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# Nellie

## Otoupalik



**L**ife often has a way of reshaping our plans. During a temporary layoff during the COVID-19 pandemic, I was 25 and scared of the uncertainty in our world and in my ability to have the future I desired for myself. It prompted a soul-searching moment. I knew I never wanted to feel the sting of job insecurity again. I found the drive to bet on myself, spurred by the belief that I could make a difference in people's lives through real estate. When the nation had to quarantine at home because of COVID-19, I stayed with my adopted parents, feeling so grateful to be able to go through those times of uncertainty with my family in the comfort of my teenage home.

Growing up amidst frequent moves, including a stint in foster care, instilled in me a deep appreciation for the stability and sanctuary a home provides. I realized that if I could help others find a place of stability for their own families, then I would be silly not to take my years of training into the world of real estate.

Before diving into real estate, my career path wound through the world of sales. I started out in auto sales at the ripe age of 19 and sold vehicles for about five years, then RVs and trailers, did a little stint working in the Auto Auction industry, and eventually landed in cellular sales after feeling I reached the end of my ropes in the auto industry. Those early years taught me invaluable skills in negotiation and client relations, setting the stage for my future in real estate.

Embarking on my real estate journey in early 2021 felt like unwrapping the best Christmas gift—passing my exams just two days before Christmas in 2020 was a moment of pure happiness. I took the plunge and there was no looking back. I was motivated more than ever to create a better future for my life than I had in my childhood. I grew up living in poverty with a single mother until I was ten years old. Throughout those ten years, we would end up moving a lot. My biological mom, unfortunately, was a distracted parent. She was juggling five kids on her own at the time, ranging from 16 years old to a newborn. Although I love my biological mom dearly, she just wasn't capable of providing us with the life we needed to feel and be safe. In October of 2006, my siblings and I were all placed into foster care, and that is where my life would forever take a turn.





however, I was still just as eager to get out. After a while, I ended up moving in with my older sister's biological father, a man I had also considered a dad growing up. This placement truthfully was no better. I was thankful to be with family and to have a taste of my old life back, but after a night of hanging out with my two older sisters, we got home late and my sister's dad was infuriated. In this home, I dealt with both mental and physical abuse. A reality I tried to hide from my peers and teachers at school in fear I would have to go back into the foster care system. Without prevail, a teacher noticed and reported it to the school counselor and that next day I had a sit down meeting with my CPS worker. I would end up leaving school that day going back into foster care.



Again, I was fortunate enough to go back to the same foster family. This is now my third time being placed with them, and I had the same motivation to get back to my freedom as I did the other two times. I begged and pleaded with my other family members to take custody of me, but after exhausting those efforts, it turned out I was just too much for them to take on at that time. Frustrated and confused as to why this would have to be my reality – one

where I was rejected, neglected, abused, and abandoned – I was feeling hopeless. All I wanted was somewhere I could call home. Through all those feelings, my silver lining was the consistency and love my foster family continued to provide for me. Then the day came, and I was given the opportunity to feel chosen, wanted, and loved when they asked me if I would consider being theirs, forever.

I remember writing out a pros and cons list to make my decision. It was obvious to me what I needed to do. After being placed with this family three times, I had grown to love them and allowed them to love me in return. I had a place I felt I belonged. I set aside my strong desire to stay within my biological family for the opportunity for a better life. In June of 2009, it became official. Both my biological parents relinquished custody, and I officially became an Otoupalik! Life certainly wasn't all unicorns and rainbows after that, but it sure was a lot better than the alternative.

I moved into a foster home in Airway Heights, and everything I was used to turned upside down. With my biological mom, I was allowed to run wild and live carelessly, but in this new family, we had rules, consequences, and the expectations were high. A change I wasn't so willing to accept. It led me to move out of foster care into placement with my biological father whose placement I still question to this day. Back in 2003 when I briefly lived with him, a fire had taken place in his basement and forced us to live in a hotel for months. Eventually, I would move back home with my mom. The thing I will never understand is how my dad was able to gain custody of me again because three years later the basement was still in shambles, the house reeked of smoke, and we had no running water or electricity. Life was a struggle. As an asthmatic, I got sick with bronchitis, and it wasn't until I was extremely ill that my dad took me to get help at the hospital. From there, it was in question the cleanliness of his house, and before I could get discharged from the hospital, I was placed back into foster care.

I went back to the same foster home in Airway Heights. I was thankful for going back to a place I was familiar with, where my younger sister still lived,

My [adoptive] parents would work tirelessly to get me the help, therapy, and structure I needed to be able to get me to a place where I was mentally 'healthy'. An effort on their part I will forever be thankful for, although, had you asked me as a high schooler, they were totally ruining my life (sarcasm).

As a new mother myself, it's incredibly important to me to demonstrate to my son why I'm so passionate about real estate. I want him to understand the incredible potential it holds for shaping his future. In a world filled with so many scary uncertainties, providing him with a safe and stable home is a top priority. Being the first in my immediate biological family and siblings to own a home, and with my partner's first house serving as a rental property, I'm deeply grateful for the stability this achievement has brought into our lives. This solidity not only allows us to provide a secure home for Bennji, our son, but also opens up possibilities for his future. My family means everything to me. As the oldest, youngest, and middle child (but not the only child), I am extremely grateful to feel so close to both my biological siblings and adopted. In total, I am one of 11 siblings.

Although our family dynamic is quite unconventional, mixed with adoptive and biological siblings, we all come together and motivate each other to be our best selves. While my upbringing has certainly dealt me a unique hand of cards, through it all, I've learned to turn challenges into opportunities and to never surrender to adversity. This resilience is the driving force behind my mission to assist individuals and families in achieving their aspirations. Whether it's a financial milestone or a personal dream, helping others attain their goals is immensely gratifying.

Growing up and facing various battles, I've come to understand the significance of having a place to call home—a sanctuary where one feels safe and secure. Being a mother to my eight-month-old son, this realization fuels my passion for real estate and drives my commitment to my chosen career. With my past experiences, I donate to charities such as Vanessa Behan and FailSafe for Life, where people who are struggling with housing, mental health, or thoughts of suicide can get the help they need and deserve.

Every day through this career, I have the privilege of empowering individuals to elevate their dreams. Whether it's guiding a first-time homebuyer towards their inaugural step into generational homeownership or assisting clients in finding a residence better

suited to their evolving needs, I am dedicated to facilitating these life-changing transitions. Real estate isn't just about buying and selling properties; it's about facilitating transformations and enabling individuals to shape their desired lifestyles. Witnessing the positive impact that finding the perfect home can have on someone's life is what fuels my passion for this profession. My ultimate goal is to extend the sense of security, warmth, and belonging that a home provides to every person I encounter.

Throughout my career, I have found success because I surround myself with people who are like-minded, goal-driven, and want to help empower others. I give a lot of credit for my success to my mentor and friend, Lauren Rasmussen, whose guidance and support have been instrumental in my success. From weekly accountability meetings to invaluable counsel, Lauren's belief in my potential has propelled me forward in ways I never imagined. She saw something in me that I wasn't so sure I saw in myself early on in my career, and by joining her team, RealVantage, she was able to help me elevate my business.





In my career of just about four years, I've been fortunate enough to help over 75 people buy and sell real estate either on-market or off, through purchasing investments, selling over \$20,000,000 in volume. I'm thankful for the opportunity to help so many people, and I'm eager to help even more families accomplish the same. I find that I'm deeply passionate about being a problem-solver in real estate. Whether it's helping clients overcome obstacles to homeownership or navigating the complexities of the market, I thrive on finding solutions that exceed expectations.

When I'm not assisting in real estate ventures, you'll often catch me cherishing moments with my family: Larry, Bennji, and our playful pup, Ziggy. Our summers are filled with camping adventures, off-road escapades, lazy days by the lake, and tackling various home projects. Monthly, we try to attend Sunday dinners out at my parents' house, where laughter and games unite us—my adopted siblings and biological sister and her family usually join us. We spend the evening laughing, eating a delicious meal by my mom, who is an exceptional cook, and enjoy the time spent together. Embracing my roles as both aunt and mother brings me immense joy. Amongst one of these photos in this article lies a testament to our blended family—a mix of adopted, foster, and biological relatives. Despite my emphasis on my adopted family, my bond with my biological family remains strong as well. I love spending time with my grandma and my other biological sisters and cousins. Grateful for my unconventional upbringing, I revel in the abundance of love from my vast and diverse family.

One of the most fulfilling aspects of my job, apart from turning my clients' dreams of owning a home into reality, is the ability to balance it with my roles as a dedicated mother, daughter, and sister. It's incredibly rewarding to find that this career not only allows me to excel in assisting my clients but also

grants me the flexibility to prioritize my family commitments. This seamless integration of professional success and personal fulfillment truly fills me with pride.

Certainly, the journey to achieving success in real estate has presented its fair share of obstacles. One significant challenge I faced early on was gaining traction as a new agent, especially without an established network or a queue of clients ready to work

with me. If I were to offer advice to anyone considering entering the real estate industry under similar circumstances, it would be to seek out a supportive team. Surround yourself with a community of individuals who are not only willing to offer guidance and support but also uplift you during moments of uncertainty.

For me, being a part of RealVantage has been nothing short of a blessing. Their unwavering support became particularly evident during trying times, such as when I fell ill with COVID and had to spend several days in the hospital. Despite my absence, Lauren and the team ensured that my ongoing transactions continued smoothly. Similarly, when my grandmother faced health issues, requiring my presence by her side, my team stepped in to assist my clients in my absence.

Beyond their practical assistance, RealVantage has become an invaluable source of wisdom, shared experiences, and encouragement. While I may envision becoming an independent agent in the future, my current connection with RealVantage is more than just professional—it's familial. They've become an integral part of my support system, offering not just guidance in real estate but also a sense of belonging and camaraderie.

My journey from poverty to becoming a rising star in the Spokane, Washington real estate scene is a testament to resilience and the power of finding the right support system. Overcoming childhood adversity and navigating through various sales roles, I discovered my passion for real estate—an avenue to empower others and create lasting change. Finding a dedicated team, such as RealVantage, provided the foundation for my success, offering unwavering support through life's challenges. Now, with a seat at the table among esteemed colleagues, I'm grateful for the opportunity to continue transforming lives through real estate investment, driven by a deep-rooted commitment to making a positive impact.



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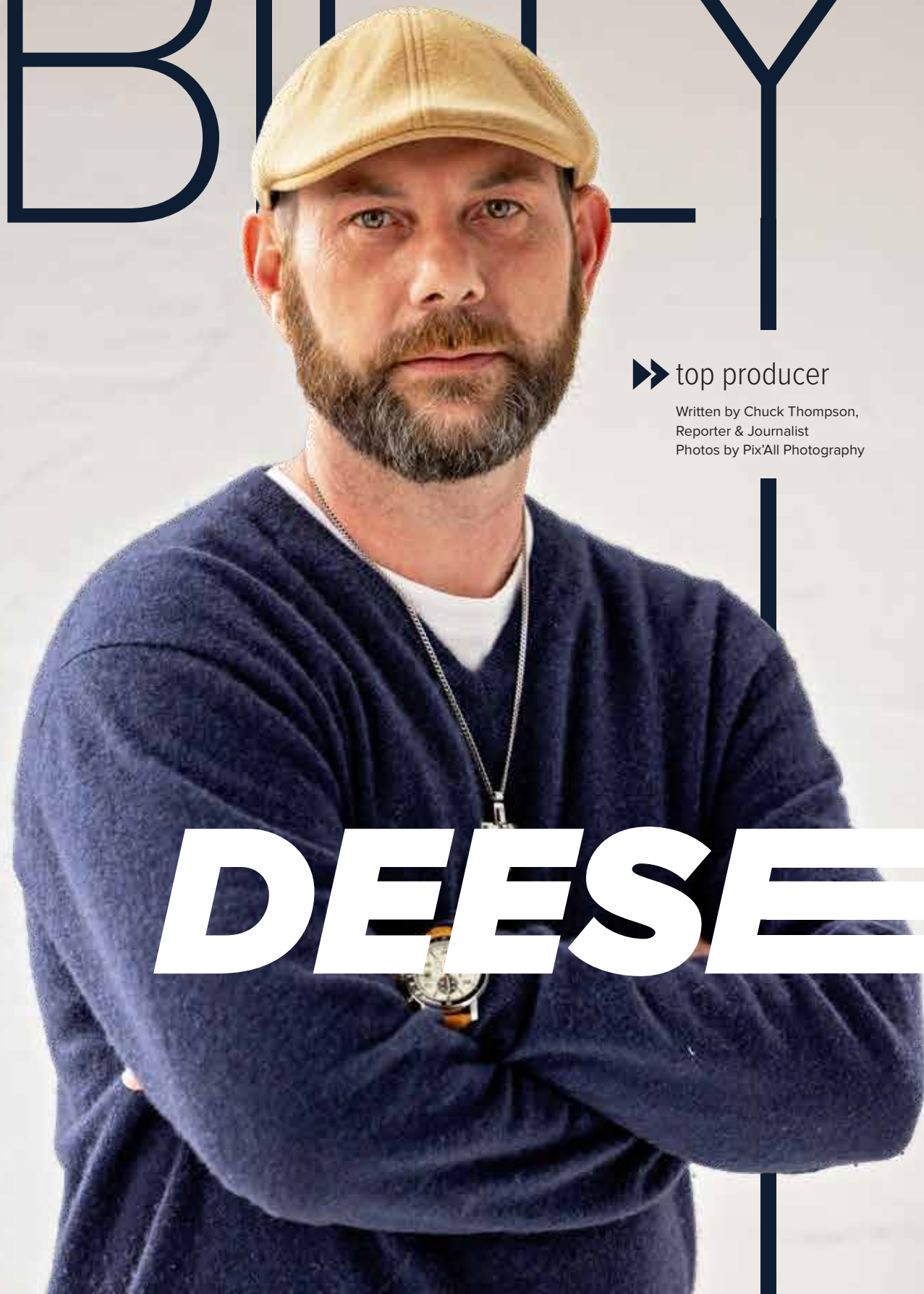
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# DEESE

How a designated broker's life seemed to parallel the market over the past decade, from fall to an all-time high.

He smiles through his beard, as he glances off into thought, looking back at the past decade of his life, and journey through real estate.

Billy Deese, 42, could be considered the poster child for the real estate American dream.

Rich in love from his family – only ten years ago he had nothing, financially.

As the real estate market gobbled its way out of the Great Recession, so did Billy Deese's life. While the country licked its wounds after the financial storm of 2008 - 2012, Billy slowly began to climb out of his own depression.

Having battled alcoholism, a divorce, and financial ruin, Billy teetered on the verge that many people never recover from, but, being bull-headed, and determined to set a better example for his children, Billy pushed through both storms, into the clear skies of a better life.

Billy Deese grew up in a rural setting, outside of a small southern town in the lowlands of South Carolina. Career opportunities were limited, low wages plagued the population, and unless you knew exactly what you wanted to do, or had the opportunity to go to college, your options were limited to plant or mechanical work.

One day in 2008, as the humidity of the Carolina air beaded up on his face, mixed with the sweat of a blistering heat, Billy and his wife and children made the decision to move back to his wife's hometown of Spokane, Washington.

Not long after his marriage crumbled and so did his appetite in the belief of better days. Stuck in a rut -- in a job he disliked, he found an escape from the heavy heart of divorce, and the grinding of work through alcohol.

"I don't think anyone intentionally plans on becoming an alcoholic," Billy said, "It starts out as an escape and then controls your life; it's no longer fun at some point and becomes something that you need to function and makes you miserable. It's an abusive relationship."

However, when Billy found the strength to stop drinking, and through the support of friends and family, he quit drinking in a week.

"I had a reason to quit, and stick with it," he explained. "I had my kids to think of, and I wanted to be a better man."

After a couple of years Billy found himself working for a large company, doing inside sales, doing quite well and hating every moment of it.

"My mind kept wandering back to real estate," he said. "I had always been fascinated by the whole process, houses, any real estate, and felt drawn to finally pursue my dream of one day building my own brokerage - I just didn't know what I was doing," he laughed.

Before even finishing his real estate courses, much less had not even taken the test to earn his license, he quit his inside sale position and focused his full attention on his real estate studies.

Billy called his mother back in South Carolina, dropping the news that he quit his job and was going to sell real estate.

“Mom, I quit my job today. I’m going to just sell real estate,” he said, reenacting the call.

“My mom, who was always supportive of just about anything I ever tried, suggested I find a part-time job and also do real estate. No, I told her, I think I’m just gonna focus on this. I feel like if I get another job, I’m just preparing to fail.”

“I had no doubt that I was going to get my license,” Billy explained. “I had to, there was no other choice. It was going to happen.”

And it did.

Getting his license in 2016, Billy started like all new realtors: full of excitement, ready to make a million dollars by next Friday, and... completely bored and sometimes awkward not knowing what to do during the days, while building a client list out of thin air.

He spent the next several months showing up at the office with his laptop, not sure what to do half the time. Anxious to start building his client list, and reputation, he patiently sat through long awkward days, and boredom, all while – unknowingly at the time – would one day lead to building his own brokerage and having his name and face intertwined, synonymously with Spokane real estate.

But for now... he was just Billy Deese, a naive realtor, without connections, money, or confidence.

All he had was determination – a trait worth its weight in gold.

Billy’s biggest concern was his lack of connections. While other agents had grown up in the area, he was not originally from Spokane, his concerns with being a new agent focused on if clients would give him a chance, and since he hardly knew anyone, where would he find his first buyers?

What might seem like a monumental obstacle to others, turned out to be one of his best cards to play as a new agent, as Billy explained, “Since I’m not originally from Spokane, I didn’t have any biases or preconceived notions about certain areas or neighborhoods.”



After months of making calls, sending emails, and gazing endlessly into his laptop screen, one day the Designated Broker for the office, Ken Sax, stopped by Billy’s desk.

“I see you here all the time. Are you busy? Would you like to help me out with some buyers?”

Billy agreed, without hesitation; excited about the opportunity to be a buyer’s agent.

“I must have shown those buyers like 50 houses!” Billy laughed fondly, thinking back of that memory. “But, we finally found one that they liked, and Ken handled all of the paperwork; and I finally got a paycheck!”

Things were moving upwards for Billy, as was the market.

Now motivated by his first transaction, he started thinking about what he could do to make sure he could weather any storm in real estate, to keep himself in the business for decades to come. But what was the magic answer?

“Investors,” he said. “They buy regardless of market conditions.”

During a fateful encounter one weekend, Billy dropped his daughter off at a birthday party.

Being like any parent, he walked in the house with her to get a feel for where he was leaving his daughter for a few hours, meeting the parents of her friends, and getting a better feel for the atmosphere before leaving her alone.

While standing in the kitchen, chatting with other parents, two other fathers introduced themselves to Billy asking what he did for work.

“And just like that, I had my first clients,” Billy said.

The two gentlemen, who were uncles to one of the kids at the birthday party, were real estate investors, giving Billy his first push into making deals, which eventually helped cement his name into the Spokane real estate circles.

Slowly, but steady – and bullheaded, Billy started making connections, getting noticed by other agents, and getting his name out across the city, leveraging social media. “Well, I had a lack of money and an abundance of time.” He said about why he chose to use social media and door-knock.

He had a goal from day one to be his own Designated Broker one day – he planned for three years, and four years later he opened Deese Real Estate.

Immediately, business took off.

Billy went out on his own right as the housing market skyrocketed, pushing him to the forefront of sales, making more money than he could ever imagine.

“We have an excellent team, but it sort of sold itself,” Billy said of the housing market in 2020.

This profound stroke of luck, mixed with genius from Billy, helped him expand into other aspects, from property management, lawn care, insurance, and construction.

In less than a decade, Billy Deese went from broke to Broker, from renter to landlord, and from a dream out of desperation to a successful business out of dedication to hard work.

When asked what he would change, if anything, he paused... the silence was loud, as he thought for a moment.

“Nothing, he replied. “I had to go through all that, in my past, to be where I am today. As much as I wish I could change some things, I don’t think I should, or else I might not be where I am today. I had to get beat down in order to pull myself up higher than I could ever imagine. It’s hard to explain.”

Only Billy needs to understand, because it’s his journey; those that know him just admire him for his determination and accomplishments.

And it doesn’t hurt being a sociable person, with a wealth of knowledge in real hard times in life, and real estate.

So, where does Deese go from here? He chuckled at the question a bit.

That’s a great question,” he replied, enthusiastically. The wheels turning in his mind, it was almost noticeable through his eyes. “Wherever – whatever I do next, it’ll be here in Spokane,” he said. “In the city I’ve grown to love, that’s been good to me and my family.”

**For more information on Deese Real Estate, visit [DeeseRealEstate.com](https://DeeseRealEstate.com).**

“I had always been fascinated by the whole process, houses, any real estate, and felt drawn to finally pursue my dream of one day building my own brokerage.”





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