

Something Strange

There are moments when we can sense some subtle... something... different, unusual... seemingly strange. It's like sensing a weather shift before it happens. Subtle, yet if paying attention and fully present in the moment, there are usually plentiful clues.

These last few months have felt that way. Difficult to put into words, only getting close with: something strange is going on.

Work

This fall marks 30 years of doing Oriental bodywork. It is a calling. It is joyful and it is also a career, a job and work. Sometimes the work aspect overshadows the joy and love of it. There have been times when finances, scheduling, inventory, bookkeeping and taxes seem to block out the core essence of loving it.



I remember feeling this way, but it's drifting further back in memory, more difficult to immediately access. Now there's a sense of excitement each morning - what mystery will walk in the door? What marvelous example of body, mind and spirit healing will appear? Daily, with each person, there is a sense of amazement: look at that! What incredible creations these bodies are, with miraculous healing abilities built-in, factory supplied and standard equipment.

It's much easier to see now. *Much* easier. And much more simple to access, make contact, engage and embrace. Allow the body to find its natural healing process, to function by simply getting out of the way. Acknowledge it. Appreciation and gratitude it. Sit back and watch with wonder.

How does this happen? With confidence in my training and decades of experience, I'm learning to trust the body before me, in the moment. Listen to it's needs and signals through touch then, follow. It feels quite simple.

And with that simplicity, the effort of work diminishes daily replaced by... ease of work, and a corresponding increase in joy of work. Hmmm... that's a strange concept... joy of work.

Sleeping/Waking

It's not just work, either. Last summer I started sleeping outside in the courtyard on hot nights. This continued into fall and, with a warmer sleeping bag, right through winter (it was a mild winter). Something happened during this process, something like acclimation, to the seasons, to the changing weather, to each day. I found myself waking earlier and earlier, easily and naturally getting up at dawn or even pre-dawn. In the past, I could easily sleep until noon and struggled to wake each morning. Hmmm... also strange.

Diet

Something is also happening with food. I'm eating less quantity and, surprisingly, gaining a few pounds. I'm growing sprouts, making sunflower seed cheese and coconut milk yogurt. Warmer months are calling for regular gentle, mild liver and intestinal detoxs and cleanses - all things tried before with poor results. I'm listening to what the body needs, not thinking about it, or following a "right" diet. That feels very strange.



Physical Activity

Kayaking adventures continue, seemingly with every river journey. Through the winter these were on the Willamette River. In spring other rivers began calling: Clackamas, Tualatin, Sandy, Columbia. Expanding scope, widening the lens has naturally increased physical activity and stamina. 27 river miles on the Tualatin, with a rough, bushwhacking $\frac{1}{3}$ mile portage around a logjam. 26 biking miles to Kelly Point park (Willamette meets Columbia) and 12 kayak miles on the water. Leave home at 5 AM,

Max/bus to Kelso, walk five miles to Oxbow, assemble kayak, paddle nine miles, disassemble kayak, paddle, disassemble kayak, bus home, have meditation class.

A year ago it was a struggle to do a mile or two on the Willamette. Even 5-10 years ago I couldn't sustain this kind of activity, especially each week. That is strange-and a surprise. It's also quite clear that it is not just physical capacity. This thin body is lean on muscle. There's an energy that permeates these river journeys, pilgrimages. The capacity of this energy far surpasses physical ability.

In these and all other areas of daily life there is a common thread. Pause, a moment or longer of stillness, listen. What appears? What arises? What calls in this moment? Then... follow. Simple. Whether work or paddle. Diet or exercise. Career changes or doing laundry. There is a natural way to each. Pause, listen, follow.

How to describe this quality? Are there any words for it, something that at least comes close? How about... ease. Not necessarily easy... just a sense of naturalness, flowing effortlessly, spontaneously.

Much time, effort and energy is directed toward reducing disease, trying to prevent, manage, mitigate. Just a little bit of allowing ease in our daily lives may be a valuable and effortless approach to balance the natural occurrence of dis-ease that goes along with these human bodies.

Paddling along the Columbia Slough. Taking a small, narrow side channel up to Smith and Bybee Lakes. Rounded banks with plentiful trees, many arching over the channel. Quiet. Still. It feels similar to creeks and bayous in the South, without the humidity, biting flies, mosquitoes and poisonous snakes. In other words, much nicer.



Mystic kayak glides easily along the still surface, paddle dipping effortlessly, one side, then the other. Air bubbles float up from very large carp circling just below the surface, small groups every 15 yards. They jump, tails slapping the surface just as the boat approaches.

At channel's end an embankment demands a short portage over to Smith Lake. Standing on the bank, legs enjoy a needed stretch feeling the solidity of rocky bank and earth... earth... earth. Taking in a 360 degree panoramic view of two large lakes, and trees and sky and earth, seemingly in the middle of nowhere, actually within Portland city limits. Ah....

Turning to pull the kayak out, looking back at 200 yards of straight channel, framed exquisitely by rounded banks, rolling hills, arching trees. A large blue heron takes graceful leave from nearby trees gliding a few feet above the water receding silently down channel midline.

Every 15 yards or so, heron passes over a school of carp that jump, ripples breaking the surface in an exquisitely choreographed dance of nature, continuing the entire length of the channel until it curves out of sight. Ah... there it is... this... just this moment. As direct and clear as any teacher, master, sage pointing to the truth, reality, Dharma, Tao. Right here. Right now.

Enchanted, speechless, wordless—the Tao that can't be spoken. Mesmerized, totally absorbed and present. Channel and water, banks and trees, blue sky and wind, herons and jumping carp, and me... no separation.

Yes. Something strange is going on. Heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for something strange as it continues to unfold.

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