

Wishes: A Job with a Decent Salary

By Mike Harris

Wishes, things that don't seem to be attainable, something for nothing. Simple logic rules out wishes as a means of achieving real results. I'm not a wishing man, basically practical and down to earth, a pragmatist. I waste little time on impractical pie-in-the-sky solutions to solve problems.

At eighteen with a High School diploma and living in America, the world not yet out of the Great Depression, there were two things on my mind: continuing my education and getting a job. But first to set my priorities, a job in an occupation that would lead to a decent salary. Education was available at the City College of New York, basically almost free. Four years of day or six years of night study. My priorities in order, a job was the next thing.

After some false starts, my father with the secular knowledge of street existence and survival, pointed me in right direction and in time I learned two trades in the clothing industry. The first took three years before I was certified a cutter by the union at the age of twenty one. I now commanded a salary of ninety dollars a week. I worked at this job for three years, till the firm went bankrupt. On applying to the union for a new job I was informed that they could give me one or two days a week to tide me over. There were married men with families who took priority. Besides, I must have some savings.

So one year of hard times while I networked and learned a new trade in the same industry. I became certified as a presser and got a union card with a new certification and an important lesson was learned. After working in union and non-union jobs for a year I landed a union job and eventually earned more than twice my cutter's salary. In the second year at my new job I became a team leader. At the age of twenty-six, on entering the army, my last week's pay was two hundred and fifteen dollars to take home, a really nice salary without a college degree, not much need for wishes. When the purchasing power of ten thousand dollars equaled what in today's world bought a forty thousand dollar car, simple arithmetic showed the value of two hundred fifteen dollars a week over ninety dollars a week, just to put things in perspective, especially being single and living alone.

With my three and half years of army, during which time I matured, I was honorably discharged, and when I returned got my old job back with the old pay, and have led a fairly normal life, with no need for wishes.