

Way of the Wild Man

Wednesday, February 14, 2018

Wild Guitar:

A Path to Self-Knowledge

In order to play wild guitar, you need to give up audience love and even interest in your playing.

Can one call wild guitar playing a performing art? Maybe. But you can't expect people to pay for it, although they might. Well, maybe you can't ask them to pay, and they might voluntarily pay, making their contribution to the Wild Guitar Fund or something to that effect.

Truth is, anything wild or not, can be played in public. But asking others to pay for it, like or love it, or even be interested in it is another story.

Wild guitar is really a way of life. It has nothing to do with pleasing or displeasing others. In fact, it may have nothing to do with them. (Although I wish it had. I hate "rejecting" others.)

However, it is a path to self-knowledge, exploration, expression, and truth.

I think about performing and ultimately sharing my music with an audience. Maybe that is just my nature.

So where does wild guitar fit in?

Is there such a thing as wild guitar performing?

Is there a venue for such playing?

Where could one develop such a new performing art?

Play for no money. Just sit and doodle in public at a mall or restaurant, playing wild guitar as folks pass by or sit talking to one other, or relax quietly thinking in a corner, letting their minds wander. That way the audience is free to listen or not.

Or, management might pay the wild guitarist a small amount.

However, getting paid for performing of wild guitar playing is somehow important to me.

I feel that if folks don't pay, it means my playing is not worth anything.

But is this true? No. Some free things have mucho value. Such as some good advice or teaching. And that's only one example.

If is true, and it is, why then must I always be paid in order to feel what I do is worthwhile and worthy?

Maybe it is simply conditioning. Also payment is one of the signs of recognition. But I think it is mostly conditioning. I have feared poverty so long that it has become a permanent set of mind. The "I need money and without it I will soon become a bum" has permeated my mind for so many years, I don't know another way of thinking.

Does artistic recognition require financial recognition? Maybe. But maybe not. Look at my Wednesday Senior folk dance class, They love it and they love me. And yet they personally pay me nothing. (The township pays me instead.) But they feel they are getting it free. Monday night dancers pay me directly, and they love the class and me as well.

So although an aspect, money is not the rule for audience recognition and love.

Will knowing this help me perform wild guitar?

Maybe.

Audience Existence

I play guitar alone in my living room. It is quiet and peaceful. No screaming audience, no peering eyes, no piercing looks or criticism, or flashing wrong-note signs.

All is quiet and peaceful as my guitar notes float and fly around the soft-curtained, rug-muffling room.

When I play guitar alone in my living room, am I still playing for an audience? Does an audience still exist?

Yes.

Yes, I have an audience. They will never go away! I am inextricably tied to them.

My audience is part of my being, part of me. Even if they seem bored, disinterested, and walk away, it is impossible to permanently lose them.

Although my external audience may disappear, I will always have an internal one.

In the past, I have feared their potential criticism. But now, no more. At least, I am working on it. And, as I do, criticism is slowly being replaced by love.

Imagine that: Although the external audience may clap, fall asleep with indifference, boredom, love me, hate me, or even walk out in protest, my internal audience loves me!

Seeing and playing guitar for my audience, whether imaginary or real, internal or

external, is an unbreakable habit. Therefore, there will always be an audience and I will always have an audience.

Another Side of Wild

The “Let ‘Er Rip” Side of Wild

Many faces of wild.

I knocked off Alhambra slow and soft.

Now that I’m warmed up, I knocked off Alhambra fast, soft, and partially sloppy.

Fast, soft (or hard), and partial sloppy (skimming or missing a few notes) is another side of wild.

It’s the “Let ‘er rip” side of wild.

Coming Home Again

But “You Can’t Go Home Again”

The “Now What?” Stage

Let’s take responsibility. I created all these problems with my guitar playing and my right hand, thumb, fingers, wrist, etc because I wanted to prevent myself from performing.

Truly, at the time, and for the next 40 or so years, a good part of me, perhaps all of me, never wanted to perform again!

I created my guitar problem to stop myself. Even with all my blemishes and inferiority complex, I was doing okay-to-fine during my performing career.

Then, in my desire for perfection, or rather my desire to never be nervous again (which I thought was due to my inferior guitar playing) I began the re-practice route, with its goal of playing perfectly, which meant I would forever be immune from criticism and never be nervous again.

Well, never to be nervous again, I have learned is not only unrealistic, it is impossible. I will always be nervous before performance. Period. It will never go away. And perhaps it shouldn't. But that is another issue and question.

Let's face it: I was on a wild goose chase.

Can I blame myself? Of course, in the process of retreat, I created an entire new business that included classes, weekends, and tours, a monumental task, which I could never have done if I had "been able to play guitar." But using the reason or excuse of incompetence, I diverted my mind and energies, and created these new paths.

Is that good? I don't know. And was it really God who was directing me during this time? Or was God my excuse for this divergence? I will never know that for sure either. Let's say God and I were partners in manufacturing this guitar excuse, with its Alhambra problems, and the new pathways it created.

Today, on guitar, it feels like I have finally come home.

I've come home to my old Greenwich Village starting days, home to Harry Berlow, flamencan guitar, and even Rolando Valdes-Blaine, and the period where I thought I could play just about any classical or flamencan guitar piece. Yes, I thought it then and could do it then. And I did. But after a 10-or-so-year career of playing, I "purposely" threw it away. I

redid my technique with the purpose of reaching the state of perfection and fearlessness, and freeing myself from my worries, concerns, performance nervousness. In the process, I “purposely crippled” myself so I could no longer play in public.

And in so doing I created a new career.

But now that I have “come home again,” where does that leave me today?

Return to the stage, in spite of my imperfections.

Return to the stage, imperfections and all.

Embrace my imperfections. I’ve got nothing better to do.

Road to Improvement

Pathway to the Divine

I’ll just keep trying to improve, never quite getting there, and that’s just the way it is.

I am sometimes right, sometimes wrong. But when I am, it’s often just for a day. Next day it’s all different, and I have to start all over.

That’s just the way it is.

On the other hand, why be down on myself?

I am improving, getting better.

It’s just that the road to improvement is so unpredictable, rocky, and strange.

And, of course, it never ends.

Running Wild, Ecstasy, and Freedom

My goal has always been freedom to create and jump for joy in the wild happiness of creation. “Wild” or running wild on the lawn, simply means freedom. Period.

How to achieve freedom? Of course you need discipline and skills to implement it. Otherwise freedom mean chaos, which is totally terrifying. Thus the country of freedom always needs borders, disciplines in which to contain it. Break the borders for a moment, and you often touch ecstasy. But ecstasy itself, although a goal and great feeling cannot (and should not) last.

Ecstasy is a momentary reminder of the Power, the heavenly forces that run the universe. And by experiencing ecstasy. Your conscious mind disintegrates and you, for a moment, become part of the universe. Yes, it is an ecstatic experience. But since you are human and contained in a body, you must come back to earth.

And you come back reminded. You know the magnificence of the heavenly power. Still the elixir is so strong, that, drunk too long, or lingering in its hold too long is dangerous and can kill you.

By connecting you to the Universe, ecstasy is the ultimate high. But when not connected to the higher forces, can also be a drug. I'd call it addicting, self-aggrandizing, false ecstasy because it creates the illusion that that you personally, your ego, is the source of all power.

Meditation

Studying Hebrew (or perhaps even coding) is my meditation/creative/in-the-

chamber-of-my-imagination time.

Eventually, I will bring the mental fluctuations to the public, to the world, but in my own way, after my own cooking in the cauldron of my imagination, in my own time.

And they may and will come out totally differently, perhaps with not a word of Hebrew or scrap of evidence that I ever studying or meditated upon anything. They may come out in a dance, or accident phrase that I drop while teaching or talking to another.

Yes, very often the people and public are just too powerful for me. Talking to others, especially trying it in a foreign language, Hebrew, etc. is often just too overwhelming; just as movies are too powerful and overwhelming, drowning out my inner voices, overpowering, shutting out my and darkening and limiting my crazy imagination with its inner vision of wild freedom.

And my imagination is my most vital tool, a place of curiosity, engagement, dreams, pleasure, and adventure.

Yet, eventually I want to bring my vision with its creations to the public. Bringing things public is a vital part of my life.

Solitude and dynamic entry: I need both.

Control/Uncontrolled

Alhambra/Tremolo Technique

I can't cross the line between Alhambra/tremolo control (slow to moderate) and uncontrolled (fast).

Yet, I can do it easily with rasgueado.

What a puzzled. I wonder why?

I wonder if I can mix controlled and uncontrolled and, in so doing, create an Alhambra/tremolo pathway to a new land.

Does controlled and uncontrolled relate to private and public? Maybe.

If so, then in the same experiment, try to mix private (controlled) and public(uncontrolled).

One Year Sabbatical

A one-year sabbatical.

I can afford a one-year sabbatical. This sabbatical idea takes the pressure off immediate action. Knowing I can afford it also eliminates panic.

I can take the chance. I can think “no pressure.”

Gives me time to reflect, wonder, dream, and change, see where this “new adventure” leads.

Truth is, I don't have to sing either.

Yes, in my sabbatical year, I don't have to do anything! I cannot remember ever having a week or month in my life like this. And now a year! And there is absolutely nothing I have to do. Nothing I am compelled, obligated, forced, pressured, frightened, panicked, railroading into doing!

In my sabbatical year I am totally free to do only what I want to do! Yes. A first for

me.

Totally free. Running wild on the lawn. Goal of complete freedom achieved!

Now what?

Maybe nothing. Maybe just live floating in a complete vacuum. Can I do that?

More important is: Do I want to do that? I doubt it. I don't think I can or want to live in a vacuum.

But in my sabbatical year, I have empty space ahead.

Where will they lead?

What will I end up doing, if I don't have to do anything?

No doubt, this will reveal my true desires.

I've been running, like a chicken with its head cut off, for years, not paying attention to my money, always focusing on accumulating, accumulating, trying to get rich so I never have to worry about money again!

Well, evidently I've reached the end of that road. It gives me no security, safety, or stability; and I'm constantly worried and afraid, or ecstatic if the money is coming in. But whichever way, up or down, money is my main focus. And I am no closer to my goal of freedom, and running wild on the lawn (well, I am running wild, but like a chicken with its head cut off.)

In this new version of my life, this new New Leaf chapter which I call "Wild," I've redefined wild as not only including fast, agitated, and ecstatic, but also slow and soft.

Slow and soft are the wise additions. And once realized, I achieved my freedom goal

of running wild on the lawn, which I now call simply: “Wild.”

Amazing: A Desire to Sell!

Strange—now that I’ve made my peace with sales and tours, saying I do not want to be pressured into sales and then I’d have a wonderful life, and I decided to follow that philosophy, and take a sabbatical year, I have a stirring, a rumbling, burgeoning, even a desire, to sell!

How did this happen?

First, the pressure had to be totally off. I had to feel free. Thus to discover my most basic needs and desires.

And then the question of what will I do with my free time arose.

And one of the things, in fact, almost the first thing to come up was: a yen to talk to my clients!

What does this mean?

Perhaps that, despite my negative sales upbringing, I am a born salesman. More than that, I may actually love sales!

If this is so, and it appears it is, what is my next step?

Perhaps I might start, for inspiration and ideas, by reading some books on sales. The past is popping into the future, with a vengeance. But this time the forced aspect is over, and it feels totally new.

I no longer have to sell. It is no longer an obligation. No more gnawing voices and

worries about poverty and more.

Friday, February 23, 2018

Banish Panic and Despair

I'm feeling panic again. No sales, no customers, no registrants, no money, plus a down market. Suddenly, with a shift of winds, and prospects falling close to zero, I move swiftly from a rosy picture a few months ago, to despair today.

It looked so good, and now it looks so awful.

Well, that's life. What to do?

On the emotional level, I could at least begin with my panic. Is it realistic or not? I don't know. But, realistic or not, I should handle it in the first battle.

Panic and despair: mere emotions, but they sure exist. They are totally influenced by the outside world of shifting reality.

If I give in to them, what happens? I feel miserable, that's what happens. But even though business is awful, do I have to feel miserable? Or can I choose to ignore my misery and its accompanying despair and continue my life, which isn't so bad, as it is?

And maybe figure out some new sales techniques at the same time.

Truth is, panic and despair have absolutely no effect on outside reality. They are my inner reality over which I have complete control!

So in my reactions to the down business climate, I am choosing to feel miserable.

Isn't there a better way?

Know my feelings, yes. But perhaps I can follow this with replacement.

Once I look into the faces of panic and despair, can I then by-pass them as “feeling ghosts,” look through them and move on? On the surface, I’d say yes.

The best rational way to handle them is to step back, look at the situation, analyze it, then do what I can, if anything.

Sometimes there is really nothing to do but wait and watch.

Can I do that while it feels like my world is ending? But what other choice is there?

Until a new or better direction comes up, what else can I do?

And maybe I can simply learn to follow my path quietly, calmly, with faith (but without hope), do what I’m supposed to do, and shut up.

Yes, recognize the weather, use an umbrella or raincoat when necessary, but stay on the path no matter what the weather. In other words, just keep doing what I’m doing.

Saturday, February 24, 2018

Return

Somehow I have given up, lost my way, stopped considering or even trying to implement my once grand program of writing, performing, playing guitar, etc. And with the disintegration of these once noble goals, my desire to fulfill other dictates has also dribbled away.

And all this because my tour business stinks, there are no reactions to my ads, emails and FB posts, no response to my sales efforts.

I am angry and depressed about this, or perhaps depressed and angry, and having a small temper tantrum because things are not going my way, or the way had planned or hoped. And I'm falling back into money and abandonment fears.

In other words, my unsuccessful tour sales efforts are turning my attitude to shit, blocking, nay blowing up all my old time goals.

I used to have "secret" goals of both publishing my books and performing on classical guitar. Those "secret" goals and wishes drove me for years. Tours, stock market (but not folk dancing), were all simply methods of making money, means of survival, so I could support my dreams and artistic goals and habits. I even learned website design so I could eventually "publish" my books online, putting some or all of their content on my website and thus bring them to the public.

But all these former desires and goals have been washed away by (unsuccessful) tours sales efforts.

What is the answer to this dilemma?

Obviously, to return to my roots.

And, I suppose, this means return to writing and publishing new books, and return to performing.

Upon hearing the latter, I go "ugh." Second I hear, "Been there, done that." But I know that is a rationalization. First, I hear. . .what?

Truth is, I must admit, I have finally conquered my Alhambra problem. And this by finally accepting my slow playing, and that I probably will never perform it in public. Or if I

ever do, it will be totally on my own terms.

This victory has taken 40 years. But I must admit, it has finally come. And it releases me to perform again.

Performing again would also mean I have to revive my songs, stories, and pieces and parts of my old program. I have to return to the past to revive and invigorate the future.

No question, I am different now.

But can I make the effort to revive not only my performing career, but my writing as well.

Horrible and Fascinating Thought

Could embarrassment and humiliation about “letting it all out,” “releasing my wailing, crying soul,” be the ultimate reason why I gave up my concerts, along with my easy singing skill?

And gave myself the Alhambra put down for years to prevent me from facing my true pain-filled and hurt emotional self?

What a horrible thought. All that wasted time, those wasted years. But it could be true.

It is the reason I started my New Leaf Journal: to express the true heartaches and joys of my soul. But this was “private” journal. Singing, at least the soulful, hurting side, would be for public consumption and display. (Even Bernice might listen.) Fear and embarrassment on all sides. So I shut it down. For 30 years.

Poverty, Having Nothing, Live By Your Wits

Period of the Sage

Return to the Past with Mew Liberation

Poverty, having nothing, becoming a Bowery bum, these fears have haunted my life, especially my married life.

I hate living in fear. But I do.

The stock market is swooping down today. My money is sinking fast. Who knows, it could all be gone in a flash. Fear rising, bordering on panic. I could lose all my money; I could become totally poor—again.

I was once totally poor during my Greenwich Village days.

How did I survive? I lived by my wits.

Maybe the concrete realization that I could, at any moment, lose all my money is a good thing to know and accept.

The disease of fear is incurable. A difference between curing and healing. I have an incurable disease; but nevertheless, I could be healed. Through self-love and acceptance (in this case of the market or something else wiping out all my money), an acceptance of ultimate poverty situation.

Enlightenment may mean that the burden of your finances or at least worry about finances, has been removed. You are “lighter”, enlightened.

Or maybe it is best to imagine I've lost all my savings, to imagine my life with no

money or even a source for it. No support at all, from anywhere.

What would I do? How would I live?

Would I simply die? (That will happen anyway.)

Maybe now that I'm older, I may have to live by my wits again. Is that really so bad?

If I can imagine how to live without money, maybe I can imagine how to live free again.

After all, in the Astrology of Personality it says that eighty-four and up is the period of the sage.

Thursday, March 1, 2018

Stop Worrying About Money

New Habit and Adventure

I've been worried about money for years. Well, actually and mostly since I got married.

First, I thought that focusing on making money would help. And it does, up to a point.

But during the days that I thought I had enough money (before the market went down, when business was flying), I still worried or at least thought about it, even focused on, money.

What did I learn? That having "enough" money, being at a point where I thought I didn't have to worry about it anymore, did not free me from money worries, or at least focusing on it.

And now that I'm losing my money, my savings are going down and hopes for improved business are sinking, I am once again still worried about it.

Thus, my methods of dealing with money worries, in retrospect, just do not work.

Perhaps the best way not to worry about money is simply to just to stop worrying.

Period.

Perhaps worrying about it is just a habit I developed over the years. Yes, it pushed me to earn: but perhaps I'm at a different stage of life now.

What stage?

I'm not sure. But now is the time to develop a new habit: Stop worrying about money.

Go about my business, keep doing what I always do, keep promoting and pushing my businesses (through emails, ads, FB, etc), and, in the process, stop worrying.

Wednesday, March 7, 2018

How strange about my left knee. My six-week physical therapy ended yesterday. Dr. Pavell said my knee was much better! And I agree.

And yet, today (and yesterday) my knee feels worse than ever! And this, even though the doctor, and even myself agree that it is better!

How strange is that?

Could this be a strange new Sarnoian reaction? If yes, why?

Well, Dr. Pavell, my physical therapists, and even myself agree that the road has been cleared. There is not nothing (or at least much less) standing in my way for Wild, and running

wild.

Could this fear of my new freedom, my new Wild place, be now appearing my left leg? This idea seems strangely possible and right. No other “explanation” holds up. (Of course, I could say I “overdid” it by walking so fast, but somehow that doesn’t feel quite right. A physical excuse for a mental state.)

Time for a conference with myself.

Friday, March 9, 2018

Suppressed Rage in my Left Leg?

Furious Over Tour Rejections

But Freedom and Happiness through my Right Index Finger

The gateway to my true Alhambra self is through my right index finger.

I wonder if the gateway to my true folk dance self is through my left leg. I used to have left “folk dance ankle.” Now I have left folk dance knee. Is there a relationship? My tensions and fears have usually been expressed (suppressed) through my left side, leg, knee, ankle.

Is that happening now?

What are my fears now? Age, incapacity, death. Lack of purpose. Anything new?

Yes, since 80.

I have yet to deal with it, accept it. Perhaps my helpless rage against it is being expressed through my left knee.

Note: Helpless rage. Helpless, my left knee is threatening to make me helpless. And indeed, I am angry, raging against such a state.

Could Sarno be right? Well, why not? He's been right in so many other things in my life. Is there suppressed rage in my leg?

It started with low registration for Balkan Splendor. Or perhaps even earlier: low registration for Romania. Then, starting this January, total silence, almost no registration for tours this year. I have been forgotten, pushed aside, shoved down and squashed. Then the fallen stock market was the final blow to my hopes for riches and success.

So basically, it feels like, this year, everything has fallen apart. I rage in helpless frustration.

And paradoxically, the doctor said I was much better! And since he said that, my knee has gotten worse!

Could it be that my body is better, but my mind is worse, that I am creating this left knee pain as a distraction?

Distraction from what? Obviously, a greater fear. Well, I said it: fear of old age, but perhaps even "worse," that my customers are abandoning me.

Childhood terror of abandonment, and the death that comes with it: My existence is being threatened. What to do? I can either flee or face my demons.

Evidently, I have chosen to flee.

Is making myself helpless a form of fleeing? Maybe. Well, it really doesn't matter.

Yes, I don't want to face how angry, nay enraged I am. I'd "rather" turn it on myself. I

hate to think it, and even admit it, but that is what I have done. No wonder my knee hurts.

Perhaps even my age fear has been created by my anger at tour rejections. I could, after all, see 80 as another step into wisdom, which it is.

In any case, the truth is I am furious furious I have been forgotten and abandoned.

A Dancing Alhambra and Happy Index Finger!

On guitar I have lost my audience. I have given them up. That's why I'm so free and happy and my Alhambra is opening up with a free, happy, and powerful right index finger! Yes, happiness and freedom reign. I no longer worry about criticism, along with the constant tension, tightness and anxiety.

I am loving my classical guitar, which I play only for myself, with love of my power, and love of God.

Indeed, the right-hand tightness must have been caused by anger at my audience. But that is over. I no longer care or even think about them. So I am not longer angry at them. I can play for myself and as my true self.

Now what about folk dancing, and tours. Is it time to give up my audience as well? No, not yet. But dive into the angry, raging bundle in my left knee.

With Dr. Pavell saying my left leg is much better, my last avenue of escape closed down. I had to finally face it. The pain behind my left knee was excruciating, But rage, anger, fear and pain of abandonment were obviously worse. I tried to deny it. That's why it took months to face it.

Saturday, March 10, 2018

Folk Dancing Healed Me

“The big deal is that my Darien folk dance group cured my left knee! Yes!

“I could hardly walk before the class. Such great pain. Leading and running the class pushed me out of myself and into the realm of higher focus, focusing on both the dance and the dancers, on leading the group, and this focus took my attention off my knee.

Then I drifted back to injury—but now with the knowledge that, for a short time, while I was focused on teaching, my knee pain disappeared.

If the intense focus of that short teaching time could do it, why couldn't I do it when I'm not teaching? In other words, it is a mental state.

And this morning, I feel better.

Tremolo

How does this realization help my guitar? Does it mean I really have to play classic guitar and more for others, give a concert? And this in order to cure (heal) myself?

Wouldn't it be strange, mysterious, and wonderful if most of my “life” problems were, through the strange alchemy of this miserable, suffering, low-to-no business, injury-prone year were solved by sneaking through the back door!

That for example, Alhambra was solved by sneaking through in that way. Of even the

desire for great leaps of wealth through stock market gains. Or what else?

Suppose all this suffering has remolded my psyche, and what used to seem difficult now seems easy.

Take this morning: The solution to my Alhambra tremolo seems and feels easy.

Wednesday, March 14, 2018

Recriminations

Forty Years of Effort in the Wrong Direction

How could I have been so stupid all those years trying to grow the Alhambra treble when, all the time, its essence was in the base?

Forty years of effort. . . in the wrong direction!

Why did it take forty years? And why am I convinced now?

Will I ever really know? And does it even matter?

The point is, I am finally there. Isn't that all that matters? The Alhambra point.

Notice I have a blinding headache coming on. I wonder why.

A blinding Alhambra headache?

Obviously total anger. But at what? Isn't it too late? Can't make up for those wasted years.

What can I do? Move ahead. A new space.

Of course, destruction clears the way to the new path.

Thursday, March 15, 2018

Sloppy, Imperfect, and Sense of Humor

May Be My (Only) Way to Go

Aiming for perfection while realizing I'll never make it is the paradox, the contradiction, the joke.

I'm a perfectionist.

But I'll never get it perfect.

Therefore, is the moral of the Alhambra that I must give up my quest for perfection. I must accept sloppy and imperfect.

Maybe that is the only conclusion I can draw. Certainly, I've tried the perfection route for enough years and it hasn't worked.

Sad to say, there is nothing more to be gained from trying.

And yet I keep aiming to be better. Is the quest for perfection unquenchable, a never-ending human disease? Or do only certain people have it? Like me?

Yet that quest is partly fun. Maybe the fact that I rarely if ever achieve it is part of the joke. And frustration is what gives me a sense of humor.

Playing Guitar "Only for Me" as a Type of Advance,

A Personal Running Wild on the Lawn Victory

Perhaps, for me, playing guitar "only for me, only for myself," free from the prying eyes of the audience, free of "professional" and concert restrictions, free in general, is a type

of advance.

Maybe this down and emptiness I feel is the down and emptiness that comes after a victory. I've finally "arrived." How glorious for the first few moments to stand shining on the mountain top! But then comes the "Now what?" And the letdown, lack of purpose and direction, after victory.

Playing classical guitar "only for myself" is indeed a personal victory. Can I accept it or do I now charge on to something else, and remain ever in the whirlwind?

I probably need a bit of both.

Monday, March 19, 2018

Writing

I'm afraid to put my foot in the water again.

After almost a year of crumbling edifices, including my bad knee and tour business, and other things, my slate has been wiped clean and I have been totally humbled. I'm even slipping back into lack of confidence.

It has been a terrible year. I have just about hit the basement and am crawling around at the bottom, listless, directionless, can't get started in anything.

It seems I can't go any lower. And I have been crawling at or near the bottom since January.

But Saturday, after dinner with Barry and Eugenia, I took a step in a "new" direction (actually an old direction restarted): I decided to go back to register for Barry's writing class

and return to writing.

A frightening new decision. On one level, it feels so good to be frightened again! And the sudden question emerged: Can I even write anymore? Do I still have an imagination? Can I “compete” with the others? Dare I dream of publishing again, with all its disappointments?

All frightening questions, ones I have avoided, probably for years. Now I am facing the music again, in a new (old) body, and new mind set. What is that mind set? I’m not sure yet. But I am taking the first step, a tip-toe, into the water

Folk Dancing

Another “new” thing: folk dancing with others, in Ginny’s Sunday class, as equals. No longer the teacher, or promoter of my tours, or even “on” when I enter the folk dance class. I don’t even have to dance well. I can just relax and be myself. (Well, I’m not there yet, but perhaps I took the first step. “Changing (healing) the world one step at a time” is the T-shirt slogan that’s come into my head. Perhaps it applies directly to me. I become “equal,” one with the others, instead of staying “above” them, “beyond” them. I can just enjoy the dancing. I haven’t been in that place for years, certainly since I turned professional, and decided to make my living through folk dancing with its tours, weekends, and so forth.

But I could only take this step after the collapse of my tour business. Can I call this a “positive” emanating from the collapse? Not yet. I hate to lose my source of income. But, on the other hand, acceptance of the loss does free me. I now have “nothing to lose” by simply enjoying myself. Much as I hate to lose the potential money, it indeed does free me.

With nothing more to lose, I can just dive in, have fun, enjoy myself, even run wild a bit. A mixed bag, but leaning to the freedom side.

Acknowledging the Need for Audience

Why do I want Barry's class? I need the human feedback. Evidently, I need a public, an audience reacting to my work. Acknowledging this need for audience is a giant step for me.

I've always acknowledged it financially, as a source of financial support. But this time, it somehow goes even beyond financial. Financial deals with survival. Somehow, I now have "enough" or am able to survive. Thus it seems even more visceral now because I am not doing it for money, or with the hope of future monies in mind.

But maybe I'm fooling myself here. We'll see where this leads.

Maybe, now here's a great dream, because of my new commitment to writing, I may even figure out a way to make some money from it! There is a Wow! direction.

Maybe I am changing careers to fulfill an old Greenwich Village writer's dream! What an idea!

Let's face it. Money is part of recognition, acknowledgment, and value. When someone pays for my work, it truly means they value it. Period. There is no getting around this deep truth.

Thus, if I could get folks to pay for my work, pay for my writing, buy my books, it would indeed "prove" their worth and acknowledge my efforts.

I have, in the past, learned to earn a living, earn money in two "impossible" fields,

namely in music as a guitarist and performer, and as a folk dancer, namely through folk dance classes, weekends, and tours.

I wonder if I'm at the border of a new "impossible" business, of fulfilling a new "impossible" dream: making money as a writer.

Such a concept is way beyond my imagination. Impossible, indeed. But therein lies its attraction.

The challenge to organizing, leading, and running a tour has been met. It's mucho work, but I know how to do it. And along with this was the challenge of finding customers. I succeeded in both the folk dance business (tours, weekends dancer) and the performing business (schools, colleges, club dates, etc.)

Is this the time to start a new "business?" Indeed, the pressure to make an instant living through it is off. I don't have to succeed right away, or truly, even succeed at all. I don't have another means of earning a living.

Nevertheless, to sell my books, earn some money through writing, would be such a grand coup. Indeed, something to think about. True, my success could be not at all. Of it could be posthumous. Or it could even be earlier.

We'll see where this road leads. But I am starting on a new "Way of the Wild Man" road.

Saturday, March 24, 2018

The Terror of Financial Ruin

My belief in progress has been shaken, certainly financial progress.

As a start, and maybe even as an ending, it has shaken my belief in financial progress. I thought, even deeply believed, that as the future rolled along I would keep making more money. More and more. That was the future. Definitely through higher stock market returns, and this coupled with higher tour money returns. They'd slowly make me richer and richer. True, I had nothing to do with all this fictitious money that I would make, but it gave me deep pleasure and satisfaction, not to say mucho security, to know I was, and would be, making it.

Today, that confidence has collapsed. Suddenly, I see I could easily go backward. And this after years of going forward. And just as I believed I could go forward to infinity, so I now see I could go backward to zero.

Obviously, this is a nightmare picture and it is far from happening. But it can. And it is not that far away.

Thus this morning, this bleak, down, miserable picture, this apocalyptic, end-of-my-world vision with clawing griffons of fear and terror stare me in the face.

What can I do about it? Really nothing. That is also the problem. I feel helpless before the crush of this juggernaut. My India will never be the same.

I've flipped from a beatitude with angels of hope flying round my head to a vision of hell with devil's pitchforks jabbing forever into my being.

Realistic? I doubt it. But I can't help feeling it.

Gratitude for CustomersExpansion of my Going Public Self

I am so grateful for customers who register for tours, or any events I run. But I've never expressed it before. I wonder if I have ever even felt it.

Expression of gratitude for customers is a first. In the past, I always felt a combination of relief and happiness. But gratitude never came up.

I wonder what it means.

Where, if anywhere, I am going with it?

It is a grand recognition of others and thus an expansion of my going- public self born from this year's miserable feelings of loss, abandonment, and suffering.

It is spring and the time of birth pangs.

Wednesday, March 28, 2018

Go Back (Forward) To Being An Artist

Getting my values straight.

My credo and purpose: Go back to being an artist.

Business is important. . .but secondary.

That's what my stock market money is for. That's what all the money is for! To defend, protect, and sanctify my inner artist.

Now that inner artist is ready, can (and will) go public.

I am now free to become that public and private artist. And I will.

This is the message of New Leaf Journal. The Way of the Wild Man journal. “Wild’ means artist.

That’s what my left knee is for: to be an artist. My left shoulder and left side, too. That’s what I’ve been searching and working for all my life: To be an artist. Artist has always been the bottom-line, wild, running wild on the lawn part of me, my deepest wish, my fulfilment.

Taking money out of the stock market may well symbolize losing the stock market’s magic and miserable hold on me. It may even free me to see the real meaning of money. Which is to support, protect, sanctify, and defend my inner artist.

“Back to being an artist.” That’s where I am today.

Or shall I say, “Forward to being an artist.”

Back or forward really doesn’t matter. But being faithful to my essence, being an artist, does.

Thursday, March 29, 2018

I have several goals as I start my new life.

One of them is: I want to live without fear. Or at least lessen my fears substantially.

The main fears that have haunted me since marriage concern themselves with money. And I spend hours of time trying to figure out how to get around them, avoid them, face them, deal with them etc.

In the past, I have been using what I call a romantic accounting “system.” This system is based primarily on dreaming, wishing, and hoping my finances will be magically resolved if I keep making more money. I avoid looking at the bottom line. I certainly avoid the beauty and peace of knowing where all my money is, where it is going, what my real expenses and income are. In other words, I avoid the beauty and peace of stability in favor of the romance of financially running wild on the lawn.

I am ready to change all this.

Why? Because I have a better dream in mind: To become the wild artist of my dreams. And I am now in a position, both age-wise and even financially, to do that.

In the process, I no longer want, or need, to be “stimulated” by constant financial instability.

Note: I evidently “needed” this stimulation in the past, because the ups and downs of financial growth (witness past monies coming in through tours, plus the ultimately losing stimulation of stock market trading, the great excitement of money rolling in, and the “thrilling fears and terrors” of down markets or losing money on trades, actually used to stimulate me. Part of my being needed that because I was not ready to grab the wild artist high.

But now I am.

In order to do this, I now need to put my financial house in order.

My realistic dream is now to base my wild artistic dreams and goals on stable, real accounting, a known financial foundation.

Parenthetically, for me, art is situated in my inner world of guitar, writing, and even choreography. Business, money, dealings with the outside world, are everything else.

Also the stock market is becoming “besides the point.”

Long range, I’m okay. Short range, I need to change my life.

My next question is: How and where to start?

Artistic Wild

Running Wild on the Artistic Lawn Cures and Uplifts

I went to emails, answered them, and did some business work, and I note the down I felt after I rose from my desk.

Could this down be because I did no wild artistic thing? Instead I was “forced” to “waste my time” with business things, important, but secondary to my calling.

I rarely feel that down after I play guitar, write, or choreograph. I may feel other things, but rarely if ever, that incredible down and rife with hopelessness, death, and longing. I wonder if part of it because I’m not being an artist and thus “wasting time” and not fulfilling my purpose on earth.

Could such an abandonment actually cause my grand downs and depression? And would following my true purpose, being tough as steel and sticking to it no matter what, cause these downs and depressions to dissipate, fall away, vanish, or never appear in the first place?

What a question! This means I have found the basis of downs and depressions.

It’s too good to be true. But is it true anyway?

Maybe it is.

Dare to Cally Myself a Choreographer

See my body as a vehicle for dance, a vehicle for choreography.

Dare I do this?

Why have I never thought of it before?

I never dared to, never dared believe that I, with no training, could call myself a choreographer.

Those days are over.

I'll dare call myself a choreographer in the same way I dare to play "Alhambra" my way.

Friday, March 30, 2018

Tremolo Vision:

On Changing a 40-year-old Habit

The insistence on playing Alhambra with emphasis on treble, in other words, "my way," and not Segovia's way, with emphasis on the bass, has cost me 40 years of guitar playing.

On the positive side, this divergence enabled me to build up my folk dance and tour business. On the negative side, I struggled over and over again with the same tremolo problem for 40 years.

A long divergence it was. But is this divergence a negative, a positive, other, or all besides the point?

How to change a 40-year-old habit?

My interpretation of all tremolos has been wrong. It's always in the bass.

How to change a 40 year old habit?

Private Singing

All the hurt and pain come out in my singing. Maybe that's why I've "never sung." Maybe that's why I've resisted it, demeaned it, made it lesser, etc. Singing it my bottom-line moan. Do I even dare do it? So far, only in private.

And for some reason, I keep singing "Dark as a Dungeon (way down in the mines.)"

I wonder if that's where I've been living all these years, hiding my singing and the hurt and pain in my soul in the dark, dreary mine.

As the first groans of "private" singing come out of me, will I begin to come out of the mine now?

Maybe.

And it only took a life time.

Sing, Speak, and Tremolo

I express myself with another point of view, and I'm called a Nazi. Talk about hurt and pain. That's why I've shut up so much of my life. Especially in politics and "serious"

subjects.

Am I coming out of the closet now?

Express your true self and you lose all your following, your friends, even your family. You're all alone, and totally dropped and abandoned.

On the positive side, however, although you stand on top of the mountain all alone, you roar like a lion with the victory of self-expression and the truth.

Is the truth worth being all alone? Accepting the fact that you will be all alone may well be a prerequisite for expressing the truth, and finding the courage to express the truth.

To no longer remain silent and take the heat, whether singing in public or expressing your opinions.

I'm not ready to lose my business over this. But maybe I can do it among "friends" and selected family. It's not a secret among family. They know it anyway. It's just not talked about.

But one of my post-eighty things is I don't want to be afraid.

On that basis alone, I should sing, and speak, and emphasis bass on the tremolos. It's all part of freedom, running wild on the lawn, way of the wild man. It's a new path.

Saturday, March 31, 2018

Old Habits

Is there some kind of "truth" in old habits. Am I partially clinging to them for an important but different reason? Is my clinging informing me that I should I only give up part

of them, but not all? A “Don’t throw out the baby with the bath water” kind of warning?

Maybe this means I should practice with thumb and bass focus for awhile, and see where it leads me. Maybe part of the old tremolo thinking are and were important and will, after practicing the new route, drift slowly back, but in a subtle, different way.

Finding Other Reasons to Play Guitar

Could I ever have an Alhambra playing victory and then move on to still play guitar? Could I find other reasons to play it? That would, of course, be lovely.

I have used my “inability” to play Alhambra as an excuse not to ever give concerts, not to face my fear of audience and performance anxiety. Why suffer if I don’t have to?

On the other had, this kind of suffering elevates me and is thus a “good form of suffering.”

I don’t want to give concerts; I don’t need to give concerts. Why do I even have this anvil hanging over me in the first place?

Truth is, I never wanted to give concerts, or even perform for others! How did I fall into this trap? Well, I had to make a living, Okay, that’s a good reason.

But it doesn’t answer the question: What do I really want?

I have to look back into my past to find out, back to the time before I had to make a living, and certainly to the time before I got married. (Marriage really put the pressure on and forced me make a living and deal with the outside world. Yes, I learned a lot. But most of it was being forced to do things I didn’t want to do, or at least didn’t like to do.)

So how was I before all this pressure? What were my dreams prior to making a living?

Playing violin, studying (discovered in college), and writing—a free and improvised combination of music and study. (intellectual things).

I also liked the solo adventures of playing in the park, or wandering the fields at the farm. Note: the adventures were always alone, never with other people. And they were really adventures of and in my imagination!

So, putting it all together, I am an adventurer in the music(words/writing) field of imagination.

Okay, now what?

Infant Vision in Folk Dancing

Can this “expression” approach be applied to folk dancing? Can I dance, especially the old and known dances, more carefully(with care), thoughtfully, and wiser? Can one really put more “wisdom” into each step?

How do you folk dance with expression?

Is there a rubato folk dance style? No. Can I develop one?

There must be a way . I don’t know what it is. . .yet.

This means old and “known” dances must be unknown and rediscovered each time you dance them; they must be resurrected and danced with a fresh and new, divine and innocent, infant vision each time!

Alchemy at its Best

How to turn the old into the new?

This is alchemy at its best.

Saturday, April 7, 2018

One Purpose of my Balkan Adventure 5-Country Tour

(Self put-downs and self humiliations are good for me)

The linguistic study course symbolized by my 5-Country Balkan Adventure means “breaking up” perfecting Hebrew, and this in favor of “dabbling” in 3 or 4 languages: Greek, Bulgarian, Albanian, and Hebrew.

The unifying factor in all this is the sound of the words.

What is the put-down threat in the word “dabbling?”

I’ll never be good in anything, never really know or master any language. I’ll always be a “dabbler,” which means superficial and bad.

Is such a put-down image of myself useful (as a motivator) or not?

Good question.

Strangely and paradoxically, I think it is. True, the orthodoxy in my family is that I should be “happy.” And if I am not happy, I am doing something wrong, living my life incorrectly.

But truth is, part of me is happy when I put myself down! It humbles and lowers me, and it is my lowered, put-down posture that pushes me to rise and become better!

A life with motivation and goals is not only boring and empty, it is actually “painful” in a disgusting, wasting, and wasteful way. It is obviously more “painful” in that feeling put-down, inadequate. forces me to reach higher.

Yes, such reaching higher because of my inadequacies may feel a bit bad. But not reaching feels much worse.

Thus, in a sense, feeling bad is my way of feeling good.

Note I say “self.” Put downs by others are bad, unnecessary, and should be confronted and destroyed. But, as I say, self put-downs and recognitions of inadequacies serve as personal motivators and thus are good for me.

Sunday, April 8, 2018

Money and the Sales Connection

One reason I like money so much is that earning it connects me to the outside world. And very strongly, too. This goes beyond merely earning a living. Money creates a spiritual connection between me and my customer, or, to put it in concert terms, between me and my audience, between connector and connectee.

That’s why sales are so important: They directly connect me to my audience of dancers, travelers, readers, customers.

Sales of my tours, dance classes, books, concerts, readings, even the songs or guitar pieces listed on my Jim’s Store website, are so important. And the amount of money, although a factor, is not as important as the fact they are paying something. Even \$1.00 is

okay. As long as they are making an effort, giving something of themselves to prove to me that what I created and am offering them is worthy.

Evidently, my tours, folk dancing, concerts, and readings aren't and can never be hobbies. They must be money-makers, even if they too make a small amount.

What can I sell?

Tours: done and doing. Folk dancing: done and doing. Concerts: idea: create, that is record, new classical guitar pieces (even folk songs), and sell them on my website! Wow, now there's a motivation to practice! And record. Start with Milan Pavanese, etc.

I could even sell my stories in pdf form!

I could even turn my New Leaf writings into essays, and sell them as pdfs on my website! Another great source of motivation.

Website sales: My newest venture. Monetize my website.

Making money, creating a service for others, pushes me to be my best! It concretizes the creations of my imagination; it makes what I create real.

Tuesday, April 10, 2018

Goals, Success, and Happiness

It's all going well today. Market is up, tours are filling, legs are hopeful and better, chinning success. All good to better.

And I'm still unhappy.

Why? Through my successes, my worry and motivation have been taken away.

Success, after its initial spark of joy, has bred emptiness.

How to handle success?

1. Celebrate: (How to do this, and for how long?)
2. Move to the next goal. In this case, it is 3 chins.

Example: Chinning success: I did one chin. My celebration lasted for one “Wahoo!”.

But this morning I’m in the after-mood- and-mode glow of realization, in the “Yes, I did it!” mode. Evidently, celebration must run its course.

The Power of Thoughts

I am improving the world by learning to stand and balance on my right leg. Practicing balance improves the world. (But it only depends on what I am thinking. I must think that I am improving the world, balancing its elements, by balancing on one foot.)

What a powerful belief! It brings vital importance and power to what I am doing.

Thoughts I think while playing guitar, folk dancing, teaching, leading a tour, walking up and down stairs, doing squats, chinning, whatever: All of them matter.

When I play guitar, think: How can my playing heal the world?

Or think directly outward: This playing heals the world.

When I dance think: How can my dancing of this folk dance heal the world?

Or think directly outward: This dance heals the world.

This way of thinking is not hubris, but rather good practice for vision enlargement of my mind.

Thursday, April 19, 2018

What Do I Want?

In my post-eighty life, what desires do I have? (If any.)

What do I really want to do?

Maybe I don't want to write; maybe I don't want to play guitar anymore; maybe I don't ever want to sing again. Who knows what I want? The future is wide open. It's a fresh beginning and I'm in virgin territory.

I am teaching folk dancing, and running tours. That's obviously still in the cards. And I'll keep doing that, both because I want to (folk dancing) and I somewhat have to (tours). But tours are, I believe, slowly running out of gas. Or at least it feels like my clients are slowly diminishing and will soon (maybe after a year or two) put me out of the tour business. But maybe not. We'll see where all this leads.

In any case, I'm folk dance teaching and tours remain.

Indeed, if I have no desire or need to perform, no need or desire play guitar in public, read my writing in public, then why bother doing it?

If no one is ever going to hear me play guitar again, why play guitar?

If no one is every going to read my writing, why write?

Is personal pleasure and satisfaction enough? I'm not sure. And will I even get it?

Maybe I should and will simply give the whole thing up and start on a completely different path. Or no path at all.

Can I live a life on no path?

Good question.

Saturday, April 21, 2018

Interesting In Itself

Infant Vision: Focusing on the Good-In-Itself

I am playing and “practicing” to improve because it is interesting-in-itself. And the word “practice” is really the practice of playing, or the playing of practice. Really then now, as I enter the post-audience period, practicing and playing are the same thing! (I am no longer practicing so that one day, some day in the future, I can play better, nay “perfectly” before an audience. Those days and that approach are over. Thank God!)

To never perform again means to never focus on pleasing the audience again. If the audience happens to be pleased, all the better. But the main focus is on the work, practice, playing itself. The audience is always secondary, a pleasant (or unpleasant) outsider looking in. But focus on the good-in-itself is vital. All else is “besides the point.”

Next Step

Okay, so now I stand on the top mountain, with my main dream achieved. This means all my side dreams have been achieved as well.

Happy and glorious, under the sun of victory, I shine on the mountain top and roar my wild cry of victory: “Wahoo!!!!”

And it only took eighty years!

Now, my cry echoes through the valley below, slowly fading in the distance, and, with the sun slowly setting, the next question rises with the moon: “Now what?”

But before I move on, I’ll relish my victory moment a bit more.

So ends a New Leaf.