

[Transcript] Founders / #320 The Making of Winston Churchill Part 2

I read something Jeff Bezos said that changed my perspective on the importance of high-quality sleep.

He said that he makes sure he gets eight hours of sleep a night and as a result his mood, energy, and decision-making is improved.

And the point that he was making was that as a founder you get paid for making a small number of high-quality decisions and you can't do that if you're sleeping terribly.

The only thing that I've ever found that has actually improved my sleep has been an eight-sleep.

Eight-sleep has this thing on their website that I think is actually a really good idea.

It's just a collection.

It's called The Wall of Love.

It's just a collection of people talking about how much they love their eight-sleep.

And there's a ton of founders on there.

Elon Musk is talking about the fact that he loves his eight-sleep.

These people aren't getting paid to say this, right?

Mark Zuckerberg is talking about the fact that he loves his eight-sleep.

Paul Graham talked about the fact that he ordered one.

I love my eight-sleep.

I've heard from a ton of other founders that listen to this podcast that ordered eight-sleep because of the ads on this podcast.

And now, let me give you an example.

My friend Rick ordered one, and now he travels a lot for work.

And you know a product is good when you miss, like you notice its absence.

And so eight-sleep in the app, it has something where if you're not there, you don't want your eight-sleep turning on.

So you have this thing called away mode.

And so now when Rick is coming back, he'll send me either a screenshot or a screen recording of him turning his eight-sleep from away mode back to being home and being excited that he's going to be reunited with his mattress.

That is not normal.

The thing I love, this is the best feature.

There's a ton of other features.

The app has great features.

The best thing I love is the ability to control the temperature.

I keep my eight-sleep ice cold.

I make sure it's cold before I get into bed.

I'm telling you, this helps me sleep, go to sleep faster and wake up less during the night.

And just like my friend Rick, when I travel, I notice its absence.

I miss it.

And so the founder of eight-sleep, Matteo, listens to the podcast.

He's been a huge supporter and he's giving listeners \$150 off.

If you want to try your own, go to eight-sleep.com forward slash founders.

That is eight-sleep.com forward slash founders get \$150 off.

I will leave the link down below as well.

[Transcript] Founders / #320 The Making of Winston Churchill Part 2

I want to tell you about another product that several of my founder friends are also using and that is Vesto.

You can check them out at getvesto.com.

Vesto makes it easy for you to invest your business's idle cash.

Vesto helps businesses of all sizes invest their cash in U.S. treasuries.

And your business owns treasuries.

That cash is backed by the U.S. government and it earns interest while it sits there.

I have one founder friend who raised a bunch of venture capital money.

And so he uses Vesto as a way to extend his runway.

I have another founder friend who bootstrapped his company and he uses Vesto to get a better rate of return than if that money was just sitting in his bank account.

If this sounds interesting to you, highly recommend you go to Vesto, getvesto.com.

Check out what they have to offer.

If you actually know the founder, Ben, I've spent a bunch of time with him.

If you schedule a demo, so you go to getvesto.com, schedule a demo.

You actually speak directly to the founder, Ben.

I think he's incredibly impressive and I think if you speak to him, you'll be impressed too.

When you talk to Ben, make sure you tell him that David from founders sent you.

And one more thing before we jump into this episode, I was just interviewed for the second time on invest like the best.

It is episode 343.

I will leave a link down below, but I'm assuming that if you're listening to this, you're already following invest like the best in your favorite podcast player.

If not, please do so.

Listen to episode 343.

It's David Sennler in the service of founders.

Had a lot of good feedback.

People really enjoyed it.

You listened to it.

Tell me if you think I did a good job.

I really do appreciate these opportunities to share all the crazy things that I've learned from reading 300 plus biographies and doing it in an interview style is actually really fun and special.

And if you listen, I hope you learned something new.

So that's invest like the best episode 343 David Sennler in service of founders.

Churchill lost something in 1915 that he never regained.

At 40 years old, youth begins to slip away from most people, but what Winston lost was not merely a matter of looks or energy.

It was a spirit that had once seemed so vital and inexhaustible, a lively spark that had served him well from crisis to crisis.

But it flickered and went out in 1915 and Churchill was never the same.

He persevered in politics until his moment in the sun came 25 years later in 1940.

But by that time, he was a harder, much less exuberant character.

He had learned the tough lessons of a long life lived at a high level, that even the

[Transcript] Founders / #320 The Making of Winston Churchill Part 2

best plans go awry, that even the best friends prove unreliable, and that even the best intentions may be misunderstood.

It was better for the world that he had known failure and suffered moments of self-doubt. What took the place of this glamorous charm was the cumulative force of a character that had been tested and strengthened over time.

These experiences had taught young Churchill invaluable lessons.

Often a politician who fights on equal terms with other giants is already in his prime and will be too old to apply the lessons of his experience in a second career like that which Churchill enjoyed as prime minister in 1940.

He brought to that position of leadership a level of skill and understanding that few politicians could rival.

For 25 years after the end of his first rise to power, Churchill was frustrated to sit and watch as others reached the top while he seemed to languish in lesser positions.

He was forced to learn patience and to ponder the meaning of his early experiences.

Most importantly, he refused to accept that the promise of his early career was dead and gone.

He continued to guard that legacy even when few believed it was worth guarding.

His old enemy, Edward Carson, seemed to understand that there was something in Churchill's character

that simply wouldn't allow him to give up.

At a dinner not long after Winston was dismissed as the first lord of the Admiralty, a journalist asked Carson, what is the trouble with Churchill?

Carson thought for a second and shot back a perceptive reply that would have made Winston smile.

Winston is a dangerous optimist.

That is an excerpt from the very end of the book that I'm going to talk to you about today which is Young Titan, the making of Winston Churchill and is written by Michael Sheldon.

So I stumbled into a rather lucky set of circumstances.

Last week, if you listen to the last week's episode, it covers the first 26 years of Winston Churchill's life.

I had bought the book that I'm holding in my hand months before I bought the other book. I didn't even know.

This book picks up exactly where last week's book ended.

So this book is focused.

This is a very unique biography of Winston Churchill.

There's over 1,100 biographies and print in the English language on Winston Churchill, by the way.

But this book picks up.

It covers only the year 26, he's 26 to 40 years old when this book ends.

So you don't have to listen to last week's episode before you listen to this one, but

I think listening to them both will give you a better understanding because what we're trying to figure out is like, okay, everybody knows the Winston Churchill who's in his 60s, the one that's fighting Hitler.

The one that inspires this entire country to fight, the one that refuses to give up.

[Transcript] Founders / #320 The Making of Winston Churchill Part 2

What this book is about is the personality and the force of will upon which is future success that's going to come 25 years after the book ends, rests upon.

So let's jump right into what this book is about.

History likes winners.

In the image of the older victorious Churchill has long overshadowed the story of the eager young man who soared to prominence only to find that he had overreached and who left office with his reputation in tatters.

So book starts he's 26 years old, it's going to end when he's 40 and fired.

And wait till we get there because even his choice of what to do after he was fired and left in disgrace and rather in shock and depressed, but really his choice of what to do next is one of the most admirable things about Winston and something I talked about last week is everything that he did in his life he did not have to do.

He sought out difficulty, he sought out greatness, he really thought from the very early age, this is I think I said last week he's maybe the most confident young man I've ever covered on the podcast.

He believed from a very young age that he had a role to play in history.

Back to the book so he leaves the office reputation in tatters yet in many ways this is really the crux of the entire book yet in many ways this early period is the most colorful of his career and is a key to his character Churchill thought his chance for greatness on a grand scale would come early in life and for such a restless ambitious man the long wait was difficult to bear by the time he became prime minister at 65.

He was more than ready for the job now.

What's amazing there's examples in this book there's even examples in the book last week he was expected by himself and the people around him to be prime minister 20 25 years before he actually reached that goal and yet the entire point is that he would not have been ready to take that position if he had gotten it when he wanted if he had gotten it earlier in life there's a lot of parallels I think I have a lot of notes Steve Jobs is on my mind the wilderness period you know when Steve was fired from Apple and then when he comes back and and goes on it sets the greatest record in my argument greatest record in entrepreneurship

history and Steve would tell you this himself without that 13 years of struggle he wouldn't have nearly been the leader and the entrepreneur that he was later in his career same exact case here for Churchill which we'll talk to a lot about today he had spent a lifetime preparing for his part this sentence is one of the most important in the book and important understanding Churchill the adventures and ordeals of those early years were essential to the making of the man who triumphed in the Second World War young Winston's career began with dreams of success that fueled a spectacular political rise but which ended in dramatic failures just like jobs creating an equally spectacular fall just like jobs at 40 he was largely written off as a man whose best days were behind him just like jobs except jobs that happened jobs when he was 30 as Churchill confessed in old age he had felt so misunderstood in those younger days that he thought that he had become in the eyes of many quote a freak always that but much hated and ruled out redeeming this is his next mission if you think about how incredible from 40 to 65 this guy persevered through this redeeming the promise of his youth became the great challenge of his later life one thing that

you get at a reading a bunch biographies is you realize that people don't stumble into greatness and it was the case for Winston Churchill as well in a conscious and methodical way he set out as a young man to become the hero that he believed his era demanded he fashioned his career as a grand experiment to prove that he could work his will on his times persevering in that approach despite repeated setbacks and often harsh ridicule of those who didn't share his high opinion of himself the reason if you go back and listen last week's podcast the reason you go read that book the book is excellent but the reading of the book is going to be very different from the podcast that you hear me that you heard that I made I wanted to focus and I did this intentionally on the fact of this relentless self belief and this is why I think we're going to come to this a lot today as well this idea at my career is a grand experiment I feel have a role to play I can contribute I can change the world you have to persevere in his case he did it for decades in the face of other people telling him stop believing your special Winston why are you talking about yourself like this why do you think you're you're destined to do great things why do you have all this self confidence fuck these people in this book and last book there's a bunch of other people around Winston telling him to not be who he was in the last book and in this book too there's a bunch of examples of people constantly trying to get Winston to not believe in himself and every time you have Winston refusing to cooperate refusing to be in their eyes reasonable why does that matter because it is highly likely that if he gave in to the opinions of other people about himself Britain would be speaking German today the choices we make in the actions we pursue make a difference they matter and they can change the course of history and this idea that Winston is constantly surrounded by people that don't share his high opinion of him it's an important thing to point out and to repeat no one knows you as well as you know you therefore your opinion about yourself is greater than all the other opinions of everybody else around you Winston Churchill's life is a decade after decade after decade example of that extremely important point many of his contemporaries accepted that history is quote the biography of great men but whether Churchill belonged among the great was always subject to hot debate it is no longer a debate this is my favorite part of reading books about Winston Churchill and why I highly recommend you do as well he had few doubts about his destiny however at the heart of this story is an irrepressible I believe in personality he declared endorsing the notion that the heroics of great leaders not vast movements or impersonal systems shape history we live in an age of great events and little men he said and if we are not to become the slaves of our own system it will only be by the bold efforts of originality by repeated experiment and by the dispassionate consideration of the results of sustained and unflinching thought little men let events take their course I like things to happen and if they don't happen I like to make them happen Churchill's words will fire you up this guy was gifted at his master of the English language you see it in his speeches you see it in his writings another thing I pointed out last week I want to repeat today so people around them they realized that there's a great line about and they said that his ear was sensitively attuned to the bugle note of history and the fact that he had a legendary ancestor which I talked about last week which is John Churchill John Churchill they said you know I was one of the greatest generals up there with Napoleon Churchill writes a biography Winston writes a biography about John Churchill says he never fought a battle that he did not win nor prestige procedure fortress that he did not take and if you really sit here and think I'm

only on page six but already you're you're sitting here and you're you're completely enveloped in Churchill's perspective his personality his worldview and what what what I feel like he's speaking to the reader he's like in every age right he's using the example you know he knew a ton of history we're going to talk about Napoleon you know I should buy the Kindle version of this book I bet you if you buy the Kindle version you search for Napoleon it's in here a dozen times maybe ten times over and over again but the fact that he was he was since his ear was sensitively attuned to the bugle note of history he greatly admired people that achieved great things in the past and really what the message that he's saying to you and I is in every age there are great men why not us and why not now and so as he's reading about these great people

he realizes oh they're like me too I like I always talk about this example I wasn't expecting to say this but it's one of my favorite things I've ever heard and it's the fact that Kobe Bryant obviously idolized Michael Jordan growing up patterned a lot of his uh his game after him would watch videotapes of him I remember this was hilarious I read this like 600 page biography of Kobe Bryant and his high school girlfriend was like being interviewed he's like what's it like dating Kobe Bryant she's like well our dates consisted of me going over to his house and us watching videos of Michael Jordan and so early in his career I think maybe the first time he ever played against Michael Jordan his teammate says hey I got some advice whatever you do don't look at Michael Jordan

in the eye and Kobe's like what why wouldn't I do that and what he Kobe had realized he's like oh my teammate didn't realize is I'm that too and so there's all these examples of Churchill being inspired by these great people of the past but not in like a said put them up on a pedestal not an idolization kind of way it's like oh I'm that too and so one of these people is Lord Byron and so it says that Churchill found encouragement for his passionate nature in the writings of the romantic poet so that's Lord Byron from early youth he was drawn to Byron as a stirring example of the man of action who was also a man of ideas both men so now he's starting to compare himself to Byron right both men were dazzled by the story of Napoleon's rise and fall and both kept cherished

busts of the great French leader on their desks Churchill was fascinated by Byron's poetic meditation on Napoleon's unbounded ambition and so what I love is these people that master the English language or any language for that fact and they're able to convey a deep insight or idea and just a handful of words and so Byron's version of describing Napoleon's ambition only took five words he just he called it a fever at the core more similarities between Byron and Churchill like Byron Churchill was a chronicler of his own history in a series of books written at a rapid pace in his early 20s he created vivid descriptions of his early adventures as a soldier and war correspondent when I was 25 years old Churchill said in old age I had written as many books as Moses something I discovered I think I discovered it this week when I was reading this book Churchill had written 43 books did you know that that was very surprising to me and in these books it says he lived the adventure of a storybook character fighting on the Indian frontier scouting for rebels in Cuba traveling along the Nile and most dramatic of all surviving capture by the boars in South Africa and just like he predicted early in life his goal I'm going to get glory at war I'm gonna use that war to get famous I'm gonna use that famous to get elected to political office that is exactly what happens when he has that daring escape after being in the Pia in the prisoner camp in South Africa and then the news of his escape spreads all over the world becomes

world famous and he gets swept into office so that is the starting point of this book also going to talk about what happens to him over the next 14 years this is a journey that will take him from the beginning of his 26th year to the end of his 40th year the failure part being very important what he learned from failure was crucial to his later success but it was a devastating setback whose sting he would feel for years that's the first time or maybe the second time I wrote the word Steve Jobs because there's so many times that Winston's story parallel Steve between his rise and fall he built a modern navy experimented with radical social reforms survived various threats on his life made powerful enemies and a few good friends fell in love several times became a husband and a father annoyed and delighted two British monarchs took the measure of the German

military machine risked his life in the air as a pilot in training authorized executions of notorious murders and faced deadly artillery barrages on the western front in world war one by the end of his first 40 years he had a good understanding of how far his talents could take him and how far he could fall what remained constant was his obedience to that bold early declaration I believe and personality exploring the heart of that personality is the aim of this biography so in addition to spending the last few weeks reading two books about Churchill also rewatched this this movie called in the darkest hour and there's a scene in the movie that I want to tell you about that comes at the very very end the movie is just about him becoming elected to prime minister when

he's 65 years old and what I found most interesting about the movie is all the pressure for the people around him in the government you know we need a super piece for Hitler we need a super piece we needed like let's give up we can't fight this war we're not going to win let's you know try to bring him to the bargaining table and the movie ends with this speech that happened in real life where you know half the people are trying to convince him to give up the other half are with him saying we should fight he gives he's just a masterful orator and very persuasive speaker and so what happens is by the end of the speech everybody's on his side and there's one guy that did not want this to happen he's sitting in the audience with another guy and one guy turns the other guy and goes what the hell just happened and his response is perfect Churchill mobilized the English language and sent it into battle Steve Jobs said the storyteller is the most powerful person in the world the most important point here is not that Churchill was born with this gift is he got he developed it through practice in fact Churchill had such a good memory and spoke so eloquently that if his wife was in the next room and she was hearing him speak she would ask she could not tell if he was speaking or reading aloud even when he was speaking extemporaneously the sentence would come out fully formed almost if they were written and so that's going to be a present fact in any book that you pick up on Churchill he spent the days leading up to his speech polishing his remarks and committing them to memory he stood before a mirror pretending he

was addressing the house this became a common method for preparation for him to the annoyance of others nearby all day we're called a friend he might be heard booming away in his bedroom rehearsing his facts and flourishes and the resounding knocks on the furniture so hitting his hand to emphasize the point on the wooden furniture he would write out a short list of his major points and keep them handy while he spoke his greatest speeches would use common words

in pleasing rhythms to cast complex ideas in memorable images from early adulthood to old

[Transcript] Founders / #320 The Making of Winston Churchill Part 2

age Churchill's eye and ear were tuned to the discovery of arresting analogies something else Churchill has in common read everything he read everything this is just like an early you go to Thomas Edison when he's like a 12 year old boy working on the the rail line he would stop over I think in Detroit he'd read every single book in the Detroit library I always tell the story because one of my favorite things ever Edwin Land gets to Harvard right read goes to the Harvard library reads every single book on light once he finished that he's like oh there's nothing else I can learn here he drops out of Harvard goes to New York City then goes to New York City public library reads every single book on light then goes back to Harvard does it again Jeff Bezos's grandfather would talk about this when Jeff Bezos was a kid he'd spend his summers on his grandfather's ranch in Texas they'd go they'd bring him to like the local library let him sit on the floor and he would just read every single science fiction book in the library you don't read one book you don't read two you read them all and you see this over and over again while other politicians were content to get their information from a scattering of newspapers Churchill devoured whole shelves whole shelves of books Churchill began living with books and sleeping with encyclopedias even from an early age his work ethic surprised everyone around him his power of work is prodigious it's almost commencement with his passion for it the great thing about Churchill's life is so much of his documented in writing and his speeches even when he was young he'd go around so he's in the House of Commons and he doesn't feel like he has a peer group that is looking at life the same way in which he looks at life and I think understanding his view of life knowing why he believed what he believed is key to understanding his actions and so what he's noticing is like well my peers don't think the way I do his peers weren't looking to cultivate a sense of destiny they did not share his particular passion for great men and great monuments Churchill had a romantic view of life as a heroic endeavor full of grand sentiments remember he grew up in a physical environment that celebrated greatness Winston was in no danger of remaining quiet about his own achievements the House could still speak volumes on his behalf as a testament to the fighting spirit and boundless ambition of his breed talking about John Churchill again Winston Churchill wanted to be the dominant political figure of the time so we're going to talk more about his relationship with his father remember his father dies I think Churchill's about maybe 20 years old when his father dies relatively young and so you'll see in the way that a young Churchill acts like he treats older more powerful figures as really as father figures if you've ever read Robert Carrows books on LBJ there's this thing that Lynn Johnson they Lynn did this the same thing like he it's not that he didn't particularly admire his father or look up to him and yet he would early in his political career he'd meet all these really successful you know speakers the house where the case is and I think they even used a designation in the book they call him LBJ's they called him a professional son and in many ways Churchill's behavior reminded me of this the first example of this is this guy named Joseph Chamberlain Joseph Chamberlain is going to be this very powerful like self-made entrepreneur and then a very powerful political figure in Britain and and Neville Chamberlain and a twist of fate this is a Neville Chamberlain's father Neville Chamberlain is obviously the prime minister that was basically kicked out during World War II and Churchill takes his place but way before that happens 30 years before that happens

[Transcript] Founders / #320 The Making of Winston Churchill Part 2

Winston actually develops a relationship friendship with Joseph Chamberlain they wind up becoming kind of enemies Joseph Chamberlain's older I want to give you a little background on to who he's seeking out who he's trying to be influenced by Joseph Chamberlain was a self-made man he made his own fortune as an industrialist by mass producing screws so cheaply that he dominated the market he became one of Birmingham's largest employers and then moved into politics

and transformed the city it was definitely a world builder kind of personality in his city he decides to clear out the slums he fixes the water supply and then he starts building all these erecting all these civic buildings literally changing the physical environment in which he inhabited he gives Churchill a tour turns to Churchill and says the first time I came here I came here to sell them screws and so Churchill seeks him out says Churchill was very friendly towards him in the same way he would treat him like a father figure and engage him in late night talks often that would last until two in the morning I had a great many more real talks with him than I ever had with my own father Churchill said and so in turn Joseph treats him almost like one of his own sons because at the time his two other sons didn't seem they said they didn't seem headed for distinction and even at this young age Churchill only had one goal this is going to very similar to to Lynn and Johnson again the goal is the very top I may start out as a congressman right in lbs case I'll go to congress then I'll be a senator but his goal from day one is like I'm going to be the president Churchill's goal from day one is I'm going to be the prime minister for Churchill there was only one goal in politics the top and everything else no matter how pleasant was just a stepping stone and one thing that was particularly fascinating to me in this book is they talk about like now you know he's kind of a Joe is kind of like a distinguished gentleman or trying to play like the role of aristocrat but there's a line that jumps out at me and it says on occasion Churchill caught a glimpse in him of the old cutthroat that word is literally in the book right on occasion Churchill caught a glimpse in him of the old cutthroat king of the screw trade that's what people would call him they reference him as king of the screw trade and doing business against him was difficult because he was a cutthroat why is that important I've talked in the past about my obsession with Game of Thrones watching the series multiple times I just went through it I don't know a year ago six months ago something like that and took notes on literally any line I have a I have an apple note of Game of Thrones lines I want to remember because I think they're like maxims and instructive for life a couple days ago I was just interviewed on invest like the best it's episode 343 in case you want to listen to it but Patrick at the very end of that conversation he asked me like what is your favorite Game of Thrones line and I realized after the fact

that my favorite Game of Thrones line is those on the margin often come to control the center but my answer on the interview was actually my favorite Game of Thrones story quick little story in like three or four sentences and so it comes from this character named Bronn Bronn came from absolutely nothing born in unbelievable poverty but he's one of these cutthroats and he's trying to negotiate a way to get the most valuable land or the most valuable castle in this actual like in this world that they're operating and when he states his goal that hey I want high garden and he states it to the sons of this illustrious family called the Lannisters one of them says high garden will never belong to a cutthroat that is the word that they use high garden will never belong to a cutthroat and Bronn's response is excellent and it's a summary of what I've learned by reading hundreds of these biographies and he says no who were your ancestors the one who

[Transcript] Founders / #320 The Making of Winston Churchill Part 2

made your family rich fancy lads and silk they were fucking cutthroats that's how all the great houses started isn't it by a hard bastard and the way to think about this is Joe Chamberlain was the cutthroat he was the hard bastard he's the one that built the family fortune and with age and time that aggressiveness may diminish but it never disappears and we're seeing that even when he's a much older man in his interactions with Churchill and she says on occasion Churchill

caught a glimpse in him of the old cutthroat and other people saw this too there is a woman who compares she meets both Joe Chamberlain and Churchill and she compares both of them on separate pages this is excellent let me go to what she said about Joe Chamberlain first she had looked closely into his personality and didn't like what she found by temperament she concluded he's an enthusiast and a despot running alongside this genuine enthusiasm is a passionate desire to crush opposition to his will a longing to feel his foot on the neck of others then she has dinner with Churchill first impression she wrote of him in her diary restless almost intolerably so without capacity for sustained and unexcited labor egotistical shallow minded and reactionary but with a certain personal magnetism he had what the kids call riz what you and i would call charisma superhuman levels of charisma but with a certain personal magnetism that's the word she's

using great pluck and some originality not of intellect but of character he talked exclusively about himself he has no notion of scientific research but his pluck courage resourcefulness and great tradition may carry him far so i'm gonna go back to this idea that other people constantly get you try to limit your ambition try to dim your light for their sake and i'm gonna compare and contrast it to the advice that he actually gets from Joseph Chamberlain so this guy says uh when he was told one day that Winston was caught up in reading yet another book on Napoleon he shook his head in disappointment and said that Winston would do better to study the drab heroes of life framing oneself upon Napoleon has proved a danger to many a man before him that's just another

way of saying Napoleon was special you're not special you're not Napoleon what are you doing you're wasting your time that's not advice that other cutthroats or other people that have achieved great things or have the desire to achieve great things would give you so this is Joseph Chamberlain somebody achieved great things counseling a younger Winston Churchill he says if

a man is sure of himself it only sharpens him and makes him more effective remember Winston said he

had more conversations with uh Joseph Chamberlain than they had with his own father that leads me into his relationship with his father and the fact that he's going to write a thousand page biography on his father a main influence in Winston Churchill's life just like a lot of people that you and i study is the fact that you can always understand the son by the story of his father that the story of the father is embedded in the son so before we get into this i need to put down this book and pick up hero of the empire from last week there is a photo insert and more importantly a caption in the photo insert of that book that describes gives you an overview of the complicated father-son relationship born into the highest ranks of British aristocracy Churchill had an air of haughty self-confidence even at the tender age of seven what he longed for most however was the love and attention of his father his father's lord Randolph Churchill lord Randolph had little time for his oldest son one of the greatest regrets of Churchill's life was that Randolph died

[Transcript] Founders / #320 The Making of Winston Churchill Part 2

an early and tragic death depriving Winston of the chance to know his father and so now we have Churchill in his late 20s maybe early 30s i'm pretty sure it's late 20s writing this gigantic biography on his father the biography was meant to honor Randolph's memory but writing it was also

a way for Winston to understand his own life he had never established a close connection with Randolph

though he had yearned for one his father was a tragic figure an ambitious and outspoken politician sounds familiar but a failure as a statesman at 40 people would argue that Winston was just like Randolph a failure as a statesman Randolph was a restless man always searching for attention but never getting enough to please him sounds just like his son the proud son of a great family but a difficult husband and father living in Randolph's shadow was far for much of his life Winston couldn't

help wondering if his father's legacy was a blessing or a curse and so the fascinating part is in this biography he's not just trying to tell the story of his father he's trying to tell the story of himself the Randolph who emerges from Winston's book is a misunderstood hero who

tries to inspire his party and his country to achieve great things but who is defeated by the forces of reaction and selfish interests too soon his wings are clipped and he slowly falls to earth at the time that church rolls writing this he has no idea that he's going to find uh find a similar fate for himself about 10 years from now he lives large and dies young a thousand pages long the biography is a towering gleaming monument the son gathering up the disordered pieces of his father's life to construct a romantic vision that might guide his own career what is also fascinating about this book is the fact that because his dad and these dad dies when he's like 46 something like that there's a lot of people that were friends with his dad that worked with his dad that were colleagues of his dad that are still alive as Winston matures and becomes older Winston becomes to know some of them and they usually hold an opinion like this Winston is astonishingly like

his father in manners and ways and the whole attitude of his mind but mr. Churchill is superior to his father he adds a knowledge and industry that his father did not possess everywhere you go when you meet people meet Winston Churchill they're shocked at his energy his intensity and his work ethic what is happening there did Churchill know his father didn't possess these talents did you is that part of what drove him to outdo his father you see a lot of lines like this it was this deep well of strength that often left his contemporaries in wonder and that sent him apart from so many other sons of the aristocracy who thought a vulgar to appear too energetic it also distinguished him from his father why would he want to be distinguished from his father what killed his father Randolph suffered for years from the debilitating effects of the syphilis that killed him the whole experience as Winston says in the biography was an embarrassment it was also heart-rending to a son who wanted to idolize his father he never forgot the morning that lord Randolph died more than a half a century later i'm going to interrupt the sentence if you have kids do not underestimate the impact long after you're dead your impact on your children lives on listen to this more than a half a century later when he was prime minister for the second time he surprised his doctor by suddenly remarking my poor poor papa died on january 24th 1895 it was a long time ago

the date was seared into his memory strangely listen to this strangely his own death

[Transcript] Founders / #320 The Making of Winston Churchill Part 2

would fall on the same day Churchill took his last breath at the age of 90 on the morning of January 24th 1965 the 70th anniversary of his father's death Churchill was special and was obvious to a lot of people around him there's this quote that has been on my mind a lot since I uh since I read it for the first time it's actually in the other book too and it's in this book and the more I think about the description the more I like it so he has this lifelong friendship with actually a woman that he wanted to marry and she turned him down her name is Pamela and so they wanted to be coming

friends for 60 years but she gave one of the best descriptions of Churchill and the more I think about it it's one of the highest compliments that you can actually give a person if you sit here and think about what she's saying the first time you meet Winston you see all of his faults and the rest of your life you spend in discovering his virtues there's two successful attributes that Churchill has that I think we should try to emulate one is it says he they always talk about his energy levels they say that he never seemed to run out of energy I'm just going to leave a link down below there's this excellent video I think it's 11 minutes long it's about this guy who sold his company to Steve Jobs a few years before Steve Jobs died and even when he was sick knew he had cancer knew he was dying

and even though Steve was older than him this is the guy that wound up selling his company to Steve

and then going to work in Apple even though Steve was older than him and sick he said that Steve was way higher energy than he was and so I'll leave that link down below in the show notes I highly recommend I've watched the video I don't know probably five maybe ten times the story's fascinating and so the second trait is the fact that Churchill throughout his life sees things earlier than other people what I'm about to describe to you this is eight years before World War One he's observing the German military he knows that they're a threat he tries to tell people around them people don't believe them they don't agree there's another great uh I covered this

book on Churchill I think it was the first book I've ever read on Churchill it's called *The Splendid in the Vile* and it's all about his time as prime minister and there's a great line in the book that goes something like you may not like Churchill but he was right on Hitler he saw Hitler for who he was way before most of the people around him this idea that he just sees things earlier than other people it happens over and over and over again remember this is eight years before World War One Churchill spent a week observing maneuvers of the German army it was a chance to take a close look at the military machine that posed the biggest threat to peace in Europe though though Kaiser Wilhelm insisted that's the leader of Germany at the time insisted he didn't want to war with anyone yeah okay well what's coming out of your mouth and then what are your actions always go with people's actions the Kaiser himself issued the official invitation asking Winston to be his personal guest for the week oh okay what are you gonna do Churchill followed a mock

battle of 50,000 men in the German infantry artillery and cavalry the regiment was a proud one and took itself seriously as a fighting force this is Churchill's observation the Kaiser gave him a special pass to inspect the latest German artillery weapons and invited him to a field conference with his generals well for a guy that says he doesn't want war he started certainly practicing a lot for it Kaiser Wilhelm began showing off his knowledge of all the great battles fought over time his history lesson had a serious point he was clearly suggesting

[Transcript] Founders / #320 The Making of Winston Churchill Part 2

that blood would be spilled again if any army was unwise enough to attack the Germans his words reinforced the message Germany was ready and willing to make war if pushed so Churchill goes back

and he says he gave the Germans credit for superiority in numbers quality discipline and organization this is Churchill's writing right they have superiority in numbers quality discipline organization these alone he emphasized were four good roads to victory you should pay attention to what they're doing we should prepare now eight years before war breaks out third trait is Churchill's

force of personality and it's really interesting because this is described by one of his lovers it's remarkably consistent this is Churchill as a young man it's going to sound a lot like the Churchill the one that the world came to know and love Winston discourse on the brevity of human

life and his determination to accomplish great things in the short time available

he told her we are all worms but I do believe that I am a glow worm more important she perfectly understood the nature of his talk that it was essentially Winston thinking aloud he was highly opinionated strong-willed idealistic romantic intense overwhelming and demanding he possessed a boundless drive Churchill had big ideas and he wanted to act on them without delay he says stuff like this to everyone all the time sometimes I feel as if I could lift the whole world on my shoulders and the reason this is important to repeat is because his internal world right his internal monologue is telling him I'm special I'm special I'm special and then the external world starts to agree with his internal world telling him that you are special and you see that at his rapid rise at 33 years old he was finally taking his place in cabinet and was the youngest to do so in almost half a century this is so important to understand because then you realize the shock imagine if you had this relentless self-belief since time time you were seven they said when time you were seven then everything around you you rise faster and at a younger age anyway else you get to 40 you're saying okay this the next step is prime minister and then the exact opposite happens you get kicked out of government and you think your entire life is over we're going to get there in a minute more personality traits that he shares with Steve Jobs he generated his own light it was intense direct and concentrated as a beam another trait that Churchill shares with Steve Jobs the fact that he raises the bar and pushes the pace for everyone around him this is going to be Churchill's frenemy I guess is the way you would describe it they're serving together their fellow politicians and even his own biographer notices a distinct difference between Lloyd George's life before Churchill and after Churchill this is what an ambitious somebody that's raising the bar for you that's pushing the pace what that looks like the effect they have in your own life the answer was that his greatest cabinet colleague and rival Winston Churchill came afterwards during Lloyd George to do more than simply sound radical

once Churchill joined the cabinet everything changed as a pair of powerful personalities with high ambitions Winston and Lloyd George came to dominate the liberal government both as partners

and as rivals with each trying to reinforce or undermine the other depending on their shifting self-interest Winston was the spark that ignited the change Winston made it clear that he was not there to do business as usual I intend to make myself damn disagreeable he said this phenomenon was noticed by Paul Graham when he was building Y Combinator he talks about in his essays why

ambitious people need they must be around other ambitious people let me read you an excerpt from one of Paul Graham's essays ambitious people are rare so if everyone is mixed together randomly as they tend to be early in people's lives then the ambitious ones won't have many ambitious peers when you take people like this and put them together with other ambitious people they bloom like dying plants given water probably the most ambitious people are starved for the sort of encouragement that they'd get from ambitious peers whatever their age and so Churchill's doing this not only for the people around him but he's actually trying to change the institution in which he's operating he tries to do it for the government and really you could think about this is not as what he's doing as a politician but this is his blueprint for life in effect Churchill was proposing to do for the nation what he had been doing for himself to achieve quick success by thinking big taking risks and making the most of opportunities why they lasted and then just a few observations that I enjoyed from his the human aspect of his life not just his career and it's the fact that he did want a family he wanted love you see him in this book struggle try to find the right woman he attempts as many times finally gets it right gets married lucks out finds a supportive lifelong spouse and then becomes a father for the very first time at age 34 and he's writing there's a bunch of letters that he writes to his wife that are fascinating but I love this like he's happy that he's not single anymore being a father and having a family was very important to him bachelor life had been lonelier than Winston had wanted to admit and now he finally had a companion with whom he could share everything and so he writes to his wife I feel a vivid realization of all you are to me and of the good and comforting influence you've brought into my life it is a much better life now and so Churchill's aggressive nature obviously is going to be loved by some people and hated by others he winds up doing a good job of offending two kings one king that he was able to offend is Edward the seventh and if you really think about the description of Edward the seventh and how he lived chose to live his life Churchill was really offended by the behavior it's just this this this the worst kind of monarch that you could ever imagine and I don't know much about how like what he did you know to the country's whole I'm talking about how he lived his life Churchill just viewed him as just fat lazy king and you'll see why with this description Edward the seventh would indulge his gargantuan appetite with gusto it was the good life that had ruined his health adding so much bulk to his modest frame that he could barely move at the end he was so stout that he completely loses his breath when he has to climb upstairs life had become one long feast much of it served him by a parade of society beauties who added their fawn caresses whoever knows what that means who added their fawn caresses to his many other comforts so he just sought comfort sought a life of idleness sought a life of the easiest path path through life they could possibly imagine leads to an early death this is the exact opposite what again I know I'm repeating myself but Churchill like Teddy Roosevelt before him and a bunch of other people I just like people that do things when they don't they're taking the harder path when they don't need to and you see this later on in his life in that book the splendid and the vile I mentioned earlier there's notes that Churchill sends to his son where he hates idleness he hates laziness he hates another people and he hates it within his family members and so he writes this to what his like a young adult son at the time and he says your idle and lazy life is very offensive to me you appear to be leading a perfectly useless existence and so if his son and the king were searching for the easiest path possible Churchill did the opposite we see this with a letter that his wife writes to him dearest you work so hard she wrote him and have so little

fun in your life she was only partly right hard work in exciting times was Winston's idea of fun and the constant desire to push the pace the constant intensity that he conducted all of his affairs with it could be exhausting to people around him he was demanding in all things that mattered to him which is often exhausting for others who lacked his intensity and even the way he plays this is the surprising thing that he liked best I don't remember reading this before but it comes up a bunch of the times in the book so I have to imagine that the other it was in the other biographies I read but it says one of Winston's favorite ways to relax was to dig in the sand so he'd go down to these beaches and sometimes he'd get caught doing this and this is what he's doing on the beaches he would create battle defenses and pretend campaigns as a way to indulge his ever active imagination idle onlookers were not welcome this was serious work in its own way giving the builder a refreshing chance to create worlds of his own without having to ask anyone else's opinion or permission it was one of the things that he liked best in the world and out of everything else that you and I are talking about right if we're really like okay let me what we're trying to do here is like trying to figure out what was a young Winston like what was he doing that is going to prepare him for his greatest moment that he could not have possibly predicted was going to come and this idea is like what was he doing when he was playing going down to the beach

and actually engaging in these campaigns almost preparing himself for real life events that are going to happen 25 30 years into the future and this kind of intensity and practice and dedication leads to again another sign from the external world that he is as special as he thinks he is at 37 years old he becomes the civilian head of the strongest naval force in the world he becomes the first lord of the Admiralty I think that's how you pronounce it and as soon as he takes over the organization we see his personality imbibed in the organization he said that the only results that really mattered was the fleets so his ship's ability to confront an enemy with a few minutes of shattering blasting overpowering force the only punch worth throwing was a knockout punch this is Churchill personified uh said Churchill the best way to make war impossible is to make victory certain he did nothing by halves and so he immediately goes and tries to fix all the problems that he sees with Britain's navy the first thing is the fact that hey our ships have to be fast and ships go faster if you if they burn oil instead of coal at the time all of his ships burn coal so he's like okay let's burn oil but they're like Winston here's the problem Britain doesn't have a reliable supply of oil now this is crazy this blew my mind you know british petroleum BP Winston played a role in creating it so he solves the problem the fact hey I can't I want to burn oil my ships to burn oil not coal Winston we don't have any oil okay so let's go buy a majority interest in an oil company so he says he would solve that problem by taking Britain into the petroleum business arranging for the government to acquire a majority interest in the Anglo-Persian oil company which is now british petroleum or as we know at BP that is insane that blew my mind second problem the most advanced gun of the day is these 13.5 inch guns that are on these these like the naval destroyers right he's like that's not big enough I want a 15 inch gun and everybody tells him like well here's the problem no one knew what the 15 inch gun would

work because as Churchill put it no such thing as a modern 15 inch gun existed none had ever been made but that did not deter him so I get to this part right he's essentially saying hey team I want you to build something that we don't know like one no one else has and the reason no one else has is because no one knows if it can be done but if we can figure out how to do it then that means

[Transcript] Founders / #320 The Making of Winston Churchill Part 2

we'll be the only ones with it a long time ago like two three years ago probably three years ago I read this biography of Larry Ellison's that that's insane I should actually reread it it's called the billionaire and the mechanic it is about I think the subtitle is uh how Larry Ellison and a car mechanic teamed up to win sailing's greatest race the America's Cup twice and so I'm reading this section of this Churchill book and it made me think because Larry was you know he's an extreme

winner I think I said in that book that if uh Michael Jordan sold enterprise software he'd be Larry Ellison like they have the same kind of competitive like psychopathic competitive drive and so Larry pushes his team they're losing at the race he's like hey we're gonna build the largest hard wing this like thing that goes on top of the sailboat and everybody's around them's like you can't do that no one's ever done it and Larry's way he thinks about it's actually kind of genius he goes this is what Larry said I know that most people think that trying to build a hard wing of this size is crazy but that's the beauty of the idea the other side isn't trying to build one so we'll have a wing and they won't and what he's really saying is like if we can do something really hard we won't have any competition it's exactly what Winston is saying here

Winston was willing to make plans on a grand scale and to be imaginative and daring when others were content to think small and go slow I think the fact that Churchill was a relentless student of history I think he stumbled upon and discovered something that I think you and I also know if you read a lot of biographies if you're studying and you're learning from history this stretches your own story it makes you reach farther it makes you believe that you're capable more than maybe you you're doing right now and we see this as a lifelong student of the country's history Churchill was allowed to play a role in the epic story of the British naval power he was following in the steps of giants who had defeated the Spanish armada in the 16th century and Napoleon's

navy in the 19th he did not want to be the man who let the royal navy be overwhelmed by the Germans

and so as I mentioned earlier Churchill has this talent to be able to see things

usually years in advance to other people he wants to prepare the navy wants to be the world's best navy wants more ships and the cabinet keeps telling them no you don't need four battleships what's wrong with you only need two be reasonable I hate that word the worst advice I've ever heard is like be realistic that's terrible advice so it says you know you don't need four more battleships you know I think two is going to be enough two you know we feel in the cabinet that is more reasonable

and I love this this few sentences that word reasonable was the key Winston's opponents never tired of saying that he was unreasonable he wouldn't listen to reason they said he wouldn't compromise they said and part of the reason they thought he was so unreasonable is because they didn't believe war was actually going to happen there's a lot of statements in the book they're like it's impossible for two civilized European countries such as Germany and in England to actually engage in warfare together or against each other rather and yet just a year or two later in August 1914 the war with Germany actually began still only 39 this is just great great writing still only 39 Winston was now at the center of a world war it had taken him only 13 years to rise from a parliamentary backbencher to one of the top posts in an empire at war he now had the chance to change the course of world history and to prove the worth of his heroic view of life Winston enjoyed an enormous advantage for this was his hour the arrival of the war that he had seen

coming and had prepared himself to fight whether by land sea or air and what is shocking is how everybody around him does not have the same approach they weren't taking it seriously there's a bunch of people in high positions of the government says for the british what would help to turn the war into such a long and bitter slog was the half-hearted way in which their leaders threw the nation into the fight and then failed so long to pursue it vigorously Churchill's rival this guy named Reggie McKenna who actually wanted to read to be the head of the navy and not Churchill

starts saying stuff like this Churchill talks well he says but he's never done anything big he continued in this vein for some time completely blind to the irony that he was golfing while Churchill was hard at work Churchill gave a forthright explanation of his position if we have to fight we must fight with single-hearted convictions and so i just have three notes on this page number one pursue your goal vigorously number two non-self-aware idiots surround you like the guy saying Churchill's not doing anything while this guy is golfing Churchill literally puts himself in harm's way repeatedly he risks his physical safety which he does not need to do which is also what he did earlier in life as we talked about last week over and over again why this guy's on a fucking golf course non-self-aware idiots surround you that is number two number three fight with single-hearted conviction and so we see the fact that Churchill is willing to put skin in the game he shocked the military and most of the nation when he abruptly decided to throw himself into combat as a field commander in all but name as first lord lord of the admiralty he wasn't supposed to be on the bridge of a battleship under fire much less commanding troops on the front lines but on october 3rd when he went to the belgian port of antwerp to observe the fierce fighting there he ended up staying three days and leading the beleaguered forces as if he had suddenly been transformed into a general this is leadership he was under continuous and heavy fire and the sheer violence of it as well as the drama of the last stand against an overwhelming german force awakened every fighting instinct in his body and even with that the shocking thing is how fast his fall comes remember he gets the job at 39 at 40 he is disgraced and it comes down to the Gallipoli campaign he definitely played a role in formulating this idea for this campaign i've heard it's always his blame that's that's what i've understand this book makes the case that you know definitely he was definitely to blame but you know the he took the line share of the blame and there's a lot of people blame but it says he was wrong it was a disaster from start to finish as the situation went from bad to worse in the next few months mistakes after mistakes was made by both the navy and especially the army which tried to clear Gallipoli of turkish troops who proved to be far more disciplined and determined than the british had been willing to believe talked about that last week there is this tendency for large powerful countries just like large powerful companies they get fat and lazy and arrogant because they've they've just had success after success after success this inevitably leads them to underestimate their opponent that is never smart to underestimate anybody it is all downside no upside they did this in the bore war they called it like we can't lose a bunch of these farmers right they do this two decades later in singapore like i talked about on the alistar earthquake i think it's episode 318 a few episodes back same exact thing here they're like there these these turkish troops we're gonna smoke them and the result was something around 20 to 40 000 dead british soldiers tens of thousands died as the fighting dragged through the rest of the year it was one long misadventure that did nothing to change the course of the war the blame for this tragic campaign was put at the feet of Churchill who was made to pay the

[Transcript] Founders / #320 The Making of Winston Churchill Part 2

price for the failure this setback was so big that a suitably big scapegoat was needed and Winston was it with astounding suddenness his meteor rise flamed out he's going to keep get kicked out of government the people he thought were his friends did not see any reason to help him supposed friends and allies say stuff like Churchill will have to go he will be a rumored man he is kicked out he is no longer allowed to be the first lord of the admiralty says i am finished he lamented i'm finished in all that i care for this is what he cares about the waging of war and the defeat of the germans the reversal of fortunes could not have been more shocking and because he was so self-confident and so boastful this is obviously going to be predictable as well Winston's enemies were jubilant they were finally having their revenge for all the mo for all his moments of defiance and imprudence for a long time Winston was in a state of shock really was describing what happens when you lose a sense of purpose for a long time Winston was in a state of shock he wandered around like a man half alive he looked years older his face pale he was very depressed it was not simply his misfortune that weighed on him it was the abrupt loss of purpose he spent five months idle waiting for opportunities that never came he made up his mind to start his career all over at the age of 40 he was suddenly confronted with the possibility that he had reached the last chapter and now he must fight or die remember the war is not over he couldn't take any comfort from the story of his father's life for lord randolph had never managed to revive his own career after falling from power in his late 30s just like he is right Winston must have been haunted by that fact and have wondered whether he was simply repeating a family tragedy his father lingered too long and suffered a slow death Winston would take his chances in the trenches his star had grown so dim that he didn't think his reputation could suffer much more from this point it seemed that he could only rise if he survived ever the gambler he was willing to throw the dice once more and risk everything for another chance to restore his fortunes he arranged for a letter to be given to clemmy his wife in the event of my death he is going off into the trenches of world war one death is a very real possibility this letter was supposed to be the voice of a ghost speaking to clemmy in case his story had reached its end without the chance to add one more chapter he wrote do not grieve for me too much i am a spirit confident of my rights death is only an incident and not the most important which happens to us in this state of being on the whole especially since i met you my darling one i have been happy and you have taught me how noble a woman's heart can be if there's anywhere else meaning an afterlife if there's anywhere else i shall be on the lookout for you there meanwhile look forward feel free rejoice in life cherish the children guard my memory god bless you goodbye winston and that is where i'll leave it for the full story i highly recommend reading this book and i would also read hero of the empire i think they're both fantastic if you find yourself wanting to learn more on church ill i made two other podcasts about him it's episode 196 and episode 225 if you buy this book or any of the books using the link below you'll be supporting the podcast at the same time that is 320 books down 1000 ago and i'll talk to you again soon i'm glad you made it to the end founders listeners are not quitters if you have not already signed up for the founders am a private feed i highly recommend doing that right now i will leave a link down below but it's also always available at founders podcast dot com because the insane amount of research that i have done over the last seven years before this podcast i have a very unique set data set that's available nowhere else there's over 20 thou i've read over 100 000 pages where like 315 books something like that i have

[Transcript] Founders / #320 The Making of Winston Churchill Part 2

somewhere between like 20 and 21 000 highlights and notes from this project 90 percent oh probably over 90 percent of my highlights and notes never make it on to the podcast yet the information contained in them is excessively valuable so what i what i did is like i constantly getting questions all the time right and i look at them like they're unique prompts to try to get some of this information out of my head and out into the world so it's actually useful to you and one way to do this so everybody benefits is by actually making a private am a feed so if you become a member you'll be able to ask me questions directly there's a private email address that you get in the confirmation email after you sign up do not share that email address because i read every single one of these emails myself i don't have an assistant doing it i'm the only one that has access to that email so i read every single one myself now the questions that i get from these emails i turn i answer and i turn them into short am a episode so that allows other members to learn from the questions of other members you can also add a name and link to your website with your question so that other members can check out what you're working on i've already got i've already heard from uh subscribers to the am a feed that they've actually got new paying customers from people that discovered their business from an am a question i plan on making several new episodes every week if you are an enthusiast of founders podcast i highly recommend that you become a member you can join by using the link that's in the show notes on your podcast player or we're going to [founders podcast.com](https://founderspodcast.com)