



Like Bright and Shiny New Dimes

I am a TV junkie. We were a big ole TV family. When my brother or I needed homework help, my dad would simply mute the TV (never turning it off, mind you) and test us on our spelling words. For us, TV dinners really were *TV* dinners.

Imagine my glee, then, at finding myself riding around in a golf cart through Warner Bros. Studios in Burbank. Not the cartoon side; the *Waltons*, *Gilligan's Island*, *Dallas*, *Dukes of Hazzard*, *Murphy Brown*, *Friends*, *West Wing* side. Our back-cover subject, Ron Miele (JD 84), is an executive vice president and general counsel for Warner Bros. International Television Distribution, and his superwonderous assistant, Christine, had us buzzing around the studio lot looking for a backdrop.

There was *Waltons'* mountain, here was Josh Lyman's DC townhouse. We finally decided on the *Friends* set (you may recognize a glimpse of it on the back cover), which is now part of the official WB tour, so we needed special security permission. While we waited for said permission, we went to the in-studio museum. Ohmigod.

As I sang along with the theme songs playing in the background (I can't remember to turn off the coffee pot, but the theme from *Eight is Enough?* Word for word.), I got up close and personal with Flo's uniform from *Alice*, as well as Wonder Woman's original costume. I wandered around in euphoria until, at the far side of the first floor, there it was: Martin Sheen's desk from *The West Wing*. I thought I would die. To me, Martin Sheen actually *was* the president (two terms!). I lived in my own fantasy land for the duration of the show and was fairly convinced that anarchy was looming after the final episode aired. As I got closer to the

desk, all I could think about was touching it. *Gulp*. Actually sitting in the chair.

I was breathing erratically when I noticed the 67 signs saying "Do Not Touch." I looked around, focusing right into the eyes of the security guard standing maybe six feet away.

"B-but..." I implored him, tears welling up.

"Yeah, I know," he said sympathetically.

"What would happen if I did touch it?" I asked bravely.

"Alarms would go off, and you'd be arrested," he answered less sympathetically.

I considered jail and being fired. Avoiding those two things very barely won out. Luckily, we were ready for the shoot.

Poor Ron Miele had a terrible cold/flu thing and was feeling awful. He had thought about canceling the shoot, but knowing we were flying down just to see him, he soldiered on. Getting him to relax and smile while running a fever wasn't a snap. So I did the only thing I could think of: I started singing TV songs. I sang *Smelly Cat* and *Eight is Enough* and *Green Acres* (I wasn't sure if it was a Warner Bros. show, but for some strange reason, I know it by heart). I had Ron laughing between coughs, and all went well.

It taught me a valuable lesson, one echoed by our front-cover subject, Leona Bridges (MBA 84). She remembers having to take human-resources courses while earning her MBA and thinking she'd never need that knowledge. She realized later that she *did* need HR: What she'd learned in those courses enabled her to manage people successfully.

You never know when what you learned way back when will help you do your job. Spelling and TV turned out to be equally important for me. Thanks, Dad.

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Wool and Wine

I wanted to be a sheep farmer. For a short time. A long time ago.

When I was 20 years old, I spent a semester studying in Manchester, England, during which I traveled extensively in Ireland. If you've never been to Ireland, I urge you to go: warm people, luscious scenery, fascinating historic sites, good beer.

I fell in love with Ireland, planted myself in a rather posh bed-and-breakfast in Kilkenny with a view of multitudinous sheep, and decided then and there that I wanted to be an Irish sheep farmer.

My family thought this was one of the funniest things they'd ever heard (they bring it up to this day). And when I realized sheep farmers live on, um, farms (who knew?), I also realized it was more the posh B&B than the sheep that was so appealing.

Now I want to be a vintner. This may stem from the two days I spent in Napa photographing four GGU alumni who are vintners (meet them in "No Place Like Napa" on p. 17). I like Napa: warm people, stunning scenery, fabulous food, good wine.

I don't know that I've ever met anyone who loves their job more than these four people. And I mean *love*. You can hear it in their voices, see it in their eyes, taste it in their wine. Whether they tend the land themselves (three of four), press the wine with

their very own hands (one of four; for the record, they do not stamp the grapes with their feet) or oversee vineyard operations (four of four), these people love the wine, love their jobs, love their lives.

I also don't know that I've ever had more fun "at work": two glorious days tooling around Napa, tasting wine, learning about grapes, getting to know these fabulous folks. Rob Fanucci gave us tastes directly from the barrels in his grandfather's original wine cellar; Fiona Barnett took us through her stunning home with its breathtaking views of her vineyards and the entire Napa Valley; Jeffrey Shifflett was so proud to show us around his story-book property that he was nearly bursting; Jayson Pahlmeyer crouched down in the dirt to explain just how *his* grapes are grown and picked (that's us in the photo above), and gave me a glass of the most expensive wine I've ever drunk.

Speaking of drunk, in addition to learning about wine people and wine-making, I learned something about myself. I've always thought I disliked red wine. Turns out, I just dislike *cheap* red wine. Who knew?

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Leaving the House

I had a very big decision to make on Sept. 12. The biggest decision of my life, perhaps. I had to decide whether to ever leave my house again. My instinct was to stay put. I am actually very proud and more than a little surprised that I managed to set foot outside that day. And I went to work.

I should really say I went to my office, because I'm not sure you could call it work for those first few days. As a misplaced New Yorker, I was sure no one here would understand my feelings, and I made up my mind before I arrived on Wednesday morning that I did not want to talk about it. Again, I surprised myself: I couldn't *stop* talking about it. That's what we did, here in the Office of Advancement: We talked about it. Actually, being able to come to the office each day following was a blessing. At work, there was no CNN replaying the nightmares I had each night. At work, there were other things on which to focus during fleeting moments of clarity. At work, there was some semblance of the world that used to be normal.

The fall issue of **ggu** was already being printed. Even if I could have, I don't think I would have stopped the presses to include coverage of Sept. 11. What could we possibly say that wasn't already being said? And, quite frankly, I don't know that I had the mental wherewithal to actually work on such an issue.

I am lucky. I work in a place where people count. Where I have a boss who accepted that I couldn't function quite right. Where co-workers helped me get through the day and steel me for another night of CNN.

Sept. 11 had countless effects, most horrifying and abominable. For weeks — months even — after Sept. 11, I thought of it as the day the world stopped, the moment after which nothing could ever be “good” again. I was wrong. For most of us, the world

kept going. And, much to my naive surprise, good things have happened since.

Companies and organizations nationwide acted just like mine: They invented new ways to console their employees, serve their customers, support relief efforts *and* still stay in business. (For more on how companies can and did cope with tragedy, please see “Aftermath” on p. 18.)

People pulled together, supported each other, looked for ways to help. My co-workers, your cousins, her friends, people we'll never meet: They gave blood or money or a touch on the shoulder or tips on how to fell a hijacker if this should happen to you.

And realizing that this *could* happen to you or me or your brother or my aunt forced us to realize how alike we all are. So when even the most accepting among us started to look askance at those who look “different,” we realized we would just have to try harder not to.

We were reminded that talent, beauty and money do not make heroes. Heroes are made of courage. And when it seems like they've given all they have to give, heroes dig down deep and find more. We have real heroes now — a lot of them.

We learned that fear must be lived with when it cannot be overcome. To my surprise, the world did not stop that day. We leave our houses, we go to work, we smile at our neighbors. The unspeakable thing that happened to us will not go away. My hope is that the good things that are happening to us won't either. A belated happy new year — a *safe* and happy new year — to you all.

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