Tulgan continues to tout characteristics of modern workers

By Susan Guerrero

Bruce Tulgan, a Pittsfield native and 1985 graduate of Pittsfield High School, has worn many hats in his 53 years of life including author, brother, business advisor, husband, karate expert, lawyer, lecturer, son, speaket and uncle.


Tulgan said anyone who wants to get better at work should read the book. The ideal reader is the person who is "ambitious and hardworking and wants to be that indispensable go-to person but struggles with overcommitment syndrome," he said.

He refers to and explains "go-to" people a lot. For example, "they understand the peculiar mathematics of real influence, lead from wherever they are, know when to say no and how to say yes, work smart, finish what they start, get better and better at working together, and promote go-to-ism," he said.

The author explained that his latest book is "aspirational—how can you add maximum value without becoming overcommitted?" In it, he asks how a person can win maximum influence by making one's self valuable to other people.

Tulgan, a dynamic and personable man, is the first to remind The Pittsfield Gazette $1

Mobile home board awards rent hike

The mobile home rent control board on October 19 approved a $110 rent increase for the Allendale Pines park.

Eagle Allendale LLC, owner of the Cheshire Road property, sought a rent increase that would boost rents at the 55 tracts at the site by $120 per month.

The rent increase is to cover capital improvements that would cost a total of $720,000 with costs split between an equity investment and the increased rents.

The increase involves $50 per month in the first year, $35 in the second year and $25 in the next.

Bruce Tulgan's mother, the late Norma Propp Tulgan, was a philosopher and teacher. She graduated with a degree in philosophy and art from Barnard College in 1958. Her son noted that she studied philosophy at the New School for Social Research. She completed a Master's in Education from North Adams State College, now called Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA). Mrs. Tulgan held several teaching positions and also ran a private training and coaching program to prepare high school students to take the SAT. She served on numerous See TULGAN page 6
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local boards in the city.

His sister, Romana Tulgan Os-
theimer, is director of education at the
Clark Art Museum in Wil-
liamstown. Her husband, Tom
Ostheimer, is a long-time his-
tory and social studies teacher and
coach at Mt. Greylock High School.
They live in Williamstown.

“My brother, Jim Tulgan, has
had lots of entrepreneurial jobs
and still lives in Pittsfield with his
partner, Debbie, and sometimes
with their grandson, Emerson.”

Tulgan’s grandmother, Ger-
trude Tulgan, lived in Pittsfield
from 1970 to 2000. She died at 100
years of age.

Bruce Tulgan, who once attend-
ed the former South Junior High
School, now Herberg Middle
School, said he has lots of mem-
ories of his days at PHS. His class
was the first to complete ninth
grade at the high school.

“I had a great experience at
PHS and had so many great teachers,”
Tulgan said. “Notable for me is
that I was gone for much of the 1983-84
school year because I was a United
States House of Representatives
Page in Washington, D.C. most of
my junior year. So, I didn’t have
the full four years.”

He remembers many of his in-
fluential teachers such as Charles
Gibson, “an amazingly talented
and brilliant kind and gener-
sous teacher,” and Gale Johnson, “also
a fantastic teacher.”

“And Mrs. McCarthy,” Tulgan
wrote. “And Mrs. Powell, Herr
Lizotte, for German; M. Belanger,
a superb physical education teach-
er; and Mr. Plummer, my guidance
counselor.”

“What a great school,” he said
of PHS. “What a great education I
was able to receive there.”

After PHS, Tulgan was admitted
to Amherst College. He even had
a huge party at his parents’ house
while they were away to celebrate
being admitted.

“I have to say there were
so many kids there in attendance,
it is amazing that it went so well
and that there were no problems,”
Tulgan said. “It’s not the kind of
ting thing you could easily get away
with these days.”

He said if he were to be asked
when he left Pittsfield, he’d re-
spond by saying “You can take the
boy out of Pittsfield but you cannot
take Pittsfield out of the boy.”

He left for Amherst College in
1985. It was his father’s alma mater
as well. Bruce majored in political
science at Amherst and graduated
magna cum laude in 1989.

The first week of freshman year,
he met Debbi Applegate. They
lived in the same dormitory, South
College. He even remembered
that he lived in Room 111, below
Debbi’s room, 211.

“Our first date was September 13,
1985,” he recalled. “I asked her
to marry me on our first date and
she said, ‘Don’t be silly, I’m 17.’

“We have been together ever
since,” Tulgan said. “We got mar-
rried September 5, 1993.”

His wife graduated summa cum
laude in American Studies from
Amherst College in 1989. She went
to earn her PhD in American
Studies from Yale University
in 1998.

Tulgan earned a JD, (Juris Doc-
tor), from New York University,
School of Law in 1998.

He said he and his wife both
loved Amherst.

“My father went to Amherst,
class of 54,” Tulgan said. “He and
I are both today our class secretaries.
When I was a kid my dad would
say, ‘You can go to Amherst or join
the Army.’ 

“His father served as a major
in the U.S. Army Reserve.

“When it came time to apply
to colleges, Tulgan applied only
to Amherst.

“We made so many of our clos-
est friends at Amherst, including
many of our best friends to this
day,” he said. “We learned how to
learn. We read so many books and
wrote so many papers. In many
ways, our life is exactly the same.
Always reading. Always writing.
Always having a paper hanging
over my head, a paper hanging
over Debbi’s head.”

His wife authored “The Most
Famous Man in America: The Bio-
graphy of Henry Ward Beecher”
and won the Pulitzer Prize in 2007.
She just finished her second
book, “Madam: The Life of Polly
Adler, Secret Icon of the Jazz Age.”

Tulgan has a deep regard for
and expertise when it comes to karate.
He’s been studying it since he was
seven years old. He began lessons
at 10 Lyman St in Pittsfield at the
Uchi Karate School in the 1970s
and 1980s, led by Frank Gorman.

He’s studied ever since and
earned a black belt in May of 1986.
He tested for his 6th degree black belt,
the master rank in that style, in
Okinawa in October of 2015.

Today, Tulgan has a home
in New Haven, Connecticut, and
an office next door where there
is a dojo.

In addition, his lifelong karate
teacher, Frank Gorman, has lived
with the Tulgans for the past five
years.

Gorman’s grandson, Nathan,
and his dog, Bentley, also live
there.

Nathan, a college student,
has been with them for two years.

“Bentley is not attending
school,” Tulgan chuckled. “But
he is a very good boy.”

“I do physical training of
one sort or another 25-plus hours
a week, including cardio and karate
practice,” Tulgan said. “It’s a way
of life.”

“The Tulgans have ‘books
in stead of kids,’” Tulgan said.
They also have four nieces and two
nephews. A niece, Frances, 21, is
like a daughter to me,” he said.

“We’ve spent lots of time
with her since the day she was born.
She and her two rabbits lived here
most recently for a year in 2018-2019.”

Another nephew also lived
with them for eight months.

As he applies all of the
strategies in his latest book to his
own life, Tulgan has this to say:
“I try very hard to act on the
strategies in this book and my
others in my life, work, and
relationships. It’s similar to “take
a walk every day and eat your
vegetables,” he said.

“All of my books are based on
decades of research including hun-
dreds of thousands of interview-
es from hundreds of different
companies,” he said. “I know for
sure, based on the research, what
attitudes and behaviors are most
effective.”

He said he probably does not
always live up to the ideals but
continuously tries.

“Every day, the challenge is “to
practice being the best I can be.”
he said, “practice being the person
I am trying to become. When I
don’t live up to those ideals, I
try to give myself some kind but
honest feedback and challenge
myself to do better. What else
can you do?”

Tulgan is the founder and
CEO of Rainmaker Thinking.
It is a management, research,
consulting, and training firm.
He got the idea for the firm while
still working as a lawyer on Wall
Street in New York City.

“I got the idea of becoming an
expert on young people in the
workplace because the older,
more experienced lawyers at
the fancy law firm where I was
working seemed clueless about
managing the young lawyers,”
he said.

He founded the company as
a research firm.

Prior to the current pandemic,
Tulgan traveled incessantly
for the past 26 years, averaging
140 travel days annually. Many are
the times when he got up between
3 and 4 a.m. or caught the red eye
specials.

“I haven’t gotten on a plane
since March,” he said. “As soon
as the pandemic set in, we put a
tv studio in the office.” His home
is next door to the house in which
the office is located.

“In the office, we now have a
whole production studio, from
which we can deliver our key
notes, workshops, focus groups,
interviews, and in which we are
producing lots of video training
programs as well,” the author said.
He said he didn’t write his latest
book with the pandemic in mind
but feels like he might as well have.

“The lessons are all probably
more essential now than they were
before,” he said. “I did write a
special note for the pandemic, but
I’m not sure I would have changed
much about the rest of the book
even if I had known.”

Bruce Tulgan, definitely a
“go-to” person, continues to be
a progressive force in the world.