

## Leading a Next Level Life

Friday, December 14, 2001

### Never Losing My Treasure

One of my fears is that I will lose this newly discovered treasure. I run and hide it under a rock or in a tree like a squirrel.

But part of the Starting Over me is realizing that, once I have found it, I will never lose it.

That I am so incompetent as to lose my treasure, the fear of such a loss, is an old put down, a dying remnant of the old neighborhood.

The Starting Over, New Level me accepts that internal treasure, once found, cannot be taken away. . . ever.

### I Always Knew I Had Them

That I would be publically (not privately) so incompetent as to lose my treasure means that internally, that is privately, secretly, I always knew I could and would keep it. I simply squirreled it away because, if I made it public, my critics would force me to give it up, and thus publically lose it. My treasure could never stand the hard light and sharp critical cutting knife edge of public "scrutiny" (actually, screw-tiny). Being screwed out of your treasure in public. The mother's harsh light of indifference, abandonment, and lack of response. So I squirreled my treasures away to keep them safe and warm.

But secretly, privately, I always knew I had them. Thus, now living in the strong Next Level, I am bringing them to light in public; I am accepting and going public with them.

Sunday, December 16, 2001

### Applause

An artist needs applause. Applause itself is one form, money is another. An artist needs both.

I will rarely get money or applause for my books. Yet a few really do appreciate them. The least is maybe one or two. Can that be enough for me? Does writing for one or two people, and receiving an occasional check make writing itself worthwhile? Certainly not. Yet it is the reality and will probably be so for the rest of my life.

And yet, writing itself is such a joy and necessity for me. Naturally, I will do it anyway. It is more like food. Do I care whether or not people applaud me when I eat? This goes for other necessities like going to the bathroom, drinking, sleeping, breathing, etc. Without these activities life cannot go on. Applause in these areas are besides the point. All this is obvious.

Still, far in the back of my mind is the distant dream that some day I will be recognized. It is the ultimate "more" dream. Some day, far into the future, I will be appreciated, respected, and, probably most important, loved. Sure, I will continue to write with or without recognition. But the lack of fulfillment of this dream, the lack of publication, public recognition, appreciation, applause, and love, is a never-ending, ever-popping-up annoyance and frustration.

What can or will I do about it? Probably nothing. Just recognize it as a never ending need, let it go at that, and keep writing.

### Twenty-Year Enjoyment, Applause, and Appreciation Plan

There is also the idea that twenty years later I will luxuriate in reading my old works and enjoying them. This way a "new person" is reading, appreciating, and applauding me.

Monday, December 17, 2001

New Career: Publishing And Selling My Books?

I slept almost eight hours. Yes, it could be that I'm tired from my long run (an hour and forty minutes, and some fast). But also it is partly because I have "nothing to get up for."

And I awoke with deep morning sadness, emptiness, purposelessness, meaninglessness. The cosmic sadness descended upon me. A hollowing sock in the stomach, even beyond depression.

I know this sadness: it comes from "lack of writing." Writing is the only cure.

But I am not writing, or no longer writing in my old and committed manner. Why? Partly it is because of the overwhelming pile up of pages I see behind me. All of these pages, and books, and journals, and new leaves, and none of them published. Nor will I commit myself to editing, putting them together, and publishing them.

Thus my commitment to writing is divided. Only half of me has decided to write.

When I piled up my new leaf journal pages for seven years, I felt I had a purpose: secretly I "knew" (or at least felt) that some day I would publish them. Not yet, not yet, but some day. Some day the world would know me. Or at least have the possibility, hope, the hope for more, of knowing me.

That "some day" time has come. I no longer believe I can keep adding pages "just for fun and fulfillment." I have too many already. Plus, I have gone public with everything else. Isn't it time to go public with my writing? Obviously. Witness my depression. Not going public is cutting my desire to write first hand drafts; thus it is cutting meaning and purpose from my life. I sleep longer, and wake up sad and empty. This is no way to live.

However, in order to change it, I need a commitment. I need to "take my writing seriously," seriously enough to commit myself to selling it. Somehow, I have to look at my writing as I first looked at my performances, my bookings, and later, even my tours, weekends, and folk dance classes: I have to look at it as a way to make a living. This means it has to go public, get out there, and – the final proof of professionalism and

commitment—it has to earn money.

I am at the turning point. My depression proves it. I had better do something, or else!

But I still have no confidence or belief that I will. Perhaps it is because I am still not sad enough, not depressed enough; it is still not a matter of life or death, although I am slowly dying from the depressing sadness within.

Yet I will not; I still refuse to make the commitment.

I wonder why.

When my Starting Over New Leaf is completed, will it mean I have totally started over? And will it mean I have somehow solved this problem and am reading to commit myself to writing sales?

I don't know.

I know I now have the confidence in myself to do it. Yet I still refuse. What a binding , depressing puzzle.

If I need and want a new career, couldn't it be publishing and selling my books?

Tuesday, December 18, 2001

Worn Out Phrases: The Beginning Of Starting Over Writing.

Off this morning—yes, off indeed. Old words return, old worn-out phrases and distance marmalade passages. On one level, I've said and done it all before. Even the "on one level" is a tired and worn out phrase. But I have no other way of beginning. True, all my phrases, words, and flying turds may be thrown out later. Indeed, I ought to clean out this page. But nevertheless, a turpentine is ramming. I can feel the latent energy deep in my bones, twisting my marrow, driving the turbine engine of herculean fortitude deep into my personal Tora Bora cave. No Afghanistan here, nor Al Qaeda either. All personal normal modern daily political and contemporary words. I don't know where to begin. But I also do know. I know I must begin; I know I must start the

pouring process again; I also know I will delete, throw out, discard this entire page. The writing is so stiff, tried, overdone, undercooked, true to form, cliché filled, and this with my own clichés. I cannot write fresh. No fresh ideas in mind. Only the need to return to the past—which, of course, I can never do. But I need the remembrance of former juices, of the four-page a day energy cycle. I'm down in the dumps, and it is because I have lost all sense of purpose, reason for existence, etc. My future is bleak; nay, not bleak. I see no future at all. I've "done it all." My days are over, numbered, finished, caput. Life is over for me. The old ways are down the drain. And I see no new ones up ahead, or even around me. Finished, caput. I'm hoping I'll discover something new as I write. It has always helped in the past. A cleansing. Will it help now? Will writing lift, not only the heavy cloud of depression over me, but help me discover a new reason to exist?

Sure, you could call me a success if you like. Big deal. Yes, I've succeeded in playing the guitar, "finishing" therapy, writing hundreds of pages, so many in fact, that I feel overstuffed and unfulfilled with them. Yes, I'd like to have them all published and out there and have hundreds of readers clamoring at my door, falling all over me, wanting to read, read, read my books. Let's fantasize: Suppose that happens. Suppose the phone rings and hundreds buy my books, and all my work, everything I've ever written, is out there and gobbled up by an eager public. How would it make me feel? Easy: wonderful. But then as I imagine further, I can see that wonder passing; soon I "get used to" the adulation; "get used to" the money coming in and the numbers of readers rising. Then finally, I am back to where I am now: What else is new? From where will I get my jollies now?

Sure I am knocking success, the dream of mucho readers and those understanders of my existence. Obviously, it would be nice, lovely, wonderful to have. I know it would make me happy. . . for awhile. At least I am "hoping" it would make me happy for awhile. Am I rationalizing away all the sales work that has to be done to promote my writing? Well, partly. I hate to think of all the work I have to do to merely

be accepted, that is, published. So much torture and push in the outside world. Can't they just accept, love, and publish me without this torture?

Well, sales and outer world torture are here besides the point. Let's face it; can I face it? I will never promote my work with the energy born of desperation that I once promoted my concerts. I am not desperate, merely dissatisfied. And that is not enough for motivation.

But its heavy cloud is enough to force me to write. That process is the fundamental and bottom line key to my existence. There it is once again in a nutshell. I can never get away from it. Nor do I want to. The writing process fulfills all or most of my dreams.

I must write for my own satisfaction, sanity, self- exploration, and self- knowledge; I must write to discover my purpose, meaning, sparks, and place in the universe. Writing puts me next to, into, the God within. We're a team who work well together.

All that I am saying above is nothing new. I've said it countless times before in countless journal pages. I have no new message to give.

So perhaps, publishing what I am writing now is besides the point. It has been said already. Yet perhaps I must write it and keep saying it and keep reminding myself over and over again. Even if I write shit, it's okay. To shit is healthy and good. Without it, you have unhappiness, discomfort, and constipation.

### Finding A New Crusade

There is also this tremendous sadness. Again, nothing new here. Only the old repeating. And, although I have this tremendous sadness, if I examine it, I can't find any real reason to be sad. I have so much. Why am I sad?

Perhaps I manufacture my sadness as a source of motivation. In a perverse way, could doing so make me happy? If it forces me to examine my life situation, to write, think, study, ask questions, question the reason and meaning of my existence, of all

pursuits that I “enjoy,” then maybe my sadness is not so “bad” after all. Maybe I need it as an integral part of my search for self and a helpmate on the path, a soul mate on the adventure of life.

Thus, I ask: is sadness my friend? Do I really need her? Or is it him? Whether him or her, it or they, should I see sadness as a positive force even though it feels so negative? No matter how much therapy I have, no matter how much I “understand” it, the bugger never leaves. It always returns in a disguised and new form. Or maybe it returns in an old form. But it always returns.

Perhaps sadness is one of my deepest and most fundamental “needs.” Not only can I not get rid of it, maybe I shouldn’t even try. Only a lobotomy would eliminate it permanently.

I see sadness as mainly feminine. I miss the inner woman. My inner mother has left my brain, and abandoned me. She is my creative womb source. By covering myself with a cloud of sorrow, I bring her back to me. That’s why depression precedes creation.

In any case, once again, this is an old idea couched in a new form. Not even that new. But it is nice to say it again, to reacquaint myself with old friends.

Perhaps my days of originality are over. Who knows? Nevertheless, the process of creating and turning out pages of words is healthy, fulfilling, and good for me.

What have I discovered about myself this morning from the process? Nothing new that I can think of. But I know I am existing now on a new guitar level. Perhaps my writing will become a reflection of that as well.

Why does it matter? Because I’d like to make a contribution, say something important, something fresh, new, and different. I’d like to feel the pump and go of new direction, travel on vital new paths, living a life of fervent new adventurousness.

Yes, I’d like to find a new crusade. I want to visit the Holy Land. I yearn for a fresh start, a new beginning. I don’t have it (yet), but that’s what I want.

At least now I know what I want and need.

### Destruction As Part Of Creation

I practice the Villa-Lobos Number Four arpeggio over and over again. In the beginning it is slow and smooth, in the middle it is medium tempo and smooth; by the end it is fast and somewhat choppy. I have managed to destroy smooth and even playing. I have moved from smooth flowing creation to fast choppy destruction.

Is the “goal” of my practice to reach destruction? Or creation? Or both?

Do I want to destroy what I create in order to create what I destroy? Are creation and destruction so much a part of the Creative process?

Indeed, they must be.

But there is no doubt that part of this morning’s Villa-Lobos practice was to destroy what I created; if that is my goal, why be afraid of choppiness, mistakes and destruction in general— because that, in a perverse way, is what I am striving for.

Wednesday, December 19, 2001

### Left Knee and Mother

On my first long run at the end of November I hurt my left knee. Slightly. On the following Folk Dance Weekend at Land of the Vikings my knee developed more pain; it hurt so much I could hardly walk down the stairs.

An annoyance. I thought surely it would go away.

But it hasn’t. It keeps hanging in there, not getting worse, but not getting better either. Yet within the confines of this pain, I have been able to continue doing long runs, folk dance teaching (which has gotten better and more dynamic since Joan Colombo’s teaching suggestion), do my yoga and callisthenics, and generally function.

Yet the wandering pain keeps hanging on; it hasn’t gone away.

I am wondering: is it a new repository for my fears?

Fears? I thought I had none; I thought therapy had cured them. My mind is clear. So is my body.

Yet my left knee keeps hurting, keeps hanging on, never quite gets better. Isn’t

this a sign that “something else is wrong”? What about the idea that pain, disease, and sickness are teachers on the path of life, and that, once I learn their lessons, my pain will go away? Well, I believe this philosophy. What does it say about my knee pain?

I don't know. Maybe I have to rethink fears in particular, and fear in general. Do I still have fears? Sounds silly to even ask such a question. Every human does. Yet somehow, I feel I have none. Or rather, my fears are “realistic.” That means if a tiger suddenly appears before me, I will feel a “realistic fear,” the threat to my existence felt deep in my gut. But as for vague, undirected fears, psychological fears of failure, disapproval, public approbation, abandonment, put downs, and lids, I can handle these. I have for years. They are no longer a problem.

This truth I feel in my gut. Yet it is possible that vestiges remain. Could they be reflected in my knee pain? I hope this is true. Psychological handling of physical pain is something I know how to do. Plus I'd feel I have some control over it. If the pain is “really” physical, if there is “really” something physically wrong with my knee (torn cartilage, etc), then I will need an “outside force,” namely, a doctor. I would “lose control” of my cure.

This points again to my old fear of doctors, and deeper, of losing control of my cure, and deeper yet, of having their opinion of my disease, pain, or sickness “push me down.” A lid in disguise.

Am I fearing the return of an old lid? Is it the lid of kids are coming in for the ten-day holiday vacation; they'll be “taking over” house, and my freedom will be restricted. Somehow, I doubt that's the problem, but it is possible.

Could I be the fear the victory? I had a physical breakthrough. Finally, after months of delay, I am back to doing long runs! I did two hours at the end of November (and hurt my knee in the process). Since then I've been doing one-and-a-half to two-hour runs every Sunday. These are major victories. I am slowly getting back into running shape, finding new ways to combine my love of running with yoga and calliyoga. Ultimately, long runs are my biggest personal victory since the summer.

Victory and success never sit easy on my shoulders. (Or on my knees.) Perhaps I am “falling to my knees,” humbly praying and internally shouting, “No, no!” to my victories. Do I dare admit this publicly? No. I am too “cured.” Thus I let my knee collapse privately. This may be psychobabble. But it may also be true. I would like to believe it is true. This would “explain” my continuing knee problem.

“You cannot be in shape, Jim Gold. You are too old; you are too weak. Someone your age should be in the hospital, in bed, collapsed and hidden in your room, cared for by your mother, or senior citizen nurses. You cannot be strong, dynamic, and bold. Don’t you realize your travel business has collapsed? Look at your finances: a total mess. You’ll be in debt for the rest of your life. Luckily, you are still a loser. That gives me a job. I can still take care of you.

“Yes, Jimmy boy, your mother is still talking to you from heaven. I haven’t left your side. Oh no, not for a moment. You can never lose me. I will never leave you. Now I’m in your left knee. Notice the word ‘left.’ Yes, we were all left wingers. But you recently left (there’s the word again!) the fold. You dared to strike out on your own and become, of all disgusting things, a right-winger! How dare you have thoughts of your own! Now you are a capitalist slob, a renegade, betraying your mother’s revolution. You slipped over to your father’s side. Well, I won’t have any of that. You’re finished, Jimmy boy. Left or right, you’ll stay under my wing for the rest of your life! You cannot get away. Never, never, never! Dead or alive, I must have a function. Taking care of you is it. I’ll do it whether I’m in heaven or hell. You can’t escape . . . ever!”

So speaks my mother in negative mode. I could say she is nice for trying to take care of me. I am also very aware of her existence deep in the subterranean caverns of my mind. Could she, and her dismal attitude towards my personal victories, be the prime cause of my continuing left knee pains?

I’d like to think so.

Since “I’d like to think so,” why not think so? Why not start “thinking so”

immediately? It will give me strength and a feeling of control over my problem.

Right or wrong here is besides the point. If I'd like to think so, I will think so! I'll move from vague to definite. In the process, my knee might get worse.

But it also might get better!

Thursday, December 20, 2001

### The Power Of Faith

This morning I wander through the extremes of discouragement.

I woke up. Crack! My knee hardly worked. Then my ankle went. Couple this with the down market: big losses there. Add to this the pressure of losing my freedom because the kids are coming in. Squeeze, squeeze! I'm being pushed into a corner, clamped down on, battered and bashed into a hole the ground, claustrophobia rising as quickly as my stocks fall. I shout in frustration over the sudden down situation; I scream over the crippling pain in my knee. The question: Will I ever dance again? rises in my mind. Total madness and wipe out!

I am "not used to" these terrible emotions. Well, at least I haven't had them for awhile. The apparently hopeless stock situation I experienced after September 11<sup>th</sup>. Then stocks came back. My crippling knee problems I experienced years ago – with the same left knee. It took me six months of down misery before I hobbled into my rescuer at Columbia Presbyterian, Dr. Garcia, who told me my knee was all right. Then, relieved, I walked out and resumed my normal life.

Such are the vicissitudes of emotions: both up or down. They become so real, believable, true, and apparently permanent, that all perspective is lost. Truly, I forgot that just a few days ago, even on this "bad" knee, I ran for two hours, conducted great fun and lively folk dance classes, and even, inspired by Michael Rosenbaum, danced the men's version of Reka with squats! I did all this on my "bad" knee.

So why would my "bad" knee be worse today? Why, after surviving for over a month "on the edge" have I suddenly gone over the emotional and physical cliff today?

What has changed? The only thing I can think of is my stock market decline and the kids coming in for a style-cramping, house-stuffed, self-inhibiting holiday vacation. Everything else in my life is going okay.

So, assuming my knee is no worse or better than it was a week ago—and “rationally” I can see no reason why it shouldn’t be—let us look at these two “new” possibilities.

First, the down market. An annoyance, indeed. But certainly no worse than after September 11<sup>th</sup>. My main mistake now is that I’ve gone too much into margin. But even this mistake I’ve been through several times before. After some hairy days and moments, I came out of them; the market turned up, and I was “saved.” Will I be saved again? Who knows? That is the nature of the market. But if I can survive it short-term, there is a good possibility I can weather this down. So, although it’s a frustrating and annoying pain in the ass, the sudden down-turn in my stock portfolio is “nothing new.” Just an added, passing, infuriating, frustrating, but temporary annoyance. I know this. Can I live it? Why not?

The other factor is the kids coming in. Again, I’ve been through all its frustrations and inhibitions before. However, I must recognize that just because I’ve “been through this all before” does not mean that “I’ve been through all this before.” Actually, every moment in life is different. So is every day, every new situation, and every so-called “old” situation. Thus the rationalization of “I have been through this all before” is, in reality, not true. I have not been through all this before. Each situation, although on the surface an apparent repeat, is actually totally different. I am new; it is new. This is enough to make the whole thing new.

So, in the light of these truths, let me look again at the two above situations:

Stock market: let’s put that aside for awhile. Although it’s a pain, I don’t think it is the main trouble.

Kids an claustrophobia: this seems more like the clamping truth. However, as I look at this closely, I even feel I have a handle on this one, too.

In fact, miserable as both situations may be, deep down I feel I have a handle on both of them. Thus there is within this attitude a scent of victory. I can handle myself; I can handle the situations. They have gone from traumas to annoyances. Plus, I recognize that they are indeed, annoyances. This recognition is again another species of victory.

I am besieged by mental victories, successes of attitude. Do I really believe that the hidden trauma of victory is helping to create my knee pain? Could it be so “simple?” Again, I’d like to believe it. I’d like to believe that as soon as I get up from my computer writing chair my knee will miraculously be better. These “miracles” have happened before. But will they happen again? You can never ask for or expect a miracle. Yet they can take place.

But beyond miracle, the question is: am I covering up my successes with crippling knee pain?

Good question, indeed.

Again, do I dare believe in what I believe? Deep down, I hope, wish, expect, believe in such a truth. I believe I have created my knee pain. No outside force has caused it. It is I and I alone who am responsible for it.

Where will we go from here?

A fresh look at the old knee. What is fresh? Seeing it through the eyes of victory. That vision I know is fresh. Whether my physical knee pain will improve, go away, or not, we will see.

But if my mind believes it, shouldn’t my body follow? Isn’t the spirit stronger than the flesh? If this is true, isn’t this the test? My knee is the battlefield, the testing ground for the idea emanating from the Spirit. On the battlefield of Knee my Faith will be tested.

I am assuming a conclusion here: that faith will win. I will get better; eventually all will be well. Why do I believe such a thing? Is it mere strength of hope? Is it the

arrogance of expectation? Is it the need to believe there will always be more and better up ahead? Is it my innate and life-giving desire for More?

Probably all of the above. But whether faith will win or not is always the question. That is why life will always be a never-ending struggle.

### Work Cures: Rising Above The Pain

When I am “forced” to work, forced to teach dancing or give a concert, I “force myself” to rise above my pain. Somehow I manage to handle it. Often it may return after I’ve finished my job. Sometimes it goes away completely.

This happened when I hurt my back a week before the marathon. I thought I couldn’t do it. But I did. And, sure enough, when I completed my task, at the end of the marathon, my back pain was gone. I had “worked it out” during the marathon.

This has also happened during dance classes. I’ve run them with various kinds of “crippling” pains. I’ve somehow managed to get through the classes. At the end, depending, I remain either “crippled” or not. But I have gotten through, survived, the class.

If, by and through my work, I am “forced” to rise above my pain, to succeed in spite of injuries, then I should remember this. Perhaps with enough mental energy, I can now conquer, rise above my knee pain. Can I do it without the outside pressure of a job? We’ll see.

### Garden Of Eden

Why do we push ourselves away from seeing the Garden of Eden? Why do we so easily jump at the chance to cover up our Vision of Paradise?

Is the trauma of seeing it too great?

If this is so, then the power of the Garden of Eden must be greater than the veiling power of trauma and pain.

Does this make Beauty more powerful than ugliness? Love more powerful than

hate? Peace and serenity more powerful than war an inner turbulence?

Were we, as children, all hit so hard by the slapping power of material reality that we learned to fear darkness more than light?

Years of guitar practice down the drain. "Throwing out" the trebles, emphasizing the bass, I could have played Alhambra, Villa-Lobos Prelude Number 4, Leyenda, Alard, flamenco, etc. this way twenty years ago.

I started the violin again, too.

Friday, December 21, 2001

### Going Public With The Artistic Chamber Of My Imagination

The kids came in last night. Zack and Zane are now moving into the giant phase of teenagehood.

We sat on the floor playing guitar. I gave Zack my good Lo Prinzi guitar and Dave my good Diaz. I showed Zane how to play castanets. Then I took out my violin and tried improvising with all of them on Spanish and flamencan themes. From there I moved on to the gaida. I tried teaching David the Macedonian melody "Dimna Juda," but it didn't quite work out. Then we tried "Three Blind Mice." Zack strummed chords on the Lo Prinzi; Dave strummed chords on the Diaz; Prinzi; Zane bowed the open G and D string on my old Music and Art violin. I blasted forth in majestic, Bulgo-gaidian style with "Three Blind Mice!" Three Sightles Rodents. Not bad. A potential winner.

Bernice, sick with her flu-cold-laryngitis-etc. sat on one side of the sofa; Jeannie sat on the other, listening and admiring our sight and sound production.

That's what happened on the bare bone fact surface. Beneath it all, I had to marvel at how easy and loose I was. In the past, I never (or rarely) have taken out my instruments to play with the kids. Why? I was hesitant, even afraid, to "show" how good I might be, or to "compete" with my son, or generally, to display any of my talents "in public" before my family. Ah, there is the answer! It is not competition with

David, which, if anything, is a minor consideration. Rather fear of displaying my talents “in public” was the source of my past reticence. Subtly hoping and asking for admiration whenever I displayed my skills, I would anticipate the put-down whack of my boyhood Riverdalian family times. The so-called “fear of competing,” whether it be with my son, David, or my sister, Miki, was truly secondary. I see now that it was a cover for my primary fear: the terror of total annihilation under the heavy bombardment of social slaps, put downs, sarcasms, and non-recognitions.

Evidently, those fears have faded. I am no longer afraid of putting myself out there, displaying my talents, and fully showing myself and who I am in public.

Dare I really use the words “no longer?” Has my long night of public performance fear really ended? Saying “no longer” makes the ending so definite. Have I really finished? What about vestiges? Well, vestiges may appear. . . or they may not. But my lifetime fear of displaying my talents and full self in public is not only on its way out, but, at this point, I’ll have to stand up for myself and say: it is definitely finished! I am out of the closet and out of my Riverdale room. I’ve gone public with the artistic chamber of my imagination. So be it.

Is that why I’ve “suddenly” returned to playing the violin? Isn’t it a return to the home of my trauma, but without the trauma? I think so. The trauma fell out of my brain during four years of therapy. I’ve returned to violin trauma-free. That is why playing it now feels so “easy.” Passages of the Mendelssohn Concerto, once so difficult and seemingly impossible, now fly along. Spiccato passages really spic. This new ease is manifest not only in my violin playing, and guitar playing (of Villa-Lobos, Alhambra, Leyenda, Alard, and flamenco) but also in my relationship to my kids and grandkids. It all feels so much easier. Now I’ll go to the next definite, perfected, and final step, which is saying: it is easy!

What about this new down in the market? Suddenly, in one week, I’ve lost almost half my money. Is this “easier” to take, too? Yes. Partly it is due to my deep-seated belief that the stocks will eventually go up. Also there is a “weariness” in my

“belief” in up-down market cycles. I have experienced, deep in my gut, how temporary and impermanent they are. How can I put trust, faith, or even energy into such transience? Well, I can't. Thus, although losing this money is an annoyance, it is not as devastating as it used to be. I see the impermanence of both the up and down side.

My knee feels better this morning. Could it be a result of yesterday's deep psychological understandings? I think so. I simply cannot believe—nor should I—that the pains of my body are merely physical. Rather, they are mental in origin. This truth must be constantly hammered home. It is the basis for belief and faith in myself.

Sunday, December 23, 2001

### Mitzvahs Work

Aha, Maimonides and most Jewish philosophers from the biblical to medieval periods say that to attain afterlife in the Garden of Eden and avoid negative penalties of divine retribution in the Hell of Gehenna, you must fulfill the mitzvahs.

What are mitzvahs? They are commandments.

Which commandments of mitzvahs should I fulfill? From whom do they come? From God Himself. But I hate commandments or being told what to do. I hate being pushed around by superior forces or being lectured on what is good even if the words come from God Himself! I like to be my own boss. Sure, let God have His say. Why not? I don't mind others participating in the game. But the last say, the final decision, has to be mine. I'm the boss. I'm in charge. I want the final word.

Okay, that's out. Nevertheless, I do follow commandments. But they are the ones I have invented. This is true unless God is secretly working his magic through my brain by fooling me into thinking that I am making up my life. After all, He could be a secret agent quietly working behind the scenes, setting up my actions in such a way that I imagine I am inventing everything by myself. God knows I want independence so He

“gives” it to me by creating my illusion of personal freedom. But the Lord knows all along where I am going or what I will do. He has predetermined it long in advance.

Anyway, whether the above is true or not, the main point is that I do follow commandments: I make up my own mitzvahs. Among them is creating four pages a day. When I follow this writing mitzvah I usually end up in my own Garden of Eden, my personal paradise. If I do not follow my commandments, neglect my mitzvahs, I soon end up frustrated, depressed, sad, miserable; and thus enter my own hell, a personal Gehenna beyond redemption.

Heaven and hell are right in front of me. They are part of my daily life. I don't even have to die before I reach them. Perhaps this is the modern version of biblical and medieval Jewish commands. Today we see things in terms of the present. Through much study, reading, and training in Buddhist philosophy tinged with dabs of Marxism, heaven and hell are no longer far away, simmering and glimmering in a distant sun or shade. They are here-and-now. The communist state was supposed to create a paradise. Never mind it turned out to be hell on earth. No one said humans are perfect. The practical application of communist philosophy, applied by power-hungry communists, certainly helped create a totalitarian prison, a contemporary gehenna. But still, the idea of having it all now, of reaching the future in the present, of experiencing eternity before you die, is a very modern idea.

I too am imbued with this attractive notion. But I'll be damned if I go the political route by worshiping the communist state. Rather, I'll travel the path of inner vision by worshiping in my own in-room, personal temple created in the celestial artistic board governing the chambers of my mind.

How do or should I lead my life? By creating then following my own mitzvahs.

Is there a common thread here? Yes. In order to be happy in this life or the next, one must perform mitzvahs. This Jewish tradition works. But it often has to be reinterpreted, readjusted, individually tailored to fit the multifaceted personalities of this modern age.

Tuesday, December 25, 2001

### Dealing With The Success Trauma Syndrome

I woke up with a headache this morning. That means I'm mad. Really mad.

What am I mad at? The tight squeeze at the home front with children all around? Bernice being sick? Her debts comments? Never ending payments on my debt? The \$950 tax I forgot to pay in July? Other?

Indeed, all of the above are annoyances. But when I look closely at each one, I can see no deep-seated reason to be angry. Annoyed, yes. Angry, mad, furious, no.

So why do I have a headache?

I am stuck, "squeezed" into the success trauma syndrome.

How so?

I didn't have a headache yesterday. But when I returned from my One Man Show Evening at Sons of Israel Temple in Leonia, I felt totally victorious. When Bernice asked me how it went, I said "Excellent!" She said I'd never used that term before. I described the evening, how comfortable, easy, and wonderful it felt. I liked the format, the order of events. I started out with forty-five minutes of beginner folk dancing. Then people sat down to eat. After they finished, I gathered them together for a community sing/concert. I started out with Irene Goodnight, then sang Oh Susannah Around the World and Tumbalalaika. Someone asked me what my footstool was for. I proceeded to do my foot stool bit, then played Granados's, Spanish Dance Number 5 on my classical guitar. The audience loved it. They sat absolutely silent, listening with all three ears. I felt relaxed playing it and was even able to "linger" on the notes. My relaxation was ninety-eight percent perfect. I followed Granados with a reading of Knorbert and the Kneecaps. That ended the concert. I took a ten-minute break, then concluded the evening with another half-hour round of folk dancing.

The Leonia event was punctuated with blasts from my gaida, whose melodies alerted the audience when I was starting either folk dancing or concert. My personality was loose and dynamic in a wonderful and funny pushy way, "ordering" the audience

to get up, start dancing, and that this was “not a vacation.” My mind was right out there, the room of my private artistic chamber going public at every turn. I was an inner and outer success.

I woke up this morning with a headache.

No doubt this was due to squeezing of my brain by the success syndrome.

Where can I go from here once I am successful? What is there to strive for? I was totally comfortable in last night’s performing format. Major success and breakthrough. These breakthroughs are happening so often they are not even breakthroughs anymore. They are becoming “normal” occurrences. Only my diminishing downs, headaches, reverse angers, and inner stiffnesses (stiffni?) remind me that each success touches on my trauma.

Starting Over is about getting used to success. I

I want success it but I also can’t stand it. Total victory takes away my “more” by giving me everything I want. Thus as I win, I also lose. I get the whole universe filled with stars and sunlight, all I ever wanted; I am totally happy lying there in a wonderful womb of warmth, safety, strength. But I am also feel squeezed, straight-jacketed, bound, imprisoned within it. This is the conflict lying at the heart of my success trauma syndrome.

Thursday, December 27, 2001

### Mailing Lists

Practically speaking, should I even have a mailing list? Should I give it up? Should I simply do a mailing once a year?

Or would it better to have only selected mailings to people who have attended a weekend or tour? Or even a dance class? (No, dance classes aren’t worth it. Or are they?)

These special mailings on specialized lists would go to agents, people who have booked me, weekend people, tour people, bar mitzvah people, etc.

Specialized mailing lists. Each one could be “limited” to under one hundred people.

This means going back to my Word Perfect mailing list.

I could have two lists: One a general list, a Q and A list, for everybody; I’d mail to them once a year (or not at all).

The second would be the specialized lists. I’d put these in Word Perfect My Files; I’d do this mailing during specialized times.

This means often entering each new person address two times. But I’d only do it if they attended a weekend, a tour, or booked me. In other words, they contributed significant money to my coffers!

In summary: I’m thinking about specialized lists and specialized mailings again. Personalizing everything to and for the persons important to me and my business.

Friday, December 28, 2001

### SIN IS SEPARATION FROM GOD

Sin is separation from God. Period.

Thus, all the punishments of hell, Gehenna, etc. are really (in my view) metaphorical! They do not actually “happen.” Rather, they exist in the mind, in the here-and-now, and are projections of painful moments when the soul is separated from God. The pain and importance of this idea is expanded by Jewish writers, rabbis, and philosophers; it is given a universal, infinite, and timeless (eternal) significance and called “sin.”

The metaphor idea is my interpretation. But I think that most Jewish writers of the past believed it literally.

Believing it literally is, indeed, very cruel. Since God is merciful and not cruel, therefore not only does reincarnation exist – to give each person another chance to improve – but so-called postmortem punishments in hell or gehenna are mere metaphors for present suffering (caused by “sin” or separation from God).

Saturday, December 29, 2001

### Starting Over Financially

Twenty-five years ago I had no stocks.

Is a no-stock time again approaching?

Twenty-five years ago I decided that, since I was smart and could make a living in the impossible field of music, I could ease and appease my financial worries by using my smarts to learn about money. From there I would slowly move on to being rich, and eventually become a millionaire.

I read "How To Get Rich Through Debt."

I started my stock market and tour career.

This morning I awoke with the fixed at total realization that both careers are financial failures. Hard to admit, but what else is there to do? However, there is one financial venture I was successful at: getting and staying in debt.

Having and growing my debt was exciting for awhile: as long as I knew I could easily pay it off. My debt-to-asset ratio was always about four to one. Plus I believed, "knew," nay expected to pay off the debts after one or two successful "twenty-thirty participant" tours.

These thoughts took place at the beginning of my tour career.

My stock market ventures were a fascinating and fun sideline. At first my stocks rose. They descended slightly when I bought in the speculative Denver penny stock market; even so, they remained four times my debt. Plus it was the beginning of an exciting financial and entrepreneurial learning adventure

Three years ago my stocks crashed. In a two month period they went to one-third of their value. After several months of panic, I "got used to" my lowered financial security and level. Plus, I still had hopes my tours would pay off not only my debts but would even eventually make me rich.

Last February expectations for my Tunisian tour totally flopped; numbers went from fifteen people in late April to one this year. Sadly, I realized my tour business was

“over” in the old making-lots-of-money sense of the word. Plus, came the understanding that four monies would not pay off my debts. I gave up these long-term financial hopes.

In May, after returning from the Budapest-Prague tour – a mild success with ten people – my Gulf Canada Oil company, of which I owned 6000 shares, was bought out by Conoco. Suddenly, after four years of the doldrums, my stock market portfolio rose. I was back in stock market business.

I opened my own on-line Fidelity Trading Account. I made some good trades with Joel. Within a month, my stock market portfolio doubled. I got excited; my hopes went up. Was I developing a new skill? Had therapy given me the mental ability to make up my own mind, take a chance, to buy and sell on my own? Could I do it all without Joel’s “advice” (which cost and lost me lots of money.) Could I make money “on my own” trading in the stock market? Maybe.

I gave it a try.

By August my portfolio had almost tripled! I thought, at this rate, by December I’d have, or “aim for,” a hundred thousand dollars. Then I would sell half, pay off my debts, and move on from there.

At the end of August my stocks crashed. After September 11th they went even further. I thought, here is a buying opportunity that comes once in a lifetime. I borrowed three thousand dollars, put it into my trading account, and bought more stocks. Soon they started to go up. By the end of November I had almost doubled the level of my account. Again my hopes rose. I took out books from the library on stock market trading.

In the middle of December the market crashed again. My portfolio went in half.

The result of all this was is that when I awoke this morning, I decided it may be time to give up on the stock market. After all the work, time, effort, hopes, and dreams I have put into it, it still goes ultimately up and down and gets me nowhere. This coupled with the fact I now have to pay off debts with paltry folk dancing, bookings,

guitar lessons, weekends earnings. It will take years (if not my entire life) to pay off this debt through such earnings. This puts me in a most uncomfortable place. It is actually painful. I don't like it.

So I have to rethink my life and money. Since my stocks may never rise high enough to pay off my debt, perhaps I should think about selling all of them off! True, I would have no assets in the market; but I would also have no debt.

This would really be Starting Over. Financially, I would end up exactly where I started off when I got married: with no money. Oh sure, I now own a house. That's an asset. Plus I have lots of confidence in myself. That's my best asset.

Financially, I am at new point: thinking about Starting Over.

### Fuck The Engine. Full Steam Ahead!

I wonder if all these aches and pains are not just due to total and utter rage!  
Repressed rage! Could be.

I really haven't felt much anger or rage during the past three months. I've adopted the role of strong caretaker. That's been okay. . . to a point.

Maybe it's time to return to rage! Yes, rage could indeed be part of Moving On.

I need to review, return to, and rekindle my rage, and bring it to new levels. Indignant rage! I won't be stopped! I won't be thwarted! Fuck 'em all! I'll do what I want, when I want, and how I want. Actually, I don't mind taking care of all these fuckers around me. But I'll be damned if I succumb to their complaining, pessimistic, wimpy attitudes. Taking care of them is okay. But I don't have to tolerate or give in their chicken shit, retreating, unadventurous, approaches to life. I'm totally sick of them. That I even tolerated or even considered giving in to them is really what has enraged me. Indignant fury, indeed. Fuck 'em all!

I need a good fucking fury, some roaring and raging rage. I need my rivers to soar in mud and relentless, redeeming fire.

Back to adventure! Back to daring! Fuck the miserable, stay-at-home, soupy,

slopping, feminine, creaking-in-the-corner mystique; screw the grey clouds of misery and the black clouds of doom hanging over the last three months. I'm sick of it all! I'm not talking World Trade Center here; I'm talking home life.

I'm Moving On. Back to adventure and daring! Onward to the roaring road ahead! Forward, upwards, and sideways, too.

Fuck the engine. Full steam ahead!

So ends another leaf.