

---

# REVIEWS

---

**THE SOUL OF A CHEF.** By MICHAEL RUHLMAN. Penguin Books, New York, 2001

**Reviewed by Marc Tumeinski**

IN READING a non-human service book or article, I have sometimes been pleasantly surprised by an instructive human service lesson. This happened to me while reading *The Soul of a Chef* by Michael Ruhlman. The first half of this entertaining book describes the Certified Master Chef (CMC) examination held in 1997 at the Culinary Institute of America, the premier cooking school in the United States. What struck me in reading about the CMC exam was the rigor, the high expectations of competency, and the dedication taken for granted in something like gaining the title of CMC, but which is normatively lacking in human services.

THE CMC EXAM was started in 1981 to help create a recognized, objective standard of excellence in the field of restaurant cooking in the United States. Applicants are tested in a wide curriculum of cooking skills (such as knife skills, preparation, serving, grilling, and baking) and styles (such as classical, Asian, and American). Applicants must also demonstrate knowledge in areas related to restaurant cooking, such as sanitation, restaurant management, table service, employee management, etc.

The test is physically, intellectually, and for most emotionally grueling. It takes 10 days, with each day lasting anywhere from 12 to 16 hours. On top of that, many test takers will re-

turn to their lodgings each evening for further study and preparation. The test costs \$2600 USD to take. Most test takers travel long distances and stay in nearby motels, which brings the total cost closer to \$4000 or \$5000 USD. The test includes written and oral exams, as well as of course actual cooking. The applicants cook on nine of the 10 days, and on one of those nine days they prepare two different meals. Each time they cook, they are timed. If they fail to serve on time, they lose points. Several times during the test, they are given a “mystery basket” of food. They then have 4 1/2 hours to plan and cook a four-course meal for 10 people using *only* the food in the basket. The test also includes classroom instruction by CMCs on a variety of cooking and other related topics. From 1981 to 1997, approximately 170 people have taken the test. Only 53 passed. A small percentage have taken the test more than once. Of these, only one passed the second time.

Each day of the exam is graded on a point scale. Applicants need a minimum amount of points to pass each day and to gain their CMC status. While cooking, they are constantly observed by kitchen proctors, who can take away points for wasting food, dissatisfactory time management, or poor supervision of their kitchen assistant. They are also often watched in the kitchen by the public through a large observation window. Their meals are blind taste-tested and graded on presentation by CMCs and other cooking professionals. After each meal and written or oral exam, they receive im-

mediate feedback and critique of their performance from the judges, of whom many are themselves CMCs.

THIS BOOK illustrates the level of competence and performance normatively expected in excellent classical restaurant cooking. Yet when it comes to offering service to devalued people, in residential or day programs for example, such stringent standards and expectations are not only typically lacking, but would likely be judged as “oppressive,” “insane” or “unachievable.” It is remarkable as well as tragic that something as esoteric as the art of high cuisine would unabashedly require such high standards, yet low or even no standards predominate in our agency-based services to those most in need.

Recent experience with teaching Social Role Valorization (SRV), and with PASSING workshops particularly, is enough to inform us of this woeful situation.<sup>1</sup> Many workshop participants claim that a four-day workshop with 8 1/2-hour days is too long, that lecture style is too demanding, that no one can work the long days and nights during a PASSING workshop and still learn, and so on. Most typical human service trainings today are at most a day long, and the norm is more like two or three hours. The toughest test that many service workers face is a 10-question CPR test, which they take after probably seven or eight hours of instruction spread over one or two days. Reading about the CMC test in *The Soul of a Chef* was a welcome reminder that the kind of developmental model approach we teach and try to implement in SRV and PASSING is not irrelevant, “out of tune with modern learning theory,” or outside human ability, but what is normatively required if one wants to achieve greater competency as a service worker, or to help others become more competent.

#### Endnote

1. For more information on SRV and PASSING, see Wolfensberger, W. (1998). *A brief introduction to Social Role Valorization: A high-order concept for addressing the plight of societally devalued people, and for structuring human services* (3rd ed.). Syracuse, NY: Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agency (Syracuse University).

---

MARC TUMEINSKI is a trainer for the SRV Implementation Project in Worcester, MA, USA, and a member of the North American SRV Council.

---

#### The citation for this review is:

Tumeinski, M. (2006). Review of the book *The soul of a chef* by Michael Ruhlman. *The SRV Journal*, 1(1), 48-49.

• • •

**ON THE OUTSIDE: EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE IN SEARCH OF ORDINARY LIVES.** By JULIE PRATT (Editor). West Virginia Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (published with support from the West Virginia Humanities Council), Charleston, WV, 97 pages, \$6.95, 1998

#### Reviewed by Ed Preneta

BETWEEN 1994 AND 1997, the West Virginia Developmental Disabilities Planning Council recruited a half-dozen writers and social workers to interview people who had moved from West Virginia's state institutions into homes in the community. Council Director Julie Pratt edited their stories. The book is a look at two decades of deinstitutionalization in West Virginia through the eyes of twelve people with developmental disabilities. Their stories are told to help readers understand what it means to be labeled and treated as “different,” so that others might learn from their experiences. While anyone can learn from the wisdom, experience and lessons in the stories, the

book is particularly relevant for professionals and policymakers in the field of disabilities.

The stories tell readers that: (1) holding high expectations about people with disabilities is critical to each person's success; (2) freedom is important to people who leave institutions, despite the ups and downs of living in the community; (3) people can be vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, mistreatment and neglect, wherever they live; and (4) caring relationships keep people safe. It is hoped that readers, professionals and policymakers will learn from these stories because "what happens to people in the future hinges on using what we've learned from their pasts" (page 9).

Since *Christmas In Purgatory* (Blatt, B. & Kaplan, F. (1974). Syracuse, NY: Human Policy Press, Center on Human Policy (Syracuse University)), thousands of stories have been told about the experiences of people all over our country who were labeled and treated as different in a negative way. All the stories have been as compelling, easily grasped, inspiring, sobering and upsetting as the stories in *On The Outside*. What is different about *On The Outside* is what it says about our human service systems "on the outside." *On The Outside* reminds us that we haven't learned from the past.

SEYMOUR B. SARASON of Yale University, in reviewing *Christmas In Purgatory*, said that Dr. Blatt concluded that purgatory is inherent in our concept of institutions. Sarason then concluded that because of our propensity to segregate people who look different, "institutional purgatories" will continue to exist for the foreseeable future. Today, these institutional purgatories aren't just remaining large state and private institutions, they are skilled nursing facilities and intermediate care facilities, to name just two. Such places ware-

house thousands of people including infants, children and elders who have mental disorders, people with intellectual disabilities, people with chronic illnesses, as well as people who are medically fragile and dependent on technology. They are also group homes, halfway houses and other derivatives of institutions.

Our institutional purgatories aren't just bricks and mortar. To paraphrase Ms. Pratt, institutions are more than just buildings, they are our attitudes and practices that live long after the last building is torn down. They are also the poverty of individual and family services and supports in the community, as well as the result of uninvolved citizenry. Today, anyone whom we label as different is at as great a risk of being committed to purgatory as they were decades ago.

*Christmas In Purgatory* shocked Americans and infuriated professionals and policymakers. It changed our thinking, values, practice and planning. *On The Outside* hints that we have new purgatories. Not only has institutionalization in bricks and mortar facilities become more subtle, reading the stories in *On The Outside* hints that institutionalization has crept into our human service delivery systems in the community. *On The Outside* needs to be read so that other stories are told until we have an epiphany about our new purgatories, and make changes accordingly.

---

ED PRENETA is the Director of the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities, and a long-time supporter of SRV training in Connecticut.

---

EDITOR'S NOTE: Readers are encouraged to also read *The Origin and Nature of Our Institutional Models* by Wolf Wolfensberger (Syracuse, NY: Human Policy Press, 1975) for a powerful history of large institutions for men-

*tally retarded people in the US.*

**The citation for this review is:**

Preneta, E. (2006). Review of the book *On the outside: Extraordinary people in search of ordinary lives* by Julie Pratt (Ed.). *The SRV Journal*, 1(1), 49-51.

• • •

**MURDERBALL.** By HENRY ALEX RUBIN & DANA ADAM SHAPIRO (Directors). Rated R, 88 minutes, 2005

**Reviewed by Marc Tumeinski**

THE DOCUMENTARY FILM *Murderball* follows the US Quad Rugby Team as they compete in the 2002 World Championships, and in the 2004 Paralympic Games held in Athens, Greece. *Murderball* is a fast-paced movie which won both the 2005 Documentary Audience Award and a Special Jury Prize for Editing at the Sundance Film Festival.

QUAD RUGBY is played with a volleyball on a regulation-sized basketball court. The game is played in four eight-minute periods. Each team has four players on the court. Players are assigned a point classification between 0.5 and 3.5, depending on the extent of their physical impairment. The total points of the four players on the court cannot exceed 8.0.

Players must keep the ball in motion, either by passing or dribbling. A game point is scored when a player crosses the goal line with at least two wheels while holding onto the ball. Players use wheelchairs built specifically for quad rugby. Quad rugby is also called wheelchair rugby and, according to the film, was originally called 'murderball' (hence the film title).

THE FILM DOES A GOOD JOB of explaining the sport, and of showing the dedication and hard training it takes to compete at the in-

ternational level. *Murderball* also helps us to get to know the featured players. We meet their families and friends. We see the camaraderie among the US team members, as well as the aggressive spirit of competition between different national teams, most notably the US and Canadian teams. This particular rivalry is largely interpersonal, as one of the star US team members left to become head coach for the Canadian team.

Some of the valued social roles which the movie portrays men and women who are quadriplegic holding include: movie star, world-class athlete, teammate, father, brother, husband, fiancé, employee, friend, coach, and national team spokesman.

In the film, we see how these valued social roles increase access to the 'good things of life' for the players, such as: good health, travel, friends, family, opportunities for challenge and growth, positive social recognition, home, work, positive sense of self, and the opportunity to set and pursue life goals.<sup>1</sup>

The movie does a good job at overcoming some negative stereotypes which surround quadriplegia. For example, it clarifies that being quadriplegic does not mean that you cannot move your limbs at all. Degrees of quadriplegia vary among those who have it; different people have more or less movement in their arms, hands, legs and feet depending on where on the spinal cord the injury occurred. It also portrays people who are quadriplegic and in wheelchairs as sexy, and as interested in and capable of sex. (There are some scenes in this movie which are not appropriate for children.)

One memorable scene late in the film touches on the issue of negative stereotypes. One of the US team members tells the story of how someone once said to him at a wedding that they had heard he was going to compete in the Special Olympics. He describes (essentially

using role language) how after hearing that question, he went from being a man at the wedding to, in his words, “being a retard.” He and a fellow team member then went on at great length to describe how the Special Olympics are different from the Paralympics; for example, that the Special Olympics happen yearly, while the Paralympics are held every four years like the original Olympics. They also emphasized that they were competing to win, not just to participate or to get a hug from a volunteer. This scene illustrates many lessons about stereotypes, including that socially devalued groups often get perceived and treated as if they were the same, i.e., someone in a wheelchair is just like a mentally retarded person.

This is an instructive movie from an SRV

perspective, and an exciting one to boot.

#### Endnote

1. Wolfensberger, W., Thomas, S., & Caruso, G. (1996). Some of the Universal “Good Things of Life” Which the Implementation of Social Role Valorization Can be Expected to Make More Accessible to Devalued People. *SRV/VRS: The International Social Role Valorization Journal/La revue internationale de la Valorisation des roles sociaux*, 2(2), 12-14.

---

MARC TUMEINSKI is a trainer for the SRV Implementation Project in Worcester, MA, USA.

---

#### The citation for this review is:

Tumeinski, M. (2006). Review of the film *Murderball* by Henry Alex Rubin & Dana Adam Shapiro. *The SRV Journal*, 1(1), 51-52.

## Invitation to Write Book, Film and Article Reviews

*from the Editor*

I would like to encourage our readers to submit reviews to the Journal of current films, books and articles. For people who are studying SRV, looking for everyday examples can help deepen one's understanding. For people who are teaching SRV, learning from and using contemporary examples from the media in one's teaching can be very instructive for audiences. For people who are implementing SRV, contemporary examples can provide fruitful ideas to learn from. Some books and articles mention SRV specifically; others do not but are still relevant to SRV. Both are good subjects for reviewing. We have written guidelines for writing book and film reviews. If you would like to get a copy of either set of guidelines, please let me know at: Marc Tumeinski, The SRV Journal, 74 Elm Street, Worcester, MA 01609 USA; 508 752 3670; journal@srvip.org. Thank you.