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PLUS

BORGATA GOES AFTER PHIL IVEY'S 2019 WSOP WINNINGS

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FINAL TABLE TAKEDOWN WITH FORMER CARD PLAYER POY WINNER ANTHONY ZINNO

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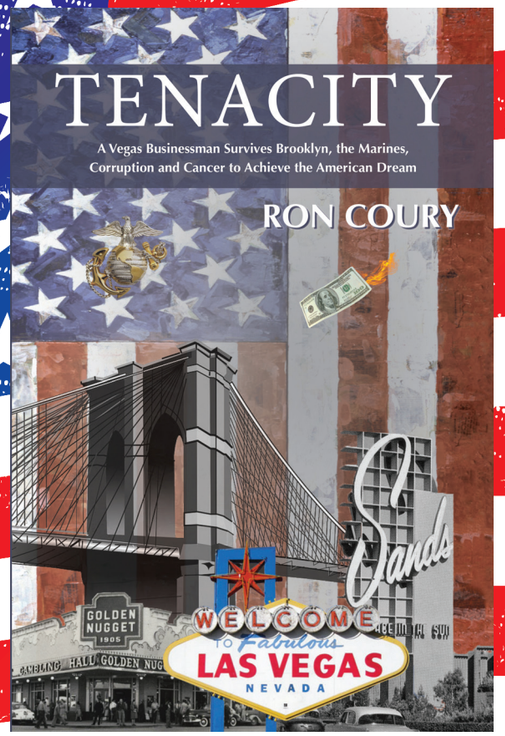
THIS WEEK'S BIG WINNER: ROGER TESKA WINS $368,475 AT WPT GARDENS MAIN EVENT

ENTREPRENEUR RON COURY TALKS "TENACITY" IN NEW BOOK

Coury's 'Tenacity' Now Available Highlighting Synergies Between Business and High-Limit Poker



ENTREPRENEUR RON COURY TALKS "TENACITY" IN NEW BOOK

Coury's 'Tenacity' Now Available Highlighting Synergies Between Business and High-Limit Poker

By Card Player News Team

Ron Coury is a well-known name to members of the Las Vegas business community. A former U.S. Marine, Coury has seen and done much in his 45 years in Las Vegas.

"I didn't just start one business and run it for 40 plus years," he says. "I always got a business started and running properly, then moved on to something else. And the types of businesses run the gamut of industries from bars, to a printing facility, a wholesale glass and mirror business, a limousine company, and more."

Coury, who is also an avid poker player, recently released *Tenacity,* the gripping true story of how he survived corruption and personal challenges to achieve the American dream. The book chronicles Coury's journey from growing up on the streets of Brooklyn in the '60s and early '70s to surviving the good-ol'-boy and Wild-West business and political climate of old school Las Vegas. From shining shoes at a Brooklyn subway to purchasing Floyd Mayweather's Rolls Royce Phantom, Coury has tasted life at both ends of the earnings spectrum. His book focuses on the determination necessary to overcome any and all unjust obstacles that may stand in the way of one's dreams.

Coury worked as a casino dealer, a real estate agent and owned several businesses. In the book Coury chronicles the barrage of constraints he faced, including political and police corruption, bribery, coercion and even death threats. Along the way, he received offers to settle matters more discreetly, with a few well-placed bullets.

Card Player recently caught up with Coury to talk about *Tenacity* and how being successful in business and poker can help you enjoy some of the beautiful things in life.

CP: First, can you tell *Card Player* readers why you wrote *Tenacity*?

RC: Over the last 15 years of playing cards, many of the people I encounter at the poker table seem intrigued and ask many questions when they learn I have been an entrepreneur all my life. The typical frequent poker player is quite intelligent and is often open to learning more about things that are new to them. Many people may draw on some synergies that exist between what I've experienced in the business world versus playing poker. It is those observations I've made and some of the unique and sometimes violent challenges I encountered that prompted me to put pen to paper and tell my life story. I also want to acknowledge three great business partners whose friendship and the partnerships we shared made it possible for me to reach my goals. Dan Hughes, Don Tamburro and Tom Boeckle all have my eternal gratitude for what we accomplished together in various, different business projects.

CP: How did you develop your interest in becoming an entrepreneur?

RC: I grew up in Brooklyn, New York and, for my first eight years, went to a small Catholic school. I had the typical school uniform – including shined shoes. One Christmas, I received a wooden shoeshine box from my dad. As teachers expected me to have my shoes shined every day for school, I saw this functional gift as an opportunity to make money. Ten cents a shine at the nearby subway stop. My first venture.

Later, my young teenage Brooklyn friends talked about starting a band. Not musically inclined, I became the manager and found the gigs. That business succeeded and further instilled an entrepreneurial spirit in me.

CP: How do you feel your military service prepared you for your business career?

RC: The Marine Corps played an integral role, instilling in me a level of perseverance and a tenacious spirit that drives you to believe failure cannot be an option.

CP: It must've been tough sledding to be a pioneering figure in the Las Vegas bar business. What skills helped you succeed in this business and what type of challenges and unsavory characters did you have to face off with to succeed?

RC: The military training I received. Unsavory characters encountered in the bar business included unruly drunks and an unscrupulous union rep who visited me. We wanted to have a friendly place where everybody knew everyone else — ultimately something people think of from the TV show named *Cheers*, but we did it first. A clean and friendly social gathering place. In a very young Las Vegas of 1979, that's exactly what we did. Suburban Lounge West on Spring Mountain and Jones was born.

At that time, I was a dealer at the Tropicana Hotel at night and a Realtor by day.

Spring Mountain and Jones was where the town nearly ended back then. They still rode horses out there. There was a guy named Black Bart who would drive his pickup truck into town from way out in the desert. He'd walk into the bar with a black cowboy hat, black vest, and two pearl-handled six shooters on his old-fashioned gun belt with two holsters. Just like in old western movies, he would turn his guns and holster over to the bartender when he walked in.

I told some of the old timers I dealt with at the Tropicana that I was going to buy this bar and quit my dealing job and they thought I was crazy. They would say, 'Are you nuts, employees are going to rob you blind. Plus, there is nothing way out there at Jones Boulevard' but I had a vision and a feel about the impending growth of Las Vegas. Unknown to me at the time was that this first business would serve as a stepping-stone to ultimately opening many other businesses.

CP: You encountered your fair share of controversy and danger in your life and still managed to move forward and achieve your goals. What skills and mindset helped you do this?

RC: A refusal to fail and a level of perseverance and determination are the skills and mindset that helped me strive for success. There were obstacles along the way, but I believe in facing adversity head on. That mindset helped in the bar business and in the limousine business when, five years later, threats to my life confronted me.

CP: Can you elaborate on those threats? How did you overcome them?

RC: While casino development and the political corruption I encountered and describe in *Tenacity* were surely scary with the risk of 50 years in prison, the death threats I received in the limousine effort were more imminently physical in nature. It's pretty daunting when you have to mount a mirror to the bottom of a broomstick and look under your car for a bomb every morning before you start it. You pause to think, 'Are these guys for real? Will they actually blow me up like they threatened on the phone?' It was challenging and caused marital problems. My wife, who was a great, great lady and terrific mother, was a pacifist at heart. She would say 'this isn't worth it…just stop.' I couldn't stop and let bullies prevail. I'm not built for running from a fight. Your readers will enjoy my creative solutions to those threats.'

CP: In a review of your book a former attorney said, "I will always remember that every time Ron called, my first thought was which Goliath was on the menu this time." What Goliaths did you pick this next fight with?

RC: Daring to tread into the limousine business. The battle was publicized and made its way into a small Brooklyn neighborhood newspaper. While my dad lived his life on the straight and narrow, some of the guys he grew up with went into the mob. One guy who lived two doors away from me in Brooklyn, Uncle Louie, was a made Captain in one of the five families. I grew up playing with his son at an early age. We all knew one another from the neighborhood. During a prison stint, my dad assured Louie that while he was away, he would help his wife and kids out should any needs arise. And, they did.

Years later at the Suburban Lounge door, in comes what looked like an eight-foot tall guy in a three-piece suit. He walks in, looks around and walks out. Suspicious, I peek out the door and he's leaning into a limo in the bar's parking lot. He opens the door and out steps Uncle Louie.

Louie was an assassination-attempt survivor, and had been shot over a half a dozen times, with one bullet very close to his vocal cords resulting in his voice being very gruff. We go into my office and he says, 'Ronnie, I heard about your limo problems back in the neighborhood and I'm here to help you. Your dad stood up for me when I went away a long time ago and there's never been anything I could do for him no matter what I offered. I can make all your problems go away. Just point me in the right direction and let me take care of it. These guys threatening you will never mess with you again.'

I knew what that meant of course. My battles with the people in transportation were news, in the paper and on TV daily. I said, 'Thank you for the offer but please don't do anything. They're trying to intimidate me. I'm taking precautions. If something happens to them, it won't be a stretch for authorities to tie it to me. I need to resolve this my own way for now'. He nodded with some level of wisdom and gave me a kiss on both cheeks and said, 'You know how to find me if you need me' and he left. I was just trying to open a darn limousine company in a monopolized market. You'll have to finish the book to know how that fight ended.

CP: You mentioned in the book that you are a "niche finder." Please explain how this is important when it comes to succeeding in business and other pursuits.

RC: Being a "niche finder" is being an observational entrepreneur and that's how the limousine venture came to be. Back then, there was no real quality stretch limousine service being offered. I thought I could do a better job. I traveled to other cities and sampled their services to get ideas. Presidential Limousine Service was born from an observation I made and

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a niche I'd found and could fill with great potential on the horizon.

Another example is the tavern business. A young town in the 1970s, there was far more heavy drinking before greater drinking and driving enforcement became a reality. I didn't see many strictly run taverns — where people (especially unescorted women) could come in and feel safe. I felt this new type of neighborhood tavern would be highly successful. It was and grew into four highly profitable neighborhood casino locations we would own around the valley.

CP: Why do people need tenacity? And how did you come up with the name for the book?

RC: In life there are sheep and there are shepherds. The sheep follow the herd, accepting what is determined for them and often find slaughter or a shearing as a result. A shepherd decides the direction and guides his or her future. People who want to maintain control over their destiny must demonstrate some level of tenacity. In my business experience, many initial answers to me were negative. My reply was defiance. I was unwilling to simply "go along." The title seemed applicable as many friends referred to me as tenacious.

CP: What are the five most important character traits and skills it takes to be a successful entrepreneur?

RC: Diligence, perseverance, determination, an unwillingness to fail, and finally tenacity. A tenacious mindset is essential to confront obstacles in life and business.

CP: How did you start your poker journey and sharpen your skill sets?

RC: After a debilitating cancer surgery in 2005 took 40 pounds from me, racquetball, my favorite pastime, was out. During what would be a long recovery, I needed a way to use my brain and fulfill a need to compete. I found both in poker. I started playing online just to learn the game. I enjoyed it tremendously. I was fortunate in business and with investments that there wasn't a monetary concern but still I started with lower limits until my skill level improved. Eventually, I tried the high-limit room at Bellagio.

Feeling I might be able to compete at that level, I played with an even higher level of player. I believe you never stop learning in poker. No matter who you are, you learn something about your game every time you sit down. Win or lose, you go home every day and think how you could've played differently. I love that! I truly enjoy learning and being challenged. Now, as a recreational pastime, it still poses a fun challenge.

CP: What do you enjoy about poker and what are the parallels between poker and business success?

RC: I enjoy sitting down with all kinds of interesting players including some pros. Giants in the poker world like Eli Elezra, Jennifer Harman, Layne Flack, Maria Ho and many others. I thoroughly enjoy the competitive nature at that level. The game has the highest level of competitive spirit that exists while, at the same time, containing the finest group of people when it comes to honesty, integrity and friendliness.

The similarities and synergies between poker and being an entrepreneur are curiously astounding, both involving comparable skill sets. Both scenarios exemplify body language, controlling the look in your eyes, displays of sincerity or weakness and even portraying yourself as stronger than you are. Negotiating a business deal and interacting with consumers and vendors is comparable to how a successful poker player's table image translates into success or failure in any given hand played.

Creativity is another integral contributor to success in both. It takes a creative spirit to determine when to use it and what level of "bluffing" to employ to best position yourself in any event. "Bluffing" adds great intrigue to an already interesting game. It's fun and simultaneously challenging to see your opening poker hand, decide you're going to play it and then make the choices whether and how to conceal weakness or strength as the board develops to optimize a pot's sizing. Over bets, under bets, check and raise or any other betting strategy provides a pool of options one can deploy to gain advantage. It is this level of strategically employed deceit that could draw action when opponents might otherwise fold.

The same gameplay occurs in many business deals. Demonstrating strength or weakness in your project can play a purposeful role when negotiating with a bank, a vendor or discussing things with a competitor. Using your creativity in a variety of ways can be fun and rewarding if you're good at it and good fortune is in your favor. Otherwise your chips are in the middle, your bluff gets called and you are talking to yourself all the way home, having learned yet another great life lesson!

No matter what, in every challenge you face, try to have fun with it whatever the result. No matter the outcome, life is too short to not enjoy everything you do.

Table banter makes the game fun but could also reveal things about how you play that an observant opponent could use later to relieve you of some of your chips. Similarly, the things a business owner says in front of an observant employee could certainly rear its ugly head. A pivotal point in my book, *Tenacity,* exemplifies just that. My casual comments within earshot of a now-known opportunistic employee resulted in life-altering consequences for us both. Every word you say and each act you perform possesses the power to affect you in ways you'd never imagine might occur.

Being cognizant of everything you say and do in a poker game is as important as portraying your business profile every day. In poker, nothing is cut and dry. Pocket aces get cracked, a full house on the turn can be surpassed by a bigger boat on the river, and checking to trap with a monster pair could give your opponent a free look at cards on the board [you'll ultimately regret]. In business, good timing and the right move advances your position when played correctly and implemented at just the right time.

CP: Great, thanks for your time Ron. In closing, what do you feel are the most important skills from your background that have led to success at the poker table?

RC: In life, I feel I was an aggressive type personality. That echoes something Doyle Brunson quoted in his book about poker, *Super System*. An aggressive nature is certainly needed in starting a new business and in achieving poker success. When a new business was envisioned, pulling the trigger on opening it is akin to pulling the trigger on shoving your chips into a pot. Assessing a situation, reading your opponent and having the heart to make a move all play a role in being a successful entrepreneur as well as playing poker successfully. Interestingly, I am currently reading Eli Elezra's recently released book entitled, *Pulling the Trigger*. A great title and an interesting read about an amazing poker pro whom I admire and consider a friend.

Perseverance is also important. A willingness to persevere and realize that you do not know it all. You can always learn something from the game, from anybody you're playing against, or from any scenario you're involved in. Diligence, determination, perseverance, tenacity, and audacity are critical keys to being a successful poker player.

Poker and Business Prove Kind to Ron Coury

From shining shoes at a Brooklyn subway stop to purchasing Floyd Mayweather's Rolls Royce Phantom, Coury has tasted life at both ends of the earnings spectrum.

In 1973, with a newfound friend and fellow US Marine, Coury would embark on an early business partnership with Dan Hughes which would ultimately span decades.

" A subsequent business partnership with longtime friend and Texas-based car dealer, Don Tamburro, would put me in the local Las Vegas car business and provide me yet another chance at trying on a new business for size and see what might come of it. Two dear friends and awesome business partners, I was blessed to reach unimaginable heights of success thanks to Dan Hughes and Don Tamburro."

The audio version of *Tenacity*, available on Amazon's Audible format is recorded by legendary Hollywood actor, Michael Madsen. "Michael's unique voice and speaking style adds an entirely new perspective to the story of my life, as described in the book *Tenacity*, and is brought to life on Audible by Amazon," Coury added. More details about Coury and his book, *Tenacity*, are available at his website, roncouryauthor.com