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Who Are You?

“Finally I looked at him,’ Ms. Fanarjian said, still dumbfounded, ‘and said, who are you?’” (*The New York Times*, September 21, 2006, “A High- Wire Master Touches Down”). Ms Valerie Fanarjian, who runs a lumberyard, was astonished by Philippe Petit’s strange ideas and unique personality when she first met him. However, Ms. Fanarjian was not the first person to be amazed by Petit’s behavior. Petit is well known for many of his incredible performance, especially his walk on a wire between New York City’s Twin Towers on August 07, 1974. According to the documentary film “Man on Wire” directed by Stephen Walker, after years of fantasizing and months of arrangement, the wire walker Philippe Petit went on the top of the towers and showed his remarkable performance on the wire. Beside the amazing job he did, the film shows some of his personality traits that helped him to achieve his goal. Apparently, he had to be tenacious, extremely patient, and quite selfish in order to walk across the buildings.

One of the most important characteristics of Philippe Petit that supported him for his success in walking between the towers is his tenacity. Though he faced several challenges and troubles on his way, Petit never gave up trying. For instance, the first time Petit came to the USA and saw the enormous buildings from the ground, he thought that his dream was impossible, but he kept on trying to accomplish it any way. Similarly, his foot was injured by a huge nail while he was trying to spy on the buildings; however, his injury never stopped him from his journey; instead, he used it as a tool to pass through the gate with no security problem. Even at last moment of the day he walked on the wire, he feared that he was going to fall off the wire and die,

but he kept on telling himself that it would be a beautiful death. He proved that not even the risk of losing life could stop him from accomplishing his vision.

Petit's patience was another major characteristic that enabled him to become the first wire walker between the Twin Towers. For example, he dreamed of walking between the towers even before they were built. Therefore, Petit had to fantasize about the day for several years. After the towers were built, he had been honing his skills until he became perfect. During his training, his friends used to wave the wire so that he could be ready for the windy air around the top of the buildings. Meanwhile, he had been spying on the building for months. In order to pass the security of the building gate, he had to use different methods such as making fake IDs and pretending that he and his friends were French journalists who wanted to write an article about New York City's Twin Towers. Furthermore, Petit used to explain his plans to his friends and the people around him to help. While he was trying to clarify his ideas, he faced several disagreements and misunderstandings; still he kept on discussing them until they understood his plan completely. Also, at the last hours, after Petit and his friends arrived on the roof of the building, they all had to hide under a tarp until the security guard left the roof. At that time, they wrote on a piece of paper to communicate with each other, and they had to make a hole in the tarp to see if the security guard left or not. However, these pressuring moments never pushed Petit to give up his dream.

Finally, selfishness played a significant role in changing Petit's dream to reality. Petit had quite a lot of friends to help him. When he asked them to assist him, they never questioned his intelligence: they trusted him and were led by him; they listened to him, and did everything he asked. Shockingly, as soon as he used them and succeeded, he turned his back on them. Some of them were expelled from USA, and their friendship was broken after that moment, as one friend said. For that reason, his childhood friend Jean Louis still cries when he think about it. Most of

all, Petit broke Annie's heart. Annie was his girlfriend since they were young. Since she met him, her life was all about him and his dreams. However, after he walked on the wire, a lady hugged him and asked him to spend time with her; he accepted her request and slept with her. Despite losing his friends, Petit's self-centeredness actually helped him succeed.

In short, Phillip Petit had both positive and negative personality traits which helped him overcome his obstacles. Petit became successful because he was nonconformist. He chose his own rules, ideas, and dreams to lead his life, and they reflected his unusual personality. Even though he hurt the people who loved him the most, his nature amazed and attracted people.