

# Whispers on the Web

A Monthly Online Newsletter for WebWhispers

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*April 2020*



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# From The Editor's Desk

First of all, my friends, it goes without saying I hope you are well and safe and staying healthy in these uncertain times. I have, like many others, tried to limit the time I spend watching/listening/checking constantly the news and media coverage. I am very careful to consider the source for my information and focus on facts not fear. But I am an avid reader and I came across an interesting article that got me thinking.

***“Storytelling’s Power to Connect and Persuade Us:  
Unleashing the Brain Power of Narrative”***

*(NPR Health News 4/11/2020 – Renkin)*

*When you listen to [or read] a story, whatever your age, you’re transported mentally to another time and place...and who couldn’t use that right now?*

*“We all know this delicious feeling of being swept into a story world,” says Liz Neeley, who directs The Story Collider, a nonprofit production company that, in nonpandemic times, stages live events filled with personal stories about science. “You forget about your surroundings,” she says, “and you’re entirely immersed.”*

*Depending on the story you’re reading, watching or listening to, your palms may start to sweat, scientists find. You’ll blink faster, and your heart might flutter or skip. Your facial expressions shift, and the muscles above your eyebrows will react to the words – another sign that you’re engaged.*

*Other scientists turned up interesting activity in the parts of the brain engaged in making predictions. When we read, brain networks involved in deciphering – or imagining – another person’s motives, and the areas involved in guessing what will happen next are activated, Neeley says. Imagining what drives other people — which feeds into our predictions — helps us see a situation from different perspectives. It can even shift our core beliefs, Neeley says, when we “come back out of the story world into regular life.”*

It made me think that as many of us feel lonely and isolated without our normal social connections, “hearing” a good story whether by actually listening to it or reading or even watching it could be just what we need. Although I’ve never been particularly interested in audio books before I may do some checking around and see if anyone has one they could loan me...leaving it out on their front steps so I could safely pick up, maybe dropping off a book I recommend in exchange.

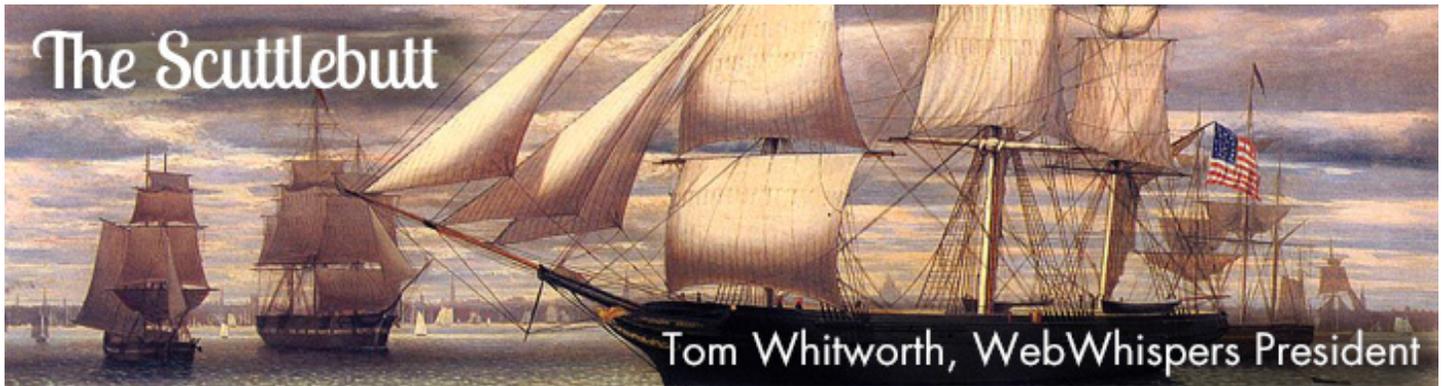
However, the article doesn’t seem to make much distinction between listening, reading or even watching the story. The critical piece seems to be the act of one person sharing their story with another person. And so, you could start doing that right here in our little newsletter. Sharing our stories is what we do best!

This month is no exception and as I read our contributors’ stories I was transported, sensing their emotions, detecting their personalities and even “hearing their distinctive voices” even if I have never met with them in person. People here write from their heart and when we finish “hearing their story” we feel as though we know them a little better having shared a bit of their journey together. At least, that’s how I feel and I hope you do too.

So, please take some time to get to know these folks, these members of our tribe, better. Listen to our stories, share yours perhaps next month and socialize the best way we can for now.

Take care of yourselves!

*Donna McGary*



## Sheltered in Place

The whole concept is one most, if not all of us, ever heard of or even contemplated, except maybe when conjuring up a wild-eyed science fiction movie from the freakish corners of our imagination. I suppose that I have corners like that, because I can wake up from a dream pondering “where the heck did that come from?” We never considered anything would ever happen that would separate us from so many that do not live in our home, who are people we love and are accustomed to seeing regularly. We never feared the one closest to us because they had just returned from a pharmacy, grocery store, Walmart, or Target. For many of us, being absent from our place of corporate worship has been extremely rare, unless we were quite ill, (or recovering from something on the level of a laryngectomy? ).

Undoubtedly, when COVID-19 is in our past, such a pandemic will be the topic of books, sci-fi flicks, and certainly any number of weekly series on television or online for years to come. Surely, electronic games for those so inclined are in the works right this very minute. We will eventually tire of the topic for entertainment purposes. It will become as blasé as the myriad doctor shows we have endured on TV for decades. Had a topic along the lines of this viral pandemic been utilized in any attempt to entertain us six months ago, most of us would have laughed. We would have thought the topic to be too far-fetched and so extremely unlikely to happen that buying in to it would be a ridiculous waste of time.

The stark reality is that the pandemic is genuine, and the affect it has had on our lives already is surreal and immeasurable. The volume of illness and loss of life from COVID-19 is heartbreaking. There simply is no other word for that. Heartbreaking. Often, though, tragedy brings out the best in people. As my pastor

(friend and boss) put it in our newsletter that I got out this weekend:

*“Because of the ones who are suffering, we are seeing kindness again. Because of the ones who are in need, we have been able to see generosity again. Because of the ones who are broken, we have been able to see compassion again. Because of the ones who are hopeless, we have been able to see support. Because there is not a vaccine for the virus, we all understand that we all are vulnerable and not invincible. Because of social distancing, we can appreciate and value one another more. Because of the ones who are on the front lines, we can recognize our true heroes.”*

~ Rev. Jonier A. Orozco

There has been much discussion within the neck breather community about steps we should take to protect ourselves. My suggestion has been to add something to what you normally do, if that is possible. To a foam filter, consider adding a fabric cover. Some do that already, and are probably well protected. To an HME, step up to the Micron, if you are able, or again add a layer- a neckerchief, scarf or cloth stoma cover. Cover the mouth and nose when around other people? I say, of course, they are air spaces. This situation is very dangerous and many of us are within a most vulnerable population. When in doubt, cover it. This is not a situation where less is more. The most important measure we can take is simply to remain at home as much as possible. Caution now will enable us to see in person again, those we now yearn to hug.

*Enjoy, laugh, and learn,  
Tom Whitworth  
WebWhispers President*



# Voice Points

Written by Professionals

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## Tips for Staying Healthy During Covid-19... and Beyond

What an extraordinary time of change we are experiencing. During these last few weeks, work, home and social routines have been disrupted and replaced by social distancing and physical isolation. How we respond to this uncertain time—and the sense of vulnerability, grief, and/or fear that may accompany—can have a lasting and perhaps extraordinary impact on physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. How can we each remain healthy as this crisis evolves? The following are some guidelines compiled from the feedback of several speech-language pathologists around the country. Along with these suggestions, I reach out with encouragement and an abundance of gratitude and love to each of you and to our entire online community. We want to hear from you and we are here to support you!

Above all else, do not go it alone. Connect with others: call or text a friend, organize a family get together via Zoom, check in with a Facebook group, email a colleague.... reach out however you can.

Get some fresh air: go for a walk (with social distancing, of course), sit on your balcony or front steps, open a window.

Exercise. Move and stretch your body. Home workouts and online fitness routines can be tailored to a variety of fitness levels. Right now, most gyms are offering free “live” classes online and many fitness apps are free to download. There are apps for counting your steps and doing yoga in a chair. Ever wondered about Zumba, pilates, kickboxing? Now is a great time to try.

Eat healthy, but also enjoy a special treat each day.

Give yourself one “task” to complete each day, such as repotting a plant, gardening, cooking a new dish, organizing a closet or drawer, cleaning a window, writing a letter.

Consider a small amount of quiet time, away from the distractions of TV/phone/media. Take a few gentle breaths in and out.

Don't forget frequent hand washing including your thumbs, back of hands, and wrists.

If you have had a laryngectomy:

- Cover your stoma and use HME. Avoid touching your stoma if you are not able to wash hands.
- Use two masks when going out in public: one for your nose and mouth, and one for the stoma. To cover the stoma, extend the lower two strings on a surgical-type mask by adding more string. Wrap these around to your back and tie.
- Know that there may be changes to how your medical care is provided. These changes may include extra questions at your next appointment, altered clinic hours, telemedicine appointments, and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) like masks, gowns, face shields. These are all designed to minimize exposure to the virus—for you, your families and the rest of your team.
- Reach out to your care team to discuss their contingency plans for routine and emergency visits. Plan ahead if you anticipate a leaking prosthesis. You may be able to do some troubleshooting at home.

Rina Abrams, speech-language pathologist at John's Hopkins University, recently published an online video to assist patients in managing their TEP. This is another helpful resource and sometimes, when you are troubleshooting or using that plug for the first time, nothing helps like seeing it.

<https://youtu.be/w0K98HtE308>

For SLPs, ASHA recently published a piece entitled Guidance to SLPs Regarding Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGP) based on the latest CDC recommendations. This, along with the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) Guidance on Use of PPE, may prove helpful for establishing clinic procedures and educating administration and clinical support staff about the roles and responsibilities of speech-language pathologists.

<https://www.asha.org/SLP/healthcare/ASHA-Guidance-to-SLPs-Regarding-Aerosol-Generating-Procedures/>

<https://www.rcslt.org/learning/covid-19/rcslt-guidance#section-2>

Stay safe everyone, take courage, and keep in touch!



## How Are You Coping With The Covid-19 Pandemic?

I've always been an introvert and not a "touchy-feely" kind of person plus I live alone, so social distancing is not a major issue for me. I do see my daughter for a short while nearly every day and my son a couple times a week. I still go to the grocery store a couple times a week, complete with mask and gloves.

I'm treasurer of my church, so besides virtual Sunday worship and Zoom meetings it has been a challenge to meet payroll and pay the bills. But, we have managed so far and have faith it will continue. I'm president of the fire district with a two million dollar budget. We're approving the upcoming budget and setting the tax rate with a virtual meeting, which would have been unheard of a few months ago.

I am constantly concerned about the health and well-being of the paid staff and volunteers. We've set new parameters for responding for medical calls to minimize exposure to the coronavirus. I stop by the firehouse a couple times a week to check in with the fire chief.

I'm eighty-three years old and a twenty-seven year survivor. I don't want to say I'm a fatalist about this whole mess, but I don't stay up at night losing sleep. I am careful, but I live my life. I grab a good book and relax. If I get infected, although my overall health is good, I realize I may not survive. Should that happen, it's been a good life.

**Carl Strand, Mystic Connecticut**  
**Laryngectomy February 10, 1993**

I haven't "created" anything but rather have continued with those activities including those outside my normal in-home life with additional common sense precautions as required by the Florida Governor. Activities include golfing twice weekly, grocery, fuel and other "necessary" shopping as both physically and mentally necessary for the wife and I. Common sense precautions include maintaining minimum 6 plus feet distance from all other persons (except my wife) and frequent use of personal hand disinfectant/ washing of hands. The only change I have made to my routine is to always utilized my hands-free TEP valve when I go out in public (so as to not bring my finger in contact with my stoma), avoid touching of others, washing my hands frequently and turned off the news. I will not be a victim of the mass physical, mental and emotional hysteria that has come upon us!

Both the wife and I are committed to being sensible but refuse to allow fear to dominate our lives.

**Dave Ross, Inverness, FL**  
**Class of '05**

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I am coping by staying connected with my friends and groups. Most of my groups have online stuff going on. We are doing arts classes and cooking classes. Also Facebook has been great. My wife and I are getting more exercise than we did in the past. Unfortunately the social aspects of life are gone but at least with social media we can stay in touch.

**Dave Kinhead**  
**Arizona, 2013**

There is, ultimately, only one person responsible for your personal health and safety. You. If your health providers give you advice and you don't follow it they cannot be held responsible for your worsening condition . . . or death. If you don't eat healthy (which as a biker was difficult for me) you've no one else to blame for being overweight with health problems...except yourself.

Bikers are notorious for bar-b-que foods when they gather. Even in our personnel lives away from the crowd we tend to indulge in feedings that aren't good for us. Something I've personally struggled with, but hey, I'm finely catching on since I took over the chore of grocery shopping 14 years ago and found you really **MUST** read the labels.

And do your best to stay away from **ANYTHING** you have trouble pronouncing the words in the ingredients list.. Quick tip: If it's got more than 5 ingredients, pass over it. Ha ha...yeah, I know, that leaves a lot on the shelves. But an occasional twinkie isn't all that bad for you. No I do not. Absolutely nothing real in them because they were created by a chemist in a lab.

Experts say to stay 6 feet apart. Who am I to argue against such wise advice. As I've pointed out before, social distancing has never been a problem for me. My sweet Vicky Sue tells me I have an 'aura' that can literally part crowds. Guess I do as I've always been a "stand-offish" kind of guy when I go among the masses. Even biker masses.

Upon being a neckbreather I realized the importance of sanitizing ones shopping cart and washing ones hands –even when it isn't flu season– because you never know **WHO** had their grimy mitts on that sucker before you took it for a spin in the big box store. Because you can bet your booty **NOBODY** cleaned that puppy before covid-19 came into being. Doctor's offices, hospitals, gyms, almost any place you go in the world you can be pretty sure it wasn't cleaned very well – if at all.

Yes, yes, I know most of these places have cleaning crews. I also know they're only as good as time and the boss allows. That's one good thing about covid-19... the whole **WORLD** is getting disinfected!

Took me catching a cold six months post-op to learn this. That's actually where I caught that cold

from. Doctors office. There, hospitals, pretty much every place you go in this world is petri dishes for germs. So wash your mitts. Often. For 20-seconds or longer. Don't matter if the water be hot (though that be preferred) because soap kills germs. Didn't your mother ever teach you that? Mine railed about it every time she washed my mouth – oh, wrong kind of soap washing. Sorry. And wear the mask.

Think of it this way – wearing the mask protects **YOU** from the idiots that don't. Because, though we breathe not through them any more, we can still get those nasty germs floating in the air (you'd be surprised!) stuck in them and, as you know, if you walk through an aroma wafting in the air – you **CAN** smell it. Right? Right.

Becoming a lary taught me all about these things – wiping carts, hand washing, staying a safe distance from folk (just in case and natural habit for me). Only new thing is the mask, but it to shall pass once this nasty bug recedes.

Oh, and get your flu shot every year without fail. I do and if you're over 65 get that one that protects against pneumonia. Yup, you betcha I did. Covid-19 will pass, but (thanks to man) nasty diseases will come round again, but if you instill this stuff in you now you'll be a step or two ahead of the herd come the next super bug – whether it be man-made or not. After all, China be not the only country working on biological weaponry.

Now, despite the rain forecast, I be going for a ride. Nope, don't wear no mask there and I don't care if it rains so long as there be no lightning. Don't like lightning anymore than I do standing under a lone tree during a lightning storm.

Stay healthy and safe. Peace.

**Troll 2006**



## Do What I Can, Someone Needs It

By Don Renfro

*Inspiration is some mysterious blessing which happens when the wheels are turning smoothly. ~ Quentin Blake*

Apparently my wheels have not been turning smoothly. I have agonized for a week on what to write about this month. As you can see this month's quote is about inspiration. It would seem like there would be a lot to be inspired about. I make it a point to read the positive uplifting news articles during these trying times that we are all experiencing. There are many stories where people are helping others that are less able to help themselves. You would think that would bring me insight into inspiration but it has not, I have still come up empty.

The last personal inspiration I can remember that moved me to action came to me a few years ago before I retired. I had been planning my retirement for the past two decades. Working for the state they have a very good retirement program that used to offer classes to attend that would assist you to prepare for retirement and help you to make good decisions in regards to your retirement. I took a class about twenty years ago and I have never been sorry I did.

As I moved closer to retirement I decided to start a side gig in retirement doing taxes as a way to supplement my retirement income. It would be very part-time (only 3 months a year) and allow me to enjoy my time in retirement the rest of the time.

About two years before I was to retire I took a class to become registered by the federal government to prepare taxes. I became certified, got a bond and registered with CTEC (California Tax Education Council). I was now able to prepare taxes for money. I was still working for the state so to work for someone else doing taxes would have to be at night after work. Because I worked such long hours and commuted about thirty miles in heavy traffic the hours I was available to do taxes was very limited. I decided to do taxes as a volunteer for the IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and the Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) programs to get some experience now while I was working, to do taxes after I retired. The program provided free tax

preparation for low-income individuals and the elderly. I could do this on the weekends while I was still working during the week.

I ended up enjoying it so much that I wanted to do it again the next tax season. Before I retired I was not sure of the amount of money I would have to live on in retirement and so that is why I considered a side gig. As it turns out, I am able to survive on the money from my retirement which would allow me to pursue my volunteer interest VITA/TEC again.

VITA/TCE begins preparing for the new tax season in about October. In September of 2018 I got my trach, in October I was diagnosed with cancer and in December I had my laryngectomy. The following year, 2019, I would be having and recovering from surgery to have a fistula corrected. And most of the VITA/TCE sites this year have been closed due to the pandemic.

This brings me to what has inspired me. I am not able to donate money to build a hospital or for me to find the vaccine that stops covid-19. Even achievements on a much smaller level are not within my capacities to achieve. But to be able to give to people that can benefit from my efforts is something I am very inspired to do. I have volunteered in the past and have always found it to be a very rewarding experience. It is very rewarding to know that I possess something that can benefit others and take me outside of myself and into a world where others matter.

I am very inspired to do this as I truly believed that after my laryngectomy I would never be able to be of benefit to another person again. I thought I would always be the one in need of another. I am so happy to be wrong about such a dismal outlook. It would appear that my wheels are turning more smoothly now as I come to the close of this article. I feel so much more inspired to do the things I feel are important to do.



# This Lary Life

## My New Tep Goes To Morocco 2017

W. C. Baker

After 26 years as an esophageal speaker, I found that it was becoming increasingly difficult to trap air and make voice as I had done so easily since 1991. I could make voice by pressing on my pharynx, but the inability to trap air made this less than adequate. After talking it over with Trish Cavanaugh, my Speech Pathologist at the San Francisco VA, we decided to go ahead with a TEP.

When I was a novice in this laryngectomy business, I tried a TEP when the radiation swelling in my neck made esophageal speech difficult. As the swelling went down the esophageal speech improved, so I had a friend stay over in case I had any problems with pulling the old duckbill. I didn't, my puncture closed pretty quickly.

I had done a lot of travelling and attended a lot of IAL conferences as an esophageal speaker, so had only a tangential awareness of TEP usage. I would have done well to have paid better attention. Over 20 years, when I travelled as an esophageal speaker, I didn't take any laryngectomy gear more than a couple of extra bibs, and some foam stoma filters. When I went to Morocco, I followed more or less the same regimen, packing no bibs and carrying a stoma brush and a plug in case I encountered a TEP leak. I was ill prepared for a two month trip.

Six years after Patricia had invited me to go caravanning in Morocco and Iberia, I found myself able to do it. She picked me up at the Marrakesh airport, the most modern looking of any African terminal I had been in. We spent the afternoon wandering around Marrakesh before driving about 110 miles to Essaouira on the Atlantic coast. From a high point, the road overlooks the city of Essaouira with 65,000 inhabitants, spreading in and around its walled medina.

In the 4th century BCE Phoenicians were the first to intrude themselves into the lives of the natives. They were attracted by the abundance of sea urchins that were sacrificed to provide the royal purple dye that was so highly valued for so long. They were followed by Sardinians, Portuguese and finally the French ex pats.

Patricia's apartment, was a two bedroom second floor, walkup about two blocks outside the walls of the medina.

I am not one to criticize anyone's religion, If it works for them then it is right and true and not to be disputed, but I do have rather strong negative feelings about the imposition of anyone's religion on others. I sleepily said some unkind things about the mu'azzin who chanted the 5:00 am call to prayer from the minaret of the mosque across the street. He complicated my adjustment to jet lag. I have been wakened by the call to prayer in many places, but never learned to appreciate its romantic charm over resenting its interruption of my custom of being asleep at 5:00 am.

I continued my jet lag recovery stretched on a blanket at a beach about an hour south of Essaouira. I kept myself covered and slathered sunblock over every exposed part of my body, except my calves that became exposed when I unzipped the bottom part of my cargo pants. I thought about this as a Goldilocks breeze was carrying me toward sleep. I knew that my lags were getting a mega dose of ultra-violet, but it's so easy to lie to oneself at such times and ignore reality, knowing full well that reality always wins in the end.

That same evening, in Essaouira we attended the first concert of Printemp Musical Des Alizes the chamber music festival of the spring winds. Once the music began, my sunburned legs were quickly forgotten. They played mostly French composers, which is to be expected, but thankfully included some Schubert and Beethoven quartets. The main venue was the atrium of a building just inside the walls of the medina. It provided great acoustics and protection from the Alizes, spring wind, after which the festival is named. The rhythmic applause at the end of each piece gives one a feeling of being more a participant than a mere observer.

Amal was a Berber friend with whom Patricia had gone to elementary school in Casablanca. Her three bedroom apartment is one of five in the building that she owns. She hosted a tea which included several of her tenants, a paella prepared by Patricia and served on the terrace overlooking the city.

Ahmed is the only openly gay Berber man in Patricia's group of close personal friends. He was quite witty in at least 4 languages. At least I assume he was as witty in Berber, French and Arabic as he was in English. It was he

who taught me how to pour tea Morocco style. Take a pot of hot tea, put in a lot of mint and sugar, let it steep while carrying on witty conversation in any of several languages. Lift the pot as you pour tea into all of the glasses. Empty the glasses back into the pot and lift the pot, to at least shoulder level, as you fill the glasses for drinking. I think that's right.

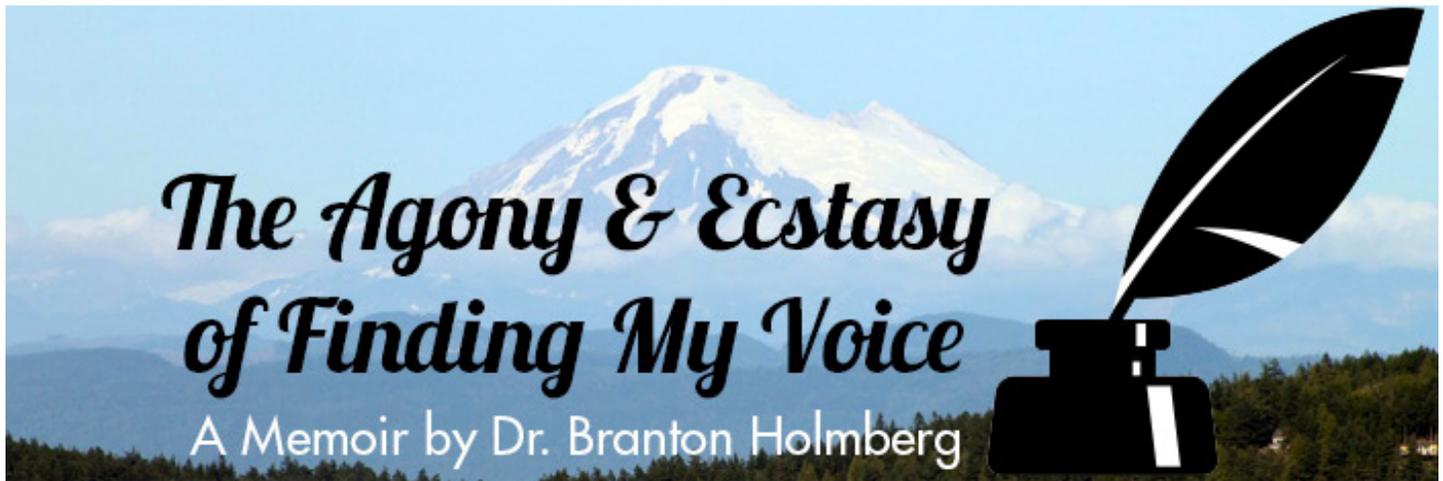
Annick is a Belgian woman who, like Patricia, spends most of her time in Morocco or travelling. The narrow streets of the medina running between multilevel buildings see the sun only briefly at specific times of day. There is much activity on Annicka's street because its end is a gate to the medina. Despite this activity there is little noise in

Annicka's apartment because it is offset on the far side of a courtyard, away from the street. It is quite a nice location, doubly blessed by being far enough away from any of the town's mosques to be spared the 5:00am call to prayer.

Claude is another Frenchman, a classical musician and an excellent cook. He liked the fact that I spoke relatively slowly, because he was better able to understand my English. He said that his grades in English were not as good as they should have been.

There were other friends to be met as we travelled into and across the Atlas mountains after the concert festival ended in Essaouira.





## Chapter 7 “Stanford Prison Experiment”

Before I get into the years after I began teaching at PLC, I need to lay some ground work. While I was working on my master’s degree another professor, Dr. Maury Pettit became a very important part of my life. Maury had been on a year-long sabbatical the year before I started my master’s program. He’d been back in Washington DC going through a National Training Laboratories (NTL) organization development program.

NTL was founded by Kurt Lewin, known as the father of modern social psychology. He was doing ground breaking work in the areas of organization development dynamics and sensitivity training designed to improve interpersonal relations in organizations.

When Maury came back to Central the year I started my graduate program, he introduced two interpersonal dynamics courses as electives in the School Psychology program. I took both of them and found them to be among the most exciting psychology classes I’d ever taken. The focus of each was to create greater openness in interpersonal communications, and interpersonal relations between yourself and others.

In those classes I found the opportunity to explore hang ups I’d developed during my life trying to talk to others, letting them know who I was and what the world looked like through my eyes. In addition to that I discovered how others reacted to me and found ways to become far more comfortable in my interactions with them.

Out of those classes Maury and I struck up a friendship that was to last until his death many years later. He was one of the greatest guys I’ve ever known and opened doors of opportunity to me nearly as great as those Jack Crawford had opened.

Getting back to when I started teaching at PLC. I taught there six years and from the moment I started, I stepped into another transformation that lasted throughout my teaching career. I was hoping to emulate Dr. Crawford’s teaching style and found myself preparing classroom presentations that involved students directly in the learning process rather than having them sit passively listening to me lecture. I’d discovered the use of problem solving exercises, and techniques for engaging people in interpersonal communications in Dr. Pettit’s classes and used them in the various classes I was teaching. I loved it and so did the students.

I introduced two interpersonal dynamics courses into the psychology curriculum at PLC and they became very popular. The enrollment was limited to twelve students per class so the learning environment was very engaging for all of us.

The year I started PLC, another key individual in my life, David Dillard the Director of off Campus Education at CWSC called me and wanted to know if I’d be interested in teaching in his program. He’d been developing college extension programs for CWSC all around the state. The courses he wanted me to teach were evening and week-end stuff so I could fit them into my teaching schedule at PLC without problems. I jumped at the chance.

I taught the Interpersonal Dynamics courses Maury had introduced at Central. They were becoming popular around the state as a new era of what was being called sensitivity training was taking hold in almost every organization in the country, big and small.

There was a lot of civil unrest and sensitivity to interpersonal dynamics was seen as a possible way to defuse it by getting people of both sexes, all races, and all levels of organizational life to talk openly, and constructively with each other.

David’s offer was exciting and I eagerly accepted. I’d found interpersonal dynamics training was not only an avenue for me to deepen the learning of the intricacies my own interactions with others, it was a magic carpet ride for those who wanted to explore theirs.

Between the years 1965 and 1975, I did hundreds of what became known as sensitivity training workshops and loved every one of them. It was a decade of exploring human interaction all over the country.

One of the more vivid experiences I had was with a group of trainers who met for a 5 day trainer development workshop to explore new human interaction techniques. It was held in Eugene, Oregon on the U of O campus. There were 10 of us and we’d each been doing sensitivity training for 5 years or more.

A year or two previous to our getting together, Stanford University had done what was called the “Stanford Prison Experiment: A Simulation Study on the Psychology of Imprisonment”. It’d made headlines all around the country because they had to stop it days before it was scheduled to finish.

Dr. Philip Zimbardo who'd designed the experiment to last 2 weeks found 6 days into it the students that'd been selected to be guards in the study became increasingly sadistic, and students selected to be prisoners became increasingly depressed, showing signs of extreme stress.

One of the trainers in our group suggested we try his idea of a simulation of that experiment among ourselves to see the effect. He'd designed a training exercise he wanted us to go through.

Our first task was to select the person in our group we most respected and admired. That wasn't difficult because there was one trainer among us we all felt that way about. He'd been a Marine in WWII and was one of the gentlest souls any of us had ever known. He agreed to be the guinea pig for the exercise.

The next step was for each of us to take 15 minutes to write down all the things we could think of that were negative about the man we'd chosen.

The third step was put him in the center of our circle of chairs and brainstorm our negative ideas about him while he sat there and listened. The idea was to build on each other's negative comments as the brainstorm progressed.

Brainstorming is normally a process where a problem is presented and ideas from the group spontaneously offered. Those ideas are built on by others in the group. It's used extensively for problem solving in organizations. In this case we were to jump on any negative comment by another group member and add our negative thoughts to it.

When we started things moved slowly because we were all hard pressed to come up with negative things to say about someone we all liked a great deal. A few minutes into the exercise the process of brainstorming was taking what had been minor negatives and building them into greater and greater negatives.

This went on and as it did things were becoming more and more sadistic, and the target of your criticism was growing more and more uncomfortable. How he took it as long as he did showed us each of us the strength of his character. When things got too intense one of the women in the group pulled out and others followed. The man who'd created the exercise called an end to it.

We were all upset and the trainer who'd set up the exercise had us go off by ourselves and think about what we'd just done, we then spent many hours doing what's called a debriefing of our experience.

It'd been incredible how fast we'd taken ourselves into a territory of human interaction that reviled us and yet we'd been drawn into it by supporting the ideas of those around us. The process had been subtle in the beginning but the outcome had been monstrous. We all apologized over and over again to the man who'd been the target. He kindly said he understood and harbored no hard feelings. To this day I'm not sure that's true because the superheated dislike we'd been in the process of creating was very intense.

That experience lives as strongly in me today as it did when we went through it. From that day forward I've understood the nature of crowd mentality and what you can get caught up in if

you are sharing your ideas with others and they encourage you to use their ideas too.

What I find frightening in today's world of computers and iPhones is how social media can be, and is, used to create sadistic attacks leading those being attacked to take their own lives rather than suffer the continual bombardment of the vile thoughts of their attackers.

We discovered firsthand some of what had happened in the Stanford Prison Experiment, albeit it in a far briefer span of time.

I don't want to leave you with a negative impression of what the sensitivity training movement was about. It was in fact the opposite of what I've just described. Its purpose was to identify and build on the positive aspects of human interaction in order to break down the barriers of prejudice and behaviors that prevented a person from developing the best interpersonal relationships they could between themselves and others.

Through the years of my work as a sensitivity trainer I learned on a grand scale we all have thoughts and behaviors getting in our way of being clearly understood by others, and letting ourselves clearly understand who they are and what they're trying to communicate to us. The focus of sensitivity training was to help people identify what those thoughts and behaviors were in their personal, and professional lives, and also help them learn techniques to be more effective in interpersonal interactions and communications.

I do have one misgiving about what I've come to call the "Sensitivity Decade" I went through. Those of us doing the work found little transfer to the real world of the techniques used to grow one's self-esteem, and the nurturance of the self-esteem of others in the workshop setting.

The techniques we'd developed worked great in the retreat settings we used them in, but getting participants to transfer them to their real-life settings was something else. When workshop participants tried using techniques that produced very positive results between themselves and those in their sensitivity groups, they flopped when they tried using them with family members and co-workers back in the real world. They were usually greeted with the admonition, "Don't try that touchy-feely stuff on me". Sensitivity training had gained a reputation for being touchy-feely emotional experiences and was mocked by those who didn't understand.

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