Feature Story

What Do You Want to Do Before You Die?

A list. A list unlike any other. Not your ordinary to-do list or grocery list. No, much different. A list written; sometimes mentally, other times physically. A list that requires desire, aspiration, and accomplishment. A list that may never be completed as it is ever changing, growing with innovations and pushing the limit. One may be fearful of crossing certain things off of this list, but once accomplished, it is crossed off forever. It may take a simple idea or a life-changing event to begin this list. For some it begins on the deathbed. For others it started early in life. This list is created by the answer to the question: What do you want to do before you die? Write down all the answers you have to this question. And now you have the bucket list.

A bucket list is a list of things that one wants to do before they leave this earthly existence. It is derived from the expression “kick the bucket” which means to pass on. For some this list has an expiration date: death, but for others it is a list of goals and ideas they want to accomplish within the next few years.

To me, it is a list of things I want to get done as soon as possible in order to make room for more items on my list. It is like a grocery list for my life. For me, and many others, a bucket list is a journey.

An example of 4 men on a journey to fulfill their bucket lists are Duncan Penn, Jonnie Penn, Ben Nemtin, and Dave Lingwood. These men are “Four regular guys on a mission to complete a list of '100 Things To Do Before You Die' and to help and encourage others to go after their own lists.” (theburiedlife.com) For every item they cross off of their bucket list, they help a random stranger cross off an item on their list. They would ask the question, “What do you want to do before you die?” This mission that started out in a garage in 2006 turned into a popular television show called “The Burried Life”. This concept of “Bucket Lists” has inspired others to make lists of their own.

Why does one create a bucket list? A bucket list is essentially a to-do list for long term and short-term goals. When one item is checked off, move onto the next big adventure. Some people begin their “bucket list” when they find out that they may be terminally ill like in the movie “The Bucket List” with Morgan Freeman and Jack Nicholson. These two men find out they are ill and decide to complete the list of things they aspire to do before they pass on.

Other people such as I have a list purely to accomplish the things they have always wanted to do as well as keep a memorabilia of accomplishments. It makes life more meaningful and memorable. Bucket lists are also associated with positive psychology. Lists are about goal- setting, which motivates people to accomplish things in life. It is a way of setting and achieving goals. There are many different items on individual’s lists, which vary with interests and passion, but a few main themes are travel, adventure, and fulfillment of life.

Travel

Everyone has a destination for which they have always wanted to travel. Some seek the mysteries of the world through history in England while others wish to relax on a private island. From the Africa to Australia, everyone has a location on his or her list. A student from Principia College, Madison Grendel, will soon be graduating with a double major in Political Science and Art. Madison Grendel a whose cousin’s bucket list of six pages inspired her, wishes to travel the world. On the map spread across her desk, she has already crossed off Canada, Netherlands, Germany, and Czechoslovakia. This last spring break she crossed off more of the countries, as she traveled to Ireland and the United Kingdom. Her ultimate travel goal is to visit Asia, and Russia. “I am drawn to China because it is so different than anything I have ever experienced.” She enjoys traveling because unlike those who have skydiving on their list she would “rather see nature on Earth rather than fall from it.” This witty world traveler speaks Spanish, Czech, and a little German, French, Croatian, and Slovakian. Linguistically speaking she is all set up to travel. The world map on her desk is her ultimate goal to conquer. We wish Madi all the best in her endeavors. The world better be ready for this one of a kind woman.

Adventure

Adventure is definitely on the top of your average thrill-seeking bucket list. The most common adventure and often on the top ten of most lists is skydiving. From first-hand experience, skydiving is the ultimate adrenaline rush. Skydiving consisted of basically signing my life away, followed by a safety video and instructions on how to skydive. Then, I was put into a harness and walked to a small plane with an instructor as I was going tandem. The rickety plane adds to the adrenaline experience as I was flown thousands of feet into the air. As I sat there getting my harness tightened, the door was opened, and my friend and her instructor literally disappeared into thin air. It then hit me. I was about to jump out of a plane thousands of feet in the air, but there was no turning back. Between the tiny headspace and having an instructor my back, I waddled over to the door. He told me to lean back and gravity take you away. We back flipped once and now I am facing the ground. Once my stomach finally caught up with me I took it all in. I could hear nothing but silence and it felt like you are just floating there. Free falling for a minute is unlike any other experience. It seems as though life on the earth should be getting bigger as I approached it, but oddly it didn’t. It is what I would imagine flying or hovering to be. So far skydiving has been my favorite item checked off of my list.

Up there with skydiving is cliff jumping, bungee jumping, and squirrel suiting. Many adventure seekers who love skydiving also love the adrenaline of falling off of other pieces of land such as bridges and cliffs. Bungee jumping is when you have your feet attached to a harness with a bungee cord on the other end attached to a bridge. Then the thrill seeker proceeds to fall backward and free fall under the bridge until the bungee catches and springs you back up.

A special suit with wings on it is the main concept of squirrel suiting. It is more of a dangerous adrenaline rush than skydiving as squirrel suiters glide close to cliffs and risk hitting the side.

In Maslow’s hierarchy of needs the top need is self-actualization: fulfillment of life. The four guys from the Buried Life wanted to help others to fulfill their life lists. Inspired by these men, I am writing this story to make you think of what is on your list. “After all, a bucket list is not about dying, but about living” (Christopher Peterson). And now I pose the question: What do you want to do before you die?