

In his mid-20s, George Raveling and a friend were approached by the head of security who told them the size of the crowd for the following day's March on Washington had been underestimated. Extra security was needed and would they be interested? Rav, who has always had the sense of recognizing a great opportunity when one was presented, immediately agreed.

On the day of the speech George didn't just get there on time, he got there 45 minutes early. The gentleman from the previous day was impressed and assigned George, who at 6'5", could make a pretty good security guard had he chosen that field, to the detail that would be *on stage* with Dr. King.

While the young Raveling felt this had all the markings of quite an event, he had no idea how the outcome would affect his life.

As anyone who's ever seen the footage of the speech can attest, at its conclusion, the massive crowd was at an emotional frenzy. People were applauding, cheering, shouting, crying and no one was more caught up in the moment than George himself. As Dr. King began to leave the stage, George said to him (and as he has said on more than one occasion, "I have no idea why I did it"), "Dr. King, may I have a copy of your speech?" At that moment, Martin Luther King, Jr. handed George the manuscript (complete with hand-written notes in the margins). George thanked him, but at that moment, someone else said something and Dr. King had turned away. Rav went home and stuck the notes in one of the numerous books he had in his apartment.

Subsequently, Dr. King was assassinated and stories of all the impressive, life-changing accomplishments he'd afforded humanity flooded the airwaves and print media. Naturally, the "*I Have a Dream*" speech, arguably the greatest one ever given, was referred to time and again. It struck George that *he had the original notes!* He went home, rummaged through his belongings and, sure enough, there they were, stuck in that same book.

George began thinking, "These notes are a part of history. They really belong in the Martin Luther King Jr. Museum in Atlanta." He got the number, called, and explained the story, saying that he wanted to donate this valuable document to the museum – with one caveat – which had nothing to do with money. He just wanted for the plaque to say, "Notes donated by George H. Raveling." As incredible as it sounds, the voice on the other end not only refused, but became somewhat indignant, lecturing George that he really didn't have anything to do with the notes and turned down his request. George is as reasonable as the next guy, as well as quite a bit brighter, so once again, he attempted to get the man to understand he didn't want the plaque to say, "Written by George H. Raveling," only that he had donated them. The museum rep couldn't be budged, even telling George the notes weren't his, to which Rave replied, "Then how come I'm holding them in my hand?" Shortly thereafter, the call was terminated and, to this day, George has the famous notes in a safe deposit box.

Despite multi-million dollar offers, he refuses to sell them. His son, Mark, will inherit them, with the understanding that they never be sold. There are lessons to be learned from all stories and this one has several.

- 1) When presented with an opportunity, seize it. Worry about what minor inconveniences it may cause at a later date.
- 2) When you're supposed to be somewhere, don't just get there on time; get there early.
- 3) Lose your inhibitions. If, at the conclusion of that speech, Martin Luther King, Jr. had said to the crowd, "Is there anyone out there who'd like my notes?" do you think Rav's hand would have been the only one to go up?
- 4) Don't overstep your bounds. Stay in your lane. Chances are that had the person who answered the phone not overstepped his bounds, those notes would be in the MLK Museum.

