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7 Great Life Lessons From Tsunami Survivor

By Elena Welon

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As I am writing this article, the world is shaken by the tsunami that hit Asia on 26 December 2004. It is only now that we start understanding the greatness of the tragedy.

But it is also at such moments that we can see examples of outstanding people's bravery and courage. And you know, they don't even think about themselves as brave, they simply did what they thought was right.

I am referring to the story of Phuket's resident Bill O'Leary, a former Australian, who saved many lives.

Just 2 minutes before the first wave hit, he received a phone call from his employee, who was on the beach where the company's office is located, "The shoreline receded 250 meters past the swim platform".

O'Leary was in the sea with guests of his cruise company and his 3 children on the board. He knew the news spelled big trouble. The swim platform was anchored 8 meters deep. He also remembered a shake he felt earlier that morning.

Not many people in Thailand knew about tsunamis but Bill immediately recognized the warning signs. Without delay, he phoned his offices and major hotels, telling them to remove people off the beach, "A tsunami is coming. Clear the beach and get people to high ground." He also asked other people on the boat to make phone calls to places they knew.

Then he headed out to the sea to face the giant wave. Bill was on the other side of the island, further away from the upcoming tsunami. He was in open water when he received the call from the same employee that tsunami hit the Phuket's beach. Bill pulled back the engines and waited. Then he saw it. A 5-meter step on the water traveling faster than any wave he'd seen before. He directed the boat right at the step and jumped on.

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The guests and children were terrified as the boat was riding the wave and everybody was screaming. Bill managed to keep the boat straight until the waves passed. Looking back they could see a wall of water washing off small boats and fish farms ashore. But O'Leary and his crew were safe.

And so were many people that got the 2-minute warning from him. They ran to high grounds and survived. One of the hotels on the beach that got the call, the Marriott, did not have anyone die.

But there also were people who ran back to their homes to fetch some valuables, and who died holding those valuables.

And here are the seven great life lessons we can learn from Bill O'Leary, a tsunami survivor:

1. If you live in the front row, this is where tsunamis hit.

Oceanfront homes come with drawbacks. Have an exit plan in case of emergency and learn the warning signs.

2. A tsunami does not come unannounced.

There ARE warning signs, always. Keep your feelings alert and you should not miss them. If there is a sudden change, seek an explanation.

3. If you know about a problem, alert others.

Don't be afraid to be a Chicken Little. The sky may be really falling.

4. When smell danger, it is wise to run away.

When your gut feeling alerts you, don't freeze. Do something. The problem will only get worse if you wait. If you don't know what can be coming, ask others for help. If there is nobody around to help, simply run. Trust your gut feeling. If you feel unsafe, remove yourself from the situation immediately. Stop a date and excuse yourself. Jump off the car on the traffic light. It's better to be silly than dead.

5. If you cannot run away from the danger, face it with courage.

Jump on the wave and keep your boat straight. Be totally fearless. Fight, if you have to.

6. No matter what happens, keep your cool.

There is no sense in panicking. Don't let your fears or anger overwhelm you. In any situation, the first question you should ask yourself is, "What can I do about it?" Decide on the course of actions and carry on.

7. You are priceless.

Your life is thousands of times more valuable than anything you own. If you smell danger, forget about your purse, cash or a family memorabilia. Even if you have nothing, you will be still the same person you are today.

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Review Of CBS's Survivor

By Edward Charkow

Survivor is one of the most popular reality television shows of all time. The show is fascinating to a broad viewing audience for several reasons, but primarily due to the exotic locations which serve as the setting for the show, as well as the extreme drama which results from having an incredibly diverse group of individuals trapped together at a remote location. The history of Survivor actually has its own series of tribulations and struggles, mostly due to the fact that no television network wanted to buy it. Many Survivor fans do not know that the United States' version of the show and was based upon the successful Swedish show Expedition: Robinson.

The idea for Survivor was originally generated by British producer Charlie Parsons who shopped the show in the United States but could not find a television company interested in the idea. After Sweden finally bought the original idea, Mark Burnett went on to buy the US rights to Survivor in 1998, but was turned down multiple times by CBS, ABC, UPN and NBC. For some reason, CBS asked for another appeal at the show, and the first American installation of Survivor went into production for its first season in Borneo. Survivor's first season was filmed in Borneo in April and March of 2000 and was first aired soon thereafter in May through August of the same year. Audiences immediately grabbed onto the show, and clamored for another season.

Filming for the second season started immediately. Survivor: The Australian Outback was aired from October 2001–January 2002, and by this point Survivor frenzy was well underway. Survivor: Africa was shot and aired in the same year as the Australian Outback. Interestingly enough, Survivor was slated to be filmed on location in Jordan for season Survivor: Arabia. However, after the September 11 tragedy in 2001 Mark Burnett chose to cancel filming in Jordan and had to immediately find a new location for the season. Further seasons have been filmed in: the Marquesas Islands, Thailand, the Amazon, the Pearl Islands, Vanuatu, Palau, Guatemala, Panama, and the latest installation of Survivor: Cook Islands will be aired in September of 2006.

The premise of the show features anywhere between 16–20 strangers who become stranded together in a remote location, and must find ways to build a new life from the land. The cast members are divided up into tribes and they compete against each other in two forms of challenges: immunity and reward. After the immunity challenge, the losing tribe is forced to banish one member from their own tribe. This banishment occurs in a ceremony called Tribal Council, at which tribe members cast silent votes for the member who they think should leave. Obviously, the individual who won the Immunity Challenge is safe for another week on the show. The reward challenge is based on endurance, skill,

problem-solving abilities or other criteria and allows the cast members to win luxury-type items to make their stay more enjoyable and comfortable. Examples of luxury items have included: food, matches, tarps and tools, and have been used to catapult the comfort and endurance of the cast members.

Find more out about CBS Survivor and the entire reality t.v. world at

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