

## Another reason to take stock

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As a milestone birthday approaches, I briefly thought about what I wanted and how I wanted to spend my special day. Since it falls on the Labour Day weekend, bodies are scarce, so a quiet time in the back yard at home, propped up near the BBQ is likely on the agenda.

But prior to my birthday I received something else ??a thyroid biopsy.

A month ago, I never gave much thought to the big C.

We read about this dreaded disease almost every day.

I've interviewed many people stricken with cancer. Some survived, some did not. I empathized, sympathized as best I could. I felt sorrow, and buried loved ones, several times. Several times too many.

I've consoled others, tried to rationalize, and tried to find several silver linings. Somet



mes I succeeded and sometimes I failed.

But I tried. I'm not a priest, so I can't really guide others to the great beyond.

And then one day you wake up and it's different. You feel something's not right, but dismiss it because you've got too much to do, too many things to look after. Too many bills to pay.

I'd love it if my inner eye lids were like the big screen, a massive projection that plays the best movies of all ? scenes from my life.

Wouldn't it be great to pause, fast forward or rewind the best moments, or the greatest yet to come?

But we can't. I'm only human, with human frailties.

Requisitions for an ultrasound and subsequent biopsy came at a routine visit to a skin specialist (who just happened to be a head and neck professional).

I recall a very brief moment of fright and panic, but it quickly subsided. There are procedures and tests to be done, so no point in pondering the what ifs until necessary.

Did I spend too much time in the sun? Did I indulge too much during my college years? Did I neglect my body? Not enough exercise??Did I forget to eat my green leafy veggies?

I think many people who are faced with a life-altering situation or disease think they're being punished for some past sins or heinous crimes. Does God believe some of us are more useful up above than down here on terra firma?

I don't expect any answers. And even if I did what good would come of it?

While I haven't heard back yet about the test results, I'm fairly confident it will turn out to be nothing. But the experience provided a lot of food for thought.

Good people come and go every day. Sometimes we're lucky enough to meet them, shake their hands and share a joke or a wonderful meal.

I have met so many good people it's mind-boggling. It has filled my heart with hope, joy, optimism, strength and happiness. Isn't that what it's all about?

And it continues, on a weekly basis. That's one of the beauties of my job ??I get to meet really interesting people and learn something new all the time. And then, I get the opportunity to share it with others.

There are those people you see, but don't give them a passing thought. But you take comfort in knowing they're around, they're

reliable and dependable, like the sunrise of a new day or the cappuccino at your favourite coffee shop. You never contemplate that they won't be there tomorrow.

As a Virgo, I tend to like routine, normalcy, familiarity. Disrupt any of these and I'm left scrambling, scratching my head.

I love people, maybe that's why I was drawn to this profession, to the chagrin of my European dad who didn't quite grasp the whole journalism thing. Did I disappoint him? I asked myself that question dozens of times over the years. The whole father/son dichotomy is a real dilemma, something that has never been fully explained.

I watched my all of my children be born, cry, stir, sleep like angels, cause trouble and grow into people. Maybe I grew a bit, too, without even noticing. Neat.

I have loved and lost and I have lost and found.

I travelled and have seen sights that are forever embedded in my mind. Some of my favourites include scaling one of the monuments at Chichen Itza in Mexico; eating a huge lobster at the marina in Philipsburg, St. Maarten on our honeymoon; getting a morning coffee from a Juan Valdez look-alike in Cartagena, Colombia.

Many of us have bucket lists??? a proverbial to-do list before we meet our maker. If you get a chance, watch the movie of the same name with Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman.

There are many places on the planet I'd love to visit and a few things I'd still like to do. But I tell you, skydiving is definitely not on my list.

At one point (or several) we take stock of our lives, and evaluate whether we've accomplished our goals, did what we said we'd do, and followed our hearts.

Unfortunately, life has to be lived forward, not backward, so when we glance back, perhaps it should be for reference only. One of my favourite sayings is if you must look back, keep one foot on the gas!?

We make decisions and have to live with the results.

Sure, perhaps I would have loved being a brain surgeon or astrophysicist and collecting those large pay cheques. Maybe I would have made a good politician or teacher.

Maybe.

But my path has led me here and along the way I've managed to meet the love of my life, have three unbelievable children and be blessed in many ways.

Is that what God intended for me?? Was it my fate to end up exactly here, regardless of which road I decided to take?

Many believe in the inevitability of fate. Even though God has given us all freedom of choice, there may be a master plan and we're all vital pieces of this huge, celestial puzzle.

If I zipped instead of zagged, I wouldn't likely be here, in the editor's chair, and you wouldn't be reading this right now. Of course, you may be watching me host my own late night talk show!

A gazillion things have led to our presence in the here and now ? our unbroken lineage and survival of our ancestors; the continued rotation of the Earth and perhaps a great deal of luck. Or is it all part of the plan?

Regardless, I'm not quite ready to leave in search of greener pastures.

After all, there are many more interesting people to encounter!