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Seeing Life & Business through a New Lens
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ROAD WARRIOR EMOTIONS

*insight from the Perspective
of a Road Warrior Couple*

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IF YOU TRAVEL FOR YOUR LIVELIHOOD, there is a chance that you are spending a lot of time in a hotel and you are missing important evenings away from family. Whether you travel by car or plane there are unique challenges on every family member involved and a wide range of emotions and issues to work through.

DEFINITION OF WARRIOR: A warrior is a “person skilled in combat or warfare especially within the context of a clan-based society that recognizes a separate warrior class.” Certainly *Road Warriors* are in a class of their own. Whoever coined the term *Road Warrior* might have been implying a toll is taken and one can emotionally wear down night-after-night, week-after-week, and year-after-year as a traveling representative. While you may not consider yourself Spartacus or Crixus, conquering the challenges of being away from family and home can be formidable.

With 12 years of *ROAD WARRIOR* expertise, featured in this article is a couple who reveal their emotions and experience. They have four children, including one having special needs. As

veterans of work travel they have been through various stages and have provided insights that might be helpful for others.

WARRIOR WIFE readily shared some of the personal ways that she and her husband encourage each other through texts, emails, putting a love note in his suit case, leaving a quick voice message to give personal touches and reminders of devotion. They have developed ongoing intimacy even though 80% of their life is lived apart. Through humor and familiarity, they have created coded names using movie characters to speak to one another knowingly and to keep interest in each other vibrantly alive. They strive to enhance their relationship although they are miles apart during the work week. This has helped to keep the emotional closeness. Warrior Wife related, “Just because he is physically gone does not mean he is gone from me.”

It is not easy though as life’s demands are abundant. She expounded on issues she deals with about his return after a trip; “There is the whole stress of him coming back. For me when he is gone, he is not gone a couple of days, rather he is

**ROAD WARRIOR
WHAT IT IS
NOT:**
A character from
Mad Max 2

**ROAD WARRIOR
WHAT IT
IS:**
A professional who is
engaged in
business travel.

gone an entire week at a time. He comes home late on Friday night or Saturday morning and leaves again Sunday afternoon- that gets really hard. The little time that he is home there is a ton to do, a plethora of things to get ready for the next trip. While I would rather be spending quality time with him, I am stuck with a load full of laundry and trying to get him packed again and ready to go. On top of that, the kids want him, I want him, I want him alone, and the kids want him without me. It is an understatement to say it is a challenge getting back together, especially in the ways that are needed for the health of our marriage. There is the initial stress of readjusting. When he comes home the house is clean, then I have to get used to the suitcase, clutter on the counter top and the table full of junk until he leaves again. I do not want to let it bug me and eat at me so I take a deep breath and remind myself of what is truly important. Instead of being irritated I reach out to hug him as I really am glad and grateful that he is home. I am self-aware of how the little stuff sometimes can get to me. It has been helpful when he is home to find time so that I can have a little get-away for myself; like time for a bath without any distractions or a night off from having to prepare a meal. We have what we call, 'Fend for yourself night.'"

The key for this wife's sanity upon her husband's return was having time alone to find respite by reading, going on a bike ride with her husband, going for a walk, the simple things that she could not do when he was traveling. She reported, "Since I am home, I want to go somewhere and have dinner out, yet because he is gone during the week and dining out each night, he looks forward to eating at home. It could create conflict if we did not learn to compromise."

Another insightful key that the Warrior Wife spoke about was to not compartmentalize home duties and family time as separate entities. Rather she suggested that they integrate the home chores by including the kids into the work that had to be done. For example, if the garage needed cleaning, her husband would invite their ten year old son out to help him in the garage and

they would have father-son time. This became an interactive way of having quality time and yet teaching their son how to be an integral part of keeping the home organized. Of course she added, "This did not take the place of dad going on overnight scouting trips with our son."

THE STRESS TOOK ITS TOLL IN THEIR COMMUNICATION at one point and she said that they decided to go to counseling. "We got into a rut and lost the emotional connection. It is a delicate balancing act. We were like business partners; all we had time to do was handle crisis. We learned that we have to let things go sometimes to reconnect. It is easy to get too busy in the course of life. At that point we were just functioning for the kids. It was a gradual decline, we were so busy, and our emotional connectivity was lost."

THE WARRIOR HUSBAND provided thoughtful perspective, "Travel equals time and time away from your most important relationships abrades the consciousness. The challenges are spiritual, relational, and physical."

THIS ROAD WARRIOR HUSBAND having traveled extensively over the course of the last 12 years has acquired a sense of familiarity with the road. Initially the travel was an exciting adventure. The travel came with nice restaurants and perks. However, with candor, our Road Warrior Husband provided an *InSight* Out 20/20 Vision perspective, "The cure for me lay in recognizing that the road offers no relief or fulfillment, but home does. The road is disciplined by healthy relationships and appropriate priorities and desires. In retrospect, I considered myself a runaway when I first began business travel. I had four kids, one with special needs, and my wife was going nuts with all the chaos and work. I didn't want to cut off contact from my family or even escape from them, I just wanted to run away for a little while for some quiet time and find my happy place and rest. Funny, work was rest. There wasn't any rest for my wife though. 2001 was when I began to tame the road and become a functional remote extension of my family."

Personalizing an old saying, Warrior Husband stated, "Time apart can make the heart grow fonder, but too much time and I was concerned her heart might forget why 'she loved the neglectful bum' in the first place. I quickly learned that a week away couldn't be made up at the same pace as a week home. The intensity in the time together was higher by necessity. In my case, my wife not only needed me to take the kids off her hands, she needed me to listen to concerns and problems she faced while I was gone, she needed to watch TV or a movie with me, she needed time away from the kids with me, she needed me to take her out to eat, she needed to cuddle, she needed intimacy, she needed things fixed, she needed me to get up to speed on everything that had happened while I was gone. Her needs were different from mine. I was tired from travel, tired from the demanding customer; I was ready to be home to relax, but when I got home there were piles on my desk, kids with projects, and an exhausted wife."

IN EXPLORING what it took for this husband and wife to grow closer rather than grow apart, this Warrior Husband said, "I needed to step it up a level. We no longer segmented life into when I got home and when I was traveling instead we worked to make the process as seamless as possible." He began to field calls from his wife and the kids whenever he was needed unless he absolutely could not take the call. He acknowledged these were not trite, "I miss you" calls, they were "problem solving" calls. These calls were often more work than his business obligations. He began to use email to help proof the kids' papers and Google to look up information and images which he emailed to his kids to help them get their school projects in on time. He dealt with discipline issues and any assortment of emotional crisis. He also lightened his wife's load at home by taking, "homework" on the road; he balanced the checkbook, paid bills on-line, and made phone calls. He acquiesced, "The road was no longer a happy place or safe haven, it had become an obstacle to getting the work of life done. Being attentive to my family although I was traveling meant that when I came home, the piles were lighter, the

projects less frequent, the problems mitigated, and that just left dinner, sex, and cuddling mostly in that order."

CONCLUSION: Not everyone will have the same set of difficulties and not everyone will find the same solutions that this couple discovered. Yet, there are commonalities experienced with all Road Warrior Families. Perhaps through their narrative you may discover something that can encourage you and if nothing else, hopefully you may have found that you are not alone in your thoughts.

Who is Cal Kripke?

The name Kripke will probably be self-evident by its literal pronunciation "Crypt Key" - Ha! Yes, Encryption, Hash Keys, Cryptic code... ^{In}SIGHT^{Out} has an underpaid (Well if truth be told, I don't pay him anything at all) contributing editor who will donate ideas as the spirit moves, as he too is a Road Warrior.

Name Significance: Cal the Encryption Key... Revealing truth with cryptic prowess. Bringing the message out from the text... It risks sounding egocentric but promises creative thought. The name Cal was chosen as, it didn't seem as overused as many other names, plus it had the right ring to it, thus Cal Kripke.

Warning: There may be times where a decoder ring is necessary for decoding his thought. If at any time you need decoding, just let us know.

CAL'S CRYPTIC KEYS OF CUBICLE BLISS

BEST PRACTICES PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL

DUTY THROUGH DISCIPLINE: I (Cal) have a duty whether I am on the road or not, but when I am on the road, duty calls more abundantly. Working for a Fortune 500 company my career requires working over

the phone and email, handling crisis, and managing relationships. I have a duty to communicate with my wife and children, troubleshoot problems, etc. These are “homespun” duties. I also have “frontier” duties, I have the duty to my company to complete my work, I have a duty to restrict contact with strangers, colleagues, and customers outside of business hours, and I have a duty to be a bore. Being a bore isn’t flattering but it is very effective. A reputation is supremely useful in engagements. Once you set your standards, you settle the issue. I only had one situation where a woman was persistent enough to ignore my standards. Here are a few of my best practices when traveling to fulfill my duty as a father, husband, and technical consultant.

“WH” Principles

Who am I spending my time with after work hours? In general, no one. I may have dinner with my colleagues or occasionally with my customer but only in a group setting. I might do a one-on-one meal with a male customer, but while I might feel safe that he’s not the opposite sex, I’m really not safe from little things like, “have another drink, you’re falling behind,” “That girl is looking at you man, and her friend is hot, come on, help me out!” or “I know a great little bar down the road where the girls are really hot!” If the dinner isn’t a business or work-related dinner or the customer/colleague isn’t a friend that I know and trust, it isn’t worth going to dinner anywhere with them. Alas, I am a bore.

When am I spending my time with others? Unless I have to work late at the customer site, I know that 5 – 7 PM CST is prime time to field calls from my family. Generally, dinner doesn’t have to happen until 7PM, and avoiding happy hour is a good idea. I don’t need to loosen up after work with a couple of drinks. I also don’t need to be out beyond dinner. I’ve made the mistake of staying up with some colleagues and having a few drinks, but it is never a good idea. I always regret the lost sleep and clarity of mind at

sunrise. Going to bed early makes me a bore, but I don’t have the hang-over in the morning.

Where am I after work? My hotel room generally. I don’t often go out for dinner with customers/colleagues unless they are trusted friends. We don’t go to topless bars, Hooters, or other establishments like night clubs. I do get pressure sometimes, but I cure it by talking about my family. I seldom eat out by myself unless the meal doesn’t travel well, but if I do I get a table rather than sit at the bar (for example: an Outback Steakhouse).

Why am I doing this? It is always a good idea to ask myself why I am doing what I am doing. Why am I going with these guys? Why am I talking to her? Why am I not in my hotel room working? Did I have too much to drink and I think it would be fun to go? Am I bored? Is it pressure I feel from colleagues or customers? **Why** usually comes into use when I haven’t been careful with the other “WH” principles.

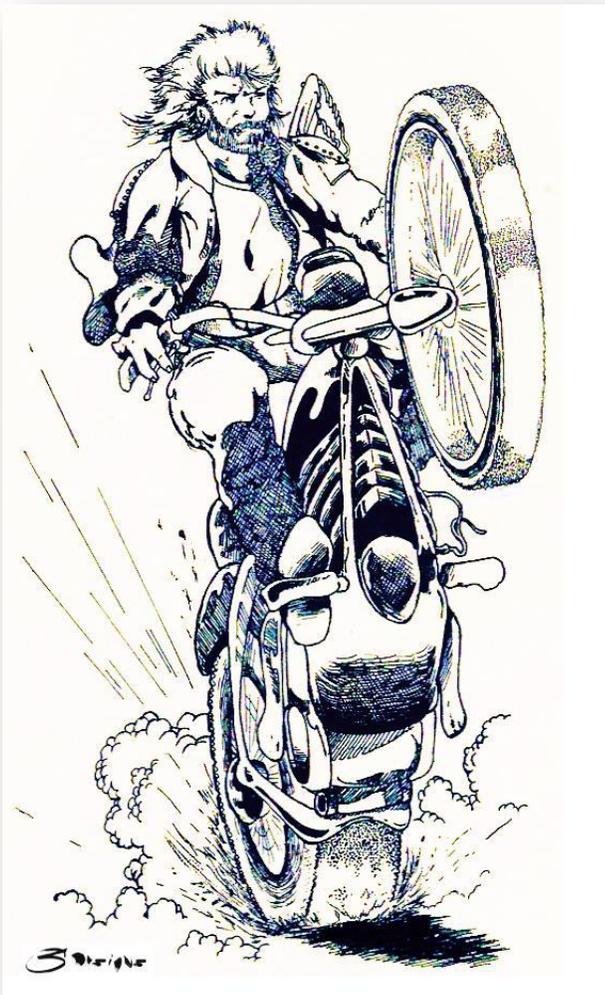
How is proactive. **How** do I need to deal with this situation. It is paramount to give thought ahead of time to how you will deal with a situation. You cannot think of every scenario, but you can think through many settings to get a good idea. I am prepared for unfavorable reviews by others when I decline a situation. It is better than the alternative. I rarely work with women in my field, but if I do, I have thought ahead about dinner, working late, etc. If the guys want to hit the night club I know what I will say or do. **How** is the method you use to avoid awkward situations or a position of weakness when the challenge comes.

What is reactive. **What** am I doing, **what** was I thinking, **what** happened? If the “how” and other “WH” principles are followed, you shouldn’t need “what.” These guiding principles might seem pedestrian, but it is simple and simple is easy to remember.

CAL'S CRYPTIC KEYS ROAD TYPES

Here are some types I have known. Of course these are just sketches from my empirical travels.

THE PARTY ANIMAL is generally the youngest of the road warriors. He or she works hard and plays harder. They are usually in sales or a social role in business, but not always. They drink heavily and eat extravagantly on their employers' budget, then stroke their egos by flirting with the opposite sex. It makes no difference if they are married, single, or in a relationship of some type, they find excitement being on the road.

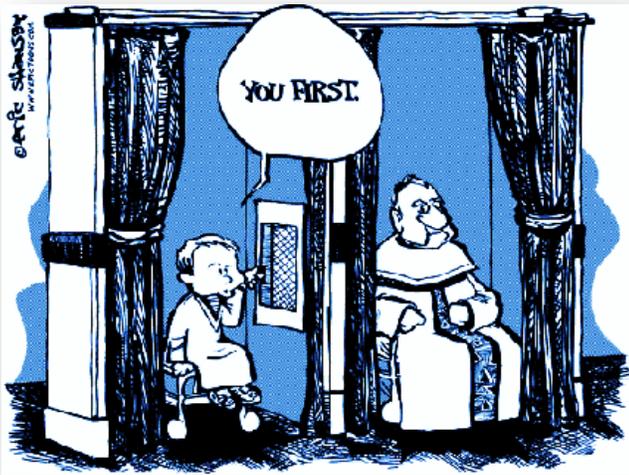


THE WORKER is young or old and works long days, eating while working and making everyone with them work at the same pace. They find their effort in work is matched only by the effort they make to talk about how hard they work. The worker doesn't have time to drink and flirt; he's got too much to do. He (or she) finds the travel a great relief from distraction where real work can get done. The worker and **the escapist** are alike in this but with different motives.

THE ESCAPIST is young or old but almost always married or stuck in some type of family obligation. Travel allows them to escape from that role, from the responsibility, the distractions, the demands. Whether they work a lot or a little is of no importance. It is only important that they are away. Those I have known in this role generally tell their spouse that they can't be bothered while they are on the road, effectively eliminating phone calls.

WHAT TO GLEAN from CAL'S ROAD TYPES? You will get a good amount of insight from everyone involved since personality and character traits are very influential in this lifestyle. I also think the results are significantly different if a husband travels versus if a wife travels. The presence of children certainly flavors Cal's experience. Cal candidly shares what he has observed with many contractors, colleagues, and customers, so along with his own experience he too, shares his observations of others.

**NEXT
A FLY-ON-THE-WALL
BIRDS EYE VIEW
A
CONFESSIONAL
SO TO SPEAK.
WHATEVER YOU CALL IT
CAL TELLS ALL
FROM HIS EXPERIENCE.**



Confessional Confidential from the INSIGHTout

Everyone thinks it,
but Cal speaks it

CAL'S EXPOSE'

SEX: This is important and it is too easy to overlook in a road warrior life-style. When I found my fatigue overcame my libido I began injecting myself with testosterone every week. That made a big difference for a 46 year old man. It is best that sex occur before the trip, it is good after the trip, but can be optional. Menopause, fatigue, and a multitude of distractions can attenuate sexual desire and more importantly, sexual action. If a normal, healthy relationship requires a middle aged couple to have sex once a week, then twice a week is a good idea for travel. As I will explain later, a traveling husband is better prepared for the road when he makes love to his wife and his wife is in a stronger position in her husband's absence with the warmth she feels reflecting on the intimacy.

DUTY THROUGH DISCIPLINE: Cal shares earlier in the section of Duty through Discipline his personal choice and further expounds internal thoughts in the following expose'.

Regardless of what you see in the movies, 99% of the time a woman will never approach a man randomly to flirt or seduce. I am persuaded that a man must always, at a minimum, put out a signal that he's interested or at least, flirtatious. As you can imagine, alcohol helps with this. I don't get into awkward situations because I won't send a signal. **I'm a neon bore.**

I am a
**NEON
BORE**



HA...

DID HE REALLY SAY THAT??

CAL goes on to say...**WHAT?** *Now this is really interesting for the wives to read. Read on ladies...*

If I get in a conversation with a woman for any particular reason, I provide terse dialogue and limit eye contact. This works well in demonstrating a lack of interest. I used to think that being a middle aged man, overweight, with a wedding ring, was a solid defense, but it is not. I am surprised when a woman makes a simple flirt, but it is easy to rebuff aloofly. I haven't encountered a woman yet who is ambitious enough to try harder, they just move on. The greater challenges have been with women I have worked with as customers or colleagues. My currency goes up as they come to know me. As unbelievable as it seems, the

way I am with my wife and my children, attracts women. It is easy to have a false sense of security.

DUTY IS NOT WHAT GIVES ME STRENGTH IN THESE SITUATIONS, BUT IT IS DUTY THAT COMPELS ME.

My relationship with God, my wife, and my children is where I draw my strength. Low testosterone was a bonus too. *(OK, now...are you kidding me?! There is a manly man, whose ego is strong enough to man-up enough to share these internal processes so that other men will know they are not alone in their thoughts?!)* Sexual relations with my wife before a trip leaves warm and cherished thoughts and feelings going into my engagements. I truly love my wife. I think she is the most beautiful woman I have ever known and my arousal is attached to her. I have a profound connection to her because I have never been with another. I am convinced these factors parlayed my success.

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL: The road not only holds temptations, but it takes us out of our normal environment of discipline. It is a double whammy, on the one hand you deal with encounters you seldom see at home and on the other, you are removed from the routine and the boundaries that insulate you from many of these encounters. Your normal schedule of sleep is affected in a strange place, sometimes not sleeping well at all. Eating is unbalanced and much different from home. I tend to fill my evening with work and often stay up too late working. I don't get the final call from my wife, "Are you coming to bed?" Reading scripture is sporadic. Sometimes you forget to pack your Bible, but mostly, you aren't getting enough sleep and you're working too many hours. You lose your quiet time with the Lord. This leads to bad habits, so when you are home, you have to redevelop the habit of your daily reading and meditation. It is very disruptive. The effects of travel don't wear off quickly. I have come home exhausted, sleeping 10 hours or more the first day or two. **Groggy, with a loss of mental clarity.** A couple of days recovery is all I usually need, but if I'm leaving the next Monday I end up having a deficit over the

weekend. On a few occasions, this pattern has endured for nearly a month.

CAL CONTINUES...

When I am on the road, I know I need spiritual renewal the most. I have to remain vigilant in my behavior. I cannot choose to "swear like a sailor" with my colleagues or customers. I cannot choose to engage in dirty jokes and inappropriate dialogue. I do work in a professional environment, so it isn't often that I encounter foul or coarse language, but you will always find it somewhere. It is easy to think you are just being a "Roman among the Roman's," but I don't kid myself. Righteousness and purity comes from a relationship with God and that relationship springs from the Word.

STRESS: I have touched this point along the way but I thought I would provide deliberate mention here, that the fatigue, work, life management, emotions, etc., of a traveling life style create a significantly higher amount of stress than a non-traveling life style. I see

more divorce, alcohol intake, poor eating habits, and risqué life style behaviors in my traveling counterparts than in my non-traveling counterparts. I was mentoring one consultant who constantly made the rounds at the customer site so he could say "good morning" to specific women in the building. That led to

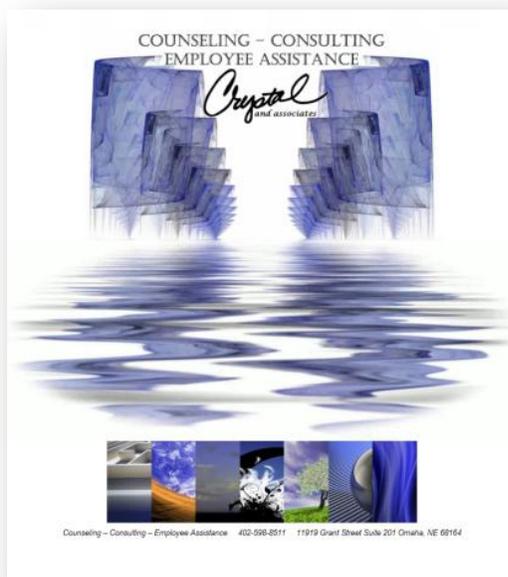
long lunches he took with one of these women to buy clothing at a nearby mall. When I asked him about his behavior he said she had good taste in clothing and she was willing to help him choose some nice clothes. I asked him what his wife would think about the practice and he assured me that it would be too much work to get out with her. A few months later he was living in a hotel; his wife had kicked him out because of his felonious behavior. He had to work very hard to get back in the house and his stress was only multiplied by



an angry and distrustful wife. I have another colleague who is very good at his job, but has been through three marriages. These people never seem stressed at the job site, their stress is at home.

It takes a lot of work to manage the stress of home. It cannot be neglected. It is much harder than working with a customer. It is not professional, it is personal, and when it is personal it is also emotional. Emotion is the hardest work of all.

WORK: Lastly, but not unimportantly, the business of life involves the business of one's livelihood. The balance to all of this is to continue to be the very best you can be in your field. To be that key contributor year after year, I have been able to be that for many consecutive years. It is humbling to possess such favor when I know I am tending to both my own "flock" and to the "flock" of my employer. I see *the workers* (from Road Types) and think, "I can't compete with that" yet I am rewarded at the end of the year. It confirms for me that I am balancing work and life when my employer recognizes me and my wife and children love me. This I must give over to Providence. I have no tip, trick, or technique. I am persuaded by experience, that this is the fruit of my labor. The Lord goes with me on every engagement.



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