

Chris: My name is Chris Attwood. I'm the Features Editor of *Healthy, Wealthy nWise*, and thank you all for joining us this evening for this "Passions of Real Life Legends" interview. As most of you know, this series is inspired by the book written by my partner, Janet Attwood, *The Passion Test - Discovering Your Personal Secrets To Living A Life On Fire*. Janet generally is hosting these interviews, but right now she's in India.



She's pursuing her passions. She is again traveling around with video camera in hand interviewing saints and sages, individuals who are renowned for their wisdom. So, for tonight, I will be filling in and introducing to you an incredible and wonderful co-host, who some of you have heard before, and I'll introduce him in just a moment. But, I want to, of course, welcome our Real Life Club members. If you are not yet a Real Life Legend Club member, you do have that opportunity, you can enroll.

For those of you who are not yet members, we have a special invitation for you to receive and take your own personal *Passion Test* Assessment, identify what are your key passions, what are the things that are most important to you in your life, and then how you can begin to align your life with those things so that you are living your own personal destiny.

That's the purpose of this interview series, to allow you to connect with some of the most successful people in the world who are living their passions, to discover what it is that they have gone through to be able to align with their passions, to be able to live their own personal destiny, and what are some of the obstacles and struggles that they overcame along the way, so that we can learn, all of us can learn together, those lessons and apply them in our own lives.

You can take The *Passion Test* Assessment. As our gift to you when you do, you'll receive a copy of Janet's ebook, *The Passion Test – Discovering Your Personal Secrets To Living A Life On Fire*. You'll also receive a complementary one-month membership in the Real Life Legends Club, which will allow you to be able to access the recording and transcript of this call as well as our call with Dr.



Alex Loyd on April 19th.

You'll also have access to the archives of the "Passions Real Life Legends" interviews with people like Stephen R. Covey, Neale Donald Walsh, Jay Abraham, Rabbi Yehuda Berg, and many others. So, those of you who are not yet Real Life Club members, I encourage you to go to www.HealthyWealthynWise.com, and click on Step #3. Take your own personal *Passion Test* Assessment, and then receive with that a complementary one-month membership in the Real Life Legends Club.

So, it's my pleasure this evening to introduce to you our co-host, our special guest co-host filling in for Janet. Many of you will remember him from our interview with Neale Donald Walsh in January. Paul Scheele is the chairman of Learning Strategies Corporation. We received so many emails after that interview that we had to have Paul come back and co-host another interview with us because so many of you said his questions were so penetrating, so helpful, and so useful.

Paul, along with his partners, founded Learning Strategies in 1981, almost 25 years ago, and it has evolved over that time into the premiere provider of self-improvement, education, and health programs. Paul, himself, has degrees in biology, psychology, adult learning, and he has mastered the technologies of human development, neuro-linguistic programming, accelerative learning, and preconscious processing.

He is absolutely a master in his own right, in his field, and it is such a pleasure and an honor, Paul, to have you this evening to introduce our special guest. Paul?

Paul: Thanks so much, Chris, great to be with you all again. It really is my pleasure to be able to introduce Stephen Simon. He's a veteran producer whose career includes the presidency of two major production companies and the development and production of a myriad of well-known films such as: *Smokey and the Bandit*, *The Goodbye Girl*, *The Electric Horseman*, *Somewhere in Time*, the Academy Award winning *What Dreams May Come*, and the Emmy-nominated Lifetime television movie *Homeless to Harvard: The Liz Murray Story*.



He is also author of the definitive work *The Force is With You: Mystical Movie Messages That Inspire Our Lives*. Stephen Simon has become the leading spokesperson for a new genre he is calling Spiritual Cinema. He's co-founder of the Spiritual Cinema Circle.

Spiritual Cinema helps us examine who we are and why we're here, and lets us form our own conclusions. These works help illuminate the human condition through stories and images. They inspire us to explore humanity when it can be seen at its very best.

Since its launch on April 1st, 2004, Spiritual Cinema Circle has become a worldwide phenomenon. The Circle distributes three to five DVDs of spiritual cinema a month to a worldwide audience and has been featured in major publications such as *Newsweek* and *Entertainment Weekly*.

Stephen is also co-founder and president of Moving Messages: The Institute for Spiritual Entertainment Incorporated, a non-profit educational corporation that develops and distributes feature films, television shows, documentaries, as well as education and training programs.

Its mission is to use traditional and new media to express ideas that illumine and inspire individual and social transformation. With a focus on spirituality in film, he teaches several seminars and writes a nationally syndicated column called "The Movie Mystic." It's my pleasure to be with you, Stephen. Thank you for being with us.

Stephen: Oh my goodness, what an introduction. Well, thank you very much, Paul. It's great to be with you and you as well Chris, and everybody else that's on the call.

Paul: Well, thanks so much. You know, your work is legendary, Stephen. You're an amazing pioneer. You're doing something, really, that's never been accomplished in the film industry and your influence in the lives of people is remarkable. For our purposes, we'd really love to know how your life's passions brought you to where you are today. Can you tell us, please, how you first began to discover what you're most passionate about?

Stephen: Well, I came to spirituality very young. My dad, who was a writer, a producer, and a director named Sylvan Simon, worked in the '40s,



made movies with Red Skelton, and Abbott and Costello, and he had actually produced the original *Born Yesterday*. So, I believe that we choose who are parents are going to be in this lifetime and I chose a filmmaker.

My dad died when I was four, unfortunately, but I remember his presence being around me when I was very young. I wasn't frightened by it, so the sense of spirituality and having something more was with me as a kid, and I grew up loving movies. That was my passion.

I came here to be a filmmaker. My mother remarried and who did she remarry? My stepfather's also a film producer, so it was very much a part of my life. I grew up with movies like *Lost Horizon*, and *It's a Wonderful Life*, and films like that that just fascinated me.

When I was 22, I walked into the Cinerama Dome in Los Angeles and saw the very first screening on the very first day in 1968 of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and when I saw the last 15 minutes of that film I just said, "That's it. Those are the kind of films that I want to make."

I spent a lot of time going down different routes, which we'll talk about in a little bit. I've had a lot of failure in my life and, you know, when you hear that kind of a build up, and that kind of an introduction, it doesn't talk about all the things that went wrong as well.

I think that's the key to all of these things because, yes, I have done all of those things, and those production companies that I ran - I was also fired from all of those jobs. I've been through a bankruptcy. I've lost everything else in my life again, so that's happened twice. I went through a period of time where my ex-wife had a psychotic break around the time of my bankruptcy and I wound up raising four girls on my own.

I've made more movies that have lost money, frankly, than have made money, and I have known a lot of failure, and a lot of heartache. I've know what it's like to have bills stacked up in the drawer, not so long ago, where they're filed in order of when they're going to be disconnected.



Out of all of that, out of all of that came this passion of mine for making movies. As you said, I produced a lot of films over the years as an executive, as a producer, and as an executive producer. I've been involved with the making of almost 30 films in almost 30 years.

Somewhere in Time was my first film as a producer, a movie that I was passionate about that has a long story attached to it, which maybe we can talk about in a little bit. That led me on a 20-year journey to get *What Dreams May Come* made. I decided I needed to get out of film industry in Los Angeles.

I needed to get out of L.A. There were a lot of things that went into this, culminating in the last three years of me actually leaving L.A., coming to southern Oregon, writing my book, going on a tour, and really just being passionately determined that Spiritual Cinema was going to be recognized as genre, and it's led to all of these other things. So, it is a complex story as we all have.

Paul: Well, you know, it's fascinating to me, Stephen, that as you talk about the failures and the hard times that you ran into, what we're interested in especially is were there times in which you really lost touch with your passion, and did you find yourself coming back to it?

Stephen: Oh, absolutely. I'm not sure I lost touch with it, but I lost faith in my ability to understand it and to be able to manifest it. I tried to get *What Dreams May Come*, as I said, made for 20 years and I went through a lot of failure and a lot of heartbreak with that. There were times when I thought, "You know, I'm just never going to get this done and I'm never going to get this done in the framework of the film industry," and "How am I going to get all of these things accomplished that I want to get done?"

I doubted myself a lot. I've said to people a lot that, "Without doubt, we would have no need for faith." We don't have to have faith that the sun is going to rise in the east and set in the west. We know that's going to happen, but these others we do have to have faith. There is doubt in every piece of faith because we can't really "know" for sure.

So, yeah, there were moments in my life when I just really went off



in odd directions. I was blessed by having angels and moments of grace, as my dear friend Cheryl Richardson talks about in her new book, come up in my life to redirect me back. When I got off the path, and I definitely did, there were moments when I rationalized to myself, “Well, you know, you just have to make a living. You’ve got to support your girls.”

All of which was true, but I rationalized what I needed to do with it and there would always be that moment where I would get turned around. I’ve had a couple of those fabulous, unmistakable, touches of grace in my life, which put me back in the right direction.

Paul: Well, there’s something in that, you know, the idea of being able to make money at something that you really love. I know when we set up this interview you told us that you get to do a lot of things that are really a lot of fun for you. So, how do you do that? How do you stay focused on a passion or a vision that’s so grand, like *What Dreams May Come*, and still get the bills paid at the same time?

Stephen: Well, you know what? It was very challenging for me for a very long time. I didn’t really quite figure out the answer to that. For me, the ultimate answer was in letting go. The ultimate answer was stop trying to figure out how you’re going to do that and just follow your passion.

I talk a lot about movie lines and movie metaphors because that is what has informed my life. There is a wonderful movie called *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* in which the metaphor is jumping from a mountain, and having the faith of a pure heart. I really ultimately realized that I could not do what I wanted to do in the belly of the beast, in Los Angeles, in the belly of the film industry, which has no understanding of spirituality, no understanding of Spiritual Cinema, doesn’t care anything about it, by the way, nor should they.

That’s not the business that they’re in. They’re in a big, mainstream business, and Spiritual Cinema is very much a niche, and is not mainstream. I just realized that I finally had to get out and so many things happened in my life that compelled me in that direction, and yet, I hung on because I was born in L.A. I dreamed that I would make these big movies in the film industry, and all those things, and the universe kept saying to me, “No! That’s not what you’re



meant to do.”

Finally, I just said, “You know what? I’m just going to follow my heart. I’m not going to worry about the rest of this. I’m going to get out of here.” My dear friend, Neale Donald Walsh, who you interviewed in January, and with whom I’m working in the film version of *Conversations With God* which we are going to start in November, is the one that was really responsible for getting me out of L.A.

Neale became a big fan of *What Dreams May Come* when he saw it and he and I became friends. As things got harder and harder for me in the mainstream film industry to do what I wanted, he kept saying, “You’ve got to get out of L.A. and you’ve got to write a book, and come to southern Oregon.” He finally was the one that got me out of L.A. - that and an amazing young lady and her dad from Milwaukee that was a very, very important part of my life.

She was a young woman who was dying of cancer at the age of 17, and that’s another story. But, that finally compelled me to say, “Okay, fine. I’m not going to fight this anymore. This is what the universe wants me to do. This is what the energy is taking me to do and I’m going to follow my passion. I’m going to follow my heart even though I do not know the direction, and even though I don’t know where the money’s going to come from.”

Frankly, when I did that, and when I disconnected from what I thought I knew, from the pattern that I thought I was going to follow, everything immediately changed, and everything started to fall into place. It is very important, I believe, for all of us on a spiritual path particularly, to be able to make that a financially abundant path as well.

It’s a very awkward thing for a lot of people on a spiritual path. It becomes very difficult for people to connect financial abundance and spirituality often. I think a lot of that is because of 2,000 years of basically genetic training from traditional religions that had the theory that to be a really spiritual person you had to be penniless, and abstinent, and celibate.

I think those of us on a spiritual path today are trying to change those precepts. I can tell you, as you said earlier in this question, I



wake up every morning now just, "What do I get to do today? This is so much fun. I love my life. I love every aspect of my life. I'm having an enormous amount of fun." Everything that we're doing is being tremendously successful in a spiritual way, and in a financially abundant way.

That did not come to my life until the last three years, and this coming June I'm going to be 59. The first 55 or 56 years of my life were a real struggle.

Paul: When you talk about the idea of disconnecting from everything you know, I can really relate to this. I was so passionate in my 20's and then I got so beat up by the "college of hard knocks" that I kind of lost my passion. It wasn't until my 40's I said, "I've got to get back to that." When you start to look at disconnecting from everything you know, what did that really mean to you? How can you disconnect?

Stephen: For me, what it meant was leave the place you've lived your entire, in Los Angeles. Get out of that town forever. Leave the industry that you grew up loving and wanting to be a part of, and that you've been a part of for 30 years because you can't do what you want to do in that industry.

Giving up the entire concept that I had been raised in with, you know, making movies with big stars, and big budgets, and being a part of the whole Los Angeles, Hollywood scene, and going to a place where I realized that I had to return to story. It was that going to a Spiritual Cinema for me are stories, and going back to a sense of a Shaman sitting around a campfire passing down the myths of a culture from one generation to another.

To me, that's what Spiritual Cinema is. That's what 21st century Spiritual Cinema is, and the Shaman is a filmmaker, and the light from the fire is the light of a projector on a screen, or a DVD playing in a television. I had to give up all of those thoughts of what I really wanted.

You know, there were times, and I must tell you, and I tell this story a lot, so I've grown less embarrassed to tell it. I came to success very early in the film industry when Ray Stark hired me to be his assistant in the late '70s, and *Smokey and the Bandit* was my first



film as an executive.

It was wildly successful, and I did *Electric Horseman*, which was wildly successful, and Ray made me the head of his company at the age of, I think, 31. I was making a lot of money and I lived in the Hollywood Hills, and I was dating three or four different women a week.

I would literally drive to the studio in my Jaguar XKE with the top down listening to the Eagles song, "New Kid in Town," and I was absolutely convinced that they had written that song about me. I was so lost in my ego and so lost in all of the material things, and all of the silliness that the universe looked at me and said, "Oh boy. He may have a good heart, but this young man has got a lot to learn."

Then, I went, as you said, through the college of hard knocks. I think I got my PhD at that college of hard knocks, and everything fell apart in my life. I mean everything absolutely fell apart because my values were not where they needed to be for me to follow this path. It took a lot of pain, a lot of falling down, and a lot of cliffs for me to really understand that I was doing what I wanted to do, but I wasn't doing it in the direction, and in the manner that I needed to do it.

Paul: That's such an astounding concept. That it's your path and yet the values that you had weren't allowing you to live your path, and there was that kind of dissonance, that sort of recognition, you had to lose the ego. You had to get back on track.

Stephen: I had to lose everything. Now, not everybody does. I was unbelievably stubborn and arrogant, and totally into my ego. I'm not saying that everybody had to go through that because I think there is enough struggle for people on a spiritual path. It can be done very elegantly and very easily, and it doesn't have to be done the way that I did it, and I hope nobody else does.

I was just a particularly hardheaded case, and so I had to go through those moments, those dark nights of the soul. I didn't have to. I chose to because I needed to come out the other end. It certainly informed the person that I am today. I am enormously grateful for everything in my life.



I'm very conscious that I am choosing to live this life, but I'm also very conscious that spirit is speaking through me, that this is not me directing it, that I have basically very little, if any control of it, and that I got out of the way and said, "Okay. Look, I'm done. I'm broken, and I'm broke, and I want to follow this path. I don't know how to do it."

I asked for help. The help was always there. I was just too ego-filled to ask for it, and you know, now that help is there, and all of the pathways that I've been wanting to do are coming out in very different directions from the way I thought they would. I made a little movie called *Indigo*, which I produced and directed, which cost \$500,000.

I never thought I'd be making a movie for \$500,000. *What Dreams May Come* cost \$80 million plus. But here I was, making a little move for \$500,000, and it was the most extraordinary experience. It was so creative and so much fun, and the results were terrific and the film has been very successful.

Now, we're going to do *Conversations With God* that I'm also going to produce and direct, and we have a huge budget for that in comparison to *Indigo*, \$1.5 million, and we're going to be able to tell a terrific story. One of the things that I have determined is that the movies that I'm directly involved with are going to be made at a very reasonable price.

They're going to be focused on story, not on big-name stars, and it's very important that these films entertain people, touch people, move people. It's also important for the people who invest in them that they become financially successful because, in that way, more and more and more people are going to get a chance to make these movies.

I'm aware of many young filmmakers, and not-so-young filmmakers around the country and around the world, right now, who are using *Indigo* as an example with potential investors, and saying, "Look what they did. They found a different way to distribute it. They distributed it in churches. They distributed it in non-traditional ways, and they were also in theaters. They made money at it, so there's a market for this. So, give me \$100,000, or \$200,000, or \$1 million



for my movie, and I'll make money for you."

That's critical, and it's critical for the audience to support these films. One of the things that I talk about a lot is that this new environment of Spiritual Cinema should not be competitive. We are collaborative. For instance, *What The Bleep Do We Know*, which is a wonderful film that's been out over the last several months.

It actually opened almost a year ago initially. It is a film that I've been passionately supportive of. I don't have any stake in *What The Bleep Do We Know*, but I do from an emotional standpoint because it's a deeply wonderful, spiritual film, and audiences need to support it, and they have.

I just recently saw a film called *The Upside of Anger* with Kevin Costner and Joan Allen that I'm going to be talking a lot about over the next few weeks. Again, something that I have nothing to do with, but a movie that I really want people to support, that I think is worthy of our support.

That's going to happen as we get together as collaborators and break this old paradigm of competition, cut throat, trying to be number one, trying to all of this that the only goal is making money, and it shouldn't be. The goal should be following your heart, following your dream, following your passions, living your life in a spiritual manner, doing unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Doing all the things that we feel that are a part of our spiritual life, and then expecting to become financially abundant as well. I think if you don't have that combination, things get broken.

Paul: I think it's gorgeous. You know, you've really referenced this idea of collaboration of being a central point and you really do have an amazing team. You've combined the talents of people who've enjoyed a lot of success in their own lives and I'm wondering how did you get that team together? What did it take to attract that kind of team to, really, something that was unproven, this kind of distribution?

Stephen: Well, the Spiritual Cinema Circle, interestingly enough, was not my idea. I cannot take credit for it. My partners, Gay and Kathryn



Hendricks, which many of your audience know as wonderful relationship experts, and authors of *Conscious Loving*, and several other books.

They have been dear friends of mine for many years and Gay Hendricks is the one that actually said to me, "Listen, forget the idea of doing theatrical firsts, and stuff like that. We should form a monthly DVD club. Do you think there are enough movies out there that people haven't heard of that they would enjoy, that we can put out on DVD, three to five movies a month?"

I said, "Absolutely," and he said, "Well, let's do it," and it was Gay that really was the one that came up with the idea. He brought certain people into the mix that he had been working with, and I brought certain people into the mix that I had been working with, and everybody just gelled.

We launched the Spiritual Cinema Circle, as you said, just about a year ago right now. We had no idea how it would do. We thought, "Well, maybe at the end of a year, maybe we'll have 3,000 subscribers, if we're lucky, or 4,000 subscribers." As we speak today, when we have just reached our first anniversary, we have 17,000 subscribers in over 70 countries around the world.

What's fascinating and so gratifying for us is that 80 percent of the people who started with us are still with us, and in a month-by-month subscription business, which is what this is, you can sign up for one month and if you don't like it, leave. Having 80 percent of the people stay with you for an entire year is enormously gratifying to us, and it tells us that the 40 or 50 films that they receive, we know they didn't love all of them.

You can't have a subscriber in Bangor, Maine, and a subscriber in Beirut, Lebanon, and have both of those people love each movie every month. We know that isn't the case, but we do know that over the course of a year, if people stay with us, they're going to get a lot of entertainment that they love.

These are films that people get to own. This is not a rental service. This is not like Netflix or Blockbuster. These are films that you own on DVD, so at the end of a one-year period of time you have 45 or 50 films in your library - shorter films, movies, you know, 20 to 30



minutes long, documentaries, shorter and feature length, and feature length movies as well.

There are comedies, dramas, and things like that, so that people can actually build up a library and have an ownership so that if three months after they get a film, they have friends, and they're talking about a particular subject matter, they can say, "Oh, we got this movie from the Circle, and this is a perfect illumination of what we're talking about."

They can put it on the DVD player. We really have films that. Ninety-five percent of them you are not going to be able to see any place else in the world other than through the Circle, and it's enormously gratifying to get the response we're getting.

Paul: What I love about the service is that there are films that are super short, so when you have a few minutes and you want to kick back, you know that you can watch something that you're going to love, and there are some longer features in there as well. Plus, one of most successful, small group ministries at our church has been the Movie Salon.

This is such a perfect thing for them. Instead of having to go to the movie theatre, they are really able to support a non-traditional film in a way that really speaks to the spiritual message even more profoundly.

Stephen: Talking about that, it's a great thing for me to bring up because when you go to the Spiritual Cinema Circle web site, if you scroll down to the very bottom, and you click on communities, you're going to find that we have almost 250 now, some either operating, or in some sense of formation, Spiritual Cinema communities around the world where people get together, once a month usually, and watch films from the Circle.

They watch other films. They go to films together. We have a number of artistic communities that are actually putting together films of their own. Our L.A. community actually just made their first film entirely from within their community. What we see is this is a community that we're building. This is not just a DVD service.

This is an international community. This is why I travel around the



world. I was just in Toronto. Next week, I'll be in Virginia Beach, Virginia, and then in Asheville, North Carolina. Then, we have our International Spiritual Cinema Festival at Sea that we're doing for a week in the Caribbean on a cruise ship that we leave from Florida.

In June, I'm going to be traveling to L.A., New York, Washington, and Chicago. I do seminars and workshops so that people get a sense of being able to connect with each other. As I said a couple of times here, this is a niche, and we don't want to delude ourselves that this is some huge, mainstream movement.

The best numbers that I've ever seen, I guess, are from Michael Ray's book that maybe there are 50 million in the United States, and certainly tens, if not hundreds of millions more around the world, who consider themselves to be cultural creatives, which means they have some kind of an interest in this arena. That's about 20 or 25 percent of the population. That is certainly not a huge thing. It is certainly not the majority. It's a lot of people.

Paul: It's a lot of people.

Stephen: It's a lot of people. If we can entertain, and inspire, and uplift, and empower within that community, then we have done a great job. I am vigilant, and so is Gay, and so is everybody else that works in our business, that we are not going to try to go out and appeal to everybody by watering down and diffusing what we do because that's what Hollywood does, and people don't need us for that.

Paul: Well, you are doing a great job, and I want people to make sure that they understand they can go the *Healthy, Wealthy, nWise* website, www.HealthyWealthynWise.com/scc, and the information that you mentioned, Stephen, about the cruise and all that is available right there.

People can find out about it and they can be involved in the Spiritual Cinema Circle. It's really a simple process. Now, I also would like to focus for a moment on some of the obstacles that you may have encountered around Spiritual Cinema. I mean there must have been some kind of roadblocks along the way and I'm curious about how you may have overcome some of those.

Stephen: How many days do we have? Well, most of those, I have to say,



were of my own making, you know, because I do believe we create our own reality. And certainly, I created a reality for myself where I was trying to operate, and doing this kind of spirituality in the belly of a very, very, old line, old-fashioned, very conservative business, which is what the film industry is.

The obstacles. Well, besides my own ego and all of the disintegrations that I went through, I was dealing with an industry that doesn't understand what we're doing, and doesn't care about it. Now, let's talk about that a little bit. The Hollywood film community, loosely called the Hollywood film community, the studios and the major independents, has undergone a massive transformation over the last 10 or 15 years in particular.

All of those distributors are now owned by major international conglomerates. People who really love films, people who have the entrepreneurial fervor and passion, have basically disappeared from the halls of power within the traditional film industry. The average Hollywood film in the year 2004 cost a little bit over \$100 million to produce and to market.

They are going for home runs. They are going for huge, mainstream, blockbuster films most of the time, most of the time. They've abandoned a huge piece of the audience. That's kind of a dirty little secret in Hollywood. It's not a very well-kept secret, but they talk about box office grosses, which are misleading because of the inflated cost of tickets every year.

In 2004, 100 million less people bought tickets for movies than in 2003. In 2004, for the first time in 12 years, 100 million less people bought tickets than in 2003. So, ticket buying is going down, and the reason for that is because those of us who are interested in say a film... I'm just going to pick a couple of films out of the air like *The Hours*, a couple of years ago with Nicole Kidman, or *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, which was my personal favorite film of 2004.

Those of us who are interested in subject matter films, we don't get those films on a regular basis any more. The studios and the major independents will generally put those films out in October, November, and December to qualify for Academy Awards, which are still very important, and can drive business, and are prestigious,



and things like that. But, the other nine months of the year, generally, and again there are exceptions - last year, *Eternal Sunshine* was the one exception in the first six months of the year.

Right now, we're in April and I think *The Upside of Anger* may be the only exception so far this year. Generally, that's what they do with films that have that kind of content. So, what's happened is this: many people, many of us who grew up going to movies as a regular habit, once a week, would definitely go to a film.

People have gotten out of that habit because for most of the year they don't have films that they want to go see once a week, and it becomes much easier to see films at home on DVD. Also, people, I think, have gotten very burned by the way Hollywood promotes and sells movies.

If you look at a film that came out in January called *White Noise*, a lot of us felt that it was going to be a very deeply spiritual film about connecting with our loved ones and things like that. It turned out to be a very violent, slasher film. You get burned on that enough and you say, "You know what? I'm not going to the theatre until enough of my friends tell me that it's a movie worth seeing."

Where that winds up cannibalizing itself is that there are a whole bunch of movies that come out in the November-December arena. You can't have all of them appeal to enough people to go see them, so that word of mouth can spread. A number of them don't do any business because they're all shoe horned into that arena, and then Hollywood says, "See. There's no market for these films."

Now, again, that doesn't make them bad and wrong. It doesn't make them, you know, not decent people trying to do the right thing in life. They just have a different viewpoint. They are looking for a different kind of audience. Their ideal audience is a 15-year old boy that has to get out of the house on Friday night and may go see a movie three, or four, or five times.

The opportunity that presents for us as filmmakers is enormous and that's why the Spiritual Cinema Circle has been so successful. It's why films like *What the Bleep*, and *Indigo* have been so successful. Because when you can get through to our community and let them know that there is a film out there made by people in



the community that do understand the sensibilities, they will come.

Paul: Oh, I love the concept of a Spiritual Cinema community. I mean that's a term that I hadn't even considered, but there's the Hollywood community, there's a Spiritual Cinema community.

Now, what I'm going to ask you is since we're really to a large extent saying, "Okay, Stephen, pick the films for me. I'm going to receive them," what qualifies as Spiritual Cinema? How do you go about selecting movies for your members? Obviously, it's not going to be the formulaic approach that Hollywood takes.

Stephen: No. And, you know, it's a fair and very, very challenging question, and an answer that I hope I can give justice to. In general, in general, the way we define Spiritual Cinema, and people define this in different ways. I completely respect that, totally respect that. But, the way we define it is: movies that ask who we are, and why we're here, and, this is a key part of it, have us feeling at least, at least, a little bit better about being a human being after the film is finished.

That doesn't mean that these are all, you know, light, Pollyanna movies where you run skipping along. Spirituality can have very dark corners. We do live with dark shadows. We do live with that part of our lives and they have challenges as life does. In January and February, for instance, our features, *Retreat* and *Book of Stars*, both had very dark centers to them of things that people were dealing with.

However, however, there was a healing and the people in them were treated as human beings. There was hope, and we looked at humanity as not being a debased species, as being an exalted species who has challenges, who has difficulties. We hope that our films will present some kind of a ray of hope as to how to deal with those issues in our everyday lives.

Now, that leads us into all kinds of different areas and because we have committed to our subscribers that we're going to send home approximately four movies a month that means 50 films a year. We have an extraordinary woman who's based in Santa Fe, New Mexico named Anna Darrah, who is our Director of Acquisitions.

Anna basically sees everything first. Anna looked at 500 movies in



our first year of operation. She also is a movie nut and loves movies, and was thrilled that she was actually going to get paid to watch movies. She totally understood our genre and what we were looking for.

When she finds something that she thinks is appropriate, she sends it to me. I also consult with other people within the Spiritual Cinema Circle, with Arielle Ford, who is our publicist, obviously, with my partners, Gay and Katie, with Lisa Alderman, who's our President.

We talk a lot about these films, and then we make a decision from our gut. We don't go, "Will our subscribers like this movie?" That is, I think, a death knell because there's an old saying that you better not tell somebody a joke that you don't think is funny just on the off-hand chance that they may think it's funny, and have them laugh.

It's hard enough to make people laugh when you think the joke is funny. So, basically what we do is "Does it touch us? Does it move us? Do we feel that this is something that we are proud of and proud to put out to the community?" And if we do that, if we feel that, then we will release the film.

We definitely get different responses from people. I'll get emails from people saying, "Please don't send out as many documentaries cause I'd really rather see more fictional films." And then our subscribers get to rate the films every month in the members section of the website. Often, our documentaries are so highly rated that they may be the highest rated films of the month, or even of the year, and I get emails from people saying, "Please, more documentaries."

You get emails from people saying, "I really don't want to see comedy," and then you get emails saying, "I want to see more comedy." So, at the end of the day you really have to trust your own heart, and trust your own judgment, and hope, hope that enough of your subscribers are going to agree with you, that they'll stay with you.

Paul: Wow. That's amazing.

Stephen: Well, you see, it's the only way that you can do it because if we put



a movie out that people don't respond to well, and generally that happens, actually, every month, but with a different group of people. So, you know, certain people will like a certain film one month, and not like another film the next month, and the people who did like it the first month won't like a film in the second month.

As I said, you know, you're not going to put out 50 films a year that every single one of your subscribers is going to love, every film. The community is just too diverse for that. And we take chances. We take risks. We're not going to do what Hollywood does.

So, what we say to our subscribers is, "Stay with us for a few months. If you see a movie the first month that you don't particularly think is up your alley, wait another month or two. If after three or four months you're not seeing movies that you like, then we completely understand, but understand that this is a process. It's a yearly process. It's not just a one-month process. What you may not like this month, somebody else is absolutely loving."

Paul: I've also noticed in watching the films that I may just be in the wrong space to watch that particular feature on that particular day, and I'll show it to someone else two, three weeks later, and I'll totally love it. So, it really can make a big difference where my personal space is, where my head is at that moment.

Stephen: Yes, absolutely. We get a lot of those emails from subscribers saying just that, which is, "I saw one of the films. I really didn't like it, but I liked a couple of other films. You know, three months later I started thinking, 'Maybe I should watch that film again,'" and they do, and they think, you know, I guess it's like that comment that Mark Twain had about his father.

You know, "When I was 16 years old, I thought my father was the biggest idiot that had ever walked the planet, and by the time I was 21, I was amazed at how much the old man had learned in those five years."

Paul: Exactly, but there's also something about this idea that a story informs us, but it also forms in us. The idea that I could awaken something on the first watching, and my intuition, or my own higher understanding is saying, "Paul, go back to this film. Go back to this film."



And if I listen, like you say, listen to your own heart, it's going to guide me back to the very message that I need to reinforce within me to really form my life along the path that I need to pursue at this moment, it's going to be there for me.

Stephen: Well, you know, Paul, that's just exactly what we want. That's the exact effect that we want to have of our films. First and most importantly, they need to be entertaining. With all of the young film students that I talk to, and people who take our telecourses, and things like that, I talked, and the very first important thing is that you need to entertain first.

If the primary message that you have is teaching somebody something, people are not going to have the enjoyment out of the film that they should have. Entertain people, and then underneath, underneath it have a consciousness that will uplift, and empower, and inspire, and have people look within their own lives.

As you just said, sometimes that's all a matter of timing, all a matter of timing, and you don't know what that timing is going to be. That's why we encourage people sometimes, if they feel like it, to become a member of the Circle, and do it with a friend or two. If you do that, it winds up costing you about \$8 a month to have these films.

The only problem that we've seen with some of those partnerships is that there begins to be an argument over who gets to keep what film in their house from time to time. We highly encourage people to do that and to discuss the films. You know, it's very hard to be on a spiritual path by yourself.

Paul: Plus, the discussion really allows us to access more of that intelligence that's awakening in us. By speaking it, suddenly we're surprised by the wisdom that's coming out of our own mouth.

Stephen: Yes. That's some of the things that we hope people will get from our films, that people will be able to talk about it and get a different perspective. As I said, we had a very challenging film in January, which our subscribers rated very highly, called *Retreat*, which is about four brothers who had actually gone through some pretty frightening abuse when they were young, one in particular.



They brought that into adulthood, and what needed to be done to heal it. Some of it was harrowing to get through, but there was a wonderful message. It was the same thing with *Book of Stars*. Then, from time to time, we'll just have a wonderful, direct, flat out comedy. Actually, in April we have a terrific movie, this month, called, *Baptist at Our Barbeque*, which is kind of a *Northern Exposure* type of film about a town that has 275 Baptists and 275 Mormons, a new deputy sheriff moves into town tipping the balance, and what happens.

It's a wonderful, comedic way at looking to break down these old barriers that we have, these old belief systems that are so destructive. Sometimes, you can much more easily do that in comedy because people will be willing to accept things in comedy that they won't necessarily accept in drama.

Comedy, of course, is enormously subjective. We had a film out a few months ago called, *Beyond Bob*, which was a wonderful, whimsical comedy and it was a very controversial film within the Circle, and you know, a number of people said they thought it was too silly, and a number of people thought it was wonderful.

I saw Gary Zukoff and he said to me, "You know that movie you sent to me, *Beyond Bob*? I've watched that movie two or three times. I love that movie." And then I had another friend of mine say to me, "There was nothing remotely funny about *Beyond Bob*," so you know, that's what happens. You have to use your best judgment, and our subscribers have different opinions every month, and that's what makes us a community.

Paul: I know you've mentioned in a lot of way the sorts of benefits that people are receiving, but I'd like to ask you... I know you can't necessarily produce a list of that, but if asked, what are the benefits to Spiritual Cinema Circle members? How do you describe that?

Stephen: Well, certainly the films themselves, we believe, illuminate issues that we're all living with. We believe that we live in the most extraordinary times. The Chinese have this saying they live in "interesting times" and with all of the tumult, and all of the pain, and all of the fear, there is also enormously opportunity, and enormous evolution.



We are living in a time in which many people, particularly from old line, traditional religious thinking, feel that the end of the world is literally at hand, within the next ten years, and there is a lot of fear that goes into that. There are a lot of things that we have all come to this planet, we hope, to evolve.

People who are on a conscious, spiritual journey, and what we hope we are doing for people, is illuminating a lot of these issues that we're dealing with. A spiritual teacher of mine once said, as the decade of the '90s passed and as we went into the year 2000, "The time for practice is over. The time for us taking a look at things and being remote from them is over."

We have an enormous responsibility, I believe, and an enormous opportunity to have a very positive effect upon the world. It doesn't mean we need to make anybody bad and wrong. It doesn't mean we need to replace anything. It means that our entertainment, and our community, and the energy that emanates from it can have a very positive effect upon us, and with that ripple effect, which is why the ripple in the pond is the logo for the Spiritual Cinema Circle, why it can go out into the world.

We feel that these movies bring up issues, and bring up individuals, and bring up things that can provide a fascinating map for many of us to follow towards healing, and towards evolving as a species. That's one of the things that we hope will come from the Spiritual Cinema Circle and we believe does from the response that we're getting from our subscribers.

Paul: I have to agree. I really do.

Stephen: Thank you. The other aspect of it is the community as we've been talking about, which as I said a couple minutes ago, it's very difficult to be on a conscious, spiritual path of evolution and to do it alone. I'm not going to say it's impossible, but it's certainly difficult because you need other people to have feedback.

You need other people to bounce things off of because some of these issues are very challenging. None of us have all of the answers. Our peer group, our soul group, can provide those for us. One of things that we're providing at the Spiritual Cinema Circle is this sense of community, the communities that I talked about.



People can connect with each other in various cities and towns around the United States, and around the world. As people were introducing themselves, when I was listening when people started the call, I heard a number of people who are members of our communities.

I've heard people whose names I recognize, and whose voices I recognize are part of our communities around the world, and that is something that we believe is a very strong and important part of it. I guess at the very bottom of it, at the core of it is this:

When you have a conscious spiritual community that is at least endeavoring every month, even though I know we are going to from time to time fail, but is at least endeavoring every month to create an exalted image of humanity rather than a debased one, which is what we get from so much mainstream media - so much hatred, so much anger, so much fear, so much of the value of money only for money's sake, only for money's sake, not for the values that go along with it.

If we endeavor, and continue to endeavor to uplift ourselves and uplift our community then the resonance of that, we believe, will ripple out like those ripples in a pond, and have a very positive affect upon the world around us, and will encourage us, and more and more and more of us, to jump off that mountain, and to say, "Okay. Look. I'm going to live my life and my passions and my spirituality everyday. I'm not going to just work in a job where I hate the values and then maybe on the weekends or at night, be able to practice my spirituality, and then go in and grit my teeth during the day."

That's really a painful way to live. I know. I did that for many, many years in the film industry. People would tell me, "Don't use the word spiritual because people won't understand what it means, and people will think you're crazy." Frankly, most of the people that I worked with for those 25 or 30 years in the film industry think that I've really lost it.

They think, "Oh, poor Stephen. Keep him away from the Kool Aid." They think that I've disappeared into some "cult" so to speak somewhere because they don't understand the whole notion of



what spirituality is, and how it can inform your life. I hope that that answers the question.

Paul: It really does. It's gorgeous, especially from the standpoint of having had the experience of your work. What I know about it is that you're really not out peddling answers. What you're really doing is very artistically raising questions, inviting our minds into lofty questions, deep questions, the answers to which we absolutely have within us. But, until we ask the question, how can we know that?

Stephen: Yes. Thank you so much for that observation because that is very much what we're trying to do. The one thing that my life has shown me is that I don't have the answers and every time I think I have the answers I wind up being wrong. Another spiritual teacher of mine once said, "The ideal place to be in life, in your being, is being in a place of about to know."

You're about to know something. You're about to know, but you're not quite there, and that's really what life is all about. You're right. That's why I say that part of a definition of Spiritual Cinema is asking who we are and why we're here. We don't have those answers.

Filmmakers that try to give those answers specifically in films wind up having a much harder time with the audience because these are questions that we want to ask, and have the audience walk out asking those questions themselves.

For instance, when I made *What Dreams May Come* several years ago, every time we would preview the film we would see some pretty intense arguments going on outside after the screenings with people who had a different viewpoint of this, and a different viewpoint of that, and "No, it said this," and "No, it said that."

It was wonderful. It was wonderful. I've always said to people, "I'd rather make a movie," *What Dreams May Come* fit very much in that category, "that 50 people love, and 50 people hate rather than make a movie that 100 people think is okay." Because part of pushing the envelope and map making is getting people's emotions involved.



You sit and you watch things today, and you see the constant penetration of violence, and negativity has to a great extent numbed society out. People are having a much harder time connecting with their feelings. A lot about what's happening with the feminine energy, and the ascension of feminine energy in the world, over the last 20 or 30 years in particular, is about being able to get back in touch with our feelings, and get in touch with feelings that we haven't acknowledged to ourselves that we really even have.

I just went to Toronto to do some events over there last weekend and on the plane on the way up, they were playing, *Finding Neverland*, which is one of my favorite films of 2004. It's such an emotional film. I looked around the plane as it was coming towards the end of the film, and I had tears running down my cheeks, and I saw one or two other people.

Most of the other people were just staring blank stares as though they had numbed out with the film. I felt so much compassion for it because I understand that that is what being in the world can do. What we're hoping is that spiritual entertainment will help because certainly we can't do it on our own. We have a very small part of this, along with people who are working in nutrition, and people who are writing books, and people who are writing music, and body workers, and everyone else that does what they need to do on their path.

What you do with learning strategies, what Paul and Chris do, everything that everybody's doing in this arena is trying to help, I think many of us, really get back in touch with our own feelings.

Chris: Paul, I just have to make a comment. You know, Stephen, the thing that I'm hearing over and over again, and it's such a beautiful point, that when one's really aligned with one's passions, when one's really aligned with the reason that you're here, which that so comes through listening to you, Stephen, that you are completely aligned.

And one of the things that's absolutely necessary is to be able to follow your heart no matter what anyone may think, or what anyone may say, even if people think that you're crazy. It sounds to me like it takes a great deal of courage to be able to pursue the path that your heart is leading you in the direction of, even though you have



no idea if anybody is going to respond to it.

Stephen: I think it does. I think you're right. I think it does. To a certain extent, it does take a great deal of courage. And then, on the other hand, I also think it's inevitable for people who have these passions because at some time in your life it builds up on you so much that either you get cancer, or you have a heart attack, or whatever happens to you in life, in mid-life crisis, when your shadow is completely filled, and you can't keep putting those things back behind you.

You have to give them expression. I believe that that is one of the things that is essential for us today, which is to, yes, to live that passion and follow your heart. It really doesn't matter at all what anybody else thinks of that as long as following your passion does not involve hurting other people, or exploiting other people, or damaging other people as long as it involves doing what you believe is a positive thing in the world.

You believe it is something that is of value to the world, and that doesn't degrade the humanity of anybody else. I think the universe is beseeching us to follow that path, and just saying, "Look, find your way onto it and we will put the wind at your back."

I can tell you that all of the wind that was in my face for 55, almost 56 years, which I created myself, you know? I'm not a victim. I created that stuff. The wind completely changed direction when I let go of my own ideas of the way I had to do things, and let God, goddess, life, spirit, the universe, whatever you want to call it, let myself be guided by that.

I'm very convinced that if the moment happens again where I start thinking how terrific I am, and go back to those Hotel California days, this would all disappear very, very quickly. The only reason that we're having the success that we're having is that the group of people who are doing it are all doing it with one very major intent, which is our hearts and our passions, and doing something wonderful in the world that we love, and we're having a lot of success with it because of that.

Once we start going off from that path and start thinking, "Oh well, if we just round the edges off of this a little bit, and don't take that



chance, we can get a few thousand more people in. As long as we don't offend anybody, then we can big a much bigger business. Then, we can sell it for zillions and zillions of dollars, and go buy our own island in Tahiti, and just watch the rest of the world fritter away."

That's not what we're about. We are going to continue to take chances. We're going to continue to do things that we think are experimental. We are going to do things that we know some of our subscribers are going to love, and some of them are not, and we're just going to say, "Please, hang in there with us. Tell us what you think," which is very important.

Our subscribers rate the movies every month and we get a really good idea of what they're liking, and not liking. But, there are still going to be moments in which something comes along and we say, "Look, this may be a little risky, but we love this. We're going to take a chance. Let's see what our subscribers think."

Paul: Well, I love the responsiveness you have to us as customers. I think it's fabulous. As we're getting close to the end, there's a question that we absolutely want to ask of you Stephen. At *Healthy Wealthy nWise*, we believe in the power of intention to manifest outcomes. So, what we'd like to ask is, what is your biggest current project, and what intention would you like us at *Healthy Wealthy nWise*, along with our readers and listeners, to hold for you?

Stephen: That's beautiful. Thank you for that. Thank you for that. Well, I would answer that in two ways. The Spiritual Cinema Circle continues to grow. We're going to be launching our Transformational Book Circle in June, and our Kids' Cinema Circle in October. We hope that people will come in and be a part of the Spiritual Cinema Circle, and help build this wonderful, unique distribution service, so that filmmakers actually have a way to get their films out.

You can make a wonderful film, but if it doesn't get out into the world, if it doesn't get distribution, and nobody sees it, then you don't get the effect from it, so certainly from that standpoint. Also, to hold the resonance for us to make this film that we're making, *Conversations With God*, which is going to be a very powerful, and very controversial look at this new image, the heart of the new



spirituality, the different ways we are looking at God energy in the world.

When we really go into the story, *Conversations With God: The Human Story*, which is what we're calling the film, to tell the story of how somebody can live in a park as a homeless man with a broken neck for a year collecting cans, and completely have to surrender, get this extraordinary message of *Conversations With God*, and come back out into the world five years later as a spiritual leader and an international best-selling author.

It is not just that human story, but also the power of it. The advertising line that we're using right now is, "If it can happen to him, it can happen to you." We all have a conversation with God every day, and when we take that power inside of us, and we take responsibility for it, the things that we can do in the world are enormous.

I'm going to start prepping that film in September and October, shoot it November and December. It will be available probably in the fall of 2006. So, I would ask for the intentions for the Circle, and for *Conversations With God* to manifest this beautiful new heart of spirituality that is going around the world.

Paul: That's gorgeous. I can definitely see that. What single idea, Stephen, would you like to leave with our listeners tonight? There have been so many great ones. I hate to force you to distill it down, but just one idea.

Stephen: Well, the first thing that comes into my mind, so I'm going to trust spirit to see if this is what they wanted me to say, is that Voltaire had a line that was used and kind of changed a little bit in the movie, *Oh, God*, which is that God is a comedian playing to a audience that's afraid to laugh.

The game is afoot, this evolution, this experience, this allusion we call life. We have an enormous opportunity to have a positive affect on our families, our friends, and on the world itself by holding a new vision of who we are, by realizing that we are not a debased species, that we are a species that consciously loves and can consciously forgive.



We've evolved in ways that we never even dreamed and we will continue to evolve in ways that we can't even think of now. To be together as a worldwide community, as we bring those ideas out into the world, and as we change the very nature of the way humanity has come to look at itself over the last 50 to 100 years, what a great vision that would be for the planet, and for our species, and for all of the universe, and all of consciousness everywhere.

Paul: Wow, got it. I've been writing notes as fast as I can. Thank you, Stephen. It was gorgeous.

Stephen: Well, I'm glad that you are because, as with all things that spirit brings through you, I certainly won't remember what I said.

Paul: We've got it on tape. To finish up, I want to share three ideas that I got, that really filled me up tonight. There are so many, like forcing you into one. I'm going to force me into three. I heard three things that really filled me. I'll say these and then I'll turn the program back over to Chris. It was just great being with you.

First was that you really can break the formulaic approach and the whole competition paradigm. We can follow our passions and we can keep financial abundance connected to our vision. To me that's very reassuring and I definitely get that that is a courageous path to walk.

The second was seeing film as the Shaman around the campfire telling stories. I absolutely loved that image. It just stuck with me instantly. But then, to recognize that around me watching that film is a conscious, spiritual community that I can get into very real dialogue with right now.

The third idea is that we really don't create from a place of thinking that it's going to sell to our current audience. We're not creating because we think our current audience is going to buy it or agree with it. What's necessary is that we trust our own passions. I trust my gut. I trust my heart, and when I do, the wind is going to be at my back. Stephen, thanks so much. It was great being with you.

Stephen: Thank you for the questions. They really got me in areas that I didn't think we were going to go into. It was an enormous amount



of fun and I cannot believe the hour went by that quickly.

Paul: It really did go so fast. Thanks so much. I'll turn the call back to Chris.

Chris: Thank you so much, Paul. Stephen, it was such an honor, such a privilege to have you with us. Thank you for being here.

Stephen: Thank you. It has been an enormous amount of fun and I hope everybody that is listening follows their passions in the world because if you do, you cannot possibly go wrong.

Chris: Absolutely, and for all of you that are listening, if you are not yet a member of the Spiritual Cinema Circle, I encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity to become a member now. Just go to www.HealthyWealthyNWise.com/scc, as in Spiritual Cinema Circle.

Paul, thank you for being such an incredible co-host this evening and for taking Janet's place in her absence. I want to let our listeners know as well that if you would like to know about Learning Strategies go to the Learning Strategies website at www.LearningStrategies.com, and you'll see the amazing products, the amazing programs that Paul and his partners make available to the world as well.

I want to encourage all of you to join us on April 19th when we'll be interviewing Dr. Alex Loyd, the creator and discoverer of The Healing Codes. Dr Loyd is one of the most amazing healers in the world today. Janet and I have both had the opportunity to experience The Healing Codes personally.

I have to tell you, actually, that we were experiencing the most intense bout of flu when we were about to give a major seminar. We were introduced to Dr. Loyd, and using The Healing Codes found that within one day the whole thing went away, and we gave one of the best seminars of our lives.

Dr. Loyd and his team have had a success rate of something like 97 percent of the people who use The Healing Codes experience substantial and significant improvements in their health. It's going to be an amazing interview, so I encourage you to join us for that. Then, Paul Scheele will be back with us to interview Bill Harris, the



director and founder of Centerpointe Research Institute, the creator of the incredible Holosync Technology. Paul and Bill are old friends.

They're going to have a quite interesting and fascinating discussion. For those of you that have an idea, have a concept which simply does not fit in the mold, that you can't think, "How can I ever make money when my passion is this?" you absolutely want to be with us on May 10th. Bill Harris is a premiere example of someone who had an idea for an audio technology that would give some meditative-type experiences.

He's become a multi-millionaire. He has an incredibly successful business. He has over 200,000 clients around the world. You will not want to miss that interview. Two weeks later on May 24th, we'll be interviewing Debbie Ford, the number one best-selling author of *The Dark Side of the Light Chasers*, as well as a number of other books.

We have incredible interviews coming up. Thank you for being with us, and we look forward to being with you on April 19th. Good night, everyone.