



FALL 2016

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NOT A BAD DAY JOB: Ensuring the Accuracy and Realism of TV

IT TAKES A VILLAGE
to Raise an Artist

A DOER
Not a Dreamer

13 SPEAKERS,
5 Days, 3 Takeaways

THE HIDDEN SIDE
of Biographies

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CELEBRATE! INNOVATION MAGAZINE
IS PUBLISHED BIANNUALLY
BY DES MOINES AREA COMMUNITY
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EDITOR'S NOTE

As a woman currently in my eighth month of pregnancy (one who will surely have delivered by the time you hold this issue), and a voracious reader of every parenting and pregnancy book I can get my hands on (not to mention blogs), it has recently dawned on me that the African proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child,” might indeed be true.

Children need villages, and a supportive community is as integral to raising a child as the individual parents. As everyone seems to enjoy pointing out, two people alone apparently lack the energy it takes to handle the messy, fussy bundle of love and joy that is about to descend upon our home.

The proverb reportedly comes from the Igbo and Yoruba tribes of Nigeria. The meaning is simple: everyone is responsible for the upbringing of the child, from the parents to the extended family to the villagers who interact with the child on a daily basis. A Swahili proverb reveals the same principle: “One hand does not nurse a child.”

And yet, we spend so much of our time isolated from one another. Grown-up children live far from their parents by necessity or choice or a mix of both. As our world becomes more technologically advanced, many of us see less and less reason to step out from behind our many screens and interact with one another. Why bother with face-to-face when a quick text will do?

But in Des Moines, it seems the opportunity to create and develop community and support still thrives. In all of my travels, I have yet to find a place where it is as easy to meet new people and gain support from the community as it is in the heart of Iowa.

This issue features writers and speakers who extol the virtues of dreaming big and pursuing passion. But the theme behind all of them, whether

acknowledged or not, is that it takes a village to raise an idea, just as it takes a village to raise a child.

In “Not a Bad Day Job: Ensuring the Accuracy and Realism of TV,” David Berman and John Wellner share their transformation from on-screen actors in the *CSI* series to the researchers and fact-checkers behind the scenes of many of our favorite crime-scene TV shows. They explain how they did it and the top five lessons they learned along the way; three of those learning lessons directly relate to the people they surround themselves with who have helped them along the way.

Homer Hickam, one of the original Rocket Boys, reveals his “Three Ps” of success: passion, planning and perseverance. In “I’m a Doer, Not a Dreamer,” he makes the distinction that while it’s important to have a dream, it’s even more important to follow the Three Ps when pursuing it. Even more notable, a group of five young boys worked together to build rockets, and their success would eventually take them all out of Coalwood, West Virginia, and into lives they barely imagined possible.

In “The Hidden Side of Biographies,” Danny Beyer extols the virtues of appreciating the team effort it takes to achieve anything great in life, rather than focusing on the virtues of the singular person associated with it. He shares his struggles as a writer and acknowledges the network of supportive people it took to accomplish his goal and the value in appreciating all of them.

Similarly, in “It Takes a Village to Raise an Artist,” James Ellwanger shares his story of growing up in a blue-collar Des Moines family, one that supported and wanted the best for him but remained comfortable with the status quo. He grew up without any idea that a life outside of manual labor was possible. After years of denying his dream, and after finding the support of community members, he took the courageous leap to devote his life to his art and has never looked back.

No creator creates in a vacuum; no inventor comes up with a groundbreaking idea without relying on (or even attempting to refute) the ideas of those who came before. And even though writing is solitary work, what is writing without the reader? Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a village to raise an idea. In the pursuit of your passion and dream, don’t forget: it takes stepping outside of our isolated world and enlisting the help and input of others to get our big ideas off the ground.



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SHATTERING SILENCE, 2009. USED WITH PERMISSION.



BY JAMES ELLWANGER

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

to Raise an Artist

As a lifelong Iowan, I have found that one of the best things about living in central Iowa is the accessibility of so many of its leading citizens, especially when it comes to pursuing new ideas. It sets us apart from so many other, more populous locations. Despite the societal differences that are inherently present in cities of any size, central Iowans tend to pull together for the common good, to seek out opportunities to enhance where we live, and to assist and encourage those who aspire to advance such goals.



DAVID KRUIDENIER, 2003 PRIVATE COLLECTION.
USED WITH PERMISSION.

I am an artist. But I did not become an artist by myself, or in a vacuum.

When I was a young man, I had the good fortune of crossing paths with the beloved local philanthropists, David and Liz Kruidenier, who arguably have done more to advance the quality of living in Des Moines over the past several decades than almost anyone else. I had been playing with the idea of leaving my day job to pursue an art career—not an idle thought for a husband and a father just getting a start in life. Out of the blue one day, it occurred to me to call David, someone I had never met, in order to ask whether he would be interested in giving me his opinion about my fledgling artistic attempts. Imagine my surprise when he immediately invited me to his impressive and imposing art-filled home for an informal chat.

I rang the doorbell and held my breath, hoping I had understood him correctly and that this wasn't a mistake on my part. After waiting a moment, a slight,

well-dressed man with a sophisticated, somewhat distracted air opened the door. He looked me up and down and then, without a word of welcome, shouted back into the recesses of the house, "He doesn't look like an artist." I visibly flinched. Was this good or bad? I braced myself. A strong female voice responded, "Good—let him in." At that moment, I fell in love with David and Liz. I like to think the feeling eventually became mutual.

David and Liz not only assessed my work and shared their honest opinions that day, they also became wonderful friends, patrons and supporters. They gave me the needed push to begin a journey down a career path so often fraught with peril that many never make the attempt despite a desire to try. Through my association with them, I came to realize that the older generation, who had lived long and well before me, had the ability to exert a tremendous influence on young artists. Not only through their institutionalized knowledge, but their real-life knowledge and experience that was and is so valuable to those who come behind them.

I don't recall any high school personnel ever asking me what I wanted to do with my life.

It was as simple as asking for advice; when prompted, they were generously willing to give it. It was not easy for me to ask, but it taught me an important lesson and gave me the courage to think of my community with a village-like mentality—a place where the people work hand-in-hand for the betterment of all with a "rising tide lifts all boats" philosophy.



THE SEAM, 2000. PRINCIPAL PARK.
USED WITH PERMISSION.

I was born into unlikely circumstances, considering my life now. Raised on the south side of Des Moines in a small, one-bathroom, story-and-a-half home like so many others, I was a child of the 1970s with all this implies. My parents were blue-collar, down-home folks who wanted the best for their children but were used to maintaining the status quo. Dad worked as a laborer for a farm implement manufacturer and Mom waited tables. I was the fourth of six children, bookended by brothers and sisters who ensured that life was never dull. I was not the type of child that sought attention, but simply rolled with it—whatever "it" happened to be at the moment.

I found solitude in elementary school by daydreaming while staring out the window and rearranging the outdoor space—the playground equipment, the landscape—in my mind's eye. Even then I had the ability in my head to walk a 360-degree circle around any item and

visualize it in 3-D from all sides. Only later did I realize not everyone could do this. My art teacher, Ms. Gooch, introduced the class to artists to whom I could relate—Calder, deKooning, Picasso. I felt an instant connection and a parallel to what I did in my head as I stared out that classroom window.

Dad's job loss in the early 1980s deeply affected my family. I was in middle school and insecure about everything, but art allowed me a creative escape, something I really needed at the time to deal with the uncertainty of a chaotic world. I went through high school participating in art class and art clubs, not because I was considering art as a profession but because it was a way to escape an unhappy reality.

I don't recall any high school personnel ever asking me what I wanted to do with my life. College was simply not discussed, and I never thought it was an option. Few of my friends and acquaintances were preparing to pursue an advanced education. And I always assumed that being a successful artist entailed having a certain skill set—the ability to paint or sculpt with specific tools in a specific way. I did not feel these were skills I possessed.

In fact, I was prepared by my parents from a young age to work with my hands instead of considering college. They expected me to labor on an assembly line, at a mechanic's garage, or on the night shift stocking shelves. I never thought about being a doctor, an attorney, a teacher, or anything to do with higher education. I certainly never dreamed of being an artist. I simply never believed that was an option for me, and I was barely aware it was an option for anyone. It was not the way I had been raised, and my limited exposure to people and experiences beyond the bounds of my own neighborhood did nothing to change this notion.



BREAKING GROUND, 2005. BILL KNAPP COLLECTION. USED WITH PERMISSION.

As a result, I graduated in 1985 with no idea of what I wanted to do with my future. For the first time, I felt immense pressure to attain a career and support myself. I held a series of odds-and-ends jobs—bellhop, shoe salesman, grocery store stock boy. However, during one stint of driving a hotel van transporting guests to and from the nearby airport, I had a conversation with a guest who suggested I consider sales as a career. This struck a chord with me. I began by peddling cable television subscriptions door-to-door. I advanced to car sales, for which I had a natural talent. I later obtained a real estate license. Eventually, I began to build my own homes for customers who wanted to begin from the ground up.

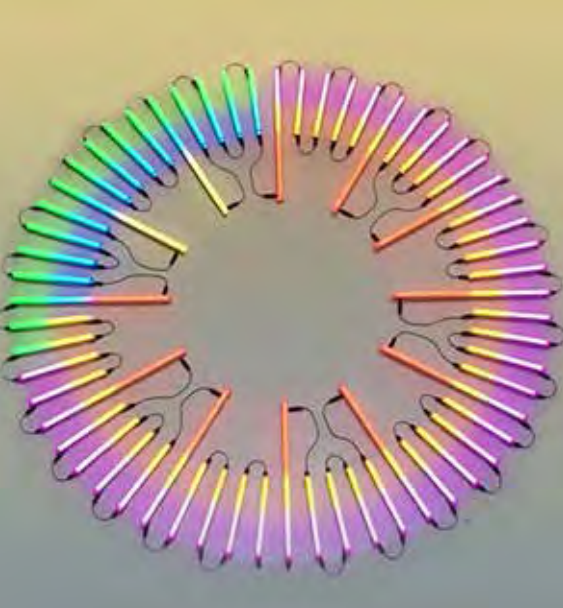
After a day of selling, at a crossroads after a day of selling, I went home at night and drew and dreamed of devoting myself full-time to the satisfaction that creativity brought. However, I had no idea how to begin to make this a reality, let alone a profession.

I saw two potential avenues for entering the art world. One was furniture design, and the other was large-scale wall art. I was very influenced by the painter Mark Rothko. I wanted to use his idea of color blocking and give it an updated spin; rather than oil and canvas, I wanted to use aviation paint and aluminum “canvases.” I wanted to create.

Finally, I decided to set aside two years to see if I could make it happen. Having a young family and trying to pursue a dream that seemed impossible from a financial standpoint was daunting. (It is actually not something I would recommend.) There are no three strikes. If you fail, you are simply out of the game. Unnerving does not begin to describe it. But that was where the Kruideniers came in.

I certainly never dreamed of being an artist. I simply never believed that was an option for me, and I was barely aware it was an option for anyone.

With their encouragement, I created my first series of wall pieces—large, polished aluminum “canvases” with highly glossed aviation and automotive paint applied in a graphic arrangement with a Rothko-esque influence. They were breathtaking. I was terrified. I gathered my courage and installed them in an unused warehouse in downtown Des Moines. I hired a photographer and put together a slide presentation to promote the work. There were only a handful of galleries in the Midwest on my radar. But I sent the slides, knocked on gallery doors, made cold calls and suffered my share of rejection.



TICK PULSE TOCK, 2015. USED WITH PERMISSION.

A vital, flourishing community not only embraces art, but also embraces its artists and allows them to flourish, grow and contribute to the greater good.

As it turned out, the gallery I was most interested in pursuing became interested in me. The owners of Percival Gallery in Des Moines offered strong encouragement, but, sadly, were in the process of closing their business permanently. So I approached U.S. Bank, the owner of the building where the gallery was located, and weeks later was able to rent the newly vacated space myself. I held my first show on my own, exhibiting the wall pieces and some of my furniture design prototypes. Since this was the early 2000s, most of the marketing was done without the benefit of the Internet. My family and I sent old-school invitations through snail-mail and made telephone calls to everyone we knew and a lot of people we didn't. We alerted the local media and hoped for the best.

After the first nail-biting night of the show, I had generated some interest and felt cautiously optimistic. The next day, a collector came in and immediately bought eight pieces for his various home and business locations. Not an hour later, a couple came in and bought five pieces, including two of my furniture designs, and in a wonderful turn of events, commissioned me to create a large-scale outdoor sculpture

for their primary residence. A second show, held four months later in the same space, resulted in the sale of all 28 pieces within the first two weeks. The commissions for the large-scale pieces then began to come in.

This was the beginning of building a clientele that would stay with me for years to come. The village was beginning to raise an artist. Subsequent shows regularly sold out, and I began to allow myself to believe I was actually on my way to successfully earning a living doing something I loved. Little did I know, however, that the art world, like so many other micro-societies that exist in the world of commerce, has a distinct pecking order. There seemed to be a shared feeling that the only way an artist from Des Moines, Iowa, could actually "make it" was by going through established channels and being anointed by the mythical art powers-that-be. Not something, I was assured by the establishment, that could be done on one's own or outside of this strict protocol.

I did my best to ignore this bad advice, which became easier to do after I began receiving commissions from individuals, corporations and government agencies. I did several pieces for private collectors, insurance companies, and other businesses and municipal organizations. Prices shortly went from \$10K to

\$15K to figures that were sometimes embarrassingly high. The dream, it seemed, had become a reality.

The Kruideniers and a number of my other patrons had lucrative connections to some bigger city galleries; however, that path would have taken me out of Des Moines. I made the conscious decision that I wanted to enhance my own back yard instead, to give back to the village that had given so much to me. There were only a few big public art installations outside of the Art Center available to Des Moines residents at the time—American Republic's sculpture collection, Claes Oldenburg's Nollen Plaza piece. I yearned to contribute. Not too many years later, I got my chance.

After the turn of the millennium, Des Moines took a leap forward, artistically speaking. Builders, developers and planners began taking an increased interest in the visions and opinions of artists, architects and landscape architects. Our community began to realize we did not need to purchase our culture elsewhere but could nurture and grow our creativity right here. Lucky to be in a position to ride this progressive wave, I established good connections who were able to suggest high-profile locations for my pieces; without their help, it would have been impossible for me to place them alone.

One example is the Shattering Silence piece that sits atop a rise on Capitol Hill overlooking Des Moines. Constructed in 2007 and situated outside of the strikingly beautiful Judicial Branch Building, the 30-foot sculpture, made of Iowa limestone, stainless steel and acrylic, commemorates the "In the Matter of Ralph (a colored man)" decision of the Iowa Supreme Court—the very first case the Court ever decided after Iowa became a territory in the mid-1800s. Ralph was a runaway slave who had been captured in Iowa



JAMES ELLWANGER'S 2ND SHOW, 2001. USED WITH PERMISSION.

James Ellwanger is an American artist from Des Moines, Iowa. He began his art career in the late 1990s after many years of working in more traditional professions.

Ellwanger is known for large-scale installations including public, private and corporate works. He is currently exploring technology-driven, interactive mediums. In addition to creating art work, he also holds patents for a variety of modern furniture designs.

*Dad worked as a laborer
for a farm implement
manufacturer, and Mom
waited tables.*

by his master's employees, but the Court refused to send him back into slavery, declaring that in Iowa all people were free and would remain so. More of a monument to civil liberties than a sculpture, the work and the story behind it highlight a piece of history that changed our world forever.

I am eminently proud—proud of the rallies that happen around the Shattering Silence sculpture that celebrate social equality and progressive change. I am proud of those who helped make it possible—the Kruideniers, insurance industry icon Graham Cook, renowned media executive/lawyer/Iowa Cubs owner Michael Gartner—all visionaries and champions of community betterment, and the

numerous donors who contributed to the piece's construction. I am proud to know that judges and justices look out of their courtroom windows during the course of a workday where they make life-changing decisions and see the sculpture. I am proud that they may be reminded of Iowa's progressive leadership in the area of civil rights. It is a rare privilege, one that I am truly thankful for and one that would not exist without the village.

After almost 20 years of being a full-time professional artist, I still sell most of my pieces by word-of-mouth referrals or by those who see something I've done and simply reach out to me. I enjoy the unique position of being able to pick and choose my projects. I currently have the privilege of working with architects, universities and municipalities on a variety of sculpture projects, including those utilizing new LED technology, an exciting development in the field. Using light as art is not a new concept, but it is getting a fresh, new look. A good example is the under-construction

Walnut Glow project, which I am heading and is part of the overall renovation of Walnut Street in downtown Des Moines (www.walnutglow.com). Another is the new installation I just placed at 300 MLK building, entitled "Tick Pulse Tock," a 20-foot brand-new take on light functioning as a time keeper.

Some days I find myself nostalgic, perhaps the result of advancing middle age, perhaps because so much water has passed under the bridge of my life so far. I look back and think that if I had to start my career today, I would certainly find it no less difficult, and perhaps more so. I happened to be at the right time and place to be able to give something to a city that suddenly thirsted for more art in public spaces.

A vital, flourishing community not only embraces art, but also embraces its artists and allows them to flourish, grow and contribute to the greater good. A village is what it takes. ◻

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THE ORIGINAL ROCKET BOYS FROM COALWOOD. USED WITH PERMISSION.



BY HOMER HICKAM

A DOER

Not a Dreamer

I am often accused of being a dreamer. I'm the author of the memoir "Rocket Boys/October Sky," which chronicles the story of six boys—myself included—who were all sons of coal miners. We built sophisticated rockets as children and then went on to successful careers.

When I'm on book tours, often parents approach me and ask if I will autograph one of my books for their child with the admonition: "Tell him (or her) to keep dreaming." Being a southern gentleman, I do as they ask despite my reservations. You see, I don't believe dreaming is enough to move forward in life. It's the doing that counts. Rather than dreaming, I think a stronger word is needed, and that word is passion.



HOMER HICKAM DISPLAYING HIS ROCKET AT THE 1960 NATIONAL SCIENCE FAIR. USED WITH PERMISSION.

We Rocket Boys of Coalwood, West Virginia, had passion, lots of it. What we wanted to do was build a great rocket, one that performed exactly as we designed it, so we would be ready to work for NASA. Unfortunately, all we did for many months was blow things up. After enough failures, it finally dawned on us that passion, while vital, wasn't enough. We also needed a plan. Without planning and an organized approach, we weren't going anywhere.

Our task, then, was to figure out all the steps it took to design and build a great rocket. That meant educating ourselves and learning a completely different way to approach problems. First, we had to learn as much as we could about rocket engineering, and then we needed to learn how to think and act sequentially with precision in our designs. This we did, and successful launches were the result. But launches alone weren't enough.

As the months and years went by, we began to understand that all the passion and planning in the world would not allow us to reach our goal without

adding in big dollops of perseverance. Therefore, we kept plugging away, overcoming all the unexpected and daunting obstacles that cropped up, sometimes out of nowhere. We treated every failure as an opportunity to get better—and we kept going.

Eventually, we built some great rockets and went on to bring home a gold medal from the 1960 National Science Fair. We went to college, graduated and pursued wonderful careers. I became a NASA engineer for two decades before trading that profession to be a writer. You see, I had a passion for writing, too.

Here's my advice to young people, and really everyone who wonders how to succeed. It's really simple. All someone has to do is adopt the approach of the Rocket Boys, which is what I like to call my three Ps of success: Passion, Planning and Perseverance.

The trick, of course, is discovering what that passion is. This requires a certain amount of introspection. Even if for just a little while, get away from all the electronic devices that compete for your time and thoughts. Sit quietly and think about what you really want to do with your life. I believe that after enough questioning, a person's life's work almost always reveals itself. It might be working as a writer or a rocket scientist or a doctor or a NASCAR auto mechanic; it really makes no difference as long as it's something you really want to do.

So what's next? You have to create a plan. What's a plan? To do anything almost always requires some sort of education, whether it's formal or informal. College is required for some wonderful jobs, but in other cases, it's better to go out and get work experience. That's part of figuring out your plan.

But no matter how good a plan is, you will almost always run into obstacles. That's why that third "P" is so important: Persevere! In life, things constantly change. What seems easy suddenly becomes difficult. It might even seem

We treated every failure as an opportunity to get better and we kept going.

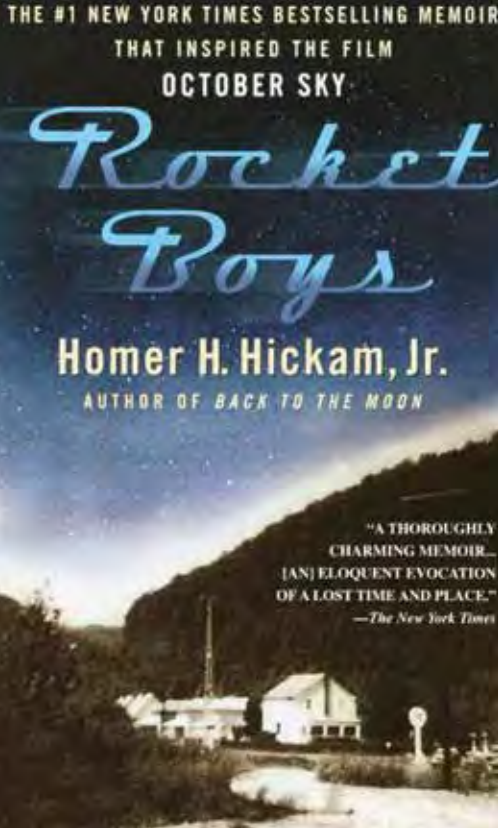
impossible. Just keep going. It's not the smartest person who wins the race. It's the fellow who perseveres. Of that, I'm a very good example!

The Coalwood Rocket Boys were not afraid to fail, and we weren't afraid to succeed. We were willing to take chances and to push the limits of knowledge and authority. And when we did well, we kept going. We remained focused and confident in what we were doing and built on our success.

Don't get me wrong. Every human being on this planet has been afraid at one time or another and that certainly includes me. But fear has never ruled me. I just won't let it. To defeat fear, it is necessary to remain confident in who you are and rooted to something of substance, something larger than yourself.

If there is anything that causes fear, it's a sense of being incomplete and detached from society. To be confident, it is necessary to know the vast trail of people and circumstances that created you, whether it is your individual family, or town, or country. You are a masterpiece, the result of billions of possibilities. Give credence to the fact that the odds against you existing as a person are unimaginable. All the events in the history of the universe and the world, all the animals and people that came together, everything that has ever happened, had to happen pretty much exactly as it did in order for you to exist. Do you think that's an accident? It isn't. You exist for a purpose. Never doubt it.

You also exist so that you might be happy. After the awful events of 9/11, so many people wrote to me and said they were paralyzed by fear and couldn't smile. That's why I wrote my



HICKAM'S NY TIMES BESTSELLING BOOK, *ROCKET BOYS*. USED WITH PERMISSION.



HICKAM'S BOOK TURNED MOVIE, *OCTOBER SKY*. USED WITH PERMISSION.

Homer H. Hickam, Jr. has been a writer since 1969. Initially, he wrote about his experience during World War II. This resulted in his first book, *Torpedo Junction*, a military history best-seller published in 1989 by the Naval Institute Press.

In 1998, Delacorte Press published Hickam's second book, *Rocket Boys: A Memoir*, which was nominated by the National Book Critics Circle as Best Biography of 1998. In February 1999, Universal Studios released its critically acclaimed film *October Sky*, based on *Rocket Boys*.

Hickam has since written a number of other novels and memoirs including *Back to the Moon* (1999); *The Coalwood Way* (2000); *Sky of Stone* (2001), which is currently under development as a television movie; *The Keeper's Son* (2003); *The Ambassador's Son* (2005); *The Far Reaches* (2007) and *Red Helmet* (2008).

book *We Are Not Afraid*, to help others overcome their fear and pain and not only find success but be happy. It's a book that helped thousands of people recognize that fear was actually holding them back. Once fear is recognized and understood, it can be banished.

For young people, many organizations have been established to help them succeed and make them feel confident and valuable. Service organizations such as the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts and 4-H are wonderful, along with a myriad of other fun and wholesome clubs that bring adults and youth together, bound by a common passion for learning and doing. For adults, there are organizations such as Kiwanis, the Junior Chamber of Commerce, and Rotary. These clubs allow them to contribute meaningfully while building both their community and building their own self-worth, which is a requirement to succeed. Volunteering at hospitals, pet shelters, homeless shelters, suicide hot lines, and many other areas allows

everyone to connect with communities that cover them with positive energy.

My next recommendation may surprise you: I think to beat fear and succeed, you should tell stories about yourself and your family and listen to theirs, too. No, honestly. Trust me on this.

Family stories reveal who you are and allow you to connect to the strength needed to survive and prosper in today's world. For instance, my latest novel, *Carrying Albert Home*, is a family story. It's a funny and sometimes sad story about my parents, their pet alligator, and the great journey they took together. They told it to me in bits and pieces over the decades, and my parents' story became important to me because it made me aware of who they were and, therefore, who I was.

If you are a parent, or an adult in a family with children, remember one of your responsibilities is to let children know who they are. To succeed in life, they need to be rooted in the firm substance

of family and country. Therefore, tell family stories to your children. Think long and hard of the events of your past, of your parents' past, of your Uncle Joes or Aunt Marias, and of the heroes who built this country. Form the story in your mind with a beginning, middle, and end, and then tell it with all the enthusiasm you can muster. When you finish, you and your children might say in a whisper, "We are proud of who we are!" That will go a long way to carry them to success.

Dreaming is a good thing but not worth much without the willingness to sweat a little. Intelligence is also not enough to succeed. Successful people aren't necessarily the smartest. They're the ones who were willing to roll up their sleeves and work hard. As fellow Rocket Boy O'Dell Carroll used to say, "A rocket won't fly unless somebody lights the fuse!" Light your own fuse. Apply my 3 Ps of success: stop dreaming, start doing, don't be afraid. Know yourself, and then fly as high as you can! ◻



**BRILLIANT REFLECTIONS
OF
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AN IMAGE OF A BRAIN FROM CSI, CIWEEK 5. USED WITH PERMISSION.



BY DAVID BERMAN
AND JON WELLNER

NOT A BAD DAY JOB: *Ensuring the Accuracy and Realism of TV*

When you watch Bones, The Blacklist, CSI, or any number of the many criminal and legal shows on TV these days, you rarely think, “That’s not realistic.” At least, we hope you don’t. We’re Entertainment Research Consultants (ERC), and for more than 15 years we have been the ultimate liaison between writers and business professionals. ERC ensure that scripts are factually accurate and realistic. How do we do it? And exactly who are we?



JON WELLNER AND DAVID BERMAN WITH GREGORY SCHMUNK AT CIWEEK 6. USED WITH PERMISSION.

We're David Berman and Jon Wellner. You may remember David as Assistant Coroner David Phillips on *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, and Jon as Henry Andrews, the DNA tech on the show. Yes, we're both actors, and most actors need a day job. We're bad at waiting tables, but luckily we fell into research back in 2000 when *CSI* started. No one knew *CSI* would be as successful as it is now. TV, like life, is difficult to predict. And writing dialogue for medical examiners and *CSI* shows is not easy. Hollywood scriptwriters are amazing and knowledgeable, but they can't possibly know everything—how to describe an autopsy or analyze evidence, *CSI* procedures, or legal information. And that's where we come in. Of course we don't know the answers either, but we do know who does, how to reach those folks, and how to turn their answers into TV gold.

Soon enough, writers from *CSI* moved to other shows—*Bones*, *CSI: Miami*, *Rizzoli & Isles*, *The Blacklist*, *Rosewood* and

more—and found they still needed our services. It turns out that most procedural shows on TV want to be accurate. And beyond the cops, lawyers and doctors we usually talk to, every show is in a new world each episode. If there's a death at an amusement park, we need an expert on roller coaster construction to help us describe the scene. Or maybe there's a death at a garbage dump and we have to find a garbologist. Yes, a garbologist—an expert in garbage.

Our job is to answer ANY question the writers have to help them make their script accurate and ensure that viewers don't watch a show and say, "That's ridiculous." We like to think of ourselves as the umpire in a baseball game. Hopefully you don't notice us, which allows you to focus on the game on the field.

We're not experts ourselves. We rely on professionals all over the country to assist us. For instance, our main *CSI* contacts are Dr. M. Lee Goff in Hawaii and Dr. Gregory Schmunk in Polk County, Iowa. We have

a roster of more than 300 contacts we've worked with—doctors, lawyers, police and scientists. All of these actual experts are kind enough to tell us how their jobs are done in reality to make our scripts realistic.

You'd be annoyed sitting beside us watching any of the shows we work for. "We did that," you'll hear us say as Dr. Robbins on *CSI* describes the blunt force trauma found on the victim's skull. "That's what Dr. Kuba told us," we'll note as we watch Brennan on *Bones* describe the occupational markers found on the victim's femur. But that's our sense of pride. We may not be changing the world, but we're part of the whole team, a group of hundreds of people making a TV show each week. And that's an important take-away: teamwork. We couldn't do any of this alone. We need help and people need our help. We all have to pull our weight.

We didn't know we'd be doing this when we were in college in the 1990s. David was a theology and history major at Georgetown. Jon studied TV production at Columbia College. But like many things in life, we didn't end up where we thought we would, and that's OK.

TV moves fast. We have to answer the writers' questions in 24–48 hours. We never lose sight of the fact that we're TV; we're in the entertainment business, not the education business. However, that doesn't mean we can cheat reality. The police officers, pathologists and investigators actually solving crimes and catching bad guys are the real heroes, and they hold us accountable. We get to talk to these heroes every day, and that's inspiring. If a life goal is surrounding yourself with people smarter than you, we're certainly achieving it, which is something we recommend for everyone.

People often want to know how much we pay these experts that we speak to every day. The answer is we don't. That's what's



BERMAN ON THE SET OF CSI. USED WITH PERMISSION.

so amazing. These professionals are kind enough to share their insights with us without sending an invoice. We've found an incredible aspect of human nature—we like sharing things we know. Think about it. If you know a lot about baseball

players, you'll tell your friends all their statistics and where they went to college, etc. It's the same for our experts, except instead of baseball, they're describing the decomposition process of a body found in a trunk in Las Vegas in the summer.

True, much of research is mostly about death, but it's also about fascinating parts of society: Shipwrecks, space tourism, exotic insects, computer technology; neurology; psychology... all the "ologies," really.

(Soupy, it turns out. Enjoy your lunch.)

It's not just a one-way street though. While it's often professionals helping TV, we've seen how TV can help professionals. For instance, before *CSI*, TV consisted of mostly cop shows; people didn't know much about the scientists who analyze crime scenes. *CSI* introduced a whole generation to a new study. As a result, many universities added forensic programs to their rosters, and crime labs were able to get much-needed funding. It's like the sharing economy. They help us, and by shining a light on the professions of these experts, we hope we're helping them as well.

Just a few of the things we've learned along the way:

- **Don't be afraid to ask for help.** People are more generous and empathetic than you might think. Asking kindly for help isn't a sign of weakness. It's how we accomplish our mission.
- **Foster relationships.** We work with hundreds of contacts, but it's not just business. We like to have them come to the set and visit us, and we learn about their families and lives.



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- **Tap into your ambition.** This is Hollywood. You can't sit on your couch and hope someone will call and offer a job. Work begets work.
- **Find something you love and it won't be "work."** You've probably heard this too many times to count, but it's true. We love TV and we're lucky enough to work in it. You have to take a step back and pat yourself on the back, realizing your achievements, yet you also have to keep your goals in mind and always be moving forward.
- **Find good resources.** People are smarter than the Internet. We don't just Google answers. We find real people doing real jobs. Google is a good tool, but it's just one in the toolbox.

We are so lucky, and we know it. We get to be in school every day (where we have to get an A on our reports) and learn new, amazing things. True, much of our research is mostly about death, but it's also about fascinating parts of society. Shipwrecks, space tourism, exotic insects, computer technology, neurology, psychology... all the "ologies," really.

And isn't that the goal, to be able to always learn? You may be done with school soon, thinking, "Phew, no more learning for me!" but we absolutely love it. Every day is a new challenge, which keeps life interesting and exciting. ◉

We never lose sight of the fact that we're TV; we're in the entertainment business, not the education business. However, that doesn't mean we can cheat reality.

David Berman, a Los Angeles native, attended college at Georgetown University where he graduated Magna Cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa with a double major in English and Theology. After completing his studies in Washington, he returned to Los Angeles where he has worked as a researcher and as an actor for the highly-rated TV show *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*.

Jon Wellner is originally from Wilmette, Illinois and a graduate of Columbia College in Chicago. After moving to Los Angeles in 2000, he has appeared on many television shows, most notably *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* along with David.

Berman and Jon Wellner maintain a database of over 300 professionals working in virtually all aspects of law enforcement. In addition to *CSI*, Wellner and Berman have worked as researchers on half a dozen television shows including *CSI: Miami*, *Bones*, and *Drop Dead Diva*.



BERMAN AND WELLNER WITH CAST MEMBERS ON *CSI*. USED WITH PERMISSION

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MAIN STAGE PRESENTATION BY HOWARD BERGER DURING CIWEEK 7. USED WITH PERMISSION.



BY DR. ANTHONY PAUSTIAN

13 SPEAKERS, *5 days, 3 takeaways*

Our annual Celebrate! Innovation Week (ciWeek 7) concluded last March at the Des Moines Area Community College West Des Moines Campus. Over the course of five days, 13 unique individuals descended upon the campus to share their personal stories and put their unique talents on display. The theme for ciWeek 7 was “Free to Dream.”



HOWARD BERGER SPEAKING AT CIWEEK 7. USED WITH PERMISSION.

Whether it's debunking myths, advancing digital music, chasing tornadoes, turning actors into our favorite monsters, writing best-selling novels, creating high-tech art, building confidence, advancing travel in space or in our own world, helping people fulfill their dreams, or just being "Iowa Nice," the abilities of those who shared their talent with us ran the gamut.

However, as I sat through the presentations, I couldn't help but notice a few common threads despite the wide variety of people and topics: identifying your passion, asking for help, and applying a laser-like focus.

At a very young age, Howard Berger knew he wanted to do makeup and visual effects for movies. So he knocked on the door of the great Stan Winston and told him he would work for free,

Dream and figure out what you want to do in life (determine where your passion lies).

just for the opportunity to learn. When Berger began in the field, there were 55 shops in Hollywood doing what he was learning to do. After years of being intensely focused, mastering his craft, and garnering some impressive hardware (two Emmys and an Oscar), there are now only four shops. His is considered one of, if not *the* best.

Fresh out of college, Kari Byron knew what she wanted when she knocked at the door of Jamie Hyneman at M5 Industries, begging for the opportunity to work as a free intern. After some persistence (and maybe even a little stalking), she prevailed. Her first day turned out to be the beginning of *Mythbusters* and ultimately a career in television. Kari spent a decade on the show and has turned that success into starring roles in other shows, such as *Head Rush* on the Science Channel and *Thrill Factor* on the Travel Channel.

Homer Hickam grew up in a coal-mining town in West Virginia where men typically became coal miners after high school (except for the star athletes who received college scholarships). Homer knew what he wanted to do the minute he saw Sputnik fly over his house in



HOMER HICKAM SPEAKING AT CIWEEK 7. USED WITH PERMISSION.

Most people are more than willing to help others achieve their dreams.

1957. After Homer nagged a few men who worked in the mine's machine shop to teach him to weld and work with metals, he and some of his friends began building rockets that continued to improve through repeated attempts. Their efforts ultimately won the National Science Fair, winning college scholarships for all of them. Homer went on to work as an engineer for NASA and write numerous *NY Times* #1 bestsellers. His memoir *Rocket Boys*, became the basis for the movie *October Sky*, starring a young Jake Gyllenhaal as Homer.

Dr. Reed Timmer always knew he loved weather. He was actually quite obsessed with it. As a young boy he chased storms on his bicycle, and by high school, where he loved science and math, he became fascinated with the science of storms. Once he received his driver's license, and with the support of his parents, he purchased cheap, beat-up vehicles so he could more effectively chase storms. Over time and with the help and support of others who shared his passion, those beater vehicles turned into what are now known as the Dominators, a line of armor-plated, tornado-resistant research vehicles. His passion ultimately placed him in the path of more than 250 tornadoes and in the starring role of Discovery Channel's *Storm Chasers*.



KARI BYRON ANSWERING QUESTIONS DURING CIWEEK 7. USED WITH PERMISSION.



REED TIMMER SPEAKING AT CIWEEK 7. USED WITH PERMISSION.

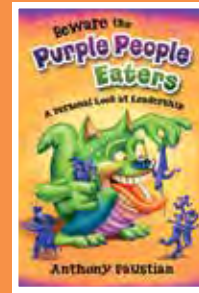
With laser-like focus, learn, practice, improve, and master your craft.

Throughout every ciWeek, patterns continue to reveal themselves. CiWeek 7 offered some clear takeaways for all who had the privilege of being there:

1. Dream and figure out what you want to do in life (determine where your passion lies).

2. Seek out people who are doing what you want to do and ask them for help. Most people are more than willing to help others achieve their dreams.
3. With laser-like focus, learn, practice, improve, and master your craft.

Through these three basic steps, you can achieve your dreams. However, “basic” doesn’t mean simple. It won’t be easy, but nothing great in life ever is. And who knows, perhaps in some future ciWeek, you could be telling your story and helping others achieve their dreams.



Dr. Anthony Paustian is the Provost for Des Moines Area Community College in West Des Moines and the author of *Imagine!, Beware the Purple People Eaters*, and his upcoming book, *A Quarter-Million Steps*.

www.dmacc.edu/west

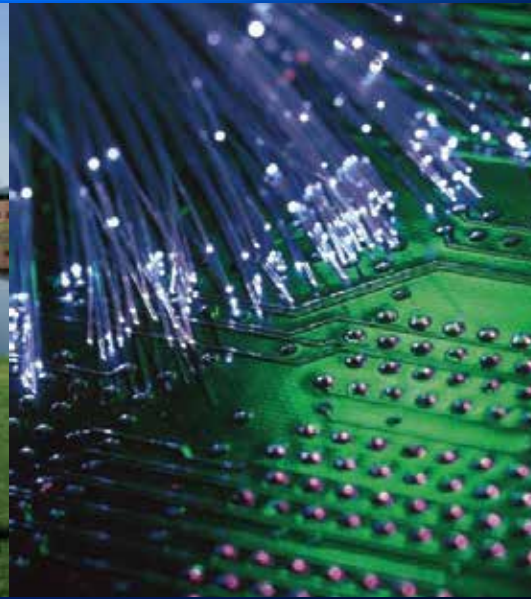
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DANNY BEYER AND HIS SIGNATURE LOOK—A BOW TIE. USED WITH PERMISSION.



BY DANNY BEYER

THE HIDDEN SIDE *of Biographies*

I can guarantee that almost everyone reading this article will eventually experience one of the following: you will be required to provide a short biography in order to be introduced for a multitude of reasons, or you will be required to read a short biography as you introduce someone. This is a common occurrence in all walks of life, including corporate meetings, nonprofit events, academic receptions and so on. A good bio can create credibility, warm up an audience, stimulate emotion, or any combination of the above.

They also tend to annoy me.

It's not that I don't like giving praise where praise is due—quite the opposite. What annoys me is that bios put the individual being recognized in a bubble. Here is a list of the awards said person has won, things accomplished, and the impact that person has made. What a bio doesn't recognize are all of the people required to help this individual achieve all of these amazing feats. No matter how great an idea is or how much it pushes the status quo, nothing great happens on its own. Everything takes a network or a team.

We've all heard founder stories, such as Mark Zuckerberg inviting a handful of friends to his Harvard dorm room in February of 2004 and how "The Facebook" launched shortly thereafter for Harvard students. Or how Steve Jobs once told his daughter that he hated how bulky and ugly CD players were. His solution? He used his team at Apple to create the device now known as the iPod. There's also the story of how a couple of ex-PayPal executives saw a need to create an easier way for professionals to connect and network online. Reid Hoffman helped develop LinkedIn to solve this need, and the business community is better because of it.

All of these stories have their founding heroes, the individuals whose bios have been read countless times at graduation ceremonies, portrayed in feature films, and used as case studies in everything from undergrad classes to doctoral theses. We tend to focus on these founders because it's easier to associate the successful outcomes with one person than it is to remember all of the individuals it took for these ideas to become a reality. However, in each founder story there are always other individuals supporting the idea, raising the bar, and moving the human race forward.

Local stories of successful teams are just as easy to come by. Take the publication you're currently reading and the event it



BEYER HOLDING HIS BOOK DURING A BOOK SIGNING. USED WITH PERMISSION.

supports—ciWeek. Dr. Anthony Paustian envisioned this concept more than seven years ago because he wanted to provide an event that would inspire the next generation to dream big, be creative and push the limits. He's told me many times that if he can inspire even one student to try and change the world, all of the time and energy he puts into the event is worth it. He will also be the first to admit that he could never pull this event off on his own.

*No matter how great
an idea is or how much
it pushes the status quo,
nothing great happens
on its own.*

His dedicated team helps in all facets of the event. It literally takes a ton of people to secure sponsorships, book speakers, organize classrooms, provide

video and sound support, manage the technology to broadcast the event to the other campuses, and so forth. This successful event brings in TED-quality speakers from all over the globe—for free—and could not be accomplished or organized by a single person. It takes a team of dedicated professionals working together on a single idea to inspire tomorrow's leaders.

I meet with talented and passionate people all the time, thanks to my profession. One of the topics I am asked about more than any other is how I was able to publish my first book, *The Ties that Bind: Networking with Style*. The perception is that I was able to write, edit and publish the book in a vacuum where I was the sole creator and producer of everything the publishing process entails. This is the first myth that needs to be dispelled.

I love to share that the idea for the book came from a leadership academy I attended. During one session, we went through an exercise to show how we all have a network of individuals who can help us move our ideas forward. At one point during the exercise, a classmate told the room she wanted to publish a manuscript she had been working on. One of the instructors quickly spoke up and said he had connections in the publishing world and could help move her idea forward.

Up to that point, I had never really thought about writing a book because I didn't know if I could write that much content, and if I did get the content written, what I would do with it. That all changed when I heard the instructor voice his interest in helping my classmate. I began writing that evening, convinced that if I did have enough content I could publish a book.

The next challenge came when I couldn't get past my first chapter. I tried multiple times to write what I thought was the correct way to begin a business book on

networking. I had read many business books and they all seemed to follow the same structure—10 to 12 chapters with 12 to 15 pages per chapter. The problem? I'm a blogger by trade and writing that much content on any single topic was extremely challenging. So difficult, in fact, that after three months I still hadn't made it through the first chapter. I couldn't get over my self-imposed limits.

I met with the owner of my publishing company to voice my frustrations. He gave me such common sense advice that I couldn't believe I hadn't thought of it earlier. Since I'm a blogger, I should write the book like a blogger. The structure of the book came together at that meeting. I tied 50 to 60 blog posts together in a cohesive manner that moved the general networking ideas forward. Three months later I had the first draft to the editors.

The rest of the process was pretty straightforward. I got the manuscript back from the editors, made corrections, and sent it back for review. We approved the cover design, took headshots, acquired quotes for the back, and sent it to the printer. By the end of the year, I had the first run of books in my hand and a book signing scheduled for the next month.

My book took a lot of effort on my part, but it also took the ideas and support of a team of mentors, professionals and friends. This is the reason books have dedications and acknowledgement sections. They require connections and a network to come into existence.

I write about and believe in networking so much because I've seen the benefits of a strong network. I also believe all ideas require a network in order to be achieved. This was made crystal clear to me during the second semester studying for my MBA. I was sitting in a marketing class listening to the professor go on and on about innovation and creativity. It's a pretty



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Danny Beyer is a passionate networker who loves connecting people and helping them realize their goals and dreams. Through his leadership experience on New View, the Chamber's Young Professional Arm, and the West Des Moines Chamber Executive Board, he organized events to help people build their brand and achieve more through networking. Beyer was named the 2013 Amy Jennings Young Professional of the Year by the Greater Des Moines Partnership for his community impact through his civic mindedness and professionalism.

www.dannybeyer.com

popular topic in most MBA classes, and while interesting, it can get a little old to hear about "the next big idea" or the "innovation cycle" for the hundredth time. Just as I was about to tune out and check Facebook, though, he said something that caught my attention and kept it the rest of the night.

He shared a story about the loss of innovation, about those ideas that never see the light of day, the ideas that get hidden, lost, or simply die. "One of the biggest threats to innovation," he explained, "is the average person's fear to share his or her ideas."

The lecture continued with the professor introducing the concept of the idea prison. The average person may have a great, world-changing idea, but fear keeps those ideas locked inside their head. We don't want to share our thoughts because we don't want our ideas to be critiqued, judged or torn apart. Instead of facing criticism, we keep our ideas locked up, safe and secure, inside our mind.

This is why having a network of trusted friends, colleagues and mentors remains so vital to the cycle of innovation. We

need that trusted circle so we can share ideas, get outside perspective, and make our ideas better. Networking is a crucial part of innovation because no idea has ever been good enough to stand on its own. Every major innovation or creative moment takes a team of individuals to analyze, change, and see it through to completion.

The world is a different place than it was yesterday because of people taking the leap and sharing their ideas. Imagine what this world would look like if Steve Jobs decided that the iPhone was just another dumb idea, or if Anthony Paustian convinced himself that ciWeek wouldn't work before even trying.

Someday you will have to create a bio, and it will be read. Go ahead and enjoy the moment, knowing that you were able to help create something great. Who knows, you may have the next big idea in your head right, and we may all be reading your story in the near future. But don't forget all the people who helped move you forward. Share your ideas and rely on your network to change the world and push the bar to the next level. ○

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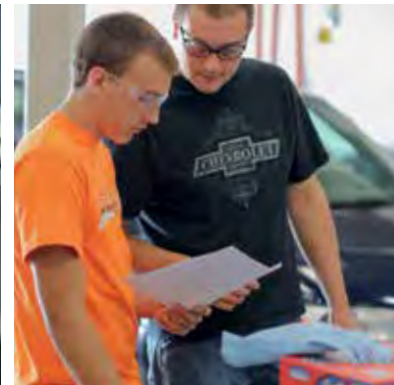
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