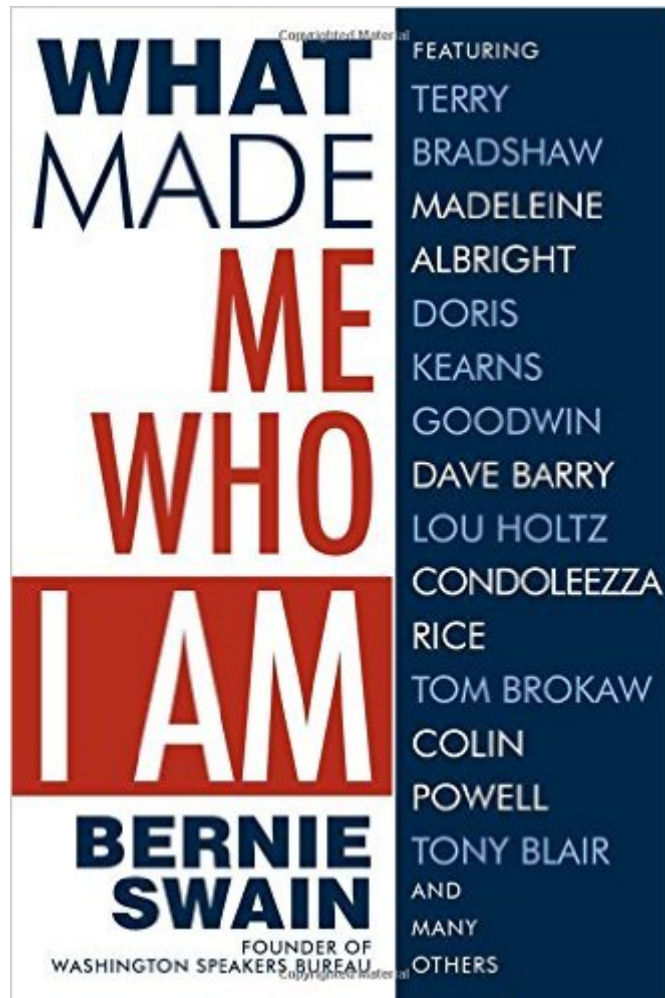


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# What Made Me Who I Am



## Synopsis

Starting a business is a wonderfully naïve venture. Only a fortunate few will survive--and very few of those who thrive will have something special to say about failure, success, and leadership. Bernie Swain is one of those few very fortunate people. He quit his job in 1980 to start a lecture agency with his wife and a friend. By the end of their first rocky year--just as his savings were running out--Swain's first revenues trickled in. He began signing every speaker with a handshake; this proved to be the hallmark of trust that helped accelerate the company's growth. Years later, his roster of speakers would be the greatest in history since America's first agency represented a host of notables such as Mark Twain, Susan B. Anthony, and Frederick Douglass. The best of Swain's fortunes turned out to be the speakers themselves because these remarkable leaders had become his personal friends. What Made Me Who I Am captures the leadership transformations of 34 of those friends--from Doris Kearns Goodwin to Colin Powell, Terry Bradshaw to Tom Brokaw, and Tony Blair to Dave Barry. This assembly of people defines a generation. What were their most powerful influences? Defining moments? Decisions that contributed the most to their character and accomplishments? Swain captures answers to these questions and more in an inspiring, practical collection of true-life stories for leaders today. What Made Me Who I Am is also a terrific gift book for graduates and others who are just starting out in life.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR** Washington DC-based BERNIE SWAIN is co-founder of Washington Speakers Bureau and today's foremost authority on the lecture industry. Over the past 35 years, Swain has represented former US Presidents, cabinet members, business executives, public figures, media leaders, and sports legends. For more, visit [BernieSwain.com](http://BernieSwain.com).

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## Customer Reviews

I almost gave this book four stars, but that would have been mean. Because there's really nothing wrong with it, as long as your expectations are realistic. As with many motivational books, you are unlikely to come away from this one fulfilling the hype when you start it. It's unlikely that you'll finish it and have changed in any way at all from the experience of reading it. It was for that implied expectation--that somehow readers -would- change--that I was tempted to give only four stars. Because, if you're like most people including me, you won't. That said, if your expectations are realistic--curiosity and interest about these people without expectations of changing your own ways and level of success--this is a good book and deserves five stars for what it is. First, the author has his own interesting story of how he became rich from setting up a speaker's bureau when it wasn't so common. That ambition and unique sort of idea is commendable and always is interesting and somewhat inspiring (if not replicable) to read about. More to the point, in that capacity, Swain has come in contact with so many famous people. Alex Haley (he's not above name dropping) told him he should use their experiences as a book (I think "John Smith" would have easily thought the same thing although Swain seems to feel it was an astonishing suggestion). Anyway, he took the advice and assembled this collection. If you enjoy short, uplifting biographies from a variety of famous contemporary people in a variety of fields (I do), you should enjoy this. There's some from politics (Madeleine Albright--one of my favorite chapters), from sports (Terry Bradshaw), from academia (Doris Kearns Goodwin) and so on.

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