

Renew Your Promise

Allan G. Hancock, CLU, ChFC

Mariam Paré

Taylor Crabtree



Allan G. Hancock, CLU, ChFC, is a 33-year MDRT member with 14 Court of the Table qualifications. As a Diamond Knight of the MDRT Foundation, his involvement has extended to 11 of its committees, and he currently serves as MDRT Foundation President. Within the industry, Hancock served as 1995 president of the National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors. He also has been treasurer of the Life and Health Insurance Foundation for Education since 2000. In his community, he served as mayor of Altoona, Pennsylvania, from 1980 to 1983. He also has served on a number of boards for local organizations.

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Mariam Paré is a 29-year-old artist. At the age of 20, a spinal cord injury left her paralyzed from the chest down, leaving her a quadriplegic and unable to paint with her hands. An occupational therapist introduced her to the mouth paintbrush, and today she is a successful artist. Paré first came in contact with MDRT at the 1998 MDRT Annual Meeting in Chicago, Illinois, after she fell into Lake Michigan still strapped to her wheelchair. Two MDRT members, who were

jogging along the lakefront, saw the incident and rescued her from the lake. The event made the local news, and MDRT donated a new wheelchair to Paré. Today, she designs her own greeting cards, has done numerous commissioned paintings, a couple of album covers and has participated in numerous art expositions and events.

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Taylor Crabtree, a 14-year-old high school student, founded TayBear Co., a nonprofit organization, as a fourth-grader. TayBear sells hand-painted hair clips to raise money to buy teddy bears for young cancer patients. Crabtree started the organization when her grandmother was diagnosed with colon cancer seven years ago. She will provide an update on the success of TayBear following the support she received after speaking from the Main Platform at the 2000 MDRT

Annual Meeting in San Francisco, California.

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Allan Hancock

MDRT was built on tradition and history. This very meeting represents the joining of old and new friends... all here to share ideas... to recharge our batteries... to find new ways to protect the individuals and families that depend on us. Your MDRT Foundation was built out of that same tradition and commitment to helping others. Over the past 46 years, the impact that you have had on the lives of others has been significant. Many of the lives touched by the MDRT Foundation have been shared right here on the Main Platform stage. But what happens to these special stories after the lights go down, the Annual Meeting is over and we all head back to our homes and our businesses?

I believe that we cannot truly know where we are going unless we stop on occasion to acknowledge where we have been. For example, there was the Chicago Annual Meeting in 1998. During this meeting two MDRT members, Rich Van Waalwijk and Dan O'Brien, were jogging along Lake Michigan. It was a warm June evening as the two jogged the bike path along the lake. Out of the corner of his eye, Rich remembered seeing two people in motorized wheelchairs rolling across the path. He normally might not have noticed this, but, earlier in the day he listened to a Main Platform story by the late actor Christopher Reeve detailing his battle with paralysis and his fight to find a cure. As the two continued their jog, it came to an abrupt stop when they heard a voice screaming for help.

As they turned, they saw one of the motorized wheelchairs out of control and heading straight for the lake. They ran back as fast as they could and approached just as the chair was entering the lake. Rich grabbed onto the chair at the last second... but it was too late. The young woman in the chair had fallen in.

The clock ticked as the two waited for the woman to come to the surface so they could grab her. After what seemed like an eternity of seconds, they realized that they had to act. Dan, who stands 6'5", jumped in the water as spectators screamed out that the woman was wearing a lap

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belt and could not get out of her chair. For a few seconds, he tried to unhook the belt with no success. With no alternatives, Dan lifted the 300-pound chair above the water so that the woman could get a breath of air. However, unable to sustain the weight of the chair by himself, he was forced to let it fall back under the water. Out of nowhere, another man jumped in the water and the two lifted the chair. It was then that Rich, lying on his stomach, was able to reach out and unhook the woman from the chair and bring her to safety. The brave young woman involved in this story was Mariam Paré. Mariam, a quadriplegic, presented Dan and Rich with a special painting that she created by holding the paintbrush in her mouth.

Today, Mariam Paré is a busy and promising artist who creates cards, commissioned paintings and prints. I could tell you that Mariam is grateful to her rescuers, but why not have Mariam tell you herself.

Mariam Paré

Hello. The story Mr. Hancock just told, a story that I am now so used to telling, is more than a story about coming close to death, losing my wheelchair, or what it's like to be rescued. It's more of a story about gutsy leadership, compassion, and success.

Through my involvement with the Million Dollar Round Table, the experience of meeting Richard and Dan taught me how to never underestimate the potential to create change in the world at any level... at any given moment of your life. Lynne Hughes is right: "One person can make a difference." Two persons can save your life! Their initial step of becoming involved in my life was a courageous and critical gesture comparable to that of any fabled hero. I learned to never assume that a hero has to be a larger-than-life figure, someone with more time, energy, or courage than any other person. I've realized that heroism is more about attitude, vision, and compassion. Heroes sometimes come out of nowhere to suddenly materialize to take dramatic stands, a testimony of leadership. Through reflection of my experience on the lakefront, I ultimately began to understand the caliber of integrity and leadership of members of MDRT like Dan and Rich.

What could have been the worst experience of my life turned out to be a pinnacle, a positive experience, where I believe all the people involved in the experience are better for having had participated in it.

Having two of your members aid in saving me from drowning was not enough for MDRT. You realized my further needs and found a way to go beyond Dan and Richard's original gesture and your Foundation helped supply me a new power wheelchair. Once you also discovered that I was an artist, you offered me the opportunity to design and create your organization's Christmas card last year. In addition, I've created something special to give back to you: a special MDRT 2005 poster.

More important, your simple acknowledgement affected me. I became energized by the relationship being generated. Indeed I am fortunate for being in the wrong place— at the right time— with the right people around to have made all of this possible for me. I am fortunate for this exchange and I appreciate MDRT, the Foundation, Dan O'Brian and Richard W. for their enthusiasm... an enthusiasm that is making a difference in this world.

Allan Hancock

Mariam's story is one of many MDRT stories shared on this stage. In 2000, you heard about 9-year-old Taylor Crabtree and her quest to give hugs to children with very serious illnesses.

Today, Taylor is a beautiful 14-year-old who is still touching lives every day. Recently, Taylor shared a special message of thanks to MDRT. Rather than my reading her words to you, please join me in welcoming Taylor Crabtree to share her comments in person.

Taylor Crabtree

After I gave my speech at the 2000 San Francisco Annual Meeting I went home and just couldn't believe what had happened. I was so excited and just kept shaking my head. You see... I had brought thousands of hairclips to sell and no one was buying them at my booth. I was beginning to think that I wouldn't get the support I was hoping for. My friends at the Foundation booth kept telling me that I will not be prepared for what happens when MDRT members take on a challenge.

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Then, I gave my speech about my company and how it helps children fighting cancer and other chronic blood disorders by giving them a teddy bear to hug. When I was finished, I rushed back to the Foundation Booth hoping that some of you would buy some of my hairclips. It was quiet for awhile and my friends again said, "just wait".

I hoped that I could sell several hundred and that would be really terrific... but what happened next is something that I will remember for the rest of my life.

The doors opened and hundreds and hundreds of you came running to my booth wanting to buy my hairclips. I thought my heart was going to explode. It was so busy and so crazy, that several of you jumped into the booth to help me because I could not keep up. Can you believe that! They just jumped in and started selling behind the counter for over two hours. It was crazy! There was this one guy with a great big cowboy hat that walked up and scooped up a hat full of hairclips and said that he would be right back. He went down to the lobby and started selling the hairclips right out of his hat. Geez! Then he would come back to drop off the money and scooped up more hairclips to sell. I have never met so many wonderful people. I sold everything I had. EVERYTHING! I even sold the hairclips I had on my head. I sold over FIVE THOUSAND hairclips in just a couple of hours.

My passion is stronger than ever for my project. Because of the belief that MDRT members had in me, I started to dream big and set bigger goals. I would really like to thank you, and let you know that your simple act of kindness has really made a difference. Because of you, I was able to reach my goal to donate 20,000 teddy bears to children fighting cancer, all over the country.

Five years ago I had brought and sold 5,000 hairclips. Well, as any good businessperson would do, I brought hairclips again this year. With your help, I can continue my mission of giving bears and hugs to every kid who needs one.

The MDRT Foundation is again helping me this year through your Promise Campaign. You all should take great pride in helping me with my goal of reaching kids during some really scary times. People talk about how hard and

mean the world is. Well, they're looking in the wrong direction because I see caring and loving people that believe! We should not underestimate the true power of a simple hug. It is something that is very easy to give.

Thank you, MDRT, for touching my life. You have become a part of my family. I will never forget you.

Allan Hancock

Taylor, we were committed to your work in 2000, and we are still committed to the lives that you are touching. Thank you for all that you do.

In 2003, the MDRT Foundation created its Promise Campaign. This special campaign was designed to encourage global support from MDRT members by asking each of you to represent your country and provide support that will fund worthy causes around the globe. Your generosity helped the MDRT Foundation to distribute a record \$1.5 million in grants during 2004.

This year we ask you to renew your promise. Our theme is Celebrating our Past and Creating our Future. Each of the stories you have witnessed this morning is a reflection of that theme. This week, when you participate in the Promise Campaign, we want you to help us celebrate MDRT and New Orleans by wearing these beads as a symbol of lives touched, lifting others up, and providing hope for those in need.

In addition, your support will also directly help the organizations and causes you have witnessed today involving Comfort Zone Camp, Mariam Paré and TayBear Company.

Plus, we have also commissioned five framed, signed and numbered prints of Mariam's painting. On Wednesday morning we will randomly draw... then later announce the names of five Promise Campaign participants to receive one of these special pieces.

The Dalai Lama said that love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive. As financial service professionals, MDRT is representative of what we do. The MDRT Foundation is representative of who we are.

You are all capable of such great love and compassion... and, together, we make such a difference all over the world.