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Sauntering

Denise Homer

I've been a professional Naturalist for twenty years now. If I'm out on the trail with a group of people - chances are I'm the leader. When I worked for the California State Park System we used to debate if an interpretive program was a walk or a hike. We talked endlessly about what constitutes the difference? What is the difference in the public expectation between those words? So it seems I had some ideas about what I was getting into when I joined a group of friends on a hike up Redwood Creek.

I didn't know the leader of this expedition very well. He was visiting from Berkeley. As we carpoled north he asked me, "Are you a professional Naturalist?" "Yes," I replied. "Well I'm an unnaturalist," he said, "I've spent most of my life in the city". Well, this should be an interesting hike I thought to myself. It's pretty easy when you're a professional Naturalist to take over a hike. It can happen without my ever intending it to. A few people have questions, I have answers and the next thing I know I'm leading the hike. I was determined not to take over this hike. I was here to participate, to just be part of the group.

It was time for the hike to begin. Our unnaturalist laid down the ground rules - no talking until we reached our destination for lunch. Absolutely, no talking and we would walk rather slowly. To my surprise I found walking slowly even harder than not talking to friends. Walking at the faster front end of the group I turned to check on the progress of those behind. There were seven people in a slow motion choreography looking at the forest as if they'd never seen a forest before. It was magical looking at them slowly winding through the mossy trees, looking up, looking down, looking deeply into the forest. What might I be missing in my inability to slow down? What could I see right here without moving my feet? Twelve feet off the trail, into the forest I spotted a beautiful moss covered big leaf maple. The mossy branches twisted and knarled against the sky. Ah, magic and in that moment I realized this was neither a walk or a hike. This was a saunter.

John Muir when asked about hiking said, "I don't like either the word or the thing. People ought to saunter in the mountains - not hike! Do you know the origin of that word 'saunter?' It's a beautiful word. Away back in the Middle Ages people used to go on pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and when people in the villages through which they passed asked where they were going, they would reply, 'A la sainte terre,' 'To the Holy Land.' And so they became known as sainte-terre-ers or saunterers. Now these mountains are our Holy Land, and we ought to saunter through them reverently, not 'hike' through them."

I sauntered on through the forest to our agreed upon meeting point, the bridge. There were two of us fast ones and we sat down on the bridge in companionable silence to wait for the rest of our party. I took off my shoes and socks and plunged my feet into the icy creek. Leaves floating on the current played tag with my toes. I watched an osprey nest and saw a Robin with its beak full of red berries.

So, the naturalist learned something from the unnaturalist – that sometimes we need to slow down and saunter through the woods. Sometimes we just need to look – really look – and to listen – really listen – because as a Native American Elder said:

If what a tree or a bush does
Is lost on you
You are surely lost. Stand still
The forest knows
Where you are.
You must let it find you.

Originally published in Friends of Arcata Marsh newsletter Upwind, Vol. 14, Issue 3, Summer 2007

Relationship with Arne Naess

Bill Devall

Arne Naess, Norwegian mountain climber, philosopher, and activist, died January 12, 2009. He was given a State funeral. The Crown Prince of Norway represented the King at the funeral. The funeral was broadcast on Norwegian national TV because he was considered a national hero in Norway.

Arne Naess was my teacher, in the buddhist meaning of that term. He guided me.

I discovered Arne Naess while cruising through academic journals in the library of Humboldt State University, Arcata, California in 1975. I participated in Earthday, 1970, but as I became more deeply involved in conservation activism during the early 1970s, I was more and more dissatisfied with the utilitarian philosophical writings underlying conservation activism. I read Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, but I wanted more. I found what I was looking for in an essay by Naess in an interdisciplinary academic journal that Naess founded in Norway, *Inquiry*. Naess' essay was based on a talk he gave at an international conference held in Bucharest in 1972. In the essay, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement, A Summary," Naess contrasted the shallow ecology movement, which is concerned with pollution and resource depletion, and the deep ecology movement, which is concerned with diversity, complexity, autonomy, decentralization, symbiosis, egalitarianism, and classlessness.



I began to correspond with Naess at the University of Oslo. Naess responded to my typed letters with handwritten notes written on small pieces of paper. In later years I would send him emails and his wife, Kit Fai, would respond to me via email. During the years that Alan Drengson and I were editing *The Selected Works of Arne Naess*, especially Volume X, *Deep Ecology of Wisdom*, we had extensive email exchanges. We discussed explorations on the unities of nature and cultures based on revising various versions of Naess' essays as his ideas evolved based on his continuing reflections on various topics. We met face to face in Australia when we attended conferences on environmental philosophy and political activism.

Naess became my teacher. When I told him I was depressed because the green movement was always on the defensive, never achieving significant political victories, he reminded me that all great social movements such as the Civil Rights Movement, have many years of defeat before significant victories. When I complained about the complexity of living in industrialized societies, he gave me the koan "simple in means, rich in ends."

I enjoyed listening to Naess talk in person. His quiet voice and his ability to reflect on his own experiences provided insights upon which I reflected. One time when Naess and I were traveling on an overnight train in Australia going from one academic conference to another, I asked him about his life in Norway during the Nazi occupation of World War II. Hitler kept about 500,000 troops in Norway throughout the war because he thought the allies would invade Europe through Norway. Naess said he wanted to be part of the resistance, but friends convinced him to remain on the faculty of the University of Oslo. He was in close contact with members of the resistance and he said that a few times, arms passed through his office at the university. The resistance in Norway provided the allies with information on troop movements and other German activities in Norway.

After the war ended, Naess was asked to lead a group of Norwegians who were given the task of bringing together Norwegians who had been tortured during the war with Norwegians who had tortured them. The goal was to bring about reconciliation. Naess was very interested in nonviolent direct action and especially in Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence in the progress of society.

Naess constantly from the early 1970s through the 1990s sought to develop and clarify the bases of the deep ecology movement. While camping together with philosopher George Sessions in the California desert, he wrote a 'platform' for the deep ecology movement. Naess suggested that many people coming from different religious and philosophical traditions could generally agree with the statements in the 'platform' and when they realized their common agreements they could work together for social change.

Naess asserted that he was not a philosopher, but he lived philosophy. He acted in the world and reflected on his actions in the world and the actions of other people and nature. He demonstrated his approach through his actions at Tvergastein in the mountains of southern Norway. He wrote about his long relationship with the mountain in his essay "An Example of Place: Tvergastein." He describes his

intimate relationship with plants, animals, snow, and the simplicity of writing inside the hut he built on the mountain. He used minimal amounts of wood to stay warm. He developed his own ecosophy while living in the hut over the course of many years. He called his philosophy Ecosophy T after the name of the place that became his Place. He traveled the world encouraging other people to develop their own ecosophies because diversity and deep questioning were major aspects of his teaching. He knew that thinking is difficult.

I was deeply involved in activism concerning the protection of old growth forests



in the Northwest region of the United States, and I was constantly helping activists ask deeper questions about Place and protection of Place based on non violent principles. Naess encouraged me to develop my own ecosophy. Working with the koan he had given me, I developed an expression of my ecosophy in my book, *Simple in Means, Rich in Ends: Practicing Deep Ecology* (1988).

Naess continued his talks and travels through the 1990s. He said he was an optimist for the 22nd century. He was especially interested in talking with young people, encouraging them to move beyond shallow environmentalism to ask deeper philosophical questions. Many college students he met were particularly depressed about climate change and the failure of national leaders. Naess encouraged young people to become leaders in the peace, social justice, and green movements of the 21st century. He said that all people have the “intuition of deep ecology” and spending time outdoors helps to bring forth what Rachel Carson called a “sense of wonder” that sustains and enriches our lives.

Many of the central ideas he developed as an environmental philosopher are included in the anthology of his writings, *Ecology of Wisdom*, edited by Alan Drengson and myself (2008 Counterpoint: Berkeley).

Naess encouraged dialogue and wide experience. When Alan Drengson and I worked on *The Selected Works of Arne Naess* (Volume X, Springer 2005), I had the opportunity to reread many of his writings and to ask him questions to clarify my understanding.

Naess continued to rethink and rewrite essays based on his dialog with other people and his wide experiences.

In my estimation, Naess was one of the great philosophers of the 20th century and in a buddhist sense he was an amazing teacher. He was my teacher, and each time I reread one of his essays I again rethink my own ecosophy and political activism.

Jerome Lengyel

April 30, 1934-February 9, 2009



On February 9, the Arcata Zen Group lost a good friend. Jerome had been sitting with us for several years and, according to his life-long friends, he was practicing in his own way for many years. As one of them noted, hiking or kayaking with Jerome was truly living in the moment. In our Sunday zendo at the Aikido Center, Jerome always sat zazen in a chair facing a window, looking out at the forested hills. During our discussion circle, he would often pull his packet of poems from his shirt pocket and share one of his favorites.

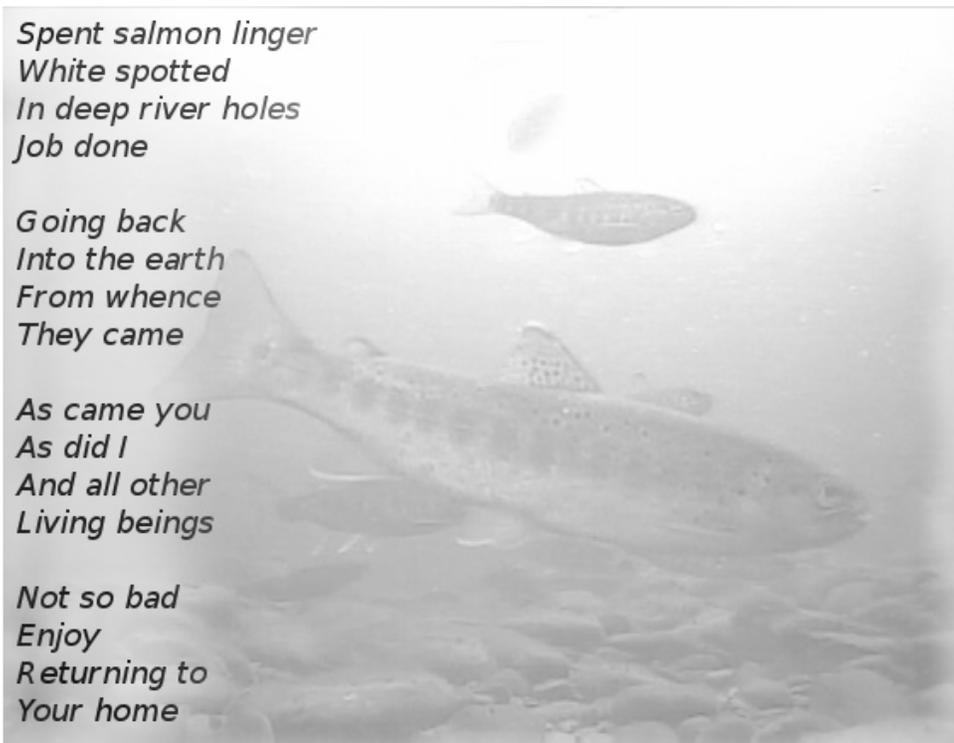
Jerome was nearly legendary in the larger community. Famous as an intrepid outdoorsman, he was also one of the founders of a large medical group and a beloved physician to hundreds of grateful patients over the years. Many of his medical colleagues considered him a mentor and a model of compassion and wisdom about the powers and limitations of their work. He was also a dedicated and very organic gardener and a firm believer in the healing properties of kale.

Jerome was a loving husband and father of five children, all of whom he introduced to the joys and terrors of running the rapids. His own father was a poet, and when he died, Jerome began writing his own poems. As our memorial to him, we have included the following three poems ~ all written by Jerome.

~ Michael Quam

My Special Place in the World

Miles and miles down chasms and canyons
unbelievable beauty of place return and balance.
I have seen the salmon
in its mighty struggle against death
leap over jagged rocks
risking all; a message to the timid.
I'm a witness to perfection repeated
a thousand times.
A lucky person.



written February 4, 2009

Epitaph

He ran a pretty good race,
Should have run a little harder,
Stayed on the race.
Was as true as he could be to his friends and his ideals
Loved the beauty of the world.

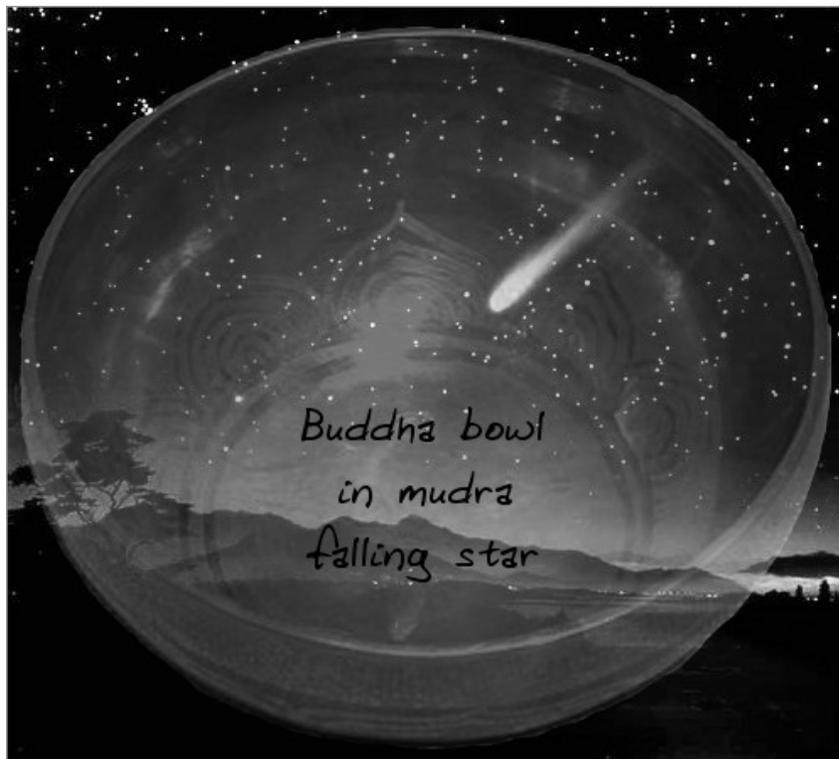
Walking on Rainbow Legs

Judith Louise

Those sparkling bands of
colored light, touching
down even without
their connecting arch,
visible only
from afar,
not at the site of
contact itself--there
invisible: the rich
magical hues, the pot
of gold. What miracles,
then, might even now
surround us, unseen
yet no less present and
even available to us?

Buddha Bowl

Shelley Mitchell



River of Life
Shelley Mitchell

We never die
700 million people in India
believe me

When I saw the burning bodies
set adrift in the
Himalayan river
I wanted to die
and be reborn

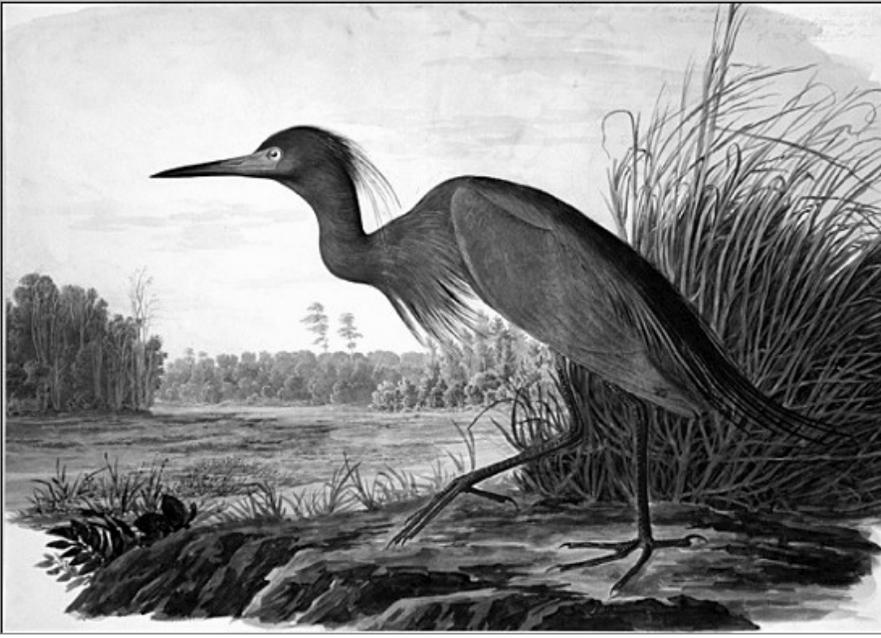
Peering over the cliff
I saw the flames
dance float and disappear
like fireflies
in the angry brown water

Burning bodies
worshipped by fire
silenced in glacial water
returned to karmic balance

I closed my eyes
grew wings
and floated to the edge
of the water
where I died

The flames transformed me
into the body of a cow
stalling traffic on
a dusty road

Someday I'll return to India
die and be reborn



Heron - Audubon

Dharma Gates are Boundless

Compiled with commentary by Michael Quam

An old friend—I'll call her Jane—sends us an end-of-the-year letter each December usually filled with news about her friends and family, sharp comments about the political scene, soulful observations of her lovely surroundings in the Green Mountains of Vermont, and wonderful poems she's gleaned from many sources. She's a woman of fierce intelligence and a magical way with words, and I always look forward to whatever she has to give us. For the past eight years, Jane has been going through terrible emotional turmoil with her daughter, a kind of continuous wounding that has taken its toll on her own sensibilities. In this year's letter she declined to give us any news of her family life and instead focused on how, in retrospect, she had lost touch with the immediate world around her. As an example, she told us the following story:

"In September I visited for a few days on an island off the coast of southern Maine. On my first evening's walk a seagull on a voluptuous granite outcrop stood on his egg yolk yellow legs, stared at me as I approached and continued to lock eyes with me as I sat, moved, departed, unthinking, unwatchful. On my first day climbing the cliffs facing east another landed just where I sat and stared at me intently from two feet away, for long minutes, while I, I stared out to sea. A fellow human appeared at one point and said, 'I see you've got a friend.' I laughed and said, 'Oh, he's just hoping I've got food.' And never once turned again toward the elegant splayfooted messenger as I contemplated 'nature.' These two were no garbage-scavenging compromised creatures from populous and refuse-ridden beaches. Those two were kings who graced me with their presence and I did not pay attention. When I returned home, my grandmother's cactus, which as far as I

knew (from my grandmother's time, my mother's guardianship and in the eleven years of mine) had never bloomed, greeted my arrival with one west-drooping outrageously complex tubular frilled white flower. There are miracles everywhere. And grace. In late summer almost every time I walked outside a dragonfly landed with its raspy feet, its relentless chewing life on my chest. Over and over and over. I have a teacher who is a dragonfly."



I was reminded of her story when I read a short essay called "Heronry" by Verlyn Klinkenborg in the January 5 issue of the New York Times. The author muses on the heron rookery he sees on a frequent train trip, how it has survived a damaging winter storm, and wonders how these particular trees were chosen by these birds. He goes on to say:

" I am used to thinking of evolution doing the selecting—blind impassive adaptation over millions of years. That is a dispassionate way of understanding behavior. But a heronry embodies a system of knowledge present in these herons, a complete, successful and highly inventive understanding of this world around them. Grasping how it came to be does not make it any less marvelous.

The train rumbles past that swamp a couple of dozen times a day. Who knows how many humans have looked up at that heronry? The hard part is learning to see nature as a dense web of interconnected knowledges. We see the dimensions of the landscape, but we miss seeing the fullness of the understandings that inhabit it. I look up at the heronry and the question that stays in my mind is this: What do herons learn from living together?" (NYT, 1/5/09, p. A19)

How many times do we in our self-absorption fail to appreciate the world we share with other animals? Around Christmas, on a cloudy December day, I was sitting in my living room absorbed in the newspaper and my morning coffee, when out the back window I sensed movement—a blue heron alighted on the roof of our little tool shed, displayed his graceful beauty for a moment, then lifted off—a visitor from the shoreline a mile away.

When I do sitting meditation at home, I usually close the door on the little room with its altar, zafu and zabuton. But this week, my wife and daughter are not at home, so I've left the door open. The other beings in the house don't like being alone, and very soon our dog Jack comes in. He's the soul of kindness, so when I whisper to him to go lie down, he does so quietly. Felix the cat has his own version of Buddha nature. He nudges and pokes at me, trying to get some sort of petting or scratching, and eventually settles in front of me on the tiny open space on the zabuton. While I'm watching my monkey mind do its gymnastics, he's grooming himself in all those hard to reach places. They're not a distraction from the purity of zazen, they're the essence of it.

I just finished reading Merrill Markoe's delightful novel *Walking in Circles Before Lying Down*, in which the narrator, a woman named Dawn, discovers she can talk with dogs. Dawn is an emotional doormat upon whom her boyfriend, her mother, her sister, her boss, etc., continually wipe their egocentric feet. Thus, she's given to bouts of repeated self-examination and doubt. Her dog Chuck doesn't get it—he loves all things smelly and despises the boyfriend. Whenever Dawn sinks into one of her self-loathing soliloquies, Chuck has just the right solution: he brings her the ball and says, "Here, throw this!" The last line in the novel is: "And so I did."

