

# *Firsthand Stories about Careers*

A Glimpse into the Lives of People at Work



*Collected and Edited by*

SUSIE BOGGESS

For my parents, the truth seekers, and the dreamers.



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## An Introduction

I'm fortunate to have met many people throughout my life—friends, former colleagues, past romantic partners, and even relative strangers—who've generously offered to provide me, a storyteller, with glimpses into their everyday lives at work.

This book you're reading now is not only about professional pursuits, but also human nature and motivation. It's about what inspires some of us to get out of bed each morning and it's also about what we wish we'd known earlier in our careers. Plus, it contains some tips here and there for those of us considering making a career change.

While each chapter that lies ahead is brief by design, I hope you find real moments of depth and heart tucked throughout these pages. Each of the guests I spoke with provided me with their honest accounts of professional strife and success in today's increasingly unpredictable and ever-changing workforce. I'm so grateful for their willingness to be vulnerable and honest with me and for allowing me to share their stories and wisdom with you.

So many of us in life struggle to find our own paths. In our increasingly stratified world, with small number of billionaires on top controlling a large percentage of society's wealth, it's no wonder why so many of us are dissatisfied professionally. We're often underpaid and unappreciated. Our skills go underutilized. It's easy to forget that no one—not me, not the experts, not the upper crust—has all the

answers. But a little more circulation of the wealth our labor has helped create would be a welcome start.

Life's a marathon, not a sprint, or so they say. (I'm no athlete, but that's the rumor I hear.) Whether we like it or not, professional dissatisfaction impacts all of us at some point of our lives. Even if this book only helps one of you find a tiny sliver of comfort—or maybe a few answers in only a small way—then I've done my own “job” here.

Thanks so much for reading. I'm sending happy wishes for decent, fulfilling work your way.



### What it's like to be a writer

This was not at all my idea. At least not when I first started out in what I thought was the real world after college. I was a political science major and led to believe I had to get a practical job that'd help me pay off my student loan debt when I graduated. I thought this meant I'd have to work in the state capitol building or maybe become a paralegal. For the longest time, I thought becoming a writer was an unrealistic career reserved only for super privileged people who could afford not to earn a paycheck. Writers, notoriously in my mind, earned little to no money. And I didn't know a single working writer when I was growing up. Besides, I was never in AP English classes. I was a mediocre student at best.

**When it all changed.** I was extremely fortunate to land an internship at the State Department during undergrad. An amazing college advisor named Rey listened to me talk about how I'd never been abroad and dreamed of traveling the world, even though I knew I couldn't afford to. When Ray told me about the State Department—and about how those who work there get paid to travel internationally while working in government—I couldn't believe it. I applied for an internship and was stationed in the Bureau of Human Resources. Eventually, I moved around to other offices within State. That initial unpaid internship



(although I got student class credits) led to a seven-year career in foreign policy. My student loans covered my living expenses during the internship.

**Why I left Washington.** One thing about working in government, at least if you have a policy job like I did, is you're often required to do a lot of writing. Position papers, speeches, and those kinds of things. As I started to become a stronger writer, I began to realize I wasn't enjoying the subjects I was writing about. My job was in global health security, so I focused on pandemics, biological warfare, and global catastrophes. Some pretty heavy stuff. While I was grateful to possess such a secure job, I began to dream about writing something other than catastrophes. I wanted to write scripts and essays that were, ideally, hopeful.

**The idea to write this book.** Living in Washington and traveling abroad exposed me to the many kinds of ways people could live their lives. I met painters in tiny villages, veterinarians in roadside animal hospitals, and chefs serving delicious cuisines. I started to wish I'd known earlier that, in life, so many paths are available for the taking. I wanted to spread stories of possibility and connection far and wide.

**Starting over.** I conducted the majority of the interviews laid out here while I was living in Santiago, Chile. I used Skype, phone calls, and a series of emails to get these stories right. I chose to write from Chile because it's a much more affordable place to live than most cities in the United States. I tutored English as I wrote in the mornings to keep me afloat financially. I also already had family living in Chile at the time, so I was by no means there all alone. Plus, I figured even if I hated writing, at least I'd learn a new language. That, to me, seemed worth the risk.

**Returning to the United States.** After Chile, and a brief stint in the mountains of Colorado where I worked as a server at a breakfast spot and continued to write and edit this book in the mornings, I moved to New York. At the time, I believed it was where all aspiring writers must go. While I now know good writers are found everywhere, living in New York exposed me to all the career paths a writer can take. While I began to pitch this book to agents and publishers, I also started to write and direct plays, short films, and tiptoe in the world of stand-up comedy. In New York, I had an assistant job at a bank to pay my bills as I worked on passion projects on the side. I drank a lot of coffee in those days. I still do. To me, coffee is an invaluable motivator. It's a creative person's best (non-human) friend, in my opinion!

**Overall advice to aspiring writers.** Making money in the very beginning as a writer is easier for some more than others. In my case, I didn't make any profit when I first started out. My day jobs kept me afloat financially while I became a stronger creative writer in my own time.

I now work in TV production and take freelance writing and consulting jobs to help cover my rent while I work on longer term creative writing projects. This allows me to write about what I *\*want\** to write about instead of tailoring all of my writing to someone else's taste. I'd love for my own creative writing to eventually sell like hotcakes and for it to make me a gazillionaire with a gorgeous home with a lavish garden and closet filled with many caftans and exotic perfumes. But truthfully, I'm just happy to be honing and developing my storytelling skills. That's probably my best advice to any writer: write the stories you want to hear. Don't get too frustrated in the beginning. Developing your own voice and talent is a marathon, not a sprint. Also! Show people your work! You'll need notes to help you improve. Get over your ego as soon as possible

but find a trusted circle of creative friends who know how to give you useful advice. Find other ways to pay your bills at first. Payoffs from being an artist come in many forms. It is the most rewarding pursuit of my life.

*- Me, Susie Boggess, Los Angeles, California*



### What it's like to be a Freelance Photojournalist

I'm really hungry. Some photographers won't take an assignment because it isn't interesting. For me, I've photographed babies and weddings and brisses and things I didn't think I would. I found a way to make those jobs interesting and, as a result, I now have made enough connections and am presented with enough opportunities that I can afford to turn some down if need be. That wouldn't be the case if I were pickier in the beginning. I can't say it enough, but as a photographer you really have to hustle.

**On diversifying her work.** A lot of people I know juggle being photographers with other side jobs, but I'm freelance, so my day-to-day changes constantly. Generally, because I'm on the street beat in newspaper photography, my day starts around 6:00 a.m. and the first thing I do is call morning news editors and check in. I cover everything from local politics to homicides to weather events to shooting, captioning, editing, and submitting photos to best tell whatever the story may be. I also have a variety of clients who aren't related to the newspapers. So sometimes I'll cover an event at night, like a tech expo or company party. On one hand, it is great because I'm in a place where I can fill my whole day, but it is exhausting.

**On photography in motion.** In photography, you have to be prepared to constantly move, change, improvise. If the police won't let you go one way, you go another way. I've shot through many people's legs before. Your editors will never care why you couldn't get a shot. They only care about the times you found a way to make it work. Plus, you have to shoot the shit out of the scenario because it might change, and you will never get the opportunity to go back.

**Educational requirements.** A formal education isn't necessarily required to become a photojournalist. When I was applying to my graduate program, I asked my professor for a recommendation and he said my program was totally unnecessary. But for me, because I hadn't solely focused on photography in school, I wanted to pursue a specialist program to really hone my skills. In my program, I learned how to properly tell a story visually and work in the industry in today's world. I think a traditional MFA program wouldn't have been as helpful with what I am doing now.

**On being self-sufficient.** I'm very much my own one-woman-show. I have to make sure people not only like one, my photos and two, me. Not having a boss or coworkers can be extremely lonely. And the other difficult thing is scheduling. My first two years working for a newspaper I basically never said 'no' and it took a lot of personal sacrifice. Fortunately, my family and friends understood. Even still, I have trouble committing to dinner plans because I never know when a newspaper will need me. I've been trying to give myself some space more recently because I am only 31 and I want this to be my career for the rest of my life. So, I need to figure out how to take care of myself in a reasonable way.

**Advice for aspiring photojournalists.** For anyone just starting out in photography, I'd say don't pigeonhole yourself from the beginning. Be open to

any opportunity that comes your way and see it as a growing and a learning experience.

- *Nancy Borowick, Brooklyn, New York*



### What it's like to be a Public Health Officer

I'm the child of U.S. diplomats. I grew up in Botswana, Ethiopia, Mali and Honduras, so my peripatetic upbringing attracted me to international work more generally. During my time in the Peace Corps, I worked with the local population and Moroccan Ministry of Health officials to design and implement water improvement projects with the goal of improving the health of the local population. I found this kind of work to be incredibly rewarding and left inspired to continue in this field. Serving in the Peace Corps really is "the hardest job you'll ever love" which is its former slogan. You'll feel lonely at times, culturally isolated at first, and inept, especially until you learn the language; then you'll feel extreme joy, connectedness, and love. It's a situation where you have to let yourself be vulnerable and see what happens. With every woman in the village, I became a sister, daughter, and friend.

**On her chosen path.** I got my Master's of Science in Public Health and am now a Senior Health Analyst at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) where I analyze information on health concerns in the Americas Region in order to prepare policy recommendations and other critical documents for senior leadership at HHS and other audiences. My job covers many topics including non-communicable diseases and associated risk factors,

mosquito-borne diseases, medical tourism (when someone travels to another country to receive medical care) and providing care to the most vulnerable populations living along the U.S.-Mexico Border.

**Life in uniformed service.** I'm also a Lieutenant in the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, one of the seven U.S. uniformed services. In addition to the policy work I do at HHS, as a Public Health Service Officer (also known as America's Health Responders), I stand ready to preserve public health and national security during national or global health emergencies. Our mission as officers is to be out the door as soon as requested to provide the health response to a natural disaster, a disease outbreak, or even to address the health concerns following terrorist attacks. In my career as an officer so far, I have participated in responses to natural disasters (e.g., hurricanes, earthquakes) as well as infectious disease outbreaks. As Commissioned Corps officers, we are indeed a big collection of many different kinds of public health professionals from various educational backgrounds and walks of life. I will say that one additional benefit is that as an officer, you are active duty, meaning that since you are always "on call," you are eligible to retire after 20 years of service. So yes, I like serving on the front lines of public health. Often the hours are quite long though and the days are unpredictable! But we're doing this work in service to the nation, which is a wonderful feeling.

**Her advice to aspiring public health workers.** For anyone interested in pursuing public health, I'd tell them to spend their time developing a good set of marketable skills, like evaluation techniques or biostatistics, in addition to becoming more familiar with the public health landscape through informational interviews, internships, and/or more education. Also, consider honing your



writing and public speaking skills. So much of what we do professionally comes down to our ability to communicate well.

- *Alyson Rose-Wood, Washington, D.C*



### What it's like to be a Volcanologist

I was always really curious about the formation of nature. I wanted to understand it. I'd think to myself, 'Why is there a stream there? Why is that rock green and that rock orange?' The most gratifying thing I do is I interpret the natural world.

**On his road to volcanology.** The good thing about becoming a volcanologist is you can study it for the fun of it, no degrees required. But if you want to become a fully engrained student in volcanology, you can get a good education as an undergrad through geology programs. Getting your PhD, like I did, takes six to seven years after a bachelor's degree. It's definitely a commitment. In my case, I studied geological sciences in undergrad. My Master's is in geological sciences and my PhD is in geology with an emphasis on volcanology.

**On deciding whether to pursue a PhD.** I will say, to get your PhD, you have to like what you're doing. During the PhD process, one has to deal with being put down over and over, so yes, it can be quite hellacious. You live around the poverty line. My particular advisor was really demanding. And over the years you get to a point where you are like, is this worth it? And I'd always answer, 'I just don't know.' I'd advocate for getting your PhD if you find something you love to do because you can take it to the limit.

**On a dream come true.** I conduct research on Hawaiian volcanoes, but of course there are volcanoes all around the world. I've studied them in Iceland, Italy, Chile, Antarctica, Alaska, Hawaii, and Turkey. Today, about 97% of my time is doing lab work and 3% is spent in the field. The field's the most fun part. Depending on what we're studying, we'll take rock samples, perform measurements on volcanic gases, gather data on seismometers, and sometimes make field maps. It's an outdoorsman's dream. Let's say if Yellowstone, for example, erupts. It could severely alter the climate for many, many years and effect everything from agriculture to food chains to infrastructure to climate.

**On the draw of danger.** To me, volcanology is the most dynamic process we have on earth. It's a process where you have the youngest rocks on the earth forming before your eyes. You have beautiful fire fountains; it's amazing to watch and study. There is also an element of danger that has always drawn me. The combination of the aesthetics, the danger, the awesomeness, to me, is the perfect science. It's a good way to spend one's time.

**His advice to aspiring volcanologists.** Volcanology students just getting started shouldn't be afraid to just contact people. Potential advisors want students to show an interest in what they are doing. Reach out and ask them if they're taking a student. Show you're serious and have an active interest. You don't want to just blindly send in an application.

Also, be prepared to be somewhat broke. As a PhD student, you are supported by a research assistantship or by being a teaching assistant. And that's typically earning you between \$14,000 and \$22,000 per year. Usually, PhD students are living off the high teens. But work hard, embrace what you love, and find the opportunities in life. People will put up these walls not to dissuade

you, but to dissuade people who aren't as serious about what they want to accomplish.

*- Jared Marske, PhD, Honolulu, Hawaii*



What it's like to be a Pastry Chef

I was in route to become a doctor like my dad. I'd taken the MCAT after studying biology in undergrad, and before applying to any schools, I felt so unsure about whether I was happy pursuing medicine. When I was little, I always said I wanted to open a bakery, but told myself I had to make money first. But then I wondered, 'Why wait until I'm 40 to do it when I can just start now?'

**How she got her start.** I got an internship at a bakery specializing in wedding cakes and I fell in love with the artistic side of it. My mom technically found me my previous job through an ad in the newspaper. She called my former boss and owner of her own bake shop and told her that her daughter was looking for a job. I was humiliated when I first found out! I was a 26-year-old woman who didn't need her mom arranging interviews for her! I'd been considering opening my own shop right out of school, but I didn't want to take out so many small business loans so quickly. I opened my own shop when I felt ready to take the plunge and I'm happy I waited until I was sure.

**Working on the weekend.** I work six days a week because most weddings are on Saturdays. Saturdays are actually often my favorite part of the whole week because that's when we put the cake in the venue and suddenly everything comes together. It makes all of the hard work up until that point

worth it. Of course, we hope we create something the brides love, but we're never really sure how it all fits together until it's in the venue. That's why delivering the cake is the best.

**Finding her specialty.** With wedding cakes, you really get to do the best of both worlds, the baking and designing. My pastry program was nine months long, split into six weeks of six different courses on various aspects of pastry. One week, we solely focused on bread making, another on cakes, another on plated desserts, and so on. Those nine months were followed by a three-month internship, where students were encouraged to work in a place more aligned with their own personal interests. For me, that was wedding cakes.

**On the unknowns.** In general, each day is always something different, which makes it exciting yet exhausting. Sometimes, it doesn't matter how tired you are, you have to keep working. Usually, we prepare the decorations way ahead of time, so they are dry by the time the actual wedding day arrives. For example, we'll start sugar flowers a month ahead of time if the cake is pretty elaborate. There are times when something goes wrong with the wedding cake after you've already invested so much time in it, like it leans or cracks. It can be frustrating.

**Typical pastry chef life.** Most pastry chefs either work at a restaurant doing plated desserts or in a bakery where they wake up early and make fresh breads. Most wake up early and are done early, but in restaurants, pastry chefs work super late, sometimes until three or four o'clock in the morning. And I'll be honest, the pay isn't great. Especially at the beginning, it can be tough to get by. Owning your own business is the best way to earn more money, but for many people, that can take a while.

**On what motivates her.** I'm inspired by people making incredible works of art who are unknown. Chefs in kitchens who put their pictures on Facebook or Pinterest. I love seeing other people who are working so hard to do the same things I am simply for the love of it.

**Her advice to young pastry chefs.** Don't give up in the beginning. It isn't easy getting hired in those early days because restaurants and bakeries want someone with experience who has proven they have the drive to be successful. But don't give up if you can't find a job at first. Keep looking. You'll end up finding a job. When I'm retired and old, I want to look back and think 'I did something that makes me happy.' And I want to inspire my children to do something that they want to do instead of what they need to do.

*- Alexis Ginsburg Mota, Birmingham, Alabama*



## What it's like to be a Basketball Referee

I've always been a sports fan. Growing up, if I wasn't playing it, I was watching it. I started officiating soccer as a kid, around 10 or so years old, as a way to make some extra money. And it really just evolved from there. The longer I did it, the more people I would meet involved with sports who would say, 'Ok, you're doing soccer. You should consider doing basketball' and so on. And at the time, I never realized I could make a profession out of it.

**What makes someone a good officiator.** These days, anyone interested in officiating as a career should apply to work at a basketball camp or high school tournament. Officiating supervisors run officiating camps that coincide with basketball camps. There you can gauge your officiating abilities and get to know other officials, both personally and professionally. And, at camps, rookie officiators will receive honest assessments and feedback from supervisors and other officials. Camps serve as a testing ground to see if people have what it takes to make a career out of it.

**How to make it as an officiator.** There are three qualities in particular you need to make it in this industry. First, you have to have the ability to make decisions. Second, you need to be an A+ communicator. And third, which goes with the previous two but goes a bit further, you need to absolutely have confidence. Being able to have communication with some of the biggest personalities in basketball is awesome. The fact that I am put in the same forum



and on the same stage as these guys is an honor. The answers I give to their questions effect their lives, so you've got to have confidence in what you say.

**On whether referees are unbiased.** I think many sports fans doubt whether officiators are ever 100% unbiased. When I'm officiating, I truly never care who wins or loses. Typically, referees are the only three people in the arena who don't care who wins. The coaches at times will try and make it seem like we are favoring the other team, but you can't blame them for that. They're always going to defend what they think is right for their team. And I'd say about 90% of the calls we make are pretty easy, obvious type plays. But it's that other 10% that are a little more up in the air. Seen through one team's lens, you can understand how they believe it could have gone either way.

**On players as chess pieces.** The players, although technical fouls are called at times and issues arise on the court, are more focused on a team approach. Rarely have I encountered a player that has left me with an overly negative or overly positive impression. They're pieces in a game of chess. They're sort of pawns. It's the coaches that are moving those pawns.

**On having your work scrutinized.** I've really never been nervous before a game, but I do experience anxiety. I look forward to any game, but obviously some have more of a hype associated with them, which causes anxiety. So many of our calls are really scrutinized. Social media amplifies that scrutiny. Plus, everything we do, including all correct and incorrect calls, is recorded and emailed to us. So once the game is over, some of the real work begins. We have to review certain plays and respond to inquiries from our bosses and that kind of thing. Just because you are off the floor and those two hours officiating are done doesn't mean our work is done. As referees, we don't have anyone out

there defending our actions. We aren't allowed to have a Twitter account and we don't really have a way to tell our story. And that can be difficult.

**On travel woes and wins.** It really is a great career, but during basketball season, we travel basically all of the time. Think about everything associated with weather and airport delays. Some people only experience travel nightmares a few times a year, but I experience those disruptions on a weekly basis. Every year, in the middle of January and February, peak college basketball season, I become jealous and envious of the people who work the traditional nine to fives and have their weekends and holidays off. Those are the times when I could go, 'What am I doing?'. That winter crunch is the toughest mentally and physically. The time away from home, being away from your family, it all really wears on you. But as a sports fan, it's incredible working in some of the most amazing places you see on TV and read about in books. So, on one hand, it is a huge perk of the job, but I also have to go to some not so good places.

**On being in on the action.** I still don't think this is a "real job." There are very few things you can do that interests so many people and that can be so rewarding. To be involved in something this huge can be humbling. It's fun; the roar of the crowd, the affiliation with great basketball; and we always have a great view of the game!

**Advice to aspiring officiators.** I'd say be careful what you ask for. Basically, if you are identified as someone that can handle it and do it, that's great. But be prepared for the travel and scrutiny.

- Anonymous



### What it's like to be a Personal Trainer

I've always been into fitness. When I was little, I watched my mom do aerobics and in middle school, I started reading my sister's Fitness and Shape magazines. I remember watching my brother play sports and noticing the way his shoulders and back would move. I became more and more interested in the way the human body works. I began to use fitness as a way to help me improve at sports. Plus, I'd workout with the guys I dated. We'd do abs of steel or buns of steel. I was always fascinated by how through movement and exercise, you could change your body. By how one person could weigh 250 pounds and then get down to 150 pounds.

**Her background and current role.** I studied exercise science in school, unsure exactly what I'd do. I work for a gym in a corporation. A lot of my time is spent running the gym. I do tedious work like folding towels, making sure soap is everywhere it needs to be, cleaning off the equipment, and other stuff. Then I teach one or two 45-minute exercise classes a day. Ours are a bit shorter because we are at a corporation and people have to get back to work. Aside from that, a lot of my day is spent answering questions about the gym or how the equipment works and educating members about health and fitness.

**The not so fun part of fitness.** The biggest drawback is it's exhausting sometimes not having a typical nine-to-five schedule, but it also comes with the nature of the job. Personal training sessions can happen at strange hours, anywhere from 5:30 a.m. to at 8:00 p.m. And the biggest thing I've had to overcome was my shyness. In this career, you really need to get over your own insecurities and put yourself out there. Being comfortable in front of a large group is part of the gig.

**On what's holding people back.** So many of my clients use the "once this happens..." excuse. They say they will start taking care of themselves once they get through this one project or after this one stressful time. Self-care always comes secondary. I try to bring them to the realization that there will always be something. Taking care of oneself should come first.

**The biggest perk to her job.** It's very rewarding knowing that I'm helping to make a difference in peoples' lives. Some say, "If it wasn't for you, I wouldn't be working out." That's the best kind of payment I get. Watching someone become excited about fitness is the best part of my job.

**Her advice to aspiring personal trainers.** The best advice I ever got, and I tell this to everyone as well, is to dabble in as much as you can. With health and fitness there are so many routes to choose from and if you dabble a bit in everything, you can help more people. If I only golfed, I would only appeal to the golf population. If I was the best spin instructor, I'd be great for Tuesdays at noon, but my gym needs people who can teach all week. So, knowing little bits and pieces of this and that will take you far.

*- Adrian Fleming, Raleigh, North Carolina*



What it's like to be a **Food Truck Owner/Restaurateur**

Growing up in a suburb of New York City, my family and I would always go to paletterias, traditional Mexican popsicle shops. My co-founder, and former roommate, had a similar experience going to authentic pop places with his family in North Carolina.

**The switch to try something cool.** After working on political campaigns in 2007 and 2008, I wasn't having much luck finding a job I felt passionately about. Brian and I decided to start a business together and the first thing we thought of was that there were no Mexican pops in our town. And so, it began.

**The road to food truck ownership.** We began experimenting with recipes around March of 2009 and sold our first pop in July of 2010. When we first started out, we were working full-time jobs, so for all of logistical stuff, (obtaining licenses and meeting with the department of health) one of us had to take the day off work and wait in line to go talk to people. It was a process! I quit my job two months after we sold our first pop. We knew there was no way we would be able to pay anyone a salary anytime soon after starting the business. I left my job with the expectation that I could live for about a year on savings.

On the financial rewards. As a business owner, 'profitable' is difficult to define. Sure, we are making money, but you often want to invest that money back in the business. One of the biggest challenges we face is deciding how much to pay ourselves and how much to invest back in the company.

Unfortunately, there are no detailed 'how-to' guides on starting and running your own business. It is all a learning process. After about a year, we started paying ourselves.

**Starting small.** We started with about \$3,000 from savings between me and Brian. We used that money to buy a pushcart off eBay and some popsicle molds. We've grown the business gradually. We first started out selling pops at a local farmers market because at the time, Brian and I were living together, and it was within walking distance to our apartment. When the first year was going really well, we decided to take all of the money we made from that market to buy an ice cream truck. The truck's best contribution was getting our name out there.

**Food truck trials and tribulations.** To be honest, having a food truck is a bit of a hassle. You get a never-ending stream of parking tickets. You always have to move it depending on traffic. You spend an hour circling around the block after finally finding what you believe to be the perfect spot, and then a cloud will blow over and suddenly no one else wants to buy a popsicle. It can be a pain.

**On their getting a permanent location.** Opening a store is very expensive and requires a massive amount of money for construction, permits, you name it. It's very different from opening a food truck. The cost of opening a restaurant varies, but in total, it cost us about \$200,000. If people come, great. If people don't come, it is not because I parked on the wrong side of the street. Food trucks were really popular when we got our start. Being a part of that whole community allowed us to meet other vendors, an extremely valuable outcome in and of itself. We learned about opening a restaurant and other insider tips like the value of catering, a big part of our business now. We used several sources to

get the sum we needed to open the storefront, including Kickstarter and a loan from the Small Business Association.

**On his advice to aspiring entrepreneurs.** I always give the same advice: start small. Too many entrepreneurs don't understand the basic concepts of business when they begin. We wouldn't be as successful as we are today if we started spending a ton of money in the beginning. Starting small allowed us to gradually grow without worrying about mounds of debt.

*- Roger Horowitz, Washington, D.C.*



### What it's like to be a Professional Dancer

I'd been a competitive figure skater for 10 years. I loved being on the ice, in the gym, and was all around a physical, healthy person. I loved skating because it combined an artistic aspect to the physical endeavor, but after a long struggle, I decided not to compete or train full time and attend college instead. When I started undergrad, I wanted to find a new way to stay in shape, and a friend of mine suggested I try dancing.

**On transitioning away from the ice.** I auditioned for a student group and despite my lack of experience, they invited me to join them. During the winter break of my senior year, I had a huge existential crisis regarding what I would do after graduation. But I kept following this feeling that there was more I wanted to know and more I wanted to learn through dance. I knew that I needed a more rigorous and professional training if I were to really try to dance professionally. After graduation, I studied at the San Francisco Conservatory of Dance for two years. Now, I'm a dancer in Young Ensemble of the Batsheva Dance Ensemble, which is one of the larger dance institutions in Tel Aviv, Israel. My contract with them is for one season, from August until July and hopefully I will continue afterwards. Another year is not a guarantee.



**On dancing's difficult conversations.** Every year in our ensemble there are 'the talks' where the director speaks to you to about the next year and they tell you whether you are going to stay, move up, or be let go. One of the hardest things to cope with is the instability of it all. You could get injured, and your career could be over. Something I've realized is every dancer is completely replaceable. There is the sinking feeling of being replaceable, but at the same time, it is a bit reassuring because there's also a sense that the work is bigger than each individual dancer. Even if it isn't carried out with me, it can be by the cast of dancers. I am a part of something bigger.

**On making his salary work.** A lot of disposable income is not quite so common in the dance world, so many dancers take on work outside of their regular jobs. I get up around 7:00 or 7:30 a.m. every morning and immediately do a bit of work for a part-time job to help afford flights home and save a little bit of money on the side.

**On managing fatigue while listening to his body.** I really do enjoy the constant exertion and effort of being a dancer. Also, this job keeps me healthy because you really are required to eat well and sleep well as part of the professional routine. You learn to listen to and take care of your body. While I'm so grateful to do this, there are moments where it can feel like any other job. I think that can be really disheartening for dancers especially because many of us give up so much for it. You go into it with so much excitement and idealism, but it is physically draining, intellectually draining, and emotionally draining. And you can get so tired. But to feel exhausted by the end of the day is a good sign.

**On connecting effort to pleasure.** I've learned to love exhaustion. Something our director says is, "Connect to your effort. Connect to your pleasure. Connect your effort to your pleasure." I love my job in the way you

love a person. You have your fights and you have your amazing moments and the moments you remember and others that feel a little dull. But there is something that runs deeper and stronger than all of that and it runs through your whole story.

**His advice to aspiring dancers.** My advice always is learn to love to work hard and really find pleasure in it. If you don't love the work, you're going to be sweating and feeling miserable. Find mentors and people to talk to who are really interesting and smart. See a lot of work. See a lot of dance. Expose yourself to a lot of voices inside and outside of dance. Know that you can push your body to crazy places you didn't know it could go. Chances are there is someone out there better than you and more flexible than you. Keep knowing there is more you can gain and more you can explore. But also keep in mind there is so much life outside of dance. Use the outside world to help improve your performance, but keep in mind that this is one art form. There is so much life outside of it.

*– Kelvin Vu, Tel Aviv, Israel*



### What it's like to be a Mechanic

Growing up, I thought I wanted to be a pediatrician, but I was always working on mine and my friends' cars for fun. The passion I developed for cars and racing took over the passion I had for medicine. I didn't get the same spark from medicine as I did working with cars. It was a hard decision to leave that behind and start something new, and the change was gradual. But I was honest with myself and said, "Follow what you like and follow your passion."

**On the long hours.** I work ten hours a day, but I am happy. It's not like I am just working, working, working all day either. I might be sitting on a computer looking up information. Or I might be driving a car or fixing a part, so it's not like ten hours of breaking my back. I think I work more than the normal person, but I don't complain about that.

**On diagnosing cars.** Being a mechanic means you're a doctor and other times you're a detective. Cars never stop surprising me. Things often break that really aren't supposed to break. The engine of a brand-new car, barely off the lot, can break out of nowhere. So many times, it's like, "No way? Really?" Working with luxury vehicle customers, they have higher standards than your average customer, so you have to deal with that. Otherwise, this is the perfect job for anyone obsessed with cars.

**On what drives him.** Helping customers makes me feel good.

Sometimes, customers just don't know how to use their cars and so I go to them and just explain it, and they are so appreciative. It's great. They feel like they've discovered a new car. And they'll sometimes be like, "Oh man, can you show me what this car can do?" And I like racing cars and all that, so I'll take them off-roading or to a closed track and push the car almost to the limit and they're like, "Oh, I didn't know my car could do that! That's awesome!" I get to drive \$120,000 cars that I could never afford in real life. That's one of the real reasons I love working for a luxury vehicle company. I love being around really nice cars.

**On purchasing a new vehicle.** One common mistake people make is not test driving the car. So many car customers only drive the car around the parking lot and then buy it. Then down the road, after a few months, they realize they hate the car. They don't like it. I always tell people, get in the car, and adjust the seat how you want it. Play with everything. Take it on the highway and around the city. Drive it slow; drive it fast. Don't think, "Oh it's just a city car." Think about all the times you will really use it. Also, I would say 85% of the cars I work on have low tire pressure. Most cars, usually on the driver's door, have a sticker with a bunch of useful information on it, including front and rear tire pressure directions. Almost every car has that!

**Tires and tribulations.** Another common mistake is people don't research how much they are going to spend on gas or tires. With some SUVs, with a big V8 engine, the tires last about 15,000 miles. And four tires on those cars can cost around \$4,000. People usually drive 12,000 to 15,000 miles a year.

**On getting an education.** I went to an automotive program for a year and a half, but even now we're required to do periodic online training every time there's a new car or a part or whatever. I always tell people getting into this field

that you have to keep an open mind and keep improving yourself because there is always more to learn.

**His advice to aspiring mechanics.** Make sure you like it before you become a mechanic. Don't just become one for a paycheck, because you will hate it. You have to be the kind of person who really, really loves to work on cars. It's what we do for many hours every single day. If that doesn't sound crazy to you, then you might love it, too.

- *Manuel Mota, Birmingham, Alabama*



What it's like to be a **veterinarian**

I felt that same passion for animals and desire to be a veterinarian a lot of people feel when they're younger. For me, it never faded. In high school, I worked in a veterinary clinic and became fascinated with the medical aspects of the practice as well. A prerequisite for admittance into veterinary school is that you have to clock 500 veterinary hours before you even apply. Schools do this because they don't want you to be surprised by what daily life as a vet entails.

**On daily life in a veterinary clinic.** Every day in the clinic differs from the next. When I see a new animal, I first perform a physical exam to help me understand how sick the pet is. Sometimes we need to go right to treatment. I might run some lab work or take X-rays. An equally important part of the visit is treatment which is why having a knack for science and its components like pathology and biology is important. Oftentimes, the more organizational tasks fall on the shoulders of the veterinarians, too. At some larger practices, vets only diagnose and perform surgery, but the smaller mom and pop shops are more so run by the vets. They are responsible for the managerial and financial aspects of staying in business.

**On considering owning her own practice.** I will say, I'd earn more money if I owned my own clinic. As a mother and wife, I often ask myself, "Do I want to raise a family and raise a practice at the same time?" It's a huge commitment of time and money. I know veterinarians who do both and do a great job. But it is a big decision and one that your whole family needs to support. And the financial implications of owning your own practice are huge. Unfortunately, we're in a lawsuit happy world right now. Many clinics went under during the recession, too. The economy actually does have a big impact on how much people are able to take care of their pets. Not everyone can afford the same level of care.

**On the overlooked aspects of veterinary medicine.** I was so driven to become a veterinarian and so excited to work with animals, I figured I would work out the time and money part later. They're two things easily overlooked. The amount of student loan debt most DVMs accrue is pretty steep and we don't start out making a whole lot. Certainly, you can plug in some part-time hours at a veterinary hospital or 24-hour facility to make extra money, but of course, that means less time with your family.

**On the mystery of pets.** Even though this is a job about animals, it requires people skills! The coworkers or the humans attached to their animals can complicate my daily practices. Yes, there are things that happen with animals that aren't good—euthanasia or dogs with not-so-nice temperaments—but those are the kinds of things you learned to prepare yourself for in school. But pets can't speak for themselves. You're relying on the owner to speak for them. The mental process of putting together pieces of information to recognize where the animal is coming from is so fascinating to me. And it goes without saying those puppy or kitten appointments make your heart melt.

**Her advice to aspiring veterinarians.** One of the best things people can do is get into a veterinary clinic, either through volunteering or part-time work, to be sure it's truly a good fit. Shadow as much as you can. Speak with some veterinarians who are able to talk openly about their careers and are able to provide some mentoring about those tough times. As a student, I probably would have made more of a financial plan. It is important to think, "If I already have student loan debt and I am going to accrue \$100,000 more, how much will I need to make when I graduate? Will I want to live off of "x" amount of dollars per year? Is it worth it to me?" For me, it absolutely was. But of course, it's always good to go into these sorts of things with eyes wide open.

- *Anonymous*





What it's like to be a Pilot

My dad was a private pilot so I guess you could say that the flying gene was sort of hereditary for me. I decided to make it my full-time career when I was pretty young, maybe in my teens. I received my bachelor's degree in geology and went on to get my MBA, although it wasn't necessary. Most major airlines require a college degree, although many regional level companies don't. If pilots want to advance beyond the regional level though, which most do, a degree is required, although it doesn't matter what you study. Airlines just want to know you are educated.

**On pursuing flight school.** The training for each aircraft and airline company varies widely, but like anything else, receiving your flight certifications takes time and effort. The first step is obtaining your private flying license. With that, you can fly small aircraft when the weather conditions are just right. After that, you work toward subsequent certificates allowing you to fly in the clouds, operate larger planes, and so on. Typically, to fly at the commercial level, earning all of the certifications takes about four years. And you have to fly a certain number of hours, or clock in the right amount of 'flight time,' before becoming eligible to work for a private/corporate operator. There are numerous hoops to jump through though up until that point.

**On first getting started as a pilot.** My first job out of flight school was with a commercial airline and I stayed with them for six years. When you're working for a commercial airline, your schedule is more predictable but sometimes quite grueling. Your hours improve with seniority, but in general, commercial pilots fly three to four days a week. They fly many flights a day, clocking in 16- or 17-hour shifts. And you don't stay in the nicest hotels. When you're entry level, you're on standby 20 to 22 days a month and pretty often called in to fly with very little advance notice. Because you're junior at that point, you're paid less. It is a tough life at first. In the beginning you really have to put your nose to the grindstone.

**On his current role as a pilot and a businessman.** Right now, I work for a private company that makes business jets. Most of our clients are high-net-worth individuals and corporations. My job is to show our clients what it's like to own one of our aircrafts. During my days, and sometimes nights, I fly around with potential buyers and tell them about the ins and outs of our airplanes, how they fly, how high, how fast, how they compare to other jets, and so on. Today we're in London.

**On the travel perks.** They're great! If the clients want to test drive it to the Bahamas, we'll take them. Or sometimes my job is to pick up one of our jets in a certain country and fly it to the next place to meet with another potential buyer. If one of our jets is in Korea, I will fly there, pick it up, take it to Dubai, then I'll take it wherever in the world the jet needs to be. My job is fairly uncommon. Most private pilots work for one owner or a charter company. Only about 100 of us are working in my arena. I literally get to see the world. One thing I'm always surprised by is how although the world is filled with wonder, it seems smaller and more connected than I imagined.

**On the drawbacks to an aviator's life.** It's a lot of time away from home. I'm gone sometimes two weeks a month. Sure, we'll fly a long day then go out to dinner together in some of the world's most amazing cities, but you notice there is no perfect place with zero problems. Every place has its ups and downs. Plus, it's a strain on the family. We work long hours. Some of the airplanes we fly can go 12 hours nonstop. We're talking New York to Greece. It's a long way to go. Not to mention going through multiple time zone changes, 6, 7, or 8 hours, twice a month.

**On the uneven pace.** We do have autopilot, so on a 12-hour flight, we use that quite a bit. If we're flying over the Atlantic or Pacific Ocean, we will go for long spans of time without any radar coverage, meaning no one is monitoring you for that period. It constantly keeps you busy. Sometimes we'll have a 20-minute lull after 40 minutes of pace to eat and relax a bit. Hopefully you are part of a good crew so the work is shared and you can relax a bit.

**His advice for aspiring pilots.** I would encourage someone interested in flying to get a degree they can use outside of aviation in case this career doesn't work out or you decide it's not what it is cracked up to be. And of course, before beginning the certification process, make sure you are passionate about flying and aviation. The road that leads you to a nice career isn't always so smooth. It takes time and effort. Don't lose sight. There is light at the end.

- Anonymous



What it's like to be a *High School Teacher*

I actually did my best to stay out of education. My mom is a teacher and my dad was a football coach for a while. Both worked with kids a lot. I love them but wanted to do my own thing. In college, I wanted to be a lawyer, so I got an internship at a law firm. I was behind a stack of papers all day and the atmosphere was so black and white. I've never been able to live a black and white kind of life and decided that wouldn't work for me. Plus, I volunteered as a little league baseball coach and really loved it. I realized I had a talent for explaining things to youth. So, despite my best efforts to fight it, I decided teaching actually was for me after all.

**On understanding his students.** I teach video production to twelve- and fourteen-year-olds. My school is about as diverse as one can be. We have about six to eight hundred students in total and 80% receive free and reduced lunch and about 10-15% of our kids are special needs. About 10% of our school's population didn't speak English when they first came to the United States. Some years we've had kids from thirty different countries speaking twenty different languages. On one of my first days on the job, a fellow teacher joked, "You

don't have to learn them all in the first week." It opens your eyes and gives you a better understanding of all aspects to life.

**On how he differs from his students.** I grew up in a two-parent household. We were never rich, but we always had everything we needed. My parents were really conservative with how we spent our money and what we could do. No ear piercings, no tattoos. So, going to college and getting a job was fairly easy for me, having that family structure with parents always pushing me to do my best. So many people don't have that. I constantly have to jump into the shoes of so many different students.

**On the diversity of backgrounds.** Some kids in my class come to us straight from refugee camps and sit next to other students who have no idea what goes on outside of our small town. One of my former students, she's in college now, but when she was in my class she had been kicked out of her house once because her mom thought she was a goody two shoes. She was actually punished for studying and being a high achiever. I had another student who has a really good heart, despite the fact that he was born in a prison. We really can't leave these kids behind.

**On teaching as a calling.** In some ways, teaching is a moral issue. It has to be a mission. You are trying to make a difference in people's lives, which honestly is something we as teachers easily lose sight of with the amount of standardized testing we do. We are forced to increasingly prioritize having our kids to pass math and language arts tests and we aren't always rewarded for helping the kids develop a sense of character and self-confidence.

**The misconceptions about his students.** When you talk about inner city public schools in general, people think we have a bunch of hoodlums running around and we are dealing with fights and gangs. My friends used to always ask,

"Any fights at school this week?" People think I work in this scary place full of scary of people when in reality, the vast majority of our students are really good kids. A little recognition goes a long way, and I feel that, too. I've had students call me 'dad' because I am the most 'fatherly' figure in their lives. It makes me feel like I matter. Wow, I am having a moment talking about this, because it has been a tough year. I think I am going to need a breather. I mean, even this year, our football team, who's had one win in the past two years, already has four wins this year alone. The players are just so excited and so proud. That is my pay.

**His advice for aspiring teachers.** If you want money, go and become an accountant or engineer or something that will make you some. By 7:20 a.m. every morning students are at my door. I typically do two to three hours of work a night, too. Around 11:00 p.m., at my wife's request, I usually call it a night. Certain teachers have found a way to make the job relatively easy. My story isn't unusual though. So many of my colleagues are working up until 11:00 at night, either grading papers or preparing lesson plans. If you want to do this job, do it for the mission aspect. You actually can change people's lives for the better.

- *Anonymous*



### What it's like to be a Registered Nurse

I went to college actually wanting to be a lawyer. I was a religion major and I took this class called 'The History of American Catholicism' where we discussed how cool nuns were when they built our hospital system in America. That class brought something out in me. It combined my nerdy love of science with real tangible service. I need instant gratification and to see what I am doing on a day-to-day basis. With nursing, you generally do see this. I would have been a terrible attorney.

**On the pace and stakes of OBGYN hospital life.** I work in a labor and delivery unit. I work 12-hour shifts where basically, I'm in charge of one or two patients while they're in active labor. The nature of labor and delivery is that it's either feast or famine. A lot of time, it will be a little slow, then it seems as if 10 women will walk in ready to push their babies out. And the more I do this, the more I realize how much has to go right in childbirth. It makes you wonder, "What the heck happened in the 1600s? How did everyone live?"

**On nursing's sacrifices.** One reason I like labor and delivery is because generally we have happy outcomes. Some people never can quite master the art keeping their emotions at bay, and I think that's why nursing has such a high burnout rate. The odd hours are really obnoxious, plus we work holidays and weekends. When I told my husband I was doing this interview, he told me to

make sure to say that working night shifts hurts our sex life. Ha! But on the other hand, the schedule can be nice most of the time, because, you know, you can have a 4-day vacation without actually taking a vacation.

**On the long days.** I'm often so tired. People forget nursing is a very physical job. Which is a good thing, because I wouldn't want to sit at a desk for 12 hours. But when I worked in intensive care, I would be so sore from moving bodies around. You come home and you are not only emotionally exhausted, but physically so.

**The most gratifying part of her work.** I love being able to explain to a family or patient what is going on with their health in terms they actually understand. Sometimes it is very tough to take care of both people and families in the hospital, so I just try to picture them as my grandpa, like, "How would you want your grandpa to be treated and how would you want someone to talk to you on the shittiest day of your life?" The golden rule inspires me. You try to make it a little better for people.

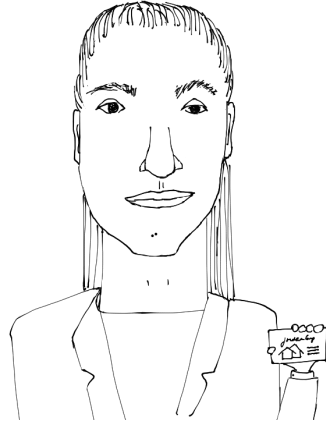
**Her life's greatest motivation.** I just want to be a respectable, good person. I want to go to work, come home, and feel good about what I've done. And I like earning my own living. I had a period of time for a month or two where I wasn't working. And I remember feeling so worthless. I hated not making my own money. Hated it. And my friend put a quote on Facebook that said self-care is a divine responsibility. And I think for women, people, anyone in general, feeling self-sufficient and able to take care of yourself, whether you're in a relationship or not, it creates a connection to your soul. It feels fed.

**Her advice for aspiring nurses.** Nursing is a great job, all things considered. It is not for everyone. You have to have a decent amount of confidence and not be too squeamish. Oh, and I would recommend nursing



students pursue at least a four-year nursing degree over the two-year programs, because I think there is just so much to learn and it is so difficult to squeeze it all into two years. Having a strong background in anatomy, physiology, and pharmacology really helps, granted, like many jobs, the best training you can get is actually doing the job. Oh! And you have to be OK with poop! That's important! f

*- Amanda Donaldson, Nashville, Tennessee*



### What it's like to be a Commercial Real Estate Agent

I was working at sushi place in 2006 as a bar manager and there was this guy who always came in at very odd hours, like 3 or 4 o'clock in the afternoon. He would always sit at the bar. One day, I approached him saying, "If you don't mind me asking, what are you doing?" He said he was working on a project, a restaurant-slash-hotel. He said, "It's huge. I am a developer and I do real estate." And then he showed me what the project was. And I thought, "Hmm, that's cool. Maybe one day we will meet up."

**On a surprising twist of fate.** About two or three years later, I was looking at opening a restaurant on my own. I had been waiting tables for 10 or 11 years and was ready to take that next step. When I met with one developer, I realized it was the same guy from the sushi restaurant a few years back! Eventually, I decided I wanted to work with him to make the project happen instead of opening my own place. What he was doing with the space was really in sync with what I envisioned to be a cool spot. I still work in a restaurant waiting tables to earn extra cash while I build my commercial real estate portfolio, so both jobs help me get by.

**On obtaining proper licensing.** Getting my real estate license took me two and a half months to complete. I went three days a week and worked my restaurant shifts around that. It was very rigorous, though. It's like taking a semester of college in two months. I love school, so I thought it was great. I'd graduated from college ten years before and loved being back in the classroom. The entire real estate program at the school where I went to in Durham was on paper \$400, but at the end of the day, I probably ended up spending \$600 to \$700 including everything the cost of books, notebooks, and all of that stuff.

**On his daily responsibilities.** Now, I basically help business owners look for properties. Sometimes I'll sit at my computer and look for them online, but I really love driving around and seeing places for myself. I'm currently helping a husband and wife looking to open a yoga and physical therapy studio. Another one of my clients is a woman who does hospice out of her garage which she's outgrowing and needs a new space. I'm working with a friend of mine who started a distillery. He makes homemade honey moonshine. He just signed a deal for national distribution and is outgrowing his space, so he's looking for a new one.

**On earning an income.** The only thing about real estate brokerage is you work on commission. If you make transactions happen, you make money. If you don't, you don't. So, when you first start off, you aren't making a dime until something actually goes down and someone signs on the dotted line. The more property listings you can get, the better. At the same time, if I bring a bunch of buyers to the table, that's great too.

**On misconceptions about his job title.** When I say, "I'm in commercial real estate" people think, "Oh! This guy is rich!" And it's not the case at all. Just like when someone says, "Oh, I'm a doctor!" people think that guy is rich. I think

you get a certain kind of respect for it, which is cool, but it's like any profession. Until you put the time and money and work in, you don't get paid.

**On arriving to his career later in life.** People ask if I wish I had gotten into real estate 10 years ago, but I know I wouldn't have appreciated it like I do now. I'm so excited about what I'm doing. Plus, it gives me the flexibility to dabble in other arenas that I've always had interest in. I wouldn't change it for anything.

**His advice for aspiring real estate agents.** Reach for your full potential. Know you can always be better no matter what you do. Try and be the best you can possibly be, in real estate or wherever you may be!

- *Anonymous*



What it's like to be a Shaman

I received my real calling to become a shaman in 1999, but I didn't know it at the time. I was in high school sitting in my Latin American history class and my appendix burst. I ended up staying in the hospital for a month and a half due to all of the infections. At one point, the infection was so heavy they had to open me up and wash my intestines by hand. During the whole time, I was never nervous or sad, but I could hear things at night. I could hear people walking around my bed and talking. When I told my mother this, she figured they were angels who were coming, you know, to take me away. Thankfully, I recovered.

**On revisiting the memory years later.** I went to college in the United States where I was a typical undergrad student. I attended fraternity parties and had the whole college experience. When I graduated, I got a regular nine to five job like anyone else and I found it to be not so fulfilling. So, I decided to open that hospital memory back up. And through speaking with different people, I ended up meeting Elberto Ellyoro through friends and he invited me to his school, the Four Winds Society, which is an energy-level school. I graduated with a degree in Energy Medicine and soon thereafter went to Peru and studied with a shaman. That was my real emersion.

**On defining shamanism.** The term 'shaman' means the person who can see in the dark. In shamanology, there are three worlds: the middle, upper, and lower. We live in the middle world. We shamans journey outside of the middle world for our clients. It's a journey that takes place through meditation. I will enter into that altered state of consciousness through the rhythm. They have done some tests that show how rhythm sort of taps into the brainwaves. I think that has something to do with it. Most fundamentally, the shaman consults his or her spirit guide, or totem, to see how we can help the client through energetic interventions.

**On how he sees clients.** I have a private office where I see clients one-on-one in San Jose. I have a small school called Mountains Threshold where I teach shamanistic classes in Costa Rica. We also lead pilgrimages to Peru for anyone who wants to come and meet some shamans and partake in more traditional ceremonies. I'm writing a book to start getting some literature out there, so I have a few projects happening right now.

**On integrating shamanism and western medicine.** I always appreciate being able to talk to my client's doctors. Most of my clients are working with a psychologist or a physician while they are working with me, so we will shoot emails back and forth. I don't want someone with cancer to just see me. I want them to be seeing an oncologist, too. I hesitate when someone says, "I am tired of doctors and want to only work with you." I don't like to work with that kind of mentality. A lot of people believe my field rejects modern medicine, and that may be okay for some, but I know western medicine exists for a reason.

**On dual treatment approaches.** You'd be surprised about how many doctors are open to working with a shaman. I had a patient who was dying from a brain tumor and I spoke with his doctor and he said, "Great, I am going to be

doing this, this, and this, and when you see him, work on his blood pressure, temperature, make sure he stays within these ranges.” That doctor has seen what energy medicine can do and knows it could help ease his patient’s pain, in this case, as he prepares to die.

**Common symptoms amongst his patients.** I’d say most of the people I work with are conquering self-doubt, fear, and issues they have with themselves. And they’ll project that onto someone else and my job is to bring it back to them. As many of my clients are dealing with depression, they’re also seeing a psychologist and on pills, but also need something else. Another pretty common client is someone who is dealing with cheating. I’m seeing a couple now, a husband and wife, and they’ve asked me to remove the bad energy that was left behind by the cheating, which I can do.

**On treating physical ailments.** I recently had a client come in with gout. He had been to his doctors and had all of the medicine and couldn’t get rid of it. He couldn’t even sleep under his sheets because the feeling in his toe was too painful. By the end of his first session, he left my office without needing his crutches. By the end of three sessions, he was completely fine. It was so exciting to see an impact at that level. I had another client whose hands were always falling asleep and by the end of the first session he could feel them again. Those moments are confidence boosters. And those are one session or two session things.

**On splitting energy.** Sometimes, I can physically see someone’s physical energy. I once had a woman come in and I said, “It’s like your energy is divided in two.” She said, “That’s because I have a parallel relationship, one with my husband and one with someone else.” And I said, “That is your problem. Love is

infinite, but your energy isn't. When it is divided into two people, that's what you can expect."

**His greatest goal.** The one thing I would ask is that people realize God is not just in heaven, but all around. And through meditation, or breathing mechanisms, you can connect. God is everywhere. And we're all connected, too. The shaman says no person is alone. We are all part of the interconnected web. Anytime you touch someone's life, some dew will fall off the web and you will affect all other people, too.

**His advice to aspiring shamans.** Take a workshop or a class or speak with a shaman and see if it's really right for you. I tell people, "If you don't like your job, there is no way you are going to do it right. You are not going to be good at it. You need to be satisfied on the mental and spiritual level." I never thought I could do anything like this. I didn't have the confidence to think this could work. I used to love seeing shows about other people making things work. I just didn't think I'd be one of them. Also, for me, being an adult is a lot easier than I ever thought. I'd see my dad stress out about doing taxes or this or that and I thought being an adult would suck. And I just think you know, it's your approach. My dad will still tell me, "Life is hard. Life is suffering." That's his problem. For me, it's not that way.

*- Mauricio Bruce, San Jose, Costa Rica*





### What it's like to be a Pipefitter

Both of my parents worked at the same plant. It's where they met. My mom quit when she had me, but my dad was there until he retired. He has a college education but realized he could make more money in manufacturing, so he stayed. My uncle was there as well. I definitely saw the perks of factory life while I was growing up. You go to work, clock in, and once you leave you don't have to take any work home with you. So, I tried it out for myself and 17 years later, I'm still there. I met my husband there, too. We call it factory love.

**On what she helps build.** Basically, when you see a big pick-up truck, we build and brand those. My day is a little different than those who work on the assembly line or 'the line' as we say, because I'm a maintenance person. If something breaks down, like one of the robots that paints the trucks stops working, I go fix it. I'm also responsible for fixing anything that has to do with air pressure, water, liquids, steam, or pipefitting. My husband is on the line and he's been there for 20 years. He is what they call a 'Team Leader.' He has a group of eight people on his team who work on the line all day.

**On the repetitive assignments.** Being on the line takes a special type of person. You do one specific task, every single day, over and over. On average, at our factory, once every 48 seconds a truck or a carrier goes by, all together

totaling 500 trucks per shift. That means you have to do your job 500 times or one time every 48 seconds for eight hours every single day. It takes a certain kind of personality to be okay with that sort of repetition. I've seen some people be like, "It drives me crazy. I will go insane." It also is very physical because obviously you have to stand, so you are on your feet for eight or nine hours a day. That's hard. We're doing some pretty serious labor.

**On the physical toll.** Even sitting down to rebuild a part, which is something I often do, can take its toll on my body. My husband and I were diagnosed with carpal tunnel in our early 30s. We would wake up in the middle of the night and our hands would be asleep. We have back issues, shoulder issues, you name it. I would like anyone who says autoworkers are lazy to do our job for a week. And I want to hear them say we don't deserve our pay and benefits. They will see we absolutely do. We aren't sitting around all day eating Bonbons, that's for sure.

**On the perks of unionizing.** Being involved in the United Automobile Workers (UAW) and having the benefits they bargained for us is [great](#). It's definitely a family atmosphere. I serve as Recording Secretary of our local union which has over 4,300 members. We refer to each other as brother and sister. Not always in day-to-day conversations, but sometimes we do because that is who we are. My Union, the UAW, has taught me how to be an activist for people without a voice. To fight for fair wages no matter what your background, your sex, or your skin color is. I love to tell people about the way it could be if we all stick together and work as a team towards a common goal. It's what unions are all about. Because in our world, you really do have to look out for one another.

**On strength in numbers.** The sense of community is much stronger than I thought. My dad wasn't as active in the UAW as me and my husband are, but we

appreciate the sense of family and that we are all in this together. And activism. I didn't realize I would be so involved. I never thought I would do something like that, but you know, it's to all of our benefit. Thinking of yourself as an activist for working people, it makes you feel really good about yourself. It isn't just about me going to work, it is about everyone and everyone's rights.

**Her advice to aspiring pipefitters.** Make sure you find a place with a union! United we stand, divided we fall.

*- Amy Houston, Fort Wayne, Indiana*



### What it's like to be a Car Hauler

I'd been getting laid off, again and again and I was just tired of it. I didn't like going from job to job. To be honest with you, I first was drawn to driving mostly for the money and because I found out it's a pretty stable career. I saw an ad in the newspaper. Actually, the newspaper was full of ads for driving jobs. I answered one of them and started working pretty soon thereafter. There's a shortage of drivers in the United States. Companies need more of us. Before, I was always the one on the hunt, worried about how I said things in interviews and dressing properly. And with truck driving, it's the other way around. I never had a job that begs you to work for them. It's all about what they can offer you. I've been doing it now for probably about ten years.

**On his life behind the wheel.** I'm usually on the road Monday through Friday, with a stop in between at home for one or two days a week. I'm almost always home on the weekends. I might go load my truck on a Saturday, but that doesn't take too long. When I'm on the road, I usually get up from the hotel in the early morning, go get in my truck, and then I drive for ten hours a day, making between one and seven deliveries each shift. I don't drive clear across the United States. It's usually within a four-state radius outside of my home state.

I also spend about four hours a day doing other work, like loading and unloading the truck. So typically, I do have full fourteen-hour days.

**On his truck.** My truck doesn't even have a passenger seat. It's really small because I'm a car hauler and I try to maximize the number of cars I can hold. Depending on the size of the vehicle, I haul between seven to ten cars and trucks per load. It is like a puzzle. I try to fit as many on my trailer as I can to maximize each trip.

**On the nerve wrecking nature of his work.** A huge part of my job is unloading each car or truck extremely carefully. We have all sorts of buttons and levers that need to be pressed at just the right time and at just the right angle to ensure everything unloads properly. I'm always at risk of damaging, or worse destroying, one or all of the vehicles. If you're tired or not with it and you're pulling the wrong lever, one car could crush another vehicle in a matter of seconds. The worst part of my job is loading and unloading the vehicles. It's nerve-racking! I once hauled 10 corvettes from Bulling Green, Kentucky. That is like \$60 or \$70,000 per vehicle! Also, if a car's scratched or messed up because of dust or rain, we get written up. A rock chip coming out of a dump truck? That's my fault. It's crazy.

**On how he stays awake on the road.** I hate coffee. I don't like it; I don't even like pop. I usually call people on the phone to pass the time, like my family and friends. That is how I keep my mind busy. I also listen to satellite radio, but sometimes you can't help but to feel exhausted, so you have to pull over and take a nap. A little 30-minute nap does amazing things. For me, it is all about the quicker I can get home that day or get my week over with, the better. I always try and push as fast as I can to get down the road quicker to see my family.

**On his number one goal.** All I'm trying to do is support my family. Every day though, it does get harder to be away from the house and family. I recently adopted my stepchild, Ashton, and boy do I miss him. He's four now and you know kids that age. They're like static cling. He'll get up in the morning and cry for daddy. When I'm home and he knows I am about to leave, he has a really tough time. I'll settle him down a little bit before I walk out the door, but that is the toughest part. It is really hard leaving that. I just love him so much.

Seeing him smile when I come home is what drives me. His not worrying about where he is going to get his next meal or what clothes he is going to wear or what house he is going to live in. Knowing he is secure and safe and stable. He is going to be set up and have the stuff that he needs. He might not have a dad every night, but I am home sometimes during the week and always on the weekends. I try not to push so hard that he has all the money in the world, but no dad. I do enough so he has security and me, too.

**His advice to aspiring car haulers.** Make sure you look at the guaranteed home time the various companies offer because if you are making big money but missing home, you aren't going to last. I don't care how much money you are making. Some of these guys are out seven weeks at a time or even for months and months. They might earn a big check, but what is the point if you are never at home to enjoy it? Some companies can offer you the world, but that doesn't matter if your life is at home.

- Anonymous



### What it's like to be a Massage Therapist

My dad had been a massage therapist in Russia and continued to practice when we moved to the United States, so I was very much exposed to it almost my entire life. I knew I would have to get a part-time job in high school and figured I could work at Hollister or McDonalds, or I could take a year learning to do something a little more involved. So, I became certified as a high school junior and I've been doing it for about ten years.

**On how she got started as a massage therapist.** I first worked in a gym part time because I wasn't confident in my skills and because I was only 17; spas wouldn't hire me. Once I turned 18 and graduated high school, I was hired by a spa and started working full time. I really loved it. Being a massage therapist is a great career for anyone who cares about people and making a difference.

**On daily life in a spa.** At most franchise spas, you see anywhere from about eight one-hour massages or six 1.5-hour massages a day and then go home. The first few years it was tough, but you develop endurance. Such a big portion of massage is body mechanics instead of actual strength. If you know the proper way of doing things, you aren't going to get hurt or wear yourself out. Definitely having enough protein to replenish energy is part of it. But I could give massages for 11 or 12 hours a day and it wouldn't bother me or make a big impact on my body.

**On her low stress requirements.** It is a calm job. Sure, like anywhere, you're bound to have kinks and stumbles along the way, but if you can find a way to leave that behind and not bring that in the room with you, it's wonderful and relaxing. Chances are, you're working in a warm, dark room with candles, and relaxing music. And the person you are working on is melting all over the table because of what you're doing. It is such a low stress job when you think about it that way.

**On the power of connection.** For me, connecting is very important. You make a lot of friends in the field if you want to. You don't have to, but I've allowed myself to open up, so I probably have made ten lifelong friends because I wasn't afraid to just talk to them. Sometimes my clients end up crying on the table and hugging me, and end up leaving without the emotional burdens or physical stress.

**On body familiarity.** I can tell within 15 minutes of the session what they do for a living and how they spend most of their time. I can also tell when the last time they got a massage. I'm pretty accurate; usually never off by more than a couple of weeks. You can feel for how long people have been neglecting themselves. It's like medicine. One treatment often doesn't do the trick, so we will suggest clients come back once a week or so for several weeks. Also, many health insurance policies cover massage therapy now. One of my clients has 52 massages a year 100% covered through his insurance.

**On confidence and sacrifices.** There has never been a day in my life where I thought, "Why did I choose to do this?" That has never ever gone through my head. But the hours and the pay are what prevent me from living my most fulfilling life. One of the biggest sacrifices I make is working during the



weekends. And my husband works weekdays and for a while we would only get every other Sunday together.

**On self-care as a priority.** I have so many clients who are 35 and in pain. They'll say, "Oh, I'm just getting old." But really, I'm like, "Oh, no you aren't. We can work on this. We can make it better." I've also learned about the importance of positivity, especially coming from a where I do in Russia, where we didn't have much. We learned to value family and take care of our things. Self-care is just as important.

**Her advice to aspiring massage therapists.** You have to want to care for people. When a client walks into your room, for that hour or however long, they are going to want to be treated like they are the most important thing in your life. Realize that your time together is to help them. The other thing is accepting constructive criticism. I have met a lot of therapists who refuse to listen to someone trying to offer their help. But because they are set in their ways and are unwilling to change, they blame failures on their client or someone else. You can't blame other people for things you are doing.

*- Eleonor "Elli" Vanover, Auburn, Indiana*



What it's like to be a Wall Street Banker

Since I was a kid, I had always found myself driven toward numbers. They stuck in my head easily. Whether it was math or sports statistics or box scores, I loved them all. Then, when I was in high school, my parents, understanding this, introduced me to books by Warren Buffet and other investors. I absorbed everything I could about finance from that point onward. Movies also have a big influence on my life. A few really got me interested in the markets. One was the original Wall Street and the other a film called Pi. The director, Darren Aronofsky, is pretty popular now. Sure, they are a stylized version of what happens on 'Wall Street,' but it's what sucked me in.

**On his daily routine.** My day generally starts around 7 a.m. I have a market space position where basically my job is to understand what is happening in the market and come up with strategy or market intelligence or business intelligence and inform the salespeople. I'll assess how certain products do under the existing conditions and suggest ways for salespeople to pitch those products to their clients. My role is pretty time sensitive. I mean, timing is hugely important in the markets. If you are a minute or even few seconds late, you will miss a market move and potentially lose a lot of money.

**On Wall Street verses Main Street.** Many of the clients we deal with are large institutions responsible for managing money from people on 'Main Street.' I'm talking about teacher and steelworker pensions funds, 401k's of small business employees, and many other investment types. Not to mention, when you pay for car insurance or health insurance, those companies reinvest your premiums in the stock market. They give us money and ask us to help them maximize its value. They rely on us to be their entry into the market because they can't invest that money directly. We are absolutely the middlemen. When they make money, we make money. And we take on their risk profiles.

**On the importance of connections.** When some people begin to study finance, they put a lot of emphasis on the quantitative portion of it, like understanding the mathematics and numbers, and that is absolutely an important quality, but I know so many people that aren't good with numbers but are good at connecting with people and do really well here. This industry is all about relationships. It continues to stun me. Just being able to shoot the shit and have small talk and speak to anyone gets you far.

**The obvious perk of working in finance.** There is no way with only an undergrad degree I would be making this type of money anywhere else. Every bank has tiers. Generally speaking, you begin as an analyst and then if that goes well, you'll move to an associate and receive a 20% increase in salary. After associate, you'll be a VP and get another 20% increase on top of that. From there onwards, you'll either be a managing director or executive director and that is big money. Like seven figures. Bonuses can be big. But I should underscore that it can change at any moment. It is totally a variable dictated by what happens in the markets.

**On comparing banking to other professions.** The argument about whether we've contributed as much to society as a policeman or teacher is a different issue all together. From a personal standpoint, should there be more equality there? Absolutely. Canada has it right. Most teachers there earn six figures after making tenure. The argument against the salary of bankers is more prevalent in the U.S. and other parts of the world where there is more income inequality and less of an understanding of what a true social value is.

**On being an idealist.** I'm making people who have a lot of money more money. The social value of my work is questionable and that hurts me a bit. I'm a bit of an idealist. I didn't realize that when I got in or when I was studying in college and it is definitely a concept that has been driven home the past few years. As it stands, my position provides very little social benefit. I am fully aware of that. And I want to leave some sort of mark on something. What that means, I have no idea, but I definitely want to have a positive impact on society and that just isn't going to happen where I am now.

**His advice to aspiring bankers.** Don't just focus on the numbers. Being social and the ability to connect with others will get you far.

*- Anonymous*



What it's like to be a **Singer-Songwriter**

I literally started singing before I could talk, and started playing guitar when I was nine years old. There was never a moment where I thought of other careers. I vividly remember in middle school thinking, "I am happy doing this now and I would be happy doing this for the rest of my life."

**On his early singing start.** After studying classical performance and theater in undergrad, I got a job right out of college singing in a four-part acapella group aboard a major cruise line. It was really fun. You live and eat completely for free. The opportunity to get paid to travel at such a young age, I was 22 at the time, was amazing. It took me everywhere except eastern Asia and Australia. I met people from all over the world. I also learned how to read and perform to crowds and develop my craft. And I didn't get seasick once! I was lucky. But some of the other guys who had weaker stomachs did. Not while performing though, thankfully.

**On his current life performing.** Now I'm a solo artist. I play guitar and sing pop tunes in bars and nightclubs in Chicago. My goal still is to be a pop star or rock star or successful singer-songwriter and eventually pay all of my bills doing just that, but that's not a real possibility for me or most musicians first starting out. So, for now, I play mostly covers four to six nights a week. I earn extra cash on the side selling pasta for my friend's company at a local farmer's market.

**On three categories of artists.** I've learned so much from watching my parents who are both singers and actors. They taught me that most performance artists fall into one of a few different categories. First, there are those who don't have natural talent, but they can work their butts off, study every single day, understand the business side of it all, and perform, but their ceiling is only so high because they don't have that natural talent. Then you have people who have that natural talent, but they aren't going to amount to much because they don't put the work in. And finally, you have the full-time professionals who have the talent and put in the work. I was lucky enough to be raised by two parents who fell into that category. They could have been on Broadway, but they decided they wanted to have a family and more stable schedules, so they made their livings acting in a regional dinner theater. Knowing I would have to be in that third category too absolutely has given me an edge. It is all about drive, really.

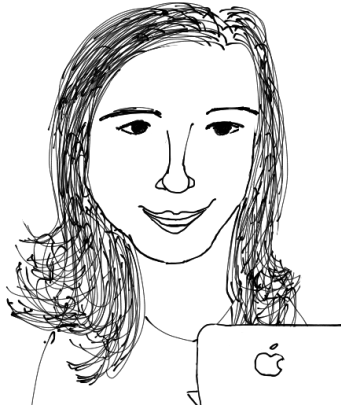
**On being a self-starter.** To book most of my gigs, I walk into bars with my guitar and sound system and say, "Hey, I am going to play for an hour for free. And if you like it, here are my rates." I probably get hired six out of ten times I do that. Sure, I don't want to be playing covers for the rest of my life, and I would rather be a pop star, but I have to pay bills.

**On prioritizing making people happy.** Some of my best friends who write music, and nearly every singer-songwriter goes through this phase, where they're like, "I am not going to play cover tunes. I am only going to play my original and great songs." But then you get over yourself and realize that these people in bars aren't out to discover your new music. They want to sing along to their favorite songs. Maybe "Wagon Wheel" isn't your song, but you get to play it and make people happy. And you get like \$30 in tips.

**On nightlife camaraderie.** Personally, I think one of the most fun parts is when you get a regular gig at a bar. They treat you like their employee. I like to go down and hang out at those bars during the week. If they need help, like if someone has to go change a keg, I'll watch the door. I was out 'networking' last night, trying to get an in with an artist and share a show, but one thing led to another...ha! I am not complaining! Like I said, I've wanted to do this my entire life. I don't have too many rough days. I complain about some of the same things others dream about.

**His advice to aspiring singer-songwriters.** Give it a shot! All it takes is \$300 for a small PA system, a guitar, and the confidence to walk into a bar. If you have the talent and the drive, you can do it. I am not making a million dollars, but I am making enough to put food on the table and live a decent life. At some point I will have to adjust because I don't think I'll always want to make my living staying in bars until 3 a.m. every weekend night. But you have to give yourself the chance to see if you can make it work. I think a lot of people think they want to be on stage, but they find out they actually they aren't cut out for it for one reason or another. Sometimes they realize they are really good at being a sound or lights person. If you are passionate about something, just get in that industry. That way no matter what, you are surrounded by what you love.

- Owen Stevenson, Chicago, Illinois



What it's like to be a **Tech Entrepreneur**

I had been preparing for Indian Civil Services exams since standard 5th and dreamt of dedicating my life to enhancing India. Indian Civil Services exams are considered one of the toughest exams in India. The eligibility to appear in this exam is to graduate from college. I also learnt that Engineering graduates have a higher success rate. So, I pursued Engineering to improve my chances for the Civil Services exam. Any particular engineering stream didn't have much significance for me at that time. I cleared the Engineering entrance exam and when I stepped in the hall where I had to choose the stream, it was an AC hall. This was the first time I experienced AC. I thought, if I am studying Engineering, studying in AC would be a good choice and I chose Computer Science Engineering.

**On technology as a magical tool.** For me, technology is more an enabler than anything else. It's not about what I know, it's about what I can create. With my laptop, I can create any magic I want. When I start writing a program, it's just a few lines of code. But when I execute it, it does so many things on the web. That is what excites me the most. The possibilities that can be achieved with technology are infinite.



**On choosing entrepreneurship.** When I worked for a company, I always thought, “I can do it better if you let me do it my own way.” If I summarize this kind of work in one sentence it’s, “You’re either living someone else’s dream or living your own dream.” Now, as I work full time on my start-up, I’m living my own dream. My team and I are building a social network to help book lovers to connect, either in your own neighborhood or across the world. Until it reaches a certain level of success, there are no perks. So, every day, you have to keep yourself motivated and keep yourself energized toward what you want to do. It also takes a great deal of financial planning. Because like so many other start-ups, in the initial phase, you don’t have any earnings. I work full time on it and my husband still works at his IT firm to help pay the bills.

**On avoiding the Titanic’s fate.** To pursue a successful career in tech, you need to know what not to do. At the beginning of a new project, we are often so excited that lots of ideas keep popping up all of the time. We think, “I can do this! I can do this also!” But one liner ideas can become a Titanic built only to sink. So, I always recommend people start just by creating a minimum shippable product. Initially contact your users personally and request for feedback. Feedback is critical to refining a product and making it more appealing to users. Keep iterating the product based on user’s feedback.

**On the importance of marketing.** If you create a masterpiece, and people don’t know about it, it will be of no use. It will go unseen. The marketing is almost as important as the creation itself. Building a start-up is not easy, but there is no greater satisfaction than seeing your idea turn into reality. Watching people use it and find it valuable gives immense feeling of contentment.

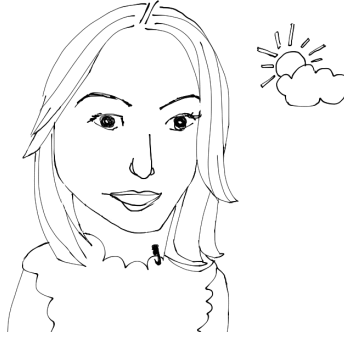
**On forging her own path.** There is no right way to success. If you are passionate, you will find your own way. When we look at all of the successful

people in tech, none of them have taken the same path. They all have taken their own paths using their own unique qualities. Many articles say, “How to Build a Start-up” and, really, I’d say it is better not to read those. No one else can tell you how to achieve success for your start-up. If you are passionate, you will do it.

**On starting on the cheap.** If you are doing a tech start-up, you don’t need a lot of money to begin. People are creating very beautiful, very nice, very lovely plugins and code that others can use for free. Execution is the key.

**Her advice to aspiring tech entrepreneurs.** Learn to code. Coding is not rocket science. To learn Java for example, you don’t have to be a mad genius or a mad programmer. Just start trying it. Don’t just read the theory; start writing very simple programs. Once you learn to do that, you’ll gradually start to understand basic fundamentals of Java programming, which is fundamental. Really, you can create magic with programs.

- *Anuradha Bajpai, Santa Clara, California*



What it's like to be a **Meteorologist**

My dad owns a commercial roofing and sheet metal business, so his job is heavily dependent on weather. I was such a weather nerd growing up. I will say, the majority of meteorologists I have met seem to have developed an interest and passion for weather at an early age. I was no different. I really loved storms and clouds and looking up at the sky and observing everything. I would go outside with my umbrella and goggles. I'd tie myself to a tree and pretend I was in the middle of a category five hurricane. I'd scream, "I'm reporting live from these conditions!" I lived for that stuff!

**On her fortunate career progression.** I was really lucky because one of the girls I went to high school with, her mom is a meteorologist in the Washington, D.C. area. I was able to connect with her and she's really been my mentor ever since. I did an internship with her in high school and another internship with a local news station in college. Through those experiences, I was able to create a resume tape. I also was in the National Broadcasting Society in college, and we took a trip to one of the local news stations. A few days after graduation, one of that station's meteorologists had gotten another job elsewhere, so there was an opening. The news director had remembered seeing my tape and he took a leap of faith and hired me.

**On where she is now.** I've worked my way up the ladder and now I'm on air in D.C., the regional market where I grew up. It's incredible because I'm only twenty-seven and I'm already doing what I've always envisioned. It's really surreal. On air, I report on weather and also do some feature reporting where I highlight lots of community events around town, which is great. Behind the scenes, I prepare forecasts, update graphics and refresh our web content, among other tasks.

**Behind the glamorous facade.** The one thing about television is that people think about the glamorous side, like, "Oh, you go in and somebody does your makeup!" We do have makeup artists during the week who help us look beautiful. But there are a lot of crazy hours. Most days, I'm up around 2:30 a.m. and we go on air at 4:30 a.m. The weather and news don't stop for weekends and holidays either. Every Saturday and Sunday, I go into work at about three o'clock and I get done at midnight, so it definitely isn't your nine to five, Monday through Friday career.

**On what drives her.** For me? I just want to communicate with the public to make them aware of what is happening to help them go about their lives. I want people to think, "I can go to Eileen. I trust her. I think she is going to give me the best forecast and communicate it the most effectively." I want to make sure people have got their umbrellas. Maybe there is going to be severe weather. I want to make them aware of that. Sure, sometimes it's sunny, or just raining, or lightly snowing, whatever. But sometimes the weather can be very dangerous.

**On cruising around in her weather mobile.** So, this is kind of cool; I drive a Hummer around town and I report weather conditions from it! And I take it to schools too and tell all of the kids about the different weather instruments and

about how the science and data comes together. I get to help inspire them to follow their dreams in whatever career field they may choose. People are always like, “Do you really drive that yourself?” and I am like, “Oh, yes I do! Girl power!”

**Her advice to aspiring meteorologists.** Not everyone who studies meteorology has to do television! They could do aviation meteorology or provide forecasts for different military sectors. There are a boatload of opportunities within the field. Personally, as long as I am always doing something weather-related, I’ll be happy. You get to make your career what you want it to be, so you get to choose what you want to do. Don’t forget you have choices. Which is pretty freaking cool.

*– Eileen Whelan, Washington, D.C.*



What it's like to be an Urban Planner

I always had this weird slash bizarre fascination with maps. I remember being bored in class and literally drawing maps of major cities, from D.C. to London to Paris. I took a geography class in high school and we collaborated with a school in New York City. We looked at everything from demographics like race and age and social make-up to land use and building heights and public transit systems. That, hands down, was the best project I'd ever been a part of. It's really where it all started for me.

**On getting the proper education.** When I was doing undergrad, they didn't offer urban planning as an undergraduate degree. So, I took a couple classes, majored in geography and then I immediately went and got my master's degree in urban planning after undergrad. The thing with urban planning is that in order to become certified, you either have to have your master's or have five to six years of work experience.

**On her current role.** I work in the more international realm where I focus on a lot of projects overseas. I have amazing access to global projects and amazing people. We have projects based in D.C., Los Angeles, Seattle, Chicago,

Western Africa, India, and London. People in my department go everywhere from Dubai to Copenhagen to all over Asia.

**On why urban planning.** You know, what I love the most about my job is how people can walk through an area one day and it can be really avoided, full of graffiti, with vacant buildings, and without any real job opportunities. And then they can come back years later, after urban planners and architects and all of these people have collaborated on the space, and it has become a place they want to live. There are great places to eat, places to shop, and homes to buy. So that sort of 180 turn a community can take is what I like the most.

**On uncertainty.** Urban planning is such a collaborative field and there are so many elements involved. The bottom of a project can just fall out from underneath at any moment. I was actually part of a slum redevelopment project in a developing country. We worked on that project for about a year and all of the sudden, within a week, it completely fell apart. The government decided to go with a different firm. Instead of trying to help these people secure housing and find a new place to live, the government just decided to clear it all. I'm talking almost a hundred thousand people were left homeless. It was one of the lowest points of my career. I'd been there, talked to people, and participated in design sessions to figure out how to make it work. I will never forget that week.

**On taking the good with the bad.** Don't get me wrong, I have my bad days and my off days, but the good days far outnumber the bad. I've been a part of many success stories, too. I worked on another slum redevelopment project in Mumbai where the stars aligned. Everybody came together. I was fortunate enough to be in the room when the announcement was made to the people in the slums that the project was going to happen. We were, and still are, really excited about it.

**Her advise to aspiring urban planners.** If you have the opportunity to take a class in urban studies or urban development, do it. Take a class before you fully commit to the major. Also, the American Planning Association (APA) organizes local chapter meetings biweekly that are open to the public. They happen in lots of cities across the US. I highly encourage people to attend one of those to obtain an understanding of the kind of work we do.

*– Vanessa N., Boston, Massachusetts*





### What it's like to be a **Wildland Firefighter**

My dad was a volunteer firefighter. He was such a big influence on my life, and I always looked up to the way he and his firefighter friends helped people. Once, I was driving home from work and I came across a bicycle accident. This girl clearly needed help and all I could do was call 911. I wished I could have done more. It reminded me of my childhood and watching my dad be really fluent in those kinds of situations. So, I decided I really want to help people and make something out of my life. I wanted to give back a little bit.

**On what led her to fight wildland fires.** After I got my paramedic's degree, I tested to become a structural city firefighter. I tested in the top 5% of my class, but at the time, there were 3,500 applicants for 28 paid positions. It was right after 9/11 when there was a big influx of people who wanted to be heroes, police officers, paramedics, and firefighters. They wanted to save lives. The market was completely saturated. I applied to become a wildland firefighter because I knew I could still fight fires and get paid.

**On her typical schedule.** I'm in the Pacific Northwest where the wildland firefighting season is usually from April to October, but it can go longer or shorter depending on the dryness of the season. I work a normal job during the rest of the year. During fire season, I usually get a call about 48-hours before my company wants me there. They'll call and ask, "Can you be at this location at

this time?" If I can, I have two days to get my affairs in order. I'm gone usually around fourteen days at a time, but it can go up to twenty-one days out there. That was originally what made me hesitate from applying, and it continues to be the toughest part of the job, being away from loved ones for so long.

**On packing lightly.** You either can be at the main base camp where probably about 75% of people stay or you can be sent to a 'spike camp' at the other side of the fire where you're working from moment to moment with about fifty other people. If you're at the main camp, you're looking at potentially working with a thousand or more people. It's like a giant tent city. Everyone shares the same facilities, kitchens, bathrooms and stuff. It's crowded, so you don't want to be the one taking up too much space. That's why you pack lightly.

**On controlling burn areas.** Mother Nature is going to do what she's going to do, but if embers fly out of the border or out of the planned area, we're sent to handle it. One thing they teach us in fire safety is that the only thing that isn't going to burn is something already burnt. Either that or dirt. Often times, you'll be in a hand crew of 20 people working all day long to dig a trench in front the fire so it can't pass. It's a very pain-staking and laborious process. I prefer to actively fight the fires, for sure! That is what everyone is out there for! That's the fun part. That is the adrenaline rush! That's why we do what we do.

**On the necessity of fire.** You know, nature needs to burn. It's its way of cleansing itself. We have to renew the underbrush. We have to clear the soil. It doesn't have to happen at the sake of property and life, so we have to control the fire. It's not about complete control. We have to have a balance with Mother Nature.

**Her advice to aspiring firefighters.** If you want to be a firefighter, getting on with a wildland crew would be a smart thing to do. It doesn't take much

education or time. It'd be a good way to know whether you really want to do this or if it just seems cool. And most city departments will let you do a ride along with an ambulance crew as a volunteer at a firehouse. Really, I didn't know a job could be this fun! I worked a lot of jobs that were nine to five, mundane, repetitive, working office jobs. I had no idea I could actually afford to support my loved ones and work a job I actually had fun doing.

*– Anonymous*



What it's like to be a Human Rights Lobbyist

I'm Catholic and grew up going to Catholic schools. 'Love thy neighbor'; that has influenced me the most. This phrase is thrown around a lot, but LGBTQ discrimination really is the civil rights issue of our generation. People in our country are systematically discriminated against and it was very much in my religious upbringing and learning to treat everyone fairly.

**On her progression to Washington.** In college, I interned for a member of Congress where I fell in love with the public policy process. When I graduated, I moved to D.C. and worked on Capitol Hill as a staffer. After a few years of hard work and networking, I joined the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) as a lobbyist. The job of a lobbyist, especially for me, is to be a bridge between the lawmaker and the issue experts. I work with lawmakers to help them understand our issue so they can write a bill and help achieve solutions.

**On the goal of lobbying.** I can't tell you how many people think the laws I work on are already in place. The way I like to explain lobbying to people is no lawmaker or staff can be an expert in every subject, so they rely on industry experts to give advice and walk them through things. I think a lot of people believe the job of a big business lobbyist, for example, is to go in and try and get tax breaks and stuff like that. But often, they're really moving beneficial

legislation through. They know where the problems exist and what needs to be fixed. So, while some lobbying is bad, a lot of it's good, too.

**On remaining open hearted.** I generally believe very few people in the world are truly hateful. It's when people don't understand something that they fear it or they judge it. And I believe most people come at things from a good place and aren't intentionally being hateful. I only think people are at fault when they refuse to examine their beliefs and why they feel a certain way. Are they uncomfortable because it's something they aren't used to, but it isn't necessarily bad? Maybe they think what is right for them and their family is what's right for other people. But I do think people are trying to be good.

**On being part of something bigger.** Working on public policy, it can be difficult to really get Congress to care about your issue because there are so many others out there. But it's been amazing to see the successes and to know I'm a part of that. We also hear stories of our HRC stickers helping people everyday. Emails of encouragement saying, "I was very much in the closet, living in rural Arkansas and didn't know anyone who would be supportive of me if I came out. But my teacher had the HRC sticker on their car and I knew it was safe to talk to them." Just seeing stickers has helped people know they aren't alone. It's a way to quietly put that message out there and let others know you're accepting.

**On keeping perspective.** It's important to take a step back and appreciate that all of the work you put in, regardless of if you achieve your specific goal. Know you're still moving the ball forward. Whether the hours are long or it was a tough day, knowing I am making a difference makes everything better.

**Her advice to aspiring human rights lobbyists.** I recommend people first get practical experience and do internships. When we're hiring, like for a staff

assistant or department assistant position, so many applicants have graduate degrees, but we've found the people who have Capitol Hill experience or have done something else are much better candidates and prepared for the job. Certainly, having a grad degree doesn't detract from the resume, but unless it is directly related, practical experience makes more of a difference in our organization.

*– Jennifer Pike Bailey, Washington, D.C.*



### What it's like to be a Graphic Designer

My mom was an art teacher and taught me the fundamentals of drawing. She helped me to develop myself artistically. The first few days of starting my company were absolutely the scariest times of my life. I was dealing with having just been fired from what I thought was a secure government job of fourteen years. I'm the kind of person that has to be forced out of her comfort zone before making a move, so getting fired was the extra push to pursue my dream.

**On her early days as an entrepreneur.** I had so many questions. Did I need a business license? What kind of business entity did I want to be? And, most importantly, how would I get any business? Then once I got past those first couple days, weeks, and months, things got better; but even now, it's still scary. The finance piece continues to be difficult. I'm always on the lookout for additional and supplemental income. I find that most business owners have multiple streams of income in addition to pursuing their dreams.

**On finding her niche.** I specialize in branding. The majority of my clients are either creative professionals or in the food industry. A company might be a start-up, but their brand can make them look like they've been in business for 20

years. I help businesses achieve that professionalism. What I love most is I get to create.

**On keeping costs low.** I'm lucky because in graphic design you don't have a lot of overhead. The bulk of my start-up costs went to investing in the proper computer and getting my LLC. The only other issue is, when starting out, you think you can do all of this stuff all on your own, but you really can't. You need a good team. At first, one or two who can help so you can focus your energy on your service.

**On developing a support circle.** Initially when I started, entrepreneurship sounded good on paper, but when you dig in and get your hands dirty, it is not easy. As an entrepreneur and graphic designer, I am living in two worlds simultaneously. I have the world of business and the world of creativity and design. I still am trying to find a balance between the two. Surrounding yourself with likeminded individuals helps. They don't have to necessarily even be in your field, but being around people who are trying to achieve the same level of success you are has been hugely beneficial for me.

**Her advice to aspiring graphic designers.** Always remain open to learning new skills to better your craft. Take advantage of any free opportunity you can. Whether an online tutorial on YouTube or a free in-person seminar, especially when you're first starting out because that's when you need to learn the fastest. And set goals for your business. Research your industry. Find out what is new, what is trendy. Oh! And identify your core product or service and stay focused in that area. Don't be all over the place with your products and services. You have to narrow down your focus and strive to perfect your core services.

*– Anonymous*





What it's like to be a Plumber

I always liked working with my hands. When I was 14 or 15, I knew my options were either to go to school or start working. And I wasn't a school person, so I started working at a plumbing company my dad's friend owned. I worked with him for about six years. That's when I got working in State facility prisons. I've been there now for, wow, 25 years.

**On working at a mental health facility.** They don't call it a 'prison', they call it a 'hospital'. And they don't call them 'inmates' they call them 'patients'. It is basically a maximum-security prison. We repair anything that has to do with plumbing. It could be a broken faucet or a broken pipe, a sewage backup or shower repair. We're pretty busy. And you've got to remember, it's a pretty big facility and the patients do break a lot of things.

**On working with the patients.** You know, it is funny. I like being around them. It's something different everyday. You never see the same thing twice. We don't work directly in contact with them, but we are around them all day. Working in the wards doing repairs. I like that. It keeps you on your toes.

**On working in an unusual environment.** Is it a dangerous job? Definitely. Without a doubt you have to be careful, but like I said, it is exciting. The worst thing about my job is how the patients are dangerous. Some have committed

murder, that kind of thing. Other than that, there really are no drawbacks. You work at a steady pace. A lot of us also have been there a lot of years together. Everybody looks out for each other. I'd say that city jobs and state jobs operate at a slower pace than working with private owners that get paid by the job. It isn't a job where you physically kill yourself.

**On misconceptions about his field.** You know, when people hear "plumber", they look down on you. And I've gotten a lot of crap because of my looks. I have a lot of tattoos. I'm a biker type guy. But it's funny because many of the people who look down on me don't even own their own car. When I first started out, I'd just gotten married and had a child on the way. With my career, I got a retirement plan. I've had medical all of my life. Every month we accumulate eight hours sick time and eight hours vacation time. The benefits are great. I own my home. I have two great kids and I put both through private schooling. People think I just deal with shit all day, but I'm proud I have been able to provide for my family in the career that I chose.

**On climbing up the ladder.** You know what? I'm not going to lie to you, you're pretty much a grunt at first. Most of it is shit. You're a coffee boy for the first couple of months. You're a sandwich boy. You have to sweep all of the floors and wash all of the tools down at night. It is basically crap work, it really is. But you've got to stick it out. There are a lot of benefits if you get with the right people and the right unions. Most plumbers will tell you, "You can do well if you are willing to put up with the bullshit in the beginning."

**On his advice to aspiring plumbers.** If you're not a person who enjoys school, there are good lines for you. If you like working with your hands, there are great trades to get into. Plumbing, painting, or being an electrician. Even though you still might have to go through some school or training, you're going

for things you like. I liked going to plumbing school because I was interested in it. You have to take the time and get the proper certifications if you ever want to be successful and make any money at it. It's the people who don't do that that give the rest of us a bad reputation.

*– Butch Broderick, New York*



### What it's like to be a *Probation Officer*

I didn't want to be a probation officer. I was a history major at a school in New Jersey with an athletic scholarship. I thought I'd be an attorney. But New Jersey turned out to be too fast for me. I'm from a pretty small Midwest town and being forty-five minutes outside of New York City wasn't a good fit. I decided it was best to move back home. Luckily, I knew one of the head volleyball coaches at a college in my hometown and she offered me a spot on the team. They didn't have a history program, but they did have a criminal justice program. So, I changed majors.

**On the perks of her current role.** Being in a smaller county, I get to see all sides of the system. My days are always different. I'll spend some days working in a jail and others in a courtroom. We talk to attorneys, cops, judges. Some days I'm in the field with another officer while wearing a bulletproof vest. I also make my own schedule, within certain confines. I schedule all of my appointments on Tuesdays so the rest of the week I can do whatever I need to do. It's a whole range.

**On helping those with a criminal record.** I have quite a few clients with drug possession charges. A lot of offenses are alcohol related. A lot of times they stole something from Wal-Mart to pay for drugs. We have a methamphetamine problem in our county. Operating while intoxicated is pretty

common. Prescription pills are big, too. Most people were using alcohol or drugs while they commit offenses. I wish there was more funding for people to get treatment. Mental health services save lives but often costs money our clients don't have.

**On finding her happiness.** Statistically, probation has a 30% success rate. And for me, to only be successful 30% of the time is awful. A lot of officers do get burnt out. I personally really struggle with taking work home. At night, I'll worry whether someone will have a roof over their head. Or I'll think about what I'm going to do if this person overdoses or if they start drinking again. But everyone's recovery looks different. For some people, it means they only drink on the weekends. Or maybe they didn't get better, but at least their mom knows they're safe. If one person decides not to use for one day, that means their kids will have one more happy day with them. That drives me. I live to help other people.

**On choosing a halfway house or jail.** I recently had the opportunity to go to a halfway house graduation. And the guest speaker was someone whom, five years before, I said, "You could either go to this house or go to jail." Well, she invited me to her graduation. She came up to me and said, "I am a CrossFit coach. I'm sober. I'm about to graduate from college. You saved my life." It was the most uplifting moment I'd had in a very long time.

**Her advice to aspiring probation officers.** Find an internship! Also, you have to have a caring heart because if you don't, it would make this job very taxing. When you see people who keep messing up and keep making mistakes, over and over, the caring heart is a huge key. And you have to learn and adapt.

*– Staci Stork, Fort Wayne, Indiana*



What it's like to be an *Eco-Lodge Resort Owner*

I didn't have a clear idea of what I wanted to do. All the way through college, my dad would be like, "You need to be an accountant! Or "You need to be a pharmacist! You need to have a good job!" But nothing really stuck out to me, so I got a business degree, and right after graduation, I got a job with a healthcare system. I thought, "Great, I have a job out of college!" I worked for that healthcare system for seven years.

**On a fateful trip out west.** In October 2012, my husband Dave and I went to Seattle for a friend's 30<sup>th</sup> birthday party. We had zero intention of a move or anything like that. But we both came away and had the same feeling of "Maybe we could live in a more beautiful place. Maybe could find somewhere where we could work together and raise a family." We got excited about the idea of breaking the mold of living in the suburbs, not having traditional jobs, and taking the kids to daycare everyday.

**On having a supportive partnership.** My husband Dave didn't finish college. Instead, he started and sold a business in his late teens and early twenties. We also bought a house in Detroit in the trough of the real estate market. Three years after we bought it, the value had increased by \$120,000. So that was crazy. If the sale from Dave's business didn't go well, and the house never happened, we couldn't have done this.

**On finding the resort.** The previous owner of the resort advertised the sale online. We saw the posting were like, "Wow, this place looks too good to be true." The owner wanted a big chunk of money up front. We couldn't afford it, so we gave him some money upfront and make payments to him every month. Luckily, the business has been a lot more profitable than we'd anticipated, likely because the reporting before had been inaccurate. And I think the previous owner knew that and was pretty fed up. He was like, "I'm over it. I'm done."

**On the ins and outs of running a resort.** My husband is really outgoing. I'm a huge introvert. With our jobs, working together, it's a whole new thing, but we complement one another. Alongside the local staff, I plan and prepare meals, do laundry, and link up with Dave to get guests settled in and give them orientation and whatnot. He'll lead activities, boat trips, and most of the managerial aspects directly with the guests.

**On cultivating loyalty.** We don't do any marketing, but people are constantly finding us online, on Tripadvisor. Word of mouth is starting to pay off big. We even have return guests! Some of these people travel all over the world, but they choose to come back to see us in Panama. So that has been really nice.

**On the long hours.** I'd say I probably am more exhausted doing this than any other type of job I've ever had. In Michigan, I'd come home and not think about work and had the weekends free. That was something that took me longer to adjust to than Dave. He owned a business and was able to disconnect here and there. He was used to life and work blending together. It's a lot of really hard work. A lot of physical work. I'm on my feet all day, and it can be really hot here. But the job is so much more fulfilling. We feel we have more of a life with a purpose than what we are doing before.

**On giving back.** Money has never been our main driving factor. We want to be able to live in a beautiful place, raise a family in a unique setting, and do something to help other people. That aspect has been really awesome. We organize service projects for students from the U.S. to come down and help build infrastructure here, like water tanks and we even built a solar system for the school. Now, it has lights and computers with internet! That's huge because before they couldn't host adult classes, like English or CPR, at night. Plus, the Government of Panama gave all of these kids laptops, but they didn't have anywhere to charge them, and now they do. Stuff like that has been awesome and makes the long days here worth it.

**Her advice to aspiring resort owners.** Make sure whatever you're buying is profitable. We couldn't imagine all this work if it wasn't rewarding personally and a profitable exercise. There are positives and negatives. The freedom we have here, that we own it, and don't answer to anybody is great. At the end of the day, I do love it. We don't regret anything so far.

– *Suzanne Smith, Punta Vieja, Panama*





What it's like to be a Stay at-Home Mom

Throughout my whole life, up until the moment that I actually became pregnant with my first daughter, I had this feeling that I was never going to be able to have children. I have no idea why I felt this way, as it proved to be completely wrong, but I was shocked when the pregnancy test came back positive. I was completely terrified because I wasn't even sure that I wanted kids to begin with.

**On an unexpected turn of events.** I was set to marry my fiancé in August of 2007 and became pregnant in June of 2007, just a few months before my wedding. I was somewhat ashamed, even as an independent adult with my own house and job, to tell my family that I'd conceived out of wedlock. It felt like a big 'Scarlet Letter'. Telling my parents was pretty hard for me to do. Probably because I'm a huge prude even though of course people assumed we'd been sleeping together. We'd been together for some time.

**On financial practicalities.** I'm very thankful that my husband has a great job that allows us to be a one-income household, allowing me to stay home with our kids. It was extremely hard to make ends meet for a while until my husband caught a lucky break and attained a good-paying job. But I've never been the type of woman whose dream was to start a family and stay at home all day. I do

admire those women and think they are very special. I love my children with all my heart, but I also enjoy and miss working outside of the home.

**On her typical days.** Despite loathing mornings, I'm an incurable night owl. I wake up and get my two oldest daughters who are five and seven ready for school. My youngest daughter is two and she stays home with me all day. Getting ready for school includes eating breakfast, brushing teeth, getting them dressed, packing their lunches and bookbags, doing their hair, etc. Every morning there's at least one to ten meltdowns. It's amazing to me how vastly different children can be, even when they are raised exactly the same as their siblings. I do all the necessary SAHM responsibilities throughout the day with my two-year-old in tow. Laundry, dishes, mopping, vacuuming, dinner prep, etc.

**On prioritizing others first.** If I'm lucky, I get a shower by noon. Make-up and styled hair and clothes other than jeans or sweats and a T-shirt doesn't happen often. It's pretty sad when I throw a nice sweater and a couple swipes of mascara into the mix and my kids ask me why I look so fancy. I'm sure I look pretty scary most days. On rare days, I get to wander around Target and it is awesome. I get pretty excited these days when I find good sales on laundry detergent.

**On evening rituals.** After school, I pick the girls up from the bus stop. I work on homework and their daily reading assignments with my daughters and make dinner. The crockpot has become my best friend. We walk across the street to the YMCA for taekwondo or swimming lessons. I give the girls their baths and then we all sit down to watch Wheel of Fortune and Jeopardy. It's kind of our thing, a nightly ritual. Even though the girls groan about our choice of shows now, I'm sure they'll appreciate these classics someday! Besides, I can't take any more SpongeBob or Dora and her insanely annoying talking map.

**On trying to manage it all.** It comes time for a story and bed. They sometimes convince me to snuggle in bed for awhile. Don't get me wrong, I love their snuggles. It's just hard to find a balance between being a good and loving mom and trying to keep the house tidy. When they go to bed is when I do the dishes from dinner and clean up the cyclone they've managed to stir up within a few hours. I heard an analogy once that I found pretty true: trying to clean the house with your kids awake is like trying to brush your teeth while eating an Oreo. Yep, that's about right.

**On her goals as a stay-at-home mom.** Above all, I want my kids to feel loved, safe, and happy. Sometimes it's hard not to attack them with hugs and kisses. I've come to terms with the fact that I'm a (s)mother and they better get used to it. They still welcome it with open arms now, but I dread the day when they no longer want to hold my hand or kiss me in public. My heart is cracking a little just thinking about it.

**Her advice to aspiring stay-at-home moms.** Just know that being a stay-at-home mom is, in fact, a privilege. Kids have the amazing ability to bring out the best in people. I have three little dictators that rule my life and push my patience and temper to the max. I've learned to pick my battles, let little things slide that would have otherwise driven me bonkers. They help me to slow down and remember what it's like to see the beauty in everything, because it's all new to them. At the same time, I think it's terrible for society to assume that there is something wrong with a person who doesn't want to get married to have children. I think it is actually very responsible for those people to know what they don't want. We should never force something that is so incredibly important and life changing on anyone if they don't feel it.

- Anonymous

## Conclusion

As I reflect on the interviews we conducted for this book, I find myself sitting with this sense that, often, our professional pursuits aren't actually about what most career magazines and executive books preach. Very few of the people I spoke with desire to climb the corporate ladder. Nor are they striving to secure the corner office or become some huge billionaire mogul. (Although, a little extra spending money from time to time would be delightfully accepted by most anyone, of course.)

Instead, it's my impression that we overblow the desire to increase productivity at every moment. Few of us are truly looking to wholly reinvent ourselves to feel younger, more cutting edge, and superior to others. We're taught we should aspire for more, more, and (yes) even more. More money, more space, and more success. But what if this quest for more is making us less fulfilled?

Most of the people in this book are simply hoping for some sense of happiness and security and for the ability to put food on the table for themselves and their loved ones. My hunch is that's the case for most of us. Our ambitions are rather simple when you take away the guise of inadequacy. We all are enough simply by being alive. Productivity isn't a replacement for true self confidence. And when we open our minds and hearts to other people's real struggles, longings, and triumphs, we understand how complicated the road to "success" can be for everyone.

We all are learning as we go. Your life and how you lead it is your own story to write. I hope you have all the good fortune in the world to make it uniquely, entirely, and completely yours.