



**THANKS
GIVING**

RoberTo

Volume 11

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

*Sent in appreciation
for memories
yet to be made,
good songs
yet to be played,
and a family of friends
for whom gratitude can never be fully relayed.*

Editor: Karen Tobin

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

6/19/15

Life is a series
of meaningful moments.
We are lucky to notice a few.
They quickly pass by
without a bang or sigh;
they don't mind whether we do.

For being so numerous
they are easy to miss,
as they roll by without a flag or a wave.
Each gets their own time,
like the thoughts in this rhyme,
then off they go to their grave.

It's in such moments
life finds its purpose,
and our place on The Pathway revealed;
taking us closer to home,
the place we're never alone
and truth is never concealed.

Each step brings us nearer
to the place it all started.
Ignited by the Great Spark
and not just some lark;
this is no trip for the faint-hearted.

Change is not only a constant;
it's an inevitability.
Everything changes
for better or worse,
more or less,
sooner or later.

The only fruitless exercise
is to resist it;
the only foolish errand:
trying to stop it.

Yet so many do
so fervently
and feverishly,
trying to wish it away,
defy its relentless onslaught,
and/or apply acceptance selectively
rather than completely.

Our challenge is the same
as our opportunity,
in degree, nature, and scope:
not only to recognize these changes
as they are happening,
but also to welcome them
in their entirety.

7/1/15
Dreaming

Driving down a dark road fairly fast
when the lights on my car
and the one in front of me
both switch off
and we can see nothing.

I say "we" because I'm not alone
but can't see anyone.
I call out but hear no reply.

I brace to hit
the car in front of me,
or to start feeling gravel
as I drift off the road,
but neither occurs.

I can see a glow on the dashboard
but I pass my hand across my face
and the light stays on,
illuminating
but not helping me see.

Knowing not where it leads,
if, how or when it will end,
and why it's happening in the first place.

Yet despite all this
- or because of it? -
I keep going
and hit nothing.

7/23/15
C & M's Wedding
Reflection 1

Two intrepid travelers
and their cute dog too
head into the unknown
to see what's yet to be shown

Ever onward
their journey unfolds
with its upside and down
the shortest way longest around

Each step ahead
required to stay where they are
brings them further along
to where they always belong

They know the answer:
that there isn't one.

7/27/15

Uniquely positioned are we
to shape the quality of our interactions with others
who tend, by and large, to treat people
the way they are being treated.

To treat others well
is perhaps our greatest assurance
of our being treated properly.

This is, of course, counter to
Newton's "universal" law
of equal and opposite reaction.

Perhaps the Golden Rule
is the source of "higher power",
launching the revolution perpetuated by
Jesus and so many others
before and since,
right up to FXT Sr.'s admonition:

"Take what you get,
make it better,
and pass it along."

7/31/15

We are advised* to look
inward and upward
not
outward and downward.
From that perspective, solutions unfold.

To that could be added:
look forward
not
backward,
lest same stories keep getting retold.

We are encouraged
to keep our head on our shoulders
hands on the wheel,
our feet in our shoes,
and forever be bold.

To do otherwise
by focusing on problems or perils
rather than
solutions and possibilities,
not only our present
- but future -
get sold.

*"Drop The Rock

8/2/15
C&M Wedding
Reflection 2

Your day soon arrives
beginning the next chapter
in an ongoing adventure story

about life and love
as two become one.
There's no better gift or greater glory.

And there's no better people
to carry on a tradition
that has continued down through the ages,

assuring society's future,
civilizing civilization
just by writing your story's next pages.

We will celebrate not just your union,
but the Power of Love
- the great miracle of life.

It harnesses the potential
released on the day
you became man and wife.

8/9/15

Do we spend more time
writing our resume or eulogy?

It's a question correctly raised.*

Usually it's the former
where life's currency's spent,
leaving the latter's field ungrazed.

Rarely do we stop
and reflect upon how
life's totality gets appraised.

We uniquely have
what no one's got;
that fact should not leave us unfazed.

Our world depends
on us sharing those gifts;
by doing so, we're ceaselessly amazed.

* David Brooks - "The Path To Character"

8/25/15

A car only moves
when it's spark plugs
are aligned in proper order;
so too do we advance only when
our sequences are properly arranged.

We cannot achieve serenity
without the emotional stability attained
when we let go of our obsession
with what ought,
and instead accept what is.

But to even get started in that direction
requires a prerequisite: calmness,
which makes possible
the clarity needed
to even consider such choices.

Taking these in reverse order
lies the path to true authenticity,
deriving the capacity
for full consciousness
and – more importantly –
conscientiousness.

We go forward by going in reverse.

8/27/15

To feel.
To see.
To learn.
To be.
It's for these reasons we're here.

Egoism.
Doubt.
Envy.
Pout.
These are the reasons we fear.

Staying present.
Remaining appreciative.
Keeping our balance.
Taking the initiative.
That's how we remain clear.

Loving.
Living.
Happily giving.
To set sail we must leave the pier.

Healthy.
Hoping
Honestly noting
Those things we must hold most dear.

8/29/15
C&M Wedding
Reflection 3
Convict Lake Resort

It's the gifts you give to yourself
that are most valued by your significant other;
things like acceptance and forgiveness,
peace and joy -
they cannot be given to you by father or mother.

What your world needs most,
it gets only when you give -
things like patience and passion,
trust and optimism;
with those tools you build the place you live.

Explorations in nature connect us
with the Mysterious Power to whom we pray
for oxygen, water, love,
and life's other essentials
we celebrate in this grand moment today.

So we gather here at the trailhead
of the longest hike in your life,
and we'll be there in thousands of sunsets
shared along the path
you'll be traveling as husband and wife.

9/4/15
Wedding Afterglow

And so another gathering
of friends of the families
who leave as a family of friends.
Forever altered
by connections forged in a chain
with no breaks, but many bends.

Rich and deep,
long and wide,
stretching to infinity in every direction.
Whole and complete.
Fulfilling and exhilarating.
It's as close as we come to perfection.

The crisp mountain air
and its cool forest streams
are a feast for each of our senses.
Bringing us closer.
Holding us tighter.
Reminding us to build bridges instead of fences.

9/13/16
Sunday Brunch
Auburn, CA

hugs and kisses
warmth and acceptance
The Circle remains unbroken

friends reunited
touching and feeling
"Language of the Heart" being spoken

a feast of love
encircles the table
no aspect of interaction faux

smiles radiate
ideas circulate
affirming what we already know

holding hands
touching hearts
souls and spirits intertwined

thoughts exchanged
feelings conveyed
trepidations left behind

marvelous moments
fantastic festivities
experienced as intended

showing up
doing our part
the circle of love extended

9/15/15

They say: "the truth will set you free."
What they don't tell you is: the experience ain't cheap,
and it makes you think you can't afford it.

Head down, eyes shut,
and minding on our own business
abdicates our citizenship duty.

Shared humbly, tactfully, considerately,
our part joins with others' like puzzle pieces
to create a mosaic more beautiful than otherwise.

Neglecting to do so won't just leave a void.
It's an excuse for even less helpful behaviors:
laziness, indifference, and resentments thereby festered.

Of course, contributing our part also has its adversities
being less welcome or appreciated than we hoped;
yet not so resisted as to justify its withholding.

The challenge forever remains:
contributing our part without over/under estimating its value,
and offering it without expectation.

9/18/15

How much different life would be, Karen asks,
 if we went through it focusing on
What is?
 rather than
What if?

How much less likely would it be
 that good doers become do-gooders
 if concentrating on
 trust, optimism and compassion
 (faith, hope and love by other names)
 rather than on outcomes, credit and cost.

It is upon the obvious
 - not profound -
 that we stumble,
 the simplest being the most complicated,
 and vice versa.

"To be or not to be" is NOT the question,
 as it is not like there's another alternative.

Like the rosary,
 our lives have five "mysteries" -
 each comprehensible yet confounding.

Life's first mystery is our spiritual well-being.
 Like the horizon,
 it moves away from us
 at the same pace we approach it;
 yet it is always there upon our arrival.

It's second mystery is our emotional well-being.
 Like a teeter-totter,
 we continually seek the balance point
 amidst life's ups and downs.

The third is our physical well-being.
 We get as much of it as we give to it,
 especially when we don't.

The fourth is financial well-being.
 We pray not to confuse wealth with richness.

The fifth mystery is our social well-being.
 Drawn to those who not only like us,
 but are like us;
 don't look elsewhere if we don't like what we see.

In these as in all matters,
 we can only do our best
 and turn the outcome over
 to The Power greater than our own.

9/26/15

There is no lack of signs
or dearth of directions.

Life comes with its own GPS
but we have to turn it on,
tune it in,
and heed its guidance.

Otherwise, we end up there instead of here,
later rather than sooner,
and worse instead of better.

There is no place worth going
we can get to on our own;
nor as much appreciate steps 'long the way.

The more we think we know where we're headed,
the less our chances of getting there;
the bumps purposeful in jarring us from our illusions.

Those obstacles don't seem like the gifts they are
because we see them differently,
rather than clearly.

9/29/15

It's said the purpose of life
is not happiness but holiness,*
but maybe it's actually wholeness.

The closeness of our connections
is not measured only by
the quality of our contacts
or the content of our conversations.
Also, by the quiet moments,
knowing smiles
and loving thoughts
we send from our minds,
share with our hearts,
and convey through our spirit.

In such fullness is found all good things
happy and/or sad,
light and/or dark,
beginnings and/or ends.
Each completing the other,
yet also smaller parts of something greater.

It is in life's totality that we live,
more or less
knowingly,
happily,
holy
and wholly.

* David Brooks

10/3/15
Return to Lakeland Village

How often it seems our only option
for responding to an uncertain situation
is the one we're looking at.

The Grand Delusion is
that there is no other possibility,
when in fact that's never the case.

Nearly as grand is the one we rarely recognize:
how well we ignore or deny this reality,
which is, of course, a decision-in-itself.

Often unseen is an even less conscious choice:
to acknowledge and accept situations
which require nothing more on our part.

The most well-hidden of all is the most obvious choice:
whether we respond only to our own self-interest
or consider what is best for all concerned.

It's up to us whether we respond
in a reflexive or reflective manner,
the former as spontaneous as a knee-jerk,
the latter being the optimal
- but hardly our only -
option.

10/4/15
Drought Respite

Falling rain washes away worries
of drought and problems therefrom.
Too bad there is no similar cleansing
from troubles equally unwelcome.

Such as deeply ingrained insecurities
pushing for answers not found
by searching far and wide;
look instead within instead of around.

Or the gnawing desire for something more
when what we already have is enough.
What we want is not what we need,
and what's important gets lost in the fluff.

Or how knowledge gets confused with wisdom,
as what we think blocks out what we know;
both distract from how we feel,
making it easy to confuse friend and foe.

These troubles get washed away
by the tears of hard lessons learned,
wiping away the illusion of our delusions*
and providing exactly what we've earned.

* with thanks to John E.

10/6/15
Jury Duty - Day 1

Not until called to civic duty
do we see wheels of justice turn.
A sense of pride rises as citizens assemble,
and of burdens making one tremble
when deciding whether someone may burn.

Those gathered reflect a cross-section
of the community in which we live,
but not of the accused
whose lack of opportunities can't be excused.
Justice is something no one can give.

The sincerity of all present is evident,
with shared aspiration for an outcome fair.
How can a process so random in pick
keep giving some the short end of the stick,
and others the top of the stair?

Among our jobs as citizen:
to make odds more even than they otherwise might be.
By giving at least a theoretical chance
for this not to be their last dance,
we preserve everyone's right to be free.

10/7/15
Jury Duty: Day 2

An entire conglomeration
whose individual intentions are good
can still produce an outcome that's bad.

Despite everyone's effort to the contrary,
the consistent result is the same.
Could there be anything more sad?

Yet none of us can shout
"Objection your honor!"
and bring the whole thing to a halt.

So instead it rolls on
if only because it must;
the outcome won't be San Andreas' fault.*

*Thanks (or not) to Uncle Fr. Pat

10/8/15
Jury Duty: Day 3

The jury is empaneled,
and surprise of surprises:

- 1) The only ones here who looks like the accused is the bailiff and his defense attorney;
- 2) The DA keeps speculating about methods and motives instead of presenting facts;
- 3) It only incidentally slips out that the accused has a 6th grade education ending at the time, all agree, that he experienced a traumatic brain injury;
- 4) Sounds like - although no one actually says it - he has been in what ironically used to be called an "asylum" ever since;
- 5) The DA asserts that the lack of seriousness of his mental condition is indicated by the "fact" that his last psychiatric hospitalization was "only" for two weeks. It later came out that his last stay was twice that long.
- 6) During that stay - except for a two-hour intake session, it took a week for the patient to be seen for treatment.

Justice may indeed be blind,
but its competence
- not this guy's -
should be on trial.

10/13/15
Jury Duty: Day 4

The triumph of form over function
represents the beginning of the end.
Appearances take priority over substance;
posturing substitutes for positioning;
and mere technicalities dictate the outcome.

Whoever wins this charade,
we are all the losers.

Small wonders our communities are in chaos,
our culture in decline,
and our uncertain future breeds
the resentments that fears unleash.

The width and depth of this industry
- its judges, lawyers, jailers, doctors, cops,
their costly jails, courtrooms and treatment facilities -
fails to differentiate the
despicable from the desperate,
instead catching only those
too slow, too crazy, or too dumb
to stay above the chaos
and below the radar.

10/14/15
Jury Duty: Day 5

How frightening to find oneself
in the belly of the beast.
That Jonah only spent three days there
comes as no surprise;
it's no place one would willingly go, even on a dare.

We like to think
it's the best justice money can buy
when instead it's what we can afford.
It's not a place you'd like to be tried,
or a train you'd gladly be aboard.

To have your future depend
on those supposedly working for you
whom you cannot pay -
better the foot in another shoe,
or to be born some other day.

It's a game set to music
we cannot hear,
and there's not enough chairs when it stops;
it's purpose becomes all too clear
even to the robbers and cops.

10/18/15

As the pendulum that swings between extremes
always finds its way back,
so also things change from however they seem
- never staying on the same track.

This is something upon which we can count,
for it's been true throughout the ages,
and yet we become skeptical when the slightest amount
of adversity emits from life's pages.

Doubt, it's been said, becomes an article of faith*
- a belief that persists despite ample evidence,
as we rush forward in an abundance of haste
allowing negative thoughts to take precedence.

It's going however we think it is:
ever changing or constantly the same.
Maybe that's the ultimate quiz:
knowing how to choose determines who wins the game.

* Emmet Fox

10/19/15
Jury Duty: Day 6

How ironic to determine
if a defendant is competent
using a process totally idiotic.

How weird hearing him accused
of manipulative malingering
by a prosecutor guilty of both.

How painful to watch him interrupt
his public defender's argument
that he cannot participate in his own defense.

How deceitful for the DA to assert
he is perfectly "normal"
when his mental health status requires two guards at all times.

How wasteful to require
seven full-time employees and fourteen volunteers
to determine what only a doctor can know.

How unfortunate to rely on a system
which relies on "impeachment of credibility"
rather than discernment of truth.

How unsurprising the process has not changed one iota,
reflecting none of the technological advances
since I was last a juror thirty years ago.

10/20/15

In the absence of hope,
we usually worry about things
in the past or future which
we can do nothing about

taking us away from the here-and-now
- the only time we can do anything -
thereby watering the seedbed
of later worries.

Worse, it is a vote of "No Confidence"
in ourselves, our support team,
and the Power Greater Than Ourselves,
an exercise that restricts
all possible options to the known -
forever projecting the past into the future.

It is by choosing faith and hope
that love becomes possible,
with the elimination of restrictions
and absence of inevitabilities that implies.

This choice does not free us from worry,
but it does liberate us to experience life's many wonders.
Which is odd, because the one (and perhaps only) thing we know
is that nothing stays the same.

This is good news if things are going badly,
as it means they can only get better.
The reality is that hope is always justified
and doubt is ... well ... doubtful.

10/24/15
Kingvale, CA

The steady roar in my ears
could be a passing river,
the wind through the mountain pines,
cars and trucks on the nearby highway,
or the bees buzzing in my head.

Each possibility equally likely,
and containing their own allure.

Blessed are we opportunities to make
- and then take -
the time to reflect on these options,
and The Power that fuels our progress
along the pathway to peace and serenity,
if we so choose to take it.

A bird's steady warble
enhances this revelry,
causing no interruption
but rather adding its voice to this chorus.

10/26/15

One of the unintended consequences of worry
is it creates an irrepressible tendency to hurry.

Neither makes any logical sense.
Both have the effect of making us more tense.

By each, our energies are drained
and any sense of benefits feigned.

No fear is alleviated by addressing it fast,
only make more likely-than-not it will last.

Focusing on a problem takes us away from its solution,
causing our efforts' corresponding dilution.

Worry keeps us distracted, so it's for good reason
we all - at some point - commit personal treason.

To avoid worry and hurry is such a great gift,
but when we receive it our ego gets miffed.

In actuality all's well and there's no reason to rush,
since what we're listening for can only be heard in the hush.

10/28/15
Jury Duty: Epilogue

When in the midst of what seems
like an exercise in futility,
it is hard to remember that
just because something seems meaningless
doesn't mean it's not worthwhile.

Life is an educational experience, but only if we learn from it.
In our personal, family, vocational and communal interactions,
it is so easy to get caught up in debates about the common good
this it is easy to miss the best interests of all concerned.

How does the professor end up teaching the class,
not the students?
Or parents raise their children instead of the child?
Or the courts render judgements instead of justice?

We often confuse progress with going somewhere,
forgetting where we are,
why we're here,
and the purposes fulfilled thereby.

Sometimes the most uncomfortable place to be
is right where we are,
and resisting the urge toward fight or flight is an end-in-itself.

11/10/15

We hold.
We hope.
We hear.
We heal.

Blessed by the opportunity we've received

to see,
feel,
accept,
and appreciate
the chance to make choices by which we're relieved

of anxiety,
fear,
guilt/shame,
and resistance
- all things that make us seem "less than", if believed.

Be happy.
Be willing.
Be joyous.
Be free.
By such decisions, a New World is conceived.

11/14/15
9-Month Anniversary

What we could only see was
how we hoped it would be
if one more chance at True Love ever came.

To feel alive
and again get to thrive
in things similar but hardly the same.

All this and more
- possibilities galore,
and not a single one of them lame.

Filled to the brim,
proper if not prim;
finding no cause for blame.

With gratitude to The Source
and to each other, of course
as each day love finds a new name.

11/17/15

They say "turn the other cheek"
but they don't tell you which one,
or which of my chins to keep up,
or why "don't walk" doesn't mean: run!

Who knew the opposite of "play" is not "work",
since "depressed" is the opposite of "fun"?
Or how "calmness" is not the same thing as "stillness"?
Or why two thousand pounds feels like more than a ton!

There's no manual that offers such guidance.
Only by beginning have we ever begun.
It's by experimenting that we acquire experience,
and by doing things that they get done.

As it was in the beginning and ever shall be,
in all places under the sun.
When we see Not Knowing as the beginning of wisdom,*
the Game of Life has been won.

* Socrates

11/20/15
In flight: OAK to MDW

Our natural predilection
to deal with problems
later than sooner
assures that we'll have
more information and experience
with which to deal with them.

But it also guarantees
those not thereby avoided
will be larger rather than smaller,
and more rather than less costly
physically and mentally,
emotionally and financially.

Raising the Dirty Harry question:
"Do you feel lucky, punk?
Well, do ya?"

Who knew there was a difference between procrastination
- which, like all things,
has its benefits
as well as drawbacks -
and avoidance,
which inevitably takes its toll.

The solution,
as always,
lies between.

11/21/15
Aboard the Lakeshore Limited

Plane then train after automobile.
Can a u-haul truck with polka band in back be next?
No connecting flights at a snow-bound airport,
so no luggage but plenty of beauty, peace and relaxation
while rumbling along rails in the backwoods of eastern New York.

Such a large country
with so many small towns,
scruffy perhaps but proudly determined
to hold on to what they've got
in a world forever on the verge of losing it.

Or at least that's what we're told,
again and again
as if repetition makes it so,
thereby discouraging us all
from doing our part
to make things better ...
or at least different.

If the common thread
of the world's religions
and the universal theme of its music
is: "love is the answer",
then two questions arise:
(1) what the heck was the question?
and: (2) is anyone is listening to the answer.

11/24/15
Chatum, NY

Another train
from another station
at another wondrous moment in time.

Here and now
as always it is,
whether ridiculous or sublime.

Far and wide
our travels take us;
always new mountains to climb.

Sometimes leading
to the loftiest heights,
and other times into the slime.

Sometimes cleansed
and purified;
other times covered with grime.

Rolling along,
yet always here.
To miss it is the only crime.

11/24/15
West Orange, NJ

Giving thanks

... for breath and pulse and all they make possible.
... for presence and purpose the Universal Power provides.
... for faith, hope and love - the three things that abide,
and a partner to share them with,
children nurtured by them,
and a family of friends sustained by them.
... for the sun, moon and stars that keep us from spinning away.
... for trees, flowers and fruits/vegetables that sustain us all day.
... for music that provides Life with its own soundtrack,
and all other art forms that likewise radiate its beauties.
... for the experience of laughter and sorrow that
enable our learning and growth,
improve our eyesight,
and thereby broaden our perspective.
... for problems as small as we are,
and the chances to let go of those Big Ideas about ourselves,
to accept people, places and things as they are,
and appreciate their purpose and value in our lives.
... for pleasures of companionship and camaraderie,
joyful harmony,
conscious connection,
creative collaboration,
serene solemnity,
thoughtful reflection,
intuition and insight,
collective unity,
and for moments of Thanksgiving like these.

11/26/15
Montclair, NJ

My world opened wider
the day you arrived
opening heart, mind and soul
ever since I have thrived.

My possibilities are greater,
and problems smaller;
my clothes fit the same,
but I feel so much taller.

My eye prescription hasn't changed,
but I see oh! so much clearer;
everything seems closer,
and everyone much dearer.

My light shines much brighter,
illuminating the pathway ahead;
helping me be where I am
and better hear what's being said.

My world changed completely
by the difference made in all things
by our forming the circle
symbolized by our rings.

11/27/15
Newark International

Departing in such sweet sorrow,
which would not be otherwise
if the greeting was not so sweet.

Gatherings in celebration of all held dear,
sharing the care we freely receive
and support for another year's adventure.

Regenerating our energy supply
through the closeness of those afar,
and the love conveyed thereby.

The joy unleashed
reveals the triviality of concerns
that block us from the Sunlight of the Spirit.

The tranquility derived
flows inward as well as outward -
for our well-being, and others'.

The celebration of gratitude
provides an annual reminder of its virtues
in every other day of the year.

12/7/15

A soon-to-be-proud GrandDaddio

News of a grandson
headed our way,
bringing to us excitement
before he has anything to say.

Of all he brings with him,
he'll need every bit
to make the adjustments required
to have it all neatly fit.

In this quiet moment
before two become three,
how it all became possible
is much easier to see.

Four parents before you,
- before them eight and sixteen-
all found their way forward,
giving births in between.

The great people you became
- by creating him -
extend the chance he'll do likewise,
filling our world's cup to the brim.

12/10/15

Often unconscious are we
of judgment and criticism;
even less aware
of the comparing that precedes it
or our sense of superiority and/or inadequacy
that creates the jealousy and envy
resulting from insensitivities
caused by our vulnerabilities.

Some feelings
- like anger and resentment -
are secondary emotions
triggered by fears
- of which we are largely oblivious -
about not getting what we want
or losing what we've got,
not realizing (or forgetting to remember)
how such projections
attract that which we wish to avoid
- an occurrence we then blame on others.

The difference between
self-awareness and self-absorption
is that the former tells us things
the latter cannot possibly know.

12/13/15

It was the Impressionists
who laid the path for the Physicists
by making palatable the disconcerting notion
that we don't see things directly
but only the light reflected by them.
They prepare us for the post-modern insight
that reality and truth are not synonymous
and perhaps not even related,
relative to the perceiver who is objective
only in a subjective sense,
prone to shape-shifting of all types, and
thus providing neither anchor nor ballast as hoped.

But unmoored is not the same as adrift.
It's a fine line indeed between liberation and abandonment,
reminding us of the impermanence of all externalities
and the impertinence of our presumptions about them,
ignoring of the most reliable and renewable resources available:
ourselves,
each other,
our ideas and feelings,
hopes and dreams,
shared interests and aspirations,
common wants and needs,
mutual longings and dependencies.

That which brings us together is stronger
than that which pushes us apart,
but only if we seek within
solutions to the problems outside - but not beyond - us.

12/15/15

Closer to the end than beginning
but never too late to start
seeing and believing,
letting go and retrieving,
looking at only our part.

There is - literally - no time but the present;
that spent in the future or past is a waste.
It takes us away
from what can get done today;
thereby making us thing we need to make haste.

Hurry sows seeds of anxiety,
causing us to confuse wants and needs,
diverting attention
and capacity for retention,
sapping energy from today's deeds.

The alternative stands readily before us,
awaiting our recognition and choosing:
accepting who/how we are,
focusing near not far,
makes the difference between winning and losing.

12/24/16

Holiday Gift: Love's Teachings

COMMUNICATE: Express your feelings. Show appreciation. Flirt! Share how you are doing. Make time for daily dialogue. Hold hands. Show consideration.

BE YOURSELF & LET YOUR PARTNER BE ALSO. Love yourself first. Stay honest/open/flexible. Strive for acceptance, not understanding. Focus on "what is" rather than "what if". Give what you need to get back; if/when not getting it, look within rather than elsewhere.

KEEP THE BAR HIGH: Always do your best. Be happy and get/stay healthy in mind, body and spirit. Stay clear and let your light shine. Avoid living in the past (where our regrets/resentments are) and in the future (where our fears/worries lay). Never give up.

BE PROACTIVE: Share concerns before they become issues. Don't wait until you need help to ask for it. Don't wait till you get caught to say you're sorry. Set healthy boundaries and stick to them. Focus on the solution, not the problem. Judge not. Turn the other cheek. Let those without sin cast the first (and last) stone.

"And in the end,
the love you take is equal to the love you make"
Lennon & McCartney

1/7/16

We are all holding on by a single thread,
but luckily not the same one.

Grasping to it tightly
and staying close to those similarly situated,
our threads intertwine into a string,
these strings into rope,
and that rope into a chord
by which all are held together.

Like us, these threads are strengthened by stretching,
They corrode when remaining limp, damp
or exposed to the elements due to isolation.

The more intertwined ours is with others,
the more secure we become in our lives,
the stronger are our communities,
and the safer our world.

Unless, that is, we enjoy dangling.

1/10/16

We are all looking
for the easier, softer way
or so the saying goes.*

Some of us tried the short cut
and found it is not.
It's by learning that one grows.

Others pretend growth happens
some other day.
They find it never shows.

Turns out the hard way is easier.
Only one part in the play
whose lines we're the only one who knows.

* the AA Big Book

1/11/16

We must be looking to see,
and listening to hear
in order to feel that otherwise untouched.
Live to be alive,
strive so to thrive;
hasten slowly, but never be rushed.

Youth is not an age
or an attitude,
but rather a matter of choice.
Look around or ahead
and soon enough we're all dead.
Only in the present is the past given voice.

Nothing to remember
or to forget.
Just the experience of our senses.
Remaining fully here
and in good cheer,
and seeing beyond our defenses.

The more one blames others for it,
greater the likelihood they are the problem.

The more bad or sad we feel,
greater the likelihood we are looking
at what we don't have instead of what we do.

The more anyone insists
it's not about the money,
greater the likelihood it is.

The farther away we look for the solution,
greater the likelihood it is close by.

The more precious our gifts received,
greater the importance they be shared.

The more out of control we are in any situation,
greater likelihood of our attempts to control others.

The farther we've come,
shorter the distance still to go.
The more complex the problem,
greater the answer's simplicity;
larger the number affected but
fewer those who can do something about it;
and more hopeless the situation will seem,
but greater the necessity for optimism.

Pain, loss and separation are inevitable*
when/if we choose the path of love;
but the alternative is always worse.

Only through patience
and nurturing
is it a gift and not a curse.

How much better our world would be
and how much brighter our lives
if just one idea we'd nurse.

Acceptance of a fact steadfastly ignored:
that we accuse others of that which we are guilty.
No greater prize would be our purse.

Proclaimed by every psychologist since Buddha,
and ignored for even longer.
We travel life's pathway by hearsay.

If we reject the joy realized
in the humanness of imperfection,
every interaction becomes terse.

Through choices each day, hour, and minute
we create lives with or without love
in the same way one writes a verse.

1/23/16

Gathered to make music
- always a good cause -
at a memorial for a friend's life
provides a chance to pause
and see this world turning
in the way that it is,
taking in more of its flavor
and less of its fizz.

More of its possibilities
and less of the other
- no need to name it,
as that might be another.

More of its beauty,
allowing its light to surround.
More of the miracles
- they continually abound -

More of the love
- if it's watered, it grows.
Why we would do otherwise
God only knows.

1/28/16

Shimmering candles
brighten the night
warming us inside and out;
illuminating our way
for at least one more day
as we discover what life's all about.

Brightening prospects
disguised as obstacles
unless seen from the proper perspective.
Open and accepting,
ready but not expecting;
to whatever unfolds, we're receptive.

Continuous adventures
on an endless path.
What's next? There's simply no telling.
Much is revealed
yet parts stay concealed,
some quiet while others are yelling.

Evolution is
relentlessly unfolding
all for the best, the experts say.
We get from within what we need
from the tiniest of seed,
from which love grows each step of the way.

1/30/16
FEAR: Part 1

"Fear lies"
the church sign says,
telling us all we need to know
about that most patient of predators
awaiting the moment of vulnerability
to distract us with some drama or trauma
in its relentless effort
to take us from the here and now
(instead to then);
from the things we can change
(ourselves)
instead of the things we can't
(everything and everyone else);
and from the One Path (ours)
instead of the many
(everybody else's).

The antidote to fear, it's said, is faith -
not just in some interventionist deity
but in the Power of Possibility
unfolding at every moment,
protecting us in times of uncertainty
(aren't they all?)
and guiding us to the best outcome
for *ALL* concerned
if we're listening instead of talking,
staying rather than running
and being ourselves rather than anyone else.

1/31/16
FEAR: Part 2

Fear not only lies.
It also cheats and steals.

It takes our time and energy,
our attention and tranquility,
confidence and clarity.
It takes away present moments
and future dreams,
our power and our potential,
and all the other gifts we receive by giving.

In doing so, fear cheats us
out of our birthrights:
the freedom to choose the best option
instead of the safest;
the chance to learn new things
rather than relive the old;
and the opportunity to see life's prospects
instead of its problems.

Fear thrives when we don't,
and won't when we do.

2/5/16

In Praise of Err: Part 1

Thanks for allowing me to make mistakes,
however gruesome they may be.
It is only thereby that we learn,
and thus we are set free.

It would seem much better otherwise
- that we'd learn before we live -
but life's fun lies in figuring it out
and, to that, full devotion we give.

One thing we get to learn is humility
- to promptly acknowledge when we're wrong.
Much more often than we'd like,
we wish we'd sung some other song.

The alternative leads to humiliation;
this is an established fact.
Not to do what must be done
shows more than an absence of tact.

It also reflects a lack of courage
- a telltale sign of fear -
planting seeds of inferiority
which push us away from all we hold dear.

To err allows us to avoid all that,
and instead grow tall and stand strong.
Who knew so many benefits could be found
in learning what's right by doing what's wrong!?!?

2/5/16

In Praise of Err: Part 2

Mistakes are the gods' way
of letting us live before we die.
Making so many, we get too busy
to ask the question: why?

They keep us in our seat
and tempt us to look back;
yet always the answer lies ahead,
lest we get off track.

And by each one we make a choice
between reality and delusion;
each has benefits and drawbacks,
but only one has a happy conclusion.

Mistakes are evidence of our humanity
- the ultimate blessing/curse of free will.
It's one exercise, more than any other,
we do daily as if it's a drill.

They're the ultimate proof we're alive.
Just as finding follows seeking,
we learn from when we err.
Oh! how loudly they're speaking.

1/30/16
Notes to Self (cont.)

What isn't said
is louder than what is,
but only if I'm listening.

If a mistake
is only a lesson from which to learn;
then it's not a burial, but a christening.

If change is
not just eventual but inevitable,
it won't be stopped by resisting.

If "don't know" or "too busy"
are the thin veneer of denial,
it's probably time for desisting.

When we're inclined
to give up and quit trying,
that's the time for persisting.

If the truth
hasn't yet set me free,
I can't blame it for insisting.

Since for every challenge
I have commensurate strengths,
it's The One I should thank for assisting.

2/9/16

Both "god" and "love"
are such small-but-big words.
What if they're one and the same?
Both magnificent, miraculous, majestic;
connecting to them is the goal of this game.

Both are shrouded
in intrigue and mystery,
simultaneously infinite and sublime.
Both are timeless and timely,
cleansing us from occasional grime.

Both connect us
to powers higher and wider
than anything we can understand,
yet expose us to knowledge and wisdom,
and new experiences well beyond grand.

Perhaps it's true:
maybe they really are
connected to a single source,
whose purpose is an end-in-itself
to which we say: "but of course!"

2/14/16
Endless Honeymoon

Some talk of a honeymoon's end
as if it's inevitable
when the reality is: it's optional.

It's not like a vacation,
hockey game, opera,
or other things that start and stop.

It's not like a foot race,
knitting a blanket, or life itself
which have a distinct beginning and end.

It's similar to a roller coaster ride
in its excitement;
to a museum visit
in its aesthetic value;
to a religious experience
in its spiritual engagement;
to a picnic on a lake
in its intertwining of peace and joy;
but not the same as any of these time-limited experiences.

A honeymoon is a state of mind
that stops when we think it does ... or doesn't.
It's a potentially endless series of opportunities
to be alive, in love, and thereby free - if we so choose -
to stay present, positive and appreciative
of this greatest of all blessings.

They call love a gift because we must give it to keep receiving it.



LouieT

2/12/16
Notes to Self (cont.)

Silence can tell me
what I most need to hear.

Listening makes it possible;
it all becomes clear,
connecting us to this very moment
which has no peer,
to those around me
whom are held so dear
and to the Higher Power within
- it's never more near.

Releasing me from worry
- the source of all fear.

Simplifying life as I'm living it,
unencumbered by its gear.

Quieting the critics,
giving them one less cause to jeer.

Reflecting on those gone before,
for whom I shed a tear.

Focusing attention on the very next step,
cautioning us not to veer.

To be happy, joyous and free,*
in that direction we steer.

* the AA promises

2/26/16
27 and Counting

Oh! How hard it is
to be who you're not,
hide who you are,
and not share what you've got.

Blessed are those who live
by choice rather than chance,
accepting who they are, and
showing up for The Dance.

How many? Too many
get lost 'long the way.
Not looking within, they go without,
and live everywhere but Today.

It's not just the stars, but the darkness
we see when we look at the sky.
And getting every question answered
won't stop us asking: why?

Every step brings us closer
to where we already are.
To be happy, joyous and free*
you don't have to go very far.

3/13/16

It's possible to look at the ocean
and see only the water,
missing the animals and energies
that connect us to everything else,
keeping our planet in orbit
and us in awe.

It's possible to look at a loved one
and experience only affection,
missing the light that brightens our lives,
the path forward it illuminates,
the sense of isolation it dissipates,
and the possibilities that might not otherwise exist.

It's possible to defer to some other
appreciation of what's happening
Now, missing the experience of life
at the only moment it's happening,
feelings that are the only evidence we are alive,
and the depth of perspective we would
otherwise lack.

It's possible to confuse our brain with our mind.
Indulging in purposeful distractions
and meaningless externalities,
we miss out on the essence of existence
– the wellbeing that comes only from being well,
and the experience of serenity awaiting our acceptance.

3/19/16

How ironic it is,
when we find we're disturbed,
that it's not the other but us
who are being perturbed.

They say the customer is always right,
but don't tell you the boss is never wrong.
If either of these are not making sense,
don't worry: you won't be working there long.

You don't need to go forward
to get to where we are.
Just avoid going backward,
and you will travel far.

You'll never get what you want;
try if you don't believe it.
Instead, just give what you've got
and you'll always receive it.

3/27/16

mother's 86th birthday wish

There's no well deeper
or river as wide
as the love flowing
from our father's sweet bride.

Her strength knows no limits;
her compassion too.
Over 60,000 meals cooked
and still not yet through.

Attitude and style modern
in any decade you choose.
In sports, politics, culture,
she's on top of the news.

Yet also closely connected
to those near and far from the fold,
while her service to shut-ins
bring warmth to those cold.

If it wasn't for her,
we'd be who-knows-where.
Apparently there's no limit
to the depths of her care.

Humbled are we
to follow her lead
as we invoke the old spiritual:
"How Great Thou Art" indeed.

3/30/16

How odd it is
that the best way
to get what you want
is to let it go,
accept that it may not come,
and learn to be comfortable without it.

That takes us out of the future
and places us squarely
in the only place we ever actually are.

Then, and only then,
are we in a position to make the most
of whatever situation we're in.

However remote that location
or small that task,
the memory muscle acquired,
habits formed
and perspective shaped
takes us further, faster,
sooner and more serenely
than any short-cut/quick-fix/sure thing.

Starting with happiness,
- rather than trying to end up with it -
makes for a longer-lasting, more satisfying experience
than any alternative approach.

4/20/16
Two Years Later

With days passing in such profusion
they can seem like not to matter
until accumulating in such a pile
that you can't tell former from latter.

Then one day comes along so unique,
you realize: so are they all.
It's how we look at them - not how they are -
that makes them seem short or tall.

The reason things change on any given day
is because we finally become active -
in my case, picking up the phone and taking a risk,
not allowing fear to dilute the attraction.

What's past is preparation for the unfolding moment,
but only if we show up for its passing
and thereby present when the next thing arrives -
from such moments, our life is amassing.

It was one of such days after a brother's party,
once again solo in couples crowd,
that I realized I needed to take action
or forever would I be cowed.

And at that moment you were ready and waiting,
having gone through a similar trial.
Now we share life's adventures together,
still not knowing what brings the next mile.

4/23/16
Costa Mesa, CA
Grandson's Pending Welcome

New life in Chicago,
coming out soon,
begins our next generation;
bringing our best
to the next century
which seems far away as the moon.

We don't yet know his name
or if he's left-handed,
but no doubt he'll leave his mark;
being who he is
wherever he goes
oh! so finely we're branded.

His parents are ready!
- aunts, uncles, grandparents too.
However from here life unfolds,
they'll assure he is raised
knowing right from wrong
and on which foot fits the shoe.

But that's well ahead.
What matters is now,
and what happens next.
May his birthing go smoothly,
growing up healthy and happy,
and someday show another boy how.

5/6/16
Notes to Self (cont.)

It's easier to keep going
than get started.

It's closer than I think,
but not as near as I'd wish.

It's more expensive than it should be,
but cheaper than what it's worth.

It's harder than I'd expect,
but softer than I deserve.

It's better to know what I think
than think that I know.

It happens sooner than it seems,
but rarely soon enough.

It's never how it looks,
but always looks like it is.

It's always darkest before the dawn,
yet the sun always rises.

It may be a far cry from heaven,
but never as bad as hell.

5/9/16

There are always things we don't know,
but that's not the same as not knowing.

So much we accept as a matter of faith
only seems matter-of-fact.

Perhaps it also seems there is no path forward,
considering how well marked the trail that got us here.

There is so much more of what we can't see
than what we can
- air, ideas, smells, tastes, feelings, integrity, intuition,
time, and, of course, love -
and yet we know they're there.

How much more, then, should we accept
the unignorable truths of our existence:
- not our wants, but only our needs, are provided.
- we get back that which we put out.
- we take offense to that which we are most guilty.
- how we treat others reflects not how we feel about them,
but about ourselves.
and
- those happiest at the end brought it with them
each step along the way.

5/14/16

Notes to Self (cont.)

There isn't a single easy way to change,
but there's a hundred hard ways not to.

There's no shortage of ways to avoid doing something,
especially when I've got to.

Dozens of distractions readily available,
but I'll have to pay a lot to...

... each more preferable than the last,
and they provide their own spot to ...

...cool down, mellow out, breathe easy.
Nothing to get too bothered or hot to...

... let it go this time and even the next.
Rest up! It'll even give you a cot to.

That's how accommodating inertia is
- complete with a soundtrack to rot to.

It would be easy if it wasn't so hard
to do right when we have a shot to.

5/29/16

Notes to our first grandchild

Not a good idea to dwell on the past
but don't forget from where you came.

It's easy to do
for never are you through
as living and life become one and the same.

Even though it never seems like it
things are always working out for the best.

For us and all others concerned,
in the short and long run,
most of it is only a test.

And nothing else is as it seems either
as the way we perceive things is not how they are.

keep your windshield clear
and your headlights on;
otherwise you won't travel far.

All that's provided is not just for your benefit

so take only what you can use;
give back twice as much
without expecting return;
this proposition you ought not refuse.

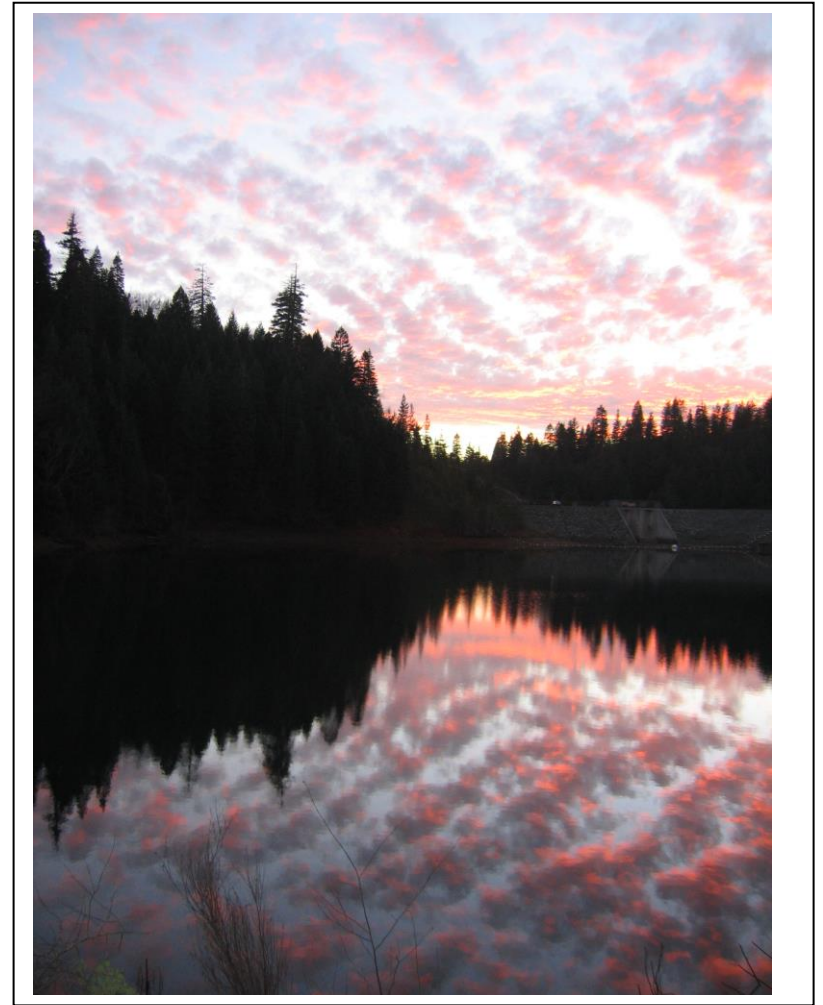
5/29/16
Ridin the "L"
Oak Park, Ill.

It's all in the eye of the beholder
whether service is a blessing or burden,
or if things are getting better or worse,
headed toward sickness or wellness,
forward or backward,
upward or downward.

It's a fact proven by Einstein
which we intuitively know to be true
even as we search hither and yon
for some less expensive explanation
that ends up costing more.

Like false owls on a passing building rampart
- which fools gathering pigeons not one bit -
insecurities can become sentinels
posted at all points of access
that can't stop the bad, but keep out the good.

What is coming cannot be stopped.
What is gone cannot be retrieved.
Forgetting neither while ignoring both
is the recurring lesson availing
those willing to listen and learn.



5/31/16
Reunion: Part 1

Headed to meet a friend from a lifetime ago
before either of us knew what from what.

Headed where? We knew not,
having no other map but our gut.

And yet we're now here - despite the odds -
still not knowing where from here will we go

yet both still willing to accept risks involved
in opening ourselves to what we don't know.

So taking the same train to the same destination
having learned how to enjoy the ride,

which is probably what joined us from the very start
and kept us since then on the very same side.

5/31/16
Reunion: Part 2

What brings us together
or moves us apart?
These forces we cannot explain,
nor can we control them,
- try as we might -
so it does no good to complain.

Things can always be different
but not likely better
- how slowly that penetrates our brain!
Returning to our beginnings
while approaching our ends,
we easier to hear life's refrain.

Releasing "why?" and "why not?"
focuses on what lies in between,
and not about loss or gain.
Earliest friends are reminders
that what we hold most dear;
they are the tracks that help guide our train.

12 THINGS I FORGET 2 REMEMBER

- 1) The path I am on is mine, and I am uniquely positioned and always prepared to take its next step. Wherever I am on it is right where I need to be to get where I am going.
- 2) Everything I did to get here was the best I could do at the time; it was good enough to get me where I am, and has well-positioned me for whatever is going to happen next.
- 3) Those I encounter along the way help me learn about myself and my path. I engage them as allies - not adversaries - by applying the first rule of trust: go first.
- 4) EVERYTHING along the way is for my growth and development. It arrives at the most opportune time; and its outcome will be in the best interest of all concerned. My perceptions to the contrary prevent me from seeing how life is a mirror that reflects back whatever I am putting out; the more vehemently I deny it, the truer this fact becomes.
- 5) My only job is to be where I am; to do only what only I can do; and remember to remember that all others are doing pretty much that same thing.
- 6) Any "problems" are just the god's way of telling me that I am in the past (triggering my regrets) or the future (prompting my fears); they remind me to return my attention to the present and count my many blessings.
- 7) These so-called "problems" are particularly prone to surface when I am looking at the differences rather than the similarities; focusing on what isn't rather than what is; seeking short-term benefits rather than long-term gains; and trying to change what I can't (others) rather than what I can (myself).
- 8) Along this path, I am only seeing what I already believe - not the other way around. My projections shape my reality, affect my wellness, and determine my fate. And they change only when my thinking does.
- 9) The clarity of these perceptions is determined by my degree of acceptance of myself, my contentment with what is, and the calmness I bring to the world I am creating by my own choices. I won't bring gasoline to a fire; I can't change anything but my attitude and approach; and I don't depend on the weatherman for my sunshine.
- 10) The Universe has already done its job, anticipating all of my needs and leaving me to manage my wants. Each breath renews my connection to Its power; each smile strengthens my connection to those around me whom It has provided for my companionship on this journey.
- 11) I face the Great Unknown with confidence rather than fear when I remain patient, withhold judgement, stay curious, and experience appreciation.
- 12) I can't remember this one!-)