

Human Kindness Foundation

a little good news

Fall 2007

GOING DEEPER

[transcribed from a sermon by Bo Lozoff at Unity of the Triangle in Raleigh NC, March 11th, 2007]

When I teach meditation, I'm a stickler for keeping the body still. In the Old Testament there is a curious passage that says, "Be still and know that I am God." Isn't that curious? Be *still*, not "be righteous," not "be busy," not "be productive," not even "be kind," but "be *still*" to know God. Do we make enough room for stillness in our lives to know God?

We just sang a hymn a few minutes ago – "*we will know everything there is to know and we won't know why.*" Are these just nice words that we get together and sing socially on a Sunday, or is religion telling us something about you and me, not just about the saints and sages, not just about the Dalai Lama and Mother Teresa? We just sang, "*Deeper than the ocean, deeper than the sea, deeper than the mountains.*" Do we believe it? Do we feel like our purpose here, walking around on Earth, is to really become that deep, that strong, that quiet, that powerful? And that this happens through something connected to being still?

It's always challenging to me to know what to say in about a twenty-minute space of time in a church sermon because there are such big and deep things to talk about and they don't lend themselves to sound bites. So in church services it usually comes down to "go deeper." You and I can actually become a little deeper, a little more still, a little more open every day to that indescribably profound mystery at the heart of who we are. It doesn't happen automatically when we're at some arbitrary age like eighty-five. That's not how it works. If we're not becoming a little bit deeper every day it doesn't just descend upon us when we wake some morning when we're the right age.

This is where religion and spiritual practice come together. There was a prisoner in Illinois a couple of months ago who was saying he doesn't know what this spiritual practice stuff is about, he's a Christian and all he needs is his religion. I said, "Tell me something that is especially meaningful to you about your religion, like what's a really important piece of it." And he didn't have to give it much thought at all, he immediately said, "The Serenity Prayer."

You know the Serenity Prayer: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." I said, "So how has the Serenity Prayer changed who you are?" And he gave me this kind of blank

look. He said, "Well it means a lot to me." I said, "Talk is cheap, how has it changed you?" Because all spiritual practice is about, is taking something from religion and working with it in a way that changes us, really alters who we are. Not just changes our attitude, but actually our DNA. That's the promise of every religion, we're supposed to change, and spiritual practice really changes us in a very cellular way.

So I said to the fellow, "Here's what I'm talking about: You're the one who told me that the Serenity Prayer is really meaningful to you. That means every morning of your life as soon as you wake up, before you go to the bathroom, before you get out of bed, the moment you realize you're awake what you say to yourself is: '*Lord today, grant me more serenity than I had yesterday to accept the things about this world that I am not going to be able to change. TODAY GOD, PLEASE may I have a little more courage than I had yesterday to influence the things that You want me to influence, and not turn my back. Oh please God, may I have more wisdom than I had yesterday, to know the difference between the two so I don't waste your time and mine.*'"

It takes about 30 seconds to do a prayer like that the moment you wake up. The Hassids, the mystical sect of Judaism that started in the Middle Ages with the Baal Shem Tov, the Hassids prayed more fervently than anybody I've ever seen, every prayer, every day. Every prayer was just rip your shirt open, "Oh God, please!" And you know what? They changed, because they meant it. They didn't just come and sing politely and go home. They wouldn't assume when you park your car this morning that you're going to have no problem finding your way back home. We change.

So imagine if every day this fellow—who says for decades that the Serenity Prayer is his favorite—imagine if every day, even the tiniest bit, he *actually* gained more serenity to accept the things he couldn't change about his prison and his life sentence. And he gained more courage to influence the people and events that God does want him to try to influence, as a responsible person. And every day he has the tiniest bit more wisdom, more insight of being able to see where he needs such serenity and where he needs such courage.

If you're doing it a little better Sunday than you did Saturday, and Monday you're doing it a little bit better than

Sunday, and Tuesday you're doing it better than Monday, 365 of those changes later you're going to be different.

So in the brief time slot that I have in church sermons I find mostly what I want to say is, go for it! Every major religion agrees that there is something divine, and that you and I, every one of us who draws breath, can directly and fully touch this by going within in stillness. Every religion. And so the question that I ask and the link between religion and spiritual practice is, are you going for it? Are you taking religion up on its reality or are you settling for being a nice woman, a nice man?

There is a power and freedom that all the religions talk about. And there are elements in our popular culture, even the popular spiritual culture, that are unfortunately going 180 degrees from real spiritual freedom and power. Jesus said thirteen really, really big words about all of this. He said, "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and render unto God what is God's." These words are like a mantra, like a formula or a riddle, they're a real DaVinci Code on how to walk through our lives.

The real sages and saints and avatars, like Christ, have absolutely never said you're never going to get cancer, you're never going to be poor and you don't have to live in adversity, like this silly thing, "The Secret," that claims all you have to do is visualize whatever you want and it will come to you. That's silly and it's beneath our dignity. The so-called "Law of Attraction" is one tiny element of life. Like a box of Cheerios says, "Cheerios can be a part of a daily balanced breakfast," well, the way we think, the way we focus our minds, can be one part of a balanced life. But for "The Secret" to say, "The Law of Attraction is the most powerful force in the Universe," and "The Universe is your catalog, just visualize anything that you want and you'll bring it to yourself," oh, thank God that is not true, because you and I can be real selfish idiots sometimes.

What is immortal and eternal in us can never be harmed, is never not abundant, is never out of touch, is never alone and friendless, is never impoverished, nothing can touch it that other people or societies or the world itself can do. We are free. We are free to move through life as loving, joyful servants of God, servants of creation knowing that we are going to get absolutely chewed up and spit out in the process and that's OK, because nothing can touch us where we really live. We're free. This freedom is a quiet thing, and that's why every religion exhorts us to spend some of our time in spiritual practice being still and humble and silent.

It's not, ***"Hello God, I'm Bo and I'm special and I'm proud,"*** not that pop culture nonsense. It's *"Hello God, it's me again Bo, I don't have the slightest idea what I'm doing here, Lord. Help me to serve you. I get it wrong more than I get it right, but I'm willing, and I'm here, I'm showing up again. May I have a little more serenity today than I had yesterday, may I have a little more courage today than I had yesterday, may I have a little more wisdom today than I had*

yesterday. May I be a simple, humble person walking this Earth knowing that the key to Holiness is unselfishness."

It's not rocket science, we don't have to keep coming up with clever strategies like "The Secret" to get what we want. That's the road to ruination, to get everything we want. Be careful about following the masses to spiritual destruction by adopting this new creed of proud and loud and busy and multi-tasking and confident and "I'm special."

When we do a lot of spiritual practices we have a lot of very powerful experiences, that's all real. I had the personal experience once of being on Calvary while He was on the Cross. Believe me, if you ever find yourself transported to the foot of the cross, and He's on it and blood is dripping to the ground and He's dying, you're not apt to feel so proud and loud. Even knowing about the Resurrection, that's the wonderful part, but being at the Crucifixion is a humbling and life-changing experience. You don't go around saying, "I'm special." You say, "What can I do to turn my life in a direction to serve that Love, that force, that fearlessness, that compassion that says, forgive them, they know not what they do? What can I do to serve that?"

That's the richness, that's the heart of religion. What can I do to serve that? Well, start every morning, the first moment that you wake up, with a prayer that is practical and modest, something that means something to you. For about eight months last year the one I worked with was, "May I be a little less selfish today than I was yesterday, may I be a little less vain today than I was yesterday." It takes about five seconds to say. You let it sink in for another five seconds.

And you know what? You see opportunities all through the day to be a little bit more or less vain, to be a little bit more or less selfish. We get more choice throughout every day because of this very simple couple of seconds. I took selfishness and vanity as a theme, this other fellow takes the Serenity Prayer, there's a woman I know in Texas who took something about vowing not to be motivated by fear all through the day, because that's something that means something to her. If we just make it real and practical for ourselves with a few seconds, the brain imprints anything that we repeat. And so throughout the day we begin to see those choice points. "Oh, I was about to do this but then I wouldn't really be a little less selfish than I was yesterday. This is my moment right now, it's my opportunity so do I really mean this stuff or not?"

What happens when we start making enough of those choices, we look back and say, "I'm doing spiritual practice and I'm becoming what my religion is about. Wow." Wow. The Gospel means good news, and the good news is so much better than what most of us have been settling for all our lives, even in our churches and religious faith. We settle for, "Well I'm certainly always going to have as much stress as anybody else, I've got all my fears." Well then, you should be ashamed of yourself because when we really make our faith real we don't have any fear. Period. It's true, it's real. We're not supposed to be walking around saying,

“Oh I’m just this little human being,” nor are we supposed to be walking about saying “I’m great and I’m proud and I’m special.” The cure for low self-esteem is not high self-esteem. That’s the mistake the pop culture has been making for about fifteen years now: replacing low self-esteem with high self-esteem. The cure is to see that we don’t need self-esteem at all. The cure for insecurity is not convincing ourselves of security. The cure for insecurity is saying, *“I’m going to have faith in my life. I’m going to dispense with insecurity. I’m going to have good days and bad days, periods of prosperity and periods of adversity, because that’s what it means to be a full human being on this Earth. There are going to be things that come into my life that suck, but then there’s that stillpoint, that rock-like force from God’s world that never sucks even in a 24-hour-a-day solitary confinement cell for a crime I did not commit. Sometimes life gets weird but I’m going to trust ‘Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil,’ because I’m a person of faith.”*

By the time we’re out of our teens it becomes one of our spiritual opportunities to say, “Do I really mean it? It’s my choice: am I actually going to be a person of faith?” We all have this choice we can make. There’s some mysterious thing going on in this wonderful universe, where there’s God and the ego and a couple of very simple guidelines that every religion agrees on. It has something to do with love. It has something to do with me being a little less selfish every day so this greater force in me can grow and blossom. It doesn’t grow and blossom by convincing myself that I’m never going to be sick or harmed. It grows and blossoms from convincing myself God is always with me, and life is not random or chaotic or meaningless. Of course I’m going to have illness and harm and loss. I don’t understand life and I don’t understand what I need. I’m going to go about living in a positive way, but bad things and good things are both going to come, enjoyable things and suffering are going to come, and that’s okay, because I’m in this world but I’m not of this world.

I’m of something that we reach in stillness, that frees us from feeling small without tempting us to feel big. Something that frees my mind and heart to wake up every morning and walk through the day, in a way, as a child. *“I’m not on top of this game, but I have a chance today to see clearly and to move in truth. Hallelujah, got one more day to try, another day to give it a good go. I’m not the hottest thing that’s ever come down the pike, I don’t understand all that stuff but I know that the greatest people who have ever lived have also been the most loving people, so I’m going to move in that direction.”*

Real religion, combined with the tiniest bit of spiritual practice, will become true. That’s really the way to use the “Law of Attraction,” not for the things that we want

materialistically, or that we want to shield ourselves from like illness. We’re going to be cringing, cowering little creatures forever if we’re trying to be safe in this temporal, mortal world. We will forever be free if we know what to render unto God and what we have to let go unto Caesar.

The abiding question that I leave you with—it seems to me the relevant question for every church service—is: are you willing to really, really take it deeply? Really, a year from now you could say “I don’t even know who I’m becoming, kind of losing control and grasp of my heart, and it feels so good. It feels like I’m beginning to walk in trust on the side of the good.”

Religion is not neutral or amoral, religion is always on the side of the good and loving. You and I are supposed to be in the world. We’re not supposed to hide from the ugliness. We’re supposed to be right there feeding the hungry and clothing the naked and sheltering the homeless and visiting the prisoner, but that isn’t the world that we are of, it’s just the world that we do the work in. Every time we wake up we’re punching in, we go to work. But we live in a place that is above, beyond, within and around all of that. It is always still and always perfect and this is really the heart of religion, is how to gradually—you and me in a daily, practical way—touch our stillness and navigate our way.

God Bless You.



LETTERS

Dear Bo and Sita,

I am in lock down 2-man cells. I was lying on my bunk reading and a porter yells "Does anybody want a book," I was about to finish my Louis L'Amour novel, so I yell "I do" without knowing what it was! He finally wiggled We're All Doing Time under my cell door.

I never have been into yoga or any of that stuff. I do pray every nite no matter what. Have been since childhood. So I pick this book up, and I have to admit, I never shed so many tears as I did reading your guide. I caught myself hiding from my celly.

I am a big man 6 feet 230. Not fat. I've been a bully all my life, I felt awkward shedding tears to myself. I do believe that people like you and Sita are real life saints! Sent from up above to help us. I feel in my heart a huge difference since reading your book. I want to read it again but I get a lump in my throat just thinking about some of the stories.

I am going to pray tonight and ask God to grant me a heart as big as yours. I'm not a bad person. I can't find myself doing the things I've done in my younger days. I know all about karma. I can't seem to give this prison number back.

Before I ever knew your book existed. I would try to think back to something bad I did to see why or if I can match up one of my crimes to the pain I am dealing with at that time. I am with the help of your book realizing that there's no use in trying to think back. just deal with it!

Well Bo if you can help me deal with drug addiction in any way that is my main reason for coming back to these places. I've been to all the drug rehabs, counseling, inhouse, the works. S.A.P. to no avail. I feel after reading your book you can help, "I'm tired."

By the way I have a baby girl 9 years old that I love more than anything in this world and a family that loves me. I do believe in God, I believe in both of you also. God sees everything. I will exit with much love and respect to the both of you.

God bless you! G

Hi G,

You say "I have a baby girl 9 years old that I love more than anything in the world," but you also say you haven't been able to kick drugs no matter what you have tried. Trying is bullshit, you know

that. Look in the mirror and admit that you are a terrible father as long as you keep using drugs. Let that sink in, G. You are a horrible, awful, selfish father whose love is all just talk, until you QUIT USING FOREVER.

Love isn't easy. Love requires sacrifice. Love is unselfish. You keep choosing drugs over your daughter. You simply have not decided to kick yet, that's the honest truth. You keep thinking someday you will, but you don't feel like doing the hard work yet. That isn't love, that's selfish bullshit.

Countless people have kicked drug addiction and you can too. Today. Not later, but now. In the middle of reading this letter. No more drugs. You can do this. Millions and millions of people have. Any of those programs you "tried" will work once you know your time has come. Get off the fence and say "NEVER AGAIN; I WOULD RATHER DIE." The way to kick is to kick, not to "try to kick."

Use my books, practice meditation, yoga, breathing, use 12-step groups, substance-abuse programs, sponsors, whatever you need, but don't "try!" Just do it this time and do it forever. You're harming your daughter every day you are an addict, and you don't want to do that. Choose her over addiction, G. That's love. You're a good man, as good as any other who has chosen love over addiction. No excuses. This letter is over, and so must your drug addiction be from this moment on.

Let me know how it goes, my friend. Hard or easy, it won't matter once you're looking back on it. You can do hard. Put your little girl first.

Love & Support, Bo



Dear Bo and Sita,

In 1973 I went outside to play, I was 5 years old. When I came home I was covered in blood, I had been kidnapped and brutally raped, and left in a ditch like a piece of garbage. I awoke in the park down the street from our house, and I walked home.

I've always hated the monsters who did this to me and now I myself have become that monster I once hated. I hog-tied, raped, and beat my wife. I was convicted of sexual assault, false imprisonment and battery and sentenced to 18 years. I have

seen how the karma in my life has become an evil chain of events. How can I create good karma? Will my soul ever be at peace?

I'm in solitary confinement. I cannot live with the anger, pain and loneliness anymore, I want to live with love serenity and peace with the world.

My wife and I were hard-core alcoholics and drug-addicts. Drifters moving from state to state, hustling our way thru life. When I'm released from prison in five years I will be shunned and ostracized from society much like Jesus Christ was.

I long to belong to something good something pure, when I was a child I was Golden, you know Innocent, I had morals and was not evil in the least. But this cruel world and the monsters in it corrupted me. So that the beautiful innocent boy grew up to be a cruel evil man. And as I look now across the years my eyes they fill with tears. Now I see how much of my life was wasted and it saddens me so. I know now that time and love are both precious gifts of God.

I did not intentionally harm or hurt my wife, we were very close, we were in love, my wife admitted on the stand that I was "out of it" meaning that I was not consciously aware of my actions, due to the drugs and booze I had been taking.

After the trial my wife and I wrote each other every day. We fell in love again, she forgave me, she knew it was the drugs and not me. I felt so horrible for what I had done to the person I loved most in the world. I attempted suicide, and hung myself with my sheet in my cell. I had an out of body experience, I saw everything, I saw my body hanging. I watched as they put me in the ambulance, I spent three days in a coma.

I have not had any contact with my wife since my suicide attempt. The courts contacted her, and we are not allowed to have contact. "OURS" is a love story with a tragic ending. Both of us are hurt and alone, because I was not closer to God. By sharing your knowledge, your wisdom, your experience, maybe then I too will know what God is, what the truth is, and maybe I won't feel so scared and all alone, maybe just maybe, with a little help, I'll find the love, serenity, and peace I long for.

Hey C,

Man, you certainly have gotten yourself in some painful messes, but it is never too late to turn life around and find the things you say you are looking for. Life never hands any of us a totally hopeless situation. Start out by trying to understand that. This is your life, and it is workable. Huge parts of it suck, but most of us have huge parts of our lives that suck. Jesus didn't exactly have a rose garden, did He?

The "monsters" who beat and raped you and left you in a ditch – did you ever wonder what happened to them when they were kids? If we feel compassion for you for what happened at age five, then don't we need to have compassion for them? Maybe they were raped and beaten too.

So let go of the blame game and talk about responsibility instead. You were "out of it" on drugs when you did this terrible crime. That's one good reason never to be "out of it" isn't it? If you hadn't been stoned out of your mind, then it is possible you would never have done this to your wife, isn't it? Blame gets impossible to assign at some point, because we all have some degree of responsibility when factors like drugs and selfishness are involved. We're all partly to blame, and none of us is fully to blame.

So instead of blame, focus on what kind of life you want to create out of all this tragedy. Who do you want to be in prison, and in five years when you get out? These are the questions my books are about, and it is never too late to turn all of this into fuel for your great journey toward God, toward being a strong, calm, quiet, kind and humble man who does not go "out of his mind" on drugs anymore.

You can do all of this, C. And this journey is the only thing that will help you in the ways you most deeply yearn to be helped.

Your main work is to quiet down, to open your heart toward God as a humble man asking for help toward a decent path, in or out of prison. Devote your life to good works and spiritual practice, not to a tiny little search for *personal* happiness. You have everything it takes right there to do this. We will help as much as we can with books, newsletters, etc., but you must do the work. You can do this—absolutely, positively, beyond the shadow of a doubt.

Love, Bo



Dear Brother Bo,

It was real good to see you! You are probably more appreciated than you will ever know. Some times I wonder how you do it and some times I am in awe. I would love to be you. I just have a hard time letting go of all the garbage. But then I have come a long way over the last 23 years. But I don't ever see me having the inner peace that I see in you.

In 1984 I shot a man 9 times out of hate. To this day I don't regret what I did. People say this is a bad thing. I look at doing all this time as a good thing. I know my surroundings, I know who is who. I am a convict, and in this world being able to say you are a convict is a good thing. I came into this system as a young punk. Did not know my ass from a hole in the ground. Now 23 years later I look at all the hurt and hate.

The other day I got a letter telling me that my 4 year old grandson was raped and beat to death by his stepdad. I live in a world that don't allow people like that. And I wonder Bo does it make me less of a man to just forgive this dude his trespass against my grandson or do I get revenge of my grandson and spend the rest of my life in prison?

I know choices are hard and only I can make them. And that makes life so crazy doesn't it? And I already know what your response would be. But the world that I live in says get revenge and the inside of my heart says kill the son of a bitch. But my mind says don't let your emotions control you, write it off and walk away from this mentality. But how do you walk away from something that you have lived most of your life?

I don't plan on living the rest of my life in prison over this puke. And yet it is a tugging at me to reach out and touch this dude. And in the end no matter what I do it will be okay. I can live with my choices and I ain't going to listen to anyone anyway. I just got to live with myself. This is why I wish I was where you are mentally and emotionally. But then again who knows what you would really do in this position. Later Bo.

Much love and respects go out to you and yours. Take care and stay strong! And once again thanks for coming and sharing with us. It meant a lot.

Later, T

Hey T,

Man, that's a rough situation. If my grandson were raped and beaten and the killer were sent to the prison where I live, it definitely would not be an easy decision to let him be. I sympathize with how hard it will be if that happens.

I don't spend much time on forgiveness, because I think it's too confusing. Does forgiving mean "Hey, it's alright what you did to my grandson. No hard feelings?"

It's never going to be alright what he did to your grandson. And there may be plenty of hard feelings. But do you have faith that this guy will pay for what he did without you having to be the executioner? Do you have faith in the law of karma, that what comes around goes around? Do you think he's just going to skate away with this deed? If you kill him, it is allowing him to destroy one MORE life in your family, by you staying in prison. And then one of his family goes after you, and the cycle may go on forever. Does that make your grandson's death less tragic or *more* tragic? The buck must stop somewhere.

Besides, somewhere in that violent, evil sonofabitch is a little kid himself, as sweet as your grandson, lost in darkness. Someone who has a chance of turning the corner and becoming a good man. Maybe he's a foul bastard today, but there's nothing in him – high or low – that is not also in me and you, including his chance for spiritual transformation. Be humble.

One saint in Judaism, a rabbi named the Baal Shem Tov, said hundreds of years ago, "The lowest of the low is dearer to me than your only child is to you." The saints see the good in us, even if we don't. The saints know that everyone suffers plenty, and we don't need to wish for MORE harm to come to anyone. We need to wish for everyone to find their way, find their faith, to stop harming others. And the only way we can do that is if we find our way, find our faith, and stop wanting to harm others. No excuses. We choose to live in a way that brings less violence or more; we can't have it both ways.

Sometimes it may be almost impossibly hard to not take revenge, but it's never fully impossible. Our actions create the world every day. What kind of world do you want your other grandchildren to live in? One with violence and revenge, or with compassion and wisdom?

Love, Bo

BO'S NOTES FROM THE ROAD

Well, it's July of 2007 as I write this from the Green Mountains of Vermont. I head into Maine next week, which will be my 37th state, driving about 40,000 miles since I rolled out of the driveway in North Carolina to begin this tour in December of '05. It's impossible to share with you even a fraction of the rich experiences and adventures I've had, the sincerity and goodwill I've encountered with people everywhere, the struggles and suffering and victories I've witnessed, the joy I've had doing music with people, the profound moments I have shared with our brothers and sisters who live in some of the most brutal places on Earth. People are people everywhere I go, and we all share the same hopes and dreams for a better world, we share the same opportunities to make our lives work, and the same temptations to follow old, wrong paths that keep us struggling forever. From Maine to San Diego, from Seattle to Miami and everywhere in-between, we have daily choices to make between a self-centered life and an un-self-centered life, and that remains the constant spiritual challenge for all of us. I have been on death row and in the mansions of millionaires, yet that journey of selfish versus unselfish is the same for us all. It's not rocket science.

Some memorable experiences along the way, both good and bad –

- On my way out of Folsom Prison after several days of workshops, I was passing by the 24/7 lockup wing in Old Folsom – thick stone walls, 4'x7' cells housing TWO men each, the cell being so cramped with bunk beds, sink and toilet that only one man could stand up at a time – and I heard a convict in one of those cells shout, “Hey, is that Bo Lozoff I see?!!” I stopped and turned toward his cell and he said, “Holy shit, it is!! Hey Bo, come on over here, man, come on over.” I walked over to the front of his cell, separated by a bar that prevents you from getting too close to the cell door, and the fellow just raved on and on about how excited he was to see me, what a great surprise, how *We're All Doing Time* saved his life many years ago, he's gotten our newsletter for twenty years, how's my wife and son, etc., etc. After he finally got all that off his chest, he said, “Man, I gotta shake your hand,” and he reached his hand through the bars. I stick my hand out as far as I can reach, but that bar is keeping us about a foot away from being able to touch each other. So I look around, and there's no guard in sight, so I have the person I'm with hold on to the back of my belt while I lean over that bar as far as I can without falling, but all the convict and I can get is the very tips of our index fingers locked onto each other. For about two minutes, in complete silence, we just held fingertips and there was more love and goodwill and respect and friendship in that little half-inch of flesh than some people may feel in a lifetime. For those two minutes, Old Folsom disappeared, time stood still, the stupidity of those tiny brutal cells vanished, and the power of friendship literally brought us into the Kingdom of Heaven. I don't know his name and I couldn't get him out of there, but we will certainly remember our time together for the rest of our lives. It was a moment in the Real World.
- God help us. In January I gave a talk at a maximum-security prison in Tampa, Florida, where the inmates are dressed in huge orange jumpsuits, heads shaved, walking in military single-file. Get ready for this: Their ages range from NINE TO TWELVE YEARS OLD. Yes, they have all committed serious crimes, but we are the stupidest self-defeating species in creation to think this is how to respond to that. No excuses. It's crazy. It's like eating our own children. God help us.
- Nazareth, PA in June – I briefly visit the Martin Guitar Factory and Museum (I've been playing Martin Guitars for about 40 years) and one of the heads of the company introduces himself to me, says he's heard about my work, gives me a personal tour, and then takes a key out of his pocket, opens up a glass case in the museum, takes out the big black guitar enshrined in that case, and hands it to me, saying “Here, let's see how you sound on Johnny Cash's guitar.” One of the great thrills of my musical life!! I played Johnny's personal guitar, sang an old Cash tune, “I Still Miss Someone,” and a few startled tourists in the museum might have thought Johnny had risen from the grave. It was very very cool....
- Tattoos – Wow. It's hard to describe how moving it is to see so many convicts who have taken the cover or various illustrations from *We're All Doing Time* and made them into tattoos. One enormous guy – maybe 6'5” tall – in Florida turned around and pulled up the back of his shirt, and there was the whole cover of the book, starting with the shackles coiled around his waist, and the chains turning to birds as they rose up his spine, and then the bird flying off over his left shoulder. Because he was so tall, the tattoo must have been over three feet high from waist to shoulder. A couple guys have the same tattoo on their legs, with the chains going around their ankle and the bird flying up over the knee. I've seen several tattoos of Maury Logue's drawings (“Beauty of the Beast” in *We're All Doing Time*) and the Snoopy “It's All Right Here, you know” from my book *Lineage and Other Stories*. It's a very sweet connection to have with folks.
- Everywhere – I have met so many prison staff who go to work day in and day out in unkind, inefficient, bureaucratic institutions and who somehow never lose their enthusiasm for helping the convicts as much as they possibly can. You convicts may never even realize how much shit they put up with for being kind to you. I bow with great respect to these unsung heroes and hope my convict friends will let these folks know how much you appreciate them.

NEWS, NOTES, AND OFFERINGS

IT'S DONE – HKF HAS MOVED

We are happy to be in our new office in Durham. Our new location is more convenient for our local volunteers, and our energy will continue to be focused on answering the mail (500-600 letters per week requesting our materials), and coordinating Bo's tour schedule for talks, workshops and concerts. Our new phone number is 919-383-5160. (We are sorry, but we can't accept collect calls.)

A non-profit organization, Stone Circles (stonecircles.org), is in the process of buying our old headquarters, and that sale is likely to be complete by the time you read this. They will be opening a retreat center, making good use of all the buildings that so many volunteers helped Bo to construct. We regret that we no longer have accommodations for overnight visitors and volunteers, but we trust that this move will help us keep our energies focused on our prison work. Times change, but life is still good. **PLEASE NOTE**, Our mailing address (PO Box 61619) will NOT change.

A GOOD FRIEND IS GONE...

In our last newsletter we wrote about Arjun (Micheal) Nicastro and his battle with Leukemia. After 23 years in prison, he volunteered for Human Kindness Foundation, where he met his wife, Janaki. It is with a heavy heart that we let you know that Arjun found out that his leukemia had returned, just hours after finishing his last class to receive his Masters degree in Social Work. He died on April 26.

He is survived by his wife and son. Janaki's faith is strong and is helping her immensely through this very painful time. She wishes to thank everyone for their prayers, which she believes are always heard. She hopes to use Arjun's death to foster more open discussion about ex-cons and the struggles they endure.



Arjun, Dylan & Janaki
Taken on April 1, 2007 – Dylan's 5th Birthday



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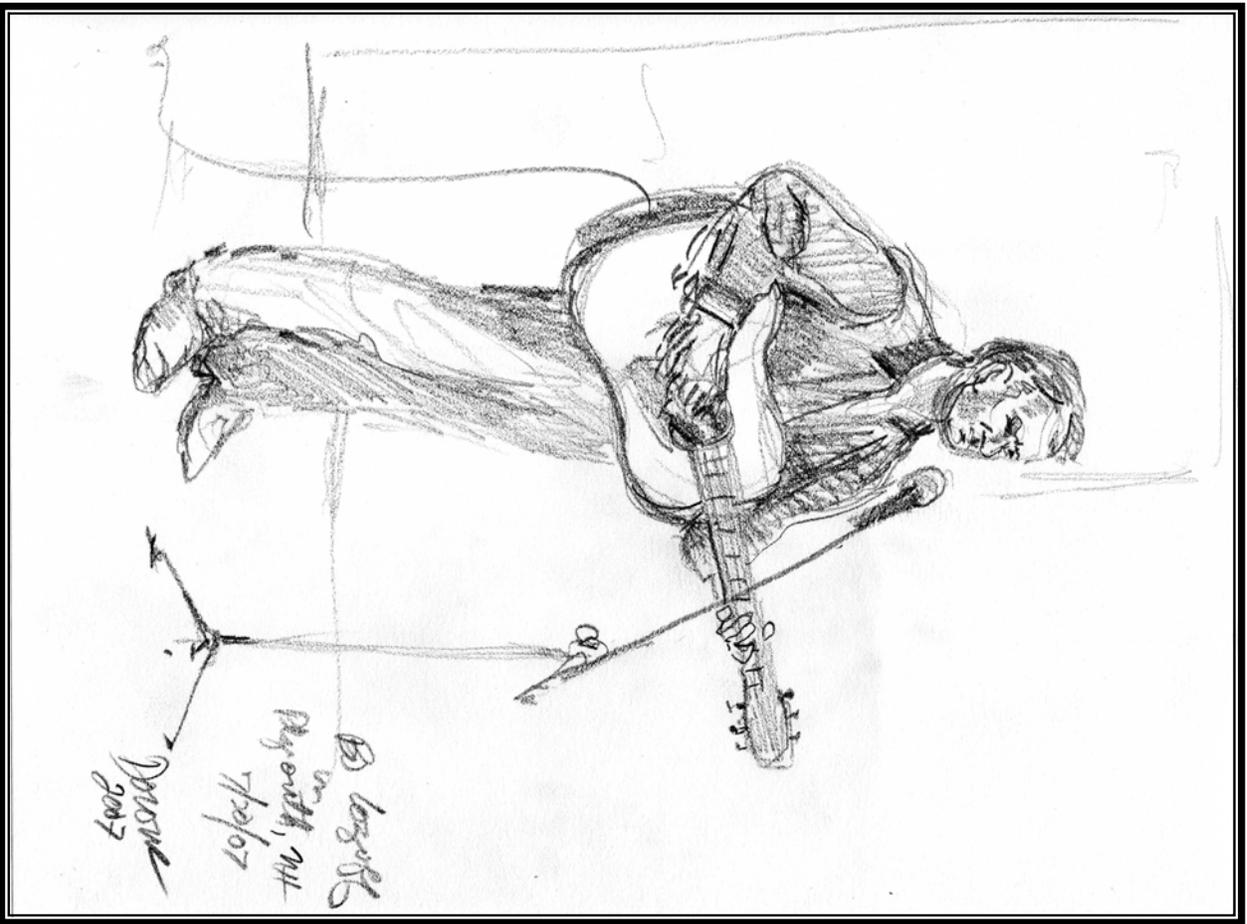
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a little good news

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Sketched live in concert by Terry Downs in New Hampshire