

“It’d be a shame to find what we love most about living and only go halfway.”

story by CHIP GAINES

Don't miss it. That's my best piece of advice. When you're in the thick of heavy or hard, when you're on the edge of cutting your losses and heading home—don't miss it.

Some of my fondest memories of Magnolia are back when no one knew us, when Jo and I would sit down to look at the books and see clear as day there was no way we'd make payroll by Friday. I'd toss and turn all night, weighed down by the pressure of having to figure something out. When people are counting on you for a paycheck and you don't have money in the bank, life gets real, real fast. But Jo and I, we'd find the one glimmer of light in the darkness, and press into it with everything we had, hoping for a miracle.

To this day I can't make sense of *how*, but it always worked out.

It sounds crazy, but I thrived in the stress of those early days. It took 50 phone calls and a plan that I didn't have. It took believing that this business we were trying to build was worth the fight. Belief in something that seems downright impossible, that's when I thrive the most.

I'll be honest. I miss those days. I'm still trying to figure out what it looks like to flourish now that my back isn't against the wall as much as it used to be. But I have a feeling it's got something to do with that thrill of the unknown, the prospect of *what if* pushing me forward. Sure, our circumstances look a little different these days, but I'm starting to see that if part of my purpose lies in impossibility, there are worlds enough of that ahead of me.

What about you? My guess is that for some people reading this, my flourishing sounds like a nightmare. Not everybody likes the sound of a clock ticking down. We're all made different. One person may flourish while exploring new cities without a map, while someone else finds their deepest joy sitting on their own front porch watching the sun go down. Same way it did yesterday. It can be almost anything. The trick is finding out what makes you come alive, and then pushing into that with all you've got. Taking it to the very edge so you know how much you have to give. Whether you win or lose doesn't matter much, not if you feel like you're on top of the world.

Try this .. think back to a time when you were really living. I mean *living*. In your element, without second-guessing yourself. Now take note of all the circumstances surrounding you. Who was in your life, what you had to gain, what you had to lose, and what kept you running anyway.

Write it down and sit with those details for a minute. I'll go out on a limb and guess that your life wasn't picture-perfect. Because those two things aren't synonymous. We can have one without the other, but more often than not, flourishing happens in that stretch in between. It'd be a mistake to think that we're only at our best when everything is working out in our favor—money rains down, you cross the finish line, everybody pats you on the back, and all the world is as it should be. The sooner we wrap our arms around the imperfect possibilities of today, the sooner we'll realize that today has more to offer than we could possibly imagine. It doesn't matter if things are tough—the obstacles, the challenges, the monsters facing you down. Nothing is big enough to keep you from thriving.

Living life to the fullest takes commitment. But it's worth seeing what's at the end of that road. It'd be a shame to find what we love most about living and only go halfway. I say we push through whatever doubts and discomforts are holding us back and trust that we'll come out on the other side. Somewhere in that darkness, you'll catch a glimmer of light. Press into it with all you've got and pray for a miracle. To me, that's flourishing.

Let's not miss it.

WHAT'S KEEPING YOU FROM THRIVING?

Handwriting practice lines consisting of ten horizontal lines.