

# ~ Inquiring Minds, Searching Souls ~ #14 March 3, 2012

“We were born to unite with our fellow men, and to join in community with the human race.” -Cicero

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## REFLECTIONS ON BUILDING COMMUNITIES IN MY LIFE

Last week, after putting together a fairly successful birthday party for one of our 98-year-old former tennis players ([see the collage](#)), I had an *aha moment* that much of my life was about building communities and how that benefitted all of us.

In high school and college, aside from playing on intramural sports teams, I was always too preoccupied with my studies to get involved in other group activities.

When I started teaching, I became involved in the teachers union because some bean counter at the District Office was trying (even then) to have us test the kids to death and rob and take the joy out of learning and teaching. So, after my tenure, I wrote for and became president of that organization, and helped make it strong enough to secure the first collective bargaining contract (1976), to gain compensation for having an MA (\$1,200/yr), and to secure a dental plan which others and I still use today as retired educators.

As a middle school teacher of Journalism I helped the school newspaper win county awards, and communicate with students, teachers, parents, School Board, and retired teachers. The kids learned how to write and use the power of the written word as they changed the school climate and even some outdated rules.

As a retiree, I contacted most of my high school and college classmates, most of whom I

hadn't seen in 40 years, and set up a semi-private webpage where they shared their life stories, and put us in touch with each other again. ([pic](#))

In a spiritual community to which we belonged, I found great joy in organizing several yearly retreats for the men.

Even now, I have this select little group of family and friends to whom I send this monthly newsletter and/or other pieces judged worthy of your readership.

All of these community building activities did (& do) the following:

- 1) allowed us to set and reach goals we could not have done alone.
- 2) provided a setting to form or reestablish friendships;
- 3) helped me and others attain personal growth and skills.

## AN IMPROBABLE DISCOVERY

I invited a new friend Marc to check out our tennis group at the party I had organized (above). After introducing him to the group I went about the task of taking pictures and cutting the cake, etc. Marc later emailed me that he had sat across from a guy named Chuck, and he and Chuck started introducing each other. Chuck notice that Marc had a French accent, and told him that his son had been dating a French girl



Chuck and Marc's surprise at gathering.

named Justine. Marc immediately jumped up and hugged him, recognizing that his daughter (Justine) and Chuck's son were in a serious relationship but neither of the parents had ever met before. How serendipitous was that?!

## NETWORKING: THE POWER OF VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES

Today, there's hardly any doubt of the power social software has brought to the masses, and to the individual to lead those masses, even though they may not be aware of their impact.

Who would have thought the self immolation of a harassed [peddler in Tunis](#) would spark the Arab Spring. Or that the communication via cell phones would mobilize and coordinate that effort.

Or the girl who cut up her Bank of America credit card in protest of new fees would “go viral” on youtube and change bank policy.

My son tells me that most of his work as an [animator](#) and/or [web site designer](#) is achieved either by word of mouth or from email or craigslist links to his websites.

The majority of my private tutoring of students comes from parents who first read about me and [my tutoring](#) credentials online. Paper résumés are passe.

I am not opposed to using this publication in part to referencing worthy projects or services provided by the readership. As you may remember, I dedicated a whole issue to Kasimu Fund (issue #11). For music lovers, I would like to recommend and link you to the [website](#) of classmate, composer and friend, Paul Page.

*My back is on the mend. -Joe*