



David Hicks: Commentary on Hospitality, Education History, and Classical Architecture

Lesson 6: David's Life Story: Part One

Outline:

Would you share an overview of your life story?

- David was the oldest of 4 boys and his father was a preacher whose ministry took the family to various locations around the U.S.
 - He spent his early childhood on a lake in Minnesota enjoying the outdoors.
 - Later, his father pastored a non-denominational church on an Indian reservation in western Montana.
- In 7th grade, David's parents moved back to his mother's native province of New Brunswick, to a rough neighborhood where he began to have academic success but also became a target for bullying.
- Subsequently, David's parents sent him away in the 8th grade to a boy's school called Stony Brook in Long Island, which he described as a "boy's paradise."
 - School was 6 days a week and their only free time was Saturday and Sunday afternoons.
 - On Sunday evenings, his 8th grade class would gather at the headmaster's home to read classic books.
- David has a fondness for single-sex education and believes we jettisoned the system heedlessly during the 1960's sexual revolution. Both single-sex and co-education have their pros and cons, but he prefers the former.
- After high school, David attended university at Princeton where he majored in English and rowed for the Princeton Lightweight team.
 - As head of the Chapel Deacons, David became close to Ernest Gordon, author of "Through the Valley of the Kwai."
 - David wrote his thesis on the English Poets of the First World War and a junior paper on T.S. Eliot. He loved poetry.
- At Princeton, David applied for a Rhodes Scholarship and was selected (to his complete surprise) after winning over a notoriously hard panel interviewer by singing Robert Burns' "[John Anderson, My Jo](#)".
 - He spent 2 years at Oxford reading Philosophy, Policy, and Economics (PPE).
 - After Oxford, the Rhodes Secretary sent David to the University of Moscow for additional studies.



- He compares his story to David Copperfield, by the way in which an influential figure has reached out to him at key points and changed the course of his life.
- David returned to the U.S. and entered Naval Officer Candidate School (OCS) that fall. After graduation, David was personally requested by Vice Admiral Turner to join his faculty at the Naval War College.
 - VADM Turner wanted David to help him implement a new “Oxford-style” curriculum.
 - He credits the military for its chain of command tradition which teaches its members how to accept and assume authority.
- He cites David Copperfield again as a lesson in gratitude for the things in one’s life—even the “Micawbers and Uriah Heeps” (i.e. enemies)—that bring about unexpected changes and blessings.
- David’s final story is about running for Congress for Westchester County, NY in 1976.
 - While teaching in NY, David volunteered to help the local Republican Party during the election year.
 - He was surprised when they asked him to run for Congress, citing his youthfulness and academic career as a “new look” for the Republican Party.
 - The Party expected him to lose but he accepted the opportunity and ran a low-budget campaign with the help of his brothers.
 - On election night, he surprised everyone by converting several key precincts and appearing to win the election.
 - The results were later reversed, to his relief because he wasn’t actually aspiring to a political career.
- David cites feeling disenfranchised as an “outsider” because the current political choices don’t represent his views.
- He concludes by pointing out the episodic quality of his life that makes it similar to the story of David Copperfield.