Chapter 1

A strong drive toward intellectual or creative achievement is present in one or both parents of almost all of the four hundred men and women of the twentieth century who are under investigation here. The parents of these celebrities are curious, experimental, restless, seeking. They are physically driving, intellectually striving; they respect learning, and they love truth and sometimes beauty.

There is no geographical center for giftedness, no racial or national or cultural monopoly. To find these families, we must seek out the farms, villages, and small towns where most of them live. They come from the North, South, Midwest, East, and West in the U.S.A. . .indeed, from every continent on the globe. A minority comes from the metropolitan centers, and many of the city-dwellers have to be sought in the green fringes at the outskirts. The common ground for these scattered families is the driving need to be doing something, learning something, changing something, or going somewhere to better themselves.

This respect for learning should not be confused with a love for the classroom. By conventional standards, the attitude of the family toward formal schooling is often careless or even negative. A few boys and girls never went to school at all. Parents of these future well-known individuals are prone to withdraw the children from school, to teach them themselves, to take them on trips, or to let them go to work. Thomas Edison and Guglielmo Marconi were home-taught boys. Wilbur and Orville Wright tinkered and traded and never went to college. The scientist, the doctor, the teacher, the lawyer—all of whom perform specialized services and must be licensed—do manage to reach the good colleges and are usually happy there, but not without having given their parents many anxious hours.

For more information or to order Cradles of Eminence, visit: GreatPotentialPress.com