

DETERMINATION CONQUERS ALL

There is no such thing as a great talent without great will-power.

-- Honore de Balzac (1799-1850) French Novelist

BY **ESTHER LEW**

Gregory Burns is a man who doesn't take no for an answer. Persistent and committed, he stands his ground and refuses to be daunted by any obstacles. His spirited zeal for life puts most of us to shame, and his extraordinary achievements are testament to the power of will and what it can accomplish.

A talented individual, Gregory has been leading an exceptional life for 39 years, and few others can hold a candle next to him. Having contracted polio at the age of one which rendered his legs immobile, Gregory has not let his disability stop him from leading a normal life. Actually, to say that he leads a normal life is a gross understatement; because he approaches life as if it is a 100-mile sprint, while the majority plod along at a snail's pace in comparison.

Active and restless, Gregory has constantly defied the physical constraints put on him by his disability. He has competed in countless international swimming competitions for both the able-bodied and disabled; and has won many medals as well as set world records for his efforts. He has climbed the highest mountains in Southeast Asia; gone trekking in the Himalayas and Nepal; and backpacked across India, China, Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia.

One truly admires his sense of fortitude and the extent to which he would go to test his limits. He has even participated in a marathon in Hawaii. "I'm proud to say that I finished last, in 16 hours, well after everyone had gone home. I didn't even ask the organisers if I could take part. I just did it. If I keep asking others what my limits are, I'm going to get someone else's perspective or what I can or cannot do."

Gregory is also a multi-talented professional who has carved a multi-faceted career in communications. He has hosted and produced radio



Greg Burns - a man with burning ambition.

programmes in Taiwan, written articles and created illustrations for two of the top-selling magazines in Taiwan; managed and produced all production and creative aspects of Prime Sports for Star TV in Hong Kong; and even spent a year on a boat making a series of TV documentaries for an European TV station.

Presently, he is the Marketing PR Manager for Pepsico Restaurants International, Singapore, which owns and operates KFC and Pizza Hut. But having a nine-to five job has not stopped him from pursuing his love for the arts. An accomplished contemporary artist who has studied traditional Chinese art forms, and commercial and fine art, Gregory has held painting and photography exhibitions in the US, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore.

Despite his accomplished portfolio, Gregory's vision for the future is still filled with goals and plans. "I want to make TV documentaries, especially about the underwater world, produce educational programmes, be recognised as a successful artist, and I want to host a "Larry King Live" kind of show where people can talk about their perspectives on life. The possibilities are endless."

Gregory's approach towards life serves as a model example of how we should all view life-- full of hope and opportunity. "Perseverance is the key, stick with it. It is also important that you produce quality rather than quantity, therefore consistency and commitment is imperative."