

HEROES

JUST LIKE

YOU!

BY:

**BARBARA
WESTBERG**

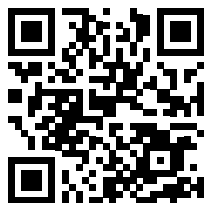


HEROES
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PARENT RESOURCES

To facilitate parent interaction with children as they read *Heroes Just Like You*, WAP Children is pleased to offer a free, downloadable “Parent’s Discussion Guide” to aid in having a conversation with your children about what they are reading in this book.

<http://pentecostalpublishing.com/heroesdownload>



What people are saying about

HEROES JUST LIKE YOU:

“Thank you, Barbara Westberg, for capturing the history of some of our great heroes of the faith. It is so important for our children today to have insight into the lives of these pillars. Barbara Westberg knows how to pull children into the story and make them feel that they can accomplish great things like these giants. There are wonderful nuggets of truth that can be taught while reading each chapter to your children. It is also a great self-read and easy to understand for children of all ages. I highly recommend this book to anyone wanting to help their child know God is great and they too can do great things for God!”

Connie Bernard

“Barbara Westberg’s book is an incredible message for this generation, emphasizing the CAP principle: Children, Adversity, and Potential. This book recognizes that the struggles children face could be forming a future of faith for them. It will inspire you to overlook your troubles and focus on the treasure! God has many heroes in the making for His Kingdom!”

Steve L. Cannon
General Sunday School Director
United Pentecostal Church International

“Once again the power of a narrative lifted me out of my life and plunged me into the lives of heroes. Wonderful, powerful heroes—most of them I knew. With many of them I have shared meals and ministry, desires and dreams, heart and history—and it all centered on Jesus Christ. My only question for Barbara Westberg is—‘When is volume two coming out?’”

P. D. Buford
Associate Editor of Word Aflame Publications

“I am so thankful that Sis. Westberg has given us this wonderful tool to help us pass down our Apostolic heritage to the next generation. This book is an excellent resource to add to any Sunday school, Christian school, or homeschool curriculum. We have enjoyed sharing and discussing these inspirational stories with our children during our family devotions.”

Jaye M. Rodenbush

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HEROES JUST LIKE YOU

by Barbara Westberg

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The chapter "Stanley Chambers" was written by Judy Bentley, daughter of S. W. Chambers.

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"Red Hair Is Special"
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The Pentecostal school teacher whose idea inspired this book. (Sorry I do not have her name, but God knows.)

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Betty Treece and Judy Bentley, who have granted permission to include the chapters they wrote.

Jody LaFleur, who graciously granted permission to quote from her father's book, *You Gotta Have the Want To*.

The families of the great men and women covered in this book. Their memories have filled in the blanks and added color to these stories.

"The godly people in the land are my true heroes!
I take pleasure in them!"

(*Psalm 16:3, New Living Translation*)



INTRODUCTION

A hero? Me? I'm not a hero. I can never be a hero because . . .

I have a disability. So did Allan Oggs. Yet God gave him power to overcome and used him to show others how they too could overcome.

I'm a misfit. Twelve-year-old Benjamin Urshan was a refugee, often without mother or father or a home. Yet he became a great evangelist and pastor.

I'm weak and I'm afraid. Carrie Eastridge felt the same way. Yet God gave her strength to build churches on an Indian reservation and in Africa.

I have been mistreated. So was Marvin Treece. Yet God gave him the determination and the smarts to become a great scholar of God's Word.

I am rejected. Seventeen-year-old Elly Hansen was cast out by her father. Yet she cared for homeless lepers and their rejected children.

I'm just an ordinary guy. Stanley Chambers felt the same way. Yet God chose him to be an extraordinary leader as the general superintendent of the United Pentecostal Church.

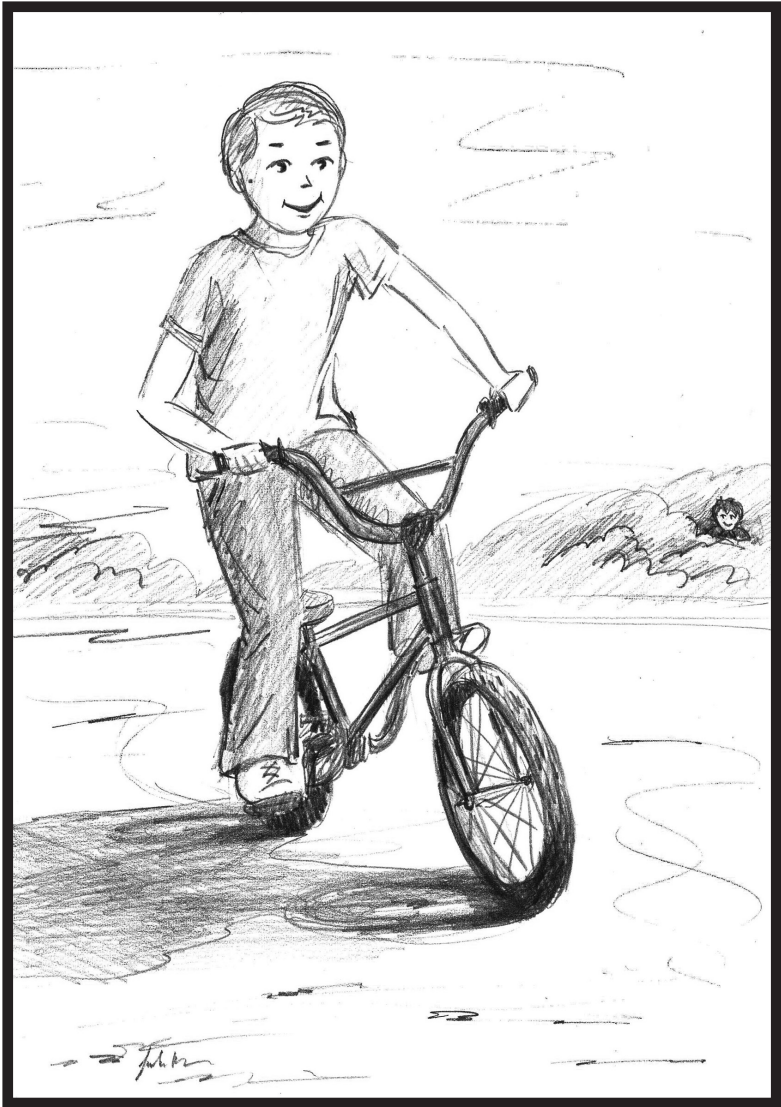
I've goofed up. So did T. W. Barnes. Yet God worked through him to heal the sick and minister to the hurting.

I live out in the middle of nowhere and go to a little church. So did W. C. Parkey. Yet God used him to inspire hundreds of people to do great things.

God can take anyone from anywhere and do anything through them. You too can become a hero just like these men and women.

What do you have to do?

Just give God a chance.



ALLAN OGGs, SR.



BIRTH REGISTRATION NOTICE

*This certifies that a certificate of birth
has been filed with the State Registrar
of Vital Statistics under*

the name of: Allan Charles Oggs

born on: September 17, 1935

In: New Orleans, Louisiana

To: Ted and Violet Oggs

THE BOY WHO WANTED TO

At the top of his want list, Allan scribbled, *bike*. He was the only boy in his class who did not have a bicycle. Oh, how he wanted to ride a bike. Watching his buddies parade by was like sand in his eyes—tough to handle. But nothing had ever been easy for Allan.

When other babies were crawling, Allan was turning over. When other toddlers were walking, he was crawling. When other boys were running, he was stumbling and falling and getting up and trying again. Even though Allan wobbled when he walked, and slurred when he talked, he did not know he was crippled. “Cripple” was a no-no word at the Oggs’s house.

“Please, Mom. Dad, I want a bike. All the guys have bikes,” Allan begged.

His parents knew that balancing on a bike would be a major challenge for him. But they wanted their son to be as much like the other boys as possible. So one day his dad brought home a bright red bicycle, the most beautiful bike that Allan had ever seen.

That day the Battle of the Bike began.

After several attempts to ride, Allan was red and black and blue—bloody, battered, and bruised. The bike was too. It was a dirty fight.

At the end of the first day, Allan leaned the bike against the porch step. He said in his garbled voice, “You had your day; tomorrow is mine. I’ll break you

tomorrow. I'll ride you. If I die, right before I die, I'm going to ride you."

The next morning he pushed the bike away from the step and climbed on . . . and fell off. He climbed on again. The wheels rolled a few feet. Allan tumbled. He got up. He was determined to conquer that wild beast.

The battle raged.

His parents watched and held their breath.

Then . . . Allan climbed on and stayed on. Not looking to the right or the left and stiff as a board, he pedaled down the street.

Mother said, "Remember, Ted, when the doctor told us that our baby had cerebral palsy?"

Dad nodded. "Yes, he said that if our son lived, he wouldn't see or walk or talk."

Cerebral palsy

is a disorder of muscle movement and coordination. It is caused by an injury to a baby's brain that occurs before birth or during infancy. It affects the part of the brain that controls body movement.

As Allan's parents talked about him, boy and bike disappeared around the corner, wobbling, but upright. They turned to watch the opposite corner, waiting for him to reappear.

Mother smiled through her happy tears, "That doctor did not know our God. Pastor Thomas came to the hospital every day to pray for our baby."

Dad added, "People all over the country prayed."

Mother pointed. "Here he comes now."

They cheered as Allan wobbled by. He grinned, but did not take his eyes off

the sidewalk ahead. Around the corner he disappeared again.

As his parents waited for him to ride around the block, his mother sighed, "It has been so hard not doing everything for him."

Allen's dad agreed, "I know, but we can't baby him. We have to let him learn."

"Here he comes again!"

This time around Allan dared to loosen one hand's grip on the handlebars long enough to wave at his cheering parents. Around and around the block the grinning boy went until he ran out of steam.

He parked his bike beside the step and fell off laughing. He pointed at the red beast and said, "I told you I would ride you."

As he walked away, he jerked to a stop, turned around, and asked, "What did you say? If you think I can't do it again, I'll climb right back on and show you."

The Battle of the Bike was over. Allan was the victor!

That was only one of the many battles that Allan fought to do the things that other children did so easily—things like jumping and climbing and writing. Anything that required coordination, even drinking from a glass, was a struggle.

His favorite form of therapy was playing ball with his preacher dad. One big problem was his right arm. It had a mind of its own. He never knew what it was going to do—flop or drop, jerk or shirk.

His dad wound up and pitched. "Here it comes, Son. Catch!"

Allan looked up, slung his arms, wobbled backward, and fell. He got up, stumbled over to the ball, and picked it up. He gave his dad a crooked grin and slung the ball.

Crash! Allan's mouth fell open. The ball had cracked the windshield on their car.

The game went on.

Allan wanted to play sports, so he participated in every school track event, except pole-vaulting. The teachers drew a line on that one. So what if he came in last every time? He was running, and he was having fun.

When the neighborhood boys chose teams for a game, Allan waited on the sideline, hands in his pockets, head down.

"It's your turn to take him," one captain said.

"No," argued the other. "It's your turn."

It was always the same . . . unless Allan's best friend, John Cupit, was playing. John was the best athlete in the neighborhood. The captains knew that if they wanted John, they had to take Allan too. It was a package deal.

As Allan grew, he was no longer content to always be last. He wanted to be the top dog, to lead, to win. But how? Everyone else could run faster, ride longer, answer quicker. All he could do was make people laugh. Oh, no one ever laughed *at* him . . . at least, not that he knew of. But they did laugh *with* him because he was the funniest guy in the class.

When Allan was about twelve, he got into a fight with another boy his age named Fritzi. Allan swung his fist, but his contrary right arm flopped. He swung again. Missed. He could not hit the face in front of him, so he stuck out his chin and dared his opponent, "Hit me."

Fritzi shook his head. "I can't."

"Ah-ha! You're scared," Allan taunted him.

"No. I'm not scared. I can't hit you because you're a cripple."

Cripple! The word exploded in Allan's brain like a fourth of July sparkler. He was a cripple. All those "oops" moments, the spilled water, the stumbling, the things that meant nothing to him before, suddenly fell into place. He was shattered.

Tears clouded his steps as he stumbled home. Slamming the bedroom door behind him, he crashed on his bed. *I'm a cripple. I'm a cripple. The girls won't ever like me. I'll never be like the other kids. I'll always be last . . . at everything!*

The door opened, and Allen's mother marched in. She sat down on the edge of the bed.

Allan poured out his fears. "I can't . . . I'm not . . . I'll never!"

His mother did not touch him or shed one tear. Her hard, wise words echoed in Allan's head. "Don't you ever feel sorry for yourself, Allan Charles Oggs! You are blessed. You can walk. You can talk. You can see. You can play ball. You can ride a bike. You can do anything you want to do."

As she left the room, she turned and said, "As long as you live, don't ever forget what I've told you." He never forgot, but he was almost grown before he believed it.

That day was a turning point in Allan's life. The physical problems he had taken for granted became huge mental blocks. While he struggled to adjust to who he was and what he was, he got into all kinds of trouble—drinking, smoking, cussing, shoplifting, even breaking and entering.

One evening Allan was looking for a snack in the kitchen when someone knocked on the front door. His dad went to the door.

A policeman stood there. "Are you Ted Oggs, the pastor of the Pentecostal church here in Kenner?"

"Yes, sir. How may I help you?"

"May I come in?" the policeman asked.

"Certainly. Come into the kitchen. Let's have a cup of coffee."

Allan's heart pounded so hard, his shirt quivered. He just knew the policeman was coming for him because of all the trouble he had caused. He wanted to run, but his legs had turned to Jell-O. He held his breath and stared out the kitchen window. *If I don't look at them, maybe they will forget I'm here.*

As the policeman sipped his coffee, he said, "Your son broke into the neighbor's house and stole some of her knick-knacks. She is threatening to file charges against him."

Without moving his head, Allan peeked at this dad. Tears were flowing down his dad's whiskered cheeks. Allan grimaced. His thoughts whirled like a pinwheel. *Slap me. Punch me. But, Dad, please don't cry. I don't want to hurt you. I don't know why I do all that stupid stuff.*

After the policeman left, Dad said, "Son, I will get you out of this one, but never again."

Knowing that his dad was not going to cover for him again scared Allan, but not enough to stop his crime spree. He just determined not to get caught.

Allan's early teen years were tough ones—for him and for his parents.

All that changed one Thursday night the summer before Allan turned sixteen. A man who had been in prison spoke at their church. He made Allan think. *I don't want to spend my life in prison. But I am so confused. God, if You will somehow clear my head, then we will have a deal.*

When the altar call was made, Allan stumbled down the aisle. As he sobbed and repented, God understood every garbled word. The confusion lifted. Allan felt clean. He was free. As he praised God, he began to speak in a language he had not learned. He got up from the altar grinning from ear to ear. Wow! Getting the Holy Ghost was even better than winning the Battle of the Bike.

That night God turned the boy who was headed toward a life in prison toward the pulpit. The boy who wanted to lead started down the right path.

THE MAN WHO GOT TO

Allan returned to school a different kid. His friends in crime avoided him like he had eaten garlic. But Allan had never had trouble making friends. Soon he had gathered a whole new set.

While he had many friends in high school, some aspects of his disability made him self-conscious. As soon as the lunch bell rang, he would grab his brown bag and head for a corner of the school ground. Not once during his four years at Kenner High did he set foot

in the cafeteria. He could not carry his food tray from the line to the table, and he refused to ask for help.

When he was a sophomore, he started thinking about the future. "I'd like to be a doctor or a preacher. I can't decide," he told his parents.

His dad chuckled. "Do you know how much it costs to be a doctor?"

Allan had not a clue. He did some research and was shocked. He thought, *It costs a fortune to go to medical school. Maybe I should be a preacher. Bible college is a lot cheaper.*

When he told his dad what he was thinking, his dad said, "That is not a good reason for being a preacher. You'd better pray about it."

About this time Mr. Landry from the state rehabilitation department came to Kenner High. "Allan, because of your disability the state will pay for your education—room, board, and tuition. You can go to any college you choose."

I can be a doctor, after all, Allan thought. Doctors make a lot more money than preachers.

The state rehabilitation department

provides an education and/or therapy for people with disabilities so they can achieve their potential and support themselves.

But the more Allan prayed, the more he felt God turning him toward the pulpit. The more he talked about preaching, the more people reminded him of all the reasons he could not preach. "You can barely talk. No one could understand you." "You are

too unsteady on your feet. What if you fell in front of everyone?" "You? Preach? No way."

Mr. Landry pressured him. "You need to decide which college you want to attend and start the paper work."

Allan went to God. "If You really are calling me to preach, then let me be asked to preach the next youth rally." All the while Allan was thinking, *That's not about to happen. I've never even testified more than a dozen words in my life.*

Ring-ring-ring.

"Oggs's residence. Allan speaking."

"Brother Allan, would you be the speaker at our next youth rally?"

God was erasing all doubt from Allan's mind.

At the youth rally Allan walked to the pulpit and read his text. He felt God's warm hand touch the top of his head and massage him all the way to his toes. Without notes he preached for almost an hour.

At the end of the service, people crowded around to compliment him. But Allan dashed for a Sunday school room and fell on his knees. "Lord, there is so much about You that I don't understand; but if You will occasionally let me feel what I felt tonight in the pulpit, I will preach for You the rest of my life."

Allan's decision was made. "I want to go to the Pentecostal Bible Institute in Tupelo, Mississippi," he told Mr. Landry. "I am going to be a preacher."

Mr. Landry's eyebrows went up. "You? A preacher? But . . . but you can't."

But Allan could and he would. Finally, Mr. Landry threw up his hands. The state of Louisiana would pay for

Allan Oggs, the guy with the herky-jerky walk and the mumbly-jumbly talk, to go to Bible college.

Life in the dorm at PBI was another challenge for Allan.

"I can't shave in front of all those guys," Allan wailed to John Cupit, his roommate.

"Don't worry. I'll bring hot water to our room," his best buddy said.

Buttons were another big problem. Someone had to button the top button of Allan's shirt and tie his tie. Thank God for John.

Another major hurdle was writing. His handwriting looked like Chinese. With his sense of humor, Allan often turned this to his advantage. When he didn't know the answer to a question, he made sure his scribbling was not legible. Often the teacher was embarrassed to ask him to read it and marked it correct.

During the first year of Bible college, Allan realized that if he were willing to pay the price, he could be, not just a good preacher, but a great preacher. He remembered his mother's words, "You can do anything you want to." For once, the guy who wanted to lead believed he could.

At the end of his second year he married Gwenelda Vanderoff.

At the end of his third year when he graduated, Allan and Gwenelda were expecting a baby. They loaded everything they owned in a small trailer and headed for Port Sulphur, Louisiana, to take care of his dad's daughter work. The guy everyone said could not preach was preaching.

The years rolled by as the Oggses pastored, evangelized, and reared three children, Allan Jr., Debra, and Jody. They moved to St. Louis where Brother Oggs worked in the Youth Department of the United Pentecostal Church. He traveled all over the country promoting youth work.

He was a guest speaker on Dr. James Dobson's *Focus on the Family* radio program. People around the world listened in awe to his amazing story.

His highest honor came when he was asked to preach at the general conference of the United Pentecostal Church at Miami, Florida. Everyone in the UPC knew him. They knew how he walked, how he talked. He was accepted. He could relax. Allan Oggs, the guy with the herky-jerky walk and the mumbly-jumbly talk, preached to thousands.

The boy who wanted to had arrived—he was the man who got to.

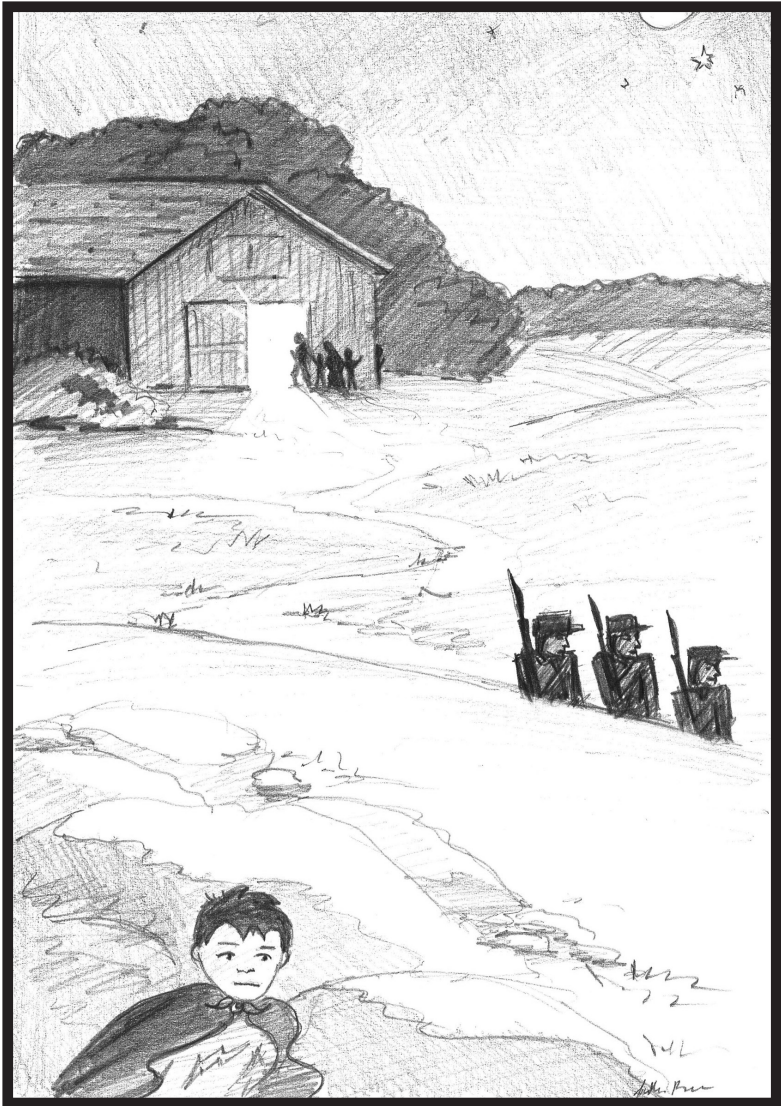
JUST LIKE YOU

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

Allan was just like you. He had dreams and he had disabilities. You may have poor coordination or be dyslexic or stutter or (you fill in the blank). Whatever your obstacle, you can overcome it . . . if you want to. Like

Allan won the Battle of the Bike and many other battles, you, too, can be a winner. Make up your mind, ask God for help, and do it!

Material for this chapter is condensed from You Gotta Have the Want To by Allan C. Oggs, Sr. with Sherry Andrews. Permission to use it was granted by Jody LaFleur, daughter of Allan Oggs, Sr.



BENJAMIN URSHAN