

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 146

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will be about the discipline, dedication, and hard work and the late Wilma Rudolf. Sadly, this Olympic champion died of brain cancer in 1994. The story of her life, however, should be an inspiration to everyone. Wilma was born June 23, 1940 but had some serious obstacles to overcome. She was born prematurely, with complications. As a small child she contracted double-pneumonia twice and also scarlet fever. At the tender age of four she got polio and was unable to walk.

Wilma came from a large family. She was the 20th child out of 22 children. Her father was a railroad porter, and her mother was a maid. Their poverty prevented her from getting the best medical care, but she was determined to overcome her handicaps just the same. She wore braces for six years.

The doctors felt that Wilma would never walk again, but her mother was optimistic and took her by bus to the hospital every week for therapy. When told that massaging her legs might help, her mother and siblings massaged her legs four times a day. By the age of eight, four years after being paralyzed, she was finally able to walk with the aid of a leg brace. She still, however, had the additional handicap of a crooked left leg and a foot that pointed inward. She wore high topped shoes to support her crippled foot. Incredibly, however, she started playing basketball with her brothers.

Three years later, at the age of 11, Wilma secretly took off her metal brace every day and practiced walking without it. After a year of practice she surprised everyone with her unbelievable progress. At 12 she tried out for a real basketball team. They graciously allowed her to practice with them and even permitted her to wear an old uniform that had been discarded. She was six feet tall, but only weighed 89 lbs.

At 14 Wilma joined the Tigerbelle track team and began serious training at Tennessee State University. She did well! By 1956 her hard work paid off and she even made the Olympic team. Against all odds she won a bronze medal in Melbourne, Australia. Encouraged by her success she returned home determined to "go for the gold".

In those days there were no athletic scholarships for women so Wilma had to pay her own way through college. Further, in order to be on the team she was required to take 18 credit hours and maintain at least a B average. Not only did she work hard and excel in the classroom, but also on the track. This is where her hard work became even more evident. In addition to her regular workouts with the team, she would slip down the fire escape at night for an extra couple of hours running. She maintained this grueling schedule for 1,200 days.

Her rendezvous with destiny came in 1960 at the Olympic Games in Rome. With nearly 80,000 fans cheering her on she won three gold medals. (100 meter dash, 200 meter dash, and 400 meter relay) Historians place her among the greatest athletes of all time. Wilma Rudolf became a living legend. She was honored as the "Female Athlete of the Year", she received the prestigious Sullivan Award, was granted a private audience with the president, and her life has been

immortalized by both a book and T.V. movie.

Wilma retired from running at 22, but now changed her focus to helping others. She not only coached women's track teams, but also founded the Wilma Rudolf Foundation. This foundation was focused on teaching others the value of discipline and hard work. She was a woman with a great Christian faith. She felt that God had a greater purpose for her life than merely winning three gold medals. Consequently, she was in church every Sunday when she was able. Even after her death her dynamic faith and hard work are still inspiring millions.

God is a worker and Wilma was created in His image. God worked, and she worked! We need to be workers too. The Ten Commandments not only command a day of rest, but also six days of labor. Hard work is also a Christian virtue. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that if anyone didn't work they shouldn't eat (2 Thess. 3:10). Lazy and slothful people will not do well in the Judgement (Matt. 25:26 - 30).

Dinesh D'Souza said he had a friend in India who wanted to emigrate to the U.S. When asked why, he said that he wanted to go to a country where even the poor people are fat. He had a point. In the U.S. you don't have to work to eat. In 2009 there were 33,490,000 people on food stamps. In 2016 the number had swelled to 44,219,123. This was a 32 % jump and an increase of 10,729,000 people. This number represents 13.6 % of the total U.S. population. One reason for the increase is that under President Obama the government actually ran adds encouraging people to get on food stamps.

Robert Rector is quoted in the September 6, 2012 Washington Post as saying: *“Working closely with members of Congress, I helped draft the work requirements in the 1996 law, and I raised the alarm on July 12, when the Obama administration issued a bureaucratic order allowing states to waive those requirements. The law has indeed been gutted. Here's how: The 1996 welfare reform law required that a portion of the able-bodied adults in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program — the successor to the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program — work or prepare for work. Those work requirements were the heart of the reform's success: Welfare rolls dropped by half, and the poverty rate for black children reached its [lowest level in history](#) in the years following. But the Obama administration has jettisoned the law's work requirements, asserting that, in the future, no state will be required to follow them. In place of the legislated work requirements, the administration has stated, it will unilaterally design its own “work” systems without congressional involvement or consent. Any state will be free to follow the new Obama requirements “[in lieu of](#)” the written statute.”*

I think God and Wilma Rudolf got it right. Work is a godly and laziness is not. Please work hard and don't be lazy.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce