

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA # 191

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with "overcomers". Everyone has trouble but not everyone overcomes their trouble! Job said that man that is born of woman is of a few days and full of trouble (Job 14:1). I want you to be one who overcomes your troubles. Jesus was an overcomer. He warned His disciples that in the world they would have trouble, but He said: "take heart! I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33).

Of the many who have overcome trouble, let's focus on just one. His name was Glenn Cunningham (Aug. 4, 1909 - March 10, 1988). He was born in Atlanta, Kansas. At the age of eight he suffered severe burns that almost killed him. It was the winter and Glenn and his brother Floyd were starting a fire in the school house stove. Someone put gasoline instead of kerosene in the can and the stove exploded. Floyd (age 13) was killed by the explosion and young Glenn was severely burned. He lost all the flesh on his knees, shins and all the toes on his left foot. The doctors recommended amputating his legs, but his parents refused. The doctors predicted that he would never walk again. It was two years before he even tried.

Glenn began his long journey to mobility by getting out of his wheel chair, lying on his stomach, and dragging himself across the lawn with his arms and elbows. He pulled himself up with the help of a picket fence and began to take his first steps. While watching a movie the newsreel featured a Finnish runner by the name of Paavo Johannes Nurmi. At his peak Nurmi set 22 official world records and was undefeated in 121 races. Based on his admiration for Nurmi Glenn dared to dream that he too could some day be a world class runner. Even though he was crippled with no feeling in his legs he was determined to overcome his handicap. His mother faithfully massaged his legs every day and they gradually came back to life. Everyone has troubles but not everyone overcomes them. Glenn Cunningham overcame his troubles and I want you to be like him!

Glenn's first halting steps progressed to the point where he could actually walk to school. He learned to run by holding on to a cow's tail and allowing her to drag him faster than he could walk. Even though he never ran "normally" he started running to and from school. Ultimately he developed both stamina and speed, and made the track team. Ultimately his dreams came true.

Among his many accomplishments he became the national collegiate and AAU champion in 1932. He later placed fourth in the Olympic 1,500. He became known as the "Kansas Ironman". He won two national collegiate titles and eight AAU crowns. He set a world record for the mile run at 4:06.8 in 1934. He was second in the 1936 Olympic 1,500 and two weeks later set an 800 world record of 1:49. In 1938, Cunningham ran an indoor one mile of 4:04.4 on an oversized track, a mark well below the outdoor world record.

From 1940 to 1944, Cunningham worked as physical education director at Cornell College,

after which he served for two years in the U.S. Navy. Although he might have used his fame to make a great deal of money, he chose instead to help others. He and his wife opened the Glenn Cunningham Youth Ranch and over the next three decades, raised over 10,000 foster children. As Frank B. Bowles wrote in Biographical Dictionary of American Sports, "With virtually no outside help, the couple handled the youngsters with old-fashioned patience and tolerance." Cunningham often went on speaking tours and shared his faith as a lay preacher.

Glenn Cunningham is not the only person who had to “overcome” physical problems. Neither are the problems you have to “overcome” unique. The Bible teaches: **“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let hyou be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it” (1 Cor. 12:13).**

Don’t let the devil destroy your dreams! **“Submit yourselves, then to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Ja. 4:7)** You too can be an “overcomer”!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce