

Folkways Records FH 5541

CAREERS IN SELLING

A Recorded Interview with

ALFRED C. FULLER

Produced by Howard Langer

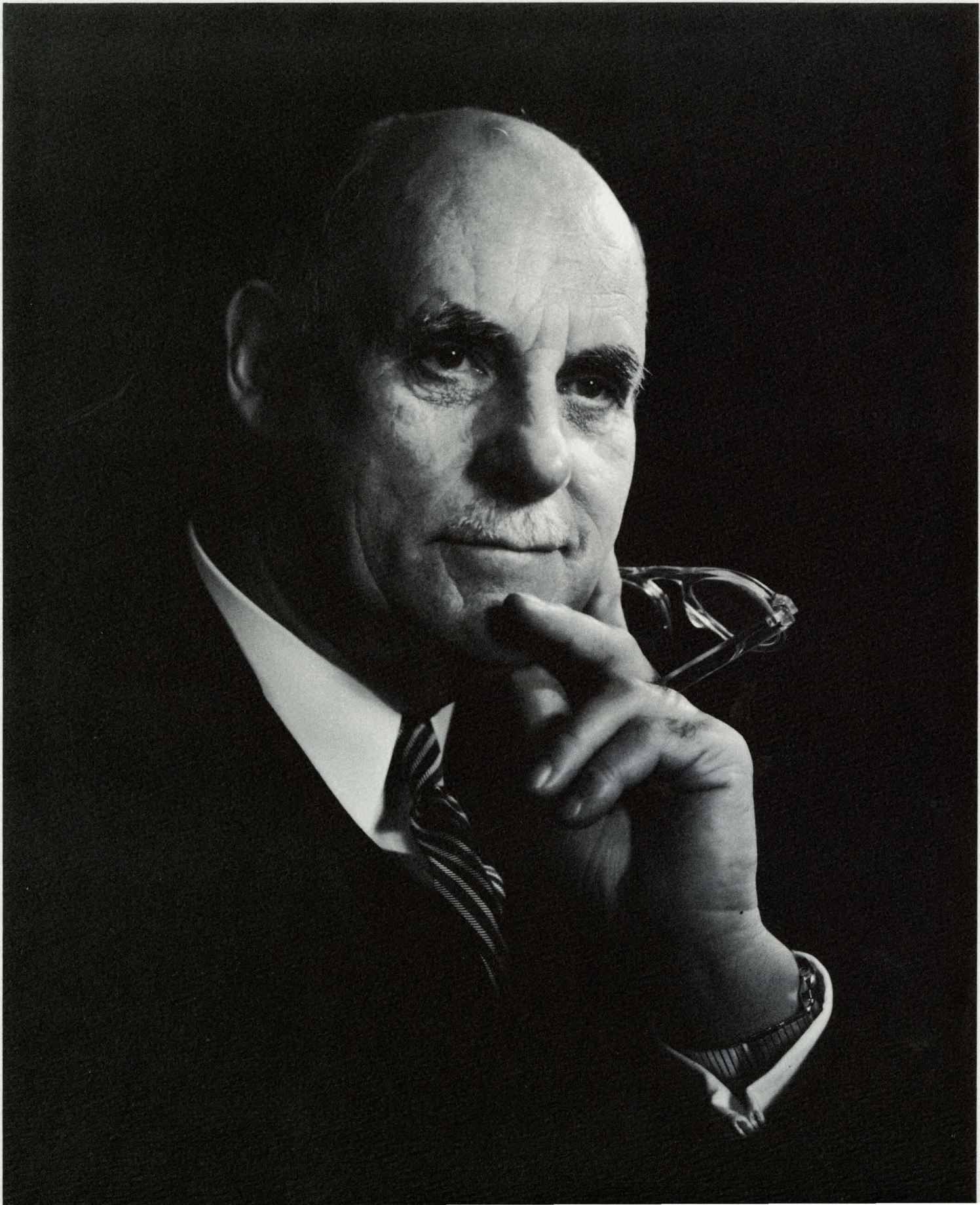


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CAREERS IN SELLING/ALFRED C. FULLER

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SIDE I

- Band 1: Background; Hints
- Band 2: Good Salesmen
- Band 3: Customer Needs
- Band 4: The Rugged Individual

SIDE II

- Band 1: Opportunities Today; Education
- Band 2: Qualities Needed For Success
- Band 3: Living For A Purpose
- Band 4: Young People; Advice Offered

ALFRED C. FULLER

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CAREERS IN SELLING

a recorded interview with Alfred C. Fuller

by HOWARD LANGER

INTRODUCTION

In 1903, Alfred Carl Fuller, a farm boy of 18 from Grand Pre, Nova Scotia, came to Boston, where his sister lived in the suburb of Somerville. The eleventh of twelve children, he had no high school education and was without business experience, but he was determined to make a living for himself.

In his first two years, he lost three jobs. Persevering, he started to sell brushes. In a year, he saved \$375, quit his job and began making his own brushes in the basement of his sister's farmhouse, where he boarded. His only mechanical training had been in repairing farm equipment; nevertheless, he designed a small iron machine to produce twisted-wire brushes by hand cranking. It cost him \$15. Horsehair, bristles, fibers, wires and enamel handles cost him another \$50. The workbench to which his machine was fixed, he made himself.

Alfred worked 16 hours a day, cranking out brushes at night, knocking on doors from early morning to early afternoon to sell the brushes turned out the night before. The first day he sold \$6 worth of brushes. That was one day after New Year's Day, 1906. Quickly, his sales mounted to \$50 a week. In the spring, Alfred moved to Hartford, Connecticut, rented space in a shed for \$11 a month, hired a shop assistant and applied himself to door-to-door selling. By 1910, he had 25 salesmen and 6 brush workers. His big problem was building a sales force. He solved this in 1911, placing classified ads in a newspaper and a magazine. In three months, he recruited almost one hundred sales agents.

Expanding his manufacturing facilities, Fuller continued building his sales force by classified advertising. From \$30,000 sales in 1910, his sales volume exceeded \$250,000 in 1916, jumped to half a million in 1918, and by 1953 was up to \$1 million (wholesale) weekly. Today, the Fuller Brush Company has more than 7,000 door-to-door dealers annually totalling sales around \$100 million.

Fifty years ago, when Fuller started house-to-house selling, the direct selling industry was in disrepute, due to loose merchandising practices and poor selling techniques. Alfred Fuller contributed to the elimination of this situation by his innovations in both merchandising and selling approaches. The fame of "the Fuller Brush man" throughout the world attests to this fact.

One of Alfred Fuller's prime interests is in the furtherance of education. To devote more of his activities to this field, he retired from the presidency of the company. He is chairman of the board of trustees of the Julius Hartt Musical Foundation, Hartt College of Music of the Univer-

sity of Hartford. The college annually offers a scholarship in opera called the Alfred C. Fuller Opera Scholarship. He is, in addition, active in support of the Hartt Opera Theatre Guild and is chairman of University Founders of Hartford University.

MR. LANGER INTERVIEWS MR. ALFRED FULLER - Part 1 & 2

Band 1:

MR. LANGER:

Mr. Fuller, you're probably the greatest salesman in the world. I think anyone who has set up the empire you have had to have some kind of special sales devices which has helped him. Could you tell us, first, how you got started in the brush business? And then perhaps a little bit about what your little ways of increasing sales?

MR. FULLER:

Well, Howard, I got into selling because I decided to sell brushes. I was somewhat acquainted with small firms who were manufacturing and selling brushes door-to-door, and I decided that it was a good field and there were opportunities in it.

MR. LANGER:

How old were you?

MR. FULLER:

I was twenty years old -- just twenty years old when I first started. One year later, I set up a small shop for production of the brushes which I had been selling for one year and combined my work of producing brushes with their sales and it worked out that over a period of months I was able to establish both the production and the sale of these particular brushes which we were making at that time.

MR. LANGER:

Now, how much money did it take you to start the Fuller Brush business?

MR. FULLER:

Well, I only had as working capital about \$375 at the time. I was earning some money and adding to that so that there was an increment of additional capital to earnings I was making at that time.

MR. LANGER:

Now, I understand when you first started you took the orders before you made the brushes. Is that right?

MR. FULLER:

Yes. I divided my time by using the late afternoon and evenings in the work of producing brushes with my selling work. It gave me more experience for one thing and it was a means of getting a small enterprise started, getting it underway. As time went on I began adding other salespeople to help me on the selling end of it and that was the beginning of the merchandising or selling program, in the business. It was very small, of course, in both the production and the selling.

MR. LANGER:

One of the things I thought about as I read your book A Foot in the Door, well, first of all, the title, "A Foot in the Door." Now, we're all familiar with the comic strip characterization of the salesman with his foot in a door. Yet, the way you describe your operation, that's the last thing that a Fuller Brush salesman would do -- put his foot in a door. Why did you name it this?

MR. FULLER:

Well, that term, "a foot in the door," has a connotation in connection with door-to-door selling in the minds of people. It was perhaps for that reason and that title to the book because it had so much to do with direct selling. My whole experience and my whole career. And it has its further connotation in the fact that it is sort of an entre meaning which I think all through this book both my direct experience in business and the selling field as well as in other phases or subjects that I've undertaken to cover in the book.

MR. LANGER:

Now you mention the fact that one of the first things you did when you started to sell was that instead of stepping forward to greet the housewife, you stepped back. Now, why did you do that?

MR. FULLER:

Well, house-to-house selling perhaps requires more ideas or techniques than other forms of selling. We are doing business with women entirely in this instance -- or almost entirely -- and the important thing is to put them at ease and not to make them feel that one is aggressive in that work. Anything that can be done to achieve that is important -- it's very useful in this direct selling. That happened to be part of our technique that proved very effective.

MR. LANGER:

What were some of the other techniques? I remember one of the things you wrote about was that a salesman should wear rubbers a size too big. What was the reason for that?

MR. FULLER:

Well, that's rather a minor incident, but the idea in connection with this work, but obviously the housekeeper wouldn't welcome someone if they thought they were going to muss up the house in any way and use of rubbers you have to . . . in fact the whole method of selling house-to-house . . . you have to cut, expedite, things as much as possible. And that was simply a means of removing your rubbers in bad weather quickly and easily.

MR. LANGER:

What were some of the other devices that you developed? these little things that you could only learn by having done?

MR. FULLER:

Well, the success of house-to-house selling first begins with your products. You must very quickly convince customers that your products are something that will be of interest to her and of value to her or him or whoever your customers might be. And we adopted a plan -- or I adopted a plan -- which helped the entre to customers by gift items. That was adopted very early in this business and has always been a very important factor. We found we could make small, inexpensive types of brushes that at the same time had a lot of usefulness to the customer and it was really a worthwhile thing for the customer to receive which was also characteristic or typical of our product. In other words, it's sort of an introduction and at the same time it introduced the uses of our products. That was the idea to give the customer something immediately that would be typical of our . . . of the utility and the use of our products generally. We're interested to furnish the housewife with as many useful items as possible. That I think is the important thing in the growth of our business; we have been able to help housekeepers in doing their housework.

MR. LANGER:

One of the things you mentioned in your book is that you tell a salesman never to accept a sale for a small brush from a housewife just so she can get rid of him. What is the reason for that?

MR. FULLER:

Well, that's simply to emphasize better salesmanship. If the salesman is not succeeding in doing more than just to get to sell a small brush when the customer's attitude is just to get rid of him, it's not good salesmanship, and we've tried to do much better than that in our contacts with customers. It isn't that you wouldn't accept the order for that small brush under any circumstances but the work which we're carrying on . . . you have to keep these customers interested to a greater degree than would be indicated by that . . . the sale of that small brush.

MR. LANGER:

One of the things that struck me in your book was this: you said at the beginning of the book, as I remember, that you didn't have a gift to gab. Yet, toward the end, you said that it was very important not to let the conversation lag, because if the conversation lags this gives the customer time to say no, or think about it, or in the lag she may decide against it. Now is this a contradiction?

MR. FULLER:

Well, I don't think so. I think that term "gift to gab" . . . the association of that in salesmanship indicates that the salesman is engaging himself in irrelevant and unimportant conversation in connection with his product and he perhaps talks too much in the wrong direction. The art of conversation is just as important in salesmanship as it is anywhere else. That's what we try to apply.

MR. LANGER:

What qualities make a good salesman?

MR. FULLER:

Well, a salesman's got to be energetic in the first place. He's got . . . he must be a worker -- certainly in our business. He needs to use a great deal of time and energy because it's an intensive type of salesmanship. Most of our salesmen today make as many as 30 to 40 contacts with customers and then he has to handle his merchandise, he has to deliver . . .

MR. LANGER:

Excuse me. Is that 30 to 40 a day?

MR. FULLER:

A day. Yes. And in the delivery of his product to these customers is an entire service to them requires a lot of time and energy. That might be put down as the first requirement. Obviously, a salesman needs to have a reasonably good personality. He may not have to be a handsome person, but he has to have a personality that will win friends and make good customers. Most all of the qualifications that are needed by successful people has to be in evidence, more or less, in salesmanship.

MR. LANGER:

I think you mentioned the element of a sense of humor. Why did you put that in?

MR. FULLER:

Well, I think a sense of humor's always useful at any time. And is particularly so in salesmanship.

MR. LANGER:

By that you don't necessarily mean someone that can crack a good joke. Just being able to make the best of a bad situation, I guess?

MR. FULLER:

No, not necessarily. He has . . . needs to be at least interesting in his . . . whatever his conversation may be and he can build that up in connection with his work usually after he's had certain experience. It involves to a degree at least a sense of humor.

MR. LANGER:

What are some of the things that make for a bad salesman?

MR. FULLER:

Well, a bad salesman is a person who doesn't do a good job in his relations with people. And that might imply anyone of a great many things. He must have enthusiasm and interest and lack of enthusiasm is of course deadly in salesmanship. He must be enthusiastic not only about his product but about his work and the . . . he must like people. The absence of those . . . any of those things would be detrimental and would denote a poor salesman.

MR. LANGER:

Now, you also mentioned the fact that many wives feel that door-to-door selling is somehow beneath them socially. Is that really a very important factor?

MR. FULLER:

Yes. It is an important factor, and in building up a house-to-house or door-to-door selling organization we try as far as possible to overcome it or to offset that psychological aspect of the work. I think that the success of our system over the years indicates that we have to a substantial degree at least overcome some of the objections that people have in buying products at their door or in their own home.

MR. LANGER:

Now, getting back to the woman who doesn't want her husband to be a door-to-door salesman, there seems to be a . . . we seem to have a society now that is more conscious of what they call "status people". Do you think that this plays a part in this business about salesmen? door-to-door selling specifically?

MR. FULLER:

The status of . . .

MR. LANGER:

Status people.

MR. FULLER:

Well, I think so. I think that the housekeeper is interested if she believes that there is some advantage of course using the merchandise than an individual dealer or salesman has or in perhaps some particular service and till that's established you haven't been able to find any particular status of . . . for this particular salesman doing his work. I think all merchandising and all selling is alike basically. It's based on the distribution of products that are useful to someone. That has to be established. There's no purpose for a person spending any amount of money that they have to spend unless it's to their advantage to spend it, and that always has to be established in the relationship of a salesman with a customer, which perhaps is an answer to that particular point.

MR. LANGER:

Do you think that radio and television and the mass magazines make door-to-door selling easier?

MR. FULLER:

I think that a great deal has been accomplished through television and radio to inform people about merchandise. All good advertising, whether it's done with a system like ours or whether it's done by copy and various mediums, and it has helped I think house-to-house selling as it has in other fields of selling or merchandising. Yes, I think it has been a distinct advantage.

MR. LANGER:

I kind of breaks the ice?

MR. FULLER:

Yes.

Band 3:

MR. LANGER:

I'd like to go into some other aspects now of your background. First of all, I guess you were probably one of the first market researchers. You said that your customers were your designers. How did you go about that?

MR. FULLER:

Well, when I first started house-to-house selling I found opportunity to get ideas from customers. A job, even at the outset, was to find products or to develop products that would be useful and serviceable in housekeeping. Now, no one knows more about that than housekeepers themselves; so obviously you had an opportunity there to enlist their assistance or aid by obtaining their ideas on housekeeping problems. As a matter of fact, it was very easy and I could give you any number of illustrations, but I found that the old-fashioned ice box (and that was before the days of the electric refrigerator) there's a drain pipe that would fill up about once a week just from the melted ice drainage down into a can underneath or into a drain someplace. I found that we could make a long-handled brush that would be long enough to get through that tube and with a brush on the end of it to clear that. And it could be done very quickly, but in the absence of it, it was a very serious problem. That's perhaps a fair example, but any number of housekeeping problems that someone who is specializing in products for housekeeping can take advantage of.

MR. LANGER:

How many different brushes have you developed since the Fuller Brush business began?

MR. FULLER:

Well, including a great many special items, I assume it would run into several hundred.

MR. LANGER:

Several hundred.

MR. FULLER:

Yes.

MR. LANGER:

Could you give me . . .

MR. FULLER:

More than one hundred anyway, at least.

MR. LANGER:

Could you give me a couple of examples. You mentioned the one about the one for the ice box. I guess that's not used in many places anymore.

MR. FULLER:

Well, it takes the form of two different things. One is to improve the brushes that we already have and the other was the development of new products. Mopping floors is probably one of the most disagreeable jobs -- it was before proper equipment was made for it -- that a housekeeper had, and by the utilization of new materials like

cellulose materials in making mops and the self-wringing mop. We developed a mop that enabled the user to keep her hands out of the water by throwing a little lever and squeezing the water out of the mop -- things of that kind.

Band 4:

MR. LANGER:

Tell me, Mr. Fuller, do you think that the rugged individual in America is dead? Is there such a creature any more? in our modern society?

MR. FULLER:

Well, when you get into the question of human nature to its strength and its weaknesses you find it ranges all the way from a very poor individual to a very unworthy individual to one who is a creative individual. And I think that there is more or a higher proportion of people today that are doing creative work than ever before. I think the new scientific and technical developments have stimulated that in the younger people, so that they see more opportunities and more things stimulate ambition and their imagination than ever before, so if we take it on the basis of average, I think there are less people of the . . . that fit into that category than there was perhaps 20 or 30 or 50 years ago.

MR. LANGER:

What I'm really driving at is could a Henry Ford or a Henry Fuller or a Charles Kettering start with nothing today, 1960, and twenty years from now build himself an industrial empire? That's considering the question of things like taxes and labors costs and so on.

MR. FULLER:

Well, I think they are doing it. I think that there are more people all the time who are developing themselves and their project, whatever it may be, into a successful product and building large enterprises than ever before. I think we are all more or less familiar with such examples of that. The work of building a business (of course some businesses require more capital) but I know of one example in Frankfort a young engineer who developed new ideas in helicopters and that business today is doing twenty-three and four million dollars a year. A lot of it's government business, but he developed this helicopter along approved lines and I think we could find any number of examples that shows that progress of developing new business and new industries is progressing all the time.

LANGER-FULLER INTERVIEW (Part II)

Band 1:

MR. LANGER:

Mr. Fuller, there have been a lot of "prophets of doom" who have said that the small businessman is doomed in America. He is being crushed by high taxes. He's being . . . his labor is being priced. . . pricing him out of business. Do you

think that there's room for a small businessman in America? can he exist? can he survive?

MR. FULLER:

Well, I think that question can be answered best by . . . perhaps statistical procedure. There seems to be just as many small businesses in existence today and far more, as a matter of fact, than there was in earlier years. They're evidently taking advantage of new technical and scientific developments. They're perhaps making parts for larger industry. Take the aircraft industry: they have hundreds of small shops that are making parts, so that the characters of small businesses change but I don't think the magnitude or the extent of the field of small businesses can contract it at all. From year to year, going back 20 to 25 years. It depends there entirely whether someone has a particular qualification, technical education, or other things to produce something and to make it fit into the over-all production that is going on. If it's in the manufacturing field, and then of course in the retail field, commercial field, even the financial field, there is still not only as many opportunities but I think there are more opportunities.

MR. LANGER:

Now, you mentioned education. Now, in your book at one point you mention the fact and I quote: "I distrusted experts perhaps fearful that they might take business away from me, but I could trust men who like myself had learned their skills by work rather than from theoretical education." Then you go on to ask how much education did Galileo have or Da Vinci or Columbus, and so on, or Lincoln. Don't you really think education is pretty important today? more. . .

MR. FULLER:

Well, I think a minimum education at least not only important but it's requisite to success today, but there are so many other qualifications that a man must have. He must have vision, he must have ambition and he must have an imagination to do things. If he has those he can usually beyond, after he's had a fairly good basic education, he can employ expert people to do certain things that he himself may not be able to do at all. I think I brought that up, too, in this book. But I think there's a far higher proportion of educated people in the business world than there was when I started. I think that in the industrial field, even in the financial field and the commercial field, that we'll say up to about 1930 the great majority had never been to college. In other words, there was no higher education than at high school and some of them with just a commonschool education. It shows that the requirements in business can be provided by people in various degrees of education.

MR. LANGER:

You mentioned the fact that everyone should have a minimum basic education. How minimum is minimum? what would you say was the minimum?

MR. FULLER:

Well, I . . . a person can succeed with even a commonschool education.

MR. LANGER:

Now, commonschool. What do you mean by that?

MR. FULLER:

I mean a grade school or pre-high school level of education.

MR. LANGER:

Roughly the first six grades.

MR. FULLER:

The first six grades. Yes.

MR. LANGER:

Now, in many states, as you know, a high school diploma is necessary before a young person, unless he reaches the age of 18 or 17, can get a job. Do you think this is a good thing?

MR. FULLER:

Well, it depends on what the job is. Of course, a person with no more than a grade school education can still find a job. I mean, he can work. But it isn't adequate for the great majority of opportunities or positions that he might contemplate. That's very true. I think in my case that it was a question of being resourcefulness to find what we might call a substitute for a better education than I had at the time, and in my particular case it was achieved by building a small organization and a larger organization of people who were sufficiently qualified to carry out certain parts of the business. So it did not seem to be a handicap particularly in my ability to direct the general progress of the business. That's the most important element in business, whether it's by an educated person or a lesser educated.

MR. LANGER:

One of the things you mentioned in your book is that you feel that the best cure for delinquency (I don't know if this is the exact quote). . . the best cure for delinquency is work. I believe you made some statement like that. What kind of work can these young people get, say, at 13, 14, or 15, some of whom have not really learned to read and write properly?

MR. FULLER:

Well, I was born and brought up on a farm and I think most of our business executives up to a certain period were people who came from a farm. Now one thing that you learn on a farm is to work. That is, you learn to be industrious and you know that even to make a basic living you have to be energetic and ambitious and willing to work, whatever it involves, whether it involves mental work, physical work, or what not. And I think that probably the impressions that I had there to use my own background and my own bringing-up and it stands anyone in a goodstead . . . all through their lifetime.

Band 2:

MR. LANGER:

Okay, now. Now, 50 years ago on the farm you could

pick apples, you could, I don't know, pitch hay, you could spread fertilizer. Today everything is machines. Of course, not picking apples, but, machines, and child labor laws don't apply to farm jobs. Of course, as you know, farm jobs have fallen so rapidly that in the next twenty years it will almost be all mechanical. The jobs will be in the cities, will be in services, and in production. What specific jobs could a young person get (I'm talking about a 13, 14, 15 - year - old youngster, who doesn't want to stay in school, can't seem to learn, who wants to go out and work and who a lot of people say should be permitted to go out and work) what kind of job can a young person like that get?

MR. FULLER:

Well, I think that there's just as much of an opportunity, or just as large a field, for workers of all kinds today as there were we'll say 40 to 50 years ago. Now, this whole question of work I think is more or less synonymous with ambition. And I think that wherever we find ourselves a person has to be willing to do a lot of work and thought and study to be applied to any vocation or any position whatever it may be, so that it may, in recent years due to mechanical development, take on a different sort of conditions and background but never the less the qualifications of ambition and energetic work is still as useful as it ever was.

MR. LANGER:

In other words, you think that a young man or young woman, girl or boy, really, has got to have more on the ball than just be available for a job. He has got to have inner qualities if he's going to succeed. Is that what you're trying to say?

MR. FULLER:

Well, yes. The statements which we very often hear that a person "gets by" -- he gets by perhaps, but we're talking now about a higher degree of accomplishment and to reach a higher degree of achievement of accomplishment the person has to be a worker. I don't care how you apply that term, whether it's mentally, physically, or in his imagination or what not. He's got to be alert, he's got to be alert and ready to provide all the energy that may be necessary to achieve that purpose. That, I think don't change very much, but some jobs are easier physical (that is, they're easier than other jobs) and certain other positions are easier mentally speaking, but in all cases there must be a driving power of some kind back of the individual to achieve a given purpose and we can use the terminology of hard work, if you will, to any of them.

MR. LANGER:

What I was trying to find out is (hard work is fine) . . . I'm just trying to find out what specific kind of work. Now, of course there's unskilled labor, there's ditch-digging, there's . . . but even unskilled labor -- there are fewer and fewer jobs in unskilled labor that are going to be available in the next 20 years. Let me put it this way: Do you think it's important for young people to try and finish school? even by going at night?

MR. FULLER:

It's very important for any individual to get as much education as possible. I think there are degrees of education or kinds of education that have to be

taken into consideration. Some individuals need one kind of education; others need another kind. It may be a little difficult for the individuals to know what is the best kind of education, but I've heard educators say many times that we don't educate young people enough to use their hands. Even a dentist, for example, is very skillful in using his hands. Now, that in a sense, is a physical element, but a person I think has to be selective and they must concentrate on some particular thing. In other words, they've got to back their talents and their abilities in some particular field, and I think that again is the question of a person concentrating on one particular thing that they believe offers them the best opportunity. In my own case, I found I could sell. I wasn't a crack salesman, but I found I could sell, and then I found I could find other people that could sell better than I could sell, and it didn't make any difference if you're moving merchandise from the producer to the consumer who does it -- it's important how you get it done. And it's the energy or the ambition back of whoever is managing the program to the degree of success.

Band 3:

MR. LANGER:

Mr. Fuller, in your book, A Foot in the Door, you write this: "Our society with its faceless suburbs, its mechanical automation, its compulsion toward conformity, is a form of slavery." What do you mean by that? do you really believe that?

MR. FULLER:

Well, using that term "faceless suburbs" . . . of course people congregate in their living there but there has to be more than that. And, of course, the community in which they live. . . if you take the business part of a community and the suburban or residential part I think there has to be a certain balance between the two in communications and all that.

MR. LANGER:

Yet, you say it's a form of slavery. Why do you say that?

MR. FULLER:

Well, it's . . . that term may be a little out of order, but I think it's just a difference between people living and working with a purpose, with a distinct purpose, if they're not it's more or less a form of slavery or at least it might be only a mental slavery.

MR. LANGER:

Well, you say it's a voluntary subservience to a high standard of material comfort and in the end it can lead only to ruin and yet there are some people that say this is what the foundation of the American standard of living is, a higher and higher standard of living. Do you think that's bad? or do you think . . .

MR. FULLER:

Well, I think that a higher standard of living involves more than just, we might say, physical comforts, or the various gadgets and what not. I think my thought there was to lead up, or into, other elements that are also important which in

this case I have developed, to some extent at least, in this book, which gets into the spiritual or the metaphysical.

MR. LANGER:

Yes, that was my next question. I was going to ask you about the religious quality running throughout the book. As you know, it's common knowledge that as far as church membership is concerned probably the highest in its history all churches, synagogues and so on, and yet we seem to have lower moral and ethical standards. How do you account for this?

MR. FULLER:

Well, I think the churches and of all kinds can do a much more effective job than they are doing so far as that is concerned. I can only speak from my own experience in that respect, and that is, that I . . . I've have given specific interest in the metaphysical, the religious aspects of spiritual, and from my own experience I have found that it could be utilized to greater degrees than it ordinarily is. Now, whether the churches can fill that gap to better degrees than they have is a question that might . . . people can differ on. I don't whether that is the answer to it. But I believe that each individual can enhance his progress and the effectiveness of whatever he is doing, by giving more attention to it. Now, where do we find the basic elements? We find it in the Bible -- at least, that's where I find it. And the Bible is not ambiguous. I mean, the statements in it are very concise -- they're very positive, and it comes down to the question whether those statements are valid or whether they're authentic, whether they are as the authors intended them to be, applicable to human conditions and human problems, human works or interests, whatever it may be. And I feel personally that it's the only source that we have of guidance in that respect and my experience is that those are pretexts and the records, statements in both the Old Testament and the New can be applied effectively to people's activities and whatever concerns them in their whole life, whether social, business, or any other thing that they're interested in.

Band 4:

MR. LANGER:

Finally, Mr. Fuller, what advice can you offer young people thinking of careers?

MR. FULLER:

Well, as I said before, I think a person has got to decide what field of activity (of course that begins with their education). If a student or the parents decide that they want to pursue engineering, we'll say for example, or anyone of the technical and scientific pursuits, he's going to select that in his educational background. He should decide on what his field is going to be and then concentrate on that field. In other words, if he scatters his interests and his work he's not as effective as he would be if he concentrated all of his study and his interests in that particular field. Now, I think a source that's very helpful in that respect is the experience of successful men. Now, men like Steinman, he was a great engineer, he was a great scientist. Well, any information that a student in school or college can gain as to why he was successful is that field is valuable to him. Now, I am talking about a career. There are other elements

besides his career, but if he's ambitious to make a career that is above the average for himself then he must find out what elements are necessary to that end and he can find a great deal in studying the lives and experiences of other people. Now, I've emphasized certain things in it. The metaphysical or the spiritual, for example. If that is valid in my experience, it has value to someone else. Not perhaps to the same degree or the same extent, but nevertheless it's valuable. I don't know any way that a person can learn how to be successful in a career except to know what the elements are that are essential to it and you can only find those in human experience.

MR. LANGER:

What do you think about a career in direct selling.

MR. FULLER:

Well, the only thing I can say in that is that a system like the Fuller Brush Company which is a direct selling system almost exclusively there has been opportunities in it. We have probably 700 or 800 men at least in our business that are making a career in the managerial end of the business. It's a system which assumes the functions of not only production but the distribution of the goods and what are those elements? First, we have production then you have the distribution which is the jobber then you have the retailer to move those goods to the consumer. Now, we do that entirely under our system. I'm just using our own system as a typical example and within that system there are opportunities. If you mean opportunities for men to do exactly as I did, that is, start a business in direct selling, and build up a business of his own, that depends on the product and many other things as to whether it's a good opportunity or whether it isn't. But I think there are opportunities in our field and there are hundreds of others of course. It's just a question of selection.

MR. LANGER:

Thank you very much, Mr. Alfred B. Fuller.

TEACHING GUIDE SECTION

Journalism classes:

1. Assign a mature student to prepare a story for Fortune Magazine on the Fuller success story. Heavy emphasis should be placed on the money angle, the pyramiding of the brush business, the building of an industrial empire.
2. Another student might write a story for a trade magazine going to salesmen. This story would concentrate on the "tricks of the trade," the ways Fuller changed the concept of the door-to-door salesman.

Social studies classes:

1. Define: status seeking, motivational research.
2. "Our society," writes Fuller, "with its faceless suburbs, its mechanical automation, its

compulsion toward conformity, is a form of slavery." Do you agree or disagree? Why?

3. Do TV and radio and magazines make the door-to-door salesman's job easier or harder? Why?

4. What kind of education should be regarded as minimum for all Americans in an age of space? What is the legal school-leaving age in your state? Should the school-leaving age be lowered? Why?

5. Review the lives of other "self-made men," such as Henry Ford and Charles Kettering. What characteristics did they have that made them succeed?

Bibliography:

Read *A Foot in the Door*, by Alfred C. Fuller, as told to Hartzell Spence. (McGraw-Hill, \$4.50)