

Christopher Gardner: Part 1

“Born February 9, 1954, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Christopher Paul Gardner’s childhood was marked by poverty, domestic violence, alcoholism, sexual abuse and family illiteracy.”^{vi} “Gardner did not have many positive male role models as a child.”ⁱⁱ He never knew his father, and “his stepfather was a violent man who was physically abusive.”ⁱⁱⁱ Gardner and his siblings were put in foster care on two different occasions while their mother was imprisoned, the second time for attempting to murder their stepfather.^{iv} “After bouncing among homes and guardians – from his stepfather to various family members to a string of foster homes – Gardner still managed to graduate from high school in 1972.”^v

Christopher Gardner: Part 2

“Gardner joined the Navy out of high school and then moved to San Francisco where he worked as a medical research associate and for a scientific medical supply distributor. In 1981, as a new father to son Christopher Gardner Jr., he was determined to find a career that would be both lucrative and fulfilling. Fascinated by finance, but without connections, an MBA or even a college degree, Gardner applied for training programs at brokerages, willing to live on next to nothing while he learned a new trade. Chris Jr.’s mother left and Gardner, despite his circumstances, fought to keep his son because, as he says, ‘I made up my mind as a young kid that when I had children they were going to know who their father is, and that he isn’t going anywhere.’ Gardner earned a spot in the Dean Witter Reynolds training program but became homeless when he could not make ends meet on his meager trainee salary.”^{vi} “Gardner and his son were homeless in the Tenderloin District of San Francisco for nearly a year. Gardner often scrambled to place his child in daycare, stood in soup lines and slept wherever he and his son could find safety—in his office after hours, at flophouses, at parks, and even in a locked bathroom at the Bay Area Rapid Transit station.”^{vii}

Christopher Gardner: Part 3

“Gardner worked at Bear Stearns & Co from 1983-1987 where he became a top earner. In 1987 he founded the brokerage firm Gardner Rich in Chicago from his home with just \$10,000.”^{viii} In 2006, he sold his share of the company in a multi-million dollar deal, then “he became CEO and founder of Christopher Gardner International Holdings, with offices in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco.”^{ix} “At age 52, Gardner has houses in two cities. He owns a major brokerage firm. He has owned fancy cars” (including a Ferrari he bought from Michael Jordan^x) “and wears custom-tailored suits.”^{xi} “During a visit to South Africa, Gardner met with Nelson Mandela and is reportedly developing an investment venture with South Africa that will create hundreds of jobs.”^{xii} Having conquered grave challenges, Gardner is now a “self-made millionaire, entrepreneur, motivational speaker, and philanthropist. He has helped fund a \$50 million project in San Francisco that creates low-income housing and opportunities for employment in the area of the city where he was once homeless.”^{xiii} “Chris Gardner’s aim, through his speaking engagements and media projects, is to help others achieve their full potential.”^{xiv} His autobiography, *The Pursuit of Happyness*, was a New York Times bestseller and became a top box office movie starring Will Smith. He published a second book, *Start Where You Are*, in 2009.^{xv} “His practical guidance and inspirational story have made him a frequent guest on CNN, CNBC and the Fox News Channel. He has been featured on “The CBS Evening News,” “20/20,” “Oprah,” “Today Show,” “The View,” “Entertainment Tonight,” as well as in *People*, *USA Today*, *Associated Press*, *New York Times*, *Fortune*, *Entrepreneur*, *Jet*, *Reader’s Digest*, *Trader Monthly*, *Chicago Tribune*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *The New York Post* and the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, among others.”^{xvi}

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