

**Notes from a Quest  
by Paul Rudy  
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PRVQ 6/4-7/2010

...THE END

I heard a sound—a cross between giant wings and the distant crow of an anemic rooster. I wasn't completely sure what had happened, but I was pretty sure it went deep: from within mother earth out to father sky and beyond. And I was separated from none of it. The sound made me sit up as if from a dream...might have been a dream except I hadn't been sleeping. Then I saw the vulture. It had swooped a few feet off my perch under the pinion on my little piece of cliff above the arroyo. It was louder than I would've thought...his wings cutting the air, a sound that did not so much come from outside me, but was already there...inside, trying to get out. She was looking for meat. Man meat. She didn't need to be quiet because her pray was usually pre-dead...like the meat I buy at Whole Foods. Fortunately, I was not wrapped in cellophane, that prophylactic protecting against rot. I knew I was still among the living and not on the vulture menu. Not so much because I was breathing, or felt the heat of the dry sun, or the ants pecking at my legs, but because sister vulture chose not to stop and take a bite out of my tender but shrinking belly. No, my time had not yet come...I still had more, of what I knew not, to do.

One of the 13 Indigenous Grandmothers says that the longest distance in the universe is the 14 inches between our head and the heart. Fortunately for me, both were still working. Vulture knew this, maybe because my smell said "I am not gone yet...I am still of this world..." it takes more than two days to put me down...to move me beyond...but I did still have one day to go. There was time for vulture to return...to check back in for that smell of flesh gone empty. But vulture did not return for the remainder of my scorched time on the hill. She knew why I was there.

She knew that my task made her desire impossible. She was patient for sure, but also knew the futility of waiting for impossibility. Hope is a concept invented by the church to keep subjects subservient, to coerce them into their own misery with acceptance and even a fake joy strung on a promise of some fabricated future that will never come. She did not believe in hope...she did not believe in any of these silly human moral concepts. There was meat ready to pick or there was meat that was still alive. I may have looked like a dead man walking on the outside, but my insides were transmitting an energetic perfume...a sweetness that broadcast "alive and well" and "wandering but not lost". She knew I was still sweet and so swooped on by, past what she knew would not come. I was not an inevitability for her, and so she would have to search elsewhere for some other's belly to fill her own. I was off limits and no amount of time would change that until my appointment came due. This was about traversing 14 inches of infinity and back.

Yes, there was time. That was the only thing I had, except for my medicine bag full of potent objects given or found in sacred places or by special teachers, my drum and rattles, and my Cherokee Basket Weaver blanket. The drum and rattles were instruments of thanksgiving-playing them and singing were the only activities...ceremonies, I would allow myself to pay with in sweat. My sweat on the hill was sacred and not frivolously spent-an Investment into the world of the unseen and untouched that I sought in my three-day vision quest without food and water during an unusually strong period of sun...the strongest recorded since recording began in Taos, but not as strong, I suspected, as some the ancestors I sought communion with had experienced. Viewed within that frame, there was not much time. The distance between Friday and Monday seemed as long as that 14 inches, but I knew that was just my mind, the top pole of that 14 speaking. The lower anchor knew differently-that my three days on this dirt under the trees was like the amount of time a fly sits on my skin before I callously brush it off. Maybe for the fly that is a long time. For Mother Earth it barely registers. But the right hug at the right time can last way beyond its limited linear time, and so I like to think that my three-day hug of the Mother is felt, or

at least registered deeper than beneath Her skin. My head said there was plenty of time...my heart knew this would be over too soon. And so I focused on presence and being. Nothing to do except fully participate in each moment.

I had staked my claim underneath a pinion and a juniper with the help of my teacher Jim, and a few supporters who ushered the way to the hill top like a funeral procession. Jim is special. Within minutes of meeting him, I knew I had found gold. They say that when we are born we wear the face we are given and when we turn 50, we wear the face that we have earned. Jim's face and his eyes say "I have been where you seek to go and it is both beautiful and terrifying. But if you choose to go, you will not go alone. I will help you as long as I can, and as you continue on your unique path I will always be here". I will never forget his last words to me on the hill. "Pray for yourself, and pray for the people". I knew what he meant. It was not advice to pray that people get what they want, or even for peace and happiness. This was a plea that we both understood that goes like this: "There is little time left for us here if we do not wake up and learn the ancient wisdom that is lost but not forgotten. Pray that we all start to GET IT...to remember our place in the great balancing dance of life on this planet". And so I settle into my sanctuary, two trees, small but steadfast against the wind, rain and sun. No, not steadfast against these things, but in harmony with these things. That is my human thinking about the world...my separation mentality. It is only I that stand against this backdrop, but I am here to let go of standing against...and to begin to stand with these trees, and all other Relations on this planet.

These trees, two birds of a feather whose wings entwined to provide comfort and shade, stood low. They knew that rising too high in this environment would take more energy than they could muster, let alone sustain, and so they stayed humble. There are no accidents. The gift of pinion and juniper was shade of the day. Their same shade kept the stars out at night. The juniper in silhouette against the muted star lit sky-a Medusa-Kokopeli dancer with left leg raised in a high kick said: "I can see and feel the sky, but your journey is elsewhere. It is easy for you to

journey upward and outward on your magic carpet of imagination. But you are here to go downward...into the Mother...into yourself and experience something real, not Imagined. I will protect you as I can, but Grandfather Sun is stronger than us both, and it is he you will need to come to peace with. Mother Earth holds your answers. Look down...feel inward and she will guide you". My heart knew the truth in this, and so I held claim over this space between two sisters, thanked them for what relief they gave for three days and nights, with no food or water, and sat...

...and sat...

...and sat...

...and...

...began to observe...

I was alone... After the going out lodge, two rounds, one for the east and one for the south, contact with humans ended. No eye contact...no touch...no words. Jim's advice to pray was delivered without eye contact muttered under his breath, as if it had lids. I already missed those huge loving brown eyes. But there was one more question he asked. In a flat unimpassioned tone he asked: "Are there any more words that need to be spoken". I didn't want to give the answer i knew i had to give, but i did anyway. "No", I said in an even more deadpan voice. I was already moving beyond words. The sage he burned had welcomed me to my spot, and my prayer ties, smudged many times along the "leading right here," delineated my space for the next three days and nights. After months of preparation, I was finally on the hill. I watched Jim's back disappear down the slope we had ascended to come to this place. His hat was the last thing I saw and then it was gone. It looked like the earth was liquid and that Jim had sunk and his hat floated away. As with any good teacher, he was leading by example, and I was an eager pupil.

All day that Friday, as I carried wood in the morning for the fire that would keep me tethered to this reality, as I journeyed in dreamtime in the teepee, as I went through the going out lodge, and as I waited for the group to get ready to take me to the hill, I had been chomping at the bit. I was ready to go on this quest. Bring it on. Now I was here. No more chomping. No more anticipation. I did not want to carry either of those energies with me into this quest, and so I checked them at the hill...in the sipapu...at the fire. I did have some housekeeping to take care of. The day was getting old, and Father Sun would be moving on soon. So I laid out my tarp and my sleeping bag and blanket, and my space was set. That took all of five minutes even with the asking of permission, the gifting of tobacco, and the setting of some of the many intentions that would get set. 4,315 minutes to go, but who's counting? I got wide open space all around me and in front of me, and THAT is why I'm here. Cool! There is lots to get to know in a 10-foot circle, but I am not here to study it like a scientist...I am here to let it study me, and to present itself at its pace, and as it wishes to reveal itself to me. Slowing down...settling in...but not too comfortable.

The isolation was lonely immediately, and yet I could still feel my supporters' presence. Even though Jim had descended into the liquid earth he was not gone. For the months leading up to the quest when people would ask me "what if something goes wrong" my answer was that "Jim would know". I trusted beyond doubt...a capital T Truth. And this was the point: to learn information gathering through extra-sensory methods. To connect with the spirit world beyond just the five senses. To gather all the data available and venture beyond rationality and find more information to experience the world in a holy new way. I would learn later that scientists call this "anomalous cognition". Its anomalous because many people don't believe in it. Strange that we draw these lines in some places but not others. Many have never seen a germ, but still believe in them... I have come to believe in many unseen things, and anomalous cognition is one of them. And Jim was adept at this...there was nothing anomalous about it at all. I had experienced his spirit wisdom before and trusted his connection to this higher plan of

information implicitly. The researcher in me practices it a lot when I'm not thinking, but I try not to talk about it much since that requires too much thought. "Sometimes I sits and thinks...and sometimes I just sits..." I've learned that this latter part is the most important when listening for "anomalies"...

I did not come here with things to "do". I purposely did not bring a journal to write in. There would be time to process things later, and writing would be a mental distraction from my cells waking up and paying attention. The more my brain was thinking, the less i would learn and understand about this place. The brain loves to label, and labels burden observations with a whole backpack of the past. I did not want to invite the past, at least not my past, to this place. I was here to make a new present, unrestricted by what i "know" to be true. I was here to sit...to be present...to give Mother Earth the only thing I really have, and that is my time. I chose this isolation. It was a communion with whatever non-human energies chose to be with me...chose to reveal to me. That isolation seemed extreme, at first, until the recluse in me reminded me that I have done this often-this aloneness. The only difference was that my refrigerator was 700 miles away. I was here to go more intentionally deeper into myself, and my fridge was one of my biggest distractions. No, this was not one of my favorite hobbies: an avoidance of other people. It was a divorce proceeding from my kitchen and pantry. No food stores except what i carried every minute of every day around my waste: my love handles, still waiting to be grabbed in a moment of passion... I was not on trial here, but the way i perceive...how i spend my time, the way i think, and live life, was. My 10-foot circle and everything within it was the judge and jury. I hoped that the executioner had taken this trial off, but only time, and the public witness of circling vultures above it, would tell... And then an ant bit me and I observed that I was NOT alone.

The ants, big red ones and tiny black ones, were plentiful. The black ones were organized, marching in step and on an errand of great purpose. The red ones were more roguish-scurrying around as if searching for something they had lost. During my going out lodge, an ant had found its

way into the water filled abalone shell that Jim had placed a grandfather stone in that he gave me the previous summer. It was an unconscious, subconscious, anomalous-conscious, maybe even superconscious contract between us. It was in the water filled shell to bless and send with me as our connection while on the hill. Two nodes on a wireless network without gismo as transmitter or receiver. Two portals in a multidimensional quantum world. Infinite direct lines between us that Jim knew how to use. A spiritual umbilical cord between two men of single vision and purpose. I was here to learn this magical system. To make the surreal, into the real. These were wise Grandfather stones, tumbled by time, programmed by water, and carrying the intention of a shaman's blessing. They were nodes in the matrix, that could access any other node. They were not limited to, or by, linear proximity. This ant that had found its way into our blessing was tapped in to this collective consciousness of our purpose. Ants naturally understand "collective", and the ants on this hill modeled the way to move in harmony and unity...at least the small black ones did. I think the red ones know more about complexity theory-theirs is a more complicated consciousness, difficult for humans to understand. Their doings were not as easy for me to unscramble, but their intention, whatever that may be, was plainly visible through persistence and conviction. Their scattered movements were made without hesitation or apology.

From the beginning to the end, ant was giving me two keys to this experience: patience and community. The patience part was mostly me, sitting in the heat with nothing to "do". The community part was the people down at the lodge keeping the fire going, praying and growing in every way possible...any way necessary...taking next steps. As i would learn, we were not actually that delineated, but the analogy works as far as any words do... They were the black ants with purpose, building mountains one speck at a time. They were taking care of business...they were gettin' it done physically, emotionally and spiritually. And they were good! A few hours in, i get hit with a huge surge of energy that nearly knocks me down. I know they are praying for me. I breath deep and give one of the thousands of thankyou's i will doll out in the next

three days. There is an unlimited supply of these i have learned. A universal bank of unlimited gratitude where taking one out puts two more back in. We all have accounts at this bank and i'm withdrawing often! My support group, both down at the fire, and scattered all over the world, seemed like the black ants whose collective consciousness was palpable. I was the red ant. Searching and wandering...foraging for little pieces of golden lunch to feed undefined desires on a journey towards both nowhere and everywhere-the 11th dimension of string theory perhaps? The linear of the physical plane where the lodge left me in the middle...and the non-linear of the spirit world where all points converge and resonate outward from a singular time and space. Quests like this required both kinds of ants...it would take us all.

My attention span for ants was about 14 inches. The red ants can cover this distance pretty quickly, but there seemed to be no objective. For the black ones there seemed to be too much. Their columns extended outside my circle delineated by 491 prayer ties-little bits of sage smudged tobacco tied into a continuous string of plump pouches strung out as a ring around the Rosie but no pockets full of posie... I was in the Big Tent, and they were the other two in this "running in place hurry up and stand still" Three Ring Circus! My ring was made 11 pouches at a time in 11 days of each color: yellow for east, red for south, black for west and white for north. I got intimate with these colors over the days. Yellow was the morning sun color, which varied all day long. Red was the color of my scorched nose...and some of the baked rocks. My blood too...but i did not shed any this time. Black was night...when I could travel at will, in that other, sometimes more appealing "reality..." Black has a richness of color in unbounded depth and complexity. Anything is possible in black...it is full. White was the place I hoped to emerge. That place with no color to influence equilibrium, only to be. The place without influence of mind or body...only spirit. I have seen this place, even been there a few times. It is perfect. It is ecstatic.

There were also seven other colored prayer ties which I never was clear on the purpose of. My imagination decided they were wild cards that the



universe has hidden up its sleeve...those unexpected things that we know are impossible but can no longer deny once we have witnessed miracles for ourselves. And that circle of prayer ties was like a constellation of miracles. It was the center of my universe for three days and nights as I drank only with my eyes and nose and ate only with my ears and skin. The span of 11 ties is about 14 inches. So, before I even got to the hill, I had already memorized this distance. We were intimate. Not in a teasing, taunting way. Love does not work like that...it does not dangle carrots or make empty promises. There was no infatuation...no expectation...only openness, the greatest paradox the circle would present. No, these 11 times 11 14-inch distances were gentle reminders built into my experience for weeks before trekking to the hill of my task. They were gentle and kind. They danced in the wind reminding me how easy this could be. Their unbrokenness reminded me of my task constantly: to connect the gap between my mind and my heart, one ant at a time. I could already see across this distance. Now was the time to traverse it.

The multi-colored string ring was like a column of ants marching around my space giving me a warning not go beyond, at least not in the bodily form, while giddily goading me to venture out through my spirit...the intangible parts of the fabric of life that i know are present because I have felt them in growing palpability. It was also a comforting protection from other physical forms entering my sacred space. I knew that the biggest predators i would confront would come from within me...the only things that have sought to destroy me in my life came from inside. The outside ones were easy to avoid or deal with. The inside ones were adept at covert operations...of guerilla warfare, and sabotage of the most heinous type. I knew these predators well, and was confident that the only things entering my circle from the outside were there to teach. I was a willing...no, eager pupil. If only i could gain the same relationship with my internal jungle that i had with the outer one. That would be progress. That would be vision.

I had a vision about mountain lion in the weeks before the hill, and wondered what an encounter with her would be like. I saw her sitting just

outside my circle. We looked at each other as if we understood. I was sure she understood those prayer ties...that they shifted me from her appetite to her cub. She did not visit in person, but still she is beautiful beyond description. The prayer ties didn't sting like the ants, but they both served as reminders: be patient, remember the community who is with you below and abroad, and remember the higher purpose for which you sit. All creatures here know why you sit and you are honored". I am honored? Yes, that is true, but my task here is to honor as well. Respect comes in all sizes and shapes. All forms and energies. All times and places. Honor goes between all relations. It is given and received freely. The ants, had they been asked would have said "we give nothing...we are just being ants". I was trying to be paul and thought i was giving. To me it felt like giving, but there was nothing exchanged...no tangible goods or economic measurements, just butt on the ground. 14 is a good number because it is one more than 13, and one less than 15. And it was the chosen number to get to Mother Earth and all her wisdom: by going nowhere 14 inches at a time.

And so, I sat...

...breathed...

...closed my eyes and allowed my other senses to come online...

...and with each breath opened every sensual pore to whatever lessons had been planned for me by higher powers than myself, and by myself...I suspected collusion in this quest...

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a wanderer coming in from the universe to lend a hand...

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I could not perceive any movement of the sun. The longer i was on the hill, the more it seemed to stand still...and yet the sun moved...sunrise

turned into morning...morning flowed into afternoon, and viola...it mysteriously and imperceptibly became evening. And then dark... Thank the Great Mystery I did not bring a watch. That would have been a cruel jail that only sleep liberates from. In Taos, the sunsets are as explosive in the east as they are in the west. This irony became a placeholder...a promise for me of where Father Sun would rise the next day. Maybe even a trail of crumbs for HIM to remember His path back to the new day. The clouds were just being clouds and yet they were coded with personal messages. Day one: "listen as we sing to you through light, shape and pattern just for the play of it". Day two: "look at how beautifully and with grace we provide a roof over your head and rescue you from Father Sun". On day three, "hear us through the shape of giant Buddha and watch how we shape shift into Guadalupe, then to coyote, then roadrunner and turtle". There was a mystical wind warrior too, chasing his lover through the western sky. Riding the waves of brother wind in a playful spirit of joy. The combined resources of the sky did show the passages of time as I tracked their shape shifting forms and ideas.

And so, the sky danced in a silent movie against the imperceptibly changing canvas. No, it was a ballet-analog in its continuum. The stage was Grandfather Sky and the music composed by Father Sun. It was orchestrated by Sister Water and conducted by Brother Wind. The notes were endlessly unfolding and morphing patterns in a continuous tapestry of silent sound. The mountains, trees and birds were the winds brass and percussion. My own nerves comprised the string section, and we all made this ballet together. Being a composer, this music was not lost on me. It was the greatest ballet ever written, and re-written each night with infinite variation. Whatever music I make pales in comparison...cheap imitation..."made in China". And yet that is why I am on the hill. To experience this art is the greatest teacher. And the biggest lesson: that the Universe does this ballet without effort or rehearsal, moment by moment as the sun and the stars follow their ordained trail of crumbs, every moment of every day. I began to perceive the movement of the sun and realize that time is the greatest shape shifter of all. Slow and continuous. Persistent and unjudging and seamless. It, in contrast to my demarcated

prayer ties, reminds me of my task: to step out of sequential time and form...to go analog after having given digital a descent go...to Return to Forever...as the column of ants marches on.

Father sun is the greatest life-giving force, but the high priestess of heat is perhaps the greatest teacher. Movement makes sweat. An open mouth wastes moisture by the spoonful. Direct sun in the heat of the day bakes anything it falls upon except the trees, plants, and animals. The rocks don't seem to mind either. Even mister big black beetle is oblivious to how his traveling house soaks up heat that stops me in my tracks. It seems that I am the only one here who is affected by the difference between a 40-degree night and a 90 degree day. For the former i must bundle into protections since my body is ill-prepared to save it own heat. I am the one who has to strip down to nothing in the heat of the day. I am not very good at regulating my thermostat...i will have to practice this...but for now, I am the fragile one, used to temperatures between 65 and 75. The plants and animals live in sub-zero in the winter time and scorching heat like today in the summer. And they don't complain. I am in a school whose lessons are about my own fragility. Inflexibility does not survive this place. Sister water flowing in abundance just a few hundred feet below my perch drives this point home. She winds her way around bends in the canon...around rocks, who she patiently knows will give way to her. Where water meets rock, there is little resistance. She is effortless, letting the slope do all the work. The Dali Lama said it: be careful what you resist...She is the miracle here. She is just being a river...but she can also be hard as a rock...flexible as necessary and rise to the sky in graceful vapor. I experienced this latter as Jim poured water on the heated stones in my going out lodge. The steam that rose into the sipapu carried our prayers with it. They also oozed out my pores as drops of salty inner life. Sister water is another miracle here. And she is beyond my reach. My mouth calls to her without sound. A drop of remaining saliva responds. It will do for now. It has too. There is no choice. Neither is there any judgment. This is...and I am learning to be like sister water. I let the slope do all the work and the soft needles from my two companions give a little more to comfort me. I experience the mantra that

my teacher Carol gave me in February: that I am fully supported by the universe. This sinks lower from an intellectual understanding to a visceral knowing. A knowing that I do not understand, but still comprehend. A knowing that I do not know how I know. A golden lunch to quench all thirst and satiate all hunger.

Time is like Sister Water. No hands ticking equal intervals...no bells saying time to go home...no movement at all, just space and the currency of right now. Laying on a rock feels hard at first, the ground too, but I know enough not to leave it at that. With my limited comprehension of time, I try to slow down-to move from linear space to the unframed...unbounded...the limitlessness of it all. A rock must move very slowly I realize, slipping back into my linear descriptions.! What am I talking about? Rocks don't move...I stop thinking about these silly things. I've noticed that when I stop thinking up here, I begin to feel...to perceive through all my senses including that other one with many names. And the rock softens. Really? Just my imagination again. No, my chest seems to sink in a bit. The rock dissolves ever so slightly. Or maybe it is me? My breathing sinks deeper into him with each breath and there is no hard line between us anymore. Another teacher, teaching "rock time"...a different School of Rock. The rock is just being a rock but he seems to sense I am trying to understand him, and so he rewards me with a little give. Our mutual viscosity lowers and we begin to mingle in that place called "no time". I partake of as much of his experience as I can. He is generous and for a speck of his time we understand each other, even communicate through feeling. I suddenly realize, which is actually quite slow in rock time, that it is not the rock, but ME, that is hard. It is my band limited senses that serve me up the illusion of hardness, and I am here to go beyond those limits, and I am. All of these teachers, the sun the river the trees and the rocks...and I begin to soften.

Señor Rock feels dry, and yet there is multiple colored lichen home-making on his skin, so I know my senses deceive me yet again. It IS dry here but the many different kinds of plants seem not to notice. The pinion is dripping sap as if its glands are overactive. It is a heavenly sweet

smell, like my favorite as a kid, Frosted Flakes. The difference is that this smell is natural and light...not like the refined sugar and wheat of Kellogg. No one has told the lizards it is dry either...or the birds...That must have been a personal memo just for me from the president of the water board. I wonder where he gets his information? The red ball cactus in bloom taunts his moisture with flamboyance. I played on his relatives in the concert hall. The piece is called "Degrees of Separation." I am feeling those degrees but closing the gap one experience at a time! He throws his explosion skyward in a single laser of color on a brownish landscape. He is a rocket launcher paying homage to the Earth, the Sky, and Water. It's red reminds me that I am in the south...the going out lodge has left me wedged between the limitations of my physical body...red by many native traditions...and the darkness of black: the spirit world. I am here to learn this flamboyance of echinocactus grusonii. The coyote in me gets it, and dances a little gig with sister cactus. Sends up a prayer and the cactus thanks it's lucky stars that it is covered in sharp needles. It probably knows that is what keeps me from biting it's ears off in search of mother's milk. That, and that i have played his brothers and sisters all over the world. I have deep respect for these beings. The composer in me connects the artist with the cactus, and i remember that my composition is about the paradox of bringing a cactus into the concert hall. Here, it is just being a cactus and I am the irony. If I am not careful, it will begin playing me.

On day three the prickly pears explode in yellow fireworks! I am the only one, apparently, who did not get the memo that there is plenty of moisture here. Slowly I am learning not to wholly trust my five companions: sight, sound, touch, smell and taste by themselves. They are limited tools used in learning another more powerful, more trustworthy sense growing within my whole body every moment here on the hill. This sense, I feel, is wholly trustworthy, and bit by bit, it is teaching me the "language of nature" as Jim calls it. I am a voracious pupil. I cannot get enough because I feel like this sense...this language connects me to ancestral time and space, and envelopes All Relations that have come before and are yet to come. I did come here with one idea...one

possibility to try, because I believe if it can be imagined, it can, and will become reality. With each breath I repeat another mantra: "I draw moisture from the air". There is not a lot of moisture in the air...maybe 15%...still, there is moisture. I even see little elves in my lungs dumping tiny buckets of moisture harvested from the air into streams that feed my body tiny sips of our sister. I am rewarded for this. Throughout my entire stay, I continue to pee at regular intervals. My last pee comes right before the spirits come to take me down off the hill. I am learning that many of my limitations are self-imposed, and I am removing these shackles, with help from all my hilltop teachers one at a time. Above señor Rock and I, a pair of Ravens returns toward the direction of Taos Pueblo on another recon mission that I've seen them do often. The air is dry. But, as I now know...not that dry.

A raven's call is the driest of all the birds I have heard. I sent many prayers to Raven during my preparation. I asked for forgiveness for throwing away the feather his brother had given me at Grand View Point in the Canyonlands years ago. I wasn't ready for Raven's strong magic then...but I am ready now. Eager even. My whole life has prepared me to sit on the hill at this time. The last three years have generously given many of the tools I may need to remodel the architecture of my thoughts and experiences. This renovation is about opening new doorways, and adding new floors and wings to my square, boxy house. It is becoming more like a Gehry than a Lloyd Wright. The last three months have charged my spirit for this three-day barn raising where I have a bed room but the rest is for Spirit. The last three minutes have...hell, what am I talking about...I don't know minutes any more. That frame is far too small for my new house... There is one thing that Raven's voice snaps me too immediately though, and that is the timelessness of Ancestral Wisdom-the accumulation of all that has ever been learned into the present moment. I want to record Ravens voice. I am sure if I slowed it down 322 times I would hear the history of this world. Or, maybe not hear it, but see the whole history as a time lapse movie of all that has led to this time in this place. All moments collapsed into a multiple-dimensional place-space and experienced as a whole without separate

parts. Raven's voice is uncomplicated, but I would never make the mistake of labeling it simple. I can't help but feeling that in that voice lies the secrets of the southwest: the disappearance of the Anasazi...the emergence of the Dine from the Earth Mother...the carving of the Grand Canyon... In Raven's voice i hear: "I have seen all since the emergence of life and as you grow, you will see what you are ready to see". My thirst shifts from the dryness of my mouth to a hunger in my cells to remember the spirit food of what Raven speaks. I want to see through Ravens eyes. But hold on sonny...one step at a time...

I toss a pinch of tobacco. A small gift in reciprocity for another crumb from the code of life dropped by Raven. I am grateful that I see anything at all, even though I always thirst for more. I am reminded of the time on Glastonbury Tor when I first began the colored vision. Leaning against the Tor with eyes closed, I was gifted with my first internal sight of flaming red-orange of the root and second chakra-rare for me even still. Suddenly the color went dark from left to right and I sensed something had passed. As I opened my eyes, a crow was landing out from me about seven feet and to the right. He had darkened my inner vision. A reminder that the recipe of "a day in the life" includes balanced parts of light and darkness. A few days later at Stone Henge with my back against the largest standing stone, a crow dropped a feather next to my foot. Picking it up yielded three rapid messages-like the rolling ticker tape of the New York Stock Exchange only instantaneous. These messages needed no interpretation. They were crystal clear and relevant to my exact time and space then. They were laser point downloads directly from Crow. Or the crows that still skirmish in and out of the Fort at Verdun every night reenacting that human nightmare. Crow, like his cousin Raven has power. No, power is the wrong word. He has information and experience. He has the wisdom of the Ancients...the philosophy of the land, and the ability to travel into the realm where the laws of our fickle science and morality do not apply. He laughs at these silly humanisms, and waits patiently for us to tire of the drama we are hell-bent on creating...and move beyond our adolescent tantrums into adulthood, where he stands ready to impart his insights. He, like whale, is the librarian of the peoples



of the southwest. And, unlike modern humans, theirs was a wisdom of delicate survival...of balance...of respect for things larger than themselves...theirs was a wisdom of humility. They understood reciprocity as the simple equation it is for balancing the checkbook of life on Mother Earth and beyond.

And that is the main reason I am here: to express a gift of reciprocity to Mother Earth. The Ancients never took without giving. And perhaps it was Raven who reminded them of this. And so I have carved a time in my life when I am here to do nothing but sit in return for all the bounty of my life...all that I have been given, and all the lessons I have learned both gently and otherwise. I am grateful. And this giving is greeted with receiving. Mother Earth is receiving...I know this deep in my being, because bit by bit, She is opening her secrets to me. I am here to give, and that is rewarded by her giving to me. She understands reciprocity in all it's simple dimensions. I begin to feel the harmony of the Earth. The melody is in all her messengers.

It is lonely here. But not a sad lonely, or a lonely that some other love is missing. It is alone here. Do I still think that way? What I mean is there are no other humans here. Yes, that's it, no other HUMANS here. There has been plenty of company, but no conversations. Really? Ok, there have been no conversations with WORDS... Learning how to write about music taught me how much words can diminish. Who was it that said writing about music was like dancing about architecture? Something lost in translation... Here I learn that words are not necessary. I have communicated with many conscious beings without them. I did verbally talk to the lizards, but that was when they looked at me like I was crazy...a look that communicated without words. No, words can diminish...tarnish...corrode...they can even erase. What was that sensation I just felt that evaporated the moment I tried to describe it? Shit...gone... Here I am living what research about the brain has shown: that our body takes in 12,000,000 bits of data per second, and that our conscious brain can process about 25 of them. That's 1/4000th of one percent! Language has a bandwidth even lower... Where do the rest go when filtered out?

Maybe that is why I am so comfortable here. My brain is as at ease as is my body because there is no need to decide which data to keep and which to throw away. My being can take it all in without processing...without judgment...without any of the things it will take to write it down later. I allow my brain to stop limiting my body, and we start to get along and accept each other for the gift each brings to this relationship with self, and with Mother Earth. Peace deepens.

I have said many thank yous...13x13 even, but many of them have been with words. I am learning to speak in my mind through images, but words still predominate. My Dr. Doolittle friend Gayle has told me that dogs speak in pictures, horses too. I envy her this communion. Now is a good time to practice though! On Senior Rock, I saw in my mind, my heart going into the him, and that is when he softened, and I FELT it. When Yoda Tree in Colorado taught me the language of tree, there were no words. Only perceived motion in both me and the tree. My hands were the instruments. My body the canvas on which this movement was felt. It is a start. There are no words exchanged until I want thank Yoda, then I use words. I am still learning how to say thank you in tree...

As I write this, the richness of the experience blossoms, not so much in words, but in 3d sensory stimulation, retrieved through cellular memory banks-my internal hard drive. I did not do nothing for three days and nights. That is what my band limited brain thinks. My band limitless heart takes it all in and my cells store it. At first, time is the mortar that held the bricks of experience together, and when time ceases, the stones lay together like the fine-toothed craftsmanship of Anasazi or Chacoan masonry. They let gravity...whatever that is...do all the work. Each experience, each moment is like a master key to a memory bank with fresh oil working loose the rusted cogs of ancient knowledge...ancestral wisdom stored in every fiber of my being and awakening with each connection between human, ant, tree, rock, clouds and sky.

I get a craving for a sip of Coke. Huh...? I haven't had a Coke in years... Some rogue cell deep within offers its suggestion of a fixation that I'm

not sure will make my dryness better or worse. Yes, that sounds really good. At least it used too... The problem is that I live in a culture that does not serve sips of Coke...only cans and jugs that clog all sense of equilibrium-an involuntary manslaughter that drowns the taste buds in a plea of insanity with Carmel and sugar. The thought of it makes my lips stick together, not from dryness, but from a putrid sense of over saturation. I plead "not guilty..." No...I thank that renegade cell whose memory is a leftover from way ago, and will pass on the Coke...even the thought of a Coke...even the idea of Coke. Coke no longer even exists...

The hot New Mexico desert remembers what a sip is though. Father sky served me up a sip. As the later afternoon scorch yields to sister clouds, the sky opens and my dusty drum head catches a few drops. 13 to be precise. Exactly one small sip. It feels strange to be licking my drum. I hope no one is looking, but pride has no currency here. It is an indulgent waste of time and energy. And so I lick this 13 inch New Mexico rain...the drops 13 inches apart, and satisfy a small part of my taste buds. It will do simply because it is slightly more than just the thought of moisture. It is the real deal, and here almost a full meal deal! I am grateful to be in a place that remembers the moderation of a sip. In the right place and time, the right state of being, a sip is more generous than a can, jug, or keg of Coke. My cells chuckle at the suggestion here on the hill, of that misguided cell and it is corrected gently and with joyous humor.

Magpies came to me in the summer of 2009 in Taos. No matter where I went, they were there, somewhere lurking in my field of view. What was unusual was that magpies don't usually lurk. They are not quiet birds, but that summer they were. I took notice. They were inviting me to cross over and become aware of both sides of reality. That is their medicine and i have the feathers to prove it. And so I jumped in with both feet. But here on the hill they are conspicuously absent. They were present down at the lodge, and the long cold winter had given their voices back, but up on the hill I get only one short visit. I distinctly felt it saying "you've done well". It was checking in on me to see if I had followed through on

the previous summer's invitation. I had...and I was. This magpie reconnaissance reminded me that this experience was part of a cycle begun the summer before. I was on the hill as the next step to the shamanic death I had experienced. Bat was present then along with two symbolic burials in the earth. The teardrop hole in the hill at Bandolier National Monument was too inviting to pass up. I heard the footsteps of two-leggeds as the earth hears them. They were walking down a path over my head. Many passed without seeing me tucked away there. A psychedelic light-show with eyes closed...a butterfly gracefully passing as I open my eyes, part of a flying rainbow. A promise of newness. Snake shedding old skin, and now, on this hill, during this time, it is time to grow new skin. It is growing by the minute, and I like my new skin. It is way more sensitive than my old. Magpie knows that its place is at the lodge...around the sipapu where new life emerges...will emerge in a few days, not up here on the hill where it is being forged in the fire of Father Sun.

I watch a lot of birds whose names i do not know. Small scissors wings...maybe cliff swallows. They flit, flop and buzz by sometimes as a few. At other times in gangs. After the 13 inch rain, they swarm in...right in to my circle, as if cleaning the ground from a pestilence like the locusts clean the landscape in the Old Testament. But they are no plague. They are far too playful, and their company is welcome. Their tiny cheerful voices cheering me on with every swoop. They remind me that each time I finished 11 prayer ties, I painted them with the smoke of sister sweet grass. She helped me write joy and ease into this experience even before I enjoined it. The swallows help me follow through on that contract. This is not a time of deprivation. It is a joyful time of giving, and unexpected receiving, and the swallows model this ease in their every movement and sound. The winged people, like sister water know how to surf. They know how to milk brother wind for all he is worth. They fly by holding outstretched wings like Jesus on the cross. They navigate with a simple flap or two here and there. They are masters at utilizing the currents presented to them, and they can adapt to these fickle currents at a moment's notice. I want to fly like them, but know I am not ready. The siren of trying grows stronger in direct proportion to my

thirst, so I avoid the temptation in the wilderness that is the edge of the rocks.

My friend Bram from Boulder told me before the quest that he was getting a lot of hummingbird presence in his life. I instantly connect this with the joy that i have programmed into my stay on the hill with sister sweet grass, and i am comforted. Throughout the duration, I have regular visits from hummingbird. A few times one actually sits on a branch right above my head. Often, I would just hear them either buzzing though or past my circle. A few days after the quest, I find out that Bram was laying on the couch in Boulder for three hours on Saturday night feeling like crap. I knew he was there with me! I sensed his presence constantly. At the coming in lodge, after I have had my first water, and delicious food, and I begin to feel back amongst the living...Jim presents me with a bracelet he had made almost a year earlier, shortly after we met. During my quest, it became clear to him that he had made it for me. As he ties it on my wrist, I see that the pattern is hummingbird. He was on the hill with me too. Two blood brothers, both sending me the same smoke signals. "Do this with joy and it will be easy". As I write this over a week later, just before dark, I hear a hummingbird fly by my friend's window in Colorado. I do not believe in coincidence any more. At some point, coincidence accumulates to a tipping point only ascribable to a user defined existence...to being tapped in. These things are ordained. They are the rewards of learning the language of nature. They are pin point messages in the web of life and learning. They are the little pieces of golden lunch I've been looking for and I return to the buffet line over and over again, knowing that I cannot possibly over eat this kind of sustenance. Hummingbird presence is the hors devoirs, the main course and the chocolate truffle desert all in one.

I envy the birds and their ability to freely navigate three dimensionally in space. Being land and water bound, we humans are stuck, by gravity, to two-dimensional motion...roughly speaking... I want to go beyond that limitation, and one way is to travel into the spirit realm. The first time I journeyed with Jim through his drum, I shape-shifted into an eagle. My

right hand distinctly felt like a talon, and my forearm spindly. I saw eagle in my mind's eye. I did not know what had happened, but after describing it to the group, Jim labelled it as shape-shifting. Had I looked at my hand, it would have looked like a hand, because the mind sees through the eyes what it wants to see...what it EXPECTS to see. And that is as it should be since it is programmed by past experience. As Leto II says in *Children of Dune*, "knowing is a barrier to learning". The minute we "know" something, we stop investigating it, and it becomes a fossilized statue: an organic experience petrifies in our lexicon of understanding. The only way to change even the most brilliant sculpture, like my personal favorite, Rodin's "Le Penseur", is through how we think about it, not by banging the bronze with a hammer, or the stone with a chisel. Close the eyes though, suspend both belief and disbelief, and all bets are off! The only limitation is the imagination. And that tome is getting pretty big. Le Penseur becomes a man taking a crap...saddened by the loss of a love...it becomes a rock sitting on a man. Plausible since we see things upside down and our brain inverts the image... So, my hand can become a talon too. At another of Jim's journeys, my torso shifts into a tree and sinks into the brick floor I am laying on. I will never forget this experience because of how unique it felt, and how connected I felt to something much larger than myself. I do not so much believe in this physical reality anymore because I have learned some other tricks. I refuse to accept the constraints my conditioning has put on me. I am stubborn and will not limit my present and future simply because of something I do or don't know. I am not just being me, but striving for something better...something more unusual...something unique. I am a pattern breaker.

A friend asked me before the quest, who all my little prayer bundles were being prayed to. To what address were they being sent? This struck me as a good question, and I love even a mediocre question to a really good, smug answer. Still, it made me think because I knew, but hadn't verbalized it before. The problem is labels. We tend to fear things that do not have labels. One of the great human paradoxes of our time is that, while humans are natural born explorers, much of our culture fears the

unknown, that's one of the reasons fast food became so popular-its predictability and known-ness. The unknown is fed by curiosity, not control, and we are control freaks. We are addicted to the illusion of control. We call the known half of an experiment the "control group" because we can predict their results within the outcomes of the experiment. We build dams to control the flow of rivers, and Mother Earth responds by filling in the reservoirs behind them with silt. Guess we didn't think that one through very carefully. No, we are not in control. The best we can hope for is to understand our place in this complex system of life, and our symbioticity. One of Deepak Chopra's seven spiritual laws of success is that nature's wisdom follows the path of least resistance. I bear witness to that every minute here on the hill. The lizard does not chase a fly. He sneaks...waits patiently, and in a split second nabs the fly on my sleeping bag with little effort and a single gobble. He does not think about digesting the fly any more than we think about digesting our breakfast. He just let's it happen. So, my prayers have gone to the Creator of this wisdom. They have gone to the spirits of the seven directions. They continue to go to the Great Mystery. This is perhaps my favorite label. It carries little baggage of the old labels I used to use and is maximally open to encouraging both my curiosity, participation, observation, and co-creation.

Mystery and curiosity are what drive me, especially here on the hill, and so I pray to it. The importance of a prayer is not so much what entity, energy or force out there receives it. The importance of a prayer...any thought for that matter...is in the energy that is released. Our conscious brain is so slow, but this low vibration is what gives it its power. In sound, the equal loudness curve shows that for a low sound to sound equally loud as a high sound, it takes way more energy. In thought, this is a great irony. Thought is the slowest part of us (one study showed as much as a 10 second delay between a subject's brain making a choice between two things, and their conscious brain becoming aware of it...) but that is precisely why our reality follows our thoughts...thoughts are the software for running the hardware of our lives, and we get to write that software in real time. And, they pack real power. That's why I never

use the word hate anymore. It is why I stopped worrying about cancer, MS, and heart failure. It is why I stopped worrying about my weight. No, I'm puttin' my thought on health and wholeness, and that leads automatically towards better choices without even trying. Choices like sitting on a hill without food and water for three days and nights. I am giving this time and energy towards healing and gratitude. And that is the direction my energy flows. I do not know how it works, but think I know why, but don't think I can verbalize it. Sorry... I can say that my lower back pain is diminishing. Normally when I get dehydrated, my back and joints really scream. Not so here without water. I am healing.

My body goes through interesting changes. I spend a lot of time laying under my sister trees. Odd that I do not put my hands on them to communicate. I guess since I already knew how to do that before coming here, I don't even think about it. Pity...I'm sure they have lots to say...I can be so deaf, dumb and mute sometime...lying here tho, my mind tunes in and out of thought. I am past Eckhart Tolle's "pathological thinking" before I come here, but it is still interesting to track what my mind does to try to distract me...like it's doing now...didn't I start this paragraph talking about my body? Yes, that's it...my body. Spending so much time on the ground makes for one necessity: stand up slowly! A few times I forget this simple rule and nearly fall over. How do I know the prayer hit I got on the first night was not simply this light-headedness from oxygen deprivation? It is simple...the prayer surge I felt came from the front of my forehead...from the direction of the lodge where I was facing. The surge from oxygen starved brain cells comes up from below. I've had lots of time to compare these two, and they are quite distinct. The rest of the prayer surges are more gentle, as if they felt the effect of their laser beam on me. They are spread out in little tingles that manifest in different ways. Silka pops into my head. Thanks for that prayer. I dream of Gayle and know she is present. A smile from Erika, and a feeling of reassurance as I think of Cliff, John, Jesse and JD. These little prayers manifest as soft touches, not the sumo wrestling smack down of the first one. We are all learning to tune our frequencies to each other, and they get it quickly. Their gentleness is touching and brings tears to my eyes. Honey in the



heart Jim calls it. And it is flowing. Thank you Kristina, Trisha, Heidi, Gretchen, Rosie, Wendy, Mom, Dad, Jon, Evie, and the list goes on.

When it gets overwhelming, the actual number of us on the hill...I just laugh and thank "All Relations because I know Grandmother Bristlecone is here too. All relations covers her...the lizards, clouds, wind, sun, stars, aliens, orbs...and the honey flows generously. There are enough thank yous but time is short. So, all relations it is. And this includes the Mayans who have so recently inspired me. They were the ones who came up with the honey in the heart I think. That balance between sweetness and grief, sorrow and joy...those two sides of the same coin. They revered bees. Bee nectar, also known as honey, they called the sweat of the sun. I love this image. I eat honey now as sun screen. I think it helps me to be more in tune with the sun. It helps my whole body take in the vitamin D, not just my skin. Yes, they are special, both the Mayans and the bees. Lots to learn from both. Bees have not changed on 200,000,000 years, and some believe their collective sound, and collective consciousness are an expression of the divine with healing powers. Bees are conspicuously absent here though. Shouldn't they be scoping out the cacti before the ants devour the goodies? But many of them are choosing to leave the planet at this time. It has worked for them as a home for 200,000,000 years, but is no longer working for them. Shouldn't this be the canary in the coal mine for us? This is one thing we are all practicing here though. This collective consciousness that informs all about each part. Big brother does that already to many degrees, but not for the loving caring reasons we do it. We do it to practice communion, not control. The ants go marching up my pants. Shit...I forgot to look where I sat again. I cannot blame them for crawling in my cracks when it is me that is not aware enough to avoid sitting on them.

I am working on overcoming my human nature of charging in and "doing". I have not been very good about standing still and waiting input. Growing up a Mennonite preacher's kid is one of the things I will always cherish. Mennonites know how to be in community, and I suspect that is one reason being in community comes back so easily for me after a long

hiatus of hermitude. I grew up around people who believed hard work was the way to everything. I'm not saying hard work is not valuable, but I did not learn to just sit and listen until I got tired of charging in with a little information, and then having to go back and redo everything because I was ill informed. I was telling another wonderful teacher, Marion, about the time I was visiting Grandma Bristlecone tree in Colorado and came upon a mound that clearly looked like a burial mound. Instead of sitting and meditation...asking who was in there...I just asked if I could walk over it, threw some tobacco, and proceeded to go up and over. I instantly turned hot from inside out...my first thought was "oh shit" I've really stepped in it now. After two hours of near panic, I found peace. I called on anyone I knew that might be able to remotely help with understanding my predicament. I really thought I had stepped into the dark side of the force. I think I even called upon Master Yoda. I certainly visited Yoda tree to ask his advice, and he gave me some. It was a trinity of fairy primrose, one of my favorite sub-alpine wildflowers that gave me the message everything was as it should be. Nine months later, Marion tells me that the grave I had walked over was mine. Turns out it was a soul retrieval of me as shaman many years ago. How do I know this isn't bull? Because I have a feeling deep down that she is right. And three days before in a performance in Taos, my voice had opened up and I "channeled a shaman". These were other people's words...not mine. I resisted the label even while I knew that something special had happened. I had never rehearsed this type of singing...never practiced this...in fact had never even thought about singing in this way before. It just came...and it came THROUGH me...not from me.

While this episode came out all right in the long run, others have not. My point is that I am getting plenty of chances to practice patience. I am learning that when I do not know what to do, I choose to do nothing, and wait for directions from a higher place. My higher self...the Great Spirit...or the Great Mystery. On the way to the vision quest I get a great opportunity to practice this. I stop in for the fourth time in a year to visit Grandma Bristlecone. Grandpa died in the year 2008. I've watched these 2,500-year-old trees for 25 years now, and from the beginning noticed

that Grandpa was on his way out. A bristlecone pine tree commits the tree equivalent to euthanasia, but upon itself. I guess that makes it somewhat suicidal. It will cut off sap to parts of itself...in effect, killing part of itself, to preserve the whole. Ironically, it was a porcupine that finished off the lone surviving branch at the very top of Grandpa. It ringed it good...one last tasty inner bark hors devour from an ancient being. I believe those two, Mr. P Q Pine, and Grandpa Bristlecone, had a karmic contract. P Q Pine terminated the last vestiges so Grandpa would not have to do it himself. That last branch was the closest to Grandma Bristlecone, as if he was reaching out to her and waving goodbye at the same time. They stood about 30 feet apart...now the distance is much greater. But I think they know how to communicate beyond this barrier. Perhaps to them it is not a barrier at all.

Ever since then, I have been giving Grandma lots of love. I visit often. Sit in her lap. Touch her. Talk to her and just spend time with her, like I am doing with Mother Earth here on this hill. She is Grandma because I can count at least 5 generations of successively younger bristlecones in the valley surrounding her. That makes her actually great, great great Grandmother, but that's too much to say. Like one of her grandkids, I am protective of her. I do not advertise where she lives, although a few people know. I took my nephew there last fall so when the time comes, he can carry my ashes there. Little did I know when I decided I wanted to be put to rest there 10 years ago, that it would be the second time for that. What goes around, comes around in this great merry-go-round of life.

You can imagine my sorrow when I come to visit her last fall, and there a 20" diameter spruce tree had given up holding on, and fallen right into the heart of her right side. On this trip, I took a saw with me to fix the situation, but the tree was bigger than I remember. I begin to have doubts that I can cut it down without causing more damage, and so I sit, ask her for guidance...ask anyone out there in the ether for more guidance, and wait. I do get some ideas, but will need another person to help execute them. So, I leave her and will come back. I will not proceed until I am sure I can do so without being a typical human and really mucking it up.

I am learning that I can not see how things will turn out, and that I rarely have enough information to make any judgment at all. So, I've stopped judging. Morality is another one of those fickle human inventions, but I'll leave that can of worms for you to chew on yourself...at least for now.

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I awaken day one with a deep blue hue in the sky. It is early. I decided early in the process that I wanted to start on the hill at night, in darkness. I cannot say for sure why this was so clear to me but it was. I also chose the site on the rock outcropping rather than the crevasse or the tree next to the river. The crevasse is for shamanic death-going into the mother. It is the about darkness before rebirth. The tree site is right next to the river under a hug ponderosa pine. It is a feminine site, with the presence of sister water tempting constantly. The sound must be even more taunting than where I am a hundred feet above her. It is also in the crotch of the steep arroyo. Safely nestled between cliffs on one side and steep sagebrush on the other. I chose the rock outcropping-a masculine site that protrudes out over the tree site which I can see from the edge. I chose to start at night, perhaps to connect with that dark cave energy. I wanted to settle in at night to face the darkness before the resurrection of Father Sun. This was about awakening after all. Sometimes literality is a key to the symbols that unlock experience. Metaphor is fun. I have spent my whole adult life working with it as a composer. But now, the real experience is better. Maybe better is unfair...it is what I want. Metaphor is easy. Finding the real deal is not. One of my favorite Steve Earl songs "Lonesome Highway" says: "There's a highway, in Oklahoma...straighter than a preacher, and longer than a memory". I think there's a highway in New Mexico too, but no car for the trip. The vehicle is time, and dirt, and sky, and lizard. You know the cast by now. The map is...well, there is no map. I'm makin' it up as I go. Gettin' by with a little help from my friends...

Both Saturday and Sunday mornings I rise early to greet Father Sun. I burn sage. Sage is one of the miracle plants. It is the catalyst for all my intentions to raise my energy and to cleans what is left over from the dark

that no longer helps me on my journey. The feeling I always get from sage is that it is not just removing toxic energy from me. That would not really help the collective...when I was doing yoga, most teachers would calmly say while setting up for savasana, to let the tension drain down into the earth...let go of all that stored stuff and give it to the ground. Now, I wonder about this. Isn't dumping our bodily tension...our energy toxins, into the earth just another version of trash dumps? Isn't that just another form of a landfill? Aren't we dumping enough shit into the skin of Mother Earth and now the new agers want us to put our energy shit there too? I am beginning to think it is time for me to take care of my own energy crap. It is time for me to give Mother Earth gentle strokes and love and not give Her any more of my junk. And that is the beauty of sage! I get the distinct sense when i use it, that it is transmuting those toxins, helping me raise their vibration, scrubbing that energy, so that what is left is light and a benefit to all. That is why it is a miracle plant. When we work together, the byproduct is light.

I watch the sunrise from the eastern edge of my circle...at the yellow prayer ties. This is the eastern edge of a cliff band that runs to the south, out to a rock point that can be seen from Jim's lodge. My circle does not include these southern cliffs. They are about 33 feet outside my red prayer ties. Cliffs may be too strong a word...the fall would only be abbot 55 feet, but 55 feet will kill just as good as 555 or 5,555 feet. So, cliffs they are. I do not go there at first. I have been given permission to leave my circle to experience and explore the energy of this rock point. I decide to be a purist and stay within the lines though...very uncharacteristic for a pattern buster. I have been on may cliffs during the years when i was bagging 14,000-foot peaks in Colorado. Finally got all 54 in 1994, 10 years after I began. I have been to hundreds of summits and stood at the edge of 2,000-foot cliffs, so I don't feel a need to go there. That is the old goal-oriented Paul. This new version of Paul is much more in to the process, whether composing, hiking or sitting on a hill for three days and nights. It is vulture that leads me to the edge. A group swoops over, sniffing for that scent of fresh or spoiled meat...they are not picky in this place where life is frugal... As they fly out over the

edge, my attention follows and I get a very clear urge to go there. This is not the urge to conquer, or the urge to do, or the urge to explore... It is an urge that says "there is something there to be given to you. Go and find out". I know enough about these kinds of communications by now to obey and so I go without thought or hesitation.

On the way out of my circle, careful to not go out across the black ties in the West, but through the Red ones to the south, I discover that single echinocactus grussoni. Enough of a gift in itself, but I know this is not the only reason I have been lured out of my net... When I reach the rocks, I get my first meal of real gold nuggets: there are pictograms. Or are they petroglyphs? They are beautiful ancient messages carved into the rock. I guess that makes them petroglyphs. Did the carvers know they would be seen 1,000 years later? These things ARE "carved in stone" so I guess they probably did. Clearly, they were important, otherwise, why not use paint? No, these were important messages. One is a double spiral, the other reminds me of an ancient dodo bird. The only dodo here though, is me. What a pity it would have been to have sat so close to these and not seen them...or felt them. Thank you, vulture, for guiding me! They are smart birds, like Raven. It was vulture that reminded me of why I was drawn to Jim as a teacher. His rule of thumb is that rules are here to serve us, not the other way around. Heck, I'll write that last one out because it is so important! We are NOT here to serve rules! Why? Because rules are the most-fickle thing ever invented by humans...even more fickle than words. In one place a woman cannot show her face in public without facing death. A rule invented by a man no doubt... In another place covering your face is a game...a way to pretend to be someone else. Masquerading behind rules is a cheap way to love. It is an imitation. It is a life subject to either wielding power over others or being subjected to that power. Rules were meant to be broken because they are only approximations of our best guesses at how to live together and with our Mother having forgotten the basic premise of reciprocity. I think this is what Jesus meant by the Golden Rule. It is what is implied in another of Deepak Chopra's Seven Spiritual Laws of Success that giving IS receiving. No, I am no sheep, but I do not want to be a shepherd either.

The double spiral speaks of equality. Mutual respect. Partnership. And most of all, balance. You have your role to fill and I have mine. We will both go about these roles with acceptance and respect. When i take something, I learn to give something back as a way of life. We learn to freely give and we freely receive. We are open conduits of energy transfer that oscillate back and forth at an imperceptible frequency...somewhere in the light spectrum. We are both sheep, and we are both shepherds.

Being visually dominant, I SEE the rock art first. Then I feel its presence. These ancient carvings resonate back through the years and I feel a connection to someone who stood here and knew the reasons why I stand here a thousand years later. They say to me "here you will find what you are looking for as hundreds of generations before you have". The spiral is gorgeous. It reminds me of grouse medicine. For about a year my morning ceremony included drawing an animal medicine card. When i am here in the dirt, I don't need the cards. No need for the symbol when I have the real thing. Each day the card I drew was on target and helped me through that days learning with informed grace. The first time I drew grouse card, I had an irresistible urge to draw a spiral on my solar plexus. I found that with a sharpie, I was able to draw a perfect spiral as if i was tracing something that was already there. A few days after this, I had a massage with my dear teacher Carol, who single handedly has taught me more about my body and its energy over a period of five years of monthly dates. After this particular session, she told me not to be alarmed, but that she was picking up some unknown energy around my solar plexus. I lifted the sheet revealing my self-imposed spiral and asked "might this be it"? She rolled her eyes and said "you better be careful where you point that thing..." Shit...didn't think about that. I had noticed people taking a wide birth around me the past few days. Sheesh...no wonder. Big personality combined with a solar plexus light saber equals "stay away," or "enter at your own risk". This subtle energy thing at times is not so subtle...the learning curve can be steep, but I do learn. Now my spirals go up/down when I draw them. Kind of like that funnel of the Tasmanian Devil in the cartoons when I was a kid. The double

spiral on the rock reminds me of the need for balance...that I would rather be energetically connected through a vertical thread that runs the length of my body than a horizontal trestle that pierces through me in mid abdomen. Now, my spirals are between me and Mother Earth and Father Sky. Please accept my sincere apologies fellow humans.

The dodo figure is fun-even a bit playful. There is something Aztec about it, or maybe Mayan. Is it a bird? A plane? No! It's Super Bird-Man! The spiral is on a vertical rock. This one is horizontal so I can actually lay on it to feel it. One evening after drumming and singing to Mother, I lay my neck over a hump on the rock, so that I see The Mountain behind me dressing to the tune of a gorgeous setting sun. It is THE Mountain rather than the mountain because Taos Mountain is special. She has unique energies which the Taos Pueblo People have been feeding for centuries. She and her collaborators are a big part of the powerful energy in the Taos area. She is the one that either draws you in or spits you out. Make no mistake, She WILL test you. Hang out in Taos coffee shops and you'll hear stories like: "my car broke down in 1984 and I've been here ever since". Or, "I met a woman here and stayed even though she left". The Mountain will either draw you in like Odessyus' Sirens, or she will spit you out. I overheard one man, who heavily plopped down next to his friend say "22 years and this place is killing me...I gotta get out of here". This is the Mountain, and I have experienced her. The first time I came to town she spit me out. It was a slow rejection, like a love relationship you think is going well, and then one day come home to an empty house. After a two-month residency, I couldn't get out of town fast enough and swore I'd never be back. But as with anything, I do not accept defeat well, especially defeat against myself. She does not do this out of malice, or because She is fickle. She does this because she knows what tasks you have set for yourself in this life that you are avoiding. She does this to help you face your unfaceable. She calls your bluff, and makes you shit or get off the pot. She sees your big picture and forces you to at least look for it, and if you are unwilling... Watch out! Self-destruction is a distinct possibility. One thing is for sure: complacency is NOT an option.



So, I began to do my own work. I faced the shit I did not want to face. I began to take long hard looks inside...embrace the darkness within...face my fears...grow...stumble...get back up again...live, laugh, cry and sing for joy, and CHOOSE happiness. And two years later was back. In 2007 when she spit me out...my path became one of seeking grace. I had come face-to-face with my "Leo-born-in-the-year-of-the-tiger-bull-in-the-china-shop energy, and had seen the effects of this. I did not like what I saw. A friend who called me on this shit helped a lot too. This confrontation led me to the right question...the right request...the right prayer, and so I began asking the Universe for grace. And the Universe responded. My edges began to soften. I began to see through others' eyes, and to walk in their shoes. I began to live more compassionately, let go of judgment and stop living a life of drama. And so, the second time around in 2009, She welcomed me in. Drew me in is probably more accurate! I have a distinct image and feeling of her wrapping her arms around me-soft as cotton ball clouds and affirming everything I had done to transform my old energy...welcoming me back for a do-over...a second chance, and I was as happy as the prodigal child returned home after learning both painful and joyous lessons from the textbook of life. That was the summer I met Jim. Unbeknownst to either of us at the time, we were laying the groundwork for me to here lying on this rock upside down looking at Her...The Mountain.

It is an interesting experience to lay on an ancient petroglyph with ones pineal gland as near direct contact as possible with an energy source that carries with it the weightless gravity of times long gone It is also interesting to force the brain to view an image upside down when its standard operating procedure is to invert an already upside down image. The closest explanation I can link to this experience is the expression "mind fuck". No other does it justice. The visual perspective is like that of a fisheye lens. You know, the kind that exaggerates the curvature of the earth so that the ends of the horizon strive to touch each other? But in this case, they curve the wrong direction! The earth wraps up instead of down, or since I am upside down...they wrap down instead of up. Are you confused yet? Good...you're getting close to the disorientation I

experienced. I am not sure if this effect is caused by the petroglyph energy, or that of the mind fuck. Maybe they are the same thing. Either way, my equilibrium is thrown for a loop, and I cannot maintain this view for long. My stomach begins to complain and threaten heaves. I know it will not be messy as there is nothin' in there to expel except dryness... Still, I do not choose to prolong this discomfort. There is enough of the newness factor about this whole vision quest experience, that I decide to forgo more of this particular queasy one, however fascinating the experience. I right myself and breathe deeply. If my eyes see upside down, and my brain inverts it, wouldn't sitting up actually be wronging oneself? This is a good time to play my favorite trump card...good for any situation where I, or someone else, has painted me into an intellectual corner... Paradox exists!

The deep breaths help me regain physical equilibrium. They have been my constant companion. A web search will yield many statistics and warnings such as humans cannot go more than 40 days without food. This must be an average because there are hunger strikers that have gone 70 some days without. You will also read that humans cannot go more than 4 days without water. Numerous web sites actually state "DO NOT TRY TO GO THREE DAYS WITHOUT WATER...You WILL DIE!" Whatever... If your normal diet consists of coffee and sugar for breakfast...soda and sugar for lunch, and beer for dinner...this may very well be the case. Before I learned to drink a gallon of water a day...i walked around in a constant dehydrated stupor. A 64 oz. Soda from Quick Trip for the same price as a 32 oz. is NOT a better deal! Unless you want a quick trip to the coroner's office... But what am I talking about...I haven't had soda for years. Time to bury the preacher and get back to the hill...and survival.

Air is the kicker. We cannot go more than about four minutes without air. Thank goddess going without air is not part of the deal here. It is my bread and butter. There is a guy in India who has not eaten or drank for 70 years. His body is sustained through air and the sun. A recent BBC report showed him under observation for 108 hrs...about 4 1/2 days. He

had neither drank, nor ate. Not so much a miracle in itself, but he had not passed anything either. That means he had not stocked up for the occasion of observation...no, he was empty by all standards. The military was going to observe him for two weeks. If they could train their soldiers to do this, it would eliminate all kinds of problems and un-necessary problems, like feeding soldiers...I'm willing to bet that if you can train soldiers to do this, the empowerment they achieve through this...the self-actualization they reach, will put them beyond the control of mere generals and prime ministers. After my experiment of drawing moisture from the air, and peeing constantly during my three days in unseasonably hot weather, I am inclined to believe this is possible. I have learned to draw moisture from the air through breath, but humans learning to draw air through the eyes is, I suspect a few thousand years off in our evolution. But anything is possible in the great dance of evolution on this planet. In a holographic universe, the need for food and water is an illusion. I'm working on cracking that illusion like Castaneda did, but need more time. Un-programming 47 years of illusion takes time. And time is what I'm giving here.

The rocks are powerful and soon I am doing ceremony in the morning and evening there. My Cherokee blanket goes with me as do the rattles and drum. The blanket is being programmed, for what, I do not know. A friend has asked me to come to N. Carolina to her cabin where she has been preparing for years to work to clear some energy around her cabin, to work with some souls that need help crossing over-leftovers from the Trail of Tears, or one of the other too numerous atrocities from the careless invasion of white settlers in the 18th and 19th century. My prayer is that I do not repeat this callousness, and so I find myself asking for grace and guidance again. I do not know what my role is, but I do know that coyote will play a big part. I am willing to try just about anything. I am very much like Wile E Coyote in the Road Runner, except my goal is not to eat Road Runner. I just want to play. Life was heavy for many years, but it is getting lighter every day. Soon I will float, and then jump high to the birds, and then I will fly. Like Carlos. He learned some of the secrets. I am learning mine.

On Sunday, my ceremony on the rocks gravitates toward this unknown task in N. Carolina. I feel like the rock art opens a conduit to this place in the East. I am sitting on the blanket which is sitting on the dodo bird glyph. My drumming takes me in a circle to the four directions...down to Mother Earth...to the Inner Spirit and ends skyward towards the North...towards the white light. I do not know what any of this means. I am just following instructions. I learned to do this when I started composing my epic series called 2012 Stories in that Taos Winter/Spring of 2007. I did not know it was 2012 Stories at that time, nor did I know it was epic. I did know that composing an hour of music in nine days is not normal in this day and age. I also realized that I had learned how to follow directions that were coming from somewhere else. From Spirit...Intuition...Higher Self...The Great Mystery...your guess is as good as mine, and I love guessing. I did come to understand, after 4 CD's composed like this, that I was, in effect, getting "downloads". This music was coming through me, not from me. My job was...and still is in growing ways...to show up...be open...and let things flow without the need to understand them, and certainly without the need to verbalized them... More and more i feel like a charlatan when i call myself a "composer". "Channeler" feels pretentious especially since i don't have a doctorate in that. Maybe there isn't even such a degree. I do not know what to call myself, so i just stick with Paul, and I let the drum guide me.

This ceremony is powerful. I am doing things and seeing things with my eyes closed. There is energy flowing through me, and I see a horizon of white light with figures going towards it. I let it go...or more likely, I let myself go. No fear...no hesitation...no worries, only trust. I decide to leave the blanket laying on the dodo rock. In a ritualistic way, reminiscent of preparing the dead for burial, I fold the southeast corner in to the center, then the southwest corner into the center, then the north west corner in to the center, then the north east corner in to the center. The rectangle of the blanket has now rotated 90 degrees. I place my whale amulet that my friend Gayle found on the beach at Moro Bay, in the center. It is a well rounded piece of wood, traveled from some

unknown distance, place and time, in the shape of a whale. It has some spots of hard black tar on it which reminds me of the crude pouring into the Gulf of Mexico from some more reckless oil barons on the frontier of deep-water drilling. They are sticking long needles into Mother earth, and we are all getting bitten in the ass. Some-day, someone else will be standing on this rock making preparations for healing this human fiasco. Humans are fiascos...we consider the past far too often, avoid the present, and do not consider the potential outcomes of our actions beyond the close of the day on Wall Street. This limited vision will undo us unless we find our creativity and fore-sight. But to my way of thinking there isn't a problem with the extinction of humans. Perhaps it is the next step of evolution for Mother Earth. We are preparing to evolve or go extinct. We seriously need a wild card from the universe.

My medicine of the North is Whale, so the amulet is quite special to me. It helped me connect with whales in Hawaii. A family of three had parked off the beach we sat at one morning as we swam and communed in the water also with turtle close by. As we prepared to leave, I stuck my feet in the water and thanked the whales for their presence. They made one circle and then swam off. I will never forget this communion and so I carry my reminder of these experiences with the Living Libraries of Whale into every walk of life. Here, in the center of my blanket, it has the special place of being a lens... a prism...a focal point of whatever energies and information I...and the blanket will need.

Next, I fold the East side into the center, followed by the South side, followed by the West side, which reorients the blanket 90 degrees back to where it started, and here I stop. For some reason, I am compelled to leave the North open. I believe it serves two purposes. To help anything or anyone, that followed the drum to the North, continue that journey. It is also open to invite the Wisdom, Knowledge, and Ancestors of the North into the blanket. I also leave the blanket on the dodo rock to add the power, wisdom and energy of Father Sun into the mix. I am beginning to feel like the blanket is becoming a magic carpet...a fabric energy drink...a supernatural cocktail. At first, I did not like the pattern of

it. Now I love this blanket. It has become a companion...a trusty padding that mediated between me and Mother Earth...a conduit for all the powerful experiences we have shared together. I have carried Her on my back...sat in Grandma Bristlecone's arms wrapped I her, slept on Her...slept IN Her...performed music to Mother Earth on Her, tied many prayer ties in, on, and around Her, and now I am doing Ceremony with her. She is special. She is powerful and gentle at the same time. She is a potent symbol of Mother Earth Herself. And, I do not know it yet, but she will be with me in the coming home lodge, where she will share my first water with me. This blanket is taking on a life of Her own. I do not know how long she will be with me. She was acquired because Jen needed a blanket for her work...our work...in N. Carolina. I will part with Her when necessary, but it will come with tears...serious honey in the heart.

I learn later that leaving the blanket on the rock causes concern, and even fear for my safety down at the lodge. John, looking up in binoculars, sees something laying on the rocks. "Is it him? It looks pretty flat for Paul. Why is he not moving"? Concern for the heat, and this mysterious flatness on the rock, prompts Jim to come up on a recon mission. He is quite good at this. He told me later that at one point he was within about 20 ft of my site. Another time he was directly across the canyon looking at me through binoculars. I never saw him. I don't really feel his presence either. He is very good at fox medicine, but I think I do not feel him, because I am used to his presence. We are so connected to each other through the Grandfather stones we share, that his close physical proximity goes un-noticed. We are connected regardless of where he is. Oh dear...I hope those watching were not doing so when I masturbated on day one...this was an uncontrollable urge...not like the other times when it is an uncontrolled animalistic mash. No, this one is tender and graceful almost as if making love to Mother Earth. We are getting quite close to each other after all...oh well...if they saw me so what. It's not as if my love affair with Mother Earth is a secret anyway. My Facebook status declares that i am in a relationship with Her. This is our honeymoon, and so I'm going to consummate in my way. The wind is getting quite strong and I notice that the blanket is about to blow off the rock. I run down to

the point (at least it feels like I run...) and re-secure it with Brother and Sister Stones in the seven directions expressed two-dimensionally. I feel like the blanket needs more time, and so I leave it there.

One of the features of my twin sisters of different Mothers condominium on the hill is the low flying limbs. I cannot stand up in the middle. In fact, there is only a small place in the West for me to stand up erect. There is also a small corner in the North too. To get to either of these places, I have to stoop. There are a few places I even have to get on hands and knees to go. I must revert back to homo neanderthalensis to relocate to where homo sapiens homo sapiens can fully erectus. I believe this is also by design. Another part of helping me focus on going down instead of up. I am spending lots of time on the ground...laying, sitting, crawling, stooping and crouching. I am constantly looking down to go anywhere. It is where much of my visual focus is. Only occasionally do the winged people draw my attention to the sky. Well, at the beginning and ending of each day, the sky itself draws attention to itself. It puts on it's finest evening gown, formal wear, and creates its own masquerade ball. Then, I am invited and encouraged to look up. It is impossible not to. And in these times I stand in the North swinging my head both directions, like watching. Ping pong match between East and West. The cool thing is that they both win! When the show is over, it is time for me to crouch back under the tree canopy-which in dusk light is like a little tree cave with a perfect cradle between two round smooth rocks. My body fits perfectly between them. They hold me in place between my hips and torso, as if my body is a cello cut out at the f holes.

The experiences where i have learned the most are those which i approach and maintain through humility. Humility fosters openness and arrogance the opposite. I have long learned that the arrogance that crops up for me is one of the lessons i set for my journey this time. Choosing to be born leo in the year of the tiger was only partly about me forging my own path. The other part is about this constant reminder that when my ego takes over, and i flirt with arrogance, it is because i am insecure about something. Arrogance is a tool that tells me be ok with

self...accepting self...loving self. It is a mirror that gently reminds me to get down on my knees as a servant...rather than orchestrating mastership. There is something humbling about all this prostration beneath Mr. And Mrs. Pinion and Juniper. On the hill, that is one of the objectives, and this site is maximally set up to facilitate vision quest objectives. It encourages humility, simplicity and fecundity. It requires and expects these things, and if you are not prepared to give them, you will learn, gently or otherwise. When i forget this, my tree teachers remind my crown chakra gently with needle pokes in the top of my head. I am constantly on my knees in this place, or sitting in the ground. 10 feet in diameter is a humble dimension...a hovel to help one grovel...gravel to facilitate travel...it necessitates grace to reach comfort in such meager space...

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There is much feminine energy in this experience and this community of beautiful people. Many of my supporters are female. The males supporting hover on the fulcrum between male/female energy. They are comfortable with the or feminine side...the energy of vulnerability, the energy of creativity. I have spent much time in the past few years working on this myself. My left side is open...my right side still opening. My pendulum of self-realization tends to swing wide. I would say too wide but I know the fallacy of a statement like that. I have a growing peace that comes from knowing that things are as they should be, that the master plan is unfolding on a scale that I cannot possibly perceive. Judgment is one of the things that narrows my scale. Acceptance and observation without judgments widens it a bit. I begin to see that the things are not good or bad...they just are. Morality is one of the enemies of life that humans have created. It serves the puny purposes of greed and power...it builds hierarchies, cast systems, authority that is a falsehood. It is the reason for some people's security, and others' fear. It is arbitrary rules made those who think they are in power. It is made by men. Women know creator energy like men cannot, and that is why they are less prone to arbitrary morality.



Jim told me of the native American greeting that goes: "is there anything you lack". Behind this is the assurance that if you lack something, I stand ready to give it. "how ya doin" in my culture is the cheapest of all greetings. If it were genuine, it would carry currency, but it is not. It is a platitude of the most void type, because it rarely elicits an honest response, and if it does, most are not prepared for a not-so-pleasant answer. The former seems to me a greeting that was invented by the divine feminine because it is service focused. It invites honesty and community. The later seems a male invention. It says "I'm sort of interested in you but let's not get too deep...I will be with you if it does not inconvenience me". This is one of the imbalances of planet earth as I go on to the hill June 4, 2010, 22 years after my now divorced wedding day. That day was beautiful. It was another opening, into a new family, a new chapter of learning how to coexist with someone. Unfortunately, in that experience, Paul got forgotten one cell at a time. I am here on the hill to remember him, to embrace him and to love him. And I am surrounded by, enfolded in and supported by the loving arms of feminine energy. I have often said jokingly that I think I was born accidentally as a man, and that I am actually a lesbian in a man's body. My struggle is to fully experience my maleness. Not the maleness of the phallus...that sword of aggression...the instrument of wielding power over others. No, that is not the masculinity I seek. What I seek is the masculinity of respect and profound love for what I can learn from women. They are my teachers. I dabble in creativity...they truly create.

I am surrounded by feminine energy and it feels right. It feels beautiful. It feels natural.

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The three nights after the quest in the teepee are a continuation of the time on the hill. They are study halls for the conscious assimilation of what has just happened largely unconsciously. They are rehearsals for the upcoming performance of taking this quest out into the world. I have hugged all the supporters present with my arms, and shared a feast with them after the coming in lodge. It is nice to make eye contact with people

again. Our eyes say a lot to each other. I have also probed outward, with my heart, to all those supporters not locally present and assured them that their collaboration with me, and Mother Earth, was accepted, powerful, healing, and beautiful. My voice tires. It is out of shape...unused and uncomfortable being pressed back into service. I can only conscript it for so long, and then we both must retire to the seclusion of the teepee. My thirst and hunger have been satiated. My desire for peace and quiet-processing time-is only just beginning. Ironic that after so much time alone, i am ready for more time alone after a few hours with others. This doesn't surprise me though...I know myself well. I am alone in the teepee-a luxury gifted by Jim in exchange for my three days on the hill. Yet one more thing I am grateful for. I love all the people in camp...all these beautiful souls who have also sacrificed dearly to join me on the hill. But now is the time for gentleness with both body and spirit. Now is the time to ease the clutch out a little at a time. It will be some time before I am back to full speed...if I'm lucky, maybe I will never get back there. I have been to the mountain of slow, deliberate and conscious life, and I do not wish to leave that mountain. No, I will strive to carry that mountain with me wherever, and whenever I go.

As I lay in my sleeping bag that first night, a wave of peace washes over me. My body feels transparent. No, that is not right. My body feels disappeared-gone...left on the hill for the vultures after all. I have been shocked by 120 volts a few times when I was a carpenter. This is a little like that except much more-gentle. My body is buzzing softly, like the Matrix is flowing directly through me. There is no separate body...mind...spirit. I am jacked in to the energy force that connects all things. I have experienced this before: this "no time" as Marion calls it. The first time was in a hotel room in France. I was waking from a nap, and for what seemed like an eternity, I hovered in between time and space, where neither existed, and this body disappeared. It was like a permanent, very gentle orgasm. I did not want to come back, but I knew my task here is not done. I remember some force other than myself dragging me back to the surface of space-time. I was disappointed, but very grateful for the experience. I have learned that any time I go to a

new place it is easier to go back there again, and I often have. And here I am again. It is so gorgeous. I drink it in-the most sensual drink. Even my mind likes this one. There is nothing to observe except that every cell in my body is co-mingling with everything else. This is paradise. This is living death. This is eternity and infinity all wrapped in a blanket of sensory input. I am Alive in a new way for the first time.

In the middle of the night, I am wakened. I cannot say how, by what, or by whom I am awakened, but I know that I am supposed to go for a walk up the dirt road from Jim's place. I follow these instructions and go. It is comfortable out. I walk slowly and quietly. This night is not to be disturbed and I have learned to be present without disturbing. I walk up the road a ways, with all of my senses wide open. There is no grogginess despite the hour, of which I have no clue. Where the hands on the clock are is no concern to me, just like on the hill. Yet again it is simply about being here...about showing up and being open. And I have learned how to be open in spades. As I walk, I am aware of what looks like 5 openings in the ground on a hill side. They are spots much darker than the surrounding hillside. Ancestors live here I feel. I become aware of a lone magpie singing in the distance and I am drawn to her song. It is lonely, gentle and deliberate. I remember a prayer in my going out lodge, that if I ever came across a path, that I NOT take it, for where I go, there is no path. So, I veer off the road and into the field. I have a flashlight but do not use it. Like heavy footsteps, a light in the wilderness disturbs the night. I do not often have campfires for this reason... I am following this lone magpie siren in the middle of the night. She is singing her many different calls, one at a time, with space in between. She is giving me her voices individually. I do not have my recorder, but my soul will never forget these notes that chaotically make up magpies' melody during the day. Here they are being carefully set on the shelf of my ears one at a time for me to shop amongst. She is so deliberate and careful with her voice.

I stop...

...stand still...

...and listen...

Birds do not sing at night often, and so I cannot help but feeling like this song is for me. It feels like an affirmation. Of what? I am not sure. Maybe it is my teacher of that last summer ago saying "student, you have done well". Maybe it is like the blue ones in Avatar, or lizard on the hill just saying "I see you". Maybe it is an affirmation that I have nothing to fear of the dark, that it is a part of me, and the balancing is complete. I am so grateful for this monolog. It is a beautiful gift. I went on the hill to give of myself, and now magpie is giving me what she has...and who she is. She is continuing my lessons in the language of nature. My cup runs over and so I begin to walk back out of the field. Briefly using my flashlight to get oriented, I realize I have been walking in a minefield of cactus. My shoes are very skimpy...those new five fingers from Vibram-just a thin soul surrounded by mesh. Cactus spines would go right through it all. I know this, not from playing cacti in the concert hall, but from accidentally stepping on them in the desert. No, it is not these shoes that have protected me from cacti reflexology on my feet. It is the spirit of this place...the ancestors of Arroyo Hondo...The Mountain...and Mother Earth that have helped me navigate this minefield unscathed. They have all heard my song and they are singing back in their own ways.

I spend the day after this first night...the day after my new birthday, just hanging around. I go for a walk up the road of the previous night. I go all the way up the opposite side of the canyon, and am directly across from my hilltop luxury suite of three days. I have fun imagining that this is where Jim was lurking when he checked on me that one time and said my face was so close to him in the binoculars, that it startled him. It is the hot part of the day, but not to worry. This time I have a generous bottle of water with me. I begin by sitting by the stream and putting my feet in. I want to revel in this water that was so close and yet so far for three days and nights. The air is cool here and there is shade. I am surrounded by

life, and I can see the big ponderosa across the stream. One thing keeps running through my head...thank you, thank you, thank you. After I get my fill, it is time to go up the hill. I want to visit Turtle Rock. Another rock with powerful carvings on them. I want to say more thank-yous.

The slope is dry, but it is nice to be moving, breathing deeply through my mouth, with enough water to lubricate it against the dryness of the air it takes on freely. My body does not feel three days of deprivation because my spirit has been so fed. Sister Sweet Grass did her part beautifully. Walking is a good speed. Anything faster than this would be a roller coaster that I know I am not ready for. And there is no need for speed. Speed is one of those things I used to just do...now it is one of those things I avoid. I recognize the toxicity of speeding, not just because the state patrol give out tickets for it, but because it is usually caused by wanting to be some other place than where I actually am. I began learning about the ill effects of speeding from my motorcycle. If you are in a hurry, the motorcycle safety class teaches, **DO NOT GET ON YOUR MOTORCYCLE!** Motorcycles require presence. If you daydream, or look beyond your immediate circle, you do so at your own peril. Being on a motorcycle is good preparation for a vision quest, because it teaches a way of being that requires staying right here, right now. Speaking of which...right now it is hot right here. I think I'll head back, but not without dipping my feet in cool, crisp water. A small stream that barely covers my feet is a generous wealth compared to a day ago.

On the second day, I begin writing these words and do not stop for nearly two weeks.

In my third night in the teepee at the lodge, I have the most beautiful sleep of my life. I wake three times to pee, and each time I crawl back in my bag, a feeling of being rocked flows through my body. The last time I crawl back onto the ground and into my bag, the sensation is undeniable...not a trick of any of my senses. I feel like i am being rocked in a hammock, suspended from the clouds, and wrapped in the softest

cotton arms I've ever felt. My body is not moving, but this inner motion is palpable...beautiful...comforting and sweet. It was a week ago that i moved into the teepee for the final preparations of going on the hill. Our honeymoon has lasted a week, a week i will never forget, and never stop understanding. On this last night, Mother Earth is consummating our union in her own way. I am swaddled in her arms, and can almost remember being held like this by my biological Mothers arms. I wonder what Mother Earth felt while I was up on the hill? There is profound peace in this. There is unbridled gratitude. It is a prayer in motion, both given and received. There is a union of body, mind and spirit with the Earth and the Sky. There is healing here. And that healing is a closing of that 18-inch gap. No, it is not a closing of that gap, it is a filling in of that gap. There is still the distance, but it is filled with a saturation of riches that I could not conceive of before and will always search for ways to express and define. There is a cornucopia exploding with the nutrients of spirit and powered by contemplation, thought, intuition and feeling. This gap is purposeful. It has found its mission and stands ready to radiate outward. To feed and be fed by All Relations that support life. My circle of love and light was purposefully opened on April 21, 2010. That circle has been completed. It is a reservoir filled with all the things life has to offer. That circle is a straight line 14 inches long that stretches around infinity both right-side up, and upside down, and it is perfectly balanced. That 14 inches is permanent in this manifestation, but I now have many tools to traverse it at will.

Long life  
Honey in the heart  
No evil, and  
13x13 thank yous

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Cafe LOKA 6/15 as two Ravens talk above my head.

I went to visit the site a week later. I had two stones to take back. One of my support friends had taken them when they were coming back from escorting me to the hill. They had traveled to Chaco Canyon and Ojo Caliente with us and after meditation, she knew that they should go back from whence they came. I wondered how i would know where to put them. It was not so important for me to put them back exactly where they had come from, but i wanted to put them where they wanted to be. How would i know? Well, they colluded with sister cactus, and shortly after I hit the trail back to the site, my hand slammed into a cactus-it was the hand carrying the rocks. Perhaps next time I won't hit the trail, but be more gentle. I suspect I still would have bumped into Mr. Spindly anyway, but I must learn not to hit anything. A needle was sticking in my finger and I could not pull it out. The rocks were both telling me: "we go here"! I threw some tobacco, thanked them for joining us on our journey to Chaco and Ojo, and welcomed them back home. I set one on either side of the path, and then pulled the cactus spine out. It was perfect. I listened, and they spoke.

The site I spent three days and three nights on is quite different when I return as Paul the human. I have a reverence for all things and beings there. Perhaps this is why I get disoriented going to the place. It takes me two tries. When I get there, it looks very different. I recognize all the trees, plants and rocks. That is not what I mean. There is something different about the light. I sat in this place for three complete sun cycles and the light never looked the way it does to me now, then. The light is cooler, and less saturated. The colors do not have the richness they did before. Everything is muted as if I am seeing the color of the light spectrum but not feeling its vibration. The rocks feel this way to me too. They still feel powerful, but that power is more subdued-more submerged...less vibrant. I do not know if the place has changed or if it is me. Probably the latter, maybe both.

I remember first arriving on the hill for the quest. Everything was in fast motion. I had prepared for months, and I was chompin' at the bit to sit! The wind was also blowing pretty hard-egging me on...goading me to get on with it...encouraging me to hurry up and do nothing. Now, a week after coming down, there is a gentle peace to the place even though there is wind. Everything feels different. We understand each other now-this place and I. There is nothing to be said save one. Thank you. We both say this to each other in our own ways. Me with song. The wind by stopping to hear it. Even the swallows come back to greet me. They remember too. None of us will forget this soon, but all must move on, and it is nearing time for me to move on from Taos. I do not want to. I want to stay in this place forever, like I have wanted to be with a past love forever. But that is not the way of life. Life moves on, and for me, it happens in 18-inch distances. So, there is not that old feeling of loss as I go. Only a feeling of completion. This circuit is built forged with sweat...dust...time...friendship...and love. This one is built well and will last the rest of my days in this life as Paul. My only task is to just be Paul, and the only thing I know for sure is that I am here to make music, and that music is for Mother Earth. Each time I sit to perform, I sit for Her and this quest continues. I know why I am here, and I am grateful to serve in such a rich way. I am blessed beyond measure.

As I drive away from Arroyo Hondo I look back to the site that I can see briefly from the highway. This time I went as Paul, the composer who is on this planet to make music. All else has faded away and is unimportant. Maybe unimportant is unfair. Everything else is inspiration...a mere rehearsal for the real experience of raising my vibration to the point where music just flows. I have a small feeling that something is left behind. Some part of me that I have owned for a long time. But there is no familiar pang of nostalgia for that which is no longer in me...no longer with me. All those things have been replaced by things deeper and more resonant. These new things originate with old things that have been re-tuned to vibrate with more than just myself or other people. That vibration is familiar...easy in a way. No, this new vibration resonates with All Relations: the rocks, trees, streams, plants, four legeds, the



winged folks, and all these parts of the sky that have touched me because I opened myself to them. My ears, eyes, nose, skin and mouth have received them. And But it is my open heart that is the truest marksman of them all. It is the sense that binds all the others together, and even keeps the mind honest and true to the larger picture and that picture is framed by All My Relations.

How do I know I resonate with these things? In my post quest visit as Paul just being Paul...I sit on the petroglyph rocks adjacent to my site and begin to sing a new song of thanksgiving. All my songs during the quest were Native American in style. I do not know where they came from...just somewhere inside or maybe they were given to me from outside. But this song was different. It was a mixture of those songs and the music of my classical training. I would call it Native Gregorian Art Grass. It is a synthesized hybrid of all I have come into contact with. It is uniquely Paul. But what catches my attention is how, as I sing, the strong wind that accompanied me up the hill slows to a stop. In all honesty, I don't notice this until I stop and then the calm is evident...even obvious. It is an eternal split second of silent stillness, and then the wind comes rushing in like the water curiously probes the seccia when the gates open in the spring. I know my prayer of thanksgiving has been heard. An offering voraciously gobbled up by a sentient planet hungry for acknowledgment...wanting to be noticed, loved, and fed, like it feeds us. There's that reciprocity in the circle of life again. As I know who I am, and what I am here to do, I now know beyond a doubt, HOW to be here and it is simple. Give something back whenever I receive and receive whenever you give, and the ledger of life will be balanced. This is when drops of purple healing dream rain fall from the stars like miracles and life continues in the great spiral dance and takes me with it.

Then across the valley a pack of coyotes strikes up a chorus. All is perfect. I am here. All is as it should be. A morning dove sings.

THE BEGINNING...

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For my teacher, mentor and dear friend, 13 thankyou's to Jim Lengerich.

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Walking to Posi Oengue singing We Are Family, I Got All My Sisters and Me...

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7/4/10 (smell)

Riding through the Great Smokey Mountains, I catch a smell. I've smelled it before...in Nicaragua...in El Salvador...in the Yucatan Mayan Country...and now here in the old mountains of the eastern US. It is a hard smell to describe. Slightly sweet with a slight bitter of time. It is a smell of old places...places that have known ancient history, and that remember it...that have born the feet of many years, civilizations and the loves of all relations. Younger places, and drier places do not have this smell. The desert bears witness to it's age in different ways. Through careful placement of life...through rings carved in rocks by long gone water...deep canyons...empty exoskeletons of rivers long dead: bones without marrow, veins that no longer pulse blood. One place in the desert I have smelled this smell of ancientness: Havisu Canyon on the Supai Reservation in Arizona, but it is not quite the same. It is richer...more oppressive than the sweet smell I encountered in these older, more feminine places. No, the Rocky Mountains at the edge of where I am perched for my vision quest do not have this smell. Their youth has a dryness that keeps the air fresh, rather than heavily laden with loam particles-cellular memories taken in through the nose. There are no airborne DNA molecules of ancient civilizations. It seems like there should be, but perhaps they have all been eaten by family vulture. Or

perhaps they lie dormant, waiting for a climate change in the form of humidity and rain that ironically brings abundant life with its twin brother death and decay. Perhaps this is the cause of the ancient sweet smell. It is this circle of life that I smell. It registers deep inside me, as if awakening my own structure to places I have been before. My very DNA stands at attention in the presence of this smell. My memory remembers too. Nothing specific...just remembering a simpler time without all the gadgets, when civilization was civilized...and humans would have given 13 thank yous for this smell. Not like the present where civilization is crazy. Yes, this is it...the complex smell marks simpler times, but that is not all of it. The river beneath me continues to flow. There is no "marking" of time...there is only flow. This river has seen all that I imagine. It knows the smell...is even part of it. It brings constant new, while the smell reminisces of old. Together they form the place where the ends of the circle of life comes together. My place is to find my place within that circle, and once found...keep moving in the great spiral of life. Someday i will be part of this smell. My molecules will go back to the collective sweetness that my nose tells me i am separate from right now. The smell is a trail of bread crumbs that leads into the deep memory of my being, and that accounts for it's sweetness. Following that trail, I bump into anther myself...In lake'ch as the Mayans called it. The smell is a doorway into a million pasts. The smell has given, and I have received.

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### N. Carolina Quest

A friend and colleague had asked me to go to her cabin in N. Carolina. She knew she had work to do, and that I had a part to play in it. I had thought about it a lot leading up to my Vision Quest, and had even done ceremony during my quest that connected me to that upcoming task in N. Carolina. I had purchased the Cherokee Basket Weaver blanket from Pendleton for her, and was certain that it had a part to play. It was with me during the prep for the quest, during the quest, and for the decompression after the quest. I had prayed, meditated on, performed with, slept on, and died a shamanic death under this blanket by the time we both arrived in N. Carolina. This blanket was special...it was

programmed...it was charged with the task it was to fulfill. I was convinced it knew more about what we were supposed to do than either Jen or I. We were still looking for clues...information on how to release souls trapped on this physical plane after the sudden, violent and tragic deaths of their bodies hundreds of years ago. It was not leftovers from the trail of tears. These ones were left behind when the British callously went through the area burning towns, crops and everything in their path. They had ruthlessly killed men, women and children in 1760 and 61, and some were still waiting to move on 250 years later. Jen had met a talented akashic record reader years earlier who after introducing herself had said..."oh...you have to release the souls". After nearly a decade of preparation, we were here in N. Carolina. The stage was set. We were gathering a few more props but the cast was in place. We knew this was our task, and I suspected the blanket, and my drum knew much more about the how than Jen and I did combined. We would have to trust these things like we trusted our security blankets as kids. We would also have to suspend our disbelief loll when we were kids. We were excited and almost giddy to giddy up, like when we were kids. A "type A" and a coyote-the perfect combination to do what we knew we had to even tho we didn't know how!

From the time I arrived, we were focused on the task. Jen had told me the story about all of the tribulations of building the cabin: the foundation washed out three times...the contractor was stealing their money and not paying the crew. Holes in the roof leaking all over the wood floors...the lost went on. My first thought was that maybe they weren't really supposed to have this place. After a while i began to see it as a test: "we want to see if you are really up to the task, so we are going to put road blocks in your way so YOU can be sure you are up to this task. My already high respect for Jen went through the roof, this time without causing any damage. So we gathered information in every way we could. The first night we went for a walk and i got a feel for the land. The second day we went for a hike up Whiteface Mountain-one of the oldest mountains in the world. I wonder how they know it is old? All I know is that at one point we sit on ozone smelling granite, and the rock summons

me. It literally pulls me back and invites me in. I succumb. I am always eager to listen to rock. To learn what he has to say to me. It fits my body perfect. There is lumbar support, and a perfect cradle for the back of my head. It is as if this rock knows me, and I him. I am grateful again for my vision quest of a few weeks earlier. I am grateful for all I have been taught through the language of nature. Now I am getting to practice it...to put it into motion. This is pay dirt! We go to bridal veil falls so Jen can commune with tree roots and I hold space for her. There are many people, but they give a wide birth. They sense something larger than all of us going on, and so they stay away. This is the first of many experiences that I will have in creating and holding space. This, I will learn later, is one of my jobs...one of the reasons I am here.

That second night we had a small fire in the ceremonial pit she had made four years prior. It was a perfect pit. A small hole sunk in to a carefully laid circle of paving stones, rimmed on the south and north by huge flat boulders, perfect for sitting or lying on. Perfect for releasing souls from. Perfect staging grounds to create space for our task. The pit was lined in the east with a bed of lush green ferns and moss. Perfectly gentle. It was all just right, and ripe with her intentions. She had built it well and I could tell she was excited to be using it for the purpose for which it was constructed and not just for making s'mores. Our intention for this first fire was simple: to send out the call...the invitation to gather for anyone who was ready to move on. I sang a loud song with my drum. Similar to the songs I had sung on the hill in New Mexico. Also similar to the ones that rang within my helmet as I rode my motorcycle Harmony across Tennessee en route to this fire pit. I had a sense that these songs brought followers. I could not help singing at times on this beautiful road between Nashville and Knoxville. I also wonder if I was being called as much as doing any calling. So, this first fire was an official invitation-a whetting of the ceremonial whistle for the grand finale to come on the fourth night. Jen had sensed that they were waiting, so perhaps this mumbo jumbo was more for us to get clear on our intentions...to piece by piece figure out how to release souls who should have travelled the Good Red Road two and a half centuries earlier. We had a lot to learn but fortunately this

school only required one thing: quiet patience. Yes, all we had to do was to sit and listen. And instructions came in that quiet space.

While sitting between songs i notice holding my drum that it feels like there are energies clambering against it. It is one of those feelings of movement in the body where the body is not actually moving. I get an image of people scrambling over each other to get at the drum. The drum gets very heavy, almost as if they are inside it. I am tempted to throw the drum in the fire. No, the fire does not get my drum. This drum is too special. Then I notice that is actually the sacred spot lower on Jen's property where she has buried some items, and where we have decided to make a medicine wheel. This place is calling me, and my drum, so we go. This mini circle is delineated by three rocks buried deep, and like the fire pit is open to the west. I drum and sing in this space. I invite the higher selves of these lagging souls to join our party. It is not for Jen and I to release these souls so much as it is to create a space where their higher selves can descend far enough back here on their thin tethers, to do with them. We are merely space holders. So, I drum to the sky, inviting them to the task, and as I walk back to the fire pit, it is easy going back up the hill in like all the other times I have done it. I feel that the connection being made between these two spots is a metaphor for the connection being opened back up between these lost but not forgotten souls and their higher selves who are longing to be reunited. We have made progress this night. We have learned more about our job. We have good teachers...we are good students.

Day three we stay home and meditate. We also begin constructing the medicine wheel where Jen has buried her things between the three rocks. It is hot. We sweat, but we make progress, and the four direction stomas are laid out, connected with a circle of corn meal. The rest will be Jen's work over time. We have laid the foundation. That evening, we have the second of our preparation fires. By now I have learned tha one of my tasks is to gather wood by day, foe the fire at night. Mother earth yields an abundant supply of wood laying on the ground. No need to cut a living tree. It is easy just to pick up what has been dropped by the standing

people already. While we are getting settled, Jen accidentally sits on one of my owl rattles. These rattles are special to me, but I even surprise myself with the ability to. Ot judge this breaking as good or bad. Broken instruments is a sign that something is out of balance...the flow is stopped up, something is not right. So, we both listen and sit still. I know that is important to fix the rattle. To mend the break, and in so doing heal the energy. The night before, Jen awkwardly p.ayes them. I coiled feel her discomfort. She expressed it to me in words to. She was having trouble playing one in each hand. She was rattle challenged, but not because she could not play them I. Each hand, but rather because she felt like there was only one right way to do it. This was what needed to be healed in my view. Too often creativity is stifled by what people think should be done, or think there is only one way to do it. As a composer I have learned that the only rules are rules we create, and that those rules are often vey arbitrary. So it was with the rattles. If they can't be played one in each hand...big deal...play them both in one hand. It is the same problem with ceremony whether Western religion, Buddhism or Native American ritual. Rule based ritual can get in the way of spirit. It is time for us to be free of rule-based doctrine. As my teacher Jim says: "rules are here to serve us...not the other way around". A rule is only as good as the amount of empowerment it engenders. A rule that shuts down energy is not only counterproductive but damaging. And I think that was the lesson for both of us in the broken rattle. There are no rules in this task we attempt. It can be done in many ways, so long as we honor ourselves, open our hearts in love and light for the betterment of humanity, and nurture peace and tranquility in a spirit of joy.

The rattles, for that night at least, were replaced by a frog rasp. Earlier in the day, I had seen this frog rasp on the window ledge upstairs in the cabin and had the clear thought that we would use it. I did not bring it down, nor did I say anything to Jen about it however. It was not surprising when later that day, she brought it down. We were getting that in tune with each other. We were both on the same page in every way. One of us would receive a message and upon verbalizing it, find out the other had been thinking it. Higher powers were at work here, leading this

thing, and we were paying attention. This becomes fun after a while. She was Sherlock Holmes and I was Watson. She was the Jacques Cleuseau, and I Kato. Were we puppets being played on a wire? I do not know, nor do I care...we were putting a puzzle together made of invisible pieces. It was a game, an adventure, a swashbuckle. I do not waste thought on whether I have free will or not. As long as life is interesting, I am content, and this task is a 13 on the interestingometer. And life is interesting. Instead of the owl rattles, we get the real thing. In the distance a bared owl-hoots. Who...who...who wants to come on those adventure to the next realm? I do...but my time is not yet...of that I am pretty sure. The rattle mended and drying up in the cabin, we get on with it.

I am led down to the new medicine wheel again. This time, I just sit, and open up to the spirit of the west. I feel the presences of higher powers. They are eager to reconnect with their long-departed souls. They are grateful for what we are doing, and will be there when it is time. Then, I hear Jen start the frog rasp. It is a slowish three pattern with one rest. I begin answering with the drum. We are together in sound. I begin to fill the rest beat so that between the two of us we are doing seven beats, one for each of the directions. I slowly process up to the fire pit, and we both feel like the spaces are connected to serve their own function. Jen feels like the role of the medicine wheel is minimal because it is so new. I feel that it is the portal for higher selves. It is the doorway for them to enter the space where healing will take place. And that doorway is open. We both agree beyond a doubt that the blanket is the opposite doorway to this space. It is the threshold for those marooned on in this plane. It is the comfort that they need to become un-marooned. Between the fire, the medicine wheel, the drum and the blanket, we feel more prepared with each ceremony we enter. I have a suspicion that this preparation is more for us than anything else. I think the other parties already know what is going down, and even how...we are the slow ones here...the ones that need practice. It is a lesson on setting intention and then letting spirit take the rest. We are both learning how to create space with intention and to follow the flow of that space and its intention. The space is where the



instruction manual is opened for us to read, but we do not have to search for instructions, only watch and listen, and follow the lead of spirit who reads to us from the instruction manual. It is actually quite fun. We end day three feeling ready. Still not so much knowing what we are going to do, or how we are going to do it, but aware of how to listen, and this sets the stage for the doing.

Day four, we have an appointment with an anthropologist who knows the area and the history. At the Nikwasi Mound in Franklin, N. Carolina, I sit on top, and feel the Mound is alive. Roads ring the mound...there are non-descript businesses...on all sides. There is a gas station called "The Hot Spot" adjacent to it. It was school children in the 1930's that saved their pennies to buy the land for preservation. Many mounds in that area had been flattened by the heavy feet of European invaders spreading civilization, the insane modern version...but this mound had been spared. Why? Because this was the place in the Cherokee Nation where the sacred fire was kept in an age long gone. And the fire was still burning. Sitting on the mound, my internal vision was exploding with color. My fingers, placed on the ground with the tips making contact, were buzzing. There was a small electric like charge pulsating continuously, and being modulated at just over a cycle per second. There was a heartbeat. It was unmistakable...undeniable...real...and palpable. I was in N. Carolina to help my colleague with a ceremony on her property that she had been planning for years. Tonight, was show time and we were with an anthropologist from Western Carolina University to gather what last information we might need. At lunch, when she mentioned the Nikwasi Mound, and that it was the place of the Cherokee Sacred Fire, I knew that was the last piece for me. As I sat there experiencing the live Mound, thoughts and images rolled through my mind. I felt a gathering of energies, asked for anyone who wanted to participate, to come along, and, knowing fire was a big part of the forthcoming ceremony, asked for the sacred for use in the evening. I do not know what possessed me to ask for this sacred thing. Had I premeditated it, I would have talked myself out of it. I would not have felt worthy of the sacred Cherokee Fire. But, I did not premeditate. I just asked. My vision swirled...and then suddenly,

it exploded into a golden yellow solid and impenetrable wall of fire. Holy shit...I was just given the Sacred Fire from Nikwasi...13 thankyou...This was a sacred task given in trust: to transfer this fire to ours tonight. To connect this sacred fire place with Jens fire pit that we had spent three days preparing. Tonight's fire would be special. It would be sacred...it would be powerful, and familiar to those we were helping. It was their fire, not mine. It would be comforting to all involved. Suddenly my role in the evening's ceremony was clear. I was the fire tender, and I would give this sacred fire back to the people who kept it burning down the roads of years ago, so they could ride its comforting waves on the Good Red Road, and quit this place whose gravitational pull kept them here long after they should have departed. The sacred fire had the ability to purge violence and to transmute tears of sorrow into joyful laughter. It was a gift beyond measure that would bring peace to many. And that night, as i lit the fire, i gave it all to our task-pouring it into the wood that would fuel the passage. And the fire burned strong. For such an honor I have only humility and gratitude to offer in return for this sacred trust. And tobacco generously given to the seven directions on top of the Nikwasi Mound.

We drive the country side after the mound looking for "burning town" a place I no longer believe exists. There is a ward in the county called burning town with lots of burning town references. It is a legacy to the callus British who came through here with pain and destruction, but I also feel now that it is also a reference to the eternal flame of the sacred Cherokee fire that is still burning. Looking for a specific place is a wild goose chase. We have already gotten what we need from burning town. Anything more is gist our imagination our fantasies to find something so obvious that we cannot miss it, but his task is more subtle, it is more delicate, it is more symbolic. A single village has turned into a large area, and depolarized from a single place of destruction to a single place of sacred trust in the task at hand. I am no longer looking for anything...no more clues...no more information. There comes a point when a student is ready for the test...ready to perform the task that will show how well they have learned. We are passed the point of no return, and ready to help

those ready to return.

That evening the stage is set. I take great care in building the fire. We put a three-foot pillar in the center, that somehow lasts through 6 1/2 hours of flames never faltering or considering to fall. The specifics of that ceremony are locked into the akashic records of all those involved, and so there is no need to recount them here. They are accessible to those they are of value to. What is interesting to me is that once the ceremony gets started, all of my abnormal senses: my internal vision, intuition, inspiration, helpful thoughts, feelings, go completely dark and silent. It is as if I am blind. I get no information beyond the two dimensional normal 5 senses. At first, I am disappointed. Wondering if I have been abandoned, or if I have done something wrong, but quickly let go of that ego space. My role here is simple...to support Jen. This is her task. She has been appointed, not me. I have been invited to help, and that is all. I am not to bear witness to these events, only follow instructions when given. It is natural to slip into this mode. The new me understands that I do not understand everything, and that not everything is for me. There are three parts to my task: to create a safe place, to observe without judgment, and to hold space. This I can do. I am a follower not the leader here. I learn later, that these three parts to my task are the three components of inhabiting the divine masculine. It is women who truly create, and it is men who support creation. Perhaps that is why we are so good at destruction. We long to create, but our role is to support in creation and it time for us to step into this task so that the world-its people, plants, animals, and Mother Earth herself, can heal. Women are the key to this. Men are enablers. Before Jen begins the ceremony, I give her the rattles and simply tell her: I think you need to use these tonight. She does the rest. In the morning, the air is lighter...the sun brighter as the fog lifts from the valley. As I leave the valley on Harmony, I realize that I am wearing black and white. There is balance, and two wheels is the way to go.