

A LIFE OF LARRY CRANDELL

# SILVER TONGUE

*Secrets of Mr. Santa Barbara*

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## The Brad Pitt Stratagem

IMAGINE a table of middle-aged women engaged in a pleasant lunch at a Santa Barbara eatery. The *maitre d'* approaches and politely explains that he cannot accept their payment for the lunch. The women are surprised. They are perfectly willing to pay their bill. The *maitre d'* shrugs as if to say the matter is already settled; then he leans in as if letting them in on a secret.

Brad Pitt, he says in hushed tones, happened to be passing by the restaurant and admired them from afar. Mr. Pitt, however, was too shy to say hello. So he decided to pay for their meal as a token of his esteem.

There follows a delicious moment when the women consider the possibility that this could be true. Then the smiles start to bloom on their faces and the giggles bubble forth. The diners now suspect the truth. They crane their heads to look for Larry Crandell. After all, he had stopped by to say hello earlier. And they know his *modus operandi*. But when they scan the room for the man who would be Brad Pitt, he has already made his exit.

It's a scenario that has played out dozens of times all over town. From down-to-earth cafés to the ritziest of restaurants in Santa Barbara, Brad Pitt has been picking up checks for women at lunch, admiring them, but always too shy to show himself. And the objects of Brad's admiration? They all wear big smiles as they leave the restaurant, shaking their heads and chuckling.

Larry loves to eat out, but not for the food. He has a very basic palate—the blander, the better. He likes his meat well done and his salad (lettuce and tomato) without dressing. No booze, no coffee, no tea. Just Diet Coke—on ice, by the crate.

Larry could care less for *haute cuisine*. He goes to restaurants for the social interaction. He always sits facing the entrance so he can see who comes in. He loves to “work the room,” as he calls it, saying hello

to everyone he knows, making them feel at ease and telling a few jokes. But he also likes to set up the Brad Pitt Stratagem as he leaves. He enjoys the fact that when he exits the restaurant he leaves behind a time-bomb of merriment. He says all it costs is money, and the people who get treated by “Brad Pitt” get a happy experience which will last the rest of the day.

At the heart of the stratagem is Larry’s essential philosophy. He does things for people that they enjoy *and he enjoys*. In this way he is both giver and receiver. There is no greater joy for him than feeling he has helped someone feel good or laugh or just enjoy life. In the moment when the women diners consider the possibility that Brad Pitt actually admired them, they feel excited. Larry feels excited, too. It’s a circle of fun that fuels itself—which is why he keeps on doing it.

Of course, he doesn’t always pretend to be Brad Pitt. Larry is nothing if not resourceful when it comes to generating variations on a theme.

A few years back, a prominent male philanthropist in town had his bill picked up by Meg Ryan. She, like Brad Pitt, was too shy to say hello in person. A week later, Larry received a card in the mail. It was from the philanthropist’s fiancée. She suggested that though she understood why Meg might be attracted to her husband-to-be, she would “break Meg’s legs” if she ever came near him.

Another time, Warren Buffett, the world’s second richest man, picked up the bill for a table of millionaire businessmen in Montecito. Later, Larry heard from one of the high-powered investors, who told Larry he thought Jimmy Buffet might have been a more appropriate pseudonym given Larry’s level of investment insight.

This kind of jocular insult is food and drink to Larry. It’s male-speak for “I’m enjoying your company.” As such, it was all the indication Larry needed to confirm that his Warren Buffett Stratagem had been a success.

## Appreciating

THIS BOOK might make you think. It might make you smile. It might even lead you to think and smile at same time—perhaps about someone you love.

I am thinking and smiling about my father right now. Sometimes it seems we spend a lot of our lives thinking and frowning. My father has spent his life trying to get people to do the opposite. He seeks to unite thought and emotion in order to create pleasure. You have to admit, it's a delightful place to be as a person—using your brain and your heart together, and to positive effect.

So here's the second secret to be revealed in these pages. You see, my father found a shortcut to this idea of thinking and smiling at the same time. He calls it *appreciating*.

Here's a diagram:

*Thinking & Smiling* → *Appreciation* →  
*Shared Joy* → *Affection & Love*

If you don't get it now, don't worry. Just read. This is like the boat rides at Disneyland my dad used to take me on in the 1960s. There are really tracks underneath the water, and no matter how much you steer like hell, you can't really crash. So relax.

Anyway, I'm the writer. And, as my dad is fond of saying, I work alone.



## What Is This Book About, Anyway?

GOOD QUESTION. But remember, I work alone.

The book examines the talent of Santa Barbara's Silver Tongue. It looks at his four central abilities:

- to make people laugh
- to make them feel good (even as he insults them)
- to build unity (even as he plays the part of the verbal rebel)
- and, mostly, to motivate.

In short, this book is about the *power of words*.

Of course, as my father well knows, the power of words is anything but straightforward. Used by a skilled public speaker, words are often just a clever disguise. Larry will freely confess as much. It may come as a shock to the many people who have listened to him and laughed at his improvised, rascally humor, but his motives are far more serious than his repartee. Even his funny stories often have a secret mission. Confront him. Ask him flat out. He'll tell you. He uses the power of words to invoke the power of love.

Here are the main premises of Larry's philosophy.

- Every loving act carries with it the power to transform lives, so all kindness matters.
- Both the giver and the receiver benefit from compassion—sometimes in far-reaching and unexpected ways.
- Reaching out to show love is not only good for the spirit, it can be the key to one's destiny.

Here's an example of what I'm talking about.

Once upon a time, during the Depression, there was a woman



named Jane who raised and supported three sons on her own. They lived in Newark, in a particularly blighted part of the Garden State. Jane worked full-time as a shoe clerk. The family was on relief—as they called welfare in those days. The boys went to the YMCA to stay off the streets. Jane loved her sons, urging them to believe in themselves, to be generous and to appreciate what they had. Decades later, when her eldest moved with his family to the earthly paradise of Santa Barbara, California, he took his mother's philosophy with him. There, in one of the wealthiest areas of the United States, he succeeded spectacularly—not in making money, but in helping others give it to good causes.

He became a jovial and gentle Robin Hood, lightening the wallets of the rich—and leaving them all the happier for their donations. After more than four decades, his volunteering, his leadership and his wit are so widely known that the local newspapers call him Mr. Santa Barbara.

From a nobody in Newark to Mr. Santa Barbara—that's the power of love at work.

Larry Crandell is in his eighties, but you'll find him at work in his office six or seven days a week. He doesn't put his success down to hard work or luck or even his cheeky sense of humor. For him, it's all about love. For him, the definition of love begins and ends with his mother's appreciation of, and devotion to, him and his brothers. Jane would sometimes say to Larry in all seriousness, "Cast your bread upon the waters, and it will come back toasted."

Larry knew that she was really talking about love, the faith it engenders and the remarkable things it can achieve.



**Family Reunited.** Just back from the war in 1945, the Crandells met in Newark for this photo. From the left—Larry’s brother Sam, his mother Jane, Larry, aged 22, and brother Marty, who was only 16 years old at the time of the photo. “Too young to fight overseas,” says Larry about Marty, “but not too young to box. I challenged him to go a round—even though he was six years younger, he cleaned my clock.” *Nota bene:* Larry holds his mother’s hand in the portrait.



**NIT 1946.** Fresh from flying missions over Europe, Larry went straight into metaphorical battle as a starter for the Syracuse University basketball team. (Larry is far left in the bottom row.) This team qualified for the National Invitational Tournament—at the time more prestigious than the NCAA competition. Larry shot a two-hand set shot. (It was so long ago that there was nothing uncommon about shooting with two hands.) He remembers the thrill of playing at Madison Square Garden. For the record, the Orangemen were ousted in the first round by Muhlenberg 47–41. Photo courtesy of Syracuse University



**Journey's Beginning.** Larry and Marcy were married in Marcy's hometown of Ashley, Pennsylvania on July 3, 1950. At left, Lena Novak, Marcy's mother prepares to farewell the couple. Five children, nine grandchildren, two great grandchildren and more than 55 years of marriage lay in front of the young couple.





**The Potentially Endless Honeymoon.** The newlyweds danced so well at their resort the management offered them free accommodation for as long as they wanted if they only did a 15-minute dance exhibition every night. They extended their stay for a week with the permission of their employer, Arthur Murray. Here, they dance at the outdoor nightclub at the Castle Harbour Hotel in Bermuda.



**New Jersey Tan.** “That’s what I looked like at 180 pounds,” says Larry. “It was in Bermuda. But I still had the Newark, New Jersey tan.” By coincidence, these two Arthur Murray teachers also were in Bermuda for a vacation while Larry and Marcy honeymooned. Larry explains. “One did not go to Bermuda in July. *We* went to Bermuda in July. The other teachers were similarly not members of the cognoscenti.”



**Second Honeymoon.** Larry and Marcy went back to Bermuda in 1958. They won an Arthur Murray competition called the Dancers Derby and used the money to take 21 staffers from the dance studio on a ship from Baltimore. “I don’t remember the sweater,” says the Silver Tongue. “You can see how much better looking your mother was for a woman than I was for a man.”





**Nice Threads.** 1958, sailing for Bermuda. “Man, I liked myself in this one,” says Larry. “Good hair. I don’t remember the suit, though.” But he does remember the trip. “There was a terrible storm. Marcy was the only one in the dining room. She ate heartily. I was coughing up my cookies. Because we booked 21 passages we had the owner’s suite—that was big time. But when you’re puking, one suite looks a lot like another.”