

# FAMILY TOOL SHED LAUNCHES AN ENTREPRENEUR

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## CLINTON HOWARD BLAZED NEW FRONTIERS IN NUTRITION, WELLNESS AND MEDICAL SCIENCE

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Medical & wellness entrepreneur*

**H**istory is rife with stories of turning points in one’s life. Helen Keller, the world’s most well-known deaf-blind person, said her defining moment came at the age of 7 when she was introduced to “the mystery of language.” Foremost motivation author Napoleon Hill, born in poverty in a one-room cabin, attributed his turning point to discovering a formula for success accessible to the average man. Writer Ernest Hemingway attributed his seminal moment to having lived in Paris among other great authors.

And then there is Clinton Howard. The Dallas-area medical and wellness icon credited much of his entrepreneurial drive to having lived four years in a tool shed.

It was the summer of 1942 when Mr. Howard, then 13, hopped a bus to Houston to live with his father. He was in for a surprise.

“When I arrived, my father told me he wanted me to live a more disciplined and challenging life,” Mr. Howard recounted. He soon learned that this meant having to pay room and board and applying himself in school.

And since the house’s only spare room had been rented to boarders, it also meant the boy’s new abode was to be the only facility available—the 6-foot-by-20-foot tool shed attached to the family garage. It had a concrete floor and was adorned with nothing but a desk, a bunk bed, a chair, a card table and a solitary light bulb hanging by a cord.

“The four years I spent in that shed during my high school years taught

me how to be an entrepreneur,” he said. “I paid for my \$35-a-month room and board with a paper route and working at the local ice cream store. I learned to make the most of what I had.”

Living an ascetic life inspired the teenage Howard to hold himself to a higher standard. A mediocre interest in education blossomed to the point where he graduated in 1945 with straight-As, earning a four-year, pre-med scholarship to prestigious Rice University.

Throughout most of his five years at Rice, Mr. Howard was on a career track to becoming a dentist. But one day while walking across campus he had an epiphany. He realized that, instead of seeing patients every day, he yearned for the kind of entrepreneurial excitement he felt in high school working two jobs to make ends meet.

After graduating with a bachelor’s of arts degree in biology and chemistry from Rice in 1950, Mr. Howard moved to Baltimore to earn a two-year medical illustrator’s degree. The course was a perfect match of his passion for drawing and his love for science and business. In 1952, he followed up with a two-year master’s degree in medical arts from what is now known as U.T. Southwestern Medical Center.

## A CHANGE IN DIRECTION



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It was in 1958 that Mr. Howard made the leap of faith that launched the balance of his career. At the time, rural physicians and hospitals relied upon a few mom-and-pop labs to conduct critical tests on patients’ blood samples. The process of mailing the samples and waiting for results could take three weeks—an eternity to physicians who relied upon the lab results to prescribe treatment.

“The lab business was a cottage industry that was ripe for revolution,” Mr. Howard said.

There was only one roadblock to Mr. Howard’s desire to build the nation’s first expedited clinical lab—money. How was he going to build the infrastructure of this new venture with only \$600 in the bank? The answer lay in his experience living in the tool shed—make the most of what he had.

A business that later would establish Mr. Howard’s credentials within the medical world began in an unassuming Dallas duplex that he rented for \$200 a month. At the time, this makeshift lab consisted of two employees—an 80-year-old woman hired to type lab reports and a Ph.D. who lived with his wife in the upstairs unit and conducted the lab tests by night.

Mr. Howard moved the lab, American Biomedical Corporation, to a larger facility in 1960. By the time he took the company public in 1969, the chain had grown to 40 medical laboratories, establishing a business trend that prompted pharmaceutical companies to purchase and consolidate their own clinical labs. Mr. Howard sold his stock in the company in 1973 for \$700,000—transforming a \$600 investment into a 1,165 percent gain. American Biomedical Corporation is now part of LabCorp.

## FROM FOLKLORE TO FACT

Increasingly intrigued by the number of stories he was hearing about the health benefits of aloe vera, Mr. Howard founded Carrington Laboratories in 1974 to develop and market aloe-based skin care products. In 1981, he assembled a team of scientists to break the code of the so-called ‘medicine plant,’ which has been praised for centuries by everyone from Old Testament authors to Alexander the Great and Hippocrates.

Four years and \$20 million in research later, the age-old mystery was solved.

“Two of the team’s researchers came into my office one day with a little dish of white powder,” Mr. Howard recalled. “They put it in front of me and said, ‘This is it.’ There in the dish was a beta-4 acetylated mannan—a long-chain polysaccharide we identified as the most active ingredient in aloe.”

Mr. Howard’s discovery took aloe vera from folklore to fact. Up to that point, there were no discernible nationally advertised products claiming to contain aloe. Today, aloe extract is the world’s most-requested ingredient in skin and personal care products.

Carrington used the long-chain polysaccharide, which the American Medical Association later named ‘acemannan’, as one of the main ingredients in new wound care products. Conventional medical wisdom at the time held that wounds healed best when they remained dry. Mr. Howard’s product introduced the concept of ‘moist healing.’ His researchers had discovered that the cells responsible for repairing connective tissue multiplied 300% faster when aloe extract is applied.

“We created this product for mankind because it was so beneficial to many of those living in pain,” he said.

## THE BEGINNING OF RBC LIFE SCIENCES

No sooner had Mr. Howard retired from Carrington in 1990 did he embark on his next career venture. He stumbled upon the idea while visiting his mother in a nursing home. As he walked about the facility, his mind focused on a recurring question: “How do our bodies age and deteriorate so quickly?”

In 1991, Mr. Howard formed what is now known as RBC Life Sciences, Inc., a company that would capitalize on his extensive research into aloe vera. Everywhere he went, Mr. Howard continued to see grocery and health food store shelves bending under the weight of poor-quality aloe products. Competitors continued to harvest aloe vera through processes that destroyed or greatly diluted the plant’s active ingredients. When he tested 20 of the then-leading brands of aloe-based drinks, Mr. Howard learned that 98% of them either contained no aloe or contained far less than revealed on the label.

“It was obvious there was a real need for a true, high-quality aloe that would retain the full potency and all the natural characteristics of fresh, undamaged aloe,” Mr. Howard said. “I knew if it were to be done, I’d have to do it myself.”



*“How do our bodies age and deteriorate so quickly?”*

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Mr. Howard's new company built a factory with a sophisticated quality-control laboratory. His chief science officer used Mr. Howard's previous research to formulate the company's new aloe products. Unlike Carrington, Mr. Howard wanted his formulation to contain not just acemannan but most of the other synergistic, beneficial compounds found in aloe.

To do this, he developed a harvesting process that took only the pure, inner filet of the aloe leaf, liquefied it in a blender and then put it in cold storage until it was stabilized in a finished product. Unlike others, RBC Life Sciences' harvesting process does not cook or filter aloe, which can destroy and remove many beneficial ingredients and polysaccharides. The company also developed a processing method that allowed it to avoid using sulfites, which can induce headaches, as a preservative.

To top it all off, RBC Life Sciences ensured that its aloe plants were grown, harvested and manufactured under strict organic guidelines.

Meanwhile, Mr. Howard helped found the International Aloe Science Council to extend the public's knowledge, understanding and appreciation of one of nature's more beneficial plants. During its ongoing investigations, the council discovered that aloe contained nearly 200 compounds, many of which are synergistic in their health benefits.

Today Mr. Howard has been honored with the titles "The Father of Modern Aloe Vera" and "Dr. Aloe" by those familiar with his nearly four decades of ground-breaking research that brought an age-old mystery to scientific use.

"Clinton's teenage experiences in the tool shed and his focus on education mixed with a burning spirit of entrepreneurship were ingredients for success," said longtime colleague John Gavras, former president and CEO of the Dallas-Fort Worth Hospital Council. "This success became reality and continued for one reason—Clinton persevered. He realized he was at his best if he were continually improving the product or himself; there is no better recipe for achievement. He is the perfect study for any young entrepreneur."



*Clinton Howard, Founder  
RBC Life Sciences, Inc.*

## RBC LIFE SCIENCES, INC.

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