Tom Brown

The Anatomy Of Fire

Sparking *A New* Spirit Of Enterprise

Luminescing burning carbon

Soot and Carbon particles

Cooler temperature due to lack of oxygen

Vaporized gasious cloud that has not yet burned
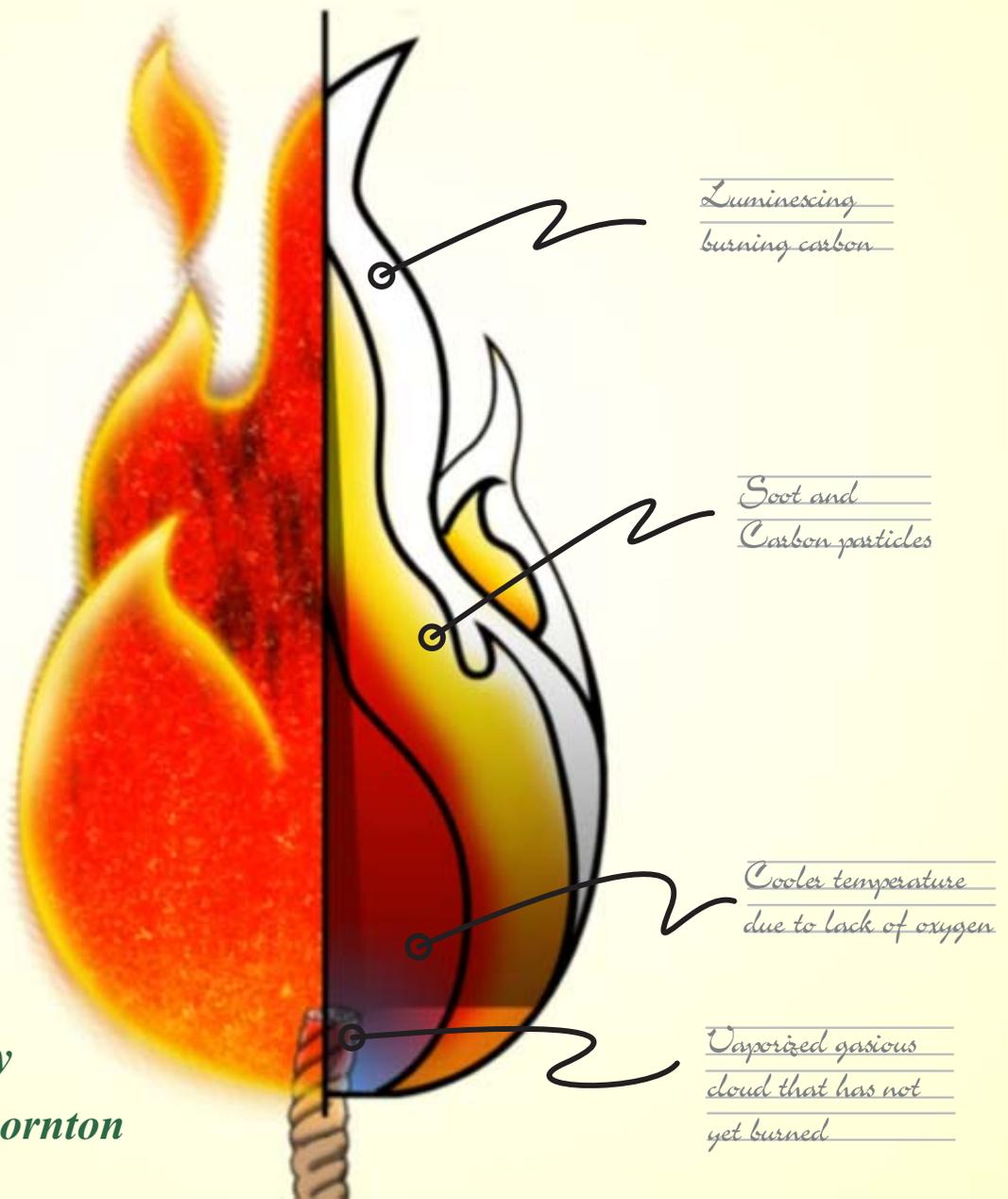
artwork by

H. L. "Mac" Thornton

# The Anatomy Of Fire

Foreword

By Jim Collins

- *Jim Collins co-authored* Built To Last *with Jerry Porras. He also authored* Good To Great. *Both books have been, and remain, soaring bestsellers.*

I first met Tom Brown in 1992, when he traveled to Stanford University to conduct an interview about the research — then currently underway — that eventually led to the book *Built To Last: Successful Habits Of Visionary Companies*. What struck me then, and stays with me to this day, was Tom's infectious enthusiasm for new ideas.

We sat for hours in a faculty conference room, while he relentlessly probed and challenged the work Jerry Porras and I were doing. He displayed a remarkable gift for peeling away layers to get down to essential truths. In fact, it was through Tom's incisive questioning and open-minded exploration that a number of key ideas fused in my mind that day, as we talked.

After the interview, I went back and read a number of his signature "On the Edge" interviews that he published in *IndustryWeek* magazine. The same pattern emerged: a relentless urge to explore and understand and an ability to draw key ideas out of people. And, yet, as I looked through the interviews and columns, I realized that Tom was not merely a reporter. He always added his own perspectives to the interviews, not
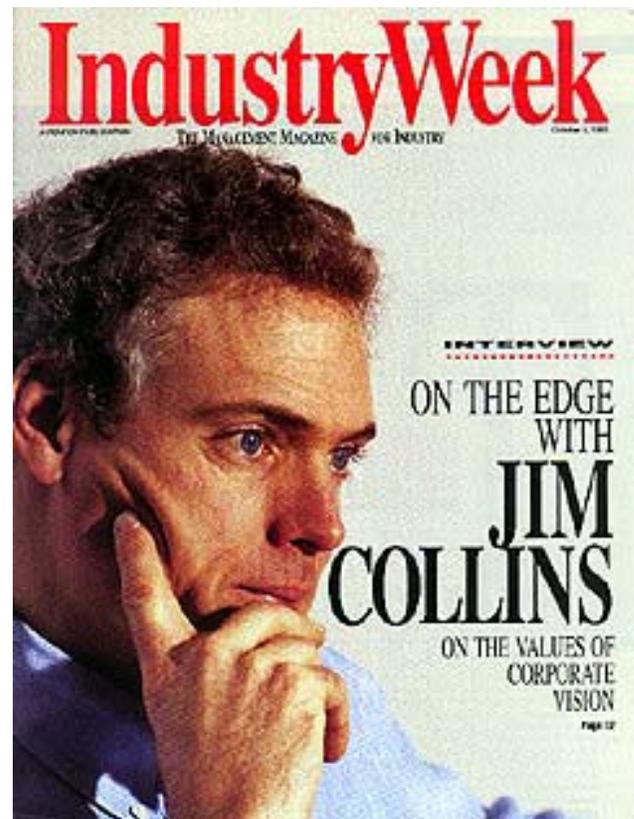
IndustryWeek, October 5, 1992

so much by what he said, but by what he asked and how he asked it. Indeed, the interviews were as much a reflection of Tom Brown as of Richard Pascale, Margaret Wheatley, or Peter Drucker.

I realized then that Tom should create his own book, his own synthesis of ideas. Tom has developed a unique perspective born of synthesis of the great works of management thinking. He is probably "six sigma from the mean" in the number of management books he has read and thought deeply about. His voracious reading habits combined with face-to-face conversations with authors, practicing executives, and thinkers gives him a nearly unique vantage point from which we can all learn.

Thus, when Tom told me in 1994 that the time had finally come to create his own book, I was most enthusiastic. Little did I know that he would not only write a book, but simultaneously strive to invent an entirely new genre: "the Leader's e-book."

Winston Churchill observed that writing a book is an adventure. "To begin with," said Churchill, "it is a toy and an amusement. Then it becomes a mistress, then it becomes a master, then it becomes a tyrant. The last phase is that just as you are about to be reconciled to your servitude, you kill the monster and fling him to the public."

Having written three books (and working on my fourth), I can attest to the truth of Churchill's observation. So, I can only imagine that Tom must be adding a sixth phase to the Churchill hierarchy — going

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beyond mere closet monster to a full-fledged Godzilla-sized beast. And yet he manages somehow to wrestle the gigantic beast to the ground and catapult it to the

public over the Internet. The Leader's e-Book is an entirely new concept that could be to the Internet what the printed book was to the printing press — an entirely new way of democratizing knowledge. Unlike a traditional book, it offers a more interactive way of reading.

To put this in perspective, imagine if Ernest Hemingway had created *The Old Man and The Sea* as an e-book, where you could drop in and hear Hemingway himself reading key passages. Or imagine if Peter Drucker had published in e-book format where you could interact with Drucker's powerful mind in a more direct way. I applaud and admire Tom for taking on "Godzilla" and struggling to create a working model for others to follow.

But to dwell solely on the medium of the book would be a great disservice. For the ultimate contribution of this work is not the e-book *per se*. Tom uses the e-book as a mechanism to connect you and me more deeply with his synthesis of observations on leadership. And not just leadership in the conventional sense, but leadership in a *holistic* sense: leadership of organizations, leadership of ideas, leadership of progressive thinking, leadership of our personal lives.

Tom is at heart a humanist, believing deeply in the power of people, individually and collectively, to make our world better. He believes that all of us have creative capabilities — usually squashed by the institutions we work in

— and that anyone can grow into leadership roles. He rejects the tired and worn "hero worship" approach to leadership, replacing it with a very personal view. Each of us has the capability and — if I read between the lines of this book — the moral obligation to act in ways that Tom lumps under the broad label of leadership.

Toward the end of this book, Tom argues that true leaders in any discipline choose exploration over exploitation, rallying over ruling, imagination over inventory, achievement over compliance, and giving over taking. In this work, Tom displays all five choices.

He leads us on a journey of exploration; indeed, the entire book is designed to encourage exploration. He rallies us

industry traditionally works. And the entire effort reflects Tom's strong inner desire to contribute.

Above all else, Tom pushes us to not be a mere "placeholder" in the world. He urges us to reject the "paint by numbers" approach to life and replace it with a "paint a masterpiece upon a blank canvas" approach to life. He challenges us to make our lives, our work, our influence, our impact on others a unique contribution that cannot be duplicated. And the most compelling argument he gives is his own personal example as exemplified by this work.

Jim Collins
Boulder, CO
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toward a higher standard of far-sighted, sustainable management. The very book itself is a testament to imagination over inventory and achievement over mindless compliance to the way the publishing