

Relish Every Taste of Strangeness

Recently I became Medicare-eligible. That's right, I'm freaking 65! I'm waiting to become both older and wiser. Not at all sure about the latter. But here's some of what I've learned about strangeness.

Venerate it, (along with elders like me, naturally).

Looking back at your life, likely what will stand out are the weirdest, strangest, most peculiar experiences. Normalcy, routine, averageness -- those aspects tend to fade into the background.

Allow a man still celebrating his 65th birthday month to babble a bit about his strange life.

I was raised by a divorced mother. Had no contact with my father. Longed for the father I never knew all through my childhood. He finally phoned me when I was in my 30s. Got to spend one hour with him in a hotel room. I was so happy when the hour was over. Couldn't stand the guy. Strange...

I embraced LSD, mescaline, and marijuana big time during my sophomore and junior years at San Jose State. Then I became a lead student of a crazed Greek yoga teacher and eventually was initiated by an Indian guru he was associated with. Became a big time meditator. No drugs, no alcohol, no meat. For 35 years. Strange...

I graduated in 1971 with a B.A. in Psychology. Decided to get a Masters in Social Work at Portland State. After becoming a MSW I realized I wasn't interested in counseling people. Had my own problems. Went into health services research. Never used my degree. But stayed in Oregon. Strange...

I wrote a book about Plotinus, a Neoplatonist Greek philosopher, even though I started off knowing next to nothing about him. Book was well-reviewed and became a steady seller on Amazon. Now I don't agree with much of what I once believed to be true about Plotinus' teachings. Strange...

I started a Church of the Churchless blog in 2004 after the religious right was instrumental in re-electing President Bush. Must have convinced myself that religiosity was undesirable, because I de-converted from my spiritual path a year or so later after being an avid devotee for so long. Like I said in a blog post, "I've become the person that I warned myself against." Strange...

My point is this: life doesn't make sense. That's the most reasonable thing I can say about it.

Expect that you'll wander here and there, back and forth, to and fro, for as long as you live. Then you won't be disappointed with how unpredictably strange life is. Instead, you'll relish every taste of strangeness.

There is no such thing as "normal." I was raised by an alcoholic (off and on, thankfully) mother. Looking back, her heavy-drinking years were bizarre. But at the time they were all I knew, so I necessarily accepted them for what they were.

Still do. I love the strangeness that I've experienced, and which I am. My advice: do the same. The strange in you is the most vital part of you. Embrace it.

Strange Up Salem seeks to lift our city's Blah Curse. Give us a Facebook like.
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