

More

Iain More: in his own words

Ahead of a company meeting in 2016, we tasked colleagues with writing their autobiographies to be shared as an icebreaker. Iain was delighted to hear about this – and to read the stories – and decided to join in the fun. Here, in his own words, is the potted biography of his colourful life Iain wrote for the team at More...

Born in Glasgow 1941 to John More (49) and Frances Watson (29). Father, son of a working-class midwife, widowed when he was five, went to what is now Strathclyde University, worked in a small ball and roller bearing business – became Grimes More when he bought out Mr. Grimes! Mother a farmer's daughter from Dumfries. Only child, sent to boarding school at 13 – ugh! In Edinburgh, coming from Glasgow – ugh, ugh, rugby playing and me football daft – ugh, ugh, ugh.

Went to St Andrews University, academically disappointed my father, but latterly as I became an international swimmer, he saw me differently. He died in 1962 the year I would have graduated if I had passed Latin, a required course. So, no degree!

Got a job as a management trainee with BP in London. Not a success either. Most memorable experience was when starting with the Crude Oil Availability and Disposal section, my boss – Josh Goodwin Bailey said – “More, when the phone rings here, we answer *Caraventure*”! He had a small business on the side renting motor homes. We were his agents! This occasionally caused a problem when the Head of a refinery, like BP Grangemouth, John Henderson, called.

BP was not keen on my swimming. International duty with GB meant taking Friday afternoon and Monday morning off to swim in Germany or wherever. Hauled before Personnel for improper use of holiday time. Decided that this was not for me. Applied to Loughborough College to do PE.

Loughborough allowed me to do a three-year Diploma in two years because of my St Andrews experience. It was a great two years physically, mentally and friend making. My tutor encouraged me to go to the States and do a Masters. He had gone to the University of Oregon.

In the summer between my two years, I went to the US for five weeks on a \$99, 99-day Greyhound bus pass. I was attracted to a bus with “restroom” – a misnomer! Out of the 35 days, probably spent 15 sleeping on the bus. A memorable experience, and there were many, was sleeping in a window seat somewhere on the way from NYC to LA, to be joined by a very large lady in the next seat, with proportionately large bosoms and baby. A large part of her, amoeba-like, enveloped me. Sleep was tough, but tougher as she often fed her baby with alternative bosoms. But Elma and I got on well and when we got to Amarillo and she departed, we had a cup of coffee and a warm embrace. This event, for some of you who know me from my days on the sleeper with the Company, presaged that aspect of my life.

Fundraising Consultants. And More.

Life in Eugene and the UO Masters was a great experience, not just academically, but also workwise – in a bar and as a “houseboy” serving in a sorority house. Came back to the UK in 1967 and got a one year PE lectureship at St Mary’s College, Twickenham, replacing Mick Jagger’s father.

No other job appeared, so back to Oregon. Started on PhD with the usual mix of work but became increasingly politically involved ending up as Student President 1971-72 leading marches of 4,000-5,000 against the Vietnam war. Did some academic research, found time to work for Presidential candidate George McGovern and do some fundraising for the Democratic Party. Took the offer of a job to set up a non-partisan Research Office for the Oregon State Legislature. This was my first effort in creating something – developing a strategy for how we would operate, hiring staff and surviving in a highly political environment.

After the Democratic Party it was my first successful fundraising experience, writing grants to the Ford Foundation for \$145,000 for school finance reform and to the Johnson Foundation for \$75,000 for alcohol and drugs. A great experience and success, and I met my future wife, Pam, a researcher.

Three years on, my second “creative experience”, a business one. Bought an old – 1859, building in Salem, Oregon, with a friend and converted it into a tavern with art shows and high quality, live traditional music and jazz, Boys of the Lough, Earl Hines, Yusef Lateef, Dexter Gordon and others. Sold the business in 1978 and came back to Scotland driven by the independence movement. Worked as Research Officer and HQ Director for the Scottish National Party. Instituted some radical changes, the most memorable, creating the first UK Party Political Broadcast that used actors not talking heads. Disillusioned by the political fall-out of Alex Salmond being expelled from the Party, left in 1982 and surprisingly got appointed to what became the first Director of Development of Edinburgh University. A fourth “creative experience” – developing an operational strategy, hiring staff and again, surviving in a highly political environment.

Three years of great experience at Edinburgh, raising £1.4m and doing the first telephone campaigns in the UK 1983-85 – there was not another one until Cambridge, a client, in 1992. The opportunity came up to go and do the same, but remarkably different job at INSEAD in Fontainebleau, in a well-established office; another great learning experience. My responsibilities included all alumni fundraising and corporate and major individual work in the US.

Made a mistake in 1987. Got seduced by Imperial College to be Director of External Relations and Development. Pam was working there. It was tough with me in France and this seemed like a promotion but found it frustrating. It didn’t work out.

Pam got a job in Dundee. No obvious work for me but I was getting a number of “free advice” inquiries and thought I might make a go of it as a consultant. Iain More Consultants formed in 1989. Hard going in the first couple of years, drove a bus intermittently with American golfers for a friend in the summer, writing reports at night!

The business built up pretty quickly including in sectors – universities, arts, schools (Ian Edwards when at Shrewsbury was an early client) and a little in continental Europe. Early relationships with other consultants were not satisfactory and I realised with a burgeoning business I needed quickly to recruit high quality consultants and support staff.

Around 1999 things happened in a rush. Anna and Rachel came on board as consultants and Lesley and John Randall added high quality IT and business strategy advice and Patricia arrived. Important to me for a long time was the ethos of whatever I created. Hard to say what this is, but certainly in recruiting Rachel and Anna it was important to me that we were all shareholders, so I distributed shares to them and continued to do this as new people joined. With clients that ethos was probably exemplified with outstanding service, going the extra mile for them, giving them value for money, challenging ourselves to always learn and do better for them.

New people joined between between 1999 and my retirement in 2006, including Simon, Rebecca, Ian, Adrian and Cameron, and soon after that Liam and James. By this time we were operating in universities, schools, arts and museums, health and conventional charities, politics – ippr – and in France, Italy, Finland, Sweden and Poland. George Bain became a Board Member and with John Randall helped shift the model away from a “workers cooperative” as George called it to a proper business. Not an easy transition for me, but I recognised the need and it is probably best it was mostly accomplished by the talented Rachel after I retired.

Concluding by returning to Elma and the Greyhound Bus journey, perhaps my travelling life as a consultant is much remembered, in particular my life on sleeper trains. I was making 75 plus journeys a year in the UK, mostly Dundee/London, but also relatively frequently, when working with Theatre Royal Plymouth, London/Plymouth and even on lines no longer existing like Edinburgh/Exeter and Lancaster/London. It extended to Europe – Paris/Milan to work with Anna and with her, Katowice/Szczecin. I can see this whole life of sharing with previously unknown people (not true on Katowice/Szczecin, Anna and I shared a compartment!) would be an anathema to current consultants looking for a higher quality of travel, or just less of it. But I met some of the most interesting people sharing my compartment – the French toilet roll manufacturer on the Milan/Paris, and on another M/P journey, Albert, the friendly Alsatian dog. On Dundee/London there was the Head of Marketing for Dorset Cereals, the Head of Animal Welfare for M&S, plus three times - Judge Macpherson of the Lawrence Inquiry and Lynn Harrell, one of the world’s top cellists. Sharing with Lynn was a challenge. He was a very big guy and he had a very big cello box. But we did it. Life on the sleeper was like that.

That’s the biography, except to say how delighted I am with the way the Company has grown and developed. Stay true to the values and this will continue. Advance Great Ambitions.