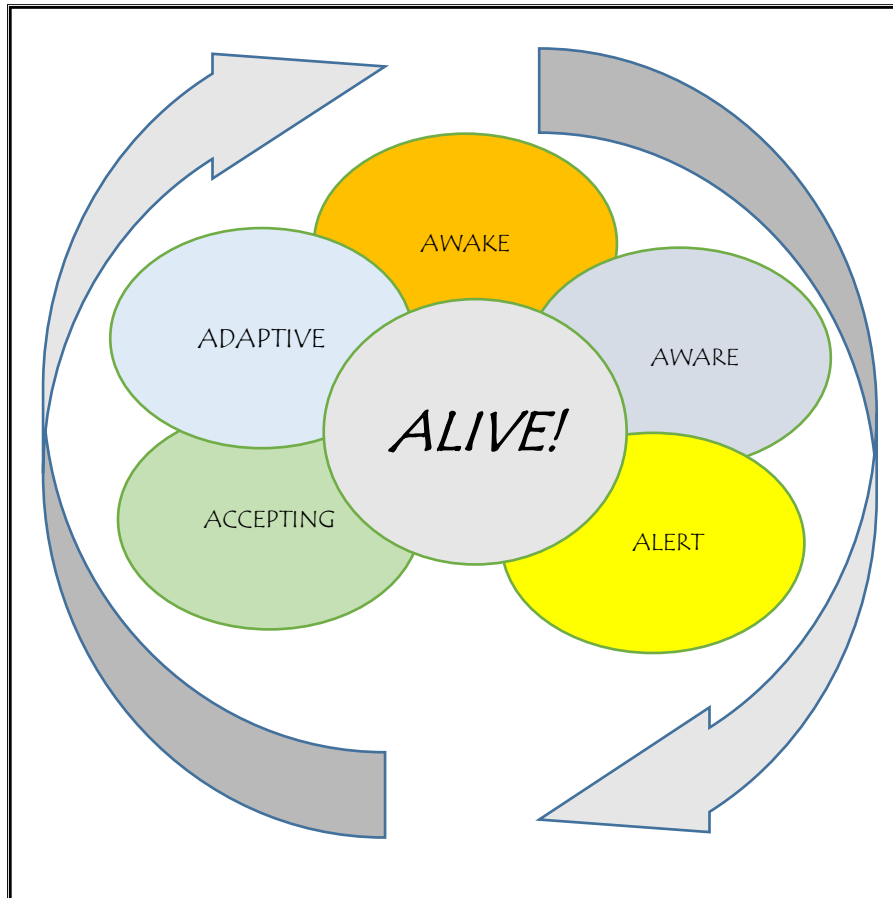


THE POWER of POSSIBILITY



BOOK FIFTEEN
RoberT.

*Read consecutively
but written separately,
the recurring nature of the
following themes, ideas and even words
attests to their patience,
pertinence,
and persistence.*

*Sent out in appreciation for
memories made,
good songs played,
and a family of friends
whose gifts can never be fully repaid.*

Editor: Karen Tobin

previous editions @
<http://www.robertvtobin-mpa.com/personal.html>

LOST IN TRANSMISSION
Undated

Thinking we know
makes us believe
we know what we think,
and feel we're getting somewhere
when we might be going nowhere.

Living from our head rather than heart
is like getting on the wrong train
at the wrong station
and still believing we will get to our destination.

It's not like we don't know what to do,
or lack the power
or courage to do it.
No need to wait for permission,
or let these messages get lost in transmission.

We know who, how
and where we are,
and also when and why that's important.
If we didn't expect life to be easy,
maybe it wouldn't make us so queasy.

SCHOOL
9/14/18

The old saying about
everything we need to know
was learned in kindergarten*
is only partially true.
That's when we discovered
what those lessons are,
but it's not when we learn them.

Knowing we need to get along
is not the same as finding out how,
and neither involves actually doing it.

Same with knowing we need to pay attention,
show up on time,
be joyful (as opposed to just happy),
remain positive and optimistic
(not the same thing either),
staying open and flexible,
compassionate and considerate,
loving and peaceful.

These lessons are learned only through a lifetime of practice.

* Robert Fulghum

KNOWING
10/2/18

Counterintuitive as it may seem,
and subtle though the distinction may be,
we don't necessarily learn more
as we get older
but rather only find out more
about what we DON'T know,
which is quite a lot
and more and more each day
if/when you stop to think about
our finite capacity for comprehension
compared to the infinite possibilities
extending outward into the universe
and inward to the microscopic
beyond our sight but not our senses
as "knowing" reaches from
the obviously apparent
to more subtle manifestations
beyond the bounds of visualization
or even conceptualization,
yet well within our grasp
- whether we "know" it or not.

The preachers say
we eventually come to recognize the truth
only because,
as it gets harder and hotter,
it is less easy to ignore
or dance around.
Only then
does the truth actually set us free.

Any untruths we choose to believe in the meanwhile
- purposefully if not exactly on purpose -
deter acceptance of harsh realities,
keeping us not only silent
but stupid as well.

Silent because
truth gets harder to see
the further we get from it.

Stupid because
doing anything else but recognizing it
not only makes things get worse;
it also makes us look silly.

We don't need the facts
to know the truth.
And we don't even know what to do with it,
but only what not to.

They don't call it ignore-ance
for nuthin.

SPECIALNESS

11/10/18

30,000 feet above The Badlands

In politics of all its forms
- governmental, theological,
interpersonal, gender, geopolitical -
it is preoccupation with our differences
- and prickly disagreements inevitably ensuing -
which divide and weaken us
in times when strength and unity
are most needed.

No surprise the latter two are now in such short supply,
forging a sense of isolation and depression,
fueling our search for refuge
in the delusion of unique identity
and the entitlement of exceptionalism
which builds animosities rather than alliances.

This confuses acquisition with advancement,
and undermines any
possibility of collective security,
realization of mutual benefit,
attainment of common goals,
or even simple recognition of shared aspirations.

That's a high cost
for the personal or national aggrandizement
a façade of unique identity thinks it can afford,
but only begrudgingly pays.

BULLSEYE

12/6/18

Perhaps it takes a lifetime,
to get brain, body and breath
completely aligned.

When uncoordinated,
and unconnected,
our selves and others' get maligned.

Having these fully synchronized
provides an energy source
to be continually mined,

generating warm light
and stimulating movement
along a path to which we'd otherwise be blind.

To fully synthesize
living and being,
only by seeking do we find.

DISCOVERY
3/23/19

It's not when we are sensitive or sensible
such qualities are needed,
for then they're in ample supply.
It's when they're lacking,
of which we're usually unaware,
until things tend to go awry.

Just as patience is needed
when we're impatient
or, by definition, when facing its lack;
or good judgement is, when most in demand,
elusive as a needle
in the hay stack.

It seems we're last to know
but first to find out
when things don't go our way,
not realizing it was we
who went off The Path,
or showed up on the wrong day.

Only when fully alive
do we truly learn
and discover
errors are not
as bad as they seem,
for it's mistakes which help us recover.

RELENTLESS RESEARCH
9/26/19

We are all social physicists,
researching how people associate
and what changes result from their interactions.

We study underlying principles
guiding such ignitions,
striving to detect predictable patterns
if only to know now
what we wished we knew then,
and thereby better anticipate
what happens next.

We seek a better sense of the forces at play
to get clearer understanding of their propensities,
and a clearer grasp of what can never be fully understood.

These are the hallmarks of a true scientist,
and a truly alive human being.

LEARNINGS I
10/31/19

Sooooo much of life
comes down to
awareness, assessment and adjustment.

Yet with so many things conspiring against these three,
you'd think our educational system
might give them at least as much attention
as geometric angles, sentence structure,
math equations and chemical formulas.

Even the realization these three coincide
- sometimes sequentially,
often simultaneously,
always chaotically -
would be an education in itself.

Learning how our application of these skills
can be affected by all manner of things
- our ego, emotions, ambitions, forebodings,
even "an undigested bit of beef" * -
all the more heightens their necessity
as part of our continuing edification.

Yet we often charge right past them,
discovering only later
what would have been better to learn earlier.

* Ebenezer Scrooge

LEARNINGS II
11/2/19

The third aspect of our life experiment
- the adjustment phase -
so easily misleads us
into mistaking the nature
and misinterpreting the scope
of emerging situations,
making it harder to recognize our misalignment
with people/places/things as they are,
and the necessity to adjust our attitude and action to them
rather than vice versa.

This causes us to confuse
a teachable moment with a teaching one,
unconsciously positioning ourselves
as the avenging (or revenging?) angel
sent by God (by gawd!!!)
to rectify all things
to our own frame-of-reference
instead of expanding our perspective
to encompass the possibility
- nay, likelihood -
whatever's happening
is what's best for The Greater Good,
with any thoughts to the contrary
being just that.

NEW BABY EN ROUTE
11/3/19

She is already with us,
hearing the laughter and feeling love,
but not quite yet;
already experiencing the first of life's many paradox,
while waiting patiently (or otherwise) to share her gifts.

Such patience is all she'll need
to keep life's profoundness from becoming confounding,
and its blessing thereby elusive.

Amazing to realize she already has everything she requires,
and
- at the risk of ending a sentence with a preposition -
what the world is waiting for.

Cause for pause,
and the beginning of a life-long celebration.

INCLINATION
11/13/19

Is it ever not true
we have a ways to go,
and room to grow?

And, when proceeding in that direction,
is there any better advice
than that for maximizing communication:
"keep your mind open and your mouth shut." *

Our tendency to think one thing
while doing the opposite
defines us as human,
as our brain's physiology, our mind's ego
and our social domestication combine
to incline us toward ways of helping increasingly unhelpful.

But these also provide a lifetime of opportunities
- so often blessings well disguised as disasters -
to learn more about ourselves and others,
the nature and purpose of our existence,
and the difference between how the world actually works
and how we think it does ... or should(!!)

It's possible, of course, the sages are wrong
but noteworthy they all concur:
whether we see life as a blessing or curse
is largely determined by whether we're focused
on The Destination or The Journey.
Our mind and bodies incline toward the former
while our joy and happiness are found in the latter.

* Celeste Headless

INFINITY
12/1/19

Those who would not expect agreement
between Buddhists and physicists
find themselves surprised.

One area of their communality:
a shared belief
matter neither can be created nor destroyed.

Ongoing arguments as to whether
life begins at birth or conception ignore one fact:
essential ingredients of paternity/maternity pre-exist both.

Same for so-called death,
as genes, behaviors patterns and even character traits
live on, and on, and onward ever after.

It has been noted:
"When you pick up anything of value,
you find its connected to everything else." *

And so are we,
regardless of whether we know it,
like it, or care to admit it.

Being part of
an ever-elongating continuum,
life continues without beginning, middle, or end.

As our dad used to say:
"Only the faces change".
And even then not by much.

* John Muir

CHANGE
12/14/19

Much of our experience
- in terms of both the quality and quantity of life -
reflects lack of coherence
between our mind and body,
heartbeat and breathing,
soul and spirit ...
crucial elements of which we're largely unaware
as our attention is diverted
by all manner of distractions,
remaining overlooked
until awakened by the unignorable
but even then we can get split or spun
into more (in)digestible terms
increasingly illogical or irrelevant
to the symptoms or circumstances
calling our attention
to the worst of all things:
the imperative for change
in our perspective, perceptions, posture and position
which, after all, are what combined
to create the dilemma-du-jour in the first place.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS
12/25/19

We're all trying to make it
how we wish it to be.
What greater gift we could give ourselves
than if what we looked at is what we see.

Allowing all to be as it is:
a gift for our enjoyment
instead of yet another thing to arrange,
as if troops out on deployment.

Focused entirely on Being Here,
as if there's anywhere other
or someone else we could be,
or have a different mother.

So conditioned are we to multi-task,
and so prone to distraction,
it takes a lifetime to accomplish
what we're capable – and even then, but a fraction.

It's never too late to begin again,
and yet again, until we're anew
and discover where we've been all along
is where we'll end up when we're through. *

* T.S. Elliot

FINDING
1/6/20

A teacher* notes how modern technology
allows us to get in touch with someone
on the other side of the world within seconds,
but it can take a lifetime to get in touch with ourselves.

Our mind is in
such a state of dispersion,
it is all we can do
to settle into our bodies first
and let the mind follow.

How easy it is
to become confused
about the sequence of things.

For example,
we seek opportunities to practice patience
but it is chances to avoid impatience
for which we are advised to be on the lookout. **

How we ask the question
can make it difficult to find the answer.

* Tich Nhat Hahn

** Headspace app

LOOKING & SEEING 1
1/12/20

One of life's great dichotomies
is the delusion of duality:
our misimpression of either/or choices
actually one and the same.

We have an (un)seeming imperative to differentiate
what is important from what's necessary,
what is most effective from what's economical,
and whether we should live from our head or heart.

All these assume we can separate
form from function,
darkness from light,
ocean from wave,
sadness from joy.

In fact, these supposed opposites
peacefully co-exist in our right mind
even as our left brain strives to create separation
between distinctions without difference.

Time to stop looking
through a telescope,
and instead start using a magnifying glass.

ALIVE & WELL
1/13/20

It takes a lot of work to discover
our primary job
is to bring love to life.

We can carry forward
into each moment and every interaction
the tender consideration
which brought about our birth.

Those who were complete strangers
passed along to us
the same loving kindness which brought them into being.

Those gifts were conveyed
honestly and truthfully
(not the same thing),
before we learned (or remembered) to say words like "thank you".

Such is real love,
which comes into our life
only when we bring it to others'.

NEW ARRIVAL
1/17/20

Days away,
perhaps even hours,
a granddaughter
patiently awaits
her debut.

The lives of her parents and siblings,
extended family and friends,
and wider community
all changed thereby
in ways unforeseeable
and unimaginable.

Warm welcome awaits,
as unconditional acceptance
and unending love
constitute her launching pad.

There's no greater act of faith,
or deeper investment in the future,
than birthing a child.

ASSURANCE ... that our needs have been provided.
BENEFITS ... of life lived according to abiding wisdom.
CANDOR ... always the best policy.
DILIGENCE ... staying aware keeps us alert.
EXPERIENCE ... the best teacher, if we're willing to learn from it.
FIDELITY ... our highest aspirations require keeping the bar high.
GOODNESS ... it's everywhere always, but only seen when sought.
HAPPINESS ... it ensues, but cannot successfully be pursued.
INTELLIGENCE ... divine or otherwise: learned but can't be taught.
JUSTICE ... doors eventually open, but it's hell in the hallway.
KINDNESS ... the key ingredient in any recipe for progress.
LOVE ... the gift we receive only by giving it.
MOTIVES ... of which we're often unconscious but never unaware.
NATURE ... always available for our exploration.
OPTIONS ... there are always more than meet the eye.
PRINCIPLES ... guide the operations of the Universe.
QUALITIES ... they're more important than quantities.
RELATIONSHIPS ... the mortar binding our lives to others'.
SERENITY ... our mutual aspiration.
TOXICITY ... it begins in our minds.
UNDERSTANDING ... we strive toward what can never be attained.
VIRTUE ... our most unappreciated possession.
WELCOME ... an attitude as much as an action.
X ... it's never where the map says it is.
YEARNING ... leads to our joy ... or undoing.
ZENOPHOBIA ... it keeps (and tears) us apart.

TOOL BOX
2/1/20

It's been noted *
we live life backwards.

We strive for security, approval, happiness
and other things which cannot be caused,
but rather are the effect
of policies, principles and postures
most likely to generate those results.

Kindness, modesty, compassion and integrity;
accountability, reliability and prudence;
honesty, openness and willingness;
a life built with these tools form a more solid foundation
in both the long and short run
than seemingly more direct routes
to more tangible rewards and riches
which characterize traditional hallmarks of success.

Those tools come in handy
regardless of the task at hand,
providing greater likelihood
resulting outcomes
are more enduring
and enduring
than whatever might have otherwise occurred.

From such a solid foundation,
we build a better world.

* Byron Katie
"A Thousand Names for Joy"

LOOKING & SEEING 2
2/12/20

The winds of change
blow hot or cold
depending on the season;
telling us things
we already know
but needed reminding for good reason.

Because it's easier to forget
than remember,
since it requires much less work ...
... until, that is,
the short-cut hits a dead-end,
and traits once charming become a quirk.

Every moment is a chance
for us to choose
to take a second look.
Knowing all things are neutral
except our thoughts,
more carefully we select our next book ...

... and more consciously decide
which pebble we drop,
for its ripples we're the first to feel
yet often the last to recognize
how we look at the world
defines for us what's real.

MOUNTAIN CLIMBING
2/14/20

We have an optical delusion.

We're able to see the upside of any mountain we face
- metaphorical or otherwise -
but precluded visually and by disposition
from clearly grasping its disadvantages.

Heck, even its upside has a downside
we are even less likely to see
as the beautiful views,
excitement of the ascent,
and anticipation of goal achievement
absorb our interest and attention.

Yet no mountain, or person, or challenge exists
except in its entirety,
with benefits and drawbacks
evenly counter-balancing each other.

Life and love are like this too,
perfect in their imperfect state.
Like diamonds, it's their flaws
which make them real
and really magnificent.

As so it is also with each of us.

TRAVELING
2/16/20
Chicago, Ill.

There isn't just one guidebook, but many,
all similarly describing
how to arrive at our destination
easier, earlier, and with less collateral damage.

All these manuals agree
about following the Road Less Traveled,
avoiding the compensations of comfort, convenience, status, etc.
which make seeming short-cuts attractive in the first place.

There is no shortage
of sign posts or mileage markers,
and plenty of warning signs
when we leave the preferable - not our preferred - course.

It's been said: "lack of knowledge is not our problem." **
Translating information into action becomes an issue when
- at the most inopportune times -
we start to disbelieve what we know,
deny facts hiding in plain sight,
and ignore clear indicators of our collective interests.

Facing this challenge is what makes us human.
Accepting it is what makes a life worth living.

* Robert Frost

** James T.

OLD TOWN PIZZA
Chicago, Ill.
2/20/20

Jimi Hendrix sings from the juke box,
and from another time
... whole different epoch, actually ...
talkin' 'bout things never bein' the same,
which are about to get REALLY different.
Not that he stuck around to see how they'd evolve,
but he definitely knew why:
because they must.

How many decades
have people sat in these seats,
ate these pizzas,
and marveled:
if it's this much crazier than it's ever been,
how much nuttier can it get?

Apparently, we're not done yet.

Maybe it's part of our optical delusion,
but it seems like we should be more
and perhaps better prepared
to handle it differently.

Only time will tell,
but now hearing Van Morrison singing about "Wild Nights",
could provide some hint to what's ahead.

LEAP YEAR
2/29/20

The truth indeed sets us free, Karen says,
but it's not pain-free
as our tendency to minimize its applications and implications
often arises on the least convenient occasions.

Pain is inevitable, we're told, *
but suffering occurs only in our heads.

This creates a time lag
between our awareness and acceptance
of reality as it unfolds.

Such delay is almost inevitable,
as our natural aversion to pain
promotes a quick-fix response
accomplishing neither,
prolonging the problem and its aggravations
while diminishing the energy and other precious resources
required for its resolution.

Our pride further enhances to this delay,
since anything more than a symptomatic solution
usually requires outside assistance
for which we are no more willing to admit needing
than we are to acknowledge
being perplexed by the problem in the first place.

Truth may indeed set us free,
but it ain't cheap.

* by Byron Katie & Others

DISCOVERY
3/6/20

How long it takes to arrive
at the place we already are.
We are always so close, it's a wonder
we have to travel so far.

Or wander so wide in relentless pursuit
of what we've already got.
You wouldn't think such a trip takes so long,
or get us so sweaty and hot.

But, like Sherlock Holmes, we exclude all other possibilities
before accepting whatever remains
no matter how unbelievable it may seem,
or however much it distains.

It's our internal qualities, not external resources,
which guide our Pathway to Success,
upon which progress depends on moderation
in a society which celebrates excess ...

... and encourages us to live on the edge
when only those in the center survive.
Only when not preoccupied with our preoccupations
do we find opportunities to thrive.

Life occurs simultaneously,
comprehensively, universally,
as end-in-itself completeness,
yet we experience it gradually,
incrementally, episodically,
and therefore, incoherently
as the whole gets separated
from its parts
and its synchronicity becomes obscured.

Karen reports on a lecturer
who encourages us to use our mind
to rewire our brain,
thereby directing our thinking,
adjusting our vision
and taking responsibility for the projections
which influence our perceptions
and thereby shape our perspective.

By recognizing the body's primary function
- i.e. to serve as a vehicle for the soul -
and aligning ourselves with it
rather than expecting it to align with us,
we bring order to what is otherwise chaotic,
liberate ourselves from egocentric imprisonment,
end the tyranny of the Judgmental Critic,
and open ourselves to the Power of Possibility.

Simple, but not easy.*

NAVIGATION
3/13/20

The distraction of the week
- global pandemic anyone?!? -
deterred but didn't preclude notice
of the first anniversary
of our Dad's departure,
having joined our sister Moira and other Tobins
in the Ides of March.

So ready to go
yet so willing to remain,
he was half way out the door
by the time of his calling,
ready to become part of the chorus
already assembled
to welcome his return to
from whence he come.

And gladly he did so,
having fulfilled his duty,
run the race,
kept the faith,
fought The Good Fight,
and earned his place at the center
of the Circle of Life.

He now, as ever,
cheers us all on
as we navigate the shoals
en route to our own safe harbor
and reunite with Oh! Captain, Our Captain.

CONTAGION
3/16/20

Nothing like aversity
to heighten anxiety
and reveal underlying angst ever present

as the completely unexpected
reminds of dangers unseen,
and matters even less pleasant.

But also recalls
of the importance of virtues
like faith, hope and love

and all of their corollaries
which fit in such times,
like a hand inside a glove.

Every good thing
has some bad,
and also vice versa.

However terrible
this pandemic gets,
it always coulda been worse.

BONDED
3/16/20

Closely connected
you and I
from this day forward
till whenever we die.

A pledge not taken lightly,
but with levity
as whatever time we have
passes with brevity.

Keeping our bar
forever high
requires persistence,
yet we forget to try ...

... not just daily,
but in each hour, minute and second,
since a single shortfall
can be one to be reckoned.

To accomplish this,
we optimize well-being.
It's not just a new way of looking,
but a different way of seeing.

THE SEARCH
3/24/20

"All you need is love." *

We sing it
as if we believe it
but live as if we don't,
allowing our wants
to supersede our needs
and our busy-ness
to supplant serenity
as our source of security.

Every song
is about love of something
- people, cars, sailing, fun, whatever -
about having it or not,
wishing we had it,
wondering why it left
or whether it's coming back.

We seek elsewhere
what can only be found within,
and then are surprised not to find it.

We know love is, indeed, all we need
but then allow all manner of things
to get in its way.

* Lennon & McCartney

CHANCES
3/28/20

There is no challenge greater
or scarier
than facing The Unknown
about which we remain largely unaware
until circumstances conspire
to reacquaint us with the unfamiliar
which is less-than-comfortable,
therefore undesirable, and thus preferably avoided
- which is what keeps it in the unknown.

Unless we are very careful
and conscious,
our mind's protective mechanism
reacts before we know it,
flooding our body with enzymes
which fuel our fight-or-flight response
when the best approach
is the one we learned in first grade:
Stop!
Look!
Listen!

What often seems a burden
in the short run
is a blessing
over the long term,
unless we forget to remember
and panic instead.

There is always another choice,
and it's always ours to make.

VALUABLES
undated

There are, of course, many reasons
not to do something.
But why, then, is it even harder to do nothing?

Consumed by the past and future,
preoccupied by their possibilities and pitfalls,
desires and aversions,
we lack the tools, techniques and temperament
to make here-and-now a familiar place,
thus explaining our discomfort there.

Doing nothing, after all, is a misnomer.

We ARE doing something then too,
and it's very hard work
requiring verve and discipline to get good at it
if only for a moment, or a minute or two.

Our urge to get – and stay – busy
impedes our capacity
for serenity, joy, and peace
which exist only in the Here & Now,
explaining why they are so lacking in our world.

CENTERING
4/6/20

Our reason for living
is to spread love via service,
but we can only do so today.

It's said yesterday's gone,
and tomorrow never was,
but each certainly has its say.

Being here now
takes a lifetime of effort.
There really is no other way.

Being grateful for what we have
while we still do; *
otherwise, there's hell to pay.

Finding the middle
between life's extremes;
seeing pastels in what appears to be gray.

Believing and feeling
as ends-in-themselves,
as if children at play.

Every ending
is a new beginning
if our doubts remain at bay.

* Prayer of our sister Noreen

DISGUISED GIFTS
4/8/20

We finally ... finally!! ...
received the gift of time
we all needed
but were too busy to realize it,
there being literally no time
or clarity of mind
to attend to anything else
... including ourselves.

Another aspect of the current contagion's gift:
its reminds how our mortality
can be snatched at any moment,
which is always true
but only now more obviously.

Like many surprises,
these gifts come tightly wrapped
in a ribbon of fear
which, if we allow, prevents us
from receiving and welcoming them.

This unique moment is like all others,
affording an opportunity to decide
finally ... finally!! ...
whether or not
to give ourselves entirely
to expressions of love and gratitude now ...
as if there were any other time, better or otherwise.

METEOROLOGY
4/14/20

Clouds, sky and weather
are constantly interacting
as if at a dance party,
interacting with each other
while also maintaining aloofness.

Same is true, we're told, *
with our experience, perception, and understanding
of any situation,
each affected by the others
yet also operating of their own accord.

One of the great feats of living
is to allow all three
to have their say
without dominating our thinking or decisions.

This positions us to
respond instead of react
to each Unfolding Moment as it is,
unclouded by past regrets or future fears.

It's best not to depend
on the weatherman for our sunshine,
or on externalities to dictate
our State of Being.

* HeadSpace app

Things we think we would do
if we weren't so busy,
but don't when we're not,
raises questions as to
what we actually want,
who is doing the wanting,
and why.

We "should" on ourselves
in sooooo many ways,
with such consistently painful results,
yet continue to act as if we didn't know
our reach exceeds our grasp.

Over-expecting not only causes us
to underappreciate what we have,
but also to become resentful of it –
a sure recipe for the disappointment
and disillusionment increasingly widespread.

Learning to not just accept,
but love who we actually are
is a humbling
- but need not be a humiliating -
experience.

Every crisis has its opportunities,
but can be found in the current one
only if we are looking for them.

EVOLUTION
4/20/20

The only absolutely true answer
to the largely rhetorical question:
"How ya doin?"
is: "Never Better."

This merely reflects a biological fact
discovered by Darwin:
all living things improve
- albeit incrementally, even microscopically -
as they adapt to challenges du jour.

This answer is also consistent with laws of physics,
whose rules about the time/space continuum
indicate we're always at the center of our universe
and remain so wherever else we may go.

Never previously having
as much knowledge, skills and experience as today,
we are truly "never better" positioned for whatever's next.

However, this answer has a darker side:
laws of chemistry pertaining to steady erosion
apply to the bodily vehicle transporting us through space.

So tomorrow's answer again is the same
but we will be less able to do anything about it,
which makes all the more important we realize
today's the only day we'll be "never better".

COMPARISON(S)
5/4/20

It's easier to get lost
than be found.

It's easier to forget
than remember.

It's easier to think we know
than recognize we don't.

It's easier to teach
than learn.

And easier to feel
than not to.

It's easier to get sick
than stay well.

It's easier to condemn
than convict.

It's easier to hate
than love.

It's easier to die
than live.

"FOUR DEAD IN OHIO" *

5/4/20

Our nation's splintering
began long ago
and perhaps always existed.

It became a clean break exactly fifty years ago,
not when the armed shot those unarmed,
or when the joke circulating in Ohio shortly thereafter
(Guardsmen 4 – Students O)
made it no laughing matter.

No, it was when the student deaths at Kent State
were not considered murder in the eyes of the local Grand Jury,
which acquitted novice shooters and those who armed them.

Politics, as has been said, is war by other means.**

This sad event epitomizes our inability or unwillingness
to differentiate dissent from disloyalty.
And it's a throbbing reminder
we have not wandered far
from our caveman days,
still allowing turf-ism, tribalism and testosterone
to define our interests,
dictate our behavior,
and determine our destiny.

Remarkable is the persistence of our belief
there is a better way
given all evidence consistently indicating to the contrary.

* Neil Young song title

** Carl von Clausewitz

"POTENTIAL SPAM"

5/5/20

Too bad we lack a filter system
at least as effective for our outgoing messages
as a cell phone's for incoming communications.

We are continually conveying
through our eyes and mouths,
actions or inactions,
things we may not know we're thinking,
might not even believe,
and certainly haven't considered their full repercussions.

And yet ever outward those messages go.

So great is the challenge is
to think before we talk,
making it all the more understandable
the frequent incongruence
between our intentions, thoughts, desires and actions.

When the techies get a fix for this,
maybe they can work on a warning light for our bodies as well,
telling us: "maintenance required".

TRIAGE
5/6/20

We don't,
by and large,
learn from others' experience.
Otherwise, history would not keep repeating itself.

The question is:
do we even learn from our own?

Tooooooo often we only do so after
diligently following Sherlock Holmes crime-solving technique:

STEP #1: Explore all other possible solutions,
including the most far-fetched or least likely
in an orderly manner inversely correlated
to the nature and urgency of the dilemma itself.

STEP #2: Prioritize attention to those options accordingly:

- (a) most preferred/beneficial to us;
- (b) most familiar/comfortable for us;
- (c) least costly in every sense of the word; and
- (d) least disruptive to status quo;

STEP #3: Only after excluding those, consider what actually works.

COROLLARY: As it's literally impossible to see unknown options,
the likelihood of their pertinence increases in direct proportion
to the degree we avoid or ignore them.

PENDELUM
5/9/20

Expectations tend to be self-fulfilling.

Regardless of whether we expect
a person or situation to abide by our wishes
or expect them not to,
in both cases we are still expecting
- i.e. attempting to impose what we think
is the best outcome for ourselves and all others,
both now and in the future.

Either approach constitutes a ride on the same pendulum
swinging widely and wildly in extremely opposite directions.

Both imply powers of omnipotence and omniscience
attributable only to God,
indicating our willfulness rather than willingness.

Just as acceptance of a person or situation
is often misinterpreted
as agreement or approval,
staying in a centered position
is often misperceived
as being neutral, inert, passive and unengaged.

To the contrary,
finding the Middle Way requires
unwavering attention, continual effort,
and unflagging commitment
to a goal we will never fully achieve.

ACCEPTANCE
5/20/20

Things are as they are;
only of that can we be assured.
And yet, even upon realizing this,
to this concept we're quickly inured.

We conjure all sorts of other explanations
for this seemingly undeniable fact,
invaded by speculative alternatives
as if our hard-drive's been hacked.

However seemingly adverse the circumstance,
things are the best they can be
if only for one simple reason:
so ever more clearly we see.

For if, truly, things were supposed to be different,
they would not be as they are;
not recognizing this sooner explains why
it took us so long to get this far.

This choice is neither a gift nor a warning;
but in fact, it's one and the same.
Rest assured, if we don't make it,
there will be no shortage of others to blame.

WINNING
6/6/20

Among all life's maxims
whose truth we strive to discern,
perhaps the most misleading starts with:
"it doesn't matter whether you win or lose ...".

It is correct in the ultimate sense,
but in the long run we're all dead,
so really, how much good does it do?

In the near term, however,
this is one of those things everyone says
but nobody believes.

Like: "I'll repay you later."

Or: "This will be good for you."

And, of course: "Just one more."

If "how we play the game"
is the only thing that matters,
why is the first question asked:
"Who won?"

BUMPER STICKERS
6/7/20

The longest road is the one that takes us home.

We always get back what we put out,
sooner or later,
but not always from the direction we expect.

We never know what will happen next,
but can be confident it will always be
in the best interests of all concerned ... eventually.

The hardest journey we will ever take
is the twelve inches from our heads to our hearts.

One way or another,
we get ourselves out of 99% of the trouble
we get ourselves into.

Beauty is indeed in the eyes of the beholder,
but seeing it is more a matter of reception than perception.

Each moment is another chance
to choose love, serenity and connectedness.

Life is what we make it.
Living is what it makes of us.

We can call slavery America's original sin
only because there are so few indigenous people left
to remind us otherwise.

MEASURES
6/24/20

Financial measurements are lagging indicators
of a community's, company's or country's success,
since - like other forms of dough -
they don't rise until all the right ingredients are assembled
and properly combined.

Happiness might similarly be considered
a lagging indicator of personal success,
as it too only flows from necessary pre-conditions.

Yet too often we look at what's measurable,
rather than what is meaningful,
as barometers of current status
and future prospects.
Such tangible indicators
come and go,
while their pre-requisites endure
come what may.

In the business world, we're told *
to "begin with the end in mind,"
but in the Business of Life
it's the means which determines our ends.

* Stephen Covey

CONTEMPLATION
6/28/20

The Buddhists among us say
there is a correlation between certainty and truth,
but only in the inverse.

As in: the truer a thing is
the less certain we can be about it,
and vice versa.

Not because it's right or wrong,
but usually because it is neither ... and/or both.

The value of any insight
is not determined by its accuracy,
but rather by whether wisdom is derived.

All matters require careful observation
as their parameters of application
continually ebb and flow
with consequences often unpredictable.

Thinking we know
is the beginning of not knowing,
and vice versa.

BROTHERLY LOVE
6/29/20

It's so easy to get lost
on that hardest of paths
back to from whence we came.

There's no signs,
neon or otherwise,
and no one else to blame.

Not ourselves or the god within us,
who are, of course,
one and the same;

nor our angels;
or the devils among us,
who managed to rig life's game.

All that matters in the end
is how we got there,
not the money or fame.

Since whatever we did
was the best we could,
there is no cause for shame.

But if we don't accept
available help,
then alone The Lion we tame.

We all are lost at times,
but whether we're found
is determined by where we aim.

LOCATION ... LOATION ... LOCATION
7/1/2

There is a map
on every hotel, school, office or cruise ship wall
which not only tells where we are,
but also how to get the hell out.

Enter another room
or go to another floor
and it too has a map,
once again clearly showing our location.

How nice it would be
to have an internal guidance system
always reminding us where we're at
and what the best exit strategy might be.

Which we do, of course.

The term "mindfulness" seems a tad abstract
until we consider its opposite: mindlessness;
then its meaning, purpose and value
becomes exceedingly clear.

We do have a personal GPS system,
but only occasionally turn it on
and, even then, not for long.

Why ever would we do that?

VAYA CON DIOS AMIGO
7/2/20

He was big on hellos,
not much for goodbyes,
but had much to say in between.

You never really knew
what would happen next,
though it was always a memorable scene.

Eyes wide
and smile bright,
to life he always brought zest.

Leading us to life's peaks,
going alone to its valleys;
so much to do left no time for rest.

Following his own path
wherever it led,
enjoying means as much as ends.

A magnet for those
he attracted 'long the way
into his Family of Friends.

Simultaneously exuding
the full gamut of emotions,
creating a colorful corsage.

To him, we extend
his wish for us:
a hearty "Bon Voyage"!

