

Filmmaker & Pilot Dirk Braun: 5 Things I Wish Someone Told Me When I First Became A Filmmaker



Edward Sylvan, CEO of Sycamore Entertainment Group [Follow](#)
Aug 9 · 10 min read





If you budget for a year, realize it will take five. Patience is key in filmmaking, and this is something that I was constantly reminded of throughout the production of *FLYING BOAT*. A combination of patience, perseverance and determination helped me complete the film.

As a part of our series called *“5 Things I Wish Someone Told Me When I First Became A Filmmaker”*, I had the distinct pleasure of interviewing Filmmaker/Photographer/Pilot Dirk Braun.

Dirk Braun has always been inspired and captivated by a sense of adventure that today has evolved into a successful filmmaking career as both a producer and director. One of his first jobs that inspired his career choice was working at an independent movie rental shop in

Connecticut when he was 15 years old before studying film in college when he also produced film premieres, fashion shows and concerts.

After receiving his degree from the University of Colorado Boulder Cinema Studies, he launched Red Mtn Productions (now a well-known commercial film production company) in 2012 in Aspen, Colorado. During the filming of FLYING BOAT, Braun learned to fly, received his pilot license and has continued a life of filmmaking, photography and aviation.

The aspiration and effort expressed in the film reflect the filmmaker's personal experiences. Braun discovered the last of the surviving Ocean Clippers, the amphibious Grumman Albatross flying boat when he was 18 years old and imagined the endless possibilities with this mesmerizing machine, a perfect blend of form and function. His dedication to producing this film has led to exaltation with an unstoppable desire to mirror the film's characters' passion for reviving and preserving the vintage aircraft. He can be found at www.flyingboatfilm.com

Thank you so much for joining us in this interview series! Our readers would love to get to know you a bit better. Can you tell us a bit of the 'backstory' of how you grew up?

I spent most of my childhood in Connecticut, and my mother would often take me to New York City. I always worked, even when I was young — whether it be mowing lawns, delivering newspapers, and working in restaurants. My parents instilled manners and a work ethic in me, but also gave me much independence. It was the values that were instilled in me that are a reflection of who I am and how I was able to accomplish what I have today. I worked at an independent movie rental shop throughout high school prior to studying film at the University of Colorado Boulder. During college, I produced events including fashion shows, movie premieres and concerts. From there, I moved to Aspen and started a successful film production company and filmed commercials and special events.

Can you share a story with us about what brought you to this specific career path?

My mother is a cineaste and inspired my interests in cinema. I decided in college that film was what I wanted to do, but I wasn't sure how I would exactly pursue this. I worked various jobs before starting Red Mtn Productions and initially thought I would generate business by producing corporate real estate videos. However, I ended up doing more creative work with events and commercials which led me to the creation of the documentary, *FLYING BOAT*.

Can you share the funniest or most interesting story that occurred to you in the course of your filmmaking career?

This is tough, of course, because funny and fortuitous moments happen all of the time. I've had situations where batteries died just after the shoot, cameras got soaked in water and wouldn't turn on, we experienced inclement weather with severe snowy conditions and encounters with Colorado wildlife. The first time I had ever flown in an Albatross, I was so thrilled and excited, I decided to film the entire experience, and made a casual, short video. After we landed and I got the last shot, my camera broke. I gave the camera to my friend, Cory, who initially had introduced me to the Albatross. Cory is handier than I am and eventually figured out how to fix the camera. He ended up filming one scene a few years later, using the same camera!

We were filming in a remote tropical location with no cell service for the film, and the A-Cam got completely soaked with saltwater and wouldn't turn back on. This emergency situation led to the tech team's perseverance and the ability to disassemble the Cam, dry it out correctly and get it running again so that we were back in business, and we didn't lose any time or shots that we intended to take.

During a New York City shoot in the Fall, I flew out from Colorado and we were ready to fly. The film aircraft was in the air and we were in full power on takeoff when one of the pilots, Tom, who stars in the film, noticed an anomaly in the oil pressure and we had to abort takeoff. This was disheartening after many months of planning and anticipation. Peter, the mechanic, had already left because he was sick, but a few days later called me as I was on my way back to Colorado and was confident that he could fix the issue and get the plane flying again. We met where the airplane was parked, and Peter successfully got the plane to airworthiness status, and we took off a few days later, flew around NYC, got all of the shots I imagined and the Fall colors were even more beautiful and pronounced than during the first try.

Who are some of the most interesting people you have interacted with? What was that like? Do you have any stories?

The characters in this film were chosen because they all have vibrant and distinct personalities. The stories they told are unique and transcendent. One particular character, Connie Edwards, is a West Texas oil baron and former pilot for the CIA. He was the chief stunt pilot in the movie, *The Battle of Britain*, and the company couldn't afford to pay him, so instead gave him 17 ME-109 Messerschmitt military planes. Connie flew each aircraft from London to his expansive ranch in West Texas where he landed them at his 6000ft runway that the CIA built during the Bay of Pigs invasion. He traded the last one for a PC12 jet and claims that he's the highest-paid stunt pilot in history.

None of us are able to achieve success without some help along the way. Is there a particular person who you are grateful towards who helped get you to where you are? Can you share a story about that?

There are countless people who have inspired me, albeit the people who work with me at Red Mtn Productions and my clients. My brother and I have a strong and close relationship, and he has been a huge influence. My mother was a driving force with my interest in cinema, and my father taught me a strong work ethic.

Can you please give us your favorite "Life Lesson Quote"? Can you share how that was relevant to you in your life?

"Be the change you wish to see in the world." I believe the best time to get started is right now and pursue your interests and dreams relentlessly until you realize them. I had no previous film production experience before starting my business, but it was by doing so that I learned so much.

I am very interested in diversity in the entertainment industry. Can you share three reasons with our readers about why you think it's important to have diversity represented in film and television? How can that potentially affect our culture?

Each and every person has a different outlook in life, and if we can experience the perspectives of others in an authentic and genuine way, it is much more meaningful. My goal with FLYING BOAT was to feature aviation enthusiasts from different backgrounds

and with different interests. However, they all share the common interest in maintaining and flying a unique, rare, and capable aircraft.



What are some of the most interesting or exciting projects you are working on now?

Completing *FLYING BOAT* was my biggest achievement during the past 5+ years. In addition to this, my crew and I produced an extensive amount of photography, and it's been exciting to create a gallery with selected fine art photographs and also design a book that will be published following the release of the film. In addition, I've begun designing and producing additional *FLYING BOAT* merchandise. After a long search, I found someone in St. Louis, Missouri who makes brilliant handcrafted neon signs, and we've created one for *FLYING BOAT*. I'm offering several other products. Quality is of utmost importance and they're all made in the USA.

Which aspect of your work makes you most proud? Can you explain or give a story?

So many aspects of filmmaking are of interest and also satisfying. I find it extremely gratifying once a shot or scene comes together, either during production or in post-production. With many shots during the production of the film, we were faced with inevitable adverse conditions, whether it was camera issues, travel issues or weather. Several times, we made it out in the nick of time, as if the stars were aligned, and we got the shot that we wanted. It's those serendipitous moments that are so exciting.

Ok super. Here is the main question of our interview. What are your “5 things I wish someone told me when I first started” and why. Please share a story or example for each.

1. If you budget for a year, realize it will take five. Patience is key in filmmaking, and this is something that I was constantly reminded of throughout the production of *FLYING BOAT*. A combination of patience, perseverance and determination helped me complete the film.
2. The more energy you expend and the stronger you push, the better it will be. There were numerous times throughout the making of this film that I felt as though it would be impossible to finish. Luckily, I pushed past the challenges, and I am thrilled and in disbelief that the film has reached completion.
3. Be prepared for the unexpected. At any moment, the weather could change and cancel everything. A piece of equipment may not work when you need it the most. Being prepared is physical, mental and emotional.
4. The more mistakes you learn from, the better. I think it's important for aspiring filmmakers to know that you will make mistakes along the way, some of which are out of your hands. For example, you can't control the weather which might contribute to poor lighting or scrapping a day of filming entirely. If you're not failing, you're not trying hard enough.
5. Being inspired is part of the process, but it's just the beginning. Ideas are easy, but making them come to fruition is the hard part. I'm extremely thankful for pushing myself daily and continuing to carry out the vision that I dreamt up for *FLYING BOAT*.

When you create a film, which stakeholders have the greatest impact on the artistic and cinematic choices you make? Is it the viewers, the critics, the financiers, or your own personal artistic vision? Can you share a story with us or give an example about what you mean?

This film started out VERY small. Since I was 18 years old, I had been developing the idea for many years when I first was introduced to the Grumman Albatross. I did not have any experience previously in interviewing, lighting or cameras, and I watched some tutorials and then interviewed Pilot Tom Casey, whom I would make the most prominent character in the film. From there, I had specific goals for scenes and shots, and the bigger goals I put off until I could determine the details of financing and crew. My target audiences were always on my mind. Most importantly, listening to myself was most critical because it was true to my mission and the dream of making this film. The goal of this film and my pledge to the audience are that they should pursue their dreams no matter how unattainable they may seem.

You are a person of great influence. If you could start a movement that would bring the most amount of good to the most amount of people, what would that be? You never know what your idea can trigger. :-)

Historically, the quality of services and goods equates to a higher caliber of life. Sadly, today people live in a world of planned obsolescence, and I think this is not good for society. People are a product of their influences and surroundings, whether it be the neighborhood they live in, family and friends, and their jobs. I believe each person has the ability to create something good and pursue his/her interests and do it the best way possible. It does not matter if is only one thing, do it the best possible way and be happy and proud. If society would do this, it would collectively lead to a much better world, and we could get along peacefully and live prosperous and meaningful lives. Money itself should never be the pursuit. It should be a means to pursue one's dreams and interests that is the driving force.

We are very blessed that some of the biggest names in Business, VC funding, Sports, and Entertainment read this column. Is there a person in the world, or in the US whom you would love to have a private breakfast or lunch with, and why? He or she might see this. :-)

On the top of my list is Sir Richard Branson who aspired to become an entrepreneur at a young age, one who has marched to his own beat. It is this kind of successful individual who will forever inspire me. I think in terms of living out fantasy and have read Richard Branson's books and appreciate his wide range of interests and pursuits.

How can our readers further follow you online?

Check out FlyingBoatFilm.com which also links to my online gallery www.dirkbraungallery.com and on Instagram @FlyingBoatFilm. Thanks for all of the support!

This was very meaningful, thank you so much! We wish you continued success!

Thank you so much for this opportunity and for your interest in my film. I wish you continued success as well!

Business

[About](#) [Write](#) [Help](#) [Legal](#)

Get the Medium app

