

## *Right on the Money*

by Michael Feir, Toronto Canada  
([michael.feir@gmail.com](mailto:michael.feir@gmail.com))

When I think of things I've learned which truly changed me as a person, I invariably think of experiences where control of the outcome wasn't completely in a teacher's hands. If everything is pre-scripted, you can inject as much passion and conviction into a lesson and it'll still stink of being a setup. My father had no training to be a teacher but was the best one I've ever had. A lesson in ownership, the value of money, and debt, which he taught me as a young teenager has shaped me as a person ever since.

I used to be fascinated by electronic games. Being totally blind, I couldn't actually play them properly but I liked to see how far I could take things with memory and exploration. In those days, I got an allowance of five dollars per week for doing chores and being well-behaved. My father wanted to teach me more about how money worked. He waited until I had saved up a little and then took me out to a store where electronic games were sold. He let me choose one which happened to cost around thirty dollars. I couldn't remember precisely how much money I had but thought I had around fifteen. My tendency to lose track of that was a good indicator to him that I needed to have a better grounding in financial matters. He offered to lend me what I didn't have and purchase the game right away, if I agreed to pay him back. That sounded pretty darned good to me, so I agreed.

As he expected, I grew bored with the game long before I had paid back what I owed for it. For the first week and a half, it seemed to me that I had made a good decision. I was thankful that I had been found trust-worthy enough to have credit extended to me. However, once I had exhausted the game's limited potential to entertain me as a blind person, the rest of the month it took me to pay off my debt seemed to drag unexpectedly. There were too many times when my little brother was able to buy candy or less expensive toys, while I had no money to my name whatsoever. Chores had a way of seeming far more objectionable when I knew that weeks would pass before I had anything to show for them. I hadn't realized how much I would miss money if I didn't have it.

At last, I reached the point where my debt to my father was paid. The next week, he handed me five dollars. Never before had a flat rectangular sheet of paper



**Revolutionize Your Learning! Transform Your World.**

Global Learning Partners, Inc. • 877-923-3393 • [www.globalearning.com](http://www.globalearning.com)

without any tactile markings on it meant so much to me. Later, he sat me down for a talk. He explained how and why people get themselves into financial trouble. It was all about taking shortcuts which ought not to be taken; all about weighing up things in terms of lasting value and what you gave up by getting them. He explained how there were times when credit was a very good and useful thing, such as when people could purchase a home with a mortgage.

Years later, my father's words have stuck with me. I've been unemployed nearly all my life. Despite that, I have a very good credit rating because I've refused to ever spend more than I could pay back immediately. I also never lend something which I couldn't lose with good grace. Because of the lengths my father went to teach me, I know the value of money and a whole lot else besides. I chose the game and chose to go into debt to acquire it sooner, rather than later. People have often remarked upon my level of patience. That lesson was where a lot of that willingness to wait came from. Because I couldn't at all claim that I had been hoodwinked or manipulated, I had to face the consequences of my decision squarely. Because of that prior experience, *my father's words were affective (and effective!) enough to make me a better person.*



***Revolutionize Your Learning! Transform Your World.***

Global Learning Partners, Inc. • 877-923-3393 • [www.globalearning.com](http://www.globalearning.com)