

Kickstarting real life after graduation

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News

What now?

It's the looming question that countless twenty-somethings ask themselves once they've graduated from university or college and are faced with the prospect of entering the *real world*.

It's that question that motivated Alexander Herman, Paul Matthews and Andrew Feindel to interview many prominent Canadians about how they started their own careers, and to turn their anecdotes into a book.

Kickstart: How Successful Canadians Got Started, features over 50 interviews with an array of national success stories, including filmmaker Deepa Mehta, former prime minister Brian Mulroney and Roberta Bondar, Canada's first woman in space.

"We graduated and we didn't quite know what to do with our lives," said Herman, 26, who grew up in the Lawrence Park and Moore Park neighbourhoods. "We realized that we were all three in the same boat, that we had finished school and we were confused by the various options that were out there."

"And it wasn't just us," he added, "it was our friends in similar situations as well—that's what gave us the idea for the book."

The three friends, who met in

their early teens as students at Upper Canada College, spent two years interviewing Canadians they felt had left an indelible mark.

"We decided to talk to people in our society we respected, people who had done interesting, fairly bold things, and figure out how they started out in the hopes of figuring it out ourselves," said Matthews, 27, who grew up in the Avenue Rd. and Eglinton Ave. area.

Herman said the fact that most of their friends were going through the same confusing transitional time while they worked on the

book kept them inspired, motivation they needed since they were without income and living with their parents.

"They were all around our age and didn't know what they were going to do, and they really liked what we were doing and were encouraging us along the way," Herman said of his friends. "That's why the book is really a product of our whole peer group."

The work categorizes interviews into three groups: searchers, made up of those who took their time finding their way; survivors, Canadians who persevered, and dreamers, for those who blazed their own trails.

The searchers category includes entertainer Raffi and David Shore, creator of the TV program *House*.

Lawyer Eddie Greenspan and ballerina Karen Cain fall under survivors, while journalist June Callwood and architect Raymond Moriyama are dreamers.

"I think the great thing about these stories is that each person can learn something from all of them, there's always something to take from them," Herman, now in law school, said. "Someone in finance could probably learn a thing or two from an activist, and someone who's a journalist could learn a thing or two from a lawyer."

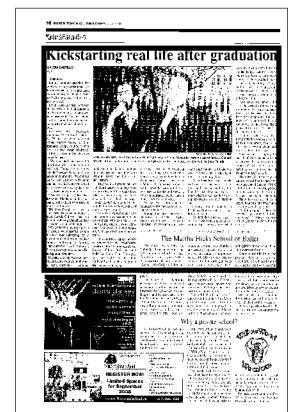
"Those lessons transcend the boundaries of whatever career you happen to be in."

Among the most memorable interviews for Herman is Lynda Haverstock, the former Lieutenant-Governor of Saskatchewan, who was a single mother at 19, and was once told she'd never walk again due to a debilitating illness.

"When I sat down with her, she said my story's not about having great ambition or anything like that, it's just about survival, and that's what's given her this amazing perspective on life," Herman said.

Matthews found humanitarian Dr. James Orbinski's story particularly interesting.

"He had this amazing experience in Rwanda as a medical student, and just the way he wrestled



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with his own responsibility as a human being, wanting to survive monetarily, but take some responsibility for the world he lived in, I found really inspiring," Matthews said of the former president of Médecins Sans Frontières, an international medical and humanitarian aid organization.

Awe aside, the authors didn't learn the formulas for becoming a millionaire, the prime minister or how to get to space, but they did learn what people do after gradu-

ation isn't what they'll be doing for the rest of their lives. There is plenty of room for exploration, trials, and even failure.

Matthews, who now works at a film production company, said he's learned overcoming fear is possible, and success is about finding a way to do what you love.

"Fear is such a crippling thing, and all of these people were able to get over that, and whether you agree with what they ultimately ended up in or not, they at least had

the nerve to try," he said.

There are still many people the authors would like to speak with, including David Suzuki, RIM Co-CEO Jim Balsillie, and singer Nelly Furtado, who they'd like to talk to for a possible sequel to the book.

The authors say they still feel like they're floating all the time, but they are doing so with a purpose.

"Talk to people, ask them about their lives, go out and ask a lot of questions," Matthews suggested. "Allow yourself to float, but do it actively."



FRANCIS CRESCIA/TOWN CRIER

PONDERING SUCCESS: Co-authors Paul Matthews, left, and Alexander Herman asked famous Canadians about their early career successes and failures for their new book written with Andrew Feindel.