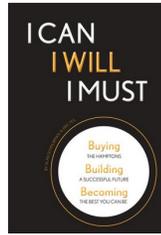


Alan Schnurman And Eric Feil Pen 'I Can, I Will, I Must'

UPDATED May 20, 2019 12:49 PM

By Frank S. Costanza



[ENLARGE \(/PHOTO-GALLERY/ARTICLE.CFM/592828#167092\)](#)



(/photo-

[Upload a Photo \(/photo-gallery/article.cfm/592828/upload\)](#)

Alan Schnurman is a hard man to peg down.

As has been routine for most of his adult life, the retired attorney and longtime real estate investor is up and about several hours before dawn each day, walking the streets near his Manhattan home, regardless of the season or weather. Completed for as long as he can remember, his solitary journey allows him to mentally prepare himself for the day that lies ahead, one that now typically involves research on prospective real estate opportunities in the Hamptons, New York City, Aspen, Colorado, New Jersey and, most

recently, upstate New York.

Before joining the ranks of Saunders & Associates in 2012—it would take the part-time Bridgehampton resident less than a year to earn his first commission as a real estate broker with an impressive \$15.5 million sale—those pre-dawn walks allowed him to prepare for a court case. Other mornings, they would provide peace so he could plan his latest episode of “LawLine,” a legal news program that he launched in 1983 and ran for 28 years on PBS, or decide if he’s completed enough research to move forward with a real estate investment property.

And every Thursday morning for the past four years, those walks allowed him to reset and refocus before his weekly phone conversations with Eric Feil, the editorial director of Dan’s Hamptons Media, and the leading author of “I Can, I Will, I Must.”

Released on Thursday, May 16, the collaboration shines the spotlight on Mr. Schnurman, who has always preferred to work behind the scenes on his real estate portfolio, and his many professional successes, across multiple fields. It also offers advice and his professional insight on real estate strategies and resources, as well as life in general.

“Every single Thursday morning we chatted, regardless of the weather,” said Mr. Feil, who met Mr. Schnurman several years earlier at a party hosted by his publication and, following a lunch meeting, agreed to collaborate on a book. “There was this one time when he was walking the streets of Manhattan in the middle of a blizzard. There’s no stopping Alan.”

Indeed there is not. His short-lived retirement seven years earlier—Mr. Schnurman is a founding partner of Manhattan law firm Zalman Schnurman & Miner—lasted nine months. In that span he visited every museum in New York City, spending three to four hours at each, and walked between 10 and 12 miles a day. Though he could no longer run long distances, the experienced marathoner—he’s completed at least 15 over his life—climbed part of Mount Everest, stopping when he reached 17,000 feet because, in his own words, “I’m not insane.”

Upon his reentry into the workforce he decided that the best way to utilize his extensive experience was to sign on with Saunders & Associates, which allowed him to continue his search for investment properties while also showing around his clients. A short time later he met Mr. Feil and, as they say, the rest is history.

Mr. Schnurman says their new book, whose title is actually a quote he always repeats to himself during his pre-dawn walks, is intended to motivate individuals who want to build upon the successes of their “9-5 jobs.” He encourages readers to look within and pursue what they truly love, even if it is not real estate investing, allowing them to secure their financial independence.

So, while the book chronicles many of the turning points of his real estate career, including his first purchase in the Poconos in 1977, his initial investment in the Hamptons market, and even his most recent acquisition of a farm in upstate New York, Mr. Schnurman insists that “I Can, I Will, I Must” is for everyone looking for inspiration and courage to take a leap of faith.

"The whole idea of the book is to actually motivate people, inspire them, and then inspire them to take action," said Mr. Schnurman, who will turn 74 this summer. "I did it through real estate, but you can do it with anything, in any field."

While that may be the case, the personal injury attorney turned real estate mogul—Mr. Schnurman says he has invested millions in real estate since the late 1970s—notes that his many lots of vacant land, rental houses, apartment complexes, and retail spaces are always solid investments so long as buyers commit to completing the required research before signing a contract. He cannot emphasize enough the importance of due diligence when researching properties, the get-your-hands-dirty kind of market research that is rarely found on popular real estate websites like Zillow, in determining if an investment will prove to be a fruitful one.

He also stresses the importance of patience when entering the world of real estate, explaining that some investments take years, if not decades, before providing a return. But they will provide a return, unlike much riskier options like the stock market, which he briefly dabbled in before moving on to real estate.

"I found that real estate is the best way to become financially secure," Mr. Schnurman said. "It's so reliable. All you have to do is buy in the right location—the best location your money can buy—and then have patience."

There are other catches, however, such as knowing when to buy and, just as important, sell. "Professionals, like myself, buy when the market is flat or going down, and sell when the market is going up," he said. "Professionals never wait for [real estate prices] to hit the bottom ... And you can never hit the top. But it is that middle range that sent my kids to college."

He strongly warns against becoming overly leveraged by assuming too many mortgages, again stressing that the key to making money in real estate is patience. That is why he encourages investors to stick with a predetermined budget, and to take on family members and friends as investment partners. Mr. Schnurman also points to his own upbringing as evidence that one does not need significant capital to enter the real estate market.

His father died when he was 7, leaving his mother, Ruth, to raise him on her own in Brooklyn. She worked as a seamstress, and Mr. Schnurman recalls waiting on the unemployment line with her whenever the seasonal work dried up. "I didn't know we were poor," said Mr. Schnurman, who would go on to drive a cab in Manhattan to help cover his tuition at New York Law School.

It was his mother who taught him, by example, about the importance of having a strong work ethic. "She instilled in me that I could do anything," said Mr. Schnurman, who would later create a scholarship in her memory that is awarded to single mothers enrolled at his alma mater.

Mr. Feil is continually impressed by Mr. Schnurman's perseverance and positive outlook, recognizing almost instantly that his life story would be one worthy of sharing with others. "Alan doesn't have to overcome problems, only challenges," Mr. Feil added.

He agrees with Mr. Schnurman's take that their book should interest all avid readers, even though they both originally thought it would turn out as more of an introductory guide to real estate investing. Mr. Feil explained that their approach changed after he and Mr. Schnurman started having their weekly chats during which he would share stories and anecdotes that could be applied to all aspects of life.

"Alan accomplished many of these things because he kept telling himself that he could do them," Mr. Feil said, "and then he would put in the effort to get them done."

Today, Mr. Schnurman owns so many properties, both on his own and with partners, that he doesn't know exactly how many are in his portfolio. "I would have to sit down with a piece a paper and do some calculating," he says.

But he stresses that one does not need unlimited cash to make money in real estate.

"If I did it, and can show you the model that it can be done by, why can't you do it?" Mr. Schnurman said. "That's the whole idea. That's why I went through this whole exercise."

"I Can, I Will, I Must" retails for \$14.99 and can be purchased online at ICIWIMust.com.



27EAST.COM QUICK
LINKS

Hamptons News

[Southampton News \(/southampton-news\)](#)
[East Hampton News \(/east-hampton-news\)](#)
[Schools \(/southampton-news/topic.cfm/95/Schools\)](#)
[Politics \(/southampton-news/topic.cfm/91/Government\)](#)
[Police Report \(/southampton-news/topic.cfm/92/Police\)](#)

Hamptons Real Estate

[Property Sales \(/real-estate\)](#)
[Rentals \(/real-estate\)](#)
[Search \(/real-estate\)](#)
[Market Trends \(/real-estate/trends.cfm?town=1\)](#)

Hamptons Classified

[Help Wanted \(/hamptons-classifieds/help-wanted.cfm/1255/Help-Wanted/General\)](#)
[Yard Sales \(/hamptons-classifieds/yard-sales.cfm\)](#)



Read our e-Papers
The Southampton Press
The East Hampton Press
Mobile - Tablet - Desktop

[\(/my/index.cfm?action=Account.readEPaper\)](/my/index.cfm?action=Account.readEPaper)
(View a sample issue (</my/index.cfm?action=Account.samplePaper>))