

## Let's Get Personal!

I thought I had finished this collection of articles. So many people have compared it unfavourably to my first collection (“Amazing Grace”) saying this one is “too much Subud” and “not enough about what has happened to you: Where have the people and places of the first book gone? What has happened in your own life apart from your struggle with Subud? Quite frankly, this interests us at least as much as what you have written about here.” Oh dear, I feel caught out and must try to put this right- hopefully with no more disappointment (and even, as in some cases, annoyance!) And how to do this without writing another book? Well, in some ways this is easier than before because for some years now my life has become more settled- certainly in ways that the first half of my Subud life were not! But let's start at the beginning...

I began this book with some turmoil as I made a new home with a new family, amidst some opposition which eventually settled down, leaving me happier than ever before and my work quite successful. My school was, in fact, awarded at this time with an “Achievement Award” following a much publicised positive inspection. Alas, I was not able to bask in this for long, however, because once again Fate intervened and I became so ill that I was forced to “take early retirement.” After 30+ years in Education I had the unusual experience of having time on my hands! I took to being a house husband like a duck to water, finding I was able to run the domestic scene easily and have more time for my more solitary pursuits. These latter became increasingly important to me.

I could not help but notice that as this happened to me my wife was becoming increasingly the opposite! She trained as a teacher and, as I ended my career, so she began hers! Our lives were going in completely opposite directions. For several years this was not a problem: in fact, my wife was quickly promoted and I enjoyed keeping in close contact (albeit at one remove now) with the educational world which I had recently left. But this did not last.

Maybe this was where the 18 year age gap between us made itself felt because as we each settled into our very different outer lives, so the differences between us gradually increased and finally became unbridgeable. My wife was worldly-busy; I was becoming more and more monastic! There was nothing I liked better than sitting in my own company, watching the changing seasons and

getting excited by *ideas, feelings and even inspirational prompts for my day*. My wife was enjoying the outer scene of people and worldly activity. We continued to share the Latihan but it was obvious that there was little else that we now had in common. I needed the space that worldly withdrawal gave; she needed more worldly and social engagement. So, in the end, we agreed to separate - and we did so *with no hard feelings at all!* I continued to want her to be happy and I still to this day get a fast heartbeat when I see her!

But our lives are about very different things now. Looking back on this separation, its rightness is shown to me by the ease with which it happened! And there had been no dramatic inner receivings or surprising outer happenings to influence this as with the other big events in my life previously. This is why I have not written about this latter part of my life before- this is supposed to be my spiritual autobiography after all and there was not anything obviously “spiritual” in evidence at this time of my life: this just happened in what I thought was the normal way. BUT now I think I may have got this wrong...

When I think of the feelings between the two of us at the beginning of our relationship, I am amazed at the naturalness and ease of its ending! Maybe this is evidence in itself of the reality of the “spiritual life”? You see, when my first marriage ended, I was devastated and caught up in a whirlwind of negative feelings. Yet, when my marriage to the “love of my life” ended, there was none of this. We remained friends in a way that had proved impossible in my first divorce and both our lives moved on and continued to grow in positive ways.

I took to living alone surprisingly positively: I loved the undistracted peace and quiet as for the first time in my adult life I had plenty of time to relate more to no-one other than myself! I had times when I actually felt more and more that being solitary was really a “flight of the alone to the Alone”! In other words I felt my life was now more real, more authentic, more “spiritual” than it had ever been before. I began to feel “spirituality” more in my bones and in more and more moments of my daily life. Dramatic inner “knowings” and outer synchronicities were now not *the only way* I could experience this Inner Life: I could feel it, even *be* it, in more moments of my day- when I was with my children, my friends etc ie in more of my ordinary daily activities.

So, I feel a very different person now from the one who started out on this adventure with the Latihan nearly 40 years ago. Then I barely survived the breakdown of my first marriage and only did so with the dramatic and

surprising help of the latihan (see: “Amazing Grace”) This time it was as natural to me as leaves falling from a tree in Autumn! Amazing- especially when I think that I would have sacrificed just about everything to be with this person at the beginning.

Mostly now I feel happy being more on my own: happy and more content, even more fulfilled. I am not completely alone: I have a part-time relationship with my second wife who has remained a good friend ever since we first met and even through - and in spite of! - my third marriage! We see quite a lot of each other. I have friends and activities outside of Subud. Some of these are connected with my new profession. I trained as a Counsellor for 4 years. Again this did not happen through any surprising inner prompts or dramatic outer events: I simply felt I would like to follow up on a long-standing interest of mine so I went to College and trained. I continue with this part-time now, mainly with clients who do not have the money to pay the normal rate, or even anything! (I see this as a chance to help or “give something back”!) I am a member of a couple of groups of counsellors who are committed to further training and have friends there. I now –and I am so glad of this- have a good relationship with my two children and especially one of my stepchildren who lives close enough to visit often and regularly (the rest live miles away, so it is not so regular or close) I am delighted to see my 5 grandchildren and 3 step-grandchildren almost weekly.

So there is still busy-ness but it is not exclusive of a more inwardly-focussed life. I now usually begin my day with a long stretch of Solitude as I sit alone in the early hours of the morning in what seems like a long pre-latihan sit! My awareness deepens in the peace and quiet of undistracted aloneness and I may receive practical “guidance” for the day ahead, or for the problems I may have at the time. My feelings will invariably be heightened and I have lost count of the times that they have been transformed from negative to positive just by sitting alone like this: it can be truly remarkable. Almost always, this Quiet Time will end for me with some moments, or minutes, of latihan. After this, the activities of my day will begin but they, too, will be interspersed with Quiet Moments and times of spontaneous latihan. At last my life seems to have become more as I would wish it to be and, I think to myself, more as it was *meant* to be.

I feel *so* grateful- at last!- for all that has happened to me under the undoubted influence and prompting of this strange phenomenon called

the Latihan!