

Walter Annenberg wrote:

"There are two great sources of inspiration in life, enthusiasm and tragedy, and I have been boxed in by both. But having been boxed in by both, I also recognize that perseverance is the key to escape and satisfaction."

Throughout history there have been those who were willing to risk and to persevere in the face of adversity, there have been those who have been written off and yet have become real contributors to society and there are those who have yet to shine.

Bury him in the snows of Valley Forge, and you have a George Washington.

Raise him in abject poverty and you have an Abraham Lincoln.

Subject him to bitter religious prejudice, and you have a Disraeli."

Strike him down with infantile paralysis, and he becomes a Franklin D. Roosevelt, the only president of the United States to be elected to four terms.

Have him or her born black in a society filled with racial discrimination, and you have a Booker T. Washington, Harriet Tubman, Marian Anderson, George Washington Carver or Martin Luther King, Jr.

Call a slow learner "retarded" and write him off as ineducable and you have an Albert Einstein.

Have a thalidomide child born with a dwarfed, twisted body without arms, and you have a Terry Wiles, who, with the aid of mechanical devices, learned to play the electric organ, steer a motorboat and paint.

Amputate the cancer-ridden leg of a handsome young Canadian, and you have a Terry Fox, who vowed to run on one leg across the whole of Canada to raise a million dollars for cancer research. (Terry was forced to quit halfway when cancer invaded his lungs but managed to raise about \$20 million.)

When he is a lad of 3, burn him so severely in a schoolhouse fire that the doctors say he will never walk again, and you have a Glenn Cunningham, who set the world's record in 1954 for running a mile in 4 minutes, 6.8 seconds.

Let a British fighter pilot who lost both legs in an air crash fly again with the RAF, and you have a Douglas Bader, who, with two artificial limbs, was captured by the Germans three times during World War II - and escaped three times!

Blind him and you have a Ray Charles, George Shearling, Stevie Wonder, Tom Sullivan, Alec Templeton or Hal Krents.

Label him "too stupid to learn", and you have a Thomas Edison.

Make him the first child to survive in a poor Italian family of 18 children, and you have an Enrico Caruso.

Have him born of parents who survived a Nazi concentration camp, paralyze him from the waist down when he is 44, and you have the incomparable concert violinist Itzhak Perlman.

Make him a "hopeless" alcoholic, and you have a Bill Wilson, founder of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Tell her she's too old to start painting at 80, and you have a Grandma Moses.

Afflict him with periods of depression so severe that he cuts off his own ear, and you have a Vincent Van Gogh.

Your list would not be complete without a smiling Max Cleland, who lost both legs and an arm in Vietnam and formerly headed the Veterans Administration, in Washington, D.C.

Don't forget Patricia Neal, the fine actress who suffered a severe stroke, but rehabilitated herself against overwhelming odds.

Blind him at age 44, and you have a John Milton, who, 16 years later, wrote Paradise Lost.

Call him dull and hopeless and flunk him in the sixth grade, and you have a Winston Churchill.

Punish her with poverty and prejudice, and she may survive to become another Golda Meir.

Pit her against sexual discriminatin, and you have a Madame Curie. Tell a young boy who loved to sketch and draw that he has no talent and you have a Walt Disney.

Take a crippled child whose only home he ever knew was an orphanage, and you have a James E. West, who became the first chief executive of the Boy Scouts of America. Rate him as "medicore" in chemistry, and you have a Louis Pasteur.

At birth deny a child the ability to see, hear, and speak, and you have a Helen Keller. Make him second fiddle in an obscure South American orchestra, and you have a Toscanini.

Take seven astronauts and watch them die in a fiery inferno and you have servants of the future of humankind.

Spit on him, humiliate him, then crucify him and he forgives you, and you have Jesus Christ.

When our days are darkest we might remember them. When our days are brightest we might remember that God has given us life and reach one step higher in the heart of caring.