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INTERVIEW SERIES

Marketing Secrets Learned In Prison:

**An Interview With Legendary
Sales Coach Ben Gay III**

Dear Student,

I'm Michael Senoff, founder and CEO of 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.hardtofindseminars.com

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Marketing Secrets Learned In Prison: An Interview With Legendary Sales Coach Ben Gay III

Ben Gay III is a world-renowned sales trainer and author of *The Closers*. He's worked with marketing giants like Earl Nightingale, Zig Ziglar and Ray Considine, and has helped countless businesses increase their sales performances.

Although Ben ran a prison program for five years called People Builders that taught prisoners and staff alike how to set and achieve goals, it wasn't until he was sent to prison himself that he learned some of the most valuable lessons about business and life.

So in this audio, you'll hear Ben's incredible story about how he was railroaded on multi-level marketing charges and sent off to prison – but how he took his sales training with him to help the people around him turn their lives around – all while virtually running his business from behind bars.

You'll Also Hear...

- The truth behind Ben's indictment and the one mistake he made that got him 15 years in prison
- What Ben knows about Earl Nightingale that most people don't
- Secret techniques Ben's learned from Ray Considine for networking in even the strangest of places
- The cheap trick Ben's wife used that almost bankrupted his business while he was in prison and how he got it all back
- An "almost magic" way to command respect anywhere – Ben had everyone calling him "Mr. Gay" in prison – even the guards
- The one-and-only proven-effective sentence to use in marketing that gets a name out there, even when no one has heard of it

It would have been easy for Ben to just sit around and do his time for the six years he was in prison, but instead he took "his show on the road" and taught everyone he came in contact with how to effectively turn even the most negative of situations into a positive.

Ben: Because that was through dealing with the Nightingale Conant Corporation, we were their biggest customer, probably 10 years before he returned from college and the other business he was working.

Michael: Was it through Holiday Magic?

Ben: Yeah. Yeah Earl was the voice of Holiday Magic. Earl and I were very good friends and Lloyd and I had sort of a present business like relationship. He didn't underestimate the value of the business

we gave him but he considered me sort of an irritant. Earl had asked me at one time if I'd like to move from Holiday Magic over to Nightingale Conant and help him build the business. I think I've told you this before, Earl was a great philosopher he was a terrible business man, and the reason they became partners, the real reason is Lloyd was his printer and Earl owed Lloyd a lot of money, and so basically I can drive you into bankruptcy again or I can be your partner. My copy for instance of "*The Strangest Secret*", the record, I've got one of the original 1956 recordings that shows on the back cover if you want to buy more of these please contact Lloyd V. Conant Distributor, he was just an Independent Distributor but he was also more importantly their printer.

Michael: Who got "*The Strangest Secret*" album in message so popularized?

Ben: Earl to answer the question because he was on the radio, he had his own five minute commentary called "*Our Changing World*", an opportunity to promote his own stuff and he was an announcer on the Big Gun WGN which is a clear channel radio station. After sundown all the people on that number have to shut down their stations, sort of turn them way down and then the clear channels then boost all over the country. Earl used to say if you squatted down by a barbwire fence you could hear his radio program after 5:00 when it went clear channel. He had plenty of opportunity to do his own promotion. Lloyd was a typical distributor buying records and selling them.

Michael: How about through Holiday Magic, did you all push that message to all good distributors?

Ben: Oh sure it was required it came in their opening package. We did "*The Strangest Secret*", "*Lead the Field*", which is a series of recordings sort of son of "*The Strangest Secret*". Earl made a mistake many people make in their careers, I may have made it myself, in that he did his best work first "*The Strangest Secret*" is a classic recording, and then he spent the rest of his career trying to top it, "*Lead The Field*" with the son of "*The Strangest Secret*" taking major points in "*The Strangest Secrets*" and try to turn each one of those into a 30 minute message and it was good...

Michael: But it wasn't like...

Ben: Yeah. And then he did "*The Complete Speaker*" and that was a total bomb and he made a lot of money being the voice of. He did a ton of recordings for us and he did them for Beltone. Have I ever told you the Beltone story?

Michael: Is that hearing aid?

Ben: Yeah.

Michael: No tell me about that.

Ben: It's a cute one that you just ought to put in your memory bank sometime there may be an opportunity to bring it up. We had decided to use Earl to help our distributors. It's hard to get people to do what they're supposed to do so we had a flexi record. Do you remember those?

Michael: A flexi record.

Ben: Yeah they'd be in magazines.

Michael: Yes.

Ben: Yeah they were made by Evatone in Chicago and Earl had a connection with them. So you could put a flexi record in a magazine, for instance, you ripped it out it was square but it was small enough where it didn't interfere with your arm on the record player, and you could send somebody a recording. Well we bound them in little booklets. One was called "Invitation to Success" point being if you're not brave enough to walk up to somebody and say "I want you to come to a meeting. How much are you making? We can help you make more" blah, blah, blah, take this recording and just hand it to people with your business card and Earl Nightingale will invite them to the meeting for you. And then after the meeting you handed them another one called "Passport to Success" and it sort of recaps what you just heard in the meeting and said "Why you ought to go forward?" And then once you are a distributor the news is broken to you. I told you this in our interview; the first \$2500 dollars didn't really get you in the prime position. The prime position was general distributorship. So he recorded one for us called The General Idea. So there were three that I remembered off the top of my head.

Michael: How did those records do, did it work?

Ben: Oh sure. It wasn't life changing but it got people who couldn't do anything to do something and then over time they learned, and maybe they didn't use the records as much but it helped us with the weaker people. But it was a huge help to a lot of people and plus it gave us a degree of credibility because by then I've created that

sentence I told you about. "Of course you've heard of Earl Nightingale the most listened to radio voice in the world, heard daily on over 750 radio stations in the United States and Canada." That's how we got around people after I quickly discovered no one has ever heard of Earl Nightingale percentage wise. It's like I say to people "Of course you know Zig Ziglar?" And nine times out of ten they go "No." They're not in selling, haven't been on motivational seminar, they've never heard of him. And that astounds me to this day you think everybody would have heard of him by now.

So anyway we created that sentence. So if you handed it to them and they never played it but you told them this recording by Earl Nightingale he's the voice of Holiday Magic, and of course you've heard of Earl Nightingale the most listened to radio, blah, blah, blah, so it was a tremendous help in that regard. So anyway, as we go back I was back with Ron and Les Davis, they were the sales managers of the company at the time, no relationship but they were, and I said "My only question is the quality maybe we ought to put it on a small real record." Well the flexi records were 11 cents apiece and the other ones were more than that enough to make a difference. So I said if you got any around that he's done? They said "We've got a shipment here ready to go out. This is the Christmas message to Beltone's Hearing Aid Distributors." And I said "Great."

So they go out to this substantial pile of address things, pick out one bring it in, put it on the silver record table in the boardroom. And the background story of this is when Earl read it he was a cold read, he was handed them a script and he could sit down and do it, and he worked with an engineer who knew when he heard a three second pause Earl was done, he got the end of the thing and the engineer was so tuned into Earl that when Earl semi-retired and moved to Arizona the engineer and his wife went with him so he could continue regarding down there. They were like McMahon and Carson except you never heard the engineer.

So anyway with total trust in the engineer and his ability to cold read he picks up this script and glances over it right before they start and he says "Oh I don't like this." Earl was a series guy and this is thing is full of Yule Tide greetings for you and yours and Beltone and Santa Claus love you and it was too gooey. So he called somebody in handed it to him and he said "Call Beltone and tell him I'd like to edit this thing." And they came back and said "Beltone doesn't want it edited." He said "Well I don't want to do it." And they said "Well the account hangs on it." And this was in the

days when Nightingale Conant was hanging by their fingertips at all times. So with that financial fact in mind he recorded it, blah, blah, blah, and Yule Tide greetings and Santa Claus loves you, and Beltone holds you dearer than anything in the world, Yule Tide greetings to you and yours. Thank you this is Earl Nightingale. And then he counted three beeps and said "Jesus Christ what a crock of shit." Because of the way they'd worked together Earl trusted the engineer and no playback was done he knew when he got something right. And the engineer must have been reading a magazine or something. I'm making up numbers now because I really don't remember, but like 10,000 records going out to the distributors and all the Beltone...

Michael: Oh that's hilarious.

Ben: Well anyway I'm sitting here in the boardroom with Ron and Les and blah, blah, blah and Yule Tide greetings to you and yours, Jesus Christ what a crock of shit and they dove on top of the record player. And then the stuff in the lobby already had postage on it and it was ready to go. Then someone said "The mailman" through their bodies over that pile and Earl went to his grave believing they had destroyed all copies. Somewhere in my stuff, and if I ever find it I'll send it to you, when they went out of the room to stop the mailman I took the one that was on the record player and put it in my briefcase. They thought they were all destroyed but one wasn't. So anyway that was how Earl worked with us and so on.

So anyway, then when I went on to Programmed Warmth. Programmed Warmth if you want and having secret relationships with everyone is one of my secrets in doing business. I am really a warm and loving guy. I have a little harder edge to me than some people in my business but I know how to be warm and friendly and I know how to send out birthday cards and so on. And my wife laughingly calls it Programmed Warmth it's important it get done but I can't remember a 1000 birthdays. So it's handwritten but its part of my day everyday to go down the list and handwrite things, and mail things, and put the stamp on slightly crooked. And the secret relationship is sort of an odd thing to describe and discuss but I'll give it some thought. And these are those nuances and subtleties that I say in my seminars. "They didn't pay me \$10,000 dollars to come here and read you a \$25 dollar book so I'm not going to cover anything in the book except by happenstance. I'm going to cover the nuances and the subtleties that are the difference between one guy making \$500,000 dollars and somebody else in the same office making \$100,000 with the same lead, same pricing, same structures, same everything.

One guy is a sales infiltrator last chapter in *"The Closers Part 2"*, the best thing ever written about selling. And the other guy is a technician knows what to do and calls on 25 people a day or makes 25 phone calls and sends out follow-up packet, whatever he's supposed to be doing he does it, but he doesn't understand the nuance and subtleties. The point then with secret relationships is everyone who works with me, and most of our friends because they just do it by habit. But I have my printer in mind right now a little lady named Rebel Masters, Rebel thinks, and it's not totally without truth, that she and I have a relationship different from everybody else. I tell her things and tell her not to repeat them and share with her things you wouldn't normally share with a printer and as a result I get paying the same price everybody else does, and probably not our biggest customer, I get super duper service because we're almost like a brother and a sister.

I'll give you a structural example of this, Ray Considine was one of my mentors, dear friend of mine, guy 40 years ago I guess it's been now, at age 91 looking far better than I do now at 67.

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Michael: Who was he?

Ben: He was a direct mail guy, salesman, speaker, sort of earned his spurs in the direct mail business, but he was a male model as a young man. Tall, regal looking, 6'3 I'm guessing, straight back to the day he died, snow white hair. Early on, when I first met him it was sort of sandy brown, but it was snow white rather quickly, big dark Hollywood type glasses. And when he walked into a room nobody ever heard of Ray, I mean he was a lesser star name wise than Zig or me or anybody, but I'd walk in the room people would go "Hi, how are you doing?" Ray would walk into a room and you'd hear in a restaurant the sound volume drop as people said "Who is that?" He was handsome but he wasn't that stunningly handsome he just looked important as hell.

Later in his career we were talking one day and I said "The next time you're out doing something call me and let me know", he generally did anyway, but I said "I'll go farther than I use to because neither one of us are going to be around here forever." And he said "Ben I'm getting on in years and a lot of my contacts have died." There used to be people that called them into their yearly convention every year for 25 years but whoever did that died and

the new guy has his friends. So he said "A lot of my contacts have died off"; this conversation was probably when he was in his mid-80s. And over the remaining years, he died at 91 or 92 I heard other little pin drops like that. One day his son who I rarely talk to called me and he said "Ben this is Chris Considine." I said "Oh I'm not going to like this call am I?" And he said "No you're not. Ray died last night." And I said "I didn't know he was in the hospital." He said "Well you got that email that said he wasn't feeling real well but don't make a big deal out of it."

Well he was going in for something like open heart surgery or something. So I said "I'm so sorry I didn't know." He said "Well we're going to have a little service for him in two days in Pasadena." So I broke some appointments because I decided that since I was Ray Considine's best friend, had been for 35 or 40 years, I should be there because all of his friends had died off and I hate to the family to be there by themselves. So I drive, I hate flying if I have a choice, it's not fear of flying I hate the hassle. So I drove from northern California to Pasadena, not a short drive, spent the night in a hotel the night before and then went over, wanted to get there early so that it wasn't a moment when Ray's coffin was alone. And walked in, I was probably five minutes before the service I got the last seat in a rather large church and I looked around and saw several familiar faces Ray had introduced me to over the years.

I've never seen so many bright sport coats and bad toupees that Hollywood crowd that can't go bald, if you know what I mean, but also much younger people, older people and so on. And then they said "We're going to have some people come forward and since we've given them all warning that they're going to speak we're not going to put you on the spot, you don't have to come up and make up something we've got the rosters setup." And I thought God I don't remember if that makes any difference I can do it anyway if I don't start crying but I don't remember Chris saying that. I'm sitting there getting my thoughts together listening to the 15 other speakers and when that part of the program ended I wasn't one of the 15 speakers. And then these people are crying and sobbing and Ray's my best friend and I've known him for this and he did this for me and he did this and there will never be another Ray Considine. I remember one guy saying "They said you'll get over him in time, over the pain." He said "I'm not ever getting over Ray Considine."

So when we left some dear friends of mine from up here who drove down for pretty much the same reason we met in a lobby and I said

"I feel like Shirley McClain in a movie where her husband dies and she goes to the funeral and there's 25 other wives and mistresses sitting there. She thought she was the only wife and the punch line of the movie would be you are one of many.

Michael: So that's what you mean by the Secret Relationship.

Ben: Secret Relationship. Ray Considine sincerely made me believe for the better part of 40 years, I guess looking back about 40 years, made me believe I was his best friend on earth. And I don't take the fact that I was one of many best friends on earth to be insincere on his part, that's just the way he was, but still he never used the term that was sort of my term, he built secret relationships with everybody and as a result he always got the best tables in restaurants. And I think somewhere in my book I write about The Yellow Door. Ray always said "Somewhere there's always a yellow door." He was talking about the story he goes to the World's Fair, whatever it was in New York and the AT&T Exhibit, I don't know what they were doing there probably a futuristic type thing, was the most popular place and the line was four hours long. And he's standing in line and he looks over and he sees a yellow door over on the side of the building like a service entrance or something. He goes over knocks on it and has a typical Ray Considine conversation with whoever opens the door. And he and his wife are suddenly inside the exhibit, not at the head of the line, just in the exhibit, there was no line for Ray Considine. He laughed when he told the story and he said "Ben always look around there's always a yellow door, and when you get there be prepared to make a friend."

You want to talk about the prison stuff next? I worked at San Quentin for five years running my People Builders Program, and that might be a story too how I got there and why I did it and so on , but never mind that for now. When in every Friday night 6:00 worked 12 hours to 6:00 Saturday morning holding seminars, initially just for the inmates and then a separate class for the staff, but eventually I blended them together and inmates and staff and staff families all went through the same seminar once a week, some of them for years, many of them for just 12 week cycle. And sometimes they do...I tell a story in seminars when appropriate, told them all my smaller seminars where people spend a little more money to come for a public speaking class or something I tell Part A and B.

Part A is I worked at San Quentin as a consultant in and out, made lots of friends some of them are still good friends to this day, among

staff and inmates. Met Charlie Manson spent time in his cell three times I think for a couple of hours each visit, so I spent about six hours up close and personal with Charlie, and lots of other people that were actually worse than Charlie but not as famous for some reason. And that's Part A and when prison comes up if somebody was to say "Was he in prison" invariably out here somebody near him says "Oh no he taught at San Quentin that People Builders Course." Oh, oh I see I was confused when he mentioned prison. Well Part B of the story is in 1986 while running a distributor type business, distributor means you buy inventory and go sell it, my offices were raided by the federal government postal inspectors, etc, etc.

Michael: Oh really in '86.

Ben: '86.

Michael: Who were you with then?

Ben: I was running National Toll Free Marketing which is the business that caused the problem or maybe I caused the problem.

Michael: Is it multilevel?

Ben: Well the government said it was but it wasn't. We sold product as a 65% discount to you and you went off and built your sales organization or didn't. You could sell the product yourself at a huge thing. We didn't have levels or the computer building to do all that and so on, but of course the government once they say you're multilevel you are.

Michael: Okay so they came in and took everything.

Ben: Yeah they took everything left the original business standing, the National Communication Center the call center I opened, the first call center in the world.

Michael: Right I remember that.

Ben: But National Toll Free Market, we were in the same building with the same people, except on corporate papers you couldn't have seen the difference, but anyway National Toll Free Market it was raided. It eventually caused the collapse of a very profitable successful business and National Communication Center and we went into a four year low, occasionally I would hear the talk through a friend of mine or something. The friend would call me and say

“They called me down and talked to me”, and the six months would go by and nothing and so on. And so about four years go by, so I guess you could say I started a new company was selling the closures material etc, which was part of the distributor business the government was trying to prove you couldn’t sell it, I’ve been selling it for 30 years very successfully. So about four years go by and one Saturday morning I get up to go get my hair cut and I glanced at the paper, and it wasn’t a huge story but in the Sacramento B somewhere in the part of the paper I would have flipped to very quickly so I could sit down and read the whole paper. It said Cameron Park, that’s a little subdivision I lived in at the time, Cameron Park Conman Indicted. I remember thinking God who’s that, I know almost everybody in town.

Michael: Oh my God.

Ben: It was me.

Michael: Oh my God you didn’t know you had been indicted.

Ben: No. First of all my conscious was clear I wasn’t doing anything wrong except to the stupidity perhaps of getting into a business that I know the government instinctively doesn’t like. But they don’t go after Avon when 200% of their people fail and they don’t go after Amway when only 2% or 3% of their people succeed. But the reason is primarily they haven’t got time to chase around \$35 and \$40 dollar and \$100 dollar cases and for \$30 and \$40 and \$100 dollars nobody complains. You don’t write to the Attorney General trying to get your \$30 dollars back and if you do they throw it in the trashcan. Where you could join my business for free it was not unlike Holiday Magic in that if you wanted the big discount locked in then you had to either sell a certain amount in a month or buy a certain amount in a month and that certain amount was \$24,625.13.

Michael: So what happened?

Ben: One distributor, we had thousands of them, one distributor wanted all this money back but he wanted to keep his product and I said “No.” If I sent him a check for \$7000 dollars we wouldn’t be having this conversation right now but I didn’t and I said “Absolutely not.” Well it turned out his name was Brad Evans, I’m happy to report he choked to death on a condom in a cheap hotel in Florida before the trial started so he didn’t get to testify against me. So I turned to my lawyer when I heard that and I said “We’ve already won.”

Michael: Oh my God.

Ben: This evil guy is dead we've won. But he stayed on it and stayed on it and stayed on it and he must have been a better salesman than I was because he convinced somebody we were evil and we had all these people, blah, blah, blah and so on. So government wrote, after we were indicted, to every single distributor we had.

Michael: How many?

Ben: Well at the top level it was about 12,000. Wrote to every single one of them and said "We think maybe there was something you should know." But in the meanwhile these people were sitting there with cosmetics and vitamins and re-sellable products, closures and so on. So we think there was a cry, I don't I never saw the letter, but it was we're here to help." They got zero responses back, zero. So then they wrote a letter that they knew was untrue saying as we told you we think there's something wrong here and we think we can get you your money back. Well tell 12,000 people they can get their all their money back without working and so on, 64 of them responded that's nothing. And some of those not all of them but some of those wound up testifying against us at trial.

They also indicted my wife at the time and most of my good friends because most of my good friends were the top sales people and officers in the company. Somewhere along the line they offered me three years in prison and checking with my lawyer he says "Well in three years there's two types of sentencing one is now gone it's called "Old Law" and that's what I was under. Old Law is you do a 30 year time minimum or two thirds of your time maximum unless you stab a guard or something and you can probably run it up to some higher number.

So he said nobody got hurt and the vast majority of people are happy, obviously, and the judge even said on the record he didn't understand why you were indicted and he couldn't understand the indictment. This was before the trial started. So he said "I think we can beat it." I being naïve, my fault said "Fine, let's go for it" and sat down with my family. I said "I don't want to say I'm guilty of something I'm not guilty of. I said "I got 125 people here in town who works for us and most of them have been with us for years. They know we weren't doing anything wrong. Now if I say I'm guilty all of a sudden I'm this crook they work for unknowingly.

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Michael: Were there a bunch of chargers or just...?

Ben: Well there were 64 counts against me but they were all basically the same thing each person that complained made that account and they all revolved around mail fraud. As soon as you see that that means the government has thrown you under the big umbrella. So believing I was innocent, believing we could win the case I went to trial. It turned into the longest trial in the 9th District where Sacramento is located, in the 9th District's history at least for a white collar crime. It was a yearlong from beginning to end that means four or five days a week I had to drive down to Sacramento in the rush hour traffic both ways, sit there in court and hear myself called a no good, because the vast majority was the prosecution's case. Out of the 12 months I probably spent 10 1/2 months listening to what a creep I was and all my friends.

So I encouraged my friends I said "Take the best deal you can whatever you can and plead out. I'm going to be the last man over the side and I'm not going to leave any of you behind because I don't think we did anything wrong. And when I testified I even said understand nothing went out of that office that I didn't even write personally, even had somebody else's signature, or approve including all the publications I've been holding up. I'm here to defend the business and my owner, but if anyone gets convicted it should be me not any of these, and I think it was at that time six or eight co-defendants still sitting there, none of those people, that's how confident I was in our position. Twelve months later the jury is out for about three hours. Twelve months of testimony, 5000 documents. They're out for like three hours, including lunch, and elected a foreman and come back and find me guilty on all counts.

So I said "Alright I got to do my year." I've wasted a year I'd be done with my time if I'd spent it in jail or in prison instead of sitting here in this courtroom, but you roll the dice and take your chances. So on sentencing day I go up and stand up in front of a judge, we were not buddies but when you see somebody that long he wasn't a stranger to me. I said "Good Morning Judge Schwartz. How are you? Good Morning Mr. Gay. How are you? And blah, blah, blah and I hereby sentence you to 15 years." Have you ever seen one of those cartoons where when you're scared and nervous...?

Michael: Their eyes bug out.

Ben: Well the eyes bug out a little bit but the sweat pops off their forehead.

Michael: Yeah.

Ben: I'm telling you cartoonist didn't make that up. The body is capable of doing that. But I stood there looking brave and I'd already handed my wallet to my wife under the theory of I won't be needing this for a while, well it turned out this whole thing was treated like...I was never handcuffed, never arrested, never anything. And then I'm thinking "Alright when does the guy come out and handcuff me?" And he said "Well we'll arrange the time for your self-surrender with your attorney and so on. Have a good day, which is wonderful, have a good day. So we left again and I didn't have to self-surrender for another six months. Then I drove myself up to the gate in Lompoc California and I sincerely believed I would win the appeal. So this was to me even...and we took it all the way to the Supreme Court. By the time you get to the Supreme Court if you're not really facing the constitutional issue I think the Secretary stamps it denied, nobody sat around and had a big discussion about it, they just said it's no constitutional issue here, 12 people heard the evidence and found him guilty end of story, but we did appeal all the way to the Supreme Court.

So for the first six months I was there every time the intercom came on I would tell whoever I talked to because I thought they were going to say "Mr. Gay report to the office we discovered this was all a big mistake."

Michael: Right. So where were you?

Ben: There are three facilities at Lompoc one is the Big House, the place you don't want to be, then there's the FCI that's meeting security you walk around loosely almost like a college campus. There's three rings of fence around it with armguards driving around, no towers but on guards driving around the perimeter. Well I was sent to a camp, a friend drove me down and pull up in front of the Big House and I was reading a book or something trying to pretend like this wasn't happening and I looked up and I said "No John, I've spent enough time in San Quentin to know what a camp was and that wasn't it." I said "It must be somewhere else." So we drove around, pulled up to a place of little foreboding and I got and I said "Hi, my name is Ben Gay. I'm self-surrendering today but I'm trying to find the camp and I know this isn't it." So I point to some mobile homes across the highways scattered among this barren looking land. And I said "Is that the camp over there?" And the guy said "No that's staff housing it's where I live."

Michael: Oh my God.

Ben: So I'm off to a good start as usual. Well it turned out they had closed down the camp, put a fence around it, turned it into an FCI and they were going to build a camp any minute. Well they didn't get it finished to where I could go because I'm not a construction worker for 19 months, so I spent 19 months in the FCI including the first day I missed a count. I asked a guard...I should know counts I used to sit in cells during counts. I walked down took a walk down around the compound and saw the chapel and I walked into a female guard and I said "Hi I'm new here am I allowed to go in there as an inmate?" And she said "Sure." She didn't say "Sure but the count is in 15 minutes." She said "Sure."

Michael: So you missed your count on your first day.

Ben: My first day. They probably had one during the night I wasn't aware of you know when you're asleep but the first one that I could be awake and attend voluntarily I'm sitting in the chapel. And about an hour and a half later, maybe two hours I decided to wonder on up to the dorm, first stopping by the bathroom, and just as I had arranged myself in the stall the door gets kicked open and they said "We found him." The whole place had been shut down on visiting day for two hours looking for me they thought I was an unhappy camper and had taken off right off the bat. So for the first time in this entire four or five year experience I'm handcuffed. They said "You're under arrest." I said "Under arrest, I'm in prison." They said "No, no, you're really under arrest now", and they took me over to the Big House, put me in solitary confinement in the hole with the bad guys.

Now I self-surrendered on a Friday so Thursday I was still in my office and this is Saturday morning. Thursday before my attorney called and said "You got to show up tomorrow", I mean he must have known sooner but he called and said "You got to show up tomorrow", I was holding a board meeting, suit and tie, looking good. And that's Thursday, Friday I'm driving to prison, Saturday I'm in solitary confinement in a maximum security prison and I sat down, they stripped me, they took my shoe laces so I wouldn't commit suicide. I had no intentions of committing suicide I was going to win my appeal. Sat down in this steel bunk, they didn't give me a mattress there was an old dirty sheet on it, which I swore I would never touch but when it gets cold enough you'll touch it, and I sat on the bunk, looked up at the ceiling and I said "Alright my God you have my undivided attention..."

Michael: Yeah.

Ben: ...“Tell me what you want.” It finally dawned on me this wasn’t just going to go away like I’ve always been sort of lucky. First of all I never thought they’d raid us but when they raid us. When they raided us I didn’t think it amounted to anything but an inconvenience. I didn’t know there was a grand jury meeting. I didn’t know they didn’t like me. I didn’t know until read in the paper. I’ll tell you a cute story. You swap your clothes almost immediately before you can get issued anything of any seriousness. So I’m walking across the compound with a lady who came down to meet me a staff member, and she said “Mr. Gay welcome. We’ve heard about you and we know about your work at San Quentin. This isn’t going to be a problem for you, you just keep your head down until you get your barrings and everything will go fine.” And I said “Great. Thank you.”

So we’re walking along and this black guy comes running across the campus leaping up and down and I thought “Great I’m in a Mental Institution leaping up and down, but as he gets closer he says “Mr. Gay, Mr. Gay.” And he jumps into my arms almost knocks me down. We spin around two or three times and he said “You remember me.” And I said “You look awful familiar please help me.” He said “I’m Albert King. I was in your class at San Quentin People Builders.” I said “Albert I remember you. Yes, how great?” And he said “Are you going to do those classes here?” And I said “Well I hope so, I’m just here for the first day but I hope to keep public speaking, sales and marketing, how to get out of prison step, it was all the People Builder’s thing. And he said “Great”, which I didn’t wind up doing for years. So he says “Fantastic” and he backs off like I want to get a good look at you. Well the last time he saw me I was in a tailor made \$2000 dollar three piece suit looking good. And he sort of stuttered and he said “How come they got you dressed like that?” Albert I here is...

Michael: Oh my God.

Ben: ... and there were two or three other people who’d gone through the class so I guess they had upgraded their crimes, they were no longer state people now they’re federal people.

Michael: How long were you in solitary for?

Ben: Just five days until they were convinced I really wasn’t trying to escape, until they got my undivided attention, which they did. I never missed a count again. Because I use to tell my friends, and I

start working the Greeting Committee for new people coming in because I knew how it was for new people, so I always went out of my way to introduce myself to anybody new and say "I'm here to help you and get you settled in and get you some sweat pants."

Michael: You didn't get to go back to the minimum security.

Ben: Medium.

Michael: You did go back there.

Ben: Yeah after five days I went back to the minimum security and the FCI. And there I was for 19 months until they got the camp built. They finally came to me one day and said "Mr. Gay", and they called Mr. Gay and I refused to answer to gay, asshole, you know, all the things they yell. Until they said "Mr. Gay" I didn't turn around. It took me about three days to get all the staff to refer to me as Mr. Gay. Some of my people had been there a little longer one for 14 years, he said "I've been here 14 years in prison in general", and he said "I have never seen an inmate called Mr. anything. How did you do that?" I said "I don't answer to anything else." They're not going to shoot you for not answering a matter of behavioral modification. But anyway one day they came up to me to discuss the camp and they said "Mr. Gay we know you don't like to get your hands dirty - I worked in the Education Department and taught most of the time in the FCI - but we think the camp is now up to your level of acceptance." I said "Well great send me over."

So it was a little more freedom. And over there the only thing that keeps you from running away as a split rail fence about three feet tall so if you want to take off and add five years to your sentence you can. And rather quickly I was running the regional warehouses the head clerk. Did you ever see Shawshank Redemption?

Michael: Yeah.

Ben: Well friends of mine who've seen it who also were aware of my prison experience say that that was me minus the violence and stuff. But my point is you get in a position where you're really important and where the guards are taking things from you they shouldn't like I help fill out their tax returns, their employment applications for the next level and because it was warehouse where all the food was kept I got an office full of food. And one of my co-inmates, a dear friend of mine still today had owned a restaurant, so we had the best food in the word working with just a fry pan, microwave, and razor blades to cut up the garlic and stuff, and a

refrigerator we stole out of the warden's house while it was being remodeled. We didn't, we swap out some stuff to the people who were remodeling, brought it over and crawled it upstairs and put it in our bathroom.

So we had refrigeration and cooking utilities and all the food that was available in the three facilities. Then with the camp open started in our warehouse and that ingratiated me to the cooks, the staff who ran the kitchen because I would call...the Big House and come over and steal all the good food, so I would call them the people in the camp and say "The food's here get over here now" and they would come raising over and I'd send them extra stuff and get extra clothing for the people." So rather quickly I got in a position where I was respectful and polite and treated everybody decently, the staff and inmates, but I got in a position where it would have been sort of difficult on short notice to run the warehouse without me that made me immune from the hole.

I was threatened a couple of times one time 60 pounds of shrimp that was a headed to a warden's party disappeared, and I truly didn't know what happened to it but if you worked in a warehouse you were from the camp so it didn't take a genius to figure out either the staff stole it, and they would do that frequently, you could always tell when pork chops or something was arriving at the warehouse when we pulled up in the morning there'd be four or five staff cars with their trucks open, but I didn't know where the 60 pounds of shrimp was. So when they couldn't get anybody to fess up Jay Ledford, the Head of the Staff that ran the warehouse, came up and said "Alright everybody up we're all going to the hole." I turned around and put my hands behind my back and I said "Jay you're going to have a lot of fun running this warehouse since you don't know any of the systems.

And the reason he didn't was when I took over the job from a guy who's had the job for 10 years. He finally went home, I changed all the systems deliberately to better systems but I didn't bother to tell anybody that I'd done it. I said "I don't know where the shrimp is, I don't care. You know if I did know I wouldn't tell you and I'll be happy to go to the hole, I've been there before I'm not afraid, but in 24 hours or less you're going to come over and get me because you literally can't run this place without me until I train my replacement. So you want 4000 or 5000 inmates scattered around between three institutions starving to death have at it.

Michael: Yeah and what did he do?

Ben: He said alright “Mr. Gay sit down.” He said “Are you going to help me find this shrimp?” And I said “I honest to God don’t know where it is.” And then I told probably the only lie I ever told in prison. I said “I’m allergic to shrimp, I’m violently allergic to shrimp, trust me I didn’t steal it.” Oh okay walked away. Well that’s not true...

Michael: Yeah.

Ben: ... but I just wanted to end the conversation instead of come on I’ll give you this if you tell me this and so on.

Michael: Very interesting

Ben: Under the new law if you get sentenced to 30 years you’re going to do 85% of it, there is no Parole Board. Under my sentence Old Law I had to do five unless I wanted an appeal, which I didn’t. I could have done 10 unless I stabbed a guard I didn’t so the likelihood of me serving 10 was sort of slim. I wound up serving six years one month one day. And probably my good service there, I put hundreds of people if thousands through GED, got them their GEDs. I taught sales, public speaking skills, how to read, how to write. I wrote letters home for people. One of the funny things is I wrote letters for the warden denying claims by the inmates. Well many inmates couldn’t write a letter complaining about whatever they were complaining about.

So as a favor to them they would say “Mr. Gay would you help me with this?” I would write the letter to the warden. The warden would write “No” on the top and send it back to me to draft the whole letter turning down the letter I had written to him. It was sort of like a time warp bizarre situation. I’d make the argument as good as I could going in and then I had to come back with an even stronger letter from the warden turning it down, they didn’t just say “No” they always explained why. So I had to overcome my own good arguments. And I was in essence writing to myself the inmate didn’t write it and the warden didn’t write it.

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Michael: So how old were you when you went in?

Ben: I was 48 and the reason I know that was on my fifth day in the hole it was August 22nd which is my birthday. And as we came out I heard somebody say August 22nd I sort of lost track of time. And I said to the guard who was escorting me back over to the FCI I said

“It’s my birthday join in” and I started singing *Happy Birthday to Me*. And about the second course he joined in and he said “You got a great attitude you’re going to do well here.” And I said “Well I’m Irish I have a sense of humor and I have a feeling I’m going to need it to get through this experience. Literally I was five days before my 48th birthday when I went in six years one month one day later I came out. While I was in there I ran the greatest direct mail program in the history of mankind. I also by the way I wrote “*The Closers Part 2*” in prison.

Michael: Oh did you? Okay.

Ben: In long hand and mailed it home until I got the job in the warehouse and I had access to...

Michael: You already had the rights to “*The Closers*”.

Ben: Yeah. I had been selling that for several years.

Michael: What was the direct mail program you put together?

Ben: Well first of all I mean that seriously and not seriously. The unserious side was I really did write, well I don’t know I guess they’re both serious come to think of it, I wrote my newsletter from prison, mailed it home, didn’t have to smuggle it you can mail stuff as long as it’s not government property. Of course it was government property it was on government paper, typed on a government computer...

Michael: Right.

Ben: ... and so on, but still I wrote the newsletter, wrote “*The Closers Part 2*” first half of it probably long hand, mailed it home and they fixed it and after that I was able to send it home, virtually typeset ready to be scanned, and wrote the newsletter. And when I first got there you had to make collect calls home and it was preceded by “This call is coming to you collect from an inmate in the federal institutions” that sort of crimped my style. But rather quickly they by happenstance swapped the system where if you had money on your account when you made a call it just automatically came off your commissary account and there was no announcement.

So I would get messages from the office written or discussed in a separate conversation where I called them and we were limited to 10 minutes. So I would make phone calls to clients who absolutely had to speak to me. Most clients came to believe I was very, very

busy, and that whoever they talked to would have to handle it whatever it was. Mr. Gay is sort of hard to reach. But when I really had to reach I would call them and invariably I was in an airport which accounted for the screaming and the yelling and the intercoms in the background. So there are people who don't believe I was in prison. There were some people in our public speaking class last when we held the San Francisco literally didn't believe I was in prison. He said "During the time period you're talking about I talked to you on a regular basis."

I told the story and I tell them if they haven't heard it I tell them two or three inspirational stories that people are working, whatever and so on, broken leg and became a hockey player or whatever, standard motivational stories. And then I say "Let me tell you about a guy using the techniques we're talking about today, setting a goal, having a system." But without getting an old seminar, all the things I teach in the seminar and this would be about the fourth day of a four day seminar I said "Let me tell you about a friend of mine name Frank, and I'm not going to tell you his last name because oddly enough you'll know it when you hear the story, but most of you know him, or at least know of him.

And I tell the story of Frank who came to his office one day, it was raided, he couldn't believe it, he wasn't doing anything wrong in his opinion. Twelve people disagreed, yearlong trial, went in. While he was in his wife started an affair with another person stole his house, stole the significant amount of acreage they had, forged documents type thing, even forged their divorce papers and didn't steal the business she didn't know how to run that, but destroyed the business. Jump ahead in the story, when I left we were making about \$40,000 a month before my salary or whatever, but making about \$40,000 a month.

Michael: Now what were you making the with?

Ben: Closures.

Michael: Oh with the closures business okay.

Ben: Yeah with the closures. But I leave we're making \$40,000 a month profit I come back we're grossing \$4000 a month instead of making \$40,000 and the business is, oh I don't really remember now, \$140,000 in debt, people are banging on the doors and so on. But I'm grateful, one the evil Carlotta was gone which freed me up to marry GiGi who I'd known since the first weekend I was up here 33 years ago as we speak, to pursue her anyway. And the PO Box

was still good, the same box I've had for 33 years and the 800 number still worked. So I had over a million copies of the book out floating around with no Web site in it because I didn't know anything about Web sites and no email but at least the phone number and PO Box.

So some businesses coming in and I could contact people and rejuvenate them. So I got that tow hold I needed. So one campaign is I continue to run the business by mail order, writing copy, having them print it and send it out and so on, but that's sort of Part A and B. Part A was San Quentin voluntary Part B was Lompoc for six years one month one day, involuntary. It sounds like about what Glen went through because I think in your cover letter you said he spent five years in an Arizona prison.

Michael: Right.

Ben: Was that federal or state?

Michael: I think it was federal.

Ben: If it was it wouldn't surprise me because his home is in Florida so the federal authorities, not always, but they try not to make it easy on you. Your family is in Florida here's an idea we'll send you to Arizona. There was, now it's a woman's prison but then it was co-ed about 45 minutes from my house. They could have sent me there instead they sent me to Lompoc at the other end of the state.

Michael: Do you talk about your prison experience in some of your seminars in the stuff you do.

Ben: I do it in all seminars that are small and intimate where we'll get really good at something. If I'm talking to a 1000 people and they're salespeople I will tell the story, if it's appropriate. Let me tell you something amazing, the first time I told the story I had been out of prison 10 days and I did a seminar...well the first one I did was in Mexico, the next one I did I probably did in 30 days it was in Portland, Oregon and I said "Did all this stuff work?" Yeah I'm standing in front of you, you just paid me \$10,000 dollars to give a talk, you just bought whatever \$20,000 dollars worth of product and you want to know if it works. Folks I've been out of federal prison for about 30 days of course it works, and then I told them the story. And we broke for lunch or dinner or whatever. And out of a crowd of 150 maybe people, it wasn't a huge seminar, mostly everybody in that company a pretty substantial group. I think it was four people came up and sort of it was a secret handshake that gave it

to me, it was sort of like pull me in close. Thanks for saying that out loud I went through that too.

And in the San Francisco seminar a guy who's got the best voice I've ever heard in my life top salesman in his field comes up to me and he says "I'm amazed you told the story and I really appreciate it. I'm surprised we didn't meet at San Quentin. And I said "Why would I have met you at San Quentin were you teaching a course there?" He said "No I was there."

Michael: Wow!

Ben: He had spent state time. And one other person had served some, it wasn't very serious, but some amount of time. But in every group I've told the story people come up and sometimes very surprising people like the owner of the company or whatever, and I think Michael Milken one of the guys who lives right next door to me and the next cube, we weren't in sells in the camp we were dormitory style.

Michael: Yeah he was there.

Ben: Well Michael Milken was at the camp I should have gone to the coed camp at Pleasanton because that was far away from his house and they sent him there. But Michael Milken's top guy was in the bunk next to me his name was Wes Shear a Jewish guy who became an Indian while he was there so he could spend time out at the sweat lodge and not have to deal with the prison.

Michael: Was there anyone else indicted from your organization?

Ben: Well there were six or seven indicted because I took full responsibility I was the only one that drew jail time. Everybody else pled out and was given probation and fines. And three of us went right to the end were found guilty but they only got probation.

Michael: How much did you spend on your defense?

Ben: I probably would have spent a couple of hundred thousand dollars had I hired an attorney. But the government knew what losing the business and all had taken on me while claiming in trial I was rich and had all this money hidden away. They indicted me and appointed me a public defender on the first day.

Michael: So you went through with a public defender?

Ben: Yeah. But my point being they knew I could get a public defender because of financial distress, but in court they maintained that I was rich. They knew better that's the reason I had a public defender sitting next to me.

Michael: Could you have gotten your own representation?

Ben: Oh yeah I interviewed several people. I had a public defender who was seen to be reasonable who seemed to be reasonably competent, I could question that now. My only point of questioning wasn't a powerful...my only real complaint with him is he should have told me "Take the deal" and explained it to me in detail. He let me go through a yearlong trial under the impression that the worse that could happen is I would be sentenced to the three years they offered me, not knowing after you tie up a judge's courtroom for a year all bets are off.

Michael: Oh I see, so the deal would have been the three years and you would have only served maybe...

Ben: One, 14 months or something. Yeah that was a disservice. He wanted to make the \$70 an hour, whatever they pay public defenders. And it's not like a one-time discussion that he didn't handle well, I said numerous times as the trial went on "You roll with ice so I do a year so what." In fact I even said, after your sentence you go through a pre-sentencing report officer or something and they write up a PSI Pre-Sentencing Investigation, and I went to her immediately afterwards and didn't realize the seriousness of it when you're in prison.

Everything in prison is based on your PSI as if God gave it to Moses. And my attorney didn't go through that with me; he said "Well there is no problem. I got another case I got to do and we'll be in touch, we'll appeal this." And I thought not with you we want. But I go up and I have this meeting and I remember seeing the lady she said "How are you feeling?" And I said "A little beaten up I didn't expect to be found guilty." And this is found guilty before your sentence. And I said "But if somebody has to do a year or two for this it ought to be me I was head of the company."

She must have been in hysterics on the inside because that isn't what they had in mind. But as recently, I guess, as the day I was sentenced and talking to her I still believe I was going to do a year, no more than two years. So clearly saying "If somebody's got to do it, it might as well be me. What do you want to know?" Here's what...the pre-sentencing thing that was wrong but worked to my

advantage, they wrote in the pre-sentencing report that they sincerely believed I had \$26 million dollars in cash stashed somewhere. This from the government who took all the records we had with them and knew better. We didn't gross \$26 million dollars in the 10 years it was in business. And they knew that what was in the bank balance and how little I was...

Michael: Well was that business going for 10 years?

Ben: Yeah from 1976 to 1986. So they knew it but she put in the sentencing report \$26 million. Well only certain people are supposed to read your pre-sentencing report your counselor, and I say that with a smile...

Michael: Yeah. Yeah.

Ben: ... the guard who didn't want to be in dangerous places so he said "I'll be a counselor" and people like that. But reality is guys got nothing to do with 2:00 in the morning he's sitting in the guard hut, he goes in and opens up the files and reads what he wants to read. So rather quickly word got around I had \$26 million dollars in cash.

Stay tuned for part two . . . That is the end of this interview.

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