

OM3POINT

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DON E. STEVENS

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OMPOINT

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Welcome to Issue 6. This has been an eventful year in Baba. Our dear Don Stevens has left us. This issue is dedicated to him and his work and connection with the Avatar. It includes some photos from Don's last Beads On One String tour in August 2010.

Additional copies may be downloaded from www.ompoinpoint.com

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(re: the cover.. lime green was Don's favorite color)

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Charles Haynes on Meher Baba and Detachment

Dan Sanders

Charles Haynes was the guest speaker at the 2011 Northwest Sahavas (a gathering of Meher Baba devotees) in Vancouver, Washington on August 20th, 2011. As a boy, Charles met Meher Baba in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina in the 1950s, and again in 1962 in India during the East-West Gathering. The following are a collection of various brief notes I jotted down from the talks he gave that I found to be particularly powerful:

Charles found Meher Baba's disciples Elizabeth Patterson and Dr. Goher to be so detached from results that the whole Meher Baba Center in Myrtle Beach, which Elizabeth had founded, lived on, and cultivated for decades, could have burned down, and Elizabeth would have simply moved on to the next task in front of her. Charles also said Dr. Goher was pure humility. Elizabeth also said that "Detachment is not attachment, but not lack of concern."

Charles also quoted Meher Baba's close disciple Eruch Jessawala, who in turn quoted Baba as saying, "If it all burns to the ground, don't give it a thought. It's not yours, it's mine."

Charles added, "Elizabeth was poised." Elizabeth would begin her day by asking Baba, "What should I do today?" Elizabeth said, "If you

listen, the day becomes the answer." She found prayer to be talking, and considered listening to be something else entirely.

Charles referred to one particular ordeal he went through, where he realized he had no control over the situation, and was ready to abandon that situation. Elizabeth told him, "Now that you know you

can't control it, and are detached from the result, now you have to go back and do it."

Charles said, "Baba knows our hearts, and will respond at the right time in the right way, and that experience will be greater than what you imagined or wanted."

Charles reminded us of the way Baba would give instructions later in life, while in seclusion, saying, "Do what you feel is best and I will help you" (rather than giving his followers specific instructions as he had in earlier years).

Baba said to Charles' mother, Jane Haynes, "Don't be afraid. Don't worry, because I am the Christ. Open your eyes and see me as I really am."

Charles stated emphatically that Baba "was so fully human that He's divine."

Charles mentioned the Creation being a film that was taken a long time ago that is now all unfolding. He observed, "Everything with Baba was the way it's supposed to be."

Charles described the day he got a few moments alone with Baba, with no one else present in the room, during the 1962 gathering.

"Detachment..
is not lack of
concern."





Minaret, Khuldabad



Charles said in reference to these moments with Baba, "Baba is complete. He needs nothing. He is everything. He's beyond even being Baba. He just is." Charles went on to explain how this experience was crucial to getting him through the abyss of his own personal dark night of the soul years later, which was so incredibly disheartening to him, and destroyed his previous concepts of Baba and life with Baba. But he came out the other side eventually, all the stronger for it, and that much closer to Baba.

Charles remarked, "to get stuck on one particular 'scaffolding' is not Baba. We have the opportunity to lose everything. It's a great opportunity. Including losing all our notions of Baba. You see this abyss in front of you. That's the time to fall into the abyss, because He is waiting there, and it's so much greater than what we left [behind]."

Charles quoted Elizabeth as saying, "No one can limit Baba." He said Elizabeth lived only for today. She also said, "When we go some place Baba wants us to go, we take Him there." Elizabeth used to go to church but not listen to the sermons--she felt she was bringing Baba to the church just by being there.

Because Charles had met Baba at such a young age, as he grew older and went years by without seeing Baba in person, he wondered if Baba was really the way that he

"We have the opportunity to lose everything. It's a great opportunity."

remembered Him. He also worried that since Baba met so many people, he might not remember Charles specifically. When Charles was finally reunited with Baba in India, he got his answer. Charles said, "We can trust 100% that our Baba is Baba." What also helped were messages that showed clearly that Baba remembered him and was thinking of him.

He said, "We [Baba lovers] are Baba's connections in the world. Everything is equally important and unimportant with Baba."

Charles spoke about "this freedom Baba gives us that He alone is real." And he said, "If He stops taking away, He's not loving us." Charles seemed to really hit this theme hard over the course of the day, about being demolished by Baba, losing everything to find Baba. He went on to say,

"He will see to it that everything (false) is destroyed, and everything is awakened."



I Was Sitting There Worrying and Worrying About This, That and the Other Thing

I was sitting there worrying and worrying about this, that and the other thing, with Him right there in front of me, when He turned to me and said,
Why not give Me all your cares and worries and be free?

So I said, OK, here Baba, You take it. You take it all and make it Yours.

And so, after giving You every this, that and other thing, He said,

Good, now it doesn't belong to you anymore; it's Mine.

Anything else, He asked?

*Well, now that You asked, Baba...*and I told Him.

When (after a very long twenty minutes) I was finally and truly done, He said,

Now that you have given Me all your cares and worries,
including every this, that, and other thing,

I want you to not only know, but *feel*, that all your worries and cares,
including every this, that and other thing, no longer belong to you.

So, if you go *on* worrying about them, it means you'll then be worrying
about what's Mine, and not yours. Now isn't that silly?

Then I thought about each and every thing that I had been worrying about,
and gave each and every one to Him all over again, repeating the process
until I not only knew, but *felt*, that none of it belonged to me anymore,
and all of it now belonged to Him.

But (there's always a but, isn't there?)...

having a monkey mind well trained in monkeyshines,

it said, Wait a minute, let me put this little baby to the test,
the way a patient, after a dreadfully painful tooth is extracted,
will sometimes root around with his tongue in the place
where the pain had been, just to see if it's really and truly gone.

So I picked out a particularly juicy worry and really squeezed it
for all the worry that was in it, and you know what?

It just didn't have that same disgustingly juicy flavor anymore
(well okay, it had *some*, but not that much).

In fact, it was mostly dry and tasteless.

I guess it just didn't belong to me anymore...



Scholars and the Rest of Us

As long as the Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust keeps lurching from one blunder to the next in their publishing practices, the blunders must be pointed out. Doing that has become something of a cottage industry.

The 1987 publication of the seventh edition of Baba's Discourses pervasively altered Baba's words without informing the reader. The mechanics of that editing were poor. But the fundamental mistake was not the disastrous quality of the editing. The real damage was that it happened at all — and the precedent that was set.

The 2005 publication of Infinite Intelligence plunged the Trust's publishing policies into new dangers. Again, the editing of the original material was calamitous and should not have been done. But among many mistakes, the fundamental mistake was putting Baba's name on a book He did not write.

The 2007 republication of the sixth edition Discourses introduced new editorial depredations. Despite presumably adhering to revamped policies designed to protect Baba's words, Baba was again named as author of material He did not write. This time it was a new Volume IV. That publication also inserted footnotes into the first three volumes that point out "mistakes," which are explained in the new (falsely attributed) Volume IV.

If the problems with the Discourses and Infinite Intelligence are indictable felonies, the following passage may be closer to a ticketable offense. Still, this excerpt reveals the central problem fueling the Trust's editorial polices: a

belief that there are two kinds of readers of literature by and about Meher Baba, the "general reader" and the "textual scholar." The former are hapless souls in round-the-clock peril of pratfalling on their own drool. The latter are an elite few who have to rewrite and explain things to the rest of us.

Excerpted from "Why Meher Baba's Words Should Be Left as They Are":

Many of us heard Baba's great disciple Eruch relate accounts of extraordinarily beautiful "talks" and discourses that Baba gave at different times. Obviously these remembered words of the Avatar need to be transmitted to posterity. Let us suppose that we recover thirty tape recordings of Eruch retelling a certain message that Baba once gave. If one wished to publish this message in written form, obviously one would need to transcribe the thirty oral renderings, collate and compare them, apply a variety of methods in the effort to ascertain what is most authentic, and publish a readable version that captures what seem to be the original elements of Baba's discourse. What I am describing here, of course, is an editorial procedure. . . . The attempt to block all such editorship will inevitably fail.

Ward Parks
Love Street Lamp Post, 2010

It is not at all obvious that various recordings of Eruch telling the same story have to be edited into a single written version by a "textual scholar."

If Eruch told the same story in 30 different ways, they should all be made available in writing. Death and taxes may be, but editing is not inevitable. Eruch did not need a "textual scholar" to tell the stories, and people in the audience

did not need a "textual scholar" to listen to them.

Editing each of Eruch's retellings into one "readable" version disguises the fact that Eruch told the story differently each time. That erases a rich history. If each version is unique, a synthesized compilation by a "textual scholar" weakens Eruch's voice by replacing it with the "textual scholar's." A single version edited for publication will destroy the opportunity to appreciate the differences individually, one reader at a time. Rather, it will express an opinion about what Eruch meant to say about what Baba said.

Here's a fun idea: a book that presents 30 different versions of the same story exactly as told by Eruch.

If a musicologist produced one "listenable" piece of music from Bach's Goldberg Variations, their beauty would be lost, leaving us with an impoverished piece of music that expresses someone's idea of what Bach meant to have composed (if only he could have made up his mind).

It is not obvious that, "The attempt to block all such editorship will inevitably fail." That's akin to an alcoholic saying, "I'm bound to fall off the wagon sometime so I might as well get tanked and start driving right now." As long as the Trust is guided by the notion that "general readers" need help from "textual scholars" to appreciate literature by and about Baba, these problems are going to continue.

Dan Tyler September 2011



"..the ... Trust keeps lurching from one blunder to the next in their publishing practices..."

Curiosity: The Mysterious Compound

Curiosity is one of God's greatest achievements and one of humanity's coolest characteristics.

Love is the power to burst out of limitations and experience unity with other forms. Curiosity is a form of this power. It is the impulse, expressed through the intellect, to imagine the truth of something other than self. Curiosity is a compound of consciousness formed by imagination and longing. Just as the divine Whim permeates creation, curiosity exists in divine potential as an experiment of consciousness.

From *Descent of Man* by Charles Darwin, Chapter 3

All animals feel Wonder, and many exhibit Curiosity. They sometimes suffer from this latter quality, as when the hunter plays antics and thus attracts them; I have witnessed this with deer, and so it is with the wary chamois, and with some kinds of wild-ducks. Brehm gives a curious account of the instinctive dread, which his monkeys exhibited, for snakes; but their curiosity was so great that they could not desist from occasionally satiating their horror in a most human fashion, by lifting up the lid of the box in which the snakes were kept. I was so much surprised at this account, that I took a stuffed and coiled-up snake into the monkey-house at the Zoological Gardens, and the excitement thus caused was one of the most curious spectacles which I ever beheld. Three species of *Cercopithecus* were the most alarmed; they dashed about their cages, and uttered sharp signal cries of danger, which were understood by the other monkeys. A few young monkeys and one old Anubis baboon alone took no notice of the snake. I then placed the stuffed specimen on the ground in one of the larger compartments. After a time all the monkeys collected round it in a large circle, and staring intently, presented a most ludicrous appearance. They became extremely nervous; so that when a wooden ball, with which they were familiar as a plaything, was accidentally moved in the straw, under which it was partly hidden, they all instantly started away. These monkeys behaved very differently when a dead fish, a mouse, a living turtle, and other new objects were placed in their cages; for though at first frightened, they soon approached, handled and examined them. I then placed a live snake in a paper bag, with the mouth loosely closed, in one of the larger compartments. One of the monkeys immediately approached, cautiously opened the bag a little, peeped in, and instantly dashed away. Then I witnessed what Brehm has described, for monkey after monkey, with head raised high and turned on one side, could not resist taking a momentary peep into the upright bag, at the dreadful object lying quietly at the bottom.

If the fuel of creativity is inspiration, the invisible engine of creativity is curiosity. It is the urge to know what will emerge from the mysterious compound. Curiosity is in essence a spiritual engine. Science accumulates facts and information using intellect. But does science, especially paradigm-changing science, arise solely from intellectual machinations? Was Darwin's inspiration qualitatively different from Milton's? When Einstein published his three radical papers in 1905, where did those surprising notions come from? What is scientific or artistic surprise but a moment in which God's timeless entrepreneurial wish, expressed as curiosity, becomes vividly conscious in the individual mind? Art and science languish without inspiration, which is asleep without curiosity.

Surprise is an excellent consequence of curiosity. A surprising way of looking at nature can happen after laborious reasoning or it can happen like a sudden breeze on a still day; it can happen in a laboratory or in a dream. Perhaps one way of judging a work of art is the potency of the surprise one feels even after it has become familiar. Curiosity is latent in every evolving form, even before consciousness reaches full maturity in the human form with its fully developed subtle and mental bodies. I am not aware of say, a grub, displaying much curiosity, but anybody with a dog has seen amusing examples of curiosity in an animal. The acceleration of curiosity in primates contributes to the sanskaric momentum that powers the leviathan leap in intellect in human beings. Apes look timorously into boxes, humans invent herpetology.

The future will bring artistic forms as far removed from today's art as Photoshop is from prehistoric cave painting. How about four-dimensional ghazals as a way for God to indulge His quest for self-awareness?

Keeping in mind that everything in illusion is an approximation, even the most inspired products of curiosity, science and art, are experiments in successive approximations. One way of understanding the approximation of curiosity is as a classical velocity of consciousness:

$$C = \frac{L_2 - L_1}{I_2 - I_1}$$

where C = curiosity

L = longing

I = imagination.

Perhaps somebody will be curious enough to look into this idea more rigorously.

Dan Tyler | September 2011



Beads On One String 2010 photos



Clockwise from top left: Meher Baba's Samadhi. In Hyderabad with Meherji and Lakshmi Subba. (B&W) Inside Kailash Temple, Ellora Cave complex. Climbing steps to Shivaji's Fort. Group shot at Arthur's Seat, Mahabeleshwar.

In the orchard and rose garden, I long to see Your Face.
In the taste of sweetness, I long to kiss Your Lips.

In the shadows of passion, I long for Your Love.
Oh, Supreme Lover, let me leave aside my worries.

The flowers are blooming with the exaltation of Your Spirit.
By Allah, I long to escape the prison of my ego,
and lose myself in the mountains and the desert.

These sad and lonely people tire me.
I long to revel in the drunken frenzy of Your Love,
and feel the strength of Wisdom in my hands.

I am sick of mortal kings.
I long to see the Light.

With lamps in hand, the Sheikhs and Mullahs* roam the dark
alleys of these towns not finding what they seek.

You are the essence-of-the-essence
of the intoxication of Love.
I long to sing your praises, but stand mute,
with the agony of wishing in my heart.

~ Rumi



The Agony of Wishing

* Sheikh: an Arab chief
Mullah: an educated Muslim trained in Islamic law and doctrine
(definitions courtesy merriam-webster.com)



Sometimes our bodies say,
“I am a hollow reed – music is playing through me.”
Sometimes our bodies say,
“I am a gnarled rag- in need of an amorous cleansing.”
Sometimes: strong, connected, grounded, river rock.

But when the body says
I have become separated from the temple
And we are left with the great divide
It is then,
 That our parched and torn eyes
 Seek out the hidden Ocean
 Which says,

“Let the water fill the chasm-
And become a pool once more.
Let the rag unfurl its blackened and desperate tangle
And receive a thousand stars.
Let the music have its way again
And soak up the fragrance of love.”

Ear to sky
Knees to ground
Head to stone
Hand to heart

We bow to that Eternal One
Who stands like a guardian of what
We abandon daily.
And when the body says,
I know nothing but longing at the gate-

The stone becomes ground
The cloth a banner
The chasm a bridge strewn
With those fragrant flowers
Over which
We return to ourselves.

Music a choir
Freedom an epitaph
The pool an ocean
Abandoning what we love no more.

A Chasm



The Hands of Baba

You
You who remind us
What, like children, we forget,
Again and again.
You who brings to us
What somehow we cannot yet find
In our clenched fists-
Your mirror
Holds for us our own image
That we cannot yet see
When we hide from our startling beauty.

When we refuse to take the hand of a stranger,
Or open our proud ears to Your ever available word.
If our hearts are shouting, and they do,
Because we are so far apart from each other,
Waking up frightened and lonely,

Hold our hand, when our own palm is not enough-
Sup at the table
When we cannot keep our own
Good company.

Help us to celebrate Your world
As if we could celebrate
Each day-

As if each perfect snowflake could make
A blanket
To hush the din of words that
Separate and destroy.

As if Your hands had taken our face and
Cradled them
In Your inextricable Grace,
And pointed us
In the right direction-
Towards Love.



A Chasm and The Hands of Baba : Tracey Schmidt is a photographer and poet living in Asheville. NC. Much of her first book of poetry, *I Have Fallen in Love with the World*, (Logosophia Books, 2011) was written at the Center in Myrtle Beach. It is available on amazon.com or from her website: traceyschmidt.com.

PAINTING GALLERY



"Don't Worry, Be Happy" by Deb Ashe



"Feet of the Beloved", acrylic on canvas board, by Katie Rose, October 2011



"One", acrylic on canvas board, by Katie Rose, July 2011



"Manija" by Deb Ashe

(ED:) The article below is a response to one or two poems in Ompoint #6: "Canticle of Jesus", by Ed Flanagan, and possibly to "Judas", by Irma Sheppard.

Canticle

Although liberals hold dear to the idea of the separation of church and state, dominant religious forces in all faiths still function to serve political power. We see this clearly in the rise of persons like



Rick Perry and Michelle Bachmann. Even the liberal church, if it accepts a de-politicized understanding of the crucifixion of Jesus, serves the oppression of the many by the few (the 99% by the 1%).

When we do not respond to opportunities to challenge evil, we are responsible for its perpetuation. The dominant doctrine of Christendom obscures the historical meaning of crucifixion, as does the "Canticle of Jesus," published in your Ompoint Circular. **The doctrine serves to de-politicize crucifixion in order to de-politicize Jesus.** The decision of Jesus to go to Jerusalem was a political decision. Confrontation with state power brought about his crucifixion, just as the assassination of King was

triggered by his support for the Memphis workers.

Since long before the time of Jesus, crucifixion was used to terrorize those who challenged the state. It was almost always a political execution rather than punishment for common crime. One of its most notorious examples was the crucifixion of 6,000 slaves, who, under the leadership of Spartacus, rebelled against their Roman masters.

Jesus was not, as the corrupt power of the Holy Roman Empire would have people believe, an innocent victim

submitting to the will of the Father. According to this orthodox doctrine, punishment that sinful humanity deserved was laid on Jesus, so that humankind could be acquitted. This seems to be in sync with "The Canticle of Jesus."

But according to a perspective of liberation, Jesus died because he

challenged the power of Rome and its privileged clients. To de-politicize Jesus is to make the cross a symbol of submission, not to God, but to evil. That is a major reason why we take objection to the Omni poem. Meaningful challenges to corrupt systems continue to be dangerous. State power has eliminated such challengers as Oscar Romero and Walter Rodney and kept Mumia Abu Jamal confined to prison for thirty years. We betray Jesus, when we do not stand up for those who challenge the system. **Judas is a symbol of such betrayal, not an obedient servant of God's plan.** The Romans did not need Judas to arrest Jesus. We believe that there is much to learn from all the major faith traditions (and some of the minor ones). We try to discern what is important in each of them and what may only lead to confusion.

Ann Joseph
October 14, 2011
Chicago





SONG OF THE NEW LIFE Meher Baba and Dr. Abdul Ghani

Listen to the silent words of Meher Baba;
The life story of all lovers of God is based on the practice of these words.
If you are serious about living this New Life,
Then wholeheartedly renounce this ephemeral existence.

We have taken to this life, in which we rely only on God;
In this, our will (to do or die) is strengthened by the oath taken;
We merrily sing the song of hopelessness;
We invite all calamities and difficulties.

We neither wail over lost hopes, nor complain about broken promises;
We neither covet honor, nor shun disgrace;
Backbiting we know not, nor do we fear anyone;
This is now the tenor of our New Life.

No confusion in the mind now, nor any ties left;
Pride, anger, lust and greed are sloughed off.
No religion for any of us, nor care for physical and mental fads.
The Shaikh and the Brahmin (typifying all castes and creeds) are now sailing in the same boat.

There is no small or great now for us all;
The questions of disciple, Master nor Godhood no longer arise.
Brotherliness or fellow-feeling is the link that exists,
And this contributes to our present enjoyment of suffering.

This world or the next, hell or heaven, we are no longer concerned with.

Shaktis and siddhis (psychic powers) occultism and miracles we are no longer plagued with.
All these false impressions have been purged from the mind.
What has value and importance for us now is to live in the active present.

Dear ones, take seriously the words of Baba when he says:
"Although now I am on the same level with you all,
Yet all orders from me, good, bad, extraordinary,
You should carry out immediately, leaving the result to God.

"Even if the heavens fall,
Do not let go the Hand of Truth;
Let despair and disappointment ravage and destroy the garden of your life,
Beautify it once again by the seedlings of contentment and self-sufficiency.

"Even though your heart be cut to bits, let there be a smile on your lips.
Here I divulge to you a truth:
Hidden in your penniless hands is treasure untold;
Your beggarly life will be the envy of kings!

"God exists indeed, and true are the Prophets.
Every cycle has an Avatar, and every moment has a wali (saint).
For us, however, it is only hopelessness and helplessness,
How else can I describe to you what our New Life is?"

MEHER BABA'S NEW LIFE, pp. 156-157, Bhau Kalchuri
Copyright 2008 Bhau Kalchuri





Ajanta

From top down they carved deep into soft rock—

caves to line the length of the curved valley.

From top down they chiseled

Buddha's top knot,
the snails warming his head.

Down to his beneficent smile, elongated earlobes.

In each cave a Buddha in the rear chamber,
fingers poised in mudra.

The antechamber
graced with pillars, fluted or ringed with
lotus, from the top down to the leveled stone floor.

Walls lined with Buddha's life in bas-relief
and now peeling frescos.

Porticos and steps
carved up and down link cave to cave.
Windows fashioned in stone—views of where
we've been, where headed.

Sudden doorways
open to green valley far below.

From the top down they sculpted the ankles, heels,
each toe and nail of the Buddha's blessed
feet from which arose

rapturous scents,
celestial tones, reverberating
ecstatic throughout every chamber,
beyond all time,
all place.

—Irma Sheppard



On October 19, on my way home after work and while walking through Pearl Street Mall (an open area in downtown Boulder, where no cars or bikes are allowed), I saw this young woman. Her sign reads, "Pick a Subject, Get a Poem." I asked her how much this cost, and what she will do with the money. She said it is a donation and she will go home to Pennsylvania and then on to China. I paid for two poems, one about "God in Human Form," and one for my daughter about "Storms." Enjoy. ~ Laurent



God in Human Form

Swaddled babe ancestry

Parted seas,

Who is this man

that comes for me?

Desert sand,

Sandled toes

Speaks to those

No one dares to know--

When the sky breaks open

light shining on particular
faces,

there is one who transcends
the races,

Walking forward
outstretched hand,
Praising graces.

Abigail Mott
October 19, 2011
Boulder, CO



Cyprus and Baba's House

by Laurent Weichberger
October 20, 2011

During October I went to the Meher Spiritual Center, for a reunion of Don Stevens' Young People's Group (the first since he passed away), and to rejuvenate. I arrived on a Thursday, and went to Meher Baba's House ("Meher Abode") on Friday afternoon. On my way to his home in the West I called my son Cyprus (age 5) in Flagstaff and said, "I am going to Baba's House, do you want me to tell him anything for you?" He immediately responded, "Yes, tell Baba I love him and I want to see him." I said I would, and upon arriving at the foot of Beloved Baba's bed in his room, I told Baba what Cyprus said.

The next time, as I was about to go back Baba's House on Sunday, I called Cyprus again repeating my question. Again he said, "Yes," but this time his response was longer. Here is what he told me to say to Baba:

*"The trees that get cut down,
make them grow again.
The poisonous turn to medicine.
The animals that get shot,
come back to life again.
Snow come sooner than it should.
All the superheroes come to our
planet."*

I had to write this down to remember it all, and did, and put it in my shirt pocket. Upon arrival at Baba's bed, before praying to Baba, I read this out to him quietly. Then I put my head on his bed, at his feet rededicating myself to Him. May it be so.



On November 5th, 2011 at 3:10pm in our living room at our home in Flagstaff, Arizona my son Cyprus said to me, "Baba just came up to me and said -- 'I will always be with you.'"

I asked what Baba looked like, and Cyprus said, "Normal, but he died, so he has no feet -- he is a ghost now."

I said, "What was he wearing?" Cyprus responded, "All white."

Although Cyprus had this experience, I will take this as Baba's birthday present to me. Thank you Baba!

Don E. Stevens

My Beautiful Big Bear, and an Elder Brother in Avatar Meher Baba's Love.

(January 14, 1919 – Imlay, Nevada until April 26, 2011 – London, England).

**By Laurent Weichberger
Boulder, Colorado**

During October 2011 we had a sort of memorial reunion of Don's Young People's Group (YPG) at the Meher Spiritual Center. I wanted to wait for after that experience of sharing about Don to write this article about his life and work, to start processing with a group of loving spiritual companions about one of the deepest losses in my life. The YPG's first book project is now available as *The Doorbell of Forgiveness*, by Don E. Stevens (London: Companion Books, 2011).

This article is based on a eulogy I gave at Don's funeral in London this May, and is focused on the facts of his life, not my personal experiences with Don which were many and varied over more than seven years of working closely together.

Don Stevens was born on January 14, 1919 in Imlay, Nevada, the youngest of three brothers: Earl (oldest), then Wilfred, and finally came Don. At that time Imlay was a, "Nevada village of 98 inhabitants." In fact, Don told me that as a kid he knew men in Nevada who were later scalped by Indians.

One of the most important aspects of Don's childhood was his relationship with his dog. In preparation for writing his biography (*An Almost Perfect Balance*), Don wrote to me:

"Denny Brooks Stevens. It is strange how much importance an animal can have on one's development during one's youth. This has always stood out in my mind when, on many occasions, I had reason to remember my first dog, Denny. He was a thoroughbred Scotch collie...

"Denny came into my life on my first birthday, on January 14, 1920. I knew instantly that something unusual and certainly important was happening when I saw my father



open the door from the kitchen into the living room where I was sitting propped up on the couch. Dad had a strange grin on his face I had never seen before, and the way he stood was very odd also. His arms were behind his back and he seemed to be holding something there; Even as I was trying to relate all this to what little I had at that stage of my life in my memory of my dad's

actions, he brought his arms around and I saw he was holding something that looked like a small pillow, but with fur on it, which made no sense. Then he stooped towards the floor and the bundle of fur developed legs and in an instant raced directly towards me.

"I hardly had time to take in all this before the bundle of

fur rocketed up onto the couch beside me and knocked me flat onto my back and something wet plastered all over my face. ... Anyway, there it was,



Laurent with Robby Smith at YPG gathering, October 9, 2011

my first birthday, and my first dog. I think my father had divine premonition to have captured two such important things together. Denny was unique, but even that I did not know at that time, nor what something unique was, but the word gathered deep meaning as the years rolled along and my first dog taught me so many human things for the first time."

One of the only times I saw Don cry was while remembering Denny, and his eventual passing.

During 1923 Don's family moved to Galt, CA (about 20 miles south of Sacramento). A few years later Don's father died (of illness). His dear mother subsequently remarried, and Don was fond of his step-father. Again, for my work on his biography, Don allowed me to ask personal questions, and we are fortunate to have his answers¹:

Laurent (LW): What did you do in California as a child? Was that move hard on you? Did you spend a lot of time with your brothers? Did you rapidly make new friends?

Don (DES): "Remember that when I was 7 years old my father died and the whole family went to work. There was no time for anything other than helping mother in the house and starting raking leaves for neighbors and later studying music. I almost never saw my brothers from this time on as they had their jobs to make money and we only saw each other at dinnertime. As both went away



to university at the age of sixteen, I then saw them only for short times in summer vacations.

I made a lot of friends quite fast as I was smart and my first idea of finding oneness was to control the other fellow so he was dependent on me. I saw rather soon that this was a totally erroneous idea of satisfying oneness and 'Mac' in first year of college taught me how erroneous that had been. It was the man in the blue shawl² who explained all that to me so I felt it in my bones and felt into a totally new type of oneness with others. This was not easy, as this necessitates the lowering of barriers on both sides, and very few people feel able to do this."

LW: You said that you wrote as a child and got published in one of the small local California town papers. At what age did you start writing work that got published? What was your favorite subject to contemplate and write about when you were younger? What is your favorite subject now?

DES: About age ten. Animals. Creation.

During the 1930s, Don attends Montezuma School for Boys (MSB) in Los Gatos, California (near Santa Cruz). While at MSB, Don met Professor Earnest Andrew Rogers (whom he later referred to as simply "Prof"). Don said Prof was a mystic at heart, but that he never introduced the boys to any particular spiritual path. Prof simply used the phrase "Cosmic Consciousness." Prof singled out Don and shared more personally with him, and gave Don the notion of "True idealism."

At that time, Don was involved with Church, Sunday School, and sang in the church choir. Don explained directly about that time in his life:

"I would say that by the late teens I realized that not just physical longing but an inner need for wholeness was fundamental and could only be met finally by a long process of understanding why oneness was blocked within us. This is why I became a Sufi and why I understood at once when I first stood before Baba³ that he had completely answered this need for wholeness, but not to be yet in a permanent and total manner. I was quite content to go through the process of removing the huge internal block that was necessary. I did not resent this nor wish to hurry it in any manner. Just to know that there was a solution and that I had already had a taste of it was enough to be happy and willing to go the course."

After high school, Don attended freshman year at Black Mountain College (in North Carolina). It was an experimental college, and he didn't like their "liberal idealism," leaving after one year to attend John's Hopkins University (JHU). Don was a member of the Phi-Beta-Kapa Fraternity, whose principles were: "personal freedom, scientific inquiry, liberty of conscience and creative endeavor." While a sophomore at JHU he was a witness to one of Prof's dreams: There was a heavy rain storm, and the students at Montezuma school would be unable to get food, etc. Don heard about this dream from Prof, and Prof sent a telegram to the school warning of coming storm, to help the kids. As fate would have it, this premonitory dream came true, and Prof's intervention made a difference. This experience made a deep impression on Don, still many years before his initial contact with Meher Baba.

Don spent summers working on the Coles' farm in New Hampshire, they were friends of his. They had also known Ralph Waldo Emerson personally. During



Laurent, Marnie Frank, Don Orinda CA 2009
Photo by Keith Gunn

1940, Don graduated from Johns Hopkins University with a degree in Organic Chemistry.

Shortly after graduation, Don commenced with "thought-force experiments." This was a type of experiment using mental forces to affect the external world. The results of this proved to Don that it works. During this time Don was involved doing personal psychological work with Dr. Kathryn Ahlstrand related to his spiritual experimentation. It was Dr. Ahlstrand who introduced Don to Murshida Rabia Martin.



Hazrat Inayat Khan



Murshida Rabia Martin

Shortly after 1940, Don was initiated by Murshida Martin as a mureed of Hazrat Inayat Khan's Sufi Order in San Francisco. Don said he was individually initiated, not in a group setting. Samuel Lewis was already a member of this order at that time.

Don returned to Montezuma School for Boys (MSB) as teacher of Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics. He then became an official advisor to Jr. and Sr. classes at MSB to help them go to University. Of this time Don said he was interested in a marriage of science and mysticism.

Soon after, Don became interested in "Channeling," and has conversations with the author Stuart Edward White and his wife "Betty." Through his advising the students at MSB, Don became friends with oil executives such as Mr. Clarke Gester, Chief Geologist of Standard Oil of CA (later Chevron), as well as Mr. Terry Duce, Texaco Representative for Aramco, and also their wives, (who Don said were spiritual), namely Bili Gester, and Ivy Duce.

After two years of teaching and trying to be a surrogate father to the students, Don left Montezuma school. Shortly after he has an experience one night at the Olympian Hotel in which he literally is visited by a man with a blue shawl, who guides him spiritually. Don wrote a small book about this figure.

During 1945, Murshida Martin put her Sufi order directly under Avatar Meher Baba's guidance (a full seven years before Don meets Baba in New York in 1952). Francis Brabazon arrives from Australia to Fairfax, California to prepare for Baba's visit there. Soon after, Murshida Rabia Martin becomes ill and shares profoundly with Don on her deathbed just before passing.



Don, Jill English
Leonard English, Kathy Harris

During 1952, shortly before Don meets Baba, a letter came from Baba to Don, in which he refers to Don as "my son." Unfortunately, Meher Baba is involved in an automobile accident while traveling from Myrtle Beach, South Carolina to

Ojai, California, and never got past Oklahoma. Instead, Don travelled to meet Baba in New York at Ivy Duce's Manhattan apartment. After this initial meeting, a letter came from Baba to Don, referring to Don as "my spiritual son." Meher Baba explains about the "spiritual son" of the Master in Discourses,⁴ in relation to obedience (bold is mine):

"Such literal obedience is not even bound by the requirement that the real significance of the orders should be within the intellectual comprehension of the pupil, and it is the best type of obedience for which you can aspire. Through such implicit and unquestioning obedience, all the crooked knots of your desires and sanskaras are set straight. It is also through such obedience that a deep link is created between the Master and the pupil, with the result that there is an unhindered and perennial flow of spiritual wisdom and power into the pupil. At this stage the pupil becomes the spiritual son of the Master, and in due time he is freed from all individualistic and sanskaric ties. Then he himself becomes a Master."

Another statement from Baba was that Don has, "An almost perfect balance of head and heart." Don wrote to me, "I was reminded by Bal Natu of two brief but very important actions by Baba as he returned from the 1952 visit



Don & Kathryn Harris

to the USA and Europe. On his arrival in Zurich after the accident and the final visit to New York, he was sitting in Hedi Mertens' garden with several of the



women who accompanied him, including several from the USA to that point. One of them wrote me from Zurich that on this occasion Baba mentioned out of the blue that it had been worth spilling his blood on American soil for the opportunity to meet someone of the caliber of Don Stevens."

Shortly after this, Meher Baba commences the personal training of Don and the Sufi charges now under the guidance of Ivy Duce. Baba explains what he means by honesty to Sufis, a long explanation which made a giant impact on Don's understanding of spirituality. This was to turn into not one but two "vows" of honesty Baba asked of Don, both spiritually and in his work at Chevron.

Soon after, Baba asks Don and Ivy to edit God Speaks for publication. During this period, Baba, Ivy and Don create Sufism Reoriented, and the correspondence show that Don stresses the need for "democratic principles."

Don told us a great story about what happened next. His version is in the book Meher Baba's Word and His Three Bridges. Here is my version of the same:

Once upon a time, Meher Baba invited the Western male disciples to India for three weeks of special sahas (which became the Three Incredible Weeks visit). Don Stevens was invited but was unable to attend due to illness. He wrote to Baba about this, who responded, "I will make it up to you, Don."

So, the next year, Baba held the "Four Language Groups Sahas" for the four main language groups of India. Each language group had one week of Sahas with Beloved Baba. Don was invited to attend that. He was one of only two from the West. Francis Brabazon was the other.

Don told me that after the Sahas, as he was packing to leave, one of the disciples came to his room saying, "Baba is calling you." Don stopped what he was doing, and followed the Indian disciple out of the building.

Don said, right outside the door, under a tree, sat Baba in a chair, with a small table next to him. On the table, was a stack of papers, and on the papers was a rock. Don was surprised by all this, and Baba spoke to him through a disciple, saying something like: Don, I hope you have enjoyed your time here with me, during this Sahas.

Of course Don replied it was thrilling and lovely, and how happy he was to have been there. Baba continued, gesturing to the papers on the table: I have brought here some of my messages and words given out over the years, which as I have told you in the past, are of the type that I have personally gone over with the Mandali (i.e. Baba's favorite words of his own). Would you be willing to take these back with you and make something like a little book out of them, similar to Discourses? And with that Baba picked them up off the table and held them out to Don.

But Don said, Baba I don't know how I could do that, those are your words, and etc. To which Baba responded, "I will help you." Don agreed, saying -- I will do my best Baba. And Baba was very happy, and continued, saying something like: And now that you have been here at this Sahas, you could write another part that describes your experiences here. In fact, I have had my secretary keeping careful notes of what I have shared here, and I could make those notes available to you as well. That could be a part of such a book, don't you think?

Don again agreed. Baba continued, and Don, Baba values your own insights and observations, and understanding. You could also be free, and write another section just based on your own feelings about Baba, and spirituality. That would be a good section too, yes? Don agreed, and Baba handed him the papers.

When Don got back to the West, he said he took the papers out of the envelope he had them in, and laid them out around them in subject/topic piles. Then he picked up each pile and



"Baba is
calling
you."



read it. He said, amazingly, each pile needed almost no writing from him to glue the passages together into a coherent chapter! He felt this is what Baba meant by "I will help you." That is Part II of Listen, Humanity. Part I is Don's experience of the Sahavas. Part III is Don's own feelings. Baba has room constructed at Meherabad for Don and gives him a bill for the materials.

~ * ~

Another time, on Don's birthday, Baba took off the sadhra he was wearing and gave it to His Beloved Mehera, with instructions to keep it for Don, as a birthday gift. The next time Don was at Meherazad to visit Baba, he asked Mehera to bring this gift for Don.

Don said the two things that he tried to work out without Baba's help were "money," and his intimate relationships, until he decided that he couldn't make a worse mess of both, and brought them to Baba, for Baba's guidance. Don said, Baba gave him "direct instructions in relation to my deepest and closest relationships at that time."

Around this time, Meher Baba made two references that Don is one of His "close Mandali." One was during 1956 at Meher Mount (California), to Billi Eaton⁵ and the other at was at Meherazad, to Eruch.⁶ Around this time Don was asked by Baba to edit Dr. Deshmuk's five volume version of Discourses by Meher Baba, for a modern Western audience (specifically the hippies in America and Europe). This lead to the conversation between Baba and Don about the "atom bombs" of spiritual energy attached by Baba to his own special words. Baba then pointed his finger at Don and told him, "And it is your responsibility to explain to Baba's lovers what I have explained to you today."

In the late 1960s Don eventually came to an impasse with Sufism Reoriented, and wrote a long letter to Meher Baba pouring out his heart about his struggles. In response, not a word came from Meher Baba, but his boss at Chevron suddenly reassigned Don to live and work in Europe! Lastly, I asked Don: What is it that Don Stevens most deeply wants?

Don: "Oddly enough, neither God Realization nor to be rejoined with Baba. ...Baba gave me a glimpse of complete oneness and I understand fully that for that to be permanent, I must go through the discipline of wiping out sanskaras, and I have no wish to slight or avoid that in any manner. And to be rejoined with Baba, that is a bit

ridiculous as again he showed me that first day after dropping the body that he was more constantly and closely at my side than he was when his body was sitting over in Meherazad. So, what I find regularly to be the most important thing to me is to live completely honestly and openly with those I love, which is quite a few people, and that I find to be a not easy bill to fill. In fact it is a constant challenge, but I also admit, a delightful challenge."

The rest of this story is too long to squeeze into an article in a periodical⁷. Read his biography and you won't be disappointed. Thank you, dearest Don, for all your love and care, and for sharing the beauty of your amazing life lived with and for Beloved Meher Baba. Jai Baba.

Notes:

1. From my unpublished research, "DonAnswersMoreQuestions.doc."
2. The "Man in the Blue Shawl" is a reference to a spiritual experience Don had before meeting Meher Baba where he received guidance from a man who appeared to him.
3. That first meeting was in New York in 1952.
4. See Discourses, by Meher Baba, 6th edition, Volume I, page 90: "The Removal of Sanskaras: III").
5. The incident with Billi Eaton I personally confirmed with Billi, via telephone in New York and she said, "But Don wouldn't care about that." It is an unpublished account.
6. The incident with Baba and Eruch is published in Lord Meher, p. 6289: <http://www.lordmeher.org/index.jsp?pageBase=page.jsp&nextPage=6289>
7. For this story, see Meher Baba's Word and His Three Bridges (London: Companion Books, 2003).



BEADS 2010 Gallery

Right: relaxing with Dr. Digambar Gadekar and Prof. Narendra Prasad near the end of the Beads 2010 journey

Below: group shot at Kailash Temple, Ellora Cave Complex, Maharastra



Aug 2010 Hyderabad Manonash Cave
Meher Gopala Krishna w/ video
and Lakshmi Subba



Aug 2010 Breakfast in Mt. Abu, Rajasthan,
with Antonia San Martin and Glenn Russ



August 18 2010
Last day of 2010 Beads Tour
Leaving Kailash Temple, Ellora/Khuldabad, Maharashtra
Chant: "OM Paraatma OM Parabrahma"

REVIEW:

Darwin Shaw's book

Effort and Grace: Open Secrets in Meher Baba's Discourses

by Marlena Applebaum



The opening lines of *Effort and Grace* immediately impacted me. I literally had to stop reading after the first three sentences to absorb the reality which Darwin was speaking of — the incredible opportunity open to us now. I was also struck by the beauty of Darwin's writing:

"We have the door to the Unlimited within us — and the opportunity for infinite exploration within. The spiritual path is wide open for those who are ready to pursue spiritual values. We have to dare to plunge into the Ocean of God's Being." (p. 3)

"We have to dare to plunge into the Ocean of God's Being." Wow. I never quite thought about the spiritual path or becoming closer to God in terms of daring. The concept of daring prompts me to contemplate Darwin's brilliant title, *Effort and Grace*, which implies that although it is grace that may ultimately set us free, and it is grace that is with us all along, yet there are efforts we can take to help ourselves and efforts we can or must make to invite that grace. I have sometimes heard the message that attaining the spiritual goal is far off in some distant lifetime and that we are sort of biding our time until it happens. Yet I prefer the idea of a more active approach to help speed things along. Darwin gives encouragement that it is possible not in the distant future, but soon. And he shares guidance and wisdom from his intimate and devoted relationship to Meher Baba and his own deep inner process of the spiritual path.

An example of effort that Darwin wrote about is regarding the conscious decision to give everything to Baba, willingly:

"In contrast to the path of purging, where we are likely to feel that the Master is painfully stripping us of elements we take to be 'who we are' or 'what we want,' the refining path of love for God involves willingly giving to Him everything we have to offer because we value His truth and love, rather than illusory things. Give everything to Baba. Let all desires and impulses flow through." (p. 58)

Most of us probably experience the stripping away of our ego attachments and desires as a painful process. Often it is excruciating, we feel we are dying, and we resist with all our might. Though difficult, I do find it helpful to reframe an apparent tragedy, instead as an opportunity to willingly give up something held dear — out of love for Baba and trust in Him, rooted so deeply in our beings that we know He is helping us, when we are faced with such a challenge. This is a familiar practice in the Baba world, yet Darwin gives fresh inspiration to us through his own deeply rooted faith and clearly articulated experience about the path.

Another facet of *Effort and Grace*, which intrigued me was how Darwin was wholeheartedly and seemingly effortlessly devoted to Meher Baba, in keeping with the traditional "Baba lover" path, yet he also emphasized some of Meher Baba's words in ways that reminded me of modern concepts such as quantum physics and the law of attraction. Here is an example:

"Meher Baba says that we are the producers of all phenomena; we have projected everything out of us. What Baba is telling us is that we are creating our own world — our emotional world as well as the physical world and our mental world — and that we can design it and make it any way we would like. In 1954 Baba quoted one of his disciples, Baidul, as saying, 'We produce everything and, like fools, we become the slave of what we are the masters of.'" (p. 80)

There are many new age ideas out there giving a similar message, that we “create our own reality.” Sometimes these concepts are expressed in ways that may not resonate, due to sounding judgmental, materialistic, or simplistic. On the other hand, it is easy to fall into a rut, believing that we are victims of life or our sanskaras, hoping God may someday have mercy on us. But Darwin is reminding us of words that Baba himself shared with us — that we may not only directly affect our experience, we literally produce it! This can be hard to hear or hard to fathom at times, but Darwin expresses it in a gentle, compassionate, and encouraging way. In several places in *Effort and Grace*, Darwin references Christ and the Bible in ways that seem to perfectly merge with his progressive attitude of loving Baba:

“Faith the size of a mustard seed can produce the miraculous... Because all the circumstances of our lives are imaginary, they are subject to change quickly. We discover that nothing is crystallized; everything can change instantly, despite the surrounding circumstances.” (p. 82)



I feel immense gratitude to Darwin, and his close friends who helped him to get this book written. It is easily accessible, yet keenly profound. Now that I have read through *Effort and Grace*, I am certain I will reference it for years to come, in the way I reference other favorite spiritual treasures, which is to inwardly ask a question and then randomly open the book to see what Baba would like me to try to grasp at that moment. Each page of *Effort and Grace* is rich with insight and can stand alone (like a holon, “something that is simultaneously a whole and a part” ~Wikipedia); therefore it can readily be used in this way.



I Will Follow Him

Over a decade ago, the Samadhi Sisters performed at the Portland Sahavas. This spontaneous trio was formed at the end of a weekly Seattle area Baba meeting when one of us lovingly used Baba’s name in the 1960’s tune, “My Guy”. “Nothing you could do could tear me away from Baba....Baba.” Two other sopranos instantly joined in to create a three-part harmony that brought nods of encouraging delight from the group.

After a number of practice sessions with guitar and piano accompaniment, we were prepared to sing these love songs to beloved Baba at the upcoming gathering. The play list included, “My Guy”, written by Smokey Robinson and the Miracles in 1964, which we changed to, “Baba”. “I Will Follow Him” was made famous by Little Peggy March in 1963 and “To Know Him is to Love Him” had been released in 1958 with “Don’t Worry My Little Pet” on the flip side of the vinyl.

For our fitting session and the first dress rehearsal, we selected from a stylish collection of dresses that my mother had saved from that era. We were surprised and pleased to find that there was a dress for each one of us that suited our unique figures as well as our personalities. With polka dots, pale blue chiffon and light brown satin, we Samadhi Sisters were eager to sway in these fancy skirts while singing to Him.

Last night in the dining hall of the Meher Pilgrim Retreat in Meherabad, India, I overheard two



women preparing a custom version of, “Up On the Roof”, to sing to Baba at morning arti. The Drifters originally recorded this popular tune in 1962. When I showed interest in their playful rendition, they welcomed me to join them in, “Up On the Hill”.

As we rehearsed, I described how years ago the Samadhi Sisters had prepared other 1960's songs for a Sahavas. Two of these came alive again as we each found our place in the harmonies. “My Guy” and “To Know Him is to Love Him” had come to mind, though the third selection had completely disappeared from my memory. The three of us enthusiastically began working on these two while I attempted to remember the third.

As I drifted off to sleep, a number of times while awake in the night and again this morning, I was unsuccessful in recalling that third song.

During morning arti, we offered “Up On the Hill” to Baba. As I sat on the middle wooden bench in front of Ted and his guitar, the other two women paired on the lower bench with the lyrics held between them. With reading glasses rested on my nose, I peered between their scarf-draped shoulders. In our triangle of sound, our newly acquainted voices blended relatively well for our first gig.

With three “Avatar Meher Baba Ki Jai's”, led by Hardeep, followed by, “Time to depart for breakfast with Baba”, we made our way back to the collection of shoes outside the Samadhi. As I slipped into my flip-flops, one of my singing partners said with bright eyes and a wide grin, “Oh! I thought of another song we could do. How about, ‘I Will Follow Him’?”

How can one describe these goose bump moments without sounding weird? Yes! I got goose bumps and replied with tears beginning to well up in my eyes, “THAT'S the third song that I couldn't remember!”

So, it looks as if Baba wants to be sure to hear this one again. This time it will be sung by, “The Samadhi Sisters: East”.

*“I will follow Him, follow Him
Wherever He may go,
And near Him,
I always will be,
For nothing can keep me away,
He is my destiny.
I will follow Him, ever since
He touched my heart I knew,
There isn't an ocean too deep,
A mountain so high, it can keep,
Keep me away, away from His love.*

Avatar Meher Baba Ki Jai!
Cynthia Barrientos October 2011



Pumpkin House for Children Trust : New Building Project Update

by Laurent Weichberger
Boulder, CO (November 2011)

A fundraiser is in progress to assist the expansion of Pumpkin House for Children Trust in Vidyanagar, India. We have been raising funds specifically to construct a new building at the Pumpkin House for Children. In August 2010, we wrote a proposal to raise funds for the new building needed by the children, who up until now have been living in the home of Ms. Stella Pillai, the Head Mistress of the orphanage. The two-story building will include a dormitory, educational facilities, and bathrooms. The projected cost of the expansion is \$21,550. Our aim was to raise \$10,000 for this building and many of you immediately responded with generous contributions. Thank you!

Here is the fundraising information to date from Charlie Gard'ner at Pumpkin House USA: "As of now we have raised \$8,020 (this includes \$ 5,020 from contributions, and \$3,000 from Pumpkin House USA)." We are still raising money, with less than \$2,000 needed to reach our goal. The original project proposal is available here:

<http://www.ompoint.com/PumpkinHouseProposal.pdf>

This email update came to us back in April from Stella in India

Subject: Pumpkin House for Children Trust
Tuesday, April 12, 2011
Dear Laurent:

Work has begun and is gaining speed. Due to the upcoming monsoons we have employed more labour. Material required for the initial stage is bought. Attached find the pictures of the work in progress.

We have finished with the complete concreting just one more slab remains which will be completed soon. Once the slab is over we will start with complete plastering, plumbing, Painting electrification etc. We will be completing the construction by Jan 2012. On every floor we will be having halls and toilets. The hall will be for multipurpose use. They would serve as study halls, classrooms etc. We have also finished a new hall for the children adjoining Pumpkin House.

attached kindly find the pics.

In His Service,

Mrs. Stella Manuel



Again, thanks to all who have participated in this project, and we hope others will realize it is never too late to join us in helping these children.

For more information contact:
Pumpkin House for Children USA
<http://www.pumpkinhouse.org>



Pumpkin House Construction 2011





The Lesson

by Alison (Govi) Hutter
11/2/2011



I have always been grateful to Baba for His method of teaching me. Each lesson tends to be mystical and, as my friend Laurent noted, dramatic. Typically the end results leave me with many special feelings: exciting lessons learned, new ways of seeing, and good stories to share. This is until my most recent lesson. This time, I just hung my head in shame.

During the last few months of this summer, several people belonging to a group called the Young People Group (YPG) decided on a meeting date at Myrtle Beach in October. This group was established by Don Stevens and over the past few years had been meeting on a regular basis. In these meetings, Don shared personal knowledge and intuitions he had gained after many years of direct and holy guidance with Avatar Meher Baba.

This would be an important gathering for the YPG: it would be our first meeting together after Don's death. Group members were curious as to whether the years of gathering under Don's guidance were sufficient to build a foundation strong enough for the YPG to remain established without his physical presence. I definitely wanted to be there.

I am a nurse in a small hospital in Winslow, Arizona. Unfortunately, I struggle in my relationship with the Nursing Director. Recent unpleasant episodes with her led me to find it incredibly unappealing to ask for these specific days off to meet with my group. As weeks passed it became a painful realization that I probably would not be able to attend.

So I started to pray to Baba—real hard.

I have consistently been assigned to work on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesdays—with little or no variation to that schedule—for many months now. One and a half weeks before the meeting at Myrtle Beach I phoned the hospital for my two-week schedule. It had been changed and as a result I would have off eight days in a row with the YPG meeting smack-dab in the middle of those days.

I immediately got onto the Web to look for flights. I decided that Oct. 6 to Oct. 11 would be perfect. I would work my regular three 12-hour shifts, have Oct. 5 to recover, and leave on Oct. 6 to Meher Baba's Spiritual Center in Myrtle Beach. Yes. That would be perfect. But, despite several hours of trying every angle possible, the only option was to accept a flight that left on the 5th. (Have I mentioned that what I really wanted was to leave on the 6th so I could rest a day?) I combined two credit card accounts that gave me exactly the amount of frequent flyer points required to purchase this ticket.

Then, I called the Center for lodging. I was told there was none available since it was a very busy week at the Center. They were booked solid. But, within two days, I was notified that I would

have lodging for every day that I was staying at the Center! It was unbelievable at how easy it came together and I thanked Baba for allowing this to happen.

I got to the airport on the 5th and was informed that my flight would have a sixty minute delay. After that hour passed, I was told that four more hours of repair time was necessary. At Flagstaff's small airport, US Airways gave me two options: 1) take a later flight that same day and arrive Myrtle Beach at 11:30 pm or, 2) reschedule for the exact flights on the next day, Oct. 6! Of course, I selected option 2. I was amazed at how Baba gave me exactly what I wanted. Again, I thanked Baba but this time profusely.

I relished my day off.

The morning of Oct. 6, I got to the airport as scheduled. As per US Airways website, there were no delays to my flights. I did not eat this morning knowing I had a couple opportunities to have a meal: I had over an hour wait at the Phoenix airport while waiting for my connecting flight, and also a 3 ½ hour flight would afford me an opportunity to purchase food. I felt pleased knowing that the day would come together perfectly since it appeared that Baba arranged for it all to happen.

Not quite. The flight out of Flagstaff ended up being delayed over an hour due to high winds. By the time I arrived at the Phoenix, I had a whopping 10 minutes to catch my connecting flight to Charlotte. I literally had to run from one end of the airport to the other end wearing the most awful footwear: heeled cowboy boots. I got to the gate as it was being closed. Whew! Despite being covered in sweat, I knew I could relax now since the biggest part of my travel was under my belt.

I settled down into my seat located quite far in the back of the plane. Hunger pangs were turning audible. I nestled down with my book eagerly awaiting the arrival of the food cart. When it arrived—after having stared at the food menu for some time by now—I loudly blurted out my chosen meal. I had anticipation in my eyes and a smile on my face. It was then that I informed that all the food was sold-out. I had to settle for a drink and that highly nutritious snack of crackers.

When I finally arrived at the Charlotte airport, prepared to make my way to the gate of the connecting plane that would take me to my long



Alison (Govi) Hutter

awaited and precious destination, I was informed that US Airways cancelled the flight. Period. Nothing else. No other arrangements. I was told that they gave our plane away to another flight. There was no substitute plane. Our pilot never even showed up at the airport. What! How can you do this? I am a single female traveler whose home is on the other side of the country. I paid for that ticket!

The group of abandoned flyers stood in shock. I could feel a rage boiling up in side of me and I demanded of the two “managers”: What are my options? The reply was that the airlines would pay for my motel tonight and there is a chance that I could get on a 9 pm flight the next night, but with no guarantee. Unbelievable!

I would not waste another day at this airlines whim. I walked rapidly to the car rental area but learned that all the cars were rented—every last one. I saw a group of people from the previous flight. They rented the last van for \$500 to get to Myrtle Beach. There were seven seats in the vehicle and seven of them. I didn't care. I became like human glue and it was obvious that they would not be able to get rid of me if they tried.

I sat on the floor of the van wedged tightly and uncomfortably between two seats and the strangers who occupied them. I didn't care. I would finally get to Myrtle Beach tonight after all. Then, ahead of us, there was the line of stopped traffic. Cars as far as one could see. There

was an accident almost 20 miles away with blocked traffic even further behind us. This is how the story continues to go on and on and on. I did get to the Center just before midnight. But the Center's driver informed me I would have to do my grocery shopping in the morning. He would take me, as previously arranged, but only after we picked up another Center visitor and friend of mine, Dan, from the airport that morning.

At 8 am I was whisked away from the Center without an opportunity to see beyond my cabin's porch. Dan's flight ended up running late so the driver took me to the health food store for some yummy coffee. I requested that I stay and do my shopping but for some odd reason the driver was insistent that I go to the airport with him to pick up Dan then return to that exact store to shop!

This is precisely what happened. And by 12:45 pm I was still in that car driving around but now with the driver and Dan. I lamented inside of my head, "Why is this happening? All I want is to be at the Center. Oh Baba! When will I ever get to the Center?" Then, as clear as Baba was sitting next to me, I heard his voice say, "Well, it was you who wasn't in a hurry to see Me." The truth of His words hit me hard. It had never occurred to me that it was Baba who wanted me to leave on the 5th. I didn't think of Him. I was only concerned about my own needs!

The meeting was fantastic but more than that, the trip was a turning point for me in my spiritual connection with Baba. I now saw that this relationship would only blossom when I allow and trust Him to be my Divine partner—present, loving, and knowing at all times in my life. Acknowledging my selfishness was my lesson. Only by joining with the Divine in selflessness will this lesson be learned.

Om.



YPG Young People's Gathering Myrtle Beach October 2011



HAPPINESS

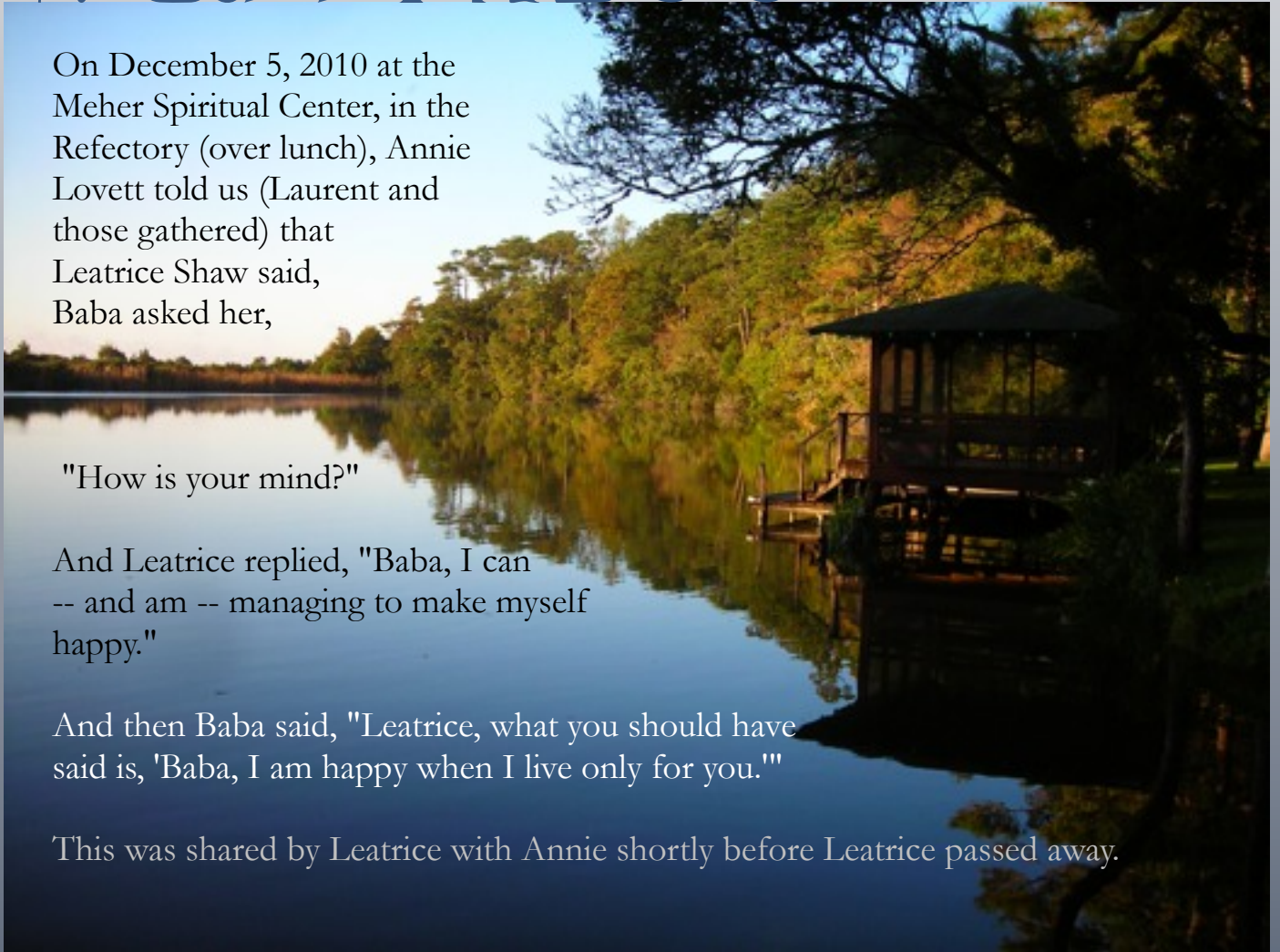
On December 5, 2010 at the Meher Spiritual Center, in the Refectory (over lunch), Annie Lovett told us (Laurent and those gathered) that Leatrice Shaw said, Baba asked her,

"How is your mind?"

And Leatrice replied, "Baba, I can -- and am -- managing to make myself happy."

And then Baba said, "Leatrice, what you should have said is, 'Baba, I am happy when I live only for you.'"

This was shared by Leatrice with Annie shortly before Leatrice passed away.



a New Way of Living Together

Evan M. Bussanich
November 2, 2011

I was asked to share an account of this vision publicly after several private conversations about it. Any description of an experience of this kind risks sounding fantastical or other-worldly, but to me the content of the message far exceeds in importance any seeming specialness of the manner it was conveyed.

In early June of this year, I happened to be sitting in the Lagoon Cabin¹, where Meher Baba had met privately with many of his lovers and followers. I had gone there with no particular agenda or question, and my mind was clear and relaxed. I had closed my eyes, and bowed my head to better feel the atmosphere inside the room,



Lagoon Cabin painting by Joe DiSabatino

which is usually palpable to anyone who has spent time there.

After a short time, I felt a strange sensation of a hand lifting up my chin, and tilting my head upward. I opened my eyes. I began to feel a tightness between my eyes, then a tingling, then an electric sensation that became quite intense. Suddenly, a shooting sensation entered the point on my forehead and penetrated to the center of my head. I saw that it was a series of images, one after another, as though looking at a flip-book. This lasted for a short time, perhaps twenty or thirty seconds.

At first, I couldn't see the images clearly – some appeared to be people, places, or maps. After the stream had stopped, and my mind had cleared a little, several distinct images came to my mind's eye without having to recall them, as though I was being shown them specifically.

The first image that I could see was a large map of the Eastern half of the United States. Everything was in darkness, like a shroud. But there was one area that was lit up brightly, and it was conveyed to me directly that this was a safe, protected place that would be largely shielded from any disruption in the world that may come to pass. It extended from the coastline inward, like a semicircle –

and covered the lowest quarter of Virginia, most of North and South Carolina, and the northeast third of Georgia to the coastline again. It seemed as though the Meher Spiritual Center was at the midway point within this semicircle of protection, as though it extended out from it.



My view expanded, and I began to see the entire United States, and then other parts of the world. It was clear from this view that there were several others of these bright spot areas of protection, perhaps around a dozen or so, scattered all throughout the world, at least one on every continent. The only ones I remember clearly were in the southeastern US and in southern Europe – possibly in the vicinity of Italy and/or Greece. It was clear there was one in the area of central India, but it was hard to tell precisely where.

After seeing these bright spots, the darkness that covered the rest of the world became more transparent, and I was able to see what was happening in the world. It was clear that many governments and economic systems had collapsed, and conditions were chaotic in many places. There did not appear to be anything like a widespread conflict, like a world war, but rather many regional difficulties. There appeared to be climatic shifts,

"I saw there was a string attached to everyone and they were being pulled into precisely the perfect place for them to be."

especially droughts that had impact on food supplies, causing social upheaval. Social upheaval and natural disasters seemed especially prevalent in parts of North America, while disease and armed conflict were present more on other continents.

I saw a series of ripples all up and down the west coast of the US, the way pebbles will ripple when thrown into still water. I took this to mean great seismic activity occurring, but it did not seem to significantly destroy the land mass of California, despite being extremely destructive to everything on land there. It appeared to be survivable for some people. In fact, all of the disruption conditions around the globe seemed survivable for at least some people, and it felt as though it was up to individual karma who would be spared. I remember how astonishing it felt to see how exact the effects would be on every single person in the midst of such widespread disruption and chaos.

I saw that there was a string attached to everyone, and they were being pulled into precisely the perfect place for them to be. This reminds me of the person that asked Meher Baba if they should try to move away from cities in preparation for the events that

would change the world. Baba emphatically told them it did not matter whether they were in the middle of a city or the middle of the Himalayas. Each was as safe or as dangerous as the other.

This story is told in Lord Meher, Meher Baba's biography as follows²:

Once, in Scarsdale, Baba revealed to his lovers an upcoming catastrophe in which many would die. Fred Winterfeldt mentioned someone who, in order to protect his family and himself from the destruction Baba had foretold, wanted to establish a home high in the mountains and stock it with provisions.

Baba interrupted, stating emphatically, "No place will be safe, not even the top of the Himalayas! Only by the grace of God can one be saved."

"Will this destruction be manmade or natural?" Fred inquired.

"It will be both," Baba replied.

* * *

After seeing all of this, I felt remarkably peaceful about it. Everything was exactly as it was supposed to be. What I had been shown had answered any question I might have had, and given me absolute reassurance. I took this time to ask a question about what I should do in preparation for these events, which seemed to be

anywhere from five to twenty years off.

The answer I received had to do with my vocation, medicine. I was told that the place I live – Asheville (but that also the Chapel Hill area would be important) – was a place where many different kinds of medicine were being gathered together to flourish and be preserved for the future. I was told I would contribute to this in some way.

Then, the last images came forth in my mind. I saw that the bright area here in the Southeast would be a place that other people would try to get to, if they could. People would come from all over. Then I was flying down out of the mountains, over the lowlands of North Carolina, and I saw thousands and thousands of little, tiny farms and villages packed together densely, all of them with their own little lights.

I saw that knowledge and technology had not only survived, but began to thrive and expand. I did not see the entirety of humanity driven back into subsistence living, with no tools or learning to build upon. I saw a new way of living together, despite the collapse that had changed the world completely.

Notes:

1. The Lagoon Cabin is at the Meher Spiritual Center in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.
2. From Lord Meher, by V.S. Kalchuri, p. 3880: "Manmade & Natural Disaster." Accessed on-line (November 2011): <http://www.lordmeher.org/index.jsp?pageBase=page.jsp&nextPage=3880>





This is a very significant book, that features a remarkable man, Don E. Stevens. I consider Don a great thinker, and a great lover of God. For nearly seventy years of his life he was a representative of esoteric Sufism, and on dozens of occasions visited and spent intimate time with a teacher whom many consider to have been the Christ — the Buddha come again. As one might take a class called Psychology 101 or 102, this book gets way beyond that; this is an advanced course, with extended discussions and deep understanding of something that is so vital to spiritual growth, human welfare and love . . . forgiveness.

— Daniel Ladinsky
Best-selling Penguin author of poetry

Hello My Friends,

Please join us in celebrating the publication of Don Stevens' last book project (before he passed away in April of this year), with the Companion Books literary event of 2011:

The Doorbell of Forgiveness **Don E. Stevens**

with his

Young People's Group

compiled and edited by Laurent Weichberger

(London: Companion Books, 2011)

ISBN-13: 9780952509752

This book is based on a seminar given by Don E. Stevens during October 2007. He felt strongly that the most important spiritual work in the world today is associated with forgiveness. Don and his Young People's Group (YPG) shared for a weekend in Los Angeles about the best way forward.

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“The scope of service is not limited to great gestures like giving big donations to public institutions. They also serve who express their love in little things. A word that gives courage to a drooping heart or a smile that brings hope and cheer in the midst of gloom has as much claim to be regarded as service as onerous sacrifices and heroic self-denials. A glance that wipes out bitterness from the heart and sets it throbbing with a new love is also service, although there may be no thought of service in it. When taken by themselves, all these things seem to be small; but life is made up of many such small things. If these small things were ignored, life would be not only unbeautiful but unspiritual.”

- Meher Baba



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