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Interview with *Rules For My Unborn Son* Author Walker Lamond

By Michael Harrison [✉](#) April 14, 2009 | 5:30 am | Categories: [Science and Education](#)



And when not to. GPOYW.

336. Know when to ignore the camera.

Ever stumbled across a piece of wisdom or know-how in your day-to-day life and thought to yourself, "That's something I really need to pass on to my kids?" This is, in essence, what parenthood is all about.

Walker Lamond decided he was going to start recording these learned lessons and with a little help from Web 2.0, he put together the [1001 Rules For My Unborn Son](#) blog last spring. It combines concise and witty observations and statements alongside cleverly selected photographs and songs. In short, it's a pleasure to browse and will provide inspiration and laughter for sons and dads alike.

Following the success of the blog, Lamond soon found himself with a book deal.

I touched base with Lamond with a few questions about his book, his geek cred, and his own father's rules of thumb.

Hit the jump for the interview.

GeekDad: I understand that you are a documentary filmmaker and that you've worked with renowned cinéma vérité pioneer [D.A. Pennebaker](#). Do you mind telling me a little about yourself and about your career in film?

Walker Lamond: When I decided I wanted to make documentary films for a living, I knocked on Pennebaker's door. He was working out of a brownstone on the Upper West Side, and he had a basement filled with 50 years worth of 16mm film. He told me if I cleaned up the basement, I could have a job. I ended up as his apprentice for about 5 years, culminating in my dream project—he and I made a film together about Bob Dylan using just the outtakes from his film [Dont Look Back](#).

Since then I spend my days producing crime shows for cable TV. It's not quite art, but the storytelling is fun. And every time the camera shakes I attribute Pennebaker and just call it cinéma vérité.



270. Stand up to bullies. You'll only have to do it once.

GD: When did you get the idea to start the 1001 Rules site? How long ago did you launch it?

WL: The project started simply as a way to preserve some of the lessons my dad taught me growing up, so I started jotting things down after he passed away eleven years ago. I started posting them online in May of 2008 just for kicks. I have been updating the site with new entries just about every day since then.

GD: There is a submission link on the site. How many of the rules are your own and how many have been submitted?

WL: I encourage anyone who visits the site to submit a rule, and I get some great suggestions. I have published a few, but the majority of the rules come straight from my dad or my own experiences.

GD: Was the site created with the intention of paving the way for the book? Or was the book deal a surprise?

WL: I always thought that these rules would look great in a book and envisioned being able to hand it to my son and say, "Learn em." But I didn't really know how to go about getting something published. Putting the rules online was just a fun and easy way to share my thoughts with a few friends. But I guess it caught on, and mostly thanks to other Tumblr users, more and more people were checking it out. After a while, the people who wanted to make *Rules* a book came to me. It worked out quite nicely.

GD: Is this your first book, and if so, tell me a little about the prospect of becoming a published author.

WL: It is indeed my first book. It's very gratifying to see something you've created, whether it's a book or a film or just a little YouTube video, sent out into the world. It's really great that the web and DIY technology has enabled so many people to be able to experience that feeling of being "published." I don't think you necessarily need the traditional media establishment to achieve that anymore. Although handing your mom an actual book you wrote is still pretty cool.

259. If it looks like rain, carry an umbrella. She'll thank you.



Cary Grant has no need for Gore-Tex.

GD: The site is a collection of rules for your unborn son. As of today, has said son been born? Or is he still in the works?

WL: You know, I started the list long before I had a family in the works. Since then I have gotten married

and recently my wife and I had our first child. A son.

GD: Do you consider yourself a geek? Geeks, of course, come in all shapes and sizes. Film geeks, science geeks, music geeks, pop culture geeks. Do you identify with any of these labels?

WL: I always aspired to be a geek in that I think the term implies a having a singular focus on a subject which in turn fosters a particular aptitude. I have the obsessiveness down, but I tend to spread my interests as to not ever get too good at one thing. I love movies and rock and roll, but I'm sure there are a million people that can out-geek me at any given time. I have to get really esoteric to be able to hold my own—cinéma vérité documentaries, vintage hotel stationery, and [David Johansen](#).

GD: Have you read the [Schott's Original Miscellany](#) or the [Dangerous Book for Boys](#)? Your site follows a similar concept that I noticed in those books: there is a set of knowledge that true renaissance men should command, and here it is collected in one place. How much stock do you put in the idea of a manual for the next generation?

WL: I've seen those books, and they are terrific. There's a long tradition of these types of books from Ben Franklin's [Poor Richard's Almanack](#) to Rudyard Kipling's poem "If", and most of the advice is as relevant now as it ever was. I think manuals are good. Rules are the most effective way to pass along institutional knowledge. That said, not everything old is good, so I've tried to cull the classics from the outmoded and add my own spin on what makes a good man. But by no means do I think these rules are universal. I mean, who am I, certainly no expert on parenting. I'm just a guy who had a pretty good idea of what kind of man I wanted my son to be, so I thought I'd write it all down before I forgot.

GD: Is there any one person responsible for your love and respect for popular culture and the virtues that make up the site? Was your own father a "man's man" and how did he prepare you for well-roundedness?

WL: I certainly credit my father for pressing on me the importance of being a good man—industrious, kind, well-dressed. But these lessons weren't necessarily learned until I had spent years putting every one of his rules to the test. There were many regrettable hairstyles. Eventually I came around. It turns out, I'm basically an Elvis man, just like him. I dress a little better than my dad though. He didn't have eBay.

GD: The GeekDad site is about passing our geeky interests (and the geeky passion for all things that one enjoys) on to our kids. Do you have any advice for parents who aim to get their kids involved and excited about life and all of its possibilities?

WL: I have plenty of great, unsolicited advice! It's called *Rules for My Unborn Son* and it will be on bookshelves in time for Christmas. But generally I would tell parents to not be afraid to lay down some rules, and tell your kids exactly what you expect from them. Kids will decide for themselves what rules they are going to break, but at least they will know where you stand.

GD: If you had to pass on only 5 rules to your son, what would they be?

WL:

- When in doubt, wear a tie.
- Be a vigorous dancer.
- Talent is learned. Learn to sing.

- You are what you do, not what you say.
- Eat more vegetables.

GD: Finally, do you really believe that [men with facial hair have something to hide](#)?

WL: Of course they do. Most commonly, their chins.

Walker Lamond's *Rules for My Unborn Son: Let's Get Some Things Straight Before I Get Old and Uncool* will be published in December 2009 by St. Martin's Press. It's [available for preorder now at Amazon.com](#).

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Comments (6)

Posted by: Anton | 04/14/09 | 7:02 am

329. Don't underestimate your fertility.

That's good advice for all teens and young adults.

Posted by: Steve | 04/14/09 | 7:38 am

Why is it an "unborn son" when you want to keep it, but a "fetus" when you don't?

Posted by: Clemson Cuz | 04/14/09 | 1:57 pm

Nice piece Michael! When is the Rules for My Unborn Daughter coming out?... I think Dads worry about them more than their sons!

Posted by: betsy lamond | 04/14/09 | 2:07 pm

What a champ and lessons well learned

Posted by: Mike Harrison | 04/15/09 | 5:04 pm

As a dad I think this kind of book could help a son understand is dad.

Posted by: Trish Hustvedt | 04/18/09 | 11:21 am

I think "Listen to your Granny" would be an incredible sequel. Your Mom is the best Mom in the whole universe ever.
