



DAVID H. E. SMITH

Billy Pigeon for President

David H. E. Smith



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For Kurt Vonnegut, God rest your soul.

*May students the world over read your
books forever...*

*Why not go out on a limb?
Isn't that where the fruit is?*

—FRANK SKULLY

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Preface

History has a long list of people who have been bold, innovative and have led countries through incredible changes to their political systems and through difficult wars; people who have changed the world with their technical advances, their brilliant minds, their ability to be different; to go into a closed room to collect their thoughts, to stay in that room for a long, long time, to come out and change the status quo, to shock the world, to think out of the box!

I would like to tell you a story about one of those unique individuals who come along once in a lifetime, who has such a profound influence on humanity, who changes the way we think. Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, I give you Billy Pigeon!

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Hi, My Name Is Billy Pigeon

Billy Pigeon, seventeen years old, is the main character of my little story. He is soon to enter his final year of high school at Bellevue High in Bellevue, Washington. Billy lives in the same neighborhood with the likes of Bill Gates of Microsoft fame, Boeing executives, and Seattle Seahawks football players: a well-to-do neighborhood, to say the least.

Billy's father, Walter Pigeon, worked for WAMU, Washington Mutual, a really big bank, servicing clients all over the Pacific Northwest. Walter was a branch manager for WAMU; he had an excellent salary, benefits, medical and dental, and a 401K pension fund. He really took good care of his wife, Sally, Billy and his sister, Sarah. Their mother, Sally, was a former cheerleader at Bellevue High in her younger days.

Walter Pigeon also took really good care of his clients. He was told by WAMU higher-ups in 2008 to prime the pump with mortgages and to give every customer who could sign on the dotted line a house mortgage. The packaging of house mortgages into mortgage-backed securities was the flavor of the month on Wall Street.

When the housing market sprang a leak and popped big-time, and when it was determined by federal officials in Washington, D. C. that WAMU was undercapitalized, that it did not meet the stress test, and that it had lent way more money than it should have, Walter Pigeon knew his bank in Seattle was in deep doo-doo—that's silly talk for deep shit!

Within months, Washington Mutual was shut down, its assets sold to JP Morgan Chase of Wall Street fame for a paltry 1.9 billion dollars, its branch offices all over the Pacific Northwest closed for now, its depositors all cov-

ered by the Federal Deposit Insurance Fund, with thousands of WAMU employees losing their jobs; need I say more?

Walter Pigeon was one of those people, he was forty-six years old, he was out of work for the first time in his life, just like another 8–10% of the American workforce, depending on which month it was. Walter had not seen this coming, he was in total shock.

After he cleared out his Seattle office and walked his boxes of office stuff to the trunk of his brand new Chevy Impala car, Walter Pigeon fired up his made in America vehicle and took a drive to a nearby bar, the bar frequented on a regular basis by other WAMU employees. The bar was overflowing with people that fine Seattle afternoon.

Ex-WAMU employees hugged each other, they cried, they consoled, they discussed their futures. Their futures were muddled; their futures looked bleak, bleak, bleak!

“How could so many smart people be so stupid?” asked Sarah Parker, a teller at WAMU for the past ten years.

“Greed,” said Jim Smith, another WAMU teller.

“When is enough ever enough?” asked Jane Morgan, a loans manager at WAMU for the past five years.

“We should have seen it coming; we were writing mortgages for people with borderline credit, with no job guarantees, with little or no assets to back up their credit except for the house itself,” said Tracy Jenkins, another WAMU loan officer.

“We were just doing what we were told,” said Jane Morgan.

“And we were doing what we were told!” snapped Walter Pigeon. “If it came from the top, it was out of our control.”

“And now what do we do?” asked Sarah Parker. “I have a mortgage of my own to pay, a car loan, kids in college.”

“We’re all in the same boat,” said Walter Pigeon.

Over another glass of Jack Daniel’s on ice, Walter told his assistant manager Peter Graves that he had no idea what he was going to do, where he would find a job, or how he was going to support his family. He had enough cold, hard cash squirreled away for six or seven more months, but that was it. The stock market was tanking, his 401K pension fund was sinking in value like the Titanic, his house mortgage payment, his car payment, his overdraft payment, his three credit card payments, his cable bill, his electrical bill, his Rotary Club dues, his wife Sally’s car payment, his golf club fees, his property taxes, his house insurance, his boat insurance, his boat moorage fees, Sarah’s tennis lessons bill were all due at the end of the month. Walter Pigeon ordered another Jack Daniel’s on ice; this time he made it a double!

When Walter finally pulled into the driveway of his home in suburban Bellevue, he dragged his sorry ass into the living room to see Sally and Sarah and Billy. The silence in their suburban Bellevue home was deafening. Sally and Sarah began to cry a river. Billy Pigeon paced the living room, his seventeen-year-old mind going here, there, and everywhere, really fast! Billy gave his father a big old hug, told his father that they were a strong family, that this was just one of those bumps in the road of life, and that everything would work out, you just wait and see. Billy excused himself, told Walter and Sally and Sarah that he was going upstairs to study for a math exam and to work on his valedictorian address to his graduating class, even though he had another year to go in high school!

Billy Pigeon stretched his arms above his head, grabbed a baseball he caught with his own glove at a Mariners' game, tossed the baseball into the air, caught it once more, and then closed his bedroom door. He lay on his single bed, his room bare compared to those of most kids his age: a desk, a chair, a plastic replica of the space shuttle Columbia hanging from the ceiling, otherwise empty walls.

He thought of high school graduation, his plans to attend U-Dub for his bachelor's degree in political science, then to Harvard for his law degree, then a job in government, then the Senate, and then the Oval Office; heady stuff for most seventeen year olds, but not for Billy Pigeon!

Billy loved politics; he was a political junkie. He watched *Morning Joe* on MSNBC with his morning coffee, he was fascinated with Wolf Blitzer and the "best political team on television," he listened to *CBS Evening News* with Katie Couric, he watched *The McLaughlin Group* on PBS, loved it when the left and the right screamed bloody blue murder at each other, and when old John said "Bye-Bye." He was intrigued by the left-wing bias of *The Ed Show*, and captivated by the right-wing slant of Bill O'Reilly.

Billy Pigeon was also interested in the goings on in New York City, on Wall Street in particular, and was a student of American capitalism. He watched Larry Kudlow on *The Kudlow Report* and Jim Cramer from *Mad Money* fame, with their boisterous support of large American corporations, and listened to Larry repeat over and over again that capitalism was the best path to prosperity: the American corporate giants like Exxon Mobile and Chevron with their highly paid lobbyists in Washington, D. C., wearing their fancy three-piece suits and carrying their BlackBerries 24/7, the greedy men and women on Wall Street, their total focus in life to make money, to live the American Dream, at whatever cost.

Billy was even more intrigued by the current economic crisis caused by the packaging of mortgage-backed securities by the really big banks on Wall Street, the sudden collapse of Lehman Brothers and Bear Stearns, the tanking

of the stock market to Dow 6000, the writing on the wall for America, and a buying opportunity for the richest Americans in the Hamptons, with piles and piles of money to burn.

But capitalism, according to Adam Smith in an economics textbook Billy had read from cover to cover, meant success and failure, not being bailed out by the federal government in Washington, D. C. Billy Pigeon, even at the tender age of seventeen, did not like the coined phrase “too big to fail.”

He watched in amazement as the Federal Government in Washington, D. C. bailed out the really big banks, bailed out AIG, bailed out General Motors and Chrysler, with the government purchasing a lot of toxic mortgage-backed securities and company stock. President Obama then spent hundreds of billions of dollars on a gigantic stimulus program, with all the money earmarked for infrastructure projects like repairing roads and building new bridges to rebuild America and give unemployed Americans temporary jobs until the economy recovered. But only a third of the stimulus money actually went to job creation. The rest went to keep on union workers who supported the Democrats and pork-barrel projects to keep politicians in both parties elected, the way Washington works, with the United States federal debt now up to thirteen trillion and counting. The actual unemployment rate is not between 8–10 percent but closer to 15 percent if you took into account all the American workers who had given up looking for a job, with American manufacturing jobs being shipped overseas at an alarming rate because of cheaper wage costs. America is in an economic mess!

“How could so many smart people be so stupid?” asked Billy Pigeon to himself. Billy was no relation whatsoever to Sarah Parker, the ex-teller from Washington Mutual. Billy Pigeon’s presidential mind was already in sync with the masses! Billy Pigeon continued to rant, in his own mind of course!

“Their stupidity, their greed, their *me, me, me* attitude, their desire to spend, spend, spend, all of it costing my father his job and millions of other Americans their jobs, too, was about to cause big-time stress in the homes of all kinds of Americans, jeopardizing their American Dream for many generations to come, including mine—end of story!”

Like I said earlier, this was heady stuff for a young man still another year and some from high school graduation. But to anyone who really knew Billy Pigeon, who knew what really made him tick, this kind of rant was nothing new. From Day One in junior high, with all the trials and tribulations of elementary school behind him, he had been a thinker, a dreamer, an idealist; he was always contemplating solutions to difficult problems.

There was no doubt in anyone’s mind that his speech to his graduating class at Bellevue High would be a success, would be different, would be talked

about by people from all over Seattle, all over the state, all over the country, and all over the world with today's social media.

Billy's command of the English language was exceptional, especially for his age. His appetite for new information was unheard of and he was a walking encyclopedia of knowledge. His wit and charm were endearing to everyone. He was a risk-taker. He loved to explore the capabilities of his mind in a conversation. He loved to go out on a limb, even risking failure and ridicule. He spoke his mind on issues at school, defending democracy and the American way. His discussions in social studies class were the highlight of his day, his fellow students and teacher feeling the same way.

Bottom line: Billy Pigeon was unique, exceptional, one of a kind, a rare bird, a young man destined for greatness, not one who sat in the corner and twiddled his thumbs waiting for the bell to go. Billy stood up in class and scolded George Bush for American involvement in the Iraq war, doubting the existence of weapons of mass destruction from Day One. The war was not justification to bleed American blood on foreign soil. He accused the American government of being in bed with big oil and told anyone who would listen that Americans should have a balanced approach to energy, that we should reduce our dependence on foreign oil, that we had enough natural gas under America to run its vehicles for centuries to come, to run its kitchens, to provide all sorts of energy for an energy starved nation, and that we should focus our attention on other alternate energy sources like wind and solar. He chastised Washington for its inaction on climate control, for wasting money on frivolous government programs, for racking up trillions and trillions of dollars in federal government debt, and for not putting away its credit card. The debt would soon cripple America, lead to zero growth in the economy, economic stagnation rivaling Japan's, and reduce America's stature as a world power, big time!

Even worse, Billy Pigeon was becoming a fatalist, absolutely convinced that Washington politicians did not have the political will or appetite because of political agendas and doctrines to take the bull by the horns, to take the tough measures necessary to turn spending into savings, to have the discipline to actually eliminate deficits and pay down debt, to actually change the culture in Washington. Don't feel bad, Billy; you're not alone in your thoughts!

But Billy's day in the spotlight would come soon, with the seeds of Billy's World germinating as we speak, that glorious night in Bellevue at Bellevue High, just over a year away, when Billy Pigeon would give his famous speech that changed America forever, a speech which was captured on hundreds of cell-phones in the audience and then sent all across social media on You Tube and Facebook and Twitter, with Billy Pigeon's plea to the next generation of young Americans getting hundreds of thousands of hits in the first hour alone.

Billy Pigeon was soon to become a teenage sensation, bigger than Donny Osmond, bigger than David Cassidy, bigger than Justin Bieber—a teenage sensation with much more to offer to the world than silly little love songs!

But all that comes later. Billy Pigeon is only in Grade 11; he has another year of high school to go. He has more early mornings with Joe Scarborough and Mika, he has to Google many more facts about American corporations, pass a few more high-school exams, watch his parents, Walter and Sally, struggle to survive, really get a feel for what America was turning into, a vast wasteland of debt, credit cards, and empty wallets.

By that time, Billy Pigeon would be ready to put the finishing touches on his famous speech, with his seventeen-year-old mind spinning around with ideas, ideas he would soon share with the world, but not yet!

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