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Griffin connection boosts Elder grad

BY JOHN KIESEWETTER | ENQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Raymond Brune's TV fortunes have dramatically improved since being hired by "Wheel of Fortune" creator Merv Griffin.

The 44-year-old Bridgetown native (www.rayjay.tv), named television chief for Merv Griffin Entertainment last year, produces the new psychic series, "Lisa Williams: Life Among the Dead" (8 p.m. Monday, Lifetime). He and business partner Andrew Yani also have sold a reality show to CBS, and bought rights to "Circus of the Stars."

The 1980 Elder High School graduate started in TV producing Channel 5 newscasts in 1984 for anchors Jerry Springer and Norma Rashid. He later worked for ABC's "Good Morning America Sunday" and E! Entertainment.

Question: How did you meet Merv?

Answer: In September last year, Andrew and I pitched several shows to Merv. He liked all the ideas and made us heads of television for Merv Griffin Entertainment.

Q: What's Merv like?

A: Merv is amazing. Every day is like being in graduate school - watching him work, negotiate, produce, create and manage people. One of the cool things about Merv is that he's in a position to produce shows just for the love of TV. Making money is not the priority. He's not afraid to tell network presidents to get lost if they don't agree with his vision.

Q: Merv gives you real clout?

A: He can call anyone in Hollywood for a meeting. Through Merv, I've met (and pitched to) Rupert Murdoch (Fox), Les Moonves (CBS), Kevin Reilly (NBC) and all the power players in Hollywood. It's incredible that we can finally get projects on the air without going through the layers of management that develop shows.

Q: He knows everyone?

A: In May I had dinner with him and Nancy Reagan. On Merv's 81st birthday, our meeting was interrupted by a call from Air Force One. The president wanted to wish Merv happy birthday.

Q: How did you meet psychic Lisa Williams?


A: Merv had discovered her a few years ago, but couldn't find the right project for her. We shot a pilot in New York City and sold it to Lifetime. We are getting lots of response and it looks like we have a hit.

Q: What's next?

A: We just signed a deal with CBS for "Dream Horse," a reality-competition-game show. We bought "Circus of the Stars," which we're revamping into a Cirque-type competition show. We are now shopping a game show, a

sister to Merv's "Wheel" and "Jeopardy." And we have a half dozen other projects that are all moving forward rapidly.

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