



IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

by Stephen A. Greene

The average client of the Johnson O'Connor Research Foundation is approximately twenty-eight years of age. This statistic, however, does not make it clear that some of our clients are as young as fourteen and a few even as old as eighty. Many people wonder, "What is the *ideal* age to have one's aptitudes measured?" There may be no one correct answer to this question since each person's situation has its own unique set of circumstances. However, testing during the junior year in high school is generally considered the best time since knowledge of one's aptitudes can help in making important decisions about college. Although testing during the high school years can be especially useful, it is never too late to assess one's natural talents to help make wise career and educational choices. This article details the experiences of two people who, based on their aptitude test scores, made dramatic career changes in their thirties. They have graciously allowed us to tell their stories.

Dr. Jim Reed originally came to us for aptitude testing as a college student. A career in medicine was one of several options we suggested based on his pattern of aptitude scores. Although he strongly considered medical school he ultimately chose, for a number of personal reasons, to go to business school instead. He earned an MBA at Wharton and pursued a career in business. Although he achieved some measure of success, he was dissatisfied and came back to us for a follow-up discussion at age thirty-four. Now, nearly twenty years later, Dr. Reed still vividly recalls some details from that session. He says:

I was sitting across the desk from the test administrator. She looked up from my test results, straight into my eyes, and asked, "Why didn't you go to medical school?" "I thought business school was the right thing to do at the time," I responded. "I guess it's too late now." She paused for a few moments and then replied, "Only if *you* think so."

Fortunately, Dr. Reed decided that it *wasn't* too late. As a result of that meeting, he decided to attend medical school.

As a first step toward completing his pre-med requirements, he enrolled in a physics course. He thought that would be a good way to test out his scientific capabilities. Halfway through the first week of class he thought to himself, "This is where I ought to be. I've made the right decision." After that, all the pieces of the puzzle seemed to fall into place. He completed his pre-med requirements at Columbia University with a 4.0 average. He also scored exceedingly high on his MCATs. Consequently, he was admitted to Cornell University's medical school the following year, without the customary one-year waiting period. He graduated with top honors and ran his own successful family medical practice for almost ten years. He then became chief medical officer for a major medical corporation and currently

serves quite happily as its chief operating officer. Clearly his career transition was, as they say, just what the doctor ordered.

Another client, Terry Scarborough, was tested by us at age thirty-two. Ms. Scarborough had received a bachelor's degree in English and a master's in education, and was working as the admissions director for Sweet Briar College in Virginia. She was reasonably satisfied with her work and was tested primarily to assess the appropriateness of our testing program for the students at her school. To her great surprise, however, the testing revealed that she had aptitudes relating to three-dimensional design. At the suggestion of her test administrator, the following fall semester Ms. Scarborough audited a design course, which she greatly enjoyed. The next spring her husband changed jobs and they relocated to another state. This gave her the opportunity to enroll full-time in an interior design program. According to Ms. Scarborough, "I enrolled in the program just for fun, thinking, 'If I get a real job, I'll quit school.' But halfway through the first semester I was completely hooked and I've never looked back."

After receiving her master's degree in interior design she worked for an architectural firm doing marketing and space planning, which she found quite satisfying. A few years later, she and her husband relocated again and this time Ms. Scarborough landed what has turned out to be her dream job: she is now a happy, successful, award-winning designer for one of the top interior design firms in the country. She has become a Certified Kitchen Designer (CKD), a Certified Bath Designer (CBD), a professional member of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) and her work has appeared in numerous national publications. Ms. Scarborough, reflecting on her testing experience said, "It opened my eyes to a world I never would have considered."

Many people who come to us for aptitude testing after the age of thirty seek primarily to expand their self-knowledge or confirm their talents so they can fine-tune their career paths, choose satisfying avocations or plan for retirement. But for those with the desire, determination and the wherewithal to make major career changes later in life – as we have seen – it's never too late.

Stephen A. Greene joined the Foundation in 1987 and has been Director of the New York office since 1999.

If you have been tested and have subsequently made a satisfying career change, please let us know by contacting Suzanne Merna at:
Human Engineering Laboratory,
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617-450-4938 e-mail: Boston@jocrf.org



CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

No. 160

We are pleased to add these tests to our testing program:

GRIP

The Grip test has a long history within the Foundation dating back to the 1930s. Grip measures the amount of force one can apply with one's hand by squeezing a dynamometer. Early dynamometers employed a spring mechanism that made calibration difficult. In the 1990s we conducted research on Grip using a new type of dynamometer employing a hydraulic mechanism. In 2001 Dr. Chris Condon analyzed data from this research and found that the test has high reliability when the hydraulic dynamometer is used. Grip was formally added to the test battery in 2002 after the construction of new norms.



A high score on Grip indicates that an individual can apply substantial force with his or her hands, which is an asset in physically demanding occupations such as firefighter and police officer. Grip may also measure nervous energy or drive.

COLOR DISCRIMINATION

For many years researchers at the Foundation have been interested in measuring color discrimination, which is the ability to perceive fine differences among colors. In addition to the standard battery of tests, in 1996 Foundation examinees were administered the Farnsworth-Munsell 100-Hue Test, which is known within the Foundation as Color Discrimination. In recent years we showed that the test has good reliability and validity. In 2002 norms were constructed and the test was added to the standard battery.



Color discrimination is useful in fields such as the production of paints and fabrics, interior decorating, cosmetology, the visual arts, and restorative dentistry.

GIFT CERTIFICATES

Gift certificates, redeemable for aptitude testing at any one of our eleven offices, are available from the Johnson O'Connor Research Foundation, Inc. The cost for the testing program is \$600. To purchase a gift certificate for full or partial payment of the test fee, please complete the form below and mail as indicated. With each gift certificate we enclose a brochure explaining our services as well as a list of our offices. For more information please call 1-800-355-3670.

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