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THE BOSS

Life as the Regginator

By REGGIE FILS-AIME; as told to BOBBI DEMPSEY Published: November 18, 2007

I GREW up in a lower-middle-class environment, usually the lone minority among my classmates. My parents, both immigrants from Haiti, had a Romeo-and-Juliet type of story. My maternal grandfather, a doctor by training, was in the Haitian government. My paternal grandfather was in the opposing military. As young adults my mother and father came to New York, where their romance was able to flourish.



Both of my parents were college-educated within the curriculum in Haiti. When they came to the United States, both had to learn English.

My mother worked in retail, and continues to do so today, working as the lead sales representative in a fine-jewelry store. My father became a machinist.

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Mark Lennihan/Associated Press  
Reggie Fils-Aime

**\*REGGIE FILS-AIME\***  
**President and chief operating officer, Nintendo of America**

BIRTH DATE March 25, 1961  
HOMETOWN Brentwood, N.Y.  
FIRST HOME CONSOLE GAME PLAYED Super Mario World

learn how you're doing the next day.

I was at [MTV Networks](#) from 2001 to 2003, and worked for its VH1 network, which was going after more of a 25- to -49-year-old demographic. That proved quite useful in my job here at Nintendo. Understanding that consumer group has proved critical in what Nintendo is trying to do now, in taking video games beyond the typical teenage boy and into a much more diverse audience. That experience was probably one of the major reasons I was recruited by Nintendo in 2003.

It's important to consider markets that may have been overlooked by your industry. In the gaming industry, much of the focus had traditionally been on kids and young men.

We found that women and "older" consumers — meaning those past their mid-20s — were very receptive when these products were presented in a way that would interest them. A surprising number of seniors are even playing these games now.

Our goal was to bring gaming back to the masses. The stories we have heard about consumers playing games as a family or with friends totally shatter the stereotype of video games being a

As a child, I envisioned a career in the hard sciences. In sixth grade, I was buying college chemistry textbooks.

I was accepted into Cornell in 1979 and went there to follow a finance and business path. I ended up pursuing marketing and sales because I was selected by [Procter & Gamble](#) as an undergraduate candidate to go into its brand management program, which is typically available only to M.B.A. candidates.

While the lineup of companies I've worked for is diverse, the linkage for all of them is an appreciation for consumers and a passion for vibrant, youthful markets.

While at P.& G. from 1983 to 1991, I was in the food and beverage division. I then went to Pizza Hut, where I learned about fast-paced businesses. In the restaurant business, you

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solitary, reclusive experience.

One downside of technology is how information spreads so quickly online in an undesirable way, such as when people post “spoilers” of games or characters not yet officially announced. I think we’ve done a pretty good job of keeping things close and under wraps.

On the other hand, in some ways we’ve also embraced the fact that things will spread quickly online. When we participate in a trade show or other consumer event, we know that video will be posted and comments will be out on the Internet, and we prepare for that.

In our industry, executives sometimes become cult figures. I hadn’t expected that. The online fans gave me a nickname, the Regginator. I didn’t even know about it until my son called me after my very first E3 electronics entertainment conference and told me, “Dad, you’re famous!”

You automatically become the coolest dad in town when you run a big video game company. The downside is, friends of my 17-year-old son always give him a ton of questions to ask me about all of the not-yet-announced games. And of course I can’t answer any of them.

*As told to Bobbi Dempsey.*

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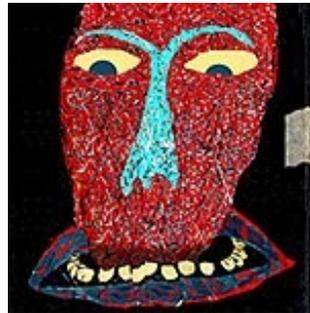
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