

# A BUTCHER'S WISDOM

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Special to *The Leaven*

ROELAND PARK — Though in his later years, longtime local butcher John Bichelmeyer had begun the normal shrinkage of age, said his daughter Mary Bichelmeyer Lucas, “he was always larger than life to me.”

And in her recently published book, called “Lunchmeat & Life Lessons: Sharing a Butcher’s Wisdom,” Lucas not only credits her success in business to her father’s sage advice, but demonstrates how to apply his simple principles of success to a variety of work and life situations.

Lucas, a parishioner of St. Agnes Parish in Roeland Park, says she earned her “B.D.” — a special degree accorded only to Butcher’s Daughters — the old-fashioned way. She spent hour upon hour seated at the old butcher-block table in her mother’s kitchen, listening to her father hold forth on his business principles and personal philosophy.

“My father taught me over all those lunches,” said Lucas, “how to deal with life’s beginnings and endings — and all the ups and downs in between. All were lessons I could apply to my own life, wisdom that helped me to be a successful executive as well as a more committed wife and mother.”

Lucas’ originally self-published the book for her nine siblings, as a tribute to their father who died in 2004, and as a way of preserving for posterity his wit, wisdom, and practical business advice. But Bichelmeyer, a longtime member of St. Joseph Parish in Shawnee and a well-known and respected member of the Kansas City business community, proved in his direct and practical way as quotable as some of the other business gurus whose books have gone on to become bestsellers.

One of Bichelmeyer’s famous maxims — “Good news? Bad news? Who knows?” — is a good example. The butcher often used to ask that of Lucas when her professional life was looking bleak.

Bichelmeyer had lived long enough, his daughter eventually discovered, to learn that sometimes bad things turn out well. Much, he believed, depended on how you approached life.

There was the time in 1951, for example, that Bichelmeyer was awakened in the middle of the night by his wife. Frantic with worry, she kept repeating that the “L” in the Milgram’s sign had sunk beneath the rising waters of the famous flood.

That meant that Bichelmeyer’s Meat Market, downhill from the Milgram’s [grocery store], was most certainly under water.

Bichelmeyer turned on the TV



Mary Lucas (above) wrote “Lunchmeat & Life Lessons: Sharing a Butcher’s Wisdom,” as a tribute to her father John Bichelmeyer (top right).



and confirmed what she had said. Realizing there was nothing he could do about it, he suggested they both go back to bed.

“After all,” he inquired mildly, “how often do we get to sleep in a little later?”

Bichelmeyer later learned that he could rebuild his market with a three-percent interest loan. Although he originally had no intention of taking it since he had saved enough to rebuild without it, a fellow businessman suggested he take the loan and invest his savings in real estate.

Though Bichelmeyer’s real estate ventures proved successful, he gauged his success by a different measuring stick than most.

Like other investors, Bichelmeyer frequently attended City Hall auctions and bought up properties.

But then he would visit the current occupants.

“I’m not going to throw you out,” he would say to those renting, “but I just wanted to introduce myself as your new landlord.”

He went on to explain that if they just kept on taking care of the place as though it were their own, he would help them any way he could.

Frequently these renters cleaned

up the place and, with Bichelmeyer’s help, bought a place of their own.

Then there was the time when Bichelmeyer’s insurance agent canceled his insurance when the former’s lung collapsed.

“After all,” the agent told Bichelmeyer, “you may not live out this next decade.”

News that might have devastated a lesser man, however, gave Bichelmeyer scant pause.

“Ok,” he responded. “For years I’ve closed on Sundays, the Lord’s Day. Now I’m going to close on Monday for St. John’s Day — for me!”

Bichelmeyer spent that extra day with family and volunteering in the community.

Business executives from near and far gave their “thumbs up” to Lucas’ tribute to her father, but no doubt with local readers the plain-spoken words of KC Royals’ Hall of Famer George Brett will count for more than most.

“I knew John Bichelmeyer,” wrote Brett, “and he lived every word of his own advice. He was a fine butcher, a loving father and a caring and committed man. An excellent tribute.”

To purchase a copy of “Lunchmeat & Life Lessons,” by Mary Bichelmeyer Lucas, go to [www.consultwithmbl.com](http://www.consultwithmbl.com).



## A Butcher’s Wisdom Summary

### IN THE BEGINNING

- Show ‘em what you’re made of!
- The first hunk of meat you sell is yourself.

### CREATE A LASTING IMPRESSION

- Remember the comeback sauce.

### STAY FOCUSED

- Get out your blinders and put them on.

### MAKE SOMETHING HAPPEN

- Don’t be a waver — do be a doer.
- Be on time all the time.
- Be a person who makes something happen.

### BRING OUT THE BEST

- If you don’t like someone than they don’t like you.
- You’ve gotta find the like.

### ADMIT YOUR MISTAKES

- Raise your hand, put it down and get back to playing the game.

### ENJOY THE RIDE

- Learn something from every person you meet.
- It’s not the pursuit of happiness, but the happiness of pursuit that inspires.
- Stay busy. Idle time is the devil’s workshop.
- Don’t act like it’s your due — take every chance to say thank you.
- When you’re all wrapped up in yourself, you make a damn small package.
- Nobody can make you happy but yourself.

### LOOK FOR HAPPINESS WITHIN

- The happiest people are the ones who are inspired and enjoying the ride they are on while they are on it.

### CELEBRATE LIFE

- Celebrate every chance you get.
- Send yourself flowers.

### PUT BAD THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE

- Look for the good to balance the bad.

### MEET THE CHALLENGE

- Deal with it — meet the challenge.
- Don’t take life too seriously — you are never going to get out of it alive anyway.
- Some things are just “Over the L.”
- Good luck? Bad luck? Who knows?

### PREPARE YOURSELF

- Don’t let go of one limb till you have a firm hold on another.
- The best endings are the ones you are prepared for.
- Inspire yourself.

### EPILOGUE

- To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die.

Excerpted from the book titled, “Lunchmeat & Life Lessons: Sharing a Butcher’s Wisdom,” by Mary B. Lucas.