

## NEW LIVES FOR OLD!

So, was being committed to practising 2 group latihans a week, and 1 latihan alone, *like rubbing a magic lamp called the latihan?! !* Looking back over more than three decades of my Subud life, it looks that way to me.

At 35 years old, my life looked settled: married with two children and a busy, although not ambitious, professional life. Then came the latihan kedjiwaan of Subud into my life at what looks to me, now, as just the right time. How would I have coped with divorce without it? Losing my wife and children was my Achilles heel: the worst thing I could have ever imagined happening to me. I am not exaggerating this! The loss of my father when I was so young had made me determined that the same loss would not happen to my children. I wanted a happy family life above all else. But this was not to be. Obviously, Subud could not prevent this (I have learnt the latihan will usually not override the will of the ego-whomever it belongs to!) but when such challenging things happen it can turn out to be truly a “God-send!” Suffice to say, I remain certain of it in my case and my gratitude to the Latihan has, if anything, increased with the passing years.

Without a wife, I still had the Latihan. And that made all the difference. Then within a fortnight of my wife leaving, my job presented me with a challenge that I soon felt was too much for me. I stared at a complete breakdown as I thought I needed to take refuge away from my job, friends and children and go back to my parents’ home some 70 miles away. Instead I took refuge (only just!) in the latihan and testing: that changed my whole perspective and my feelings, too, so that I was able to take the first step towards two promotions and a career that I now see as both the biggest success of my life and the most latihan guided.

There were other successes, too. Intuition, prompts from the latihan and testing opened the way for me to find a home for myself and my children which was truly amazing!

The Schoolhouse was like “a gift that fell out of the sky!” The years I lived there were to see many changes to my life- most of them latihan guided. My personality was continually forced to grow in necessary but nonetheless difficult ways as I the

“drifter,” the non-initiator, was forced to DO, to get things done and to be more involved in the world: to be organised and planned in detail. I had so much going on in my life: a hugely demanding job, running a house, looking after two children for half of the week, and then came a new relationship and step-family ...I often felt like a juggler with number of balls in the air: blink and I could easily drop one! It took a lot out of me but I seemed to need them all.

Paradoxically, too, I had discovered that I also needed doses of Solitude which the Schoolhouse gave me plenty of. I quickly discovered that I could not keep all these balls in the air without this, so I began a habit I have never lost: I would get up at 5am in order to sit completely alone for a couple of hours, at least, in a kind of extended pre-latihan quiet. Invariably these times would lead to the latihan, sometimes testing and nearly always to a more positive mood and even practical inspirations for the day. I still value these times immensely...

Although I discovered the need in me for perhaps more solitary times than usual, I also learnt that I did not want a life of complete aloneness. In fact, I was regularly reminded of this by my latihan. I could enjoy all day completely on my own but then I would want a sociable evening: a good laugh was especially appreciated! I enjoyed company; I enjoyed the ordinary things of life provided they did not overwhelm my Solitude. There were, e.g, occasional shopping days or trips out. My new partner was a good companion and over the next few years we were to take holidays to Greece, Portugal, Austria, Spain, eg, and my favourite...Switzerland. I saw more of the world in this time than I had ever done previously. At the beginning of my Schoolhouse life I would never have believed all this to have been possible as I struggled to pay bills, child maintenance (even though the children were with me half the week) furnish the house etc. Why, I was now even able to buy a new car every 2 or 3 years!

In fact, I have often looked back on my life in Subud with some disbelief as so much about, and around, me has changed- and so clearly for the better. I had, with such incredible good luck, been given my own home and had at last got it to be reasonably comfortable; I was not completely alone but I had time for my solitary pursuits; I had frequent contact with my children; I had a very interesting Inner Life and had seen the real value of the Latihan and testing and of quiet, solitary times. Most amazingly of all, I had achieved real and tangible success in my job

and in my material life. And, although our relationship had to change, the children and I were able to keep a closeness that so many fathers in my position feel they, through little fault of their own, irretrievably lost through their marriage breakdowns.

I stayed at the Schoolhouse until the children had become adults and moved out. This was not an immediate decision. As is so often the case with me, the Outer once again took a lead in my life as my son announced that he and his partner were being made homeless and were desperate for somewhere to live. The Schoolhouse came to the rescue once again as the most obvious solution seemed to be for me to go and live with my partner, at least for awhile, and the two of them should take on the Schoolhouse for as long as they needed it. So, then another phase began in my own life...

My move to live with my partner had immediate and noticeable benefits. In the winter I was immediately warm as one fire warmed the whole house: I would just lie in front of it and soak up the heat or just watch the red, orange and yellow flames dance behind the glass and think of the draughty, blanket-filled Schoolhouse days and how lovely it was to be so warm here! Here, I did not have to go round the whole house lighting every form of heating there was and then wait for ages for the whole house to get warm! And I did not have all the housework, cooking, washing, ironing etc to do, more or less single-handedly. In fact, my companion was a good house keeper and so I had little to do here – I got the coal in and that was about it! Altogether, the material aspects of life were easier now, probably, than they had ever been. And there was a companionship which I very much enjoyed. My partner was a good companion and easy to live with. She was happier, too, with me as a companion in her otherwise empty house, so all in all it was a good and positive arrangement. And it was to stay that way for several years...