



FRANK
McKINNEY

ADVERSITOLOGY

Overcoming
Adversity
When
You're
Hanging on
By a
Thread



Caring House
BOOKS

F L O R I D A

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I

INTRODUCTION

A-D-V-E-R-S-I-T-Y

WTF?!

On March 11, 2020, the entire world was thrown into chaos when the United Nations declared a global pandemic. Ironically, on this this very same day, Frank McKinney received an unrelated possible death sentence from his doctors . . .

In the weeks leading up to this, Frank is riding high. He has just celebrated the theatrical, rappelling-from-a-helicopter grand unveiling of one of the most beautiful oceanfront mansions in the world: his \$15 million speculative

“Tropical Modern” masterpiece at 3492 South Ocean in Palm Beach. After creating and selling 44 oceanfront mansions on spec, this magnum opus is now being marketed and billed as his final masterpiece. Frank thinks he is retiring after 30 years as the preeminent creator of beachfront mansions.

Now it’s time to turn his attention back to the Mojave Desert and the footrace *National Geographic* has ranked the toughest one in the world: the Badwater 135-mile ultramarathon. As Frank contemplates returning to the searing heat of Death Valley, California, to compete for the 13th time at Badwater, he reflects on his faith and how many of the Bible’s most significant and transformative events seem to occur in the desert. There’s a deep spiritual cleansing that takes place there, a rawness and renewal unlike

anywhere else on the planet. The trajectory of Frank's life has skyrocketed since 2005, the first time he ran this punishing race. Now he looks forward to putting himself to that physical, emotional, and spiritual test again—a microcosm of life—when he will run continuously over a span of 48 hours, much of it in 130-degree heat.

Frank will do anything to get back out to his summer desert home. Although he completed six races in a row in his early years with Badwater, more recently he finished only one out of the last six. On his latest attempt, he made it only 135 *feet* before freakishly tearing a tendon in his foot almost right after the starting gun sounded. He's getting older, but on this next attempt he's leaving nothing to chance. His diet is cleaner and more precisely calibrated than it ever has been before. He is also happy to be a living science experiment, a human Petri dish, when it comes to anything that will allow him to exceed the known limits of his body.

Which is why, on Valentine's Day in 2020, he undergoes a cutting-edge procedure on his ailing knees. His orthopedic surgeon extracts stem cells from deep within Frank's hip bone. Those cells are placed into a high-speed centrifuge and spun down to create a highly concentrated amount of white blood cells, which are then injected back into Frank's knees. In addition to cadaver cartilage implanted during a previous surgery, these "super cells" are intended to help regenerate disintegrated cartilage, brutalized from 40,000+ miles of running all over the world.

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All is well. The magic carpet ride that has been his life—though full of turbulence along the way—continues to fly at supersonic speed.

Coincidentally, Frank is scheduled for his semiannual physical only a week later. Being extremely fit, these regular doctor's office pilgrimages are more cause for medical wonderment than suspense or dread.

“You’re one of the healthiest individuals I’ve ever had as a patient. Your vitals and bloodwork are like those of a 25-year-old!” Dr. Carol Huber often exclaims.

This visit is no different, except for one tiny thing. The bloodwork from the lab shows a slightly elevated white blood cell count. A higher level of WBCs is not uncommon in endurance athletes, though, due to their bodies being in a perpetual reparative state. More important, given the recent procedure that blasted a sky-high concentration of WBCs into Frank’s system, this reading is of little concern.

“Come back in a few days and let’s check it again to be sure. I’m certain everything is fine,” the doctor says.

The second test shows the WBC count has jumped again, but not by much: from 12,200 to 19,500. (A healthy reading is anywhere between 4,000 and 10,000.) Still no cause for alarm. Frank, his primary care physician, and his orthopedic surgeon continue to attribute the rise to the aggressive and invasive procedure just two weeks before. Frank’s body will process the excess white blood cells, they think, and all will soon return to normal. He certainly has no other symptoms. Frank is busy enduring 20-mile training runs and managing his real estate empire. They decide to test again in another few days.

Less than a week later, the levels soar to 99,000, and his doctor begins to doubt that such a precipitous rise is tied to some new-age stem cell procedure. Still, Frank doesn’t worry; he had insisted that the orthopedic doctor extract as much stem cell material as he possibly could from his body, so this is just a side effect of his usual “if a little is good, a lot is better” approach to life. They schedule one more test a few days out.

Even though Frank feels no effects from the escalation in his white blood cell count, he thinks that it is time to do some research to find out what the hell might be going on: *When you stick your head in the sand, what sticks out of the ground? Your ass, to get kicked. What in the world could this be? Some terrible infection, a blood disease, or simply errors at the lab?*

There is also the unsettling fact that Mike Magi, one of Frank’s closest friends, died only a few weeks before from a deadly blood disease. At the

time, Frank was so distraught that he could not even attend the funeral and Nilsa, his wife, went in his stead. Frank had made an excuse and failed to show because he simply could not face it.

**This is just a side effect of his usual
“if a little is good, a lot is better”
approach to life.**

That afternoon, these worrisome thoughts are deeply buried when Frank is the center of attention during a glamorous photoshoot for *Boca Raton Magazine*. During the last shot at his seaside property, where Frank is sprawled across a couch on the rooftop lounge, his phone rings, and it's Dr. Carol. The photography team takes a break, and Frank gets up, walks to the railing, and looks out over the beautiful, azure-blue ocean some 45 feet below. He taps the little green phone icon.



The glamorous calm before the storm

Calmly but firmly Dr. Carol orders him, “Get Nilsa and head immediately to the emergency room. Your latest reading shot to over 200,000. I’ll meet you there. You’re very sick and could be dying.”

For a guy who’s made his living by adding zeros and multipliers to practically everything in his life, this is startling. Frank’s reading is now 222,000 white blood cells per cubic milliliter, or over 40 times the normal range with no end in sight to the rapid increase. *What the fu*k . . . ?*

“You’re very sick and could be dying.”

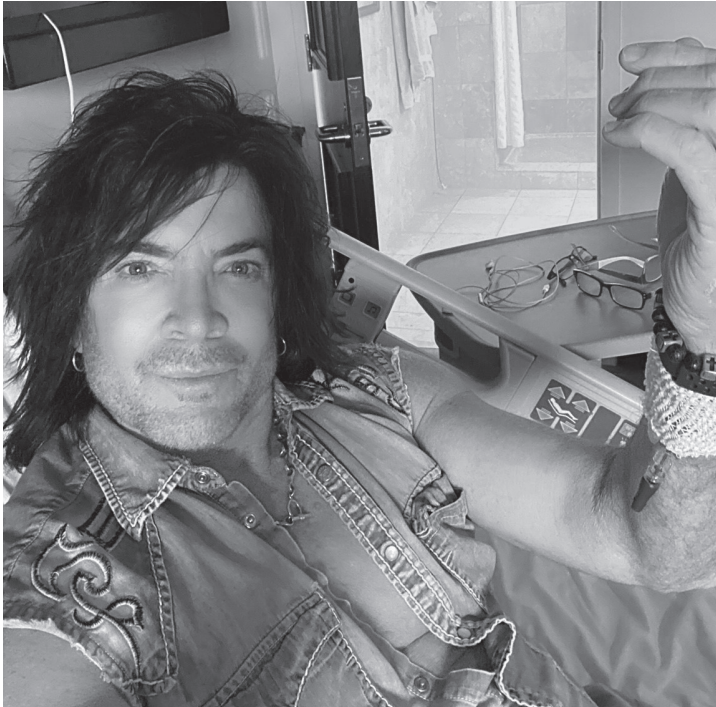
Frank’s mind is racing as he makes the 9-mile drive in his 1988 Yugo along the 35-mile-per-hour zone of Ocean Boulevard, a road he has driven countless times returning to his house from the sites of dozens of his oceanfront creations. He has also run thousands of training miles on this stretch over the last 30 years. As if in a trance, he stares through the car’s windshield and grimly notes that his tiny Yugo is just about the size of a coffin. The familiar drive has turned into a torturously slow pre-mortem funeral procession in Frank’s swirling mind.

When Frank gets inside the door, he explodes into a towering rage. Screaming, throwing anything not nailed down, smashing glasses, tearing Bible pages, cursing God—this from a Christian. He temporarily loses it, while his wife, Nilsa, is simply terrified for Frank. Something is going on, and Frank is being *forced* into the hospital to find out what, exactly, it might be.

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What he’s not thinking about is how life in the VIP wing of Bethesda Hospital was actually pleasant. He had been admitted there previously when he had a portion of his large intestine removed due to sepsis, and he’d found his stay so pleasant, in fact, that he’d delayed checkout until after dinner was served by the private chef.

But this time, he has no mental bandwidth for pleasantries. Same wing, same amazing care, same Frank. But, after several days of tests and waiting on pins and needles, the doctors, Nilsa, and Frank finally convene to hear the verdict.



Hospital Day 1: WTF?

The outlook is grim on this March day—for the whole world, really. And it's uniquely bad for Frank as his Midas touch, his Teflon reality, is destroyed in an instant with three words.

Chronic. Myeloid. Leukemia. (CML)

Frank sees the bleak path ahead all too clearly.

He does not want attention, prayer groups, prayer warriors, a hospital room decorated with balloons and get-well cards, and plasma donations from everybody he knows. When it comes to this, he chooses *not* to be a “put it out into the universe” kind of guy. He will do this his way.

I'm going to die some day, but it will not be today, and it will not be from this, he vows.

And the mindset shift is on.

* * *

It has now been three years since Frank's diagnosis, and, except for one small hiccup, he has been completely clear of any trace of the deadly intruder for over two years. He is back and better than ever. What approach did Frank take, and what mindset did he apply, to overcome this seemingly insurmountable obstacle? What other challenges and setbacks has he overcome in business, in relationships, in his spiritual life, that were just as threatening, and how did he approach these adversities? Why did Frank choose to keep his condition a secret from all but five people outside of his doctors? (Not even his family knew!)

Buckle up, settle in, absorb, and enjoy the 9-step A-D-V-E-R-S-I-T-Y plan Frank shares so you can overcome your life's adversities quicker and with far less pain.

And finally, *why* is this book written by me, Frank McKinney, in the third person?



A quick assessment to gauge the emotional severity of the adversity you are currently facing, whether it's physical, relational, or financial: The Adversitometer is a simple tool to pull out of your pocket, purse, or from your memory and ask yourself, *Just how much adversity should this situation truly represent in my life?* You can go to Adversitology.com and print out your own Adversitometer.

To order this book: Adversitology.com