



**My
American
★☆☆★
Dream**
GREAT SUCCESS
AGAINST THE
ODDS



A LIFE PATH
1. "My dad called me Tiger Woman," says Pardee (at age 4). "He would say, 'When the going gets tough, Tiger Woman gets going.'" 2. Pardee's motto? "Starring in the life I love," she says (with her father, cheerleading at age 15). 3. Being a mother inspired Pardee's move to real estate: "I wanted to be a connected mom. Life is too short not to dance and play tag."

People

From Maid to Millionaire

CLEANING HOUSES AND WORKING IN THE FIELDS PICKING FRUIT HELPED INSPIRE A DRIVE AND DETERMINATION THAT TURNED HER INTO A SUCCESSFUL REAL ESTATE MOGUL *By* **CHRISTINA DUGAN**

GROWING UP WITH PARENTS

in the construction business, Tami Halton Pardee quickly learned the value of hard work. "My mom would have us sweeping up at the job sites," says the Lake Oswego, Ore., native. "She believed kids should learn a solid work ethic." After college Pardee, 44, cleaned houses to make ends meet. Now a mom of four, she has sold more than \$2.3 billion in real estate as CEO of Pardee Properties. "Anything can be done," she says. "There's no such thing as 'no.'"

Blessings in Disguise

Though her parents divorced when Pardee was just 2 years old, she says they both taught vital life lessons to her and her 11 siblings: "My dad taught me to think, and my mom taught me how to work." When Pardee was 7, her mom even sent her out into the fields from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. to pick strawberries alongside migrant workers. "I thought it was normal," she says. "I thank my mother now for the experience."

Leap of Faith

After graduating from Boston University in 1993, Pardee moved to Los Angeles on a whim—and without a job lined up. "I didn't have a plan," she admits. "So I cleaned houses. I knew how to clean, and I could pass the

white-glove test." Later she spent 18 months working as a personal assistant to Sharon Stone. "She made me think bigger," she says. "The word 'no' doesn't exist in her vocabulary. It was a great lesson."

Devastating Diagnosis

At age 29, Pardee began experiencing vertigo and was told by her doctor that she had multiple sclerosis. "I just sat on the porch bawling," she says. But quickly her pain turned to purpose: "I didn't want to be in a wheelchair and not have enough money to take care of myself, so I decided to use it to drive me." Soon afterward, she married a man she'd been dating (Michael Pardee, her husband of 15 years) and threw herself into a career in real estate.

New Beginnings

After founding Pardee Properties in 2005, she sold \$33 million in real estate that same year. Now, with the company growing about 40 percent a year, Pardee says her company is more than just a business. "It's not just selling real estate," she explains. "You're changing people's lives. A home is a foundation that people depend on."

Giving Back

With every home sale and purchase, Pardee Properties donates 10 percent of its net proceeds quarterly to local charities through the Life-Changer program she began in 2009. "I've been so lucky, and I think you have to give back," she says. "I want to be a life changer." ●