

Zig Ziglar

By: Helen V Hutchings

The Great Motivator



Ziglar family photo, taken by professional photographer and fellow-traveler-in-life David Irvin, shows Zig and Jean surrounded, left to right, by daughter Cindy Ziglar Oates, son and company CEO Tom Ziglar, daughter Julie Ziglar Norman, her husband Jim Norman, and Tom's wife Chachis Ziglar on far right.

Volumes have been written about him—and he's written volumes himself—27 at last count with his 28th, *Embrace the Struggle*, just released in October. Along the way he's helped so many others clarify their thinking about themselves, in matters related to both business and personal life.

Hilary Hinton Ziglar, whom most simply call Zig, is well-grounded and plain speaking. His common sense approach and delivery have enabled him to successfully encourage and motivate others. Gradually his motivational speaking developed into full time work and led to establishing his company in Plano, Texas, the Zig Ziglar Corporation, offering public seminars, customized educational programs, workshops and keynote speakers, all focused on personal and professional development. Ziglar has called Texas home since moving there in 1968. More recently, Zig has put his name toward the establishment of the Zig Ziglar Center for Ethical Leadership at Southern Nazarene

University located in greater Oklahoma City.

As Ziglar recognizes, and wrote in his 1998 book *Success for Dummies*, the profession he chose—public and motivational speaking—was virtually non-existent prior to the 1960s. As American business changed and companies expanded, employees, particularly those in sales and marketing of a product, sometimes got discouraged or just felt lost. Behavior scientists have long recognized man as a social animal. So helping people recognize they are not alone with the problems or challenges they face and, more importantly, helping them deal with them, gave rise to the type of speaking and presentations at which Ziglar excels.

Zig Ziglar's effectiveness reaching others—regardless of age, cultural background or profession—has origins in his own life experiences. Born in southern Alabama, raised in Yazoo City, Mississippi, Zig was the tenth of twelve children. No surprise then that the work ethic was instilled in him early on and reinforced by the death of his father when Zig was nearly six years old. A succession

of youthful jobs—each of which contributed its own “lesson” to Zig's growing understanding—saw him through high school, following which he applied to join the Naval Air Corps.

War ended, military service ended, and newly married to his beloved “Redhead”, as he lovingly refers to Jean, his wife of now 63 years, Zig's career begins—sorta. As with most things in this life, finding his life's work didn't occur in a straight-line. Discovery came with each new experience, helping Zig refine and define himself and his work—or as he phrases it in the title to the third section of his very readable autobiography, published in 2002 and simply titled *Zig*, “Three Steps Forward, Two Steps Back.”

Space here doesn't permit sharing all the details but, just as that section title indicates, there have been some marvelous high points and some truly devastating lows. Beyond a doubt, the lowest of the lows occurred in their personal, as opposed to professional, lives when their first-born,

together, talk more and have more fun than ever. Those are just some of the reasons I frequently tell audiences that if she ever leaves me I'm going with her.”

Early on Ziglar set a mission for himself which he expresses as wanting, “to be a difference maker in the lives of enough people to make a positive difference in the world.” In turn, as success has come to him, his desire to continue to make a difference for others inspired and precipitated establishing his legacy Zig Ziglar Center for Ethical Leadership at Southern Nazarene University. Although very much in its infancy, the program, under the direction of Tony Griffin, has organized a lecture series bringing together students and community leaders and developed a scholars program for undergraduate students. Additional programs will be added as the Center continues to grow with each new program directed toward fulfilling the mandate, Developing an Ethical Climate within Organizations, as set for it by the man whose name it bears, Zig Ziglar.

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daughter Suzan, died of pulmonary fibrosis just days after her 46th birthday.

Ziglar's strength comes from the understandings that he's gained through the need to cope with events of his own life. He also credits his profound faith. The result is a man who, simply put, is able to connect effectively with others as is clearly shown by a few quotations gleaned from some of Zig's books and speeches.

His common sense approach is demonstrated by, “Everyone in any profession is a salesman. Patients won't return to a dentist or doctor if that professional doesn't treat them politely or with consideration. The same applies to just about every profession you can think of—including sales!”

When asked to comment on divorce, Zig observes, “Our divorce rate would drop dramatically if men and women ‘delivered’ in marriage what they ‘sold’ in courtship... (namely) thoughtful, loving, considerate little actions for each other.” Concurrently if speaking about his own 63-year marriage with Jean, Zig unabashedly says, “Today, we are more in love than ever; we do more things

There's an irony surrounding this article that you are reading about Ziglar's philosophy that Zig himself is sure to enjoy. The publisher of this magazine, Josh Cates, knew of Zig, but had never attended any of the Ziglar seminars, or read any of Zig's books, or listened to any of his tapes. During the time this writer has been reading and learning in order to be able to write this piece, Josh Cates has been engaged in efforts to grow and strengthen his publishing company. Many of the concerns and issues that Josh mentioned he was dealing with were echoed or addressed by something Zig had written or recorded. It was a natural progression to encourage Publisher Cates to read some of Ziglar's books and listen to some of the tapes as he would likely find Zig's ideas helpful as he develops his plan and furthers his goals for himself and his business. And indeed within a few weeks of listening to and reading Ziglar's thoughts, Josh's publishing company released its newly written and adopted Code of Ethics and Conduct, a document clearly reflecting that Zig Ziglar advice and counsel had found yet another admirer. **S**