

FIVE DIFFERENT PATHS

By Fred Hobbs

When we are young, many paths are open to us regarding our occupational choice. In times past, parents often charted the path. A recent study of 348 young people, ages 14 to 18 found, not surprisingly, that parents were the most influential people in that choice, followed by teachers.

But that influence quickly wanes in the young adult years. Wage and salary potential, job satisfaction and long-term career prospects become the three most important factors in choosing the path labeled “success.”

For boys, the tradition of “following in your father’s footsteps” by becoming a doctor, lawyer or merchant is much less common today. Girls now aren’t expected necessarily to become teachers, nurses, or full-time housewives, although many choose one of those paths.

In my immediate family, there is no recognizable thread regarding occupational choices among the five siblings. We walk very diverse paths, not pushed in any direction by my widowed mother, but each of us encouraged to reach our own potential, whatever that might be.

Sara, the oldest, my only sister and ten years my senior, chose to be a full-time housewife and mother. She was very successful in that pursuit. In addition to her own three children, she and my brother-in-law assisted my mother by guiding some of my early development. She was highly intelligent, an avid reader and knowledgeable on current events and social trends.

Oldest brother Bob pursued two paths during his now 90-plus years. At age 19, he entered military service, became an Air Force officer and flew in missions, including those during the historic D-Day invasion. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, an honor also bestowed on such famous fliers as Charles Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart. He served also in the elite Strategic Air Command. Bob retired at age 49 as a full colonel. He continues to operate a farm, a large walnut tree grove and cattle pastures on land he owns in the Ozarks.

Brother Bill is an attorney and retired vice president and treasurer of the Kaiser Aluminum Company, part of the empire created by Henry J. Kaiser. In that capacity, he traveled all over the world. He served in the Army Air Corps during World War II. After a nearly 50-year stint living in the Bay Area of California, he and his wife moved back to Boulder, where he had spent his college days.

My brother Sam passed away several years ago at the age of 56, but had already distinguished himself on still another professional path. As Public Works Manager of Bloomington, Minnesota, Sam received a national award for creativity and model planning in building the infrastructure of a once largely rural hamlet into a large suburban community near Minneapolis.

You’ll pardon me for writing this paean in honor of my four siblings, but if nothing else, it illustrates the very different paths that can be taken by five members of one family. Oh...and

what about that fifth member? He spent some time around a few radio and TV studios over the years and has not been afraid to write about it on occasion as part of participation in the prestigious Windsor Gardens Writers Group!