

LIST OF A LIFETIME

Writing down goals and dreams helps make them come true

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Near Dau Tieng, Vietnam in early 1967, Paul Zumfelde was surrounded by death. Casualties had been coming fast and heavy. It was clear that many wouldn't survive.

So, sitting in a foxhole one day, he wrote down 100 things he wanted to do before he died.

He dreamed big: Climbing one of the tallest mountains in Switzerland. Building his own house. Earning multiple degrees.

It was just a simple exercise to stay positive, to keep his focus on survival. When he finally returned home safe, though, it became something more. It became his life's road map.

"I knocked off 10 to 15 of those goals real quick" by hitchhiking across Europe, remembered Mr. Zumfelde, of Wauseon. "From there I went on to compile my own 'life list' and at the age of 63 am still crossing items off of my lists."

Mr. Zumfeld isn't alone in creating this kind of list and measuring his life by it. Ellen DeGeneres has talked about her life list on her TV show, and bookstores are full of travel tomes telling you the 1,000 places you should see before you die. The subject made it to the silver screen recently with *The Bucket List*, starring Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman as terminally ill patients who set off to fulfill their dreams before they kick the bucket.

There are even Web sites to help you make your own. Susie Wyshak created SuperViva.com to help people organize and find inspiration for their life lists about two years ago after she was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease.

"I wanted to really do the things I had been wanting to do," the California woman said.

Here are the top 10 goals listed by users on SuperViva:

1. Buy a house
2. Pay off all my debt
3. Get married
4. Go to Italy
5. Ride in a hot air balloon
6. Exercise three to five times per week
7. Write a book
8. Go to Hawaii
9. Swim with dolphins
10. Get my passport

SOURCE: SUPERVIVA.COM



Paul Zumfelde in his house, which he built himself. Constructing a home is one of the goals on his life list. (THE BLADE/LORI KING)

Ms. Wyshak's personal "public" list - the site allows users to make goals visible to other users or keep them private - has 95 dreams for the future, including learning glassblowing and driving a Porsche. What is perhaps more notable is her public list of goals that she's actually completed, which tops out at more than 130.

"I didn't even look at the list for six months and they just started happening," she said.

That's the beauty of making a formal list, experts say.

"There's a lot of research out there that proves that when we actually write our goals down, we're more likely to follow through," explained Carrie Claypool, who provides coaching and counseling services in the employee assistance division of Harbor Behavioral Healthcare.

Such lists have the power to keep us from getting stuck in the past or present, especially when we're feeling down.

"The life list lifts us out of our drama and opens our focus up to wider possibilities," Ms. Claypool said.

To that end, she said a good life list should be large and include a healthy mix of high adventure - visiting exotic places, going skydiving - with more ordinary goals whose importance shouldn't be overlooked.

A fun example is Ted Leonsis, owner of the Washington Capitals hockey team and a multimillionaire. After he survived a plane crash landing in 1983, he made a list of more than 100 things he wanted to accomplish in his life.

Some of his goals seem a bit far-fetched for most people: Net worth of \$1 billion after taxes, own a jet, go one-on-one with Michael Jordan. But isn't it nice to see that some of his dreams are the same as regular folks: see the Rolling Stones, get a hole-in-one, go to Alaska, have grandchildren?

Rich Goss, of Petersburg, Mich., made his list back in 1973 when he was a bored student sitting in class at Monroe County Community College. In a preamble that he scribbled down, he explained its purpose in helping him to examine his life: "I would like to do these things to prove I am not just a mediocre person living and wallowing in mediocrity."

Some turned out to be better ideas than others. He did learn to scuba dive, a pastime that led him to meet his wife, and he earned a high-level belt in a martial art. His battle with a Komodo dragon using only a sword and knife, on the other hand, never materialized.

There was something bigger at stake in all of this, something Mr. Goss would love to pass on to others, including one of his sons who developed his own life list.

"It taught me goal-setting, and that is something that is so important to teach people," he said.

Jay Fleischmann said his goal-oriented nature led him to make a "dream list" as well. The 35-year-old Springfield Township man keeps his goals on a laminated card that he stores in the front of his wallet. He has been surprised at how effective it is in making his dreams come true.

"Once I started doing that, I was amazed at how frequently they would come to fruition," he said. "It's almost like writing them down and reviewing them once in a while is 80 percent of the battle."

Janis Sankowski uses the Web site www.43things.com to organize her life goals. She said her list is a way of focusing her attention and pushing her to really experience life.

"I think that everyone kind of gets into just a stagnant life," she said. "They go to work, they might do things around the house, but they don't really experience life. I think there is so much out there that you need to experience."

Like swim with manatees, a goal that Ms. Sankowski, 45, was able to cross off her list thanks to a recent trip to Florida. So far, she's also been able to cross off kissing a complete stranger, holding a tarantula, getting a piece of art into an exhibition, and others.

The Point Place mother views her list of things to do before she dies as a work in progress that she frequently fills with more items. The alternative, she said, is too depressing.

"What do I do when I complete my whole list?" she asked. "OK, it's time to die?"

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