



No joke!

BY SUSAN MARQUARDT BLYSTONE

Alumna builds career on humor

Claire (Goldstein) Berger '77 could have had a miserable experience at Illinois State. She remembers vividly the shame endured in Centennial Hall as she repeatedly walked away from casting lists that never included her name. As a student enrolled in theater, the inability to land roles in productions could have scarred her confidence or erased her dream to perform.

But Berger is a person with an uncanny ability to mold each moment into a positive experience. What some label disappointment, she calls an opportunity to go another direction.

"I'm not into concussions. If a door is closed, I won't keep banging my head against it. I look for a different angle," Berger said. For example, her audition failures led her to get experience with

radio as a late-night disc jockey at WZND. She wanted to become comfortable in front of a camera, so she joined TV-10 and announced the weather. And she took on the role of critic at the *Vidette*. “I decided if they weren’t going to cast me, I was going to review them. My revenge was learning how to write,” Berger said with a laugh that is her trademark.

Berger has made a living with laughter since she left Illinois State. She graduated with a contract major, meaning she created her own degree with a blend of journalism courses, radio and television classes, and theater work. Her first job took her closer to her childhood home of Palatine, as she accepted a position in the Chicago Public Library’s broadcasting department. Her assignment was to host several radio series that aired on various stations as public affairs programming.

Still in her early 20s and eager for a creative challenge, Berger left the security of the city staff payroll and joined Chicago’s famed Second City improvisational theater troupe. Beyond the opportunity to sharpen her humor, she had the chance to do memorable commercial work.

“I did an ad to launch McDonald’s chicken nuggets,” Berger said. “I was a chicken from head to toe. I had my head in a chicken suit for 12 hours. It takes attitude to be a chicken for that long.”



By 1984 Berger was ready to test her talent in a different market. She moved to Los Angeles to pursue a career as a stand-up comedian. She did the club circuit there until she and her husband, Steven ’76, M.S. ’77, decided to start a family.

The birth of Jenna in 1987 and Sam in 1990 led to another change in Berger’s career plan. She took a job as a warm-up host for television shows so that she could maximize the joys of motherhood. Berger spent nearly a decade with *Murphy Brown* audiences. She worked more than 65 different shows, including *Seinfeld*, *Just Shoot Me*, and *The Ellen Show*.

“My goal was to raise my kids, because first and foremost I am a mother. So I worked one or two nights a week at a studio close to my home. I



had the best seat in the house,” she said. She also had the challenging task of keeping audiences engaged during taping that could take up to six hours.

The experience prepared her well for her next opportunity, which was to become the first stand-up comic ever to be trusted by HGTV to host a series. Berger joined the network’s *Fantasy Open House* and took viewers through opulent, multi-million dollar homes located across the country.

“I asked the questions every viewer wanted to know,” Berger said. A favorite episode was her tour of a castle in Coral Gables, Florida. The owner placed a large, authentic cannon in the front yard.

“I asked him if that was his form of home security, and then I asked him where he gets the balls,” Berger said. Perhaps not surprisingly, the follow-up question didn’t make it past the edit room.

While *Fantasy Open House* is still in syndication internationally, it is no longer in the HGTV lineup. Its demise didn’t disappoint Berger, however, as she was ready yet again for another door to open. This time the opportunity was one she created by launching FunnyWorks, Inc. Berger is CEO of the company, which exists to bring humor into the workplace. She is adamant in her belief that humor is a valuable resource rarely maximized, and particularly within corporations. She and a staff of humorist writers are determined to



Claire (Goldstein) Berger ’77 interviewed many a celebrity—including Arnold Schwarzenegger—while working in Chicago as a host of a radio series, *top photo*. Berger made history when she was chosen by HGTV as the first stand-up comic to host a program for the network.

“We are programmed to believe that fun and work don’t connect. We think we are delinquent if we are having fun at work.”

preach the power of laughter, despite what she describes as “an uphill climb” since FunnyWorks came into being seven years ago.

“We are programmed to believe that fun and work don’t connect. We think we are delinquent if we are having fun at work. But work is more than a paycheck. It involves health issues and our emotional wellbeing, as we spend more waking hours

with our coworkers than our loved ones,” Berger said.

As a consultant to companies, she advocates that humor at the office will help employees combat everything from burnout to illness. She authored the book

Funny Works! 52 Ways to Have More Fun at Work, to help improve office atmosphere.

Some are listening to her message that humor and health are intricately linked. Kaiser Permanente, America’s largest leading integrated health care organization, enlisted Berger to create an advertising campaign about the healing power of humor.

Berger is a believer in part from her own personal experience. She grew up as the second of four children with a mother who battled mental illness. She relied on humor to cope with the stresses at home and to build friendships, as the family moved frequently. She finished high school at age 16 and recalls the disappointment that came as her classmates voted her “most likely to succeed.” Her heart had been set on the title of “class clown.”

Today at age 50 Berger lives the message that humor can be the key to success, but so is determination, hard work, and a willingness to remain flexible. She shares that message regularly with



Berger has turned her passion for humor into a company, FunnyWorks, Inc., which exists to bring laughter into the workplace. She has authored a book on the subject and offers help through her Web site.



Berger has many fond memories of Illinois State, which is one reason she welcomes the opportunity to return to campus and give of her time and talent. During a visit last fall, Berger met with theater students and also took time to converse about design with members of a Family and Consumer Science class, above.

college students while visiting campuses as part of her Dream Dorm Do-Over program (see accompanying article). She was particularly pleased to reconnect with Illinois State students during a visit last fall. She maintains strong ties to campus, and has donated 10 years of sitcom scripts to the College of Fine Arts for use in an on-camera class.

“Illinois State made me what I am today,” Berger told theater students. She shared with them the reality of a business that can be brutal, noting that “the most beautiful homeless people in the world live in Los Angeles.”

But Berger also delivered a message of hope as someone who has had a paycheck every year during the past three decades in the entertainment industry. She did it by embracing a life lesson she learned during her days as a disappointed but undefeated college student: “We are all in a constant state of reinvention, personally and professionally. The most important thing is to stay true to yourself.”

[Editor’s note: To learn more about Claire Berger, visit her Web site at www.funnyworks.com.]



Berger met her future husband, Steven '76, M.S. '77, while both were Illinois State students working at WZND. Their first photo was taken on Valentine’s Day in 1976 in Berger’s Manchester Hall room.

Dream Dorm Do-Over

Never underestimate the need to decorate a dorm room. As Claire (Goldstein) Berger '77 can attest, settling into a residence hall can be critical to academic success.

Berger became so disturbed by studies that show students drop out of college because of a failure to thrive socially that she invented a program titled Dream Dorm Do-Over. Created and trademarked through her company, FunnyWorks, Inc., Dream Dorm Do-Over allows her to blend her talents and interests.

"This combines my work as a mom, HGTV show host, and as a comic," Berger said. Her ultimate goal is to give students a sense of home away from home by revamping their rooms.

The University is equally concerned about retention. A commitment to helping students stay and complete their degree work is one reason Alumni Relations enlisted Berger to redo a room at Illinois State.

Berger arrived on campus with her own budget of \$500, which is the amount she spends on every winner. At Illinois State, that person was senior and finance major Dave Jaeger.

Berger chose Jaeger from 17 applications that were submitted prior to her return to campus for Homecoming last fall. He stood out from the others in part because he made his plea as a resident assistant who has spent four years in a dorm. Berger was especially eager to give Jaeger something new, as his room was furnished with what he described as "a mish mash of left-overs from my siblings who all went to college before me. I am the youngest in my family, and I would love to have something of my own!"

That wish came true through Berger, who spent most of a day revamping Jaeger's room in Manchester Hall last October. When he turned over the keys that morning, Jaeger left a cluttered room configured in such a way that his bed was elevated by cinder blocks so that it could serve the dual function of desk chair. That was the last time he saw a bedspread from his adolescent years, or the rug permanently marred from glitter that he spilled while completing a banner. With a limited budget, he continued to use it as his best defense against a cold, tiled floor.

Jaeger returned 12 hours later to find a new desk chair, a new rug, and a new bedspread chosen in his favorite color of blue. The bed pattern was coordinated to match wall decorations. Shelving was added, running shoes were organized in bins, an entertainment area was created, and a makeshift kitchen was in the corner. Even his fish, Sunflower, gained an upgrade to a larger tank.



Dave Jaeger, *top left*, made an emotional plea in his entry to the Dream Dorm Do-Over contest. Once chosen as the winner, Claire (Goldstein) Berger '77, *top middle*, spent a day working her magic. Jaeger was delighted with the results, *top right*. His new and improved room, *bottom photo*, is functional for studying and entertaining.

Jaeger's expression went from shock to glee as he reentered his room. His appreciation was apparent on his face before he spoke his thanks to Berger, who left him with a far more functional space.

"It's so organized, it's amazing," Jaeger said. "I was so excited when I learned that I had won, and even more excited when I actually saw my made-over room."

He lists the bed as most improved. "I got a down comforter, a new duvet set, and lots of new pillows. My friends love the fact that there is lots of seating so that they don't have to sit on the floor whenever we watch a movie," Jaeger said.

Beyond anything material, Jaeger is grateful to have a space that is "conducive for a learning environment, yet also for entertaining."

It's a combination Berger knows every student needs, which is why she revamps as many as 20 dorm rooms a year. She envisions writing a book of tips for dorm decorating, and is seeking to expand her corporate sponsorships that will allow her to pursue her new role as mom to America's college kids.

[Editor's note: See an online photo album of the Illinois State dorm do-over at www.alumni.ilstu.edu/photo/dreamdorm_doover.]

You're invited!



Celebrate Illinois State University's 150 years of excellence by attending the many special events scheduled from February 2007 through February 2008. All of the following campus events are open to the public. Information about additional events is available on Illinois State University's home Web page. Go to www.IllinoisState.edu and click on the 150th logo for all the details. Plan now to be part of your alma mater's milestone anniversary year.

February

15 Founders Day

Historian and author David McCullough is the keynote speaker at this year's Founders Day, which is the official start of the University's 150th celebration. The convocation begins at 1 p.m. in the Bone Student Center Braden Auditorium. Free

18 President's Concert

A highlight of this event will be the presentation of new musical pieces commissioned for the sesquicentennial. The concert begins at 3 p.m. in the University's Center for the Performing Arts Concert Hall.

March

6 College of Education Event

The Department of Educational Administration and Foundation's 75th Anniversary Administrator's Roundup will be held from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Bone Student Center.

28 Keynote Speaker

Environmental activist Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is a keynote speaker sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences. His speech begins at 7:30 p.m. in the Bone Student Center Braden Auditorium. Free

April

3 College of Business Event

Caterpillar Chairman and CEO Jim Owens is a speaker sponsored by the College of Business. The event begins at 2 p.m. in the Bone Student Center Braden Auditorium. Free

12 Mennonite College of Nursing Event

Barbara Resnick of the University of Maryland will speak as part of a Mennonite College of Nursing event to examine the topic of expanding teaching nursing home care. The event begins at 5 p.m. in the Bone Student Center Old Main. Free

17 Keynote Speaker

Titanic discoverer Robert Ballard is a keynote speaker sponsored by the College of Applied Science and Technology. His speech begins at 7:30 p.m. in the Bone Student Center Braden Auditorium. Free

June

14 Town and Gown Golf Outing

Illinois State University Golf Course

August

23-October 5 NEH Exhibit

The National Endowment for the Humanities Exhibit titled *Forever Free: Abraham Lincoln's Journey to Emancipation* will be on display at Milner Library. Free

28 Lincoln Lecture

Guy Fraker will present a lecture titled "Lincoln's Early Career" at 7 p.m. in Milner Library. Free

September

6 Lincoln Lecture

History Professor Emeritus Mark Plummer will present a lecture titled "Emancipation Defended: Lincoln's Letter and the Springfield Rally" at 7 p.m. in Milner Library. Free

18 Keynote Speaker

Historian Doris Kearns Goodwin is a keynote speaker sponsored by the Milner/Ames Lecture Series. Her speech begins at 7 p.m. in the Bone Student Center Braden Auditorium. Free

27 Lincoln Lecture

Roger Bridges will present a lecture titled "Lincoln and the Emancipation" at 7 p.m. in Milner Library. Free

29-30 Cemetery Walk

The McLean County Museum of History will offer a cemetery walk that highlights individuals who played a role in Illinois State University's past. This event occurs in Bloomington's Evergreen Cemetery.

Sesquicentennial Speaker Series



McCullough
February 15, 2007



Kennedy Jr.
March 28, 2007



Ballard
April 17, 2007



Goodwin
September 18, 2007



October

6-7 Cemetery Walk

The McLean County Museum of History will offer a cemetery walk that highlights individuals who played a role in Illinois State University's past. This event occurs in Bloomington's Evergreen Cemetery.

13 Gala

A Sesquicentennial Gala Event will be held during Homecoming from 6-11:30 p.m. in the Bone Student Center Brown Ballroom.

November

1 Keynote Speaker

Documentary director and producer Ken Burns is a keynote speaker sponsored by the Stevenson Lecture series. His speech begins at 7 p.m. in the Bone Student Center Braden Auditorium. Free

8 Keynote Speaker

Country music star and nurse Naomi Judd is a keynote speaker sponsored by the Mennonite College of Nursing. Her speech begins at 7:30 p.m. in the Bone Student Center Braden Auditorium. Free

14 Keynote Speaker

Author and educator Jonathan Kozol is a keynote speaker sponsored by the College of Education. His speech begins at 7 p.m. in the Bone Student Center Braden Auditorium. Free

February 2008

14 Founders Day

The 150th anniversary celebration concludes with a variety of Founders Day activities. Futurist, author, and inventor Ray Kurzweil is the keynote speaker at the convocation, which begins at 1 p.m. in the Bone Student Center. Free



Purchase a piece of history

Unique items tied to the University's 150th celebration are available for purchase.

Illinois State University: *Historical Video Series—1857-2007*

The University's history, from its founding to the celebration of its sesquicentennial, has been captured in this documentary-style DVD collection. The total run length of the entire set is approximately four hours. Purchase now for \$15 a set, plus tax, shipping, and handling.

Illinois State University: *A Pictorial History—1857-2007*

This 160-page commemorative album with 230 photos depicts various stages in the University's life. Copies will be available in February at a cost of \$50, plus tax, shipping, and handling. Contact author Robert Aaron at rlaaron@ilstu.edu or call (309) 438-8404 to order.

2007 Commemorative Calendar

This 14-month calendar is an inspiring reminder of Illinois State's proud heritage, with photos and notations of important events from the past 150 years. Purchase now for \$5 each, plus tax, shipping, and handling.

Additional items, including vintage wear, will be available in the weeks ahead. Go to www.alumni.ilstu.edu/merchandise_services on the Web to see the complete listing of sesquicentennial souvenirs.



Burns
November 1, 2007



Judd
November 8, 2007



Kozol
November 14, 2007



Kurzweil
February 14, 2008



Artistic endeavors

Alum amazes from the White House to Hollywood

On the rear window of one of his vehicles is a sign that reads “Denny Rogers, Bronze Sculptor.” Get to know the man and you’ll soon realize the statement is a gross oversimplification, as no one title is enough to describe the multi-faceted talent of Rogers ’73, M.S. ’80.

It is true that he excels in bronze sculpting, as noted by the fact that his life-size American Bald Eagle was chosen by President Ronald Reagan for use at his second inaugural in 1985. Rogers so impressed the White House that he is one of few artists with official permission to use the Presidential Seal in his two- and three-dimensional work. He gained that honor during the Carter years, with the authorization granted by other administrations as well.

Rogers is also a forensics artist, a historical artist, a wildlife artist, and an avid researcher. He

is, for example, one of few people to have access to molded face castings of President Abraham Lincoln. They have proven invaluable as a research reference for his sculpting.

He has worked with law enforcement on homicide cases since age 19, and was the first in America to develop the electronic computer facial reconstruction concept. He did so while enrolled at Illinois State, where he completed his undergraduate degree in visual communications. He was the first student to earn a master’s in the University’s advanced product design program.

A former university educator and inventor with recent patents, Rogers is also a gifted illustrator. He has combined his artistic skill with his enthusiasm for the outdoors and wilderness to create a series of animal physiology books that offer meticulous drawings as a reference for artists.

His talent is appreciated in Hollywood. He has worked in the movie industry doing preproduction as a special effects artist, set designer, sculptor, consultant, and construction coordinator.

That's not the only star connection for Rogers, who was chosen by noted country musician Willie Nelson to create his image for a line of T-shirts, posters, and an album. The project ended with friendships formed and the opportunity for Rogers to occasionally join Nelson and his band on tour.

And yet, despite such high-profile work, Rogers never fails to mention his experience as a heavy equipment operator, laborer, and ironworker.

"I attended ironworker's school and Illinois State's graduate school simultaneously, and I graduated from both. I set rebar in the containment walls at the Clinton Nuclear Power Plant. I have been 400 feet up on structural steel, and rode headache balls setting beams, which paid tuition to Illinois State's art school," Rogers said, referring back to his early days at the University. "It was both interesting and fun."

Rogers grew up in Springfield. He arrived at Illinois State in 1968 as a freshman ready to study art. He stayed on campus 20 years, working as a faculty member in the School of Art long after finishing graduate work. He went on to master bronze sculpture and foundry technology.

Bronze is a complex artistic medium, and one not readily understood by most artists. "Hot cast bronze is among the purist, most ancient, most durable, permanent but repairable art forms throughout history," Rogers has written. "To many artists, bronze artwork is the ultimate challenge."

One of Rogers' first bronze pieces, a Bighorn sheep skull, is mounted on a low pedestal near the door of his rural Bloomington log home. "I did that probably 30 years ago," he said. "It's nothing more than an experiment in molding. I poured it in bronze at the ISU foundry. The first project I ever worked on there was helping Keith Knoblock, the professor in sculpture."

The Bighorn is a stark contrast to *Winged Magnificence*, which is the bronze bald eagle show-

cased by Reagan. It was on display for a year in the office of former Illinois Governor James Thompson, and was used by then Vice President George H.W. Bush during the yearlong sesquicentennial celebration of his native state of Texas.

Wings, beak, and talons outstretched, the eagle is poised mid-flight above the lofted cathedral living room in Rogers' home. If any single piece can be said to capture the scope of Rogers' achievements, this iconic expression of American spirit would be it.

The sculpture was done while Rogers was at Illinois State. It still stands as a manifestation of the breadth of his work—his artistic talent, his mastery of technique, his commitment to American idealism, and above all, a lifelong enthusiasm for the wilderness and all its creatures that lies at the heart of his work.

Rogers began research for *Winged Magnificence* in 1980. Like sculpture in any medium, it started on paper as he sketched views of the subject from every angle. To create drawings for the sculpture, Rogers turned to the resources of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. His association with the agency led to further opportunities and recognition, and continues to provide Rogers with research and inspiration.

He spends extended time in wilderness areas to study, conduct research, and also for sheer enjoyment. An eight-week trek last summer through remote Northern territories was typical of Rogers' multipurpose ventures. He used the time in Alaska and the tundra to combine recreation with wildlife research for a future book.

One leg of the trip took him to The Yukon on business. "I've designed and built a gold-finding tool," he said. "I'm always thinking about easier ways to do things. I got to watching a couple of guys panning gold. I said 'that's labor-intensive,' and I figured out an easier way to do it. If it works I'll patent it and sell it." Without revealing too many details,



Denny Rogers '73, M.S. '80, spends hours sculpting at a studio in his home, *above*. One of his most spectacular creations is *Winged Magnificence*, a life-size American Bald Eagle show in flight. The eagle, *below*, was showcased at President Ronald Reagan's second inaugural.





Rogers is known for the intricate detail that he incorporates into his depiction of wildlife. The Mangrove Monarch is one of many species he has recreated.

Rogers explained that it could significantly aid law enforcement agencies in underwater searches.

The project is just one of many for Rogers, who is also working on a series of books as yet another outlet for his illustration, draftsmanship, and knowledge of avian anatomy. *The Illustrated Bald Eagle* is a reference “for bird lovers, sculptors, woodcarvers and artists of all categories.” It was released in May of last year by Fox Chapel Publishing in Pennsylvania. It’s the first in a book series that will be indispensable references for anyone who wants to draw, paint, sculpt, carve, or simply deepen their appreciation for these birds of prey.

The second volume presents the screech owl and snowy owl, while the third explores the red-tail hawk, peregrine falcon, and American kestrel.

The fourth book focuses on the great horned owl, the barn owl, and the barred owl. Each successive work renders the subject in greater detail than the one before. The latter two volumes will be the most comprehensive to date, presenting feather-by-feather illustrations of each of its subjects. The books will be marketed worldwide and should be on bookshelves before the end of the year. Rogers hopes to follow up with more works of a similar nature.

Rogers is also at work on *An Eagle, An Artist...and Other Critters: The life, times and misadventures of Denny Rogers*. A compilation of his work, the 450-page book is his life story retold in photographs, drawings, and text. Mayhaven Publishing in Illinois is publishing the work that includes acknowledgements of the colleagues, friends, and artists who have influenced Rogers’

Monument to Illinois presidents is artist’s passion

Is it possible to put a massive Great Seal of the United States, the Seal of the President of the United States, and the heads of Presidents Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, and Ronald Reagan in bronze on the face of an Illinois cliff?

Denny Rogers ’73, M.S. ’80, will answer in the affirmative.

Rogers has partnered with nationally known artists across the country to build a team for the project.

Illinois Senator Bill Brady, who is also a construction developer, has committed to assist with raising funds for what will be known as the Illinois Presidents Monument (IPM). Brady is national chair and spokesman for the endeavor.

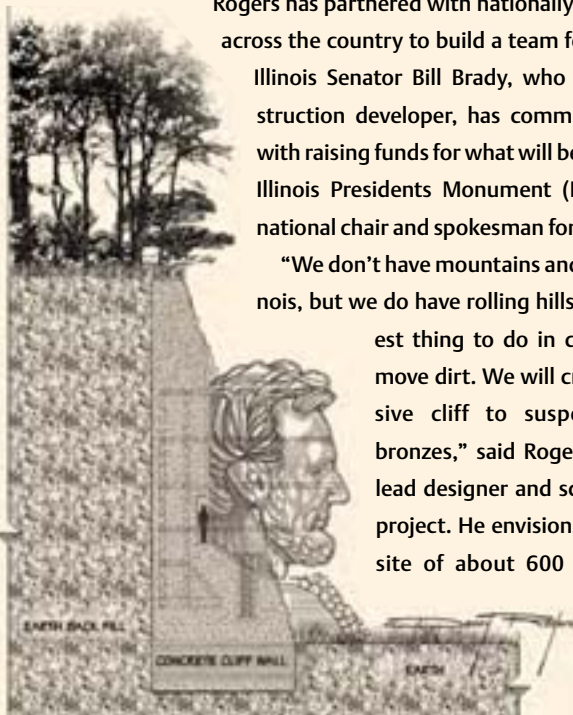
“We don’t have mountains and granite in Illinois, but we do have rolling hills, and the easiest thing to do in construction is move dirt. We will create the massive cliff to suspend the five bronzes,” said Rogers, who is the lead designer and sculptor for the project. He envisions the IPM on a site of about 600 acres, ideally

somewhere in Reagan country near Tampico or Dixon.

The acreage is needed to accommodate an 8,000-seat amphitheatre for events that will create revenue to pay for the monument after seed money is obtained. A lodge and restaurant, reflecting lake, presidential museum, art gallery, wooded nature trails, and wildlife habitats are also planned. These elements will guarantee the IPM becomes a magnet for visitors from across the country and around the world, creating the same attention as Mount Rushmore.

Rogers compares his effort to that of the work required to complete the monument in South Dakota. “Sculptor Gutzon Borglum had political perception problems with Mount Rushmore, but he found one lone senator who located \$2 million. The mountain has become a bright sparkling jewel to this country and inspired so many to excellence, while also generating billions and billions of dollars in international tourist trade,” Rogers said. “The IPM would do no less for Illinois, and it wouldn’t hurt America one bit to have a reason to visit flyover country.”

Brady sees the same potential. He is consequently happy to speak out for the project that will be done without using taxpayer’s dollars. “We must assume our natural leadership role in America,” Brady said. “Increasing international visitor’s trade is but one small step in doing so. With today’s technology, creating an Illinois Presidents Monument is possible.”



life and his work. The images range from Rogers' *Yellow Rose* portrait of Nelson to pencil drawings and bronze sculptures of Rogers' parents.

While the book contracts occupy a great deal of his time and energy, Rogers makes plenty of room to pursue his most ambitious vision: a monument on the scale of Mount Rushmore to honor Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, and Ronald Reagan, the three United States presidents from Illinois (see accompanying article).

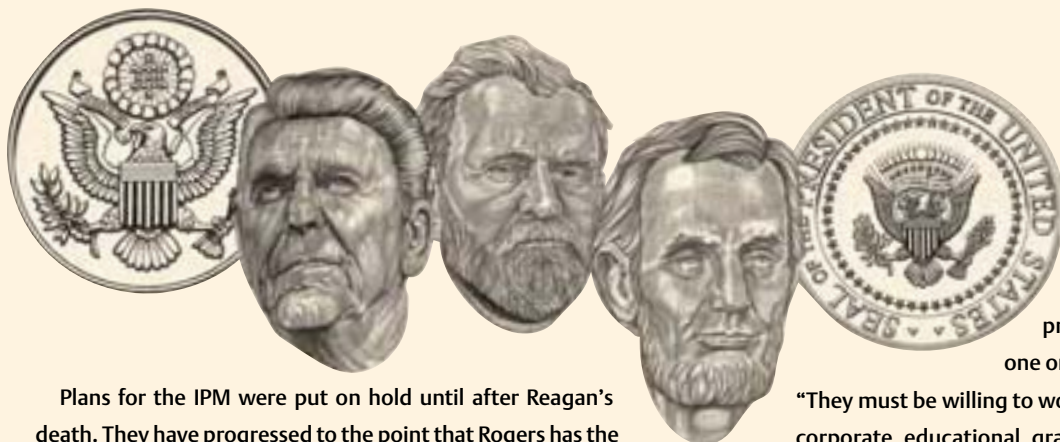
Rogers has one other personal goal that he'd like to incorporate into his role as lead designer and lead sculptor—a doctoral degree. At 60, he notes that it wouldn't make much difference to his future.

"It's just personal unfinished business that would reflect my never-surrender nature and need



Research is a key part of the work Rogers does, especially for a series of reference books he is completing.

for continued self-improvement in my personal fight against all odds and natural and national forces," said Rogers, who is determined to stay productive "until gravity wins the day."



Plans for the IPM were put on hold until after Reagan's death. They have progressed to the point that Rogers has the blueprint formulated. Artists, sculptors, and construction teams will first build the cliff, which Rogers compares to creating a nuclear containment wall. A massive network of steel and rebar will be required to shape the necessary structural support. Rogers envisions pouring tinted, colored concrete with spun fiberglass in the mix.

The cliff will hold the faces, each of which will be 40 feet from the lower neck to the top of the head. The three faces combined will be roughly 20 feet high from chin to hairline. Total width of the image with the seals included will be 120 feet, with the projected cliff mounting surface as much as 200 feet long and 60 feet high. A foundry building will be erected at the site to complete life-size replicas that will be cast in sections and assembled.

It's a complex construction project that will bring artists, technicians, construction teams, teachers, and graduate students together. In the making, it will draw on expertise and support

across fields as diverse as art, science, history, education, technology, business, construction trades, and government.

In an initial three-year, research start-up phase, the project will require funding from one or several national corporations.

"They must be willing to work together to fund from their corporate educational grant foundations a three-year, advanced university graduate student research and design program of work and study," Rogers said.

University sponsorship will be a second key element, with Rogers serving as a visiting professor at participating schools. The third is to gather "a state and national blue-ribbon committee of diversified, prominent citizens" who will raise seed money from many corporate and individual sources to underwrite the start-up work that will follow on site, Rogers said.

The effort sounds as monumental as the finished project. And yet, Rogers and Brady are not intimidated. Rogers knows it can be built and how to build it. His determination is apparent in one simple question.

"If Illinois country boys of simple parentage don't take the lead in honoring our Illinois presidents of other-than-noble birth as an inspiration for all future, humble-born Americans, who will?"