

The following article was written by a former Odyssey of the Mind team member from Colorado. It first appeared in the Spring 2000 issue of the Odyssey of the Mind Newsletter.

ODYSSEY4EVER

by
Brandon McNerlin

This is a message for anyone who has ever fixed a prop with duct tape, written out a Style Form on the bus to competition, used aluminum foil as a costume, had 1 minute to think and 2 minutes to respond, or crammed an entire skit into a mere 8 minutes. For all of you team members out there, I have an exciting message for you: Odyssey of the Mind never ends. The friends and skills you develop during competitions will be remembered for the rest of your life.

I began the Odyssey of the Mind in the fourth grade when our team, the Procrastinators, tackled a Rube Goldberg problem. From that competition until the day I graduated from high school, I competed six more times, mainly in the vehicle problem. Over the years, some of my costumes have included a helpless maiden, caveman, mad scientist, and Egyptian. Our team vehicles have been built out of plastic, PVC, plywood, rat traps, Legos, and Styrofoam. For one competition, I even taught myself to ride a unicycle so I could be a court jester in the skit! During college I became a judge for the vehicle problem so I could immerse myself in the limitless creativity flowing like electricity during Odyssey of the Mind competitions.

Today, I am a graduate of the University of Colorado and will soon head up to Alaska to be a drilling engineer. The vehicle problems

helped me realize that I wanted to build things that no one had ever seen before, so I became an engineer. Now, instead of building battery-powered cars with a \$100 budget, I am building medical catheters, pressure vessels, and flow tanks with a nearly bottomless budget.

The Odyssey of the Mind has also helped another one of my teammates realize his career goals as well. He would always compile the soundtracks for our skits. Now, he is studying to be a professional orchestra conductor and has even conducted the scores to several movies.

The skills and experiences we have gained from Odyssey of the Mind have shaped who we are and who we want to become. I still try to think of creative solutions to all of my difficult problems. I am very confident speaking in front of an audience, a quality I attribute to Odyssey of the Mind. I mean, when I think that I have stood in front of a crowd wearing my caveman costume, a potato sack and leopard print boxers, it's hard to be embarrassed about anything by comparison.

So my message again for all of you out there is this: If a Ranatra Fusca or first-place ribbon slips out of your hands, don't worry. Everyone in Odyssey of the Mind wins in the long run.

