



Living the Dream

By Katrin Prentice

One of my favorite inspirational stories is of a young African boy who crossed over 3,000 kilometers of hostile jungle territory on foot because he had a vision and determination.

Legson Didimu Kayira was born in the 1940s to a life of total poverty in the

Tumbuka tribe, Malawi, but he dreamed of studying in the United States. When he was 16, he decided to make his way on foot to Egypt and find work on a ship sailing to the U.S. He left home with only a small ax, a blanket, a map of Africa, a map of the world, and two books—a Bible and a copy of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Fifteen months later, Legson arrived in Kampala, Uganda, where he came across a directory of American colleges. He wrote to Skagit Valley College in Mount Vernon explaining his situation and asking for a scholarship. The dean was so impressed he granted him both admission and a scholarship, while the student body collected \$650 to cover his fare. In December 1960, Legson finally arrived at Skagit Valley College, still carrying nothing but what he'd left home with two years before.

Later, Legson became a professor at Cambridge University and authored six novels and the prizewinning autobiography, *I Will Try*.

Here's another: In 1938, Soichiro Honda began developing a new piston ring, which he dreamed of selling to the Toyota Corporation, but it was rejected.

He went back to the drawing table, and two years later he had a new piston ring. This time, he won the contract with Toyota, but he had no factory, and concrete was rationed due to WW2. Undaunted, Mr. Honda invented a new formula for making concrete and got his factory built. Unfortunately, it was bombed—twice—and finally leveled by an earthquake.

After the war, Japan suffered a gasoline shortage. Mr. Honda couldn't afford to drive his car, so he attached a small engine to his bicycle. His neighbors were soon asking him to make "motorized bikes" for them too and encouraging him to build a plant to manufacture his engines.

Because he had no capital, he wrote all 18,000 bike shop owners in Japan a personal letter, explaining his vision and asking for financial contributions. Five thousand of them agreed to advance him capital for his invention ... and the rest, as they say, is history.

What these men, and others like them, have in common is that they refused to let the limitations of their circumstances limit their dreams ♦.

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