



The Midnight Missive **Vol. 6 No. 10**

*Business/Technology/Counter
Culture/Media/The Arts
Established April, 2000
July 15, 2005*

Tales from the Trench

Rants, Rumbblings and ruminations from the bottom of the food chain

Lesson #1: You gotta stick out ya neck

It was 7:55pm on a warm fall night in Beverly Hills.

I had to make a choice and I had to make it fast.

Stay in the car or go ring the doorbell.

We we're going to be late, there was no way around it. You cannot drive from Beverly Hills to Santa Monica in five minutes. If I rang the doorbell we would only be a little bit late, but if I stayed in the car we could be very late and that would be very bad.

My problem was that the former two term governor of the largest state in the union was inside a house in Beverly Hills, but he had a fundraising dinner with a bunch of financial hotshots at some swanky Santa Monica restaurant at 8pm. Compounding this problem was that the woman inside the Beverly Hills house had donated generously to the Governors senate campaign and was planning on donating more.

Had the Governor sealed the deal? Would I ruin it by ringing the doorbell and announcing that he had more important places to be or was the Governor looking at his watching wondering where the hell I was?

At 8pm, I rang the doorbell. I did not have enough faith in my driving skills to become Mario Andretti when the Governor got in the car at 8:20 and said, "Step on it".

When the door opened I was immediately greeted by three large dogs that knocked me down the steps and proceeded to go mark their territory on the front lawn. I got up, walked back to the door and before I could mutter out the speech I had been preparing for the last five minutes the Governor, still sitting in the living room, saw me and said, "Thanks, David. We were just on our way out".

Twenty minutes later we pulled up fashionably late to the restaurant and the Governor was given a warm welcome. My thanks for getting him out of Beverly Hills came not only in the ride to the dinner, but also in a phone call later that night.

When the trip was over and I went back to my office and was quickly informed that the Governor wanted me to accompany my boss on a trip to their campaign headquarters to teach their staff the ins and outs of political fundraising. I went from being a driver to a political consultant overnight.

I did not realize it at the time, but when I rang that doorbell I was sticking my neck out for the Governor and it paid off. In a field like politics, where thousands of people are competing for jobs that are famous for being overworked and underpaid, taking risks is an essential part of making yourself known. Elected officials meet hundreds of people every week trying to impress them and feed off their star power. Just being another cog in the wheel is not going to get their attention. (A friend once spilled a beer on Barack Obama and reminded him of it the next day by apologizing, he still claims it was unintentional.)

In the business world the same principal is just as important. Getting ahead requires taking risks. Hard work might help you keep your job, but it will not guarantee a promotion. You have to stick your neck out if you are going to get noticed. Be it looking for a new job, speaking up at meetings or asking your boss for that raise, putting yourself on the line is as important in career advancement as showing up on time.

Sometimes it is as easy as ringing a doorbell.