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Inspiring Alumni Share Their Stories

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Inspiring Alumni Share Their Stories

The inauguration of Eric R. Jensen as president provided the perfect opportunity to invite seven representatives of our thousands of influential and inspiring alumni to return to campus. Over two days, these alumni made [public presentations](#), spoke to classes, shared meals with student groups, posed for countless photos, and helped spread Titan pride in settings large and small. It's a tall order to tell their stories in a short space, so instead, we offer these snippets of their sage wisdom: how they found their passions, what moves them, and why they never, ever stop learning.

Marcus Dunlop '08

Hedge Fund Analyst, HG Vora Capital Management

At IWU: business administration and economics double major, Academic All-American® in football (running back), Phi Kappa Phi national scholastic honorary

Investing is like football: "I was looking for a career that allowed me to continue to compete, every day, in the same way I was competing in football. I wanted to be in on the action. In football, you practice, you watch film, you study, you have an opponent, and there are winners and losers. No two games are the same. In investing, you do your homework, you practice to get better at it, and there's an opponent – when I'm buying an asset that I believe is undervalued, and someone else is saying it's overvalued, there's a bit of competition. And there's always a scoreboard whether you make money or lose money. That competition, and being in the action, is the drive, for me, into the investment world."



Marcus Dunlop '08



Demetria Kalodimos '81

Demetria Kalodimos '81

Emmy Award-winning Broadcast Journalist and Documentarian

At IWU: Music major, DJ at WESN Radio, Sigma Kappa sorority

On the importance of developing empathy: "I've been on television five nights a week, three times a day, for almost 35 years...[The callousness of the news business] never bothered me much, I'm ashamed to say, I seemed to be able to shake off some pretty terrible stuff, but [nearing age] 40, I had sort of an epiphany when some not-so-great things happened in my own adult life. I was developing empathy, for real, for the first time in my life. ...I started considering ... that my encounters with people, could and do have a lasting impact. If somebody yelled, 'hey, aren't you the news lady?' I tried then not to just shake them off or be in a hurry. I stopped, I shook hands, I listened, I hugged, I talked, and I still do that every time, no matter how hurried I am. It's been one of the best conscious changes I've ever made. . . Now I actually think about how it feels to see a loved one's mug shot on the air or a crumpled car that looks terrifyingly familiar in a live shot or hearing the name of someone who's been murdered over and over can be like tearing open a scab and I'm the person pulling on the Band-Aid. I've sat on a couch with

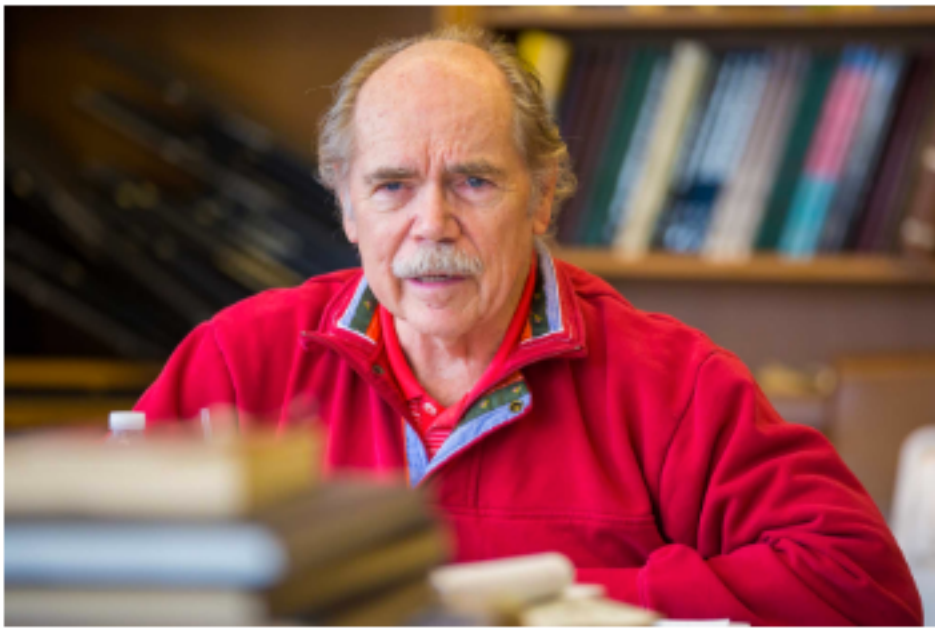
grieving families more times than I can tell you, I've been to funerals for little kids, I've talked once a week for the past year with dozens of men on death row, and I'm thinking, 'have I gone soft?' Maybe. Is that a bad thing? I don't think so."

Dave Kindred '63

National Sportscasters & Sportswriters Hall of Fame sportswriter, author

At IWU: English major, baseball team, columnist for *The Argus*

Getting in bed with Muhammad Ali: “Ali was the most accessible of celebrities. He wanted people around him. [In Las Vegas in the mid-1970s] I go to his hotel, I go to his suite, it was a central suite, he’s in a bedroom, I see him in bed [but] I can’t hear him, he can’t hear me, so he says, ‘Louisville, come in here.’ I was working at the *Louisville Courier-Journal* at the time, he called me ‘Louisville,’ I’m not sure he ever knew my name. So I go in, I still can’t hear him because there are 100 people in his hotel room. He lifts up the corner of the sheet and says ‘get in.’ I don’t know what you’d do if the heavyweight champion of the world tells you ‘get in bed,’ but I did. And one of us had on clothes. We pull the sheets up over our heads just to hide from people. ...I wanted to do a column about his entourage – who they were, how many they were, what he paid them – so he took my notebook, above his head, and wrote down their names, wrote down how much he paid them, we talked about the upcoming fight for 10, 15 minutes, and I left. Ali was full of surprises, but that was the most unusual interview arrangement I’d ever been in.”



While visiting campus, Hall of Fame sportswriter Dave Kindred '63 spoke to Argus staffers about the art of interviewing.



Carlina Tapia-Ruano '77

Carlina Tapia-Ruano '77

Nationally recognized Immigration Attorney

At IWU: history major

Consensus, not compromise: “In 2006 I became the first elected Latino, male or female, to head the 12,000-member American Immigration Lawyers Association... which was like learning to herd cats. Not easy, but if you want to accomplish goals, which all leaders should, you’ve got to learn, you can’t just work with your friends. You’ve got to work with people you dislike, you’ve got to find common ground if you hope to accomplish things. I also learned that to be a leader, it takes more than compromise. It takes the skill of building consensus so you can actually achieve the goals you all aspire to achieve.”

Stephen Ondra '80

Neurosurgeon; Senior Vice President & Chief Medical Officer, Health Care Service Corp.

At IWU: biology major, Student Senate, Sigma Pi fraternity, Tri Beta biology honorary

Health care wasn’t healthy: “As I walked the halls of Northwestern Memorial, you couldn’t help but also notice some of the inequities that went on. The health system itself was not at all healthy... Reaching back to that humanities background [at IWU], there was the question, ‘so, what can we do to make health care better, more accessible, more equitable, more financially sustainable for individuals and the nation? ... I volunteered to be on committees. I went to Medicare, ...Department of Defense Science and Advisory Boards, members of Congress, and along the way I met a state legislator who wanted to be a [U.S.] senator. He was the longest of long shots...[Barack Obama] would up changing my life and I wound up changing careers yet again, and so that took me to Washington, again on that same mission...how do we make the health system more equitable, more affordable for people? That led to a new career, leaving medicine entirely, and becoming a federal policy maker. That is a jump into the deep, cold end of the pool. You have to have confidence in yourself, the courage to take the jump, which comes from ... believing in yourself and believing you can evolve, which you all learned here at Illinois Wesleyan.”



Dr. Stephen Ondra '80 (right) chats with his former professor of biology Bob Hippensteele at the Alumni Showcase.



Kevin Dunn '77

Kevin Dunn '77

Actor (*Veep*, *Transformers* film series, more than 80 roles in film and TV)

At IWU: theatre major, Sigma Chi fraternity, football

Not-so-obvious skills come in handy: “The casting director for *Transformers* said, ‘I don’t want to see Kevin Dunn. I’ve seen him enough.’ [My manager] knew [Transformers director] Michael Bay was kind of a self-made building freak, he’s a technical wizard, he bought the old place where he used to get his car fixed and that’s his office in Santa Monica. [Professor Emeritus of Theatre Arts] John Ficca hired me to run the shop my senior year so I’ve always built and I’m a carpenter, so [my manager] called up Michael Bay’s office and said, ‘I’ve got this wonderful actor...he’s just like the [Ron Witwicky] character, he works on his house all the time.’ So I went in and I met Michael Bay and I got the job. And then the [Transformers] casting people called me and said, ‘Congratulations, you’re so wonderful, you got the job.’ They didn’t want to see me, they weren’t interested, that’s why it’s such a long haul and you learn...how dysfunctional it all is, and you learn your own coping mechanisms and people you can trust, maybe not completely, but people you can work with.”

Juan Salgado '91

MacArthur Foundation Fellow; President & CEO, Instituto del Progreso Latino

Student Senate annual “Do Good” Speaker

At IWU: economics major, football

Video: [Meet the Visionary Chicago School Leader Who Just Won a 'Genius' Grant](#)

How to stop worrying: “Whatever worry I had [as a college student about making grades and what to do in life] kind of disappeared when I just started to live the good life, and the good life, for me, is a life where you are guided by the things that you love to do that bring love and understanding to other human beings, that bring great testimonies and richness for other humans. Once I was living that good life, there wasn’t a worry...”

I used to think I had to prepare myself to be ready to do some good in the world and then I learned that *doing good* in the world is what *prepared me* to do good in the world, because it’s the experiential knowledge that’s complemented with that reflection and that communication with others in the world that actually helps you find and understand. If you are not in the act of doing, then you simply won’t get there fast enough.”



Juan Salgado '91

