

Innovative marketer starts exercise in Confessional Development

MindZoo creator Randy Jones launches far-flung blog

May 16, 2011



Randy Jones, author of the blog "Attack Bunnies, Indecent Exposure, Elizabeth Vargas and Other Bumps in the Road," unburdens himself to Lauren McAuley, who assists him with the blog. / Don Manley/MarcoIslandFlorida.com

Randy Jones' curiosity was piqued by a box of photos of an unknown woman that he found while packing to move to Southwest Florida in late 2009. That find sparked a quest that led to the creation of the Fiddler's Creek resident's blog, "Attack Bunnies, Indecent Exposure, Elizabeth Vargas and other Bumps in the Road."

Curiosity unleashed Jones' inner detective. Through obsessive digging, he uncovered facts about the life and far-flung adventures of a family member previously unknown to him.

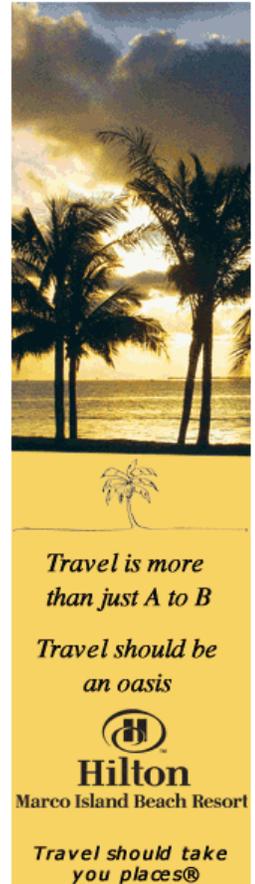
A byproduct of that process was Jones' decision to take events from his life and humorously recount them in "Attack Bunnies," which outlines his personal and professional development.

"That really started my writing," Jones said of the mysterious photos he found while preparing to transfer himself and his direct-marketing firm — MindZoo — to Marco.

Jones' experience includes working with many Fortune 500 companies in sales and marketing. His clients included JCPenney, Pep Boys, GEICO, The Washington Post and Walgreens. Jones moved his firm from the Washington, D.C. area to Marco Island last year. His office is off Bald Eagle Drive, in the same plaza with Arturo's Restaurant.

"I found this box of pictures and I didn't just find one picture," said Jones. "I found several early 1900s photos of a woman I didn't know." The woman in the early-to-mid 20th century photos is Jones' great aunt — the late Georga Yates Doles.

"Back in that time period, you didn't have that many photos," Jones said. "So to have six, seven or eight photos that survived that was a significant amount of someone's memories that ended up in a box in my garage in Leesburg, Va. I felt this incredible responsibility to find out who this woman was and how her memories ended up in a box."



Jones was left with many blanks to fill in where his great aunt is concerned, such as why her sisters — including his great-grandmother Mary — never spoke of her.

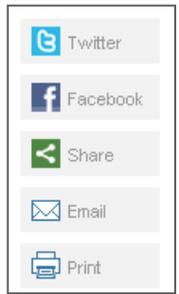
Those questions caused Jones to ponder the fact we often know very little about our ancestors.

“You might know their (deceased relatives) names, but do you know anything about those people — what they believed in — what they stood for?” asked Jones.

Jones also began pondering the legacy he was leaving his two college-age children.

Ruminating provided the impetus for Jones to write a book about the whole affair that he shopped around to literary agents.

One of those agents, Christopher Schelling of Ralph M. Vicinanza Ltd., suggested Jones use blogging to enhance his public profile and improve the book’s chances of being published.



Borrowed

The blog’s title is borrowed from the book and in part, it’s purpose is to improve the manuscript.

“Attack Bunnies,” which debuted in February, is the result of Schelling’s advice.

On the blog’s website, Jones describes “Attack Bunnies” as “Containing equal parts business exposé, parenting handbook, sales training text, personal memoir and how-to-NOT guide.

“Attack Bunnies is based on the premise that every person you meet, and every situation you navigate, influences the one multi-faceted person you ultimately become: at home and at the office,” Jones said.

Jones takes episodes from his own life and uses them as humorous metaphors to impart lessons and provoke thought, and entertain.

“Do I write about business, no,” Jones said. “But I am certainly involving business principles and what I’ve learned in life because I am a worker. So that’s what I’m going to talk about.”

Confessional Development is the phrase Jones has coined to sum up his approach.

That phrase means to “be honest with yourself with the people, the places, and the events that have impacted you. A lot of them are the crazy, outrageous events that stick in your mind and truly impact your life. Be willing to laugh at yourself.”

Honesty

Jones’ honesty is reflected in the blog’s title. “Attack Bunnies,” indecent exposure and ABC News broadcaster Elizabeth Vargas have all played a role in the Missouri native’s life. There is a new blog entry each week. Included among the whimsical entry titles are “Honour Thy Poultry,” “Georga on My Mind,” “My Mind on Georga” and “The Beaster Bunny.”

While Jones’ family, friends, acquaintances and experiences have provided the basis for the blog so far, Jones hopes to expand its reach to include the tales of other business people.

“One of the things that Naples and Marco, and Collier County brings are people with just incredible business backgrounds,” Jones said. “I would love to sit down with CEOs, CMOs, high-level executives, to hear their professional development stories. I don’t want to hear about Harvard Business School. I want to hear about your paper route.”

He’d love to conduct interviews “and grow it with other peoples’ stories.”

Jones hopes to eventually attract corporate advertisers for the blog and to have it featured in major media outlets and on other websites.

Lauren McAuley is a MindZoo intern from Florida Gulf Coast University who has been focused on promoting the blog, especially through social media. “I think it’s been really exciting because I came into this company not really knowing that much about blogs,” McAuley said. “It’s great being given an opportunity to work on something that’s this involved in the community.”



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