

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF READING IN MY LIFE

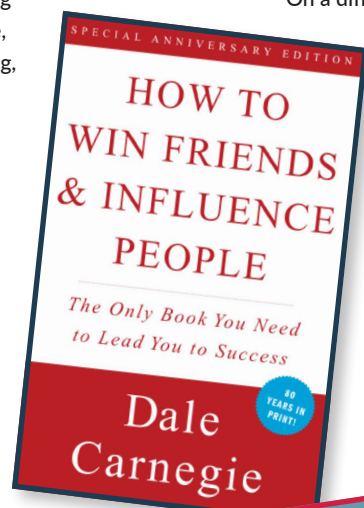
And the 4 Books That Impacted Me

March 2 marks Read Across America Day, celebrating the joy of reading. Reading has always been with me, shaping my perspective, improving my understanding, and giving me moments of pure joy.

When I was a kid, I loved reading comic books, and I used to collect soda bottles to earn money and buy more to read. I grew up in a small town in Missouri (Joplin), and we had just one public library. I spent a lot of time there reading books by Alfred Hitchcock, the Hardy Boys, Jack London, and other authors who wrote adventure-type stories, taking me to far-off places in my mind. Reading these books sparked my love for literature, which has stayed with me ever since.

One book that has significantly impacted my life is Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People." In 1971, at 12 years old, I stumbled across my dad's 35-cent paperback copy that I read and underlined over and over. This timeless guide to effective communication helped me overcome my shyness and taught me the importance of listening, making me a better conversationalist.

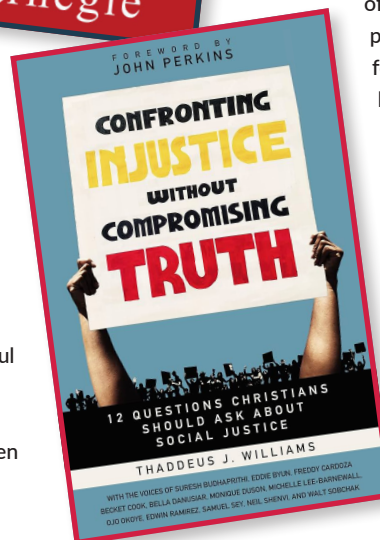
Shortly after, James Michener's book "Centennial" fascinated me with the art of historical novels. Written to commemorate the United States Bicentennial in 1976, the complex plot and beautiful imagery, spanning centuries and linking the land's development with its inhabitants' lives, kept me spellbound. At 909 pages, it was probably one of the longest books I'd read to that point. When I finished, I promised to introduce this literary masterpiece to my children, hoping they would cherish its beauty as much as I did.



On a different track, Brennan Manning's "The Ragamuffin Gospel" introduced me to God's grace. I grew up Catholic and had heard lots about "the rules." Manning's insights about God's acceptance resonated deeply. It was a transformative read that introduced me to the freedom of embracing imperfections and finding solace in God's unconditional love.

More recently, Thaddeus Williams' "Confronting Injustice Without Compromising Truth" opened my eyes to the complexities of social justice. The book digs into the tension between biblical social justice and contemporary cultural interpretations. The differences are profound.

This is a short list of books I can recall now, but many more have touched me throughout my life. Books are more than just sources of information; they offer windows into diverse perspectives, challenges to my thinking, and avenues for continuous learning. They remind me how much I have to learn.



The magic of reading is that it's a journey of discovery that helps us broaden our knowledge and discover new perspectives. So, as we celebrate Read Across America Day, I urge everyone to embrace the transformative power of books and pick one up this month if you aren't already reading something. Whether it's "Harry Bosch" or "Harry Potter," Stephen King or Agatha Christie, they have changed my life in profound and beautiful ways, and can do the same for you!

-Jim Monast

3 FURRY HEROES

JACK, TOGO, AND BANDIT WENT ABOVE AND BEYOND

Sometimes, heroes come sans cape but with fur, paws, and a keen sense of smell. We've heard the stories of police dogs, bomb-sniffing dogs, and the German shepherd Trakr, who found the last survivor on 9/11. But even untrained pets and strays can be heroic.

Meet Jack, a stray dog in New York City known for scavenging through dumpsters. One early morning, his routine search for food took a life-saving turn. Behind one of these dumpsters was a baby, wrapped in a blanket, vulnerable and alone. Instinctively and with remarkable gentleness, Jack picked up the baby in the blanket with his teeth. Whether guided by fate, an extraordinary sense of purpose, or just because it was the closest open business, Jack took the baby to the hospital. The nurses tried to shoo him away when he first ran through the sliding doors. One nurse, noticing the bundle in the dog's mouth, was able to get close enough to retrieve the baby. Thanks to Jack, the baby received life-saving medical attention.

In the 1920s, the remote town of Nome, Alaska, grappled with a deadly diphtheria epidemic. Children were dying, and the icebound city was inaccessible by plane or boat in the winter. The only way to deliver the needed antitoxins was by dog sled on the Iditarod Trail. Balto, a Siberian



husky, received most of the fame, but Togo, another husky, led the team across the most treacherous part of the journey. These dogs delivered life-saving medicine in time and saved many of Nome's children.

Cats can be heroes, too, as proved by a calico cat who lived up to his name in the most unexpected way. One night in Mississippi, intruders were trying to break into a home. The house cat, Bandit, sensed the danger and sprang into action. The cat's relentless scratching and tugging at its owner's blanket finally woke him. Then Bandit led his human downstairs to discover the attempted break-in, which also scared away the intruders. Bandit proved that size and species don't matter in heroism.

In moments of crisis, these four-legged heroes rose to the occasion, not for glory or reward but out of pure love and loyalty. They are potent reminders of the courage and selflessness that animals are capable of.

Client Story: Jesus Sandoval

We are blessed to represent people who've moved to the U.S. from all over the world: Vietnam, Morocco, Canada, Nepal, India ... even That State Up North! They all have fascinating stories of moving here for better work and better lives. America is still a land of opportunity.

We have several folks from South America and Mexico, including Jesus Sandoval. Jesus



came to us in 2016 after suffering two injuries at a large grocery chain headquartered in Pennsylvania named after a large national bird (C'mon, you can guess!).

Jesus moved from Mexico as a young man with training as a chef. He did lots of catering events for the grocery chain and worked a second job at Sears. In 2013, working as a sous-chef, he was running a tray of six plates of food when a customer thought it might be funny to trip him. (I wouldn't be surprised if the customer was influenced by his friend, "Al K. Hall.") The result was no laughing matter. Jesus twisted and reached out, trying to maintain balance of the tray, and herniated discs in his lower back.

He originally tried handling the claim with a union representative, but the company fought his claim and treatment hard, so he called us. Under the care of an Ohio State neurosurgeon, Jesus underwent epidural injections, lots of therapy, and ultimately, a fusion involving several levels of his lower back. Years after surgery, he still wears a back brace and has

constant pain in his leg and foot, back spasms, and tingling in his toes.

While being treated for his back, Jesus was promoted to running the seafood department of one of the chain's new, trendy, premier locations. In 2016, he was coming out of the cooler, getting something to help a customer, when he fell on the wet floor with an outstretched left arm. He tore the three tendons comprising his rotator cuff and was called back to do one-armed work at the store! Not long after, he had surgery for the tear. While he was off, the department revenue dropped 40%; obviously, his customers really missed him!

While he still requires treatment for both injuries and lives with considerable pain, his upbeat attitude and quick smile make him a favorite with customers and coworkers. He is now the chef for Torchy's Taco franchise in Columbus, Ohio. He's a man who doesn't let his injuries get him down — he just keeps on going, like the Energizer bunny. We are fortunate to know him, and talking with him always brightens our day!

THE RISING TIDE OF COURAGE

6 YOUNG FRIENDS RESCUE STRANDED BEACHGOERS

On Nov. 18, 2023, a group of six friends, aged between 12 and 15, found themselves in a harrowing situation on Kiama Beach in New South Wales, Australia. While boogie boarding, they saw a sudden emergency unfolding just 20 minutes after all lifeguards at the beach completed their shift for the day.



their actions as necessary, stating, "We just had to do what we could."

During the rescue, George encountered an 8- or 9-year-old named Matt, who was submerged underwater. "By the time I got to him, he was completely underwater, just his hand above the surface

of the water, so I was pretty worried," said George. They saved all six individuals, showcasing their incredible courage and skill in the face of danger.

This incident showcased the critical role played by these young lifesavers, highlighting their dedication and quick thinking. The group's ability to act promptly and effectively, even without professional lifeguards, underscored the importance of their training. Their heroic efforts on that November day not only averted a potential tragedy but also emphasized the invaluable contribution of young individuals in ensuring the safety of beachgoers. Great work, boys!



A rip current had swept six individuals, a mom with her three children and two young women, hundreds of feet out to sea. With no other help in sight, Max Laird, Braith Davidson, George Griffin, Harrison Smea, Alex Norris, and Zach Marsden, who were members of the Kiama Surf Life Saving Club and all under the age of 16, became the sole hope for a rescue.

The group, led by 15-year-old Harrison, used their boogie boards to navigate the violent waters and bring everyone back to dry land. Despite the shocking nature of the event, George described

SUDOKU

	8				4	9		
	7		9			8		
5		3						
	1			3		4		8
3				2				6
8		4		7			3	
						3		9
		8			7		2	
		6	8				5	

6	8	2	3	1	4	9	7	5
4	7	1	9	5	2	8	6	3
5	9	3	7	8	6	2	4	1
2	1	7	6	3	5	4	9	8
3	5	9	4	2	8	7	1	6
8	6	4	1	7	9	5	3	2
7	4	5	2	6	1	3	8	9
1	9	8	5	9	7	6	2	4
9	2	6	8	4	3	1	5	7

ANSWER



MUNCHIES WITH MOLLY CHIPOTLE-INSPIRED CHICKEN BURRITO BOWL

Inspired by [EasyChickenRecipes.com](https://www.EasyChickenRecipes.com)

INGREDIENTS

- 2 boneless chicken breasts
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1/2 tsp chili pepper
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 1 cup white or brown rice, cooked
- 2 cups shredded romaine lettuce
- 1 cup canned corn
- 1 cup canned black beans
- 1 avocado, cubed
- 1/4 cup sour cream
- 1/4 cup shredded cheese

For Salsa

- 1 tbsp chopped cilantro
- 1/2 tomato, chopped
- 1/2 onion, chopped
- 2 tbsp white vinegar
- 4 tbsp lime juice
- Salt, to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. Cut chicken into bite-size pieces. In a medium-size bowl, add chicken, olive oil, paprika, cumin, chili pepper, salt, and pepper. Mix until chicken is evenly coated.
2. In a skillet over medium heat, cook chicken for 7 minutes or until cooked through. Set aside on a plate.
3. In a large bowl, layer the rice, lettuce, corn, beans, and cooked chicken.
4. In a separate bowl, mix together salsa ingredients, then pour over the chicken mixture.
5. Top with avocado, sour cream, and cheddar cheese. Enjoy!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1** My Journey Through Books on 'Read Across America Day'
- 2** 3 Pet Hero Stories

Client Success Story
- 3** The Incredible Rescue Mission at Kiama Beach

Chipotle-Inspired Chicken Burrito Bowl
- 4** Time Travel With Us!

SOME OF HISTORY'S QUIRKIEST MOMENTS

Grab your time travel hats! We are peeling back the layers of the past to reveal a few stories you won't find in the history books, though history class would have been much more fun if they were!

WHEN STILLNESS CREATED HISTORY

Imagine a bustling Parisian street filled with life and activity. A photographer is there, about to take the first known photograph of a person. But the only person still enough to photograph was a man getting his shoes shined — the exposure time then was several hours, almost a whole day's work! So, the shoe-shining duo became unexpected celebrities in history as the subject of the first known photograph of humans in 1838.

A WHISTLE STOP FOR WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS

When trains first thundered across the American landscape, some women wouldn't ride them — a bizarre myth emerged claiming that traveling at speeds of 50 mph would cause their uteruses to fly out of their bodies! Thankfully, at least two women saw past the strange notion to propose genuine improvements in the iron horses. In 1870, Eliza Murfey held 16 patents for

her inventions to improve how bearings on train car wheels responded to their axles. In 1879, Mary Elizabeth Walton held two patents for reducing smokestack emissions.

TALE OF THE TALLEST BUILDINGS

The Great Pyramid of Giza is the oldest and last remaining of the original seven wonders of the world. For 4,000 years, this architectural marvel was the tallest building in the world. But all reigns must end, and in 1311, the Lincoln Cathedral in England claimed the crown. It was the tallest building for 237 years until its spire collapsed in 1548. However, it was still the tallest building ever built until the Ulm Minster in Germany set a new record in 1890 — it's still the tallest church in the world.



SHORTS SHOOK THE WORLD

In the sizzling summer of 1937, something extraordinary happened on the streets of Toronto that changed fashion forever. Two daring women went out in public wearing shorts. Yes, shorts! The sight was so unusual that it drew overwhelming attention and even caused a car wreck! While this moment caused quite a stir, it wasn't until after World War II that shorts gained popularity.