

## CREATING MEMORIES WITH SAFETY

By David G. Lynn

**Our memories speak volumes and they represent footprints in our lives that mold who we are. Over the years, I have been blessed with incredible experiences with my family, and those memories have had a powerful influence on my life.**

**I value those recollections,** but there is one family memory that I have lost. I never had the opportunity to meet or talk to my grandfather, Elbert Collins Lynn, better known as E.C. I have heard interesting stories that describe him. I have seen pictures of my grandfather, but unfortunately, every recollection of him is at best second-hand and watered down by years of his absence. E.C. is a memory that I wish I had firsthand, but unfortunately, the memory is lost.

My most prevalent secondhand memory of my grandfather is that he was a carpenter by trade and traveled around working on construction jobs. I do not know what types of jobs or projects, but I do know that one project led him to Kingsport, TN, in 1961. The details of that project have always been sketchy and brief, but the ending is always consistent. My grandfather was building forms around a column when a cement truck backed over him, crushing him under the wheels. The incident claimed his life at 9:15 a.m. on Sept. 27, 1961. He was only 44 years old and my father was a freshman in college when he heard the news. My Uncle James and Uncle Dan (E.C.'s brothers) drove to Newberry College in South Carolina to break the news to my dad. Can you imagine what went through my dad's head when my two uncles appeared unexpectedly? The timing and nature of the incident was obviously tragic, and I have always wanted to know more about the details of the day that stole a memory from me.

### Vantage Point

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My dad has only shared a few details that he remembers about the event. The cement truck backed over my grandfather. Now, many times when my dad hears a backup alarm on a truck, he thinks, what if that could have been the difference between life and death for my grandfather? Many people in my family believe that the incident is one reason we have backup alarms today. Another memory that he shares is that the owner of the prominent construction company, Charlie Daniel ("Big Charlie"), personally wrote him a letter offering his condolences. Big Charlie promised that if my dad ever needed a job he could work at Daniel International. My dad never pursued the offer, but he always speaks of the letter with respect and appreciation because Big Charlie himself took the time to write it. My dad lost the letter years ago, but it remains one of the focal points of his recollection of the event. Even though the details of the incident have been limited, I have always recognized that this one single moment stole a memory that I can never retrieve.

If we look hard enough, every tragedy will reveal its own unique irony. In my case, I have always thought it odd that I work in the safety field. I started working with South Carolina OSHA in 1991 and from the moment I was hired, I realized I was in a profession that could have impacted my grandfather's life and possibly enabled memories that have since been lost. The irony never stopped me in my tracks, but as I learned more about OSHA requirements, I always felt that there was a unique paradox in what I was doing. As a compliance officer with OSHA, I even issued citations for vehicles without backup alarms. I recognized that I had the power to influence an environment in a way that could prevent what happened to my grandfather from happening to someone else. The influence had the authority to create memories rather than steal them.

As my career progressed, I managed safety at two manufacturing facilities and eventually I was blessed with the opportunity to interview with Fluor Corp. The moment that the opportunity arose, the irony of my choice of profession in light of my grandfather's

death rose to a new level. For you see, not only did I work in a field that had the power to influence safety, now I had the chance to work for the company where my grandfather died. The idea felt weird.

In November 2004, I accepted the health, safety and environmental regional manager position and began work with Fluor. When I walked through the doors of the corporate office in Greenville, SC, I could not help but wonder what my grandfather would think; yet another memory lost.

The irony does not end with my employment with Fluor. After being at the company for 3 months, the Tennessee Eastman project requested that I conduct a safety audit at its facility. I quickly learned that the project was in Kingsport, TN, and that small bit of information prompted me to ask, "How long have we been at this facility?" The answer was eerie: since the early 1960s. The answer did not confirm that this was where my grandfather died, but the response sure did pique my interest and the fact made me uneasy.

I arrived on site eager to do a good job with the audit, but I was unsure how I would satisfy my curiosity. After all, how do you tell a project that your grandfather may have been killed on this site years ago? Broaching the subject was a little awkward, but after I got to know the leadership team on site, I could not help but ask, "Is there anyone still around who worked here in 1961?" I shared the motivation behind the question and the leadership team responded positively. They helped me find a man who was there the day my grandfather died, James Johnson (J.J.). I did not think that was possible, and the reality shocked me. That was an interview that I never expected. What questions do you ask in such a situation? Despite my anxiety, I discovered that the unanticipated opportunity was a blessing that drew me closer to the memory that I was seeking.

J.J. told me that the incident did not happen at the Eastman plant. He said that it happened down the road at another Daniel International project. They were building a plant in Kingsport, TN, when the incident occurred. He said he did not witness the incident, but he was on site when

it happened, and he remembered the project shut down for the day after. J.J. described how the cement truck was backing down a narrow portion of the building to make a pour around the base of a column, and for some unknown reason, my grandfather was unable to move out of the way. These simple details not only captured the essence of what I have always heard, but the conversation closed a loop in my curiosity. I had the opportunity to talk to someone who was there in 1961. That chance to build on a lost memory meant a lot to me.

As I drove back to Greenville after my visit, my lost memories began to take on new meaning. I thought about simple questions. What if there was barricade tape? What if they had a spotter? What if there was a backup alarm? What if they had completed a prejob brief? What if someone had warned him? In retrospect, the what-if questions paint a picture of regret that we cannot change. If you think

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forward, what-if questions are simple tools that impact the future.

Through the irony of my experiences, I have slowly begun to understand that memories are not only lost but they are created by asking "what if" at the right time. Memories are shaped by every individual's dedication and commitment to anticipate risk and execute the task with safety in mind. Every measure of safety excellence has the opportunity to shape our quality of life for the future and fashion memories that last generations.

Our vigilance to achieve zero injuries is not about a faceless number. The reality is that the finite number zero represents an infinite number of memories and experiences that bless the lives of people today. I challenge you today to consider the memory that I lost and make it your goal to create future memories for the people you work with every day. Your commitment to safety today creates memories tomorrow. **PSJ**

## Math Toolbox, continued from pp. 46-49

### Answers: The Case of the Quieter Workplace You Do the Math

Your answers may vary slightly due to rounding.

$$1) L_w = 10 \cdot \log_{10} \frac{0.03}{1 \cdot 10^{-12}} = 104.77 \text{ dB}$$

$$\text{or } L_w = 10 \cdot \log_{10} \frac{3 \cdot 10^{10}}{1} = 104.77 \text{ dB}$$

$$2) L_w = 10 \cdot \log_{10} \frac{0.0001}{1 \cdot 10^{-12}} = 80 \text{ dB}$$

$$\text{or } L_w = 10 \cdot \log_{10} \frac{1 \cdot 10^8}{1} = 80 \text{ dB}$$

$$3) W = 10^{(94+10)} \cdot 1 \cdot 10^{-12} = 0.00251 \text{ W/m}^2$$

$$\text{or } W = 10^{(94+10)} \cdot 1 = 2,511,886,432 \text{ pW/m}^2,$$

equivalent to about  $2.51 \cdot 10^9 \text{ pW/m}^2$

$$4) W = 10^{(85+10)} \cdot 1 \cdot 10^{-12} = 0.000316 \text{ W/m}^2$$

$$\text{or } W = 10^{(85+10)} \cdot 1 = 316,227,766 \text{ pW/m}^2,$$

equivalent to about  $3.16 \cdot 10^8 \text{ pW/m}^2$

### How Much Have I Learned?

Your answers may vary slightly due to rounding.

$$5) L_w = 10 \cdot \log_{10} \frac{0.004}{1 \cdot 10^{-12}} = 96 \text{ dB}$$

$$6) L_w = 10 \cdot \log_{10} \frac{0.002}{1 \cdot 10^{-12}} = 93 \text{ dB}$$

$$7) L_w = 10 \cdot \log_{10} \frac{0.001}{1 \cdot 10^{-12}} = 90 \text{ dB}$$

$$8) W = 10^{(95+10)} \cdot 1 \cdot 10^{-12} = 0.0032 \text{ W/m}^2$$

$$9) W = 10^{(92+10)} \cdot 1 \cdot 10^{-12} = 0.0016 \text{ W/m}^2$$

$$10) W = 10^{(89+10)} \cdot 1 \cdot 10^{-12} = 0.0008 \text{ W/m}^2$$

11) A change of 3 dB corresponds to a doubling (or halving) of sound power.

### The Language of Sound Power

12) c; 13) d; 14) b; 15) e; 16) a.