

PERSONALITIES

“I say there are only three types of people in the world: those who make it happen, those who watch it happen, and those who say, ‘What happened?’”

- Bill Morris

Bill Morris: Focused on spreading success

Think you could do 20,100 sit-ups in your lifetime? Bill Morris did that many in 11 hours - without a bathroom break. He set a world record that was recognized by the “Guinness Book of World Records.” But he wasn’t put in the book because his feat was considered life-threatening.

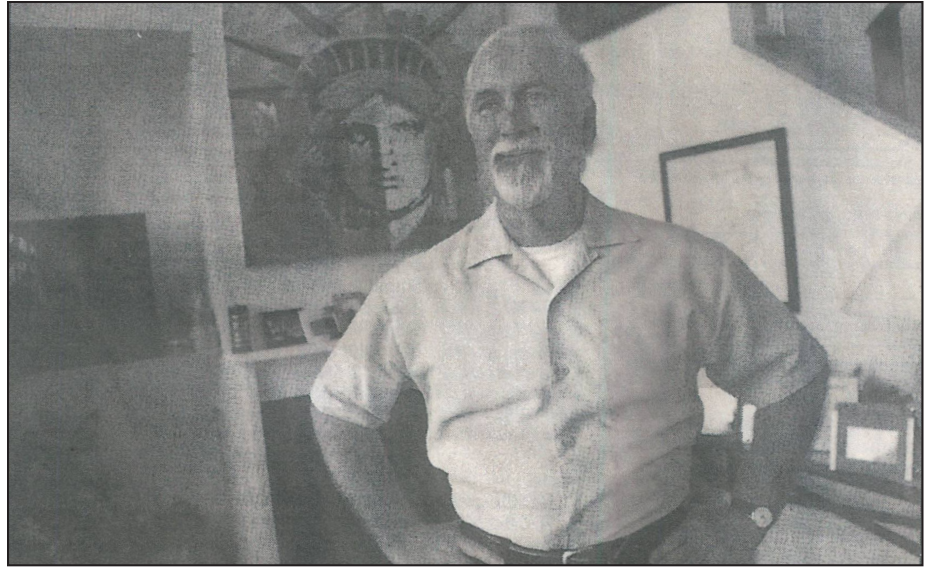
The 54-year-old ex-Wall Street CEO now tours the country speaking to kids, athletes and execs about success. And they listen. “When a guy does 20,100 sit-ups in a row,” says the man with abs of steel, “they get very little criticism.”

The man is a contradiction in terms: a corporate wiz who loves giving out money to street people, serving soup at kitchens, and helping disadvantaged kids; and a spiritual guy, whose racing red Lotus sits in the driveway of his spacious Monterey home. He has one hazel eye and one blue. “Jane Seymour was the last person to notice,” he says. He looks young, but has white hair and a goatee. And while he is an over-achiever, he knows that a loving family is his greatest success.

He blinks back a tear after pulling out letters from his two sons that extol his supremacy as a father, their best friend and role model. “I must have done something right.”

Morris’ motto is “Learn, earn and return.” And when his bio is read on stage, he always says, “If you think that’s impressive, you should see my list of failures.”

The go-getter also inspires audiences with, “I say there are only three types of people in the world: those who make it happen, those who watch it happen, and those who say, ‘What happened?’”



Q: Success is defined in the dictionary as “attainment of wealth and fame.” True?

A: I disagree. Success is setting personal life goals and achieving them, as well as being able to give back to other people. For me, success isn’t money. I know more unhappy millionaires that you can shake a stick at. Two main elements of success are to be non judgmental and to laugh. Finding what you’re good at and taking it to the max. You have to be laser-focused on your goal and let nothing get in the way of it. And when you fail, don’t wear the hair shirt and beat yourself up. When kids fail, they quit. But I say embrace the failure and ask, “What did I learn from it?” I didn’t do sit-ups all at one time. I worked up to it.

Q: Recent failure?

A: I’ve produced a video that I thought would be the best thing since bottled beer. But nobody has stepped

up to the plate as investors. I’m still working on it.

Q: Most successful person ever?

A: Mother Teresa is one of my ideals. In my book, she is numero uno.

Q: Were you most likely to succeed from birth?

A: No. I don’t think anybody is born with that. It’s either self-induced or given from the parental unit. Kids who don’t have moms and dads can be successful.

Q: Who were your cheering and booing squads?

A: My mom encouraged me to get into my first diving competition, and I won. Booing squad? If it was there, I was deaf.

Q: What was your idea of success at 15 versus now?

A: I was getting through high school at the Bronx. Out of 225 freshman, my rank was 165. When I graduated, I was ranked seventh. It really comes down to your time management program. I had to determine what to give and give up.

Q: Orville Redenbacher said education is the key to success, but Hank Ketcham said, no, it's determination and persistence. Which is it?

A: They're both right. In both cases, they have 50 percent of the formula.

Q: You're an award-winning jock (racquetball, boxing, squash, triathlons etc.) and business man. What has it cost you/your family?

A: At 31, I was international controller of Kidder Peabody and was responsible for everything in London, Geneva, Tokyo etc. It probably cost me my first marriage. My kids were 3 and 4. From that day forward, I was determined to spend my free time with them. I gave up golf etc., and did bike rides and spent athletic time with them.

Q: how can people swim with the Wall Street sharks and still maintain decency and serenity?

A: You have to understand that 98 percent of everybody in Wall Street are decent, giving, human beings. At times, somebody gets greedy. But sooner or later, they're brought to justice. Unfortunately, they give a bad name to others.

Q: As a board member of the Make-a-Wish Foundation, for which you've raised \$150,000 in pledges doing sit-ups, what's the most touching wish you've heard?

A: Oh, man, one of the best was when I'd given some athletic advice to the New York Knicks. I was able to hook up Charles Barkley with a dying child

whose wish was to meet him. We drove down to see the boy in New Jersey. I know Charles was dead tired from playing playoff games, but he spent hours with the kid. The boy's eyes lit up like they were electric. His hospital room was a shrine to Charles.

Q: How have Wall Street execs, who contributed pledges, responded to your motivational speeches?

A: They get an appreciation of time management. Maybe the guy who spends 15 hours a day at the office will decide not to be as aggressive, and to allocate more time to his family, even though he'll probably earn less. I asked one executive what the most important things to him were. In this order, he said, "My job, my kids, my wife." That was scary...I also talk about how important fitness and good nutrition are. I address mind, body and spirit.

Q: Your biggest setbacks?

A: Probably divorce. Not being able to be successful at marriage.

Q: You teach teens how to get it together mentally, physically and spiritually. Which is most important to success?

A: It's a three-legged stool. If you don't have one left, the stool won't stand.

A: Talk about teens, fat, salt, sugar and TV.

A: (laughs) They all seem to go together, don't they? Too much TV and fat will put a kid on the couch forever. When they don't exercise, they have low self-confidence; and if they don't eat right, they don't have the brainpower to absorb their lessons in school. They nod off in the afternoons. It's a domino effect, destined for failure. I'm trying to get kids off the couch. One of the topics (in my

Formula for Success programs) is: "You can't run a Ferrari on regular."

Q: When are you an imposter?

A: Never. What you see is what you get.

Q: You say you actually post your goals on a lamp shade, to see each morning, just as you advise others to do. Do you allow time for slouching?

A: Absolutely, it's part of the Formula for Success. Active rest is really important for the body. You can't work out seven days a week. The body needs rest. Sunday mornings I read the New York Times. I definitely know how to relax.

Q: Your favorite quote?

A: Henry Ford said, "If you think you can do it, you're probably right. If you think you can't, you're probably also right."

For more information about Morris' programs, look up:
www.successforteens.com