

Inquiring Minds: Recalling a few high points of the Month

“Silent gratitude isn't much use to anyone.” ~G.B. Stern

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PLEASANT SURPRISES ALONG LIFE'S JOURNEY

The things we do for our family, friends, and even strangers come back to us in unexpected ways. I'm sure all of us have our stories to tell, but it's important to remember them and be grateful.

I never thought teaching our son David to program our Apple II computer when he was ten then might play a part in his pursuing his art, animation and web page design years later. Nor that his constant questioning would lead me to learn more in the field, eventually teaching it in my own computer lab. The best part for us was spending time together and helping each other find and define our careers.



Young David



David, the man

Two weeks ago I went to SF by myself (Patricia was ill) to take care of our granddaughter Lois. This ten hour challenge would be a first for me alone. We had a great time doing all sorts of things and having wonderful “adventures” like two hours at the Randall Museum and petting zoo.

Last week, at (Sr.) Mary Jane's house for helping kids with homework, one volunteer was excited about having figured the answer to a physics problem for a high school student--Joanne is such a wonderful mentor for our girls there. The three retirees I work with are amazing: John is a former math teacher, and Joanne, a retired

surgeon, and Marc, an engineer. The older kids keep us on our toes--Jennifer has me taking an online course in Algebra 2 to keep up with her. It's fun, productive, and well organized, thanks to our eighty-year-old leader.

GRANDKIDS CHANGE US ALL

Patricia and I are still new to having Lois in our lives. She turns three this Sunday, February 17. and we are still in awe of the whole experience of again having a child in our midst. She has transformed us all: the joy of being with her, of seeing the world through her eyes, and having her see something wonderful in us. We respect our daughter and son-in-law even more because we know the challenges of parenthood. We feel they, too, see us and John's mom Karen in a new light for what we have done in raising them, and also helping them with Lois when we can. The extended family is also touched, and David loves being an uncle. True, it does take a community to raise a child, yet in doing so, the child raises its community to new heights. Such is symbiosis at its best.



Lois with Papa on a solo adventure in SF

THE AGE OF REVELATION ACCELERATES CHANGE

I welcome the new transparency

brought about by the internet, smart phones, traditional exposé shows like 60 Minutes, and we columnists such as Mark Shields, David Brooks, Paul Krugman, Thomas Friedman, and more. Armed with a smart phone, the internet of mass instruction has expanded the power of the press to the people. Anyone can be a reporter, and as such can effect change. Hopefully, this will raise the standard for a better world.

In the sense that the [Apocalypse](#) literally means *an uncovering*, so the last days of hidden injustices are here. They may still exist, but not for lack of knowledge. Hopefully the urge to fix the problems will overcome lethargy or laziness. So problems revealed should be a positive sign because the first step in solving a problem is admitting that there is one.

On a individual level, knowing that there is no sin done behind closed doors that will not be outed (sexual abuse cases, murders, etc) might motivate a better morality, albeit a less noble reason to do the right or avoid the wrong.

REVISITING GRATITUDE

Thanks to our friend Tom S. for reminding us of a practice he and his roommates started after viewing a



[gratitude website](#) I mentioned several issues ago.

Instead of the traditional grace before meals which may impose one's religious beliefs on another, Patricia and I each just briefly review and state that for which we are grateful for that particular day. It's a nice way to recognize and give thanks for the positive elements in our lives day by day.

Jonathan Haidt's book *The Happiness Hypothesis* is nicely [summarized in wikipedia](#).

OUR FAVORITE NEW MOVIE

We saw and highly recommend *Silver Linings Playbook*. Starring Bradley Cooper, Jennifer Lawrence, and Robert De Niro, this film had been nominated for four acting categories, a possible first in 31 years. A bit painful at first, but stick with it. It's worth it.



THE NEW NORM: LIVING WITH DYNAMIC TENSION

Anyone who is a close relationship understands the give and take needed to nourish and sustain that union, whatever it is.

The nature of dynamic tension is its give and take, its seeking a balance, an equilibrium, a mean, or a homeostasis, if you will. Nature and human interaction are rife with dynamic tension. It is the male and female, the yin and yang, of our existence. When one dominates, the system breaks down. Such is with politics and the many and varied issues facing us. Ideologies, be they liberal or conservative,

business verses environment, must be tempered in , with, and by reality. Such is life's struggle. No one wins outright, at least not for long.



Consider the the symbol above, and note from [wikipedia](#):

“Yin and yang are actually complementary, not opposing, forces, interacting to form a whole greater than either separate part; in effect, a dynamic system. Everything has both yin and yang aspects, (for instance shadow cannot exist without light). Either of the two major aspects may manifest more strongly in a particular object, depending on the criterion of the observation.”

To embrace the give and take nature of reality we need to be of a certain temperament. Patience, understanding, temperance, humility, compassion, and other like-minded virtues are needed to speak one's own truth and listen to that of another. It's much easier to ignore difficult people than to deal with them responsibly. It's not about us changing them, but changing ourselves as much as possible to find productive coexistence. Our survival depends on these traits and practices.

KQED LOOKS AT GOTHIC CATHEDRALS OF EUROPE

If you are interested in gothic cathedrals built a thousand years ago, and want to learn about their history, and the physics that keeps them standing (or not), you may want to check out [this 2006 52-minute show on PBS NOVA](#). If you missed the viewing, you can

stream it from the website, but I found it easier to find by just googling the topic.

The problem for us, with so many good shows to see and so many good books to read, so many seminars to attend, etc., is prioritizing what we want to view, read, or do in the time we have.

Research and careful choosing are the keys to helping us decide how we want to spend our time,

TOGETHER ON SOME THINGS, APART IN OTHERS, GLADLY

This choosing oftentimes has Patricia and I going our own separate ways because we have our own interests. I used to think this was a bad thing, especially in doing quasi-social events such as attending church events. True, when we were raising our children, we stayed together on this, but now my spouse has gladly given me the freedom to attend what I want, especially if we have differing opinions. True, I do not badger her to play tennis or golf either, although I see some other couples sharing these interests. But we do



Us at Mama's in North Beach last month as we toured the city for two sunny days

connect in other areas of shared interests like spending time with family and friends, hiking, seeing movies and musicals, *et cetera*. It's nice, we're both happier, together and apart. Life can be wonderful.

--Peace and gratitude, from Joe