

805 LIVING

MARCH 2010

THE COOL ISSUE



Ventura A to Z,
spring fashions,
Monterey
getaway, and
jobs that will
make you green
with envy.



COOL

MICHAEL SOMMERMANN, PhD

Professor of Physics, Westmont College, Santa Barbara

“There are supernova searches going on around the globe because astronomers can use the information to measure the extent of our observable universe. One day in February 2008, Tim Puckett, who has organized one such search, called and said he might have found a supernova in a galaxy 400 million light-years away and asked me to confirm that. The following night, I pointed the telescope in the direction of that galaxy. In the wee hours of the morning I was able to detect and image the spot of light and the spiral arms of the galaxy. I could see right away there was a supernova [subsequently named Supernova 2008an].

“I teach an introductory astronomy course and one of the first things I do is ask my students to envision an orange to represent our sun. If you place the orange here in the 805 area, the next orange would be on the East Coast. That’s our next nearest star, Alpha Centauri. It all becomes mind-boggling at times.

“While it’s hard for us to fathom all this information, it’s also awe-inspiring, and I think astronomy fulfills certain desires as humans. I stare up at the skies with my students and it still fascinates me to look up there on a clear night.”

Every third Friday of each month, weather permitting, Westmont College’s Carroll Observatory is open to the public. For more information and a look at Supernova 2008an, go to www.westmont.edu/observatory.

In today’s world, it seems that anyone who has a job is lucky. But the truly fortunate ones are those who can’t wait to get up and go to work every day—no matter what they do for a living. They don’t drag their feet when leaving the house; they don’t grumble about the hours or the pay; and they make those who work with them feel even better about their jobs, too.

As the following profiles show, there is certainly no shortage of cool careers. People are still able to make the most of their jobs, which in turn rounds out the rest of their lives. Some have spent long periods of time studying and training to reach their dream position, while others have essentially extended their hobbies into a paying gig. Either way, they show up to work each day with a smile.

WORKING 9 TO 5 HAS NEVER BEEN SO FULFILLING.

Interviews by Anthony Head

PATRICK LONG

*Porsche Factory Driver
Defending 2009 GT2 Class Champion
of the American Le Mans Series*

“Since I was 5 years old I’ve been driving. I got my start at Jim Hall’s racetrack in Oxnard. Now, as a Porsche driver, I compete against Aston Martin, Corvette, BMW, Ferrari—some of the top manufacturers of endurance sports cars from all around the world. I’m the only driver representing all of North America on the Porsche roster. It’s great to carry the flag not only for my birthplace of Thousand Oaks and where I grew up in Oak Park, but for all of the Porsche enthusiasts in the U.S.

“I’ve had the chance to win some of the most prestigious races in the world. I’ve been the youngest American to win the major sports car stand-alone victories, like the Rolex 24 Hours of Daytona, the 24 Hours of Le Mans, and the Sebring 12 Hours.

“I’m getting to live my dream and my passion, which is racing. I’ve been able to check off a lot of boxes before my 30th birthday. It’s humbling as well as exciting, and I have a lot of boxes left to check off.”

Patrick Long will be vying for the checkered flag at the Toyota Long Beach Grand Prix in April. For more information go to www.patricklong.com.





ANDREW MACPHERSON/THE RAPPAPORT AGENCY/WWW.MACFLY.COM



GARY MOSS

RENEE ARTMAN

*Forensic Services Bureau Manager
Ventura County Sheriff's Department*

"I started as a forensic scientist in the toxicology section of the Ventura County Sheriff's Department, and I really liked the analytical part of the work as well as dealing with sophisticated instrumentation. The operation is very dynamic and from the beginning, I liked what I was doing.

"Today, as a manager, I'm responsible for directing and coordinating the activities of the forensic scientists and laboratories. We are scientists. We are applying science to the law. Our role is to analyze evidence, write the reports, and testify in court regarding examination results. It's unbiased, and it's great when we can help to convict the bad people—and help people who are innocent but accused of committing crimes.

"I admire the level of expertise, integrity, and dedication that our whole department has. Last year we became the very first lab in the country to be accredited with the International Organization for Standardization for the calibration of breath-alcohol instruments. Our certificate is number one. I'm very proud of the group, the teamwork, and support for one another. I feel very fortunate to be in this environment. In July, I will have been here 25 years."

For more information on the Ventura County Sheriff's Department go to www.vcsd.org.

JOHN RUSSO
Celebrity Photographer

“My job is to make people look beautiful, so I have to make them feel beautiful. I do that by properly lighting, putting them in amazing environments, [and] capturing their character, personality, and spirit. When I go into these shoots, I have the attitude that I’m having fun and

the celebrity should be having fun and we’re going to create fun images.

“I get to hang out with these people who are normally so out of reach. I’m obsessed with tennis, so I get to spend a whole day shooting Serena Williams and talking about tennis. I get to hang out at Pete Sampras’ house and talk about all his grand slam titles. That makes my job incredible. When you’re told that you’re going to be shooting Sophia Loren—that makes my job *unbelievable*. It’s like I hit the lottery every day.

“I’ve been teaching at Brooks Institute for five years and it’s fun being around the next generation of photographers. My students sometimes complain that there are so many photographers out there, but I always stop them and say, ‘Yes, but there aren’t many great photographers. There’s always room for a great photographer.’”

John Russo’s new book of photography, About Face, is out and proceeds benefit Smile Train, which fixes cleft palates in children. For more information go to www.johnrussophoto.com.



GUS DERING



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a blue dress and brown boots, stands on a green rectangular pedestal in an art gallery. To her left, a large landscape painting in a gold frame is displayed on the wall. The gallery has a wooden floor and track lighting on the ceiling.

EIK KAHNG

Chief Curator and Curator of 19th- and Early 20th-Century European Art, Santa Barbara Museum of Art

“Ultimately it’s all about the work of art. There is a level of anticipation that needs to occur, and you have to work at it. What I enjoy the most is trying to make the work of art sing for the public—to really have them experience the thrill of discovering what a wonder a simple painting can really do for someone’s life.

“Becoming chief curator is a whole new ball game for me. It requires a whole new skill set and a greater administrative role. This is a position that requires a fair amount of creativity to stage important exhibitions with some of the finest works of art from around the world. And the staff here makes all the difference. I feel exceptionally welcomed here.

“I’m still just beginning to know the museum’s permanent collection; I haven’t seen all of it. But I like to be as informative as possible for the people who wish to encounter the works of art we’ve gone to the trouble of acquiring. To watch people light up at a work of art—it leaves me truly gratified.”

For more information on the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, visit www.sbmuseart.org. ■