**14190, Mario Marino – Retirement**

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today is a momentous day for me. After 34 years with this great company I am retiring. I have to say that when I first came here I had many plans for rising in the company but I didn’t think about what my retirement would look like. Isn’t that the way it is when we’re young. We think we are invincible and will live and work forever. I remember when I interviewed with John McNeil who became my mentor in the beginning. He was then fourth in the company. I asked him if he knew he was hiring the next president. The look on his face was priceless. He had a poker face and to anyone else it probably looked like he wasn’t fazed at all. But, I could in his eyes that he would just wait and see if I could live up to my bold boast.

I began my career here as a sales representative just like most of us. I rose in the company the way you can successfully rise, with lots of hard work. I studied my customers and learned their plans and their needs and I found ways for us to meet their needs while staying within our profit margins and growth plans. As I worked my up through the ranks I put that same tenacity to work make myself successful as I helped this company be successful. Along the way John mentored me and taught me the ropes at each step of my career. Even when he was no longer my boss he was still there to offer me advice and counsel.

My boss for the last twenty years has been Henry Demone. Henry is a different sort of person and a different sort of boss than John. He’d heard of my bold challenge in my interview when John hired me. He wasn’t convinced; he was more amused that someone brand new should be so bold. His mentoring was to challenge me every step of the way to see if he could trip me up. Ah, but I was up to the challenge. I made sure no one in leadership saw any weakness or sign of being intimidated. Then, I made sure that I watched him like a hawk and learned all I could learn, building upon my experience in previous positions.

As I grew and moved up the ladder I made sure that I emulated my mentors and took younger representatives under my wing. I taught them the ropes and helped them to not make as many mistakes as they would have without any help. Of course, I made my share of my own mistakes and the ones after me made their share of mistakes.

The last 34 years have been a great ride, with enough ups and downs to match the wildest roller coaster in the world. We’ve had successes, failures and everything in between. I’ve worked my share of 60 hour work weeks and I’ve seen slow periods. But, it’s been the greatest ride I could ever have imagined. Today you hear about people changing jobs and careers multiple times in their lives. I couldn’t imagine going to a different company every couple of years. I have enjoyed every minute of my time with this company and wouldn’t have changed anything about it.

If you are an employee lower on the totem pole don’t be quick to take the advice of outsiders to move around. This is still the best company to work for in my opinion. If I were young and just starting out I would still make the career choice to stay here and work my way up. If you are a customer then consider the things I told you about this company. As a customer stability is a good thing in a company you do business with. You know that you can depend on them to produce the product you order. You know that they will keep their business contracts and will be in business long after you signed your first contract with them. That’s important to employees and to customers.

In \_\_\_\_\_ I made good my boast and became the president and COO of the company. Everything looks different from the top but not necessarily easier or harder, just different. The main difference is that instead of taking orders I do more giving orders. Instead of looking for my next step upward, I’ve spent my time trying to make my mark on this position before I left. I hope that I’ve done that. I hope that I’ve set the example for the next president and COO for how things should be done.

All in all, I am proud to have been a part of this business for 34 years. I’m proud the contribution I’ve made and the legacy I am leaving. I give credit to John McNeil and Henry Demone for their example as much as their training and mentoring. I know I’m not the only person they taught but I believe I may be the most grateful. Not every boss wants to train his successor to be better than him but that was their goal, to help me be the best I could be and hopefully to improve upon what they did in this company. That became my goal when I trained those under my leadership.

This company has been one of the highlights of my life. It’s been more than just a job and I hope that all of our employees feel the same. If any of you ever question staying for the long haul just come ask me and I’ll remind you why it’s the best decision you could possibly make.

Thank you,

(If you want to you could tell a short story about each man you have mentioned when you name him. Funny stories are best told from experience.)