

Who You Are Makes A Difference

A teacher in New York decided to honor each of her seniors in high school by telling them the difference they each made. Using a process developed by Helice Bridges of Del Mar, California, she called each student to the front of the class, one at a time. First she told them how the student made a difference to her and the class. Then she presented each of them with a blue ribbon imprinted with gold letters which read, "Who I Am Makes a Difference."

Afterwards the teacher decided to do a class project to see what kind of impact recognition would have on a community. She gave each of the students three more ribbons and instructed them to go out and spread this acknowledgment ceremony. Then they were to follow up on the results, see who honored whom and report back to the class in about a week.

One of the boys in the class went to a junior executive in a nearby company and honored him for helping him with his career planning. He gave him a blue ribbon and put it on his shirt. Then he gave him two extra ribbons, and said, "We're doing a class project on recognition, and we'd like you to go out, find somebody to honor, give them a blue ribbon, then give them the extra blue ribbon so they can acknowledge a third person to keep this acknowledgment ceremony

going. Then please report back to me and tell me what happened."

Later that day the junior executive went in to see his boss, who had been noted, by the way, as being kind of a grouchy fellow. He sat his boss down and he told him that he deeply admired him for being a creative genius. The boss seemed very surprised. The junior executive asked him if he would accept the gift of the blue ribbon and would he give him permission to put it on him. His surprised boss said, "Well, sure."

The junior executive took the blue ribbon and placed it right on his boss's jacket above his heart. As he gave him the last extra ribbon, he said, "Would you do me a favor? Would you take this extra ribbon and pass it on by honoring somebody else? The young boy who first gave me the ribbons is doing a project in school and we want to keep this recognition ceremony going and find out how it affects people."

That night the boss came home to his 14-year-old son and sat him down. He said, "The most incredible thing happened to me today. I was in my office and one of the junior executives came in and told me he admired me and gave me a blue ribbon for being a creative genius. Imagine. He thinks I'm a creative genius. Then he put this blue ribbon that says 'Who I Am Makes A Difference' on my jacket above my heart. He gave me an extra ribbon and asked me to find somebody else to honor. As I was driving home tonight, I started thinking about whom I would honor with this ribbon and I thought about you. I want to honor you."

"My days are really hectic and when I come home I don't pay a lot of attention to you. Sometimes I scream at you for not getting good enough grades in school and for your bedroom being a mess, but somehow tonight, I just wanted to sit here and, well, just let you

know that you do make a difference to me. Besides your mother, you are the most important person in my life. You're a great kid and I love you!"

The startled boy started to sob and sob, and he couldn't stop crying. His whole body shook. He looked up at his father and said through his tears, "I was planning on committing suicide tomorrow, Dad, because I didn't think you loved me. Now I don't need to."

Helice Bridges

*You are invited to become a
Steward of the Dream*

Who I Am Makes A Difference™

A Blue Ribbon
on every person in America
in the next five years ~ creating
the foundation for acknowledgment
for this generation and all generations to come.

Helice Bridges' dream is to have a blue ribbon pinned on every person in America by the year 2000. To help make this dream come true, you can order "Who I Am Makes A Difference" blue ribbons by calling (800) 887-8422 or writing to HBC, P.O. Box 2115, Del Mar, California 92014.

All The Good Things

He was in the third grade class I taught at Saint Mary's School in Morris, Minnesota. All 34 of my students were dear to me, but Mark Eklund was one in a million. Very neat in appearance, he had that happy-to-be-alive attitude that made even his occasional mischievousness delightful.

Mark also talked incessantly. I tried to remind him again and again that talking without permission was not acceptable. What impressed me so much, though, was the sincere response every time I had to correct him for misbehaving. "Thank you for correcting me, Sister!" I didn't know what to make of it at first but before long I became accustomed to hearing it many times a day.

One morning my patience was growing thin when Mark talked once too often. I made a novice-teacher's mistake. I looked at Mark and said, "If you say one more word, I am going to tape your mouth shut!"

It wasn't ten seconds later when Chuck blurted out, "Mark is talking again." I hadn't asked any of the students to help me watch Mark, but since I had stated the punishment in front of the class, I had to act on it.

I remember the scene as if it had occurred this morning. I walked to my desk, very deliberately

opened the drawer and took out a roll of masking tape. Without saying a word, I proceeded to Mark's desk, tore off two pieces of tape and made a big X with them over his mouth. I then returned to the front of the room.

As I glanced at Mark to see how he was doing, he winked at me. That did it! I started laughing. The entire class cheered as I walked back to Mark's desk, removed the tape and shrugged my shoulders. His first words were, "Thank you for correcting me, Sister."

At the end of the year I was asked to teach junior high math. The years flew by, and before I knew it Mark was in my classroom again. He was more handsome than ever and just as polite. Since he had to listen carefully to my instruction in the "new math," he did not talk as much in ninth grade.

One Friday things just didn't feel right. We had worked hard on a new concept all week, and I sensed that the students were growing frustrated with themselves — and edgy with one another. I had to stop this crankiness before it got out of hand. So I asked them to list the names of the other students in the room on two sheets of paper, leaving a space between each name. Then I told them to think of the nicest thing they could say about each of their classmates and write it down.

It took the remainder of the class period to finish the assignment, but as the students left the room, each one handed me their paper. Chuck smiled. Mark said, "Thank you for teaching me, Sister. Have a good weekend!"

That Saturday, I wrote down the name of each student on a separate sheet of paper, and I listed what everyone else had said about that individual. On Monday I gave each student his or her list. Some

of them ran two pages. Before long, the entire class was smiling. "Really?" I heard whispered. "I never knew that meant anything to anyone!" "I didn't know others liked me so much!"

No one ever mentioned those papers in class again. I never knew if they discussed them after class or with their parents, but it didn't matter. The exercise had accomplished its purpose. The students were happy with themselves and one another again.

That group of students moved on. Several years later, after I had returned from a vacation, my parents met me at the airport. As we were driving home, Mother asked the usual questions about the trip: How the weather was, my experiences in general. There was a slight lull in the conversation. Mother gave Dad a sideways glance and simply said, "Dad?" My father cleared his throat. "The Eklunds called last night," he began.

"Really?" I said. "I haven't heard from them for several years. I wonder how Mark is."

Dad responded quietly. "Mark was killed in Vietnam," he said. "The funeral is tomorrow, and his parents would like it if you could attend." To this day I can still point to the exact spot on I-494 where Dad told me about Mark.

I had never seen a serviceman in a military coffin before. Mark looked so handsome, so mature. All I could think at that moment was, Mark, I would give all the masking tape in the world if only you could talk to me.

The church was packed with Mark's friends. Chuck's sister sang "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Why did it have to rain on the day of the funeral? It was difficult enough at the graveside. The pastor said the usual prayers and the bugler played taps.

One by one those who loved Mark took a last walk by the coffin and sprinkled it with holy water.

I was the last one to bless the coffin. As I stood there, one of the soldiers who had acted as a pallbearer came up to me. "Were you Mark's math teacher?" he asked. I nodded as I continued to stare at the coffin. "Mark talked about you a lot," he said.

After the funeral most of Mark's former classmates headed to Chuck's farmhouse for lunch. Mark's mother and father were there, obviously waiting for me. "We want to show you something," his father said, taking a wallet out of his pocket. "They found this on Mark when he was killed. We thought you might recognize it."

Opening the billfold, he carefully removed two worn pieces of notebook paper that had obviously been taped, folded and refolded many times. I knew without looking that the papers were the ones on which I had listed all the good things each of Mark's classmates had said about him. "Thank you so much for doing that," Mark's mother said. "As you can see, Mark treasured it."

Mark's classmates started to gather around us. Chuck smiled rather sheepishly and said, "I still have my list. It's in the top drawer of my desk at home." John's wife said, "John asked me to put his in our wedding album." "I have mine too," Marilyn said. "It's in my diary." Then Vicki, another classmate, reached into her pocketbook, took out her wallet and showed her worn and frazzled list to the group. "I carry this with me at all times," Vicki said without batting an eyelash. "I think we all saved our lists."

That's when I finally sat down and cried. I cried for Mark and for all his friends who would never see him again.

Heleen P. Mroska

You Are A Marvel

Each second we live is a new and unique moment of the universe, a moment that will never be again . . . And what do we teach our children? We teach them that two and two make four, and that Paris is the capital of France.

When will we also teach them what they are?

We should say to each of them: Do you know what you are? You are a marvel. You are unique. In all the years that have passed, there has never been another child like you. Your legs, your arms, your clever fingers, the way you move.

You may become a Shakespeare, a Michaelangelo, a Beethoven. You have the capacity for anything. Yes, you are a marvel. And when you grow up, can you then harm another who is, like you, a marvel?

You must work — we must all work — to make the world worthy of its children.

Pablo Casals

The Royal Knights Of Harlem

Within walking distance of my Manhattan apartment, but also light-years away, there is a part of New York called Spanish Harlem. In many ways it is a Third World country. Infant and maternal mortality rates are about the same as in say, Bangladesh, and average male life expectancy is even shorter. These facts it shares with the rest of Harlem, yet here many people are also separated from the more affluent parts of the city by language. When all this is combined with invisibility in the media, the condemnation of many teachers and police who work in this Third World country but wouldn't dream of living there, and textbooks that have little to do with their lives, the lesson for kids is clear: They are "less than" people who live only a few blocks away.

At a junior high that rises from a barren patch of concrete playgrounds and metal fences on East 101st Street, Bill Hall teaches the usual English courses, plus English as a second language to students who arrive directly from Puerto Rico, Central and South America, even Pakistan and Hong Kong. Those kids are faced with a new culture, strange rules, a tough neighborhood and parents who may be feeling just as lost as they are. Bill Hall is faced with them.

While looking for an interest to bind one such

group together and help them to learn English at the same time, Bill noticed someone in the neighborhood carrying a chessboard. As a chess player himself, he knew this game crossed many cultural boundaries, so he got permission from a very skeptical principal to start a chess club after school.

Few of the girls came. Never having seen women playing chess, they assumed this game wasn't for them, and without even a female teacher as a role model, those few who did come gradually dropped out. Some of the boys stayed away, too — chess wasn't the kind of game that made you popular in this neighborhood — but about a dozen remained to learn the basics. Their friends made fun of them for staying after school, and some parents felt that chess was a waste of time since it wouldn't help them get a job, but still, they kept coming. Bill was giving these boys something rare in their lives: the wholehearted attention of someone who believed in them.

Gradually, their skills at both chess and English improved. As they got more expert at the game, Bill took them to chess matches in schools outside Spanish Harlem. Because he paid for their subway fares and pizza dinners, no small thing on his teacher's salary, the boys knew he cared. They began to trust this middle-aged white man a little more.

To help them become more independent, Bill asked each boy to captain one event, and to handle all travel and preparation for it. Gradually, even when Bill wasn't around, the boys began to assume responsibility for each other: to coach those who were lagging behind, to share personal problems and to explain to each other's parents why chess wasn't such a waste of time after all. Gradually, too, this new sense of competence carried over into their classrooms and their grades began to improve.

As they became better students and chess players, Bill Hall's dreams for them grew. With a little money supplied by the Manhattan Chess Club, he took them to the State Finals in Syracuse.

What had been twelve disparate, isolated, often passive, shut-down kids had now become a team with their own chosen name: The Royal Knights. After finishing third in their own state, they were eligible for the Junior High School Finals in California.

By now, however, even Bill's own colleagues were giving him reasons why he shouldn't be spending so much time and effort. In real life, these ghetto kids would never "get past New Jersey," as one teacher put it. Why raise funds to fly them across the country and make them more dissatisfied with their lives? Nonetheless, Bill raised money for tickets to California. In that national competition, they finished seventeenth out of 109 teams.

By now chess had become a subject of school interest — if only because it led to trips. On one of their days at a New York chess club, the team members met a young girl from the Soviet Union who was the Women's World Champion. Even Bill was floored by the idea that two of his kids came up with: If this girl could come all the way from Russia, why couldn't The Royal Knights go there? After all, it *was* the chess capital of the world, and the Scholastic Chess Friendship Games were coming up.

Though no U.S. players their age had ever entered these games, officials in Bill's school district rallied round the idea. So did a couple of the corporations he approached for travel money. Of course, no one thought his team could win, but that wasn't the goal. The trip itself would widen the boys' horizons, Bill argued. When Pepsi-Cola came up with a \$20,000

check, Bill began to realize that this crazy dream was going to come true.

They boarded the plane for the first leg of their trip to Russia as official representatives of the country from which they had felt so estranged only a few months before. But as veterans of Spanish Harlem, they also made very clear that they were representing their own neighborhood. On the back of their satin athletic jackets was emblazoned not "U.S.A.," but "The Royal Knights."

Once they were in Moscow, however, their confidence began to falter badly. The experience and deliberate style of their Soviet opponents were something they had never previously encountered. Finally one of the Knights broke the spell by playing a Soviet Grand master in his 30s to a draw in a simulation match. The Russians weren't invincible after all; just people like them. After that, the Knights won about half their matches, and even discovered a homegrown advantage in the special event of speed chess. Unlike the Soviet players, who had been taught that slowness and deliberation were virtues, the Knights had a street smart style that made them both fast and accurate.

By the time Bill and his team got to Leningrad to take on the toughest part of their competition, the boys were feeling good again. Though they had been selected at random for their need to learn English, not for any talent at chess, and though they had been playing for only a few months, they won one match and achieved a draw in another.

When the Knights got back to New York, they were convinced they could do anything.

It was a conviction they would need. A few months later when I went to their junior high school club room, Bill Hall, a big gentle man who rarely gets

angry, was furious about a recent confrontation between one of the Puerto Rican team members and a white teacher. As Bill urged the boy to explain to me, he had done so well on a test that the teacher, thinking he had cheated, made him take it over. When the boy did well a second time, the teacher seemed less pleased than annoyed to have been proven wrong. "If this had been a school in a different neighborhood," said Bill, "none of this would have happened."

It was the kind of classroom bias that these boys had been internalizing — but now had the self-esteem to resist. "Maybe the teacher was just jealous," the boy said cheerfully. "I mean, we put this school on the map."

And so they had. Their dingy junior high auditorium had just been chosen by a Soviet dance troupe as the site of a New York performance. Every principal in the school district was asking for a chess program, and local television and newspapers had interviewed The Royal Knights. Now that their junior high graduation was just weeks away, bids from various high schools with programs for "gifted" kids were flooding in, even one from a high school in California. Though all the boys were worried about their upcoming separation, it was the other team members who persuaded the boy who got that invitation to accept it.

"We told him to go for it," as one said. "We promised to write him every week," said another. "Actually," said a third, "we all plan to stay in touch for life."

With career plans that included law, accounting, teaching, computer sciences — futures they wouldn't have thought possible before — there was no telling what continuing surprises they might share at reunions of this team that had become its own support group and family.

What were they doing, I asked, *before* Bill Hall and chess playing came into their lives? There was a very long silence.

"Hanging out in the street and feeling like shit," said one boy, who now wants to become a lawyer.

"Taking lunch money from younger kids and a few drugs now and then," admitted another.

"Just lying on my bed, reading comics, and getting yelled at by my father for being lazy," said a third.

Was there anything in their schoolbooks that made a difference?

"Not until Mr. Hall thought we were smart," explained one to the nods of the others, "and then we were."

Gloria Steinem

I Think I Can!

Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right.

Henry Ford

Rocky Lyons, the son of New York Jets defensive end Marty Lyons, was five years old when he was driving through rural Alabama with his mother, Kelly. He was asleep on the front seat of their pickup truck, with his feet resting on her lap.

As his mom drove carefully down the winding two-lane country road, she turned onto a narrow bridge. As she did, the truck hit a pothole and slid off the road, and the right front wheel got stuck in a rut. Fearing the truck would tip over, she attempted to jerk it back up onto the road by pressing hard on the gas pedal and spinning the steering wheel to the left. But Rocky's foot got caught between her leg and the steering wheel and she lost control of the pickup truck.

The truck flipped over and over down a 20-foot ravine. When it hit bottom, Rocky woke up. "What happened, Mama?" he asked. "Our wheels are pointing toward the sky."

Kelly was blinded by blood. The gearshift had jammed into her face, ripping it open from lip to

bigger lips" — but she has few visible scars and has recovered from her injuries.

Rocky's heroics were big news. But the spunky youngster insists he didn't do anything extraordinary. "It's not like I wanted it to happen," he explains. "I just did what anyone would have done." Says his mother, "If it weren't for Rocky, I'd have bled to death."

*First heard from
Michele Borba*

forehead. Her gums were torn out, her cheeks pul-
verized, her shoulders crushed. With one shattered
bone sticking out of her armpit, she was pinned
against the crushed door.

"I'll get you out, Mama," announced Rocky, who
had miraculously escaped injury. He slithered out
from under Kelly, slid through the open window and
tried to yank his mother out. But she didn't move.
"Just let me sleep," begged Kelly, who was drifting in
and out of consciousness. "No, Mama," Rocky insisted.
"You can't go to sleep."

Rocky wriggled back into the truck and managed
to push Kelly out of the wreckage. He then told her
he'd climb up to the road and stop a car to get help.
Fearing that no one would be able to see her little boy
in the dark, Kelly refused to let him go alone. Instead
they slowly crept up the embankment, with Rocky
using his meager 40-pound frame to push his 104-
pound mother. They crawled inches at a time. The
pain was so great that Kelly wanted to give up, but
Rocky wouldn't let her.

To urge his mother on, Rocky told her to think
"about that little train," the one in the classic children's
story, *The Little Engine That Could*, which managed to
get up a steep mountain. To remind her, Rocky kept
repeating his version of the story's inspirational
phrase: "I know you can, I know you can."

When they finally reached the road, Rocky was
able to see his mother's torn face clearly for the first
time. He broke into tears. Waving his arms and plead-
ing, "Stop! Please stop!" the boy hailed a truck. "Get
my mama to a hospital," he implored the driver.

It took 8 hours and 344 stitches to rebuild Kelly's
face. She looks quite different today — "I used to
have a straight long nose, thin lips and high cheek-
bones; now I've got a pug nose, flat cheeks and much

Willing To Pay The Price

When my wife Maryanne and I were building our Greenspoint Mall hair salon 13 years ago, a Vietnamese fellow would stop by each day to sell us doughnuts. He spoke hardly any English, but he was always friendly and through smiles and sign language, we got to know each other. His name was Le Van Vu.

During the day Le worked in a bakery and at night he and his wife listened to audio tapes to learn English. I later learned that they slept on sacks full of sawdust on the floor of the back room of the bakery.

In Vietnam the Van Vu family was one of the wealthiest in Southeast Asia. They owned almost one-third of North Vietnam, including huge holdings in industry and real estate. However, after his father was brutally murdered, Le moved to South Vietnam with his mother, where he went to school and eventually became a lawyer.

Like his father before him, Le prospered. He saw an opportunity to construct buildings to accommodate the ever-expanding American presence in South Vietnam and soon became one of the most successful builders in the country.

On a trip to the North, however, Le was captured by the North Vietnamese and thrown into prison for three years. He escaped by killing five soldiers and

made his way back to South Vietnam where he was arrested again. The South Vietnamese government had assumed he was a "plant" from the North.

After serving time in prison, Le got out and started a fishing company, eventually becoming the largest canner in South Vietnam.

When Le learned that the U.S. troops and embassy personnel were about to pull out of his country, he made a life-changing decision.

He took all of the gold he had hoarded, loaded it aboard one of his fishing vessels and sailed with his wife out to the American ships in the harbor. He then exchanged all his riches for safe passage out of Vietnam to the Philippines, where he and his wife were taken into a refugee camp.

After gaining access to the president of the Philippines, Le convinced him to make one of his boats available for fishing and Le was back in business again. Before he left the Philippines two years later en route for America (his ultimate dream), Le had successfully developed the entire fishing industry in the Philippines.

But en route to America, Le became distraught and depressed about having to start over again with nothing. His wife tells of how she found him near the railing of the ship, about to jump overboard.

"Le," she told him, "if you do jump, whatever will become of me? We've been together for so long and through so much. We can do this together." It was all the encouragement that Le Van Vu needed.

When he and his wife arrived in Houston in 1972, they were flat broke and spoke no English. In Vietnam, family takes care of family, and Le and his wife found themselves ensconced in the back room of his cousin's bakery in the Greenspoint Mall. We were building our salon just a couple of hundred feet away.

Now, as they say, here comes the "message" part of this story:

Le's cousin offered both Le and his wife jobs in the bakery. After taxes, Le would take home \$175 per week, his wife \$125. Their total annual income, in other words, was \$15,600. Further, his cousin offered to sell them the bakery whenever they could come up with a \$30,000 down payment. The cousin would finance the remainder with a note for \$90,000.

Here's what Le and his wife did:

Even with a weekly income of \$300, they decided to continue to live in the back room. They kept clean by taking sponge baths for two years in the mall's restrooms. For two years their diet consisted almost entirely of bakery goods. Each year, for two years, they lived on a total, that's right, a total of \$600, saving \$30,000 for the down payment.

Le later explained his reasoning, "If we got ourselves an apartment, which we could afford on \$300 per week, we'd have to pay the rent. Then, of course, we'd have to buy furniture. Then we'd have to have transportation to and from work, so that meant we'd have to buy a car. Then we'd have to buy gasoline for the car as well as insurance. Then we'd probably want to go places in the car, so that meant we'd need to buy clothes and toiletries. So I knew that if we got that apartment, we'd never get our \$30,000 together."

Now, if you think you've heard everything about Le, let me tell you, there's more: After he and his wife had saved the \$30,000 and bought the bakery, Le once again sat down with his wife for a serious chat. They still owed \$90,000 to his cousin, he said, and as difficult as the past two years had been, they had to remain living in that back room for one more year.

I'm proud to tell you that in one year, my friend and mentor Le Van Vu and his wife, saving virtually

every nickel of profit from the business, paid off the \$90,000 note, and in just three years, owned an extremely profitable business free and clear.

Then, and only then, the Van Vus went out and got their first apartment. To this day, they continue to save on a regular basis, live on an extremely small percentage of their income, and, of course, always pay cash for any of their purchases.

Do you think that Le Van Vu is a millionaire today? I am happy to tell you, many times over.

John McCormack

Follow Your Dream

I have a friend named Monty Roberts who owns a horse ranch in San Ysidro. He has let me use his house to put on fund-raising events to raise money for youth at risk programs.

The last time I was there he introduced me by saying, "I want to tell you why I let Jack use my house. It all goes back to a story about a young man who was the son of an itinerant horse trainer who would go from stable to stable, race track to race track, farm to farm and ranch to ranch, training horses. As a result, the boy's high school career was continually interrupted. When he was a senior, he was asked to write a paper about what he wanted to be and do when he grew up.

"That night he wrote a seven-page paper describing his goal of someday owning a horse ranch. He wrote about his dream in great detail and he even drew a diagram of a 200-acre ranch, showing the location of all the buildings, the stables and the track. Then he drew a detailed floor plan for a 4,000-square-foot house that would sit on the 200-acre dream ranch.

"He put a great deal of his heart into the project and the next day he handed it in to his teacher. Two days later he received his paper back. On the front

page was a large red F with a note that read, 'See me after class.'

"The boy with the dream went to see the teacher after class and asked, 'Why did I receive an F?'

"The teacher said, 'This is an unrealistic dream for a young boy like you. You have no money. You come from an itinerant family. You have no resources. Owning a horse ranch requires a lot of money. You have to buy the land. You have to pay for the original breeding stock and later you'll have to pay large stud fees. There's no way you could ever do it.' Then the teacher added, 'If you will rewrite this paper with a more realistic goal, I will reconsider your grade.'

"The boy went home and thought about it long and hard. He asked his father what he should do. His father said, 'Look, son, you have to make up your own mind on this. However, I think it is a very important decision for you.'

"Finally, after sitting with it for a week, the boy turned in the same paper, making no changes at all. He stated, 'You can keep the F and I'll keep my dream.' "

Monty then turned to the assembled group and said, "I tell you this story because you are sitting in my 4,000-square-foot house in the middle of my 200-acre horse ranch. I still have that school paper framed over the fireplace." He added, "The best part of the story is that two summers ago that same school-teacher brought 30 kids to camp out on my ranch for a week." When the teacher was leaving, he said, 'Look, Monty, I can tell you this now. When I was your teacher, I was something of a dream stealer. During those years I stole a lot of kids' dreams. Fortunately you had enough gumption not to give up on yours.' "

Don't let anyone steal your dreams. Follow your heart, no matter what.

Jack Canfield

Consider This

Consider this:

- After Fred Astaire's first screen test, the memo from the testing director of MGM, dated 1933, said, "Can't act! Slightly bald! Can dance a little!" Astaire kept that memo over the fireplace in his Beverly Hills home.
- An expert said of Vince Lombardi: "He possesses minimal football knowledge. Lacks motivation."
- Socrates was called, "An immoral corrupter of youth."
- When Peter J. Daniel was in the fourth grade, his teacher, Mrs. Phillips, constantly said, "Peter J. Daniel, you're no good, you're a bad apple and you're never going to amount to anything." Peter was totally illiterate until he was 26. A friend stayed up with him all night and read him a copy of *Think and Grow Rich*. Now he owns the street corners he used to fight on and just published his latest book: *Mrs. Phillips, You Were Wrong!*
- Louisa May Alcott, the author of *Little Women*, was encouraged to find work as a servant or seamstress by her family.
- Beethoven handled the violin awkwardly and preferred playing his own compositions instead of

improving his technique. His teacher called him hopeless as a composer.

- The parents of the famous opera singer Enrico Caruso wanted him to be an engineer. His teacher said he had no voice at all and could not sing.
- Charles Darwin, father of the Theory of Evolution, gave up a medical career and was told by his father, "You care for nothing but shooting, dogs and rat catching." In his autobiography, Darwin wrote, "I was considered by all my masters and by my father, a very ordinary boy, rather below the common standard in intellect."
- Walt Disney was fired by a newspaper editor for lack of ideas. Walt Disney also went bankrupt several times before he built Disneyland.
- Thomas Edison's teachers said he was too stupid to learn anything.
- Albert Einstein did not speak until he was four years old and didn't read until he was seven. His teacher described him as "mentally slow, unsociable and adrift forever in his foolish dreams." He was expelled and was refused admittance to the Zurich Polytechnic School.
- Louis Pasteur was only a mediocre pupil in undergraduate studies and ranked 15th out of 22 in chemistry.
- Isaac Newton did very poorly in grade school.
- The sculptor Rodin's father said, "I have an idiot for a son." Described as the worst pupil in the school, Rodin failed three times to secure admittance to the school of art. His uncle called him uneducable.
- Leo Tolstoy, author of *War and Peace*, flunked out of college. He was described as "both unable and unwilling to learn."

- Playwright Tennessee Williams was enraged when his play *Me, Vasha* was not chosen in a class competition at Washington University where he was enrolled in English XVI. The teacher recalled that Williams denounced the judges' choices and their intelligence.
- F.W. Woolworth's employers at the dry goods store said he had not enough sense to wait upon customers.
- Henry Ford failed and went broke five times before he finally succeeded.
- Babe Ruth, considered by sports historians to be the greatest athlete of all time and famous for setting the home run record, also holds the record for strikeouts.
- Winston Churchill failed sixth grade. He did not become Prime Minister of England until he was 62, and then only after a lifetime of defeats and setbacks. His greatest contributions came when he was a "senior citizen."
- Eighteen publishers turned down Richard Bach's 10,000-word story about a "soaring" seagull, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, before Macmillan finally published it in 1970. By 1975 it had sold more than seven million copies in the U.S. alone.
- Richard Hooker worked for seven years on his humorous war novel, *M*A*S*H*, only to have it rejected by 21 publishers before Morrow decided to publish it. It became a runaway bestseller, spawning a blockbusting movie and a highly successful television series.

Jack Canfield and Mark V. Hansen

Everybody Can Do Something

The basic difference between an ordinary man and a warrior is that a warrior takes everything as a challenge, while an ordinary man takes everything either as a blessing or a curse.

Don Juan

Roger Crawford had everything he needed to play tennis — except two hands and a leg.

When Roger's parents saw their son for the first time, they saw a baby with a thumb-like projection extended directly out of his right forearm and a thumb and one finger stuck out of his left forearm. He had no palms. The baby's arms and legs were shortened, and he had only three toes on his shrunken right foot and a withered left leg, which would later be amputated.

The doctor said Roger suffered from ectrodactylism, a rare birth defect affecting only one out of 90,000 children born in the United States. The doctor said Roger would probably never walk or care for himself. Fortunately Roger's parents didn't believe the doctor.

"My parents always taught me that I was only as handicapped as I wanted to be," said Roger. "They

never allowed me to feel sorry for myself or take advantage of people because of my handicap. Once I got into trouble because my school papers were continually late," explained Roger, who had to hold his pencil with both "hands" to write slowly. "I asked Dad to write a note to my teachers, asking for a two-day extension on my assignments. Instead Dad made me start writing my paper two days early!"

Roger's father always encouraged him to get involved in sports, teaching Roger to catch and throw a volleyball, and play backyard football after school. At age 12, Roger managed to win a spot on the school football team.

Before every game, Roger would visualize his dream of scoring a touchdown. Then one day he got his chance. The ball landed in his arms and off he ran as fast as he could on his artificial leg toward the goal line, his coach and teammates cheering wildly. But at the ten-yard line, a guy from the other team caught up with Roger, grabbing his left ankle. Roger tried to pull his artificial leg free, but instead it ended up being pulled off.

"I was still standing up," recalls Roger. "I didn't know what else to do so I started hopping towards the goal line. The referee ran over and threw his hands into the air. Touchdown! You know, even better than the six points was the look on the face of the other kid who was holding my artificial leg."

Roger's love of sports grew and so did his self-confidence. But not every obstacle gave way to Roger's determination. Eating in the lunchroom with the other kids watching him fumble with his food proved very painful to Roger, as did his repeated failure in typing class. "I learned a very good lesson from typing class," said Roger. "You can't do *everything* — it's better to concentrate on what you *can* do."

One thing Roger could do was swing a tennis racket. Unfortunately, when he swung it hard, his weak grip usually launched it into space. By luck, Roger stumbled upon an odd-looking tennis racket in a sports shop and accidentally wedged his finger between its double-barred handle when he picked it up. The snug fit made it possible for Roger to swing, serve and volley like an able-bodied player. He practiced every day and was soon playing — and losing — matches.

But Roger persisted. He practiced and practiced and played and played. Surgery on the two fingers of his left hand enabled Roger to grip his special racket better, greatly improving his game. Although he had no role models to guide him, Roger became obsessed with tennis and in time he started to win.

Roger went on to play college tennis, finishing his tennis career with 22 wins and 11 losses. He later became the first physically handicapped tennis player to be certified as a teaching professional by the United States Professional Tennis Association. Roger now tours the country, speaking to groups about what it takes to be a winner, no matter who you are.

"The only difference between you and me is that you can see my handicap, but I can't see yours. We *all* have them. When people ask me how I've been able to overcome my physical handicaps, I tell them that I haven't overcome anything. I've simply learned what I can't do — such as play the piano or eat with chopsticks — but more importantly, I've learned what I *can* do. Then I do what I can with all my heart and soul."

Jack Canfield

Yes, You Can

Experience is not what happens to a man. It is what a man does with what happens to him.

Aldous Huxley

What if at age 46 you were burned beyond recognition in a terrible motorcycle accident, and then four years later were paralyzed from the waist down in an airplane crash? Then, can you imagine yourself becoming a millionaire, a respected public speaker, a happy newlywed and a successful business person? Can you see yourself going white water rafting? Sky diving? Running for political office?

W. Mitchell has done all these things and more *after* two horrible accidents left his face a quilt of multi-colored skin grafts, his hands fingerless and his legs thin and motionless in a wheelchair.

The 16 surgeries Mitchell endured after the motorcycle accident burned more than 65 percent of his body, left him unable to pick up a fork, dial a telephone or go to the bathroom without help. But Mitchell, a former Marine, never believed he was defeated. "I am in charge of my own spaceship," he said. "It's my up, my down. I could choose to see this

situation as a setback or a starting point." Six months later he was piloting a plane again.

Mitchell bought himself a Victorian home in Colorado, some real estate, a plane and a bar. Later he teamed up with two friends and co-founded a wood burning stove company that grew to be Vermont's second largest private employer.

Then four years after the motorcycle accident, the plane Mitchell was piloting crashed back onto the runway during takeoff, crushing Mitchell's 12 thoracic vertebra and permanently paralyzing him from the waist down. "I wondered what the hell was happening to me. What did I do to deserve this?"

Undaunted, Mitchell worked day and night to regain as much independence as possible. He was elected Mayor of Crested Butte, Colorado, to save the town from mineral mining that would ruin its beauty and environment. Mitchell later ran for Congress, turning his odd appearance into an asset with slogans such as, "Not just another pretty face."

Despite his initially shocking looks and physical challenges, Mitchell began white water rafting, he fell in love and married, earned a master's degree in public administration and continued flying, environmental activism and public speaking.

Mitchell's unshakable Positive Mental Attitude has earned him appearances on the "Today Show" and "Good Morning America" as well as feature articles in *Parade*, *Time*, *The New York Times* and other publications.

"Before I was paralyzed, there were 10,000 things I could do," Mitchell says. "Now there are 9,000. I can either dwell on the 1,000 I lost or focus on the 9,000 I have left. I tell people that I have had two big bumps in my life. If I have chosen not to use them as an excuse to quit, then maybe some of the experiences you are having which are pulling you back can be put

into a new perspective. You can step back, take a wider view and have a chance to say, "Maybe that isn't such a big deal after all."

Remember: "It's not what happens to you, it's what you do about it."

Jack Canfield and Mark V. Hansen

Run, Patti, Run

At a young and tender age, Patti Wilson was told by her doctor that she was an epileptic. Her father, Jim Wilson, is a morning jogger. One day she smiled through her teenage braces and said, "Daddy what I'd really love to do is run with you every day, but I'm afraid I'll have a seizure."

Her father told her, "If you do, I know how to handle it so let's start running!"

That's just what they did every day. It was a wonderful experience for them to share and there were no seizures at all while she was running. After a few weeks, she told her father, "Daddy, what I'd really love to do is break the world's long-distance running record for women."

Her father checked the *Guinness Book of World Records* and found that the farthest any woman had run was 80 miles. As a freshman in high school, Patti announced, "I'm going to run from Orange County up to San Francisco." (A distance of 400 miles.) "As a sophomore," she went on, "I'm going to run to Portland, Oregon." (Over 1,500 miles.) "As a junior I'll run to St. Louis. (About 2,000 miles.)" "As a senior I'll run to the White House." (More than 3,000 miles away.)

In view of her handicap, Patti was as ambitious as she was enthusiastic, but she said she looked at the handicap of being an epileptic as simply "an inconvenience." She focused not on what she had lost, but on what she had *left*.

That year she completed her run to San Francisco wearing a T-shirt that read, "I Love Epileptics." Her dad ran every mile at her side, and her mom, a nurse, followed in a motor home behind them in case anything went wrong.

In her sophomore year Patti's classmates got behind her. They built a giant poster that read, "Run, Patti, Run!" (This has since become her motto and the title of a book she has written.) On her second marathon, en route to Portland, she fractured a bone in her foot. A doctor told her she had to stop her run. He said, "I've got to put a cast on your ankle so that you don't sustain permanent damage."

"Doc, you don't understand," she said. "This isn't just a whim of mine, it's a magnificent obsession! I'm not just doing it for me, I'm doing it to break the chains on the brains that limit so many others. Isn't there a way I can keep running?" He gave her one option. He could wrap it in adhesive instead of putting it in a cast. He warned her that it would be incredibly painful, and he told her, "It will blister." She told the doctor to wrap it up.

She finished the run to Portland, completing her last mile with the governor of Oregon. You may have seen the headlines: "Super Runner, Patti Wilson Ends Marathon For Epilepsy On Her 17th Birthday."

After four months of almost continuous running from the West Coast to the East Coast, Patti arrived in Washington and shook the hand of the President of the United States. She told him, "I wanted people

to know that epileptics are normal human beings with normal lives."

I told this story at one of my seminars not long ago, and afterward a big teary-eyed man came up to me, stuck out his big meaty hand and said, "Mark, my name is Jim Wilson. You were talking about my daughter, Patti." Because of her noble efforts, he told me, enough money had been raised to open up 19 multi-million-dollar epileptic centers around the country.

If Patti Wilson can do so much with so little, what can you do to outperform yourself in a state of total wellness?

Mark V. Hansen