

Tony Hawk

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TONY HAWK

PROFESSIONAL SKATEBOARDER

TONY HAWK

WITH SEAN MORTIMER

 HarperCollins e-books

TO MY FAMILY:

THANK YOU FOR ALL OF THE LOVE,
LAUGHTER, AND SUPPORT

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INTRO

It wasn't always cool to be a skateboarder. Today, if you wear skate shoes and baggy pants you look like most of the youth population. It's the "in" look. People of every age all over the world play skateboarding video games and know the name of complex skate tricks. If you turn on the TV there's a good chance you'll see skateboarding in a commercial or a contest. But back in the late '70s, when I started, skating was on its way out.

By the time I was obsessed with skateboarding, it was a geeky fad that only weirdos and nerds continued to do—at least that's what my schoolmates told me. I was used to hearing their taunts, though. I was twelve years old, and I was the only skater in my school. I didn't look like anybody else. Scabs covered my knees and elbows, and my clothes were ripped because I was always falling while trying new tricks. Everybody else in school had Nikes or Adidas, and I had blue high-top Vans or Converse Chuck Taylors with gray duct tape crisscrossing the toe. I had to tape them together because they were falling apart from kneesliding. My days at school were spent keeping my head down, doing my schoolwork, and counting the seconds until the final bell rang, signifying freedom. That bell allowed me to go to the local skatepark, Del Mar Skate Ranch, and skate until closing.

The days and nights spent at the skatepark saved me. All my problems—my lack of skate friends who lived close by, my tiny size, the fact that I was a walking scab collection—evaporated once I walked through the entrance door to the skatepark. I worked out any problem by skating.

Skating also taught me the meaning of focus and perseverance. One time at Del Mar when I was trying to learn a new trick, I set it up with an easy trick called a 50-50. It was simple; I just needed to grind both my trucks on the edge of the concrete bowl. I had done thousands of times before. I could do it in my sleep. This time, though, I got stuck on the edge and started to fall. I put my hands in front of my face to protect it, but unfortunately, it was too late. My face bounced off the concrete. My mouth was full of blood.

Dazed, I stood up, and walked to the manager's office. My legs wobbled, and I couldn't walk in a straight line due to my semiconscious state. My mouth felt weird, and when I ran my tongue against my front teeth, a bolt of pain blasted through my head. I wanted to start crying—the pain was that bad. I had broken my front teeth in half. Both were now nubs, half their original height, and sensitive, exposed nerves dangled from the end of each. My parents, who had grown used to the occasional skatepark emergency calls, picked me up and drove me to a dentist, who capped my teeth. A few months later I was goofing around in a mellow part of Del Mar, and I slammed on my face again. This time I knocked my front teeth off entirely. Like the old saying goes, if at first you don't succeed, try, try again.



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Slamming didn't bother me, because I knew that was the price I had to sometimes pay to learn a new trick. And when I finally landed it, I knew it was all worth it. Afterward, I immediately push myself to learn a harder trick. My time spent on a skateboard built up my confidence. It didn't bother me that I didn't have a girlfriend or wasn't the popular guy at school. All I cared about was rolling around with other skaters at the park and having fun. And as far as skating goes, not much has changed since then.

1: MANIAC KID

I was an accident. My mom laughs and shakes her head no whenever I say that, but it's the truth. She prefers to say I was a surprise. My parents, who were both in their forties when I came along, thought they'd finished raising kids. When my mom had me, she was in the middle of completing her college education and my dad worked as a salesman. My oldest sister, Lenore, was off at college, my other sister, Patricia, had just graduated from high school, and Steve, my brother, was twelve years old when I, the screaming baby wrapped in a blue blanket, came home.

I was an absolute nightmare for the first decade of my life. I began committing offenses when I was still in my crib and barely able to walk, but I never felt anything but love from my family.

Because my dad worked full-time and my mom was at school, they hired an elderly, sweet nanny to watch me. I knew she loved me, but I didn't like the fact that she had control over when I ate, slept, and played. One of my earliest memories is of trying to score a direct hit on her using any toy within my hand's reach. I'd often wake up in my crib just in time to spot her peering in on me. Whenever I saw her head of willowy white, I'd grab the nearest toy and launch it at her. I rarely succeeded in hitting her, but my trying was enough to make her quit.

I tortured a list of nannies and treated some better than others. But I treated my parents worst of all. My mom has dozens of embarrassing stories of me and my spastic temper. Once when she told me I was old enough to sleep in my own bed, in my own room, I thought differently and decided to take matters into my own hands. When I thought my parents were asleep, I began the first stage of my special operations mission. I got on my hands and knees and crawled below my parents' line of sight, or so I thought. I slinked down the hallway like a worm. Slowly and somewhat quietly, I pushed open the door to their room. Staying low, I silently crept to the edge of the bed, ready to crawl up quietly and sneak in under the covers. When I looked up to start my climb, Mom was there staring me down. I shook my fists at her, knowing my plan had been foiled. As I crawled back to my room, I swore in my mind to extract revenge at a later date.

Another time soon after, my parents sent me to bed early—probably so that they could get some well-deserved, relaxing time to themselves. I was so annoyed that I had to go to sleep while they were still up having fun, that I yanked all the sheets, pillows, and blankets off my bed. Carrying everything down the hall, I sat on the stairs and one by one threw everything at them. A shower of bedding rained down on them while they watched TV and just pretended not to notice.

My parents had to stop having guests over, because they couldn't predict how I would act. One time when I was about five years old, they thought I'd mellowed enough to invite some friends over. I ended up crawling on the table and upsetting the place settings, not to mention my parents. Needless to say, after that they didn't have any guests over for years.

No matter what I did, my parents still showered me with love. They were incapable of

being disappointed with me. One of my parents' friends summed it up best when she told my mom she thought I was spoiled rotten.

"He's not spoiled rotten," my mom replied, "he's loved."

"Well, then he's loved rotten," the friend said.

THE GREAT ESCAPE

From the time I was two, I knew I had my parents wrapped around my finger. There weren't a lot of problems I couldn't solve with a massive temper tantrum. After a while, my parents always caved in to my demands. Naturally, I thought the whole world would be as easy to manipulate.

Cold hard reality smacked me in the face moments after my dad dropped me off at Christopher Robin Preschool. I was three and short for my age. I stared up at the tall chain-link fences that surrounded the school. They seemed as high as skyscrapers—impossible to climb over to escape. I couldn't believe my parents would leave me in such a horrible place. The first day was the worst of my young life. Every day we had to run through a fire drill. We'd file outside and silently wait for instructions from the teachers. At lunchtime we were forced to sit with our head in our hands and keep silent for a minute before we ate. At that point, I don't think I'd ever maintained a full minute of silence.

The absolute worst torture the school inflicted on me was the forced nap time. I was hyper, to say the least, and I had to be running around, tapping my feet, or deeply involved in an activity or else I went bananas from boredom. I still have nightmares about trying to stay still on my sleep mat, squeezing my eyes shut as the teacher walked around checking on us. I never once fell asleep.

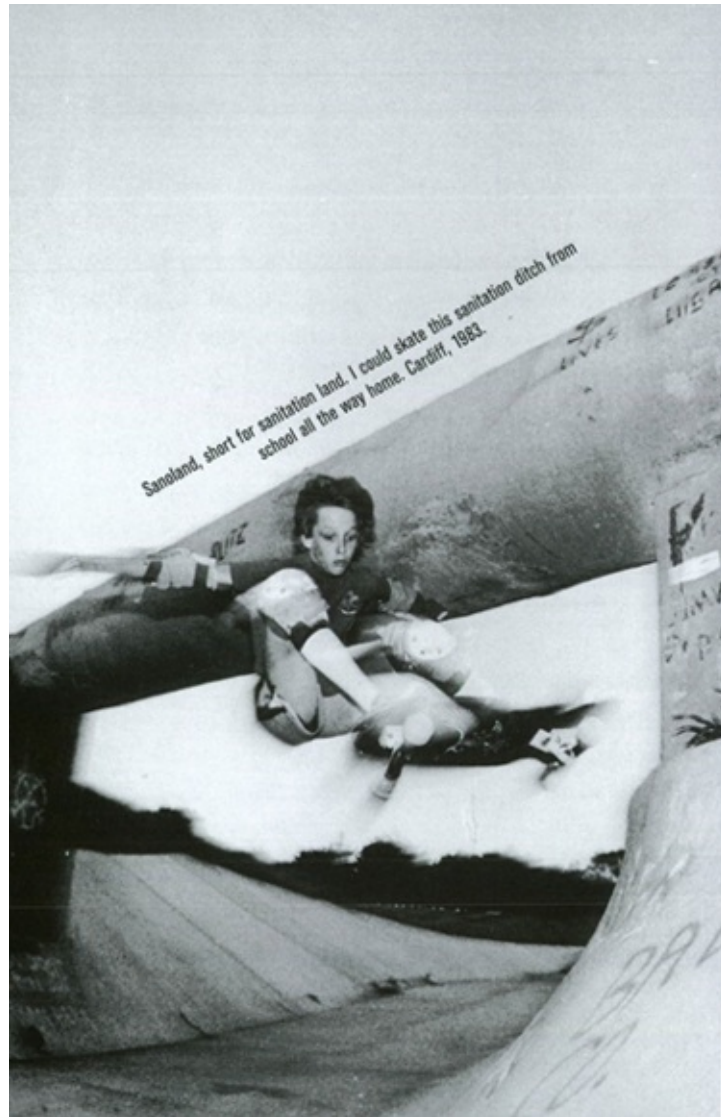
My terror of preschool became so great that one time my sister Lenore visited me at school and I grabbed her leg like a drowning person and wouldn't let go. I had to be pried off.

I knew I needed to get away from there, so after a few months I became obsessed with escaping. I devised a plan. I would cry. It wasn't rocket science or anything, but it worked with my parents, so I figured it would work with my teachers, too.

The next day, after my dad dropped me off, I ran to the fence and locked my fingers onto it as tightly as I could. I shook the fence and started bawling. I'm not talking little weepy tears; snot was bubbling out of my nose, my eyes turned red, and my head whipped from side to side to ward off any teacher who tried to get close. Eventually, a few teachers would pull me away, but the next day I repeated the process.

After a few weeks of this, my dad was called into the office. Half an hour later he picked me up from class, and we drove home. I had done it! I had beaten the dreaded preschool in a test of wills. They had informed Dad that I was formally expelled. My dad thought it was funny. Instead of punishing me, he bought me an electric red toy car that I could sit in and drive, even though we couldn't really afford it. My mom says she watched me from the

kitchen, zooming around, smacking into furniture with the biggest smile on my face. She commented to my dad, “Just what the world needs, another dropout with a slick car.”



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2: SPAZ, THAT'S ME!

When I think back on all the terrible things I did to my parents, I don't know why they put up with me. One time when my mom couldn't find a baby-sitter and had to register for college classes, she was forced to take me along with her. We had to wait in line for half an hour. My mom refused to let me run around and pillage the college campus on my own. She held my hand tight, so I couldn't escape. I became so mad that I began kicking her in the shins. I didn't stop until we had left. She was forced to register later.

I'm not proud of my attitude as a child. Now, I understand that part of my problem was my diet. My parents usually let me eat what I wanted. They had little choice—I would throw a temper tantrum if I didn't get it. Not a little angry fit; these were atomic bombs of tantrums. I freaked out so much that my mom finally let me have my own shopping cart when we went to the grocery store. I filled it with junk food. I ate sugar-coated cereals and ice cream every day. I drank more Coke than water. All the sugar and caffeine cranked me up into a frenzy, and once it mixed with my overachieving determination, I could barely control myself.

It didn't get much better when we would eat in a restaurant, which due to my behavior wasn't often. I'd order the largest meal and milk shake on the menu. My dad would lean over and warn me that if I drank the entire milk shake, I'd be too full to eat a balanced meal. I'd throw a tantrum, get the milk shake, and suck it down before our food came—and always without fail, I'd be too full to eat anything. It got so bad that my mom stopped ordering and I ate my leftovers. She always had a complete meal.

DETERMINATION

I had an overactive sense of determination, which exploded whenever I was involved in anything competitive. If I was playing a video game like Pac-Man with my brother and lost, I would throw a spaz. If I thought I was losing at checkers, I'd flip the board up, spraying checkers all over the room. If somebody had something I wanted, such as a Frisbee, I'd have to have it. If there were three or four people with Frisbees, it wasn't enough that they share one with me—I had to have them all! I was a brat of Godzilla proportions.

When I was five, my mom thought it would be a neat idea to teach me to play tennis. She explained the rules and gently lobbed a fuzzy green ball over the net to me. I charged forward, wound my arm up like a slingshot, and hammered the ball as hard as I could directly at her. The ball blasted from my racquet and scored a direct hit on her. She laughed and told me to calm down. (She later told me that watching me run as fast as my little legs could propel me almost gave her a laughing fit.) But without fail, every ball I smacked shot over the net like a missile and either ricocheted off my mom or missed her by a mile. She stopped after a few hits and called me over.

“Now, Tony,” she said with a smile, “I think you’re trying to hit me on purpose.”

I was so hyper that I jumped back and forth on my feet like a tap dancer.

“If you don’t want to play nice, I’ll stop playing and go home,” she said.

I stopped thinking about blasting more balls. I didn’t even really want to play anymore. What was the point of playing a game if you didn’t try to demolish your opponent?

My mom says she and my dad put up with all my cruddy attitude because they felt sorry for me. She realized I was a lot harder on myself than I was on them. She saw all the goals set and my days spent trying to meet them. My parents were smart enough to realize that if they tried to interfere, it would frustrate me more. If my parents hadn’t supported my determination, I doubt I would ever have been a sponsored skateboarder, never mind a successful professional.

GIFTED?

Even though I was a preschool bad boy, I actually enjoyed school once I was free of nap time. By second grade, I wanted to be a math teacher. Like most of my other obsessions, it had to happen right away! I couldn’t wait twenty years until I finished school.

I recruited my friends from the neighborhood to meet at my house after school, I spent half an hour setting up the patio furniture in the backyard. I lined all the chairs up next to the tables and put a piece of paper with a pencil on each chair. When my “students” came, I conducted math class. I showed them how to solve problems and then walked chair-to-chair helping them if they needed it. It only lasted a few days. They didn’t seem to enjoy class as much as the instructor did.

In elementary school, I learned how far to push the limits without being annoying. I was pretty mellow—almost shy. But I couldn’t control my boredom and constant need to fidget. The teacher would give a lesson and I’d tap my feet, flip my pencil around on the desk, look out the window—anything to keep myself amused. The weird part was that I got high grades and understood what the teacher was saying, but every day seconds stretched into minutes and minutes seemed like hours.

My mom knew I was a hyper kid but couldn’t understand why I had trouble paying attention in class. She knew I wasn’t dumb. I had learned to read, write, and count before I started school from watching *Sesame Street*. She thought my problem might be that I was understimulated.

She arranged for an IQ test, and when the results came back, we found out that I had scored a 144. This was higher than the average score and it put me in the “gifted” category. The person who administered the test explained that the cause of my frustration was that my brain was constantly telling my body to do things it couldn’t physically do. Because of this, I burned myself out trying to accomplish my goals and was usually disappointed with myself when I didn’t meet them. So I took out my frustration on my family.

My parents had a few options. They could bump me up a grade, but they figured that starting a class with kids a year older would make me even more of a nightmare. Or, they could wait until I entered third grade and bump me up to fourth-grade reading and math.

Any ideas I had about continuing my fidgeting in the fourth-grade class were demolished on my first day in reading class. The teacher whacked a smart-alecky student over the head with a pile of papers. In my third-grade mind, I figured that this was the punishment you receive if you read incorrectly. When I saw it happen, I froze, my eyes bugged out, and I was scared to move and make the teacher notice me. I was positive she would give me a thrashing for being too much of a spaz.

I convinced my parents and third-grade teacher that I wasn't ready for anything as "advanced" as fourth-grade classes, and went back to trying to stay still in third-grade reading and math.



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3: THE BEGINNING

By the time I was nine years old my brother and sisters had all moved out. I was especially close to my brother, Steve, who took my temper tantrums and spaz-outs in stride. When he hung out with his older buddies, he included me in a lot of their activities. We shared the same absurd sense of humor. He'd drop his towel and moon me in the hallway. He was my best friend, and when he moved to a college that was a four-hour drive away, I was devastated. But at least he'd visit once a month.

One day we were digging in the garage looking for something to do when Steve pulled out a dusty, blue fiberglass skateboard. It was almost half the width of today's boards and inches shorter. The wheels were tiny and the bearings rattled around from years of not being used.

"Try this," Steve said, and we went into the alley behind our house where there was a flat road with no cars. Because he was a surf freak, he naturally skateboarded.

From the mid-1950s up to the '70s, skateboarding was mainly an activity that surfers did when the waves were flat. They would ride supersketchy skateboards. In the beginning, a lot of them were handmade from cut-up rollerskates nailed to a piece of wood. In the '50s the wheels were made of steel. Imagine riding on a board with wheels that could be dented if you ran over a rock! Soon skaters began riding clay wheels. These were a little better, but they would eject the skater into the air if he hit a tiny rock or a crack in the sidewalk. Clay wheels also cracked over time and fell apart. The bearings used were loose and would often spill out, stopping the skateboard in an instant.

In the '70s skaters started using urethane instead of clay and the modern wheel was created. At first skaters used to do weird tricks like handstands and ballet routines on the boards. But a group of rowdy kids in Santa Monica called the Z-Boys (because they rode for a skate shop called Zephyr) forever changed the way people would skate. They never did the gymnastic type of skating; they copied what surfers were doing. They brought their distinctive style to empty backyard pools, which sparked the start of vertical skating as we know it today. The main stars at the time were Tony Alva, Stacy Peralta (who would later help shape my career), and Jay Adams.

My brother was never a serious skater. He did it casually for a few years and then he shoved his skateboard in the back of the garage. But he knew enough to show me how to stand and push properly. The only problem was that I couldn't turn! I pushed and drifted toward the end of the alley and either slammed into it or jumped off as my board rolled into the fence. Naturally, I whined, so Steve showed me how to turn to avoid smashing into things.

I had a good time skating that day, but to me it was the same as playing miniature golf or throwing a Frisbee around—fun, but nothing I craved doing nonstop.

About every other week I'd pull the skinny blue board out when I was bored, and would roll around in the alley by myself. Gradually, I began skating more and more. It was still nothing serious, but six months later I was skating a few times a week.



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Courtesy of Steve Hawk.

4: JOINING THE ANTS

There were a few kids in my neighborhood who skated on a casual basis. Once or twice a week we'd gather and push around on our boards and try to improve our balance. We rarely did anything besides roll up and down the flat street.

I lived in San Diego at the time, and about twenty minutes away from my house was Oasis Skatepark, which was located under the freeway overpass. Even before my brother introduced me to skating, I would scramble to the side of the car and watch the skaters below as we drove past. They were small, like ants, and the park was full of them crisscrossing by one another at high speeds as they rode through the park. I was always amazed that they never crashed into one another—at least not that I ever saw. It looked fun, but it was a world I wasn't a part of yet.

Once I started skating more often, I begged my parents to take me to Oasis. They didn't have any extra money to waste on a skatepark membership, which they knew I would never use if I didn't enjoy it. So my dad did the next best thing—he built a slant ramp in our driveway.

If there's one thing my parents are masters at, it's encouraging their kids to follow their dreams. Before Steve had his driver's license, my dad woke up every morning as the sun came up to drive him to the beach to surf before school. My dad never complained and seemed to love it. My sister, Patricia, was in a band, and my dad built her stage sets and managed the band.

My dad had a variety of jobs throughout his life. He was a pilot during World War II and the Korean War. Later, he worked as a salesman for everything from musical instruments to *Star Wars* coffee cups. He had a bit of a problem holding on to a job, because he rarely got along with bosses. Looking back, I realize he considered it his job to encourage his kids to believe they could accomplish anything, as long as they were willing to put the hard work into it. My mom was just as positive.

After a few years of my dad's unpredictable jobs, my mom started teaching and became the breadwinner of the family. If I had had different parents, I wouldn't be nearly as successful in my life. Once they saw that I enjoyed skating the driveway ramp on an old blue board, they bought me a better one that was more modern and wider with better trucks and wheels.

EXTREME PAD WEARING

In fifth grade I got the surprise of my life when a neighborhood kid asked if I wanted to go skate Oasis with him and a few other skaters. He said his mom was going to drive a van full of his friends down on the following Saturday. I begged, and whined, and explained to my

parents how horrible my life would be if they didn't let me go. They finally agreed after days of my nagging. Even though my temper had improved slightly, I was still a brat of King Kong proportions. The only difference was that by the time I was in fifth grade, my parents had become a little better at dealing with my hyper energy.

The first time I entered Oasis, I had to stop in order to take it all in. What seemed like hundreds of skaters were whipping around doing tricks on skateboards that I thought were impossible. Everybody, from older men with mustaches to young girls, was skating.

I'll never forget the blast of excitement I felt as I walked into the cluttered mobile home that Oasis Skatepark used as an office. I was finally going to be one of the tiny ants I had seen zipping around from the freeway above. People would actually look down and see me skating, and think I was a *real* skateboarder. I filled out the forms they gave me, was given a day pass, and told I needed to rent safety equipment.

My helmet was massive! It slid around on my head like I was wearing a bucket instead of a piece of safety equipment. The foam insert was damp and smelled like somebody else's mixture of sweat and shampoo. When I fastened my elbow pads, it felt like I was strapping cold slugs to my arms. I could almost see the germs moving around on them. I've done a lot of things in my life that some people consider dangerous. I've busted my teeth out many times, knocked myself unconscious a few more times, and broken some bones, but looking back, the most dangerous and brave "stunt" I ever did was to put on rental safety equipment.

Imagine going into a locker room immediately after a football game and putting on sweaty and dirty clothes that smelled like they were rinsed in the sewer—that's what putting on rental skate pads and helmets felt like. The normally soft elastic backing of the pads was so crusted with skaters' sweat that it hardened and made crunching sounds when it moved. White, crystallized salt coated the outside of the pads. If I was lucky I'd get one "fresh" kneepad, meaning that it was still damp from a previous user's sweat but at least the elastic didn't crunch. Still, I would have skated in my underwear if that was the rule. Once I walked through the entrance to Oasis, I didn't care what my equipment smelled like or how gross it felt. Luckily, once I got into skating, the first thing my parents invested in was my own safety gear.

I spent most of my first day at Oasis trying not to get run over. I practiced in a small, mellow beginner's bowl that was about as high as a curb. Then I tried to skate everything else in the park when it wasn't too crowded. I didn't stop the whole day.

During the ride home, I could tell something weird had happened. I felt different than I had in the morning. My mind was filling up with all the excitement from the skatepark. I wanted to learn so many different tricks! I realized later that for the first time I was feeling content. Even though I wasn't close to being a good skater, I felt happy thinking about all the possibilities skating had to offer. I wasn't frustrated or discouraged. That night all I thought about was what it must feel like to be able to skateboard like some of the experts at Oasis. I couldn't wait to go back again.

From that day on, my life changed, and my energy was spent trying to hook up rides at Oasis. My brother had finished school and moved back to San Diego to work for a newspaper. He had his own apartment, but once a week he'd drive me to Oasis and watch me skate. After a few months of chauffeuring me around, he became too busy at work and couldn't drive me

as often. My parents, realizing that I was a full-blown skate nut, did what came naturally for them—they made sure I made it to the park as often as possible.

A few times a week my dad would drive me to Oasis after school and watch me skate for hours, until the park closed, and then we'd drive back home. My mom was always available if my dad was busy. Many times they'd drop whatever they were doing to drive me to the skatepark.

Skating at Oasis forced me to get my first job—a paper route—so I could make money to help pay for my park pass and new skateboards. It turned out to be the only “real” job I've ever had besides skateboarding.



Courtesy of Tony Hawk.

My dad (apparently happier than me) at one of my contest winnings.

5: NO MORE TEARS

My mom tells me she is grateful to skateboarding because instead of giving them a hard time, I directed my energy at improving my skating. I was still hyper, but there would be no more crazed games of tennis. My brother said I mellowed out when I played arcade games with him.

I did other sports besides skating. I played basketball and baseball. My dad was the president of the baseball league and coach of our basketball team, and he did what he could to make sure the leagues were the best they could be. That's what made my decision to stop playing team sports so hard.

One day my dad picked me up from Oasis and drove me straight to basketball practice. I was in such a hurry that I forgot to take my kneepads off. I was running around the court without skateboarding safety equipment. My dad called me over, and I took off my pads. I looked at him, and was scared because of what I had to say.

“Dad, I'd rather skate than play basketball or baseball. I have more fun skating, and I feel like getting better.”

I expected him to freak out, after all the energy he'd put into the leagues. But he already knew what I was telling him.

“Fine by me,” he answered. With that reply, my jock days were officially over.

WISING UP

Now that school was my only distraction, all I ever did was skateboard. I didn't see any of my old, nonskater friends, because I spent every spare minute at Oasis. Life at the skatepark was a different world. Even though I was younger than most of the local skaters, everybody treated me as an equal—as a skater. Some of the best skateboarders in the world practiced there, and I would watch them and try to learn from them. I'd imitate them and occasionally ask them for help.

A weird side effect happened once I started skating nonstop—I became nicer. I remember thinking one day, “I'm tired of being a jerk to my parents.” Skating made me focus on improving myself rather than dwelling on my immature frustrations. With skating my teammates couldn't blame me for losing—because I didn't have any. I only had myself to blame. The unfortunate part of this was that I became constantly annoyed with myself for not living up to my expectations. That was the worst feeling ever.

I'd practice a single trick for hours straight. I'd fall, analyze what I did wrong, and then try it again. I did this like a broken record until I landed a trick. If I messed up, I'd solve the problem by watching other skaters or concentrating harder on the trick. I'd even think about improving as I went to sleep.

The only “person” I ever turned to with my problems was my new best friend, Zorro. One day after school, I found him digging around in a trash can. I stopped to play with him and took him home. My parents said I could keep the black-and-white cat, who at the time didn’t have a name.

My dad named him Zorro because of his facial markings, and he quickly showed that he had as much attitude as I used to. He was never afraid to pop his claws out and start slashing if someone tried to pick him up. I was the only one in the house who could pet him. (Not knowing this, one visiting skater tried to pet Zorro and was soon running around the house screaming with Zorro attached to his arm and slashing away.) He was my faithful companion for the next decade until he died in the early '90s.



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6: THE BASICS

I practiced at Oasis and learned all the basic skateboard tricks such as rock ‘n’ rolls and grinds. But once I tried to learn more advanced moves, like airs, I ran into a problem. I was too skinny. I had to wear elbow pads on my knees, because I was so skinny that nothing else would fit. I wore the smallest pads possible on my elbows, which were still too large and were constantly slipping down.

I was too light to grab airs early like everybody else. I had to work extra hard to get enough speed to propel myself out of the bowl, and if I bent down to grab, I would lose momentum. The only way I could figure out how to do airs was to pop an ollie and, once I was in the air, grab my board. At the time, it looked weird. Nobody else did anything like that. I was embarrassed about not being able to skate like everybody else—other skaters made fun of me and called me a “circus skater.” Little did I know that in ten years, they and even other skater would be doing airs using my technique.

When I decided to learn a trick, nothing could get in my way. Like the time I was learning Inverts. I knew I was close to landing one, but my dad had come to pick me up for dinner. I asked him to give me a few more tries. Then a few more. It became obvious to my dad that I wasn’t going to leave before I landed one. Half an hour later he had to pick me up, kicking and screaming and drag me to the car. I glared at him. “Dad! If you’d just let me try five hundred more times I would have had it!”

FIRST CONTEST

I was eleven years old when I entered my first contest. It was at Oasis, but I was still scared. I almost made myself sick from nerves. I was so freaked out that I couldn’t speak. During the drive to the skatepark I went over and over in my mind all the ways I could goof up. The closer we drove to the skatepark, the more I thought about telling my parents I was too scared to skate. My skateboard career almost ended before it started!

It seemed as if there were thousands of skaters entered in the contest. They came from all over Southern California to skate. I had never seen so many people at Oasis. The park was so full that it was impossible to practice. When they finally called my name to skate, I was so nervous I fell on the easy tricks. I never found out how I did, because the contest took so long that we left before the results were posted.

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