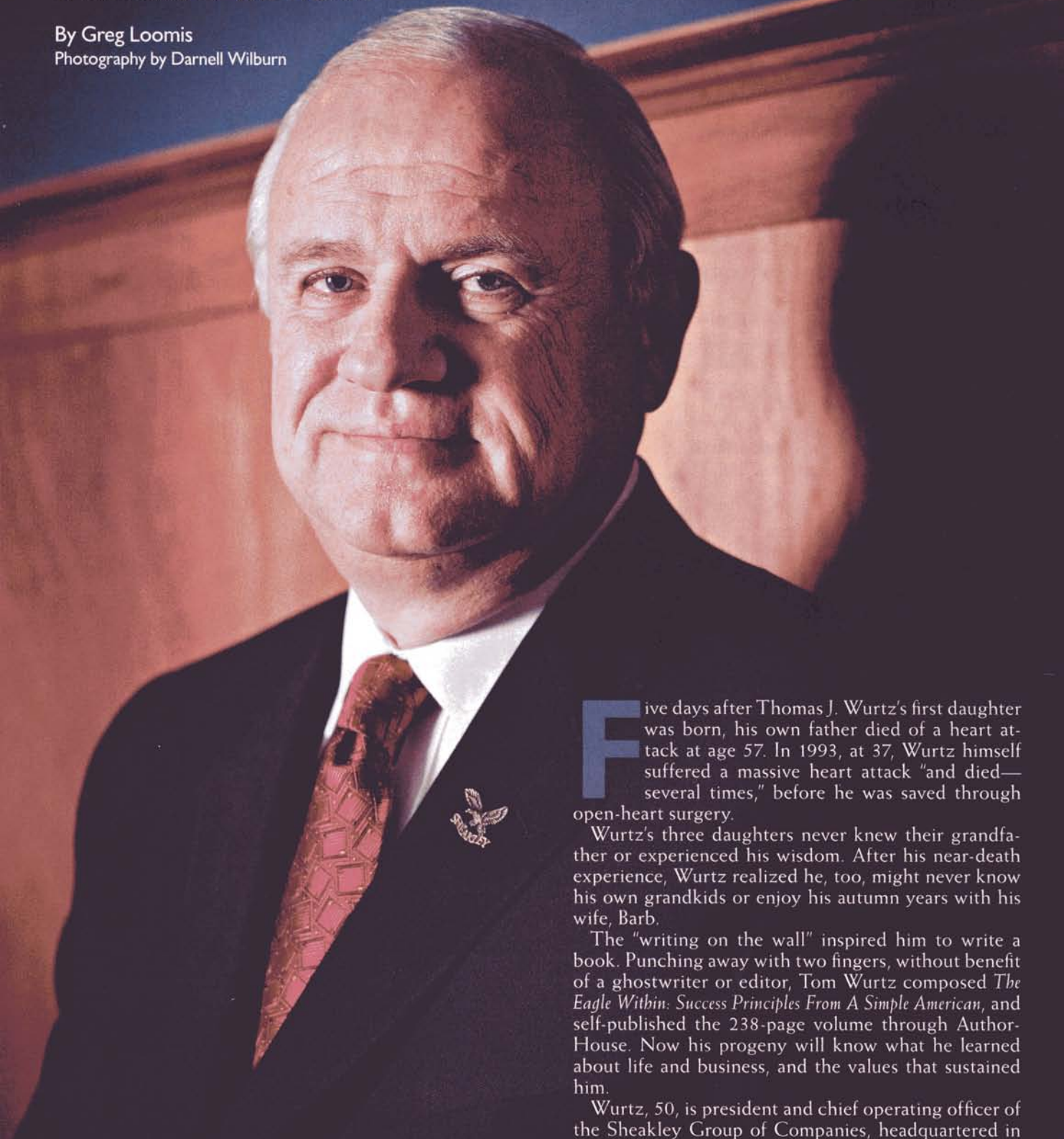


No Tolerance for Quacks

EAGLE TOM WURTZ SINKS HIS TALONS INTO THE DUCKS OF THE WORLD

By Greg Loomis

Photography by Darnell Wilburn



Five days after Thomas J. Wurtz's first daughter was born, his own father died of a heart attack at age 57. In 1993, at 37, Wurtz himself suffered a massive heart attack "and died—several times," before he was saved through open-heart surgery.

Wurtz's three daughters never knew their grandfather or experienced his wisdom. After his near-death experience, Wurtz realized he, too, might never know his own grandkids or enjoy his autumn years with his wife, Barb.

The "writing on the wall" inspired him to write a book. Punching away with two fingers, without benefit of a ghostwriter or editor, Tom Wurtz composed *The Eagle Within: Success Principles From A Simple American*, and self-published the 238-page volume through AuthorHouse. Now his progeny will know what he learned about life and business, and the values that sustained him.

Wurtz, 50, is president and chief operating officer of the Sheakley Group of Companies, headquartered in

Sharonville. Founded in 1963, Sheakley provides integrated payroll-related services for small to mid-sized companies. Its specialties include cost-containment programs for employee benefits, especially workers' compensation. The Sheakley Group and its subsidiaries in total serve more than 40,000 clients with 500 employees nationwide.

That's all well and good, but Tom Wurtz is a no-nonsense kind of man. His web site is named www.thesimpleamerican.com. His down-to-earth definition of Sheakley: a "blue collar company" that manages data details with tenacity and customer satisfaction in mind. "It's not glorious or sexy. Our job is to make boring data management exciting," he explains.

With receding white hair, solid jaw and engaging grin, Wurtz has the easy radiance of a born salesman. Combined with a quick, sarcastic sense of humor and an encyclopedic memory of business tales and jokes, he's the kind of guy who makes a round of golf much more than a scorecard.

"The shyest person ever" early in life, Wurtz evolved into a successful business executive who's now in demand on the business speaker circuit. He grew up in Fort Mitchell, and graduated from Northern Kentucky University in 1977 with B.S. degree in business. His first job was parking cars at the airport. His second job came in 1978, when Larry Sheakley took a chance on him as the company's eleventh employee.

The list of those who influenced Wurtz the most begins with God, his parents, his priest, Zig Ziglar, John Maxwell and Rush Limbaugh—and ends with James Bond. Lest you think Wurtz is a predictable conservative, read his chapter on The Beatles and the importance of being multi-talented.

Wurtz is passionate about personal development. He has read more than 400 business books and listened to thousands of hours of self-improvement tapes. He exalts the power of being a simple American: "looking for a chance, taking risks, being scared, being awful, committed to personal development, overcoming obstacles, believing in myself and believing in the American Dream."

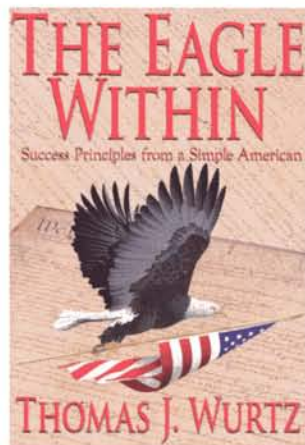
The Eagle Within features 118 Eagle Principles. "Dress Like You're Already Successful" explains why

Wurtz views "casual days" with disdain. He recalls with relish the time an employee told him productivity would rise 20 percent with a casual day every Friday. "Why not have casual day every day and lay off 20 percent of the staff?" Wurtz shot back, leaving the employee speechless. Company picnics, flex time, even bonuses are "stupid business tricks," he claims. "If you want happy employees, help your employees accomplish something they didn't believe they could accomplish," he offers.

The core of *The Eagle Within* and the business philosophy of Tom Wurtz is the Eagle Leadership Program he began five years ago at Sheakley. It's about personal growth, not management training. Candidates must be recommended by a supervisor and pass a board interview. After three months of intense work, there's a pass/fail exam—and some flunk. Those who pass wear eagle pins on their lapels, with subtle pride. The core values are consistent, but it's not about cultish indoctrination, Wurtz notes.

The program is built on his conclusion that the world consists of eagles and ducks. Eagles are optimistic, passionate and energetic. They fear not. When an eagle gets knocked down, she sees an opportunity to rebound. Ducks are naysayers. They feed on pessimism. Ducks are contagious, excelling at only one thing: bringing others down.

"Our great country has declared war on terror," Wurtz explains. "At Sheakley, we have declared war on ducks."



Thomas J. Wurtz, president and COO of the Sheakley Group of Companies, and author of *The Eagle Within*.

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— TOM WURTZ

The Eagle Within covers familiar territory and well-worn aphorisms. Don't pursue money; pursue excellence. Realize the difference between making and *earning* money. A good company "is one that doesn't quit on its employees."

Wurtz's personality, however, takes the book to another level. Here's a man who has little patience for "psycho-babble crap," who has the gumption to claim that Pete Rose was only an average ballplayer who happened to play a long time, and that "politicians have one primary purpose in life—to confiscate money from the American people."

Yet Wurtz is able to recognize his own shortcomings. "It was a shock to me," he replies, when asked about a big lesson in his life. "I learned in business I couldn't motivate anyone. I can only help people who want to change, and be there when they're ready." 