



## Father's Day Article for "Maritzburg Pulse"

I have recently read a couple of books and watched a DVD that all spoke to the same theme. Flashback portrays a middle aged man who is living a successful and hedonistic Hollywood lifestyle albeit a lonely one. The diagnosis of cancer and the death of a childhood friend take him back to his teens and the events that have led him to live as he is. Jon Katz writes in *Running to the Mountain* of buying a ramshackle old house in the country and spending 6 months there. Although happily married he realises that more than half his life is over and he has never pursued a lifelong dream. As a teen he was greatly influenced by Thomas Merton's writings and he still hungers to experience something of a contemplative life. In *Aspiring* Keiri decides to climb a mountain. His youngest daughter is leaving home; life can now be about him. The demons of childhood conspire with longings to be part of the "brotherhood of the rope" and he climbs a Kiwi mountain *Aspiring* seeking to prove himself.

Dreams need faith and hope to sustain them. Trauma shuts them down.

My work as a coach is to help people uncover, recognize and live their dreams which is so often linked with purpose. But is that not also a leader's role? Every one of us is a leader of at least one – ourselves. As fathers you are also leaders of those you have helped bring into this world. At work, even if you are not in a recognized role of authority whom are you leading by dint of age or experience or plain charisma.

I am frequently both amazed and saddened at the double layers that exist within us. An extreme example perhaps but Himmler was the most amazing father, yet could order others children to the gas chamber. It seems schizophrenic. But are any of us any different. How can that be? The joked about short man syndrome, which all too often is true. The smallest man is the bolsheist. What's that about? Yet you will have seen through countless other projected charades. Words say one thing but body language says another.

So much posturing and pretending. Watching some daredevil young fellows I said to a friend, "thank goodness I'm a woman. I don't have to pretend not to be scared" It seems to me that as a boy you have to be immensely courageous.... to say you are scared.

The famous quote says that you can only love others to the extent you love yourself, is that true of leading? I think so. If our actions and behaviours are the result of our thoughts i.e. our beliefs, then Henry Ford spoke the truth when he said "if you think you can, or you think you can't, you're right". Are you aware of what you are doing, how you are leading, opportunities you are turning away from, facades you are putting on, times you are giving up or conversely obstinately, pig-headedly forcing to happen. What is your driving force? If it is wholeness you will lead others into greatness. If it is brokenness and childhood demons you will probably lead yourself and others into more of the same.

True responsibility is when we stop blaming, making excuses or pretending we are what we aren't. It's when we take ownership of not just our failures and mistakes but also our talents, dreams and opportunities. Accountability is not just answering for what we have done but also examining our life for the flaws or glitches in the system.

**One of the great early philosophers said "an unexamined life is not worth living"**