

Ruth Schrage

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Portfolio of PhotoShop Work

Photo Montages

Note: The design concepts for the spreads and composite images shown from Spirituality & Health magazine are by Don Wright.

THE PATH TO A BUTTERFLY SANCTUARY

*A place where every caterpillar
has a name —
and symbolizes a person in the
process of transforming*

By Patricia Robinson Trapp

When I was a spiritual counselor for a hospice program, I looked for direction from patients by finding out what they were experiencing in their lives, as well as what gave them meaning and purpose. With Lucille, an unexpected journey began with a jar filled with milkweed leaves and a chubby caterpillar. Because of her, a "Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary" now spreads over more than an acre at my house, a living portrait carved out of the forest.

Lucille was fun-loving. A humble person who was frequently grateful for what she had. Lucille celebrated life by giving to others. She was not one to feel sorry for herself, even when she was dying.

She was a master gardener. We would page through gardening magazines like children giggling at holiday toy catalogs. One afternoon, after seeing a picture of a monarch butterfly in a magazine, Lucille asked about their life cycle. That evening, my research began. As I scrolled down the seemingly endless pages about monarch butterflies on my computer, I was astonished by how many lessons I could learn. I printed a picture of a milkweed plant to share with her during my next visit.

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MONTAGE BY CRYSTAL STAR; BACKGROUND: ROB MELNYCHUK/GETTY IMAGES; MONARCH FLYING: JOEL SARTORE/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC IMAGE COLLECTION; CATERPILLAR: BIOTIC/PHOTONICA; PUPA SHOTS: LEE CANFIELD/SUPERSTOCK; MONARCH ON FLOWER: PING AMRANAND/SUPERSTOCK

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Spirituality & Health magazine, June 2003

Both of these are put together with stock photos with the exception of the tree branch, which I scanned.



Spirituality & Health, June 2005

YOUNG WOMEN WHO FLY WITH THE GEESE

By Kim Marie Murphy



OIL SPILL

GULF OF ALASKA

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND

ALASKA PENINSULA

KODIAK I.

CHOWIET I.

Confronting an environmental disaster, a woman rediscovers her heart. Now she's making a new generation stronger. You can, too.

Letting Go

The life-changing moment that brought me to Chowiet had come a few months before. Back home on the Oregon coast, I had helped a local environmental group raise funds to send volunteers to Alaska to join the cleanup. Lying awake one night, I realized that my heart was calling me to go, as well. Ever since I was 13, I had been fascinated with dolphins — their playful, joyful nature, communication, intelligence, and social structure. I devoured any information I could find. Yet after embarking on an undergraduate path to study marine mammalogy, my professors convinced me that jobs in this field were hard to come by, so I reluctantly switched my major to marine geochemistry.

My career path was smoothly paved from here, and my stories of exploring active undersea volcanoes made me the envy of others at parties. Yet the emptiness in my heart grew with each passing year and each core sample I analyzed. But, lying in bed that night, I realized that the Alaska project would let me move toward a deeper fulfillment I had long ago left behind. The next day I asked my boss for a leave of absence, and he flatly said no. So I quit. The most frightening and freeing choice of my life was made in that instant.

I sat alone, perched on a 200-foot ridge overlooking the vast Pacific Ocean on Chowiet, a remote, uninhabited Alaskan island, hundreds of miles from the mainland. The wind caressed the tall grasses of this weathered, treeless landscape. Scores of cliff-nesting thick-billed murres tended their nests and eggs. A lone silvery-gray fulmar soared silently overhead.

The year was 1989. Roughly 600 miles northeast, in Prince William Sound, the Exxon Valdez had run aground. Prevailing currents and winds were carrying the oil spill toward Chowiet and eight other islands. Known as the Semidi Islands National Wildlife Refuge, they are breeding and nesting grounds for almost three million seabirds and marine mammals, so volunteers had been rushed here to count wildlife before the devastation.

My mission, along with three other women volunteers, was to count seabirds, eggs, hatched chicks, and fledglings at specific sites each day. The data we gathered over six weeks were entered daily into a laptop computer at our base camp so that comparisons could be made before and after the spill's damage. But in the peace and stillness of that moment, my mission was forgotten. Time disappeared. Everything was perfect. I found myself passionately reciting the words of a Rumi poem to the colony of murres nearby, "What I want is...to swim like a huge fish in ocean water...to be a desert mountain instead of a city...." Tears of joy streamed down my cheeks.

MONTAGE BY CRYSTAL STAR. EXXON VALDEZ U.S. COAST GUARDIAN PHOTO. OILY BIRD-JACK SMITH/AP PHOTO

A cowboy, an Indian, a fighter pilot, and a pharaoh hunker down over burgers while people like your dad figure out what they will do next.

Your mom has a master's degree in economics and is a successful banker, but her real passion is theater. She has played Hedda Gabler Off-Broadway, and studied method acting with Maria Ouspenskaya, the grand Russian who was Stanislavsky's leading lady. Nowadays, whenever your dad gets a new gig and you're off to a new town, your mom will start an acting school, filling the house with people who make strange noises and odd movements as they get in touch with their "instrument." Your mom teaches you that the breathing and grunting and singing and squirming are all parts of the method these actors use to become their characters.

Even at five, you know in your bones that people can be taught to transform themselves into other people.

So even at five, you know in your bones that people can be taught to transform themselves into other people. You know that even the stars are bound by scripts, written by a person behind the curtain, and that those stories, those scripts, those myths, bring not just new people but new worlds into being. And you know that the most important person in the world is not the boss. No. You are your daddy's girl. Having watched him through so many comedy gigs, you understand that what sets

a world in motion is the person who creates the jokes. Get people laughing, and absolutely anyone or anything can change.

What you don't know, although it will make perfect sense in retrospect, is that you will spend your life moving between countries and cultures with the ease of a child wandering through the MGM sound stages. Your work will be learning and understanding what is at the core of people. You'll be renowned as an evoker of human and cultural potential, but mostly you'll be a storyteller on a world stage, figuring out the scripts that set people and their countries

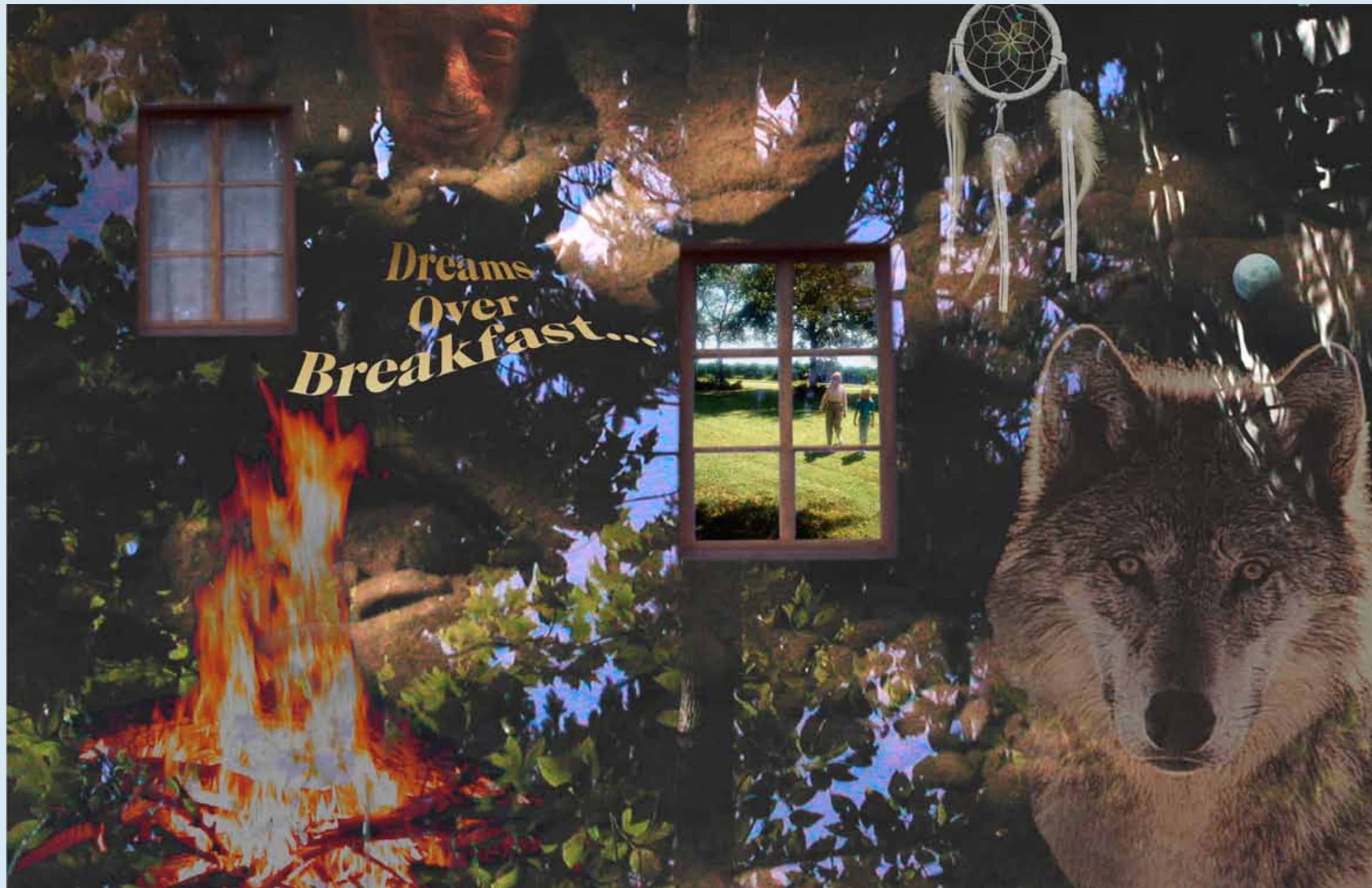
What you don't know is that you will spend your life moving between countries and cultures with the ease of a child wandering through the MGM sound stages.



Put together from supplied photos, I also made the label on the whiskey bottle.

Montage from stock photos of ocean, stars and boat. For an article where the author describes her experience one night in which the luminescence of the sea appeared to merge with the stars in the sky.





This montage was my own design. I took the photos of the fire, tree reflections in water, dream catcher and clay face.

Photo Montages continued



*Front and back covers for the CD
Beyond The Wind by Ubaka Hill.
I took the photos of Ubaka.*



Photo Retouching

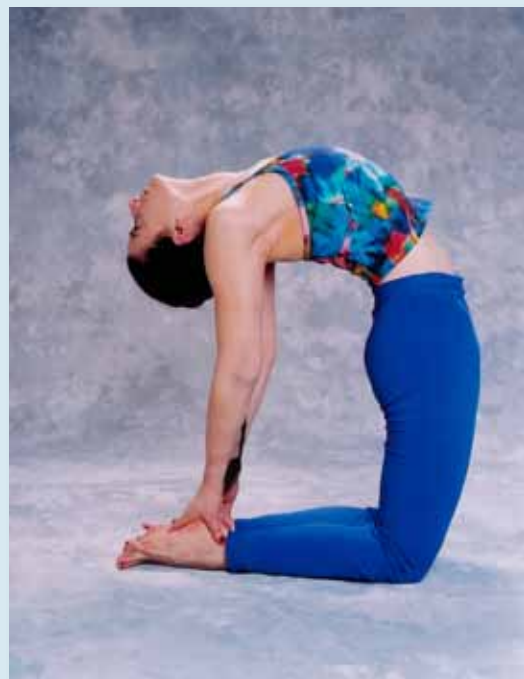
AFTER



Spirituality & Health, April 2004

During my six years with Spirituality & Health magazine, I did extensive photo retouching; extending backgrounds, changing skies, took out all sorts of objects, adjusted poor color, took hair off people, changed expressions on people's faces, moved objects in photos, and did hundreds of cut-outs.

BEFORE



Tricky cut-out, put on new background.



The girl who
changed a fashion
photographer's eye

SEE

BEAUTY

STORY BY JILL NEIMARK
PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICK GUIDOTTI

EVERYWHERE

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Spirituality & Health, June 2006

BEFORE



AFTER



Job for Macy's employee 2003

ORIGINAL



Job for Macys 2004

AFTER



I retouched out the thermos and extended the rocks on the sides a little to fit the space required on the cover.

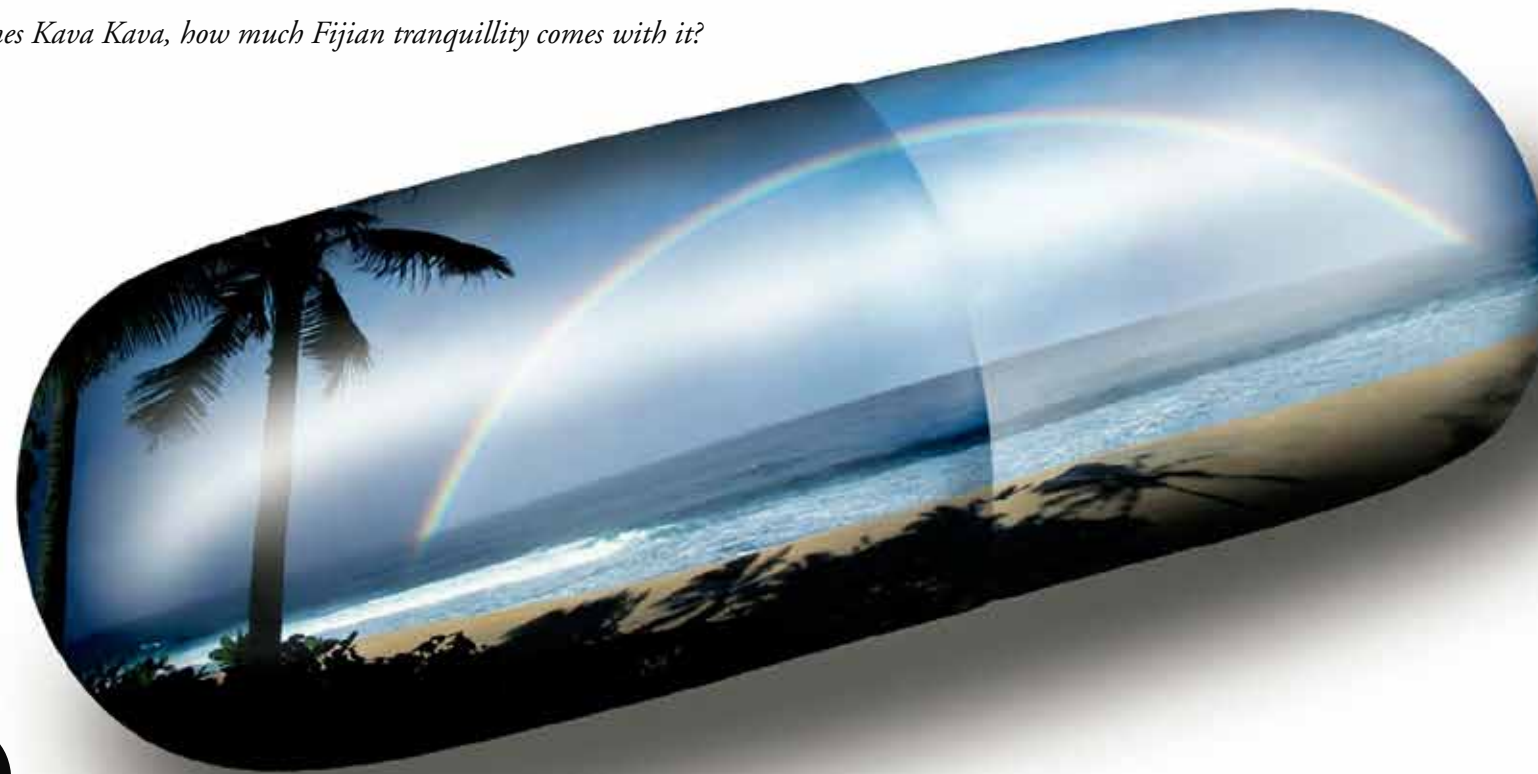
BEFORE



PARADISE IN A PILL?

When Yaqona root becomes Kava Kava, how much Fijian tranquillity comes with it?

By Chris Koentges



On a bleak winter night in the suburbs of Calgary, Alberta, eight Tibetan monks wearing sandals and maroon robes shuffled out across the ecru-colored stage of the local recital hall. They paused for a moment, donned oversized yellow centurions' hats, and then abruptly filled the room with deep, guttural grunting for which they are world-renowned.

According to the program, these monks have devoted a lifetime to perfecting these sounds, but as the novelty wore off, the audience yawned and fidgeted, applauding politely — perhaps gratefully — when the

droning finally ended. As an experience, it was “delightful,” something to check off on a list of cultural products (“Endangered eighth-century music ritual — done!”). To me it felt like a trip to the zoo, where visitors trudge dutifully past rare and marvelous transplanted species and light up at the prospect of soft ice cream. Which is like sipping a good Bordeaux at one of those franchises that proprietors stubbornly refer to as a “café.” Which, when you think about it, isn't far from popping Ginkgo Biloba along with one's morning Cheerios.

PHOTO OF PARADISE: JEFF DIVINE/GETTY IMAGES

*ORIGINAL
PHOTO*





Original stock photo on left; I added more cedar wall on both sides and top.

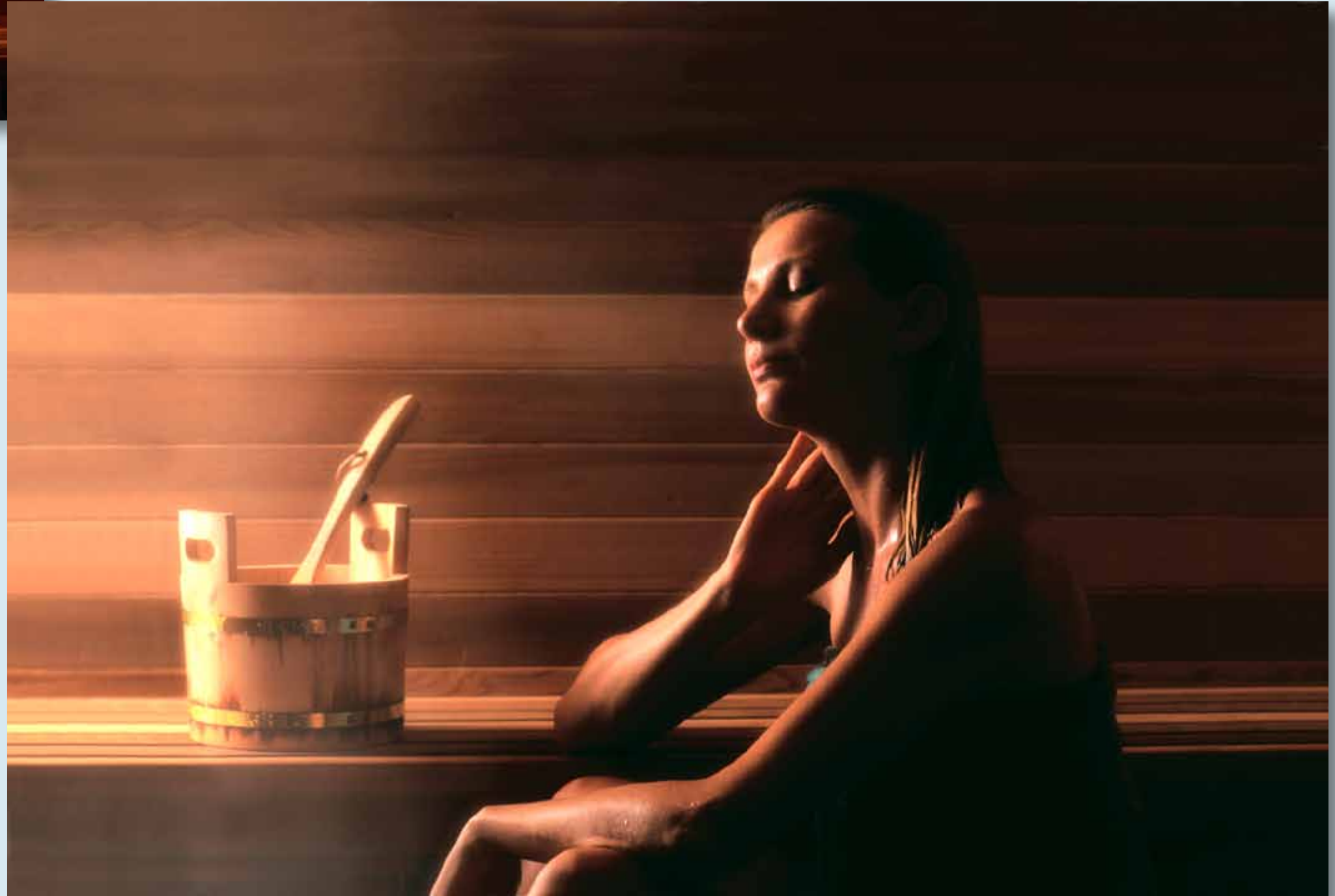
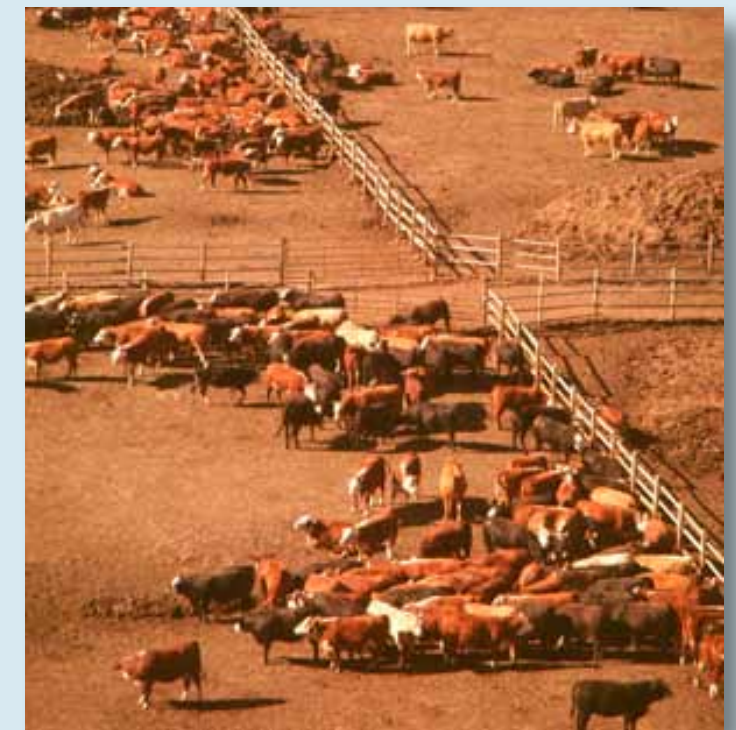


Photo Retouching continued



Larger image made from stock image below: Lots of cows added, repeating different parts of the photo to make the pens look fuller.





*I added color to these
two stock photos.*



Spirituality & Health, August 2004





My Great-Grandmother.





Spirituality & Health, October 2006

ORIGINAL PHOTO



HEALING GROOVES

HOW TO ENTER
THE DANCE FLOOR
OF THE MIND

BY JENNIFER DERRYBERRY MANN

A flutist and drummer filled the room with music, and Wyoma's dance gained in momentum and intensity, until she was frenetic with movement, frantically tearing at the fabric in a wash of tears and sweat. Finally freed from the fabric, Wyoma ended the dance she'd performed for herself and her mother. "I believe that, by going crazy, my mother freed herself from a life of oppression as a southern black woman married to a devoutly religious older man. My dance was an expression of having an opportunity to seek freedom in a different way — by being who you truly are inside — and to show that I was doing it differently."

Differently, indeed. Until she was 15, Wyoma also felt the oppression of being raised as a Sanctified Pentecostal, a religion that forbade dancing (but couldn't dissuade the spirited girl from dancing in her closet). Despite the restriction, the religion itself sparked Wyoma's fire for movement and healing. "In the church choir, I stood next to



Wyoma, a 55-year-old dance instructor, pulled a length of crumpled wedding-dress fabric from the trunk of her car. She'd found the material at a garage sale, and now, on the final evening of the African healing dance class she was teaching, she thought she might use it when it was her turn to take the floor during the night of solo performances. Wyoma stripped off her shirt and wrapped the frothy white fabric around her.

"As I put on this fabric, the idea was still in the 'interesting' phase in my head," she says. "I had no idea what I was going to do during my dance." But somewhere between cocooning herself in the fabric and making her way to the center of the floor, Wyoma realized she would be dancing for her mother, a 68-year-old schizophrenic who'd long been on Thorazine. "I was wrapped tightly in this fabric, straitjacketed in, like my mother felt," she says.

MY DANCE WAS AN EXPRESSION OF
HAVING AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEEK FREEDOM
IN A DIFFERENT WAY
— BY BEING WHO YOU TRULY ARE INSIDE.

THE POWER OF A GOOD STORY

From a treasure hunter who found a pirate ship, I learned that what connects us to our big dreams is the stories we embed ourselves in. Some stories heal. Some harm. We get to choose.

BY STEPHEN KIESLING

Over the last decade, I have been fortunate to be involved in launching a number of successful and extremely fun community projects — an ice rink, a skateboard park, a rowing program, a maze of trails, a playground, and now a whitewater kayak park. Whenever a new team comes together, there is always someone who raises a hand and asks where the money is going to come from. What I've learned is that the critical issue surrounding any new project — or life goal, for that matter — is not money. Instead, the most important work is finding a story powerful enough to call the dream into being. There happens to be a good story behind my realization.

The story is complicated and very personal. My hope is that something in it may help you make your own big dreams come true — and perhaps save you some trouble along the way.

The story begins on a hot summer day in Manhattan in 1989, when I met a treasure hunter named Barry Clifford who had found the pirate ship *Whydah*, which had sunk off Cape Cod in 1717. His goal on that day was to sell me on the idea of writing a pirate

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*The sign is made from scratch in Photoshop.
I used some woodgrain texture from another photo.*



Photography



Spirituality & Health, Winter 2003



Spirituality & Health, June 2005



Spirituality & Health, August 2006

These are all photos I took for the magazine. I made the background for the pill bottle in Photoshop.



Spirituality & Health, Spring 2002