A longtime traveling salesman, Ray Krock spent years selling Multi-Mixer milkshake machines to mom-and-pop restaurants across the United States. In his early fifties, after spending years studying the way local eating establishments delivered food to patrons, he visited a small but highly successful hamburger chain run by two brothers, Mac and Dick MacDonald. These two marketing whiz kids had developed a highly mechanized and efficient program of food preparation that they dubbed the “Speedee Service System.” They were already selling franchises for their MacDonald’s restaurants, though on a modest scale.

Immediately realizing the super-sized potential in the automated hamburger business, Ray went to work for the MacDonald bothers as head of franchising. After a few years, he bought them out. Once the business was his own, he surgically removed the “a” from the “Mac,” changing the chain’s name to McDonalds.

Ray Kroc then went on to single-handedly invent the fast food industry in America and to build the largest restaurant business in the world.

“I was fifty-two years old,” Kroc wrote. “I had diabetes and incipient arthritis. I had lost my gall bladder and most of my thyroid gland in earlier campaigns, but I was convinced that the best was ahead of me.”