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ABILITY

China's Cai Cong
这个世界不该有残疾人

Nic Novicki P2
THE FILM CHALLENGE

Global Sports
ADAPTIVE DRAGON BOATS

James McEachin
ACTOR, AUTHOR, SILVER STAR & PURPLE HEART RECIPIENT

+

WORKFORCE DISCLOSURE?

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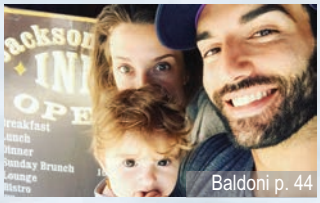

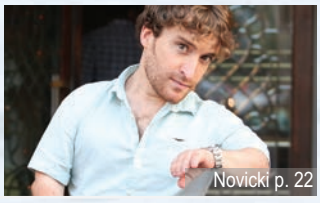

CONTENTS

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For iOS & Android

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iOS

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- For High Contrast modes, press the button with four colored squares.
- To access the 58 Language Translator, move to the next bar by pressing the button with three dots. Select the first box, with the letter "A". To translate into another language, select the language button to the right, choose your language of preference, press done, then hit the "Translate" button on the bottom left of the screen.

Android

- To hear the text, press your phone's "Option" button, then select "Start TTS"
- To get text in large font, under the "Setting" selection, press the "+" button, and to decrease font press the "-" button.
- For High Contrast modes, under the "Setting" selection, press the button with four colored squares.
- To access the 58 Language Translator, press your phone's "Option" button, and select "Translate". To translate into another language, select the language button to the right, choose your language of preference, then hit the "Translate" button to the right of the selected language.

My summer has been crazy, fun and hectic. I had to travel all over the US to do AFMX schools. I taught them in Texas, Illinois, Colorado and Washington.


Illinois MX school

They were a lot of fun, and I got to bring my bike, so I had the chance to ride with everyone at all the schools. It's always impressive to see how hard everyone works at AFMX.

I lost my interpreter at the Washington school, and couldn't find another one, so I had to call on my mom to save me :-) She said fine, but I had to "pay" her in sushi, and take her to local breweries and wineries. Not a bad deal. Ha ha.

We all had a really great time, and the scenery there is beautiful! I bid on a condo stay in Telluride, CO, at my brother's school festival, and won the silent auction. I was really looking forward to checking out the condo, Had planned on some serious mountain biking, and invited friends to come and hang out with me. But when I went there, part of the roof had caved.

I wasn't sure what had happened, so I called the police because it almost looked like a break in. Turns out it was raccoons or possibly bears! Luckily, I texted the people who I'd won the condo stay from, and they refunded my money, so it turned out all right, even though we didn't get to hang out there!

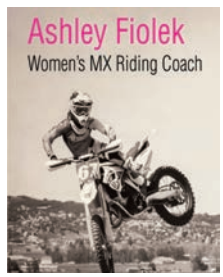

Washington MX school

Now I'm finally on my way back to my tiny house in Florida. Along the way, I went camping for a whole week with no shower or air conditioning, which was a little rough but also beautiful and relaxing. It was up in Frisco, CO, where they had a bunch of unique and exciting MTB trails.

We got to go fishing and hit some cool bars up there. At one point, we were climbing on our mountain bikes and my friend Lindsey saw a huge moose. We both freaked out! We tried to be very quiet and stealthy, and head out of there as fast as possible, before the moose could see us, which was thrilling and scary at the same time.

I doubled back to Texas again to teach some private lessons, and then started my long drive home to Florida. I've been gone for almost two months, so I'm really looking forward to floating in my mom and dad's pool on a raft with a cocktail in my hand. Until next time…

■ ABILITY



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Grinding to the American Dream

PART 2

Ugolini had used his savings to buy a shoe shinning kit. He set up his station on the corner of Seventh and Main. People would recognize him and ask where his cute little monkey was. He would always respond, "Whatta monkey? I never knowa a monkey."

One day, Becky stopped by to check on Ugolini. She was concerned about his mental health now that he was on his own. She handed him an apple. His heart rang with joy as he gently fondled it for a long, awkward, minute as salvia gathered on the corner of his mouth. He was just happy to have something that she had touched. He smiled and then took several bites of the apple, as if it were a piece of her heart that she had given.

"Oh," she surprisingly said. "I was just hoping you would polish my apple so I could put it on the shelf and eat it for breakfast."

Ugolini slowly stopped chewing then handed the half-eaten fruit back to her. "I brung ya something else," Becky shyly said. She pulled out a little doll she had made and handed it to Ugolini.

"I like to make dolls in my spare time," she proudly stated. "Maybe it'll bring ya luck."

It looked so real. The man gently fondled it for a long awkward minute as salvia gathered on the corner of his mouth. Again, he was just happy to have something that she had touched. "Heys, yousa wanna takea a stroll?" he asked, hopefully. The shoe shiner shut down shop early that day so he could spend the afternoon in the park with Becky. They walked together while she talked and he laughed. After an hour or so, she finally asked him why he was laughing. He really had no answer so he began to converse with her.

While they were on the bench enjoying a hot dog, they looked up to find the monkey walking towards them. He was wearing tailored pin-striped suit and smoking a cigar fatter than the hot dogs that Becky and Ugolini were nibbling on. Two chubby thugs flanked the furry animal on both sides as they strutted in sync. Coincidentally, they were just as fury as the monkey. Soon, they hovered over the couple.

"Whatta you wanta froma mea, ya ungrateful monkey?" the old man snarled.

The monkey just smirked and blew several cigar smoke rings in the air. The cocky beast snapped his finger paw and one of the thugs handed him a hundred dollar bill. The monkey strolled over to Ugolini and tucked the C note into his front, wrinkled, shirt pocket and then tapped him on the cheek, as if to say, "Go get yourself something nice to wear."

Ugolini jumped up and pulled out the hundred-dollar bill from his pocket, threw it down on the floor, and spit on it. The monkey went crazy, circling and shrieking, taking the disrespectful action as an affront to his "manhood". He yanked off his suit coat and hunch over with his paws in front of him, ready to pounce.

"You wanna takea a shot at old Ugolini again?" he snarled as he stood up, snarling. "Come on, Mister Biga Shot. I'ma gonna takea you down oncea anda for alla."

Ugolini wasn't playing games. He swung his arm and knocked the cigar out of the monkey's mouth. The angry animal screeched, and then charged at his former owner, knocking him over the bench. The old Italian threw the monkey off and then leaped to his feet like a spry Coon cat. He shuffled his feet and waved his fist cursing the short baboon.

"I'ma gonna rippa your tail offs anda shove it downs your throat," he threatened.

He was just about to do the Linguini body slam on the little pest, a move he had learned on the streets of Genovese as a teenage boy during scraps after a neighborhood Bocce Ball loss, but before he could pounce, he was grabbed by primate's thugs.

Before Ugolini was pommeled, Becky stood on the bench and jumped on the old man's shoulders, thinking she would gain the advantage in height — not to mention she was the high school chicken fighting champ. Unfortunately, the organ grinders' knees were shot and he crumbled, like a hillside in a California rainstorm. While Becky sat on his head, his face barely peeking through the bottom of her dress, the monkey scurried around them, making mocking noises while the henchmen chuckled.

That night, as Becky nursed Ugolini's wounds, she made him a bowl of eggplant soup. He loved it. The bowl bowled him over. It was the best soup that he ever had. He looked deep into her eyes, her face beaming, and without a second thought he kissed her. She smiled and reached over and touched the old man's face, then plucked out some stray eggplant stuck in his beard. Suddenly, a grand idea struck him; they would open their own restaurant.

Ugolini scraped up his savings from his days as an organ grinder, along with his shoe shinning cache. It wasn't much. Becky had set some money away from the dolls she had sold. They were still in need of cash, so they went to a local pawn shop. Ugolini put up his old hand organ for collateral. He was given a thirty-dollar loan. It still left them short of their restaurant dreams.

The couple walked alongside the Hudson river. "We'rea gonna geta our restaurant and it'sa gonna bea the besta place in the whole world," Ugolini chimed. "People theya gonna comea from miles to trow downa youra food."

"Yeah, sure they will, Ugolini. Sure they will," she responded, then started crying.

The old man held her in his arms tightly. "I makea everything alright. You'll see," he said. "Ugolini makea the world spina round and around."

On the other side of town, the mobsters were sitting around their bar hangout drinking booze, smoking and laughing. Chimps sat at the corner table, wrapped up in a five-card stud poker game with three other thugs. The monkey had done well for himself, lying, cheating and stealing his way to the top. He was living the American dream.

Suddenly, the door opened. The place grew quiet as they watched Ugolini shuffle in. He took off his hat and fiddled with it in his hand.

"Ia comea to speaka witha the bossa man?" he softly mumbled.

The humble organ grinder sat across from a fat Italian man, Mr. Spatero. He watched the godfather eat his meatball soup. "So, you're looking for a loan?" the godfather asked.

"Ia got mea somea biga plans," the organ grinder claimed.

Suddenly, the godfather spit a mouthful soup back into the bowl. "Holy mugatsa, since when do meatballs have bones?"

"Mya girlfriend she makea the besta soups ina the wholea wide world," Ugolini proudly stated. "Asa matter-of-fact, we a gonna open a restaurant and everybody gonna come from miles around. But, we no havea the money to doa this. It isa why I'ma herea before you."

"I'll tell you what. You bring over some of your girlfriend's soup tomorrow and if I like it, we'll see what we can do to for you," the mob boss said.

The next day Ugolini brought the soup over. The godfather was blown away by it. Without any hesitation, he put eight grand on the desk and slid it over to the old man. "I wish you success on your new business," the godfather said. "It comes with a forty percent interest rate to be paid each week. Don't be late. Bad things can happen."

Ugolini was torn as he walked out. Happy he was getting the money, but bitter it was coming from an illegal organization. He despised the mob and couldn't help but think he made a deal with the devil. He worked hard his whole life and these people just took from little people like himself. As he walked out of the hangout, he shot a

glance over at the monkey slumped at the card table, eating a breaded lamb chop and sipping on a glass of Rye whiskey. Their eyes locked for a moment. Ugolini gave a disgusted look and spit on the floor. The monkey put his arm over his other arm as he lifted his fist in the air (It was the Italian "screw you" sign).

Within a month, the restaurant was up and running. Becky had done a wonderful job decorating the place, hanging her various dolls on the walls. Word had spread about the tasty food, and soon the place was packed every night. While Becky worked in the kitchen, Ugolini would walk around taking orders and talking with the customers. He was often asked about his little monkey friend. Ugolini would shrug and say, "I thinka he's a stocka broker or something."

Every Friday, a few of the mob boys would stop by and pick up the interest money from the loan Ugolini had acquired. Although it was a hefty fee, business was good so payback wasn't a problem, but he would be indentured to thugs for a long time. Ugolini's relationship with Becky couldn't have been any better. While the pair only had one night to go out with each other at least they had money to do things like bowl, dance, or enjoy a Valentino picture show.

The monkey was falling deeper and deeper in with the mob. His tasks had become more dangerous. However, he wasn't rising in the ranks and was becoming disillusioned. They were treating him like a second-rate gutter rat. After a long day of zipping around town running numbers, the little monkey's till came up light. When the mob boss questioned him about the shortage the furry animal schlepped it off as if to say, "Forget about it." After the third time it happened, some mobsters brought Chimps into the back alley and gave him the once over, three times. The beatings were a message to ensure the monkey knew that embezzling was something the mob didn't look too kindly on, not to mention they felt it was dishonest to steal any money that had been honestly stolen.

On the other side of town, Ugolini's restaurant was beginning to have troubles of its own. A food critic gave a scathing write-up on a linguini dish that happen to contain a dark curly hair. Ugolini claimed it was just a roach, but the critic knew a greasy follicle when he saw one. It was so disgusting that the snotty critic would battle nightmares for the rest of his life.

The scathing article in the *Times* leveled Ugolini's business. The number of customers dropped to half (There was a certain amount of people who enjoyed stray hairs in their meals, mostly Asians, who found it an American delicacy). The Italian entrepreneur tried everything to boast business. He gave out two-for-one sausage coupons. He even brought in a street magician to entertain folks at their

tables, but the only thing that disappeared was the money in the cash register and the magician.

For over a year, Chimps had worked his way up the mob ladder and was now in charge of the booze runs on the east side. He ran a small crew of underlings who would hijack truck shipments, steal the barrels of hooch, and then deliver them to the speakeasies on the west side. After each successful heist, the little varmint would celebrate by tearing up the town, boozed off his rocker and sporting an entourage of flapper girls. With his cocky gangster demeanor, he would throw around tips, tucking dollar bills in people's pockets while blowing a wave a smoke in their face from the expensive cigar he puffed on. The chimp was the man about town and relished his position as a thug.

The boss wanted to expand his operations. His thugs began to step up the shake downs of local businesses. One of the businesses was Ugolini's restaurant. As a result of the stray hair in the food encounter, the old man's profits had slowed and he was barely making ends meet.

"Whatta ya mean yous nowa wanna twenty percenta of my profits?" Ugolini screamed at the chimp.

The monkey gave a half-smirk and shrugged as if to say, that's just the way it's gonna be. He then confidently puffed on his cigar, not realizing he was sucking on a sausage he had accidentally grabbed off of the table.

Ugolini reached his breaking point and charged at his old side-kick, but before he could wrap his arms around the hairy gangster, he was stopped by the monkey's gorilla apes. They hoisted Ugolini off the ground with his legs flaying, while he screamed, "Whatsa matter for you? I takea you offa the streets and a raisea you froma a little bambino monkey and this is the way youa treata me?"

Chimps felt no remorse, or at least he didn't show it. This was the big money. The American dream. No more dancing like a fool and begging for pennies to be thrown into his tin cup. He was going to be somebody.

The monkey was starting to have his own problems. He had been taking a cut of the shake down money to support his lavish lifestyle. The booze, tailored-made suits, and trollops came at a price, but he felt he had an image to keep up. He was burning the candle at both ends and was beginning to screw up on his job, missing mob meetings and important shipments.

It didn't go unnoticed. Suspicion was growing with the boss and he now had some of his boys keeping an eye on the monkey. The mob boss brought him in for a sit down and started to pepper his underling with questions, hoping to trap the furry embezzler. Chimps stay cooled. He didn't say much except for a few grunts and shrieks, and then buttered up the boss by handing him a banana.

For now, the boss was satisfied. He sternly told his employee to quit monkeying around and handle business. To make sure the little sneak understood, he had his boys slap him around a bit. Maybe it was because the boys had eaten lemons earlier, but the beat down left a sour taste in Chimp's mouth.

Ugolini had fallen months behind on his payments to the mob. The mob boss had no choice but to send some of his boys to have a chat with the old man. Chimps, now a captain, would lead the group. When he arrived at the nearly vacant restaurant, Ugolini was in the back, rolling manicottis. Becky rushed back to tell him the gangsters had entered the food joint.

The disheveled chef appeared from the back room with his arm around Becky as to ensure her of her safety. Chimps, smoking his signature cigar, approached with his paw out, signaling it was "pay up" time. Ugolini, under a lot of stress and teetering on his breaking point, huffed as he lifted his rolling pin and began waving it recklessly in the air. "Youa biga thorna in my side. Takea, takea, takea! Ugolini worka hisa fingers to the bone anda youa strolla in here with a youra little monkey paws stretching out to geta da money I makea with a my pasta anda meataballs. I raised you from just a littlea monkey nowa look ata you. Youra a biga hairy disgrace. Youra momma woulda bea ashamed of you."

The comment cut deep into Chimps. He loved his mother, who was tragically killed while riding a pony in the circus. He shrieked then ran around the restaurant jumping on tables and throwing plates. He quickly calmed down, straightened his tie and composed himself. He approached Ugolini and held out his paw for his pay off. The old man sighed then handed the monkey six meatballs, "That's alla I got for you now." The chimp examined the meatballs closely then held his hand back out. Anger and rage appeared on Ugolini's face. He huffed then grabbed two cannoli's off the counter and thrust them at the monkey. Chimps smirked as he took the rest of the payout.

The mob boss exploded when Chimps handed him four meatballs and one cannoli. "What the hell is this?" he questioned. "Where's my money?" The chimp shrugged, perplexed why the boss didn't think they got a good deal. He gestured as if to say did you want meat sauce too. "You stupido monkey!" he yelled as he slapped the confused primate. "I want you to burn that restaurant down. No money, no business. Capiche?" Chimps began to shuffle out of the room with his shoulders slumped. He looked back at the boss, hoping he'd have second thoughts. "Burn it!" the big boss bellowed.

Chimps sat on a crate down by the docks, looking over the water. His mind was racing. He was so lost that he had no idea he had been smoking a banana for the last hour. What had he become, he thought. Although he and Ugolini had fallen out and gone in different directions,

he didn't hate the man. The monkey thought back to Vienna, the little town where Ugolini had rescued him from a traveling circus; the place where he was beaten and abused and forced to do handstands on the back of an elephant to crowds that threw peanuts at him. He remembered how the old man trained him to dance and do tricks for money, teaching him to play the crowd and soak them for every cent they had. He was a good man and Chimps was starting to feel some regret, but he also knew that with the mob, business was business and there was no way out, but in a coffin. They'd never let him walk away.

It was around midnight when Ugolini finished wiping down the kitchen. Becky was supposed to pick him up, but was running a little late. Suddenly, the old man could smell smoke. He quickly checked his ovens and stoves to make sure all was turned off. He raced out to the dinner room to see the front of his store blazing in flames. Escaping with his life was all that mattered now. Without thinking, Ugolini dove through the window, falling safely onto the sidewalk. He managed to roll into the streets out of harm's way. Not far from him he heard some laughing. Looking over he saw Chimps holding a gas can with a few of his thugs. Just then Becky pulled up in a car.

Ugolini jumped to his feet and points to the monkey. "Youa! Youa stole a my dreams! Nowa I'ma gonna takea youra monkey lifea!" The monkey ripped off his coat and tie then waved the old man to come and get it. Becky screamed, "No Ugolini!"

But, it was too late. The broken restaurant owner had reached his breaking point. It was time to end it all…

for good. He charged Chimps who charged right back. Ugolini planned on using the "clothesline take down" his grandmother from the old country had taught him once, but Chimps was a step ahead of him and went low. He flipped the old man over his shoulders, into the night air until a resounding thud was heard as Ugolini hit the ground. The monkey lifted his arms in victory and pounded his chest. He seemed to signal that there was more of that if his old master wanted to continue the scrap.

Ugolini slowly climbed to his feet. He raised his hands in front of him signifying he was done as he mumbled "No maas, no maas." He reached in his pocket and revealed a shiny quarter as his agape mouth uttered, "What's that, huh? What's that?" He began to slowly twirl in his fingers. Chimps cocked his head as he watched the coin change positions. "Huh, youa likea," Ugolini teased. "Youa likea the shiny quarter." Indeed the animal did. Money was his weakness and he loved it as he felt the hypnotic effect. Suddenly, Ugolini flipped the coin in the air as the monkey's eyes followed it, the little Italian man rocked back then planted his foot into the monkey's crotch. The greedy mammal doubled over, gasping for some cool air to relieve the throbbing ball pangs. "The monkeys seea. The monkey swoona. The monkey fall downa," Ugolini sneered.

Chimps put his hands in the air as if to say that he had enough. Then, with a tear in his eye, he stretched his arms out looking for a hug. The gesture seemed to touch Ugolini. Maybe the feud was finally over. He smiled, and then raced over to give his monkey a loving squeeze. As he grabbed his furry friend, the monkey grasped the old man's ears, fell on his back, and put his

hind legs on his chest, pulling the grinder down only to flip him over. Ugolini did a double somersault then kissed the cement. Lying stunned and motionless on the sidewalk, he shook his head to clear out the fogginess. Chimp's laughing face came into focus as he hovered over the old man. Suddenly, the organ grinder got a second wind and popped up, throwing punches in the air, looking for something to hit and ready to go another round. The monkey and the man built a head of steam and a collusion ensued. They grappled and the old dog put the monkey in a bear hug. Standing by her car, Becky watched the horrific spectacle until she could take no more. She dropped her bag of popcorn and ran over to put an end to the fight. She grabbed Ugolini and the monkey and was brought into the melee until they all fell to the ground.

Becky was thrown off, while Ugolini held the flailing monkey in his hands. It was time to end the turmoil. He moved towards the burning building and without a second thought he threw the monkey into the flames. An eerie silence filled the smoky air, broken by the soft crackles of burning wood.

The mob thugs looked on in shock as they watched their four-legged leader perished in the inferno. Ugolini took one last look at his blazing restaurant and then pushed his way past the hoodlums and into the safety of the car where Becky had already made her way sitting in the front seat, tightly bundled in her coat, and weeping. They drove away somehow believing their American dream was still out there.

Life continued in New York, at full speed. Immigrants were pouring in, in search of the American Dream. Many had made their way out west where new cities were beginning to bustle. One of them was San Francisco, where dreamers had ventured out to find gold and decided to stay. On one of the corners was a lively bar that featured top notch showgirls dancing in bubbly flowing dresses. But, the big draw was when an old man would take the stage and softly play a herde gerde to the melody of an Italian song while a monkey would entertain the audience with a playful jig then run around after and collect dollar bills in his tin cup. Ugolini had kept his name figuring he was safe on the west coast. Chimps, well, he would always be Chimps. The duo had come a long way from spare change.

In a small church, Ugolini and Becky held hands at the altar. She was wearing her own homemade gown made from the fabric of the doll's clothes she used to sew. She also had set five beautifully dressed dolls in chairs next to her as her bridesmaid clan. Ugolini, standing more erect, looked dapper in his tux that he purchased instead of renting. Next to him, stood his best man Chimps in his own tailored-made suit and chewing on an unlit cigar.

"Do you take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife?" the preacher asked.

"Sure. I don't seea whya not," Ugolini responded with a smile.

"And do you take Ugolini as your lawfully wedded husband, to love and obey?" asked the preacher.

"He's my Ugolini," she bashfully stated with a soft tone.

The preacher then asked for the rings so he could bless them before they placed it on each other's fingers. Ugolini looked at Chimps who looked a little dumbfounded. He reached his little paw inside his pocket and pulled out a banana. He nervously smiled then reached in his other pocket and pulled out a bottle opener then looked at Ugolini as if to say, "I got nothing."

The old man turned beet red and got up in the monkey's face. "Whatsa matta for you, youa stupid monkey? Wheresa the ringa I gavea you?" Chimps snarled at him. "Oha, youa wanna piecea of Ugolini?" Chimps crotched down then waved him on. "Youa barking ata the wronga dog," Ugolini huffed. Chimps had seen this too often and got in his four-legged stance to take on the crazy fool.

Suddenly, Becky stepped between them to prevent any blood-letting skirmish. The two were smart enough to realize that it was not a good thing to fight on the big wedding day. They had the rest of their lives for that. At the reception Ugolini got down on one knee and with his hurdy gerdy dedicated a sweet old Italian song to Becky. The off-key ditty brought a tear to everyone's eye. This was the time when people were vulnerable, so that's why Ugolini had sent Chimps around with the cup. They made a killing that day. Ugolini would later play a fast song and dance around, all the while plastered from the wine, where he would fall on a table and pass out. Chimps would rifle through his pockets and grab what he could.

Becky continued to make cute little dolls that Ugolini sold at his new restaurant. He was proud of his talented wife and every time he looked at one of her works of arts he'd reflect back on the life-size uncanny depiction of the stuffed Chimp's doll she made. The same one she had concealed in her coat and slipped to Ugolini during the staged skirmish outside the big restaurant fire. The mobster never saw the slide of hand as Chimps slipped into her coat as Ugolini pretended to wrestle with a monkey doll then quickly heave it into the fire. The pseudo tragedy of Chimp's death made him a free monkey – able to live a new life without the fear of a mob retribution for leaving the gang. The insurance on Chimp's death would give the three of them a new start on life. And, the insurance money from the burned down restaurant was enough to open a new and better establishment. San Francisco seemed like a good place as any to live the American dream. ■ ABILITY

by Jeff Charlebois

Stand UP AND BE COUNTED

For nearly four decades, I've been a stand-up comedian. I began honing my craft in 1978, inching out into the spotlight on clubs' amateur nights. I found that people can be uncomfortable with letting go and laughing; they tend to think that you're supposed to take life seriously, so I put them at ease by walking them into my world. I made it okay to laugh with me about the quirks of having cerebral palsy. I boldly put myself in their faces to be loved, hated, criticized, ridiculed, respected, adored and/or resented.

When we comedians step out on stage with a new audience before us, we never know how we'll be received. And yet it's just like exercising any other muscle; it becomes stronger the more you work it. Now truthfully some comics will never get stronger because, well, they suck. Their "funny" muscle is forever skinny, and they should probably stop now and look at becoming an accountant or a proctologist.

I can go onstage, flex the funny—pouring sweat at times when I've got a tough audience on my hands—and nail it. On those nights, I walk offstage, feeling good about myself. Other nights, not so much.

Everyone says it takes a lot of courage to do stand-up comedy. Perhaps so, but for me, personally, there's another "stand-up" skill that has been harder to master, and that's standing up for myself in life: Having the courage to confront those who dismiss me, take advantage of me, and devalue my presence.

There's no stage or gym to work on that. This kind of stand-up muscle takes facing up to situations or people who go against my self-worth, belittle or bully me into feeling that I'm powerless, or not deserving of what I want in life, and what should rightfully be mine.

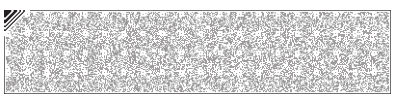
I've always had difficulty in this area, fearing anger or hurting someone's feelings. I can become passive aggressive, and beat myself up, instead of being honest, relaying how I feel, and going after what I really want. And I can assure you, being mealy mouthed in this way does not work ever.

Each time I fail to stand up for myself in life, the universe creates situations for me to try it again. At age 60, I'm challenged, more than ever, to get as good at standing up in life as I am at stand-up comedy. It is probably the most important lesson I'll ever learn.

If you read my autobiography, *I'm Walking as Straight as I Can*, you know that I was taken advantage of time and again, and paid a huge price for not developing my stand-up muscles early on. I hope that you'll forge the courage to stand up for yourself today and every day. You may be surprised how strong you become. Go on! I double dog dare ya!

Oh, and by the way, you can also have a sense of humor in standing up for yourself, as well. For example, I was once left in an airport in a locked wheelchair for a couple of hours. I couldn't walk well that particular day because I was in too much pain. I needed to use the restroom, and no matter how I tried to get someone's attention, I couldn't.

When I couldn't wait any longer, I placed my carry on in the chair, and pushed it from behind. When I returned to the gate, people were smiling. I smiled back and said, Sometimes you just have to be creative to achieve your goals. Everyone laughed. ■ ABILITY



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A QUARTER TURN

No one picks up a penny, some people stop for a dime, but everyone picks up a quarter because it still has value. A fourth, as they say in the liquor business, is 3/4 less than a whole. A quarter of a pizza is like Pac-Man if he opened his mouth twice as wide. For those of you who are not so good with math, help has arrived. President Gerald Ford signed the Metric Conversion Act in 1975, and we should be 100 percent switched over soon. Do you think people will bend over to pick up a metric quarter?

Most motorcycles are equipped with a right handgrip that twists from idle to wide-open throttle in a quarter turn. As my journey of a million miles for multiple sclerosis (MS) crosses over the quarter-million milestone, my mission is indeed at wide-open throttle, and I am certainly turning a corner in what was once just a musing thought on a long day's ride.

Reaching 250,000 miles is a notable achievement for me and my adventure that began just as a crazy idea five years ago. Starting from zero, I wanted to ride a motorcycle a million miles while raising awareness and money for MS. I wanted to travel, reach out to others and encourage them to live the best life they could, all while Chasing the Cure. Like MS itself, I didn't really know where I would end up!

MS is an autoimmune disease causing inflammation of the central nervous system. Damage to the coating surrounding the nerves in the brain and spinal cord interfere with the transmission of signals to the rest of the body, causing a wide range of symptoms.

The disease targets more women than men and is usually diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 35. There is no typical course of disease progression as symptoms and severity differ for each person. Common symptoms can include fatigue, walking difficulties, numbness, spasticity, weakness, vision problems, bladder and bowel complications, cognitive issues, depression and emotional changes.

Today we have a drawer full of medications that help slow down the amount of attacks and the disease's progression, but we do not have a way to reverse the damage that has occurred, and we do not have a cure. There is a lot of exciting research being conducted however, and I believe a cure may happen over the next decade.

Personally, I am lucky that my MS has been in check, no doubt because of the disease-modifying therapy I have been taking for 12 years and the lifestyle changes I have made. Following my passions and riding every day certainly has played a part in my treatment.

In five years, I have become a national speaker, writer and ambassador for MS, sharing my story with over 250 audiences across the US. I travel exclusively by motorcycle, and my journey has been supported with products and services from many companies who see value in what I am doing and even use me for product testing.

After all, a month on my bike equals more than a year for most riders!

I am also amazed that with your help and support and a few of my crazy ideas, we have raised over $100,000 for MS research. My first fundraiser, the 100 Saddles-Sore 1000 not only raised $6,000 but set a world record in the process. Surprisingly, no one had attempted to ride 1000 miles in 24 hours using 100 different motorcycles before!

The MS5000 was a fundraiser I created to have other riders join me in April each year, trying to document as many miles over 50 days while collecting money for MS. This event has raised $85,000 over the last five years. My riding a scooter from Boston to Chicago in 24 hours while wearing a powder blue tuxedo raised some eyebrows and $6000!

The last big ride I attempted was to set a world record documenting the most hours ridden in a single day: 28 hours, across all the US time zones all in the same day raised $7,000, and finally killed my trusty Yamaha.

Speaking of which, the faithful stallion is soon to be on display at Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum in Birmingham, AL, as a testament to the bike's durability and the amazing feats I accomplished riding the hell out of it over three short years.

I am also lucky that I have been able to secure support from corporations, small companies, readers, riders, family, friends and perfect strangers to keep my mission moving forward.

With my MS in check and a quarter of the miles digested, a million-mile goal does not seem so far away. As I write this column, I'm working on a proposal for a joint promotional event with a major corporation that may indeed bring my adventure and mission to a whole new level of exposure this fall. I also have some ideas for an exciting and crazy stunt on a chopper, so stay tuned! My first Yamaha Super Ténéré should be ready for public viewing at the world's largest motorcycle museum in Birmingham by October, and I can't wait to see the amount of national exposure it will bring to my story.

My Facebook and YouTube pages are gaining viewers, and I hope to expand my popular video posts as I continue to travel along my journey. Thank you for liking, sharing and following my adventure, as it helps me gain exposure and sponsors whose help and support will propel me the next three quarters of this journey, *Chasing the Cure*.

Regrets?
Only one. If I had only pledged a million *metric* miles, I would now be at 402,336 kilometers, 2/5ths or 40 percent of the way to a cure! ■ ABILITY

longhaulpaul.com
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photo by Feng Huan

蔡聪 这个世界不该有残疾人

Cai Cong

He has rarely been seen in public, and he is unlike other people with disabilities we have seen. He is neither angry nor bitter, and he is not filled with hatred. He is not full of self-pity, and he is not miserable. He is a humble, little man, both humorous and witty. What he experienced during his first thirty years was special, but he admits he is just an ordinary person.

As a public welfare organization advocate, Cai Cong is now a partner to a Beijing welfare group and a disabled organization; he is also the CEO of *Someone* magazine. He is a non-visual photography instructor and a program producer. He was born in 1986 in Hubei Jingzhou, and at the age of 10 he began losing his vision (his vision is now only 0.2008). In the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games he participated in a disabled video advertisement, and in 2017 he appeared on the talk show *Qi Pa Shou*.
In Chinese culture, the most popular people in society are featured on the show *Qi Pa Shuo*. Using his witty humor, Cai Cong attracted stars Ma Dong, Can Kangyong, and He Jiong, all of which gave him a standing ovation. Other top stars, like Xiaosong, praised him and stated Cai Cong was possibly one of the best guests ever to appear on the show.

His view of "the world should not have disabled people" shocked the audience, and for some time Cai Cong became the main focus and center of media discussions, to the point where media stations competed for coverage and news on him.

Call him a marvel, call him a sinner, but his popularity was due to his witty comments, humorous responses, and his interest in the rights for disabled people. It was also a response to the way he broke the sterotype of the typical disabled person and his/her image. As a person with a disabled identity, it all added to his image and made him ever more popular, but Cai Cong cannot truly feel the impact of his popularity.

“Disability is our characteristic, but not a disadvantage”

In 1996, Cai Cong was a 10-year-old boy in Hubei Shashi, and his vision worsened to 0.02.

That year, while at the Spring Festival, his father pointed to a car and asked, “Do you see the car’s license plate?” At that time, Cai Cong did not realize there was something wrong with his eyes and responded “Where? I cannot see it.” Despite how close he got to the car, he still could not see the license plate number. As a result, his father took him to the hospital for help. The diagnosis revealed that Cai Cong suffered from glaucoma.

“Such a handsome child, but he can no longer see.”

Cai Cong’s parents did not know that their child had moved from the back of the classroom to the front in an effort to see the blackboard, but still found it too difficult. But he had a good teacher, and his friends did not abandon him. They even formed a small reading group in which his friends read to him. During this period *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* by Milan Kundera, and other famous novels gave him strength. They helped his understanding that pain, loneliness, and happiness have the same value and are equally important.

“I am already like this, what is more difficult than what I am now.”

Cai Cong worked hard to study, attend school, and play with his friends and classmates. During the final exams, Cai Cong was first in the class, and he became known as “the other person’s child”, which was a compliment in that he was what all parents wanted their children to be like. His excellent academic performance increased his confidence and allowed him to start looking forward to his future.

Shanghai disabilities themed conference, Cai Cong met Nick Vujicic, Australian evangelist (center)

Despite how well he did in school, he could not complete the normal college entrance exams. Before he took the tests, his vision deteriorated even more, and the necessary papers became very unclear. He asked the staff for assistance, but the Education Examination Institute rejected this. In desperation, he decided to go to Changchun University Special Education Institute, a school that accepted blind students. Here, he met a large number of blind people, but for the first time he was told what kind of future he could have: massage. But this made him wonder—"why can the blind only work as masseuses?" There were many students at the university, and they all had different talents (like singing and dancing). This was when Cai Cong became determined to change the fate of the blind and the paths they could take in their futures.

After he left the university, he was restless. During the previous three years, he used non-visual photography training to assist the blind students to shoot from their hearts. The argument that "the blind shoot whatever" since they cannot see and cannot know what they are doing, Cai Cong believes "the feelings of the blind can also use a camera to convey beautiful scenery".

His marriage is an example of him following his heart. Many expected Cai Cong to marry someone who wasn't blind so she could take care of him, but when he found love, he did not avoid his feelings. His wife is also blind, and he wants their love to prove that the blind can pursue happiness.

Once your beliefs are firm, you are more able to accept yourself. At one time, his teacher asked, "When you are on the toilet and cannot see, how do you wipe your ass?" Cai Cong did not take the question seriously, but thought, "Do you need to see in order to wipe?" Just when he believes everything is okay, questions referring to his daughters force him to think more deeply.

On Cai Cong's desk is a picture of the three of them: himself, his wife, and their daughter. Out of love for him, Xiao Jia, his 26-year-old wife, quit her job in Jiangxi and moved to Beijing where she became a makeup artist, who is teaching the blind how to apply makeup. When they decided to have children, those around them did everything to stop it. Despite their preparations and decision to care for the child whether s/he was healthy or not, their risky behavior to abstain genetic testing drew harsh criticism.

"You two cannot see. What if the child inherits this and is also blind? Isn't that irresponsible? Aren't you afraid s/he will be embarrassed that both her parents are blind? Have you not considered your possible child's feelings?"

Others accuse him and say it is irresponsible to not consider his daughter to which Cai Cong replied, "I cannot see the picture book, then my daughter and I can listen to the book. We can also talk about movies." This reveals his frustration in realizing there will be many obstacles for them.

The birth of his child has made him firmer in his belief that life is equal and more clearly aware of what children mean to their parents. Cai Cong states, "most people think the sole use of having children is to have someone to look after them once they are old. Those children will become better than their parents (a Chinese philosophy that parents are the dragons, and children are the phoenixes—that each generation becomes more powerful than the one preceding it). I am not like that. My wife and I feel we should enjoy the life that God has given us. I love this child, not because of what she may become in the future or that she will take care of me when I am old, I love her because she is a child who is equal to every other child in the world. She is just as valuable, and no disability can change this."

"Give them 1000 answers. But there will always be 1001 questions."

Today Cai Cong has become too tired to respond to

questions. He believes that as long as everyone upholds the stereotype for people with disabilities, then nothing will change. This problem will always exist.

Not the "wonderful" from wonderful, not the "evil" from evil.

In addition to taking care of his family, Cai Cong works for the disability group promoting its rights. "Cong is our big brother. When he is here, we are not afraid of anything." When Cai Cong's name is mentioned at the office, colleagues show their support by giving him a thumbs up.

Uber was bought by "di di?" and this new company ceased providing for the blind. As a result Cai Cong and the group for disabled rights launched an adocate movement and demanded an evaluation of the transportation system. When Huawei and OPPO mobile phones were first released, there were similar problems. Cai Cong encouraged everyone to write to the networks, but to also help modify the initiative in his letters. The event was covered by the news and gained mass media attention due to the determination of Cai Cong and the groups that he led.

According to Cai Cong, much needs to be done to improve the education for the blind in China. "China's education for the blind is still in its infant stage. Special education schools still insist the only career option for the blind is to be a masseuse, and many blind students still go into the massage industry."

In his opinion, that profession is not good or bad, the problem is that the blind in China do not have the power to choose what to learn and what to become. In contrast, the employment opportunities for the blind in the United States is relatively open (ex: lawyers, teachers, programmers, etc.). Additionally, in America, visually impaired children attend ordinary schools, and they are given the opportunity to grow up just like others. Cai Cong has said that when people with disabilities are given encouragement, they are ready to enter society with confidence. Unfortunately, when they enter the real world and are faced with the social inequality and non-tolerate attitudes, they become understandably frustrated. In addition, the parents of the disabled are victims to these attitudes and may feel ashamed of their disabled children. As a result, many disabled children find it difficult to enter society, which is most likely why the disabled are never seen on the streets of China.

In an effort to change the living conditions of the disabled in China, Cai Cong reached out via radio shows and magazines. To him it was not work, it was what his heart wanted to do. He went onto *Qi Pa Shuo* in an attempt to raise awareness for the disabled, change their living environments, and teach others to treat the disabled with more respect.

Cai Cong has done all of this in an effort to raise awareness for the disabled, and it was not for personal fame. Before appearing on the lecture show *Wonderful Speech*, he refused offers from many other programs. These other shows were more about his life and an attempt to gain sympathy from the viewers, but Cai Cong wanted to educate viewers on the lives of the disabled.

Another reason to why he appeared on *Qi Pa Shou* was because he agreed with the show's values. "Over the past decade I've been concentrating on what people with disabilities can do. I would spend all day considering various theories, and the more I thought, the further I got from real people and real lives." Cai Cong has said, "*Wonderful Speech* believes that nothing is right or wrong, but is there to promote diversity".

The audience of *Qi Pa Shou* saw that Cai Cong was the first disabled person ever selected from the hundreds of thousands of applicants. During the first two rounds of the show, he surprised many through intense debate. On the program, he spoke of how he was unlucky to have a disease, but he had such a cheerful tone, many viewers were left with much to think about. After the show more learned of him, and he earned the "wonderful debut" title.

"When blind people want to be successful, it is strange or odd. When blind people deviate from the rest, they are evil or stupid." These are the opinions of most people, and according to this logic, Cai Cong should be called strange and evil. But, his illness does not infer that he is stupid or a demon; he is someone who has learned to accept himself, become engaged in disability-related work, and provided a voice to a societal group.

by Kang Chenyuan

This story is part of a series of articles published as an exclusive editorial exchange between *China Press for People with Disabilities & Spring Breeze* and *ABILITY Magazine*

Nic Novicki

THE CHALLENGE

During a conversation with *ABILITY*'s Chet Cooper, Lia Martirsyan and actress Christina Cannarella, Novicki spoke passionately about this year's Film Challenge, his origins in the entertainment industry, and why we don't see more people with disabilities in films.

...Continued from previous issue

Cannarella: What do you like better, stand-up or acting?

Novicki: I like doing everything. Sometimes it's a split focus, but I really enjoy doing multiple things, not just acting, not just stand-up, and not just being on-camera. I like being behind-camera, too. I've begun to enjoy producing and creating content almost as much as being in front of

the camera. I still make the majority of my living acting, but I love to write—there's something so gratifying when you write and create something, and you can get it made. It's like, "Wow!" I feel so proud of it. A lot of times I don't even care if I'm in it. I'm usually thinking about the shot or the location or negotiating or talking to someone about a permit, or figuring out the next day's call time.

A lot of times I act in my own projects, because sometimes I'll write for myself, and it just ends up that I'm writing for that character. My voice comes through, and I'm like, "Wait a minute, this is for me!" I was a writer for the CBS Diversity Showcase, that was a great experience for me. I wrote 55 sketches from August to February. We were writing for a cast, and I wasn't in that cast. So it forced me to write not just for me but for other people as well. It was a great creative learning curve.

Cannarella: When you were young, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Novicki: I dreamed of playing sports. Thought I'd be a big NBA player. I loved playing basketball. Enjoyed it as a kid. I knew I wasn't really going to be a professional athlete, but there was that moment when I was a little kid, throwing the football to myself, running, singing Notre Dame's fight song, like, "I'm gonna play in the NFL some day, after I play at Notre Dame, after I become the only person under four feet tall to do this." That wasn't the case. But that transition got me into the arts. I was a pretty good athlete, but once I reached 12 years old, everyone else got so much taller than me that I couldn't compete. So I got kind of down, "What am I gonna do?" I was always good at doing accents and impersonating people, so my English teacher was like, "You should sign up for this play." So I started doing plays. I was in a ton of plays in my home town of New Haven.

I went to college, and thought, "I'm done with entertainment, that was fun." At the time, I wanted to open up a Hard Rock Cafe, but it was going to be the Short Door café, and there'd be little people things everywhere, and was going to franchise this out. I had a whole crazy map planned out. "I'm going to have these crazy franchises of little people-themed restaurants." Within my first week of college, at the time, this is how I entered stand-up: I went with my girlfriend at the time to a comedy club. We walked in and everyone turn their focus on us, because this is Philadelphia, and it's kind of a tough crowd. The comic also looked at us, and he was like, "Oh, look at Willow and his wife!" He was just doggin' us, it really upset her. It didn't upset me. I was like, "I want to do this. I want to go back and tell my story." It had nothing to do with that, but I broke up with the girl that week.

So I went back the following week, and my act was complaining about her. "She's mad at me for this. I get no respect." It was kind of like a weird Rodney Dangerfield act. But I got a couple paid gigs from my first time ever doing stand-up, and I just got into the scene from there.

Cannarella: Do you have any footage from that first gig?

Novicki: No, I'm old. This was 15 years ago. It wasn't like now where you can just shoot it on an iPhone. You had to bring a dump truck and get a camera. "Let's take a picture, VHS!"

Cooper: Do you know Dylan and Ryan? They live in Philly.

Novicki: (*laughs*) Oh, yeah!

Cooper: Just checking. They're my nephews.

(laughter)

Novicki: I just was in Philly. You know Geno's Steaks?

Martirosyan: Yeah, it's just across from that other steak house.

Cooper: We've been there.

Novicki: It's the best cheesesteak in the world. I'm friends with Geno, so I did all these shout-out videos where I was like, "You want to be on camera?" I'd just go up to people and be like, and we'll come up with a funny little tag line in front or the end or different scenarios. But I did one inside Geno's, at the grill, and I'm so proud of that. I'm like, "Oh, my God, I was in Geno's! I was on the grill!"

Cooper: You didn't get burned?

Cannarella: You have that footage, right?

Novicki: No.

Cooper: So, you weren't on the grill?

Novicki: I'm a good dancer. Hey, look at me go.

(laughter)

Martirosyan: What's Novicki?

Novicki: It's Polish.

Martiroysan: Do you speak?

Novicki: No, but I've been there. I was in a play with Mark Povinelli. We were in *A Doll's House*. It's a classic Ibsen play. All the lead male characters were played by little people, because it's a show about belittling women. So we kept to the text.

Cooper: Belittle*?*

Novicki: *Belittle*. That's the play.

Martirsyan: Is that what they were trying to do?

Novicki: I don't know. You guys have stumped me here. I'm like, "Wait a minute, why did I not pay attention in English?"

Martirosyan: What's your go-to impression?

Cooper: This is great for print. Go ahead.

(laughter)

Novicki: I don't know. I do Jack Nicholson, different things. *"If I want to ask you a question, I'll ask for the answer. I just want to have a good time and relax here."* I'll usually just think of someone and then specifically work that.

Cooper: But you don't know Ryan or Dylan?

Novicki: (*laughs*) I don't do Ryan or Dylan. I'm not allowed to. I signed an NDA. Dylan was like, "Look, I'm going to sue you."

Cooper: They're both attorneys.

Novicki: I could go back and meet them and come back and give a different answer.

Cooper: Do you go back to Philly often?

Novicki: I got a scholarship, and that's why I went there. I don't go there enough.

It's a great city.

Cooper: We're from South Jersey.

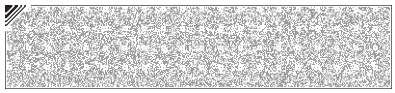
Cannarella: We? Speak for yourself.

Novicki: Are you guys involved with the Media Access Awards?

Cooper: For over twenty years we've been connected with Media Access.

Novicki: I'm finally meeting with them. The last two weeks I've never responded to more emails in my life.

Next year I'll have more help for the challenge. As it's growing, I have a tech guy, but I want to have more help. I've had people help with some stuff, but because a lot of people want to ask for things that are not part of



the rules, so I've got to figure all that out.

Cooper: Thank you for the treats. When did you start baking cookies?

Novicki: In my Keebler days.

(*laughter*)

We got a whole bunch. [*All look in the direction of Nic's suit*] I've been getting all these different crazy kinds of suits.

Cannarella: I love it.

Novicki: I've got a gold one now and a red one.

Cannarella: You had a nice one on the other night at the screening of CinemAbility.

Novicki: Yeah, that was the gold one. I'm bringing them out. I got them when I went to Singapore and Thailand, where I get them custom made.

Cannarella: We created a show called "On the Boulevard."

Novicki: Oh, really?

Cannarella: In 2008 with Dotti my character.

Novicki: We got really close. Alec Baldwin and NBC were behind it, and Reels was going to buy it. I just met with Mosaic Films, and they're interested in it now. It's a show that never ends. More of a workplace comedy about four guys, but the backdrop is the boulevard. Hence, the Broken Dreams Boulevard.

Martirosyan: Do you just walk around on the boulevard?

Novicki: Kind of. We filmed it literally right out there. I used to have a production company office right across the street. Then Marshalls came in and took us away.

Cooper: The police?

Novicki: Yeah, that, too.

Novicki: Yeah. At the bottom, there used to be all these little shops, and my executive producer had a café there, and we had a little office in the back.

Martirosyan: Oh, that's nice.

Cooper: So when you sit there in Marshalls, it's not the same?

(laughter)

Novicki: There used to be a giant warehouse in the back that we used to be able to use to film. It was like a giant sound stage in the middle of Hollywood.

Cannarella: I want to ask you about your parents. Are they living, and what do they think about what you do?

Novicki: My parents are living. They have been trying to get me to stop doing entertainment. They're supportive. They're happy with what I do. They know I like acting and stand-up. With the Challenge they've been supportive. I think now that they're seeing articles in *Variety* and other publications, they're like, "Oh, wow!" They kind of see more about it, because they just don't know. My parents are not on social media, so they can't see people excited about the Challenge. For me, as an actor, it's instant gratification, because they're like, "We just saw you on HBO!" They're finding out about the Film Challenge now. They've always been excited and happy that it's something I'm passionate about.

Cannarella: Do you have siblings? How old are they? What do they do?

Novicki: I have two brothers, both older. I'm the baby. I'm the only non-little person. It was cool. My parents were not overprotective at all about me. Yes, they were. No.

Martirosyan: Did you say the only non-little person?

Novicki: (*laughs*) I was the only little person. I'm hanging out with them this weekend, going back to the East Coast. We're close. They just have regular jobs. They work in utilities and stuff like that.

Cannarella: Where do they live, here?

Novicki: One in New York and one in Connecticut.

Cannarella: What about your wife? How did you guys meet? What does she think about all of this?

Novicki: My wife is awesome. We met at a little people convention. She was about to leave. It just wasn't for her. She wasn't having a good time. She was an actress. My best friend, who's a little person, met her, and she was like, "Yeah, I'm going to go. It's not for me." She'd never been to a little people's convention before. She was like, "I was just here to meet actors," and he was like, "My best friend Nic is an actor." So she met me. I was working on *Boardwalk Empire* at the time, so I was in New York for an extended period. We started to date and now we're married.

Cannarella: Where'd you take her?

Novicki: To get sushi in Greenwich Village.

Martirosyan: Just read on NPR about the writers' strike, not spending money on things like sushi.

Novicki: Yeah. And then they all got sushi.

(laughter)

Cooper: In your Challenge, one of the things you mentioned was to be sure not to have any logos, etc. How detailed was that? We were looking at some of the videos, and there was a guy who was in a motocross outfit, and he had a bunch of logos, because that's what motocross clothing does. How do you deal with that?

Novicki: That ends up being a factor for our winners. But, in general, I try to put people through a professional filmmaking course, in a sense. If you want to own your own content, you can't put Nike on stuff, because you need Nike's permission. That's why I say the content has to be stuff that would be able to air on network TV, no explicits, because I want to make this welcoming for sponsors and get more sponsors, which I've been able to do. So obviously it's something to be sensitive about.

Martirosyan: So you were double-dinged.

Cooper: We can get permission. We noticed after the fact that we had logos in ours, but we know the people.

Novicki: And that's the thing. It becomes more of an issue when it's front and center, and looks like an Adidas commercial.

Cooper: Oh, so you did see our film?

(*laughter*)

Novicki: Yeah.

Cannarella: Because you are dealing with teams with all abilities on them, it does take more time, in my experience, working with people with disabilities, to have the content created for film, just the logistics of things. We have such a short amount of time.

Novicki: 55 hours.

Cannarella: I know you said there were some people who didn't get their films in on time or get them done.

Novicki: Everyone needs to learn how to work on deadline.

Cannarella: Absolutely.

Novicki: The biggest problem is, we're trying to get people to reach a professional level. There's no CBS to say, "Hey, sorry, we're going to let you come for four days."

You have one hour to film. And everyone can accommodate. It becomes a planning issue. You start writing too long. In your next film, when you get cut off, and you're not allowed to be in this film, then in your next film, you're like, "OK, I know I'm going to be done with my writing a little earlier, and if my actor is in a chair, it's going to take him two hours to do this scene," you've got to build that into your schedule. It's all part of the process. And we've had films turned in on time with the entire cast, everybody deaf. They've got to subtitle completely. Now we're offering subtitles. When I need to make exceptions, I will, but as a whole, I think that, as myself being a little person, sometimes we play our cards with disabilities, where I'm like, "Sorry! Couldn't reach that over there, that's why I didn't get it." You learn how to do that. But I think with people with disabilities, you need to—

Cooper: You played the reach card?

Novicki: Yeah, the reach card.

Cannarella: Is that why you wouldn't turn the light on?

Novicki: Exactly.

Cannarella: But, you're right. We've had a conversation before about what is it exactly—why is the entertainment industry not employing people with disabilities as much as it should be? Between 17 and 20 percent of our population has some sort of disability. That is absolutely not represented in the industry. Why is that?

Novicki: I'll be 100 percent honest. Some of it is because we don't have the experience. As somebody who's been a comedian for many years, I put the work and the time in. We need more programs so people with disabilities can enter the party, get more experience. But it becomes an experience issue ultimately. That's why there's not a lot of writers or producers with disabilities, because you can't just go into NBC, CBS or Fox, and say, "I'm going to be the star of a show," or the writer if you've never written anything.

Cooper: If you were to be 75 percent honest, what would your answer be?

(*laughter*)

Novicki: Because the times are changing and they're getting closer, but they're not there yet. We're seeing things like *Speechless* come on. We're seeing changes in the industry. CBS is hosting panels, they're sponsoring the Film Challenge. People are trying to include us, but it's not just up to the studios and the networks, it's up to us, creating our own content and saying if you're not stepping up to the plate, too, then it's not the fault of others.

Cannarella: You create an opportunity. That's what I feel being in the industry has not been giving to people with disabilities. So that's one reason why we wanted to interview you as well, because you've created an opportunity for people to do this. It's a platform. People with disabilties experience what it's like to do a film in front of a live camera. It's not as crazy as when you get to work on a set.

Novicki: Yeah. What's cool is, you get to see all these stories being told. I'm so proud of the films that have been made over the course of the Film Challenge over the last four years—amazing, beautiful stories that are interesting, funny, and touching. I like to look at it like the disabilities add another layer. It doesn't have to be in the storyline, but it's more interesting when it's somebody who's deaf, someone in a wheelchair, someone with cerebral palsy, or a little person doing something that's not related to that issue. Since the nature of the Film Challenge of each team is to have one person with a disability in front of or behind the camera, the stories are unique. You can tell this is not somebody without disabilities trying to put people with disabilities in a box and say, "This is how they react." These are usually stories that are organic to people with disabilities.

Cooper: But in the call sheet, you had some requirements. For example, they had to have hats.

Novicki: Yeah. Why I think there's not a lot of content for people with disabilities are the deadlines. Several people from the Film Challenge this year who have been in the business for a long time thanked me because they really appreciated the process and felt like they were in control. They'd been wanting to do something for a while, but I'm like, "Look, you can't talk about it. Just sign up for the Challenge and do it. It's got to be done in this time period." We give a prompt where everyone gets the same genre, whether it be romantic comedy or drama, and the films all have to be three to five minutes, follow a certain theme, and they have to include little props which don't have to be in the story line, they just have to be in the film, like, two out of five things. Just so we know it was done that weekend and not 10 years ago.

Cooper: You had a kitchen, a hat—

Cannarella: —a living room—

Cooper: —a dead, stinky fish, which I thought was interesting.

Novicki: I've had people try to bribe me. People are giving me cigars and stuff, 'cause I like smoking cigars.

Martirosyan: You went to Cuba. Tell us about that.

Novicki: Personally, I love traveling. That's my favorite thing. I've been lucky enough to travel all over the world to act and do stand-up. But when I'm not working, that's what I want to do. My wife is the same way. So we went to Thailand for our honeymoon last year, and this year we wanted to go to Cuba before it becomes—before

Starbuck's comes in. So we went, and one of the best things about the Film Challenge is I can be anywhere in the world and find people with disabilities who are interested. So I contacted the Film Festival and said, "This is my namesake. I founded this Disability Film Challenge. I'm looking at possibly talking with you guys and screening some of our films." Because film festivals all around the world have been screening our films.

So I get an email back and they say, "Oh, we can't," because it's government, and it's still a communist country, so it was going to be tough for them to screen our films. But they connected me with a tetraplegic filmmaker, so I had a meeting with him, and he wanted to enter the Challenge. Unfortunately for him, it became a little challenging, though.

Cooper: The Challenge was too big of a challenge?

Novicki: Yeah. The internet didn't work properly, and then he needed a grant to pay people.

Cannarella: Wow!

Cooper: Do you think he'll be able to do something next year?

Novicki: The problem is the internet isn't fast enough. It would have to give him an extension, and it just became too difficult.

Cooper: Telecommunications, I think, is one of the first things that we're going to help with in Cuba.

Novicki: It's not there. But we loved it.

Cooper: Especially if you like old cars.

Novicki: And cigars.

Cannarella: How did the collaboration with Easterseals occur?

Novicki: I know Judd Apatow from comedy. We're not friends, but we'll see each other and talk. I was telling him about the Film Challenge, and he put me in touch with his head of development, Josh Church, and Josh connected me with CK&D, which is a social cause marketing company. They represent Easterseals, and they were like, "This is a perfect fit." So, last year, they set up a meeting with Easterseals Southern California. Easterseals' national office was helping market by sending out retweets from last year's Challenge. This year, we had a formal meeting, and we decided it was the right fit. The Challenge had grown a lot, but they saw where I wanted to go with it, and they were able to help bring it to the next level through their marketing team and by helping

get more advertising. It was amazing. Easterseals Southern California helped me bring on more sponsors, widen the net for people with disabilities, too, because they offer so many amazing programs and services for people with disabilities. So they were able to get it in front of a lot more people with disabilities who weren't necessarily just actors or people in front of the camera.

I always tell people, too, "You don't have to be a professional." And if you watch all the films, there's definitely varying levels of filmmakers. Some are shot with less expensive cameras, and there are drones, technocranes and actors, as well as others who were maybe shot on an iPhone. But, ultimately, a story, and if it's a good story, it doesn't really matter. If it's heartwarming, if it's funny, it doesn't matter what you shoot on.

Cooper: We shot ours on a landline.

(laughter)

Cannarella: One of the things we're doing is "Find Your Calling" workshops to teach people behind the scenes all the different jobs in the industry.

Novicki: I do these workshops. I'm in the Producers Guild, too, and my main asset as a producer is that I'm good at bringing people together. That's how I got into producing. I can get the locations. I'm not necessarily going to bring in the money, but I can bring in a lot of different camera people, I can get equipment cheaper, and I know how to use my own resources to put a crew together, even when there's no money. Sending out emails, typing up a release on what the film is about and all the people who are attached. And sometimes if I was the biggest person or part of it, I would use myself. If there was a bigger actor or bigger producer who was connected, I would start with them and the different projects they're associated with and tell people, "We just need you for a couple hours. Whether it's not paid, I guarantee you I'll get you paid on another job." I'm good at doing that because I'll hear that this guy's looking for a camera guy. "Hey, Matt, you did a great job. You helped me. Matt would be great." And now Matt's working. It's always trading. And then Matt wants to hire me for something.

It's putting yourself out there. Even people just announcing themselves, "Hey, I'm an actor. I'm a writer. I'm a director. I want to enter this Challenge. I'm looking for help." Some people may end up only able to give you a location. Sometimes you say, "Hey, who wants to make me dinner?" It's not even for the Challenge, but I'd just like something for dinner. People have these resources.

Cannarella: You're right. It is. We're all connected. It's about sharing resources and helping each other on our journeys however we can.

Novicki: And it's a learning process. You get better at camera work. I've done these workshops at YouTube and the Producers Guild of America, teaching more skills, including editing skills. It's trial and error. You can't learn everything in a day. You just keep learning.

Cannarella: So for people who are interested, do you usually do the Challenge in the springtime?

Novicki: It's in the spring every year. We'll usually announce our big mentor in January on the website [below]. I try to figure out what the genre is and what I think about the genre or whoever the big mentor is, and from there we announce everything.

Cannarella: It'll be interesting. Last year you had a mystery. The year before that was a romantic comedy. What was the first year?

Novicki: It was dramedy. This becomes like a special event for some people every year, where they're looking forward to the announcement, the families of people with disabilities say. I'll start getting emails in December, "Just checking in to see." And all throughout the year I'll get people interested, they don't realize it's just once a year. It'd be impossible for me to do this more than once a year, not just the workload, which would be crazy, but the amount—including all the submissions would be like a split focus.

The other main thing about the Challenge is an awareness campaign, which I started two years ago. Everybody has two weeks to come up with the most views, likes, and shares for their films. It used to be just on YouTube, but now it's on Facebook too. Some of these movies are like viral videos. Since Thursday, when it started and only four days later, films have over 16,000 views, 600 shares.

Cooper: It's the same guy viewing it over and over.

Novicki: (*laughs*) We're uploading all the films, so I can go in and look at all the analytics. "I know what you're doing!" But that's the whole thing for the Challenge. It's putting yourself out there and saying, "Hey, I'm an actor." And it's showing disability. You're sharing with all your friends, all your colleagues. We've had a lot of jobs come out of the Challenge, both in front of and behind the camera, also during the awareness campaign. Sending the films all out, and somebody will be like, "Wow, that actor was really good in that one scene," or "This is a pretty good storyline," and they'll request a spec script from the people, or the real one. Numerous TV shows, guest stars—it's been really cool. ■ ABILITY

disabilityfilmchallenge.com
nicnovicki.com

Showering on Two Legs: *Luxury* or *Necessity*?

"Trying to shower safely is the single worst part of my day, every day." Frank Jones, a motorcycle mechanic who had one leg amputated in 2009 as a result of complications due to a 1993 motorcycle accident, has managed quite well in working around living without the lower half of his right leg. He has run several businesses, rides motorcycles and is an expert in troubleshooting mechanical problems in all types of vehicles. One activity he's never adjusted to is taking a shower safely. Not a fan of using a shower seat, Frank gets into the shower by sitting on the edge of the bathroom sink, placing his intact left leg into the shower, and pushing himself up into a standing position. During that transition he is off balance and unsafe. Two decades of showering this way put intense stress on and caused damage to his left hip joint, not to mention the injuries he sustained by falling numerous times in the shower.

Enter 23-year Navy veteran Michael Simonetti, or "Simo," another avid motorcycle enthusiast. As a way to explore ways to help other veterans after his retirement from the military, Simo enrolled in the Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling program at San Diego State University and received the Certificate in Rehabilitation Technology. The Certificate is a collaboration between the Department of Administration, Rehabilitation, and Postsecondary Education (ARPE) and the College of Engineering. Simo's background in art, his mechanical abilities honed in the Navy and his innate creativity and desire to help others were a perfect match for pursuing the Certificate as an area of specialization in the masters degree program.

For his initial project in the Certificate program, Simo talked with Frank about how he might benefit from the use of assistive technology. They came up with a number of concerns to explore, and since Frank was willing, they started with an assessment. The Matching Person and Technology (MPT) assessment (Scherer, 2005) is a good fit for rehabilitation counselors to determine if an assistive technology device is likely to work for an individual. The MPT uses a "person-centered approach" placing the AT user as the driver of the process. Simo learned quickly that Frank was definitely in charge of determining the best possible solution. Anything had to be better than what he was currently doing, but it had to be a resolution he was comfortable with, provided total stability and, most importantly, would be easy to use. Together they explored what might be possible by researching solutions that had worked for others.

Determining that nothing suitable was available, they got their first inspiration from a quad cane, which has

four "toes" for balance. Simo and Frank then developed a prototype for a "shower foot" prosthetic providing the same non-slip stability and could be attached and detached easily. The more they worked with it, the more excited they became with the possibilities. Completing the course project under the direction of engineering professor Dr. Andrew Szeto, Simo and Frank considered the next steps for turning the prototype into a viable product. Simo then approached his academic advisor, Dr. Caren Sax, for advice on how to take the project to the next level. Simo and Dr. Sax met with SDSU's Lavin Entrepreneurial Business Center's Executive Director, Dr. Alex DeNoble, who opened the door to apply for the Zahn Innovation Platform Launchpad (ZIP) whose mission is to help SDSU students, faculty and staff launch startups. Simo applied and was accepted, beginning his steep learning curve regarding bringing a product to market and all that's involved with getting it to that point.

Fifteen months later, the latest all stainless steel prototype, now with five toes for added stability, will stand up to the shower environment and ensure solid support for the user. They applied for and were granted a patent for the device and are continuing their research by talking to other amputees for their feedback. The other exciting development came in the design of the "lightning disconnect" enabling the user to connect and disconnect the "shower safe base foot" quickly and without the use of any other tools. Adapted from hardware used on helicopter artillery Simo remembered from his time in the Navy, the new disconnect could have a variety of uses, including a way for triathletes to quickly switch out their prosthetic legs for biking, swimming and running.

Simo and Dr. Sax recently presented the device at the RESNA Conference in New Orleans where they received many compliments as well as some constructive feedback. The possibilities are exciting. With a population of more than 1.5 million amputees in the US, the largest proportion being lower limb amputees, the shower foot can help many individuals who want to stand on two feet again to shower. The device is simple, solid and safe, providing a low-tech solution in a high-tech world. Simo and Frank are interested in getting the shower foot to as many people as possible for the lowest price to ensure all who would like the device can afford to buy it. They are in the process of getting FDA approval and would love the Veterans Administration to make it available for veterans. ■ ABILITY

by Caren L Sax, EdD, CRC

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Shower Safe Base Foot: jsdesignindustries.com

SPORT

FOR COMMUNITY

For the hundredth time, she wrapped her hands tightly around the barbell and breathed in deeply. She pushed the weight up over the rack and waited for the signal from the judge. For a moment, she blocked out every other thought and concentrated on only one task: bringing the weight down onto her chest and powerfully pressing it back up again. Adeline Dumapong was preparing to become a champion.

In those few seconds on the bench, Dumapong was no longer the 6-year-old from a small village in the land-locked Ifugao province in the Philippines whose parents had carried up mountains when polio paralyzed her


SPORT
COMMUNITY
HOIST

Valeria Filiaeva of Belarus (back row, right) and Deepak KC of Sri Lanka (front row, right) were mentored at Spaulding Rehabilitation Network in Boston during the 2016 GSMP

from the waist down. She wasn't the girl who was sent to an institution for kids with disabilities in far-away Manila to be given a chance at life.

In August 1997, Dumapong was a woman competing in her first powerlifting competition. She had discovered the sport a few months earlier at the age of 23, and was seeking her next step after finishing her bachelor's degree in computer secretarial administration. On that bench, she had fallen in love. The feeling of raw strength, transmitting from her arms and chest, moved through every part of her body.

In this first competition, Dumapong competed against lifters without disabilities, as was the norm for her early career. To make matters more difficult for herself, she refused her coach's advice to wear a bench shirt, like many of the other lifters, to aid her lift. He stood by, frustrated, telling her that if she lost it would be her own fault for being stubborn.

"I was full of self-doubt," Dumapong remembers. "But, I took on the challenge, concentrated on my lifts, and blocked everything else out. Thank God, I won."

Like Dumapong, there are athletes and adaptive sports leaders around the world who use the power of sport every day to make tremendous impacts in their societies, both at and away from the medals podium. In Ecuador, there is a National Paralympic Committee president who saw the devastation an earthquake ravaged in his country's rural provinces and sprung to action. In Belarus, a wheelchair tennis coach fights for her athletes to shine alongside the country's other Paralympic hopefuls. Only a few hours south of Dumapong in Cebu, Philippines, a disability rights advocate stands on a pier, organizing his country's first adaptive and cross-disability dragon boat team, and helps guide them to gold in their first international competition.

The now 44-year-old Dumapong is the greatest Paralympic powerlifter in Filipino history—the country's first-ever Paralympic medalist, winning bronze in powerlifting at the 2000 Sydney Games—and is preparing to represent her country for a sixth time at Tokyo 2020. A mentor and role model to thousands of girls in the Philippines, she wants to pave the way for those who will carry on her legacy, showing that disability doesn't stop a person from scaling mountains.

"Sport was my escape and my refuge when life was hard," Dumapong says. "It is the way I discovered I can do anything."

For Dumapong and the others, what ties them together is not only their commitment to using sport to promote inclusion and empower people with disabilities. It is also their participation in one of the United States' most

unique public diplomacy initiatives: the U.S. Department of State's Global Sports Mentoring Program (GSMP).

Using Sports Diplomacy to Touch the World

Launched in 2012, the GSMP annually brings together leading disability rights and women's equality advocates, athletes, administrators, and innovators from around the world on a five-week exchange program through the State Department's Sports Diplomacy division. During its first four editions, the initiative focused primarily on women's empowerment with espnW as a private sector partner. In 2016, the State Department added a separate disability sport-focused mentorship component, Sport for Community, thanks in part to the advocacy of Ann Cody, a three-time U.S. Paralympian and current senior foreign affairs officer in the Office for International Disability Rights at the State Department.

"Through Sport for Community, international participants learn about ongoing efforts by the United States to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities," Cody says, "in sport and all areas of life, and promote the benefits of laws like the Americans with Disabilities Act globally."

During the program, applicants recruited by U.S. embassies around the world travel to the United States, where they spend one week absorbing curriculum focused around the topic of sport for social change from The University of Tennessee's Center for Sport, Peace, and Society, the cooperative agreement partner for the initiative, and local partners in Washington DC. These "emerging leaders," as they are called, are then partnered with mentors from the country's top disability sport organizations for three weeks. At these sites, they work on creating a comprehensive action plan for enacting sport-based social change in their local communities. In the past two years, the organizations involved in the program have included the U.S. Olympic Committee, Lakeshore Foundation, Spaulding Rehabilitation Network, the Shirley Ryan Ability Lab, Ability360 Sports and Fitness Center, among others. The program concludes back in the U.S. capital, where the international leaders present their plans to representatives from the State Department.

"Assembling some of the brightest minds and creative spirits in DC to embark on the process of creating cost-effective, culturally relevant action plans is like watching magic unfold in real-time," says Sarah Hillyer, Ph.D., director of The Center for Sport, Peace, and Society. "The beauty of these magical moments is that emerging leaders return to their home communities equipped and empowered to implement programs and policies that are changing the lives of some of the most vulnerable populations in the world."

Dumapong participated in the inaugural program in

Credit: US Dept. of State in cooperation with Univ. of TN Center for Sport, Peace & Society

Bayron Lopez met Ann Cody in 1998 shortly after his amputation.

2016, where she was mentored by executives at Lakeshore Foundation in Birmingham, Alabama. Others, including Valeria Filiaeva who was mentored at Spaulding Rehabilitation Network in Boston, traveled from as far as Sri Lanka, Ethiopia and Kosovo to spend three weeks at mentor sites across the United States.

"The program is still inspiring me one year later," says Filiaeva, the Belarusian wheelchair tennis coach. "When hope was almost gone, and I thought we'd lost all support, the GSMP pushed me to believe like crazy that I could do this, and that passed onto my students, the leaders at the federation, and the government, who finally took us seriously."

Filiaeva arrived to the program with one key goal in mind: earning official status for wheelchair tennis from the Belarusian government. This status would allow her to develop athletes to compete in International Tennis Federation (ITF) tournaments and, hopefully, one day represent Belarus in the Paralympics.

For years, Filiaeva had taught students on whatever courts she could find. She downloaded YouTube videos and translated articles from wheelchair tennis websites. Balancing work as a tennis commentator for Belarusian television, and a producer for Stringershub, she volunteered to organize wheelchair tennis for the Belarusian Tennis Federation.

Last June, when she returned home from the GSMP, Filiaeva immediately set to work. With the national federation's support, she forged a partnership with a local training center for adaptive athletes and won a development grant from the ITF, which she will use to organize a summer tennis camp for six to eight international players, and eight of her own, in preparation for ITF Futures Series tournaments in Poland and Lithuania.

In February, Filiaeva and the Belarusian federation received even better news: the official government recognition they'd sought since the days of public courts and YouTube videos. The new status gave their players access to the Belarus Tennis Academy courts and Paralympic Republic Center, a state-of-the-art facility where the country's Paralympics and Deaflympics athletes train. The center also provides salaries for two coaches and support for two annual tournaments, while the federation will provide support for two other tournaments, allowing Filiaeva's players the chance to participate in four international tournaments a year.

"It was like a dream come true," Filiaeva says. "I feel like I am the mother of wheelchair tennis in Belarus."

Overcoming Obstacles Along the Way

Of the 31 international leaders who have participated in the 2016 and 2017 classes of the GSMP, the majority,

Lopez is now president of the Ecuador Paralympic Committee.

like Dumapong and Filiaeva, come from developing countries. Through U.S. embassies and consulates around the world, the U.S. Department of State aims to select leaders who are not only powerful advocates and influencers, but who can use the GSMP experience to further impact thousands of lives, according to Trina Bolton, a program officer with the State Department's Sports Diplomacy division.

"When people with disabilities have an opportunity to get in on the game—to compete in a race, score a goal, manage a team, or run a league—these accomplishments serve as leapfrog proof that everyone can contribute in sports, and in turn, society," Bolton says. "Through sports, people from all walks of life—including people with disabilities—experience increased independence, self-confidence, and health. When everyone can reach their potential and contribute fully to society, it is a win-win for the United States and other countries, creating a more stable and secure world."

Bayron Lopez, the president of the Ecuador Paralympic Committee, had his leg amputated following a motorcycle accident as a teenager. In the months after his accident, he felt isolated and forgotten by the rest of society—common feelings, he says, for people with disabilities in Ecuador, especially those in rural and provincial communities.

"I met Ann Cody in 1998, two years after my accident, when she came to talk about inclusive sports in Ecuador," Lopez says. "I was 20 years old, and she motivated all of us to move forward through sports, and to fight for the rights of people with disabilities."

An accomplished wheelchair racer who has won more than 300 medals over the past decade, Lopez's medals, which he prominently displays in his living room, are only a reminder of the thousands in his country who have never had the chance to strap into a racing chair, hit a volleyball, or score a basket. After running his own sports club in his hometown, El Empalme, he ran for and won the presidency of his Paralympic committee (Lopez was re-elected through Tokyo 2020 last year).

During the program, Lopez worked with Mark Lucas, executive director of the U.S. Association of Blind Athletes. Two months prior to starting the GSMP, in April 2016, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake rattled Ecuador, with reports of more than 650 people dead and 16,600 injured. The Esmeraldas and Manabí provinces—two of the worst-affected regions—are home to thousands of people with disabilities, and Lopez instinctually thought of how these already inaccessible communities would be left even more ravaged by the damage. He told Lucas he wanted to do something to bring back home. The name of his plan the men created together suits the mission: *No Fear. No Limits. Sports for All.*

Once he arrived back at home, Lopez took long rides to the provinces, using his platform as the Paralympic committee president to meet with leaders to see how he could help them. He organized workshops to train coaches on inclusive sports activities, and held amputee soccer and sitting volleyball clinics. In Quito, he challenged Paralympic athletes to step up and be role models. Cristian Calderon, a director within the Ministry of Sport who played professional soccer for national champions El Nacional (1992, 1996) and Olmedo (2000), joined Lopez in Esmeraldas to get the community out to participate in his sports events.

Despite his determination, there were many doors that closed in Lopez's face during the early days. There were no-shows to his events, and leaders who challenged the role sport could play in revitalizing a community with such limited resources.

"Many of the schools wouldn't release their students because the teachers didn't believe sport could do anything to help them," Lopez recalls. "I'd speak in the villages. I was in the newspaper and on the radio. All my activities were paid for. And many people still didn't attend."

These challenges are not unique for alumni of the GSMP. On top of societal doubts about the impact of sport in the lives of people with disabilities, there are shifting government priorities, fundraising challenges, and other long-standing issues with accessibility and grassroots sports development. Leaders like Lopez often find themselves at a crux.

In Brazil, another Sport for Community alumnus, Anderson Gama, struggled to convince his bosses to invest in grassroots sport and not in high-performance sports. In Nepal, inaccessibility and unreliable telecommunications systems made it difficult for Deepak KC to organize meetings with potential partners. In Ethiopia, limited funding, a high demand for few adequate sports facilities, and the absence of Deaf sports professionals combined to frustrate Alemayehu Teferi.

Regardless, these leaders all persevered. Lopez, who was at the point of abstaining from running for re-election with the Paralympic committee to focus entirely on grassroots work, chose to be patient and maximize the support he had with the country's disability sports federations, the U.S. Embassy, and Ministry of Sports. In November, the State Department funded a trip for Lucas to travel to the provinces with Lopez, where they spent three days running workshops and clinics for more than 375 people.

"For years as the president of the NPC, I was on one side of the desk," Lopez says. "The GSMP made me realize I wanted to be a president not only working with elite athletes, but a president who is in the towns, the villages, and in the community supporting the thousands of people who want to be included."

From One to Many

Dumapong no longer spends most her time in the gym. As a board member with both the Philippine Sports Association for the Differently-Abled (PHILSPADA) and the Philippine Paralympic Committee, and a member of the women's committee of the Asian Paralympic Committee, she is focused on building for the future. In Rio, after 16 years, the country added its second Paralympic medalist as Josephine Medina won bronze singled Class 8 in table tennis. She feels the time is right to identify leaders who will carry on her legacy of empowerment.

"Before going on the program, sport was always about me trying to reach my goals and improve my life," Dumapong says. "It was Adeline first. Then I reached out to the community as part of my obligation as an athlete. After the program, I realized, 'Come on Adeline, you can do something bigger and better for your country.'"

One of Dumapong's main activities has been bridging the gap between Paralympic athletes, coaches, and administrators. She has organized an athlete's council and a women's group within the NPC for the first time to help voice the concerns of athletes. In January, she led a two-day soft skills training seminar for PHILSPADA with 82 athletes and coaches in attendance. At the seminar, which she called "Together We Can!", attendees learned about how personal accountability, conflict resolution, clear communication, and other leadership skills contribute to a more unified Philippines delegation.

"The impact results speak volumes," Hillyer says. "The result of one emerging leader returning home is that thousands are being reached. Beyond the individual impact, we're witnessing a movement of leaders working closely together to bring about change on a larger and more systematic, sustainable scale."

Dumapong now plans to organize Paralympic sports festivals in three major cities—Metro Manila, Baguio City, and Cebu—where she'll partner with schools and different civic organizations so people can learn about adaptive sports and try wheelchair basketball, goalball, powerlifting, and other Paralympic sports. She hopes to rely on the support of the Philippine Sports Commission and U.S. Embassy to make these festivals a reality.

"For me, programs like the GSMP are very important because they open your mind to the power of collective action," Dumapong says. "When you touch one person and they bring this lesson to the community, and community buys into it, the fight becomes one that everyone fights for. It's not about one person. That is when real progress happens." ■ ABILITY

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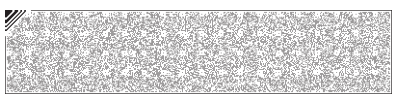
by Brian Canever



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THE WORKPLACE DISCLOSURE DILEMMA

Whether or not to disclose a disability at work is an important and potentially stressful decision. Decisions about disclosure and the responses of supervisors and coworkers to this information, can significantly influence employees' workplace experiences. Concern about possible mistreatment in the workplace is a primary reason why individuals with disabilities are reluctant to disclose. Disclosure decisions may be especially difficult for individuals whose physical or mental health conditions are nonvisible or concealable, who may determine that it is better to "pass" as nondisabled, than to risk adverse treatment by supervisors and peers in response to a known disability. However, even individuals whose disabilities are apparent (such as people who use wheelchairs or other mobility aids), often find that they need to consider when, how, how much, and with whom to share information about their disability.

Types of Disclosure

Under The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a job seeker or employee must disclose a disability when requesting a reasonable accommodation for a job interview, or in order to perform essential job functions. Initially, the individual need only advise that an accommodation is requested due to a medical or health issue; this begins an interactive dialogue with the employer. In some instances, more specific information may be needed in order for the employer to determine a reasonable, effective, accommodation. Of course, less formal types of disclosure also occur, such as when a person tells trusted colleagues about their disability while developing workplace friendships.

Disclosure Decisions: Pros and Cons

Disclosing a disability as part of requesting an accommodation can be beneficial. If a disability negatively impacts one's ability to perform essential job tasks, an effective accommodation can help the person to retain the job. However, disclosure can also have drawbacks. For instance, individuals who disclose may face stigma, negative stereotypes, or be treated as less capable by supervisors and coworkers once a disability is disclosed.

In a recent study of work-life balance among workers with disabilities by the Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability at Cornell University, 97 percent of participants reported that they had disclosed to at least one workplace colleague—typically to a coworker or supervisor, and less often to Human Resources (HR) or the Equal Opportunity/Diversity Office.

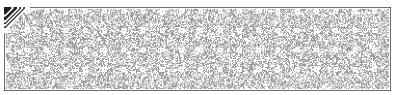
Study participants described a range of experiences in disclosing their disability. While the vast majority of disclosure experiences were reportedly positive, or neutral, there were some cases of negative responses from each of these types of colleagues.

Table X. Quality of Disclosure Experience: among individuals disclosing to the colleague type, the percent ranking that experience positive, negative or neutral.

	Supervisor	Coworker	HR	EO/Diversity Office
Positive	59%	60%	33%	27%
Neutral	25%	28%	29%	21%
Negative	8%	4%	8%	3%
Did not disclose	8%	8%	30%	49%

Among respondents who reported negative disclosure experiences, there was a wide range of outcomes, including significant job consequences, such as feeling forced to quit, excessive work expectations, increased monitoring, invasive questioning, lost opportunities for advancement, and even termination.

Issues related to disclosure were also noted in study participants' responses to questions about experiences of workplace harassment and discrimination. For example, one participant with a self-described "invisible" disability reported being "forced to disclose" why they had an accessible parking placard, explaining, "I was never so humiliated. (The employer) demanded I bring medical proof; and I've had this hang tag for over ten years and only worked at this job three weeks." Another participant summed up their experience of



workplace discrimination stating, "More than once details of an accommodation request were shared with people who did not need to know."

Practical Considerations/Protected Choice

Whether or not to disclose a disability and what details to share about it, are personal decisions. Deciding not to disclose is a legally protected choice, unless an individual is requesting a workplace accommodation.

Study participants described the different ways in which they had planned for or staged their disclosure to maximize the chance of it being a positive experience. Some participants disclosed only partial information - either not sharing information about all of their disabilities (in instances where they had two or more conditions) or only sharing limited information about the impact of their disability. Others spoke about establishing relationships within the organization before disclosing or sharing pieces of information over time, rather than all at once.

As these findings suggest, disclosure decisions may differ depending on the particular job, workplace climate/culture, nature of disability, and whether or not an accommodation is needed. Some questions to consider when deciding whether or not to disclose a disability at work include:

Is a disability negatively affecting the ability to do essential job functions?

Who needs/has a right to this information within the organization?

When should the information be shared?

What is the workplace protocol for disclosure (i.e., Are all accommodation requests handled by HR?)

What are the potential benefits and possible drawbacks of disclosing in this job, at this time, in this organization? (In terms of personal well-being, job retention, workplace inclusion, workplace advancement, etc.)

Conclusion

Disclosing a disability in the workplace has potential benefits and negative consequences. There are personal and workplace factors that need to be considered. Ultimately, each person must decide for themselves. ■ ABILITY

by LaWanda Cook, PhD

Healthy Living Initiatives Lead, Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability at Cornell University. The Work-Life Balance and Disability Study is funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research.

edi.cornell.edu

JUSTIN BALDONI

There's no "I" in Wayfarer

A feng shuied, industrial room invites us in as we prepare for our interview with Justin Baldoni. Baldoni plays Rafael Solano on the hit TV Show, *Jane the Virgin*. If you haven't seen the show, picture an American telenovela, which takes the viewer on a rollercoaster ride of emotions with dramatic twists on artificial insemination, crime lords, and murder, oh my! Rafael is a wealthy hotel owner, cancer survivor, surprise father of three (hence the drama), former playboy, and an overall charismatic individual. Every week, as the chapters of the show unfold, fans are drawn more and more into the man behind the coifed hair, sharp suits, and muscles.

Justin's work off screen is what also caught our attention. He is an advocate for mental health awareness, and a trailblazer for celebrating and recognizing all human potential. His production company, Wayfarer Entertainment, focuses on letting people be the storytellers of their lives in any form that speaks to their heART.

With a heavy fan base on social media, it's no surprise that Justin's posts, videos, and series topics often make his fans feel like they are part of his family, and inspires them to honor their true selves. The adorable videos that Justin shares of his daughter Maiya, is enough to get fans to click on that follow button. *ABILITY* sat with Justin to talk about his role as Rafael, the birth of The Carnival of Love, and much more.

Sylvia Frat: Congratulations on the immense success of Jane the Virgin. *I'm a big fan.*

Justin Baldoni: Oh! You've been hiding it well.

*Frat: Um, I prepped for it! (*laughs*)*

What was your first reaction when you first got the role of Rafael?

Baldoni: When I first got the role of Rafael, I hadn't been acting. I had stopped acting to start this. So Wayfarer had just been in business a little over a year, and I was telling the stories, making these documentaries, and it kind of happened on a fluke. I didn't really take it seriously at first.

(laughter)

That's what happens with natural light. A massive cloud just—but I didn't take it seriously at first when I got the audition. I just thought it would be fun to go into an audition, and interestingly enough, my wife had auditioned for the role of Petra, because she's an actress. I was reading with her at one point, helping her with her audition, and I was like, "Who's this Rafael guy?" The way they described him, I was kind of already getting jealous in case she got the role.

*Frat: (*laughs*)*

Baldoni: And then of course they had called me in. They had been looking for Rafael for quite a while, and my managers, who representing me for directing, asked if I wanted to go audition as an actor. And I said, "Sure, it'd be fun." So I went in, and of course (snaps fingers) it was almost instantaneous. The next day after I auditioned I did a screen test with Gina, who had just gotten the role. And then they told me in the room that that was it. I was kind of in shock. The big thing for me was, if I was going to go back into acting, then I wanted to make sure that if I became successful, I used it to make a difference in the world.

Frat: The show has done numerous flashback, or time travel, sequences, which one was your favorite one so far?

Baldoni: I love the fantasy sequences in *Jane the Virgin*. There was an episode in season 1 where Rafael walked through a crowd and then Jane and Rafael danced together in this kind of like choreographed salsa dance. That was a lot of fun. That was one of my favorite scenes.

Frat: You were recently one of the guest speakers at the UCLA Mental Wealth conference. What sparked your interest in that?

Baldoni: I've always been interested in mental health and wellness, without necessarily putting a label on what it was that I was interested in. Growing up I was bullied and picked on and went through a lot of very

Baldoni engaging with kids

Speaking at the opening of another Shane's Inspiration inclusive playground

Baldoni affectionately carrying his sweet daughter Maiya

Back row: Scott Williams, Maiya, Justin, and Emily Baldoni

lonely phases when I didn't have any friends and nobody liked me and I would come home and I would cry. My experience as a young adult, a boy and then a teenager and then a man, has always been hard. Looking back now, I'm sure that there were times when I suffered from what could have been diagnosed as depression, not extreme, but definitely moments of it.

And then as I got older and I got into my twenties, I remember experiencing extreme heartbreak and definitely going through bouts of depression and never really feeling like I was prepared for it. That's one of the reasons I launched my company and why I tell the stories I tell, because I believe that we all have the ability—some of us do, but for some of us, to diagnose depression might be a little too intense, but I think we all have the ability to for the most part get ourselves out of the situation that we're in. It's a mix of mindset, of support, friendships, activity, getting into your body, and also really perspective. As an example, I tell the stories of people who are dying who are living amazing lives so we can kind of have a mirror in front of us and remember that there's somebody who always has it a little bit worse, but if I can see somebody who has it a little bit worse who's doing amazing and having an amazing attitude, maybe that can pull me out of whatever I'm going through. So I've always been very, very interested.

Frat: You've partially answered the next question, but is this also what sparked your involvement in Wayfarer and its initiative, The Carnival of Love?

Baldoni: I started Wayfarer Entertainment to create real impact on people's lives through storytelling. I think we're so focused on ourselves right now, we're living in a generation that's very me-me-me and I-I-I, and when you're living in that kind of myopic, focused world, it's very easy to become depressed, to become sad, to become unhappy, because everything's focused on you. It's even been proven scientifically that if you take the focus on yourself, you can find happiness a lot quicker. I wanted to create a company that told stories that helped people get out of their own way, get out of their head and start living for "we" instead of for "me."

That looks like a lot of different things. It looks like super-happy content, it looks like super-intense and sometimes what could be perceived as sad content, it's inspirational content. *Jane the Virgin* would be considered that. It gets you out of whatever you're in and gives you happiness. The Skid Row Carnival [of Love], I started going down to Skid Row probably eight or nine years ago on my birthday, just to kind of guilt my friends into having a birthday party on Skid Row and we would make food for other people. The goal was to go and connect, because every day there's a birthday on Skid Row, but nobody gets to celebrate.

It was like a—I hadn't planned out this whole genius journey of, "Oh, I'm gonna start it this way and then grow it." It was, I just wasn't a birthday person. I didn't have a ton of friends, and I didn't really like the feeling of inviting people out to celebrate me. So instead I was like, "Let's do something for others." I grew up in the Baha'i faith, and in the Baha'i faith, we're told that faith is an abundance of deeds and a fewness [?] of words. It's all about action. It's also about service. The idea that our lives are supposed to be of service to others and day by day strive for your actions to become beautiful prayers.

These were all things I grew up thinking about, and I just wanted to put them into action. That's kind of how it all started, and then when *Jane the Virgin* happened and I started to develop a little bit of celebrity, when you have that, it's a lot easier to get people to come and do something. So I had the idea one day to start a carnival. So I said, "We're going to throw a carnival," because the whole purpose is to make people happy and to help them find relief from what they're doing within their life. And no one's ever thrown a carnival on Skid Row.

It turned out really well. And now it's growing superfast and we have a nonprofit here at the company that supports the carnival and our work.

Frat: The documentary series My Last Days*, can you tell us a little bit about that and how it started and where it is now?*

Baldoni: *My Last Days* is a documentary series about people who are terminally ill but they are living amazing lives. The idea is to inspire all of our viewers that you don't have to find out you're dying to start living. It started on YouTube, and it became one of the most successful documentary series on YouTube ever. A young guy named Zach Sobiech, there's a picture of him over there, wrote a song called "Clouds." He was one of our documentaries and it was seen by 20 million people all over the world. Now we're making a movie about it at Warner Brothers. *Jane the Virgin*, after *Jane the Virgin* blew up, I took the project to CW and asked them if they'd be willing to put it on TV, and they said yes. We ended up building a whole thing around that called CW Good, which is a way for the CW stars to do something good with their time.

Frat: You showcase a lot of your workouts on Instagram with—what is it called? The Garage?

Baldoni: Oh, my footage at the Human Garage, yeah.

Frat: And you're very committed to your early morning routine and you even have your daughter come and work out with you. What do you do when life gets hectic? How do you make sure you balance your workouts?

Spreading the love during Baldoni's *Carnival of Love* on Skid Row

Baldoni: I wish I was as balanced and committed to my workouts as you think I am. Unfortunately, I don't work out every day. But I want to. That's one of the reasons why I film my workouts, to kind of make myself work out more, but also because people get inspired by all kinds of things. For me, fitness and staying in shape is kind of meditation. It helps me stay grounded when things get hard. That's where I find relief, in working out, pushing myself. We all have our different things we do to bring us back. For me, I'm very kinesthetic, so when my body feels off, then my life feels off. I try to do everything I can to keep my body sharp, and unfortunately I've got a lot of injuries and pain and all kinds of things everywhere. I'm always trying to heal myself from some injury or something.

Frat: You recently went on what you called a "mantrip" with a few close guys friends and said that we all need to take a minute of as you called it self-care, to reflect and relax. What are some of the tools you've found useful for when you can't get away? What are some of the relaxations tools and techniques that kind of help you out?

Baldoni: I think it's important to have self-care, to have built-in moments in your day or week or month where you're able to decompress and just kind of shut off the world and you can do that either by watching Netflix or by working out, by taking a walk, calling up a good friend and saying, "Hey, you wanna just do nothing for an hour?" We're living in an age where we're just constantly bombarded with technology and information all the time and I don't think our brains are set up to process that, so we all become very ADD. It's important to just kind of disconnect every now and then. That's something I'm working on and I have not perfected, by any means. That for me was huge, because I needed to disconnect, even though I was connected most of the time. In theory it works.

Frat: We met you at a Shane's Inspiration park event. How did you get involved with that?

Baldoni: I got involved with Shane Inspiration through CBS, originally. Shane's Inspiration had donated a playground to a children's hospital, I think the one in Hollywood. That's where I first met them, and they reached out and asked me if I would come and be a part of Rockets, the launch of the rocket at the children's playground in the Valley. I think it's a really cool organization, so I said yes.

Frat: That was it.

Baldoni: Yeah, nice work. ■ ABILITY

shanesinspiration.org
wearewayfarer.com

JAMES McEACHIN

BEYOND THE DUTY

James McEachin is a Silver Star and Purple Heart recipient, veteran of the Korean War, an accomplished actor, and an award-winning author. McEachin is perhaps best known for his roles on *Perry Mason*, *Matlock*, *Play Misty For Me*, and his NBC series *Tenafly*. He enjoyed an illustrious career and eventually retired. Since retirement, McEachin has authored six novels, multiple screenplays, and his one-man play, entitled *Above the Call: Beyond the Duty*, which opened at DC's Kennedy Center in 2008. The two-hour play has been seen in places as far off as Kuwait. McEachin began the year 2013 by releasing *Tell Me a Tale: A Novel of the Old South* as an audio book and is currently working on his film project *The Purple Heart*. Alabama's Mobile Area Veteran's Day Commission selected McEachin as their 2013 Patriot of the Year for his continued work with veterans. On November 1, 2013, the GI Film Festival awarded him the 2013 GIFF Veteran in Entertainment Award for his many patriotic appearances and performances.

Cooper: Tell me about your acting career.

James McEachin: Acting was never really that important for me. It was something I just did. I always found it kind of strange. There were roles you wanted to do and a lot of roles you were glad you didn't do.

Cooper: How did you get into acting?

McEachin: Totally by accident. I was walkin' down the street—

Cooper: A car accident?

McEachin: It wasn't an accident. (*laughs*) I didn't even have a car. No, I was walkin' down the street and a guy approached me. I was going up to see a friend of mine by the name of Geordie Hormel, son of Hormel meats. He had an office on Melrose Boulevard. I was going up to see him, and this guy comes down the same side of the street and takes a look at me and he asks, "Ain't you an actor?" I said, "No." The guy said, "You want to be one?" I said, "No, no, out of my league." He said, "I wrote this script, this role, this guy looks just like you. I'm going up to see the producer now we're going to start shooting in a matter of a few weeks." I said, "No, that's not for me."

He says, "Why don't we have a lunch, and we can talk about it?" Well, the guy was a little pushy and I said, "I'll take the lunch," but if the guy tries something funny, I'm gonna pop him in the mouth—but I'm gonna eat first *(laughs)*.

He was so hyped up over this movie. So I took the script, and I put it in the trunk of the car and I forgot about it. A couple of weeks later I get a call asking, "You gonna do the movie?" My wife was in the kitchen, and I said, "Hey, Hon, there's some guy wantin' me to be involved in a movie. Do you think I should do it?" She said, "Well, you might as well. You've bombed out on everything else you've ever done." (*laughs*) I said, "OK."

We went down to Bakersville, and we shot the picture. It's about some guy masquerading as a Klansman, something silly. We had a three-week or four-week shooting schedule, but the problem was, I didn't know you had to memorize dialogue. I didn't know that you didn't have to just pose and do things naturally. It took me forever to learn that. Even though I didn't know anything about acting, I knew what bad acting was. (*laughs*) I think I had a patent on bad acting! It was terrible. But I survived.

I ended up with another movie, a little short thing with Doris Day. I had five or six lines in that film. I also found out that the pay was a hell of a lot different

than what they paid on that first movie, which was $100 a week. After that I thought, I'll do another one. And that happened to have been *The Legend of Lylah Clare*. I had two lines, but the film was directed by the great Bob Aldrich. He made me feel good. He said, "Hey, you know, you've got something." And if he said it, it must have been true.

From there I went on to *Cowboy in Africa*.

Cooper: How did you get on the Perry Mason *show?*

McEachin: Oh, that came years later. In acting, the whole thing is getting a job, finding a role. And obviously there weren't many roles for blacks. Most of those guys who were getting the jobs came out of New York Repertory Theater Company—people like Roscoe Lee Browne. They were sort of snobbish and stand-offish.

Cooper: Being a black actor, in those days, was more difficult?

McEachin: Difficult to get a job, yeah, and then you had to fight the many conspiracies on the set. You're about to say something important and a lamp goes off. The white man could be a terrible son of a bitch when he wanted to be.

Cooper: You lost me there about the light going off.

McEachin: You're the black guy, in a close-up doing some heavy acting, boom! a light or something like that, goes out, and you've got to do it all over again.

Cooper: Oh, they're just screwin' with you?

McEachin: Yeah.

Cooper: Tenafly *was on NBC?*

McEachin: Originally NBC pulled the plug after one year, and it went into syndication. We got some terrific reviews on it.

You know, they wanted to show it before *Cosby*, they wanted to show a family of situation, a black guy with his wife, the whole nine yards. The people really liked him, but the network sabotaged the numbers.

Cooper: What does "Tenafly" mean?

McEachin: That was the name of a city, they just liked the name and they asked me what I thought about it, and I said fine. So my name was Tenafly.

Cooper: How did you get involved in supporting the veterans?

McEachin: One day a lawyer friend of mine, whose wife used to work for the Department of Defense, said to him, "Do you know of any Korean war veterans who can make a speech for us?" He said, "Yeah, my good friend McEachin." They called and I said, "Well, yeah, I'll do it." And they were all the more pleased I was a Korean war veteran, with a Purple Heart, Gold Star and I had a television series.

One speech went over very, very well, and years later David Huddleston and I did a thing called *Reveille*. It was a little short film for the internet, and we had over six million hits.

Cooper: Nice! Can we talk about post-traumatic stress disorder—when did you realize you had PTSD?

McEachin: I think when it first manifested itself was at an incident about a couple years after I got out of the service. It was at a policeman's ball, and I just really lost it. Writhing on the floor. You're hearing explosions and all of that stuff, 'cause I didn't really believe in battle fatigue or any of that stuff.

Cooper: That's what they called it back then, battle fatigue?

McEachin: Yes. So I really didn't believe in it. And I think the image came from General Patton, who went into the hospital, yelling "Get out of that bed and get back on the front lines!" That kind of made sense, because it was less manly, it seemed okay to me. That is before understanding battle fatigue or PTSD. I went to the department and obviously I had a gun on me, but you're a cop with a mental problem. Not good, right?

So I had to go to the hospital to be diagnosed, and I was found to be all right, according to them, and I've had no melt downs since then.

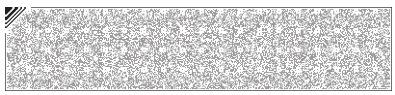
Cooper: Being wounded caused the PTSD?

McEachin: Oh, there's no question about it. The explosions, hearing about the loss of Lieutenant Schenk, which lasted from that day to this day. I think it started to—I don't want to say intensify, but this thought or this holding onto the memory of that incident kind of went away a little bit after the girl found the medal some 50 years later and then—it bothers me, or it crosses my mind, that the guys that saved you and the whole nine yards. But I had always felt that he never received his—Lieutenant Schenk I'm talkin' about—never received anything for what he did, and the same thing with the blond-haired boy, you know. They never got anything, any sort of just rewards for having saved a life.

Cooper: And that life was your life?

McEachin: Yeah.

Cooper: You got shot several times?



Jon Voight and McEachin. A video "American Valor: A Salute to Our Heroes" about McEachin, was narrated by Voight.

McEachin: I was shot and shrapnel landed on this side of my body.

Cooper: On the left side?

McEachin: Yeah. And I remember in the hospital when I woke up, on my bed stand there was this piece of metal. I gather the doctor must have given it to me as a souvenir. And wouldn't you know, some son of a bitch stole it. It was something I really wanted.

The other wound was here, which is a two- or three-inch scar. That was enough to slow me down that morning when we were trying to make our way back to our company lines. What had happened was that we went out on a patrol to rescue a fellow GI who was pinned against the wall.

Cooper: Someone who was pinned?

McEachin: Yeah. They had him splayed against the hill—you could see with binoculars. Naturally we didn't have any binoculars because we were the grunts. But the officers could see. Our company CO made up his mind that we were gonna go and rescue that boy, 'cause nobody's gonna go and take one of our guys pin him up against a hill, the day before we had gone and mounted an attack against them. This time it was us against them and not them against us.

We wanted to save the boy, so Lieutenant Schenk, who was one of the officers in the company, assigned this—called for volunteers to go out that night at 0800 to rescue the guy.

Cooper: 0800, is that nighttime?

McEachin: 2000 hours, thank you for catching me. In fact, I think I made the same mistake in the screenplay.

Cooper: You made the same mistake when you went out in the morning?

McEachin: (*laughs*) I'm gonna look at this, too, to see if I made that mistake, 'cause that's a critical mistake. So we went out, following this path, finding our way to get over to the hill. Well, now, as you look back, you know that we were walking into an ambush, smack dab into one, and I was point guard, point meaning that you were the first guy and the lieutenant is behind you because he's reconnoitering the area, so to speak. And the next thing you know, all hell broke loose. I don't want to go through that whole thing again.

I don't know how long I was out, whether it was an hour, whether it was 10 minutes. But I know that I found myself on my knees in this creek, and that water goin' drip (*pause*) drip (*pause*) drip. I'm tryin' to come to my senses, and what the hell is that. I'm moving my

hand up my jacket, and there's a little hole—

Cooper: In the jacket?

McEachin: —And I know I'm hit because I know that's blood and it kind of had that smell to it. And then this side started hurting, and then as I tried to move, these legs, I don't know if I'm stuck in the mud or what, but there was a damn wound here. And God, I'm in trouble. It's amazing how God just steps in, and there is a God, I know that, I talked to him. "Let me get out of this, sir." So I—oh, wow, that was a hard day. But I knew I had to get out of that water.

I remember being on my knees, and that's why the water was drip, drip—

Cooper: You heard the dripping from your blood.

McEachin: Yeah. So I crawled out of the water, and it's beginning to feel numb. At first it was kind of warm, and then you gotta move. You gotta get outta here. And then I heard Chinese voices kind of fading away in the distance. I was kind of familiar with the language, I didn't know it, but I was familiar with it. As I got about maybe 10, 15 yards, I heard a voice saying, "Who goes there?"

I said, "I'm an American soldier." From out of the brush, in total darkness, I think he asked me what outfit was I with, and I said, "I'm with Kane company," a couple of other questions, and then he came over to me. It was pitch black out there, remember, and then he started to help me. And then we talked, and he tried to push me out of the water and I'm like, "Ow, don't do that!" I remember those voices going, "Am I too loud? We can't be talkin' too loud."

This was the most patient, the most kind, peace-inducing person that you'd ever want to meet; I'd never known anyone that wonderful. He was struggling like a son of a gun to get me out. He had no question about me being saved. Then finally he tried to placate me some more, we got out some distance away from the creek and then he could really see how messed up I was. His attitude was, "I'll get you out of here."

Cooper: You had a piece of metal in you?

McEachin: Yeah, so he couldn't lift me up on this side, and then he'd get around and try to do it on the other side so then he'd start dragging. You name it, he tried it. What he really wanted to do is the old way where you used to put the guy piggyback on your back. He couldn't do that, either, because now I can't really move this hand to do anything to help him. And then the more he would—the more footsteps that he would take, the more this would hurt. And don't forget, this side was

McEachin in the Korean war

numb. This leg, now I'm thinking seriously, they're gonna have to cut my leg off. Oh, God!

But somehow he made it. He was scuffling and carrying on.

Cooper: And you call him the blond guy?

McEachin: The blond-haired boy, yeah.

Cooper: You never got his name?

McEachin: Never got to know his name. Didn't know what outfit he was from. Guy kind of looks a little like you, you know what I'm sayin'?

Cooper: I wanted to say hi again, how've you been?

McEachin: *(laughs)* And then one time I was goin' shoot the guy, I was gonna kill him.

Cooper: It wasn't me.

McEachin: I thought he was gonna leave me. One time he set me down maybe after an hour or a couple of hours, I had no idea of time. It's very brushy, but only the vegetation was on this side, and I crawled out on the other side. Boom! Some goddamn big 16mm gun. I can see the guy pacing back and forth. He's coming over here to look, 'cause I don't think he knew how he got there.

Cooper: Oh, he was lost?

McEachin: Yeah. He's lost. But he was also looking for the easiest way—so he would stay there and think it over.

Cooper: But in your mind he's leaving you?

McEachin: I'm thinking that this guy here—

Cooper: Why shoot him for leaving?

McEachin: Yeah, yeah! (*laughs*) And I had a grenade, which was surely faulty thinking, because there was no way I could lob a grenade that far. I couldn't raise this arm that high.

Cooper: But it was also faulty thinking to kill somebody who's already helped you.

McEachin: I was gonna shoot him, I really was. In fact, I address that in the screenplay.

Cooper: But you never got to tell him anything like, 'thank you'?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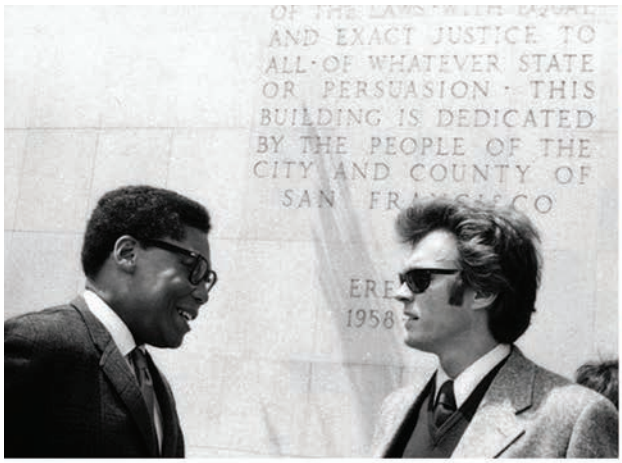
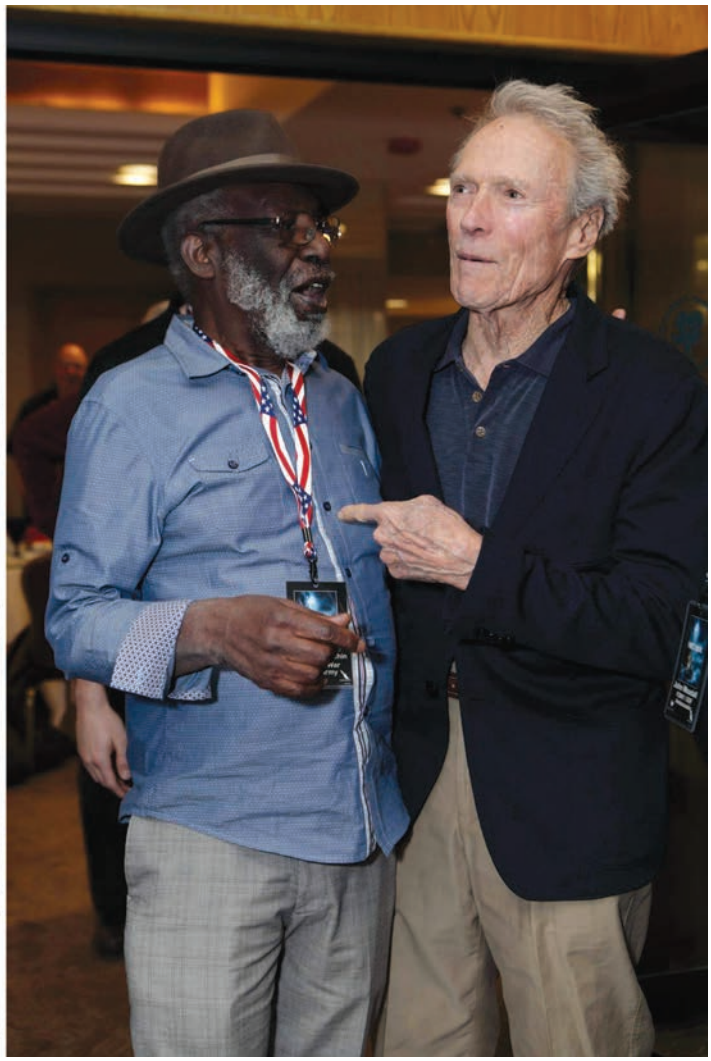


McEachin and Clint Eastwood



McEachin: We talked. We had a running dialogue going.

Cooper: Good.

McEachin: Yeah. I exaggerate what we talked about in the screenplay because I couldn't remember all of the dialogue, but I remember his attitude.

Cooper: Did you mention the part that you thought he was leaving and you were thinking about shooting him, or was that kept to yourself?

McEachin: Oh, no, I told him.

Cooper: You did?

McEachin: I said, "I was gonna shoot you," and he said something like, "If you're gonna do it, you'd better do it in a hurry, because I think the Chinese are on our tail again." He was that kind of a guy.

*Cooper: Nice. (*laughs*)*

McEachin: I really was gonna blast—and I come back to that same thought at the end of that segment wherein we finally made it back to our lines, I think it was late afternoon, I'm not sure.

Cooper: 0800?

McEachin: (*laughs*) I said, "You know I was gonna shoot you?" I reminded him of that. But I also said, "Hey," as he put me down and started to go back here and the litter bearers tried to help out, I said, "Hey," as he walked away, "I never did get your name!" And he said, "That's OK, I never got yours. Let's just say that we're brothers under the skin, because names have a way of ruining things,"and I said, "Isn't that strange?" So as he fades away, the camera comes back on me and I say, "And you were gonna shoot that guy! How in the hell could you be so dumb that you were gonna shoot the son of God?"

Cooper: Did you see anyone, a psychologist or a psychiatrist?

McEachin: Only after that episode at the policeman's ball where something triggered me and Johnson, who was the police sergeant, said, "Get his gun! Get his gun!" Which is the same gun I used all last night in the

piece, because I have my off-duty pistol.

Cooper: You had mentioned you were a police officer, and you were there when a young person was killed.

McEachin: We got a call, a B&E call, breaking and entering. Carlton, it was his post, so he was first to respond to the call. He started chasing the guy he was running and I got there in my car, I was in 103. I started running and chasing, too. Carlton hit the guy with one of his bullets, and I tackled him.

Cooper: He was running, after he was shot?

McEachin: Yeah, he was still running. The next thing I know, all the other patrol cars came, and that college student is dead. I didn't shoot him, as I say in the play, but I was there, and that is not a comfortable feeling. This was in the city. I don't know how it turned out, because when I left, I washed my hands of the whole entire thing. Now, your next question is, did I leave because of that? No. That was a part of it. I left because of the fact that the injuries from drinking all that filthy water when I was in the creek, I got tuberculosis and that lasted for a long time. I came out here to be cured and heal. And the episode of that night just kind of latched onto it, fused itself into it.

The thing about it is, nobody ever said, "Were you really a cop? Did you really participate in the shooting?" Nobody's ever questioned me on that.

Cooper: Did you have any therapy?

McEachin: They want to double-check you to make sure you're doing alright, but not any sort of treatment. I do know that I started doing the play, and I really think that the one-man play called *Above the Call: Beyond the Duty*, helped me, and I touch briefly on that episode, and that occurrence.

Cooper: The episode in Korea?

McEachin: Yeah, where I got wounded. You can't tell a play if you don't tell the story of his life, unless you tell that pivotal moment.

Cooper: His life being your life?

McEachin: Yes. ■ ABILITY

americanveteranscenter.org/mceachin
wikipedia.org/wiki/James_McEachin
facebook.com/james.mceachin.52

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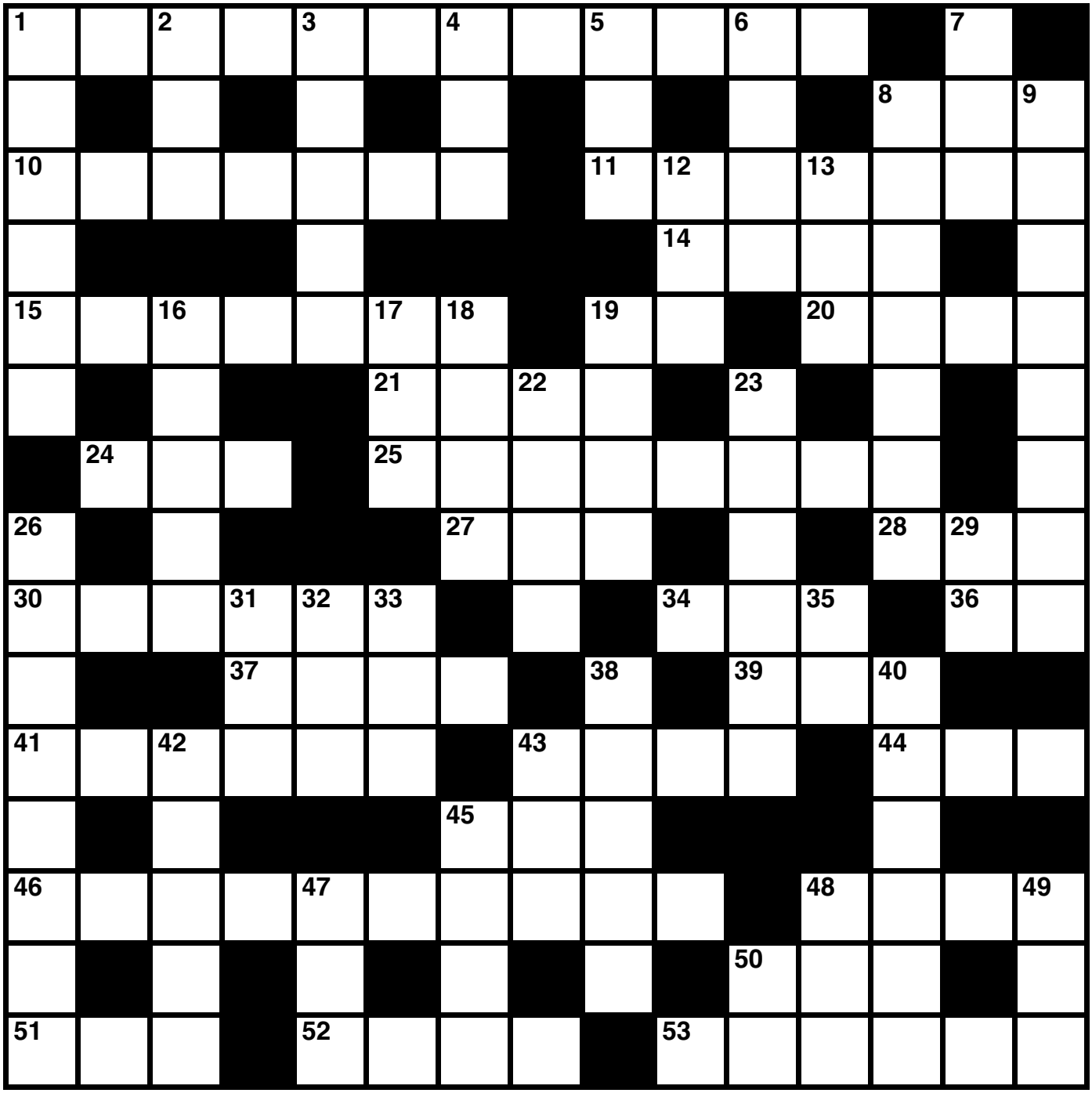

Crossword Puzzle

ACROSS

1. "Facts of Life" star supporting the Pancreatic Cancer Action movement, 2 words
8. Sign of the Zodiac
10. Form of art Rembrandt was skilled in
11. South African statesman who overcame apartheid
14. Welcome gifts in Hawaii
15. Mystery writer, King
19. City Sheryl Crow sang about in "All I Wanna Do"
20. Good name for a Dalmatian
21. Streaming media and TV player
24. Mature like good wine
25. Tom Cruise's role in "Born on the 4th of July"- 2 words
27. Originally named
28. It's often worn with a suit
30. Atlantic and Pacific
34. Cash machine
36. Phoenix's state
37. Oktoberfest drink (German word)
39. Snake of the Nile
41. Singer who wrote "You make me feel like a natural born woman," ____ King
43. Cat sound
44. No longer fashionable
45. Go public with
46. Stand-up comedian and "Boardwalk Empire" actor who raises money for Little People of America, 2 words
48. "Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay" singer, first name
50. He pours beers for Homer, Carl and Lenny
51. Iconic blind blues singer, Charles
52. Hit ABC series set on an island
53. Baseball great who battled ALS

DOWN

1. John of Monty Python
2. Mandela's org.
3. Stand-up comic and parenting expert 5 kids, goes with 26 down
4. Label
5. Tree that lines many streets
6. Archer the actress
7. Bud
8. Aretha Franklin smash hit with a message
9. Author of "What the *** is Normal?" Francesca _____
12. Phrase for chefs, 2 words
13. Engage in trash talk
16. Majestic bird, American symbol
17. Blunder
18. Time for an early lunch
19. Skywalker first name
22. Leg joint
23. James Cameron movie that outgrossed his own "Titanic"
26. See 3 down
29. Des Moines state
31. Blood system letters
32. Nothing
33. Visit
35. Seth Rogen & JK Rowling supports org. (fighting nerve disease)
38. Actor with Down syndrome "Corky" *Life Goes On*, Chris _____
40. Actress with Down syndrome Becky on "Glee," Lauren _____
42. Sly character
43. Digital photo
45. Points at
47. Wise bird
48. Cry at a Cirque de Soleil show perhaps
49. Droop a little
50. "__ myself and I", De La Soul

answers on page 62

Crossword Puzzle

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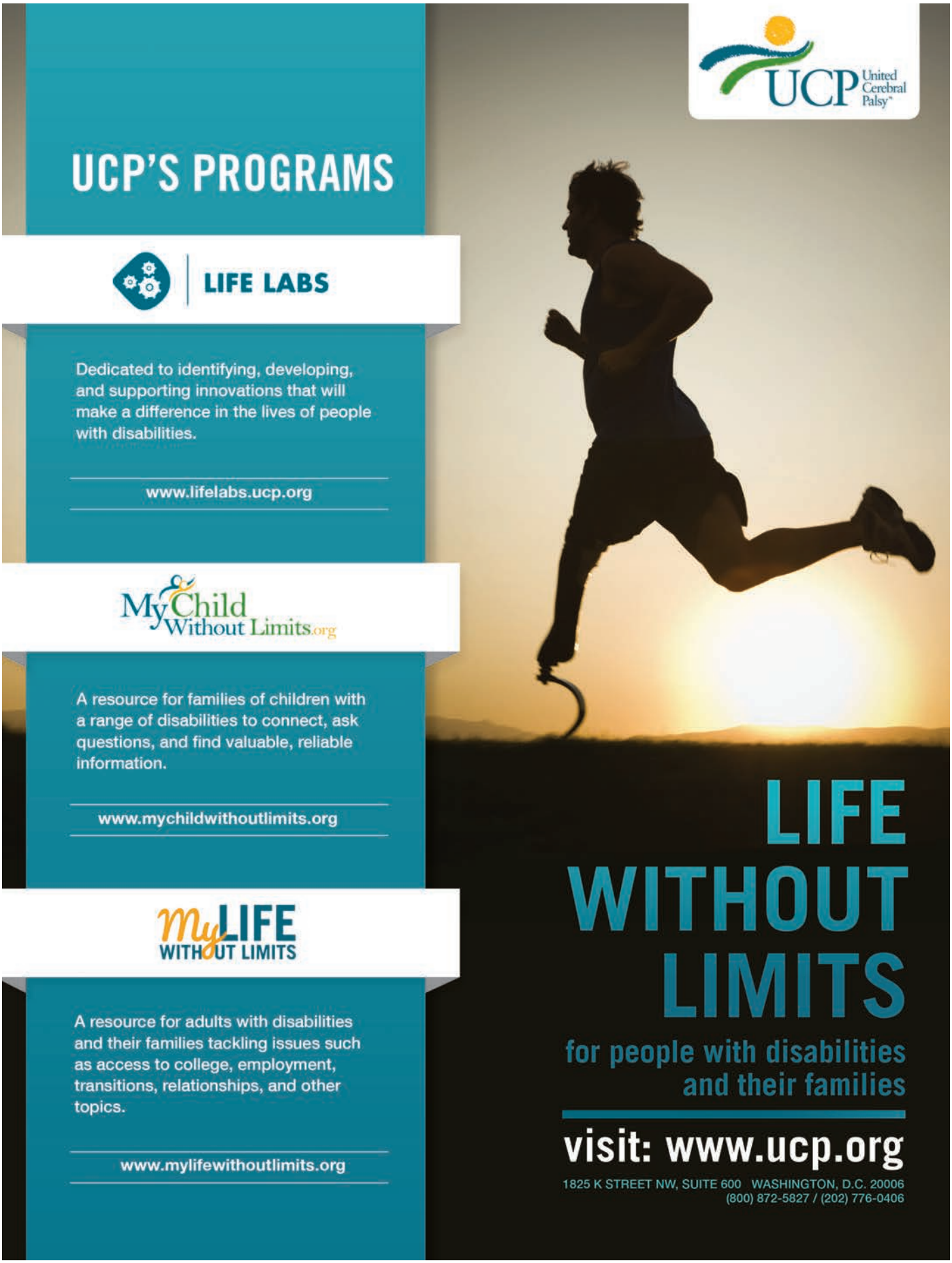
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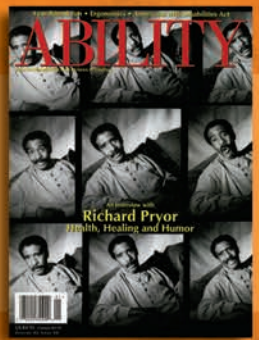

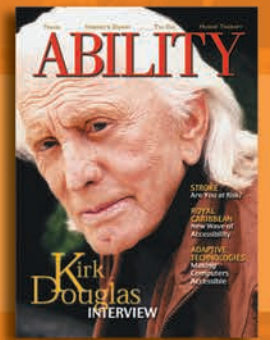

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