

Foreword by “Cowboy” Kenna James



To follow your heart takes courage and is usually accompanied by great risks. These risks come in different forms for different people but the initial cost is always the same. When you reach the crossroad in life of whether to listen to your mind and hold true to your responsibilities or go on “*Tilt*” and follow your dreams, which path do you choose? It means leaving the security of the life you know to face your fears and travel down the path of the unknown. Often the price tag is too high to pay as it compromises your family and friends, who simply don’t understand or believe in your dreams.

The 1990s ushered in the iconic Soccer Mom: women who were former cheerleading captains, college newspaper editors and successful business leaders who at *their* crossroad faced similar choices between having a family and a career. Those that were already set in their ways would never think of compromising their family or children. Instead they followed their nurturing nature and continued dutifully taxiing their children to sporting events in the family minivan while holding their dreams of more public fame and a career at bay.

The 2000s have now introduced us to the Poker Dad who faces a similar choice. However, their decision is driven more from a conquering nature rather than a nurturing one. They are fueled by the emergence of “every man” Chris Moneymaker as their Moses, turning \$40 into a \$2.5 million windfall at the 2003 World Series of Poker. As a result, many men who hold down full-time jobs, coach their son’s little league and attend their daughter’s dance recitals have started to dream anew of a second chance at fame.

With poker the barriers are not external but rather internal and this is what makes for such an interesting backdrop to this story. *Life on Tilt* travels beneath the skin as we live vicariously through our hero's journey and the difficult decisions and choices that Johnnoe Zandoken has to face at the crossroad in his life.

In March of 2007 I had just busted out of a poker tournament at the Venetian and was lost in my own plight of problems when my space was invaded by John Blowers, a Poker Dad interested in tapping into my ten years of professional poker playing experience. John offered to share an excerpt of *Life on Tilt*, which I accepted mostly out of a sense of obligation and promptly deposited it in "file 13" – you know the one – the junk drawer in your house holding all the unwanted stuff that accumulates until it becomes necessary to jettison it to the dump.

My own journey was stilted at the time and little did I know that I would find solace within *Life on Tilt's* pages. It was a year later when I was drawn to an old email containing the synopsis of the story which I immediately fell in love with and that you now hold within your hands. The junk had inexplicably been moved aside to reveal Johnnoe Zandoken, who is now my travel companion along my path of dreams. A path that reminds me of one of my favorite quotes from Arthur Miller; "the purpose of the play is to make one more human, which is to say - *Less Alone*."

This book is not intended to improve an experienced player's strategy, but rather provide a portal into the psyche of the Poker Dad. We all have passions or distractions that make us who we are and John captures the essence of balancing limitless dreams with family realities. His insight into the nuances of balancing "normal" life with the poker world, coupled with the way he can at the same time draw parallels and distinctions between each is fascinating. His command of the written word and understanding of the game make *Life on Tilt: Confessions of a Poker Dad* a must read.

The cosmic and spiritual conveyance of this book will transport you to a world that transcends poker, a world where we pursue our dreams while we survive our failures. Maybe you'll see a reflection of yourself in his protagonist, Johnnoe Zandoken, and his confessions. It's an open and honest account of what life is like...on *tilt*.

Enjoy the Journey!

Kenna