

# Wayward

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## The Discovery

I moved to Wayward in 2015. My job in Chicago had evaporated but I managed to find a downsized version in Wayward so my move was as permanent as things get these days.

After being opened in Chicago I was a regular latihan participant in the group there. Wayward is a large town but no match in size compared to a city. I expected to latihan alone, with trips to annual events like regional gatherings for social contact and renewal. Keeping up the discipline of regular latihans by myself proved difficult. However, I maintained my Facebook page with several past Subud acquaintances as friends. That helped.

Three months later a Chicago friend wrote that he had heard of a group latihan in Wayward. He added that it was not on the national list and he had no further information. I e-mailed the national office which replied that, yes, there had been a request from Wayward to be recognized as a group. The office gave an address but said that the decision as to whether or not to recognize the group was yet to be settled.

The following evening I went to the address and found a substantial building on the fringe of the industrial district with a sign over the entry reading 'Inner Gym'. The interior lights were on and two or three people entered while I hesitated. I followed them in.

Inside the spacious foyer, immediately to the left and right of me were desks with illuminated lamps but empty chairs. In front of me was a wall with a large, wide notice board unevenly covered with sections of jumbled and more formal postings. Below, in the centre, was a conspicuous box with a slot labelled 'DONATIONS' and a suggested \$2 per latihan. On either side of the notice board were doors, with tables positioned beside them, one monitored by a man and the other by a woman. Their jobs required their attention. They watched with relaxed care as each participant of their own gender pressed a finger on an identification device that produced a green light where a red one had been. Having completed the process, each entrant then passed through the door and disappeared. I thought the process strange but decided to proceed. So far no one had paid any attention to me.

I approached the man at his table. He looked up briefly, not wanting to break his attention from those entering.

'Hello,' he said, watching the red light turn green yet again.

'Hello. I wonder if I'm in the right place...?' I paused.

'For what?' he asked quietly.

'Well, I heard that Subud latihans take place here...at this address.'

'Yes,' he said, looking up briefly. 'That's happening right now. Though we just call them "latihans".'

'Well, I'm a Subud member from Chicago...'

'Oh, good.'

He returned his attention to the people passing to say to me, slightly distractedly, 'We welcome Subud members here. Our latihans are no different here from any group in the country that you might have attended. Each Subud group does vary slightly....'

He broke off his sentence to offer assistance to a young man who seemed to have a question.

Then, in a pause in the traffic, he stood, stretched his back and then extended his hand.

'By the way, I'm Arnie.'

I shook his briefly and said, 'I'm Frederic...uh...Fred.'

'Fred,' he confirmed. 'If you want to latihan here, please check in with Ian.'

He pointed to the now occupied desk on the same side of the foyer as his table and returned to his seat to monitor the next entrant.

'Thanks,' I said, and moved toward the indicated desk.

Noticing me, Ian stood up. 'Can I help you?'

'I think so. Arnie suggested I should see you.'

He offered his hand, which I shook.

'Please sit down.'

I noticed that his name was on his badge along with the title 'Helper'.

'What can I do for you?' he asked.

'I'm a Subud member and heard that you offer latihans here.'

'So you're here to attend the exercise?'

'Yes.'

'When and where were did you begin doing latihans?'

'Chicago in 1987.'

'So you've been latihanning quite a while,' he affirmed.

He paused. Looking at me he said, 'Well, that's all I need to know for you to go into latihan.'

I must have looked a little expectant. He still didn't know my name. What about my address and phone number, e-mail address...even occupation?

Ian sensed my perplexity. 'I'm sorry, I guess this procedure is a bit strange for you.'

All I need to know is that you've been opened or initiated and therefore that when you go in to latihan you won't be confused. If you hadn't been opened, you couldn't have given me that simple answer. Then our conversation would have proceeded differently.'

'I see,' I said. 'You don't need to know my name and address?'

'No. Not for just attending latihan. Is this a single visit?'

'I live here now. I'd like to come back for more.'

'Good. Please let me explain to you how it works here. As an organization we're not interested in your name. We try to make people welcome and people can exchange names with us if they like, but the Latihan Society makes no record of participants' names. Of course, we want you to be pleased with the latihan arrangements, but because some people like to be anonymous we consider that's their right. Nor do we require you to join the Society which runs this place.'

'Oh.'

I must have sounded perplexed.

Ian reassured me. 'There are a number of clubs listed on the notice board. If you're interested in any of them, just join them.... You don't have to join any if you don't want to.'

'Aren't they part of the organization?' I asked.

'No. They're not included in the mandate of the Society. Imagine that, unlike the situation in Subud, the cultural or charitable clubs are of no concern to the Society, period.'

'Are notices of their meetings published in the Society's newsletter?'

'No. They have their own newsletters. The Society doesn't have one or need one.'

'Am I excluded from the Society?'

'No. No no, but like the clubs if you want to join the Society, you will have to agree to its terms of membership. The Society also has an annual fee. It runs the hall and support services for the latihan. Nothing else. It has nothing to do with any of the interests or beliefs of the latihan participants. Neutrality is a strict rule that applies to publications and anything else that may come up. When acting as a representative of the Society or doing Society business, even in casual conversations, Society members must not express their own opinions about matters of personal faith or world view or advocate that the Society take a position on those things. Of course, as a private person a Society member is free to participate in any club or other activity, even faith based clubs like the Interfaith Club or the Legacy Club. Depending upon the club, you may be on their mailing lists or duty rosters. Club membership has nothing to do with the Society.'

He paused. 'Is that clear?'

'I think so. I guess that means that my name will not appear on the Society membership list if all I do is latihan?'

'That's right. You may ask to be on a list to receive the Society's e-mails or postal

notices. But that's your choice. The Latihan Society is not secret about what it does. Apart from its members, few are interested in it. In any case all the material produced by the Society is posted on the notice board: meeting minutes, financial statements, change of latihan times, that sort of thing.'

'So, there are Society meetings.'

'Oh yes, two kinds. The helpers, who are all Society members, welcome any latihan participants, such as yourself, to meetings twice a month to talk together about the latihan. They also run the latihan. For instance, the people working in this foyer tonight are all helpers. During latihan sessions we share our duties such as being at this desk and attending in the latihan itself.'

'And the second?'

'The second?'

'The second type of meeting.'

'Oh, yeah... The members meet in the Society's annual business meetings, sub-committee meetings, special meetings. They are no big deal. Non-members are welcome to observe them. Some non-members, like the present bookkeeper, work for the Society but they have no vote.'

'I see. And the clubs?'

'As I said they're independent and each have their own set ups. Some keep member records. Some are very temporary. Some publish, meet regularly and so forth. Some don't. They are independently financed and when they use these facilities, they pay rent. The largest are the Social Club, the Legacy Club and the Arts Club.'

'What is the Legacy Club?'

'Their members look after a library of Subud books, particularly Bapak's talks and the like and other information that interests them. They also keep a local history archive and hold meetings from time to time.'

'And they are not part of the Society?'

'No. They are financially and structurally independent.'

'That's a lot to take in,' I said. 'I'll need some time to think about that.'

'Of course. If you have any questions just ask.'

'Sure.'

'Do you want to go into latihan tonight?'

I nodded. 'Uh-huh.'

'I need to record your fingerprint to enable you to check in.'

He pointed to a device on the desk, tapped the computer tablet and asked me to place my index finger in the slot.

'Hey. What is the point of this?'

'The Society needs to gather data about how many people are doing latihan and to manage voting for the helpers' pool...mmmm.... Well, I guess you need to be more filled in.'

'Yes.' I nodded. There was obviously more and my curiosity was piqued.

'Well, you remember that I said that some people like to be anonymous and that the Society does not need to know who they are? Well, that's true but the Society, like any business, needs to know how many customers it has and how often they need to be served. This information enables planning and, should the national Subud organization admit us, it will be needed to determine the number of our delegates for national meetings — that sort of thing. In addition, in our local we have regular elections for the helpers pool in which the voters are all the latihan participants who attend regularly.

'The helpers pool?'

'Yes. When we started this local we didn't want to disturb how the helpers had traditionally arranged themselves when they were Subud helpers. But we did want to provide a mechanism for the regular latihan participants to be able to remove the people they didn't like from among the helpers. We felt that the helpers should continue to control how many active helpers they needed and retain the right to choose them but only from an elected pool. So the helpers decide how many they require to look after the latihans and the needs of the participants. The voters are asked to affirm that number and then vote for half as many more in a pool from which the helpers can choose their team. If you want to be a helper, you have to be voted into the pool. The helpers can then choose you or not as they see fit. This election occurs annually in January.'

'That's a big change.'

Ian nodded. 'Uh-huh.'

He waited for the idea to sink in.

On reflection, the helpers' set up seemed clear enough so eventually I came back to my original question.

'So, why do you need my fingerprint?'

'At first we didn't have many members and, as we all knew each other, we kept hand-written attendance records and used visual recognition to admit people to the latihans and collect statistics. Then our membership grew and remembering who had been opened or not became difficult. So, we used available computer technology to simplify admission and data gathering. We need the data about people but not their identities. If you want I will tell you about the data processing. Most participants don't care but you seem interested.'

'Well, I think I ought to know. It *is* my fingerprint.'

'It is. But we don't store your name, just the fingerprint. What happens is that the digital image of your right index finger, or another if you prefer, is recorded in a permanent data file along with today's date and a unique, randomly generated identification number. When you want to enter a latihan, you place your finger in the reader at the door changing the light from red to green because the program sees a match between the image stored in the permanent file and your newly applied finger.

That admits you to the latihan.'

'OK.... Is that it? What happens to the identification number and the date in the file?'

'A second, temporary file is generated when you enter. It is used to garner useful statistics such as how often the unknown person linked to your fingerprint attends latihan. From that and information in the permanent file we get the retention percent of those opened. We also get the number of people who must be served by latihan facilities per day, per week, per month or per quarter. In addition, we need to know how many participants are "regular" as defined by the Society. At present a "regular participant" is defined as someone who attended six latihans in the last three months. Regular participants can vote for the helpers pool and join the Society.'

'Six in three months to be considered active! That's quite demanding compared to what I'm used to.'

'The participation rate for regular participants can easily be changed if needed. This method of counting is similar to, but more accurate than tallies of "active" members in some Subud groups. But, we do it without knowing who we're counting.'

'I'm a suspicious guy. How do I know to trust you or your system?'

'You don't know. However, the program is open for anyone to use it or to inspect the code. A page is posted on the notice board over there. I have one here if you want to take it with you.'

He searched in the desk and handed me a detailed description of the programs and their uses.

I looked at the page. 'Whew...that's a lot to take in. Do others manage to understand it?'

'By far the greatest number of participants are not concerned with the computer program. If they want a complete description they can get it just as you have been given it now. The only requirement for us is that you must have on file a permanent record matching your fingerprint to enter the latihan.'

I agreed to having my fingerprint recorded.

'Does it matter which finger I use?' I asked.

'No, as long as you always use the same finger. Most people use their index finger.'

I put my right index finger in the slot of Ian's reader and the light turned green apparently indicating that my print had been digitized.

'That's it,' Ian said, 'The latihan is continuous from 7pm to 10pm tonight. You can keep track of your time by the illuminated clock on the wall. If you need anything just ask. The duty helper in the latihan is Harold. He has a name tag.'

'Thanks,' I said. 'Oh, by the way...' Needlessly, I nearly told him my name. '...It doesn't matter... Thanks, you've been most helpful.'

'You're welcome,' he said.

I returned to Arnie at the entrance table and placed my finger on the reader. The red light turned green and I entered the latihan.

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## **Clubs**

During the next few months of latihan in Wayward, I met up with three or four people who included me in after-latihan coffee get-togethers. On one occasion, I asked about a party being advertised on the notice board.

'Who goes to the parties?'

'Anyone who does latihan and any friends they bring. George and Wilma go.' Wilma is George's partner. She no longer comes to latihan but apparently goes to parties. George was a regular at our coffee routine though not that evening.

'Ah,' I said. 'Who arranges them?'

That invited an explanation of how the clubs worked. The parties and other events were arranged by the Social Club. It was made up of people with different talents and interests. Some liked to prepare refreshments and serve them. Some liked to prepare and support entertainment and some just liked to party and help a bit...or not.

'Do people who have never latihan go?' I asked.

'Oh yes, occasionally...as a friend...unless the community is invited. Then it is advertised like any public event.'

'Interesting.... So what is the Legacy Club about?' I asked.

'It's organized like the other clubs. There are a lot of people who attend latihan who are especially serious about their spiritual life. Some of them are members of local religious congregations. Others have a more private and philosophical interest. The Legacy Club appeals to those who are particularly interested in Subud, its history and Bapak's legacy. That's how it got its name.'

'So there is quite a connection with Subud?'

Nods.

'They run the library, don't they?' I sometimes saw people bringing books to and from the hall and I had noticed a book room with the Club's name on it.

'Yes. They also hold group DVD sessions or discussions. I'm sure you've seen those advertised on the notice board.'

'Uh huh,' I said. Then, remembering their role I asked, 'Do helpers join the Legacy Club?'

'Some do. When helpers or other Society members join any club they do so as private individuals.'

I joined the Social Club and got involved with entertainment.

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## **The Helpers' Pool**

I had been to several of the meetings held by the helpers who, as expected, were identified by name tags. They were also introduced by their full names. They certainly weren't anonymous. A few latihan participants attended, some regularly, to make up rather informal meetings in which we talked about our lives and latihans and their relationship to each other. One of the two meetings each month was for men and women separately and one was for both sexes together. Most of the helpers were pleasant and one or two were outstanding but I took a dislike to a couple of them and found some others lacklustre.

As January rolled around I decided that I would vote for the helpers' pool. Understanding the election turned out to be a challenge.

The voting took place during the final week of January. I applied my finger, qualified as a voter and was handed a ballot for the men helpers. The women had a separate pool.

The ballot had two parts. At the top was a short paragraph telling me that the local had grown to 250 from 180 the year before. The helpers were requesting a pool of up to 18 to serve approximately 120 men with 12 helpers. I knew that 3 one-hour latihans were offered on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 12 hours in all. A quick calculation let me see a need for 3 helpers on duty at every latihan for 1 hour each at the information desk, entrance table and latihan room. That would be 6 helpers per week with the same people on duty twice a week. Given helper-member meetings, individual face-to-face meetings, absentee and sick days, 12 seemed a reasonable working number to be drawn from the 18 in the pool for the year. The remaining 6 might be chosen as replacements during the year in the event of some long term absence. Before I arrived, in the previous year there had been 13 in the pool of whom 9 were active. They also were on duty for 4 latihan sessions per week but the sessions were shorter: two for 1 hour and two for 2 hours. The work load had been considerably less.

The ballot asked me to approve the pool size of 18 or offer an alternative. I check-marked my approval of 18.

In the second part I was presented with a list of 38 men who were willing and qualified to be in the pool. There was no comment beside the names to indicate whether they were current helpers, had previously been helpers or were new candidates. Just a list of names. I hadn't met most of them. On the list were the helpers I had met at the meetings, some of whom I liked and one of the two I disliked. The rest were either adequate in my judgement or unknown. The voting instructions were to check-mark every candidate that I approved of and leave the others blank. I did so leaving blank all the names that I didn't like along with many others whom I didn't know. I hadn't paid much attention to the pictures and bios of candidates on the notice board.

'Next time,' I said to myself.

The ballots were counted and the results posted on the notice board next day listing the names, but not the votes, received for 19 men along with a minimum cut-off vote of '3'. The women's list had 17. They had asked for 20. Their minimum cut-off vote was '1'.

I asked Jack, who had been counting votes, why there were 19 and not 18 on the men's list and 17 rather than 20 on the women's.

'Two men were tied for the 18th spot,' he said. 'Ties for the last spot are always all included. In this case both the 18th and 19th spot got 3 votes each. That's where the

cut-off vote comes from. After all, this is a pool from which only some may be chosen later so the size can vary a bit without harm. Being in the pool just means you are willing, qualified and supported by those served. Anyone who received no votes is never elected to the pool. So the total of 17 in the women's list meant that only 17 had received any votes. All those chosen had at least 1 vote, the cut-off vote. The rest had been left blank.'

I also asked him, 'Why limit the number who wanted to serve as helpers and had qualified to do so?'

Jack replied, 'If you want, I can go into the thinking behind the whole process. It took us quite a while to work it out.... Interested?'

'Yes,' I said. As you know by now, I am a sucker for wanting details.

'Very well. People were discontented about having no choice as to who should be helpers. The main irritant was the inability to get rid of helpers they didn't like. At the same time they acknowledged that only practising helpers could judge who had the background to do the job. Quality became the issue.'

'What do you mean by quality?'

'Good question. After trying very hard to reach agreement, we decided that what makes a good helper could not be decided by sharing ideas as there never would be agreement. Determining what quality meant was left to each person in the voting community to decide by voting. Both helpers and regular participants would vote for a limited pool from which the helpers could select their team.'

'OK, so you dodged the bullet about quality but why the limit?'

'Without a limit, all the regular participants would automatically be available. There would be no need for the community to vote and the regular participants' opinions wouldn't count. The choice of the helpers' team would be entirely in the helpers' hands as it was before. The original trigger for the process would remain an irritant, that is, the inability to get rid of pesky helpers.'

'Well, couldn't the community endorse by vote the helper team members after they were selected?'

Jack replied, 'Yes, that was considered. People don't like to vote against people rather than for people, especially in a small community. Another problem is that once a team exists, people felt that by voting against anyone approved by the team itself, they would be voting a lack of confidence in the whole team even if there were only one or two they wanted to fire.'

'I get it.'

I was not sure I did understand but I was beginning to see that group social dynamics could be more fragile than I ever imagined. So a limit was needed but how to set it? That was my next question to Jack.

'First, you have to understand the difference between a limit and a quota. You "reach" a limit but you "fill" a quota. If you had a queue, a limit of 15 would mean that the 16th person and above would be excluded but 15 would be included in the quota. "Limit" is exclusive. "Quota" is inclusive. Once you decide on a limit it is more pleasant to talk about a quota. People in a quota have "made the cut". The question then becomes, "Who sets the quota?"'

'One darn choice after another.... So, who does set it?'

'The helpers.'

'Why?'

'Well, they are the only people who experience the work load of being helpers. So they can agree, more easily than anyone else, on how many of them there needs to be.'

'But the size of the pool was on the ballot....'

'Yes, but the final choice is up to the helpers. On the ballot the voters are asked their opinion with an understood obligation that if most of them didn't like the quota, the helpers would take that into consideration next year.'

'I get it. So that part is an opinion poll. The quota is up to the helpers.'

Jack added, 'Yes, but it includes a buffer of about 50% more as spares.'

'Spares?'

'For practical and quality choice reasons. If a helper can't continue or the team has misjudged their number for the work to be done or the population grows, then they need others eligible to add to the team without needing another vote. As to quality, there will undoubtedly be some elected to the pool whom the helpers don't like. Helpers need enough choice in choosing their team that they are not singling out people to reject.'

'More fragile social dynamics.'

'Exactly.'

I wondered how people got on the ballot. Were they nominated?

Jake explained, 'No. In a larger group, perhaps, but in a small group that is one complication too many. Candidates nominate themselves provided they meet the conditions. Because the vote is by approval, any number could be on the ballot.'

'Approval?'

'The voting method is known as the "approval" method. Negative choices are just the same as abstentions. If you vote by preference numbers you vote "No" by assigning a low or no number. Here you don't vote "No". You just vote in favour of candidates.'

'More social dynamics,' we said, nodding our heads in unison.

I continued, 'Ummm...candidates? You said "conditions" they had to meet. What conditions?'

'They have to be regular participants in latihans. And they have to qualify by having been on a previous ballot or having taken the tutorial offered by the helpers.'

'Any previous ballot?'

'Yes. All candidates have, at some time, taken the tutorial. They can be on the ballot

as often as they want after that. Of course, that means that all serving helpers can also throw their hat in the ring.'

'So, are they also candidates?'

'If they want to be. Every serving helper has to have been first elected into the current year's pool.'

'No exceptions...'

'No.'

'What's the "tutorial" all about. It sounds like an exam by the helpers.'

'No, not an exam. A familiarizing experience. No one is graded. The helpers get a chance to observe the candidates during the tutorial so that if they are in the pool later they will have some idea of their qualities. On the other hand, the candidates get a detailed look at the helpers' role. Having had a close look at the job, quite a few decline to continue after experiencing the tutorial.'

'Oh, I see...yes, I can understand that....'

'Both the community at large and the helpers have a role to play, so, while both vote, the helpers alone make the final choices from a pool chosen by the voters. By this process quality is not defined but is expected to be maintained by satisfying the various points of view in the community.'

I poured some cold water on his enthusiasm, 'It just looks like standard voting to me.'

'Not quite,' he replied. 'Because the helpers are also voters, the stabilizing effect of continuity is a likely result. Some objected to that. In the end, it was agreed that stability through some continuity did not prevent a determined community from removing those it disliked.'

'So a strong dislike had to be widely felt.'

'Yes. But as it turned out there is another, unexpected factor at work. The quality of the selected helpers also depends upon the size of voter turnout and the number of candidates. Widely disliked helpers can be removed but only if a large number of people vote thus increasing the total vote count for the winners and reducing the approval of those disliked to the point where they will not attract enough votes to be in the pool. Knowing this, voters often don't turn out in large numbers unless they really want someone removed.'

'The voters know that?'

'Yes. The word gets around. But there's more.... A second factor beyond qualification is that a balance has to be struck between finding the best people and finding enough people.'

'Enough?'

'Sometimes it's hard to find the willing. Here's the situation. The larger the number of candidates more than the quota, the more choice there is for the voters and, in theory, the greater the opportunity for quality satisfaction. If the total number of candidates with any votes is equal to or less than the quota, all are elected by acclamation with a corresponding reduction in potential quality.'

'Stability balanced against the need to clean house,' I mused.

'Jack, when I first asked you about why there were 19 and not 18 on the men's list and 17 rather than 20 on the women's, you never actually answered the question.'

'Didn't I?... No, I guess you're right. Instead, I got going on the history of the voting system.'

'Yes.'

'Well, you need to know how the counting is done to answer that question. Because every voter can give one vote each to as many candidates as he wishes, when the votes are counted the candidates are listed in ranked sets according to the votes garnered. For instance, all those with 15 votes are grouped together as a set. 14, 13, and so on are grouped together right down to 1 vote sets. Then the sets are added starting from the highest votes until the quota is reached. The last position in the quota is filled by the last ranked set. That set may have more people in it than left in the quota. All in the last ranked set are elected even though the total will be over the quota. That is what happened in the men's election. Given a large number of choices on the ballot, the least favoured candidates get very few votes and are eliminated when the quota is full. Zero votes are not counted. Widely disliked helpers can be removed but only if a large number of people participate by being both on the ballot and voting. High participation increases the total vote count for the winners and reduces the approval of those disliked to the point where they will not attract enough votes to make the quota.'

'You touched on that before.'

'Yes, but this time I'm showing how the ballot counting makes it happen.'

'That's another way of showing that quality depends upon a large turnout.'

'Right,' he agreed. 'If there are as many or fewer candidates than the quota, no election is needed but there is no say in the quality by the voters. If there are only a few candidates more than the quota, the quality of the helpers would, in theory, be low. If only a few candidates are available in excess of the quota, enough could get zero votes that the number chosen would be less than the quota but those rejected would probably not be wanted by the voters in any case. That is what happened in the women's pool.'

'Again...participation matters.'

'Yep. Otherwise you get what you get, usually more of the same old, same old.'

I thanked Jack for the good hour he had spent with me. I had a feeling he was just getting warmed up. No matter how the process works, strong participation increases the likelihood that disliked helpers could be removed. Either a small field of candidates or low voter turnout would mean that a chance for change and quality renewal would be less.

As it turned out, enough of the others agreed with me about the one serving male helper I disliked. So, to my satisfaction, he was not included in the pool for the year.

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**The Society**

In 2018 I applied to join the Society, not out of any deep interest in it — it seemed rather gray — but because I wanted to contribute to the enterprise beyond just donating and, I confess, I had become interested through watching several meetings as an observer. Contrary to my expectations, I didn't learn anything I didn't already know but could have guessed. The Society members are very uncomplicated about their participation. They just want to contribute to the support of the latihan. And, of course, there are no other stated objectives in the 'Aims' posted on the notice board which reads, in part:

*The Society supports a process known as the 'latihan' participated in only by those initiated by the helpers which maintains as much simplicity as possible in the procedure including the non-interruption of any participant engaged in the process by any other participant unless there is an emergency. The principles of the Neutrality Agreement shall apply to all while participating.*

Nobody asked me to join though they could have, nor did they question my wish to. There was a low key standing invitation to join on the notice board along with a phone number.

A woman answered the phone. 'Hello. Christine speaking.'

'Are you the person I should ask about the Latihan Society?'

'Yes. You're interested in joining?'

'I'm thinking of it,' I said a bit awkwardly. Then realizing I had never met her, 'By the way, I'm Fred Hughes.'

'Hi Fred. Do you latihan regularly at the Inner Gym?'

Of course, I realized, she had no list to refer to. 'Yes. This is my third year.'

'Will you be at latihan on Thursday?' she asked. 'I'll be in the office from seven till nine.'

'I'll come and see you.'

'Right. See you on Thursday then. Bye.' She hung up.

That Thursday, I knocked on and opened the door to the Society office at the back of the building where Christine, I supposed, was at her desk.

'Come in,' she said, looking up. 'You must be Fred.'

'Yes.'

'Please come in. I'm Christine... I've seen you around.'

She offered a chair at the side of the desk.

'Thanks,' I said and sat down.

'So, you want to become a member of the Latihan Society.'

I nodded.

'No need to ask you why but there are some things that I have to make sure you understand.'

She paused. I waited, wondering what I had missed in those meetings as an observer...; then:

'Because you become a member of a legally registered organization, you take some responsibility for what it does. You'll no longer be anonymous. Your name will be listed on the hall notice board as a member. If you take on work for the Society, you'll be asked to wear a name tag depending upon what job you are doing — you know — meeting the public, fielding complaints from latihan participants, that sort of thing. I think you probably know these things but I'm obliged to review them with you.'

'Of course,' I said.

'First, I need to establish that you are a regular participant. So you will need to do the finger thing.'

She tapped the computer tablet and pointed to the fingerprint reader.

'Please.'

The light turned green. She looked at the tablet. I craned my neck a little. Christine noticed that I was interested and turned the tablet around so I could read it. A message had appeared: 'Regular Participant'. There was no reference to the identification number or the number of times I had attended.

'Fine,' she said. 'You understand that if you want to rejoin next year you must qualify again?'

I nodded.

'...and that you will pay an annual membership fee?'

'Yes,' I said.

'Good.' Christine opened a drawer and took out two forms.

'This is the membership information form for your name, mailing address, phone number and e-mail address. It's pretty obvious.'

I looked it over while Christine continued, 'You must be aware of the Neutrality Agreement?'

'Yes,' I said, 'I've seen it on the notice board. I don't have any problem with it.'

She handed a copy to me which read:

#### *NEUTRALITY AGREEMENT*

*As a member of the Latihan Support and Preservation Society (the Society) I agree to:*

*Limit my activities as a member of the Society to non-partisan support and preservation of the latihan carried out using procedures as described in the*

*Aims of the Society.*

*When acting as a representative of the Society I will not advocate any world view or take a position about a world view in any discussions. When it is not clear to others whether I am acting as a representative of the Society, I will assume that they see me as a representative and will not take part in any such exchange unless I declare on each occasion that I am speaking for myself.*

*I will accept, with gratitude, correction by members and non-members alike of any failure of mine to abide by the above.*

*Repeated failures on my part to live up to this agreement may result in revocation of my membership in the Society.*

*Full Name* \_\_\_\_\_

*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_

*Date* \_\_\_\_\_

I had considered this requirement for some time but when faced with the fact of actually signing it, I was confronted with the seriousness of the responsibility. I did hesitate, but only for a moment.

I filled out the address form and signed the Agreement.

'Do you want to pay your membership fee tonight?'

'Yes, I brought my wallet.'

Christine retrieved a receipt book from the desk, filled it out, signed it and gave it to me in exchange for \$30 cash.

'Congratulations,' she smiled. 'You are our newest member. We will be having a facilities meeting on the 16th if you'd like to come.'

'Thanks, I would,' I said, rising. 'I'll see myself out.... Bye.'

'Bye.'

The Latihan Society leased, but could own, its own facilities. There were the standard officers and bodies of any society: president, secretary, treasurer and sub-committees like building operations and promotion.

The helpers and those who were in the helpers pool were all obliged to join as they were representatives of the Society when in support of latihans and ministering to participants. Helpers, however, did not do any of the temporal work. This separation of duties was a copy of the intentions of the Subud organization.

The very infrequent meetings of the Society were standard copies of any society's annual general meetings or specially called meetings. The usual reports were read, a common informal set of procedural rules was used and the officers were elected by

voting. Testing was not employed.

The meetings were open to anyone who could pass the finger recognition check successfully whether they were occasional attendees or even inactive persons. However, only members could participate. Non-members were strictly observers.

Even when they were not on duty, however, members faced touchy situations in which they were seen by others as representing the Society. Then the Neutrality Agreement came into play in a personal way. The experience could be awkward.

The purpose of the Neutrality Agreement was to ensure that all participants in the latihan were free of any official pressure to believe anything that others believed or thought that they ought to believe. Surprisingly, this constraint upon members while representing the Society was not easy to follow, especially since they had to learn that the very language they used habitually contained unconscious biases about their own world views. So the experience of living under this discipline was hard.

During a pause in the facilities planning meeting, we had a coffee break.

Christine, who it turns out, had come from a Subud group in Michigan, asked me if I knew Harlan Demarias.

'Um...yes, I think so,' I said. 'I think he was in Chicago when I was there. I remember his name being in the Newsletter along with a picture of several others at some weekend do or other. I didn't know him personally. Why do you ask?'

'He died.'

'Oh,...did you know him well?'

'Yes, well enough. We were on a couple of committees together.'

Silence.

'Ah,' I ventured, 'I guess we can assume that he's OK.'

Christine seemed unusually alert.

Slowly, after a pause, she said, 'What do you mean?'

'Well...,' I sensed a *faux pas* and tried to make myself clear. 'He was attending the latihan..., wasn't he?'

'Yes.'

Another pause.

Christine, determined, spoke slowly and quietly. 'You just included me in a view of death that I may or may not share. You do realize that that is a contravention of the Neutrality Agreement given that you're at this meeting and you're wearing your name tag?'

'Oh...no...I didn't think my comment was anything more than small talk.'

'It was more. We have to pay attention to what we're really saying and learn to check our habit of making assumptions about what others believe.'

I was stunned. 'What can I say?'

Christine looked at me and waited expectantly.

Then I remembered. 'Oh...thank you for pointing out my slip.'

I felt oddly at peace.

'There will be more,' she said gently. 'We're human. Believe me, it takes a while to get the hang of it.... By the way, personally I don't have any disagreement with what you said. But some would be upset and even annoyed.'

'Well, what should I have said? I didn't want to ignore you.'

'You could've asked me how I felt about his death. You would not only have acknowledged me but you'd also have turned the initiative over to me. I would then expect to be listened to without your bias...if I so chose.'

Members of the Society are expected to make unintended 'neutrality' mistakes occasionally, especially at first. Members are mandated to correct, privately, neutrality transgressions of fellow members in their dealings with each other or with non-members. Indeed, even old hands who were not and might never have been members are quick to query and correct members who break their Neutrality Agreement. If a member, when acting as a Society representative, can not learn to self-check, some might even say self-censor, his or her conversational habits, eventually, on a formal complaint, they could have their membership revoked by a vote of the membership. Every latihan participant knew about the Agreement and many prized it as a protection against pressure to conform. The laying of 'guilt trips', even little ones, was not tolerated by this community.

Contrary to my expectations, I have come to see that the Agreement has accomplished its intended results by the relaxed tone I experienced in this group of people. The culturally built-in protection of their beliefs made them feel secure. I found that I was willing to take on the required self-discipline. No such restraint was needed in club activities because they were entirely voluntary and independent of the organization. Indeed, some were intentionally partisan and the debates quite noisy.

\* \* \*

About the time I joined, the national Subud organization, facing a declining membership, was showing signs of wanting to include this local in its list of groups. The negotiations were proving difficult as each side had to learn a lot about the other... and themselves. It will be interesting to see the upshot. I'm just pleased that I have a place to latihan and people I enjoy being with.

\* \* \*

For those who find such things interesting, this is the Latihan Society's information sheet I mentioned earlier that explains the fingerprint programs:

### ***THE LATIHAN SOCIETY***

#### ***HOW YOUR FINGERPRINT IMAGE INFORMATION IS PROCESSED AND USED.***

*When you have your fingerprint recorded it is digitized and a program*

stores it as a single record in a primary file along with a randomly generated identification number and today's date. In front of the first digit of the number is an 'M' for men and 'W' for women input by the operator.

Every time you enter latihan an 'Entry Program' compares your fingerprint with the primary file records. If your fingerprint image matches a stored image in a primary file record the date in that record is overwritten with today's date and the light is changed from red to green. The identification number and today's date, but not the fingerprint image, are then copied as a new record to a working file provided there is no match for today's date and number already recorded earlier that day. That way if you enter latihan more than once a day, the program will only write one record for each day.

The working file collects records with dates that are newer than or equal to the date 91 days ago. Any record with a date older than 91 days is erased whenever any program using these files is loaded. This keeps the file always up to date. 91 days is the equivalent of 3 months or one quarter of a year:  $91 \text{ days} \times 4 = 364 \text{ days} = 1 \text{ year}$ .

A 'Qualified Participants Program' reads the primary file and displays a report showing a count of all the records from a requested date to the present. The primary file records are of those who have qualified to enter latihan since the beginning of record keeping. These records are of all the people who have been opened here or have arrived here as previously opened new residents. Short term visitors' (non-residents) fingerprints are not recorded. The total number of records counted since the date requested is displayed:

Participants Qualified to Enter Latihan since xx/xx/xxxx (date)  
Men xxxx Women xxxx

The 'Current Attendance Program' counts the total number of records in the working file within the date span requested and displays a report of the total customer population load during any date span in the past 91 days:

All Current Latihan Attendances between xx/xx/xxxx & xx/xx/xxxx  
Women xxxx Men xxxx

This program also records in an archive file the total attendances for each quarter of all the years since the program began. When 91 days have passed since the last archive record was created, an archive record is added. In this way an attendance archive is built for historical comparisons.

The 'Retention Percentage Program' totals all the records with unique identification numbers in the working file and then totals all the records in the primary file from an input date to the present and reports a count comparison as a percentage of those individuals still attending latihan with all those who have ever qualified to attend from the input date. The retention percentage is displayed:

Retention Percentage of Current Attendees  
compared to All Qualified People since:  
xx/xx/xxxx  
Women xx% Men xx%

This program does not distinguish between those not attending who

*have resigned, moved or died. Therefore the older the input date, the smaller the retention rate, even if every local resident opened currently attends latihan. Remember that every time a person enters latihan the primary file matching fingerprint record date field is updated.*

*The 'Regular Attendees Program' reads only the working file. A rate of attendance qualification number is input and a display is shown of the number of participants who meet or exceed that qualification. The current definition of a 'regular attendee' is 6 or more records for a given identification number in 91 days. This program works by comparing within the working file the unique identification number in each record with the other identical numbers in the file and counts the number of matching iterations. It then stores the identification numbers with iterations equal to or more than '6' to produce a list. When it has completed the list it adds up the number of men and women who qualify and displays:*

*All Regular Attendees  
Men xxxx Women xxxx*

*The 'Regular Attendance Confirmation Program' certifies individuals who want to qualify as 'regular participants' required for joining the Society. This program compares the applied finger's digital image to its stored digital image in the primary file. It then repeats the steps above in the 'Regular Attendees Program' using only the identification number associated with the applied finger in the working file. If the identification number appears 6 or more times it changes the light from red to green and displays:*

*Regular Participant*

*If the identification number appears less than 6 times it leaves the light red and displays:*

*Not a Regular Participant*

*The 'Qualified Voter Confirmation Program' is another version of the 'Regular Attendance Confirmation Program'. In this case it qualifies 'regular participants' for voting purposes. This time the program creates a temporary file that can be erased when the voting is over. If, as above, the applied finger image matches an image in the permanent file, it then uses the matching working file records to qualify the person as a regular participant. The program then seeks a match with the identification number in the temporary file and finding none creates a record in the temporary file of the identification number and then changes the light from red to green and displays:*

*Qualified Voter*

*If a person attempts to vote more than once the 'Qualified Voter Confirmation Program' will only accept one finger recognition attempt. It does this by repeating all the processes leading up to when the program seeks a match of the identification number in a record in the temporary file. If it finds a record created when the person first voted, the screen then displays:*

*Already Voted*

*The temporary file in this program also tracks and stores the number of voters voting in the election so that the percentage of voters compared to those qualified can be ascertained.*

*For further information ask the executive committee member in charge of the programs.*

\* \* \*

**Author's Note:**

*Wayward is an expository essay in story form which attempts to flesh out a new model of a local Subud group focusing on organizational structure and processes as they emerge from fundamental principles: the separation of the spiritual and temporal; the application of democratic norms; the requirement for total acceptance of any world view within the Subud culture; the support of the latihan as the single purpose of Subud as an organization; and the necessity for discipline in applying and living these principles. The sources for this story are the many articles on the Subud Vision site and two years of conversations with its editors and reading list-servers. David Week's 'Subud as University' is a spinal concept on which others hang. The author does not expect anyone completely to buy into this imaginary world. Rather he hopes that it will act as a springboard for particular reforms, including others not envisaged here, that the reader might wish to undertake in the real world.*