

ABOUT THIS BIRTHDAY

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Folks, today I am seventy-one. I never imagined I would get this old but (as they say), it is perhaps better than the alternative. So here I am, more-or-less still intact.

Sure, I could lose a few pounds (and intend to do so), but otherwise I am in good health, not on any medications, and fully mobile. I don't think I want to run a marathon, but I am going canoeing today on the legendary Pine River. There will be six of us, two to a canoe. I will canoe with my daughter May, Margaret with May's husband Seth, and my son Michael Andrew and his partner Micah Ling will complete the group. What a lovely combination!

The Pine River is a deeply-etched river valley wending its way through the Manistee National Forest, almost a million acres of protected forest right next to where we live. The Pine is a shallow river, has both fast and slow stretches, but is always winding. With its high banks and trees overhead, there is no doubt this is one of my dream sequences, and a living dream at that.

The last time I canoed the Pine, it was with Bardo Tulku Rinpoche (a high Tibetan lama), and he and I managed to capsize on one stretch. That was fun. We just stood up until our feet felt the ground of the streambed and righted our canoes.

And what is the message that age whispers to me on my seventy first?

It whispers to do what I can for everyone I love and to learn to love everyone. It is like my daughter May wrote in the song "What Makes You Alive?" on her "New Flower" album... "It's not what you take; it's all that you give." It is way better to give than to just receive. And when I think I have nothing more to give, and I often do, I can always give of myself, share what I am going through. Facebook is a good place to do that, right? And what are my plans?

Think about it for a moment. I am sorry to say that most of my plans are linear; they run from here straight into the future to there. I am still in love with the linear, that line onward and forward. This is why I like those very-straight two-tracks in the deep woods around here that extend as far as I can see into the distance until they vanish into a point. Yet those linear plans will run out when I run out of time. This linearity is a bad habit I have, one I need to break.

As an astrologer I know everything is cyclic, and the straighter the line, the finer the curve. Everything "is" only by returning, cycling, and continuing to exist. And no part of a cycle or circle is the starting or ending point. Every point on a circle (or cycle) is sacred and special, is equal, and only leads to the next degree. The message for me is to celebrate whatever point I am at. Now, if I could only do that.

Friends, I am not quite ready for the rocking chair, but I do often wish I had a porch with a view of the setting sun. What do you think that symbolizes?

I include a poem I have posted here before that I wrote about aging. Humor me, it is my birthday.

SHORT TIMER

I am older now.
I have less time,
But more of it.

I finally have enough,
Of whatever I was saving for,
To make it to the end.

And as that end draws near,
What I need to get there,
Grows less with every year.

So I can take a break,
Even chance to look around,
To see how you are doing,
To know where you are bound.

We could even walk together,
But here is what is tough,
I am only going to the end,
And that is close enough.