



Unearthing THE BURIED LIFE



On the road with MTV, dream catchers and Penelope the Bus
By Esme Mazzeo

Photo courtesy of The Buried Life cast

What do you want to do before you die? It seems like such a loaded question, right? Six months ago, a generic answer like, "I want to live my life to the fullest," was quite a sufficient answer for most people. That was before January 18, when *The Buried Life* premiered on MTV and four seemingly unremarkable guys from Canada showed the world that it is possible to define what a "full life" means to you, write it down in a list and go after your goals, one small step at a time.

Ben Nemtin, 26, Dave Lingwood, 24, and brothers Duncan, 27, and Jonnie Penn, 23, made a list of 100 things they want to do before they die. Then, after some extensive fundraising for the trip, they set aside two weeks in the summer of 2006 to begin going after their goals. This isn't your parents' "to do" list, either. At least, not unless your mom has a secret desire to break into Hugh Hefner's mansion and party with Playboy bunnies. Not only are some of these tasks very difficult (to say the least), but also, for each task that the boys cross off their list, they have vowed to help a stranger fulfill one of his or her own dreams. "Well if we're just going after only our stuff, it'd be a little selfish," Lingwood tells *Pulse*. "And also, we got so much help from the community and from strangers with all the things that we wanted to do, it was such a natural thing to pay it back."

This was an important part of the project from the beginning. But how do four young guys with barely any money pick who they are going to devote their time and effort to helping? "When we meet someone we can usually tell that because they'll just be so passionate about it," says Lingwood. "There's something that they'll just give off...we can hear them talk and say 'wow, we should really help this person, this means a lot to them.'" One of the first strangers to be included in the project was a man named Brent, whom they met in Kelowna, British Columbia.

"He had lost his truck and was going to lose his New and Used store," says Lingwood. "And when we asked him what he wanted to do before he died he said that he had gotten off the street with the help of a [local] homeless shelter and he wanted to bring back food [there]...He never even brought up the fact that his business was going to go bankrupt because he didn't have the use of a truck."

When the boys found this out, they searched for a very generous used car salesman, and were able to buy a \$2100 dollar truck for just \$480, not only to help deliver the food to the shelter, but to ensure that Brent wouldn't lose his business as well. "It

"...we ask people to put their lives into perspective and think about life and death because then it forces you to structure your priorities."

was the first time we had ever really seen how easy it was to really make a profound difference in someone's life," says Lingwood.

These days, after four years, three different tours around the United States and Canada pursuing the project, and countless misadventures with Penelope the Bus, helping strangers has become easier for the guys. But in the beginning, it was difficult for them to get their parents on board with the idea. "At first they thought it was just a two week kind of thing so none of our parents really thought twice about it," says Lingwood. "Then when we kept on going, eventually dropping out of school, they were a little weary but for the most part they were supportive. They were of course a little thrown off, but you can't always go by what your parents want for you. It's not necessarily always the best thing for you."

The boys' families are thrilled with their success right now; not many parents can sav their son spends his time proving to

the world how easy it can be to fulfill your dreams and change people's lives at the same time. But the guys were not eager for a television show if the network wanted to change the way they went about the project. "When you watch our show, it's really our mark and our six months of labor that you're watching," says Lingwood. "MTV gave us complete creative control...We edit it, we pick the music. We've been doing this for four years, we're not cast...We are proud to say that this is an actual reality show."

One of the episodes in which the authenticity of *The Buried Life* is most apparent involves the boys helping a young woman named Queen. Both of her parents had died in Hurricane Katrina, in The Superdome, and their bodies were sent to different parts of the country. Queen had never been to visit her mother's grave. The boys were able to raise \$300 through working at a local restaurant one night for plane tickets from Memphis, TN, to Denver, CO, and two of them were able to go with Queen to pay respects to her mother at her gravesite.

Simplicity is the key for anyone when trying to achieve a goal on your list, Lingwood says. "Honestly...once you figure out what you want to do it's just about taking that first step and telling your friends about it, because then people will hold you accountable...You can look at that end goal and say that's so far away I'll never be able to do that but what you need to do is start taking those first small steps and just seeing where it leads you."

According to the show's blog, *The Buried Life* team will go out on another tour across the country in the summer of 2010, and be back with Season Two shortly after that. So, prepare your lists, and don't be surprised if a guy with a camera crew stops you on the street one day and asks you "the question."