

“Modern men are mistaking the means of life for its purpose.
In order to possess the means, they are sacrificing the goal.”

Reikichi Kita and Kiichi Nagaya

“The only devils in the world are the ones running around in our hearts,
and that’s where all our battles should be fought.”

Mahatma Gandhi

"Without human action, Buddha’s blessing not much effective.”

HH Dalai Lama

“This is a world of action, and not for moping and groaning in.”

Charles Dickens

"It is not the same thing to speak of bulls as to be in the bull ring."

Spanish proverb

“I’m a little skeptical about so-called ‘blessing.’ Blessing must come from our own action!”

HH The Dalai Lama

* The Most Important Page of This Great Free Book *

I'm betting that you're going to love this free book. When you want to see more by the same author, there is plenty of it. Doug "Ten" Rose's other books, *Fearless Puppy On American Road* and *Reincarnation Through Common Sense*, can be sampled & purchased at www.fearlesspuppy.org in both print and ebook fashion. They can also be found on Amazon (where they have twenty-three 5* reviews!) as print and Kindle, and Smashwords.com has *Fearless Puppy*—or ask your local bookstore to order them.

Why am I giving away the very saleable, high quality, and extremely entertaining work in *Voices Of Reason From The Ends Of The World* for free? I want you to enjoy the reading, of course, but the main purpose of all my writing is to help increase wisdom and common sense by financially sponsoring more wisdom teachers, beginning with but not exclusive to Buddhist Nuns and Monks. ALL the profits from sales of my books go there. Anyone who has seen the news recently knows that our world desperately needs a whole lot more wisdom and common sense. The Fearless Puppy project to increase those much-needed commodities is all very well explained near the end of this book in the chapter "Why the Dog Soldier Trilogy is Being Written." It is also well explained from another angle and with more specifics at the website.

As you enjoy this free book, please spread it around as far and wide as possible. When more people read it, more people will want to see the other two 5* books, and then more wisdom will be sponsored.

After reading this book, please go to the website and buy the other ones. They are as good as this one, but longer—and they are high adventure stories, not essays. There is a brief description on the next page. You'll not only get great reading for yourself, you will also be helping your family, your friends, and everyone else on your planet by sponsoring wisdom teachers. It is the best deal in literary history, folks, and you're in on the ground floor! It's a free book followed by an option to buy two more 5* books, with the profits from your purchase price going to improve the planet.

Enjoy the show! Please take the next step.

Many thanks.

Be well,

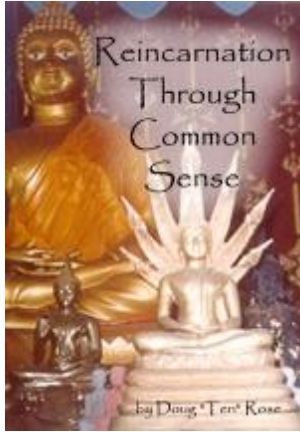
Tenzin (Doug "Ten" Rose)

p.s. Besides being able to buy both *Fearless Puppy on American Road* and *Reincarnation Through Common Sense* at www.fearlesspuppy.org, you can also find some sample chapters from each book there as well as project details, news articles about previous projects, TV and radio interviews, and a lot more!

* ALL AUTHOR PROFITS SPONSOR WISDOM PROFESSIONALS AND THEIR EFFORTS *

“Once you accept the universe as being something expanding into an infinite nothing which is something, wearing stripes with plaid is easy.”

Albert Einstein



Reincarnation Through Common Sense

Reincarnation Through Common Sense is a book of stripes and plaid in the most entertaining sense of Einstein's words. Westerners have written many books about living in Asian temples. None are like this true story.

The rural Buddhist Monks and Nuns of a forest temple in Asia adopt a very troubled soul from Brooklyn, New York. He can't speak the language. No one there speaks English. He is penniless, has no intention of studying spiritual discipline, and is amusingly psychotic. This author is not a theology student! He is nonetheless given access to the ancient roots and spiritual wings that define the Wisdom Professionals who have rescued him. He redefines life and reports the details in a manner so intimate and natural that you'll think you are having coffee on a barstool in the temple with him. You may laugh a lot on your way to Nirvana! You may say "Ouch!" a few times, too.

Magic is redefined as objective reality and common sense. Spirit is presented as a functional friend, without the fairy dust. Moods run from adventurous psychosis through enlightened bliss as writing styles run through ancient prose to sharp modern internal rhyme. The main character's life runs through death into reincarnation without ever leaving his body—and he describes this process in vivid terms and living color.

This down to earth treatment gives a clear view in simple terms of truths that we more often find fossilized within concretized symbols beneath rusting metaphor. For an experience unique in comedic drama, spirituality, adventure, and sheer creativity, buy and read *Reincarnation Through Common Sense*.

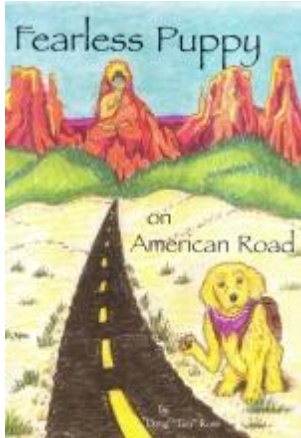
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direct links from our website to print and ebook or ask your local bookstore

www.fearlesspuppy.org/m_reincarnation.htm

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Fearless Puppy on American Road

This amazing (mostly) true story reads like a fantasy. *Fearless Puppy on American Road* is a transfictional self-help book. It is both comedic and dramatic—a butt kicking, page-turning adventure story that makes deep spiritual impressions.

Within this book you will meet several saintly Tibetan Lamas. You will also meet a man who is his own uncle, specialists in smoke, mirrors, and invisibility, spirited sex, oxygen orgasms, heavenly Hell's Angels, phony preachers, domestic violence/domestic solutions, racist killers in America, Canadian race wars, Native American wise men, a bit of Christian ethics and Jewish ritual, angelic witches, benevolent heroin addicts, magical birds, an all-lesbian band playing a rock concert for the deaf, the musician raised by multi-ethnic golden-hearted prostitutes, martial artists battling neo-Nazis, the modern-day Robin Hood, and many other strangely wonderful people.

Buckle your seatbelt tightly, take a deep breath, and enjoy the ride. Fearless Puppy runs on rocket fuel!

**Please forward this through your contact and friend lists, and to anyone you think might be interested. Help us raise funds through book sales to sponsor Wisdom Professionals. Your effort is important! Thank you.*

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direct links from our website to print and ebook or ask your local bookstore

www.fearlesspuppy.org/m_fearless.htm

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*Doug "Ten" Rose may be the biggest smartass as well as one of the wisest and most entertaining survivors of the hitchhiking adventurers that used to cover America's highways. He is the author of *Fearless Puppy on American Road* and *Reincarnation Through Common Sense*, has survived heroin addiction and death, and is a graduate of over a hundred thousand miles of travel without ever driving a car, owning a phone, or having a bank account. Ten Rose and his work are a vibrant part of the present and future as well as an essential remnant of a vanishing breed.*

Voices Of Reason
From The
Ends Of The World

BY DOUG "TEN" ROSE

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Or see our website at:
www.fearlesspuppy.org

All author profits are donated to funding *Wisdom Professionals*.

“When you are convinced that all exits are blocked, either you take to believing in miracles or you stand still like the Hummingbird. The miracle is that the honey is right under your nose, only you were too busy searching elsewhere to realize it. The worst is not death but being blind, blind to the fact that everything about life is in the nature of the miraculous.”

Henry Miller

“Imagine we are astronauts who have crashed into the moon. We look across the vastness of space and see the beautiful blue Earth. But we can’t get back because our ship is damaged. All we can do is look at that brilliant blue beautiful orb in the black sky and dream of being home.

“But suppose we managed to fix our ship, and landed back home. How would we feel when we first set foot upon the Earth? What would we observe and savor? How intensely would we experience the sights and smells, the flavors, the feeling of a gentle rain?

“*That’s* how we should walk on the Earth with each step.”

A Walking Exercise from Thich Nhat Hanh

“Focusing on what is going right
instead of what could go wrong
can repair a life in an instant.”

Tenzin Karma Trinley

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About the Author

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The mother of these books is Alatheia Windsong Daniels who was previously managing editor of the Cherokee based Good Medicine Society publication *The Flowering Tree*. We've traded several thousand emails and spent several thousand hours together—on the Internet. Alatheia is bashful, and is probably smart to be so. If she weren't reclusive, guys would be hovering around her like bees at a honeycomb. Windsong is the most diligent, patient, focused, strong, and warmhearted woman I have never met.

The late, great Joann Benjamin Kaplan was kind enough to put up with me for several of my craziest years. That was four decades ago. She gave several valuable contributions to this book much more recently.

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Speaking of friends and teachers, I have had the incredible luck to know some folks who are both at the same time. H.H. Seonaidh John Perks and The Venerable Julia Perks of Celtic Buddhism have each lent me brain cells when my supply was dwindling. They are awesome examples of what the saintly can do with their lives while still remaining approachable and unpretentious human beings.

The greater Brattleboro, Vermont community and everybody in it just plain rocks! They embody what it should feel like in a comparatively sane and certainly progressive small city. It has been a great privilege for me to live in Brattleboro, and a great benefit to be surrounded by its residents.

The diligent proofreading efforts and friendships of www.iBrattleboro.com's own Lise LePage (and Chris Grotke) have been a great help in making this book readable. Many thanks also to the insightful literary minds and kindness of Leslie Jacob Sommers, Will Quinn, and Cheryl Ray. Deep gratitude goes to the generous efforts of Glen Gill, Debra and Cody Oakland, Lindsay Cobb, and Susan Sanborn.

Last, and the exact opposite of least, my literally undying gratitude goes out to anyone whose main concern is the well being of all living creatures as a whole—and especially to those people who have mustered the strength, courage, and invested the energy to do something

constructive with that concern. Sure, there are a few like The Dalai Lama and Mother Teresa who always come to mind first, but there are much less famous examples to be seen every day. More folks than you might imagine have a concern-for-us-all.

These are the people who remind us how to live free of pointless fear and bullshit, whether it is our own or someone else's.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my teachers and their teachings. I have been lucky enough to receive important and often life saving education from a collection of folks varied enough to include several wonderful and highly respected modern day spiritual teachers, revered masters of several disciplines, Tibetan Lamas, Native American wise folk, Jewish and Christian scholars, and Southeast Asian Buddhist Nuns and Monks—as well as wise hookers, junkies, winos, construction and factory workers, truckers, retailers, Deadheads, panhandlers, single mothers, grandmas caring for infants, saints having a bad day, and the odd jackass performing saintly deeds.

In a million different ways they all gave me the same three pieces of information.

- ❖ A person who is a self and not a self-image, who stays in the present tense without being fragmented by memories of the past or by worries for the future, that is a well centered self without being selfishly self-centered—that person can accomplish anything.
- ❖ You've got to be a friend to have a friend. Be a great friend to yourself. Then be just as great a friend to the world. The world will be your great friend in return. What you get from life depends on who you are and what you do, not on what you want.
- ❖ "I" actually means "We." The singular self that we spend most of our energy thinking about may be a necessary frame of reference to bolster the ego strength needed for our individual survival, but it gets way too much attention. To stay in touch with who we *really* are, and with the happiness that comes to us with that realization, it is essential to approach life as if we are part of a vast ocean, not just a lone human drop.

Introductory Hope

Some of this book was written while I lived in a Buddhist Temple in Thailand. Other parts were written in much less hospitable places in Asia. Yet other sections were written in Costa Rica, and others in several different parts of America.

All of these places, like the writing that came out of them, share more similarities than differences—and they each offered similar experiences. All these different cultures made a couple of things very obvious to me.

1—Every place has a lot of nice people and a few assholes in it. Even the assholes can be nice people sometimes. It seems that the nice folks occasionally act like assholes, too.

2—Many folks make life harder for themselves than it has to be. Some make it a lot harder. There are easier solutions to most problems than people choose to use.

I hope that everyone reading this book finds good entertainment, information that will lead them to a better solution for at least one of their problems, and a way to have at least a bit more patience with and compassion for the assholes in their world.

Chapter 1

Stalking the Truth a Few Lines at a Time

“Fix reason firmly in her seat,
and call to her tribunal every fact, every opinion.
Question with boldness even the existence of a God;
because, if there be one,
he must more approve of the homage of reason
than that of blindfolded fear.”

Thomas Jefferson

The Temple Dog Barks at Interpreters, Translators, and Followers

I'm writing this in the company of Buddhist Monks and Nuns in a Southeast Asian Temple. As well as being surrounded by Nuns and Monks, I am also surrounded by several dozen dogs of all sizes, colors, and breeds. My robed roommates have rescued these animals, and me, from the intense cruelty of steaming Asian streets. These dogs, and of course the Temple folks themselves, are a joy to be with. They never blame the society, their moms, the government, the Boogeyman, or the anti-Buddha for any problems they may suffer. They accept personal responsibility for their own thoughts and actions.

Buddha himself was not a member of any of the many schools of Buddhism. Jesus was neither Catholic nor Protestant. The following inscription was on the hilt of Mohammed's sword: "Forgive him who wrongs thee. Join him who cuts thee off. Do good to him who does evil to thee, and speak truth although it be against thyself."

Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, and others like them were damn fine people and exceptional examples of productive spirituality. I have no quarrel with anyone's God, teacher, or prophet, but *followers* can be fairly dangerous people at times. *Translators* or *interpreters* can be even more so.

Everybody talks about truth as if it is Ramen noodles and they have a case of it in the kitchen cabinet, but the truth is that what we tend to call truth is usually defined by whose truth it is. The mundane truth by which we judge the world is subjective. It is dependent upon the angle from which it is being seen by the person who is seeing it.

Symbolic references are often used in spiritual teachings. That's no problem. The problems arise when interpreters and translators concretize those symbols into material "truth" or "fact," and followers then treat that information as unbendable law. Many followers pay more attention to the illusory benevolence of inherited superstition than they pay to fostering a functional benevolence within themselves.

For the first five hundred years of Buddhism, there were no material images of the Buddha—no statues, no paintings. There were good reasons for this.

Historical, literal, fundamentalist, concretized interpretations of symbols make it too easy for us to abuse spiritual mechanisms, and to escape responsibility for our own development and the well being of the world. This always ends badly. For yea, no lord can keepeth dry that person who will pisseth into the wind.

Translators and interpreters often reconfigure great wisdom teachings to fit their own ignorance and selfish motives—or the ignorance and selfish motives of the political and economic forces that ally with and employ them. Darkness sometimes co-opts the light. What we have inherited as "the will of God" may have as little to do with any God's will as Wall Street has to do with integrity in finance, or snack cakes have to do with nutrition.

The term "spin doctors" may be a recently invented one, but the concept of readjusting the truth is nearly as ancient as the wisdom these vipers disassemble—and then rebuild to fit their own purposes. Many of today's interpretations of "The Way" and "The Truth" resemble the

originals about as much as the Christianity of Hitler or the Spanish Inquisition resembled the original doctrine. Some of the people who know Christ is the answer must have forgotten what the question was. This forgetting-the-question syndrome is certainly not exclusive to Christians who have gone astray. Many followers of every faith on Earth have been way too trusting of the dogma presented them, and some of the people who present it.

Interpreters package and then sell, rent, or impose upon us artificially flavored illusions of truth, salvation, enlightenment, and happiness that are built upon *their* goals. That twisted information and those errant goals are often very different from those of the original teachers from whom these interpreters borrow their moral authority.

Following our own inner guidance will yield better results than following the village idiot. Neither Buddha nor Jesus was waiting for a Buddha or a Jesus to come solve their personal problems or those of humanity. Whatever we need is within us. The job of uncovering and constructively utilizing it is ours to do.

Ripe for spiritual paths that fit neatly into our fast food/consumer mentality, so-called civilized humanity is glad to pay the bill that its false prophets have presented to us. Many people believe that we can rent an available-on-demand and conveniently disposable synthetic substitute for decency and wisdom instead of working towards those qualities, earning them, sustaining them, and then constructively implementing them. The interpreters, the translators, the forces that ally with or employ them, and the enforcers that protect those interests continue to collect the rent for themselves while they return hollow benefits to us.

There are people who will tell you that they are on a fast track to Jesus, Jehovah, Allah, Buddha, or Wherever. They may want you to pay for more information from them, buy certain products, fight “holy” wars at their request, or donate other parts of your mind and life to them. We all know of televangelists and politicians who make a robber baron’s fortune by convincing some of us that giving them money can buy us love and happiness—but a few greedy clowns on TV are just the tip of the iceberg.

We are the iceberg. The world might be full of Mother Teresas and Einsteins if the best of humanity’s notions were given proper attention by each of us. Many folks that wouldn’t trust an average stranger with a single dollar don’t mind trusting a politician or preacher full of vacuum-packed hope and bullshit with serious money and even their lives. Many people are too tired, misinformed, or stressed out to access on their own psychospiritual existence. Others are convinced that their personal spiritual maintenance is a job beyond their ability—so instead of working at it themselves, they trust that responsibility to TV personalities who they will never meet. The result? Instead of a world full of Mother Teresas and Einsteins, we have an overabundance of dull, warped, frustrated spiritual slackers that never bothered to research where the road is but are nonetheless pissed off about not reaching the destination! Go figure!

I have to say it again. Following our own inner guidance would certainly yield better results than following the clamor of our village idiots.

Yes, it does require less strength to trust or blame something outside of one’s self than it takes to recognize one’s own responsibility, find one’s own faults, and change a detrimental emotional flaw. Unfortunately this easy-road approach is bullshit.

Whatever that Bigger Spiritual Something Else out there may be, if we are distracted by biased dogma and the hidden agendas of the greedy interests that hide behind lies, concretized symbols, and rusted metaphor, we will never get in touch with that Something Else.

The move toward being at home with our own unstained intelligence may be as simple as making a clear-minded decision to do so. Making the effort to be more aware of what we do and don't want our brains to absorb and act upon has to yield results. Anyone consistently moving in the direction of clarified intelligence (or anything else, for that matter!) will have to eventually reach it. Try it! Point yourself somewhere, start moving, and don't change direction. You will get to that somewhere. The mind moves toward the destination we plan for it just as surely as feet move us across a room.

The greatest purpose of our greatest teachers may be to show us how, in the long run, to be our own greatest teacher.

Does all this sound abstract, contradictory, weird, un-interpretable, obtuse, un-translatable, and maybe even bizarre? I hope so. I planned it that way.

I wouldn't want to be mistaken for a fucking interpreter or translator myself!

God Forbid! I'd rather be a dog.

“The common error of ordinary religious practice
is to mistake the symbol for the reality,
to look at the finger pointing the way
and then to suck it for comfort rather than follow it.”

Alan Watts

“Having failed to distinguish thoughts from things,
we then fail to distinguish words from thoughts.
We think that if we can label a thing we have understood it.”

Maha Sthavira Sangarakshita

“You can tell you created God in your image
when it turns out God hates the same people you do.”

Anne Lamott

Debt / Security / High Finance

I've figured out what security is all about. It won't come from blood-sucking institutions that bankrupt your country and leave no solution to its destitution. The needs of their greed continue to feed on the dying carcass of the paradigm they gave birth to and then caused to decay. These evil pigs will never save your day.

Those that you love and those who love you, and community members with loyalty who would never throw you overboard or keep a financial sword of Damocles hanging over your head—these loved ones are where to keep your assets and liabilities. They do not thrive on your dread like the banksters who would leave you for dead in the street. Real friends build mutual victories and guard against mutual defeat.

Any community can be more cooperative than competitive. A *real* community, whether it all lives in one tree or is spread internationally, will not allow greedy vipers to cause the demise of the vexed. Anyone with intelligence knows they might well be next to feel the adverse effects of the disenfranchisement the vipers offer.

“Stay awake and aware,” our teachers advise us. Don't be fooled by verbal disguises! Evil's language gets softer as tactics get harder. But life improves quickly as people get smarter.

(Simple potentials work well as a starter! We can circumvent some greed with simple barter!)

Cigarettes

Masochism's management team. Noxious fumes and poison gasses that would be considered war crimes if used in times of combat. In a communal suicide, everyone lights up together.

We would run away quickly from a burning building, but we set our own human houses on fire from the inside, leaving sludge, soot, and ashes behind. We cough up the remnants of what used to be vibrant human energy and tissue that took a long time to build. That tissue and energy helped us to breathe life in deeply. Now it flops out and suffocates like a fish fatally lost on dry land.

Automatic repetition. No thought. No thought of, no awareness by, and certainly no concern for either the primary victim or the innocent bystanders that we turn into fellow victims. Those bystanders never consented.

We smoke without care, blatantly looking truth in the face and calling it a liar. We are junkies, folks, and stupid ones at that. At least heroin gets you high—and most heroin addicts will admit that they have a problem. We are junkies who bullshit ourselves.

What are you going to do about it?

I've got a better question.

What am I going to do about it?

“Jah made the Ganja, the devil made tobacco.”

Bob Marley

Jah Rules / Jah's Rules

There are similarities between some of the Rasta/Raggae ideas and the highest spiritual concepts of any religion or philosophy. A few of those similarities follow.

“It’s about burning certain things out our minds
to live in one harmony.”

Bob Marley

No matter where you go, there are good people with honest concern for something other than their own little selves. No matter where you go, there are also people who are too hypnotized by fear and bullshit to care about anything but their own insecurity.

Whether selfish or well intended, many folks have very little communication with their *actual* selves. They often blindly cling to empty distractions while burying their innermost thoughts under all the worries and concerns that the modern world offers.

As worries about mundane things that don’t matter expand, separation from actual self grows. Constant attention to veneer-depth, self-referencing concerns allow no time or space in the mind for more meaningful concerns. Empathy can become a casualty if it is not exercised.

Focus on meaningless choices, such as which cell phone plan saves us a dollar a month or what some soap opera character will do on tomorrow’s show, serves a twisted purpose. It keeps people from feeling the real boredom, sadness, and pain connected to serious questions such as why their lives often seem paper thin and unsatisfying; why anti-depressant drugs are so popular; the confusion about how to live more fully, happily, and actively; and how to positively affect the future.

The “meaning of life” may not be so complicated or mysterious. Our purpose may simply be to increase the amount of living we do. We can easily and instantly increase the percentage of ourselves that we actively bring to our lives and the world just by decreasing our attention to bullshit. Giving attention to productive, constructive, positive ideas leads to constructive positive action.

Constructive positive action is a self-perpetuating machine. We feel good when we do good, and that makes us want to do some more good. As we move onward and upward, repetitive goodness becomes more and more of an integrated character trait—a habit. Good habits make good people. Good people make good planets.

Equality, love, happiness, peace, and justice are important enough to base a life upon. These are not just impotent rhetorical ideas. They are not light conversation to delude ourselves with while we exercise our lower options in life and watch the planet turn into a junkyard.

The bonus built into the system is that when we work for what is beneficial to everyone, we always benefit ourselves.

Strength, Discipline, and Power

I am imagining the difference between growing up in this Asian Temple and growing up in a major American city.

Growing up as a boy in Brooklyn, New York, *strength* was defined as something used to kick other people's asses in a street fight or knock them down in a football game. *Discipline* meant you were going to get your ass kicked by authority. *Power* was defined as something big armies used to conquer small armies.

That is what was taught. That's what we learned. These diseased notions were as much a part of our education as reading, writing, and arithmetic. They were carved into us at home, in school, through TV programming, and on the street. Funny how a young mind often absorbs and believes anything it gets exposed to.

"Funny" is probably the wrong word.

It has been very easy for me to make rapid progress against these three twisted interpretations while living in this Temple. Temple logic doesn't require remembering three different things. Power, strength, and discipline are all funneled into and used for one purpose—positive control of the self. Action, speech, and even thought all fall in line behind this singular self-control.

This simple focus on the advantages of self control makes repairing warped definitions and concepts easy. It suggests the recognition, not denial, of our less than positive attributes and desires. When recognized, they can then be sublimated. The word "sublimate," especially in the lingo of psychiatry and psychology, means to divert, modify, or otherwise change an instinctual impulse into a higher or culturally more acceptable activity. For example, "I wanted to kick his ass but sublimated the anger and built a house to burn off the energy" or, "Monks and Nuns sublimate their sexual energy into developing compassionate thoughts that can be directed equally to all beings, and without any sexual nuance or influence attached."

Becoming master of one's self makes life a happier experience for that self and everyone who comes in contact with it. "Mastering oneself" means conquering personal history and social conditioning well enough so that the past isn't sucking the life out of our present. We can be *all here, all the time*.

Thinking about the Temple folks' logical approach regarding strength, discipline, power, and the training that reinforces that logic gave me a brilliant idea. Every baby born to our next few generations will spend the first five years of life in a Temple.

Yes, it goes against my idea of free will, too, but hear me out for just a minute. Two or three, maybe four generations of this, tops, and we're out of the woods.

The improper definition and use of strength, power, and discipline is responsible for all of war and much of crime. It may take only twenty or thirty years of replacing primary education's negative definitions with more positive ones for us to see many tragedies disappear. The new norms in teaching might state that real strength is used internally to resist performing any harmful actions, discipline is used to stabilize that strength as a consistent character trait, and

power is the skillful and courageous ability to make sure that positive changes grow from that strength and discipline.

With baby in the Temple, parents wouldn't have to wake up several times a night to diaper and feed, so adults would get more rested and peaceful, too. Monks and Nuns love babies and children. Shared work is a way of life for them. They could easily adjust to rotating childcare shifts that would keep everyone well rested, especially by the second or third generation down the road when there would no doubt be more Monks and Nuns around to do the job. The job description, the very life purpose of these people, is to generate loving kindness and wisdom. How do you think baby is going to react to that?

By the third or fourth generation of this process, jails will have been prettied up and turned into nurseries and kindergartens. The former war budget could now be spent on...well, you know—the usual Utopian notions.

Is it too weird an idea for you? It's too weird for me! Of course I'm joking about drafting babies, but there's a very serious consideration within the joke.

How about popularizing a curriculum of emotional intelligence that parents who want happier children can teach to their young'ns at home during those earliest and most formative years? Why not put teachers who are specially trained in emotional intelligence into pre-schools, kindergartens, and regular public schools? How about including some instruction regarding the benefits of cooperation versus competition, the advantages of compassion and forgiveness, and how to do well in business while maintaining integrity into every child's education? These concepts could be built right into academic reading, writing, and arithmetic stuff. The approach can be implemented with primary focus on a global ethic that respects all religions while using a secular approach that does not require incorporating specific symbols or dogma.

Wouldn't this be just as easy, and immeasurably better for society and every child in it, than teaching young people how to dominate within the pecking order or deaden creativity for conformity's sake?

“Impractical,” you say. “It'd never work.” “People aren't like that.”

I have to agree with part of that answer.

People aren't like that.

That's because our dumb asses weren't educated
in an emotionally intelligent environment.

Are You a Hard-On?

Are you a hard-on? I am sometimes. The end of the last page is a good example. Sorry. Calling us all dumb asses didn't help, did it?

Professional help is being sought. None of the other folks in this Temple seem to be hard-ons. I'm going to watch them more closely and try to learn. I don't want to be a hard-on anymore. Insulting and annoying people isn't going to make any friends. Even the most brilliant statement or observation is not going to accomplish its purpose if that statement is presented in a hard way. Polite and respectful communication always works better—unless you are one of the very few people who can do hard as well as George Carlin, Richard Pryor, Mark Twain, Oscar Wilde, Ambrose Bierce, Bill Maher, Jon Stewart, Stephen Colbert, Bill Hicks, Lewis Black, Doug Stanhope, or Chris Rock.

Sometimes I think a harsh thought only to find myself apologizing minutes later for the harsh words or actions that were spawned by that harsh thought.

I often have even more hard and harsh thoughts toward myself than I do towards others! Yes—I'm hard on myself!

Putting those two pieces of information together made it easy to figure out that being hard-on myself has become sort of a habit, a pattern, a character trait. After spending decades of being hard on myself, I too often automatically deal with other people in the same hard and harsh manner.

I know a lot of folks who do this.

The sad part is that we are, for the most part, intelligent and concerned people. We can come up with some pretty good observations and ideas that could be helpful to others, if these observations and ideas were communicated in a decent manner.

But no one wants to listen to a hard-on.

There's only one kind of communication a hard-on is good for.

That's a wonderful thing, but I don't want to be limited to it alone.

“Tolerance and patience should not be read as signs of weakness.
They are signs of strength.”

The Dalai Lama

Don't Tell a Cow You Want Eggs. Don't Ask a Chicken for Milk.

It would be fun to say, "That's an old Asian folk saying." The truth is, I just made it up. But this popular idea is probably, in some form or another, among the old folk sayings of nearly every culture in history. No matter how it is phrased, the concept offers a solid common sense that is beyond debate.

We have all seen this point demonstrated.

Certain things just aren't going to happen. A clear mind will recognize these things and act appropriately. But folks with a film of attachment over their eyes often see things as they want to see them instead of seeing things as they are. This can cause some very inappropriate actions.

No one ever constructed a building while sitting in a chair, went swimming on dry land, or convinced a frog to write a sonnet. Any and all of our delusional thoughts that lead to ridiculous actions will hold similar results. We don't get eggs from a chicken because we want eggs. We get eggs from a chicken because chickens produce eggs.

For further example, anyone deciding to use his or her head to crack a rock because he doesn't want to walk all the way to the garage for a hammer will end up with a headache, a hospital bill, and a rock without a scratch on it. If the same person first takes a deep breath and stops to think about cracking rocks for just a few seconds, it will be easy for him to realize that a heavy hammer is the way to go and worth the trip.

Many have suffered metaphorical stitches in the head while figuring this out. I was one of them, but the obvious is finally becoming clear to me. The smartest approach to almost anything is a practical and realistic one. Wisdom Professionals show us just how beneficial it can be to have decisions come from a mind that is clear and calm. The consistent work they do toward building and maintaining mental clarity makes a lot of sense in that affecting one's own mind is a job that can be done with success—whereas no amount of trying to affect a cow's mind is going to yield even a single egg. Eons of coercing chickens will not convince them to produce milk.

No progress has ever come from insisting that others make changes they are not ready, willing, or able to make. Nor will progress come from distorting our perception of reality in an attempt to fit an unrealistic desire, or from trying to change circumstances external to us that cannot be changed. Leaning intelligence into a situation is always more productive than making believe we can bend reality away from it.

Save yourself some pain, my friend. If you ever decide to crack a rock with your head, please think about it for a while first. I hope that after you examine the situation a bit, you'll go find a hammer for help. It took fifty years for me to learn how to patiently reach for the practical instead of grabbing at the desirable with a mind fogged by blind impulse. That should embarrass me, but it doesn't. I'm having so much fun breaking rocks and other obstacles out of my way without suffering a headache that I don't have time to be embarrassed.

Mediating The Media

I have worked very long and hard at writing, and then selling, *Fearless Puppy on American Road* and *Reincarnation Through Common Sense* because all author profits sponsor Wisdom Teachers. It has been a lot of effort for no pay, but I believe very strongly in the quality of the books, and of course in the cause—as you can tell by the way I always spell Wisdom Teachers with capital letters.

Promotional processes are less fun than the writing process. They include, among many other things, interviews. There are several places on the Internet to find lists of radio and TV interviewers. These interviewers want to discuss certain topics and are looking for folks who have ideas and information that fit into those categories. There are also lists of newspaper, e-mag, and print magazine reporters looking for information on topics they have either been assigned by their editors or have chosen to freelance.

I'm grateful to all the folks who organize this and make it easier for media people to find the information they want. Their lists also make it easier for people with a story to find a venue that allows them to tell that story.

But I have to admit to needing a stiff drink or two after every trip through one of these lists. I look at them in the same way I look at a dog that is eating dried turds out of the cat box or rolling in long-dead skunk remains. Sometimes one shower isn't enough to wash away the memory. Most interview topics listed are mind-numbing drivel. What our media feeds its public portrays our world as Open Mike Night gone wild at the corner of Tequila and Zanex.

Now, of course, I'm not talking about the "regular news." Not much of what is on these lists pertains to that. The talking heads that color our perceptions of staged wars, real fires and car crashes, Emmy award-eligible politics, predictable corruption, illusory economics, selectively reported/racially profiled criminal activity, and other macabre distractions have their scripts composed by greater powers.

No, I'm talking about the groundwork that mediates our psychological landscape—the mind melting goo that softens our brains up enough so that we can eventually fall prey to the bigger stuff. The reporters on these lists seem, for the most part, to be collecting the type of information that we find in popular magazines, tabloids, the sillier talk shows, and the so-called "reality" shows.

[Calling All Women Who Struggle With Excessive Sweating!](#)
(CBS Television Distribution)

[Pet Parents Quotes for Ladies' Home Journal \(Ladies' Home Journal\)](#)

[Most Unusual Concierge Requests \(National Publication\)](#)

These are not bizarrely different or unusually inane listings! They are very ordinary.

So many things in the world need attention. Bullshit is not one of them. Yet it seems that this sort of nonsense gets much of our daily attention, while productive matters that could actually make life better starve in obscurity. Where are the reporters who ask for information from experts on cooperation versus competition? Emotional intelligence? How to live better with others? How to live better with ourselves? How to upgrade health and happiness in the

workplace and in the home? Where are all the eager investigative beavers that gather valuable information about the advantages of using basic golden-rule morality as business ethics? Why love and compassion are so important in every venue?

They are not to be found on the most popular media lists. This bothers me. So I'm starting to write to a few of these young reporters every day. I pick the ones looking for the most ridiculously functionless content and send them each the letter below.

This may irritate a few people and will probably get me blocked from a listing service or two. That's OK. The Law (of Karma) works in mysterious ways! Maybe out of all the letters I let fly, a few will land on the right reporters who take it to heart. Maybe those few will go on to higher ground, leave the bullshit behind, and begin to research, cover, and uncover material of conscience and meaning. They may do this in an entertaining and conscious manner that will be a wonderful catalyst for the growth of world wisdom. Stranger things have happened! No one knows where the next Deepak Chopra or George Carlin will come from.

What everyone does know is that if we keep eating informational turds out of the cultural cat box and rolling around in the stench of destructive programming, we're going to get even sicker—and anyone who reads a newspaper, watches TV, or listens to radio knows that we're already sick enough.

Want to join the effort? Send the letter below or anything like it to an appropriate reporter, DJ, interviewer, editor, station manager, or wherever you think it fits.

We know politicians don't listen to the public voice, but maybe people who aren't getting such a high price for sacrificing their integrity will. I hope we can reach some.

OPEN LETTER TO MEDIA FRIENDS

Hello, My Friend!

Please don't misunderstand. I'm not writing to tell you what you should or shouldn't do or be. I'm no smarter or better than the next guy, and wouldn't presume the moral authority to tell anyone anything. This is just a request from a friendly fellow citizen.

You are obviously a talented person or you couldn't function at this level. A rewarding responsibility always accompanies that much privilege and ability. One serves no purpose without the other. Your talents and abilities don't go anywhere without this responsibility. They sit paralyzed in a purposeless no man's land, like a car without a road.

If you take the high ground and use your talent to focus on constructive issues, yes, it will help little do-gooder causes like mine and it will help the world at large—but that's just a pleasant byproduct. The real and most basic responsibility is to your self. I doubt that I'm telling you anything you don't already know. Even when you feel great, you can recognize a discomfort inside. You know there's a piece missing, that something is not quite right. That uneasiness is something to be grateful for. It means that you are still in touch with

yourself, and that your heart hasn't altogether glued itself to our culture's asshole yet.

You know you are better than the material you work on. You become shallow or stay frustrated from dealing with nonsense.

In a world that's falling apart on so many fronts, is spending your precious time and intellect doing inane features like this your best move? **The only things that matter anymore are the things that help.** Does this feature help? Does it substantially lighten the suffering of anyone? Will it make anyone happier? Does it make you happier?

We're not talking about conservative/liberal, left/right, pro/anti, believer/non-believer, or any other form of directional, opinionated leaning here. We're just talking about choice of focus. By spending your self on wisdom, justice, and love, happiness, and improvement you become those things. If you spend your time in the cultural dumpster, you'll start to absorb that odor instead.

I look forward to the day when we all scrape the nonsense off of our more meaningful and entertaining concerns. When we do that, things will start to improve drastically. When *you* do that, you will do great things for us all as well as for yourself.

Be well.

Your Pal, Tenzin (Doug "Ten" Rose)

www.fearlesspuppy.org

Chapter 2

Remembering Benevolent Teachers

Our brains regain so many bright features when remembering to thank our benevolent teachers. Time can't destroy what good teachers have taught us, the jewels they have brought us. I owe them much more than this little dedication. Perhaps we all do. They've probably taught you something, too.

Although we don't use it often enough, their wisdom survives in us as ancient good teachings continue to guide us. So many of these lessons show immortal clarity, potency, effectiveness, and no signs of rust.

When tuned to their wisdom, we carry their trust.

I've always wanted to publicly thank my teachers—from George Carlin to John Lennon, Bill Hicks to Martin Luther King, Jesus, Buddha, the wino on the roof, and that wacky guy who used to stalk the elevator of my apartment building.

A chapter on each would be impossible. What can fit follows here.

They All Said This

We've all made a lot of changes during our lives. I have changed from a suicidal lunatic into a happy, intelligent person. Many folks have successfully gone through some changes that were even more severe. This was not done by magic. We were taught how to do this. Our teachers share their intelligent kindness with us just as their teachers taught them. This chain of education links us to the beginning of time.

We can look back past Spiderman, Buddha, Batman, Jesus, and every archetypal hero—back beyond fable and even legend to what could be called the Great Unified Teacher that informs all others. When we do look back, we find that all great teachers have agreed on at least one fundamental truth. That truth is the point of this book, and possibly the most important point ever voiced.

Each and every human
contains the potential for greatness within.
If effort is made to unleash and direct that potential,
incredible things can happen.

Thank You To Mapmakers

You deserve to know of these folks if you haven't already had the pleasure. Once you meet their work, you may want to look more deeply into it.

It always shocks me when people say they can't find good information. There is a lot of it available.

A very popular expression these days says that "life is a journey." If it is, some roads can make the trip more pleasant and direct than others. We can just light out and blindly explore. We can deal with occasionally getting stuck in cul-de-sacs and dead ends while hoping to find the more pleasant roads—or we can read maps that have been left to us by previous explorers. These folks have already paid the price required to familiarize themselves with the worst and best of roads. Following their maps can help us to avoid getting lost. It is always good to know talented mapmakers. If you haven't already met them, it is my pleasure to introduce:

Paramahansa Yogananda, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Lao Tze, Chang Tsu, Milarepa, Stevie Wonder, James Brown, Jim Brown, Bob Dylan, The Grateful Dead, Asanamanda, Saint Francis, Swamiji Ganapathi Sachananda, Daniel (the Peaceful Warrior) Millman, Jackie Robinson, Roberto Clemente, Richard Pryor, Jimi Hendrix, Michael More, Michael Moore, Thich Naht Hahn, Wavy Gravy, Madame Blavatsky, Alice Bailey, Bill Cosby, Dione Fortune, Kurt Vonnegut Jr., Norman Cousins, Bahaulah, Mitch Snyder, Bob Geldorf, Paul Simon, The Beatles (each separately as well as together), Albert Einstein, Caleb Gaeyano, Carlos Santana, Tina Turner, Robert Kennedy Jr. and Sr., Malcolm X, Van (The Man) Morrison, Michael Franti, Joni Mitchell, Luciano, Brother Rashan, Jim Jeffords, Michael Landon, Harvey the Rabbit, Hermes, Hot House Flowers, Che Guevara, Lama Lodru Rinpoche, Lama anyone, Dr. Robert Thurman, Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Rosa Parks, Benito Juarez, Medgar Evers, Tattoo Mike, John Trudell, Chiefs Crazy Horse/Sitting Bull/etc., Caroline Myss, Nelson and Winnie Mandela, Ven. Robina Courtin, Khenpo Tsultrim Tenzin Rinpoche, Pema Choedron, Triza Schultz, Tim Janakos-Kobayashi, Eric Tsiknopoulus, Alice Bailey again, Thomas More, Thomas Merton, Viktoras Kulvinskis, Annie Wigmore, Dick Gregory, Grandfather Eli, Lisa Simpson, James Taylor, Maya Angelou, Soul to Soul with Jazzy Jeff, Jon Stewart, Stephan Colbert, Lewis Black, and Barry White.

We could include the right Friend, Bartender, School Teacher, Minister, and even the right fleeting acquaintance. Even your own breath or heartbeat can point you in the right direction if you pay enough attention to them. Inspiration and guidance are found in the most likely *and* the most unlikely places, if you are looking for them.

There are so many folks who are not famous, people we meet very briefly and whose names we may never know. They too can teach us valuable lessons. A stranger, even an enemy, can have very important information for us.

There's no shortage of help around, amigos.

The events of the following true story prove that.

Danger and Courage

I've lived in several apartment buildings in America. Many of the neighbors became my friends while others seemed best to avoid, but we all took the same elevator.

Jim's apartment was two doors down from a woman I lived with briefly. Jim seemed like someone to avoid. He was downright strange and he appeared to be a few sandwiches short of a full mental picnic.

His full time job was to ask everyone else on the floor to visit him. He waited behind his apartment's front doorway to hear the elevator arriving at our floor. As the elevator door opened, so did his. A foul, bizarre odor that would seal a skunk's nostrils came flowing from his apartment into the hallway, along with a "How you doing? Found something great on the computer videos if you want to see!"

Everyone would nod politely to him but no one would go in. Everyone looked at Jim as a potentially dangerous character, although each of us had a different idea about what that danger might be. I thought Jim was relatively harmless but might start to knock on my door constantly if I was sociable to him just once. Ken, in the apartment next to Jim's, was sure that Jim was evil, crazy, and gay. He thought there was a very real danger of getting chloroformed and cornholed in Jim's lair. (No one visited Ken much either.) Kathy, next door to me, said, "He could be a lunatic or even a rapist!"

As my brief romance in the building was waning and it became clear that the end was near, I started seeing Jim as less of a threat. He never did seem like a chloroforming, cornholing, lunatic rapist to me—and it now seemed I wouldn't be living in the building long enough for him to become much of a nuisance.

I decided to brave the minimal danger and go into Jim's apartment at his next invitation. I guessed that he didn't have any human body parts in the freezer, although the smell coming from his apartment was so bad it could have been fried colon wrapped in two-week jogger socks.

My visit turned out to be an education. Jim taught me more about danger and courage in an hour than I had learned about those things in a lifetime.

For the hundredth time, I got out of the elevator and heard, "How you doing? Found something great on the computer videos if you want to see!"

I shocked both of us by saying "Sure, Jim. But I haven't got long."

"Fafafafine," he stuttered.

The cleanliness of his apartment surprised me.

"How would you define the word *danger*, Ten?" he asked.

Jim obviously hadn't polished his social skills in a while. He didn't realize that such an opening line might send a red flag up in an already suspicious visitor's mind. A little unnerved by the question, I chattered too much of an answer.

“Well, Jim, everyone’s got a different thing that they are scared of and think of as dangerous. Some things are obvious, like a car bearing down on you or a guy shooting a gun at you. Everybody sees that as danger! Then there are the things that are particular to each individual depending on their situation. A wife feels danger to her home because her husband is unfaithful. A person feels the danger of impending suffering and death after being diagnosed with a terminal disease. Then there are a lot of things people think very dangerous that don’t even exist. It may be that *most* of the things people think are dangerous don’t really exist in their lives at all! That would be something like a wife imagining the danger of another woman stealing her husband although her husband is actually faithful, or a person feeling his survival threatened when he just read about a fatal disease.”

Jim became more animated as he responded. “I thought that covered all the choices too! Turns out there are definitions of danger we’ve never considered!”

This conversation happened as soon as I entered Jim’s door. It was getting harder by the minute to know if I had put myself in real or imaginary danger. I couldn’t tell if he was an actual psychotic or just an unusual fellow—until he told me his story.

I found out quickly that Jim was very much more lonely and ill than depraved or dangerous. He was ill with good reason. He was stabbed directly in the heart and barely escaped death during a mugging suffered months earlier, before moving into the building. This episode had some serious psychological as well as physical side effects, as could be expected. Jimmy had locked himself off from a threatening world but was smart enough to know he had a problem, and courageous enough to do something about it. He braved a ferocious fear and threw a line out into the world every time he opened his door to invite someone in. Jim prayed that eventually someone would reel that line in and pull him back into the world. He had gotten along very well with that world before his trauma.

The smell from his house turned out to be a constantly simmering pot of Valerian herb tea. This guy was smart enough to stay away from both pharmaceutical and illegal drugs. “Valerian root may smell like a mixture of foot and ass,” Jim said, “but it’ll calm you down pronto with no addictiveness or side effects!”

Jim was on disability leave from work. His groceries were delivered. The nearly total isolation left him with a computer for a best friend. He was on it more often than not, researching all possible sources of medical and psychological knowledge that might help him heal. Jim had not been able to shake the severe tweaks from his mind yet, but he was certainly working on it.

Jim said, “Look at this!” as he tapped into the Bookmarks section of his computer and popped up a video. He pushed the video ahead to a timing marker that he knew very well. At 55:00 of a video called *The Yogis of Tibet*, Jim gave me some information about danger and courage that stopped my clock.

The punch line that Jim brought me to was an interview with the Dalai Lama, who was talking about his conversations with old Monks and Nuns that were recently released from twenty years of captivity in Chinese prison camps.

The Dalai Lama described the incredibly brutal conditions, as those old victims themselves had recounted the conditions to him. Prisoners were made to break rocks until their arms literally withered. Beatings, sleep deprivation, torture, and many other severe persecutions were

commonplace. The cruelty was heightened by near-starvation. Each prisoner was given a small ball of barley flour for the daily meal. The older Monks would often give their food to the younger Monks in order to strengthen those younger Monks' chances of lengthy survival.

The Dalai Lama said, "I asked the old Monk about his experience. He told that on a few occasions he faced some danger, and I asked him what kind of danger—figuring he must be talking about fear for his very life. The old Monk answered, 'A few times during that twenty-some years I felt in danger of losing compassion for the Communist Chinese prison guards.' "

"Love thy enemy" is an important part of Buddhist ideology. That venerable old Monk embodied this ideal with a power that shattered all my misconceptions of danger and courage.

I had avoided Jim for months. I never expected to be in this potentially dangerous person's company at all—and Jim certainly never seemed like the type of person to seek any groundbreaking wisdom or chill provoking realization from. But what he showed me about danger and courage, by way of his personal example as well as his video, was as powerful and valuable as any insight from any Wisdom Professional could have been.

I may have helped him by stepping into his house and making that first visit, but he paid me back, big time.

We had a few more visits before I left that apartment building. Jim had some more good videos to show me.

One day, I invited him to leave the security of his apartment and enter the safety of mine. Jim hesitated and twitched a bit before he realized that the time had finally come to step out past his own door. He watched a video with my soon-to-be-ex and me.

We've lost touch since, but last I heard Jim and my ex were very happy together. He went back to work. Since meeting Jim, I try to be much less judgmental and much more understanding of people. Jim and his video taught me how valuable those qualities can be.

There's no shortage of help in the world, amigos.

There may be a mapmaker waiting for you around the next corner.

It could be the very next person who says hello.

Once you make sure there are no human body parts in the freezer and that the smell is nothing worse than an herb, you might find that your very own neighbor has a map or two!

No Misunderstandings, Please / What Does Matter

Thank you, Mr. Carlin.

*You brought us laughter, truth, integrity, courage, and conscience—
and you did each of them better than most folks do any one of them.*

Just so there are no misunderstandings, I would like to officially state something right here at the beginning of this section. Almost none of the people (there are a few exceptions) who are complimented here as teachers and influences actually know or ever knew me. I'm not trying to make believe that I am in some kind of intimate buddies club with every genius on Earth, or that I have personally met and had social what-to-do with any of these people. I go to lectures, classes, concerts, get the books, and watch them on the computer, HBO specials, or PBS—just like nearly everyone else who has been smart enough to seek them out or lucky enough to stumble across their information.

I have an active imagination. Even video contact can affect me strongly at times, but that's where the "relationship" ends.

What is the big deal with this meeting-a-famous-person shit, anyway? A very small number of people have become a lot more famous than the rest of us. Sometimes this happens because we admire a person's genius, talent, or merit. But just as often, it happens through no actual accomplishment on the part of the famous person! It often happens because shill marketing and media conglomerates with paper assholes are selling the public an image and an artificial relationship to it. These media and marketing folks work for corporate pimps that collect big bucks from this artificially manufactured hero-worship because this hero-worship results in bizarre purchasing habits on the part of the consumers who have been hypnotized into believing that their imagined connection with the "hero" is concrete, meaningful, and has some connection to the product for sale.

Being famous is no big fucking deal. It is even less of a big deal if your major accomplishment is that you've *met* one of these celebrity heroes, whether they are of the real or artificially manufactured variety. Celebrity itself is often bullshit, and celebrity by association is even more so. There's no end to the respect I have for the people who are mentioned in this chapter, but I wouldn't brag about meeting or knowing them personally (even if I did). Meeting someone means less than a rat's ass.

Brag about meeting, say, Mother Teresa or the Dalai Lama? I don't think so! I'd brag if I spoke and acted as nobly as Mother Teresa or the Dalai Lama!

No, on second thought, I guess I wouldn't.

Regardless, meeting or knowing someone else doesn't make you, yourself, an improved or admirable individual. That happens when you are actually being, doing, or somehow taking part in something admirable.

I feel so strongly about this that the following true story is one of my all time favorite moments in life.

It was a beautiful autumn day in the early 1980s at Hugo's bar in Northampton, Massachusetts. After an all day effort to deplete the world's beer supply, a sudden flash of inspiration came to me. Over the course of the following months, that inspiration developed into a successful statewide charity project. It got a lot of attention and press because it involved high-level politicians, famous musicians, major league sports teams, unions, volunteers who didn't get paid at all, and a hot button issue. Above all, the project went well because none of the money passed through our volunteer group but instead went directly from contributors to very well established and reputable charities. There was no possible question-of-trust factor. (More details are available in the About the Author section at www.fearlesspuppy.org/, if you are interested.)

Several months after the project, I was back at Hugo's, again doing my part to help society drain free of its alcohol content. I made this effort many times during the 1980s. A guy (decent sort) who infrequently frequented our watering hole came through the back door. He was known and well liked by one of the regulars at our table so we invited him to join us. Decent-sort-Mike was then introduced to several people who were famous for not being able to remember names.

Mike downed half a beer and suddenly turned wide-eyed. He stared at me for a few very long seconds. It was the kind of stare that made me wonder if he was on some powerful drug and I was showing up as a freshly tapped keg in his hallucination.

That wasn't it. The mad stare was his sudden recognition of a person whom he knew had experienced the proverbial *fifteen minutes of fame*.

"You're that guy from the newspapers. You're great!" said decent-sort-Mike.

I had to reply, "Don't be fucking ridiculous. I'm a drunk from Hugo's, just like you are."

The light went on in Mike's more than slightly bloodshot eyes. It was that deeper kind of understanding that rarely happens, even between people who know each other very well. He *got it*.

A big slow "Woooooow!" came out of his mouth.

Mike suddenly realized that he could have done that charity project, and would have received the same attention from the media if he had. Instant insight told him that *anyone* could have done it. It was all just about getting up and doing it. I did kick my own drunken ass into the process, but that didn't make me any more of a superman than him. The only difference between us was that I put that situation's potential to actual use.

We bought each other beers and talked for hours with no further misunderstandings.

All of us humans have the same potential to be incredible.

Who you've met or know doesn't matter.

Who you choose to be
and what you choose to do with your life
is what does matter.

Waves (and a Quote) / The Village Elder

I am sitting on a beach in rural Southeast Asia with a man in his seventies. We are watching the waves. He is a wonderful person, a Class A human being. The Village elder has become as much of a friend to me as possible. I don't speak his language, nor does he speak mine. He is patient. We work around the language barrier.

The Elder has lived his whole life in this rural tropical paradise and has developed something in common with Nature itself. He is stable in the knowledge that nothing is stable, that there is no consistent norm. The Elder knows that life is composed of a wide variety of changes and experiences. Some of these changes and experiences can trigger happiness in people, while others make people sad. He knows that each individual can react to these changes and experiences with wildly varying degrees of intensity. For most, these varying degrees of intensity move around inconsistently on either side of a near-mythical center point of complete emotional stability. Many folks will never even get to visit that point of perfect emotional balance, not even once during their entire lives.

Our Village Elder is at home there.

I wonder how many waves he has seen.

We sit in near-silence, occasionally passing the few words back and forth that we know in each other's language. We use hand motions to fill in the conversational gaps. At times, one of us laughs at nothing. Then the other laughs at the first one and so we both end up laughing at nothing. *Nothing itself* seems to like it best when we both laugh.

The Elder turns toward me and speaks in his own language. A hand motion and a selfless desire to communicate accompany his voice. I don't understand the exact words, but anyone would understand what he was saying.

He owns a smile that could stop a war.

"Be aware of everything but worry about nothing. The waves come in, the waves go out. Life goes on. Do what you can to help wherever it is possible to help. Enjoy your time here. Learn what you need to know."

I instantly feel better. Things will change. They always do. They can change for the better and that can be at least partially, perhaps totally, under our own control.

Anyone sitting with The Elder would feel an electricity radiating from him, as I did. You can feel the intense power of this man's serenity in a simple waving motion of his hand and see it in the sparkle of his eyes. There is an obvious and incredible depth to the wisdom that this man has developed during the first seventy years of an extraordinary life. I feel very fortunate to be on Earth at the same time and in the same place as this amazing person.

"The waves come in, the waves go out.
Underneath, ocean always calm."

The Dalai Lama

Jesus and Bill

Audience member: “Hey buddy, we’re Christian and we didn’t like that joke.”

Bill Hicks: “You’re Christian?”

Audience member: “Yeah, that’s right!”

Bill Hicks: “Well then forgive me!”

If the idea that we keep reincarnating into different bodies until we get it just right is true, it may take the average person millions of years to reach perfection. That could include many lifetimes each as animals, vegetables, minerals, and of course again and again as humans. When finished, most Americans would likely resemble the stories we hear about Jesus more than they would resemble the historical Buddha.

Jesus had Buddha’s compassion but is also said to have had what we in Brooklyn call a “kick ass and take names later” attitude. He thought that selfish people hurt decent citizens too often. He wanted it stopped immediately without any further damage getting done to anyone, even the transgressors!

It is easy to picture Jesus aggressively demanding justice. The history books have portrayed him with a passionate sense of good and evil that was very capable of letting righteous indignation take the reins. That righteous indignation was strong enough to turn corruption’s tables upside down.

The late, great Bill Hicks also enjoyed giving bad guys a piece of his mind in defense of justice. Jesus is usually depicted as a much gentler and calmer person than Bill Hicks. Bill seemed happier than Jesus might have been to throw a good hard jab at the evildoers. But reports about Jesus may be limited and have certainly been altered over the past couple thousand years. He may have been more of a revolutionary in real life than he is portrayed as in the stories we get to hear. He certainly had a revolutionary’s bottomless conviction to hold his ground, and a revolutionary’s confidence in the triumph of good over evil. These always accompanied the compassion that was his most solid anchor. He maintained these even while being hounded, hunted, betrayed, and finally murdered by the law of the land.

“Forgive them, Lord, they know not what they do.” (This is the line that makes all the Buddhist Monks and Nuns great admirers of him.)

Bill Hicks was not as forgiving as Jesus, but he may have been just as dedicated to seeing humanity get its act together. There are no stories of Bill changing water into wine, but there are many accounts of him changing groups of somber, ignorant people into happy gatherings of laughing and somewhat more enlightened people. Bill could sting an audience harshly as he made them realize that there is no Santa Claus. He could sooth that sting with a laugh just as quickly.

Bill and Jesus both donated their lives to enlightening us. Both were persecuted for insisting on truth and human decency.

Are you a person who believes that a war slaying more civilians than soldiers can be noble and perhaps even holy? Do you think people of other races, religions, cultures, or those living in

other parts of the world are less worthy of happiness and perhaps not as important as you are? Has the natural environment been put here for us to dominate and use as we see fit, regardless of consequences to the other living things within it? Do you feel that the necessities of a sound personal or national economy can justify suspending some ethical and moral considerations, even if it causes suffering to others?

Do you believe that praying to a statue or icon can substitute for constructive altruism and practical compassionate effort?

If Jesus and Bill were still here, they'd both slap the shit out of you.

“The Hero with a Thousand Faces”

The Monks and Nuns in Southeast Asia know a lot about wisdom, kindness, and psychology through the interpretations offered by their school of Buddhism. The Tibetan Buddhists have a somewhat different approach that is similarly brilliant—and so do many South American Shamans, Sufi dancers, and Rabbinical scholars. Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King, Jr., gave us what is basically the same wonderful information through actions inspired by their Christian interpretations. Deepak Chopra and others gracefully guide ancient Indian wisdom into Western culture. Millions of Americans have studied the teachings of our own Natives—Black Elk, Sitting Bull, and others.

There has been one man knowledgeable enough to teach from all of these angles with equal authority. He was also humanely decent and humbly charismatic enough to attract several generations of listeners, and continues to do so years after his death.

Joseph Campbell was the teacher’s teacher. I call him “*The Good Professor*.” His lessons blended warmth and humor with a comfortable ease. They gave many intelligent insights with a clear vision that simplified complex concepts. The Good Professor was a major influence on Richard Adams (*Watership Down*), George Lucas (*Star Wars*), and many others who went on to become strong influences upon us.

Joseph Campbell’s scholarly pursuits on the subject of how myths affect our lives began with an early interest in Native American culture. He was fascinated by the way their myths were able to help folks deal with the harsh realities of life—all the suffering, killing, and eating that was and still is such a large part of human existence. As the young Mr. Campbell continued his studies, he found that one core mythology flowed throughout all the world’s philosophical stories, myths, legends, and religious interpretations. This core mythology has been presented very differently in different time periods, locations, and cultures, but it can also appear as uniformly as it does in what are currently our three major Western religions that have different names for what is basically the same biblical god. Regardless of cultural variations, Mr. Campbell observed that many of the stories, many of the symbolic characters within them, and certainly many of the morals behind these stories coincide.

Presenting little teasers of The Good Professor’s work from my point of view will fall very short of his own presentations. I’m clever for a hobo, but a hobo is all that I am. Everything in this book is written from my little personal perspective. I could have it all wrong. Check out the master. Try the originals. They are readily available on the Internet and in print. They include a metaphorical picture of Enlightenment that is easily among the most brilliant teachings ever recorded. Enlightenment metaphors are very plentiful in philosophical teaching. Professor Campbell describes the process as a boat trip from New York City to New Jersey, and does so with a simplicity and clever sense of humor that no other teacher has managed.

Joseph Campbell’s teachings are important for many reasons. His bird’s eye view of *the bigger picture* is one of those reasons. Another is that everything he says leads to a logic based on metaphysical common sense.

The Good Professor’s teachings also demonstrate great honesty and courage in showing us just how damaging some cultural interpretations of universal truths can be. He shows us how dangerous the concretizing of metaphors and the misinterpretation of symbols as physical,

historical facts has been—and reveals how long some of those errant interpretations have survived in human hearts and minds.

We all physically live in a time frame and must deal not only with illness, aging, and eventual death, but also with the problems of life—suffering, ego attachment, and assorted types of mental bondage and confinement. These are byproducts of our life in the field of time (as opposed to being in the spiritual, “eternal,” timeless state). We all have booked appointments that we don’t want to keep, we at least occasionally suffer thoughts flowing through our heads that we prefer hadn’t shown up there, and so on. Campbell told us that we can experience a release from a good deal of life’s mental bondage within the field of time. We can do this without *actually* getting free from it. This may sound as contradictory to you as it did to me, until The Professor explained it.

Consciousness rides around in and directs our bodies. Our human bodies are the vehicles that carry the consciousness that orchestrates them. Good things happen when people don’t identify themselves with the history of the bodies they inhabit, but instead identify with the consciousness that informs those bodies. When we choose to identify with the consciousness instead of the experiences of the vehicle/body—when we keep our selves, our thoughts, our feelings, and all of our self-referencing points based in the consciousness instead of in the history of the vehicle, the suffering and bondage of the vehicle is then no longer something that we are involved with. The vehicular history then has nothing to do with what we experience mentally. Attachments to childhood traumas, any misinformation and fairy tales from school / church / government that hypnotized our youth, what the neighbors were gossiping about last week, or what we saw in a TV show yesterday are not the most constructive places to keep your attention. Focusing on eternal consciousness works much better.

Campbell said, “You are free in bondage. Mythologically, the shackles fall off without leaving your wrists.”

Anyone familiar with Dave Chappelle might get a good laugh from this Campbell image! The “I’m rich, bee-aach” and shackled-hands-full-of-money image at the end of each incredible Chappelle Show may have roots in some very similar realizations to the one Mr. Campbell describes as being “free in bondage.”

The Professor said that this free-in-bondage thing is the state attained by Buddhist Bodhisattvas (can be very loosely translated to English as “Saints” here). They know that in the world of ego, suffering, and psychological entrapments, a greater force than those complications is always at work. This knowledge can foster a confident and constructive attitude that produces a higher, happier, more productive way of life among enlightened beings—Joyful Participation in the Sorrows of the World. Without denying the rampant suffering that exists, evolved beings can stay happy about the opportunity to participate in, and perhaps improve, life on Earth. Although these enlightened folks are still bound to life’s earthly challenges, they stay free from many of the mental problems and confining psychological difficulties that most people mistakenly consider ordinary and unavoidable.

Here is another of my personal favorites. This quote springs from a reference to the *Star Wars* movies that The Good Professor so heavily influenced. He was referring to a key theme in the movie—the influence of The Status Quo Machine versus the Power of The Individual. Please

understand that Mr. Campbell's definition of *the devil* is likely to be quite different from any televangelist's definition. We can safely guess that he was referring to something more like an internally generated, severely negative state of mind rather than a big red evil dude with a pointy tail and a pitchfork.

“The minute you take what the dictation of the time is
instead of the dictation of your own eternity,
you have capitulated to the devil and you are in hell.”

Professor J.C.

“Why Don’t You Tell Your Face?”

*With love and thanks to the world’s favorite uncle,
Mr. Leo Buscaglia*

I ask how you’re doing and you tell me you’re fine, but you’re staring out off into space. The look in your eye tells me something’s awry. You’re not sitting in your favorite place. You appear to be thinking that to speak your true feelings would surely result in disgrace. If you’re feeling fine, I’ll kiss my own behind. If you’re happy, you should tell your face!

No one feels perfect all day and all night, and if you’ve got a problem then you’ve got a right to share it with people who care ‘bout your plight and can help you recover, recycle your sight.

But you don’t.

You just sit there with that frown covering you.

Seems kind of silly.

If someone sincerely asks how you are, that’s a sign of your luck and their grace. They can help wash your clothes and straighten your wrinkles, pull joy through the holes in your lace. So do not just sit with your head up, your butt wishing you were in some other place. Open up the damn door when your friends come knocking. Let them help you to stabilize when you are rocking. You can’t tell them anything that will be quite as shocking as “If you’re happy, why don’t you tell your face?”

Selflessness and the Emotional Bank Account

Thank you, Mr. Covey!

We may be living in the most ferociously economic age in history. Here is an economic metaphor that is more benevolent than fierce. *The emotional bank account*, as taught by Stephen Covey, is very valuable and easily understood.

Whenever we do something good for another person, we can compare that action to making a deposit in a bank account jointly owned by both of us. Negative words and actions directed toward the other person would amount to a withdrawal from that same account. Keep track of your balance, don't overdraw on your account, and the quality of your relationship will be affluent.

As simple as this can be, there is a tricky part.

Here it is.

We have to know what constitutes a positive deposit or negative withdrawal *from the other person's point of view*, or it doesn't work. Respecting and addressing the other person's concept of what actually makes up a deposit or a withdrawal is essential.

I need to hear this reminder often. It makes perfect sense to a person like myself who has heaped sweetly worded wonders of psychospiritual comfort upon cold, hungry people who wanted me to just shut the fuck up and get them a sandwich.

How do you know what constitutes a deposit or a withdrawal from the other person's point of view?

Empathy is the answer.

Knowing that answer is easy. Making it happen requires some effort.

This empathy is not some kind of misconceived selflessness that travels without self-respect or self-appreciation. Nor is this a timid kind of goodness. This selflessness works from a base of confidence powerful enough to let us step out of ourselves without getting lost.

I like apples a little better than oranges but enjoy either. I have an apple, an orange, and a hungry friend who is allergic to citrus. What do I share?

Of course.

Giving my friend what she actually needs, whether or not it requires a sacrifice on my part, makes the deposit.

This idea of extending empathy into someone else's reality is very similar to the famous old Native American saying about walking a mile in someone else's moccasins.

No one can walk that mile in someone else's moccasins while still wearing his or her own shoes. Dropping our own personal agendas for long enough to understand the other person's agenda is the essential first step. If that isn't the first step, the rest of the process won't work any better than trying to speak and listen at the same time.

Many folks in Asia take their shoes off at the front door—and especially at a Temple’s front door. They voluntarily turn off part of their personal thought machine in order to allow something else in. They sacrifice a self-centered focus and nurture their desire to walk in the Buddha’s moccasins.

What produces stronger understanding and less judgment in most long standing friendships? In strong friendships, we often sacrifice the wearing of our own shoes to walk in our friend’s moccasins. This kind of familiarity does not breed contempt. It defines real friendship.

This is also why people who have a lot in common can often get along well even if they have just met. Similar experiences and opinions give each one a better idea of what that other one’s walk feels like. They own similar moccasins.

Happy relationships that work sanely for everyone in them require taking the metaphorical shoes off for long enough to empathize. This takes great strength, courage compassion, and compromise. As Mr. Covey has said, it takes a constructive and creative selflessness.

Whoever learns how to walk in the moccasins of others takes a giant step toward saving the world. This is true no matter how small you think your influence is or how large your moccasins are.

p.s. Washing feet and wearing clean socks is simply common courtesy.

“In order to swim one takes off all one’s clothes—in order to aspire to the truth one must undress in a far more inward sense, divest oneself of all one’s inward clothes, of thoughts, conceptions, selfishness, etc., before one is sufficiently naked.”

Soren Kierkegaard

“We tend to wear suits of armor one over the other...”

The late, great Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche

Black and Blues

"I'm in a phone booth in Chicago and I got no one to call."

Robert Cray

There's something special about every kind of music, but history has given The Blues a unique depth of soul chilling realism. It's for cotton pickin' sure that four or five centuries of people owning and whipping your ass will make you a master of The Blues.

I grew up in the 1950s and 60s. If I were a black child then, I would not have The Blues or any other problems today. I'd be dead. I would have killed some bigot, likely in self defense, and been executed for it anyway.

What kind of patience and inner strength does it take to endure a degrading brand of bullshit being programmed into you since before birth, as well as throughout life, and yet still be able to overcome the race reference enough to live with white folks?

The Asian Monks and Nuns who know this story are impressed. They see distinct spots of spiritual genius here.

The first, of course, is the basis of reincarnation through common sense—the confident presence of mind to recover from history and accomplish your self in the present tense. Recovering an unstained mind from bygone traumas is a primary practice in Buddhism. Black folk have recovered from historical programming well enough to realize that they are individuals of equal or greater worth than any other people.

They have also (for the most part) recovered well enough from five hundred years of atrocities to realize that not all white people suck. The second feat of spiritual genius is the “forgive them Lord, they know not what they do” thing that most black people have managed. Yes, that one has been done before—but Jesus didn't have to bear a continuous suffering for four or five hundred years.

Most Americans under the age of sixty do not have a clear picture of how severe the bigotry was in America. This problem is by no means as dead as it needs to become, but it is also not as ugly as it was just a generation or two ago.

Thank you to Black America for the beautiful examples to follow.

Thanks for maintaining the saintly strength to withstand nearly half a millennium of paying the rent without being allowed in the house.

Thanks for fostering the intelligent knowledge that the best revenge is living well, for earning the right to sing The Blues, and for formulating those Blues into a beautiful and internationally respected art form and healer.

Modern Teachers All Say, “Stay in Your Own Canoe!”

*With gratitude to our many wonderful modern popular Wisdom Professionals,
including Bernie Siegel, Deepak Chopra, Wayne Dyer, Byron Katie,
and so many others.*

Staying grounded / staying within oneself / paddling one’s own canoe is a subject that has been addressed by nearly all of our modern Wisdom Professionals.

“Stay in your own canoe” is something I first heard from Andy Caponigro. He is a Master Teacher of spiritual and medicinal breathing practices, and author of *Miracle of the Breath*. Mr. Caponigro’s teachings effectively combine the wisdom and practices of several ancient systems.

Conscious breathing can be the backbone and anchor of the *in-body experience*. The in-body experience is the parent of internal balance. This internal balance leads to personal happiness, health, and stability as well as a better relationship with everything and everyone else. It is the antidote for stressed mental states that could lead to hasty actions that might ruin a day, or even a life. If *anything* is coupled with your balanced conscious breathing, it will increase the effectiveness of that anything.

We’ve all heard about out-of-body experiences being a high and esoteric form of spiritual mastery. In isolated, infrequent, extreme, mythical, and legendary instances that may be true. But, as Dr. Chopra explained so eloquently decades ago, anyone can have an out-of-body experience. We are all actually having out-of-body experiences most of the time! That’s how we live. We are almost constantly paying attention to something outside of our selves. Jobs, kids, parents, friends, lovers, food, money, cars, news, video games, and the like occupy most of our thoughts.

The real trick is to have an in-body experience. It is well worth the time it takes to get in touch with, get to know, and then become grounded within our own inner being, instead of our outer doings. In-body experience keeps us paddling our own canoe. It puts us in firmer control of our own thoughts and actions.

“Next!” / “Let It Go!”

A related subject addressed by most modern teachers is the need to stand one’s positive ground regardless of the negativity around us.

For some mysterious reason, a small percentage of any population is nasty and fond of senseless gossip. Fighting off these jackasses can be a strain. I don’t have that kind of time or energy. Feeding my attention into a senseless situation would make me a little senseless, too.

Small villages like the one attached to this temple I live in are famous for gossip, although it certainly happens a lot in big cities as well. When the rare nasty rumor gets circulating about me in one of the small outlying towns that I occasionally visit, I use Dr. Dyer’s trick (also relayed to the public by Dr. Chopra in one of his PBS Specials).

My bad reaction to someone else’s nonsense, and so many other types of external negativity as well (and my own, for that matter!), is replaced by waving a mild backhand in the air and thinking, “Next!” That thought is gone and there is now room for a better one. The errant thought needn’t be forced or beaten out, but just watched and waved on with detachment as it sails away. It is like a cloud passing in the sky.

Letting mental garbage hang around and fester is no healthier than throwing rotten food all over the house and waiting for the maggots to take over. It is much better to just wave goodbye to unproductive ideas and get on to a better thought.

The modern teachers I am thanking here can be very different from each other in the knowledge they present and the ways they present it, but every single one of them has taught on this point. The Monks and Nuns here live by this notion.

A person insulting us cannot do real damage to our peace of mind. We do that to ourselves with a senseless, self-hypnotized mental repetition of the offense. The grinding mental repetition of dwelling on a singular unpleasant event can turn an isolated, passing discomfort into a toxic habituation. Lack of confidence, substandard expectations of life, and many other self-defeating attitudes often have their roots in simply not letting go of someone else’s bad day. Our modern Wisdom Professionals have taught millions of folks how to use the phrase “Let it go!”

“What you think of me is none of my business.”

Byron Katie

Mr. Covey gave us a similar lesson with his snakebite analogy. If ever bitten by a poisonous snake, the most important thing to *not* do is run around in panic. That’s exactly what drives poison to the heart and makes that snakebite fatal.

Renting out space in our heads to fuggin assholes is a senseless and dangerous proposition. Dwelling on our own manufactured negativity and bullshit is at least as bad.

Aah, sorry. That sounds too much like the squawk of an overbearing hard-on from Brooklyn, doesn’t it? I should put that in a nicer way.

“Next!”

How about—

Harboring low quality notions engendered by the words or actions of others is a senseless and dangerous proposition. Dwelling on our own unproductive emotions and problems instead of releasing them and reclaiming that mental space to house more positive and productive thoughts is silly and counterproductive. Isn't it?

There! That's much more civil.

I am very grateful to all the brilliant modern teachers that have shown me these valuable things, and I'm learning another aspect of all this from the Buddhists. According to them, I also have to be grateful to and for the nasty gossiping jackasses! The Buddhist notion is that the people I see as gossiping jackasses are actually being helpful to me by producing the situations that allow me to experience putting the good ideas of “Stay in Your Own Canoe,” “Next!” and “Let it go!” into practice. So, the jackasses are acting, in a sense, as teachers by helping me to practice becoming a better person.

Go figure.

Folks often talk about what might have been the best time to be alive. I doubt that any other time period in history had as many Wisdom Professionals in it. It is certain that we've never had the communication tech and tools available to access so much wisdom. For this reason alone it seems that we couldn't do better than to be in the time and place where we are.

Dedication and Perseverance

Many people who are now thought of as great heroes, geniuses, and saints were misunderstood and abused in their own time. We admire and respect them for more than just wisdom and kindness. We admire them just as much for the relentless strength and courage that it took for them to stay in their own canoes. We admire them for suffering the hardships and pain they endured in order to hold firmly on to their convictions in the face of frustrating ignorance and deadly opposition from others.

When courage and perseverance fuse to righteous quality in one human package, it can produce a dedication so massive that history bends for it.

Greatness disregards superficial boundaries. It prefers the primordial truths. There have been people of every color, time frame, and location who have lived by this same dedication-and-perseverance theme. Any serious Wisdom Professional believes that the dignity and integrity of *all* humanity is much more important than their own individual life. Knowing that they will not live long enough to see this universal decency completely accomplished never stops or even discourages them. They do more than just working for decency. They actually become its process.

“What need is there to say more?
The childish work for their own benefit.
The Buddhas work for the benefit of others.
Just look at the difference between them!
The source of all misery in the world lies in thinking of oneself.
The source of all happiness lies in thinking of others.”

Shantideva, ancient Indian sage

Standing by a passionate conviction defines dedication and perseverance. Very few people ever take this as far as Joan of Arc or Mahatma Gandhi did, but many of us have learned to apply great lessons to much smaller situations. The effort doesn't have to be big in order to be important. Each little drop is important to the ocean. Here is a small personal example.

THE CHERRY ON TOP OF THE FRUITCAKE

Many tourists act a little wilder while on vacation in a foreign country than they do at home. This is even more pronounced here in Thailand where there are so very many opportunities to do the wild-and-crazy. The locals around here are usually very tolerant of tourist behavior, but they talk about you. This is true anywhere. It doesn't matter whether you are in Thailand, Paris, or at the North Pole. If you are a little different, at least a few of the locals are going to bust your chops—especially if you're from out of town. Gossip of this type can happen whether you are wild and crazy or not. There may also be some finger pointing and giggling.

Most of the finger pointing is just good-natured amazement, especially in a place like rural Southeast Asia where the locals find a zoom lens camera as miraculous as we would find a working intergalactic starship with transporter beam. Most of it is just an innocent bafflement with foreign customs and technologies, and it is harmless. But that is not the topic here. The

topics here are staying in your own canoe, letting bad stuff that flies in one ear fly as quickly out the other, unshakable dedication to your own purpose, and perseverance in the face of adversity, insult, or even danger.

In spite of heavy competition from my fellow travelers for the position as cherry on top of the international fruitcake, I have become known in southern Thailand as “*THE Crazy Alien*.” Most of my fellow non-locals who get any special attention from the locals are simply drunk and bizarre. The natives expect this. But when locals see an American person who is a bit older, they suppose that he is like the Americans they see on TV. So when they look at me, they see something that falls very far away from their frame of reference.

Here is a person they cannot explain. He is not at all “normal.” He is living in a Buddhist Temple on a foreign continent without studying Buddhism. He cannot even communicate in or understand the native language, has no money at all, has no way to get home, and is writing a book about a culture and religion that he is slowly learning very little about. When the book is finished, he has plans to get back to America somehow, and with absolutely no business connections and no related experience at all, sell novice writing for lots of money. He will then give all the money away to build combination educational/spiritual resorts that are entertaining destinations for guests. The purpose of these resorts will be to perpetually return profits that will be used to fund an increase in the number of Wisdom Professionals in the world. The purpose of that is to help alleviate suffering in human beings, and in all other living creatures affected by human beings, to the greatest degree possible.

He works on the writing in an isolated cabin with the intensity and introspection of a lone Monk, stopping only now and then to completely fall far off the other end of life’s pendulum by mysteriously acquiring massive expense-free doses of alcohol, ganja, and lodging at fancy tourist places on the beach.

His long-term goal is to build enough of these resorts through which he can gain enough profits to make it financially possible to increase the total number of Wisdom Professionals in the world by one percent. Logic dictates that his odds of success may be roughly the same as the odds of one person winning a hundred million dollar lottery jackpot prize twice in the same week.

Even the folks living and working in the resort towns a few miles away from their village and Temple are not used to seeing behavior like this—not even from the most certifiably loony and highly medicated tourists. I seem even more bizarre to those of my neighbors who have never been out of this hundred-resident, isolated hamlet and have never seen those tourists.

It is very lucky for me that Thai folks respect *crazy* more than Americans do.

Sometimes I wonder exactly what they think of me—but not often.

Every moment spent thinking about what other people are thinking about me is a moment I’m not thinking about what I actually need to be thinking about.

It would suck to be on my deathbed watching someone else’s life flash before my eyes. No life can be lived through other people’s perceptions of it.

I don’t have the time to worry and wonder if other people think I’m nuts. I have books to write and Wisdom Teachers to sponsor.

I *do* have a sense of logic. It is easy to see how what I'm doing might look strange to others. It is easy to understand why some folks might think me a lunatic.

Maybe I am one.

But if you are reading this book, maybe I'm not.

Anger

The book Chapter One and its author have been life preservers for many. I am one of them. Thank you, Stephen Gaskin, for this information about anger and for every thing you have given us.

I used to get angry a lot. It was more fun than depression and seemed a functional way to vent feelings that could have turned uglier or even dangerous if repressed. We've all had a lot of good reasons to get angry, including:

- doing someone a favor and then getting screwed over by them
- trusting someone and being betrayed by that person
- doing something stupid (self-directed anger)
- being hit by a bully
- the dog eating your work or school projects
- a lover drinking up the rent money
- or "doing" the neighbor
- in your bed
- being sober and having a drunken stranger throw up on you
- hiring a broker who invests in a dive-bombing stock
- having your last dollar stolen, heart broken, a disrespect spoken...

The list goes on endlessly.

There's one good reason to *not* get angry that overrides all the reasons that make anger appear logical. Anger is toxic. Unlike other types of poisoning, anger is not only a danger to the person being angry and the one he or she is spraying it on. It is damaging to everything near it. Adults, children, and animals alike—anything within earshot can feel someone else's anger. It releases chemicals in bodies and brains that damage the health of participants and innocent bystanders alike.

Everything that other people love about us as well as most of what we love about ourselves runs away when anger shows up. Almost any other emotion is an improvement over anger and its consequences.

"He made me angry!" It may seem that way, but it is not really true.

We allow ourselves to be angry or we don't allow it to happen.

Compassionate tolerance toward and patience with the sources that piss us off are good substitutes for anger. Forgiveness is very productive, even when approached from a selfish angle. It isn't necessarily done for the sake of the person who has been a jackass to us. Forgiving someone else prevents us from poisoning ourselves with anger. There is no sensible option. Once

already wronged, why breed more harm? A simple decision to stop the bleeding works better than any other decision.

This is an inside job. We can't deny the existence of anger that has risen. Tell the anger to leave as soon as the awareness of it arrives. Best to tell it politely. Getting angry at anger doesn't work very well. Calmly waving anger away may not be easy, at first. It takes practice. Consistent attention to our own thoughts, actions, and attitudes allows one to be aware of the anger as it is rising. Then we can practice releasing it. With enough of this mental practice, anger will start showing up in our minds less often.

As Mr. Gaskin says, "The trick isn't to not act angry, the trick is to *not be* angry."

Trying to deny or bury existent anger invites explosive failure, whereas simply putting attention on something better could succeed quickly. It will succeed eventually.

Stress or exhaustion can thin out patience in the best of us. Anger gets hold more readily when a person is stressed or exhausted. Most folks try to stay as relaxed, content, and rested as possible. Sometimes that's not good enough. We may need to redefine the concept of "as possible." Staying as relaxed and rested *as necessary* makes more sense.

The extra patience afforded by a relaxed mind and a rested body can mellow out a volatile situation quickly. It can help us step away from life's most dangerously toxic and downright unpleasant state of mind.

ONE WAY TO FIX IT

I rarely get angry anymore. Depression never was and is still not a smart option. Now I use a mechanism.

This method works!

Using the method I am about to describe reminds me that every action, thought, and feeling is my own choice. It reminds me that I am not a prisoner or pawn of anyone or anything that tries to anger or negatively influence me. It reminds me that I am the captain of my own emotional ship and have to adjust my sails so that they are pointed in the right direction—that direction being away from anger and toward happy sanity. It also reminds me that my reactions are totally under my own personal control and that I have an obligation to myself and everyone else to just say "no" to anger.

Nowadays, if I feel anger trying to make a disturbing entrance into my life, I stop whatever else I'm doing and start doing the Mexican Hat Dance while playing with my dick (not in public) and whistling Beethoven's Fifth Symphony through one nostril. I like to go fishing with my free hand.

Doing this keeps me out of trouble.

It is just about impossible to get angry from that position.

Got a better idea?

I'll bet you do.

The Neville Brothers

Unity takes the upper hand.

The Neville Brothers are The Musical Royal Family of New Orleans. These biological brothers are considered by many to be the musical royal family of our planet. If you don't have a good time at a Neville Brothers show, you either need medication badly or have already had way too much of it. Their music roams comfortably between a sweet float and rhythmically rocking your socks off. The beat is usually funky and solid enough to make a dead man dance. Lyrics are often socially important and emotionally intelligent. This great musical package is very unusual in that a single tune can have listeners both thinking and dancing.

But of all the wonderful qualities the band brings to the stage, the most important thing the Neville Brothers show us is their chemistry as a group.

We've all seen sports teams and musical groups with very talented players who have no concept of team chemistry. They function more like individual fingers than like part of a hand. These groups can seem to be accidentally joined together. They almost never win championships. The Nevilles are not one of those bands.

The Neville Brothers Band plays like an old-school basketball *team*.

These guys have each been practicing their own instruments for so many years that those instruments could rightly be called third arms. With individual skill sets so well accomplished, each player has more power free for the group effort. Individual and group functions become nearly inseparable.

The Neville family accomplished this step a long time ago. Then they took the process a step further by inviting bigger concerns to their party.

Just as the individual brothers melt their efforts into making the band the best it can be, the band as a unit melts its efforts into making the planet the best it can be. The group makes continuous effort after charitable effort on behalf of the human family.

They have gathered fame and success, but there is no "I've got mine now, so forget everyone else." The brothers stay involved and find ways to help.

Besides team unity and bringing collective goodwill up to the next level, they also show us a lot about perseverance, courage, grit, and patience. Each brother has overcome mistakes, some actually made by them and some laid upon them by our very confused society. Life can be difficult no matter when or where it happens, but some jobs are more difficult than others. Young-and-black mixed with southern-America and six-or-seven-decades-ago about as well as the proverbial oil and water. Mistakes were often made *to* people instead of *by* them.

Regardless of how the mistakes developed, each Neville rose above them and moved on to higher ground.

As mentioned earlier, I organized a series of charity efforts. It all began as a local project in the early 1980s, just as international efforts for the same cause were beginning to get media attention. (Our little effort began a year or so before the historic *Live Aid* concert and *We Are the*

World productions did, but the Ethiopian famine crisis had already gained some international publicity and inspired some action by then.)

One hundred percent of the money raised by our project went directly from the donors to well respected assistance groups. I organized everything, but the money never actually passed through my hands. This removed every doubt about good intentions. The support from local businesses, politicians, and artists was phenomenal. This had a lot to do with an incredibly progressive generosity on the part of the Pioneer Valley area of western Massachusetts. That generosity was expanded by the fact that America at large was enjoying a cocaine-and-sports-car level of prosperity at the time.

My friends and volunteers had a lot of faith in the project's potential to go bigger. I felt the need for a "Go" sign before diving into anything as big as the statewide effort they wanted. It seemed to be a bit too much for a reluctant and inexperienced organizer like myself to accomplish.

The Neville Brothers Band was playing in the area as our local charity effort was wrapping up its whirlwind month of activities. I went to the show after a long warm up at the tavern. Armed with the extra courage of "beer balls" and a few newspaper articles about the local project, I went toward the dressing room to see if a Neville brother would give us any help. Three feet from the greenroom door, a bouncer about the size of Mars got curious about my intentions.

"What do you think you're doing, bro?" said the human building.

He was good enough to look at the newspaper articles and allow me to explain. He was also good enough to take the paperwork into the dressing room. Ten minutes later Aaron Neville sent out a phone number and a message to call him later in the week when he would have more time to discuss the project.

I felt good about having picked so well in the who-to-think-highly-of department. The feeling multiplied a few days later when I made the call. I expected to speak with a secretary in an office. Aaron himself answered the phone at his home.

Aaron consented to lend his name to the project's next phase. I took that as the Go sign and went on to get an Honorary Directorship agreed to by the governor. Many other officials, statewide unions, professional sports teams, schools, and organizations agreed to get involved after that.

Again, none of the money went through me, so there is no way to know how much was raised. What I do know is that it takes some down-to-earth courage to be a famous musical personality with your privacy at a premium. It takes even more courage, a strong faith in human nature, and some serious compassion for a suffering humanity to give your home phone number and then personal involvement to a total stranger running a charity project that you never heard of before.

That's what being part of a hand instead of a lone finger is all about. As a Neville brother, Aaron had a lot of experience at that long before we ever met.

Starving people got to eat and live because of Aaron's courage.

And that's just one Neville! There are a lot of them.

Messages in the Neville Brothers music are often as strong, righteous, and unified toward the common good as the group's individual members are.

I look forward to hearing whatever they will have to tell us next.

Viktoras Knows Love

Viktoras Kulvinskas was born in Lithuania during the 1940s. He was a Western pioneer of mind/body medicine before it was made so popular by doctors Siegel, Chopra, and others. Mr. Kulvinskas taught at the University of Connecticut and later became a computer consultant for Harvard, MIT, the Smithsonian Astrophysical Lab, the Apollo Project, and others. He co-founded the Hippocrates Health Institute along with Dr. Annie Wigmore. Viktoras has researched and popularized many groundbreaking holistic healing methods including yoga, wheat grass, enzymes, live foods, spiritual living, probiotics, sprouts, and various massage techniques.

Viktoras worked closely with Dick Gregory as a personal health consultant during Gregory's nine hundred mile run for peace. He was also Nutrition and Education Director at Gregory's Obesity & Substance Abuse Facility.

As one of the most respected health professionals in the world, Mr. Kulvinskas lectures and writes almost constantly. His wonderful book *Survival into the 21st Century: A Planetary Healer's Manual* (cover art by Peter Max) was known as "the Bible of the Aquarian Age." I've worn out a few copies of it during my own travels. It was *the* health manual of the generation that first popularized the holistic lifestyle, and also the holistic medicine that has since been widely accepted in the West. *Survival* has sold over a half million copies worldwide. The book contains reliable, documented information covering alternative therapies, macrobiotics, exercise methods, food combining, various types of meditation, consciousness expansion, and much more.

Viktoras was one of the first folks in the West to tell us that meditation is the most productive (and most difficult) work a person can do. Steadfastly holding a deep, focused concentration isn't an overnight accomplishment. Viktoras Kulvinskas knows about bliss programming, its mechanics, and its benefits.

Viktoras told us that love is the most powerful force on Earth and that it cannot be forced. It can be expressed, offered, denied, or accepted—but never forced. Viktoras knows that unloving thoughts, whether toward others or our selves, cause physiological damage. He informed us that the subconscious mind does not know a psychological threat from an actual physical danger. He told us this long before it became common knowledge.

Viktoras knows that we humans each have unlimited potential for decency and wisdom. He thinks we can be pretty smart if we foster the growth of our own intuition. Viktoras has told us that by way of this intuition we can plug into immense sources of information contained in what he has coined "the cosmic library."

Viktoras knows that conscious awareness conquers emotional fears. He knows that people can change how they look at themselves and each other. He told us that if we constantly reinforce positive habits in thought and action, we will also constantly increase happiness and intelligence.

Viktoras knows all the above and a lot more. He has spent thousands of hours explaining these points in depth to folks around the world, in the hope of increasing our happiness as individuals and as a planet.

Viktoras quickly taught me everything I know and will probably forgive me for taking forty years to learn it. Viktoras knows love. Thank you, Viktoras.

Mr. Perks Knows Truth

People spend a lot of time talking about “the truth” as if it is a familiar old friend, but the relationship is more often like that of a fan to a celebrity they’ve never met. When folks actually meet the raw truth, it can scare the shit out of them.

Outside the world of Nature itself, truth is rare and bullshit prevalent. It can take a while for truth to triumph, but it will eventually percolate through and then rise above any pile of bullshit it is trapped under.

Some people are so deeply rooted in truth and acutely allergic to lies that they can refuse distortion at every turn. A rare few among this small group are both kind-hearted and well equipped enough to help and guide others.

His Holiness Seonaidh (John) Perks is one of these people.

The “His Holiness” title comes from being head of the Celtic Buddhist order. He prefers to be called John. John Perks is so intensely comfortable in his own skin that any one who spends time with him feels a therapeutic effect.

John grew up in a British village as Nazis bombed it. He didn’t speak at all for two years of his childhood. School officials, ignorant of stress disorders or how special John was, put him in the disabled class where he did minimal schoolwork but a lot of cleaning, serving, and helping. John noticed how happy everyone was to be helped. That made him happy. He decided that helping people wasn’t a bad way to spend a life.

His Holiness Perks is currently a counselor for veterans with PTSD, has worked with children in crisis, and has plans for building a facility to expand that work. Celtic Buddhism also has a nunnery. This activity all comes from an eighty year old man who chops his own firewood.

John Perks spent eight years as butler and organizer for the Bill Cosby household, but his most influential period of service was the near decade he spent with Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. *The Mahassidha and His Idiot Servant* is the Venerable Mr. Perks’ masterpiece of a book about his experience as the servant, friend, student, and confidant of one of the most accomplished masters of any spiritual tradition to ever set foot upon American soil. Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche started the first Buddhist University in the United States and was one of Buddhism’s greatest influences on Western culture.

Popular treatments of heroic and spiritual figures often give us sanitized, half truthful accounts of our wise men and women. Wise folk are often presented to us as infallible and totally pure. Of course no human being is totally “pure”—certainly not according to the very questionable and repressive definitions of moral purity given us by our culture. We are all human.

This includes wise humans.

An artificial distance has been created between our wise people and the so-called common person by establishing this illusion of totally pure heroes. Enlightenment and spiritual progress are too often inaccurately presented to us regular folks as unattainable. They are too often framed

as some mystical thing that only a person who was born with special qualities and ultra-human grace can accomplish.

This artificial distance is a dangerous thing for several reasons.

Its major drawback is that it leaves many people with a frustrated, incompetent, and disillusioned feeling similar to that of a self-conscious, full figured woman who is comparing herself to a magazine model. That “regular” woman may be very intelligent, very good hearted, beautiful in demeanor, and even cute. She may be an all around better person to be with by far than the sleek model with the glorified body. Nonetheless, many doors are closed to us regular folks that are left open for the genetic celebrities in lingerie, beer, and perfume ads.

Sadly, some of the lovely women that society has labeled ordinary, regular, plain, too big, too small, or otherwise imperfect, drive themselves to bizarre, expensive, and unhealthy lengths attempting to reach shallow goals that are often genetically impossible to reach. The attitude of “I’m supposed to be like that model but it’s not possible for me, I’m an undesirable failure,” has been a tragic side effect of the image that commercial advertising has created of so-called perfect beauty. Some women give up on a healthy lifestyle in frustration as their self-respect surrenders to artificial standards.

Many folks fall victim to a very similar type of misinformation when presented with spiritual models that seem to have an otherworldly or unattainable perfection. One strong similarity between these two scenarios is that the fashion model photos and the spiritual model propaganda have both been airbrushed. But the differences between the spiritual hero and fashion model scenarios are much more important than the similarities.

The most important difference is that people cannot make themselves taller or change their bone structure, but anyone *can* make giant strides in the direction of their spiritual role models. Becoming happier and of more benefit to those around us is always possible wherever a human brain has any serious intention to do so. These goals are not shallow or genetically impossible to reach. Not everyone can become a fashion model, but anyone can become a Wisdom Professional.

But then along come the interpreters and translators to tell us otherwise—again! These public relations men for the status quo present us with the idea that our heroes and saints were more than human, and that such wisdom is out of reach for us everyday folk. They convince us that we need products and middlemen to negotiate our beauty, divinity, and self-worth.

If people believe they are morally and spiritually incapable of reaching wisdom or happiness, if they believe that their ability to become better humans is limited or even impotent, what follows is a popular frustration that leads to cynicism, sloth, and apathy. Individual growth and planetary evolution both retard under the influence of this market motivated frustration. Personal initiative gives up to the empty promises of material property, bad drugs, and salvation by the dollar. Churches, governments, and greedy manufacturers then cash in on the insecurity of their citizens while the wise wait patiently for the rest of us to figure out that all we need to do is cash in our own chips.

The status quo knows that when an important goal is made to seem unobtainable, many folks will relinquish partial control of their lives to any force that claims the ability to carry them toward that goal.

If happiness and human decency, much less enlightenment, are presented to us as imaginary perfections that can be reached only by the faultless, then why bother trying? “I can’t get there from here” is an excuse used by many for never starting the journey at all. This sad lack of confidence causes many folks to outsource their responsibility and personal power to a government, hero, or god’s superior abilities. It is ironic as hell that those heroes and gods all placed the responsibility firmly on us!

“Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.”

“The kingdom of heaven is within you.”

“Seek and ye shall find.”

Most truly wise people encourage others to become wise, and the majority of wise folk would never deny that they are just everyday people with expanded awareness, a lot of courage, and enhanced perception. They also readily admit to having plenty of human idiosyncrasies and imperfections.

The whitewashing of our spiritual leaders is a subtle but serious example of just how impractical and surreal status quo’s modern culture-shaping can be. No one wants to face the fact that everyone who has ever lived was to some extent a sweaty human. Talk is always hushed about Jesus and Mary Magdalene, Moses’ speech impediment, Doctor King and the Kennedys’ sex lives, or the habits of a Tibetan Lama whose broad views on alcohol consumption and sexual conduct were unique among Lamas. These conversations are scandal and blasphemy to the folks who prefer to picture our saints as Snow White fantasy characters rather than the wonderful, heroic, yet human-like-all-of-us people that those role models have always been.

On the other side of this same coin, many conversations on the subject of heroes being human get twisted out of context and become fuel to the fires of sensationalism. As we all know too well, sensationalism is the accusatory form of journalism that would rather see the public yelling at life’s ass than smiling in life’s face. Fuck sensationalism and the people who promote it. They don’t deserve any more ink. They won’t get it here.

There is another way to look at all this that differs greatly. It makes the truth about our heroes valuable instead of embarrassing. This more logical point of view says with glee that the wonderful and exemplary people in question are human. It says that our ability to understand their less popular and perhaps less attractive traits goes hand in hand with our ability to understand and emulate their great compassion, intelligence, and more admirable traits. It reminds us that we are the same type of human being as they, and that we have the same potential for greatness. It also reminds us that so much of the negativity attached to the term “being human” is a bad figment of someone else’s imagination.

Down to earth, uncensored information that offers a non-sensationalized full and honest picture of our heroes, saints, and role models—complete with both their shining moments and their imperfections—also reminds us that we are not supreme beings with the right to stand in judgment of others. We may consider a neighbor or work mate too fat, thin, compulsively clean, sloppy, oversexed, undersexed, gay, straight, lazy, or even too energetic to fit our personal tastes.

Haven’t there been many saints and many heroes with similar qualities?

Our historical wise folk would want us to know that they were determined, hard working people who never gave up on their goals in spite of great difficulties presented them by society or any occasional indiscretions of their own. They certainly want us to know that as flawed and human as we all may be, we each have the same ability as they did for great accomplishment. HH John Perks helps us to see that and so did Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. The Venerable John Perks knows what the truth is and he knows what Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche's truth was, too.

If you want to read a book about a saint that was written by a hero, pick up *The Mahasiddha and His Idiot Servant* by John Riley Perks.

Manipulative propagandists and well intended but impressionable fantasy victims alike have given us many reports that are bleached of their true flavor. This book is *not* one of those reports.

You'll be impressed with several people by the time you've finished reading. You will also be impressed with yourself. This book shows that you can be as impressive a person as you want to be, and that all the desires, faults, frailties, and peculiarities that come with the human experience do not cancel out our ability to produce very powerful benefits, massive improvements, and astounding beauty for the world and for ourselves.

“Stress, anxiety, fears, and confusion are common. If we become attached to these states, we produce our own prison and become detached from the environment. Insight is the process that enables us to go further...without becoming attached to realization as dogma, or an end point.”

HH Seonaidh (John Riley) Perks
www.celticbuddhism.org

p.s. The best book ever written about Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche is *The Mahasiddha and His Idiot Servant*. The most brilliant and easily understandable book ever written about Buddhist thought may be *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche.

“You’re Gonna Suffer Anyways, So Why Practice?”

Public Television has always offered more than just a great scholastic education for children. A wonderful collection of spiritual teachers was featured during much of the 1990s. These broadcasts included many discussions with and lectures by people who possess the kind of talent and wisdom that humans have been seeking ever since there were such things as humans, talent, and wisdom. I videotaped these broadcasts and then watched them so often that the information became part of me. Many other folks did, too. These programs were our meditation.

Loretta LaRoche was one of those lecturers featured on PBS. She isn’t from my old neighborhood, but her direct approach often sounds very Brooklyn. I’d like to thank her for all the clever, funny, and insightful things she has helped me to think about. A classic LaRoche talk focuses on deleting the type of trouble we just flat out make up for ourselves in our own heads.

If you have no food or a loved one has a fatal disease, these are real problems. Life sometimes gives pain and challenge. There is no way around it. But if you worry all day that an actually faithful spouse is cheating, you may just have a possessive paranoid tendency and an attachment disorder. If you screw up what could have been a happy day by worrying about things you can’t change—the weather, someone else’s business that’s none of your business, an imagined insult—that’s not a good move, either.

Mrs. LaRoche explains such things with a down to earth honesty that pulls no punches, and in a way that helps ideas stick to her listeners. She has combined the humor and wit that are responsible for such lines as

“You *are* gonna suffer anyway. Why practice?”

The Public's Broadcasting Service

Certain elements of the U.S. Congress want to erase funding for PBS.

This is a very bad sign, folks.

PBS programming helps people avoid the sales pitch hypnosis of network TV. We, the viewing public, actually vote for the programming we want to see through our responses, requests, and contributions to local PBS stations.

Commercial TV is designed to steer the viewer through a maze of products for sale and consumption, not to offer productive programs. As a result, a lot of the basest emotional bullshit designed to hump your adrenalized attention into peak readiness for commercial messages is presented on PBS's corporate counterparts. In contrast, a lot of positively oriented, non-violent, spiritually uplifting, dramatic, comedic, nature related, intelligent, artistic, exciting programming happens on the public's network.

Ever wonder "why Johnny can't read," or add, or subtract, or concentrate, and has attention deficit disorder? Not discounting diet, societal pace and pressures, systemic dishonesty, and a baffling system of mixed messages running rampant throughout the culture, it has a lot to do with the single digit attention span Johnny has developed while habitually watching short spurts of violent cartoons in between even shorter spurts of commercial messages. The rapid turnover of both commercial messages and program segments have patterned Johnny's mind to stay grounded in singular focus for very, very short time periods.

The violent, shocking, dramatized nature of what Johnny's mind is absorbing shoots an adrenaline reaction through his system. The subconscious mind doesn't know the difference between a real threat and a mentally manufactured threat. Damaging stress chemicals are released and the basest survival senses are heightened while watching violent programming. This results in Johnny's brain circuitry being heightened for fight or flight, and being more receptive to commercial messages. The products advertised in these commercial messages are not health food. So now, in addition to having his ability to focus for more than a few minutes in a row being dissected by fragmented programming and machine gun intensity commercial messages, Johnny has been sold and is eating sugar laden petroleum products while being hypnotized by his own adrenaline. These adrenaline rushes, impending sugar crashes, and the perverse programming that caused them do not exit his psyche after the sale has been made. At this point the marketing culture has built themselves another nervous, undereducated, and addicted consumer—the kind of person most advantageous to their goals. They profit. Johnny's screwed.

This process, along with the carnival of death that the video game industry has become, helps Johnny get all warmed up for pushing bigger buttons a bit later on in life. Killing people who are more physically existent than the ones in his video game won't be a problem for Johnny when he reaches military age. He only sees images on a screen, not the real flesh and blood carnage.

Of course, people have been killing each other since long before video games and commercial TV were around, but (with the possible exception of ancient Rome) murder has never been so widely advertised as an impersonal process, recreational sport, source of amusement, economic necessity, and heroic act.

Commercial television with its base motivation of greed and its orientation toward mindless violence and selfish consumption is a pretty good example of how to negatively program a population. It is an even better example of an obvious, easy, and immediate opportunity that humanity has to better itself. All we have to do is change the station.

PBS is a good example of what can go right if the public is in charge of its own destiny instead of being manipulated by a small, warped, perversely motivated minority.

Can we make corporate TV get with the program by selective shopping? After all, they are in business to sell products. If we don't buy the products they are trying to sell us and let them know that a change to more productive programming might loosen our cash flow, might the programming and timing formats change?

The networks can still make a lot of money while giving us a little more time to pay attention to the show in between all those commercials. Soccer games do not have commercial breaks in the action, and they still get the advertising done very well.

Why not sell us products and programming in a sane and intelligent manner? Why not sell products and programming that are beneficial? Why turn our children into fright-flight-fight zombies? Why do my niece and nephew have to see a hundred people being killed on the TV each day?

We are going to suffer anyway. Why do they make us constantly practice—and why do we continue to do it?

There are options.

This slam is not a blanket condemnation of everything the major networks have ever put out. Oprah has, at times, hosted a collection of spiritual talent to rival even that of PBS. She also produced a functionally real Angels Network. Anyone in a certain age bracket will remember three decades of Michael Landon's characters. His ethical stories also became TV business success stories, proving that such nonviolent programming can succeed commercially.

If the idea of commercially functional positive programming catches on, Johnny may eventually be able to watch something like Sesame Street on several commercial networks. The length of program and commercial segments could become more inviting to sanity.

Mom will still buy the soap that is being advertised for sale. It won't matter much to the sales figures whether that soap is advertised during a soap opera trauma drama or by Oscar the Grouch and the Cookie Monster. Johnny's future wife will buy the soap, too.

The difference will be that she and Johnny will be able to read—and think—again.

The Bigger Romance of Ashford and Simpson

Imagine that the singular person you are lives in two bodies. Each has its own distinct and brilliant talents. These brilliant attributes are perfectly balanced within the singular unit that your bodies compose. You have both maternal and paternal qualities with absolutely no accompanying sexual identity crisis. You know who you are.

Your faith and your confidence in that faith are immune to compromise. Immortal convictions cement you to a higher-than-selfish purpose. Massive power flows through you without causing any tweaks or aberrations. You carry this power constantly and are always at home with it. It leaves a bright glow and no scar on everything it touches. It constructs beauty at your will and does so no matter where you go or whom you are with.

No matter how strange things get, you are never lost. All of you is always *here*.

What is commonly called “love” is just a warm up act compared to your state of mind. You circulate that loving state of mind to others in ways as diverse and potent as a Miles Davis solo. You live to manufacture joy for others. Your personal happiness was accomplished long ago. There is no need to work toward where you already are.

Folks from rural and urban areas alike recognize you as an international treasure. They come from all over the world to hear you sing your songs. Great and famous people admire, copy, and perform versions of what you have written. Millions have taken home recordings of your beautiful melodies. They play them over and over, and are happy just to capture fractions of the emotional intensity that you created.

You'd have to be Ashford and Simpson.

TIBET

A short science fiction story.

*With many thanks to Douglas Adams and his incredible
Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.*

It's business as usual and just another day on Earth, but in the great beyond a meeting of earth shattering importance is taking place. The Space Aliens' Council of Constructive Destruction is deciding what part of the physical universe to dismantle. They need to disintegrate a lot of physical matter back into pure energy. That's what these aliens eat and their supplies are running low.

The discussion reaches two final candidates for a you-become-lunch location. Each of these vast areas of space has a single planet with life on it and—you guessed it—one of those planets is our Earth.

There are minimal differences between the two potential food sources. Both have plenty of tasty matter. The Council decides to make its culinary decision based upon the comparative merits of the two planets that have living inhabitants. The civilization judged most worthy of surviving will do so. We have become one of two final contestants in an extinction and digestibility contest!

The Spacefolk responsible for making the final decision look at the other planet's citizens first, tally up the points, and then proceed to summarize us. Here is their report.

This is the recorded history of the Earthlings. The dominant life form on the planet calls itself Mankind, although the majority of these creatures are women.

These beings have been consistently deluding themselves for thousands of years. They enjoy hiding behind a self-righteous façade. While ostensibly worshiping goodness, compassion, and love that rarely get exercised, the species actually perpetrates fear, greed, war, and selfishness in most planetary functions (although they often do a lot better on local levels).

The themes of their prayers and most sacred thoughts seem to be peace, harmony, unity, equanimity, and demilitarization, but their many so-called civilized cultures have never actually accomplished these states. To the contrary, such sentiments seem to be window dressing and paperwork. They have, for the most part, been hypocritically utilized as propaganda. Older, greedy, profiteering warmongers have hypnotized the youth of nearly every generation into protecting a lifestyle that is more fantasy than fact. Executives craving false power and transient possessions convince the general population that they will all be able to live in peace, harmony, and prosperity by killing a bunch of strangers

just one more time. The rank and file seem perpetually duped, and this species seems incapable of learning a lesson.

The result of this planet's immortal state of combat has almost always been *no positive change* for the majority. On the contrary, this majority often endures incredible pain, suffering, hardship, and devastation.

Mankind unwittingly fosters the continuance of all these trespasses by glorifying the increasing wealth and power of the greatest oppressors among them! ("Unwitting" may actually be a more appropriate name for this species than "Mankind.") The small minority of oppressors has time after time convinced mankind at large to scapegoat whom or whatever will provide a distraction from the robbery and brutalities that these very same oppressors are actually perpetrating.

Attitude malfunctions have taken hypnotic root within the general population and account for its almost bizarre, apparently unconscious willingness to participate in this self-destruction. The hypnotic rooting of systemic requirements and regulations into the general population is accomplished through widespread and varied communications and information systems collectively known as "The Media." The very admirable ability of these systems to inform and unify is completely incongruent with the despicable functions they enable. The content of their messaging is most often poisonous, commercial, or inane.

Perhaps the most accurate description of these Earthlings is found in their own catch all quasi-medical reference term "schizophrenia." It defines a certain lack of ability to recognize the difference between subjective and objective reality. Earthlings use this label to demean and isolate select individuals. The irony is that the species as a unit has long embraced this same condition as a way of life.

The continuously combative and violent norm was (and still is) supported by the vast history of humankind until a segment of the population calling themselves "Tibetans" attained a semblance of sanity. Finally it happened. A group appeared who did enough mental work to make their *walk* match their *talk*. An isolated, peaceful, cooperative people developed the kind of culture that humans had, up to that point, given a great deal of lip service but no concrete attention. After having ranked among the most ferocious warriors on Earth for several centuries, the Tibetans decided that peace was more

productive than war and compassion better than greed. At the height of their sanity, twenty percent of the Tibetan population was composed of Monks and Nuns—beings whose employment was to perpetuate positive states. Peace, joy, environmental respect, and natural beauty reigned for centuries.

Then other Earthlings invaded and killed the Tibetans for the purpose of stealing their land and natural resources. A few of the more sympathetic Earthlings made some valiant efforts to correct this, but most either ignored the holocaust or whined in graceless impotence.

That was the Council's report.

Don't make any long term plans, folks. We'll be taking a trip soon. Don't bother packing. Where we are going, you won't need what you think you own.

I hope that when the aliens eat our energy they will find us more palatable than we can possibly find ourselves at this point. On the other hand, they may find our energy toxic. If our energy is toxic to them, it might be a stroke of poetic justice and an ironically appropriate final act for us to poison superior beings, as we have more or less already done in Tibet.

A QUOTE

Reporter: "So Mahatma, what do you think of Western Civilization?"

Gandhi: "I think it would be a good idea."

“A Working Class Hero Is Something To Be”

Common sense started screaming in my ear at about the same time puberty arrived. Common sense was pissed off that most of the information being thrown at it was so obviously inaccurate and so often nonsensical.

I reacted to this like a cartoon character that was mean enough to drop an anvil on someone and dumb enough to run under it as it was falling.

Every generation makes attempts to escape the mistakes and evils of the previous generation. Progress comes in small doses. Some members of my generation took drastic steps to insure that the separation from our parents' accepted reality would result in a more serious and lasting hold on our own.

Looking for unorthodox sources of information in the psychedelic 1960s was so much easier and more dangerous than at other times in history. Things that could help a lot and things that could hurt severely were both readily available. They often came in the same package. The psychedelic drug culture opened new doors of perception but massive chemical side effects and societal bullshit denied us the mental stability necessary to deal with what was on the other side of those doors. Some of us made the wrong choices and died young. Others rode the right choices out of control and died young.

My earliest drug experiences were very pleasant. Being already crazy as a child in the 1950s, the drug scene sent me into a metaphysical back flip that was temporarily stabilizing. I gained the calm and confidence that come from having had a loving family forever. My first tab of LSD taught me that *forever* is always right here and now. The loving family part revolved around the messengers and messages of *our music*. Friends became closer than family in sharing that music's point of view and the very risky mental explorations that were so much a part of its message. Music was more than background accompaniment. It was often the road map for our voyages.

We visited other dimensions together. We had psychic experiences that couldn't be translated into language well enough to discuss them with parents or teachers, even if those relationships had been good enough to encourage discussion.

Some of our messengers and role models sold out and became less inspiring to us quickly. Some stayed consistently influential and productive until their untimely deaths. The rare few (Bob Dylan, Stevie Wonder, Paul Simon, Carlos Santana, etc.) continue on with consistent quality. As great as any were and these rare few continue to be, there are many people who feel that John Lennon was in a class by himself.

He was never afraid to be completely human and expose his soul to the rest of the world with reckless abandon. He made music that was used as a straightforward, fear-and-bullshit dissolving, love-fostering tool. Mr. Lennon bravely supported and invented positive causes that made him as unpopular in certain circles as Martin Luther King was with the Ku Klux Klan and the Dalai Lama is with the Chinese Communist government.

John Lennon was murdered within a year of Bob Marley's death as our American military industry's government was promoting its bizarre Star Wars program. The “All you need is love” concept is one that some spiritual traditions but almost no governments or cultures have ever been able to understand, much less cultivate.

Media often creates emotion for its own purposes. When Mr. Lennon was killed, there was a shock felt around the world that the media didn't have to create. He was one of the twentieth century's greatest representatives and continues to be an inspiration to the billions of us who would still like to "give peace a chance."

Powerful people still selfishly sponsor the deaths of many well intended military personnel and innocent civilians. Some do it consciously and directly while others do it unwittingly. These people may be evil, ill, or just ignorant. My Temple mates would say that these troublemakers are in need of compassion, as is everyone. Maybe they are right. Maybe we need to muster a lot more feeling for even the worst among us in order to stop the bleeding and make history a little happier. The winners of battles and the takers of territory write what we learn as "history." That is why our history books are so riddled with falsehoods, war oriented, biased, and barbaric.

But there are others who would rather see peace and happiness thrive as a global condition. We are many, but perhaps too polite. We may solve these ancient puzzles of violence and war some day. It would be nice if they stayed solved long enough to give us a more pleasant and truthful history book. If murder for material profit is ever replaced by harmonious improvement for its own sake, you can be sure that Mr. Lennon's status will be elevated from rock star to saint in our history books.

Thank you, John.

"And in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make."

TRANSCENDENTAL MEDICATION

Finding your intelligence through such proper channels as sober meditation and sanely acquired experiential knowledge is the way to go. Knowing this doesn't stop me from occasionally leaving the Temple I now live in. I trade in a day of Transcendental Meditation for a day of Transcendental Medication.

I don't recommend it. I just do it.

Everyone says, "You can't get there from here. Drug induced enlightenment is short-lived at best, deadly at its worst, and illusory under any circumstances." I'm sure they are right. My approach to mind altering substances continues to modify.

But Transcendental Medication was my generation's original ticket to psychic and spiritual reality in the first place, so I cannot badmouth it altogether.

Cowboys killing so-called Indians, the Mafia's exploits, and World War Two movies were all heavily romanced by the public in 1950s and 1960s America. Hot dogs were a nickel, cigarettes cost a quarter a pack, and both were considered healthy. Period teenagers were involved in yet another era of gang wars and violence. *West Side Story's* Jets and Sharks were role models.

I wanted a pet dog and annoyed my parents until they consented. They pledged that within two weeks we would drive out to the Bide-a-Wee Home and rescue a poor little barker from extinction.

They had no idea what my plans for the animal were.

Unable to wait, I immediately drew up a training plan for this canine killer-to-be. A dummy was built of old clothes and stuffed with newspapers so the dog would have something to practice its brutality upon. My pet would be named *Assassin*. It would be well trained to, and have a great passion for, murder. It would become all teeth and claws, with no mercy.

In that two week span between building the dummy and actually going to get the dog, the Beatle's *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album came out and LSD began to melt my anger and cruelty.

The dog did get rescued from the pound but experienced a totally different fate than the one originally planned for her. In a single day she narrowly escaped being killed and also narrowly escaped becoming a killer herself. I named the dog Sergeant Pepper. The dummy became a harmless Halloween ornament.

The idea of a female sergeant was unheard of in the 1960s. That idea alone made Sargie a neighborhood favorite, but she was so playful and friendly that she would have become popular with the neighbors anyway. Sergeant Pepper never hurt anyone in her life. Except for a few emergency situations, neither have I.

Two potential assassins never came into being. Transcendental Medication and the music it rode in on were responsible.

MDISCLAIMER

I stopped doing hallucinogens in 1980 after about five hundred trips. Nearly all of the former hardcore *experiencers* that are still alive and coherent have quit completely or lightened up drastically.

Let me say again that no part of this book is an endorsement of hard drugs or a suggestion that anyone take the Transcendental Medication route. I must strongly advise against severe and ridiculous excess. Parts of the psychedelic/narcotic experience are as dangerous as using rocket fuel in a moped—surely more dangerous than it's worth for most folks. Some of the roads get very bumpy. People died on them. Some people are still dying on them. I died of a narcotic overdose and needed two shots of adrenaline to revive in the hospital. Many of my friends were not that lucky.

I'm also luckier than many in that all the bumpy roads eventually led me to a very stable mental home base. Not all the folks who survived the landing did so with both feet on the ground.

Transcendental Medication experiences were not always the smartest directions to take, but they have allowed me residence in a state of mind where most folks don't even get to be tourists. I wish all my dead friends could have gotten here with me. I wish all the surviving damaged ones, the walking wounded, had gotten where they wanted to go.

The Society for Creative Maladjustment

*Based on a speech by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Dedicated to him, the Giraffe Society, Giraffes everywhere,
and to the Giraffe that lives in each of us.*

Most institutions, including government, religious, and economic ones, share a stance that profits when the public craves stability, fears change, and clings religiously to status quo. These institutions promote as well as embody that craving for stability and that fear of change.

In a vain, ridiculous, and doomed quest for permanence, status quo attempts to avoid the growing pains and power shifts required by progressive change. One method used to accomplish profitable stagnation is to downplay the new and better. Status quo has tagged brilliant folks throughout history with some pretty dubious titles in an attempt to trivialize the importance of what these people had to say. We've heard "fruitcake," "revolutionary," "crazy," "heretic," "traitor," "on the fringe," "dangerous," "weirdo," "loose cannon," and "commie" every now and then, but the label most often used in polite society to describe those who would rock the boat is "maladjusted."

Status quo itself is something that lives in a glass house and really shouldn't be throwing stones. Fear, bigotry, war, poverty, disease, and poisoning the biosphere are all stones with which our established systems could justifiably be hit. Many societal trends are accepted. They are not all well adjusted. The same could be said of the people who blindly follow these trends. Not long ago our society considered owning other people to be well adjusted.

It is unfortunate that so many of our better, kinder, more humane human citizens suppress or even amputate their feelings in order to fit in and gain acceptance. They are often frozen in non-action. They accept the unacceptable in fear of the social penalties for being thought maladjusted. This impotent intelligence may be even sadder than the brutal ignorance it complies with.

Some folks believe that even the most intense human suffering can be tolerated, as long as they are not the particular humans who are doing the suffering. Most of us are better than that. Most of us cannot comfortably adjust to brutality. Some are courageous enough to speak out in a maladjusted manner against such injustices.

Look at the folks who were considered maladjusted by most of the people who shared their era! Jesus, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, Copernicus—there's no end to the list. Isn't it amazing that more people aren't excitedly running toward becoming creatively maladjusted rather than being frightened away from it?

When Mother Teresa first began her mission, "everyone thought she was cracked." This quote is from Father Gabrich, a fellow Albanian expatriate and fifty-year friend of Mother's. He said the first Mass given in the first rooms where Mother began her care of the sick and poor. There are now very few people of *any* religion who do not recognize her as a Saint. She bucked the traditionalists with an inner strength that a "well adjusted" person cannot access. She didn't just sidestep, but actually defied conventions of the very church that her life was based upon. She did so with a revolutionary attitude that leaned on ferocious courage and dismantled even the most liberally minded ignorance. She made the world a better place by sticking her neck out.

It's not just famous people who do the creatively maladjusted thing.

The Giraffe Society recognizes and awards people worldwide who stick their neck out for the greater good. They have a long list of regular folks just like us who are charter members of this particular branch of the Society for Creative Maladjustment.

An older couple walks to the bank. They have spent most of their lives in frosty winters of northern America. They are going to transfer accounts to a sunny retirement spot, and to arrange for the sale of the home they are ready to leave.

Before they can get to the bank, they meet a cold, hungry, homeless man with a heart-wrenching true story. They listen. The couple never makes it to the bank that day. Instead, they take the man back to their home.

The couple's next trip to the bank is to refinance the mortgage on their house, not sell it. They open a homeless shelter in that house and never move south. Their sunny retirement spot is now internal and they have never been happier.

They are publicly acknowledged and awarded membership in the Giraffe Society by virtue of their spiritual membership in Dr. King's Society for Creative Maladjustment. At one time, the suffering man who they met on the way to the bank was a member, too. He got lost, had some bad breaks, slipped downhill, and his membership lapsed. He has pulled himself back together now, helps to manage the shelter, and is again a member in good standing of *The Society*—and society at large.

He got by with a little help from his friends.

It can be said that many Monks and Nuns at this Temple are full time members of *The Society for Creative Maladjustment*. They live without sex, without alcohol, and do not eat after noon. They deprive themselves of many things that most of us consider to be essential.

There are folks who see these choices as signs of maladjustment, but the results of these labors increase the ability of these Nuns and Monks to help other people. They are focusing on things they believe to be more important than material ease and luxury, or even physical comfort.

Are you someone who *feels it*? Are you someone who admires what that old couple did? Do you understand the good intentions and efforts of the Southeast Asian Temple dwellers that are described in parts of this book? If so, then you are probably someone who, at least occasionally, does a decent thing for a person in need whether or not others think you are well adjusted or maladjusted for doing so.

Thank you.

On behalf of all of your fellow creatures, and myself, thank you very much. *Any* helpful action can be a good one. What appears to be a small thing can end up having a big impact in the long run. Goodness multiplies very quickly some times.

If you don't feel the point yet, it doesn't mean you are a bad person. There are logical, if not always obvious, reasons for any behavior. Some of us have been screwed over so severely that

we have a right to not recover from it, to stay isolated from, bitter toward, and even afraid of our fellow humans. The major problem with this approach is that it doesn't work. We hurt ourselves more than we hurt anyone else by using it. Being right doesn't help as much as forgiving does. Forgiving others is better than suffering.

Everyone has goodness in them. Even those who initially appear evil can turn saintly once they get past the fear and mental clutter that inspire cynicism and neurotic self-concern. When good intentions are put into action, when one person does something nice for another, those fears and that mental clutter begin to dissolve. Everyone benefits. The roots of evil start to rot and begin to pass away.

Every action contains its own automatic, congruent reward or punishment that is inseparable from it. Both instant and long term karma are facts of life.

Reading and talking will only take us so far. Only the *doing* gets a thing done.

Thinking, talking, or reading about doing is like trying to scratch an itchy head through a leather hat. It is a good start but doesn't get the job done. People have talked about wanting to live on a peaceful, happy planet since the beginning of people. It hasn't happened yet.

The singular chance for the survival and happiness of our loved ones, ourselves, and future generations is being defined by what we do to increase cooperation, happiness, health, sanity, and respect for each other right now.

The Society for Creative Maladjustment has cleaned the red carpet in anticipation of your arrival. This society's door is always open. When anyone joins up, everyone gets stronger. All approaches to a better world—whether these approaches are scientific, spiritual, economic, or political—must lead through this door eventually. There is no sensible option to the compassionate cooperation inspired by a constructive and creative maladjustment to the world's evils.

“Every society has its protectors of the status quo and its fraternities of the indifferent who are notorious for sleeping through revolutions. But today our very survival depends on our ability to stay awake, to adjust to new ideas, to remain vigilant and to face the challenge of change.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Among the most remarkable features characterizing Zen we find these: spirituality, directness of expression, disregard of form or conventionalism, and frequently an almost wanton delight in going astray from respectability.”

D.T. Suzuki

“Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore. We have seen the future, and the future is ours.”

Cesar Chavez

“Without deviation from the norm, progress is not possible.”

Frank Zappa

CHAPTER 3

Anger Bad, Recover Good

Why is this razor-sharp piece of dogshit here? Because I'm surely not the only one who has ever had this bad a day. If you ever have one, I hope that you will remember just how warped this little bit of poetic psychosis is. Maybe that will help you to laugh yourself back into sanity regardless of how badly the circumstances suck.

Gonna Kill

Gonna kill that bitch, I swear I am
She treats me like a dog, though I know I'm quite a man
She so much disrespected me that she deserves to die
Gonna break her nose, cut off her toes, you know that I don't lie

Gonna kill that prick, he stole all my money
Walked 'round laughin 'bout it like he thought it funny
Gonna beat him fuckin senseless so he never will forget, see
When I'm done, he'll up and run, and wish he never met me

Gonna kill that dog, he bit my ass
Chased me in the gutter where I stepped on broken glass
He was chewin on my butt like he ain't ever been fed
Gonna whip'm, whomp'm, stomp'm til he sure be fuckin dead

Gonna kill that cat, she clawed my eye
All I ever tried to do was pet her on the thigh
She was scratchin, she was bitin—motherfucker sure was frightenin
Gonna soak her fur in gasoline and do up some ignitin

I'm gonna blow up that store, they charged me too much
Every time they see me coming they go rapid on the touch
They nickel and they dime me, and they never give right change
When they're a pile of rubble they'll be feelin pretty strange

Gonna kill everybody, they're all fuckin with me
They lock me up, empty my cup, and think that I don't see
They tell me what to do and when—that really takes some balls
They're out o' luck, I don't give a fuck, I'm gonna kill them all

I'm as human as you bastards are and I'll say a little more
I'm not your fucking banker and you're not my goddamn whore
You'll treat me like a person or I'll cut your weasel throat
Before I sail on out of here in my western-bound boat

Gonna kill my mother and my father too
When I'm done with them, I'll beat *you* black and blue
Better get your ass to runnin, cause you know I'm surely comin
And when I slice you up, you fuck, you surely will be bummin

This is too much work.

It makes more sense to just kill myself.

Go Fuck Yourself

Some of the points here are well taken, but this bit is rude enough to show a little tweakiness, and maybe even a mental illness!

If you think some mythic cartoon character from someone else's ancient imagination is going to ride in on a white horse or fly in on a cloud at the last minute to save us from the results of things we knew all along were wrong but kept doing anyway,

go fuck yourself.

If you care when The Cowboys are torturing The Redskins on the football field but don't care that it happened in real life,

go fuck yourself.

If these phrases are part of your life: "I vote for the lesser of two evils," "Ethics don't apply to business," "That's just the way it is," "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em," or "It ain't what you know, it's who you know and who you blow,"

go fuck yourself.

If you would step over a hundred hungry and homeless people to get to a charity benefit for animals at the country club,

go fuck yourself.

If you like Black music, clothing, slang, style, and cool, but you distrust or despise Black people whom you pass on the street—even though you have never personally met those individuals,

go fuck yourself.

If you've never given a moment's thought to the difference between being self-centered (in the negative sense) and being centered in self (in the more positive sense)—well, that happens. A lot of us just don't get exposed to those kinds of notions. But if you don't think about it now,

go fuck yourself.

If you work all day at a job you don't like to make money you don't need to buy things you don't want in order to impress people you don't really care about,

well, you've already fucked yourself.

If you are the kind of person who would put a venomous chapter called "Go Fuck Yourself" in what is otherwise a perfectly good book,

go fuck yourself.

The Mad Hatter's 9th AfterMath

This bit's fun. Spread it online.

Try multiplying the number nine. It always follows the same design. I have no idea why nine stays in line, but it's something I'd love to define.

Add the digits in your final answer and the nine will always appear. It is no magic trick. It's not crafty or slick. It requires no whiskey or beer.

Nine always ends in the same place it began. It enjoys the style of other numbers awhile, but goes home just as soon as it can.

The number nine rides in a circle, both sociable and self-contained. It's at home as it rides through the heart of the mind that speaks to our bigger brain.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
x 9	x 9	x 9	x 9	x 9	x 9	x 9	x 9	x 9
9	18	27	36	45	54	63	72	81

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
+ 8	+ 7	+ 6	+ 5	+ 4	+ 3	+ 2	+ 1	+ 0
9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

$$9 \times 16 = 144 \rightarrow 1+4+4=9$$

$$9 \times 12 = 108 \rightarrow 1+0+8=9$$

$$9 \times 155 = 1395 \rightarrow 1+3+9+5=18 \rightarrow 1+8=9$$

$$9 \times 222 = 1998 \rightarrow 1+9+9+8=27 \rightarrow 2+7=9$$

$$9 \times 135 = 1215 \rightarrow 1+2+1+5=9$$

$$9 \times 111 = 999 \rightarrow 9+9+9=27 \rightarrow 2+7=9$$

Transference/Denial

Recognizing one's own weakness is a serious strength.

I've got to do a better job of facing my own brain trash. Cleaning up is impossible without first admitting there is dirt. At times I can't find the point that I've missed, and I get pissed at the person who points it out to me.

How wrong is it to be so embarrassed by a thought or action that the only way to regain satisfaction is to transfer the fault, to transfer the blame, to a bystander never involved in your game? *Transferring* responsibility for one's own thoughts and actions proves that one's mind has lost its traction! Why does this happen? Is it unclear vision that lacks power of decision to distinguish truth from lies? When thoughts lose their honesty, so do actions. It is time to stop the bleeding and end the self-defeating tendencies.

The truth stays disguised to the blind ego's eyes, but wisdom folk are immune to this plight as they subdue causes of mental blight by keeping all actions and thoughts in strong light.

A determined effort toward healing often reveals problems in dealing with repealing the feeling of mentally reeling from the effects of stealing away from self, and then trying to blame someone else for a hand that, in fact, contains cards one has dealt to oneself.

Dismiss the vanity that keeps us afraid of facing the reality that we have made! Parents and history, deeply buried mystery, may have originally contributed to current problems. It doesn't matter. Responsibility for the control of any life always belongs to the person whose life it is. It's been said before and it's worth saying again, my friend. Attempts at transferring all the responsibility for your personal problems to anything else is a lot like shooting yourself and blaming the bullet.

Deleting this transference and denial bullshit is essential. Facing yourself is elemental. Bullshit may be a fertilizing asset to the growth of buds and seedlings, but it is a powerful liability in the growth of human beings. (Don't be hard on yourself. Maintain your traction. We all aim at big numbers, but we all learn in fractions.)

Dealing With Pain

Everyone has had pain. Everyone knows it sucks. Nobody wants it.

The Monks and Nuns I live with like to look at the other side of pain. They agree that pain sucks but also believe that what sucks in life should be observed, and then patiently dealt with as quickly as possible. Pain is not something to dwell upon. Dwelling on trouble, heartache, or physical pain only reinforces it.

There is a bright side to anything. There are also methods to help relieve suffering. The most productive course of action is to find that bright side of any painful situation, practice those methods to relieve suffering, and give them the lion's share of focus without doing extensive moaning and groaning about the problem. Life is all about solutions, not problems. No whiners live at this temple!

It seems as if many Wisdom Professionals must actually take an oath to stay entrained on the bright side of any given situation! They always look for what could be learned from painful experiences, and how to use that education to advantage. They certainly don't deny that pain is present, but as little attention as possible is given to the suffering and discomfort aspects of that pain.

Arthritis is one of the many painful things in our world that suck. A decade ago, twice within two years, my skeleton stopped cooperating. Bad ankles and knees wouldn't let me walk. Bad hips and a bad back wouldn't let me sit. A bad neck would only allow me to be in a flat position facing up, with my back on the floor. It was time to lie down. This went on for three months each time.

After a week of mumbling curses at the ceiling, I finally figured out two things. These have gotten me through many painful periods since.

- ❖ Everything is what it is what it is, regardless of what I wish it to be. It is better to find something positive in your attitude and something constructive to do with your day than to lose your mind.
- ❖ If you do lose your mind, it doesn't really go anywhere.

Those painful periods taught me perseverance and made time for a lot of education. Without life's usual distractions, the self gets to know itself pretty well. What I learned during these painful experiences has helped me to stay alive in many difficult situations since, and will no doubt help in dealing with future pains and other difficult situations when they arise.

Pain will happen, but much of the suffering associated with it can be alleviated by attitude adjustment. The old expression is true. "We cannot change the wind, but we can adjust the sails."

The two worst potential reactions to pain are performed by rude assholes that take their pain out on innocent bystanders, and the poor silly bastards who take their pain out on themselves. These unfortunate roads always lead to more pain.

I hope, my friend, that you never have any form of pain. But you will. And when you do, I hope that your attitude adjustment toward that pain helps you, and all the people around you that you influence, to suffer less severely and heal more quickly.

Chapter 4

The Costa Rican Papers

The Bizarre Costa Rican Death and Reincarnation of the Fearless Puppy

There is an important definition of reincarnation that does not involve physical death. It was described well in *Reincarnation through Common Sense*, the book between *Fearless Puppy on American Road* and this one. There's no need to rewrite it all here. The short version of it says that the subject of reincarnation can be seen from an angle that has nothing to do with migrating souls entering new physical bodies.

We are each constantly being reborn within this very life. Each time a person changes his or her mind and acts on it, that change is added to that person's makeup. He or she becomes, to a certain extent, a new person. Just how new we become is up to the person who is doing the becoming. It can be a slight temporary change or a big and more permanent one. The change can have minimal effect on one individual or bend the history of the entire world.

The new you or me always has the option to turn any new thoughts or attitudes into solid habits and convictions. This can take a long time and require consistent reinforcement. This mental rebirth, this metaphorical reincarnation that is referred to here, often involves both instant recognition and continuing process.

This functional definition of daily reincarnation is the root system of evolution. As we change the thoughts that produce our actions, we also influence our development not only as individuals, but also as cultures, societies, and as a species. Evolution happens more quickly, pleasantly, and efficiently when we consciously direct it, but it will happen regardless of whether we pay attention to it or not.

I need to start practicing my own very consciously directed kind of reincarnation pretty damn quickly. This "calling" I feel is much more than a spiritual direction. It is time to shape up or die in the more literal sense. Like so many folks my age, I have been indulging excessively for decades. This pleasant stupidity won't last much longer before the physical degeneration invites death to pay its permanent visit. Death will, of course, happen to us all anyway—but the evidence says that with a little bit of conscious effort and change, I can delay it.

So it seems that in order to put off physical death, I have to accomplish a more spiritual death—a slaying of old, destructive habits and a dismantling of the attitudes responsible for them.

I am going to use the "nothing to it but to not do it" approach. This means I'll have to consistently recognize that all the destructive habits and attachments, and restrictive relationships with anything or anyone, are and have always been self-manufactured. That's right. I built these habits with my own thoughts and actions. No one ever tied me down and forced me to take part in any unhealthy activity. I orchestrated my own dissipation, and I can certainly orchestrate the attitude adjustments that will produce the right changes in habit so that I can increase the number of years I get to stay on the planet.

As with everything else my generation has accomplished or failed at, I'll do this orchestrating in an excessive way. Several near-lifelong habits have been instantly evicted including: cigarettes, fried food, coffee, sugar, and forty years of daily ganja and near-daily alcohol consumption. Just to make things interesting, I'm also going to quit a three-decade

mission of inventing independent charity projects and raising funds for great ecological groups, my significant other, all my friends, my country, and a few other things that I can't remember right now due to the floating dizziness I feel from the withdrawal symptoms that are kicking in.

I'm pretty sure I don't want to permanently quit doing the charity projects, having friends, intimate relations with women, or ganja. Those changes will be temporary. But an iron logic dictates that cigarettes, fried foods, alcohol, and other health liabilities need to be drastically reduced immediately and should probably be eliminated altogether, in the long run. To that end, I'm off everything all at once. Things are getting trippy very quickly. I'm writing this on a plane to Costa Rica where, upon arrival and besides going through the withdrawal processes, all my remaining teeth will be pulled and replaced by implants. That should snap a few of my old habits out of their sockets! (At least the ones that involve chewing.)

There are usually nine months between conception and birth. This being a rebirth of sorts, it seems fitting that I stay here in Costa Rica for that length of time. It may end up being easier and a lot more fun than withdrawal symptoms and losing teeth should be! According to almost all reports, there are very good reasons to spend time in Costa Rica besides dental work and reincarnation. Most reports about this country are very positive. All these shining reports seem to stem from and revolve around one major fact.

Costa Rica may be the only country in the world that has been without a standing military for the past fifty years. The population hasn't had to deal with any deadly combat or threatening enemies. Fear-based, defensive tendencies are not part of the national psyche. This lack of any fear from foreign attack (admittedly made possible by a major US military presence) has fostered a practical, humane, working consideration for all living things. Costa Rica put its resources into more intelligent processes than the ones most countries allow to occupy their policies and suck up their budgets.

The country has a ninety seven percent literacy rate, an unparalleled respect for nature, and a thriving ecotourism industry that supports that respect. While CR has only one-quarter of one percent of the world's total landmass, it contains a full five percent of the biodiversity on Earth. Habitats range from rainforests and volcanoes to beaches and mangrove swamps. Environmental law protects twenty five percent of the country through an enlightened national conservation system that is considered an international role model. This, in combination with the lack of military concerns, makes Costa Rica perhaps the most comfortable and securely protected nation on the planet. Looking at nature as something to cherish rather than conquer has been a benefit to the natives, as well as to their environment. The people here are as beautiful as the natural surroundings. This is understandable. The war consciousness embraced by most of the world has been replaced by ease, security, and self-respect as well as the fondness of nature. This cultural package produces more smiles than fear. If a culture doesn't focus on fear, the odds increase drastically that the citizens within will stay happy. Happiness shows on people. It keeps them from aging quickly. There are drugs and (mostly non-violent) crime, especially in the capital city—but nearly all reports say that Costa Rica is a happy, democratic, prosperous, and politically stable nation in the midst of a very unstable region.

Some of Costa Rica's autonomy can be attributed to the fact that at the time Columbus landed there in 1502, and for a few hundred years after that, Guatemala City was the capitol of the Spanish empire. No one wanted to bother much with a province as far away and sparsely populated as Costa Rica. As usual, the folks doing the colonizing didn't like the idea of having to

work their own land. Costa Rica lacked enough natives for a ruling class to enslave, and so was mostly left alone. This lack of colonial concern with or intrusion into Costa Rica allowed the nation to develop its own pleasant peculiarities. These peculiarities include the nation's very democratic nature. Freedom has almost always been abundant here.

I will be reporting to you about Costa Rica's ecological, cultural, party, environmental, spiritual, and dental/medical complexion—and about any unusual adventures that might pop up. It seems that adventures in what may be the world's only fifty-year demilitarized society might turn out to be very interesting. My continuing withdrawal symptoms and reincarnation from habitual behaviors should be interesting, too!

I'm not the only person going through this. As the surviving folks of my generation decay, reality pushes many of us into such processes. A lot of younger folks are also smart enough to get on that wagon while it is still rolling in good health, and before the process becomes a necessary part of survival. Gaining mental clarity and avoiding physical degeneration always have been good ideas at any age. They still are.

If life doesn't throw any unexpected curves at me, this could be great! It should be easy and pleasant to get in tune with the legendary Costa Rican ethic of "Pura Vida" (Pure Life).

San Jose, Costa Rica—Spiders on Acid / Love in a Juice Glass / Hell on a Street Corner

Did you ever see that *National Geographic* episode about the effects of drugs on wildlife? One very impressive experiment featured a lone spider. Researchers gave the unsuspecting little arachnid a bit of LSD, in the hope of observing behavioral changes. They got their show. Our eight-legged hero began spinning for the camera. The web resulting from this marriage of spider and hallucinogen looked like an Escher staircase scene after a visit from a psychotic bulldozer.

Welcome to San Jose, Costa Rica, a bizarre architectural schizophrenia unparalleled anywhere in the known universe. An average city street can house a white stately-columned mansion next to a dilapidated red, yellow, and black Rasta restaurant next to a rococo masterpiece of a building in powder blue that neighbors an orange grocery store sitting next to a soot-charred auto repair shop beside a massive post-modern glass-front high-rise office building adjoining a cemetery fenced in protectively by concertina wire while the ornate church on the same grounds sits with doors wide open and gold crosses exposed.

When I first got off the plane and was waiting in the immigration line, a fellow traveler from America struck up a conversation. He was making his fifth trip to Costa Rica. I asked him for the most important thing he could tell a first time visitor who had nine months to spend in the Land of Pura Vida. He replied, “Stay out of San Jose. It’s the asshole of Costa Rica. The rest of the country is beautiful.”

Of course, he didn’t know I was deathdeep in a withdrawal experience and that San Jose was the perfect place for me. There are plenty of great opportunities to die here—and just as many opportunities to be reincarnated.

I’m staying in an apartment recommended by the dentist’s office. It turns out to be owned by the dentist’s sister. It costs twice as much as the rents I have recently paid in Vermont or New Mexico, and of course much more than the nothing-at-all I’ve paid for rent during most of my forty-plus years on the road.

There are none of the cute, playful monkeys in the courtyard that were featured on the website brochure that the dentist showed me. The courtyard is just a twenty square foot concrete slab with a few small potted plants in a corner. The landlord team of husband and wife are good-hearted people but obviously of the “entitled” class. Several of their sports cars occupy most of the concrete slab. Most of the view from my window includes their massive industrial-gauge metal garage doors and a less than attractively built stone wall. There is a musty, moldy, backed-up-sewer type smell from a leaky wall between the bed and bathroom that makes breathing less fun than it should be. I’m going to the dentist this afternoon to see how fast we can set up the work schedule so I can get out of here. Those monkeys are in Costa Rica, somewhere. I’ll find them as soon as my mouth is reincarnated.

Some discomfort has kicked in, but I’ve had much more severe withdrawal symptom experiences in much less hospitable places. My program to get healthy should be easy to follow here. Quitting fried food and coffee in an apartment will be a lot easier than quitting heroin as a homeless person on the street was thirty years ago.

Things looked pretty bleak upon entry to San Jose that first day. I was disgusted and almost ready to go right back home. But by the third day, Tico (that's what Costa Ricans call themselves) hospitality had me feeling good. The Passion Flower and Saint John's Wort herbs, and the stepped-up meditation time, also helped. The assorted withdrawals are already starting to lighten up a little as they run their course. I've been through withdrawals, physical pains, and similar problems so often that such pain isn't much of a bother anymore.

It is amazing just how much a person's self-built attitude is responsible for sculpting that person's happiness or misery in almost any circumstance. Sure, there have been plenty of changes in my external reality over the past few days, but nothing to account for how much better I feel now than I felt when catching my first gaze of San Jose. The people were just as nice and the neighborhood was the same when I felt so badly about being here a few days ago. The streets, the trees, the flowers were all just as lovely then as they are now. George Harrison was right. It is "all in your mind."

Some good material changes helped. The leak in the wall is being fixed for the next tenant and the landlords moved me to a second floor apartment with hardwood floors and a large outdoor patio that views the mountains. These landlords get nicer every time I see them. He works for the Costa Rican government's Foreign Service and she comes from a rich family of clothing manufacturers. This lovely couple, Esteban and Suantzy, adopted a pregnant street dog whose back legs were destroyed by a car. They built the crippled dog a set of strap-on rear training wheels. They take the dog, Bonita, for regular wheel-walks. Esteban and Suantzy kept one of Bonita's pups and got the rest farmed out to good homes.

Knowing these people a little better makes it hard to think ill of them for owning an excessive number of cars, but I don't like the lord-of-the-hacienda tone they use with their laborers. The gap between the social and economic classes is more severe here than it is in America. It seems that even the nicest of rich folks treat the help like shit.

Looking around San Jose for a few more days reinforced all my first impressions. It seems an odd mix of hip, pretty, small-city bits thrown in a blender with what post-apocalypse Detroit will probably look like.

Some sections of San Jose seem like a lovely little country town at first glance—but not for long. A few minutes of watching the bizarre traffic flow responsible for the barely breathable air makes it hard to think of any part of this monstrous city as a country village.

But the East End of San Jose rocks! There are Japanese, Argentine, Italian, and Caribbean restaurants within two blocks of my apartment on Fifteenth Avenue. The Caribbean place has live Calypso music on Thursday and Friday nights. There is a community Cultural Center featuring a large theater nearby. The neighborhood also houses an architectural university, a language school, a Brahmin meditation center, a kindergarten school, a bowling alley with pool tables, a public elementary school, several eateries serving local dishes, and a vegetarian tea house/restaurant featuring freshly squeezed fruit juices. The latter has a yoga and massage school attached to it. I'll be less clever than usual for a few weeks while the initial withdrawal poisons move out of my brain and the adaptation to a new environment takes place. Today was no exception. I tried to give the juice-bar lady 20,000 Colones (\$40 US) for a juice. She insisted on only 2,000 Colones (\$4 US) and took fifteen minutes to explain the monetary system to me in

Spanish with sign language. The same friendly honesty may not be available throughout the city, but folks in this neighborhood are as friendly as anyone I've ever met anywhere. It has become obvious that my rent is as much a payment for the neighborhood as it is a payment for the apartment itself.

Besides the restaurants and cultural places, plenty of "daily" businesses are also packed within this ten block area—a supermarket, a gas station (\$1.10 US per liter), pharmacy, and computer repair shop join each other on busy streets with lots of traffic and air pollution. There are scenic quiet streets just a block or two from the noisy ones.

It is expensive to live in Costa Rica. Food can be less expensive than in America, but it depends on what you buy. Great fresh fish is often available below the US price. Anything locally produced is cheaper, but there is a massive import tax. This is responsible for things such as cars, computers, and appliances costing upwards of fifty percent more than America price. A bottle of Listerine or Morningstar soy burgers, for example, are available at three times the average US price. A \$10 jar of Vitamin C is \$22. Anything manufactured out of country has a price tag that would scare even the most financially carefree executives and trust fund kids off to a discount house.

Food is not as much of a concern for the East Enders as it is for some of their downtown cousins a couple of miles away. Some of San Jose is charming if not beautiful, but central downtown contains some of the most gruesome sections of city in the world. The streets are always crowded with pedestrians and in places log-jammed to a standstill by long lines of people waiting for the public busses. Traffic is insane. Drivers are stressed and aggressive enough to make New York City cabbies and LA road-ragers look like Monks and Nuns. Potholes are massive. They are everywhere in the central district and can eat half a chassis quickly. Cars don't live very long downtown. Neither do some of the people. Deep, wide-open drainage ditches and pits are a deadly hazard to pedestrians. Although the safety concerns need to be rethought, some modified version of the ditch system is very necessary. Deadly flash flood runoff is not unusual during the rainy season. It can sweep a person away to their doom very quickly.

Certain streets are thickly lined with homeless people who sleep singly on cardboard, or three to four on a decaying mattress that even a self-respecting dumpster would evict. Crime is increasing rapidly. Picking of pockets is the crime of choice on the streets. Violence infrequently rears its ugly head, but even at its worst San Jose is still a good deal tamer than most major US cities. Murders and muggings are rare. The three million people of San Jose suffer as few murders in a year (fifty or so) as some major US cities experience every month or two! But frustration, abject poverty, and the chance to make a quick buck are driving many of the homeless to crime and drugs. There are only so many hungry kids any neighborhood can hold before the shit hits the fan.

The relatively Ghandian Tico temperament is shocked by the recent present and frightened by what the future may hold. This nervous caution has woven itself into the urban fabric very suddenly. The locals and expat Americans tell me that squalor, danger, and degradation in the central area of downtown are increasing exponentially. I'm not sure exactly what the word "exponentially" means, but there is no other word big enough to describe the disappointment Ticos have regarding the increase of trouble appearing in their capital city, and to a lesser extent throughout the country.

Many locals attribute these problems to the large and sudden influx of illegal immigrants from other countries in Central America. Twenty-five percent or so of the city's rapidly growing population supposedly falls into this category. These arbitrary aliens from just a few miles down the road have come to a more reasonable place to find a more reasonable life. Some have succeeded and become valuable assets to their new communities. Many others have not.

Other locals say the decline of the city was going to happen anyway, and that there are at least as many Costa Rican nationals out on those hellish streets as there are immigrants. Wherever these suffering folks originated, they all now suffer a daily death on the San Jose streets that rarely offers reincarnation. It is a tear-provoking sight that spreads throughout the city, although the worst of it is contained in an area of ten square blocks.

Locals may blame immigrants, fellow Costa Ricans, or the times we live in, but everyone agrees on blaming drugs. Most seem happy to see the recent influx of eight thousand or so *additional* U.S. troops, and a few U.S. ships patrolling their waters. This troop movement was supposedly inspired by the drug problem and designed to remedy it. Even those who doubt the potential effectiveness of this process are happy to see what appears to be an effort being made. Of course, whether this troop movement really has to do with a drug war, or the rumored resurgence of the Contra movement in neighboring Nicaragua, or U.S. soldiers on leave in a party-oriented culture, or a U.S. counterbalance to the recent increase in Chinese influence in Costa Rica is questionable, but the Ticos seem to believe the first option. Most of the locals that I have spoken to so far are still surprisingly naive enough to picture America as the planetary guardian riding in on a white horse. Those who have prospered and benefited most directly from the large U.S. military presence here are its most vocal supporters. But there are certainly many Ticos, from the ghettos to the universities, who think differently.

The Chinese influence is a disappointing stain on the fabric of Pura Vida. In 2007 the Costa Rican government abandoned a long time alliance with Taiwan to change its United Nations vote in favor of Communist China. This occurred as the Chinese built an Olympic-caliber stadium here at no charge to Costa Rica. I'm sure it cost more than 30 pieces of silver, but there are correlations to the better-known story. China is now one of Costa Rica's major trading partners. It seems that even Paradise is, to some extent, for sale. In Costa Rica's defense, their political corruption is probably no more severe than that of most of the world's nations. But it is disappointing to see the fabled Central American Shangri-La as a place where fat cats run rich while there are native children who don't have enough food, thousands of homeless live in the streets, cars die in a deeply pot-holed infrastructure, and this great nation's integrity gets sold cheaply to the Chinese Communist government's gangsters.

In all fairness to the area known as downtown, it stretches out for a long distance in every direction and a lot of it is no worse than any big city. Much of it is pleasant, some of it is culturally wealthy, and certain parts are beautiful--but the most central district itself defines hell as a street corner.

No description of San Jose would be complete without the following information. You will certainly see evidence of it, if you ever visit. It is not on every street corner, but you will run into it throughout the country and especially in the capital city. Prostitution is legal. Oddly enough, pimping isn't. I'm not going to do any first hand research, but from what I hear many of the prostitutes are single moms supporting children in a society that offers few other opportunities.

Not all of the working girls are independent operators. Some of the sex trade involves slavery. The government, at least on paper, is not at all sympathetic with the slavery aspect of its sex trade. Steps are being taken to uproot it, but these steps have not yet been very effective. Sex slavery occurs in every country in the world—even America. But in any country where prostitution is legal, it is easier for this criminal tragedy to slip under the radar.

There is a government department that does hooker health inspections monthly, but counterfeit documentation is not uncommon. Even if a working girl has a card saying she has been inspected, it may well be a falsified one.

There have been isolated incidents of hookers luring tourists into blind alley pocket picking situations, but not many. But the buyer needs to stay aware. As holds true for sex-for-sale activity anywhere in the world, if you roll around in the muck, you are bound to get some on you in one fashion or another.

The Costa Rican legal system saves its most potent weapons for a different type of sex crime. If you like screwing around with kids, please come here to do it. By the time Costa Rica gets done with you, you'll wish they had buried you under the jail instead of putting you in it.

On a lighter note, there is a small but thriving gay/lesbian scene in San Jose. Here's another area where I won't be doing firsthand research, but I have heard that it is a generally friendly scene. There have been just a few isolated incidences of a twenty year old making himself or herself available to a fifty or sixty year old, and the older person having his or her wallet stolen. If something seems too good to be true, it probably is—whether in a gay, straight, or not-at-all-sexual situation. This is true anywhere in the wide world. Locals suffer the same fate as tourists in this department.

Much like the hell-town of El Centro, the sex trade is more prevalent in certain districts. Luckily, there is a lot more than some potential sexual satisfaction, disease, and danger to be found in San Jose. Here's some info about a few of the more pleasant sections. The city has many monuments of historical interest as well as several great little parks featuring touches of nature and fantastic people-watching opportunities.

The National Museum on Second Avenue houses one of the most amazing pre-Columbian artifact collections ever assembled. The building is a restructured military fort that personifies Costa Rica's move away from any fragment of a warrior mentality and toward a peaceful temperament. Jade, stone, well-preserved wooden and gold pottery, jewelry, antique musical instruments, and other cultural treasures trace the Tico people's colorful history back through time into an era long before European conquest and debauchery began here.

The Plaza de Cultura in the museum area can be the most entertaining spot in town, weather permitting. Street musicians, prophets, and artists are available to the public in a 1960s Greenwich Village type free-for-all. The main action is, coincidentally enough, on East Fourth Street.

Several casinos are available to the gambler. These are often accompanied in the same or adjacent buildings by whorehouses for those interested in the types of gambles mentioned a few paragraphs ago.

Costa Rica is a very religious and sometimes spiritual country. Catholicism is the main religion and cathedrals abound in the capital city, as they do in most of Latin America. But CR also has the highest concentration of Buddhist activities in all of Central America, noticeable Brahmin and Jewish presences, Jehovah's Witnesses, and several other factions of Christian. Herbal spiritualism akin to the Wicca tradition are strongly present. There is also a good deal of New Age activity here. Yoga centers, Pilates, and various other forms of spiritually related exercise systems are very popular. Legitimate massage and acupuncture are readily available. There are even tiny smatterings of Goth and Satanism.

San Jose's central market takes up a few full city blocks and offers every type of meat, fruit, vegetable, clothing, and medicinal herb available in the country. There is a much smaller but very colorful organic market on Saturdays at Collegio Mexico.

The National Theatre is the architectural pride and joy of San Jose—and the nation. It is well worth visiting. A result of the vision of its Belgian architects and the handiwork of Italian decorators in 1897, this masterpiece of design seats a thousand people and still hosts live performances today.

There is no end to the number of day trips one can take from the city. Within striking distance are hot springs, volcanoes, jungle canopy zip-line rides, beaches, and a beautiful, unique array of flowers and wildlife.

In spite of its problems, San Jose can be a wonderful city that is as safe, often friendlier, and has as much to offer as any major city in the world. If you can stand to be in *any* place that has millions of people living in it, you would enjoy parts of this one.

The Volcano Doesn't Erupt / The Earthquake Doesn't Happen / My Dead Father Buys Lunch

My father, Morris, died at the age of eighty-nine. This happened two years ago. I had not seen him during the last ten years of his life. No one notified me at the time of his death. Several months after the fact, my estranged brother, who was the executor of Morris Rose's estate, found and contacted me. He was legally obliged to do so, within the terms of our father's will. Much to my surprise, the old man left some money to me. I had been a homeless person living in poverty for the better part of forty years. What my father left me wasn't a retirement-on-the-beach amount of money, but it was quite enough to allow a few years of dental work, habit changes, and writing. I am grateful to my dad. It was kind of him to include me in his will. We rarely agreed on anything except that life requires each participant to keep a solid strip of duct tape over his or her ass.

Brother Dearest tried to convince dad that I was not competent enough to handle the money. He advised dad to leave my share in trust, controlled by little brother, and doled out to me as this young goblin saw fit. Dad told him to fuck off. I took that move on daddy's part as well-done apology for some of my childhood's uglier moments. His final decision was to trust me with a share of what he had worked all his life to accumulate.

I got an equal share of the money, but all my father's possessions were sold at the discretion of the executor. My brother saw fit to give me one piece of memorabilia. It was my father's badge. No, he was not a policeman. He was a New York City electrical inspector for most of his life. For the last five years of his career, he was the Superintendent of Public Buildings in Brooklyn. That could have happened sooner. Moral advantages are often accompanied by financial disadvantages in our culture. An honest person usually has to work his way up through the system very slowly. Morris Rose was such a person. He could have risen through the ranks a lot more quickly by turning an occasional blind eye and playing ball with his Mafia-affiliated higher-ups.

Although not a cop, he did have certain police-like powers. These powers allowed him to enter, evacuate, and close any public building in Brooklyn that was unsafe or violated any part of the electrical code. He could have lived a wealthy life and retired a *very* rich man had he let some buildings with substandard wiring slide.

The way humans behave and the way God behaves were both things that bothered Morris. He seemed especially disturbed with God. "This whole business of everything living by killing and eating everything else is crazy. This world is crazy. God's nuts!" He had a well-taken point.

My greatest complaint about Morris is the same great complaint I have about humanity at large. He too often surrendered his personal power and potential. His mother in childhood, his "higher-ups" at work, and his wife at home continuously beat him down. He would have been much happier had he mustered the strength to seize a few opportunities while maintaining his moral compass. Had he stood up for himself a little more often, everyone around him would have felt the benefit.

Mr. Rose had little faith in his ability to control his own life. He was partially right. It can be a trying world. But, like the rest of humanity, much of his frustration resulted from a self-inflicted lack of confidence. He fit in his own canoe and knew how to row well—but Morris

lacked a faith in, or even a perception of, the fact that a river can be an ally as easily as it can be a challenging adversary. Morris lacked faith that *anything* was on his side.

Great abundances occasionally overpowered that lack, especially in later life. Morris eventually found ways to get a few things done that he couldn't quite make click earlier in life. After a forty-year marriage that would have made most folks hang themselves after ten years, Morris spent his last twenty years with two girlfriends who treated him well.

I am in Costa Rica today on the remains of Morris's money, and on the day that would have been his ninety-first birthday.

Several other dental patients beside myself are housed at the urban apartments of the dentist's sister. My neighbor and fellow dental patient Pat asked me if I wanted to take a ride this morning to see an active volcano and geyser at Poas. Poas is a few hours outside of San Jose. Pat told me, "There was an earthquake there that killed a half dozen people and did a lot of damage some months ago, but if the volcano doesn't blow and another earthquake doesn't happen, it'll be a great day!"

For the first time since his death I tacked my father's badge to my shirt. "Sounds like a great place for a birthday party, amigo! Let's go."

Rejeanne (Reggi) from southern Maine, another fellow dental patient and apartment complex resident, joined us for the trip.

None of us had been out of the city yet. We were all excited about seeing some of the famous natural beauty of Costa Rica. We were not disappointed. It was a magnificent ride.

A half hour of sheer uphill beauty led from the base of the mountain to the entrance of the Parque Nacional that contained the volcano and its geyser. A long series of switchback and horseshoe turns wound through the wild jungle that gave way to cultivated ornamental flower, strawberry, and coffee plantations every quarter mile or so on the not-quite two-lane road. Occasional small villages, fruit stands, infrequent restaurants and lodges did nothing to detract from the majesty of our climb toward this authentic death-trap/scenic paradise. Exotic orchids hung proudly from strangely twisted branches. They resembled bizarre and beautiful ornaments on some otherworldly Christmas tree. Other plants that looked a bit like rhubarb sported leaves as large as elephant ears.

We drove below the clouds, then through the clouds, then above the clouds while skirting smiling locals and happy cows. Even the vegetation seemed to be laughing.

We finally reached the park entrance. A hundred yard walk from the very small parking lot brought us to a modern museum building. Its two floors of exhibits and information explained the geographic history of the area, the active crater, and the geyser. Upstairs in the cafeteria, samples of a Costa Rican version of coffee/rum liquor were being offered free of charge. I fell off the wagon long enough to toast my father's birthday with one, and then quickly got back on the wagon. That coffee/rum shot was the most delicious beverage containing alcohol that I have ever tasted. Part of the explosively floral flavor may have been due to my very recently deceased cigarette habit and the reincarnating taste buds that came with it. But even without the fresh taste buds, this combination of fine Costa Rican coffee and rum would very easily beat similar varieties, even Kahlua, in a taste test.

Our crew moved slowly. We'd all had recent major surgery on our faces and were feeling the aftermath. Reggi was a bit fitter than her two aging companions. Pat and I didn't adapt to the altitude and humidity of the mountain immediately. Even the altitude of San Jose had been difficult for us. This mountain climbed an additional several thousand feet. It suffered thinner air and a severe drop in temperature. This coupled with the near-hundred percent humidity provided us even greater challenge.

A Twilight Zone type two hundred yard walk through bizarre foliage separated the cafeteria and the crater sight. We huffed and puffed through the strange and frigid rain forest as clouds rolled in and out of it, rapidly alternating moments of thick blinding fog and blue-skied sunshine. The spectacle was eerie. It would not have been any great surprise if a gnome, hobbit, or elf popped out of the dense jungle mist.

We finally arrived at our destination and gaped like baffled children into a giant steaming cone so large and ominous that it frightened eagles to its perimeter. It contained a steaming sulphur lake in its center. The crater was surrounded by the result of its violent history. Barren moonscape covered acres of scorched rock and earth that had long ago given up the idea of life, much less growth.

And then it all disappeared! Within a half-minute, clouds rolled in thick enough to cover the entire sight, including the folks next to me! Perhaps thirty tourists from several countries and many Ticos as well shrieked "ooooh"s and "aaaah"s in the chilling mist. A sight that had seemed as big as nature itself was suddenly swallowed up whole by the sky! Everything stopped as an international group of strangers was suddenly galvanized into an awe-stricken unit by their inability to see each other.

In a few minutes, the cloud drifted away again and the sun broke through. More ooohs and aaahs were followed by jokes about whether Frodo had made it to the sulphur lake with the ring or not. I wasn't the only one in the crowd with a surreal Mirkwood Forest feeling.

Five minutes later, the crowd silenced at the reappearance of the cloud cover, and another disappearance of the crater. This happened three times within a half hour.

The volcano didn't blow its cork, and the earthquake didn't happen—today. We left the Parque Nacional for a ride down the other side of the mountain. It was as beautiful as the ride up had been.

About half way back to San Jose we stopped in the town of Grecia for lunch. The owners of the restaurant were a Mexican woman and her Costa Rican husband. The combination of flavors that they produced in their cooking was as warm and wonderful as the people who ran the place.

I'm getting used to wonderful people. Everyone in this country seems friendly. There was a small collection of books on a counter against the far wall of the restaurant. Several were Costa Rican guidebooks—the only thing I had forgotten to bring from America. I asked the owner if they were for sale. She said no. Someone had moved out of her rental house and left the books behind. Since she didn't pay for them, she refused to charge anyone for them. "Just take them Señor, no charge."

I bought lunch for our group with Morris's money. He would have done that if he were here. He loved to give other people gifts on his own birthday. He had certainly given me one.

Several great teachers have told me to clean up my act and become a teacher myself. I don't think I'll do it. It seems a better idea for me to sell a lot of books and use the money to sponsor others who are more motivated than I am to become great teachers. They'll do a better job of it. I'll clean up my act a little, just because it is the healthy and sane thing to do. But I'd rather be a good, honest, happy sponsor than a half-assed, semi-inspired, perhaps even lazy, irritable, and impatient teacher.

I am Morris Rose's son and I know what my job is.

I hope I do my job as well as he did his.

I hope everyone does.

Rastas Run Ragged Rain Into Ocean

The dental work is, according to the dentist's opinion, near completion. Parts of it that felt OK during the first few weeks are starting to feel less than OK now. The pain is intense in spots. It is not getting better. I am also hearing complaints from a few other patients, too. Incompetent dentists who put on a good show may have screwed us big-time.

I'm holding a return ticket to America dated several months down the road. Nine months in Costa Rica may still be a good idea, but my timing sucks. The next two months are the most severe part of the rainy season. Bigger storms usually don't make their appearance here until the second half of the season, but this year the monsoons have been early and severe. The rains have already caused a few deaths due to mudslides in rural areas. During my five weeks in the capital city, every day has suffered a deluge. It has been raining for more total hours than not. The long term forecast calls for a hundred and fifty percent of the usual rainfall this year, as well as six cyclones and two hurricanes within the next three months.

I think I'll go to the beach! Actually, it was dentist's orders. Doctor Brutality (one of my many nicknames for him) said I should go relax and regain my strength before we finalize the dental process. The area of Costa Rica with the very lowest amount of rain forecast for this month is the southern Caribbean beach area near the Panamanian border. This area is reputed to be very Rasta in nature. It is said to have the most laid back atmosphere in a notoriously laid back nation. Getting there requires a long trip over rough roads into an area that is twenty degrees hotter than San Jose—but if I see one fucking day of sunshine, the trip will be worth the trouble. Humans can get used to anything, I suppose. But why anyone would want to get used to four months in a row of not seeing the sky due to washout caliber rains and cloud cover is beyond me.

The trip south and east turned out to be a very pleasant one through lush green forests and national parks. The four-hour ride was dry and beautiful, the roads better than advertised, and the crew in the small bus was very friendly. The ride itself was therapeutic, but what I'm sitting in seven hours later as I write this is even more so. It is early evening in Cahuita and the sky is still blue. While it is true that the temperature is hotter than the devil's balls, the heat can't dampen the beauty of the sunshine—especially since I have a twenty-dollar a night room with air-conditioning, cable TV, a refrigerator, queen size bed, wi/fi, and hot water shower. Beaches (one black sand, one white) are three blocks in either direction of the Cabinas Smith hotel where I am staying. The white sand beach is actually in the Cahuita National Park and is joined to trailed preserve.

Mack and Joyce run the Cabinas Smith. Mack, Joyce, and I are about the same age, but they feel more like benevolent parents. Sweetness strong enough to make anyone comfortable pervades the place thanks to the easygoing attitude of the owners. The name Smith is rooted more firmly in this town than anything else. A Smith was the original human settler of Cahuita a few hundred years ago, when turtles owned the beach.

I checked out several hotels in town before renting here. Many of them were nice and some cheaper, but this place has more going for it than any other. Mack and Joyce can arrange fishing, snorkeling, horse riding, and indigenous tribe tours. They know where to find whatever you

need. There is air-conditioning available here at a reasonable price. AC is very valuable in this heat. It usually doubles the rent in the few rooms in town that have it. Cabinas Smith is located on the block between the elementary school and downtown, near the action but without being stuck in it. For those not bothered by the heat, comfy rooms with fans are available for twelve dollars at Smith's Two, located a block and a half past the school. The lovely Loida is on duty there. She is as kind and helpful as Mack and Joyce are.

Downtown Cahuita contains a few blocks of Rasta bars, tourist shops, restaurants, two small food markets, Internet and tour-booking businesses, and more total Rasta places, people, and colors than can usually fit into such a small area. The fact that this Rasta vibe is used for commercial tourism purposes makes it no less pleasant, although it can be annoyingly shallow in places. Everyone has Bob Marley pictures hanging everywhere--but many locals don't know who Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailer, Dennis Brown, Luciano, The Morgan Family, etc. are. Even the mildest of America's Raggae fans have usually heard of at least one of these.

There are several local people trolling the main street asking tourists to buy limes, coconuts, and weed. They are really selling the local color and flavor. A warm Caribbean personality can make a tourist glad to buy a few limes that she or he could just as easily have picked off a nearby tree. If there were no coconuts, limes, or weed, these free spirits would no doubt find something else to trade with tourists for money. As brother Lambert told me, "Take these limes for a dollar. It's like a contribution. I'm a true Rasta Man. I won't beg. This way, I give you something, you give me something." The system works and the limes are great. Jah be good.

But besides good folks like Lambert, there are some more aggressive panhandlers that can make the streets a pain in the ass at night. These are Rasta-looking people that do not live by Rasta principals. These folks are neither free spirits nor from hungry families with children. These are crack-heads and alcoholics using dreadlocks as a bullshit sales pitch.

People often talk of the Caribbean side of Costa Rica as being more "Wild West" and having a higher crime rate than the Central Valley or the Pacific regions. Don't let the reports get you paranoid. Trusting your new camera to a stranger while you swim, walking down a deserted stretch of dark beach or back road at midnight, or giving your money to a stranger to get weed while you wait in the bar are not good ideas in most of the world. Cahuita is basically a sweet little town, but as is unfortunately true in most of the world, you can run into an occasional thief, hustler, alcoholic, or a crack-head here. If something makes you feel uncomfortable, trust your intuition. Let the "better safe than sorry" rule apply. This place is as safe as most small American cities. The bad apples here are few, and there is little violent crime.

You can tell a lot about a neighborhood by its street dogs. The packs in most of world have usually been abused so much (by humans and each other) that they are unapproachable. The Cahuita dog packs roams the streets like they belongs there. These slow moving dogs will often approach humans. They act like a friend who has already bummed too many beers, but knows you won't refuse him another. They act like they really own the streets but are benevolent enough to share their town with you. The Cahuita packs, down to their last member, look healthier by far than most street dogs and many of the housedogs I've seen in other places. They are most often friendly to each other and to humans. You will rarely, if ever, see a person kick at them—a practice that is unfortunately prevalent in much of the world. These canines hang out in groups of from three to ten or more. They sit in front of restaurants enjoying the human company. They take naps between parked cars while enjoying the shade. If they smell human

benevolence, they may wander over for a bit of petting or to ask for a snack. Restaurant owners sometimes chase them off firmly, but always in a non-abusive if not downright affectionate manner. They are as accepted as everything else around here.

“Accepted” and “laid back” sum this place up. Temperatures consistently range into the high nineties and carry heavy humidity at this time of year. It rarely dips below seventy-five degrees, even after midnight. Neither dogs nor people have the spunk to cause much trouble! You will see very few tourists over twenty-five years of age here. Older folks, who aren’t natives or ethnic Hottentots, can find the strong heat and heavy humidity oppressive and even dangerous.

After a little live music at the Coco bar/restaurant and a good night’s sleep, it was a pleasure to awaken to another sunny day. Breakfast at Miss Brigitte’s Café near Black Sand Beach showed a little more of what the best part of this country is about. I was the first customer. I owed 3,000 Colones (\$6 US), and didn’t have any change smaller than a 10,000 Colon bill (\$20 US). Rocia, the manager/chef, didn’t have any change to break the bill. Without ever having seen me before or knowing if she ever would again, Rocia said with a smile, “Paga otro dia. Esta bien.” (“Pay on some other day. It’s OK.”)

I haven’t heard any bad reports about any of the restaurants here. Even the Chinese food place in town is good, although none of this tourist town’s eateries are cheap. La Fe, right next to the town park, specializes in coconut drenched anything (veggies, meat, fish, squid, shrimp, chicken) and does it well. There is a restaurant on the busier side of the street that has great food and a ten-year old promotions man. This kid knows everything. I’ve never driven in my life, but he could have sold me a used car. It’s not that he was “slick.” He really knew his business, he also knew everyone else’s business, and the boy had an astounding talent for making food you had never eaten sound like the best food you would ever eat.

The black sand beach is slightly littered by driftwood and is usually deserted at this time of year. This south Caribbean area is one of Costa Rica’s best-kept secrets. If I were a Tico, I’d be running down here every weekend of the rainy season. But these driest months of September and October are oddly the slowest tourist months of the year in the Caribbean area. As Ricardo told me, “Much mo live music start December, Mon. Dat when de mo peoples ere.” Not only are the beaches more private at this time of the year, but also, barring a storm, the dangerous rip currents don’t exist now. These rapid undertows can drag an inexperienced swimmer out and down to Davey Jones’ locker so fast that there wouldn’t be time to panic—but at this time of year, the ocean is gentle as a lake and cool enough to be very refreshing.

An occasional tree overhangs the black sand beach from the road. They are worth searching for. The sun is as fierce and merciless as the water is docile. Shade is prime real estate.

The white sand beach starts on the other side of town, right at the entrance to the national park. A bridge going into it during the day is closed at night. A suggested donation is requested to enter. For less than a dollar you get a trip to the beach, beautiful nature trails with wildlife, and make an investment in Costa Rica’s gold-standard national park system. The national park’s white sand beach is better maintained, better known, and has more people on it than the black sand one—but there is plenty of room for all on it at this time of year.

The white sand allows more of the water's Caribbean-green color to show through than the black sand beach does. The white sand beach also offers a lot more potential shade from the overhanging trees that hug both the beach and the hiking trail that runs through the jungle that adjoins the beach. The trail itself is very well shaded. It is where I finally saw monkey families with babies—and a sloth! A sloth is an incredible creature. It looks like a dog-bear and an anteater-badger had a baby the size of a small human. It moves in very, very, very slow motion.

Weed isn't legal here, but it is commonly accepted. You don't want to smoke in front of police, in a bar or restaurant, or on Main Street, but the downtown square holds a cubic mile of ganja smoke every evening that is semi-discreetly smoked there. The beaches seem to be fair game for ganja, too, but discretion is always the better part of stupidity. In-room smoking, whenever possible, is more intelligent.

The regional bus system is good enough so that day trips to nearby Puerto Viejo (bigger beach/tourist town), Bribri (named after the resident Bribri Indian tribe), and several other small towns between here and Panama are very doable.

After two weeks in this steaming Wild West Rasta town, I'm a bit more relaxed, but it is time to head back into the dental torture chamber and San Jose's rains again.

You Can't Fit Ten Pounds of Shit Into a Five Pound Bag

You'll notice that I'm not giving you the real names of this father and son team of dental butchers. There are a few reasons. One is that they are, along with several other businesses in Costa Rica, backed by New York Mafia investment. This country is a lot like pre-Castro Cuba in that regard. I'm sure that if I printed the real names of these people I'd get my ass capped a lot more efficiently than my teeth were. But the more important reason to not sling mud is that I don't want to be an asshole just because someone else was. I'll try to give you a brief but accurate account without too much negativity. Lordee knows we all hear too much negativity as it is!

I can summarize the whole dental experience quickly by saying that if I had to choose between being dipped in beef gravy and thrown into a cage of starving lions or letting these dentists back into my mouth, I'd be heating up gravy. Another reason that I won't go into a tirade is that on the way out of the dentist's office for the last time, a fellow patient gave me this. It has softened me up a little.

Legend of the Porcupines

It was the coldest winter ever. Many animals died because of the cold. The porcupines, realizing the situation, decided to group together. This way they covered and protected themselves; but the quills of each one wounded their closest companions even though they gave off heat to each other. After awhile, they decided to distance themselves one from the other and they began to die, alone and frozen.

So they had to make a choice: either accept the quills of their companions or disappear from the Earth. Wisely, they decided to go back to being together. This way they learned to live with the little wounds that were caused by the close relationship with their companions, because the most important part of it was the heat that came from the others. This way they were able to survive.

Moral of the story: The best relationship is not the one that brings together perfect people. The best is when each individual learns to live with the imperfections of others and can admire the other person's good qualities.

Silence is sometimes the best answer.

If the fortune cookie business I've always dreamed about starting up ever becomes a reality, I know what the very first dough-covered sugary words of wisdom inside my very first cookie will be. "Confucius says—You can't put ten pounds of shit into a five pound bag."

If a dentist is doing so many things at once that he can't keep track of any of them, if he starts drilling your teeth within five seconds of extracting the needle—before the Novocain can possibly take effect, it is a obvious sign that that dentist is trying to fit the metaphorical ten pounds of shit in a five pound bag. Doing several things at once only works up to a point. When the number of tasks one is thinking about at the same time allows for very little attention to be paid to each individual task, it almost guarantees the failure of several of those tasks and defines trying to fit ten pounds of shit into a five pound bag. This is bad enough if you are a chef or factory worker, but it is altogether inexcusable in the medical profession.

I'm not singling out my dentists. There are many stories of disasters very similar to mine circulating about doctors and dentists from around the world—and for that matter about professionals in many other fields as well. Costa Rica and much of the "developing" world has picked up some of big daddy America's less attractive habits. Trying to do too many things all at once, being constantly stressed out by that, and damaging quality in order to achieve quantity are among the more unfortunate examples. This lifestyle not only causes those immediate psychological, physical, and spiritual problems mentioned above. It also dangerously distracts us from what is going on right in front of our eyes. For at least the past half a century now, the American public has been so occupied in individually acquiring what are mostly unnecessary "needs" that it was distracted from noticing some very crucial trends. We didn't notice our government being stolen by gigantic corporations, or that our freedoms were dissolving. When a lot of nonsense conquered common sense it sort of slipped under all of our radar. We used up our attention on trivial pursuits and had no attention left for much more important processes.

I'm not talking about evil people here! Many of us are people of good heart and intelligence. Many are attempting to right the barbarous wrongs our planet is suffering and are doing so in a courageous fashion. But if any one factor actually succeeds in driving this world through its own paper asshole and into oblivion it won't be the greed, fear, and avarice of the evil corporations or their political stooges. We can fix that, eventually. What we can't seem to fix, at least not so far, is the neurotic internal tendency to try to do twenty things at once, the delusion that this is necessary, and the very psychotic belief that it is possible to glean the highest possible quality from each of many actions as if each were a singular action engaging our total attention.

Multi-tasking is what the yuppies used to call it, when the "yuppie" and "multi-tasking" labels first came on to the media scene. The parent of these labels was a generation suffering a severely exaggerated self-centered sense of entitlement resulting in a spoiled-childish "I want it now!" attitude. This mentality is now thought to be normal! Folks who used to be thought of as selfish pricks are now more often referred to as "go-getters." This attitude controls much of our earthly playing field. Everything *needs* to be had right now. This nearly psychotic so-called *need* for so many immediate gratifications requires that everything *needs* to get done all at once. It would be of great benefit to most individuals and certainly to the planet as a unit if, in the immortal words of George Carlin, everyone learned to "drop some of your fucking needs."

Superman is a comic book character. Real people should reconsider their options before trying to fly off a building, stop a speeding train using only their bare hands, or fit massive multiple projects into a time frame that isn't practical. When projects multiply, attention divides.

The specificity of function that makes any good project a singularly focused thought-to-action process is then gone, along with the quality that a hundred percent attention adds to any venture.

Severe multi-tasking kills. It kills the quality of each task performed, and it can kill the person performing the tasks. Case in point—my dentists. The father is 68 years old and has put 13,000 implants in human mouths—several of those in mine. His son has also done extensive work on me and many others. These men are handling twice as many patients as any dental (or other) practice should. They work twelve hours a day, six days a week at the office, several more hours at home handling emails, with many more hours spent supervising and managing The Mob's brand new hotel above the dental offices—as well as trying to maintain some semblance of family and personal life. The father had to go home early yesterday, leaving his son with a doubly impossible load of patients to handle. This is not surprising. The senior Señor suffered a stroke just a few months ago, was taken to the hospital just a few days ago with further complications, and then jumped right back into work way too quickly—again. It is a safe bet that he will be dead by the time you read this.

It is sad that these dentists themselves suffer so very much from their attempts to fit ten pounds of shit into a five pound bag. It is much sadder that innocent patients suffer because of them. Hundreds of patients have passed through this office during my (to date) two and a half month period of treatment. About a half dozen that I'm directly aware of have suffered mistakes. There have to be many more during the same time period that I haven't heard about. One or two severely damaged patients per week may be a relatively small percentage, but it sucks big-time for those involved.

This is an avoidable circumstance. It can be fixed with intelligent pacing.

I first came into the office telling the docs that my remaining teeth had to be pulled. With a quick glance the senior dentist said, "We will try to save them," and proceeded into a painful grinding process. After ten very painful days of temporary crowns, the teeth were then *permanently* crowned with much difficulty and further pain. Those *permanent* crowns have since been sawed off and the bad teeth pulled, as I requested in the beginning. They are now replaced by the implants that should have gone in originally. Nineteen crowns were then improperly placed on the implants so that the essential daily maintenance process was impossible. There are many other serious problems that have resulted from the work of these men. There were quick, wrong decisions made. Quick, wrong actions always follow such quick, wrong decisions. More important decisions demand time, research, and extensive examination. The volume of experience these men have developed at their craft can sometimes allow rapid, surface-level judgments to work out well. Not always.

Writing is a very forgiving profession. Being an author is easy. Authors scribble something on a paper and then go back and polish and edit it many times until it is readable. The paper doesn't mind. If I put a wrong word or sentence down too hastily, there are many opportunities for me to fix that word or sentence before subjecting anyone else to my work. No problem. But most of what we run into in life needs to be given focused attention and done correctly on the first shot. Surgery is among the primary activities that should not be considered in terms of "we'll edit later if we have to." Results of that attitude can be ruthless.

This is not specifically a rant against two dentists. It is more of a rant against modern humanity, including most of the people I know and love in America and around the world. Those

who know me have certainly heard this before, perhaps several times! Anyone who meets me will hear it again.

Ten pounds of shit does not fit into a five-pound bag. You have only 100% of a mind. Doing the best you possibly can requires all of your attention. This is not rocket science. There is no complicated theorem to follow. If you have a total of 100% attention and you are entrained on a singular process, that process will get 100% of your attention. If, on the other hand, you have ten projects going on at once, then whether you like it or not, whether you are consciously aware of it or not, your full attention can not possibly be focused on any singular process at hand. This holds true no matter what you are doing. If you are doing too many things at once, the quality of each action will suffer.

Quality always suffers by spreading thin the major birthright that we humans enjoy—our ability to give concerned attention to whatever we want to get done. Even a group of wonderful, well-intended people who are trying to save the world can end up yelling at each other about some petty bullshit that has nothing to do with the important efforts at hand, if they get side-tracked in multiple tangents. This can fuck up a meeting to the point where none of the good stuff gets accomplished. If you see this accidental animosity happening in your group, home, or workplace, you can bet big money that it is caused by the jangled nerves of a divided concentration that is produced by insufficient focus that is caused by an unhealthily rapid, stressed, and strained pace of life resulting in the attention deficit most often instigated by excessive multi-tasking. You can end up screaming at a child you'd rather hug because you are trying to cook, make a phone call, get dressed, save the environment, and write out a shopping list all at the same time.

The old dentist gave himself a stroke trying to do too many good things all at once. In the long run, that may cause many future patients to miss the benefits of his better work. That manic pace has already caused some patients brutal pain from his lesser work.

A lot of folks need extensive dental work but can't afford it at U.S. prices. Most of my friends are Americans who are getting older. We, as a species (and perhaps even more so as Americans), are living longer in spite of eating processed food, operating at high stress levels, and consuming a high chemical content through our air/food/water and even the fabrics we wear and the soaps we wash them in. Most Americans also engage in one if not several additionally detrimental habits including alcohol, caffeine, refined sugar, empty-calorie diets, cigarettes, prescription or illicit drugs, etc. It is no wonder that our gums recede and our teeth decay.

I'd like to be able to recommend a good place for my friends to get dental work done well at a reasonable price, but I can't. What I can and do strongly recommend to my friends is that they give their total attention to the process when deciding where to get their dental work done. Please do not allow that decision to be just one among a group of many simultaneous decisions, with each decision earning only partial attention.

Any hasty decision has the potential to come back and bite you in the ass.

You can trust me on that one.

Ruby Slippers and a Paper Asshole / Everyone Wants to Go to Heaven, But Nobody Wants to Die / University Love Fights Back!

If I had to sum up all human malfunction in a sentence it would be, “Everyone wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die.” This obviously schizophrenic trend of expecting results without making effort is about as illogical as expecting a lake to do your swimming for you. Nonetheless, it seems that mankind is very fond of this aberration. Its sad results are way too apparent almost everywhere we look. America and Costa Rica share this little warp in the fabric of their realities. It seems that, to at least some small extent, we all do.

We often live a shallow if not hollow existence, expecting God, the government, or Santa Claus to pick up our slack. The common Brooklyn expression goes, “He’s not a bad guy, but he’s got a paper asshole.” That is to say; he doesn’t cover his own action, he doesn’t follow through on his swing, he talks a better game than he plays, he has a life that seems to be based on a true story as opposed to actually being one.

Costa Rica is the land of “Pura Vida” (“Pure Life”). It is demilitarized, free, relaxed, environmentally conscious, and most of its people are warm and friendly. Costa Rica is also home to a massive U.S. military presence that allows the country to survive without a standing military force of its own. It has sold its UN vote to China for a sports stadium, had its president recently visit Wall Street in an attempt to sell more of the country’s authenticity and assets, has an underfed majority and a virtually untaxed privileged minority, severe and blatant political corruption, and an infrastructure that is very far below potential.

I think parts of life here are wonderful. But then again, I’ve got a paper asshole, too. My proposed nine months of traveling Costa Rica and quitting bad habits is about to fall victim to bad weather and dental torture. My effort to spend most of a year becoming a cleaner physical specimen have turned into three weeks of total purity followed by two months of modified relapse. Cigarette, alcohol, coffee, fried food, and refined sugar consumption are way down from previous volumes, but they are nowhere near completely erased. My attempts at quitting everything would probably not have worked any better in America. The old expression is true. “No matter where you go, there you are.” Nonetheless, serious moderation and some real progress have been achieved. Except for the teeth, everything health related has improved.

It seems like I have a lot in common with Costa Rica, but I must have even more in common with America. That’s where I will be finishing this chapter after I abandon my Costa Rican post for more familiar company and comforts. I will click my ruby slippers together three times, pronounce “there’s no place like New Rome,” and return to the country with perhaps the most notoriously paper asshole in recorded history. Slave owners who wanted to be free founded my homeland. Very few facts define the term “paper asshole” as well as that one does.

I don’t think I’ll be leaving America again once I get back there. We seem to deserve each other. I’m very curious as to which of us will be the first to die on our stolen home turf. I may be aging rapidly but, in spite of the noble sentiments and compromised efforts generated by Uncle Barack’s White House, the country’s odds of moral and even structural survival seem even slimmer than my own.

The system supposedly built by and for the people at large, as it turns out, was actually designed by a small privileged minority for the benefit of the small privileged minority. The people at large never had much to do with that system—except for doing the actual physical labor. This is just as true today as it was hundreds of years ago. Factions of the ruling minority play ping-pong with reality while paying lip service to a vast popular majority that is largely composed of poor bastards who toil unwittingly to support the greed and mental illness of the minority. This vast majority seems to put a lot of effort into supporting their own suffering.

Unless we flesh ourselves out quickly and get more focused and determined in our efforts, unless we somehow restructure the game, we will continue to fall through our own collective ass.

I can't understand how this happened. The U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence were noble documents. The system looked so great on paper.

Here is the best thought on the subject that I have ever seen on paper.

“The most revolutionary act a person in this country can perform is to be happy.”

Patch Adams

There are young people all over the world who believe Patch Adams' sentiment. They are our hope. For the time being, they are telling fear to “fuck off” and embracing love, a lust for life, and a celebration of living. Sadly, there is no reason to think that they won't eventually follow the lead of generations before them by selling their birthright for material trinkets, a false security, and conditioned reflex responses to everything. History often turns out to be more shit than poetry, doesn't it?

I have faith in them anyway. I have to. It is faith in young folks that keeps old fucks alive and personable. Without it, a lot more of us would be in bell towers with rifles.

I had the privilege of meeting some of these up-and-comers on “The Street of Bitterness.” My landlady and several others referred to one of the University's bordering streets by this unusual name. That impressed me as a good enough reason to stay away from the place. I was very mistaken about that.

The University of Costa Rica composes a square mile or so of area within Barrio (neighborhood of) San Pedro. To its east lie two seven-block long streets lined with coffee shops, bars, restaurants, Internet cafes, and copy stores. What you are now reading was written in a single day spent in several of those bars. It was written on donated scrap paper from one of those copy stores.

Catholicism has been the major cultural influence in Latin America since the Spanish beat indigenous populations to death with it about four or five hundred years ago. Circling the interior of nearly every Catholic Church are a dozen or so plaques called “The Stations of the Cross.” They depict the stages of Jesus Christ's walk down the bitter street leading to his death. He is carrying a heavy cross while being tortured and tormented by captors and countrymen alike.

After nearly three months of irritating sobriety, constant rain, and continuing dental torture, I had a big urge for a good old-fashioned buzz. Not knowing exactly what “Street of Bitterness” meant, it still sounded like the place to go today. At eleven a.m. I walked into one of several open-air street bars. I wasn’t the only one in there. A couple of tables each held five students who would not be old enough to drink in America. They chatted each other up while brunching on individual pitcher-sized mugs of Imperial, Costa Rica’s most popular beer. The open front of the bar offered a fish-tank view of the college population on the street. The table full of students next to me was laughing, the people on the street were smiling and lively, and I was starting to remember things I had forgotten by 1975.

I sat down with Alfonso, Andrea, Vivianna, and a couple who were too busy drunkenly pawing each other to introduce themselves. I showed them the *Fearless Puppy* book and explained in fractured Spanish that I was writing a chapter about the university for a new book. My goal for the day was to get plastered, and to do some research and interviews.

Vivianna said, “Do you speak English?”

Vivianna informed me that many of the students at the University of Costa Rica had graduated from private high schools where the curriculum included attending schools in the U.S. and Britain. Most of my new friends spoke English better than I did!

They looked a lot like I did during my collegiate years of the 1960s and 1970s. They all had long hair, the guys had facial hair, their dress was very uptown hippie—and they were stoned, drunk, and groping each other before noon. Ah, the memories!

The following explanation came to me from Alfonso, a nineteen-year old soccer-scholarship student at the University of Costa Rica (UCR) with a strong sense of cosmic regularity and an even stronger ability to have fun. “The university itself is the actual crucifixion. Where we are drinking is called the Street of Bitterness, named after the Stations of the Cross. This street has been called that for as long as anyone can remember. The system crucifies our creativity with the regressive, conservative attitudes that are so prevalent within their so-called education. We come here and drink in order to reverse the direction of the steps leading to that crucifixion, to make sure we wash away the brain washing with alcohol, to sort of rewind as well as unwind from both the process and the results.”

I asked whether they thought the university was progressive or reactionary. Alfonso replied “Both! The administration is more on the side of big business, but the student body itself is more progressive. The real problem for us is that the progressive students are always spread too thin. There are so many protests! Everyone is protesting everything—so when a really big and important issue comes around, a lot of the students are too jaded or burnt out to get involved in another issue. We sort of get ourselves too watered down. We must learn to be more selective about where we put our energies.”

What an amazing insight for a nineteen year old to have! It would be very nice to be able to think that this guy was an average college student. I had, after all, randomly chosen to speak with him and his friends. The only real qualification for being interviewed by me was that they were close to campus and publicly inebriated before noon. But these people, and especially Alfie, were unusual. He had already spent a few months on a full soccer scholarship at the University of Florida when he decided that the bright lights weren’t worth being away from Costa Rica.

This large sign covers the front window of one of the most popular among a dozen pizza places on this beautifully infamous street:

“Choose life. Choose a job. Choose a family. Choose a big fucking television, choose washing machines, cars, compact disc players and electrical tin openers. Choose leisurewear and matching luggage. Choose a three-piece suit on hire in a range of fucking fabrics. Choose Jesus and wondering who the fuck you are on Sunday morning. Choose sitting on that couch watching some mind numbing, spirit crushing game shows, stuffing fucking junk food in your mouth. Choose rotting away at the end of it all, pissing your miserable last in a miserable home, nothing more than an embarrassment to the few selfish, fucked up brats you spawned to replace yourself.”

I may complain about the rain in Costa Rica, but you’ll never hear me complain about the Costa Rican sense of humor. This is some very bright darkness from a neighborhood whose average resident is twenty years old!

I’m not sure how the Ticos feel about it, but to me the University of Costa Rica is the capital of this nation, if not the world. Of course my bit of an opinion was gleaned from one day of bar hopping. A full four years of matriculation might change that point of view.

Alfonso kept pumping out intelligence that any elder would consider well out of the normal psychospiritual range of a drunken teenager.

“There is a broad difference between social classes here, more so than in America where there is a lot more of a middle class. I am kind of in the middle here. It is a rare situation and gives me a great deal of freedom. I can have friends who are at both ends of the spectrum, very rich and very poor. That allows me to stretch myself further than I could in America because this space between rich and poor is a much vaster gap here. My rare middle position gives me more opportunities to grow and learn. I have a greater freedom to roam between every type of people. I have such great freedom in many ways. I am a very lucky person. I get drunk here, and then I work doing research for a law firm for a few hours, and then classes, and then study. I work very hard but I still am very lucky, and I have a lot of fun.”

Continuing the interview, I asked him what he thought about the Patch Adams line you just read a few pages ago. Alfonso’s face lit up as I mentioned the name. “That Patch Adams movie changed my life.”

“So many people want to change the world, but that lack-of-power feeling makes them distraught. I think I have to just be nice and be as much an example as I can of what a better world would be. Nobody changes the world—not directly. We can only change ourselves. In doing that, well, we change the world. These people who think they will change the violence in the world with violent means are fucked up. That is just like becoming what you hate! The only way to change the violence is to change what you do yourself to being as non-violent as possible.”

These were privileged kids who were using their privilege well. They all loved being where they were. They all loved doing what they were doing. They were very grateful for their opportunities.

After a beer or two, another student named Arturo joined the group and added, “It is great to be here! The freedom from being with my parents has given me even greater security—greater confidence in my own abilities. We have responsibility for our own actions, and for our own reality—and for their consequences! So we can have a drink in the daytime, yes—but we have to be careful. Things have to get done. We can’t drink like all day, and all week.”

The crew spent a lot of time talking about issues that most young adults talk about—sex, relationships, getting a buzz, and so on. Some of it was pretty funny. At first there was a lot of conversation downplaying their relationships to each other. “I like her, but I’m just friends with everyone here. We go to class together.” After several beers, the tune changed. More than one of this group pulled me aside to let me know that nearly everyone at the table was screwing everyone else at the table, at least part-time—but nobody else knew that all this was happening. “I like her but I sleep with the other one too and she...” Everyone seemed a bit confused about who they belonged to this week, but they were all happy. They were all grateful to be involved in the action.

We were in a nearly deserted bar at eleven a.m. By two p.m., Alfonso was leaving for work with a buzz that would have cancelled most people’s workday. The bar was packed. So were several others on the street (yet another sign that some of Costa Rica is not at all a third world country).

Walking the eighteen blocks home from the university area felt a bit like coming down from a good acid trip. It wasn’t really depressing, but there was a change in atmospheric pressure that was easy to notice. The Barrio Escalante, where I live, is a pleasant, friendly neighborhood. But the toll that “real life” takes could be felt in every block of the walk. You could see it in the eyes of the people getting out of work, many on their way home to just barely feed their families.

College areas hold powerful energies that can rapidly lose definition upon leaving their surrounding neighborhoods.

Like so many college students who are lucky enough to be living in open-minded atmospheres, my friends and their classmates were full of hope and hormones. They had a confident and glowing, if not well-defined, sense of future. Even in a place called The Street of Bitterness, a vibrant friendliness and comfortable happiness are easy for a nineteen year old to find. Idealism has a chance to become itself here.

I highly recommend a visit to the nearest campus bar for every older person. If you are lucky, you will get to meet people like Arturo, Alfonso, Vivianna, and Andrea. If not, try another bar or another campus. It is worth a few-drink investment to find these people. Sure, parts of the conversation will seem laughably shallow, but there is enough genius, hope, decency, and love-of-life out there to encourage any elder. Even the most ornery of jaded geezers that have been beaten from one end of the bitter streets to the other can appreciate unmolested hope.

You can trust me on that.

CHAPTER 5

How the Law of Cause and Effect Will Save Humanity's Ass: An Epilogue in Five Parts

Part 1—Quotes That Mean Something

Part 2—Erasing the Lines

Part 3—Cleaning up the Crap

Part 4—Bringing It All Back Home

Part 5—Responsibility, Recovery, Reincarnation

Part 1—Quotes That Mean Something

“When I do good, I feel good. When I do bad, I feel bad. That’s my religion.”

Abraham Lincoln

“What has become of the Golden Rule? It exists, it continues to sparkle, and is well taken care of. It is Exhibit A in the Church’s assets, and we pull it out every Sunday and give it an airing...It is strictly religious furniture, like an acolyte, or a contribution-plate, or any of those things. It is never intruded into business.”

Mark Twain

“Noah and a few like him perceived that the continent was indeed finite, and that venal office-holders, legislators in particular, could be persuaded to toss great hunks of it up for grabs, and to toss them in such a way as to have them land where Noah and his kind were standing.

“Thus did a handful of rapacious citizens come to control all that was worth controlling in America. Thus was the savage and stupid and entirely inappropriate and unnecessary and humorless American class system created. Honest, industrious, peaceful citizens were classed as bloodsuckers if they asked to be paid a living wage. And they saw that praise was reserved henceforth for those who devised ways of getting paid enormously for committing crimes against which no law had been passed. Thus the American dream turned belly up, turned green, bobbed to the scummy surface of cupidity unlimited, filled with gas, and went *bang* in the noonday sun.”

Kurt Vonnegut Jr. from *God Bless You Mr. Rosewater*

“They don’t want people who are smart enough to sit around the kitchen table and figure out how badly they’re getting fucked by a system that threw them overboard thirty years ago. They want people who are just smart enough to run the machines and do the paperwork, and just dumb enough to passively accept all the increasingly shitty jobs with the less pay, reduced benefits, the end of overtime—and the vanishing pension that disappears the minute you come to collect it. And now they’re coming for your Social Security. They want your retirement money. They want it back so they can give it to their criminal Wall Street friends. And you know what? They’ll get it! They’ll get it all. They count on the fact that Americans will remain willfully ignorant.”

The prophetic Mr. George Carlin

“It’s just a ride. We can change it any time we want. It’s just a choice. No effort, no work, no job, no savings of money—a choice, right now, between fear and love. The eyes of fear want you to put bigger locks on your door, buy guns, close yourself off. The eyes of love instead see

all of us as one. Here's what we can do to make this world a better ride. Take all the money we spend on weapons every year and use it to feed and clothe the poor of the world. There will be enough to help every person in the world, not one left out—and we can explore space, both inner and outer, together, in peace.”

Bill Hicks

“Try to learn to breathe deeply, really taste food when you eat, and when you sleep to really sleep. Try as much as possible to be wholly alive with all your might, and when you laugh, laugh like hell. And when you get angry, get good and angry. Try to be alive. You will be dead soon enough.”

William Saroyan

“Don't worry about how much time you have wasted in the past— begin to practice now. What you do from now on is more important.

“I personally have many pains, but if I do not fixate on them, if I meditate, I do not feel them. If you want to become free of suffering, you must change your mind, not your body. We have to purify our own minds. We should not insult each other, but rather uphold love and compassion. We must be compassionate toward all, especially toward those with inferior wisdom. It is through negative thoughts about others that you are deceived. Everyone is a buddha.”

H.E. Garchen Rinpoche

“It is a bit embarrassing to have been concerned with the human problem all one's life and find at the end that one has no more to offer by way of advice than *try to be a little kinder*.”

Aldous Huxley

“To live only for some future goal is shallow. It's the sides of the mountain that sustain life, not the top.”

Robert M. Pirsig

“This is my creed: For man, the vast marvel is to be alive. For man as for flower and beast and bird, the supreme triumph is to be most vividly, most perfectly alive. Whatever the unborn and the dead may know they cannot know the beauty, the marvel of being alive in the flesh. The dead may look after the afterward. But the magnificent here and now of life in the flesh is ours alone, and ours for only a time. We ought to dance with rapture that we should be alive and in the flesh and part of the living incarnate cosmos.”

D.H. Lawrence

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out that the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is not effort without error or shortcomings, but who does actually strive to do the deed; who knows the great enthusiasm the great devotion, who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.”

Teddy Roosevelt

“We are social animals. We have to live within the society. So it is very necessary to have the right kind of relation with and attitude toward the society.”

“Please pay more attention about inner value.
That is the ultimate source of happiness and success for life.”

The Dalai Lama

“You can’t know wisdom, you have to *be* it.”

Ram Dass

“Constructively dealing with adversities and bravely jumping educational hurdles can quickly fine-tune a person to Nature’s Law. We may look to saints and role models for inspiration, but we are the ones who make our own effort, and then make our own progress. We may lean on heroes and deities, but the person whose hurdle it is must always do the final and decisive leap over that hurdle.”

Tenzin Kharma Trinley

“We do not want churches, because they will teach us to argue about God.”

Chief Joseph

“Truth, practicality, and objectivity all suffer from ancient dogma as well as modern advertising. Outdated, irrelevant moral codes and fairy tales are deeply rooted within us. These notions scold

and threaten us from thousands of years ago. Many are presumptuous enough to argue with both Natural Law and cultural norms. Much of this dogma is proving impractical in the twenty first century. Much of it has proven detrimental in almost every century. It empowers guilt and fear, and enables these to run off with our lives.”

Tenzin Karma Trinley

“The Zen expression “Kill the Buddha” means to kill any concept of the Buddha as something apart from yourself. To kill the Buddha is to be the Buddha.”

Peter Matthiessen

“There is no reality except the one contained within us.
That is why so many people live such an unreal life.
They take images outside them for reality
and never allow the world within to assert itself.”

Hermann Hesse

“Sustaining connection with one’s spiritual power takes an unswayable conscious decision to make a continuing effort to do so. That decision must be followed by consistent reinforcement. Getting high and seeing God is lovely, but the drugs wear off. Euphoric highs from religious rituals wear off too. Sustained effort does not.”

Tenzin Karma Trinley

Part 2—Erasing the Lines

*There is often a line of objective reality
between what we would like to believe and what is in front of our eyes.
There are similar lines that separate psychedelic, psychic, and psychotic.
These lines can be very thin at times.
Let's erase them for a few pages.*

My friend John is a wonderful person, but he has some weird moments. John himself will admit that he can be buggier than a June picnic.

John, myself, and a dozen other folks were actually at a picnic together several years ago in June. The group was growling its concern about the corporate takeover of the world and the impending New World Order. They griped about how we will all soon be dependent for food and clothing upon one conglomerated parent company that will own *everything*. More complaints and fears included the death of creative individualism and artistry, profits being given priority over people, destruction of the environment, dissolution of the middle class, degradation of human rights, and so on. Each rave was at least partially valid, and the list was endless.

John broke in with, “Yeah, isn’t it great! The bad guys are doing it for us! Those selfish bastards are uniting the whole world!”

Everyone looked at John as if he was made of green cheese.

So did I.

Over a decade later, I finally get it. Every effect has a cause that precedes it. That effect, over time, can become something very different from the original motivation that sponsored its cause.

Most people have an us/them, good guys/bad guys point of view. This condition they see does exist, but only as a temporary distortion. In the long run, everyone is “us.” Like it or not, we really are all in this together. That being said, we must still admit that a small handful of disproportionately empowered people are currently calling the shots for their own benefit while the majority of civilization gets short changed. A programmed impotence, stress, and various forms of techno-hypnosis have rendered the majority too numb to fight back. Both sides of this social equation represent the worst humanity has to offer. It does so in very dangerous ways. Our democracy is wounded by human greed on the one hand and human weakness on the other.

“Democracy is like a tambourine. Not everyone can be trusted with it.”

John Oliver

Mr. Oliver is always ironically funny and often correct. My picnicking friend John was right, too. “They” are doing it for “us.” The profits-over-people group, whether they are New World Order robber barons and dishonest bank executives or just morally bankrupt citizens, are causing world unification for their own selfish economic purposes. But as a positive effect of that poorly motivated unification, the gender versus gender dysfunction / race against race horrors / nationalist and religious wars that we now suffer will have to end. They have no choice. A unifying technology and globalizing economy have already become the central part of planetary culture. Racial, sexual, and national biases are already suffering a troubled survival on their way to obsolescence.

John did forget to mention the darker half of the picture. This has, so far, all been happening in a very harsh manner. War, poverty, disease, environmental destruction, toxic fear, repression, and other miseries are the tragic byproducts of the deadly levels of materialism, stress, fear, and greed that motivate those who control much of our material world.

Our remaining joys and freedoms will suffer debilitating dementia within our lifetimes if these motives and methods continue to overpower better instincts. Focus on being smarter and happier, and helping those around us to become smarter and happier, needs to be exercised immediately. Beginning this process may be as simple as realizing that if we are not having plenty of harmless fun, we are fucking up.

Happiness can only become more popular than fear if we make it so. Nightmares can only be cured by waking up.

“One day it will have to be officially admitted
that what we have christened
reality is an even greater illusion
than the world of dreams.”

Salvadore Dali

Following through on this idea that we can truly make life on Earth a much better experience will require some courage. Old attitudes and priorities will have to change in order to accommodate more fun, happiness, and cooperation. Change is almost always accompanied by growing pains, even if that change is for the better.

Planetary unification is becoming ripe enough for adoption by saner folks than the scoundrels who are creating it. As “we the people” inherit this global unity, we will also inherit the responsibility for global care. Actually, it was always ours. For a long time we entrusted much of the job to government inefficiency, overburdened agencies, and nearly nonexistent corporate ethics. We hired the fox to guard the henhouse. As a result, almost everything has to be cleaned up. This cleaning up cannot be done later. An urgent attitude of immediate necessity is essential to developing a saner policy of living while living is still a possibility. We need to decide pretty damn quickly that we want to stay alive as a species. We then need to live by the belief that the functional, sane, peaceful, cooperative accomplishment of that survival is the unquestioned priority over all other concerns—including material gains and financial profits.

All this global care has no choice but to start as individual effort. Cleaner drops are still the only way to make cleaner oceans.

Part 3—Cleaning Up the Crap

What can an individual do? Where does the improvement start?

Everyone's answer will be different, but similar.

I am now adjusting my personal attitude to coordinate with the possible survival of our species and the production of a better world. My individual drop needs cleaning, for the whole ocean's sake as well as my own.

This process, so far, has been similar to coming home after work to find out that a pipe burst on its way to the septic tank. I'm standing between the bathroom and kitchen, knee deep in metaphorical raw sewerage. (On some days, neck deep.) This psychological, spiritual, philosophical, informational, emotional sludge is bonded to my reality by a shit-load (excuse me) of conditioning in the form of lies that have been disguised as fact, and an attitude of "that's just the way it is." I have spent my life digesting garbage cloaked as truth, without knowing there were options.

Not all of it was garbage. Some of the information was very good. But, to a large extent, our government, advertising, schools, churches, media, and even parents have fed us a percentage of warped information that, over the course of many years, has woven itself into our lives. There is no one to blame! They all had similar lies fed to them. Some are as playful as "Santa Claus brings the toys." Some have been as dangerous, damaging, and divisive as "Black people are inferior" or "Jews need to be exterminated." Some are as manipulative as "Buy our cologne and get easy sex quickly" or as good at diverting our attention from fixing our own problems as "God or the government will take care of that for us." The roots of human tendency toward deception, whether based in innocent ignorance or evil intent, originate too deeply in the past to trace back to a source. That doesn't matter right now. What does matter is that we've recognized what the problem is, so we can fix it.

This metaphorical sewerage is at least as dangerous to ignore as any physically real, disease carrying substance. Some of it stinks just as badly, too. It is nasty stuff. As nasty as it is, what can be done about it?

It has to be cleaned up, of course.

The flow of this infectious misinformation needs to be shut off at its source. It is necessary to remember to change the channel, leave the situation, or at least not take it to heart if I am exposed to more bad attitudes and information. Then the broken pipe needs to be patched or replaced. If more nasty material leaks through that same weak spot in the pipes later, it will mean starting repairs all over again—and it will cause more damage to the whole house.

It may be smart to call in a professional. Good teachers live to help remedy such situations, as do good plumbers. There is a very important difference between teachers and plumbers within the context of this metaphor. Plumbers do the job for you. Teachers show you how to do the job yourself. You won't find psychospiritual plumbers. You will find psychospiritual teachers. Ask them for a set of tools. Those tools will be your most valuable allies.

This psychospiritual home repair and improvement project is not rocket science! It has been going on forever and much simpler folks than us have accomplished it. It is where education

meets evolution. If I can train my puppy to use the newspapers or a kitten to use the litter box, I can train my own mind to get rid of its waste products.

Once the toxic flow is stopped and the pipe damage is repaired, it's time to get out the mop and bucket. Some folks would rather work on this personal cleaning process all by themselves. Some call a cleaning crew. Most people do at least a little of both.

My friends and I like to help each other clean the garbage out of our brains in the same spirit that we help each other to move a couch. Some friends show up. Some don't. It shows who your real friends are. But whether you have twenty friends with you or are doing it alone, no one else is ever responsible for guaranteeing a successful cleanup. It's strictly a personal responsibility in the end. If you have help in the middle, you're lucky.

Once everything is fumigated and cleaned, it is time to fix the wall that had to be broken through in order to access the source of the problem—and to repaint that wall. As long as the wall needs to be replaced and painting needs to be done anyway, why not use the higher grade sheetrock and slap on that nicer paint?

Is there something you've always wanted to do or be? Is it something that you could make happen if the old dirt, scars, cracks, obstacles, and holes in your life were dealt with, cleaned up, and repaired?

“... purifying the obscurations of our mind is a little bit like taking care of our house. If we clean and pick up a little every day, things will look pretty good all the time. If we only clean and pick up every few weeks, our place will look messy. If we are diligent with our efforts, there is no doubt that we will get results... and will begin to have more positive things happening to us. When our body or clothes get dirty we have obvious ways to clean them. But if our mental body is dirty, we have to find some other methods that are effective...but not much will happen with a method of just wishing and hoping. Without sincere efforts at purification, Samsara (suffering) will go on and on for us.”

Lama Karma Rinchen

With the brain cleaning in progress, better options become obvious and available. Many suspect attitudes start changing. As each of us individually adjusts our attitudes toward cooperative survival and away from the destructive type of competition, a sane and constructive majority action will be inspired by the improved direction that all the individuals within that majority are taking.

The misguided puppeteers who have been pulling our collective strings make up a very slim fraction of our population. Their physical and financial bullying cannot prevail against a united public whose members share mutually beneficial motives and goals. The minority that considers profits before it considers the well being of the very people who labor to provide them with those

profits will vanish—if we each, as an integral part of the citizen majority, turn our complaints into unshakable practical commitments and then act on those commitments to produce positive, constructive changes that will bring about universally beneficial results. The more direct language of Brooklyn might say that our world needs to move toward getting its own head out of its own ass, and that can only be accomplished if each of us individually move as far as humanly possible toward that same goal.

It is important to act on these understandings as soon as we reach them, and to consistently and continuously govern ourselves by an unshakable commitment to them.

It may not be so difficult! A few simple things seem to make sense.

- 1) Wherever there is a choice—be nice. This option is almost always available.
- 2) The practice of persecuting scapegoats needs to be replaced by the practice of finding and instituting solutions to problems.
- 3) Each individual needs to share the responsibility of solving community and global problems while solving their personal ones.
- 4) The word “cooperation” needs to gain the same importance and status that the word “competition” now enjoys.
- 5) A functional happiness that is not gained at the expense of others has to regain dominion over the convoluted methods that many folks now use to get happy.

Our good intentions and decency have always been there, waiting for the courage of our convictions to make its commitment to them. When we back those good intentions with courageous conviction, we earn the ability to repair the damage that has been caused by our less likeable qualities. Status quo’s corporate and political ventures will *have to* change in accordance with any improved strength of character or any heightened moral integrity on the part of the citizen majority. These corporate and political institutions will have to surrender power back to the people who work within them, and even more so to the people who will or will not purchase from them.

Part 4—Bringing It All Back Home

It is the right time to admit that we've been had. The forces of irresponsible shortsighted selfishness have cleverly pitted us against each other in many ways.

Manufactured fears are among the worst propagandas that have poisoned us. The status quo casts particular groups of our neighbors as enemies in order to accomplish our intimidation. This divide and conquer method of intimidation has a long history of use as an economic and political tactic.

Manufacturing false enemies will hide the real one.

Fears of Black people portrayed as criminals and gangsters, imaginary weapons of mass destruction, all Muslims portrayed as violent, dramatized exaggerations of poisons, weather, and diseases have been planted in our little brains as deeply as frustration in a disillusioned voter. Media-induced spins and inherited ignorance need to be neutralized in order for our global unity to enjoy peace and prosperity. The unfortunate success of the divide and conquer method of politics has resulted in the suffering and death of millions of misled people throughout history. It is the cornerstone in a vast structure of negative bullshit that we have been force-fed.

There will be many positive results from cleaning the fear, greed, and violence based bullshit and hypnosis out of our brains. In the short term, we will become much happier people. In the longer term, we will be building a much happier civilization. This happier civilization and its happier people can then couple with the global-unity that is now, ironically enough, resulting from the nasty economic efforts of the self-centered few who sponsored the programming that we need to clean up!

When that happens, my friend John's bizarre statement will come true. A very unified humanity will come to its better senses, become smart enough to enjoy its own blessings, rescue itself from extinction, and save the animals, air, earth, and water from destruction as well.

If we pay more attention to our Bigger Brains, the approaching global unity can produce nearly utopian conditions. That will be much prettier than the painful shit storms awaiting us if we don't.

How is it all going to turn out?

That's up to us. If you and I don't make it happen, it won't.

If being happier ourselves and more helpful to others turns out to be too big a job for us, maybe we don't deserve to be here.

But if we each make the effort to manufacture the selves and societies we want, instead of just blindly fitting in to the manipulated options offered us by a very suspect history, we can become the sculptors of our future instead of the victims of our past.

Part 5—Responsibility, Recovery, Reincarnation

We cannot simply lay all the responsibility for our damaged world upon so-called “leaders.” Pointing fingers at behind-the-scenes hustlers, megalomaniacs, and morally bankrupt shills that market evil to others for the sake of their own personal gain doesn’t tell the whole story, either. You and I unwittingly bought into it all. We didn’t stay awake enough to refuse bullshit’s influence.

At this point, it really doesn’t matter who co-opted happiness, the religions, the Constitution, and Rock & Roll. It is not important to find out exactly who twisted these sacred concepts into marketing and propaganda tools. Neither blaming nor punishing will help, and the only things that matter now are the things that will help.

If we can figure out how the greed and power lust of the very few has been able to manipulate nearly all of humanity for so long, that might help.

Doing something about it would definitely help.

Fixing problems and having them stay fixed is the important part of justice. We can’t start hanging the guilty as we start facing the facts. And why bother? Even devout atheists know that what goes around, comes around. As the major offenders are shed of their power, we need to forgive these sick bastards as a product of their times.

With that done, we can afford the luxury of forgiving ourselves. A handful of major assholes could not have damaged the world unless the rest of us gave them our permission to do it. These vipers have ways to control without the majority’s approval, but they can’t do a thing without the majority’s compliance.

There is a more important reason to forgive the blatantly guilty than gaining our own forgiveness by association. History has proven time and again that defeating one enemy gives rise to another, whereas *involving* a former enemy as a co-worker, partner, and friend can be very successful. Japan and America have economic and cultural ties that weld us together. France and Germany own a similar alliance. Your odds are better of winning the lottery than of ever seeing France and Germany go to war with each other again. Hitler and Hirohito are long gone, with little trace of their agendas left in Germany and Japan. The same is true of Genghis Khan, Marie Antoinette, and any number of other villains. All their political regimes have died.

What political agendas have survived, and why? Never, *never* in history have the agendas that looked to conquer-and-subject survived. All previous empires have fallen. We can be sure that similar forces currently in power won’t survive either.

But nonwhite people and women can vote in America. What were once abused colonies, including Gandhi’s India and nearly all of Africa, are now fully independent nations. In a world where charity is too often confused with weakness, Mother Teresa’s concern for the less fortunate is popularly recognized as saintly activity. Most of our planet has lovingly adopted the Tibetan nation-in-exile and offered great respect for the Dalai Lama’s platform of nonviolence.

How and why do these spiritual philosophies and political agendas succeed and remain indestructible? It is because the only agendas that achieve immortality are the ones that plan mutual benefit for everyone on Earth, *including* enemies. Nothing can kill a movement or agenda

that helps all and hurts none—not even the murder of its leaders. Christ, Buddha, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, Susan B. Anthony, The Dalai Lama, John Lennon, and anyone else that has ever had a lasting positive influence on the world, worked toward equal human dignity for everyone and did damage to none. They were strong enough to love everyone, even their enemies.

The time is right for us to join our heroes in doing just that. Compliance with evil *is* evil and avoiding such compliance is primary. But while we maintain the strength of our own spiritual and political immune systems, the most practical approach to dealing with troublemakers is to treat them as we would treat sick children.

Compassion is medicinal. It turns enemies into allies.

Our civilization has some wonderful assets. We can make sure that those survive while the damaging liabilities are being repaired.

Please don't wait for Jesus, Buddha, Allah, Jehovah, Shiva, Aphrodite, or anyone else to do it for you.

Please help produce the positive thoughts, feelings, and actions—the causes—that will yield joyful, sane, and universally beneficial effects.

The obstacles in front of us cannot survive the awesome power of the forces that stand behind us—once we couple those forces with the incredible abilities that, believe it or not, are waiting right within our own minds. These abilities are empowered as soon as they are recognized and gain strength when they are given consistent attention. When you commit to them, they commit to you.

Human commitment makes history bend.

When the international warmongers become as compliant with peaceful goals as most of the peaceful citizens have been with all the warmongering, then the effort toward planet wide sanity will become a cooperative voice of reason that sees everyone win.

Be nice to everyone. We need them all.

Be nice to yourself. We need you most.

“There is no need for temples, no need for complicated philosophy.
Our own brain, our own heart, is our temple.
The philosophy is kindness.”

H.H. The 14th Dalai Lama

“We don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.”

Howard Zinn

APPENDIX

Why the Dog Soldier Trilogy Is Being Written

Why the Dog Soldier Trilogy Is Being Written

This explains a bit about our project to sponsor Wisdom Teachers. There are a few laughs in here, too! More project details are at www.fearlesspuppy.org

The Dog Soldier Trilogy is a collection of two books that became four books but was packaged as three books. The first book was written second. Most of the second and third books were written first. The fourth book was written last.

As you already know, this book is a freebie that hopes to attract you to the first two books. I'm an old guy. My friends tell me that what I'm doing is "marketing." Last I knew, marketing meant going to the store for bread and eggs. Maybe this will work. This promo book is free, the other books are very good, and the cause is even better than the books.

The Dog Soldier Trilogy is about many things but is presented as the story of a single human being. It would also be reasonable to say that it is about every human being. Most of us could easily relate to the main character. Many mistakes made by humanity as a species have been made, one at a time, by our individual hero.

He's been busy.

If fuck ups were feathers, our boy would have wings. He seems to constantly bounce between extremes of disaster and bliss that rarely rest in stability. It is also true, to give credit where credit is due, that our protagonist occasionally embodies bits of what makes human beings worth the trouble it often is to deal with them.

These books read very much like novels. Many folks who have read them think that they are fiction or fantasy. They are not. The books are totally true stories, except for Book One, *Fearless Puppy on American Road*. We'd have to call this one "relatively true" because some of it holds more truth as a personal hallucination of mine than it does as an objective reality. Some of the facts within this book may be jumbled. Details have been recalled by a memory that is suspect. It will only take a few pages of reading for you to understand why the author's memory is suspect.

What happens in real life doesn't always leave documented proof in its wake. These books are real life.

A few names have been changed to protect the privacy of my friends. Some more have been changed for my own protection, legal and otherwise. Very few names have been changed to protect the innocent. That's because very few people actually are innocent, especially in the first book, *Fearless Puppy on American Road*, and this book, *Voices Of Reason From The End Of The World*.

Folks who were my hosts on the road related some of the stories in *Fearless Puppy* to me. I'm a pretty good judge of bullshit by now. If a story appears at all, it means that I'd bet money on it being fact. A lot of the stories in *Fearless Puppy* come from alcohol and drug saturated memories of decades ago. Liberties of poetic license have been taken with some of the specifics. *Puppy* is, nonetheless, a story that is for the most part factual. I know this to be true because I am the main character.

The second book, *Reincarnation Through Common Sense*, is a different story altogether. It is a completely factual account. It involves more folks who could truly be called innocent and less perceptions clouded by drugs and time. Most of this book was drafted while residing in an Asian Temple. The stories in *Reincarnation* can be more strictly described as totally true because in this book I have personally seen everything that is described. All accounts are firsthand.

Everything in the book that you are holding is straight fact with a little added commentary, laughter, and screaming. *Voices Of Reason From The Ends Of The World* may be my favorite book of all because I get to thank my teachers gratefully and bitch at the world sarcastically in the same volume.

Writing is fun for me. I hope this writing is also fun for you to read—but *The Dog Soldier Trilogy* has a purpose to it besides recreational entertainment.

Here it is.

There doesn't seem to be any political solution to the world's problems. We can elect as many different Chief Bozos as we want to, but we'll still be living in a circus of suffering. As long as the thoughts, conversations, and media of humanity are focused on war, greed, drama, and problems instead of happiness, peace, love, and solutions, we will always be, as they say in Brooklyn, "in a world of shit."

Many of us are constantly worried that we live on a planet that wobbles dangerously out of control. Actual horrors notwithstanding, life on Earth is friendlier than we have been led to believe and can be made friendlier still. Many of us regular folks have realized this and chosen to do something about it. We have assigned our selves the job of getting happier. In addition, we try to present more positive, truthful, progress oriented information and happier options to our fellow humans. The purpose of all this is to recognize, refute, and help repair the result of the negative information and options that we have been depressed by for so long. The idea is that if all people have more access to happier options, ideas, and attitudes, it will be easier for us all to become happier, kinder people.

Most folks have some very good tendencies, but these tendencies are often warped by stress and misinformation. These tendencies need to be exercised and strengthened past the point where they can be compromised. We all need as much reinforcement and support in doing this strengthening as we can get. We need more people who are real professionals at bringing about these happy and helpful kinds of thoughts and actions in themselves and others—especially those who are so serious about it that they completely dedicate their lives to making it happen.

In present day America we are blessed to have many such folks, and they are pretty blessed themselves. Many of our professionals-of-the-positive are doing well. Deepak Chopra's sold a lot of books. Bernie Seigel, Iyanla van Zandt, Wayne Dyer, Marianne Williamson, and many of our other brightest minds live in very comfortable circumstances. Oprah seems to have a few bucks left over, even after the expense of all the wonderful activity that she sponsors. That's great. These people deserve all of the prosperity that comes to them and more.

My point is that many of their equals in America, and especially in other parts of the world, are not doing so well. Many forms of Native American, African, Asian, Australian, European,

and other assorted wisdoms are now endangered. Those who are preserving these wisdoms within their small local cultures often lack the resources for decent survival, much less the wherewithal to make what they know available to us. I've met some of these folks. Some live in very average American towns. Some live on the other side of the world. A lot of what they know could prove essential to all of us.

Asia provides a clear example. Over there, much of the positive counterpart to greed, brutality, and ignorance arrives through the compassion and loving kindness of a school of thought (it doesn't require a religious interpretation, folks) that is known as Buddhism. It is the route most folks over there (and there are a lot of them) use to get back to their more humane side. When life gets harsh, if people get lost and foul, the Monks and Nuns are well equipped to help those people direct themselves to the road that leads back to a sane manner of living. They have the psychological as well as the spiritual training, total dedication, and patience to help everyday folks find their individual peace. This of course helps the society at large to stay manageable, happy, and friendly. The Monks and Nuns of Asia are the Wisdom Professionals who remind people of the human decency within, and their obligation to exercise it.

Many of these professionals-of-the-positive throughout Asia lack life's basic necessities, including food, clothing, and shelter. The resources and facilities do not exist for their numbers to expand in conjunction with modern humanity's dire need for these people.

As a rule, Monks and Nuns don't have paying jobs. Survival is dependent upon the generosity and gratitude of a population that is nearly as poor as the clergy themselves.

The life of a Buddhist Monk or Nun is austere even in the best circumstances. The training is very rigorous. They do without most of the things that you and I would consider essential parts of daily life. They are involved in what may be the singular most difficult effort on earth—deep meditation. This isn't some la-la brained or half assed 1960s flashback type of effort. The type of meditation done by the Monks and Nuns requires full time mental focus. Facilitating the elimination of suffering from all living creatures and developing the skillful means to do so is the goal of that focus.

Starvation and frostbite can break anyone's concentration. Although they feel that the spiritual rewards of their training are unparalleled, the trials that are posed by that training can seem too overbearing to endure. For some prospective beginners, those trials may seem too overbearing to attempt.

I've been lucky enough to see firsthand the powerful effect that these Wisdom Professionals can have on individual lives. I've seen it in America, Asia, Mexico, and everywhere else I've ever been.

Let's crunch some numbers. (Again, Asia is just an example. The real dollar cost of preserving North/South American, African, Australian, European, and other assorted humans and wisdom may be slightly higher, but is certainly comparable and manageable.)

It takes one dollar a day to sponsor a Nun or Monk (food/clothing/shelter) in northern India, Mongolia, Nepal, etc. For that dollar, a Monk or Nun by virtue of their extensive training,

compassion, and dedication may influence from one to several million people that day. They do go on TV and make videos sometimes.

They might influence a child to do better in school. This could result in the benefit of that child, the child's family, community, and possibly all of humanity as well. That child could grow up to invent the cure for cancer, or who knows what.

Stranger things have certainly happened.

A Wisdom Professional could catch an adolescent girl at a crossroads in her life. He or she could influence that girl to become more like Mother Teresa and less like the crack whore down the street.

You may call investing a dollar a day to this process charitable. You may take what is probably a more realistic approach and call it functional or practical. From whatever angle you look at this situation, most of us would agree that this is a well invested dollar.

These professionals-of-the-positive provide the general population with a very available daily dose of kindness and emotional intelligence. This dose counteracts the effects of whatever bullshit has pissed the members of that general population off that day, and often reaches further to assist with long-term problems. The irate people are reminded that they can be patient, compassionate, tolerant people. People on the edge remember that the world can be a decent, friendly place and that stepping on others in order to feel in control of their own circumstance may not be the best idea.

If people in any part of the world feel more happy than hostile, then people in every part of the world are safer and more comfortable. An expansion of happiness pumps up the odds for a decrease of violence and an increased amount of the peaceful coexistence we enjoy.

It seems that the information offered by these teachers of sanity can spur us everyday folks on to a state of mind more conducive to what we could call spiritual growth. Everyone benefits from having another good teacher around, especially when the subject of study is how to be a happier, healthier, and less hostile human being. Again—this spiritual growth is not some surface level, bullshit do-gooder, bumper sticker type figure of speech. The type of individual spiritual growth referred to here may be the deciding factor in facilitating our survival as a species.

I love and respect my fellow humans, but we've screwed up to an embarrassing proportion, in at least one regard. We're very late in providing support, respect, and sponsorship for emotional and spiritual intelligence. For whatever reasons, we have historically put faith in the need for a destructive type of knowledge. This misplaced faith has backfired. Destructive knowledge is running us over.

Constructive knowledge can save us if our priorities are adjusted.

If more of the people who are willing to dedicate their lives to the increase of such things as functional, practical happiness and general sanity get the opportunity to do so, it may be our best, and perhaps last, chance to jack up the level of this circus before the bozos blow it up.

It is, after all, our circus. For all we know, the common Far Eastern theory of reincarnation notwithstanding, this may be the only circus we'll ever get to attend. Doesn't it make sense to support more competent ringmasters and management?

* The Most Important Page of This Great Free Book *

I'm betting that you liked and maybe even loved this free book. When you want to see more by the same author, there is plenty of it. Doug "Ten" Rose's other books are *Fearless Puppy on American Road* and *Reincarnation Through Common Sense*. They can be sampled & purchased at www.fearlesspuppy.org in both print and ebook fashion. They can also be found on Amazon (where they have received twenty-three 5* reviews!) as print and Kindle, and Smashwords.com has *Fearless Puppy*—and you can ask your local bookstore to order them.

Why did I give away the very saleable, high quality, and massively entertaining work in *Voices Of Reason From The Ends Of The World* for free? Of course, I wanted you to enjoy the reading, but the main purpose of all my writing is to help increase wisdom and common sense by financially sponsoring more wisdom teachers, beginning with but not exclusive to Buddhist Nuns and Monks. ALL the profits from my book sales go there. Anyone who has seen the news recently knows that our world is sorely in need of more wisdom and common sense. How the Fearless Puppy project plans to increase those desperately-needed commodities was all very well explained in the last chapter, "Why the Dog Soldier Trilogy is Being Written." It is also well explained from another angle and with more specifics at the website.

Please spread this book around as far and wide as possible. When more people read it, more people will want to see the other two 5* books. That will mean more good times for readers, and more wisdom sponsored.

After reading this book, please go to the website and buy the other ones. They are as good as this one, but longer—and they are high adventure stories, not essays. There is a brief description on the next page. You'll not only get great reading for yourself, you will also be helping your family, your friends, and everyone else on your planet by sponsoring wisdom teachers. It is the best deal in literary history, folks, and you're in on the ground floor! It's a free book followed by an option to buy two more 5* books, with the profits from your purchase price going to improve the planet.

Enjoy the show! Then please take the next step.

Many thanks.

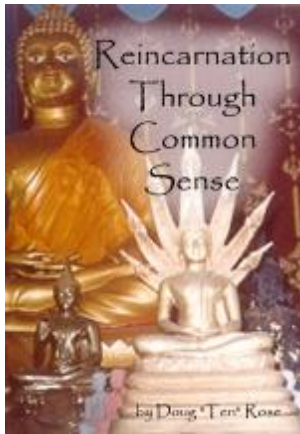
Be well, Tenzin (Doug "Ten" Rose)

p.s. Besides being able to buy both *Fearless Puppy on American Road* and *Reincarnation Through Common Sense* at www.fearlesspuppy.org/, you can also find some sample chapters from each book there as well as project details, news articles about previous projects, TV and radio interviews, and a lot more!

* ALL AUTHOR PROFITS SPONSOR WISDOM PROFESSIONALS AND THEIR EFFORTS *

“Once you accept the universe as being something expanding into an infinite nothing which is something, wearing stripes with plaid is easy.”

Albert Einstein



Reincarnation Through Common Sense

Reincarnation Through Common Sense is a book of stripes and plaid in the most entertaining sense of Einstein's words. Westerners have written many books about living in Asian temples. None are like this true story.

The rural Buddhist Monks and Nuns of a forest temple in Asia adopt a very troubled soul from Brooklyn, New York. He can't speak the language. No one there speaks English. He is penniless, has no intention of studying spiritual discipline, and is amusingly psychotic. This author is not a theology student! He is nonetheless given access to the ancient roots and spiritual wings that define the Wisdom Professionals who have rescued him. He redefines life and reports the details in a manner so intimate and natural that you'll think you are having coffee on a barstool in the temple with him. You may laugh a lot on your way to Nirvana! You may say "Ouch!" a few times, too.

Magic is redefined as objective reality and common sense. Spirit is presented as a functional friend, without the fairy dust. Moods run from adventurous psychosis through enlightened bliss as writing styles run through ancient prose to sharp modern internal rhyme. The main character's life runs through death into reincarnation without ever leaving his body—and he describes this process in vivid terms and living color.

This down to earth treatment gives a clear view in simple terms of truths that we more often find fossilized within concretized symbols beneath rusting metaphor. For an experience unique in comedic drama, spirituality, adventure, and sheer creativity, buy and read *Reincarnation Through Common Sense*.

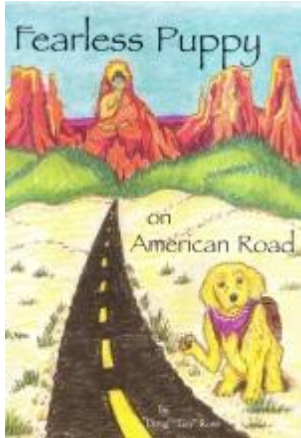
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direct links from our website to print and ebook or ask your local bookstore

www.fearlesspuppy.org/m_reincarnation.htm

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Fearless Puppy on American Road

This amazing (mostly) true story reads like a fantasy. *Fearless Puppy on American Road* is a transfictional self-help book. It is both comedic and dramatic—a butt kicking, page-turning adventure story that makes deep spiritual impressions.

Within this book you will meet several saintly Tibetan Lamas. You will also meet a man who is his own uncle, specialists in smoke, mirrors, and invisibility, spirited sex, oxygen orgasms, heavenly Hell's Angels, phony preachers, domestic violence/domestic solutions, racist killers in America, Canadian race wars, Native American wise men, a bit of Christian ethics and Jewish ritual, angelic witches, benevolent heroin addicts, magical birds, an all-lesbian band playing a rock concert for the deaf, the musician raised by multi-ethnic golden-hearted prostitutes, martial artists battling neo-Nazis, the modern-day Robin Hood, and many other strangely wonderful people.

Buckle your seatbelt tightly, take a deep breath, and enjoy the ride. Fearless Puppy runs on rocket fuel!

**Please forward this* through your contact and friend lists, and to anyone you think might be interested. Help us raise funds through book sales to sponsor Wisdom Professionals. Your effort is important! Thank you.

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direct links from our website to print and ebook or ask your local bookstore

www.fearlesspuppy.org/m_fearless.htm

www.fearlesspuppy.org

About the Author

Doug “Ten” Rose may be the biggest smartass as well as one of the wisest and most entertaining survivors of the hitchhiking adventurers that used to cover America’s highways. He is the author of Fearless Puppy on American Road and Reincarnation Through Common Sense, has survived heroin addiction and death, and is a graduate of over a hundred thousand miles of travel without ever driving a car, owning a phone, or having a bank account. Ten Rose and his work are a vibrant part of the present and future as well as an essential remnant of a vanishing breed.

See the About the Author section at www.fearlesspuppy.org