

Many Selves

Tuesday, August 28, 2007

Dale Carnegie's books are filled with simply, down-home, wholesome, American goodness.

A genuine interest in others. I have that. Always have.

Where does art fit in?

I see (or saw) art as about self, whereas business, sales, playing in the park, sports, basketball, even conducting the orchestra, leading the boys against the girls in Fort Tryon park, even entrepreneurship as part of "others," dealing with and the skill of working with them. In these areas, I have always had a curiosity and genuine interest in others.

Again the grand dichotomy between art and self, and business, outward bound, sales, play, and others.

But over the past few years, this dichotomy has fallen apart. I am now in a post-seventy new place. Amazed, surprised, and happy that I can still learn new things about myself, my self, my sales self, and perhaps even my artistic self.

Yes, evidently, I have many selves. True, they are all combined into one grand Self, but that Self is for God and I to look at, understand, and somehow decide its universal significance.

Many selves. Maybe that's what I ought now to deal with.

Dare to be Entusiastic!

Dare to be enthusiastic, smile, be friendly, curious, interested; dare to love your life and dive into the fun of dealing, nay playing, with others.

I dare. Smiling in public and jumping for joy when dealing with others is the easiest and most natural thing I do.

That's why I am, and always have been, a natural salesman.

But in the communistic, anti-capitalistic, bureaucratic, board of education world of phony sophisticates I grew up in, it was never considered an asset. Smiling, friendly people were basically considered stupid, naive, silly, or just plain blithering idiots. Smart people, intellectuals rarely if ever smiled. They were usually totally serious, generally forlorn, and always worried about the nature of the world situation and the potential negative consequences of man's effect on it.

Negativism, cautiousness, and cynicism were the armor of the so-called intellectuals and sophisticates. Not an ounce of fun or play in them. Dreary, dull, and full of put downs. That's why I hated them so.

My life has been an effort to build up personal strength so I can fight against these incarnations of negativity.

My sales personality is my smiling, jumping-for-joy personality, my running wild and free, in the park self.

New Vision

I have been battered by the winds of a new vision. However, before it arrives, the old vision must be broken, destroyed, blown away.

I have been suffering from the usual post-tour vision problems – blurred reading of printed pages, vague dizziness (of thought), general aimlessness of direction. These are the basic elements of post-tour return trauma.

Time for a new vision coupled with clear thinking.

This vision will create better focus; better focus clears up dizziness.

Friday, August 31, 2007

Listening to Others

Listening to people: Truth is, it's more interesting than talking to them. Asking them questions, then listening to their answers, is more often much more interesting than telling them about the things I already know. The latter is basically boring. (It goes more in the sales and self-promotion category, necessary for monetary growth, but rarely for personal growth.)

Sunday, September 2, 2007

Overuse

Overuse. Two two hour runs in one week, the second followed by a full day's hour of yoga and calli, full day at the Yankees, next day teaching folk dancing at Goldens Bridge. Result: Yesterday's manifestations. Total ground down fatigue. Shoulders, legs, totally gone. Vague dizziness, too.

Let's face it. This dizziness and total blow-out of my body stunned and scared me. On our way to the Yankees game, when I felt dizzy and light-headed around the T-shirt stores under the Jerome Avenue El, I became nervous, scared. What was happening to me? Was this a heart attack, a stroke, other? Was I about to embarrass myself by fainting, and even dying right in public in front of my children?

But now, a few days later, I realize, it could be, may be, was, is due to exercise overuse. How embarrassing. . . and scary. Clueless and at a loss. I totally missed all the cues.

Competition at its Best

The way to get things done, to motivate people (and myself), is to stimulate competition. This not necessarily to make more money (although that can be part of it), but more in the desire to excel. The challenge to expand the spirit.

Compete with others: Let them become my symbols and motivators to become the best I can be. (Thus a tour competition with Karl can be, will be, is good for me.)

This means I have to dive into my competition with Karl. Love and thank him for competing, and bringing out the best in me – the true meaning and importance of opposition, and why my enemy is my friend. (In Hebrew, “rea” (resh, ayin) means enemy and friend.)

Could I stimulate competition between one tour group and another? Each tour groups wants to be the best.

What does “best” mean? It’s true my group members seek my approval. Does best mean liked by me?

What do I need and want from my group? (Note the possessive “my.”) What would make them best?

Truth is I want to love and be proud of my them. (I’m personally involved.) I want them to be the best.

What would make them so?

What is a good tourist, a good traveler? How can they compete with themselves, and with other tour members, to grow, expand, learn, and become the best tourists and travelers they can be?

Guitar

I will never be practicing or playing guitar alone again. I will always have before me an imaginary or real audience. They will be sitting there, not necessarily judging me, but rather, letting beautifully vibrations from my guitar playing enter their hearts, feed their souls, unearth their treasures, inspire them to appreciate these jewels, encourage them to explore these new paths of potential, and thus subtly transform them.

Perfection and Passion

I just played a perfect "Alhambra." It was "satisfying."

But a perfect "Alhambra" is not a passionate Alhambra.

Perfection precedes passion.

Passion lies a step beyond perfection.

A perfect "Alhambra" is the first step, but not the goal.

The goal is playing with passion,

A passionate "Alhambra," with a perfect "Alhambra" as its stepping stone.

Perfection is cool, nice, interesting, even "satisfying."

Passion is hot, wild, enthusiastic, and inspiring.

My violin teachers insisted on perfection. The idea of passion never came up.

Wednesday, September 5, 2007

Music, Writing, Friendship, and the Divine Source

I have lost contact with my source, my Divine source.

Music used to be my source; writing used to be my source. Music and writing, music through writing: these were my sources, my instruments, my means to the Divine. Running, yoga, folk dancing, studies, even business and sales, although totally necessary, were always secondary. Of course, I need my body to reach the divine, but nevertheless, my body comes "second." Without the divine imbuing it with power, vitality, and energy, it is a dead, lifeless thing.

So, where does all this lead me today? I have vaguely lost my way in and among the sales forest of life. How do I get my energy, smile, and enthusiasm back?

I can only guess that I have to return to my source, or sources. What are they? Music and writing: music through writing, writing through music. What's the difference? I don't know. . . and I don't care.

Time for a return. And I can also see some friends for lunch on the side.

Thursday, September 6, 2007

Physical Construction

My physical slide gone far enough, run its course. Furious this morning. . . at myself. Pain, hold backs, restraints, aches. Screw them all. I'm ready to attack again. Anger and rage. Set my body on fire. Burn corpuscles, burn! Let my muscles roar! Dive into physical life feet and head first.

Bulgarian. Oh, Bulgarian in the morning. What happened to love of words, sounds, languages, meanings? They are part of physical life. Back to basics.

Giving Up Ornaments and Accouterments

New Way of Guitar Thinking

I'm choking on the old forms. I have to give them up.

Guitarwise, this means: Give up love of impeding arpeggio and move into love of melody (bass in tremolo, treble in "Alard." Focus on the foundation, the melody; give up ornaments and accouterments, arpeggios. A new way of thinking.

I'm choking on the old forms. Both for my mental and physical health, I have to give them up.

In a sense, in order to reach passion, I have to give up perfection. Thus, in order to play the melody passionately, I have to give up the focus on playing a perfect arpeggio. I have to soften the arpeggios, so they become a distant pattern, a soft,

flowing background.

Yes, it's true that the passion to play guitar well leads to the desire for perfection and motivates me to practice. But playing itself, means transcending the desire to play perfectly, (perfection), and diving straight into the cauldron, and letting myself be burned and embraced by the fires of passion.

Expectation versus Doubt

Energizing versus Nervousness

On my Bulgarian tour I exchanged nervousness for energizing.

On yesterday's bar mitzvah, as I stood outside Temple Israel looking over the crowd, and mentally putting the energy of my dancing stomach into every dancing soul, telepathically communicating to them that they should, will, and must dance. I exchanged doubt for expectation. And dance they did! The whole room got up at my command, and, as their wild circle twisted past tables and chairs around the room, they all danced like crazy!

Doubt creates fear and nervousness. It tightens the mind, freezes the muscles in a vague fear, cuing in a lowered energy pattern causing one to, if not fail, at least do poorly.

Expectation energizes. It creates freedom and flow. By opening the mind and releasing the muscles, it increases blood flow, and calls up latent energies; it opens the flood gates of inner strength, fortitude, power, and success. (Or, perhaps more accurately, it creates the possibility, the tendency towards success. And as I grab each little success along the way, the total picture of a grand success emerges.)

By undermining the church, and with it, faith in religion, much of the scientific movement beginning after the French Revolution and the Age of Reason created a

general cynicism and doubt. This in turn, created new fears for man, tightened his soul, threw haunting cosmological and personal doubts before him, and turned him away from the freeing power of belief. One needs faith in something to call up the flow of energy, enthusiasm, success. . .and happiness.

Faith in my violin playing talents, skills, and abilities was constantly hammered by Vladimir Grafman. Every time it popped up, he hammered it down through his sour face, silence at any of my accomplishments, lack of encouragement and enthusiasm. This translates directly into guitar playing, and manifests itself every time I not only play arpeggios, but actually, and time I think or realize I am playing the classical guitar. These fears and doubts are thoroughly invested in the word "classical."

Could I change this life long pattern? Well, I'm working on it.

Monday, September 10, 2007

Fun or Passion

I am both a fun person and a passionate person. Can one be a passionate fun person? Can one have a passion for fun, and have fun with passion?

Passion is often associated with serious, struggle, hardship, pain, and suffering. In fact, passion derives from the the Latin word pati, to suffer, to endure. Fun, on the other hand, is related to the medieval English fond: foolish, naive, credulous, hopeful, fondle: to caress, stroke, handle tenderly, and fonner: to act foolishly,

So what would I prefer? Suffer on the cross of passion, or laugh and be tickled by funny feathers of fun? Do I prefer enduring pain, or the naivety and credulous hope found in foolishness? Which is more freeing, pain or laughter?

My answer quite obvious. If you've got nothing better going in your life, well, then you might as well take passion. It's better than nothing. . . although not much better. On the other hand, if you are fond of your dreams, have a chance to fondle your

hopes, and dive into your pleasures, dreams, go for the fun!

Passion is the other side of fun. The sad, suffering side. "Deep" and melancholy, its realm is tinged by transience and death.

There is more freedom in foolish and naive fun, than in serious, profound, deep, tied-to-the-cross passion. Yet they are twins. The team of inhalation and exhalation work together. There is no escape from either.

On Expectations

Expecting the best is better than expecting the worst. Why?

Deep down, what you expect is really what you want! Expectation is a stronger and more specific form of want. "I expect" is a more powerful command than "I want."

Expectations must be specific. Pack and prepare. Attack the accomplishment of desires one mountain at a time.

Verbalized Rebirth

Post-seventy life is absolutely and definitely a new beginning. A new and fresh start. And even Ma is looking down at and on me, saying "You play beautifully." She even "appeared" last night in the form of an usher. And this morning, in the form of my younger and renewing self, Mr. Phillips, gave me this message. "It looks like you're making some excellent progress. I admire your hard work."

Indeed, Phillips is an emblem, symbol, teacher, and verbalizer of my new, future, post-seventy self. That's why I found and am reading his book, Body for Life. I am creating a new body and mind for my new life. In this quest, Ma (and somewhere Pa) are helping me from above by sending me messages and messengers. Phillips and the

usher are their messengers carrying new messages for my future, post-seventy life. They are not really “teachings,” since I know them already. Rather I’d call them verbalizations and clarifications of my deeply held beliefs and inner truths.

Gold’s Law of Reciprocity

First I focus on creating value – for myself (in personal and even professional life.) This value then automatically flows to others. That is Gold’s law, and a given.

This Law is not egotistical, but rather self-ish. And since self and Self are really One, ultimately, it is Self-ish.

Three Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin. Carried away on the wings of this fantastic book. I’m gone.

This is exactly what I fear about reading novels. Can I read this one and still hold on to my hat? Wouldn’t that be a good challenge.

Can I incorporate novel reading into my days? Should I? Such a passion and richness. Such novels are the Beethoven symphonies for post-seventy life.

Thursday, September 27, 2007

One Thing at a Time

How to stay afloat in the storm continues. Focus my energies one thing at a time. See if I can “do it all” in this manner. Well, I know I can “do it all” in this manner. But I must remember and focus in order to do it.

Keep the focus steady on: one thing at a time. Then one thing after another. That is my challenge.

How to handle the avalanche? How to not become overwhelmed? The answer is through the above.

The first improvement step is: Better organization.

The Ultimate Travel Experience

Ultimate travel is to push yourself beyond your so-called limits.

Maximum intensity occurs after you have “perceived” failure. Aim to go beyond that point – to a higher point – to push yourself to a place where you have never been before.

This is the ultimate in travel, the ultimate travel experience! The ultimate in mental, physical, and soul travel.

But How?

Pushed around by business events I have to perform, battered and distracted by the abundance I have attracted.

Drowning in the waters of abundance.

How to handle it? What to do?

Journal writing. Verbalizing keeps up my awareness. It also creates a freedom space where my mind can release, relax, and get perspective.

Where does Zany fit in? At the moment, he doesn't.

I've also slipped back to reading the Wall Street Journal and New York Times with my morning coffee. What a degeneration.

I'm living in the Land of Abundance.

Energizing Factor in the New Neighborhood

It's the most amazing thing: Everything I touch seems to be turning into money. I'm partly afraid to say this, afraid it might jinx things. On the other hand, I'm partly happy to say it because behind it is an old neighborhood hope that it will jinx things, and I'll go back to the old neighborhood with its constant worries about money and I'll be energized in the old manner by my constant financial concerns.

But no question, today's mood feels right. I'm very focused and unafraid of financial and business success, I can handle the overwhelmed feeling. In fact, I now see it, not as overwhelmed, but rather as my energizing factor. This new feeling and approach began with the Bulgarian tour this summer and has continued.

It's the energizing factor in the new neighborhood.

End of Writing? Or Which Direction Zany?

Strange and vaguely sad: Could my writing days be over? Am I really in such a new place? Have the writing of Zany, and Zany himself, really finished?

Or am I ready for a new form of writing, even a new form of Zany?

If yes, would Zany become a totally different character? Should I create a wholly new character and change his name? Or should he still be Zany but quite transformed?

Should he even become Attila?

Should the next book be about the children, the future of the Zany family, about Attila?

Seems we need a dynamic businessman, a go-go salesman. Would that be Attila. . . and Mashugi? They would sell language, and/or words. They would start by selling the first word which they discover on Mt. Ararat. They sell it along with pieces of Noah's arc.

It means fleshing out the characters of Attila and Mashugi. These would be, especially Attila, the heroes of Book Two. Zany would fade a bit into the background.

Friday, October 12, 2007

A Whole New Start

Sadly or happily, now that writing is over, I have to get back to writing. Without it, meaning is slowly draining out of my life.

But everything seems, feels, and maybe is different. I sense I've gone through some kind of transformation. The old characters, modes of life, attitudes, old thoughts, and indeed, the entire old neighborhood itself have faded away, maybe even disappeared. Something drastic and dramatic has changed. Mostly, perhaps wholly, it's in my attitude and approach.

But whatever and wherever it is, I won't be "happy" and "satisfied" until I somehow get back to writing.

Two thoughts, and they are new ones:

1. (Maybe. . . always that hesitation, the hesitation that precedes creativity) Zany is finished. He has served his transition and transitory purpose. He is satisfied, found, and happy playing his violin on top of Mount Ararat. Where else is there for him to go? What else is left for him to do? Nothing. He has found himself, and is thus happily dead. Perfected and perfection have been achieved. Having stepping into heavenly perfection, he is over.

Is there a next? There must be, since I must write in order to find meaning in my life.

2. Perhaps I need to move on to a new character. In the process, or before I do, I must mop up Dr. Zany. Edit and finish his book. Or I might even hold Zany in abeyance until I find and develop my new character.

3. Another new thought: Maybe New Leaf itself is finished. Or at least the title. (But title changes signify inner changes.) Sure I must keep up my daily writing. But perhaps I might rename it, call in my Journal. Journal for a New Day. Changing the title might change the essence and form too. It may well reflect the new me. It might jump start and kick my brain in a new direction..

The Zany Breakthrough and Meaning

Is that what Zany was all about? My guitar playing? The Sylvan Woods finale? Music?

Next step: To play my pieces rapidly, wildly, dynamically, with total flavor, loose, fiery, and giving them my all. In the Zany-on-Mount Ararat style. Totally free and with abandon. Perfected and done. Nothing to strive for but total bliss, abandon, and freedom. Floating, nay flying, through the stratosphere.

Not only in guitar, but in violin, gaida, and singing, too!

See the similarity now between running (legs) and guitar playing (fingers), violin and gaida, too. Legs and fingers flying. Flying legs and fingers.

Zany is about achieving mental and physical freedom, "total freedom," in music and life. It's about flying and dancing, violin in hand, on the pinnacle, the top of Mount Ararat. Can Noah's arc be far behind?

So ends a New Leaf. I begin a new life, A New Journal!