

Today's speaker was John Mead—John Thomas Jewelers



John spent a good portion of his presentation this morning discussing the roads he has traveled to get to today. And it certainly has been an often rocky path, filled with incredible challenges and rotten situations. But there have also been a few lucky breaks, and some smart choices too. Things began in Canada where John was born and the bumpy part started when he was 5 weeks old. In order to get away from a very abusive situation, his Mom handed him out a bedroom window to an aunt, then she followed. It was 5 years before they returned and he was able to meet his then 9 year old sister and 7 year old brother for the first time. Besides the very abusive father and addicted mother, at one point John's household also included a mentally unstable uncle that was very mean to John and his siblings (one time trapping John and his brother in a closet while threatening to kill them with a running chainsaw). John's was the poorest family in a poor neighborhood and schoolmates always made fun of the Meads' clothing. It wasn't until well into his grade school years before he received his first pair of new shoes. He was so proud of them, until he went to school and the other kids still made fun of him because the shoes were from a discount store. At some point, John's mother decided to move the children to the United States, and they went to live in a community near Niagara Falls. John's father had left but the terrible memories of abuse weren't gone, and the family was still far from stable. Whenever John's mother had one of her drug episodes, the kids would be placed in foster care. The situation was a constant drag on John's state of mind and he began getting more and more angry with the world. Young Johnny Meatball (the nickname given to him by his friends because they thought the red-haired John Mead looked like a meatball standing out on a plate of spaghetti) was starting a downward spiral in his life. The 6th grade was a relatively OK time (excluding all the challenges that he constantly faced). John was doing well in classes. He had an IQ of 135 and was able to take some college credit courses. He even received a letter from President Regan congratulating him on being 6th in the nation. But the strain continued and the anger got worse. His 7th grade year was bad. John failed every class. One of his teachers knew what was really going on and tried to turn the young Mr. Mead around. The teacher arranged for John to take math and science during the summer so that he could make up the lost ground. John did that and progress occurred... until the next school year began. The still angry-with-everything Mr. Mead missed 55 of the 180 schooldays that year. A lot of it because he was in jail. Still, that teacher didn't give up. He wanted to get John a change in school environment, so he talked the administration into promoting John to the 9th grade, without having formally finished the 7th or 8th grades. The family moved across town so John was now only 2 blocks from a different high school. It was a great plan-but only as far as the school situation was concerned. It didn't magically fix everything. The years of abuse had instilled in John an attitude that he will not be grabbed or physically threatened, and that negative conditioning caused an issue with his first year in the new school. Two weeks into the 9th grade, John was incorrectly accused of being the instigator of a classroom incident. John refused to go to the principal's office because he had done nothing wrong. When the teacher grabbed John to pull him out of his seat, John reacted and took a swing at him. After a short fistfight, the teacher was knocked out and John was expelled. Now the only avenue left for Mr. Mead to get through high school was for him to ride his rickety old bike back across town every day to the old high school. To John's credit, he did that. The determined Mr. Mead not only became the first person in his family to graduate from high school, he went on and became the first to graduate from college too (working two jobs and going to classes at night). The downward spiral was reversing, but the demons were still there. Working as a part owner of a bar, it was very easy for John to develop addictions of his own. Then another serious challenge appeared. He was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. [The neighborhood where John grew up was the now infamous Love Canal. His childhood home had a basement, and like all the others in the area, there was constantly a green ooze coming out of the ground. His family didn't know at the time that they were living on top of a contaminated dumping ground. The Love Canal area has now been permanently closed to human habitation, but that is no help to those that were exposed to the toxic waste while living there for years.] John went through 6 months of chemotherapy that did mitigate the illness, but during the process, Mr. Mead lost 65 pounds and all of his hair. His red hair did grow back, but after a short time it turned brown. Johnny Meatball can now be one of the past issues that gets pushed farther back in the memories. And that is not the only part of his old life that Mr. Mead has been able to come away from. John says that he feels very lucky for the way that his world has changed. But in reality he has worked hard to reverse the downward spiral and his life is currently on a very positive upward trajectory. Some of the changes may be attributed to luck, but a lot of the direction is the result of Mr. Mead selecting the right options when choosing which door to enter (or close) as he progressed through life. Some of the luck was when he got involved with the Boys & Girls Club when growing up. His mentor, and the boxing programs, helped him channel his anger in a non-negative way. Some of the right decisions include getting away from that bar and into the jewelry business; and then becoming an expert in the diamond industry. And whether luck or good decisions, or a combination of both, John says that absolutely the most fortunate thing that has ever happened to him was when he met his wife, Janelle. She means everything to him. Besides being a wonderful wife, she is a super mother (the Meads have a daughter and a son), a great friend, and an excellent business partner. Janelle was also in the jewelry business when they met, but after their son was born, she became a stay-at-home mom. Then when the children began school, Janelle went to school too, and became a teacher. In 2017, John convinced Janelle to get back into the jewelry business and work with him. Together they are a formidable team. Their business has increased from a few thousand dollars of revenue in 2017, to more than \$2 million now. Currently they are the #1 retail jewelry store in New Mexico. Each year only 20 jewelers are invited to go shop in the Antwerp diamond district and John has been one of them for the past three years. That's a big deal because 85% of diamonds pass through Antwerp and the selection is amazing. As an example, a search of John's USA database found 9 diamonds with specified characteristics (clarity, size, shape, etc.) but in his trip to Antwerp, John found 10 such diamonds in a single parcel...and he was given many more parcels to choose from. Another aspect of the industry is the emergence of lab-grown diamonds. To an amateur, the lab diamonds appear to be like natural diamonds but at about one-tenth the cost. However, the lab versions depreciate very quickly and have no return value. Antwerp has chosen to ban lab-grown diamonds from their district. That has caused a decrease in their business, and in the process, created a very positive buyer's market for natural diamonds. John and Janelle are going to Antwerp again in a few days, and they are running a special promotion for it. If you purchase an Antwerp diamond valued at more than \$5,000, John Thomas Jewelers will include a \$2,500 trip to the Dominican Republic. Another great deal from the Diamond Master. You pay \$5000 or so and you get a great diamond (most likely of a better quality and size than you expected), plus you and a special friend get to spend a few days on the beach in the Dominican Republic. Mr. Mead even gave away one of those trips as a door prize this morning---Congratulations to Bobby Jackson! If you want to know anything about diamonds, or free trips to the Dominican Republic, contact Mr. Mead at 505-342-9200. If you want to just shake the hand of an amazing survivor, catch John at any of our Tuesday morning meetings. To those people that say you cannot escape your past. Mr. Mead is here to tell them: "YES YOU CAN!"

◆ Board members please note that there will be a meeting right after breakfast next Tuesday, April 9th. If you have any questions, please contact Mario, or President Sierra.

◆ **NOTE: Our April 23rd meeting will be at Chello Grill. See the flyer that is with this email for details.**

◆ Second announcement of a new member application:

Sunnyside Up Breakfast and Lunch Cafe

Representative: Ken Romero

Category: Restaurant

Sponsor: Gerald Montoya

Second announcement of a new member application:

New Mexico Trailer Depot

Representative: Matt Darnell

Category: Trailer Dealer

Sponsors: Lance Darnell

If you have an objection to either of these companies becoming a member, or if you have information that you feel should be considered during the review process, please contact Membership Committee Chairman, Jack Zipper (via telephone number 505-259-5959 or email at jdzipper@comcast.net) as soon as possible.

◆ The EAGA 2024 Golf Tournament will be on Friday May 17th at Santa Ana Golf Course. Shotgun start at 1:00pm. Brown bag lunch will be provided. Cost is \$20 for members and \$85 for guests. Hole sponsors are available for \$100. (Costs will be billed to EAGA member's account). Signup sheets will be at the Tuesday breakfasts. If you have any questions, contact Committee Chairman, Jerry Becker.

◆ The Summer Bash Committee is forming now. Their first meeting for planning this year's bash will be Thursday, April 11th; 5:30pm; Rio Bravo Brewery. Any members are invited, but if you are new to EAGA, this is a special invitation to get involved. Spouses are invited and encouraged to attend the meetings too. It is a great group of people and being part of it will certainly be fun. If you have questions, contact one of the committee chairmen: Pat Maloy or Dan Mowery (after his recuperation).

Badge Board Greeters

Apr 9th John Mead—John Thomas Jewelers

Apr 16th John Woods—Phocus Real Estate

Apr 23rd Lance Darnell—Darnell Cable & Fasteners **Meeting at Chello Grill 7:00am**

Scheduled Speakers

Apr 9th Michael Kourcek—Atmosphere Commercial Interiors

Apr 16th ****We need a speaker ***

Apr 23rd ****We need a speaker **** **Meeting at Chello Grill 7:00am**

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