Foreword

The challenges that impact the health and well-being of children and adults in today’s world are colossal. As a lifelong child advocate, I am dedicated to directly addressing these issues and empowering young people to lead intentional and fulfilling lives. It has been my good fortune and honor to serve at the helm of Children’s Home Society of Washington, whose sole purpose is to create a world where all children thrive! In order for children to thrive & realize their potential they must be loved, nurtured by parents and community who are strong, resilient and able to navigate the trials, as well as the good times, of life’s journey. We all need and benefit from those who provide inspiration and meaning to our lives.

In April, 2009, I attended the annual Sweetheart’s Benefit Luncheon for Children’s Home Society of Wenatchee and met one of those inspirational leaders. The keynote speaker for this event, Jon Magnus, had recently survived a medical ordeal that nearly claimed his life. His message, which included words of wisdom from a survivor and information from a book that he was writing about positive role models, was powerful and touching. Following Jon’s presentation we agreed to remain in touch as he completed his book.
In February, 2014, Jon sent me the completed manuscript for S.H.I.N.E.—Life Lessons Revealed. It is both substantive and thought-provoking.

S.H.I.N.E.—Life Lessons Revealed challenges readers to look within by looking without. It highlights the value of listening and learning from others, of seeking inspiration from those who live authentically and of transitioning from simple observer to positive role model. Readers learn to embark upon a journey of self-discovery, to celebrate solidarity, to live with purpose, to face adversity with resilience and to experience the joy of positive thinking. S.H.I.N.E.—Life Lessons Revealed offers clear and poignant illustration that resilience and perseverance can result in amazing triumph and success despite all odds to the contrary. Jon’s keen intuition and insight have allowed him to grasp the challenge that each of us must come to grips with as we strive to be our best. His understanding and perception of one’s opportunity and challenge is captured beautifully in these fascinating and engaging biographical vignettes of very different yet, similarly courageous, outstanding individuals.

A visionary, leader and dedicated educator, Jon clearly has brought his heart and compassion to the pages of his book. For fourteen years he has invested his time and effort to help students as they prepare, together, for the future. His genuine interest in people, his love of learning and narrow brush with death give him the unique life perspective voiced in this book. I know that you will enjoy S.H.I.N.E.—Life Lessons Revealed, find practical application and be inspired to be the best that you can be—as I have.

Enjoy!

Dr. Sharon Osborne, President/CEO
Children’s Home Society of Washington
Chair, Children’s Home Society of America
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PART I

Who’s in Your Mirror?
Prologue

Shortly after midnight, the shrill beeping of a heart monitor pierced the silence of my hospital room. Nurses and doctors scurried around the bed, barking orders and moving in equipment. “What’s happening to me?” I wondered. “I am only forty-five. Why does my mind feel so disconnected from my body?”

And then I saw it: Wenatchee High School French teacher Jon Eric Magnus died at age 45. A resident of Cashmere, Washington, for the past 10 years Mr. Magnus has been teaching French and working on a book of interviews with fourteen exceptional...

My obituary scrolled through my mind like a document on a computer screen.

~

Seven weeks earlier, on September 6, 2009, classes had begun at Wenatchee High School in Eastern Washington State. During the first weeks of school, I focused on getting to know new faces and making everyone’s learning experience memorable and entertaining.
Every person is worthy of my attention. Everyone I meet teaches me something. The key is to listen and to observe.

I listen and observe daily in my role as high school French teacher. Every day students pepper me with questions or reveal hidden feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. They struggle to identify who they are and what they will become. At times, they discover that finding their place in life is an elusive goal. Yet, as students share the ups and downs of teenage life with me, I often find our roles reversed. Their insights and unadulterated wisdom, refreshingly sincere, make me stop, reflect and learn.

Over time, my interactions with people of all ages, from vastly different countries and cultures, revealed two startling truths:

1. The search for direction and a meaningful life does not end in adolescence.

Many of us have become spectators of our own existence. We wander aimlessly, burdened by a sense of helplessness and bound by others' expectations. We invest precious time and energy into simply existing and never experience the satisfaction of finding true happiness and self-fulfillment.

2. Many adults never engage in the introspection that allows them to discover who they truly are. Consequently, they never experience the joy of leading an intentional and fulfilling life.

In 2002, seven years before my brush with death, I set off on a journey to find out why. For twelve years I traveled the world to speak with and observe fourteen exceptional people who shared their secrets to successful living. Their unique experiences illuminated patterns in thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving that led them to achieve their goals. Over the years, I began to see patterns emerge—five attitudes and lessons that this diverse group shared in common.

Little did I know that the five steps they taught me would become an integral part of my own journey, the fundamental elements that helped me to reconstruct my own life.
I left the hospital with a new zest for life. Everything looked different. The remaining leaves on the trees—golden and red as they defiantly clung to the branches—were the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. Most significantly, I now understood others who had stared death in the face and lived to share these gems:

- Life is infinitely fragile.
- Become the person that you want to be now. There are no guarantees for tomorrow.
- Live intentionally.
- Do not waste a single moment.

For months following my operation I commandeered a comfortable armchair next to the wood stove in my parent’s home. I spent countless hours reflecting on my life and what I’d learned from these fourteen individuals. And I decided to finish my book.

Come along as I travel from my advanced French class in rural Wenatchee, Washington, to Paris, France; Lake Geneva, Switzerland; Budapest, Hungary, to the banks of the Mississippi River and beyond. Join in conversation as I sit in Nancy Brinker’s kitchen (Founder of Susan G. Komen for the Cure), Cheryl Brown Henderson’s historical office (Brown v. Board of Education), LPGA golfer Betsy King’s country club and CBS Broadcaster Mark McEwen’s living room—among others.

Taken together, the lives of these mentors taught me the five principles that can help each of us chart the course of our life:

- See Your Own True Potential
- Have a Heart for Others
- Identify and Meet Pressing Needs
- Navigate the Course of Change
- Expect Success

Their collective wisdom helped me survive my ordeal. They led by example and inspired me to be the best at being myself. They taught me to S.H.I.N.E.

Far too often, we must endure personal tragedy before we examine our lives and begin to live the lessons we’ve been taught. But why wait? Now is the time for action. My hope is that no matter where you’re from, where you’ve been, or where you are in your life, my story and the lessons of my fourteen mentors will inspire you to be exceptional, to be yourself, and to S.H.I.N.E.
My destiny was altered during World War II in a small French village called Poillé-sur-Vègre. At noon on July 4, 1943, my great uncle David Butcher’s plane was shot down over Nazi-occupied France. He was the only survivor. What began with an explosion at 28,000 feet became an odyssey that spanned the following six months. With the help of the French Resistance, he eventually escaped to Spain and returned to the United States, but his stories, which he shared with me as I was growing up, would greatly influence the course of my own life.

When I was seventeen, my family hosted a young French student named Jean-Louis. During a family visit with my grandparents, we took out a dusty folder filled with postwar letters and mementos and shared David Butcher’s incredible story. Moved by the events surrounding the crash and the relationships my uncle developed with those who saved him, Jean-Louis returned to France with a mission: to reconnect my family with Alfred Auduc, a well-known Resistance hero who had been responsible for my uncle’s safekeeping.
Jean-Louis completed his mission, and the rest is history. In 1984, at the age of twenty, I had the great honor of returning to France with my uncle nearly forty years after he was shot down in World War II. I was immediately adopted by the family of Alfred Auduc and began my own journey into the French language and culture, a journey that brought me great fulfillment and eventually led me to write this book.

On that trip, Alfred Auduc told me about the 650 inhabitants of the tight-knit village of Oradour-sur-Glane who were brutally murdered during a Nazi attack in 1943. In 2003 I visited the village with Katrina Seibert, a close friend who was teaching English in the city of Limoges. Katrina knew my uncle's story and my personal interest in World War II, so she planned the outing. As we drove into the parking lot of the visitor's center, I could almost taste the oppressive feeling of the disaster that had occurred there. Left untouched for decades, the destroyed homes, stores and church of Oradour-sur-Glane are a timeless monument to the terrors of war. Katrina and I hired a personal guide and began our walk through the empty streets. The silence was overpowering.

We listened carefully as our guide explained how Nazi soldiers had cloistered men and boys in barns and stuffed women and children into the church with military precision. With evil determination, they prevented any possibility of escape by posting sentries who guarded exits. When the hour of mass killing struck, the Nazi soldiers spewed volleys of bullets from their machine guns, methodically cutting down the men and boys.

Next, they set fire to the church full of people. Hundreds of women and children died. Within a few short hours, Oradour-sur-Glane became a gripping memorial to the barbaric nature of the Nazi regime and its sympathizers.

Stunned, Katrina and I walked the streets in disbelief, peering into the destroyed homes and shops of this once-bustling community. Then we entered the burned-out church. The wind was quietly blowing through the glassless window frames as the sun shimmered at odd angles through what had once been the roof. Looking down, I tried to comprehend how human beings could be so cruel and uncivilized.

“Do you know what those spots are?” our guide asked, pointing at the floor.

I stared at the strange gray blotches. They varied in size and covered most of the floor in this part of the church. I shook my head.

“This is where they found the largest pile of human ash,” he said. “What you’re looking at is the residue of melted flesh from many of the women and children who gathered in this area. They were literally incinerated by the heat of the fire and exploding grenades.” He told us that only eight people in the village survived.

I couldn’t fathom how a place of worship for seven centuries could be used for such infinite evil. On this spot, the best and worst of mankind were forever united.

The visit to Oradour-sur-Glane resonated in my mind for days. And a question haunted me: what has humanity learned from this? And, on a more personal level, what have I learned? Oradour-sur-Glane had spoken to me, and my teacher’s mind looked for ways to integrate this tragedy into my curriculum. How could I share the power of this life-altering experience with my students?

As I continued my travels through France, I thought about the handful of survivors. I wondered whether their unique and painful experiences had forced them to reassess the very basis of their existence. I wondered what their message would have been to me, and ultimately to my students. Education and knowledge are the most effective weapons in fighting ignorance and guarding against the repetition of ugly historical events. And I was sure that their wisdom would have shed much light on the subject. Though I would never have the chance to speak with them, the impact of the visit to Oradour-sur-Glane would change the course of my life.

Two days after leaving the village, I arrived in Mougins. Perched on a mountain top overlooking the Mediterranean in southern
Before I set out to find leaders and exceptional people to interview, I wanted to discover some general principles about role models. So my students and I brainstormed. Looking back now, I can see how our discussions—and the principles about learning from role models that we established—helped guide my selection of interviewees over the following years.

**General Principles of Learning from Role Models**

1. The inspirational behavior of positive role models doesn’t mean they are perfect. No one is flawless. People can still be role models with their flaws.

2. Role models can be found everywhere. You do not have to be exceptional to be a role model. The simplest, humblest people might have the innate capacity to make a lasting and positive impact on others. They might provide support in a time of need, say the right word at the right time or carry out a random act of kindness.

3. Everyone has the ability to share something positive, to be a role model to someone.

4. Learning from, or ignoring role models is a personal choice.
It was a good question. And, of course, she was partially right. It is important to learn to be independent. But there is a big difference between learning from role models and copying role models. The fundamental value in learning from role models is to learn to be the best at being ourselves. Sometimes, this means modeling our behavior after others. But more often than not—as we’ll see in the next chapter—it’s about using role models like mirrors, to reflect our true selves back to us in a way that leads to growth.

Over the years, I have come to see five other reasons to learn from role models. And as our culture becomes more and more enchanted by media-constructed celebrities, these reasons become more important than ever.

1. Seeing Values Modeled
Many people grow up in homes without adults around to model the values needed for success. And when we grow up without positive role models in our environments, some of us adopt the attitude that exceptional people are somehow superior, or even perfect. Since we know we are not perfect, we might conclude that we cannot be exceptional ourselves.

As I interviewed the fourteen people in this book, again and again I witnessed living models of the five core principles in this book. But I also observed something else. Each person I interviewed exemplified pure humility. Even with their successes and inspiring attributes, each sought to deflect praise onto others and point out the help they had received along the way.

This humility teaches us that, along with their inspiring stories and amazing work, role models are regular human beings. But their messages are far from regular. They are unwitting teachers from whom there is much to learn. When we understand that role models are both exceptional and ordinary, we can be inspired to see our own potential to become exceptional in the midst of our ordinary lives.
The Questions

The following is a list of 17 of the 24 questions I asked each of the interviewees. The other seven questions were designed to provide me with the background and personal information I used in each chapter.

Please take a few minutes to look into your own mirror by reflecting upon each of these questions.

1. Did you have a role model when you were growing up? How did that person impact your life? Do you have a role model now? Who is it and why?
2. What qualities do you admire in other people in general? Why?
3. How do you define success?
4. How does one achieve success?
5. Do individuals become exceptional by choice or by destiny?
6. Does one’s socio-economic status affect one’s ability to become exceptional?
7. For what are you best known?
8. For what would you like people to know you best?
9. Was there a particular event or moment in your life that was a turning point?
10. Did that moment or event change your perspective of yourself?
11. Have you ever been told that you cannot achieve a particular goal? How did you react? What was the outcome?
12. Have you ever wanted to give up? What motivated you to keep going? What was the outcome?
13. What has been your greatest challenge in life?
14. Do you have a motto or a life philosophy that you live by?
15. What is the most serious problem facing society (worldwide) today? How would you encourage people to confront this problem?
16. What is your vision of the future?
17. Looking back on your life, what would you spend more time doing?

PART II

(S) – See Your Own True Potential

(H) – Have a Heart for Others

(I) – Identify and Meet Pressing Needs

(N) – Navigate the Course of Change

(E) – Expect Success
Seeing Your Own True Potential

Seeing your own true potential is the foundational principle of S.H.I.N.E. The ability to see yourself clearly—including both your gifts and your limitations—is a trait that appeared again and again as I traveled the world and interviewed these fourteen extraordinary people. S.H.I.N.E. is not simply about convincing you that you can do anything you dream of, though often you can. It’s about honesty with yourself—seeing yourself as you actually are. Sometimes it can be uncomfortable to see yourself clearly, but on the other side of that discomfort is the potential for change.

To illustrate the principle of seeing your own true potential, I chose three men who each personify this trait in different ways.

In the life of Alexandre Jollien we find a wonderful lesson about the difference between perception and reality. Alexandre is a Swiss writer and philosopher plagued from birth by athetosis, a condition marked by slow, writhing, involuntary muscle movements. His whole life, many looked upon him as a man incapable of doing anything. Some laughed at him and pitied him as his arms and legs flailed uncontrollably as he walked down the street. But he never allowed
A friend from Switzerland suggested that I interview Alexandre Jollien, a young philosopher who is not yet well-known in the United States. In one of our frequent telephone conversations, she told me the story of this exceptional young man and his recently-published book.

Alexandre had risen above the challenges of physical handicap and occasional inhumane treatment from others who didn’t understand his condition. He promoted a message of self-discovery and love and would be a perfect fit for my book. My friend contacted Alexandre for me and was able to nail down a date and time when we could meet in a small village along the banks of Lake Geneva, Switzerland.

The night before the interview, though tired from the long trans-Atlantic flight, I was unable to sleep. Rattled awake by the alarm clock and fuzzy from a lack of slumber, I learned a valuable lesson: to be in shape for future interviews I’d need to be well-rested.

I hopped a train from downtown Geneva, made it to our meeting at the appointed hour and waited for Alexandre to arrive. In little time, I saw him making his way up the street. He was indeed eye catching, but it wasn’t his unusual way of walking that grabbed my attention. Though other’s perception to limit his own view of his true potential. And he never allowed his physical limitations to dampen his brilliant mind. With help from a loving Catholic priest, Alexandre saw past the reflection in the mirror, saw his own potential, and lived it.

Champion adventure racer Ray Zahab teaches us another lesson about our own potential: that as we strive to reach it we are often our own worst enemy. By overcoming a self-destructive lifestyle to become an elite endurance athlete, Ray discovered that our deepest limitations are often self-imposed. Being honest with himself was the key. Once Ray saw himself and his own actions clearly and honestly, he was able to change them. And once he changed his view of himself, his true potential was able to emerge.

Like Alexandre Jollien, Daniel Kish faced a true physical limitation. Blinded by a rare form of cancer at age fourteen months, Daniel learned to walk and even ride bikes by using echolocation, a technique that allows the blind to “see” by using sound. Refusing to let others define who he was, he strove to live the most normal life he could, and to help other blind people do the same.

Meeting with these three exceptional men inspired me as I worked to overcome my own medical ordeal. They taught me that accepting the limitations that do exist can be as important as seeing through the limitations that don’t exist. May these three men’s stories inspire you to look inside, see your true potential, and live it.
his movement was unique—a symphony of rotating and gyrating forward steps—what I noticed first was his contagious smile as he reached out to shake my hand. Immediately drawn to this perfect stranger, I knew that my friend had been right about him.

After lunch together, we walked to a nearby park and sat on a bench with an amazing view of the lake. I listened as Alexandre answered my questions. Indeed a philosopher, his responses were clearly the product of a brilliant mind. Following the interview, we walked to the nearest bus stop. While waiting there, I caught a sobering glimpse into the personal life of this incredible man. Two young boys giggled and pointed as they walked past, shocking me with their callous behavior. Then, a few moments later a woman approached us, shook Alexandre’s hand, and thanked him profusely for his contribution to spreading the message of love and tolerance.

The bus arrived and off he went, but not before having changed my life in the short time we spent together. His life is a shining example of how, by recognizing our own true potential, we can excel beyond the limits others might set for us.

Prenatal-acrobatics are generally considered the sign of a healthy baby, but at times they can cause devastatingly permanent damage, as was the case for Alexandre Jollien. While he was twisting and turning within his mother’s womb, the umbilical cord wrapped around his neck and choked off the vital flow of oxygen. Black and blue at birth—silent but still alive—doctors feared the worst. They rushed him away to receive immediate medical attention, the first of many separations from mother and family that would come to dominate the first two decades of his life.

A victim of athetosis—a condition marked by slow, writhing, involuntary muscle movements—Alexandre didn’t experience a normal childhood. As other infants took their first, tottering steps, Alexandre could not walk. As they progressed from simple words to basic sentences and experimented with sounds and symbols, Alexandre struggled to speak. Locked inside a body over which he seemed to have little control, every movement was belabored and every word slurred. And because of his condition, there was no developmental time frame.

Despite the encouragement and interest of loving parents, physical or verbal progress came only through monumental effort. Painfully aware that their son would never fully thrive at home, Alexandre’s parents sought the help of an institution for those with special needs.

At the age of three, Alexandre entered the Institut Notre Dame de Lourdes in Sierre, Switzerland. There he began a routine that would control his life for the next seventeen years. Sunday night he arrived at the center for classes and therapy that lasted through Friday. Every weekend he celebrated a joyous reunion in the family home before beginning another week. Though saddened by these weekly separations, he soon became accustomed to life at the institute, quickly making friends with other students.

The other students faced a myriad of physical challenges, but were firmly united by one goal: progress. Not confined by social expectations or the slightest notion of competition, they basked in the smallest success of others as each faced the task at hand. Never measured in leaps and bounds, these little victories were at times the result of weeks or months of steady and consistent effort. Basic skills, so utterly taken for granted by the overwhelming majority of the population, were often overpowering hurdles only dismantled through vigorous therapy and repetitive training.

Alexandre persevered with dogged determination while struggling to gain control over his unruly body. Learning to maneuver a fork and knife “without slitting his neighbor’s throat” was of primary importance. As was learning to walk after crawling for years to get where he wanted to go. A lengthy process, he would first need to strengthen his legs in order to stand, keep his balance once on his feet and maintain an iron-like grip on the handles of a walker. Only then did he experience the freedom of movement in an upright position.
Was there a turning point in your life?
Turning points have come through seeing friends, talking with them, sharing my problems, seeing what they would do in my situation and listening to their advice. We don’t have to follow the advice of others, but it’s beneficial to ask. Also, meeting Father Morand, who helped me to understand that by gaining an understanding of culture I could live better.

Did that experience change your self perception?
Yes, Father Morand showed me that the objective was not exterior, not an outside social success, but inward success. In other words, the ability to be happy on all occasions. Strangely enough, it was by targeting spiritual objectives that I reached professional goals.

Have you ever wanted to give up?
No! Never! I was lucky to be perseverant. When convinced of my goal, I’ve always had the willpower to pursue it. This will, combined with daily progress, helped me to believe in future success.

What has been your biggest challenge in life?
To live happily every day and not live in sadness and pain. The hardest thing is just daily life. We might be strong at one point in time, but maintaining that strength every day is one of the most beautiful things we can do.

Do you have a life philosophy by which you live?
Yes. Epicurus told us to live every day as it were the last and the first. In other words, be thankful to be in the world today and truly present in life. This is my motto, to increasingly enjoy every moment in the present.

In your opinion, what is the most serious problem facing society today?
War and violence. Trying to make a profit at all costs to the detriment of others. Violence and the lack of respect for others are the most serious challenges, though they have existed since the beginning of time.

What is your vision of the future?
The future? I hope we will return to traditional values. Fraternity. Brotherhood, and the wisdom that we can develop in ourselves.

Looking back on your life, what would you spend more time doing?
To spread goodness around me and to be more present. This, in addition to being more capable of helping others. However, in order to help others one must first help oneself. It’s easy to lose time worrying over things of no value.
There are thousands of miles between Munich, Germany and Nancy Brinker’s kitchen in Georgetown, Washington D.C. But these two locations became inextricably linked for me through a series of events I could not possibly have orchestrated. The experience was direct confirmation that sometimes it’s better to sit back and let life happen than to try to choreograph each step of the way.

One summer I rented an apartment in Budapest, Hungary in order to write without the distractions that come with being at home. I flew from Seattle to Munich and my plane arrived during the last few minutes of the World Cup game between Germany and Argentina. As was the case in many German cities, fans were crowded around large screens in public areas such as the plaza that separates the airport from the underground train station. The tension was palpable as I wound my way through the excited supporters and into the subway car. Germany won the game just as the doors slammed shut, and the crowd erupted into an earsplitting cheer that slowly faded as the train eased its way into the tunnel. It was an auspicious beginning for this month abroad, clearly setting the tone for what was to come.
The following morning I stamped my Eurail pass and boarded the train from Munich to Budapest. Shortly after settling into the compartment I was joined by a friendly couple from Texas, David and Jessica. Before the train had even left the station, we began swapping stories about our travels and future destinations. Our conversation gradually became one of those great philosophical interactions that, for some reason, are so easy to have with perfect strangers on trains and planes. We discussed everything from public education, to the importance of learning about other cultures, to the upcoming birth of their child. Though Budapest was not on their original itinerary, I extended an invitation to come visit me in one of my favorite cities in the world.

They decided to change plans and come to Budapest, and two days later David and Jessica arrived at the Kelati station. That evening, we took a taxi to the Four Seasons Hotel, located in a spectacular art nouveau palace overlooking the Danube River. There we met Martina, a friend of David and Jessica, who informed us that a car would soon be there to pick us up. It was not just any car. This car was from the American Embassy, and the chauffeur was a friendly Hungarian who gave us a guided tour as we made our way across the city to a restaurant.

After being seated and ordering a dish of local goulash, Martina asked me what I was doing in Budapest. I told her about my book and shared stories of some of the individuals I’d recently interviewed. She listened intently, then said, “I think you need to meet the person I’m traveling with. Her name is Nancy Brinker and she’s the former U.S. Ambassador to Hungary. More importantly, she’s the founder of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. She’s done amazing things to promote breast cancer awareness, and I think she’s an ideal candidate for your project.” After listening to her comments, it all began to make sense. Meeting David and Jessica on the train in Germany and inviting perfect strangers into my apartment was no coincidence.

Four months later, I was sitting in the kitchen of Nancy Brinker’s Georgetown apartment in Washington D.C.

Airports are like theater stages. The arrivals and departures of automobiles, taxis, shuttles and airplanes provide a constant ballet for those who pause to watch. Quiet terminals are pierced with outbursts of joy as passengers step off planes into the arms of loved ones too long separated by countless miles. For some, there’s a feeling of excitement in the air for a long-anticipated expedition to an unknown land. For others, there is dread over a flight that brings an end to the perfect vacation. Airports are also a place of separation. At times, these busy arenas set the stage for a painful farewell, the sting of which can be recalled for years.

Such was the case one busy afternoon at an airport near Peoria, Illinois. That day, Nancy Brinker said goodbye to her only sister, Susan G. Komen, and hurriedly made her way to the terminal entrance. These bi-weekly separations were getting progressively harder since Susan was in the final stages of a valiant but losing battle with breast cancer. They were both well-aware that this could be the last time they saw each other. Despite her frail and diminished condition, Susan mustered the strength to open the car door and step out. She called out to Nancy in a voice weakened by illness, and uttered those three words so often difficult to say: “I love you.” Nancy ran back and threw her arms around her sister. It was the last time.

Nancy and Susan were not only sisters. They were inseparable friends. They grew up together in the love and support of the Goodman home, and their parents instilled in them the fundamental values of their Jewish faith. Both acquired the principles of stewardship and hard-work by observing their mother and father, and both had grown to understand the importance of serving community through selfless action. Although these lessons would ultimately form the women that Nancy and Susan became, as children they had not always been quite so ready to learn.

Shortly after World War II, on a hot and muggy summer day, the girls and their mother were riding along in the family station wagon.
It was Saturday, and Nancy and Susan had one thing on their minds: a swim at the lake with their friends. But they were not headed to the lake. Rather, they were en route to a community service event at which they were to donate a few hours of time to help someone in need. Their minds were filled with thoughts of cooling off in the lake, and they repeatedly badgered their mother to let them go swimming.

Their whining and carrying on was stopped cold by the sound of squealing tires as Mrs. Goodman slammed on the brakes. The car screeched to a halt. Pulling over to the side of road, Mrs. Goodman instructed her daughters to get out of the car. “Girls,” she said as she waggled her finger in their direction, “let me tell you something. People have died defending our country. All I’m asking you to do is to fix what’s wrong. That’s what you do in a democracy. Don’t expect your best friend to do it. Don’t expect your government to do it. Don’t expect your teacher to do it. It’s up to you girls to be the stewards of our country and our community. This I expect you to do and I’m not getting back into that car until you tell me that you understand the importance of what I’m saying.”

Susan nudged Nancy and told her to say “yes.” It was only then they were allowed to get back into the car. Though Nancy was only five years old at the time, she’d clearly received the message. She knew that she and Susan must do something to help others, but she wasn’t sure what exactly she should do.

Later that evening, Susan came bounding into her room and jumped up onto her bed. She had come up with a great idea, a way of being the steward about which their mother had spoken. They would select a cause, then put together an evening of song and dance in the back yard. Susan could sell tickets and Nancy would be the performer. They’d use their God-given talents to entertain for the purpose of charity. After ample reflection, they decided to support the Polio Society because they had many little friends afflicted by this disease.

Susan began selling tickets, dutifully explaining the cause with zeal and sincerity. Her purpose and dedication paid off. She sold sixty-four tickets to her sixty-four neighbors. The night of the presentation arrived and Nancy sang and danced her heart out, convinced she’d put on a masterful performance. After everyone had gone home, Susan, in the sweet and tactful manner she’d always had, said “You know what Nan? Next time I’ll sing and dance, and you sell tickets!” That was Nancy Brinker’s first experience at fund raising. That is how she learned to become a steward in the service of others.

Though their lives would lead them in different directions and even to different states, Susan G. Komen and Nancy Brinker would only grow closer over the years. While Nancy went to Texas to launch a career in marketing and public relations, Susan chose to stay in the Midwest and start a family. She married Stan Komen and they adopted two children.

In addition to time spent together at family events and during vacations, Nancy and Susan spoke daily on the phone. It was during one of these conversations in 1977 that Susan shared some devastating news. She had discovered a lump in her breast and was terribly concerned. Their family was no stranger to breast cancer. A great aunt had survived the disease by undergoing a radical mastectomy that left her chest a mass of scar tissue, skin and bones. Though Nancy had always championed this aunt as a brave survivor, Susan had struggled with the perception that she’d somehow been transformed into less of a person.

Breast cancer treatment options were limited in the late 1970s and medicine tended to be physician-centered rather than patient-centered. There were no support networks, organizations, or Internet resources from which to derive information. Cancer treatment was difficult to obtain unless a treating physician referred patients to a cancer center, and doctors were not always keen on sending their patients to see other physicians. Though there was general awareness of the existence of breast cancer, it was an uncomfortable subject that was not often discussed in public forums.

Susan G. Komen based her treatment selection on the advice of a surgeon who was recommended by the family doctor, initially opting
PART IV

(S) – See Your Own True Potential
(H) – Have a Heart for Others
(I) – Identify and Meet Pressing Needs
(N) – Navigate the Course of Change
(E) – Expect Success
Every project or goal requires meeting many individual needs along the way. Identifying and meeting pressing needs means getting clear with ourselves about these needs. It means figuring out which are fleeting desires or temporary distractions and which are real needs.

And just as every project and goal has needs, every person has needs. But how many of what we think of as “life needs” are truly needs? In the wider view, identifying and meeting pressing needs is about seeing what is truly important in life and shifting our energy and attention onto those things.

The fourteen exceptional people in this book all have the ability to determine what is truly important. By eliminating small distractions and momentary desires, they operate more efficiently and more effectively. And by seeing the true needs in life, they allow themselves to live their own true potential.

Roberta Krause, a retired Washington state teacher, lived her whole life as an educator. But after narrowly escaping Ground Zero on the morning of 9/11, her life came to a grinding halt. After that
morning Roberta was forced to reexamine her priorities. And in her story we see that sometimes being confronted by a tragedy teaches us to set aside all but the most pressing needs. She now teaches others to do the same, offering an inspirational message to focus on what is truly necessary.

Doctor Leland Hartwell, a Nobel Prize winning scientist who leads teams making major breakthroughs in cancer research, brought his inquisitive mind to the world of science. Moving methodically from problem to problem, question to question, he learned that major results can come from a series of small efforts that each meet the next pressing need. By following his own inquisitive mind tirelessly, he helped countless others, even though that wasn’t his stated goal.

Cheryl Brown Henderson inherited the legacy of one of the most famous cases in American history. In *Brown v. Board of Education*, the United States Supreme Court ordered the final desegregation of the U.S. School system. As the plaintiff named in the case, her father, Oliver Brown, became the face of desegregation in America. But there was much more to the story than most people knew. Cheryl dedicated herself to correcting the record about this landmark case, and doing it publicly. Her story invites us to recognize that truth is a universal need.

In these three exceptional life stories, we see shining examples from three very different people. Though they come from different backgrounds, they share an ability to recognize what is truly needed in the context of their own lives. They show us that by working to identify and meet the true needs, we can accomplish exceptional achievements.

*Peaches in the Clouds. This delectable creation, a mélange of peaches, whipped cream and saltine crackers, tantalized my thirteen-year old palate. A strange mixture indeed, it was the perfect recipe for my entry into Mrs. Krause’s class cookbook. Who was Mrs. Krause? She was the fearless leader of the only Bachelor Survival course taught at Hyak Junior High School when I attended. In my young mind, she became the authority on all matters relating to home economics for boys. Her courage facing a class full of developing male adolescents created one of my most memorable classroom experiences. Little did I know that some twenty-five years later I would still be using some of the tips she taught on how to survive bachelorhood.

Looking back on her teaching style, I find myself using some of the very techniques Mrs. Krause modeled. In her class, every day was different and learning experiences were designed to leave no time for boredom. Her sense of humor was contagious, and laughter was common in class. For example, when discussing teenage pregnancy she revealed that the most reliable form of birth control was common aspirin. This came as a great surprise, but she clarified by explaining that the small white pill needed to be held between the girl’s knees at all times.*
I hadn’t seen Mrs. Krause in twenty-five years. One spring morning, while teaching third period at Wenatchee High School, the phone rang in my classroom. Susanne Sortor, my sister, was on the line. “You’ll never guess who is in town,” she exclaimed. I hadn’t the slightest idea. “Mrs. Krause.” I asked whether it was “The Mrs. Krause” or just “a Mrs. Krause.” “Oh no,” she answered. “It is Roberta Krause, the one and only.”

I asked what Mrs. Krause could possibly be doing in Wenatchee, three hours away from where we’d grown up and gone to school. “She’s speaking at a fundraiser for Children’s Home Society,” Susanne replied. “She survived September 11.”

I drove to the convention center on my lunch break and, amid the groups of individuals mingling before the presentation, I spotted her on the other side of the room. I approached her table and introduced myself. Much to my surprise, she remembered me well, even asking by name how my mother was doing. We had little time to catch up because the presentation was about to begin, but she quickly explained how September 11 had changed her life.

Sure that I could learn even more from this teacher who’d already taught me so much, I asked for an interview. Several weeks later we sat around her dining room table where she told me her chilling and thought-provoking story.

Roberta Krause looked forward to the day ahead. She and her older sister, Jane, would begin with a 10k walk, do some shopping and then finish up their brief stay in New York City at the opera. The trip was similar to other vacations they’d spent together over the years. Jane, an economist for Security Benefit Life, was often invited to participate in conferences around the country, and the locations of these gatherings were far more exotic than the educational symposia Roberta attended. They were staged in cities with exciting nicknames: the Windy City, the City by the Bay or the Big Apple. Together, they’d purchase extra days at the end of the conference and use the time to explore the culture and daily life of the cities. In May, 2001, Roberta received a call from Jane.

“I have one more conference before I retire,” she said. “It will be held in New York City in September.”

“Oh man, autumn in New York City,” Roberta replied. “That’s fabulous. Of course I can make it.”

The next words Jane uttered would be more than prophetic. “We’ll be staying at the Marriot World Trade Center Hotel. We’ll be right in the middle of things.”

Roberta arrived at John F. Kennedy International airport on the evening of September 9th, but was dismayed to find herself “stuck” in a terrible traffic jam caused by Michael Jackson’s return concert at Madison Square Garden. During the three-hour commute, she did her best to bide the time by taking in the sights along the way to the hotel.

The Marriot World Trade Center Hotel, a 22-floor structure, was situated exactly between the Twin Towers, its lobby sharing a common entryway with elevators to Tower 1. The actual structure of the Marriot was dwarfed by these two 110-story buildings that consisted of 200,000 tons of steel, 425,000 cubic yards of concrete and 43,000 windows. Tower 1 was crowned with a 360-foot television antenna, a spire that reached into the sky above the city.

After checking into their 16th-floor room, the adventure began as the sisters, both avid walkers, discovered the city on foot. They dined in fine restaurants, attended a Broadway production and completed a 10k Volkswalk down and around the end of Manhattan Island. Jane’s business interests led them to Wall Street where they rubbed the nose of the famous bull statue, a ritual that supposedly brings good luck. While Jane attended her conference on Monday, Roberta did some shopping. The two looked forward to the following morning, September 11th, when they planned to take one last walk before returning home.
About the Author

Jon Eric Magnus is an award-winning high school teacher and adjunct professor at the University of Washington. He has traveled through twenty-five countries and speaks English, French, Spanish and conversational German. He spent eight years in Europe where he worked as a translator and interpreter for Virgin France and the Observatoire Français des Drogues et des Toxicomanies (French Observatory of Drugs and Drug Addiction).

In 2003, Jon received the Heart of the Panther award for excellence in teaching and is recognized as an Educator of Excellence by Washington State University. In 2013, the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center/Fiestas Mexicanas named him “Humanitarian Extraordinaire” for his work in service of others. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies from the University of Washington and a Master of Arts degree in Education from Central Washington University. He currently resides in Cashmere, Washington.