



Family & Friends Travels

Fletcher Soul Traveler

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Intro



No Man is an island. The world around me helped me to where I am today. All my teachers, family, and friends taught me about the web of life. We are all interconnected in ways we can't even imagine. This book will help detail the web of people who helped me on this journey.

The above paragraph came from my book, Family and Friends. It is the foundation for all my writings. Click on the image of the family and friends and you will see the PDF and YouTube video.

Yes you know I love to travel. I love to hear stories about other people's travels and journeys on this road in life. In this book, I'm going to tell the stories about family and friends' travel adventures. You have had enough of listening to mine. If you would like to contribute to this project, send me a message.



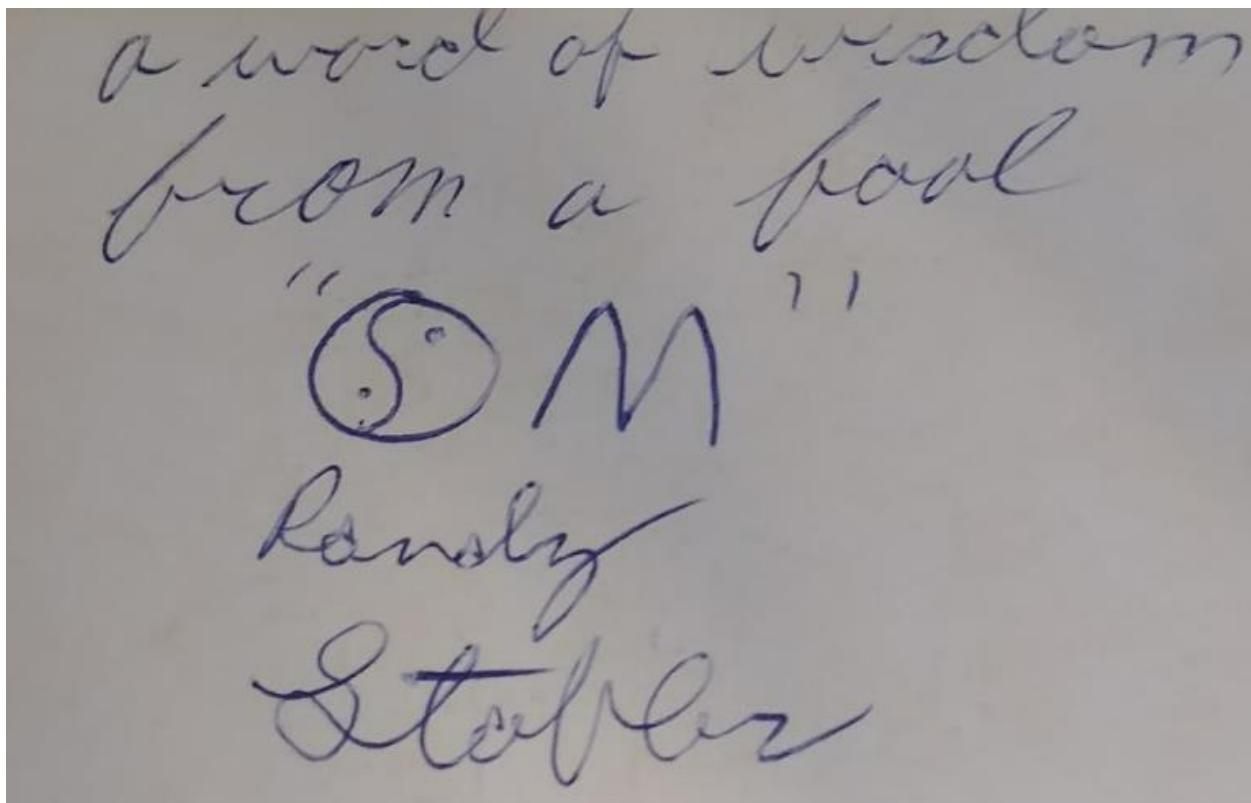
Book Family & friends

Mom

Grand Mother Josie

Randy Stabler





I just learned yesterday that a dear friend of mine Randy Stabler died last Friday.

In my high school yearbook, Randy wrote the following.

A word of wisdom from a fool.

Randy's one word was OM yet he used the letter Om as a ying-yang symbol.

To be honest it was quite profound for its time.

Randy had a great heart.

My twin brother and I ran cross-country and track together with Randy.

He was always a delight to be around.

I last talked to Randy only a few months back.

He talked about his kids and spending time in Iraq.

Both of us love to cook.

We both love the ocean.

We had so much in common.

I would see incredible posts on Facebook with Randy and his six kids.

They all had an incredible love for each other.

The day he died all six kids were there.

What a beautiful way to leave this world.

Randy's body died yet his spirit is eternal.

His ashes were spread across the universe.

Randy is still alive.

Close your eyes and go into the silence.

You will sense Randy's presence.

Randy lives inside of your heart.

He is a part of you.

So whenever you are sad about your dear Dad leaving this planet remember he is a part of you.

Those glorious memories never go away.

They are a part of you.

Randy is riding the incredible wave of the universe.

He is a cosmic surfer now.

Some things never change.

They just transform and go into another dimension.

Love you, Randy.

We will see your shining face again.

Randal Stabler message 1
poerds1046,r2c4t0f m1bh1o101e cO .

Here is an interesting fact in my life as ... father (aka; papa with my kids). We sold a house in Newport Heights, 1993 ...packed up a 20 foot container with all our wordily possessions....four kid in tow, youngest 2 years old...and moved to Hong Kong. Business and adventure was calling. After move to Hong Kong...I traveled from Taiwan to Israel and all countries between these points to support my family and live the adventure. Creating business in over 13 or so countries ...cool yea! Still have an Export/Import business in Macau (dormant)...Macau, our final home settling for last 5 years after 3 years in Hong Kong.

MY wife, at the time and children were the "true troopers."

Thank you for reading....any one into hearing our eight+ years living in Asia?

Randy



The following is a story that Randy wrote on his journey in Afghanistan. It comes right out of a James Bond movie. I was in Afghanistan 50 years ago today.

Randy only had 5 days to pull this off. I can't believe that he did this. The waves of the world are very different than ours. To

simply comprehend that. Randy did this in 5 days is extraordinary. His daughter Misha was going to graduate from Newport harbor high.

This story is better than any novel. When you have visited these far off places and you hear other people's stories, you understand how dangerous the world can be. Randy nonchalantly tells a story

Randal Stabler

History;

1993/94 Hong Kong, developing business via fax machine...internet in its infancy, or non existent to parts of world I was communicating with to service/create Sta-Lube business. Sta-Lube was sold to CRC Aerosol in 1993. I along with Dad, Laird and Judi Proetel negotiated an exclusive contract with CRC for me to continue the Sta-Lube market/sales presence in Asia and Middle east, which I earlier developed. Thus move to Hong Kong...with family and sell of NPT home. Move was and best for all who experienced the China/Hong Kong/Macau education/experience!

While servicing and developing business via fax. A hit on Afghanistan requesting 20Ft container of high quality vehicle gear oil, that is eighty drums, each drum

weighing 450lbs. The logistics/payment alone were daunting and challenging. Inquire came from Kabul via Islamabad, Pakistan. No easy task to get such an inquire. I respond, again, via fax. Their response; the gear oil was for Russian vehicles left behind from Russia's rapid retreat in late eighties defeat. At the time, 1994, the outside world was not aware of the Taliban. I admit I was "horny" to do a 'big deal,' With a family to support and grow a business in Asia. And I loved the adventure of it all...fortunate me living life.

A Year or so later learned, after sale, the brutal place Afghanistan, especially towards women.

Flew into Lahore, Pakistan from Hong Kong early June/94. I had five days to get the deal done...because after the five days, I had four more days to be in Newport for Mischa's high School graduation, I was not going to miss it!! (probably just racked up enough miles to fly around the world).

Arrived Lahore and promptly driven to Islamabad for the night. Next day, early AM, woken to attend the call to the Mosque (the largest in the world). I attended, washed feet, the service. Then we, prospective Afghan customers, loaded into a crew cab Toyota pick-up and headed towards Peshawar. At Peshawar, my Afghan minders wanted to share with me an open market. Oh...yea all along the way ate great locale food, including raw goat brain with lots of garlic, herbs and peppers. The open market, Peshawar (border to Afghanistan), is set out like a "swap meet,"

beautiful rugs laid out.



But instead of general domestic goods...there is a huge awry of weapons! AK 47's, Mortars, Machine guns, Hand Held Rocket Propelled grenades etc, and Ammunition for all. Hundreds bartering for the goods. I felt very uncomfortable among all these weapons meant to kill. My minders/customers, thought

they were sharing a beautiful open market.

After being shown the pride of the country, Mosque/Open Market. We loaded into the crew cab to drive into Kabul via "Kyber Pass" (if you do not know of Kyber Pass history, look it up...very famous).



All this with Himalayas in deep fore ground. Dicy drive with deep river valleys and no road guards to deflect you from going over the edge into a thousand or more foot drop into the valley. Arrived Kabul to complete the gear oil deal. I was promptly served locally brewed beer and tea, brought in by young boys (yea I know you are thinking ... this is a Muslim country, beer? yes).

Deal done after midnight hour. The transaction\$ was a logistic nightmare. Three banks involved all requiring LC's (letters of Credit) and BL's (Bills of Lading) starting from the docks of Sta-Lube at Rancho Dominguez, CA, destined for Kabul.



Drove back to Pakistan ... four and one-half days out. Arrived Islamabad mid afternoon on finish of fifth day. I was knocked off flight to Calcutta, India due to unrest/saber rattling between each country. And told there were no more flights for next 2-3 days. But...for an extra fee I could catch a flight to Indonesia that would connect me with a flight in Hong Kong to meet USA flight. I was set up! Fortunately I was prepared with "Swiss

Army Knife" nock-offs from HK with twenty dollar USD\$ wrapped around each knife (I had been here before). Got on the plane and was seated...for next six or more hours, to an aging woman constantly coughing up blood into a handkerchief, anxious what I was going to catch.

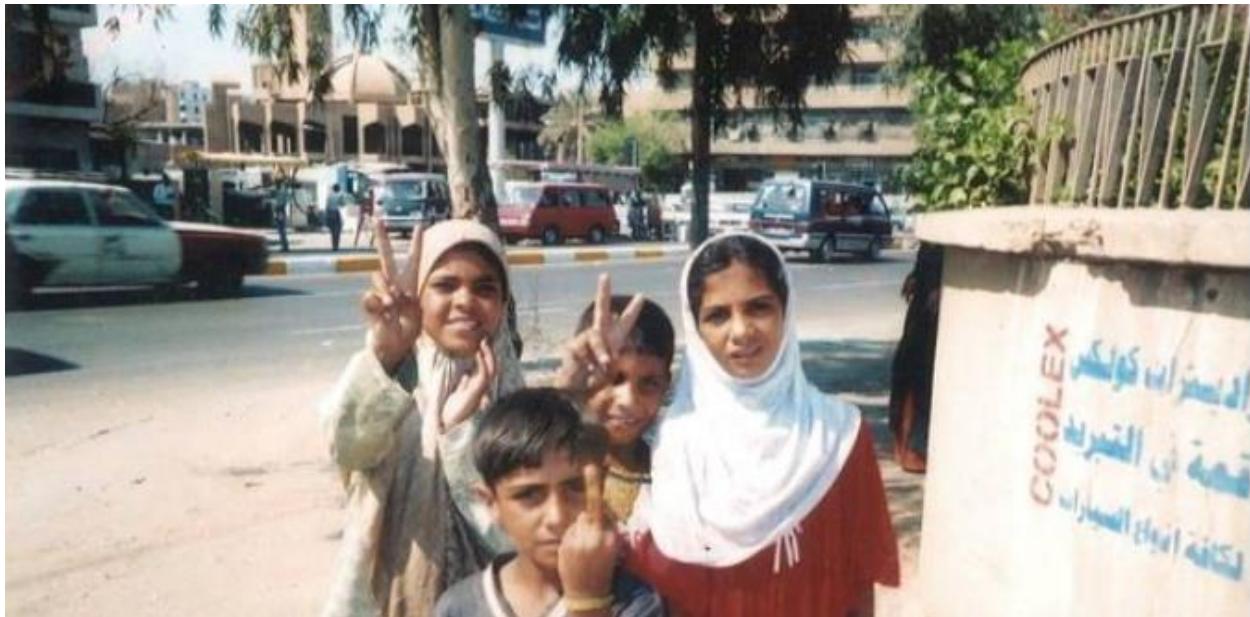
I made MISCHAS' graduation!

[Randal Stabler message 2](#)
[epSstolr,mi214Alcp 02f5 2](#) .

My time in Baghdad...I was in the "LE" (local economy , the streets) almost daily 2003-2004. Just rummaged up these photos. The group of Iraq teens was a spontaneous shot..two girls happy to see me one confused and the boy your next a car bomber...second shot our soldier in an improvised armor with sand bags, 4x4's and steel doors with his office chair bolted to the Humvee bed (check out pic in mirror).

Crazy place was Baghdad. I was sub-contractor cheffing for the intelligence and Black Water community (before we knew of Black Water 2003).

Have several newspaper articles under "Embedded Chef."



Randal Stabler curry soup message
roesh0l0i2p3 1 fr,1aa3A18 .

Rick...As promised; here is my Curry Soup version along with stocks...enjoy creating! Please take liberties with your variations...then share. You are excellent in creating with cooking!

Remember; all has been done before in cooking, we can only expand with our own creative nuances'.

Chicken Stock;

- Roast 1/2 chicken with garlic, onion, celery, carrots, peeled/sliced ginger, turnips, parsnips, small amount beet a few cloves, cilantro, parsley and S/P. coat all with small amount sesame oil.

After Roasting; throw all in 5qts of water...reduce to 3 qts. Slowly, three hours or more.

Vegetable Stock:

- No chicken

Soup finish:

- Strip chicken meat from bone. Toss bones. Chop meat.

- Add all roasted vegetables to compost, to grow your future vegetables in next seasons soil.

- Again, use same fresh veggies, or more of your choice (potatoes along with tomatoes work well here). Chopped to your preference size. Add chopped chicken.

- Sauté veggies and chicken in clarified butter, or oil of choice, to point of semi softness. In soup size pot.

- At this point add one apple (skin on) and banana, both finely chopped.

- Add curry powder or paste of your choice along with a little added coriander, turmeric and of course chile spice to your temperament.

- Stir and sauté

- At time well stirred saute meld, splash in small amount Saki to set off flavors and...stir, until you get right aroma.

- Add 1 12oz can coconut milk. Not coconut water

- Add the 3qts stock and simmer slowly 2 hours or so.

- Remove from heat and let rest over night for flavors to bind and discover each other.

Next day:

Reheat and serve with Rita some Nan along with rice or what ever.

ENJOY...and play in cuisine fun!

22

2 Comments

Like

Comment

Share

2 Comments



Mark McClellan

Randy, this sounds yummy. Rick, I know you're on it.

○ **Like**

○ **9y**



Active

Richard Fletcher

I'm making this on Saturday....

○ **Like**

Curry Soup

Chef: Randy Stabler

Ethnic: Thai

Main Ingredient: chicken

Categories: Soup

Meal Type: Dinner

Food Type: Non vegetarian

Level:

Servings: 8

Prep Time:30 minutes

Cook Time:3 hours



My dear friend Randy Stabler gave me this recipe. He has been an incredible chef for many years. The secret to this recipe is the stock.

Here's a quote from Randy. The beauty of cooking "we could cook 24/7 3 meals a day in our life time and not repeat a recipe." There are literally millions of recipes. I can go to a Pot Sticker restaurant in Macau and then another one around the corner and experience different slight variations in flavors for the same product.

[Print](#)

Ingredients

Chicken stock

- 1/2 whole chicken
- 1 cup potatoes
- 1 cup celery
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger
- 1 large turnips

- 1/2 cup beets
- 1 teaspoon 5 star anise
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro
- 1/2 cup fresh parsley
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 10 cups water
- 1 whole juiced lime

Soup ingredients

- 1 diced large banana
- 1 tablespoon ghee
- 1 cup potatoes
- 1 cup celery
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger
- 1 teaspoon cloves
- 10 sprigs fresh cilantro
- 10 sprigs fresh parsley
- 1 medium apples
- 1/8 fl oz sake
- 1 1/2 cups coconut milk
- 1 tablespoon curry powder
- 1 teaspoon coriander powder
- 1/2 whole red chili
- dash of salt

Recipe

Add 10 cups of water to pot. Add chicken and rest of broth ingredients. Bring to a boil and simmer for two hours. Strain the stock by pouring the liquid over a colander with a pot underneath it. Compost the vegetables if you can. Save the chicken and set aside.

Add soup ingredients to stock. Bring to a boil and simmer for 20 minutes. Let it cool overnight to bring out the flavors. Next day heat up soup and serve with yogurt or naan.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 Curry Soup

Servings Per Batch 8

Amount Per Serving

Calories 151

Calories from Fat 2

% Daily Value *

Total Fat 9g

14%

Saturated Fat 6g	32%
Monounsaturated Fat 1g	
Polyunsaturated Fat 0g	
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 4g	1%
Sodium 84mg	4%
Potassium 637mg	18%
Total Carbohydrate 18g	6%
Dietary Fiber 4g	18%
Sugars 7g	
Protein 3g	6%
Vitamin A	66%
Vitamin C	79%
Calcium	9%
Iron	3%

* The Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet, so your values may change depending on your calorie needs. The values here may not be 100% accurate because the recipes have not been professionally evaluated nor have they been evaluated by the U.S. FDA.

Nutritional information

Michael and Barbara Lawler

‘The world is a big, big place’ ¹



¹ <https://www.ocregister.com/2010/11/14/the-world-is-a-big-big-place/>





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- Michael Lawler and his girlfriend Barbara Burdick sailed around the world covering 6 continents, 61 countries and 31,146 nautical miles. Michael, a Newport Beach attorney, was gone from? July 2007 to July 2010. Barbara, a teacher from from Manhattan? Beach, was gone 26 months.

By **TERYL ZARNOW** | Orange County Register
November 14, 2010 at 2:00 p.m.

Michael Lawler says a semester spent at sea, when he was a student at USC nearly 40 years ago, opened his eyes to adventure.

That's when the notion of sailing his own boat around the world took root in his mind.

But you know how it is: The young have grand ideas, but no money. The mature have money, but no time and, often, outgrow their big ideas.

Sometimes a dream deferred is nothing but an irritant, best ignored.



But, once in a long while, it creates a pearl.

Lawler deferred his dream through law school, marriage and three children. He'd imagine routes he might take, the ship he might buy.

Eventually, his law career was established, the kids grown, the marriage ended. In 2005, he met fellow sailor and future girlfriend Barbara Burdick, and the timing was suddenly right.

In July of 2007 they sailed the *Traveler* from Newport Harbor, starting in the Transpacific Yacht Race to Hawaii.

Three years later, they sailed home. That's two canals, six continents, 61 countries, 31,145 nautical miles and a long time between washing machines.

...

Lawler, 57, has stories to tell future grandchildren – the kind that make your eyes widen and your imagination soar.

Imagine sailing 15 days across the Pacific from Kona to Tahiti or 16 days sailing 2,500 miles across the Atlantic from Africa to Barbados.

He saw huge Komodo dragons in Indonesia, the coronation of the King of Tonga, and the pyramids of Egypt.

They had adventures. Heading toward Fiji, Lawler and Burdick, 53, spotted a distress flare and searched the darkness to find two fishermen in a small boat. They towed them back to Niue where they were greeted like heroes.

“We saved their lives for sure.”

There are also stories not fit for children.

They were concerned about pirates in the Gulf of Aden, but a British couple they met at the Maldives, Paul and Rachel Chandler, reassured them it wasn’t bad.

As the Traveler made its passage, however, they were approached by an unmarked speedboat carrying an armed man. They played dumb and never stopped.

“We had to deal with the situation,” Lawler comments. “They might have been beginner pirates.”

But in October of 2009, as the Chandlers sailed from the Seychelles toward Tanzania, their yacht was boarded and they were taken hostage. They were held 13 months before their ransom and release (on Nov. 14, 2010).

•••

Lounging on the 47-foot Traveler, where Lawler lives today, he’s more proud of his feat than he is philosophical about it.

During the voyage he signed his e-mails “Livin’ the Dream.” Anyone carrying the Peter Pan gene is bound to be jealous.

“The hardest part was leaving the dock.”

Before leaving, Lawler bought the boat and got his pilot’s license. He sold his car, his house, and his Newport Beach law practice. Burdick, a teacher from Manhattan Beach, took a two-year sabbatical.

They missed the recent economic meltdown.

“We picked a great time to take three years off.”

While Lawler says the boating life isn’t easy, he isn’t comparing hardships. He figures diesel, never-ending repairs and all other expenses ran about \$100,000 per year.

Lawler and Burdick clearly savor their journey, which wasn’t an exercise in isolation. Friends and family joined them for stretches along the way, and Lawler flew home several times as well.

Still, it was total surrender to wanderlust.

Figuratively and literally, they set their own course. Generally, they headed west, but changed direction on a whim.

“There’s something about heading out,” Burdick says, her voice trailing off.

Leaving Fiji, Lawler decided to veer south so they could visit an active volcano on the island of Tanna in Vanuatu.

Heading to Singapore, they decided to take a right up the Kumai River to see the orangutans in Borneo.

The engine starter conked out in Yemen, which led to a 21-day visit at an unlikely vacation spot.

•••

If you’ve never sailed a ship that doesn’t offer second seating, you can only imagine the empowerment of taking on the elements and winning.

Were they confident about their survival?

No, they both laugh.

Lawler thought the boat would make it, but Burdick recalls hours when they were pushed sideways instead of heading forward. She remembers the horrible sound when the keel bumped a reef in Fiji. They nearly sank in high winds on the Red Sea.

“We were different people by the time we got back,” Burdick says.

They seem sure-footedly confident:

Confident they can tear into an engine and maybe fix it. Confident that when the electronics fail, they can make do with paper charts, a compass and sextant.

Lawler – who doesn’t have a button-down estate lawyer vibe – admits he was tempted by a shoelace-optional lifestyle.

For eight months in French Polynesia, waiting for a new engine and good weather, life was pretty fine.

“That was a very appealing lifestyle. I thought: I could live here.”

•••

In the end, he also wanted to come home.

“I was a little travel weary.”

Three years is a long vacation. Their passports ran out of pages. Visas expired so often they sometimes became temporary residents.

Since their journey, Burdick and Lawler have only sailed to Catalina – which they dismiss as “walking out to check the mail.” They plan to race the Traveler again in the 2011 TransPac to Hawaii.

Lawler is saving up to do it all again – maybe forever.

To circumnavigate the globe in three years, Burdick explains, they had to move pretty fast.

“The world is a big, big place.”

Lawler has advice for anyone with a dream:

“Do it sooner rather than later. The years fly by and you get older fast.”

Posted in the cabin is a fitting footnote from Mark Twain:

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”

They took it literally.

Contact the writer: Michael Lawler will share his adventures at the Newport Harbor Nautical Museum in the Balboa Island Fun Zone. He will speak at 7 p.m. on Jan. 13, Jan. 27 and Feb. 10. For information: 949-675-8915. Visit www.voyageoftraveler.com. Contact the writer: Terylzarnow@gmail.com.

²Balboa Island sailors Barbara and Michael Lawler plan 'lifetime adventure No. 2'



Balboa Island residents Barbara and Michael Lawler are pictured with their 47-foot sailboat Traveler that for three years carried them 32,000 miles around the world to 61 nations on six continents. Now, they are planning a second world cruise that may last up to five years. (Photo by Ludie Henley)

Balboa Island residents Barbara and Michael Lawler are pictured with their 47-foot sailboat Traveler that for three years carried them 32,000 miles around the world to 61 nations on six continents. Now, they are planning a second world cruise that may last up to five years.

(Photo by Ludie Henley)

BY DAVID C. HENLEY

APRIL 16, 2019 2:47 PM PT

“Danger” should be the middle names of Balboa Island residents Michael Lawler and his wife, Barbara.

That’s because Michael, a Newport Beach attorney, and Barbara, a seventh-grade English teacher, confronted an assortment of crises, some of them potentially life-threatening, during a round-the-world cruise several years ago aboard their 47-foot

² <https://www.latimes.com/socal/daily-pilot/news/tn-dpt-me-reader-report-newport-beach-henley-20190418-story.html>

sailboat Traveler, which carried them more than 32,000 miles to 61 countries on six continents.

“Most of our journey proved to be idyllic,” said Barbara, citing the five months they spent cruising the waters of French Polynesia and the “fantastic time we had with the new king of Tonga who invited us to attend his coronation in the presence of his queen and island chiefs.”

But the pair also struggled with perils along the way, such as that “frightening day” they were terrorized by heavily-armed seagoing pirates in the Gulf of Aden and their encounter with a “monster storm” that suddenly came upon them in the dead of night and threatened to capsize Traveler during their rescue of two fishermen whose 20-foot skiff was foundering off the coast of [Niue Island](#) in the South Pacific, added Michael.

They faced other trials as well, including fierce storms in the Atlantic and Indian oceans and off the coast of Mexico and when they had to make emergency repairs at sea after their boat sprang leaks and its auxiliary diesel engine and navigational equipment broke down.

But despite the dangers they faced on their “adventure of a lifetime,” the Lawlers are making plans for “lifetime adventure No. 2 ” sometime next year, said Barbara.

“This time, however, our round-the-world trip may last five years, not three,” said Barbara, who was born and raised in Glendora, graduated from UC Santa Barbara, lived aboard a 44-foot sailboat in the Caribbean for five years before meeting Michael, holds a Coast Guard 100-ton master’s, or captain’s license, and has participated in countless races including the Los Angeles-Honolulu Transpac.

“In fact, Barbara and I met in Honolulu following a Transpac,” added Michael, the first child born at Hoag Memorial Hospital Presbyterian following its opening in the early 1950s, a graduate of Newport Harbor High School, USC — where he was a member of its sailing team — and Western State University College of Law. Michael, who began his sailing career at the age of 8, came in second place in the 2007 Transpac cruising class competition and also holds a Coast Guard 100-ton master’s license.

When I asked the Lawlers what they consider to be the most ominous episode of their three-year voyage, they replied, almost in unison, “when the pirates threatened us in the Gulf of Aden.”

“It happened when we were sailing north on our way to the Red Sea, with Somalia and Djibouti on our port side and Yemen on starboard,” Michael recalled. “This is where the Gulf of Aden narrows to just 17 miles and near a group of small islands named [Bab el-Mandeb](#), which in Arabic means ‘the Gate of Tears’ because so many ships have sunk there.

“All of a sudden, we saw an open boat, about 24 feet long and powered by an outboard engine, speeding toward us. Aboard were three men. One was brandishing a large gun, which appeared to be an AK-47. The men were yelling to us in Arabic and gesturing us to stop in mid-channel. They wore civilian clothes, so we assumed they weren’t police or military.

“I realized right away that we were in big trouble, as this was approximately the same area where pirates had hijacked the U.S. container ship [Maersk Alabama](#) and captured its captain, Richard Phillips.”

(Phillips was ultimately rescued by U.S. Navy Seals, who killed three of the four hijackers, and his ordeal was portrayed in the motion picture “Captain Phillips” that starred Tom Hanks).



Michael and Barbara Lawler on board La Sirena just after finishing the 2,250 mile Transpac Yacht Race in 2013. (Photo courtesy of the Lawler family)

Michael and Barbara Lawler on board La Sirena just after finishing the 2,250 mile Transpac Yacht Race in 2013.

(Photo courtesy of the Lawler family)

“We had no weapons aboard Traveler, so when the pirates came alongside we tossed them a water bottle to indicate we were friendly,” Michael said. “But they continued screaming at us to stop our boat, and the fellow with the machine gun kept pointing it at us. We then decided to turn our backs on them and pretend to ignore them. At first we were frightened, but we didn’t panic and were able to regain our inner-calm.

“The sea gradually became rough, with the wind blowing at 40 knots or better. This worked in our favor. The pirates were getting their butts kicked in their small boat in the choppy seas, and I think they were getting a bit seasick. After about 15 minutes, they suddenly turned their boat away and left us alone. It would have been disastrous for us if they had boarded Traveler. We were just plain lucky they didn’t.”

Today, the Lawlers are studying maps of the world to determine the route of their second world cruise.

“It will be a bit different from our first voyage, which took us from Newport Beach to Hawaii, the Pacific, the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, several cities in Western Europe, North Africa, a crossing of the Atlantic to South America, the Caribbean, passage through the Panama Canal to Panama and then north to Central America, the west coast of Mexico and back to Newport Beach,” Barbara said, adding that she and Michael will participate in the next Transpac competition which will be held in three months.

On their 2020 cruise, the couple plans to return to the Pacific but then sail directly to South Africa and South America before coming home to Newport via Mexico’s west coast, said Barbara who hopes to take a leave of absence from her teaching position in Paramount, a small city north of Long Beach, during their voyage.

Before Michael and Barbara had described the itinerary of their next international cruise, I asked if it would again include the tiny Pacific island nation of Vanuatu, which, until 1980, had been jointly ruled by France and Great Britain.

“Of course. We look forward to returning to Vanuatu. [Cannibalism was practiced in Vanuatu until 1969](#), the same year the Apollo astronauts walked on the moon Vanuatu is beautiful and unspoiled, so I can see why the TV show ‘Survivor’ is set there,” he said.

“When Barbara and I landed in [Tanna](#) on our first sail around the world, we were introduced to an older gentleman wearing only a loincloth who told us he was a ‘retired’ cannibal. I shook hands with him, but then stepped back a few feet, fearing he might decide to revert to his former diet as lunchtime was approaching. He appeared to have a good set of teeth, and I didn’t want to take any chances,” Michael explained.

David C. Henley, a Newport Beach resident, is a contributor to Times Community News.

William Becket



I first met Bill in junior high. Bill was definitely a character. He had a strong sense of humor. Bill was a great basketball player and surfer. His family belonged to the San Onofre surf club which allowed him to surf at San Onofre. Back then it was off-limits to the public.

Bill and his family were portrayed in a book.

Barbarian Days: A Surfing Life

By William Finnegan

Winner of the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Autobiography

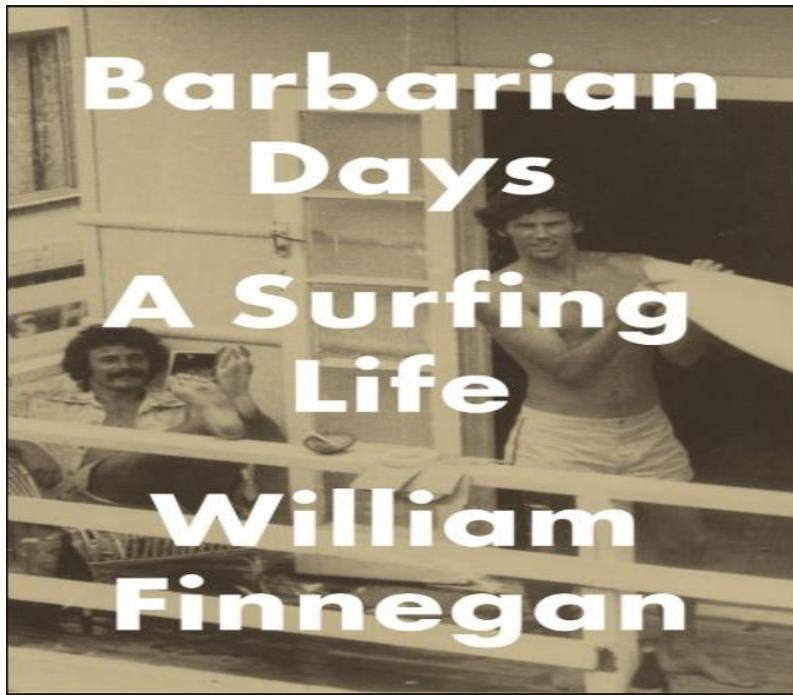
**Included in President Obama's 2016 Summer Reading List*

I have read this book and highly recommend it. William Finnegan is a great storyteller and author.

³As he kicked off a summer vacation, President Obama released last week a free 39-song playlist for a summer day—essentially a soundtrack for a summer vacation. He also shared his summer reading list—five books which offer, notes the White House, “a mix of fiction and non-fiction, including a Pulitzer Prize-winning surf memoir, a psychological thriller, and a science fiction novel. They include:

- *Barbarian Days: A Surfing Life* by William Finnegan
- *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead
- *H Is for Hawk* by Helen Macdonald
- *The Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins
- *Seveneves* by Neal Stephenson

³ <https://www.openculture.com/2016/08/the-5-books-on-president-obamas-2016-summer-reading-list.html>



Here's a sample of the book.

SCUSE ME WHILE I KISS THE SKY

TOWN WAS FLAT. The whole island had been flat for **a** week. I had the day off work; Becket had some acid. We dropped (that was the strange, sinking, truncated phrase people used for ingesting LSD) before daybreak, then stood around **a** fire in Kobatake's backyard and waited for dawn. Old Kobatake never seemed to sleep. He jabbed the fire with **a** crowbar, his face **a** golden oval against the velvety blackness of his yard. He cackled when Becket joked about the roosters waking up his wife. Maybe our scheming, bewhiskered landlord wasn't such **a** bad guy. We took my be-flowered car, the former Rhino Chaser, and headed north.

One plan was to ride in the summer sun from the middle east

Bill is a great guy. I will always remember him.



William Finnegan, "Barbarian Days"

Politics and Prose • 31K views

A long-time staff writer for The New Yorker, Finnegan has written four books, including Dateline Soweto and Crossing the Line; his...

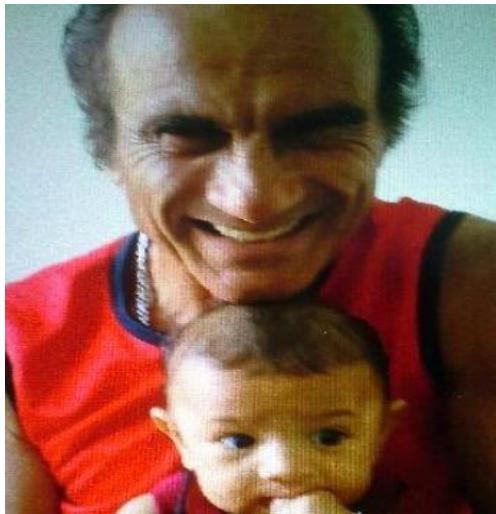


William Finnegan: Barbarian Days on Surf Splendor

Surf Splendor • 2.7K views

William Finnegan has been an important figure contributing to surfing for the past 30 years or so, mainly as a writer, but also as a...

Chuck Cook



Mark S. Blackburn NHHS Class of 1971

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After a train of bad news such as the loss of Gary Hill's William B., and the very bad global news from Paris today, it is my great pleasure to share some GOOD NEWS. I am posting delightful news about our classmate Chuck Cook. I have the pleasure to announce that at age 62 Charles Arthur Cook has become a Father--about 6 months after Chuck received

his first social security check!

This amuses me on many levels. I have a GrandDaughter who will be 15 next Spring, but Charlie Cook has a Son who will not turn 1 until next May! If there is one word to describe Chuck---what would that be? Virile? Those still residing in the Harbor area probably have spotted Chuck riding his bicycle around Newport. He has led a life entirely suitable to Newport and to himself...but clearly out of the mainstream! I well recall when Chuck was 17 after reading and researching carefully (not skills Chuck applied to school very often) he determined he would be a vegetarian. This was pretty uncommon back in 1971. His parents (the worst I've ever known) promptly kicked Chuck out of their house in response.

An inconvenience to be sure--but trust me, Chuck was MUCH better off! Perhaps due to his affinity for vegetables, Chuck worked in the produce industry for about a decade--his longest "stint" was at a produce market called "grower's ranch" on Newport Blvd. I believe for 3-4 years he filled out a 1040 form on April 15 as most of us tax slaves do. Increasingly, Chuck did more casual labor migrating more into landscaping--something he seems to have a talent for. He's had a few side jobs including helping one of the Nedeau brothers at farmer's markets and working as an assistant to an electrician.

For the past 25 years Chuck has serviced a loyal following of landscaping customers in the Newport Heights area. Through the years Chuck has been very true to himself, marching to the beat of his own unique drum. Chuck's adoptive parents punished him with a close-shave haircut 4x a year when report cards came out. While Chuck's adoptive Father was allegedly an intelligent engineer, he

couldn't seem to fathom that his ADOPTED Son would not have "inherited" his same math skills. So, Chuck was made to feel like a failure on many levels, but found his dignity in living cheaply and simply with his integrity and wonderful sense of humor. He owned 1 car in his life (that his parents made him buy) selling it by age 23. He has met 99% of his transportation needs with a bicycle. He's in great shape!

Roughly 30 years ago Chuck began going "South for Winter." For many years he would spend the winters at the beaches of Oaxaca, Mexico, and would return with the most exquisite hammocks made in Mexico. He'd sell these for a markup upon his return. For the last 20 years he has gone to SE Asia, and is very expert on Thailand and Cambodia. He used to spend about 5 months a year there. Then he would "hold his nose" and return and work in Newport doing landscape work for 7 months. Gradually spending more time there, he now is in SE Asia perhaps 7 months and only in the USA for 5 (Chuck and I both find the USA less tolerable each year). He is a master of living frugally which allows him to live the life of a retired millionaire half of each year (on Asia's lower cost of living).

Chuck will only work 6 hours a day, 4 days a week, 6 months of the year. He will only work outdoors. The rest of the time he is relaxing on the most beautiful beaches in the world. His life is simple, his requirements are few--it is a lifestyle, that, although unconventional, has served him very well. Yes, the IRS wishes he would work harder and churn more \$, but Chuck has an internal wisdom that stupefies me! Yeah, he still sucks at Algebra, but I honestly think he's one of the happiest people it has ever been my privilege to know. Chuck practices meditation every day and is remarkably disciplined about his personal habits. He is still a vegetarian after 40+ years, and has never had health insurance nor do I believe has he seen a doctor in 40 years. He has never married.

Chuck's Son was born last May. His name is Amar Charles. Chuck has known his Son's Mother for 6 years. Her family operates a farm. His destiny and legacy seem to be in Thailand, a free and happy country. Chuck is NOT on facebook, but I can hook you up with his email (on request).

21You, Mark McClellan, Caroline Cahill Cecil and 18 others

21 Comments

Seen by 46

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[Comment](#)

[Send](#)

Mark S. Blackburn

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Many of my friends and family have met my friend Chuck Cook--a friend since Junior High School. More than anyone I have ever met, Chuck has chronically failed to meet society's expectations, which makes him very interesting and charming. He marches to the beat of his own drum. He meditates and follows an Eastern Guru. He has traveled the world, works no more than 1/2 the year and hasn't held a formal job in 40 years. He has lived an extremely high-quality, relaxed life in Thailand, Mexico, Costa Rica, Fiji, and Newport Beach. He is the Father of a brilliant 6 year old boy in Thailand. He rides a bicycle--and has not owned a car in 45 years. He goes barefoot nearly always. When in Newport, to save for his travels, he lives in a tuff shed for which he recently held a mortgage burning celebration. Usually he spends 1/2 the year in Thailand, although he is departing for Zihuatanejo, Mexico next week due to Thailand's crazy travel restrictions. Zihuatanejo is Mexico's premiere nude beach near Huatulco. Chuck spends enormous amounts of time simply laying in the sun. Trust me--he'll NEVER get Covid! He is the King of Vitamin D--which is why he is the PERFECT person to have starred in this advertisement for a sun tanning balm. What is the impact of his non-conforming lifestyle? Chuck Cook is probably the least-stressed & happiest person I have ever known! (You cannot hear what Chuck says if you use a phone. You must listen on a computer...not sure why this Vimeo works this way).



Mark Blackburn



Your video

Talk Story with Mark Blackburn Part 2

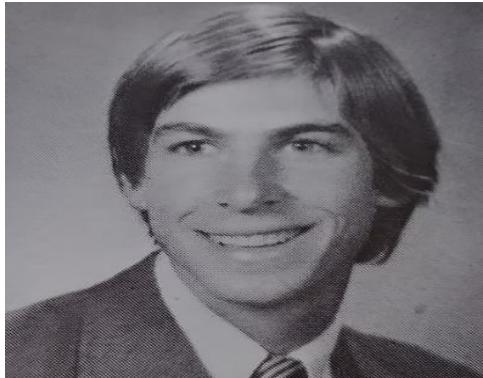
I have known Mark since kindergarten. Mark has a place in my heart. We have been good friends for years. He loves adventures. Mark is extremely intelligent and humorous at the same time. Good traits to have. He always has a wise crack you can see from his mouth. He is actually listening to you. Another good trait.

We have been friends for so long that anything goes. We don't try to change one another. Another good trait. Both of us are in the same field of IT so we know what going on the hiring and firing in our

industry. We both laugh and cry in the absurdities of life. We talk around four times a year. It's nice to hear about his life's adventures. Mark just completed a childhood dream when he was 10 years old. Here's a Facebook post that Mark posted on April 19, 2017. It describes his sense of adventure in life.



Why I climbed the pyramid: The year was 1963. I was 10 years old attending Mariner's Elementary School in Newport Beach, CA. We had a school assembly. The father of a student (that a handful of my friends might remember) gave a slide presentation in the cafeteria of their family's summer vacation trip to Mexico. Many things impressed me, but I was utterly astounded and enchanted to learn that Mexico had pyramids. Up to that point, I thought only Egypt had pyramids. The slides clearly showed that this family was allowed to climb to the top of the pyramids. From that instant, it has been a dream of mine to climb to the top of a pyramid. So, yes, it took me 53 years to finally make good on that dream. The cost was minimal--\$300 RT airfare from SFO to MEX. Mexico is on sale right now. For whatever reason, the Peso is down against the Greenback. Rental cars can be had for \$4 a day, decent hotels for \$40/night. A final inducement to go now was the fact that UNESCO is trying to make it illegal to climb all



pyramids. A gringo borracho (a drunk American) fell off Chichen Itza a few years ago to his death, and it HAS been closed for climbing ever after. I wanted to go before all of them are closed. It was a fantastic and surreal experience. I am extremely glad I went. I am now glad I was a spy for the NSA in Central America in the late 70s, and still retain much of my Spanish

speaking/listening ability, which was mandatory for that job. The classmate whose Father gave the presentation was Paul Cohen. Does anyone remember what became of him? (I suspect he went to CDM , not NHHS). Since I was sent to my reform school in Hawaii during my last 2 years of NHHS, I lost track of many folks. That said, I must have at least 8 good FB friends who attended Mariner's with me, and might even remember that slide show. I cannot put into words how satisfying it was to be at the top of the Pyramid of the Sun on Good Friday. Incidentally, I chose that day to go, believing I would have Teotihuacan to myself--because everyone in this Catholic nation would be at church! No, they were all at Teotihuacan! Avoid holidays! On a normal day, the Unesco Historical Site 40 minutes north of Mexico City will have 10,000 visitors. On Good Friday there were 40,000! Bucket List item accomplished! I have 1 friend and 1 relative who has climbed these pyramids: [Les Jones](#) and my cousin [Gale Demmer Seiersen](#), both of whom climbed these over 50 years earlier. Who else has?

Paul Cohen



I really believe in Synchronicity. This is from Wikipedia.

Synchronicity is a concept, first explained by analytical psychologist Carl Jung, which holds that events are "meaningful coincidences" if they occur with no causal relationship yet seem to be meaningfully related.

This post of Paul got started by synchronicity of events. My friend Mark (see above) goes to Mexico and visits the pyramids at Teotihuacan just outside Mexico City. This is his childhood dream. When he was ten years old he

listens to the adventures at a lecture given by Paul Cohen's Dad. Paul's family spent the summer in Mexico and Guatemala. Paul's Dad was a doctor and did volunteer work for the summer. Mark never knew that Mexico had pyramids.

So Mark goes to Mexico and posts his adventures on Facebook. I read the post and thought whatever happened to Paul. We go back to first grade. I haven't spoken or heard about Paul for over 46 years. That's a long time.

So here's where synchronicity kicks in. Mark post on Facebook. Mary Louise Piccard sees the post.



Mary Louise Piccard Paul Cohen is in Colorado Springs [Mark S. Blackburn!!](#) I spoke with him last summer! I'm sure he'd love to hear about your adventure and that his family inspired you! He's on FB - albeit very seldom - he does check it!

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · [April 19 at 1:50pm](#)



Mark S. Blackburn Mary, Thanks so much! I found Paul's FB page. (which you are correct, he hasn't used since 2015). Still, next time I'm in Colorado Springs, I may try to look him up.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [April 19 at 2:39pm](#)



Paul Cohen Mark--so nice to read your post and am looking forward to reconnecting with you. Wow-was nice reading of your trek to Mexico-very cool!

Interesting how you had that intent for so many years--I think our visit to Mexico and Guatemala long ago led to a couple year volunteer in Laos, SE Asia.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · April 20 at 5:53pm



Mark S. Blackburn Paul, Great to hear from you & know you are alive (and presumably) well! I vividly remember your Father narrating that slide show to this day. Traveling that far from home was not so common in those days.....How long have you been in Colorado Springs?

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · April 21 at 11:47am



Paul Cohen hah--yes, mostly well, thank you! Great to hear from you as well. Wow--this is an amazing story. So fun that you did that. I've been enjoying seeing your video posts. Looks like you've had an incredible trip. Are you back in the U.S. now? A friend and I made that same climb this time of year--just two years ago. We really enjoyed it. I moved to the Springs about 25 years ago and like it. Are you in Seattle?

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · April 21 at 1:18pm



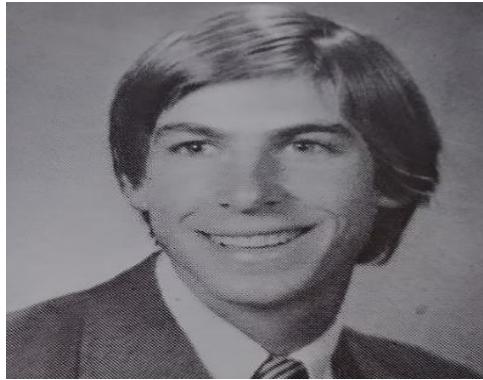
Gretchen Gribble Omg...[Paul Cohen](#). FB has become "old home week" for me recently. I don't know if you remember me or not. It's fun hearing what my classmates are doing all these years later. Happy to hear tidbits about you, Mark S. Blackburn, [Mark McClellan](#) and others. Yeah Mariners, Ensign and/or NHHS alumni!

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · April 27 at 12:52am · Edited

I see that Paul is on Facebook so I send him a Facebook friend request. Paul responds **Richard, [Paul Cohen](#) has confirmed that you're friends on Facebook.**

So yesterday I was looking at Mark Blackburn's chapter I decided to add Paul's picture.

This is from the previous chapter.



The classmate whose Father gave the presentation was Paul Cohen. Does anyone remember what became of him? (I suspect he went to CDM, not NHHS).

I get out my Newport Harbor yearbook and snap this picture and insert it above.

I send Paul a message.

Hi, Paul, It's been many moons since we have last seen each other. I was visiting some friends last summer in Colorado Springs. I tried to look you up. Anyway, maybe next time.

Rick!!!

First Mary P, Mark- now my friend Rick!!!!

Haha

Can't believe it!

What's happening?!?

Paul

Wow

Earliest of friends!!

So then we get on the phone and start talking for a few hours. Now we haven't talked since high school but we had instant communication. It's amazing to see how a series of events connect each one of us. If Mary Louise Picard didn't contact Paul or Mark didn't do a post of his adventures on Facebook I wouldn't have been in contact with Paul.



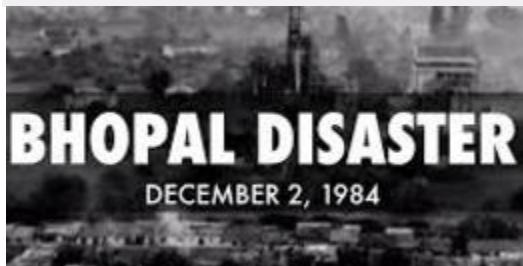
I remember as a kid I was fascinated by Paul's house. It was a Japanese-style house. From what I remembered they had a courtyard with the rooms coming off from it. Instead of having ordinary doors, they had shoji doors. Now as a kid I love anything from the Far East. I loved things outside of the box. Paul's house was stuck in a

neighborhood with all standard houses of the time. The front of the house was standard but nobody knew the jewel inside.

Paul's Dad was a doctor. I saw him a few times when I was a kid. Paul's Dad was my brother David's primary doctor. Back then it wasn't unusual for a Doctor to treat a patient smoking a cigar.

Paul and I were great friends in elementary school.

I learned over the phone that Paul has been to about the same number of countries that I have been to. Around 35. He spent two years in Laos doing volunteer work.



Paul tried to go to India. He had his plane tickets but unfortunately, the Bhopal gas tragedy happened in India. When Paul tried to get a visa he was denied. Paul was a lawyer at the time. The Indian government wouldn't give him a visa. They

thought he was going to India to work on the Bhopal gas tragedy. Paul tried to tell them he was going just as a tourist but they wouldn't listen.

It's a small world. Paul's Mom got remarried. Her husband was a member of the Beek family from Newport Beach. I went to junior high school with his niece Carol.

This is a story from the Balboa Island Museum about the Beek family

In 1919 Joseph Alen Beek obtained the rights from the city of Newport Beach to provide a ferry service across the Newport Harbor between Balboa Island and the Balboa Peninsula. Before starting the ferry service Beek owned The Ark. The Ark consisted of a giant rowboat with a small engine which Beek used as his first ferry vessel. The Ark carried oars in the event of engine failure. There was no regularly scheduled service and customers telephoned Beek when they needed a ride across the harbor.

In 1919 Beek charged a nickel (5 cents) per person. Three years after commencing operation, Beek built the Fat Ferry. This vessel held twenty passengers. Beek later built a small one-car barge which the Fat Ferry pushed across in front of it.

In the 1950s Beek built three double-ended wooden boats for his ferry service: the Admiral, the Commodore, and the Captain. These three boats are still in service and have transported over two million persons. Each ferry holds three cars and 75 people. As of 2007, the Beek family charges \$1 per adult, \$2 per vehicle, \$.50 for children ages 5–11, \$1.25 for adults on bikes, \$.75 for children on bikes, and \$1.50 for motorcycles. Children under the age of 5 are free.

The ferry boats need constant maintenance but this does not usually interrupt the ferry service. For two weeks in 2008 the ferry service shut down for an extended period, for the first time in 50 years, to rebuild the automobile ramp leading to the boats.

Currently, Beek's three sons run the business and it has been in the family for close to 100 years.

Paul tells me his Step-Dad is an incredible character. He is in his nineties. He has driven the same Volkswagen since the seventies. Who knows how many miles he has traveled on it? Paul says he has the unique ability for photographic memory.

photo-graphic mem·o·ry
'fōdə,grafik 'mem(ə)rē/
noun

1. the ability to remember information or visual images in great detail.
- 2.

3. He also loves computers. He was involved in the early days when computer science was still in its infancy. I would love to meet him someday. He seems like the character I would love to be around.



Train ride though the ranch 1

during high school.

Paul went to the Thacher School in Ojai for two years. Paul met the family that sold the ranch to the Macco Corporation in the sixties. I wonder how the family that sold the ranch feels today. For a surfer, it would be like selling the keys to heaven.



Paul said he would tell stories to his kids about my brother and I. Paul remembers a time in fifth grade where John and I would switch classes. Paul remembers that John and I would switch shirts and then go to each other class. All the students knew my brother and I were playing a joke. At some point in time, the entire class would start laughing. Everyone except for the teacher was on to this joke. The teacher would wonder what's going on.

Eventually, the teacher would catch on and we would all laugh. These were simple times. I don't know if today the school system would appreciate this.



Bruce Charles 1

I knew Paul's brother Nat in high school. My brother and I were on the same track team and cross country team in high school. Nat was best friends with Bruce Charles a great neighbor of ours. I remember in either fifth or sixth grade they dressed up as surfers and carried a surfboard for Halloween. I was impressed. I distinctly remembered when I said, "someday I'm going to be a surfer".

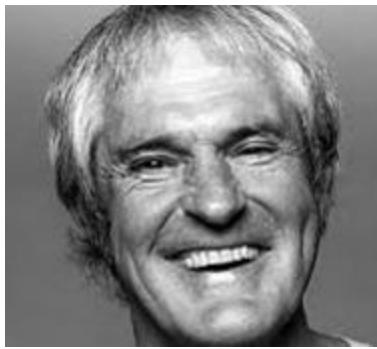


Richard Albert 1

During my phone conversation with Paul, he mentioned that with my travels to India and my love for meditation did I ever hear about his second cousin. He was somewhat a black sheep in the family. His name was Baba Ram Das formerly known as Richard Albert. Did I know Ram Das? During my late teens and early twenties, Ram Das was

famous in the meditation community.

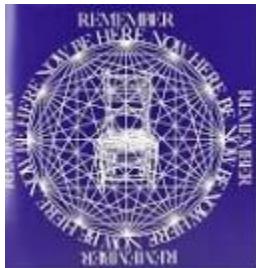
Richard Albert was a famous young psychologist during the sixties. He along with Timothy Leary began to explore the effects of psychotropic substances on the mind. Both of them worked at Harvard University.



Timothy Leary 1

They began to do clinical studies on the effects of LSD and psilocybin. At this time they weren't illegal in the country. At some point, they got fired during the research. They had graduate students who actively participated in the research but one time they had an undergraduate study. Consequently, they were fired.

Timothy Leary famous slogan was "Tune in, Turn On, Drop Out".



Ram Das wrote the book "Be here now" a popular book during the sixties and seventies. Today it is considered a modern spiritual classic. In fact, I read this book at Ananda in Nevada City before I went on my journey. To be honest, at that time I really didn't understand the book. Books like these take the practical experience to understand and to incorporate these ideas in the book. Ram Das stopped using drugs and meditated for the rest of his life. He used to say that drugs were training wheels. At some point, you don't need them anymore. I tried LSD once and never again. The state of meditation brings one into our natural state where we don't need anything artificial to open the door within.

So I was completely surprised when Paul told me his second cousin was Ram Das. I saw him speak in Santa Fe New Mexico during the seventies. I have been impressed by his work. He had a tremendous influence on the population at large. He helped to bring meditation to be common among our society. During the seventies, it was considered you were on the fringe of society if you meditated. You were strange. Now a day's yoga is mainstream. You can practice it almost everywhere.

Synchronicity is so common yet most of the time we don't see it. Sign posts are everywhere yet we don't have eyes to see.

Thanks, Paul for being my lifelong friend. I'm so happy that we are connected again. We are all on an incredible journey of life.

Patti ODesky

I've known Patty for over 50 years. She has a passion for adventure and traveling in her blood. I remember her posting on Facebook around 2012 her adventures to the Galapagos Islands. My brother and I went there in 1970. We were in Ecuador and found out that the Ecuadorian Navy allowed tourists to go on a 3-week journey to the Galapagos Islands. Mind you it was on an old World War II vessel which was highly antique yet we loved it. It was third-class traveling at its finest.

Back then they didn't have tourist vessels traveling to the Galapagos Islands. Much has changed since then.

I talk to Patty about her trip to the Galapagos Islands and we discovered what was still the same and what has changed dramatically since then.

I'm hoping to get Patty to write about her journey there in 2012.



Patti ODesky

February 1, 2012 · 

Snorkeled with so many sea turtles it was rush hour on the Galapagos island





Patti ODesky

February 1, 2012 ·

More Galapagos Island beauty



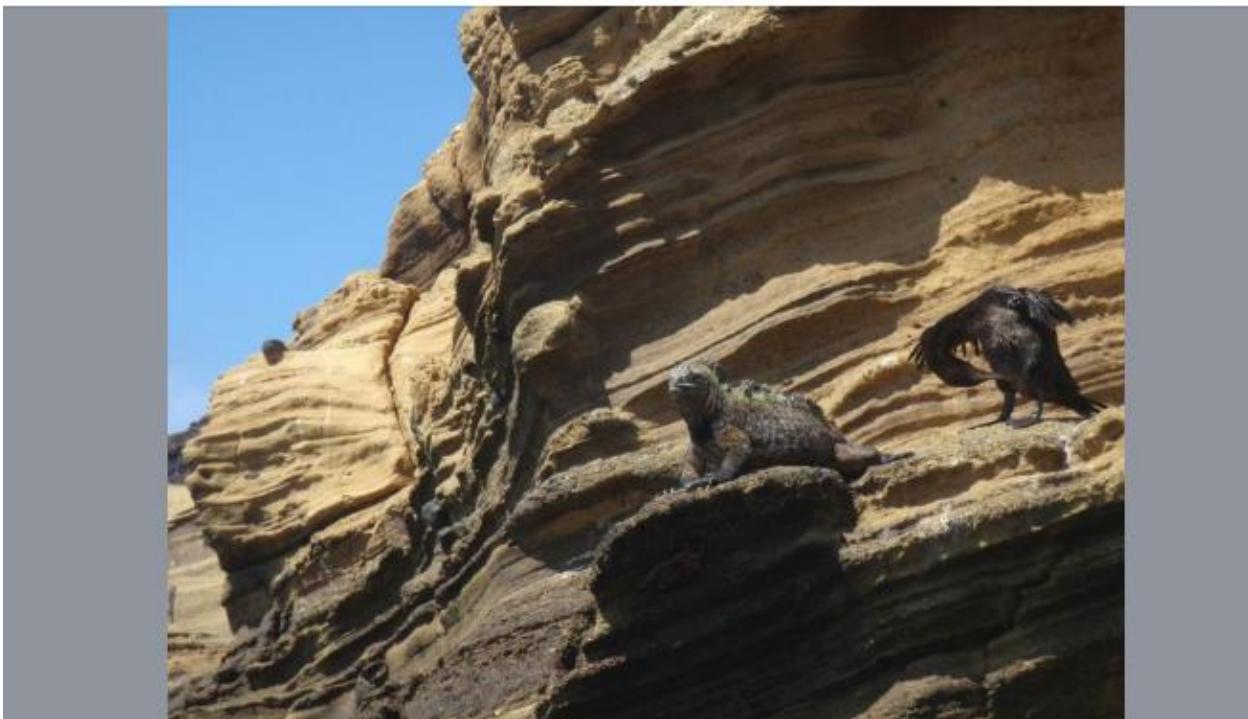


Patti ODesky

February 1, 2012 · 2 people

...

Marine Iguana and flightless Cormorant found nowhere else than the Galapagos Islands! Just arrived back last week. Incredible trip!



Galapagos Islands my twin and I over 50 years ago



The Galapagos Islands was a trip of a lifetime. We went on this old US Navy (WW2) ship. At this time there was a tuna boat war between Ecuador and the United States. The Ecuadorian navy was looking for US tuna boats. We visited Santiago, San Cristobal, Isabel, Fernandina and Espanola islands. While there I could see why Darwin came up with his theory of evolution. The Galapagos Islands at that time weren't a tourist destination. They contain one of the only

giant tortoise populations in the world. My brother and I were amazed by the size and age of these incredible creatures.

I have pictures of seals jumping over my brother's head. You had to watch for Mom and Dad. They were huge and would chase you out of the water and then run after you.

I remember vividly looking at the waves and I counted over a minute while it broke perfectly. No one had ever ridden this wave. I saw years later they now have surf excursions to this beautiful place.



The first time my brother and I saw iguanas we were standing at the same spot looking at the waves and we sensed something was looking at us. We looked around and there were hundreds of iguanas were looking at us. They were completely camouflaged. The Navy personnel was very kind to us. There were a couple from the US and a poet from Argentina onboard. We learned a lot about nature. It would be hard not to. Never before have I ever been in such a pristine environment.



Galapagos Islands and Ecuador pictures







Peter Lingle



Peter and I have had many incredible adventures together. Read my previous books and you will see The adventure that we took going from France to India. Mind you this was over 50 years ago.

Peter wanted to become a medical doctor. He kind of does things his own way. He decided to go to South Korea and study and become a doctor. Just think he had to learn Korean spoken and written in order to pull

this off. Peter did do this. He has great tenacity. Peter grew up in Southern California has a surfer. He still has that laxidas ago persona around him. Yet don't be fooled by that. He is extremely brilliant in his own way. Whatever he wants to pursue, no matter how difficult it is, he accomplishes that goal. I find that fascinating. He spent time in South Korea and Japan. He loves both places. For the last 12 years he has lived in Thailand. It seems the east has been a good area for him to live. I hope you enjoy this interview that I had with Peter recently.

Carl Sagan

The following to YouTube videos encapsulates the meaning of once upon a time. Each time I watch these I get goosebumps. I hope you do too. This is the essence of storytelling and myths. Being awed is a state of mind that transforms the mundane into the sublime state of mind.



Carl Sagan - 'A Glorious Dawn' ft
Stephen Hawking (Symphony of...)

melodysheep 12M views

MP3: <http://www.symphonyofscience.com> My own musical tribute to two great men of science. Carl Sagan and his cosmologist...



Symphony of Science - 'We Are

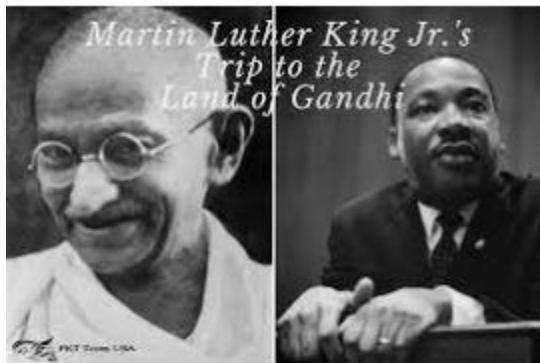
All Connected' (ft. Sagan,...)

melodysheep 8.5M views

MP3 available at <http://www.symphonyofscience.com>. "We Are All Connected" was made from sampling Carl Sagan's *Cosmos*, The...

Martin Luther King

My Trip to the Land of Gandhi- Martin Luther King Jr.



Author: King, Martin Luther, Jr.

Date: July 1, 1959 to July 31, 1959

Location: Chicago, Ill.

Details

In his account of his India tour published in *Ebony* magazine, King notes that Gandhi's spirit is still alive, though "some of his disciples have misgivings about this when . . . they look around and find nobody today who comes near the stature of the Mahatma."¹ Lamenting India's pervasive economic inequalities, King observes that "the bourgeoisie—white, black or brown—behaves about the same the world over," and he calls upon the West to aid India's development "in a spirit of international brotherhood, not national selfishness."

For a long time, I had wanted to take a trip to India. Even as a child the entire Orient held a strange fascination for me—the elephants, the tigers, the temples, the snake charmers, and all the other storybook characters.

While the Montgomery boycott was going on, India's Gandhi was the guiding light of our technique of non-violent social change. We spoke of him often. So as soon as our victory over bus segregation was won, some of my friends said: "Why don't you go to India and see for yourself what the Mahatma, whom you so admire, has wrought."

In 1956 when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, India's Prime Minister, made a short visit to the United States, he was gracious enough to say that he wished that he and I had met and had his diplomatic representatives make inquiries as to the possibility of my visiting his country sometime soon. Our former American ambassador to India, Chester Bowles, wrote me along the same lines.²

But every time that I was about to make the trip, something would interfere. At one time it was my visit by a prior commitment to Ghana.³ At another time my publishers were pressing me to finish writing *Stride Toward Freedom*. Then along came Mrs. Izola Ware Curry. When she struck me with that Japanese letter opener on that Saturday afternoon in September as I sat autographing books in a Harlem store, she not only knocked out the travel plans that I had but almost everything else as well.

After I recovered from this near-fatal encounter and was finally released by my doctors, it occurred to me that it might be better to get on the trip to India before plunging too deeply once again into the sea of the Southern segregation struggle.

I preferred not to take this long trip alone and asked my wife and my friend, Lawrence Reddick, to accompany me. Coretta was particularly interested in the women of India and Dr. Reddick in the history and government of that

great country. He had written my biography, *Crusader Without Violence*, and said that my true test would come when the people who knew Gandhi looked me over and passed judgment upon me and the Montgomery movement. The three of us made up a sort of 3-headed team with six eyes and six ears for looking and listening.

The Christopher Reynolds Foundation made a grant through the American Friends Service Committee to cover most of the expenses of the trip and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Montgomery Improvement Association added their support.⁴ The Gandhi Memorial Trust of India extended an official invitation, through diplomatic channels, for our visit.⁵

And so on February 3, 1959, just before midnight, we left New York by plane. En route, we stopped in Paris with Richard Wright, an old friend of Reddick's, who brought us up to date on European attitudes on the Negro question and gave us a taste of the best French cooking.⁶

We missed our plane connection in Switzerland because of fog, arriving in India after a roundabout route, two days late. But from the time we came down out of the clouds at Bombay on February 10, until March 10, when we waved goodbye at the New Delhi airport, we had one of the most concentrated and eye-opening experiences of our lives. There is so much to tell that I can only touch upon a few of the high points.

At the outset, let me say that we had a grand reception in India. The people showered upon us the most generous hospitality imaginable. We were graciously received by the Prime Minister, the President, and the Vice-President of the nation; members of Parliament, Governors and Chief Ministers of various Indian states; writers, professors, social reformers, and at least one saint.⁷ Since our pictures were in the newspapers very often it was not unusual for us to be recognized by crowds in public places and on public conveyances.⁸ Occasionally I would take a morning walk in the large cities, and out of the most unexpected places someone would emerge and ask: "Are you Martin Luther King Jr.?"

Virtually every door was open to us. We had hundreds of invitations that the limited time did not allow us to accept. We were looked upon as brothers with the color of our skins as something of an asset. But the strongest bond of the fraternity was the common cause of minority and colonial peoples in America, Africa, and Asia struggling to throw off racism and imperialism.

We had the opportunity to share our views with thousands of Indian people through endless conversations and numerous discussion sessions. I spoke before university groups and public meetings all over India. Because of the keen interest that the Indian people have in the race problem these meetings were usually packed. Occasionally interpreters were used, but on the whole, I spoke to audiences that understood English.

The Indian people love to listen to the Negro spirituals. Therefore, Coretta ended up singing as much as I lectured. We discovered that autograph seekers are not confined to America. After appearances in public meetings and while visiting villages we were often besieged for autographs. Even while riding planes, more than once pilots came into the cabin from the cockpit requesting our signatures.

We got good press throughout our stay. Thanks to the Indian papers, the Montgomery bus boycott was already well known in that country. Indian publications perhaps gave a better continuity of our 381-day bus strike than did most of our papers in the United States. Occasionally I meet some American fellow citizen who even now asks me how the bus boycott is going, apparently never having read that our great day of bus integration, December 21, 1956, closed that chapter of our history.

We held press conferences in all of the larger cities—Delhi, Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay—and talked with newspaper men almost everywhere we went. They asked sharp questions and at times appeared to be hostile but that was just their way of bringing out the story that they were after. As reporters, they

were scrupulously fair with us and in their editorials showed an amazing grasp of what was going on in America and other parts of the world.

The trip had a great impact on me personally. It was wonderful to be in Gandhi's land, to talk with his son, his grandsons, his cousin and other relatives; to share the reminiscences of his close comrades; to visit his ashrama, to see the countless memorials for him and finally to lay a wreath on his entombed ashes at Rajghat.⁹ I left India more convinced than ever before that non-violent resistance is the most potent weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom.¹⁰ It was a marvelous thing to see the amazing results of a non-violent campaign. The aftermath of hatred and bitterness that usually follows a violent campaign was found nowhere in India. Today a mutual friendship based on complete equality exists between the Indian and British people within the commonwealth. The way of acquiescence leads to moral and spiritual suicide. The way of violence leads to bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers. But, the way of non-violence leads to redemption and the creation of the beloved community.

The spirit of Gandhi is very much alive in India today. Some of his disciples have misgivings about this when they remember the drama of the fight for national independence and when they look around and find nobody today who comes near the stature of the Mahatma. But any objective observer must report that Gandhi is not only the greatest figure in India's history but that his influence is felt in almost every aspect of life and public policy today.

India can never forget Gandhi. For example, the Gandhi Memorial Trust (also known as the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi) collected some \$130 million soon after the death of "the father of the nation." This was perhaps the largest, spontaneous, mass monetary contribution to the memory of a single individual in the history of the world. This fund, along with support from the Government and other institutions, is resulting in the spread and development of Gandhian philosophy, the implementation of his constructive program, the erection of libraries, and the publication of works by and about the life and times of Gandhi. Posterity could not escape him even if it tried. By all standards of measurement, he is one of the half-dozen greatest men in world history.

I was delighted that the Gandhians accepted us with open arms. They praised our experiment with the non-violent resistance technique at Montgomery. They seem to look upon it as an outstanding example of the possibilities of its use in western civilization. To them, as to me it also suggests that non-violent resistance when planned and positive in action can work effectively even under totalitarian regimes.

We argued this point at some length with the groups of African students who are today studying in India.¹¹ They felt that non-violent resistance could only work in a situation where the resisters had a potential ally in the conscience of the opponent. We soon discovered that they, like many others, tended to confuse passive resistance with non-resistance. This is completely wrong. True non-violent resistance is not unrealistic submission to evil power. It is rather a courageous confrontation of evil by the power of love, in the faith that it is better to be the recipient of violence than the inflictor of it, since the latter only multiplies the existence of violence and bitterness in the universe, while the former may develop a sense of shame in the opponent, and thereby bring about a transformation and change of heart.

Non-violent resistance does call for love, but it is not sentimental love. It is a very stern love that would organize itself into collective action to right a wrong by taking on itself suffering. While I understand the reasons why oppressed people often turn to violence in their struggle for freedom, it is my firm belief that the crusade for independence and human dignity that is now reaching a climax in Africa will have a more positive effect on the world, if it is waged along the lines that were first demonstrated in that continent by Gandhi himself.¹²

India is a vast country with vast problems. We flew over the long stretches, from North to South, East to West; took trains for shorter jumps, and used automobiles and jeeps to get us into the less accessible places.

India is about a third the size of the United States but has almost three times as many people. Everywhere we went we saw crowded humanity—on the roads, in the city streets and squares, even in the villages.¹³

Most of the people are poor and poorly dressed. The average income per person is less than \$70 per year. Nevertheless, their turbans for their heads, loose flowing, wrap-around dhotis that they wear instead of trousers, and the flowing saris that the women wear instead of dresses are colorful and picturesque. Many Indians wear part native and part western dress.

We think that we in the United States have a big housing problem but in the city of Bombay, for example, over a half million people sleep out of doors every night. These are mostly unattached, unemployed, or partially employed males. They carry their bedding with them like foot soldiers and unroll it each night in any unoccupied space they can find—on the sidewalk, in a railroad station, or at the entrance of a shop that is closed for the evening.

The food shortage is so widespread that it is estimated that less than 30% of the people get what we would call three square meals a day. During our great depression of the 1930s, we spoke of "a third of a nation" being "ill-housed, ill-clad, and ill-fed." For India today, simply change one-third to two-thirds in that statement and that would make it about right.

As great as is unemployment, under-employment is even greater. Seventy percent of the Indian people are classified as agricultural workers and most of these do less than 200 days of farm labor per year because of the seasonal fluctuations and other uncertainties of mother nature. Jobless men roam the city streets.

Great ills flow from the poverty of India but strangely there is relatively little crime. Here is another concrete manifestation of the wonderful spiritual quality of the Indian people. They are poor, jammed together, and half-starved but

they do not take it out on each other. They are a kindly people. They do not abuse each other—verbally or physically—as readily as we do. We saw but one fist fight in India during our stay.¹⁴

In contrast to the poverty-stricken, there are Indians who are rich, have luxurious homes, landed estates, fine clothes, and show evidence of over-eating. The bourgeoisie—white, black or brown—behaves about the same the world over.

And then there is, even here, the problem of segregation. We call it race in America; they call it caste in India. In both places, it means that some are considered inferior, treated as though they deserve less.

We were surprised and delighted to see that India has made greater progress in the fight against caste "untouchability" than we have made here in our own country against racial segregation. Both nations have federal laws against discrimination (acknowledging, of course, that the decision of our Supreme Court is the law of our land). But after this has been said, we must recognize that there are great differences between what India has done and what we have done on a problem that is very similar. The leaders of India have placed their moral power behind their law. From the Prime Minister down to the village councilmen, everybody declares publicly that untouchability is wrong. But in the United States, some of our highest officials decline to render a moral judgment on segregation and some from the South publicly boast of their determination to maintain segregation. This would be unthinkable in India.

Moreover, Gandhi not only spoke against the caste system but he acted against it. He took "untouchables" by the hand and led them into the temples from which they had been excluded. To equal that, President Eisenhower would take a Negro child by the hand and lead her into Central High School in Little Rock.

Gandhi also renamed the untouchables, calling them "Harijans" which means "children of God."

The government has thrown its full weight behind the program of giving the Harijans an equal chance in society—especially when it comes to job opportunities, education, and housing.

India's leaders, in and out of government, are conscious of their country's other great problems and are heroically grappling with them. The country seems to be divided. Some say that India should become westernized and modernized as quickly as possible so that she might raise her standards of living. Foreign capital and foreign industry should be invited in, for in this lies the salvation of the almost desperate situation.

On the other hand, there are others—perhaps the majority—who say that westernization will bring with it the evils of materialism, cut-throat competition, and rugged individualism; that India will lose her soul if she takes to chasing Yankee dollars; and that the big machine will only raise the living standards of the comparative few workers who get jobs but that the greater number of people will be displaced and will thus be worse off than they are now.

Prime Minister Nehru, who is at once an intellectual and a man charged with the practical responsibility of heading the government, seems to steer a middle course between these extreme attitudes. In our talk with him he indicated that he felt that some industrialization was absolutely necessary; that there were some things that only big or heavy industry could do for the country but that if the state keeps a watchful eye on the developments, most of the pitfalls may be avoided.

At the same time, Mr. Nehru gives support to the movement that would encourage and expand the handicraft arts such as spinning and weaving in-

home and village and thus leaving as much economic self-help and autonomy as possible to the local community.

There is a great movement in India that is almost unknown in America. At its center is the campaign for land reform known as Bhoodan. It would solve India's great economic and social change by consent, not by force. The Bhoodanists are led by the sainted Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan, a highly sensitive intellectual, who was trained in American colleges.¹⁵ Their ideal is the self-sufficient village. Their program envisions

Persuading large land owners to give up some of their holding to landless peasants;

Persuading small land owners to give up their individual ownership for common cooperative ownership by the villages;

Encouraging farmers and villagers to spin and weave the cloth for their own clothes during their spare time from their agricultural pursuits.

Since these measures would answer the questions of employment, food, and clothing, the village could then, through cooperative action, make just about everything that it would need or get it through barter or exchange from other villages. Accordingly, each village would be virtually self-sufficient and would thus free itself from the domination of the urban centers that are today like evil loadstones drawing the people away from the rural areas, concentrating them in city slums, and debauching them with urban vices. At least this is the argument of the Bhoodanists and other Gandhians.

Such ideas sound strange and archaic to Western ears. However, the Indians have already achieved greater results than we Americans would ever expect. For example, millions of acres of land have been given up by rich landlords and additional millions of acres have been given up to cooperative management by small farmers. On the other hand, the Bhoodanists shrink from giving their movement the organization and drive that we in America would venture to guess that it must have in order to keep pace with the magnitude of the problems that everybody is trying to solve.

Even the government's five-year plans fall short in that they do not appear to be of sufficient scope to embrace their objectives. Thus, the three five-year plans were designed to provide 25,000,000 new jobs over a 15 year period but the birth rate of India is 6,000,000 per year. This means that in 15 years there will be 9,000,000 more people (less those who have died or retired) looking for the 15 million new jobs¹⁶. In other words, if the planning were 100 percent successful, it could not keep pace with the growth of problems it is trying to solve.

As for what should be done, we surely do not have the answer. But we do feel certain that India needs help. She must have outside capital and technical know-how. It is in the interest of the United States and the West to help supply these needs and not attach strings to the gifts.

Whatever we do should be done in a spirit of international brotherhood, not national selfishness. It should be done not merely because it is diplomatically expedient, but because it is morally compelling. At the same time, it will rebound to the credit of the West if India is able to maintain her democracy while solving her problems.¹⁷

It would be a boon to democracy if one of the great nations of the world, with almost 400,000,000 people, proves that it is possible to provide a good living for everyone without surrendering to a dictatorship of either the "right" or "left." Today India is a tremendous force for peace and non-violence, at home and abroad. It is a land where the idealist and the intellectual are yet respected. We should want to help India preserve her soul and thus help to save our own.

1. Four weeks after returning from India, King prepared a draft of this article (Draft, "My trip to India," April 1959; see also Maude L. Ballou to Lerone Bennett, 17 April 1959). Nine photographs accompanied it, including pictures

of King meeting Prime Minister Nehru and the Kings and traveling companion Lawrence Reddick placing a wreath at the site of Gandhi's cremation.

2. Bowles to King, 28 January 1957; see also Homer Alexander Jack to King, 27 December 1956, in Papers 3:496, 498.

3. In March 1957 King attended the Ghanaian independence celebrations. For more on King's trip to Ghana, see Introduction in Papers 4:7-9.

4. The Reynolds Foundation provided \$4,000 for the trip, SCLC provided an additional \$500, and the MIA and Dexter Avenue Baptist Church presented the Kings with a money tree at a "bon voyage" celebration in their honor on 26 January (AFSC, "Budget: leadership intervisitation, visit to India by Martin Luther and Coretta King," February-March 1959, and "The Kings Leave Country," Dexter Echo, 11 February 1959).

5. See G. Ramachandran to King, 27 December 1958, in Papers 4:552-553.

6. Wright, an African American novelist, had lived in Paris since 1947. In a draft of this article, King had crossed out the reference to Wright. For more on King's visit with Wright, see Introduction, p. 4 in this volume.

7. Among those King met were Nehru, President Rajendra Prasad, Vice President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, and member of Parliament Sucheta Kripalani. King also refers to Gandhi's disciple Vinoba Bhave.

8. King's draft phrased this differently: "Our pictures were in the newspapers very often and we were recognized by crowds at the circus and by pilots on

the planes.” The draft did not include the subsequent sentence or the following two paragraphs.

9. See King to Ramdas M. Gandhi, 8 August 1959, pp. 255-256 in this volume.

10. This sentence and the remainder of the paragraph were not included in King’s draft.

11. King’s draft added the following sentence: “They, like many others, seem to feel that nonviolent resistance means non-resistance, do nothing.” The remainder of the paragraph and the following paragraph were not included in the draft.

12. King’s draft included the following paragraph: “We also learned a lot from the India journalists. Our practice was to divide the time of our press conferences between questions they asked us and questions we asked them.”

13. King’s draft added the following: “The people have a way of squatting, resting comfortably (it seemed) on their haunches. Many of the homes do not have chairs and most of the cities have very few park or street benches.”

14. In King’s draft, he had stricken the following two paragraphs: “There is great consideration for human life but little regard for labor and time. We saw men mending shoes almost without tools. Five persons may be sent to bring down a package that one could carry. Human muscles there do many jobs that our machines do here. Moreover, nobody seems to be in a hurry and it is surprising when arrangements and appointments come off according to schedule.

Young boys accost you everywhere, persistently offering to supply you with just about anything your heart could desire and your pocket book can pay for. Begging is widespread though the government has done much to discourage it. But what can you do when an old haggard woman or a little crippled urchin comes up and motions to you that she is hungry?"

15. For King's 1959 interview with Vinoba Bhave, see Vinoba, "Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with Vinoba," *Bhoodan* 3 (18 March 1959): 369-370; see also King to Narayan, 19 May 1959, pp. 209-211 in this volume.

16. King's draft indicated that ninety million more people would be looking for work.

17. In his draft, King marked the following sentence for deletion: "Her people are remarkably patient but many of them are looking toward their neighbor to the North and noting that China under the discipline of communism seems to be moving ahead more rapidly than India."

Source:

Ebony, July 1959, pp. 84-92.

Vivekananda's journey

⁴How a young Indian monk's travels around the world inspired modern yoga.

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Calcutta, 1882

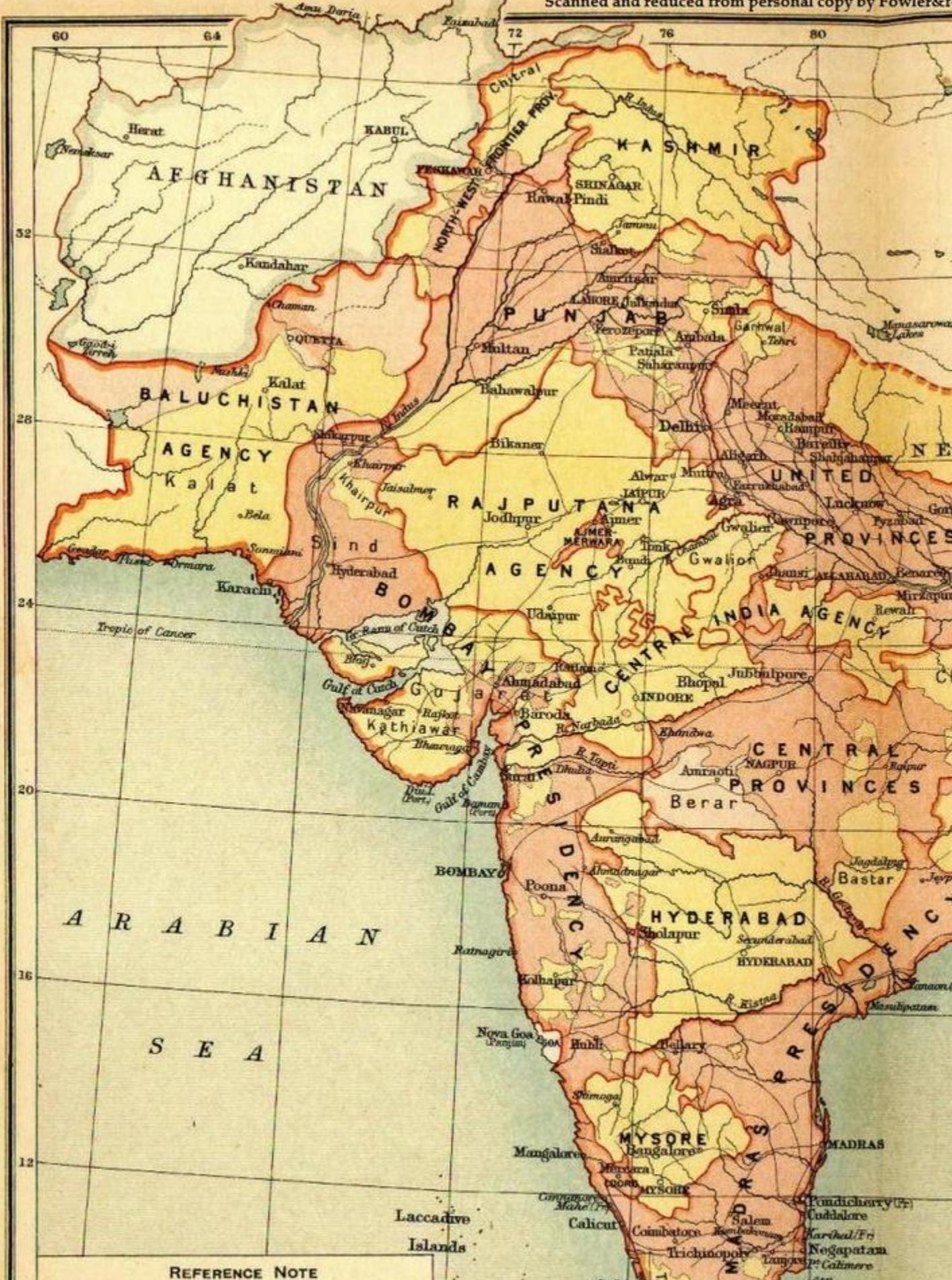
At the end of the 19th century Calcutta (now called Kolkata), in Bengal, was a bustling international port of call for trade and visitors from around the world. It was home not only to Bengalis but to a long-established British colonial community.



show credit information for image 'Colootollah Street, Calcutta'

A 19th-century view of central Calcutta.

As the centre of British rule in India, Calcutta was awash with Western ideas and influences, causing many Bengalis to reassess every aspect of their lives and heritage. The result was a remarkable flourishing of Bengali literature, arts and social reform.



show credit information for image 'Political divisions of the Indian Empire, 1909'

A map of South Asia showing areas of British Rule in pink, Calcutta is on the north-east coast, at the top of the Bay of Bengal.

In the midst of the 'Bengali Renaissance' a devout young man in search of answers about his identity began a spiritual journey that would result in historians describing him as "[the creator of fully fledged modern yoga](#)".

Narendranath Datta was born to a professional middle-class Hindu family. Educated in a mix of English and Bengali traditions, he spoke both languages fluently and could read and write the ancient Indian language of Sanskrit. He also had a personal interest in Western philosophical and [esoteric ideas](#).

As a law student in his twenties, Narendra joined the Brahmo Samaj, a religious reform movement that sought to modernise Hinduism. The Brahmo Samaj had connections with Christian reform movements such as the American Unitarian Church – one of the influx of missionary and social movements that arrived in India with colonisation.



show credit information for image 'Ramakrishna Paramhansa, 1885'

The reformer and ascetic Ramakrishna Parahamsa, 1885.

Through the leader of his Brahmo Samaj group, [Keshab Chandra Sen](#), Narendranath met another reformer, Ramakrishna Paramhamsa, who was to change his life.

Baranagar, 1886

Ramakrishna was an unconventional Hindu ascetic who practised kundalini yoga, but also explored Christian and Sufi teachings. According to [Dermot Killingley](#), one of the things that appealed to Narendra about him was that he taught "harmony not only of all the doctrinal traditions of India but of all religions". In January 1886, Narendranath gave up his law studies and went to join Ramakrishna as a disciple.



show credit information for image 'The River Hooghly at Baranagar'

A modern view of the River Hooghly at Baranagar with the Vivekananda Bridge in the distance.

Shortly after Ramakrishna's death in 1886, Narendra took a vow of renunciation, and became a *sannyasin* (Hindu ascetic) taking the monastic name Vivekananda. Along with Ramakrishna's other disciples, he formed a

community of monks and established a small monastery on the banks of the River Hooghly near Baranagar.



show credit information for image 'Vivekananda and other monks at Baranagar Math'

The monks at Baranagar in 1887. Vivekananda stands third from the left, wearing a turban.

Along with a life of meditation and prayer, the monks began to travel across India, preaching and visiting other religious sites and ascetics. But after five years of wanderings, Vivekananda became frustrated with the life of an ascetic.

Perhaps influenced by the zeal for social reform he encountered in Calcutta, he wanted to help the poor not just spiritually, but through social welfare. "We are so many sannyasins wandering about teaching the people metaphysics – it is all madness..." he complained. "We have to give back to the nation its lost individuality and raise the masses."



show credit information for image 'Map of Asia 1892'
A map of Asia in 1892.

Setting sail, May 1893

The transmission of ideas across the British Empire wasn't all one way. By the end of the century, there was increasing interest in Eastern spiritual ideas in the West.

Vivekananda must have been aware of this when he resolved to travel to America in order to raise funds for his new social project: "As our country is poor in social virtues, so this country is lacking spirituality. I give them spirituality and they give me money," he reasoned.

In May 1893 he boarded a steamship at the east-coast port of Bombay, bound for North America. But instead of travelling West, he travelled East – first to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), then via Singapore to Hong Kong and China and finally to Japan.

Along the way, he discovered Sanskrit manuscripts at Buddhist temples in China and Japan and was struck by the influence of Buddhist and Hindu spirituality across Asia. Perhaps these encounters confirmed his belief in the international appeal of Indian spirituality.

From Yokahama, he sailed across the Pacific to Vancouver and then took a train across Canada, arriving in Chicago at the end of July.

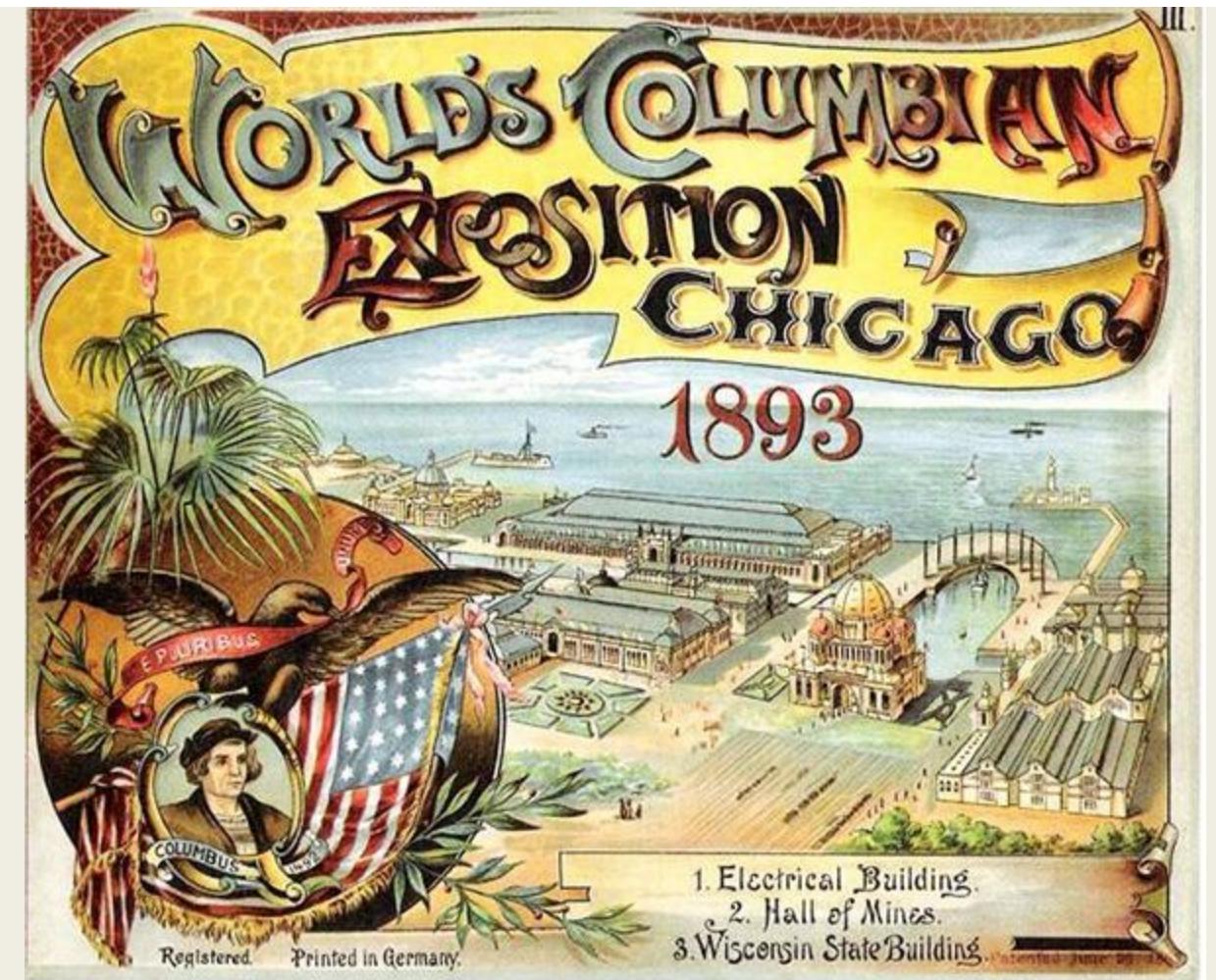


show credit information for image 'Ferris Wheel at the Chicago World's Fair'

The ferris wheel at the World's Columbian Exposition (World's Fair) in Chicago, 1893.

Chicago, August 1893

It must have seemed as if the whole world had arrived in Chicago for the World's Fair in 1893. The city hosted 46 nations, each with its own pavilion, and the World's Columbian Exposition featured an amusement park for the first time.



show credit information for image 'World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago'

Poster for the Chicago World's Fair, 1893.

Vivekananda arrived in Chicago hoping to attend the Parliament of Religions, an adjunct event to the Chicago World's Fair. The Parliament was organised by the American esoteric community, and included representatives from around the world. The two organisations invited to represent Hinduism at the Parliament – the Bramo Samaj and the Theosophical Society – were both sympathetic to esoteric, universalist ideas of spirituality.

Vivekananda applied to join the Parliament, introducing himself as a monk "of the oldest order of sannyasins", and on this basis he was accepted.



show credit information for image 'Parliament of Religions, 1893'

Vivekananda (fourth from the right) at the Parliament of Religions in September 1893.

The “handsome young monk in the orange robe” was a great success. By the end of the Parliament, he was a media celebrity: The ‘Boston Evening Transcript’ reported that he was “a great favourite at the parliament... if he merely crosses the platform, he is applauded”.

He spoke several times on topics related to Hinduism, Buddhism and harmony among religions before the parliament ended on 27 September 1893. The ‘New York Herald’ noted: “Vivekananda is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions. After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation.”

After the Parliament of Religions, the American esoteric community took Vivekananda under its wing, hosting him as a guest speaker around the country. He received an enthusiastic reception, attracting many followers as he went. And this led him to reassess his mission.



show credit information for image 'Swami Vivekananda,
Hindoo Monk of India'

A promotional poster for Vivekananda's lecture tour, describing him as "The Hindoo Monk of India".

In 1894, he set up the [Vedanta Society](#) and his work for the new organisation meant that he stayed in America much longer than intended.



show credit information for image 'New York City,
1890s'

New York City in the 1890s.

New York, 1896

With its mass influx of migrants at the end of the 19th century, New York City was open to new thought and experimentation. Vivekananda's main esoteric and cultist following was based in and around New York City – it was there that [Madame Blavatsky](#) had founded the Theosophical Society. So it was in New York that Vivekananda settled when he grew weary of touring the country.

The notion of yoga was already familiar in the West. The Theosophical Society did much to popularise Indian spiritual ideas, including yoga, through [their publications](#) about and translations of ancient texts.

But where the Theosophists emphasised the exclusive monastic nature of yoga, Vivekananda insisted on its universal accessibility. This fitted very

neatly into the self-improvement ethos of the esoteric communities he attracted.

Vivekananda did not set out to become a yoga teacher, but because of the demand for practical spiritual techniques from his followers, he began to teach yoga classes to groups of 50 or more. In July 1896, he published his seminal book '[Raja Yoga](#)' as a guide to spiritual techniques.



SWAMI VIVEKĀNANDA

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HINDU RELIGION AT THE WORLD'S PARLIAMENT
OF RELIGIONS, HELD IN CHICAGO, 1893.

VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY

RĀJA YOGA

BEING LECTURES BY THE
SWĀMI VIVEKĀNANDA

WITH PATANJALI'S APHORISMS, COMMENTARIES
AND A GLOSSARY OF TERMS



NEW EDITION, WITH ENLARGED GLOSSARY

NEW YORK
BRENTANO'S
1920

show credit information for image 'Raja Yoga'
The 1920 edition of 'Raja Yoga' by Swami Vivekananda.

Vivekananda regarded all forms of spiritual practice as yoga. His mental and spiritual practice may not be familiar to many in today's yoga classes, but 'Raja Yoga' impacted on modern yoga in several ways.

By including an English translation of the Yogasutras in his book, he reinforced the connection to an ancient practice. And the open-to-all, self-improvement approach became the basis of many yoga manuals to come.

Postures receive only passing mention in 'Raja Yoga'. Indeed, Vivekananda was quite dismissive of the physical practice, complaining that the only yoga taught in Bengal was "the queer breathing exercises of hatha yoga – which is nothing but a kind of gymnastics".

By distancing 'Raja Yoga' from postural practice and all the negative connotations of the [19th-century yogi](#), he gave it a superior spiritual status.

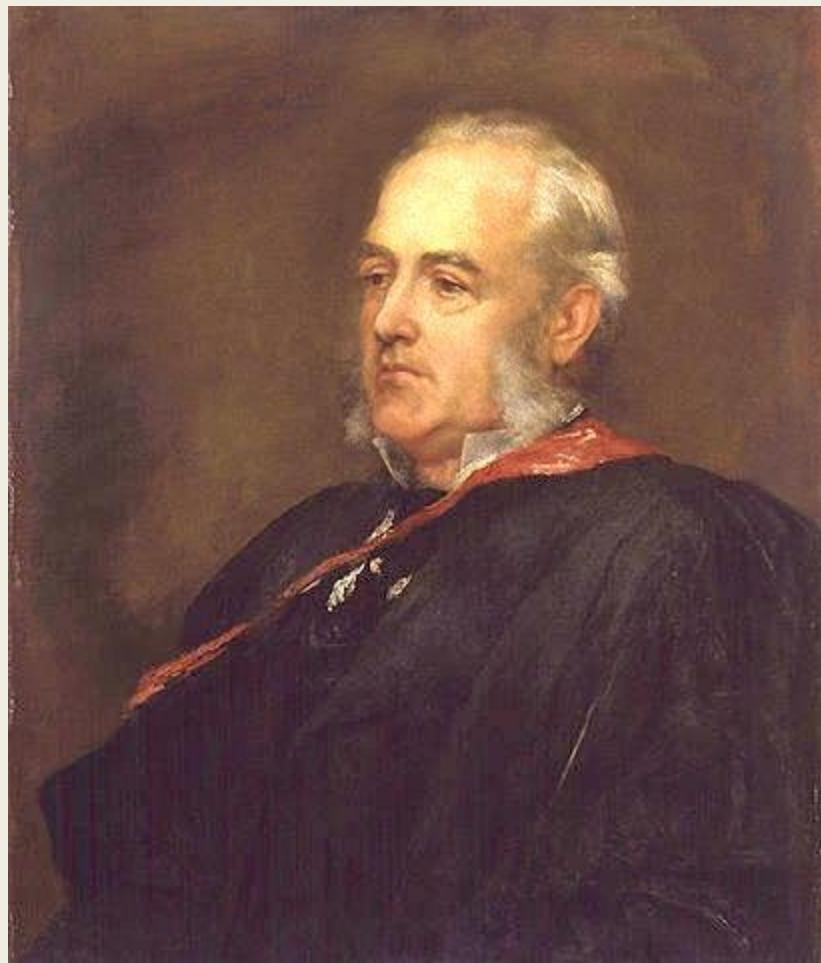


10135 - OXFORD, HIGH STREET.

show credit information for image 'City of Oxford'
High Street, Oxford, 1890s.

Oxford, 1896

In May 1896, Vivekananda found himself in “a little white house, set in a beautiful garden”, having lunch with the influential scholar and Indologist [Max Müller](#) and his wife. It was a measure of his growing international reputation that, while on a lecture tour of the UK, he was invited to Oxford to meet Müller, who was an admirer of his teacher Ramakrishna.



show credit information for image 'Max Müller'
Portrait of Max Müller, painted at the end of the 19th century.

Like many early Orientalists, Müller was a champion of the study and dissemination of ancient Indian culture. Because of its common linguistic roots in Sanskrit, he felt it had something to offer the West.

He was not so enthusiastic about contemporary Indian culture, however, believing that it had degenerated since its Vedantic origins. In 1868 he wrote that:

India has been conquered once, but India must be conquered again, and that second conquest should be a conquest by education. (...) By encouraging a study of their own ancient literature, as part of their education, a national feeling of pride and self-respect will be reawakened among those who influence the large masses of the people. A new national literature may spring up, impregnated with Western ideas, yet retaining its native spirit and character.

[Müller, Georgina \(1902\) The Life and Letters of Right Honorable Friedrich Max Müller. Vol 1. London: Longman, pp. 357–358 — Max Muller entry, Wikipedia](#)

His views mellowed over time, but they highlight how the colonial context impacted on cultural and spiritual concerns. Vivekananda admired Müller for “creating a respect for the thoughts of the sages of ancient India”, and he certainly would have agreed with Müller on the value of ancient traditions in engendering national pride and self-respect, but as a means of gaining independence from colonial rule.



show credit information for image 'Belur Math'
A view across the River Hooley of Belur Math, the current Ramakrishna temple and mission at Howrah, Calcutta.

Return to India, 1897

In December 1896, Vivekananda finally set off for home. He travelled via Europe, lecturing in England, France and Italy en route, before boarding a ship in Naples. He arrived in Ceylon on 15 January 1897 and, from there, his friends and supporters organised a lecture tour, ensuring a warm reception and lots of publicity about his journey to the West.



show credit information for image 'Vivekananda in Chennai 1897'

Vivekananda (seated in the centre with a staff) with Alasinga Perumal and other supporters in Madras (now Chennai) after his first tour of America, 1897.

In May 1897, four years after he set off on his epic journey, Vivekananda finally achieved his aim of founding a social relief organisation, which he named after his mentor – the [Ramakrishna Mission](#). The Mission and a new temple were established in Howrah, a suburb of his home town of Calcutta.

He returned to India a guru in the modern sense: a teacher with a significant international following. His success in the West did not go unnoticed in India, and his 'journey' was to become a model followed by the modern gurus and yogis who came after him.



show credit information for image 'Swami Vivekananda at Belur Math'

Vivekananda in his sannyasin robes, probably taken at the newly created Belur Math in Howrah, 1899.

Vivekananda showed that it was possible to present yogic concepts and techniques to a wider audience by drawing on the modern influences around him. Most importantly, he demonstrated how South Asian ideas and traditions could be given universal appeal but still retain their identity, rather than simply being assimilated.

Modern yoga at the end of the 19th century was essentially Raja yoga, a spiritual, meditative practice. The revival of a more physical practice emerged in the early 20th century within the context of a broader physical

culture movement that began in northern Europe and spread across the world.

About the author



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