

Fall 2024

TALES FROM RIDERWOOD

Stories by and for Riderwood Residents

The Golden Pig

by Jenny Graham



Escaped domestic pigs, Eurasian boars, and hybrids of the two roam Texas and cost the state millions in agricultural damage each year. My neighbor's sons hunted those wild pigs and collected a five dollar bounty, per tail, year round.

One night I answered the knock on my door and found the two boys holding a tiny, rust-colored piglet. They had killed the mother and had no use for the baby. When they asked me if I wanted him, I took the little fellow and held him close while he nuzzled my neck, uttered a few soft grunts, and wormed his way into my heart.

I raised dairy goats so I always had surplus milk. The hungry little pig took to the bottle of warmed milk right away. I put the pig in a pen with that year's crop of bottle-fed kids. No one seemed to mind and they all bundled together and fell fast asleep.

The pig and kids bonded as a family unit. When they were old enough, I moved them to the pasture. The pig grew at an alarming rate and could drink a gallon of milk in seconds. I hadn't taken the pig to raise as a

guard for the goats, but that's what he became. He kept watch over his little herd, and if he wanted to go someplace, he would gather the goats like a herding dog and drive them to the chosen spot. Every year, the pig adopted the new crop of kids. He tolerated them jumping all over him with their sharp little hooves when he lay on the ground to rest. The pig grew into a 600 pounder and stepped carefully to avoid crushing the baby goats. When the sun's rays struck the pig, his bristled coat changed from red to glittering gold.

Besides his guard duties, the pig was always busy and up to something. Based on that characteristic, I named him Bertrand the Busy Man. I had heard pigs were intelligent and Bertrand proved it. Several times throughout the day, for his own amusement, he would collect the dogs' bowls and stack them one inside the other. Then he would knock the stack down, carry the bowls to another spot, and restack them. I wondered if I should get the pig some jigsaw puzzles to put together.

When Bertrand was small, he hitched rides around the pasture on my thoroughbred mare by jumping up and latching on to her tail with his teeth. Since the mare was high strung by nature, I expected her to send the pig flying with her hind hooves. For some reason, the mare tolerated the anomaly. The other mare hated the pig. She tried her best to get him

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The Golden Pig

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by putting her head as far as she could through the apertures in the field fence. Bertrand taunted the mare as he stood behind the fence, just out of her reach, and squealed while the mare snapped her teeth together inches from his nose. the fence, just out of her reach, and squealed while the mare snapped her teeth together inches from his nose.

Bertrand spied on me all the time. He stood outside the milking parlor and peeked around the door whenever I milked the goats. If I made eye contact, he backed out of sight. At feeding time, he hid behind a tree trunk and watched me load the truck with livestock feed. As soon as I got in the truck, he would race away. I don't know if the pig told the other animals I was coming, but they were always waiting for me at the top of the hill. Whenever I worked around the farm, Bertrand hid behind trees or bushes and watched until I finished my tasks.

One afternoon I came home from work and heard the goats' distressed cries. I rushed to the pasture and saw Bertrand chasing the neighbor's dog off the property. Bertrand saw me and came running over. Every hair on his body was raised, and he grunted with every breath. I spoke softly and told him what a good job he'd done protecting the goats, and he calmed down. Some of the goats were injured and required veterinary care. Sometimes when dogs get in with a herd of goats, they kill them all for sport. If Bertrand hadn't been there, I may have come home to a disaster.

Several years later, I accepted a job offer in Colorado. An animal sanctuary agreed to take Bertrand so he could receive care and live out his life, and a friend of mine agreed to manage things so I could leave and get settled in the new job.

I loved the farm, and the difficult decision to leave it behind weighed on me. The day of departure came, and I packed the truck in gloomy weather. The sun dozed behind a bank of grey clouds all morning. When I left the farm and got half way down the lane, the sun rose above the clouds and drenched the landscape in bright light. The last thing I saw in the rearview mirror was a golden pig standing on top of the hill, watching me drive away.



For future
issues of
*Tales from
Riderwood*

We welcome the
following: memoirs, biographical
sketches, human interest items,
poems, and other original short
manuscripts. Fiction should be so
identified. For instructions
regarding entries please contact

Ed Vilade KC419, 301-273-2396
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Tomorrows Children

by Peggy Lunde

High adventure in their future
Dreaming new creative dreams;
Planning cities by computers,
Millions crowded so it seems.

Future travel on a space ship
Jetting off to visit Mars;
Once the tales of fiction movies,
Reaching up to meet the stars.

Driving cars without a driver;
Food created in a lab,
Virtual games for entertainment,
Never touching, feeling sad.

How I pray for human contact
For the future children's lives.
Let them meet at birthday parties
Childhood struggles they'll survive.

Climbing trees and building forts
From scraps of lumber just for fun,
Riding horses to the mountains,
Playing hopscotch in the sun.

Stop this constant competition!
Only winning has no soul,
Children playful with companions,
friendship is the only goal.

Watching birds, and clouds, and sunsets;
Digging on the sandy beach,
Camping out and river swimming,
Running, climbing to the peaks.

Encourage them to play for fun
Without a trophy, we must teach.
And let them play to find new friends,
High adventure in their future,
A worthy goal within their reach.

The End of Junior High

by Tom Rogers

I spent Kindergarten through 9th grade at Benjamin Franklin Junior High School. As the final 9th grade was nearing completion, I can only remember two accomplish-ments: In 1949, at age 14, I gave Tommy Rounds a bloody nose, and at the following graduation I received the "best student" award.

Tommy Rounds was a school bully who liked to bump into me, and certain others, for no apparent reason other than, to impress the girls. When he knew the teachers who monitored the hallways were not looking, he would bump into a student he didn't like. For whatever reason, I was one of the students he didn't like. I ignored him as much as I could hoping a few bumps would eventually stop, someone would report him to a teacher, or a parent would complain to the Principal. The ignoring reaction was not what he wanted from me, so the bumping and shoving became more frequent and aggressive.

He was a little bigger than me and I assumed he was stronger, but I couldn't take it anymore, I was furious, it had to end today, one way or the other. After the last class, I told him to meet me at the playground behind the school. He was there, I was there, and half of the school was surrounding us. No teachers, just students. The word had quietly gone out, there was going to be a fight. It was three hours since I had angrily requested for us to meet. I had cooled down and was no

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The End of Junior High *Continued from page 4*

longer as angry. I was not a fighter, this was my first. Even Tommy didn't look as angry either, but the surrounding students were more than ready for a fight to start.

Tommy started it off with a punch to my chest that hurt but had the effect of refueling my anger. My brother, who was nine years older, had told me in a fight, to go for the nose and forget all other punching locations. As Tommy was coming after me with a second hit, I punched him with a straight arm to his nose. He fell to his knees in pain with blood from his nose getting on his hands and shirt. As he ran away crying, being jeered by most of the students who knew him as a bully, I was physically grabbed by a female teacher, who had just arrived to see the horrible thing I had done to Tommy.

She was upset with what she had just witnessed and roughly squeezed my arm as she took me back to the school to see the Principal. Fortunately, he had left the school and all the office staff had left also. She wanted to know what caused the fight and when I told her she let me go with a stern warning against any further fighting. She planned on telling the Principal all about the fight and was sure he would want to talk with me. For some reason, I never heard from him.

Tommy stayed away from me for the rest of the semester. We both went to North High School where I graduated in 1953. Tommy got into another serious fight which he lost to a football player. He quit school as a result and joined the Marine Corps and became a drill instructor.

I can't tell you how I ended up with the VFW or Veterans of Foreign Wars Award in Junior High. We were all sitting in chairs on the stage idly listening to the Principal talk about the award when he turned around and asked for Tom Rogers to come forward. I don't remember what was said to me as I was in shock. It must be he had never heard about the Tommy Rounds incident. I was later drafted into the Army but had never considered joining the Marine Corps, as for sure, I would have ended up with Tommy as my drill instructor.

Grief by Bob Cohen

At night I slide into an empty bed
The sheets are cold for you are not
beside me
I turn toward you but then avert my head
Lest I Intrude on where you ought to be
The hollow air is my companion now
And memories alone must take
your place.
For these are all of you I'll ever know
A void is all that's left of your embrace
Too brief the years that we were wed
now seems
I'm avid for another day with you
To relive the fulfillment of our dreams
Bask in sharing how love and family
grew.
But yes! We did have time and did
do this —
Each told our love, then shared one
final kiss.



For A Clergyman at Ninety

by Lane Jennings

I know a man who
Loves the Word
As if it were a woman
Or a dog. . .

...No,
That's not right.

I know a man who
Loves the World. . .
...That's
Not it either, really

I know a man
Who uses Words
To praise the World
For all
He finds to love there:

Animals, seasons,
Children, elders,
All those in need
Of aid or comfort,
Ordinary ones
To be admired,
Moments worth holding.

And, by his praising,
Praises too
The Author of it all,
Who will, in time,
Reward him greatly,
In His perfect way,

As I do now,
Imperfectly,
A little,
In this song.



Crushing on Crows

by Jane Perkins

During my two spring seasons of what feels like endless vacation living at a nature preserve, Riderwood Village, I now know the exact number and type of wildlife that are perfect for my personal entertainment with limited outdoor space.

"Can you build me a corner shelf for the balcony railing, right here?" I point and query my wood-working neighbor. "Mmmmm," he mumbles and then measures, and re-measures, and soon draws lines on a tablet. Some days later, he knocks on my door and shows me a lovely triangle of wood fitted to the railing that is now a plant shelf existing entirely within my space.

Perfection.

From this space I can, perhaps, rekindle a relationship with crows (*Corvus corone*) that first developed with center city crows in another life. I hear them, now, in the tree grove cawwwwing to each other. I see a pair sometimes on rooftop antennae.

With this terracotta plant saucer and these shelled peanuts that crows love, I might attract this neighborhood pair.

It works. They come early morning and I watch them from my pillow. Landing sometimes on the railing and cautiously sidling toward the treats. Toward breakfast. Eventually they land right on the saucer's edge.

Sometimes they take one peanut and fly off; other times they gobble up nut after nut, then leave with one in that big beak to share with the mate.

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Crushing on Crows
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Two shiny black crows are the perfect number and species for my enjoyment of the nature around me.

And then, the jays (*Corvus cristatus*) squawk their way over. A pair of them -- maybe siblings from last year's brood. They behave a lot like crows, but mostly eat hit-and-run. They are way more fidgety. Highly entertaining and the blue in their feathers is thrilling every time they fan their wings.

And so, I think... ah, THIS is the perfect selection of species for me to feed and welcome to my home.

But it's WILD out there. I have no control over anything.

Soon I am entertained by a young squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) whom I met last year when his tail had no fur. He's bushier this year. Cute little fella. I name him Roger. It turns out, though, Roger is very territorial and he's apparently a Ninja squirrel -- he takes on the pair of crows one morning, and after some turns and jumps and what look like punches, he commands the railing! He prevails through a pair of skirmishes against two crows more than twice his size.

These peanuts are his today. And so are my seven plant pots. For some reason, he digs and flings dirt everywhere.

I begin to think that I will have to end this love affair with crows. It's getting too complicated.

But then this cute little nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*) silently appears on the corner of the brick wall and hops down, sideways, to the saucer, takes one nut and disappears into thin air. How cute is that? I love that this perfect being shares my space.

But the squirrel.

I'm now saying out loud to friends that I must quit this. How long until every critter on campus is out here chowing down on a sure thing?

Shortly, I find two sparrows on the railing, eyeing the situation. "Is this too good to be true?" one inquires of the other. Note: sparrows, unlike crows, regularly poop while they eat.

And then, finally, Roger shows up with his mother. She's way bigger than he is. Not believing his tales, she finally clambers up five stories of brick to see for herself. She hangs back as he proudly shows her the spread — and she is first to fly off the railing onto a tree branch when I intervene.

I've gifted myself too much of a good thing.

Sadly, the cafeteria is closed.

Zero is the number.

I will crush on crows from afar.

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In Memory of Joseph B. Kuhns, Sr. by Bob Kuhns

My father was not a teacher; he was an Engineer.

He taught me Duty. When I was a young man, on Christmas Eve, we looked forward to the family going to Midnight Mass together. But one Christmas Eve, it was snowing, and his job was to see that the roads were cleared and made safe for others. So, he went out on the road to supervise the snow removal all over the county. He missed Midnight Mass, but he did his duty. I know I learned that he did what was right. My father was not a teacher.

He taught me that you can fix anything. No matter what it is, if it is broken, it can be repaired. With ingenuity, and tools, and scraps of stuff, you can make it work again. Of course, it may not be economical, but you can fix it. But he was not a teacher.

He taught me about racial equality. When I was a young boy, he took me for a ride in the State Roads Commission car as he made his rounds, inspecting the roads all over Montgomery County. We traveled all morning. When he reached the border where his jurisdiction ended, he made a U-turn in a parking lot of a restaurant by



the road. And I looked out at the restaurant and saw a sign in the window. I asked him what the sign meant, "WHITES ONLY". My father told me about racial equality right then, about injustice and hatred and how love and compassion were the right way. And then

I understood. And he finished by saying he would never eat at that restaurant because of that sign. He was NOT a teacher.

He taught me that when you are so angry at someone, someone you love, so angry you want to hit them, that it is time to leave the house. Go out the front door and take a walk. It may take ten minutes, or it may take an hour. But when you come back you will be able to handle the situation better. Dad wasn't a teacher.

He taught me an appreciation of the fine arts. In the Summer, at night, we were allowed to stay up and watch the Late Movie, Safeway Theater. And I got to see Humphrey Bogart in "Treasure of the Sierra Madre", and other classics.

But he was not a teacher.

Thanks Dad.

Gambling Introduction

by Tom Rogers

In 1955 I started my first full-time job as a draftsman at McIntosh Laboratory. Most workers on the production line were women who assembled and soldered electronic components into amplifiers. Some women liked to gamble each week on the Friday night boxing matches.

One of the people I worked with was named “Happy” Malcolm who ran the weekly boxing fight pool for 20 people. He liked to laugh and had a positive outlook on almost every subject; ergo “Happy”. Boxing was very popular on television in the 1950s and every fight ended with the time recorded in minutes and seconds.

Happy’s fight pool was 20 three-second time increments: 0 1 2, then 3 4 5, all the way up to 57 58 59 seconds. Each Friday twenty people paid a dollar and then drew their time increment out of a hat. The fight was on Friday night and the winner got \$20 coming to work on Monday.

The pool paid out money only on a Knockout (KO). That’s when a fighter falls to the canvas from a single blow and cannot rise to his feet to the referee’s count of 10. However, if the fight ends in a Technical Knockout (TKO), where the fighter can no longer defend himself or face significant damage, the referee will stop the fight. If the fight ends this way, there is no fight pool winner. You pay another dollar, and the winner of the following week would get \$40 instead of \$20.

Up to that point in my life, I had never gambled. Happy pressured me to play so I paid my dollar. The fight the first week was



a KO, my time in seconds won, and I collected \$20 on Monday.

As a result of winning I was “required” to continue to play as some of the ladies grumbled about the “new guy” winning. I paid my dollar again and picked my time from the hat. The fight on Friday was a TKO; there was no payout. Happy whispered to me that if the fight had been a KO, my time would have won. Unfortunately, he also whispered this to the ladies and more grumbling was heard. Next week’s winner would get \$40.

I paid my dollar again and picked my time from the hat. The following Friday’s fight was another TKO. There was no payout and next week’s winner would get \$60. Thank heavens, one of the other players would have won if it had been a KO.

The next Friday’s fight was a KO and my time in seconds won. I had now collected a total of \$80 from the fight pool beating the odds of 1 chance in 20.

Happy collected the dollar each week from all twenty people. He told me that everyone would quit the fight pool unless I collected the money for the following week. As the collection time approached I was worried everyone would try to make me feel bad about my winning streak. Quite the opposite, they were very friendly and all wanted to shake my hand hoping to transfer some luck over to them. It must have worked as my winning streak ended for many future fights.



Not Ungrateful

by Lane Jennings

Look at that moon, the bloated wretch,
grinning on high, while we
peer up like fishes
from the planty deep.

No beacon either, just a broken
mirror, scattering a little
of the true light back—
crumbs out of loaves.

But friendlier for that:
easy to fix on, and
draw near to. Sun,
you gave us everything;
We know, and we don't
mean to be ungrateful;
it's just hard to love
a light that burns our eyes.

Prayer for Seniors

For Spiritual Equilibrium
As I Move and Change

by Mary Jane Phillips

Divine Forming Mystery of Creation
Grant me:

Regular Circuiting [Retiring]

Through the Seasons in my life span as
they appear
like the rhythmic appearance of night
and day

that happens when the sun circles the earth

Smooth Transit [Downsizing and Moving]
of my life call without wobbling, rocking
between attachment and

detachment, alternating between rest in
You and service to other –
rolling on with soft vibration at my center

Steady-State Resilience [Grieving]

through terrible moments of sadness,
tragedy, and bewilderment
in my life coincident sometimes with the
mystery

of Your unfolding in my life call

Straight Highway [Continuing]

to You in humility, joy and awe whilst
forming, reforming,
transforming in grace and deepest faith —
outside space matter time energy and
understanding

Amen

Recovering

by Bob Kuhns

Recovering from eating Club Crackers (Original) with a spoon. The box shows no indication that the three sleeves of crackers inside had been homogenized or something. Not an unbroken cracker in the entire box. Solution: pour the crumbs of various sizes into a cereal bowl and eat one spoonful at a time. My dreams of spreading cream cheese on them were shattered too.

Recovering from creating the Bob Kuhns Memorial Slide Zone along the Appalachian Trail in Shenandoah National Park. I was leading the Ancient Volcano Hike when I tripped and fell off the trail down a steep rocky slope for about ten feet. I think I must have rolled over at least once with my backpack absorbing some of the shock. Bruises on my body and pride. After I climbed back up, I looked at the area where I must have acted like a five foot wide weed whacker to the vegetation and a bulldozer to the rocks.—

Recovering from watching a dozen tennis balls roll helter skelter across the road in Shenandoah National Park. They zigzagged back and forth sometimes retracing, but eventually ending up in the grass at the edge of the woods where a wild turkey hen had just gone. Oh! Wait! those tennis balls were baby turkey chicks.

Recovering (still) from last evening's incredible orange sky. Thoughts in my mind as I watched.



“Oh, look at that sky. I should take a picture. But it'll probably be gone by the time I get a camera ready. So I'll just enjoy the fleeting moment. Okay, fleeting moments. It is so intense. Twilight now has new meaning in my mind. I should get my good camera. But I don't want to miss the end. The buildings and trees are now fading in the darkness. But the sky is still neon. Fleeting is not the correct description. Finally, the brilliant orange is fading. I wish I had taken a photo or video.

Recovering from leaving the window shades open so I could watch the snowflakes falling this morning. When the snow started, the first flakes coated most of the windows, providing military quality concealment to the invading army of flakes. That's fun to say, “army of flakes.”

Recovering from this morning stupidly cutting my stupid thumb on the stupid lid on the stupid cat's stupid food can. Minor 8th inch long slice, but on the inside of the knuckle. When is “National Stupid Cat Week” anyway?

Recovering from menu choices: at a small deli along Rt 89 the chalk board menu said, “Breakfast Burritos, One filling – for example Egg, Two fillings – for example egg and bacon, Three fillings – for example egg hashed browns and Spam.”

Recovering from seeing the stages of freedom of speech degenerate from worthy to borderline to civil disobedience to riot to coup attempt.

A Father's Love

Part I

by Norm Braveman

For as far back as he can remember, Sam wakes up each morning before the alarm. Over the years he's come to cherish the solitude of the early morning. It's quiet and there are no schedules to keep, no papers to grade, no research reports to write, and, most of all, no decisions to make.

The time is his. He owns it. He possesses the quiet where he can linger at whatever thoughts enter his mind, mull over problems, or simply stare blankly at the ceiling.

At 5:08 a.m. today his attention flips back and forth between sounds of the wind howling outside and memories of yesterday, a day spent hauling lobster traps with his friend Bill Owens, a fisherman from Ships Cove. The wind-whipped waters of the bay made their work more difficult than usual. Even so, the haul was good. Lots of keepers so they continued until the wind turned into a raging nor'easter, pushing pans of ice from the ocean ahead of it into the once clear bay. By mid-day they couldn't keep the ice away from the wooden hull boat long enough to get the traps from eight fathoms so the two men headed back to the harbor at Ships Cove.

Sam recalls Bill saying that he is worried about the nor'easter coming this late in the season. He said the ice would clog the bay for days after the wind dies. "Somethin' bad's bound to happen whenever a nor'easter blows late winter ice into the bay. I never seen nothin' like it," Bill said as they returned to the harbor. "It's almost like the devil hisself is ridin' on them damn pressure

ridges of ice and laughin' at us poor fishin' folk." And as an afterthought he adds his favorite expression. "Some mess my friend. Some mess."

Sam turns on his side. He watches Sally and the baby sleeping quietly next to him. Their steady breathing in unison makes the covers rise and fall rhythmically. *Just like the roll of the ocean*, he thinks. The peacefulness of their breathing contrasts the eerie creaking and groaning of the rafters of their home caused by the violent wind outside. Sam looks at the clock on the nightstand. *Nearly five-thirty*, he thinks, as he pushes the button on the back of the little clock. *No need to wake Sally and the baby.*

His foot doesn't quite touch the floor when the ringing telephone breaks the early morning sounds. Answering it before the first ring ends, he turns away from the bed, cups his hand over the mouthpiece and whispers.

"Hello?"

"Zat you, Samuel?" It's Liza, Bill's wife. "Can ye come over," the urgency clearly marks her voice.

"Sure. Is it o.k. if I come by at around ten? I need to be at the university by eight to teach a class."

She places her hand over the mouthpiece and Sam hears her mumble something. She returns to the phone saying, "No, Samuel. Bill says that ye should come over now. He needs...."

"Can I talk to him?" Sam interrupts her.

Once again he hears the muffled sound of voices through the earpiece of the phone. Then she comes back on the line. "No Samuel, he won't come to the phone."

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A Father's Love *Continued from page 12*

He says for ye to come over now," and she hangs up.

He sits motionless wondering what could be so important if Bill won't talk to him. It isn't like him.

He feels Sally's hand lightly rubbing his back.

"Something wrong?" she asks in a sleepy voice.

"I dunno. Something's up at the Owens'," he whispers as he turns to face her. "Bill won't talk on the phone." And, after a pause, "I'll stop there before I go to school and call you if it's anything important."

She gives him a look of understanding, sleepily kisses the air in front of her and then turns her attention to the baby who begins to fuss.

It takes Sam nearly twenty minutes to reach Bill's house. The wind, still from the northeast, is even stronger than it was the day before. As he makes the last turn, he looks out over a vast expanse of whiteness that was once the open water of Ships Cove Harbor and Northeast Bay and mumbles to himself, "Some mess."

Inside the house men from the Cove are sitting in small groups talking in hushed tones. Bill is alone in the corner, sitting in his favorite chair, bent over, holding his head in his hands rocking back and forth. He speaks in a hoarse whisper when he realizes that Sam is standing next to him. "Lord God my son, them two young'uns never come home the whole night."

"Who didn't come home?" Sam asks.

Contemplation Changes Us!

by James David

Contemplation is used here as an umbrella term that encompasses any form of deep relaxation that produces enlightened, joyous realizations that are life changing. Meditation of any type is a prime form of contemplation. Other forms could be yoga, daydreaming, resting, tai chi, or praying.

For thirty of my fifty years of practicing psychotherapy, I taught each of my patients to meditate. A small percentage, 10 to 20 percent, began to meditate daily. I find it interesting and frustrating how few people respond enthusiastically to this life changing invitation. The ones who meditated daily quickly viewed life with fresh eyes.

Core Secret

What is so important about developing a "Contemplative Worldview?" A Contemplative Worldview, in its essence, begins with taming the mind's worrisome thinking. The more we tame or quiet the mind, the more we experience ourselves as okay just as we are. The more we live in the certainty of our goodness, our okayness just in being, the greater our freedom from outcomes. For example, whether a given event happens or does not happen, does not change our living in intrinsic goodness. Being content with ourselves frees us to experience the love, peace, and joy already inside of each of us. Keep in mind, this is experiential, it is beyond words, beyond thinking.

Core Gifts

Contemplation changes everything. We become much more centered,

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connected to our Inner Self, and much more observational or aware of the thoughts that arise and the feelings that occur. With time, negative or fearful thoughts do not surface. They are replaced with new, even greater sensibilities for beauty, truth, and goodness. Creative insights flourish. Spontaneous gifts of compassion arise with startling clarity. Anger or violence becomes repulsive and is replaced with kindness, gentleness, generosity; a plexi-glass shield protects and repulses slights, rejections, and unkindness.

Albert Einstein advised us that, “No problem is ever solved with the same mind that produced it.” He also said that “Imagination is more important than intelligence.” He certainly had both in abundance and synergistically integrated his left and right brains with an enlarged corpus callosum. He had a contemplative mind.

Fritz Perls, the father of Gestalt Therapy urged us to get out of our minds and into our bodies. The feelings in our bodies cannot lie but our thoughts can deceive us, torture us and ruin us. But it is either/ or thinking to denigrate either cognitions or emotions, both are essential. In contemplation we acknowledge and respect both.

Contemplation accelerates our evolutionary growth by noticing our more habitual, primitive world of non-dualistic, black/white, good/bad thinking and switching to both/and cognitions. This recognition leads to realizing that in most conflict, parties contribute equally but differently.

This is a truth most difficult to comprehend and accept.

Recap

Upon reflecting about how contemplation changes us, the first awareness that bubbled up for me was staying centered throughout the day. “Staying centered” means to be connected to our core self, the center of our

being. It entails observing without judging. It means experiencing the now fully, like drinking in a painting without thinking.

Next, I realized that staying centered rests upon the foundation of experiencing yourself as okay just as you are. The more you experience your core okayness, the more you stay centered throughout the day.

Of course, the train goes off the tracks for all of us at times. With a contemplative mind the train wreck is less severe and of shorter duration.



***Marcel Proust perceived that
“The real voyage of discovery
consists not in seeking new
lands but in seeing with fresh***

Continued on page 15

Then I remembered the evolutionary gift of non-dual, both/and thinking. This frees us from blaming, scapegoating, hating, and denigrating others. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “We must learn to live together as brothers and sisters or perish together as fools.”

Love gets manifested in being accepting. Until we are totally self-accepting (A daunting task!), we will not be totally accepting and understanding of others. The contemplative mind effortlessly, unthinkingly unleashes acceptance.

Eckhart Tolle’s many books speak the language of staying in the present moment, “the now.” Quieting our minds in any form of contemplation opens the door to being fully present to ourselves and others.

Resting deeply unlocks the power of our creative minds. By moving facilely from Beta brain waves to Alpha, Theta, and Gamma brain waves we enter a new realm of fresh imaginings. Marcel Proust perceived that “The real voyage of discovery consists not



in seeking new lands but in seeing with fresh eyes.” The ship that delivers new vision is Theta. Right next to Theta is Delta, which is peaceful, rejuvenating sleep.

Developing a contemplative mind strengthens our sensibilities for greater abhorrence of lies, ugliness, and violence with greater attraction and enjoyment of truth, beauty, and goodness. I am repulsed by gun violence and uplifted by James Heriot’s “All Creatures, Great and Small.”

Ending

By this time, you might have gotten the impression that a contemplative mind creates passivity, contentment and peace without much worldly benefit. The truth is far from that. Contemplation also moves us into action. We effortlessly receive new thoughts about how and where to put our values into action. It may help us to remember the words of Henry David Thoreau, “It’s not what you look at that matters, it’s what you see.”

Dr. Jim David is a retired psychotherapist in Silver Spring, MD, who adheres to positivity in all areas of life. Currently he does Personal, Spiritual and Executive Coaching. Visit his website at www.askdrdavidnow.com or email at jimsue63@gmail.com.



Dear Rita

by Paul Rohr

A quick reflection on today. This marks the 2nd Valentine's Day that has occurred since you died. In one respect this feels somewhat hollow, since you are not here to share a celebration with me. I keep reminding myself that we did have almost six decades to celebrate this day together.

I started the day getting "Ashes to Go" from Pastor Dave at Epiphany this morning. I am not going to the Ash Wednesday service, since it is the same time as the Gentlemen Songsters rehearsal. The words with the ashes were "Remember that from dust you came and from dust you will return." This is a solemn reminder that days on earth are numbered, but the exact number of remaining days are unknown. I do believe that there will come a time in the future when we will be together.

While I measure (and cherish) the Valentine Days which we spent together, I remember that there were several such holidays where I was on assignment and we had to have our own celebration on another day. One of those days when I was in Southern California. Our team, Roger Ju

and I, went out to dinner at a Chinese restaurant in San Clemente California. I'm sure that other diners turned their heads to see two guys dining together on that romantic evening. Another time I was in Sweden. The actual details are fuzzy. However I have a vivid imagination with intimate pictures of how we managed to

have our celebration when finally we were able to celebrate together.

I did get a card yesterday from our son, Paul. The card had the message in pink letters "I always think YOU'RE Awesome. BUT TODAY, You get it in Writing." His message was "Happy Valentine's Day, Dad. I Love you so much + today seemed like an appropriate time to say so. Love, Paul"

Another card also arrived from our daughter, Jennifer. The valentine was a paper Cherry Blossom array. The enclosed card read "Dad, All my love today and every day!"

These cherry blossoms remind me of Mom's love for you and for her family and the beauty in the world, Jen."

It's time for me to practice for the rehearsal this evening. I am cherishing all the time which we had together and balanced it with the need to live life without you.

Love,

Paul

2/14/2024



Night Music

[A playlet to be presented
as a podcast or texted live online]

“Psssst. Ken san.”

“Unnnnnn?”

“Ken san!”

“Wha-? Who’s there?”

“It’s me.”

“Yukiko san? Is that you?”

“Yes.”

“Where are you?”

“Up here.”

“It’s dark. I can’t see.”

“Look closer. On your pillow.”

“Is that...no it can’t be. You...you’re a chipmunk!”

“Shhhh. Not so loud!”

“But you’re a chipmunk! A talking chipmunk!”

“Yap. It seems so.”

“What happened? How did you get here?”

“I’m not sure. One minute I was home, working on a rush translation job. It was late, and I was drowsy. Next thing I know I’m on all fours, five inches long, and scampering across the grass outside your house. I recognized it right away. And your car was in the breezeway, so I knew you must be home.”



“How did you get in?”

“I asked a field mouse. He led me around back, through a broken window into your basement. He goes in and out all the time, he says; climbs up the basement stairs, and makes noise just to tease your cat. She knows he’s in there; but she can’t get at him!”

“Hmmm. So that’s why Alexandra scratches so much at the basement door!”

“Yep. He’s a very fat mouse, though. Can’t squeeze beneath the door. Just as well for him if he teases cats. But chipmunks are slimmer, so I had no problem.”

“I can’t believe this.”

“What?”

“That I’m lying in bed in the middle of the night talking to a chipmunk who sounds exactly like my Japanese tutor!”

“It does seem pretty unlikely.”

“Could this just be a dream?”

“Maybe. But if so, which one of us is having it?”

“Good question! I don’t know. Hey! Here’s a thought. Let’s ask each other questions! If you answer by saying things only you could know, then this must be

your dream. But if your answers only match my expectations, then we're probably in my dream. And vice versa"

"Sounds complicated...but okay."

"I'll start. Ahhh. What's your earliest memory—I mean as a little girl back in Japan?"

"あの[Ano..well]... maybe walking on the seashore with my grandfather holding my hand. I must have only been two and a half or three."

"Hmmmm. That sounds an awful lot like one of my memories. Were you in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and was there a crazy old 19th century hotel nearby, with only three or four rooms in it, and all built out of concrete in the shape of a huge elephant?"

"[Ie, Ie] No. Of course not!. It was the beach at Kaike, just outside Yonago, on the Bay of Miho. I remember a long dark stretch of pine trees back behind the beach, and you could even see Mt. Daisen in the distance."



"Wow! You remember a lot. And I'm sure I was never anywhere near there. Though I guess maybe I could have read about it in a guidebook sometime...."

"True."

"Let's just call that one 'inconclusive.' Your turn. Ask me something now."

Mmmmm. All right. Tell me, Ken san, what is your favorite piece of music?"

"You mean my all-time favorite ever, or just the best one I can actually play?"

"Either way."

"Okay..., my all time favorite is Brahms' *Fourth Symphony* op 98, performed by the Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Serge Koussevitsky. And if you want to get really detailed it's the RCA recording on 78 rpm wax disks. As I kid I played it so many times I even came to love where the phonograph needle scratches make popping sounds in perfect counterpoint to the natural beat of the music."

"すごいね!" [SU-goi, Ne?] You don't mean it! Ken san did you really?....

"And my favorite thing to play...at least I used to play it, though I haven't touched the keyboard in a while now, was the *Forlane* movement from Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin*. I love every single note."

"Now I'm the one who can't believe!"

"What's wrong? Don't you like Ravel?"

"No, no. I mean those two exact same pieces are my favorites, too!"

"Yukiko san, are you sure?"

"Definitely! Right down to the needle scratches on the Brahms."

"But Yukiko san, they stopped making 78 records years before you were even born."

"They did?"

"Yes. And that walk on the beach with your grandfather, what did the sky look like? Was it red by any chance?"

"Yap. I remember the sun was just coming up."

"But you were on the west coast of Japan, and the sun rises in the east."

"You're right, it does. So that means..."

"...that means this must be my dream."

"Yap, I guess so."

"Too bad. I would have liked being in your dream."

"Well, maybe you will be."

"Maybe. And, hey, perhaps I won't be so old and...married. And maybe you won't be... a chipmunk."

"Probably not."

"Or else we'll meet somewhere and both be the same age, and I'll speak Japanese as fluently as you speak English. And maybe we'd even fall in love."

"But you wouldn't need language lessons then. We' would never have met."

"You're right. I guess things are better this way. No more questions though. I'd only get the answers I wanted to hear."

"You would."

"Well then, better go back to sleep. Tomorrow's a busy day."

"For me, too."

"Can you get home okay?"

"Mmmm, hmmm. I never really left, remember?"

"That's right, you didn't. And you're not really a chipmunk either."

"Nope."

"That's good. Now at least I know you won't get chased by Alexandra."

"Ah ha ha! Good night, Ken san. Sleep well."

"おやすみなさい¹⁴、[*Oyasumi nasai*] Yukiko san! And...thanks for stopping by."



NOTES

1. *Ano...*=Well now...
2. *Sate...*=let's see.
3. "*Sugoi ne*"= Incredible!

Sacred Places

Michael J. Brennan

March 15, 2024

Many people believe that when something very unusual happens
in their life

This will be remembered by them as a magical moment

As a sacred place

When I was about 12

I was hunting butterflies near a railroad track

I entered a circle of very high bushes with a clearing in the middle

Almost immediately, I noticed that every exit was blocked by
a very large banana spider and its web

I sat down

I wondered how I had entered

I wondered how I would exit

After a while I chose a path and made it outside

I have often wondered about this experience

Where did the spiders come from?

Why did I make it out without being bitten?

Did it really happen? What lesson did I learn?

I have had only a few experiences in my life

Where I believe I was in a sacred place

In San Diego, I went east across a mountain to the

Anzo Barego desert in spring

The cacti were in bloom

Everything that lives was coming to life

And I stood by a hospital bed Holding my son's hand

When they disengaged the machines and he died

He was 42 and I was 75

Joseph Campbell said "Your sacred space is where you find
yourself again and again"

It can be different for each of us

It may be a religious icon or a wondrous
place that we visit

Or simply an important recurring
memory from our past



Are Your Joints Well Tonight?

To the tune of “Are You Lonesome Tonight?”

lyrics by Gloria B. Duane

$\frac{3}{4}$; **Key of A**

Are your joints well tonight? Can you climb up 3 flights?
Can you still swing rackets with a might?
Can you still bend down low? Can you still touch those toes?
Can you still lace those shoes on the go?
Do your knees crick crack crick crack sitting down or up?
Do your knuckles keep growing and not straighten up?
Do you need Aspirin?
Or is it Naproxen?
Tell me dear, maybe Ibuprofen?

Are your joints well tonight? Can you stand up with spr ht?
Can you get up from bed quick and light?
Can you still walk and skip? Can you still run, not slip?
Can you scratch your back itch with a zip?
Does your neck crick crack crick crack when turning around?
Did your shoulder get frozen when you tried to lift?
Does your back give you pain?
Does it shoot down like lightning?
Tell me dear, do you need massaging?

Can you hear me alright? Do you need me to shout?
Extra hearing aid battery might?
Is it just your eyesight? or you need extra light?
When the words seem so blurry at night?
Does your memory stray
To that bright wedding day, but forget what I told you, just moments away
Is your blood pressure up? And your HDL down?
Tell me dear, are we all getting there?



What Is The Writer's Guild?

by Ed Vilade

The Writers Guild provides aspiring Riderwood writers opportunities to expand their writing skills through reading their stories, memoirs and poetry to other writers. Other members then offer critiques, if requested. Selected entries are then compiled into a periodic publication, *Tales from Riderwood*. The group meets every fourth Monday from 3 to 4 PM in the Montgomery Station classroom. All are welcome.

History

The exact beginnings of the Writers Guild are lost to us. We believe that the Guild has been in existence at Riderwood for at least 15 years. When Martha Robinson, long-time editor-in-chief, became incapacitated and then died in 2016, all previous records of the Guild were lost. Guild member Ed Vilade took over and has been editor-in-chief for more than eight years.

Tales from Riderwood

The Writers Guild sponsors *Tales from Riderwood*, available at Front Desks. About 1500 copies of each issue are printed. Hundreds of residents have chronicled in this publication the triumphs, challenges, influences, people and

events that have shaped their personal and professional lives and experiences.

Riderwood residents can submit for publication written Personal Experience Stories, Memoirs, Biographical Sketches, Essays, Short Fiction, Original Poetry, Photos and Art. Prose submissions are limited to 850 words, and poetry to about 200 words.

In the earliest days of the Writers Guild, *Tales* was designed and laid out by a professional graphic designer and produced by a professional printing house. Riderwood

management decided to discontinue the funding for professional design and production. Since then, *Tales* has been edited by Ed Vilade, designed and produced by volunteer graphic designers and printed on Riderwood copiers. Riderwood residents Rita Hofbauer and, lately, Michele Morgan have designed and produced issues. Michele is retiring, so that future issues will be produced by a volunteer to be determined. Anyone interested, and capable, should contact Ed Vilade (see the masthead of this publication for further information).

All are welcome to join us!
The Writer's Guild meets every
fourth Monday of the month
from 3 to 4 PM in the
Montgomery Station classroom.

