

CHOICES

AUTUMN 2013

AN INTERVIEW WITH
JEFF TIFT

RENOWNED WILDLIFE
ARTIST AND INSTRUCTOR

THE GRATITUDE ISSUE

UNDERSTANDING
GRATITUDE AND
BECOMING A MORE
GRATEFUL PERSON

DISCOVER GRATITUDE

FIND THE TRUE
MEANING OF
BEING GRATEFUL



WHO I AM TODAY

BEING GRATEFUL FOR THE
PERSON YOU ARE TODAY



GRATITUDE AND TRAVEL

HOW TRAVEL CAN PROVIDE
AN OPPORTUNITY TO
EXPRESS GRATITUDE



A LETTER OF GRATITUDE

A FATEFUL ACCIDENT AND
THE POSITIVE IMPACT IT HAD
ON THOSE INVOLVED

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FROM THE EDITOR

Someone seems to have put the clock on fast-forward. Life is moving faster and faster. Today we do everything fast: talk fast, drive fast, even eat fast. Time is at a premium and most of us are afflicted with “hurry sickness.” There never seems to be enough time to do the things we have to do, much less those things we’d like to do. Many of us don’t even have time to think.

Time is the most precious and limited resource we have. In spite of our best efforts, time is unyielding. No one can stop it, slow it down or save it. If you are like most people, trying to balance a busy professional life and a busy personal life, you know the challenge it can be to get everything done. For some reason, we keep adding “just one more thing” and forget to eliminate another. The result is an ever-increasing time crunch.

There are probably even times when you feel like a spectator watching your own life unfold instead of being in control. What’s wrong with this picture?

Joan Baez once said, “You don’t get to choose how you are going to die or

when. You can only decide how you are going to live.”

Decide right now that you are going to quit being a “human doing” and start being a “human being.” To my knowledge, this is the only life you are going to have, so make it enjoyable, satisfying and rewarding.

How do you do that? That’s what this issue of Choices is all about- taking the time to be grateful for who and what we are, for the people and things we are blessed to have in our lives and the opportunities that are presented to us every day.

The stories our contributing authors have shared this season remind us all that we have choices, and the choices we make are what determine the course of our lives. Through their experiences, we can find many

important lessons that will help us avoid wrong turns and blind alleys in our journey through life- one such lesson is taking the time to be grateful for the things and the people in our lives.

If you feel stuck in a situation that appears beyond your control, these stories will show you how others have coped with crisis and uncertainty and made tough choices and positive changes in order to find deeper meaning and gratitude.

It is our hope that through the pages of this magazine, you find encouragement, hope and possibilities.

We are most grateful that you are our reader. Thank you.

OUR TEAM

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GRATITUDE IS A CHOICE

BY JUDI MOREO

Gratitude is an emotion expressing appreciation for what one has—as opposed to what one wants or needs. It is currently receiving a great deal of attention primarily because Oprah has emphasized so many times on her show that we need to have gratitude or even write in a gratitude journal. I agree with her.

In the United States, where I was born, grew up and live most of the time, I find that people get so caught up in what we want and don't have that we often forget to appreciate what we DO have. In fact, a 2013 World Happiness Report, published by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, ranked the United States as the 17th happiest country in the world. I expected we'd be a lot further up the list as we have freedoms and opportunities unequalled almost anywhere else in the world. What's wrong with us that we don't see how fortunate we are? Is it unfulfilled expectations? Were we brought up to want more, be more, do more ... and therefore we don't realize how truly fortunate we are?

“There are so many things to be grateful for. We don't have to search for them. They are right in front of us. We just need to recognize and acknowledge them.”

We can cultivate gratitude and that will increase our levels of well-being and happiness. If we will write in our journals every day listing just three things for which we are grateful, our focus is on the positive rather than the negative events that happen in our lives and this will increase our energy, optimism and empathy.

We can feel grateful for even the smallest things- someone else set the table tonight or made their beds. We

saw the incredible morning sunrise or evening sunset. It didn't rain today. Or it did rain and we really needed it. We had food to eat, a roof over our heads and clothing to wear. Someone smiled at me today. I had the opportunity to help someone else. There are so many things to be grateful for. We don't have to search for them. They are right in front of us. We just need to recognize and acknowledge them.

When you write three things for which you are grateful in your journal right before you go to bed, you'll even find that you sleep better. When negative things happen during our day, if we will list a positive that came out of that event or a person who handled it well to whom we are grateful, it will help us bring closure to that event. It will even help us to wake up in a more grateful state in the morning.



I love the story of the baseball umpire who was asked if the pitch was a ball or a strike and he replied, "It ain't nothing until I say what it is." Well, it's the same in life. Whatever the circumstance, it ain't nothing until you say what it is. You can call your game as you choose. Is it negative or positive? Is it success or failure? Is it a lesson for which you can be grateful?

Some other things we can do to cultivate gratitude are:

Concentrate on what you do have instead of what you don't; on what you are instead of what you aren't; on what you can be instead of what you can't. When we focus on the positive, we will be happier. Happier people are more emotionally healthy people.

Pick up the phone today, call someone and tell him or her you are grateful he or she is in your life. Say thank you for something they have done or even just for being there for you. A little bit of appreciation goes a long way.

Send a card, thank you note or a small gift to someone for no reason other than to let that person know you are grateful to have him or her in your life.

Think about the things people have done for you throughout your life- and thank them. Even people who have treated you with less respect than you feel you deserved have given you something. Be thankful you've learned that lesson or be thankful you are not that person.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Judi Moreo is the author of the award-winning book, "You Are More Than Enough: Every Woman's Guide to Purpose, Passion, and Power" as well as its companion, *Achievement Journal*. She is a Certified Speaking Professional who has spoken in 28 countries around the world. Less than 10 percent of the speakers in the world hold this highly respected earned designation. To contact Judi or book her for a speaking engagement, contact Turning Point International, (702) 896-2228 or judi@judimoreo.com.

Help someone else. Helping others gives us good feelings. It can be something as simple as opening a door or mowing the lawn. Don't expect anything in return. Don't even expect a thank you. Just do it because it is what you want to do.

Being grateful will reduce your stress, put a better expression on your face and contribute to an overall sense of well-being. You will find that people like to be around people who are full of gratitude. This is the season for Thanksgiving. Choose gratitude and be thankful for who you are. You are More Than Enough.



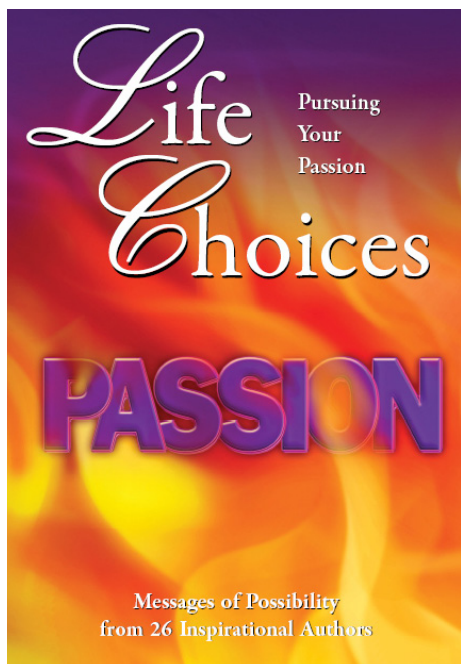
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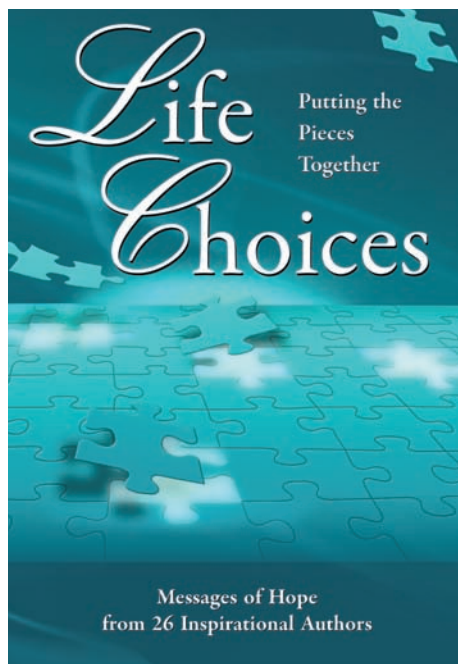
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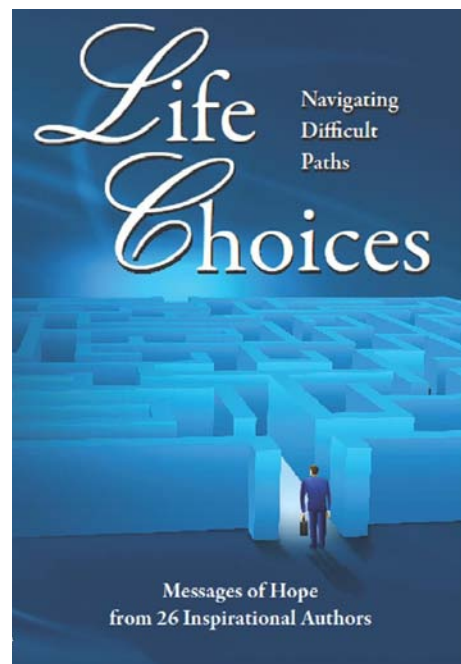
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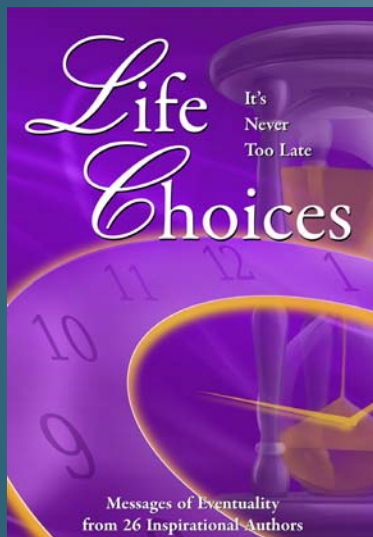
If you have ever had a dream that you wanted to pursue but didn't have the courage, if you've ever wanted to do something that you didn't think you could do, if you have ever wanted to go somewhere but didn't believe it was possible- READ THIS BOOK. Twenty-six authors share with you how they pursued their passions and made their dreams become reality.



Should you find yourself in circumstances that require the making of difficult choices, the stories in this book can offer you courage and inspiration. Each author has addressed hurdles they have faced in order to reach their current level of success. It is a collection of powerful true stories written by real people who have overcome the obstacles in their paths.



This empowering collection of stories reminds us that we all have choices and the choices we make are what determine the course of our lives. The authors of these stories are real people who have reached into the depths of their souls to share their inspiring journeys when navigating the difficult paths of their lives.



LIFE CHOICES SERIES

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No matter who you are, how old you are or your level of success, it is never too late to make the choice to be who you are meant to be. Don't be afraid to make changes. Don't be afraid to make an attempt to achieve your goals.

Within the chapters of this book, 28 authors tell their stories and share the lessons they have learned. Their enlightened knowledge can serve as inspiration for finding your own path to the understanding that it is never too late.



DISCOVERING THE TRUE MEANING OF GRATITUDE

BY JOAN PECK

Most of us easily express gratitude on a daily basis when we say thank you to someone for something they have given us or done for us. In fact, we often say it more like a responsive habit without much feeling or thought.

Expressing “thank you” as an acknowledgement to something

positive that has affected us is valuable and positive for all parties involved. Yet, many times we simply look with gratitude at one situation at a time, easily forgetting the enormity of all that we can be grateful for, which when acknowledged can be tremendous. We just need reminders.



Animals unwittingly often play a leadership role in our lives because something will happen that focuses our attention on an event that brings home to us the moral consciousness of gratitude, which we may have let slip in some small way.

Animals are so expressive in their simplistic acts that it can touch us in ways humans can't. This is even true for our household animals who continuously show us their gratitude in little ways all their own.

Not long ago in the news there was a story regarding a whale that was in trouble.

"A fisherman spotted her just east of the Farallon Islands (outside the Golden Gate) and radioed for help. Within a few hours, the rescue team arrived and determined that she was so badly off, the only way to save her was to dive in and untangle her from the fishing net wrapped around her- a very dangerous proposition.

One slap of the tail could kill a rescuer.

They worked for hours with curved knives and eventually freed her from the ropes that had trapped her.

When she was free, the divers say she swam in what seemed like joyous circles. She then came back to each and every diver one at a time, nudged them and pushed gently, thanking them. Some said it was the most incredibly beautiful experience of their lives. The man who cut the rope out of her mouth says her eye was following him the whole time and he

will never be the same."

After reading that story, I was encouraged to be more grateful for what I did have and not focus on "coming from lack." But, in fact, I still needed a wake-up-call.

As serendipity would have it, a friend of mine delivered a present to me that changed my outlook on my life for good. She handed me a package and when I opened it, a mirror with words written along a spiraling circle lay in the box.

The words began from the middle of the whorl and ended at the outside circle: "Ask, Believe, Visualize, Act and Enjoy." It is called a Gratitude Mirror, one that anyone can easily make. It came with printed gratitude statements stamped on soft plastic strips that easily adhere to the glass and also some blank strips so that I could make my own. It was suggested that I hang my mirror in my bathroom because that is the first room in the house that I walk into in the morning and the last room I am in at night. That gives me a way to both start and end my day – with gratitude!

I hate to admit that the first one I made for myself was "I am grateful for my financial abundance." When I placed it near the one that was already printed "I am grateful for all the abundance in my life," I realized how limiting my statement was. I stood there and was ashamed that with my first statement I was closing myself off to the greater abundance in my life – love, good health, friendship, beautiful surroundings and so much more.

I then learned to expand the meaning of ABUNDANCE to include AWARENESS so that by my being more aware, I could know and experience how blessed and fortunate I am to be living in so many different ways with so much abundance in my life every day. And I am grateful.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joan S. Peck is the author of several spiritual books and a contributing author to two of the Life Choice books. She has a new book coming out this fall – "Prime Threat- Finding Your Way Out of Addiction", a book written with her son from the other side.

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"Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others."

- Marcus Tullius Cicero

JEFF TIFT

AN INTERVIEW

BY JUDI MOREO

As our fall issue is themed gratitude, I want to share with you an interview with a man that I have been so grateful to have studied with these last few months. Jeff Tift is one of the leading wildlife artists in the Northwest. He is also an outstanding art teacher. His dynamic personality has made the challenge of learning a new medium really fun! You have probably seen some of Jeff Tift's beautiful paintings as they appear on greeting cards, puzzles, popcorn tins and light switch covers as well as in some of the finest galleries in the U.S.

JEFF TIFT

Surrounded by the Cascade Range, Jeff Tift grew up in the small town of Cashmere, Wash. An avid hiker, skier, canoeist, and all-around outdoorsman from an early age, Jeff spent every available moment hiking and backpacking in the Cascades.

Jeff's paintings visibly express a respect and admiration for the mountains, high lakes and wildlife of the Pacific Northwest, often depicting the experience of sharing nature and the

wild with animals. Jeff's background landscapes are areas he has personally visited and are painted with great attention to detail. A single painting may take up to six weeks to complete.

Did you always want to be an artist?

I'm not really one of those people who always knew they wanted to be

an artist. I dabbled in some art when I was a kid but never really thought of painting as a career until I was about 23 years old. I was attending Washington State University when my mom bought me a paint set for Christmas. I decided to give it a try and was surprised my first painting turned out pretty good. I've been painting ever since.



When did you first know you had talent?

When I was a kid, I used to draw cartoons and would draw those pictures in ads for art classes and I was pretty good at it, but never pursued it.

Who influenced you?

While at college, I was taking a wildlife biology class and came across some animal books with paintings by Glenn Loates and Guy Coheleach and was very impressed with their works. I thought that would be an interesting way to make a living. I was also influenced by Roger Dean who did album covers for the progressive rock group Yes. In addition, I was also heavily influenced by Robert Bateman and Thomas Mann.

What inspires you?

I believe getting out into the wild is the most important part of being a wildlife artist. What motivates me to paint is the preservation of nature and wildlife. I do a lot of backpacking in the Northern Cascades of Washington state. It is some of the most beautiful scenery in the world and I have been to some amazing places, which always invigorate my creative juices. I also kayak, cross-country ski and go on wildlife viewing trips to various places to view animals in the wild and obtain reference material. Getting out in the wild is definitely my biggest source of inspiration.

What makes a painting great instead of average?

First and foremost, it has to be a painting of something you've experienced firsthand and were



absolutely blown away by the experience. That way, your personal encounters and feelings become part of the work, which I believe also can be felt by the viewer of your painting. Lighting is hugely important in a painting along with composition.

FAR LEFT

"Regal Repose" by Jeff Tift

ABOVE

Jeff Tift



Of all of your works, do you have a favorite?

Yes. Several!

Why do you teach painting?

It's very rewarding to help other people discover their talents. And I enjoy the socializing with the people who attend my classes.

In your studio, I've seen pictures of some domestic animals as well as your incredible wildlife paintings. I have friends that would love to have paintings of their pets. Would you be interested in doing more of these paintings?

Yes. I love animals!

Where can someone contact you if they would like to buy one of your paintings or prints, or have you paint a picture of their pet?

**Mr. Jeff Tift
Rolling Rock Studio
Entiat, Washington 98822**

**(509) 784-6632 or
<http://www.jefftift.com/>**

I've loved every minute of taking classes with you. Thank you for teaching me so much! I'm looking forward to studying with you again in the spring.

ABOVE
"Copy Cats" by Jeff Tift

RIGHT
Jeff Tift at Summit Chief Mountain



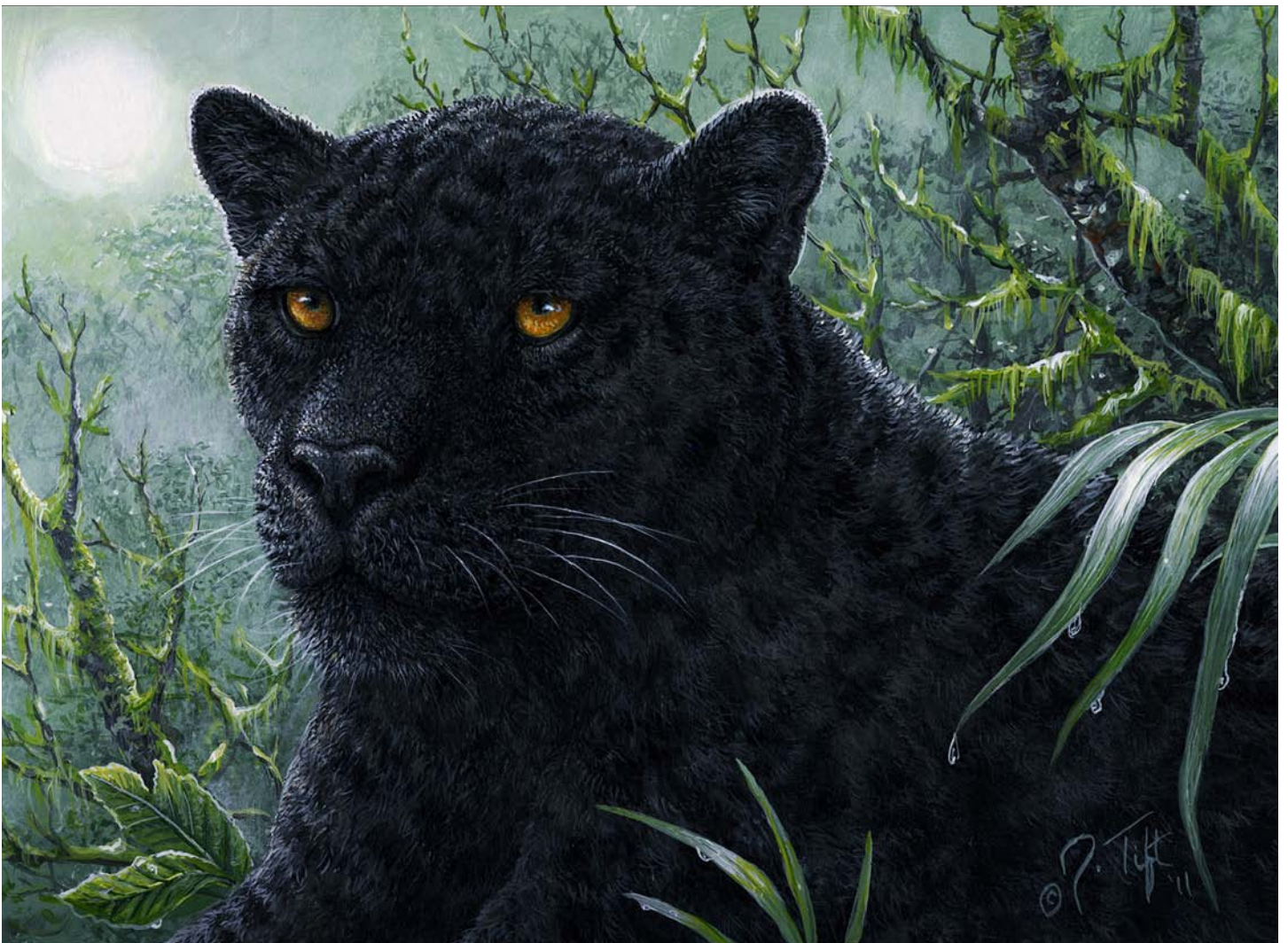


LEFT

"Vin Tsillan" by Jeff Tift

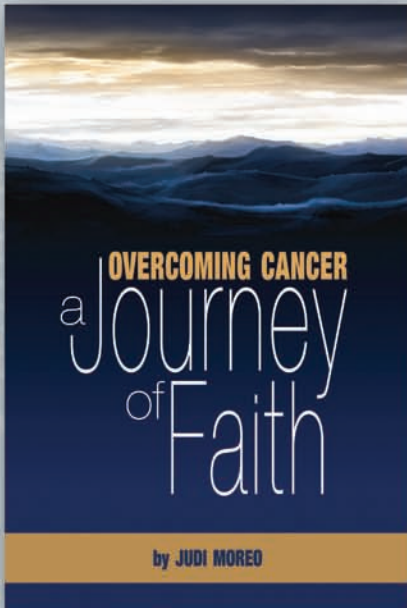
BELOW

"Black Beauty" by Jeff Tift



Award-winning author Judi Moreo knows what it is to travel the journey of cancer and shares that experience in this book.

Overcoming Cancer: A Journey of Faith



Through her personal story, inspiring quotes and practical suggestions, Judi shows us that cancer and fear are messages to us to make lifestyle changes. This supportive book can help the newly diagnosed cancer patient ask better questions, understand there are alternative and integrated treatments that can work and, most of all, maintain hope.

Even though traveling the cancer road was a rocky and difficult journey, it was also rewarding. The path through cancer requires enormous discipline, work, and change; yet it is filled with excitement, experiences and discoveries that can bring us to a new and better place if we are open to possibilities and focus forward.

"This book may help save your life or that of a loved one. Judi Moreo "gets it." She understands that the question is not "what kind of treatment do I undergo?" but rather "how do I heal myself?" Her personal experience with cancer taught her to recognize that recovery from chronic illness is often a recovery from an unhealthy life in many respects. With humor, grace and courage, she addresses the physical as well as the mental, emotional, psychological and spiritual needs for recovery in an easily accessible, practical way. Whether you are looking for help to reclaim your health from cancer or any other illness, let Judi be your guide."

- James Sensnig, N.D., Founding President, American Association of Naturopathic Physicians; Former Dean, National College of Naturopathic Medicine; Founding Dean, College of Naturopathic Medicine, University of Bridgeport, Connecticut; cancer survivor

"This book is a must for those facing cancer and for those who have loved ones facing this fear-filled disease. Judi writes from the heart -- telling her story with truth and emotion. She highlights her course of action, not forcing her opinions on anyone but truly providing options to conventional cancer care that are sound and doable. Her recommendations for nutrition therapy and exercise are quite impressive and fact-based."

- Julie Freeman, MA, RD, LD, Licensed Nutritionist, Integrative Medicine

This Book and Others Now Available Online!

www.JudiMoreo.com



GRATITUDE ISN'T ABOUT YOU

IT'S ABOUT THEM

BY JIM CATHCART, CSP, CPAE

How many times must you say thank you to someone? Is a thank you card enough? After all, if you wrote and sent it, didn't you complete your part? How about if you made a thank you call? Sent an email? When is it enough?

The purpose of a thank you is not for you to express your gratitude. Instead it is for them to feel your gratitude.

So thank them until they feel thanked. Some people find a personal note to be a great thank you. Some prefer a call. Others want an in-person visit. Still others feel that an email is enough. Everyone has a preferred mode of thank you. Determine their preference and your task is much easier.

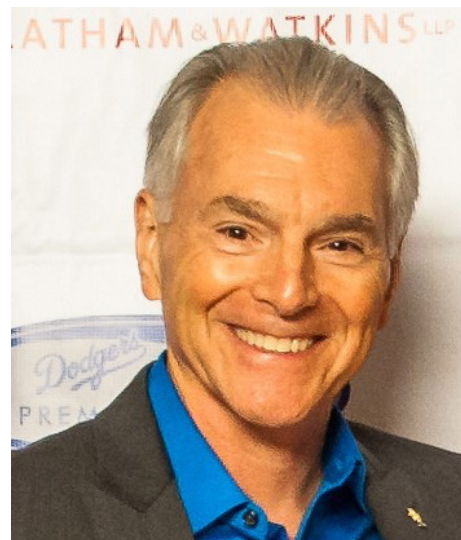
Gratitude has been called the greatest of all emotions and I agree. When we cultivate a thankful heart and mind, we notice more of the blessings and good things around us. When we don't cultivate gratitude, we become cynical and judgmental toward others. "Geez! I can't believe nobody did this" or "What about me?"

When you are intentionally grateful, you don't have those thoughts very often.

Notice that I said "intentionally grateful." Gratitude needs a boost. It doesn't just emerge on its own. So, decide today to regularly ask yourself, "Whom should I take time to thank?" The more you ask it, the more people you'll think of and the more people will think of you.

Make the world glad that you are in it by continually telling the other folks why you are glad they are here.

Thank you for reading this.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jim Cathcart is a Hall of Fame professional speaker, author of 16 books and past president of the National Speakers Association. Contact him at www.cathcart.com

Thank You
Dankie Mahalo
 Hioy'oy
Qagaasakuq
Gracias
Ngiyabonga
Hohóu
Merci
Chokran
Grazias Hvala
Tsikomo
SALAMAT
Ďakujem
Dank u
Mèrcie KIITOS
Faleminderit
Paldies *Tak*
Juspajarkätam
Dzięki
Grazie

W

hat If It Wasn't There Tomorrow?

Every morning I take a little time to practice. I practice being grateful- for everything. Have you ever heard the saying, *what if all the things you didn't thank God for tonight were gone when you woke up tomorrow?* Well, it got me thinking! What if the hot water and the car or the really comfy pillow that I always steal from my husband weren't there the next day? Or worse, what if the people in my life weren't there?

The truth is there are more than a million things we take for granted on a daily basis: for example that hot shower in the morning, three square meals a day or the bed we sleep in at night (even if we sleep with pillow hogs).

It's All About Perception

This summer, my oldest son and I went to Trujillo, Peru. We worked with an organization called Project New Hope

International. The project was to work in the barrios our first day there and then to do two consecutive camps for 2 ½ days each with the kids of the barrios. The first camp was the young elementary-aged kids and the second camp was junior/senior high-aged kids.

These kids were some of the happiest kids we were ever blessed to spend

time with and they had very little. They don't have hot water or showers or three square meals a day or even their own bed to sleep in. Many times they share beds and the mattresses are on dirt floors in their one-bedroom homes in the barrios.

Would you believe that during that 10-day trip we never once complained

GRATITUDE TAKES PRACTICE

BY JASMINE M. FREEMAN





about what we didn't have? We didn't complain about the camp bed mattress being flimsy or flat. I didn't complain about the chicken feet floating around in my soup at lunch. There wasn't even a complaint about the cold showers – we simply skipped showers for a few days. (It wasn't always pretty.)

What are you taking for granted in your life? Do you need to introduce your own gratitude practice? The cool thing about this practice is there is no right or wrong way to do it. You simply need to just take a moment to be grateful!

How to Practice Gratitude

The practice goes like this: take a little time at the beginning or end of each day and either write or say out loud at least three things for which you are grateful. You don't have to stop at three

ABOVE

Jasmine with her son

LEFT

Jasmine in Trujillo, Peru

“ If you don't feel grateful for anything right now, force yourself out there to give and be that person for whom others are grateful. Trust me, it's infectious.”

either – you can keep naming them for as long as you'd like! Think about the things you just couldn't bear to wake up without the next day. Living life with a focus on gratitude will fill your spirit up in more ways than you can measure.

What If I Don't Feel Grateful for Anything?

I've been in that dark place. You might be there now but you won't be in that place forever; trust me. Be thankful for your ups and your downs because when we experience downs, we appreciate the ups even more. Know that there is a purpose marked for your existence even if you don't know it at this very moment.

When we spent our time in Peru, our only job was to show love to the kids there. Love by doing, listening and entertaining. I felt more grateful when I was giving to others than I ever felt by having a big shopping spree or getting any kind of gift I'd longed for. If you don't feel grateful for anything right now, force yourself out there to give and be that person for whom others are grateful. Trust me, it's infectious.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jasmine M. Freeman loves to help others! That passion has led her to a fulfilling career as chief executive assistant to the CEO of Office Dynamics where she has the opportunity to support, write for and speak to administrative professionals.

Jasmine loves to serve. Jasmine handles the marketing and PR for The Cupcake Girls of Las Vegas, is the incoming 2014 Vegas Young Professionals Chairwoman of the Advisory Council, Vegas Young Professionals Ambassador Committee Chair and active volunteer at her church.

Jasmine loves to write. She is co-author of the book, *Who Took My Pen ... Again?* and has featured stories in two Life Choices books. Jasmine also blogs at WildWonderfulWorkingWoman.com about being a working mother in today's crazy world. She's a mother of four amazing kids and wife to one very supportive man.

HAVE YOU EVER FELT STUCK?

Have you ever been stuck? Felt like no matter what you do, you just can't get ahead? Do you ever think you should be more successful by now? Are you struggling with finding your life purpose? Are you disappointed and discouraged with where you are or where you seem to be headed? Do you feel like you were created for something more, but don't know what?

If so, let Judi Moreo be your coach and mentor. Judi will provide the tools and techniques you need to achieve your desired results and she will hold your hand through the process. She will work with you to design a program specifically for you to take you from where you are to where you want to be.

Not only will you receive guidance and feedback, you will benefit from Judi's extensive background in leadership, management, image, presentation skills and service. Her insights and guidance will help you become who you want to be and present yourself as you want to be seen.

For more information, call Turning Point International at (702) 896-2228 and speak with Judi personally about the possibilities for you.



As an international business leader, Judi knows firsthand what it takes to be successful. She has owned and operated businesses in both the United States and South Africa. In addition, she has spoken, consulted and presented both keynote speeches and training programs in 28 countries on four continents.

Judi is an accomplished author with 10 books to her credit, several of them award-winning best sellers. She has been a journalist, model, finishing school and model agency owner, a professional speaker, a corporate executive, an entrepreneur, a consultant and a cancer survivor.

Around the globe there are many men and women whose lives are a testimony to Judi's personal and professional success. It is no wonder that she has a collection of awards, but to her "life is not about awards. It is about the reward of making a difference in another person's life." And that she has done over and over and over again.



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FORGET THE NEW YEAR, HOW ABOUT NOW?

BY NICOLE HELLEDOORN

It's time to trade in your swimsuit for sweaters, make family travel plans and start getting ready for the holidays, which are just around the corner. Altogether, these events can be stressful, and when combined with the drop in temperature they're enough to make anyone want to bundle up and put off their health and fitness goals until the new year. Does this sound familiar? Well, what most people don't realize is that fall is actually the perfect time to get healthy and adopt new habits without having to break a single New Year's resolution come January.

Initiating a healthier lifestyle in the fall also means that you'll see and feel tangible results by the time holiday parties roll around, meaning you'll

more easily be able to resist the sugar-laden treats and appetizers and make better food choices while celebrating the season with friends and family. So, what can you do now to get on track?

"Fall Back" to Better Sleep

Daylight Saving Time kicks in Nov. 3, and we will have shorter days with an earlier nightfall. Keep the same bedtime and try to get some extra sleep, if you're not getting close to the generally recommended eight hours already. It will take some time for your internal clock to adjust but getting extra shuteye couldn't be easier with the help of magnesium supplements, herbal teas and rituals such as getting into your sleep clothes or reading – these are all signals to your body that it's bedtime.

Getting better sleep results in increased energy, increased immunity, better cognitive function and can help your body regulate its hormones, which are in charge of everything from your mood to your metabolism.

Trade In Your Grains For Veggies

Many squashes, such as the beloved pumpkin, are in season in the fall making it the perfect time for you to swap out your pasta for butternut squash noodles and your rice for cauliflower. Pretty much any grain item can be replaced with a vegetable substitute, allowing you to get more nutritional bang for your buck.

Eliminating grains also eliminates gluten, an inflammatory protein that has been linked to several health

conditions. And lest you think I am suggesting that you forgo holiday baking, I'm not! There are plenty of grain-free flours that can be used such as almond flour, coconut flour, arrowroot and plantains with truly delicious results. There have been several times when I have baked traditional items without grain-based flours and my guests could not tell the difference. As an added bonus, you may have some additional free time to experiment with new recipes during the day while the kids are out.

Stay Active

Fall and winter are the least busy times of the year for gyms, personal trainers and other fitness studios. You can find deals on training packages, save money and avoid dealing with crowds, if you initiate a new workout routine in the fall as opposed to the beginning of the year or spring. If a lighter fitness

routine is more your speed, autumn is made for walking! Bundle up and go for a stroll to see the changing leaves, hit the local pumpkin patch, go apple picking or just move more throughout the day.

The easiest way to be less sedentary is to set an alarm on your phone or calendar to go off once an hour. When it goes off, make sure you get up, stretch, walk around a bit or even do some squats. The increased blood flow is great for your heart and will keep you mentally sharp throughout the day!

Change Your Attitude To Gratitude

Adopting an attitude of gratitude can help you focus on what positive changes you'd like to manifest and inspire you to follow through on making them a priority. While the holidays are always a poignant time to reflect

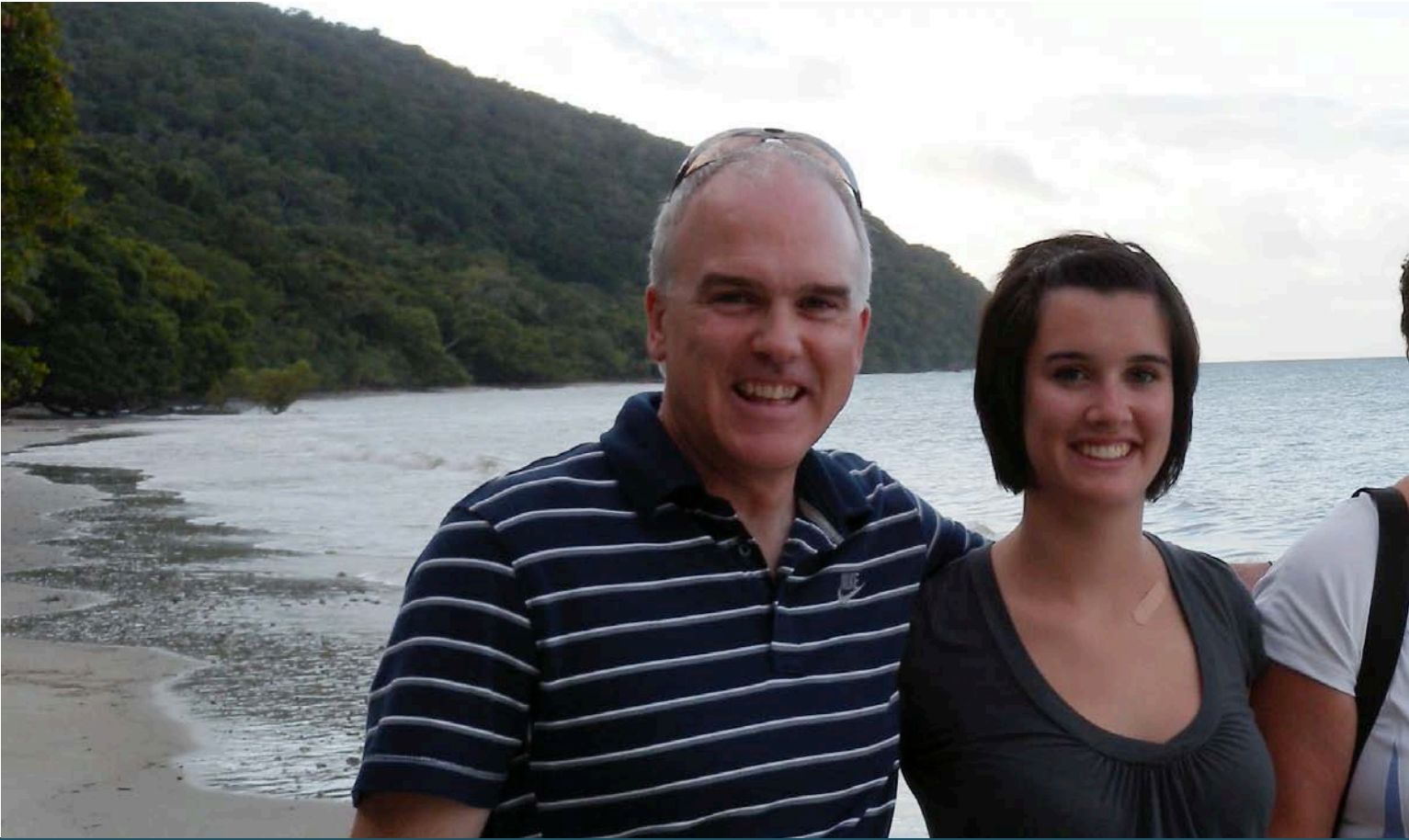
on what we have to be grateful for, let autumn be a time where you focus that reflection into action.

Make a plan for the rest of the year that allows you to enjoy what you have or activities you love, minimize stress over perceived obligations and prioritize the health and well-being of you and your family. These can include paring down the holiday celebrations you attend, allowing others to help with the holiday cooking or travel logistics or foregoing tradition and traveling to a new destination that you've been meaning to visit for years.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nicole Hellendoorn founded California Paleo Kitchens (<http://www.californiapaleokitchens.com/>), an Orange County, Calif.,-based consulting service that helps people transform their lives through adopting Paleo diet principles. She is also a public speaker and author of the upcoming ebook "Paleo Kitchen Makeover." Connect with CPK on Facebook (www.facebook.com/CaliforniaPaleoKitchens), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/PaleoKitchens>), or via Email at: californiapaleokitchens@gmail.com



I started studying positive psychology in 2005. One of the first research articles that really peaked my interest was one by Selgiman, Steen, and Peterson (2005). Selgiman and colleagues were trying to find ways to increase one's happiness level and decrease depression levels. One of the interventions was writing a letter of gratitude to someone who you felt like you had never thanked properly. I decided to try this but first let me give you the background.

My husband had just graduated from university. As a family, we decided to see the East Coast of Canada with our 2-year-old son

before we returned to the West. When we reached Newfoundland, we were in a horrific car accident. My husband had been driving and there was nothing left of his side of the car. He simply undid his seatbelt and walked away. For me, it took a little more effort to get out. Once I was out, I had to get our son out of the backseat. By the time I was ready to jump across a creek, a lady was there to help me get across the creek and then up to the top of the embankment. Once we were at the top, she was taken one way and I was taken in a different direction – she was the lady who had hit us.

The first police officer on the scene kept telling us that we should all be dead – she couldn't believe we had

survived. Eventually, I asked her to stop telling us we should be dead! As my husband and I reflected back on the accident, it made us realize how lucky we were to walk away but also how important it is to live for today because no one knows what tomorrow holds. We really tried to raise our children with this philosophy.

Now fast-forward 18 years. I was diagnosed with cancer. I was extremely grateful that I had been studying positive psychology, as I was able to apply my knowledge to help me through my journey. I was also very grateful that we had tried to live for each day because I did not have any regrets. Each night we would talk about what we were grateful for – sometimes it was

A LETTER OF GRATITUDE

BY JUDI WALLACE



that I had been sick that day! I was also very grateful that I had such a supportive family who continually offered me unconditional love.

I was asked to write about my journey. I realized that my journey seemed to start with the car accident because we were so grateful we had survived and we felt it had a positive impact on our lives. I also realized that I had not properly thanked the lady for helping me get across the creek and up the hill. I found my journal and the lady's name and I Googled her.

I wrote her an email telling her about the positive impact the accident had had on our lives and how it influenced the way

we raised our children. I also thanked her for helping me get across the creek and up the hill. To my amazement, I heard back from her. At the time, she had just graduated from university, too. She also realized how lucky we all were to walk away from the accident and she too had tried to raise her

children with the same philosophy of living for the day.

I will always be grateful that I was able to study positive psychology. Writing a thank you letter to someone I never had a chance to thank, increased my happiness level!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Judi Wallace completed her Master of Arts in interdisciplinary studies with a concentration of positive psychology. She is an accredited life coach and is on the executive board of the ICF- Okanagan Chapter. Judi is also a motivational speaker with a portion of her fees being donated to the British Columbia Cancer Foundation. She is a Paul Harris Fellow as well as a Competent Communicator and Leader through Toastmasters International. She lives in Kelowna, BC with her husband.

GRATITUDE AND TRAVEL

BY JIM LABUDA



atitude and travel may not be terms normally linked together. Gratitude is often expressed when we take

time out of our lives to reflect. It often defines the good things in our lives, highlights positive interactions, reminds us of what is important and- most importantly- reminds us to thank those around us.

Travel provides us with the time away from our busy lives to reflect, explore, interact and enjoy the world around us. We tend to take time to enjoy the moment and the opportunity and to pause and take in our surroundings. Travel can also provide us with the additional time we need to express our gratitude to the people in our lives.

The link between gratitude and travel can be illustrated from an experience my wife and I had on a spring 2013 trip to the Island of Santorini, Greece. We were invited by our hosts, Spyros and Diane Zorzos, owners of the Boathouse Hotel and YaMas restaurant, to join their family for Greek Orthodox Easter dinner.

We were seated with a group of 24 members of the Zorzos family and friends in the YaMas restaurant,



which is beachside in the village of Kamari. It was an idyllic setting along the glistening Aegean Sea on a beautiful, sunny, peaceful day. Platters of delicious food were being passed around, glasses of wine were being refilled and everyone was enjoying everyone else's company. Many people remarked about the beautiful day, the excellent food and the wonderful company. As the conversations continued, I threw out the question, "What have we done in our lives to deserve to sit here and enjoy all this?" Comments of agreement certainly filled the air, but to me it was a deeper question.

Here was a group of people from various corners of the world and of different cultures brought together by some type of connection to the Zorzos family. For my wife and me, we were the first guests of the season at their family-owned hotel.

Most of the dinner guests had never met each other prior to this visit to Kamari, yet there was a bond, a sense of family, a sense of trust. People were open, caring and genuinely sincere to each other. In a world filled with so many issues and Greece being plagued by such a depressed economy, we sat there in a euphoric state, enjoying the

moment and celebrating Greek Easter with the people around us.

At that time, I chose to reflect on my life, my travels, the people close to me, my marriage and this unique experience. This euphoric feeling brought on a profound feeling of gratitude. For the moment, I was grateful for my new friends, the roasted lamb, the Greek wine, the beautiful setting and the cultural experience. It seemed like a perfect time and place to celebrate life and to be grateful for all with which I had been blessed. I expressed my gratitude to Spyros and

Diane for extending an invitation to join their family and friends for their most treasured holiday. The experience made me appreciate my life. It fueled my zest for travel and created a lifelong connection to new friends in Greece.

Yet, I still ponder- what did I do to deserve to be sitting in an idyllic setting along the Aegean Sea on a beautiful, sunny, peaceful day celebrating Greek Orthodox Easter with new friends in Kamari, Greece? I may not know the answer but will be forever grateful for the experience.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jim LaBuda, Ed.D., has a passion for travel and life. He is a nationally recognized educator and administrator. He has authored education-related articles, been a reviewer for a national education journal, presented at an array of conferences and published a column, "Lessons Learned." He enjoys nothing more than flinging a backpack on his shoulder and traveling.

Jim can be reached at LVBUDA@cox.net or (702) 845-3434.



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- M. Scott Peck

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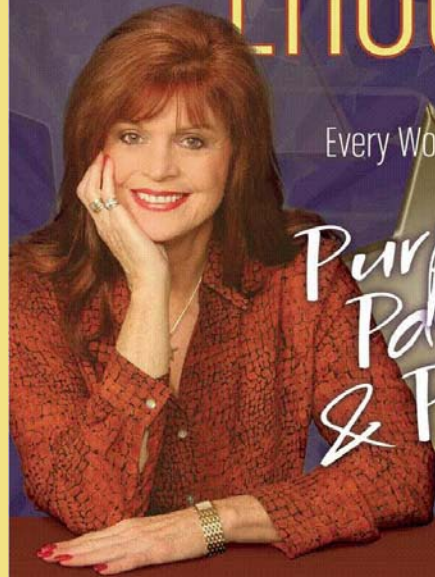
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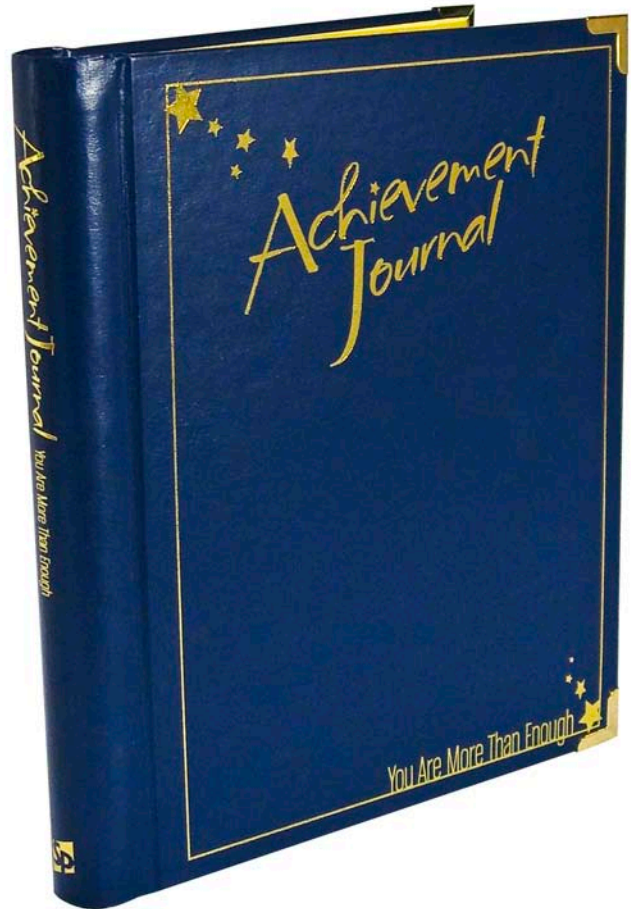
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The Montel Williams Show**



THANKSGIVING

BY KEVIN B. PARSONS



nly a few minute earlier, 8-year-old Amy woke me out of a dead sleep. “Daddy, there’s sparks on the roof.”

2:30 a.m., Thanksgiving morning, 1985

I stood in the snow, wearing unlaced boots with no socks and watched the firemen on the roof, putting out our house fire. They had doused the flames and now used chainsaws to cut the smoldering embers, throwing them into the yard. The blackened wood sizzled and cooled in the snow.

I leaped up and looked out the window to see the snow in the back yard, looking like frosting on a cake as the glow from the flames tinted it an amber color. Sherry woke, too, and went to rouse everyone. She dithered and searched for boots and coats.

“Honey, we gotta move, the house is on fire.” I hustled everyone out and into the night. “Come on, firemen,” I muttered as we stood outside while the fire spread on the roof. “Where are you?” Eight of us shivered in the cold: my wife and four kids and two single women who

lived with us. “Sherri, go to the Skorvons next door and get the kids out of this weather.”

“It’s three in the morning. We can’t wake them up.”

“Of course we can. The house is on fire.” I escorted them over and like good neighbors should, they took them in.

The firemen arrived and struggled with our steep and icy driveway. As the carnage grew, the snow succumbing to the flames.

We got the kids inside and I went back outside to ... what? Watch the chaos, I guessed. Neighbors woke from the noise and stopped by to offer regrets and support. I returned to check on Sherri and the kids. She listened and asked, “Are those chain saws I hear? Cutting up my brand new house?”

“I’m afraid so.” We’d built the house and

moved in six months ago, dreaming of raising our family in it.

After a few hours, a couple of firemen finished cleaning up the mess and secured the house. I rubbed my hands together and asked the chief, “Um, could we possibly get inside and remove the turkey from the kitchen?” Sure. A fireman offered us Red Cross help. I shook my head. “Our neighbors are going to provide shelter for us during the duration. Thanks anyway.” What a great bunch of people, they’d stepped up before the embers got cold.

That was the best Thanksgiving of my life.

Huh?

Yep. I suppose it could have been easy to look at the wreck with a gaping black hole in the center and curse our luck, but my heart overflowed with gratitude. We could fix the house, it was insured. Our Thanksgiving could have turned out

much worse, had Amy not awakened to the flames erupting from the roof. Everyone escaped unscathed, and family and friends pulled together to help out as people do when things go a little bit crazy. A few short hours later, my brother’s family hosted Thanksgiving. They joked that we could have just said we wouldn’t host it this year, rather than set the house on fire.

As we bowed our heads to offer a Thanksgiving prayer over the turkey and fixings, I thanked God for His protection of our family. Sometimes it’s what you have, not what you don’t, that’s important.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kevin B. Parsons has written numerous books, anthologies and blogs twice a week on www.kevinbparsons.blogspot.com and posts on Author Culture (www.authorculture.blogspot.com) and Geezer Guys and Gals (www.geezerguysandgals.blogspot.com).

Kevin has owned numerous businesses in the construction, motorcycle and real estate industries, in Nevada, California, Washington, Oregon and Arizona. He currently enjoys life at 9,000 feet in Brian Head, Utah with his patient wife, Sherri.



WHEN LIFE GIVES YOU LEMONS MAKE MOJITOS

BY CAROLYN V. HAMILTON



My job ended in classic high drama. Just after lunch I was ordered to pack my belongings and be escorted out of the building. After two and a half years, why was I fired? They said I didn't understand their programs enough to be writing about them; I suspect it was because I uncovered sloppy accounting.

At 67, my plan was to work three more years and retire to a sunny overseas locale where I could live on a small nest egg and my social security. Multi-marriages and lack of planning — embarrassing in hindsight — meant my choices would be to continue working or find a way to live on less.

Now that plan was shattered. I began a round of job-hunting and interviews with air-headed 30-somethings. I concluded that age discrimination may be illegal, but it lives and thrives. My savings were shrinking. It looked like work at Walmart or ?

I have retired friends in Puerto Vallarta. But the reality was that I could not meet Mexico's income and savings requirements for residency, and that tourist destination is not for the faint of wallet.

Online I explored the small Andean city of Cuenca, Ecuador. Once I made the decision, I became the professional downsizer.



||| **BELOW**
The road to Cuenca

For the next three months—still angry and fearful from the firing—I pulled in socially and sorted through clothes, books, art supplies, photos and memorabilia from my travels. I loved my Seattle vintage '60s apartment with its panoramic view of Lake Washington; I didn't want to leave it, but I'd given my notice to the landlord and my lake-gazing days were now numbered.

I advertised things on Craigslist and conducted business in the parking lot of the neighborhood Starbucks: open the trunk, show the goods, exchange the cash. But, for furniture, I knew strangers would have to come to my apartment. As it turned out, I met the nicest people—young couples starting out and singles with their first great job. I gifted friends; they helped me haul donations to Goodwill. I shipped family

treasures to a younger Oregon cousin, who was thrilled to have them. I sold my beloved PT Cruiser—loaded with leather seats and moon roof—that I had purchased new in 2004.

In Seattle, I'd never worn my gold and diamond jewelry, and it wouldn't be smart to wear it on the streets in a foreign country. I sold my mother's diamond ring, my first engagement ring, a beautiful peach moonstone cocktail ring from my second husband, a pearl ring my parents had given me for my 21st birthday. To lessen the pain of letting these memories go, I photographed everything.

Now, I live in charming Cuenca, a Unesco World Heritage Site. Year-round weather like Lake Tahoe in the summer. Kind and helpful people who welcome



foreigners. Excellent water from the tap, the American dollar for currency and the same 110 voltage outlets as the U.S. My days are busy with writing, painting, learning Spanish and meeting friends in cafes for mojitos. My modern three-bedroom apartment—\$400/month rent—has a fabulous view of the Cajas mountains. I walk to the Tomebamba river, the indigenous market for fresh fruits and vegetables, the bank, an English-speaking doctor, El Centro, a Curves franchise and a scrapbooking store.

La vida es buena—life is good, and I’m living this life years earlier than I’d originally planned. The hurt and anger of being fired and “forced” to move is gone.

Now I can acknowledge my gratitude to those people who decided they didn’t like my writing and fired me.

LEFT

Carolyn at the Caro Escalante Bridge

BOTTOM LEFT

Open-air market of Cuenca



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Artist, author and retired marketing executive, Carolyn V. Hamilton, is also a returned Peace Corps volunteer and vintage Playboy bunny. Her AA degree in Commercial Art is from Los Angeles Trade Technical College; her B.A. in Liberal Arts from Antioch University. She is Editor and Chief Adventuress at www.adventuress-travel-magazine.com “for women over 50 doing fun things.” Learn more about her at www.carolynvhamilton.com. She lives the high life in the Andes of Ecuador.



WHO I AM TODAY

BY REV. CHARLOTTE FOUST



Not all wisdom comes with age. Wisdom comes to us gradually. It comes to us in increments through our experiences. We don't always recognize it. Some of us never use it. Wisdom follows us all of our lives, waiting to be seen and understood.

The lessons that bring wisdom are rarely easy. Sunburns, broken bones and torn muscles teach us quickly about how not to treat our bodies; why we need to build up to running marathons; and to warm-up before we do strenuous exercise. We learn something from every experience – the good and the painful.

Doing our best to get from day to day, we encounter challenges, obstacles and opportunities. How we react to them, how we deal with them determines the lessons we learn from them – and be assured that everything in life has a lesson.

When we don't learn from a negative experience, we are doomed to repeat it. Not recognizing how we got there in a positive, joyous experience can leave us wandering around lost, looking for a way to get back to the good in our lives.

The older I get, the more I realize how grateful I am for the life I have lived. I would not be the person I am without having lived through the challenges,

The lessons that bring wisdom are rarely easy.

the ups and downs. I have learned how to navigate the difficult times, and how to maintain the peaceful times. I've learned to climb mountains, slay dragons and calm the waters. I've learned to savor the little things, the time I have with people I love, the beauty and wonder of the world around me.

Adversity comes in many forms, at random times. Without the earlier lessons, we would not have the skills



to deal with the bigger things when they come. The death of a beloved pet helps us learn how to handle the ultimate death of family and friends. Everything helps us grow into the people we are becoming every day.

I am not the same person I was yesterday or the day before. I have had experiences, met people, read more, done more. I will not be the same person tomorrow I am today. I am the sum of all I have ever been and tomorrow there will be more of me to be.

Everything I have ever done, experienced and felt has molded me into the person I am. I give thanks every day for my life. That may seem strange to someone who has been abused, minimized, invisible, demeaned or dismissed. I don't give thanks for the pain and suffering- I give thanks for the understanding gained, the lessons learned.

I live my life with gratitude for all that has been and allowed me to become the person I am. I am excited to see and be the person I will be tomorrow. I am grateful for my life.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rev. Charlotte Foust is senior minister of Community Spiritual Center in Las Vegas, Nev. Her messages and meditations inspire thoughtful reflection and positive actions. Rev. Charlotte's essays and affirmations can be found at www.communityspiritualcenter.com and www.whispersfrommyheart.com

“ Your life is the sum result of all the choices you make, both consciously and unconsciously. If you can control the process of choosing, you can take control of all aspects of your life. You can find the freedom that comes from being in charge of yourself.”

- Joanne Kathleen Rowling

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PERSISTENT DETERMINATION

BY PAT TURNER

Have you heard the saying- “Life is what happens when you’re making other plans”? Well, I was not making plans other than marriage and children when my life was forever changed. Two days before Christmas my senior year of high school, I was in a car wreck that resulted in the loss of my right leg above the knee. I spent most of the three months while in the hospital thinking about what I would do with my life after I was discharged.

Prior to the accident, my high school counselor had given me no encouragement to go to college by telling me “not to bother- I wasn’t smart enough.” Having a strong will even at 17 (not to be confused with being stubborn!), I *knew* I was going to college so I wouldn’t have to depend on anyone to support or take care of me. Once I got through my requirements and discovered my passion for teaching, I was a regular on the Dean’s List.

For more than 30 years, I worked with learning-disabled students in grades one to eight, and for 14 years I worked as a substitute teacher in general education. I retired a year ago, but stay connected to students by sharing life lessons I have learned along the way. There are three main messages I bring to students (and

anyone who will listen): 1) Never get into a vehicle without using a safety seat or seat belt; 2) Every person is different- some differences are just more noticeable than others; and 3) Life in general is hard, so be kind to each other- be a friend.

Kids are great; the little ones especially just pop out with the question to a parent, “Why does

she just have one leg?” When I see them watching me I know that inquiry is going to happen. I will stop and ask the parent, “Do you have a minute? I would like to tell them what happened.” Generally they do, and as soon I talk to the children their curiosity is eased. Depending on the age, they may not process it all, but the next handicapped person they see might not be so scary. If I wasn’t





an amputee I wouldn't be as credible, and for that I'm grateful to have the gift to teach people of all walks of life.

The blessing in being an amputee for 48 years is that I KNOW without a doubt why it happened. How many people do you know that can say that about the direction their lives have taken them? I have worked with so many children who struggle for various reasons in school. I am there to tell them to never give up. I had trouble in school and know how frustrating it can be- just keep trying different things and you WILL find something you are passionate about. Also, through sports, I have been an encouragement to others. I imagine it would be pretty funny to follow me down the ski hill and watch people's reactions.

Grateful, you bet, for all the opportunities I have had with my school kids as well as adults to give encouragement even before they needed to call on their inner strength. Yes, I know why I am here, and the role God had for my future on that snowy night- to be an example every day I walk out my door.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pat Turner lives in East Wenatchee, Wash. with her husband of 34 years, Joe. She has been active at her local ski area, Mission Ridge, since the year it opened in 1966. Pat learned to three-track ski and then taught skiing and racing. She received her B.A. in teaching at Central Washington University and accepted a teaching assignment in Placerville, Calif. She continued her career in teaching in the Wenatchee area where she recently retired. She enjoys remaining active at the gym as well as riding tandem bike with her husband. Pat also enjoys soaring in a glider, parasailing, zip lining and going for rides in a Long-Eze plane which her neighbor built from a kit. Her travel experiences include working with a special needs ski group in New Zealand, honeymooning in Tahiti and relaxing in Mexico, and Hawaii. Pat's other activities include watercolor painting, reading, knitting and crocheting. She crochets bookworms to use for a bookmark (pictured at left), and shares with kids, friends and strangers alike.

Busyness is not exclusive to CEOs. It also strikes you and me. We have let our “stuff” run amuck! We stack busy so high that we can’t see from behind the never-ending “To Do” list. Busy brain causes cluttered thoughts and leads to mild and, sometimes, severe confusion; thereby making sound judgement problematic.

What I am about to share with you can change your life. It is the secret to women’s physiology and thought processes. Women are emotional creatures. We are wired differently than men and that is why we are capable of multitasking like crazy which, is how our crazy schedules begin! Women who allow themselves to be ruled by emotions often subject themselves to everything that comes along. This article is for those who no longer want their happiness to be dependent upon people and/or conditions beyond their control; and for those who are ready to accept the promotion of being Chief Executive Officer.

My results came out of a longing to possess joy regardless of what is going on around me. I decided I did NOT want to be easily shaken but steadfast in all of my ways. When I began to achieve this, my gratitude became profound and life’s experiences richer.

I knew in my heart, and from reading scriptures, that I needed to let go of the melodrama of people and problems that frequently affected me and my performance. Scriptures gave clues: “This too shall pass,” “count it all joy brethren when you encounter various trials ...” and “in this world you will have trouble, behold I have overcome the World.” Implementing this information is the HOW TO manual of



I AM THE CEO OF ME

BY D’ARCY BURKE

being an overcomer. It begins with this premise: “take every thought captive.”

The bottom line is: emotions and feelings don’t have brains and so they can’t make decisions. Period. As CEO, I decide what to tell myself to think. I make the best decisions by observing myself like a witness receiving information. Once data is gathered and I’ve looked at it objectively, then my brain can make an informed decision.

As a witness, I simply receive and observe. I do not judge, react or start thinking about what I’m going to say or do. Afterward, I ask myself

how does this make me feel? More importantly, why does it make me feel this way? Everything stems from two major roots: fear or love. They can’t co-exist. Establish first, is this coming from a place of fear or a place of love. Then, use this information to guide the response.

Remember, everything will be OK as soon as you’re OK with everything! Nothing is gained from worry. Actually, it is a waste of precious time and energy. Choose to keep your heart open because the mind will follow the heart. As CEO, what you decide to be busy with is totally up to you.



Keep in mind that obstacles are opportunities for growth and maturity. Tribulations will always get our attention because they come in loud and clear, as if over a megaphone. If we choose to have an open heart to lessons in life and if we focus on the positives instead of the negatives, then we learn how to trust in greater measure so that our strength and endurance has a chance to grow.

When we bump into problems or misguided expectations, we can take a new approach. We can regulate our breathing. The brain needs oxygen to make a wise decision. Secondly,

remind ourselves to relax and lower our shoulders while exhaling a cleansing breath. The purpose of this is to let go of “stuff” so it doesn’t get stuck. Thirdly, let ourselves off the hook by choosing to forgive. Forgiveness isn’t for the perpetrator. It’s the process by which we literally free ourselves. Lastly, we must envision our “stuff” as virtually passing through us. Make a management decision not to allow “stuff” to cling to you and weigh you down any longer. This is the single most liberating decision you can make.

As CEO, you will be amazed at how much clarity you will have and how

stable you are. Nothing can shake you, no matter what life throws at you. Maturity is evident when nothing can steal your joy. By letting things pass through you, circumstances and people lose their talon grip on you. A clear mind is a sound mind. The heart and mind work in tandem, so, let peace be your umpire. If your heart is at peace, your mind is also. You’ll be able to give up “busy” forever!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

D’Arcy Burke is an entrepreneur and says she wouldn’t have it any other way. She has done many things: nutrition, owned a commercial design firm and even built and ran an amusement park. She presently lives six months of the year in the beautiful northwestern United States and six months in El Salvador, where she has five beautiful beachfront rental homes and a luxurious bed, breakfast and spa. Trip advisor awarded her premier property, Beach Bella Vista, the prestigious award “Property of the Year” along with Excellence recognition. D’Arcy can be contacted at info@dulcevilla.com or in the U.S. at 509-662-4253. On the web: www.dulcevilla.com & www.beachbellavista.com



I put my carry-on in the luggage compartment and sat down in my assigned seat. It was going to be a long flight. “I’m glad I have a good book to read. Perhaps I will get a short nap,” I thought. Just before takeoff, a line of soldiers came down the aisle and filled all the vacant seats, totally surrounding me. I decided to start a conversation. “Where are you headed?” I asked the soldier seated nearest to me.

“Chicago to Great Lakes Base. We’ll be there for two weeks for special training and then we’re being deployed to Iraq.” After flying for about an hour, an announcement was made that sack lunches were available for \$5. It would be several hours before we reached Chicago, and I quickly decided a lunch would help pass the time.

As I reached for my wallet, I overheard a soldier ask his buddy if he planned to buy lunch. “No, that seems like a lot of money for just a sack lunch. Probably wouldn’t be worth five bucks. I’ll wait till we get to Chicago.”

His friend agreed. I looked around at the other soldiers. None were buying lunch. I walked to the back of the plane and handed the flight attendant a 50 dollar bill. "Take a lunch to all those soldiers." She grabbed my arms and squeezed tightly. Her eyes wet with tears, she thanked me. "My son was a soldier in Iraq; it's almost like you are doing it for him."

Picking up 10 sacks, she headed up the aisle to where the soldiers were seated. She stopped at my seat and asked, 'Which do you like best beef or chicken?'

"Chicken," I replied, wondering why she asked. She turned and went to the front of plane, returning a minute later with a dinner plate from first class.

"This is your thanks." After we finished eating, I went again to the back of the plane, heading for the restroom. A man stopped me. "I saw what you did. I want to be part of it. Here, take this." He handed me \$25.

Soon after I returned to my seat, I saw

the flight captain coming down the aisle, looking at the aisle numbers as he walked, I hoped he was not looking for me, but noticed he was looking at the numbers only on my side of the plane. When he got to my row he stopped, smiled, held out his hand and said, "I want to shake your hand."

Quickly unfastening my seat belt I stood and took the captain's hand. With a booming voice he said, "I was a soldier and I was a military pilot. Once, someone bought me a lunch. It was an act of kindness I never forgot." I was embarrassed when applause was heard from all of the passengers.

Later I walked to the front of the plane so I could stretch my legs. A man who was seated about six rows in front of me reached out his hand, wanting to shake mine. He left another \$25 in my palm.

When we landed in Chicago I gathered my belongings and started to deplane. Waiting just inside the airplane door was a man who stopped me, put something in my shirt pocket, turned,

and walked away without saying a word. Another \$25!

Soon entering the terminal, I saw the soldiers gathering for their trip to the base. I walked over to them and handed them \$75. "It will take you some time to reach the base. It will be about time for a sandwich. God bless you."

Ten young men left that flight feeling the love and respect of their fellow travelers. As I walked briskly to my car, I whispered a prayer for their safe return. These soldiers were giving their all for our country. I could only give them a couple of meals. It seemed so little ...

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A veteran is someone who, at one point in his life, wrote a blank check made payable to The United States of America for an amount of "up to and including my life." That is honor, and there are way too many people in this country who no longer understand it.





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A FINAL NOTE
FROM JUDI MOREO

Whenever we find ourselves resisting our life circumstances, rather than reacting out of fear, anger or despair, we can choose to acknowledge that which we have, the things we have done, the places we have been and the people we have become. Whenever we wonder if the positive experiences we want in our lives will ever come about, we must stay focused on the good that is already present in our lives and be grateful for the blessings we have.

When you choose to live anchored in gratitude instead of thinking about what you lack and what your limitations might be, you will feel calmer and more peaceful. You will be better able to think clearly and find solutions to problems, make the right decisions and choose the right path for your life, instead of running around in a frenzy grabbing anything and everything that looks like an easy answer. Any time you act out of fear, you give up your power.

In her book "Rich Woman," Kim Kiyosaki states, "While fear can warn us of life-threatening events, it can also be a killer — a killer of dreams, of opportunities, of our own personal growth and passion of living life to its absolute fullest." Don't let fear kill your dreams, growth, and passion or cause you to give up your power. Choose gratitude instead!

Judi