

Hello. . . This is Og Mandino.

Some memories of my long-ago childhood are still very vivid, especially when I think of that special little red-headed Irish lady who was my loving mother. She had a special dream for her son. "Someday," she would tell me, again and again, "someday you will be a writer. . . not just a writer but a great writer! "

Well. . . I bought her dream. Most kids resent having their parents plan their future but I liked the idea. A famous writer. Yes! Mother had me reading grown-up books from the library long before I entered the first grade and I was always writing short stories for her approval.

In my senior year of high school I was editor of the school paper and our plans were that in the fall I would attend the University of Missouri because we believed that they had the best journalism school in the country. And, then. . . six weeks after I graduated from high school, my mother dropped dead in our kitchen while she was making lunch for me.

I had a terrible time trying to deal with her passing. Instead of going on to college in the fall of 1940, I went to work in a paper factory and, in 1942, I joined the Army Air Corps. In 1943 I received my officer's commission and my silver wings as a bombardier. I was an "officer and a gentleman" two weeks before I could legally vote. I flew thirty bombing missions over Germany in a B-24 Liberator. Jimmy Stewart also flew in the same heavy bombardment group. . . the 445th. Nice man.

I returned to the United States, after the war had ended, and discovered quickly that there wasn't much of an employment market for bombardiers with only a high school education. After many months of unemployment checks and painful searching, I finally secured a job selling life insurance and married the lady I had been dating before I went to war.

The following ten years were a living hell. . . for me, for her, and even for the lovely daughter we had been blessed with. It seemed that no matter how many hours of the day and night I worked, struggling to sell insurance, we drifted deeper and deeper into debt and I began to do what so many frustrated individuals still do today, to hide from their problems.

On the way home, after a long day of sales calls and canvassing for business, I would stop at a barroom for a drink. After all, I deserved it, didn't I, following such a tough day? Well, soon one drink became two, two became four, four became six and finally my wife and daughter, when they could no longer endure my behavior, left me.

The following two years are no more than a hazy memory. I traveled the country in my old Ford, doing any kind of odd jobs in order to earn enough for another bottle of cheap wine and I spent countless drunken nights in gutters, a sorry wretch of a human being, in a living hell.

Then, one cold wintry morning in Cleveland, one I shall never forget, I almost took my life. I had passed the window of a dingy pawn shop and paused when I saw, inside on a shelf, a small handgun. Attached to its barrel was a yellow tag. . . \$29. I reached into my pocket and removed three ten dollar bills. . . all I had in the world and I thought. . . "There's the answer to all my problems. I'll buy that gun, get a couple of bullets and take them back to that dingy room where I'm staying. Then I'll put the bullets in the gun, put the gun to my head. . . and pull the trigger. . . and I'll never have to face that miserable failure in the mirror again."

I don't know what happened next. I joke about it now and say that I was such a spineless individual at that time that I couldn't even muster enough courage to do away with myself. In any event, I didn't buy that gun. As the snow was falling I turned away from the pawn shop and commenced walking until I eventually found myself inside a public library. It was so warm after the outside chills of November.

I began wandering among the thousands of books until I found myself standing in front of the shelves containing scores of volumes on self-help, success, and motivation. I selected several of them, went to a nearby table and commenced reading, searching for some answers. Where had I gone wrong? Could I make it with just a high school education? Was there any hope for me? What about my drinking problem? Was it too late for me? Was I doomed now to a life of frustration, failure, and tears?

That library visit was the first of many library visits I began making as I wandered across the country, searching for Og Mandino. I must have read hundreds of books dealing with success and gradually my drinking subsided. Then, in a library in Concord, New Hampshire, I discovered W. Clement Stone's great classic, *Success Through a Positive Mental Attitude*. . . and my life has never been the same since then.

I was so impressed with Stone's philosophy of success, that one must be prepared to pay a price in order to achieve any worthwhile goals, that I wanted to work for the man. His book jacket indicated that he was president of Combined

Insurance Company of America and I searched until I found a subsidiary of that company in Boston and applied for a salesman's job. At about that same time, I met a lovely lady who had a lot more faith in me than I had in myself and when Mr. Stone's insurance company hired this thirty-two year old loser, I married the lady. Bette and I have now been together for forty years.

Within a year I was promoted to sales manager in the wide-open, and cold, territory of Northern Maine. I hired several young potato farmers, taught them how to sell, applying Stone's philosophy of a positive mental attitude, and we were soon breaking company records.

Then I took a week off from work and rented a typewriter. You see, the dream of writing had never really faded from my heart. I wrote a sales manual on how one sells insurance in the rural areas, typed it as neatly as I could and sent it to Combined Insurance's home office in Chicago. . . just praying that someone there would recognize the great talent they had buried in Northern Maine.

Well, someone did! The next thing I knew, Bette and I and our new young son, Dana, were moving to Chicago, with all our possessions tied to the roof of our car and I was assigned to the sales promotion department, writing company bulletins. At last I was finally writing!

Mr. Stone also published a small book titled Success Unlimited which was circulated to all his employees and shareholders. I had been working at the home office for several months and had become a friend of Mr. Stone's when the editor of his magazine retired. I boldly applied for the position, although I knew nothing about magazine editing, and he not only gave me the job but also entrusted me with a mission.

I was to convert his publication from a house organ to a national magazine and I had a blank check from him to take all the steps that were necessary to accomplish our goal. In the following ten years our magazine staff grew from two to sixty-two and we attained a paid circulation of close to a quarter of a million!

Several months after I became the magazine's editor I realized that I needed one more article to fill the next issue that was going to press in just a few days. . . and there was nothing suitable in our files. Well, I'm a golf nut and so I went home and worked all night, writing a piece about Ben Hogan and his terrible automobile accident when they told him he would never walk again. The great man not only walked again, he won the National Open again!

I ran the article in Success Unlimited and then fate took over. A letter arrived on my desk from a New York publisher. . . the kind of letter all writers dream about receiving. He had enjoyed the Hogan article and believed I had much talent and if I ever decided to write a book his company would be interested in considering it for publication.

Eighteen months later we published a tiny book entitled [The Greatest Salesman in the World](#). Of course, since no one had ever heard of Og Mandino, the first printing was rather small, 5,000 as I remember. But here's where fate stepped in again. Rich DeVos, co-founder of Amway Corp., was addressing an Amway Convention and he told his people that there was a new book just published that he believed would help all of them, The Greatest Salesman In the World, written by a man with a funny name, he said, Og Mandino.

Rich DeVos's testimonial triggered an unbelievable number of book sales and many reprintings. When total sales reached 350,000 copies within a couple of years, Bantam Books purchased the paperback rights. . . for more money than I believed there was in the entire world. The book's sales have never abated. Even now, thirty years after initial publication, it still continues to sell more than 100,000 copies each month in paperback!

For many years now, I have received approximately 80 to 120 letters each week from grateful readers thanking me for The Greatest Salesman in the World and relating examples of how the book saved or changed the writer's life. Most amazing to me is how many of these letters are lovingly sent by individuals we would categorize as celebrities in the world of business, entertainment, and sports. I respond to all of them, of course, but I respect their privacy too much to divulge their names, ever.

What a lucky man I am!

Buy the book that has changed millions upon millions of lives.

