



May 28, 2025

THE LONG PULL: What A Week

This past week has been one of the most challenging weeks at Macro Ops.

I want to discuss the *real world* of trading, life, and markets — the stuff nobody wants to talk about... the stress and anxiety of managing a portfolio while your business partner lies in an ICU bed, thousands of miles away, wondering if he'll make it.

But before I do, thank YOU for your thoughts, kind words, and prayers over Alex during this time. You have no idea how much they meant to him and me. Prayer works. Alex is doing *significantly better*. His platelet count is back to normal, he's sleeping well, eating real food, and should leave the ICU within a day or two.

I am happy, relieved, and exhausted. It feels like I can relax again.

So let's get on with it.

Alex Gets Malaria

Last week, around this time, I got a text from Alex:

"Brother, bad news. In hospital waiting to. Move into icu. Think severe form of malaria. Been near death last 4 days. But in good hand now. Will hopefully be out in a few days. I keep u posted as much possible. Please pray."

My heart dropped. Suddenly, I didn't care that IDR was down 36% over the past month, that our portfolio was giving back paper profits, or that I felt underexposed to what was working (maybe we owned too many mining stocks and not enough NVDA?).

None of that mattered anymore. All that mattered was ensuring Alex would be okay. The portfolio was the last thing on my mind.

I spent the next few hours texting Alex's wife, Liz. We confirmed flight details to Costa Rica and her hotel stay, and coordinated with the hospital for insurance.

Then I spent the rest of the day worrying about Alex.

I mentioned this in Slack, but besides my wife, Alex is the only person I talk to every day. And it's been like that for the past nine years. We talk about markets, companies,

trades, how to grow MO, family ... everything. Yes, he's my business partner. But he's become one of my best friends.

It sucks hearing that your best friend "almost died" a few times and is stuck in Costa Rica, alone, in some random hospital, with malaria, and nobody by his side.

But Alex is tough. I told him he couldn't die from a mosquito bite because "that's not how a good Marine dies." He laughed. He still had his humor.

That's what I love about Alex. Every obstacle is a learning opportunity. Every challenge is a workout aimed at increasing his mental and emotional strength. He texted me that afternoon, saying:

"I have the most severe form of malaria. Quite serious as my organs are failing and I have super high fever. But they're about to load me up on drugs I think so should be better soon. Not fun but I'll be fine. Just my final test from the Big Man. He's always testing my faith but my faith is unshakeable."

There are few feelings worse than watching someone endure tremendous pain and knowing you can't do anything about it in the moment. All I could do was pray and ask everyone I knew to pray.

So that was last week.

Today, Alex is doing significantly better. His platelet count is back to normal, he's off dialysis, and should leave the ICU in a couple of days.

What a difference a week (and a ton of prayer) makes!

Managing The Portfolio

After this week, my benchmark for a portfolio management system is "can the portfolio survive if my business partner gets malaria in Costa Rica and almost dies four times and I can't devote all my time to watching my stocks?"

That's a high bar, and the MO portfolio passed with flying colors.

This is a good time to explain the power of our diversified team. Macro Ops has modeled itself around the [Commodities Corp trading house](#) – the old school "trading university where traders learned to trade and perfect their skills."

We take a three-pronged approach to markets:

1. **Macro:** Alex's domain, where he trades currencies, futures, forex, and commodities based on long-term macro themes.
2. **Value:** My domain where I trade/invest equities on a bottoms-up, thematic, or catalyst-driven hypothesis focusing on deep work and fundamental convictions.
3. **Systems/Quant:** Chris's domain, where he trades VBOs, FVBOs, Curvy Mean Reversion, and other quant-driven systems with higher win rates and more predictable return streams (clipping coupons).

Stanley Druckenmiller has said (and I'm paraphrasing), "the great thing about my process is that I don't have to trade every market. If there's nothing in equities, I can move to commodities, forex, or interest rates. There's always a market to trade."

It's the same at Macro Ops. If there's no macro trade – or Alex is in the ICU with malaria – we won't trade macro. We can take value or systems trades. Or do nothing!

The point is that we've created a robust system with multiple fail-safes designed to protect returns and position the portfolio for positive expectancy, regardless of what market is or isn't working.

Overlay all that with technical risk management, and you sleep well at night, regardless of what's happening outside markets.

So while I spent most of my time worrying about Alex, coordinating and communicating with his wife, and controlling my stress levels this past week, **our portfolio stood tall.**

Our systems allowed me to spend 20-30 minutes at the end of each trading day evaluating our positions, checking our total portfolio risk, and monitoring existing stop losses to see if we needed to adjust for tomorrow.

A Nine-Year Journey

Today's portfolio management results from nine years of incrementally improving our process, portfolio management, and team. There's still a lot of room for improvement. But we've come a long way.

I cringe at how we managed our book even 1-2 years ago. We bought a ton of stuff we didn't know, traded *way* too much, and chased the next shiny object.

I can't wait to have Alex back at the trading desk. But it's good to know that we've created a system, portfolio, and philosophy that can withstand whatever life throws.