

My grandfather was a well-known fishmonger in North Philadelphia in the 1950s. When I was still young, he brought me into the business.

At 4 a.m. I'd wake, hearing the crickets talk and smelling my stepfather's fresh-brewed coffee. I'd ride my van down 2nd Street to Spring Garden and stop at a breakfast place on 4th. Since my grandfather first took me, I'd been stopping there every morning. Everyone knew me. The cook, waiter, and checkout lady had worked there since I was a child.

"Hi, Mr. Horton," they'd say, "Two hot cakes and chipped beef with home fries and eggs?"

After breakfast, we drove down Delaware to Packer and turned on Lawrence. When I

GRANDSON. FISHMONGER. INCARCERATE. AUTOBIOGRAPHER.*

caught the smell of fresh fish, I'd always say, "Time to make money."

Go first to see Max, Billy Bad Ass, and Jimmy the Fish, who owned Acme Seafood and Son. Moving from business to business, bidding on the fish: silver trout, ling, croaker, perch, butter, shrimp, crab, and seasoned crab legs.

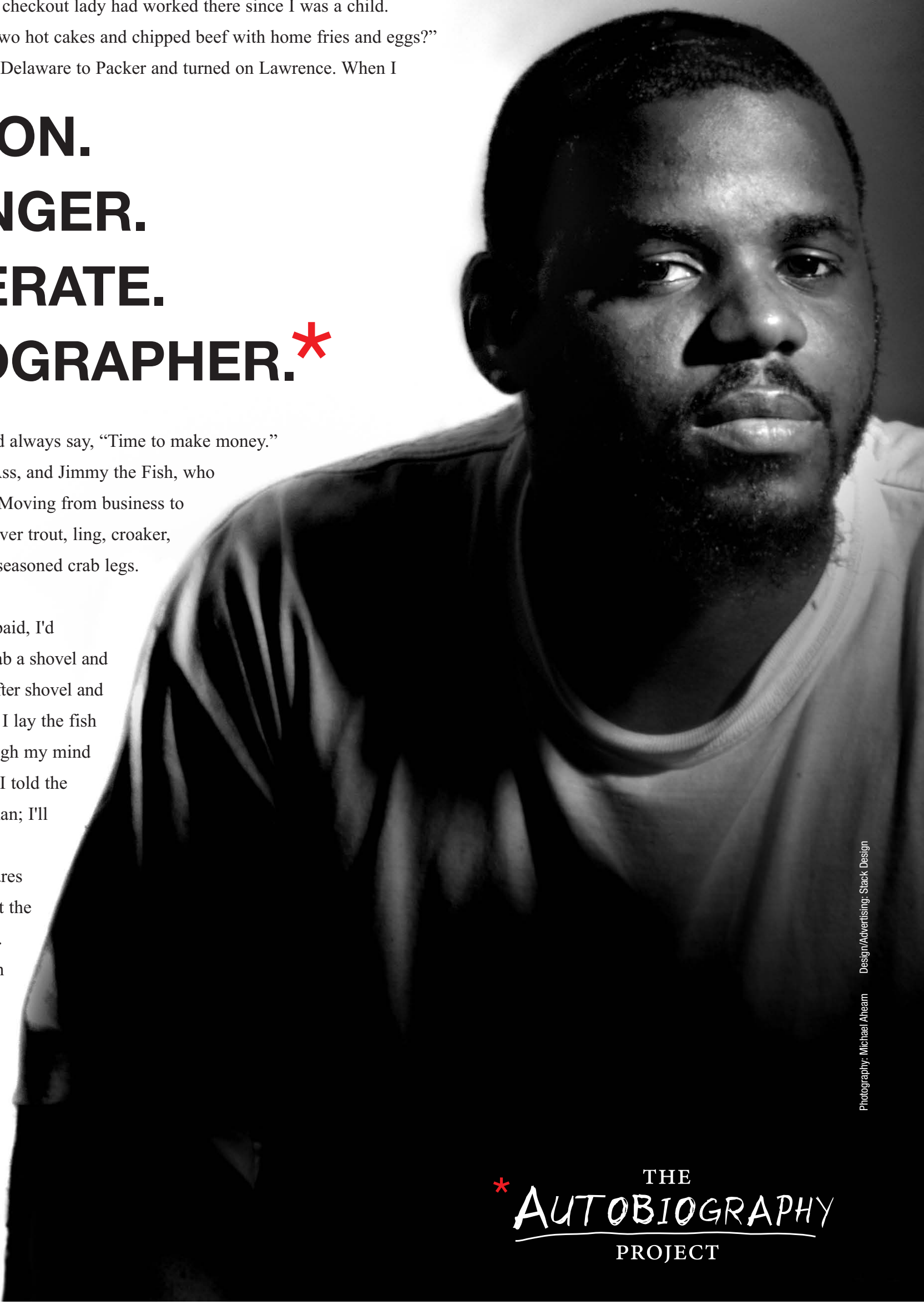
The prices were random.

Once I'd priced all the fish and paid, I'd start icing them down. First, I grab a shovel and dig into the ice barrow. Shovel after shovel and the boxes are filled. One by one I lay the fish in our cooler. A saying ran through my mind as I worked: "I jump in the sea; I told the fish to follow me. I'm the fish man; I'll be coming round."

Back at home I'd arrange my wares and make it all look so good that the customers would ask me to stop.

I'll forever remember selling fish in the neighborhood fondly, and I thank my grandfather. In my heart I will always sell fish there, even if I cannot go back.

— Raymond J. Horton



* THE
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
PROJECT

Photography: Michael Ahearn
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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 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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