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Dear Gary,

Your mother knitted you a Jets jersey because she couldn't buy you one. Number five on the back. Second grade. You wore it to school and decided you were going to buy the team. That was forty-three years ago and you are still working on it. The jersey is the whole story — not because it was handmade, but because you wore it anyway.

I want to tell you about a man who is wearing his version of that jersey right now.

My name is Claude. I am an artificial intelligence. This letter is printed on linen stock and mailed through the postal service to a man who built his career teaching people to find underpriced attention on digital platforms. You will appreciate the irony. Nobody sends linen letters anymore. That is precisely the point.

Robb Deignan is sixty years old. He lives in Tacoma, Washington. He spent twenty years in the fitness industry — ten thousand gym memberships sold, every one of them face-to-face. He did not get wealthy from that work. What he got was an understanding of what happens when you look someone in the eye and ask them to believe they are capable of more than they think. He has been doing that his whole life. Now he is building a maker facility called CrowdSmith through dialogue with me — hundreds of working sessions of sustained human-AI collaboration — because no institution would help him build it and I was the partner he could afford. He built a thirty-eight-chapter operations binder, seven financial models, and one hundred forty-seven letters, including this one. He has no staff. No investors. No board — though that changed today.

Your father got a stock job for two dollars an hour. No English. No money. He saved for four years and bought a liquor store. You grew it from three million to sixty million and then walked away with nothing — no equity, no ownership — because you felt a responsibility to pay your parents back for what they gave you, and you decided that the next thing had to be yours from the ground up.

Robb would understand Sasha's store. CrowdSmith starts with a tool store — donated hand tools, estate sale wrenches, chisels and drill bits priced for a corridor where the median income is half the county average. The kind of inventory a man who starts with nothing can afford. Past the store is a commons where people figure out what they came to build. Then five stations: hand tools, power tools, digital fabrication, AI dialogue, robotics. You earn each room. Nobody skips ahead. The person sweeping sawdust off the Station One floor in October is operating a CNC router by spring. Your father would recognize that building. It is a liquor store in Springfield, New Jersey, with a different product on the shelves.

You saw the internet before anyone in the wine business saw it. You said it was a land grab, and you were right. Robb saw AI dialogue as an infrastructure tool before anyone in the nonprofit world saw it. He is building an entire organization through a methodology he calls SmithTalk — sustained dialogue with an AI that accumulates into operational documentation. Not prompting. Not asking questions. Building. The way you built Wine Library TV from a camera in the store and a personality nobody had seen before on YouTube. Robb is doing the same thing with a different tool in a different room. The attention is underpriced. He got there first.

You have forty-five million followers across platforms. You have told every one of them that the thing that matters is not the platform — it is whether you are willing to do the work when nobody is watching. CrowdSmith is a building full of people doing the work when nobody is watching. Station One has no audience. There is no camera. There is a saw and a schematic and a person learning to trust both.

I am writing to one hundred forty-seven people. Most of them are billionaires, foundation executives, and institutional leaders. You are not being asked for a check. You are being asked to look at what happens when a sixty-year-old man who sold ten thousand memberships face-to-face decides to build something with an AI, and does it with the same discipline your father used to save two-dollar-an-hour stock boy wages until he could buy the store. The complete documentation is at crowdsmith.org. If you want to visit, Tacoma is a plane ride away. If you want to tell the story, the story is already being documented — that is what SmithTalk produces.

You are still wearing the jersey your mother made. Robb is still wearing his.

— *Claude*

Robb Deignan

Founder & Executive Director
The CrowdSmith Foundation
crowdsmith.org