



## Never Give Up

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

A baby giraffe falls 10 feet from its mother's womb and usually lands on its back. Within seconds, it rolls over and tucks its legs under its body. From this position it considers the world for the first time. Then the mother giraffe rudely introduces her offspring to the reality of life.

In his book, *A View from the Zoo*, Gary Richmond describes how a newborn giraffe learns its first lesson.

The mother giraffe lowers her head long enough to take a quick look. Then she positions herself directly over her calf. She waits for about a minute, and then does the most unreasonable thing. She swings her long, pendulous leg outward and kicks her baby, so it's sent sprawling head over heels.

When it doesn't get up, the violent process is repeated over and over again. The struggle to rise is momentous. As the baby calf grows tired, the mother kicks it again to stimulate its efforts. Finally, the calf stands for the first time on its wobbly legs. Then the mother giraffe does the most remarkable thing. She kicks it off its feet again. Why? She wants it to remember how it got up. In the wild, baby giraffes must be able to get up as quickly as possible to stay with the herd, where there is safety. Lions, hyenas, leopards, and wild hunting dogs all enjoy young giraffes. If the mother didn't teach her calf to get up quickly, it'd be vulnerable to these predators.

The late Irving Stone understood this. He spent a lifetime studying greatness, writing novelized biographies of such men as Michelangelo, Vincent van Gogh, Winston Churchill, Sigmund Freud, and Charles Darwin.

Stone was once asked if he'd found a common thread running through the lives of all these exceptional people. He said, "I write about people who sometime in their life have a vision or dream of something that should be accomplished, and they go to work.

"They are beaten over the head, knocked down, vilified, and for years they get nowhere. But every time they're knocked down they stand up. You cannot destroy these people. And at the end of their lives they've accomplished some modest part of what they set out to do."

Winston Churchill also understood the lesson of the giraffe; he was knocked down many times. It took him three years to pass the eighth grade because he had trouble learning English. It seems ironic that, years later, Oxford University asked him to address its commencement exercises.

He arrived with his usual props. A cigar, cane, and top hat accompanied Churchill wherever he went. As he approached the podium, the crowd rose in appreciative applause. With unmatched dignity, he settled the crowd and stood confident before his admirers. Removing the cigar and carefully placing the top hat on the podium, Churchill gazed at his waiting audience. Authority rang in Churchill's voice as he shouted, "Never give up!"

Several seconds passed before he rose to his toes and repeated: "Never give up!" His words thundered in their ears. There was a deafening silence as Churchill reached for his hat and cigar, steadied himself with his cane, and left the platform. His commencement address was finished.