

I Am Finally Living My Dream! (How I left the corporate world at age 44 to pursue a career as a musician.)

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**By Jim Hudak**

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Even in grade school, I knew I wanted to be a musician...full time, as my career. I firmly believed it was my "calling". Early on, I determined that in my case, as a musician, there could be three sources of revenue: live music performances, record sales, and songwriting royalties. It took many years, but finally it has happened as I envisioned it as a young boy. As I near the age of 50, I can say I am living my dream as a musician...performing, recording, and songwriting!

This wasn't by any means a direct route. I forgot about following the yellow brick road.

Along the way, I have taken a few side roads...newspaper delivery, landscaping, outdoor maintenance for a school district, restaurant busboy, boxing and stocking groceries, bartender and tavern manager, lumber yard and hardware sales, real estate sales, selling entertainment discount books door to door (and successfully, I might add!), doing voiceovers for commercials, acting as an "extra" for films and television, concessionaire at sporting events, umpire for youth athletic games, painting houses and remodeling buildings, apartment manager, music librarian...

and the "big three" long term: 1. 16 years as an executive with ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers) and SESAC where I received an incredible up-close view of the songwriting and legal side of the music business. 2. Five years as an employee and store manager for a six-store chain of record stores, learning just how many thousands of recording artists there actually are and getting to attend an unlimited number of free concerts. 3. Four years as a traffic, news, and sports reporter for over 50 radio and television stations. This reporting experience was invaluable. Besides all the behind the microphone experience, I saw the competitiveness, professionalism, (usually) low paying, corporately controlled world of broadcasting – firsthand. The highlight was flying daily in Cessna planes and helicopters, providing traffic reports for stations in the San Francisco Bay Area.

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Wow! That's quite an assortment of jobs. Talk about a diverse view of the world.

But...all that time, I saw it only as a means to an end. My real goal was to play, record, and compose music, FULL TIME. It was just so hard to do on an ongoing basis and still pay the bills. I would get gigs from time to time that would last anywhere from one night to three months. I never played "Top 40" radio hits, but insisted on playing what I believed was music with integrity or at least music close to my heart. While I wanted to perform mostly my own compositions, I was willing to also play songs by my musical heroes. You know, those singer-songwriter types that were not always household names: John Prine, Bob Dylan, Gram Parsons, Jerry Garcia, and of course the Beatles and James Taylor.

But whether I played as a soloist or in groups, sustained income just wasn't there. Finally as I neared age 30, the thought of a steady paycheck became too good to pass up. I took a job as a Field Representative for ASCAP. It required my selling copyrighted music licenses to all types of businesses who provided music for their customers. I spent the next 16 years never having to worry much about

money. I also enjoyed the varied experience, the travel, and the solid education in learning about that part of the music business that so interested me – it was a valuable chapter in my life. But although the financial worries were gone, I spent so much of that time unhappy! I knew I had to get back to the artistic pursuit of my music.

By 1996, I was on my last legs as a music business executive. I'd lost the fire and couldn't let go of the urge to follow my dream. Finally in late 1996, I left my position as Vice President of SESAC to get back to being a musician. The 15 – 20 hours a week I spent as a traffic and news reporter bridged the financial gap.

In the meantime, I began rounding up gigs, hustling, and learning all the new songs on the piano that I possibly could. I knew I was getting about a 20-year late start compared to all the hot young players out there. But I figured I could make up for at least some of that through sheer hard work and determination. Because of my previous work experience, I was comfortable telephoning and meeting with people of all levels of business. I began working with hotel, restaurant and country club managers, wedding planners, and any venue that might be open to having piano music.

Systematically going through the yellow pages, I would keep meticulous notes about which businesses had a piano, who I'd spoken with and when to follow-up. Soon enough I was performing regularly – an average of three times per week...and earning decent money. Often I would find performing opportunities in unexpected places: libraries, museums, senior citizen facilities, and lots of corporate parties. Eventually, I was fortunate to land a four day a week steady job playing piano at a couple of Nordstrom stores...low paying, but great exposure and experience. I was on my way!

Now with two CDs available on Brainstorm Records, MY independent record label, the dream is being realized...the dream is being lived! The CD sales combined with my constant gigging six or more times per week nearly equal the income I earned during my peak years as a music executive. Meanwhile, I am putting a new emphasis on generating songwriting royalty revenue, with a three-year plan underway designed to round out that third source of income I have planned on since grade school.

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It hasn't been easy...but it has been worth it in every way! My little musical empire, now five years old, has seen steadily increasing in revenues each year. I have felt surges of joy and the ultimate in frustration. I am always eager for new challenges...and sometimes ready to quit. But, awhile back I came across a sentence that sums it all up perfectly. The statement comes from John Madden, the highly successful former football coach of the Oakland Raiders (who has become an even more successful football broadcaster). He was talking about the insecure, volatile occupation of being a National Football League Coach, a profession where one can almost guarantee they will be fired – often more than once. In determining whether or not someone is suited for that difficult profession, Madden said: "You shouldn't be doing it unless you can't live without it."

I would say the same applies to one's pursuit of music, or whatever their particular dream may be. If you can't live without it you simply have no choice but to pursue it.

For me, pursuing my dream was the best and most rewarding thing I have ever done.

If you've got a dream, I say, LIVE IT!!

Jim Hudak is a pianist, singer, guitarist, and songwriter who lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. His latest CD, Gratefully Yours, is currently receiving international acclaim. For more information, you can contact Jim through his website, [www.jhudak.com](http://www.jhudak.com), or by phoning Brainstorm Records at (925) 673-7293.

### **Goal Setting: Pops Proves Its Never Too Late**

**By Vic Johnson**

Pops first set the goal in high school, but when he graduated he thought he wasn't mature enough to pursue it so he enlisted in the U.S. Army.

He dreamed about it as a member of the 82nd Airborne as he became an Army Ranger. Later, in the first Gulf War, he thought about his goal again, as he also did during his service in the Kosovo conflict. For 20 years, through his Army career, a war, marriage and six children, Pops kept the dream and the goal alive.

Never mind that he was considered far too old to pursue his dream, Pops just couldn't let go.

When he retired from the Army at 39, he decided it was finally time to do something about the goal he'd set so many years before. He moved his family to Columbia, South Carolina and enrolled as a freshman at the University of South Carolina.

No, he wasn't considered too old for that. Many others, much older, have pursued college degrees for the first time. What Tim "Pops" Frisby did was even more special. At an age when even most professional players have hung up their helmets, he began working out with the South Carolina Gamecocks football team during the winter. Working out with players half his age, all of whom were

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young enough to be his son, he competed for a position on a Division One major College Football Team.

It was a goal that Pops had lived with for a long time and he began to realize it when coaches invited him back for fall drills. When South Carolina kicked off their season against the University of Georgia, Tim Frisby was on the sidelines wearing Gamecock jersey number 89. On September 25th, against Troy, the legendary Lou Holtz, head coach at South Carolina, sent Pops into the game for its final four plays. "I have a lot of respect for the guy," Holtz said. "A Ranger, 20 years in the Army, six kids. He loves this team. I thought it would be good to get him in. I'm sorry we could not throw it to him." But knowing the way that Pops Frisby makes his dreams come true, that's just a matter of time.

Frisby, who turns 40 in February, has been featured on ESPN's "College GameDay." ABC's "Good Morning America," CNN, the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times are all planning stories.

Incidentally, the father of six between the ages of six months and 16, also maintains a 3.88 (out of a possible 4.0) grade point average.

Still think it's too late for your dream? Goal setting and goal starting is a process that can start at any age and at any time. There's no need to wait until January 1st to set or start a goal. Goal setting and goal starting doesn't have to take place at the first of the month, or even the first of the week. I once started on a big goal at midnight on the 24th of the month.

Tim Frisby accomplished his goal and realized his dream for two simple reasons: he never let time take

his dream away, and when the time finally came, he took action. It worked for Pops — and it'll work for you too!

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Vic Johnson is a popular motivational speaker, author and Internet Infopreneur who has created some of the most visited personal development sites on the Web. His flagship site

He is co-author of "Goals 2004," which is found at

Goal Setting: Pops Proves Its Never Too Late  
Dream Job Crisis  
Golf Schools Provide A 'Way Out'  
The Young Tiger Woods  
Are You Too Old To Go Back To School?

How to become a Chef!  
Dream Psychology  
Gate Crash into the Interior Design Industry.  
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