

Crazy, But True....

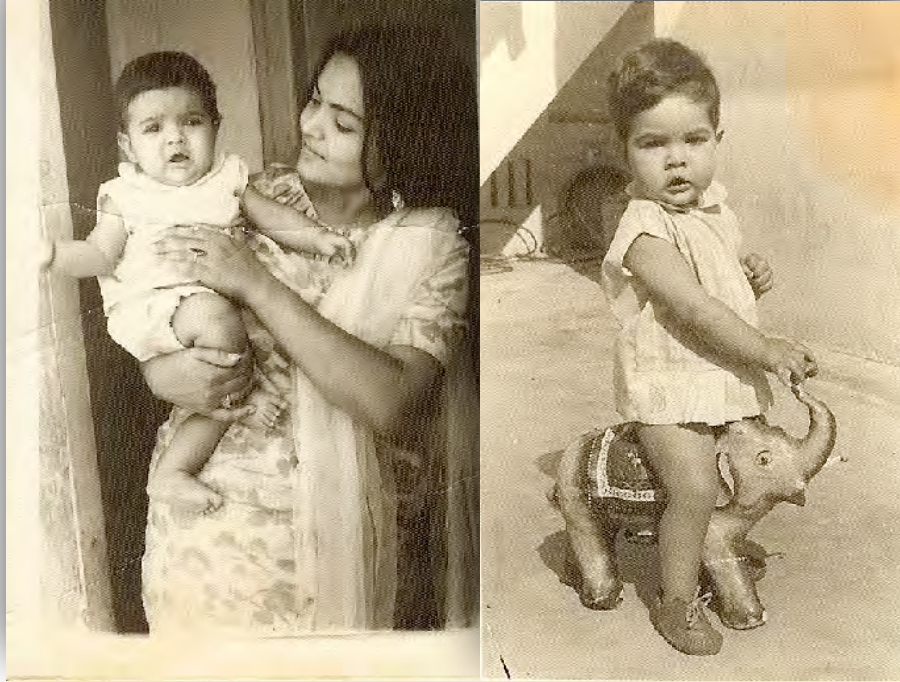


A Message From Hammad Zaidi:

Thank you for reading about some of my most memorable life experiences. Some of these snapshots are comedic, while others are tragic, but all of them are littered with the great truth that if I can limp my way into the life, I love, anybody can achieve anything.

Here are 31 "crazy but true," things about me:

1) As an infant, I suffered a head injury, rendering my left side more negligible and less able than my right side. I was limited gifted use of my left hand, and a sexy-ass cowboy limps with my left leg. Luckily, my fall triggered my family's move to the United States for better medical attention for me. Thus, I see my disability as the "rent" I had to pay to have my wonderful life.



2) I created "Script Accessible," a screenwriting contest for writers with disabilities and non-disabled writers who write about disabled characters.



Script Accessible

3) I was held up at gunpoint in August 1980 on the way home from a pick-up baseball game. Not knowing if my assailant hated my culture, skin tone, or disability more, I knew I hated all three. After being freed, I rushed home, locked myself in my room, disrobed, and then stared at my naked body in a mirror all night until I liked what I saw. Then I stared longer, a lot longer until I loved what I saw.

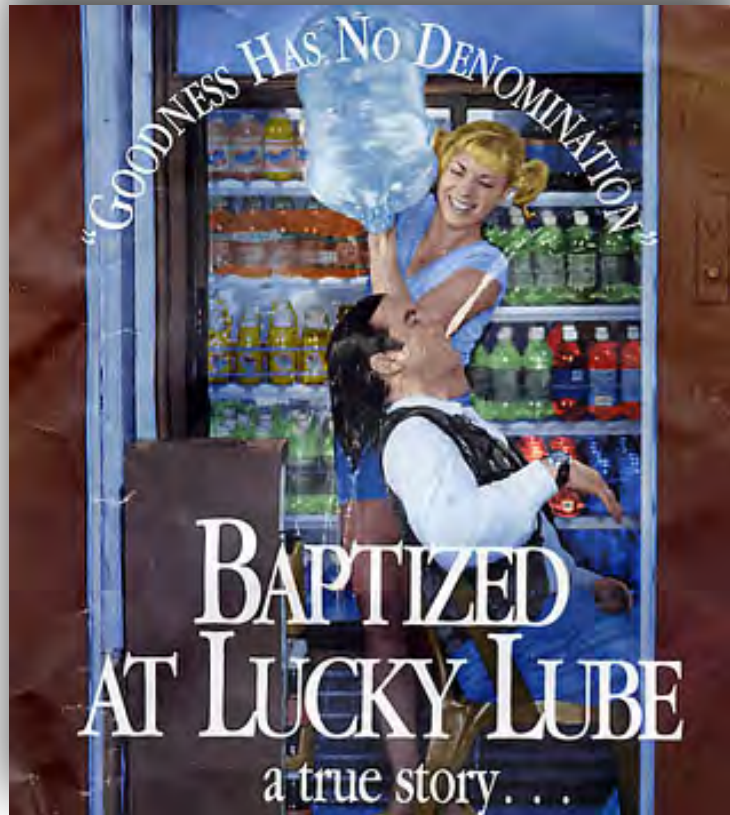


4) In 2002, I wrote, produced, and directed a September 11th related Public Service Announcement for the first anniversary of 9/11. My PSA, "*Champions of Hope*," played in 5,001 theaters, on TV networks, and at significant arenas. The White House endorsed it, Disney and Verizon paid for it, and Regal Cinemas distributed it. My film inspired an estimated 650,000-1,000,000 kids to do community service.

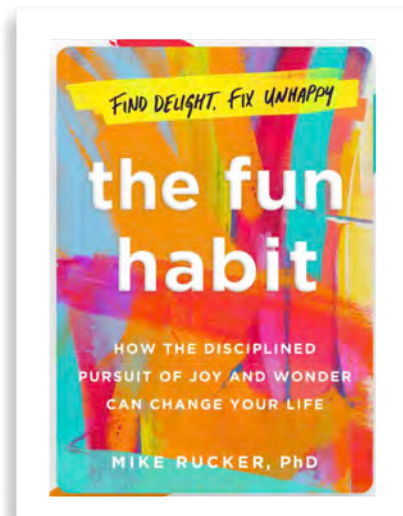
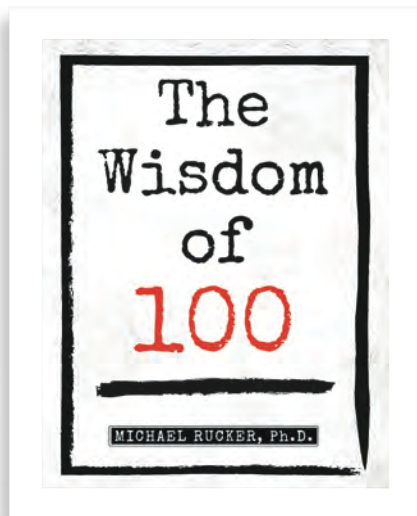
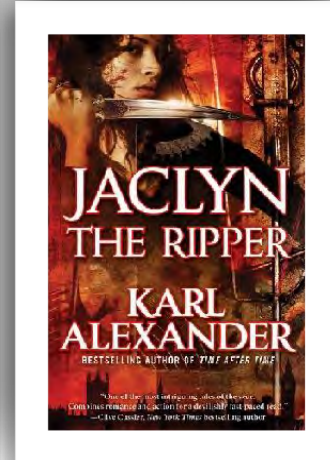
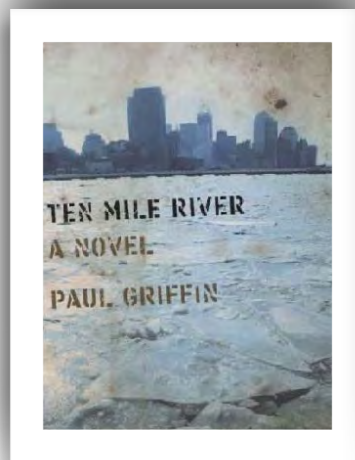
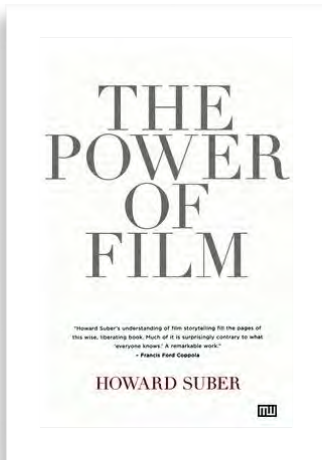


5) While waiting for my car to get an oil change at Jiffy Lube in Thousand Oaks, California, in 1998, the lady sitting next to me informed me she thought I was "crippled" because I wasn't Christian. She then pulled out a pocket Bible and offered to baptize me in the water cooler, claiming that doing so would "save me." So, I agreed to let her try. Two years later, I made a short film about the incident titled "*Baptized at Lucky Lube.*" As my first directorial effort, "*Baptized at Lucky Lube*" played 28 film festivals in six countries (United States, Canada, Australia, England, France, and Mexico). It also garnered a bit of national and international press, including an article on *Ain't it Cool News.com*.

Paul Griffin, the actor who played me, is also a celebrated author. Paul has since written several critically acclaimed and award-winning works, including "*Ten Mile River,*" "*The Orange Houses,*" "*Burning Blue,*" "*Adrift,*" "*When Friendship Followed Me Home,*" and "*Stay With Me.*"



6) I've been mentioned in five books. My late friend Karl Alexander credited me with giving him the concept for his novel, "Jaclyn The Ripper," my quote of praise appears in my mentor Howard Suber's book, "The Power of Film," and I'm in the "Thank You" credits for my dear friend Paul Griffin's book, "Ten Mile River." Additionally, my "quote of wisdom is #50 in the book, "The Wisdom of 100," by Michael Rucker PhD, and I'm in the Thank You credits of Michael Rucker PhD's newest book, "The Fun Habit."



7) *My three most significant personal accomplishments were learning to tie a shoe, ride a bike, and drive a stick-shift car. Those three moments made me feel unstoppable because they launched me into motion.*



8) I found a UCLA snowcap buried in the snow at recess in kindergarten in Overland Park, Kansas. My discovery ignited my obsession with UCLA. Although I showed little academic promise at the time, I received my Master of Fine Arts from the UCLA School of Film 31-years later.



9) When I was nine, I would sneak into the kitchen late at night, snag a plate and a salad fork from the cupboard, and proceed to our weathered brown sofa. I'd pretend the plate was my "steering wheel," the salad fork was my "stick-shift," and the couch was my Porsche 911 with "UCLA Alumni" tags on it. I'd imagine living oceanfront in Los Angeles and working in film. It still amazes me that every single part of my childhood visualization has become my reality.



10) *Pac-Man* is the only video game I could play growing up because it only required one hand. However, I executive produced 29 video games and wrote or co-wrote seven. My games included five for professional athletes (Hanley Ramirez, Alex Morgan, Maya Moore, Simon Dumont, and Steven Jackson) and three for The Jim Henson Company. Also included was "*Hubie The Flat Balloon*," a semi-autobiographical story, currently being developed as a Children's book and an animated television series.



11) My world was shattered on December 8, 1980, when John Lennon died at the hand of a disgruntled, mentally challenged man. I always wanted to befriend Lennon, so I could tell him how much The Beatles' music and solo work helped me cope with being disabled. Twenty-seven years later, I befriended Julian Lennon when my company signed his *"Whaledreamers"* film at the 2007 *Cannes Film Festival*. We teamed up with *Greenpeace* and *Hollywoodtoday.com* to throw an oceanfront bash where 1,643 guests joined us to watch Julian play a midnight set.



12) The most amazing concert I've ever attended was *The Knebworth Festival* in England on June 30, 1990. The line-up included Pink Floyd, Paul McCartney, a Robert Plant/Jimmy Page "Led Zeppelin" reunion, Phil Collins, Genesis, Eric Clapton, Mark Knopfler, Elton John, Tears For Fears, Cliff Richard and the Shadows, and Status Quo.



13) When I attended *The Knebworth Festival* in England in June of 1990, I shared a hotel room with Gary, a 45-year-old man dying of AIDS. The experience changed my life. Gary urged me to leave New Jersey when I returned to the U.S. and move to California to chase my dreams. He said I may as well die with him if I didn't go after what I wanted. Gary also said I would never forget June 30, the concert day. Just six weeks after returning from our trip, I left New Jersey and moved to Los Angeles to pursue my lofty goals. **Gary was right; I'll never forget June 30 because, in addition to Knebworth, my twin daughters were born on June 30, 21 years later.** Pictured below is Gary in front of Abbey Road Studios in London.



14) I failed to get on my high school radio station three years in a row but became an on-air personality at two college radio stations; Rider College in New Jersey, which earned me an FCC license, and California State University, Northridge. Those experiences, coupled with spending my youth loitering at a seedy little Mob-owned record store that paid me in free posters, albums, and concert tickets in exchange for spinning records and putting up displays for them, allowed me to attend over 1,000 concerts. Some of my favorite shows include The Knebworth Festival in England in 1990, The Who performing their rock opera Tommy at the Radio City Music Hall in 1989, Billy Joel at Giants Stadium in New Jersey in 1990, David Bowie at Giants Stadium in New Jersey in 1990, Boston in Boston in 1987, Texas Jam in Dallas in 1986, The Walden Woods concert in New York City in 1991, Simon and Garfunkel in Los Angeles in 1993, The Eagles at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena in 1994, Paul McCartney in Las Vegas in 2002, The Dawson City Music Festival 2001-2008, and Desert Trip in 2016.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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Hammad H. Zaidi

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15) I attend major film festivals, like Cannes, Berlin, and Sundance, to buy and sell motion pictures. I also served in the press at *The Cannes Film Festival* for three years.



16) I've served as a jury member, screenplay jury member, filmmaker advisor, showcase curator, panelist, advisory board member, and or world cinema screener at several film festivals worldwide. These include Sundance, SXSW, Slamdance, Nashville, Temecula, Kansas City, Dawson City, and Flickerfest in Sydney twice, amongst others.

In 2018, I founded The Lonely Seal International Film, Screenplay and Music Festival, recognized as a "Top 100 Best Reviewed" Festival in the world, on FilmFreeway.



17) In April 2001, I met Academy Award-Winning Actress Olympia Dukakis at the Nashville Film Festival. We hit it off, so she jokingly asked me if I had a part for her. I told Olympia I was doing a mockumentary about me escaping an arranged marriage, so she asked me to write a one-page scene. If she liked it, she would do it...We shot the scene, which featured Olympia Dukakis dumping me because I was too old for her when she was starring in the Cherry Orchard in Carmel, California, in August of that same year.



18) In September of 2006, merely three weeks after I became engaged to my fantastic wife Shahina, I was asked to serve as one of the Judges of the Hawaiian Tropic National Beauty Pageant in North Shore, Hawaii. The late Lakers owner Jerry Buss was also judging.



19) I created "Ogre Achiever," a Shrek-based national billboard campaign to inspire kids to achieve. It has been adopted by many school districts nationwide. I've sold several creative writing projects to The Foundation For A Better Life, including "Ogre Achiever" and "Generosity," a PSA for which I won a national Telly award.



20) I created and wrote "Going Bionic," a weekly column on Film Threat from 2010-2015. Over 300 articles have been published, with 256 originally on Film Threat.



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Hammad Zaidi's 'Going Bionic' appears every Tuesday at FilmThreat.com

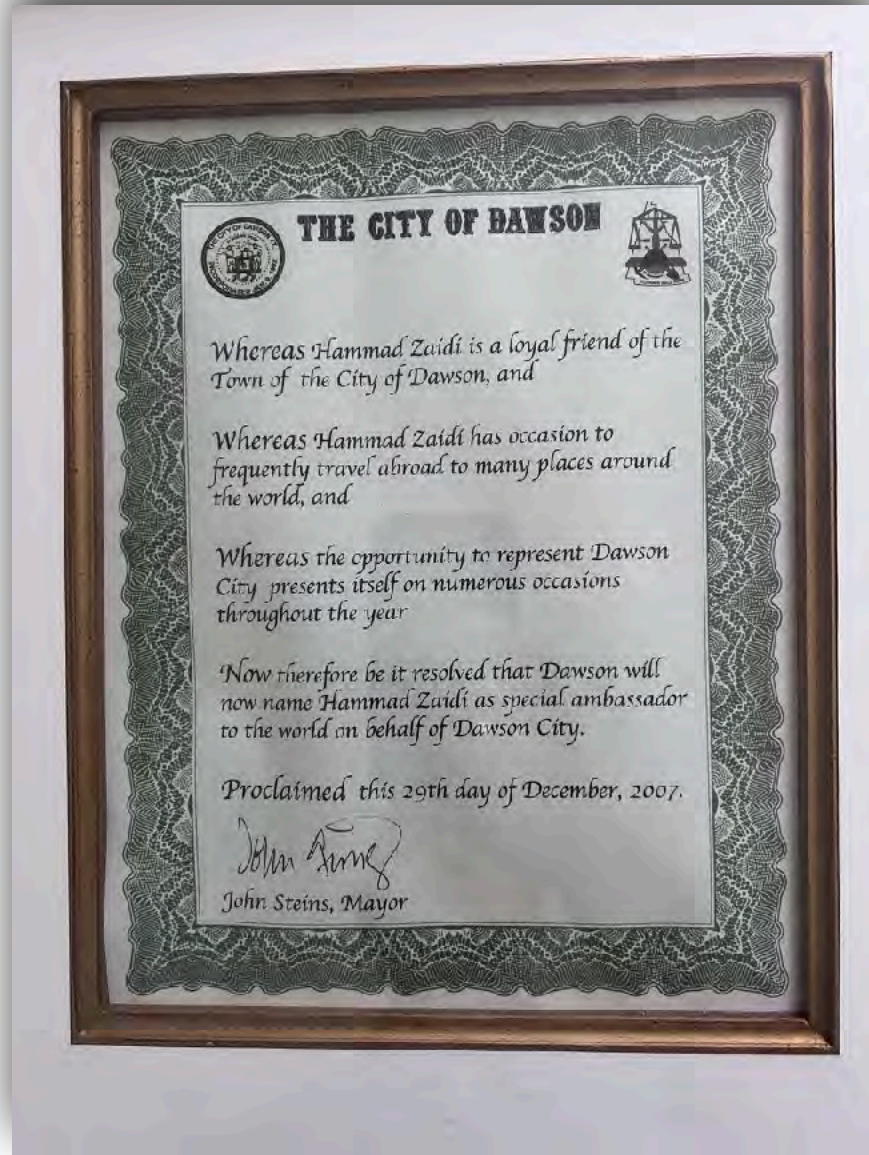
21) I often attend the Dawson City Music Festival, under the "Midnight Sun," in the Canadian Yukon. One of my friends in Dawson City, "Caveman Bill," lives in a cave. Bill has enjoyed lots of press, including *The New York Times* and a spread in *GQ Magazine*.



22) My wedding had quite the eclectic guest list. It included a 90's rock star, a European pop star, a spy, a few sports greats, two celebrated authors, and several friends from Dawson City, Yukon.



23) My favorite wedding gift was a proclamation signed by Dawson City mayor John Steins, making me a "World Ambassador to Dawson City."



24) I scored 0.0 points all season for my seventh-grade basketball team. I played 14 seconds all season.



25) In 2012, I played former NBA Lakers standout, Kareem Rush, in a one-on-one game, in an attempt to score in a basketball game for the first time. Kareem won, 20-0.



26) I've had the rare opportunity to befriend some icons from my youth. Walt Hazzard, the UCLA Hall of Fame basketball player who served on John Wooden's first National Championship team, became an Olympian and coached the UCLA basketball team. Karl Dorrell is a Rose Bowl-winning wide receiver and a UCLA football coach. Both of them attended my wedding with their wives.



27) I've gone to the Super Bowl for my birthday every year since 1993. Other great moments I've had the pleasure to attend include, The 2000 Sydney Olympics and the 1999 Women's World Cup Final (when the USA beat China 1-0 in penalty kicks). I've also attended several World Series, NBA Finals, NCAA Final Fours, the 2012 MLB All-Star Game, countless Lakers, Dodgers, and UCLA football and basketball games, and the Eskimo Games in Fairbanks, Alaska.



28) I spent 2006 working out with NFL-bound UCLA football players in their private gym. While they bench pressed hundreds of pounds, I struggled to lift the bar with no weights on it. I had my own trainer Todd, who is now with the LAPD. I was honored as one of the civilians asked to endorse Todd's candidacy for the LAPD. Years later, the LAPD gifted me one of their highest civilian honors.



29) I have never drank, smoked, or done drugs; ever, but I've always been wonderfully addicted to Dr. Pepper. My neurologist prescribed me Dr. Pepper as a child to balance the effects of my medicine at the time. I still take my Dr. Pepper "medication" daily. I've named a dog, parakeet, and a parrot Pepper. I have shipped Dr. Pepper to Europe for business trips, and I even had glass bottles of "Original Dr. Pepper" shipped from Dublin, Texas, for my wedding.



30) I love road trips. One of my favorite ones was driving from Los Angeles to Las Vegas in a refurbished hearse to hang out with the Beach Boys during their week-long New Year's Eve Residence in 1992. Other gems included zig-zagging from New Jersey to California to help my friend help deliver a Porsche convertible he bought for his father in 2002 and driving from Los Angeles to Tampa, Florida, for the Super Bowl in 2021. **Notice the thousands of cardboard cutouts in the stadium. Only 24,835 people were there.**



31) I dreamed of being a professional athlete as a child, but then reality sunk in. By the time I was twelve, I was determined to become the owner of a professional sports franchise. I've been chasing that insanely outrageous dream throughout my life. However, it may have become closer. I am currently a co-founder and CEO of GO! Game On Total Sports LLC, a new 24/7 sports FAST channel.



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