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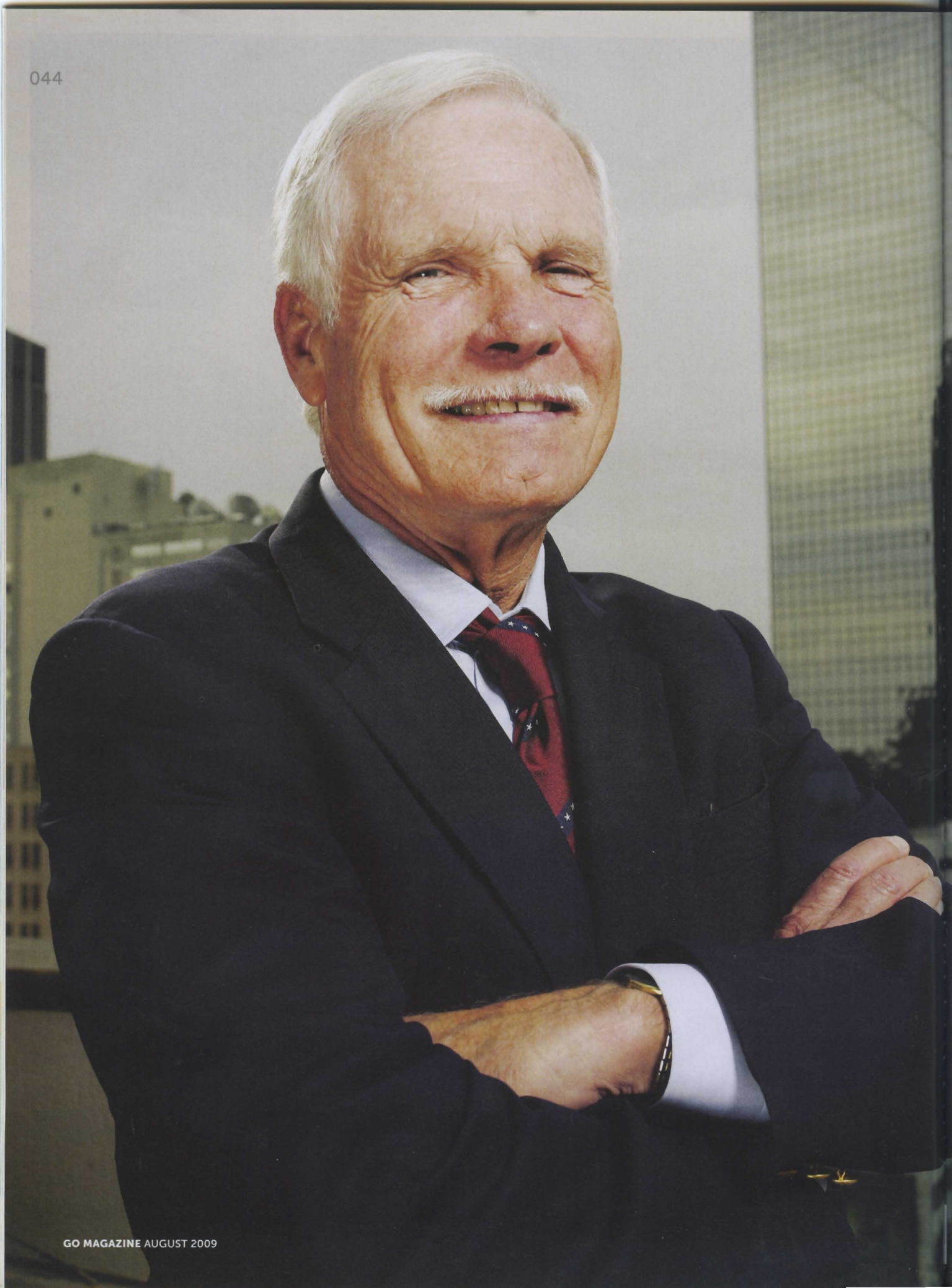
THE VISIONARY

TED TURNER revolutionized the media
industry, changing the way we get
the news. Next on his agenda?
Saving the world.

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Call Me Ted isn't just the title of Ted Turner's latest book, the bestselling autobiography (co-written with Bill Burke) detailing the 70-year-old's legendary life. It's also the first thing he says to visitors entering his downtown Atlanta office for the first time, usually accompanied by a welcoming grin and a remarkably firm handshake. ■ In the office, there are reminders of his greatest achievements practically everywhere you turn, from classic sailing paintings (he was the winner of the 1977 America's Cup) on the walls to Atlanta Braves bobbleheads (he turned the team into a pennant-winning franchise) lining his assistant's bookshelves to televisions quietly tuned to CNN (he founded the Atlanta-based network in 1980). ■ But once the office doors close and the interview begins, it's clear that the renowned entrepreneur is most comfortable just being plain ol' Ted, a man who is refreshingly frank about his desire to save the world.

The term "maverick" has been thrown around a lot recently and has often been used to describe your approach to business. What does that word mean to you? "Well, it's somebody that doesn't fit the mold perfectly, somebody who's a little different. Being able to think outside the box has served me well most of the time, but sometimes you make mistakes, and that's a part of life. But the word doesn't mean that much to me. 'Vision-

ary' means more. I don't really think of myself as a maverick."

What visionary moves are you most proud of, and what mistakes do you most regret? "As far as my business achievements, I'd say I'm proudest of seeing the potential in satellite and cable TV for television distribution. The Time-Warner merger with AOL is the only major mistake I made business-wise, and it wasn't my mistake. Everybody

was in favor of it, so I couldn't have stopped it if I'd wanted to."

In 1970, when you bought Atlanta's WTCG 17 (later TBS Superstation), did you have any idea how large your TV empire would become? "When I first got into it, I just wanted to work in television, and that was all I could afford. UHF had not made it yet—it was still an experiment—but it all evolved out of the work I did in cable."

How do you feel about the way the digital revolution is changing the way people experience television? "It gives people more choice and freedom, which has been the trend with a lot of consumer products and services. It's made life more convenient, like the microwave oven. But if I were a young man today, I wouldn't go into the TV business because it's matured. I'd go into the clean, alternative energy business."

Why? "It's at the very beginning [of the industry's lifespan], and because everybody needs energy. I can't think of any other industry that has the same level of potential upsides. There's wind, solar and geothermal energy, and all sorts of new technologies being developed in these areas. We're going to have to wean ourselves off of fossil fuels because they're running out, and we only have 3% of the world's oil reserves here in the United States. We use 20% of the world's energy, and news reports say that, even if global warming weren't the threat that it is, we'd still need to move to renewable energy sources simply because of the financial situation. We cannot keep sending trillions of dollars over to the Middle East, where they're building indoor ski resorts with our money while we're unemployed."

Why do you think it's taken the Western world so long to figure that out? "Because it requires dealing with the future, while we've been living for today and letting the devil take care of tomorrow. It's finally caught up with us. We've been spending more money than we're making, which you can do for a while, but not forever. Warren Buffett said the United States as a whole has been

spending 6% more per year than we make for the last five years, and that's trillions of dollars! We've been splurging on our credit cards, but all of a sudden the bill comes due and the piper has got to be paid. It's very painful, but it's always very painful to cut back."

What role do you think the environmental movement will ultimately play in fixing the nation's economy?



"Environmentalists are in favor of clean renewable energy and combating global warming as fast as we can, and I think that's going to be good for the economy, too. It'll create a lot of new jobs here in the United States, because while you can outsource the production of the windmills and solar panels, you've got to install and service them here, and there's no reason we can't build them here as well. It should provide a great stimulus to the economy,

and it'll also get us away from fossil fuels. Here in Atlanta, the incidence of asthma in children is up 100% from what it was 20 years ago, and it's all because of automobile emissions and our power plants burning coal. Even if we do nothing but get cleaner air, it's still worth doing it, because our poisonous air keeps getting worse."

You own more than 2 million acres of private land. How does this fit into your environmental vision?


"I think we're setting an example for how to manage land in an environmentally sensitive way, with a real strong emphasis on maintaining habitats for a variety of plants and wildlife."

The bison you raise on that land proved to be the inspiration for your Atlanta-based restaurant, Ted's Montana Grill, which has been promoting a "Green Restaurant Revolution." What's that all about?

"We're doing everything we can to encourage businesses to become more eco-friendly. I'm heavily invested in the chain, and we're trying to set a good example for environmental stewardship. We're doing everything from using biodiesel and paper straws that are biodegradable, to using more energy-efficient lighting."

As one of the primary architects of Atlanta's growth over the past 30 years, what are the best and worst things about the city's evolution?

"Atlanta has grown so much, but it can't keep growing the way it has. As the world gets more and more overpopulated, it looks like the unchecked growth was a mistake. We probably should have stabilized the population years ago instead of going off the charts, because otherwise



"Being able to think outside the box has served me well most of the time."

all of the other things we're doing to save the environment are going to be washed away. On the positive side, we've got a good baseball team. (Laughs) I'd like to see more green spaces, but the ones we have are very beautiful and well taken care of. I'm thankful for that."

You've pledged a billion dollars to the United Nations. Why do you think that organization is so important?

"Because we live in a very complicated and interconnected world today, and I think we'd have absolute chaos if we didn't have the UN. It's like the national governments, which aren't perfect either, but we can't function without them. If you look at failed nations such as Somalia, they can't get anything done because they have no government or police department, so it's total chaos. But the United Nations deals with things national governments can't do alone, like addressing climate change, which requires all the countries in the world to work together. They handle world food programs in countries dealing with famine, helping to alleviate hunger, and deal with the global problem of refugees. The list goes on and on."

You've always been pretty outspoken about politics, and admit in your book that you considered running for president at one point. How would you grade the job President Obama has done so far? "I think he's done a very good job, considering the fact that he inherited, through no fault of his own, this

serious financial trouble we're in. I'm not sure what the right way to deal with this financial meltdown is, but he's got some of the smartest people in the country working on it with him. As far as environmental concerns, I think he's put climate change and getting rid of nuclear weapons right at the very top of his agenda. He also has to balance the quest for renewable resources with the survival of the auto industry, which is a very complicated problem that I'm not sure I have all the answers for. That's why he's president and I'm sitting here talking to you!"

While you may not be president, you've done a lot in your 70 years—and you'll likely achieve more. What do you do to stay healthy and vibrant? "I haven't really seen any major changes. Your 70th birthday is just like any other day. Of course, as you get older you do seem to slow down a little, and it becomes a little more painful getting in and out of chairs or the car. But I do exercise every day, and I read a fair amount to try to keep up with everything that's going on in the world today."

What compelled you to write *Call Me Ted* at this stage of your life? "I figured if I was going to do it, it was about time. You never know how long you're going to be around, and I thought there was enough that had happened in my life that it might be interesting to other people and maybe inspirational in some ways. I've had a lot of experiences, and life

is really just a composite of your experiences, so I thought the people who took the time to read it might find it helpful in some way."

The book wasn't entirely told just from your perspective. It's interesting that you allowed your competitors to have a voice. "That was my co-author's idea. I'd never seen it done before, and we couldn't think of any other biographies that had used that approach before. I think it generally worked."

Some critics complained that you failed to address how some of the more difficult parts of your life, such as your father's suicide and your sister's untimely death from an autoimmune disease, helped to make you the man you are today. Were there portions of your life that were especially tough to revisit? "Of course! Everyone has disappointments and sadness in their lives, and it's always painful to relive the tragic portions. I don't feel like I skipped over the difficult parts of my life. For the most part, I felt like I confronted them."

If you were writing a sequel to *Call Me Ted* in 10 years, what new achievements would you hope to include? "I'd like to see the world rid of nuclear weapons and see us handle the issue of climate change effectively. I'd like to see the population stabilized, and poverty and hunger eliminated. There are a few other things as well, but they would all be achievements of humanity, not personal achievements."

Speaking of achievements, what advice would you impart on someone hoping to have your kind of success? "It's hard to adequately answer that in one paragraph. When I get asked that question of how to become successful, I say, 'Early to bed and early to rise, work like hell and advertise.' (Laughs) If you want a one-liner, that's the one I give people. Another truism is that it doesn't matter how rich or powerful [you are], you still have to cut your toenails. You don't look like too big a cheese when you're cutting your toenails!" ✕