



O N O U R S H O R T L I S T

# Disney Biz

*A California film executive makes fantasy a reality.*

These days, Christopher J. McGurk '78 is sitting on top of the world. "When you were a little kid, this is the kind of thing you dreamed would happen to you," he says. No, he didn't win a million dollars. And he isn't an astronaut or a cowboy. McGurk is president of the Walt Disney Motion Pictures Group in Burbank, California, where he rubs elbows with the likes of Mickey, Minnie, Goofy, and a few less animated screen stars and entertainment industry bigwigs.

this 38-year-old who, after graduating from SU's School of Management, began his professional career as an accountant with Price Waterhouse and "got bored out of my mind."

Formerly chief financial officer for the beverage division of PepsiCo, McGurk has made numerous contributions to Disney since joining the company in 1988. As a key player in the purchase of Miramax Films two years ago, he helped make the studio—which produced movies like *The Piano* and *Pulp Fiction* and earned 22 Academy Award nominations last year—five times larger than when it was acquired. He also helped engineer a turnaround in Disney's live-action movie business with successful films like *Judge Dredd* and *Crimson Tide*, and has been a major catalyst in the development of Disney's new stage-play business.

McGurk says he loves his work. Despite long days and often stressful decisions, he reaps many benefits from his job, including attending Academy, Grammy, and Emmy award shows, movie premieres, the Cannes International Film Festival, and more.

But it's his three children, he insists, who reap the biggest rewards, such as making numerous trips to Disney World and Disneyland every year. "One of the best things in the world is going to a theater with your kids and seeing how they react to a product that you've helped create, market, and develop," says McGurk.

His children recently attended the premiere of the stage play *Beauty and the Beast* in Toronto, where his son, in a tuxedo, and daughter, in a gown, schmoozed with the likes of Michael Eisner, chairman and CEO of Disney. "I have to keep reminding them how lucky they are," he says.

McGurk feels the secret to success is being involved in an ever-changing, boundless profession. "I try to keep my edge," he says. "I work to be the reasonable man in an unreasonable business, the guy with his feet on the ground."

Admirable traits, especially in the fantasy business.

—GINA M. BURMEISTER



Since 1988, Christopher J. McGurk '78 has been making deals, handling negotiations, heading up planning, and smoothing out financial rough spots for the Walt Disney Motion Pictures Group in Burbank, California.

McGurk makes deals, handles negotiations, heads up planning, and smoothes out financial rough spots for Touchstone Films, Hollywood Pictures, Walt Disney Pictures, Miramax Films, Buena Vista World Wide Marketing and Distribution, Hollywood Records, and Walt Disney Theatrical Productions. No small feat for

## USDA Choice

James E. Tatum G'80

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is a federal agency in transition, and James E. Tatum, a 1980 graduate of the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, is a key point man responsible for ensuring that the changes about to take place go as smoothly as possible.

As special assistant for management issues to USDA Secretary Don Glickman, Tatum heads the change management team assisting in restructuring plans mandated by Congress in 1994. Currently there are more than 40 agencies under the USDA umbrella, at least a dozen of which will merge. Five-hundred field operations scattered throughout the country are also marked for reorganization.

Tatum has already logged thousands of air miles as he crisscrosses the country for meetings with USDA managers and staff. "I've been letting them know how the new operation affects them and how it changes the way business is conducted," he says. "Naturally, because of the reorganization, our employees are under a great deal of stress due to job changes, relocation, or shifting responsibilities. To accommodate our employees, we have to ensure that counseling and training are available and that appropriate information is being communicated."

Above and beyond USDA reorganization, Tatum also serves as special assistant to the USDA/1890 Task Force, coordinating activities between the agency and 17 land-grant historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). These schools were founded as a result of the Morrill Act, a bill that created the first institutions of higher education for African Americans beginning in 1890.

Through the USDA/1890 Task Force, Tatum provides overall leadership and direction for the agency by working with the HBCUs on research, teaching, and fostering student interest in studying agriculture and related sciences. "There are resources available at the federal level for teaching and research, but many of these institutions



James E. Tatum G'80 (left), shown here with Congressman Jay Dickey (R-Ark.), directs USDA programs involving historically black colleges and universities and has been key point man during the department's reorganization.

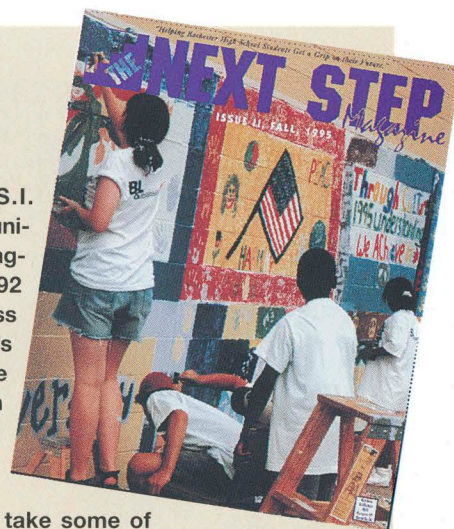
### TEEN 'ZINE

➤ After graduating from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications with a master's degree in magazine journalism, Kristina Hutch '92 grew impatient with the slow progress she was making in the field. That's why she took what she felt was the logical next step—starting her own magazine.

This past spring, Hutch launched *The Next Step*—a quarterly magazine for high school students. "We take some of the guesswork out of college, career choices, and other life choices," she says. "We help students start thinking of the future sooner."

More than 14,000 high school students in Monroe County, New York, now receive the magazine, and Hutch has plans to expand circulation throughout New York state and, eventually, North America.

"The magazine really fills a need for me to help people," Hutch says. "It combines my love for teaching and writing; I hope it will make a difference."—Heather A. O'Connor



may not have the ability to access the information," says Tatum. "Having this information is crucial if these institutions are to equally compete to attract the nation's brightest students."

Tatum has been honored with two USDA Distinguished Service Awards, the Secretary's Reinventing Government Award, and Tuskegee University's George Washington Carver Distinguished Service Award for his contributions to agriculture and higher education.

He credits his years at the Maxwell School with providing a broader perspective on how to work successfully in a political and social climate to effect change. "I've received a lot of good advice from Maxwell alumni," he says.

—TYRONE A. GUIDEN

## Pulitzer Pride

Brian Donovan '63

A passion for hot rods combined with a keen interest in the American-Soviet space race led Brian Donovan to enter college in 1959 to pursue a degree in engineering. Once he began his studies, however,

Donovan started to worry he would not be happy dealing with the repetitive tasks involved in engineering work. He decided instead to try his hand at newspaper reporting, and in 1962 transferred to SU's journalism school where he could indulge in his other passion—the written word.

"I was at the point where I would be a mediocre engineer," says Donovan, now 54. "I switched to journalism, not necessarily knowing that it was what I wanted to do, but needing a degree where I could get a job."

Donovan's instincts proved to be right on the mark. In 1994 he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his work on a series of *Newsday* articles examining police disability pension abuses in Long Island, New York.

The investigative series, written by Donovan and fellow reporter Stephanie Saul, documents cases of former cops collecting thousands of dollars in tax-free disability pensions, despite being physically fit enough to lift weights, play softball, or even go hang gliding. It was published over seven days in June 1994 and prompted pension officials to examine disability claims more closely.

"It was an investigative reporter's

dream," says Donovan. "It was a system that no one had taken a look at. You had people who were waiting to be sources, but just hadn't been asked."

The Huntington, Long Island, resident admits he was skeptical when the project was first proposed because of the confidentiality of most medical records. During his search, however, Donovan found several people willing to provide documentation for questionable claims.

"Don't trust your instincts at the expense of doing your legwork," says Donovan. "Computers help you in reporting, but you still need to look at paper records and talk to human sources. Don't take 'no' for an answer."

This wasn't Donovan's first encounter with a Pulitzer. He was part of a team of *Newsday* staffers that was awarded a Pulitzer in 1970 for its investigation of political land scandals.

"It's wonderful—if I never win another plaque, I'll have a good obituary," says Donovan. "Once you come down to earth, though, you still have to do the same things. This is sort of a 'what have you done for me lately?' business."

Despite talk about the newspaper industry's struggle, and his own firsthand experience with the closure of *Newsday's* sister publication *New York Newsday* by its parent, Times Mirror Co., Donovan remains optimistic. "There are always going to be scandals to look into," he says. "There are always going to be people needing information. Nobody has invented a computer terminal yet that you can take into a diner or read in the bathroom or hand out to members of the family."

—DOUGLAS ALGER

## Russian Democracy

Scott Boylan G'85

It is well past dusk and Scott Boylan is returning home after a long day at work. He is fully aware the park outside his apartment has been garrisoned with troops to avoid public rioting. However, what he does not expect is to be mistaken for a dissident. Out of the night comes the slam of a metal riot



Brian Donovan '63 (right) gathers with *Newsday* Investigation Teams Head Joe Demma, co-author Stephanie Saul, and Assistant Managing Editor Charlotte Hall after learning they had won a Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting.

shield against Boylan's shoulder. He does a body roll off the shield and begins to run, not stopping until he is safely inside his apartment building. "It must have been an instinct that returned from my days playing football," he says.

This is just one of Boylan's memories of the two years he spent working in Moscow for the International Republican Institute (IRI), a nonprofit organization dedicated to building political institutes of emerging free democracies outside the United States.

Boylan's task in Russia was threefold. In individual meetings and large conferences he advised politically inclined Russians about party development; instructed members of the Russian Parliament about democracy, including how to develop successful campaigns and legislative agendas; and, with the aid of community activists, encouraged minority groups to organize and let their views be known.

According to Boylan, a 1985 graduate of SU's College of Law, women remain one of the single largest under-represented groups in the former Soviet Union. "Russia is a chauvinist society," he says. "As such, one goal of the program was to discover women's concerns about their environment and get them involved."

By contacting community activists, Boylan obtained names of interested individuals and invited these women to attend IRI leadership conferences. "This was the most rewarding part for me, because Russian women have more optimism than Russian men," Boylan says. "Many of these women eventually ran and were elected to public office."

Boylan notes that centuries of inherent fear of government power in Russia have prohibited many citizens from taking political action. In their minds, always, is a feeling that no matter how good things get, Communism might return at any moment.

"We are trying to work with all those believing in democracy," Boylan says. "Party organization has to start at the grass-roots level, with people, and that's what makes the program work."

—DANIELLE EPSTEIN

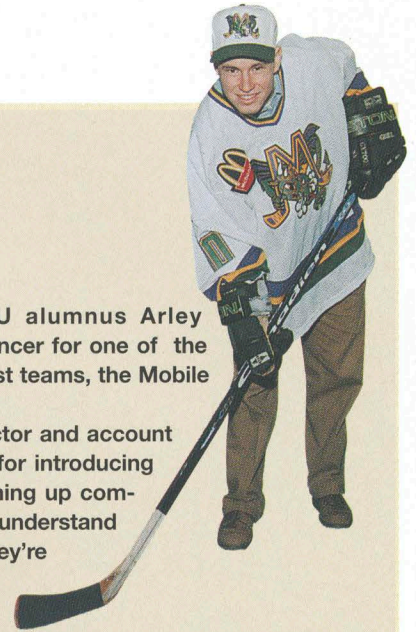
## SLAP SHOT

### ➤ *Hockey? In Alabama?*

Absolutely, according to SU alumnus Arley Johnson, radio play-by-play announcer for one of the East Coast Hockey League's newest teams, the Mobile (Alabama) Mysticks.

As the team's broadcasting director and account executive, Johnson is responsible for introducing the team to the league and drumming up community support. "People don't fully understand the magnitude of this league, but they're willing to take it in, which makes it a perfect situation," he says. Since their debut last October, the Mysticks have attracted more than 5,000 fans a game, placing the team among the league's top 10 in fan support.

Johnson, a native of Massachusetts, moved to Mobile in spring 1995 to pursue his dream of being a professional radio broadcaster. "Since hockey is such a fast-paced game, it forces you to focus on the action, to tell a story," says the 1992 graduate of the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. "It's exhilarating because you're on your own stage. Nobody is going to cut you off the air." —Heather A. O'Connor



As a representative of the International Republican Institute, Scott Boylan G'85 traveled to Russia to teach about the workings of a democratic society.