

Bret Baier

*Chief Political Anchor; Anchor &
Executive Editor
Special Report with Bret Baier
FOX News Channel*

“Don’t ignore the journey on your way to a goal. The journey is an important part of the whole thing.”

Bret Baier was born in 1970 in Rumson, New Jersey, but raised in Atlanta, Georgia. His father worked as an oil broker and traveled often for his job. His mother began her career as a flight attendant, then became a travel agent, and later an accountant. “Both my parents were hard workers,” Baier says. “They instilled in me the importance of working hard enough not only to pay my own way but also to get to the next level.”

Baier’s first job was mowing lawns. “I did 10 lawns each weekend,” he says. “When I was older, I was a caddy and golf cart attendant at the local country club. I also worked as a busboy and waiter and eventually as a bartender. I learned early on that hard work pays off. To be successful, you don’t always have to be the smartest kid or the most well off. But if you can hustle, you’re going to prosper.”

A self-described ham, Baier enjoyed school and was motivated to be involved in a variety of activities. He recalls, “I was a little entertainer and always wanted to make people laugh. In high school, I was outgoing and served as the editor of the school newspaper and as president of the student council. In the spring, I was in the musicals and plays. I was very motivated and had a lot of fun, but I was always looking for the next thing.”

During his junior year, Baier, who always had a love of sports, obtained an internship with the sports anchor of the ABC affiliate in Atlanta. He enjoyed the experience, but what caught his eye were the reporters and new anchors. “I refocused and knew that when I started college, I wanted to pursue television journalism as a career.”

Baier won a golf scholarship to DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, where he double majored in English and political science. During the summer, he did an internship at a TV station in Hilton Head, South Carolina. “They let me cover stories that actually made the air,” he says. “It was a great experience.”

After playing golf all four years at DePauw and serving as the captain of a team that went to the NCAA championships, Baier graduated and got a job at the Hilton Head TV station where he had interned. “I covered ‘big’ stories like the nesting of the loggerhead sea turtles or the color of the azaleas in the median strip. I was a one-man band: the photographer, writer, and reporter. I put my stories together and then sent them to the mothership in Beaufort by 3:00 every day,” he says. “Once I made that deadline, I went to my second job delivering food. Once I went to a

house to make a delivery and the guy said, 'Aren't you the reporter on channel six?' I said, 'Yes, sir, did you order the calzone?' To make ends meet, I had a third job bartending."

Career

To improve his reporting skills, Baier sent away for VHS tapes of award-winning news stories. "I watched those tapes over and over," he says, "trying to hone my craft. Finally, I made a tape of my best stories and sent it to markets around the country. I heard back from Amarillo, Texas, and Rockford, Illinois. There was more news going on in Rockford, so I chose that job."

While in Rockford at WRAL, an NBC affiliate, Baier was credited with breaking several statehouse stories. He went on to anchor a weekend show. After 10 months, he made a new tape of his reports to send around the country. He received an offer from WRAL in Raleigh, North Carolina, a CBS affiliate.

"I was there for more than two years," he says. "I did every kind of story, from tornadoes to politics. I learned a lot from some of the great reporters there. I ended up covering the state capitol and then I got an agent, who told me about a new start-up channel that saw my tape. They wanted to offer me a job. This was the FOX News Channel. I worked for their Atlanta bureau from my apartment with a fax machine and a cell phone. That was 27 years ago."

In 2001, as the 9-11 attacks took place, Baier was called upon to cover the Pentagon. Afterwards, he was the FOX News Channel (FNC) national security correspondent for the next six years. In 2006, he became the chief White House correspondent and covered the second term of the George W. Bush administration.

In 2009, Baier took over for his friend and mentor Brit Hume as the anchor of *Special Report*. He also serves as the chief political anchor of the network and the host of FOX News Audio's "The Bret Baier Podcast." Throughout his tenure at FNC, he has played a critical role in every major political event.

Baier has received numerous awards for his work. In 2016, he earned the Kenneth Y. Tomlinson Award for Outstanding Journalism from the Robert Novak Journalism Fellowship Program. In 2017, he received the Sol Taishoff Award for Excellence in Broadcast Journalism from the National Press Foundation.

An accomplished best-selling author, Baier has published several books: *Three Days in Moscow: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, *Three Days at the Brink: FDR's Daring Gamble to Win World War II*, *To Rescue the Republic: Ulysses S. Grant, the Fragile Union and the Crisis of 1876*, and *To Rescue the Constitution: George Washington and the Fragile American Experiment*.

Baier's first book, published in 2014, was the deeply personal account about his son Paul, who was born with five congenital heart defects. In the book, *Special Heart: A Journey of Faith, Hope, Courage, and Love*, he details all his son has had to endure. "Essentially, my son's heart was pumping the wrong way," Baier says. "His first open-heart surgery took place when he was 10

days old. The surgeon reworked a heart that was the size of a walnut, moving arteries the size of angel hair pasta. Paul came back from surgery with his chest still open (to keep the swelling down) but covered with a clear plastic bandage. Looking down and seeing your son's tiny heart pumping changes your life forever. It changes how you look at things. It changes what's important and what's not important. We were blessed that day and we are so grateful to all those who contributed to Paul's recovery."

As he's grown, Baier's son has undergone three more open-heart surgeries, plus several stent procedures. Today, at age 16 and at a height of 6'4", Paul Baier is doing well. "We are deeply grateful and have such a deep appreciation for Children's National Hospital in Washington, D.C., where all of Paul's surgeries have taken place. From this experience we now have a family motto: Gratitude is the attitude."

Baier remembers a time when he spent the night in the hospital with eight-year-old Paul, who was undergoing yet another heart procedure. "He woke up in the middle of the night and asked me why other kids in his class were not having to go through what he had been enduring since his birth. I told him that God has a plan for him and that he is passing with flying colors. He accepted that and went back to sleep. But my message to anyone going through a tough time is that whether you believe life is all mapped out or not, you have to believe that you can get through tough times and come out of it tremendously successful."

What I've Learned

When Baier thinks about his success, he says that his ideas on the subject have changed over time. "I've always been a striver. My career has been about going to the next rung on the ladder. But today I'm figuring out a work/life balance. I have not yet fully realized all my goals, but to me happiness is one form of success—and I'm definitely happy."

Baier often addresses graduating students, and when offering advice to young people, he encourages them not to miss the journey. "So many people get caught up in trying to be successful, they miss the journey along the way. But you shouldn't ignore the journey because that is an important part of the whole thing."

Honored and excited about his Horatio Alger Award, Baier says, "I think this recognition for me reinforces the importance of hard work. We live in an Instagram world that gives us so many distractions, but if you can focus on work—work you love—then success will come your way."

Robert Duane Ballard

*Founder and President
Ocean Exploration Trust*

“See failure as the greatest teacher you will ever meet.”

Bob Ballard, the middle of three children, was born in 1942 in Wichita, Kansas. “It was six months after the bombing of Pearl Harbor,” Ballard says. “My father was working as an aviation engineer. He had been valedictorian of his high school class and started at the University of Washington, but he ran out of money and was forced to leave before completing his degree. Growing up, my father always seemed to be working, and I didn’t see a lot of him. It was my mother who was the backbone of our family. She was very loving and always had my back.”

A new job for Ballard’s father took the family to the Mojave Desert in California, where he tested new aircraft with Chuck Yeager. This worked out well for a boy who fell in love with desert exploration. “I was an active child,” Ballard says. “We didn’t understand then that I was actually dyslexic and hyperactive. My older brother is the smartest person I have ever known. He blazed through life like there were no obstacles, but it wasn’t like that for me. I ran into every wall you could imagine. But exploring the desert that surrounded our home was a treasure trove to me. Those were my first hours of being an explorer.”

Ballard’s sister, Nancy, was born with a chromosomal abnormality. This affected her in many ways, including an underdeveloped lower jaw. “She was unable to talk,” says Ballard, “but I figured out ways to communicate with her. She had an amazing spirit and never stopped smiling. She inspired me my whole life. The challenges I had with dyslexia seemed small in comparison to what she dealt with on a daily basis. Nancy put things into perspective for me. My mother took care of her until she was 98 years old.”

In 1948, the Ballards moved once again, this time to San Diego, where they lived in a duplex within walking distance of a fishing pier and beach. “For me, that’s where my life began,” says Ballard. “I would go down at low tide and spend hours exploring the tidal pools. In those days, my challenge was learning how to control my energy. I was often disruptive in school because it was hard for me to sit still. But those tidal pools focused my energy and fed my natural curiosity.”

By the time Ballard was 10, his father put him on a budget. The elder Ballard asked his son to make a list of his needs and his wants, telling him he would pay for the needs but Bob had to raise money for his wants. “I always had a job after school,” Ballard says. “I worked in a laundromat, had a paper route, mowed lawns—all the regular childhood jobs.”

A defining moment for Ballard came when, at age 12, he went to the movie theater to see *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. “I watched the actors walking on the bottom of the ocean, and it

was the first time I really thought about what is under the horizon. It excited me and when I learned there was a career in oceanography, I knew that's what I wanted to pursue."

Ballard attended the University of California at Santa Barbara, where he majored in geology and chemistry. He played basketball and volleyball, was his junior class president, joined a fraternity, and was in Army ROTC. "I spread myself too thin," he says, "but college was like a smorgasbord for me and I just wanted to eat every experience I could."

In 1967, Ballard was working toward a Ph.D. in marine geology at the University of Southern California when he was called to active duty. Upon his request, he was transferred from the Army into the U.S. Navy as an oceanographer. He served for three years as a liaison between the Office of Naval Research and the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Woods Hole, Massachusetts. In 1974, he completed his Ph.D. in marine geology and geophysics at the University of Rhode Island.

Career

Ballard's first dive in a submersible was in 1969 off the coast of Florida for a Woods Hole-sponsored expedition. In 1970, he began a field mapping project of the Gulf of Maine for his doctoral dissertation. In 1974, he was a geologist diver in the submersible *Alvin* during Project FAMOUS, which explored the median rift valley of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge.

In 1977, during the Galapagos Hydrothermal Expedition, funded by the National Science Foundation, Ballard's team explored the seafloor using the deep-towed camera system ANGUS. Their photos captured the sudden appearance of a dense accumulation of live white clams. Within hours, the clams led scientists to find hydrothermal vents for the first time. This discovery of hydrothermal vents was a groundbreaking moment in the history of oceanography and has since led to many more discoveries about the unique ecosystems that thrive in extreme environments.

In 1985, Ballard began his search for shipwrecks. He and a group of scientists, engineers, and technicians aboard the research vessel *Knorr* discovered the final resting place of RMS *Titanic*. The team used *Argo*, a then-new towed system of television cameras and sonars named by Ballard, the expedition's leader. In 1986, he led a team back to the site with the human-occupied submersible *Alvin*.

The *Titanic* discovery was followed by the team locating the final resting place of the German battleship *Bismarck*. Other discoveries include John F. Kennedy's *PT-109* and the *USS Yorktown*, both of which were lost during World War II.

In 2010, Ballard created the Center for Ocean Exploration at the University of Rhode Island's Graduate School of Oceanography, which in 2019 was selected by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to become its Ocean Exploration Cooperative Institute (CECI). The Institute will spend the next 10 years exploring the 52 percent of America that lies

beneath the sea, making it—in essence—the second Lewis and Clark Expedition in American history.

Ballard has published 26 books, has won two Emmys, and was nominated for four others based on his 35 television specials.

What I've Learned

Growing up, Ballard always felt he didn't measure up to his brilliant older brother. However, in 2015, at the age of 72, he finally came to understand himself fully for the first time in his life. In his memoir, *Into the Deep*, he writes, "I was listening to the radio about a book called *The Dyslexic Advantage*. The symptoms sounded familiar to me. That night I started reading the book and I couldn't put it down. Tears were streaming down my face because here was a book that was describing me to me. It wasn't that I had a defective brain, it was that I was wired differently and that I should think of dyslexia as a gift."

Since then, Ballard has learned his different way of thinking is largely what has given him his successful career. He explains, "I have the ability to see patterns and use those insights to reconstruct the past or predict the future. That is my strong card."

When Ballard was considered graduate school, his dream was to go to the Scripps Institute. Unfortunately, he was not accepted. "One thing my dyslexia has taught me," he says, "is that you have to figure out ways to go around your failures. I discovered that my failures have been my greatest teaching moments. With dyslexia, I was rarely able to go through the front door to achieve my dreams, so I always found a side door."

When talking with young audiences, Ballard advises them to follow their passion. "If you're not running to get to work, then get another job," he says. "My other advice is to see failure—and you will have failures—as the greatest teacher you'll ever meet. Learn from your failures and move on."

One of the most difficult times in Ballard's life came in 1989, when his 21-year-old son was killed in a car accident. "Todd had just accompanied me on the search for and discovery of the *Bismarck*," Ballard says. "I had a hard time accepting his loss, and I harbored a lot of anger. I needed help, and that's when I discovered Joseph Campbell, author of *The Hero's Journey*. Campbell's concept is that life is a journey, an act of becoming, and that you never really arrive at your destination. His philosophy changed the way I see the world, and it has been very helpful."

In the epilogue of his memoir, Ballard writes, "What have I learned through both my explorations at sea and my efforts to understand my own special gifts? My daughter, Emily, came home from college not long ago, and she brought with her a sign with a quote from J.R.R. Tolkien: 'Not all those who wander are lost.' Those words of wisdom capture the essence of what explorers do and the spirit that continues to drive my life today. It's a message of hope,

confidence, and optimism—a message I want to share with people, young or old, with or without dyslexia, as they continue on their own journeys of discovery.”

William Robert Berkley

Founder and Executive Chairman

W. R. Berkley Corporation

“I want to do everything I can to foster the American dream.”

The second of three boys, Bill Berkley was born in 1945 in northern New Jersey, where the family lived first in an apartment and then in a modest house in West Orange. Berkley’s father took over a family company that serviced vending machines; his mother also worked in the business part time. “Up to that point, not much was going well for me,” Bill says. “I was a smart kid, but difficult. In school, I spent a lot of time in the principal’s office. I was always quick to apologize for my misdeeds, but one day the principal told me a story about pulling nails out of a piece of wood. You could pull the nails out, but they always left their mark. Empty apologies, he told me, did the same thing. They never erased what you had done. That story stuck with me, and I decided then to try to behave better in the future.”

When Berkley was in the fourth grade, his father’s business began to fail and he took a job with a company in Baltimore that manufactured products to be sold in vending machines. Berkley saw this move to Maryland as a chance for a fresh start. He recalls, “With my father’s new job, we were able to become more middle class. We had a nicer house, and I started doing well in school. I no longer got into trouble. Observing my father’s improved circumstances gave me the drive to want to succeed. It made me realize that if you worked hard, there were more opportunities.”

Berkley started a lawn-mowing business and charged \$1 per lawn. He discovered that other boys in his neighborhood were unwilling to knock on doors to find customers. That gave him an idea: He would do the selling and take half the money earned from each new lawn-mowing recruit. “That was my first business experience,” he says.

When Bill was in the middle of his sixth-grade year, his father was the pilot of a company plane which crashed enroute from Alabama to Chicago. “I had a very hard time accepting my father’s death and the immediate changes it meant for our family,” he says. “My mother moved us back to West Orange, New Jersey, to be close to family. This was devastating for me. I liked our life in Baltimore and saw this move as a step back to a less happy lifestyle.”

Back in New Jersey, Berkley’s family lived in an apartment where the next-door neighbor was a stockbroker. Berkley spent as much time as he could with him learning about the market. Soon, Berkley bought stock in Decca records, reasoning that if so many of his friends were buying records, then the company must be doing well. When the stock price increased and Berkley realized a profit, he was hooked on the idea of becoming an investor.

Within three years, the family moved to a two-family home in a less attractive community in Union, New Jersey. Determined to be self-sufficient and not a burden to his mother, Berkley sold Austin biscuits door to door at an apartment complex. Looking to expand, he came up with the idea of selling his product to the local supermarket. At age 13, he became friends with the store’s owner, who gave him a job. “It was there that I learned to work hard and longer than

anyone else in the market. I wanted to learn all I could about the business and soon I was giving the owner advice that would improve his operations. Mentally, I pretended I owned the store, which made me take responsibility for all I did.”

By the time he was in high school, Berkley was not only working in the store but also had a large paper route. He earned enough money to buy a car and cover all his personal expenses, but paying for his own college education was out of the question. Berkley was accepted by his first-choice school, the University of Pennsylvania, but without a scholarship, he couldn’t afford to attend. He did receive a full-tuition scholarship to New York University (NYU), and he quickly accepted the offer.

From the beginning, Berkley felt in a rush to complete his education. He double majored in statistics and finance and took 22 credits each semester, which allowed him to graduate in three years. He began a paper delivery business in his New York City apartment building, which immediately gave him access to 250 customers. At the end of his last year at NYU, he was approached with an offer to buy his route for \$6,000. “That was a lot of money in those days,” Berkley says. “It helped me with my tuition to get my MBA at Harvard Business School.”

While at Harvard, Berkley established Berkley Dean, an investment advisory firm. He and his partner, Paul Dean, managed \$2 million of clients’ money from his apartment on the Harvard campus. By 1968, when he completed his graduate degree, the company was managing \$10 million of investment assets.

Career

Berkley was offered a job with Fidelity Management Research Company, the company that he had interned for during his first year at Harvard. Berkley worked full time for Fidelity until he completed his MBA. He knew he wanted to start his own business, and his mentor at Fidelity, Ned Johnson, offered him a \$25,000 investment in Berkley’s new company. “This was money I was counting on to get my start,” Berkley says. “But after many discussions, Fidelity’s attorneys counseled Johnson not to go through with the deal.” In the end, Johnson decided to keep his commitment and gave Berkley the money as a consulting fee. “This was a huge lesson for me. From then on, I’ve known the importance of keeping your word and honoring your commitments,” Berkley says.

In 1970, Berkley began to focus on the insurance industry with the establishment of W. R. Berkley Corporation. In 1973, as chairman and CEO, he took his company public. W. R. Berkley has built more than 50 successful insurance businesses. The company’s market value, which is more than \$20 billion, insures properties in aviation, mining, design, medical, transportation, oil, and gas. Today, Berkley serves as the executive chairman and his son is the CEO. “I still work full time,” he says. “I go in every morning at 6:30. I just find it exciting.”

Berkley has never forgotten New York University—the school that made his education possible with a scholarship. He has served on the NYU Board for 30 years and was chairman for the past

eight years. He and his wife, Marjorie, have donated more than \$50 million to the school's Leonard N. Stern School of Business.

His charitable giving is largely administered through the Berkley Family Foundation, of which he serves as the president, secretary, and director. His philanthropic interests primarily include education, healthcare, and environmental causes.

What I Have Learned

"I've always believed in the American dream and I want to do everything I can to foster it in the minds of America's young people," Berkley says. "My definition of the American dream is this: If you work hard enough and devote time and effort, you can accomplish almost anything in this country. You don't see that anywhere else."

Honored to become a part of the Horatio Alger Association, Berkley strongly supports helping young people to attain higher education. "I see education as giving you the framework to understand how everything works," he explains. "It doesn't solve your problems, but it gives you something to build on. When combined with hard work and perseverance through challenging times, success is usually the outcome."

When Berkley was 11 years old and lost his father, it changed his life forever. "My big break," he says, "was winning a full scholarship to NYU. Without that, I wouldn't be where I am today, living my own American dream. I'm living proof that an investment in education gives infinite payback, and it's my privilege to pay that forward to the next generation."

Over the years, Berkley has been involved with a number of nonprofits, but he says, "The Horatio Alger Association is the epitome of what I think a nonprofit should be. The scholarship programs that help deserving students achieve positive outcomes through their own commitment and desire are outstanding. It's just one of the greatest nonprofit organizations that exists. I'm very excited to be a part of it."

P. James Donnelly

*Founder and Chairman
Castle Group*

“The American dream isn’t a moment in time, it’s an experience.”

James Donnelly was born in 1961 in Bell’s Corners, a small town outside of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. His father worked as a teacher and supplemented his income by pumping gas at night. “My father graduated high school and had one year of college, which in those days was enough to become an entry level teacher,” Donnelly says, “but he believed in education and continued his schooling part time. It took him 20 years, but he finally earned his Ph.D.”

The middle of three children, Donnelly lived with his family in a modest 900-square-foot, one-bathroom house. When they moved in, one of the options in the new home, which cost \$16,000, was to include sod and a paved driveway. The Donnellys opted out of both. “We were the only ones in the neighborhood like that,” Donnelly says. “I know my parents were doing the best with what they had, but it left a mark on me.”

Since his father was away from home working for much of the day, Donnelly’s mother was the mainstay of the family. “When my mother was in the 10th grade, her family needed her to leave school and work in the local mill to help them financially. She always regretted not completing her education and it left a scar that she still talks about. However, her pride and joy were her children. She was a loving mother who always had my back,” Donnelly says.

From the time they could walk, the Donnelly children had regular chores. “My father never hired anyone to do repairs on our home, Donnelly says. “When we needed a new roof, my brother and I were there helping him hammer in the shingles. We were 10 and 12 then. To please my mother, who worried we would fall, he tied a rope around a big stake in the middle of the roof and tied us to the other end of it. I came to understand, looking back on those work-ethics moments, that success isn’t only hard work, but if you don’t work hard, you probably aren’t going to be successful.”

When Donnelly was 13, his father told him that he would pay for his room and board, but Donnelly would have to pay for everything else. “I accepted that,” he says. “I learned about a nearby condominium complex that needed someone to mow the lawns. I won the contract, which at the end of the summer paid me \$2,000. I started mowing on Monday and finished on Friday, which gave me the weekends off. Then it would all start over on Monday. It was then that I set a goal for myself: I would be a millionaire by the time I was 30.”

To reach his goal, Donnelly knew he would have to go to college. A self-described “bad kid,” he often skipped school and put little effort into his studies. In Canada, there are 13 grades and by the time he reached the 12th grade, he was close to being kicked out of school. “I knew I had to

knuckle down,” he says. “I brought up my marks and actually won an award for best all-round student, which included athletics, academics, and community service.”

Donnelly knew he wanted to be an accountant. When he was younger, he noticed that one of their neighbors, Mr. Miller, always drove a new car. “My parents didn’t know what he did for a living, so I went over to his house one day and asked him. He told me he was a chartered accountant. I decided that day that I would be a CA and work for one of the largest accounting firms.”

In high school, Donnelly became the youngest McDonald’s manager in Canada. During the summer, he worked as a crane operator in Alberta’s oil fields. These jobs paid for his car and eventually for his degree at nearby Carleton University. “I never got the whole college experience of living on campus,” he says. “I lived at home, commuted to school, and worked full time after my classes.”

Donnelly has never regretted the strictness of his upbringing. “My parents gave me all the tools I would need to be successful,” he says. “They taught me the value of humility, hard work, self-reliance, and giving back to your community. Those values have always served me well. I believe that when you stay true to your values, you make the right choices.”

Career

In 1984, Donnelly completed his Bachelor of Commerce degree and went to work for Arthur Andersen as a CA. He had reached his career goal, but in less than two years he knew he’d made a mistake. “I was making good money, but I hated what I was doing. I certainly could not see myself being an accountant for the rest of my life.”

Donnelly reconnected with an old schoolmate, Ross McBride, who asked him to partner with him to sell tax-advantaged real estate limited partnerships. “Everyone thought I was crazy, including my parents, to leave my job to go into real estate sales. Even I couldn’t believe that after my first year I made \$300,000. The next year, I made \$1 million. I was 27, so I reached my millionaire goal three years early.”

Donnelly and McBride founded Intellivest Group in 1987. The company did well until the tax laws were changed the following year. Donnelly had to quickly pivot, or he would lose everything. He and McBride flew to Florida, where they heard they could make some good real estate deals. They bought an apartment building and quickly converted it to condominiums, which they then sold to Canadian investors. This enterprise was successful until the Canadian dollar decreased in value in 1991. At that point, the business switched to property management under the name of Castle Group.

In 1999, when his partner wanted to pull out, Donnelly sold the properties on Florida’s west coast and became the sole owner of what was left of Castle Group headquartered in Fort Lauderdale. For the next 21 years, he grew the company one account at a time with his brother Rob and childhood friend Craig Vaughan. Today, Castle Group is the largest privately owned

residential property management company in Florida. In 2020, Donnelly sold Castle Group, but remains with the company as chairman. A serial entrepreneur, Donnelly also founded and owns interests in JCR Partners, Crown Residential, VendorSmart™, and Donnelly Capital.

“I am grateful to this country and all I have been able to achieve here, he says. “I am living the American dream, which to me isn’t a moment in time, it is an experience. This country allows you to do and be anything you are capable of dreaming.”

A passionate community leader, Donnelly serves on the boards of Nova Southeastern University, Broward Workshop, LeMieux Center for Public Policy at Palm Beach Atlantic University, and is past chair of the Community Foundation of Broward.

Donnelly met his wife Cathy when they were just 12 years old. They have three sons, Jordan, Chase, and Brock. Together, they support many non-profit organizations, including the Community Foundation of Broward, United Way of Broward, Boys & Girls Clubs of Broward County, and Business for the Arts, and are benefactors of the Broward County Arts Foundation.

In 2014, they founded the James Donnelly Property Management degree program at Nova Southeastern University. It is one of only eight bachelor programs in property management in the country. “My life’s purpose is supporting our next generation,” Donnelly says. “I want to help pave the way for today’s young people to change their circumstances through education and hard work, just as I did.”

What I’ve Learned

“When I started my career, I didn’t know how to be successful,” Donnelly says. “Other than my parents, I never had role models in my life, but I became an incessant reader and books became my mentors. Benjamin Franklin has served as a mentor—he just doesn’t know it. I have read books about how to be a better leader, a better person. I think it’s important to be a lifelong learner.”

Donnelly has a philosophy of life, which he has condensed into four words: stretch, smile, live, and give. He explains, “Stretch means to expand your knowledge—get a little uncomfortable in learning something new. Smile means projecting happiness into the world. I’m actually an introvert, but no one believes that about me because I’m always smiling and showing interest in others. Live means to be in the moment. You can’t change the past and you don’t know what the future holds, so live fully in the moment. Give means to be generous with your time, treasure, and talent. I say these words to myself every day before I head out into the world. It’s had a powerful impact on my life.”

Humbled and excited about his Horatio Alger Award, Donnelly says, “It brings some closure to a loop I started when I was 13 years old. That’s when I started earning my own way and I never stopped. This award is the pinnacle of my career and a recognition of my journey. To stand alongside my fellow Members is such an honor.”

Steven Todd Green

President

Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.

“I see success as fulfilling the purpose for which you were called.”

Steve Green, the middle of three children, was born in 1963 in Oklahoma City, where he still resides today. His father, David, worked as a supervisor at a variety store chain called TG&Y. In 1970, David Green took out a \$600 loan and started a home business in his garage assembling and selling picture frames. By 1972, the business focused on arts and crafts and was named Hobby Lobby.

“From the beginning, our family was very involved in the business,” Green says. “My mother worked alongside my father in getting it established. I began working in the store when I was only seven. I was paid seven cents for each frame I put together. It excited me to have some spending money. I never minded working in the store. In our family, work was just a part of life.”

The Green family embraces its Christian faith and heritage. “Our faith has always been a deep part of all that we do, all the decisions that we make. I was raised with Christian values and a strong belief in hard work, honesty, and integrity. My parents modeled that. My father has always been passionate about his work. I have worked with him for 42 years and it’s been a great experience,” he says.

Once the business was beginning to be profitable, Green’s mother was able to stay home and take care of her children. “My mother is a gentle spirit but very strong,” Green says. “She provided a warm and loving home, and I’m very grateful for the happy childhood my parents gave to me.”

Green enjoyed sports and participated in football, baseball, and track in high school. By then, he had made the decision that as soon as he graduated, he would work full time for Hobby Lobby. “My father dreamed of making the store a nationwide chain, and I wanted to be a part of that,” he says. “We had eight stores when I graduated and I was anxious to contribute to our growth.”

Career

Green began at the bottom and learned how each department operated. Over time, he oversaw the accounting department, warehouse system, and buying systems. He also helped to develop the international importing department and real estate expansion

Hobby Lobby’s corporate headquarters includes more than 12 million square feet of manufacturing and distribution space, and an office complex in Oklahoma City. Today, there are more than 1,000 Hobby Lobby stores with 46,000 employees operating in 48 states, making it the largest privately owned arts-and-crafts retailer in the world.

In 2004, when he was 41, Green became president of Hobby Lobby. His father, who is still actively involved in the company, is the founder and CEO. His mother, Barbara, is a buyer for the company. His brother, Mart, is the founder of Mardel Stores and currently serves as Ministry Investment Officer for the Green family businesses. His sister, Darsee Lett, is the vice president of Hobby Lobby Art/Creative. “As leaders of a company this large, we try to serve those who work for us,” Green says. “It’s a big responsibility.”

Closing their stores on Sunday was a major decision for the company leadership. “In all we do, we want to honor God,” Green says. “We were making \$100 million in sales on Sundays, but we still felt the right thing to do would be to commit to making Sunday a day of rest for our employees. It took us two years to implement, but in the end, it has served us well. Today we are very pleased and excited that we made that decision.”

Tithing is also an important part of the Green family’s faith. “We give half of our profits to our philanthropy, which is very exciting. We want to be a profitable company because the more we make, the more we are able to give and support causes that have a positive impact on lives.”

In 2009, the Green family purchased its first biblical artifact and has since acquired tens of thousands of them, which now comprise the Green Collection. In 2010, the Museum of the Bible, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, was established and opened to the public in 2017 in Washington, D.C. Steve Green serves as its founder and chairman of the board. In this capacity, he has assembled a team of academics, designers, technology professionals, and other experts to create the 430,000-square-foot museum dedicated to a scholarly presentation of the Bible’s history and impact. The Green Collection is on loan to the museum, which to date has had more than 2 million visitors.

Green is the author of *Faith in America* (2011), *The Bible in America* (2013), and *This Beautiful Book* (2019), and co-authored with his wife, Jackie, *This Dangerous Book* (2017). Steve and Jackie Green have been married for 39 years and have a son and five daughters, a daughter-in-law, three sons-in-law, and eight grandchildren. They are active in their local church and support many Christian charities.

What I’ve Learned

While Hobby Lobby has routinely grown each year since its founding, 1985 was a challenging time. “We were in the middle of an economic downturn and for the first time, the company lost money,” Green says. “We owned more money on our house than we could sell it for. It was a dire situation and we didn’t see how we were going to survive. One thing I have learned in business is that you have to adjust with the times. Just because something is successful today, doesn’t mean it will be successful tomorrow. You could be the best covered wagon manufacturer in the world, but people are no longer buying covered wagons. We persevered through the challenge of 1985 and returned to profit in 1986. In the end, we just try to do what is right and that has served us well.”

Green's faith has directed him in all aspects of his life—in his relationships, in his business, and in his home. When the idea for the Bible Museum emerged, he never envisioned himself getting so involved with the project. "It felt like God was directing me to go down this path," he says. "It's been an exciting journey. I believe God has a plan and a purpose for me and for my life. I strive each day to fulfill that purpose as best I can."

Honored by his Horatio Alger Award, Green says, "I'm very grateful for this recognition. It's incredible to become a part of this Association."

When asked about his advice for Horatio Alger Scholars, Green says, "My hope for the Scholars is that they take their God-given abilities and pursue their education to the fullest extent. It's important to always grow in our knowledge and never stop learning. It's fundamental to all we do."

For those facing difficult situations, Green says, "When I consider the challenges the Scholars have faced in their young lives, I hope that they understand that challenges are difficult, but it's how we respond to them that counts. This country provides great opportunities for those who strive to do the right thing and who display good character. I see it as part of the American dream. Hard work, perseverance, integrity, and generosity—these are the building blocks of achieving dreams."

Kenneth A. Hersh

*President and Chief Executive Officer
George W. Bush Presidential Center
Chairman, Hersh Family Investments*

“The best bet you can make is to bet on yourself.”

Born in 1963, Ken Hersh was raised in Dallas, Texas, where his father was a podiatrist and his mother an economics professor. Unfortunately, it was not a happy marriage. “I grew up listening to a lot of arguments,” Hersh says. “To describe my home life, I would use the word ‘tense.’ In addition to strain between my parents, my mother was working on her Ph.D., trying to have a career, and raising three kids. She was under a lot of stress.”

While the home front was not ideal, Hersh thrived at school. He attended St. Mark’s School of Texas, a grades 1-12 school that provided him with the stability he craved. “The one value my parents agreed on,” he says, “was education. I have always been grateful that I was sent to St. Mark’s. My teachers were my role models and I made lifelong friendships. It was the place that was rewarding and a safe haven.”

When Hersh was 10, his parents separated; they divorced when he was 12. Not wanting to be a burden on his mother, Hersh began working at an early age. The summer after seventh grade, he developed his own neighborhood sports camp. “I recruited about eight kids, charging them each \$1 day. We would play baseball, football, and basketball. They brought their own lunch and I gave them Kool-Aid. I earned \$40 a week and thought I was rich. In hindsight, I was the cheapest neighborhood child care center.”

In high school, Hersh played soccer and golf. He also served as the editor of the school newspaper and was captain of the debate team, which participated on the national circuit. “Those activities had me thinking that I would one day be the next great trial lawyer,” he says.

Summer jobs in high school included working the graveyard shift at McDonald’s, in the mailroom and loading docks of the Horchow Collection, and the grill at Jack-in-the-Box.

Hersh was accepted to Princeton University, which he believes was a perfect fit for him. “Given my parents’ contentious relationship, I grew up self-reliant, which is exactly how Princeton’s curriculum is structured. In your junior year you write two papers, and as a senior you have a year-long thesis that is 40 percent of your GPA. In other words, they put a lot of emphasis on independent work. I thrived in that environment.”

Hersh believes that the most impactful thing that happened to him at Princeton was joining an organization called Business Today. He ran the organization during his junior year and worked for it over two summers. “We did fundraising around the country, put out a quarterly magazine,

and organized a national conference. It was completely student led and it turned me on to business.”

After graduating from Princeton magna cum laude with a degree in politics, Hersh planned to go to law school and also earn an MBA. He was accepted to Stanford’s business school, but was waitlisted for the law school. Hersh was enticed by Stanford’s offer to defer enrollment for two years so that he could gain some work experience. He had a month to make his decision and he spent that time interviewing for analyst positions on Wall Street. Morgan Stanley offered him a two-year financial analyst position in New York City, which he quickly accepted.

Hersh’s time at Morgan Stanley ultimately changed his trajectory. The simple fact that he was from Texas prompted the company to place him in the energy group of their investment banking division. “I didn’t know the difference between natural gas and gasoline,” Hersh says. “I guess they assumed everyone from Texas must know oil and gas. The lucky thing was that in 1985, a lot of the big energy transactions were taking place. As a result, I crunched the numbers around some big oil and gas mergers. I was thrown into the fire and learned by doing. It was grueling 100-hour weeks, but I learned a lot. I also came to realize that I no longer wanted to pursue law. I wanted to stay in finance.”

Career

In 1989, Hersh completed his MBA, graduating as an Arjay Miller Scholar. In the summer of 1988, while working on his MBA, Hersh wrote a report for Richard Rainwater, one of the legendary godfathers of what is now the private equity industry. Rainwater used that report to help form the basis for a new private equity fund called Natural Gas Partners (NGP). Hersh, along with Rainwater, Gamble Baldwin, and David Albin, co-founded the private equity fund in November 1988 as an energy fund focused on the oil and gas industries.

By the early 1990s, the firm had established a pattern of funding entrepreneurs and helping startup companies grow. At NGP, Hersh and his partners pioneered an investment methodology that became the industry standard in structuring capital for the domestic oil and gas industry, thereby facilitating the unconventional shale revolution. Hersh served as CEO until 2016, and under his leadership NGP became one of the nation’s leading investment firms of the time. Ultimately, the firm became NGP Energy Capital Management and diversified into a firm with funds dedicated to energy, mining resources and minerals, agribusiness, energy technology and energy lending.

Toward the end of his time at NGP, Hersh started to realize he was gaining more personal satisfaction from his philanthropic work. “After my 50th birthday, I decided it was time to devote more time to my civic involvement,” he says. In 2016, he became president and CEO of the George W. Bush Presidential Center, which houses the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum and the George W. Bush Institute.

“It’s been an incredible joy to be a part of this mission-driven entity,” he says. “We’ve expanded the programmatic work of the Bush Institute around the values of freedom, opportunity,

accountability, and compassion. We combine public programming and policy work in the areas of economic opportunity, strengthening democracy, and advancing free societies around the world.”

Ken Hersh is a frequent writer and speaker on topics ranging from economics and geopolitics to the energy industry and financial markets. In 2023, he released his book, *The Fastest Tortoise: Winning in Industries I Knew Nothing About*, which chronicles his journey in an industry he didn’t even know existed when he started. Going fearlessly into the unknown defined Hersh’s career and along the way he learned a few lessons, which he generously shares in his book.

In addition to several lifetime achievement awards in the energy industry, in 2023, Hersh received the Ernest C. Arbuckle Award, the highest award given by Stanford’s Graduate School of Business, recognizing excellence in the field of management leadership, and the H. Neil Mallon Award presented by the World Affairs Council to recognize his contribution to the region’s global presence. In 2019, he received the Henry Cohn Humanitarian Award, presented by the Texoma region of the Anti-Defamation League for advancing the cause of human rights, dignity, and equal opportunity.

What I’ve Learned

Looking back over his career, Hersh is quick to give credit for much of his success to his long-time business partner, David Albin. “We were partners for nearly 30 years without a stitch of paper between us. We complemented each other and had total trust between us. That is one piece of advice I have for the those just getting their start: Find people you want in your foxhole—your internal board of directors—and invest in those relationships.”

While reflecting on his career in preparation for writing his book, Hersh came to realize that much of his success and trajectory came to him because he was willing to recognize opportunities and put in the effort to see where they would lead him. “I call one chapter in my book ‘Raise Your Hand.’ I had the attitude that I would try to make things happen; that I would take a stab at something even if I was unsure of where to begin or where it would go,” Hersh explains. “It’s a mentality that really paid off for me. When I mentor young people today, I tell them the best bet you can make is on yourself.”

When asked for his definition of success, he says, “For me, it’s having no regrets when I look back. I think that at the end of the day, if you can look back and say: ‘If I had it all to do over again, I’d do it pretty much the same way,’ that sounds like to success to me.”

Hersh has often been described as a master entrepreneur. “Entrepreneurship is everything,” he says. “You can be entrepreneurial in business and in relationships. In fact, life itself is entrepreneurial. Some people think about their future and they want it to be highly scripted. They’re very targeted. But I say, let the fog of the future excite you. If you are so specific about where you want to be 10 years from now, you could be letting opportunities pass you by because you are so focused on the end point.”

Humbled by his Horatio Alger Award, Hersh says, “To be associated with the Association’s mission aligns well with how I carry myself and what I feel is important about paying it forward. I look forward to a long association with both the people in the organization and the Scholars that it helps.”

Dale LeFebvre

Founder and Executive Chairman

3.5.7.11 Investments

“See value where others don’t.”

When Dale LeFebvre was born in 1971, his father worked for the telephone company as a lineman. He later became a clerk for the IRS. His mother was an eyeglass assembler, and later became a hairdresser. Raised in Beaumont, Texas, LeFebvre thought hardship and poverty were normal. “I was never exposed to anything else,” he says. “I was more or less unaware of anything better.”

LeFebvre spent his summers with his grandmother and great-grandmother. “My grandmother was very nurturing,” he says. “My great-grandmother was illiterate, but she was the one who focused on my education. I would say that both of those women influenced me the most in my childhood.”

A self-described nerd in elementary school, LeFebvre became an early reader in kindergarten, thanks to a teacher, Miss Patterson, who took an interest in him. “Even though I liked to read, I wasn’t that interested in school,” he says. “I got into a lot of fights, and I have another teacher to thank, Mrs. Brown, for steering me away from that behavior. At home, my parents didn’t emphasize education. They were more about religion and the values of honesty and hard work.”

LeFebvre didn’t spend much time thinking about his future. “All I knew is that I wanted to be independent,” he says. “I wanted money because, from my vantage point, money is what got you freedom.”

In junior high, LeFebvre was part of a minority-to-majority transfer to a better school. That is where he developed a love of science fair competition. He also loved his shop class. He was a straight-A student, but he still wasn’t taking school seriously. One day, a friend, Henry Jackson, talked to him about taking the PSAT. “At first, I thought he was crazy encouraging me to take that test,” LeFebvre says. “I just didn’t see what good it could do for me.”

LeFebvre took the test and did so well he was recruited to go to a summer program at MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts. “That experience changed my life. I knew by the end of it that I wanted to go to college. I especially wanted to go to MIT, but I didn’t see how I would ever be accepted—and if accepted, I didn’t see how I would afford the tuition.”

From the time he was a young teenager, LeFebvre worked. He mowed lawns and later worked as a salesman in an electronics store called Service Merchandise. His job paid for his personal expenses, but there was no other money for college. “I applied for more scholarships than anyone on Earth,” he says. “I got a lot of scholarships, but it was clear to me none would get me

into MIT. I reconciled myself to going to the University of Texas and didn't even send in an application to MIT."

No one was more surprised than LeFebvre when he won a Bell Labs fellowship, which is one of 12 scholarships in the country. It was enough money for him to attend MIT, but the application deadline had already passed. Encouraged by his friends to call the school and see if they would extend the date for him, LeFebvre made the call. "I called admissions and spoke to a Ms. Williams. "I explained about my just receiving my scholarship and asked if she would extend the application deadline for me. She asked, 'If you get accepted, will you come?' I said absolutely. She accepted me over the phone and sent me an application to sign. That changed my life."

LeFebvre was excited to go to MIT, but he soon realized as a freshman that with regard to academics, he was woefully behind his fellow classmates, many of whom had gone to private prep schools. "I knew what it would take for me to maintain my usual straight-A average," he says, "but it would mean the difference between getting some sleep or no sleep. I chose the easier route and was a B+ student. It was enough to keep my scholarship, but when I look back on that time now, I wish I would've put in the extra effort. It's my one regret."

LeFebvre was an electrical engineering major, but in his later years at MIT, he became involved with civil rights. "I decided I wanted to be Thurgood Marshall, or at least a judge," he says. "For me, that meant going to Harvard Law School."

LeFebvre took the LSAT and did very well. He was accepted to Harvard, but money was once again an issue. He decided to defer law school for a year, giving himself time to make some money for his graduate education. He worked as an analyst for McKinsey & Company from 1993 to 1995. LeFebvre was the first MIT graduate to be hired by the global management consulting firm.

LeFebvre earned his J.D. degree from Harvard Law in 1999 as well as an MBA—also from Harvard. "When I returned to school, I went from making money to spending it. By the end, I was in debt for more than \$200,000."

Career

In 2006, LeFebvre became the co-founder and managing partner of AIC International Investments, a St. Michael, Barbados-based private equity fund management company—now known as Portland Private Equity. "I felt that if I was ever going to take a risk and really go for it, it would be best to do it at the beginning of my career," he explains. "I was having a hard time finding a job with any of the Wall Street private equity firms, so I decided to create my own firm."

Unfortunately, LeFebvre discovered he didn't like many aspects of the private equity business. "The motto of private equity," he says, "is to buy something, marginally improve it, and then sell it. When I first started, I didn't know how much this business philosophy would not appeal to

me. Instead, I wanted to take existing businesses, push them in different areas, and grow and develop them.”

In 2008, LeFebvre founded 3.5.7.11, a controlled investment private equity firm. Since then, the firm has raised more than \$1 billion in institutional capital for businesses specializing in transportation, infrastructure, energy, financial services, and technology. LeFebvre serves as executive chairman in each portfolio company, providing strategic direction, management oversight, operational guidance, and financial structuring expertise.

“I love what I’m doing,” he says. “Seeing businesses and the people in them grow is very rewarding. The name of the firm is a nod to MIT, where all the buildings are numbered. The numbers I chose for the firm are all prime numbers, which felt right to me when naming the company. I wouldn’t be where I am today without MIT.”

An avid inventor, LeFebvre personally holds more than 50 international and domestic patents. He is philanthropically committed to civil rights, arts, culture, and humanities-related causes in the U.S. and the U.S. Virgin Islands. He currently serves on the Board of Trustees of the National Smithsonian Board, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and the American Association of Blacks in Energy. Previously, under the Obama administration, he served on the President’s Advisory Committee on the Arts for the John F. Kennedy Center, The John F. Kennedy Center International Committee, and Oxfam America.

What I’ve Learned

A few years ago, LeFebvre was digging a hole in his yard to bury his beloved dog who had just died. After developing a pain in his side, he was forced to stop shoveling. He thought it was a hernia. He went to the hospital and soon learned he was in acute sepsis.

“I went into a coma for the next 500 hours,” he says. “My infection was massive, and it didn’t look like I would recover. My kidneys and lungs failed and I barely had heart function. The doctors said that my chances were so low it would be as if I were the only person to survive a plane crash. But my team from 3.5.7.11 was there with me and they voted to give me a chance. This experience and so many others in my life taught me how important your relationships are. I learned to read because an illiterate woman encouraged me. I took the PSAT because a friend told me I should. An admissions counselor accepted me to MIT without an application. And doctors who I’d never met before saved my life. I have learned that people show up in your life—especially when you have problems. These people are good and they have value. That’s why I always say it’s important to see the value in others.”

LeFebvre’s definition of success is working with people you want to work with, talking to people you want to talk to, and solving problems you want to solve. “Surround yourself with these people and you will have success,” he says.

His advice to those just starting their careers is to always consider a person’s whole story. “When looking at a person you want to emulate, look at their whole journey—not just the

successful part at the end. It's the journey that's important—that's where all the learning takes place."

John T. McNabb II

*Former Co-Founder, Chairman, and CEO
Growth Capital Partners, Inc.*

“Your life is a product of your circumstances, but it’s also a product of your choices, your will, and your values.”

Born in Charleston, West Virginia, in 1944, the Honorable John T. McNabb II grew up in the coal country of southern West Virginia. At the time, his father was serving in the North Atlantic during World War II. “My mother was only 19 when I was born,” McNabb says. “We became very close. She had the gift of a good voice and she sang at weddings, funerals, and other church-related events. When I was a toddler, our family entertainment was my mother’s piano playing, card games, and sitting together listening to favorite shows on our four-foot-tall radio. We lived in a two-bedroom, one-bath house with a railroad directly in front of it.”

When the war ended, McNabb’s father returned home and began working for his father-in-law’s meat processing business. “It was my great good fortune to be born into a patriotic and hardworking family who loved God and America,” McNabb says. “My four grandparents had a total of seven years of schooling. My parents and grandparents were smart and well read, but no one could afford college.”

As a boy, McNabb had low self-esteem, and he’s unsure of why this was the case. “It didn’t come from my loving parents,” he says. “For some reason, I felt the need to prove myself to be relevant, but that began to change once I became involved in sports.”

One day, McNabb was invited to try out for a local baseball team. He hit the first ball out of the park. The team was affiliated with a church that his family did not attend, and the coach told him that to be a part of the team, his family had to join that church. When he told his parents about his baseball encounter, they showed their support for him by changing from their Methodist church to the Baptist church. McNabb’s parents spent their evenings practicing with him—his mother in the outfield fielding balls he hit from his father’s pitches. Eventually, his mother became the team’s coach.

By the time he was 10, McNabb was spending his summers playing baseball and working at his grandfather’s meat processing plant. “I would wake up early in the morning and punch the clock, work all day in my white freezer outfit, and then go play sports in the evening. It’s a schedule I maintained all the way through high school,” McNabb explains. “My work changed over the years. Once I got my license, I drove a truck and delivered meat in southern West Virginia and worked in operations. I worked hard at the plant from age 10 until 17. I come from a long line of hard workers. No one complained about that, everybody just worked hard. That’s how I grew up. There was love in my family, but there wasn’t much leniency, and that’s how I have lived my life.”

In high school, McNabb's athleticism extended to football. He was named to two football All-American teams during his senior year, which earned him a football scholarship to Duke University. "Going to Duke was a big challenge for me," McNabb says. "I was the first in my family to attend a four-year university and I had no preparation for it. I was a little intimidated. But once again, sports helped me through that challenge."

During his four years at Duke, McNabb was named to the All-Atlantic Coast Conference Offense Team and awarded the Jacobs Blocking Trophy as the outstanding blocker in the Atlantic Coast Conference. In 1965, he was Duke Football's Most Valuable Player and served as one of the team captains. He was named to two All-American teams, one as a guard and one as a center. He received offers to play professionally, but he refused. The Vietnam war was in full swing, and McNabb felt it was time to serve his country.

He volunteered for the U.S. Air Force. While in Vietnam, he served two combat flying tours in Southeast Asia. He also flew 137 combat sorties and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters, and the Air Force Commendation Medal. In 1970, he was a finalist for Pacific Air Force Junior Officer of the Year.

Upon his honorable discharge from the Air Force, McNabb earned his MBA degree from the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University. Later, he completed finance and corporate governance post-graduate training at the Stanford Directors Forum. He also completed post-graduate studies offered by the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College, the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, and the University of Chicago Booth School of Business.

Career

McNabb started his career in the energy industry in 1979, accepting a job offer from Mobil Oil's exploration and production division located in Denver, Colorado. He has been involved in domestic and international energy operations and management for more than 40 years. During this time, he also co-founded a merchant banking firm, Growth Capital Partners, serving as chairman for all 19 years of the firm's existence and as chief executive officer for almost 20 years. After the firm was sold to Duff & Phelps, an international financial services entity, McNabb served as the company's vice chairman.

McNabb went on to serve as chair and later chairman and chief executive officer of Willbros Group, a Fortune 1000 publicly listed company and one of the world's largest energy contractors. He also served as lead director for two Fortune 500 public companies and has served on the boards of directors of eight publicly listed companies. Additionally, he has served on more than 50 privately owned companies and nonprofit entities, including as chairman of the Board of Visitors at the University of Houston.

Most recently, McNabb was appointed by President Trump to a five year-term with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Council. He was also vice chair of the Council for a Secure America and is an emeritus member of the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University.

An active philanthropist, Darlene and John McNabb focus their giving to the educational needs of at-risk children and funding faith-based educational entities.

What I've Learned

When he was in his 40s, McNabb was dissatisfied with his inner self. "I felt it was time for an honest self-evaluation," he says. "I made a list of 40 traits that I wanted to examine—things that I considered to be pluses as well as minuses. It was a long and difficult exercise, but I came out of that experience with a spark and desire to make a difference. To me, that's the definition of leadership: making a difference. From that point forward, that's what I set out to do in all my endeavors."

McNabb taught leadership at the University of Houston for four years. His advice to his students was to be true to themselves. He also counseled them to be more of a listener than a talker. A strong believer in the American dream, McNabb says, "My life is a product of my circumstances, my choices, my will, and my values. I believe you can shape your own destiny, but you have to put in the effort and work. You have to be ethical and make choices that are moral. Most of all, you have to be true to yourself."

McNabb warns against complacency. "It's complacency and fear that keep us from doing what is necessary to expand our horizons," he says. "My life is proof that if one actively pursues self-improvement, one can greatly change their circumstances and possibilities."

About receiving his nomination for the Horatio Alger Award, McNabb says, "This is a special time in my life. I see this award as validation for a life lived with integrity and honor. Helping others and making a positive difference are what has always motivated me. You know, you only get one life on earth, so I believe you should do with it what you can. It is not a practice."

Ramola Ramesh Motwani

Chairwoman

Merrimac Ventures

“When you educate one person, you change generations.”

Ramola Motwani comes from a long line of hard-working business owners and entrepreneurs. She was born in 1947, just after India became independent from Great Britain. At the time, her family lived in the state of Sindh, which became part of Islamic Pakistan. Fearing religious persecution and believing there would be more opportunities in India, the family moved to Mumbai.

With millions of migrants looking for work, it was difficult for Motwani’s parents to get re-established, but they were optimistic in their ability to provide for their seven children. They began supplying milk to the local hospital, and from there they secured more contracts. “My father was very smart and well spoken,” Motwani says. “My mother was supportive and loving. Together, they were determined to give their children opportunities to succeed—and that started with education.”

Motwani was a quiet, obedient child. She attended a convent school, where she especially enjoyed her music and dance classes. She excelled in Hindi and achieved first place in the Hindi exam given by the Maharashtra state, the most populous in India. “I didn’t think much about my future in those days,” she says. “But I loved to study and I wanted my education to continue.”

Motwani attended Jai Hind College in Mumbai, where she met her future husband, Bob Motwani. She earned her undergraduate degree in economics and then pursued her interest in law, gaining her J.D. from Government Law College in Mumbai.

In 1975, she arrived in St. Louis, Missouri where Bob Motwani was living on a business visa. She arrived with only the \$8 allowed by U.S. immigration laws, and she knew she had to start working immediately. The couple married and Ramola worked in their wholesale business, Sona Enterprises, which sold imports from India, China, and Hong Kong. “I was a one-woman show in that little shop,” she says. “I ordered and sold merchandise, I cleaned the store, and I even helped people load their furniture pieces. But I was happy to do it all. Working has always felt like sunlight to me. It energizes me.”

In 1979, following the birth of their two sons, Bob Motwani was diagnosed with scleroderma, a chronic disease that causes the hardening of the body’s connective tissues. The couple went to many doctors and hospitals, but nothing gave them real hope. There was no cure and his life expectancy after diagnosis was 10 to 12 years. At the urging of their families, they went to India to explore medical options there. “It was such a scary time,” Motwani says. “Travel to India was so expensive and we had our two little boys. We were spending our limited resources, but nothing gave us much hope. One doctor told us that a cold climate is not good for this disease.”

By 1986, the couple decided they would live in Florida full time, and invested in the Merrimac Hotel in Fort Lauderdale Beach. “It was run down, but it was beachfront property,” Motwani says. “We couldn’t afford the asking price, so I told Bob to just throw out a number we could work with and see what happens.”

The Motwanis saw the business potential to invest in the area, piggybacking on the steady revenue from the rowdy yet reliable “spring break” crowd that promised high returns, when thousands of young people would converge on the beach town. But Fort Lauderdale cracked down on the seasonal debauchery, the city imposed new rules and authorities enforced them.

“This drove away the young people,” Motwani remembers. “We never got the income from spring break that we expected when we bought the hotel. This was devastating to all the hotel owners. Many left their keys on the front desk and deserted their properties. I decided if we couldn’t increase our business, then we had to cut down on expenses. We did all the housekeeping and maintenance ourselves. I had kept our business in St. Louis and I returned there every two weeks to keep that business going. I worked 24/7 in those days.”

While the Motwanis watched fellow beach moteliers slip into bankruptcy with record cancellations and dips in occupancy, they still believed in the Fort Lauderdale Beach area and proceeded to dig in. It was then that the couple shored up finances to acquire the Gold Coast Tropic Cay motels, which they owned and operated until, at the peak of their momentum in 1994, Bob suddenly passed away at the age of 47. Romala had to think hard about what to do next.

“Our sons were teenagers then and we were all devastated at the loss of my husband,” she says. “He was so loving and as far as the business went, he was the spokesperson. He was the one who made the deals. His death left me with a choice: I could sell everything, or I could move forward with our plans. I wanted to preserve my sons’ future, so I chose to persevere.”

Career

Motwani stepped up to run the company’s operations and absorbed her husband’s responsibilities, all while raising her two teenage sons, Nitin and Dev. She became a major force in the transformation of Fort Lauderdale—taking it from motel spring break central to becoming one of South Florida’s most popular, upscale family-friendly luxury hospitality markets. Along the way, she learned to form strategic partnerships with developers, enabling her to build her first large luxury condo hotel. She has become one of the community’s most pioneering and active local leaders, plainly passionate about South Florida’s real estate and hospitality markets as well as the education industry.

Today, Merrimac Ventures is a real estate investment and development firm whose primary focus is on prime resort and mixed-use development, but it also has extensive investments in multi-family residential, condominiums, retail, and office properties. The company has completed more than \$3 billion in real estate development projects and currently has a pipeline of active projects in excess of nearly \$3.7 billion. The Merrimac Ventures’ story is one of triumph over adversity and how the vision and hard work of the Motwani family transformed a city.

Ramola Motwani is proud of her sons, who are now actively involved in the company. “I wanted my sons to help me get to the next level with the business,” she says. “They both got their undergraduate degrees from Duke, and they both got their master’s in real estate development at Columbia. While in New York, they worked on Wall Street. They did not return home until they had completed their education and achieved some work experience. I have always been a learner and I too wanted to learn the real estate business. My ultimate success in that arena is my legacy to my sons.”

Not only is Motwani committed to the success of her company, but she is also committed to the success of young people in her community. In 2011, she implemented the first hospitality program in Broward

County Public Schools, which included internships and mentorships. Her program is now offered in 15 schools. “Part of the program includes field trips to 5-star hotels,” she says. “These students have never seen anything like a luxury hotel. It gives them a new dream, something they may not have considered before.”

An ardent supporter of her community, Motwani is a member of the United Way of Broward County. She has also served on the Advisory Committee for the Business Improvement District of Fort Lauderdale Beach and was vice chair of the Beach Redevelopment Advisory Board. Additionally, she has actively participated as a Chamber of Commerce Trustee for more than 20 years, and is also a State Board Member of the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association. Motwani was appointed by the governor’s office to the Florida Commission on the Status of Women.

She was inducted into the Junior Achievement Hall of Fame, the NSU Entrepreneur Hall of Fame, and the Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce Hall of Fame. Her many honors include the March of Dimes Woman of Distinction Award, the Salute to Business Award, the Woman’s Council Award, the City of Fort Lauderdale Beach Visionaries Award, and Individual Fundraiser of the Year for the Scleroderma Foundation.

What I Have Learned

To commemorate the 25th anniversary of her husband’s passing in 2019, the Motwani family partnered with Broward College to launch the R. Motwani Academy of Hospitality and Tourism to support and encourage local students in the pursuit of hospitality careers, many of which are first-generation college students. When addressing the students in her program, Motwani tells them to follow their passion. “If you do that,” she says, “then work is not work—it is a journey.”

Motwani is particularly interested in helping young women. She says, “I want to empower women who don’t realize their potential. I use my own life story to encourage them. My message? Believe in yourself, be positive, and be persistent because nothing comes without hard work.”

Honored by her Horatio Alger Award, Motwani says, “It is the perfect fit for me because the values of the Association so closely align with my own. I believe that when you educate one person, you change generations. That’s what the Association’s scholarship programs are doing. I’m proud to become a part of that endeavor and helping these young people to reach the next level.”

Bruce S. Sherman
Chairman and Principal Owner
Miami Marlins

“Make your own luck through education, perseverance, and hard work.”

Bruce Sherman was born in Auburn, New York, in 1948. He grew up in Queens, the third and youngest son in a middle-class family. His father worked as an engineer and his mother was a schoolteacher in her later life.

“My mother was a college graduate, which was unusual for those days. After she had raised my brothers and I, when she was 50, she earned her master’s degree and taught in New York public schools for the next 20 years. I’ve always admired that about her,” Sherman says.

Sherman’s mother exuded positivity. “She is the only person I’ve met in my life who never had a bad word to say about anyone,” he recalls. “She was kind and loving and influenced me greatly.”

Sherman describes his father as reserved. “He cared as much about my character marks on my report cards as my academic grades. In my high school yearbook, he wrote, ‘May your life be filled with memories of constructive activities.’ He wasn’t a ‘let’s play ball’ sort of dad.” Still, Sherman grew up loving all sports—especially baseball.

For about four years, he had a paper route that included 120 customers. “I loved the days when I collected the money from my customers,” he says. “I was always given a lot of coins as part of their payment and that’s one of the reasons I got into coin collecting, which I have continued for my entire life.”

Overall, Sherman was a B student, but he did exceptionally well in math. After taking what was called a “Special Pupil” test in sixth grade, he was offered an opportunity to combine seventh, eighth, and ninth grade into two years instead of the typical three. “In most ways this was good for me,” Sherman says, “but I also had to leave all my friends and start over with new relationships.”

Before graduating high school at age 17, Sherman joined his brother to visit his brother’s friend who was attending the University of Rhode Island. “I loved the campus despite it being one of only two I’d ever seen and decided that was the school for me. I had no college counseling. My parents thought I should major in accounting so I could get a job as soon as I graduated, and that is what I did.”

Shortly before graduating from URI, Sherman participated in on-campus interviews with large accounting firms. He accepted a job with Arthur Young and Company. “They enrolled me in a training program, and I got my CPA,” he says. “I was a little intimidated in those early days. Many

of my co-workers were from Ivy League schools, but I persevered and did well. Arthur Young was an incredible foundation for my entire career.”

Career

For the next nine years, Sherman worked as an accountant at Arthur Young. While working full-time, he attended school at night to earn his MBA from Bernard Baruch College in Manhattan, which he completed in 1973. These 17-hour days included a daily two-hour commute each way to and from his office, and on the nights when he wasn’t attending class, he taught accounting at Queensborough Community College.

When the firm asked him to transfer to their Pittsburgh office, Sherman said he would accept only if they offered him a partnership. The company couldn’t guarantee that outcome, so Sherman began to look for alternatives. “I’ll always be grateful for my start at Arthur Young and Company (now Ernst and Young), but I knew deep down it was not the right environment for me.”

Leaving a steady job and having no immediate career path unnerved Sherman. “In those days, I was living paycheck to paycheck,” he says. “I had a mortgage and a family that counted on me for their support. My eldest brother, Peter, offered to let me use his downtown office in Manhattan from where I could apply for career opportunities. His emotional support meant a lot to me. He is one of the smartest people I’ve ever known, and I’ve always admired him. I wanted to prove to him and my other brother, Joel, that I could be successful.”

Two months later, Sherman was hired as a financial executive at the Collier Family Office, a company that owned a wide variety of businesses in southwest Florida. For the next several years, Sherman worked diligently, but began to realize that he would never achieve economic equity if he stayed on the current path. “There was no possibility of stock options in a private company, and my goal was to become an equity participant,” he explains.

In 1986, he co-founded the wealth-management firm Private Capital Management (PCM) and his first client was the Collier family. PCM grew to become the largest independent asset manager in the southeastern United States and one of the largest firms in the country. “Over the next 20 years, PCM went from one client to 7,000. At one time, we managed, on a fully discretionary basis, \$35 billion. I’m very proud of that.”

Sherman sold PCM to Legg Mason in 2001. The sale was at a record valuation based on PCM’s assets under management. Following the sale, Sherman retained autonomy over PCM’s portfolio management and investment research and led the company to a prestigious #1 ranking in the country for 10 years as measured by Nelson’s “World’s Best Money Managers.”

In 2009, Sherman retired and formed his own family office to manage his personal assets and his extended family’s assets. In 2017, he became the chairman and principal owner of the Miami Marlins, a Major League Baseball team. “I’ve loved baseball my whole life,” Sherman says. “It is a privilege to be a team owner.”

As soon as he retired, Bruce and his wife Cynthia focused on philanthropic endeavors. Together, they are deeply involved in the Marlins Foundation outreach initiatives and programming, as well as many philanthropic organizations in South Florida. They have been Trustees of the Naples Children & Education Foundation for more than 20 years, which supports underprivileged and at-risk children in Collier County.

The Shermans also founded the Bruce and Cynthia Sherman Charitable Foundation. Among the Foundation's missions is supporting medical institutions and health initiatives. The Foundation administers the Sherman Prize to recognize and reward individuals who go above and beyond to make exceptional contributions in the fight to overcome Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. The Foundation also endows the Bruce and Cynthia Sherman Professorship in Urological Research and Innovation at New York University's School of Medicine.

In 2021, the Foundation partnered with the Bascom Palmer Eye Institute at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine to establish the Palm Beach Vision Health Initiative, a pediatric vision screening program for children living in underserved communities.

What I've Learned

After becoming the principal owner of the Miami Marlins, Sherman embraced the responsibility that the position required. "I've learned a lot," he says, "and that's something I recommend—later in life, you should learn something new. I love what I'm doing today. It's been a great opportunity to educate myself about a completely new industry and to take the reins of the Miami Marlins."

Sherman calls his life philosophy HDT: the Happy Day Theory. "We all have challenges and problems," he says, "but it's up to the individual to manage any negative factors that might influence their life. Focus on the problem and do what you can to fix it but try to see the positive in all situations. For me, my Happy Day Theory is to recognize that my family and friends are more important than anything else. When you are confronted with a roadblock, you just have to push ahead, and good things will happen."

Sherman's definition of success has changed over the years. When he was younger, it was financial security. "Today, I measure success by what I give back. A lot of my philanthropy involves supporting at-risk children. If there is one thing I hope any vulnerable child understands it is that they are not alone in their struggles. If they need help, they should seek it out—because help is there for them."

When he addresses young people just getting their start, he advises them to be open to risk. "I think that you can take more risks until the age of 35. If you aren't in the right career, don't be afraid to try something else. If I had stayed in my first position out of college, I would never be where I am today."

Richard Eugene Workman

*Founder and Executive Chairman
Heartland Dental*

“You have to open the door when opportunity knocks.”

Rick Workman was born in 1955 in Clay County, Illinois, where his father was a farmer and his mother was a teacher. “We were in a very small, rural community,” he says. “We had a large extended family in our county. My grandparents lived across the road from us and I had 31 aunts and uncles living nearby. Everybody knew everybody. In the summer, my older sister and I traded off each week living with our grandparents while my mother completed her teaching degree. It was such a blessing to be so close with them and to have their influence.”

Workman was raised with a strong sense of community. “Farmers help each other,” he says. “If it’s bringing in their harvest or baling hay or loaning a tractor—whatever the need, they do their best to help. If someone was sick, you took them soup. It was on our farm that I learned about the importance of family, community, resilience, and hard work.”

At the age of four, Workman got his first farm job collecting eggs from the chicken coop. He later graduated to feeding hogs and by the time he was 10, he was driving a tractor and putting in 12-hour days. “You get a lot of time to think when you’re on a tractor,” he says, “and I spent a lot of time thinking I did not want to be a farmer.”

Workman was greatly influenced by his mother’s positive attitude. “I was 26 before I realized all mothers tell their children they are smart and special and can be whatever they choose. Dad and mom taught me to be kind and respectful. I was also taught to give my all—to do my best. These are strong American values that were imbedded with me and I’m very appreciative of where I came from.”

As his first and second grade teacher, his mother suggested that his handwriting was so bad he should be a doctor. “That idea sort of appealed to me,” he says, “but I had no real goal for the future. I just knew I wanted some sort of a profession. My mother encouraged education and I agreed with her. My grandfather, also a teacher, taught me in the seventh and eighth grades. He also encouraged education.

Workman attended Southern Illinois University (SIU) where he majored in biological science. On a trip after his freshman year of college, he met a couple who were both dentists. Taken with their enthusiasm for their profession, he ultimately decided that is what he would pursue. “For me, college was a stressful, uncertain time. I didn’t have a lot of confidence and I worried I wouldn’t do well enough to get into dental school.”

Workman returned home every weekend to work on the farm. At school, he lived in a trailer and subsisted mostly on homemade sandwiches.

In the end, Workman did well in his studies. After graduating in 1977, he earned his Doctor of Dental Medicine (DMD) degree from SIU's dental school. Ultimately, he was surprised at his dental school training, which he says often had a militaristic vibe to it. "Questions were not encouraged and if you bravely ventured one, you risked being ridiculed. We were even taught how to silently scold an assistant if they made a mistake. I always thought there was a better way to not only teach good dental skills but also how to be a better leader and build a successful team in the office."

Career

In 1980, Workman started a private dental practice in Effingham, Illinois, about 40 minutes from the family farm. "I found a basement location, borrowed \$35,000 from my parents and grandparents, and set up a two-chair office. My advertising was a \$15 hand-painted sign that I put on the front of the building. My goal was to make \$25,000 in my first year."

There were six other dentists in town and Workman was determined he would measure up to or exceed his peers by working harder, smarter, and together with his team every day—all day. His confidence in his abilities grew as he got more experienced. Within six months, he was on pace to make \$50,000 in his first year.

By 1981, Workman realized he was getting 25 patients a month from a small town 25 miles away. One of his new patients was a banker from that town who offered Workman a business loan with special terms if he would open a second office. "I took him up on his offer," Workman says, "but having two offices was a lot more work. I was putting in 55 hours a week delivering patient care and an additional 30 hours on the business side of operations."

In 1982, Workman opened a third office in a town in his home county that had no dentist. Eventually, he established the Workman Management Group which grew to 29 offices throughout central Illinois. He sold that group in 1997 and started his new group the next day. Today, his organization, known as Heartland Dental, provides dentists with a host of administrative and support services. It is the largest organization of its kind, including more than 1,825 affiliated dental practices in 39 states.

"I am passionate about dentistry and our organization," Workman says. "I came to realize most dentists faced the same realities I faced, but often lacked similar experience levels or good business acumen. Dentists affiliated with Heartland have the opportunity to learn from one another and share best practices, making them better positioned to provide the best care and experiences for their patients. I believe that open and transparent sharing of knowledge is the largest benefit of being a part of a successful dental support organization."

Beyond his work with Heartland Dental, Workman devotes himself to mentorship, leadership advice, and speaking engagements. Recently, Angie and Rick Workman gifted \$32 million to

High Point University in High Point, North Carolina, which will result in the Workman School of Dental Medicine, the state's only private dental school.

"While students have to learn the sciences and they have to learn the technical skills, the learning of leadership and interpersonal communication, how to lead a team, how to interact with patients, and how to be a valued member of your community is also important and will be a part of the dental program," he explains.

What I've Learned

"I am blessed that my career gave me an opportunity to make a difference," Workman says. "I founded a company that pioneered an industry, that improved dental practices and made a positive difference for those who work in those practices as well as the communities they serve. For me, that's the definition of success."

Workman has a philosophy of life that is deeply rooted in his upbringing. "My wish is that we would all try to be more like a small town, where people are nice, where if someone needs help their neighbors give it, and where we do the right thing simply because it's the right thing to do. That's America. Our small towns are America."

As a popular speaker to college students, Workman often encourages them to be leaders. "Part of that is to try to build something that will last. Don't cut corners. Show up for work and be present. Work hard and give all your effort to whatever task is in front of you. In America, if you do this, I don't see how you can lose. Opportunities are all around us, but you have to open the door when opportunity knocks."

Honored by his Horatio Alger Award, Workman says, "It's like being inducted into life's Hall of Fame. I passionately believe in the Association's principles and all it's doing to promote the American dream. At this point in my life, I'm trying to do all I can to help others. I'm doing this through my business, through my philanthropy, and through mentorship. I look forward to working with the Association in any way I can to advance its mission."

