

NOT SO ORDINARY?

By Daniel Stuart Olmes

These may be the most important words I'll ever write, but not because they're profound or because they've never been written before. They may never be highlighted in a famous publication, or receive formal recognition or great accolades. They may never reach that far, actually. But they're the most important words I'll ever write because I'm writing to my immediate community, to my family, and to my friends and neighbors—the people I'm surrounded by every day. And as with most things, to make a real difference we must start with those closest to us. And that's you, Franklin Farm—my home!

If you're anything like me...

You've probably wondered what this all means—life. You've probably experienced pain in one form or another. Perhaps regret or shame for the past, and fear or anxiety of the future; the two things that take us away from the beauty of the present moment. You've probably experienced self-doubt, whether that be physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually, for they all contribute to the image we create of ourselves. And often that image is not aligned with who we truly are.

You've probably asked the basic questions, ones we've asked since we could consciously reflect on our own existence: Where did I come from? What is my purpose? and Where am I going? At some point you may have faced profound sadness that the things in your life aren't the way you want them—that you didn't have good answers to those questions. You may have distracted yourself with obsessions and addictions and compulsive behaviors to avoid asking such questions, or acknowledging those realities.

You may have been envious of those who seemed to have figured it out. You may have been sick in one way or another. You may have filled your head with bad information. You may have made poor choices, or been confused by a good choice and the right choice and lacked the wisdom to know the difference.

You may have looked out at the night sky in absolute wonder. You may have questioned, considered, or accepted the existence of a higher power. Maybe you've done all three? You may have said prayers, and asked someone or something for answers, only to receive none, or so you thought at the time. You may have read hundreds of books looking for the keys to the universe, only to realize they're right in front of you every day.

You've probably had one, two, or many difficult or failed relationships in your life, even a lack of love. You may have asked why there's so much evil and suffering in the world and pondered your own mortality. And you've probably expressed frustration or dissatisfaction that your life lacks excitement or adventure, a boring grind through the ups and downs of everyday life. Maybe it's been hard to get out of bed some mornings. I could go on and on.

What I'm describing is the human condition. These are things we all experience on our journey from here to there. It's life. It's common. It's as painful as it is beautiful. And it's what we often call ordinary.

But there's a solution. There's a choice.

Because life is anything but ordinary. It's an astonishing miracle. It's the greatest gift we've been given. And it's a total enigma. That in the vastness of the cosmos, and given all the possibilities and all the time that's passed, you're reading this article right now, in this moment. The

fact that you occupy the most complex machine in the known universe, which is your mind and body, and yet you've had no training in how to do it, should leave you speechless. And the fact that you're you, in a sea of infinite possibility, having the thoughts you are right now, in some small corner of the cosmos, is almost too much to contemplate. By all measures, life is just absolutely crazy. And it has to mean something!

But maybe we're not designed to know. Or not yet? Maybe we're designed to walk in mystery. Maybe we're supposed to be satisfied with simple things, simple truths. Maybe it's in love, in each other, and in the countless ordinary experiences we have in life that we find comfort, that we find meaning. Maybe that's the point, because it's accessible to everyone. That love is our universal language, and it's something that can be understood by everyone.

On just an average day fifteen years ago, I had a very ordinary experience that changed my view of the world. It changed everything, actually. And from that point forward I started keeping a journal of other such experiences, those that happen to all of us, every day. The things I write in this journal are not experiences that are typically described as extraordinary. They aren't of great accomplishments or major life events. Those were too obvious and not easily forgotten, but they're the experiences that are rooted in human love, the simple things that, if viewed a little differently, can have a profound impact on our lives. They're the things we most often miss, the subtleties of life—the delicate undercurrent where the real miracles hide.

There's a lot of information in the world, especially in the digital age. Information can come in many forms. In fact, there are too many to count. We can be absolutely bombarded and overwhelmed with information, making it very difficult to see the real beauties in life. And for too long I made the mistake of thinking that the quality of that information was what made life good or bad. That my happiness and contentment were determined by the things that happened to me.

But what I finally realized is that it's not the quality of the information that matters, it's the quality of the choice I make with it. How do I view the things that happen to me? Because that freedom is rarely taken away. Those choices can be more difficult given our circumstances, but they become our experience. They become our life. Sometimes we don't choose the things that happen to us, but we can choose how we experience them. This is not a new concept, but one we often forget.

The key is we need to know where to look. We need to look in different places. We need new information. And we need each other. This small journal is about finding new information and the people and experiences that can change our lives, even if they're quite "ordinary." This journal has fundamentally changed my view of the world, and it sparked a journey I couldn't have ever possibly imagined. It became the Memoirs of an Ordinary Guy.

So join me on this extraordinary journey. In reading my story, I promise it'll remind you of yours, and it'll inspire a new vision of your own life and the world around you. This book is not about me. It's actually about you. It's about all of us!

Synopsis:

Find joy and love in ordinary, everyday experiences. By most measures, Daniel Olmes is an ordinary guy—but he’s learned how to live an extraordinary life. In *Memoirs of an Ordinary Guy*, Daniel asserts that we are all capable of being extraordinary and redefines what it means to be just another ordinary person. He is living proof that extraordinary is there for all of us. It doesn’t mean rich or famous. It doesn’t mean better. To Daniel, “extraordinary” means grateful, honest, happy, loving, fearless, and faithful. Doing extraordinary things is not what makes us extraordinary. Being extraordinary is having an extraordinary perspective on our lives and the things that happen to us. Daniel’s narrative will inspire everyone to view their lives differently, remind us of the stories that we all share, and spark a renewed curiosity about a world that’s anything but ordinary.

Advance praise:

“Danny Olmes’ folksy memoir packs a punch. He combines the wisdom gained from personal reflection with the lessons of an ‘ordinary’ American living through extraordinary times. He has written a sweet tale for the country he loves.”
-- Miranda Devine, New York Post columnist and author of *Laptop from Hell*

“Danny Olmes, a so-called ‘ordinary guy,’ has written an extraordinary book that offers countless life lessons the rest of us would be wise to heed and even emulate. Here’s another important lesson: put this on your must-read list. Now.” -- Len Shapiro, longtime Washington Post sportswriter, columnist, and editor

“It has been my pleasure to see the development of Danny Olmes’ thought-provoking book, *Memoirs of an Ordinary Guy*, from its very early stages to publication. Danny’s goal has always been to capture life experiences that are not only meaningful to him but will also encourage readers to reflect on their own lives. Danny has succeeded in his objective, and I have no doubt that every reader will come away from this touching book with new perspectives on life.” -- Chuck Cascio, longtime freelance writer and author of *The Fire Escape Stories* and six other books

“*Memoirs of an Ordinary Guy* is a unique and inspiring read. Penned in a series of vignettes, Danny captures the spirit of the ‘Everyman’ through introspective insights that will help readers contemplate the value of everyday experiences and living in the moment. Compassion for others and the importance of self are the essence of Danny’s work and a must read for those seeking self-awareness and integration into a more rich and full life.”
-- Lt. Col. David Richardson, USMC, Ret. and author of *War Story*

MEMOIRS OF AN ORDINARY GUY

*The Everyday Experiences
that Changed My Life*

DANIEL STUART OLMES

Foreword by Jamie Clarke

Two-Time Mount Everest Summitter and Climber of The Seven Summits

