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A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Work...

When I Grow Up

By Michael A. Crawford, CPA

While I have experienced a successful and rewarding career as a certified public accountant, I didn't always dream of growing up to become a CPA. During my teen years, I was convinced my destiny was to become a rock star.

I know what you are thinking. How does one get from rock star aspirations to accounting?

It all started when my dad decided to learn to play the guitar. I was fascinated by the new sound in the house. I often borrowed his guitar and pretended to be the fifth Beatle. Recognizing my interest and my knack, my dad offered to pay for guitar lessons.

There was only one problem.

Living in a small Oklahoma town, the closest guitar lessons were more than 50 miles away in Tulsa. I was only 12-years-old at the time, so I needed financial help and transportation. Against my mom's initial wishes, Dad became my financier and chauffeur in my quest for rock stardom.

Lessons went well. I quickly mastered both rhythm chords and lead guitar riffs and began learning my favorite rock 'n' roll tunes. Two years after I first picked up the guitar and subsequently labored

through lessons, a local band asked me to audition for them. The band was searching for a guitar player to replace a departing band member. I immediately jumped at the chance and booked Chauffeur Dad to get me to the audition.

When I arrived, the band members — all in their mid-twenties — seemed surprised I was only a 14-year-old kid. However, they also seemed intrigued and allowed me to audition.

To this day, I don't know if it was my talent, my age or both that piqued their interest, but at the end of the audition, I became the newest — and by far the youngest — member of "Revelation."

The first gig after I joined the band was playing a senior prom at a nearby high school. With a sense of anticipation and nervousness, I tried to envision what the

night would be like. Wearing my new white bell-bottom pants with lavender shirt and paisley vest, I loaded up the station wagon with my equipment, and my parents drove me to the dance.

At first, the butterflies in my stomach fluttered incessantly, but by the time our first number was over, nervous fluttering was replaced by a sense of exhilaration I had not yet experienced in my short life. What a rush it was to be on stage and



The offices of Crawford & Associates in Oklahoma City are a rock 'n' roll museum.

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(FUNNY cont. from 8)

entertaining students older than me!

During the show, I also got my first taste of real rock star status. I had obtained groupies! During one of the band's numbers, two pretty high school senior girls at the prom laid a white table napkin at my feet on stage. At the end of the number, I curiously picked up the napkin and, to my amazement, found the girls' names along with a simple question: "Will you talk to us?"

My heart was racing! Having just crossed over the line into puberty, this was quite a thrill for me. For the rest of the evening, whenever the band would take a break, my two new admirers would get me water, wipe the sweat from my neck and brow, and do their best flirting. After the dance was over, one of my groupies asked if she could help me gather up my equipment and load the car. I was more than happy to oblige. Once the car was loaded, she gently pulled me aside and began kissing me like I had never been kissed before. After several minutes of this special rock star treatment, I reluctantly admitted I had to leave. My parents patiently waited on me in the station wagon — or what I now called our tour bus.

On the road home, I relaxed in the back seat, reflecting on what had just happened and tried to figure out how I could be so tired but still have so much adrenalin flowing. After a few minutes on

the road, Mom asked how I liked my first experience with the band. Without hesitation, I responded "Mom and Dad, I know what I want to be when I grow up! I've found my calling!" At that point, I was determined to be a rock star.

However, as I learned throughout life, most good things must come to an end. After four years of rocking, it was time to leave the band and attend college. I had also come to the realization that, while I had some talent to become a rock star, I probably didn't possess enough talent to become a rich rock star. So I replaced the guitar with college textbooks and set out on a new four-year journey to become a business professional.

I never lost that desire to perform, though. I have been lucky enough to develop, at least in my own mind, a form of rock star status within the CPA profession. With an expertise in a specialized field in accounting and a knack for public speaking, I now draw admiring fans (accounting groupies) from around the country to hear me speak. (That's what I'm telling myself, anyway.)

I never gave up my passion for rock 'n' roll music. Anyone who has visited our office in Oklahoma City would surely tell you the office is quite unique. It is one of the few, if not only, professional office that also serves as a rock 'n' roll museum. With autographed guitars, albums and other rock and roll memorabilia adorning our walls and shelves, the office serves as a

constant reminder of the days when roll 'n' roll took the place of debits and credits. €

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