

# **Grade 11**

# **30F Comprehensive**

# **English**

# **Memoir Unit**

## **Comprehension**

**\_\_\_ Memoir Questions – Million Little Pieces**

**\_\_\_ Memoir Questions – Elbows Deep or Lost**

## **Writing Piece**

**\_\_\_ Pre Write Memoir**

**\_\_\_ Web Organizer**

**\_\_\_ Memoir Outline**

## **Comprehension Questions**

Each response should be a minimum of 3 sentences

**1. Who are the characters in the story?**

**Describe them fully.**

**2. Identify two types of conflict in the story.**

**Provide examples to support your statements.**

**3. What was your opinion of the story?**

**Provide examples to support your statements.**

## **Comprehension Questions**

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Describe them fully.**
  
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statements.**
  
- 3. What was your opinion of the story?  
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statements.**

# MILLION LITTLE PIELES

I wake to the drone of an airplane engine and the feeling of something warm dripping down my chin. I lift my hand to feel my face. My front four teeth are gone. I have a hole in my cheek, my nose is broken and my eyes are swollen nearly shut. I open them and I look around and I'm in the back of a plane and there's no one near me. I look at my clothes and my clothes are covered with a colorful mixture of spit, snot, urine, vomit and blood. I reach for the call button and I find it and I push it and I wait and thirty seconds later an Attendant arrives.

How can I help you?

Where am I going?

You don't know?

No.

You're going to Chicago, Sir.

How did I get here?

A Doctor and two men brought you on.

They say anything?

They talked to the Captain, Sir. We were told to let you sleep.

How long till we land?

About twenty minutes.

Thank you.

Although I never look up, I know she smiles and feels sorry for me. She shouldn't.

A short while later we touch down. I look around for anything I might have with me, but there's nothing. No ticket, no bags, no clothes, no wallet. I sit and I wait and I try to figure out what happened. Nothing comes.

Once the rest of the Passengers are gone I stand and start to make my way to the door. After about five steps I sit back down. Walking is out of the question. I see my Attendant friend and I raise a hand.

Are you okay?

No.

What's wrong?

I can't really walk.

If you make it to the door I can get you a chair.

How far is the door?

Not far.

I stand. I wobble. I sit back down. I stare at the floor and take a deep breath.

You'll be all right.

I look up and she's smiling.

Here.

She holds out her hand and I take it. I stand and I lean against her and she helps me down the Aisle. We get to the door.

I'll be right back.

I let go of her hand and I sit down on the steel bridge of the Jetway that connects the Plane to the Gate.

I'm not going anywhere.

She laughs and I watch her walk away and I close my eyes. My head hurts, my mouth hurts, my eyes hurt, my hands hurt. Things without names hurt.

I rub my stomach. I can feel it coming. Fast and strong and burning. No way to stop it, just close your eyes and let it ride. It comes and I recoil from the stench and the pain. There's nothing I can do.

Oh my God.

I open my eyes.

I'm all right.

Let me find a Doctor.

I'll be fine. Just get me out of here.

Can you stand?

Yeah, I can stand.

I stand and I brush myself off and I wipe my hands on the floor and I sit down in the wheelchair she has brought me. She goes around to the back of the chair and she starts pushing.

Is someone here for you?

I hope so.

You don't know.

No.

What if no one's there?

It's happened before, I'll find my way.

We come off the Jetway and into the Gate. Before I have a chance to look around, my Mother and Father are standing in front of me.

Oh Jesus.

Please, Mom.

Oh my God, what happened?

I don't want to talk about it, Mom.

Jesus Christ, Jimmy. What in Hell happened?

She leans over and she tries to hug me. I push her away.

Let's just get out of here, Mom.

My Dad goes around to the back of the chair. I look for the Attendant but she has disappeared. Bless her.

You okay, James?

I stare straight ahead.

No, Dad, I'm not okay.

He starts pushing the chair.

Do you have any bags?

My Mother continues crying.

No.

People are staring.

Do you need anything?

I need to get out of here, Dad. Just get me the ~~fuck~~ out of here.

They wheel me to their car. I climb in the backseat and I take off my shirt and I lie down. My Dad starts driving, my Mom keeps crying. I fall asleep.

About four hours later I wake up. My head is clear but everything throbs.

I sit forward and I look out the window. We've pulled into a Filling Station somewhere in Wisconsin. There is no snow on the ground, but I can feel the cold. My Dad opens the Driver's door and he sits down and he closes the door. I shiver.

You're awake.

Yeah.

How are you feeling?

Shirry.

Your Mom's inside cleaning up and getting supplies. You need anything?

A bottle of water and a couple bottles of wine and a pack of cigarettes.

Seriously?

Yeah.

This is bad, James.

I need it.

You can't wait.

No.

This will upset your Mother.

I don't care. I need it.

He opens the door and he goes into the Filling Station. I lie back down and I stare at the ceiling. I can feel my heart quickening and I hold out my hand and I try to keep it straight. I hope they hurry. Twenty minutes later the bottles are gone. I sit up and I light a smoke and I take a slug of water. Mom turns around.

Better?

If you want to put it that way.

We're going up to the Cabin.

I figured.

We're going to decide what to do when we get there.

All right.

What do you think?

I don't want to think right now.

You're gonna have to soon.

Then I'll wait till soon comes.

We head north to the Cabin. Along the way I learn that my Parents, who live in Tokyo, have been in the States for the last two weeks on business. At four A.M. they received a call from a friend of mine who was with me at a Hospital and had tracked them down in a hotel in Michigan. He told them that I had fallen face first down a Fire Escape and that he thought they should find me some help. He didn't know what I was on, but he knew there was a lot of it and he knew it was bad. They had driven to Chicago during the night.

So what was it?

What was what?

What were you taking?

I'm not sure.

How can you not be sure?

I don't remember.

What do you remember?

Bits and pieces.

Like what?

I don't remember.

We drive on and after a few hard silent minutes, we arrive. We get out of the car and we go into the House and I take a shower because I need it. When I get out there are some fresh clothes sitting on my bed. I put them on and I go to my Parents' room. They are up drinking coffee and talking but when I come in they stop.

Hi.

Mom starts crying again and she looks away. Dad looks at me.

Feeling better?

No.

You should get some sleep.

I'm gonna.

Good.

I look at my Mom. She can't look back. I breathe.

I just.

I look away.

I just, you know.

I look away. I can't look at them.

I just wanted to say thanks. For picking me up.

Dad smiles. He takes my Mother by the hand and they stand and they come over to me and they give me a hug. I don't like it when they touch me so I pull away.

Good night.

Good night, James. We love you.

I turn and I leave their Room and I close their door and I go to the Kitchen. I look through the cabinets and I find an unopened half-gallon bottle of whiskey. The first sip brings my stomach back up, but after that it's all right. I go to my Room and I drink and I smoke some cigarettes and I think about her. I drink and I smoke and I think about her and at a certain point blackness comes and my memory fails me.

**B**ack in the car with a headache and bad breath. We're heading north and west to Minnesota. My Father made some calls and got me into a Clinic and I don't have any other options, so I agree to spend some time there and for now I'm fine with it. It's getting colder. My face has gotten worse and it is hideously swollen. I have trouble speaking, eating, drinking, smoking. I have yet to look in a mirror. We stop in Minneapolis to see my older Brother. He moved there after getting divorced and he knows how to get to the Clinic. He sits with me in the backseat and he holds my hand and it helps because I'm scared. We pull into the Parking Lot and park the car and I finish a bottle and we get out and we start walking toward the Entrance of the Clinic. Me and my Brother and my Mother and my Father. My entire Family. Going to the Clinic. I stop and they stop with me. I stare at the Buildings. Low and long and connected. Functional. Simple. Menacing. I want to run or die or get fucked up. I want to be blind and dumb and have no heart. I want to crawl in a hole and never come out. I want to wipe my existence straight off the map. Straight off the fucking map. I take a deep breath. Let's go. We enter a small Waiting Room. A woman sits behind a desk reading a fashion magazine. She looks up. May I help you? My Father steps forward and speaks with her as my Mother and Brother and I find chairs and sit in them. I'm shaking. My hands and my feet and my lips and my chest. Shaking. For any number of reasons. My Mother and Brother move next to me and they take my hands and they hold them and they can feel what is happening to me. We look at the floor and we don't speak. We wait and we hold hands and we breathe and we think. My Father finishes with the woman and he turns around and he stands in front of us. He looks happy and the woman is on the phone. He kneels down.

They're gonna check you in now.

All right.

You're gonna be fine. This is a good place. The best place.

That's what I hear.

You ready?

I guess so.

We stand and we move toward a small Room where a man sits behind a desk with a computer. He meets us at the door.

I'm sorry, but you have to leave him here.

My Father nods.

We'll check him in and you can call later to make sure he's all right.

My Mother breaks down.

He's in the right place. Don't worry.

My Brother looks away.

He's in the right place.

I turn and they hug me. One at a time and hold tight. Squeezing and holding, I show them what I can. I turn and without a word I walk into the Room and the man shuts the door and they're gone.

The man shows me a chair and returns to his desk. He smiles.

Hi.

Hello.

How are you?

How do I look?

Not good.

I feel worse.

Your name is James. You're twenty-three. You live in North Carolina.

Yeah.

You're going to stay with us for a while. You okay with that?

For now.

Do you know anything about this Facility?

No.

Do you want to know anything?

I don't care.

He smiles, stares at me for a moment. He speaks.

We are the oldest Residential Drug and Alcohol Treatment Facility in the World. We were founded in 1949 in an old house that sat on the land where these Buildings, and there are thirty-two interconnected Buildings here, six now. We have treated over twenty thousand Patients. We have the highest success rate of any Facility in the World. At any given time, there are between two hundred and two hundred and fifty Patients spread

through six Units, three of which house men and three of which house women. We believe that Patients should stay here for as long a term as they need, not something as specific as a twenty-eight-day Program. Although it is expensive to come here, many of our Patients are here on scholarships that we fund and through subsidies that we support. We have an endowment of several hundred million dollars. We not only treat Patients, we are also one of the leading Research and Educational Institutions in the field of Addiction Studies. You should consider yourself fortunate to be here and you should be excited to start a new chapter in your life.

I stare at the man. I don't speak. He stares back at me, waiting for me to say something. There is an awkward moment. He smiles.

You ready to get started?

I don't smile.

Sure.

He gets up and I get up and we walk down a hall. He talks and I don't. The doors are always open here, so if you want to leave, you can. Substance use is not allowed and if you're caught using or possessing, you will be sent Home. You are not allowed to say anything more than hello to any women aside from Doctors, Nurses or Staff Members. If you violate this rule, you will be sent Home. There are other rules, but those are the only ones you need to know right now.

We walk through a door into the Medical Wing. There are small Rooms and Doctors and Nurses and a Pharmacy. The cabinets have large steel locks. He shows me to a Room. It has a bed and a desk and a chair and a closet and a window. Everything is white.

He stands at the door and I sit on the bed.

A Nurse will be here in a few minutes to talk with you.

Fine.

You feel okay?

No, I feel like shit.

It'll get better.

Yeah.

Trust me.

Yeah.

The man leaves and he shuts the door and I'm alone. My feet bounce, I touch my face, I run my tongue along my gums. I'm cold and getting colder. I hear someone scream.

The door opens and a Nurse walks into the Room. She wears white, all white, and she is carrying a clipboard. She sits in the chair by the desk.

Hi, James.

Hi.

I need to ask you some questions.

All right.

I also need to check your blood pressure and your pulse.

All right.

What type of substances do you normally use?

Alcohol.

Every day?

Yes.

What time do you start drinking?

When I wake up.

She marks it down.

How much per day?

As much as I can.

How much is that?

Enough to make myself look like I do.

She looks at me. She marks it down.

Do you use anything else?

Cocaine.

How often?

Every day.

She marks it down.

How much?

As much as I can.

She marks it down.

In what form?

Lately crack, but over the years, in every form that it exists.

She marks it down.

Anything else?

Pills, acid, mushrooms, meth, PCP and glue.

Marks it down.

How often?

When I have it.

How often?

A few times a week.

Marks it down.

She moves forward and draws out a stethoscope.

How are you feeling?

Terrible.



In what way?

In every way.

She reaches for my shirt.

Do you mind?

No.

She lifts my shirt and she puts the stethoscope to my chest. She listens. Breathe deeply.

She listens.

Good. Do it again.

She lowers my shirt and she pulls away and she marks it down.

Thank you.

I smile.

Are you cold?

Yes.

She has a blood pressure gauge.

Do you feel nauseous?

Yes.

She straps it on my arm and it hurts.

When was the last time you used?

She pumps it up.

A little while ago.

What and how much?

I drank a bottle of vodka.

How does that compare to your normal daily dosage?

It doesn't.

She watches the gauge and the dials move and she marks it down and she removes the gauge.

I'm gonna leave for a little while, but I'll be back.

I stare at the wall.

We need to monitor you carefully and we will probably need to give you

some detoxification drugs.

I see a shadow and I think it moves but I'm not sure.

You're fine right now, but I think you'll start to feel some things.

I see another one. I hate it.

If you need me, just call.

I hate it.

She stands up and she smiles and she puts the chair back and she leaves.

I take off my shoes and I lie under the blankets and I close my eyes and I fall asleep.

I wake and I start to shiver and I curl up and I clench my fist. Sweat runs down my chest, my arms, the backs of my legs. It stings my face.

I sit up and I hear someone moan. I see a bug in the corner, but I know it's not there. The walls close in and expand they close in and expand and I can hear them. I cover my ears but it's not enough.

I stand. I look around me. I don't know anything. Where I am, why, what happened, how to escape. My name, my life.

I curl up on the floor and I am crushed by images and sounds. Things I have never seen or heard or ever knew existed. They come from the ceiling, the door, the windows, the desk, the chair, the bed, the closet. They're coming from the fucking closet. Dark shadows and bright lights and

flashes of blue and yellow and red as deep as the red of my blood. They move toward me and they scream at me and I don't know what they are

but I know they're helping the bugs. They're screaming at me.

I start shaking. Shaking shaking shaking. My entire body is shaking and

my heart is racing and I can see it pounding through my chest and I'm sweating and it stings. The bugs crawl onto my skin and they start biting

me and I try to kill them. I claw at my skin, tear at my hair, start biting myself. I don't have any teeth and I'm biting myself and there are shadows

and bright lights and flashes and screams and bugs bugs bugs. I am lost. I

am completely fucking lost.

I scream.

I piss on myself.

I shit my pants.

The Nurse returns and she calls for help and Men in White come in and

they put me on the bed and they hold me there. I try to kill the bugs but

I can't move so they live. In me. On me. I feel the stethoscope and the

gauge and they stick a needle in my arm and they hold me down.

I am blinded by blackness.

I am gone.

SHARE



MENU

# Elbows Deep

188 29 19:6

PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL GIBSON, FROM THE BOOK "ELBOWS DEEP"

SHARE COREY KOSKIE  
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*Ring... Ring... Ring...*  
**R**I turn over in bed, opening my eyes just long enough to make out the time on my bedside clock.

It's 4:30 in the morning.

*Huh?*

The ringing stops, and I fall back asleep.

The ringing starts again.

*Who the hell's calling at 4:30?*

I pick it up and begin speaking groggily.

"Abhhh, hello?"

Q MENU

The voice on the other end is all business.

"Hello, this is your security company calling. We have a fail to open at the Planet Fitness in Bloomington, at 10606 France Ave. Is this your property?"

"Yup."

I hang up the phone and sit up in bed.

*Dammit.*

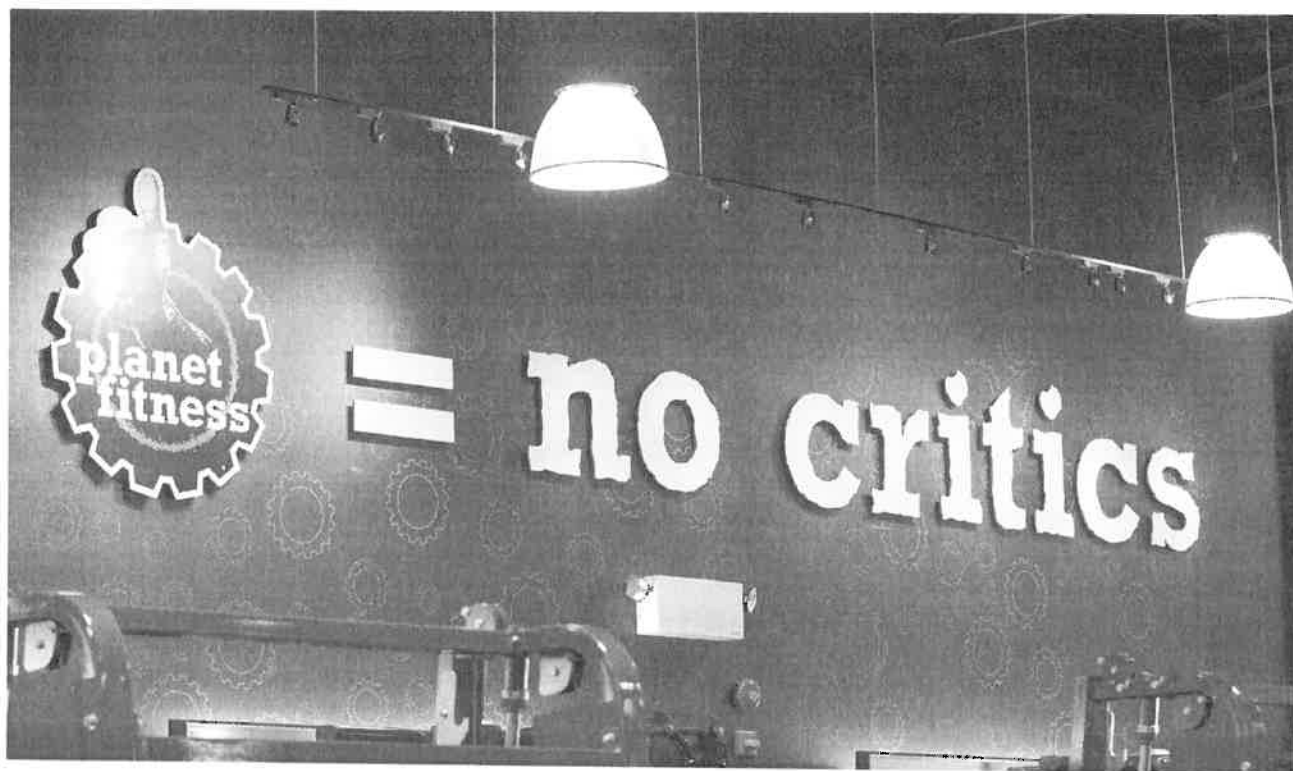
Where is the person who's supposed to open the gym? Why didn't the manager answer his phone when they called?

I hop out of bed, put on my Planet Fitness golf shirt and pair of khakis and I'm out the door. It takes 24 minutes to get to the store, and it's already 4:45 a.m. The gym is supposed to open at 5:00 a.m. on the dot, which means I'll get there nine minutes late.

Hopefully, there aren't too many people waiting to get in. But the early risers don't exactly take a casual approach to exercise.

\*

The first time I retired, it was from Major League Baseball. Today, it is with great gratitude – and, if I'm being honest, with a lot more anxiety – that I announce my second retirement... from Planet Fitness.





Why more anxiety? Because making money in the real world is hard! In my first career, I was a third baseman. But in my next one, I had to learn how to be a utility player. At Planet Fitness, I played just about every position you can imagine:

- CEO
- CFO
- CMO
- CTO
- VP of sales
- front desk employee
- cleaner
- salesman
- marketing intern
- sign flipper
- plumber
- accountant
- repairman
- deliveryman
- HR manager
- customer service manager
- project manager
- real estate attorney
- HR attorney

... and on top of that: father, husband, baseball coach and hockey coach.

Basically, what I'm trying to say is: hitting a baseball was easy compared to building a successful business.



MENU

One unfortunate truth about the real world is that if you want to build something, it's much easier to lose money than to make money.

In the beginning, I did a lot of the former.

\*

It's 5:09 a.m. when I arrive at the store in Bloomington. There are 15 angry customers waiting for the doors to be open. And they're all laying into me:

"OH! OH! Big boss had to get out of bed— don't you pay somebody to do this?!"

"This is the second f—ing time this month! What a f—ing joke! What kind of operation are you running here?"

I really had no good comeback. The bottom line was that these people had paid for a membership and expected the gym to be opened up on time. There was nothing I could say but, "Sorry, grab a Gatorade out of the cooler, on me?"

The employee who was supposed to open that day stumbled in at 7:30 a.m. smelling like a bar floor and looking like he rolled to work through the mud in a windstorm. I was ticked.

"Hey, what is going on? You're 2 ½ hours late."

"I am so sorry, but my best friend was killed in a head-on collision last night in my car and I walked from downtown."

I was obviously shocked. I gathered myself and said, "I am so sorry, I can't imagine what you are going through right now. You should take the day off, go home."

As he was leaving, I peaked out the window and watched him walk to his car — the one he had just told me had been destroyed in a head-on collision — and left. This is the first time I had to deal with somebody blatantly lying to my face in order to save his or her job.

...At least that I knew of.





Later that day, a gym member comes up to the front desk to inform me that the toilet is clogged. I went to see what was going on.

I didn't realize I was about to step into a war zone.

I walked in and was greeted by a toilet slightly overflowing, filled with toilet paper. I grabbed rubber gloves and started cleaning out the debris. When I finally clawed through all the toilet paper, there was a surprise. One of the biggest turds you've ever seen (and this is saying something, because I was in MLB clubhouses for nine years).

I promptly began dry heaving. (I actually just gagged while writing this.)

As I got down to the bottom of this mountain of joy, I thought to myself *What the hell am I doing? I've played nine years of big league ball and now I'm up to my elbows in somebody else's freshly churned colon kebabs.*

I didn't need to be doing any of this. I made enough money in my career to not do another thing for the rest of my life. But like most athletes, I went stir crazy after I retired. So I figured I would become a "businessman." I mean, how hard could it be?

I dabbled with some business opportunities here and there, but I didn't get serious about it until I overheard my then seven-year-old son Joshua and his buddy talking one day.

"What does your Dad do? He's home all the time."

"I don't know, he plays golf sometimes, but nothing really."

Everything I'd ever learned about work ethic was from my parents, and immediately upon hearing that I thought, *What kind of example am I setting for my boys?* I knew I needed to do something... but, what?

What kind of skill set does a high school graduate who bounced around between three colleges before playing 16 years of baseball really have? Never mind the fact that I was still dealing with post-concussion symptoms from my playing days.

I thought it over, and after nine years in the Majors, I figured that could buy some skill sets.

Boy, did I almost make some dumb choices. But my saving grace was that I was cheap. Manitoban cheap.

To give you an idea of what I'm talking about, this is how I was taught the value of a dollar while I was growing up in Canada.

One day, when I was 7 years old, I threw a fit because my mom wasn't going to buy me what I wanted. In my anger, I ripped a dollar bill into a thousand little pieces. When my mom found the torn up dollar in the garbage, she made sure that I understood the error of my ways.

Once I had the ability to sit on my butt again, I had to pick up all the pieces and put the dollar back together again. It was like the world's smallest jigsaw puzzle. Then my mom taped it, framed it and hung it right above my bed.

"Don't *ev-er* forget the value of a dollar and how hard people have to work to earn it."

During my first contract negotiation, I can't imagine what my parents thought when I turned down the Twins' initial offer of \$3 million for three years.

\*

For my first foray into "business," I decided that I was going to become a real estate mogul. Heck, if Donald Trump can do it, anybody can, right?

So I tried to buy a couple commercial properties. But the guys I was dealing with were speaking a whole, different language. Present value, future value, amortization, depreciation, vacancy rate, CAM, CAP Rate, blah, blah, blah, blah. I realized I was playing with the big boys, and I needed to put on my big boy pants. Lucky for me, the owners didn't take my offers and I didn't budge from my initial one. If I had "won" those properties, I would be writing a different story.

A family friend, Jeff Majkrzak, was on the board of Planet Fitness and told me to look into opening a franchise. I was immediately drawn by the \$10/month membership and the Judgement Free Zone. Cheap and no judgement spoke to my Canadian heart. But then I stopped and thought, *Wait, how do you make money off a \$10/month gym?*

He told me to do the due diligence and find out. I don't think he figured I would partake in as much due diligence as I did. I called every franchisee – every single one – to learn as much as I could about what I was getting myself into. Finally after a year, I took the plunge and became a Planet Fitness franchisee. I opened my first location in January 2010 and my second location in May 2010.

Two franchises, double the opportunity to make mistakes. Perfect.



MENU

So this might shock you, but it turns out running a business is not like playing a professional sport.

When I was playing professional baseball, I fancied myself a businessman as well. I was an idiot.

Side note: To the athletes currently reading this who play a professional sport, focus on playing the game you love. You will have the rest of your life to dabble in business. Make as much money as you can right now playing your sport, because you're not making that kind of money in the real world without risk.

Side-side note: To those athletes who have two phones, lose the second phone, man. That second phone is no good for your career! You only need one phone. Toss the shady phone in the trash. Just play the game and enjoy every moment of it. There is no place out there that will fill your tank like it is being filled now.

My business career went a lot like my baseball career. In the beginning, I had no experience and I really sucked. I couldn't catch a ball in the minors and I couldn't retain an employee at Planet Fitness. In baseball, I took ground ball after ground ball. In business, I read book after book. In baseball, at the end of the day, my personal success was all up to me. In business, it was all up to everybody around me.

At Planet Fitness, I had to depend on the competence of others in order to do the job to a Major League standard -- which is to say -- to strive for perfection. And I was a Hall of Fame-level fault finder. I could walk into the gym and tell you 15 things that needed to be "made better" before I blinked my eyes.

Suffice to say, my business career started off with a thud. I got to the point where I was hemorrhaging money on a daily basis and losing several employees every month via termination or quitting. This went on for about 18 agonizing months.

The turning point for me occurred at 4 a.m. on a Monday. I was in bed and hadn't slept a wink. I was having heart palpitations because I was so stressed and frustrated. I did what plenty of stressed people who can't sleep at 4 a.m. do: I turned to Google.

"Why don't employees do what I want them to do?"

\*poof\*

I find out there's a book titled, *Why Employees Don't Do What They're Supposed To Do and What To Do About It*.

Bam. Ordered. Amazon Prime next day delivery.

Oh look, there is another book in the series.

*Coaching for Improved Work Performance*.

Bam. Ordered. Amazon Prime.



And then I stumbled onto another book *Why We Do What We Do*.

Q MENU

Ordered.

Around the same time, I started watching a show called *The Profit* with Marcus Lemonis. This may sound weird, but this TV show was really valuable to me. I learned that even though the numbers are important, I needed to do a better job of being accountable to the people at my businesses. The common denominator among all the firings and quittings was me. I needed to change.

I needed to come out of my shell with my employees. I needed to build a relationship based on trust with them. I needed to learn how to have a conversation that would move them forward and not tear them down. I needed to earn the right to speak into their lives.

After a lifetime of playing sports, I discovered that leading in sports is different than leading in the business world. Sure, there are similarities around teamwork and striving toward a common goal. But leading a group of college or professional athletes who possess an internal drive to succeed is relatively easy. Compare that to a world, where you are one of a million job opportunities – with many of them paying a similar amount. The speaking circuit might have it backwards. Professional sports teams should be bringing in entrepreneurs who built their company up with regular people to speak about leadership, instead of the other way around.

\*

Now that this phase of my life has come to a close, it's cool to look back and see how far the franchises have come. Once I got a handle on how to actually manage people, things completely turned around. I found out that you definitely can make money from a \$10/month gym if you run it the right way. We went from losing a lot of money, to a business that has enough merit to be acquired. The majority of the employees I had working for me at the time of the sale had been there for two or more years. Seven of them had been working for me for four-plus years. This was something I was very proud of, because the average tenure of a person taking on an entry-level position in the gym industry is just 5-7 months.

This wouldn't be a proper retirement letter without at least a few thank yous: I am so appreciative of all the Planet Fitness franchisees who helped me refine my process, took my many phone calls and answered my many stupid questions during the early days. I'm also thankful for the opportunity that Planet Fitness gave me in opening up the businesses. Finally, I'm very grateful to all my employees and members. Without you, I would be nothing. To my two longest tenured employees, Anna George and Boranica Ly, thank you for being there with me since the beginning.

I paid a lot of money for this real life business education, but I wouldn't change a thing. The failures forced me to look internally and grow as a person. Now I'm not just a better businessman, I'm also a better father, husband and human being.



After all these experiences, here are some very costly lessons I learned. Athletes and young entrepreneurs, listen up, because I am about to save you a lot of money.

1. If you are not willing to roll up your sleeves and dive into the “colon kebabs,” stay on the sidelines. You need to learn the business and be active in the business. Nobody is going to watch your crap like you.
2. It is not about you. It is about your employees! If you care about your employees, they will care for your business.
3. Trust takes time. You can lose it in a flash by what you say or do. Choose what you say carefully, and remember: DWYSWYSYWDI (Do what you say when you say you will do it). Okay, that’s a long acronym.
4. Surround yourself with wise people. Leverage wisdom.
5. Finally, and most importantly, always look to evolve and grow as a person. Learn from your failures. It is not always somebody else’s fault.

**COREY KOSKIE**  
CONTRIBUTOR

# Play Hard and Dream Big MENU

MICHAEL CUDDYER / CONTRIBUTOR

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The Voice of the Game.

SIGN UP

BEVERLY ECKERT, 55,

remembers her husband,

SEAN ROONEY

*Beverly Eckert:* Sean had warm brown eyes and dark curly hair. He was a good hugger, one of those people that are just comfortable to be around, and a favorite wherever he went. I used to tell him I thought my family liked him more than they liked me.

He had a cerebral job, but in his spare time he liked to do really tangible things, like carpentry and plumbing, electrical, masonry—you name it. He loved to cook too. I keep rosemary in the kitchen now because the aroma reminds me of this marinade he made for grilled steak. He used our Weber grill year-round, even in the winter, even in the rain. He would be out there with an umbrella in one hand and his steak tongs in the other.

There are things I can picture so clearly still. Early evening on a summer night: We're relaxing before dinner, sitting next to each other on the stone step out back, and we each have a glass of wine. We're just watching the fireflies rise out of the lawn, steak on the grill, and we're talking and laughing.

Sean and I were together for thirty-four years. We met when we were only sixteen at a high school dance. He died at fifty. I try not to think about what I lost but what I had. For Sean and me, fate, in a way, was merciful. I know what happened to Sean, because he was able to reach me by phone from where he was trapped in the South Tower.

I was at home. I had left work when I heard about the towers getting hit. It was about 9:30 AM when he called. When I heard his voice on the phone, I was so happy. I said, "Sean, where are you?" thinking that he had made it out, and that he was calling me from the street somewhere. He told me he was on the 105th floor, and I knew right away that Sean was never coming home.

He was very calm. He was very focused. He told me he had been trying to find a way out and what he wanted was information. So I relayed to him what I could see on TV, what floor the flames had reached and on what side of the building. I also used my other phone, my cell phone, and called 911 and told them where Sean was and that he needed to be rescued. Sean told me that initially he was with some people that tried to escape by going down the stairs, but they had to turn back because of the smoke and the heat. They headed for the roof, but when they got there they found that the roof doors were locked.

He told me the other people were now in a conference room and that he was alone. I asked him to go back and try the roof doors again, to pound on them, and that somebody on the other side would hear him. I said, "The doors couldn't be

locked. They are emergency doors." We both remembered the helicopter rescues from the roof at the '93 bombing.

Sean was gone for maybe five minutes, and then he came back to the phone. He hadn't had any success, and now the stairwell was full of smoke—he had actually passed out for a few minutes while pounding on the doors.

There was a building in flames underneath him, but Sean didn't even flinch. He stayed composed, talking to me, just talking to me the way he always did. I will always be in awe of the way he faced death. Not an ounce of fear, not when the windows around him were getting too hot to touch, not when the smoke was making it hard to breathe. He will always be a hero to me because of that.

By now we had stopped talking about escape routes. I wanted to use the precious few minutes we had left just to talk. I knew it was time to say good-bye. He told me to give his love to his family, and then we just began talking about all the happiness we shared during our lives together, how lucky we were to have each other. I told him that I wanted to be there with him and die with him, but he said no. He wanted me to live a full life. At one point, when I could tell it was getting harder for him to breathe, I asked if it hurt. He paused for a moment, and then said, "No." He loved me enough to lie.

In the end, as the smoke got thicker, he just kept whispering, "I love you," over and over. I was pressing the phone to my ear as hard as I could. I wanted to crawl through the phone lines to him to hold him one last time. Then I suddenly heard

this loud explosion through the phone. It reverberated for several seconds. We held our breath. I know we both realized what was about to happen. Then I heard a sharp crack, followed by the sound of an avalanche. It was the building beginning to collapse. I heard Sean gasp once as the floor fell out from underneath him. I called his name into the phone over and over. Then I just sat there huddled on the floor of our living room just holding the phone to my heart.

I remember how I didn't want that day to end, terrible as it was. I didn't want to go to sleep, because as long as I was awake it was still a day that I shared with Sean, still a day where he had kissed me good-bye before leaving for work. I could still say, *That was just a little while ago. That was only this morning.* I knew there would never ever be another day where I could say that.

I think about that last half hour with Sean all the time. It traumatized me to the core of my being, but it was also a gift. My last memory that I have of Sean isn't about pain or fear, but it's about bravery and selflessness and, most of all, about love.

*Recorded in New York, New York  
on November 19, 2006*

*Beverly Eckert died when Continental  
Flight 3407 crashed near Buffalo  
on February 12, 2009*



Pre Writing --- Memoir

Name \_\_\_\_\_

For each time period write down a memory and or experience you have had in regards to a relationship, person, object and or place.

**COMPLETE 7 OF 14 --- EACH MEMORY SHOULD BE 2 SENTENCES**

Kindergarten \_\_\_\_\_

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Grade 1 \_\_\_\_\_

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Grade 2 \_\_\_\_\_

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Grade 3 \_\_\_\_\_

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Grade 4 \_\_\_\_\_

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Grade 5 \_\_\_\_\_

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Grade 6 \_\_\_\_\_

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Grade 7 \_\_\_\_\_

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Grade 8 \_\_\_\_\_

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Grade 9 \_\_\_\_\_

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Grade 10 \_\_\_\_\_

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Winter \_\_\_\_\_

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Spring \_\_\_\_\_

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Summer \_\_\_\_\_

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Fall \_\_\_\_\_

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# Memoir Web Organizer

For 3 of the 7 Memories – Expand Below

Main Idea

Detail

Detail

Detail

Main Idea

Detail

Detail

Detail

Main Idea

Detail

Detail

Detail



## Personal Memoir Outline

For 1 of 3 Memories that was completed in the web organizer ---

Expand on 1 in the below outline.

Paragraph One Introduction / Identify the event, individual or place of the memoir. (2-3 sentences)

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Paragraph Two Describe the setting –time/place (2-3 sentences)

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Paragraph Three Describe characters involved  
Refer to the adjective word handout  
(4-5 sentences)

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Paragraph Four    Discuss the subject (event, individual, and place) that had an impact on you. Details Refer to tone worksheet. (10 sentences)

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Dialogue / If no dialogue needed begin a 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph continuing to discuss the subject

Paragraph Five    Describe your thoughts and emotions regarding the subject. / Refer to tone worksheet (2-3 sentences)

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Paragraph Six      Discuss the resolution of the conflict and or the subject,  
or the changes that occurred for you because of the  
event, individual, and or place.  
( 2-3 sentences)

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