



Written by [Larry Elder](#) on March 16, 2023

Ego and Greed

I took a flight from Los Angeles to Minneapolis and was picked up at the airport by a black driver. His name is Davis. He looked mid-20s, but it turned out he was 39. He was charming, soft-spoken, friendly and became talkative once he realized I wanted to talk.

During the drive to my hotel, he told me he liked sports. I asked whether he knew the Los Angeles Lakers were originally based in Minneapolis. He was surprised.

“Really?”

“You didn’t know that — and you’re a sports guy? Why do you think they’re called the ‘Lakers’? There are no lakes in L.A.”

Davis laughed. “Always thought the name was weird but didn’t know they got the name from my city.”

He is not married, has no children and is close to his mom and his two sisters.

“You didn’t mention your father,” I said. He paused.

“Well, he was never in my life. Died when I was 18. Leukemia.”

“Was that hard on you and your family?”

“Yes, but I tried to stay busy, got into sports, played football.”

I asked how long he’d been working as a driver.

“About two years.”

“What did you do before?”

“Well, I caught a case back in 2010.” He said.

“‘Caught a case’? You mean time in prison?”

“Yes.”

I expected him to say a few months, but he told me he served nearly three years.

“That’s a long time,” I said.

“Would’ve been longer if I hadn’t gotten out early for good behavior.”

We talked about his crime. He said his mom rarely worked, that his family was desperately poor, and they moved frequently and suddenly to avoid paying rent.

“I went to three or four high schools. As soon as I sort of got settled, we’d move again.”

At the last place, his mom had a tiny bedroom. The sisters slept in another small bedroom, and he slept on the couch.



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“I got sick of sleeping on that couch. Whenever I met a lady, I was embarrassed to show her where I lived. I got sick of living like that.”

He got a BB gun and used it to rob a movie theater for about \$2,200.

“Got caught. Found out you do the same amount of time for a BB gun as you do with a real gun.”

“What possessed you to do that?”

“Greed and ego. Got caught up in greed and ego. And in a way, it was a good thing; I needed to get myself together and start taking responsibility.”

I told him that some would say what happened was somewhat understandable, even predictable.

“I mean, you lacked a father figure.”

“No,” he said. “That’s just an excuse. I made dumb decisions. I had choices. I just made bad ones.”

What was it like behind bars? I asked. Was he attacked, molested?

“No. But I could’ve been. I was in a minimum security prison, and it was run by gangs. My first day, the toughest gang leader asked me ‘where I was from,’ meaning what gang I belonged to. I told him I was a ‘neutron,’ meaning I didn’t belong to any gang. He said, ‘In here you better pick a side.’ He asked me my name; I told him my last name and he said, ‘I know that name; what is your father’s first name?’ I told him. His whole attitude changed. He said, ‘I knew your father.’”

Turns out they used to run together in the gang.

“‘Your father was a cool dude.’ he said. And from that point on I was protected — nothing ever happened to me.”

“How ironic,” I said. “Your dad was not in your life, but your dad’s reputation protected you from getting assaulted when you were in prison.”

“Yeah, funny how things work out.”

He now works as a youth counselor and motivational speaker. He encourages fatherless children to forgive their fathers, to make good decisions and to refuse to think like a victim.

We reached my hotel, exchanged information and promised to stay in touch. I told him I would write about him, and that his story will inspire others.

Davis smiled. “I knew this was going to be a good day.”

Larry Elder is a bestselling author and nationally syndicated radio talk-show host. To find out more about Larry Elder, or become an “Elderado,” visit www.LarryElder.com. Follow Larry on Twitter @larryelder. To read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate webpage at www.creators.com.

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