Dr. John D. Krumboltz is living proof of the extraordinary life journey open to those who embrace opportunity. As a youngster his inability to choose a career caused him much stress. More constructively, it sparked a lifelong exploration of how learning experiences influence people’s career decisions.

Undecided about a major, Krumboltz enrolled at Coe College in his hometown of Cedar Rapids. He joined the Air Force ROTC and qualified for the varsity tennis team. As “luck” would have it, the tennis coach was also a professor of psychology. On his advice, John declared a psychology major.

Becoming a guidance counselor appealed to him. “I’d heard that counselors had tests that could tell people what their ideal occupation was,” he explains. “I figured I could counsel myself on my future occupation.” It was a tidy but unrealistic notion. After earning his master’s degree he worked as a counselor and taught algebra in Waterloo, Iowa. As the complexities of effective guidance became apparent, so did his dissatisfaction with the non-directive counseling he’d been trained to provide.

Seeking a more scientific, practical approach, he applied to a doctoral program at the University of Minnesota. Soon after completing his degree he was called to active duty in the Air Force, where he was encouraged to continue his research and publish in professional journals. Two years later he was pursuing his interest in behavioral psychology as an assistant professor at Michigan State University. When Stanford University beckoned with a faculty position in their counselor education program, Dr. Krumboltz found a perfect fit for his innovative ideas. His revolutionary work on the effects of happenstance offers liberation and fulfillment on many levels to anyone willing to make the most of unexpected life circumstances.

“The career counselor can play a crucial role in helping clients to create positive chance events,” he asserts. “As a result, clients may not end up where they requested, but they may very well end up where they want to be.”