



# possibilities

unleash your imagination

## Hawaii 5-O

Often, great moments come to us unexpectedly.

This spring we vacationed on Maui and with a vast array of activities available, we decided to split into smaller groups to allow everyone to maximize their fun. Deandra and I were intrigued by what appeared to be a fairly benign road trip into a nearby valley community to learn more about Hawaiian culture. Both of us have a teacher personality, and a preference for the safe and secure, so this trip seemed perfect.

Needless to say, Deandra and I were quite surprised when our mini-van, driven by a very young girl (she admitted to being 23), was suddenly hanging off the side of a cliff on a two way road barely wide enough to allow two small animals to pass let alone two motor vehicles. Had the brochure mentioned the very real risk of death (two weeks earlier someone in a rented Mustang convertible slipped off the edge – he didn't survive), Deandra and I may have decided on a different excursion. Most of the other passengers in the van with us were apparently equally shocked – in particular the poor woman directly behind us, who kept sobbing and muttering "I just want to go back. Can we go back?"

Our driver showed no fear. She squeezed to the right (it was OH so much better when the mountain, as opposed to cliff, was on our right) as necessary to allow ongoing vehicles to pass. And on

occasion, when the road was impossibly narrow, she was forced to back up to find a chunk of road wide enough to allow for passing. It was at those moments that I most wished she would stop giving us the tour-guide talk and focus on not backing us into oblivion.

Even after we headed down into the valley destination, the thrill ride was far from over. We also had to steer our van through a fast moving river - twice. Each time an image of our van rushing wildly downstream, our screaming faces pasted to the windows as we tumbled into the ocean, played vividly in my head.

And, as a final test of courage, we disembarked from our thrill ride van, and were escorted on foot across a narrow hanging bridge and into the small community on the other side of the river. (Do the math. In my mind, we definitely crossed this river more than necessary).

The journey proved to be worthwhile. In fact the journey itself, without the fascinating, beautiful, and engaging destination, was enough on its own. Deandra and I both were exhilarated, proud, and strangely enlightened. The memories of that morning excursion will no doubt be fodder for stories for the balance of our lives.

When we reunited with the others in the early afternoon, we gushed with enthusiasm. But we were not to be outdone. The others had



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# possibilities

## ...Hawaii 5-O (cont)

chosen surf lessons. And they were equally wound up. With professionally shot photos to prove it, they recounted their successful lesson with a very charming young local surfer lad and the ensuing thrill of riding the waves.

Deandra had to try it. Not wanting to be a wimp (I am the only male in the family after all), and hoping to give Deandra's courage a little nudge (she did appear to be waffling), I agreed to go with her. Next morning, off we went.

I'm not a good swimmer, and while I wouldn't say I am afraid of the water, I have a healthy respect that perhaps one day a psychologist will pin on a near drowning I experienced at age four. More importantly, I don't like swimming. As the girls have grown older I have found it easier and easier to avoid the water altogether, and surf lessons would turn out to be the first and only time I stepped into the ocean (or a pool) on this vacation.

Add to that the fact that I have no land skills to translate to a surf-board. I have never been on a snow-board or skate-board, and a few attempts many years ago to water ski on one ski ended in relative disaster. Also, I turned 50 this year, and while I don't consider myself old, it dawned on me as I looked at all the other students on the beach that morning that I was by far the oldest, likely by at least 20 years. Perhaps this wasn't really such a good idea.

It was in fact, a very good idea. I will attribute much of my success at surfing to our instructor, Lucas, a teenager or twenty-something-year-old from Brazil who was clearly much more



interested in young girls than in me (and must have wondered how he drew the short straw to get me in his group), but who nonetheless provided us with excellent instruction, that resulted in success for all four of us under his tutelage that morning.

On my first attempt I struggled to ride the board out paddling against the waves and trying not to tip as the waves rocked my equilibrium. I finally arrived to where Lucas was waiting, and suddenly a wave approached and Lucas helped me point the board towards shore, started pushing, and yelling at the top of his lungs "Paddle hard!" Lying on my stomach, I paddled wildly and suddenly felt the enormous push of the rushing water behind me. Like we had practiced numerous times on the beach, I pushed up with my arms, moved to my knees, slid my left knee forward and in one swift movement jumped to my feet. And suddenly, much to the surprise of Lucas I'm sure, I was surfing. The rushing water and the wind blocked all other noise and all I felt was the push of the water and

the thrill of doing what a few days ago I would have said would never happen.

Sometimes, in the most unexpected situations, we experience a moment of clarity. For a few moments, while the ocean wave carried me effortlessly into shore, I realized what any surfer-dude, or adventure tour guide already knows. Life is all about going with the flow.

### Bill

## Great Minds, Great Thoughts

*"You have brains in your head,  
you have feet in your shoes.  
You can steer yourself  
any direction you choose..."*

*Out there things can happen  
and frequently do  
to people as brainy  
and footsy as you"*

Dr. Seuss - *Oh the Places You'll Go*

*No man's knowledge can go beyond his experiences."*

John Locke

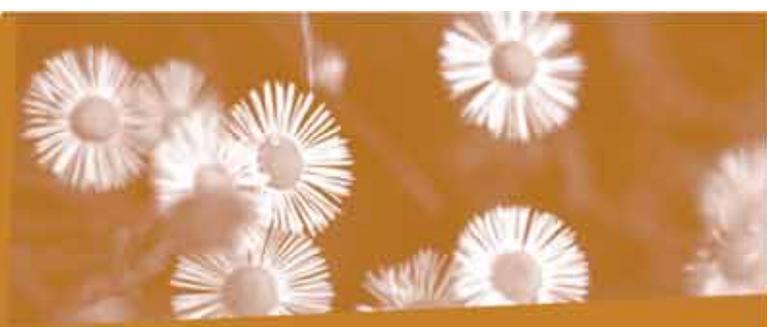
*"Once in awhile, You get shown the light,  
In the strangest of places, If you look at it right."*

The Grateful Dead

*"One's destination is never a place,  
but a new way of seeing things."*

Henry Miller





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## Wendy's Wings

May 15, 2004 was my sister's wedding day. Two days later my sister-in-law gave birth to her second son. Two days after that my Auntie Wendy lost her battle with Breast Cancer. You could say that I experienced the circle of life all in a matter of days.

This is certainly one week I will never forget.



Aunt Wendy holding my daughter Rebecca

and warm smile upon her face, there was not a hint of the battle she was fighting.

My aunt was a wonderful wife, mother, sister, aunt and grandmother. She worked for the York Region School Board for many years and was also a member of the North Metro Sweet Adelines for approximately twenty years. I was very fortunate on my wedding day in 1998 to have her quartet attend and sing for us as a wedding gift.

I had heard about the Weekend to End Breast Cancer and

thought that one day I might sign up. My excuses were plenty: not enough time, I wouldn't be able to raise enough money, maybe when my children are older. This year I didn't listen to my excuses and with the support of my husband, sister and family I decided to join this worthwhile event.

My sister and I have formed a team in memory of my aunt which we have called Wendy's Wings. As I share my story with you I am sure that there are many of you with a similar story to tell. With one in nine people diagnosed with breast cancer chances are you will or already know someone affected by this disease.

### Zoe

The Weekend to End Breast Cancer is a two-day, 60-kilometre walk through the neighbourhoods of Toronto. Proceeds benefit Princess Margaret Hospital, funding important breast cancer research, education, services and care.

Laurie Sobie, a founding partner of Bell Financial and a specialist in employee benefits, group retirement and pension plans has participated in the walk for the last three years with her team, the Blue Footed Boobies.

If you are interested in supporting either Laurie or Zoe on their journey please visit our website at [www.bellfinancial.ca](http://www.bellfinancial.ca) and click on the links.

Read it!

***Raising Self-Reliant Children in a Self-Indulgent World, Revised, by Jane Nelson and H. Stephen Glenn.,*** (2000, Three Rivers Press).

This book explores how 50 years of change has affected our society – how the support network of the extended family (who always lived nearby) has been replaced by neighbourhood networks and other groups that bring like-minded people together. And where those modern networks aren't in place, what effect the lack of support has on the nuclear family, especially the children.

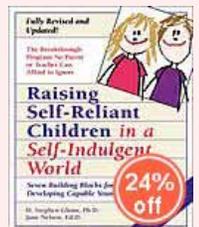
The authors explore the development of positive self perception through a series of lessons and experiences. Those lessons, referred to as the *Significant Seven*, are the suggested tools for healthy self-concept and self-esteem. I believe these core values

are lifetime gifts for our children, so they will *know* they are important – that they add value as contributing members of their family, and their community.

What I enjoyed most about this book was the examples of *spending quality time* with your children; how to use a simple experience as a lesson without being preachy (I don't think I listened when my parents preached either).

By the time she reaches life beyond high school I hope my daughter, Bailey, will know herself well; with confidence - ready to take on the world.

**Cheryl**



## Capturing Beauty

As a teenager back in Montreal I did odd jobs for our neighbour, Mr. Preston, and in recognition of my efforts he purchased and annually renewed a subscription to National Geographic magazine. At first, I felt cheated that my hard work was not rewarded with cold, hard cash, something that was always in short supply in those days. However, it wasn't long before I became engrossed in the stories and especially in the images of people, places and creatures that were totally foreign to me. Mr. Preston had the foresight and wisdom to understand that while a few dollars would have been spent on things forgotten the next day, the impact of the magazine might be felt for a lifetime. And of course he was right. Today, long after the jobs and gift subscriptions have ended, I still bring National Geographic into our home. It is very likely responsible for my family's continuing love of the natural world and for our insatiable desire to visit far away places.

Like most subscribers, it's the National Geographic's photography that has kept me turning the pages all these years. In high school, I glamourized the life of the professional photographer. Far from the mundane and predictable world in which I lived, I imagined myself jetting off to exotic locales, cameras slung from my shoulders and rolls of film spilling from the pockets of my safari jacket, emerging from jungles and deserts with a visual record worthy of publication. I believed the world of photography to be cool and sophisticated, two more things of which I was in short supply at the age of fifteen. And so, desiring some adventure in my life and with my father's ancient camera in my possession, I signed up for an introductory course at school, hoping to learn the craft and impress a few girls along the way.

I don't remember much about that photography course, other than the fact that I was deemed to possess neither the technical aptitude nor the artistic flare to produce pictures worthy of publication anywhere, not even in the school newspaper, which from time to time featured students' work but would not consider my feeble submissions. Fortunately, the requirements for a passing grade appeared to be simply showing up, so I emerged with a



course credit but without a budding career in the photographic arts (and no girls, either).

Despite my setbacks with the camera, my fascination with beauty captured through a lens continued to grow over time. Soon after Elizabeth and I were married, we came across a large framed photograph at a flea market in Vermont. The black and white print, depicting a farmer's field darkened by an imminent summer storm, remains nearly twenty years later one of our favourite possessions. With the advent of idiot-proof point and shoot cameras followed by digital photography, even misfits like me were eventually able to create quality photos to cherish.

However, despite the advances in camera technology over the years, the pictures I continued to take, whatever the subject matter, always seemed to be missing something. The photographs were rarely able to capture what I was seeing in my mind's eye. When we visited Costa Rica in March, I took over 280 pictures, but nearly every one appeared two-dimensional and lacking in the rich detail that was all around us. I couldn't blame the surroundings, which were indescribably beautiful. I just couldn't transfer that beauty on to a still image.

Near the end of our holiday, I stood at the top of a hill and witnessed yet another gorgeous sunset over the Pacific Ocean. I had seen many such sunsets over the past few days and snapped many pictures, but none could completely capture what I was seeing. However, this particular evening was especially spectacular, so I picked a spot on the horizon and clicked. The image on the back of the camera was breathtaking. I immediately showed it to our younger son, Noah, who looked at it for a long time. Finally he looked up at me and asked: "Daddy, is this what Heaven looks like?"

I certainly hope so.

*This article is dedicated to the memory of my mother-in-law, Alice Cooper, who passed away on the day this picture was taken.*

**David**

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