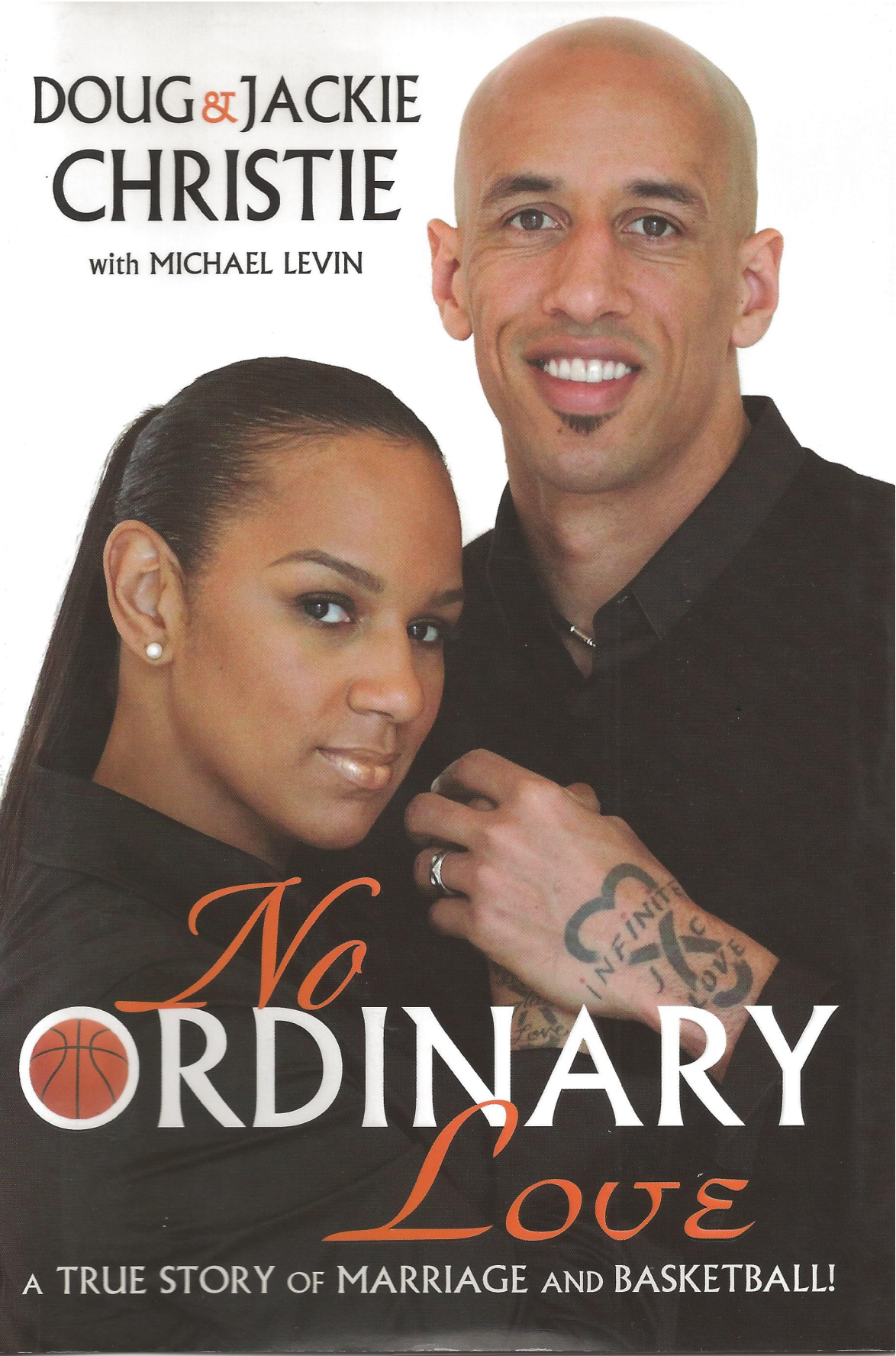


DOUG & JACKIE CHRISTIE

with MICHAEL LEVIN



No ORDINARY LOVE

A TRUE STORY OF MARRIAGE AND BASKETBALL!

O N E



THE ULTIMATUM

Doug: The second most important thing in my life is basketball. The most important thing in my life is my family—my marriage to Jackie; my relationship with our three children—Chantel, Ta’Kari, and Douglas. If you know me, you know how much I love to play the game. It’s given us everything we have—a beautiful home, financial security, and the ability to dedicate so much of our time and financial resources to charitable endeavors.

My pro career has had more twists and turns than I could have imagined, from the time I was initially drafted in the first round by the Seattle SuperSonics—even though a contract dispute made it impossible for me to sign with them. So I was traded to the Lakers, where I got to play alongside Byron Scott, Vlade Divac, James Worthy, and many of the other great players from the Showtime era. From the Lakers I went to New York, and then Toronto, where Isiah Thomas was the general manager of the team and one

of the finest people I've ever met. From Toronto, we went to Sacramento, where I played five years on the most amazing team I could imagine. It was just so much fun playing with them. And then I got hurt and was the first to be traded. I went to Orlando, where I played until I realized I needed ankle surgery. My heart ached because I enjoy playing so much and I knew that I would have to rehabilitate it and would be out of the game for a while.

Until this season, my last stop had been with Dallas. In fact, I'll tell you about all of the different stops we've made on the NBA circuit. But after Dallas, it really looked as though I would never get to play again, and I found that devastating. I love the game of basketball, I love playing, and I love competing. It's in my blood. So you can imagine my excitement when the Seattle SuperSonics talked to my agent in September 2006, wanting me to work out for them.

Jackie: We live in Seattle, Washington, so it seemed like our prayers were answered. Doug had been the hometown hero when he played basketball in high school here. We had both grown up in the city as well, and now it would just be a short trip downtown for him to go to work.

Doug: And we wouldn't have to pack!

Well, I went down to the gym to work out with the team, and I wasn't exactly sure of how well I would be able to play. After all, I was coming back from ankle surgery, and you can work out all you want and shoot all the baskets you want at home, but until you actually get on the court with other NBA

players, you have no way of gauging how good your game is.

I can tell you this—it was like a dream. I was not just playing better than I thought I could. I honestly believe that while working out with the Sonics, I was playing better than I had in a while. The game just flowed. Sure, it took a day or two for me to find my rhythm, but once I did, it was a great feeling.

On top of that, the players on the team couldn't have been more supportive. Their superstars are Ray Allen and Rashard Lewis, and they seemed delighted to have me on board. I've always been known in the League as a defensive specialist, which means that I free up the shooters from the primary responsibility of sticking guys at the defensive end of the floor. Since I've got that covered, they're free to create, shoot, and put up their numbers. I'm happy because I'm contributing, and the result is winning basketball. Ray Allen and Rashard Lewis had true appreciation for what I was doing, and they told management that they wanted me on their team.

Jackie: Rashard Lewis was even quoted in the newspaper as saying, "It's almost like Doug is a member of the team already."

Doug: Then one day, General Manager Rick Sund approached me in the Sonics' weight room and asked if he, Coach Bob Hill, and I could have dinner. "Sure! Just see my agent! He'll set it up and we can meet." But then it dawned on me; if I'm sitting down in a restaurant with my agent and the coach and maybe Rick Sund, the general manager of the Seattle SuperSonics, word's going to get out really quickly,

and maybe that's not the best thing. Deals like this are best done when there's a certain amount of privacy. So instead of a restaurant, I suggested that they come to our home. I'd cook dinner, and we'd sit down and talk.

Jackie: Doug likes to cook. He's very good at it, and a lot of the time he does the cooking for the family. I'll do the laundry and run errands, but the cooking I leave to him.

Doug: It's something I picked up hanging around my grandmother's kitchen, when I was young. I'd just sit there and watch her cook, and sometimes I would ask her how she did this or how she did that. Then I'd start messing around myself. My best friend from childhood, who's still my best friend today, Tyrone Pollard—we call him Tye for short—likes to cook, too. So the two of us will get in the kitchen, turn the music on, and start cooking.

Jackie: I wasn't there. I was told by Doug's agent that it was best if Doug met with them alone, so I went to the gym to work out.

Doug: Tyrone and I cooked up a bunch of food for the Sonics brass—salad, fettuccine, steak with potatoes, vegetables, fine wine—which they passed on, but we had it there for them, just in case. We made sure we had all beverages stocked—anything they might want—from apple juice to lemonade.

The food turned out great. My cooking really took off in college—I was at Pepperdine, which is in Malibu, and I didn't have a lot of money, so I figured if I didn't really learn to cook, I might not eat. Even when I was in Los Angeles and New York, I would still call my grandmother and ask her, "How do you

do this?” or “How do you do that?” One time, I cooked a meal for a date with Jackie—it was kind of experimental. I don’t remember what it was, but I know I hadn’t made it before. So Jackie was my taste-tester.

Jackie: I didn’t know that!

Doug: Yeah, it was trial and error. It expanded after she told me, “You cook really good.” That encouragement spurred me on to become an even better cook. That’s how everything is in our marriage.

Okay, back to dinner with the coach and the general manager of the SuperSonics. We talked basketball for a while. They were inquisitive, asking a lot about the reality show that Jackie and I had been doing. They seemed very uncomfortable about it. If you’ve heard of us, you might have heard some pretty strange things about us, that we’re weird people, that I’m henpecked, that Jackie’s controlling, and all sorts of other terrible things that happen not to be true. For some reason, the sports media have been gunning for us practically since we got married. We were surprised at some of the things said about us on the air, even by people with a reputation for responsibility, like Bryant Gumbel. But we participated in the reality show in order for people to see how we really are and that we are not weird.

Jackie: We’ve gotten so many positive responses from all kinds of people about the show—celebrities, other athletes, and fans. The reaction in e-mails has been unanimous—people are really excited to have an African American couple offered as role models for what a committed marriage can be. That’s the most satisfying thing about the show for me—it gave us a

chance to show people who we really are, not who the sports media purport us to be.

Doug: Exactly. So I'm staying on a positive keel through this meal—we're having a great talk, everything's looking good, and it just feels as though I'm coming full circle. After all, I was born in Seattle and now it looked like I would have the opportunity to end my career in the Sonics uniform. It just felt right.

That's when the trouble began.

"If we sign you," they asked, "would you have a problem being the thirteenth guy?"

I tried not to let my face show my true feelings, but the question shocked me. Why would they want me to be the thirteenth guy? With no disrespect intended to any of the other members of the Sonics, it was pretty plain to me after a couple of days with the team that I was the third or fourth best player out there. So why would they even hire me if all they wanted me to be was the thirteenth man, who usually never sees the floor unless a player is injured?

"We'll just have to think about that," I said as diplomatically as I could.

They nodded, but I could tell that wasn't the response they were looking for. I wonder what they must have thought of me. Just because I had been injured didn't mean I couldn't play. I had worked incredibly hard to rehab my ankle and I was almost in the best shape of my playing career. Thirteenth man? For a team that had been struggling in the standings for years? I just couldn't figure that one out.

And that's when the real trouble came.

"Look, Doug," they said. "A lot of teams do things their own way when it comes to wives and

families of the players. The way we do it is that we sequester the players for training camp. We know obviously that you live here in Seattle, but we'd want you downtown with the players for the whole training camp. *And no visitors allowed.* Would that be a problem?"

It didn't sound very good, but plenty of teams did this. The Lakers under Pat Riley were famous for traveling to Hawaii or Santa Barbara for training camps to focus and let the team bond. So this was an accepted way of doing things in the NBA, although, of course, it wasn't the only way.

Before I could answer, they got to the point they really wanted to make.

"Here's the other thing, Doug," they said. "It's about your wife. Obviously she's a free person and she can do anything she wants, no disrespect intended. But we don't want her traveling to away games. In fact, we don't even want her in the same city where an away game of ours is being played. Is that something you can live with?"

No wives? But if I want to go out and pick up on some girl, it's all good?! No way. I couldn't possibly abide by that! Jackie is my soul mate and my best friend. Jackie always traveled with me, either on the team plane when that was the policy of the team, or she would just fly separately. I took an immediate resentment to this rule.

Jackie: We assumed they had heard all the garbage about us, so it was evident to Doug and me, once he told me what happened, that the rule was aimed at us. Aimed at me.

Doug: I was just shocked. They had obviously bought into

the hype that they had heard about Jackie. I'm not one to use the term "hate" lightly, but I can't imagine what other term would apply when you think about all the abuse, cruelty, and blatant lies that have been hurled her way during our time in the NBA. She's been called names and mocked because of her love for me. Sports reporters seem to take some kind of devilish glee in portraying her as something she isn't. I'll tell you what Jackie is. She's the most loving, supportive, devoted wife I could ever want. She's my soul mate, my best friend, the mother of my children, my business partner, the person I'm destined to spend my life with. Sometimes I say to her, "We'll be together a long time into the future, pushing each other's wheelchairs."

Jackie: How exactly are we supposed to push each other's wheelchairs if we're both in wheelchairs, honey?

Doug: I don't know. Maybe they'll be electric. But the point is that Jackie is portrayed in the media as the exact opposite of who she is. They say that she controls me. They say that she won't let me do interviews with female reporters, which is a lie. They say a million different things about her. And we felt from the direction of the conversation the Sonics management had taken that they must have bought into the falsehoods.

I responded, "Well, I will have to get back to you after I discuss it with my wife."

I'm sure this was also not the response they wanted either, but that's what I said. I was thinking, "This is crazy!" The NBA is fabled for its groupies and so-called hootchies in every city. What most people don't know is that some of those girls aren't just hanging around outside the arena waiting to hook up with one

of the players. Sometimes, they're actually on the payrolls of some of the teams—they actually work for some of the teams. I'll get into that later, as well.

But I was sitting there staring at these guys thinking, "Are they out of their damn minds? Women who are keeping the players up all night, out at clubs, in hotel rooms, doing whatever—that's not a distraction to the team? That doesn't affect the way a guy plays? But my bringing my wife along because I want her with me even when I'm on the road—that's a problem somehow? Is this odd or what?"

I wanted them to leave my home before I said something that I would regret.

Jackie: Besides, it's not like they would notice I was there anyway. I'm there for Doug, not them. Mostly, when I travel on the road trips, I hardly see anyone from the team, except at the game or on the team bus or plane, if they allow the family to go.

Doug: It was evident from their facial expressions that they knew that there was no way on earth that I would go along with this business about agreeing not to let my wife travel, or at least be in the same city with me. So they headed out the door, but before they did they were nice enough to say, "Whatever we do, you're always welcome to come to SuperSonics games. If you need tickets, just give us a call."

They then turned to me and said, "Well, if you don't play for us, what are you going to do?" As if they thought that they were my only option, and that since I was not willing to go along with the ultimatum about my wife, I wouldn't have another chance to play. But they were wrong. As I've always

said, my wife and my family come first, and basketball, though I love it, does not define me. So I proceeded to tell them that we have other businesses, and that's what I'll be doing. I thanked them for coming and said goodbye.

As I showed them out of our home and closed the door behind them, my heart was sinking. Tickets to a game? I didn't want tickets to a game. I wanted to play for my hometown. I wanted to make the fans of Seattle proud. I knew in my heart I could really help the team, as I've always been a fan and studied their play. But not at the cost of spending time away from my wife. As I said at the outset, the most important thing in my life isn't basketball. It's my family. They come first.

Jackie: Okay, so ... I'm at the gym working out and waiting for my cell phone to ring, so Doug can tell me how great everything went. That his dream was coming true.

Doug: I grabbed the phone to call my wife. I knew Jackie was happy with how things were going—she could tell from the workouts how well I was playing, and how the guys on the team were accepting me, as we usually have these discussions after workouts or games. I had been playing with a lot of pain in Dallas, prior to this moment. Now, I was feeling no pain at all! I'm a trained athlete, so after the third day, my conditioning kicked in, and I was feeling great. I was like, "Oh, honey! We might be playing at home!" But now all my hopes were shattered.

Jackie: So he called me. I said, excitedly, "Honey, tell me how it went!"

Doug: "Nah, I don't think it's gonna work, babe!"

Jackie: I said to him, “Quit playing with me!” He loves to do things like that—get me going one way when the reality is another way.

Doug: “It’s not gonna work,” I said. “I’m serious. Tyrone’s sitting here, so I don’t want to talk too long right now. Just come on home and I’ll give you all the details.”

Jackie: I was like, “Okay, but I don’t understand.”

Doug: “When you get home,” I told her, “you will.”

When she got home, I explained the situation to her. It seemed that they would only accept me on the condition that Jackie not come along on road trips or even be in the same city. Everything was business as usual and everything was okay until they said that she couldn’t go on the road.

Jackie: I couldn’t believe it—I thought, “*Wow!* They must have really bought into the untrue stories about me.” They didn’t even want me in the same city as my own husband.

Doug: I talked with my agent. It seemed that the team was really concerned about the reality show and about the “closeness” of our relationship, like we were too close for comfort.

Jackie: We were totally shocked at this point. Our private life is ours, and should not be a concern to anyone.

Doug: I think someone said I wasn’t focused and I didn’t want to play anymore.

I think that, just maybe, the whole thing about the reality show was an excuse. They seemed concerned about our close marriage. The show had been filmed over a year before, they weren’t filming anymore at the time, and it had only gotten positive responses.

Jackie: My attitude was, if Doug wanted to play with the SuperSonics even under those conditions, it would have been okay with me. I knew how important his dream was to him. And even though I was heartbroken, I would make this sacrifice for my husband.

Doug: There was never any chance of that. Imagine having to guarantee that my wife wouldn't come around. That she would basically be invisible. I mean, where do you get off with something like that?

Jackie: They never even called Doug back directly; they only spoke to his agent after the meeting. They must have known he wouldn't go for it. When Doug told me all of this, I couldn't fathom it! I exclaimed, "They really said *it's me or them?*"

Doug: After I was playing that well it should have been a no-brainer, but instead it was a no-go.

Jackie: It felt like we were all alone and there was no one who could help us. I knew how hard Doug had worked to recover from the surgery and how excited he was to be back on the court. We were envisioning seeing him come to play; he'd be in the green and gold of the Seattle SuperSonics, the team that drafted him. And it would just be a quick drive from home to the arena.

Doug: I wasn't really shocked. I've seen so much in this League that nothing could surprise me. I was trying to stay calm. But they had a problem with me. It hurts because, as a player who takes his craft seriously, I was striving so hard. I really wanted to do this. I was really starting to expand my game and push it harder and harder. To get cut down like that wasn't a good feeling.

Jackie: We've been through so much, especially with the

sports media. Even after he had surgery, some people were saying that he was just pretending to be injured. So to show them he was really hurt, we actually had a press conference and his agent showed the bone spurs that were removed during surgery. We're not the kind of people to make things up. I was really ready to throw in the towel, but it was my husband's career. What really bothered me was that they were calling Doug a quitter in the newspapers. Our kids were seeing this, and they were asking, "Is Dad really a quitter?" And then when the Sonics made that proposition, it hurt.

Doug: I knew Jackie would have supported me if I had made the decision to accept the SuperSonics' offer on their terms and have her not travel, because she loves me. But I would never put anything ahead of my wife.

Jackie: Despite all the stories you hear about me making all his decisions for him, no, I wouldn't be happy about it. But I would stand by my husband.

Doug: My mind was made up even before they had gone out the front door. The only thing that really bothered me was the fact that I wouldn't get to play with my hometown team. That was the thing that I had the hardest time with. I just figured, well, it wasn't meant to be, and there would be another opportunity down the road. There's still twenty-nine other teams in the NBA, and at least one of them might think that I could help them and not be concerned with my closeness to my wife!

T W O



THE FOUNDATION

Jackie: I was the third youngest of nine kids. My dad wasn't in the household, but I knew him well, and I had a stepfather. For many years, though, my mom was the sole caregiver. I learned so much from her about how to raise a family and even how to run a business—there's nothing easy about running a large family like we had. In some ways, I don't know how she did it, and I marvel at her ability to keep everything together.

I'm a big list person—I love to make lists of everything that I need to do, not just for the next day or the following week, but even for the next year. Not just things to check off the list but also goals—things I want to achieve and family goals, too. Then, as I'm able to check those things off, especially the big ones, it gives me a very good feeling of accomplishment. Not to mention I have more time to do other things that I want to do. I definitely learned my organizing skills from my mom, there's no doubt about that.

We didn't have a lot of money, but we were a very close-knit family. My mom's love was truly infinite for all of us kids. I saw that each of us meant the same to her, and we all meant the world to her. And even though we didn't have a lot of "things," I learned a very important lesson from her—if you have family, you have it all.

Our cars wouldn't always be new, but they would be neat. Even if the radiator was steaming, my mom would find a way to get it fixed and we'd be on our way. She taught me the importance of making the best of whatever I had.

Fashion was the biggest thing in my life, even when I was three or four years old. I knew back then I was destined to grow up and be a model or an actress and wear fancy clothes. That was the vision I had for myself. I would do fashion shows with all my siblings. I would tell my sisters and brothers, "Okay, now it's your turn to sing a song." At first, they were annoyed when they didn't do well, but then it became a family tradition, and everybody loved it. My mom would make clothing for us, and you could say that was the start of my fashion career. I always had the support of my family, no matter what I wanted to do.

By the time I was ten or eleven years old, I was already modeling in shows at the local mall or various city events. Of course I never told my mother, but I was actually embarrassed by our family car. I would always tell my family to come twenty minutes late. If the show was starting at ten, I would tell them to get there at 10:20, so that no one could see our car—since they'd be inside already—eight kids of all different sizes spilling out, the car sputtering, my

mom's big hair. She had so much hair! I laugh now that I was so embarrassed then. Okay, I wasn't actually embarrassed, but I just didn't want people to see this. All the other girls with whom I modeled came from families with nice cars. I just felt we didn't have the right transportation, I guess.

Our family was close, but I still sometimes fought with my sisters a lot because, well, you know, the whole-sibling rivalry thing. But they knew me to be a kindhearted person who forgave easily, so they would find it in their hearts to forgive me.

My mother always arranged it so that a bunch of us could attend the same school at the same time. Typically, there would be five of us from our family attending the same school. People knew that if you messed with one of us, you had to deal with all of us. Through it all, I had the attitude that I would be an actress or a model, and I didn't tell too many people that, because I didn't want to get teased about it. But even through elementary school, we were still putting on those shows, and sometimes we'd charge money—say, two dollars—so we could raise money to make more costumes. Aside from that, I was just a typical kid. I loved to go outside, play hopscotch, read my mom's fashion magazines, and go to the local stores and just see what they had—window-shop, I guess.

At Christmastime, we would sign up for different programs that supported big, single-parent families like ours. These are programs like Toys for Tots. You could request three items and write them down on a list, and more fortunate people would get the lists from the charities and buy the toys, and donate them to the organization. That way, you pretty much

always knew what you were getting. I always wanted Barbie dolls and fashion items. If Mom made enough money, she'd buy us presents, too. But the main thing we got from her was love.

Today, people see us on the reality show living in a beautiful mansion in an upscale neighborhood, but I was born a long way from the proverbial white picket fence. I knew growing up that I wanted to save enough money to take care of myself and my family and help other people out, but more than that, I wanted the beautiful relationship with a soul mate that unfortunately eluded my mom and so many other women, and men for that matter. I knew that my soul mate was out there for me, and I was completely dedicated to finding him. I knew that expression—"instead of looking for the right person, be the right person." So I tried to be everything I wanted him to be—loving, kind, and good-hearted. And I prayed a lot. In my quest for this person, my mom ended up calling me "the Blazer," because the moment in a relationship I knew it was wrong, it was over. I knew I'd find my Prince Charming. When I met Doug, I got what I always dreamed of.

I'm a little ahead of myself. Back in high school, I was modeling and doing gymnastics. I was pretty good at gymnastics until a freak accident—a mirror sliced my left Achilles tendon. I needed surgery and I was in a cast for half of ninth grade. It wasn't too bad because I was popular in high school and all the boys saw my temporary disability as a way to flirt and so they helped me out a lot. As soon as the doctors took the cast off, I tried to come back too soon. I ran too hard, and it ruptured again. That was the end of my gymnastics career.

Girls can be really tough on each other, especially in high school. Some of the girls then were jealous of me and they would try to pick on me. They would say things like, "She thinks she's cute." They would throw these little jealousy fits. I might have been cute, but I was tough, too! In high school, I quickly developed a reputation—you'd better not mess with me, because I've got lots of sisters and brothers, and I'll fight you all by myself if I have to.

One of the best things that ever happened to me was being in a girls dance group. I can't recall the group's name, but we performed at the Bubbling Brown Sugar event at the local high schools' basketball games. I loved ensemble dancing because of the bonding among the girls. We had something special that we could do and we could perform. It was fun because despite the fact that I came from such a big family, I was always something of a loner, always just thinking about growing up and becoming a model. Once I was in that group, there was really no stopping me. No one in my family believed I could dance! But I brought my mom down to see the show one time, and she was so impressed.

After high school, I continued to study, to improve myself, to develop, and find my path. I attended community college for two years. Whatever interested me, I would study. I went to bank teller school and got my certificate. I studied computers, worked at a cleaner's, worked in different department stores, whatever it took, to keep progressing forward. All the while still modeling and loving every minute of it. I was popular, in part, I think, because I knew a lot about fashion. Everybody loves clothing, and girls love to talk about clothing, so I always had friends

who shared that interest with me. I pretty much liked to relax instead of party, so I wasn't in the kind of crowd that was out every night. I was looking for something, and I knew that it would find me. Settling down was my number one priority. After that, my next priority was helping people in life. Even then I knew that I wanted to help as many people as I could. As a child, I was branded as soft because I would give everything away, but I just loved people and I wanted to help them.

I had boyfriends, but I had never had a friend who was a boy until I met Joey B. That was different, just to have a male figure in my life who was a friend and not a potential romantic interest. And one day Joey B. said, "I have someone for you to meet. I think you'll really like him." Of course, it was Doug, and I thank Joey B. to this day.

You could say I had a fun childhood with lots of playmates, unlike Doug, who got spoiled being an only child.

Doug: This is your turn! Leave me out of it!

Jackie: Okay! So we moved down to south Seattle. There was a store called Busy Bee Greens and Things. Doug's mom was part owner. I didn't know the Christies back then. I just knew that she had the best candy in town. My mom would treat us on special occasions with candy from their store. We were always like, "Let's go down to the store. They've got all the latest candies!" I never realized that Doug was one of the kids playing video games in the back at his mother's store. He knew one of my little sisters. He would later remember seeing her around. But somehow, our paths didn't cross back then. You

could say we lived parallel lives until Joey B. introduced us. It was ironic. We lived in the same neighborhoods, and we were the same type of kids. We came from the same type of background, and yet somehow we never knew each other.

Doug: Life's all about timing. We weren't supposed to meet then. We were supposed to meet when we did.

Jackie: That's right. Okay, your turn.

Doug: Okay. Here goes. My father was black and my mother was white, and she was very young when I was born. They took me and warded me to the state. My grandfather, Dale Christie, came and got me, vouched for my mother, and brought me back to her.

I was an only child, so my whole childhood was basically my mom and me, and of course, all my friends. We first lived in Bellevue with my grandfather, who was a part owner in a skating rink, so I would stay at the rink a lot because I could skate there all the time. I'd also sleep in the back of the rink, get up, skate, go back to bed. It was great. Then my mom and I moved to the south end of Seattle. It was a lower income area, and she was one of the few white people in the neighborhood. Race was never an issue with me. I never looked at color lines that way. I didn't care about that. Around this time, my mom worked at a local grocery store. Everybody knew my mom. Wherever I went, it was, "Oh, you're Norma's son!" As I grew up, and people recognized me for basketball, it shifted—then they would say to her, "Oh, you're Doug's mom!"

Neither work nor school was a passion for me when I was a kid. Instead, not surprisingly, it was sports. Soccer was my first love. I played the game

from the age of seven until about ten. I was pretty good, too, playing left wing and right wing. Then I met my mother's boyfriend, who was a basketball player. And that's when I really fell in love with the game. Practically from the first moment I touched the ball I knew—*this is what I like, and this is what I'm going to play*. School didn't interest me very much at all, but basketball sure did.

My father lived ninety minutes south of Seattle in a town called Longview, Washington. I met him for the first time when I was about six years old. I got to go down and hang out with him. For a city kid like me, Longview was really different—it was more like the country. Up in Seattle, I lived in a predominantly black neighborhood. Longview was almost totally white. There were only two black families in the whole town. It was a great education for me as a young person to see both sides of the fence. At the time, Longview represented the wilderness—my dad and I would go fishing and hunting there, and I just loved it. “Man,” I would say to myself, “this is awesome!” That would be during the summer. During the school year, however, I'd be in Seattle with my mom.

I got into recreational league junior basketball in Seattle, and in my second year, our team won a championship. That was the coolest thing ever, and I realized that although I might not have put it in those words at the time, succeeding in sports helped me to get over the insecurities I had developed growing up without a father in my home. I lived in a rough neighborhood, and I didn't have brothers or sisters. It was just me, by myself. Other guys had their dads or older

brothers to give them confidence. I found confidence in athletics. And since everyone in the neighborhood knew my mom, I didn't run into a lot of problems with the other kids.

I feel as though I've had an angel watching out for me from my earliest childhood. Some of my friends were even murdered. They were some of my best friends when I was younger, and we grew apart as we took different paths in life. Luckily, I never got involved with some of the dangerous activities that they discovered. I made the choice to go in the other direction.

That's why being a father is so important to me—I know there are certain things that our children will never have to go through, certain temptations that will never befall them, simply because I'm here for them.

My mom was always my biggest advocate and my strength. For so many years, she served both as my mother and my father. I hope you enjoyed those Father's Day cards, Mom! Wanting to do things for her became my driving force. I wanted to buy her a house when I grew up. I wanted to give her financial security. Our relationship spurred me to keep on pushing to succeed as an athlete, and I dedicated my life to basketball. Skipping school wasn't an option for me, because my mom would take a seat with my best friend Tyrone's mom at all the games. She knew what was going on, and the school was right across the street from her job.

After I started to have some success in basketball, I found it was addictive. I really enjoyed the game. That's what I wanted to do—play all the time. By

sixth grade, however, my grades weren't good. I was just playing basketball and hanging out with my friends. My mom told me that if I didn't get it together, she'd send me to live with my dad. I didn't think she'd do it ... but she did! So off I went to Longview.

While I lived with my father I excelled in athletics. My father made sure that I was getting good enough grades to play ball. If I didn't get good grades—he made it clear—no sports, no fishing, no hunting. So I got my act together in that way.

I went back to Seattle for eighth grade, and Longview for ninth grade and part of tenth before finally deciding to stay with my mom and finish high school in Seattle. My mom enrolled me in Rainier Beach High School, in our neighborhood, and through a friend of hers she also set up a workout for me with the basketball coaches. After seeing me play, they said, "We've got a place on the team for you." Suddenly, I found myself on the varsity team of the very best high school in the state—a true blessing. The following year, basketball suddenly took off to a completely different stratosphere for me. I was All-Metro my junior year and Senior Player of the Year, with our team winning its first state championship in basketball.

I graduated high school that year, having made some great achievements in track as well. I jumped seven feet in the high jump, which won first in the state. Things were looking up for me! The downside was my grades. I had good enough grades to get by and to be noticed by colleges. But there's just this little thing called the SAT. If you don't score at least

seven hundred on your SAT, the NCAA says you're not eligible to play during your freshman year of college (better known as Prop 48). This certainly limited my options.

Since I was growing up in Seattle, my thoughts naturally turned to the University of Washington, but that didn't work out. Instead, I got an invitation from Pepperdine, down in Malibu, so I decided to visit. Naturally, I fell in love with the campus—who wouldn't, with its incredible views of the Pacific right in the heart of Malibu? I also knew it was time for me to get away from home and stand on my own. I felt I had to test myself in a totally different environment.

Pepperdine couldn't have been better to me. They told me that whether I got the minimum score necessary on the SAT to play my first year or not, they would still honor my scholarship. I'm a loyal kind of person and I respect loyalty, so I told them, "You've got yourself a ballplayer." At the time, Jim Harrick was the coach, and he was headed to UCLA, but I stayed at Pepperdine because the assistant coach who recruited me, Tom Asbury, would be replacing him. I'll say this—going to Pepperdine was one of the hardest transitions I've ever been through. Educationally, standards were a lot higher, and being around a bunch of well-to-do college students proved to be interesting. I couldn't play basketball because of Prop 48, the rule about the SAT I mentioned, so instead I played intramural basketball. I wasn't even allowed to watch the team practice. I was homesick and by Christmas break, I was distraught. I went into the coach's office extremely upset and saying that I wasn't coming back.

He asked me if I was sure, and I said, "Yeah, I'm sure."

Coach was very thoughtful. He responded, "Well, everything's waiting here for you if you change your mind."

I packed everything I owned into the trunk I had brought with me, and I headed back home. And I'll tell you what, that trip back to Seattle during Christmas of freshman year was the best thing that ever happened to me. When I returned to the old neighborhood, I found everybody was doing exactly the same routine, and I wasn't missing out on anything.

During that Christmas break, I made up my mind that I was going to return to Pepperdine. This was a big turning point in my life. I knew it would be difficult, but I also knew I was up for the challenge. I couldn't be around the team, so I hit the books. That way, I was going to be eligible to play the next year.

So after making it through my freshman year, I came back my sophomore year. But junior year was when everything kind of exploded. All of a sudden they were lining up tables for NBA scouts at our games. I'd go out and shoot before the game and I'd see the sports administrator from Pepperdine, Mike Zapolski, laying out credentials from the Lakers, the Bulls, as well as other teams. I'd say to him, "Who are they coming to see?"

"You," he'd say.

Well, my mind started going crazy. I thought, "I could leave college early and go into the NBA." Instead, I hurt my knee at the end of the year. I was Player of the Year my junior year at Pepperdine.

However, that knee injury was kind of a message to me—stay there. So I stayed and played my senior year, and then I was drafted in the first round, by Seattle. It looked like I was going home. And around that same time, I met Jackie.

Jackie: When I met him, I thought—

Doug: *Hot guy!*

Jackie: That's not what I thought! Okay, that's not the only thing I thought. He seemed like a nice person, and we could go on from there.

Doug: And we did. So, that's where we came from. That's how we started off.