

MONDAY MANNA

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THE POWER – AND IMPACT – OF PERSISTENCE

By Ray Kerwood

[Editor's Note: The following is an adapted excerpt from Cross Currents: A World War II Survivor's Voyage through Life's Storms to God's Safe Port, an autobiography by Ray Kerwood]. A long-time member of CBMC, Ray served with distinction as an officer with the Merchant Marines during World War II. He served 28 years in various management roles with Gulf Oil, before launching his own company, Alpine Petroleum. His book in its entirety is available FREE on [CBMC International's website](#)]

Business is risky, and if you are unwilling to take controlled risks, you should not go into business for yourself. I have certainly made plenty of mistakes. But the good choices have outnumbered the bad. I think of one time a risk paid off, but only because I was aggressive, refusing to give up too soon. In other words, I would not take "no" for an answer.

I had learned through my younger brother, Jim, who lived in Charleston, West Virginia, that a number of companies in his area were selling a particular product used by coal companies in their sludge ponds that my company, Alpine Petroleum, could make available for sale there. Seeing these sale opportunities in my own home state gave me the idea to call up one of West Virginia's most prominent multi-millionaires, John Heater. He owned 38 Go-Marts – combination service station, restaurant and grocery store – across the state.

To supply these locations, Mr. Heater had established a large barge terminal in St. Albans, West Virginia. He also was a majority owner and president of the Bank of Gassaway. So, I called him with a request. Would he be willing to enter into a contract with my company for storage and transport of gasoline and diesel fuel?

Mr. Heater abruptly replied, "Mr. Kerwood, while I have met you once and know of your good reputation, why on earth would you think I would have any interest in your offer when I have already turned down that same request from Exxon, Pure Oil, Ashland Oil and Elk Refining Company?"

Instead of taking the hint, I chose to act like he was my good friend. "John, your office is on my way to Charleston. I only need five minutes of your time." "No," he said. I refused to give up. "John, I have an approach that I promise you will find beneficial." "I told you no." In a courteous tone, I persisted. "John, five minutes is all I ask." "Okay," he finally agreed with reluctance. "But remember one thing, Ray. Five minutes, and you better be gone."

Five minutes was all it took to sign a deal that led to a four-year, lucrative partnership. Without being persistent, maybe even a little pushy, in asking John Heater to consider my offer, none of that would have happened.

(In my book) I mention this and various other events to emphasize that during my life there have been a number of decisions that have worked out favourably, not through any particular business acumen of my own, nor happenstance, nor pure luck, but by divine intervention and God's blessing.

There is a well-known TV financial expert, Dave Thomas, who whenever he is asked, "How are you doing?" always responds, "Better than I deserve!" I would say the same. My life and my business career have both been better than I deserve, and I give praise to my Father, to whom belongs all the credit and glory.

Postal Address:

PO Box 8168,
Woolloongabba, QLD, 4102

ABN: 42 005 622 515

Office Address:

Suite CBMC,
Sung Do Lawyers,
14 Annerley Road,
Woolloongabba, QLD 4102

Email:

admin@cbmcaustralia.com.au

Phone:

07 3172 9365

Reflection/Discussion Questions

How good of a salesperson are you? What do you find the most difficult part of selling something, whether it is a product, a service, or yourself?

Have you ever been confronted by a persistent, refuse-to-give-up salesperson? What was your response? Did you find it bothersome, or did you admire the person's determination?

Do you find persistence to be one of your personal strengths, or do you find yourself easily discouraged to the point of giving up? Explain your answer.

Rather than crediting his own abilities, or good fortune, Ray attributes his business success to "divine intervention and God's blessing." How do you relate to such a conclusion? Can you give an example of how and why you feel that way?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:

Romans 5:1-5

1 Corinthians 15:58

Galatians 6:9-10

Ephesians 2:10

James 1:2-7