

In A Nutshell

Spring / Summer 2005

Sea Monsters

by Oliver Cross

"There is a famous saying: 'If the mind is not contrived, it is spontaneously blissful, just as water, when not agitated, is by nature transparent and clear.' I often compare the mind in meditation to a jar of muddy water: the more we leave the water without interfering or stirring it, the more the particles of dirt will sink to the bottom, letting the natural clarity of the water shine through. The very nature of the mind is such that if you only leave it in its unaltered and natural state, it will find its true nature, which is bliss and clarity."

—Sogyal Rinpoche

I don't believe in madness. To me, it's superstition—a sign of the times.

I won't go 'toe-to-toe' in scientific terms. I believe metaphor is a far greater teacher. I liken psychiatric diagnoses to sea monsters, the kinds of things that sailors talked about and were afraid of, things thought to have been seen but not verifiably. Things that went hand in hand when fear of falling off a flat Earth reigned in popular belief.

We can change the world—we have changed the world. We have changed the world into a place where people go to war and kill each other. We have changed the world into a place where global warming imminently threatens the planet's ability to sustain life. We have changed the world into a place where the food we eat has questionable nutritional value. We have changed the world into a place where incidents of terrible, incurable diseases are on the rise. We have changed the world into a place where girls reach puberty at younger and younger ages. We have changed the world into a place where we are running out of time.

We create the world in which we live and want to live.

Christopher Columbus is one of my role models. Besides the practical challenges of his journeys, which led to—if not accidentally—the discovery of the Americas, he dealt with the insecurities of those around him. Hardly anyone believed in or supported him. He lived in danger. On more than one occasion he was tossed in jail for his beliefs.

I have a handful of psychiatric diagnoses, not the least of which is schizophrenia.

What are the gifts of a psychiatric diagnosis? What makes it all worthwhile? The gift of health is its own reward and may be far separate from how we're treated by psychiatrists, because psychiatrists don't listen, they seek symptoms. The two activities are not the same. Imagine a musical performance where audience

(continued page over)

In This Issue:

Sea Monsters by Oliver Cross.....	front page, 2, 17
Echoes of the Past by S. Roddan	3
Man Bites Black Dogs by Scott Dixon	4
Satya'Soapbox by Satya Devi	5
Minute Particulars by A. Feldmár	5, 6, 7
A Complex Character by Terrence Levesque	7
A Testament to Courage by D. Paul Strashok.....	8
Hummingbird Wisdom by Dea Scramstad.....	9
love in the summer rain by reinhart.....	10,11
Sacred Institutions by Oliver Cross	12
What's Fair is A Righteous Fare by Frank G. Sterle, Jr.	13
Understanding The Journey by Terrence Levesque.....	13,17
Reading, Writing, Walking, Mentoring by Jim Gifford.....	14
Bookworm by Andrew Feldmár.....	15, 16
C/S/X Websites	18,19
Bulletin Board	19
Drawing by Sora You	back page

MPA Society
122 Powell St.
Vancouver, B.C.
V6A 1G1
Tel: 604-482-3700
Fax: 604-738-4132
Website: vmpa.org

members show up to listen, feel and allow the music to move and inspire. Then imagine one or more individuals showing up with oscilloscopes to analyze the sound, scratching their heads and looking for evidence of what's going on, trying to understand. That's what psychiatrists do. We can all do it.

Psychiatry may be irresponsible and there may be no way of holding it accountable. Shall we accept this? Can we go on? What are the gifts of a psychiatric diagnosis? I consider my psychiatric diagnoses similar to a child of mine. When we parent, we give up certain things in order to care for our charge. I have given up many things, mostly having to do with people who began treating me differently upon finding out that I had a psychiatric diagnosis. There's no talking to some people—I had to give up and leave. These are people who believe what they are told over what's in front of their own eyes. People don't want mental patients to be well.

Some of the people involved were very important to me and had things that I wanted and needed in order to grow up strong and healthy. My parents are among

them. I started doing without the things my parents had to offer me from their position of relative power after a point because I wouldn't sacrifice my truth, my belief in myself, my spirit for the trappings they'd have given me if I did. What would have been, if only I had come to think of myself as they decided to think of me: as crazy?

From my position of powerlessness, with nothing left to lose I believed in myself when no one else would. If they could take it all from me, then I dared them the take that from me too. I stopped at nothing to protect my own interests. It was obvious to me that no one else had them at heart. I started patronizing people—my parents, doctors—and surprisingly no one seemed to notice.

I rebuilt my life, like pruning a plant it doesn't come back the same way. Rather than alternately falling prey to and rebelling against the repetitions of my psychiatrists, I re-turned my attention to the guidance of my

(continued on p. 16)

Editorial Note

by Jim Gifford

Byron Fraser has decided to leave the editorial board of 'In A Nutshell', after several years of diligent service. His intellectually stimulating and provocative articles were greatly appreciated and, hopefully, we will be publishing more of his work in the future. Now Byron wishes to pursue other opportunities and we wish him well in all future endeavors.

Terrence Levesque returns to the board after a sabbatical. We look forward to the straight-forward and down-to-earth approach to life and mental health issues he brings as both board member and contributing writer. Welcome back, Terry.

The Editorial Board of **In A Nutshell** welcomes letters, articles, and poetry on mental health issues from you, our readers.

Warning! Do not abruptly stop psychiatric medications! Most psychiatric medications are powerful drugs and should be withdrawn from gradually under the care of a physician or other health practitioner.

In A Nutshell is a publication of the M.P.A. Society, 122 Powell St., Vancouver, BC, V6A 1G1, ph. (604) 482-3700, fax (604) 738-4132. The MPA is a non-profit organization that offers a variety of programs in **ADVOCACY, HOUSING, RECREATIONAL and SOCIAL ACTIVITIES** for former mental patients. For more information on any of the above programs or housing waiting lists, please phone the office at (604) 482-3700. Editorial Board: Jim Gifford, Ely Swann, Reinhart, Terrence Levesque, D. Paul Strashok. All works are © The Individual Authors, 2005

The opinions expressed in this magazine are those of the individual writers and not necessarily those of the M.P.A. Donations toward the cost of **In A Nutshell** will be gratefully accepted by M.P.A.

Echoes of the Past

by Sam Roddan

I was 15 years old in 1930. My dad came out to Vancouver the year before from Port Arthur. He had a big church, the First United Church at Gore and Hastings in the east end. You can still drive by there now and see the same sort of men that hung around there during the thirties; they look the same.

As a boy, the minister's son, I'd help make up hampers for the poor and for the men looking for a little relief. They'd be lined up for block, all single, all unemployed. They'd get a hamper on special occasions; a hankie, a bit of tobacco, a few papers, a chocolate bar, a meat sandwich and a razor blade. My dad would be onto them. "Gotta keep clean boys, keep clean!" And there might even be a pair of socks or a stamped envelope with a few sheets of writing paper. Dad would say, "Now, don't forget boys; gotta write home. Write 'em at home!"

Migratory workers flooded into Vancouver, it was warmer here than Calgary or Halifax. They flooded out the Central City Mission, the Salvation Army. When they weren't marching, "tin-panning," as they'd say, they were organizing. The single and unemployed were a mobile group and they were organized like an army. On tag-days – they could only march on certain days and people got fed up with them – the men would march through the streets demonstrating. And they always had a destination, Oppenheimer Park. We called it the Powell St. Grounds. If you look carefully there now you'll see the Roddan Lodge, named after my dad the Rev. Andrew Roddan. He was an involved man in those hard times. He'd preach in his church and on the radio about the right of men to work. One newspaper called him an evangelical tympanist.

The most visible hobo jungle was the one under the Georgia St. viaduct. B.C. Electric had a coke-gas plant nearby and it was warmer down there. It was just

a tangle of shacks, tar-paper, corrugated metal, anything. *Classy* was a piano box shack. There were no latrines, no water either. My dad and I used to take water down in barrel before the city put in a hose. The stink was... What a stink.

The symbols of the depression were everywhere about the east end; the pawn shops full of instruments and workmen's tools. The thrift stores and second-hand stores had men searching through rows of curled up shoes. The unemployed men had newspapers stuffed in theirs. And along the long quiet streets, here and there the painted face of a young woman from behind a curtain.

What sustained a man who was down and out in the thirties? Well, the newspaper room of the Old Carnegie Library used to be packed in depression days. The cynic might say, those guys are only in there to keep warm, but people were interested in the books, in the hometown newspapers. In the thirties, it seems to me. People had a feeling that there was a solution somewhere – in a book, a political philosophy, the Bible. People were conversationalists, they exchanged ideas. For a young guy out of work there were all kinds of things to keep busy with. "Will I picket the scrap iron that's going out to Japan? or march to keep the propaganda, the message, out in front of the public?"

Now there seems to be a kind of fatalism about things. No one has an answer. The economists disagree, people have lost faith in political solutions in themselves. There are no leaders or great orators like the unemployed had in Harold Winch.

The last time, a great depression ended due to war. Overnight, men who had no shoes got shoes, a greatcoat, three squares a day, jam and toast for breakfast, two pairs of underwear – and a rifle. ■

Quotes from the Roundtable

by M.D. Arthurs

"confession is good for the soul and
contrition enriches the heart."

Man Bites Black Dogs - News Briefs From All Over

Compiled by Scott Dixon

Look At All The Lonely People

The New York Times reported recently on an unmarked, locked room full of the long forgotten in Salem, Oregon.

Inside the room, in a dim and dusty corner of one of many abandoned buildings on the decaying campus of the Oregon State Hospital are 3,489 copper urns, the shiny metal dull and smeared with corrosion, the canisters turning green.

The urns hold the ashes of mental patients who died from the late 1880's to the mid-1970's. The remains were unclaimed by families who had long abandoned their sick relatives, when they were alive and after they were dead.

The hospital opened in 1883 as the Oregon State Insane Asylum and was once a national model for mental health care. The 1975 movie "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" was filmed there

Sock It To Me

"I don't care whether he's mentally ill or not."

- Vancouver Burrard MLA Lorne Mayencourt, as quoted in the Vancouver Sun, on the panhandler he chased for seven blocks before being getting punched in the face. Mayencourt, upset because the man was swearing, called 9-11 four times in 36 minutes, then tried to make a citizen's arrest by grabbing the man. That's when the punch was thrown.

Columnist Allen Garr commented in the Vancouver Courier: "Few would react the way Mayencourt did. But, after all, he did spend four nights sleeping outside on the Downtown Eastside just to get a feel for the plight of the downtrodden souls who regularly inhabit our streets. Mayencourt concluded that aggressive panhandlers were neither homeless nor mentally ill."

All The News That Fits

A study of major U.S. newspapers shows that 40% of stories published about the mentally ill during a six week period focused on danger and violence.

Only 20% of stories contained themes that fell into the broad category of advocacy action. These stories addressed the shortage of resources in the public mental health arena, the need for better care, and the absence of good-quality housing.

The study was led by Dr. Patrick W. Corrigan, professor of psychiatry at the University of Chicago.

Against All Odds

A recent random and unscientific search of the Internet for news stories featuring the expression "history of mental illness" netted 399 results in less than a second. Most of the stories collected by the Google news search engine involved violent crime and suicide.

A similar search for the expression "no history of mental illness" revealed just nine stories.

That's a ratio of about 40-1.

Bitter Harvest

Iris Chang's family thinks the best-selling author's suicide could have been averted if mental illness did not have such a strong stigma in the Asian-American community.

They described Chang's shame after she suffered a breakdown, recalling how she asked them not to reveal her condition to other relatives or friends and resisted taking medication.

"What's so powerful about the stigma of mental illness that someone would want to take the knowledge of their illness to the grave with them?" asked her brother, Michael Chang.

The author's mother, said she wished they had refused to honor Iris' request and been more open about what she was going through. "In Asian culture, it's considered shameful to have some mental patient in your family," she said. "But mental illness is a disease, a chemical imbalance in the brain. We should treat it just like a heart attack or diabetes." ■

Satya's Soapbox

by Satya Devi

"You have not lived a perfect day, even though you have earned your money, unless you have done something for someone who will never be able to pay you." —Ruth Smeltzer

My mother once told me that nothing in life was worth doing and that everything was fixed. She said my attempts at being an active pacifist who makes choices were as though a Café had a sign on the window, "Buy one coffee, get one free", and that after careful consideration said, "Well, I'll take this one"

Lines for Dolly Mercredi;

An angel has flown away. Any one who ever went to the Kettle for pastime or housing help, knew Dolly.

A few months back, I met Dolly for help with housing that allowed dogs. Dolly not only got all the various papers and forms needed, showed me how to fill

out and then address the envelopes and put stamps on them for me. She put me in touch with Unity Housing, a series of co-ops, consumer-run and fortunately, they allowed Mohandas, my Pomeranian and me to move in. I thought I would call Dolly after I settled in a bit. I remember her smile which came easy and often lit her eyes, eyes which had found their resting place, and her smile could not be held back. An incarnation of love and compassion: Dolly Llama.

Two of my brethren were talking recently on the bus and one said, "Let's go to the Kettle", and the other said, "No, it's closed down this afternoon; Dolly's been killed by a car racer". And I don't know how I made it home that day.

She will not be forgotten, and Dolly, wherever you are, a lot of us owe you one - and I don't mean a coffee. ■

Minute Particulars

by Andrew Feldmár

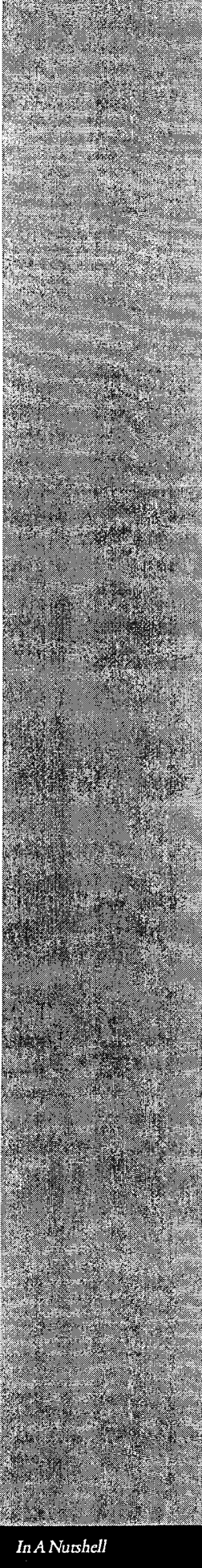
Recently, I was asked to participate in a discussion after the showing of Peter Robinson's 1971 documentary, Asylum, filmed in London, England. R. D. Laing appeared for a short introduction, but the therapists involved in the action of day-to-day living were Mike Yokum, Paul Zeal, and Leon Redler. I spent a year from 1974 to 1975 in London, attending to several of the therapeutic communities (there were seven of them at the time, not unlike the Archway community shown in Asylum), studying and working with Laing, Redler, and others. These households were offshoots of the original Kingsley Hall experiment, during which Laing and other psychiatrists and therapists moved in with and lived together with a number of people who otherwise would have been hospitalized as mental patients on wards of psychiatry. Laing disapproved of his profession's haste in diagnosing people as *schizophrenic* or *psychotic*, and immediately medicating them. He wanted to know what it was like to live with, to

hang out with unmedicated people whose suffering the profession would label *mental illness*. In Kingsley Hall, like in Asylum, there was no way to tell apart patient from therapist.

Leon Redler is still my friend, so I asked him a few questions. Thirty-five years after the event, this is how our conversation went:

AF: What happened to David Bell? (In Asylum David is one of the central characters, very verbal, difficult to comprehend, sweet at times, disturbing and angry at other moments. Laing once told me that when he himself needed spiritual solace, he would visit David and hang out with him.)

(continued page over)



LR: David lived in the community for at least 6 years after the film was made. He got his own flat, either through the local council or through a housing association, some time before the life of the community ended and the household was disbanded. He was hospitalized several times in the years after the film was made. This usually happened when he'd be quite agitated, go out on the streets, speaking rapidly and by words and body language conveying that he was distressed. This would lead to the police picking him up, taking him to a hospital, being admitted, and put on phenothiazines. He would be told that he needed to stay on this medication for the rest of his life, and then sent back to the community after not too long a period. Eventually he decided to stay on the drugs, for a combination of reasons: (i) believing what the doctors told him, that he needed the drugs for his illness, *schizophrenia*, (ii) preferring life on the drugs, hoping for fewer hospitalizations, and (iii) genuinely preferring to live on a more even keel, without the eruptions of distressed states that were not easy to cope with either by others or by himself.

One day Ronnie Laing received a phone call from a woman consultant psychiatrist at Fryer Barnet Hospital where David became a patient. She said that withholding phenothiazines from David was as negligent as if we were withholding vitamins from a man dying of a vitamin deficiency disease, or withholding insulin from a diabetic. We were not, of course, withholding anything from anybody; we were simply not insisting that people in the household must be on drugs. It was intended, after all, as a place of asylum and refuge for people in distress, we weren't going to pretend we know best what's good for another, where it was the responsibility and choice of each individual to seek what help they wanted, including any help via their GP or local hospital.

The consultant complaining, didn't, of course, acknowledge that there was absolutely no evidence that there was any demonstrable relation between a primary biochemical deficiency and/or excess that phenothiazines directly addressed, as could be easily demonstrated in the case of vitamins or insulin. Nor did she consider that giving drugs which regularly produced symptoms of Parkinson's Disease, in setting out to reduce or control symptoms of *psychosis*, should give us pause in such therapeutic zeal. She also didn't know, what would become apparent later, that many people on long-term phenothiazine medication would suffer irreversible Tardive Dyskinesia. Looking back, I wonder if she would stand by her serious charge of our irresponsibility today.

More than ten years after he had left the community, having been living on his own and attending various day centers, he called me up to make an appointment. He said that he wanted *psychoanalysis*, something I had never said I was offering but that he had frequently spoken of as his description of what we were engaged in. At that time he had been on drugs for years, was quite overweight, and his unrigged liveliness and sharpness of mind and articulation seemed significantly diminished. I had recently finished three years of training, and qualified as a teacher of the Alexander Technique. As I have felt a profound transformation through this work, I thought that this would be the most valuable way I could try to get back in touch with David. He agreed to give it a try, but stopped after three or four sessions. Sadly, he didn't return, nor ask to discuss again his initial request for *psychoanalysis*. He died ten years later, still living in his own flat. I think he must have been about 60 years old. Although I was very fond of David and found he made language begin to come alive for me, come to life for me, in a new way, and although I appreciated and respected him as a good and kind person, and as a sort of poet/seer, however distressed and *mad*, I failed to understand deeply and clearly the source of his suffering, or much of his way of articulating his fragmented world of self and others. I feel I let him down, and probably myself down, as his informal therapist. Were we to meet again, I would approach him quite differently. I can't say how, as I'd have to play it by ear, responding to where he was at, responding to his call and opening myself to him more than I did or was able to 35 years ago. David was a very honorable and decent man, indicative of a basic integrity of spirit beyond all the apparent fragmentation and splits. He was bright, creative, and sensitive...

AF: Would you comment on what I've heard so often, "R. D. Laing blamed parents for the madness of children, but his notion of schizophrenogenic families proved to be groundless. Schizophrenia is an inherited disease, that needs pharmacological treatment."

LR: Read the introduction to **Sanity, Madness and the Family**. There isn't any suggestion of blame, nor a reductionist, simplified view of cause and effect. Sadly, the notion of some of us human beings being able to drive others of us crazy, including and especially when we are living in close proximity, and including contexts of sexual, physical and verbal abuse as well as less grossly visible ways of hurting, confusing, bewildering others or driving them to hopelessness, despair... sadly, this is not groundless. It happens all too often. Wake up and take a fresh look at what's going on, without any prejudiced frame or model. "Who is

doing what to whom?" is a very useful question to keep asking.

AF: Just recently, a Professor of Psychiatry at UBC was instructing an intern who was seen in conversation with a patient, "You are not to talk to schizophrenics, they'll just get agitated. We just medicate them, we don't talk to them." Would you comment?

LR: Obscene, absurd, negligent, unethical, crazy, crazy making, despair-o-genic. What a way for any human being to tell others, in his care, to treat others, in their care, whoever and however they are!

AF: I gave up after fifteen years of trying to establish an asylum in Vancouver, when a government mental health chief turned down my application, saying, "Unless there is a psychiatrist and a psychiatric nurse to

enforce that they take their meds, the only way you'll ever get a license is over my dead body!" Would you comment?

LR: His mind and heart – if he's got such, are already dead and deadening. His verdict is ignorant, dogmatic, rigid, and will sadly lead, in the domain he has control over, to the suppression of potentially valuable and creative and openhearted work. His words are also spineless, bigoted and, of course, completely unethical and irresponsible!

Laing's words often come to mind: "The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice. And because we fail to notice that we fail to notice, there is little we can do to change; until we notice how failing to notice shapes our thoughts and deeds."

A Complex Character

by Terrence Levesque

What a fine day it is today, the weather is perfect. I have high hopes that I am going to have a good year. I can surely expect that the summer will be hot and dry. The evaluation of time is a wonderful thing. Where would we be without it? There are those who like to work in the garden. There are those who like to jog. Walking around on a summer day is a pleasant way to spend your time. Once again I will go to the beach. I will mingle with the crowd. I will buy a hotdog from the street vendor. I shall eat ice cream. We do not do great things but we function and live in the everyday world. People have said that if you don't do it, nobody will and that nothing will happen unless you make it happen. I still don't know if they are right or wrong. Someone once said that there are heroes in the seaweed, there are children in the morning, they are leaning out for love and they will lean that way forever. I believe that it's true? Where are we going and why? Many questions are left unanswered. Is there an afterlife when we die? Why is the sky blue? Questions that remain unanswered.

I sit at my desk looking out my window; my world is viewed from a single window. It makes more sense that way. Perhaps today, someone will call. I feel

talkative today. In one of his poems, Dylan Thomas says: that he ran in his heedless way yet he remained in his chains, green and dying. So much for Dylan Thomas. But is there a reason for all the heartache and despair? Regardless of what we do, nature will take its course. Knowing that there are cycles in nature makes us more human. Some of the problem is that we are out of step with nature. I think the human race will continue on with all its good and bad points. I am ever optimistic in this regard. It is very nice not to have to toil for a living. It is nice to have some time to oneself. Every cloud has a silver lining, and the moon is made of blue cheese. Granny taught me well.

Night and day, year after year, the story is the same one. We struggle and strive, we have loss and pain, there is the healing of wounds and the expectation that our existence will be happy.

The journey is a long one. Time heals and changes all things. From my window I see that the sun will set. Tomorrow I will go about my business and it will be just another day. Father Time and Mother Earth may you reign over us now and forevermore.

A Testament To Courage

by D. Paul Strashok

Courage lives in the lion's heart
or in the vibrant heart of a faithful lover,
who would never lie to you
or darken your visage with idle, careless, hurtful words.
Courage has a chance to live in all of us,
for a life lived without courage is no life at all.
A faithful friend
holds courage in a cup, a chalice,
a bond of love.
The work of courage is never done;
there are always new wildernesses of the soul to tame,
new territories to gain,
new fallow ground to be broken.
Courage lives with confidence
and their dwelling-place is strong.
It's pillars are faithfulness and honesty
under a ceiling of charity.
The opportunity for courage
moves on every side
for so many would lose heart
in our society — give up.
But courage is ever-involved.
i would to
drink at the cup of courage
only if it can be shared with others.
Courage crafts it's work well.
it lifts the souls of those it touches.
it's colours are all bold
it's dreams are all enduring.
Courage is a strong craftsman.
This i would say to courage
"Be a bond between me
and those whom i love
that we may work your work and craft your craft."

Hummingbird Wisdom

by Dea Scramstad

So many places to go
with wings that never fly slow
Stopping –
only for a moment
to get that nectar-filled glow
Holding still...
I can feel your wings airflow
Suspend your Breath
can this be real

Hummingbird Wisdom
i think i can feel
so close
& yet so trusting
There you go again

That long-beaked _____ thrusting _____ needle
nectar nipper
Be a sipper

Leave me with a sigh
until
you fly by
somewhere close by

Hummingbird Wisdom
never asks "Why?"

love in the summer rain

by reinhart

gently gently i will touch you
and lay thee down in tall grass
softly i will call to you
and softly i'll respond

hand in hand and side by side
we stroll along the trail
toward a clearing at its end
flanked by great fair woods

in the field wild flowers bloom
the fragrance sweet and pure
the scents of hay and leaf and tree
waft also on the breeze

high in the sky seagulls fly
between the drops of rain
swallows swoop just inches above ground
like acrobats with wings

we come upon a cozy spot
in the middle of the field
where the grass is soft and pliable
and bends for us a bed

we lower ourselves to the ground
as heaven's teardrops fall
and there we shed each other's clothes
with slow deliberate moves

all that grows and breathes and lives
entwined like threads in a tapestry
and the two of us naked in the summer rain
part of nature's potpourri

we touch we kiss we embrace
the water pours upon us
rivulets of rain stream down
our naked clinging bodies

i move upon your body wet
you slide beneath my skin
our love is fluid our love is warm
our love like a tropic ocean storm

time stands still the world dissolves
our hearts and minds expanding
our love consumes all contradiction
as our consciousness explodes

and as we make love in the summer rain
reality melts around us
and we become one with the universe
as we become one with each other

Sacred Institutions

By Oliver Cross

Psychiatric diagnoses are assigned to us for life,
But marriage takes far less commitment
with divorce ending all those but half

In relationships we're told best not to put up with too much
The sunrise, however, comes always
Where's the choice? It looks easy—it's not!

What is sacred if not something that's a fixture in our hearts?
What is marriage when half of them fail?
Pray, what souls remain to serve the truth of love?

What's Fair is A Righteous Fair

by Frank G. Sterle, Jr.

I'm closely related to a tree-planter/bush-worker who, despite his schizophrenia, has worked in this field for at least a decade. Such work, I can see, is grunt labor and grossly unappreciated by society. His hands are chapped all to hell and look like that of a 70-year-old, retired coal miner; yet he takes the lumps like a true player in this field of labor.

Furthermore, the fact is, he may not have to be performing such under-paid, over-labored employment – he partly chose to do so, a decision much of which was to help the environment recover after the razzings of the well-paid tree-cutters in the forestry industry. This relation of mine originally had worked as a top chef in a five-star restaurant, with a fairly decent wage, for about a half-dozen years; however, the stress involved in the field of five-star chef-dom was overwhelming him, and he felt compelled to resign. He now has the relative space and freedom, as well as psychiatric medication, he feels he needs in order to contribute to society and support himself – “I'm not going on [government fiscal] assistance, if I can help it,” he'll say.

So, he's chosen the alternative: he's doing the labor of a grunt with the pay of a low-income earner. It's not fair,

to say the least.

It all reminds me of the mentally challenged paper-recyclers – who work for next to nothing – I came across when I was doing community service. It dawned on me how some people could be rejected fiscally and professionally while performing such a beneficial task for our society and the environment. All the while there are people who labor to free murderers and are respected, with their \$1000 suits and their classy briefcases, as professionals who deserve to earn multi-millions of dollars every year since they worked at school to earn the mostly publicly-funded education. I tell/remind my relation that he's doing for society perhaps one of the most important deeds: planting that which is needed to produce life-sustaining oxygen. Yet he's nonetheless receiving naught but a pauper's treatment when it comes to getting paid.

It's high time, to say the least, that all laborers – despite their psychiatric status – received the recognition and the fair pay for that which they're contributing towards a healthy, viable society; not simply based on how much schooling (subsidized, I might add) that one has received. ■

Understanding The Journey

by Terrence Levesque

The journey of my life has been an experience and it has not been without it's problems. It has been mentally trying and difficult as well as complex and hard to understand. I have withstood the test of time and have persevered. I have gone through many phases in my life, each phase had a beginning and an end, and I have gotten through them all. I have seen births, deaths, marriages, separations, divorces, physical activity, heartbreak, loneliness, isolation, destitution, poverty and much more. I have had my share of joy and sorrow, of pain and suffering

The day begins again and I look back in amazement at my life so far. Brighter days are ahead and I am now with a lighter heart and a more stable mind. Others have walked a similar path and my heart goes out to them. This journey is not mine alone.

You don't live your life in one day, in one week, in one month or one year. It is time – a long time that you have to go through and as you pass this time, you learn the lessons of life along the way. Wisdom and knowledge may eventually be yours, but it will be hard fought and dearly paid for. I have said that life unfolds and many truths and falsehoods are then revealed. There is, of course, the good and the bad, the right and the wrong, truth and lies. We see the strengths and weaknesses in ourselves and others, we learn to navigate and find our direction. Sometimes we lose our way. We journey from birth to death and it is unending. But there are happy times, times when you can take a

(continued on p. 17)

Reading, Writing, Walking, Mentoring

Four Ways to Stay Healthy

by Jim Gifford

When mythologist Joseph Campbell was asked what spiritual exercises he did, his response was, "I Underline!" Like Campbell, I have pursued reading and reflective study as a means of enlightening my soul. Jnana (knowledge) Yoga has been my way.

The broad range of topics I have indulged in has enhanced my outlook on life, give me a positive perspective from which to view my struggles with mental/emotional dis-ease, and has generally been beneficial to my well-being as a whole.

Reading allows me to ingest insights gleaned from various and accomplished thinkers who have written about the issues and problems that plague and are the root causes of so much unbalance.

An extension, or opposite side, of this literary endeavor, is the act of writing, which has always been for me a vocation.

I am reminded that painter Pablo Picasso, before he died, said, "My life has been art therapy.." For myself, creating poetry and other written works has served the same purpose. Although I've never kept a journal, reflecting on my poems and prose over the last thirty plus years, has revealed much to me of my long, and arduous sojourn, telling me a great deal about where I have been and how I got to today.

After my adventures in reading, and before actively writing, I invariably need periods of time to be emptied

of extraneous information, thus leaving kernels intact, along with their companion insights. As an avid walker, I use this awareness activity as a form of meditation.

Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh has written an excellent little book on this practice. For me, it is an opportunity to get out and wander in nature, thus abandoning worldly chatter and dwelling in Silence. For this pastime, I love the word saunter which derives from holy land or sacred journey on Earth. In this respect, nature serves as a vital and renewing mentor for my spirit. It acts as an encourager, uplifting me in authenticity.

Anyone or anything that serves our growth into being who we were truly meant to be is a mentor. Often it is an older person who loves us with open arms and offers the liberating incentive to be ourselves, giving empathy in a non-judgmental attitude. As a people person, I have attracted in individuals who have supported and show direction to me during my years of struggle with bi-polar disorder.

A mentor may be a song, movie, book, or perhaps an animal. In my case, the film "Good Will Hunting", the song "High Hopes", Alan Watts' "The Wisdom of Insecurity", and Emmy the white lab, have been especially influential.

Thus I have engaged in therapeutic options to conventional care, in maintaining psychic health on my voyage of discovery, ■

Quotes from the Roundtable

by M.D. Arthurs

"life is not relative;
it's eternal."

Bookworm

Buddhism without beliefs: A Contemporary Guide to Awakening

By Stephen Batchelor

Riverhead Books, New York, 1997

Reviewed by Andrew Feldmár

This is the most exciting little (120 pages) book I've read in a long time. Reminds me of Vivekananda's tiny book (130 pages), called Karma-Yoga, or Martin Buber's morsel (41 pages), entitled The Way of Man. What do these three books — one Buddhist, one Hindu, & one Hasidic — have in common? Radiant clarity, profound simplicity, and ever-living enlightened inquiry into the nature of the human predicament.

Batchelor's is an existential, therapeutic and agnostic interpretation of Buddhism. He shows that no belief is needed in order to follow the path advocated by the Buddha; he makes evident that it's not necessary to think of the Buddha as a mystic or savior; he emphasizes that a *course of action* is mapped out in Buddhism, not a set or system of beliefs. If you ask me how you could get to the Railway Station, and I give you a map along with instructions, you might take your chance and follow my guidance. The proof of my veracity is in your reaching your goal. If I also tell you that millions have successfully reached their destination for many centuries using the same map, with the same instructions, you might feel safer on the way, and you might not feel alone.

According to Batchelor, the Buddha's awakening wasn't a mystical event: "he spoke of having discovered complete freedom of heart and mind from the compulsion of craving." His path is referred to as the middle, or central path, that avoids both indulgence and mortification, yet leads to the understanding of anguish, the letting go of its origins, and the realization of its cessation. Anyone who follows him also cultivates the path, keeping it clear for others to follow.

Habitual reactions can incapacitate, petrify, and freeze us. Heartfelt, mindful responses allow the life that lives us flow, love, nourish, and move us. In his more recent (2004) book, Living with the Devil, Batchelor writes, "The numbness of alienation gives way to the astonishment of participation... Intimacy is

realized in wholly giving oneself while wholly receiving the gift of the other." My alienation is rooted in numbness to interconnectivity; my habits turn me into a skin-encapsulated automaton, insensitive to the uniqueness of others and the moment-by-moment unfolding of the environment. Gautama held each and every one of us responsible for our own freedom. Fettered with habit patterns, unexamined beliefs, and undigested received notions, we cannot consider ourselves awake.

This agnostic Buddhism is not based on disinterest but "a passionate recognition that *I do not know*." Batchelor's agnostic skepticism is primarily directed at the notions of karma and rebirth. The Buddha exhorted us not to cling to any views, including those of his teaching, and to investigate reality for ourselves. The whip and carrot implied by karma and rebirth, that how you conduct yourself now will determine your fortune in lives to come, are not necessary for developing and embracing a viable ethics. "Ethical integrity is not moral certainty," Batchelor notes. "When we are faced with the unprecedented and unrepeatable complexities of this moment, the question is not 'What is the right thing to do?' but 'What is the compassionate thing to do?' This question can be approached with integrity but not with certainty. Batchelor offers an ethics of empathy rather than a metaphysics of fear and hope. In accepting that every action is a risk, integrity embraces the fallibility that certainty disdainfully eschews." Our responsibility rests in our freedom: "It empowers us to embrace the ambiguity of a present that is simultaneously tied to an irrevocable past and free for an undetermined future."

Consider the question, "Since death alone is certain and the time of death uncertain, what should I do?" Death here is not just my own death, but also the

(continued page over)

death of my loved ones, of my friends, of my enemies, of my possessions, of my world. This again is a very pragmatic question, a question of strategy, a question not of dogma or belief, but of preference, of desire. The answer could range from "Kill myself immediately!" to "Partake in the sacrament of every living moment, fully, with all my mind and all my heart!"

We are distracted much of the time. Distraction is a state of unawareness. Often, we "are reliving an edited version of the past, planning an uncertain future, or indulging in being elsewhere. Or running on automatic pilot, without being conscious at all." We can *resolve* to become mindful. After R. D. Laing's death I had a chance to glance through some of his unpublished writings. In a journal, he unambiguously stated that in the lifetime of a human being, the decision whether or not to undertake the practice of meditation, seemed to him to be by far the most important decision to be made. There is no conversion implied here, no "desperate urge to be good, but an ongoing, heartfelt reflection on priorities, values, and purpose."

All things and experiences, pain as well as joy, emerge from and fade back into an unbroken flow of conditions. I emerged in my mother's fallopian tube, and I will fade away upon my death, which approaches even as I write. So, who am I? Batchelor asks, "So what are we but the story we keep repeating, editing, censoring, and embellishing in our heads?" He notes, "There is nothing thinglike about me at all. I am more like an unfolding narrative... Instead of taking ourselves so seriously, we discover the playful irony of a story that has never been told in quite this way before."

There are times when one can feel that life is an endless chore, and one can become a burden to oneself. To live a joyless existence requires one to cultivate an attitude of reluctance and resistance, a hatred of reality, a craving for life to be other than it is. In our freedom we can choose to cultivate a garden of delights and enjoyment. It takes dedication and perseverance to learn to play music, to sing, to garden, to cook, to practice the art of conversation. It takes practice to develop courage, to build nourishing friendships, to appreciate poetry, art, and philosophy. "The art of dharma practice requires commitment, technical accomplishment, and imagination. As with all arts, we will fail to realize its full potential if any of these three is lacking," writes Batchelor.

Batchelor is a former monk in the Tibetan and Zen traditions, but by now he seems to have freed himself of traditional dogmas, having distilled what is essential in Buddhism: a strong skepticism about the meaning of one's experience, yet a devoted attentiveness to one's experience. He takes seriously the Buddha's last admonition to his disciples, "Be a lamp unto yourself!" He lectures and conducts meditation retreats worldwide, and is a contributing editor of the magazine *Tricycle*. He lives in France with his wife.

Batchelor makes enlightenment, or awakening, as he prefers to call it, accessible, not the unattainable privilege of an elite. Freedom, compassion and awareness are not esoteric, mystical gifts that are all but impossible to attain. This book is a breath of fresh air, a welcome guide in a terrain that many find foreboding. ■

Quotes from the Roundtable

by M.D. Arthurs

"when nothing else makes any sense anymore
two things that remain
are love and forgiveness."

Sea Monsters

(continued from p. 2)

many teachers in various disciplines: music, martial arts, orthomolecular medicine, nutrition, psychology, acupuncture, massage, physiotherapy and meditation. Concluding that madness doesn't exist and that there's nothing to worry about did not come out of the blue. It was well considered and took a long time to realize. It was based on many years of continued and guided practice by the best of these teachers. It was not only their courses, nor the particular disciplines, but the manner of their teaching and the hope that their respective practices imply.

My saying that madness is superstition does not make it true. It is not an intellectual or logical argument designed to stand for all time. It is a rhetorical statement.

I know that I believe in myself no matter what. Mine is a daily practice, a regular training. No matter how difficult my choices become or what others may say they think of me I choose what I need to believe in myself.

Something changed. My life is beautiful now.

What I do not know, and what will be answered in the second half of my life, is whether more people will believe in me when I believe in me. So far I have met so many people willing to believe in me as long as they believe that fundamentally, at heart, I don't believe in myself.

With all my experience as a mental patient, which I cannot put on a resume, I know nothing of mental illness. I know how I escaped the clutches of psychiatry. I know what I did to become well. I know that the act of becoming well jeopardized the premise and proof of my psychiatric diagnosis. I know who helped and supported me. I know that I don't control my health. In part it depends on the context in which we live and breathe. I know the world does not need to be changed for the better. I know that it needs to be left alone. I know that I had to give up more than I wanted for my beliefs. I know that I am still growing. I have nothing to share, however, about how to live with a mental illness or a psychiatric diagnosis—no more than I can tell you how to train a sea monster. There are no rules for that. ■

Understanding The Journey

(continued from p. 13)

break. There are good times along the way. Along with the daily struggle of life, there are great questions and answers to try and understand. We do our best in handling them. Family bonds are strong in some cases, while in others they are weak or non-existent, I try to remain calm, cool and collected in my daily life and activities. It is not always so easy to do.

The journey is a long one, that's for sure. Right or wrong, good or bad, we must carry on in order to live a full life. Expectations are too high in some cases and many of us find ourselves quickly coming down to earth. The river runs to the sea, the sun rises and sets. Ashes to ashes and dust to dust. Life is calling me, and now I must run. ■

Quotes from the Roundtable

by M.D. Arthurs

"the sweetest thing about writing
is the last period."

Websites of Interest to Consumers/Survivors/Ex-Mental Patients

(This list is not intended to be comprehensive or exhaustive, and has left out many well-known sites that are widely available and easily accessible from local directories. This entire page in separate e-form for easy clickability will be sent upon request from: duhring@shaw.ca — B.F.)

Organizations (General)

www.mind.org.uk www.power2u.org www.mhselfhelp.org www.wnusp.org www.tao.ca/~pact
www.u-kan.co.uk www.mentalhealth.com www.icspp.org www.oikos.org www.icomm.ca/csinfo
www.aapd-dc.org www.mindfreedom.org www.geocities.com www.mdri.org www.breggin.com
www.cvdinfolbase.ca/mh-atlas/ www.szasz.com www.antipsychiatry.org www.peoplewho.org
www.walnet.org/llf www.mentalhealth.org.uk www.fsu.edu/~trauma/ip.html www.radpsynet.org
www.contac.org www.buildfreedom.com/ft/psychiatric_survivors.htm www.samhsa.gov
www.nucknfuts.com/index.php www.cam.org www.lino.com/~raiddat <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antipsychiatry> <http://aix1.uottawa.ca/~nstaman/alternatives/OVNVinternational.htm>

Advocacy and Activism

www.mental-health-matters.com/activist.html www.m-power.org www.narpa.org
www.protectionandadvocacy.com www.cchr.org www.popan.org.uk www.advocatweb.com
www.gamian-europe.com www.hri.ca www.hrweb.org www.iahf.com www.benzo.org.uk/prawi.htm
<http://members.aol.com/jimhofw/jimho.htm>

Alternatives

www.talkingcure.com/index.asp www.alternativementalhealth.com www.medsfree.com www.mosher-soteria.com
www.transtherapy.org www.patchadams.org www.healthfreedommovement.com
www.weglaufhaus.de www.elcollie.com www.stopshrinks.org www.lstpm.org
www.emotiosinbalance.com www.the-bright-side.org/site/thebrightside/ www.doctoryourself.com
www.emotionsanonymous.org www.projectresilience.com www.bu.edu/cpr/rr/alternative/
www.religiousfreedom.org www.wildestcolts.com <http://stopbadtherapy.com> <http://nht.amhll.blogspot.com> <http://essence-euro.org/jasp/> <http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/erthworks/nonmain.htm>

Drug Information

www.larsmartensson.com www.drugs-and-medications.com www.drugawareness.org
www.outlookcities.com/psych/ www.canadiandimension.mb.ca/v35/v35_5ab.htm#three www.nmsis.org
www.antidepressantsfacts.com www.socialaudit.org.uk/1.4.html www.chemsense.com
www.prozactruth.com www.quitpaxil.org www.talkingcure.com/archive/drugs.htm www.truehope.com
www.astrocyte-design.com/pseudoscience/index.html <http://members.fortunecity.com/siriusw/Biochemical-Imbalance.htm> <http://groups.msn.com/SIDEEFFECTS> www.benzo.org.uk

Children & Youth

www.voice4kids.org www.aspire.us www.hearmyvoice.org www.ritalindeath.com www.p-a-r.org
www.adhdfraud.org

Tardive Dyskinesia/Dystonia

www.power2u.org/selfhlep/tardive.html www.wemove.org www.dystonia-support.org www.dystonia-foundation.org
www.iatrogenic.org/index.html www.breggin.com/tardivedysk.html
www.caromont.org/16036.cfm www.emedicine.com/neuro/topic362.htm www.drugdigest.org/DD/Articles/News/0.10141,513136.00.html www.psyweb.com/Diction/tardived.html www.thebody.com/pinf/phenos.html
www.reglan-lawsuit.com www.ninds.nih.gov/healthandmedical/disorders/tardivedoc.htm www.easyweb.easynet.co.uk/simplpsych/tardive.html

Electroshock

www.ect.org www.banshock.org www.idiom.com/~drjohn/review.html <http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/bmj;326/7403/1363>

Bulletin Board

The Self-Help Resource Association of B.C. (SHRA) conducts regular Facilitator Training Workshops for Self-Help and Mutual Aid Support Groups. They also publish a quarterly newsletter and the [Directory of Self-Help/Support Groups in Greater Vancouver](#) with approximately 600 listings, many of them dealing with mental health. The latest edition (2004-2005) of the [Directory](#) is now available for \$12.00 or \$10.00 at the office if you drop by and pick it up. SHRA is located at Suite 306 – 1212 West Broadway, Van. B.C. V6H 3V1. Tel: 604-733-6186. Fax: 604- 730-1015. www.vcn.bc.ca/shra

The Alternative & Integrative Medical Society (AIMS) at UBC publishes the free [AIMS Wellness Directory: Lower Mainland Guide to Complementary Health](#). It contains approximately 250 paid and many unpaid listings dealing with a broad spectrum of mental, physical, and spiritual aspects of healing. For a [Directory](#) and/or more info. about the Society, phone 604-822-7604. Fax: 604-822-2495. E-mail info@aims.ubc.ca. Web: www.aims.ubc.ca. AIMS, University of British Columbia, Box 81 – 6138 SUB Boulevard, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z1. Office: B80A Woodward Building, UBC.

Vancouver/Richmond Mental Health Network sponsors many self-help groups including a Women's Circle. Their address is #109 - 96 E. Broadway, Vancouver, B.C., V5T 4N9 and the Co-ordinator of the Network may be reached at 604-733-5570.

Named after Vincent van Gough's homeopathic doctor, Paul Gachet, **Gallery Gachet** works to provide a safe, borderless place of artistic expression. It strives to be a place of healing and a center of artistic excellence. Founded in 1994 we provide opportunities to exhibit, perform, publish and sell work and to offer a place for support and community. We aim to use the canvas of the outside world to educate and demystify the public on issues related to mental health and abuse.

Websites of Interest to Consumers/Survivors/Ex-Mental Patients (continued from previous page)

Forced Treatment

www.freedom-center.org www.namisc.org/newsletters/August01/MindAid.htm www.hri/doccentre/docs/gosden.shtml www.garynull.com/issues/Psych/Index.htm www.psychlaws.org www.kqed.org/w/hope/involuntarytreatment.html

Mental Health Law

www.bazelon.org www.ac.wvu.edu/~knecht/law.htm www.psych.org/public_info/insanity.cfm www.forensic-psych.com/pubs/pubADment.html www.psychlaws.org www.imhl.com www.ialmh.org www.justiceseekers.com www.safe-trak.com/main/competencyl.htm www.abanet.org/disability/sites.html www.experts.com www.expertpages.com/psychiatry-psychology.htm www.psych.org/advocacy-policy/leg_res/apa_testimony/testimonysub-crimeposted91800.cfm www.ilppp.virginia.edu/ www.law.cornell.edu/topics/mental_health.html www.helpforparents.net/LegalResources/1LegalResources.htm

History of Mental Health Care

www.psychiatricsurvivorsarchives.com www.webcom.com/thrive/schizo/kdarch.html www.cwu.edu/~warren/addenda.html www.epub.org.br/cm/n02/historia/psicocirg_i.htm

Online Publications

www.mentalmagazine.co.uk <http://members.aol.com/asylumpub> <http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~expert/psychnews/>



1900 Louisiana

SORA