

PASSION, CREATIVITY AND SUCCESS

A Creative Person's Survival Manual

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Passion, Creativity and Success.
A creative person's survival manual

Our media business involves a zillion layers of invention, including every craft and art seen credited on those end-title crawls. Each credit connotes an innovator and creative problem-solver bringing his or her talent to bear in the creation of movie magic.

Across the spectrum of vocations, whether you're an actor, writer, director, inventor, chef, computer programmer, research scientist or, God help us, a weapons creator—we struggle with the process of bringing forth what has never existed through the mysterious process called creativity.

For many, this exploration toward the ultimate joy of accomplishment has a cost: anxiety!

FIRST RULE: IGNORE ALL RULES

I share these thoughts, aware of how ignorant I am of the true spectrum of your inspiration process. Which I consider pretty close to sacred. I want to dialogue “with” you and not at you. Please ignore everything here that goes against your instincts. They are usually right!

My observations come from the privilege of a longish career. A few wild, giant successes and many rejections (many!) Experiences that have given me the one thing I didn't have when younger - “perspective”. I have discovered the scripts I've written from the heart have gotten them made more frequently than the projects the studios paid me to write. But, as an artist and businessman I have never been far from the pain of uncertainty, when attempting to make concrete what has flitted around inside my head.

As a curious young documentary filmmaker I explored some amazing game-changers in various fields. Like revolutionary Media Guru – Marshall

McLuhan, Master Magician and Psychic debunker, The “Amazing” James Randi. Brilliant Canadian Architect Raymond Moriyama. Malcolm Bricklin the car entrepreneur who built a gull-wing sports car before Delorean. Toller Cranston the first international figure skater to perform his sport as Ballet on ice and not just muscular gymnastics – and my own mentor Norman Jewison who’s list of amazing films is humbling. People who have the habit of pushing beyond the limits in their fields.

What did I learn? They have a universal sense to think freely and uniquely outside their current boxes, but it didn’t prevent stress and outside criticism. They cared so much about their goals that despite the negatives they headed where their guts told them. It was infectious. I don’t think of myself as particularly gifted... More a dreamer and not a great employee, but they made me feel that pursuing my own dreams was possible.



I HAVE NEVER ESCAPED STRESS

It comes from our imaginations trying to help us define the future – but without any compass for that untrod path. Stress is normal, it evolved alongside the imagination as a protective problem solving mechanism, igniting our body's fight or flight system. A kind of psychic radar, bouncing negative things out and reflecting on how we might defend against them. But, when it is not attached to solving a real issue, it can bounce all over the place unnerving us in the process.

I saw the world's most renowned stress pioneer speak. The late Dr. Hans Selye. He stated that being mugged or experiencing a surprise birthday party can create an identical adrenalin rush. Heart rate increases. Tension tightens. Breathing speeds up. But, in the mugging, the effect is felt as fear and the birthday surprise, as joy. – “Anxiety” when it is in the service of something we value is embraced as “Excitement”.

Selye said, our adrenalin glands disturb us less when we are impassioned, pursuing goals that fascinate us. Even more strongly if we feel those goals benefit others!

Alternately, working on projects that are against my nature. (Maybe I sold out a little?) – Trying to cash in on someone else's goal can be painful. I have done it as a writer. And it was like trying to pluck words out of my flesh. I didn't like the end result and failed to have the incentive to fight for it.

When I am going in the direction my instincts support, the fear of failure is still there – but mitigated with the magical excitement of discovery.

The essential part of creativity is not being afraid to fail.
-Edwin H. Land

WE SHOULD HAVE COME WITH A MANUAL

Most schools are teaching from the past, or worse, teaching to the test, ugh! Production line thinking. They don't usually do a great job of discovering ugly ducklings and inspiring us to become swans.

Einstein did not speak until he was four and did not read until he was seven, causing his teachers and parents to think he was mentally handicapped. Many educational institutions forget that the root word of "education" is EDUCE – Greek for to bring forth.

The man with the most watched of all TED talks is Sir Ken Robinson. A natty British author, with an amazing sense of humor. ([TED](#) is a brilliant source of inspiring videos by a myriad of passionate experts.)



With subjects such as "Schools kill Creativity," Sir Ken challenges the education system to find our strengths and skills as children. To help us to understand ourselves and strengthen who we are naturally supposed to be — musician, painter, engineer.

He says it is vital we relate with others who share our path. He calls this finding our "Tribe". Nerds need to hang with each other and gain from their mutual unique perspectives. Within our tribes we no longer feel like crazed loners. It is like coming home, leading us to more fulfilling lives.

***You were born an original. Don't die a copy.
- John Mason***



SURRENDER TO YOUR INTUITION

Do not censor. Explore. Sometimes the most bizarre ideas have meaning hidden within them like dry kindling. Remember: It took a whacked-out epiphany to spark the discovery of penicillin from bread mold.

Actors taught the wonderfully liberating skill of improvisation discover they can make up insightful characters and situations in an instant. They are guided to trust themselves and their companions. Encouraged not to hold back. Any idea no matter how grotesque, socially inappropriate or strange can transform into a wild comedic treasure.

Daydreaming is not goofing off. It's a healthful, problem-solving brain practice. In fact, a recent broad study stunned scientists in its implications about how active the brain is. Psychological scientist Mary Helen Immordino-Yang and colleagues stated: "We under-appreciate the impact of introspection and daydreaming on our cognitive life and individual wellness." They coined the term "constructive internal reflection" and strongly suggest there be a standard educational practice to promote it.

HAVE FAITH THE ANSWERS WILL COME

I suffer from a common form of doubt called Impostor Syndrome. My fear as a writer-director is that my flaws will be exposed, that I will be seen for what I fear I really am: an unskilled impostor. Hence, I am surprised when an outside questioner, like an actor, forces me to focus on a point I had never considered.

Evolved and appropriate answers often come instantly. We can be unaware how much our experience and knowledge our brains have stored up.

When asked to estimate the scale of our aware, conscious brain compared with our unconscious brain, people very much over-estimate what they can actively feel. In truth, the unconscious is like an ocean and our awareness is merely the boat on it. It is a weird deep, unreachable place where dreams, DNA and life dynamics mingle and occasionally bubble up a brilliant solution.

Be patient, be open and ask your unconscious to help. Be eccentric! Put yourself in the place where you create best. It is said famed 1930s musical director Busby Berkley devised his innovative dazzling geometric dance patterns by sitting in a hot bath every day before going to the set.

MRI research says our brains exhibit the same activity when we take a shower as when we experience a breakthrough epiphany. I have made many great discoveries in my shower and none has to do with my anatomy.

We do not need magic to change the world. We carry all the power we need inside ourselves already: we have the power to imagine better.
J. K. Rowling.

IDEAS ARE CAPRICIOUS SPIRITS

We must make a space for them to nest in our minds. Giving an idea time to gestate is natural. Sleeping on it is not just an old saying—it is a functional truth. Changing your environment, watching movies, exercising, tying up your physical body can sometimes free the unconscious. I live with Post-Its everywhere—in the bathroom, my car, on my treadmill. They're idea flypaper.

Occasionally nothing comes. I have read that the desperate fear that our creative output is at a dead-end may itself be a necessary part of the creative process. Crashing our old reliable day-to-day left-brain processor can push it into the background and unchain our right brain, the source of unconscious epiphanies.

Mysteriously, we don't always know what we are going to invent, but we can feel something ripening! Like the tip of an iceberg. For two years after our breakthrough *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, I had this certainty in my gut—like a metaphorical story-sausage—that I was going to write a historical female story.

Despite trying to kick-start or rush it out of me, it wouldn't come. Then suddenly my unconscious was ready. I was ripe. The script poured from me onto the page like a gusher from my soul. It was like taking dictation, and it was intoxicating. It became *Moll Flanders*, and it took just five weeks to write. Conversely, I have agonized for years over some of my other passion projects!

When solutions surface, be smart and grab 'em before they sink again.

A lot of people are afraid to say what they want. That's why they don't get what they want. - Madonna



DON'T GIVE IN TO YOUR INNER BULLY

A public confession: I'd like to commit a murder! I want to obliterate that damn gremlin that floats inside me whispering, taunting me about my imagination's inadequacies. It's a bit like the monster outside the plane in that famous Bill Shatner *Twilight Zone* episode. This gremlin's attempting to tear pieces off my emotional wings.

I call this insidious creature the Golem. Almost everyone trying to create anything seems to suffer from these critical parasites. *"You are wasting your time."* – *"Your ideas are so awful, they'll go into the dictionary under 'excrement'."*

Bizarrely, I think our Golems are really an evolutionary defense mechanism. They are trying to help us avoid taking risks, because we'll survive longer.

I've found that I cannot judge what I write at the moment of creation. Like it's from another part of the head. But the old Golem is there, unafraid to spout scorn.

Despite a strong homicidal desire—you can't seem to kill a part of yourself—I have trained myself to ignore the voice of doom. After a cool-down period, I am frequently amazed how strong the stuff that it damned and lambasted really is. If I had listened to my inner critic, most of my achievements would never have found their way to existence.

Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgement that something else is more important than fear.
- Ambrose Redmoon

PROBLEM-SOLVING IS SELDOM A STRAIGHT PATH

It can be depressing when solutions don't unfurl like a magic carpet. There is no organic "on" switch. When X-rayed, Leonardo Da Vinci's paintings show many earlier layers of work, scratchings-out, compositions that were abandoned. Sometimes it took him years to finish a piece, thus proving that Leonardo was an inefficient idiot who had no idea what he was doing. Yeah, right!

Creativity is imprecise, chaotic, instinctual—but just as often, delicious and amazing. Choosing its path is a great excuse to flow with our curiosities and engage in an omnivorous, explorative life. Ideas build on each other, build on the discoveries of others, then fall apart and rebuild stronger. There is no wrong. Just doing anything creative exercises our inspiration muscles and strengthens our unique voice.

Just like the weather, we fog in. -- Expect to plough through some murk.

“INVENTORS BLOCK”

It is in our nature to want to be perfect because we fear judgment by others. But that can freeze the ability to explore the real way ideas often evolve: randomly. When answers don't come, we must not beat ourselves up. It is like whipping a dove to try and make it kill. Not good!

When writing my book on screenwriting, *Riding the Alligator*, I searched the web looking for cures for “Writer’s Block.” One Australian, Andrew Cavanagh, had evolved a powerful solution: “Write any old CRAP! A pile of steaming crap, no one would ever read.”

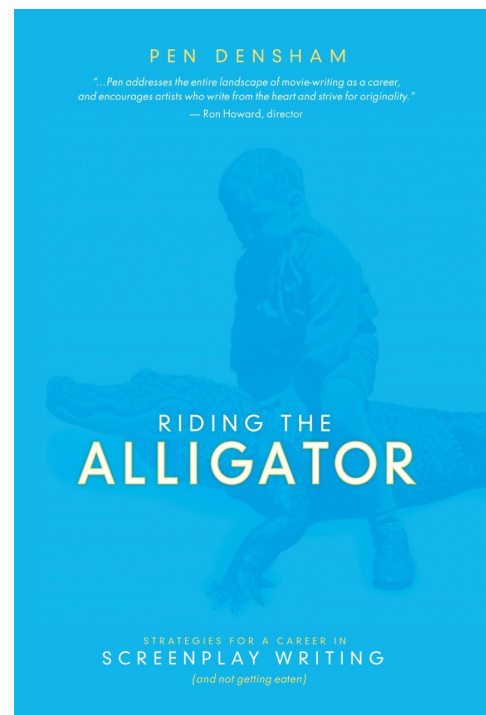
Labeling our new work “crap” cunningly disables our perfectionism by saying we’re just playing in a mud puddle. Splattering creative clay where ever it flies. There are no consequences, hence no failure.

“The biggest mistake most writers make is that they confuse the creative process with the critical process,” says Andrew Cavanagh. “And that leads us to secret number 2: The biggest secret of great writing. Re-writing.”

When we step back, our stream-of-consciousness crap pile is often the foundation for a pretty good sculpture. We can see how to give it greater definition, even if it is a tad lopsided.

I was surprised when I recently discovered the identical “crap” axiom being used in a blog for computer program originators who feared going forward. I realized geeks really are my tribal cousins.

***The first draft of anything is sh*t.
-Ernest Hemingway***



MISTAKES ARE INEVITABLE

Aim for imperfection! You can clean it up later. I call my first draft in script writing the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Any f—ing way to the coast is the right way! It is unfair to criticize ourselves for taking a few wrong turns on a journey of exploration *that has never happened before*.

When we have roughly mapped our new territory, the next step is to prune out the failed branches of the journey, put the freeway through and erect helpful direction signs. This is also called a re-write.

Apart from the occasional brilliant “eureka” gestalts, most great ideas have to be raised like tiny babies into the adults they will become. Expect some throwing-up and diaper changing, some falling down and bruising, some tears and tantrums.

Professor Robert W. Weinberg of Temple University studies problem-solving and creativity—or, as he describes it, “The cognitive processes involved in the intentional production of novelty: solutions to problems, works of art, scientific theories, and inventions.

He examines creative geniuses like Edison, Charley Parker, Frank Lloyd Wright and Picasso. He feels they are not born geniuses. Instead, he says, “Most creative giants work ferociously hard and, through a series of incremental steps, achieve things that appear (to the outside world) like epiphanies and breakthroughs.”

You and I may have a chance yet. As Einstein said, “It’s not that I am so smart, it’s just that I stay with problems longer.”

SEEK OUT “CREATIVE MIDWIVES”

Ideas are like small children. Avoid letting anyone shout at them, it can make them run away. Seek out men and women with spiritually supportive souls, who value your work and who can help you push through the pain of birthing something new. They are there for your child and not to impose their prejudices. The best can give you truthful insight on how to strengthen your progeny for the hard scrabble world it will have to grow up in.

Dr. Ericsson is the researcher who concluded that spending 10,000 hours at a skill is required to become a true expert—a statement that might ignore the many good works and breakthroughs accomplished by the young. He assessed research on top performers in fields ranging from violin performance and surgery to computer programming and chess. And in a 2007 Harvard Business Review article, he stated that true expertise requires teachers who give “constructive, even painful, feedback.” And he found that all of those who reached a pinnacle of accomplishment deliberately picked unsentimental coaches who would challenge them and drive them to higher levels of performance. A committed tough-loving but sympathetic ally to share your philosophies and fears with can be astonishingly helpful.

Conversely, do not share your early intuitions carelessly. Especially with the selfish, desperate, arrogant or self-absorbed naysayers. They can suck the optimism and energy out of your vision by casting their ignorance and prejudices over the glowing embers of what might have been a blazing discovery.

Consider Steve Jobs words. *“Your time is limited, don’t waste it living someone else’s life. Don’t be trapped by dogma, which is living the result of other people’s thinking. Don’t let the noise of others’ opinion drown your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.”*



DON'T JUDGE BEGINNINGS BY THE FINISHED WORK OF OTHERS

It's like looking at the brightness of a light bulb and assuming that it was an easy creation for Edison. It was not. It took more than 4,000 attempts to get the darn thing to work! And he's quoted as saying he "ached to give it up!"

Annoyingly, after all the blood and tears have been invested to get them "right," finished works can look deceptively obvious and simple. Blaming our early ragged progress for a lack of instant perfection, by comparison with completed successes, is a cruel and unnecessary punishment.

We need to give ourselves rewards and encouragement along the journey. We need to see ourselves as heroes and enjoy the challenges in our lives. And sometimes we need to rest and build up strength because inventing the future involves brief inspiration followed by a lot of perspiration. We can exhaust ourselves without being aware of it. I have often felt guilty about taking a break and then been stunned how quickly solutions flew into my head afterward.

REJECTIONS HAVE TO BE EXPECTED

Being right doesn't always make a breakthrough inevitable. Kathryn Stockett's smash success *The Help* was rejected by 60 literary agents. The Beatles were rejected—"We don't like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out."—and this poetic statement about a scientific breakthrough: "Who the hell wants to hear actors talk?" That was Harry Warner of Warner Bros. in 1927. The list of brilliantly abysmal rejections is laughable—except when it hits home.

Do not surrender your beliefs. We are often dynamically *much* stronger than we think we are. There are courageous models of unusual stamina all round us—soldiers, firemen, people with debilitating illnesses—who find the spirit to endure more obstacles than we can imagine.

I was very moved by Diana Nyad. She swam for 53 hours to make the 103-mile crossing from Cuba to Florida without a shark cage. This was her *fifth* attempt to make this swim! "All of us suffer heartaches and difficulties in our lives," Nyad says. "If you say to yourself, 'find a way,' you'll make it through." Then she adds. "You never are too old to chase your dreams." She is 64 years young.

We homo-sapiens are pretty cool creatures. There is a spark of that courage in all of us. But we may not know it until we call on ourselves for it.

Oprah Winfrey was fired because she was "unfit for TV," J. K. Rowling was a divorced mother on welfare and 12 publishers rejected *Harry Potter*. Steven Spielberg was rejected by USC Film School three times and never got in. Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team. Winston Churchill was cast to the wildness, as he described it, for many years before being called in to become prime minister and lead England during World War Two. We should be honored to be in their company.

PEOPLE WHO ACCEPT REJECTION BETTER THAN ME!

I have immense respect and empathy for those willing to act. I hold them in awe. As a writer-director I get to hide behind the camera and send my scripts out to audition for me! I collect my rejections by remote control.

Actors are visibly and personally exposed from the audition to the edit and frequently sacrifice control of their final work to people like me. That is courageous, and I respect that trust immensely. Without them, there'd be no one to make my words sound much better than they are.

Like actors, we cannot control whether we get the role. The variables are too random. But we cannot fail when we use auditions as opportunities, ones we control by exploring our personal best and, thereby, making ourselves stronger for the future.

Celebrate your rejections. You got up to bat, and that's the only route to win the World Series. Babe Ruth was the king of strikeouts as well as home runs.

Stay in the game somehow. I have seen the unexpected come to the rescue. This year, I was one of the producers, along with John Watson and Julian Adams on RCR's *Phantom*, starring Ed Harris, David Duchovny and Will Fichtner. A great project, written and directed by good friend Todd Robinson. When it seemed we hit a major road block, our team at the Paradigm Agency made a generous gesture that enabled the movie to go forward. There are businesses out there, run by people with hearts.

Caring is a powerful business advantage.
- Scott Johnson



WE ALL HAVE TO BE SALESMEN

I believe we have a responsibility to expend equal creative energy, if needed, to bring our ideas to the market. I call this Creative Entrepreneurism.

The word “selling” can negatively remind us of gimmicks and manipulation. How about we reframe it as: “Effectively communicating about what you have created so others are more able to understand its value and buy it?”

Those whose support we need may have different perceptions than ours. Promoters, marketing executives, financial investors and, yes, the gatekeepers who are just plain incompetent.

Market analysts have told me consumers crave novelty. The problem with selling a creation or invention that’s truly novel is it can scare the crap out

of a lot of sales executives. There are no benchmarks to measure the risk. It is far easier to sell last year's hit dressed up with the word NEW slapped on it and claim it's what the buyer/audience wants.

Apple does the opposite. They invent new products to replace successful old ones before the latter run out of steam. And Apple is frequently pilloried by the so-called experts. Speaking on the introduction of the iPhone, Microsoft's CEO Steve Balmer prophesied: "There's no chance that the iPhone is going to get any significant market share. No chance."

Be diplomatic with decision makers. Make clear the value and abilities of what you originated is a winning strategy. Help your potential allies with mile markers and freeways signs. At Trilogy, we enthroned this process as: "Building a bridge backwards." Or, to put it more impolitely, "Asshole proofing."

Use psychology. Explain your vision with reference to significant successes that they understand and value. For example, I pitch movies that way. "This story combines the box office potential of *Alien* and *The Exorcist*. A priest is flown to a moon-base because NASA has found the devil's bones up there!" Our goal is to gain incentivized and informed supporters in our quest.

Maintain a dialogue with your enterprise collaborators and financiers. Have patience and avoid anger. Anger only entrenches both parties. Interpret what "they say" to the best of your skills. Sometimes there are good points hidden in subtexts. Share your problems—it can define you as empathetic and trustworthy.

I once took a sales training course sponsored by Kodak, and I still remind myself to use a major technique I learned in the course: "Eliminate the objections." Dig for them, answer to your buyer's satisfaction, then dig for more. People tend to hold back their biggest, most personal reasons for making a rejection. When we have built trust by being reasonable, those

final, most suppressed doubts and objections will usually be revealed. Often small insightful changes accomplish their needs and ours.

And when the objections are answered, the only thing left is to buy.

I overcame major objections at MGM to financing *Moll Flanders*, a film I wrote and eventually directed, by gentle persistence and reframing areas of my spec script to overcome the objections. And then I begged for a second read.

Want a tip on how to get the most from a creative person?

-- Don't tell them what to do. You short-circuit what you might gain. Define your need and ask them to help achieve it by using their imaginations.



EMISSARIES, AMBASSADORS AND EVANGELISTS

When we aim to land an agent, manager, a salesperson, choose the honorable to represent you. Humans buy from people they like and can trust. Deception is a short-term ticket to oblivion. Morality is part of selling yourself and your creations. It will be worth it.

You don't want a hard-core car salesman. They are too likely to abandon you as soon as they see resistance to a sale. Seek an all-weather friend. A philosophical fan of your work you can talk to. And who will be there when times are tough.

In the most subtle and diplomatic of ways, sell your "sellers" on the passion you have and the values of your work. But be sure to listen in return. We need the information and instincts of our salespeople who are experienced in the buyer's ecosystem. They can give us realistic appraisals of how our product will fit the market. What we should fight for and what to give up in order to give our work its best chance to thrive.

Spend heartfelt time with the people who support your sales heads. Assistants are there daily and observe all, but they're seldom given the respect they deserve. They have knowledge of the market and their bosses' moods and availability. Many are on a growth track and may be fantastic allies. Taking a sincere interest in their lives and goals can be fulfilling and instrumental in building a team.

Everything you can imagine is real. - Pablo Picasso

HOLDING YOURSELF BACK IS 100 PERCENT SELF-CREATED FAILURE

What do you yearn for in your life? Are you aiming at it? The Huffington Post recently ran an article on the top regrets of the dying. Their message can give people like us comfort. Faced with the end of their path, they reflected and wished they had the courage to be their true selves. They wished they hadn't worked so hard, that they had the courage to express their feelings and had let themselves be happier. These are choices.

I am sure I am one of the pinnacle achievers of procrastination. In fact, I feel like I put the "pro" into the word! Looking back, my "errors of omission" are my greatest mistakes. Where I allowed doubt to make me a coward. Where I let my fear, vanity and lack of faith in myself hold me back, it cost me more pain and self-retribution than my "errors of commission"—that is, when I tried to create or sell something that caused myself occasional embarrassment.

I do let my passion loose and push my work—once in a while I pull off amazing feats. I went back to Les Moonves, the head of CBS four separate times over a period of years, before I got his permission to revive a show I adored, Rod Serling's *Twilight Zone*. By number four, I felt more like a giant idiot than an emissary. But I was still excited enough to find a way to ask one last time. Les had taken over the UPN network, and I suggested *Twilight Zone* as a companion show to *Star Trek*. I was writing the pilot within days.

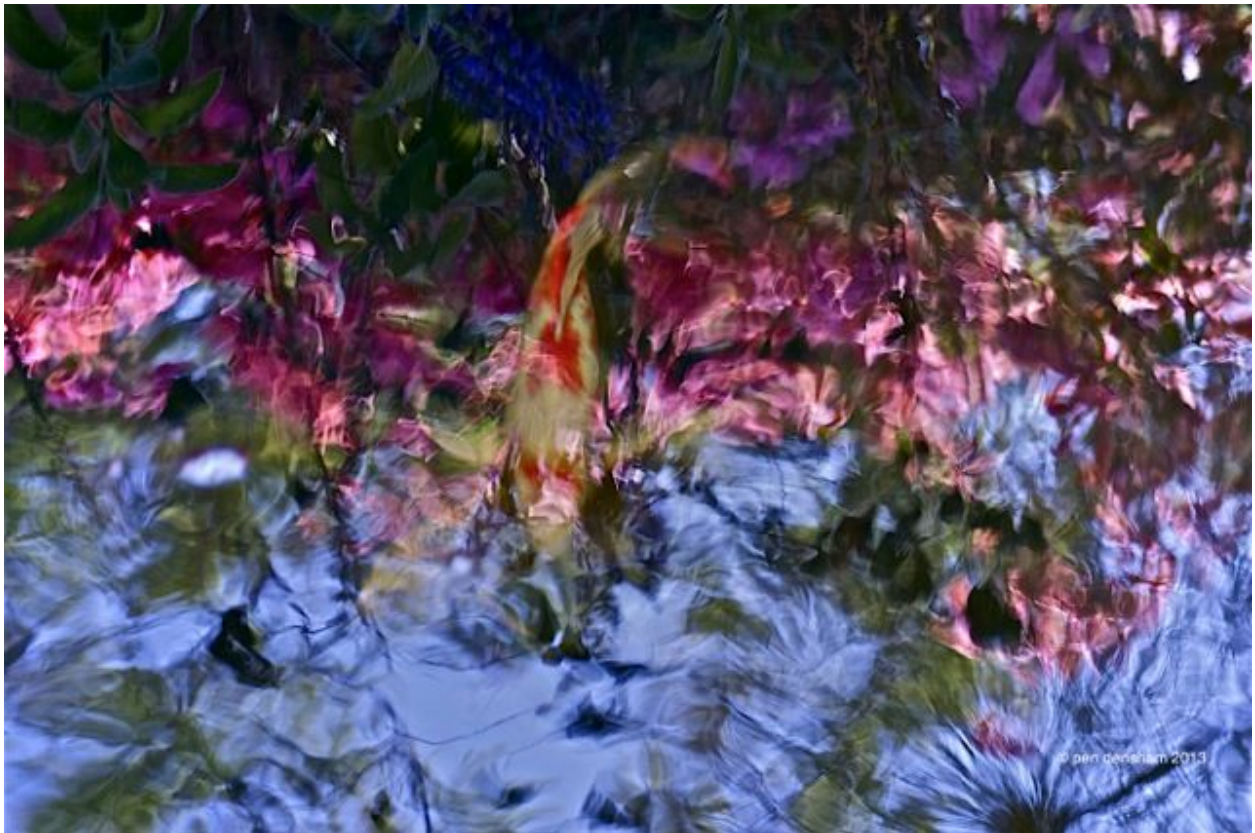
Every attempt to create is a roll of the cosmic dice. Sometimes, it is just quantum mechanics screwing us up. Yep. Science says success is random. It rolls around chaotically. But luck comes best to the prepared.

And if it doesn't come? Frankly, I always worry that too many of us fail to realize we must enjoy *the journey*, not judge our success by an end result that is often in the hands others. Not everything sells. But every attempt teaches you.

Barry Mann and his wife, Cynthia Weil, said they had written many songs that never sold. But felt they needed to have written them to evolve the ones that did become timeless standards like, “You’ve Lost That Loving Feeling,” the song that BMI said was played more times than any other in the twentieth century.

Reportedly, when Mann and Weil sang this for The Righteous Brothers, low-voiced Bill Medley loved it but Bobby Hatfield was puzzled. He asked, “What do I do while he’s singing the entire first verse?” Phil Spector, who was there, replied, “You can go directly to the bank.”

***“The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now.”
- Chinese Proverb***



THE TILTED AND GLASS-CEILINGED PLAYING FIELD

We face unfairness in our lives. That's especially true for women, minorities and outsiders. Some of us are forced to run uphill more than others. Only 19 percent of produced feature films are written by women—a grossly unfair statistic. How to cope?

I asked screenwriter/director Robin Swicord for her perspective on creativity to share in my book. Reading her words got me teared up. Their humanness and power apply not just to women but anyone who is treated as a minority or an outsider. I share some of her thoughts here:

“Dr. Lauzen’s 2009 report shows that women comprised 16% of all directors, executive producers, producers, writers, cinematographers and editors working on the top 250 films the previous year.

Would it have been better to know all of this before I dedicated myself to becoming a filmmaker? Or is it better not to be aware of the obstacles we face? I found myself having to constantly weigh similar thoughts when I became a parent of two daughters. How do I help my two intelligent, creative daughters be strong and mentally free in the face of subtle bias? How do I prepare them to thrive in a world or a career where they might not be fully valued? Anyone who has ever overcome a seemingly impossible obstacle knows the simple answer that silences these questions: Do it anyway.

Write your script anyway. Direct your movie. Is there a barrier? Go around it. Ignore conventional wisdom if it doesn’t serve your goal. Use your own judgment. Break the rules, if the rules don’t make sense for you. When you succeed, no one will mind that you didn’t do things “their way.”

When you fail, accept the blame. Apologize and begin again. Keep going. I don’t believe that ignorance is always bliss: I like to know what I am up against, so that I can ignore it. Make alliances, if you can. There’s strength

in a common goal. Whatever is impeding you eventually becomes irrelevant when you follow your intention, and do good work.

Not sure that you know how to do good work? Do it anyway.”

OWN THAT WE CHOSE OUR INVENTIVE PATH

The world is speeding up. Inventions are avalanching into all phases of human experience. Technology is pushing us to frontiers both positive and negative that we never dreamed of. Nobody knows where this is all going.

Here’s an example: There are going to be 5 billion media consumers out there using everything from Google Glass to iWatches and goodness knows what else, alongside the traditional film and TV delivery systems. With business support, USC just inaugurated the Edison Project, which involves fourteen professors from multiple disciplines trying to find a sense of direction for entertainment production, new media and new distribution platforms.

In all endeavors and industries there will be obsolescence, loss and change. For we, the creative, navigating these new and uncharted and sometimes stormy futures, all seems chaotic. But in chaos, I see opportunity.

Those steeped in the safety of their old ways will still be trying to teach blacksmithing in the automobile age. Others, meanwhile, will embrace change using crowdsourcing incubators. Change is the new gold rush.

Work hard at what you love. Trust that the human animal will not change its emotional make-up and create from your heart. Dynamic people attract others. When you do what you love, when you work from passion, it is not so much work anymore.

If you don't attempt something distinctive, different and dangerous, how will you get noticed? Ask yourself: Is it better to occasionally face going down in flames than being hidden in the shadows guessing at what others want and making Xerox copies?

MY PASSION?

When asked where did I grow up? With quiet pride, I say I haven't yet. I left school at 15, a stigma at that time, but I think it saved me from being academically processed into a "useful" worker. It has taken a woefully long time to call myself an artist, give myself pure permission to play, explore, be eccentric.

Yet since childhood, when I witnessed my parents making theatrical shorts at age four, it is what I yearned for the most: to cast spells with a camera and my imagination. In filmmaking, I have tried to avoid the critics' opinions, both good and bad. Neither is correct, only time will finally judge. I have come to see the true test of what I accomplished is simply to ask myself, "Knowing the outcome, would I do it again?" Surprisingly, my usual answer is yes.

And about my creativity goals in the future? I have three of them. One: I have film projects that impassion me enough to "spend" my time on them, including a script that makes me tingle when I work on it. It's a character study of a white detective with a tragedy in his past, re-discovering his humanity and spirituality learning from a Navajo Tribal police woman struggling with her own beliefs.

Two: I am on a personal journey of photographic discovery. I love cameras and wanted to make images that cause the eye to dance. For most of my life, I followed the "rules" and failed my aspirations. And then I stopped obeying and started asking "What if?" I am making stunning impressionistic, in-camera, nature images that are unlike anything I have ever seen. Some exclusive editions are selling for many thousand of

dollars. (They have been used to illustrate this article.)

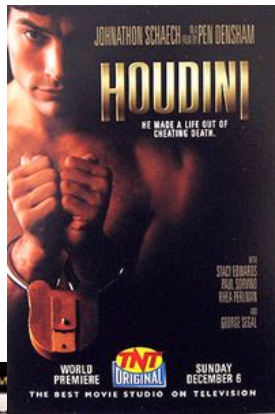
Three: Increasing my knowledge of creativity by sharing experiences with impassioned people, young and old, from my tribe.

I was inspired to write this article because a close and encouraging ally of mine was feeling the blues. It could just as easily have been the other way round. So, I dedicate this to all of you who have similar yearnings and deeply wish you the greatest of creative adventures!

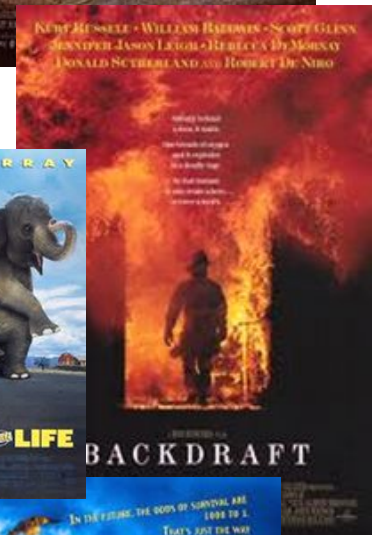
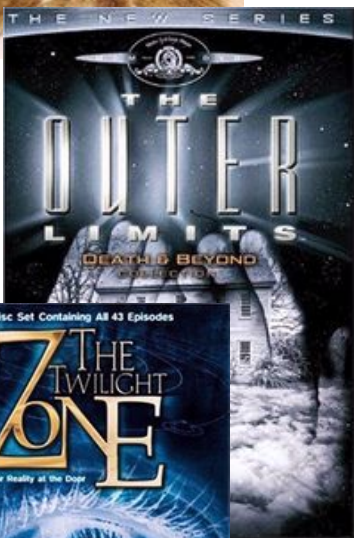
I may be tempting you to become Van Gogh, who only sold one painting in his lifetime. There is that risk, which is why it is vital to see your daily work as your passion being fulfilled. But, if there is an afterlife, the old Dutch dude has to be looking down and laughing his ass off right now.



***The only time I feel alive is when I'm painting.
-Vincent van Gogh***



Pen Densham rode into the movies at age 4 on a live alligator and started a life-long love of cameras and story. Pen produces, writes, directs (2 Oscar Nominations and over 60 other awards). He is partnered in the Trilogy Entertainment Group with John Watson - their breakthrough hit was Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves, and 16 other features such as Moll Flanders (which Pen wrote and directed), Backdraft, Tank Girl, Houdini & Trilogy's 2013 feature, Phantom. A submarine thriller starring Ed Harris, David Duchovny, William Fichtner. Directed and written by Todd Robinson. Pen also revived The Outer Limits and The Twilight Zone series.



The images accompanying this article illustrate Pen's explorations to push beyond conventional photography. To use the camera like a paintbrush to illustrate the emotions and sensations of nature. More info: <http://schoosart.com/pen-densham.html>



Pen's best selling book on creative script writing is

***"Riding The Alligator - strategies for a career in
screenplay writing - and not getting eaten!"***

Published by Michael Wiese Books.

*Download a free chapter on igniting your imagination at - [http://
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