

# In A Nutshell

Autumn 2005

## It's A Dog Eat Dog World

by Oliver Cross

One who binds themselves to Joy,  
Does the winged life destroy;  
One who kisses the Joy as it flies,  
Lives in Eternity's sunrise.

—William Blake

What is business? To break down the word: busy-ness. "Time is money." Implication: doing rather than being. In time and space, *doing* places more emphasis or attention on space while *being* tends to bring one's focus into time.

In business, quantitative measures are easier to manage and therefore preferred. Scientific research may also be divided into quantitative and qualitative categories, with quantitative research—the more "objective" of the two—generally valued and respected more highly.

Quantitative measures alone are not normal. Corporations have essentially the same legal rights as individuals. Thus, a healthy corporation will exhibit some of the same characteristics as healthy individuals. Life is about balance.

The over-emphasis of quantitative measures opens the door to all kinds of unethical practices in business: business without heart; business that loses itself to greed, betrayal, lies and neglect.

Unfortunately, many products that work aren't profitable in today's terms. A greedy company over the short term can gobble up a healthier competitor. When something breaks, often it needs to be replaced. Replacement costs money, empowering the company that sold the product that broke.

If a business can sell something that customers or consumers will always need, why offer a better solution, one that perhaps addresses a need once and for all? Anybody can do that: anybody can build something that doesn't work. Without information, we may all be sold on something that doesn't work when better solutions exist. We should all be open to better ways of doing things. That's progress.

Bad business is antithetical to teaching and learning. Can business that is healthy but not as profitable as unhealthy business afford a large marketing or advertising budget? No. Healthy business may be about attraction rather than promotion. If a company has a good product, people will buy it and word of mouth is a powerful thing.

Business requires people who are talented and passionate about producing good product, but it also needs people at the executive level willing to make potentially difficult business decisions focusing on a business

(continued page over)

### In This Issue:

It's A Dog Eat Dog World by Oliver C.....	front page, 2,
Win One for the Losers by S. Roddan .....	3
Man Bites Black Dogs by Scott Dixon .....	4
And Broken Bones to Teach by D. P. Strashok.....	5
Then and Now by Terrence Levesque .....	6
Cynicism by Frank G. Sterle, Jr.....	7
A New Reality by Terrence Levesque.....	8
Minute Particulars by A. Feldmár .....	8,9,10
It's Up To You by Jim Gifford.....	10
Stillness Rebirths into Life by Dea Scramstad.....	11
Two Poems by Frank G. Sterle Jr. ....	12, 13
Old Man by Ben Nuttall-Smith .....	14
Bookworm by Andrew Feldmár.....	15, 16
Media, Movies and Madness by M. Baker .....	17, 18
The Beginning and End of Ziggy's War by reinhart .....	18 -22
Bulletin Board .....	23
Drawing by reinhart .....	back page

# Win One for the Losers

by Sam Roddan

I've always been a dud at sports. As a lad I spent most of my time sitting on the bench. I never won a race or scored a touchdown. I had plenty of heart but was poor on the finish.

In the high school track meet of 1932 at Brockton Point Oval in Vancouver, I dropped the baton in the 440 relay. Later I peaked too soon and came last in the 800.

Today I have no collection of scrapbooks or faded clippings to show off to my grandchildren. No cups on the mantelpiece. No memory of podium tears to remember. And no moments of glory to relive as the fires burn low in the old furnace.

Fortunately, my ineptitude in sports sharpened my sympathies for the loser. I'm always eager to cheer on the underdog, the also-ran, the washout and the flop, the flash-in-the-pan, the little guy down for the count.

Perhaps this concern for the loser would explain my appreciation for the old-fashioned poetry of John Masefield: *Theirs be the music, the color, the glory, the gold; Mine be a handful of ashes, a mouthful of mold.*

Canada is a young country. We're still proving ourselves, forever adding up our spoils, cups, trophies, keeping track of the gold.

For my part I find it difficult to remember what country took the mile at Rome, or the high jump in Berlin back in '36. Or the Stanley Cup in '62. Or how many golds we picked up at Munich or at Los Angeles in '84. And what year did the great Harry Jerome bid us all farewell?

Today I find myself confused at our obsession with millisecond differentials, the underworld of steroids, the new theology of sportsmanship and hype.

Since all spoils go to the victors, only crumbs are left for the losers. No endorsements, no re-establishment credits, no shiny bonuses for them,

Losers are legion.

We all want to soar with the winner, drive through to the finish. Perhaps the time has come to pause, share the anguish of the also-rans, a great host of them, falling, going down, biting the bitter ice and snow.

## Quotes from the Roundtable

by M.D. Arthurs

"in the world of mortals  
our sins are what, for the most  
part, define us as  
personalities and individuals."

# Man Bites Black Dogs - News Briefs From All Over

Compiled by Scott Dixon

## Please Call Back During Business Hours

An attempt by the Prince Edward Island government to restrict the hours of the province's crisis line ended just 24 hours after the cutback was announced.

With the aim of saving \$30,000 a year, the government proposed keeping the crisis line open only from 9AM - 5PM on weekdays. There was to be no service at night or on weekends.

The PEI Medical Association denounced the proposed cutback as 'absurd.'

CNN anchor Jack Cafferty mocked the province by telling viewers 'everyone knows crises usually happen at noon on Tuesdays.'

## War of the Words

"Tom Cruise may be a halfway decent actor, but when he starts to play doctor, he is being totally irresponsible." - Dr. Steven Sharfstein, president of the American Psychiatric Association on the NBC Today Show.

In an earlier appearance on the show, Cruise - a member of the Church of Scientology - condemned actress Brooke Shields for taking the antidepressant Paxil to combat postpartum depression. Cruise said, "These drugs are dangerous. When you talk about postpartum depression, you can take people today, women, and what you do is use vitamins." He added that what antidepressants do "is mask the problem. They're mind-altering antipsychotic drugs." (In another interview, Cruise said, "There's no such thing as a chemical imbalance.")

As for Ms. Shields, she wrote an article in the New York Times in which she described the Cruise statements as a "ridiculous rant."

## Welcome to Bedlam, Mass

Nearly one in four inmates in Massachusetts' prisons suffers from some form of mental illness, ranging from mild depression to debilitating diseases such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. At one women's prison, one of every two inmates has been diagnosed with a mental illness. The statistics come from a review of prison records by the Metro West Daily News.

In Massachusetts, as in other states, officials for years have struggled with questions of how to punish people with mental illness for the crimes they commit, yet still ensure they receive the services they need - and how to ensure they continue to get those services after their release.

## Paint It Black

Appearing on CBS, writer Bebe Moore Campbell said the stigma of mental illness is "more keenly felt" in the African American community.

"No one wants to say, 'I'm not in control of my mind,'" she explains, "For African-Americans and other people of color, it's almost like a double whammy because we're stigmatized by virtue of the color of our skin. We don't want to say that there's something else that deems us less. So we go into denial. "The effects of not getting help, of being in denial, are devastating, because in a community that's already disproportionately represented in prison, people who walk around with untreated mental illnesses, wind up with the straight 'go to jail' card."

In her new novel - "72 Hour Hold" - Miller tells the story of a mother dealing with her teen daughter's bipolar mental illness.

# And Broken Bones to Teach

by D. Paul Strashok

My dad, William, was sitting in the living room of our family home in East Crestwood, Edmonton. He was reading his afternoon newspaper, as he was wont to do after a hard day on the job. (I was sitting nearby, probably reading the Bible or some spiritual book, trying diligently to find the meaning of some passage or other in the exhaustive concordance I kept nearby). My dad usually didn't speak much when he was reading his paper, but today he spoke to me and said "I see that the Legislative Grounds are going to be closed for construction over the summer while they redo the whole area." I thought little of this unusual sharing of information from the Edmonton Journal. Little did I know that a matter of prophetic significance was involved.

A few weeks later, towards the end of the summer, I was returning to Edmonton after a short trip to Vancouver. After arriving at the Bus Depot downtown, I went up to confront the street prophet with whom I did have a longtime association, while living in Edmonton. I declared to him that he was in error concerning some of his teachings (although I had been in submission to his ministry for number of years). I walked away in a huff.

At the same time, I was trying to live without wearing my eyeglasses and I thought that the pleasant shrubbery around the Legislative Grounds near 95<sup>th</sup> Ave. and the High Level Bridge would be 'pleasant to the eyes' and aid in my healing, totally forgetting the word that my Dad had spoken.

As I neared the grounds, there were some tall green trees, but walking down one street, I found it blocked off due to construction, so I turned back and headed for the next street. It, too, was blocked off. By the time I got to the third street and found it blocked off, I was feeling rather exasperated, so I decided that, along with the help of my God I was going to 'leap over a wall', the construction fence surrounding the area that was being improved.

The fence was about eight feet high and, in my street shoes, I managed to clamber up the outside to the top. Hunched down at the top of the fence, I wondered what was the best way to get down the other side. I decide that one jump should do it. What I didn't know was that beneath the gravel below was solid concrete. I came down on the left heel of my shoe directly on the concrete, my whole weight landing on that foot. I felt something snap in my ankle.

There I was, trapped in a construction enclosure with a broken ankle as night began to fall. All the workers were gone and there was no one around for city blocks. I decide not to cry out for help, but that somehow I would make my way out. I found a ladder and managed to lean it up against the fence and climb up to the top. Somehow I managed to get down the other side. Hopping on one good leg I made my way up two blocks, stopping to read my small copy of the Christian sacred scriptures and turned directly to the passage in Hebrews chapter 11 where it spoke of those who endured through trial. Hebrews Chapter 11 (KJV):

36 And others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth.

39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

It was at that time that I received the revelation that not all the heroes of the faith had mighty deliverances (such as Daniel in the lions den), but that some had to endure unto death – enduring faith as opposed to delivering faith.

Somehow, I made it up to a government building and buzzed at the door. A Commissionaire answered and I called my dad to come and pick me up. Well, much madness and mayhem ensued when I arrived back at the family home. I was still believing the Almighty for a miracle, but ended up having to go into the hospital for an operation to have steel pins place in my ankle and reconnect the sheared-off part of my anklebone that was damaged. I had never had a major operation since having had my tonsils taken out at the age of five. As I was wheeled into the ante-room for the operating room, I prayed our

(continued page over)

Lord's prayer. As the attendant physician began to put me under the anesthetic, He said "Don't worry, we have all the techniques of modern science to help you". I replied, "I'm not trusting in that, I'm trusting in God". After I came too from the anesthetic, all I remembered was a vision that it was the Risen Messiah Himself standing over me who had done the operation. All glory be to Him!

It turned out that I had to wear a cast for what was to be for seven months after the operation.

Nevertheless through the prayers and intercessions of many spiritual persons, the cast was only on for seven weeks, after which it was removed, and, about a year later, the pins were removed and I made a complete recovery. Nevertheless, some hard lessons were learned, including paying more attention to the words of my natural father and being subject to spiritual authority. Lessons that, I hope by this time, have been fully ingested and turned into living truth in my inward being. ■

## Then and Now

by Terrence Levesque

Vancouver was always a vibrant city as I recall. Today, although there is a lot of traffic in the street, the city is quieter, at least for me. In the old days, there were great crowds of people everywhere. This is not so today. On the back streets of Vancouver there are few people moving about. It is a peaceful setting that I live in. I cannot speak for other places because I have not been there.

Vancouver is one of the cities in the world. It is the city in which I live. There has been a lot of problems with the way our system works and these problems, I believe, are finally being addressed.

The way it works is far from perfect, yet we are all managing to get by and to survive. To be able to pursue your interests without too much interference is a result of living a democratic way of life.

Once we have learned something of how our system works we are then free to enrich our inner being. We are free to turn our attention to other matters. We can spend more time doing what we want to. We are fortunate to have many things that other people in other countries do not have.

We have all the amenities to make our lives better and more worthwhile. We must learn to choose between that which is bad for us and that which will do us some good. I know that adjusting to the social changes in our world is not easy.

It is hard sometimes to keep our balance and to see things correctly. As time goes by and we get older, we understand things better and keeping our balance is easier to do. In daily life, people have different problems. The stresses and strains on us as individuals is hard to avoid.

In any event, we must keep our minds open and active and we must try to keep up with what is happening in the world and in the world around us. It is important to keep the present time clearly before you, so that you are able to move forward with your life.

It is not necessary that we are successful in life. Success and failure should not be a part of the equation. Our goal is to live a full life, to carry on and make our way in the world. If we can do this, then our lives have been worthwhile. ■

## Quotes from the Roundtable

by M.D. Arthurs

"if I could tell you  
what my poems mean,  
i would have no need  
to write them in the first place."

# Cynicism For Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

by Frank G. Sterle, Jr.

I'd fess up to being a chronic cynic if it were not for all of those who dislike me getting pleasure out of my cynicism. Hmmmm, perhaps I shouldn't dare say that. It seems that cynicism and paranoia are often confused with one another. But how I know that I'm a cynic (though admittedly a little paranoid and neurotic as a result of my cynicism), I'm more a negative person than some other person who believes that, for example, the government is spying on him/her.

My late father used to be a cynically orientated person (hmmmm, I wonder where I got my tormentous habit), thinking that almost everything can and likely will go wrong. A real parade was my father. However, on his defense, he tried to do what he believed was best for his family: he didn't smoke, take drugs or drink alcohol (except on the very-rare occasion on which he'd savour a glass of wine).

But regardless of how I may have acquired my cynicism, what, you might ask, are my cynical attributes?

Well, let me relate but two examples.

First, my greatest cynicism(s) is reserved for our public bus-service system. I have a Murphy's Law type perspective of our bus system. It goes as such: if I get to the bus stop on time, the bus will have come early; and if I arrive at the bus stop late, the bus will have come on time (though a rarity, anyways); and if I get to the bus stop early, the bus will then come late — if at all. And while I travel on the buses, it drives me nuts having to pass through the traffic lights. I simply hate it when the bus has to stop for opposing traffic: it delays my arrival, it causes bus-part wear-and-tear and creates stop-and-go fuel-burning pollution, all of which would otherwise not occur if that damn light would just stay green long enough for the bus to pass through. I can't help myself. Riding the bus, I'm almost always looking at the approaching traffic-light as my bus nears. If it's green, I almost hold my breath in anticipation that the light will go yellow at the last minute and the bus driver will feel compelled to prove to everyone his/her stop-on-a-dime breaking talents and stop the mechanical beast.

Secondly, when money is owed a family member by an external source, I almost always assume that the owing party will not pay or at least do their best to not pay. It's quite frustrating. And for some reason, I don't fear that I will not get paid. Go figure, eh?

Thirdly, I learned the hard way to not always assume a scheme is being pulled over one's eyes. A poetry publisher's letters would come to me saying that a poem that I sent them or posted onto their website was chosen for print-publication. Not taking them seriously, I'd toss out the proof-copy of my poem that included the statement that I should correct any discrepancies. I did no such thing. The next thing I knew, I was receiving letters stating that I had indeed had my poems published as was foretold me. The problem was, there were some errors in the poems print-published — some were serious errors — errors that I had a chance to correct had I not assumed the worst (i.e., that the poems would never be published unless I agreed to buy the book in which the poem was to be printed). I was wrong

And what, you may ask, do I tell myself when matters go right, as they were supposed to, as they usually do; in other words, how do I deal with my negative mind when my worries were all for nothing, as they usually are — whether they involve money owed to my family members or a bus system that usually functions adequately.

Well, I simply put that positive majority into that filing-drawer envelope titled: "Oh, well, things went right. But there'll be a next time ..."

[www.mentalhealthconsumer.net/FrankGSterleJr](http://www.mentalhealthconsumer.net/FrankGSterleJr)

# A New Reality

by Terrence Levesque

Gone are the days of wine and roses. Now it is beer and cigarettes and a whole lot of coffee. These days I am in a completely different frame of mind. I have forgotten many things of the past. I try hard to keep my mind focused on the present time, to have a positive attitude and to be ready for the things to come.

I know that history is a great weight and I try not to let it get me depressed. Today, these times are completely different in character for me.

I see and feel a dying in the world. Perhaps it is the beginning of a rebirth in the world. I would be the last to know. But as I watch television, listen to the radio and read the newspaper, I see that this old world is still turning and it is carrying on. I don't know where we are going. I can't see into the future.

I meet for coffee and conversation with a close friend and we discuss the aspects of our world. These days I am living a bohemian lifestyle and existence. I have, in a way, gotten used to it. I have little money and am just barely getting by.

I am not interested in sports anymore and am sad to see that a lot of the old actors and actresses have now gone. The road ahead will be challenging. I am

sure, and I hope I can find the strength and the will to continue. But never mind, many problems in my life have now been resolved.

I am in a good frame of mind and am seeing things clearly. I look forward to this new reality. It has now dawned on me that we are alone in the world and that I am now seeing things from the perspective of my manhood. All the childish things are no more.

At fifty-eight I feel that I am too old to marry and so I remain a bachelor. I have a head of gray hair and have all but retired. But the days are pleasant and the spring is coming. Another year is upon us.

I have been out of school for many years now and I have little time to spend with theories and concepts. I am out in the world, like it or not.

I am old enough to have seen great change take place in the world and I look upon it with a sober eye. I can still see things clearly and, in my world, things make sense. It is 2005, a precious moment in time. There is night and day, time, this earth, and the joy of friendships, and I will proceed with my life the best way I know how. ■

## Minute Particulars

by Andrew Feldmár

In September, this year, I'm scheduled to give two large public talks in Budapest, Hungary. Each occasion could easily draw over 500 people to sit in the audience. I've done this sort of extravaganza before. Facing a crowd, the question that forces itself into the foreground of my mind is, "What is worthwhile to say?" What would, could make a difference that might compensate people for making the effort to attend?

What have been my own most liberating, most significant discoveries, what insights gained do I treasure most? What has my own experience taught me? I figure that I cannot miss the mark by much if I talk about what has made a difference to me personally.

Candor is best, because I will speak the truth for at least one human being, myself, taking a chance that my truth won't be irrelevant or simpleminded or commonplace for others.

I remember thinking, when I was little, holding on to my mother's hand as she dragged me along the street at *her* speed so that my feet would only occasionally touch the ground, that when I grow up, I won't have to tolerate *anybody* rushing me. Knowing and guarding my pace has become an important and constant battle in the service of maintaining my inner peace. The concept of *autorhythmia* applies not just to the pacing that is just right for me, but also to my own idiosyn-

cratic patterns of sleeping/waking, eating/fastening, working/resting, socializing/solitude, etc. Relaxation doesn't mean being limp, inert and horizontal. Rather, it is the state of being nobody-but-myself unabashedly. Going at my speed, not slower, not faster; exerting just as much effort as I want, not straining, not slacking off; finding my very own answer to the question, "Between *everything* and *nothing*, what's the *something* that's enough?" I have realized that resistance is the secret of joy. Resistance, to anyone or anything, internal or external, that would oppress me; that would diminish my freedom; that would put pressure on me to be somebody-other-than-myself. And I have also learned that you cannot fight for your freedom once-and-for-all. You have to be prepared to fight at any moment, all the way to the grave. Someone might come along at any second and try to deprive you of your freedom. So, I learned to love fighting, since living seems saturated with such struggles: hating to have to wrestle for my freedom would translate into hating being alive. Now, I can hardly wait for somebody to try to control me, so I could let him/her have it!

Another discovery I have made is that I need to know who is my friend and who is my enemy. It may be foolish to lie to a friend, and it may be equally foolish to tell the truth to an enemy. For some time I didn't understand why I lied to my mother when I was a teenager. She thought I lied because I was bad, incorrigible in fact. It took me until I was in my thirties when I figured out that I lied because I didn't think that my truth was good enough for her. I lied to her because she wasn't my friend. Any truth I gave her, she used to control me, she used against me. A friend would have used candid information to love me better, to make things easier for me. I can now understand my mother's concern, worry, responsibility; I wished then that she could have trusted me, that she could have had faith in my ability to learn from my mistakes. Even now, if ever I am tempted to lie to someone, I ask myself why I consider him/her my enemy. Many people I know live double lives: one for show, for prestige, for family, and one for themselves, hidden, secret, potentially shameful. Our desires have been sorted into desirable, acceptable desires, and unacceptable, shameful, undesirable desires. Many people identify with their secret desires, and consider themselves depraved, bad, sick, or crazy. Their above-board life becomes a tiresome theater where they work for praise, gain, and applause. The phrase *coming out of the closet* signals a courageous or foolhardy moment, when one decides to leave the stage and to reveal one's secret life, for better or worse. When Allen Ginsberg in 1956 published *Howl*, he *came out*: "Like when I wrote *Howl* I didn't expect to publish it. I was concerned about my father seeing all that about

cocksucking. That was the source of the pressure - my father's disapproval. It took me a while to get over that before I realized that it didn't make any difference." In the same interview, Ginsberg says, "Rely on your feelings and trust your feelings. I think a lot of homosexual conflict comes from internalizing society's distrust of your loves, finally doubting your own loves, and therefore not being able to act on them. I also think it's important to accept rejection because the more you learn to accept rejection, the more you have a chance of getting laid, of scoring, both for heart and for cock. The more you open yourself up and give yourself, continuously without rancour, and accept rejection from people who are either too timid or are afraid socially, or who just don't want you . . . the more open you'll be to your feelings, the more you'll communicate, the more likely you'll just connect."

Which reminds me of another personal discovery I made in my thirties. I was born into a family. Just as I couldn't choose the historical moment or the geographical location of my birth, I also had no choice about the womb that would carry me to term. For better or worse, I learned to adapt to, make do with, endure, enjoy my family. For a child it's impossible to flee its family of origin; searching for more loving parents than one has been dealt, is not an option. Leaving home during or after one's adolescence has the great advantage of being able to switch one's major survival strategy from *enduring* one's given environment to *searching* for people and places that suit one. As Ginsberg observed, one can afford rejection or refusal, because one can just go on searching!

I think that unhappiness is caused by powerlessness. After 36 years of practicing psychotherapy I have come to the conclusion that most people suffer because of ethical and/or political difficulties in their lives, not because of psychological or psychiatric problems. We may habitually allow ourselves to be treated badly, or we may habitually treat others badly. We may habitually let any kind of personal power to do what we want and not what we don't, slip through our fingers. We may habitually live in survival mode, when in fact we could just live. War may be over yet we are not convinced that it is safe to leave the bunker that saved our lives. We may allow others to position themselves above us in a hierarchy, and we may position ourselves above others. Now that's not a bad strategy in an emergency, on a bomber airplane trying to land safely with one wing on fire and a bullet-hole

(continued page over)



in the fuel tank. The crew has to act as one, there is no room for doubt or questioning authority. Fortunately, some of the time, we live, or could live in peace which allows for anarchy, both experiential and epistemological. There is room for living in this world, experiencing this world, in an infinite variety of ways, all of them *legitimate*. The only thing I'd like agreement on has to do with the consequences of our actions. How I know what I know, or think that I know, how I make sense of situations and what my experiences are, all this is nobody's business. But my actions can interfere with others. I don't want to transgress, trespass, and I don't want others to bully me.

I am left with this eternal problem of bullying. What to do about bullies? This plagued me already in

grade school; I'm plagued by it now. What does *love* do when it meets *evil*? One of the ancient theological conundrums. Turn the other cheek? Work out, practice, until I become like one of the Japanese sword masters were, the teachers of the Samurai? They never carried any weapons, but when attacked, they could skillfully disarm their assailant, and kill him with his very own weapon. What to do with Hitler and the Germans? Bush and the Americans? And all the little Hitlers, and little Bushes, who lurk within and without?

One needs the courage of lions. Fortunately, courage is not a character trait; it's not necessarily determined genetically. Every day, in every way, I can practice courage.

## It's Up To You

by Jim Gifford

In the mental health consumer community, there is much in vogue discussion about how society stigmatizes those who have suffered breakdowns. The talk is that people in general unjustly and ignorantly fear us as potential threats to their well-being.

Although I understand and appreciate this viewpoint, I do not wholeheartedly accept this way of thinking.

I was raised in a family of positive thinkers. In adulthood, despite years in and out of asylums, and the fact I remain under therapy and take medications, I see myself as a whole person and am, for the most part, upbeat by nature. I have even discovered 'possibility thinking', the concept that a nut (no pun intended) has the potential of a tree, and ultimately a forest, within it.

As I have evolved in my acceptance of my weakness, and also seen its strengths, I have become open and vulnerable to others about my experience with bi-polar affective disorder. The response would surprise those who hold to the stigma theory.

Almost everyone has revealed that a sibling, parent, other relative, friend, co-worker, or neighbour has a similar affliction. They confide and often seek what modest counsel I can provide,

I feel ex-mental patients must come 'out of the closet' if any significant change and education is to occur. We must realize experience is the only true teacher, and we have our own unique and special insights to offer others, many of whom are dealing with their own 'psychic conspiracies of the shadow'.

Remember life is all about attitude. One may hide under the label of victim and use it as a scapegoat from participating fully in life; or one may move into the psychological space of acknowledging everyone on the planet deals with problems and, regardless, life is a miracle and each of us has the opportunity to lead a rich and rewarding life.

It's up to you.

# Stillness Rebirths Into Life

by Dea Scramstad

Suspend your breath  
    hold the silence of Death  
    Eternal Silence  
I allow you to take hold  
Until  
    you turn this crude form into gold  
Now I feel you close  
    These are the moments I love most  
Breathing  
    through every pore of my skin  
Gasping  
    for the life I'll drink in  
Trusting  
    the times that string together  
Knowing  
    soon I'll feel better  
Living by seconds  
    this gift is precious  
Having Faith  
    until I receive a message  
Sharing each treasure  
    with those that don't measure  
Giving  
    seeds to be sown  
Nurturing  
    until they have grown  
When the cycle beings again  
Death can become your friend  
Being present with the Earth's Renewal  
Can provide us with so much fuel.

# You're Free to Speak ... As Long As We Agree With You

by Frank G. Sterle, Jr.

Would you mind if I would get up to speak,  
not that I'd want your verbal charity,  
nor from your criticisms I should flee,  
though you might feel this I should really seek;  
thus "freedom of speech" is not for the meek  
it appears, for its mere legality  
is questioned often, then one must pay a fee  
by law – this "freedom" is not for the weak.  
Please spare us all the platitudes so sleek,  
it all can be falsely sweet as pastry,  
though such can give the populace a peek  
at just how our speech is not so free,  
rather it is a situation bleak  
and reflects quite poorly on the country.

# The Tunnel Light

by Frank G. Sterle, Jr.

Could've been  
But it's not,  
Shouldn't have been  
But it is,  
I writhe and suffer  
With reality, with life,  
With my demons  
And my self-inflicted  
Emotional and  
physical turmoil;  
though perhaps  
there's light at  
the end of the  
proverbial tunnel –  
perhaps I can  
procure a silver  
lining to every  
dark, dreary cloud.

# Old Man

by Ben Nuttall-Smith

Clatter! Bing! Bang! Boom!  
Spring pounds on city sidewalks  
skateboards scrape  
hot tires squeal  
shouts and laughter echo off the buildings  
basket balls bound on post and fence  
and dribble past and back and 'round the old man  
lost  
in his past

Clatter! Bing! Bang! Boom!  
battle screams in the night sky  
engines roar  
ack-acks pound  
shouts and curses fearfully sound  
big bombs whistle as the walls resound  
shrapnel whines past his head

"Bloody kids!"

"Get a life, grandpa!"

*(Old Man is from The Chameleon Sings – Surviving Pederasty and Rejection, by Ben Nuttall-Smith, to be published later this summer by Trafford Publishing.*

This poem describes my mental state when suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome brought on by memories of childhood abuse. **The Chameleon Sings** describes the effects of and process of healing from childhood wounds.

Information regarding the book should be available by deadline in August. My web page will be: [www.BenNuttall-Smith.ca](http://www.BenNuttall-Smith.ca) )

# BOOKWORM

## The Politics of Experience

By R. D. Laing

Ballantine Books, New York, 1967

Reviewed by Andrew Feldmár

I was almost 30 years old when I first came upon this book in June 1970, on a trip to San Francisco. I paid 95 cents for it, new. My wife was 7 months pregnant with our first child; I was at the very beginning of my career as a psychotherapist. Imagine my consternation reading, "The condition of alienation, of being asleep, of being unconscious, of being out of one's mind, is the condition of the normal man. Society highly values its normal man. It educates children to lose themselves and to become absurd, and thus to be normal. Normal men have killed perhaps 100,000,000 of their fellow men in the last fifty years. ... We are not able even to think adequately about the behaviour that is at the annihilating edge. But what we think is less than what we know; what we know is less than what we love: what we love is so much less than what there is. And to that precise extent we are so much less than what we are. ..." The author was described as "a young British psychiatrist," whom I had the good fortune to meet in person less than four years later. He was adamant that he was a Scotsman, not a Brit.

At the time, I had just finished reading **Psychotherapy East & West**, by Alan Watts (also \$.95), which proved to be a good introduction to Laing. Both Laing and Watts were concerned with ways of liberation, awakening, and opening. I cannot think of any books today, 35 years later, that I would rather recommend to beginner therapists of any persuasion (psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, clinical counselors, etc.), than **The Politics of Experience** and **Psychotherapy East & West**.

I decided to review Laing's book afresh, because I don't want it to be forgotten. Nothing has changed, there have been no advances in the field, the book is illuminating, and if anything, we have entered a darker, more dismal, more alienating epoch in the domain of Mental Health & Mental Illness.

Laing's diagnosis of our predicament is succinct: "We are all murderers and prostitutes – no matter to what culture, society, class, nation, we belong, no matter how normal, moral, or mature we take ourselves

to be. Humanity is estranged from its authentic possibilities." The starting point for both therapist and patient must be his or her alienation. We are all in the same boat, the *Dreadful* has already happened to all of us: "Bodies half-dead; genitals dissociated from heart; heart severed from head; head dissociated from genitals. Without inner unity, with just enough sense of continuity to clutch at identity – the current idolatry. Torn – body, mind and spirit – by inner contradictions, pulled in different directions. Man cut off from his own mind, cut off equally from his own body – a half-crazed creature in a mad world."

The shift away from looking for the source of mental anguish *within* the individual to examining carefully what's happening *between* people is the beginning of *social phenomenology*, the science of my own and of others' *experience*. We could say that it is the study of *interexperience*. The fundamentals are obvious yet often left out of consideration: "I cannot experience your experience. You cannot experience my experience. We are both invisible men. All men are invisible to one another. Experience is man's invisibility to man. Experience used to be called the Soul."

Laing's radical approach has gone mostly unheeded. In North America today, a psychologist or a psychiatrist is trained to fix a malfunctioning patient efficiently, fast, and professionally (read: impersonally). Laing wrote, "Any technique concerned with the other without the self, with behavior to the exclusion of experience, with the relationship to the neglect of the persons in relation, with the individuals to the exclusion of their relationship, and most of all, with an object-to-be-changed rather than a person-to-be-accepted, simply perpetuates the disease it purports to cure."

Only recently, a psychiatric intern at the University of British Columbia School of Medicine was reprimanded by both the charge nurse and the chief of staff for having had a conversation with a *schizophrenic* patient. "We don't talk to them, we just medicate them."

(continued page over)

Talking might unnecessarily agitate them," he was told. Laing wrote, "Schizophrenics have more to teach psychiatrists about the inner world than psychiatrists their patients." Later he added, "No age in the history of humanity has perhaps so lost touch with this natural *healing* process that implicates *some* of the people whom we label schizophrenic. No age has so devalued it, no age has imposed such prohibitions and deterrents against it, as our own. Instead of the mental hospital, a sort of reserivcing factory for human breakdowns, we need a place where people who have traveled further and, consequently, may be more lost than psychiatrists and other sane people, can find their way *further* into inner space and time, and back again. Instead of the *degradation* ceremonial of psychiatric examination, diagnosis and prognostication, we need, for those who are ready for it (in psychiatric terminology, often those who are about to go into a schizophrenic breakdown), an *initiation* ceremonial, through which the person will be guided with full social encouragement and sanction into inner space and time, by people who have been there and back again. Psychiatrically, this could appear as ex-patients helping future patients to go mad."

From about 1980 to 1995, I spent considerable time and energy trying to set up and run a place in Vancouver, where such experiments could have taken place. The prohibitions and deterrents proved insurmountable.

Laing notes, "Our sanity is not "true" sanity. Their madness is not "true" madness. The madness of our patients is an artifact of the destruction wreaked on them by us and by them on themselves. Let no one suppose that we meet "true" madness any more than that we are truly sane. The madness that we encounter in "patients" is a gross travesty, a mockery, a grotesque caricature of what the natural healing of that

estranged integration we call sanity might be. True sanity entails in one way or another the dissolution of the normal ego, that false self competently adjusted to our alienated social reality; the emergence of the "inner" archetypal mediators of divine power, and through this death a rebirth, and the eventual re-establishment of a new kind of ego-functioning, the ego now being the servant of the divine, no longer its betrayer."

In spite of the use of the word *divine*, this is not a religious book, unless you consider *religious* to be a deep respect for life, the love and tolerance of others whose radical otherness cannot even be comprehended, and an infinite patience with, and devoted attention to, self and other. This is a most pragmatic book, calling for a true science of persons. The rock you study doesn't respond to how you think of it; the patient looked at with the *objective gaze* of the psychiatrist does respond to who the doctor is and what he happens to think of his patient. Social phenomenology, the best attempt, so far, at a science of persons, asks the doctor to examine his own subjectivity as well as the effect he has on his patient. How we treat each other makes all the difference. The effect of the best anti-anxiety medication may not be greater than the company of an open-hearted, calm, receptive other person. Love is not efficient. It takes courage and determination to enter psychotherapy, both as a patient and as a therapist, if therapy is to remain "an obstinate attempt of two people to recover the wholeness of being human through the relationship between them."

If you allow this book to have its way with you, it will transform you, it will disturb you, it will turn you on. If having read it, you can dismiss it, I think you are in grave danger of being *normal*.

## Quote:

"For me, insanity is super sanity.  
The normal is psychotic.  
Normal means lack of imagination, lack of creativity."  
Jean Dubuffet

# MEDIA & MOVIES & MADNESS: Misgivings about Myself as Mad

by Marie Annharte Baker

Lying about the homefront, during a weekend of downsizing the brain mass, strange voices interrupted the usual collision of internal obsessions about might have beens, should dos, and what others must do to heal me. The sounds did emit from the TV set which is a least expected site for an infusion of semi-sane ideas. I riveted available consciousness to a program on Book TV hosted by a descendant of Mordechi Richler. The subject was depression and the guests to be interrogated were celebs or experts in individualized cases of madness. I realized immediately I was upscaling lifestyle. By the end of the program, I was convinced that I knew more about madness, had a critique of that program and was about to email CBC with profound insights that I did not get from watching the show. But it was a start to an inquiry about representations about madness in media and movies. But it also induced misgivings about mad as moniker.

Allow me to introduce the authors: Morris Wolfe, Greg Hollingshead, Kay Redfield Jamison, James K Bartleman, and Karen Armstrong. BTW the only prior knowledge I had was about Jamison because of her writings on bipolar creativity. Karen Armstrong (*The Spiral Staircase: My Climb Out of Darkness*) documents recovery from a destructive religious experience as a nun to achieving a more spiritual path. (Hmmmnn, a nutty nun. How fascinating!) Greg Hollingshead wrote *Bedlam*, a novel which takes place in London's Bethlam Hospital during the 18-19 century. Morris Wolfe was the lover of Elizabeth Harrison Ikiru and compiled her memoir (*The Voice Inside Me*) which is an account of suicide attempts and self-mutilation while suffering depression. Most surprising to me was the presence of 2004 *Courage to Come Back* Award recipient, James K Bartleman, who is also of Native heritage. He became the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario after years of public service and wrote *Muskoka* and *On Six Continents*, two memoirs. Very impressive collection of writers of first person accounts, novels, and biographies whose voices raised to broadcast level in the media.

There you are. There I am thinking about the loneliness caused by stigma and silence. TV was broadcasting reality for a change on this Sunday

afternoon for me. How was it for you? Was I the only one that caught that program? So here goes my sense of it! In praise and awe of the credible credentials of the renowned and respected authors, I found the program did stimulate an old gizzard with gravelly bits or was that my crop? Alas, the anatomy of literary chickens may be misrepresented. I am, however, a virtual chicken to comment on the issue of how we consumers, survivors and malcontents in general are depicted. Given each of us has a unique and gullible gift of psychobabble talk, why not venture forth? (What are the chances of these famous authors reading Nutshell and/or Richler Jr. himself. We are safe in our own confines so to speak!) Whose big toe is out there for me to stumble over?

What askewed me was the casual putdown of the movie *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Only recently, I learned about the struggle to bring the novel written by Ken Kesey to the stage and screen by Kurt and Michael Douglas. One person said No more lobotomy! Speak to the chemically lobotomized (if it is possible for a response)! Next, it will be no more Big Nurse! Yet, whomever has been cloned down to the common Mental Health Worker these days. I am an alarmist given the miracle of treatments and medications once unknown. Well, aren't the side effects of anti-depressants still unknown? So the show had misinformation tidbits to strew. The incredible poverty of consumer survivors gets oblivious when media concentrates on the posh who make poor representation of those who deserve a telling of the story of battles with diagnosis, doctors, dementia, disillusion, delusion, dark days and diverse depictions of depression. Going down?

If I have any venom left (ducts are dry from cotton mouth), the mini spurt I would save for The Honourable James K Bartleman who is a fellow native consumer-survivor. He spoke on the show about the absence of books in Northern Ontario native communities or the no libraries exist on the rez disadvantage. Well, in the old days, it was not true because of the many catalogues used for toilet paper. Reading was

(continued page over)



happening in even the remotest places in the community. James K figured an access to literature would enhance self-esteem. Very good intent but with no mention of First Nations authors or storytellers as a necessity in every First Nations community, I got the doubtsies. It seems too easy for other Natives to attack self-esteem as I concluded mine was taking a beating. Even Franz Fanon thought the colonized native might get more mental wellness by decolonizing his or her identity. Yes, books are needed in Indigenous communities but so are films. Sending books is a good thing but I always see that Native representation requires careful attention or more feet in moccasins trudging the four directions. Having wasted my youth reading apartheid lit, I wouldn't push that on anyone.

No foreclosure on Native territory warranted but imaging ourselves has to be our turf and has to be guarded at times. Watch dogging the media and movies can be therapeutic mental exercise or exorcise. This insane world is not just a house of mirrors with

distorted reflections of consumers survivors. We may join in the stigma race and paint ourselves weird. (I'm doing an excellent job at that BTW). Demystifying our common cause of depression has to be a continual cranium cleansing ritual. Cognitively speaking, that is. Depression is not just a downer but it is on the rise. Soon. Pretty soon.

What's next, eh? Next time we will take our cogs to the cinema. How bonkers is Hollywood about mental health repression or oops meant to say representation? Right. Just how much do the movies rely on the good old bad guy or girl? If you are plotting a murder in a script then you have to find a convenient fall person such as a depraved maniac. How many maniacs will it take to change the big light fixture of the big screen? Then, how many upturns, downturns, roundabout spins will it take to get undizzy about our depictions in the movies. Until the next publishing moment!

# The Beginning and End of Ziggy's War

by reihart

The day that Ziggy left for the war the town put on an old fashioned parade. Girls, legs, billowing hair, drummers, pipers, horns, fire trucks, flower floats, officials, clowns, waving beauty queens, motorcycles, dancers, twirlers, mimes, gymnasts and tumblers, and all the usual trappings that constitute such an event. Oh my, Ziggy would utter in later days. It was such a fine day. The sun was brightly shining, the lawns shone lush and were neatly trimmed and all the blossoms flourished. It was so very pleasantly warm. Mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters were clapping, shouting, kissing or blowing kisses, waving furiously and jumping up and down. The train whistle screeched, the horn thundered across the station platform and one and all were called aboard. White steam and dark smoke pumped into the glittering, dazzling, diamond sky. It appeared almost as if the sunlight lingered upon the molecules of the turquoise-blue sky.

The last thing Ziggy's mother said to him, as they were all saying good-bye, was that she was so very proud of him. Mein lieber Siegfried, as she was wont to call him, you look so tall and handsome in your uniform. Everyone kissed and hugged, cried and backslapped and shouted their last words as the soldiers filed aboard the black, snorting train.

The parade marched by and eventually dispersed

at the end of the town's main street. Suddenly the entire town became oddly still and quiet. Clotheslines, flags and banners eerily flapped in the silence. The families of the departed soldiers also quietly dispersed and went home.

A gentle breeze whispered between cottonwood leaves and carried the perfume of blossoms and flowers along the streets and alleys of the town. Twas a soothing, aromatic wind. A few puffs of soft, snow-white cloud adorned the azure blue and slowly dragged across the horizon. Cats stretched out lazily along the sunbaked stones and blocks while dogs strolled casually across the yards and streets of the neighbourhoods. Birds circled and swooped and rose on the convection currents of the air. Oh my, Ziggy would say in later days, it was such a fine, old day. And when he came back from the war, this was the only event of his life that he would ever talk about again.

The day that Ziggy came back from the war was also a sunny, blue-skied day. A gentle refreshing breeze soothed the crowds. Ziggy wore his soldier's cap, his freshly washed and pressed uniform, his captain's bars upon his collar and his combat medals on his breast. He rolled up to his greeting family in a stainless steel wheelchair. Oh mein leiber Siegfried, his mother cried, and burst into tears as she threw her arms around her

favourite son. Ziggy's brother had been, and was, exempt from the war. He had gone off to college and was well on his way to becoming a doctor. He extended his arm, shook Ziggy's hand, and welcomed his brother back home. He tried to suppress the shock of seeing his sibling in a wheelchair. He tried to suppress any signs of his feelings altogether. Instead, he circled around to the back of Ziggy's wheelchair and pushed his crippled brother along the way to the family home.

Ziggy was nineteen years old when he went off to war. He was strong; he was healthy; he was fit for battle. He proudly carried his automatic rifle, his sidearm, his dagger, binoculars, compass, canteen and all his battle gear as he bravely marched against the enemy.

It was springtime when Ziggy first stepped into enemy territory. The weather was pleasant and mild. Most of the sky was blue, and the few clouds that floated above the almost friendly, earthly vistas were cotton-white and softly pleasing. It was an odd, strange and suspicious prospect for the start of a war.

It didn't take him very long to engage the enemy in active duty. Ziggy saw action in the trenches, on the fields, in the countryside and in the towns, villages and cities of the enemy. Bombs and artillery fire darkened the sky with clouds of smoke and debris. The noise and fire of explosions consumed the battlefields and landscapes for miles in all directions. From the trenches he drew careful beads upon the opposing soldiers. Ziggy was a trained and markedly good shot, courtesy of the many hunting trips with his father. As a sniper, he singlehandedly dispatched dozens of the enemy. His fellow soldiers, those who fought by his side, marveled at his marksmanship and his success in battle. Some of them said that he had a real gift, a real talent, for the job at hand.

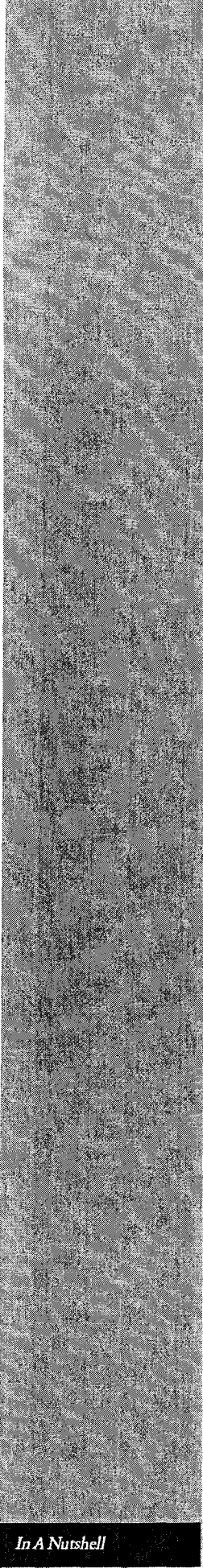
When the troops went over the top and stormed out of the trenches, Ziggy was, on more than a few occasions, among the very first to lead the charge. Tightly clutching his rifle in his fists, he would charge at full speed upon the enemy; all the while roaring out his battlecry and firing his weapon at those coming against him from the other side. His fellow soldiers, especially those who had become his friends, wondered if he had the capacity to feel any fear at all. When Ziggy earned a medal for bravery for some of his leading charges, some of many before the end of his tour of duty, the troops all agreed that the award was well earned. They cheered, hollered and briskly saluted whenever he went by.

On one occasion, Ziggy's division captured an enemy town. But they still needed to flush out some of the enemy soldiers from their positions within some houses and fortified bunkers, from whence they would fire upon Ziggy and his mates. In the case of one such house, he kicked down the front door and stormed into the darkness within. For a moment he was blind. Pain exploded in his left shoulder as he was struck by some

sort of implement. He felt the weapon being torn from his grasp and a great mass knocked him to the ground and fell on top of him. Ziggy found himself in hand to hand combat with an enemy soldier. The two of them struggled in the dark and on the ground; rolling over and over as the advantage passed from one to the other, and back again. In the midst of the struggle Ziggy gained the opportunity to clasp his army dagger, and as the two of them were tumbling on the ground he let the enemy gain the upper hand so that the foe was on top and had the advantage. And then Ziggy plunged his dagger deep into the enemy's back and right through his heart. The man gasped loudly and collapsed dead on top of an exhausted Ziggy. Ziggy pushed the corpse off of himself, and now that his eyes adjusted to the dark, he was able to have a look around. The first thing he noticed was that the foe had no weapon. Then he saw that the man wore no uniform. Ziggy realized that he had just killed an innocent civilian who had only been trying to hide and avoid the war. He kicked the corpse in the head and swore fiercely. Fuck!! He decided against informing his comrades and superiors about the civilian aspect of this incident. Now that the deed was done, it would serve no purpose to complicate the situation with such an irreversible fact. A corpse is a corpse, he reasoned, what difference does one more make among hundreds of thousands. Still, he continued to curse and mutter underneath his breath until he rejoined the rest of his mates and they finished securing the town. As it happened, Ziggy's courage, prudence and ability were rewarded with a promotion. He was elevated to the rank of captain. One of the youngest ever commissioned.

On another, similar, occasion Ziggy and his troops were ready to capture another enemy town. However, they were bogged down by two fortified bunkers with the capacity of heavy artillery and multiple automatic weaponry. The bunkers prevented them from advancing upon the rest of the enemy soldiers positioned within the borders of the town. The difficulty for Ziggy and his gang lay in the unfortunate fact that the two bunkers were located side by side. If one were able to advance on one of them, one would almost certainly fall victim to the other. Bullets, from both sides, were flying fast and furious, but, just as neither side offered any obvious targets, so neither side was able to advance or make any progress. It appeared there seemed to provide no resolution to this awkward, wasteful siege and stalemate.

Two days later, the tactical situation still had not changed. Ziggy's forces remained unable to penetrate the protective shield that the fortified bunkers provided for the town. It occurred to Ziggy that he might go on a solitary, unsanctioned mission all on his own. There was no sense in telling his superiors what he was planning since they would most certainly disagree with



his proposition and order him to stand down. He resolved to advance on the bunkers by one of their far flanks. The fortified positions would be left with one complete blind spot on the opposing side from whence he would launch his attack. Instead of facing four automatic weapons, two in each bunker, he would only have to contend with one if he approached from a far flank. And once he had advanced beyond a critical point on one of the bunker's far flanks, he would be in a position beyond the sights and line of fire of the enemy guns. From there he might crawl, belly to the ground, beneath their sights – beneath the defenses of the fortified bunkers. The primary problem lay in getting to the critical point beyond the enemy sights.

Ziggy took a deep breath, made the sign of the cross, and started running. Running fast; being fit; being a high-school athlete. Thus he went – zigzagging, dodging, rolling, jumping up again, almost flying over the ground. He heard the whistling of hot lead shooting past his ears. He also heard the blast of grenades and return fire as his own mates and troops realized what he was trying to accomplish and tried to provide cover fire for his as well as they were able. Ziggy took one great, long dive and roll, as it were, a leap of faith, into the safety zone beyond the sights of enemy guns. He landed, rolled, and dodged behind a garden wall for cover. Suddenly, he became aware of a sharp pain in his right thigh. He looked and discovered that he'd been hit, whilst in mid-air, during his last, final dive. His khaki pants were soaked with blood and his leg was beginning to stiffen up. He dragged himself along the ground and crawled as best he could within striking distance of the two bunkers. Ziggy's strategy was to crawl beneath the line of sight of the enemy and position himself below and between the two hold-outs; the bunkers being located on the side of a small hill. He left a trail of blood across the ground and by the time he had attained his intended position his right leg had become completely useless. He dragged it, like a dead weight, despite the throbbing pain. At the bottom of the bunkers, with the gun barrels sticking out of them, firing shots above his head, Ziggy collapsed. He was himself amazed that he had achieved this goal, this stage of his assault. And then he propped himself against the concrete foundation of the fortification; his back against the wall. He fished a cigarette out of his pocket and promptly sparked it up. After a couple drags he tossed it and then took a grenade in each hand. He pulled the pins, counted to three and then tossed them into the enemy hold-outs through the firing slots where the guns still stuck out. One grenade into each bunker. The explosion shook the ground as if a small earthquake had hit – and Ziggy lost consciousness.

When he woke up, Ziggy found himself in a MASH unit. The bullet had been removed from his leg, his wound had been disinfected, treated and stitched, and he was resting comfortably on an army cot. He was

told that he had been given several units of blood. An army doctor came around and told Ziggy that he was mending well and soon would be able to leave the hospital and rejoin his combat unit. Still feeling fairly drained and fatigued, Ziggy drifted off to sleep.

The next time he awoke he beheld his commanding officer looking down on him. Ziggy raised his arm and was half way to saluting the colonel, but the latter laid his hand on Ziggy's shoulder and told him that the gesture was appreciated, but under the circumstances, not required. The colonel then told Ziggy that his conduct on the battlefield was an inspiration to all the troops and would most certainly not go unrecognized. The colonel went on to tell him that he would be decorated with a purple heart for being wounded in battle and that he would be further decorated with a congressional medal of honour for service above and beyond the call of duty. Then the colonel told Ziggy to rest and took his leave. Three weeks of rehabilitation in the hospital and then Ziggy rejoined his combat unit and was once more on active duty.

The war raged on, and with it Ziggy also raged on. He began to acquire a reputation as a killer extraordinaire. His exploits became legendary, and grew more in stature with each retelling. Rumours began to circulate and some began to openly wonder aloud whether Ziggy had a death wish. No-one, it seemed, could convincingly account for his total disregard for danger, his complete lack of any fear and the enormous risks he was willing to assume. His heroics were unfathomable. As for himself, Ziggy never commented on what went on on the battlefield. He's a real professional it was said. Ziggy's silence on his exploits only increased his legendary standing and added further fuel to the fire of gossip and rumour. Seasoned soldiers began to whisper and gossip like a gaggle of old women. Ziggy continued to perform his duties as if he were completely oblivious to the talk around and about him. Nevertheless, he must have been aware of it when conversations suddenly ceased in his presence as if a bubble of silence surrounded him. But, he never mentioned it.

After three and a half years of warfare, scores of kills to his credit, several dozens of battles and victories, both smaller and greater, Ziggy's career as a soldier came to an abrupt and unexpected end. He was riding in a jeep along a dirt road to the front of the infantry line, when the vehicle drove over a solitary, rogue landmine. The detonation blasted the jeep off the ground into midair, and with it the young, brave captain. When Ziggy hit the earth again, his back was broken and he was paralyzed from the waist down. Such was the beginning of the end of Ziggy's war.

And so, after six months stay in a hospital, Ziggy came back home to his family. The town put on a bit of a parade, but it was a subdued affair. No-one knew how to react to a war hero in a wheelchair. Many, if not

most, felt that it would be somewhat indecent to cheer or celebrate such an occasion, such a home-coming. None spoke of this sentiment but most understood it instinctively. The mayor and all the community leaders filed by the man in the chair in order to officially and ceremoniously welcome him home and honour his accomplishments. One by one Ziggy shook their hands and thanked them. And then, upon having devoted an appropriate, albeit minimal, length of time to this occasion, Ziggy quietly asked to be taken home.

At the family home Ziggy's mother and father set up a room for him on the ground level of the house. Obviously he was no longer able to negotiate the stairs up to his old bedroom. Ziggy kept mostly to himself and rarely spoke. He either slept or stayed in his room until lunch time at noon; at which time he would join the family at the dinner table. Still, he had little to say. He never initiated any conversation and his responses to any questions were short. Usually a simple yes or no. And never, under any circumstances would he mention the war, nor any of his experiences in it. Those few topics or events that he responded to at all, with his customary yes or no, ended with the day that he left for overseas; the day the train had left and the town had put on a parade. Occasionally, Ziggy would remark what a beautiful day that was, But thereupon he would lapse into absolute silence for hours on end. His family soon learned to leave him in peace. Neither did he seem to have much of an appetite. His portions were small and in most cases he did not finish his plate. The only thing he seemed to enjoy at all was smoking his cigarettes.

After the noon time meal, Ziggy would take his chair out on the patio. There he would sit silently for hours until dinner time in the early evening. He would smoke his cigarettes and gaze motionless across the fields and off into the distance.

And then, after dinner at six o'clock in the evening, Ziggy would be back out on the patio. He would resume smoking his cigarettes and watch the sun go down. He sat quietly and virtually motionless. Twilight came and went, the sky grew dark, and the stars came out. He would sit silently for a couple of hours under the white stars and black sky, and then he would retire to his room until lunchtime the next day. This routine remained unchanged for nearly two months.

One evening, after dinner, while Ziggy sat out on the patio, he reached under the blanket that was habitually draped over his legs and pulled out his service revolver and cleaning kit. Slowly, methodically, piece by piece, he disassembled the weapon and laid its components parts out upon the blanket over his lap. He thoroughly cleaned each component, then thoroughly oiled each component, and then reassembled the weapon and restored it to working order. A few days later he repeated this activity. And then a

couple of days after that, the same again. And then, within a few weeks, it became a daily ritual. Every evening, after dinner, sitting out on the patio, he took apart the gun, cleaned and oiled its parts, and put it back together again. Piece by piece, always in the same order.

On a particular evening, while Ziggy sat in his chair out on the patio, smoking his cigarettes, his mother came out and asked him how he was doing. Fine is all he said. She asked him if there was anything she could do for him. No thanks, he said. Alright then Siegfried, she said, and went back inside the house. Thereupon, she approached her husband, Ziggy's father. She told him that he should go and speak with his son. He can't go on like this forever for the rest of his life, just sitting out there all alone, never saying a word, she complained. What should I say to him, the father asked. I don't know, just talk to him, she replied. I think he needs a man to talk to.

Ziggy's father came out onto the patio and seated himself next to his son in one of the porch's wooden chairs. Ziggy had his disassembled revolver laid out upon his lap. His father said to him that he took mighty fine care of the weapon. You sure got that thing well cleaned and oiled, he said, in mint condition. A piece of equipment well taken care of can be a thing of beauty, he told his son. Ziggy said nothing, and continued polishing the metal components on his lap. Listen son, said the father, I can imagine that it must be tough, that it must be heartbreaking, to be confined to that chair and never able to walk again. I can imagine that you must be depressed and filled with despair; but maybe it would help if you talked about it. There's nothing to talk about, Ziggy said, it's just part of the war, it comes with the territory. Yeah, but how do you feel about it, the father asked. Ziggy shrugged, but said nothing. Ok, maybe it would help if you would tell me how it happened, the father said. Jeep drove over a landmine, was ziggy's curt reply. That's it, that's all, the father queried. That's right said Ziggy, just a freak accident. Well, was there anything else that happened over there that's bothering you, the father asked. Nah, just the usual, responded Ziggy, same as every other soldier. Alright then, the father spoke, does it make you angry, all that happened over there, the wheelchair and everything else that you must have experienced. Do you feel like you've been cheated? Do you feel like G\_d's been unfair to you? Do you feel like less than a real man, you know, like with nothing below the waist? Alright, stop it, Ziggy raised his voice, it happened, it's over, it's done with. There's nothing to talk about! But that's just it, the father said, you should have something to say about it all. Everything that happened over there is pretty momentous if you were to measure it on some kind of scale. These were pretty large events in your life. They would be for anyone. You must have some feelings about it all, it couldn't be

otherwise. It's only natural. It's only human.

Thereafter followed a moment of silence. For an entire minute Ziggy remained mute; his head hung low, sadly, upon his breast. Alright, ok, he blurted, you wanna know how I feel, I'll tell you, I feel like I got what I deserved. What, the father remarked, how can you say that; what could you possibly have done to deserve this. And he pointed at the wheelchair. Ziggy's voice suddenly became soft and small. You know dad, he said, the first time that I drew a bead on one of the enemy, and in my sights saw the bullet hit his head, splash it red and at that moment kill him, I felt a strange sense of excitement. The second time was even better. I felt calm, I was in absolute control. I drew a bead on one of them, right between the eyes; my finger on the trigger – dead to rights. I softly and calmly let out my breath, squeezed my right index finger, and watched his head snap backwards; a red hole in his skull. I saw his body go limp and collapse almost as if I were watching it in slow motion. It was a thrill. After my third kill, I understood that I enjoyed it. That's right, dad; I enjoyed the killing. I felt powerful. I felt strong like never before. I held life and death in my hands. And that's not all. The entire war – I loved it. Never before, nor since, have I felt so alive. The noise, the fires, the explosions; I loved it all. But most of all I loved the killing. All my senses seemed to be on high alert. My skin, my whole body, inside and out, virtually tingled with thrill and excitement. And all my senses themselves also seemed to be heightened, so that everything became more intense, more clear, louder and hyper-real. Oh yeah dad, all your sensations become amplified and magnified. Once, when I dispatched an enemy soldier with my knife, when I plunged my blade

deep into his mid-section, heard his gasp as the breath left his body, felt his warm blood spatter on my hands, saw the red life ooze out of him and watched his mortally wounded body slide to the ground, the thrill was almost sexual. And you know, Ziggy said, nothing can compare to the rush of lobbing a live grenade at someone or something and blowing it to kingdom come. Blow it right out of this fucking world. But best of all, daddy, is the semi-automatic pistol at close quarters. Blow some son of a bitch's brains out at ten paces – there's nothing like it. Or pump six rounds of hot lead into some poor bastard's chest before he even hits the ground – it's a mega-shot of adrenalin. And what's more, there were other things that I loved about combat. During the war I knew exactly what my purpose was. I knew exactly what I was supposed to do, and how to get it done. For the first time in my life I was absolutely certain of the meaning of my life. I knew without a doubt what I was meant to do.

So that's my story, dad; are you satisfied, Ziggy said. That father was speechless, He quietly got up and in utter silence went back inside the home. Ziggy finished reassembling his service revolver. When he was done, he laid it in his lap. Then he fished inside his breast pocket, pulled out a pack of cigarettes, took out a smoke and sparked it up. He calmly smoked his tobacco reefer and blew smoke at a setting, orange sun. And when he was done, he fished inside another pocket. He pulled out a live round of ammunition, inserted the bullet into the gun chamber, put the gun barrel in his mouth, and pulled the trigger. ■

## Quote:

“War contains so much folly, as well as wickedness,  
that much is to be hoped from the progress of reason.”

James Madison

# 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](http://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](mailto:info@aims.ubc.ca). Web: [www.aims.ubc.ca](http://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.

**The Mental Health Empowerment Advocacy Program** will help consumer/survivors with applications and appeals for Welfare, PPMB & PWD, Other Provincial benefits and supplements, Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPP), Old Age Security (OAS), Student Loan Forgiveness, Basic Income Taxes and referrals to other supports. Please call if you have questions or to book an appointment. Office hours: 9:00-4:30 p.m. - Monday to Friday. Address: 1733 West 4th Ave., Vancouver. Phone: (604) 482-3700.

**The Highs and Lows Choir** practices every Tuesday noon until 1:45 pm at Douglas Park Community Centre, 801 W. 22nd Ave.(between Oak and Cambie). Call Ans for more information at (604) 482-3744, or simply drop in.. It is a choir for people with mental health concerns and their supporters who enjoy singing in a relaxed atmosphere. We want to provide a place where people have the opportunity to build confidence, share and develop commitment and singing skills and - for those who choose - to perform in public.

reinhart...

