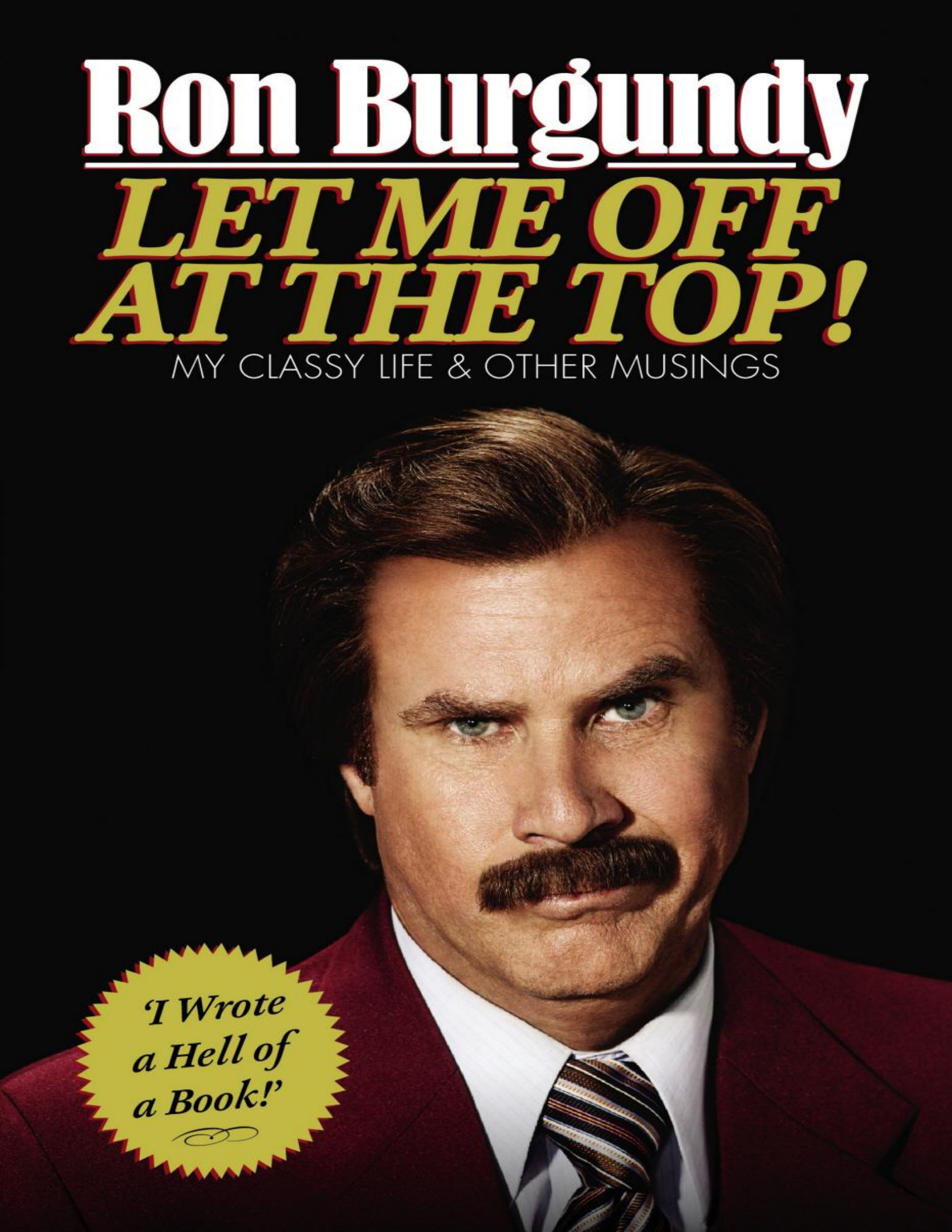


Ron Burgundy *LET ME OFF AT THE TOP!*

MY CLASSY LIFE & OTHER MUSINGS



*'I Wrote
a Hell of
a Book!'*



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About the Book

The autobiography everyone has been waiting for: a shockingly candid and raw confessional from an international treasure.

In his very own words, the world's most trusted and beloved News Anchor, Ron Burgundy, reveals his most private thoughts, his triumphs - and his disappointments. His life reads like an adventure story complete with knock-down fights, beautiful women and double-fisted excitement on every page. He has had more than his share of amorous exploits and formed the greatest on-air team in the history of televised news. Along the way, he's hobnobbed with people you wish you knew and some you honestly wish you didn't - celebrities, presidents, presidents' wives, celebrities' wives, dogs and, of course, Veronica Corningstone, the love of his life. Who didn't Mr. Burgundy, or 'Ron', as he is known to his friends, rub elbows with in the course of his colourful and often criminal life?

This may well be the most thrilling book ever written, by a man of great physical, moral and spiritual strength and, not surprisingly, a great literary talent as well. We owe it to him, and to ourselves, to read it.

With never-before-seen photographs. Some in colour!

About the Author

RON BURGUNDY is an award-winning News Anchorman and poet. He lives with his wife, Veronica, and dog, Baxter, in San Diego, California. When he is not making models of eighteenth-century sailing ships, he can often be found on the deck of his own boat, *The Shining M'Lady*, or supervising archaeological digs in and around his backyard. This is his first 'book'.

Ron Burgundy
LET ME OFF
AT THE TOP!
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DISCLAIMER

Every word in this book is true. You can fact-check most of it but much of it lives within my brain. Fortunately for you my memory is infallible. With the exception of people, places, situations and dialogue, I'm like a walking encyclopedia of facts. You might as well chisel this baby in stone, because what you are holding is a perfect unchallengeable chronicle of American history and personal narrative. You are welcome.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

It took me eight years to write this book. The research alone—fact-checking, reading the source materials, asking questions—was endless and I didn't care for it that much. I just didn't. But I persisted because I knew what I was doing was truly very important. A book is never the work of one man. Many people contribute to its failure, or as in this case, its success. Dorathoy Roberts at the Harvard Widener Library was instrumental in recovering so many facts and nautical terms. Janart Prancer aided my work immensely with her near-encyclopedic understanding of rare manuscripts in the Herzog August Library, Wolfenbüttel, Germany. Esther Nausbaum, head librarian at the prestigious Kirkland School of Dinosaurs, was instrumental in tracking down indispensable paleoecological records for [chapter 15](#) in this book. Herb Kolowsky was ever watchful and patient, reading over many drafts of the manuscript as well as cleaning my gutters. I consulted with my dear friend and lover Doris Kearns Goodwin over many breakfasts in bed. Her sharp intellect and sharper teeth found their way into practically every page. Although we are no longer lovers because I don't know why, her knowledge of presidential history is the basis for [chapter 12](#). Her dogged enthusiasm for the project was only outpaced by her enthusiasm for lovemaking, which I could barely equal. I don't know what to say about Doris really except if she's still out there and she would like another bounce, I would be game. Johnny Bench was an invaluable spell-checker. Lars Mankike brought an artistic eye to the project and a kind of European nihilism that was

completely unnecessary. We fought often and he got what he deserved, so I'm not even sure why I'm thanking him here, but it's too late now. Sandy Duncan is full of boundless energy. What can I say about Veronica Corningstone, the love of my life? We've had our ups and downs for sure, and usually the downs were because of something stupid she said or did while losing blood. You really can't fault women for being irrational. Blood drips out of them willy-nilly and there's nothing they can do about it. It's like being a hemophiliac. I suspect science will one day cure them of this blood-dripping disease but until then, *Vive la différence*. Finally Baxter, my dog and best friend, saw me through many tough hours as I struggled with my emotions during this project. His love and support sustained me through extremely difficult excavations into my past. Only Baxter knows the pain I have lived. Our nightly talks formed the basis for what you hold in your hand now.

WHY WRITE THIS BOOK?

Does mankind really need another book dumped onto the giant garbage heap of books already out there? Is there some pressing desire for the wisdom of a humble News Anchor in this world? Will it add to the great literary achievements throughout time or will it be lost in a swamp of trivial scribbling like pornography—devoured and then destroyed out of shame? I stand here (I write standing up) and I say, “No!” No, this book will NOT be lost! This book is necessary. It’s an important work from an important man. I was the number one News Anchor in all of San Diego. My name is Ron Burgundy and what you have in your hands is a very big deal. It’s ... my ... life. It’s my words. It’s my gift to you.

If the truth be told, I’ve wanted to write a book for a long time, but how? How do you write a book? Oh sure, I know you get paper and pencils and make yourself a pot of coffee and you stay up all night and write one. Seems simple enough, but it’s not. There’s a very long tradition of book writing going back through history all the way to Roman times, and if you know history like I do you understand that book writing is NOT EASY! Rule number one sayeth the bard, “To thy own self be truthful in regards to yourself.” I knew from the beginning, before even purchasing the paper and the pencils and the cans of coffee, I would have to spend a little time getting to know me. I’ve been so busy being Ron Burgundy the legend that I never stopped to really get to know Ron Burgundy the man. Before I wrote one word of this masterpiece I took long walks through the streets of San Diego trying to make friends with a guy I

barely knew: myself. I talked to myself, that's right, in bars, at bus stops, in laundromats, wherever my muse took me. I recommend it. Go out and talk to yourself. Record the conversations like I did. I had a small lightweight twenty-pound Grundig reel-to-reel tape recorder with a built-in microphone. A typical conversation went like this:

Ron
Hey, good friend of mine.

Ron
Hey right back at you.

Ron
What's it all about?

Ron
It's a good question, Ron. You ask tough questions.

Ron
It's my business, I'm a News Anchor by trade.

Ron
No kidding, that's important!

Ron
Yeah, it's really nothing. I'm kind of a big deal around San Diego.

Ron
It sounds damn impressive.

Ron
It is in a way. It's pretty impressive. Are you hungry?

Ron
I could definitely go for some fish-and-chips. Do you know where they have the best fish-and-chips in San Diego?

Ron
I do. There's a one-of-a-kind sea shanty called Long John Silver's that fixes up delicious fish-and-chips at a reasonable price.

Ron
Man, that sounds yummy.

Ron
Why don't you join me? I'm heading over there now.

Ron
How far of a walk is it?

Ron
About six miles.

Ron
Do you want to discuss life some more while we walk?

Ron
No, let's shut it down until after we eat.

Night after night like a ghost I walked the streets of San Diego holding conversations with only myself. Sometimes the conversations were trivial, like the time I got into an argument over which dog breed, Labrador or collie, was better at learning tricks, but sometimes they reached a sublime level of deep thinking, like this conversation I recorded while sitting on a transit bus.

Ron
What's it all mean, Ron?

Ron
Sometimes I think we're all crazy.

Ron
I know what you mean. I feel crazy myself sometimes.

Ron
I mean, what's to stop me from lighting this bus on fire?

Ron
I know! But keep your voice down, okay?

Ron
I mean it! There's nothing. What holds us together, Ron? Very little. VERY LITTLE!

Ron
Ron, you're in your head too much. Breathe.

Ron

No but listen to me, Ron, the world is made of strands of particles and atoms that commingle without meaning, taking form momentarily, decaying, finding new form—senseless activity without a guiding center. How can we make sense of it? Burning down this bus with all these people holds the same value as giving birth to a child. Don't you get it?

Ron

Keep it together, buddy.

Ron

I WILL NOT BE TALKED TO IN THIS WAY. I AM NOT A CHILD! I MIGHT JUST BURN DOWN THIS BUS TO PROVE A POINT!

Bus Driver

Do we have a problem?

Ron

Cool it, Ron. You're making people nervous.

Ron

I DON'T CARE! I DON'T CARE! I'M GOING TO BURN DOWN THIS BUS!

Unidentified Male Voice

Get him. Hold him down.

Ron

I'M RON BURGUNDY! Ow, come on. CHANNEL FOUR NEWS!

Ron

He's okay. Stop hitting. He's okay ... he's okay, let him breathe.

I have over a thousand hours of recorded conversations with myself. What was I looking for? What was I trying to get at? I knew if I was going to write a book I would have to call on all of my powers of concentration. I would have to dig deep into the man, not the myth but the man, Ron Burgundy. To begin with I climbed Mount San Gorgonio, the highest peak in all of Southern California, and I called on an old friend, mighty Athena, the goddess of wisdom and courage, to guide me in this noble endeavor.

There I stood naked to the stars and the great gods above and yelled out, “My name is Ron Burgundy and I call on you, Athena, for inspiration! I am going to write a book. It shall be the story of my life, a great novel! I’m not sure *novel* is what you call a life story. There’s another name for *life story* and I have forgotten it. For it does not matter! Brobalia! It’s called a Brobalia! No, that’s not it but it starts with a *B*. It is of no importance, mighty Athena! I stand here alone, naked on this mount with these tourists from Germany”—it’s true, there were some tourists from Germany up there as well—“to ask for your guidance and wisdom while writing this Binocular. Nope, that’s a word for something different. NO MATTER! Bisojagular! Still not right but I’m getting closer, fair Athena, and thanks for your patience—let all the gods know, Zeus, Apollo, Poseidon and Hestia, to name only a few, that I will ask for their strength in writing this Braknopod. Way off! My old pal Doris Kearns Goodwin would surely know the name you give a life story. She was a real egghead, among other things. Anyway, Athena, just help me write this thing. I swear to you that I will remember the name people give to life stories the minute I get down from this mountain! Thank you, brave Athena!”

Judging by what I have written here I can say with all confidence she heard my plaintive cries that raw night up on that tourist trap of a peak in the San Bernardino Mountains.

Now, I’m not going to lie, a searching evaluation of who I am has been an ordeal, not just for me but for those closest to me. It’s been hard on my wife, Veronica, and Baxter, my dog, and for anyone who lives within screaming distance of my house and for law enforcement personnel. I went all in on this quest for self-discovery. William Thackeray Thoreau once said, “Desperate men lead lives of quiet songs that are left unsung when they do end up in their cold tombs.”

Something like that. Anyway, the point is you only go around once and you really need to go for the gold!

I can tell you this: There were a lot of people out there who didn't think it was such a good idea to write a book. I know stuff about certain people and let's just say that sometimes knowledge can be dangerous. When word got out I was writing a "tell-all" book there were attempts made on my life! This is serious business. Most men would have run for the hills. Not me; I welcome the challenge. There is a chance I may have to go into hiding after this book comes out. I can't say where I will disappear to but more than likely it will be my cabin I purchased with George C. Scott's cousin. Its location can never be known. Scott's cousin is never there and it's less rustic than you think, with a pool table and full bar as well as a washer-dryer combo, and it's within walking distance to the Big Bear Lake general store.

Death threats are an occupational hazard of course for us anchormen. I'm very comfortable living each minute with the expectation of being attacked. It's been many years since JFK told me he used to enjoy Marilyn Monroe from behind while Joe DiMaggio looked on in the corner. The main players have all left the stage, so perhaps now is the time to speak out without fear of reprisal. Maybe telling the truth is more important than any danger I may face. Then again, maybe the truth has nothing to do with it. Maybe I just don't like it when people say, "Ron, you can't write a book, you don't have the courage," or "Ron, you can't write a book, you don't know how to type," or "Ron, have you ever even read a book?" It's the naysayers who get me. I like surprising people. I always have. I think everyone in the world took it for granted that I would not have the balls to write this book. I've got the balls, big hairy misshapen balls in a wrinkly sack. This book is a testament to my giant balls. If you want some feel-good story about how to live your life, then go look elsewhere. This book is a hard-

hitting, no-holds-barred, unafraid account of my exceptional life with some words of wisdom thrown in for good measure. You won't find a lot of fluff here. If you're looking for fluff to take to the beach, check out the Holy Bible. This ain't that book.

So who am I? That's what this book is about. Over the next eight hundred pages (unless some bitch of an editor gets ahold of it with his clammy hands and snotty nose) I will let you in on a very big secret: my life. Of course some of it isn't such a secret. Some of it you know already. I'm a man. A News Anchor. A lover. Husband. A friend to animals on land and at sea. A handsome devil. A connoisseur of fine wine. I have one of the classiest collections of driftwood art in the world. I can throw a Wham-O Frisbee if I have to, but I prefer not to. I love the outdoors. Nature drives me nuts. I make pancakes for anyone who asks. I take long nude walks on the beach. I play jazz flute, not for business but for pleasure. I'm a world-class water-ski instructor. I don't care a lick about the fashion world, although they seem to care an awful lot about me. My best friend is a dog named Baxter. I'm quite famous. I'm a history buff. I collect authentic replications of Spanish broadswords. I smoke a pipe on occasion, not for profit but for pleasure. I've been known to sing out loud at weddings and funerals. I'm a collector of puns. I have over three hundred handcrafted shoes of all sizes. I don't give a damn about broccoli. I believe all men have the right to self-pleasure. I carry a picture of Buffy Sainte-Marie in my wallet and I'm not even Catholic. My favorite drink is scotch. My second-favorite drink is a Hairy Gaylord. I'm affiliated with at least a hundred secret societies; some of them, like the Knights of Thunder, will kill you just for printing their name. I adore tits. I will never be persuaded to try yogurt. I'm allergic to fear. Other men have fallen in love with me in a sexual way and that's okay. I have mixed feelings about bicycles. My handmade fishing lures are sought after by fly-fishermen

the world over. I've never been one for blue jeans. Sandals on another man have been known to make me vomit. My Indian name is Ketsoh Silaago. My French name is Pierre Laflume. I can never tell anyone about what happened in Youngstown, Ohio, one January night. There are no other people who look like me on this planet; I've looked. Babies, bless their souls, give me the creeps. I own a chain of hobby stores in the Twin Cities I have never seen. I once ate a ham dinner and then realized it was not ham. People tell me I look like Mickey Rooney. Woody the Woodpecker cracks me up every time. That's the basic stuff; now prepare yourself for the journey—the journey into an extraordinary life.

THE BOY FROM HAGGLEWORTH

The story we were told as children went something like this.... On June 27, 1844, Joseph Smith, the great Mormon martyr, and his brother Hyrum were killed by a mob in Carthage, Illinois. In the middle of the mob was a smooth opportunist named Franklin Hagglesworth. Hagglesworth was on his way to Keokuk, Iowa, and the Mississippi River to cheat people out of money. As the mob grew outside the jail where Smith and his brother were held, Hagglesworth stirred up the crowd with anti-Mormon slogans and songs. Up to that point the crowd had been a peaceful assembly of reasonable people willing to discuss whether Smith or his brother had transgressed any laws. Hagglesworth saw an opening. With his honey-tongued skill for oratory he was able to cajole the law-abiding citizenry into a frenzied pack of murderers. Within minutes of his opening his mouth, the crowd stormed the jail and shot the two brothers. Hagglesworth ran off to the Mormon camp to report the sad news that their leader had been shot. Feigning sympathy with the now-distraught Mormons, he produced a dirty dinner plate and proclaimed Joseph Smith himself had given it to him right before his death. According to Hagglesworth it was the last plate given to Smith by the angel Moroni. But unlike the plates Smith "translated," this new plate had never been translated. Pretending to read the plate, a fairly crappy piece of pottery that sits in the Hagglesworth Museum to this day, he told the crowd that a new religion would be born out of Mormonism—a new religion dedicated to worshipping the penis of Mr. Franklin Hagglesworth. He went on to explain that this new religion

required up to twelve but no less than three women “who didn’t have to be virgins because that seemed kind of overused” to frequently see to the needs of his ever-demanding penis. For the most part the men and women in the Mormon settlement were not convinced of Hagglesworth’s “vision.” But try and remember—this was a strange part of American history and folks were dropping everything to follow men with heaven-born plates. There were nudist colonies and polygamist silverware-making colonies and people going to séances left and right—not like now, when reason holds sway. This was a wildly superstitious time and so it should come as no surprise that eight women of various ages believed the plate and followed Hagglesworth up the river to worship his penis. He landed on a bald, shale-covered scrap of earth not far from the river in northeastern Iowa. Because it could not be farmed Hagglesworth was able to buy the property for a dollar and fifty cents. Three days into the new colony, tragedy struck. A great famine overtook the settlers, so the angel ordered Hagglesworth to send some of his women to the river to worship other men’s penises for money and food. It worked! Hagglesworth was in business! A steady stream of boatmen beat a path to Hagglesworth’s church of penis worship over the next thirty years. Hagglesworth lived to the ripe old age of forty-eight and died with a boner. That’s what we were told anyway growing up in Hagglesworth.

About ten years after Hagglesworth’s death, the Valley Coal and Iron Company bought the town for seventy-five cents and began mining for coal. Although the company changed hands many times over the next fifty years, Standard Oil of Iowa took over the operations in 1922 and successfully mined forty miles of intersecting tunnels of coal beneath the town. In 1940, the year I was born, Latham Nubbs flicked a half-chewed, still-lit stogie into the street outside of Kressler’s Five and Dime and the town of

Haggleworth caught on fire—a fire that still burns to this day. Deadly carbon monoxide gas and plumes of hell-spawned black smoke appear and disappear at random. The smell of sulfur, literally the smell of Satan himself, permeates the air, sending visitors and lost strangers to emergency rooms all over the state. In 1965 the governor of Iowa, Harold Hughes, condemned the town and relocated its remaining twenty-eight residents.

I was born into a simpler time. Environmental concerns wouldn't come into play until hippies and weirdos started crawling the earth. For us, growing up in Haggleworth, the fires were a way of life, a hazard like any other. The smell went unnoticed because it's what we knew. The black smoke rising from the hot earth was a daily reminder of the hell pit below the surface. I was born into this town of three hundred hardheaded Iowans whose only way of life was mining, and of course drinking and burning to death. Mining was especially hard because of the fire, and drinking wasn't any easier, also because of the fire. The more you drank alcohol, the more likely your chance of igniting yourself. It was a cruel irony, but the only way to stave off that horrible impending feeling of one day burning to death was to drink more ... a vicious circle, really, but one we enjoyed with gusto.

In this carefree community the Burgundys were a proud clan. Claude and Brender Burgundy had eight boys. I was the last one born. The plain fact of the matter is we all hated each other equally. There were no alliances within the family. It was every man for himself. The day I was born was the day I received my first sock in the face. My brother Lonny Burgundy smacked me the first time he saw me. I couldn't speak yet, as I was only a few minutes old, but I do remember thinking to myself, "So that's the way it is." I grew to like the uncertain anticipation of being pounded on by my older siblings and by the occasional explosion of fire that jumped up out of the earth. In grade school, my best