

I stood on the hardwood floors waiting to take the most important basketball free-throw shot of my life. My sneakers, a pair of peach-colored high-tops with Velcro straps instead of laces, barely touched the foul-shot line.

It wasn't the NBA, NCAA or even a high school tournament. It was fourth grade. Prep-league basketball. The championship game.

I was the worst basketball player in the league. A pudgy little girl not even five feet tall, I was petrified to touch the ball. The year before, my encouraging father offered to pay me one dollar every time I touched the ball. This year

# ENVIRONMENTALIST. ADVENTURER. DAUGHTER. AUTOBIOGRAPHER.\*

he had upped the ante to one dollar every time I attempted a shot and two dollars if I made the basket. By the end of the season, I had made exactly ZERO dollars from my father.

But the opposing team had committed a technical foul and Coach said I had to take the shot. The wooden bleachers were packed with parents cheering on their children, the sidelines bursting with excited teammates, and yet I felt completely alone—by myself on the black foul line.

I had NEVER made a basket before in a game. I'd hardly touched the ball my entire basketball career. I bounced it once, certain the ball would hit my foot and roll away. I looked up at the basket looming before me, hoping I would at least hit the rim.

I held my breath. I shot. The only sound was the ball scraping by my fingernails as it left my hands. And then I heard another sound I'd rarely heard before... swoosh. I'd earned a dollar. Well, technically, I'd earned two dollars.

— Jessica Anderson



\* THE  
AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
PROJECT

*The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* is the most widely published autobiography of all time. In honor of Franklin's 300th birthday, the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary and *One Book, One Philadelphia* invited today's Philadelphians to submit memoirs of their own, using no more than 300 words. At the end of the project — May 17, 2006 — a panel of judges selected twenty autobiographies to appear on bus shelters throughout the city. Visit [www.theautobiographyproject.com](http://www.theautobiographyproject.com) for more information about the project, and to read more Philadelphia stories.

The Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary is a non-profit organization established to mark the 300-year anniversary of Benjamin Franklin's birth. *One Book, One Philadelphia* is a project of the Mayor's Office and the Free Library of Philadelphia.



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