

Inquiring Minds: A few reflections over the months

#26 Aug 2013-Jan 2014

“In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.” -Albert Einstein

[Intent](#) [Past Issues: 1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [9](#) [10](#) [11](#) [12](#) [13](#) [14](#) [15](#) [16](#) [17](#) [18](#) [19](#) [20](#) [21](#) [22](#) [23](#) [24](#) [25](#) [Comment](#)

BACK AFTER A BREAK

My Muse--or whatever summons that mysterious force which motivates one to write, to create, or to value one's own sharing--left me some months ago. So my mind and motivation were left fallow, maybe for the collective good. Anyway, now fortified with new news and views, I'm back, and I hope you will enjoy my latest communiqué.

“BREAKING BAD” GLORIA AND THE BOOKS SHE SHARED

Patricia and I met Gloria Anderson when we tried to see the last episodes of the *Breaking Bad* television series, not having that channel. It was a risk both ways, and we were pleasantly surprised to have met and found a new friend in Gloria who took us into her home and her life which turned out much more than sharing a TV series.

As it turned out, Gloria is an incredible person who has become a mentor and friend. She's very tech savvy for her age, well read in many subjects, and quite the cook and entertainer.

When I told her my interests she immediately pulled out several books from her library. (I only took those under 400 pages long since I both my stiff neck and my attention will not endure more.) Here are some of those books.

The World Without Us (2008) by Alan Weisman was a scientific, specific, and sobering account how nature will go on if/when humans cease to be. *Imperium*, a fictional biography of Cicero as told by his

scribe Tiro who really invented shorthand, is a very interesting historical drama based on the life of a man I translated but hardly knew. Paul Conroy's *Under the Wire* remembers Marie Colvin's final days when journalists were targeted for trying to expose the atrocities of war-torn Syria. Calvin Trilling's *Remembering Denny* is a memoir of Redwood City's Rhodes Scholar Denny Hansen who was Gloria's contemporary at Sequoia High School. It was a search of why he killed himself in midlife (and was my least favorite.) Presently I am finishing *Cleopatra: A Life*, by Pulitzer Prize author Stacy Schiff and author of a new book on Ben Franklin. Cleopatra is shown as a wily statesman more than a sex goddess portrayed in the movies.

I am always amazed how books and media expose my ignorance and expand my horizons.

HELPING A FRIEND PLAN HIS MEMORIAL SERVICE

Ray and I had a unique friendship, both accepting each other without letting our differing opinions get the way. And so when he knew and accepted the fact that he was dying, he asked me to help him make his last good-byes by preparing a

five-minute video DVD of his life and loves. It was a project which helped us cope and grow closer. True to his country roots he featured [Carrie Underwood](#) and

[Vince Gill](#) singing *How Great Thou Art*. It was a wonderful memorial, and I was glad to have a small part in it including designing the program with a little [collage poem](#) on the back. I will fondly remember the good times we had.

REAPING WHAT ONE SOWS

It always amazes me how my upbeat self begets more good will and opportunity than when I am in a funk. I remember my most upbeat teachers--one was probably manic-depressive (bipolar) --but when he was “on” he was a delight, a beacon of light and joy in our seminary solitude. Many say we are creators, gods if you will, of our own reality. Good-seekers (God-seekers?) are open to and often call forth the good in others. Those with critical eyes often see and bring forth the negative in the same people.

To tap into this positive side is one of the reason, I believe, people join and attend spiritual communities, go to parties, etc.: they provide an opportunity to present one's best self, receive the best others have to offer, and bask in goodness. More basic than Psych 1, but bears remembering once in a while when trying to fend off all the negatives so emphasized in the media.

I imagine the more down-to-earth people are “realists,” and the totally upbeat person is a bit tiring at times, but it's always nice to be open to glean and nurture those moments of joy and humor when one can. Think of Benigni's movie *Life is Beautiful*, where he remained most positive in a concentration camp mainly for his son. Such an inspiration!

