



Not knowing what he wanted to do has been very good to Shawn Halwas (Associate '80).

Halwas grew up on a farm near Inglis, Manitoba, and though he loved farm life, it didn't provide a clear path for him to what he would do as an adult. Thus, when it came time to decide which university he would attend upon graduating from high school, he chose the one closest to home: Brandon University.

"I wish I had been one of those people who knew exactly what they wanted to do with their life, but that's never been me," says Halwas. "I'm an adventurer, and doing the same thing for too long becomes boring. Like any teenager with big dreams, I saw myself as a lawyer, a famous actor, a writer, a computer wizard and just about everything else I could imagine."

ALUMNUS PROFILE: SHAWN HALWAS Associate '80

Alumnus' adventurous spirit has led him through

three careers, and counting

BY KELLY STIFORA

Halwas decided to enter a program that he thought would cover the widest range of possibilities: General Arts.

"My time at BU was a life-changing experience," he says. "It was a growing-up experience and although I was not the overachiever I dreamed of being, it laid the foundation for what my life would become—an adventure!"

Halwas says it was the friendships he built at BU that had the strongest impact on the course his life would take.

"I'll never forget 'Malaysia Jim,'" says Halwas. "On my first day at BU, this guy came up to me and said, 'Hi, I'm Jim from Malaysia.' As it turned out, Jim was actually from Calgary, but had been living in Malaysia with his family for the past couple of years. After two years at BU, Jim returned to Calgary and encouraged me to go there as well. I thought this sounded like a wonderful adventure so I packed my bags and headed off to Alberta."

There Shawn landed a job with the Royal Bank, and embarked on a 10-year career, working his way up to the position of Assistant Manager of Credit and Compliance before giving in to the plaguing 'what ifs?' that had been creeping up from the back of his mind.

"What if I had become an actor, or a writer or a computer wizard?" he asks. "I had to find the answer. At the same time I was becoming increasingly disillusioned with a world that seemed consumed with making money. I decided to change my life, and shocked my colleagues when I resigned and headed off to West Africa, where I volunteered with Mercy Ships International for five months."

As it turns out, that was really just the beginning of Halwas' adventures.

"If you're looking for an education and perspective," he says, "West Africa is a very good teacher. For the first time in my life, I felt what I had

done made a difference in the lives of others. It was a wake-up call. It made me realize that I only get one shot at this life and I had better make the most of it."

Upon returning from Africa, he enrolled at the Actor's Working Academy in Vancouver, and then "conquered the world's greatest fear" by completing the Dale Carnegie public speaking course. He also completed a Teaching English as a Second Language certificate, which steered his adventure to South Korea for three years, and led to one of his most recent endeavors.

Noticing that many teachers in Korea use the traditional card game "Go Fish" as a tool to teach English, Halwas searched the internet for a version that incorporated words other than fish and animals, and was surprised when he couldn't find one.

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"Feeling very creative and a little entrepreneurial, I developed a prototype and sent it to an ESL publisher in the United States," he says.

The publisher, ProLingua associates in Vermont, published Halwas' version of the game in the form of a book, *Go Fish, Seven Speaking and Listening Games for Learning English* (January 2007).

And the adventure continues. Since returning from South Korea, Halwas has also been studying computer systems technology at British Columbia Institute of Technology, a program from which he will graduate this spring.

After that, it would seem that for this particular adventurer, the sky is the limit!