

Thoughts on Life

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How I See It: Thoughts on Life

What is a journey? in writing a memorial for a friend, I again look at the broad brush stroke of our lives from the perspective of those lives with whom we have intersected and intertwined; the opening and closing of doors on the way, reading books, seeing movies, trying to get some understanding and meaning of life.

On this particular journey down here to Santa Fe, having left Alaska a year ago, the path involved more than expected. Living with my niece, her husband and their/my extended family on Vancouver Island was a joy. The richness of putting family tales together, trying to make sense of our lives, the changes, how things have worked out. What word to use instead of dysfunctional, which seems to be all families in one form or another; coming through the tunnel of time to try to understand the whys and hows of then and now. What we thought was meaningful then and what is meaningful now.

The perspective of age.

Being on the Island again, where i lived and went to school many, many years ago, reconnecting with friends of that time, recounting the patchwork of our lives was a rich, fun experience. The sheer delight of sitting on the rocks by the sea in Oak Bay, Victoria, with an old, old friend. Two little old ladies drinking white wine out of a thermos, laughing and laughing about our lives and things we remember. Good times again.

The trip to Africa. A journey of many dimensions which I have written about in its own narrative.

It came time to leave the Island. After taking the ferry to Port Angeles, Washington, I start driving my old VW Westfalia down Hwy 1. The varied lives and interesting people I meet in campgrounds and RV parks remind me again that one cannot make assumptions about people, i.e Texas license plates on a trailer that turns out to hold Bernie supporters. Old timers that look like old Alaskans and turn out to be just that..."Hey, Alaska", one calls to me "where are you from?" He has been living in this RV park for 20 years and still looks like someone in a small Alaskan town.

The rainy miserable weather makes driving along the Washington coast less than pleasant, along with the depressing sights of a bust economy. An economy formerly largely dependent on the now defunk lumber industry; vacant, boarded-up businesses, discouraged, sad faces, a feeling of total emptiness. Life devoid of hope and purpose, the landscape, devoid of sunshine. I can just pass through, but what of those that must stay.

Then the change upon coming into Oregon. The coastline. All superlatives apply to this extraordinary landscape. Miles of truly remarkable beauty combined with a vibrancy in the air as tourism has lifted the economy, creating a sense of prosperity and well being. The sun is shining here and it is warm. The damp cold has stayed behind in Washington. I stay at a Klamath River campsite where the nights are brilliant with stars, as there is no nocturnal light pollution from nearby cities.

And then into California where the orange poppies bloom, starting right at the border crossing. Meeting up with wonderful, outgoing, helpful friends of friends who take me in and feed my body and my soul. A respite in paradise before continuing. My faith in basic humanity is reinforced again. Kind, decent people who take the opportunity to make the world a better place, one contact at a time. And who will always find an opportunity to do this.

Onward south through the smell of farmland. A car breakdown necessitating another stay and rest. The fun of being with friends who welcome you and the pleasure of spending time together.

I love New Mexico. The ochres, pale violets and grays of the adobe offset by the gray greens of the sage. The late afternoon, early evening thunder storms that occur everyday and sometimes turn more violent at night. One evening, the sky was bright orange, reminding me of a forest fire. The leaves on the trees appeared yellow, as though in autumn. I expected the power to go out, as it would have done in Alaska, but it didn't. Intense thunder and rain.

When I first arrived here in Santa Fe, the river was a dry bed. Now, after the storm, the river is full of water. Now I know it can get much higher and even flood. But this high desert country needs rain. There are greens of all shades, so intense, so different from the watercolor-like landscape of the Island.

Renting an apartment for the first time in many years presents another journey. Being a bit untidy by nature, I am forced to clean up my act, as they say, and stay a little more focused and organized as I go through my day. After living in the VW camper off and on for the past two months, this should not be much of a problem. But I find that the moment I am allowed to have space, I immediately utilize every inch, oozing into every corner. Clothes do not get hung up immediately, dishes sit in the sink. The wonderful freedom that space allows. This is how women must have felt when they no longer had to wear corsets.

I look out my windows and am transported into a world of multiple shades of green. Trees abound in this particular spot as we are by the river bank. Painters' paradise. The subtle shades of adobe and multiple colours in the gardens surround me. In the mornings I awake to the sound of birds singing. I am reminded of Africa. The late afternoon thundershowers bring water to the river bed, and in the very quiet of the night I can hear the sounds of the water flowing by.

On the Stanford rape case.

High on my list of all that is appalling in this case, is the letter from the perpetrator's father. It immediately makes what Brock Turner did a bit more understandable, not forgivable, but a basis of where and what this kid must have come from. Nowhere in the father's letter is there any mention of the victim, or any sense that Brock was ever taught that he is responsible for his actions, that you don't do anything that endangers or deliberately harms another. Brock's denial reflects his father's denial of the situation.

The focus is on how his son's life is ruined because of 20 minutes of "action." There is no apology to the victim, no concern or thought given to the life of the victim, her trauma, her future. No apologies offered for his son's behavior. From the tone of the letter, it is possible to hear the dialogue in the background.. 'she must have led him on, she knew what was going on, must have been conscious to be there and then passed out, who was she anyway? must have bseen trash to start with.'and on and on...the usual comments.

And, is it ever excusable to run from the scene? He just left her. What defense does he offer for that? What if the two Swedish guys had not come along? There is not a moment of remorse or concern, except for getting caught, the damage to his career. No thought for her.

And, lest we forget, the only reason this case became viral and is getting attention is because the victim was so very articulate, writing such a 'to the point' letter. The sad thing is that had she not done this, and were it not for the internet, this case would have gone unnoticed, forgotten except by the victim.

And those who are not so articulate? Are afraid to speak up? Are not heard when they do speak? What happens to them?

They are left behind and forgotten.

Will this make a difference in how rape cases are viewed in the future? maybe, just maybe.

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i was about to email a friend re a problem i am having with my GPS. My question was "where am I?" and how can I get from here to there? Then came the news of the Orlando shooting...and now, I again ask myself and millions of others, where am I?

I live in the United States, supposedly one of the most desirable countries in the world. Yet, here again, a mass shooting. How is it that someone is allowed to buy an assault weapon? What possible use in a civil society is there for a semiautomatic? This young man just walked into a store and bought this lethal weapon. What is going on here?

Yes, apparently he was unstable. Well, we didn't need an official report of his past to tell us that. Do we think that a normal, mentally healthy individual would do such a horrific thing? But all this takes away from the fact that if he had not been able to buy the assault weapon, this could not have happened. What is to prevent other homophobic, mentally unstable individuals from doing the same thing? Nothing, while we stay on this road map.

Maybe there is just much too much money to be made from the sale of guns and ammunition to hope for change. That's the bottom line. It all boils down to money. A lot of rhetoric from both sides, and 'oh yes, we are all horrified and so sad about what happened, but please, don't touch my money.'

So if we really want to make a change, make the world a better place, we can do it. Nothing is easy, it all takes time, but we can divest, make sure that no money is invested in arms or ammunition, pressure Congress for stricter gun control, be more tolerant of others, emphasize the peace aspects of any and all religions, The list goes on...helping the mentally ill, alleviating poverty, better education for all our children. But everything needs a beginning and nothing can happen until we seriously start working on it. And maybe a good beginning is to look at where we are investing our money.

There are many people working very hard on just these problems and more. But it needs all of us.

It looks like the greatest protection we need is not from terrorists, but from ourselves.