



XIV. NEVER COMPROMISE YOUR INTEGRITY

Age: 20

In almost every organization there are certain things that cannot be controlled unless you are the person at the top. When this is the case success and failure most undoubtedly rests with you. When it isn't you are compelled to adapt and conform to the culture of the company or work somewhere else.

In most circumstances being a valued employee, a good example, and a team player can influence leadership enough to get their attention and even inspire change when and where it is needed.

For me that moment of truth had come. However, the decision I was faced with making was very different than any I had to make before in my young career. It wasn't about opportunity, it wasn't about income, it wasn't about being stagnant or properly recognized for a job well done, it was about integrity and character. Not just the company's, but my own. Would I stand strong and protect those who had come to depend on me, or would I accept something that was seriously wrong for personal gain?

Character and respect were a big part of everything I did and a big part of what I instilled in and gave to each employee. This wasn't an option it was a way of life. The idea that a company or its employees were willing to accept anything less was inconceivable to me. It is important as you read on to remember the time, **1976**. Sexual harassment in the workplace had not yet become much of a topic for debate and didn't have any legal consequences when it occurred.

When you grow up like I did, respecting everyone you you knew, young and old, you might take for granted that others did as well. It was not something just to be considered growing up, it was a requirement. Anything less would have a big price to pay for anyone who dared to cross that line.

So when two female employees on my staff told me they had been propositioned by two married corporate executives visiting our store I was in complete disbelief. One thing was certain, this was unacceptable, and if it was true, I was definitely with the wrong company. These guys crossed the line. The employees felt helpless and because of the nature of the time I was the only one they could go to. The only question left for me to answer was; "Would I be there for them"? You bet I would be.