

Inventors

DIGEST

It's a 'Wonderful' Mess

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SPARKED IP RIGHTS DEBATE

GO, GO, GADGET GUY!

**STEVE GREENBERG'S
INNOVATIVE CAREER**



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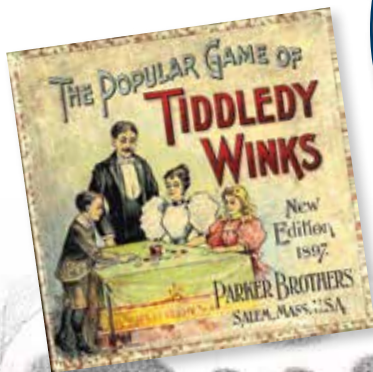
December 2024 Volume 40 Issue 12

They Said **What?**

- 4 "In the original book, Dorothy's slippers were silver."
- 9 "It should not be too much to ask that the [next] head of the patent office must believe in patents!"
- 15 "They don't have a copyright on this story, and they've never come to us for copyright on the story."
- 21 "The Boy Wonder has become a man of honor."



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WHAT THE HECK IS HE UP TO NOW?

10 QUESTIONS WITH: STEVE GREENBERG, 'THE GADGET GUY'

BY EDITH G. TOLCHIN

HE HAS LONG been known as “The Gadget Guy” and “The Innovation Insider.” I have long known him as an amazing person.

Steve Greenberg and I met in 2009 at the Charlotte offices of *Inventors Digest*. As then-board members of the United Inventors Association, he, longtime ID contributor Jack Lander, a few others and I were filming a video series for novice inventors.

I interviewed him in 2012 for *ID* when he hosted Food Network’s “Invention Hunters.”

Greenberg, a longtime journalist who’s won 12 Emmy Awards and is the author of “Gadget Nation,” is a frequent contributor on NBC’s “Today with Hoda & Jenna” and the host of YouTube’s gadget game show “What the Heck Is That?”—considered a cross between “Shark Tank” and “What’s My Line?” or “I’ve Got a Secret.”

In 2014, along with his brother, Gary Greenberg, Steve contributed to the Crowdfunding chapter

for one of my inventor series books, “Secrets of Successful Inventing: From Concept to Commerce” (Square One Publishers).

Greenberg demonstrates innovative products for top TV markets including WGN in Chicago; NBC in Washington, D.C.; and judges in innovation competitions around the world. He has a huge social media presence on X (formerly Twitter) @stevetv; on Facebook at Facebook.com/stevetv; Instagram (@stevegreenberg); and on LinkedIn at LinkedIn.com/in/stevetv.

I recently caught up with him for “10 Questions.”

Have you always wanted to be involved in media and journalism? As a child, what were your grown-up aspirations?

Journalism wasn’t even on the table when I was a youngster.

In eighth grade, I wrote a paper stating I wanted to be an ophthalmologist

One of Steve Greenberg’s favorite new gadgets is the Sofa Stud, a spill-proof cup holder for your couch invented by a couple in Littleton, Colorado. The longtime TV fixture and author never envisioned his career path.



when I grew up. I went to Rutgers College and then received a scholarship and early acceptance to Northwestern University Dental School in Chicago.

So, I became a full-time practicing dentist in New Jersey. Back then, I had no thoughts of a career on television; no journalism career was on the horizon for me.

So how did you go from dentist to journalist?

While doing dentistry, I had free time on Wednesdays and most mornings. I needed a hobby, and television really started as a hobby for me.

It was the 1980s, and suburbs were being wired for cable television. Part of the cable deals cut by towns included the creation of a public access television station. My New Jersey town had one of those deals, and I was involved in the creation of a public access TV station in my town. It was just a hobby—but I loved it.

From that relationship with the cable company, I was offered a part-time news job at WOR, a TV station which had just moved from NYC to Secaucus, New Jersey (the WOR move was forced due to some FCC violations). I worked the news desk and helped produce news stories. It was very exciting working in a newsroom, and I got hooked on the adrenaline rush of breaking

news. I put together a “resume reel” and mailed it to about 100 TV stations around the country.

After lots of rejections, I finally received a few interviews. I ultimately landed an on-camera, full-time TV news reporter job at WNEP-TV in Scranton-Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania. It was an ABC station owned by the *New York Times*.

It was the perfect newsroom in which to learn my craft. The assistant news director liked me and trained me to be a fast, accurate, serious television journalist.

From WNEP-TV, I was then offered a reporting job at the CBS TV station in Miami. After years of doing that, I decided I wanted a new challenge, so I left CBS and started my own company doing freelance video stories for various television entities including HGTV’s “Dream Builders,” HGTV’s “House Detective,” DIY’s “To the Rescue,” Discovery Channel’s “Your New House,” WPBT’s “New Florida,” Wall Street Journal Television, E!’s E! News, TPE’s “Lifestyles of the Rich & Famous,” and many others.

How did you go from doing television segments to new products segments?

I was hired by Discovery Channel’s “Your New House” to do a daily segment Monday through Friday. The executive producer suggested I do a gardening segment or maybe “Cool Tools.”

Greenberg’s says his show “has evolved from a Zoom format to trade shows, to “man-on-the-street” formats. ... The show is a thinly veiled platform to introduce new products to viewers.”



“I became a full-time practicing dentist in New Jersey. Back then, I had no thoughts of a career on television.”

I lived in a high-rise, so gardening was out and I’m not handy enough to showcase various tools day in and day out. I suggested a daily segment called “Check This Out.” I wanted something wide open, so I wouldn’t run out of topics; and I really wanted to showcase gadgets.

I love gadgets and new inventions, so this topic seemed like a great fit for me. I would showcase five products a day, five days a week.

My apartment looked like a storage warehouse. It was insane. Boxes on top of boxes. Shipping products in and out every day. I had a great team—and we were making TV every day.

My segment aired at 6:55 p.m. weekdays on The Discovery Channel. (It) was the lead-in to the wildly popular “Wild Discovery,” so I had lots of viewers. And that’s how I met hundreds of Mom, Pop, and garage inventors.

In airports, in the grocery store, and at various trade shows, I met inventors who wanted their new products showcased in my segment. They all had a story to tell, and I thought that would make a great TV show.

So why didn’t you make it into a TV show?

Well, I wish it was that easy. Unfortunately, I couldn’t get any TV executives to agree with me. I pitched the idea to lots of TV executives and though most seemed truly interested, I never got the green light.

My TV show idea, which I called “Gadget Nation,” basically profiled Mom, Pop, and garage inventors who had come up with problem-solving gadgets and their journeys to bring those gadgets to market. I had some great inventor stories, but there were no catfights, no table tossing—so TV executives passed. But that’s not where the story ends.

One executive at truTV reached out to me and said he loved the show idea but couldn’t get the others in the room to agree with him. He suggested I turn “Gadget Nation” into a book. I said, “I’m a TV guy, not a book guy.”

He insisted, and I ultimately listened to him. I pitched the book to a few literary agents and

then to Sterling Publishing. I landed a book deal, and then I wrote the book: “Gadget Nation: A Journey Through the Eccentric World of Invention.”

The book did very well. I had lots of fun promoting it and demonstrating the gadgets showcased in the book.

Unexpectedly, the book opened so many new doors. I became a semi-regular guest on NBC’s “Today,” got on the board of the United Inventors Association, and became a judge and speaker at trade shows around the world.

But didn’t you end up getting a TV show on Food Network?

Yep—and it’s because of the success of my book, “Gadget Nation.”

Several production companies reached out to me to be the host or cohost of television shows that focused on the invention world. I participated in a few pilot episodes. Most of the shows died quickly and quietly.

One show made it to TV screens around the world. Food Network wanted to do a show about the Mom, Pop, and garage inventors behind new kitchen gadgets.

The show was called “Invention Hunters.” We did one season, and despite impressive ratings, we were canned.

The show was a competition format. Each episode viewers would meet a few inventors and their inventions. On the show, we would test the invention and finally pick one to be pitched for a licensing deal at Lifetime Brands. Then, in the boardroom of Lifetime Brands, they would decide if this inventor got a licensing deal or not.

It was a fun half hour—lots of laughs and some tears. I loved doing “Invention Hunters,” but I was told that by the time the episodes



A guest on NBC’s “Today,” Greenberg shares a smile with host Hoda Kotb and Jenna Bush Hager.

started to air on Food Network, the executives who had approved the show were long gone.

So, that didn't help our survival on the Food Network. You can still catch episodes of "Invention Hunters" buried on the Food Network's streaming platform.

Anyone who follows you on social media knows that you launched a game show called "What the Heck Is That?" Why the heck did you do that?

Great question, Edie!

Well, I was thinking about writing another book, and frankly, despite the success of "Gadget Nation," the world of publishing had changed so much it just didn't make any sense.

But I still wanted to showcase new inventions, and most shows such as NBC's "Today" really controlled what products got picked for any segment.

I wanted the freedom to pick the Mom, Pop, and garage inventors that I thought needed an exposure boost. I always loved game shows and thought that format might be a fun way to highlight new products and get viewers involved in the process.

That's how my game show, "What the Heck Is That?," was invented.

Each episode, I showcase one new product. The panelists try to guess what that gadget does.

The show has evolved from a Zoom format to trade shows, to "man-on-the-street" formats. And the episodes have gone from 15 minutes each to now just 2-to-3-minute episodes.

But despite the format changes, at its core the game show has remained the same: Here's a new gadget; can you guess what it does?

The show is a thinly veiled platform to introduce new products to viewers. I really hope the invention community embraces the show—because ultimately, if my game show gets a large enough audience, it will help inventors launch new products. As I often say to inventors, "Help me help you."

Where can people see the show?

It can be seen on YouTube, and on the streaming platform DBTV.

As I mentioned, the show can also be seen on DBTV. What is DBTV?

DBTV is a streaming network that can be seen on all smart TVs, and streams live 24/7 (600,000 monthly viewers); on Roku Live Stream; On Demand (reaching 60.1 million households); and on Amazon Fire, Live Stream & On Demand (reaching 50 million households).

DBTV can now also be seen on Roku in Canada, Mexico, Germany, Ireland, Australia, United Kingdom, and the country list keeps growing.



"If my game show gets a large enough audience, it will help inventors launch new products. As I often say to inventors, 'Help me help you.'"

If you haven't seen the game show, please check it out. And if you are watching it on YouTube, please Like and Share.

Also to support the show, subscribe to the YouTube channel. It's free, and if you click on the little bell next to "subscribe," you'll get a notification each time I post a new episode. Help me help you!

How can our readers who are inventors get their products showcased on your show?

It's really easy. There are two qualifications: If your invention is available for consumers to buy (on your own website or in a retail store or anywhere), and at first glance your invention is a "mystery gadget" (you can't tell what it does by just looking at it).

Meet both qualifications, and your product qualifies for the show.

Next, reach out to me. My email is on stevegreenberg.tv, and on gadgetgameshow.com.

Just go to either site and click on Contact. Then send me your product link, send a picture, and tell me what problem your gadget solves. That's it!

What about getting your new products on NBC's "Today" or other editorial shows?

In those cases, the process works sort of in the reverse. When I get a segment assigned to me on "Today" or another editorial show, if I don't already have gadgets for the segment, then I post on social media what I'm looking for.

If you see my post and your product "fits" what I'm looking for, reach out to me. So please follow me on Twitter (X) @stevetv; on Facebook [com/stevetv](https://www.facebook.com/stevetv), and on LinkedIn.

What's next for Steve Greenberg?

Yikes! I don't know. I hope more of the same for many, many, many years.

I would love to see the game show grow and evolve—and maybe one day become a "real" TV show.

I really enjoy being a new products judge and speaker at trade shows. I hope I continue to get more speaking gigs moving forward.

And I love to travel. I hope that doesn't slow down. All I can say is, "Stay tuned!" 📺



STEVE GREENBERG

BORN: Paterson, New Jersey

HOME: Miami, Florida

EDUCATION: DDS and MPH
(Master of Public Health)

HOBBIES: Travel and dining out

AWARDS: 12 Emmy Awards, and several national awards including the American Heart Association's prestigious Blakeslee Award

PROUDEST PERSONAL MOMENT: Graduating from Northwestern University Dental School (a rough road to get to that day).

PROUDEST PROFESSIONAL MOMENT: Seeing my book "Gadget Nation" selling in bookstores across the country.

FAVORITE TV SHOWS: "Six Feet Under," "Golden Girls," "Frasier," "Law & Order SVU," "Friends," "Seinfeld"

FAVORITE MOVIES: "The Sound of Music," "The Godfather," "All About Eve," "Chicago," "Toy Story," "When Harry Met Sally"

FAVORITE GUILTY PLEASURE: Bravo

FAVORITE BOOK: Dr Seuss' "Yertle The Turtle and Other Stories"

FAVORITE QUOTE: "No good deed goes unpunished."

