

learning for life



FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS

by Robin Booth, Life Coach & School Principal

“I want to be a farmer,” my younger brother said to me one day. “And I want to buy a farm in the Eastern Cape.”

We were sitting in his house in St James, Cape Town, 20metres from the sea. The waves crashing on the rocks threw up a fine mist that soon covered the house windows, and the whales were close enough for us to hear their blowing. I looked across at my younger brother and tried to imagine him in the dry sun wearing khaki and veldskoene. Here was a young city man, having lived his life in the Mother City, and now he wanted to farm sheep. He knew nothing about sheep, nothing about farming, loved being social with his friends, and now wanted to live two hours from the nearest town (with no cellphone reception, and no electricity either). This sounded insane from my perspective, and very romantic from his.

Somewhere out of the mists of my own past I recall my father having voiced a similar dream. “I have always wanted to farm,” he would often say. His eyes would mist over and his gaze would go off to the horizon, no doubt enjoying the vision of himself on the back of a horse or striding across a green field to a farmhouse emitting smells of apple tart and family laughter (of course he would have grown the apples as well!).

I tried to talk some sense into my brother by telling him of the joke of the farmer who won the R20-million lotto and, when he was asked what he would do with the money, the farmer replied, “I will keep on farming until the money has all run out!”

My talk with him didn't seem to change matters much as he bought a farm in the Baviaanskloof for R1.6-million and moved there with his wife and daughter. They bought 600 sheep, but all his reading of how to farm sheep didn't help much when the drought came and he lost his whole flock. It didn't help either when the baboons came and raided the fruit trees and the vegetable garden. Or that they were the only English-speaking farmers in the whole area, and they viewed life quite differently than did the traditional, church-going, Afrikaners.

It seemed as though I was right. This was a crazy idea and a money-drain as well. Dreams are for those who are sleeping, aren't they?

But what impressed me most, was that he never looked back and said, “I should not have bought the farm.” He never said, “it was foolish of me,” or “I made a mistake”. Every apparent set-back was

counterbalanced by the exploration and discovery he had while exploring his dream. He always kept moving forward, learning from the things that did not work; from sheep-farming, to a Retreat Centre, to tourism.

But then it seems as if he was right also. He was offered R5.5-million for his farm (a growth of 350% in four years) so this was not a money-drain. He learned about land, conservation, sustainable-living and the empowerment of poor farming communities. More than that, he had broadened his experience of life in ways which you can only access if you follow your passion and dreams.

But the sense of satisfaction in him of having followed his dream is priceless. In fact, it is inspiring. I take courage from the reflection that I rarely regret what I have done. What I seem to regret more is that which I did not do. Even when things don't work out the way I wanted them to, I learned so much that I do not regret having done it. For your life to be great, your courage must be bigger than your fears. My father's wish of being a farmer went from being a dream to that of being a regret of an unfulfilled dream.

I love going to my brother's farm and I go as often as I can. I am grateful that his dream allowed me to experience this part of the world. So often I see people gaze off into the distance, a blurry eyed vision of a different life, the dream of “if only...”

The wise man Pantanjali wrote this in the 2nd Century BC. “When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all your thoughts break your bonds: your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction, and you find yourself in a new, great and wonderful world.

Dormant forces, faculties and talents become alive, and you discover yourself to be a greater person by far than you ever dreamed yourself to be.” When you follow your dreams and engage your passion, your life changes.

My favourite memory of my brother's farm is walking over the fields past the grazing horses, my brother and I having just walked into the mountains and swum in the cold freshwater pools. And as we near the house, we heard the laughter of family and smelled the sweetness of fresh pie made from freshly-picked apples. 🍏



PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE BAVIAANSKLOOF by Geoff Spiby