



Greeting art director Dale Moyer
with GUSTO and a smile!

generation of Scholastic editors who looked to him as a model of journalistic excellence and integrity. In his social studies boot camp, Eric preached the importance of clarity and context and he taught us how to make

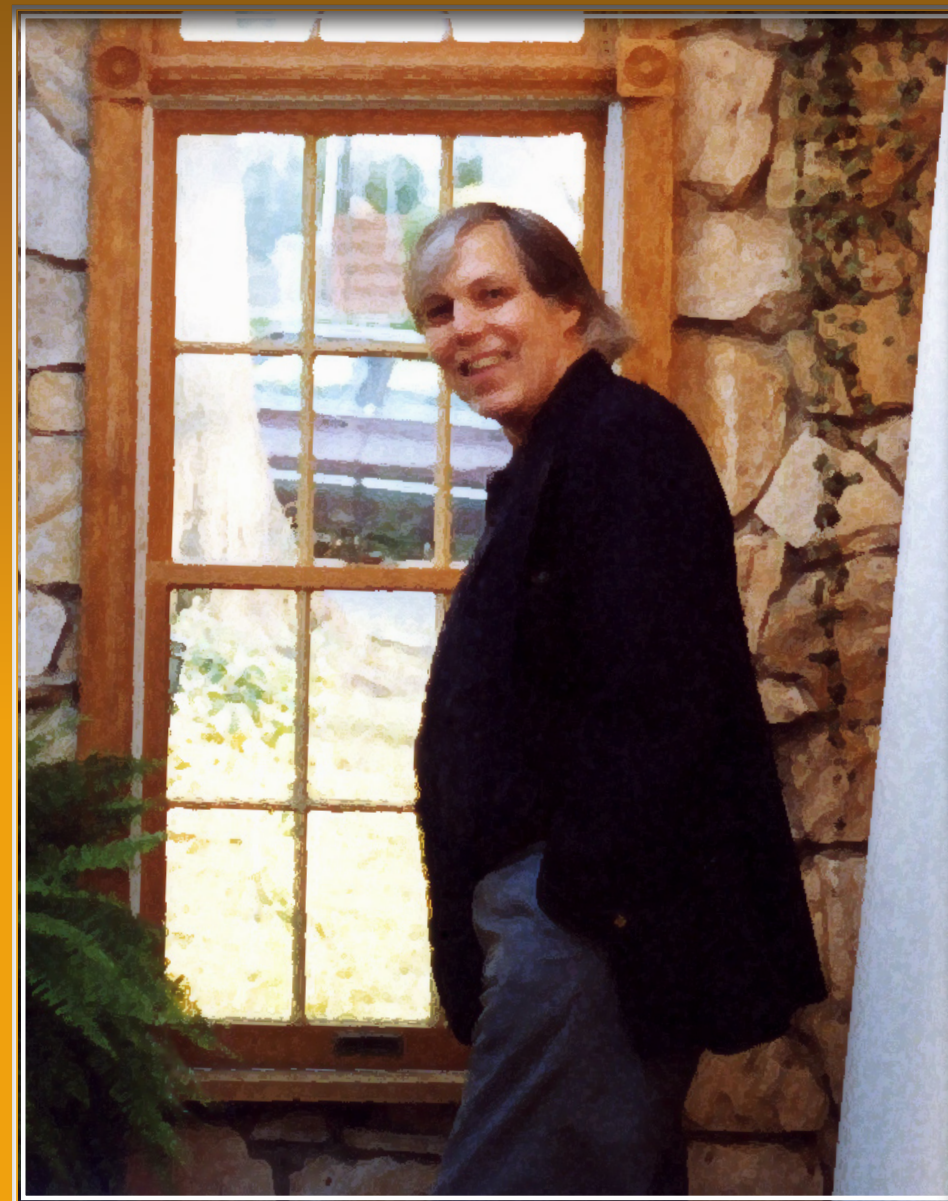
history and current events relevant to teenagers. He inspired us through his sense of higher purpose—his belief that our magazines strengthened America by educating its future citizens. Years later, as editor of Parade, I faced the challenge of making history and current events relevant each week to the lives of 75 million American adults. Thank you, Eric, for helping to prepare me so well for that task.”

DAVID GODDY: “I remember Eric telling me that our job was to avoid The New Yorker effect—producing tony issues that piled up without being read. He said our business on Update was to get the teacher to open and use 14 issues a year. This was back in the days when Update—today’s New York Times Upfront—was published 18 issues a year, when editors were strong men and women! If the teacher used 14 out of the 18 issues, she would renew. If she used only 12, and had six unopened bundles, she wasn’t getting her money’s worth.”

STEVE MANNING: “Eric was always a great colleague and a terrific raconteur. He was always encouraging and supportive to me—I think he felt that we were carrying on a tradition, his tradition, with Update magazine and that made me feel proud, as I know it did for David Goddy, Lee Kravitz, and others. That was a special time for Scholastic magazines and in educational publishing, a time unfortunately that’s gone and not coming back. So, hats off to Eric who had so much to do with making it happen.”

BRIAN BICE: “Eric Oatman was a class act, top to bottom. He taught me, most importantly, how to be a good friend. It was his friendship that I gained the most from and it’s his friendship that I miss the most. I’m grateful for the times we had and I’ll never forget him and his influence on my life.”

ERIC OATMAN



LIFE LESSONS

Eric Oatman

ERIC OATMAN, LIFE LESSONS

Lorri Hopping here. Eric Oatman was one of my favorite people on the planet, no exaggeration, and I know many people feel the same way. I tried to remember the very first time I met him, and couldn't. Though we worked on different magazines, somehow he entered my life seamlessly, bypassing the "stranger" and "co-worker" stages to become an instant friend.

Over 25 years or so, I wrote and edited countless pieces for Eric, with ups and downs and plenty of go-rounds and do-overs as we massaged copy until it was "up to snuff," in his words. He was an excellent editor and writer, but I also appreciate that he was equally passionate about education and educating. As a teacher and mentor, he was patient, forgiving, generous, understanding, and wise.

In that spirit, I asked colleagues to share "what I learned from Eric"—short pearls of wisdom to bring forth here as we look back at our time on Earth with this tremendous man. With love and affection, we begin with gusto and that big, unflagging smile.

DAVID GODDY: "I learned how to answer the phone with GUSTO—an ebullient 'Hellooo'! Eric always conveyed enthusiasm."

SHARON BLUMENTHAL: "I learned: Don't take yourself too seriously. Rise above that which could drag you down. During the early 1980's, a benign heart condition (tachycardia) I've had most of my life started giving me a lot of trouble. I was placed in charge of a new in-house typesetting system called Atex, and job stress resulted in several long bouts of heart palpitations and trips to St. Vincent's ER. I was given a prescription that manages the condition beautifully. Whenever I would see Eric, he would invariably ask me, "How's the ticker?" and then clutch his chest as though he were suffering from a cardiac episode and cry, "My ticker! My ticker!" That never failed to make me laugh and certainly helped me keep things in perspective."

Eric clowns around with Sharon Blumenthal and Maury Kurtz.



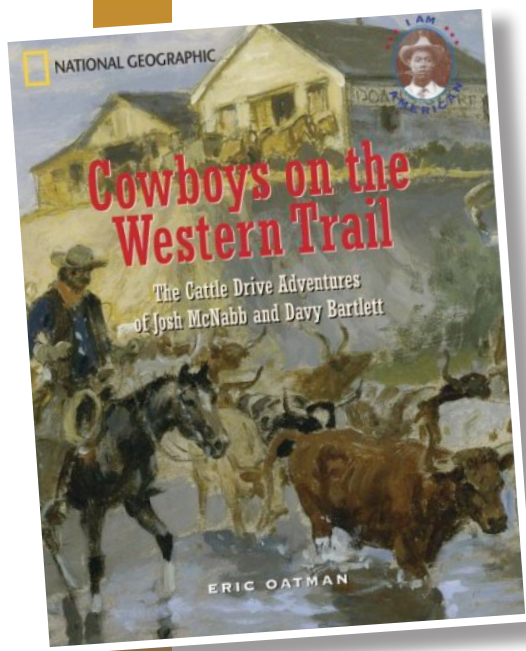
BRIAN BICE: "I traveled to New York two or three times each year and often call Eric to meet him for lunch, a drink, dinner, whatever. Seeing Eric was the highlight of the trip. He'd bring me up to date on his work and his family, and we'd swap war stories of crazy colleagues and clients we'd known over the years."

HOLLY HUGHES: "At the 44th Street office, I happened to be parked at a desk next to Eric's staff, where I'd often be included in the goofy cubicle-to-cubicle banter. Eric's dazzling smile and open-hearted spirit helped define the Scholastic spirit for me. One of the greatest workplace environments ever!"

ELAINE ISRAEL: "Eric and I used to go for coffee. One time, we went during the last big blackout in the city. We were in a little place on 12th Street and, when just he and I and the staff remained, we got to eat whatever we wanted out of the fridge. Eric and I were like two kids in a candy shop!"

JIM BROWNELL: "Editors, by nature, are prima donnas, but Eric was undoubtedly the least temperamental of all the editors I've ever known. When the walls were shaking with Roy's or Goodykoontz's tirades, Eric was smiling. I'll always remember Eric with a smile on his face (which brought a smile to mine)."

LORRI HOPPING: "Eric was a true people person and recognized early on that I preferred to work head down, mind absorbed in a project rather than schmooze. I'm grateful that he didn't let me get away with being a hermit, gently pushing me to attend meetings and events at every opportunity and encouraging me to, 'insinuate' myself (his word). He was right. Work, and life, are about people, not projects."



MARY BETH SPANN: “It’s no secret that Eric possessed a warm, effervescent nature. He loved to laugh and found humor in almost everything. But even though I relished Eric’s fun-loving side, I learned more from observing how he handled the serious side of life. Even when facing painful obstacles, I never heard Eric whine or complain. Instead, he’d openly discuss things in a matter-of-fact manner while gently waving off any expression of worry or concern that came his way. In fact, Eric would usually be the one offering words of reassurance to the rest of us. I will always love and admire him for that...and for so much more.”

JACKIE GLASTHAL: “What I learned most from Eric I gained largely from observation and emulation, rather than supervision and line editing. As he and I commiserated over the past few years about our respective medical challenges, I was both inspired and strengthened by the way he dealt with, and occasionally even seemed to transcend his troubles using humor, his knack for the distracting art of storytelling, and a boundless positive outlook. I soaked up whatever I could from his formidable coping skills, and would like to think that I was able to offer him at least a bit of comfort and support in return. You truly were a role model, Eric—both editorially, as well as in finding ways to face adversity courageously and with dignity.”

SUZANNE McCABE: “I learned that a heart was also called a ticker, and that Eric’s was made of gold. Years later, when I had the lucky coincidence to work with Eric on a freelance book project, I learned that he was the best damn editor in town.”

JOAN NOVELLI: “When I left Scholastic to raise my young son in the Catskills, I planned to freelance but had not thought through the details. Thanks to a steady stream of assignments from Eric, alongside some quick lessons on the business side of things, I was able to make it work. I think of Eric, with his generous spirit and big soul, as the most terrific sort of uncle.”

DEB GORE OHRN: “It was a great honor to know and work with Eric. I wouldn’t be here at Meredith without that call one day 19 years ago when he told me to apply for a job as editor of this little custom magazine called Crayola Kids. A whole wonderful chapter in my life is due to Mr. Oatman. Here’s to you, Eric! Hugs!”

LAURA GALEN: “I reported to Eric for a few years at Scholastic. He was not only hugely and continuously supportive and positive, but also an expert at his work. He was a true mentor, a great boss, and just a lovely guy to be around!”

SUZANNE BARCHERS: “What a great loss to the world of educational publishing. I worked for Eric at Weekly Reader and, he had such a tremendous influence on my writing. He would strike those adjectives, great and tremendous—just one of many lessons I learned from him! (Oops... another one.)”

KATHY BURKETT: “When I met Eric, he was a seasoned editorial director, and I was a newbie assistant editor. Still, he talked to me like a knowledgeable colleague. I remember wondering whether someone had misled him about who I was and how little I’d done. Over time, I came to realize that it was just his natural generosity and graciousness. What a gift. Talking to Eric always made me feel a bit more confident. I hope I’ve sometimes been able to do the same for others.”

SUE MACY (from her I.N.K. blog): “Eric Oatman was the first person to pay me to write about American history.... He assigned me the articles and history plays that nudged me toward my current career as an author focusing on history. I wrote articles about men who hauled freight across the Old West; an oral history project with World War II Rosie the Riveters; the influenza epidemic of 1918-1919; and the spirit of exploration in America. My plays dramatized the exploits of a former slave who spied for the Americans during



the Revolutionary War; the kidnapping of Daniel Boone’s daughter in 1776; and a family’s westward journey during the Gold Rush.... Thank you, Eric, for starting me on my journey.”

CAROLYN JACKSON (from her Progressive Woman blog): “Eric Oatman spent most of his career writing about history and current events for junior and senior high students.... He became a favorite of teachers across the nation who used the materials that he tended, most importantly Search, a magazine that focused on history with plays in which the most reluctant of readers could take part. Equally important, he nurtured a cadre of writers, editors and artists who learned from him how to make their subject matter come alive.... Some of his protégés have gone on to book and game publishing that keep history alive.”

ABBY JUNGREIS: “Wow, what didn’t I learn from Eric? As an editor, I learned the importance of the Dark and Stormy —starting the piece with something that grabs the reader; as a manager, I learned the importance of accepting peoples’ weaknesses while playing to their strengths; as a person, I learned the power of generosity and curiosity—Eric was generous with praise, with time, with resources and always curious about the world and the people who live in it. God I miss him!”

MAURA CHRISTOPHER: I learned what it was like to sit beside a true teacher as he patiently, line by line, taught me the craft of good writing and how to see with an editor’s eye.

Eric’s support, benchmark standards, generosity of spirit, and joie de vivre left an indelible impression on me. I feel extraordinarily fortunate to have had Eric Oatman as a first editor and a friend.

JIM KELLY: “While working on an half page ad for Nick Jr. magazine, the visual being a Ricecrispy treat in the form of a football, passing through the up rights of a goal post, I asked Eric, what’s our headline? He said “It’s Good!” the man was a genius, a great friend and I will miss him.”

LORRI HOPPING: “Like many staffers who worked in the Scholastic magazine in the 1980s, I learned editing and

writing skills at Eric’s elbow. He often started these sessions by saying, ‘Let’s inject a little warmth into this piece.’ And warmth came so easily and naturally for him! I once watched him turn a statistic-laden report about traffic accidents into a dramatic lede with a punchy ‘nut graph’ that propelled the reader to the pithy end. Warmth was his secret sauce!”

DAVID GODDY: “I think the greatest thing I learned from Eric is that professionalism is to always bring passion and respect to the task, whether large or small. Everyone gets up for the big things – brainstorming a new approach, starting a high-budget new project. But rewriting a piece that should have been easy for the writer to nail, or writing some dumb memo to explain what people should already have known, or picking up work the rest of the team didn’t get to — Eric demonstrated every day a passion and caring about the whole project, and no detail or concern was too small to care about or to be left to someone else to backstop.”

DAVID SCHAFER: “While my time and interaction with Eric were not extensive, I definitely look back on them as positive and rewarding. We worked on one special project together, a publication celebrating the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution. Eric was working at home and called in to ask for my help in using a software program. The next time he was in the office, Eric made sure everyone working on the project was informed that I had helped, giving me credit. Eric took great care to recognize and appreciate peoples’ contributions.”

BRIAN BICE: “In 1990, an assignment landed in my lap that would enable me to start the business I’d always wanted, but I was worried that I wouldn’t know how to do everything I needed to succeed. Eric reassured me that, of course I could do it... on this assignment, and on lots more to come. That first project led to more than 20 years of business success. I couldn’t have done it without him. He was a reliable resource not just for creative material, but for referrals to other great creative talents who I met, learned from, hired, and worked with over the years.”

LEE KRAVITZ: “I’ll always remember Eric as the patriarch of the editorial staff that made Update and Search magazines so unique and important in the 1980s and 1990s. Eric begat David who begat me and Steve Manning and Phil Sudo and Elizabeth Ward and that entire

