

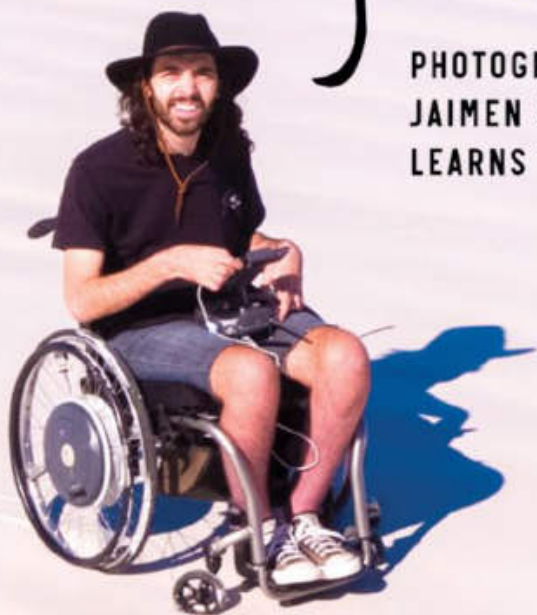
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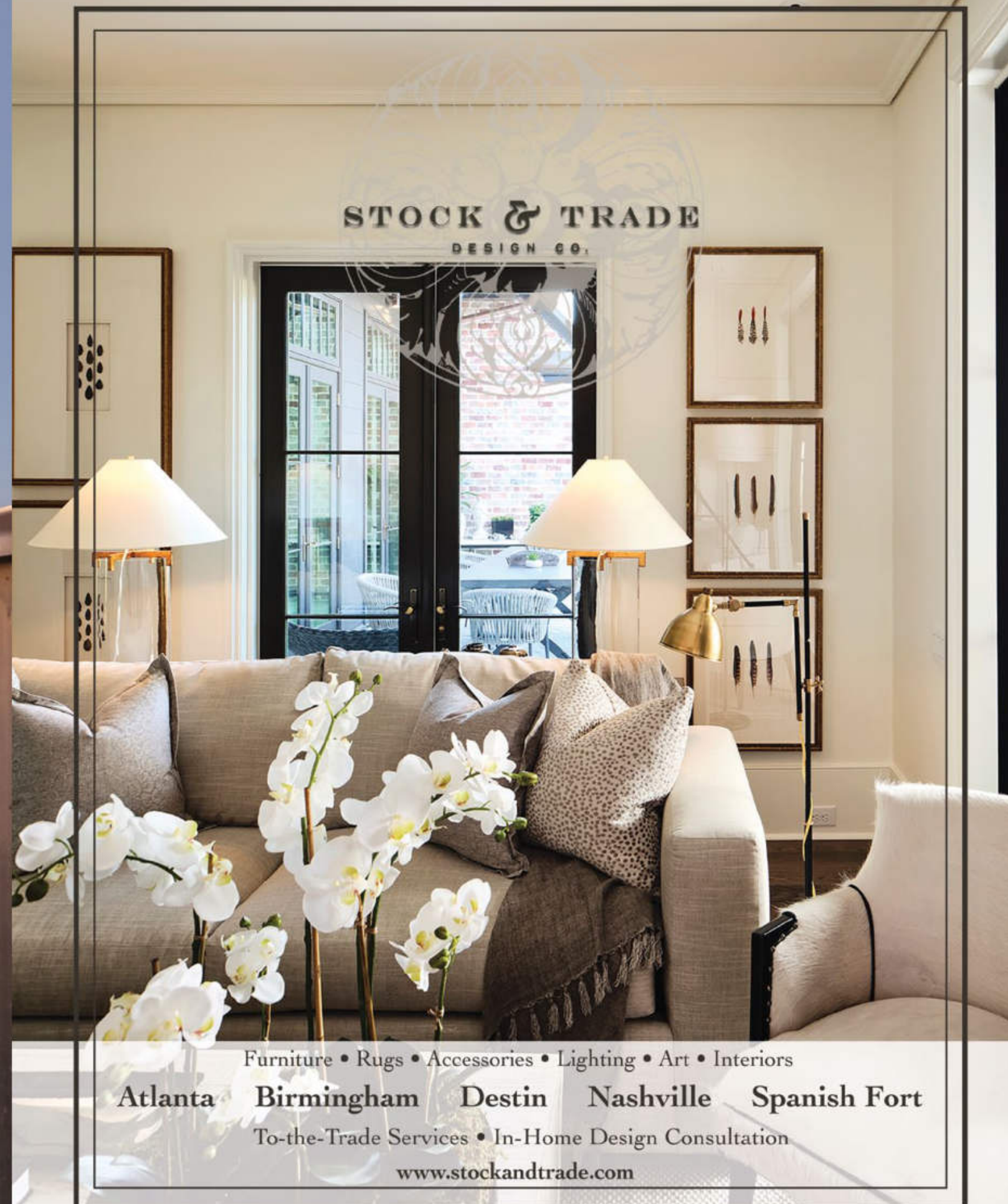
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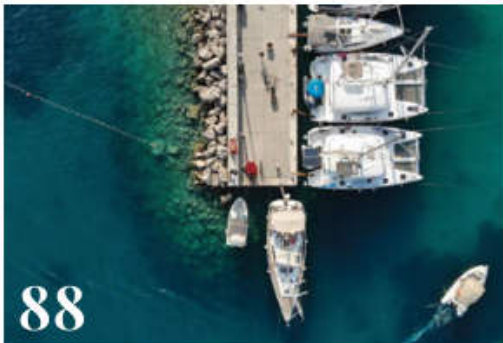
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Happy Thoughts FROM THE 30A GUY

I took a religious philosophy class in college. Being raised devout Catholic, I felt especially engaged when it came time to discuss the nature of good and evil, including how evil can possibly exist in the face of an all-powerful God, who could simply stomp-out all evil with the snap of His divine fingers, if He so wished. (Apologies if I offend anyone with my dated pronoun usage. I'm still a novice at that game.)

Through the ages, great saints and philosophers have debated such topics exhaustively, coming up with explanatory concepts such as freewill, Manichaeism, etc. But one simple argument – I like simple – is that without evil, we wouldn't even know what good *is*, because we would have nothing to compare it to. That is, if everything in the entire universe was the color blue, not only would we not know what the color red is, but we wouldn't know what blue is either, because blue would be the only thing that existed. So, the argument goes, you need at least a little red in the universe; otherwise, the concept of blue is totally meaningless.

When we think of “good people,” we often think of people who attend church every Sunday, or people who always have a pleasant demeanor, never uttering an ill thought about anyone or anything. Such people no doubt meet the basic definition of good. But there's arguably an even more powerful category of good people. These are the kind of people who run into a burning building when everyone else is running away. These people rescue abandoned animals, adopt orphans, and establish charities to help those in desperate need. This kind of good actually requires evil to exist. That is, there's no such thing as compassion without suffering. There are no heroes without tragedies. Evil is necessary to create such a powerful form of good.

In what we're dubbing our first “Happiness Issue,” we're very proud to share inspiring stories of some really good people who have endured and overcome daunting challenges in their lives. But rather than let their unfortunate circumstances define them, they've used their personal pain and suffering to create joy – not just for themselves, but for those around them.

We hope their stories will help inspire you to seize control of your own mental and physical well-being. We've all endured a lot of stress and anxiety (and worse) over the last couple of years, and we've certainly learned a lot about the viral nature of pandemics. But there's something far more powerful and far more contagious than COVID-19. It's called happiness. I hope we can spread a little to you through the happy people and places in these pages.

Beach Happy, my friends!

Mike Ragsdale

Mike Ragsdale
Founder, The 30A Company

ON THE COVER:
Jaime Hudson

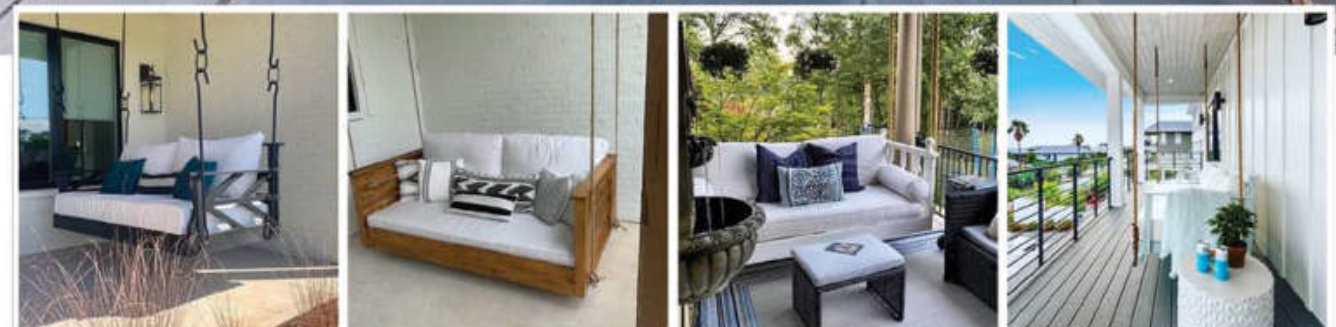


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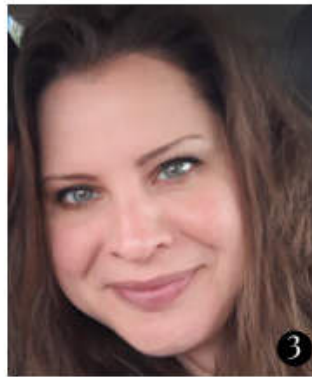
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4



5

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LEARNING TO FLY

Jaimen
Hudson



Photographer
JAIMEN HUDSON'S
Unlikely Path to Happiness

By Paul Stanley



Jaimen Hudson grew up on the coastline of Esperance in Western Australia. Surrounded by water and gorgeous beaches, he spent carefree days playing sports, scuba diving, and hanging out with friends. Then his life took a drastic turn.

While attempting a motorcycle jump, 17-year-old Jaime went over the handlebars and landed on his head. Lying motionless in the sandy Australian dunes, it took emergency responders over an hour to reach him. It was during that time that he realized his life would never be the same again.

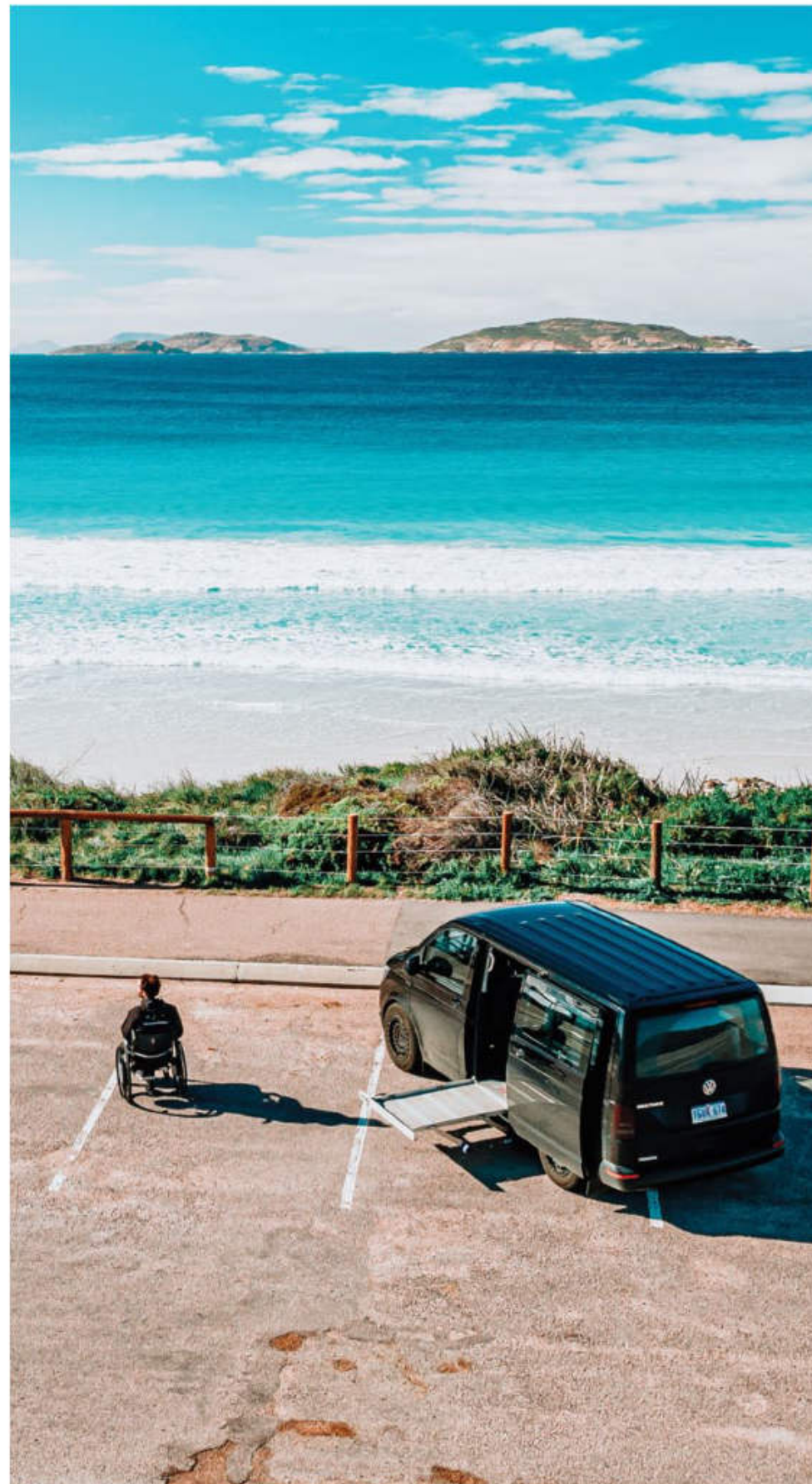
The lean, muscular athlete found himself paralyzed from the armpits down. His life certainly changed...but it also began.

Adjusting to the struggles of life in a wheelchair would devastate most people. It certainly wouldn't allow the life beneath the sea that he was used to. Yet, Jaime quickly realized he had two choices—he could exist and slowly drown in a sea of misery, or he could adapt and figure out how to absorb life's hidden beauty. Jaime chose the latter.

"I basically went from a fun-loving kid, doing whatever I wanted, to relying on everyone to help with basic needs," Jaime said. "For a long time, I couldn't even scratch my face, and I had to rely on others for everything. The accident made me realize how fragile life really is and how lucky I am."

Before writing this story, I wasn't familiar with Jaime or his work. I've encountered several people throughout my career who have found success despite physical limitations. Rarely have I met someone who radiates pure joy. That includes those of us without physical limitations. How does Jaime find the strength to enjoy life so fully?

"Sometimes shit happens in life, and you've just got to move on," said Jaime. "I wasn't a pessimist before my accident, and I'm not one now. When people suffer tragic injuries, the reason loved ones and friends leave them isn't that they are injured, but because they're so difficult to live with. I never wanted that to happen to me."



“
His life
definitely changed,
but it also began.
”





Like Florida's Emerald Coast, white sandy beaches and turquoise water surround Esperance. Both his parents are scuba instructors, so Jaimen began diving when he was ten years old.

"I think there's something calming and soothing about water. I don't think I could live in a place without the ocean. People drive hours to spend a few moments looking at it."

Recovering from his injuries, Jaimen returned to the family business. Although he doesn't have complete control of his fingers, Jaimen taught himself to type using his knuckles. Content with his work and occasional beach visits, Jaimen looked for an excuse to be on or near the water. Like the motorcycle accident that changed his life, a chance encounter with a customer in 2014 took him in another direction.

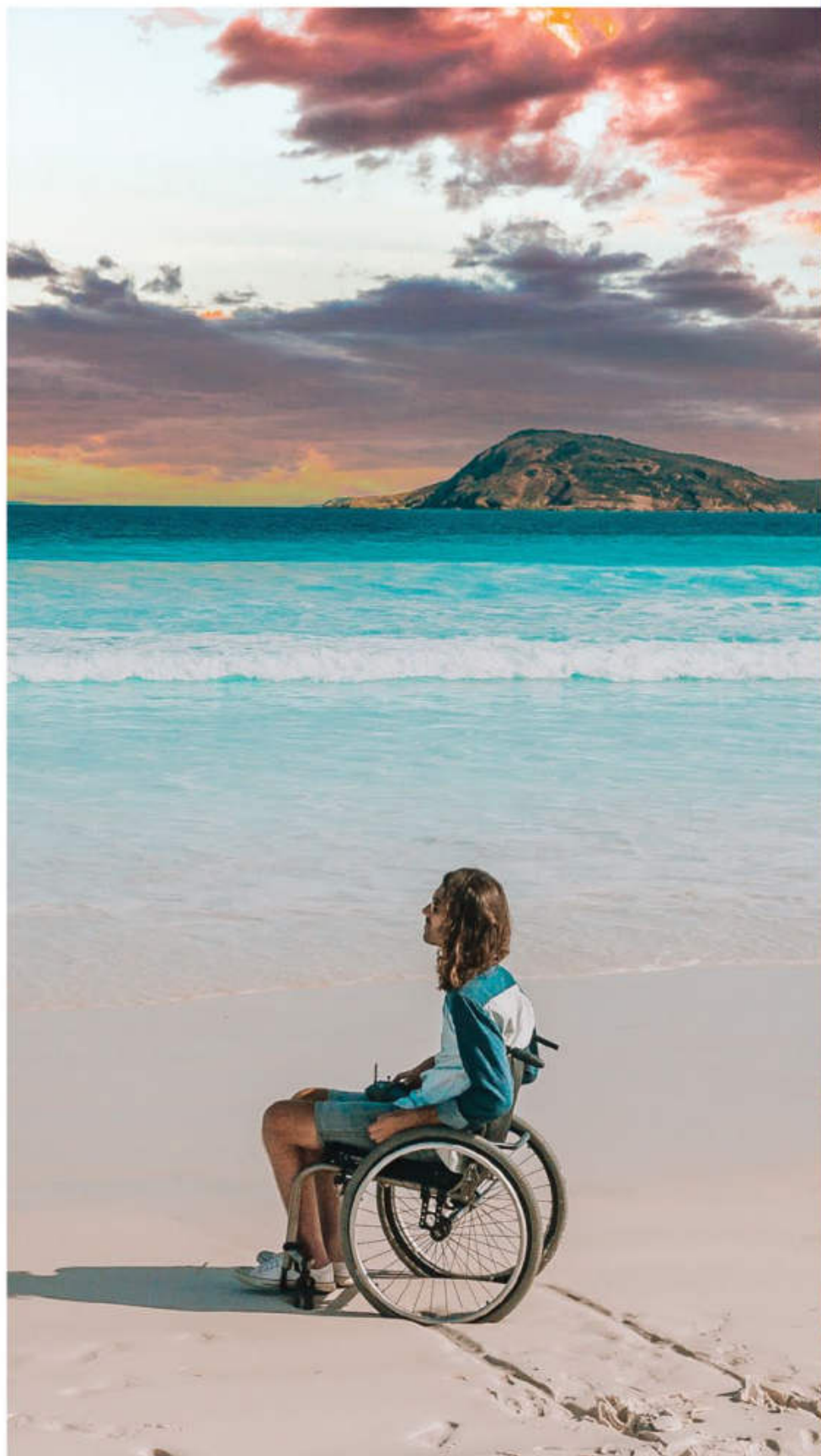
A man asked to charter a boat to take aerial photos. It turned out he was the CEO of DJI, one of the leading drone manufacturers.

"The photos he shot with a drone blew me away," said Jaimen. "I immediately started researching drone photography to see if it was something I could do. My family got tired of me reading and talking about them and encouraged me to order one."

Jaimen spent hundreds of hours learning how to operate his drones. Still, he was hesitant because he wasn't sure if he could manage the controls well enough. Like the other obstacles Jaimen encountered, he also mastered aerial photography.

It didn't take long for people around the globe to find his photos. His videos and photographs have now garnered more than 250 million views online.

Another turn of events brought even more changes. A few years later, an old family friend in the broadcasting industry, Leighton DeBarros, saw Jaimen's work. The two men bumped into each other at a drone certification meeting and discussed documenting Jaimen's work. Before they knew it, the idea of Jaimen diving again surfaced.



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His videos and photographs
have now garnered
more than
250 million
views online.
”





HH

But there was a huge problem. Because of his physical condition, Jaimen's lungs aren't able to expel water. If water ever entered his lungs, he wouldn't be able to cough it up, increasing his risk of drowning.

Undeterred once more, Jaimen began learning how to dive as a person with quadriplegia. After hours of training and pool dives with his team, Jaimen felt ready for his ocean dive.

The 2021 documentary Jaimen Hudson: *From Sky to Sea* captures his latest journey as Jaimen returned to his beloved ocean to film the migration of whales off the Australian coast. The documentary debuted in the spring of 2021 in Australian cinemas and will soon be available on Australian streaming services.

When I asked Jaimen if he was scared or nervous about diving again, he confessed his nerves were high right before going into the ocean. "Looking back, I should have prepared a lot more," the smiling Aussie said. "But as soon as the saltwater hit my lips, I felt at home."

Jaimen has experienced many changes. "For a long time, I didn't think I would ever marry. I used to think, who would want to marry some guy in a wheelchair?"

Today, thirty-year-old Jaimen is married to Jess, and they have a two-and-a-half-year-old son. "My son always wants to turn my drone on and off, and he gets upset if anyone else does."

Jaimen still works in the family business and has achieved accolades as a world-class drone photographer. Now Jaimen can add underwater exploration to his growing list of unlikely achievements.

There's an exciting new project in the works. "We've begun to write a script for another dive documentary showcasing the islands of Western Australia. We'll touch on how climate change may be affecting the Australian reefs and other factors that impact our oceans."

Rest assured that anything Jaimen set his sights on will be pursued with a beach lover's passion. 🏖️

To learn more, visit Jaimen's website (www.jaimen.com.au) or follow him on Instagram (@jaimenhudson).



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Ragan's Resilience

An Uphill Journey Leads to the Beach

Story and photos by Susan Gunn

Norman Vincent Peale once said, "Our happiness depends on the habit of mind we cultivate. So practice happy thinking every day."

That is easier said than done, but recently, I got to know a bright, young woman with jet-black hair and a megawatt smile who challenged me to re-think that opinion. I had heard about this bubbly, kind-hearted, brightly positive woman. I wanted to know more about how she managed to stay so tenacious and happy despite some extraordinary obstacles. Her name is Ragan Smith, and I won't soon forget the day we met.

“

**I try to look
at life with
ONE CHOICE,
and that is
to face whatever
is before me
like tomorrow
is not going
to come**

Ragan is a beach girl, working as an ambassador for The 30A Company in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida. We sat down and quickly relaxed as we began to chat about her story. Although Ragan enjoys being social and spreading positivity, she doesn't like being the center of attention. As fate would have it, the daughter of Delena Stuart Watson and Kirk Bedinger was born into a harsh spotlight, making her entrance into the world in Dallas, Texas, thirty-three years ago with two rare birth defects. Weighing in at nearly five pounds, Ragan was born with cloacal exstrophy, a condition in which the internal organs of the lower abdomen are exposed externally. Some of her organs were malformed or not completely functional. Another serious complication in her case was spina bifida. She was not given a good prognosis for survival.

I listened as Ragan told me about the first few weeks of her life. She was transferred to Children's Hospital in Dallas where her parents met pediatric surgeon Darrell Hermann. Dr. Hermann had just completed a sixteen-hour surgery on another child. He then successfully performed the first surgery on Ragan, which lasted twelve hours. After almost two months in the hospital, she was able to go home. Her parents were informed at that time that she would most likely never sit up on her own, that she would never walk, and that she would need specialized round-the-clock care and require multiple surgeries as she grew. She told me with a coy smile, "I was sitting

up by nine months, and I took my first steps on Easter Sunday when I was two years old."

At home, she faced a different kind of life, but not one you might imagine. As she grew, she endured many surgeries to accommodate and correct issues caused by both conditions. This left Ragan vulnerable to infections and complications. As a result of hospitalizations and healing time, she faced not only continuous recovery but school and social challenges as well. With the loving support of her four siblings, her parents, and extended family, she pushed through these challenges and thrived, but there were issues. When Ragan was seven, she had increasing pain and difficulty with her digestion. Exploratory surgery revealed she had several holes in her large intestine, and eventually, she ended up in ICU with sepsis. Again, the doctors told her now-divorced parents her prognosis was not good. United in their love for Ragan, her parents remained amicable, and once again, they prayed for Ragan to heal. She was placed into a medically induced coma to allow her body to have the best chance.

"During the time I was in a coma, I had an out-of-body experience. I could see myself in the bed, I could see my parents talking to Dr. Hermann and crying. I didn't understand it then, but somehow I came to know during these moments that if I survived, I would have a fulfilled life—I would make sure I lived a fulfilled life." It wasn't until years later that she would return to this hospital ICU with her mom, point out the room she had been in, and share the secret of her experience.

Upon hearing Ragan's story, Delena told her daughter, "That was the day we were told to prepare for your funeral." Ragan seemed to understand then and there her life was meant for something special.

Ragan had lived until the age of ten with her spine at a 78-degree curve, and at eleven, she had another major surgery to install a Harrington rod for spinal correction. Initially, this left her in excruciating pain, and though her back is much improved, she has no

”



feeling in her left leg from the knee down. As if life wasn't challenging enough, she suffered the tragic loss of her beloved step-father to a motorcycle crash when she was 21.

Ragan has battled through, and though she said there are times of physical and emotional pain, she loves her life. Ragan has spent her time serving others with her mom who started Ragan's Hope, a non-profit organization to support families of children with birth defects and traumatic injuries.

As fate would have it, another familiar pediatric surgeon, Dr. Craig Hobar, started a not-for-profit organization called LEAP to help children needing specialized surgeries. The two organizations joined forces, and through LEAP and Ragan's Hope, she and her mother have joined Dr. Hobar and his team on multiple mission trips to India, Haiti, Ecuador, Mexico, Belize, and Zimbabwe. Ragan told me, "On one trip to India alone, we evaluated several hundred children and performed nearly one hundred surgeries."

It was on one of these trips to India that Ragan met Jason Smith, also from Dallas, was involved with similar mission work. He made his permanent home in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, with his young son Ethan, and in 2015, he and Ragan were married.

Ragan has always been drawn to the beauty of the coast and says she somehow knew she would end up near the water. But her real love became Ethan. "Once when I was a little girl out with my grandfather, I noticed a pregnant woman and I said, 'I can't wait to grow up and be like her, to have a baby and be a mom.'" Her grandfather gently explained to Ragan that she wouldn't be able to have children of her own, but only because someday there would be a child who needed her. She found that child in her now legally adopted son, Ethan.

Ragan's challenges continued a few years ago when she stepped on a mesquite thorn, which she did not feel. It penetrated the bone of her left heel. She returned to Dallas for surgery and, due to a massive

infection, nearly lost her foot. I asked Ragan how she managed to get through this time after everything she had already experienced. "I knew I couldn't control my circumstances, and there were some dark days. I just had to get back on my feet, walk to the end of the hall outside my hospital room, then walk down to the cafeteria the next day," Ragan said. "I just set a goal that I would get home and walk the beach again with my child, and embrace the beauty and nature that surrounds us. We live in such an amazing place!"

Ragan wanted me to know her loving parents never adopted the attitude that their child would be different. Though she faced upwards of seventy surgeries by the time she was ten years old, her parents never faltered in her care, both physical and emotional. "My parents said, 'We are not going to sit her in the corner and say she can't do something. She will be able to do anything and everything anyone else can do,' and I think this is a huge testimony to the person I am today."

As our time came to a close, I looked at this pretty 5-ft tall, 100-pound powerhouse of a woman and realized I had been sitting across from one extraordinary human. Not because of her birth defects, but because of her resilience and positive attitude—and that great big smile. I asked her what she might say to people struggling in these current times, feeling like there might not be an end to their trials and tribulations.

"I try to look at life with ONE CHOICE, and that is to face whatever is before me like tomorrow is not going to come. It's hard, even more so in these uncertain times. People are struggling, people are seeing no way out of situations, but if we would look at life with the attitude that the best, most rewarding moments come after struggle—wow, how beautifully true. We just need to endure the struggle to receive the unimaginable reward yet to come."

To learn more about Ragan and Delena's organization, visit Ragan's Hope (raganshope.com).

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Though she faced upwards of SEVENTY surgeries by the time she was ten years old, her parents never faltered in her care...

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Giving Their All

A couple sells their home and hits the road in pursuit of their big, beachy dream

By Lauren Sage Reinlie

One evening last fall, Julie Weldon and Stacey Pierce, a married couple from South Carolina, were on their knees praying inside an RV, their last major possession, while parked at a campsite outside San Diego.

With tear-streaked cheeks and puffy eyes, the women felt beat down and broken. They prayed for more strength. They prayed for just a bit more endurance after having come so far. They prayed they had what it would take to keep putting one foot in front of the other to reach their finish line.

This is not exactly the picture Weldon and Pierce, 50 and 49, respectively, had imagined for this stage in their lives.

They'd hoped to be retired, maybe running a little bed and breakfast.

Instead, last year, the entrepreneurs sold their house. They moved into an RV, putting everything they had left into their company, and headed for California. Their product, The Wanderr, is a powerhouse piece of beach and adventure gear. It's a cart for hauling up to 150 pounds with a cot and a foldable, adjustable chair, all in one rugged package that can traverse difficult terrain, including sand.

The concept is gold, and the two are fully invested, not just financially, but with all their passion, their drive, and their entire lives. They say it's a calling.



But it has also been a wild roller coaster ride.

Just two weeks earlier, the couple had been riding the high of their biggest, game-changing break after winning a live competition on national TV and securing a deal with QVC and HSN (formerly the Home Shopping Network). The agreement and the exposure catapulted their product to a new level. But on this night, they found themselves back in the trenches, feeling overwhelmed, almost completely depleted, and doing the same thing they have been doing for years now: searching desperately for funding.

Weldon likened their experience these days to the last few miles of a marathon. "I've never been so sure we are going to be successful, but many days, we don't feel we have the energy in our lives to keep going."

The idea behind The Wanderr began decades ago when Weldon's father noticed a mother struggling to manage all her gear while taking her kids to the beach. Her parents created a prototype, but with six kids and a bakery, they never managed to bring it to market. In 2012, Weldon decided to give it a go.

By 2014, she had founded a company and partnered with a manufacturer, but the partnership was a disaster. Rather than put her name behind

a product she didn't believe in, she walked away from her own company, taking a job at the Shrimp Shack for \$10 an hour to clear her mind and tend her wounds.

After a couple years, Weldon and Pierce felt called back to the concept, and in 2018, they pulled the trigger on a redesign. Two years later, in the middle of a global pandemic, they had to fire a Chinese manufacturing company and find a new one. Meanwhile, the couple was hustling, trying to find investment dollars, but they just weren't coming in.

"As women, it's very hard for us to get funding," Weldon said. During 2020, they made over 100 pitches to potential investors to little avail. At the same time, they watched a friend of theirs, a man with a sunglasses business, raise \$8 million.

The numbers are harsh. In 2020, female-only founders received a mere 2.4 percent of all investment funding in the United States, according to an analysis by Crunchbase. Over half goes to women in tech. That leaves about one percent for all other women-run ventures.

And even among these few funded startups, Weldon and Pierce are rarities. Not many female entrepreneurs are bringing complex products like theirs to market. "We walk around the trade shows looking for other women doing something similar," Weldon said. "We never find them."

The couple were reckoning with these realizations when they decided to sell their home. They had already closed all their 401Ks and maxed out their credit cards. The house was all they had left.

"We looked at each other, and it really was the only choice," Pierce said.





"We weren't going to give up on our company."

After the house went, they weren't sure what to do. RV life was not the obvious choice. Weldon and Pierce are not exactly minimalists or avid road trippers. "Let's put it this way, we had four closets in our house, and that wasn't enough," Pierce said. But they have enjoyed the experience, seeing the country from its highways and meeting people along the way.

After hearing that the couple sold their house, a U.S. manufacturer they had been courting for years agreed to work with them. "He said in 30 years, he hadn't met entrepreneurs who were as committed as we are and who believed in their product as much as we do," Weldon said. The Wanderr will be entirely made in the United States in 2022.

After winning on the TV show *America's Big Deal* in October, and the deals and exposure that came with it, Weldon

and Pierce are confident they are on the upswing. They can feel the end of their time battling in the trenches is near. They have already weathered so much and have always gotten back up again. But it is still scary to be out on a limb where they are, and their day-to-day lives can still be a struggle.

When they don't feel they have the energy to continue and to finish the race, the people they have built relationships with along the way have come through.

"Our friends and family, even strangers, it's like they are lined up along the path, waving at us and saying, 'Keep going,'" Weldon said.

And they do. 🙌

To learn more about The Wanderr and to help their pursuit of happiness, visit omegear.com or follow them on Instagram (@ome_gear).



DEFENDER OF

HAPPINES

"Happiness is a state of mind,"
said dad-of-four, Daisson Hickel.



By Martin Liptrot
Photos: Sean Murphy

Very profound, I thought, as we sat, sipping fresh coffee in Grayton Beach, Florida, in the morning sunshine with the warm November weather surrounding us, but I wonder if location has a little part to play, too?

“Some of the happiest times I’ve had have been in some of the most unlikely places – Iraq, Afghanistan, the Middle East,” said Daisson. “I’ve had immense happiness because I’ve shared those moments with some extraordinary humans, people you share a deep bond with, because you depend on the person next to you.”

“But living by the water is my happy place,” he added. “Being at the beach helps put things in perspective. You can appreciate the grandeur of it all, and it puts your personal challenges in scale. And living at this beach in Northwest Florida makes me complete. The people I meet here have a solid connection with the place, it isn’t just a slogan on a t-shirt. This is a community that is genuinely beach happy.”

Daisson deserves some happiness. He has served his country well for nearly two decades. He has completed 11 overseas deployments as a U.S. Army Green Beret and has taught combat diving to special forces soldiers in Key West. It was upon returning from one of these assignments that Daisson learned his unit had relocated from North Carolina to Eglin Air Force Base on the Gulf Coast, and that he and his young family would be moving to the Florida Panhandle.

“I’ve always had a love of the water and the open air, so this was a move – though we hadn’t planned it – that we relished,” he said. “My wife came on a trip to explore the area and fell in love with what we saw. We chose to live as close to the water as we could manage, and getting on the beach or in the Gulf has now become a part of my personal routine.”

Daisson can be spotted most mornings on Grayton Beach with his vintage Land Rover Defender, tugging, dragging, and pushing its huge spare tire across the sand for exercise, before pouring himself a cup of coffee to coincide with the rising of the sun.

And now, as his years of military service draw to a close, like many of his colleagues, Daisson is contemplating the tricky transition to civilian life, and how to create a perpetually happy state of mind.

“I’m in the thick of this now,” he said. “Something



happens when you take the uniform off for the final time. What goes away with it is access to people you shared a common mission with, a common purpose.”

“In the military, you train hard and, in that environment, building trust and relationships becomes easy. But when that goes away, and your body starts to break down from all the injuries and abuse you’ve put it through,” said Daisson, “it does something to you.” Adapting to civilian life isn’t easy.

“In my military experience, you can be gone for months at a time,” explained Daisson. “You put the mission first, your family life second. But as a civilian, you are privileged to choose what your priorities are. If I choose that my happiness is now my priority, my passion for happiness becomes the center of my focus. I think this is what I am being drawn towards as I start new businesses and become passionate about new things.”

So, what might these new passions be, I asked.

“I’ve always loved coffee. Wherever I have been, Central America and the Middle East, there is a culture around coffee I adore.”

Daisson founded The Java Can Company after his second deployment to Afghanistan, offering a completely portable coffee making kit – gas stove, coffee grinder, 4-cup moka pot and 4 cups for sharing – all housed in an authentic military-spec ammunition box.

“I have my Java Can with me when I am watching the sunrise on Grayton Beach and can offer a cup to others who are walking or exercising on the beach when I am there,” he said. “It is a great way to connect.”

He also wants to connect with people further afield.

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“I love to travel. I am working with partners to set up a bespoke travel company, which offers people real, authentic travel experiences. We have a business opportunity in Nepal, and I have family in Colombia, so I would love to take a group of adventurers into the jungle, along the rivers or into the mountains.”

“Americans are pretty time-poor and only have a week or two to travel,” he said. “This means they tend to only see the tourist highlights, which isn’t really travelling. I think we learn more from a more immersive experience.”

Daisson is also passionate about another bespoke way to travel. He is a vintage Land Rover aficionado.

Relaxing on Grayton Beach one day, he noticed a Land Rover pull up and, inevitably, a conversation was struck. The owner of the other Land Rover was Mike Ragsdale, founder of The 30A Company. The two men quickly bonded over coffee, a shared love of travel, and these iconic, rugged British vehicles.

Mike invited Daisson to get involved with the 30A Sand Rover Rally, an opportunity Daisson leapt at.

“My company initially provided quality coffee to the participants at the second annual event, but now, a few years later, I want to get more involved. So, this year, I am helping organize the event, inviting global travellers who have great experiences to share about their vehicles.”

Like many of us, Daisson wonders what will happen to the economy post-pandemic.

“One thing has certainly changed: people realise they can live where they want,” he said. “They too can put their priority on having fun and being with the people they love.”

From this reckoning an idea sprung, and an experiment was launched.

Daisson founded Drive Afar, a beach vehicle rental company with a fleet of classic Land Rover Defenders and other beach vibe vehicles, including a VW Bus and a Dune Buggy.

“The experiment was a success,” said Daisson. “We rent our vehicles through Turo, the online vehicle rental app, and we quickly realized we were the only one renting what we call beach vehicles. You can rent a vehicle for a day or a couple of weeks, cruise up and down Scenic Highway 30A, go get coffee from Rosemary, Alys or Grayton Beach or drive to the Red Bar or any of your other favorite restaurants.”

Just this week, he rented a Defender to a family from Atlanta.

“The dad was totally stoked about being able to get behind the wheel of a right-hand-drive vehicle,” said Daisson. “We dropped off another one of our open-top Land Rovers for a



couple from Dallas who just wanted to cruise up and down the beach in the sun with the wind blowing in their hair. These are things they can only do when they rent these vehicles, and they rent them here.”

Daisson said this is a business pursuit that truly matches his passion. “It celebrates beach-happy vehicles in the most beach-happy community in the country. And now we can make the best beach experience of all come to life. We can make you feel like a local.”

As Daisson completes his final months in military service, he is continuing to explore new ways that he can help create even more happiness.

“With everything I do, I am looking for ways in which my happiness can lead to happiness in others,” he said. “Whether that is providing great coffee, sharing time together or looking for ways to offer experiences that create some sort of valuable exchange between people – more than just monetary – that would be my perfect recipe for happiness.”

Follow Daisson Hickel's life and business adventures on Instagram (@daisson.hickel).





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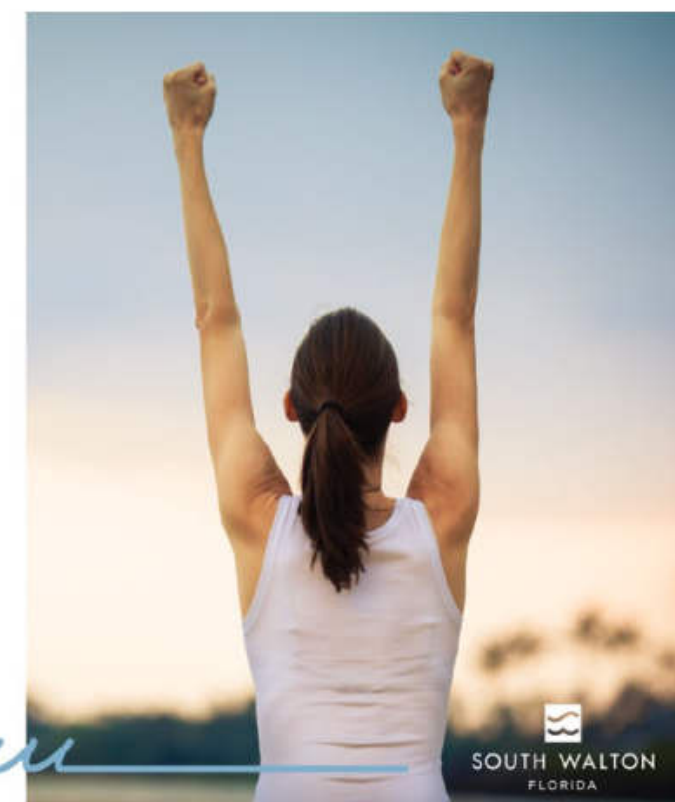
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Photo: Lauren Athalia



“
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”



JESSE W. COUCH



A Legacy of Giving

A grandfather's secret gift continues to spread happiness

By Lauren Sage Reinlie

When Sean Couch's grandfather passed away, he knew his life would never be the same. In that moment of grief, however, there was no way he could have known just how much his path would shift from that day on.

Jesse Couch was 94 when he died in 2015. For Sean's 29 years of life, his grandfather had raised him like a son. Sean and his mother lived a few blocks away from his grandparents. With his own father out of the picture, Jesse stepped up. They had countless dinners together and went on trips as a family. Sean spent his weekends with Jesse and his grandmother, Toddy. They were very close.

Jesse, though not a big man, loomed large in stature. He could be intimidating. Sean remembers the well-trod path to his study, down a long, quiet corridor in his grandparent's modest ranch-style home outside Houston. The study was filled with stacks of books. His grandfather, a Princeton political science graduate, was well-read, always studying and learning. Every morning he started his day reading his Bible. Jesse was a pilot during World War II, and he maintained a love of flight all his life. In conversations in the study, Jesse would sit in his chair and listen. He was quiet and expressionless, sometimes for long stretches, and then confident, commanding, and often profound in his response.

While his grandfather studied his books, Sean took to studying him. Jesse didn't speak much about his personal life. By reviewing his scrapbooks and photo albums and watching his grandfather's actions, Sean began to piece together a rich story of a stoic man who was also incredibly thoughtful, passionate, and a dreamer. He played golf and was a member of the gun club, but he also wrote poetry and gave his time to art museums, animal shelters, and the Houston Arboretum. He had overcome some of life's toughest struggles, including losing a son to suicide. Still, as a grandfather,

he found himself able to be a strong, reliable presence in Sean's sometimes chaotic childhood.

Jesse offered guidance and helped Sean get through college, spending money that Sean had never seen. Jesse always drove used cars and didn't flaunt any apparent wealth. When Sean's mother needed assistance, Jesse assured Sean he had a plan and not to worry.

Jesse watched Sean grow, study marketing and digital media management, and join tech start-ups in Austin, where his entrepreneurial spirit really came alive. Sean married, and when Jesse died, Sean and his wife were expecting their first child.

Sean attended Jesse's funeral services. The family grieved. Sean felt a hole open in his life.

And then they received his will.

Along with taking care of various affairs, Jesse entrusted Sean with a multi-million-dollar charitable foundation, a foundation Sean had no idea even existed.

"Suddenly, it felt like all the skills that I had learned in life had really prepared me for this," said Sean. "It was very serendipitous, and that's kind of how my life has been. Everything happens for a reason. I'm very much about fate and God's plan. You make the plan, but you really have no idea what's going to happen next."

Today, the J.W. Couch Foundation (www.jwcouchfoundation.org) gives out about \$2.5 million a year to various projects focusing on education, preservation, and wellness, three causes Jesse was passionate about. Sean and his wife now have four children. Two years ago, the family relocated from Texas to the 30A area in the panhandle of Florida.

Center for Humane Technology

The foundation has supported a wide range of groups over the years. One highlight includes being an early backer of the Center for Humane

Technology, a non-profit focused on reducing screen time and fighting the ill-effects of social media.



The group has gone on to do extensive work, including producing the documentary film *The Social Dilemma*.

Last year, the foundation backed the Farmlink Project, which was started by a few college students who couldn't go to school during the pandemic. They began cold-calling farmers who had produce that would otherwise have been thrown away and had that produce directly delivered to food banks.

This was the first effort through JWC Studios, a new arm of the foundation that produces and funds high-quality videos for nonprofits. The groups can use the videos for messaging or fundraising, whatever they need. "I wanted to do more than just write grants," Sean said. "This is something that can have a much longer shelf life."



Today the Farmlink Project is an official non-profit based in Los Angeles, and the students were awarded the Medal of Honor for their work.

Sean has also begun to direct funds into preservation efforts near their new home, including backing the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance, Scenic Walton, and the E.O. Wilson Biophilia Center. One of their most ambitious projects to date is the *Paper Bear*, a full-length feature film slated for release late 2022. The film aims to entertain while also highlighting



the importance of preserving the natural resources around the 30A area while development is proceeding at a rapid clip.

The foundation has changed Sean's life, and not only in that he is applying his skills to a new industry. The work itself is rich and rewarding in a way Sean hadn't experienced before. The foundation helps others but also elevates Sean's own life experiences. He said he often laughs, thinking about how his grandfather must have known what was in store for him while he had no idea all along.

"It's not lost on me how lucky I am to have this opportunity," Sean said. "Every day the work continues to give me a lesson on life—how to be more empathetic, more passionate, and a better listener."

His grandfather's legacy carries on. @

To learn more about the J.W. Couch Foundation, visit www.jwcouchfoundation.org.



ZOOM



TOWNS

Taking a Permanent Workation

By Martin Liptrot

In March 2020, I told myself I would never visit Seagrove Beach, Florida, again.

Despite having owned a second home on its shores for nearly 20 years, I decided we would not be vacationing there ever again.

Not because we had fallen out of love with the place, with its turquoise blue water, sugar-white sand and laid-back hometown vibe, but because with remote working advancements, we could now live there permanently.

Like millions of others around the world, as the COVID-19 pandemic hit, our lives—and especially our working lives—changed dramatically. Office buildings closed, meetings and conferences were canceled, and face-to-face sales events were curtailed.

Having spent 25 years working for some of the world's largest consumer goods companies and global advertising agencies, I was accustomed to a very corporate life. I commuted, attended team meetings, ate meals in company canteens, and amassed countless points and miles in airports and hotels.

But here I was, in my early 50s with high school and college-aged children, about to pack it all in and move to Zoom Town.

Zoom Town, of course, isn't an actual place. It has no zip code.

It is any number of locations across the USA and beyond where a community experiences a significant population increase as remote work lifestyles become more popular. The name is a play on "Boomtown" from the days when gold and oil were first discovered, and on the name of the web video conferencing tool, Zoom.

By summer of 2020, the pandemic had led to the phenomenon of significant migration to beach communities, ski resorts, and quaint, rural country towns. Research suggests there are 35 million global digital nomads working remotely – 30% of them Americans.

The pandemic sent some people retreating to their second homes—beach houses and ski lodges where they converted the third bedroom into an office complete with Zoom conference call technology and fast fiber networks.

Firms quickly recognized the advantage of having staff working remotely, how much happier and more satisfied they were, how productivity improved, and the cost saving of not having to heat and cool or maintain and secure enormous office blocks in the world's most expensive cities.

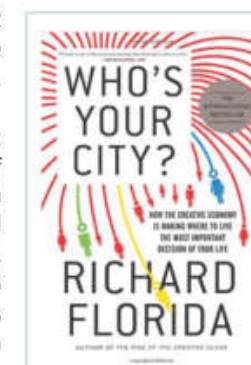
Encouraged by such discoveries and trends, more and more people have started to explore working remotely, and they're looking for the ideal spot to relocate.

There are many considerations for anyone looking to move to Zoom Town. The first is to decide if this is a permanent move or just a temporary one. The idea of packing up your whole life and moving across the country or overseas forever isn't one to take lightly. For families with kids in tow, the challenges are even more pronounced.

According to academic and leading urbanologist Richard Florida, author of the book *Who's Your City?*, schools are the number one consideration for most remote workers thinking about permanently relocating.

But many of those looking to take advantage of remote working opportunities see this as a temporary option. They may be thinking that when things return to 'normal,' they will be back in the big city again. For others, particularly the Millennials and Generation Z demographics, permanent doesn't mean that much to them. They may be looking at Zoom Towns as somewhere to spend a fixed period or, like digital snowbirds, just the winter months, or perhaps just 'somewhere to hang' until the next great opportunity arises.

We know today's college leavers don't expect jobs for life, home ownership and financial securities previous generations demanded from work, so picking a community



that meets their lifestyle aspirations — sporting, community or cultural — may be high on the list of priorities.

And smart mayors and town officials are now seeing the inherent economic benefits of becoming a Zoom Town.

Understanding what remote workers want and need and then showcasing it to prospective new residents is what many towns and smaller cities are now focused on. Some small towns are offering relocation grants, work visas, and even free electric bikes to tempt new remote workers.

Communities are now competing to attract talent. As well as having great natural attractions like lakes, beaches or mountains, city councils and town administrations recognize they need to be providing other important amenities too — the aforementioned great schools, but also available and affordable housing, good transport infrastructure, hospitals, and leisure facilities.

And what Zoom Towns have quickly discovered is that this influx of new remote workers is having a huge multiplier effect on the local economy. Not only do new residents pay their taxes and do their shopping locally, but they also create demand for new businesses providing the services they were used to having in their previous urban homes, such as dog walking and pet sitting, electric bikes and e-scooters, food delivery and coffee shops, health food stores, and gyms.

While comparing house prices, tax rates, and proximity to beaches or mountains is important in deciding if Zoom Town living is for you, potential remote workers also need to know they can successfully perform their jobs from where they choose to locate. After all, this is not early retirement or downsizing. It isn't about dropping out and spending more time with your dog, and though using your free time more enjoyably is a definite bonus, you still must earn a living.

I am a writer and a marketing consultant mainly involved in real estate development, economic

regeneration and tourism, so the warm shores of Florida are ideal. I'm in the same time zone as many of my clients, plus I can easily get to customers and contacts if the need arises.

My Zoom Town is in fact an entire county — Walton County in Northwest Florida. It already had a population of around 75,000, good digital infrastructure, great restaurants and bars, two growing airports less than an hour away and it is bisected by the I-10 interstate for access to New Orleans, Dallas and Houston in the west and Atlanta, Jacksonville and Tampa to the east.

Remote working may paint a picture of isolation, but the reality is we need places to co-create, to meet like-minded individuals, and to grow our businesses or careers.

While every Starbucks on earth has a budding playwright working on a script, the best Zoom

Towns have opened dedicated studios and conference call centers from which remote executives can have multi-participant events with colleagues or clients and enjoy the tech-support we were used to back in the office.

In our Zoom Town, I recently hosted a training event for a multinational agency with tele-conferencing for participants from Europe, New York, and Los Angeles. With the digital network and expertise in the hands of dedicated professionals, the event was a huge success, it was a fraction of the cost of flying all these people to one central location for a week, and it has led to a new repeat revenue stream for my business too.

But the real benefit of living in Zoom Town is your happiness.

Now, instead of commuting on busy roads and packed trains for two hours a day to and from the office, I have time to cycle to the gym, swim in the Gulf, and make breakfast for my youngest before she heads off to school.

These, I believe, are the moments of life-affirming happiness remote working in Zoom Town delivers. 🏡



5 Popular Beach Zoom Towns

1. Zadar, Croatia

Zadar has opened the world's first purpose-built remote working village, nicknamed 'The Valley.' A historic port town in Croatia with thriving markets, glistening beaches, and all the fresh seafood you could wish for, it is also one of the most progressive cities in Croatia and offers a good mix of history and innovation.

2. Lewes, Delaware

Lewes combines the charm of an East Coast beach town but offsets the cost of living with Delaware's famously low taxes. Add a strong local food scene and some affordable high-speed internet, and you've got yourself one of the greatest towns for remote working.

3. Aruba, Caribbean

Aruba advertises itself to tourists as 'One Happy Island.' Now U.S. remote workers who sign up for the 'One Happy Workation' program can enjoy three months of special rates, free WiFi, and all-inclusive food and beverage options. You can even bring your pets.

4. Tulum, Mexico

Tulum has the infrastructure to cater to this upsurge of remote workers, offering reliable WiFi, remote working spaces, digital nomad groups and clubs. The cost of living is low, it is in the same time zone as the U.S. and the lifestyle benefits are huge.

5. Ventura, California

This vibrant So-Cal coastal city is rich in history and home to a vibrant arts scene, both of which embody its liveliness and casual atmosphere. Ventura also has an impressive 32 parks and historic sites, award-winning schools, and 272 days of sunshine every year.

Embracing #Vanlife

**Social distancing
inspires a renewed
passion for exploration.**

By Alagan Abesamis Demarest
Photos: Amy Siebert



We're living in the midst of an RV revival. More and more people across the country are embracing "vanlife," renting or buying RVs in response to travel restrictions and coronavirus concerns during the pandemic. They're hitting the road, with family, friends, and pets in tow, seeking out adventure without the stress or inconvenience of having to book or catch a flight, having to sleep in someone else's space, or having to be on someone else's schedule.

RVs have been part of Andrew Cooley's life for as long as he can remember. He's a fourth-generation RV dealer who worked for his parents for about 17 years before opening his own dealership at 31. He started washing campers when he was 12 and sold his first RV when he was just 15 years old.

A few years ago, Birmingham, Alabama-based friend Jeffrey Hunter called Cooley and pitched the idea for the adventure van company. Cooley met with Hunter and Lee Conn the following day to learn more about their vision. Cooley talked it over with his wife, sold their dealership, and went from being an RV dealer to an RV manufacturer in one fell swoop.

Hunter, Conn, and Cooley founded Storyteller Overland with the goal of serving the community of overlanders and bringing to market adventure vans with a custom quality fit and finish at a mass-produced price. The company officially formed at the end of 2018

and has consistently sold out of their inventory because of consumer demand. The community that they've created among their customers and fans is also a crucial component of the business.

"This special community brings together folks from all walks of life," Cooley said. "Folks that are on the left or right side of the aisle have become friends and now they travel with each other. They probably would have never spoken to each other, but they had this commonality—the van and the community behind it. Our main goal is to equip people with the proper tools to allow them to live as freely as possible, to explore every place that they can."

Cooley attributes the uptick in popularity of RV travel to reclaiming a sense of control and an inherent human desire to explore. "We all want to be in control of our lives," he said. "We feel like we have some level of control over what happens for us and to us on a daily basis." When the pandemic hit, so many things were out of our control: mask mandates and travel restrictions enforced to help slow the spread of coronavirus kept people from doing things that were once taken for granted, like gathering with friends and family or going on vacation. RV travel and embracing vanlife helped to give people some of that control back. "I believe that people wanted to get out there and explore in a way they were still allowed to," Cooley said. "Travel restrictions kept people



“

This special community brings
together folks

from all walks of life.

Folks that are on the left or right side
of the aisle have become
friends and now

they travel with each other.

”

#Vanlife



from leaving the country, but you could still go to all the national parks." An RV solves two key problems: how to get there and where to stay.

Packing up a van, loading your family or friends into it, getting on the road, and going wherever you want to fulfill what Cooley views as a deep-seated desire for adventure and exploration; kind of like Lewis and Clark. "RV travel gives you that sense of freedom," Cooley said. "It instills confidence in the fact that you're in control of what happens to you. You get to see and meet different people from across the country when you travel, and after you meet folks, you realize that we're not so different."

The reasons people are choosing RV travel vary widely, and Cooley has heard a number of stories from customers. One couple has toured the country, playing concerts from their van. Over the last year-and-a-half, they have put 70,000 miles on their RV, traveling coast to coast and playing countless venues along the way.

Another Storyteller Overland customer purchased a "Beast MODE" van to facilitate her hobby of collecting gems and stones. The van she bought was totaled just two days after she bought it, and she couldn't get another one as the company was sold out, with a waiting list of a year. Storyteller Overland ended up selling her a Beast MODE model that they never even planned to sell, simply to get her back on the

road. She told Cooley that it allowed her to collect gems and stones for one last year before her age made it physically unfeasible.

Another customer bought one of their vans to take her mother across the country. "The mother was moving into the winter stages of her life, and her daughter realized that their time was short," Cooley said. "Her mother had a ventilator, and because our Storyteller vans generate their own power as they're driving down the road, she was able to take her mother on this trip and have power every step of the way."

Whatever your reasons are for embracing #vanlife, we're all for getting out there and living the life you've imagined. The pandemic has caused many of us to reevaluate priorities and to realize the importance of human connection. RV travel has allowed many people to escape the stresses of the pandemic, if only for a few days or weeks, out on the open road and into the wilderness where there's no need to worry about social distancing. For some, it's about embracing minimalism, simplifying their lives and living with less, trading possessions for experiences. Adventure is out there—what will your story be?

To learn more about Storyteller Overland, visit storytelleroverland.com or follow Storyteller Overland on Instagram (@storytelleroverland).



Amazing Beach Campgrounds for Van Lifers

Grayton Beach State Park (Grayton Beach, Florida)

Named the best beach in America by Dr. Beach, the secret is definitely out on this picturesque park. Key features include Western Lake, a 100-acre coastal dune lake, a 4.5-mile trail, and a 1-mile nature trail that goes through the dune ecosystem, along the salt marsh, and through the pine flatwoods.

Tillikum Beach Campground (Yachats, Oregon)

Enjoy views of the Oregon coastline and whale-watching from one of the many beachfront campsites on this campground. Surf, swim, and wake up to the sound of waves crashing onto the shore every morning.

Grand Haven State Park (Grand Haven, Michigan)

This 48-acre park boasts a half-mile of Lake Michigan shoreline, and the mouth of the Grand River runs along the north side of the park. Much of the park is covered by beach sand, and you can enjoy views of the Grand Haven pier and two lighthouses.

Camp Gulf (Miramar Beach, Florida)

This family-owned and operated campground in Miramar Beach has beachfront campsites, which give guests a front-row view of the Gulf. Campground amenities include two pools and a big water slide, a casting lake, an activity center, free Wi-Fi, three bathhouses, a laundry facility, and recreational rentals.

Assateague Island State Park (Berlin, Maryland)

Maryland's only oceanfront park is located on a barrier island that's home to deer, waterfowl, wild horses, and more. Set up camp just a few steps away from the Atlantic Ocean and enjoy the two miles of beach, secluded coves, and marsh areas.

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WINTER 2022 • 67



CAREY

MARIAH

The award-winning songwriter, actress, producer, and entrepreneur shares her favorite beach destinations and a recipe for happiness.

By Abigail Abesamis Demarest

Mariah Carey is a music industry legend. She's one of the best-selling female artists of all time, with more than 200 million albums sold to date and 19 Billboard Hot 100 #1 singles (18 of which she wrote herself). As a singer, songwriter, and producer, Mariah has amassed multiple Grammys, American Music Awards, three Guinness World Record titles, and Billboard's "Artist of the Decade" Award, to name a few. She has a five-octave vocal range, and in December 2020, her 1994 single "All I Want for Christmas Is You" set a Spotify record for most single-day streams: 17.223 million.

In addition to her musical accomplishments, Mariah is a mother of twins and a Congressional Award recipient. She has donated her time and energy toward several philanthropic causes, including Save the Music, the Make-A-Wish Foundation, World Hunger Relief, and the Elton John AIDS Foundation.

She's also an extremely savvy entrepreneur. In August, after almost two years of planning and product development, Mariah launched Black Irish, a line of Irish cream liqueur.

We recently spoke with Mariah about her new startup, her favorite beaches, and what truly makes her happy.



Beach Happy: What's your favorite beach destination?

Mariah Carey: I just love the ocean and any place that has access to the beach. In pre-pandemic times, I would usually do a show and then take a little vacay. I haven't really taken any vacations recently because of COVID-19, but my favorite beach destination would have to be Capri; I love Capri. I also love the Bahamas and the Caribbean. We love St. Barts—all the fabulous places.

BH: What is your proudest accomplishment?

Mariah: My children. They are a full-time job. They are everything to me, and I love them so much. Having my kids was a major, major moment in my life. As a songwriter, my songs are also like children to me, in their own way, because I write and produce them. I'm very proud of that. It took a long time for people to acknowledge that because most females don't get acknowledged for the work they do behind the scenes. There's this assumption that we're divas who just show up and everyone else handles it all, but that isn't the case for me. From the inception of a song to the completion to working in the studio, I love it all.

BH: Why did you decide to launch an Irish cream brand?

Mariah: Initially, it was about a holiday moment. Every year, I go on a sleigh ride with my family and friends. We have tiramisu and hot cocoa (which may or may not be spiked), and this tradition sparked that initial idea. We started really working on what eventually became Black Irish. I got involved in creating the flavor, working on everything from texture to the color to the bottle. My team and I realized that this liqueur isn't just for the holidays—Black Irish is amazing over

ice, mixed into a fabulous milkshake, served over ice cream, or poured into coffee. I felt like a lot of people were coming out with different types of hard liquor, but that's not really my thing. I love a great sweet cream liqueur and thought Black Irish could be something unique, fun, and festive.

BH: What is your secret to happiness?

Mariah: Wow, I wish I had one. I think I'm pretty much like everybody else in that sometimes I'm happy, and sometimes I'm not quite as happy. But I'm an optimist. I try to remain an eternal optimist, so when things get discouraging or I'm not quite as happy, I just go to that place. Music has always been my saving grace, and that's what I'm so thankful for. I always try to remember that it's a gift that I've been given, and I can always lean on that gift. 🍷

To learn more about Mariah Carey, visit mariahcarey.com or follow her on Instagram @mariahcarey. To learn more about Black Irish, visit goblackirish.com or follow along on Instagram @goblackirish.

We Belong Together Brew Irish Coffee

Warm up with this spiked coffee drink named after Mariah's award-winning 2005 hit.

Ingredients:

- 6 oz prepared hot coffee
- 1 oz Irish whiskey
- 1 1/2 oz Black Irish Original
- Whipped cream to top
- Optional: Cocoa powder for dusting

Directions:

1. Fill a glass mug or a footed glass mug with hot water and let stand 1-2 minutes to heat up glass; pour out.
2. Add coffee, Irish whiskey, and Black Irish Original, and stir.
3. Dollop whipped cream on top.
4. Dust cocoa powder over whipped cream, and serve.



CLIMB

THE LADDER

A SIMPLE TECHNIQUE THAT COULD
CHANGE YOUR LIFE FOREVER

By Mike Ragsdale

*"Go confidently in the direction of your dreams!
Live the life you've imagined."*

— Henry David Thoreau

Everyone stared up at me, shielding their eyes from the sweltering noonday sun. From my gusty perch, they all looked like ants baking on the white-hot concrete.

"Do it, you wussy!" someone taunted from below. Teenage girls snickered. I couldn't actually hear them snicker from way up there, of course, but I knew they were, regardless. It's what teenage girls do.

I inched as near to the edge of the platform as I dared and nervously peered over. From this vantage point, the Olympic swimming pool below looked like a bucket into which some deranged carny might plummet.



When I was growing up in Cullman, Alabama, our family made frequent summer pilgrimages to Point Mallard Water Park in Decatur. With a video game arcade, a riverbank beach frequented only by the kids smoking Vantage Ultra Lights, and a gigantic “wave pool” that tossed around tired children like an angry old washing machine, Point Mallard was a teenage rite of passage. The towering chain-link fence surrounding the compound wasn’t as much to keep freeloaders out as it was to keep hormone-stricken teenagers corralled while their exhausted parents ducked out to the shopping mall or the closest package store. It was the perfect cage in which to pit awkward token-rich boys against one another in gladiatorial feats of pre-masculinity before a blood-hungry audience of giggly girls in bikinis. It was a terrible spectacle that sent scores limping home with savage strawberries from being dragged along wave pool walls and even deeper psychological scars from the Beyond Thunderdome manner in which we all plowed our way headfirst into puberty. Point Mallard was also home to a ten-meter high-dive platform where Olympic gold medalist Greg Louganis once trained.



“C’mon, kid,” sighed the lifeguard. “Either jump or climb back down.”

It was a motivational speech he gave a hundred times a day.

My choice was simple: jump and risk dying upon impact... or suffer a long, humiliating climb back down the three-story ladder while throngs of teenagers laughed and jeered. Death didn’t seem so bad, so I jumped.

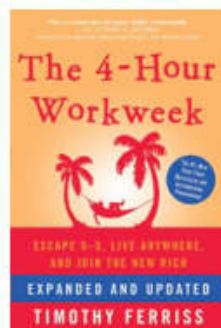


About ten years ago, I read a book called *The 4-Hour Workweek* by Timothy Ferriss. The book’s “work smarter, not harder” mantra really spoke to me, as I was deeply fatigued following a couple of failed business ventures. Ferriss’s book spun larger-than-life tales of solopreneurship and unlimited global travel fueled by powerful new internet marketing strategies. I soon set out to create such a business, and by 2011, my start-up had become self-sufficient enough that I could actually entertain the notion of unbridled travel through exotic lands.

But could we do it? Could we really bounce aimlessly around the world for a year? I wasn’t too worried about our income stream, as I was already running the business entirely from my laptop at home. Couldn’t I run it just as efficiently from Kuala Lumpur or Bosnia? I didn’t have any employees or office to worry about—just a global network of talented and reliable freelancers who helped me keep all the wheels turning, precisely as Ferriss had prescribed.

But what about the kids and their schoolwork? Who would watch our house? Who would take care of our dog? What if something happened to our parents or grandparents while we were trekking through some Cambodian rainforest? “What ifs” are anchors that prevent life’s ship from ever sailing. Truth be told, we had absolutely no clue how to pull off something so gargantuan. We just had my zealot-like belief in a book that promised me we could.

So, late one night on a wine-fueled spousal dare, we charged four non-refundable around-the-world plane tickets to our credit card for



about \$2,000 each from World Travellers’ Club. We bought them six months in advance, giving ourselves time to figure things out... we hoped. Then, on Facebook, we blurted out what we’d done.

We established accountability. We had climbed the ladder.

Terrified, we now stood on a social media stage for some to speculate. Could we do it? Would we actually jump? Like my youth’s Olympic platform, it was either jump or suffer public humiliation if we chickened out (not to mention a brutal financial loss). “I almost went around the world,” I would one day tell my grandkids. Somehow that doesn’t have quite the same inspirational ring to it.

Six months later, we boarded our first flight on an epic journey that would span more than twenty countries. We experienced adventures ranging from cooking lessons in Budapest to exploring snow-covered caves near the Syrian border to being guests of honor at a wedding in Rajasthan to being evacuated from our home during a prison riot in Bali. How did we do it? I honestly don’t know. Ten years later, it seems inconceivable—too big to have achieved or to ever repeat. But we did do it. All because an irrational fear of ridicule outweighed our rational fear of failure. 🍷



Tips

for “Climbing the Ladder” to Promote Life Change



Is there something you’ve always wanted to do but are simply too afraid to pull the trigger? Use these simple tips to help you finally take the leap of faith:

1. COMMIT

in a tangible way. Buy a plane ticket. Submit your two-week notice. Make a big down payment. Put some skin in the game. This is climbing the ladder. Your decision is still reversible at this stage, but you can’t back out without feeling some serious sting.

2. BRAG

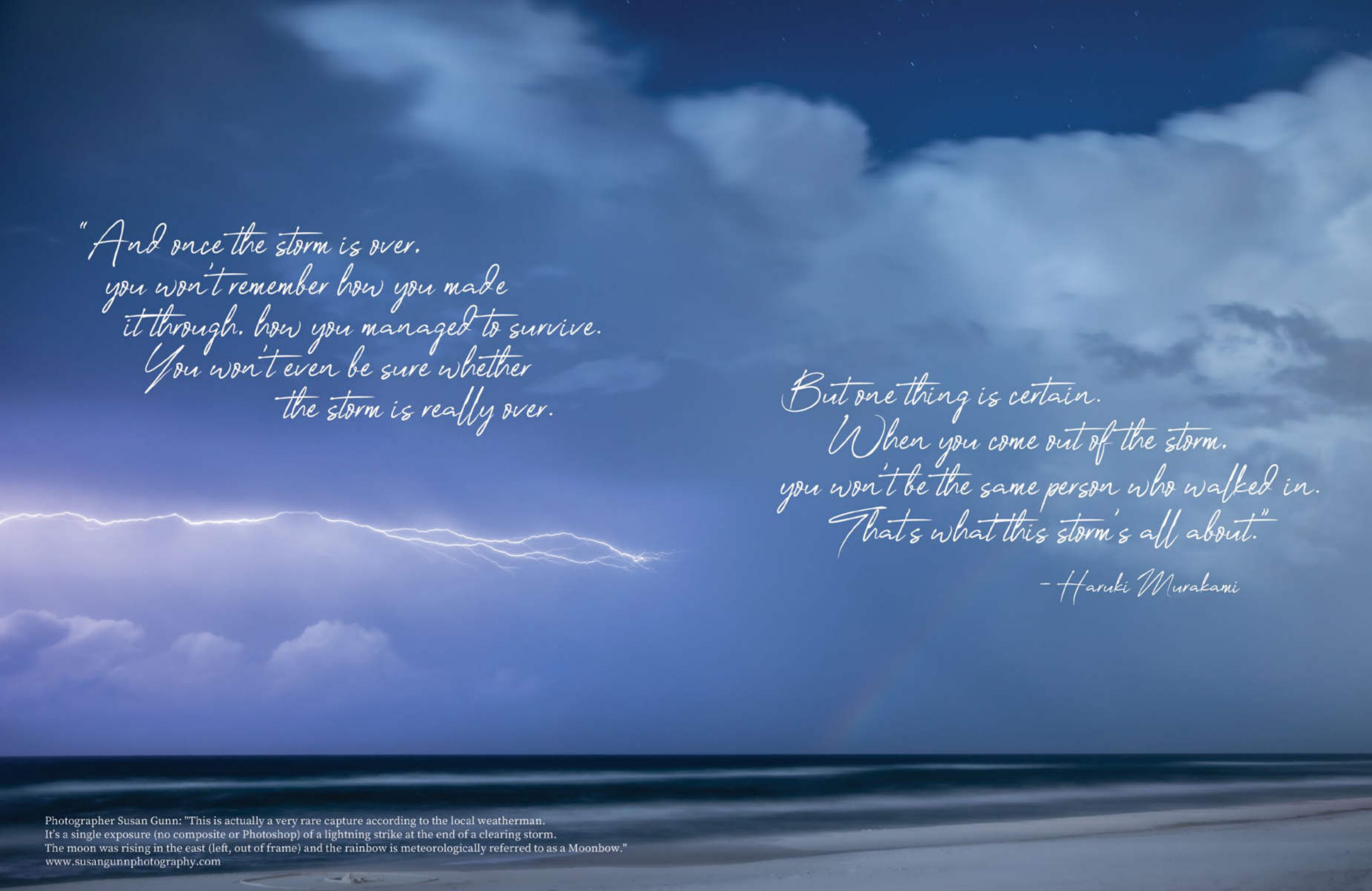
about your plan to anyone who will listen. Now that you’ve scaled the ladder, gather an audience as quickly as possible before you start having second thoughts—trust me, you will. Be shameless. Tell as many people as possible. The goal is to back yourself into a reputational corner. Always wanted to take surfing lessons in Nicaragua? Buy that ticket and then boast about it to your cubicle-locked buddies. Are you quitting your desk job so you can fulfill your dream of starting an ecotourism business? Put in your notice and share a Facebook page promoting your new endeavor. Serious consequences? Big time. Terrifying? Absolutely. But trust me, you will figure out a way to make it work. When landing on Mexico’s shores in 1519, invader Hernán Cortés famously ordered his soldiers, “Burn the boats!” When returning the way you came is no longer an option, it’s incredible what you can accomplish.

3. BRACE

yourself for the jeers. “You couldn’t pay me to go to China,” they’ll boast. “Four out of five start-ups fail,” they’ll warn. “Aren’t you worried about terrorism?” they’ll exclaim. You will start to question whether you’re being responsible. You will begin to wonder if you’re crazy. Maybe you are. But rest assured, the biggest rewards in this life go to those who take the biggest risks. Albert Einstein once said, “Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds.” Don’t let mediocre minds taunt you back down the ladder.

4. JUMP

When the moment of truth finally arrives, you will have the courage to jump. And when you finally step off that ledge and begin your irreversible free fall, that’s when you’ll feel it: this is what it feels like to be alive.



*"And once the storm is over,
you won't remember how you made
it through. how you managed to survive.
You won't even be sure whether
the storm is really over.*

*But one thing is certain.
When you come out of the storm,
you won't be the same person who walked in.
That's what this storm's all about."*

- Haruki Murakami



Influencing Change

Youtubers join forces to remove 30 million pounds of trash from beaches, rivers, and oceans.



SCAN TO WATCH!

By Abigail Abesamis Demarest

On October 29, 2021, Jimmy Donaldson (also known as “MrBeast,” with 75 million YouTube subscribers), Mark Rober (with 20 million subscribers), and hundreds of other YouTube creators uploaded videos about cleaning trash out of the ocean. It’s part of a global campaign known as #TeamSeas, spearheaded by MrBeast, Rober, and campaign director Matt Fitzgerald. Their goal was simple but undeniably ambitious: raise \$30 million to remove 30 million pounds of plastic and trash from beaches, rivers, and oceans around the world. “Which is just so freaking audacious; this only happens if we all work together,” said Rober.

In MrBeast’s video, he worked with dozens of volunteers to clean up one of the dirtiest beaches in the world. After four days of picking up trash, they had collected more than 60,000 pounds.

“Even though this 60,000 pounds of trash we picked up might seem impressive, there is sadly way too much trash still in the ocean,” said MrBeast, noting that between the ocean washing up trash to the beach and rivers bringing in trash from the mainland, that shoreline will inevitably get dirty again.

According to #TeamSeas, it’s estimated that there are 200 million tons of plastic already circulating in marine

environments, with an estimated 11 million tons entering the ocean every year.

MrBeast and Rober introduced the #TeamSeas campaign, presenting it as a way for their viewers to help address this pressing issue that affects all of us. The dynamic duo’s #TeamTrees campaign raised \$20 million to plant 20 million trees (and counting). They now vow that for every dollar donated to #TeamSeas, a pound of trash will be removed from the ocean.

Half of the money raised goes toward funding volunteer beach cleanups around the world and fishing trash out of the ocean, while the other half will fund the production of trash-eating robots that pick up garbage from rivers that flow into our oceans 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The money will be split between two nonprofit organizations: Ocean Conservancy and The Ocean Cleanup.

The #TeamSeas plan for cleaning up 30 million pounds of trash (enough to cover about 85 football fields a foot deep) involves three points of intervention: beaches, rivers, and oceans. On the beach side of things, Ocean Conservancy will send professional crews to clean up some of the most vulnerable beaches around the world. Locally hosted #TeamSeas events will allow campaign supporters to get in on the action, working in tandem with Ocean Conservancy’s International Coastal Cleanup network.

For rivers, #TeamSeas is funding the production of interceptors, river cleanup technology from The Ocean Cleanup that collects trash before it reaches the ocean. Currently, The Ocean Cleanup has focused its efforts on removing trash from the 1 percent of rivers that contribute to 80 percent of the trash that flows into the ocean from rivers. In the ocean, #TeamSeas is working with Ocean Conservancy’s Global Ghost Gear Initiative to remove ghost gear (lost, abandoned, or discarded fishing gear).

Cleaning up our oceans isn’t the solution to all our climate issues, but it’s a start. And the content produced as part of the #TeamSeas campaign stands to spark new generations of ocean advocates.

On January 1, 2022, #TeamSeas achieved its \$30 million goal, with 30,249,948 pounds of trash removed. MrBeast and Rober personally pledged \$100,011 and \$100,010 to the campaign, respectively. Susan Wojcicki (CEO of YouTube), YouTube Originals, and Patreon are also among the top donations so far.

Even though the campaign officially ended on January 1, 2022, the money raised will fund cleanup work for the next three years. During that time, the #TeamSeas website will remain active for anyone who wants to donate. 

To learn more about #TeamSeas, visit teamseas.org. To learn more about Ocean Conservancy, visit oceanconservancy.org. To learn more about The Ocean Cleanup, visit theoceancleanup.com.

“The plastic pollution problem is so big that no single solution will fix it at once. But we’ve got to start somewhere.”



Beach Happy



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NEVERMIND BAR AND RESTAURANT

CAPE ST. FRANCIS, EASTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

By Craig Jarvis
Photos: Caroline J. Photography
S Coffey

PICTURE PERFECT

The most striking element of Nevermind Bar and Restaurant is the lighthouse. It is dominant, looming over the bar. Comforting and solid, it is in every image, and it is what your eyes wander to when having a drink or a bite to eat. At night, it is even better.

THE MENU

The food is exquisite. Chef Wesley Randles offers special meals, with all produce sourced locally and prepared with minute details to perfection. With St. Francis Bay being a harbour town, there is always fresh fare coming out of the sea. Chef Randles performs his magic on this fresh produce daily.

This menu changes with the seasons and with the availability of seafood. Burgers are around \$8, and a lobster roll is \$12.50. There is a comprehensive cocktail menu, a great selection of imported and craft beers, and a curated wine list of some of South Africa's finest.

THE SCENE

Nevermind Bar and Restaurant is quite an idyllic place to chill with some gentle live music, a few drinks and a bunch of friends. The ocean's constant roar and the cozy location exudes nothing but good vibes. It is

the ideal place to forget the stress of life, the hardships and craziness of COVID-19, and the fact that we're all here to have as much fun as fast as we can before we leave this place. The sun goes down behind the restaurant, but it glints and reflects off the lighthouse until the dying moments, making it one of the most picturesque settings in the world for a sundowner.

When Nevermind really comes to life is when there is a live band playing. Recently, well-known South African surfer and musician Robin Auld came for an afternoon jam. The crowd was a mix of board shorts and flip-flops, glamorous models, and distinguished older crew in the area, singing and clapping along as they enjoyed cold beers and fine food.

It does get busy, and on a perfect summer's evening after a good day's surf, booking is essential if you want to eat. So when it gets a bit crowded, and you're just keen on a drink, the revellers spill out onto the expansive grass. This is all under the watchful eye of the Seal Point Lighthouse, looking in four directions — over the rocky wild side (the reason for its existence) the Nevermind Bar and Restaurant, the distant bumpy horizon and the zippering waves of Seal Point.

Who would have thought that a functional, state-owned lighthouse could have brought happiness to so many at a very late stage in its life? A popular beach bar and restaurant with excellent food and a great ambience came from a dilapidated site. It also became a happy place of employment that no one was expecting.

The Seal Point Lighthouse is 142 years old. Unfortunately, the surrounding building, created to house the lighthouse keeper, has been somewhat decrepit and in a state of disrepair for a while. Named after the patron saint, St. Francis, the lighthouse was completed in 1878 and built to ward off ships from the dangerous reefs that stretch out more than a kilometre out to sea. At 27.75 m, it is one of the tallest lighthouses in South Africa, with a light range of 28 nautical miles. The intensity of the light has changed over the years. It started with a three-wick burner with the intensity of 15,000 candles and flashed once every 20 seconds. Now the lamp power is 2,750,000 candles, and it flashes every 5 seconds.

Nestled at its base is the very unique Nevermind.

WAVES AND SURFERS

Located a stone's throw from some of the best waves on the Eastern Cape, there are always surfers finishing off a late session at Seal Point and heading over for a few quick beers and a meal. They are always stoked and in a good mood after a few excellent waves, dictating the festive spirit of the location when the waves are favorable. The outside bar area is also ideally situated to be out of the predominant south-westerly wind. It's a wind that brings a chill to the bones, but it is also offshore on the long right-hand point-break waves that these surfers enjoy.

Nevermind is a place where everyone is welcome. It is a place that embraces locals and visitors alike, and it is a place filled with happiness and gentleness. No rowdy vibes and no rude visitors to be found here. Those people are not to be found on Cape St Francis, a place with charm and cuteness along with fine, top-end establishments like Nevermind.

To learn more about Nevermind, visit their website (sealpointlighthouse.com/restaurant) or follow them on Instagram (@nevermind_capest-francis).



Whispered Advice from “Dr. Quiet”



Finding Health and Happiness in a Post-Pandemic World

By Dr. Bart Precourt
(Doctor of Chiropractic)

What if I told you that one of the most important doctors in your life is Dr. Quiet? Ironically, most people don't know who Dr. Quiet is or what they do.

Recently, Dr. Quiet has been pushed aside and at times completely ignored. I've heard "I can't sit still" from more people this past year than ever before. I know we like to be active, yet are we uncomfortable with stillness and silence? It's hard to put into words how to describe these past two years... chaotic, crazy, and exhausting are some words that come to mind. Maybe the best is "uncertain." Uncertainty leads to anxiety, small thinking, and fight-or-flight instincts, moving us farther away from our best selves.

Collectively, there has never been so much uncertainty on a day-to-day basis. Politics, viruses, riots, mandates... yuck! These things are so common now that they have almost become normalized.

So, what does Dr. Quiet prescribe? You guessed it: QUIET TIME. Time for us to be alone with our thoughts, our body, and our spirit. And yes... most (maybe all) people are uncomfortable without a constant source of stimuli — social media, news, podcasts, music, kids, business, etc.

What has this uncertainty caused? Tragically, we've addicted our nervous systems to crave stimuli. It's called sympathetic dominance, and it reduces our capacity for love, creativity, kindness, health, and living to our fullest. Oh yeah... and it wears us out, down regulates our immune system, creates hormone imbalances and essentially turns us into walking zombies.

The good news is that there is an easy, or at least identifiable, fix. **Bring back Dr. Quiet!** The most common question Dr. Quiet will ask is, "Does this serve me?"

[More >](#)



Here are three key tips to establish a new “normal,” one that serves you:

1. SLEEP: Assessing our quality of sleep is one of the most important health strategies to have. Dr. Quiet encourages us to pay close attention to sleep quality. Sleeping is when we heal, when we recover, and most importantly, when we shift out of fight-or-flight from sympathetic activity into parasympathetic activity. Eight hours is still the benchmark. This should happen naturally without the need for wine or medications. We should feel rested when we wake. Well-rested people are often more patient, kinder, and nicer, to be around. Kindness is contagious, and being more rested serves us all.

2. SPACE: Dr. Quiet also encourages us to take a moment to shut down the noise and create SPACE and PAUSE. No phone, emails, or TV. Shut it all down. This could be meditation, prayer time or a walk without your phone. Even a time-out from family (including kids). Why? So we can listen. Listen to our thoughts and hear what our bodies are saying. The amount of people walking around unconnected to their mind and body, unconscious to the words they are using and typing is staggering. Creating space to listen to our bodies helps make for better food choices. The more we listen to our body, the more control we have over our health, emotions, and life. Without this, anxiety can start to creep in; weight gain and sedating with food or alcohol takes over. When we give ourselves space, fear and convenience won't drive our decision making. This SPACE is critical for creativity, personal growth and healthy relationships. Don't be surprised if only Dr. Quiet addresses these important issues. This is kind of the unspoken part of being healthy.

3. ENERGY: Dr. Quiet pays close attention to our energy. Where are we gaining it, and where are we losing it? Sources of energy include food, relationships, exercise, and thoughts. Dr. Quiet advises you to stop wasting your precious energy on anything that does not provide a R.O.E. (Return on Energy). Plug up the leaks. Arguing with some random person who thinks differently than you on Facebook is a classic energy leak. That's energy you will never get back. When we have all kinds of clutter coming in and out, we deplete our batteries. Using the advice of Dr. Quiet will protect our energy and help develop a new normal. Good energy is magnetic, attractive, and fun to be around. Go get some.

Dr. Quiet has been overshadowed by Doctors Doom and Gloom for way too long. Use some of Dr. Quiet's tips and unleash the best version of you.

To learn more about Dr. Bart Precourt, visit drbartprecourt.com or follow him on Facebook (@drbartprecourt).

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The Captain's Call

Pandemic sends record numbers to the sea

By Martin Liptrot
Photos: Fletcher Isacks
Grady-White Boats



For Pete Boland, messing about in boats is just something he does.

“Perhaps being from a seafaring nation – Great Britain – it is something in my blood, but I have always been around boats and the sea,” said Boland. “I love the battle against the elements and the thrill of competition.”

Boats have played a big part in the life of this 57-year-old corporate executive. Being on the water not only helps him unwind and relax from the pressures of work, but it was also through his love of sailing that he met his wife, Jacqui.

“I lived on a beautiful sailboat in San Francisco back in the ‘90s,” said Boland. “It was a bit unusual, as everyone else was buying condos and downtown lofts, but I think being known as ‘that Brit who lives on a boat’ definitely helped me stand out from other single guys. And of course, there was always plenty of willing crew for weekend sails across San Francisco Bay.”

Now a resident of Seaside, Florida, Boland has recently taken his passion for boating to the next level by buying a 35-foot J/105 class racing sailboat, which he has appropriately christened London Calling.

“I always wanted to sail in offshore races, but that requires a serious boat and an experienced crew,” he said. “I found the right boat in New England and hooked up with a great sailing team here in Fort Walton and Destin.”

So far, he's taken London Calling to the Charleston Race Week and numerous local regattas, and he is now preparing for some serious offshore races around Southern Florida and the Bahamas.

"Honestly, it's both an investment of time and effort," admitted Boland. "Believe me, I'm very thankful for having a wonderfully understanding wife."

Boland certainly isn't alone in his nautical pursuits. With the COVID pandemic having changed how we live, work, and spend our leisure time, boat ownership has suddenly skyrocketed.

"Typically, I have around 80 to 85 vessels of all shapes and sizes in our inventory at any given time," said Caleb Peavler, general manager of MarineMax in Panama City Beach, Florida. "Today, demand is so hot, we have less than half a dozen."

With the COVID-19 virus restricting travel, making flights and accommodations more difficult to book, families are looking for other ways to safely spend time together. The pandemic also inspired people to reevaluate what's most important in their lives. With so much social media and so many digital devices in our lives, family time is increasingly at a premium. For many, boating became a perfect platform for bridging the social-distancing gap.

"We're seeing people who have never boated before or haven't been on the water in a very long time," said Peavler. "We get parents and grandparents who come to us to buy a boat, and one of the big motivations is wanting to spend time with the kids, uninterrupted by the outside world."

With more and more people reprioritizing their work-life balance, the nation's boat builders are working to meet growing demand, but they're struggling to keep up.

"People are moving to the beach in great numbers, and as people make their dream move from the city or the suburbs, they want homes near the water," said Northwest Florida real estate broker Gordon Tarver. "They may not have thought about boat ownership before, but when we pick them up in a sleek motorboat, cruise across the bay and pull up at a private dock to show them a property, they not only want to buy the house, but now they also want the boat to go along with it."

As for Pete Boland and his London Calling, boating has once again become an integral part of his daily life.

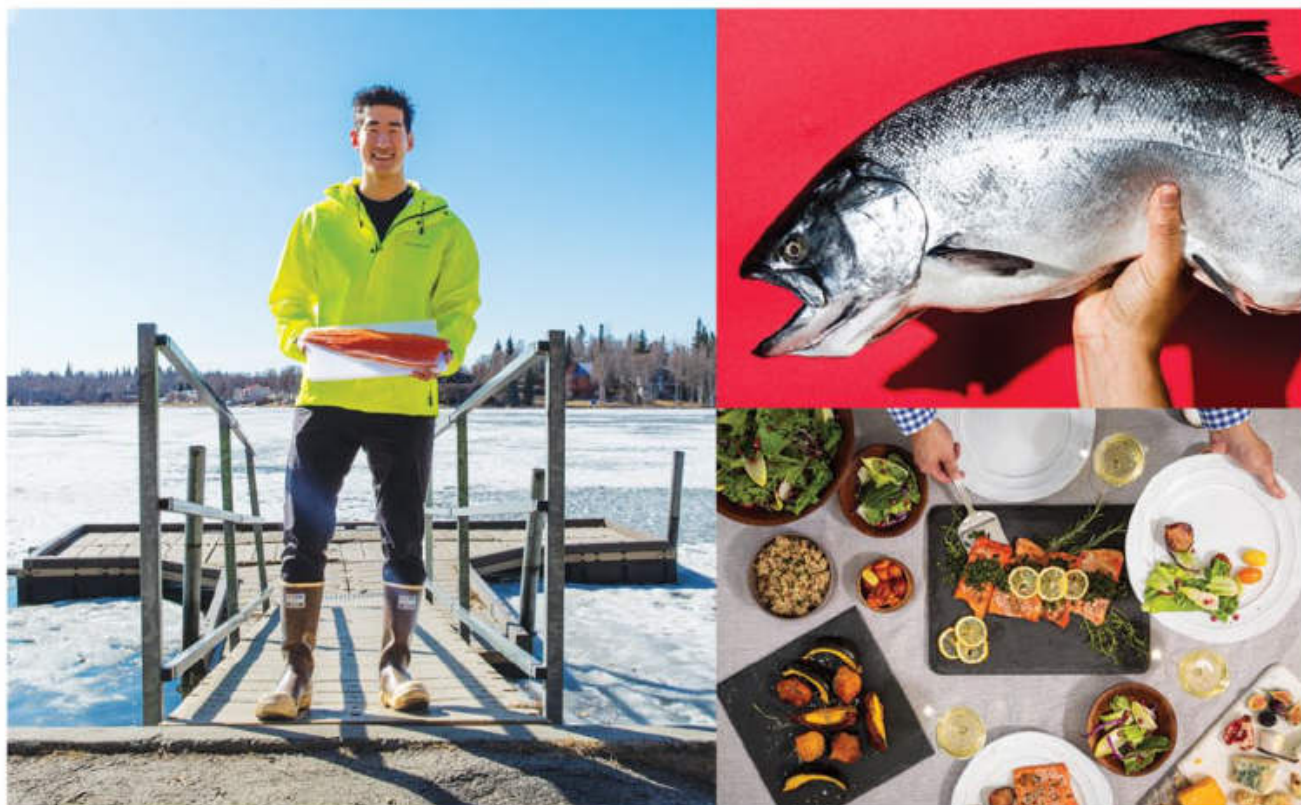
"When I get up in the morning, I still check the news headlines, the sports scores, and the stock prices," said Boland. "But now I also look for long-range weather and boating forecasts so I can plan ahead for the next time I can get out on the water. Owning a boat has changed the way we live, and I couldn't be happier." 🍷

To learn more, visit www.marinemax.com or follow them on Facebook (www.facebook.com/MarineMaxLeisure).



“
The nation's boat builders
are working to meet
growing demand,
but they're struggling
to keep up.
”





“Seas” the Dream

29-year-old Kyle Lee is on a mission to bring the freshest wild-caught Alaskan seafood to the masses.

Kyle Lee attributes his entrepreneurial spirit to his parents, Taiwanese immigrants who own a restaurant in Alaska. “I essentially grew up in the restaurant,” Kyle said. “I’d be on my mom’s back while she was making egg rolls or running the cash register.” Watching the way his parents ran a restaurant—the way they communicated with each other, how they spent their time, the things they cared about—taught Kyle about fiscal responsibility and instilled an appetite for risk-taking.

During his college years, shows like *Deadliest Catch* were popular and caught Kyle’s eye, so when his friend Eugene Desjarlais bought a commercial fishing boat, Kyle leaped at the opportunity to go fishing with him. “It sounded awesome,” Kyle said. “I’d seen so many shows and wanted to get out there to try it.”

The summer week aboard his friend’s commercial fishing boat on Prince William Sound in Alaska was, in a word, gorgeous. “It was 65 and sunny,

flat, calm, no big waves, and everyone caught a ton of fish,” Kyle said. The week flew by. “I was fishing in some of the most gorgeous areas in the world with some of my best friends. It was awesome, one of the best times of my life for sure.”

When he went back to college in Colorado the following fall, Kyle stocked his freezer with salmon that he had caught during the trip. He’d cook it up or slice it into sashimi and share it with friends. When he eventually ran out and it was time to restock, he was disappointed by what he found at the grocery store. “I started to wonder what the disconnect was and what happened,” Kyle said.

“We were catching these beautiful fish in Alaska, but at the supermarket, the salmon had gaping meat with lackluster color.”



By Abigail Abesamis Demarest

The following summer, Kyle reached out to his friend Eugene about working as a full-time deckhand. Following his spectacular experience of a week at sea, he wanted to see what it’d be like to do it for two to three months. Kyle had a blast, and with his senior year approaching, he knew that he’d have to make some big personal decisions about what he wanted to do with his life. In school, Kyle studied finance and accounting. His parents stressed the importance of academics, and while they saw the fishing trips as a good experience, they didn’t view it as a potential career path. Kyle had finance internships lined up and job offers for when he finished school, but he had a difficult time deciding what he wanted to do.

At the end of his senior year, a serendipitous opportunity gave Kyle the courage to dive headfirst into his passion. A retiring fisherman was selling his boat and permit to fish in one of Alaska’s most coveted fishing spots: the Copper River. Fishing rights along this 300-mile river have to be purchased or inherited, and the salmon that swim there are packed with healthy omega-3 fatty acids because of their exceptionally difficult migratory route. For Kyle, this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The corporate world could wait. He took out a loan to purchase the boat and permit, and the rest, as they say, is history.

At Alaskan Salmon Company, Kyle and his team are bringing sustainably sourced wild-caught Alaskan salmon directly to consumers, which includes everyone from Michelin-starred restaurants to home cooks. Wild-caught salmon typically has a long supply chain (anywhere between seven to ten middlemen, plus processing overseas), which results in consumers ending up with a product that is less than ideal in terms of taste and quality. Alaskan Salmon Company takes a different approach from volume-based fishing operations. While their fish might cost more per pound, they flash-freeze the salmon they catch and send it directly to the consumer with no third-party distributors or middlemen.

After just five years in business, Alaskan Salmon Company has developed a loyal following. When they launched direct-to-consumer sales in April 2021, they had 4,600 people on the waitlist within the first month. Their most recent launch is the Chef’s Selection Box, a monthly subscription box containing 12 fillets of fresh, wild-caught seafood including species like Copper River sockeye and coho salmon, as well as rockfish, black cod, and halibut from small fisheries located in Kodiak and Cordova. As the company continues to grow, expand their offerings, and educate people about wild salmon, Kyle is enjoying the ride and the life he has built by following his dream. 🍷

To learn more about Kyle Lee and Alaskan Salmon Company, visit aksalmonco.com or follow @alaskansalmon_ on Instagram.



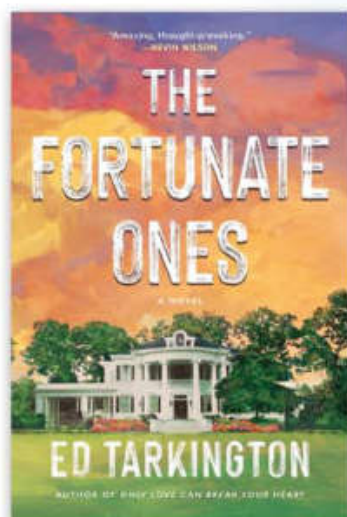
“We were catching these beautiful fish in Alaska, but at the supermarket, the salmon had gaping meat with lackluster color.”

beach reads

From East Nashville to World War II Berlin, these lesser-known novels are perfect pastimes for your next beach day.

By Paul Stanley

Beach-goers love to lose themselves in an engaging novel while absorbing heavy doses of vitamin D and listening to the sound of crashing waves. Established writers like John Grisham, James Patterson, Stephen King, and Pat Conroy built their nest eggs by offering readers opportunities to step into their fantasy worlds, if only for an hour or so at a time. However, here are a couple of works that are definitely worthy of toting down to the water's edge.



Author: Ed Tarkington

The Fortunate Ones

Everyone loves a tale about a down-trodden boy from the wrong side of the tracks who makes his way to the high-brow section of town. Set in the heart of blue-blood Nashville, *The Fortunate Ones* is Ed Tarkington's second novel. The book is also a finalist for the 2022 Southern Book Prize, awarded by the Southern Independent Booksellers Association.

Through no fault of his own, Charlie Boykin was dealt a bad hand. Raised in a strict evangelical household, his teenage mother falls for a soldier heading to Vietnam. A couple of months later, she's pregnant and determined to defy her father's wishes to "go away for the next few months." Instead, she connects with an aunt trying to make it in Nashville's competitive world of country music.

Charlie spends his pre-teen years living with his mom and aunt in East Nashville. Although bright, he's headed for a rough life until his mom finds a way to enrol him in an elite private school that caters to the Belle Meade Country Club set. There, he

befriends Arch Creigh, who quickly introduces Charlie to the jet-setting, privileged Nashville lifestyle he used to only dream of.

After a successful high-school stint, Charlie follows Arch to Vanderbilt University and helps his friend climb the state's rough and tumble political ladder. The deceitful albeit innocent skills they acquired in their youth prove worthy in the world of high-stakes politics.

With Charlie at his side, Arch achieves his political dreams, but at a considerable price. It is a price that will only grow larger until Charlie reaches his breaking point.

Tarkington does a magnificent job of weaving two worlds together. While fortune, fame, and breeding sometimes separate the masses, in reality, the only difference between the have and the have-nots are a few zeros on a bank statement.

At The Wolf's Table

Rosella Postorino's latest novel, *At The Wolf's Table*, follows the saga of Rosa Sauer, a young married woman in 1943 Nazi Germany. Once an idealistic bride living an engaging urban lifestyle in pre-war Berlin, she had no clue that she too would be enlisted for the Führer's cause.

With her husband Gregor away fighting on the Russian front, Rosa lives with her mother in their Berlin apartment. Tragedy strikes when an allied air raid takes the life of the one who had given life to her.

Forced to retreat to the rural home of her in-laws in East Prussia, Rosa struggles to connect with new relatives she has never met. Their only common denominator is the man that's both a son and husband.

Within hours of her arrival, German SS soldiers appear at their door, informing her to be ready the following morning to serve her country.

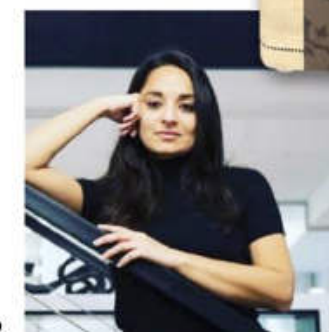
Soon Rosa finds herself as one of Hitler's food tasters. Sitting at a long table with nine other women, most of whom grew up together in the small village, Rosa is lost and confused. The women divide into two camps: the "fanatics," or those loyal to the cause, and another group of women that couldn't care less

about any cause. They simply want to provide for their families and grow old with their loved ones. The war has stripped them of that chance.

Postorino weaves an intricate story of human struggle and survival. Although a work of fiction, the author built the narrative after attempting to locate the last remaining Hitler food taster, only to discover she recently passed away at 96 years of age.

Twice daily, Rosa faces death by poisoning when tasting Hitler's bland vegetarian food. At the same time, her complex relationship with a hard-line SS officer further complicates her future. However, her soul collapses when Gregor is reported missing after a series of infantry assaults just before his Christmas leave.

Will Rosa see her first love again? Read *At The Wolf's Table* to find out how Rosa handles the drama among her fellow tasters.



Author: Rosella Postorino

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BEACHES ABROAD

MYRTOS BEACH KEFALONIA, GREECE

By Ellen Grace Jones

Nestled at the bottom of a seemingly endless track that zig-zags its way down a perilously steep limestone cliffside, Myrtos in Kefalonia is the beach that launched a thousand Greek postcards. Despite being recognized as one of the country's best beaches, its tricky location means it rarely heaves, and remains blissfully underdeveloped.

Make the journey and you're rewarded with a paradisiacal 2,600' curve of gleaming white tiny pebbles, dip-worthy azure shallows, and the warm scent of pine on the breeze while cicadas chirrup in the background.

The island of Kefalonia was the setting for Louis de Bernières' bestseller, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*. When the film was made, Myrtos made its cinematic splash as the location for the film's iconic mine detonation scene.

WHY GO?

That eye-poppingly electric blue sea. Those Insta-worthy views. Before you make your descent to the beach, pause at one of the two vantage points to capture some Instagram moments. If its insane natural beauty isn't enough, Myrtos Beach has a cool cave to swim into at its northernmost tip. Although sunbeds and showers are available, don't expect buzzing beach bars or tavernas. There's a tiny refreshment-serving shack and that's about it.

Being on the northwest coast of the island, Myrtos is spectacular at sunset. It's best to dedicate a whole day to visiting the beach, staying until the sun dips beyond the shimmering Ionian, and the sky turns hues of peach and purple. There's no shade, so pack an umbrella and everything else you'll need for your day at Myrtos.

For lunch or dinner, savor the catch-of-the-day at one of the handful of traditional Greek tavernas along the cliff top above.



WHERE SHOULD I STAY?

If you're hankering for a slice of authentic Greek village life, look to Assos, a secluded coastal village just 20 minutes north of Myrtos. In the shadow of a Venetian fortress, Assos looks plucked from the pages of Homer's *Odyssey*. Indeed, Odysseus was king of Kefalonia's sister island, Ithaca. You'll find luxury villas and humble apartments alike to rent in Assos, as well as traditional tavernas to dine in.

If you're a traveler who craves more of a cosmopolitan vibe, stay in the bustling capital, Argostoli. Since most of it was sadly destroyed by a 1953 earthquake, Argostoli is relatively modernized, but it retains a quintessential Greek charm. There's a scenic harbor to explore, historic museums and countless bakeries where you'll find heavenly mandoles and pastelia made with local honey.

HOW DO I GET THERE?

Myrtos Beach is located at the foot of the Agia Dynati and Kalon Oros mountains, just 18 miles north of Argostoli, the island's capital. You can hire a car or scooter in Argostoli, then head north towards Assos. Myrtos is well signposted, and at the small village of Divarata, you'll find the hairpin-bend 1.2 mile track that snakes down to the bay. At the bottom is ample parking space for your vehicle.

Of course, the rockstar way to make an entrance at Myrtos is by dropping anchor on your own private boat. If chartering a superyacht is a bit too A-list for your budget, hop aboard a day cruise or hire a motorboat.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Myrtos Beach itself is free to access. In Argostoli, scooter hire is about 25 euros a day during peak season, while car hire costs around 35 euros and motorboats 100 euros. If you'd rather enjoy a guided Myrtos experience, four-hour day coach tours to the beach operate at 30 euros. Sunbeds and umbrellas are around 7 euros per day to hire.

Sean Dietrich, nicknamed Sean of the South, chronicles life in the American South. Find him online at seandietrich.com.



Happiness is...



By Sean Dietrich

Yesterday, I met an elderly man in the supermarket parking lot. He was loading his car, and I was loading mine. He wore a surgical mask. So did I.

Beneath his mask, all I could see were his bushy, white eyebrows, with stray hairs that grew 8 feet long and curled sideways like little corkscrews from hell.

Do me a favor: when I get old, if my eyebrows look like this, tie me down and take the horse clippers to me.

Anyway, my new elderly friend was very nice. He was telling me about his childhood during the 1940s. The Great Depression had just ended in the U.S. But not entirely. You don't just snap your fingers and say, "Depression's over!"

His family lived in the mountains of North Alabama. They were poor. They used outhouses. He and his brother hauled drinking water from the creek because they couldn't pay their water bill. And life kept getting worse.

His mother got sick. His baby brother died. His father left for California to find work and never came back. These were not hard times. These were horrible times.

"Listen," the old man said, "after growing up the way I did, I figured out the trick to finding happiness. Care to guess what it is?"

No. I didn't. My carton of ice cream was about to melt.

He went on, "The only way to be happy is to be unhappy."

I had to rub my chin for a second before making a profound and thoughtful remark: "Do what?"

The old man told me that the Great Depression made him a happy man. Not at first, but when it was over, it was pure euphoria. Good jobs were suddenly available, money was better, and the war had finally ended. Everyone kissed the ground and thanked the sky.

"You can't appreciate spaghetti and meatballs until you've had to live on ketchup soup," he said.

I nodded and pretended like I understood him, but I didn't. Alas, I am not the sharpest spork in the drawer.

We bid each other goodbye, he wished me a happy Fourth of July, and he crawled into a ratty car with bald tires. His son was driving. After they puttered away, I was left standing in a cloud of blue exhaust.

Ever since then, I've been thinking about what he said. And I wonder if he's right. Maybe I've been looking at this whole coronavirus thing wrong.

So I did a little research. Here is what I found:

In the last four months, bicycle sales have been sky-high. The highest in fifty years. Bikes are selling like hotcakes. There are bicycle shortages all over the nation.

I called a big bike shop in a big city. I talked to a guy over the phone.

"Yeah," he said, "it's been a crazy good year for us. We get a lotta young people who wanna get out into the real world, and into nature, and quit playing on their phones so much."

Ah, yes. Cell phones.

You'd think with everyone being trapped inside that phone usage would be up. And according to cell phone company records, usage is up. But not like you would think. People are making more phone calls to Mom and Dad.

So then I interviewed several parents about their kids' cell phone usage. One woman said this:

"Normally, in our neighborhood, kids are always glued to their screens, but not this summer. We've had neighborhood baseball and football. Lately, my son forgets to take his phone with him. It's a miracle, really."

Here are a few other ways that the pandemic has changed people's routines:

Erin, in New Jersey, says she has cooked supper in her own kitchen for 133 days, consecutively. She admits, "We have saved a LOT of money just by not eating out."

Sue, in West Virginia, said that since the quarantine, her family has been eating dinner each night together around the table.

What a novel idea.

My friend in Oklahoma City said he lost his job when the lockdown started. Unemployment depressed him at first, but after a few months, something weird happened. His blood pressure went down.

Pretty soon, the doctor took him off his medication. He's working part-time from home now.

"I feel better than I've ever felt in my life," he said.

Kyle, in Virginia Beach, has lost 30 pounds since the quarantine began. Ashley, in Chicago, has taken up jogging.

My friend Allen gave up drinking. And if you knew Allen, this would shock you. Especially if you once saw Allen drink gin out of his own shoe on New Year's Eve.

Almost everyone I interviewed admits that they have grown closer to their immediate families.

Here are some of the other things I've heard:

"I have more time to go on walks."

"I hang out with my kids a lot more."

"I've been reading books non-stop."

Reading books might sound like a small thing, but I can relate to this one. Four months ago, I was too busy working to read through *Cat in the Hat*. But during these last months, I actually read a few books. It's the most fun I've had in years.

So I don't know. Even though this has been a hard year for me, even though I've been bored, even though I've been downhearted and in need of electro-shock therapy, and even though it has seemed like this entire world was falling apart at the hinges, something inside me says that an elderly man I once met was telling the truth.

Still, I hope my eyebrows never look like his. 🐼



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Gifts

That'll Keep Any Beach Fan Happy Year-Round

Yes, it's winter. Yes, it's chilly. Of course, in our hearts, we'd all love to live an endless summer filled with a bottomless abundance of warmth, sunshine, and plenty of beach time. Unfortunately, sometimes reality – and Mother Nature – has other plans. Here are some fun products that can keep you feeling beach happy year-round.

By Shannon Serpette

1. CB Grey Silk Shawl

With the right colors and patterns, silk shawls or sarongs can invoke a tropical vibe that makes you feel as if you're still out on a beach, no matter what time of year. The CB Grey shawl can be worn in many different ways – turn it into a scarf, pirate tails, head wrap, or a knotted necklace. Super soft against the skin, it'll feel like a gentle trade wind is caressing you, and you'll swear you're living your best life. A little luxury can create a lot of bliss.

SHOPCBGREY.COM
(\$132)

2. Bask Toweling Blazer

Want to beach-up your next backyard bar-b-que? The Bask Toweling Blazer is a stylish terry cloth jacket that radiates a casual but sophisticated vibe. It'll help you stay a little warmer until summer gets here while looking like you just slid into port aboard your own personal mega-yacht.

BASKNYC.COM
(\$174 AND UP)



3. Sunloops Sunglasses and Charms

Sunloops are an ingenious combination of chain sunglasses and charms that are perfect for those who want an extra dose of fabulousness on the beach, or even in the dead of winter. With so many looks to choose from, you'll have a hard time deciding which one to pick (our favorite is the Annie). Even if you're only sitting at your computer planning your next beach vacation, Sunloops will make you feel as if you're already on a boat sipping margaritas.

WEARSUNLOOPS.COM
(STARTING AT \$75)



4. Mermaid Wave Wear Wetsuit

You can still go to the beach when it's cold, but why opt for ordinary when you can look like the badass beach babe you were always born to be? Let other swimmers wiggle into those boring black wetsuits that pretty much all look the same. This sparkling pink wetsuit will certainly make you stand out from the rest of the shivering crowd. Hop in the chilly water and pretend you're a mermaid or just strut your way into the nearest beach bar. Either way, this suit will make you feel like a naughty rock star or a nautical superhero.

MERMAIDWAVEWEAR.COM
(\$492)



5. Copper H2O Water Bottles

Water is a life-giving substance that deserves proper respect. Instead of staying hydrated with a sketchy plastic water bottle made out of all sorts of chemicals you can't pronounce, opt for a high-quality water bottle. This 100 percent food-safe copper water bottle is gorgeous and will make sipping plain water feel like a special occasion. You'll never need to use – or throw away – another disposable water bottle again.

COPPERH2O.COM
(\$24.50)



6. 30A Love for the Beach Puzzle

This 1,000-piece, heart-shaped puzzle will plant a smile on your sun-deprived face when you're forced to spend time indoors. Featuring cute depictions of all things you love about the beach, this 30A puzzle turns any dreary day into an instant vacay. This unique puzzle is also available at Target, and was designed by 30A super-fan and social media style influencer Callie Danielle.

30AGEAR.COM
(\$29)





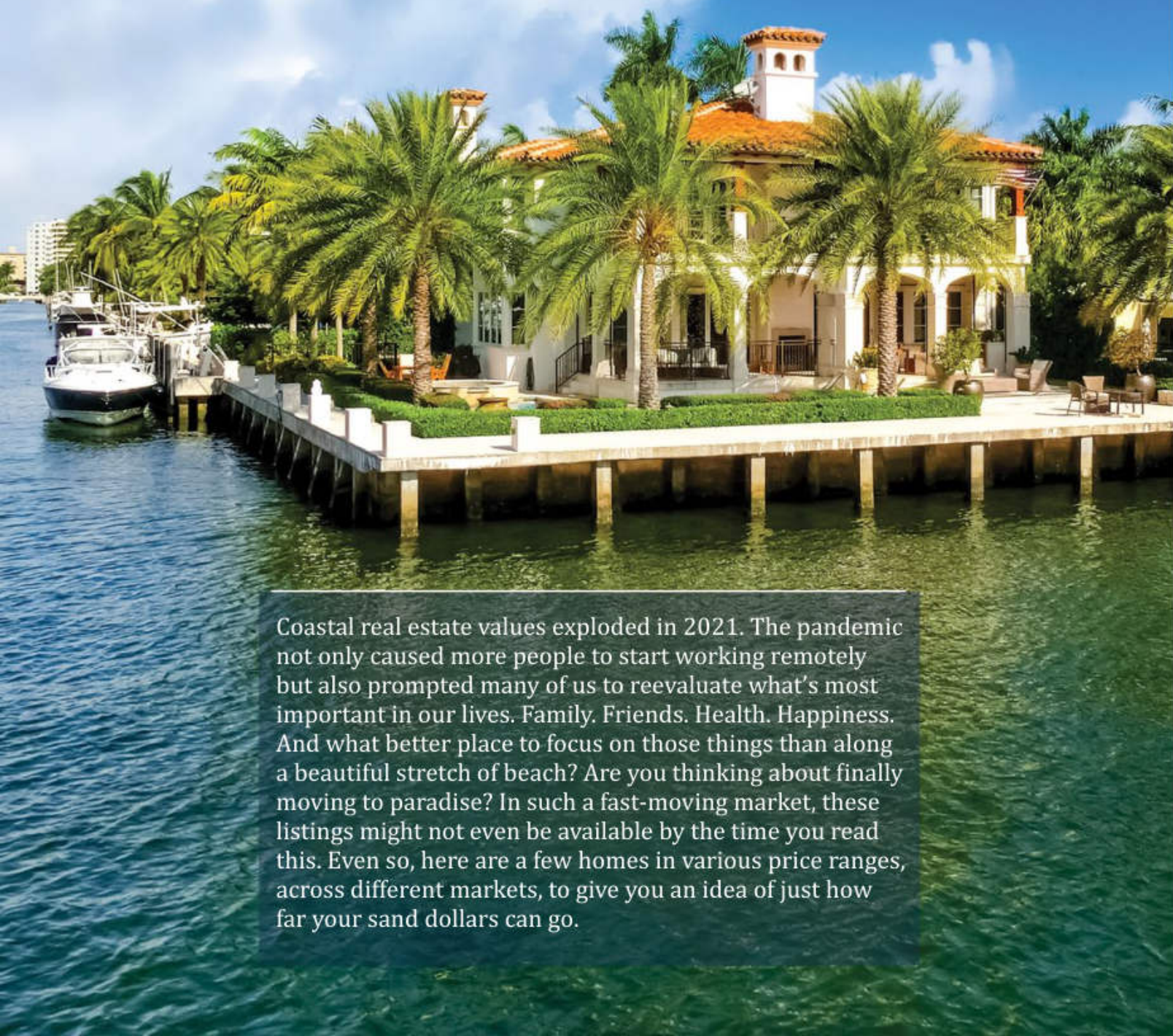
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What You Get

FOR YOUR MONEY



Coastal real estate values exploded in 2021. The pandemic not only caused more people to start working remotely but also prompted many of us to reevaluate what's most important in our lives. Family. Friends. Health. Happiness. And what better place to focus on those things than along a beautiful stretch of beach? Are you thinking about finally moving to paradise? In such a fast-moving market, these listings might not even be available by the time you read this. Even so, here are a few homes in various price ranges, across different markets, to give you an idea of just how far your sand dollars can go.

South Walton, Florida



147 Eve Circle, 4 bed / 4 bath 2,941 sq. ft.

\$899,000

The Bobby | Team, Engel & Völkers 30A Beaches, www.bobbyjteam.evrealstate.com



29 Ruth Street, 4 bed / 4 bath 2,688 sq. ft.

\$1,425,000



7 Sara Circle, 5 bed / 4.5 bath 3,352 sq. ft.

\$1,700,000



Alison Foote, JPAR Coast and County, www.alisonfoote.com

652 Dorr Ave, 4 bed / 3 bath 2,901 sq. ft.

\$575,000



Angelo DePaola, EXP Realty Seaside, www.thecoastalconnection.com

805 Wedgewood Dr, 4 bed / 2.5 bath 2,332 sq. ft.

\$465,000



Antoni Figueiredo, Local Property Inc., www.antonisellsgulfcoast.com

1700 Heritage Dr, 5 bed / 4.5 bath 4,845 sq. ft.

\$1,150,000



Mike Reynolds, www.robertsbrothers.com

7063 Lakeshore Dr, 3 bed / 2 bath 1,325 sq. ft.

\$595,000



Shonna Nance, Keller Williams, 251-716-6325

3767 Ponce De Leon Ct, 2 bed / 1 bath 750 sq. ft.

\$599,000



John Massee Lane, .58-Acres

\$775,000

Brad Reese, Beach Properties of Florida, www.southwaltonfl.com



Solaire Way, Penthouse 2, 4 bed / 5 bath 2,850 sq. ft.

\$4,395,000

Brad Reese, Beach Properties of Florida, www.southwaltonfl.com



278 Seabreeze Court, 5 bed / 4 bath 2,800 sq. ft.

\$1,985,000



155 Heritage Dunes Lane., 5 bed / 5 bath 4,200 sq. ft.

\$5,249,000



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MARCH 18 & 19 ■ AARON BESSANT PARK

PRESENTED BY SOUTHERN LIVING MAGAZINE

UNwineD in Panama City Beach on March 18th and 19th at Aaron Bessant Park. Spend the weekend tasting craft beer, wine and spirits while sampling cuisine from renowned area chefs and local eateries. At its heart, UNwineD is a stylish garden party that showcases the best of the region.

Plan your weekend now.

For more information, go to
UNwineDPCB.com



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A WEEKEND TO UNWINED!

Panama City Beach to usher in spring with its premier festival



Soft breezes, live music, delectable cuisine from the area's leading chefs and a global assortment of fine wines, craft beer and spirits will welcome locals and visitors alike to the sixth annual UNwineD festival held at Panama City Beach's Aaron Bessant Park March 18-19, 2022. Located minutes from the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, this two-day stylish garden party showcases Panama City Beach's passion for the people, places and cuisine that make the city worth celebrating, and this year's event is one not to miss.

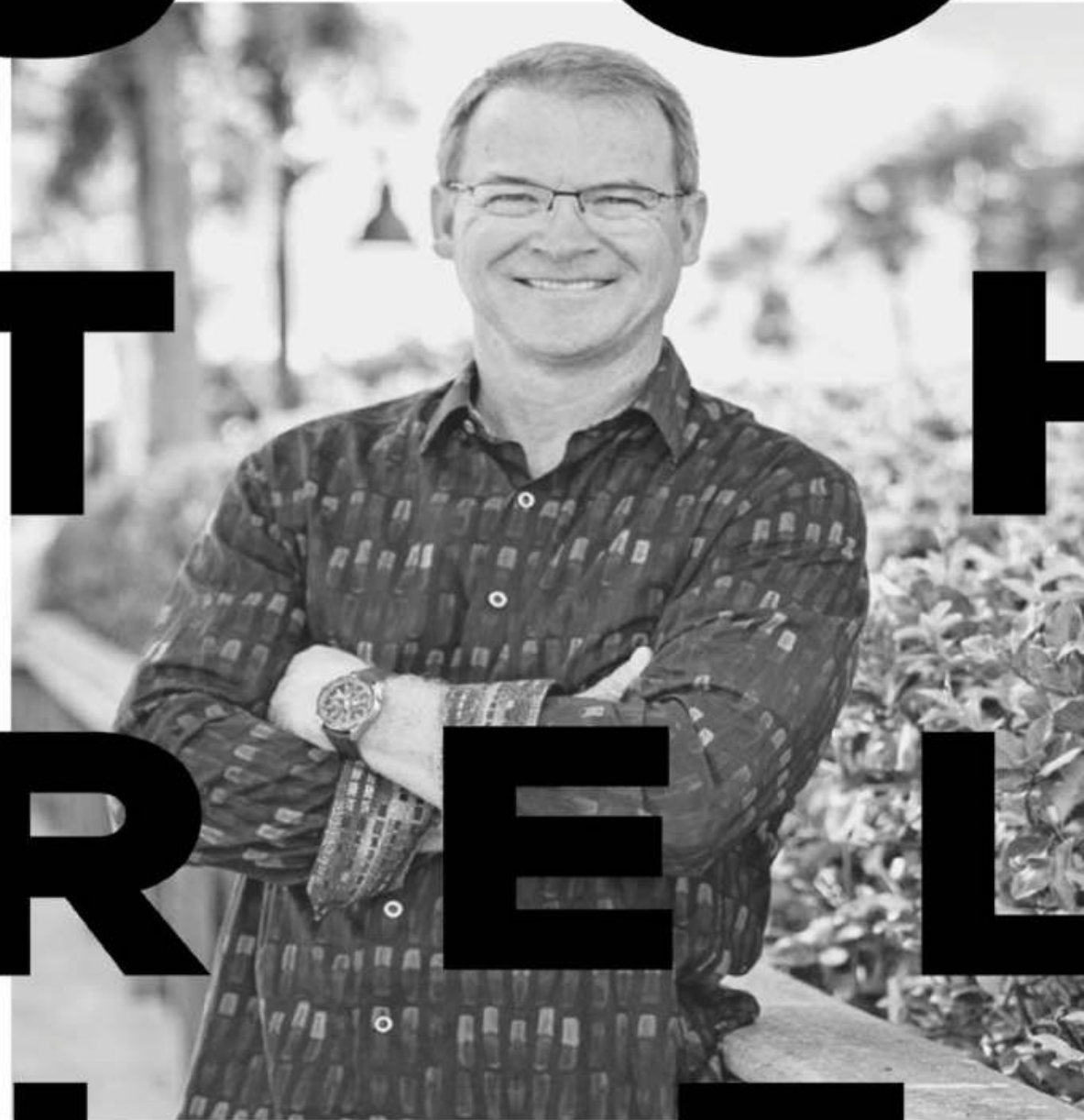
The weekend's festivities kick off on Friday night with a celebratory soiree presented by *Southern Living* magazine. Ladies and gents will arrive from all over the country outfitted in their finest fashions to wine, dine and mingle at the elegant affair. Held under the festival's signature white tent, this is an exclusive, curated experience for a limited number of food, wine, spirits and beer aficionados.

UNwineD's Grand Afternoon Tasting takes place on Saturday from 1-4:30 p.m. and features more than 40 purveyors who provide samplings of craft beer, spirits and wines from North America, South America and Europe. Guests will have the opportunity to discover new brands and meet regional brewers and wine vendors from the immediate area. Throughout the day, Panama City Beach restaurants will be offering tasty bites ranging from Southern classics to fresh seafood straight from the destination's turquoise waters. In between noshes, guests can browse local shops and boutiques at the Art and Vendor Row, stop by the Visit Panama City Beach retail tent or check out the *Southern Living* tent brimming with home décor, cookbooks and more.

This year, a portion of the proceeds will go toward local and regional charities.

UNwineDPCB.com

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20 SONGS GUARANTEED TO PUT A SMILE ON YOUR FACE!

To celebrate our HAPPINESS issue, here are 20 songs that are virtually guaranteed to bring a little sunshine to any day. We currently have these songs playing in rotation on 30A Radio, which you can listen to for free in the 30A apps for iPhone or Android, on your Google Home or Alexa device ("hey Alexa/Google, play 30A Radio"), or by going to www.30Aradio.com on any device!

1. "Bob Marley" – One Love
2. "Soak Up the Sun" – Sheryl Crow
3. "Kokomo" – The Beach Boys
4. "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay" – Otis Redding
5. "Lovely Day" – Bill Withers
6. "Let's Go Crazy" – Prince and The Revolution
7. "You Make My Dreams" – Hall & Oates
8. "Don't Stop Me Now" – Queen
9. "Can't Stop the Feeling" – Justin Timberlake
10. "Don't Worry, Be Happy" – Bobby McFerrin
11. "Walking on Sunshine" – Katrina & The Waves
12. "Shut Up and Dance" – Walk the Moon
13. "I Wanna Dance With Somebody" – Whitney Houston
14. "Happy" – Pharrell Williams
15. "Uptown Funk" – Mark Ronson ft. Bruno Mars
16. "Shake It Off" – Taylor Swift
17. "Stronger" – Kelly Clarkson
18. "Here Comes the Sun" – The Beatles
19. "Feel Good Inc." – Gorillaz
20. "Up & Up" – Coldplay

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What is 30A?

This is a map of our little beach community. Old Florida "State Road 30" once started at the Alabama state line and meandered 283 miles east across the panhandle. Several "alternate routes" (hence the "A" in 30A) offered drivers a slower scenic option, usually along the beach. But we don't think of 30A as disjointed miles of soulless asphalt. 30A® is a celebration of small town beach life – the kind that's been enjoyed by families for decades all along the Gulf Coast. 30A isn't just a line on the map. It's a lifestyle; an attitude. It's that happy place we all dream of when we need to unwind, unplug and celebrate life. – 30A.com



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