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Old Westbury



Question Everything

THE REMARKABLE LIFE OF ROGER GIMBEL, FROM WHEATLEY REBEL TO INDUSTRY INNOVATOR.

PHOTO BY EVA VIDEOGRAPHY

DELIVERING NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS

LEAST LIKELY TO *Succeed*



Roger in his "fish room," surrounded by photos and mementos of past experiences on the sea.

HOW GROWING UP DURING ONE OF AMERICA'S MOST TURBULENT ERAS SHAPED WHEATLEY GRADUATE **ROGER GIMBEL** INTO AN INVENTOR, ENTREPRENEUR AND PHILANTHROPIST WHO NEVER STOPPED QUESTIONING WHAT'S POSSIBLE.

BY JEANNE PETTI, PHOTOS BY EVA VIDEOGRAPHY

IN THE SUMMER OF 1969, just weeks after graduating from The Wheatley School, Roger Gimbel drove to upstate New York with tickets to see a concert.

"I went there not knowing it was Woodstock," he says. "I just had tickets to go see a concert." The scale of the moment quickly became clear, with nearly half a million people gathering for what would become one of the most defining symbols of a generation.

For Roger, however, Woodstock was one chapter in a much larger story. The experiences that came before, and the lessons that followed, would shape not only the career he built but the life he chose to lead.

If you had walked the halls of Wheatley in the late 1960s and asked who among the students would one day become an inventor, entrepreneur, author and respected leader in the printing industry, Roger is convinced his name would not have come up.

"I was the least likely to succeed," he says with a laugh.

Roger grew up in the Country Club section of Roslyn Heights, where his sister Gail still lives today. His closest friendships took root early on, with many remaining strong more than six decades later.

He and his group of friends were far from model students. "We used to let the air out of the tires of the teachers' cars," Roger admits, laughing. "We were pretty bad."

The Roger Gimbel of the late 1960s had long hair, played drums in a rock band, skipped class, and rode motorcycles far faster than he'd care to admit today. He and his crew found plenty of ways to stir up trouble, but they were also coming of age during one of the most uncertain periods in American history.



Roger and Cheryl

"It created this atmosphere of being extremely unsure about the future," Roger recalls. "Which made me do crazy stuff, because why not? Who knew what was going to happen?"

He vividly remembers classmates refusing to recite the Pledge of Allegiance, heated political debates spilling into the hallways, and experimental discussion groups where students were encouraged to openly air their deepest fears and frustrations. "It was the beginning of sharing, talking, being very open," he says.

These heavy, chaotic experiences forced him to confront hard questions about his own future. When draft numbers were drawn, his reality was so uncertain that leaving the country became a serious option. "My father had made arrangements for me to go to Canada," Roger says. "I was going to leave. My lottery number for the draft was 142. They only went to 125 that year so I put in for 1A and they didn't take me!"

Although the draft was no longer an immediate threat, Roger's search for purpose was far from over. Like many young people of his generation, he continued questioning authority, challenging convention, and searching for where he fit in a rapidly changing world.

He became more involved in the anti-war movement and found himself brushing up against its more radical fringe. During a visit to see his then-girlfriend at Cornell, he walked into a house where activists were assembling homemade explosives.

"I said, 'They're going to blow themselves up,'" he recalls. "And I said, 'You know what? I like having nice things.'"

Looking back, he laughs at the simplicity of that statement. But it was one of those moments that quietly changes the course of your life. Roger realized he wasn't interested in tearing things apart. He wanted to build something that would last.

Living through those years instilled a lesson in Roger that lasted long after the protests quieted down: nothing in life is guaranteed and the future can pivot overnight. But rather than making him cautious or fearful, that realization gave him a rare willingness to take bold risks.

That willingness to embrace uncertainty would serve Roger well, but it wasn't enough on its own. Taking chances is one thing. Knowing how to turn those chances into something meaningful is another. For that, Roger had an extraordinary example waiting for him at home.

SHARING THE JOURNEY

When Roger isn't consulting, writing, or mentoring, you'll most likely find him on the water. An avid yachtsman, he has long believed that some of life's best moments are meant to be shared.

That spirit of generosity extends beyond family and friends. Each year, Roger donates private charters aboard his beloved Hatteras yacht, *Hattrick*, to charitable organizations, helping nonprofits raise thousands of dollars through fundraising auctions.





At the Songs of Love Foundation dinner, where Roger donated two private yacht charter trips

Among the causes closest to his heart is the *Songs of Love Foundation*, thanks in part to his longtime friendship with Marc Solomon, owner of Solomon's Jewelers in Plainview. A passionate supporter of the organization, Solomon has helped champion its mission of creating personalized songs for children and adults facing serious medical, emotional, and physical challenges.

At the Foundation's 2025 Swing & Sing Charity Golf Outing, Roger donated not one but two private charters, which raised $13,000 through the event's live auction to help bring comfort and hope to those who need it most.



Roger and Cheryl at their beautiful Old Westbury home

IN HIS OWN WORDS: BOOKS BY ROGER GIMBEL

Roger Gimbel has spent a lifetime asking questions, solving problems, and learning from experience. He shares those lessons through books that encourage readers to think differently, embrace change, and never stop growing.

His memoir, *I'm Not Anyone*, reflects on the twists, turns, and reinventions that shaped his life and career. His second book, *Dream Big. Act Now.*, offers practical insights drawn from decades as an entrepreneur, inventor, and business leader, encouraging readers to pursue their goals with curiosity, courage, and action.

His forthcoming book may be his most personal yet. Through a collection of true stories, Roger reflects on the moments that shaped him. One chapter recounts a four-hour battle with a blue marlin off the coast of the Bahamas, an experience that became a lesson in perseverance, humility, and accepting that even your best effort doesn't always produce the outcome you hoped for.

Like much of Roger's life, the stories aren't simply about what happened. They're about what the experience taught him.

In keeping with his commitment to helping others, Roger donates the proceeds from his books to the Herman L. Gimbel and Audrey M. Gimbel Memorial Scholarship Fund, helping the next generation of graphic communications professionals pursue the opportunities that shaped his own life.

Looking back, it's hard to imagine that the teenager who once considered himself "the least likely to succeed" would become someone so committed to helping others succeed. Yet perhaps that's the most fitting ending of all.



Roger's Hatteras yacht, Hattrick



Roger with a sailfish he caught in the Bahamas

"My father was a pretty brilliant guy," he says.

A master lithographer by trade, Herman (Hy) Gimbel saw opportunities others overlooked. Rather than chasing massive commercial print jobs as most in trade were doing at the time, he pioneered short-run printing for the growing offices filling Manhattan's skyscrapers.

"He created the short run printing industry," Roger says. "He was an innovator."

Roger started working in the family shop while still in high school, learning the trade from the ground up. The work wasn't glamorous. It meant showing up, paying attention, solving problems, and earning his place one day at a time. Without realizing it then, he was learning the value of hard work and the discipline that would eventually define his career.

Over the next five decades, Roger built companies, weathered setbacks, earned the trust of clients, and developed a reputation for solving problems others couldn't. Along the way, he founded and led successful businesses, earned numerous patents, authored several books, consulted with organizations across the country, taught and mentored industry professionals, and served in leadership roles for some of the printing and graphic communications industry's most respected organizations. His passion for education and mentorship extended beyond the industry as well. A graduate of the nearby New York Institute of Technology, Roger served on the University's Board of Trustees for over a decade alongside then-President Matthew Schure. His contributions have earned him national recognition, including induction into the Xplor International Hall of Fame and the Electronic Document Systems Foundation Hall of Fame.

Yet Roger has never viewed success as a destination. Instead, he has approached every challenge as another opportunity to learn, adapt, and ask a simple question: Is there a better way? He became an inventor, entrepreneur, author, consultant, educator, and respected industry leader not because he followed someone else's blueprint, but because he wasn't afraid to create his own.

Today, Roger lives in the Old Westbury home he and his wife, Cheryl, purchased more than three decades ago. Cheryl first spotted the spec house, seeing its potential long before it became the warm, welcoming home where they would raise their family. There, they watched their children, Hunter and Erica, grow up, attend The Wheatley School, and go on to build fulfilling lives of their own. It's a home that reflects what drew them to Old Westbury in the first place: a strong sense of community and a wonderful place to raise a family.

Roger credits much of his success to Cheryl, whose unwavering belief in him gave him the confidence to take chances, embrace uncertainty, and pursue ideas that didn't always come with guarantees. Together, they built not only a successful life, but one grounded in family, hard work, and giving back.

Today, Roger continues to write, mentor, consult, and invest in the next generation of print professionals through scholarships established in honor of his parents. Together with his sister, Gail, they created the Herman L. Gimbel and Audrey M. Gimbel Memorial Scholarship Fund, ensuring that students entering the graphic communications industry have opportunities to build meaningful careers, just as Roger did.



Spending time with friends Jimmy Case and Wayne Diamond.



Roger's band "Roger and Friends" 1969-1970

His generosity extends beyond the industry he loves. An avid boater, Roger donates private cruises each year to charitable organizations, helping nonprofits raise thousands of dollars through fundraising auctions (see Sidebar).

When Roger reflects on his Wheatley days now, he doesn't paint a sentimental or rosy picture. He remembers the thick uncertainty, the deep generational friction, and a room full of teenagers trying to make sense of a rapidly changing world. But he also recognizes that those tumultuous years forged his willingness to think independently, question standard principles, and embrace the unknown.

Looking back, it's hard to imagine that the teenager who once considered himself "the least likely to succeed" would become someone so committed to helping others succeed. Yet perhaps that's the most fitting ending of all.