

# Chapter 1

## THE GHETTO -- A VERY BRIEF HISTORY

“There are two ways of meeting difficulties; you may alter the difficulty or you may alter yourself meeting it.”

-- *Phyllis Bottome*

It was called low-income housing by the politically correct. We, the inhabitants, called it the ghetto, or the projects.

I found myself living in this setting because my mother was left to raise four children on her own, of which I was the youngest. It was the 1960s and we had a balanced mixture of white and black families in my neighborhood. As time progressed, more and more of the white families moved to the suburbs.

I grew up in an era when prejudice was very prevalent in America, but not with me. Motown music became my favorite to listen to and Muhammad Ali was my favorite athlete. Some of my best friends were black, one of whom was Edwin, although I called him Etwin because I couldn't pronounce his name correctly. (It wasn't due to a speech impediment -- I just had trouble pronouncing it!) He was my best friend. Although I have limited memories of those early years, they are fond memories.

Though tough to describe the buildings themselves, I wouldn't exactly call them row houses like in Philadelphia, and they certainly weren't town houses as you know them today. They were more like apartment units, six of them attached together, brick-built, two-story.

We lived in one of the middle units. The youngest of four, I shared a bedroom with my oldest brother, eleven years older, my sister shared a bedroom with my mom, and my other brother got the last bedroom.

My oldest brother was an athlete and definitely had an influence on me. He would always tell me, “If you’re gonna be an athlete, you can’t smoke or drink alcohol.” I took those words to heart.

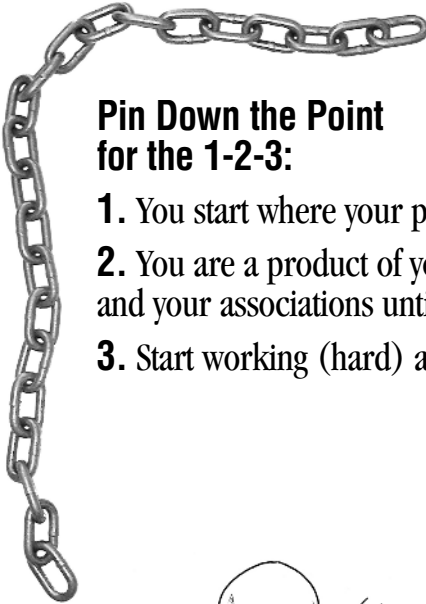
Minneapolis was a very clean city and still is to this day. There wasn’t much crime in the projects that I was aware of at this stage in life. We were very close to downtown Minneapolis. In fact, I could see the skyline from the front door of my house (as I called it).

One of my not-so-fond memories of childhood happened one hot summer day as the older kids were having a waterhose fight in the common area. We younger kids would run through the water to cool off. I thought it was my turn to run through the water, and another young guy thought the same thing. He came from the opposite direction, and we collided heads with one another. Nothing happened to him other than getting knocked down, but unfortunately for me, I had split my skull wide open.

I was rushed to the hospital and received more stitches than I care to remember. The doctor shaved a big patch of hair off the top of my head and fastened a large, white bandage to it. It was the most embarrassing moment of my life up to that time. I didn’t even want to leave my house, and when I had to, I wore a cap on my head.

I am very grateful and thankful for my humble beginnings. I learned very early in life the value of a dollar and how to spend money wisely.

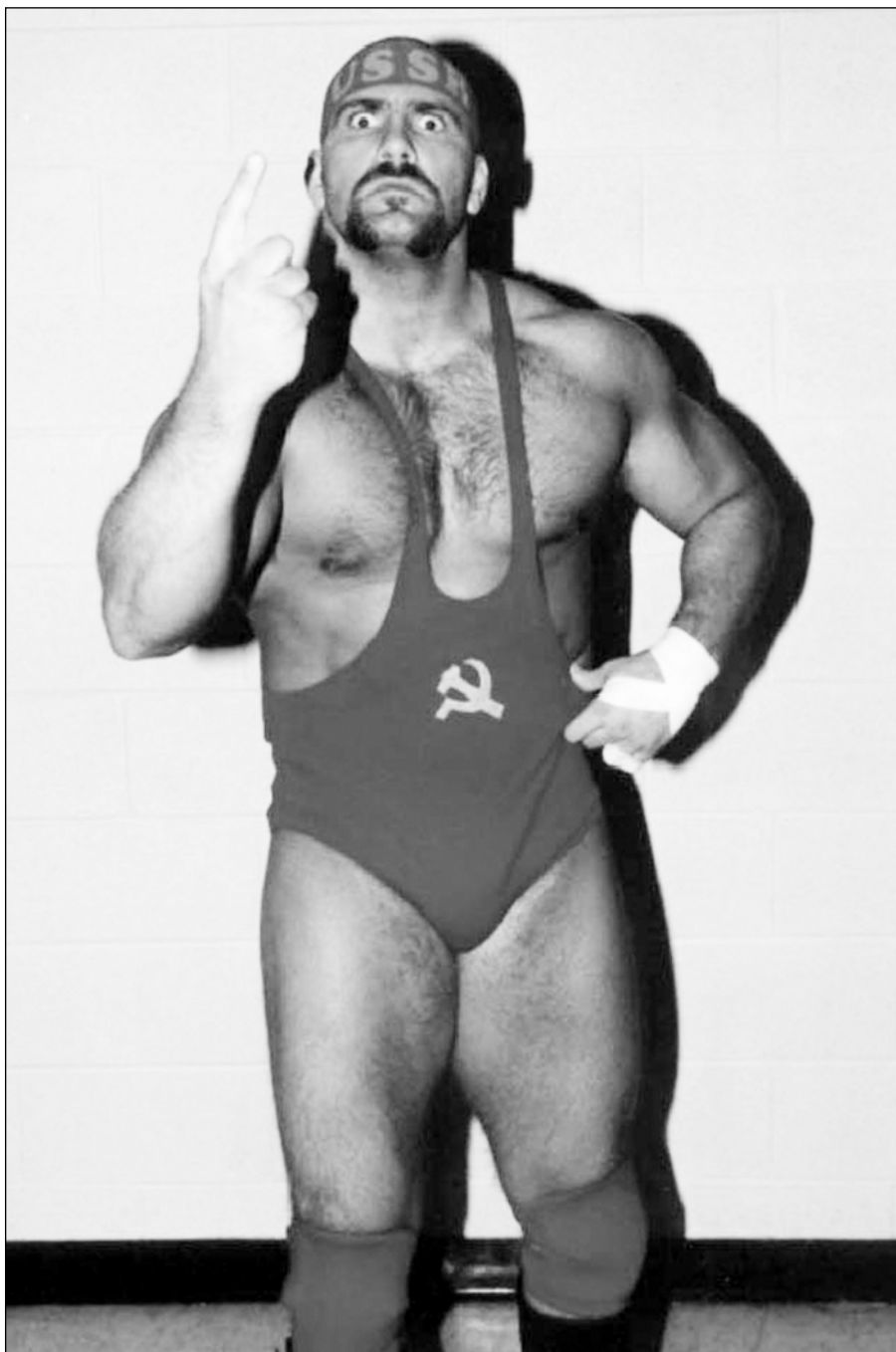
In the summer of 1969 I was ten, and we made “the big move” to the suburbs. We were the second-to-last white family to leave the ghetto. Apprehensive about my new surroundings, I learned to adapt. In fact, within a year, I would begin my career as an entrepreneur, securing a position as a delivery boy for the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* newspaper.



### **Pin Down the Point for the 1-2-3:**

- 1.** You start where your parents put you.
- 2.** You are a product of your environment and your associations until you get a clue.
- 3.** Start working (hard) as soon as you can.





My intensity convinced them to believe.