



STARCROSS
community

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Sharings

Summer 2010

A Reflection from Brother Toby

DON'T FORGET YOUR VICTORY LAP(S)

Three seemingly unrelated things happened to me as the apple blossoms were fading from the trees and the business of nature's growth toward maturity was beginning.

FIRST, a book. Jim and Liz Bugental were trail-blazing psychologists who were very dear to me and many others. Liz was a nun in Los Angeles for 19 years. Her religious community and Cardinal McIntyre had very different views on living out the Gospel. He finally said do it his way or get out. 90% of the sisters parted paths with the cardinal. Liz was one. She and Jim married and lived in the Bay Area. A few years ago Jim had a stroke which took most of his memory but, as he put it smilingly to Liz, "I still have you!" He died at almost 93 in 2008. Liz followed at 83 in 2009, just as her book about "our later years" came out. A few weeks ago I found a suggestion there that we should take time out from growing old to walk, slowly, on a victory lap around the arena of our life celebrating all the hurdles we have crossed — "wrapped in the banner of our years" — commemorating the many victories in our lives.

SECOND, I have heard a lot this year about discovering that a parent, friend, or ourselves have reached the "aged" state. No longer "middle-aged" but AGED! I am one of those and, like many people I know, am trying to come to grips with what that means.

THIRD, a twenty-something lawyer is in her first year of trying to change the world with her law degree. She is facing compromises she never dreamed existed while in law school. I know from the past that many idealistic young doctors, teachers, ministers, journalists, chefs, writers, musicians, and others in any calling have stood where this new attorney finds herself.



There are many times in life when we find ourselves where we never expected to be. How about losing that "solid" job? The death of a child in whose warm radiance we expected to bask for years? And how did it happen that I am old? How did it happen that after 24 years of jumping through educational hoops and becoming qualified, the glorious future has turned into a minefield?

Stop a minute. Can we plan a victory lap before going on?

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I don't know what lies before me. Or how I will handle the challenges of aging — the end game. Can I accept that fresh opportunities are now scarce? I will never do this and never do that. It is OK. There is a wonderful word in Julian of Norwich's (1341-1416) writings. Julian was all worked up about lots of shortcomings in her life. In a vision, Jesus said it's OK. These things were "behoovable" — needed, useful, necessary.

So to my young friend I say, all you have been through — Law School, college, high school, adolescence, grade school and all that — has been behoovable and you did it! Before facing the future, wrap yourself in the banner of your life and take your victory lap. And, when you finish you can better take the next step.

Can we all prepare for what lies ahead by more properly re-evaluating the "disappointments" of what has been? Do we need a divine vision to convince us that, despite everything, it has mostly been behoovable? There is a man, 10 years my senior. He could move crowds, make changes in the world. Now, on good days, he can fold the laundry. Can we help him see that every towel he folds belongs in a glorious victory lap of a rich and behoovable life?

Now the hard part — can we do that for ourselves?

INDIVIDUAL GUESTS AT STARCROSS

For many years we have wanted to be able to share this wonderful place with others but we've been frustrated by the lack of an appropriate building. Some day we would love to build a little house where a volunteer guestmaster could live and help us welcome retreatants. But we are few people with limited resources so this is a distant dream.

In the meanwhile, we will explore the idea of letting people come stay in the 1903 farmhouse. It's a bit primitive but it's what we've got. If you've been wanting to spend some time on an individual retreat at Starcross, here's how it would work.

We will attempt to share our life and space with a limited number of guests who come for a minimum of a week. There would be no charge but we would like up to four hours of work per day. Guests would be welcome to come to Lauds and Vespers, if they wish. Otherwise they'd be pretty much on their own. They would bring groceries and cook for themselves. It would be essential to have medical insurance and their own means of transportation.

If this appeals to you, email and tell us what attracts you, when you'd like to come, and how it could be mutually advantageous. community@starcross.org.

Preference will be given to people who know something about us.



A SUMMER DAY AT STARCROSS

Saturday, July 24th, from 9-4

Our friend Sandra Bodley says she loves trips to Starcross because "when I travel up there I take the time to connect to the seasons. I love the beauty of the setting and the beauty of the community's spirit".

This special day will include a talk by Brother Toby, working together (harvesting lavender and the like), lunch and a time of common meditation in the chapel. We have room for several people to sleep over Friday night. Please contact Sister Marti to register sm@starcross.org or call 1 (800) 960-1500 for more information.

STARCROSS DIGITAL!

Driven by economic and environmental necessity, and also the shifting methods of connecting with people — we are making changes.

Please give us your email address. We are able to communicate with those on the e-list much more effectively. And, there are special notices which we can only send email. It is working very well but only 1 in 12 of our friends has let us change over. Remember we never give out this list. Just send an email to community@starcross.org and we will make the change.

Video is coming. Last December there were many requests for some weekly inspirational helps for those who were using Brother Toby's *A Winter Walk* to step through the season. Also, there have been more requests for seasonal videos of Starcross. Others want to hear David's music or the progress of kids in Africa. Our first efforts will be modest but we are on the way. We will soon work on some short videos to put on our website and, with the help of our younger friends, we will let you take some seasonal peeks at Starcross via *You-Tube*. We are very conscious that many of our friends have to do more in their homes these days. Sister Marti has taken classes in video editing, Sister Julie is honing her camera skills, and Brother Toby is shaking his head but coming up with ideas. We expect to have things rolling by mid-summer. We will send email links whenever anything is up.

Starcross Books. The publishing world is in panic mode at the moment and that has encouraged us to start an old-fashioned venture. We will publish some books under our own imprint. The upside is we can get them out to friends much quicker and cheaper. The downside is reaching the general public but we hope friends can help there. The first work will be Brother Toby's *Seasons: Through A Year With A Contemporary Monastic Family* using the experience of Starcross as a background for a month-by-month contemplative journey through the year. For a broader perspective, he adds excerpts from the 1874 Shaker Journal of Elder Otis Sawyer of Sabbathday Lake, Maine. In the manner of his popular *A Winter Walk*, Brother Toby is once again attempting to capture the sense of the sacred in daily life. We will have it out in the summer.

SHARING WITH US

We have been grateful for the response to our fund appeal. Friends have been willing to share with us, despite their own difficulties and hardships. So, as we expected, the return is not as much as in former years, but our appreciation of your support is greater than ever. Thank you for making it possible for us to continue, which we would be unable to do without your help.

If you have not yet contributed and are able to do so, we would be most grateful. Just use the enclosed envelope, or call us toll free at 1 (800) 960-1500. If you receive the newsletter by e-mail you can donate online at www.starcross.org

TASTE A GREAT OLIVE OIL!

Saturday, September 5th — 10 am to 5 pm

If you will be in Northern California over the Labor Day weekend, plan to attend an Extra Virgin Olive Oil tasting in the barn at Starcross. Our pungent, robust oil continues to win awards in Los Angeles and among California olive growers. In fact, not only did we win a gold medal at the big Yolo Fair competition – Sister Julie's Olive Oil took "Best of Class"!

Join us on September 5th to have a taste, learn how the oil is produced and stroll through the peaceful olive groves. And if you can't be here, don't despair. Sister Julie's Olive Oil is always available online www.starcross.org or call us at 1 (800) 960-1500 and we'll ship it right to your door.



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- YOU DESERVE A VICTORY LAP!
- SUMMER EVENTS AT STARCROSS
- NEWS FROM OUR YOUTH IN UGANDA
- DIGITAL CHANGES
- TASTING OUR OLIVE OIL!

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2010

NEWS FROM YOUR EXTENDED FAMILY IN UGANDA!

It is always a pleasure to report on the progress of our community of AIDS orphans in Uganda. They are literally transformed when given a chance in life. Here are some updates.



Harriet – We often speak of our own Sign Language Interpreter because we are so proud of her. Our director, Margaret Nanteza, reports that Harriet has taken a good job with the government deaf society. When we found her she was in a grass hut in rags. With her salary Harriet supports her grandmother (who lost 6 adult children to the AIDS virus) and is paying school fees for her many siblings and cousins.

Winnie – This brilliant young woman is in her third year at Makerere University majoring in statistics and economics. She's come a long way from the unfinished, empty house where she and her young siblings stayed alone after both parents died suddenly from AIDS.



Kasule – At a young age Kasule decided to use the opportunities he's been given to help the impoverished people of his village, where we originally found him wearing only a shredded T-shirt. After finishing his business degree, he will start a microfinance organization based on the Grameen banking principles.

Cissy -- Came from a shack in a remote swamp. Now, after completing a course in tourism, she began working at a hotel arranging conferences and workshops. In a recent email she wrote: "Send my regards and love to all SKW (Starcross Kin Worldwide) members and sponsors. I thank them so much."



We will have an informational meeting and "wine country reception" hosted by Vicki Bailey in Santa Rosa, Ca. on Sunday afternoon, September 19th. If you are in the area, please come and bring interested friends. For more information about the event and Starcross Kin Worldwide House of Hope in Uganda and how you can make a huge difference in a child's life, contact sister Julie, sj@starcross.org, or call (707) 886-1919.