



In the lull between W.W. II and Korea, while I was still held by Lutherans, my parents settled for a few years in Aberdeen, Washington. Two of my father's sisters lived there, and one of his uncles.

In the uncle's home, my brother and I learned that you could build the sauna inside the house (heresy), that we might have a Manx kitten from the coming litter (infecting me with a lifelong affection for the breed), and that, when we visited, our great-aunt would play "If I Knew You Were Comin' I'd Have Baked a Cake" on their record player. It was the first record I can recall.

A few years later, in a valley east of Portland, I began to study violin. Among the things I received from my teacher were records of my own, flood damaged old records, 78's, grooved on one side, smooth on the other. One recording was signed on the label by Yehudi Menuhin, one of a handful of great violinists of this century.

Knighthood by the British Crown, loved and revered around the world, Menuhin's gifts as a violinist and conductor are only part of him. He was largely responsible for bringing Ravi Shankar and the wonders of Indian music to this country thirty years ago. He has helped us open our ears to unfamiliar musical worlds.

While being interviewed in the late 1980's, Menuhin was asked what he would say to an audience of educators. He replied that he would tell them that every day at school should begin with lots of singing and dancing. He meant it.

More recently a study in Rhode Island caught national attention. Music was added to the school day of first graders for several weeks, and testing revealed strong increases in verbal, reading, and writing skills. Even more remarkable were huge increases in mathematics abilities.

Linguistic theory tells us that our language structures the way we think. More languages give a person broader, richer cognitive skills. Moreover, languages can be absorbed almost at will by children between two and ten, when they are learning how to think. We would suggest that some of these languages are musical, that each kind of music is a language of great value.

Thanks to people like Sir Yehudi, music from all around the world can be heard everyday: familiar instruments used in strange, exciting ways, and strange instruments made from available materials creating living sounds. They give us new ways of hearing, of seeing, of thinking.

Adding an emphasis on music and languages to primary education would benefit the students in many, many ways, but there is a further truth that makes it even more attractive. You don't have to force it. Most children just love to sing and dance.

Counter Culture Sandy Rea

Tea is an art. True tea, not that crap with a picture of a cabby on the front. And I'm talking about tea as an event rather than a beverage.

The north coast is particularly suited to doing tea year-round. I have a plain wooden chest in the living room filled with table cloths and doilies, fond mementos of the grandmother who brought her belongings from Pennsylvania to far-off California in it. She traveled west with her new husband, who would later become mayor of the town they settled in. As Mayor's wife she excelled in giving teas, and had a cupboard full of serving pieces for every holiday season. She gained further stature in the community by suing the mayor for divorce -- unheard of in that era -- when apprised of his dalliances. He was not re-elected. She went to USC and became a real estate broker.

I discovered her cabinets full of blown glass and silver jug about the time we had all decided to become very cool beatniks who drank black coffee or plain tea. Austerity was the key. Because the knickknacks were too beautiful not to use, and because I truthfully leaned a bit more toward Marie Antoinette than Jack Kerouac, they began shifting from her cupboards to mine over the years. Now they delight her great- and great-great grandchildren at family meals.

But, more importantly, they are used for Tea. My idea of a ideally set table is one that boasts enough lace to look like a platform frothed with whipped cream. You start there, add terrific food, like cucumber/watercress sandwiches, real scones (hot, of course), and chunks of butter in a crystal dish, at least two exotic jams like kiwi or quince, and a three tiered plate of small cakes and sweets. The teapot must be positioned so as to exude that Grande Dame flavor, filled with a perfectly brewed tea that is unavailable at any supermarket. Surround it with small dishes of lemon wedges, clotted cream, cashews, mints, and sliced fresh fruit in season. Any three friends who are willing to wear fabulous hats and enjoy themselves unabashedly. We have such a good time together at tea that we have been known to squeal upon hearing an invitation. (It is the only time we squeal.)

In the winter, tea is in front of the fireplace, with hot gingerbread, lemon sauce, curried chicken sandwiches, and plain scones. We drink a hearty pot of black tea with it, soaking up the warmth of the fire and the friendship to use against the howling bleakness outside. We talk of books we intend to read, of places we have visited.

Children take to tea like they do to a decent mud puddle. For them the menu changes to peanut butter and jelly or egg salad sandwiches, muffins, and all the sweets. They like it when something familiar like carrot sticks or grapes crops up on the table. More often than not, it's the concept of having dessert in the middle of the afternoon that appeals to them most. One of our favorite tea traditions sprang from our first children's tea: the use of different china patterns at every setting.

Now the adults are the ones who are quick to choose the Blue setting, or the Bird or Ivy cup. Each has her favorite, and will hint at disappointment if it is not on the table each time. Our flexibility takes a direct hit when we wear hats with large flowers.

The ambiance can be as varied as the type of tea someone serves, from Rose Petal to Iperial Gunpowder (it's a guy thing). No one has ever turned down one of my invitations, regardless of whether it was to be held at the mahogany dining room table or at a suitable patch of greenery overlooking the ocean at Ecola Park. We delight in our teas, and in our companionship. My favorite women attend, share, dream, and heal each other with their presence. Last fall we (successfully) included a weekly tea in the prescribed regimen for the treatment of breast cancer. The prospect of a Friday afternoon tea in Astoria softened the impact of Monday's chemo session to a surprising degree. It was so much more fun to peruse petis four recipes than Bernie Siegel, despite his actual contributions to us all. I can't imagine anyone who would understand better.

And, to, my poor, embarrassed children: Upon my demise, I want to be tossed onto a pyre wearing a large green straw hat with a cabbage rose, clutching a box of Typhoo in one hand, and a stunning Royal Doulton cup in the other, next to a pot of water (which has been, of course, brought to a ROLLING boil.) No bags in my heaven.



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Shaking hands with ourself Micheal Sears, D.C.

I pleasantly surprised this week to receive in the mail an invitation to Wavy Gravy's 60th birthday party, a music and fun bash being held at the Berkeley Community Theatre. While the name may not be familiar to all reading this, Wavy (AKA Hugh Romney) is a sixties cultural icon, perhaps best remembered for organizing the food for the original Woodstock Nation. Appearing most frequently in clown white-face, Wavy was quoted only once in the invitation. He said, "We are all one person trying to learn how to shake hands with ourself."

If the Seva Foundation, whose motto is "compassion in action", the sponsor of the birthday gathering, was looking for a summary statement for Gravy's sixty years, they picked a good one. Perhaps nothing more aptly describes the collective deconstruction we face today, or the mysterious "everything is connected" post-acid astonishment of the sixties, than reference to humanity as one person.

I got a renewed insight into this mystery recently by hiking to the whale trail at Cape Lookout. This path of a mile or so leads from the coast highway through untouched old growth to an eventual cliff jutting out into the sea. Lying down on your stomach and looking over the edge, you have a good chance of seeing California gray whales swimming beneath you. As glorious as whales can make you feel, what impressed me this day was the old growth forest leading to the sea. Here you can see massive old trees, spectacular in their size and antiquity, growing out of the remains of still older ancestors. Ancient nurse logs provide nutrition and support for those still living; and organic hope for those to come.

I realized on the trail that day that we, too, carry our ancestors on our backs. Just as the nurse logs sustain their children, our individual lives are a product of the nourishment and support of earlier human presence. We as a walking combination of the genetic history of our species. Like the trees, we are captives of time, but we are not rooted in one place. Like the trees, we are dependent upon an organic matrix for our continued survival; but by creative invention we are not totally subject to natural law. Like the trees, we give of ourselves for future generations', but we are not limited to a plant's ability to give. Each child represents humanity's best chance for a progressively evolving civilization. Each child is the torch-bearer for all past generation's hope for survival.

It seems to me that what is most deeply needed today is an individual sense of contribution to a collectively shared vision. Not a vision just for one's family or country, although that's part of it, but a vision of one's kind, humanity as a whole. We are beginning to speak of humanity as a single organism striving to become sustainable on our planet home. It is a deep and mysterious field of understanding, informed by science, religion and philosophy, which we are struggling to express. We know that no cell in the human body exists apart from the body, whether in contributing to its function or deriving its share for the well-being of the whole. Working together, the cells of the body find a collective well-being and consciousness unachievable by any single cell or group of cells. That is to say, the purpose of biological development transcends the mere existence of the body and its parts. Is this not also true for the collective body of humanity?

Please forgive these limitations of understanding. I'm not able to get there by myself; it's something we need to do together. The time is ripe. Endowed with the wealth of all the genetic and cultural diversity that has evolved through past ages, we are now challenged to draw on our collective inheritance to take up consciously the responsibility for the design of our future. We are all involved in the birth pangs of humanity's coming of age. The skeleton of our present understanding needs the flesh, blood, and muscle of wide-spread consultation to bring forth the vision of humanity as one soul one body.

Happy Birthday, Wavy.

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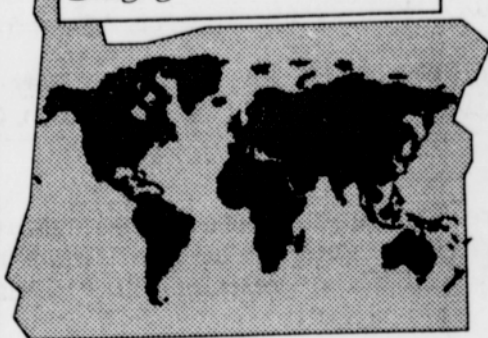
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