



Irv Prell / El Paso Times

**Former El Pasoan Andy Given, shown with wife, Yoko, and daughter, Annie, is a Hollywood production executive.**

## 8th-grade film launched movie executive's career

Andy Given, his wife, Yoko, and his daughter, Annie, were in El Paso recently visiting Andy's parents, Barbara and Ken Given. Andy is a production executive at Universal Studios and has worked on "Far and Away," "Housesitter," "American Me," "The Babe," "Backdraft," "Beethoven," and the current release "Mr. Baseball."

Andy's parents moved to El Paso from Detroit in 1957, and Andy was born a year later. In the eighth grade, he made his first one-reel 8mm movie, a science fiction horror movie titled "Witches" starring his brother, Barney.

Andy studied film at the University of California at Berkeley, then spent a year in New York before moving to Los Angeles. For the next six years, he worked as a production assistant, production coordinator or location manager for commercial film companies and TV production companies.

Andy got his first crack as production manager of a feature movie in 1987 with "Under the Boardwalk."

"After I had been on the job for two weeks the studio fired the director and the two lead actors. They asked me to have all the equipment suppliers go on hold for two weeks until they decided if they were going to continue with the movie. Those were the two longest weeks of my life. Here I had just got my first feature film job (no more commercials) and it could be over in two weeks. However, they hired a new director and new leads and I got my chance."

Then in 1988 he got the movie "I'm Gonna Git U Sucka" with Keenan Ivory Wayans and his brother Damon Wayans.

"The job of production manager calls for me to supervise all the day to day activity of the movie. Keeping the movie on



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schedule and on budget. You have to say 'no' a lot and you don't make many friends.

"In 1989 I tried to open my own company with a friend. In the one year we were trying to raise money for a feature film, I did a few commercial jobs. I can still hear my mother and father calling and telling me that I was still young enough to go back and get a law degree like my two brothers, Tom and Barney."

Andy was fortunate enough to have met the senior vice-president of production and post-production for Universal Studios, Donna Smith, while filming "Under the Boardwalk."

"We had stayed in touch. She called, and I went to work for Universal studios in 1990."

Andy met his future wife Yoko Nakahira in 1987 at his brother Barney's birthday party. After turning down her offer to a concert because the seats weren't good enough, they were married one year and a day after they first met. Their daughter, Annie Natsumi ("Summer Beauty" in Japanese), is 14 months old.

Among Andy's goals: "Before my daughter is a teen-ager I hope to come back and make a movie in El Paso."

Irv Prell's profiles of area people appears each Thursday in the El Paso Times West Side neighborhood edition.