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The Time and Place of My Education

Education: The act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reason and judgment, and generally of preparing oneself intellectually for mature life.

The long, winding, ever-intriguing and ever-challenging journey through this great mystery called Life has now brought me here to Fairhaven College for my education. While, as a student of Life, the entire journey has indeed been an education, it is now at this juncture that Education takes on a whole new meaning: Education becomes a formal, systematic, and disciplined process of organizing, integrating, and *developing* all that has come before and what up till now has been random and scattered experiences and learning. Education becomes a means to give focus, form, and purpose to mind and thought. It will be like laying a strong intellectual foundation so that a useful structure can be built in the world.

Education has had variable levels of priority throughout my life. Achieving success at the measured, competitive, memorizing and conforming game of High School won me a scholarship to the University of California at Irvine in 1977. As what seemed to be part of a cultural and parental pre-determined plan, I was to study pre-engineering courses paving my way to getting a 'good job.' The tediousness of sitting through Physics, Chemistry, and Calculus after so many years already spent in the classroom was stifling, and a voice inside me called out for adventure. So, in a spirit of wanderlust, I decided to postpone my education and experience the 'real world' instead. A propitious decision I'm sure; for otherwise I probably would have ended up stuck in some Silicon Valley corporation with a family and a mortgage and now would not have the time to attend Fairhaven College.

The real world soon proved to be more challenging than I expected, so as a compromise I decided to combine education with adventure by enlisting in the Navy. Scoring extremely high on the entrance exams allowed me placement in an Advanced Electronics Program. The Navy paid me for a year-and-a-half to learn various levels of electronics and technical and troubleshooting skills. Oddly enough, the most valuable and meaningful education of those Navy years came not from the programmed environment of the military classroom but from the experience of going overseas and witnessing other cultures.

During the next several years I made some attempts to return to school but they never materialized. Those attempts were characterized by a feeling that it is something I *should* do rather than knowing exactly what I *wanted* to do. My electronics experience found me jobs but not fulfillment and I yearned for something more.

This 'something more' turned out to be an intense desire to have the presence of Spirit in my life. My life had not been fulfilling because it did not reflect my inner needs. I began to see my

experience as merely the product of cultural conditioning – it did not truly reflect ‘I.’ A whole new level of education began of an inner sort as I absorbed myself in stripping away the layers of acquired conditioning.

Finally, as an outcome of my internal learning, I was led to a Permaculture Design Course, which gave me a whole new perception of education. Yes, here was formal study combined with life skills, education in that which mattered most to me – learning how to live. A seed was planted during that course that has sprouted and is now an established sapling. My task at Fairhaven is to nurture and feed that sapling so that it may grow into a strong, mature, blooming and seeding tree.

The time is exactly right now for me to resume the formal education that I postponed at age seventeen because there is no longer any distinction between learning and living. It is not so much a point in linear time that I’ve reached as a stage in development, where Life and Education complement each other perfectly. Education is not something to do but rather an act of becoming, and that becoming is to more fully realize what unique role I can fulfill in the great network of Humanity.

These are crucial times. As humanity as a whole must now rethink all prior assumptions on how to live, those who would call themselves ‘students’ must realize that the opposite pole of learning is teaching, and receiving an education now infers a responsibility to teach what is learned, if only be example.