

FROM HOMELESS TO HAIR CARE BILLIONAIRE

John Paul DeJoria spent much of his youth in an East Los Angeles street gang. At 9 years old, he started selling greeting cards and delivering newspapers to help his immigrant mom keep their struggling family together. But it didn't work and he ended up in foster care.

A high school math teacher's comment that he'd never succeed at anything in life prompted DeJoria to clean up his act. He joined the Navy Reserve after graduation. Two years later, he was honorably discharged and floated through a series of jobs, including encyclopedia salesperson, janitor, and bike mechanic. He was even homeless for a time, cashing in soda bottles to make ends meet.

Eventually, he landed an entry-level marketing job with *Time magazine*. Good performance helped him work his way up to Los Angeles Circulation Manager. But his boss said he wouldn't be promoted again without a college education.

DeJoria left and was fired from his next three jobs.

Instead of giving up, he and hair designer friend Paul Mitchell borrowed \$700 to create a hair care system for salon professionals. DeJoria was totally broke and living in his car again. So he created an innovative door-to-door sales strategy based on his past encyclopedia sales experience to get the company off the ground.

Today, the multi-billionaire co-founder and CEO of Paul Mitchell Systems is known for donating millions each year to worthy causes. "I look upon the misfortunes in my life as blessings because they got me to the next step," DeJoria says. **"Whatever you do, if you do it better than anyone else, it's amazing how things just start falling your way."**

