

Journey in Media Leads to Found Passion *Westchester alum wins award using story-telling skills*



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Frank Capra, Bugs Bunny, and robots.

Connecting these disparate dots leads to Gene Koprowski, Saint Joseph High School Class of 1983. For him, they would all make great subjects for documentaries.

Having already won a PBS Telly Award for his production “The Frank Capra Story: It’s A Wonderful Life,” Koprowski, who lived in Westchester while attending St. Joes,

recently completed three weeks of 18-hour days in post-production for his upcoming PBS documentary, “On With The Show: How Bugs Bunny Changed Contemporary Culture.”

Koprowski was already a big movie buff when he took teacher Tom Patronski’s film class during his senior year at St. Joes 37 years ago. He enjoyed all genres, especially comedies, and, besides films, he looked for humor in all media, including albums and old radio broadcasts.

Knowing the media arts were in his future, he majored in radio and television production at Northwestern University, from where he graduated in 1987.

Koprowski’s professional career began as a freelance writer for Newcity, a newspaper founded in Chicago in 1988. Soon he would write jokes for Bob Orben, formerly a speech writer for Vice President Gerald Ford.

Koprowski was hired by PBS in Washington, D.C., where he wrote for “Technopolitics,” which aired on over 300 stations and whose focus was the politics of science and technology. There he worked with Neil Freeman, former editor for National Review and a protégé of the magazine’s founder, William F. Buckley Jr.

In the mid-’90s, Koprowski worked for Forbes magazine as a features writer.

“This was a very interesting time. Not only did I get to interview corporate executives, but some of them were just hitting their stride as the dot-com industry was flourishing.”

In the next decade, Koprowski found himself writing columns for news agency giant United Press International before joining Fox News Chicago, where he was part of a team that completed an Emmy-nominated piece for Fox News NYC in 2008, the subject being police tactical technologies for criminals on the run.



Amidst work and completing his master's degree in liberal arts/theater from the University of Chicago, he met his future wife, Nancy, on the subway in 1988, where he learned she lived in the same apartment building he did.

Soon after their marriage in 1990, Gene and Nancy formed a media production firm, Transcendence Broadcasting Inc., with Gene serving as executive producer and Nancy as producer and chief operating officer.

Today they have a 20-year-old daughter, Katherine, attending the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as an engineering major.

Koprowski achieved a milestone this year when he won a Telly Award, a national award for a local production with partner WTTW/PBS Chicago, for the documentary on Frank Capra.

“I remember watching ‘It’s A Wonderful Life’ (directed by Capra) several times while in high school. Years later I saw a documentary about movie directors who were tasked with filming events during World War II. Capra was one of them, and I wanted to know more about him.

“The more I researched, the more I loved his journey – immigrant, who as a child knew little English, worked his way through school, studied engineering, which includes thinking in terms of design and planning, both which served him well as a director.”

No sooner was that project completed than Koprowski began another. And, once again, he had his eyes on a director.

Tex Avery was an animator and director for many cartoons, most notably those associated with Warner Brothers, specifically Bugs Bunny.

“Tex Avery directed his animations as if they were a motion picture. That fascinated me.”

Once his idea was approved by PBS, Koprowski worked hard to secure funding from foundations, including the Illinois Arts Council.

Koprowski also interviewed and used several historians and other contributors for the production celebrating Bugs Bunny's 80th anniversary. Some of the voice-overs were members of the production he wrote, directed and produced for The Second City comedy troupe: “The Broken Compass Players Present: Make America Gag Again,” a commentary on contemporary politicians, from President Bill Clinton to President Donald Trump.

Turning his attention now to robots, Koprowski has always been interested in the depiction of robots in film, especially in “Metropolis,” a classic 1927 science fiction film by Fritz Lang depicting the struggle of class separation.

“Besides films themselves, I love their histories, and I use archival photographs and film to enhance my passion – storytelling.”

Gene, congratulations on your success. St. Joseph High School is proud of you, and we wish you well as you continue to follow your passion!