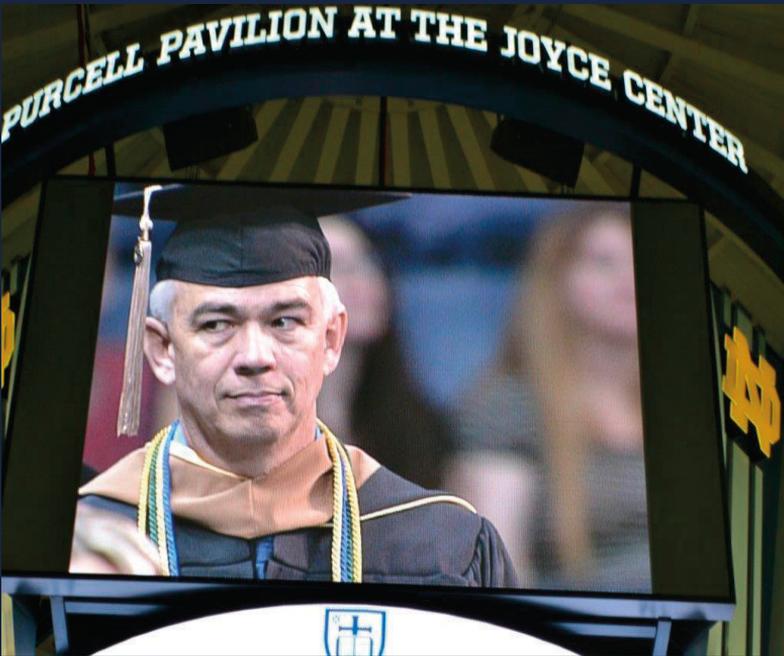


# 27 *Seconds*



*Jack W. Rolfe*

# *27 Seconds*

*Discovering Your Life Changing  
Moments*

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This book is dedicated to all those individuals who desire to join me in making a positive change in the world one student at a time, one family at a time, one school at a time, one community at a time; and then one nation at a time.

Proceeds from Jack Rolfe's speaking engagements will be donated to the following organizations:

Play Like A Champion Today Initiative

University of Notre Dame MNA Program

Rudy Foundation

School of Life Foundation

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~ Kristin Sheehan, Co-Director

*Play Like A Champion Today Initiative: Character Education Through Sports  
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### *Foreword*

A familiar slogan in Notre Dame sport’s lore is “Play Like a Champion Today.” Using only the phrase “Play Like a Champion” would provide a robust mantra; but the inclusion of the word “Today” packs a more powerful punch and provides the hidden ingredient for a virtuous life. The Greeks had two words for time: *chronos* and *kairos*. *Chronos* is chronological time that can be measured in minutes and months; but “Today” is likened to *kairos*, which is the here and now—God’s time. Whereas *chronos* is quantitative, *kairos* is qualitative. It measures moments, not minutes. Further, it refers to the *right* moment, the opportune moment, the perfect moment. Jack shares his “Today” experience, his *kairos* of “27 seconds” that changed his life; and I hope you will allow his experience to motivate you to change yours.

When we hear the word Champion, our minds might jump instantly to the image of the elite athlete with remarkable statistics or the highly-skilled team holding the trophy at the end of a tournament. Jack Rolfe, in *27 Seconds*, eloquently expresses that this vision is much too narrow. Every person can be a Champion as they strive to become the best version of themselves. Becoming a Champion in life does not happen automatically; you must believe in yourself and set a plan in motion to realize your true life potential.

Champions care about excellence of character and have a strong desire to succeed, but always with integrity. Champions love to compete and thus honor the “game of life.” Champions are self-motivated and take responsibility for their actions. Champions make mistakes, but persist in the face of failure. Champions are other-centered and devote their life work for the good of our world. Champions are made, not born. Jack’s work is here to inspire and guide you in discovering how you can become a Champion in your life.

The cardinal virtues are the central human qualities that mark excellence of personal character. Champions strive to embody these virtues of Fortitude, Prudence, Justice and Temperance. Jack’s book challenges you to incorporate these cardinal virtues into the person you are, how you act and what your mark will be on the world.

Fortitude is pursuing your goals with courage and persistence. Jack provides you with the inspiration to engage in meaningful life goal-setting. Research reveals that when you write your goals on paper, you will be more motivated to strive to achieve them. Jack gives you the physical lines as encouragement to dream big and set a plan in motion to make your dreams a reality. Embrace Jack’s challenge by writing your goals and striving daily, weekly and yearly with fortitude to reach them.

The cardinal virtue of Prudence means sound decision-making. Living a prudent life is doing the right things for the right reasons, even when no one is looking. Jack reveals how he made the world a better place with his many talents. Jack gives you motivation to discover your special talents and then urges you to “take action to bring these talents and skills forward” by making prudent decisions in your life.

The cardinal virtue of Justice is treating others with care and respect. Jack discloses that being highly-motivated and becoming successful in life mean nothing if you do them for self-

aggrandizement. You must give back to others to lift each other up. The mandate that Justice requires is to “bless the world.”

Finally, the cardinal virtue of Temperance is leading a balanced life and maintaining control. Jack’s example of living with temperance means rooting your life in your faith and recognizing God’s ultimate plan for you.

Jack inspires you to find “perseverance, persistence, hope, energy to fulfill your dreams, power to overcome, force to achieve as the underdog, ability to accomplish what others say you cannot and your will to win in life.” This epitomizes a virtuous life...the life of a genuine Champion...Jack’s life...YOUR life. As you embark upon reading this book, take a deep breath and, in the pause before you exhale, believe that you can find your inner Champion and strive toward living a virtuous life, to find your “27 seconds,” your “Today” moment to touch the world so that the world will be forever altered in goodness.

*~ Kristin Sheehan*

*Everyone has a*

*“27 Seconds”*

~~~~~

*~ Where it began for me*

The year was 1967 and it was a wintry day in February. The setting was the small farming community of Ririe, located in Southeastern Idaho. Ririe's population was approximately five hundred people—and on that day I believed I was the most important resident. I remember the day being so cold that I was bundled up in my old winter coat with fake Eskimo fur lining the hood. The stage was the backyard of the Rowan Apartments where I lived with my mom, dad and older brother, Russell, who was my only sibling. This small complex of four attached units was next door to the Kraft Cheese Factory; the railroad tracks were running seventy-five feet from where I stood. At seven years of age I felt as if I were on the top of the world. I was completely focused, for it was fourth down with one yard to go. I took the snap from myself and then leaped into the pile of boxes I had set up in a snowdrift. Yes! I made the needed yard then jumped up while spiking the worn and tattered football into the snow. I was leading my team to victory just like my hero Bart Starr had led his Green Bay Packers—whom I loved—to their first Super Bowl triumph. I loved sports and I was living my dream! This humble beginning is my first memory of reaching out with a youthful passion to fulfill the dreams I had; the dreams we all have.

That setting was make-believe, but visualizations or imagined successes are how it starts for us all. A vision of who you are to become is placed inside; and it is up to you to find and become that person. This process starts at an early age as we begin to discover our natural desires and talents. Gifts that we have been given from God fill our soul and start to blossom. A foundation is laid for us to recognize and realize our purpose in life, which is unique for every person. That purpose is comprised of the dreams that you aspire to attain using your gifts and talents.

I realized early that athletics were one of my passions and were something I had been blessed with a talent for. My love of athletics and competition inspired me to participate in as many different sports as I could while growing up. I was born in Rigby, Idaho, and lived with my family in a trailer before moving to Ririe and residing in the very small apartment where my imagined football games were held. My mother, Irene Alice Russell, was born and raised in Canada. She, too, had a meager beginning: she dropped out of school in the eighth grade. My father, Dee Rolfe, grew up on a small farm in Southern Idaho and joined the Navy upon leaving high school. While we lived in Ririe, Mom worked at the post office and Dad was employed at a local gas station and as a high school basketball referee. My brother, Russell, and I did not have many things in common growing up, but did fight like brothers often do. We are now good friends. I lived with my family in Ririe until I graduated from high school and moved on with the next chapters of my life.

Even in my small hometown, I found many activities to participate in: from little league to high school I played football, baseball, softball, basketball, track and field, volleyball, ping pong, bowling, and anything else that had a ball involved. I played with passion, and often found myself sporting an injury from one of my many activities. I spent much time in a physical therapist's office receiving treatment for one injury or another.

The ongoing experience as a young patient gave me a yearning to pursue my education and become a physical therapist myself. In wanting to reach my educational goals, I found a desire to become the valedictorian at my high school graduation. Since I was still only in junior high school when I set this goal, my mom gave gentle caution that being valedictorian was a great goal, but I should realize that I may not attain this lofty achievement. My mother's well-meaning advice only fueled my desire to become valedictorian; and, for the first time in my life I felt

motivated by someone telling me that I possibly could not achieve what I set out to do. Wow! This experience ignited in my soul a power enabling me to accomplish whatever I set my mind to! From that day forward, I came to welcome situations when people tell me that I may not or will not attain the visions of success I see in my future. In fact, I ensure I speak my ambitions out loud because I know someone will shoot me down. The negative thoughts thrown my way are the fuel I need to succeed and fulfill my dreams. And by the way—I became my high school co-valedictorian!

*~ After high school graduation*

Upon graduating from Ririe High School in 1977 I went to Ricks Junior College in Rexburg, Idaho, studying and working as a student athletic trainer under the guidance of Nate Yearsly, head athletic trainer. After graduation from Ricks Junior College, I attended Boise State University. While at Boise State, I began applying to physical therapy school, setting my sights on the University of Utah. Being accepted into physical therapy school was and still is a very competitive process. At that particular time, the program at Utah was receiving over three hundred applications per year; the program only had twenty-four seats available. I had a burning inside telling me Utah was the school for me. With this powerful emotion I decided Utah would be the only school that I would apply to. Everyone around me—family, friends, associates, classmates, professionals in the field and strangers—was bold in telling me that applying to only one school was a crazy choice! I was repeatedly instructed and counseled that I should apply to several schools to increase my chances of getting accepted somewhere; every school in the nation was difficult to be accepted into due to high volume of applications and low volume of acceptances. Once again I was told that I would probably not accomplish what I set out to do. So guess what path I took. Yes, you are correct. I focused all my energy on the University of Utah. I visited the program and met the faculty. I had my professors at Boise State University call the program staff at Utah. Every week I found a way to boost my efforts and chances. I was pleased indeed when I received my acceptance letter to the physical therapy program at the University of Utah. I did well in the program and graduated as a physical therapist in 1983.

The pattern of accomplishing what others believe I cannot began early and has continued to build over the years. Now those who even slightly know me never doubt that I will complete what I set out to do.

While I was pursuing my education, another young man was also eagerly engaged in advancing his education. His name is Daniel “Rudy” Ruettiger. When I was entering high school in Idaho in the fall of 1974, Rudy was entering the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. Rudy and I were separated by a distance of one thousand, five hundred thirty-seven miles. We did not know each other, but our souls were headed down the same path. Rudy was the third of fourteen children and he, too, grew up in humble beginnings. He attended Joliet Catholic High School, where he played football for locally famous coach Gordie Gillespie. Rudy joined the United States Navy after high school, serving as a yeoman on a communications command ship for two years; he subsequently worked in a power plant for two years.

While working at the power plant, Rudy decided to apply to Notre Dame, but due to his marginal high school grades he had to do his early college work at nearby Holy Cross College. During his time studying at Holy Cross Rudy discovered he had dyslexia—but he didn't allow this discovery to stop him from pursuing his dreams. Rudy applied to and was rejected from Notre Dame two additional times during his two years studying at Holy Cross College. Finally, after his fourth application to Notre Dame, Rudy was accepted as a student.

Rudy led a life fueled by people telling him he couldn't accomplish the goals he wanted to achieve. One dream he harbored was to play for the Notre Dame Fighting Irish football team, despite being merely 5'6" and 185 pounds—an undersized player. After working as hard as possible and showing he was willing to work as much as he needed to, Rudy earned a place on the Notre Dame scout team, a practice squad that helps the varsity team practice for games. Rudy never even dressed in uniform for a game until his last opportunity to play for Notre Dame at home. He was placed into a game as defensive end against Georgia Tech on November 8, 1975. In the final play of Ruettiger's senior season with the Fighting Irish, he sacked Georgia Tech

quarterback Rudy Allen, which is all his Notre Dame stat line has ever shown. Following the game, Rudy's teammates carried him off the field; he was the first of only two players in Notre Dame history to ever be carried off the field by his teammates. His simple story of playing only "27 seconds" for one of the most storied football programs in the country was made into an inspirational movie, *Rudy*. The movie has motivated and inspired millions of people across the world to reach for their dreams regardless of what others tell them about their abilities.

Many years after Rudy graduated from Notre Dame, I spent "27 seconds" at the University that changed my life forever. Like Rudy, these "27 life-changing seconds" came after a life of following my dreams and working hard when others said that I could not make it. Let me explain how my "27 seconds" came about.

*~ The Straight A's Talk*

In the fall of 1993 I was living in Las Vegas, Nevada, with my wife and four children. I owned and operated a successful physical therapy practice and was drawing upon my love of sports to coach girls basketball. We are devoted members of our church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, (also known as the Mormons), and I was serving as the Bishop of our congregation. A Bishop is the leader of a local congregation (known as a ward) with duties similar to those of a Pastor, Priest or Rabbi. The position is a non-paid calling you function in while maintaining your profession outside the congregation.

Within the church there is an organization established for the women called the Relief Society. The Relief Society President in our ward had invited me to speak at a dinner celebrating the anniversary of the founding of this organization. As I prepared for that occasion I felt a deep inner desire to know what to say. I prayed and pondered about this opportunity for weeks. The inspiration I received was to present an outline of how to attain "Straight A's in Life." The outline consisted of five "A's," which were Appreciation, Assisting, Attitude, Aim and Always. I used my experiences of working with the elderly in nursing homes as a physical therapist coupled with my experiences of coaching youth basketball. I was learning much about life by working with both ends of the life spectrum simultaneously.

The night came and the talk was given. I felt very good about how things went and afterward felt prompted to keep my notes and file them away. I had never done this before, but followed the prompting and then forgot about it for the time being. Little did I know that this talk would later lay the foundation for my life to come.

~ *Trip to Dallas*

In the spring of 1995 I was asked by a dear friend, Mark Smith, to accompany him to Dallas, Texas. He had written a children's book and produced a cassette to go along with the book. Now he was attempting to find someone to produce and publish the project. An organization in Texas expressed interest in viewing the work. Mark wished for me to go on the trip as support and backup. We made the presentation not knowing how it was received and wrapped up so we could head back home.

I was now at the Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport. As I boarded a Delta Airlines 737 airplane, it seemed like the beginning of any other flight. You make your way down the aisle, looking for your seat and possible overhead space. You prepare to be uncomfortable for the next three hours and buckle in. I had repeated this routine countless times before—and today seemed no different. How could I even imagine that something would happen to me on this trip home to Las Vegas that would not only change my life but the lives of thousands of youth across the world?

Mid-flight I was starting to doze a little, drifting in and out of consciousness. I was then jolted with a strong yet peaceful impression that permeated my heart and mind. I had a vivid vision of the “next step” in my life. Wow! I could not deny what I was experiencing. Part of my mission in life was to write a book. I remember thinking, “What? I am not an author? I am just the guy next door. The guy who is your neighbor, trying to live life day-to-day, making a living and raising a family. What is this impression all about?”

As I mulled over this startling thought, I remembered the “Straight A's in Life” speech I had given to the church women's organization two years prior to this flight. Now, at 30,000 feet

somewhere over New Mexico, I was feeling one of those burning sensations in my soul: I was supposed to pull out the notes from that talk and write a book about it.

Well, dismissing the thought off to indigestion or something similar, I put the idea of writing a book—writing a book!—far back in my mind. In fact, I put it off until I could no longer fight it. The same impression to write the book would not leave me; thus, I gave in. After two years of writing I handed the first draft to three close friends for their review. Each one stated that when I placed the manuscript into their hands, they felt warmth of energy. Wow! Those were tender moments.

The book that came from this experience was published in 1997 and is entitled *Learn to "School" Your Toughest Opponent* and contains the "Straight A's in Life" curriculum. The book outlines a ten-step formula (five A's were added to the original speech) on how to obtain success, peace, and happiness in the "School of Life." Each step is an "A" with a simple homework assignment. For example, the first "A" is Appreciation. The chapter encourages you to learn how having gratitude in your life can impact you in many ways. Your homework to achieve this "A" is sending a thank you message to someone every week! The message in the book comes from my experiences of working with the elderly in nursing homes as a physical therapist while also coaching girls' basketball at various levels of competition.

~ *The School of Life Foundation*

In 2002 my wife, Lexie, and I came to the conclusion that we wanted to take the message of the book I wrote to the world. We decided the best way to accomplish that task was to create a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. The entity we founded is the School of Life Foundation. Our foundation is committed to the social, moral and character development of youth. At the time we donated our workbook, *Learn To "School" Your Toughest Opponent*, to sports teams, schools, church groups, at-risk programs, and other youth organizations. The book offers life-guiding principles and values to help youth achieve "Straight A's in the School of Life" while also discovering that they are their own toughest opponent! We donated thousands of copies of the book to entities around the world. Numerous stories of how this book was touching the lives of young people started coming to us through emails, letters, cards, phone calls and various other formats. We knew we had embarked upon a worthy journey.

*~ Presenting at Notre Dame*

Many years back a dear friend told me he truly believed that in the lives of those people who are trying to do good things there are no such things as coincidences. This belief he shared struck a chord in my soul. I thought about his words often in relation to my experiences and started to observe their verity in the lives of others. I, too, have come to believe that the statement is true!

One such “coincidence” happened in my life in 2007, when I met Michael Palmieri, a fellow physical therapist. This was the same year we received permanent status from the IRS declaring the School of Life Foundation as an official nonprofit entity. Michael had been drawn to southern Utah and had moved his family there from the Chicago area. We became acquainted with each other in the healthcare arena and I soon discovered that he was a quality guy. Michael became a strong supporter of the School of Life Foundation; we subsequently placed him on our advisory board.

I had no idea that Michael was a “Domer”—someone who graduated from Notre Dame—and was a true supporter of the University. He had recently made friends with Kristin Sheehan, the Program Director for the Play Like A Champion Today Initiative, which is based on the South Bend campus. He had informed Kristin, who too was a “Domer,” about the School of Life Foundation, which eventually led to a phone conversation between Kristin and me. I was impressed with Kristin and what Play Like A Champion Today espoused for a mission.

Kristin extended an opportunity for me to come to their annual conference in June 2008 and present to their participants information about the mission of my organization. She informed me that Rudy was scheduled to be the keynote speaker. Wow! There was no way I was going to turn down that offer! Not only was Rudy my hero, but I had never been on campus before. This

speaking experience would be one of the greatest opportunities for me, ever! Thus I accepted the invitation.

It was a beautiful day in June 2008 when I drove into South Bend. I quickly found the campus and as I pulled through the gates onto Notre Dame Avenue I was immediately overwhelmed with a spirit that I could not describe. I later found out that what I felt was the “Spirit of Notre Dame!” It is a special spirit you feel every time you step foot on the grounds, no matter how many times you have been there before. (I also believe that every college and university campus has a “Spirit” about them. This is due to the beautiful buildings, lovely landscaping and being a place of higher learning.) I drove up this beautifully tree-lined avenue, staring at the Golden Dome on top of the main administration building at the end of the road. Next to the Golden Dome stood the Basilica. I am amazed I did not hit something or someone with my car. I was mesmerized. Somehow I found my way to the parking lot right by Notre Dame Stadium. I had to pinch myself to make sure that I was not dreaming. That day truly changed my life forever.

During lunch one day while at the conference I sat by a gentleman from California. During our course of conversation he mentioned that he had recently graduated from the Mendoza College of Business at the University of Notre Dame with a Masters Degree in Nonprofit Administration. He then proceeded to tell me details of the program. I had one of those moments in life where the hairs on your arms stand up and an electric chill goes through your spine. You have no doubt that what is being said is meant to be just for you. Wow! I knew that I needed to be in this program! I wasted no time after arriving home to contact the program director, Kim Brennan, and find out everything I needed to do to apply.

I began the application process immediately. One of the steps was to take the Graduate Records Examination (GRE). It had been close to thirty years since I was last in college, so I knew this process was going to be difficult. I prepared as thoroughly as possible, studying for many hours, and finally took the exam. When my scores came in, the university told me that my scoring should be a little higher to have a shot at getting accepted. I repeated the grueling process of studying and testing. Once again I fell a little short of the goal on the GRE. After my second attempt at the GRE, the program at Notre Dame informed me that I would need to complete a college course in math to make up what I lacked in my GRE score . Math! What? My worst subject of all time. Thank heaven I had a son-in-law who was going to school to become a CPA. He quickly became my best tutor. I then competed and passed the college course and submitted my finished application. My efforts during the application process had been significant, and the day I received word of my acceptance into the program became one of the greatest days of my life. This education would propel my knowledge and connections to a higher level which would aid me in growing and operating the School of Life Foundation. My dreams were being realized.

*~ The journey continued*

As I walked into the main lobby of the Mendoza College of Business on the campus of the University of Notre Dame, I had an overwhelming feeling my life was changing. Even though I did not know a soul, I still felt these people would be part of something special in my life. It was beautiful outside on that June afternoon in South Bend, Indiana, and it seemed as if the spirit of this long-standing institution exuded from every brick in every building. The year was 2009 and I couldn't believe I was standing where so many great leaders had stood before me. Even more amazing to me was that one week earlier I had celebrated my 50th birthday with my wife, children and grandchildren at our home in St. George, Utah. Now I was about to begin the course to complete a Master's Degree in Nonprofit Administration (MNA).

The MNA program at the University of Notre Dame is structured so you can complete the coursework in a time frame of anywhere between fourteen and fifty months. I chose the fifty month plan, which required ten weeks of study at Mendoza College and allowed the rest of the work to be completed online. I was determined and excited to gain the full campus experience, so I choose to live on campus during the four summers of study. I wanted to walk and live on the grounds that Rudy along with many other Notre Dame alumni had walked upon.

My initial three summers on campus I lived in three different Halls; and during my fourth summer I lived in the best location of all! I resided on the fourth floor of the Sacred Heart Parrish, which was formerly St. Joseph Hall—the same residence hall where Rudy lived during his time in South Bend. This building was originally built in 1919 as the college seminary for the Congregation of the Holy Cross and was laced with tradition.

I truly fell in love with the beauty, serenity and spirit of this campus. When I was not in class or studying, I spent time just walking the grounds and soaking it all in. A typical day would

consist of eating at the South Dining Hall, browsing in the Hammes Bookstore, sitting by the lakes, listening to the bells of the Basilica, admiring the Golden Dome atop the administration building, gazing at “Touchdown Jesus” and praying at the Grotto. Each time I leave campus I immediately long for the next time I can return. While I am there my soul is calmed, energized and recharged.

The coursework in the MNA program is rigorous. Giving my best effort in school had to be balanced with working a full-time job, overseeing the School of Life Foundation, spending time with my family and fulfilling church obligations. The task was difficult, but I persevered knowing that the end result would be worth the effort.

~ *Experiences along the way*

As I continued on this path in life I was being introduced to some amazing individuals who had also found their “27 seconds” and were using their talents to lift the lives of others. I was gaining a deeper understanding of why it matters.

In June 2008 I was attending a Foster Care Youth Conference at Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant, Michigan. I had been invited to be a keynote speaker at this event. After the presentation I was fortunate to meet a very gracious lady, Jennifer Wallace. She is affectionately known throughout the state of Michigan as the “TIP Lady.” Jennifer is the Outreach Manager for the Michigan Education Trust and travels the state giving youth “TIPs” on how to attain scholarships and other funding to pursue their dreams by participating in higher education. I have been inspired since that time by the TIP Lady. Jennifer used inspirational moments from her life to discover her talents and is now using those talents to fulfill her dream of helping young people reach their full potential in life. She has had many hardships along the way, but has never let go of her passion. You see, *that* is why it matters.

The following year, Jennifer invited me to Detroit to speak to the Wade McCree Scholars from the Detroit Public Schools and these students’ parents. As I spoke that evening, I used an analogy in regard to a \$20 bill. I told the students I had withdrawn the \$20 bill from an ATM machine earlier that day and the bill was still fresh and crisp. I asked if anyone in the audience wanted the bill and they all raised their hands. I then folded the bill, crumpled it, stepped on it and kicked it. I asked who still wanted the bill—and again they all raised their hands and informed me that it was still worth \$20. I then pointed out to these young people that their lives are similar to the \$20 bill. They come into this world fresh and crisp while holding value as a child of God. As they move along in their journey sometimes they get folded, crumpled, kicked

and stepped on. Even through their trials they need to remember that they never lose their value as a human being. They all have gifts and talents that can be used to change the world. While I spoke, I noticed that one young man was intently listening to this message.

After the presentation I found the young man who was so focused during my speech. When I spoke to him I felt impressed to give him the \$20 bill I used during my example. I challenged him to use the money to assist someone else, and he accepted the challenge. About one month later I received an email from this young man. In that email he informed me that he had used the \$20 to make what may seem like a small difference on a city bus route. One day the young man was riding a city bus. At one of the stops along the route, an elderly gentleman attempted to get on the bus but did not have enough money to cover the fare. This young man gave the bus driver the \$20 bill and asked the driver to let the man on the bus as well as anyone else that day who needed help paying their fare. You see, *that* is why it matters.

I began to see my spouse more for whom she is. My wife, Lexie, is my best friend, soul mate and eternal companion. We have been happily married for thirty-five years. During that time I have witnessed her using her talents on a daily basis to lift the lives of our five children, three children-in-law, and nine grandchildren. She will drop anything she is doing in a heartbeat to assist them in anyway. One of her dreams is for all of them to reach their full potential in life while enjoying peace and happiness. You see, *that* is why it matters

A few years back a neighbor of mine told me that he could not change the world, but he could change the world for one person. I then watched him and his wife adopt a young girl from foster care. They did everything in their power to help her reach her full potential in life. As her world got better so did mine, yours and everyone else's. My neighbor lived one of his dreams of making a difference in the foster care world. You see, *that* is why it matters.

With my work in the School of Life Foundation I was afforded the opportunity to meet and spend time with Scott Lagasse, Jr. and his family, who live in Florida. “Scotty” is living his dream as the NASCAR Driver of the #8 Boy Scouts of America car in the Nationwide Series. Before every race he uses his talents to speak with thousands of Boy Scouts, encouraging them to attain their full potential in life. You see, *that* is why it matters.

Heather Anderson was one of my classmates at Notre Dame. While Heather was working and enjoying her career as a model earlier in life, her brother died from the use of drugs. Following her brother's death, Heather used her talents to become Miss Utah in 2007. She entered the pageant not to win a beauty contest, but to give her a platform with an opportunity to speak to people about the danger of using drugs. After her reign, she has continued speaking to elementary schools across the nation in the D.A.R.E program carrying on that same message. You see, *that* is why it matters.

Another friend and former coaching staff mate of mine dreamed of becoming a statistician. He worked hard at using his talents to gain all the education he needed. He now provides a good living for his family working in his desired field and has donated his time and skills to conduct research studies for the School of Life Foundation. These studies give us outcome data showing the positive impact our organization has on youth. This data is then used to attain funding to continue our work. You see, *that* is why it matters.

Through the School of Life Foundation I met Charlie Johnson, the President of the Board of Directors for the Pay It Forward Foundation. His dream is to have every person on the planet wearing a Pay It Forward bracelet and doing acts of kindness, then passing along the bracelet. He left the extremely successful business he owned to work on this dream. You see, *that* is why it matters.

I believe at any given time in life we have the chance to reach out and grab on to someone that is lifting us up. At the same time we will have a chance to reach out and lift another person. The key is that we all lift each other together. Life is truly much easier that way. As you read the few examples I have listed, you have probably started to think of someone you know who has been living his or her dream by using talents to lift someone up. People who have found their “27 seconds” and are using it to do good things. There is no coincidence that these individuals are on your path. They are part of your inspiration in discovering your “27 seconds.”

*~ The day arrives*

I found myself approaching the platform erected inside the Joyce Arena. I could not hold back the anticipation of being handed my diploma from the University of Notre Dame and completing the walk across that magnificent stage. I felt deeply that this was about to be my “27 seconds” at this institution that would change my life forever. From the very first moment I had stepped foot on this beautiful campus five years earlier I knew my life would never be the same. The “Spirit of Notre Dame” had indeed captured my soul. I will never forget that moment in time: at 11:15 am on the morning of May 18, 2013, I became a “Domer” and part of the Notre Dame family!

Once we moved our tassels from right to left, the graduating students sang the Alma Mater, “Notre Dame Our Mother” and then the “Notre Dame Victory March.” My emotions began to break down and the tears flowed. I held closely with pride the fact that it was my responsibility to take my learning forward to bless the world. The next day would be the University Commencement exercises inside Notre Dame Stadium. My time had finally come to walk down the tunnel and march out onto that historic field. I would not be carried off afterward on the backs of my classmates like Rudy had been carried off by his teammates after his defining “27 seconds”, yet I would carry on my shoulders the charge to carry on the traditions and mission of this great institution.

I also knew that my time had come to write this book because the story had come full circle. My “27 seconds” after four years of rigorous study, sacrifice and dedication at Notre Dame had prepared me to tell my story. The talents and dreams inside of me needed to move onward. My time to share my story with the world was here. My life was changing forever. Is yours?

It starts deep in your soul. I believe that your heart feels for you, your mind reasons for you, but your soul speaks to you. Are you listening? When you listen you are able to hear what is shaping your life. When you act on what you hear, you start to fulfill your purpose in life. Each day you have people, places, objects and circumstances surrounding you that create opportunities to listen and learn about your mission to fulfill. The key is not only to listen, but to then have the courage to act upon what your soul whispers to you. As you listen and act, you develop a desire to know who you are, why you are here and where are you going. You can start this journey no matter what age, occupation or gender you are. In fact, you have already started and may or may not know it. When that power is found, action can be taken to move forward in using it to lift others, thus making the world a better place for us all.

Thus, the key is not only finding those “27 seconds” in your life. The key is also tied to the before and after. The key is the combination of perseverance, persistence, hope, energy to fulfill your dreams, power to overcome, force to achieve as an underdog, the ability to accomplish what others say you cannot, the will to win in life and much more. Then use all that has been given you to bless the lives of others. I invite you to answer the question “What is your 27 seconds?”

~ *How to find it*

On the evening on June 18, 2013, I was watching the final episode of Season Four of the television show *The Voice*. When Carson Daly announced that sixteen year old Danielle Bradbery from Cypress, Texas, was the winner I felt a tear stream down my face. Yes, that is right, a tear or two. She was living her dream! She came out of nowhere, performed in front of an audience for the first time, competed against thousands of contestants, and never let go of pursuing her passion. So why the tears for me? At that moment it was confirmed once again to me that I, too, could live my dreams!

This happens on a big stage often now in our world; shows such as *America's Got Talent*, *American Idol*, and *The Next Food Network Star* all allow people who were formerly unknown to live their dreams on a large scale. Why are these shows watched by so many people? Because we all feel inspired when we witness someone find their mission in life. We experience the same inspiration when we see someone stand up and walk from a wheelchair after being injured in an accident. We go through this experience when we see a baby take those first wobbly steps. Accomplishment from others fuels our inner soul.

Finding success, peace and happiness in our own lives depends on what we do with those inspirational moments that transpire along our journey. Do you enjoy the moment at the time you see it and then move on or do you take motivation from the experience to take your life to the next level? I invite you to not waste those valuable God-gifted instances. You have an opportunity to begin now if you have not already done so. And if you have already begun, this is your chance to take your journey to an even higher plane.

Where will your story be told some day? It does not matter who you are, what good or bad has happened in your life, where the story is conveyed, or how many other individuals hear it.

What matters is that you live it, share it, and make a difference in the life of another person. You now have the occasion to write your story. You see...finding your “27 seconds” is finding your purpose in life. I offer some steps for you to get started.

List three times in your life when you have felt major inspiration. Describe when the inspiration occurred, where you were, what you were inspired with, why that moment made you feel inspired or enlightened and how have you acted upon it.

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Drawing from the experiences in these three moments of inspiration in your life, list what talents you have discovered inside of you.

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Here is where it all comes together. Inspiration in your life assists you in discovering your talents. Those talents fuel you to envision your dreams. Never letting go of those dreams gives you the power to lift another. This circle of events makes the world a better place and aids you in finding your purpose...your “27 seconds.” Here you will detail who you will aid, when you will help them, and how you will accomplish your goal.

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I found my "27 seconds", Rudy found his, and now you are finding yours. Congratulations!

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~ *Thomas J. Harvey*  
*The Luke McGuinness Director of Nonprofit Professional Development,*  
*Mendoza College of Business at the University of Notre Dame*

### *Afterword*

“27 seconds”, the Tip of an Iceberg Formed Over Sixty Years by Thousands of Changed Lives! Jack Rolfe’s story has a personal touch that makes it unique. He cleverly tells about his mid-career journey and the role that a graduate degree at the University of Notre Dame’s Mendoza College of Business played in bringing him to a higher level of accomplishment and satisfaction. The degree that he earned is now called the Master of Nonprofit Administration, a graduate business degree for those working in the nonprofit sector. As the program’s Director, I am quite proud that this degree has a mission to develop exemplary leaders in nonprofit organizations. Jack’s story of how *27 Seconds* came to symbolize a much larger reality in his life represents only one tiny piece in a grand mosaic that has taken some sixty years to develop while changing thousands of lives along the way. Let me tell you some of that story.

The University of Notre Dame has had a business school on its Campus in Northern Indiana since 1921. This business school had only an undergraduate program from its founding in 1921 until 1954 when the College of Business established its first graduate business degree with the name, the Master of Business Administration or simply, MBA. However, there was more to the story. Rev. Theodore Hesburgh, the visionary President of Notre Dame at the time, established this new graduate degree to strengthen a part of the American economy that few other academics

at that time even thought about, namely, the nonprofit service sector. Ironically, he did this in the same year that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) coined the term “nonprofit” and established various categories to define the tax status obligations of such organizations. He also acted in that pre-ecumenical period in American history within the framework of his own Catholic religion. Thus, while he adopted the established brand of a MBA for the new degree, he limited participation in the program to vowed Religious of the Catholic Church. This was a stroke of genius in that in 1954, such Religious ran about 30% of the nation’s hospitals, more than 125 Colleges and Universities, and some of the oldest and largest child welfare organizations in the country. Notre Dame became a pioneer academic institution in realizing the importance of the nonprofit, or the community benefit, sector in the USA. The nonprofit sector in the United States now constitutes about 10% of the American economy. More importantly this sector houses some of the most important institutions that contribute to the quality of life for virtually all of us. These include religion, the performing and visual arts, health, education and social welfare organizations to name just a few. Notre Dame realized what other academic institutions would come to discover, namely, that the organizations that make up this Sector deserve to be led by individuals wholly educated to run them efficiently and competitively. Now there are as many as 150 Colleges and Universities that offer courses, degrees or certificate programs uniquely designed for nonprofit leaders.

We jump ahead to the time in which Jack Rolfe experienced his “kairos” of expectation, a moment or “27 seconds” frozen in time when he discovered how this degree empowered him to do better what he had been doing. It did so, and continues to do so, for others. The degree has changed, but delightfully for the better. In 1967, the University established a more inclusive graduate business degree and needed the MBA name. The nonprofit degree had two other names

before embracing its current Master of Nonprofit Administration in 2005. With less Religious available, the degree opened its enrollment to the entire nonprofit sector in the USA and in the NGO or non-governmental community beyond. Typical classes now include an ecumenical mix of folks from various religious backgrounds and working in religious and secular organizations. In 2001, the degree's format was changed to accommodate the needs of current leaders of nonprofit organizations who could not take off work for two years to earn a graduate degree. The MNA degree blended ten weeks of face-to-face learning on Campus with several semesters of on-line courses to help practitioners learn while continuing their work and ability to support themselves and their families. Let me end this part of the sixty year history that made possible Jack Rolfe's "27 Seconds" of self-discovery. In 2004, China, the world's largest nation, legalized nonprofit organizations. Several Universities there began efforts to help the nation develop this "new" sector within China. Frequently they encountered the problem that there was no corporate memory on how to run such organizations. As a result, Renmin University in Beijing, with a strong emphasis on Public Administration programs has partnered with the University of Notre Dame's MNA degree to offer a dual degree for Chinese Students. The first four Chinese students came into the MNA program in the summer of 2013. In its 60<sup>th</sup> year, the MNA degree has had another new beginning to extend its influence.

Jack tells the story of the MNA degree at a very personal level. In this "Afterword" I tried to tell the degree's larger story, its actual history. Let me end with a story that blends the two. Carolyn Woo, Dean of the Mendoza College of Business for nearly 15 years, strongly supported this specialty degree program. As a result, she was very conscientious about speaking to each new MNA class when they arrived on the Notre Dame Campus. A commitment as a Trustee to Catholic Relief Service took her to Africa one year just as the new MNA class arrived at Notre

Dame. Upon her return, she asked to speak to the class over a lunch hour. She began her remarks by asking the students to be patient with her as she shared with them some of the more touching aspects of her recent trip to some of the world's poorest nations and peoples. She promised that eventually her insights for MNA students would become evident. And they were. Carolyn told of visiting Zambia, a very poor African nation with limited infrastructure. The roads were so undeveloped that she had to go to the cities of the interior by helicopter. When she visited several camps along the Angolan border, she met an aging Catholic Bishop who was from the United States. He smiled and embraced her saying that they are like family since he earned the MNA degree at Notre Dame way back in 1972 when he worked in health care. The Dean added, "Now we come to my message for you. In 1972, when this man got the MNA degree, he did not know where humanity would be at risk and in need of his service in the future. However, this degree prepared him to be a good decision maker that would benefit so many. My question to you is, where will humanity be at risk in some future situation? Will you use your time in this program to be prepared so that wherever you are called, you will be ready and competent?" It was a wonderful question to set a context for all the MNA students, like Jack Rolfe, to be open to their "27 seconds" of self-discovery, so that they will be better able to serve others for the good of all. It has been a privilege for me to know Jack and to walk part of his journey with him. And it is humbling to have, as part of my job, the honor of helping to fill those "27 seconds" of discovery for so many hundreds of MNA graduates that are daily making this world a better and more loving community for the entire human family.

Personally all of us who have the opportunity to read Jack Rolfe's *27 Seconds* will experience different endings to the story. Jack set the stage nicely by reminding us that Rudy of ND football fame discovered the value of dedication by accomplishing just one tackle while

wearing the uniform of the Fighting Irish football team. Jack's own story is less dramatic. It was a mid-career attainment of a graduate degree that gave Jack a renewed vision and a creative tool box to let his Foundation affect young people dramatically better. How will the story end for you? Have you already had one of those "27 seconds" discoveries or are you still looking for it to happen? This little book should be helpful in letting you discover the moment and realize how the insights will play out in the lives of others. Take a little time to think about it. The discoveries are assured and exciting! "27 seconds" happen quickly. They even are the stuff of a very tiny book. However, *27 Seconds* has the potential of filling a library with thousands of similar tales of how individuals freed their potential to make this human nature of ours into a stronger and more loving community. For that, Jack, we thank you!



*Jack & Lexie Rolfe*

### *About the Author*

Jack and Lexie Rolfe are the Founders of the School of Life Foundation. This organization has now focused and dedicated its mission to increasing high school graduation rates. Each day in the United States 8,300 youth drop out of high school. These young people are less likely to find work at all, and more likely to live in poverty, commit crimes, and suffer health problems. The estimated cost to society for each dropout is \$292,000.00. The aim of the Foundation is to bring about a “positive disruption” in education through assisting youth in reaching their full potential by “Achieving Straight A’s in the School of Life.” The “Straight A’s” character building formula is found in Jack’s book, *Learn to “School” Your Toughest Opponent*. The original program was shifted to an after school class for at-risk youth in one high school during the 2011/2012 school year. The classes have spread to twenty schools across three states for the 2015/2016 school year. The growth is due to the data measured rise of GPA scores, increase in character attributes and improvement of graduation rates experienced by the participants. Requests for the School of Life are now coming in from across the county. Jack has retired from coaching, is preparing to retire from the physical therapy profession, operates the foundation and speaks professionally. Jack and his wife Lexie live in St. George, Utah. They have five children and eleven grandchildren. Jack’s

Notre Dame “Genshai” cohort dubbed him the Silver fox!

***INVITE JACK TO SPEAK AT YOUR MEETINGS OR EVENTS***

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*Entering the Stadium*



*Marching onto the field*



*Celebrating with Manti Te'o*



*Sharing the moment with fellow classmate, Michael Benson,  
President of Eastern Kentucky University*



*Graduation ring  
Go Irish!*

**How does a fifty-year-old Mormon end up being enrolled as a student at the University of Notre Dame? I did it by spending a lifetime of discovering, developing and delivering my unique purpose in life. Then, after four years of rigorous study and sacrifice, I found myself approaching the platform erected inside the Edmund P. Joyce Center on my graduation day May 18, 2013. I was being awarded a Masters Degree in Nonprofit Administration with honors from the Mendoza College of Business at Notre Dame. I glanced upward to see my image being broadcast upon the overhead Jumbotron screen in this beautiful sporting arena. I could not hold back the anticipation of being handed my diploma and completing the walk across that magnificent stage. I felt deeply that this was about to be my “27 seconds” at this institution that would change my life forever.**

**~ Jack Rolfe**