

Beyond the New Normal

Wednesday, December 11, 2019

Lifetime Sales Dilemma

I hated sales when I got married, but I was “forced” to do them. Or rather, I forced myself to do them because without them I would have had to work for a living (which means doing something I hated, like teaching in a school system, or corporate life. The “compromise” was to sell.

So I always hoped that someday I would make enough money so I would no longer be forced to sell.

Well, strangely, I am now at that point. I have enough money so that I no longer have to sell. Yes I’d have to cut back a bit, but I have enough money to survive without sales.

So in once sense, I have succeeded, I have arrived.

But it does not solve my book promoting problem. True, my total soul was not in my guitar program, or even my folk dance teaching or tours. Although a good part of me was in them, those programs were devised solely to make money, to earn a living with the ultimate purpose of freeing me to be an artist.

But truth is, as I see it, my total soul is, was, and has been in my writing! In my view, most of my best self lies in my books. And I want people to know about it, to read it. I want them to know the real me!

If this is true, then I’ll have to find another reason to sell . . . one that has nothing to do with money.

I’d have to sell for my soul, for the “privilege” of exposing my essence to others, for the honor, pleasure, and privilege of receiving their arrows of criticism or indifference.

I no longer have to sell, no longer “forced” to make a living.

Yet I am still not satisfied. Nausea and a headache are still following me, haunting me as I sit here financially happy.

This certainly shows that money cannot buy happiness.

So what am I asking?

I'm asking for another reason to do it.

Another positive that comes out of sales, is that I feel glorious when I finally do sell something! I feel that God has shined down on me!

Still, that has never been enough to justify doing sales. Maybe God has been forcing me to sell all along because He knows that, despite my resistant personality, sales are good for me.

Sales and Rejection

What are sales about?

They're about rejection and victory.

I hate to admit it, but I'm so sensitive.

Maybe my hatred and fear of sales is simply about rejection:

I just don't want to get hurt.

And yet life is full of about pain

There is no escape, only avoidance and denial.

What can you do?

Either dive in, ride it, seize the pain

And end up with a victory or two en route.

Or accept headache and nauseous.

Along with no victories en route

Either way you end up with feeling pain.

Love, inspiration, and courage run the world.

Isn't diving in a better choice?

Finding My Own Pleasure

I woke up this morning furious. At myself.

Why?

I've been beating myself since Thanksgiving, for the past week or so. Why?

Something about publishing.

But bottom line, I've forgotten how to give myself pleasure.

How can I do that publishing, promoting, advertising, pushing my work?

Up to a couple of days ago, I couldn't figure out a way.

But at least I'm onto the problem.

In guitar, a pleasure in finger plucking.

In books, a pleasure in hearing my stuff read by Barry and seeing others react, happily and with interest, to it. It warms my heart in a friendly, fulfilling chuckle, a bubble of fulfillment.

So there is pleasure to be found in my activities. I've just forgotten or have yet to figure out, how to find it.

Lost and Found Department

I have completely lost track of my heart, my soul, mind, body, all the good parts, lost my way, been totally distracted.

Basically, I have forgotten (did I ever know?) How to have or give myself pleasure.

I was worried about giving to others, how to improve the world by improving myself, giving of myself, etc. What bullshit? Fuck thee world! If I can't give myself pleasure, the world will be a worse place. And the only way I can help the world, or anyone else, is by learning how to give myself pleasure first. Then of course, the pleasure will spread to others. But it's got to start with me. Period. No other way.

How did I get so lost?

I don't know.

And truth is, I don't even care. The point is to get back on track.

Publishing my book is what threw me off. Once my Treasury if International Folk Dances came out, I was immediately thrown back into the old neighborhood of I-must-now sell my book. The result was a grand bout of nausea and headache, total sickness and self-destruction. I didn't want to go back there, but I did anyway. Perhaps I needed to revisit, to "do it over," and finally get it right. In other words, destroy my old self-punishing, self-straight-jacketed self and replace it with a new pleasure-seeking, pleasure-loving self.

And to find such a self among my books would be a major accomplishment.

Well, today I am on my way. I'm starting by asking the right questions.

Readings and Pleasure

(Not Yet But Maybe?)

A thought: If I get such pleasure out of hearing Barry read my work to others, and this through their pleasure in hearing it, their chuckles, acceptance, understanding of my philosophy, etc., then I wonder if I could get the same pleasure (or at least close) by reading it to them myself.

This would mean my doing a reading. Performing. That I should even mention such a terrifying thing is perhaps in itself quite amazing. Am I on the cusp of future personal pleasure through my writing?

Friday, December 13, 2019

"What's the best way to approach death?" Dan asked. He was six years old.

"Through the back door," Mama Madre answered. She was busy emptying her refrigerator, throwing frozen steaks out the window.

Monday, December 16, 2019

The Genesis of Amazement

Politics/History

Politics is the art and importance of the present.

History is the art and importance of the past.

Dealing in politics makes history, important, and dealing with history makes politics important. By stepping into the present, I embrace, crystallize, and enlarge the past.

This is all and beautiful and complicated way of saying the new and structural change has just taken place.

How to even begin explaining this?

Well. It “started” last night. I was feeling strangely down, and as I talked to Bernice, I was wondering why. That’s when I realized my down was a usual and typical down and came because I had finished some short-term or long term project. I am always down when I finish. Why? Empty spaces now confront me along with the grand question.

Okay, what had I finished? Basically, I had said that, once my Romania tour was finished, I could start finishing my books, namely my choreo book and short story book. Well, guess what? I’ve been working on my Treasury of International Folk Dances, and now it is published and finished. My Carlos the Cloud book is just about finished as well.

Then I faced the usual post-publication dilemma: How to promote, advertise and sell my new (and old) book? A grand bout of headaches, stomach aches, and nausea followed. And during this short period, helped by Rick, I realized I do not want, will not want, and never have wanted to promote, advertise, and sell my books! Oh yes, I wish others would buy them. But I don’t want to put the effort and time into promoting them. In fact, once they are published, in my mind they are finished and done, and it is time to move on to the next project.

Yes, the books will mostly remain in my basement. But for some reason, that is their proper place – to be discovered by posterity, which is my secret hope. Or, perhaps

more realistically, to be completely forgotten. Washed away by the flow of events, covered by the mist of years and centuries, lost in the dustbin of history, stolen by the thief of time.

Just as my body and memories of me will disappear into the dustbin of the universe, so will my books. It's sad to realize this, but that doesn't make it any less true.

In any case, for some reason, I've made my peace with this idea.

Okay, that was step one.

Now what?

Well, through the cleansing process of depression, with my mind now totally cleared, space was immediately created for something new to rush in.

And this morning, it did! What? Politics! And a short bit later followed by History.

This is totally amazing to me.

But it feels right. Also, with this new opening, the study of languages has suddenly fallen off the cliff. We'll see where this leads.

I can't talk about this any more this morning. But I remember last night, before I went to bed, I thought, I have absolutely nothing to do tomorrow. I am totally free. There is absolutely nothing I have to do! And this for the next two weeks, maybe even longer.

Okay, so in this new, free state, what, if anything, will I do?

And this morning I began not with Hebrew study, but by reading my book on Trump. And I wrote a list of all the good things he has done. And as I did, I also thought about how Ulrike is putting together a Hanukkah trivia quiz, and how, more important, I had totally forgotten about Hanukkah history, and history in general. When she mentioned elephants of the Maccabees, I couldn't even remember the name of Carthage, the Phoenicians, Hannibal, etc. My interest and memory of history had faded away through mostly disuse.

But now, today, suddenly things were different. If I was now to speak about politics, the art of the present, I could now, suddenly bring in history, the art of the past, for support! I could verbally both explain and defend my views!

This kind of explanation, and defense is and would be totally new for me!

I have always shied away from politics, and been tongue-tied whenever it came to defending or even explaining my views. The idea of political confrontation has always shut me down. Political discussions drive me into a corner, and I immediately escape into the protective sanctuary of my teenage violin-practice chamber. I have always felt completely helpless and powerless, tongue-tied in these political situations, No doubt it goes back to my childhood. But for whatever reason, it has been going on all my life.

But suddenly, this morning, I saw the possibility of something new, of explaining and even defending my point of view. In public.

Politics. and with it history, both came together.

Totally astonishing. We'll see where this leads.

My many year, study of languages if over. It feels like the leaf just fell off that tree.

I wonder if it will appear, re-appear, in a new form. I vaguely hope so. Why? What a shame to have put in so much time and effort, so many years of study, and suddenly just drop it, give it up. This is exactly what my mother said when I gave up the violin. "So many years of practice and study," she said. " You were so good. What a shame to drop it and give it up."

Strangely, I don't remember feeling bad about giving up the violin. And truth is, I don't feel bad about giving up language study. But it definitely feels a bit strange, different, even amazing. Suddenly, my need and even interest in it, has dissolved.

Will it come back in a different form, a different time of study, maybe late afternoon, or even evening? Even as I say thing, I ask this question, I know I'm trying

to hold onto the old way of life, the old language study schedule, the familiar. But truth is, deep in my new heart, I know something is over.

Maybe the quicker I accept the new, the better.

Take my amazement drink, mourn the past, for ten seconds, a few minutes, even a day or two, then move on.

Tuesday, December 17, 2019

Success and Real Success!

Yesterday, during and after training with Rick, I realized I need a new big dream. All my old dreams have been accomplished, fulfilled, at least on some level. No wonder I feel down and empty.

Then this morning I realized I don't need new dreams. I still haven't fulfilled my old ones. I've only given up on them!

Why?

Discouragement, fear of old age, other. Also I have "suffered" from victory and success. Tours have been good, and money has been good. I am temporarily satisfied. And then comes. . .Now what?

Victory and success also bring sorrow and arrogance.

The arrogance protects me from the sadness of success when success is seen as an ending.

Truth is, I've mistaken the brief joy at the top of the mountain for success, as an ending, a permanent place, even an end-in-itself.

Real success is not an ending, not a permanent place, not an end-in-itself.

I have crossed its mountain barrier of success and am skiing downhill on the other side in a glorious sunshine of happiness. Why am I happy? I'm on my way to the next mountain!

That is real success.

What do I want?

To be left alone?

What about sharing what I do with others?

Sharing can be fun, but it does not feel like a calling.

What about changing, affecting, effecting, and healing the world? That too is fun, but does not feel like a calling.

So?

I still don't exactly know, even at this late stage of life.

Maybe by example, by following my fun path, I incidentally, inadvertently, as a side effect, I can heal the world. When the sun shines, by its very nature, it shines on others and heals the world.

Thursday, December 19, 2019

Performing for Nothing, Performing for Free

Could performing for free be the first crack? And will it make a difference? But it certainly would catapult my New Normal into the stratosphere. And it happened in Barry's class, along with his help. But of course, I was ready.

It's my my biggest fear.

But why?

Even in asking the question, the fear immediately diminished. Then the fear of performing dribbled away into nothing. I can no longer think of a reason! Somehow the reason, and with it, the fear itself, just fell out of me.

And add to that, the idea of performing for nothing, for free!

This also coupled with the "emptiness" of stock market trading. Why I bother or occupy my mind with the ups and downs of my trades. I don't even need the money. Thus I don't even do it for money, although money is the scorecard. I do it for ego.

In any case, yesterday's trading day was the worst. I didn't lose that much money, but my dreams of being and becoming a good trader were once again smashed.

And I was left with an emptiness of vision and purpose. That's when, once again, I asked what kind of empty life do I have, do I lead, if I let it be disturbed by mere stock market fluctuations?

And last evening, the idea of no more performing fears rushed into my mental vacuum.

I always covered my performing fear by saying I must be paid to do it. Otherwise, facing and dealing with it are not worthwhile. And this was partly true, since performing was the way I earning my living. But that way of life ended long ago. Only the fear, and habitual way of thinking, remained.

Now that habit has fallen off the table. Dare I admit that my mind is now free to perform again? With a bit of a tremble, on this new day, I say yes.

And in the idea of performing free, I am at a total new juncture. I open the door to the possibility, hope, and even desire, of enjoying it!

What more does this mean?

I can drop the pre-performance anxiety that appears before (almost) everything I do in public. Like folk dance teaching. Tours?

But more important, can I now begin to perform again on guitar, singing, and even do readings. How about putting them all together in a show? An one-man show? Wow, do I now dare? Would I ever do such a thing?

Or should I start small? Five to ten minutes somewhere? A combo of songs and reading.

Friday, December 20, 2019

Performance

A Seismic Shift, A Big Deal Change

The idea that I am no longer afraid to perform has released strange venoms and odors. I now face the world as a free human being.

I don't have to do anything. And this in turn enables me to ask the bottom-line

philosophical question: What do I really want?

This morning I woke up at zero, at the bottom, totally empty. I am at the place of no purpose, meaning, or desire whatsoever.

I have a total weekend off. I have had almost the whole Xmas vacation off. And this is a period of free time and emptiness that I have been wanting to experience since the Romania tour ended and my choreography book was finished.

Why do I want to experience an epoch of total free time, with absolutely nothing to do, not a pressure or desire in the world?

Because I want to find out if, in the depths of emptiness, there is actually anything I really want. Or, beyond needing the basics of food, clothing, shelter, anything I need.

In other words, I want to get to know myself. My real self. When I am unpushed, have no demands from the outside, anything deep in my core that I actually want?

Can the core me live empty?

How long can the core me go on without purpose or meaning?

Would it or I want to live that way? Is it even possible?

Do I need to merely fill up my empty time on earth? Or is there a real purpose to my existence, a real meaning to my life?

That is the quest and question in my "totally free" experiment.

Having no fear of performance, being free to perform, also expands to being unafraid of meeting people, dealing with people, leaving the house, being in society, and no longer wrapped up in the hermit life.

And the hermit life really means living inside the teenage violin chamber of my mind, the practice home of my soaring imagination and creativity. Because, alone in my room, playing the violin and soaring high on spiritually spacious journeys, I experience the Magnificence. A vision and power I never want to lose!

But in leaving that chamber, such a vision would be squashed by outside

negative forces. So even though, through marriage and more, I was forced out of my chamber, in my mind, I never wanted to leave it.

Fear of crushing, fear of criticism, created a split mind. I functioned quite well on the outside, but my brakes were always on, holding back, always defending, waiting silently for the grand blows.

But now somehow, this fear has fallen away. No doubt, it is because I am older, more experienced, and stronger.

So where does this new state leave me?

I don't know yet. But I am about to find out.

It begins with the "invitation" to perform at this year's folk dance New Years' party.

And I am playing around with the idea of singing, reading, and classical guitar, a threesome, all in one showing.

Imagining a New Audience

Here's my future creative work: Imagining a new audience into existence, a naive new audience for everything I do!

What does naive mean? Open to anything I play, dance, or do.

I create audiences out of my imagination. They exist because of my imagination. I imagine them into existence.

In order to imagine my new audience, I must kick out the old one.

Saturday, December 21, 2019

Index Finger Walks on Stage

He's a big guy standing at the door of the concert hall, guarding my index finger.

He's also blocking it.

But which one? Blocking, guarding, protecting?

Do guarding and blocking go together?

Or do both of them, working together, create “stuck”?

Is my index finger stuck in the door?

Somehow blocked and protected, guarded, I have to be transformed, metamorphosed, fused into one, so that my index can walk freely through the door.

Maybe rather than blocked or protected it is blocked and protected. In other words, that big guy’s method is to guard my finger by blocking it. Blocking my finger is his way of protecting it. He needs the finger to be safe.

But as index walks through the door, entering the new concert hall with its new, accepting and naive audience, maybe it is only now totally protected.

Protected against what? Against the arrows of criticism, darts of negativity, deadly poisons of jealousy, envy, and hatred, and all the other boulder landslides that can fall on and roll over a concert soloist.

But the new naive audience is now an index fan club, supporter, protector, defender, and energizer. Index no longer has to worry, no longer needs to be guarded and protected. It can freely enter the concert hall, mount the stage, And when it does, it will now be embraced as a soloist by the naive, happy, open, accepting, supporting, generous, energy-giving, energizing audience.

Now

Monday, December 23, 2019

The strange Devil’s bargain: I can play guitar but I can’t walk. In other words, my fingers finally work, but in exchange, my legs don’t.

Do I want that?

Maybe for a week. This week is totally off. No dancing, no gym, no “need” to exercise, no nothing. I am totally free to fall apart as I play guitar gloriously.

Once work starts again next week, we’ll have to see where all this leads. But for now, for this week, until the glorious guitar playing habit is established, maybe I don’t mind trading it in for walking and hurting legs. Lots of sitting may well be necessary to

play guitar so well.

And it is so wonderful to play guitar! To flow and weave through these great pieces! Maybe this mental game with the devil is okay to play for a few days. Give up walking in exchange for guitar playing. Certainly, I did that for two days, the weekend, Saturday and Sunday.

But today is Monday. We'll see if I should go on like this for a week, or exchange these Devil's ideas for new ones.

After all, I do want to keep my legs functioning along with my arms and hands. I want all my parts to work to celebrate this glorious new guitar endeavor.

(Maybe my legs are hurting because I am resisting a celebration. Hmm. Maybe I'm still afraid to believe I've broken through, that I no longer need my index block, so I'm holding back, restraining a flood of joy. And that's why my legs hurt. Actually, my leg pain starts in the lower back, so really my lower back hurts. And remember Sarno and the anger displacement TMS effect.

Afraid to believe it, and angry that such a fear still exists. Lack of faith perhaps.

Why should I have faith?

But why not?

Why not choose faith over lack of faith, non-faith.

Faith is better for me.

Tuesday, December 24, 2019

Feelings and the Stock Market

My stock, going in half and losing the money, is a slap, a reminder to be careful.

Annoying. A total blow to my ego. Pay attention.

How can I get myself to pay attention?

Feel the disgust with the situation, especially self-disgust for putting myself into this careless, unmindful situation. Ugh.

Disgust is good.

Self-disgust is best. It is my energy rising, and a very important motivator.

Face it, feel it, let it run.

Let self-disgust be my guide.

See where it leads.

Wednesday, December 25, 2019

Christmas day. In Spain October 2018, I recognized my mortality bottom. Old age, fear of disability, constant shadows and realization of upcoming eventual death haunted my mind. And of course, I tried to deny it. But my body rebelled against the denial and came up with constant knee and leg pain.

Step two was when Rick said I was totally stiff and needed to make my new religion one of stretching. I agreed, and in April of the following year I began an intense stretching program. Even up to one to two hours a day. And it worked! Slowly my body improved. But optimism entered since I now knew I could handle my knee and leg pain through stretching. It came down to a simple truth: When I stretched, I felt better; when I didn't stretch, I quickly got stiff, and I felt worse.

But somehow the fears of disability and mortality did not go away. They were "handled" through the positive distraction of stretching, but were not dispelled.

Now, today, almost six months later, I am looking into them again. I started by reading Sarno again,

Friday, December 27, 2019

The Fun Factor

The Enjoyment Enterprise, Joy Jumping

Is the purpose and meaning of life to enjoy oneself? And the world around us?

What else could it be?

So I'd have to answer: Yes.

That means the hero is one who can enjoy himself, or herself, despite all the suffering, hardships, aches, pains, hurts, and heartaches the world imposes upon us.

This means one must actually practice enjoyment.

Saturday, December 28, 2019

Pleasure

How to hold on to the fleeting nature of pleasure.

Maybe you can't. Maybe feel it and watch it repeat is the only way to go. Maybe the nature of pleasure is that you can't hold on to it, and when you try, you lose it.

Hope

Dare I hope?

This means: Dare I want something?

Evidently, I do.

I want to play guitar great!

Anything else I want?

Maybe I have been fooling myself? Maybe I want something but mortality – I shall someday die – and disability – my knees hurt – have squashed my desires, discouraged and pushed me down, forced me to deny them.

Doubt

Practicing guitar the good and happy way. Playing the Good Alhambra, loose and relaxed with index happiness.

But suddenly doubts arise:

Am I discovering a new guitar world?

Or am I fooling myself (once again)?

Do I dare believe it?

Or will my rush and lack of patience kill it?

I have to choose: I have to believe it!

I have to believe in progress. I have to believe that in starting, and perhaps finishing, with myself, I can create a new world.

Hope creates motivation.

Thus, even if it is an illusion, motivation is good. My belief that even at this late stage I can change my guitar world motivates me to work at changing it. And by working at it, I will hopefully improve something.

So whether my hopes are true or not is besides the point, hope is simply a good-in-itself.

My hope to improve my guitar playing will push me to practice more! And that is good.

Tuesday, December 31, 2019

The feeling that I have to eventually perform (Alhambra, as a symbol) has absolutely been blocking me for years. The block has been in my right hand, my index finger, to be exact. Now, after years (perhaps really the past few weeks), I have psychologically realized that, first, I do not want to perform, secondly, I don't have to perform, and finally, that I've given up, lost the need to perform. This happened when I decided not to perform at the New Year's Party, too much tension and preparation as a professional, etc. In any case, somehow, miraculously, after so many years, the chains fell off. The gate at the index finger relaxed, then opened, and a love of power, joy, and happiness index finger came through.

And this morning, somehow, it seems as if Hebrew is coming together as well!

Another miracle.

This miracle feeling, the grand "Wow!" really means I did well today. Nothing more. It is my feeling of satisfaction, happiness, and excitement in the present. Nothing

more.

When I make it more, as I have done for so many years, it simply acts as another garrotting form of put down, of diminishment, a garroting of my satisfaction, turning off of my excitement. The unreality I created by expanding the “Wow!” feeling to unrealistic proportions is simply another inventive form, a creative way of expelling my happiness.

Somehow all that is over.

Victory during the past few days, and victory today.

Flirting with Disaster

I don't consciously want disaster. But somehow it is stimulating to flirt with it.

Curiosity? Uncertainty? Testing limits? Lack of faith? How far can I go without destroying myself, or what I want?

At the moment, I attribute it to lack of faith. After all, why would I want to test limits, if I absolutely knew that what I want will happen no matter what? Destined, fated.

Can I be sure about faith?

The very nature of faith is based on “I don't know.” And there are so many things I don't know. So faith must be all around me. even though I can't grab or hold onto it.

Without faith, I'm forced to try various other methods, test and experiment, be daring and wild. Who really knows what will work?

If this is the case – and it is, where does faith come in?

What is it? Where and how can I use it?

IF

if, if, if, if.

If I ever performed again, it would be totally on my own terms. There is no other

way.

Slow and meaty as I want. If there ever is an audience, and they fall asleep or walk away, let them. It doesn't matter. Is of no consequence. Performing is no longer about them. It is about my love and my expression of those loves.

It can be no other way.

Could I pull this off? Certainly not yet.

In the future? I don't know.

But there is no other way.

Thursday, January 2, 2020

Never Overwhelmed? Maybe

Went to sleep last night, and woke up this morning with a bad knee, bad back, and bad start. I know it has to do with going back to work today. And this after my great two-week "vacation."

Rage and anger at my return. The usual. And this is subtly causing my morning aches and pains.

But do I still need them?

Everything ahead of me looks good. So basically, I'm being overwhelmed by the good.

The stock market is up this morning. I can't wait for it to open in a few hours! I'm so excited! (Note bad knee, back, etc.)

So I can see my left knee as my "excited knee."

My back as my "excited back."

I've repressed the excitement, depressed it by being overwhelmed.

I've invented overwhelmed to suppress my excitement, a self-containment against joy and fun.

Am I really overwhelmed?

No. I always manage to handle my situations.

This means I am not overwhelmed. Rather I am excited – but hiding it by my own invention.

Now looking back, I wonder if I have ever really been overwhelmed. Maybe I have just been excited all the time, even over-excited, but controlling it, hiding it, through my guard-rail mechanism.

Friday, January 3, 2020

Doing Something by Doing Nothing
Active Watching, Waiting. . . and Deciding

Today is a down day in the market.

My market “plan” was to wait a week or two before I do anything. My plan was to actively watch and wait.

But at the same time remain “flexible.”

Thus today is the day to learn that I am doing something by doing nothing.

What does actively watch and wait mean? It means watching and waiting like a tiger ready to spring, about to pounce. It means watching and waiting while in deciding mode. The decision part is the active part. It means you’re ready to change your mind at any moment depending upon what happens, depending on circumstances.

Business Adds Motivation

My time is precious. I have so little of it.

Since this is so, what will “push,” motivate me to call folks on my email list, or for that matter even friends?

One motivating reason would be increase my tour and folk dance business. Increase and grow my business in general.

This sounds very self-serving – and it is.

But obviously, it is a good thing, a good action, when I make the effort to call

others. And the goodness remains whether the reason is “selfish” or not.

So business is a positive motivator. It pushes me out of the house and into the world!

If this is true, and it is, I wonder why I always resist it so. My inward reticence? Fear? Desire to remain in the safe and womb-like confines of my house, my room?

In any case, this “reticence will probably always be a part of me, will never leave me. Thus desire to enter to world will always face resistance and be a constant problem.

Forcing myself to do it may be the only way I ever do it. And what better way of forcing myself that through the self-serving attitude of my business.

I can even see my work as my father encouraging me to stop practicing violin, telling me to get out of the house, get some sunshine, go play while my mother stood for art, and remaining in my protective practicing womb-room.

So business like a father to me. An interesting, sweet way of putting it. Plus it helps me remember him every day.

This is beautiful idea. Yet note the rise of a blinding headache as my father gets introduced into the picture.

I remember my blinding headache when I rode down to Hamden with Miki in the back of our truck. I didn't know why, but I felt it.

Anger and rage are now again rising. I wonder why.

I know I want to relate my father to my life-supporting work, tie him to my business and give it more strength. And to daily remember him.

Resolved

My father, Abe, was the gateway to a positive view of business, a positive attitude toward it.

After fifty years or more, the conflict between the inner Ma and Pa, art and business, has been resolved. Ma and Pa are united. There's no more fighting.

Now it's a question of getting used to it.

A great psychological step and attitude forward.

Saturday, January 4, 2020

It is my job to make them happy.

But the way to do it is to reach deep into myself, pull out my treasure, and share it with them!

In other words, reach deep inside myself, pull out my talents and skills, and share them with my audience. In other words, I start from the inside, rather than looking outside, looking around me at the audience and trying to find out what they want. First, it is impossible to know what they want, second, I can't give it to them anyway, since those are not the talents and skills that I possess.

So trying to please the audience by going outside myself to the centers of their desires, is basically impossible.

I have been on a fool's quest most of my life, and simultaneously resisting this quest.

Thus the energy and creation of performing, teaching folk dancing, even running a tour is born and first comes from deep inside me, then fans out to reach the guitar audience, my folk dance students, my tour travels, even my readers.

Thus, fearing audience criticism, folk dance student criticism, tourist criticism, although it feels real, is really quite ridiculous and besides the point. My performance is not up to the audience. I can only give, share, what I know. Everything else is beside the point.

Yes, I can be compassionate and sympathetic to their complaints, desires, unhappiness, and dissatisfaction, and even try to help them, if I can. I may even be able to modify the way I teach, the way I perform or even run a tour by changing its itinerary, etc. All that is possible. But again, these decisions and changes would come from deep inside me, and would be based only on my skills and talents, and one of my

talents is flexibility.

Sunday, January 5, 2020

Maybe my attitude toward work (retreat), money (freedom from fear), and performance (retreat) are part of my unpaid karma.

No question there is a terror in the land, and it concerns work, namely returning to it after my long two-week fruitful “vacation.” The terror is reflected in the heaviness, aching, and fatigue in my legs and lower back. Going back (note “back,” “lower back”)

Monday, January 6, 2020

It’s a new day. I like new days. They are a fresh start.

And this morning I’m off to a fresh start. It’s the first day of work. I’m prepared.

Last night’s beautiful thought was about Hebrew.

My Study and Connection of Hebrew

The study of Hebrew connects me to God and Eternity, and to eternal life. Just what I want and need.

Death is something I do not want. Thus studying Hebrew is a good way for me to fight against death. It might not help my body much, which will disintegrate by itself. But it will help calm my mind, and certainly will motivate and inspire my spirit.

Thus studying Hebrew is my way of connecting to Eternity.

By studying it every morning I am connecting to eternity every day. Not a bad way to begin each sunrise.

Tuesday, January 7, 2020

Improvement Is My Goal

Without trying to improve myself or climb Jacob’s ladder, I have an emptiness within me.

It is the down of success? Maybe. But perhaps instead of using the word “success” I should say “finishing.” I’m finished with my project, path, goal, whatever.

Yes. But whatever word I use, the truth is, I must find something to improve on.

Why? Because it’s good for me. Period. Self-improvement, improvement in general, is a good-in-itself. Without it, there is only emptiness.

Truth is, “it” is anything I choose. I simply have to make it.

Wednesday, January 8, 2020

Strange, But Nice

Angry With My Guitar

I’m happy with my business, happy that folks are registering for my tours, happy with my choreographies and folk dance teaching, happy with the stock market and the way my choice of small stocks is moving.

So everything is going well.

But strangely, this morning I woke up I realized I was angry with my guitar. What does that mean? My guitar has let me down; I’m disappointed with it.

I once upon a time expected so much from the mastery of its technique: fame, fortune, recognition, competence, confidence. After the Sharon Isbin revisit to my guitar past, and living through the old lack of confidence, worries, and inferiority feelings I used to have as a professional guitarist, I have somehow have lost these states of mind. Basically, I am finally, after fifty or more years, free.

This is a good thing, a fine attitudinal development. The leaf of inferiority and, with it, the need to perform and prove myself, has finally fallen from the tree.

Strange that my first feeling is anger at the guitar! You’ve let me down, disappointed me, I can no longer find sustenance and hope of redemptive confidence within the narrow confines of your belly. I am finally free to play. Total freedom. No restrictions, desires, hopes, nothing. Just the pure fun of touching you, plucking your strings, listening to your sweet sound, or whatever else comes out. This is definitely a

good thing. But I suppose I must go through the anger and disappointment stage first.

That's where I am today. And with the realization that it already feels like its over.

Sunday, January 12, 2020

Index finger guitar collapse. Let him in. Make friends with him. Let him enter the establishment. Accept and adjust to his style of playing, slow with grand focus on the index finger plucking exactly and strongly.

Monday, January 13, 2020

What good is patience?

It gives you the time, and space, to focus on love and passion.

Tuesday, January 14, 2020

Emotions and the Stock Market

I'm amazed how emotionally attached I am to the stock market and the up and down fluctuations of my stocks.

I have enough money to survive well. So the market is no longer only about money. It's more than that: It's about winning and losing.

Is it good to have my emotions subject to such fluctuations? I doubt it.

What to do, if anything?

Cut back? Invest more?

Eternity and God

I need eternity to give my life long-term meaning.

Thus, I need God. Period.

(Whether He needs me is another question.)

But the fact that I need Him for permanence, long-term, endless rock, is a good

enough reason for His existence. O to invent Him. Either way works.

With everything around me, including myself, transient, I need the solid existence of a rock an infinite source. (Doesn't everybody? How do you find meaning without it?)

Thus bottom-line, since I need the long-term, endless life, I need to cling to a Highest Power.

Saturday, January 18, 2020

Enjoy the Moment

This morning I feel totally and fully successful.

I can't say I enjoy the feeling. But I don't dislike it either. I'm more in shock than anything else.

I don't know what to do with this new self-image.

What should I do?

Simply be thankful and leave it at that?

See it as a passing moment, a pleasant phenomenon, a good day, and leave it at that?

Probably, the latter is best. In fact, part of this questioning is to avoid the happy feeling of pleasantness.

So best is to jump into it, let it settle in my bones, swish around my body, bring a pleasing massage to my brain, let it do its thing. . .and then, let it pass.

That's the wise and smart way to handle a day of success.

Do I Need Musical Security?

I need my body. So I have to keep my body in shape.

I need my voice, too.

But do I need my guitar? And singing voice?

No, not in the old sense.

Is there a new sense? Not yet.

Will there be one?

We'll see where this leads.

Once fear and the need for security conquered, you say, "Okay, I conquered my fears. What now?" And beyond that, the deeper question: "Why bother to live?"

The answer is: You live for love and beauty.

What else is there?

What else could be better?

So you have fear and security on one side, and love and beauty on the other.

You need both – not only to survive, but to thrive.

Okay, do I need guitar, and singing?

Do I need art?

Do I need beauty?

Note: Politics is not about love and beauty, It's only about power, mostly over others, with argument and struggle as its base. And aggression. Whereas art, based on finding and creating beauty and love, is about power as a revelation of your higher self.

That's perhaps why I'm tongue-tied in political "discussions." They are really arguments in disguise, no-win situations I instinctively shy away from.

But I am still fascinated by the fight, aggression, power, struggle, war of politics.

The Hidden Power of Imagination

Send healing vibrations (prayer) to Janet.

Do they work? Maybe.

A good practice. Gives me control over illness and even death. Yes, it may be imaginary power, but it helps me. And if it helps me, it might even help others. After all, the hidden power of imagination is vast and unknown.

A Visit from the Devil

Focusing on death, old age, short time, the loss of my wife, etc, are all another form of the “Why bother?” excuse, depressive, “impending doom” post-eighty cloud that has haunted me with its darkness most of my life.

It is a useless visit of discouragement from the devil.

When it visits, best is to dispatch it immediately.

Wednesday, January 22, 2020

Journal Writing

Do I write in my journal to remember, or to forget?

Yes, often I want to forget.

Bad, bad.

Change it to reread, learn, and remember.

Lots of wisdom hidden in my gems.

No more throwing it away.

Keep it for my sake and for posterity.

I Am A Gambler

I am a gambler. I like risk.

Of course, not too much. But I like some, enough to stimulate my brain.

However, the risk I took with LK was just too big. Too much money to gain or lose. And I am in the process of losing much to most of it.

I have to sell down to a comfort and stimulation balance. I did put my stop loss in. But I didn't expect it to be used.

Yes, gambling is my vice-hobby. I like to gamble; I have the gambler mentality. But only in the stock market. A speculator.

Maybe I should read up about gamblers, and speculators; get to know more people like myself.

Can I find a practice, a challenge to replace gambling? Or am I hopelessly

addicted?

If I am, is it a skill I can learn? Should I “study” gambling, or rather stock market speculation, namely, small stock speculation? Is it worth trying to improve?

Or is it more worth trying to give it up?

Or should I just see it as a passing storm cloud, pay no more attention to it, and move on?

I have too much time on my hands, am unchallenged, even a bit bored, even a active as I am.

What challenge could really absorb my whole mind?

If there is one, it would somehow not have to involve money. Be beyond money.

Dare I say this—but the challenge I could be avoiding is both writing and getting my books out there. This would be a major effort because ia also means readings, public appearances, Susan’s approach, maybe even radio and TV appearances. All in order to push and promote my books.

Sunday, January 26, 2020

In a blink, it can disappear.

But without an excitement substitute, I’ll do nothing.

Learning about myself.

It also hides a fear.. . of the public.

Coming out of the fog of fear.

Passing the gambling wall.

Goal: To Be Better in Public

Do it, not for money and success (in the sense of public approval), although that may come, but rather for learning and improvement. Especially improvement!

Monday, January 27, 2020

Stock market, speculating, and trading is just another way of trying to impress her with my money making skills.

I never thought much about money before marriage. After marriage I almost thought only about money. Since then, my obsession with it has never stopped.

In fact, most of it is to impress my wife. Sure, I need some for myself, but most, the excess, the security part, is for her, to make her happy.

What would I do or need without the desire to impress her and make her happy?

I don't want to lay it all at her feet, or, of course, blame her for my money obsession. Yes, she wants security through money, and so do I. But most of the obsession comes from me.

I really need a new self-definition. Actually, it would be a reminder of my old self-definition, the one I discovered as teenager, and perhaps in my first year in college.

A self-definition based on love, learning, and improvement, love of the self-improvement path.

What did I love?

Violin, basketball – and in college, I learned that I loved to study. (Not get good marks, my marks were terrible. But I loved the study process, the magnificent of learning, of opening a book, reading, and let the universe open up and expand before me. What a marvel that was!)

So I have learning, self-improvement, and love. The big three.

Tuesday, January 28, 2020

What's Normal?

Given the choice between mortality and immortality, I choose the latter.

However, I'm not given the choice.

Thus, for the thinking, sensitive person like me, it may be normal to wake up low, down, and depressed every morning and then convince and fight my way out of it.

After all, the sad truth of existence is that all is transient, temporary, passing, and

sooner or later will die.

Thus even though everything for me in the daily world is going pretty well, I still wake up depressed.

Then, through mental gyrations are convincing, I slowly fight my way out of it.

I wonder if this is the way all smart, thinking, aware and sensitive people live.

Yes, involvement in the world distracts me from my mortality. And that's a good thing.

Wednesday, January 29, 2020

Mistakes

I lost mucho dinero in LK. I got over-excited, over-enthusiastic. Success made me careless and I made a mistake. And I believe my mistake is shameful.

But making mistakes is part of the game. I will always make mistakes. The question is, what benefit can I get from them?

Well, I love trading. I will never give it up, and this, even if I lose mucho. (This has certainly happened over the years!)

So the idea is to learn from my losses.

What have I learned? That, if I want to be proud I'm a stock trader, I must take it seriously.

I was careless as I walked through the stock trading quicksand. And I am ashamed of my carelessness and especially the resulting loss.

Does shame relate to fear?

Yes. Secretly, I blame myself for my mistake. So, when others blame me, I believe them. I am wrong for making a mistake, and should be punished.

It is my view of mistakes that is the real problem. When other people criticize me for my mistakes, they are simply confirming what I believe.

Mistakes are, however, painful learning opportunities.

Perhaps the pain itself makes them good learning opportunities. Who wants

pain? We'll do almost anything to avoid it. Better learn or else!

This is what my new view of mistakes needs to reflect.

Outside punishment is moreover, beyond my control. I am only in charge of my attitude, and that is the only change within my power to make. What happens from the outside world is annoying, even devastating, but beyond my control.

I slipped on the cliff.

I had become so arrogant and confident.

Or did my growing confidence turn to arrogance? Whatever, I became over-confident, carried away by grand emotions that I was finally on my way, finally knew something, finally got the stock market right, finally had my tour business right, finally even had my guitar right, and my physical body was also on its way to getting better through all my stretches and exercises.

And it was true.

But I got carried away by my excellence, lost my frightened focus through success and over-confidence, and starting the LK overreach and partly unfocused tour billing, ended up slipping off the cliff.

And yes, I've been down and stunned for the past few days.

This morning I'm at the bottom, but starting to turn my ship around. I haven't lost my "realistic" confidence, I have been slapped upside the head, kicked in the ass, and made a fool of myself to myself. I'm embarrassed, stunned, somewhat disgusted with myself, and a bit visited by the "How could I be so stupid?" feeling.

But as I lie here on the ground, I'm getting ready to turn things around, and get back to the old values, by altering my point of view.

Love, Passion, and Commitment

Conquer All (Or Most)

"Just shut up and just do it."

Quite depressing as I face the emptiness.

What can fill it?

What can be my strong purpose?

Passing on my legacy? Racing against death?

Indeed, these are not enough.

Love—of something? Maybe.

Love, passion, commitment? Better.

Do I love my guitar?

Do I love my yoga and running?

Do I love my languages?

Do I love my business, folk dancing, writing?

Do I love my miracle schedule?

The word “miracle” implies love. Love creates passion, and makes commitment.

Love would fill the void.

Okay, to make my daily life better, let’s say it is.

How will things change?

Let me start off by saying, admitting, realizing that I do love my miracle schedule.

If all this is true, what’s the problem?

I “simply” have to remember I love them. Passion and commitment are part of that love.

Discipline

Discipline is a form of love.

I could start by disciplining my mind to stay on track!

I could start my new life by practicing the discipline of staying on track!

Tuesday, February 4, 2020

Life as a Fool
or Retreat Yes, Defeat No

What have I learned?

Maybe what I saw as a defeat is really a retreat.

Maybe I just can't give up. It's not in my personality. (Maybe its part of the anal personality.)

Giving up to me is death.

Thus, I cannot give up trading. Yes, I can do it "differently," especially after being chastened by this historic retreat.

Retreat is a mental state, an attitude.

So it defeat.

Evidently, my personality, and even character is:

Retreat yes, defeat no.

Yes, I feel a bit like a fool.

But note, after accepting fool status, I feel a bit better already!

Maybe life as a fool is the way to go.

Maybe life as a fool is the smart, realistic, humble, and wise way to go.

So ends a New Leaf.