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**HIDDEN MARKETING ASSETS**

# *University*

INTERVIEW SERIES

**Ben Gay Interview, Parts 1 & 2**

*Michael Senoff Interviews Ben Gay*

Dear Student,

I'm Michael Senoff, founder and CEO of [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://HardToFindSeminars.com).

For the last five years, I've interviewed the world's best business and marketing minds.

And along the way, I've created a successful home-based publishing business all from my two-car garage.

When my first child was born, he was very sick, and it was then that I knew I had to have a business that I could operate from home.

Now, my challenge is to build the world's largest free resource for online, downloadable audio business interviews.

I knew that I needed a site that contained strategies, solutions, and inside information to help you operate more efficiently

I've learned a lot in the last five years, and today I'm going to show you the skills that you need to survive.

It is my mission, to assist those that are very busy with their careers

And to really make my site different from every other audio content site on the web, I have decided to give you access to this information in a downloadable format.

Now, let's get going.

Michael Senoff

*Michael Senoff*

Founder & CEO: [www.hardtfindseminars.com](http://www.hardtfindseminars.com)

## **Ben Gay introduced the sales world to the most popular - most powerful sales training material ever produced: Ben Gay Interview, Part I**

35 years of top-level, professional selling experience has made Ben Gay III a legendary figure in the sales world. A world-famous salesman, sales trainer, author, consultant, and speaker, he still sells on a daily basis! Gay has been the #1 salesperson at every single company with which he has been associated. It's not surprising that his book, The Closers, which explains selling the way it really is, is the most powerful book on selling ever written with over 3,000,000 copies sold.

In this interview, Ben reveals how his selling success sprang from a childhood fascination with the yarns of a former-slave and local Civil War veterans in mid-Century, which spawned an unquenchable passion for meeting interesting people. At his father's knee, he learned the amazing ability of a master closer to move people to action through the sheer power of talk.

After a successful career as a youthful buyer at Macy's, he moved into direct sales and discovered the power of multi-level marketing where he met and worked with renowned salespeople, including the greatest Master Closer he ever worked with, James H. Rucker, Jr., J. Douglas Edwards, Fred Herman, Earl Nightingale, Zig Ziglar, Bill Dempsey, and Ray Considine, among others. In this no holds-barred interview, he shares the absolute unvarnished truth with you.

While sharing fascinating anecdotes about his career, Ben dispenses selling tips, techniques, and secrets. You'll discover:

- The key to sales success: always sell a competitively priced, quality product to qualified customers
- How a closer thinks: the secret of Sales Closing Power
- How to get the sale that day!
- How your success depends on the effectiveness of your sales presentations, telephone sales scripts, and direct mail letters
- And much, much more!

So meet Ben Gay III...the person with the unique ability to explain selling in down-to-earth terms you can easily understand and apply. The Closer is the sales closers bible, the one book you *must* have in your personal library. My interview with Ben Gay, the master closer, is one you shouldn't miss either.

Michael: Let's start from the beginning, where were you born?

Ben: I was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, on August 22, 1942, which means as we record this, I just turned 66 a few days ago.

Michael: Happy Birthday.

Ben: Thank you sir.

Michael: What did your mom and dad do?

Ben: Mother was the last generation that was raised to do volunteer work and wear white gloves and take care of the homes. Dad at that time, was a photographer. We, the cumulative we, owned 42 portrait studios in and around New England called Housman Gay Studios, Housman being my uncle. Then the box brownie came along, the first camera to be sold to the masses. My father saw the end coming and so he went to my uncle and said, "Buy me out or I will buy you out. This business isn't going to support both of us for much longer," although they made a lot of money. The Box Brownie, the original mass marketed camera where it looked like a little black box. You held it about waist high, looked down, saw your image and clicked. Then all of a sudden you didn't need a photographer anymore.

Michael: Oh I see. Who made that?

Ben: Kodak.

Michael: Oh, Kodak. Okay so when that came along, you saw the portrait industry was on its way out?

Ben: Yeah. It dawdled on, in fact almost every town still has one somewhere, but they don't make much money anymore. They depend on class photographs, senior class, yearbook and so on.

Michael: Did your uncle start that business?

Ben: Him and my uncle started it together.

Michael: So the two brothers started it together?

Ben: Brother-in-law.

Michael: Brothers-in-law, gotcha.

Ben: So we sold out and went looking. I don't know if Dad had a target or not, but we went from Massachusetts to the Los Angeles area, in particular Apple Valley California. We were the first non-Indians to live there. Mom, Dad, and I opened up with the owners of Reserve Oil and Gas in Apple Valley California. Dad sold Roy Rogers his ranch and Pearl Bailey and her husband Louis and their ranch.

Michael: So he was in real estate?

Ben: Yes. Mother, however went to her grave without admitting that she didn't like the place. She claimed that the high desert country gave her nosebleeds. It is entirely possible, but I know that living in what looked like the moonscape at the time, it is now a thriving city with grass and hayfever problem and everything. Back then; I just know that my mother from New England picture Catherine Hepburn was not real happy in Apple Valley.

So we started on the way to Florida to buy another Real Estate company. We stopped in Atlanta to visit my father's uncle, my favorite uncle Ted. We just talked to him. Arnold Gay, who ran the stables down in Sandy Springs, near your home. We stopped in to visit him. Dad hadn't seen him in years. I have never met him or anything. He had a lovely home and a nice business, Fuller-Gay Food Brokerage Company. We spent just a night or two and when we got ready to leave, and then either my mother or I had mumps. So that gives you 10 days to recover. Then the other person, whomever had it first healed, and then the second person got it. We were there another ten days. We were there 20 some odd days with Uncle Arnold. He talked Dad into settling in Atlanta and buying into a food brokerage business. So that was in 1948. My sister was born there. She still lives there. It is like there is an old movie and I forget exactly the name of it. It is like "Guess Who is Coming for Dinner". You stop for one night to do something.

Michael: How old were you when you moved to Atlanta?

Ben: Six or seven.

Michael: You stayed there until how old?

Ben: Until I moved to California to run a cosmetic company out here and by then I am guessing I was 25 in 1967.

Michael: Wow you come from a real history of entrepreneurs and businessmen.

Ben: Yeah, it was one of the nicest things that ever happened Michael. You've heard the term comfort zone, which everybody else since then, but never the less it is a great way to explain things. The kindest thing that my family did to me, besides love me and try to give me a good education and so on was by who they were and who they associated with. They set my comfort zone very high. We lived two blocks out of the gate of East Lake Country Club. Everybody that was anybody at the time belonged to East Lake. You know the chairman of the board of Coca Cola, Bobby Jones the great golfer was still alive. That was his home course. In fact, he was born where the third green is now. His house was there originally. The grand slam trophies were in the trophy room. I had nothing to do with it. I didn't achieve all of that, I just got the benefit from it.

Michael: Yeah, you didn't know any different.

Ben: Yeah and that's truly the greatest way to phrase it. I didn't know any different.

Michael: Yeah, I heard that in an interview that you did with the radio guy. You said that you were comfortable and then you guys were talking about how your Dad said, Okay it is time for you to go on your own."

Ben: August 22<sup>nd</sup>, my birthday.

Michael: So at 21 you were on your own?

Ben: Right.

Michael: You were staying in the family home and then you moved out. Where did you move?

Ben: Well, if you were in Atlanta now, you would be impressed. It is now called the pond, 75 [inaudible] Avenue, catty-corner across from the Fox Theater and directly across from the Johnson Terrace Hotel. Now

it is once again the place to live. They have really dolled it up again. We were there because it had long since ceased being the place to live. So my wife, who has now passed away, my first wife, Marcia, we had like a bachelor apartment. We had a hot plate. We washed dishes in the bathtub, which was the room between the living room and the bedroom. We were on the eleventh floor with a balcony if you climbed out the window. So we sat there and watched people come and go from the Fox Theater. They must have looked over thinking that we were rich. It cost us \$95 a month and if you plugged in more than two appliances at a time, you blew everything on the eleventh floor. If someone was in the bathroom and you wanted to go into the bedroom, you had to open the window and step out onto the balcony then open the other window and step into the bedroom.

Michael: Now did you know that you were in a dump at that time?

Ben: Almost as soon as I walked in because what I got was half of the bachelor furniture that my rooming buddy and first business partner, Jimmy Rucker and I had. You know, I didn't mind that when it was just an unending series of beer and pool parties, but when you suddenly have a wife who was going to Crawford Long Hospital to become a nurse and you are living in hardly what you promised her. She grew up, not grew up but when we were dating, she spent a lot of town at the country club, at the Atlanta Athletic Club downtown and out at the stables of Sandy Springs. She thought that she had married into money. Well she had, but unfortunately I had just been expelled from the family. She was about 30 days late. That was when I spun around and the term "comfort zone" hadn't been created yet, but that is when I realized what is going on here?

Michael: Younger, did you ever work a job? Did you have jobs?

Ben: Oh sure. We use to go down and volunteer to sweep out stores and stuff. I had worked since I was about 8 or 9 years old for pocket change and stuff. Then when I was 14, I set up a lawn mowing business. It wasn't just me with a lawnmower. I had about 20 kids working for me.

Michael: All right. So you were hustling as a kid?

Ben: Oh yeah. Dad let us be around nice things, but if you wanted money in your pocket, you earned it.

Michael: So at 14, you had your lawn business?

Ben: Yes.

Michael: Did you do it with a partner or did you do it on your own?

Ben: I started out on my own and rather quickly maxed out. You know there are only so many lawns that you can mow in Atlanta in the summer with the heat, humidity, and time. So I was complaining to my father one day and he said, why don't you get people to work for you. I said, "They can do it themselves. They don't need me or visa-versa. What is that going to do?" He said, "Well you are pricing it wrong." I was making him nervous. I don't remember what it was back then, but let's say I charged \$3 or \$5 per lawn. He said, "Don't do that. Do an excellent job and tell them to pay you what they think that it is worth." Well it was magic because whatever they were paying me before, they paid me double. Once that happened I said well this is great, but even now I'm still out of time. He said, "Now hire your friends and give them half the money. You collect and inspect. You are out of the manual labor business and you get half of what 20 people are doing."

Michael: So he taught you really what real business is all about.

Ben: Yeah.

Michael: Now when you were getting those accounts, were you knocking on doors cold?

Ben: Yeah.

Michael: Had you done that before or was this kind of new? Did you have a learning experience when it came to the direct selling?

Ben: Well it was a learning experience somewhat, but back then we use to do a lot of fundraising. You don't probably remember, but Krispy Kreme Donuts did a huge fundraising thing and salt-water taffy and I did stuff for the March of Dimes and old newspaper boy, Danny. My dad would encourage me to do that because I could meet people and learn a skill.

Michael: So at that age when it came to a fundraiser in your school or whatever were you always number one?

Ben: Yes.

Michael: Always?

Ben: Always.

Michael: Where did that come from?

Ben: I don't know other than comfort zone, a little competitiveness. I had a younger sister who was an excellent golfer with [inaudible]. She was seven years younger. We had a friendly competition going on. We had a big enough yard where we had a pitch and putt thing set up. We were always competing there and so on. Then Dad taught me other things that kids didn't get taught because they hadn't been raised maybe by sales people who owned their own businesses. All my aunts and uncles, everybody without exception owned their own business. All of dad's friends owned their own business or were president of some huge thing.

Michael: What are some other lessons that it taught you that you could really remember?

Ben: I will give you a quick little one where you said you never won in fund raising. The answer was yes. If there were a physical product, I would knock on the door and when they open the door and remember in Atlanta you have screen doors. When they open the inner door, I would step off to the side, almost out of sight, which would cause them to open the screen door. I would hand them the Krispy Kreme donuts. So they had them in their hand before they knew why I was there. They had taken possession. You just hardly ever miss anyone that way.

Michael: Did your dad teach you that?

Ben: Yeah. I said, "I can't wait to tell my friends." He said, "Don't tell your friends." Do you want to win the Columbia bicycle? You know selling greeting cards and stuff. If you want to win the Columbia bicycle, this is how you do it son.

Michael: So you learned how to earn some pretty decent money as a kid on your own?

Ben: I have always had, substantial is a relative term, I probably have ten times that in my pocket now by accident, but back then I was the kid with the money.

Michael: When did you go to work for Macy's?

Ben: I was standing outside Murphy High School in my senior year. It is funny how things back then, you stop for dinner one night and 60 years later your family is still there. I was standing outside of Murphy High School doing nothing and a friend of mine Jerry Bell came out the front door and down the steps. I said, "Where are you going?" He said, "I am going down to Macy's. They are hiring people to take back returns the day after Christmas." I said, "Who wants a one-day job?" He said, "Well the odd thing is that they train you for two weeks, for one day and they pay you for the training." I said, "Let me ride along with you." I got in the car and that was probably against school rules. I don't recall because it was the middle of the day and suddenly I am going downtown in 180 Beach Street in Atlanta Georgia." We went to the personnel department and somehow got the applications. His girlfriend had some sort of in there. I forget what it was, but he was going to get hired. I also got hired. I really liked it. I was working in the housewares department selling on the floor.

Michael: Was it for commission?

Ben: Yeah but it didn't amount to anything at that time. It was just to take back stuff at Christmas time. I'm not terribly proud of this, but I heard a lady named Barbara Ferns, god rest her soul because I am 66. She was a grown woman and she is probably long since gone, but if she ever hears this, I appreciated her so much. I heard her say that the day after the day after Christmas, she was going on a two-week vacation. She was the lady that hired me in the personnel department.

So I went through my two-week training. I did my day after Christmas. This was just the second or third busiest day of the year. People are bringing back things and you are trying to upsell them so that you don't lose money on the transaction and the next day I knew that she was on vacation. I just reported back for work. Two weeks later I am standing on the floor. I had already been given some responsibilities. I was head of stock, which sort of makes you a glorified stock boy with a title and some authority. She tapped me on the shoulder. I turned around and said, "Ms. Ferns, how are you?" She winked and she said, "That is very clever. I understand that you are doing an excellent job. Carry on."

Michael: So they kept you on?

Ben: They kept me on.

Michael: Did you stay with them for a while?

Ben: Five years.

Michael: Five years at Macy's?

Ben: Yeah. I became the youngest assistant buyer and the youngest buyer in Macy's in their 100-year-old history.

Michael: Was it Macy's that was known for their return policy?

Ben: Rich's was who was famous for it. Now Rich's is technically out of business, but they are both owned by the same.

Michael: Yeah, you know whom I am thinking of. Who is the one with the shoes? Was it Rich's?

Ben: Yeah Rich's. They had a window on Peach Street where they put the returns, the high-button shoes. The thing that galled us was in the window at Rich's was a steam iron that was Macy's private label. I frankly, forget what it was called, but Rich's, their brand was AMC. So to show how generous they were for years they kept a Macy's steam iron in their window that they had taken back and were getting credit for knowing it was one of a few brands on earth that could not have come from their store. They were so known for that policy of good customer service that even though I could give my mother an employee discount or let her shop and I would go buy it and get an employee discount. When it was something important, she would say, "Well I will get it at Rich's." I said, "Mother I am getting you an employee discount." It was called Davis and as you know at the time Macy's owned it. I am getting you the employee discount. She said, "I know, but if I wanted to take it back, Rich's will take it back without question. They have the high-button shoes that were bought 60 years before. They have one of your steam irons in the window." So I said, "Our policy is exactly the same." She said, "I know dear. I know."

Michael: Rich's was in the mind of it.

Ben: Right. They had locked in that policy and the patron saint Rich's had built that image to the point that I don't think you could stand on the street corner and give away free steam irons and knock that down. They had done such a great job of reassuring the customer. When you shop with us, everything is going to be okay.

Michael: Up until this time, did you ever struggle with selling?

Ben: You know anytime I struggled a little bit with selling or income, it is when I made a bad decision about what to sell. One of the first things I say in seminars because I try to take huge chunks off at a time, if you know what I mean? So we can spend on the nuances and subtleties. We can spend all day in a seminar. Little things that will double and triple what everything else will make you. So I try and take it off in big chunks and I tell them the first thing that you learned that I have learned the hard way is that you should always sell a quality product, that is competitively priced and you spend your day talking to qualified people. Now first I had a friend that I trained who was in prison at the time, actually he was into selling. He was getting out just about the time that the Dodge Rams were first coming out. I frankly forget when that was, 15, and 20 years ago or whenever it was. He was a handsome kid and he had learned and studied hard and read the books. So he said, "What should I do?" I said, "All right just to get started." I remember he was going to court in Seattle or some place in the Northwest where he was from. I said, "You go find Dodge dealership and I don't care what you have to do, get on the lot that is selling the trucks. You meet the first truck that comes in." Because I had been reading about it in the trade papers. You meet the first truck that comes in with the Dodge Ram on it. You chain yourself to the front bumper of the Dodge Ram. I said, "You will start making money in spite of yourself and you will learn how to sell."

Michael: Because it was going to be such a hot automobile.

Ben: If I had a young man today that says, "I am going to go in selling in a couple of years." What should I tell him? I said, "Go find out who is going to have the Chevrolet Volt, which is coming out in I think 2010." The commissions will probably not be terribly high, but on the other hand you will be able to sell them in advance by a year. So the few times that I have struggled a little bit, before I discovered/invented coined the term of that rule, quality products comparatively priced and you are talking to qualified customers. Whenever I have broken that rule, things get tough.

So another example I use to prove the same point is - remember the Yugo?

Michael: Yes.

Ben: It was the world's worst automobile, the cheapest automobile, new and the world's worst. They are now selling as collector's items and people are turning them into planters on their lawn.

Michael: All right. Tell me about the time you answered a classified ad and met Bill Dempsey. How old were you and where were you at in your life?

Ben: I was 22 years old.

Michael: So this was right after Macy's?

Ben: Yes it was during that period of time. There was a period of time when I worked at Macy's seasonally and traveled on the road as a manufacturers rep. When I say seasonally, they needed someone with my talent and experience and someone in the toy department and various places as sort of a temporary buyer bringing the pinch hitter, the heavy hitter. So I would go in for seasonal things if it corresponded with the flow time and whatever I was really doing. Dad was a clotheshorse and I don't mean that outlandishly, but he just always looked good. When he died one of the greatest debates we had in my family was what suit he would want to be buried in because how he looked was very important to him. Picture James Cagnie as a young man, the actor. Dad and James Cagnie looked like twins.

Michael: So he was a good-looking guy.

Ben: Yeah. If you have ever seen Yankee Doodle Dandy, to me that is like watching a family movie. My dad was a small guy like Cagnie was and he strutted when he walked.

Michael: How tall was he?

Ben: Oh, I don't know 5' 8" I am guessing. When he walked into a room you knew he had arrived. He looked good. He dressed good. He carried himself well. He was just a presence.

Michael: Were your uncles like that?

Ben: No. They were normal human beings. Dad was the one. I also suspected at times when we drove to LA and wound up in Apple Valley, I really believe and my wife and I have talked about it many times. I think Dad was going to LA to get into the movies because he was a good dancer, he had been a professional diver, and he was use to being the center of attention. I can't quite picture why a guy from

Alabama who owned a big business in New England would suddenly drive all the way across the country with no specific plan.

Michael: You are probably right.

Ben: Yes. I always had that feeling, but any ways at the same time that I answered the ad, Marcia my first wife invited my mother and father up to the apartment.

Michael: Had they been there yet?

Ben: No.

Michael: Okay first time to the apartment.

Ben: First time to the apartment.

Michael: How long had you guys been married?

Ben: We had been married and living there just a few weeks. So there is a knock on the door and we had made it look as nice as you could. You know picture early Danish that was old, same as any bachelor's apartment. Then you open the refrigerator and there is a jar of mustard and two beers. We had a wicker sofa that we bought somewhere and we spray painted it green in our broke days, in my bachelor days. That somehow got moved in. I think Rutherford my rooming buddy was kind enough to let me have that, while he kept the dining room table that was cut in a big oval that we made it out of plywood. We painted it black and put the playboy bunny in the middle. Marsha said, "No, we won't be taking that with us."

So any ways the door was knocked on. We opened it. Dad use to like bourbon and so I went and bought what I could afford, a pint. It looks like a hip flask of bourbon and a little soda and offered it to them. He stood there looking around. He says, "Oh where is the rest of your apartment?" I said, "Well follow me." I led him through the bathroom through the rest of the apartment. Then with my luck there were dishes soaking in the bathtub. He says, "Oh, this is lovely." We didn't invite him to dinner. We were not that stupid. We invited them to come by and have a drink and then we would go out to dinner, which he was going to pay for. So finally it got a little awkward. I was sitting down. My mother was sitting down. Marsha was sitting down and he was still standing in the middle of the room, sipping his bourbon soda. He didn't like that either because of course I didn't get the brand that

he would have gotten. He finally said, "Let's go." I said, "Dad, sit down and relax." He said, "Please don't be offended by this. I just really don't want to sit on your furniture." So if someone tells you not to be offended by something like that you are obviously not offended 40 years later talking about it.

Michael: Yeah.

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Michael: So you were really humiliated?

Ben: That was back to the comfort zone problem. So right about that time, this is interesting to me Michael; I had looked at want ads for me. I had looked at them many times if I had a want ad running to see how it was doing. For me, looking to do something, I had looked at one issue of the classifieds in my entire life. It was back when they were separate papers. The Atlanta Constitution, the morning paper. I looked under help wanted and there was nothing there that I could do, a problem I still have to this day. Thank goodness that I am in selling because there is nothing else that I could do. Then I went over where it said "Business Opportunity" and I didn't know even what that meant. I looked down and there was one ad that caught my eye. It said, "If you know anything about marketing and want to make more money, then call this number." So I called that number, rather quickly I was talking to Bill Dempsey.

Michael: Tell the listeners. Who is Bill Dempsey?

Ben: Bill Dempsey was one of my early sales mentors. He was a guy who recruited me into my own business the first time. We have been in touch, lost touch, got back in touch over the years, but if it were not for Bill Dempsey, I would not be talking to you today. There are several other people along the way that I could say that about to, but he was the first one other than my father.

Michael: What was the company?

Ben: It was called Holiday Magic.

Michael: Holiday Magic. What kind of company was it?

Ben: It was a cosmetic company. Back then they called it multi-level marketing and now it is network marketing, but it is the same thing. It started in September 1964. I joined it a year later. Rather quickly, it was the largest direct sales, multi-level company in the world.

Michael: There were multi-level companies before that, but none this big?

Ben: Nutri-Bio was the grand daddy that sort of sprung a lot of them. My boss had worked for Nutri-Bio.

Michael: Okay, so they were before Holiday Magic?

Ben: Yeah, but not nearly as big. Bob Cummings, the actor was their front man. He was a health nut, so there was no [inaudible], it was a natural tie in. From that spun off Amway and Shackley and so on and so forth.

Michael: Was Amway going at the same time as Holiday Magic?

Ben: Yeah. Holiday Magic was bigger than Amway and Shackley combined at the time, now what they have become. We were in 25 countries and we had 5 different companies in each of the 25 countries. I forget the math. I think close to about 100. I was running the whole thing. I think I had 125 companies under me.

Michael: You said you were running the whole company?

Ben: Well I joined as a distributor. Let's get back to that.

Michael: Yeah, let's go back. Bill Dempsey and you went in.

Ben: Yeah, I answered the ad, "If you know anything about marketing, call blah, blah, and blah." So I called it. I am talking to Dempsey and it was funny. I was on either Peach Street or West Peach Street in front of an old colonial store that was a little long in the tooth. It was a grocery store. In front of the grocery store, this was before cell phones, was a pay phone. This happened to be a pay phone that when you drove around to get your groceries, the clerk slammed the buggies into. So if you were making a call from that phone it was punctuated every 60 seconds or so by another buggy hitting the edge of the phone booth, plus when you call from a pay phone, you echo. You may not know that, but trust me those of us that spend a lot of time in pay phones back then, it echoed. So I am talking to Dempsey, "Hello this is Ben Gay, the Ground Gay Food Program". He says, "Hi, how are you?" I said, "I'm fine." I didn't point out that the Gay in the

company name wasn't me. In fact, originally, it wasn't even my father. It was Arnold Gay and then Dad bought the company from him. So I'm thinking about looking at other opportunities to add to my empire.

Michael: Your portfolio?

Ben: Yeah, my portfolio. I am going on and on. Dempsey who was about 15 years older than I was, just a little more mature to say the least, and had been an Arthur Murray dance instructor. He was a hard-core salesman. He says after I went on and on about how important I was. He says, "Mr. Gay, let me explain something to you. I am not the man standing in a phone booth answering want ads. That is you. Where are you?" I told him the store on West Peach Street right near the Fourth there. He said, "I have good news for you; I am 1447 West Peach Street, Trust Company Georgia Building. I am on the third floor and if you are standing in front of my desk in 10 minutes. I know where you are and you can make it. In 10 minutes and I will explain this business to you. If not, don't ever call this number again." He hung up. So Rucker had come up in a car while I was on the phone call. He said, "Who are you talking to?" I said, "We don't have time to talk right now, Rucker. Let's go."

Michael: You were in your Nash Rambler?

Ben: Yeah, I was in my Nash Rambler. We raced over to 1447 West Peach Street. Soon got the elevator and talked to Dempsey and discovered that it wasn't like a job. I didn't understand business opportunities. It wasn't a job-job. It was you bought some product and you went out and sold it. Well the product was \$91.42 to buy what they called a one-pack. It was one of everything in the basic line.

Michael: Did he pitch individually or in a group?

Ben: Well individually to the two of us. They did have opportunity meetings and so on, where I learned how to speak. By a coincidence on September 15, 1965, in the same office in a different interview than mine, Zig Zigler joined the business. So we started literally on the same day in the same business and wound up as competitors. I wound up years later as president of the company. He has done rather well with it. But \$91.42 was almost exactly \$91.42 more than I had, so that was either pay day or close to pay day. I went out to the office, picked up my check and Rucker's check, which is what we use to do. We were buddies, you know. There are two things I can write. I print everything. I can write my signature and I can write Jimmy

Rucker's signature. So I cashed his check and went back downtown all by myself, gave it Dempsey and got my one pack. I had a wife and he was still a bachelor. So Rucker that night said, "Did you pick up my paycheck?" I said, "I did Rucker. We are in the cosmetic business." He said, "It is good for me too, but did you get my paycheck?" I said, "Yes, that is how come we are in the cosmetic business." Then I found out that we had to put up some more and some more, before we were done we had invested \$5,091.42. Rucker sold his car with a little help from me, a 1957 Chevrolet. He is still mad at me about that.

Michael: So you bought into the thing about \$5,000. You have been number one at selling a lot of stuff. What do you think about the multi-level stuff? Were you into it?

Ben: Yeah, it looked like magic to me. I was the typical naive network marketer, they didn't call it network in those days, but oh, get five, get five, get five, get five and I would get rich by the sixth month.

Michael: Is that what Dempsey showed you?

Ben: He showed me that is possible.

Michael: Did he show you his checks?

Ben: Yes.

Michael: How much was he making at that time?

Ben: \$10,000 a month in 1965 and the business was less than a year old.

Michael: The money is what gets you.

Ben: Oh sure. It got me. People listen to this and go; oh he was only making \$10,000 a month. Keep in mind that this was in 1965. It is like making, I don't know, \$50,000 or \$60,000 a month today.

Michael: Yeah. I know the house that we grew up in, when we were born in 1965 that house cost my father maybe \$33,000.

Ben: What is it worth today do you think?

Michael: Oh it is probably more than half a million.

Ben: Yes. So using that type of math, it was a lot of money. He had an excuse to go downstairs, which was an opportunity to show me his brand new Lincoln and the other people's brand new Lincolns that was sharing the office with him. So we were in. Then because I have done number one in some places. Then because I got married too young and I tried to put the wife through nursing school. It wasn't working. I decided that I could do it my own way. They had scripts and presentations and everything. I decided to wing it and I did for six months. I winged it and I didn't make a penny. Not only did I not make a penny, Michael, not a penny changed hands.

Michael: Oh really. So you wanted to do it your way. You were number one in everything and it didn't work.

Ben: Yeah. Nobody taught me scripts before. My total sales training before was at Macy's. Will that be cash or charge? That is selling. You know you bought a frying pan, look at our spatulas. You know that type of thing. If you bought a lawnmower, have you considered a riding lawnmower?

Michael: Now with Holiday Magic, they were pretty scriptive. They had a script for selling.

Ben: Everything.

Michael: Did Zig Zigler have anything to do with any of the scripting and stuff or was that all done?

Ben: Well over time, he did because by then I was running the company and I drew from people who knew more than I did. Earl Nightingale was the voice of Holiday Magic. Dr. Napoleon Hill, "Think and Grow Rich" worked for him the last two years of his life. [Inaudible] who was one of our house trainers? Zig had done reasonably well, but he was not superstar, he just could speak better than the rest of us.

Michael: Did he become a superstar in Holiday Magic?

Ben: Yeah. We laugh about who won to this day. There was a year long contest. First prize was a Rolls Royce, first announced prize, but Bill Hassock later told me that first prize was the president of the company. So Zig won the Rolls and I became president.

Michael: Who was the sales trainer?

Ben: That was Doug Edwards.

Michael: Yeah, tell me about him.

Ben: Doug Edwards had sold insurance. He had a voice from god. You have hear Earl Nightingale speak?

Michael: Yes.

Ben: Okay, picture that deep warm voice. Jay had a voice like that, but his was clear. Earl as he got older, got so rumbly that you almost couldn't understand him.

Michael: Was Douglas selling the Holiday Magic?

Ben: Yeah, but mainly we used him as a trainer. It was a waste of time to have him just selling because he could stand in front of a group of people and make them feel like they learned something, whether they did or not and a lot of them did and give them confidence. So Doug was successful before I met him anyway. He was working for a company called American Sales Masters. He and the leading champion Bob Richards and Fred Herman, the great salesman from Cedarstown Georgia, all worked for American Sales Masters.

Michael: What was American Sales Masters?

Ben: It was a seminar company. They were sort of a forerunner, Peter Lowe's operation. Travel around five or six speakers and fill up a big auditorium. I met Doug by winning the contest in Atlanta to get to go to Miami Florida to the J. Edwards Seminar and have a private dinner with Doug.

Michael: That is how you met him on the private dinner?

Ben: Yeah. He died four or five years later. He never had written a book and his family came to me and said would you write a book by Doug Edwards? I said, "Well I am good, but he is dead." They said, "Well take his seminar and recordings." He had done six recordings that were well known. They said, "Start that as a starting point." Well, when I say I wrote the book, things casually spoken from the stage, frequently don't read well. I just made it read well. It is true to Doug. Even things that I wrote from scratch, people will read the book today.

Michael: What is the book called?

Ben: Sales closing power. It is out of print now because my own material, the closing, thanks to Doug and Zig and all of the people who trained me is so much better. We have gotten to where we couldn't of given Doug's stuff away and that is also partly because things get dated. He was talking about the puppy dog close in one of his seminars.

Michael: Did that come from him?

Ben: As far as I'm concerned it did. I don't know. He was one of the first giants that I met. [Inaudible] and people like that, people that preceded him. Elmer Weaver.

Michael: Had you ever met Elmer Wheeler?

Ben: In his old age, I met him once. I think I met Bret Motley, but I couldn't swear to that. I was supposed to and I forget if something happened or not or he was in a big crowd or what have you.

Michael: So what one mentor out of all these guys did you really look up to, did you really take to their personality or what they thought in relation to professional.

Ben: William Patrick, Bill Patrick who was the head of Holiday Magic, chairman of the board after everything. He was a huge factor in my life. My Dad was a huge factor and that is not my Dad is a wonderful guy like we all think. It was that he was a professional, world-class salesman. So that was a huge effect on me.

Michael: What did Patrick teach you? Can you think of anything?

Ben: Picture Jim Rone. Bill was the forerunner for Jim Rone, in fact Bill trained Rone's mentor. In fact the one he talks about all the time.

Michael: Who is Rone's mentor?

Ben: Well he talks about a guy named Earl Schultz who was with Nutri-Bio, which is where they all came from, but the guy who really trained him. I don't know why he doesn't give him more credit. It is a guy named Bill Bailey, William Bailey. He was the first president of Holiday Magic. He and Bill Patrick had a falling out and Bailey was thrown to the curb. He went off and started a spin-off company, Best Line. Jim Rone was sort of Best Line's answer to me.

Michael: So Best Line was multi-level right?

Ben: Oh yeah.

Michael: So Jim Rone went with Best Line. He was in the MLM business too.

Ben: Sure.

Michael: It is very interesting how some of these giants in sales were involved in the MLM.

Ben: Yeah, well we all come from the same place.

Michael: So Jim Rone was with Best Line. What were they selling?

Ben: Chemicals, cleaning chemicals.

Michael: Did they grow like you guys or not really?

Ben: They never got as big as we were, but they were big. There use to be a game that we played. We bought a 3500-acre ranch up in Clear Lake and Bill and I were sitting out a trailer at the time just because the house was being built and Bill was a plane collector. He had 42 airplanes. The only flying B-29 in the world, a fortress of Lear Jet, a B-51 Mustang, which unfortunately he got killed in up there and all of these antique planes, plus a stable of regular planes that supported the business by teaching flying lessons and so on. So we were sitting outside the trailer one day and I hear this deep rumbling. I turn around. I say, "What is that?" Well it was Bill Bailey in his bomber. He was dropping sacks of flour on us. He was bombing with flour. It was his way of announcing that he had bought the 3500 acres next door. Then we bought a 100-foot yacht called the Principian. It was actually a boat that we built. It wasn't even its actual purpose. It was one of those classic looking ships. We spent a ton of money redoing it. I say we, these are not the ways that I would of chosen to spend money, but it was his money. My job was to make it and Bill was in charge of spending it.

So we are sitting in Sausalito one day on the fantail of this luxurious yacht and we looked up and here comes a yacht exactly like it. I mean exactly. Ours was the Principian and I think this one was called the Atlantis or something like that. It pulls in and we had been wondering why the slip next to us has been vacated for about two weeks and in pulls Bill Bailey and Jim Rone on their matching boat as Bill's. So

there was a lot of that stuff going on. It was an interesting time. People had a great effect on me. Something we never heard was Walter Wells or The Great Salesman that Ever Lived. He was in Atlanta.

Michael: What did he sell?

Ben: I never even held manager, but he sold cars and land and this and that. He was 15 years or so older than I was. One of the reason that I know all these people that were either dead or retired or in the process of retiring or something keep in mind, they were 30, 35 or 40, 45 and 50 years old. I was 22, so I was always the kid in the room.

Michael: Earl Nightingale, what was his interaction with Holiday Magic, like a spokesperson?

Ben: Well the first day that I joined the company, Bill Dempsey handed me an old beat up copy of Think and Grow Rich, a scratched up record, which is sitting about 10 feet from where I am right now. He said, "If you read this and listen to this, it will change your life." So I did. Think and Grow Rich, it took me a long time to get. I guess I was too much of a Simpleton, but now I read it once a year. I have read it over 40 times. I start it January 1<sup>st</sup> every year and I read it again. The strangest secret, I have it on video, VHS, so I can't get rid of my VHS. I watch it once a month just to get me back on track, so I have watched those two things. Now all of a sudden I am being rapidly moved up the line because of my speaking ability. That is the only reason I was President of the company. Keep in mind, I have a high school education. I was a good sales person, but there is a huge difference between good sales person and running the company that rather quickly was in 25 countries and taking \$1,000,000 in cashier's checks.

Michael: Were you pitching Holiday Magic in front of tens of thousands of people?

Ben: Oh yeah. I became the front man. If Bill Patrick wanted to speak, he was still the big draw. I was sort of assistant God, then we got to where we can't afford to have both of us in the same place.

Michael: Were you comfortable speaking?

Ben: Oh yeah. Not the very first time, but rather quickly I got where I really liked being in front of the room to the point today, Michael, my family kids me about it. If you get ten or twelve people in our living room, I

find excuses to go barbecue or wash the dishes or something so that I don't have to interact with a small group. Maybe interact is the problem versus standing in front of 10,000 people. I am more comfortable there than anywhere else on earth.

Michael: Are you introverted in some ways?

Ben: I am quite shy, believe it or not. I am paid not to be, but I am very shy. The worst times for me in a seminar, what is funny is I was just signing them up for a seminar in Raleigh in January and instantly – I mean the deal is just if they are calling me back again, it wasn't a hard sale by any means, but instantly as I am saying fine, I will reserve the date for you I am thinking, "Oh my God. I have to go meet. They probably have turn over. They are not the same people that they were last time." I am not talking about from the stage. I am talking about the meet and greet before or after. That still gives me the willies. I know how to do it. You would think I was the most confident person in the room, but I just can't wait to get out of there. You know introduce me.

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Michael: No that is interesting. So when you were speaking in front of 10,000 people pitching Holiday Magic, did you have a scripted pitch? Did you develop it or were you just speaking from the hip?

Ben: Well both. If I was speaking in front of 10,000 people, it probably wasn't a normal opportunity meeting. The first time that I spoke in front of 10,000 people it was at the Long Beach Arena and it was the Holiday Magic International Convention. The next time it was for State Power Motor Oil Additive Company. The next time it was probably for Bob Cumming's Vitamins. The same marketing plan, same everything, same scripts, you just change the name of the product.

Michael: All right so you went on to represent other multi-level companies?

Ben: Yeah, but they were all in the Holiday Magic family. We own all of those. So those I would get up and talk. They are already in the business. So I might have a little 10-bullet point thing to make sure that I hit the subjects. Most of our business at 7:59 someone walks in the front of the room and says, "Good evening ladies and gentlemen my name is... I am a general with, either Holiday Magic, Bob Cumming's Vitamin, State Power or whatever, Enterprise and Bob Bank's Closing. It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to tonight's

special meeting, blah, blah, and blah.” That speech went on word-for-word for about 40 minutes. He introduced a film. The film came on. It showed whatever company we were talking about. At the end it says, “Earl Nightingale says that 95% of all Americans are either dead or broke at age 65. If you would like to be part of the other 5% turn to the person who brought you here tonight and ask them how you can get started in company name.” Lights came on; he got out the legal pad and drew four circles explaining the benefits of each position and asked which one best suits your needs. If you picked one, you were in. If you didn’t pick one, then they explained further the benefits of each position. The money went up, the examples of how it happened went up. There were six versions of that close. You had to know them word-for-word or you would be thrown out of the meeting. That is how we got a group of just rag-tag folks.

You know, I pulled them off milk trucks. The president of the Canadian operation was a favorite waiter of mine at the dock in [inaudible] California. I liked the way that he delivered the flaming shish-kabob 60 days after I chatted with him in the Mexican operation because if they would stick to the script and they didn’t have much choice. If they would stick to the script, you could put them into any situation.

The head of the State Power operation was a gentleman named Kay White. I called him in one day and I said, “Kay, State Powers that you have heard me talk about, well it has an office building now and so on. The guy we thought was going to run it really isn’t up to it. It was an old friend of Bill Patricks and it was one of those personal things, trying to put a friend to work. I said, “So you go over there.” He said, “I don’t know anything about motor oil.” I said, “Kay, it is the exact same script, marketing plan, discounts, and everything. Just stop saying cosmetics.” He went over there and did a fantastic job without missing a beat. So we did it based on standardization, absolute and complete standardization.

Bear Bryant the old football coach said his job was to take 40 extremely different young men and in Spring Training before they faced the enemy, to get them to operate with a single heart beat. That is what we attempted to do and were pretty successful at there. I do that now with all my clients. Dixie Home Crafters the second largest, fastest-growing home improvement company in the world. Home based in Atlanta. Up and down the east coast, that is all we work on. Get the presentation right. We tell them, we are not paying you to sell, we are paying you to get the demonstrations because if you give the demonstration by the script, then you will sell. You don’t have to worry

about that. Harris, the chairman of the board of the company, says that if you get monkeys driver's licenses, he could run the business without people. I said, well you would have to have a parrot to go along with the monkeys. The monkey drives it and the parrot gives it. The joke among Home Crafters is the answer to all questions just about, in all sales questions, is if someone yells at you it is the presentation stupid.

Michael: Elmer Wheeler was really on to this, Tested Sentences that Sell. Do you remember the research he was doing on all that?

Ben: I know of the research. My favorite one is the egg story. Do you remember that?

Michael: One egg or two?

Ben: One egg or two and the milkshake. It not only exploded their sales because Woolworth our younger listeners might not remember, it was the five and dime and the forerunner to K-Mart and Wal-Mart and so on. It was the largest retail operation in the world. It was also, because of their lunch counters, the largest restaurant operation in the world; causal dining. I don't know what it was. I am making up numbers, but something like 80 miles of lunch counters in all their stores and the largest owner of spoons, forks, and knives. They sold more of any commodity than you could name. They sold more of it than anyone else. Wheeler came up with the thing of back then, people would put a raw egg in a milkshake. Some would and some wouldn't. So he put eggs under the counter. They use bow shaped, they stored 4 or 5 bows where the lady could walk in amongst her customers. At the top of the bow, under the counter, they put stacks.

Michael: What do you mean bow?

Ben: The counters were sort of in a wave because that way they could get more seats in.

Michael: Oh, I see. Yeah.

Ben: Each waitress had the inner half of her circle, so to speak. She took care of those people around her and maybe halfway down to the next bow. So at the peak of the bow, under the counter, they had stacks of eggs. After sitting there for about a half an hour and just watching because I would ask how can they increase sales. I watched it and watched it and watched it and I finally said, "Eggs!" That's it. So they

trained them that every time anyone ordered a milkshake they reach under the counter, pick up two eggs in one hand, hold them up in front of the customer and say, "One egg or two?" Enough people who didn't normally want an egg said one, and enough people who normally had one egg said two. It had a fantastic effect, but it was like McDonald's is today. It created an egg shortage all over the United States.

Michael: Wow, did it really?

Ben: Yeah. McDonald's today, let's just say we didn't have chicken McNuggets. They don't just come out with them one day. They go give the chicken producers a years' warning that it is about to happen or else it would eat up every chicken in the United States.

Michael: That is just incredible. That is incredible what one sentence can do for a large company like that, a scripted selling sentence, a selling sentence. So what do you say to all of those, let's say non-professional people in the field who want to just wing it compared to delivering scripted sales messages?

Ben: Keep your resume in shape for a salaried job.

Michael: So it sounds like if everything is scripted, becoming a professional sales person in some ways is a no brainer as long as you can follow the scripts.

Ben: Absolutely. I don't understand why I am still a high-paid sales trainer 43 years after I started being the high-paid sales trainer. It would seem to me that if word of my first talk had spread or word of Zig's first talk or Ryan Frasier or Earl Nightingale or Elmer Wheeler or anybody, if something had spread. The one egg or two is a great example. It is a short script, but it is a script. They weren't allowed to deviate. One egg or two? They were also taught that if the person said none, they were to put it down and that is the end of the conversation.

McDonalds probably, and I am making up numbers, but they probably make \$1,000,000,000 a year saying what? Do you want fries with that? How difficult is that? Utter and complete standardization. I just don't get it, why people don't understand that. Now for those listening, we ought to make this clear. I don't mean. You know people say that is a canned presentation like in the Music Man or the Tin Man when Gary Ross or whatever the name of that thing was. I'm not talking about being an old drummer who walks in with shined shoes and a firm

handshake and says the exact same thing to everybody every time. What I am talking about is that you have a plan.

If you are selling at home like my friend that does Home Crafters, I know that other things happen. We don't have in our script when a dog runs into the room and poops right in the middle of the rug. We don't have what happens when the kid falls down and bangs his head and they have to get up and go do something about it. So there are all of those things that can change. What you do have is you have a plan, a track to run on, point a to point z. Within that, we sell for instance a closing series.

We sell the executive package and it is our most popular item. It has everything in line, lifetime subscriptions and everything and so on that really feel good because when I sell it to someone they know now, if they will listen to it and apply it, they know everything about selling. So it is a sales career in a box. We have a way of explaining it. You get this, you get this, you get this, and you get this. Now if you interrupt me, I will go back to where I dropped off and I will pick it up.

What I like to do in front of seminars is I have people come up with blindfolds on, all the product is on the table and I say, "Pick one up." I have already given them the script. I say, "Here is the script that I am going to use to sell it to you. At the end of the seminar I am going to ask you, during lunch breaks or whatever to go in the back of the room and buy it, but now I want you to listen to the script that I am going to use to get you to do it. You can run from the script even when I am selling you from the script." Then I have them come up and pick up an item. Now they are familiar with how I describe things. They pick the item and I start at that word. Now I am making up numbers because I have really never counted them. Let's say that there are 20 items in the executive package counting subscriptions. You can shuffle them like a deck of cards and I will give you word-for-word, complete with the right emphasis, hesitations, the ahs and everything about all of the products you want. We do the same thing with Dixie Home Crafters whether we are selling roofing, gutters, siding, windows, doors, or the new space age insulation that goes in the attic it is called Diamond Barrier because the heating and cooling portion of your power bill is 30% to 40%. It is word-for-word, every time, all the way.

See one of the things, Michael, just fascinates me. In the direct mail industry, and I bet you have done a lot of this, you write a letter and it is going to go to everybody in zip code 95667. You don't write a different letter for each house, do you?

Michael: No.

Ben: Okay. You write the best letter that you possibly can that raises all of the objections that you possibly can think of in advance. It knocks them down and gets them curious. It gets them stimulated. It has a call to action. You work on the letter, you mail it, you test, and you change something, you test, and you change something. That is the rules of direct marketing, test, test, and test, as you know. So when you get finally the letter right, then that is the only thing that you send. Anyone that is listening to this who is old enough to get their own mail is probably in the last two or three years, several times, opened a letter from the Wall Street Journal that says and this isn't verbatim. "Twenty-five years ago on a bright sunny day, two young men graduated from college. Today one of them is the chairman of the board and the other one is in middle management in the same company." The letter goes on to say, "In essence, the difference was that one took the Wall Street Journal and one didn't." You wrote that letter.

Michael: As a matter of fact, I just interviewed a gentleman named Denny Hatch and I have the whole story on that.

Ben: I just got an email from Denny moments ago.

Michael: I interviewed him and I have the full interview up on my site. He talks about the whole story. I called the circulation director and established that that one letter was worth over half a billion or a billion dollars. That is a great story.

Ben: Yeah, easy by now. That is called their control piece. They do send out other letters, but the goal of the other letters is to get better than that letter. In 40 years, they have never gotten better. No control piece has ever beaten that letter. In fact, and I don't know exactly how they did it because it wouldn't be word-for-word, but the theme of it is so identifiable they copywrote it. If I write a letter to my people and say, "Twenty-five years ago, two people graduated from selling school and one is the chairman of the board and the other one is a moderate sales person and the difference is the closures." If they find out about it, I will get a letter from their lawyers.

Michael: Oh, very interesting because I asked Denny were there any successful promotions based upon that same theme. He couldn't really recall any, but people have tried to use it. That is interesting that they can copywrite that theme.

Ben: Yes the theme. Like Harley Davidson copywriting the sound of their engine, which they did. That is the value of a presentation. When you get a good one, then that is what you do day-in and day-out. The closers material has sold millions and millions of units and the script hasn't changed from I'm guessing in 20 to 25 years. They got it right 25 years ago.

Michael: How many books have you published so far?

Ben: Units of the closure?

Michael: Was The Closure your first book?

Ben: I wrote other books first that were not terribly successful. I tried to do a knock-off on "The Lazy Man's Way to Riches", Joe Karbo's book?

Michael: Yeah, what was it called?

Ben: Mine was called "Easy Wealth".

Michael: Were you trying to sell it direct mail?

Ben: Yeah. I thought Karbo's letter was sort of rough around the edges so I cleaned mine up and sophisticated it.

Michael: It didn't work?

Ben: It didn't work. Joe Karbo years later said, "How did you do with that book son?" We were sitting next to each other at a seminar that Joe Sugarman was running. I said, "Not very well." He said, "I laughed the first time I saw that. I said oh that poor young guy, he doesn't get it."

Michael: That's funny.

Ben: I didn't. I thought, "Well if he can do it with that crummy letter." To answer your question, I have written over the year, somebody told me the other day, I think we have one of each at least, about 12 books on selling and living successfully. I have ghost written for other sales trainers, another dozen or so. In the introduction we say, "You probably have one of my books in your library whether you know it or not."

Michael: So the closure was your big hit?

Ben: Yeah, but I will tell you a funny thing there. I didn't write the first draft of The Closures. I founded the 800 answering service business. I opened the first call center in the world. It was called The National Communication Center. It was in 1976 located in Shingle Springs, California.

Michael: How did that occur?

Ben: I was a traveling salesman. A guy came in with an idea. You know traveling salesman/speaker. Toll free numbers were just coming into common usage. Companies like IBM used them late at night to transmit huge amounts of data from point A to point B, but you and I didn't know about 800 numbers or have any reason to use them. They were very costly. It cost \$10,000 per line to have an 800 number. That bought you 240 hours of time. At the end of the month if you were out of time, then you got a bill for overtime. If you were under, let's say that you only used 100 hours, then the other 140 went away and you owed them a new \$10,000; therefore, every home in America wasn't destined to have an 800 number to say the least. So I figured out a way, I thought it was a pretty neat idea T-minus before cell phones.

A pretty neat idea would be for people like me, speakers who were traveling around the country. They were here and there and nobody knows where they are to have a place where you could call toll free, leave a message and I could call toll –free and pick it up. Well it was a neat idea, but there were only about 15 of us that were busy enough to need the service, so I was deeply in trouble right off the bat. So we expanded it, okay we will do it for anybody who wants a toll free number, and then we will start taking orders. We didn't take orders when we first started. I got Sharper Image, the toll numbers to join us. We were their first answering service. I just bought a watch from him the other day at his new company. Any way it grew and grew and became the largest answering service in history and it was all successful. Meanwhile we are always looking for new ways to talk someone into joining us. When I started that business 97% of all Americans did not know that an 800 number was toll-free. So I had to build an industry, educate a population and build a company simultaneously. I don't recommend that to anybody. I would not do it again if I knew the story, but I did.

So I am looking through the Wall Street Journal one day. I am looking for ads that could benefit from an 800 number. There was a little

classified ad that I would of not clipped it out and sent it to our word processing department to start the series of letters, except it said something about closing. The ad was so poorly written that I wasn't sure what they were selling, but I sent it down to word processing with my own check, \$14.95 I think it was in those days. I said, "They want \$14.95. Order whatever it is. It may be a book." Enclosed I put a letter that said, "Your ad will do a whole lot better if it had an 800 number in it." So off it goes. I frankly forgot about it. Two or three weeks later, back comes this sad looking little thing, a horrible color on the cover and horrible graphics. You know how you flip through a new book to sort of get a feeling for it, pages shot all over my office. The ones that stayed in the book, half of them were upside down and some of them were right side up. I said, "Oh. Well I have been cheated again." If I am going to get cheated, \$15 is a good way to get cheated. You know, I have been cheated for a lot more than that.

Michael: What was the book on?

Ben: It was The Closers.

Michael: It was called The Closers?

Ben: The Closers.

Michael: Who wrote it?

Ben: The truth is I don't know. I know who claims to have written it and I have reason to doubt it, but he is who I give credit to the book. His name is Jim Pickens. He is the one we paid, we now just own it outright, but for several years we paid royalties.

Michael: So was this Jim Pickens just a guy selling books through classifieds ads?

Ben: Well it turns out that he sold rights to The Closers to two other guys. The reason it was so horribly printed is one of them worked in a print shop. So they would wait for the owner to go home and the three of them would sneak back into the printing plant and try and print the books and then get out and clean up any sign of them being there, then come back the next night. They printed 500 books.

So any way, I pick up all the stuff around my office. I gave it to somebody and said, "If you have time, put the pages back in order and put a rubber band around it. I might read it someday." I was just so

fascinated that they would take your money and send you this junk. So I threw it in my briefcase. The same briefcase that is sitting right here at my feet today and that was over 30 years ago. Again, I forgot about it. On the way from New York to San Francisco, I had read everything on the plane. There were no laptop computers in those days. So I started looking through my briefcase and there is this thing. I thought this is good. I will skim through it here and I will leave it in the seat pocket and I won't have to worry about it anymore. So I started reading through it. Well it was like finding the Dead Sea Scrolls. It was in bad shape and needed rewriting, but it was filled with wisdom, wisdom that I had learned. If I had time to write a book and the talent, then that is what I would of written. Hopefully better, but I would of written it. So I get off of the plane and I go to the nearest pay phone and dial the number in the back of the book. I say, "Hi. I just read a book of yours called *The Closures*." They said, "Mr. Gay, how are you?" Now this is before caller-id or anything like that. I am on a pay phone at LaGuardia Airport.

Michael: How did they know it was you?

Ben: I said, "I didn't give you my name." They said, "Well we bought the rights to *The Closure*. We printed 500 copies. We ran an ad one day in *The Wall Street Journal* and we sold one book. If you read *The Closures*, your name is Ben Gay and you are from Plattsville, California." Long story short, I bought the other 499 copies.

Michael: What were you doing at that time, anything with Holiday Magic?

Ben: That was long since gone. I was running the answering service at the National Communications Center and I had a marketing company attached to it called National Toll-Free.

Michael: Okay, so you knew good sales training material when you saw it? So you bought the 400 copies for? What was the purpose?

Ben: Just to give them away.

Michael: Okay.

Ben: They weren't worth selling. You would have to make too many apologies, so I just gave them to my in-house reps. I said, "If you have people out in the field that you are working with, give them this. Apologize for its condition, but tell them that I found some really great

stuff in it. Make sure that you have a rubber band handy when you open your copy.”

Michael: Do you remember how much you paid for them?

Ben: You know, I don't - \$500 or \$600 plus freight.

Michael: Then what?

Ben: I figured that would be the end of it. This is the book that wouldn't die. A month or so later, reps started coming up to my office from down in the sales room saying, "So and so in Chicago wants 50 and so and so wants 100. So and so wants this." So I again, long story, someone called back and I got the national and international marketing rights to it. We wrote it, edited it, recovered it and turned it into the best selling sales book of all time.

Michael: Okay, let me ask you this. Once you saw the demand coming in, you knew you had something valuable?

Ben: Yeah.

Michael: Now I do a lot of interviews. The Melvin Powers interview on book publishing he sold 7,000,000 of the *Think and Grow Rich* and probably tens of millions of books and it is pretty fascinating. So you knew you had something valuable, you called him. How did you negotiate that deal? How did you structure it? Just from the book self-publishers.

Ben: Well, what I said there was, "I want the rest of the books." I told him that at LaGuardia at the airport. Then I called him back and I said, "There are people who want this thing. I have to take the time to re-write it and everything. It is horrible in this kind of condition. What can we work out?" He said, "Well why don't you do all that and give us the cost of printing. Give us, and I am quoting from memory, either 50 cents or 75 cents per book that you sell?" His attitude was, not Jim Pickens, but the guy Pickens sold the rights to. His attitude was 50 cents is better than nothing, which is what he currently had. So for years it was easier to pay him when we printed. We printed 50,000 copies and we sent him a royalty check right then because we were going to sell them any ways.

Michael: Did you do a contract?

Ben: It was just over the phone. We did produce a contract eventually, but I dictated even that, there was no attorney involved. Then I started adding to the series. It is like Hershey's chocolate, one of the great breakthroughs in my mind about branding. I walk in a Safeway store near my home one day and I looked down the length of the produce section to the dairy section. There sat a carton, a half-gallon of milk, dark brown with Hershey's written on it. I said, "Whoa. What says chocolate better than Hershey's?" I said, "That is clever." Everything we do now The Closers Part this or The Closers Tele-Training or The Closers Alert News Bulletin Service or The Closers Update Newsletter, The Closers Part 1, The Closers Part 2.

Michael: You built a brand.

Ben: Yeah we built a brand. It is all the same color blue. We call it Closers blue. We add to it. I am adding to it all the time.

Michael: Success of The Closers, orders were coming in. How many of the first version have you sold?

Ben: We now call it The Closers Part 1. The last figure that I heard and this was years ago because it has been through three or four publishers with me being the primary person in each case, different companies for different reasons and different printers. Years ago the last figure that I heard was 3,000,000.

Michael: Three million. Is it sold all over the world?

Ben: It is all over the world, in 26 different languages.

Michael: Now when you first had it, were you self-publishing yourself?

Ben: I still am.

Michael: You are the publisher?

Ben: Yeah. I never really understood the term self-publisher versus publisher.

Michael: Well I guess self-publisher, you keep all of the profit when you sell. I guess that is how it is?

Ben: Yes. Through a publisher we would get 10% probably of their sales after they discounted 55% to any book wholesaler. Out of \$11.23, I

would make \$1.12 or whatever versus I print it, there is no secret about it and I am selling information. I print it for about \$1 and sell it for \$24.95 and keep it all.

Michael: If the book wasn't there, how would your business look? Do you think the business or your brand would be there without the book?

Ben: Oh yeah because I would of sat down and written another book. I decided that I didn't want to grow old on airplanes. I use to do 300 seminars a year. Some were in house for whatever company that I was running at the time. Others were outside companies and so on, but about 300 a year. You know you come back and your, my oldest boy is now 40. He would of grown noticeably. You know what I am talking about? You would come back and he is taller when he was when you left.

Michael: Yeah. So you weren't around that much?

Ben: Yeah. I wasn't around as much as I should have been and as much as I wanted to be.

Michael: How many kids do you have?

Ben: Three, one biological and two stepchildren. Now, Gigi and I, Gigi is my wife are currently raising or helping to raise the next generation, which are all girls and all nieces. So we have them running around in the house most of the time from age 10 down to 20 months. They are all little girls. They don't smell. They don't steal. They are more dramatic, but it is a whole different lifestyle for us. We really like it.

Michael: All right. So you were glad to get off of the road?

Ben: Yeah. I do 24 a year. I promised Gigi when I married her, we have been married 11 years this weekend. I said, "This hasn't worked in the past. Here is what I will do. I will do 24 seminars a year and no more. I won't accept any local clients, you know in the county there is a young man with 5 major companies based there. There is always people who either work for you, supply you stuff, or visiting from Ohio. I never got through a meal without eating the tomatoes off of my salad without them saying can I talk to you just a minute with me, the wife and the three kids. So I won't take any local clients and I won't give a speech within 60 miles of home. So in the little town of Plattsville, I am not Ben Gay super sales trainer. I am Gigi Ronzoni's husband and we

don't know what he does. It's the best decision I ever made, second only to marrying her.

Michael: How can people find out more about you and more information about your Closure books and your Closure series and everything that you have to offer?

Ben: Well, one go to our web site. It is probably the best and easiest place to start. That is www dot, B as in Ben, F as in Frank, G as in Gay, the number 3 dot com. [BFG3.com](http://BFG3.com) or they can call me. It would probably be better if they go to the web site first so when they called we would both be operating off of the same page, but they can call me at 800-248-3555, that is my personal toll-free line. I have it with me in my pocket all of the time. I usually answer it myself, unless I am on the line with somebody else, in which case leave a voice mail.

Michael: When is your next seminar?

Ben: The next seminar is down in the bay area in California somewhere with Eric Lawform next month.

Michael: Do you do seminars with Donald Moine too?

Ben: I have done two with Donald through Eric. Eric and Donald are close. I am sort of a lone wolf. I will work with someone else if they ask me to, but I won't go look for someone else to work with me because I just did a six and a half hour counting lunch and dinners and everything. You know eight or ten hours. Six and a half hours of talking in Atlanta. They said, we would like to have you back but I guess we have heard it all. I said, "No, you have heard 6 1/2 hours of about 120 hours of material.

Michael: It is already an hour and a half and it is so much more to talk about. Maybe when time permits, I can do a part 2 with you and we can get into some more of this stuff on sales and some of the techniques and the real meat on sales. I wanted to get to know you a little bit and your history. Certainly the listeners can learn all of your techniques through your products and books and such, but this has been fascinating, especially some of the history on this.

Ben: Well, thank you Michael. A lot of people, I am sort of the hand that shook the hand of. We don't get to meet Dr. Hill anymore or Earl Nightingale or Earl Edwards or anyone else. I developed the love for this in 1948 when we moved to Atlanta. My very first friend was a guy

name Arthur who lived across the street behind the ole Jarvis plantation. You know our house and all the streets were all what use to be the Jarvis plantation fields. Arthur was born a slave in the slave shack, that he still lived in behind the Jarvis mansion that was still in the Jarvis family, it was a little long in the tooth by then, but still in the family. Right up the street was the Civil War Veterans Home with about 100 guys who fought over on [inaudible] and Gettysburg and so on. So I use to ride up there and talk to them and ride around on Arthur's mule cart when he did yard work. I just developed a love for meeting interesting people and finding out about the things that I couldn't have known about because of their age or whatever. It has served me well and led me to a very fascinating life.

Michael: That is exactly what I am doing. I love interviewing. I am truly interested and I get to record that and just provide it to anyone for free. Well could you do a second part? Let's do it, this has been great. I'll clean this up, not that it needs that much cleaning up. If you want to hear yourself for an hour and a half, I will send it to you. I am certainly going to share it with listeners at hard to find seminars. I will be glad to do another one with you. It would be great.

Ben: Let's work out a date and we will do it. It has been a pleasure working with you. You are professional and as you know, you have probably been on some of them, not everyone is real good at what you do.

Michael: Well, thank you very much. I appreciate it. Thanks so much, I will talk to you soon.

*For more interviews like this, go to [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://www.HardToFindSeminars.com).*

Thanks for listening to Part 1 of my interview with Ben Gay, III. For more information on Ben Gay's products, sales training, and Closer series go to <http://www.bengaytheclosers.com>.

This is the end of part 1. Please continue to part 2.

## **Discover the mother lode of marketing and sales lore: Ben Gay Interview, Part II**

Although my first interview with Ben Gay was chock full of fascinating stories and invaluable selling secrets, believe it or not, there's more! On top of his legendary status as a world-famous salesman, sales

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trainer, author, consultant, and speaker, Ben Gay is the founder and executive director of the National Association of Professional Salespeople with a membership in 8 figures. And talk about inspirational! Ben spent 12 hours a weekend for five years at San Quentin with his People Builders program that successfully enabled his students get off the prison merry-go-round, reducing recidivism by over 80% and "did time" with Charles Manson. On top of that, he was attitude coach for the crews of Apollo 15, 16, and 17, working with astronauts Alan Shepherd and Jim Irwin.

While his stories about his brushes with the famous and the infamous are captivating and inspirational, you can't afford to miss the nuggets of sales and marketing wisdom that pepper this interview.

Ben reveals:

- The secrets of closing and how to become a Master Closer
- Why confidence is your most important asset and how to build it
- How he took a catch phrase and turned it into gold
- How to take an objection and turn it into a benefit
- How to become a sales infiltrator
- How to use the Internet to multiply your sales
- The Step-by-step phases of his foolproof sales process
- The magical ingredient that separates The Closers from all the other sales training programs
- And much, much more!

Ben Gay tells you about selling the way it really is and not the way we wish it were. As Ben would say, "It's the presentation, stupid!" So tune in to radio station WII FM (what's in it for me?) and prepare to be dazzled by the master!

Hi this is Michael Senoff of [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://www.HardToFindSeminars.com). This is the beginning of part 2 of my interview with Ben Gay, III. The title of this interview is called Discover the Motherload of Marketing and Sales, Ben Gay Interview Part 2.

Michael: Let me ask you this; give me a definition of what professional selling is, your definition.

Ben: Well if you go through the basic levels that I tend to talk about, you have the person who shouldn't be in selling, period. That is about 20% of all sales people. I say that in every seminar. Twenty percent of you shouldn't be here. You know it. I know it. The person who has hired you is beginning to suspect it. Get on with your life. At the first break say I am going to have a cigarette, get in your car, and go home and so there is that group. Then you have the order takers. There are order takers in all businesses no matter what the size of what they are selling is and so on. When I picture an order taker, you walk in to a store and someone says, "Can I help you?" That is an order taker. If you want a toaster, you pick it up and take it to her. She writes it up. Then you have sales people that understand their job is to get you to spend now and perhaps more than you intended to spend now. Then you have closers. Now we are getting into the professional sales person's level.

The early stages of it, closers know that at the end of a logical sales presentation there should be a close, an end to the story, a call to action. This isn't just a socialization process. I am here to sell. There are techniques for learning how to sell. Most people selling cars aren't closers, but that is sort of where you start picking them up. In almost every store situation, you will find one of them. They know to guide the conversation and they know why they are there. Then you have master closers and now you are right in the dead center of the heart of what a professional, capital P salesperson is. A master closer knows about you before you leave home. When he or she sees you coming across the lot, he is making decisions, sizing things up. Let's see he was in a position where he got to see your car, look at the tires on the car. A brand new Cadillac with bald tires is a very interesting situation. My Dad always said that he was a master closer. I hadn't created the term yet, but he was a master closer and didn't know it. Dad said you always check the tires on the car. The fingernails, he was looking for people who bit them primarily, but dirty or unclipped was another one. Then, he said, get behind them and check the heels on their shoes. That will tell you far more than their bank account will tell you.

Michael: Is that to see if they are worn out?

Ben: Yeah. Worn down and so on because maybe the person with worn down heels is your best customer because whatever you are selling helps people who are maybe a little down on your luck. If you were selling a business opportunity to someone who bit their nails to the quick, a master closer would catch that and ignore much of the bluster and so on that this person puts forth because they would have a little bit better idea of what is going on. A master closer, let's say that he is a speaker like I am. I can stand in front of like 1,000 people they begin to blend together, but you still watch the front ones. With 10,000, you have to watch the front ones, but if I am in a room of 1,000 or less, 500 I feel real good about, I can tell you what the reaction what I'm saying is, is on almost every person in the room.

Michael: With 500 or less?

Ben: Yeah. Literally with every one, I always can sense the mood, but literally everyone, which enables me to turn right in the middle of the speech and say, "You sir. You have doubts about what I am talking about. Stand up and tell me what they are. We will get them cleared up. I want to be a help to you." He pops up and he has a doubt. It was obvious. So master closers whether they are speaking on a stage or working on a car or selling insurance or funeral policies or home improvement or whatever, that is sort of the situation that they are in. That is sort of the sweet spot of professional salespersonship. Then we have a sales infiltrator, which is the term that I coin in the last chapter of The Closers, Part 2. It starts on page 257. If anyone is ever listening to this and happens to have the Closers, Part 2, stop what you are doing and read it. From there to the back of the book is the most profound thing ever written about selling. It says exactly what a master closer is, does, and how to be one and it takes you to that next level sales infiltration. The sales infiltrator isn't an outside force dealing with you like in a ping-pong match. A sales infiltrator gets inside of you and becomes part of your team and helps the team make decisions. He or she almost disappears from the process, while inside the prospect mentally he or she is captain of the team.

Michael: There is a lot of different sales training out there, how is your Closer series different than the other sales training out there, maybe from Tom Hopkins or Zig Zigler. You know when people see that maybe the Closers people will say is harsh and cruel.

Ben: It is harsh, I will tell you that. It is politically incorrect, but every time I have gone to sort of smooth it out a little bit, there is an uproar

because people say don't you dare mess with it. That is like penciling corrections in the bible. We will continue to do a little mental adjustment in our heads for various things, but the lessons taught in the Closer are the truth. To answer your question about what is different about it, and I don't mean different versus everybody. We have the greatest book on selling. I may have never seen or heard about it. I don't know. I hadn't heard about the Closer for a long time either, but the difference it is selling in life the way it is, not the way that we wish it was. It is sales with the bark ripped off and exposed. Now I have a choice and I have done for other people. I have written about 12 books under my name and 12 books roughly some of what was in the file. In that I commit the sin that the Closers doesn't commit when I am doing it for other people. Other people want sort of a vanilla eyes thing that won't offend anyone. That is fine. There is a place for that, but I learned by people grabbing me figuratively by the throat and telling me the absolute truth. I swear by that because if it were not for that, you and I would not be talking today. There was no way on earth that I could go from the way I was operating by reading [inaudible] books and seminars because it wouldn't of made me change. So as Nightingale says, "If you want a warm feeling, take a bath." The king of motivation told me one time, he said, "Motivation is like wetting on yourself in a blue surge suit, it feels good and no one can tell." So that is the difference with the Closers. People laugh, friends of mine and friendly competitors and so some of the people that we talked about have said sitting around a dinner table after they were done or after I was done or we were all done. They all said that they had wished that they had written The Closers. It is the best thing out there. Everybody knows that if you are a hard-core commission sales person. If you worked at Walmart, I would tell you to not waste your time.

Michael: A lot of students go through your programs and read your books. What is the common denominator that you find where people fail when it comes to using The Closure's methodology.

Ben: Well the number one failure is that they don't read it to start with. They buy it and then it sits on their credenza or in their briefcase and they never read it. That is what happens to the vast majority of material sold in probably all of the self improvement industry.

Michael: Do you know any stats on that, officially?

Ben: No, I have just been around long enough and have been in enough offices where I meet someone that I know bought my material an that is why I am there giving a speech and I look on their desk and there is

The Closure. I am always thrilled and I pick it up and the binding has never been cracked.

Let me tell you a quick, funny story. It is funny after you get past the fact that my one brother-in-law committed suicide and so I had to fly back to Atlanta to be with my sister, comfort her, pick out the suit he was going to where, and all of the stuff that goes with that. So we are out at the cemetery and we are going to pick out the place where he is going to be. The salesman is saying that he should be on a hill because there is much better view. It is also twice the price. I said, "He is dead. He isn't going to be enjoying the view." I want my sister in her old age to be able to get to it easily. Show me something on the flat land, near the road. He was a nice guy and we sort of tussled back an forth. As we go back into the office to fill out the paperwork, my sister Jane and I sit down across the desk from him and I look behind him on his credenza.

Michael: You see your book

Ben: I see The Closure. I said, "The Closure, what an interesting title. What is that about?" The blood drained out of his face. He said, "Well in the cemetery industry we don't just bury someone. We excavate the grave. We call it opening the grave. We put the vault in, we put the casket in and so we close the grave. That is what that is, the Closure. It is about closing graves.

Michael: Oh, that is hilarious.

Ben: When my sister and he went out to pick out the marker, that is the one thing that I figured, how bad could that be? What is he going to do to her over there? I took the book out of his thing, autographed it. I said, "Nice comeback, all the best." I put my business card in it. I go back out in the lobby, meet him again, take Jane by the hand. We go back in the parking lot. He goes back in his office. I am watching the rear view mirror. The front door of the place flies open again and he is standing there with the book in his hand looking up the driveway after the car.

Michael: Oh, that is funny. What do you think then is the most effective and economical way to sell nowadays with the Internet and all this technology?

Ben: Well the Internet is wonderful if you know enough about it or can hire somebody to do it if you are may age. I know how to do email, but we

have a very active and successful presence on the web. That is passive income. What a godsend. We sell more books through Amazon than use to sell period, 25 years ago and we don't do anything but ship them cases of books two or three times a week.

So the Internet is absolutely wonderful. I whole heartily endorse it. Anybody who is selling anything ought to have at least a primitive web site. You can get those templates where even a primitive one that doesn't do much, looks good. So I absolutely think it is wonderful. Some type of selling has to be done face-to-face. I don't mean that you can't do it on the web. I have talked to people for an hour trying to get them to buy a sales trainer executive package for instance, yet almost every morning when I go to the office there is a report on my desk that shows 3, 4, 5, 15, or whatever people went to the web site and ordered the same package without any trouble or resistance. They just ordered it. Some people need face-to-face so it is backed up from the web to the telephone.

People say now that you have to write a book about telephone selling. I said, "The Closer covers all types of selling." Telephone selling isn't different. If you think it is different, let me tell you from someone who has done both, which most of them haven't done. I started out, you know after we got through lawn mowing and so on, the first thing that I got in the car and had to go somewhere was the manufacturers rep, George [inaudible] and Associates, and I was driving all over the Southeastern United States, 50 miles between appointments. This sounds funny now to people who are listening, but if you are my age you will remember that it was almost cheaper to drive 50 miles to see if someone was there, than to phone them. Long distance calls were very expensive and gas was very cheap. The highways weren't jammed up where there were long parking lots.

I remember one time that I drove all the way to Fort Valley, Georgia from Atlanta. I drove all the way from Fort Valley to meet with the Blueberg Wonder Lodge buyer, custom homes and found out that he didn't meet with sales people on Wednesdays. So I stayed overnight in the Howard Johnson's. I will never forget it was my first night, on the road as an individual paying my own bill and I waited to see him the next day. Now I could have made 50 successful phone calls in the period of time that little jaunt took me. So I use the exact same technique on the phone, the exact same presentation on the phone as I do in person that I do on the Internet, that I do on the stage in front of hundreds of thousands of people. The only difference is I don't drive 50 miles between calls. I am not wearing out my car.

One of our callers, I just noticed that she has 50,000 miles on it. Well the car is over 5 years old, that shows you how big of a driver I am. So those are the different types of selling; face to face, on the phone, the Internet, whatever. The procedure stays the same. People still tune into the radio station, WII-FM, What is in it For Me. If you can explain to them what is in it for them on the phone, then you win. So today if you are selling a good product and if you can explain it face to face, you win or the Internet you win, or in the newspapers or whatever. My wife says, "Some day when we are retired." Because I love what I am doing, so I set a goal and a time line of 75 when I am going to retire. God may not let me get that far, but if he does 75 that's it, just because I like goals. Some don't have one and just go till they drop I guess. So she said, "When you really retire and you have sold the business or someone else is running it for us, what do you think about having a little hardware store or something on Main Street in Plattsville?" This is where gold was discovered. I said, "That would scare me to death." She said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "I wouldn't know what to do." You know a hardware store, first of all that is a bad example because I am not even allowed to have a hammer. I am not very handy. Some of the local businesses, you put out your wares, ice cream cone or hot dog, the people say I don't really want that now and they go away. What are you going to do? Where as soon as I got out of the lawn mower business I was into at least regional business as a marketing representative, rather quickly national business, and then international business.

One of the benefits of the telephone is if you are in national business or scope business, it allows for mistakes. It is like you and I talked about one time about telling a joke in front of 10,000 people. The worst joke on earth gets a laugh because there are enough goons in 10,000 people to find anything funny. They will save you and their laughter will spread and so on. If you tell the same bad story in front of 12 people, the only thing you will hear in the room is your heart beating. If you get into a national or international business or even a large regional business and you put something out there, enough people will take it. Phone calls are so cheap and the Internet is virtually free that they will save you. If you have a reasonably good idea it is easier to sell on a larger scale than a smaller scale.

*For more exclusive interviews on business, marketing, advertising and copywriting go to Michael Senoff's [HardToFindSeminars.com](http://www.HardToFindSeminars.com).*

Michael: If you were to tell me your most memorable sale over your career, is there something that pops out in your mind?

Ben: The most memorable failure that I ever had and it taught me so much was I was working with George Fleischmann and Associates. One of the products was Indiana Glass. That is that white milk glass when you got to a florist that your stuff comes in. That is Indiana Glass by the Indiana Glass Manufacturing Company, probably in Indiana as best as I recall. He had a close out. There was a whole bunch of stuff, perfectly good, but they had changed their design. George Fleischmann was such a top rep for them, they gave him a carload of this stuff. When I say gave them, I mean dirt cheap just to get rid of it. He, being a kind man, said, "The carload is yours and here is what it costs." He had an item listing up and down for everything in the line. He said, "Here is what it costs and anything that you sell above that you may have." I said, "Wow." Well, lo and behold, my father who I had worked for before had a contact at a Country Club of the guy who owned the largest florist business in Atlanta. So I called and said, "This is Ben Gay. I want to come and see you." I didn't say Ben Gay, III because I wanted to leave enough doubt for them to think it might be my dad coming. I said, "Hi. I am Ben Gay. You know my dad. I am now with George Fleischmann and Associates and Indiana Glass. I know that you are a big customer of it already." They said, "Certainly." I said, "You are not going to believe this. I have this carload." I told them the story. I had this list redone with about a 20% mark-up, which was very, very fare, but 20% of an entire carload in my pocket would of radically changed my life. So I said, "Blah, blah, and blah." He said, "Okay, I will take it." I said, "Which one sir?"

Michael: Really? Did you really say which one?

Ben: Yeah. I will take it? What do you mean it?

Michael: What did he mean?

Ben: He meant the carload. So I said, "Oh, okay." He said, "Let's do the EPO." I said, "Super." I tapped my cheap sport coat where I keep my pens and there wasn't one there. So I reached into my pants pocket, thought it must have gone down there by mistake. It wasn't there. So I looked up at him and I said, "Excuse me. Can I borrow a pen?" He said, "You don't have a pen?" I said, "Funny you should mention that. I don't." I said, "I must of lost it or something." He said, "Young man, I need that glass. I want that glass. I am going to buy that glass. Probably at regular prices throughout the year, but I am going to teach

you a lesson that is worth far more than whatever you were going to make selling me that. Sales people don't go anywhere without pens." He stood up and shook my hand. He said, "Nice to meet you, young man. I wish you the very best."

Michael: He didn't buy.

Ben: End of story.

Michael: That is hilarious.

Ben: Michael, unless I am in the swimming pool or the shower. You will never catch me without a pen. So he made me far more than I lost from the sale. Common sense tells you that you ought to have a pen, but I was sort of lacking.

Michael: Now did your Dad find out about that one?

Ben: Yeah, my Dad found out but it didn't affect him. George Fleishman was whom I was working for by then. Yeah my Dad found out about it. I don't think I told him. I think we were having dinner and he said, "I was talking to Mr. Hall the other day." I thought, "Uh-oh." I got the entire story related back to me including, you know I could only see the look on his face; the story when I heard it from my father included the look on my face.

Michael: That is funny.

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Michael: Oh yeah, that is a good failure story. Well you made a lot of money; something really juicy?

Ben: Probably as far as, "Wow I just made a lot of money" it would have been one of the foreign franchises for Holiday Magic and probably England.

Michael: So you were selling franchises throughout the world?

Ben: Yeah. It wasn't like my job, I was president of the home office of a major company, but when someone expressed interest they want to talk to the president and/or the chairman of the board. So Bill Patrick the owner tossed the ball to me. He said, "Captain Hendrickson, he was some big deal in England. He is sort of interested in what we are

doing, so why don't you talk to him?" So I called him after I figured out how to do that with time zones and everything. I wasn't the most sophisticated person that you have ever met in my 20's. I got him on the phone. We chatted a little bit. He said, "Would you come over and visit with me?" I said, "Well I will once we have a deal going, but I am not going to fly over to sell you because we are going to sell it any ways." There was this long pause and then in a proper British accent, "My you are secure aren't you?" I said, "Yeah, this is a tremendous deal. You can come over here, I will be happy to meet with you." He said, "How much should I bring with me?" I said, "Two and a half million dollars." On which I would have made and did make a quarter of a million. He says, "All right. I shall dispatch myself or whatever." He handed us a check for two and half million dollars. I made a quarter of a million dollars on the phone call.

Michael: That was pretty hard core thing to say over the phone, which was good.

Ben: The Master Closure, you sell from a position of strength whenever possible. I have been in situations where that wasn't possible, I am sure, but whenever possible you sell from a position of strength, both personal financial strength, personal strength in your beliefs. Then as we talked about the very first time that we talked, you are selling quality products that are competitively priced to qualified people. Here is a great example. Quality products, cosmetics at the time, science advances, but at the time it was as fine as any product on earth because that was all we would put in it was the very best components. We hired Mort Scott to put it together for us. He is the one that did Bromel Seltzer, Hard as Nails, and a whole bunch of things. He was famous before he joined us. We gave him free reign. He made sure that nobody could call us on the quality of the products. We had a quality product. It is competitively priced. You have to be or you are out of business. The trade takes care of that. You talk to qualified people. Captain Hendrickson had millions. I forget what the exchange rate was at the time. I said two and half million, he said that will be fine. Then he said, "Is that pounds or dollars?" I wanted sophisticated enough.

Michael: Oh, I hope you said dollars.

Ben: I did say dollars. He was willing to pay three and a half million pounds and even then a pound was worth about two to a dollar. So he wouldn't of changed. We would of sold it for what it was, but that shows my lack of sophistication. I said, "Well dollars of course."

Michael: There are people who want to be in sales and when you talk about selling from a position of strength, we are talking a lot about just plain old confidence. I'm sure you meet a lot of sales people that just don't have it, but who want to get into professional selling. What do you tell these people? How to gain confidence when it comes to professional selling?

Ben: You get with a company that is selling a quality product, etc. You find out what their scriptive presentation is. If they don't have one, encourage them to get one quickly. Scripting is probably the most important key after you get past quality product. You learn to do it by the numbers. In the early days I told you that I made nothing for 6 months that I was into big time selling. The next 6 months, I made \$110,000 part time; 1966 dollars.

The way that I started making money was I started doing it by the numbers. I would memorize word-for-word the presentation. The first time I gave it and it worked, which would of probably been within the first 2 presentations. I said this and cringed internally. They said fine and got out their checkbook. I remember thinking, "Wow that is odd. I hadn't seen that before." Then you get another one and another one. After a while you say blah, blah and blah. Based on what you told me this is what I recommend. Fair enough and I expect them to say yes. The confidence has grown where if I give a logical presentation with a lot of emotion in it, but nevertheless a logical presentation, heavy on the benefits, knowing who they are, what they need, and what they want. I handle it as our materials teach you to do. When I get down to the end is my most common close.

Michael: What is your most common close?

Ben: Based on what you have told me, here is what I recommend, fill in the blank. Fair enough.

Michael: Now did you coin the fair enough?

Ben: Well fair enough, I am sure, has been a term since English was invented, but as far as fair enough in selling, yeah. Years ago, the Wilson Warning Corporation in Minneapolis, Barry Wilson and his gang taught us all "feel, felt, found". I know how you feel. I felt the same way. This is what I found. It was so popular and so effective; it got where when you started to say that to a prospect they would say it with

you. I know how you feel. Oh really, tell me what you found. It got over used.

Now I have where waitresses in coffee shops are saying, "fair enough" to me. I stumble across it because I am more like a tuning fork. I can sense what is going on in a room. If I am talking to you on the phone, in person, or whatever and you decide to buy, I feel an atmospheric pressure change. Whether you know that you have just bought or not, I do. In fact, if it is over the phone where you can't see me, I start writing up the order. I know how this is coming out. So I have become really sensitive to it.

That is one of the hard things about teaching what I do, but on the other hand it is better because most people can't be hard closers. They don't have the courage or they were raised to be too polite. If I want someone to get out of my house, they get out. There are a variety of reasons because the vast majority of people can never be taught to be hard closers. You say this, I say that, they have to say no seven times before they will buy. Stay in there till the eighth call and then you say they left and they didn't buy. Oh, did you ask them seven times? No, I only asked them five times before they told me to drop dead. Well that is the reason you see, if you only had asked three more times. Well that is just not the way most people are built.

So I found that if I did the heavy lifting up front, when I started teaching other people that I found a very receptive audience. You do the heavy lifting up front. As Doug Edwards taught me years ago, if you have built in objections bring them up first and brag about them. Don't leave them to chance. Don't wait for the other shoe to drop. Cover that, make it a benefit, but bring it up first and brag about it. If you have been in selling one product line 30 days, you have heard every objection on earth that there is. There just aren't any more. So if it is one that you are going to hear every time, you build it into your presentation and bring it up first and brag about it. If it is Rolls Royces are expensive. You might as well talk about that. Don't leave that to the end and they say, "Oh I thought that this was going to be \$40." Then you guide them along and you ask questions. Listen and listen.

Most people can't stand the sounds of silence; they have to fill it with something. You listen to what they are saying. Most people will tell you how they will buy, what they will buy, when they will buy, and if they need to finance it. When they are done, you can say confidently, "Based on what you have told me, here is what I recommend. Fair enough?" It is just astounding. It is like shooting fish in a barrel. Now

please understand Michael, that I have laid foundations earlier. Not in every presentation. It doesn't need it, but in most presentations, all big-ticket presentations, all serious life changing presentations for them.

I start with a little introduction. Hi, how are you? I become their friends. This is a cute little dog. Rather quickly I say, "Let me tell you how I like to work with people because I think that you will like this. I believe that you deal with people fairly, squarely, decently, and by the rules. Fair enough?" They always say fair enough and shake hands. I say, "Super. I want to deal with you in what I call a straight-straight manner. That means you be straight with me and I will be straight with you. If I have a question, I want your permission now to ask it. If you have a question of me about anything, I am hereby giving you permission to ask it. Let's not come to a good or bad decision based on misinformation. Straight-straight, fair enough?" Fair enough and they shake hands. See that wipes out. I go through the whole presentation with some prospects and then they get down to the end and they lose their nerve and they say that they want to think about it. They want to call their imaginary financial advisor. They want to check with the brother-in-law that they hope they will have some day. They have to check with so-and-so. I laugh and they laugh. I never hear that at the end. You see you knock it down up front and then benefit, benefit, benefit, listen, listen, listen, listen, benefit, benefit, benefit. Based on what you told me, here is what I recommend.

Michael: Your telling stories in the sales presentation hold an important role?

Ben: A big part, now they are scripted. I don't mean to sit around and tell stories. Almost everything that I do is scripted. If I told you a story today or related something that I have ever told anywhere before, you know you are controlling the order of what I talk about, but I have told it before. When I told it, it was word for word. There is maybe 7% rate at Sam Quinton which means only 5% of people had reason to study and so on. I figured out what people are going to probably be interested in. So I put together in my mind the best ways to relay that information. I don't want to just have my whole life and sales presentations, everything structured and then start coming off with wild things on the fly. It would destroy everything. Al Holbrook does Mark Twain, I don't know Al Holbrook, but here is what I have read. In his interview, he does an hour and a half presentation with the interviews of 2 hours with Mark Twain's stories. Every one of them was verbatim right off of mark Twain's pen, but he knows 8 1/2 hours of Mark Twain and he has never given the same show twice. He tells it with one

opening story, and I don't know what it is, but it is some sure-fire thing. Like when I get up in front of an audience and as soon as the applause dies down I say, "Let's get this Ben Gay thing out of the way." You build an objection. We wondered if this goof ball knows that there is a back rub named after him.

I have several amusing stories about it. We wanted to name my son Ben Gay, IV and my wife objected. We decided to call him Absorbing, Jr. Picture 10,000 people reacting like you just did. But that is word-for-word, so Al Holbrook has some sure-fire marketing story. He knows how they ought to react to it. Based on how they react, better than he expected or worse than he expected, he alters the rest of his performance.

You remember how old jukeboxes use to work? The arm went up and got the record and brought it down and dropped it down on the turntable and then it plays the song again. Al Holbrook reaches back into his selection of 8 1/2 hours of Mark Twain material and based on the reaction to the first one, then he says that he continues shuffling based on the reactions. If they are not into little boy stories, super. I have 6 hours that doesn't say anything about little boys. So he uses some others and he walks off the stage two hours from when he started. He always gets standing, screaming ovations and it is 100% scripted.

Michael: Do you have a script book, like a play book in your office where if you ever needed to reference something?

Ben: No. I did for years. I started out with what looked like the Sears catalog in front of me. They say this and I say that. If you are starting out, I highly recommend it, but I would be lying to you if I told you now. My wife says that I have more stories now that anybody wants to listen to. I know them by heart, so I don't need the playbook.

Michael: All right. Tell me about the when with you being the coach to the astronauts.

Ben: One of our top distributors in Holiday Magic was Jean Harrington. Her husband, Jim Harrington dutifully came to the meetings and acted like he was interested. He was actually an extremely brilliant, whatever you are if you work with rockets. I don't even know the title of it. He was, however, the test supervisor of the man in space program at Cape Kennedy in Florida. So he was in charge of three Apollo shots, three when I was down there, but he would do like every other one

because somebody else has the other one set up in the vehicle assembly building. So they have the every other one. There were two people with his title. I went down and did some talks in Florida for them. They were such nice people that they became social friends as well as business friends. He said, "You know what we need is some of that as NASA." They had just been through this thing where they were nearing the end of the Apollo program. The way think is, if you are shooting 14 off and you are going to shoot 17, it's over. They think so far in advance and train so far in advance, etc.

So he said, "When you are in the end and the private contractors are beginning to lay off people, then NASA right in the middle of that." We were all friends. WE all lived in the same neighborhood. People were starting to just drive by the bank and drop their keys in the slot and just abandon their house. There were blocks like that. He said, "Right in the middle of that with all the depression that, that causes, mental depression." He says, "NASA announces the large wage increase for us. That turned people against people and so on." So we went over to the base the next morning just to give me a courteous tour. Apollo 14 was about to take off and Alan Shepherd was the commander on it, originally from the Mercury program. Shepherd is on the intercom. I am dramatizing this. He was upbeat and high, but commanders don't have to get up there and talk about anything over the PA system. He was virtually begging them to put together the rocket kit so he could get back home to his family. The morale was so bad. He was the one interesting enough in the glory days of the space program who said it only bothered him when he sat on top of Mercury and realized that the entire thing had been put together by the lowest bidder. So he had the sense of the problem. Now you have the lowest bidder and bad morale.

Jim says, "Do you hear that?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Why don't you do some work with us?" I said, "What can I do?" He says, "Do that stuff that you do with Holiday Magic with some of our people, the ground crews, flight crews, and so on." I said, "Fine." He said, "I am going to invite some of them over to the house." So he brought over the crew of Apollo 15. The commander of that shot was Jim Irwin who was one of the nicest people in the world. He left NASA and he started a ministry operation called Operational High Flight. Unfortunately way too young, he died of a heart attack. But Jim Irwin listened to me and he said, "I am taking you to the head of the space agency." Back then the two top guys of the Cape were Dr. Miles Ross and Dr. Devis. The next morning I was sitting in the office with Jim Harrington, Devis, Ross

and Jim Irwin. Jim Irwin introduces me and he says, "This is the attitude coach for Apollo 15, 16, and 17. How can we best use him?"

So I did some seminars for the ground crews, the flight crews, and so on with the nickname "The Attitude Coach". Now of the two things that people talk about the most in my life. One is San Quentin; they are just fascinated by it. You sat in a room with Charlie Manson? My god! The other one is the astronauts. Neither one was I paid for, my two most exciting sales. I was not paid for.

Michael: During sales presentations, a lot of sales people believe that they have to present and that they need to make a presentation whether it is with a PowerPoint or a sales presentation or that they need to present facts. Are there any negatives about presenting facts or putting on a sales presentation? What advice would you give a sales person who is putting on a sales "presentation" to sell something?

Ben: First you lay in that base I told you, straight-straight, fairly, squarely, and decently by the rules. Once you get all that in, then you do what I do which is called a warm-up where you get on a personal level with them and begin the sales infiltration process. Then I am very open about things.

To answer your question, it is yes. Your presentation is terribly important and scripting is terribly important. It allows for dogs walking into the room, not everybody wants your prospects to, but it gives you that track to run on. I announce what I am going to do. There is an old speaking adage. Tell them what you are going to tell them. Tell them, tell them, and tell them what you told them. So I say I am here to explain the "x, y, z" product to you and to work with them and so on. The best way to do that is to go through it step-by-step, so with your help and cooperation I am going to do that. This is really exciting. Then show business starts.

Show business starts when you walk in the door. I don't mean this in an insincere way because I love people when I meet them. You have to really go out of your way for me not to like you, but when I go in I am aware. I am now in the warm-up process. I don't just wander in, you know whistling, scratching my stomach, and looking around. I know why I am there. When I get to the presentation I know why I am there, and I want to make sure they do. We have a lot of fun chatting. I look forward to chatting with you some more, but at some point I have to explain the power to you. I am not big on PowerPoints and slides. If you can possibly do it, I want the product there. However your

organization does it, you then give the presentation with feedback along the way as you go. Then at the end, you ask any questions. One of my best clients, Dixie Home Crafters, they gave a wonderful pre-closing question. They go through the whole presentation; they know where the person is. They put on the show. They say, "Anymore questions?" They either have them or they don't. Let's say that they have one. They answer it. If they have another one, they answer it. Eventually the prospect says, usually immediately, "No, I don't have anymore questions." So the Home Crafter person says why don't I give you one. Other than the price and payments, would there be any reason that we couldn't get your job started today? It is almost always the money. You don't invite a gutter person out to your house to look at your gutters, unless you are interested in replacing them, at least some, and so other than price or payments? The guy says, "No, that is probably it." Most of the time they go, "No, that is pretty much what it comes down to." They reach across and shake their hands and say, "Congratulations. I promise you that I am not going to let price or payments stand in the way of you getting what you want." Then they present the pricing. They present the pricing just like they presented the product. It is a scripted, planned presentation. Then at the end, here is the price. If need be we can call the office and see if we can't do it some different way and so on. They have an astounding closing rate.

Michael: How long have you been working with that client?

Ben: He likes to say a little over 20 years. Part of that time was he bought some of my materials and I didn't know who he was or what he was doing with them. That is almost every client I have today. Large clients started out and they went to a bookstore and got a book. One of my biggest clients was at a garage sale one day, saw The Closures and figured it had something to do with selling. They picked it up and paid \$1 for the book. He today is one of our biggest clients. So Dixie Home Crafters, Hugh Harris, the CEO is very kind to say that we worked together over 20 years, but I would say that probably the first three to four of those years, I didn't know it, but now formally and intensely somewhere between 15 and 17 years.

Michael: All from a torn up book that you found when you called that classified ad.

Ben: Yeah.

Michael: Pretty amazing.

Ben: Well it is, but it is when opportunity meets preparation or as Arnold Palmer said, "The more I work, the luckier I get."

Michael: You created and taught the famous People Builder program for the inmates and staff in California's infamous San Quentin State Prison. How did that come about?

Ben: I was sitting in my home at that time in [inaudible] county, right on San Francisco Bay having what I like to say, retired. My former employer would of said been fired, but by mutual agreement I was no longer working with him. I had a lot of money thanks to them and my hard work. I was 30 years old. I was quickly discovering that retirement was not a splendid idea for someone with a fertile mind because you get up with nothing to do. My mother use to say, "Idle hands are the devil's workshop" or something like that. I found myself confusing activity with achievement.

So I am sitting there thinking, what can I do that would be interesting and make some money? I look across that portion of San Francisco Bay that separated my house from what looked like a hill, but right behind the hill was San Quentin and from my perch, my little eagle's roof office on top of the house, I could see the smoke stack of San Quentin and zeroed in on that thought minus the smoke stack, I probably would of just looked at the hill for a while. I thought San Quentin what a great challenge that would be to show the success principles that I have been living by and teaching for the past "x" number of years. This would actually work. What greater challenge.

So I made an appointment or phone call I think, hopped in my car, drove around the bay and pulled up to Red Nelson's office. He was the warden at the time. I went in and gave my proposal. He and the associate warden at the time, Clem Swagarty listened intently and they attended a couple of things that I had spoken at before, so they knew I wasn't some derelict off the street. They listened and said, "We would like to do this." I said, "Fantastic." They said, "What do you figure it is going to cost us?" I hadn't really thought about that, but I said, "Well, why don't we do, I come in and teach for 12 hours, from 6 at night to 6 in the morning?" Red Nelson said we could do anything that we wanted, so we worked out the clearance to do that. Have inmates out of their cells for 12 straight hours. I want to make it intense. They said, "Fine." I said, "We will do it every Friday night to Saturday morning." They said, "Fine." So I said, "That is four days of my time really, so I don't know. How about \$10,000 per month?" This was 36

years ago. I am 30 then and now I'm 66. They said, "That would be fine." Clem got up and went and got a bunch of stuff. They showed this big pile of papers in front of me. I said, "What's that?" They said, "These are the forms that you have to fill out." Of course it has to go to the so and so agency and the so and so board and this and that. He said, "I am going to approve it, but that's my recommendation." I said, "How long is this going to take?" He said, "Oh we are going to push it through, a year or year and a half." I said, "How much would it be if I did it for free?" Red Nelson said, "We could start this afternoon."

So about an hour after that conversation, I was standing in front of, I think we had about 300 inmates for the first introductory session. That is how I spent from Friday night to Saturday morning, 52 weeks a year for the next five years.

Michael: You did that for five years?

Ben: Yeah.

Michael: You did that every week?

Ben: Every week.

Michael: On a Friday?

Ben: Friday night, 6 p.m. I would go in about 5:30 and be in class with them by 6 and go to 6 in the morning.

Michael: Very interesting.

Ben: Yeah it was fascinating. The recidivism rate in California State Prison at the time and I read something in the paper the other day that indicated nothing much has changed, was about 87%. That means about 87% of the people that they let loose, were back in custody of some sort in two years. There was recidivism rate of the People Builders with five years study, and it is not many years since I detached from it, was less than 5%. That is absolutely honest. Now in my old age, let me go one step further, because sometimes you can exaggerate things by omission. We significantly changed the lives of a lot of people with their help, cooperation and hard work, but the type of inmate, convict they preferred to be called when you reach the San Quentin level. The type of convict that would give up his Friday night, which is the only night that he gets to watch movies and go all the way to Saturday morning and if he has a visitor Saturday morning he won't

have any sleep, is a different kind of cat perhaps than many of the inmates, if you see what I mean. Maybe he was more motivated to get out and stay out than your average person. I will skew that a little bit that it wasn't a class that maybe dropped it from 87% to 5%, but some figure significantly less than 87% is true.

Michael: People Builder was the content based on stuff that you were experiencing with Holiday Magic?

Ben: Well people know that it was just a name that I came up with because I use to give a speech saying we are not in the cosmetic business. We are in the people building business. I coined the term so that when I went to San Quentin, we had to have a name to call it. I said, "Call it the People Business."

Michael: After five years, what brought the end to that?

Ben: I moved up here and we are up in Plattsville, 136 miles exactly from the front gate of San Quentin and I made the trip several times. I had always told them from the very first night. I said, "I will be here so long as this is the best place for me and my family to have me be and where I want to be the most." After about 2, 3, 4 trips of 136 miles each way, which is half of Friday and all of Friday night, Saturday morning and half of Saturday getting home and then you are dead tired. I didn't think it was a good idea. I was given another opportunity.

There was a warden at Folsom State Prison, Johnny Cash a famous warden, his first name was Jack, I don't know his last name. He knew that I had moved up to the area, somebody ratted me out to use prison terminology. So he called me and he said, "I would like you to come over here and teach that People Builders program in Folsom." Well Folsom is about the same distance from my house today as San Quentin was from my house in Rune County. I thought that was doable. I said, "All right I will come down and take a look."

So I went down. There is Old Folsom and that is like an English dungeon of 300 years ago. That is what was there at the time. They have since built new Folsom, which is pretty architecturally, but they lock you in a room and that is the end of it, like a Super Max. So any ways Jack walked me up to the front gate of this old thing that you would use if you were filming a horror movie, rusty gate swung open. I knew the sound from San Quentin. They were a little newer, but not much. I walked in and they slammed behind me and I turned to Jack. I said, "You know I would really appreciate the opportunity to come

down here. The work I have done at San Quentin has been some of the most interesting work I have done in my life. It is there that I met Charlie Manson and spent a good deal of time with him and so on. You meet really fascinating people and I am not downgrading my experience at San Quentin. It just dawned on me. If you give me the tour, I would love to have it. But if it is based on that I am going to teach the class, I am going to tell you right now I am not going to do it. I have heard that sound behind me too many times.” He laughed. He said, “I understand.” He opened up the other Sally Port door and gave me a full tour of the cellblocks and everything and that was the end of it.

Michael: You didn't want to teach it?

Ben: My age was a factor. I am 66 now. I can't stay up all night.

Michael: No, I understand.

Ben: Yell and scream.

Michael: You did it for five years.

Ben: Yeah. I think I sort of did my thing. I have good friends that came out of those classes. In time, the staff began to come. In the last year or so that I was there, we had convicts, staff and staff's family in the class.

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Michael: Do you hear from any of your convict students?

Ben: Many and the correctional officers. I started to say guards, but they don't like to be called guards, but the correctional officers have stayed in touch. It was harder to win over the guards, than it did the inmates. The inmates I was really blunt with and I know how to talk service talk and prison talk. So I talked considerably different to them than I do to you or like Marine talk when you are charging the hill. The guards were harder to win over because they have seen a neverending stream of well-meaning, bleeding-heart liberals coming in to save the poor prisoners from the unjust court system and make them feel worse about themselves than before they got there. When I came in, the inmates were expecting that. When I walked in the front of the room, it was sort of like scared straight in reverse. It was sort of like instead of

the convicts scaring the kids, it was I scaring the convicts. You can stick with your way of life, you can play anyway you want; however it isn't working. I would spend maybe a whole night on that subject.

One guy asked me, "What is in it for you?" I mean there is something going on. I said, "They are not paying me anything." I have a feeling it is going to cost me a lot of money. He said, "Then really, what is in it for you?" I brought the class to a halt, I had the guards come over. You don't just casually wander around San Quentin. They are called movements. Guards were brought over and I said, "I want you to go back to your cell, every single one of you people with your little legal pads and I want you to write down everything you have, everything you own and I want you back in this room in 30 minutes because maybe I am missing something. Maybe you have something that I really want. If you do, then you and I will talk individually.

Well they got the message before they left the room, but they came back. You know one 12" black and white television, two army blankets, a bible and so on. The guards were much slower in coming around. They thought that I was there to put them down. That I was going to try to spring these people that were wrongly convicted. There are people in prison who are innocent, but the vast majority of people in prison are there for the right reason. They could have been caught for other things and probably ought to be there longer.

Michael: Do you remember what you and Manson talked about? Did you have a one to one conversation with him?

Ben: Yeah, I did. One day Terry Brewster, the lieutenant, he was usually on duty when I was there at night. He became an integral part of the program. He and his family went through the program several times. It was 12 weeks, we graduate and you could come back. We would get a new group also and do another 12 weeks and another 12 weeks and so on. Any way one day, Charlie back then was not allowed in the general population, again he is not today. He is down at Corcoran State Prison in central California. Remember, he didn't kill anybody. He directed others to. I don't remember if he got the death penalty or not. The death penalty was overturned right about the time that the Manson family went through. Two or three got death penalties and got them overturned. I'm not sure if Charlie was part of that. He does have life without possibility of parole and he was kept in what is called the adjustment center. The adjustment center is a freestanding building right on the main courtyard at San Quentin. So when I came in every night by happenstance, he could look out his cell across the

casum to the next wall on the catwalk and the window you could see me coming in and into the classroom and the door shutting. Then he could watch the class from one of the windows all through his cell.

So one day he sent word through somebody and it got to Brewster. Who is that guy? What is he doing and so on. So later Brewster said, "He wants you to meet him." I said, "Well bring him down." He said, "You are such a funny guy. We don't bring Charlie down. You go to Charlie." So I said, "I can go in the adjustment center." He said, "You can't just wander in." I had free reign in the prison. I could go anywhere but the adjustment center and death row anytime and do anything that I wanted to do. I was young enough and stupid enough to actually do it. So any way, he said fine. I went over to the adjustment center.

That is where they just had; you probably don't recall it, but the Jackson shoot-out. An inmate allegedly, and it doesn't make any sense, went to visit with his lawyer who gave him a gun and a wig. He put the gun under the wig and walked all the way back into the adjustment center through all of the checks and body searches. That makes no sense whatsoever. That is what happened they say, but I am telling you it didn't happen. The end result was, and I am making up numbers, like 10 dead guards and 10 or 14 dead convicts right at the door where you go into the adjustment center. That is where the whole thing took place.

So I get to that door and there are still stains on the sidewall. I said, "This is interesting." They said, "There are some forms you have to sign." I said, "Well I have already signed the permanent forms." These are the things when you come in you are on your own. If you are taken hostage, we will not negotiate for your release. If we have to shoot the convict, through you, we will. So you had to sign that just to get inside of the prison. Now I am going inside the adjustment center. I said, "I already signed that." They said, "You haven't signed this one." It was the person that is on steroids. So in we go and we go up to I think it was the second and if not the third tier. Charlie Manson's cell was on the end. I walked up and he was expecting me. He said, "Mr. Gay how are you?" I said, "Mr. Manson how are you?" They unlocked the cell and in I went. I thought we were going to talk through the bars. I frequently did that while walking the cellblocks. In I went and was locked in with him.

First of all any physical intimidation instantly went away. He is a tiny little guy about the size of Sammy Davis, Jr., not big at all or anything.

I spent that night about 2 to 2 1/2 hours and then on another visit and then on another visit. So probably 6 to 7 hours in total with him just chatting. People say, "Were you scared?" No because of the situation I had been in there two or three years by this time. Not by any physical intimidation of his, but I was fascinated. That I will admit. First of all he is crazy, obviously, but he is not crazy like you see him in the interviews. He does that for the cameras on cue. For instance, we would be sitting there talking, sort of like you and I are right now, and a guard would walk by and he would leap up and go "booga, booga, booga". I would go, "Yeah right, Charlie." The people in the adjustment center had seen the act enough, but we had a reasonably normal conversation except for the subject matter. The subject matter was a variety of things. He wanted to know what I was doing. I figured that turnabout is fair play and we would swap stories. I said, "How did you do it?" If you remember those kids, they came from middle class and upper middle class families. Most of them had a pretty good education. I said, "How did you get them?" He said, "They were lost and young and stupid." He said, "I could of done it with anyone, but it would of taken longer. I took the path of least resistance. Wandering around, unattached, young, and stupid." Now add to that a deep understanding of psychology, however primitive that it may be. I mean he was living under the California youth authority.

He has been in prison off and on like 6 months at a time, and out maximum since he was 12. So it wasn't like he went to Harvard. Somehow he has an animal instinct, the psychology and philosophy and the ability to explain it in simplified terms probably because that is all he can talk in. I could of sat with Sigmund Freud and probably not have understood anything that he has said, but I could sit with Charlie Manson using the same lesson and he wouldn't use any word that had more than five letters in it. Then his eyes would sort of get the stare down for a while. We both admitted he was doing that. His eyes when they look at you, they go in your eyes and out the back of your head.

Michael: Piercing.

Ben: Piercing and you sort of forget while you are talking to him, he kind of mutates into somebody that is not crazy, Charlie Manson. You don't want to stay in there too long; you will start thinking he is sane.

Michael: Very interesting. Any one story that you can think of, of a previous conflict that was really able to stay out and change your life and do something great?

Ben: Yeah, his name is Joe Mac. When I went into San Quentin he was on death row. I didn't know that, but that is where he was. Almost simultaneously with me beginning to teach, he came off of death row, he appealed his sentence. I am not going to justify his situation, but it was a ridiculous sentence for what he did. Even what he did isn't what he was accused of doing. He was not leading a good life. He was a pimp, a drug dealer, bar owner and had gone out to meet with a guy about a dispute over territory or something and a gun was pulled by the other guy and Joe fighting it off, twisted his arm around and the gun went off and it shot the other guy who lived. He said that Joe kidnapped him, drew a gun on him, and it was one of those dropped guns and you can't prove who it belongs to. So that story stuck and Joe wound up on death row. So any way he appealed and he got it changed to life without possibility of parole. As much time as I have spent in prison, I would rather have the death penalty personally and just get on with it and not leave me there for 20 years like they do in California. Get on with it. Life without possibility holds no interest to me.

Michael: Did he get out?

Ben: Well that is what he had. Then I was teaching also down at the Crystal Cathedral, Robert Schüller's church, the hour of power on television. I say teaching, but I was doing an occasional speech down there for their possibility thinkers' luncheons and possibility thinkers' breakfast. Well they always want to hear the Sam Quentin story, so I would tell them. My favorite guy there, he was really a neat guy. You would of sworn he was a college graduate ski instructor if you met him. People wouldn't believe what he had been involved in when I met Joe and talked to him.

So they would say tell us about your favorite guy or most interesting story. I would tell them about the visits with Charlie Manson that always fascinated them. Then I would say, but the guy I work with, my contact inside of the prison with the People Builders is Joe Mac. Every time I went down, they wanted an update on Joe Mac. Meanwhile Joe is still continuing to appeal his sentence. He finally got it reduced to life and with life you can have parole. Meanwhile he was head of SCOPE, the special committee on parole re-employment, although he was doing life his job was to get contacts from the outside and get released inmates jobs. He was president of the Jewish congregation, although he wasn't Jewish when he went in and he was president of the People Builders. The guards thought the world of him. So he is appealing and fighting that and trying to get his parole.

So one day I am down at the Christian Cathedral and I said, "Hi." I gave my little talk. They said, "Now you can't leave until you tell us how Joe Mac is doing." I said, "Well as you know he started on death row, life without possibility of parole, life which could mean 7 years parole, but it hardly ever does, but it could. His goal was always to come down here on one of my trips because I would tell him all about you guys. He would stand on the altar here with me and tell you how he has turned his life around. They all cheered. If you feel that way, turn around and let's watch Joe Mac take his last 67 steps on the way to the altar at the Christian Cathedral. I had paced it off from where I sat and Joe came forward and the place went nuts.

Michael: So he did get out.

Ben: He got out and he is living up at Lake Tahoe now. He is doing fine.

Michael: This has been fantastic. I really appreciate you. You have been very generous with your time.

Ben: Excellent. You are a neat guy.

Michael: Thanks Ben, I really appreciate it. Have a great day.

Ben: Same to you.

Michael: Bye.

That is the end of my interview of Part 2 with Ben Gay. I hope it has been helpful. For more information about Ben's famous Closer series, books, seminars, and tapes go to <http://www.bengaytheclosers.com>. Thanks for listening.