

Le Bon Journal

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Volume 3 Issue 5: Career change and second passions

Do you have a burning passion that distracts you from your work? Or do you wish you had a passion besides your job? It's all about achieving a balance between work and play, getting paid to do what you love, and loving what you do.

Some people make a career out of pursuing their passion. Others become passionate about their work. Still others work outside of their passion so that it is not work but play. And there are those that keep changing jobs until they discover their passion.

How do you know what your passion is unless you have indulged in it? Whether it is a sport, an art, a hobby, or even a job, you will only know the extent of your passion once you've engaged in it, feel the flow, and miss it when you can't pursue it freely.

In this 8-page issue, contributors from the US, Canada, England, Holland, Malaysia, and Taiwan generously share stories of their passions, career changes, and personal philosophies.

On page 1, the Hungry Poet gives the kind of career guidance to his daughter that he never got from his own father. Peter Murphy followed his dad's advice to give up his first passion only to return to it two decades later. James Ku resisted his father's advice not to work for foreigners and made a big career change at the age of forty (page 2).

On page 3, Deanna Wolff's day job enables her to pursue her passion outside of work. JC III abandoned his passion to pursue his career but rediscovered it in time to balance his professional and personal life.

Robert Bekkers identified and pursued his passion as a career from day one (page 4). In contrast, Anne Ku tried all sorts of vocations before discovering her true passion. Paul Ellis made a career of changing careers (page 5).

On page 6, Guido Egidi writes about the necessities and risks of career change as well as the difficulties of moving into self-employment. Mark Forster describes how he managed to leave a regular salary to become self-employed (page 7).

What motivates such life decisions? Decision making is the theme of the next issue in October 2004 (page 8).

Feedback from readers is always welcome. Reaction to the previous issue on Uprooting appears on page 8.

Career guidance for daughter

My daughter, now 18 and just starting second year at college, was at the first major crossroad of her life one year ago when she had to decide on what further education to pursue that could lead to a meaningful and rewarding future career.

Oh yes, I can vividly recall facing this crossroad before, at around her age too. But I did not have the benefit of my father to guide me at the time, for he had never attended school and was not in any position to impart advice on tertiary education and career planning. Yet, he had achieved greatness in his own ways and had done things with his life which I could only dream about.

Actually that was just my excuse for not asking my father at the time. I was too proud and stubborn to want any "guidance." I was too eager to decide for myself in the belief I had the wisdom to make my own decisions.

My daughter was never an academic, but she is very creative with graphic arts. She had three choices: 1) to pursue graphic arts as a profession which has been her dream; 2) to study for a less artistic and more commercial variant in graphics design and advertising; or 3) to pursue her passion for multimedia and digital animation in this high tech Digital Age.

She chose graphics design and advertising with my "guidance," but she made the final decision on her own --- at least that's what I would like to believe.

So how did I guide her? This is what I taught her.

In this modern high tech world of overcrowded populace and extreme competitiveness, survival is no longer a matter of talent and opportunities alone. We must be pragmatic and make sacrifices for commercial purposes. In deciding for a future career, there are three critical factors to consider.

Firstly, choose a profession in which you can excel, something you have a talent for or the fundamental competencies to do well in - something towards which you are intellectually geared.

Secondly, choose something you enjoy doing or that can give you personal satisfaction in the course of accomplishments --- a field of expertise closer to your heart and your passions.

Thirdly, make sure it can be a financially rewarding experience or it is commercially in demand --- something that guarantees a sustainable professional career for the long haul.

Whatever you choose must meet all three criteria without exception if you want to excel in your chosen field, enjoy the experience, and harvest the fruits of prosperity.

These are the three factors that will satisfy intellect, passion, and sustenance. Abraham Maslow could not have defined it better, I think. Actually the same philosophies apply when she asked me about her new boyfriend --- but that's another tale altogether.

The Hungry Poet, Malaysia

From accountancy to music of angels

I suppose I really wanted to be a musician at the age of 15 when I started having guitar lessons. I wanted to go and live in Granada and learn flamenco from the gypsies, but my father said it would be best to study for my A levels and train for one of the professions. He told me it's very difficult to make a living from music because it's so competitive.

Fifteen years into accountancy, I turned down a lucrative job offer of company accountant in central London and vowed never to return. The very next day, I went busking on a tin whistle. It started just as an experiment to see if it was worth doing because there was no stress involved.

I got the idea of learning the harp after a close friend passed away and left me some money, enough to take a year off busking, buy a small 25 string harp and take weekly lessons.

Seven months later, I plucked up enough courage to go out busking with the harp on a lovely sunny day at St Katherine's Dock beneath the famous Tower Bridge in London, got photographed and filmed by numerous tourists and went home with £40.

A year after that, I played my first wedding with the harp. I left the reception without being paid because nobody at the top table thanked me during the speeches. A few days later I received a cheque in the post, which included a tip!

While busking in Bond Street tube station during Christmas 2002, a passerby asked if I would like to have a free day in his recording studio. This former electric bass guitarist with a band had converted the ground floor of his Kilburn residence into a fully equipped recording studio. He probably appreciated my playing and knew that a CD recording might help. We put down nine tracks in one afternoon and added a tenth track a few days later. The album was christened "Just Harp."

I boldly sent a copy of the master to Danielle Perrett, a highly accomplished harpist, whom I had seen perform in concert. I asked if she would like to comment on the recording. To my surprise, she only criticised one track, a minuet that occasionally drifted out of triple time. For an accountant turned musician, this was indeed quite a significant achievement. After all, Danielle had written the harp syllabus for Trinity College, Greenwich.

One evening after a day of busking, I returned home to a voice mail requesting a booking for a private function to be attended by the Queen of Greece. At first I thought someone was winding me up. I went to bed thinking "to play for royalty, a musician has to be of a significantly high standard. Was this me?"

It turned out that Danielle Perrett had recommended me. The day before this royal event, two things were important --- a fresh haircut and a new silk embroidered waistcoat.

On the day of the event, I was delighted to find a room with wonderful acoustics, wooden flooring and a high ceiling, I was asked to play from a balcony some distance above the ground floor function. After tuning up, I began playing to the guests at 12 noon and Her Majesty Queen Anne-Marie of Greece entered half an hour later. The guests spoke very quietly so I played a flourishing glissando to provide an ambiance and fill the silent void. This had the effect of encouraging the guests to talk more leisurely.

Not long afterwards, I watched a TV documentary on medieval English court minstrels. It showed a minstrel singing and playing a lute on a balcony far above where the guests were eating and drinking on the ground floor. The presenter Terry Jones said that musicians played on the balcony for the acoustics, being closer to the ceiling, and so that the aristocracy wouldn't have to socialise with the musicians. I guess English traditions never change!

Third-generation Irish harpist Peter Murphy appears on the (UK) South Bank Show on ITV on 22 August 2004 at 11:15 pm, <http://www.justharp.co.uk>

Career change and uprooting at forty

The big uprooting happened when I was 40. I thought it was now or never. My dad tried to talk me into not working for "foreigners." He had experienced poor working conditions and bad exploitation by imperialism of various powers in Shanghai in 1930-1943. I told him his imperialism days were long gone.

Not heeding my father's advice, I made up my mind to change my runway --from teaching to translating, and from translating English into Chinese to translating Chinese into English. My new career in 1970 meant I had to work shifts, which was the worst part of it and hurt my health even now. Imagine having to work the graveyard shift (midnight to 7 AM) for two weeks, swing and late swing shifts (6 PM to 0230 AM), day shift, and back to graveyard shift for 21 years.

The transition period lasted two or three years. In the first six months as a trainee, I was not allowed to bring my family from Taiwan to Okinawa unless I paid their relocation expenses. Only in 1980's did my employers think that it was sort of not human to let a family man live alone on a strange island for such a long time.

What would have happened had I stayed put in Taipei? My three kids would have received complete Chinese education; and they would all be fluent in Chinese. But none of them would be so good at English and know Western culture so well.

I have few regrets. If you had known the social conditions in Taiwan in the 1960's, you would have done so, too. We were living in a suffocating atmosphere. Of my 120 former college classmates, fewer than 20 stayed in Taiwan. People greeted each other with "Got funds ready? Borrowed? When will you leave? Which university? Which airlines? Got

admissions? Any scholarship?" or "Any hope to get a job overseas? Where? Can your family go with you?"

You see, I was really heartened to be able to leave for my new career, though I knew I would work shifts and face uprooting. Actually the same situation is happening right now in many countries, including China.

What I gained from the switch of my career? My relocation from Taipei to Brunei and then from Taipei to Okinawa deepened my understanding and broadened my outlook of the world and the times. Prior to my career changes, I had stayed put in Taiwan for 14 continuous years. I had friends only in the academic circle in Taipei. In my new career in a different country, I could meet different kinds of people. Yes, that was my major uprooting and I have few regrets.

Former lecturer, author, and translator James Ku is retired in Taiwan.

Aroma therapy

I think my lifelong passion first sunk its teeth into me when I was still a very young child. Every summer weekend, my parents would pack enough food and clothing, and me, into our old light blue Volkswagen Beetle for a much-needed escape, two and a half hours north of the hot, bustling city, to our modest cottage in the wild Canadian woods.

Nestled on a small, serene spring-fed lake, our sandy beachfront cottage is surrounded by an abundance of majestic maple, birch and fir trees. I remember closing my eyes and holding my breath in great anticipation as the car door first opened. To me, that first long whiff of sticky pine sap, fertile soil and drying grass was almost the best part of the weekend. Immediately after these olfactory delights, came the sounds of softly buzzing bees and hummingbirds, gentle lapping waves from the lakeshore, and the dozens of dainty twittering languages spoken by robins, blue jays and the numerous other birds discreetly hidden like soldiers in camouflage in the surrounding foliage.

Still at a very young age, my family's little weekend jaunts to the Canadian north gave way to two-day drives to the warmth and the expansive white beaches of Gulf Coast Florida. Again, I would hold my breath in anticipation as the car door opened upon arrival. The sweet, luscious scent of nectar from the orange blossoms, along with the gentle smells of chlorine from the surrounding swimming pools, and the hot, salty tang of the not-so-distant ocean, would invade my ever-greedy nostrils.

Virtually every neighbourhood, city or stretch of land anywhere in our abundant world has its own distinctive scent. We can close our eyes and be instantaneously whisked away to places that we've visited simply through drawing on our sense of smell.

The fragrance of a certain brand of soap makes me reminiscent of my late grandmother's cottage in small-

town Germany. Even the smells of lavender or succulent apple blossoms in the springtime remind me of my own backyard.

I call it "aroma therapy." So, of course, every time that I sit in a car or on a train or on a plane, I am in great anticipation of the first unique scents of my destination. They always leave behind an exotic fingerprint in my mind.

My current day-job as a web and graphic designer is definitely a means to an end. But I'm fortunate that I get seven weeks of vacation a year, which allows me to pursue my travels - whether that is in the form of a lazy weekend in the nearby north or an energetic sight-seeing venture to a country halfway around the world.

Traveling is my passion. Writing helps me to relive that passion. And my memories are a bridge from my working life to that passion.

Deanna Wolff is author of "The Girl's Guide to Traveling Solo," Toronto, Canada. Copyright (c) 2004.

<http://www.deannawolff.com>

Rebirth of a second passion

In junior high school, I was interested in music, musical theatre, singing, playing guitar, dancing, stand-up comedy, and anything on stage. Singing would be considered the second or first passion depending on when you asked me. Music defined who I was and who I wanted to be. It was what kept me ticking. Taking the music away meant taking away a part of me like my heart or lungs.

I performed all sorts of music: from show tunes to jazz, barbershop to Brahms. I couldn't get enough of it. While serving in the US Air Force, I sang and played guitar, performed with a song and dance group as well as competed in Air Force talent competitions. Life was great!

When my enlistment was up, I returned home to work in the family business, something I had always planned on. As my career got busier, my focus shifted and my ambitions took over. My life, all of a sudden, became about making money. I worked constantly and had no time for such things as music.

When I was courting my wife, all she knew about me was that I was a guy who was working in his family business, trying to set the world on fire. She was attracted by my ambitions and financial goals with no clue of my past love for music. Project after project, year after year, I worked long strenuous hours, looking for that pot of gold. Unbelievable sacrifices were made all in the name of what I was very passionate about --- my work.

Many years went by until I had lunch with a special friend from long ago. In our conversation, she reminded me of my passion for music and asked why I hadn't kept up with it. Our discussion made me realize that I had sold out my passion for music, for a search

for fame and fortune in the business world. There was no balance in my life. All work and no play eventually made me see how incomplete I was without music.

Don't get me wrong, I have a good life --- a wife with three wonderful sons who keep me very happy and very busy, but something was still missing.

One day while sitting in a shopping mall, I heard the most wonderful sound. A barbershop quartet was singing "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" to the patrons in the mall. I was in awe! My sons kept asking what kind of music it was because they had never heard it before.

Tears came to my eyes and I was filled with unbelievable excitement. I made eye contact with one of the members of the quartet who came over and invited me to sing with their chorus. Overwhelmed by the wonderful sound of their music, I agreed to attend the next rehearsal. After hearing the 75-man chorus perform, I was hooked! It didn't matter what I had to do. I decided I would make time for this.

Three years later, this second passion is alive and well in my life. I perform with the barbershop chorus and my own barbershop quartet.

I have finally achieved balance in my life with my re-discovered passion. I share it with my three sons and they love it too. They will pursue it as they get older and it is something we will share for the rest of our lives. It will keep us close. While my wife doesn't understand this passion, she tolerates it and, every once in a while, she enjoys a performance but not without some form of criticism. So now I have to be careful not to over-indulge in my passion.

It took the rebirth of this second passion to force me to look at the years that went by without music. It all seems like a huge blur.

My career is going very well but music keeps me focused on what is important: my children and family. I don't get obsessed with my career the way I did years ago and the music provides an outlet of fulfilment, exhilaration, relaxation and an additional unbreakable bond with my sons! Time spent with them is my first passion.

JC III, baritone in "Four in the Morning" barbershop quartet, <http://www.4am.info>, and member of The Virginians Barbershop Chorus, <http://www.virginians.org>

My passion as my career

My first passion is to play the guitar, something I've wanted to do since I became aware of the existence of this wonderful instrument. As a kid I wrote and played pop songs, but the lack of tradition in pop music led me to pursue classical guitar.

To maintain a high level of competence as a professional guitarist, I limit myself to classical guitar though I do enjoy playing other styles. Meanwhile, teaching pays my bills. Despite many beautiful moments in individual interactions with my sixty-odd

students, I teach more than I want to. So I work to live as well as live to work.

My second passion is to compose and arrange. Whether it will ever become my first passion depends on my physical condition. As long as I continue to enjoy playing the guitar, it is unlikely that I will become a full-time composer.

I have tried to combine both performing and composing, but it has only worked when I played my own works and even then I felt my competence wasn't sufficient. So I decided to stop composing and focus on performing, which gives me a lot of satisfaction. If either composing or performing brings in enough money, I would give up teaching and combine my two biggest passions. I am pretty sure of this. Maybe one day it will actually happen!

My personal philosophy is that dedication shows in what we do, not in what we say. Most people talk a lot about passion whereas I prefer to live it. Action speaks louder than words. To be a composer one has to compose. To be a performer, one has to perform.

Robert Bekkers lives in the Netherlands, <http://www.dutchguitar.com>

A portfolio career of second passions

Two pieces of advice influenced my career decisions. My electrical engineering professor suggested that the road less travelled would yield pleasant surprises. A classmate told me to use my head to follow my heart.

Instead of continuing with my postgraduate studies in the US, I chose to do my master's degree in a different discipline in London. Operations research (an area of applied mathematics) was a subject I discovered while studying in Montreal the previous year, and London was a place I visited for just three days that previous summer. Both promised to be exciting and fulfilling.

Somewhere along the way, my sister noticed that I was motivated by what I hadn't done before. She calls it "deficiency motivation." I call it curiosity and temptation of the novel and the diverse. This would keep me busy for the rest of my life, for the grass is always greener on the side I haven't trodden.

Indeed I seem to swing from one extreme to another, always diversifying my portfolio of skills and experiences. After working in a small company where everyone knew everyone else, I tried a big company where job titles were more important than names and personalities. I enjoyed a brief period in a start-up company, followed by short-term contract work as a project manager, database analyst, desk-top-publishing temp, statistics analyst, and then back to the corporate world of permanent, full-time employment.

Starting in management consulting where my colleagues thought we were smarter than our clients, I moved to the client side where bankers thought they were smarter than their consultants. Decision support

for foreign exchange traders lent itself naturally to energy trading using my final degree to make the industry shift. From energy modelling, I moved to energy publishing. From writing about energy, I moved to writing outside of energy.

After being made redundant in mid-2002, I came across the term “portfolio career” in a women’s career management book. I was curious as to what I could do with my existing skills. In the subsequent two years, I earned a living as a hotel pianist for three months, university lecturer in statistics for six months, events organiser, freelance writer, book editor, website designer and web host, piano teacher, and landlady.

The Chinese saying “if it’s fish you’re looking for, why climb trees” requires you to know what it is that you want first before you even begin to look for it. Sometimes it takes a lifetime of trying different things to identify your passion.

Although I have played piano since I was eight years old, I’ve always dismissed it as a hobby. It was enjoyable and relaxing. It introduced me to many interesting people. In my wanderings around the world, music was the one thing that was consistent and persistent. In the end I answered to its call.

Another Chinese saying “enter the water tower and be the first to get the moon” advises you to get close to what you want. Having set my heart on filling the gaps in my music education and finding opportunities to play chamber music and compose for different instruments, I am now studying at a conservatory and living off a portfolio career.

Writing from London, Anne Ku keeps her portfolio career updated at <http://www.anneku.com>

Career changing as a career

Throughout life I've been able to try many careers (some simply to make a living; a few in line with my passion), by virtue of having a PhD and the arrogance (not always justified) to assume I could do anything I had the confidence to do.

This freedom necessitated the avoidance of family responsibilities (if anything, my ideas would be my "children"). While not particularly unhappy as a child, nor maltreated by the standards of the time, I wouldn't want the responsibility of having inflicted the experience on another, or be constrained by parenthood.

The need to “make sense of life” emerged in childhood, as a belief that “if I understand the world, maybe I can minimise the chances of it hurting me” (only partly true). My interest or personal philosophy, if you will, has always been to make sense of life in all its aspects, psychological and physical.

Much of my life has oscillated between working hard and attempts to achieve and maintain a sustainable lifestyle and work style. By one's 50s, one starts finding constraints biting and, worse, to conflict --- the

need for a good night's sleep as a signal that one isn't handling stress well, but finding a low calorie intake to reduce excess weight seems to inhibit sleep. (Spreadsheet logs on diet, sleep etc., as well as money and time use, help to control these peripheral problems which, at times, seem to become the core problems.)

Most illuminating: the recognition that deep interests set aside early in life, seem to continue to develop (unconsciously) and returning to them later in life has a surprisingly revitalising effect. (Painting, maths, a relationship with an early girlfriend restarted.)

From my career changing, I also learned that one should not let any heavily demanding job be a distraction from one's passion for more than a short period; ideally, it should become self-financing.

From the low points in my life (listed below), I recognised that the need for security has consistently outweighed my willingness to take big enough risks.

From the turning points, I realised that making a lot of money was not satisfying for me (nor compatible with quitting smoking) as it didn't bear on my passion nor allowed any time for it at all. I also recognised the need to change myself rather than change the partner yet again.

From the high points in my life, I discovered that my passion is, and has always been, to make sense of life in all its aspects, by academic standards.

My current four-line summary reflects this. “Conceive life as a finite nested sequence of complex adaptive systems, that can be represented as agent-based (computer) models; rebuild philosophy under scientific realism, using this conception applied also to mind, to rewrite epistemology, reinterpret metaphysics as a conceptual gap-filler, and perhaps (eventually) suggest approaches to reposition ethics.”

High points:

- First work, at age 13, published in a book on nuclear physics (it's mostly downhill from here!)
- Quite a lot of “sex, drugs and rock-n-roll” in the 60s and 70s (rock drummer: 1961-64)
- PhD (UK) and post-doc. (Sweden) in theoretical chemistry (in spite of/during the 60s and 70s)
- Praise from Jacob Bekenstein (Israel's “Stephen Hawking”) for ideas on a cosmological model
- Futurist in the computer industry for 3 years
- Very well-paid as technology consultant and investment newsletter editor at Barings, (Tokyo, London; long before Mr Leeson sank the company)
- 18 months in Europe, touring art galleries and starting to paint again (first time since my 20s)
- Year as a full-time investor, from the morning the 1st Gulf War started (but undercapitalised)
- Finally quit smoking (after 30 years, averaging 30 per day)
- Built a more solid, nth, career platform as a university teacher/administrator
- Community representative for housing project for 3 years (200 homes; voluntary work)
- A couple of well-researched property transactions, one highly profitable; the other will take a few more years to

mature

Low points:

- Nothing dramatic enough to be interesting, but being a child was... frustrating
- Beaten to publication of the above cosmological model by J. R. Gott III, though his was the better paper. So it goes! (Sounds of much gnashing of teeth... for 30 years)
- Three (essential) fallow adjustment periods in undemanding jobs

London-based Paul Ellis pellis@london.edu views his career as a "stochastic variable." Aside from his main job, he also edits academic papers on business-school research topics for non-native English authors.

Changing your job or your career: expert advice

In the last ten to fifteen years, the responsibility for your career has shifted from the employer to the employee. Employers in the business world no longer offer job security or tenure. Changing your job or your career has become necessary to survive.

In general, the more parameters you change (job function, status, business, employer, industry and ultimately your career) the greater you risk something going wrong. Most of the parameters will fall outside your sphere of control, skill set, knowledge base and comfort zone.

Psychologically speaking, most people are better at tweaking a few parameters rather than embarking on a 180 degree turn to change their career altogether. For example, changing your job within an industry or keeping the same kind of job but moving into a different industry is easier than changing both job function and industry at the same time.

Paradoxically, doing nothing is as risky as changing everything. More and more working people have successfully moved on to their second or third careers. Some have even resorted to managing a portfolio of careers, which is considerably more difficult because of the need to juggle and switch contexts.

Your corporate career is at maximum risk between age 40 and 50 plus. This unfortunately coincides with the highest level of financial commitment and family responsibility. If you are laid off, you have to either move on to your next job (only to face the risk of being laid off yet again) or consider self-employment. When you are self-employed, there is no notion or pressure of a sell-by date. Your focus moves from trying to keep your job to becoming more entrepreneurial.

Age discrimination is forcing many employees to move into self-employment, particularly in English-speaking Western economies. Most formerly salaried employees are ill-equipped to make this transition. They find it very difficult if not impossible to adjust to the one-man band concept. Many are apprehensive about moving away from their comfort zones, both in terms of skill set and business knowledge.

A less risky and more manageable option would be to team up with a few ex-colleagues or friends who can complement your skill set and expertise to produce synergy and nurture a more a supportive team spirit. Such a team arrangement may be badly needed when you have just been victimised into accepting a redundancy from your employer.

For most business professionals, changing your career is inevitable so you might as well as get geared up for it to create a softer landing. It's better to be prepared than to be sledge-hammered by market forces into having to make too many adjustments too quickly. Try to use your next corporate job as an observation post to map out your next move. Don't pour your life and soul into any job without allocating some time to career management and planning.

The timing of your career change is critical. If you are too young and inexperienced, you risk breaking your neck. If you are too mature and set in your ways, you might well be lacking the energy, creativity and stamina to make it happen for yourself.

What are the signals for changing your job or career? Change your job when you stop learning or when you feel you can hack it in an entrepreneurial environment. Change your career when you feel you can leverage off sufficient experience and knowledge to capitalise on new business opportunities,

To change your career to follow your passion, such as to do what you love rather than to love what you do, you may have to accept tradeoffs in remuneration. Passion and remuneration are not necessarily positively correlated, at least, initially.

Guido Egidi, founder and managing director of international executive consultants Stanlake Search, London, provides career coaching for candidates at <http://www.stanlake.co.uk>

Becoming self-employed

By 1997 I had been working for the Church of England for 11 years. At the age of 53 I enjoyed my work of helping churches to raise money, but I had always had the ambition to work for myself at some stage. Unfortunately I had no idea what I could do to found my own business. I had already tried a number of network marketing ventures but had never been able to get enthusiastic enough about them to get anywhere near making them a success.

Then one day I saw a two-page article about life coaching in the Times by a journalist called Tessa Souter. Strangely enough I don't normally read The Times, so it was pure chance that I saw the article. But I remember the feeling as I read it: "This is it."

I phoned up the contact number given at the end of the article almost as soon as I had finished the article, and I was away.

To cut a long story short, three years later I had a thriving part-time coaching business and my book "Get

Everything Done and Still Have Time to Play" had just come out and was selling well. Tessa Souter who had written that article in the Times was now my coaching client.

But I was still working for the Church of England and was still terrified by the thought of giving up a regular salary.

I was now 56 years old and I could not put things off any longer. In a state of something resembling complete terror I gave three months notice to my employers.

I decided I needed a plan. And so I carefully went through the planning sequence which I had been taught. I worked out the details of where I wanted my business to be, made goals for the next 5 years, 1 year, 1 month and 1 week and then made a list of things to be done today. It was when I looked at this list that I realised that I had condemned myself to five years' worth of to-do lists like this. A great weight seemed to settle on my shoulders. I tore up the list and all the goals. I never missed them!

By the time my three months notice was up, the fear had gone completely. In fact I couldn't wait to get started. Within two months of giving up a regular salary I was earning twice as much as I had before. I knew that nothing would ever get me to go back to working for someone else.

Mark Forster, author of "Get Everything Done and Still Have Time to Play" and "How to Make Your Dreams Come True," England, publishes a free coaching newsletter at <http://www.markforster.net>

It's a tradition in Le Bon Journal to include an entry from Bon Journal or its predecessor the Diary of Anne Ku. To make this issue an even eight pages, we are including two entries, related but two years apart.

Second passions

All work and no play, makes Jack a dull boy. The more I get to know my colleagues, the more I find out about their second passions.

Work as a means to an end. These are the people who do not live to work. Their hobbies and pastimes are easily work in their own right, except their day jobs pay more. Are they the ones that have compromised themselves to work to live?

My sister believes that artists fall into three categories. The Van Goghs of this world who struggle in the art - only to die a pauper and receive posthumous fame. Those that compromise their art - work to earn them a living to pursue the art they so love. Finally, the lucky ones whose family or friends support them - to allow them to singularly pursue the passion of their lives.

I changed my attitude a couple years ago and decided to make music my number one priority. Out came a

flurry of compositions. My confidence in my sight-reading ability grew. But I soon recognised my limit, not just in playing but also my tolerance for uncertainty. Work brings a steady cashflow, which in turn brings the kind of certainty that would allow me to pursue music without worry though, not necessarily with concentration.

So I, too, join the ones who have second passions. Only, I have a third passion.

--- Anne Ku, Bon Journal 30 October 2002

Two years on

Two years ago today I bid farewell to my editorial colleagues in London. It was the end of a salaried existence and the beginning of a job-free adventure.

What did I do first? Celebrate! I invited my mom to visit. And she cooked for my private outdoor concert: Spanish Summer Soiree, an idea inspired by a trip to Granada, Seville, and Cordoba earlier that year.

After diligently contributing a tenth of my salary to National Insurance for years, I couldn't wait to claim some of it back. I "signed on." This meant that I had to go to the Job Centre once every two weeks to meet with an officer and declare that I was still unemployed and still actively looking for a job. The declaration required me to "sign" my name or "sign on" to get the £53 per week benefit.

I received a call out of the blue one day from the editor of a competing magazine (to the publications I had worked on.) He asked if I could write an article about energy trading. Sure! That was what I used to do. So I became a freelance writer.

Somebody heard me play the piano at a party and asked me to teach her six year old daughter. I was reluctant at first. After all, I didn't start learning to play the piano until I was eight. Soon I began to compose pieces for this little girl, who had learned how to sight read from me.

One day while having afternoon tea at Claridges, the five star hotel of Gordon Ramsay fame near Bond Street, I became distracted by the viola-piano duo. It occurred to me then that I could play piano at hotels and get paid to do what I loved to do.

I called all the hotels at the airport closest to where I lived. First I asked if they had a grand piano. If yes, I asked if they had a pianist who played there regularly. If no, I asked to speak to the person responsible for the piano which was usually the food and beverages manager. I auditioned at the Renaissance Hotel and the Hilton. Thus began my stint as a four-day a week hotel pianist in residence.

The Iraqi situation in February 2003 forced the hotel to shift their entertainment budget to 24-hour security. I was crushed. I had gotten used to free drinks and gourmet dinners. Besides, I enjoyed playing different

pieces every night to stranded travellers from all over the world.

Magically about two days later, I received an e-mail from the local university. They needed a part-time lecturer for their core probability and statistics course the following week. I called and got the job.

Meanwhile I got to know more and more artists, musicians, writers, and other self-employed people. They had their own opinions, and they talked about their own creations. What a far cry from the salaried world of following other people's agendas! I got involved in the community through setting up a neighbourhood watch, organising concerts, and giving writing and business advice. Before long I was setting my own agenda and using my head to follow my heart.

--- Anne Ku, *Bon Journal* 28 June 2004

Next issue: decisions

The next issue of Le Bon Journal e-zine (15 October 2004) is about *decisions and how you make them*. By the deadline of 15th September 2004, tell us in 700 words or less the life decisions you've made, your decision making style, and any regrets you have in retrospect. In other words, tell us, how you would have made your decisions differently to get better results.



Anne Ku, editor

Le Bon Journal e-zine is a free quarterly publication for self-expression intended as a vehicle for sponsorship of the arts and other good causes. Sponsorship is sought to keep this publication independent, alive, and free.

Each issue has a unique theme set in advance. Contributors are invited to submit up to 700 words to the editor by the deadline (usually one month before publication date). If accepted, submissions will be edited and returned to contributors for correction. Le Bon Journal reserves the right to edit for space and clarity before final publication, typically on the 15th of the month.

Contributors retain the intellectual copyright of the published piece. Le Bon Journal keeps the publishing right. Parts of the Le Bon Journal e-zine may be quoted provided reference is made to the individual contributor author and the title of the publication and web site address, e.g. "Le Bon Journal, volume 2, issue 5: Career changes and second passions, <http://www.bonjournal.com>"

The e-zine can be downloaded from the Bon Journal web site at <http://www.bonjournal.com> in PDF format and printed for easier reading. Readers and other supporters are encouraged to make copies of the entire issue and distribute to others.

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Anne Ku, founder and editor of Le Bon Journal, may be contacted via the contact form on <http://www.bonjournal.com>.

Previous issues

Love is actually all around the world
Volume 3, Issue 2, 15 February 2004, 3 pages

Uprooters on the uprooting experience
Volume 3, Issue 4, 15 April 2004, 6 pages

Reaction to Le Bon Journal "Uprooting" issue

Thanks, very good writing and style - natural talent! Generally uprooted people seem to be much more interesting than the rooted ones - broader horizons I imagine.

Architect who is passionate about tennis, bridge, and ceramics, London

I think there may be another category: the adventurous rooted. These are people who like being rooted and feeling connected but also need and want intellectual and personal challenges and excitement.

Serial careerist with several second passions, London and Colorado

I read what I could of the ezine pdf article on uprooting (before it got stuck on me and I couldn't scroll down further). It IS an interesting piece - interesting even though I didn't agree with all that was written. (How could I? People were saying such different things!) I must say that I disagree with the writer who claims long-term friends to be expendible. Some of my very best friends I've known since grade school and enjoy expending energy on, even after a hiatus lasting longer than the two-year limit proposed by the author.

I find myself to be someone who very much likes to have roots but also to be able to move about. Indeed, my ideal would be a living arrangement that allows me to move to three locations over the course of a year: Southern California, Tokyo, and London.

Literature professor with passion for the piano, California

I was going to read the uproot (issue) again. But I stopped. I thought it was too much text that held me back, but that's not really it. I don't like the way it's presented. One has to print it out first to be able to read it comfortably. I don't want to print. Besides, the ink is empty. So I keep scrolling pages up and down. I have no overview. I don't know where I am. I don't know what I'm reading. The Bon Journal (web site) instead is pleasant to read, calm, big characters, not too many words. [Editor: *Le Bon Journal e-zine is not intended for online consumption but to be read offline on paper.*]

Let me make some suggestions. Always pay a lot of attention to the way you present it. That final step is very important. If you don't, all effort and all quality will be lost. Why not add pictures of the authors? Put an index on top, the content I mean, with THE QUOTE of each entry.

Systems engineer whose passions include tennis, bridge, and damsels in distress, Holland

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