**Marc Montserrat on Winston Churchill**

Who was Churchill? Most people remember him as the British Prime Minister during WWII. But this paints an incomplete sketch of a man that received the Nobel Prize in Literature, was an officer of the Army, a painter, a historian and was even made Honorary Citizen of the US by President Kennedy. A renaissance man? Hardly. He was a soldier at heart that blended all domains of his life until one is undistinguishable from the other. He was born as one of the last aristocrats and died as the greatest Briton of all times.

Son the Duke of Marlborogh and an American-born lady, Sir Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill was born on November 30th, 1874. He was brought up mainly by nannies and at boarding schools, as was the custom.

He started his career in the army, fighting in India, Sudan, South Africa, Turkey and the Western Front during the First World War. His artistic qualities shone through war, and he was famous as a war correspondent. Between war assignments he took several political positions, many of which gained him a great deal of controversy, such as his opposition to grant power to India or some monetary policies that caused economic deflation. This put him in an unpopular spot during the 1930s, when he started to be known for warning against the perils of Nazi Germany. When WWII started he was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty and shortly thereafter Prime Minister. This was the start of his best years as a public leader.

His public speeches, in which he refused to accept anything but victory against the Nazis, helped inspire the British people especially when Britain stood alone against Hitler and chances seemed bleak. It may seem strange that despite leading Britain’s victory against Germany, he lost the 1945 election. His party was not popular, but Churchill was. So much so that the opposition party used the slogan “Cheer Winston, vote Labour [the opposition party]”. The opposition’s promises of social welfare programs such as the NHS, full employment and education were much more than the Conservatives were willing to promise and Churchill lost the election.

Relentless, he became Leader of the Opposition and in 1951 he again became Prime Minister. Only a stroke managed to retire him in 1955. Even that didn’t keep him quiet for long: he tried to come back to power in the early 60s but died in 1965 as a result of a second stroke.

Who was Churchill? A bulldog. A man of dogmatic passion for effort and moral convictions.

Continuous effort - not strength or intelligence - is the key to unlocking our potential.

– Winston Churchill

Indeed, Churchill said it best: “never give in--never, never, never, never, in nothing great or small, large or petty, never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.” This passion is clearly visible in his career as Prime Minister and Army officer, but also in his personal life. As a boy he had a sever speech impediment, which he worked to overcome until he became one of the best orators ever.

Who was Churchill? A gentle family man.

 (of his mother) “she shone for me like the evening star. I loved her dearly - but at a distance”

- Winston Churchill

Churchill adored his mother. He wrote numerous letters during his time at school begging her to visit him, which didn’t happen often. In adult life Churchill regarded her more as a sister than as a mother, and she often acted as a political mentor. He was happily married, had 5 children and made his family residence one of the centers of his life. Churchill even said that his “most brilliant achievement was [his] ability to be able to persuade [his] wife to marry [him]”. Churchill’s grandson also says he was a “rock” in his upbringing, and that they would spend hours laying bricks together, feeding swans at a pond or taking care of pigs.

Who was Churchill? A caring friend.

Friendship is the only cement that will hold the world together.

- Winston Churchill

Winston didn’t make many friends at school, but then weaved a very tight network of friendships around his officer assignments, political career, family and artistic aspirations. In fact, he seemed to have an uncanny ability to knit friendship, family, mentorship and personal aspirations. The list of his close friends clearly shows this ability: it includes a political conservative that was his best man at his wedding, his secretary and literary mentor, a fellow MP who was a political confident, Army generals who supported his policies, and artists that painted portraits of his family. All of them spent prolonged times at Chartwell, Churchill’s family residence.

Who was Curchill? An artist and a bon vivant.

He has all of the virtues I dislike and none of the vices I admire.

- Winston Churchill

He was also known for liking his drink and for smoking like a chimney. His own family says that they would find him early in the morning still in his bed, surrounded in cigar smoke with a whisky and soda already on his table. He would top it up it once or twice before lunch! This didn’t prevent him from producing 30 volumes of history, 20 of speeches and painting 500 canvases… or receiving a Nobel Prize in Literature!

Who was Churchill? A man that managed to integrate all domains of his life to be one of the most successful leaders in History. His core values of moral integrity, relentless work, drive and ingenuity were essential in helping him succeed, but also put him into trouble many times. These values, as well as sheer stubbornness, made him spend most of the 1930s as an outsider, an unpopular figure. He only managed to regain power and ultimately lead Britain against Hitler thanks to his close friends and mentors. This is best understood when we look at his achievements and how they are related to his other domains. He was a successful statesman, and his political mentors included his mother and close friends. He was a successful soldier, and famous generals rooted for him and shared his family and artistic life. He was a successful artist, and used his work as a war correspondent to gain fame and then his artist friends as inspiration. He was a beloved father and grandfather and managed to pull together his friends and family and used his house as a way to make these domains reinforce each other… and himself.

Churchill’s life, his incredible achievements and utter failures, tells a powerful story of how authenticity with one’s values, being able to build a network of supporters and communicating one’s vision can unlock our potential and help us overcome challenges.

I can apply these lessons to my life by reminding myself constantly to be authentic, to trust my values and to persevere in building my dreams.

Another powerful lesson is to reflect on my network for friends and consciously make an effort to blend my work friends, my ‘leisure’ friends, my family and my interests. I hadn’t explicitly thought about the power of my network as mentors but it seems clear that unlocking this power this is a key to a fuller life. A practical consequence for me is to focus my future experiments on (1) what matters to other people and (2) on weaving a tighter net among my different domains. I trust that small changes go a long way here.

A third lesson is that communicating one’s vision is key. Being a loud introvert, I hadn’t considered this as important before. But clearly I need to start telling stories about my life and what I want to achieve in all domains.