



With daughters Ashley, 24, (left) and Amy, 22.

# Byrd Baggett

BBA '72, LIFE MEMBER, UT TRACK ALL AMERICAN '71, PROFESSIONAL SPEAKER, BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF 13 BOOKS ON TOPICS OF LIFE, LEADERSHIP, AND MOTIVATION. HELPING BUSINESSES DEVELOP AUTHENTIC LEADERS AND TEAMS. MARRIED WITH THREE CHILDREN.

As a child, I was always encouraged “to keep my eyes on the stars.” My childhood dream, shared by many of my classmates, was to attend The University of Texas on an athletic scholarship. I achieved this goal, receiving a full scholarship in track and enjoying a substantial degree of success. I lettered all four years, was elected captain my junior and senior years, earned All American status in 1971, and was a member of two conference championship teams.

Upon graduation, I had successful careers with two Fortune 500 companies, married my beautiful wife and was blessed with three wonderful children, despite the fact that five fertility specialists advised us that we would never have children. Doubt sees the obstacles while faith sees the way!

One would think that happiness would accompany all this “success,” but with each accomplishment came a deeper emptiness. I was never satisfied, always wanting more, bigger and better things (cars, homes, money, boats, position, etc...). This lack of a meaningful purpose resulted in 13 jobs,

7 careers, and could have resulted in the loss of a marriage if not for my wife’s unwavering faith and commitment.

God finally had to get my attention, and boy was He successful! We Texans are fiercely proud folks, and to get our attention sometimes requires a ‘two by four’ upside the head. My ‘two by four’ was seven humbling experiences in a five-year span. I was on a commercial flight that lost power at 28,000 feet over the Rocky

Mountains and didn’t regain power until 12,000 feet (we were over peaks that reached 14,000 feet!); my mother died; my best friend died at the age of 38; my college track coach, one of the most influential people in my life, died at the young age of 57; I spent three days in a cardiac intensive care unit; I was forced to resign from a comfortable executive position at the age of 40; and we lost everything we owned in a bizarre moving-van fire. Needless to say, God was successful in getting my attention.

After my speaking engagements, I am frequently asked, “If God loves you so much, why did He let those things happen?” My answer: “He had to take me out of my comfort zone to reveal my true gifts and for me to understand the powerful difference between success and significance.”

Finding these gifts and sharing them with others has given me meaning and purpose that I never dreamed could exist. As John Maxwell states in his wonderful book, *The Success Journey*, “life is a journey, not a series of meaningless destinations.” My journey is dedicated to helping others build authentic relationships that stand the tests of time and change.

In conclusion, adversity taught me the following truths:

“Listen to the calling of your heart and the true riches of life will follow.”

“Follow the trail to your dreams, not the path of others’ expectations.”

“Look at life through the windshield, not the rear-view mirror.”

“The past doesn’t have a future, but you do.”

“Adversity can be a stepping stone to greatness or a tombstone of defeat. It’s our choice.”

And, my favorite quote, “Success at the expense of faith and family is really failure.”