

the enlightened gambler

**The heart and spirit
of the risk taker
in all of us**

by
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Excerpt from Chapter 1

I was now awake and aware and I began to immerse myself in the stock market. This felt to me like high stakes gambling and I could have lots of fun, and maybe even make a killing every now and then. Winning was on my mind, and the concern about possibly losing all my inherited money took a backseat. I started buying and selling a bunch of stocks. Some did pretty well, some not so good. But I was up a little and holding my own. Not too bad for a novice. Then, at some point, I bought one hundred shares of Ameri-Trade, a quiet little trading company. The stock price was at twenty-three, so I paid twenty-three hundred for the hundred shares. I was more interested in some other stocks that I owned, however, slowly but surely, Ameri-Trade began to increase in price. I can't remember if I ever thought about buying more shares, but within a few months, the company split twice and now I owned four hundred shares ... and the price continued to rise.

Every day I'd be watching the stock quotes, listening to *CNBC*, buying and selling and talking about stocks with anybody who would listen. I was living a double life; one part of me was functioning as a well respected member of the Tallahassee community, while the other part of me was acting like a hungry vampire who had just tasted blood for the first time. It felt like I had an insatiable appetite and wanted to keep guzzling more and more blood.

It was known as the Tech Bubble and I was right there in it, joyfully riding the wave with a number of tech stocks. Prices were going through wild swings on a daily basis, and I was getting my fill of crazy gambling juice. Ameri-Trade was continuing to skyrocket and was now over fifty dollars a share. I had four hundred shares that were now worth more than twenty thousand dollars and I was dancing every day. But how much more could Ameri-Trade go up? Should I sell now or wait a little longer to see how high it could go?

Excerpt from Chapter 22

Since this book is all about gambling and risk taking, I think it makes sense to digress a little and mention one big risk that we all usually make in life—marriage. I am of the belief that most marriages in this country take place as a result of a growing, loving relationship. Both people involved are often filled with love for each other, a joy for their present time life, and an honest enthusiasm for their future life plans. Well, as all of you already know, it all too often does not work out as beautifully as the imagined fantasy. Right? And the results can frequently be much more painful than a loss at the race track.

I've been married three times and subsequently divorced three times. Do I gain points in your book for being an eternal optimist by continuing to chase the beautiful fantasy? Or do I lose points for not learning enough about the shadow side of marriage after the first two times I had to drag my body down that ugly path called divorce? I guess we have to take some responsibility for the paths we have taken, and I am clearly guilty of being a

hopeless romantic. May God bless me and all of you who also continue to search for that delicious but elusive fantasy.

The beginnings of those marriages were always filled with bliss and lots of fun; however, the endings were always fraught with pain and confusion. It's a big loss, and it hurts. As if the raw pain isn't enough, we then have to deal with the deep confusion. Confusion strikes at the heart and the mind. What happened? It's like losing a big pot with a full house. How did that happen? How could I have been so unlucky to get such a great hand, only to lose my shirt in the process? Was it my fault? Did I do something wrong?

Excerpt from Chapter 32

Looking back over my life as a gambler, it's been juicy and vibrant, wild and crazy at times, but constantly enriching and rewarding in many ways. My brain is sharp and in excellent shape as I roll past my sixty-fifth birthday, in part possibly thanks to my love of gambling and having so many decisions to make every time I place a wager. I wish I knew then what I know now, mostly about how to limit the self-abuse when I had gone through losing times. I mean, come on, who likes to lose? But now, after all these years, I know how to take a few minutes to allow myself to feel bad most of the time when I lose without feeling bad about myself. That's big. Winning and losing periods are like life cycles. They come and they go just like the night and the day. One almost always follows the other.

I have a distinct memory from years ago of watching Michael Jordan on national TV, with tears streaming down his face as he received the Most Valuable Player award in 1993. He had just won another basketball championship with the Chicago Bulls. And although it was his third basketball title in three years, this specific championship was extra special to Michael because it was only months ago that his father had been murdered. Michael dedicated that year to his father, and now, having won the championship, appeared relieved, ecstatic, and filled with grief, all at the same time as he looked up to the sky with a wet face and yelled out, "I love you, Dad!" This was vintage Michael, a man's man, showing the world how to be open with the deep emotions of winning and losing, all at the same time. It was beautiful and amazing.

I sincerely wish all of you lots of gambling happiness in your future and a deeper understanding and acceptance of the times of tears.