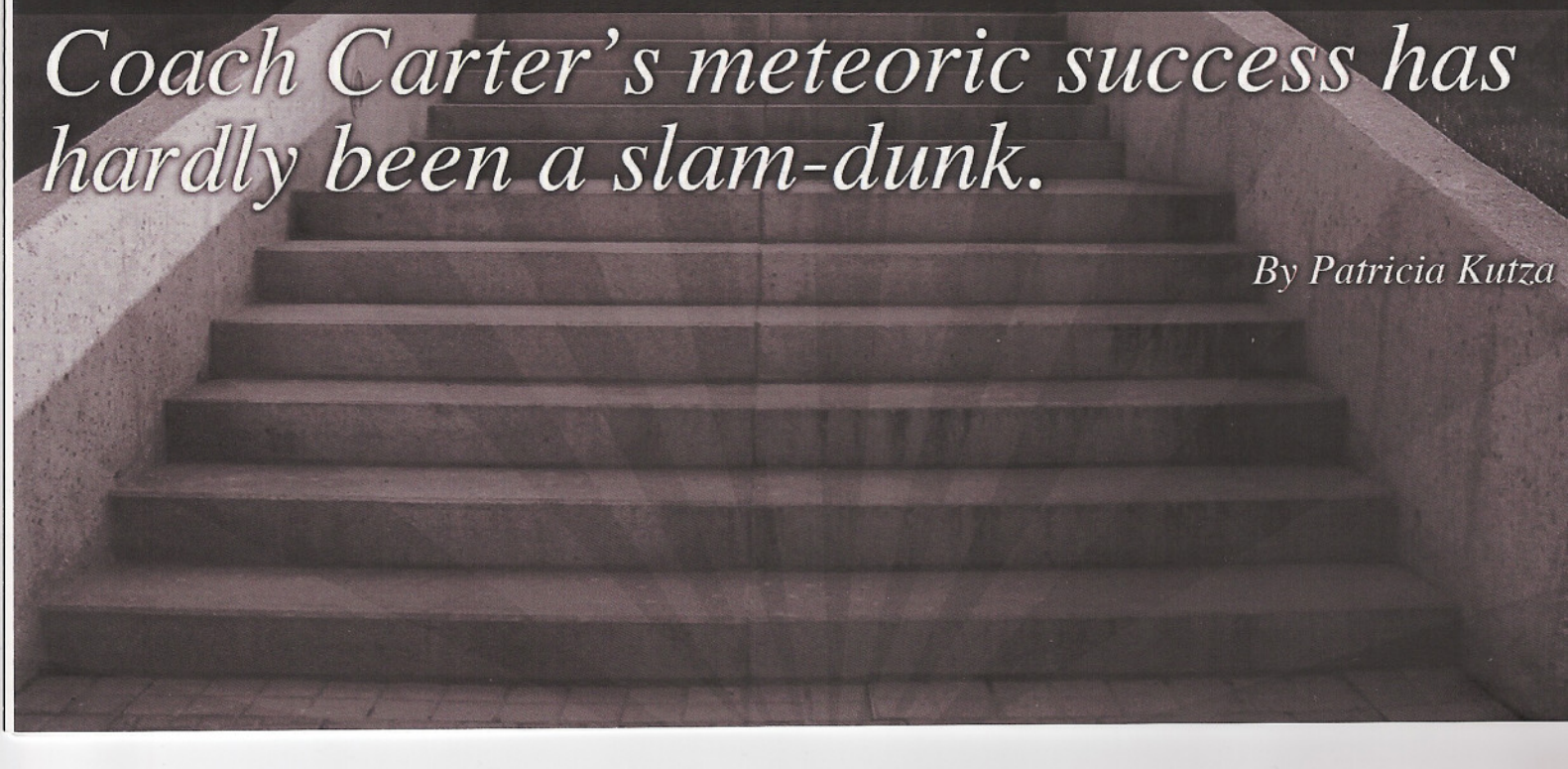




**Take the  
STAIRS  
Instead**

*Coach Carter's meteoric success has hardly been a slam-dunk.*



*By Patricia Kutza*

“Every step you take gets you closer to your goals.”

**W**ith his forthright manner, business smarts and blockbuster movie patterned on his coaching success, it wouldn't be a stretch to assume that Ken Carter, the inspiration for the protagonist in the movie, Coach Carter, literally took the express elevator to reach the level of status and world-wide recognition he now enjoys.

### No Slam Dunk

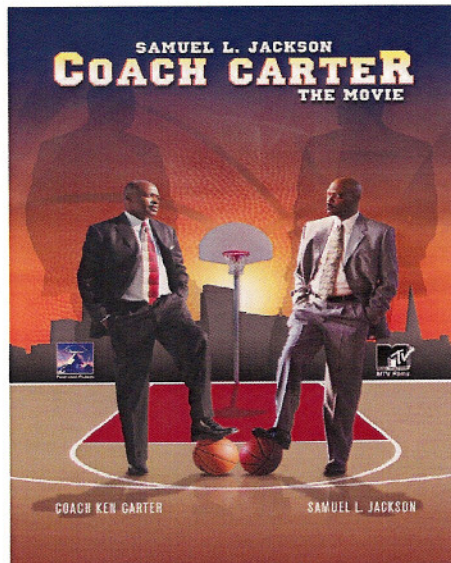
But Carter freely admits that he never believed that getting to this successful plateau would be a slam-dunk. In an exclusive interview with Excell's staff, he generously shared a slice of his history seldom referenced in the media. “Yeah, I had lots of difficult days. I sure did,” says Carter. Previous to taking on that pivotal role of coach for Richmond High's basketball program, he started a series of businesses that included barber and beauty shops and a T-shirt silk-screen company. All of these businesses, he explains, called on Carter to exercise the rules he learned early on from his parents, growing up in McComb Mississippi. “You have to come in early and stay late, and do what you love.” Carter explains. “I was also taught that you don't get paid by the hour, but by the value you bring to the hour.”

### Show Me the Money

Working long hours, however strong the love, didn't always translate into cash. Carter grew fond of saying, “My definition of an entrepreneur is working 16 to 18 hours a day to keep from getting a job! I would question myself...‘do I really want to do this’? Or do I just need to work for some one else, like Chevron or PGE? By the end of the day I would always answer that question with ‘No!’” These career affirmations would become especially powerful for Carter when he was faced with bills he couldn't pay: “There were many days when I couldn't pay my PG&E bill. Since the PG&E meter was inside my company, I locked the doors so my meter

wouldn't be shut off. When my customers asked me why I locked the door, I simply told them the truth. I told them that I couldn't pay my PG&E bill and was warding off the meter person. Do you know that one of my customers actually wrote me a check to keep the lights on! He said, “Give me credit and we will make it up later. Amazing!”

Carter says it was these kinds of experiences that made him understand that his customers wanted the same kind of success for him that he wanted for himself. “I knew that if I kept my business going, work those long hours, did all the things to create business, business would eventually come my way.” he adds.



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### Payback in Spades

And come his way it has, in spades. Carter's been lavished with such prestigious accolades as the NAACP's Impact Citizen of the Year award, the Harvard Club's Distinguished Secondary Education Award and Willie Brown's Leadership Award.

Highly in demand as a motivational speaker, Carter also finds time to balance his other roles as founder and CEO of the Coach Ken Carter Foundation, coach of the TNN-televi- sion SLAMBALL series, author

of two books, and founder of the soon-to-launch Marlin, Texas-based Coach Carter Impact Academy.

### No Shortcuts

With all those projects on his plate, Carter still disdains shortcuts. Like expecting other black members of the community to support his endeavors simply because of their shared race: “I got to give you a reason for you to walk through my door and spend your money. Doing so is actually an investment in my future. You know, you have to take the stairs, no elevator, and no escalator. Every step you take gets you closer to your goals.”