



Ten Things I Learned from Bill Porter: The Inspiring True Story of the Door-to-Door Salesman Who Changed Lives

Shelly Brady

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Bill Porter, a Watkins salesman with cerebral palsy, has been featured in a Portland Oregonian story that was reprinted in Reader's Digest and an episode of 20/20 in 1995 that is still one of their highest rated segments with the most viewer response. In March of 2002, TNT will air the made-for-television movie starring William H. Macy, Helen Mirren, and Kyra Sedgewick based on Bill's life. This book will be the only book available about Bill Porter. The book is written by a woman who first worked for Bill as a typist and driver to deliver his orders and who later became a friend and co-speaker with him. Through simple yet moving life lessons, Shelly Brady tells the story of Bill's life and how she came to know him. The "ten things" include "Mothers Know Best," "Teamwork," "Persistence Pays Off," "Don't Take No for an Answer," and "Know Your Limits But Reach Beyond Them." Included in the book will be photos of Bill growing up and a few samples of the letters and emails he receives from those who have heard his story. These lessons may sound simple, but told through the life and experiences of a man who authorities would have sent to an institution and who could have lived on disability all his life but instead chose to take a physically demanding life of a door to door salesman in the worst neighborhood of Portland (without pay, only commissions), they become powerful beacons to those of us with fewer obstacles, perhaps, but more resistance to living fully. Bill Porter graduated from high school at the age of 22 because he first had to go through a special school for the handicapped, even though his only handicaps are physical and not mental. Rather than take disability, he sought a job and eventually was able to sell Watkins products door to door because he would work totally on commission and took on a territory no one else wanted. He went on to become the top grossing salesman in Portland, the Northwest, and the U.S. Bill has found ways to live the life he wants regardless of the nay-sayers around him. Whether it is finding cooperative bellmen at the hotel downtown to button his cuffs and tie his shoes or beaming a video to his speaking engagements because of ill-health, Bill gets the job done. And he does it all with a smile and a wave and without one moment of doubt or self-pity. The world may not need the vanilla and other household products that Bill Porter peddles door to door, but it sure does need more Bill Porters.

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