

The Story of Sam

Sam was a poor kid who grew up in the heartland of America during the time of the Great Depression.

Times were tough and the kid worked hard to help his parents make ends meet. He would get up early in the morning to milk the cows and sell the milk to his 10 - 12 customers for 10 cents a gallon - a lot of cash in those days. He also went door to door selling magazine subscriptions when he was barely eight years old.

Sam had one good thing going for him - a sharp streak of ambition. His mother always told him that he should try to be the best he could at whatever he did. So **Sam always pursued everything that interested him with true passion.**

Even as a kid growing up in Missouri, Sam was big on setting bold goals. He was so ambitious that when he became a Boy Scout he took a bet with all the other scouts in his unit that he would be the first amongst them to reach the rank of *Eagle Scout*. Getting an *Eagle Scout* badge was no easy task and required a scout to show extreme bravery. Most *Eagle Scouts* were years older than Sam.

Sam won the bet when as a 14-year-old, he saved a man from drowning in a river.

Little Sam went on to become the youngest Eagle Scout in the state of Missouri at that time.

In high school Sam was elected President of the Student Body and was active in a lot of other clubs too. Despite being only 5'9, Sam joined the basketball team and was delighted when it won the State Championship. Sam also became a quarterback on the football team – which went undefeated too.

"Thinking big just came naturally to him."



Sam's ambition and positive mental attitude stayed with him as he graduated from high school. By the time Sam got into college he was even entertaining thoughts of someday becoming President of the United States. Thinking big just came naturally to him.

Closer at hand, he decided he should try to be President of the University student body first. So he ran for every office that came along and by the time he graduated college he had been elected president of the senior men's honor society, an officer in his fraternity, president of his

senior class and president of the Bible class. He was also captain and president of Scabbard and Blade, the elite military organization of ROTC.

While doing all this he also ran his own newspaper business and was making \$4,000 to \$6,000 a year – which was at the end of the Depression Era fairly serious cash. "[Sam] was a little scatterbrained at times," said the circulation manager of one of the newspapers Sam delivered while in College, "he would have so many things going on, he'd almost forget one. But boy, when he focused on something, that was it."

Sam graduated from college with a business degree and took a job at a J. C. Penney store as a management trainee for \$75 a month.

But Sam wasn't satisfied being a management trainee and soon started looking for other opportunities.

At the age of 27, with a loan from his father-in-law he bought a little discount store in Newport, Arkansas.



Despite initial poor sales and heavy competition from more spacious stores across the street, Sam set a goal "I wanted my little Newport variety store to be the best, most profitable variety store in Arkansas within 5 years".

Sam worked hard for five years and hit his goal. He soon had the largest variety store in Arkansas. But he didn't have much time to enjoy his success.

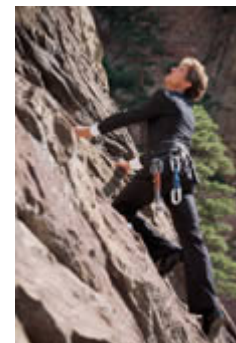
Soon his world came crashing down.

Sam's lease expired and the owner of his building refused to renew the lease. He knew Sam had nowhere else to go and decided he wanted to take over the store to pass on to his son.

"I felt sick to the stomach," said Sam, "I could not believe this was happening to me. It really was like a nightmare."

But Sam wasn't the type of man to resign so easily.

He and his family moved to a different town. There, in Bentonville, Arkansas, he opened a new store. He remembered overhearing some people comment on his new venture, "Well we'll give this guy sixty days, maybe ninety. He won't last that long."



Well, Sam lasted more than 90 days. And his new store became a success. Soon he began expanding his business and opening other stores throughout the state.

In 1962 at the age of 44 he opened his most ambitious store yet. He called it **Wal-Mart**.

The rest is history.

In 1985 Forbes magazine called Sam Walton the richest man in America. The kid who had to walk door-to-door selling milk and newspapers had founded what today is the largest company in the world. Wal-Mart made millionaires out of thousands of stockholders, provided jobs for millions of Americans and helped increase the quality of life in many developing countries by reducing the cost of goods.

In 1992, Sam Walton received the *Presidential Medal of Honor* – the highest civilian award that can be bestowed on an American citizen.

From childhood till the time he died in 1992, Sam Walton had been successful in everything he undertook. It's hard to place a finger on what qualities make people like Sam Walton successful in so many different endeavors. But in his autobiography he talks about why he believes he was so lucky.

"I don't know what causes a person to be ambitious," Sam later said, "but it is a fact that I have been over blessed with drive and ambition from the time I hit the ground."

He added, "I expect to win. I go into tough challenges always planning to come out victorious. It never occurred to me that I might lose, it was almost as if I had a right to win. Thinking like that often seems to turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy."

Jose Silva