

# Inquiring Minds: salient sentiments of summertime

#30 Summer, 2014 "Death smiles at us all, all a man can do is smile back." – [Marcus Aurelius](#), *Meditations*

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## DEALING WITH DEATH

Losing my mom, two close friends, and two influential acquaintances within a year's time understandably let some air out of my emotional tires. Redirecting my thoughts from my loss to all that I had by their presence helped me get over it. Sometimes I would write a piece to help me focus on the good times we had together. Other times I would be reminded by what they taught me over the years. [Ray](#) taught me the joy of watching old westerns. I think of Rick when I hit a good backhand in tennis and his spending hours practicing with me. [Mary and Brigitta](#) were examples of great intellectuals and fierce questioners. Patricia just found this little [poem](#) I wrote several days after my mom died.

Friends and family I now have will undoubtedly take on greater value after they go, so I want to try to appreciate them more now. The ever-present specter of death makes the love and appreciation of life more real.

## DANGER: EXPECTATIONS

My friend Rick once told me that some of his biggest disappointments came from having expectations of other people or



events which did not turn out as he imagined they would. This gave me an insight into many of our struggles. At least Rick knew it was a stumbling block for him, and sought to mend his ways. Better late than never, but serious illness has its way of waking one up. (Though he was trying at times, I still miss him.)

There's a nugget here for all of us. It's not about not having goals in one's life, but not expecting to meet them. Buddha would talk about our *clinging* or *attachment* to certain outcomes. Thanks, Rick, for the reminder.

## REKINDLING THE FLAME

One of the gifted speakers at Insight Meditation Center (IMC) in Redwood City talked about how she was alerted, enlivened, and excited when she experienced our last earthquake.

She noticed how as she aged she wanted to feel the thrill of youth and discovery. People do many things to recapture this. Some travel, some buy new toys, some take on new challenges or less savory engagements. The fountain in youth is in the thrill of living. We all need certain stimuli in order to respond and feel vibrant. Even seemingly traumatic experiences get our attention and awaken us to life.

## WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

I once was an attendee of another liberal open spiritual

community lead by the charismatic Father [Sean O'Laoire](#). I love the community if not the lengthy services.

This community, too, attracts all sorts of spiritual seekers. There is so much which falls under the aegis of the term *spiritual* or *spirituality* that has me wondering about what the very term "spirituality" means. It's surely not the orthodoxy of old, but what are its major components of spirituality?

A starting point for me is wikipedia. Some quotes below:

The term "spiritual" is now frequently used in contexts in which the term "religious" was formerly employed.[31] Contemporary spirituality is also called "post-traditional spirituality" and "[New Age](#) spirituality"...

Those who speak of spirituality outside of religion often define themselves as [spiritual but not religious](#) and generally believe in the existence of different "spiritual paths," [emphasizing the importance of finding one's own individual path to spirituality](#). According to one 2005 poll, about 24% of the United States population identifies itself as spiritual but not religious.[[web 8](#)] (my underlining)

More to explore. If interested, continue reading the [wiki](#) article.

**PERSONAL UPDATE:** We are redoing our [back](#) and [side](#) yards to handle water runoff issues, and then having artificial turf and a small putting green installed. Challenging, tiring, and exhilarating. *I feel alive!* -Joe

