

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

---

*Sent in appreciation  
for memories  
yet to be made,  
good music  
yet to be played  
and a family of friends  
who can never be properly thanked.*



## *RUMINATION(S)*

RoberT.  
Book Eight

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

9/23/12  
The Vigil

Watching him straddle  
that oh! so fine line  
between there and here

Sometimes going  
but then coming back  
hard to know for which side to cheer

Calling on all saints  
– canonized or un –  
to carry him into the abyss

Then hearing distinctly  
“please no, not yet!”  
It’s a game that no one will miss

Like a 1-to-1 tie,  
now in extra innings,  
it’s the ultimate test of endurance

Which none can win  
and yet there’s no losers  
of that we’ve been given assurance.

10/14/12

Sun shines in the garden  
bringing things to life,  
feeding birds, bees and several of we  
evidence of blessings is rife.

None ask questions  
and they tell us no lies,  
transforming energy into effort  
brings good health to our lives.

Reaching upward and outward.  
Away from darkness toward light.  
Making the best of what’s available.  
Providing continuing delight.

This place is outside my door,  
but I must stop to see  
the greater glory missed when  
hurrying to do rather than be.

By staying in their place,  
and using what they’ve got,  
these plants fulfill their purpose  
and don’t try to be what they’re not.

10/19/12

Is it nature or nurture  
that we try to hold on  
to the last moment  
rather than seek out the next?

My future is not behind me.

The blessings of life happen today,  
not yesterday ... or tomorrow for that matter.

Everything I seek out there  
is already here  
patiently waiting to be discovered,  
acknowledged  
and appreciated.

To put the joy  
back in enJOYment  
involves calmness and serenity,  
not thrills and excitement.

Neither sugar nor adrenaline is our friend,  
nor the desserts, stress or drama that induce them,  
yet – like looking ahead or behind –  
we feel drawn to them  
like our favorite, most comfortable pants  
that no longer fit.

11/13/12

Any sailor  
can stay safe in the harbor,  
where the water is calm and winds steady  
with anchor available and dock nearby.

The challenge is at sea  
with the shoreline out-of-sight  
and no way of knowing  
what lies beyond the horizon.

This is the seamen's test  
of heart, mind and soul  
taxed to their limits  
- or what seems like them.

Resolve is something  
hard to find  
and easy to lose,  
yet never out of reach.

11/15/12

The way forward beckons.  
There's no turning back.  
No need to ask "where?"  
You're on the right track

For there is only the one  
you're already on,  
but do not drift along it  
like ducks on a pond.

And wherever on it you are  
is the only place that is real.  
Any moment spent otherwise  
is one from you they steal.

And never, no never,  
will it ever return,  
so each step 'long the way  
one must carefully discern.

For its not about where you're going  
but rather where now you are;  
that which we're seeking  
has carried us this far.

11/19/12

Someone's teacher said  
there's no such thing as cold,  
as thermometers only measure  
the presence or absence of warmth.

And also said there is  
no such thing as darkness,  
but only a greater or  
lesser degree of light.

And then, they wondered,  
if the same is true of hate,  
really only a tell-tale indicator  
of the lack of love in our lives.

A good friend noted  
that these non-existent opposites  
serve as signposts that tell us  
when to go the other way.

So the absence of evidence, it's been said,  
isn't necessarily evidence of absence;  
non-existent negatives tell us what is missing  
and where to find it.

11/20/12

11/25/12  
Thanks Giving

Someone pointed out  
that we don't fear the unknown  
– how can we if we don't even know it?  
What we interpret as such  
is instead our loss of the known  
... or maybe just what we thought we knew.

Scary thought made scarier  
by the same observer's note  
that the one called Jesus  
had more trouble with those  
who thought they were doing good  
and weren't  
than those who didn't think so  
... and in most cases actually were correct.

All deceit  
begins with self-delusion,  
convincing ourselves that which  
we wish others to believe  
so, if they buy it,  
our view is thereby confirmed  
... talk about taking the loooooong way around!

Seeing ourselves as we really are  
... and accepting what we find ...  
as it turns out, life's greatest challenge  
and an inside job.

It is said that God has a sense of humor  
but also, I think,  
a sense of humility.

He/She/It acts anonymously,  
performing miraculous wonders  
that we attribute to luck or serendipity.

It is, after all, no coincidence that  
Noah didn't wait until it started raining  
to build the ark and start gathering animals.

He not only listened but heard,  
following – albeit reluctantly – directions clear(er)  
in the hindsight provided by a forty-day downpour.

How similar it is for us  
receiving guidance of which we are unaware or ignore  
as warning signs and gnawing sensations indicate otherwise.

As Sherlock Holmes observed:  
“once you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains  
– no matter how improbably – must be the truth.”

In this case, a seeming unlikelihood  
- that the God's hand is found in all that transpires -  
is the most probable of reasons for giving thanks.

11/26/12  
Sisterly Reminder

Happy Birthday!! to you  
and our sweet Lizzy too!  
You both brought light to our world  
and each, in your own way,  
remind us to live only today  
staying tethered when we'd otherwise be swirled.

And remind us as well  
in ways that retell  
timeless lessons that get lost 'long The Path:  
about the value of smiles,  
the temporary nature of trials,  
and solutions that require New Math.

Important as things seem,  
that's only a dream  
from which it is hard to awaken.  
But it's important that we do,  
and not think that we're through,  
for only then are our gifts forsaken.

Thanks for these reminders  
to remove our own blinders  
and appreciate our gifts while they're here,  
which ain't for very long  
- life's a very short song -  
so sing loud to reach those not so near.

11/27/12

We think our judgment  
was first to go  
when we left the narrow path  
but actually what went first  
is our willingness to trust  
in ourselves, in others, and in God  
for in those chaotic moments  
when our feet leave the ground  
common sense becomes uncommon  
and our compass no longer points North  
we begin to doubt  
and soon after disbelieve  
our own capabilities  
and the Universe's capacity  
to materialize the best for all concerned  
then as our effort/energies dissipate  
so others' get withheld  
and sure enough there's not enough  
and the prophecy becomes self-fulfilling  
the moment is gone  
the battle lost  
and the wish becomes a dream.

Better to remain on the path  
however daunting it becomes  
than to sow the seeds of our own dissatisfaction.

11/29/12

12/8/12

If you're looking around  
and don't see a miracle,  
maybe it's actually you.  
That you're still standing,  
can manage a smile,  
and have teeth and still can chew.  
Maybe it's the place that you live,  
or songs that you sing,  
or "to do" list you finally got through.  
Or that we still have loved ones  
– amazing in itself –  
or that interesting analogy you drew.  
Or how fast humming birds fly,  
or dogs wagging tails,  
or cows that have milk and moo.  
That oceans stay in their place (mostly),  
and stars remain in the sky,  
or the invention of the nail and screw.  
The sun behind dark clouds,  
the dawn after darkness,  
and flowers a rainstorm grew.  
The air we breathe,  
colors of autumn,  
or jokes we forgot we knew.  
Parents and friends,  
the touch of a hand,  
or kind things that people do.  
This moment – now,  
and the chance to enjoy it,  
even with an occasional boo-hoo.  
The experience of love,  
our capacity for insight,  
the invention of the shoe.  
Perhaps we're so dazed  
from being amazed  
we don't see the miracle through.

Good friends are mirrors  
showing us who  
and how  
we are.

Reminding us also of  
where we've been,  
what we learned,  
when we've grown,  
and why.

They bring us closer  
to ourselves  
while challenging us  
to move beyond  
the places we've been,  
and the experiences we've had.

They broaden our horizons,  
stretch our limits,  
deepen our awareness,  
and stimulate our awakening.

They are milestones  
along our journey  
from there to here,  
from without to within,  
and from then to now.

12/9/12

We don't call it  
"self-esteem" for nothin'  
'cause we don't get it from others  
but instead give it to ourselves.

Same with "self-confidence"  
or "self-awareness".  
We look for them within  
or find ourselves without.

These are opportunities  
to see in ourselves  
that which we wish  
others would

and thereby show it  
not just to ourselves  
but to them as well,  
telling us for sure that it's there.

They can't see it  
if we don't  
and they will not look for it  
if we won't.

12/12/12

How strange that  
when we think it's  
not about us,  
it is.

And when we think  
it's all about us,  
it most likely isn't.

Can it be that our vision  
is so distorted  
by our own perceptions?

Can we ever be more wrong  
that when we  
think we are most right?

Can we let go of that  
which we hold most dear,  
not choking it by our clutching?

Can we see that our  
desire for escape  
assumes there's somewhere else to go?



12/21/12  
Twins

Two new bright candles  
bring light to this world  
on the day of the year it's most dark.

Between them the embodiment  
of faith, hope and love;  
on that, the evidence is stark.

Arriving right on time.  
No gymnastics required,  
'though for no one involved 'twas a lark.

What lies ahead  
compared to what got them here  
will seem like a walk in the park.

But time flies by so fast  
like Chicago subway trains  
that stop at Division & Clark.

It's tears of joy that they bring,  
the greatest gift of a season  
when all the angels sing: "Hark!"

12/23/12

It's gifts that we've received  
that we must give away  
and ones we wish we had  
for which we sorely pay.

Grasping the former too long  
for their benefits we savor  
that for others is intended;  
it's for us just passing favor.

Longing for the latter too much  
as if by wishing we'd find  
instead of seeing what's here;  
it's to our blessings we're blind.

It's when we want what we have  
that we have what we wanted.  
There's no reason to look elsewhere  
- those scary houses are haunted.

What makes this season special  
is the giving, not getting.  
Spreading spirit year 'round  
makes good on this holiday setting.

12/29/12  
Pacifica

Waves crashing on our coast  
delivered from distant shores  
sent out by immeasurable powers  
that have kept our world spinning  
from its very beginning  
in this way God's beneficence showers.

In countless ways we benefit  
sometimes in manners unknown  
from strong forces equally unseen  
that help us stay on the path  
and avoid causes of wrath  
if neither here nor there, we get caught in-between.

The force of those waves as they're curling  
awash in their swirling and surge  
provides just a hint of their strength  
if they can erode rocks  
surely they'd knock off our socks  
ceaseless churning without width or length.

What makes up most of this planet  
and provides so much of our nurture  
is in nature, where we spend not enough time.  
It's the source of much WOW!  
We'll never understand how,  
but its appreciation is cause for this rhyme.

12/31/12  
Metamorphosis

From time to time  
place to place  
and person to person  
life goes on,  
as George Harrison sang,  
within and/or without us.  
Unfolding.  
Ongoing.

By giving back  
what we've put out  
and then some,  
the Gods tell us  
what could happen  
by revealing to us  
what won't.

Telling us  
not so much  
what to do  
as what not to,  
if we're listening.

Giving us  
the chance  
to change  
our minds  
and our lives.

1/1/13  
New Year

Happiness, joy, love and peace  
are usually deemed  
the result  
from our getting aligned  
with people, places and things  
that have interest, needs  
and timetables  
different than ours  
and well beyond our control.  
An if/when proposition at best.  
What if these good things  
are deemed as cause  
instead of consequence instead,  
at the head of the process  
instead of the end,  
serving as a frame-of-reference  
and criteria for decision-making  
that makes the maintenance and expansion  
of these good things we already have  
our conscious, constant choice  
rather than an eventual/potential outcome.  
They would then not be  
a definite/possible/maybe,  
but an absolute certainty  
and driving force that propels our lives  
from moment to moment,  
experience to experience,  
interaction to interaction,  
lesson to lesson,  
smile to smile,  
and awakening to (re)awakening.

1/5/12

Those who proclaim themselves  
the arbiter of fairness  
often have a thumb on Justice's scale  
claiming what's good for all  
is what's best for them,  
all other alternatives beyond the pale.

Those who cannot distinguish  
their wants from their needs  
are deceived and also the deceiver;  
thinking they can have it all,  
they lose what they have  
and find themselves left with neither.

Those who cannot acknowledge  
their reliance on others,  
and on powers beyond their reach,  
find themselves alone  
and can't stem the tide  
when flood waters enter the breach.

Those who are unable  
to humble themselves  
will not be the ones who're exalted;  
instead surprised to find  
it's the last who'll come first  
and realize no one else can be faulted.

1/6/13

We tend  
to blame others  
for our negative reactions  
failing to recognize  
feelings come from within  
so we're the cause of our own dissatisfaction.

We're only getting back  
that which we emit;  
it's is a timeless theme of our culture's sages.  
Yet our contrary delusion  
continually persists  
as it has throughout the ages.

A great guitarist\* sang about living  
In a room full of mirrors  
"where all I could see was me."  
When he took his spirit  
and smash them to pieces  
"then the whole world was clear for me to see."

We too are challenged  
to ignore self-generated projections  
of our interests, wants and desires  
and see the good  
that's best for all  
soon – before the warranty expires.

\* Jimi Hendrix

1/9/12

The past is prologue.  
The future is epilogue.  
It's the present where our story gets told;  
where whatever comes next  
unfolds with each line of text  
as we're moving from young to old.

But not slow enough  
or too soon either,  
so I guess the pace is just right;  
learning what we don't know  
without letting it show  
or making those 'round us up-tight.

Yet in the relativity of time,  
which as a smart guy observed,  
speed fluctuates in relation to the observer;  
so whether its slow or fast  
or we arrive first or last  
depends on the degree of our fervor.

If it truly is what it is,  
and "this is this, and not that"\*  
then why get worked up in a lather;  
our life unfolds as it will  
and it never stands still,  
so let it be what it is 'stead of whatever we'd rather.

\* Alan Watts

1/12/13

1/10/13

Holiday lights flicker  
and slowly fade  
as another year's passing  
leaves resolutions freshly made.

It's not just creaky knees  
that mark time's passing,  
but also accumulation of strength  
and courage amassing

that can only be acquired  
by both living AND learning,  
listening AND hearing,  
and gained only by earning.

So it's not what we have,  
but what we do with it  
that binds us to one another  
like a steel girder's rivet

and creates possibilities greater  
than we can ever surmise  
obvious only when  
seen through God's eyes.

things are generally fine as they are unless or until we think they should be otherwise but never will be of course for how could they be anything but what they are and yet that never stops us from thinking they should be different or from getting upset when they aren't even though whenever we do we are sure to be wrong but even knowing that won't stop us from wishing, wondering and lamenting knowing full well that it won't change anything and in fact will only make matters worse but we do it anyhow again and again over and over until the pain involved brings us to the shocking insight that this isn't working and maybe not even then until we remember that we cannot believe everything we think and we stop doing so just for a moment and suddenly see those same things differently and immediately it all looks better, sounds better, feels better and wouldn't you know gets better and better and better and we start to wonder why can't things always be like this and we begin to relax and start to see the power and purpose of a life of presence and we begin to see those same people and places around us as if for the first time and start to think maybe this is what happiness is and maybe even what heaven feels like and it seems like it can go on like this forever and we start living as if it will and everything is lovely and loving and in our caring and concern for others we notice there is something not as good as it could or should be and then we start thinking about how they/it ought to be instead of how they/it already are and how much better it would be for everyone not just us of course if they/it were different from how they are but then if we're lucky THIS time we remember that it is ok to feel that way but not so good to think that way because then we start acting that way and then things aren't so fine after that so we finally finally finally don't do that and things start to seem better again until, well, you know...

1/13/13

If we are indeed autonomous  
free from undo external influence  
and in all ways quite independent  
then how is it that the 911 operator  
and emergency room nurse  
know when it's a full moon  
without even looking out the window?

Quantum physicists and Zen Buddhists agree  
that everything is connected  
in ways we are cannot see or be aware  
and thus affect and are affected  
by the slightest ripple  
at the farthest end of the cosmos  
in ways concurrently subtle and significant.

And the more we deny it  
the truer it becomes  
as our adamant resistance  
and feet-stomping tantrums  
themselves prove the point.  
The adverse effects of anger and resentment  
triggered as if we were puppets on a string.

Autonomous? Not quite.

1/17/12

They say it's better  
to give than receive  
but they don't tell you  
its harder  
to truly give without getting  
and not be caught in the netting  
or acting the part of a martyr.

Nor do they explain that  
whatever we're not getting  
is what we're not giving;  
had we known  
we'd quit looking around  
'cause it can only be found  
inside, amidst the marrow and bone.

If we only knew  
but we don't  
nor will we ever,  
no never;  
and what happens instead  
we won't know till we're dead  
unless you know of some hidden lever.

2/2/13

It's not so hard  
takin' the time  
as makin' it.

Nor as hard  
startin' a habit  
as breakin' it.

It's much harder  
bein' honest  
than fakin' it.

More difficult  
findin' the path  
than takin' it.

No easier  
sleepin' through life  
than awaken' in it.

And much better to  
be cherishin' friendship  
than forsaken it.

They say we love people  
despite all their faults  
but perhaps we do because of them.

Knowing how imperfection  
leaves them – and us –  
unprepared for the challenges of life  
makes the courage mustered  
and perseverance demonstrated  
all the more remarkable  
and indeed admirable.

It may be impossible  
not to love those  
who exhibit such fortitude  
often mistaken for foolishness,  
and to do so with humor  
despite the adversities involved,  
and with humility displayed  
for such a praiseworthy accomplishment.

Any so-called faults  
don't simply make us human.  
They make us magnificent,  
all things considered,  
and more loving and loveable  
than we might be otherwise.

2/5/12

Letting go of what never was  
 (aka what we wish it were)  
 instead accepting the way things are,  
 releasing any expectation to the contrary  
 and surrendering our desire that it be otherwise

Hard as all that is, and truly so,  
 how much easier than  
 trying to do what we can't  
 or get others to do what they won't  
 or for things to unfold as they don't

Wishing it were different doesn't make it so  
 and yet knowing that doesn't seem to help.  
 Pretending we're not even as we are,  
 that we don't care when we do,  
 and what is a big deal isn't, or what isn't is.

If surrender, as they say, isn't a matter of giving up  
 but rather it's joining the winning side,  
 then release is not letting go of what's already lost  
 but of making room for what we've always had.

Pretty much every psychologist  
 since Buddha  
 has warned of our tendency  
 to accuse others  
 of that which we are guilty,  
 seeking to achieve by intimidation  
 what cannot be gained  
 by appeals to logic  
 or more subtle forms  
 of persuasion.

Placed on the defensive,  
 we have to work very hard  
 not to take the bait,  
 stay calm, clear and focused  
 on the position and principles  
 that would otherwise be undermined  
 with our accessory-after-the-fact cooperation.

There is something very primal  
 about such raw assertions of power,  
 which makes us want to defer  
 to the imposition of authority,  
 to go-along-and-get-along,  
 be part of the pack,  
 and get the approval dispensed  
 with all the magnanimity  
 of a bully who is getting their way.

But it's a mistake  
 to succumb to such temptations  
 and a disservice  
 to the very cause for which  
 such compromises would be made.



2/10/13

It's said the hardest thing for a human to do  
is to truly, simply, clearly see.

To remove the obstructions to perception  
is a monumental – indeed lifelong – task  
and that's only if we are awake and aware while we're doing it...  
otherwise we could spend all that time for naught  
confusing analysis with insight  
feelings with facts  
information with knowledge  
and knowledge with wisdom.

Those obstructions to our sight  
most difficult to remove are invisible  
- things like expectation and aspiration,  
our desires for acknowledgement and affirmation,  
the hunger for appreciation and, yes, affection –  
all these can blind us from the fact  
that we are not seeing things as they are,  
our perspective and reactions distorted thereby.

By striving for acceptance rather than understanding,  
joy instead of pleasure,  
giving rather than getting,  
feeling rather than thinking,  
we begin to see our life's biggest challenge  
and greatest accomplishment:  
to be.

Why only one day  
dedicated to love?  
it's lightness and sweetness  
warmth and tenderness  
kind considerations  
thoughtful remembrance  
quiet moments  
and loud  
fun and frisky  
little things that are big  
and  
big things that are little  
simple yet complicated  
obvious yet subtle  
articulate and wordless  
highs and lows  
gladness and sadness  
hopes and dreams  
fierce determination  
and fortitude required  
humor too  
and patience  
and humility  
no quitting  
but lots of kidding  
and trust.

Maybe tomorrow too?

2/15/13

On Socrates's last day, the master of inquiry  
asked why decisions  
get based on questions of life or death  
rather than right or wrong.

He thought the only thing to be considered  
is whether one's behavior  
is that of a good or bad person,  
for which we all knew the difference.

The man convicted and condemned for  
not being sufficiently religious  
thought one's purpose in life  
is to make their soul as good as possible.

His thought that we  
undervalue what is most important,  
and pay too much attention to what is not.

And at the moment of his own departing,  
the man famous for noting  
we don't know what we don't know  
said our society's view of death was "reprehensible folly".

For all we know, he said, death could be  
the greatest that happens to a person  
but instead it is feared as the greatest of all evils.  
He saw it as a claim to know what we don't,  
thinking we are wise when we are not.

If our civilization's epitome of wisdom  
thought we should never fear  
what could turn out to be a good thing,  
and could say this about that  
from where he was sitting,  
might not we all about things much less frightening?

Two old(er) guys, Joe & Charlie  
go around talking about life's ironies,  
among other things.

For example, in times we seem headed  
in the opposite direction of where we're going,  
they remind that Columbus was derided for going West to go East.

They note that those who left home  
bringing their families on a daunting ocean voyage  
to secure religious freedom  
wound up burning at the stake  
others who did not share their beliefs.

They observed that those who say  
they "found" God  
don't always realize it wasn't God that was lost.

They note that our success  
- no matter what our culture says otherwise -  
is not in finding but in seeking.

Fear, they say, doesn't reflect  
a lack of confidence in ourselves,  
but in the God's willingness and ability  
to keep doing for us what we could not do for ourselves  
while not doing what we could,  
just like He/She/It always has  
with and/or without our knowledge,  
our cooperation or permission...or too often  
- considering the magnitude of gifts received -  
our gratitude.