

### **The Philosophical and Paternal Instincts of a Professor**

Dr. George J. Phillips, logic and world religions professor at Point Park University is currently married and has two teenage daughters age seventeen and thirteen. He has an interest in philosophy and world religions. However, he claims not to be part of a religion. He believes life is difficult and people should have to work to get anywhere in life. I know Dr. Phillips because he is currently my logic professor here at Point Park University. The interview with Dr. Phillips helped re-inspire my personal thoughts about becoming a talk show host. During the interview, we discussed how people could influence other people's choices. I simply posed the idea that people can influence your ambitions and he replied with a look of concentration and said, "One must follow their bliss". He asserted that Joseph Campbell was the true author of that statement, but nonetheless the words of wisdom re-focused my lens and I remember now why I truly want to follow dreams and become a talk show host. With a simple assignment as this one, an interview can be beneficial in ways that both persons are not aware of, we do not know each other all that well, but talking with someone who is an acquaintance can be helpful in granting advice in the most creative manner possible.

I opened my red notebook and proceeded with the interview promptly at five after two.

#### **What is your most important accomplishment to date?**

Dr. Phillips thinks for a moment and declares that raising his children is his most important accomplishment to date. Yet knowing he is not finished teaching them lessons of life, but they are at a stage where kids do not listen intently as they used to. He goes on to say that when children are younger, the parents have a greater influence on them and they are easily obedient and understanding, however as time progresses, their minds become more independent. Dr. Phillips pauses and looks down at his motioning thumbs and exclaims that his duty as a parent is to shape his children's character and teach them what is right and wrong.

#### **How do you personally define success?**

I glance up from my notebook and see him looking around the room bewildered and at sea. He tells me when I stopped writing that success is a complicated concept to put in a sentence or two. I replied, indeed. However, he carries on with his thoughts. Defining success, personally, can be looked upon in a few scopes of light. Success to me is getting to the point in life where I say I can do this, and seeing my goals through. However, the most personal way of how I define success would be, achieving that feeling of full awareness in the present moment. As he is talking I am frantically scribbling on my notebook and I stop for a brief moment to look up in his eyes and I observe the sincerity that is lining the meaning of his words. I continue the interview.

#### **Why did you choose this profession?**

He smiles. He admits that philosophy was not his first choice or even a remote possibility while going to college but he wanted to study something that was of utmost interest to him. I look down at my

own chicken scratch and begin to scratch the surface of the paper once more. He raised his hand just above the desk and starts listing subjects like business that had nothing to do with what he presently finds himself teaching. He remarks, I did end up finding that passion for history and philosophy and now look where I am, I am teaching world religions and logic classes about twice a week. He smiles. I do love the idea of understanding the basic truths in life and find myself content with where I am. Writing ever so swiftly and barely making it to the surface of the paper, I pose the idea of having people influencing his choices. I do admit that people have influenced my decision on becoming a professor, but you have that initially everywhere you go, he explains. There are parents and friends that geared me towards the decision, but I do follow what is of interest to me and teaching does trail right along with philosophy. At that moment, I knew exactly what he had meant by “teaching does trail right along with philosophy”, because it is the philosopher’s responsibility to go back and teach others. This concept parallels Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave*, because when someone does discover a truth or a reality outside of the normal setting, they must then go back into the cave and teach the slaves or the people, who are unaware of the reality or truth, exactly what that truth or reality that they have just discovered is. Listening to Dr. Phillips state this, made me feel the goose bumps around my neck. During the interview, at this point, is where I had made the connection of re-defining my goal of becoming a talk show host. Moreover, he had asked if people were influencing me with my personal career decisions. I nodded my head in agreement and that is when he quoted Joseph Campbell “Follow your bliss”.

#### **What are your typical weekend plans?**

Feeling really fueled to follow my own passion, I simply marked a “W” in my notebook and whipped my head out of my notebook and waited intently for Dr. Phillips to state his response. All that came out of his mouth was that his weekends varied. However, he dutifully noted that this upcoming weekend was going to be a typical weekend and he would be catching up on work, housework, and he might start a project. Feeling a bit funny, I asked him if he does anything fun. He announced openly and honestly that he likes plants. I tried to hide any evidence of a smirk, but it snuck out anyway and we both laughed good-heartily. As a small side note, I told him that it just might snow this weekend, and he said that he needed to make room inside of his house for the plants because of the weather. I chuckled a bit and commented that his house had better be big enough for his family and his plants. He laughed. He did mention that over the G-20 break that had happened a few weeks ago, that he took his daughter on a road trip to visit colleges. In addition, last week some of his out of town friends came in for the weekend and he had a casual get together at his house. I peeked over at the time, and informed him that I had one more question left to ask and he gently shook his head.

#### **What advice would you give to the freshmen class here at Point Park University?**

Dr. Phillips sat up and leaned over the desk and responded enthusiastically with, oh good. I would give them the same advice as I would give to my daughters. That is, you must be willing to work and try to do well. Do not shy away from work or take the easy way out of a problem. As I made it to my notebook once more and finished writing the advice down, I noticed that it was peculiarly silent, I asked, and? Nevertheless, he was finished.