

“Now is the time,” By Ronnie Needham

Dear Reader,

My name is Ronnie Needham. I am the founder of Ronaldo Designer Jewelry, that sold over \$174 million in retail business the last 15 years. I have headlined in Las Vegas, my products were in the gift bags for the Oscars, the Grammys, and onstage with the pope at the Vatican. Mine is a true American rags-to-riches dream come true.

What follows is my personal story. I will reveal to you my life philosophy, and all about how money flows, where this knowledge came from, and how I gained the critical traits that led to my success. I'll show how those instincts were always living inside me. I will give you the secrets of success that made me a multi-millionaire, all while unfolding the compelling memoir of my rocky road to fame, fortune, and most of all, love.

In short, this is the story of how I lit the fires to my Burning Desire.

With warmest personal regards,

Ronnie Needham

Chapter 1

The Superbowl

I looked around the stands where everyone was going crazy. The New England Patriots’ Malcomb Butter had just intercepted the ball at the one-yard line. New England holds off the Seattle Seahawks to win Super Bowl XLIX in Glendale, Arizona. The final score was New England Patriots 28, Seattle Seahawks 24.

It was the first of February 2015, and the confetti is coming down like snow. I looked around the stadium at all the wealthy people in the stands. I said to myself, how in the world did a regular guy from Pleasure Ridge Park, a middle-class neighborhood in Louisville Kentucky, who only went to high school, ever afford to spend \$35,000 to come to the Super Bowl?

I had just spent \$20,000 on Super Bowl tickets, not counting the airfare for four people plus all the expenses. I paid for everyone. What was weird, I really thought nothing of dropping \$35,000 on the week. No big deal. After all, I had spent \$550,000 in cash to remodel my 6,200 square foot home. One of the nicest homes in southern Indiana, it would soon be featured in all kinds of magazines.

The house is sold as I write this, but at the time I had spent over \$1.2 million on the home and all the custom additions—a gym, sauna, steam room, a wine room, cigar room, hammered tubs in all the bathrooms, painting by the masters, three kitchens, a high beamed ceiling, and a New Orleans designer walk-out basement, complete with New Orleans street signs, leading out to the inground pool. I had built my country estate in the city of Jeffersonville, Indiana. The property sat in a cul-de-sac surrounded by massive homes; all my neighbors owned some type of

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successful business. My home was the largest and most expensive home in the neighborhood. It was over 8,000 square feet of pure decadence, beyond belief.

Mr. Details, my contractor, had gone to New Orleans to take photos of New Orleans Street signs and the wrought iron on the buildings, of course on my dime, because he was going to replicate them in exact detail for my basement. Who sends a designer to New Orleans to study street signs? I had wanted the exact details on all the wrought iron replicated with all the bends, twists, and turns copied in every insignificant detail for my basement. The cost did not matter.

When anyone would come over to the house, they would say, your home is so nice! It is like the Taj Mahal! My home was a mansion. The basement was like stepping straight into New Orleans. A \$25,000 painting by New Orleans artist Peter O’Neill was the highlight of my art collection.

On the lower level, as you came down the steps and turned the corner, you were in one of the nicest wine cellars in southern Indiana, complete with over 300 bottles of wines from all over the world. I did not drink wine very often, but my guests loved the wine room. The ambiance was so great it was my favorite room in my three-story home.

Later, we found out we had a fourth floor that was never finished, sealed off by Mr. Details. I remember thinking, how in the world do you not know you have a fourth floor? I also had a massive three-car garage, a basketball court, and a 20-foot-long BBQ grill in Coronado stone highlighted the pool area, accented by a stone fire pit that seated fifty people around the fire. There were three kitchens, my office, plus five acres of land—I had bought the other lots to the side of my property.

My yard had a flowing stream that ran through the property, and oak trees surrounded the entire estate. I had giant rocks placed by the stream so my grandson and I could go fishing. The

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back of our lot butted up to a large undeveloped woodland near the interstate. A flock of wild turkeys lived on the property and slept in the trees. Almost every day, several deer would walk past the backyard and eat the apples I left out for them.

My friend, David Kazar, had come over in October the year before to sell me \$88,000 worth of Persian rugs. During the halftime show of the Sunday football game playing on TV, the analyst was talking about the upcoming Super Bowl. I mentioned to David I'd always wanted to go to the Super Bowl. David smiled and said, “Ronnie, just go! You can afford it, my friend.”

After David left, I called and found four Super Bowl tickets at the forty-yard line. It would take place in February, only three months away. I had no clue which teams would be playing, but I hoped it would be my Green Bay Packers. I owned a share of stock in the Packers, and I thought how nice it would be to see the Packers win! Would they make the playoffs? Would they make it all the way to the Super Bowl? Time would tell.

A few months later, it was the playoffs. Green Bay was up by a score of 19-7 over Seattle, with four minutes to go in the game. It looked like the Super Bowl was in reach for Green Bay...only for them to lose to Seattle in one of the greatest comebacks in playoff history.

On the flight back to Kentucky from the Super Bowl, I said, “Oh well. I'll just go again next year.” And next year I figured I'd just charter a private plane as I had done for the Green Bay Packers game, I had attended a few months earlier. I'd flown up, watched the game, then flown home all in the same day. Much nicer going in style. I decided maybe I would go to the Super Bowl every year until Green Bay won.

From giving away Rolex watches to friends and employees, to having a custom-built circular wine cellar that was ten feet tall and held over 300 bottles of wine, I lived a life so extravagant it was hard to understand how all of it was even possible. My friends would come

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from all over the country to attend one of my famous parties.

And yet, all I enjoyed was work. All I did was work. Nothing else made me feel alive other than my passion, my work. I had become a workaholic. I do not think a person starts out to be a workaholic, it just happens. I was looking for my significance in life. I was not getting it from my wife, so, I had dived even deeper into my work to block out the pain.

Because I was in a dead-end marriage.

Chapter 2

Armando Ortiz

In the spring of 2015, my friend from New Orleans, Armando Ortiz, the owner of Bayside cigars, was coming up from New Orleans to attend one of my parties. I had met him in New Orleans, and we'd hit it off and become excellent friends. He stood about five-foot-eight, medium build, and spoke with a heavy beatnik vernacular. Armando had one of the best cigar stores in America, and I used to buy cases of all the rare cigars from him. He was one very cool dude and was always doing the very cool scenes with fantastic people all over America. He once told me he did not like Arnold Schwarzenegger, because Arnold thinks he is an authority on all cigars. Armando said, “I do not sell to him, and he does not like that very much. Arnold thinks he is boujie, but he's just full of crap.”

I ask, “What is boujie?”

He explained, “Boujie is someone who's pretending or trying to be higher class than he is. A shortened version of bourgeois, a fancy French term for middle-class. Ronaldo, when you live in New Orleans, you learn all about the French.”

Armando had flown up early the day of the party, bringing \$10,000 worth of cigars to treat all my friends to a fine cigar. The party was so much fun. Friends from all over America attended. At 11:00 p.m., I announced, “Everyone put your hands together for Armando Ortiz, the owner of Bayside cigars, up from New Orleans. He is one of the top cigar aficionados in the world. Armando will oversee the entertainment tonight.”

Armando said, “Thank you Ronaldo. Everyone please gather around the pool house.”

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The cigar tasting and history lesson by Armando started, and we all got to light up the rarest cigars in America. Several women smoked the cigars, too.

The pool house bar had enough room for several dozen. People were sitting all around the swimming pool drinking, talking, and having a good time—nearly 100 people in total. Most of the local power players were at the party. All but the governor of Indiana, Mike Pence, were present—top attorneys, bankers, all the mucky-mucks and their wives.

It was so fun to watch everyone drink the Courvoisier cognac, a brand of cognac produced by Beam Suntory, a subsidiary of Dunday Holding of Osaka, Japan. They based the production in the town of Jarnac in the Charente region of France. None of us really knew anything about fine Cognac or the absolute best cigars in the world, other than Armando.

At around three in the morning, Mr. Details stopped to say goodnight and to thank Armando for the cigars. The builder would always stay as late as possible to network with all my friends to get referrals. The party had dwindled down to just a few people. Almost everyone'd had too much to drink or too much to smoke. What a great night! I'd had the best liquor selection and the absolute best cigars in this neck of the woods.

Armando was packing up, so I asked him, “How much do I owe you for the cigars, Armando?”

He said, “Ronaldo baby—” he preferred to call me by my nickname “—you do not owe me a dime. I love your parties. I came out okay. In fact, I made a great deal of money off your friends. Ronaldo my man, your friend from China, Mr. Yang, bought over \$75,000.”

Then Armando said, “Let's have a cigar, I would like to try the Courvoisier.”

We took a break and sat at the bar. As he sipped the cognac, he asked me, “Ronaldo why are you not drinking some Courvoisier?”

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I said, “I just buy the stuff, I really don’t like to drink it. But it is the best. Just like your cigars, people expect the best from me.”

Armando hands me a cigar and said, “Here, light this one up.”

“Okay, what is this one?”

“It’s a Cohiba Behike. Only 4,000 were produced, at a price of \$400 per cigar.”

I asked, “Why so much?”

He responded, “A few decades ago this was the private label brand for Fidel Castro. It is now the most recognized cigar brand in the world, right up there with Dom Perignon champagne, and Rolls Royce. Cohiba is the top brand of cigars in the world.”

It was pretty darn good.

After we puffed for a while, Armando asked, “Ronaldo, how in the world did you make your money?” He sipped a little, then said, “How did you make it all work, how did you get started?”

“Well...” I poured myself some Courvoisier. I figured I’d need it.

He glanced over and said, “But you said you disliked Courvoisier.”

I nodded, “I do, but it is going to be a long story, and this stuff taste so bad it will keep me up all night to tell you all about the secrets of my success.”

Chapter 3

The aftermath

I had spent the night talking with Armando, telling the whole story of my life until that day. I told Armando my personal story, my philosophy, and all about how money flows, where this knowledge come from, how it was always living inside me, and how I gained the traits that led to my success. In short, how I lit the fire to my Burning Desire.

The day was winding down and it was early afternoon. I had just finished the last cigar Armando had given me while sitting around my pool when my cell phone rang.

It was Armando calling to thank me **for the pendant I made him. I had** left with the Uber driver to give him at the airport. “Ronaldo thank you. I love the **pendant** you made me. It caught me by surprise.”

I told him, “It was the least I could do. Thanks again for coming,”

Armando said, “I cannot thank you enough for sharing your story and teaching me how money flows. I love the way you roll, baby. Take care.”

When I finished the call, I smiled and paused for a moment, then went back into the house. After I took a shower, shaved, and got cleaned up, I went to my office to plan out my week. It was Sunday. Time to get to work.

My time for exploring this kind of philosophy was on Sundays. Every Sunday for years, I had written down my thoughts, and my theories about life and business. It would just flow through me as I sat at my desk and wrote down my thoughts. I would try to stop writing, but then

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another thought would come to me, then another, and another, as more time drifted by.

I picked up the book I was reading, *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill. Written in 1937, it has my very favorite quote.

“Whatever the mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve.”

I was looking for the formula of motivation, how to tap into it on command.

That day, I wrote the following simple sentence: What is your assignment on this earth? If you do not know, you have not found out your assignment yet.

I believe every person’s assignment is to solve a problem on this earth. A problem is an invitation to help others.

What you love is a clue to how you can find your assignment on this earth. Your reward is in direct relationship to your efforts, by the grace of God.

What you love is your key to success. Never invest in something you do not love.

What you hate is also a clue to what your assignment could be on this earth. If you hate drug addiction, then it is a clue to what your assignment could be and how you can achieve success—by preventing others from drug addiction.

When Moses saw an Egyptian master hit a slave, Moses hated this injustice, and it motivated him to change the situation and take his people out of Egypt, by the grace of God.

Anger is a passion to focus on. Examine what upsets you. You must identify what brings on the anger inside of you. That is what you should focus on to make a change.

Anger is the birthplace of creativity.

Another key is purity of heart. What you do to help others is always a key. By fulfilling a need in others, you will find success.

What grieves you is a clue to what you’re assigned to heal. It tears me up to hear about a

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prisoner who serves twenty years, then they discovered he was innocent. Like Nelson Mandela. After his time in prison, he became a leader of the nation of South Africa. Mandela did not hold on to the injustice but used the injustice to change South Africa for the better. God gave Mandela the gift of the problem of apartheid in South Africa, and without violence he changed the entire country, by the grace of God.

Some pain is unspeakable. When you hurt too much to talk about it, then it is important to work through the pain to find your true assignment. If something touches your heart, if it touches your spirit, it is a clue to what God wants you to do with your life.

Your assignment is the only place where God will give you money for the provisions to achieve anything. Prepare your field, and God will send the rain. Jesus called out to the boat as they cast out the nets. They got all the fish they needed to feed many.

You must find something to weep over to make it count. Then it lives in your heart. Find this thing and you will find the motivation to change your life. You can be paralyzed in life without being confined to a wheelchair.

Ask yourself, what is my assignment on the earth? What am I passionate about? Ask yourself, is this assignment critical to the world? Then you must realize you are the perfect one to go forth and achieve what God has assigned you to do. Your assignment must become an obsession to achieve. Look at Jonah in the bible. Jonah did not want to go where God had told him to go, so he jumped off the boat. A whale swallowed him and spat him out on the beach where God wanted him to go.

Use this kind of in-depth self-examination to plan the how and the why to achieve your own goal, then find the right formula to solve the need. Delay becomes failure. Do not delay! Do it today.

Chapter 4

My Family Roots

I owe much of my success in life to the way I was brought up. The things I learned and went through growing up truly made me the person I am today. In order for you to understand the way I approached life’s difficulties and handled my successes, I must tell you about my family’s roots.

I was born in Louisville, Kentucky, to Betty and Hobert Eugene Needham. Both my parents were from Cumberland, way up in the mountains of eastern Kentucky. They married in 1955 and moved to Louisville after my dad came back from the Korean War. I was born on August 27th, 1956.

My father’s mother’s name was Mary Frances Needham. She had a big impact on my life. I learned from her that whenever you step out in faith with a purity of heart, God will bless you more than you can understand.

She lived way up in the mountains in Cumberland, in Harlen County. Her husband, Edward Needham, my father’s father, had immigrated in the 1920s from Europe with his brother, coming into New York City via Ellis Island. His brother died while working on Hoover Dam in Nevada. They built the dam from 1931 to 1936 during the great depression. If you ever visit the dam, they have a plaque with the names of the ninety-six men who died during its construction. My Great Uncle Needham’s name is on the plaque.

My Grandpa Ed was a coal miner, and twenty years older than grandma. He went by the

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name Ed. I never met my grandpa. He died in 1947 in a coal mining accident. He lived just three days after the cave-in, succumbing to the injuries at his home as my dad held his hand. On the death certificate, the coal company put down it was due to a heart attack or something to that effect, to get out of having to pay damages. My dad was only 15 years old at the time.

Back then, you owed your soul to the company store. A famous line out of a song, but it's true. The miners would come out of the mines all black from the coal dust. Many of the miners got the black lung and died from that, if not from an accident or cave-in.

My dad was a firm believer in the union, no doubt inherited from his dad. Coal miners did not have many rights until the unions were formed. Maybe the unions went over-the-top with their demands. I do not know much about the unions' business, or who was right or wrong. I can just say men did not die as much and the mines got safer.

Grandpa Ed had traveled all over the United States in the twenties and early thirties. He had worked in almost every state in the lower forty-eight. He wanted to see all of America and find a place he could call home. He would work, get a grubstake, then he would travel on, just drifting, searching for something. He always said, “I will know it when I find it.” He told my dad he'd spent just two Saturday nights in the same coal camp in Eastern Kentucky, fell in love with my grandma, got married, and made himself a home.

My father told me Grandpa Ed was of a medium build, but as rough as they come. He stood five feet eight inches tall, weighed 165 pounds soaking wet, and was strong as a bull. Coming over from Europe as a young man, he also had to have a lot of grit. My grandpa Ed had great work ethic. After settling down, he worked as a coal miner, laboring in the mines from daylight to late in the day. Then he would come home and work on the family farm until dark. He taught my dad that you do not mess with someone's family, their livelihood, or their money,

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unless you want to die.

Grandpa would get drunk now and then. He’d sometimes take out his 45 and shoot the wheels on the trains to make them go faster. Grandma would bail him out of jail and fuss at him, but the next day it was all forgotten.

Over the years, the term Bloody Harlen County had earned its nickname. The mountains were full of rough people. The governor of Kentucky, Happy Chandler, would learn this the hard way when he attempted to force the coal miners back to work. They just blew up the mines with dynamite. Then they told him, “You dig out the coal yourself.” The state militia could do nothing with the coal miners. In the end, the miners had fought and gained a union.

My dad was the firstborn child in 1932 in Derby, Virginia. The family moved to the eastern Kentucky mountains when he was five. Dad had two brothers, John Henry, one of the best running backs in Kentucky high school football history. John Henry was the star on the Cumberland football team in 1952 and 1953.

Dad once told me he was home on leave from the army and went to see his brother play football with an army buddy. When the players started running onto the field, my dad said, “That’s John Henry.”

My dad’s army buddy remarked, “John Henry is the smallest player on the field.”

Dad said, “It does not matter. John Henry is the shiftiest runner, and no one will catch him.”

The opening kickoff, John Henry caught the ball with one arm because he had a cast on his other arm. After catching the ball, he jugged left, an opposing player missing a tackle, then reversed his field. John Henry zigzagged all the way down the field as one player after another missed tackling him. He jumped up over a tackle, got hit in the legs, turned a flip, landed on his

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feet, and kept going. He scored a touchdown.

My dad yelled, “Did you see John Henry go all the way?”

My dad’s army buddy knew he was seeing the best running back in the state. John Henry ended up scoring five touchdowns. He threw for one touchdown, ran a kickoff back for one, and rushed for three. He ended the game with 167 yards rushing, leading his team to victory.

The fact he was playing with a broken arm taught me that no matter what, in life you play to win, broken arm or not.

My Uncle June Bug was my dad’s youngest brother. Bug had lost an eye because of a bee gun accident. He also became a coal miner like his father. Dad always said, “June Bug was a good man who loved the University of Kentucky Wildcats basketball team.” Bug loved listening to Cawood Ledford, voice of the Kentucky Wildcats, call the games.

Dad also had a sister, Joyce Ann, who worked for Blue Diamond coal company in Kentucky. Joyce Ann married my uncle Allen Blevins, a good man who also ended up working for Blue Diamond coal company.

In those days, everyone worked hard all the time. They grew their own food, slopped the hogs, fed the chickens and ducks, just to survive. My dad hunted squirrels and deer to provide meat for the table. Each year in late fall, the hogs were slaughtered, giving the family meat for the winter.

As a boy, I saw the fence my dad and my grandpa built in 1940. They made the posts from locust wood, an extremely hard wood that was famous for its durability. My dad told me the story of how he and his father put in the posts into the ground to hold the barbed wire. They would dig the hole with a post-hole digger, put in the post, then took a sledgehammer and pounded the post into the ground. They put small rocks all around the post and then took a large

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metal tapping bar to tamp in the rocks around the post.

One day, they were putting posts in the ground and Dad got tired as he tried to hold a post in place. Grandpa was using the sledgehammer to drive in the post. Dad slumped over a bit from the fatigue, and as the sledgehammer came down, it struck my dad in the back and knocked him out. Grandpa picked up my dad and ran into the house to get help. Dad was okay, but very sore.

Grandpa thought he had killed his son. He told my dad the next day, “Son, I will never work you this hard ever again.”

Dad told me, “His father lived up to those words.” The rest of his life, when dad got tired, they would quit. No more seventeen-hour days, they cut back to only twelve-hour days.

It was the mountains and life was hard.

Those posts were still in the ground in the late 1980s. I helped remove some of them; they were tough to get out of the ground. Things built in the 1940s stood the test of time.

Dad also had twin sisters that were lost to the measles. That happened a lot in the mountains in the 1940s.

Growing up, I spent a lot of time up at the Needham farm in the mountains. Grandpa Ed had died a long time ago, but my grandma, Mary Frances, played a big role in my life. She was always teaching me something. How to say my prayers, how to hoe the garden, slop hogs, feed the chickens, bring in firewood, bank a fire, take out the slop jar. She greatly helped to form my values, work ethic, and religion—a well-rounded eastern Kentucky education.

My grandma gave me two spankings in my life. One was for dunking the cat in the rain barrel when I was around five years old. The other had been two years earlier, for pulling off all the rose petals from the rose bushes. She had an immense flower garden.

Grandma’s farm was over ten acres on the side of a mountain, just above Gilliam Hill in

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Cumberland, about two miles from Benham, Kentucky. The home of Black Mountain. The highest elevation in Kentucky, topping out at 4,145 feet.

The road to the farm wound up the mountain for over a mile, with a lot of horseshoe curves. Maybe six or seven homes were situated along it.

I was the oldest grandchild. Tommy, the second oldest grandchild, really loved my grandma. Tommy was good to her and went to see her his entire life. Tommy’s mom was my dad’s sister, Joyce Ann, my favorite aunt. She once took a carload of us to the drive-in movie theater to see The Blob. We seldom went to the drive-in as it cost too much money. We were extremely poor, but wealthy in spirit.

Luckily there was radio. My dad loved the University of Kentucky Wildcats basketball team and loved to keep score during the games. We all listened to the games on WHAS radio. Dan Issel was my dad’s all-time favorite player. Issel was an All American for Kentucky in 1971. Kentucky was knocked out of the NCAA tournament that year by Artis Gilmore and the Jacksonville Dolphins.

We always called Cumberland home, even though I primarily grew up in Louisville. We went to the mountains at least once a month on my dad’s long weekends. I spent a lot of summers helping get the farm ready for winter. Grandma did not have running water or an indoor restroom when I was a boy. As time went by, we added many things to her home. When I was around twelve years old, I went with Dad to put in a new furnace to heat her house. She’d always used coal or wood for heat, and she continued to use wood for many additional years because of the high cost of gas heat. I helped put a new roof on her home and did many improvements to the farm. But Uncle Allen did the most work on Grandma’s house.

Allen was my favorite uncle. We enjoyed hunting or fishing to put a little meat on the

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table. He especially loved to ride a motorcycle up and down the “hollers” in the hills of the mountains to go squirrel hunting. I fell off more than once. We would get going up a very steep hill and just fall off backward with the motorcycle crashing onto both of us as we rolled down the hill. When we needed stitches, grandma would just sew us up with catgut. You got used to the bumps, bruises, and occasional stitches from rock fighting, falling out of a tree, or swinging across the gorge on the grapevines. When you cut yourself, you were told to just put some dirt in the wound.

When I was sixteen years old, I helped Uncle Allen build a bathroom in Grandma’s home. I remember the neighbors coming over to see the indoor running water. She now had electricity, running water, heat, and indoor facilities. We no longer had to use the well or the outhouse. All of this was now a thing of the past. Times were changing for the Needham’s. We were on the way up! Though Grandma still had a chicken coup, hogs, ducks, and raised most of her food. Living in eastern Kentucky, we worked hard to just put food on the table.

Even so, once you spend a lot of time up in the mountains, you will love those mountains for the rest of your life.

On the other side of the family, my mom’s maiden name was Betty Daugherty. Her dad was my grandpa Jess Daugherty. His wife, my grandma, was Velvie, and their oldest child was my Uncle Bill. He was a mountain of a man, the strongest man I ever met. Bill was a sheriff in Knoxville, Tennessee. In his youth, Bill had been the Navy boxing champion, and he’d once fought Max Baer in an exhibition. In New York City in 1934, Max knocked out Primo Carnera in the 11th round to become the world heavyweight boxing champion. In 1935, Max lost the title to James Braddock in one of boxing’s greatest upsets. Max Baer was big a bully. He had killed Frankie Campbell in the ring in 1930, with a left hook. They put Max in jail, but after a bit, they

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released him. The fatal fight came when boxing was second only to baseball as the nation’s most popular sport. Millions of Americans would sit by their radio to catch the major fights.

Uncle Pete Daugherty was the youngest of my mom’s brothers. He worked at BF Goodrich in Louisville. Mom’s oldest sister, Jo, married Harold Hensley. Uncle Harold built the Kerby Vacuum Company into national prominence. In later years, many in the family said I got the gift of gab from Harold.

Juanita, my mom’s baby sister, married George Heavern. Uncle George owned Heavern’s Hardware, a chain of several dozen stores on the East Coast. George also designed motors for Roger Penske, the former race car driver who formed the Penske racing team that won forty national championships.

Mom at one point lived next door to Dad on the hill. They courted in high school, then fell in love. The same day my dad graduated from high school, he received his draft notice. He was going to Fort Knox for basic training, then was shipped overseas to fight in the Korean War.

After basic training, my father took a train to San Francisco, then a ship to Hawaii’s Schofield Barracks, an army installation. Then back on the ocean to Okinawa, Japan, and finally to Korea. The war was now in its last stages.

Mom and Dad waited to get married until Dad came home. I guess they wanted to see if **he** made it back from the war alive...

When dad had served his two years, he came home to Fort Knox. They discharged him, and he took the bus to Cumberland. Dad asked the mine supervisor for a job. The supervisor told Dad, “On your father’s deathbed I promised him I would not hire you to work in the mines. That was your dad’s dying wish.”

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Chapter 5

My neck

In 1955, Dad moved to Louisville, Kentucky, and went to work at a paper mill. Soon he landed a job with BF Goodrich, an excellent company. A few months later, Mom moved to Louisville, and they got married.

Mom and Dad lived in a garage at my mom’s uncle’s house off Hazelwood Avenue. A few years later, they bought an old home off Greenwood Road in Pleasure Ridge Park, a suburb of Louisville. In 1963, they bought a new home that was being built a few miles away in a brand-new subdivision called Feyhurst.

I grew up in Feyhurst, at 7232 Durst Drive Louisville, Kentucky 40258. The new subdivision had over 200 homes, all full of children to play with. Life was grand growing up in Pleasure Ridge Park in the 1960s.

When I was little, my dad always got up early on Saturday mornings. One day when I was six years old, I rose at about 6:00 a.m. and went outside to ask him why he got up so early.

My dad said, “Do you know why the trees grow upward and the branches spread out?”

I said, “No.”

Dad told me it was to praise the Lord. He said, “Do you know that early in the morning, the birds all over the world sit in the trees and sing to praise the Lord? It’s like a worldwide choir, just listen.”

I did, and I heard so many birds singing. It was amazing.

My dad picked me up, sat me in his lap, and he sang, “For God so loved the little birds, I

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know he loves me too, he loves me too, he loves me too, I know he loves me too, for God so loved the little birds I know he loves me too.”

He was a great dad.

But my childhood wasn't all roses. I had to put some tough secrets of success into effect as a little boy, before I even knew the lessons were the secrets of success.

My parents and Grandma taught me about faith when I injured my neck.

In 1963, I was seven years old and in the second grade. I was playing on a bunk bed and fell off backwards. I hit my neck on a desk on the way down. The backwards fall damaged three vertebrae in my neck, and my head tipped over like a chicken with a broken neck. Technically, it was a broken neck. I had to wear a halo, then a neck brace for four years. My neck was not strong enough to support its own weight. The fall severely injured me, but I was not paralyzed so I was really lucky.

My mom would help me outside to sit on the front porch to watch the other kids play football. I could not turn my neck from side to side, so I had to move my whole body. My grandma told me on a visit, “You must pray to God that he will heal your neck.”

So, each day I prayed to God. I always started my prayers, “Lord hear my prayer.”

Nearly four years went by. Then one night, an angel came to me in my dreams. The angel told me, “God has heard your prayers. Tomorrow you can go play with the other children.”

When I woke up, I told my mom to take off the stupid collar, that an angel had told me God had healed my neck. Mom just said, “Hush up,” but I persisted, and finally she took off the collar. I moved my head left to right, then right to left, up and down. I shook my neck all around to show my mom. Then I asked, “Can I go play now?”

Mom hit her knees, crying, and said, “Thank you Jesus.”

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I am like, “Mom can I go play now?” She said. “No, I must call your dad.”

Mom called Dad at work. The BF Goodrich operator went to get my father to put him on the phone. She told him to come home, not to ask why, just come now.

Mom never called Dad at work, so my father knew this was serious and left immediately to go home. Dad never left work, either, but on that day he did. Within twenty-five minutes he was home. Mom marched me in front of him and said, “Tell you father the story. Then show him.”

I am like, “What?” She said, “Ronnie, just do it,”

I said, “Okay, Mom,” and told my dad, “Well, an angel came to me in my dreams and told me to go play. That God had healed me. So, Mom took off the collar.” I moved my head all around to show my dad the free motion it now enjoyed.

Dad also hit his knees said, “Thank you, Jesus.”

Both my parents cried and hugged me. Dad said, “Son, your grandma also gets messages from angels in her dreams, and they always came true. It has happened to my mom all her life.”

I asked, “Can I go play now?”

Dad said, “Sure son, go play, go run.” I went outside and found my friend Richard Roberts, my best friend growing up, and we played catch with the football.

Over the next fifty-eight years, seven times in my life, the angels have told me things in my dreams, and every single time what they told me has come true.

I do not understand how or what to make of it, only to say my grandmother told me, “By Cherokee legend, the messages from angels in your dreams are a gift, something God does for a few chosen people. My own grandmother told me that the angels told her several things, and they would always come true.”

For me, it is what it is. Kind of unbelievable, but it’s all true. How or why, I do not know,

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but one thing was for sure—I grew up in a good Christian home. I have seen some real-life miracles. My neck was one miracle.

Another miracle would come to me just a few years later.

When I was eleven, I started working out with weights. I quickly become extraordinarily strong. After only four years, my physique was well-shaped. Now at 15, I was getting ready to play football the following year.

Or so I thought.

Chapter 6

The prophecy

My grandma’s farm consisted of ten acres with a lot of woods on two sides. Each farm on her mountain had part of the land cleared of trees so they could plant crops. To walk up the mountain to her home was hard. The road was over a mile long, and some parts were so steep you could not ride a bicycle up the hill. I always enjoyed going to the penny candy store when I was a boy. The walk down and up the mountain was hard, but when you’re young, a treat like a piece of candy was worth the walk.

My grandma lived with my cousin Henry, who was the child of her sister, Edith Bullock. Henry was born mentally challenged. He would always have the mind of a six-year-old child. But he looked like he was the strongest man in the mountains, and possessed the body of a Greek god. As Henry said in his own words, “I am stout,” an eastern Kentucky slang for strong.

Henry had a splendid gift. Growing up, we all knew about his special gift. Each day, he would stop working at noon when the town whistle blew in Cumberland, Kentucky. Henry would always eat a bologna sandwich for lunch, and after lunch he would go out in the front yard, grab handfuls of birdseed, then hold his arms open wide and say, “Triva, triva tree, the Lord is with me.” He would say this over and over, and soon the birds would land on Henry’s arms. They’d walk down his arms to get the birdseed out of his hands. It was an amazing sight. Henry could touch all of God’s animals—birds, squirrels, deer. Each day when Henry fed the hogs, the squirrels would come and crawl all over him to get peanuts from him. Whenever he went to any park, within a few minutes the deer would come up to him and he would pet the

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deer. He would call the deer babies.

On July 4th, 1971, we had a family reunion. I was spending the summer on the farm to help my grandma. I told her I really felt sorry for Henry. She took me out onto the front porch. Grandma dipped snuff, spat into the grass, and said, “What do you see?”

I said, “I see Henry feeding the birds.”

She asked, “Can you do that?”

I said, “No.”

She asked, “Do you know of anyone else who can do what Henry is doing?”

I said, “No Grandma. Everyone knows Henry has a special gift with animals.”

She sat me down on the porch steps and said, “Sometimes God gives you a little less than others. But at the same time, God always gives you a little more than others. Henry is incredibly lucky.”

I said, “Grandma how so?”

She said, “Boy, you and I have to earn our ticket to heaven, but Henry had his ticket to heaven punched the day he was born. Never feel sorry for Henry. He is doing great, and one day he will live in heaven. Be grateful for what God has given you. When it seems you may have less, realize you may have more.”

Several years went by, and my dad and I went to visit Henry in Corbin, Kentucky. My grandma had been promoted to heaven by then, and Henry was living in Corbin with my Aunt Edith. My Uncle June Bug met us at the house, and as we walked in my uncle called, “Henry, do you remember these guys?”

Henry held out his arms and said, “Welcome home, brothers.”

We gave Henry a big hug, and he hugged us back.

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As we drank coffee, Henry went outside to feed the birds, and he sang, “Triva, triva, tree, the Lord is with me.”

I watched as the birds came out and sat on Henry’s arms as they’d always done. I smiled and said to my dad, “Some things do not change.”

We looked outside again, and we heard Henry sing, “Triva, triva tree, God is with me.”

No one could ever understand how this could be. It was a special gift, a way for Henry to share his gift with the world. I have seen countless miracles in my life, and this was one of the absolute best.

Like my grandma, I truly believe some people are born with their ticket already punched to heaven.

She was very wise.

When I was 15 years old, Grandma taught me something that changed my life.

One day grandma put a lump of coal in my hand and told me she was born with a veil over her face. She then asked me, “Do you know what that means?”

I said, “No.”

She said, “The membrane was covering my face at birth and had to be cut away so I could breathe. The Cherokee Indians believed that meant the person could foretell the future.” She then said, “Do you know what happens to coal under heat and pressure?”

I said, “I don’t have a clue.”

She told me, “It turns into a diamond and shines.” She added, “One day you will shine a light all over the Southeastern United States, then the entire United States, and then one day the world.” She told me, “You are a lump of coal now, but one day you will turn into a diamond and shine.”

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I said, “Wow grandma.”

She added, “But first you must prove you are worthy. Once you prove you are worthy, a man from the North will call you and say, “Now is the time.” After that call, no power on earth can prevent what God intends for you to do.”

Very few people on this earth know of this prophecy.

That prophecy was a turning point in my life. No matter what happened, I was resigned to the fact that it was all God’s will. God had set my future. God would take care of me.

All my life, I had heard strange stories about Grandma’s prognostications. Like the time she told me she dreamed the coal mines were going to blow up. She tried to get her husband not to go to work that day. Ed went to work anyway. Later, the town whistle blew, meaning the coal mines had blown up. Grandma packed a lunch, walked a few miles up into the woods, and sat down on a log. Five hours later, the men dug their way to **safety** through the ventilation shaft right exactly where Grandma was sitting.

Ed stuck his head out and grandma said, “Ed, get out of that hole.”

Grandpa later told my dad, “Whenever your mom has a dream in the future, I will listen to her.”

Now, when you are 15 years old, this is a lot to take in, and a lot to think about. The day of Grandma’s prophecy about me stuck in my memory for the rest of my life. And sure enough, twenty-seven years later, the prophecy came true. That was the day I lit the light that shone all over America.

My grandmother had planted the seed in me. She had delivered a message to me from God. The lesson I learned from this, and from Henry, was that each person is unique, and each person had special gifts, and that none of us are alone in this world. God is with each one of us. All we

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need to do is realize that God has a plan for every single person. Each of us is a miracle. No other person on this Earth is like any other. We are all special.

By the grace of God, I then spent over twenty-five years learning all the secrets of success. For years I studied, I learned, and I put them all into action. Finally, I'd proved I was worthy, and just as my grandma had predicted, it all happened for me.

I have come to a place in my story where it is time for me to tell you a few the secrets of success that made me a multi-millionaire.

The 1st secret to all success: Understanding that you are special.

Realize this and visual this. Plant this seed in yourself: God made me special. God wants me to be successful so I can help others in this world.

The 2nd secret to all success: Act on faith alone.

By knowing that you are worthy, you are planting a seed. When you plant a seed, you can expect that God will bless you. God will send you a harvest.

The 3rd secret to all success: God never sends you into a situation alone.

God goes before you. He stands beside you. He walks behind you. Whatever situation you are in right now, be confident God is with you.

The 4th secret to all success: Visualize success.

Write your goals and thoughts. Visualize your action steps.

The 5th secret to all success: face adversity head on.

In my life, it was when I went through the really hard times that I found myself. I learned you must face adversity head on; there's no way around it. You cannot run or hide from adversity. Crap happens to us all. Just say, “So what? I've got plenty more to give.”

The 6th secret to all success: repetition, repetition, repetition.

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Practice does not make you perfect, perfect practice makes you perfect. Repeat successful actions only.

These are only my first six secrets. I will get back to the others in a moment, but first I need to tell you about my thumb.

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Chapter 7

December 23, 1971

In the winter of 1971, I was planning to go out for the high school football team. Tryouts were just a few more months away, and I could not wait. I wanted to be a running back like John Henry.

One day when Mom and dad were not home, I was working in our basement ripping some boards on dad’s table saw. The board jammed, I pushed it, the board broke free, then *bam!* I cut my thumb nearly off. Blood was squirting out all over the place, on the walls, on the floor—an unreal amount of blood. With each heartbeat, I was dying.

I was going into shock, and I would be dead in a matter of minutes. I knew I needed help. I ran upstairs and got to the edge of the dining room carpet by the kitchen. I thought, if I get all this blood on the carpet my mom will kill me. I was now less than five minutes from bleeding out. I had lost almost half the blood in my body.

I turned around and ran out the back door. I ran across the street to Bobby Mattingly’s house, knocked on the front door. As I knocked, I passed out from blood loss. Thankfully, Bobby was a paramedic. He absolutely saved my life that day.

Someone loaded me into Jack Coan’s police car. No time to wait for the ambulance. We had to go! It was an actual emergency. Jack Coan, our neighbor, was a police officer. He always parked his police car in his driveway. Jack was now driving me in his car with his siren on and lights flashing. If I had not been in shock, I would have thought, “How cool!” as we drove away.

Jack Coan took me to the University of Louisville hospital. Soon they had tracked down

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my parents, who were at my uncle’s house doing some cooking. My parents arrived at the hospital within thirty minutes. Mary Timburg, our neighbor, had followed us to the hospital in her car. She told my parents when they arrived, “It’s pretty bad. Ronnie’s hand is all cut up.”

Mom gasped. “How?”

Mary said, “**Ronnie cut his right thumb nearly off on Hobert’s table saw.** It’s just hanging on. He has also cut three additional fingers on his right hand.”

The doctors came in talked to my dad. “Mr. Needham, we cannot save his thumb. We cannot put it back together.”

Mary Timburg said, “Wait a minute.” She quickly called Dr. Kutz and Dr. Kliner at Jewish Hospital, the world-famous hand surgeons who would one day put Neil Armstrong’s thumb back on. He was the first man to walk on the moon. Mary was a scrub nurse for them.

They told her to bring me over to Jewish Hospital and they would see what they could do. Soon I was in surgery, an eleven-hour operation. After the surgery, they told my parents they had saved the thumb, but did not know if it would take. If it turned black, they’d have to amputate the thumb. It was in God’s hands now.

My parents took me home. I do not remember that day. All I remember is finally waking up with Mom and Dad saying, “Ronnie, its Christmas.” They took me into the dining room to open Christmas gifts. First, they gave me an Indian bead belt-making kit.

I said, “Well, I guess I cannot do that now.”

The next gift was a pair of blue jeans. Then dad said, “We have one more gift for you, son.”

I opened the gift. It was Pleasure Ridge Park High School letterman jacket. I had asked for the jacket weeks earlier, but Mom had said, “They cost too much. We cannot afford the jacket.”

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My dad asked, “How do you like your jacket?”

I said, “Fine.” But I noticed my mom and dad did not have any gifts under the tree.

I knew what they both had done. They took back their own presents to buy me the letterman jacket. As mom helped me back into bed, I asked, “But why mom?”

She just looked at me and said, “Son, that is what moms and dads do for their children.”

My dad told Mom to go to bed. She left, then Dad told me, “Since you got hurt, your mom has been praying for your thumb nonstop all night. Bobby Mattingly came over when we got you home from the hospital. We thanked him for saving you.”

Bobby told them, “I have never been late to work for eighteen years.” I knew that Bobby always left at three o’clock to go to work. Bobby shook his head and continued, “But that day I could not find my car keys. That’s why I was still home. After I got Ronnie stable and Jack Coan drove him to the hospital, I found my car keys.”

Mom asked Bobby, “Where did you find your keys?”

He started crying and told her, “Betty, they were in my pocket the entire time.”

Mom also cried. Dad said, “You would have died if it was not for Bobby.” Then he looked at me intently. “Listen to me. God has a job for you, son, or you would be dead.”

My grandma called my dad the next day and asked how bad I had cut my thumb. Dad did not have to ask her how she knew. Grandma had her special gift. He told grandma I was okay.

After Dad hung up, he said, “Son, God does things we may not understand, showing us how mighty he is.” As I fell asleep, Dad told me he knew of my gifts.

Two years of rehab went by. I remember being so excited as I called my mom and said, “Look at me! I can pick up a penny!” The rehab was long, with a lot of exercises. But within two years I could use my thumb again. It just had less feeling. I continued to lift weights in order to

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get out my anger and frustration. Football had been a nice dream.

But I had gained something better. When I cut my thumb, I had learned about adversity, and had formed a new habit that would affect my entire life. When I rehabbed my thumb, I would push my thumb harder with my other hand to get its flexibility back. I pushed myself harder to pick up a penny. When you cannot feel, you cannot pick up things. Just to open a car door took two years. The pain was incredible; as I did rehab work, I would sweat from the intense pain. But I would just tell myself I had plenty more to give, and then work even harder on the rehab.

I had to learn to tie my shoes with only one hand, and how to write with my left hand. My writing was very messy with my left hand. Three months after I hurt my hand, the doctor took my cast off. I was in my biology class. Mr. Matthews, my biology teacher, had a double wide yardstick. He slammed it down on my table, and by accident he hit my thumb and broke the bones in my thumb all over again. I had to go back to the doctor and get a new cast. It was a new setback I was forced to embrace.

What does not kill you, will strengthen you.

While I was rehabbing my thumb, I would repeat the following mantra each day: I think I can, I think I can, I know I can, I know I can, I will, I will, *I will*.

God was saying to me, “I am going to repay you for the years stolen. The years you spent lonely. You are going to have plenty of joy, plenty of peace, plenty of resources, and plenty of opportunities.”

Despite my injuries, I continued to move forward, continued to learn, and was determined that I would become successful. Over time, the journey through my difficulties led me to outstanding business success and becoming a multi-millionaire. Persistence in the face of

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adversity, and only by the grace of God.

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