

Realistic Living

A Journal on Religion and Ethics

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REALISTIC LIVING

Realistic Living Resources

37 Years of Truth Seeking
by Gene Marshall

November of this year marks the 37th anniversary of the Realistic Living incorporation. In that time we have created and published on paper, website, blog site, videos, and emails a large set of resources—accessible for your use in upgrading religious practice—especially a Christian practice that is attempting to be true to the Kierkegaardian stream of theologizing. Here are four sets of these resources:

1. Innovative Theologizing
2. The Realistic Living Website
3. The Realistic Living Blog site
4. The Zoom Seminars

1. Innovative Theologizing

In the mid-19th century, Søren Kierkegaard initiated a fresh method of Christian Theologizing. A century later his breakthrough was further developed into a planet-wide Christian renewal movement by five luminaries that have found a permanent place on my mediative council and set in place for me a sort of new, New Testament of writings that have been further elaborated by many other authors, but never out-lived.

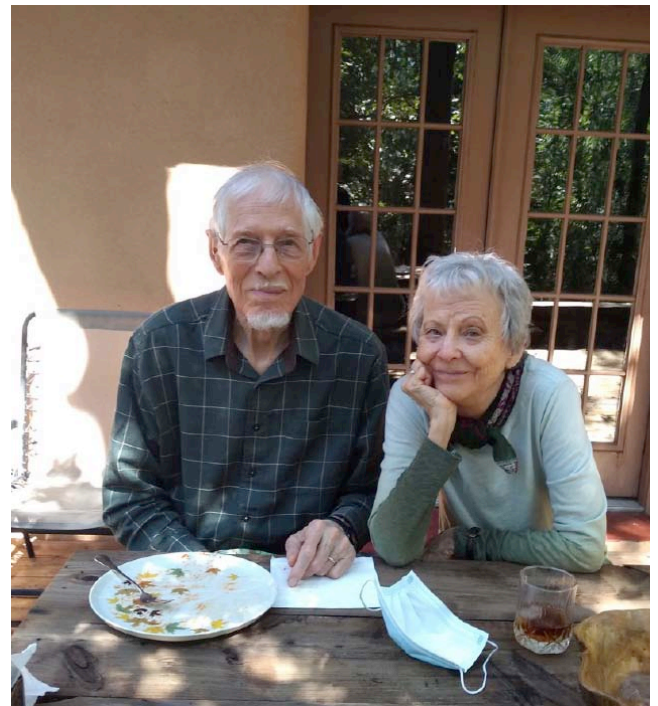


photo by Jane Manley

These five persons are: Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, H. Richard Niebuhr, and Joe Mathews. This last name did not write a library of books, but he was one of the world's great theological teachers and an innovator who melded the insights of these other five luminaries—allowing

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their voices to enrich each other and lead to the construction of a theological method and tools for witnessing to the good news of this heritage in an ever-renewing fashion. Of course, many other luminaries arose during and after these six—some of whom are likewise history-making figures. These six, however, have stuck with me in spite of all the challenges to them and all the failed efforts to leave them behind.

In the 44 years since the death of the last of these six theologians, I have been relating their breakthroughs to unfolding events that have widened my applications of their genius. Ecology has been a big topic for me in this long period. Feminism is a second. Inter-religious dialogue is a third. The death of the two-story metaphor of heaven and Earth has also been a big topic for which I have seen a good deal of further clarification. I have also found my vision of the next institutional forms of Christian Life Together undergoing big transformations—including visions like the Bioregional Parish, the Co-Pastor Circle, and the Servant Office.

Following is a chronological list of the books and booklets that trace the story of my still-emerging theologizing. The entries in this list include perfect-bound **books**, some self-published, some publisher published. In this list are also a number of 8 1/2 X 11 inch short-run **booklets**.

1985 book

A Primer on Radical Christianity

This was my first self-published theologizing book. I made 500 copies and sold all but 3. It has been long out of print. In 2018 I republished this book with WoodLake Publishers in an updated version with a new title: *Radical Gifts: Living the Full Christian Life in Troubled Times*.

1987 book

The Reign of Reality
A Fresh Start for the Earth

This second theologizing book was published with co-author Joyce Marshall—a first effort toward a Christian Ethics emphasizing ecological sanity and overcoming patriarchy.

1994 book

To Be or Not to be a Christian:
Meditations and Essays on Authentic Christian Community

1996 booklet

The Birth & Rebirth & Rebirth & Rebirth . . . of Spirit

1996 booklet

Good Christian Religion as a Social Project

1996 booklet

Great Thinks, Great Feels, and Great Resolves

1996 booklet

The Infinite Silence Speaks
Poetic Discourses on the Book of Genesis

1998 booklet

Speaking Back to the Infinite Silence
Some Poetic Discourses on the Psalms

1998 booklet

The Infinite Silence Walks Among Us
Some Poetic Discourses on the Gospel of John

2000 booklet

The Reincarnation of Paul
A Fictitious Dialogue

2003 book—iUniverse

The Call of the Awe
Rediscovering Christian Profundity
In an Inter-religious Era

2005 booklet—iUniverse

Great Paragraphs of Protestant Theology

2008 book—iUniverse

Jacob's Dream
A Christian Inquiry into Spirit Realization

2014 book—Resurgence Publishing

The Love of History and the Future of Christianity
Toward a Manifestation for a Next Christianity

2019 booklet

The Creator of Christianity:
A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark

2020 book—Wipf and Stock

The Thinking Christian:
Twenty-three Pathways of Awareness

The last book in this list is my most complete statement of a philosophy of religion and of Christian Theologizing; nevertheless, this entire 36-year journey of Christian theological writings fills in various important corners with provocations that are also needed to move us out of the pre-Kierkegaardian era of theologizing and tip us over into a thoughtfulness on Christian faith that is appropriate for this post-Christendom Era of Christian practice.

2. The Realistic Living Website

The Realistic living website is a wonderland of resources from videos that you can watch, to courses you can teach, to book reviews, and basic contexts on solitary exercises, as well as brief contexts on the overall tasks of Christian renewal, inter-religious dialogue, and ethical matters.. Here is the link to visit that web site.

<http://www.realisticliving.org/>

You might want to view the **Videos** of Joyce and Gene answering questions framed by Michael May and videoed by Maryellen May. You can check out the **Courses** you can teach or study alone. If you want a review of one of our books click **Books**. If you want a review of other key books and movies click **Book and Movie Reviews**. If you are in need of some suggestions for your solitary exercises click **Solitary Practices**. Many of our **Journals** are available on this web site. The contexts for **Intimate Circles** may also be helpful.

3. The Realistic Living Blog site

<http://realisticliving.org/blog/>

In addition to the resources on the main Web site, we have an up-to-date Blog site that has a collection of recent essays on Freedom, a set of eight videos on Christian renewal, a complete commentary on the Gospel of Mark, and a set of lesson plans for studying and teaching six key study books.

4. The Zoom Seminars

In January of 2021, I began facilitating two Zoom Seminars—on Part One and Part Two of my 2020 book, *The Thinking Christian*. Then, I facilitated two more Zoom Seminars on Parts Two and Three April 24 to June 26. Finally, the 5th and 6th 2021 Zoom Seminars I facilitated on Parts Three and One beginning August 7th and completed their last Saturday on October 9th.

Part One is a philosophy of religion that applies to religion in general.

Part Two is on Christian Theologizing within that general view of religion.

Part Three is on the ethics and communal life of a next Christian practice.

For 2022 the schedule for these Zoom Seminars begins with Parts One and Two on January 15th lasting for 10 Saturdays until March 19th; Parts Two and Three held from April 23 to June 25; and Parts Three and One from August 6th to October 8th. Each session of these Seminars is for one hour. Each Zoom meeting will be open 15 minutes before each session and 15 minutes after each session for further conversation and questions.

I consider these innovative programs to be an opportunity for leadership training aimed at continuing the spirit movement that was rooted in the awakening program called “Religious Studies One,” launched by the Ecumenical Institute Chicago in 1964. Each of these invitational Zoom Seminars is designed for 5 women and 5 men who want to provide religious leadership of some sort, Christian or otherwise.

If you are interested, send an email to gwesleymarshall@gmail.com or a letter to Gene Marshall at 3578 N. State Highway 78. Bonham, TX 75418. These Zoom Seminars are offered free of charge—a gift of Realistic Living.

Taking all three of these Zoom Seminars is the best preparation we currently offer for leading small groups in a next adventure in the recovery of an authentic Christian faith. These Seminars can also be useful preparation for leading groups doing a religious practice other than Christian. And the Christian practice being explored is one that takes

WHAT IS THEOLOGY

place within the environment of our inter-religious era of cooperation. Please feel free to correspond with Gene concerning any questions you may have about these programs.

If you can't schedule a Zoom Seminar at this time, you may still want to read the book. *The Thinking Christian*, a 398-page handsome volume, retails from publisher for \$39, but I can provide it to you for \$28, postage free. Just put a check for that amount in an envelope with your mailing address and name, and I will rush it out to you. Here is a recent poem that could have been part of this book, and that gives you some of its flavor:

Discovery

The women attendees
outnumber Ron and I
in the Tai Chi class,
but we all move our arms
through the same chi
and sink that chi in similar bellies.

I understand "chi" as a combination
of awareness and freedom,
the yin and the yang of what we
westerners call "consciousness."

This land of consciousness
is occupied by worms, sharks, fish,
cats, dogs, sea mammals, and horses.
Don't forget dinosaurs, lizards, and turtles,
and, oh yes, octopi and kangaroos.

Humans only are conscious
of this consciousness,
and have a word for it.
But the enigma of consciousness
is part of a mysterious cosmogenesis
of natural evolution
nested in a Land of Mystery
unfathomable to the human intelligence.
When I don't feel the **Awe**
and wonder about the **Awesomeness**
of it all, let me take note of the fact that

"Being an **Awed One** who faces the
Awesomeness that puts me in **Awe**,
is who I am."

What Is Theology? Religious Theoretics by Gene Marshall

For many people today, it remains true that not having an acceptable answer to this question blocks consideration for practicing a next Christianity. I have a book on my shelf entitled *What is Theology?* It is a translation of writings by Rudolf Bultmann on this topic. Few will read this book, because it is so abstract in style, but I want to share my simple summary of an answer to this question that I found in this book.

Theology is a form of religious theoretics for a religion like Judaism, Christianity, or Islam that uses the word "God" to refer to Profound Reality. So understood, theology is a quest for the truth of our experiences of Profound Reality as an Otherness or object of human consciousness—a real encounter. This study of Profound Reality includes a companion study of the truth of our awareness of profound consciousness of this Profound Reality that no human concepts can contain.



Bultmann statue

Every religion has a religious theoretics, but not every religion uses the same metaphors in their religious theoretics. Whatever set of religious metaphors that a religious theoretics uses, it is a

WHAT IS THEOLOGY?

reflection upon those direct experiences by human consciousness of Profound Reality. The Profound Reality experience is what makes profound consciousness profound. This really-real Profound Reality is an “otherness” or in that sense “object” of human consciousness, not just an idea or just a state of human consciousness. And there is no experience of Profound Reality without the experience of a state of profound consciousness.

This means that the study of Profound Reality and the study of profound consciousness are one and the same study. There can be no study of Profound Reality without a study of profound consciousness, because it takes profound consciousness to study Profound Reality. And there is no study of profound consciousness without the study of Profound Reality, because the presence of profound consciousness implies the presence of this Otherness or objective-essence of Profound Reality.

There is no such thing as holding Profound Reality at arms length like a galaxy or a tree or a cat or another human being, or a human idea of some sort. Therefore, the human being filled with profound consciousness of Profound Reality is a full third of the overall experience of all three aspects of this experience. Without a full involvement of the human no profound consciousness and no Profound Reality can be part of what the study of a religious theoretics discusses.

I will illustrate this with an other-than-Christian religious theoretics. The Upanishads of Hindu India provide a set of religious theoretics that is quite different than the religious theoretics taking place at the same time in Israel.

Profound Reality in this Upanishad religious theoretics is named “Brahman.” Profound consciousness is named “Atman.” So when the Upanishad texts say “That I Am,” these texts are saying that Profound Reality and profound consciousness are the same Eternal Mystery. The “That of Brahman” is more than a subjective state. And the “I of Atman” is a subjective presence of the essential human “self” (or “no-self”) when experienced in the presence of “Brahman.” This is

not theology, for no “theos” is part of the language of this discussion. Christian theology, however, can also speak of the experiences being referred to in these sub-Asian religious metaphors. Profound Reality is the same Profound Reality, whatever the metaphorical language that is used to speak of this Profound Reality. It is also true that each of these metaphorical language systems may emphasize and/or minimize different aspects of Profound Reality—as well as those states of profound consciousness that are the companions of experiencing Profound Reality.

Notice what is implied above about theology. A personal God that transcends this ordinary world, but acts within this same ordinary world upon you and me and everyone in a personal way, is metaphorical talk. This does not mean, however, that God is only a bit of metaphorical talk. This One God of the Arabian-originated religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is metaphorical talk about That actual Otherness of Profound Reality—that “Final That” or “Objective Oneness” of human awareness

With this view of a religious theoretics in mind, let us take a quick trip into some theology writings Christians call “the Old Testament.” Within the name of the prophet Elijah, considered the grandfather of the prophets, “Eli” means “my God” and “jah” is short for “Yahweh.” So it is the case that the prophet Elijah took for his name, “My God is Yahweh.” Yahweh is the name used in this theologizing for a personification of Profound Reality. “My God” means my devotion. There are many Elohim—many devotions. All these gods and goddesses of the Canaanites are Elohim. These Elohim are like the temporal objectifications that we still “worship” today: love, war, wisdom, sex, ideas, self-images, etc. Yah is the inclusive That, the mono or One God, the one overall devotion. The many devotions are secondary to this One.

This singular devotion to Yahweh is clearly present in Psalm 90. I am going to restate this Psalm with minor word changes in order to aid us in seeing more clearly the lasting meanings that were meant in this old piece of poetry:

Yahweh, You have been our fortress
from generation to generation.
Before the mountains were raised up
or Earth and cosmos were born in travail,
from everlasting to everlasting
You are the One Lasting Power.

You turn humans back into dust.
“Turn back,” You command the offspring of Adam;
from Your perspective a thousand years
are as yesterday.
A night watch passes and
You have cut off each human being,
They are like a dream at daybreak.
They fade like grass that springs up in the morning,
but when evening comes is parched and withered.
So we are each brought to an end
by Your negating power.

In mid-speech, we are silenced by Your fury.
You lay bare our illusions
in the full light of Your Presence.
Each day goes by under the shadow
of Your furious realism.
Our years die away like a mummer.
Seventy years is the span of our life,
eighty if our strength holds;
the hurrying years are labor and sorrow,
so quickly they pass and are forgotten.

Who can feel the power of Your negations,
who can feel Your fury like those who are devoted to
You?

So teach us to count our days,
that we may enter the gate of wisdom.

This same Yahweh was seen as the overarching historical actor in the events lived by Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and 2nd Isaiah. And this same Yahweh is the One Jesus calls “Abba” or “Papa.” Jesus announces that “Papa” is bringing forth a restored humanity in Jesus’ own living presence, in Jesus’ aggressive ministry, and in the lives of those who are responding with a living of Jesus’ proclamation. This proclamation is about a fresh blossoming of our essential humanity—seen to be a new Adam and Eve—a kingdom of Yahweh

replacing the kingdom of Rome and a despair-sick people of Israel.

With these clarifications about Yahweh, the whole Bible begins to come alive with a truth that is still happening to us. Yahweh is still acting in history—acting Exodus-wise, Exile-wise, return from Exile-wise, and Jesus-wise in our lives today, and forevermore. Such a recovery of Biblical theologizing is essential for the continuation of a viable and vital next Christian practice.

Integration at 65 and 87

Two Personal Memoirs
by Joyce Marshall

This article appeared in Realistic Living’s June 1999 journal. We reprint it with a followup this 22 years later.

Integration at Age 65

a personal memoir
by Joyce Marshall

To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together.

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-5

Part I - The House

We decided to build a house in 1995. We began thinking of a design and exploring building possibilities. In ‘96 we decided to move our doublewide mobile home and build a strawbale house on that site. We completed our design that year. In June of ‘97, after waiting six months for dry weather and for the mover to be available, we moved the mobile home to another part of our property and repaired the subsequent damage. In August, the concrete foundation for the new house

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was poured. In September we had a wall-raising party.

The Big Heart Builders worked from August of '97 to April of '98 constructing the house. Gene and I began painting doors and building decks before they finished, and then we worked intensely from April '98 to the present (April '99). We tiled 2000 square feet of floors and tiled baths, hung interior doors, made curtains, completed the decks (with John Howell's help after he moved into the mobile home), as well as myriad demanding tasks you never think of before getting involved in such a project.



Sometimes as we worked on our knees, month after month, or waited for the weather to clear, or for the plumber or stucco worker to be available, it seemed that the various tasks would never get finished, much less the entire house. Everything took much longer than we imagined it would. As the days went by I often felt that if the house were ever completed I would never want to do another thing—just rest from the exhaustion and enjoy the new living space.

When we first considered this project I knew that if we were going to build a house and participate in it as fully as we intended, it must be soon. In spite of Scott and Helen Nearing's example, I didn't trust my capacity to carry off such a project in my 70s. My sense was that the time to carry heavy buckets of mortar and grout and push wheelbarrows of cement for deck posts was now, and the time to lie in the hammock and enjoy the decks was in my 70s.

Now the project is finally coming to completion. There's one shower yet to tile—a one-person job which Gene will do. There's the road and drive to be graveled and some landscaping to do.

We have been living in the house since last August. We moved in before we were through tiling floors and hanging doors. We are daily surprised and exultant at how well our plan has worked out. It is very satisfying to envision something and gradually bring it to concretion. This house has exceeded all our expectations. Every part of the house is a joy to be in. Right now we are delighting in the two recently completed decks as the weather is perfect for working outside, taking naps, visiting, or just looking at the woods and listening to the birds. It seems miraculous that this house has materialized with the ambiance we dreamed of.

A big part of realizing this miracle has been Gene's astounding genius, persistence, and hard physical work. He was on top of the entire building process, educating himself to understand what was going on, making sure mistakes were avoided or quickly corrected, troubleshooting for the builders and keeping their spirits up. He read books on tiling and deck building and proceeded to lay out designs and made them happen. He had never hung doors, and we couldn't locate a good carpenter when we needed one. So he figured out how to hang doors. Our working together on this is another long story. The short version is that we are both hard workers, we work together well, and we had only a few loud shouting matches.

My appreciation for the laboring people of the world has increased manyfold. The four Big Heart builders lived up to their name. They pulled their camping trailers in and lived on the site, putting their hearts and bodies into building us the house we wanted. The subcontractors—concrete workers, roofers, stucco workers, painters, plumber, cabinet maker—all impressed me with their ability to analyze situations, their practical knowledge, and their heavy expenditure of physical energy. Our friend, Dan, created wetland septic systems for our house and the mobile home and the solar guys from

INTEGRATION AT 65 AND 87

Dallas put panels on the roof to heat our water and the house.

Our hearts were warmed by the 40-50 friends and strangers who stacked bales to raise our walls in an amazingly short time, giving the house a boost of energy and spirit.

So now at last I am beginning to imagine there might be life beyond building a house and that I might even be interested in activities besides rest and sitting and staring.

Yes, as Ecclesiastes says, a time to build a house, a time to rest, and then a time to begin imagining the next steps in life. I notice that my relationship to choosing my upcoming activities is different than four years ago. I have gone through the Symplegades of building a house and I have done it as I passed my 65th year—a marker not only experienced on the calendar, but felt in the body. I no longer have the desire or energy to organize large state-wide or continent-wide meetings. On the other hand, I am aware that I have a genius for certain processes: peer counseling, group facilitation, EcoTheater—each of which is remarkably healing for individuals and groups. It is very satisfying to spread this magic around, and it seems appropriate to pass along the benefit of my years spent accumulating these capacities.

I have recently begun a local women's support group and am discovering a renewed enthusiasm about teaching co-counseling—to these women as well as perhaps classes for others. I am also interested in working with the alumni of the Leadership Fannin County classes Gene and I have taught—four groups of 18-20 people so far—as the members take on roles of leadership in the county. A few people are excited about EcoTheater, which whets my appetite to involve others in that wonderful process. I have also been drawn back to playing the piano and singing, mostly for my own pleasure. I have been amazed that I am playing better than ever, learning new challenging pieces, and that I can still belt out a ringingly clear high B-flat.

So I am discovering that age 65 is not too late for births and rebirths. Perhaps one of the gifts we

elders have is our awareness that these times of weeping and laughing, casting away and gathering, keeping silent and speaking come and go throughout life. Our living can demonstrate the possibility of encountering the vagaries of life with grace and equanimity and the freedom of using our capacities boldly and joyfully.

Reintegration at Age 87

**A personal Memoir
by Joyce Marshall**

I recall a Life Phases chart back in the day that had four phases of 20 years each, ending at age 80. I recently discovered in my files a Seasons of Life chart that goes to age 100. The 60-80 season is called Elder, the role being that of Diplomatic Guide, the task that of Deepening Contemplative Abilities and Finding New Activities. This person's relation to the other seasons is to inject the Power of Wisdom. The role of the 80-100 season is Spiritual Eldering, and the task to Story Life's Journey and Accept Life's Given. This person is to inject the Vulnerability of Endings in relation to the other seasons.



photo by Paula Brennecke

I recently went back through my yearly charts to discover just what we did since I wrote the above piece in 1999. (I chart each week, each quarter and each year, ending with a one-page chart for each year.) It seems an appropriate time to reflect as we had just built this house then and we have recently been in process of doing various necessary repairs

POEM AMD FAIRY TALE

on it from its natural aging. I'm also noting various "body repairs" we are undergoing and have undergone during this period. It is quite clear that the 80-100 season relates to vulnerability. I also noted that 17 people, either family or those very close to us, have died since 1999. As I said to a friend, I always read the obituaries, to see who I know, and to wonder if tomorrow it will be mine. I recently wrote my obituary so it will be ready when needed.

This past 22-year season we have made good use of the house we built. From 1999-2018 we had Symposium gatherings twice a year, one five days, the other a weekend. Most of the meetings were here in our house with an average of 25 people attending. The meetings involved research in various committee groupings and training by RL staff and sometimes bringing in outside people. We had Larry and Peggy Ward doing mindfulness meditation, Brad Blanton, creator of Radical Honesty, and Cynthia Winton-Henry, co-creator of Interplay. One of the committees did research on co-pastor circles. The Bonham co-pastor circle began weekly meetings here in 2001 which continue to this day. The Blackland Prairie Bioregional Group has met quarterly (mostly here) for these two decades. We have also hosted a number of sojourns for individuals and couples.

In 2010 we purchased a large mobile home to replace our original abode here in the woods and to make a home for Alan Richard when he came to join our staff. We have also used that space for various activities during symposium meetings and to house some participants. It has become the space for our mid-week spirit group meeting which includes Tai Chi, meditation, and personal sharing.

Our staff has continued deepening by attending retreats and workshops. We have done many vipassana meditation retreats, Radical Honesty workshops, DanceMeditation training, Interplay, Diamond Heart work, Byron Katie retreats, and learned Tai Chi.

We have led courses in Washington D.C., Indiana, Illinois, California, Oklahoma and Texas. Pat Webb and I created and led a Contemplative course and the Beyond Patriarchy course in various

sites. Gene recently created and led Zoom courses on his book, *A Thinking Christian*. Alan led a Zoom course on Becoming Anti-Racist for a church in Houston, as well as teacher training for the course.

We have continued creating the Realistic Living Journal twice a year, adding color to this publication. Gene continues to write books. I created a number of spirit manuals, one set based on the Ignatian retreat and another on the Benedictine canonical hours and the Psalms. Alan has written "outreach" pieces that connect Realistic Living's movement focus with alliances of scholars and activists.

I led EcoTheater workshops which resulted in local dinner theater performances from 2002 until 2014.

We were active with the Fannin County Democrats, Gene being county chair in 2008 and me facilitating group processes and assisting in organizing the county convention. Other members of our circle created CORE (Citizens Organizing for Resources and Environment) in 2010. Alan participated in the protest of the pipe line and is presently active in the local Community Cares Coalition.

And by the way, I don't sing for other people any more, just for my own enjoyment, AND I can still, on good days, belt out a clear high B-flat.

I Wait

In the silence I wait

Yes, wait.

Waiting is good.

I await the signal that tells me the next move.

Sometimes the signal is to wait.

Just wait.

Wait it out.

Wait for clarity.

Wait and rest.

Just wait.

Wait to speak.

Wait to see.

To know.

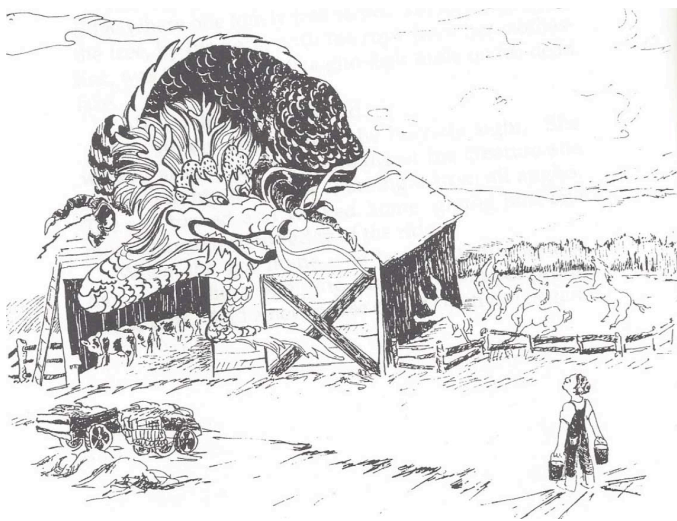
To sense.

Then —

then —

Who knows?

by Joyce



drawing by Maggie Robinson

Fairy Tale

Penelope Winthrop-Jones

by Joyce Marshall

Once upon a time on the lonesome open prairie there lived a stepmother. What a way to name someone, she thought. I am a person. My name is Penelope Jones. Why do people always call me the stepmother? Just because I happened to marry a man who had a family, everyone calls me the stepmother—thinks of me as the stepmother. I am a person in my own right. I refuse to be defined by one role I play in life as mother to children I did not bear.

Well, she thought about this a lot as she milked the cows, cooked the meals, managed the children, talked over the farm business with her husband, and mostly as she sat at her window in the early morning looking out over the prairie, smelling the fresh early morning breeze.

One day as she sat meditating by the window, she saw a spider sitting in its intricate web awaiting its prey. She asked the spider what it was that she, Penelope, could learn from Jennifer, the spider, for that was the spider's name.

"Well," said Jennifer, "I just weave my web as you see here and then I sit still and wait. I weave my web and I sit and wait. It works every time. You can see I'm well fed and quite content."

"Hmmm," thought Penelope. "What web do I need to weave?"

Then as Penelope went out to the barn to milk the cows that evening, what should she see but a great dragon in the sky—a giant dragon flying about and spitting fire. Strangely, she was not afraid. She watched as the dragon came flying toward her and landed right on the peak of the barn roof. The dragon—Constance was her name—roared out, spewing a flame down to Penelope's feet. "Why aren't you running and hiding like everyone else?" said the dragon, said Constance.

"Well, I'm just not afraid," said Penelope. "Actually, I'm rather relieved to see you. I've been feeling boxed in and unfulfilled and frustrated and all. Somehow it's a big relief to see your flaming fire and to hear your roar. I think there's something for me to learn in this."

Penelope gazed for a moment at Constance the dragon and then went on into the barn and milked the cows. Her husband was about, feeding the cows, and the children were about, playing and doing various chores; but to Penelope, it was as if she were alone in the universe, so absorbed was she in her inward journey.

She took the milk in, and Johnny, the eldest, ran it through the separator. Penelope got Margie started with supper and she slipped up into the attic where she found the old Civil War sword that belonged to her husband's grandfather. She took the sword and pulled it from its scabbard. She held it up in both her hands. She held it up as she stood up tall.

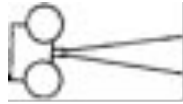
So she added another ritual to her daily routine. Now she had her morning time contemplating Jennifer the spider, her milk time encounter with Constance the dragon, and her evening time in the attic holding the sword aloft. These rituals fed her spirit.

And things changed, as things always do. And one day, many years later, Penelope Winthrop-Jones, the renowned writer, realized that no one ever thought of her as the stepmother any more.

**ART ON THE
HUMANNESS SCALE**

reviews by Joyce Marshall

MOVIES



Karajan. I was drawn to this film because it was directed by master filmmaker, Robert Dornhelm, and because of Herbert von Karajan's reputation as a conductor. The documentary is beautifully done, telling the story of this Austrian musician who had to manage his developing career in Nazi Germany. But what brought me to purchase it so I could play it again and again was the demonstration of how Karajan got sounds from orchestras (and singers—he directed the entire opera, not just the orchestra) that I have never heard. It wasn't simply the perfection. I have heard perfection from other conductors. He got an emotional quality I have heard no where else. If you see the film, do not miss the so-called trailer. It is not actually a trailer, but complete performances of many pieces which you get only parts of in the film. A full concert.

Die Fledermaus. Sydney Opera House. This wondrous performance combines the skill of Marx brothers style comedy with top notch singing for this comic Johann Strauss operetta. My response was out loud laughter at the sight gags one minute and jaw-dropping awe at the singing the next.

The Best Years of our Lives. If I saw this in 1946 (I was 12) I forgot it and hadn't seen it since. It won seven Academy Awards then, and holds up remarkably well. I would give it the same awards today. About three vets returning home from World War II, it features actors I recall from the day: Myrna Loy, Fredric March, Teresa Wright, Dana Andrews, and Virginia Mayo. Non-actor, Harold Russell, who actually lost both hands in the war, won the award for best supporting actor.

Maiden. This fine 2018 documentary is about the first all-women crew to enter the Whitbread Round the World Race. The race has taken place since 1973 and was exclusively male until Tracy Edwards put together an all-female crew of sailors and entered the 1989-90 race. What an inspiring story! Lots of film from on-board the boat demonstrates the absolutely life-threatening demands of this voyage and the great skill required. And for the women, simply getting enough support to buy a yacht and prepare it for the race (the crew did most of the refitting themselves) was nearly impossible. Most people thought they wouldn't make the first leg. Like Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire. She did everything he did except in high heels and backward.

The Public. Emilio Estevez wrote, directed and starred in this 2018 film, playing a librarian at the Cincinnati public library where a group of homeless people carry out an occupy-type sit-in on a cold winter night. A violent confrontation is threatened and a magnificent non-violent response brings tears and laughter. I loved it!

NOVELS



Martin Chuzzlewit
by Charles Dickens

This has not been a popular book of Dickens, but it has become one of our favorites. I understand that Dickens considered it his best. As I have mentioned here before, we read novels together—that is, I read aloud to Gene. I find my experience of a novel is deepened ten-fold by hearing it. We saw the 1994 BBC video version before reading the book and then again after reading the book. The second time the film was much more meaningful, knowing the depth of the characters. There are two Martin Chuzzlewits. Young Martin is grandson to the elder and makes an almost fatal trip to the United States, which Dickens pictures as full of self-promoting

RECOMMENDED READING

hucksters. We meet Seth Pecksniff and Jonas Chuzzlewit, both villains, but quite different in style. Tom Pinch's great awakening to Pecksniff's villainy is one for the books. And we meet the first private investigator in fiction, Mr. Nadgett. This book is a delight.

The Fortunes of Nigel
A Legend of Montrose
both by Sir Walter Scott

Neither of these novels are among Scott's well-known historical novels, yet we found them to be especially satisfying. Nigel shows up during the reign of King James VI of Scotland who was James I of England. James' son in this story later becomes King Charles I of England in the Montrose story. Young Nigel comes to London to obtain payment of a debt owed him by the king. At one point, when imprisoned in the Tower, the king learns of his innocence by listening in from a secret cell next to his.

The Earl of Montrose travels incognito to Scotland as the general of Charles I's campaign against the Covenanters. Montrose is a brilliant strategist and a wise human being and the only historical person in the story. You have to look up what happened to him, as Scott doesn't tell us. (It is tragic.) A major sub-plot is around an experienced mercenary, Dalgetty. Both of these novels feature young men who find a woman they love and marry, but Scott doesn't dwell there. His style has me leaning forward at the end of each chapter, eager for the next, and also gasping with surprise at every turn of events. What a storyteller!

Mother Comes of Age
by Driss Chraïbi

Moroccan author Driss Chraïbi's novels deal with colonialism, culture clashes, generational conflict and the treatment of women. His books are often perceived as semi-autobiographical. This one reads like it might be. It is about two sons who tell the story of their mother who was married to a man the age of her father at age 13 and was never allowed

to leave the house. Now she is 35 and her grown sons decide to liberate her. Through the radio, the telephone and the trips with her sons into the world (unknown to their busy father) she loses her innocence and finally declares her independence to her husband. Her son, Nagib, overhearing the conversation, noted that she had "a voice of velvet in a throat of iron." She becomes quite an activist and the story itself is emancipating.

RECOMMENDED READING

reviews by Joyce Marshall

The Freedom to Love
The Life and Vision of
Catherine Harding
by Karin Visser
New Sarum Press, 2016



I learned of Catherine Harding because of her husband, Douglas Harding, author of *Of Having No Head*. Visser's book is largely transcriptions of interviews with Catherine with Visser's notes about their meetings. Catherine is about my age. She was born in France. Her father, age 52, was active in the French resistance when Germany invaded France. He disappeared, probably shot. I strongly identified with her story as I, too, lost a father I adored when he was 49. At age 18 she received a Fulbright scholarship and studied in North Carolina. I won't tell her whole story here, but mention that she married two interesting men. One was Driss Chraïbi whose novel is reviewed above. They had five children together. In the 1960s, Catherine taught English in France using Shakespeare and Milton and also the Beatles and Bob Marley and recordings of Jack Kennedy's and Martin Luther King's speeches. About the time her marriage with Driss fell apart, she met Buddhist teacher Kalu Rinpoche, who was a profound influence on her life. Later she decided she wanted to become a yoga teacher and went to India to study with Iyengar himself—a "genius," she called him. All this time she was continuing to mother her children in whatever ways were appropriate. She met her

RECOMMENDED READING

second husband when her son's friend insisted she attend Douglas Harding's workshop in Paris. She also termed him a genius and they traveled the world teaching until his death. Visser includes an Appendix on Douglas' experiments of *The Headless Way*, with drawings.

Long Quiet Highway
Waking up in America
by Natalie Goldberg
Bantam Books, 1993

You may know Goldberg from her books on writing—how to. This book is a full-length demonstration. How to tell your story with juicy details. She begins in high school when she experienced herself as a nerd, then goes on through her "hippie phase." She tells her experiences with Allen Ginsberg and Trungpa Rinpoche to illustrate what they were like personally. She describes the years she spent in Minnesota when Katagiri Roshi was her teacher. And then his death. And letting go of this person "who was paying attention. Paying large attention."

Goner
The Final Travels of UG Krishnamurti
by Louis Brawley
Non-Duality Press, 2011

And this is another story of a student letting go of a beloved teacher. Both speak of gratitude. How to express their deep gratitude. But the timing never seemed right. I read this book some time back—maybe a year ago—and picking it up to consider reviewing it, I find myself caught up in reading it again. I don't suppose Brawley studied writing with Natalie Goldberg but he gets juicy details down beautifully. His writing is so honest and just downright intriguing. A follower of Jiddu Krishnamurti, he accidentally discovered UG Krishnamurti (Uppaluri Gopala) on the computer and learned that he was not related to JK and had even been a follower of JK himself for decades and had "torn apart" JK's teachings. Brawley read everything he could find of UG's words—which others had transcribed into books—and described

him as "blunt, fierce, down to earth" with an "indifference to ancient systems, scriptures and the value system of spiritual practice." This awakened a strong desire to meet him. Making a call to a California number he got from the website designer he got UG himself on the phone and met him when he was in New York City soon after. This was February, 2002. By July that year, Brawley was in Switzerland with UG and from then until UG's death five years later. He traveled the world with him and became his sort of "body man" as Brawley was large and strong and could lift UG when needed. Here's what he noted once about UG's presence: "A mechanical device could never capture the quality of the field around him—living, pulsing with light and energy. I didn't know why it was so easy to be with him. Sitting with this unknowable man put the world in its place. His comments lanced the wound of conflicted human consciousness." Brawley's description of his saying a final goodbye to UG and his experience of being in the world without him are particularly moving. He notes that UG said at one time, "The only thing that will happen around me is that people's burden will be lightened a little, that is all." Brawley's response: "That was an understatement."

Explorations into the Eternal
Forays into the teaching of Nisargadatta Maharaj
by Ramesh S. Balsekar
Acorn Press, 1987

Here is yet another devotee of a master. Ramesh is one of those considered to carry on the integrity of the teaching of Nisargadatta. This book mostly describes the teaching and is less about the teacher. Near the end of the book, however, Ramesh says more about his relationship to Nisargadatta. He used the same word that Brawley used above—understatement. "It would be an understatement to say that my whole attitude to life changed radically in those three years." He notes that the most important thing he learnt from him is "the supreme importance of apparent ordinariness . . . the ultimate uselessness of competing against others." Many authors of books on the non-dual perspective list

Nisargadatta as one of the few they lean upon. Ramesh explains him simply and clearly.

Alan Richard has been in New York this quarter

On September 30th, I departed from Bonham in a used 2008 Prius I'd purchased the day before, arriving in Yonkers, New York on October 2nd. Until the week of November 20th, I will be staying in the home of Dr. Mehnaz Afridi, director of the Manhattan College Holocaust, Genocide, and Interfaith Education Center and working at the Center, which is located in the Bronx. My work here involves:

- **Filing boxes full of documents and artifacts, some dating back to the 1930s, belonging to Holocaust survivor and "Nazi hunter" Herman Ziering (1927-2005) in preparation for digitizing the Center's Ziering Archive.** Many of the documents will be stored in boxes for scholars and students to access at the Center, but select "one of a kind" documents will become part of a digital archive and made available for scholars and the public online. Working from a grant provided by the Claims Conference, we are sorting everything into major categories, writing short narratives for these categories explaining what they are and why they are important, "tagging" documents into minor or overlapping categories to aid web developers in setting up a navigation system for the digital archive, selecting documents for digitization, and conducting searches for professional digitization experts and website developers who will assist us in the final stage of this work, to be conducted in 2022.
- **Piecing together the series of events that led Ziering to help organize survivors of the Riga ghetto in Latvia and, working with the Society, with the Anti-**

Defamation League of B'nai Brith, and eventually with the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations, bring the war criminals associated with Nazi mass murder in Eastern Europe and living in the United States to justice. Ziering's "Nazi hunting" work preceded any active investigation of war criminals by either the Immigration and Naturalization Service or the Justice Department, both of which were stymied for two decades by Cold War priorities. Indeed, evidence in the material donated to the Center and obtained from interviews with people who worked with Ziering indicates that pressure from the few "freelance" investigators like him who persisted in their justice-seeking efforts in the face of official foot-dragging and even cover-ups were what prompted the federal government to begin taking the presence of Nazi war criminals in our midst seriously. But the story of Ziering's role in this process has not yet been "written up" in a scholarly way and inserted into the known history of "Nazi hunting." Part of our work between now and November 15th will be to draft a paper that tells this story.

- **Assisting the Center in expanding its mission.** At the Center's 25th anniversary gala on October 24th honoring the Center's 91-year-old founder Frederick Schweitzer and featuring a moving speech by Elisha Wiesel, the son of the late renowned author and human rights advocate Elie Wiesel, Dr. Afridi reviewed the Center's past work and provided a vision for its future, which will involve both a broadening of the scope of attention from the Holocaust in Europe to other areas of the globe, a greater attention to genocidal crimes preceding the Holocaust and to policies of mass murder since the Holocaust and informed by it, and greater attention to both individuals whose courageous efforts rescued people from mass murder campaigns and to programs and workshops designed to promote greater

understanding between groups in conflict, including religious traditions, and intervene to prevent the recurrence of campaigns of mass murder. This involves planning specific programs to be implemented in the next few years, and obtaining funding for them, primarily from grants and donations.

I was originally slated to begin my return journey to Bonham on November 15th, but Dr. Afridi has requested that I remain here during the following week. I now plan to begin the drive back to Texas on the 20th of November, visiting my ailing father in Iowa on the way, and arriving in Bonham the weekend after Thanksgiving

E-mail-Dialogues

We are open to assist you to understand these resources or to discuss any of these matters. Our new email addresses are:

Gene: gwesleymarshall@gmail.com

Joyce: joycemarshal623@gmail.com

Alan: alanjayrichard@gmail.com

Realistic Living Finances

Financial gifts to Realistic Living go directly into needed services. We raise and spend a budget of **\$30,000 a year** on programing that is useful to our constituency.

We send complimentary copies of this journal to new people for a temporary period of time. If you want to be sure of continuing to receive this journal, we ask for a minimum donation of \$20 a year.

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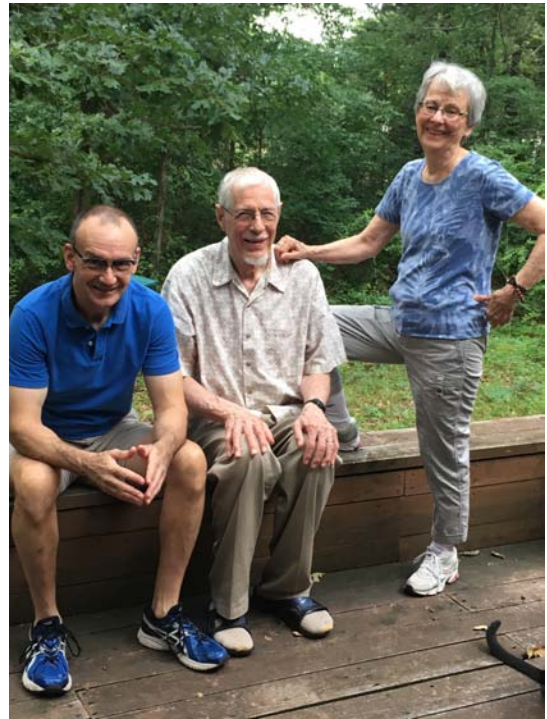


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basis. Your bank can work out a way to send these contributions for you.

If you are a customer of *Amazon.com*, you can set up through *smile.amazon.com* for a small portion of your Amazon purchases to be contributed to *RealisticLiving.org*.

We do not pay salaries to our three staff members, but only expenses that sustain our programing, electronic outreach, physical travel, and program attendance. We have a 12-member official board who is responsible for our non-profit 501-C3 corporation and who is also an active working board that now meets twice a year by Zoom. The staff—Gene, Joyce, and Alan—seek the advice of this board, and our finances are legally reviewed by them. The staff meets regularly, does many things together, such as this journal, and each has individual ministries as well.

Reminder

Beginning on January 15, 2022, Gene will facilitate two Zoom Seminars on Parts One and Two of *The Thinking Christian*. Contact Gene about this.

gwesleymarshall@gmail.com

Realistic Living

is contemporary language for "Holy Spirit."



photo by Leslie Ephland

Realistic Living

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