

POSSIBILITIES

unleash your imagination

DISNEY, TIME TRAVEL, AND ICE CREAM

At a family dinner in November, I lamented that my Disney World annual pass (that's right) was set to expire in February and I had no one interested in joining me for one last trip. Nancy, the youngest of us, eagerly volunteered, and over the next day, both Diane, and Marie joined in. (Younger brother Bob was unable to fit this into his schedule.)

There were many reasons that we shouldn't have made this trip. Mobility issues for one, for two, arguably three, of us (including me). Disney days generally involve 20,000 steps or more. We didn't even ask the spouses to join us - although they quickly supported this idea. And we really had no experience traveling together. Ever. Heck, we barely lived together, with Marie leaving home to pursue her career when I was seven. None of these things, not even the cost, deterred us.

My sisters have each been to Disney one time before, either as a child, or with their children, with memories best described as neutral. Now some thirty, forty or fifty years later, they were returning, without children and, thanks to me, with high expectations. As we made our way into Magic Kingdom on our first park day, I will admit, I was a little nervous. What if the reality falls short of expectations?

We walked up Main Street USA, peeking into the colourful shops, while a barber shop quartet was singing, and a cheerful double decker bus jauntily headed down the street towards the towering backdrop of Cinderella's Castle. A Disney photographer lined us up for our first of countless photos, and learning that we are siblings took a few extra minutes to welcome us to the most magical place on earth, getting a wonderful photo with Tinker Bell, of course. In less than 10 minutes we were all enchanted.

At a leisurely pace, and with frequent stops to rest on benches or to visit bathrooms, we made our way around Magic Kingdom that

morning, watching a couple of great shows, and enjoying some of the most iconic rides at Disney. In the spirit of childhood, we enjoyed hot dogs for lunch at Casey's Corner where a piano player set a lively mood in the heart of Magic Kingdom. From there, we moved on to Epcot where we glided across the world in Soarin', proudly visited the Canadian Pavilion, and discovered Mickey shaped ice cream bars that were so good there was only one possible explanation - Disney magic. We had dinner at my favourite restaurant anywhere, Nine Dragons in the China Pavilion, and were amazed and moved by the fireworks over World Showcase Lagoon as we made our way out of the park.

We floated back to our rooms that evening on Disney's Skyliner and reflected on a perfect day, then giggled with anticipation as we talked about the Disney days ahead. It was wonderful for the four of us to spend five days together. We have a lot to talk about, from catching up on our ever-expanding lives, to meandering down memory lane. We laughed when we discovered that our memories are not always in sync. But this trip was much more than just being together. We "did" Disney.

With time divided between Animal Kingdom and Hollywood Studios on day four, we visited

all four parks, and three resort properties in three days. We went on eleven excellent rides and saw six amazing shows. We ate chicken and rice in China, beignets in New Orleans, seafood on a Caribbean Island, pineapple Dole whip on a Polynesian Island, and fish and chips in a British Pub. We travelled by bus, boat, monorail, Skyliner, and spaceship. We traveled through 30,000 years of human history, visited pirates, survived a haunted house, and saw wildlife on an African safari. We met and hugged Mickey and Minnie. We joined the rebel alliance, got captured, and escaped. And so much more.

Some go to Disney with the goal of conquering. We went to enjoy. We left confident that we did both.

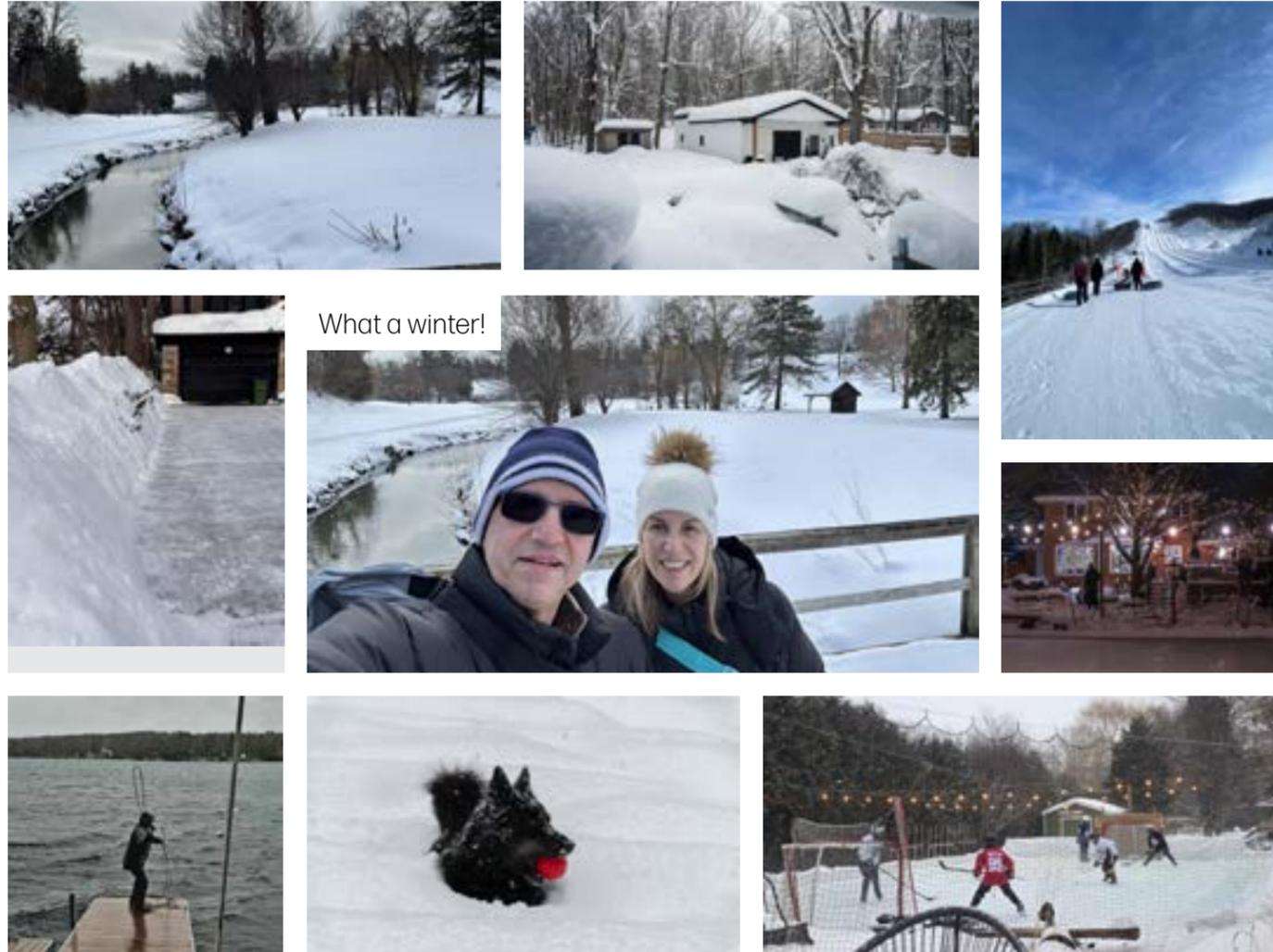
Disney World of course is non-stop adventure, excitement, discovery, and wonder. But, what makes it so special to me are things like, kindness, generosity, inclusiveness, and happiness. These qualities are evident in every cast member at Disney World, and in most of the guests. Many times, I have said to fellow travelers in Disney World, "I love it here. These are my people." These same values were instilled in each of us by our parents, and by each other. On this Disney trip, I brought my people with me.

In Hollywood Studios on our last day, we stopped for another round of the impossibly delicious Mickey bars. We sat on a curb to enjoy them and for the umpteenth time that week a guest asked if we wanted them to take our picture because "we just looked so darn cute eating our ice cream." It's a picture that defines our Disney vacation. Four siblings travel back to their childhood, play make-believe, and eat ice cream.

I shouldn't have been nervous entering Magic Kingdom on day one. Disney wrote the book on belief and happy endings. And the Bell family from Bradford are believers.

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What a winter!



Coconut Chicken & Squash Soup

WHAT YOU NEED

- 2 tbsps Avocado Oil
- 1/2 cup Shallot
- 1 1/2 tsps Fresh Ginger
- 4 Garlic Cloves
- 1/2 oz Lemongrass
- 1 lb Extra Lean Ground Chicken
- 1 tsp Sea Salt
- 3 cups Butternut Squash
- 2 cups Chicken Broth
- 1 3/4 cups Can Coconut Milk
- 4 cups Baby Spinach
- 3/4 cup Thai Basil

DIRECTIONS

Heat a large Dutch oven or pot over medium heat and add the oil. Once hot, add the chopped shallot and cook for three to four minutes, just until it starts to brown and soften. Add the minced ginger, minced garlic, and chopped lemongrass and cook for one minute, until fragrant, stirring often.

Add the chicken and salt, breaking it up as it cooks. Cook for five to six minutes, until no longer pink.

Add the cubed squash, broth, and coconut milk and stir to combine. Bring to a simmer, reduce the heat, and cover. Cook for 15 minutes or until the squash is cooked through.

Add the shredded spinach and cook until just wilted. Divide evenly between bowls and top with Thai basil. Enjoy!

Continuing our series where we get to know our wonderful Bell Financial employees, in this issue I interview our intrepid Insurance administrator Denise Madden.

Denise: My name is Denise. I've worked at Bell Financial for 6 years. I split my time between insurance and money administration. My main focus is to help the clients in any way that I can, whether it's helping them sort out their insurance policy or renew a policy, and then with money it's helping clients with a withdrawal, or making an investment. Anything that they've spoken to the advisor about and it needs implementing.

Interviewer: What do you like or dislike about working here?

D: I like that it's a family environment. I've worked other places where you just don't know what to expect when you walk in the door. Here you know it's the same friendly, great environment when you come in each day.

I: Do you have any fun memories or like funny things from your time working here that you would want to share.

D: This isn't so much funny ha ha. But it's funny, crazy! Right before I started working here 6 years ago, I had booked a vacation on a cruise. This was the first week of March 2020. When I arrived back there was obviously a lot of talk about Covid-19. I came back to work for a week and then that Sunday Sonia called me and asked that I quarantine for the next 2 weeks even though I had already been back to the office. By the time I had completed my 2 week quarantine everybody had been sent home. That was a crazy way to start work at a new company.

I: Ha! That is crazy. What are your hobbies outside of work?

D: I like walking. I go to the gym. I volunteer. I enjoy watching Formula 1 racing. We do it as a family, and we all kind of root for someone different during the season. We also watch English Football.

I: What's your team?

D: For soccer it's Wrexham, only because you got me into the show. We went to see the grounds when we were in England last time.



D: One of my favorite things, my husband and I like to do is to go for coffee Saturday morning at Metropolis. That it's our date morning.

I: Yeah, how do you take your coffee?

D: Just milk.



I: Tell us about some of your recent travel.

Denise: On my last trip to England, we went to the White Cliffs of Dover. I had always wanted to go and see that. We could see France from across the water. I love traveling with my family and it's nice to travel around England and seeing you know, just the history of the place. We've seen lots of ruins and things like that traveling around England.

I: Do you have a particular connection to England?

D: My husband's from England and we met at a Bible school there. We lived there for 5 years. We decided after we had had our daughter that we wanted to see what it was like living in Canada as a family. We thought we'd come and live here as long as we had lived in England. The plan was after 5 years we would decide where was best. We came here and never really discussed it again.

I: What is your favourite movie?

D: The Holiday. I have to watch it every Christmas.



I: I love it too. Yeah, what location do you like better? Kate Winslet's California or Cameron Diaz in the cottage?



I: Do you have any pets?

D: No.

I: You guys have allergies? What pet would you have if you did?

D: Yeah, yeah. I would have a dog. Yeah, and it would probably be something like a golden doodle. Something that doesn't shed and has no allergy repercussions.

I: Where would you travel? If you could go anywhere in the world

D: I would go to the Mediterranean, which I'm heading to in October.

D: I like the cottage in England.

I: What is your favourite genre of music?

D: I don't know, I still like going back to the late 70s early 80s, when I used to listen to like ACDC and yeah, just the old nostalgic rock.

I: What food could you not live without?

D: Chocolate.

You can read a more 'formal' profile of Denise here on our website!

<https://bellfinancial.ca/about/our-team>

BACKPACKING THROUGH TIME

A few weeks ago, my elder son Ethan asked if I had a photo of us sharing outdoor activities when he was young. It was for some sort of work activity. I rummaged around and found one from a trip to Algonquin Park in 1999. Ethan would have been seven years old and his younger brother, Noah, about two and a half. I hadn't thought about that trip for a long time, but that one picture sent many happy memories flooding back to me.



The fall weather was not cooperating that week; it was rainy and cold for the entirety of the trip. But the boys never cared. As long as we were outside, walking in the woods, beside a stream or along a shoreline, they were happy. We probably wouldn't have been able to do much "off road" exploring when they were young if it wasn't for the backpack we purchased when Ethan was an infant. This marvelous contraption allowed

Ethan to sit comfortably at my eye level and enjoy the view. Years later, it was Noah's turn to get a front row to the natural world all around us. Thanks to the backpack, the options to explore seemed almost limitless.

As Ethan and Noah gradually outgrew the backpack, their love of the outdoors never waned. In fact, when they were old enough to plan their own adventures, it invariably involved climbing gear, tents and sleeping bags. The backpacks were no longer used to carry children but instead to haul 30 pounds or more of supplies. They never shied away from inclement weather or challenging terrain.

My boys are now young adults building exciting lives with their partners. Both their work and their after-hours recreation revolve around being outside. Ethan is employed by a Canadian outdoor apparel company in Calgary and is the living embodiment of the brand: he leads employee groups in hiking and trail running adventures along the foothills of the Rockies and can knowledgeably advise customers about what gear will be best for their unique adventures, since he has likely used or worn most of what he sells.

Noah was recently wooed back to the beautiful town



of Nelson, B.C., to run the local golf course. To rise to the position of General Manager at age 28 is no small accomplishment. Like his brother, his expertise is highly valued, since he has earned the respect of the members for his knowledge and dedication over several years of employment in every role, including short-order cook. And when he's not managing the club or sharing a round with a member, he's likely to be camping beside a lake with his wife.

I will be visiting Ethan and Noah at the end of May. I know that they will want to take me hiking into the mountains and out for a round or two of golf. However, I worry that the wear and tear on my body since the days of carrying them on my back along forested trails will not permit me to do what we've always done. Nevertheless, reconnecting with my sons through nature will be special, even if in a limited capacity, and I can't think of anything I'd rather do.

My backpack will include lots of Tylenol, just in case.

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GREAT MINDS, GREAT
Thoughts

"Spring is nature's way of saying, 'Let's party!'"

Robin Williams

"We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing."

George Bernard Shaw

"We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty."

Maya Angelou

"Laughter is timeless, imagination has no age, and dreams are forever."

Walt Disney

"There is power in looking silly and not caring that you do."

Amy Poehler

Inspired by your vision

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