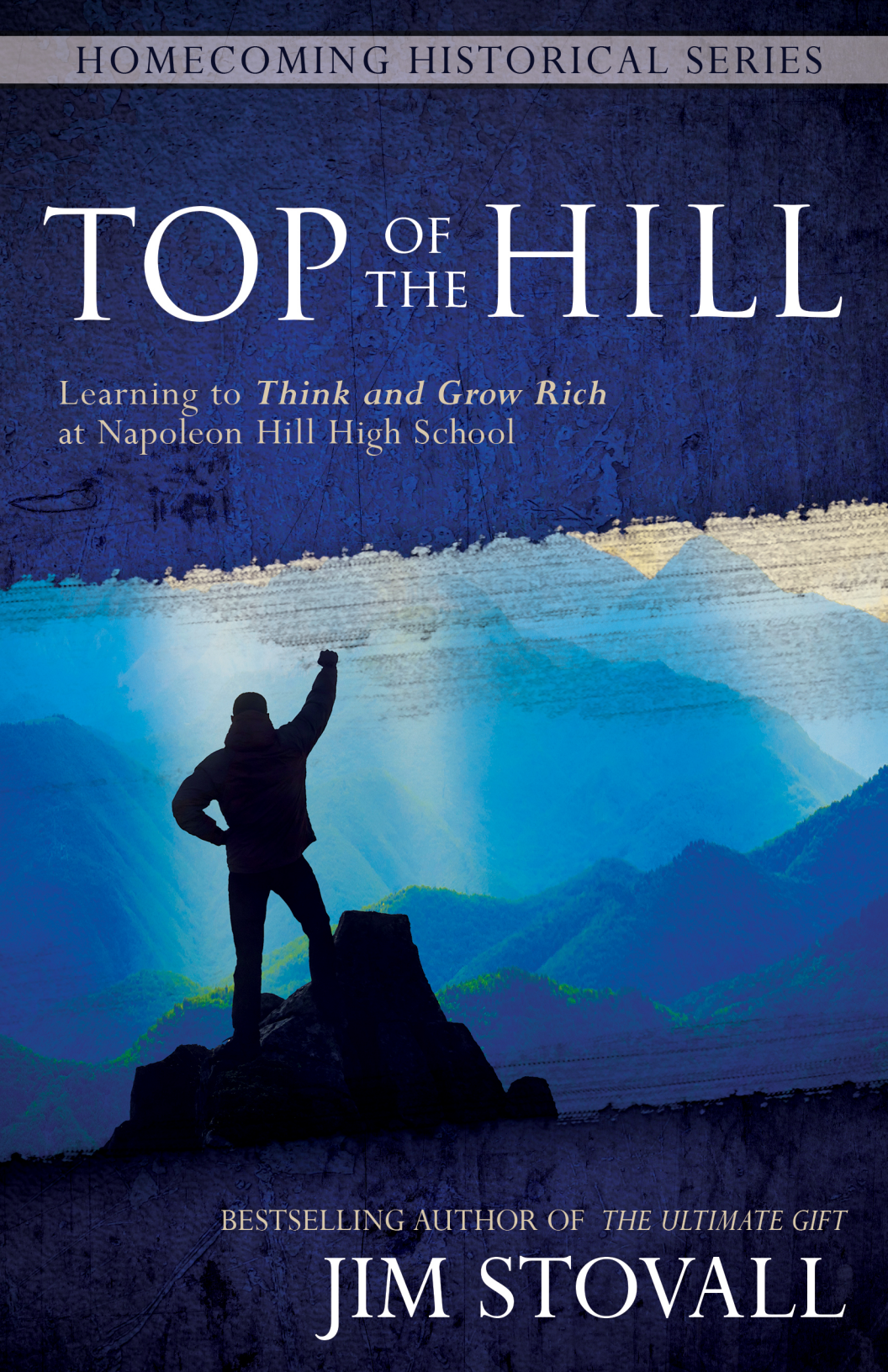
HOMECOMING HISTORICAL SERIES

TOP OF THE HILL

Learning to ***Think and Grow Rich*** at Napoleon Hill High School



BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE ULTIMATE GIFT*

JIM STOVALL

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How Are You?

I am as healthy as I believe myself to be.
I am as wealthy as I believe.
I am only as blessed as I consider myself blessed.
I am as happy as I will allow myself to become.
My life is as productive as I, myself, will permit.

Joye Kanelakos

From *Discovering Joye* by Jim Stovall

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Foreword

By Don M. Green

In Jim Stovall's latest book, he has mastered Napoleon Hill's immortal quote, "You are the master of your destiny. You can influence, direct, and control your own environment. You can make your life what you want it to be."

After authoring more than thirty books, Mr. Stovall's newest book has taken a real-life happening brought about by the serious economic downturn in the mountains of Southwest Virginia, where Napoleon Hill was born and went to school.

Few people writing today could equal the adversity that the author faced. Stovall overcame the fact that he became blind when he was just graduating from college with honors in two majors. Few people in life have achieved the author's success. Being blind would place many in a position of giving up on life, but what Stovall did have was vision. Eyesight may allow you to see your present surroundings, but vision allows you to "see" where you can go in life.

Besides Stovall's honors in college, he was a heavyweight Olympic weightlifter, and the loss of his sight kept him from his dream to be an NFL lineman.

Jim Stovall is also a bestselling author, and his book *The Ultimate Gift* sold millions of copies. Later, it was made into a movie starring James Garner, and that film along with the two sequel movies and four novels in the series have grossed over 100 million dollars. Six of Jim's other books have been made into movies, with two more currently in production.

Narrative Television Network, cofounded by Jim Stovall, makes television accessible to 13 million blind and visually impaired people and their families. Narrative Television Network is the recipient of an Emmy award as well as an International Film and Video Award.

In 2000, Jim Stovall was selected as one of the Ten Outstanding Young Americans by the U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce. Jim was also selected as the 1997 Entrepreneur of the Year and the International Humanitarian of the Year in 2000, joining Mother Teresa, Nancy Reagan, and Jimmy Carter.

Jim has been a successful investment broker and entrepreneur. Steve Forbes, publisher of *Forbes* magazine, summed up Jim Stovall's life by saying, "Jim Stovall is one of the most remarkable and inspiring individuals of this age or any age." His example of doing good and producing great things in the face of what others would consider to be a debilitating challenge is uplifting and inspiring.

Introduction

By Jim Stovall

MY DEAR READER, YOU AND I ARE PREPARING TO TAKE A JOURNEY together within the chapters of this novel. This book is fiction, but you may never read anything more real in your life.

This is the second volume in my *Homecoming Historical Series*. In the first story, *One Season of Hope*, I featured the wisdom and perspective of President Harry S. Truman. In future books and movies in the series, I plan to highlight Will Rogers in *Will to Win*, Mark Twain in *Making Your Mark*, as well as many other influential world changers.

Napoleon Hill, the focus of this novel and movie, is different from any other historical figure I will ever highlight in the *Homecoming Historical Series*. President Truman and all the other historical figures I will focus upon changed history because they were in the right place at the right time to make a difference. Napoleon Hill is certainly an historical figure, but he will forevermore be known for changing people who, in turn, changed and are still changing the world.

We can learn from any historical figure if we keep an open mind. If we learn something, we change our life; if we teach something, we change another person's life; but if we teach people to teach, we can change the whole world. This is the impact that Napoleon Hill had during his life and continues to have through the ongoing work of Don Green and The Napoleon Hill Foundation along with countless Napoleon Hill students, teachers, and disciples around the world.

I became aware of Napoleon Hill unintentionally and somewhat reluctantly. As a young man, my sole aim in life was to become a professional football player. Coaches and scouts assured me I had the size and speed to reach my objective, so I felt my future was assured, and I ignored academics along with most other things in the world around me.

Then one year, during a routine physical exam before playing another season of football, I was diagnosed with a condition that would cause me to lose my sight. I realized there were no blind players in the NFL, so I enrolled in a local university and tried to figure out what to do with my life.

During my senior year, as corporate recruiters and human resource professionals came to our college campus to recruit soon-to-be graduates, it became obvious to me no one wanted to hire an ex-football player who was rapidly going blind. As an act of desperation, I told my parents I wasn't going to get a job but, instead, intended to launch my own business.

My father introduced me to an entrepreneur he knew named Lee Braxton, and my life forever changed. Lee Braxton had made millions of dollars during the Great Depression, gave most of it away, and worked as a volunteer for the rest of his life at the university I attended.

The first day I met Mr. Braxton, it was readily apparent that he was older than my grandparents, and we had very little, if anything, in common. He dismissively handed me a book and said, "Come back when you've read this." As the door slammed behind me, I glanced down and discovered I was holding a book I had never heard of entitled *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill. That book became the basis for everything Lee Braxton taught me as he became my mentor for the rest of his life.

Many years later, I wrote a book entitled *The Millionaire Map* about my journey from poverty to wealth, and that book, of course, dealt significantly with my time with Lee Braxton. Several months after *The Millionaire Map* was released, I received a call from Don Green who runs The Napoleon Hill Foundation. Don informed me that Napoleon Hill and Lee Braxton had been best friends, and Lee Braxton gave the eulogy at Napoleon Hill's funeral. This forged a unique connection and relationship between me and Napoleon Hill.

Hill was born in the 19th century, changed the world in the 20th century, and remains among the biggest influences here in the 21st century.

On a trip to Wise, Virginia to speak at the University of Virginia's campus for their annual Napoleon Hill Day, I spent an afternoon filming my portion of the movie documenting the life and legacy of Napoleon Hill. While I was in the area, the birthplace of Napoleon Hill, this story and the characters in it revealed themselves to me and began to impact my life as I hope they will yours.

Our journey with these characters and Napoleon Hill will not end when you finish this book but will continue throughout your life. Any time you need support or encouragement from a fellow traveler and student of Napoleon Hill, I can be reached at Jim@JimStovall.com.

You must remember that Napoleon Hill's message has enriched millions of people, but it is critical that you begin to focus on how this message will change your life. If you are entertained and inspired by this story, I will be pleased; but if you change your future and the lives of people you encounter through the timeless message of Napoleon Hill, I will have reached my goal.

Jim Stovall
2017

Chapter One

Trouble in Paradise

"Opportunity often comes disguised in the form of misfortune, or temporary defeat."

—Napoleon Hill

1

Autumn came gently to the mountains of Virginia that particular year. The changing of the seasons can best be observed by someone who is in the same place at the same time each day.

Phillip Madison was just such a person as he could be found daily at 6:00 a.m. dutifully plodding through his three-mile jog. Phillip Madison was not one of those joyous, exuberant runners one confronts from time to time, but he was more of a dutiful, dogged, and persistent jogger who was more interested in the results than the exercise itself. Phillip preferred having jogged to jogging.

Every morning at 5:45, the persistent, ever-vigilant alarm clock interrupted Phillip Madison's slumber. He quietly dressed in his running gear and crept out of the house so as to not awaken the rest of the family. After a few quick obligatory stretches, he plodded down the driveway and turned onto the county road in front of his house.

It was the first week of September, so the daylight was coming a bit later each morning. The false dawn was just beginning to chase away the darkness from the forested mountains of rural Virginia.

Eventually, Phillip slipped into a steady pace, found his stride, and began to breathe comfortably. While he couldn't point to any evidence to prove it, Phillip Madison was convinced that the hills were getting steeper along his three-mile jogging course with each passing year.

In his mind, the new year was marked annually not by the changing of the calendar on January 1st but by the beginning of the new school year each fall. Phillip Madison was known as Principal Madison at Napoleon Hill High School in rural Wise County, Virginia. Napoleon Hill High School represented more than Phillip Madison's job or profession. It comprised the totality of his life.

The first time young Phil Madison had darkened the door of the school, he was a scrawny, timid freshman who felt as if he was the proverbial stranger in a strange land. Over the next four years, he distinguished himself academically—and to a lesser extent athletically—as a Napoleon Hill High Warrior.

After graduating from the teacher's college in the area, Phillip Madison found himself back at Napoleon Hill High School as an English teacher. After a decade of guiding young minds through the writings of Shakespeare, Twain, and Napoleon Hill himself, Phillip Madison was appointed the new principal of his alma mater.

The years had flown by, and as he jogged toward the halfway point of his morning ritual, he was painfully aware of the fact that he was closing in on a half century of life. It seemed somehow fitting that exactly one and a half miles from Phillip Madison's house, at the precise halfway point in his daily jog, the historical marker commemorating the life and legacy of Napoleon Hill had been erected. The historical marker had been the brainchild and pet project of Don Green, the Executive Director of The Napoleon Hill Foundation. Mr. Green was a retired bank president who brought his energy and many years of experience to the foundation whose mission was to build on the life's work and growing legacy of Napoleon Hill.

Each year, the foundation's work culminated as people came from across the country and around the world to celebrate the annual Napoleon Hill Day at the local campus of the University of Virginia. Phillip Madison made sure that every student at the high school got to experience the festivities and hear the speakers who gathered for Napoleon Hill Day each year.

As he reached out and touched the smooth, solid surface of the marker, Phillip felt as if he had renewed his daily connection with Napoleon Hill. The marker gave a thumbnail sketch of Napoleon Hill's life, but it didn't begin to tell the whole story. Phillip knew the words inscribed on the marker by heart.

> Napoleon Hill was born nearby on 26 Oct. 1883. At age 13, he became a "mountain reporter" for small-town newspapers. He left Southwest Virginia in 1908 to write magazine profiles of such business leaders as Andrew Carnegie, Henry Ford, and Thomas Edison. Hill virtually invented the gospel of personal achievement by distilling their principles of financial success into several motivational books. He published Think and Grow Rich, the century's most popular such book, in 1937. Hill lectured widely and served as an advisor to presidents Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt. He died in Greenville, S.C., on 7 Nov. 1970.

As Phillip Madison left the historical marker behind, he knew that every step he jogged brought him closer to home. He was convinced that this spot in the mountains of Virginia had to be the most beautiful place on earth. He had not traveled extensively, but he had never found any place that compared to this familiar slice of paradise.

The simple life he led in the countryside of Virginia seemed more rich and full as he vicariously experienced the whole world through the careers and lives of his former students he stayed in touch with.

As was his daily habit, he paused to catch his breath at the top of the hill near his home. From this vantage point, Phillip Madison could see the valley stretched out before him. This rural community had been blessed with rugged beauty and natural resources, but a downturn in the economy and a depressed coal industry weighed heavily on everyone who lived in the area.

The morning light was brightening, so Phillip could just catch a glimpse of the spot where the Napoleon Hill historical marker was located in the distance. He thought of Hill's early life in these same mountains where as a young man he had labored in one of the coal mines. Eventually, young Napoleon Hill settled into the life of a laborer.

He worked for an area farmer for a dollar a day and was convinced this would be his lot in life until the wise old farmer uttered the words that changed Napoleon Hill's life and, in turn, changed the rest of the world.

The farmer confronted young Napoleon Hill, saying, "You are a bright boy. What a pity you are not in school instead of at work as a laborer at a dollar a day."

Napoleon Hill would remember that fateful moment and those powerful words for the rest of his life, saying, "That remark aroused in me the first ambition I had ever felt, and incidentally, it is directly responsible for the Personal Analysis system that I have worked out. No one had ever hinted to me before that I was bright. I had always imagined I was exceedingly dull. In fact, I had been told that I was a dunce. As a boy I was defeated in

everything I undertook, largely because those with whom I associated ridiculed me and discouraged me from engaging in the things that interested me most. My work was selected for me, my studies were selected for me, and my play, well, I was taught that play was a waste of time. With this firsthand knowledge of the great handicap under which the average person starts out in life as a working basis, I began, many years ago, to work out a system for helping people find themselves as early in life as possible. My efforts have yielded splendid returns, for I have helped many find the work for which they were most suited, and I have started them on the road to happiness and success. I have helped more than a few to acquire the qualities for success."

Phillip Madison hoped and prayed that he could somehow be in the right place at the right time with each of his students to say the words that would open their hearts and minds to the possibilities that exist in the world in much the same way that the farmer who tilled the very soil in the valley below planted a seed in the mind of a young, impressionable Napoleon Hill.

As Phillip Madison turned and gazed at a distant mountain across the valley, he could see the sun's morning rays illuminating Napoleon Hill High School perched on a plateau partway up the mountain slope. From his unique perspective, he could view the school as a focal point for every phase of his life. Whether it was little Phil Madison freshman student, Mr. Madison the English teacher, or Principal Madison, the anchor of Napoleon Hill High School had always been there for him.

He took pride in the responsibility entrusted to him to educate the young people of the area. In the coming days, he would learn that sometimes in the midst of educating students, the students can educate their teacher or even their principal.

About the Author

Jim Stovall is the president of Narrative Television Network, as well as a published author of many books including *The Ultimate Gift.* He is also a columnist and motivational speaker. He may be reached at 5840 South Memorial Drive, Suite 312, Tulsa, OK 74145-9082; by email at Jim@JimStovall.com; on Twitter at www.twitter.com/stovallauthor; or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/jimstovallauthor.

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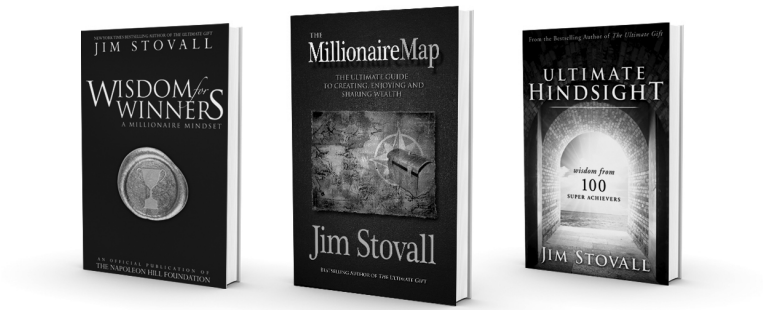

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