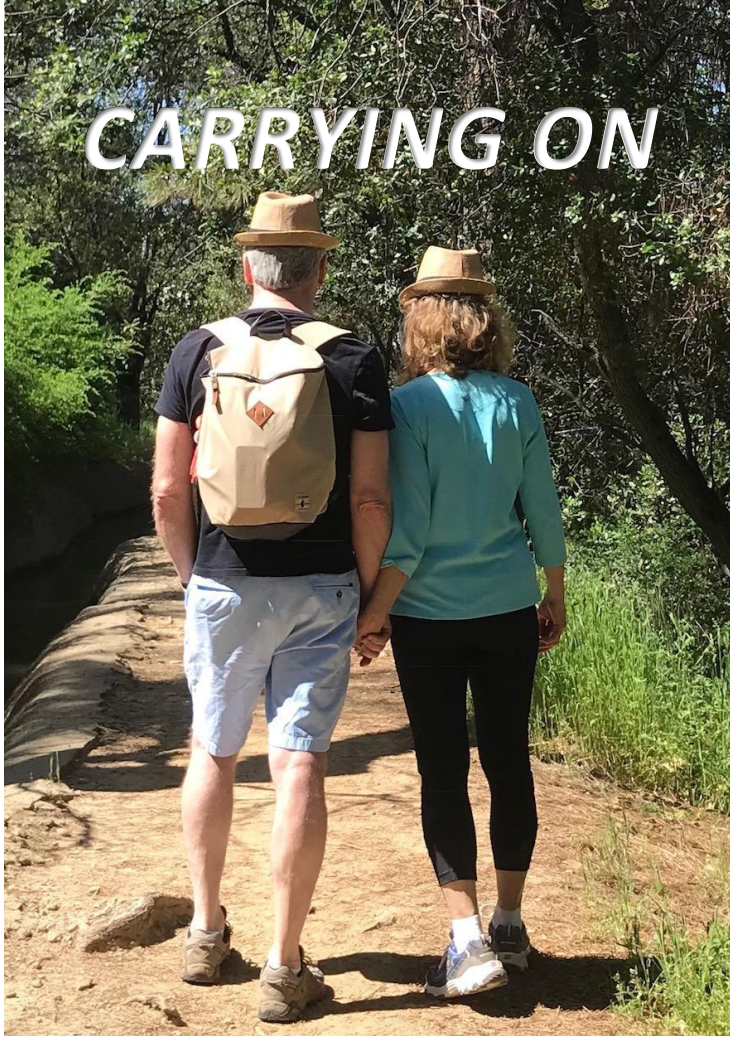


CARRYING ON



RoberTo
Volume 13

*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
Cover Photo: Clara Tobin*

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

JAILHOUSE INJUSTICE
Martinez, CA
7/10/17

Whether our confinement
is physical, mental, emotional or spiritual,
the means of its release is the same.

To assign blame or assess guilt
to judges and jailers
just sucks us further into their game.

To instead look within
when any trouble begins;
thereby begins the healing.

It's a waste of time
looking anywhere else;
only from ourselves are we stealing.

Beginning anew,
again and again,
to keep afloat the ship we are sailing ...

... and carry onward,
ever forward,
toward the stories we'll be someday regaling.

SUMMER'S APEX
7/15/17
Stinson Beach, CA

Rising tide.
Setting sun.
Rhythmic ocean waves.
Cross-section of humanity
resting and relaxing.
Sandcastles washing away.

Summer's apex
in light drenched splendor
cooled by constant breezes.
Gleeful children.
Innumerable dogs.
Pelican flying in formation.
Sailboats in the distance.
Waves rolling in from Hawaii.

It's the moments to remember
that we forget.

Normal.

Ordinary.

Remarkable.

Living starts when time stops.

Already planning for next time.

SIXTY-THREE
7/16/17

We're surrounded
by family and friends
whether we know it or not.

Always there
in good times and bad,
helping us recall what we've got.

Being more-or-less
happy and healthy,
we're not really in such a bad spot.

Even when
we feel something's missing,
what we've got is still quite a lot.

And, if truly needed,
and we do what we can,
it arrives timely; in fact, on the dot.

No need to quibble
about its form of delivery –
who cares if it's cold or hot?

We get our friends
by being one.
Try it – it's well worth a shot!

ANOTHER MOMENT
8/3/17
San Clemente, CA

Gentle breeze wafts the balcony.
Palm trees dot the horizon.
Ocean and sky equally blue.
Crashing surf and humming ceiling fan
lulling us into relaxation,
their incessance overcoming
equally insistent mental distractions
and anxieties only as real
as we make them,
pushed away if only momentarily
by the growing sense
of peace and serenity
whose seeds get their watering
by noticings such as these.

We cannot know what we don't,
or do what we can't
or be where we aren't,
truths that remain largely obscured
until we stop trying,
quit doing,
and start being,
if only for a moment.

LESSONS
8/4/17
San Clemente, CA

It's easier to know
what not to do
than what to.

It's easier to see
where to start
than when you're through.

It's easier to say
what others should
than what we must do.

It is easier
to bite off
than it is to chew.

It's easier to learn things
than to remember
what we always knew.

It's easier to see
how far we have to go
than to know how much we grew.

It's easier to tell how far
from here to there
than from me to you.

69TH ANNIVERSARY
8/14/17

Lots of water
under the bridge
and lots of kids 'long the way.
Lots of chances
for living and learning
and letting others have their say.

Lots of opportunities
to "make it better and pass it along"
and let every dog have its day.
Lots of experiences
- blessings disguised as challenges -
and many a piper to pay.

Lots of love
and peace and joy
by which our fears allay.
Lots of optimism,
and of modeling of the Golden Rule
by which on the "High Road" we stay.

G&C'S 3RD ANNIVERSARY
8/15/17

So much to celebrate
- civilization's perpetuation assured -
(Phew!)
by yet another smiling face
added to the planet
by two clear (and clearly capable) parents
united in their commitment
to stay present,
be responsible,
have fun,
and encourage young Gus
to do likewise.

They are spiritually grounded,
socially connected,
values-based
citizens of the world,
birthing not just their progeny
but a whole new world order
that heightens our prospects
for a bright future.

VERACITY
8/16/17

The truth isn't very difficult to live with.
It's getting to it that's hard.

Its road is pock-marked
with rationalization and obfuscation,
diversion and denial,
deceit and delusion,
projection and avoidance,
metaphor and literalism,
and nit-picking of every kind.

Truth not-so-simply requires
acceptance rather than analysis,
embrace rather than surmise
and,
by all means,
welcome rather than resistance or revisionism.

It cannot be bent,
folded or spindled,
but it can (and often will) be mutilated.

(RE)VISITATION
8/24/17

Our sister Moira came by again today,
Not once but twice
in a dream about a(nother) wild family gathering.

As we were running around making various arrangements,
I suddenly found myself in a lovely but unfamiliar part of town.
I went into an old apartment complex,
and there she was,
sitting at a corner table reading under a light,
healthy and happy as could be,
as if awaiting our arrival.

"Everything's fine"
was the message conveyed
not by her words
by her smile and laughter,
eyes beaming
and not a grey hair on her head.
We seemed to chat for a while
as if there was no place to go,
and not a care in the world.
I took lots of notes and promptly lost them all.

Ran into brother Dan thereafter
and tried to explain it all to him
when suddenly there she was again,
leaning out from an upstairs window of the old apartment,
shouting for us to come upstairs
because she has shoes for everyone.

But of course she does.

PORTALS
8/29/17

Our spirits are inclined toward peace
but our minds and bodies seem not,
equipped with a bazillion tricks and traps
triggered by instincts toward fight or flight
at the slightest provocation, real or imagined,
that floods our minds with ideas and emotions,
and our bodies with adrenalin, cortisol
and other chemicals
that can be healthy/helpful or neither,
depending on their application
and/or reception.

It is these two sentinels
– body and mind –
that stand watch ever vigilantly,
creating the portal through which
all experiences and circumstances must pass
before touching our hearts
and nourishing our spirits,
or else not.

Who knew that parents, teachers and ministers were right
about the importance of good habits,
moderate temperament,
and the discipline required to stay in the center of the road
when we would rather be elsewhere!!!?

LA SERENA INN
Morrow Bay, CA
9/1/17

Harbor town at sunset.
Seals and gulls saying "good night".
Distant roar of ocean waves.
Blinking lights and fog horns guiding
those still asea.

Similar guidance is available
to all those adrift,
pointing us in the right direction
and away from life's hazards,
rekindling the lesson learned
by a child crossing the street:
to stop, look and listen.

We are obliged
not just to be perceptive
but also be receptive,
adjusting ourselves
to changing circumstances
rather than vice versa.

Solitude and serenity are found
not far from the beaten path
but removed from the tourist traps,
inviting those curious enough to leave behind
shore-bound ideas and expectations.

UNSPEAKABLE (1)
9/4/17

How often we only discover afterward
what we previously thought unthinkable,
inadvertently blocking from our minds and hearts
things neither good nor bad
obscured from consideration
by our narrow conceptualizations,
limited knowledge,
and finite computation capacity.

More troublesome is our tolerance for the unspeakable,
allowing discomfort or disinterest
to persuade us to ignore, deny or avoid
... and thereby render acceptable ...
what ought not be condoned
by our inaction or inattention.

Just as the legal maxim is "silence is consent",
so also our tolerance of the intolerable
constitutes not just permission,
but endorsement of that so abhorrent
that we are struck dumb – and stupid – by its emergence.

Yet speak up we must,
or render ourselves complicit
in the unfolding of the unacceptable.

REMEMBERING
9/12/17

Hearing about yet another friend
who is close(r) to life's end
provides a(nother) chance to consider what it means

to appreciate what we've got,
whether or not it's a lot,
and remember: nothing is as it seems.

We're here for a reason
for such a very short season,
as if in a series of dreams,

never fully awake
yet everything's at stake,
resonating from our atoms and genes.

All over too quickly
and more-or-less sickly;
life isn't all peaches and creams

but well worth the trip,
then leaving barely a blip
amid all the shouts and the screams.

Each day is full of surprises,
which is better than predictability.
Even bitter is preferable to boring;
pain more acceptable than numb;
adversity over complacency.

It's said* the old saying
"you only live once"
is incorrect;
we only get to die once,
but get a new chance to live each day
if we so choose, of course.

And that,
like the search of intelligent life in the universe,
is a lot harder than it sounds.**
Choosing every day
to feel and think,
embrace the unpalatable,
to live without resentment
and love without fear;
all require more patience and tolerance
than we think we have,
but rewards us
with more freedom and fulfillment
than we thought possible,
conveying a sense of liberation
otherwise unattainable.

* John Feil, 9/11 First Responder survivor

** Lily Tomlin

UNSPEAKABLE (2)
9/16/17

Oh! So often, it seems,
we're the last to know
but the first to find out.

We strive to ignore pain
we cannot disregard,
and then try to deny its existence and impact
by activities that only increase it.

How often do we respond to the unspeakable
by behaviors unforgivable,
soon doing the unbelievable,
and finding ourselves in the realm of the inconceivable!?

In matters foreign and domestic,
responses that instead increase love, peace,
compassion and healing –
striving for the middle ground
instead of the opposite extreme –
are all the more important
as they become increasingly difficult.

Practice doesn't make perfect.
It just makes us more prepared
for whatever's next.

STRANGERS
9/21/17

It's not immediately obvious
what a challenge it is
to be ourselves around others
without being unduly influenced
by their needs or interests
or even our own,
but rather simply opening ourselves
to the situation as it unfolds
and staying focused
in these encounters.

Even more difficult it is
to be ourselves,
fully accepting both our assets and liabilities
without becoming deluded by glimmering attractions
or ignoring costly consequences
often hiding beyond the garish glare.

Character, it's been said,
is what people do in the dark.*
That's when we discover whether
we are the same with ourselves as with others,
or if there is someone else involved
who is strange to us,
but no stranger.

* George Bernard Shaw

MATINEZ COURT HOUSE
9/26/17

If, as the old saying goes,
the mills of the gods grind slowly
but exceedingly well, *
only the former can be said
about the wheels of (in)justice.

The appropriate disposition
of any court case
may be a happy coincidence,
but it can hardly be called
the primary focus,
or even the intended outcome.

The reputation of the judge and prosecutor,
the convenience of the jail deputies,
time honored traditions and precedents,
and what is not-so-euphemistically called
"if it pleases the court" –
all these are stronger drivers toward any outcome
than the victim/plaintiff, the accused,
the facts,
or all taxpayers combined.

With all of those interests at stake,
the absence of diligence in these cases is
– quite literally –
a shame.

* Sextus Empiricus, 200 A.D.

BABYSITTING
Chicago, Ill.
10/1/17

The future is as bright
as a grandson's smile
and his parents proud glow,
illuminating each's path forward
through imposing obstacles, undeterred.

And so it has always been,
overcoming doubt
accepting risk,
demonstrating trust,
without ignoring evidence to the contrary
for the most (important) part(s).

In such passing moments
the future becomes the past,
as our children have children
who challenge, defy and love them
as we did ours,
without knowing what to expect,
or how quickly the baton would pass.

LOST & FOUND
10/5/17

Life and death
hang in the balance
at moments we are least aware.
We could be sitting
listening to music
or walking down a stair.

Either can come or go
whether we know it or not,
and at times we least expect,
making us recognize forces
beyond our control
and deserving our respect.

At any moment,
what we have gets lost
and may never be found.
Best to live
before it's too late
and we're buried in the ground.

LINES
10/8/17

Dreaming or streaming?
It's so hard to tell
as images and ideas flow
unfiltered and disassociated –
equally real and unbelievable.

Depleting or defeating?
One can beget the other
as the ongoing War of Attrition
wears us down, if not out,
leaving us increasingly unprepared
for whatever happens next.

Treating or retreating?
They sometimes look alike,
for surrender is not so much giving up
as accepting the obvious
and joining the winning side.

The line between these distinctions,
is wide and clear
as we approach it,
but quickly becomes invisible
as we cross it,
finding out only the hard way thereafter.

* 12 Step saying

TEACHERS
10/10/17

Ignorance is not only
the leading cause of stupidity;
it can also mark the first step toward a teachable moment,
those head-slapping, teeth-grinding times when,
after trying everything else,
we finally try what works.

Well, perhaps it's the second step,
as the first is toward the humility
that only comes from the humility
arising from the acknowledgement that
I not only don't know
but – when left to my own devices –
don't have a clue about how to find out ...
a condition so distracting that
it is often difficult to listen, let alone hear,
which seems itself to be a third precondition
for a teachable moment.

None of which matters a bit
without the courage to do something different,
which is a fourth prerequisite to change.
We could be seated at the feet of the world's most wise,
but copious notes are useless
in the absence of the willingness to try.

And, obvious as it sounds,
there are no teachable moments without the willingness to learn.
Too often, we let who we are
keep us from getting to know – and like – who we're becoming;

it's only when s/he is welcomed that the teacher arrives.

LESSONS (cont.)
10/13/17
Yosemite, CA

We can't know how ice cream tastes, we're told,*
until we've actually tried it.

And, of course, we can't actually taste it
until we've bought it.

If storms' intensity increase due to climate change,
that won't stop because we've denied it.

Truth has a way of coming out
no matter how many ways we hide it.

We all go out on the horse we came in on,
but it's up to us to remain astride it.

A door that's bolted will remain shut
no matter how hard we've pried it.

Healthy food won't stay that way long
if you have greased and fried it.

Judgmentalism is not yet passé,
no matter how much we've decried it.

The shoe can't get on the other foot
until someone has untied it.

* John Gray

STREET SIGNS
10/14/17
Yosemite, CA

Life comes complete
with signposts, mileage markers and traffic lights
all largely self-explanatory.

Smiles,
experiences of joy and happiness,
fulfillment and contentment,
love and peace
are the Green Lights of Life,
encouraging us to keep going
in the same direction
without letting up or slowing down.

Heartburn and headaches,
heartache and hangovers
are among the Yellow Lights of Life,
warning us, at a minimum,
to proceed with caution
and consider changing lanes ...
and perhaps also direction.

Break-ups and breakdowns,
burnout and blackouts
are Life's Red Flashing Lights,
alerting us to heart attacks of all kinds
awaiting around the next corner.

What the signs mean is not up to us.
But whether we heed them is.

CHOOSEY
10/18/17

We get to experience
the totality of life,
the great, good, blah, bad and ugly.
It's only when we get choosey,
oddly enough,
that we stop getting the full spectrum
and, even more oddly,
we get more of the lower half
and less of the upper end of the equation
as if, in trying to assert control,
we lose it altogether
and only get it back
when we stop seeking and grasping
and instead become more receptive and grateful –
yes, even for what we don't want.

Roses don't come without thorns,
horses or dogs without manure,
trees without leaves to rake,
dinner without dishes,
love without pain
or
life without death.

"It's all part of it," a great man says.*

*FXT, Sr.

COMPLEXITIES
10/26/17

The problems of life are complicated,
but their solutions tend to be simple:
if/when we do what's best for all concerned,
we tend to do and feel well
- not always or even mostly -
but better than we might otherwise.

And if/when we don't, we won't.

As a friend notes,*
we'd never think of putting 10 gallons of gas
and one gallon of water
in our car's fuel tank
and think it will run properly,
but we do that to ourselves
and each other
all the time -
expecting it to all work out just fine.

Understanding is elusive and ephemeral.
Acceptance is always available,
if we so choose.

* John E.

THE CHALLENGE
11/1/17

It's not for nothing
that they call it: "working through the problem."

After ignoring, denying and/or avoiding it,
and then trying to go over or around it,
finding sources aplenty of fault/blame along the way,
we eventually acknowledge and accept its existence -
none of which brings us any closer to addressing it.

To the contrary, the issue is not even the problem itself
but rather the solution,
which is often hiding in the opposite direction
of whatever crisis or chaos ensued from its unfolding.

Rather than succumbing to the temptation
to treat symptoms and shoot messengers,
the challenge is to see the little things
that make such a big difference,
do what can be done rather than what needs to,
and keep one's head when
everyone else is losing theirs.*

* "If" by Rudyard Kipling

THE CIRCUS
11/3/17

Who knew that circus skills could carry us through life?

Perhaps primary among these is juggling,
an especially good thing to know
when bowling balls and flaming torches
are coming at us in rapid succession.
Knowing which end to catch,
and when to let 'em drop
is a trial-and-error experience
that involves plenty of both.

Another handy skill is lion-taming.
Learning how to stick your head in its mouth
without ending up in its stomach
does not allow many opportunities for practice,
which helps explain why so many live in such ignorance.

The last of these skills is unavoidable, and unignorable.
Somebody has to clean up after the elephants,
but nobody wants it to be their job;
As it turns out, everybody shares that duty –
some lucky enough to have shovels, and some not.

Many other skills are helpful in the Circus of Life
– working the high wire,
learning when to let go of the trapeze bar, and
how NOT to be the man shot out of the canon –
but these first three keep us in the ring rather than peanut gallery
and less surprised by the appearance of all the clowns.

COMPLAINT DEPT.
11/9/17

If life had a Complaint Department,
what would yours be?
Getting too much or too little?
Seats too far back to see?

We tend to focus
on what we don't got.
Look the other way
and we find more than not.

We see what we're seeking
wherever we look,
Good, bad or indifferent,
it's all there in the book.

But it's we who decide
which pages we read.
We won't get all we want,
but always have what we need.

Complainers aren't just lamenting:
"They're not playing my song;"
theirs is a self-centered assertion
that the gods got it wrong.

THANKS GIVING
11/11/17
NY, NY

It's been suggested* that instead of looking for god,
we should look for love
and find they're one and the same.

Much like an apple
that has both a seed and sweet fruit
- a rose by some other name ...

... that brings together
our past, present and future -
each part of the same game.

Wherever compassion, gratitude
and freedom unite,**
there's nothing and no one to blame.

To live is to experience
these beautiful gifts;
missing even one would be such a shame.

* Marianne Williamson: "Return to Love"

** Marcus Borg: "Convictions"

APPEARANCES
11/13/17
Baltimore, MD

How often we deem obstacles
as things that obstruct,
for why else would they be so named?
Sitting, as they do,
in the midst of our path,
they would seem to be rightly blamed.

But what if, instead,
they were viewed as signposts,
advising that our course be adjusted?
Seen as helpful tools
instead of barriers to be surmounted,
we'd waste less energy being disgusted.

That our perceptions
are shaped by our projections
defies all manner of logic,
yet they determine
how we see everything,
making what could be helpful seem toxic.

We must stay close enough
to see things
as they are,
yet far enough not to be
deceived by their appearance.
Otherwise, we won't get far.

PUZZLES
11/14/17
Annapolis, MD

Life is like a jigsaw puzzle,
but without the picture on the box.
A couple of pieces might be missing,
a lot of them look the same,
and some smell like stinky sox.

The harder we try
to make pieces fit,
the more they seem to resist.
Sometimes the shapes are quite obscure,
and at others seem tightly knit.

But the longer we work at it
it becomes clear(er) to us,
turning out in ways
completely unexpected,
often with a minimum of fuss.

Then the pieces are returned
to the box from which they came.
Sometimes with more,
and at other times less than we started,
either a valuable lesson about life's game.

COMING & GOING
11/21/17
Chicago, Ill.

Our tenuous basis for living is revealed
By how it begins and ends.

Nothing that happens in between compares
with the drama and trauma
as something coming from nothing
and nothing from something,
or at least so it seems.

Resiliency and fragility,
hopes and wishes,
triumphs and defeats,
abundance and scarcity,
sadness and joy,
darkness and light
periodically ebb and flow.

But our arrival and departure
are distinctive moments
never to recur in this exact configuration,
making our presence as unique
as it is fleeting.

(IN)DECISION
11/24/17

The Path is as wide as a highway
when we're on it
but, like all such roads,
it is easier to stay with
than to get on or off.

And it's often the other guy
we need to watch out for,
lest we start acting like
the idiots and maniacs
we find ourselves disparaging.

The line between good and evil,
is obvious and unignorable
until we're crossing it;
then it seems subtle and miniscule,
a relative guideline
rather than a realistic impediment
to options we might never otherwise consider.

It is on this slippery slope of perception
that decisions with life-long implications are made.

INCHING ALONG
12/12/17
Wilmette, Ill.

Wondering, while wandering
down a slippery sidewalk
on a sunny ice-cold day,
about how we manage
to stay on our feet
given all we encounter 'long the way.

The harder we try
not to fall down,
more likely those possibilities seem,
so we tread
every more carefully
not to trip on our way through this dream.

Inch by inch,
step by step,
we strive to get ourselves to where we already are,
obsessing about
how long it will take
to travel a distance that's not very far.

With a stiff wind in our faces
and uncertain terrain ahead,
it's too dangerous to look back.
Best to look forward
and stay on our feet,
lest we veer off the track.

INEVITABILITIES
12/14/17

We write what we need to read
and say what we need to hear, it's said*
and learn what we need to know.

We find what we're seeking,
see what we're looking for,
and get where we want to go.

We fear what we won't face,
ignore what we're trying to avoid,
and water that which will grow.

What we resist is what persists,**
trying to stop what we cannot prevent,
and always reaping exactly what we sow.

We fight battles we don't need to win,
making worse what we're trying to make better,
and hiding what we need to show.

We dig the holes we get stuck in,
walk when we should run,
and plant our seeds in the row we hoe.

Accidents aren't.
Neither are coincidences,
just as heel follows toe.

* Gloria Steinem
** John E.

TRICKYNESS
12/16/17

How often we define solutions
not in terms of the problem
but what (we think) we can do about it,
ignoring or dismissing information or options
that contradict our (mis)perceptions.

And, when in such circumstances,
how tricky it is to discern
whether the situation is something to accept, ignore or address –
especially when each has its benefits and drawbacks,
and all of which can have equal and opposite effects
than those intended
if errantly applied.

The challenge, of course, is to find
"the wisdom to know the difference."*

* Part 3 of The Serenity Prayer

CHOICES #3
12/19/17

A lot of things I thought would be good for me,
it turned out – not so much.
And almost all the things I thought were bad for me
turned out to be very educational.

Such (mis)perceptions
occur at the point
where living and Life coincide,
focusing us on the outcome instead of the process,
causing us to miss out on what happens in between.

It is our choices
that determine our destiny,
and not the other way around.
And it's the attitude by which those decisions are implemented
most influences how well they are received.

It is a wonder we have gotten this far
with so little information about so much.

DAD'S 92ND BIRTHDAY
12/19/17

It attests to his character and wisdom
that the most damning thing he could say –
"You're better than that" –
was actually a compliment.

Or that his most clear directive –
"take what you get,
make it better,
and pass it along" –
wasn't telling you what to do or how to do it.

Similarly, his admonitions –
"Do the right thing"
or
"Be a leader, not a follower"
provided scant information about what that meant
or how hard it would be.

He would teach without preaching,
propel without pushing;
quick to smile
and even quicker to apologize.

He didn't tell us as much as show us
how to handle whatever challenges arise
with grace, humor, humanity, humility
and, of course, a song.

HOLIDAY GIFTS #1
12/24/17
Christmas Eve
Nevada City, CA

It is the gifts we give ourselves
that best indicate,
indeed define,
our self-worth:
peace or pain
acceptance or rejection
praise or criticism
joy or sorrow
serenity or aggravation.

We know best
if we've been naughty or nice,
and reward ourselves accordingly,
and more-or-less consciously,
by our choices,
our demeanor,
and our outlook,
all of which determine
whether we live in heaven or hell –
either of which are accurately reflected
by the gifts we give ourselves.

HOLIDAY GIFTS #2
12/25/17
Christmas Day
Nevada City, CA

Each day is worth celebrating
a miracle of its own,
a holiday of love to share
and a chance to see how we've grown.

Each is another new chance
to appreciate gifts we've received;
to unwrap and enjoy
what might otherwise not be believed.

This day, like all others,
is a chance to give thanks,
share love, show respect,
and fill in all the blanks.

And, like all others,
this day's special too
if, nothing else, for another opportunity
to say "I love you."

HOLIDAY GIFTS #3
12/28/17

The greatest gifts
of this or any season
so often go unwrapped;
experiences of joy, freedom,
happiness and tranquility
so frequently go untapped.

When we allow
externalities
to shape our way of being,
we turn over our puppet strings
to some other master
and lose our way of seeing.

These gifts
are not something
we need to take in,
but to let out
whenever
we begin ...

... to accept
people and things
just as they are,
and ourselves too –
as our greatest gifts.
After all, it's gotten us this far!

REVELATIONS
12/28/17

Life becomes a series
of meaningless moments
if/when we focus on the motion,
not thinking or seeing
or sharing or feeling,
lacking a sense of devotion.

Not going there
but instead staying here
is a matter of life-long learning(s);
through trial(s) and error(s)
and occasional terror(s),
we always materialize our yearning(s)

On every step in the journey
from there to here,
many things are revealed.
The most important of these,
like the birds and the bees,
were never actually concealed.

Rather, they're hidden
by thoughts and actions
that separate us from The Source.
They were there all the time,
and, like the words of this rhyme,
they arrive when we follow the course.

RESOLUTIONS
12/31/17
New Year's Eve

In the Pathway of Life
- its starting point, interim and destination -
are built with, for, and by love.
It is especially when it doesn't seem so
that we must see it that way,
not just because doing otherwise always makes it worse,
but because it is the only way to make
a bad situation better,
our future brighter,
our relationships stronger,
our centering point firmer,
our potential more fully realized,
our learning experiences more enlightening,
our presence more positive and productive,
our contributions more valuable and appreciated,
acceptance of ourselves and others
arriving sooner and more readily,
our world better, and thereby
our love becoming even deeper, wider and greater.

"We know that all things work together for good
to them that love." Romans 2:28

THREADS
1/4/18

Looking at days
behind and ahead,
continually searching
for their common thread.

If not for consistency,
at least continuity;
maybe not clarity,
but perhaps maybe unity.

Weeks roll by
into one year, then another,
with enough instability
to make one shudder.

But positive signs too -
as young people's emergence
provide sufficient basis
for optimism's resurgence.

And so on each day
our attention returns
to the only important thing:
whether one learns.

CARRYING ON
1/8/18

Why is it
so difficult to become
the person we already are
and always were,
but not quite yet ...
why must we travel so far?

And so wide
in so many directions –
no wonder we're so easily lost!
Wandering about
with neither compass nor map
as if in a rudderless dingy we're tossed.

But not without bearings,
sense of direction,
or destination
in an adventure unfolding
with every next step,
bringing us closer to reclamation ...

... of that person
who was born
to do what we've done,
and somehow manage
to carry on
until finishing what's begun.

PROGRESS
1/11/18

It is hardest
to see our own progress,
in part because we tend to measure it
against where we think
we should be by now
instead of where we might be otherwise.

The latter is a more accurate benchmark,
even if its hard(er) to see
the cumulative adverse effects
of things that didn't happen,
and the resulting negative mental outlook
that would make the threats before us now
even worse than they appear.

It's as difficult to account
for what might have been
as it is to appreciate what is happening instead,
but attempting to do so
makes us grateful for today even more.

POTHoles & PITFALLS
1/15/18

How often our path forward
seems otherwise,
as its potholes
and pitfalls
seem more like
an invitation to disaster
than the roadway to The Promised Land
it always is.

The deceiving nature
of appearances
being what they are,
you'd think we'd know better
or at least have learned by now
to ignore the fear
that accompanies uncertainty,
and the intimidation
that discourages improvisation and creativity
when it is needed most
yet seems least apt of all our options.

Just as all roads once led to Rome,
the fact is that every path
leads us forward,
although some sooner and less traumatically than others.

GIFTS
1/20/18

Perhaps the best gift
one can give or receive
is the right to be wrong,
whether to themselves, another,
or someone you'd like to smother.
For its benefits, you won't have to wait long.

Not that "wrong" can be judged
in an objective sense,
because there actually is no such thing.
Illegal, yes,
sometimes better or worse,
but we're the ones who decide what to bring.

And not always correctly
- that's the whole point -
for to be human is to err;
which is why it's important
that mistakes be acceptable,
otherwise we might never dare.

That's why the freedom
to not always be right
is such a fantastic gift
to give and receive,
lest we're even more often
are prone to drift.

DISTANCES
1/20/18

We're asked to look at the proximity
between head and feet;
when kept close together,
we're hard to beat.

They're already fifty (or sixty) inches apart
so never in a place that's the same,
but the further they're separated
makes it a more difficult game.

Oh! So often it is that wherever we are,
we wish we were someplace else.
There's nothing wrong with a mental vacation,
but living there permanently isn't good for one's health.

Keeping our feet in our shoes is easier
than keeping our head on our shoulders.
When we do, we're likely to find
the path ahead less strewn with boulders.

It's harder to do than it sounds,
but only gets harder if we won't.
It's easier once we have started,
but that can't happen if we don't.

SALESMANSHIP
1/22/18

Ironic it is
that willingness to accept rejection
is what makes for a successful salesperson,
and makes us happy human beings.

It's not that sales people won't take "no" for an answer,
but rather that they don't get discouraged by it
and look elsewhere for positive response
instead of accepting the negative one
as somehow reflecting on their intentions,
their efforts, sales strategy,
or product.

Although it might
and perhaps could very well be,
they instead choose more-or-less consciously
to learn from the experience,
make any mid-course corrections warranted,
and try again,
and again,
and again.

It doesn't make them right, or smart,
but it does make for a happier human being
and a better sales person.

CHOOSING
1/25/18

Its best if we don't have to
choose between the two,
but it's the quality
- not the quantity -
of our lives
that matters most in the end.

It's when trying for both
that we end up with neither
as our pursuit
of short-term benefits
undermines long-term gains,*
leaving us only
with the former,
which are - by definition -
temporary.

To do otherwise
seems unnatural,
but not necessarily contradictory
to our interests.

* John E.

FORGIVENESS
1/30/18

Forgiveness is the gift
we give ourselves;
no one benefits from it more.

Accepting our imperfection
as evidence of our humanity
has advantages galore.

We're no longer defined
by blame or guilt,
or its accompanying shackles.

No need to hide
our shame or its cousins
who raise all of our hackles.

When we accept ours' and others'
mistakes and shortcomings,
it's truly an act of compassion ...

... that releases us
as well as all others
to more fully experience life's passion.

LESSONS (cont.)
1/31/18

A little is a lot
if you think it is.
A lot is not
if you don't.

Everything is fine
if you see it that way,
and totally off-line
when you won't.

The future is bright
of you believe it is,
or dark as night
so you say.

The whole world is happy
when you're smiling,
and so sappy
the other way.

Love is everywhere
when we are loving,
but only when we declare
that intention ...

... otherwise we find
ourselves alone,
the daily grind
a cruel form of detention.

ENCHANTMENT
2/10/18
Kona Coast

Surf waves crashing.
Shore birds cooing.
Sea turtles circled 'round.

The powers of nature.
The exhilaration of Life.
The experience of hallowed ground.

Imbued by nature's forces.
(Re)discovering its wonders.
Appreciating paradise found.

The externalization of love.
The internalization of beauty.
Not by the ounce, but the pound.

Exposed in such moments
to life's greatest joys,
its beauties everywhere unbound.

3th WEDDING ANNIVERSARY
2/14/18
Kona Coast

Now ... Here ... This*

There's no simpler - or harder - injunction.

Being, and staying present
is the greatest act of love
we can give ourselves
or another,
and the loudest expression
of honor and appreciation
we can give to Our Maker.

It's the only place where we experience
life's joys and sorrows,
the most telling evidence
of our being alive and well.

And it's the only place
we can exercise the freedom of choice
that makes us co-creators
of our destiny.

Now ... Here ... This*

* Price Pritchett
"Hard Optimism"

METEOROLOGY
2/22/18

How often we confuse
the sky with the weather,
thinking they're one and the same;
not seeing the peace
beyond all the turbulence,
we seek a weatherman to blame.

Similarly, we see
chaos in the universe
and think life, by its nature, is chaotic.
When we start treating it as such
and get pulled into its swirl,
we're the ones being idiotic.

How many times
do we seize what we want,
not realizing what we give up to get it?
We won't know till it's gone
how dearly we've paid,
and by then we'd much rather forget it.

LEADERSHIP
2/23/18

Abraham Lincoln found that,
in telling the truth,
the people believed him.

Because he didn't save the most important point
for the rhetorical climax of his speech,
the people listened to him.

Because he never tried
to take anything from them,
the people trusted him.

Because he addressed
what was in their hearts and minds,
the people followed him.

Because he stood for what's right,
and against what's wrong,
the people fought and died for him.

Because he didn't oversimplify the complicated,
or overcomplicate the simple,
the people appreciated him.

And we still do.

LESSONS (cont.)
3/20/18

One of the hardest things to do,
is what we should
when we don't want to.

And even harder:
to love those
we don't love very much.

Hardest of all:
recognizing in advance
that the sweeter the short-term pleasure,
the longer and larger the long-term consequences.

It's challenges like these
that make life so exciting,
and harrowing;

that make our joys
all the greater,
and sorrows an even greater blessing;

that make each moment
more vibrant,
and its lessons more valued.

LESSONS (cont.)
3/24/18

It's not so hard figuring out
what's the right thing to do;
we just have to not do what's wrong.

Almost anywhere we go
is headed north,
as long as we're not goin' south.

When we know where we are,
and who we're with,
we won't be where we don't belong.

And by taking good care
about what goes into our heads,
only good things will come out of our mouth.

It's only when we don't
take the short-cuts through life
that our pathway doesn't seem long.

And only when
we act like a jerk
that we end up being a louse.

EASTER REVELATIONS
4/1/18

We allow the running debate
about who Jesus was/is
- son of god,
Son of Man (whatever that is),
Zen Buddhist,
Con Artist,
Nuttiest of Them All -
or what he did or didn't say
to distract us from how he lived
and why it matters.

The essence of his "teaching":
Love one another.
Judge Not.
Fear Not.
The Kingdom of God is within you.
Heaven is here,
and now.
Death is an illusion,
or at least a mystery.
Be your brother's keeper,
and as forgiving as the Prodigal Son's father.
Be of service, like the Good Samaritan.
And let peace be within you.

These have outlasted all the controversies
and well-describe a purpose-filled life;
challenging as they are,
no wonder they are so often not our focus.

MIRACLES (1)

4/8/18

We may listen to or read about others' experience
but usually learn only from our own,
as if it's the first time anything like this has happened;
that has been repeatedly shown.

Everyone has the right to make their own choices
and to their lessons thereby derived,
all others are merely observers
hearing explanations sometimes contrived.

For we "live and learn" in that order,
no matter how better the other way 'round.
But we only get where we're going
if our feet stay close to the ground.

But even if not,
whatever happens was meant to be.
Each day, life's miracles are evident
but only if we so choose to see.

LOOKING vs SEEING

4/29/19

It's one of life's many ironies:
that the hardest thing to find
is the easiest thing to lose:
our perspective.

Partly because it is altered
by our projections
of ego and self-interest
often misinterpreted as selflessness.

Partly because of external forces and factors
within our influence
but beyond our control –
a subtle distinction difficult to discern.

Partly because of the misimpression
that objectivity is not only real
but attainable,
itself a subjective judgment
based on flawed assumptions,
faulty premises,
and a shaky foundation.

Our perspective is ours to keep
only as long as we don't throw it away.

PONDERING
6/2/18

How much more difficult life becomes
when we see problems as, well,
problems
rather than
the educational, enriching
and enlivening experiences they are.

Instead of our normal reactions to adversity,
which include intimidation, resentment, anger, resistance,
and other disguises for fear,
we could respond with
curiosity, heightened attention,
greater acceptance,
and deeper appreciation
for all the earlier "learning opportunities"
that prepared us for this moment;
the people whose guidance carried us forward on our path;
and the Higher Powers of the universe
greater than ourselves
and beyond our understanding.

In this world,
"problems" are opportunities
for personal development
and
spiritual growth.

So what's the problem?

WISHING
6/7/18

It takes so long to realize,
and is so hard to accept,
that it really is what it is,
which makes it even more difficult
to recognize and acknowledge
that, in fact, it isn't.

What's becoming increasingly obvious
is that it actually is
whatever we think it is,
as so many filters and biases
distort the perceptions
and fuel the projections
that shape the world as (we think) we see it.

All the more pertinent
becomes our effort to keep emotions calm,
our mind clear,
our lenses clean,
our attitude optimistic,
our heart loving,
and our spirit free.

The physicists and Buddhists agree:
all is relative to our place and perspective;
so import is the Eye of the Beholder.

Wishing it were otherwise won't make it so.

CIRCLES
6/8/18

Whatever "it" is,
it won't be enough ...
the new house or car,
the new job or promotion,
wedding or kids,
clothes or shoes,
party or partner,
wild vacation or meditative retreat.

Anticipating "it"
puts us elsewhere,
and out-of-practice
with being where we are,
and appreciating what we have,
and thus left without
the acceptance and receptivity muscles
required to have any of those
new and shiny objects-of-desire
become sources of the
fulfillment and gratification
we expect them to be,
ever leaving us ungratified and
soon thereafter defaulting
to the familiar-but-uncomfortable search
for the new house or car,
new job or promotion,
etc. etc. etc.

MIRACLES (2)
6/13/18

Miracles only happen
when we least expect
because we don't expect them.

When we look for them,
they're all around.
No magnifying glass needed to detect them.

More often than not,
they hide in plain sight.
A shining light won't reflect them.

Ignored or denied
by those of little faith,
who're left with no hope to protect them.

Recognized only
at the last possible moment.
and only then if you choose to select them.

Thereby opening doors
to an array of possibilities
available only to those who elect them.

ATTRACTION
6/14/18

Things change.
They're always changing.
We don't change them;
they change us.

Nothing always happens.
In fact, things rarely
- we might say uniquely -
occur,
no matter how much it may seem otherwise.

What's best for us
often contains an element of repugnance,
forcing us to overcome aversion
to our own well-being.

While what's worst for us
has an element of attraction,
challenging us to renounce
allures toward which we are impelled.

No rest for the weary
- or is it the wicked?
Hard to remember which
when we are so busy trying to be neither.

"WHEN I'M SIXTY-FOUR"
7/16/18

Life keeps unfolding
until it doesn't,
but mostly it goes without notice
as we wander hither and yon
blissfully ignorant of beauty and truths
that lie before us.

We grow older,
but not necessarily wiser,
if we don't learn life's lessons,
not just about the birds and bees
and the forces of physics,
but also about its blessings.

One day passes,
and soon enough decades,
going by faster and faster,
each one a chance
to recognize and acknowledge
the artwork which comes from The Master.

LOVE
7/29/18

They say love is blind,
but they don't tell us
it can also be blinding.

It can obscure our appreciation
for the big things
that draw us together in the first place.

It can magnify our preoccupation
with the little things that didn't matter
until we started thinking they did.

It can mask our vision
as to the best interests of all concerned.

It can hide from us
the self-confidence and self-respect,
compassion and consideration,
faith, joy and optimism
we brought to the situation,
and heighten the fear and negativity
that arises when we've lost it.

St. Paul told us that love is patient, kind,
and does not envy or boast;
he forgot to mention
its proclivity to be blinding.

NOTINGS
8/7/18

A weird, seemingly incoherent dream that may be neither.

Somehow I found myself driving a buggy or stagecoach
to some sort of present-day event in the country.

Whoever came along stayed or left separately,
and I found myself guiding the horses homeward alone
at full speed along a side road.

Slowing down as I approached the main road,
I discovered the horses were gone
and instead I was being pulled by what looked like a single coyote.
Upon coming to a complete stop,
I realized it was actually a big, furry, floppy-eared rabbit.

Unhooking the bunny from the harness,
I expected it to run or bite me,
or at least be huffing and puffing,
but it showed none of those things.
Instead, it was completely benign
and more composed than I expected under the circumstances.
An old(er) woman driving by
stopped along the road in the darkness,
and seemed unphased by any of this.

Not exactly sure what this dream means,
but from this story comes certain truths:
(a) what draws us forward is not what we think;
(b) what propels us is more powerful and peaceful than we expect; and
(c) none of this is not as surprising or unusual as it seems.