

Chapter 1: Kalalau

Standing looking into the river on the Kalalau Trail, on the island of Kauai, I thought of the song, *One More River to Cross*. That's all it was, one more river to cross, and yet, looking below and seeing the huge boulders, the fast-moving water, and the other side, just a little farther than I could comfortably jump, stopped me in my tracks. "It's just a leap," I told myself. "I have taken many leaps in my lifetime." However, this could not be done in two leaps. It had to be one giant leap. And the other side seemed just beyond my reach. I froze.

I thought about the easy trip into the first campsite. Rising early, we hiked a narrow path along a sheer cliff looking at the ocean far below. It was difficult with a backpack, but I did it with ease. Then two rivers to cross provided just a bit of practice. It wasn't like I had never crossed a river. I'd crossed plenty in Alaska, but this was different, more like a chasm than a river. Boulders and rushing water filled my senses.

I remembered the leap I made when I left my home in upstate New York. That felt like jumping off a cliff. That was done in one huge leap. I had rid myself of so much fear over the last ten years, and here it was back, as big as ever, staring me in the face.

Then a hand – a hand reaching out from the other side. A hand making that leap much more doable in my mind. A hand that I could not reach. A hand that would be there for me when I had summoned the courage to take the leap. A hand that could pull me the last few inches if I didn't make it all the way. A hand that made all the difference.

Nearing age 60, I didn't want to show any weakness. I wanted to be independent, competent, strong, resilient, and powerful. Yet, here was another lesson. There are times in life when we must accept, or give, a helping hand. Because of the effect that hand had on my thoughts, I made it across the river, and hiked on into the Kalalau Valley, for a magnificent week, away from civilization, in the remoteness I craved and loved. It came at a price. Releasing fear, yet again. Feeling the fear and going forward. That is the definition of courage. I had developed amazing amounts of courage over the last years, and I would gain more strength, courage, and faith as I continued on my journey. Taken from a Buddhist saying, "Another challenge, another opportunity to grow," has become my mantra and has helped me recognize thousands of opportunities.

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