

American Prophets

Interviews with activists, visionaries and poets by Paul E Nelson.

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As I go back over these interviews, some of the best of the 450 hours of radio programming I produced between 1994 and 2004, there are a flood of thoughts which come rushing into my head. The first is how fortunate I have been to be able to meet such amazing minds and try to put them in the best possible light to get their, sometimes revolutionary, ideas to a larger audience. These interviews were used as Public Affairs programming, those hours that radio stations were once required to do to earn their licenses in a time when it was understood that radio airwaves were part of the commons. Fat chance you'll get owners and government regulators to understand that concept now. These visionary authors, activists and poets with their presence and their books (which I read before interviewing them) expanded my own consciousness a great deal in those years and further emboldened me to dig deeper, creatively, to polish my own gesture, first as a radio interviewer and community activist and later, as a poet and essayist.

To hear a suburban mom (Gloria DeGaetano) refer to the Theodor Adorno concept of the "industry-generated-culture" is one such remarkable juxtaposition featured on this radio interview program. And how that one phrase says so much. Though she's under the Thinkers and Activists section of the book, she has a way with language that is both reassuring and revolutionary.

To understand the depth and complexity of the historic era in which we live, there can be fewer guides more capable than Jean Houston who understands and demonstrates with her own life how this is, indeed, "Jump Time" and we were born for it, in one way or another.

How invisible fields affect our lives is barely comprehended in our culture, even though electrical fields make our modern lives possible. Rupert Sheldrake's work on Morphogenetic Fields is controversial, but until someone comes up with a better theory, I find his work quite remarkable. He does understand quite thoroughly the paradigm shift in our time from a mechanistic cosmology, highlighting competition and domination, to that of honoring relationships and a world-view that is organismic in nature. The sooner we grasp this as individuals and as a culture, the sooner we'll be able to address the many crises that are affecting the species' very existence in the system we call *Earth*.

I first became aware of the whole-systems approach through the healing arts, so it was quite an honor to be able to pick the brain of Larry Dossey, a doctor who was honored for his wartime service and who understands the shift in the way we look at healing by combining a notion from quantum physics, non-locality, to something that would seem very conventional and, perhaps, old-fashioned, prayer.

Having the opportunity to interview the late Allen Ginsberg was quite intimidating at first. The look on his face when he'd mention something from the history of American poetry made me feel about three feet tall because of my own ignorance of the subject, but I hung in there with him and vowed to dedicate my life to a better understanding and appreciation of that subject after meeting him. His thoughts about how the Reagan administration plotted to spend so much on military spending in an effort to eliminate all other federal government programs seem quite prophetic from this post-Bush, post-911 viewpoint. Of course we once expected poets to be prophets and the group assembled here do serve that function, poets and non-poets alike. I have read that Ginsberg treated everyone who interviewed him as a potential bodhisattva and I am grateful to this day for that consideration, for sharing space with him for an hour in June of 1994 and for the legacy he leaves in my life, which I have tried to honor in many different ways.

Similarly, preparing to interview Michael McClure involved a backpacking trip, a view of a pristine watershed from a vantage point of over 5,000 feet and seeing a poem of his with the words MORE ALIVE THAN I OUGHT TO BE. It was one of those magical moments when time stops and you never forget where you were when you experienced something. I was above Appleton Pass in the Olympic National Park and I have tried to visit that space annually, in September, since that moment. McClure's work has been a huge interest of mine since that experience in 1995 and I do not think a poem will ever impact me the way Dolphin Skull did. His reading of a portion of it on the program continues to be a watershed moment in my life.

I could go on about highlights from every interview, Jerome Rothenberg's notion of the concept of "othering" and his love of Federico Garcia Lorca and the Dada poets. Brenda Hillman's rare combination of anti-war activism and experimental lyric poetry. Sam Hamill's dedication to translation, anti-war activism and poetry as a wisdom-teacher and Nate Mackey's remarkable poetic gesture and the rare combination of powerful intelligence combined with deep soul.

The final chapter I give to two indigenous men, a self-described witch, and a man who was unsatisfied with his suburban existence and went to India to become enlightened. Bhagavan Das graced the program with his tremendous singing voice and helped me understand the systemic/experiential approach from an ancient perspective, the Hindi tradition. Richard Atleo and Beaver Chief get the last words as indigenous men who held on to their culture's powerful and ancient traditions and my love and appreciation for the First People of the North American continent is demonstrated by giving them the last word here. Beaver Chief's wisdom and love for humans survives him and I am humbled and grateful for having learned something about Coastal Salish culture from him.

It feels right to bring out these interviews at this time. It is remarkable that I was able to sneak this material onto commercial radio stations in the years the programs aired and the bulk of these interviews comes from that experience. Now that 911 has impacted our world, there seems to have been an intensification in the corporate desire to control just about anything possible. There is no way such a radio program could exist on commercial radio at this time and it is doubtful most non-commercial stations would attempt to air something so radical. But radical means affecting the root cause and in this era when we need to address the roots of global warming, massive spending on war and the destruction, misery and economic injustice caused by permanent war, the massive divide between rich and poor and the systematic elimination of the commons, among hundreds of other crises, I feel these people represent the best of what America has to offer. The notion that response to crisis brings out the most innovative, novel and creative solutions. Author Chris Hedges believes that the corporate state is a "dead and terminal system of power." These words resonate with me and as something more equitable approaches, I hope the words of the prophets on these pages give you some idea as to how to make that world possible, as they have for me in my own work and life.

Paul E Nelson
10:01P - 1.23.12
The Whiteley Center
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Thinkers/Activists

PAUL NELSON: What message do you think our children need to hear to be well? Is it something like, “Don’t think of others, think only of yourself. That’s the way to be cool.” Or is it, “Be like anybody else but yourself. Your unique abilities are not important. It’s how or like the image TV commercials give you that’s important.”

Well, of course, no one would admit to *wanting* kids to get these messages, and healthy parents would want the *opposite*. Yet, in a land where TV is a babysitter, this is only the tip of the toxic cultural iceberg that has been unleashed in large part by the slime oozing out from your TV set.

A woman who has succinctly boiled down the messages of what she calls the “industry generated culture,” has seen the results of using TV as a drug, and she has dedicated her life to helping parents prevent its abuse. Gloria DeGaetano is the founder and CEO of the Parent Coaching Institute, and the author of several books, including *Parenting Well in a Media Age: Keeping Our Kids Human*.

Gloria, you know, you’re one of my favorite guests on the show.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Thank you for having me back.

PAUL NELSON: Thank you for your wonderful work. It’s really amazing and inspiring, and each book is just, you know, you refine it and have new insights and . . . it’s such a delight to have you on. Thanks.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Thank you.

PAUL NELSON: I think we might have covered this in an earlier interview, but can you tell us how you decided to dedicate your life to media activism? What was that one moment, do you remember?

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Well, I think there might have been *two* one-moments [laughs] in one way.

One was myself, as a parent, watching how my sons, ages 2 and 4 then, while I was going through a divorce, you know, I *used* television, I *overused* it, being stressed out, single mother, and I can certainly understand how parents overuse it because I *did*. And I saw the incredible changes in their behavior when I reined in and when we stopped overusing it and when I was able to have them play more and use audio story tapes and that type of thing, and it was just such a profound difference in their attitudes and how they negotiated with each other, how they *played* so well together.

And the other part was myself, working as an administrator in Issaquah School District, and just observing the children, observing the teachers, and it finally dawned on me, Paul, that I could not really say, “teaching” without saying “teaching in a media age,” and I certainly, back in 1987, when I changed careers, couldn’t say “parenting” without saying, “parenting in a media age.”

PAUL NELSON: Sounds a little bit like the reformed smoker.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: In a sense I would say that but I’m not sure it’s “reformed” so much as *informed*. And I know that we can’t *transform* until we’re *informed*.

PAUL NELSON: What inspired the creation of the Parent Coaching Institute?

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Again, a combination of things. I’ve worked in the media as a consultant, as you know, and had written some books and by 1999 when the tragedy of Columbine happened,

my book on medical violence was coming out, and I just sat down and thought, “You know, how do we get a handle on the media *issue*?” We have over 500 books for parents and yet parents that I’m meeting don’t even know what the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends. We have so much research around the overuse of television and video. We have so much *research* around all of the media violence and all of the harmful *content*. And yet, it’s not getting to *parents*, and if research isn’t getting to parents, the research is basically *useless*.

So I looked around and got interested in the coaching model as a way to support parents on more of a relationship-centered, focused, kind of giving relevant information through collaborative relationship, and that’s what coaching is.

PAUL NELSON: As I read the book, and I think about your work as it has evolved, because I think this is the third or fourth time you’ve been on the air, I get a sense that the Institute functions as a network for refining the concepts that you are presenting in this book, and that you’ve presented in your last several books. This sort of a testing ground, a proving ground and a way to *refine* these concepts through people’s actual experience with their kids all over the country.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Mm-hmm. In some ways that’s true. We offer a graduate level program in which we are training counselors, educators, family advocates, anyone with a degree who wants to work in a coaching model with the parents they serve. So we have *hugely* dedicated professionals, heart-centered people who have been working with parents for a long time, many of them. And so we’re teasing out what is actually working, what works to help really transform the lives of parents and children today.

PAUL NELSON: Do you have coaches all over the country, the continent, the world?

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Actually, we have coaches all over the country and we have several in London and several in Australia.

PAUL NELSON: You use a phrase to describe what is at the root of many of the problems we have with youth, and that phrase is “industry generated culture.” Can you define that?

GLORIA DEGAETANO: I use the words “industry generated culture” to connote two things, Paul. One is the fact that the popular culture being marketed out there, the air that our children breathe and live in, is basically developed and constructed by an industry, by media conglomerates, advertisers, global industries, and it’s a *business*. The word “generate,” I think, is an important word and maybe as a poet you love that word too because there’s so much in that word: generative, generous, *generate*. What does it mean to *generate*? And in a sense the overarching culture we live in is being, not only manufactured for market, but it’s coming and evolving and *generating* from BUSINESS.

PAUL NELSON: Oozing from [laughs] and in business, some . . .

GLORIA DEGAETANO: In a sense, yes.

PAUL NELSON: . . . someone suggests, yeah. Well, it’s interesting you say that, generate to *make*, rather than to create, ‘cuz what they’re doing is not in the sense of creation. It’s not in the model of the creator, at least I experience that. But poet, as maker, I mean, the word “poet” comes from *maker*, so that notion of making something is interesting.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: And the only way we’ll get to the *personally* generated culture is when we start *creating*, using our own, authentic, creative expression. So we move from a manufactured culture to a really, truly generative culture that is *created* by the people and for the people.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. How did you come up with the phrase?

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Industry generated culture?

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: There have been several theorists in the 1940s who talked about an industry culture, and I had looked at words like corporate controlled culture. I didn't really wanna get into a polarity with corporations because many corporations are doing a *fine* job in supporting family systems. It's more of the *impersonal* business aspect of it and that's why I used the word "industry."

PAUL NELSON: You know, in fact, the vast majority of corporations are small businesses that give so much back to their communities.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Right.

PAUL NELSON: It's just the few, which unfortunately have the heavyweight share of the *dollars* that create the havoc.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Right, and they have the eyeballs, if you want to say, of the masses of the world and so the media conglomerates are the dominant industry that is able to forward the messages that they decide to forward.

PAUL NELSON: That's what you say in the book. You say that, well . . . these are *my* words, but the industry generated culture, it *relies* on the *media* to perpetuate its reach, its perniciousness, you might say.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Right. And it's very difficult to change the media with the rules we have right now and in a mass culture. So we have five or six, basically, businesses owning 90 percent of everything we read and see and hear and so forth.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. We're talking with Gloria DeGaetano. She's the founder and CEO of the Parent Coaching Institute. She's the author of the new book, *Parenting Well in a Media Age: Keeping Our Kids Human*. I'm Paul Nelson.

"Don't let your children watch TV 'til they learn how to read 'cuz then all they'll know how to do is cuss, fight and bleed," is what Prince once said, that prophet from Minnesota, sometimes known as Prince, the artist formerly known as, and currently known as.

But, you know, that's not just something from a pop song. He would have an ally in the medical world, who say, "No screen time for babies under 2." And some are saying until they're 5 years old, they shouldn't watch TV.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Correct.

PAUL NELSON: The *science* is backing this up.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Absolutely . . . the science is backing it up and a lot of creative people, like Prince, including Madonna and Arnold Schwarzenegger [laughs] don't let their children watch a lot of television and have rules around television. So it seems that most families I work with *want* to create boundaries, *want* to create ways in their families to *live* well with television. And the reason I called the book *Parenting Well* is because I think that we've got to tap into our well of wisdom as parents, and it's very difficult to draw from a *social* well that's toxic. So that

means we have to rely more on our instincts, on our guts, on our intuition and really know that that supports the research. We can just observe our children after watching four to five hours a day of TV and really see the changes. I did.

PAUL NELSON: Talk to us about the science though. Talk to us about these studies that are validating this.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Well, recently there was a study at the University of Washington, you might have heard, in collaboration with Children's Hospital that showed for every two hours of television young children watch, their attention span decreased by ten percent. This rubber stamps about 20 years of research the Singers, Jerome and Dorothy Singer, did at Yale University, in which they outlined overuse of television for pre-schoolers, was very detrimental on their focus of attention and their imaginative abilities.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. And as adults who watch a lot of TV, they end up morose and drained, a study by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi concludes that.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Oh, yes, that was a 13-year longitudinal study out in the early '90s, and a lot of parents don't understand that or know about that one either.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. As if stupid or inattentive were not enough, kids who watch too much TV also run the risk of being obese.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Correct.

PAUL NELSON: This is one of the studies that you refer to in the book.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Right. More studies have come out now. In 1988 the American Medical Association had issued a warning and then the warnings all through the '90s. One of the big challenges that I'm trying to address in the book, Paul, is that we keep issue {?} the warnings our children become more and more damaged in some way. You know, their physical well-being, their emotional well-being, their social well-being. And nothing is changing faster enough, and that's why I feel like we have to make critical life affirming decisions in our daily routines. Often-times we think, though, oh, those aren't, you know, how important is this? You know, that I read to my child every night, or that we cuddle or we turn the TV off, or we don't *buy* a VCR for our van, you know. All of these are so important and profoundly powerful, small choices parents in a media age must be making.

PAUL NELSON: There's an anecdote in the book about the Parent Coach, I think it was, coming into the house, and there's the young parent zoned out in front of the TV. The young child zoned out in front of *another* TV with a different channel on, and yet, a kid under 2 is zoned out, if that's possible to be zoned out when you're that young, in front of yet another TV, with another image from that, a different image from the other two that they're watching.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Right.

PAUL NELSON: I mean, you talk about *that*, and I'd like to get to: What does that lead to? I mean, starting out at age six months or whatever, maybe from the moment they're out of the womb, being stuck in front of a TV.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Well, the bottom line is that what we are doing with the overuse of television and screen technology is we're hyperactivating reptile functions, low brain functions, which means the child would be more impulsive, less ability to *attend*, less *wanting* to learn, less seeing

one's self as a learning, and certainly not identifying one's self as a creator. We're *under-*activating the cortical function, which is the largest portion of the brain, and holds all of our ability to think, imagine, analyze and construct *meaning* in our lives. And so as young children don't exercise their cortical function or those displacement effects that *happen* with overuse of television, keep *compounding* as children get older, then what we *have* is what we are seeing so much of in too many classrooms. Children bored, teens in angst, not understanding who they are, out of touch with a strong core self identity. Not seeing themselves as part of a whole, a creative contributor to the world and as significant and meaningful.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. There are researchers who suggest that people who have such a low level of individuation that they believe the views and feelings acquired through media messages are actually their own.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Correct.

PAUL NELSON: There's no differentiation between the two.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Right.

PAUL NELSON: Now, this average media message that comes out, if you watch TV, it's: Use this underarm deodorant otherwise you won't have sex with beautiful people who look like this. So there is, at its core, a disempowering message because if you were empowered and felt good about yourself, you wouldn't need, you know, the underarm deodorant, you wouldn't need these certain brands. I mean, they advertise to get you to buy the product, and the way these advertisers are finding is effective is disempowering. Is *that* the reason, because of that disempowering message, that we have these kind of ramifications of the low self esteem and the violence? Or is just the *act* of watching TV?

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Well, I think the disempowering messages play a large portion on it. However, if a person has a strong self identity, the disempowering messages *don't* disempower. So one filters the messages through one's own core self-belief system, not only about oneself but about the world. The industry generated culture wants to keep people objectified, turning them into *objects*, not human beings with unique likes, tastes, abilities and certainly not human beings who create better ways. You've got to be stuck in a certain mindset, possibly a paralysis within one's own creative abilities, to take those messages seriously.

PAUL NELSON: So for someone like *me*, who rarely watches TV and then the NCAA Tournament comes on, and I see beer commercials of people talking to their beer [laughs] as if it were an animate object . . .

GLORIA DEGAETANO: I know, I've seen those.

PAUL NELSON: . . . And you think to yourself, do you get that stupid when you drink that beer? So because I have a certain level of individuation [laughs] some would argue that, I can look at those messages and say, "This is really stupid."

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Not only stupid, could be dangerous because it really, to me, those beer commercials that are making the beer, you know, like a person and the woman talks to the beer like a lover, or the man talks to the beer like a college roommate or whatever it is, is really unconsciously saying, "You know, this is as important as a person."

PAUL NELSON: Furthermore, talking about the damage created by this industry generated culture, and the reptilian brain deficiencies that you're talking about, or the development of that or the lack of development of the cortical functions, do you believe this leads to Columbine-type events?

GLORIA DEGAETANO: I don't think it's the only thing that leads to Columbine-type events, Paul. But I do think that as children and teens live more out of a reptile function, their emotional life continues to suffer and they become at risk *for*, you know, video games to move in to replace the real life, meaningful experiences.

The other thing I think we have to bring out in this conversation, and I bring it out in the book, is that we, as human beings, get conditioned easily to small screen technology. We *like* it. We stay with it in a way we don't with our vacuum cleaners or our new inventions, you know, that we have to put something to it. So in a sense, people get addicted to computer cyber sex or to computer shopping. You don't easily get addicted to cerebral processes. I mean, people don't get addicted easily to writing poetry or to playing chess.

PAUL NELSON: Is that *right*?

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: Well, I . . .

GLORIA DEGAETANO: It's harder work.

PAUL NELSON: . . . well, I find I can do without it but I get kind of grouchy if I haven't had a good poem in a few days.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Well, you're an artist. My sister, the same way, who's a water-color artist and she gets out of sorts if she doesn't spend enough time, you know, painting. And so the antidote to addiction . . . one of the natures of an addiction or an aspect is that you're not conscious of what you are doing. You know, you sort of lose consciousness and you're not making a choice, a deliberate, intentional choice. When we use our authentic expression, which I call as one of the "Vital 5" in the book, we are deliberately, intentionally choice-making to become more human.

PAUL NELSON: In fact, it's the opposite of an addiction, right.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: Some children who watch too much TV from an early age don't even know that they're supposed to get images in their heads when they listen to someone read them a story.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Right.

PAUL NELSON: You tell that, in the book.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Yes, yes. More and more teachers are talking to me, coming up, explaining, you know, "My children, when I read aloud to them in the classroom now, I have several kids who aren't making up pictures in their own heads when I'm reading aloud to them." Amazing.

PAUL NELSON: And you say that one of the challenges of our time is the erosion of community standards through the co-opting of social institutions, fostered by the industry generated culture.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Right.

PAUL NELSON: Talk to us about some of the effects you're seeing on *community*, specifically from this.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Well, my concern, let's backtrack a minute. My concern is that parents, every parent – my vision, Paul, really is that every parent *has* the support and the relevant information he or she needs to optimally raise . . . you know, to *optimally* raise children. Not what the least amount we can do, but *optimally*. In social institutions, they may make a decision that erodes the parental authority, for instance. Or erodes parental relevance. The National PTA making this decision to put the director of marketing for Coca-Cola on their advisory board is an example of this thoughtless kind of buy-in to Coca-Cola that erodes the parents' authentic caring to try to say, "Drink more water, drink healthy foods, you know, eat healthily, and so forth and so on." And so the PTA becomes a symbol or, as I'm saying, a corporate clone to perpetuate the wrong messages. And then we say, "Oh, our kids have so much obesity." Do you see? That's what I was trying to get back to or say when we talked about that issue before. It's very, very difficult to change the behavior and the attitude if the overall *culture* doesn't support the behavior and attitude of the children.

PAUL NELSON: In other words, you've got a kid at home, never watches TV. You know, she gets to age, and eats organic food and not a lot of fatty food, and certainly not a lot of sugar. Eats fruits and vegetables, goes to the daycare and they're eating Lunchables and watching TV.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: And they're considered weird or stupid or different and they're ridiculed and bullied if they *are* making healthy choices. So the parents will come to me and say, "What can I do here? This is devastating my child, and my child has to fit in with his or her peer group." So this is some of the strategies and ideas I outline in the book, *are* to support parents to really focus on their *own*, authentic truth in this media culture.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. And how can a Parent Coach help? How can we tie this back to the work of the Institute?

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Well, a Parent Coach can help a parent get through parenting challenges, and of course there's always some parenting challenge in the 18 years, and even in the transition, some of our coaches work with parents of grown children who are adults or going through college. So a Parent Coach though in relationship to the media can start helping the parent, first of all, feel supported in listening to their gut. OK? We can normalize, too. The Parent Coach can sort of normalize the reaction or what's happening out there in the society, and to *amplify* the parental internal strength so the parent starts feeling stronger. We've got to just be radical in our non-conformity and say, "Yeah, we're a nonconformist and we're proud of it, and this is what *we* do." And then to gather strength from other friends and other parents, and a Parent Coach can . . . can foster external resources for the parents, to help them get in touch with like-minded individuals.

PAUL NELSON: Gloria DeGaetano is the founder and CEO of the Parent Coaching Institute, and the author of the new book *Parenting Well in a Media Age: Keeping Our Kids Human*. More information at parentcoachinginstitute.com. Gloria, for anyone who missed it, give us the thumbnail sketch of the history and mission of the Parent Coaching Institute.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Well, the Parent Coaching Institute basically started in the year 2000, Paul, after I had worked almost 25 years in the area of media, and realizing that we're not going to shift things very easily in a mass culture, what could we do to provide relevant information for parents. So the mission at the Parent Coaching Institute is that all parents would have relevant information and ongoing support to help them parent well in a media age through use of a coaching model, which I've adapted to basically look at, not only media but also to *affirm* parents and to amplify all the wonderful things that they are doing for their children.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. You know, I'd like to get a sense of how it starts out. The parent calls the parent coach and gets a sense of how the system works, and then it leads to something like "Marge and Lily" that you describe in the book on Page 37.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: Can you kind of take us from point A to point Z, using them specifically as an example.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Well, sure. Marge was a working mother who contacted the Parent Coaching Institute and really was stressed, you know, with two little ones, one little girl about 4 and then her boy was only about 10 months. And she had a stressful job as an accountant in a bank and really had spent a lot of time and thought to her career, and like a lot of mothers, was just overwhelmed with two children and working full time, and she did have a supportive husband so that really helped.

So a lot of times parents come with a specific problem and this was like how to get Lily, you know, to do certain things, and Lily was resisting and of course, as young children do. And over time though, really what comes up, a lot of times this happens as working with the coach, the mother or the parent working with us—we have fathers working with us—realize, you know, it's not always about getting their child to do or do something. It's about their *own* self-care and in Marge's case, and in many parents' case, it's about understanding their own identity as a parent. Getting clearer on their *values*. What do they really want for themselves and their children?

PAUL NELSON: So one of the things that they wanted was, of course, to have a loving connection with their kid, and if you come home and just turn on the TV and let them veg out in front of that so you can unwind from work, you're not only creating that, you know, reptilian brain in the child, but you're missing out in an opportunity.

You talk about parents in the book who turn off the TV, come home and on their way home they're *thinking* of different ways in which they can engage their kids in non-TV related activities, or things like watching the TV with a drape over it or something . . .

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Right [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: . . . and making up their own pictures in their heads.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: It's, I guess, it's a question of first of all really: What is it that we want? But then the second question is the *how*. The *how* gets tricky, Paul, in a media age because a lot of parents think, "Oh, you know, it's gonna take too much energy out of me to actually spend time playing with my children." And that the TV gives the *source* for time away. And what we find is that, of course, when parents are supported and sort of nudged and nurtured to play with their children, they realize and they see it's much more revitalizing. There's much more vitality that's nurtured. So an aliveness starts coming back to the family, whereas screens—videogames, television—they *drain* the parent and the child of vital energy. And the more you do it, the more you don't *feel* like doing it.

PAUL NELSON: It's an energy vampire . . .

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Yeah, there you go.

PAUL NELSON: . . . as Judith Orloff would say. And even if you're not watching it, and it's in the background, it's still sucking the life force out of you.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Well, it is a distraction and television on in the room can really *hook* a child's orienting response, that low brain area that will pay attention to the flashes of lights that are the image, you know, changes. And I always really encourage parents to keep the television off when children are playing in the room, or when they're doing homework because it will only distract. Not only from their work but it distracts from their inner dialogue so that the child can't get in touch with him or herself as a problem solver.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. There are gifts inherent from what you call "a clear parenting identity." Can you talk to us about that identity, how one develops it and what the gifts are. You mention a little bit in some of the things that happened, that state that comes from being creative with your children. That is one of the gifts.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Right. There are a lot of gifts on getting clearer about our identity. I think that we have a mass kind of identity crisis as parents in a media culture. TV makes parents look like buffoons or erode authority and bypass the parents through marketing techniques. All kinds of things are ganging up on parents, really, to make it harder. So I say, let's get together and think about what do we want, what are we willing to *give* for what we want? How rigorous are we going to be with ourselves in keeping to our integrity, walking our talk? It's hard to do, obviously. It's very hard for us to do but . . . but what are our support systems for being in our integrity? So a clear parenting identity, you know, is really equated to how much we're willing to stay in our integrity. Then it's a feedback loop, Paul, because the more we are *in* our integrity and have a clear sense of identity, the more resolve we can have. The more *stable* we can become with all this chaos and insanity, which I call "un-sanity," really, out there in the media. This carnival culture, all the lack of dignity in the human condition. All kinds of very, very difficult things to look at, then become sort of like stupid and silly, and we just don't give it attention anymore, and we pay more attention to ourselves and to our children, *where* our focus of attention needs to be.

PAUL NELSON: You know, you talk about that integrity and that wherewithal. There's a story about Gandhi who had, you know, dental problems and a Methodist minister said, you know, "Come on, I've got this dentist. He'll take care of it. You don't have to pay for it." And Gandhi said, "Are you gonna give free dental care to *all* the people who don't have it? 'Cuz if they don't have access to it, I don't want access to it either."

That is a kind of commitment we can't expect from everyone. I mean, there's very few people, Gandhi . . .

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Well, see . . .

PAUL NELSON: . . . But that's an *example* of a commitment to a principle that goes beyond what the average person would do.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Exactly, and that's why Gandhi's considered, you know, and revered as a saint, and Mother Theresa and various people who have been very evolved spiritual beings on our planet obviously have this hugely deep commitment to what they're doing, and then they model it for us, and really show us what's possible as being a human being.

Jane Goodall in her latest book says something very interesting and she says, you know, "Now, with all the problems in the world, we *all* have to be saints. We all have to be so rigorous in our integrity. We all need to strive for that model."

PAUL NELSON: Well, if we're not quite saints yet, we can use what you call "The Vital 5" to help kids get the five core needs to be healthy, in *all* aspects of the term. Tell us about how you develop these and what they are.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Well, looking around, you know, I understand child and adolescent development and some of these vital five are considered very, very essential by most people. For instance, the first one, a loving child / parent bond, is absolutely *crucial*. However, other experts don't really take that bond as I do, to the next level of interacting with children in a media age and developing the bond throughout the 18 years, even though in adolescence it looks a little different, but it's still an important *relationship* with the child.

So the other of the four vital five, I looked at research around mostly developing the interiority, the self-identity. I feel, again, if we have our identity, as I say that in the last part of the book, our *human* identity, then we can make life-affirming choices around media and all forms of screen technology can serve us.

So the second of the vital five has to do with bonding with our inner life, or helping the child develop an interior life. And with their lives right now externalized out on the screen four or five hours a day, they're *not* developing an internal life.

The others of the vital five flow from that. If you have an inner life, then you can develop and generate your own *images*. And that is so crucial because there are all kinds of negative and artificially constructed images by this corporate culture or really what you want to call, you know, it's a counterfeit culture. It's not a culture of deep personal meaning. But our own images *are*, and our only way to get to a vision of the future of what we really want for ourselves and our children and our grandchildren, is to have image-making capacities and to value them.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: So that's the third vital five. The fourth stems from that as creative expression. So what are we creating when we're sitting in front of a tube, a screen? We're not creating as a species and . . . we *are*, you know, there are so many people creating and there'll be a lot of controversy about this part of the book because, you know, we have hi-tech and we have *hugely* creative people, but at the same time, I'm making a distinction between the small c and the large C. Not all of us are gonna be Van Goghs, not all of us are gonna be able to build software programs. But all of us *can* be creative in our own families with our daily decisions we make.

The last of the vital five is contribution to a larger whole and I frame it in a different way. I talk about it as relationship. Children, and *all* of us, really can't contribute to something we don't feel connected to. And I think a *lot* of the problems with our society, with our teens is that they're not contributing because they aren't *connected* to the societal fabric. They're so disconnected.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. You mention the phrase "limbic residence" in the book, and I'm guessing this goes back to the first of the vital five, that parent / child bond.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Yes, it does. And it goes to really throughout all of the vital five in some ways then. But the mid-brain of the mammals, of humans, of dogs, cats, of all mammals is called the limbic brain, and in that brain is where we form relationships and where we learn how to express emotion. We only learn to express emotion in relationship to others of our kind. That's why our kittens love to be petted, our dogs love to be petted and . . . and I know cuddling with my husband is really an important thing. It isn't about sex and it doesn't lead to sex [laughs]. You know, it does- it's not *about* that. It's about the *closeness*. Scientists and brain researchers have shown that this is called limbic resonance. We actually start deeply breathing with each other in harmony. We actually start slowing down body processes. Babies that are held much more often and closer to loving, caring adults have better brain functionings in learning later on.

PAUL NELSON: I can imagine someone hearing this, scanning the dial, coming in at this point, not hearing the previous stuff . . .

GLORIA DEGAETANO: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: . . . and saying that, “Now wait a second. Such parents, well, you’re coddling the kid. You’re too liberal. Is what you’re doing.” Have you . . . you’re nodding your head, saying you’ve heard this one before.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Oh, yeah, you know. You have to look at the brain research. A fabulous book is called *A General Theory of Love*, by three psychiatrists who have synthesized this brain research. Parents will oftentimes have problems with toddlers, you know, and toddlers are exploring everything and they get very aggressive. But a lot of times there’s another little baby who’s getting held a lot and the toddler, when a child gains weight, sometimes isn’t picked up as much. Just by putting the toddler on dad’s shoulders, just by cuddling with the toddler and holding the toddler when you’re reading aloud to him or her, you’re going to be able to change that behavior in a more positive direction. Limbic resonance works. It’s very, very critical to the human condition.

PAUL NELSON: How does a parent who is raised without “the vital five” begin to correct those deficiencies in their selves through their lives? Can it be done through proper parenting? Does the process begin to ameliorate itself that way?

GLORIA DEGAETANO: I make it very clear in the book that “the vital five” are not only for children. They’re for *all* of us. So at any time we can repair or we can bring in things that we didn’t have. The bonding with our parents, for instance, may not have been what we wanted. What we can do as adults now is make sure every single person in our lives, *every single person* is there for us one hundred percent. And if they’re not, start making changes to that, and you know, getting . . . saying No to this friend who’s sapping our energy and not supporting us. So there’s ways we can look at “the vital five” for ourselves and nourish our own human needs, as well.

PAUL NELSON: You mention that when the kids don’t have that sense of connection that it’s a problem. They don’t have that ability to image and relate to other kids. And I’m thinking part of the problem, as a result of that decreased brain function, is this inability to articulate and communicate which obviously results in violent acts.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Right. Language is a symbolic system, as you know, and you’ve got to address the symbolic functioning of the brain in order to have an articulate expression through vocabulary. And so the less words a child has, for instance, the less capable they are of expressing their negative emotions as well as their positive ones.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. Imaging and the *intent* that it incorporates has a tremendous impact on all relationships and you tell a bit about the Pygmalion effect in the book, the student / teacher relationship and the studies that have been done with when a good image for a certain student is kept, and a good intent is kept in the teacher’s mind.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Right, and we know that through educational research that when another person holds an image of *us*, of a positive one, we move toward that expectation. So I’m working to translate that research in the book to help parents hold positive images of their children. It’s so difficult when the child’s acting out or going through a spell that’s, you know, very trying for the parent. How can we hold the possibility of the ideal or a preferred future of what we would want for our child *at* that time.

PAUL NELSON: Is the high some kids crave when they experiment with drugs actually a crying out for the altered state, creating something gives them?

GLORIA DEGAETANO: I think that there is a hunger for transcendence, obviously, in our culture. We can get transcendence through spiritual experiences. "We're all mystics," Matthew Fox says, and it's all part of the human condition. It's not something that's only for a few spiritual-minded people.

PAUL NELSON: Matthew Fox also suggests that "hell is our refusal to create."

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Right. Right. And I did put that quote in the book. I think it's a wonderful quote.

PAUL NELSON: Going back to the root word of what hell is.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: What hell is, yeah. It's a refusal. A refusal to create. And then he says, "Well, then is heaven our creation?" When we create and various researchers, psychologists talk about that flow experience, you know, you're losing yourself, but you don't lose your-, your *intent* in that way, your deliberation. What you lose is your *ego* consciousness and you become a part of that creative process, and really you realize you're not doing it all. There is a spiritual dimension, there is a co-creation here where another aspect is moving through you, if you wanna call it grace or God or a divine spirit. When we create, whether it's trying to figure out how to juggle the dinner schedule with, you know, yelling kids . . . and when we just take a moment and get into ourselves and think, oh, and we get an idea. Oh, we pull out the crayons or we remember to put our children into the bubbles of the sink, or you know, something weird, just simple. But it's like we're also moved, we're inspired. And tapping in to that place of inspiration for families is so critical in this nihilistic, such a demeaning, negative culture.

PAUL NELSON: What you say leads to alienation and psychopathology. You say that in the book.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Well, yes!

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, you also *believe* that "to make that shift to a personally generated culture, no traditional revolution will be necessary." And through your work this is already happening, and through the work of many other folks, we're already beginning to see this, although it's not being reflected on the five o'clock news.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Not yet, and as you have interviewed a lot of those cultural creative people, working small, people doing their thing within their integrity, and what I'm encouraging parents to do is look at that model and to think about, you know, working small in order to change the culture. That parents are really the transformational *leaders* of the culture *if* they do the job that they *want* to do, and if they really work to get the support and the affirmation they need, I believe all parents want their children to have a better life than they had. And all parents want to give their children the best. It's just a tricky business right now in a media culture to be able to *do* that.

PAUL NELSON: All revolt is personal.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Well, that's a good point. Yes.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, that's what Michael McClure said.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Right.

PAUL NELSON: Why is it important that kids learn about the nature of altruism?

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Well, as I talk about this, is the last of "the vital five," this contribution, you know, as a relationship. Altruism gets us outside of ourselves. A lot of discussion around giving right now, or becoming spiritual people even, it seems so self-centered to me. It seems narcissistic. It's: What I can get out of it. You know, if only I affirm then I can become rich.

PAUL NELSON: I . . . I . . .

GLORIA DEGAETANO: You know, that's a distortion. It's a distortion. But it's . . .

PAUL NELSON: But if we look at the . . .

GLORIA DEGAETANO: It's out there.

PAUL NELSON: . . . If I give you \$5,000,000, you'll name the building after me, for example.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: I mean, this is not the joy of non-attached giving.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Yeah. And so getting back to the true meaning of altruism, to give for the joy, like you say, of giving to *see* someone else *grow* because of your *love*. This is the definition of a healthy, intimate relationship. In order for us to have healthy relationships with those we love, our spouses, for instance, we've got to be able to focus more on what we're *giving* than what we *receive*. And if we don't do that the relationship, you know, it doesn't work. Both parties have to do it, and that's the great paradox. It's a fabulous paradox of true love, of real deep intimacy, that you *do* receive more than you *ever*, ever imagined by giving from the heart, like you say, if you wanna say without detachment. But just with giving from that sense of love and nurturance. You're there to forward the *life* of that person in the optimal way you can. Can we be there like that for our *society*, is the question.

PAUL NELSON: How are your kids turning out?

GLORIA DEGAETANO: My kids are doing great! They're now older – one, Matthew, is 24 and Adam is 22, so they are launched and happy adult young men.

PAUL NELSON: And you have time to write!

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Yeah, now I have more time. Yes, that's absolutely true. I have more time to help and support other parents [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: Your gift to us through your writing and through your work is an amazing gift, and the work that you do is so amazing, and it's such a delight. You're so articulate, you've done the research, you've done your homework, and you articulate it *so* well in the book. I hope that people get this. I hope they buy five copies and give them out for birthday presents . . .

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Oh [laughs]. Thank you.

PAUL NELSON: . . . you know?

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Thank you, Paul.

PAUL NELSON: Thanks for being on the show. Continued success with your work.

GLORIA DEGAETANO: Thank you very much.

PAUL NELSON: Parent Coaching Institute dot com [parentcoachinginstitute.com], the website. Gloria DeGaetano, founder and CEO of the Parent Coaching Institute. The new book is *Parenting Well in a Media Age: Keeping our Kids Human*.

PAUL NELSON: Hello, and welcome to this week's program. I'm Paul Nelson. With all the books out now on animal communication, one might think the supermarket tabloids are having an effect on book publishers, and while that yet may be the case, the hard, cold, scientific evidence is beginning to emerge that suggests there is something to the notion that not only is animal communication possible, but animals might have some very important information for us. The main man behind the notion that there *is* proof to the paranormal abilities of animals is respected scientist Dr. Rupert Sheldrake. His new book is *Dogs That Know When Their Owners Are Coming Home, and Other Unexplained Powers of Animals*. He has conducted numerous experiments with dogs and other animals, has collected research, and has developed some interesting theories about this phenomenon. Jaytee is a Terrier, and the subject of hundreds of experiments to determine how he knows when Pam, his owner, is coming home.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: On more than 200 occasions where we've studied Jaytee's behavior, reacts when Pam is setting out, or just before she's setting out to come home, from whatever distance, whatever time of day, or evening. There are some occasions he hasn't done it or he's reacted, anticipated her arrival more than 80 percent of the occasions we've studied. There are some occasions he hasn't done it though and most of those have been when there's a bitch in heat in the adjacent apartment.

PAUL NELSON: Dr. Sheldrake's background in biology exposed him to the theory of morphogenetic fields and his *own* theory is that animals are able to communicate telepathically through a similar phenomenon he calls "morphic fields," one of several field theories he is now developing.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: The morphogenetic fields are just one kind of organizing field, the ones who are developing organisms. Behavioral fields organize the behavior of organisms through coordinating the activities of brains. Social fields organize the activity of social groups and coordinate the different members of the group. So members of a flock of birds or a school of fish can turn almost simultaneously without bumping into each other.

PAUL NELSON: Renowned scientist Dr. Rupert Sheldrake is our guest today. *Dogs That Know When Their Owners Are Coming Home, and Other Unexplained Powers of Animals* is the book. I hope you enjoy this week's program. Thanks for tuning in.

Many religious and spiritual traditions have prophecies of the end of time. The Mayan calendar doesn't even go past Winter Solstice 2012, suggesting *that* day is the end of time. But one could interpret that phrase in many ways. If Rupert Sheldrake's theories are accurate, the end of time is tied in with such paranormal phenomena is the feeling that someone is staring at you, and the fact that some dogs know when their masters are coming home. How can we make such connections? Stick around.

Today we're honored to have one of the world's leading scientists in our studios. Dr. Rupert Sheldrake studied natural sciences at Cambridge and philosophy at Harvard. He holds a Ph.D. in biochemistry from Cambridge, and was a Fellow at Clare College Cambridge. He's the author of several books and more than 50 technical papers, and his new work is *Dogs That Know When Their Owners Are Coming Home and Other Unexplained Powers of Animals*. From London, England, and the Pacific Northwest, we welcome Rupert Sheldrake to the program. It's a pleasure to have you here today.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: It's a pleasure to be here.

PAUL NELSON: You had an experience with animals, as many of us had, as a child, brought you a lot of joy. Scamp was the name of your dog and he wasn't the only pet you had. So you had joyous times with animals as a child.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: We kept a lot of pets and I was very keen on animals. I think the ones that fascinated me most were homing pigeons because they *did* something so mysterious, and that mystery of homing pigeons has stayed with me all my life, really.

PAUL NELSON: And your experience with Scamp?

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Scamp was a great dog and, you know, the affinity that one feels with dogs, I developed at a very early age with him.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. You had a work experience with animals as a teenager that was perhaps the antithesis of that childhood joy. Maybe you can tell us about that internship.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Well, I became a biologist. I studied biology at school because I was really fascinated by animals. Then I had this job between school and university when I was 17. And I was working as a technician, a temporary technician in a drug company research lab. When I got there I discovered this was, in fact, a vivisection {of archery} {?} {factory, maybe?}. Cats were operated on daily. My syringe injection was poisonous to see what things would kill them and so on. And there was this terrible carnage every day and piles of dead animals were thrown out into a bin every evening for incineration. This really made me think. I was doing biology 'cuz I loved animals and I was working in this place where animals were systematically poisoned and vivisected on a daily basis. Something had gone horribly wrong. And I think that was the experience, really, at an emotional level, that made me think that present-day biology had taken a wrong turning. It was not really about life; it was more about death. It was more about . . . in our lab classes we didn't so much work with living organisms. The first thing we did was to kill them. So this, I think, was what started me thinking and made me later come to the ideal that we need a more holistic approach to biology. It was only recently that I remembered this experience as a teenager that had this emotional impact. It wasn't an intellectual impact. I didn't question the intellectual foundations of science, but there was something that made me think it had gone wrong.

PAUL NELSON: You know, it's interesting that you say that because just now I'm reminded of something I'd planned on and planned on bringing up later in the interview, and perhaps we can discuss it in more detail, but that dogma against scientific experiments with animals, provided, I mean, the only science we *do* with animals is when we're doing *that* kind of science. When there's no regard for animals as beings, as sentient beings. And so, it would seem to me that there's a connection between that notion and the dogma against research and animals and how they can help us. And I guess we'll get more into that, but I'd like to get into the book and perhaps your first notion that you had a sense you were gonna write a book based on the notion of paramour-, paranormal abilities in animals.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: This really grew out of my previous book, which is called *Seven Experiments That Could Change the World*, published in 1994. And in that book I'd been trying to find simple experiments to do with everyday phenomena, that could ideally been done on budgets of ten dollars or less, which is why that book, subtitled, *A Do-It-Yourself Guide to Revolutionary Science*. One of the experiments I proposed there was to test for telepathy in dogs through this phenomenon of dogs anticipating owners' arrivals. Dogs can wait at doors or windows ten minutes, even half an hour, before someone gets home. I proposed doing research on that to see if something *more* was going on than merely routine expectations or hearing familiar car sounds.

That aspect of my *Seven Experiments* book led to an enormous public response and it really led into this research. I spent five years doing research, and I discovered that these unexplained powers of pets, the animals we know best, are a fascinating topic. There's a huge amount of information. Millions of people keep pets; millions have observed unusual behavior. And that's really what led into the present book.

PAUL NELSON: It makes sense that it took you five years because just reading the book, one is almost overwhelmed by the amount of evidence and the different facts that you pull up and it's, it's really quite a work of scholarship. And in terms of the abilities that animals have, you break the abilities up into three main groups: telepathy, the sense of direction and premonitions. Perhaps a brief description of each, and maybe some examples.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: The telepathic faculties I'm talking about are where animals – dogs, cats, horses and parrots, the star performers here, pick up where their owner is thinking. Now, many people would say, "Well, how do you know it's not just body language, noticing subtle cues and stuff?" Well, in some cases when the owner is in the same room, that may be the case. But what I've been particularly interested in is how they pick up their owners' thoughts or intentions even when their owner is *not* in the same room. For example, a lot of cats hate going to the vet, and they pick up when their owner is planning to take them, and they disappear. The big problem for vets-, we asked vets in North London, practically every veterinary clinic we asked had a problem with canceled appointments with cats on a regular basis. So you might think, well, this is just them seeing the owner getting out the carrying basket and so on. But that's not the case. A lot of owners *don't* get out the carrying basket 'cuz they *know* the cat will disappear. And some people make appointments for the vet while they're at work. Then they drive home to pick up the cat and instead of being on the doorstep where it usually is, it's nowhere to be seen. So I think that the cats can pick up people's intentions to take them to vets. Dogs can pick up people's intentions to go take them for walks, even if they're in another room, and it's not a usual time. Animals can pick up people's intentions to give them special treats, food, at unusual times. Somebody's just *thinking* of getting something out of the refrigerator for them and they bound into the room.

But the most spectacular example is the one that I've based the title of the book on, the ability to anticipate arrivals because here, the person's miles away when this happens. They can be 10, 20, 50 miles away, even a thousand miles away or more, if they're flying from a city in another part of the world. And in these cases, the animal's anticipation, going and waiting by the door or window, can't be explained in terms of seeing the owner or picking up clues from them.

Most people would say, "Well, how do you know it's not just a matter of routine or habit, or regular timing?" Well, in most cases it's not. People who comment on this phenomenon, who've noticed it, and who find it striking in their pets, are well aware of the possibility of routine. What's interesting is that most of the cases I've had about it are *not* people returning at routine times. We've also done experiments where we videotape the animal. We can see exactly when it's waiting. We have time coded videotapes. We've done more than 250 of these experiments. And the person comes home at randomly selected times. I call them or beep them on a beeper to tell them when to come. They don't know in advance when this will be. No one at home knows when they're coming, and to rule out the idea that the animal is just picking up familiar car sounds, we have people travel in taxis or get friends to drive them in unfamiliar cars. And the animals still know. It's definitely not routine, not familiar sounds, at least in the case of the dogs I've investigated in most detail. It seems to be a telepathic phenomenon. The animals are responding to people's intentions. They, in fact, start reacting *before* people get in the car to come home. They start reacting when they're just *planning* to get home, getting ready to leave the building, getting their coat on and getting their bag packed and starting on their homeward journey.

PAUL NELSON: We're chatting with Rupert Sheldrake. He's a renowned scientist and author of *Dogs That Know When Their Owners Are Coming Home, and Other Unexplained Powers of Animals*. I'm Paul Nelson.

Yeah, it's just amazing. It's like animals will scan our brain for a mental picture and be able to see that mental picture of us taking them to the vet or taking them out or giving them a sausage or whatever, and have a sense that that is coming. That's telepathy and I think what we ought to do, rather than getting into the other groups is to talk about a couple more examples of that. The

videotape experiments were done with Pamela Smart of Ramsbottom, England and her terrier, Jaytee, and I'd heard about these experiments from Dr. Mona Lisa Schulz who specializes in intuition and she told us a bit about them, but perhaps we can get it from the source now.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Well, we've done many experiments with Pam and Jaytee. These are the-, this is the main dog I've worked with. I've done experiments with several other dogs, as well, who have given similar results. But Jaytee's the most intensively investigated dog in the world for this phenomenon.

Jaytee, on more than 200 occasions, where we've studied Jaytee's behavior, reacts when Pam is setting out or just before she's setting out to come home, from whatever distance, whatever time of day or evening. There *are* some occasions he hasn't done it, or he's reacted, anticipating her arrival on more than 80 percent of the occasions we've studied. There *are* some occasions he hasn't done it though, and most of those have been when there's a bitch in heat in the adjacent apartment.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs] He's a little preoccupied.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Yes, that's what, and it shows that Jaytee can be distracted and there are some things even more important than his owner's arrival.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Some of the times he's failed to do it have been when he's been very tired or sick. But most of the time, more than 80 percent of the times he goes to the door and waits for her in this characteristic way. It's extremely significant statistically. The results are highly repeatable. In experiments with human telepathy, one of the problems is they experiments are so *boring* usually that people get bored with them and their scores fall off. Luckily, dogs never get bored with their owners coming home, so you can do this kind of thing over and over again.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs] Oh, that's beautiful. That's absolutely beautiful. Well, the other main group that you have in terms of the dogs and their quote unquote "paranormal abilities" is the sense of direction. I mean, we see these newspaper stories quite often, and in fact, you quote one about a dog losing his family in Indiana and finding 'em in a place he's never been, at their new home in Oregon.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Yes. Well, there's two things here in the sense of direction. One sense of direction is homing, going to a familiar place, and that's relatively common. Most-, many dogs and cats do this and it's the same kind of behavior we see on a regular basis in homing pigeons. Many people keep pigeons to race them and so a common sport. There are five million pigeon fanciers worldwide who race their pigeons. These pigeons are routinely taken hundreds of miles from home. In England they often have races of 500 miles or more. They're released in the morning and they usually home that same evening, flying at an average speed of 60 miles an hour, and they fly straight home. It's not as if they're just fanning out and randomly searching the countryside. It would take them weeks to find their home that way, if they found it at all. They fly, and they head off, usually more or less in a straightaway, homeward direction and get there.

So this, this is *homing* and it's related to the larger problem. It's the tip of the iceberg, in fact, for a much larger problem, which is migration. We just don't know how migrating animals, like swallows and Arctic terns and-, and marine ones like salmon and . . . we just don't know how they do it. Salmon smell the home river when they get near to it but that doesn't account for getting thousands of miles across the ocean to the right estuary. Nobody knows how these migrating birds do it. They get some clues from stars, some clues from a magnetic sense. But these, in themselves,

are not sufficient to explain it. {close this space if poss.; I can't do it} So we've got a big mystery in homing and navigation here, and this is one of the things I talk about in my book.

The other sense of direction is even more mysterious and that is the kind of example you gave, where animals find *people* who've moved away, instead of finding a place they're familiar with, homing. In some cases the people can move away and the animal finds the people, hundreds of miles away. And that's extremely mysterious 'cuz it's not going to a place it's ever been before. What it's doing is homing on a person, not on a place.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, that's very interesting, and you say this as it's a big mystery and it *is* to the scientific world, but we have a sense that you're honing in on that mystery, as well. Premonitions was the last example of that. Dogs that know, for example, when their owners are about to have an epileptic seizure and other such ways that they save lives.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Yes, this is quite common. Many epileptics have dogs that warn them of oncoming seizures, and it can be half an hour or more in advance. Nobody knows how the dogs pick it up. The people, themselves, certainly don't know, and having a dog that gives them warnings is enormously valuable to them 'cuz one of the worst things about being an epileptic is not knowing when a seizure is coming on. Say, somebody could be out in a public place, going down a flight of stairs. If a seizure comes on then, it's dangerous and at the very least, it's extremely embarrassing 'cuz people to the ground, have convulsions; they're often incontinent. No one wants that to happen in a public place or when they're unprepared for it. And these dogs give them enough warning to get to a safe place, to sit down or lie down so they don't come to any harm when the seizure occurs.

There are organizations in the United States and in Europe that are training dogs as seizure alert dogs but many epileptics have found their animals just do it anyway, without any training. They spontaneously give these warnings.

The other thing about these warnings is they're extraordinarily reliable. They get it right practically a hundred percent of the time. Nobody has a clue how they do this, and there's been no detailed research on this at all so far. But it is a remarkable phenomenon.

PAUL NELSON: It's not just dogs, though. It's a rabbit that you cite in the book, and in fact, the rabbit who had that ability, died and was replaced by another rabbit who was able to do it, as well, lending credence to the notion of morphic resonance, more of which we'll get into as we go along.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Yes, that's right. Other animals can do this. There's the rabbit you mentioned, or a couple of rabbits you mentioned. Also, some cats can do this. But the star performers in this warning are definitely dogs. There's many more cases of dogs than other animals. But I daresay other animals could be trained to do it, and if people paid more attention to their animals' behavior, maybe more epileptics who have animals might notice the-, their pets doing this. There are a lot of people who have seizures who are not aware that animals have this ability and may not notice warnings they're trying to give them.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. We talked a little bit about the dogma against dogs and other animals, and that skepticism, which comes from certain scientists, Dr. Richard Wiseman, from your country, a chief among them is, you believe, anti-scientific.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Yes, well there's certain kinds of skeptics who are not just raising reasonable objections and making reasonable comments. There are certain people for whom the very possibility of telepathy is ruled out as a dogmatic presupposition. They're convinced that none of these abilities can really exist. So the only issue is to find out, when they *seem* to exist, is to find out whether people are telling lies, being fraudulent, or whether they're simply deluded by trans-

coincidences, selective memory and so forth. The dogmatic skeptics are quite immune to evidence. Nothing will convince them that these things happen. And that's what I'd call an anti-scientific position. People who, on the one hand, try to suppress scientific inquiry, trying to prevent people doing this kind of research by ridiculing it and making sure there are no grants or facilities for this kind of research. And also just rejecting any evidence that may come up, on the grounds it's impossible. That's a profoundly anti-scientific attitude, but luckily, these dogmatic skeptics, they are sort of scientific fundamentalists, are quite rare. They're very vociferous but there aren't very many of them. Most scientists, in my experience, are actually much more open than they may seem. Most of them don't want to admit in *public* that they're interested in these things 'cuz they're afraid that the skeptics will jump on them and accuse them of being soft on pseudo science or something like that. So many will keep quiet in *public*. But since I've "come out" as it were, in my interests in these subjects, I often find scientific colleagues in *private* say, you know, "This is great work you're doing and my dog does it, too," and "I only wish there was more of this kind of thing in science, but I don't like to talk about these things at the lab because, you know, people will think I'm weird." It's extraordinarily common, that kind of attitude.

PAUL NELSON: Well, they'll be doin' it in ten years anyway. Dr. Richard Wiseman, probably a *professional* skeptic, does he and other people like him keep you sharp by making you investigate everything that they talk about, and being able to prove it wrong?

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Well, Richard Wiseman's different from your run-of-the-mill armchair skeptic. He's a British skeptic who actually does experiments. Most of them simply dismiss all this stuff from the comfort of their own chairs. But he does experiments. On the other hand, he goes into these experiments with an attitude that the point of the investigation is to just to find out where the fraud is or where the flaw is. I don't think he's got an open mind, but he sometimes *appears* to have one.

In the case of these dog experiments, I invited him to do some experiments with Jaytee, the dog I've done so much research with. He did some experiments with Jaytee and they gave essentially the same results as my own. I show the graphs, based on his data in my book. However, he invented a criterion for Jaytee's behavior, just looking at two minutes of the dog's behavior instead of the whole three or four hours in each experiment. And by inventing extremely artificial criterion he claimed that the dog hadn't passed his test. He could only say this by ignoring most of his own data. And he then went on TV in Britain and said, "Oh, it hasn't worked," and published a paper saying it hasn't worked.

I recently published a paper showing exactly what the dogs did, and showing exactly why his interpretation, I think, is completely invalid. But anyone interested in seeing his data compared with mine can see it in my book, and I think anyone who's seen the data plotted on graphs sees that he had actually replicated exactly the phenomenon that I've observed.

PAUL NELSON: And more information is also available on your website.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Exactly. There's a lot of information about my research there, and most of my published papers are available on the website, in the full text fashion {version?}.

PAUL NELSON: Very interesting. I was doing a search on your name and sure enough, your own website came up. So let's give that out as we close this first part of the interview. That website: URL www.sheldrake.org.

We're chatting with Rupert Sheldrake. He's a renowned scientist. His new book is *Dogs That Know When Their Owners Are Coming Home, and Other Unexplained Powers of Animals*.

PAUL NELSON: We continue now with our chat with Rupert Sheldrake. Dr. Sheldrake studied natural sciences at Cambridge, and philosophy at Harvard. He holds a PhD. in biochemistry from Cambridge, and was a Fellow at Clare College Cambridge. He's the author of several books, and more than 50 technical papers, and his new work is: *Dogs That Know When Their Owners Are Coming Home and Other Unexplained Powers of Animals*.

Now, your scientific experiments with animals were predated by a few folks, included among them a Russian neurophysiologist named Vladimir Bekhterev. Can you tell us a bit about his work?

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Bekhterev was working in Russia earlier this century, and he came across a circus dog that . . . a circus performer had this dog that he could give mental commands to and the dog would obey these commands. And Bekhterev decided to investigate this, and he was an admirably open-minded fellow, and he asked the circus dog trainer to come to his laboratory or his apartment with the dog. And he found he could get this chap to give commands to the dog, completely silently, even when the dog couldn't *see* him, and the dog would go and do what he asked him to do. Like, running across the room, jumping up onto a table, picking up a particular book in his mouth, coming down and putting it in a particular place. He asked him how he did it, and the dog trainer, who was called Dirov, told him that he just formed a clear picture in his mind of what the dog was going to do, from the dog's point of view, and then gave it a kind of mental push, and the dog would do it. Bekhterev found he could do the same thing with the dog and he trained a dog of his own to do this kind of thing. And in his experiments he was convinced that this was not just a matter of subtle clues, body language and so on, or eye movements. Because he had screens and removed all those clues from the dog.

So he experimentally demonstrated what, in fact, his common knowledge among dog trainers, the formidable British dog trainer, Barbara Woodhouse who wrote a lot of books on dog training, had no doubt about this. She said when you give a command to a dog, it's not just a matter of the way you *say* it, or the way your *body* is, but you have to *think*, it, too, and send a clear, mental picture to the dog of what you want it to do, and then it will *do* it. And this, for her, what for Bekhterev was a weird phenomenon that he investigated and found really was telepathic. For Barbara Woodhouse, she took this completely for granted, and all the people who followed her method of dog training just take it for granted.

PAUL NELSON: That's very interesting that you say that because if *you* get the mental picture in your head about some behavior that you want *stopped*, the dog is reading the mental picture of your head, like whether it's eating garbage and other things from the street, and if you have that picture of how disgusting that is, that reinforces it.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Hmm, yes. Well, I think it's very important to pay attention to the mental pictures you have with animals and not all pet owners know this. But I think many experienced animal trainers are well aware of it, and people who are very, very successful with animals, I think, do this as a matter of course.

PAUL NELSON: Mm-hmm. Now dogs aren't the only animals with telepathic skills. You talk, in the book, about cats that answer the phone and even give some examples of *humans* that have been known to anticipate members of the tribe. Aboriginal people have less cultural conditioning so we can understand that. But even in places like Norway, they have a *name* for the phenomenon of telepathy.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: In rural Norway there's a phenomenon called the Vardogger, which means "warning soul," and it's a phenomenon whereby people *know* who's going to come and visit the house. They *know* when someone's about to come to the house, up to half an hour in advance. It's very like dogs knowing when their owners are coming home. I think that these telepathic skills

are much better developed in animals than they are in most people. But in people, in traditional societies, they're much better developed than they are in our modern world where, I think, they've been greatly suppressed.

One of the places where I think they occur quite commonly in the modern world, and this is something I'm investigating at the moment, is between mothers and babies. I think there's a very close bond between mothers and babies, particularly nursing mothers and babies. This is very close and it's very biological and it serves an obvious biological function. If the mother is away from the baby and she knows when the baby needs her, so she can go back to feed the baby or if she does feel she's needed and goes back to it. This is obviously of survival value for the mother / baby pair.

So this is one of the things I'm investigating at the moment, and if any women have had these kinds of experiences with babies, I'd love to hear from them 'cuz I'm collecting data on this at the moment.

PAUL NELSON: Dr. Mona Lisa Schulz was on the program, describing about how she was jogging in Portland, and her mother, on the other coast, on the other side of the continent, knew immediately that something had happened to her. So perhaps that's one suggestion for the new book or for the research.

The notion of how dogs and other animals are capable of homing in on people with whom they have a strong connection is linked to a theory of yours expressed in previous books, the notion of morphic fields. Now, as I understand from reading the book, this comes out of your experience with biology, and is based on a theory that goes back to the '20s, the notion of morphogenetic fields, so perhaps you can give us a primer on morphic and morphogenetic fields.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: In the 1920s, a number of biologists became convinced that embryology, the growth of embryos, the development of plants from seeds, could not be explained just in terms of genetic material and proteins. They didn't know about DNA then. But their argument was actually one that's valid even today. They pointed out that all the cells of the body have the same chromosomes. We now would say they all have the same genes. That the different cells develop in a different way, and if you think of the arm and the leg, for example, they've got the same genes in all the cells. They've

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: got the same proteins. There's no chemical difference between an arm and a leg, and yet they have different shapes. Now, what is it that gives the shape? It can't be just the genes 'cuz otherwise all the cells would be programmed identically. It's not just the chemicals because otherwise the arm and the leg wouldn't have different shapes.

There's something else, a bit like a plan. If you think about buildings, the form of a building isn't determined by the building materials. With the same bricks and timber and things you can build houses of different shapes, with different architect's plans. And they thought there was something that gave a plan to the organism, which they called the morphogenetic field, the form-shaping field.

That idea is now very common in developmental biology. There is *need* for an organizing field, to explain how organisms develop. I think that these organizing fields are, in fact, a new kind of field in nature. I've taken that idea and developed it further. And morphogenetic fields are just one kind of organizing field, the ones for developing organisms. Behavioral fields organize the behavior of organisms through coordinating activity of brains. Social fields organize the activity of social groups and coordinate the different members of the group. So members of a flock of birds or a school of fish can turn almost simultaneously without bumping into each other. And I think that these morphic fields underlie the social bonds that exist between members of a pack of wolves or members of a human family, or mothers and babies.

And I think that the bonds between dogs and people or cats and people are morphic fields. That's the nature of the bond. When a person goes away from the animal, say someone goes away from home to work or on holiday, that bond is not broken. It stretches. There's a non-local connection that remains in place between the person and the animal, and that's what serves as a channel for telepathy. It's only *because* of the bond that the channel is there. That's why telepathy normally occurs only between people and animals, or animals and animals, or people and people that have close emotional bonds with each other.

PAUL NELSON: To get a better sense of how these work, you liken morphic fields to magnetic fields and how when you have a magnet and say, iron filings and you move it, they all respond in that way. It's very similar to the school of fish that you just alluded to.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: That's right. The magnetic field is the most familiar of fields to all of us and anyone who's played with magnets as a child or as a grownup will have a direct sense of this. The field is invisible. You can't see it. But you can see its effects on our findings. You can render the effects of the field visible through the lines of force that the iron filings take up. But if you take away the iron filings, the field's still there, even though there's no way of detecting it except through magnetic phenomena or electrical phenomena.

I think that morphic fields are like that. They're within and around the organisms or the societies that they organize. They're invisible but they have visible effects. And just as moving a magnet can change the pattern of iron filings, I think that the moving morphic field of the whole flock, it's like a group mind, if you like, is what coordinates the individuals within it. They're not just looking at their neighbors to see what they do.

PAUL NELSON: We're talking with renowned scientist Dr. Rupert Sheldrake. He is the author of *Dogs That Know When Their Owners Are Coming Home, and Other Unexplained Powers of Animals*. I'm Paul Nelson.

Let's follow that school of fish notion and the group mind in fish because it's fascinating when we think of what you call the "fountain effect" in fish, or what is called the "fountain effect" in fish, and also the flash expansion. Just a delightful mental picture that I get from reading the book.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Yes, there are many forms of behavior that fish share. For example, if a predator moves towards a school of fish, the fish will expand, undergo a flash expansion around the predator. They all move away from the predator and create a sort of hole in the school, around the predator. And they accelerate extremely rapidly in this flash expansion, yet they don't bump into each other.

PAUL NELSON: How fast do they go?

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Well, in terms of miles per hour, I'm afraid I can't remember exactly how fast they go, but it's an extremely rapid expansion. They accelerate through several body lengths in a fraction of a second. And you can model it. It's one of the more interesting kinds of computer model of animal behavior, involves models of flocks of birds or schools of fish. There's a model called "Boids" by Craig Reynolds, which many people have seen on computers. These models are interesting, in a way, but they're based on just looking at what happens between immediate neighbors. The more sophisticated, recent models that are on computers now take into account as it were the *field* of the group. So it's interesting that the limitations of these earlier computer models are being overcome by coming close and closer to a field model of flock or school behavior. And so, in a sense, there's a parallel development of this idea through the computer modeling of these flocks and schools.

PAUL NELSON: Similar to the super organism theory, as ascribed to social insects, ant colonies and that kind of thing, which is something we could get into but I'm seeing how we're running out of time and there's so many questions that I have. I mean, we could have you here for hours.

One thing I definitely want to talk about is China and how that bias against learning something from animals does not exist as it does in Western science. In fact, China, according to the book, has gone further than most countries by committing resources to the scientific study and implementation of animals as earthquake predictors.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: They have, yes. The Chinese have taken this seriously. It's been known for centuries, all around the world, that animals often behave in an unusual way before earthquakes. Cats hide, dogs become restless and seemingly afraid. Horses behave abnormally, wild birds, caged birds, many of them behave in an unusual way. This has been observed since classical times in all parts of the world. In recent years, in the California earthquakes of '89, the Loma Prieta quake and the '94 Northridge quake, there were many signs of animal behavior, as I've discovered with the help of my research assistant in California, David J. Brown. And in the recent earthquakes in Greece and Turkey, I've found there were many examples of unusual animal behavior. So there were in Assisi in the 1997 quake, initially.

In the West this animal behavior is completely ignored. Seismologists treat earthquakes as a physics problem or as a geology problem, and they regard stories about animal behavior as just anecdotal. That's what they say. They just dismiss them all. Well, the Chinese, luckily, have not done that, and they ask people to report when they see unusual animal behavior, and when they get a surge of unusual animal behavior. This makes them look very carefully at other signs, and it's enabled them to give quite a number of very successful earthquake warnings. They've evacuated whole cities, hundreds of thousands of people, hours before huge earthquakes devastated their cities. They did this first in the '70s but they've been doing it ever since.

In the West, the official earthquake researchers have now pronounced it's *impossible* to forecast earthquakes, which lets them off the hook if ever getting predictions wrong. They don't make them at all. They still continue to use large amounts of public money to fund their research, but they've given up predicting earthquakes.

I think, however, looking again at animal science *could lead* to an effective earthquake prediction system, and with the help of telephones and the internet, there could be millions of people, particularly on the West coast of the U.S., who could be trained to look for these signs and to call in to a free number if they saw these signs. And then if there was a surge of calls from a particular region, this could well help in predicting earthquakes.

PAUL NELSON: Yet, though we're up against that bias against animals in research unless we're dissecting them, something which you believe is anti-scientific. We talked about that before.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Yes. I think there's a bias on the part of science professionals against this. But say some independent body set off an earthquake pet line where you could call in. And this wouldn't require very much funding. If the officials, the seismological people didn't want to part of it, they needn't be. But if it was possible on the basis of pets to produce a few successful predictions, I don't think in the early stages it would be right to issue warnings on the basis of pets 'cuz false alarms can be very counterproductive. But if there was enough data to show this is for real, then I think the state government and the federal government and the general public and insurance companies would all say to the official earthquakers, "Look, you guys, why don't you get together with these people and work or integrate both of them." And I think that would be the way forward, not to have one or the other, but both, together.

PAUL NELSON: Chances are, in this society, would be motivated by the insurance companies, but that's a whole 'nother story. Dean Radin has done some experiments at the University of Nevada on that two-legged animal, that suggests some interesting notions about time, showing people images on a computer screen.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Yes, Dean Radin is, I think, one of the most inventive of modern parapsychologists and he's done some brilliant experiments on what he calls "pre-sentiment," knowing in advance when things are happening. Or *feeling* in advance when things are happening. In his experiments people sit in front of a blank computer screen and then after 30 seconds or so of the screen blank, a picture flashes up on the screen, and while this happens, people's skin resistance, their heartbeat are monitored. The skin resistance, as in a lie detector test gives a measure of emotional arousal. Most of the pictures that flash up in a random sequence are neutral pictures – pictures of nice scenery, friendly-looking people and so on. But some of them, extremely shocking. Either they're hardcore pornography or they're scenes of extreme violence. They're emotionally disturbing pictures. When the emotionally disturbing pictures come on the screen, people's skin resistance changes, their pulse rate changes, as you'd expect. But the fascinating thing is that these changes occur three or four seconds *before* the pictures appear on the screen. People somehow pick up, in advance, their whole physiology reacts in advance of these shocking images appearing. And they couldn't know, by any normal means, 'cuz the order in which the pictures appear is determined by the computer, at random. Nobody knows. The experimenter doesn't know. This is all happening just inside the computer. So I think his experiment showed that there's a pre-sentiment in human beings that, a kind of precognition of the future influencing the present, which no one has been able to explain.

PAUL NELSON: Well, the suggestion in the book is that time, linear time, the moment that what we consider *now* is *thicker* than we believe it to be.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Yes, that's what I'm suggesting. That, you see, one way of dealing with this kind of pre-sentiment that Dean Radin has found is to say, well a normal idea of the present is much too limited. Of course, the present as we experience it subjectively already has a certain thickness. We're not seeing things microsecond by microsecond. We blur together experience over many milliseconds into the present. That's why, when we look at Cine films, it's a series of still images, 24 a minute, appearing in a second. Changes of image – image, blank, image, blank, we blend them together into a continuous moving image because our minds actually have a thicker present than is objectively there on the actual screen.

So I think there's a thicker present. Whether this accounts for premonitions of earthquakes by animals, which can happen hours or even days in advance, is another question though. That there may be physical signs there, electrical changes and other physical stimuli, but nobody *knows* to what extent that that kind of premonition can be explained in terms of physical stimuli or pre-sentiment or pre-cognition, something to do with the thickness of time.

PAUL NELSON: Mm-hmm. So then the whole notion of time, as we know it, is certainly being reconsidered as Einstein suggested we ought to do anyway.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Yes, well, I think that the premonitions and precognitions force us to look at our understanding of the nature of time, and personally I'd prefer not to have to do this. I mean, morphic fields, telepathy, memory and nature, these are familiar topics to me. I feel comfortable with all those. Premonitions are much more disturbing, even to the kind of expanded world view that I work on. And I've gone to considerable lengths to try and see if there are alternative explanations for this animal behavior, these premonitions. In some cases, there *are*. But in other cases there aren't. And I think there has to *be* something like pre-cognition or pre-sentiment in humans and in animals.

PAUL NELSON: Well, you studied philosophy at Harvard and so I'd like to end with a bit of philosophy. We had an animal communicator in here on the program, and she believes that this subject of animal communication, telepathy, whatever you wanna call it, she believes it's coming out at this time because our species is in desperate need to reconnect with nature, to *live* in the moment, as thick as it may be, and to learn about unconditional love. What do you think about those notions?

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Well, I certainly think we need to learn to reconnect with nature and learn to rediscover that animals and the rest of the world are not just separate from us. They are to be manipulated by us for human profit and gain. And I think that our world view needs to move beyond the mechanistic world view to a more holistic world view.

Exactly why these are things that are happening now, I don't know. I mean, there are many reasons, I think, that are forcing us towards a more holistic and interconnected view of the world. I think we *need* it, just to understand the facts of science. I think biology, particularly, has had a kind of tunnel vision, which has been very distractive for the science and for the environment. So I think we need it for scientific reasons. I think we also need it for ecological reasons. The effects of our behavior are causing a major global crisis.

In the realm of healthcare, we need it because the tunnel vision of institutional medicine obviously leaves a lot of things out, which is why this is flourishing, alternative medicine. And Andy Weil makes a very strong case for it. What we really need is integrated medicine that brings all these things together in a bigger picture. There's many areas of our lives in which we need this more holistic picture. And I think that pets, the animals we know best, can help us towards it, because in a way, we already *know* that they know things that we can't explain. And when we recognize that they have these powers, we see daily demonstrations of this interconnectedness in our own homes.

PAUL NELSON: It's just amazing. I mean, someone could look at that book and look at it for years and years, and continue to get things out of it, continue to do some of the experiments that you suggest they do, keep a dog log and what have you. I'm very impressed with your work. It's been an honor to have you on the show, and I wish you continued success and happiness.

RUPERT SHELDRAKE: Thank you. And if anyone would like to get in touch with me, then could I just say, again, that they can do so through my website. It's [www.sheldrake](http://www.sheldrake.org), S-H-E-L-D-R-A-K-E, dot org. (www.sheldrake.org), O-R-G.

PAUL NELSON: Yes, indeed. Our guest has been Dr. Rupert Sheldrake. The new book is *Dogs That Know When Their Owners Are Coming Home, and Other Unexplained Powers of Animals*.

PAUL NELSON: Hello, and welcome to this week's program. I'm Paul Nelson. If the world is to survive well into the third millennium, a transition to a feminine whole systems approach is paramount. Fortunately, many of the people who make it their business to promulgate a partnership approach see the tide turning toward not just a tolerance for diversity, but an honoring of it, and a rejection of the prevailing competition domination model. One of the world's brightest whole systems thinkers is internationally renowned scholar and author, Jean Houston. Jean is back with a manual of hope for this critical time in human history. The book is *Jump Time: Shaping Your Future in a World of Radical Change*. She says one encouraging trend is America's fastest growing segment of consumers, a group known as Cultural Creatives.

JEAN HOUSTON: Cultural Creatives are like you and me. We're people who volunteer, who have hope, who are interested in our own interior development, but as a way to unfold, being of real use in the world. Women are very important and women's styles of knowing holistic, circular, looking for process rather than product.

PAUL NELSON: Jean says that Aristotle's concept of entelechy or the force which drives an organism toward self-fulfillment is the best reason to be optimistic for the planet's future, as this is the best course for what we all crave – personal freedom.

JEAN HOUSTON: Spirituality gives us access to a much larger bandwidth of being. You know, we are living in the kingdom then. We're not living on the outskirts or the suburbs. We are as Yeshua Ben Yosef, you know, Jesus of Nazareth said, you know, that the Kingdom is both within you, and another translation is "in the midst of you." But it really needs the deep work of consciousness.

PAUL NELSON: One of our favorite guests is an amazing, myriad-minded woman who has a very deep understanding of the way things need to be, as well as the best ways to get there. I hope you enjoy today's program with Jean Houston, author of *Jump Time: Shaping Your Future in a World of Radical Change*.

It's *Jump Time*. The end of the Second Millennium, Armageddon, the Second Coming, the Rapture, the Decline of Western Civilization, the Post-American Century, the Pacific Century, the Age of Aquarius, the time after the death of the old gods, before the birth of the new. The time after the death of the old gods, before the birth of the new.

As we await the birthing of the new gods and goddesses, what better inspiration for this time of whole system transition than a new book from Jean Houston. The best-selling author, internationally renowned scholar, philosopher and teacher, Jean is the Co-Director of the Foundation for Mind Research in Ashland, Oregon, a consultant to UNICEF and other international agencies. She is a self-described heretic psychologist and one of the all-time favorite guests of this program. Today we welcome the perfect midwife for *Jump Time*, Jean Houston. Just a delight to have you on the show.

You know, in fact, whenever people say, "Well, what kind of show do you do? What kind of guests do you have?" Invariably, yours is the first name in a stream that rolls off my tongue. Jean Houston, Barbara Marx Hubbard, Mary Catherine Bateson, Riane Eisler, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And so just a delight to have you on the show. You get this stuff as well as or perhaps *better* than anyone on the planet, even my poetry heroes and sheroes like Michael McClure and Diane di Prima. Really, and thanks for coming down here and enlightening us.

JEAN HOUSTON: Well, I don't know about enlightening, but I think we can have a very good time. And we always do, Paul.

PAUL NELSON: And that's good. That's good.

JEAN HOUSTON: Especially that you're in love now.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

JEAN HOUSTON: Makes it even better.

PAUL NELSON: It makes it easier, doesn't it. Not so much of a struggle, and we're gonna talk about that. Not necessarily my love life, thank God, but how love affects one's quest for individuation.

The new book is entitled *Jump Time: Shaping Our Future in a World of Radical Change*. I feasted on the book even more than your previous offerings. Now there's a criticism I have, which is a strange way to open up the interview, is that the book seems to be very accessible. Now maybe I've been reading too much language poetry, but is that an accurate take? Is it an accessible book and was that intentional?

JEAN HOUSTON: Accessible.

PAUL NELSON: Yes.

JEAN HOUSTON: Yes, yes. And, 'cuz I've written too many inaccessible books. And to write an accessible book takes a lot more time, a lot more honing, a lot of deepening, so that you don't just sort of go off in a great pyrotechnics of metaphor and speaking to other domains of yourself. But you find yourself really in communion and communication. Also, I did this book as a year-long course that I taught to my mystery school, and so I think it has that kind of sense of direct communication, person to person.

PAUL NELSON: Well, you know, there still are pyrotechnics in it and there still is difficulty. There's stuff that, you know, I have to look up to get and especially the myth, which is one of my deficiencies. So I'm not saying it's for simpletons but . . . well, I enjoyed the book. It was very readable.

Jump Time has been a key phrase of yours for a long time.

JEAN HOUSTON: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: You mentioned on the show last time you were on. How was it coined?

JEAN HOUSTON: Well, it just jumped into my head. But I think it jumped into my head after I had read, many years ago, Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge's work on punctuated equilibrium, that when you study the fossil record, there really are missing links, and they don't fill up. You know, before the old Darwin said, "Well, they're gonna fill up." But of course, they didn't and then toward the end of his life even he was disturbed by it. Because it would seem that a species goes on in a certain way for thousands, even in some cases, millions of years, and nothing much happens, and then suddenly – Jump. In relatively few generations in terms of evolutionary history, it moves to a whole new regime. And so I ask, "Why?" Is it because a species has a kind of coded time release pattern that it will make these changes? Is it at the edge of its tolerance? Is it bored with itself? Is it climactic conditions? Whatever it is, the fact is that things do enter into Jumps, whole system of transition, and what I say in this book is, judging by where we are *now* in the new millennium, I think that we are in the Jump time as formidable as may have happened to species in millions of years past.

PAUL NELSON: And you talk about previous Jump times, the time when the Declaration of Independence was signed, the Renaissance being a prime example

JEAN HOUSTON: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: And this is a Jump Time to dwarf all Jump times, the time in which we live.

JEAN HOUSTON: Yes, I mean, this is the most interesting time in human history. Other times thought they were *it*. They're wrong. *This* is it.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

JEAN HOUSTON: This is it.

PAUL NELSON: Well, thanks for clarifying.

JEAN HOUSTON: That's right. I thought you'd like that. [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, that's a nice little sound bite. Let me write that down.

JEAN HOUSTON: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: A time of whole system transition. Why don't you . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: . . . why don't you [inaudible]

JEAN HOUSTON: Well, everything is up for grabs. I mean, the maps don't fit the territory. It's as if we're attending a wake for a way of being that has been ours for hundreds, even thousands of years, and tomorrow will *not* look like yesterday. I think, for example, as we're recording this, we have just learned that the human genome project has been virtually completed. Now, it wasn't supposed to be completed for another five years. What is happening, not simply in technology, I mean, where were you and I when we first began our shows, you know, four or five years ago? And where was the Internet? You know, it was just sort of vaguely there. And now . . .

PAUL NELSON: Pre -Web.

JEAN HOUSTON: Pre-Web. And in the last four years, look what has happened. A world of colossal busy-body-ness, the world mind taking a walk with itself. You introduced me by saying, 'The new gods and new goddesses.' Well, one of the things that's happening is fusion. Suddenly Athena is doing lunch with the White Buffalo Woman [laughs] you know, and Isis and Mary Magdalene are having a fine time. So we have this cross fusion cultural mitosis. The *food* has changed radically and all this . . . I go into simple . . . When I think of simple towns in Iowa and I find a Middle Eastern restaurant that also has a sideline in Chinese cuisine. I go into-, I was in San Francisco the other day and there was a Jewish-Chinese restaurant, Genghis Cohen, you know?

PAUL NELSON: [laughs] And you're making that up [laughs].

JEAN HOUSTON: No, I'm not making it up. I know it's there. I swear to God it's there.

PAUL NELSON: [laughing]

JEAN HOUSTON: You know? I mean, you can also find the French-German, Hide-a-Way, you know, Stollen Kisches [SP] {Kisses?} but is . . .

PAUL NELSON: I think I did read that before.

JEAN HOUSTON: . . . No, that one, that's a joke. But . . .

PAUL NELSON: That one's a good . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: . . . but the new world music that you play here, that music that is, you know, hybrid sounds for hybrid selves. Now, if I were to go back a thousand years ago, I'm Scotch and Sicilian. And if I were to go back to my Scotch relatives . . . my Sicilian relatives a thousand years ago were probably fairly sophisticated, living under a kind of Arabic interest and decadent arrogant culture. But I go back a thousand years ago to my Scotch relatives, and their names were probably something like . . . Hugo, Son of Stupid and Clotilde the Cuckoo. And they had really a very dull life. I mean, they would wake up in the morning in their mud and wattle hut because the chicken would walk across their face, you know. And then they'd get up and it was always raining in the 11th Century, and they got behind the plow. And maybe on Sunday they got hold of a hog's head of meat and would fall into a ditch and that was the big event. But *then*, led by mad monks and greedy nobles, my ancestors, Hugo and Clotilde got up and went east on the Crusades. And they come to Byzantium, glorious, decadent Byzantium, with everyone sounding like an ancient Byzantine version of Noel Coward, don't you know? Oh, Dahling, you're into Progress, how too, too, Neo-Platonic, you know, and savoring saffron-laden dishes with pistachios and then they go on to Jerusalem. Jerusalem, you know. The gray place of the crossroads of spirit bursting through the place everybody wants and everybody wants to *be* in. You know, spirit becoming incarnate in flesh. And then they go back to Scotland. Well, how are you gonna keep them down on the farm after they've seen Byzantium and Jerusalem? You *can't*, and so they begin to . . . Old Hugo starts to create spice trading and . . . and their child begins to build medieval cathedrals and the soul of man vaults the sky and universities. Now that was then. That's a thousand years ago.

Now, multiply it millions of times and you can just see what is happening to consciousness. It is not the same mind. It is not the same body.

PAUL NELSON: It's the same story with trade, with the Iroquois Confederacy and perhaps that's the hope of what will come out of NAFTA and GATT and these kinds of agreements, that kind of change, that kind of evolution, that kind of appreciation for other cultures. We're talking with Jean Houston. She's the author of *Jump Time: Shaping Your Future in a World of Radical Change*. I'm Paul Nelson.

You know, I've heard from second-hand reports that NASA research to help astronauts have an easier time in reacclimating to earth living, they set the frequency of the spaceships at the same frequency of earth, and after 20 years of travel, space travel, they'll say, "Wait, the frequency of earth actually has *changed*." Is it not vibrating at a higher frequency these days?

JEAN HOUSTON: I don't know that for a fact, Paul, but I certainly, like you, I have anecdotal evidence. But if a planet is a living system, [inaudible] if she's living, then why wouldn't she change her vibration? I mean, she is a great lady after all and so she [laughs], she's subject to all kinds of changes. I don't think she's in a menopausal shift [laughs], you know?

PAUL NELSON: [laughs] Let's hope not.

JEAN HOUSTON: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: That's so funny [laughs]. Give us a hundred years for that, huh?

JEAN HOUSTON: Shrug your shoulders and we all fall off, you know? [laughs] But sure, I mean . . . One of the things, as you know, I've done some work with an astronaut and one of the things they said was, you know, "You come back, floating back to earth and there she is, that beautiful blue and silver planet, floating in womb of the cosmos." And as Ed Mitchell said to me, "I felt such nostalgia for the world could be, and you *knew* her to be alive, and you knew that you had *left* as her baby and came back as her . . . co-partner." And that's also a major piece of the shift. I really suspect that if there *is* . . . just like in the movie, *2001*, when they touch that great rectangle, ZOOOOP! You know? And everything shifts in the . . . I suspect that it was that picture, of the seeing of the earth from outer space that activated some, if you will, some radical evolutionary latency in us, and that's why it began to shift.

I was in China, in central China in 1983 and I was present when a peasant in his little house pulled down the picture of Mao Tse-Tung, and who did he replace it with? The picture of the whole earth from outer space.

PAUL NELSON: Oh, I thought you were gonna say Elvis there, for a second.

JEAN HOUSTON: No, not Elvis.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

JEAN HOUSTON: And I was staying with some lepers in Southern India, and there next to Saraswati and Ganesha and Bhutamata and Shiva, the picture of the earth from outer space. It's an evolutionary event and with it we move into a level of partnership for which we've been ill-prepared. And one- part of my book is about how do we prepare ourselves for this level of partnership, this complexity that is upon us 'cuz most of us have still been educated to be white males of the year 1926.

PAUL NELSON: Well, and let's talk about that, the shadow looms larger than ever. The peace dividend, remember that? We were talking about that a few years ago. Now, that's a distant sound bite and fundamentalism of all kinds is rampant on the planet. You see this as a case of a rat fighting hardest when cornered?

JEAN HOUSTON: First of all, fundamentalism is not rampant throughout the planet. Fundamentalism is extolled for its excitement [laughs], the media. Some of the worst fundamentalisms that I have seen, you know, apart from certain tribal fundamentalisms in Africa, Arabic fundamentalisms and Islamic fundamentalism, has been in the United States, quite frankly. You don't . . . in many countries you see nothing like this. But I think what it is, of course, is the sunset effect. That the sun always blares out, "Whee, here I am, before I go down." And also, part of one of the major aspects of any living system is not rocking the boat, a kind of natural entropy, so that things have to *prove* themselves before they really can go forward.

PAUL NELSON: Homeostasis.

JEAN HOUSTON: Homeostasis, absolutely.

PAUL NELSON: And you say there's a regeneration of society happening, a change from the ego-centric to the world-centric. We were just talking . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: Well, I think it'll take a century to do it. But certainly globalization is with us, whether we will [laughs] or not. But a lot of it is, as you may know, I do a lot of work in many cultures around the world, and one of the things that I see happening is cultures coming back. The Balinese have become more Balinese. Maybe it's because Americans and Japanese and Europeans have acted the way the de Medicis did in the Renaissance, you know, that they honored the

poets and the players and the artists and the dancers. And so the Balinese say, “Oh, well you appreciate our society? That’s wonderful. We’ll deepen it.” You know, and they have, and at the same time they’ve created this incredibly wealthy textile industry, you know, using their Batiks in terms of new and innovated forms. I’ve worked with Maori people and Aborigines in Australia to appreciate their culture and to appreciate and not just to appreciate but to have them *deepen* their culture while they move into the next century. So I’ve been in situations in Arnhem Land in Australia where you have people doing 50,000-year-old puberty rites and dancing with the white chalk on their face, and in the background there’s also a dish antenna.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, interesting. Cultural Creatives is something you mention in the book.

JEAN HOUSTON: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: They listen to the show, they buy your books, they provide hope in terms of an emerging movement. Paul Ray is the person who coined the term through his research of 20 years, we were talking at lunch.

JEAN HOUSTON: Ten years of serious work and then actually, it began many years ago for him.

PAUL NELSON: A good sign, Cultural Creatives? Can you describe what they are?

JEAN HOUSTON: Well, Cultural Creatives are like you and me. We are people who volunteer, who have hope, who are interested in human, our own interior development, but as a way to unfold, being of real use in the world. Women are very important and women’s styles of knowing holistic, circular, looking for process rather than product.

There are actually two kinds of Cultural Creatives. There is the one I’ve just described and there’s ones called the Greens, and the Greens may not be that interested in inner space, but by golly, they’re interested in, you know, saving the world. And between the two it’s about 46,000,000 people, which is a very substantial part. Well, [inaudible] used to say for any society to change you needed a ten percent creative minority, and with the Cultural Creatives you have almost 15 percent, almost 20 percent.

PAUL NELSON: What’s taking so long?

JEAN HOUSTON: It hasn’t taken long at all, as cultures go.

PAUL NELSON: You don’t think so?

JEAN HOUSTON: Oh, no. You know, I’m a collector of antiquities and I’ve dug in Egypt and Greece and it’s very important to me and I can look at a piece of sculpture that I might own, it’s 4,000 years old, from the end of the Old Kingdom and beginning of the Middle Kingdom. And then I can look at something from the Ptolemaic period of, you know, say the second Century B.C., first Century, B.C. and there’s not that, you know, you can see differences, of course, but still the basic structure is there. But now, I mean, that . . .so you’re talking 4,000 years. Can you imagine what would happen 4,000 years between now and then? No. So that’s also Jump Time, that kind of acceleration. Things are not being carried over. They are reconstituting themselves. We’re in a time of radical deconstruction and reconstruction of every known way of being, having, thinking. If you went back to your ancestors, even of a hundred and fifty years ago, think of what their experiences were, and then contrast them with what your experience is, and the fact that you probably live anywhere between five to ten to a hundred times the amount of sheer experience of your ancestors of a hundred years ago. Now, this affects the nervous system. It affects your poetry. It affects their musical ear, it affects *everything*. Things are not structured in the same way because chaos is always looming within to both illumine and then to destroy, and then to re-

configure living in a time of absolute deconstruction and reconstruction all the time. No, it's not the same light.

PAUL NELSON: Wow. A core concept of the book is the Aristotelian concept of entelechy.

JEAN HOUSTON: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: Dictionary.com says, number two: A vital force that directs an organism toward self-fulfillment.

JEAN HOUSTON: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: That perhaps the key component of Jump Time, is it not?

JEAN HOUSTON: Yeah, I use it in a more psychological and spiritual sense, and I use it the way Aristotle used it when he said it is the entelechy of an acorn to be an oak tree. Is the entelechy of course, of a baby, to be a grownup human being. Entelechy, if I were to be whimsical about it, of a popcorn kernel to be a fully-popped entity. But that we have within us a kind of directive, creative purpose, a pattern of unfolding, that if we get in touch with it, suddenly it is the Yellow Brick Road [laughs], you know, the road of spiritual pollen. It is the unfolding of qualities and capacities and emotionalism, feelings, and options and opportunities that would not normally be there when we are living out of a much narrow bandwidth, a bandwidth of serial monotony, or just doing what we're expected to be doing.

PAUL NELSON: How does your own entelechy coalesce?

JEAN HOUSTON: How does my entelechy . . . ?

PAUL NELSON: How did it coalesce? How did it come together for you?

JEAN HOUSTON: You know, that's interesting. I've never been asked that. I think it was always there. Part of my family was a very spiritually-minded family. My mother was a Sicilian Catholic but not terribly happy with the rigor and restrictions and so she was having leanings towards new thought, you know, so that was always there in my early childhood. I was theologically precocious. I was not precocious in math or other things, but I was always interested in where is spirit? And I had an experience – oh, I don't know if I ever talked about it on the show, where I was sent to Catholic school when I was five years old, just for some months. And my father, the comedy writer, gave me interesting questions to ask the poor little nun every morning: "Uh, Sister Theresa, um, when Jesus rose, was that because God filled him full of helium?" You know, "Sister Theresa, when Ezekiel saw the wheel, was he drunk?" And the one that really got her: "Sister Theresa, I counted my ribs and I counted Joey Montebello's ribs, and we got the same number of ribs. And I wanna know, if God made Eve out of Adam's rib, how come . . ." (and I had 36 little Catholic children raise, *Sicilian* Catholic children raise their shirts, you know, at the same time). But the really bad one was, "Sister Theresa, did Jesus ever have to go to the bathroom?" Whoa! That did it. She jumped up. She pinned up a big sheet of oak tag and she wrote on it: Jean Houston's years in Purgatory. Well, anytime I asked one of these questions, she . . . and she lisped very badly, too. She would shout: "Blasphemy, blasphemy."

PAUL NELSON: Oh, that's where it . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: "Sacrilegious, blasphemy." And she'd put up a big X, and each X represented a 100,000 years. And at the end of the first grade when I turned six, I had 300,000,000 years in Purgatory to my credit, and I had no future in the Catholic Church, and I went home crying and my father did try to make me feel better. He said, "Wait 'til you see how they hog-tied a real saint,

and he took me to see *The Song of Bernadette*. It was a beautiful motion picture about a religious experience, starring Jennifer Jones, as Bernadette. And everything was fine, except when the Virgin Mary makes this extraordinary epiphany, this beautiful luminous epiphany in the Grotto. And my father, who was a great one for laughter, couldn't stop laughing. He howled, he hooted and all the Sicilians turned around and said, "'Hey, Diablo, Diablo.'" And I said, "Daddy, get out of here. Go to the bathroom." And he says, "You know who that is up there on the screen? We met her last year in that party in Beverly Hills, and she's playing Mary now. Hot damn! I told her she'd go far." And it was the starlet whom he had known, called Linda Darnell. And he couldn't get over this rather unlikely person playing the Virgin Mary. Well, we went home and I went and I threw myself into the closet and I began to pray to the Virgin Mary to show up, and I kept counting to great numbers, and closing my eyes and hoping she would come, and I would give up candy. . . and nobody showed up. And finally, I just gave up and I went and I sat by the bay window, and I looked out at the fig tree blooming in the yard, and the plane in the sky and then it happened. Suddenly, everything was available. Everything, and I knew that I and that fig tree in the yard and the doggies in the closet that I had been trying to pull out of the closet so the Virgin Mary wouldn't step on them, and you know, the plane in the sky . . . I knew it was all part of this great symphonic weave. Everything was interrelated to everything else. Everything was part of a kind of a colossal divide, symphonic, poetic pattern, and it was very, very good. And I knew it was my job to evoke that sensibility in others, so that's how my entelechy coalesced.

PAUL NELSON: Well, boy, you're doin' a fine job. We're talking with Jean Houston. Her new book is *Jump Time: Shaping Your Future in a World of Radical Change*.

We continue now with the perfect midwife for the time we live in. A time of whole system transition she calls Jump Time. The best-selling author, internationally renowned scholar, philosopher and teacher, Jean Houston is the Director of the Foundation for Mind Research in Ashland, Oregon. A consultant to UNICEF and other international agencies, she's a self-described heretic psychologist and one of the all-time favorite guests of this program. The new book is *Jump Time: Shaping Your Future in a World of Radical Change*.

For anyone just joining us, how 'bout a thumbnail version of Jump Time.

JEAN HOUSTON: Jump Time is the changing of the guard at every possible level. Jump Time is the biggest deconstruction of everything that we knew or thought about and / or existed in, and its reconstruction. Jump Time is where we are living, the biggest change in human history, and as I said, other times in history thought they were *it*. They are wrong. *This* is it. And what my book is about is how do we jump with and stay sane and creative in Jump Time.

PAUL NELSON: We mentioned Punk-eq. Not Punk-eq itself but punctuated equilibrium which is the short version. Punk-eq sounds like some kind of band, but it's not. . .

JEAN HOUSTON: It's scientists getting silly, where it's . . .

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, and they ought to do that more often, but maybe a brief definition of that and why this is the time for that.

JEAN HOUSTON: Well, punctuated equilibrium refers to the fact that in the evolutionary record you can observe that a species will go on in a certain way for hundreds, thousands, even millions of years, and not too much happens. And then suddenly, relatively quickly it will be a whole system transition, and it will be a rather different evolved species.

PAUL NELSON: It then merges with something else.

JEAN HOUSTON: So it's equilibrium. Its evolutionary equilibrium *punctuates* and it jumps to something else. It doesn't merge. No, it punctuates. And I'm saying, of course, that I think that systemically, in our bodies, minds, psyches, spirits, governments, religions, social forms, relationships – we are in a Jump Time. We are in a state in which the equilibrium of hundreds and even thousands of years has been punctuated and this is Jump Time.

PAUL NELSON: And we talk about science and biology is used in the book quite often, which is perfect for an organismic paradigm which is emerging. And you use bacteria as a partnership, ethos metaphor. Can you explain how bacteria survives with partnership, with a more feminine approach and not the domination model?

JEAN HOUSTON: Well, how did you, I'm curious about how you saw it working.

PAUL NELSON: OK. Let me just go . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: 'Cuz I'd like to make another kind of metaphor.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. Let me see what I have here. I have it in my notes. Bacteria as a metaphor. The way it gets by, the way it . . . Here we go. Page 28.

JEAN HOUSTON: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: My notes are pretty extensive when I get a book like yours 'cuz I don't wanna screw it up. Contrary to the view that evolution is a combative . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: . . . read {?} in tooth and claw struggle, bacteria led the way by networking.

JEAN HOUSTON: That's right.

PAUL NELSON: Microbial life forms multiplied and grew more complex by co-opting others, not just by killing them. They could also merge, combine their bodies, form permanent alliances. Symbiogenesis, the merging of organisms into new collectives, evolved as a major strategy for environmental survives.

JEAN HOUSTON: Well, that's . . . I'm glad you did that 'cuz I thought it would be much better read than trying to explain it. And that's the way things do survive, the network. We do understand that the network is the wave of the past and it is the tide of the future. And today, people are networking, especially through the Internet, for example, in so many ways that they never could before. We are in a planet of colossal busybody-ness. I mean, when I think of what my life is like, late at night, I'm so glad that I am not 20 years younger, because you would see in front of you somebody who would probably weigh 400 pounds, have bottle glasses and be popping Twinkies in their mouth, because I have this whole sense of the world mind taking a walk with itself. Network – I work now in maybe ten different cultures. You know, networking, pulling the teachers together, pulling the new alternative health professionals together *with* the teachers. Putting them together with new, innovative scientists and theologians. And there is an orchestra and an orchestra conductor, and one becomes a kind of Leonard Bernstein of a new kind of sense of collective commons, like collective responsibility in which everybody has a piece of the total of the action and understands how they are part, who they are, and also part of the whole.

PAUL NELSON: And we talked about the fusion of the different cultures around the world and we're not talking about the return of Weather Report and Stanley Clarke and company [laughs]. We're talking about a cultural fusion, and there's a great story, and I wrote down, and which is so poetic,

and there's such poetry that's in the book. I could underline passages, you know, little phrases throughout the book and come up with a wonderful epic poem, which might not be a bad way to spend my time. But the synchronicity of Aboriginal churingas in the Dream Time is one of the most delightful stories in the book . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: Yes, it was.

PAUL NELSON: . . . that illustrates the breakdown of the membrane. Why don't you tell us . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: Breakdown of the membrane, that things are passing through in our dreams and our psyches. We have leaky margins with each other. Well, I've done a lot of work in Australia and the churinga is a kind of symbolic mandala that is used by the Aboriginal peoples, and very powerful. Quite, very often very beautiful and sometimes it represents their walkabout. Their walkabout to their sacred places.

PAUL NELSON: And you went to what was called Ayers Rock . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: Ayers Rock . . . Ayers Rock . . .

PAUL NELSON: Ayers Rock.

JEAN HOUSTON: . . . which they call Uluru. Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: Uluru, that's right.

JEAN HOUSTON: Yeah. And so one of the things that I found was that psychiatrists, and I've trained a lot of, for some reason, a lot of psychiatrists and social workers and psychologists. They report that they're often white, Caucasian, often English and Irish descended patients are dreaming these churingas and these churingas are popping through. So I knew an Aboriginal woman who says, "Why do they think that, you know, they've killed us off, and they haven't done that. Because, you know, the white fella, the white fella, he go by our sacred site and one of our spirit babies *jumps* into the womb if the lady's pregnant, and before you know, she's borning herself a black fella's spirit." They think the Aboriginal is coming back. But in a sense, when we look at the world fusion, black fellow, yellow fellow, red fellow, white fellow, all fellow, you know, they are in this extraordinary state of blending. We *are* moving into a global sensibility, whether we like it or not. But I think with high individuation of culture.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

JEAN HOUSTON: It isn't gonna be just a blur.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. And we talked about entelechy and the force that helps propel an organism toward actualization. And love is a key driver in this process. Relationship, in general, but especially love, as I can attest to, only recently. Or abandonment of same [laughs] which maybe is not worth it, and give up and get stuck on a couch, watching the ballgame and drinkin' beers or watchin' soap operas and eating bonbons and just giving up for this lifetime. Now, you quote Michael Ventura in the book, and that was quite resonant with my experience. In fact, why don't I just go to . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: Please do.

PAUL NELSON: . . . page 113 and read that, refresh your memory and put it about as well as it can be put. And this is a quote from his book-, actually from the *L.A. Village Voice* of February, 1994:

“In love, we reveal ourselves in each other’s presence. After the first flush of romance it will strip us down. Then love will call up everything within us that is *not* love, that it may be healed. So to stand in the state of love and *remain* there is to be inundated and shaken by everything inside that is *not* love. Everything drawn to the healing power of love. A power that does not let us go, does not let us off. It’s dizzying. It’s frightening. It has not *rules*. It’s deep sweetness and its great reserves of calm exist only in relation to its capacity for revelation.”

Wow, that just says it all right there. Yeah, that might be your warning not to [laughs] fall in love, right? Because then you’re gonna have to deal with all your *stuff*. Right?

JEAN HOUSTON: Well, I think that’s one of the best statements I’ve ever seen, the fact that love is not hearts and flowers. It’s revelation. It’s the necessity for transforming. If you and I are in love, then we hone each other. You know, we get down to the gristle and the bone of it all. And that’s why one plus one *always* equals in love, 7,483. And that’s when the entelechy is often called forth. You know, that one gets into the essence of who and what one is because if one does *not* discover the essence of the other and the essence of oneself and meet in essence *and* all the existential stuff, then invariably there’s trouble in paradise.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, there certainly is. Yeah, and I thought it was just Stephanie. You know, I feel in love with her over a year and I thought . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: . . . Man, she’s ruthless. I mean, I just . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: . . . every, you know, last ember of a dying habit resurfacing and she . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: . . . has no tolerance for it. And I thought that was simply that, well, she’s a tough nut to crack.

JEAN HOUSTON: You get a catharsis of all your old stuff if you’ve got a mature beloved. Now kids, you know, who are being [sighs] urged on by biological necessity, time to procreate – Be fruitful and multiply and multiply and multiply, they’re not gonna feel this.

PAUL NELSON: Or as McClure said, “High on the drugs of our glands.”

JEAN HOUSTON: That’s right. Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: It’s . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: But once the glands are not that important anymore, then of course, you get down to the real stuff. That’s why I think, you know, with our lives . . . you know, you have a nine-year-old daughter. Well, in 2040, you know, she’ll be about 49 years old, which means that she will probably be part of this whole revolution in the genome and genetics and could probably live for another hundred years. Now, I don’t know about your daughter as a 140, 150-year-old lady, well into the 21st Century, but one of the things we have to realize is that with these long lives, what are our professions going to be? We can’t quit at 65. It will have to be lifelong learning. And what about staring at the same face over the breakfast table for a hundred years? [laughs] You know? Will we have to re-covenant our marriages? And have deep, sacramental whoop-de-doops and deep restatings of our commitments and where we want to go together? I

mean, *all* social processes that have been sustained all these 60,000 years are going to undergo phenomenal stress, strain and transformation in this new century.

PAUL NELSON: Bring on the Tantra, baby! [laughs]

JEAN HOUSTON: Well, exactly! And we'll be looking at the genius of other cultures who may have, you know, tapped into a kind of Back-to-the Future brilliance about many of these social forms, and of course, Tantra is certainly one of them.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, and you mention that in the book and it's funny because we went to a healing love workshop a few weeks ago and I've been doing the healing sounds at night and it's been improving my Bruxism and has had a number of other wonderful effects on what I'm going through.

There's another quote, you quote another person in the book, and I'm gonna see if I can find her.. . . Here we go, 128. We're talking about Eldon Underhill . . . I'm sorry, Evelyn Underwood.

JEAN HOUSTON: Yes, Underhill.

PAUL NELSON: Is it Underhill?

JEAN HOUSTON: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

JEAN HOUSTON: Evelyn Underhill, the great philosopher and scholar of mysticism.

PAUL NELSON: OK. And the quote is that you were . . . and we're talking about in this case, resonance. {close this space if poss.} "When we come into phase where the creative energies of the universe are scope and large as such that everything we see, the little girl in the swing, the dog gnawing a bone, the old man in the nursing home, and so on and so forth, that becomes a celebration of the wild exuberant, all-accomplishing energy of divine manifestation."

In our first segment you talked about your *own* experience in that case. Evelyn Underhill says, "The marks of this resonance are: One, a complete absorption in the interests of the infinite under whatever mode it is apprehended by the self. Two: A consciousness of sharing its strength, acting by its authority, which results in a complete sense of freedom, an invulnerable serenity and usually urges the self to some form of heroic effort or creative activity. And three: The establishment of the self is a power for life, a center of energy, and an actual parent of spiritual vitality in other men, other people."

A complete sense of freedom is what caught my attention here because, you know, we talk about living in the land of the free, and yet we are such slaves to the urges that are fueled by television ads and by consumption. You know, it's a culture consuming itself, is what we're seeing. And yet, in freedom, it's through the highest connection with spirit that we find freedom.

JEAN HOUSTON: Yes. Spirituality gives us access to a much larger bandwidth of being. You know, we are living in the Kingdom then. We're not living on the outskirts or the suburbs, you know. We are as Yesua Ben Yosef, you know, Jesus of Nazareth said, you know, that the Kingdom is both within you and it, another translation is, "in the midst of you." But it really needs the deep work of consciousness . . . or the simplicity of acceptance. You know, sometimes people who don't have children often have these experiences of illumination, of seeing the interaction, like I described of my experience where I saw, by myself, the fig tree in the yard and the dogs in the closet and the plane in the sky, and my idea of the Virgin Mary and my little Mary Jane shoes. I mean, they were all part of the same interdependent reality. And you know, we are gloriously

overendowed in our brain, mind equipment . Brain, mind, body equipment. We almost don't need this much equipment for the kind of small lives that we live. But now we do.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. Junk DNA, not junk necessarily.

JEAN HOUSTON: That's right. Not at all and . . . and we do, we are resonance phenomena. We are, you know, you are going out right now at 186,000 miles an hour [sic] because light is ultimately reaching you and is sending out a version of you. And who is to say that that version may not be hologrammatically linked out there into the mind of God, and be continued and some part of you continues to grow?

One of my exercises – Oh, I never thought to discuss this on the air, is to assume that this is true, or to, you would think of it as a working metaphor. And to assume that those parts of one's self that are contained, if you will, in the great hologram, universal hologram, or the mind of all being, depending on your metaphors. That they're not ephemeral, they don't die, but they continue in you. For example, were you a poet as a child?

PAUL NELSON: You know, and in kindergarten I did get a poem published.

JEAN HOUSTON: All right. So that kindergarten child poetically developed and then picked up again, where, in your 20s sometime?

PAUL NELSON: Actually, only about six or seven years ago.

JEAN HOUSTON: OK. So in your early 30s. That picked up but you may have been surprised at how easily it picked up and how developed it already was.

PAUL NELSON: Yes [laughs].

JEAN HOUSTON: All right, so what I'm saying is that these self-creating, ongoing, learning, creative parts of ourselves . . .

PAUL NELSON: It might even . . . some people call it selves, actual selves.

JEAN HOUSTON: . . . they may be, no, they are selves. I'm convinced of it. I mean, we are polyphrenic. We have a orchestral crew of selves – healer, meditator, lover, mechanic, poet, musician, dancer. They do continue. In other words, and so you didn't have to keep at it from the age of 5 to the age of 35. In other words, it continues. Now, whether it continues in the deep self or whether it's the deep self that is shaded into the mind of all beings so that God knows where you are gathering ideas, instincts, *rhythms*, oscillations, metaphors, maybe from all over the universe. And then when you finally tap into them, because they have been preserved and kept, and kept on going. They are organic. Everything is evolving, everything is growing, going, perhaps even with the godhead, so that when you finally tap into it, there it is, fully. Maybe the selfing game is what infinity does for fun. And the development of the multiple selves within a particular body mind system called Paul Nelson or called Jean Houston.

PAUL NELSON: Oh, wow. I mean, this is used for the next three years for me, I'll have you know. Let's talk for the next four and a half minutes or so about the Internet because we are running out of time with our time together and I know you have a very busy schedule and I appreciate you coming down to our studios.

The Internet, and I heard this statistic on the radio, for the first time, the first generation in the history of television, the first generation of kids that TV-viewing levels are actually going *down*.

JEAN HOUSTON: Right.

PAUL NELSON: And that's because of the Internet.

JEAN HOUSTON: Because the Internet engages you.

PAUL NELSON: And the Internet is helping develop this . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: It is inter . . .

PAUL NELSON: . . . this sort of inner life, this introspection.

JEAN HOUSTON: Yes, it is. Yeah. High tech / high touch. If you . . .

PAUL NELSON: Talk about that.

JEAN HOUSTON: Well, high technology almost always requires as both its antidote and extension, a high touch, a high hands-on, a high internalization. Thus, when these high technologies came into hospitals, what also develops simultaneously, holistic medicine, preventive medicine. You know, I mean, I can give you so many different examples of this, but the Internet is one of the best because in the linking of you with Imaginal Space out there, touching upon times and spaces, taking on archetypal names, Thunder on the Mountain Shorts {Schwartz?}, Flaming Arrow Shapiro, doing things, orchestrating events and projects that you would have been a perfect milquetoast about doing or even attempting in your normal life. This is then . . . it reflects back and reflects back into inner space and you find that your own inner images and your inner worlds, your inner screens have opened up as your outer screens have been extended. So I think it's changing the way we think, the way we do things, and one of the things I say in the book, it's actually one of my favorite [laughs] metaphors is that as the great civilizations grew up along the great waters, the great rivers in the fourth millennium B.C., along the Nile, Egyptian civilization, the Tigris and Euphrates, the Yangtze, the Ganges, so an extraordinary new civilization is growing up along the great river of electronic information that *is* the Internet. And of course, it's culturally fused because it is linking different . . . the rivulets and streams that are the great branchings, the different websites, the branchings off this great river of electronic information.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

JEAN HOUSTON: I mean, you're on the Internet, aren't you?

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, I've got two websites.

JEAN HOUSTON: And how have you changed?

PAUL NELSON: It's . . . been extraordinary. My whole life of . . . I separated from my wife of 11 years. I feel like I'm really beginning to tap into my potential. Just beginning to tap into it. And I'm also- I've come head to head with my issues. I mean, immediately. I mean, you know, womanizing or excessive libido, I mean, the Internet, if you want it, there it is! [laughs]. That's the number one research site on the Internet.

JEAN HOUSTON: So the amplification of private deviance.

PAUL NELSON: Absolutely. And you know, the second most searched item on the Web, do you-, after pornography, do you know what it is?

JEAN HOUSTON: What is it?

PAUL NELSON: Poetry.

JEAN HOUSTON: Poetry, yes.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, so that's . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: I didn't know that. No, that's interesting. That's helpful.

PAUL NELSON: And that's what's developed in me after . . . and I mean, you know, you talk about people being able to reinvent themselves so quickly. And you know, I've gone from a person who, you know, didn't care about poetry, to one who wanted to bring it into my daughter's life, to a person who interviewed Allen Ginsberg, all of a sudden having lunch with you and talking about projective verse. I mean, it's an incredible . . . and I mean, in six years, that's quite sophisticated. Of course, I go with my intuition on what's important and what resonates.

JEAN HOUSTON: But this accelerated it. Your intuition and your entelechy, your deep, divine purpose went hand and glove and accelerated so that you probably did, in several years, what normally would have probably taken you 10 or 15.

PAUL NELSON: Even longer and . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: Or longer. I'm just being nice about that.

PAUL NELSON: Well, thanks very much. No, I think it was very intense. And that's why I have compassion for people like Bill Clinton. You know, because there's a tremendous life force in that, and then he used it the wrong way, and he got caught, [laughs] literally with his pants down. But . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: Yeah, but I mean, I know these people.

PAUL NELSON: And but . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: And frankly, anybody would have because to be in the White House, and I spent a lot of time with them in the White House, as you know. [sighs] To see the level, not just of daily, but of hourly projections, toxic negatives projected onto them constantly. Very little empowerment, believe it or not. I mean, I would see Hilary come and say, "Oh, look at this wonderful letter somebody wrote me," [laughs] you know, and she was so pleased. You know, and he would do the same thing. You can't have that much negativity without, you know, whatever is your weakness or your shadow arising. And, I mean, if they had given him a lie . . . There is a tribe, I write about it, in South Africa, where if somebody has *really* trashed himself and others, if he's really bummed out, they sit him down and for three days and three nights, everybody sits around him, and they appreciate him.

PAUL NELSON: They *praise* that person.

JEAN HOUSTON: The praise him. They appreciate him.

PAUL NELSON: In this country we'd be stoning him.

JEAN HOUSTON: Yeah. They praise him and in three days and nights, he's a wonderful new citizen and very creative.

PAUL NELSON: And the same story about the Iroquois Confederacy also tells that story as well, which is a beautiful story and . . . You know, that's part of my heritage, Mohawk on my father's side.

JEAN HOUSTON: Are you a Hawk? Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: Many, many years, just a slight part of it.

JEAN HOUSTON: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: You know, but . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: You come from an old family, old American family?

PAUL NELSON: On my father's side, part of it.

JEAN HOUSTON: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, the growing . . .

JEAN HOUSTON: It's almost impossible . . .

PAUL NELSON: . . . upstate New York.

JEAN HOUSTON: . . . Upstate New York, sure.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

JEAN HOUSTON: Yeah, it's almost impossible if you come from an old American family not to have some Indian and probably some Black . . .

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

JEAN HOUSTON: . . . in your family.

PAUL NELSON: On that note, we have to end. I wish we could go on. I could do several more hours with you and I hope, since you're living not that far away, that we'll see you soon.

JEAN HOUSTON: I'm down a block now.

PAUL NELSON: Absolutely.

JEAN HOUSTON: [inaudible]

PAUL NELSON: Well, you know, we're headed that way in the near future so maybe we'll stop by and say, "Hi."

JEAN HOUSTON: It's been lovely. Thank you.

PAUL NELSON: Continued success with your work and continued health and happiness.

JEAN HOUSTON: Thank you.

PAUL NELSON: Jean Houston has been our guest. *Jump Time: Shaping Your Future in a World of Radical Change*, her new book.

PAUL NELSON: We are not entering a new era. We are *in* it. A time in which we begin more and more to understand the deep connection between all things. With 40 percent of all Americans now exploring natural medicine, according to *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, it is apparent that the easiest way Americans recognize holism is through medicine. Dr. Larry Dossey is a medical doctor, but he is now a proponent of holistic medicine. In his new book, *Reinventing Medicine: Beyond Mind- Body to a New Era in Healing*, Larry Dossey talks about how the new era of medicine we are already in is characterized by the notion that the mind is not confined to the brain, or to the body for that matter, but is of a nature he calls “non-local.”

LARRY DOSSEY: Non-local mind is mind that is not localized to the individual brain and body, or even to the present moment. Non-local mind is infinite mind. It's mind that's spread throughout space and time, without boundaries and without interruption. And if you follow the logic of what this mind would look like, it would unite with other minds, which are also not localizable. I mean, there are no boundary, you can't put them in boxes and wall them off from all other consciousnesses.

PAUL NELSON: While the mainstream media might characterize interest in such paranormal notions as far out or somewhat goofy, Dr. Dossey is quick to point out a study done by a respected institution that suggests the opposite is true.

LARRY DOSSEY: But the National Opinions Research Center, so-called NORC, from the University of Chicago, actually did psychological evaluations on people who had these radical, far out, para-psychological experiences, such as the sense of being bathed in white light and being connected with all there is. And they found that having these experiences was the best predictor of solid, normal mental health of any criterion they had ever discovered. So far from being an indicator of mental *ill* health, having these paranormal experiences is an indicator of *normal* psychological health.

PAUL NELSON: Dr. Larry Dossey is like a beacon in the murky night of mechanistic medicine. Pointing the way to a future that is already here. It is our pleasure to provide a forum for his thoughts and visions, which is coming right up. I hope you enjoy today's program. Thanks for tuning in.

As we head into the 21st Century and the Third Millennium, one would think that everyone in our culture is stricken with *panic* at the thought. The bumper stickers of Christians that say, “In case of Rapture, this car will be unmanned,” are one sign.

The media, plagued by what Riane Eisler calls “disempathitis,” doesn't help either. She suggests the media is *sick* and as a result, concentrates on the sickest aspects of society - the hurricanes, floods, wars, pre-Millennial shooting sprees and other tragedies - If it bleeds, it leads. With all this background cultural blur, you would think the next century will be *hell*. However, if you pay attention, you can find signs that the 21st Century promises to have profound change that has been due for a long, long time.

In no other discipline will the change be as profound as in the wellness profession. According to a *Journal of the American Medical Association* survey, 40 percent of all Americans are seeking some kind of “alternative care.” I prefer the term *natural medicine*, but we'll go along with the term “alternative” for now. 40 percent of all Americans, and most of those folks do *not* tell their doctors about their decision to seek an alternative practitioner. Why? Well, you'll probably get an arrogant response like I once did. Something like, “Well, it probably won't *hurt* you.” Old paradigms die hard amidst a lot of fear. But there are also leaders, trailblazers who aren't afraid to admit that what they once believed is wrong, and there *is* a better way. Today's guest is one such man.

Dr. Larry Dossey graduated with honors from the University of Texas at Austin, earned his medical degree at Southwestern Medical School in Dallas. He was decorated for valor for his service as a battalion surgeon in Vietnam, and all this experience did not prepare him for his life's work, writing about the future of medicine. But then again, perhaps it did. His book on the healing capabilities of prayer, *Healing Words*, was a best-seller, and his latest book is *Reinventing Medicine: Beyond Mind-Body to a New Era in Healing*. Dr. Larry Dossey, welcome back to the Pacific Northwest.

LARRY DOSSEY: Paul, it's great to be on your show again. Thanks.

PAUL NELSON: You've got it. [laughs] You know, before your last book was published in 1993, *Healing Words*, there were only three medical schools in the U.S. that had courses devoted to exploring the role of religious practice or prayer or spirituality and healing. And now there are nearly 60, and this is the sweetest revenge, isn't it?

LARRY DOSSEY: Well, it is a kind of a revenge and I'm glad to have lived long enough to see this being carried into the medical schools. You know, this is the desire, I think, and the wish and the fondest hope of every researcher and writer to see your work accepted in your own profession, and that's a wonderful feeling for me.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. And yet, you know, you say you have this feeling during your lifetime, yet the change is happening very, very quickly, isn't it?

LARRY DOSSEY: I was terrifically wrong about the speed of this process. I thought that this was going to take somewhere into the middle of the next century for this data and this evidence to be accepted and implemented in the actual institutions, such as medical schools and hospitals, but I was dead wrong. I really can't keep up with all the programs that are embracing this, that are cropping up at medical schools and hospitals around the country.

PAUL NELSON: And that's pretty much what you *do*. You are no longer practicing but you're combing through all the research that's being done on the paranormal or distant healing or non-local mind, terms that we'll get into as we go along.

LARRY DOSSEY: Right. My job seems to have evolved into offering my services as a kind of an interpreter of this data for my colleagues in the profession, a kind of synthesizer and collector of the evidence. Before *Healing Words* came out in '93 no one had ever really brought together all of these studies, for example, on distant intercessory prayer in one place and examine them very thoroughly. And so I think there is a role that's valuable, that's to be played in that way.

PAUL NELSON: And someone with a pedigree like yours. I mean . . .

LARRY DOSSEY: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: . . . as, I mean, M.D., that's first of all, right there. If it was N.D. or D.C., they'd say, 'Well, wait a second, this is not the case.' But you're a medical doctor who even served his country in Vietnam. You know, I didn't *know* that before.

LARRY DOSSEY: Yeah, I had my go at that in '69. I spent a year with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, which is a bunch of paratroopers, wild and crazy young warriors, who I was assigned to for a year.

PAUL NELSON: Mm-hmm. Interesting. Well, this is a good segue, from war, from one war to another because wars have so much to do with our understanding of how the body works. In fact, you break down medical eras into three: Era I, II, and III, the latest, which we've just entered. The

first, which started right about the time of the Civil War. So maybe a summary of these different eras of medicine and what they stand for.

LARRY DOSSEY: Well, the era approach is kind of a framework I've invented to sort of explain the transformations we've *lived* through, and the healing approaches in the past 150 years. Era I did begin in the decade of the American Civil War, the 1860s. This was when medicine first began to become scientific. Actually, it's evolved into the use of drugs and surgical procedures, basically. And . . .

PAUL NELSON: What we still have now, isn't it? [laughs]

LARRY DOSSEY: I know. It's still with us, and obviously it dominates medicine. But beginning in the 1950s, Paul, another decisive development began to occur. And when I was in medical school this was called psychosomatic disease. We emphasized the negative. But now, this is being called mind to body medicine, and there's a positive role we acknowledge now, that the role can play.

For example, the role of imagery and visualization and meditation on your own body. These are healthful, positive effects. But I think we're living now into what I call Era III, which is what this book, *Reinventing Medicine*, addresses. And this is the capacity of some quality of the mind to affect not just *your* body – that's Era II, mind-body medicine. But the ability of consciousness to reach out beyond the confines of our brains and bodies, and even the present moment, to make a difference out there in the world. I'm absolutely fascinated by the health implications of this, and I know this strikes people who encounter it for the first time as somewhat outrageous, but I would defend, Paul, on the basis of a little four-letter word: data.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, and it's . . .

LARRY DOSSEY: Evidence.

PAUL NELSON: . . . Lots of it in the book. You know, one more thought about the difference between allopathic, symptom-oriented medicine and natural medicine is the notion of pathologizing or *mythologizing*. If I were 20 years younger, I would have been diagnosed with attention deficit disorder, put on Ritalin, probably against my better judgment, and made to think that I'm a statistic. Whereas, when you look at A.D.D.'s positive side, the notion of, I can think about what next question I'm gonna ask, I can think about how the tape is going, and if it's getting all the information right. I can think about all these different little things – how my dog is reacting in the other room, hearing my voice and making sure he's not gonna bark and ruin the interview. Thousands of little things, at a very low level of consciousness, and yet, the old way of looking at it is to look at the negative side, to pathologize it.

LARRY DOSSEY: Exactly. You know, it's interesting to look through the history, the annals of science and to look at figures who popped up historically. Einstein is a great example. If Einstein came along today and revealed to his physician or psychiatrist, if he would have had one, everything he thought and dreamt about, he would be classified, almost certainly, as schizophrenic and probably medicated into some sort of unimaginative individual. Other people have written about this and proposed this: What are we doing by pathologizing these strange mental states that we really don't understand, that sometimes erupt in enormous expressions of creativity and discovery?

PAUL NELSON: We're doing a disservice, aren't we?

LARRY DOSSEY: I think so and we ought to rethink this.

PAUL NELSON: Like, for example, Prozac. I was just listening to an interview I did with alchemist Dennis Hauck last night and you know, the notion of when someone gets depressed we put 'em

on Prozac and we *prevent* them from going *through* that depression, experiencing it, and coming out better and greater and getting rid of all that dross that's not serving them anymore.

LARRY DOSSEY: That's right. You know, surveys have been done, looking at great artists, poets and particularly musicians, who have often these incredible swings in their states of consciousness and so on. And if all of these people had been Prozac-ed, then one wonders what we would have lost in terms of these incredibly contributory creative geniuses. So we have to rethink whether or not it's valuable to smooth out everyone into some sort of, you know, bottom line state of consciousness. I think not.

PAUL NELSON: Lowest common denominator.

LARRY DOSSEY: Lowest common denominator.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. Dr. Larry Dossey is our guest, whose new book is *Reinventing Medicine: Beyond Mind-Body to a New Era in Healing*. I'm Paul Nelson.

The book is brilliant from the very first quote, and as soon as I saw that I thought, "There is something here." And the quote is: "Where does one person end and another begin?" That's attributed to Iris Murdoch. Now, that's really the key to the book and to the concept of non-local mind. But the genesis of the book itself is about a dream you had, a prophetic dream, which also gets into the concept of non-local mind. Why don't you tell us about that experience.

LARRY DOSSEY: Well, this dream happened to me when I first entered medicine. This was during the first year I was practicing internal medicine in Dallas. And I have to say I've been very hesitant to write about this. This is the first time I've ever divulged this publicly in this book, and so it took me, Paul, over 20 years to get enough courage to go public with this, so I can't really crow about this. I was really in denial about the significance of this for an awful long time.

But in any case, during my first year in medical practice I had a dream about the four-year-old son of one of my cardiology colleagues that I was in practice with at the time. And in this dream this kid was in an examination room and he was lying on his back, and a medical technician was trying to do something to his *head*. And this wasn't working because the kid was not cooperating. In fact, he was going berserk. His mother was standing there, trying to comfort him but this wasn't helping either. Finally, the medical technician got so exasperated she threw up her hands, and said, "I quit," turned around and stormed out. That was the dream.

I . . . just had a feeling of incredible reality to me. This was one of those numinous, realer than real dreams. I forgot about it however, because I thought it was *trivial* and just one of those crazy dreams. *Until* I was sitting at lunch that same morning in the luncheon area of our medical complex, having lunch with the father of this kid in the dream, the cardiologist. And while we were talking, *in* walks his wife, carrying this kid. And this kid is really upset. He's got big ole tears coming down his cheeks. His head is wet. He's really upset. She begins to relate what had happened. They'd just come from the E.E.G. laboratory where they shampoo your head and put all the electrodes on when they do a brain wave tracing. This kid wouldn't allow it. He went nuts. They had to abandon the procedure.

What had happened is that the day before the kid had had a fever and a seizure and so they had decided *today* to bring him into the laboratory for this EEG tracing. I was stunned when I heard her tell this tale because I had dreamt in precise, exotic detail these events *before* they had even happened.

So after she left with this boy I asked the father, "You know, we need to talk. You know, could I have *known* about this ahead of time?" And he said, "Don't be silly." So I told him my dream, and

he turned white. And now there were two of us physicians sitting there having this existential crisis, you know, because we *knew* that if we took this seriously, space and time just didn't operate the way we'd been taught.

PAUL NELSON: You were probably thinking somewhere deep down inside, "It's gonna be 20 years before I can start [laughs] telling people about this," before, *really*, before the scientific community to catch up to where you were.

LARRY DOSSEY: Well, listen. I had known patients who had been put on medication for talking about experiences like this. I mean, I wasn't about to go public with this kind of experience. But the universe sort of kept hammering at me because within the space of one month, I had two more of these suckers, and I had got the message, you know. Something needs to be redefined here for me and . . . but it took me a long time to come to terms with this.

PAUL NELSON: And no dreams like that since.

LARRY DOSSEY: Nope.

PAUL NELSON: Wow.

LARRY DOSSEY: It was like the universe had delivered the message and hung up the phone, and now it was up to me to figure out what this meant, you know, if I *could*.

PAUL NELSON: That's a great metaphor. So *with* that, we get to the notion of non-local mind. Where does one person end and another begin? So what is the thumbnail description of non-local mind?

LARRY DOSSEY: Well, non-local mind is mind that is not localized to the individual brain and body. Or even to the present moment. Non-local mind is *infinite* mind. It's mind that's spread throughout space and time, without boundaries and without interruption. And if you follow the logic of what this mind would *look* like, it would unite with other minds, which are also not localizable. I mean, there are no boundaries, you can't put them in boxes and wall them off from all other consciousnesses. This is an ancient realization and who would have thought that data, evidence from modern science would be confirming this point of view, but I think that's really what is happening, currently. I believe this is the model of consciousness that's going to carry us into the next millennium.

PAUL NELSON: Wow! That's a heavy quote there, and I'm with ya on that. That's part of why you're on the show. And you know, you're talking about the research and I think we need to really get into some of that 'cuz you've done so much of it, it'd be a disservice not to talk about at least two or three of the studies. And not just to, you know, we could see here in a place like Seattle, maybe the Bastyr University doing this kind of stuff, but we're not talking a naturopathic college necessarily doing this research, although they are doing their own research but there are many prestigious medical schools that are doing studies on non-local mind, prayer and medicine, distant healing and other fascinating aspects of what you're calling Era III medicine. Duke, Princeton, there's a great study done at San Francisco General by Dr. Randolph Byrd in 1988, that *you* call "the most famous study in distant healing." Why don't you tell us about that.

LARRY DOSSEY: Well, it has come down, I think it's safe to say, as the most illustrious study of all. It's certainly not the *best* study. It could have been improved on but it certainly established a principle that you could evaluate and study distant healing, intercessory prayer, just pretty much like you would a new medication. What Byrd did was to take 393 patients who came through the coronary care unit of San Francisco General Hospital, and half of these people were prayed for and half weren't. Otherwise, they were all given equivalent, high-tech care, state-of-the-art medicine. And he simply saw how they *did*. There were fewer people in the prayed-for group who died. The

people who received the prayer, none of them had to have the tube put down the throat and be hooked up to a mechanical ventilator, while in the unsprayed-for group, 12 people had to have that done. There were many measures of superiority in the prayed-for group, so that I think it's safe to say that what was being evaluated here had not been *prayer*, but a new medication, this probably would have been heralded as a medical breakthrough.

For *me*, this was a stunning discovery because it showed that you *could* empirically test distant healing, the effects of peoples' *distant* thoughts on other individuals who don't even know that they're being prayed for. This, for me, was a stunning discovery.

PAUL NELSON: And it comes to the notion of Keats, who talked about negative capability, the notion of being comfortable to embody paradox and when we look at Randolph Byrd, a very devout, religious man, who couldn't reconcile his religious side with the scientific side until his one experience that led to this experiment.

LARRY DOSSEY: Well, that's a tragedy, I think, that is implicit in modern science, and in particularly, modern medicine. You know, most of us who go through medical schools are obsessed with this idea that you've got to make a choice in life and you can either decide to be scientific and rational and intellectual, analytical. Or you can go over and do something at the College of Arts and Sciences, right? And you can be intuitive and irrational and creative and artistic and flaky. And you can't get those two impulses together in your life. And so, we're told that, you know, "Boys, you can't have it both ways." You know, life is this painful choice. This is a schizophrenic division in people's lives. I think this evidence that we're talking about here shows that we *can* have it both ways. We *can* bring your intuitive and creative and spiritual side together and marry it up with their intellectual and scientific side. I think that's a direct implication of these studies.

PAUL NELSON: Not only *can* we do it, but we *ought* to do it, and it's gonna happen anyway. It looks to me that this is an outgrowth of . . . I mean, you can go back to Newton, you can go back even further. In fact, in the beginning of the book you go back further than that, talking about Plato and Aristotle and the notion of Reason, and you didn't get into this specifically, but how *reason* started to replace mythology, and that's where we started goin' wrong.

LARRY DOSSEY: You know, you can see, if you go back to the way the Greek physicians reacted, for example, to dreams, which I did in the book, you can see how there was a period in Western healing traditions where doctors didn't split up this mind / body business, you know? And they, for example, in the Asclepions, in ancient Greece, the healing temples, the doctors would go to the patients at night and they'd whisper in their ear: "Pay attention to your dreams, pray for a revelation that we will understand the diagnosis and maybe even the therapy will come to you in the dream." So I think we're reasoning our way slowly back to this piece of wisdom, and that's one reason I call this *RE-inventing* medicine. You know, we're trying to rediscover some of this ancient wisdom.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, and as we get to the end of our first interview here, I think it'd be important to talk about some of the criticism of non-local mind. In fact, some of the critics are very well-respected people. A Nobel Laureate, Francis Crick, who was there in the 1950s, sharing a Nobel Prize for the discovery of the nature of the DNA molecule, the Double Helix. He is a critic of non-local mind.

LARRY DOSSEY: That's right. Crick is, I think, committed to the idea that everything that happens in terms of mental activity is just a function of what the molecules and the atoms in the brain, basically the brain chemistry is doing. I think Professor Crick is not very well informed about the evidence, particularly in medicine, that points to an infinite, non-local expression of consciousness. And this is important because most theorists these days in the hard sciences, you're talking about the nature of consciousness, are *horribly* informed about the clinical expressions of this in hospi-

tals and clinics and so on. And this is one reason why I think the great advances in our understanding of consciousness are not gonna come out of thought labs and computer tanks. I just think that it's gonna come out of the medical side of things, where we *see* these non-local expressions, day in and day out, being played out in the lives of their patients.

PAUL NELSON: And quite often, *women* are gonna be there, who are perhaps more open to that kind of thing happening.

LARRY DOSSEY: I think that's right. And the fact that in many medical schools, more than half the student body now is made up of women, I think it's gonna help this process along.

PAUL NELSON: Amen! Now, when we talk about critics of non-local mind, we're talking about people who have egos that refused to relinquish control. Basically, we're telling people, "Francis, you know, you're a very brilliant man. You won a Nobel Prize, but . . . you're *wrong*." And he . . .

LARRY DOSSEY: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: . . . he's not willing to admit that.

LARRY DOSSEY: You know, there's an old saying, Paul, that comes as consolation *to* me when we get into these knock-down, drag-out contests and arguments with people, you know, for example, who won a prize, a Nobel Prize in one area of science, but . . . and claim to extend this knowledge into fields they really are not informed about. Max Planck, the physicist who was involved in the transformation and physics at the turn of this century, said once, "Science changes funeral by funeral." And I . . .

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

LARRY DOSSEY: . . . and I think sometimes that, you know, we're just gonna have to be patient and many of the critics are just gonna die off. They're gonna go to their grave horribly uninformed, *certain* that the rest of us are fools.

PAUL NELSON: And when they come back, they'll *get* it.

LARRY DOSSEY: [laughs] I think so.

PAUL NELSON: I'll leave *you* with a quote from a guy from your home state, Sam Rayburn, who once said, "It takes a carpenter to build a barn, but any jackass can knock it down."

LARRY DOSSEY: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: So there, you have it. Larry Dossey . . .

LARRY DOSSEY: I love it.

PAUL NELSON: . . . Thank you, Larry. That's it for our interview number one and we'll be back with more with Larry Dossey. Dr. Larry Dossey is the author of *Reinventing Medicine: Beyond Mind-Body to a New Era in Healing*. And he's got a website: www.dosseydossey.com .

LARRY DOSSEY: Right.

PAUL NELSON: That's two Dosseys, D-O-S-S-E-Y, D-O-S-S-E-Y.com.

Part 2 now of our interview with Dr. Larry Dossey. Dr. Dossey graduated with honors from the University of Texas at Austin. Earned his medical degree at Southwestern Medical School in Dallas. He was

decorated for valor for his service as a battalion surgeon in Vietnam, and all this experience did not prepare him for his real life's work, writing about the future of medicine. Combing through studies and finding the latest evidence that proves the point of concepts like non-local mind. His book on the healing capabilities of prayer, *Healing Words* was a best-seller, and his new book is *Reinventing Medicine: Beyond Mind-Body to a New Era in Healing*. Dr. Dossey, welcome back to the show.

LARRY DOSSEY: Thanks, Paul.

PAUL NELSON: Non-local mind is what we were talking about in interview one, so for those who missed the first part of our chat, perhaps a thumbnail description of non-local mind is what is in question here.

LARRY DOSSEY: Non-local mind is infinite mind. It's mind that reaches out to infinite regions of time and space. It can't be confined to our brain and our body or even to the present moment. It's mind, essentially that's loose in space and time, without limit.

PAUL NELSON: And when we try to explain the concept of non-local mind, the experience of being stared at is one familiar to just about everyone, I'd guess, and there have been several studies done on this phenomenon that explain a lot about Era III medicine, in more ways than one. Studies from Australia and from Marilyn Schlitz, and dream research pioneer, Stephen LaBerge prove that there is something to it. So maybe their two studies is what we can start out with.

LARRY DOSSEY: That's right. The so-called staring studies are an attempt to explain this very common event, which you imply, that, you know, we just sort of know that we're being stared at, at a stop-light or in a restaurant and you look around and sure enough, by golly, somebody's looking right at you.

PAUL NELSON: Why don't you take a picture, it'd last longer, one of those lines, huh?

[Both laugh]

LARRY DOSSEY: That's exactly right. And so these researchers have done some elaborately controlled, beautiful studies, showing that at a distance, even when you're staring not directly at a person's body, but an image of them, on a television screen, the distant person still is able to punch the button and indicate when that distant person is staring at their image on the television screen. So this is, I think, vivid evidence that there's some form of distant communication that pushes us in the direction of non-local or infinite mind.

PAUL NELSON: Not even staring at the person, but at a video image!

LARRY DOSSEY: That's exactly right.

PAUL NELSON: That's amazing! Now, there's a man who's a critic of the notion of non-local mind, or at least he *was*. I don't know if he still is. But that led to an interesting collaboration, one with Marilyn Schlitz who was sort of in favor or predisposed to believing that there's something to the non-local mind, and Richard Wiseman who didn't buy it. So they combined for a study, which had some interesting results.

LARRY DOSSEY: Well, Richard Wiseman is one of the great critics, cynics and skeptics in Britain of this whole idea that people can communicate non-locally at a distance via their consciousness. And Dr. Marilyn Schlitz has produced some studies, showing that these staring things do seem to be able to connect people at a distance. So, here you have Dr. Schlitz producing positive studies, and Dr. Wiseman, who can't produce any positive findings in his experiments with this. So Wiseman

invites Schlitz to come to Cambridge in England, and so they collaborate on the experiment. They run simultaneous experiments. They follow the same methods; they use the same subject pool; they do everything the same, with the *single* exception of the fact that Dr. Schlitz believes that this works, and Dr. Wiseman is a complete skeptic. What happened in these studies is that Dr. Schlitz, once again, gets positive results, showing that people can tell when they're being stared at a distance, and Dr. Wiseman, again, cannot produce anything. This suggests to *both* of them that perhaps you're preconceived ideas about how things are gonna work actually affects the outcome of your experiment. Now, this is a *horrifying* suggestion to a lot of people who are opposed to this idea that your thoughts can change the world, in the first place. But this is one of the rational implications, I think, of these studies. And this is going to be, Paul, I predict, one of the hot topics in experimental science in the next millennium. The effect of the thoughts or the expectations of the experimenter on the actual experiment that that person is doing.

PAUL NELSON: Well, that's come out of science of this century, the fact that just by virtue of watching the experiment, you're having an effect on it, and that has profound implications for the whole notion of this double blind placebo notion of studies.

LARRY DOSSEY: That's exactly right. Physicists have wanted to restrict that effect to things like electrons. You observe an electron and you change its behavior. And so that's been OK. But to apply this to the level of whole human beings, they've not wanted to go there. But these studies by Schlitz and Wiseman seem really to be pointing in that direction.

PAUL NELSON: One other notion about that, Dr. Wiseman, if you have healthy skepticism, the emphasis on *healthy*, that's a good thing. But after a while you're skepticism becomes your *disease*. That's what Stephanie Skura who does skin-, a releasing technique, a non-traditional form of-, I hate to use the word "therapy," but a therapeutic sort of movement thing. And she says that's what happens to people, their skepticism is really what is their disease.

LARRY DOSSEY: That's exactly right. And this leads to, not science, but what has been called scientism. And it is a betrayal of science. I mean, scientists who play science the way it should be played, are willing to follow the data wherever it leads them. It may be painful to go in that direction because it may involve fear and hesitation itself.

PAUL NELSON: And loss of ego.

LARRY DOSSEY: And maybe loss of *grants*, you know? Loss of prestige, loss of standing in the eyes of your colleagues. But science is a tough path to follow because it involves setting the ego aside and setting aside your preconceptions and really putting it on the line and saying, "I don't care where the evidence leads. If the evidence solidly points in that direction, I'm willing to go there." The fact is, sadly, that when it comes to *consciousness* and particularly these areas where the mind begins to appear non-local, in violation of *everything* we've been taught, the sad thing is that there are a lot of scientist who refuse to go there.

PAUL NELSON: And we'll wait for their funerals.

LARRY DOSSEY: Science changes, funeral by funeral. That's right.

PAUL NELSON: There you . . .

LARRY DOSSEY: Good ole . . .

PAUL NELSON: . . . there you go.

LARRY DOSSEY: . . . Max Planck.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs] Non-local mind in animals is now the subject of, I think, every other book that comes into this place, and when *you* describe non-local mind in animals, Napoleon is one person who's a believer.

LARRY DOSSEY: Well, Napoleon had an experience on one of the battlefields in Western Europe once where the animals seem to find his dead master across this battlefield that was strewn with dead bodies and he was amazed that this animal was able to *do* this. So we do have that little vignette that comes down through Napoleonic annals about this.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, and lots of other examples quoted in the book. Now, Rupert Sheldrake, who is a respected scientist from England, he's a very firm believer in the notion of non-local mind in animals. He's got a book, in fact, on the subject and we hope that he'll be a future guest of the show. And he's also the person who helped you decide on the term, "non-local mind" in the first place, a friend of yours.

LARRY DOSSEY: That's right. Rupert Sheldrake's research grabbed my attention around 15 years ago. He was a respected Cambridge biologist who actually came up with the idea that the mind does behave in infinite ways. And he was deeply influenced by his own experiences and his own spiritual tradition, and I had occasion to connect with him at conferences and invite him to my home in Dallas at the time, and he came and stayed with us and we went out to eat one night, and we began to talk about what to *call* this. We need a good term to refer to this aspect of our consciousness that behaves non-locally. And so I floated the term to him, non-local mind, and asked him what he thought about it. And I'm happy to say that he gave it his blessing. He said he thought it was one of the best terms that he had heard to refer to this quality of the mind in a long time.

PAUL NELSON: Now, when we talk about Sheldrake, he's developed a theory that, now he didn't come up with the theory, but he's *developed* it, that attempts to explain how non-local mind works, the notion of morphogenetic fields. Yet, scanning the book and reading it, I didn't see this covered in the book.

LARRY DOSSEY: Actually, I will plead this. I have given Rupert Sheldrake's morphogenetic field theory so much ink in my past books [laughs] I sort of decided to give it a rest in this one. People have told me, you know, "You're just fronting for Sheldrake."

PAUL NELSON: Is that right?

LARRY DOSSEY: You know, "You refer to his work so often," and indeed, I have. Actually, Rupert Sheldrake, I have to say, is one of my heroes in science. I think he's one of the most courageous, creative people out there today. So I'll get back to talking about Rupert, probably in my next book.

PAUL NELSON: But that's what we're talking about here. We're talking about emotions and thoughts that have energy, that travel, that do not lose any energy as they travel. This is essential to the notion of non-local mind and how it works.

LARRY DOSSEY: That's exactly right. We see this, for example, in distant healing, distant prayer. You know, people have tried to figure out whether prayer is more effective, or whether its strength is greater if you do up close, at the bedside of the sick person, for example, as opposed to the other side of the earth. It doesn't make a darn bit of difference. So we could say that space is not a factor here. I mean, it doesn't *help* to be close up. People have even put patients in so-called Faraday cages, which are lead-lined or metal-lined boxes to see if they can block the effect of the prayer, as if it's some sort of electromagnetic signal that you could shield. This doesn't work. So no one knows how intercessory or distant prayer healing intentions work, but they certainly don't behave

like ordinary forms of electromagnetic energy, which can be shielded, and which get weaker the farther apart you get from the source of it.

PAUL NELSON: I have that mental picture of somebody in one of these cages, and also this other mental picture of God laughing, for crying out . . .

LARRY DOSSEY:[laughs] If God has a sense of humor, probably this would have made her laugh.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, right [laughs]. Thank you. Dr. Larry Dossey is our guest. His new book is *Reinventing Medicine: Beyond Mind-Body to a New Era in Healing*. I'm Paul Nelson.

Now, you're a respected medical doctor. You served in Vietnam. Certainly you could not be tagged as a left-wing, granola-eatin' West Coast kind of person. Well, maybe not in the past, but maybe now you *will* be. But people who believe in paranormal phenomena are not kooks either, and a study from the meat-eatin' town of Chicago bears this out, the NORC study is what I refer to. And you wanna tell us about that?

LARRY DOSSEY:That's exactly right. You know, people who have experiences involving telepathy and clairvoyance and so on have been ridiculed by skeptics and cynics for so long, as being mentally imbalanced. But the National Opinions Research Center, so-called NORC, from the University of Chicago, actually did psychological evaluations on people who had these radical, far-out parapsychological experiences, such as the sense of being bathed in white light, and being connected with all there is. And they found that having these experiences was the best predictor of solid, normal mental health of any criterion that they had ever discovered. So far from being an indicator of mental *ill* health, *having* these paranormal experiences is an indicator of *normal* psychological health and balance. So this is one area, again, where the set-, skeptics have managed to turn this totally upside down and give a false impression of this field.

PAUL NELSON: Twist it again to benefit mediocrity and the lowest common denominator.

LARRY DOSSEY:Yes.

PAUL NELSON: People who buy into natural medicine have a sense that all disease has some spiritual component. This is a 180-degree turn, as we're saying, from Era I medicine, where the person is just a machine that needs a new part when one part goes bad.

LARRY DOSSEY:That's exactly right. And I think this is a profound insight. It certainly is a recovery of ancient wisdom, where this connection between spirituality and physical health was simply taken for granted. You know, I think that doctors need to understand the connection between spirituality and alternative medicine a good deal better. There was a survey that was published in December of '98, out of Stanford, by Dr. John Astin, and it was published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*. It contained a great insight. The name of this survey was "Why Do People Use Alternative Medicine?" And he found out that the main reason people are out there, going to alternative therapies by the *millions* is not because they've looked at the scientific studies and they have done their homework and they prove that ginkgo actually *works* to make you more cognitively alert. They use these methods because of spiritual reasons, basically. People who've opted for alternative medicines, asked and found out, have had some sort of transformative spiritual experience in their life, which drives them in this direction. So this *return* of spirituality in modern healthcare, is tied to this enthusiasm for alternative therapies in our culture. So we gotta link these things together, this movement toward alternative measures and the return of spirituality.

PAUL NELSON: So when we look at something that might be described as being “whoo-whoo,” a little bit *out* there, like Louise Hay, we’re beginning to think that there’s some science that backs this up. Are you familiar with *her* work?

LARRY DOSSEY: Yes, I am. I gotta say that if you look back at some of the things that now we take for granted, 20 years ago we all called them whacko, West Coast, too. I’ll give an example in medicine: this idea that social support was good for health. The skeptics and cynics had a field day with this. They laughed researchers and social support, you know, out of the meetings. How could it be that just because you went bowling once a week, and you met with your buddies and, you know, went to church or somethin’ like . . . what difference could this make in health? Now, *this* is under the wire. This is taken for granted. I don’t know of *anybody* who objects to the idea that social support is good for people’s health. We offer the same sort of resistance now to these infinite, non-local expressions of consciousness, and my prediction, Paul, is that we, too, will overcome our intellectual indigestion toward this, just like we did to this idea of social support being helpful.

PAUL NELSON: And then we’ll begin to do things like create a national dream team.

LARRY DOSSEY: Oh [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: And we’re not talking about hoops here.

LARRY DOSSEY: No, we’re not talkin’ hoops. Actually, I am so impressed by the fact that there are prodigies out there who really do have this great skill of dreaming the future. That we ought to sort of use this, capitalize this for the common good and then so I have proposed that we find ways of identifying people with these natural talents. These people whose consciousness sort of infinitely retrieves information from the future and from great distances, and have them dream for, for example, national security. We got close to this with the remote viewing research that the CIA sponsored in the past decade, and there’s some astonishing accomplishments of that effort. So I offer this in all seriousness. I think that this is a great potential resource that we ought to take advantage of.

PAUL NELSON: Maybe a thumbnail sketch of the dream helper ceremony is what we could get now, to get a sense of how dreams work in healing.

LARRY DOSSEY: Right. Dream helper ceremonies have been used by dream researchers as a therapeutic tool, and the way this works is that a common group of people will come together, and one person will declare that they need some assistance in an insight in an attempt to gain understanding about personal problems and so the rest of the people in the group that night will devote their dreams, seriously, to trying to gain an insight about the solution for this person’s dilemma. And the next day they meet together and they share what they saw. And Stanley Krippner, Dr. Krippner is Director of Research at Saybrook Institute and other people who have *refined* this technique are astonished at the information that comes to the people, various members of the dreaming group that apply to solving the problem that the individual is dealing with.

PAUL NELSON: The black and white dream, for example, everybody having some kind of aspect of black and white in their dream and how it applies to the person.

LARRY DOSSEY: The individual who wanted help was facing a crisis in her life she couldn’t solve. The dominant theme in the dreams of the people who dedicated their dream life to solving this problem that night were black and white. One person dreamt of black and white piano keys. Another person dreamt of a black white designed taxi.

PAUL NELSON: Dr. King in front of the White House.

LARRY DOSSEY: And Dr. King in front of the White House, and so on. And so this woman revealed later, after all of these people revealed the black and white themes of their dreams, that she was involved with a relationship with a black man, and this has caused all sorts of interpersonal conflict in her life. Her relationships with her parents were on the rocks, and so she was trying to find guidance about which way to go in this relationship. And the feedback that the people were able to give her, who dreamt these black and white themes, helped her resolve this dilemma.

PAUL NELSON: Go slow.

LARRY DOSSEY: Go slow, that's right.

PAUL NELSON: There were examples of watches going slow or something like that in other dreams.

LARRY DOSSEY: That's exactly right and this theme also, in the black and white motif, involved a slowing down of *time* in many of these dreams that these people had. So they were able to give her feedback that suggested that she really take this slow; that she make no precipitous decisions; that she worked through this 'til she's comfortable with it before embarking on any definitive path.

PAUL NELSON: Yes. And we realize through your work and other work that you cite, that time is a field, and we could get into that aspect of non-local mind but we're running out of time, and there's one last thing I really want to get into and I think it's critical. The most important lesson from the dying might also lessen our society's rampant fear of death, and that is to suggest that with the advent of the awareness of non-local mind, death is *not* an end.

LARRY DOSSEY: Well, I think that this may be the most important implication of the infinite or non-local mind. You see, a mind that does behave with disregard to space and time is a mind that is omnipresent in space and it's infinite in time, therefore immortal and eternal. Well, if we have some aspect or quality of our mind that's immortal, we're talking about survival, in some sense, of death. There seems to be some aspect of the consciousness that *is* eternal if we take these implications seriously. I think we *should* because if we were able to assure dying people that there's some quality of who they are that couldn't even die if it tried, this would be the greatest comfort we could give dying people, in my judgment.

PAUL NELSON: Well, your work is gonna last a long, long time, and this is very obvious. I'm very grateful to not only be able to be exposed to your work, but to have you on my radio show.

LARRY DOSSEY: It's an honor for me, Paul. Thank you.

PAUL NELSON: The places where people can get more information, of course we mentioned *your* website, dosseydossey.com, that's D-O-S-S-E-Y, D-O-S-S-E-Y dot com. And *Taste* is another resource for people who want more information, and one of the websites: I-S-S-C, dash taste dot O-R-G (issc-taste.org) and we'll have that URL on our website. Continued success, Larry.

LARRY DOSSEY: Thank you, Paul.

PAUL NELSON: Dr. Larry Dossey has been our guest. His new book is *Reinventing Medicine: Beyond Mind-Body to a New Era in Healing*.

POETS

**Interview with JR, November 19, 2011 at the NW Spokenword LAB in Auburn, WA,
conducted by Paul Nelson www.paulenelson.com**

PN: Read the introduction of a typical poetry anthology and you get something like this from William Harmon in the top 500 poems:

The 19th Century seems to have been a golden age for poetry, from first to last. I do not believe the 20th will ever look so good. I am not the first to remark that the greatest writers of the 20th Century work in prose.

I guess it depends where you look from. From Jerome Rothenberg's perspective, based on his own work, inspirations and his anthology of 20th Century verse, it looks amazing. Describing his poetry career as an ongoing attempt to reinterpret the poetic past from the point of view of the present, Jerome is a performance poet pioneer, anthologist, translator and author of over 50 books of poetry. The man who helped found the branch of Ethnopoetics, Jerome was the visiting poet for Fall 2001 at the Northwest Spoken Word Lab in Auburn, Washington, and is our special guest today on the program.

Jerry, it's been a tremendous weekend and thanks for being here.

JR: It's been a great weekend for me, too.

PN: Excellent. You told students at Auburn High School on Friday morning that your first poet outside of English was Federico Garcia Lorca, or should I say, Garthia Lorca. You were even younger than they were when you discovered his work. Tell us about that.

JR: Well, I was about 15 or 16. My brother, who is eight years older than me was just out of the Army and studying at New York University, and a teacher of his, a lovely man named Tom-, Thomas Riggs. When my brother showed him some of my poetry, became a very encouraging mentor for me, and began to introduce me to work that, of course, at that point I had not come across on my own, and you know, that included from the Spanish, the martyred poet, Federico Garcia Lorca, who had been killed by the fascists at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. He was the first poet, certainly the first contemporary poet that I had read in another language, or the first poet I had read whose work was in another language. And made a terrific impression on me through my teens and through my 20s, and you know, I've carried that with me into the present. And Lorca, in fact, was an influence on a great many American poets.

So I tried some translations from Lorca because even then I was given to translation much more enthusiasm and I think an ability with translation than with languages, as such. And partly, translation became important for me as a way of coming to grips with other poets and other poetry by entering into a perhaps one-sided collaboration between myself and whoever it was that I was translating.

Then many years later, I was given the opportunity or commission to translate a series of poems by Lorca, early poems of his that he called "The Suites", using that musical term, suites, and I

translated over 200 pages of those and that was, I think, maybe the biggest translation project I'd ever been engaged with, up to that point.

PN: Yeah. Even though you weren't aware of it as a very young man, 14, 15 years old, you had a sense of the power of the Duende, as Lorca calls it.

JR: Yeah, Lorca in a very wonderful essay that he delivered, I think, shortly after visiting New York and on his way back to Spain, in Cuba, trying to describe a sense of the powers that he felt in poetry. He used the word, "Duende" which is a, oh, a kind of a figure in Spain like a troll or a Leprechaun or in the oldest and most powerful sense of the word, a fairy spirit. But he used it to describe a kind of poetry that fell to the poet as it being engaged in a struggle. And not invocation to a beloved muse but a power battle with a kind of force of nature. And I think Lorca felt that this was, well knew that it was a term that was used by the Flamenco singers and musicians with whom he was in very close contact. "Whatever has black sounds," he said, "has Duende." So that kind of power that he was trying to get into the poetry.

Although, aside from that, he was also a very beautiful, elegant and graceful and, you know, and sometimes a comic but witty poet.

PN: Playful.

JR: Playful. Playful poet.

PN: Yeah. And the Duende exists when there is the possibility of death.

JR: Yeah, so death has been a circumstance lurking behind a lot of poetry. We're quite aware of that, you know, even at the most popular level. I mean, that is to say, when people in our own culture who would seem to be separated from, alienated from poetry, actually get around to writing poetry, it's so often in relation to the death of somebody, as if no other language can be used at that point. You want that that special language, and whatever the results may be. There is at certain key moments in life, still today, turning to poetry as a form of expression. And I very happily recognize that, and you see the work of other poets as really not too distant from that. A confrontation with death and suffering. And but also other deep forms of human experience, joyful ones, as well as tragic ones.

PN: We're talking with Jerome Rothenberg. He's the author of over 50 books of poetry. He's a translator, performance poet pioneer, and editor of several groundbreaking anthologies, including *Poems for the Millennium*. I'm Paul Nelson.

Lorca Variations is a book of yours that was created after you were not able to publish those translations of the Suites, as you had expected. Maybe you can tell us about that experience, and more importantly, about the process of writing the *Lorca Variations*.

JR: Yeah, the experience was simply that I had been commissioned to do the complete Suites of Lorca by Farrar Strauss, a big publisher in New York, and it was to be part of a large collected poems of Lorca in English. So, the biggest English language version of Lorca yet published.

But my understanding was that I would also be permitted prior to that publication, to publish my translations as a separate volume. And I thought of this as my return to Lorca and a kind homage to a poet who had been important to me at the beginning of my career as a maker of poetry.

Well, publication plans changed for Farrar Strauss and they rushed a big book into publication and suddenly I found that, I was included as part of this large volume, but without a separate publication as homage. And I felt very badly about that, but then figured I had other means for carrying through on paying my respects to Federico and so I entered into a process of writing in which I went back to a number of the poems in Suites, and with each poem I extracted all of the English nouns. I mean, that's in other words, this is my translation, you know, and although it's Lorca's poems to start with, the words are words of our language or words that I selected as the poet translator. And I set the words up in columns and moved among the columns, picking out the words, all of the nouns in the Lorca poems, and sometimes in a very systematic way, sometimes in a very free way. You know, but so as to, in each poem, have all of Lorca's nouns attended to. And poems emerged that on the one hand were very different, and on the other hand, were clearly Lorca. It was a step for me beyond translation. You know, it's not paraphrased. It's really a way of creating new poems based on the gathering of words from the other poet and the result was a book of 33 poems plus one – 34 poems called, I called *The Lorca Variations*.

PN: Yeah, and the key word, I guess, is 'other' and when we look at the stance toward poetry that many in the avant-garde of the 20th Century take, as opposed to the mainstream, there's less of an ego involved and more of a poet as medium, or at least as person who allows other voices into the poem, and chance operations. And you use the 'othering' during your workshop. Of course you put that on word processor and it's gonna red line it as not being a word, but we . . .

JR: Yeah, it does it all the time.

PN: [laughs] Well . . .

JR: That's why we cut out that function from our computers.

PN: It's tough for poets, isn't it? It just . . .

JR: Yeah, ha.

PN: It just doesn't get poetry, but why don't you tell us about this notion of 'othering' and the notion of trying to, as Olson said, 'Rid yourself of the lyrical interference of the ego.'

JR: Yeah, well, because we all carry our egos with us so, you know, it is perhaps a vain ambition to think that you're going to rid yourself of ego. But lyrical interference, I mean, the lyric is taken, if we take it not in the sense of song, but in the sense of a first person poetry in the most subjective form of poetry. Ultimately, this has its limitations. It throws the poet back on himself, herself and that's OK, but it also narrows down the field of poetry. And when we imagine ourselves to be part of a lineage going back to a Homer or a Dante or a Shakespeare, poetry is a big proposition there. Partly it's big because Dante, Shakespeare, Homer, worked extensively and these were larger works. But even the possibility that in the shorter work, the short poem then,

the medium-size poem, that there would be room for more than that kind of vaunted self-expression. The possibility of being able to express other selves, selves other than me, that the poet can be a spokesman for others and bear witness in the name of others. And this is, I think, has been an ambition of poetry and let's say, poets in America, you know, going back to the time of the great founding poet, Walt Whitman, who in the great poem cryptically called *Song of Myself*, attempted to bring all possible selves into the poem for everything belonging to me, as well belongs to you, he said.

PN: Voices of the diseased and . . . and so on and so forth.

JR: Yeah. Also, the long suppressed. 'Through me, many long suppressed voices,' Whitman says. And that has, for years been uppermost in my mind. And so techniques of poetry, collage appropriation, chance operations, the kind of variations that I'm speaking about, have seemed to me to be, not just ways of playing around with language, but ways of "othering", of bringing the voices of others into the poem. And in that sense, also, not just to establish identity, but in a way, to put identity into question.

PN: Yeah. "Othering" and some of those other processes you're talking about, quite often allow for prophecy to come into the poem, and reading "Second New York Poem" from the *Lorca Variations* in the Olympic National Park, the week of September 11th, 2001, we left, shortly after hearing the news, and that was our plan. There was some amazing synchronicity and this, the book, *The Lorca Variations*, was published, what? In '93 or something like that?

JR: Well, . . . something like that, yeah, in '93.

PN: Yeah. So . . . Can you read the first two sections of the New York poem? I think I have it bookmarked there.

JR: Yeah. It begins with a quote from Lorca saying, you know, the mask, look at the mask, how it comes from Africa to New York. And the first section, the first *title*, the first section is titled: "They Are Gone, the Pepper Trees."

[1]

Half of it was sand
 & what remained
 was mercury & made him
tremble,
 too afraid to rub it in
 while visioning
a hippopotamus who stalked through
 everlastings,
 & other animals who crossed
those endless bridges,
 whom he could bring down
 with a spear,

that beaks grown dormant,
 their flesh nailed onto trees,
 from which he used to cut his masks,
would wear his masks around
 New York, half crazy
 wasn't he,
the bright Gazelle mask flashing
 where he walked,
 what joy to be among you
at this gathering,
 he thought,
 to spend this time with you
here with the wheat rots,
 swan's rut, camels
 plod among the peppers,
in the mask that shows you fear,
 the mask dissolving into sand,
like solitude and ashes
 where the light has died away
 so recently,
the cat is playing with a cork,
 & all things come into this other light
 the phosphorous ignites
over New York, where death
 's a crocodile, & sunlight
 makes the world
grow darker, where a sword cuts through
 my throat, my feet,
 where silence covers everything,
where eyes turn white,
 where time turns inside out
 like valleys
rife with mutilated buds
 in Africa,
 inviting us to join
their dance of death.

The second section is called, 'Canyons of Line Imprisoned.'

[2]

A fond farewell
 at the border. See the dead
 & how they hunker down,
who bring us hurricanes,
 those naked masks,

those shameless tumulters,
who tempt us with strange lights
horses will ride past,
slender mounts for children,
edging their way through niches,
squeezing
into bank vaults,
Wall Street poor and empty,
roofs on which manometers
break into pieces,
& the channels they leave behind
excite the iris,
yes, and voices
cut across New York, & someone
wears a mask
that looks like North America,
& someone else counts up
the unemployed, whose numbers
brought together in a frozen dance,
o Lorca,
darken the sky.
These herds are what we will become,
their frenzy
will be ours tomorrow,
o my naked heart,
we watch the sphinx together,
squatting inside this cemetery,
she with a bank director's mask
& you, a chinaman's,
your profiles soon identical
except that you
still sing your deep song
while the sky fills up
with down, & fireflies
grow faint and then invisible.
Time hides
inside you, can you feel it?
does it press against your mask?
whose groans
are rising in this place?
whose blood is on our blueprints
even now?
is there a formula to chart
the impetus we feel? a yellow thread
to recollect it?
when I dance, the naked wife says,

it is no less for money,
 when I give you tail
 you fade in me and die,
the stillness
 overtakes you, sky
 is split asunder,
lime & mire splatter on the snow,
 the night makes even gold
 turn black for us
who wait here at our windows,
 watch old columns
 lit by flames,
the impetus returning
 like a wheel that spins
 forever
in an empty bank vault,
 see it with your own eyes,
 hear it cross this space
in silence,
 watch her naked body
 in your mirrors,
feel the sap press upward,
 as if moving among mountains,
 guano everywhere,
to drown in guano
 living,
 buried in its canyons.

PN: Wow. Now, you know, because I set it up as being potentially prophetic, have heard the poem several times, I've read it out loud several times, but it's just amazing how you can just click off -- and maybe I'm reading this into it, but "where the light has died away so recently, phosphorus ignites over New York, the dance of death and old columns lit by flames" -- And you were in New York City when it happened.

JR: Yeah. I . . . we, my wife and I were in New York for a month. We had arrived there a few days before. We were in a friend's loft while the friend was traveling. In Tribeca, so that is close to what then came to be called Ground Zero, close to the World Trade Center, and, yeah, it was [sighs] . . . it was a way, in . . . in a way, the reading of, not just that, but of a lot of poetry took on a sense of the prophetic form. But, you know, if poets have antennae or, if poems have an antenna, I think that apprehensions and anxieties are being . . . It's both prophetic and of course it's also looking back to what one recognizes. Certainly as the devastations and holocausts of the 20th Century and all of this is, there's a potential for violence and destruction in the world that we ignore and always have ignored at our risk. And I think when poetry opens up, it also opens up to these violent cataclysmic possibilities. So here, I'm working with a vocabulary from a poem of the 1930s by Lorca. And I think maybe if you went back to Lorca's *Poet in New York*, that

anxious sense, this period, the short 20-year period between one World War and another World War, and already, with that destruction beginning to manifest itself in Lorca's country, Spain, that will make him one of its victims. But I think poetry has intent. Poetry, other arts, other forms of human expression. I don't want to put poetry, sort of, on its own pedestal as the only way that one gets to some accurate and powerful vision of the world.

PN: Understood. Our guest is Jerome Rothenberg, the author of over 50 books of poetry. He was reading from *The Lorca Variations*, which is published by New Directions.

Well, we were talking about *The Lorca Variations* and your being in New York City, and not only were you there when it happened, but it's also your hometown. So tremendous feelings about that. You know, they've talked about potentially flying a plane into the Sears Tower in Chicago, the tallest building in the country, which is my hometown so even the thought of that happening, just really affects me in a very deep cellular level.

And another poem which . . . well, in a sense is also prophetic, is called "Lorca Variation 19, In a Time of War," and I mean, poetry and war go back [laughs] many, many years before they're even, when poetry was just a spoken act so . . .

JR: Yeah, including poets I can think of who . . . who write poetry in favor of war [laughs]

PN: Yes, right [laughs]

JR: And I don't wanna give poets a . . .

PN: No.

JR: . . . completely lean slate is, you know, the . . .

PN: Right.

JR: . . . but . . .

PN: But maybe, maybe reading that poem, to give us a start for this section of the interview.

JR: Yeah, I mean, again, the words are taken from, nouns are taken from a translation that I did of the poetry of Federico Garcia Lorca, who himself was a victim of a war.

The Lorca Variations XIX, In a Time of War

[1]

Snuffed out in mind
or heart
the war sucks up the dew,
dries out the spring,

the water thickens,
daisies wilt,
a stone drops through
a dark lake,
near a silver mountain,
nightingales
lie dead,
a tremor uproots three
black trees,
uproots the memory
of trees
& oxen,
the poppies from another war,
another homeland.

[2]

War makes a prisonhouse a thousand cells crisscross in: a
universe we enter down a single road.

[3]

A widow in the darkness gathers roots the slender stem of
an acacia curving in the love she brings a love that floats
like butterflies over the road to war.

[4]

Inside the glass a crystal moon lives war will shatter into
flowers in the endless night.

[5]

Once the night grew tamer once the stars, destroyed by war
inside their hive fled to the open air.

[6]

Moon acacia water lily star: even a year of war won't hide or
tame them.

[7]

War waiting in the gateway to the hive.

PN: “Lorca Variations XIX, In a Time of War”. Jerome Rothenberg, the poet, reading from his work. Let’s go to the anthology work. *Poems for the Millennium*, for me, is just absolutely amazing and overwhelming. I don’t consider myself a scholar so perhaps that’s part of it. But it’s just an incredible document, and something that someone could go over, literally, for the rest of their life and still continue to get richness from it. Can you tell us about how that project was initiated?

JR: Well, it was something that was brewing in my mind for a long time and I think, oh, you know, maybe 12, maybe 15 years before, actually getting a contract to do the work, I had begun to propose something like it to the publishers that I had worked with. I’ve been given to making anthologies for some time, seeing the anthology as a kind of massive assemblage and epic work that I could create from many different resources. And always with the idea, not to do an anthology that was a recapitulation of other anthologies that were themselves recapitulations of other anthologies. But the anthology as an instrument for presenting work that had been ignored, set aside, or even despised by literary communities and others. Or, as I once wrote about why I write poetry, that I try to write poems, which are necessary to me and which have not existed otherwise. I try to make anthologies that have not existed otherwise and for which I feel a real need, a real necessity.

My sense was that wherever I look, the assessment of the 20th Century, which was then, moving towards closure, had slighted what seemed to me to be some of the most important product as poems of the 20th Century. That the books had it wrong or I think at a certain point in the 20th Century weren’t even trying to make a general assessment. It’s difficult to bring a hundred years of poetry or anything else into a single place, a single book.

But I thought it was still important in our time, not to let that part of the near past slip away without making some statement on my behalf and on the behalf of other poets with whom I work. Some statement about how we really saw the poetry of the century. So I thought I was not just speaking for myself but, but speaking for others, and I think that actually was true.

PN: And and specifically addressing the folks who I mentioned in-, at the beginning of our chat, Willis Harmon talking about the best work of the 20th Century and writings in prose. So you’re, in a sense, addressing folks with that point of view.

JR: Yeah, and no, I think it was, the 20th Century, which continues and . . . To Be Continued into the 21st, was an extraordinary century for poetry. It was certainly my century. You know, I’m happy to have made it into the 21st Century, but Paul, for you, for me, we are people who have spent our lives in what was called the 20th Century.

PN: Yeah, and that makes it a difficult situation for you, or could be a difficult situation because here you are, looking back at the 20th Century, at the different schools and the different writers from that era, trying to carve out what you thought was the essence, and probably making some difficult decisions. And you, yourself, are one of the leading figures of the American avant-garde of the 20th Century. So very difficult where you have to put yourself in. Not only as someone looking at the 20th Century, but an active and vibrant participant in it. So, was that difficult for you?

JR: Yes and no. I . . . This is not the first anthology that I've done and preceding the anthologies, I've been the publisher/editor of three or four little magazines. And early along I and some others, and in fact, at one point everybody I knew had a magazine. It was [laughs] it was a time in the 1960s. I hardly knew a poet who didn't have a magazine or wasn't on the board of some magazine. Of course the question came up, do we publish ourselves? Or are we that totally self-effacing, that we just put ourselves out of the picture and act as the, you know, the objective selectors. But we really didn't think that that would -- the point was, you know, that we were a part of whatever we did. So when it came to the anthologies, also, you come up against that. Do I put myself into it? Well, I was into it anyway, you know, just . . .

PN: Well, the notion of objectivity, I think, is something that maybe was strongly considered in the 20th-, or reconsidered in the 20th Century. I mean, Heisenberg talking about, you know, how if you are viewing an experiment, you're having an effect on it. So the notion of objectivity is really kind of ludicrous.

JR: Yeah. I also thought, there was something in particular as we came to the second volume of *Poems for the Millennium*. Ah, you know, we have come into our own time. This is the time that I became a poet and Pierre Joris became a poet. Most of the poets that I know became poets. But how can I present that part of the 20th Century, that part of my lifetime, without being quite frank about myself as a participant in it.

The more difficult thing, of course, was that some number of poets, could not be because, they're as big as those books are there. There are limits and you end up making some bad decisions. Ultimately, I think I once said, we would like to put out an anthology of everybody. But that exists perhaps in the mind of God, but there's no way of [laughs] of getting a publisher to consider doing it.

PN: The Dadas were quite an inspiration for you. Can you tell us how you discovered them and what it is about them that resonates with you.

JR: Yeah, the Dadas, in both poets and painters, and as far as memory recollects, some dancers that were also connected with it, but the Dada poets . . . Certainly that was one of the groupings that we wanted to get into *Poems for the Millennium*. Certainly, when I was first coming into poetry, the Dadas in the general appraisal of art in the 20th Century, we're not on television, so you can't see the gesture I'm making with my finger [laughs]. But they were a very, very small part of that story. And yet, when the artist, the American artist, Robert Motherwell, in the later 1950s published a collection and anthology called *The Dada Painters and Poets*, my eyes opened wide, as did the eyes of many others. And although he included very little poetry in it, the talk about the poetry and the talk about the poets led me to look further into that work, and I approached it with a sense of great kinship between us, if we, who are younger poets in 1960, and this generation of my father. And I wanted, at that point, in fact, to do a small anthology of Dada poets, not with anything else what the poems presented there. And I announced it for the little press that I had, and said that I was preparing a collection of Dada poetry to be called *That Dada Strain*, and I never carried through on that. But, many years later I published a book of my own poems, called *That Dada Strain*, in which the poems are addressed to, one by one, to the poets of Dada. And in *Poems for the Millennium*, there is the Dada section, a section that does not exist in

other anthologies of the 20th Century, along with a section on futurism and surrealism, and the objectivists, the negritude poets. And so, the Dada anthology, in effect, appears within *Poems for the Millennium*, 30-35 years later.

PN: And is it that irreverence, that sense of play? What is it that resonates with you?

JR: It's the irreverence, it's the sense and a movement that grows up during the First World War, of the shock to language and to consciousness, from the century's violence. Not the Dada's violence, so this kind of violence in their poetry and their language and in their art. But the sense of revulsion and the desire that they express, by strong action on their own part, to cleanse language of the corruption that it's undergone in the name of nation, state and power.

PN: Advertising.

JR: Mm-hmm, and advertising . . .

PN: Yeah, yeah, which might now be more relevant to the situation than the nation state.

JR: Mm-hmm.

PN: You know, you talk about how your eyes opened up. I can sense that peoples' eyes open up when they hear you reciting Dada poetry. And their hearts, as well. Would you grace us with something? Maybe something from the *Dada Strain* or . . . whatever you choose.

JR: Yeah, well, this is speaking of Dada -- you want a long one or a short one?

PN: Well, maybe a short one.

JR: And this is the opening poem of that *Dada Strain*, called, "That Dada Strain."

the zig zag mothers of the gods
of science the lunatic fixed stars
& pharmacies
fathers who left the tents of anarchism
unguarded
the arctic bones
strung out on saint germain
like tom toms
living light bulbs
aphrodisia
"art is junk" the urinal
says "dig a hole
"& swim in it"
a message from the grim computer
"ye are hamburgers"

PN: [laughs] Maybe I should have picked a long one. And maybe some Hugo Ball. You know, when you did that the other night, that just lit people up. And, you know, we don't have the toy whistling device which I saw you do in Taos at the Poetry Circus.

JR: Yeah, well, I don't have the Hugo Ball, if it's the sound poem, I don't have the text in front of me.

PN: Oh, OK.

JR: But I'll do a poem addressed to Hugo Ball. And Hugo Ball was a German poet and these are all young poets who have come, escaping the war to Zurich and in Switzerland and there, set up a movement with a silly name, Dada, you know, as against the highfalutin other names that avant-garde movements have taken, like Acmeism and you know, expressionism, Rayonism. You know, here Dada is the name of the movement and they begin to do performances in a place they call, after the great rationalist philosopher, Voltaire, the Cabaret Voltaire and in one of the early performances, Hugo Ball gets up a . . . a costume, does sound poetry, loses consciousness, thinks he's having a, I guess *is* having, a great religious conversion experiences. Goes off into the mountains of Switzerland and dies there as a kind of Catholic Dada saint.

June 23rd, 1916, for that evening's reading, he made himself a special costume. His legs were in a shiny blue cylinder, which came up to his hips so that he looked like an obelisk. Over it he wore a huge coat collar cut out of cardboard, scarlet on the inside, gold on the outside. It was fastened at the neck in such a way that he could give the impression of wing-like movement by raising and lowering his elbows. He also wore a high, blue and white striped witch doctor's hat.

A GLASS TUBE ECSTASY, FOR HUGO BALL

a glass tube
for my leg says Hugo Ball
my hat a cylinder
in blue & white
the night the german ostriches the sink
he pisses in
all these become his world
his dada song, begun there
holds the image
until it comes at us:
the image from its cross
looks down:
a ribbon
a revolver
mud
these contribute
to his death
also to what his death contributes
later, too hysterical
too sick with god
& time:
a carousel
a roasted poet

fish
the queen says to his mind
& enters
where the street of mirrors starts
she sees his face
reflected
in hunger of the world
as pain, the consciousness
of death not why we die
but why we dream about it
& why our dreams can't save
the dying remnant
Hugo
as I write this poem
the voice cries
from a further room
the dancer / singer calls me
from a further room
I step into an obelisk
below the waist
my mouth opens to sing
but freezes
shut
in grief for you
ombula
take
bitdli
solunkola
the collapse of language
tabla tokta tokta takabala
taka tak
a glass tube ecstasy
escapes from time
babula m'balam
the image & the word
over your bed
hang crucified
again the cabaret explodes
again again
fatigue
one
foot
in glass
a glass nerve
&
a priestly gas pump
pulls

her hair out

PN: Well, we're just about out of time and there's *many* things I'd like to talk to you about, but I guess I'd like to end on this note: You say in *Prefaces* and in other writings, in your *Book of Poetics* from many years ago. I'm guessing this was 1970s or something like that. You say in it, . . . "No poet solves the problem of vision under these changed circumstances. And by our own time it becomes evident that the function of poetry isn't to impose a single vision or consciousness but to *liberate* similar processes in others." Can you elaborate on that?

JR: Yeah, I think that's expressing . . . a hope for poetry and maybe it's clearer in the post World War II generation than it was for those earlier in the century. There have been kind of tyrannical forms of poetry and art. The Surrealists led by a very brilliant French poet, Andre Breton, tried to establish themselves on a kind of Soviet model, you know, with a board of directors, like a kind of Surrealist Politburo but more with the authoritative voice of Breton, himself. Part of the attraction of Dada, was in Tristan Tzara's declaration, although he could be pretty autocratic, you know, from time to time, and the true Dadas are against Dada. So that you undermine yourself when you're moving in the direction of total authority. You know, and rather, for many of those that I was with, it was possible to see ourselves as initiators of something in which others were invited to join, and to supersede us, rather than our laying down an authoritative rule. I can only say that for myself, this is-, it's been a *hope*, that the work could stimulate work in others, whether it's the poetry or the performances or the anthologies or whatever, you know, rather than . . . The discomfort with . . . there's a discomfort with finality and the and closing the door against anyone else entering.

PN: Well, we're gonna have to leave it at there because we're out of time. So many other questions to ask you. It's been such a delight and an honor to have you in our place and I wish you continued success, and thank you so much for the inspiration.

JR: Yeah, thank you, Paul.

PN: We've been talking with Jerome Rothenberg. He's the author of over 50 books of poetry. He's a translator, a performance poet pioneer and incredible anthologist, and he's been our visiting poet at SPLAB in Auburn, Washington for Fall 2001.

PAUL NELSON: Can it be 50 years since the founding of the so-called Beat Generation? That meeting between Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and William S. Burroughs? Can it also be 38 years since the poem "Howl" was first published? At the age of 68, Allen Ginsberg is still writing poetry that inspires many, and pisses off others. He's a member of The American Institute of Arts and Letters, a co-founder of the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at the Naropa Institute, the first accredited Buddhist college in the Western world. And he's in Seattle, touring, to promote his new collection of poems entitled *Cosmopolitan Greetings*, published by HarperCollins. Allen Ginsberg, welcome to the program.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Thank you. Actually, the poems cover 1986 to 1992. See, I'd had a big book of collected poems from Harper that covered 1947 to 1980, and another book, *White Shroud*, 1980 to '85, and then I finally finished harvesting all the poems over the last six years, up to . . .

PAUL NELSON: Harvesting.

ALLEN GINSBERG: . . . up to '92.

PAUL NELSON: Uh-huh, and meeting those deadlines.

ALLEN GINSBERG: And it's not a deadline, actually. It's just whenever I figure out I got enough poems for a big enough book, I get 'em together and send 'em into Harper's and they seem to be willing to publish 'em.

PAUL NELSON: I'm sure, I'm sure.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Actually, amazingly, in this case, the publication day was May 18, and they'd already sold out the whole first edition, printed a second and sold that out, and so on the third printing, which is kinda strange, actually. I think there must be some more activity in the poetry world, among younger people, lately.

PAUL NELSON: Sort of a Renaissance?

ALLEN GINSBERG: Yeah, lots of poetry readings, poetry slams, and things in movies. Johnny Depp collecting Kerouac . . . so there seems to be some Renaissance of the old San Francisco poets and the Beat poets particularly.

PAUL NELSON: What do you think about poetry slams and bringing competition into what most people consider an art form?

ALLEN GINSBERG: Well, the aggression is kind of obnoxious, obviously. But on the other hand, it's a way of siphoning off aggression into some area of words that is more harmless, and also getting people into text and into performance so that the aggression becomes theater, rather than out on the street, real life. So maybe it's . . . it also sort of makes good compost for the art, anyway, over any kind of art. But I suppose in an America dominated by that sense of macho need to protect yourself by looking fierce, you get some kind of fierce poetry, which one side of it might be fierce, the other side it might be sort of diamond pride. You know, something valuable. Like, Whitman says, 'I find no fat sweeter than that which sticks to my own ribs.' So you get somebody, straightening out his back and saying, "I'm proud of myself."

PAUL NELSON: I want to talk about Walt Whitman but I wanna talk about the fact that it's been 50 years since the so-called founding of the Beat Generation. Does it seem like 50 years?

ALLEN GINSBERG: Well, the wink of an eye, ha ha, but 50 years is a wink of an eye when you consider eternity, or when you consider the vastness of space and the universe. So 50 years is like

what people look back on and say, “Gee, I wish I was still young, ha, but I’m not. I’m a wrinkled old corpse.”

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

ALLEN GINSBERG: And actually, 50 years is kind of a strange conception. It was an idea at NYU. New York University, they just had a 50-year Beat reunion and academic conference, and they thought up the idea that it was 1944 that I met Kerouac and Kerouac met Burroughs. But I don’t think the phrase “beat” was used uh, ‘til about 1948, ’49, in a vague . . . in a conference, a conversation between a novelist, John Holmes, and Kerouac, in which Holmes was an eager intellectual and was trying to name, you know, figuring out what’s the name of our not-lost generation. And Kerouac, not meaning to name it, but un-name it, if anything, said, “Oh, it’s a Beat Generation. It doesn’t have any particular characteristic, heroic characteristic.” And Holmes, four years later, 1952, wrote an article in *The New York Times* magazine section, saying, “This is the Beat Generation.” So that, but in defining it as sort of juvenile delinquents and switchblades and aggression, which was, I thought, unfortunate, ‘cuz it set a tone for the media to . . .

PAUL NELSON: Stereotype it?

ALLEN GINSBERG: . . . cream on itself . . .

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

ALLEN GINSBERG: . . . over and stereotype.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, and it . . .

ALLEN GINSBERG: So actually, you could state it from 1952, so the surfacing of the phrase, and 1948 the casual remark and . . . 1944, meeting between the people involved. But that accumulated more friends. Like, 1950, we all ran into Gregory Corso who’s a great genius and is still writing, and as is Burroughs still writing at the age of 80, and painting, and very active, and very influential on most modern culture, including youth grunge. I think his last, one of the most recent productions of Burroughs was a record called *The Saint, They Called Him*, was Kurt Cobain for supplying the music. And just before that he’d had an album, *Dead City Radio*, I think with the Sonic Youth group, putting music around his words.

PAUL NELSON: So the Beat Generation and Generation X.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Well, there’s always been that continual Bohemia that goes on. Dylan was maybe the next generation and he said, back in 1975, that his inspiration to be a poet came from Kerouac’s *Mexico City Blues*, which he said “blew his mind” when he first read it. And I asked him, “Why?” And he said, “Well, it’s the first poetry that spoke to me in the American language, my own language.” So I think that’s the continuity. We’re using a living language rather than a dead literary language.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Which is what William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound recommended, is use the spoken vernacular tone.

PAUL NELSON: You were on the FBI’s list of “dangerous radicals.”

ALLEN GINSBERG: And no, uh, let’s see, what was it? Dangerous Security. Dangerous Security was the formal, official title.

PAUL NELSON: Is that right? Are you still on that list?

ALLEN GINSBERG: I don't think they got a list like that anymore. And the weird thing is I was put on that list, I found later on, I got my FBI and CIA and Army Intelligence and all that, those papers that under the Freedom of Information Act, back in the late '70s, under Carter, actually. And I found that I was put on the Dangerous Security List by that old faggot, J. Edgar Hoover.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

ALLEN GINSBERG: Who, himself, was a sort of transvestite queen and I think it was really amazing how he got away with that. On August 26, 1964, '65, just after I had been kicked out of Cuba by Castro, for for complaining about his attitude toward gays, 'cuz he had broken up the theater school. Castro, with his sort of macho Catholic background. Had broken up the Theater School and sent them all off to . . . in Havana.

PAUL NELSON: All . . . all the maricones.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Yes, and sent all these Americones off to Campo de Trabajores, as to work in camps. Sort . . . and it seemed ridiculous 'cuz there were a number of great gay Cuban revolutionary poets. And the tradition of poetry, gay poets like Lorca, himself on and so . . . even Raul Castro was rumored to be gay. I heard that in Havana, and I still heard that for years later. And very privately, I asked about that. What's he coming on, why is Castro coming on like that when there's rumor about his brother? Well, and so one day I was just marched into . . . and my room was invaded by a bunch of brown-uniformed immigration police and I was taken off . . . the set, bricked off the set immediately and put on a plane to Czechoslovakia. And so we took a little tour of the Iron Curtain countries and when I got back to Prague, was April 26, I was put on the Dangerous Security List, according to the papers I got later. And within a week I was elected King of May and kicked out of Czechoslovakia for being anti-Communist. So what that all was about, who knows? Except the one thing I got out of it was that the secret police in all countries are sort of international mucous membrane network that they're connected with each other and have the same sort of idiocy and snoopiness and probably double-minded hypocrisy.

PAUL NELSON: We're talking with Allen Ginsberg, the poet who is touring to promote *Cosmopolitan Greetings, Poems 1986-1992*, published by HarperCollins. I'm Paul Nelson.

As recently as the mid-'80s, you said you wanted to "save America's soul." Do you still aspire to do that, and is it worth saving?

ALLEN GINSBERG: Well, I'm not sure that the soul is worth saving, but the spirit is worth saving. I don't know what the soul is, but spirit means "breathing," and where there's breath . . . where there's breath there's life. But we've done so much damage to the planet that at this point I wonder if the planet can be saved, even. I just saw a little thing in a . . . George Will, a very conservative commentator back . . . something in a Seattle paper, back in early June, where he, himself is talking about the coming anarchy, as the rich nations get richer and shut out the poor nations. And . . . and destroy agriculture, as we have been destroying it for agribusiness bank agriculture. So depleting the countryside and forcing everybody into the big cities and overcrowding the cities, and causing immense . . . both damage the country from the kind of agribusiness fertilizer use, petrochemical fertilizers that ruins the land. Turns the land into blotting paper after a while and it kills all the bacteria. And then also depopulates the countryside and forces these vast cities to mushroom with smog and ozone layer depletion and poverty and rebellion and finally, anarchy. So even the conservatives like Will is beginning to worry about this berserk expansionism growth, hypertechnological assault on nature. I think up here in the Northwest, there's a little

more consciousness of that because you have so much nature to protect, and you have these old growth forests . . . and mountains and some formerly unpolluted water sources.

I had a strange conversation the other day with . . . and supper with Gore Vidal, the writer, and some younger people who asked him, "Well, you're a political wise man. What do you think's the next big crisis?" And he said, "Oh, the next great war will be over the Arctic icecaps." And I said, "What?" And he said, "Well, you know, all the water in America is polluted by now and there's certain countries that are gonna be facing loss of water supply, like the Southwest and here and Arabia. So they'll be, you know, big wars to get the big icebergs down into somebody else's territory." Which is not such an outlandish idea, actually, when you realize that even in the United States, certain areas are running low in the water table because of excessive population, which seems to be the world problem. Population expansion, like little lemmings.

PAUL NELSON: There have been threats by California to divert Columbia River water to California and . . .

ALLEN GINSBERG: Oh, yeah.

PAUL NELSON: . . . and get drinking water that way. And of course, water for all the irrigation, which is extensively, is . . .

ALLEN GINSBERG: It's in all the lawns. In all the lawns and all the running taps and all the leaky faucets, that slop the . . . humanity has allowed to accumulate and all the toilets that wash away our detritus without recycling it. It's a question, I think, in the long run of the United States and the Western countries having to limit their consumption, and have to lower the standard of living to something comfortable but more minimal and less throw-away beer can littered. I mean, you consider, and someone once said . . . I don't know if it's true, Australia, about a third or half of Australia's electric supply goes to making aluminum, and fusing aluminum. And what's aluminum used for? Half the time it, throw-away beer cans. You drink one glass of beer or one glass of Coke and bam. All that energy and all that precious metal is discarded, to become more problem. So how could we do a recyclable economics and a recyclable megalopolis? That's the whole problem. Instead of having the idea of a throw-away planet.

PAUL NELSON: You've been . . . you've been kicked out of Cuba, kicked out of Czechoslovakia and on the FBI's list of radicals . . .

ALLEN GINSBERG: No. Dangerous Security.

PAUL NELSON: Dangerous Security.

ALLEN GINSBERG: I think it was a, you know, prone to violence even though I'm a pacifist. All those violent FBI people [laughs] had their own ideas of . . . projections of their own violence on others.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. It's all those reckless words . . .

ALLEN GINSBERG: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: . . . in the books.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Inaccurate language.

PAUL NELSON: How would you describe your politics at this time in your life?

ALLEN GINSBERG: Well, as before, somewhat of an anarchic pacifist. I think politics begins at home, that you, if you're gonna do any reforming and revolution, you make a revolution in your consciousness to begin with. To become conscious of your own aggression, or my own aggression and ignorance and grasping . . . before I can point the finger at others. Then once having developed some small sense of connection with the world and compassion, maybe, getting outside of the shield of anger and resentment and whatever it is one resents. Being born for that matter is . . . I don't wanna get born. I'm gonna die. Once you get over the complaining, and relate to the situation as it is, you realize that everybody is suffering and some kind of compassion rises to see what you can do to help to alleviate that massive suffering. And from that you could have some kind of community action or political action or relationship with other people, that's not just predatory and exploitative or manipulative. And it seems that most capitalism and communism is based on conning other people and getting something out of them and enriching . . . one's self at the expense of the pain or labor of others.

That was a . . . insight that W.E.B. Du Bois, the great black philosopher had way back in 1903. He was saying that the problem . . . then he thought the great problem of the century was the color problem. And 60 years later he wrote a little preface to his great book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, saying that he had to amend that. That it was . . . and he felt that the great problem that was connected with race, but it was the ability of smaller groups of people to live in luxury and power at the expense and pain and labor of weaker groups who were being manipulated and pushed around. And this was connected a great deal with race. But the main thing was that inequity, not from natural balance, but from force and violence. Until war had become universal, as a way of obtaining advantage.

PAUL NELSON: The book, *Cosmopolitan Greetings*, covers poetry written in the years 1986 to 1992.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Right.

PAUL NELSON: In American, the end of the Reagan years and the end of the Bush years, for that matter.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: How do you think history is going to judge the Reagan / Bush era?

ALLEN GINSBERG: Well, I, you know, they got into such an enormous debt. After . . . the interesting thing is that Reagan, the conservatives or the new conservatives, for years, when I was a kid, we were always talking about conservation. Conserving, meaning conserving, and also balancing the national debt and not getting into bigger debt, living within our means. And yet, the astounding thing was that under Reagan, the Democratic debt building exploded enormously and got in . . . not from billions, into trillions and trillions and trillions. And according to that . . . who was that guy that was Reagan's economics manager of the budget or . . .

PAUL NELSON: Stockman.

ALLEN GINSBERG: . . . David Stockman. According to Stockman, I remember him saying that Reagan deliberately bankrupted the Treasury, to build up the military and to make it impossible to continue any kind of welfare state. And so this trillion and trillion and trillion debt is a deliberate political maneuver on the part of conservatives who are supposed to be living within a budget. And that's the mind-blowing thing. That they didn't do that at all. And nobody noticed it. Or I don't think people, that people seem to think it was, you know, some inevitable result of cosmic growth or something like that, rather than a complete abrogation of every principle of free market and economy that conservatives have been boasting about since I was a kid in the '30s. So they left a debt which can never be repaid, as far as I can see, and which has exhausted American

energy, both for war and military, and energy and money that might have been used for reconstruction of the environment. And so I think it's put the whole planet in a hole, and I don't think we'll ever get out.

PAUL NELSON: I see . . .

ALLEN GINSBERG: And I think that's one of the reasons that Clinton is having it so hard because he's presented with problems that are basically insoluble at this point. And American public has allowed it to go on. A poem of 1986 is more or less the . . . sort of response to the economic / political situation. It's called "The Velocity of Money." I got interviewed by a guy named Lee Burton for The Wall Street Journal on the business of poetry. You know, poetry and business. He's a guy that went to school with me and but he said, "The velocity of money," and I said, "What does that mean?" He said, "You know, money going faster and you people have to take it out of the bank to reinvest it every time the interest rate goes up."

I'm delighted by the velocity of money as it whistles through windows of Lower East Side
Delighted skyscrapers rise grungy apartments fall on 84th Street's pavement

Delighted this year inflation drives me out on the street
with double digit interest rates in Capitalist worlds.
I always was a pseudo Communist, now we'll win {no line space after this line} as usury makes
walls thinner, books thicker & dumber
Usury makes my poetry more valuable
Manuscripts worth their weight in useless gold—{no line space after this line}

The velocity's what counts as the National Debt gets trillions higher
Everybody running after the rising dollar
Crowds of joggers down Broadway past City Hall on the way to the Fed
Nobody reads Dostoyevsky books anymore so they'll have to give passing ear
to my fragmented ravings in between President's speeches
Nothing's happening but the collapse of the Economy
so I can go back to sleep till the landlord wins his eviction suit in court. {changed to reflect the poem as
published, except the left "pseudo" in 'casue I presume he said it}

PAUL NELSON: You know, another thing about conservative politics was that smaller government and sort of a Libertarian spirit . . .

ALLEN GINSBERG: Right.

PAUL NELSON: . . . which left during the Reagan years.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Right.

PAUL NELSON: And now, especially this year, in this state we have potential peoples' initiatives on the ballot. They're not qualified for the ballot yet.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: But they perhaps might, that would legalize discrimination against gays and lesbians.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Yeah. There's hardly free market, ha. It's kind of interesting that theo-political televangelists, authoritarian hierarchical mindset that uses the same kind of language that you heard under Mao Tse-Tung and Stalin. Like, it's that their, the mindset is not so different. In Stalin, it's under Stalin you had rootless cosmopolitans, people who didn't have any American roots

or Russian roots. Rootless cosmopolitans by which he meant Jews, really or Bohemians, or artists, really, or people that didn't follow the party line. Didn't follow the monotheist party line of Stalin or the monotheist party line of Robertson. And under Mao, you had the free spiritual corruption, as a way of attacking independents, autonomous artists. And you have that same phrase being used by Jesse Helms and the neo-conservative anti-art right, trying to censor what goes on television and radio. Or get money from the government even, but also independent radio and television under the Helms FCC regulations.

And then under Hitler it was degenerate art, and you get the same language out of Pat Robertson and what is it, the American Family Institute, like rides herd over television and radio commentators.

PAUL NELSON: Reverend Donald Wildmon.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Wildmon and the American Family Institute. I have a little poem about them, actually. Maybe it'd be interesting to get onto that. It's called "Research." {no spaces between lines in published version}

Research has shown that black people have inferiority complexes regarding white folks

Research has shown that Jews are exclusively concerned with financial lasciviousness

Research has shown Socialism to be a universal failure wherever practiced by secret police

Research has shown that Earth was created 4004 B.C., a Divine Bang

Research has shown that sparrows, bees, lizards, chickens, pigs & cows exhibit signs of homosexual behavior when in prison

Research has shown that W. A. Criswell's Southern Baptist Inerrancy Confession is the most virulent form of Christian Truth

Research has shown that 90% of people going to Dentists have bad teeth

brush your teeth violently 3 times a day after meals wear away the roots

Research has shown that Hollywood makes the best films ever, the sexually degenerate that the U.N. is Good [] Bad [] Indifferent [] for American interests Check One

Research has shown that Christian Reconstructionist homosexuality is Sin, Lesbianism crime against nature, AIDS a plague sent to punish gay Angelmakers

bisexuality *disapproved* by 51% Americans

Research has shown that teen head-shakers watching TV get more IQ tests than natives of Amazon & Ucayali rivers who have no antennae

Research has shown whales & porpoises subscribe to a Higher Intelligence than Norwegians and Japanese

Research has shown that Elitist Individualism Spiritual Corruption & Degenerate Art *caused* Dictatorships in Soviet Union, China, and Germany

that possession of pornography by the American Family Institute has resulted in 35% increase in sex crimes among institute librarians

To conclude research has shown that the material universe both does and does not exist simultaneously, no contradiction

PAUL NELSON: Let's talk about Walt Whitman. There are . . .

ALLEN GINSBERG: There's one thing I'd like to mention before we go on.

PAUL NELSON: OK.

ALLEN GINSBERG: The censorship on radio and television is like the censorship we had on books back in '58, '59, '60. And on movies, there was, at one time a period in America when you could not print classics like Catullus, the *Satyricon*, Vitruvius Arbiter, the Greek Anthology, without printing what was considered blasphemous or sexual in Latin or Greek. It took a number of trials, particularly of Henry Miller, *The Tropic of Cancer* and *Capricorn*, great novels; D.H. Lawrence's monumental *Lady Chatterley's Lover*; and novels of [inaudible] and many other books up to 1962, trials of *Naked Lunch* to liberate word from the hands of the police mind and controllers of the mind. Following that there was a liberation in movies, so that movies became much more ample and humane.

Now there is censorship that was introduced in 1988 by Senator Jesse Helms, directing the FCC to prohibit the use of so-called "indecent language," 24 hours a day. And that was standard. A group of us got together and sued the FCC, namely the PEN Club, the American Civil Liberties Union, William Burroughs and myself, as Friends of the Court. And off to the Supreme Court, won, rolling back the *hours* of censorship to 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. censored, and then free trade so to speak, open channel, what do you call that? The . . . channel, safe harbor. Safe harbor, 8:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.

PAUL NELSON: When the *kids* won't be listening.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Supposedly. Although, my poems, like, "Howl," "Kaddish," "Sunflower Sutra," and "America" are in high school anthologies and college anthologies, and are studied by kids under 18 during the daylight hours when they're prohibited to hear them on the radio, *or* have them spoken on television. So there's a real contradiction because it's eliminated a lot of literature off the air, and what is on the air is just as indecent, I would imagine – violence and murder and a continuous *imaginary* violence and not real examination of the real violence that we see around us.

So I just would like to mention this so that listeners will know that the same condition of censorship as you have had in the Soviet Union and China, and *formerly* in America, exists on the *main* marketplace of ideas, the electronic media, radio and television. And people should be very clear about that. They're not gettin' the straight language of reality.

PAUL NELSON: Let's talk about a couple of radio folks that are subject to those regulations, Howard Stern . . .

ALLEN GINSBERG: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: And Rush Limbaugh, who certainly does that push the envelope in terms of decency, in terms of *words* that are indecent.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: Or perhaps *ideas* that are indecent.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Well, in free speech, I don't mind Limbaugh if people can understand him.

PAUL NELSON: Well, what do you think about him?

ALLEN GINSBERG: Stern, well, I've heard him only once. He sounds like a bag of hot air, frankly. If anybody's taken in by him that's their . . . His method is again, the use of aggression. Like in the poetry slams. The use of aggression to get people riled up, one way or the other.

PAUL NELSON: Michael Meade calls him "a bully."

ALLEN GINSBERG: Yeah, well he *is* a bully, obviously, and he thinks . . . that's his ethics, and his ethos is aggression. Against other people, against gays, and against people he doesn't agree with, which is all right if you can get away with it, but he's hardly a man to point an ethical finger at anybody else. And I do feel that there is some inequity if *he* can get away with his language on the air and I can't speak mine on the air. My major poems are not allowed. So there is some . . . it's not a free market here, although he believes, supposedly, in a free market. He pays lip service to it. He's got his own little monopoly interest going on there.

So for Howard Stern, he's got the interesting thing, he's got the money to pay off. You know, to pay the fines, or just that he's popular enough so he can pay a fine. However, my poetry's a marginal matter that was published extensively on the air in Pacifica stations and listener-supported stations, in *college* stations, and it's now bricked off the air during those hours. And the interesting thing was that the religions right, when they began censoring the National Endowment of the Arts grants, attacking them from Mapplethorpe or Annie Sprinkle or others said, "Oh, this isn't censorship. This is just discretion of where the government wants to spend the taxpayers' money." But those same people, Helms and the Heritage Foundation, themselves funded by alcohol and tobacco, the worst drugs, have the nerve to pose themselves as ethical arbiters for us, have also used that argument as a kind of party line, front . . . but at the same time have attacked independent listener-supported, non-government supported stations by this new FCC regulation. So it *was* censorship of free speech in a free market. It wasn't just choice among the . . . who should get government money. And that echo, that argument about government money, echoes the old Stalin argument in Russia, about elitist individuals getting paid by the state for their dirty art, which the common people of the Communist Russia's, doesn't approve of. And why should the Communist government be supporting these elitist individualist, degenerative artists? And the same thing in China. So what's interesting is as those former anti-Communist, so-called democrats have the same language and the same mentality and the same ambitions as the dictators of Europe, and I think if they ever got into real power in America, like Ollie North, we would see some concentration camps.

PAUL NELSON: We're talking with Allen Ginsberg, whose new collection of poetry is entitled *Cosmopolitan Greetings, Poems 1986-1992*. I'm Paul Nelson.

There are a couple of references, at least . . . to . . .

ALLEN GINSBERG: We were gonna talk about Whitman, remember?

PAUL NELSON: That's exactly where I was goin', yeah, Walt Whitman. A couple of references to Walt Whitman, in the book.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: Obviously an inspiration. What has he meant to your work?

ALLEN GINSBERG: Well, you know, Whitman was the first major world poet, aside from Poe, who had tremendous penetration around the world, incidentally. But he was the one that introduced a whole new language of open forum, vernacular talk, exuberance and self-empowerment, very democratically into the literatures of all the countries in the world, from up to China in 1919. There were a couple of poets, Guo Moruo and Ai Qing, who translated Whitman for the first time, and it had a tremendously energizing effect on poetry all over the world, even for the surrealists and the futurists in Russia, 1907- 1910.

And in America he's like "a mountain too vast to be seen," which is what I've said a number of times, and that we take him for granted. But if any kid, at the age of 15, 16, sits down and reads through all of Whitman in a couple weeks, beginning to end [laughs], it'd be like taking acid. It just opens up the head and you know, gives a breath of fresh air into the heart, especially. In this recognition of oneself as open and as friendly and as tolerant as Whitman, himself. Secrets that one kept to oneself about Eros or cowardice or one's own idiocy, are all revealed in Whitman in a way that makes them into transparent humor and generosity and exuberance, and friendliness. So it leads people to become friendly to themselves and friendly to others. It's all sort of a energizing and uplifting, in a very interesting way, and it's only in the last 20 years that Whitman has finally begun to find his place in America as a kind of hero. At first it was the literary idea, "Oh, he didn't write in rhymes and verses and stanzas like Longfellow, so he couldn't be a superior writer." And he's obviously, an awkward, crude provincial jerk-off individual that didn't know what he was doing literarily. And yet the style of open form became an international style, whereas the more limited Longfellow style was really just limited to the 19th Century, basically. And as imitations of classical meters from Greek and Latin, but sort of by putting American literature into a kind of a corset or a straightjacket. So Whitman got out of that straightjacket, mentally and physically in the first line and inspired a whole new wave of poets, including Ezra Pound, who was, *felt* he was more sophisticated but really finally had to come around and say, "I make a pact with you, Walt Whitman. I've been pigheaded long enough." And of course, that goes into William Carlos Williams who began experimenting with living vernacular idiomatic Americanese and that influenced everybody, including me and Robert Creeley and Kerouac and just the whole world of poetry. Even Robert Lowell, the academic poet, champ, finally in the '50s, opened up his verse form so he could speak in Americanese and use the cadences that you use when you're *talking*. Da da da *da* da da, . . . da da da, da, da, da, da, da *da* da. And use the cadences that you use when you were talking.

PAUL NELSON: Let's talk about the process by which you write poetry. You date and also put the *time* when ostensibly you finish the poem.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Sometimes.

PAUL NELSON: And I am looking at these, the *times* in the book and it's 2:30 in the morning, 3:30 in the morning, six o'clock in the morning. Is that when your best work is done?

ALLEN GINSBERG: Well, I think you'll find many of those are crucially dated with *time*, not all, when they're dreams. Because it's part of the apparatus or part of the situation that of, "Oh, wow. I woke up at 2:30 in the morning in this visionary event happened and I took it down then, just to give an indication of the circumstance, and the *context* of the poem. Particularly, in this book, the long dream about Ken Kesey and the Grateful Dead, and it's called "I Went to the Movie of Life," much too long to read. But I woke up in the morning and I think I dated exactly where it was. Where I was, sometimes even the *place*. Generally, it's dreams that are given with the hour. That's why it's 6:00 a.m. or 2:30 in the morning.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. There was also a . . .

ALLEN GINSBERG: Or after *reading*, you know, casually in bed after reading, then that would be maybe 2:00 in the morning.

PAUL NELSON: Well, I picture myself working 'til five o'clock in the morning, preparing for this interview, thinking you stay up all night, and that's when you have a chance to be alone and when the noise begins to die down, although in New York, that might be *never*.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Never, no. 'Cuz actually, I've got a poem about that [laughs], if you're interested.

PAUL NELSON: Sure.

ALLEN GINSBERG: A little bit of the New York, I think it's called "A Thief Stole this Poem."

PAUL NELSON: Yes, yes. In fact, that was one I had marked for you to read.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Ah, that's on page 74. It's a tongue in cheek {?}poem {?}because it sounds like I'm insulting every race imaginable. "A Thief Stole this Poem." That's me, the thief.

These days steal everything
People steal your wallet, your watch
Break into your car steal your radio suitcase
Break in your house, your SONY Hi 8 your CD VCR Olympus XA
People steal your life, catch you on the street & steal your head off
Steal your sneakers in the toilet
Steal your love, mug your boyfriend rape your grandmother on the subway
Junkies steal your heart for medicine, they steal your credibility gap over the radio Coke-heads & black men steal your comfort, peace of mind walking Avenue A your laundry package
Ssteal your spirit, you gotta worry
Puerto Ricans steal white skin from your face
Wasps steal your planet for junk bonds, Jews steal your Nobodaddy and leave their dirty God in your bed
Arabs steal your pecker & you steal their oil
Everybody's stealing from everyone else, time sex wristwatch money
Steal your sleep 6 A.M. Garbage Trucks boomboxes sirens loud arguments hydrogen bombs
steal your universe.

December 19th, 1991, 8:15 a.m.

PAUL NELSON: There you go.

ALLEN GINSBERG: 'Cuz I was waking up.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, right.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Waking up to the garbage trucks, pounding down East 12th Street, makin' an awful lot of noise, like giant brontosaurus. So that's, the reason for that is I woke up and it was like a first take on, first thought waking up.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, let's talk about first thought / best thought. That's a line from one of the poems in the new book.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Yes, it is the title of a book by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, my Tibetan lama guru. I just wanted to interrupt, that long poem I spoke of about Kesey and the Grateful Dead, called "I Went to the Movie of Life," is dated April 30th, 1987, 4:30 to 6:25 a.m. I mean, that's how much time it took me to write this very long, elaborate story-like visionary dream. Of, you know, a dream in which I found myself in Clarksdale, Mississippi, the Home of the Blues, waiting for the Grateful Dead tour bus, for their Ken Kesey psychedelic bus passing by, and wanting to join them.

PAUL NELSON: When you . . .

ALLEN GINSBERG: That was about . . . first thought about . . .

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, exact--I mean when you *write* the poetry, is it a finished product? Or do you go back and edit it? Or how does it usually work?

ALLEN GINSBERG: I edited very slightly but I depend on the first notation, and if it's not there, then the poem won't work at all in any way. As in the poem, it's sort of a dream, and 4:30 to 6:30, writing down the dream with all the detail in the dream, remembering it and finding some poetic form to write it in, so that it comes out intact, both as a poem and a dream record, with some surprise thing at the very end. You think that maybe it's real or a story and all of a sudden it comes to some impossible situation and you wake up. So that provides sort of the magical vision for the poem. But to do that, you have to remember the primordial *details* of the dream. [coughs, clears throat]

First Thought, Best Thought is a title of a book by Chogyam Trungpa, my Tibetan lama guru, and it came up in the course of a conversation, which we were composing a chain poem together. Each of us contributing one line apiece. And at some point I said, "The monk bent down to lace his animal shoes." And I didn't know what I meant by "animal shoes." It was just, came up out of my head. And he said, "Animal shoes?" And I said, "And, oh, yes, the shoes are made of leather – animal shoes." And he said, "First thought, and the first thought is the best thought." And I said, "First thought, best thought," i.e. condensing it down. Meaning, the first raw flash on your mind that's usually visual, before you mediate it and edit it and editorialize on it, and generalize on it or make it OK for other people to look at censor it . . .

PAUL NELSON: Filter. Filter.

ALLEN GINSBERG: . . . or filter it.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

ALLEN GINSBERG: *Before* you filter it, it usually comes intact as a kind of raw, emotionally interesting gleam, usually visual. So Kerouac has the idea in his instructions for writing, "Don't stop to think of words, but to see picture better," i.e., the first primordial picture that you see. 'Cuz what people tend to do is be a little ashamed of their minds, or ashamed of their raw thoughts or theme – "Well, that's too personal," or, "That's just me. Maybe I should generalize it." Say I'm having a dream in which I'm sleeping with *mother*. Now, I don't wanna write about *that*. People would . . . So I'll think I'll say, "I had a dream in which I did something *bad*. Ha. Or I had a dream in which

I outraged society, or I had a dream in which I . . . I don't know. And it's a bit . . . so finally, you'll lose the humor and contradictoriness and quiddity and humanity of the first glimpse that goes back to either person, goes back to Freud or goes back before the *Bible*. And you lose the detail and you lose the believability, and instead, you get some generalization or abstraction. And one very interesting thing that William Blake says is, "Generalization and abstraction are the plea of the hypocrite, knave, and scoundrel." "Labor well the minute particulars." Take care of the little ones, the minute particular details. Take care of the little ones. Kerouac has the phrase, "details are the life of prose or poetry." Or as Pound said, "Direct treatment of the thing or object," or Williams says, "No ideas but in things," or the American vernacular, "Give me a for instance."

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

ALLEN GINSBERG: Same thing. So, "First thought, best thought" means you catch yourself thinking, that's an American vernacular, and you notice what you noticed in your mind. And you retain it, intact. It doesn't mean first thought chronologically, because chronologic, it might mean a surface thing. Like, "Oh, well, I'm gonna think about what I was thinking about." You know, you gotta get to the bottom. You know, if you stirred the pool, wait 'til the water settles so you can look down at the bottom, like in a fish tank.

PAUL NELSON: Sounds sort of like meditation or Buddhism. That's the first thing that comes to my mind.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Very much so, and that phrase, "catch yourself thinking," which is totally American vernacular, which everybody knows, really, or giving you---catches little thinking, is basically the seed of meditation practice itself. Where . . . Have you ever done of that? Any kind of . . .

PAUL NELSON: Meditation?

ALLEN GINSBERG: Yeah, . . . Siddhan? {Sitting?}

PAUL NELSON: Yes, yes.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Well, for the audience or listeners that don't, it's possible to explain, very simply, actually. Basically, if you sit straight up, with your spine upholding your body in a position of awake with your eyes open, and your eyeballs relaxed, and pay attention to the breath coming out of your nose, and to the breath and so, the tickling of the air at the end of the nose until you finish the single out breath, going out with the breath but not *controlling* it, just observing the out breath when it goes out. Or being mindful of it, or paying attention to it. And on the in breath, taking a vacation, nothin' special you gotta do. Just you check out your posture, that you're still sitting in a straight, in a position of being awake and aware of the space around you and above you. So just living with yourself, without any intention of accomplishing anything, but just appreciating the pace you're in, and the already ongoing process of breathing. So very simple. But in the course of that, you may find that your mind starts spacing out. And you begin thinking.

PAUL NELSON: Perhaps a list of things to do today.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Yeah. So what do you do with those? You take a friendly attitude toward your thoughts. You might even acknowledge them, say, *thinking*, and then bringing your attention back to your next out breath and ride out with that. Without controlling your breath, just observing breath, long or short, is a way of putting your attention somewhere steady, and it's always there. And then also acknowledging your thoughts, taking a friendly attitude toward them, which is what poetry does. It's acknowledging the thought, taking a friendly attitude toward it . . .

PAUL NELSON: Non-judgmental attitude?

ALLEN GINSBERG: And letting it go. Non-judgmental and in fact, tolerant, amused and being willing to *live* with yourself. Being willing to tolerate your own mind.

PAUL NELSON: Tell us about the . . . Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at the Naropa Institute, and the Institute itself.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Well, we're having our 20th Anniversary. It's a contemplative college in Boulder, Colorado, and was founded in 1974 by a very intelligent poet, Tibetan lama, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. Trungpa is the author of a number of books that are published by Shambhala Press, and he has a number of study groups around the country. He died in 1986 but had built a very firm foundation among his students for ongoing work, and this college is sort of like the interface between the secular world and the Buddhist world. But also an independent entity where sort of giving hospitality to Christians, Jews, Bohemians, Kerouacian beatniks and whatnot, as well as Sufis. And the idea is to have a wisdom education rather than a commercial education. So it's particularly good for poetics, dance, but also psychology. A very strong psychology group that gets good jobs upon graduating 'cuz they're so adept both knowing themselves from meditation and empathizing with people who are lost to themselves.

So we've gone on for 20 years, but the reason it was called the Kerouac School was that Trungpa was a very good poet and Tibetan. And one day, back, I think '72 or '73, I read him all through Kerouac's *Mexico City Blues*, the same book that had inspired Bob Dylan, and Trungpa laughed all the way. And when we got to New York after a four-hour ride down from his retreat land in Vermont, he got out of the car and said, "It's a perfect manifestation of mind," i.e. Trungpa was right in your mind, in the way I've been describing. So when he asked me and Anne Waldman to take responsibility to form a poetics faculty in order to teach the meditators Golden Mouth, otherwise they'd be no good at turning the wheel of Dharma and explaining their attitude of tolerance toward life. And teach, to poets, some meditation to avoid the . . . Jimi Hendrix, Kurt Cobain syndrome of depression and self damage. You know, some kind of basic balance and sanity, which is always useful in poetry 'cuz many poets . . . You know, was it . . . Wordsworth has a line, "And we poets in our youth begin in gladness and thereof come an end . . ." and what is it? Depression and madness or . . . suicide and madness, which is characteristic of our rock 'n' roll grunge generation, too, as it was every generation of poets or Sensitives, and from the very first when I said in "Howl," "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving, hysterical, naked."

So it was a great way of introducing East and West together and combining them. And the intelligence of meditation, in catching yourself thinking, and the intelligence of poetry, very similar, in which poetry you've got to catch yourself thinking and write down what you thought. So they're actually both facets of the same kind of awareness practice. And he sought {saw?}, Trungpa, the teacher saw that, saw poetry, American poetry, as an awareness practice like tea ceremony, archery, martial arts and so we've had this going on for 20 years. And this *summer*, we'll have our *big* anniversary with Amiri Baraka coming, the great black poet; Robert Creeley, great academic, Black Mountain poet; Philip Glass, the musician, with whom I've worked a lot; Michael McClure who travels these days with Ray Manzarek of the Doors fame. Ken Kesey's coming down to put on his trickster play. Marianne Faithfull who's taught lyrics poetry there a number of years; Francesco Clemente, the painter, who's made a portrait of me that we can sell for keeping the school going. Galway Kinnell who's more of an NYU academic poet but has been opening up his imagination lately, and Ferlinghetti of the old Beat Generation, and Gary Snyder of the Northwest will be there. And a lot of people and sort of endless--Gregory Corso, Gelek Rinpoche, the teacher I've been working with now since Trungpa died. And . . . let's see, who else have we got . . . Some younger poets that people wouldn't know, and Anne Waldman, most of all, and Ed Sand-

ers. Ed Sanders is the Founder {? No he isn't—unless AG said “of the Fugs”} and Anne Waldman who is the Director.

PAUL NELSON: And for more information we have a phone number for you, in Colorado: 303-546-3592. We *are* just about out of time. There are well, several poems I'd like you to do but since we are running out of time, “Autumn Leaves” is one.

ALLEN GINSBERG: That's a good one. You got the right one to sign off with.

PAUL NELSON: I thought so.

ALLEN GINSBERG: You must have read this book.

PAUL NELSON: Well, I did. I did read it. I spent . . .

ALLEN GINSBERG: Good for you!

PAUL NELSON: . . . I spent a lot of time with it, especially last night, and I was thinking. Well, perhaps we should read the poem first and then talk about it.

ALLEN GINSBERG: OK, “Autumn Leaves”:

At 66 just learning how to take care of my body
Wake cheerful 8 A.M. & write in a notebook
rising from bed side naked leaving a naked boy asleep by the wall
mix miso mushroom leeks & winter squash breakfast (macrobiotic),
Check bloodsugar, clean teeth exactly, brush, toothpick, floss, mouthwash
oil my feet (or unlink {anooint?} my feet with oil), put on white shirt white pants white sox
sit solitary by the sink
a moment before brushing my hair, happy not yet
to be a corpse.

September 13, 1992, 9:50 A.M)

PAUL NELSON: If *you* were told 50 years ago that you were gonna write that kind of poem 50 years later, what would you have thought?

ALLEN GINSBERG: Actually, I was prepared for it 'cuz I had read Walt Whitman's old age poems, and very beautiful poems by William Carlos Williams, really beginning to write. And in Williams' case he had a very funny poem, well, it may be a little later: “There were roses in the rain, don't cut them, I told my wife. They're so beautiful. Ahh, we were *all* beautiful once, she said, and cut them and placed them in my hand.”

And Walt Whitman in his “Sand s at Seventy” or “Old Age Echoes,” said, “As I sit writing here, not my least worry is that the querilities of old age, ennui, boredom, constipation will filter into these, my daily songs.” [laughs]

So the trick is to take a friendly attitude toward your thoughts, and to notate them. And the purpose of that is to reveal your mind to other people, candidly, so that you become transparent and they can see themselves in you, as a kind of mirror, if your thoughts are the ordinary thoughts of a senior citizen, as mine *are*. It's just that ordinary mind contains eternal perceptions as I have in one of these poems, as I've said. That is, if you actually rely on your ordinary mind, you find . . .

facts, details, fantasies, noticings that are permanent to everybody or common to everybody. In that sense, eternal perceptions. So then in all, in ordinary minds, so you could do is {it?}, it's like rollin' off a log. You just write – writing your *mind*. No matter, and since the mind is always active, there's never a lack of subject matter, never a lack of *drama*. I mean, the mind is moving all the time from . . . to Cascades to the Lower East Side or the bottom of the ocean or the black holes at the end of the universe. So you have . . . with ordinary mind you have the possibility of contradicting yourself, like in Whitman: "Do I contradict myself? Very well, I contradict myself. I am large, I contain multitudes," but damn it. Democracy of mind, therefore tolerance of eccentricity. Tolerance of being gay, tolerance of other people being nuts. Tolerance of Rush Limbaugh, [laughs] some kind of humor and spaciousness about the whole thing rather than the claustrophobic paranoia that you find in Rush and the other people. Even if the world is going to hell in a handbasket, there still is the old function of poetry or broadcasting or medicine, or any activity, in relieving the mass of sufferings of everybody who already on earth condemned to disappear in a kind of dream life that goes by in the wink of the eye, as we were saying. So the function of poetry, I *think*, is to present a candid view of the actual mind, with all of its contradictions and all of its compassion for itself and for others caught in the same boat of meat.

PAUL NELSON: Thanks for being on the program.

ALLEN GINSBERG: Thank you for your tolerance and letting me breathe.

PAUL NELSON: We've been talking with Allen Ginsberg who is in town, touring with his new book, *Cosmopolitan Greetings* Poems 1986 to 1992.

PAUL NELSON: The Tenth Annual Women of Wisdom Conference at Seattle's Unity Church had the usual New Age suspects, like author Shakti Gawain and others. One surprising presenter did catch my eye: Anne Waldman, the internationally known poet, teacher, editor, and co-founder of the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado. Then upon reading her latest book, *Vow to Poetry: Essays, Interviews and Manifestos*, I see that she says, "I believe that feminine energy is in the ascendant in this culture."

Today we talk to her about that energy, its implications for the culture and other provocative statements from her new book, which helps illustrate the famous quotes of poets past, that:

1. Artists are antenna of the race and
2. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.

Anne, welcome back to the program. I just have to tell you the new book is one of the *best* books on poetics I have read in many-- in fact, that I've *ever* read, and that includes *Poetics of the New American Poetry*, and a previous book of yours, *The Naropa Disembodied Poetics Anthology*. Congratulations, it's very inspiring.

ANNE WALDMAN: Well, it represent a real history in terms of my own life and work, and all the cultural activism and the founding of Naropa's Jack Kerouac School and homages to some of these wonderful, wise elders, Ginsberg and William Burroughs, of course. And, you know, I felt it was a good teaching book. I really see it as a book for my students, as I say in the introduction, you know, dedicated to the past, the present and the students to come.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

ANNE WALDMAN: And I'm very obsessed right now with lineage and legacy and how important it is for writers of my generation to articulate their poetics to *give* some of the history as they've lived it, really, and make that available. And also, explicate some of the conditions out of which the poetry comes. And in my case, of course, the political poetry and the performance poetry and . . . So it was an interesting task. It was very painful, what there wasn't room for, and then once I got it together I thought, there's so much more to *say*, and there's so much more to write. So I hope I'll do more of this. So there's a little subsequent pamphlet that's come out with several manifestos written since the events of September, when I was in residency in Italy, so I'm happy about that. And it's the same kind of, you know, this is subtitled, "Manifestos – Essays and Interviews," but the *manifesto* form seems really important right now.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, absolutely. How did you get involved in the Women of Wisdom Conference? I saw you on the publicity, and I thought, "Wow! That Anne's in, this is cool!"

ANNE WALDMAN: Well, Sonya Lee who's one of the active teachers and has certainly helped develop that project over the years, suggested to the folk who organize it that after hearing me read *here*, through the SPLAB activities and Sonya was in my workshop when I was last in the area, thought that this would work for the Women of Wisdom, that there was something that I had to offer there, that fit in with the dynamics and vision of that-, that gathering. So I'll be teaching a two-day workshop, 9:00 to 4:30 tomorrow and Friday. And . . .

PAUL NELSON: Well, by the time this airs it'll be-, it'll be history [laughs] so . . .

ANNE WALDMAN: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: . . . But that's great that you're teaching there. I think it's outstanding, and . . . well, I could go into that, but I don't wanna talk about the Women of Wisdom. I think it's a wonderful conference, and I hope it continues for many years.

ANNE WALDMAN: Yeah, it's been ten years now.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, that's just amazing. Now, there is a short piece in the book called "Oppositional Poetics" and let me see here. If my notes are correct, it's on page 51. So this is a nice short essay, and this'll give anyone listening a sense of where you're coming from – at least one *view* of where you're coming from in the book.

ANNE WALDMAN: Good, yeah, I agree. "Oppositional Poetics," and it opens with a few lines from Holderlin's poem, "Bread and Wine" (what is the use of poets in a bereft time?)

How do we now navigate a new chaos of possibility? Our languages and investigations of utopias, prehistoric caves, history's revision, from a peoples' point of view, i.e., the invasion of Turtle Island ("these were the violent beginnings of an intricate system of technology, business, politics, and culture that would dominate the world for the next five centuries"). How to navigate the "horbins" or holocausts" in memory, out of memory, and to come? Is it conceivable? Dare we say "oppositional" is a spiritual poetics? How to navigate mythological poetic wars, planetary finitude, unfathomable sickness, starvation and death. How to navigate the new savage state? As writers what's the task? More letters to immured power-mongers? New hope in a fresh, less cynical "administration"? Putting our energy into a "candidate"? Total candor? Total renunciation? The Crips and Bloods, the newspapers say, orchestrate a kind of truce after L.A. Insurrection--people-to-people we are made. My best friend and I argue about that word: insurrection. Want to get the facts straight. Is it simply a "frustration"? A looting? You think "riot" is a better namer? Some of us think since January 17, 1990, everything's markedly different. My niece had "communist" smeared across her high school locker room [sic] for refusing to salute the flag during Desert Storm. No, never sleep. You must go against the grain for the benefit of others.

As the Muse said to Hilda Doolittle, "Write. Write or die." {edited to match published text for punctuation, etc.}{elsewhere you have not had poems that were read bolded. Shd be consistent throughout.}

PAUL NELSON: Ha, ha. You know, when I hear you read again, it's like I'm back in that universe. Like some people experience a fine wine, you know? Or something like that. It's amazing 'cuz I'm, you know, back at the splatter.

ANNE WALDMAN: Well, this is the voice that's in my head all the time.

PAUL NELSON: Wow!

ANNE WALDMAN: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: Well . . . well, lucky you.

ANNE WALDMAN: Oh, I don't know about that.

PAUL NELSON: I guess. What happened January 17, 1990?

ANNE WALDMAN: That was the beginning of the Gulf War. Course we're back there *again*, which is why this piece still feels, you know, very relevant. But this sense of a new kind of war, you know, with the surgical striking and the demonization of Saddam Hussein, I think we're going to be back in there, again.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

ANNE WALDMAN: And the fact it's, you know, very few American lives were lost, although the illnesses out of that conflict-, the chemical . . .

PAUL NELSON: The Gulf War Syndrome.

ANNE WALDMAN: . . . the syndrome. Yeah, The Gulf War Syndrome.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And you point out in . . .

ANNE WALDMAN: And the number of people who *died*, of course, in that country and died subsequently because of . . .

PAUL NELSON: Sanctions.

ANNE WALDMAN: . . . sanctions and all that. So it's an intense reality that we have not even, that many of the American . . . *most* of the American citizens don't really know what the facts were, and it was very hard to get information. It was not, you know, as you remember, the Pentagon was controlling things, just as they are now. So . . .

PAUL NELSON: They learned in Vietnam.

ANNE WALDMAN: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, they did.

ANNE WALDMAN: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: And you point out in the book, Timothy McVeigh was a Gulf War vet. The man that took out . . .

ANNE WALDMAN: That's right.

PAUL NELSON: . . . Oklahoma City.

ANNE WALDMAN: That's right.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

ANNE WALDMAN: Right.

PAUL NELSON: So that's interesting how this turns back on us. Another thing that's interesting and I'm reminded of, is you mentioned that there always has to be an enemy.

ANNE WALDMAN: I know. It's a kind of human condition, I guess, to create something on which to posit, or project your aggression, your ignorance, your passion, and always blaming, you know, blaming the *other*. And then, of course, exaggerating and building up a huge, huge fantasy that totally demonizes. You know, now that there aren't, as we *see*, you know, crazy people out there, and destructive people and also . . . experiencing the same thing. But I talk about this in the piece on Rocky Flats, so what the Warring God Realm situation, which is an image from Buddhist psychology and philosophy, this sense of a realm, where that's the juice, that's the fuel that you need to keep this thing going and both sides, of course, are hallucinating each other and you become the same thing you are. You know, in a way it's like saying, well, the most aggressive . . . you

know, in the terrible Palestinian and Israeli conflict. . . when you think of the Holocaust and what the Nazis did, and then to see that that same kind of *energy* is reflected in the most extreme extremists of the Israeli warmongers, and so that kind of . . . the sense of that energy traveling, that it's not about who you are, culturally. Yes, there are issues over land and property and religion and so on, but it's the same basic human atavistic energy to have to create this enemy. And then of course, we *know* that the war as we're seeing in our situation here on the . . . homeland . . . homeland [laughs] . . .

PAUL NELSON: It's the same thing. War on drugs, war on this, war on that, yeah.

ANNE WALDMAN: When we should be fighting the war on poverty, the war on AIDS, the . . . etc., etc.

PAUL NELSON: War on environmental degradation or what have you.

ANNE WALDMAN: Oh, exactly.

PAUL NELSON: Or stop . . .

ANNE WALDMAN: No, I feel that we're invoking a war on the *planet* at this point.

PAUL NELSON: Right.

ANNE WALDMAN: That's what it's about and until we . . .

PAUL NELSON: Probably the most important thing.

ANNE WALDMAN: . . . until we see how we're doing that, and of course, any wars will affect the environment.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. Jung said that Israel has to be . . . and he, in fact, predicted that they would perpetuate a holocaust and that is-, it's the shadow.

ANNE WALDMAN: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: The whole shadow syndrome again.

ANNE WALDMAN: Well, is it kind of karmic playing out there and , you know, these things travel. I believe that.

PAUL NELSON: Through all of this, you say that . . . feminine energy is in the ascendant in this country.

ANNE WALDMAN: Well, I think, yeah. And as you can see, more women in situations of manifestation and no, it's not about *control* necessarily, but as artists, I'm specifically, I think, speaking there about women writers and women artists and filmmakers and so on, that who are making reclamations. Of course there have always been women working in these ways but we need to reclaim some of that history and sense of lineage. But there's a . . . I would say that in *my* experience and growing up in the, really coming of age in the '60s, but going through the '50s and watching the generations in front of me, the women who were around during the Beat generation, just one example, who would be locked up if they were different, if they were having an interracial relationship or a child out of wedlock or had dropped out of college or high school even Often, the mores then were very, very hard on the women. Lobotomies, putting people away for years, the suicide rates among women at that, sort of in those nexus of alternative activity was, it

was a real struggle. So I would say, compared to those times, certainly the poetry scene has flourished with women, really at the controls in so many situations. So I think I'm speaking of that, but also the sense of feminine energy, feminine energy creates spaces. I talk about putting makeup on empty space. But the sense of allowing things to happen, creating environments for events and work, the actual creative work and community to take place. So there's a kind of atmosphere that I think feminine energy certainly creates. And and I've been involved with those kinds of projects for years, of course.

PAUL NELSON: And it doesn't necessarily have to be represented by *women*. I mean . . .

ANNE WALDMAN: Exactly. Exactly.

PAUL NELSON: So, that's what you're saying.

ANNE WALDMAN: Right.

PAUL NELSON: I mean, if you talk about . . .

ANNE WALDMAN: Exactly.

PAUL NELSON: . . . feminine energy and we don't think Margaret Thatcher [laughs].

ANNE WALDMAN: Right. We definitely don't.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

ANNE WALDMAN: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: And . . . and, you know, you talk about . . .

ANNE WALDMAN: The Iron Lady.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, right, right, right. You talk about that era that you grew up in, and what was expected, you know, the cultural mores. But your mom wasn't like that. In fact, you . . .

ANNE WALDMAN: No, she was . . .

PAUL NELSON: . . . you quote that in the book as saying, "If I see you with a baby and a baby stroller, I'll come and shoot you."

ANNE WALDMAN: I *know*. She had another idea for me and she had been a dropout in the '20s, and gone off to live in Greece for a decade, and was very involved with, as I describe in one essay, the Utopian Ideal, this group of folk, spearheaded by the poet Angelos Sikelianos, a wonderful Greek poet, and his wife, Eva, who was from America, to create, bring back the Greek plays to Delphi, and they wove their own clothing, they made their own sandals, they approximated what the gestures for the dance would have been like by looking at Greek vases. And their vision was that this could change the world, that this would prevent the world from marching into World War II, and so on. So this, you know, very touching . . . and there were some Luadites {Luddites?}, to some extent. And so that was part of my background and I think, Frances LeFevre Waldman, Sikelianos Waldman had a lot of . . . you know, other ideas for me [laughs]. So, tall order.

PAUL NELSON: A lot of moxie . . .

ANNE WALDMAN: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: . . . as they would say. We're talking with Anne Waldman. She's a poet, teacher, editor, co-founder of the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics in Boulder, Colorado, and her new book is *Vow to Poetry: Essays, Interview, and Manifestos*. I'm Paul Nelson.

When we talk about the feminine, we understand that we're talking about an open system, a receptive system. And you are part of a movement in poetry. You talk about your lineage, that uses open form. I guess, in America all the open form poets can trace themselves [sic] back to Walt Whitman. Do you see this open form as perhaps a sign of the ascendant feminine?

ANNE WALDMAN: Well, yes, that's . . . I was talking about atmosphere and ground and space, to let things, you know, come and go, and I certainly feel that in performance somewhat because, and in improvisation. I was speaking with someone recently about the feminine strategies of say, the writing of Kerouac and Burroughs, that yes, while the Beat male generation was somewhat macho, or they actually were *not* macho in the sense that they were bonging {bonding?} as *guys*. And there was a lot of sympathy and exchange and so on. But there was something very . . . I think that's what attracted me, in part, to the writing, to the actually creative work was this, you know, as I saw it, more feminine strategies, more of Rhizomic cross, you could say, even cross genre kinds of techniques and in, particularly in Burroughs, and then Kerouac, in a way, resonates for me with Gertrude Stein. You know, following the grammar of the mind and the particularities and details of *thinking*. I mean, he has a much more vivid vocabulary and he's writing out of, you know, real experience and people and characters and so on. But this idea of tracking the mind in that way, and it's more than interior monologue. It's, you know, constantly flipping around with the tangibles in the world. And so back, inside / outside all the time, microcosm, macrocosm. So *that*, to me was attractive, and then I felt I was coming to, you know, *longer* form. Very much coming into longer form. It's not enough to write these little poems on the page, that the page, the single page, the single sheet of 8 ½ x 11 white paper, that's stark, a very traditional form. Although, if you go abroad to Europe, their paper size is a little different, which is fun. That kind of torques you . . .

PAUL NELSON: System . . .

ANNE WALDMAN: . . . possibility . . .

PAUL NELSON: . . . process.

ANNE WALDMAN: . . . and your system.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ANNE WALDMAN: And just the visual hit alone. But in any case, that sense of open field, and you get this with the postmodernists, and certainly Pound is all over the place with *The Cantos*, and then bringing in other cultures, languages, histories, investigative poetics, documentary poetics, and . . . you know, what is that feminine? I'm not sure. I guess it's . . . or not absolutely feminine, but it has these tendencies to be more accommodating and I would say, when I took on the long epic poem, *Iovis*, that project, that was the only form in which I could, you know, tell these stories I needed to tell, and track my consciousness through, what? 20 years, something like that, and I was challenged by someone in a review, saying that that was a male, that the epic was a male form. And I wrote this to disprove that [laughs] or composed, in part composed it. I don't know if that answers the *question*, but this sense of . . . again there are chance operations. The work I've done with the John Cage section of the *Iovis*: Dear John Cage, What? Time me. And then there are decisions within that piece, to stretch it, you know, over an hour. I can be five minutes. I can play with, enter the text there at any point and go backwards, forwards. Make it more spiral-like

or circuitous. And the breakdown of the narrative structure, which of course, Burroughs was doing with work that was more like *film* than it was like writing, if you had to look at the underlying structure.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. Show a David Lynch film to people 30 years ago and . . .

ANNE WALDMAN: Right.

PAUL NELSON: . . . very dis- . . .

ANNE WALDMAN: Right.

PAUL NELSON: . . . well, it's very disturbing today, I think. You know, what I'm getting at, I think, maybe is the open systems, like you discuss in the work of Ilya Prigogine. He calls them "dissipative structures."

ANNE WALDMAN: Right.

PAUL NELSON: And you talk, in the essay, "All living things are dissipative structures," and can you tell us about that aspect?

ANNE WALDMAN: Well, again, the open system and this coffee cup or this rock, these are, some things are more open systems. Of course, as we *know* from science and physics and biology, the incredible life that's going on at this molecular level all the time. As we sit here, there are things growing on our eyelashes and all kinds of exchanges going on. So what is a closed system? A closed system is a dead, stagnant . . . I mean, even the plastics and the stuff that we create artificially often has activity. But I guess a town is an open system. The Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics is an open system. So it's a structure that allows for a give and take of energy, and I also think of this wonderful note in *The Pound Era*, which touches on luminous details. And luminous details are the things that sort of take us through a sort of cycle of existence. So when you pick up a piece of glass, you can go back to its being sand, its being on a beach, its being primordial and then it's, cycled towards becoming a bottle and a factory-made item. But that these *things* in our world and these little luminous details are actually alive. So in and of themselves, they're like open systems. A poem is an open system. You know, the structure is an open, and the . . . it's not a neat little narrative box or subject matter item that then you can neatly . . .

PAUL NELSON: Control?

ANNE WALDMAN: . . . *control*.

PAUL NELSON: Now, you talk about the poem being an open system, but what about a traditional sonnet? Or iambic pentameter?

ANNE WALDMAN: Well, it depends on the sonnet. I would say Shakespeare's sonnets are very open systems, and of course, that's an amazing series, and that's a really a serial poem. And it's moving around, linguistically and in extraordinary ways, and there are resonances within the series, and so on. And then the word play and the punning and the vibratory quality of the language. I don't think it's that the form of the sonnet is what confines it. But then you take that and you just keep doing it, or you imitate it.

PAUL NELSON: Or it becomes dogma.

ANNE WALDMAN: Or it becomes dogma. Exactly.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

ANNE WALDMAN: So it's not that the system is at fault, and there is a sense of taking old forms and giving them new life, or at least playing with forms, and then evolving your own, and I mean, I'm working with a form right now of, you know, seen and unseen, which is a dual thing on the page, and it flips around. What do . . . you know, what's seen? What's unseen? In a literal sense, in a psychological sense, in a sense of what's being held from us in the public domain here as citizens of this culture and under this particular government. So, it touches a lot of levels, and I guess *that's* what I'm after and I see that that's . . . and you can move that around so that the thing *below* moves up to the top and that can . . . and you know, this is basically a duality I'm playing with, much like *Marriage: A Sentence*, where I'm varying the prose poem and the poem and, you know, it's going back and forth as a argument between the sexes . . .

PAUL NELSON: Dialogue is on the brain.

ANNE WALDMAN: . . . one could say. Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: We're talking with Anne Waldman. She's a poet, teacher, editor, and co-founder of the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics in Boulder, Colorado. More to come. You can find out more about Anne's work at the Naropa website, Naropa dot edu. (Naropa.edu). And the new book is: *Vow to Poetry: Essays, Interviews and Manifestos*.

PAUL NELSON: We continue now with Anne Waldman, the internationally known poet, teacher, editor, and co-founder of the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics. That's at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado. Her latest book is: *Vow to Poetry: Essays, Interviews, and Manifestos*. It's an invaluable guide to anyone seeking the cutting edge in the intersection of poetry and activism.

Well, you know, before we go any further, you have not read anything. So maybe something from *Marriage, a Sentence*. You know I like "Dark Of Night." I don't know if you have that one tagged, but that's a beautiful, playful one with . . .

ANNE WALDMAN: Sure, I'd love to read that.

PAUL NELSON: . . . this series.

ANNE WALDMAN: [pause] OK. "Dark of Night." This is from *Marriage: A Sentence*.

In some places a woman would marry a woman, which torques the definition of marriage would it be so simple any such definition. For they throw stones at you in the torqued definition of marriage. It hurts to be unkind they say & and cast a stone. Or someone had a man take a slug at her on an emotional, national holiday because she was a known lover of women who had a wife. And it was a man's holiday, a memorial day for dead warriors who are mostly especially in the two wars men. Or maybe she the woman slugged was a wife. This is a two wives tale. It was unseemly to see two women kissing, two women embrace under the primrose tree. Two women in a Lautrec brothel holding the tide together against the slings of men. Caressing against the tide of pimps & other men. Some get murderous in Oregon, to see the women, two, shopping together as might a man and wife. Living as do a man & wife in an ordinary man & wife apartment, doing man & wife things. Except at night in the deep dark of night, they said, they who were murderous & dark. What do they do at night? While we are doing our man & wife things, what do they do in the dark of night what do they do? {other poems read are not bolded} {this shd be checked to see if punctuation matches the printed text}

PAUL NELSON: What do they do?

ANNE WALDMAN: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: That's the question, absolutely. You know, to make a vow of poetry . . .

ANNE WALDMAN: Just say no to family values.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs] Your bumper sticker. Tell us what it means to make a vow of poetry. Besides an exciting life filled with few financial rewards, misery, and in some countries, death.

ANNE WALDMAN: Well, I talk a little bit about that in the introduction, giving a kind of definition, a vow coming from the middle English, V-O-W-E, which is from *vou*, V-O-U from old French, from the Latin, *votum* or "vote." So this was a real nugget here, this sense of voting coming from the neuter past participle of [inaudible] to vow, also to be enjoyed. The playful association with vowel from middle English, vow-el from Old French, vowel, from Latin *vocalis*, sounding from *vox* or *vocus*, voice.

So by my own skewed associational mathematics, Vow equals Voice. And I say I will vote always for the transforming of a language's energies, or languages' energies sides with a full voice. So this sense of vocalizing the text, the actual, you know, the creative text, which often come to me in this sort of oral way. I mean, I'll hear them before I sometimes *see* them. And then a sense of being, you know, vocal with just what's going on and what I see and what I witness, being a kind of witness. And I think that word plays in here, as well. So this sense of being empowered, of course. You know, we feel disempowered if the votes aren't counted properly. And we feel disempowered going to endless war without really knowing what that *means* and so on. So this also carries a spiritual sense that you have in the Buddhist tradition, particularly the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, which is some of the underpinning of the whole Naropa project to create a school that was non-competitive and really work with *sangha*, which is the Sanskrit word for community. But the vow there, the Bodhisattva vow is that, you know, you will *be* a bridge, you will be a cloak to . . . you will be a *meal* for the hungry. You will benefit others before you benefit yourself. So you wanna create things that actually benefit others down the line. So I've been on this more lately. Maybe I feel, you know, time gets more precious, but we're trying to save, for example, our tape archive at the Naropa University, we have nearly 30 years of incredible oral moments, things you are not going to get on text. Spontaneous performances, collaborative work, with jazz musicians and others. We have Ginsberg, you know, composing on the spot. We have classes and lectures and colloquia with interactions between people, people thinking on their feet, and also vocalizing their minds. This is often in a class you are reading, yes, a poem by William Blake, or Whitman, but it's done in a particular *way*, which is real transmission. So this sense of transmission, you know, the vow to the voice, to the voting, to the vocalization of text to transmission, that you're not going to get in the same way.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

ANNE WALDMAN: So the Bodhisattva vow is really to benefit and leave, support and create environments for others to continue and to follow the path of least suffering. So I'd say that's the idea-, there's always the conflict between making art and having it under your name, and owning it, and then what is not to own it? What is to let it go? Or to feel that you're part of a continuum? I very much feel I'm a part of a continuum of people who work with words, and there's a whole extraordinarily glorious history before me, and there's incredible stuff coming now and *after*; and it's magnificent and strong and it's an alternative to this media speak and degraded language and the *lies*. The incredible lies every day, these sort of opportunistic realities that are so detrimental to the language. Not to mention all the languages in our world that are going extinct . . .

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

ANNE WALDMAN: . . . from other cultures.

PAUL NELSON: Right. Then . . .

ANNE WALDMAN: And *animals*, too. In the language and song of animals.

PAUL NELSON: So that sense of lineage was illuminated for you, in part, by Charles Olson at the Berkeley Poetry Conference in 1965.

ANNE WALDMAN: I would say definitely because he was, you know, a figure then. Certainly Ginsberg, as well, and others who were participating in that convocation, which was, you know, major. It was one of the first gatherings outside of a more academic situation that brought together the lineages of the New American Poetry, and of course, the lineages of the New American Poetry were coming out of a lot of the work of the Modernists. Certainly, Pound and Williams and Stein and H.D. and others. It was a kind of, you know, statement, and going there at the age of 20, was again like a transmission, and actually hearing poetry in this way and seeing it being presented by, you know, weird, exciting, lumbering people who were not in a, you couldn't . . . they were out of the mold. I mean, outside the mold of the more academic poetries of the time. And the presentation, too. I mean, that kind of, again, very narrative, subject oriented, neat, often tormented but . . . there's a lot that can blossom and bloom. I'm not fixed in one particular school by any means, and I loved hearing Robert Lowell read when I was in high school. I mean, there was a unusual event. And there's something about that raw voice, person, personage up there, without a lot of props and without a lot of lighting and makeup and preconceived, scripted performance because so much of our world is scripted, as you *know* and that, in terms of media, it's just horribly scripted. I guess sports is the only thing that still has some suspense and surprise. But from the news to these kinds of shows and talking and . . . So there's something very unscripted about the . . .

PAUL NELSON: The reading.

ANNE WALDMAN: . . . the reading.

PAUL NELSON: And authentic.

ANNE WALDMAN: Yep.

PAUL NELSON: In the 1994 Talisman interview with Edward Foster, that's reprinted in the book, you say: "When you prostrate in Buddhism you're bowing to your own enlightened mind and to the sanity possible in the world. Poetry . . ."

ANNE WALDMAN: Right.

PAUL NELSON: . . . and you say that "Poetry practice is much the same. You're synchronizing your body, speech and mind to refine your expression, your manifestation in the world." This is similar to what you were saying before the Olson question. Talking about that Bodhisattva vow.

ANNE WALDMAN: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: But that notion of synchronizing your body, speech and mind refine your expression is what we're trying to get across in the schools. That if you can get kids to do this . . .

ANNE WALDMAN: Of course. Of course.

PAUL NELSON: . . . and, you know, you'd talk about the Auburn School District and . . .

ANNE WALDMAN: Right, right.

PAUL NELSON: . . . you see what a difficult situation you have. But can you tell us about that? That refinement and what happens to the practitioner?

ANNE WALDMAN: Well, I'd say especially working with younger writers, just to get them into the moment so that their eyes are open, their sense perceptions are alert. You can meet a wonderful experiment if you just step outside, get outside the classroom. And then, any one moment in your experience is so, there's so much going on and so there *is* a figment of a song you love or heard. There *is* something going on with relationship. There *are* all these little voices in your head of other people. There's what you *hear* that's coming through in these interesting fragmentary ways. There's a, you know, fragment of a dream. So to get people at a early age just to be alert and awake, and also present, and we need our body to write. We need our hand to hold the pen or type on the computer. And then to the vocalization or the speech, which also doesn't have to be always spoken because there's, as you know, sitting and reading poetry by yourself out of a book, there, you *hear*. If it's working you hear that music in your mind. So I think to the body, speech and mind there is to be in touch with the *present*. That *now* is very interesting. That doesn't mean that the past and all the wonderful sense of lineage doesn't enter in there, as well. But to *trust*, just to trust that moment and to go on *your nerve*, as Frank O'Hara says, and to be . . . you know, really . . . there's the first thought / best thought, which is, you know, complicated because what *is* that? Sometimes the first thought maybe *isn't* the best . . .

PAUL NELSON: Scatalogical. [laughs]

ANNE WALDMAN: . . . or you're . . . but that sense of trust . . .

PAUL NELSON: Especially with high school kids.

ANNE WALDMAN: . . . yes, with . . .

PAUL NELSON: You know?

ANNE WALDMAN: . . . high school kids. Or the first thought is something they heard on TV, you know, etc.

PAUL NELSON: It's not a real thought then.

ANNE WALDMAN: Not a real thought. So *what* is the real thought? And then . . . but that idea of trusting and not being embarrassed and not being ashamed or feeling like you have to do your little thing privately to make it the way it should be or refine it, or have it be in fashion, or have it be smarter than you think you *are*. That, you know, you're liberated, I think.

PAUL NELSON: And this is what you're talking about in your essay, "Kali Yuga Poetics."

"More than ever the poem is a call to responsibility and action." And you also talk about going into the schools. "Kali Yuga Poetics sends writers armed with pens and pads and postcards and libraries into schools, prisons, homeless shelters, alternative radio and TV stations, print shops, and the public demonstration zone."

ANNE WALDMAN: Right. [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: That's Kali Yuga Poetics.

ANNE WALDMAN: Yeah, right.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

ANNE WALDMAN: Well, this is *war*. You know, I don't like to use that word, but it's the struggle and it's the fight for the imagination. And this is what we have to be doing. I mean, the times are calling for these radical interventions as poets. And I don't mean going fully armed with Star Wars weaponry, but getting in there with our vocalizations and interesting minds and our melopoeia, logopoeia and phanopoeia. Get Down! [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: With your bad self. Anne Waldman is our guest. Talking about getting down, how 'bout that. Few others can get down like her. Anne Waldman – poet, teacher, editor, co-founder of the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics in Boulder, Colorado. The new book is: *Vow to Poetry: Essays, Interviews and Manifestos*.

Energy in poetry, a regular theme in your poetics, of course some of that could be traced back to Olson and his sense of lineage, when he was talking about the poem is nothing more than an energy construct from where the poet got it.

ANNE WALDMAN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: He or she will have had several causations by way of the poem, through to the person who listens. And it's a transfer of energy in that way. In an essay in the book, called "Go Between Between", I think it is, you mention how (and forgive me on some of the pronunciations, this is not my area of expertise, Eastern religion) "one invokes the Yiddams or deities as manifestations of more awakened states of mind, invites them to descend and unites with them. Awakened states of mind, energy without ego, is the idea here."

ANNE WALDMAN: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: Which is not only a beautiful thing in poetry but also in life itself. Can you tell us how one might . . . how *you* are able to achieve that energy without ego state?

ANNE WALDMAN: Well, I don't know that I always *achieve* it. It's certainly an aspiration. And I guess, you know, if you talk to anybody doing creative work, at that moment of energy and creatively coming together, you often feel very empty. You're not who you think you are. You're not . . . you know, it's not preconceived in a way. It's sort of magically . . . it *happens* and you're sort of transformed a bit. Not to say there aren't other ways of working, where you, when I'm working with research and text, especially with my long epic poem, I'm actually putting things together and arranging and sort of altering, editing a lot and so sometimes I'll put everything out on the floor. You know, 50 pages for a section, and play with it and work with cut-up or bringing back a certain leitmotif and so on. So there are lots of ways of working. I'm not saying that the poem is always arriving from on high. But there *is* that, even in the throes of doing that collage work on the floor, you know, like Jackson Pollock or something, you're not your ordinary sort of self, and I think that's part of it. And so you're not as invested in owning it. And it's only *later* that you have the thing that it becomes somewhat . . . you know, where do you put it? Is it going in a book with your name on it? Is it . . . and so on and so forth, and how are you identified with it? How are you identified with your work? So these are struggles and I bring in Buddhism which I've studied a bit of. I always feel like a beginner and also a lazy practitioner in some ways, although there is this sense of meditation in action. But using that sense of practice, the practice of sitting in meditation, where you have to sit and you look at your mind and you come back to the breath, and you start to lose that sense of solid self and ego. And then you see that the work, as . . . this comes back to the open system question you were raising and this comes back to this sense of a fluidity and a construct that is *not* fixed and permanent, that can shift and so you see you *don't*

own it. It's some kind of manifestation that puts you in touch on a deeper sort of human, if not *animal* level.

PAUL NELSON: I'm trying to teach that to my daughter who's ten years old, Rebecca, who you've met.

ANNE WALDMAN: Right. Well, I'm sure you're doing a good job.

PAUL NELSON: She, I'll give you an example, we're writing Exquisite Corpses with four people, and I give her the word "organic." And she . . .

ANNE WALDMAN: Right.

PAUL NELSON: . . . she writes: "Organic spit of the cow of destiny."

ANNE WALDMAN: [laughs] Oh, my goodness!

PAUL NELSON: Which is *amazing*.

ANNE WALDMAN: That's terrific.

PAUL NELSON: I heard this line and I'm going, "Wow, that's amazing!" Not knowing who wrote it, you know.

ANNE WALDMAN: And that was right on the spot?

PAUL NELSON: Right on the spot.

ANNE WALDMAN: Fantastic!

PAUL NELSON: And I said, "Rebecca, where did that come from?" She said, "I don't know."

ANNE WALDMAN: [laughs] Exactly.

PAUL NELSON: So that's the state you're talking about.

ANNE WALDMAN: Well, yeah. And then there are projects that are more . . . you have them in mind. Often I sit with something that's gestating and can go on and on for a few months, as is . . . you know, the work with a long poem, I think that's the kind of way I'm working. Sort of thinking about the larger themes and backdrop and bringing that into play and *how* to bring that into play, and also reflecting what's going on currently, and what I need. You know, how I need to respond.

PAUL NELSON: There's so many more questions I have but we're just about out of time.

ANNE WALDMAN: OK.

PAUL NELSON: And before I let you go, I'd really love for you to read your homage to Allen. You were there shortly after his death, when he passed away.

ANNE WALDMAN: Right. OK. This is "Notes on Sitting Beside a Noble Corpse – Light Breeze Stirring the Curtains, Blue -- Faint Tremor of His Blue Shroud." And this was written at the poet's bed at his home in his loft. His body in repose after death. This was New York City, April 5th, 1997, and the Buddhist teacher Gelek Rinpoche and monks were chanting the Chakra Sambhara Soda {Sutra?} nearby.

**Allen Ginsberg will never raise this body up,
go out board a shiny airplane travel
a thousand miles—Denver? Thousands –Milano?
to pump the harmonium -- how ecstatically he does this! –
Chant OM NAMO SHIVAYA “all ashes, all ashes again”**

**Allen Ginsberg will never sit across the street
hunched over Chinese noodle bowl,
the old professor stayed up all night reading the young poet’s poems**

**Allen Ginsberg will never meditate his body,
spine straight to heaven, holding up
the roof of the word on the bright orange cushion**

**Allen Ginsberg’s eyes will never water again --
of tear gas, Bell’s palsy or flow on the
death of a guru, read Blake Shelley lines
to freeze your soul & you weep you weep you weep
& the whole Naropa Disembodied Kerouac tent is weeping**

**Allen Ginsberg will never tell awkward teen boy
he’s known since birth he’s sexy again
from hospital bed, the boy stood at the window
because his mother sobbed
and Allen Ginsberg said he was dying today**

**Allen Ginsberg will never brush this corpse’s thin hair,
get groomed, oil feet, brush teeth
(he’s so conscientious!)
mix mushroom leeks & winter squash breakfast again.**

The telephone rings, Allen Ginsberg will never answer it again

**. Allen Ginsberg will never embarrass China,
Russia, the White House, dead corrupt
presidents, Cuba, the C.I.A. Universe again**

**But Allen Ginsberg will ever ease the pain
of living with human story & song
that’s borne on wings of perpetual prophecy
life & death a spiral!.
He’s mounting the stairs now with Vajra Yogini**

**Full century’s brilliant Allen’s gone,
in other myriad forms live on
See through this palpable skull’s tender eye,
kind mind kind mind don’t die! {punctuation & capitalization edited to match printed text,
word variations left intact} {again, you either want all of the read poems bolded or none of
‘em}**

ANNE WALDMAN: And I wanted to read the few of the lines from Allen’s “Song” which are included in this little essay about his death, which we take really to heart . . . in terms of the Naropa, “The weight of the world / is love. Under the burden / of solitude, / under the burden / of dissatisfaction / the weight of the world / is love.” And then from “Memory Gardens”: “Well, while I’m

here I'll / do the work-- / and what's the Work? / To ease the pain of living. / Everything else,
drunken / dumbshow."

PAUL NELSON: Well, I'm happy you're not yet a corpse.

ANNE WALDMAN: [laughs] Yes.

PAUL NELSON: Thanks for being on the show.

ANNE WALDMAN: Thank you so much, Paul. I enjoy . . .

PAUL NELSON: Continued success with your work.

ANNE WALDMAN: . . . this show and you continued success with your work. We've gotta . . . keep
going, Onward!

PAUL NELSON: Very inspiring. Extremely inspiring.

ANNE WALDMAN: Thank you.

PAUL NELSON: Anne Waldman has been our guest. More information at Naropa dot e-d-u
(Naropa.edu). And look for the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics. She founded that
with Allen Ginsberg in 1974. The new book is: *Vow to Poetry: Essays, Interviews, and Manifestos*.

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PAUL NELSON: I don't really need much of an excuse to spend a week or even a couple of days in Port Townsend, "Washington's Victorian Seaport," as the sign says. But when I found out that the Natural Marine Science History Camp was happening the same week as the Writers' Conference, it seemed like synchronicity for a father / daughter trip, and off we went. This conference is not just *any* writers' conference. It's the 29th Annual Port Townsend Writers' Conference produced by Copper Canyon Press for Centrum Arts and Creative Education. The Director of the Conference, founding editor and spiritual center of Copper Canyon is Sam Hamill, a renowned poet, essayist and translator who's published over a dozen volumes of original poetry. Sam, welcome to the program.

SAM HAMILL: Thank you. It's nice to be here.

PAUL NELSON: You're a long way from Utah.

SAM HAMILL: A long way, been gone a long time.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, from Utah originally and left at an early age.

SAM HAMILL: Well, I was probably born in northern California but I kinda grew up in Utah, and left as a teenager.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, I was through Moab recently, where you had been shortly before that.

SAM HAMILL: My first visit to Moab in many, many years.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You know what? Before we even get going, there's a poem about being an editor, I guess, that would be perfect to set this up. So would you be so kind as to read that?

SAM HAMILL: Well, I'm about to turn 60, and of course, when you get that age people start talking about retirement. So this is called "On Being Asked About Retirement" and it's from a new book of poems called *Dumb Luck*.

For most white male Americans my age, it would be nothing special, I suppose, to drive an hour to a shopping mall and buy a summer's clothes. Year after year I bought a pair of jeans and a couple of shirts from the discount rack to mark the beginning of summer. But suddenly I find myself being paid for doing just what I've always done, giving poetry away. Entering middle class at my age makes me, I admit it, nervous. Nevertheless, I like this Van Heusen and that arrow is awfully nice. I've never owned a necktie or a suit and I don't suppose I'm the least inclined to now. Put me in a suit and I'd be fake as a presidential smile. Same old jeans to greet my day. For an editor, the crap factor's deep some days. I'll buy myself some teeth and a sexy dress for my beautiful wife, and celebrate with Sake and Unagi and that's a change of life. It sounds a little odd to say it this way, but I'm employed in the service of poetry. I got a job and job security. {lineate to match printed text; also, either bold all poem texts or none of 'em}

PAUL NELSON: Those presidential smiles are getting more fake year after year, aren't they? [laughs]

SAM HAMILL: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: That's only gonna go better with age. Copper Canyon started as a Centrum project, I understand.

SAM HAMILL: No, actually I founded Copper Canyon Press in Denver in 1972 with several other people and brought it to Port Townsend in 1974.

PAUL NELSON: Was it, did residency have something to do with it?

SAM HAMILL: We became Centrum's first Artist in Residence.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. And the rest, I guess, is history. Some people say Copper Canyon is the nation's premier non-profit literary press. Can you tell us about some of the artistic advantages of being a non-profit press in an era of bottom line transnational corporate thinking?

SAM HAMILL: Well, we publish a good deal more poetry than any of the New York publishers and we do a better job of *selling* it because we publish poetry *exclusively*. And our standards are set by the quality of the poetry, not by the marketplace. So some of our very best poets are, in some cases, some of the least known poets. In other cases there are extremely well-known poets, like Carolyn Kizer or William Merwin, W.S. Merwin, certainly Hayden Carruth, who are internationally renowned poets. They're also on our list because they came to us because of our devotion to poetry first, last and always. Poetry on the booklist of New York publishers is at the bottom of the list. Poetry on *our* list is at the top, in the middle and at the bottom.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, and obviously that gives you an advantage. So how does the, you know, typical capitalist thinking come into play? Does it at all?

SAM HAMILL: Well, it does come to play. We have to be responsible to our donors. People give us money to help support poetry. If we don't spend that money *wisely*, they're certainly not going to continue to *give* it to us. So you have to give people a certain amount of bang for their buck. We have to publish *wisely* even though we're not publishing under a red line only. So that if a book's going to be a midlist seller and only sell three or four thousand copies, we've got to know, we've got to be wise enough to be able to figure that out in advance so that we don't print 8,000 and end up destroying some. We've never destroyed books. We've never remaindered books and dumped them. We're really good at selling our product. So while we're not dominated by the marketplace, we have to play in the marketplace and play by the rules of the marketplace.

PAUL NELSON: And yet, also, you have to be careful to print quality to have that consideration for your donors, and yet you often get to print *friends*, so I imagine that's a fine line you have to walk sometimes.

SAM HAMILL: Well, it doesn't exactly work that way. I have a lot of literary friendships but those friendships developed out of the literature, not out of a friendship first in virtually all of those cases. My closeness with Hayden Carruth became what it is because I work closely with him as his editor and his ally.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. What are some other examples? Friends . . .

SAM HAMILL: I'm sorry?

PAUL NELSON: Some other examples, friends of yours that you ended up publishing.

SAM HAMILL: Well, Richard Jones is a wonderful example. I guess about 20 years ago I was down in the South, I think in North Carolina, and I heard him read at a poetry reading, and I walked up to him afterwards and introduced myself and said, "I sure would like to have that manuscript."

In some cases there are things that have come totally blind. Thirty years ago an unknown Utah poet, Dave Lee sent me a manuscript. It had some poems in it about being a pig farmer. And Dave

and I had a discussion and I suggested that there was a real rich mine here that ought to be worked. And there was some real gold in there, and he's become a renowned poet, telling sort of small town, country poems that are very narrative. We published him before he'd published *anywhere*.

PAUL NELSON: About seven or eight years ago, the Press was in danger of going out of business and now you're publishing, you know, more books . . .

SAM HAMILL: All that, that was a rumor. That wasn't really true. We had a change in staff, which forced us to put a few things back on the schedule a little bit. We were never in danger of causing . . . We have probably the strongest board of directors in non-profit publishing.

PAUL NELSON: What . . . I was just . . .

SAM HAMILL: I was never concerned about going out of business.

PAUL NELSON: But there was a struggle there.

SAM HAMILL: Well, literary publishing's always a struggle, but we were never endangered.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. Yeah. The mission of Copper Canyon is: To enhance--tell me if I have this right to enhance the understanding, appreciation and status of poetry in our culture and to build the audience for poetry.

Now, why do you think poetry is in *need* of having organizations dedicated to bolstering its status?

SAM HAMILL: Well, for the very reason that I sort of gave earlier, and that is that in commercial publishing, poetry is at the bottom of the list, and often what sells *best* is least *important*. It's very easy to sell postcard poetry or greeting card poetry, and it's very difficult to sell a real genius. So we're like any other arts organization. If you're going to have good galleries for your painters and sculptors, you're going to have to have people that are willing to support those galleries. And we are, in a sense, a gallery for poetry, except that our primary function in the world is to print books.

PAUL NELSON: A lot of people say that poetry has marginalized itself and Victor Hernandez Cruz says, "It's not poetry that's marginalized itself; it's the *culture* that has done that."

SAM HAMILL: Well, I perhaps would in part disagree with that. There are more poetry readings now than ever before in this country. More books of poetry in the marketplace, more books of poetry being bought. More poetry on the airways, more poetry in the workshops, than ever before in our history. When I was a young teenager, a young beatnik poet, there were virtually no women poets, no Hispanic poets, two or three black poets . . . no Filipino poets, no Asian-American poets . . . no Euro-American poets. There were, you know, four poets and they were all in the academy, and there were no poetry readings until November, 1956, at the Six Gallery when Kenneth Rexroth and Mike McClure and Gary Snyder broke down, and Allen Ginsberg, of course, [inaudible] and really brought poetry back to the people.

PAUL NELSON: From the academies?

SAM HAMILL: Oh, absolutely, yeah.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, yeah.

SAM HAMILL: Before the beat movement there were virtually no public readings anywhere in this country in the communities, and very few in the colleges.

PAUL NELSON: It was very *elitist*.

SAM HAMILL: It was.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. We're talking with Sam Hamill, the founding editor of Copper Canyon Press, Director of the Port Townsend Writers' Conference, poet, translator and essayist who's published over a dozen volumes of original poetry, including *Destination Zero: Poems 1970-1995*, and *Dumb Luck*. That poem that you read earlier, the title piece from *Dumb Luck*. Was that . . .

SAM HAMILL: That's from a new book that we published in September.

PAUL NELSON: Mm-hmm. You mentioned about how well poetry is doing in this country. Let's talk about poetry in *other* countries and that's part of where Copper Canyon has been headed in recent years. A lot of translations, a beautiful book of . . . an anthology of contemporary Mexican poetry called *Reversible Monuments*, one example of that.

SAM HAMILL: Well, that's the first really substantial anthology of contemporary Mexican poetry to have any breadth and depth in 40 or 50 years.

PAUL NELSON: Mm-hmm.

SAM HAMILL: Our dedication to translation, I guess, is pretty well-known but if you really stop and think about it, our lives are really shaped by translation. Most Americans are, you know, Christian or Jewish and they read the Bible, but very few of them read it in the original language. People who study Islam, very few people really study the original language. So from our philosophy, you know, Plato and Socrates, from our religions, all of this is a translated culture. What makes America great, in fact, is the fact that it *is* a translated culture. Our sense of democracy is rooted in the Greek – Democritus.

PAUL NELSON: And also the Native American, the Iroquois . . .

SAM HAMILL: Absolutely.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

SAM HAMILL: Absolutely and their own sense of democracy, which was so different from *ours*. And the languages that we destroyed, nearly 200 years of languages being annihilated in North America during a century of genocide. That has a cultural and aesthetic impact, as well as the basic gut impact that you feel when you really consider what that means to not only annihilate a people but destroy even their language.

PAUL NELSON: Which brings to importance your translations. In *Reversible Monuments*, a book of contemporary Mexican poetry, it's not all *Spanish*.

SAM HAMILL: No, it's *not* all Spanish. There are native languages in Mexico, as well and it's wonderful to have a few poets still writing in those languages, as well as people who can translate them into American English . . .

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

SAM HAMILL: . . . to give you a real vision of what the poetry of Mexico *today* really like.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, an incredible anthology. I've just got a copy recently so I'm gonna certainly delve into that.

SAM HAMILL: Thank you.

PAUL NELSON: Other translations – I heard John Balaban read in Taos, New Mexico, *Spring Essence*, a book of translations. Amazing work.

SAM HAMILL: One of the great Vietnamese women poets, Ho Xuan Huong, that's a marvelous book, and one of the great things about that book is that it's trilingual. That is it's in American English and in Anglicized Vietnamese and in the old Vietnamese language, which owes a great deal to Chinese written characters, but are somehow slightly different. So that book's really a trilingual book.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, and an amazing work.

SAM HAMILL: If one wants to really learn something about the Vietnamese language, as well as Vietnamese *poetry*, you can go to that book, where there basically is no other book.

PAUL NELSON: You said while introducing Yusef Komunyakaa, Saturday night at the Writers' Conference, that you wanted to bring him to the Writers' Conference for *years*. Tell us why.

SAM HAMILL: Well, I just think he's one of the great original voices today in American poetry, and Yusef and I have a number of passions in common, including what I would call classic mid-century jazz and Delta Blues. And I can hear all of that in his poetry. He's a wonderful, elegant reader and a brilliant writer and a very great teacher.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, then and that's important, obviously, for the Writers' Conference, someone who not only can deliver a reading, who's got the credibility, but someone who can *teach*.

SAM HAMILL: There are *lots* of good writers who are lousy teachers. Just because someone writes well doesn't mean that so-and-so is a good guy, or a smart *teacher*. So it's a unique combination of talents that we're trying to find.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. How much do *you* like teaching?

SAM HAMILL: I don't teach anymore. I quit teaching about ten years ago. I kinda burned out. I taught in a prison system for 14 years and I spent a lot of years working with battered women and children. And I just kinda burned out on it so I don't teach anymore.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, yeah. You also brought another poem, too, at least one more of your own. That would be nice to read.

SAM HAMILL: Well, this is a little different kind of poem. It's written in Japanese music and meant to be played with my Shakuhachi-playing friend, Japanese bamboo flute player. So it's written in Japanese in five and sevens. It's called "*The Orchid Flower*." {no italics}

**Just as I wonder
whether it's going to die,
the orchid blossoms**

**and I can't explain why it
moves my heart, why such pleasure**

**comes from one small bud
on a long spindly stem, one
blood red gold flower**

**opening at mid-summer,
tiny, perfect in its hour.**

**Even to a white-
haired craggy poet, it's
purely erotic,**

**pistil and stamen, pollen,
dew of the world, a spoonful**

**of earth, and water.
Erotic because there's death
at the heart of birth,**

**drama in those old sunrise
prisms in wet cedar boughs,**

**deepest mystery
in washing evening dishes
or teasing my wife,
who grows, yes, more beautiful
because one of us will die. {bold all poems or none}**

PAUL NELSON: That reminds me of some of the later poems of William Carlos Williams.

SAM HAMILL: Well, thank you. That's very nice.

PAUL NELSON: Well, Williams, yeah, there's something I wanted to bring up. He said "There is no poetry of distinction without formal invention."

How important is it for Copper Canyon to push the art forward?

SAM HAMILL: Well, I don't know that it's terribly important for Copper Canyon to be thinking in exactly the terms Williams put forth. I think it's more important for the *poet* to think in those terms.

I've never considered myself an avant-gardist. In fact, in some ways I've always thought of myself more as a kind of neo-classicist. But that doesn't mean that we're not in search of the perpetually new. I think every poem seeks to reveal something new and original. Although nothing is self-originating, we Buddhists believe. So there's a tricky little combination that we're trying to achieve between what is not merely new on the page, but new in sound and fresh in vision and new in what it resonates with. New in finding a new *tradition*. All poetry, all art has to arise out of a tradition. Nothing is self-originating.

So there's a combination there of bringing in the traditions of poetry and presenting something new at the same time. That's what we're looking for.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. It's the role of the poet to push the art forward and . . .

SAM HAMILL: Absolutely.

PAUL NELSON: But it's your role to pick what poets are on Copper Canyon so . . .

SAM HAMILL: It's my job to pick what poets are right for Copper Canyon, but there are a lot of very good poets that aren't right for Copper Canyon for one reason or another.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, yeah. Well, who would be an example of someone like that?

SAM HAMILL: Who would *not* be?

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. Who would be someone who, you respect their work but you don't see 'em as right for Copper Canyon.

SAM HAMILL: Well, I love Richard Wilbur's work but I don't think I would be the best publisher for Richard Wilbur. He's really a Formalist and I'm not a big fan of Formalism, although Hayden Carruth writes a Formal poem as well as anybody in our language. It has to do maybe a little bit with the sensibility. But I *read* Richard Wilbur and I admire his work greatly.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. Is there an avant-garde anymore?

SAM HAMILL: Well, *sure*. I think Jorie Graham is a kind of avant-garde. Frankly, I don't think her poetry has a lot of poetry in it. I think it's mostly prose, broken up onto page.

PAUL NELSON: Well, isn't that what Williams . . .

SAM HAMILL: But one editor's opinion, I want to make this clear. My opinions are very subjective. They *have* to be. And part of what makes art *engaging* is the dialogue that happens when we begin to disagree. And you become a fan of what I'm sort of putting down, or I become a fan of what you're putting down. And we learn to look at this stuff from a slightly different perspective.

PAUL NELSON: We begin to look for the commonalities?

SAM HAMILL: Sure. Absolutely.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

SAM HAMILL: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: Which makes the translation so important.

SAM HAMILL: Well, I think that's true in *all* art. You know, when people first heard Charlie Parker they didn't know how to listen to it and there was this enormous rush of notes, so many notes you were just totally overwhelmed. It took us *years*, most of us, to learn how to listen to that stuff. We're still at a stage in this country where a lot of people never got past poetry in elementary school and they say, 'Well, if it's poetry, why doesn't it rhyme?'

Rhyme is only one of a hundred tools. And so it has to do with rhythm and measure and juxtaposition and image-making.

PAUL NELSON: Perhaps the most important thing about poetry, as they say in Taos, at the Poetry Circus, "Poetry saves lives."

SAM HAMILL: Well, I've always believed that. I've always claimed that poetry kept me from self-destructing when I was a teenager and strung out on heroin and obsessed with being the hippest teenager that ever lived.

PAUL NELSON: Did you achieve that?

SAM HAMILL: No, I just . . .

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

SAM HAMILL: . . . I almost self-destructed. But my friend Kenneth Rexroth kind of convinced me that poetry, in fact, could be a path to enlightenment, and I've been following a Zen path in poetry now for more than 40 years.

PAUL NELSON: Here now, Sam Hamill reading from his CD, *Heart of Bamboo*:

SAM HAMILL: Two yearling deer stood in heavy falling mist in the middle of the road leading into town. Brown coats glistening, huge eyes open wide, caught in the headlights in the first yellow smear of coming daybreak. Twenty feet away I finally stop the car and sat still inside, eyes locked together in a curious searching with those of the doe.

Minute by minute we were transfixed, motionless, each imagining the other. And then the sun peeled back the dark clouds like a second skin, and in unison the deer stepped slowly forward, gently, cautiously, off the road into underbrush that flourishes along the woods edge and vanished in mist.

Dazed, I returned to my day, to the work at hand.

And now the hour late in the morning, mist falling again, I can still feel my skin prickle under those beautiful brown doe eyes, touching me like a lover's hand, cautious, slowly exploring something deep in me I cannot touch or name. {lineate to match print version (if there is one), also bold all poems or none}

PAUL NELSON: Coppercanyonpress dot org, (coppercanyonpress.org) the website.

SAM HAMILL: Well, it's there.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

SAM HAMILL: Just like all the other O-R-Gs.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

SAM HAMILL: If you go to our website you'll see a lot of poetry. You get information on books and broadsides and things that our writers are doing.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. Thanks for being on the program, continued success.

SAM HAMILL: It's my pleasure.

PAUL NELSON: More with Sam Hamill in a moment. The founding editor of Copper Canyon Press, Director of the Port Townsend Writers' Conference, poet, translator and essayist. He's published

over a dozen volumes of original poetry, including *Destination Zero: Poems 1970-1995*, *Gratitude*, and *Dumb Luck*. Again, the website: www.coppercanyonpress.org, and if you didn't get that down we'll have it on our website at inpeoria.org. That's I-N, P-E-O-R-I-A, dot O-R-G.

PAUL NELSON: We continue now with Sam Hamill, founding editor of Copper Canyon Press, Director of the Port Townsend Writers' Conference, poet, translator, and essayist who's published over a dozen volumes of original poetry, including *Destination Zero: Poems 1970-1995*, *Gratitude* and *Dumb Luck*.

If one needed a sense of what the future holds for this culture, a glimpse at what has been done to Fort Worden, 100 years after it was established as a military camp, will provide it. The headquarters for a number of creative endeavors, including Centrum Arts Creative Education and Copper Canyon Press.

We talk today to a man who runs the non-profit poetry press in what was the canyon {cannon?} repair shop at the old fort. Welcome back, Sam Hamill, to the program.

An interesting change in 100 years – is that all it takes to go from war to poetry, is a hundred years.

SAM HAMILL: [laughs] Yeah. All of the bombs have become *verbal*. [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: [laughs] That's right. And more deadly, too, in many cases.

SAM HAMILL: [laughs] Strange place for a pacifist to spend 30 years.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, but it's a beautiful place because we can look at, you know, how our tax dollars can be spent for the purposes of beauty and enlightenment rather than destroying life.

SAM HAMILL: Watching what's happened here over three decades has been a great pleasure to me. And not just what happens in literature, but what happens in music and dance and all the arts. And what happens when people come, just come to visit and look around. It's a very civilizing place for an old army fort.

PAUL NELSON: Do you get frustrated at trying to run a non-profit press, struggling to, you know, make it work and then seeing the amount of money, year after year, that gets *increased* in defense spending?

SAM HAMILL: Well, that stuff will make you crazy. Steve Kuusisto pointed out a couple of days ago that something like 36,000 children die every day of malnutrition in the world. I think it's much more than that but when you start putting too much of that into your *mind*, it can sort of interfere with the real conduct of your own individual efforts to make the world a little better place to *live*. So on the one hand, while I'm aware of all that stuff, my focus has always been sort of on *my* work today, and today *only*. And attention to daily practice and daily detail.

PAUL NELSON: And after doing it for over 30 years you can *see* the actual fruits of your work that . . .

SAM HAMILL: Well, we've published something like 260 books for Copper Canyon and I've published 37 or 38 books of my own. So a little bit of daily detail isn't really a bad idea.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. Let's talk about the results you've seen from the Writers' Conference after all these years. Can you tell us about someone who came, perhaps as a youth or as a young poet, and maybe someone you're publishing.

SAM HAMILL: Well, there are an infinite number of people who have come here and continued on with their writing lives. If I began a list simply of the faculty members and think of all of the great old Northwest writers who have been here, many of whom are now dearly departed, like Bill Stafford and Dick Hugo. Carolyn Kizer is still very much with us and Kenneth Rexroth was here and Phil Whalen, who died a couple of weeks ago and taught here. And Gary Snyder has taught here, and Maxine Kumin who's not a Northwesterner, taught here. The list is just, it's huge and it's long and the influence is almost incalculable because a lot of people who come here and take the ten-day writing workshop go back and spend their active lives in the classroom, taking into the classroom many of the practices that they were engaged in *here*. So there's a kind of snowball effect to that kind of teaching.

PAUL NELSON: Quite often when one throws a party that person doesn't really get to *enjoy* the party. So can you tell us what *you* get out of the Writers' Conference besides the lower I.Q. as you mentioned earlier?

SAM HAMILL: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: And sleep deprivation, which I'm sure is a part of that.

SAM HAMILL: Well, I O.D. on lectures and poetry and crowds and all the rest of it, but I'm kind of a famous recluse. I'm not a real social animal. I *love* this conference and I've given a good portion of my life to it the last six years. What I have learned myself from this conference, frankly, is incalculable. Many friendships that last a lifetime were *born* with this conference. So it's a lot of hard work and in the future I'll be doing less of it. I'll probably become more of an advisor to the conference rather than its director because I would like to have more of a writing life. And I can't run Copper Canyon *and* the Writers' Conference, *and* have a complete writing life. It's just too much work for one man.

PAUL NELSON: You're starting poets off at 8:30 in the morning with a lecture [laughs]. Isn't it . . .

SAM HAMILL: Well, I've been up for three hours.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

SAM HAMILL: It's time they went to work [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: I knew it. I knew it had somethin' to do with that. You know, in Taos it starts at 3:00. No, actually, it starts at . . .

SAM HAMILL: You know, if it were *my* writing conference, I'd run it like a Zen boot camp and they would all be up at 5:00 a.m. They would have their tea and they would go to work.

PAUL NELSON: Yes. And enrollment . . .

SAM HAMILL: Just like me.

PAUL NELSON: . . . Enrollment would go down, I'm sure. Well, in some ways, I guess.

SAM HAMILL: No, but no one has complained about an 8:30 lecture. We moved that time back a little bit, frankly, so they would have another half-hour in the classroom. And I think that's a great benefit. So . . .

PAUL NELSON: You moved it from 9:00 to 8:30.

SAM HAMILL: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, so they, to provide more time with . . .

SAM HAMILL: To extend the actual workshop time a half an hour a day.

PAUL NELSON: Talking with Sam Hamill, the founding editor of Copper Canyon Press, and the Director of the Port Townsend Writers' Conference, where *we're* at this week, enjoying the ambiance at Fort Worden here in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Paul Nelson.

You know, we talked last time about William Carlos Williams, that quote, "There is no poetry of distinction without formal invention." And one person who did not get the credit he likely deserves in his role in pushing the art forward is a man named Kenneth Rexroth. A man forever linked to the San Francisco Renaissance of the '40s and '50s, a movement that made way for the Beat generation, though Rexroth probably lived to regret that [laughs]. He was a man who literally helped save your life. Why don't you tell us about that.

SAM HAMILL: Well, I was a 15-year-old kid who had read Rexroth's poetry and Ferlinghetti's poetry and Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, and then when I was 15 years old in 1957 or '58, I went to San Francisco to be a beatnik. And like most kids who do stuff like that, I ended up almost self-destructing, and I ended up living on the streets, and I had a heroin habit. I was just *getting* a heroin habit. And I happened to run into Kenneth and he realized that I was stoned and we got to talking and it was through my relationship with him and his friendship that I was installed for a while in his wonderful house on Scott Street, where I sort of got introduced to the serious side of what it might mean to *be* a poet. And that's really sort of when I began looking at my life and how I wanted to live it.

PAUL NELSON: And many years later, what? 44 years later you're publishing his *Collected Poems*.

SAM HAMILL: We just, we're about to publish it. It'll be published in late September, 900 and some pages of really remarkable poetry. One of the great poets of the last century, certainly.

PAUL NELSON: Including work that's never been published before.

SAM HAMILL: Some work that's never been published. Not a lot but it's the first time you've been able to see it all, front to back, in pretty much the right order.

PAUL NELSON: In one *big* book.

SAM HAMILL: One big book . . .

PAUL NELSON: So that in . . .

SAM HAMILL: . . . A book you can spend the rest of your life reading.

PAUL NELSON: It's a true story, yeah.

SAM HAMILL: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: Yet, this is another example of some of the benefits of being a non-profit literary press than a *for* profit. Tell us about it.

SAM HAMILL: Exactly. New Directions, of course, published Kenneth all of his life, and he was very close friends with J. Laughlin, the late, dear J. Laughlin, the founder and master of New Direc-

tions. But to publish this big book takes a whole lot of money, and New Directions would have to sell this book for \$60 or \$70 a copy, probably, and we'll sell it probably for \$40. So . . . we can *do* that, simply because people help us make that possible by donating time and money.

PAUL NELSON: Could you give us an example of his work?

SAM HAMILL: Well, here's . . . I wanted to bring, actually, two poems. Kenneth was known for his political poems, he was known for his love poems, known for his translations and known for his jazz poems, so what does one pick? Well, I picked a little short poem that sort of has a little bit of bearing on music. This is called, "A Flute Overheard," one of the later poems:

**Grey summer
Low tide the sea in the air
A flute song
In a neighboring house
Forty years ago
Socrates on death
The pages turn
The clear voice
Sea fog in the cypress
My daughter calls
From the next room
After forty years
A girl's candid face
Above my desk
Twenty-five years dead
Grey summer fog
And the smell of the living sea
A voice on the moving air
Reading Socrates on death {bold all poem texts or none}**

PAUL NELSON: Becomes a lot more poignant after you, you know, after a man's gone, when reading his words like that.

SAM HAMILL: Well, you know, I should give you a little bit of my . . . Rich Little Rexroth. I always thought he sounded a little bit like W. C. Fields and he'd just get just mad as hell at me when I'd do that. Get on one of his political tirades and he'd sound somethin' like this: "These running dogs of the capitalist bourgeoisie . . ." But when I read his poems like that it sort of pushes my body away from the poetry. So it's hard for me to read his poems in his voice because I'm so used to reading them in my own voice.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, yeah. So, so Kenneth, do you like capitalists?

SAM HAMILL: Yeah, with an apple in their mouth. Yes, indeed.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

SAM HAMILL: Or something like that.

PAUL NELSON: Ah, yeah, there was a quote, oh, boy. Did I write it down? Something about the purpose of the poet. I have it written down in the book. Oh, here it is. He said: . . . you know, a couple of different things. "I write poetry to seduce women and overthrow the capitalist system, in that order."

SAM HAMILL: That's right. In fact, he said that here at the Port Townsend Conference when we had him here. I think it was about 1978. A nice little white-haired lady in the audience didn't understand why he was on a political tirade and stood up and said, "Mr. Rexroth, I just don't understand why you write poetry." "My dear, I write poetry to seduce women . . . and overthrow the capitalist system. In that order."

PAUL NELSON: Do you think we would have been better off if he reversed that order?

SAM HAMILL: Not necessarily [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: No? [laughs] It wouldn't have happened anyway [laughs].

SAM HAMILL: You know, I think that . . . one of the things I learned from Kenneth is the value of friendship. And whatever else he was, Kenneth generally loved women. And he often didn't behave altogether well. But he was a feminist before that word was invented. And he really cared about *everybody* in his way, but he especially cared about people who had that artistic thing going. And you gotta remember, in his age there were no women poets except Edna St. Vincent Millay and Elizabeth Bishop, maybe. And certainly the people outside academia were non-existent on the literary horizon. He spent his *whole life* encouraging young women writers, especially, but *all* young writers and when he died he left a little bit of foundation money to establish a scholarship for young Japanese women writers.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. I wanna cover more about that. I wanna cover more about his friendship. In the introduction to "Sacramental Acts," his love poems on Copper Canyon Press, there is a quote that said . . . after he moved from San Francisco he said: "I lived 40 years in San Francisco and haven't had a real friend to show for it."

SAM HAMILL: Well, he felt kind of betrayed and isolated by the time he left San Francisco. Kenneth had a number of psychological problems, probably the most severe of which was his paranoia. And he would sometimes call J. Laughlin in the middle of the night saying that, you know, "*The New York Times* is out to get me." That's a disorder and if we took him today to see a psychiatrist they could probably give him a pill, they way they have Hayden Carruth, to deal with Hayden's paranoia and chronic depression. Hayden functions pretty well with the help of medication. I think it would have changed Kenneth's life. And unfortunately, his paranoia damaged a lot of friendships. But if you talk to Gary Snyder today, it's evident in everything Gary says, the great love and affection that he has for Kenneth, and how much he learned from Kenneth, how much Kenneth helped shape his character and his poetry.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, and we had Jerome Rothenberg at our Spoken Word Lab, well, about a year or so ago, and when he talks about Rexroth, the smile lights up his face.

SAM HAMILL: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Kenneth was a great joy about 98 percent of the time. Unfortunately, about two percent of the time he was haywire. And some people didn't understand that he was just a little bit crazy, and it hurt their relationships.

PAUL NELSON: Did that craziness help his work?

SAM HAMILL: Oh, in some ways I think, sure. I think all of us who labor to be working artists are a little bit crazy. Why else would we do this?

PAUL NELSON: You're not talkin' metaphorically, either [laughs].

SAM HAMILL: No, I'm certainly not. No, absolutely not. And I think that many of us have all kinds of diagnosable disorders. I've wrestled with . . .

PAUL NELSON: If we *look* for them

SAM HAMILL: . . . I've wrestled all my life with chronic depression. One of the reasons I'm so close to Hayden is I really understand his depression because I share something *of* it.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, but we also live in a society that is trained to look, you know, medical system that's trained to look for the bad part, or *find* the bad part and kill it, might be the motto.

SAM HAMILL: Well, and you know, if you look at the way we treat working artists, you look at the way they're profiled, when was the last time you saw a poet treated with any sense of respect in the American mass media? When's the last time you saw a poet portrayed in a movie in which he wasn't just totally screwy?

PAUL NELSON: Yeah

SAM HAMILL: But I think one of the things that drives someone to be a great musician or a great poet or a great artist is that need to connect. And I know that for *me*, as an orphan and as a battered child, I really identify with Kenneth's struggle to get straight with women. He was horribly battered by his grandmother after his mother died when he was very young. And it tormented him all his life, this sort of battered child syndrome and his feeling like he was never quite enough for someone or quite enough to make the actual relationship. But his poetry is full of profound understanding about those relationships, that are realizations made possible because of what he had been through.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. And in Rexroth's poem "A Letter to William Carlos Williams," he said: "The role of the poet is one who creates sacramental relationships that last always."

SAM HAMILL: We used to argue about that. I used to say, "Kenneth, the poet doesn't create those relationships. He explores them. She identifies them. She articulates them. But the poet doesn't create those relationships. Those relationships are there organically."

PAUL NELSON: He or she documents them.

SAM HAMILL: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, yeah. It's been said that, you know, you talk about his relationship with women, and it's been said that his translating of the poetry of Chinese and Japanese women transformed his heart and mind.

SAM HAMILL: You know, Eliot Weinberger says that at the end of his life Kenneth almost *became* a woman. In a way that's almost true. When I talk about Kenneth the feminist, a lot of it comes out of translating Li Ch'ing-chao and the women poets of Japan, the women poets of China. It had a very profound effect on his late poetry.

PAUL NELSON: Has the translating had an effect on *your* life?

SAM HAMILL: Oh, absolutely, translating has really sort of *shaped* my life. I'm a practicing Zen Buddhist. All of that came to me in translation.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. You have another one of his poems selected.

SAM HAMILL: Yeah, I thought I'd read one of Kenneth's later love poems. This is "Confusion of the Senses."

**Moonlight fills the laurels
Like music. The moonlit
Air does not move. Your white
Face moves towards my face.
Voluptuous sorrow
Holds us like a cobweb.
Like a song, a perfume, the moonlight.
Your hair falls and holds our faces.
Your lips curl into mine.
Your tongue enters my mouth.
A bat flies through the moonlight.
The moonlight fills your eyes
They have neither iris nor pupil
They are only globes of cold fire
Like the deers' eyes that go by us
Through the empty forest.
Your slender body quivers
And smells of seaweed.
We lie together listening
To each other breathing in the moonlight.
Do you hear? We are breathing. We are alive. {bold all poem texts or none}**

PAUL NELSON: You can just feel his energy from that. You can just absolutely feel the passion from that.

SAM HAMILL: Wonderful poem, gorgeous poem.

PAUL NELSON: What did . . .

SAM HAMILL: Kind of poetry you can write only when you're a 70-year-old man, still very much in love.

PAUL NELSON: What an honor it must be to repay the kindness he showed you by saving your life when you were a 15-year-old strung out . . .

SAM HAMILL: Well, that's really not the way I see it. It would be nice if it were that simple. But what I see it, I see my job as doing is bringing this poetry that's kind of been overlooked in recent years, bringing it back to the forefront and saying, "Remember, here is the complete works of one of *the* great poets of our time."

PAUL NELSON: Why do you think he's been overlooked?

SAM HAMILL: Oh, he was outside the academy, he was outside the literary establishment. He was a solitary man in many ways. He was difficult to deal with sometimes. All of the above.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah?

SAM HAMILL: You know, when *Time magazine* {no italics on magazine} called him the “grandfather of the beats,” his response was: “An entomologist is not a bug.”

PAUL NELSON: [laughs] Yeah. And yet, people give him credit for shaping the culture of the West Coast.

SAM HAMILL: Well, Ferlinghetti, I asked Lawrence for a little comment for this book and his comment was very clear and to the point: Rexroth is the father of us all.

PAUL NELSON: Well, much success . . .

SAM HAMILL: Or the *Master* of us all, I think he said.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. Continued success with his work and . . .

SAM HAMILL: He was the most well-read human being I’ve ever met. He read positively *everything*, and his two-volume *Classics Revisited*, is basically a B.A. in Humanities, just by reading the books as he discusses them. And he was a remarkable mind.

PAUL NELSON: Well, . . .

SAM HAMILL: 54 books he wrote.

PAUL NELSON: I look forward to seeing the book when it’s out.

SAM HAMILL: Thanks.

PAUL NELSON: And I wish you continued success with your work here at the Press and the Conference.

SAM HAMILL: Thank you very much. It’s been a pleasure.

PAUL NELSON: Sam Hamill, founding editor of Copper Canyon Press, Director of the Port Townsend Writers’ Conference. We’ve been talking about Kenneth Rexroth, whose *Collected Poems* are coming out by Copper Canyon later this year. Copper Canyon Press dot O-R-G, the website (www.coppercanyonpress.org.) for more information.

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PAUL NELSON: It's been 40 years since the infamous poetry reading at the Six Gallery in San Francisco, the coming out party for the so-called Beat Generation poets, the night when Allen Ginsberg first unleashed his "Howl" on an unsuspecting America. That evening also featured the poetry of a young Michael McClure. Since then Michael McClure has gone on to write volumes of poetry, novels and award-winning plays. He's toured with former Doors keyboardist Ray Manzarek and has been awarded the distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Poetry Association.

He has been described as a scholar of the visionary, a professor of beauty, and a flashpoint at the intersection of the spiritual and the real. His latest book of poetry is entitled, *Three Poems*, featuring his latest work, "Dolphin Skull." Having Michael McClure on this program is more proof that I have the coolest job in the world. Michael, a pleasure to bring you on this program.

MICHAEL MCCLURE: Thank you, Paul. Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: I do what I wanna do and you're here and it's great.

MICHAEL MCCLURE: Here I am.

PAUL NELSON: And this is a wonderful opportunity and so let's make the most of it. I'd like to talk to you about that quote, "A flashpoint at the intersection of the spiritual and the real." You know, there's a very powerful spirituality coursing through this book that speaks to me in a very powerful way. I'd like to get a sense of what started you on your own spiritual path.

MICHAEL MCCLURE: Maybe it was looking at Mount Rainier. Yesterday I took a tour down . . . not a tour. I went down the coast past the airport, that is, and I saw Mount Rainier again, and I realized, what a thing to see when I was, you know, like 9, 10, 11, 12 years old, delivering a newspaper route in Seattle, and looking up there and seeing this ghostly, vast, supernatural, gorgeous brilliance of this mountain out there. And then I went over to West Seattle where I used to live on 35th Avenue Southwest and walked up one street and realized I was looking out at Puget Sound and the islands and the mountains in the distance and that was also what I grew up with. So I think that's really part of it.

And then after that, when I was just a little older than that, went to the Middle West and started haunting bookstores and found things like Jacob Boehme, Swedenborg, and it wasn't long until I discovered William Blake's work, and I said, "Whoa, this is speaking to me." Or the work of Kenneth Patchen or e.e. cummings or also painting by people like Jackson Pollock and I was interested in biology, biology paintings. For me, consciousness and spirituality all . . . I can't distinguish between the spirit and matter. They seem to be the same thing to me. Spirit and substance are exactly the same thing.

PAUL NELSON: And isn't that the big revelation of all our time? The scientists, the atomic physicists are saying the same thing that the . . .

MICHAEL MCCLURE: They're saying the same thing that was said by the Hua-yen Buddhists in the 9th Century A.D., that it's all made out of nothing. Now they talk about super string theory instead of a flower garland. Nothing is physics and Buddhism but at the beginning it sounded an awful lot alike.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, and not . . .

MICHAEL MCCLURE: And not like people said in the '60s, when they were doing things like *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* or Fritjof Capra's book, *The Tao of Physics*. This is at a kind of higher level than that.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

MICHAEL McCLURE: And nobody's even remarking about it, except you and me right now on the radio.

PAUL NELSON: Well, and I think more people are beginning to get hip to that. You know . . .

MICHAEL McCLURE: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: . . . when I was growing up and just a young radio guy, workin' at a jazz station, thinking, "Boy, it would have been cool, to be alive in the '50s, and watch the evolution of bebop and seen Miles and Monk and what have you, and boy I really wish I had lived back then." And as I get more into the new paradigm, for lack of a better way of talking about it, the excitement of the end of the Millennium and the changes happening in the world, I think . . .

MICHAEL McCLURE: Yeah, I think with Nature being forced into non-existence, it puts it at such a critical point that it's one of the most intense times to enjoy it, and experience it. And I hate to say something like that because what you're doing is you're kissing good-bye to it. But what a great moment to experience the depth and intensity and meaningfulness of it, while as you say, at the same time, amazing things are being done in the Arts, in poetry and painting and in physics. And like you, I see the co-relationship of those.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. It's all coming together. In fact, I'm involved in the Red Sky Poetry Theater here in town and they had a opportunity, as they do each year, to play Bumbershoot. And so what we did was a take-off on *Ovid's {no italics for author's name}Metamorphoses*. So, and from a poetry angle, the same thing that I'm hearing through my work in interviewing people like you . . .

MICHAEL McCLURE: And I heard that Anne Waldman and Ed Sanders of the Fugs were there this last year, too. Is that true?

PAUL NELSON: I believe so. I know that Patti Smith and Jim Carroll was there, and Patti Smith showed up on the Wild Card stage but . . .

MICHAEL McCLURE: I just [inaudible] Patti Smith to San Francisco.

PAUL NELSON: She's back, huh?

MICHAEL McCLURE: Yeah, I guess so. First time I met her she was a young poet and she was hanging around St. Mark's Church in New York where we gave poetry readings. She asked me for my autograph.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs] Oh, wow. Let's talk about your evolution as a poet. When did you first say, "Yeah, I'm a poet."

MICHAEL McCLURE: I think I first said "Yeah, I'm a poet" when somebody read me some e. e. cummings. Yeah: "I feel said he, I'll squeal said she," the poem that started out like that and I said that sounds pretty interesting. It was actually, I was in the middle of high school, and I went down to the library and found e. e. cummings and I found those erotic poems of e. e. cummings and I said, "Well, I guess I'm a poet. This stuff's great."

PAUL NELSON: Were you writing at the time?

MICHAEL McCLURE: No. I wasn't writing. I was making things up, complex verses and reciting them to people, I mean, that never occurred to me at any stretch of the imagination that it was

poetry. I was just entertaining myself and my friends. And it wasn't until a few years later that I realized that was probably my *first* poetry.

PAUL NELSON: Were your friends entertained? Or did they think you were sniffin' dope?

MICHAEL McCLURE: Well, then, I must have been about 13, 14 years old. We hadn't gotten into dope.

PAUL NELSON: Not yet [laughs]. We're talking with Michael McClure and he is touring with his new book, entitled *Three Poems*, which features a couple of old classic ones and a new one, "Dolphin Skull," published by Penguin. I'm Paul Nelson.

There's another line in the book. It's not in the poetry itself, but in the description of the poetry, and you refer to yourself as "a scientist of meat."

MICHAEL McCLURE: Yeah. And I think Jackson Pollock was, too. You know, the painter that did the great drip and . . . abstract gestural painter, gestural expressionist painter. Or so's a man named Pete Voulkos who was the man who changed ceramics from being a craft into being a major experiential fine art by doing that same movement of body use. And he found that the abstract expression of painters like Jackson Pollock and Franz Kline and Willem de Kooning, if people know who those are. I think that this guy was just a little younger than them, and said, "I'm gonna do that with clay." And he began doing it with clay, and making these *huge* clay figures. He changed everything. He's a scientist, I think, too, and he was using his body in this struggle with, for, against, in love with and joy of, maybe even a little hatred of clay. And created this entirely new acceptance of a new medium in the field of Art. You know, that's nice.

PAUL NELSON: And meat?

MICHAEL McCLURE: And meat. He's using his meat.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah?

MICHAEL McCLURE: He does performances. He's been in a big struggle with the potter's wheel and huge pieces of clay that people were moving around for him. So it's a very exciting thing.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

MICHAEL McCLURE: And I guess since I first got to San Francisco when I was around, well, I guess I was about 20 years old, I've been associating a lot with friends who are biologists, botanists, ornithologists, psychiatrists, medical doctors and sometimes combinations of all those things. So they've taken me out to- well, I have one friend who's a psychiatrist and a medical doctor and also the most extraordinary naturalist I've ever known in my life. Exactly my age, and so we sort of grew up together . . . experimenting with the psychedelics and then going out to the desert to look at the spring wildflowers, doing a little mountain climbing, to see what was at the top of the mountains, and driving to the ocean and driving down to Big Sur and learning what plants had what relationship to what animals, and what birds and what flowers.

PAUL NELSON: Plant intelligence, a nature doctor friend of mine calls it. Plant . . .

MICHAEL McCLURE: Well, it's all intelligence.

PAUL NELSON: Right, right.

MICHAEL McCLURE: If it's there, it's intelligence.

PAUL NELSON: Right, right. *Three Poems*, over 200 pages in the book. These are very *long* poems.

MICHAEL McCLURE: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: By anyone's standard.

MICHAEL McCLURE: Yeah. The first one was written in the '50s, about the time of that first poetry reading that you spoke of earlier. That was the reading, poetry reading that was said to begin the Beat Generation. That was October 12th, 1955. I was pretty young. I'd already met Allen Ginsberg, who was a little older than me. Allen had met Gary Snyder, a great nature poet, and Philip Whalen, another wonderful nature poet, an American poet is now a Zen Master at the Hartford Street Zen Center in San Francisco. A young surrealist poet, Philip Lamantia, and our master of ceremonies was the great anarchist, philosopher, poet, Kenneth Rexroth, and he introduced us and Allen read "Howl." I read my first poem, the first poem that I read in public. It was also Gary Snyder's first reading, Phil Whalen's first reading. And I read a lot of poems about nature, including a poem, "For the Death of 100 Whales." And while we were giving this reading, Jack Kerouac was there in the audience, shouting, "Go, go, go, go." And I met Jack that night, but I didn't really have a conversation with him 'til the next day when Ginsberg brought him over to my place, and I had a little, you know, a little matchbox of marijuana and we smoked that, and became friends.

PAUL NELSON: And you talk about . . . I had planned on talking about this later, but projective verse is how you have written a new one and how you write, and . . .

MICHAEL McCLURE: All three of these poems, long poems, book-length poems are in projective verse.

PAUL NELSON: First thought and best thought, you're writing it down and basically you're writing it, it's coming straight from you onto the paper and Boom! It's done. You don't go back, you don't edit, change things around.

MICHAEL McCLURE: No. These three poems are unchanged. They're spontaneously, and they *are* as they were written, and each one is a kind of a spiritual challenge and part of the adventure of the consciousness that's taking place there is, I may not change it. I mean that I do not allow myself to change it. And that doesn't mean that it's a grueling or excoriating task that I've laid upon myself but a very sweet possibility of taking a trip through experience that I've never taken before. Now, the poem does not really necessarily come from me. With projective verse, the inspiration for the poem can be outside of you, or it could be inside of you. It could be a perception or an act or a memory, or a piece of consciousness. But it could also be . . . let's say it was a vase of incredibly beautiful irises. Then I look at that vase of irises and / or touch it or I smell it. It's not just looking at it. I'm *aware*. I have the perception in the real world of that vase of irises. It becomes part of *me*, of the physical being, and then it sort of like *rebounds*, following my breath line onto the page and is arranged on the page in terms of my breath line, and what I'm really listening to as I write it, it's not metrical foot like, you know, A, B, light, heavy, light, heavy, light, heavy, or any given count, but I'm listening to the syllables as it happens.

So you see, it's less like I'm dragging something up out of myself than it is like I'm asking the world, like the painters that I spoke of. Or like Pete Voulkos doing his battle with . . . and joyful battle doing his dance. Doing his dance with the medium of clay. I'm doing my dance with the medium of words. The same way Ray is doing his, Ray Manzarek, my partner when we're performing together, keyboardist of the Doors, is doing his dance, his molding, his shaping, his creation with music. I'm doing mine with words. So when we work together, the two flow together and that's what we do. That's what we call a symbiosis.

PAUL NELSON: And spontaneous creation, it's improvisation, just like jazz artists.

MICHAEL McCLURE: It's improvisation, yeah.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

MICHAEL McCLURE: Ray can improvise more than I can because he's improvising with the music. I tend to follow the words of my. . . Ray's improvising with music. *Usually*, I'm improvising with the audience because it's a different audience, every time. A different feeling about it comes up different every time.

PAUL NELSON: You know, and that's the way Kerouac wrote. It's that train of thought, it's the first thought, best thought, as Allen Ginsberg has told me. But people like Truman Capote say, he said, actually, and I may be paraphrasing . . .

MICHAEL McCLURE: "That's not writing, that's typing!"

PAUL NELSON: "That's not writing, that's typing." You . . . right, right, right. Right.

MICHAEL McCLURE: That's what Truman Capote said about Jack Kerouac.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

MICHAEL McCLURE: Well, you know, there's some truth to that.

PAUL NELSON: But he didn't get it.

MICHAEL McCLURE: You know, a man as brilliant as Truman Capote might have gotten it and he might have been a little envious of it. You know, he's an extraordinary human being. But the reason that I think there is some truth to the fact, that's not writing, that's typewriting, is that Kerouac was not trying to create literature. Kerouac was creating great art. He was creating poetry, he was creating a record, kind of one of the fine, great records of consciousness in word, but he was not seeking the goal of literature. And that may have been what makes Truman Capote feel a little uncomfortable. Now, after the fact, people say, "Oh, yeah, Jack Kerouac is great literature." And Capote was looking for that distinction and strongly seeking it and thinking. I don't believe Jack was. It's an award that's been given to him and it's *seen* that way.

PAUL NELSON: Let's talk about the new poem. "Dolphin Skull" is the new poem in the trio, in the new book. And I'd like to get a sense of, and you talk a little bit about it in the afterword, but the inspiration for "Dolphin Skull"?

MICHAEL McCLURE: It seems like I'm doing nothing but talking about Jackson Pollock in this today, the great painter who's known for his drip painting. "Dolphin Skull," the poem is in two sections. "Stanzas in Memory," in which I emulate Jackson Pollock's psychoanalytic drawings and then I want to go to the unconscious and write directly and in projective verse, as directly as it's possible to go, while looking at themes for imagery or sensory images in the unconscious. And I did 17 long stanzas like that, these energetic gazes into the unconscious. And then I realized the poem wasn't done. I took one of those long gazes into the unconscious and I knew which one. It spoke to me, and I took that moment, from the unconscious, and made that moment as conscious as I possibly could by writing everything that took place in that moment. And I found that melded in that moment was everything from travels that I'd done in Tanzania and Kenya, back to my infancy in Kansas, to my childhood in Seattle, to the experiences that I had in the '50s in San Francisco while I was being photographed by the photographer who furnished the cover

photo of that book, the picture of me in the mid-1950s, about the time I wrote the last poem in the book. All of those things melded together into one moment. I saw the all moments in one moment, and in fact, each moment is a great adventure and everyone of them is alive in the same moment, and all that's happened is it's like a life spirit is changing now. I'm me right now. You know, you're you right now, and somebody else is somebody else right now. But we're all sharing the same moment, and what we can do is give each other the experience or the pleasure, or the fun, or the fear or the hunger or the passion, or the light-handedness, or the light-headedness, or the pleasure of any given moment that we have. So it's a very long, musical, verbal recording of that moment.

PAUL NELSON: It's incredible work. I have to tell you about a time that I took the book in preparation for this interview and went up to the top of Appleton Pass in Olympic National Park and just was reading some of it, just screaming, "More alive than I ought to be!" It's just, it was just so powerful. And then . . .

MICHAEL McCLURE: That's what I want the poem to do. I mean, if that poem can do it for people, that's what I want.

PAUL NELSON: Well, putting people in the moment. You know, some people have to bungee jump or skydive in order to . . .

MICHAEL McCLURE: That's good.

PAUL NELSON: . . . or jump out of plane, but poetry is . . . It can do the same thing. It can put people in the moment without you breaking a leg or something. What is it about poetry that makes it have that property? To be able to put people *in* the moment, instantly?

MICHAEL McCLURE: Well, I'm afraid a lot of poetry doesn't do that for me. And the poetry . . .

PAUL NELSON: Well, good poetry.

MICHAEL McCLURE: . . . the poetry that doesn't do that for me is the poetry that's, you know, proposed to me to be the contemporary . . . well, first place, we're talking about contemporary poetry right now. The book say {?} {books say? book says?} that as an aside. So much of the poetry that proposes to me that it's literature, that it's high art, that it's a lot of things like that is not doing it for me because it's following such a multitude of rules. The people that are doing it have their heads so boxed up that they're so busily imitating someone else, that it's so busily concerned with whether this will be acceptable in a college classroom or where . . . or if they have students, what their students will think of it. So that kind of writing is in such a sad wreckage of a prison that it doesn't do anything.

But if you go to the poetry of people like Allen Ginsberg or Gary Snyder or Diane di Prima, or Anne Waldman, of that standard, or Amiri Baraka. If you go to those living, those vital poets, it *is* an adventure in consciousness because there's nothing held back. It is the highest form of art because they're *not* holding back. They're not being cowardly, they're not being niggardly, they're {not?} saying we have to put the bounds on it. It's people who are letting, as far as possible, their deepest expressions and their deepest feelings, and even the feelings that they discover as they're writing the poetry. The poetry itself becomes a way of inventing the soul that they're trying to create. All of, none of these people believe that we have a soul. I *think* that they all believe that we can create soul. I *think* that they all believe that it doesn't do you any good when you *have* created one. You just make . . . it just complicates your problem. It gives you . . . then there's something *more* to write poetry about. It means you can taste the nectarine better. It means that you probably enjoy bungee jumping more if you're bungee jumping. So it just makes more problems but we can't resist it though.

PAUL NELSON: You know, I can't believe that we're just about out of time with this first segment, and yet, you haven't read yet. So what I'd like you to do is read a little bit, perhaps from page 11 through page 14 of "Dolphin Skull." We're talking with Michael McClure, whose new book is entitled *Three Poems*.

MICHAEL McCLURE: So here's a few stanzas from "Dolphin Skull," and these are energetic gazes into the unconscious, written spontaneously and without change:

Broken shells in sand are not superhuman. Everything is divine. The body is the soul. The intelligent side. Cries in the sand are little crab's eyes. Creepy and bright as the musky smell of decaying algae and sunshine. The cold wind like a chilblain in some sort of skin. Going back to the moment of the Big Bang. The Big Bang is the consciousness of lions dispersing the eagle. The eagle lands in the bare tree by the car and tears up a rabbit. The soul is a dead baby. You know these things. Like the smell of a new tire, while flight after flight of planes passed over. I am still here, just as I ever was. I am furious and fragile and trembling, just as I ever was. Begging is heroic. Striding free of spirits as it can in its swirl. Breaking up rainbows and agonies into action. Part of this dark flow that turns over and over by the hands of light, with fingernails and movies. Movies of sun and rain of darkness. Gray hair on the floor. [pause]

Gray hair on the floor and the radio talking. Steering wheel, more real than anything else. Foggy yellow light in the tunnel. Skinny, addled, wrinkled, childlike, old Horowitz playing Scriabin on TV. Me playing this beautiful pen. More alive than I ought to be! More alive than I ought to be.

Oceans and freeways of grief and guilt, triumphant, bare feet and drugs up the nose. Child of cocaine and raccoons and hollow logs. [inaudible] fillet. Nature loves to hide herself in Leonardo's secret language and the dimensions disappeared after the Bang. Old men dreaming of great-grandfathers are very wise. Like Silba, with wooden spools wound with scars or thread. And an antler pops its drinks, will bowl in the yard in moon shadows. {lineate to match the printed text}

PAUL NELSON: Whew!! [laughs]

MICHAEL McCLURE: This is [inaudible] and Heraclitus in "Nature Loves to Hide Herself."

PAUL NELSON: With that, we're gonna have to wrap up our first segment. We'll have more next time. Thanks for being on the program.

MICHAEL McCLURE: My pleasure.

PAUL NELSON: We've been talking with Michael McClure about his poetry and his new book, *Three Poems*. It's published by Penguin. In fact, we have autographed copies to give away. Be listening to the end of the program for an address where you can send a postcard and enter our drawing. It's our way of saying thanks for listening to the program.

Hello, and welcome to this week's program. I'm Paul Nelson. This week, Part II of our interview with Beat Generation poet Michael McClure. We'll talk to this former Seattle resident about his new poem, "Dolphin Skull," about his thoughts about the death of Jerry Garcia:

MICHAEL McCLURE: He ate what he wanted. He put what he wanted inside of himself. He played music endlessly as much as he wanted, and he lived a very full life. Somebody said to me the other day, "Aren't you sorry about Garcia?" And I said, "No, what a great life!"

PAUL NELSON: We'll also talk to him about a man who considered Michael a mentor, Jim Morrison.

MICHAEL MCCLURE: Those of us who knew Jim well didn't really expect him to make it *past* 27.

PAUL NELSON: And we'll tell you how you can win an autographed copy of his new book, *Three Poems*. Last time we featured Part I of our interview with poet Michael McClure. It was 40 years ago since the kickoff of the so-called Beat Generation at {a? the?} poetry reading at the Six Gallery in San Francisco. Since then Michael McClure has gone on to write volumes of poetry, novels, award-winning plays. He's toured with former Doors keyboard player Ray Manzarek, and has been awarded the distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Poetry Association. His new effort is entitled *Three Poems*, published by Penguin Poets, including the brand new poem "Dolphin Skull." It's our pleasure to welcome back to the program Michael McClure.

MICHAEL MCCLURE: Hey, thank you, Paul.

PAUL NELSON: So nice to have you here, and we're gonna take advantage of it and get another segment. We left off at talking about "Dolphin Skull" and talking a little bit about, when we *weren't* recording, I talked to you about taking a line of your poetry and using it in a poem that I wrote and seeing what your thoughts were. And you talked about how Kerouac, when you were reading his work . . .

MICHAEL MCCLURE: Yeah, one of the things that I enjoyed *most* about knowing Jack, personally, was that I would be at the same event he'd be at, I'd be at the same conversation, I'd be in the same room. Matter of fact, I'd see him taking notes and I'm, "Oh, f**k {do you want to un-asterisk these? I presume it was sbleeped for radio--}, notes. I f**kin' didn't know it was gonna be part of a novel." And then I'd read the novel later and I'd say, "Oh, this is really kind of wonderful," because Jack and I see things in a very similar way but here in the novel I'm seeing how it looked through his eyes, how it smelled through his nose, how it tasted with his mouth, and it's just a little bit different from me, so it makes the experience bigger. I mean, this is what makes writing an adventure, and you don't have to have *been* there. You know, I wasn't there when Charles Dickens wrote about something, but I'm still seeing it through his sensorium, his senses, and it's that same excitement.

PAUL NELSON: And that is a perfect segue into a line I wanted to talk about. Page 19 of the book, in "Dolphin Skull":

"A dead friend's eyes through his wire-rimmed glasses, his laugh has become part of my bones." {lineate as in the printed version, or use slashes to show where the line breaks are}

We're talking about the same sort of sensation that we were just discussing.

MICHAEL MCCLURE: Yeah . . . " . . . friend's eyes through is wire-rimmed glasses. His laugh has become part of my bones. This city of my heart was once innocent as a baby and we grew up in a shoe shop, bakery, umbrella shops and department stores. Seasons of heavy rains and babies. Cold, silver wings, steaming food on a wooden table. Ex-dreams of poverty, agonies over the rent. Faces twisted by love in the night. Bodies tearing, pat one another like sleek figures high on the drugs of our glands, and still we were all Gods, as I have a huge faith." {lineate and punctuate as in the printed version, or use slashes to show where the line breaks are}

You know, once in a while you start thinking about your dead friends and even in the end, and I guess, in your unconscious they're never really dead. They're always there. Even in the poem, I guess you step out of the unconscious to remark that they're dead when you remember their wire-rimmed glasses.

PAUL NELSON: Do you remember who that was?

MICHAEL McCLURE: Oh, yeah, of course.

PAUL NELSON: Is that someone we know?

MICHAEL McCLURE: No. Well, he's pretty famous among certain circles because he was a political radical who founded a group called The Diggers in the Haight Ashbury in the mid-'60s, he and Peter Coyote, who's known now as an actor and film director, and a guy named Peter Berg, who is now a bioregionalist. This is Emmett Grogan I'm writing about. Those three formed this radical, anarchist, political theater group and furnished meals for kids that came from all over the country in 1967 to the Summer of Love, while we got up on the stage at the Polo Field at Golden Gate Park in San Francisco and boogied for 'em and said, "Kick it out." And it was Timothy Leary and Alan Watts and Ginsberg, me, Gary Snyder . . . Quicksilver Messenger Service, the Grateful Dead, the Hell's Angels. It was pretty nice at that.

PAUL NELSON: Peter Berg runs the Planet Drum Foundation.

MICHAEL McCLURE: That's right, exactly.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, yeah. You mentioned the Grateful Dead and the thought had crossed my mind to ask you about Jerry Garcia and your thoughts about his passing.

MICHAEL McCLURE: Well, my thoughts about Garcia's passing are . . . I've got several. One is: What a great life! I mean, what a *great* life. He ate what he wanted. He put what he wanted inside of himself. He played music endlessly, as much as he wanted, and he lived a very full life. Somebody said to me the other day, "Aren't you sorry about Garcia?" And I said, "No! What a great life!" w
See, I felt the same way when Jim Morrison died. ell, I felt differently 'cuz I *knew* Jerry but I was quite close to Jim and when Jim died, people said, "Isn't this horrible?" And I said, "Well, you know, really, those of us who knew Jim well didn't really expect him to make it *past 27*." He really did it. He didn't lose anything.

The other thing I think about Garcia is that great poem that Robert Hunter, the lyricist for the Dead and also a real fine poet that wrote for Jerry, and it came out in *Rolling Stone* recently.

PAUL NELSON: Didn't see it.

MICHAEL McCLURE: Yeah. You should take a look at it if you get a chance. When Ray Manzarek and I are out on the road performing, we often perform with [inaudible].

PAUL NELSON: The day that Jerry . . . you know, I'd seen the Grateful Dead once. I think it's like something you *have* to do. Not a tremendous Dead fan, however, the day he died and all, of course all the radio stations were playing nothing but Jerry Garcia and then Grateful Dead music. The day he died I *got it*. I got it through lines like: "Like an angel standing in a shaft of light and . . ."

MICHAEL McCLURE: Well, the lines are being written by Robert Hunter, though the music is Jerry's.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

MICHAEL McCLURE: Oh, and in some cases, Weir is doing the music, too.

PAUL NELSON: But you get a sense of what his life was *about*. It was about peace, it was about non-violence, it was about the highest ideals of the 1960s, and . . .

MICHAEL McCLURE: Yeah. I wanna say something about the Grateful Dead, as a whole, and of Jerry Garcia, in particular since I knew him from the earliest days and that is the . . . People say, “Oh, wow, this is so amazing. These people are out on the road and they’re this big successful group, and yet they’re not playing the commercial game.” Well, it just so happens that the people like Jerry, Bobby Weir, Cat{?}, Hart, are among the most intelligent people I know, and when I think about Jerry, I’m just as liable to think of Jerry in the ‘60s and the intelligence of what he said. And the *radicalism* of what he said, the inherent anarchist philosopher in this great musician and how openly he spoke out in those days. In the later days Jerry got to be seen as a . . . I don’t know, like Santa Claus or Big Brother or Grandpa or something . . . and he said less and played more. He came to love playing music more and more and if you could have heard him speak, I think many people would have been amazed at the size of the intelligence bursting from that man. The same intelligence, not the same but I mean another very, very intelligent person is Bobby Weir. Another very, *very* intelligent person is Mickey Hart. I mean, we’re talking about, rare phenomenon, the coming together of people of such high, both high ideals in music and high capacity in terms of their intellectivity.

PAUL NELSON: And humanity.

MICHAEL McCLURE: *And* humanity.

PAUL NELSON: Right.

MICHAEL McCLURE: You know, yeah. Well, I could. . . don’t get me off , I’ll start talking about the Rex Foundation.

PAUL NELSON: OK. We’re talking with Michael McClure, poet with a new book called *Three Poems* that features a new poem entitled “Dolphin Skull.” I’m Paul Nelson.

You mentioned Jim Morrison? Many people say that you were the role model for Jim Morrison.

MICHAEL McCLURE: It’s probably true. I was thinking the other day that Robert Duncan, great American poet, was *my* mentor, and he was 14 years older than me. And then it occurred to me, just the other day, I said that I was 14 years older than Jim. I probably *was* his mentor, you know. Not that I didn’t learn things from Jim, too. Jim and I got together because he was crazy about a play I’d written, called *The Beard*, and *The Beard* is a confrontation of Billy the Kid and Jean Harlow in Blue Velvet Eternity, and it has the representation of an explicit sex act, as we say, quote / unquote, at the end and it was being . . . But it was a beautiful play, you know? And we were doing it as an anti-war statement during the Vietnam War. And Jim was crazy about that play and it was being busted San Francisco and Berkeley and it was arrested 14 nights in a row in Los Angeles, and in New York it got two theater prizes, and you know, it was just a pretty unpredictable world . . .

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

MICHAEL McCLURE: . . . And Jim and I met for the first time and we both took a look at each other and, boy, did we just like each other.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

MICHAEL McCLURE: We both had hair down way past our shoulders and were wearing leather pants, you know? And, “Who is that guy?”

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

MICHAEL McCLURE: And so one of us said, “Can I buy you a drink?” And one of us bought the other one a drink and we fell right into talking about William Blake and his poetry and after that we were close friends for the last several years of Jim’s life.

PAUL NELSON: That’s a . . .

MICHAEL McCLURE: And that’s how I met Ray Manzarek, was at the third recording session of the Doors. And then Ray and I got back together about eight or nine years ago and I heard Ray play piano and he heard my new poetry and we decided we had to do that together. So Ray played piano and I’d recite my poetry and we’d go around to places like, well up here we do it at The Backstage . . . is where we perform up here. And in . . .

PAUL NELSON: Well, where about in Portland?

MICHAEL McCLURE: In Portland? The Rose Ballroom. Great sound system.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

MICHAEL McCLURE: And in New York, the Bottom Line and in San Francisco, The Great American Music Hall and so on.

PAUL NELSON: I’d like to shift the conversation to another person, a person of a different sort. A person who is a, judging by the poems, a big influence on you, and that person is Alfred North Whitehead.

MICHAEL McCLURE: Oh, yeah. I was at Kent State shortly after those murders of the students took place during the Nixon regime. A play of mine was being put on there. I was giving a poetry reading. I walked into the bookstore, student bookstore at Kent State, and there was this book called *The Function of Reason*. And I was very interested in the concept of reason because I guess I’d become so accustomed to hearing myself referred to as “an unreasonable poet” or an irrational poet that I became interested in what reason was. ‘Cuz I always loved the idea of reason, and the idea of consciousness, and the idea of intellectivity. So I bought this little paperback book, about 90 pages, by Whitehead, called *The Function of Reason*. And I thought it was the most difficult thing I’ve ever read in my life, and I’ve read it three times since, and through that book I found out that any point in the universe is the center of the universe, and is the point that the universe is experiencing itself at, prehending itself at, at that moment. And I said, “Oh, I get it.”

Now, maybe nobody gets it after hearing *that*, but if you look in *The Function of Reason*, it’s there. It’s about the universe experiencing it, though. And of course, you and I and a chipmunk and that ball of lint under your chair over there, are all points in the universe. And so we’re all mutually prehending one . . . and one another is direct, prehending the self that is ourselves making this thing that we seem to be dwelling in.

PAUL NELSON: The moment.

MICHAEL McCLURE: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: Right.

MICHAEL McCLURE: The moment.

PAUL NELSON: Whitehead had a huge influence on Einstein, too.

MICHAEL McCLURE: Is that right?

PAUL NELSON: Oh, yeah. Yeah. *Process and Reality*, I think was a big influence on that, too.

MICHAEL McCLURE: I did not know that. That is extremely interesting.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

MICHAEL McCLURE : Because the two models for my poem "*Rare Angel*," {no italics for poem title} that is the two things I was thinking about most was that I . . . not about Einstein, but about an *idea* of Einstein, that we do not think the way we *think* we think [laughs], but we think with our bodies through our muscularity. Our muscularity and the movements of our body, and I think he means that on the micro level, as well as the macro level, are our consciousness and are our thoughts. That was one idea when I wrote "*Rare Angel*." It was the middle poem in this long book of poems, *Three Poems*.

And the other idea, of course, was Whitehead's idea of Reason. I wanted to write a poem that was *truly* reason, as much as I could write without using my upper central nervous system but using my body to speak with.

PAUL NELSON: More of a kinesthetic intelligence.

MICHAEL McCLURE: That's what I was seeking for.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

MICHAEL McCLURE: Now, I did not arrive at it wholly or completely, but that was my intention. You know, you have aspirations and then you get as far as you get.

PAUL NELSON: It's amazing because something *huge* that happened to *me* was going through a ten-session body therapy work called, a SOMA work.

MICHAEL McCLURE: Mm-hmm?

PAUL NELSON: The name SOMA was given to that work by Ida Rolf, who created Rolfing, and so this is an advanced form of Rolfing, in a sense. And I had the ten sessions, took six months to integrate as is their practice, then got a tune-up session. And then right after that, I started writing poetry, like it was flowing out of me like a fountain. I mean, in the first three or four months of the year, a poem a day. It was just intense. It was incredible. And so freeing up the energy that was locked in emotion, stored in the body, which is what we do.

MICHAEL McCLURE: That's interesting because I've been very involved in the body work movement, since 19-, well, a long, long, long time. Niko Tinbergen was given the Nobel Prize and in his Nobel speech he spoke about Alexander training. So I saw that in Alexander training. The Alexander trainers sent me to a Rolfer; the Rolfer sent . . . I mean, you know, not sent me because they couldn't do anything for me. They said, "OK, now the next step is this." And so eventually ended up with Feldenkrais and doing some studying with Moshe Feldenkrais. So body work is also at the core of my poetry.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, and it's at the core of the cutting-edge in our world today, no question about it.

MICHAEL MCCLURE: Absolutely.

PAUL NELSON: The part of the poem that you were reading from . . . the “looking through the wire-rimmed glasses” and it says, “the glass has become part of my bones.” When we look at this poetry, we see that it goes down vertically on the page.

MICHAEL MCCLURE: Yeah, that’s exactly right.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, tell us how you decided to write your poetry like that.

MICHAEL MCCLURE: I wanted to start--it’s also *centered* on the page, except oftentimes the poetry is not centered. It’s *roughly* centered on the page. It may drift from side to side of the page, but essentially it’s symmetrical on right and left, the way most higher organisms are, and it’s shaped like an organism. And it’s as if there’s a spine or notes of a chord, or nervous system running down the center of the page, and the line lengths reflect around that, almost like an oscilloscope pattern, going back and forth. But this, to me, is the shape of the body and, for me, it is the shape of the thought as I’m having it, as well as my energy when I’m having it. Because the one thing I didn’t say about projective verse when we spoke last time, in the earlier show, was that the *key* to projective verse is the *energy* of the poem. And it’s the energy coming out of the breath. So if you look at these poems on the page, I hope that you will be able to see the body language and the mind language, which is the same thing here as you let yourself go with it. It might try your patience, you know, ‘cuz a lot of people consider me really obscure, esoteric, hard to understand poet, unless of course, I’m with Ray and then they all say, “Yeah, we did {dig?} it [inaudible]. Wow.”

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

MICHAEL MCCLURE: Which is true and I could tell you why. But I find the world seems to be catching up with my poetry, or my poetry seems less clouded for people. People seem to understand it now, whereas when I was a kid they’d say, “What is that?”

PAUL NELSON: I wanna follow up on that because “Poetry should be incomprehensible,” is something that Goethe said that you . . .

MICHAEL MCCLURE: And incommensurable and incomprehensible, that’s what Goethe said. And I think he’s absolutely right, otherwise we’re just writing social literature, and I hate social lit--I don’t hate it. I don’t like social literature. I like art, I like poetry. I like William Blake, I like Keats, I like Shelley. I like Diane di Prima, I like Anne Waldman. I like Amiri Baraka. These are the people that talk to me and have somethin’ to say, and they’re not writing literature. They’re, they’re writing high, and very high, very passionate, energetic, meaningful art.

PAUL NELSON: Boy, there’s a zillion questions . . .

MICHAEL MCCLURE: I don’t wanna read John Updike, for cryin’ out loud.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

MICHAEL MCCLURE: That’s [inaudible]. Now that’s social literature. I don’t wanna write that.

PAUL NELSON: Is it . . .

MICHAEL MCCLURE: If that’s literature, if you like John Updike, do not buy *Three Poems* by Michael McClure or any other books by him.

PAUL NELSON: So now I get the reference to the eagle devouring the rabbit in “Dolphin Skull.” Is that what . . . no, maybe not. Let’s see . . .

MICHAEL McCLURE: No, that was “The Memory of Africa” {is this a title or is he just referencing a memory of Africa?} that came out in that same moment that there were, remember, was it . . . a while back I read a poem about lights in little crabs’ eyes. That’s the beaches of Seattle in the Pacific Northwest when I was growing up here, the little sand crabs on the beach lying right there in my unconscious, just as modeled {mottled?} and shiny and perfect and glinting under that piece of kelp that they were when I was . . . seven years old.

PAUL NELSON: We’re just about out of time again for this segment. And so I’d like you to start reading so we can get some reading . . .

MICHAEL McCLURE: OK.

PAUL NELSON: . . . on here. What I’ve chosen, unless you have something you’d like to read . . .

MICHAEL McCLURE: No.

PAUL NELSON: What I’d like to hear is pages 63 and 64, starting at the beginning of 63 and ending there at the bottom of 64, and let me just reiterate that we’re talking with poet Michael McClure about his work, his new poem, “Dolphin Skull,” and his new book of poetry entitled *Three Poems*. It’s published by Penguin Poets.

MICHAEL McCLURE: And this is not from the unconscious. This section is a very long section of consciousness, exploring one single moment, and the manifestations of so many times and places in my life that were in a single moment in my life. The way they’re that way in your life and everybody else’s life. I’m not sure that we don’t all share the same moment.

“Cloud of faces. Personality, its grimaces and holdings of muscle. Gratuitous, well-trained and in pain. The Amtrak is a person as much as people are. Let it be the flesh that is self. Hold, let this moment [inaudible]. But it never was, eternally.

Raindrops on great planks and smell of old cashmere sweaters where the rat gnaws the luggage case. The fingers flip up the other sleeve. The camera clicks. Photographer grin. Soul is the elimination of personality. Soul invents soul, like the deep clouds. But something else driving the cars. Personality enshrined.

The poem that was nothing, absent. The knuckles and the pen are a shadow on the page and the swirl, and the scroll spins. Hunger and courage are ends in the same worm that the robin pries from the golf course. Night is weighed in the scale and the room is the white plum petals, fall into designs of rats, trunk and the branches. The crossing plane roars, lead to the old window sill and the purr it makes in eagle’s peak.

This is it and it’s all perfect. Imperfect, never was, nowhere. But a glossy brown Jeep station wagon, the cliff edge above the glittery silver flash ocean and something else move on with big loops of blue-black scale bicep in a rosy aura of shimmer. Or crunch of woven straw under the boot heel.

Walking through a selection of empty streets, there’s no conflict in memory. It’s all here where it never was. Laocoon loops its streetlights and motes dust in eye, long gone into the future. A bearded man listening to mashing childhoods in Mexico while the room purrs there in the middle of the wing beats and makes a lengthening growl in front of the bookcase. The smell of macro baking. Leg of mutton. Diapers. The child’s big face in the doorway, babes singing in hallways.

Big land turtles pulling ornate red chariots over shining wood floors. And the riverbank, mud of all kinds making vale. The parasite of personality drops away. The muscles-, and the muscles, the spirit loop and throw out coils, exfoliate tendrils.

Comprehension. Understanding the taste of red purple grapes with green flesh and the seeds nestled in there where the tongues glides in something written while high in the old days. Shaped like a star in all directions and moments blast in dodders and skims through everything. Outside of everything containing it.

The dentist drills on the mountain range, as if it were mute and dumb. Dumb and mute, not hearing him. The nurse giggles in flattery at the base of the cliff where the snaggletooth Indian pushed the Jeep through mud bank. Lights and crashed. Grills in lotus pot. [inaudible] containers stacked for pickup with the milk tanks. A wall of cicadas singing, turned into a roar here. Fears of nothing in the whirl of wooden yoyo as the hand slides up and the other hand up the sleeve. The smile is vacant and sly and knowing and deep, soulful.

Freed of personality. Freed of tendrils being the tendrils. Solid. Personality of gold and ivory and donkey fur. Laughing at itself like courage being cheap. In the air bushmen dreamed of gazelles turning to eagles in the road and the purr and the roar. Roar behind the eyes. Behind parturition on the other side of the lost dimension. In this one before me, conceived of its hunger.

At the foot of the cliff, beside its ears in the room and the cloudburst straits of flowing shapes of blue purple from the old skull top, as the goddess upward flows. From the perineum to all the dimensions in one. Imaginary, [inaudible] where there's no imagination but the madman calling to the corridors of his lost teeth.

The young man sly smile of passion and courage and hope and fear. Snail trails on the sidewalk feel the wind. Screams from a lost love on cold, empty streets, and loving kisses in midnight playgrounds.

The chunky finger slides up the sleeve as the room fills with feathers and blood and purring roars. The central nervous system is shaped like the Milky Way, and the odor, almost like licorice. {lineation, capitalization, punctuation etc. shd match the printed text}

PAUL NELSON: Again, we're out of time. But let me just say that . . .

MICHAEL McCLURE: I enjoyed that, Paul.

PAUL NELSON: Oh, man, that. . . and you know, I wanted to end on that, and yet, we started with somethin' that was back and you kept reading. That was really cool that you did. Thanks for being on the program and good luck with your work.

MICHAEL McCLURE: See you soon.

PAUL NELSON: All right. We've been talking with Michael McClure about his work, his take on life, Jerry Garcia, Jim Morrison, and about "Dolphin Skull," a part of *Three Poems*. It's published by Penguin Poets and we have autographed copies to give away. Be listening at the end of the program for an address where you can send a postcard to enter our drawing. Just our way of saying thanks for listening to the program.'

PAUL NELSON: The visiting poet for Fall 2011 at SPLAB is Brenda Hillman. She's published eight collections of poetry, all from Wesleyan University Press, the latest of which is *Practical Water*, which came out in 2009. She's edited an edition of Emily Dickinson's poetry for Shambhala Publications and co-edited *The Grand Permission: New Writings on Poetics and Motherhood*. Her awards include the 2005 William Carlos Williams prize for poetry, fellowships from the NEA and the Guggenheim Foundation. She is the Olivia Filippi Professor of Poetry at St. Mary's College in Moraga, California, a member of the permanent faculty of the Napa Valley Writers' Conference, and of the Squaw Valley Community of Writers. And she's also involved in non-violent activism, as a member of the Code Pink Working Group in the San Francisco Bay area. And that was a good link for the talk that happened last night, "Innovation and Activism in Poetry." But first, Brenda, before we get into that, I love your story about the plane from Oakland to Seattle and . . . a non-poet, a civilian, a normal person, however you wanna say it. She said, "So what kind of poetry do *you* write?" And it's like, wow, how do I, you know, put this in terms that a lay person will understand, and you said two things: Spiritual, nature poetry that experiments with form and innovative lyric. And how did she respond to that?

BRENDA HILLMAN: Well, you know, people . . . It's kind of a conversation stopper [laughs] because they . . . usually the follow-up murmur is something like, "Well, I don't read much poetry." And at that point I think the follow-up answer should be, "Well, it's still *in* you," and if you don't read it then . . . it's not that you *should*. It's that, "Oh, I'm sorry, because it would help your life so much." So , anyway, we talked about female relationships and grandchildren and children and daughters and it was a nice conversation. I brought poetry back into it. So you can feel as if you've opened the door, to remind them that it's out there. That it's there.

PAUL NELSON: And you don't have to wait until somebody dies to start getting interested in it.

BRENDA HILLMAN: That's right, yeah, and that you need poetry throughout your life. And that just because you gave it up doesn't mean you didn't once have it. Because they know that it's there for them. I think they know that it's there for them or they wouldn't turn to these sort of talismanic uses of it at various points in their existence.

PAUL NELSON: You think it's a situation like, if they don't engage poetry on some level then something comes into fill the void? Like advertising or something like that?

BRENDA HILLMAN: Well, yes. And another way of saying it is . . . one thing that my husband, Bob Hass, says whenever I'm sort of hypercritical of somebody's attention to something that seems to me kind of an irrelevant matter of achievement in the world, he'll say, like, you know, becoming good at some very, very small, kind of aspect of a subject matter, he'll say, "Well, it's their poem." So I think everyone does have their poem. If to be obsessively, spiritually engaged in some discipline or being good at something is one thing poetry does for your soul. Yeah.

BRENDA HILLMAN: So how would you elaborate to someone who knows a little bit about poetry about those two things that you told this person to describe your poetry?

BRENDA HILLMAN: You mean, in terms of the nature, yeah. Well, I guess, in fancier, sort of more poetics terms, my poetry comes out of a long interest in the continuums, since the romantics of the engagement with the non-human world of a plant, animals, the wild, as Gary Snyder might say. And our place in it. I would say, you know, eco-poetics is the term that's being commonly used, but the sense that we're part of a greater nature and greater environment than just the human mind and . . . my interest in the so-called spiritual, which is also a sort of questionable term, is that, to me, interest in the invisible and the non-human natures does include a sense of mysterious consciousness that may not be human. And so I'm interested in touching on those things.

And there's a third element that I didn't get into with the woman because I could sort of sense that that would fall badly. Has to do with the socio-political and our connection between the human language in our society, in our world, and our political and ethical responsibilities as artists.

PAUL NELSON: So to call out doublespeak in other instances of use of language to control or to obfuscate.

BRENDA HILLMAN: Right, exactly. And we were talking last night about some of the terms that are put on, that almost put on the culture like a brand in a violent way like the word, use of the word "drone," which is obviously the worker bee. But the sense of the robot. And enhanced techniques for torture.

PAUL NELSON: Enhanced interrogation techniques.

BRENDA HILLMAN: And enhanced interrogation techniques, I mean, it's just unacceptable, sort of brutalization of language for the wrong reasons.

PAUL NELSON: You were talking, I think, it was at dinner last night about your mom who would talk to the plants and other things like that, so maybe that kind of gave you a sense of the sentience of all things. Would you say that's a fair estimation?

BRENDA HILLMAN: Yeah, I mean, I grew up in what I think of as a kind of interior Protestant tradition. I grew up Baptist and one of the things that surprised me is I sort of went to college and began to read about esoteric Western metaphysics, is that the Baptists, the sort of quietist Protestant traditions also have a real connection with Gnosticism, with a sort of occult. Even with a strange kind of anarchic spiritual state, which puts you in connection directly with the Divine. Now, mostly in American Protestantism, this has become very rigid and programmatic in terms of contacting Jesus in this very specific way, according to the Scriptures. But it isn't mediated necessarily by other saints. So it seems to me that the connection between maybe animism and American Protestantism and esoteric things like theosophy that interests me as well, Gnosticism, does have to do with this sense of immediate entrance into a strange connection with things, with the other, with encounters with animal spirits or even, you know, animated objects. The specific example is that my mother, when we grew up, she talked to plants, and she *still* talks to plants. Like, "Come on, baby. Come on honey." You know, just touching the leaf and encouraging it and it wasn't a sort of New Age-y thing. This was before the sort of New Age-y thing. If you talk to plants, you're actually putting oxygen on them, so it'll breathe better and so on. And, no, it was something like a very immediate sense that they needed her presence to do their work.

PAUL NELSON: Well, she is exuding her own field onto theirs, or engaging their field with hers- in a nurturing way so, you know, the notion of composition by field comes to mind, with Olson. But the other connection is that if *this* is alive, if we see a plant being alive, or rocks, as in the animist tradition, how they're welcomed as grandfathers in the sweat lodge, then we got to believe that the poem, in the moment that we're composing, has some kind of intelligence, and to recognize that and to honor that by going perhaps where the poem wants to go, and that puts you in a tradition of organic or projective or however you wanna say it. Where Duncan and Levertov were referenced last night, come in, as well.

BRENDA HILLMAN: Yeah, I think so, and certainly a much more process oriented way of writing so that even if you set yourself a task or, I was just talking with my friend Alisha about this, but even if you set yourself a *task*, it's almost as if you've set the baby in a very large playpen that includes the entire universe, and you sense the limits of your own skill or interest, but within this very wide limit, you're a divine child at play in some ways. So . . . so in that way, yeah, I think a process and observing oneself in action is part of what the poem is.

PAUL NELSON: Like in meditation.

BRENDA HILLMAN: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: You know, the witness of self. Talking with Brenda Hillman, the visiting poet for Fall 2011 at SPLAB in Seattle. SPLAB.org, the website. The latest things that you've been writing, *Impractical Water*, and I hope that you'll read a few poems from that. And also [inaudible] one, an occasion where you persuaded your husband to stage an action at the place where the drones are piloted in Nevada. And you have a [inaudible] about that. Do you have that handy?

BRENDA HILLMAN: I can find that, yeah.

PAUL NELSON: I think I have . . .

BRENDA HILLMAN: Yeah, yeah.

PAUL NELSON: . . . took my copy right there.

BRENDA HILLMAN: OK. Great.

PAUL NELSON: Can you tell us a little bit about that need to create actions like that? And your involvement with Code Pink and maybe we can even talk about our trip to Occupy Seattle yesterday.

BRENDA HILLMAN: Well, for starters, I wanna tell your audience that I feel as if we were saying last night that it's not only a natural thing but a *necessary* thing for poets to be engaged with social and political activism, and that it's not going to hurt your poetry. It'll open up avenues, that they aren't necessarily overlapping disciplines or fields, but they *can* inform each other. They can exist side by side. They can engage, even the most esoteric poem can be brought outdoors and done as a chant or as an action in front of others.

And the particular thing that you were asking about, Bob and I went to Creech Air Force Base which is outside of Las Vegas, Nevada, to do what I thought of as a poetic action. We decided to stand right near the gates of Creech and read poetry for two days, and we videotaped ourselves in this action, holding signs, and doing vigils and doing the poetry reading. And it was a small group of us, Katherine Factor, Janet Weil, Bob Hass and me. And we brought poems of various kinds and we read them. And what was impressive and interesting was that the trucks and the guys that were going into the base really slowed down, and they would stop. They would stop to look at us. It was an odd sight to see, instead of people out there shouting or blocking the entrance necessarily, which I'm totally in favor of, any action you do that's a direct, non-violent action, to stop people from going onto the base, to me is, is helpful. But we decided just to do a poetry reading vigil. So this is the poem and it is in the [inaudible] tradition but I don't follow the formal haibun tradition involves embedding the haiku, a measured haiku into a block of prose. So I just usually put lines in front or at the end.

PAUL NELSON: So it's a "bun."

BRENDA HILLMAN: It's a bun. It's a bun [laughs]. It's a bun that's hai. [laughs] Should I read this?

PAUL NELSON: Yes, please.

BRENDA HILLMAN: Oh, OK.

We are western creatures; we can stand for hours in the sun. We read

poetry near an Air Force base. Is poetry pointless? Maybe its points are moving, as in a fire. The enlisted men can't hear. Practice drones fly over-head to photograph our signs; they look like hornets [*Vespula*] with dangly legs dipping in rose circles with life grains. They photograph shadows of the hills where coyotes' eyes have stars. They could make clouds of white writing, cilia, knitting, soul weaving, spine without nerves, dentures of the west, volcano experiments, geometry weather breath & salt. Young airmen entering the base stare from their Hondas; they are *lucky to have a job in an economy like this*. The letters of this poem are also lucky to have a job for they are insects & addicts & thieves. Volcanic basalt recalls its rock star father. Creosote & sage, stubby taupe leaves greet the rain. We hold our signs up. We're all doing our jobs. Trucks bring concrete for the landing strip they've just begun.

A cliff stands out in winter
Twin ravens drop fire from its eyes
My inner life is not so inner & maintains the vascular system of a desert plant. I'm grateful to Samuel Beckett & to my high school boyfriend whose drunk father yelled when we closed the door & read *The Unnamable* during the Tet offensive. They prepared me for this. Outside the base we seen Borax mines in the distance. The colors of flesh, brown, black, peach, pink, bronze. help. Outside the base we see borax mines in the distance—the colors of flesh, brown, black, peach, pink, bronze. We stand there as the young airmen settle into their routine. The Gnostics noted it is difficult to travel between spheres, you've had to memorize the secret names & the unnamable haunts every aspect of your routine. The names grow heavier as you carry them between the spheres. {lineation, punctuation etc. shd match printed text}

PAUL NELSON: Now, if you could take out the part about the letters and how the letters start developing characteristics of the coyote stars, this would really be a political poem.

BRENDA HILLMAN: OK.

PAUL NELSON: And there are those who say your poems aren't political enough. What do you say to that?

BRENDA HILLMAN: Well, I think political is is such a strange and mysterious term. Obviously in the last four books I've written about politics directly and indirectly. But I guess, as we were saying last night, the difference between what I'm interested in as the form of writing that engages me most and what might be an overtly didactic poem or a poem that would rally the crowds in a sort of anthem-ish way, is that I think that we bring our subtle, various forms of subtle consciousness or theosophists would call it "the subtle bodies." You know, the floating spirits or the ancestors, or the fact that to me, coyotes, you can *feel* the fact that coyotes are surrounding us with stars in their eyes, at the same time as you can hold up your signs. And it's a much more complete human experience not to be encamped with an ideology while you're being a poet, even though ideology might take its place next to you, or *in* you, or even a desire for an outcome. Because of course we want the drones to end, and of course we're not going to be able to end them as poets. So there's that.

PAUL NELSON: So it's not so much in sublimating the didactic or the ideologue in oneself, but it's reaching out to something *higher* and something that probably has more power than a didactic poem, and that includes the imagination.

BRENDA HILLMAN: Well, I think so and I don't necessarily. . . I don't know if it's so much about hierarchies as the fact that, like the Druid poet priest, the wise part of ourselves has to include the teacher, the activist, the poet, the spiritually engaged or impassioned person without necessarily a ranking. And though we want the drones to stop, we know that as poets we're not gonna necessarily be able to have that happen. We would have to do it doing a different kind of action.

And I wanted to say another thing about this poem is that I remembered when I was writing it, 'cuz we were actually having the drones . . . they aren't the drones that are in Afghanistan. They're *practice* drones that they fly at Creech, so you actually do see the drones, the predator drones and the reaper drones. And you see them taking off and they're right next to you, and they fly, well, they were flying over our heads, photographing us, and they're very frightening. Because they're silent, and they're *huge*. And so we would hold up our signs really flat, so that they could read the signs and so instead of just reading to the guys and women who were entering the base with their Hondas, we were also holding the signs up. There was nobody *in* the drones but the guys in the trailer could be photographing and seeing our signs. So we were trying to get the signs to be read and the signs were not completely predictable. Like, Bob's sign said, "All violence is wrong, except ours." It was ironic, you know? I mean, they'd have to *think* for a second. Yeah, you know, F and {effin'?} A, that's right. And then they'd say, "Wait," you know? Like, wait. All violence. Uh, uh, let's see. No. No, that's not a regular sort of average peacenik thing to say. But that's the only thing Bob wanted to write on his sign. So it was an interesting thing.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. And I can imagine, I've never been inside one of these bases where they're doing this, but I'd liken it to a videogame, which it must be like, and can only think that the original way you manipulated a videogame was with something called a joystick.

BRENDA HILLMAN: Yeah, they pull their joysticks and one of the things that is critiqued about drone warfare is that the soldiers or the pilots of these things don't have to feel anything when they're hitting a target-rich environment, another piece of B.S. language. But a target-rich environment, you know, is a small Pakistani family who's at a wedding, who might have one uncle who's involved with a group.

PAUL NELSON: Seen from a different perspective, where we're sitting right now here in Columbia City might be a target-rich environment.

BRENDA HILLMAN: And someday might be, you know? For either our own drones or other people's as we continue to condone this way of behaving, of really annihilating people, bodies, without the kind of moral conscience. And I said, sort of jokingly, to Bob when the Iraq war started and we were doing the bombing. I said, you know, really, I'd rather people be doing this with clubs. If they're going to do it, they should actually have to feel the physical presence of their violence, and not this detached, disengaged horror that these machines represent.

PAUL NELSON: I remember backpacking on the Pacific Crest Trail, not too far from Mount Rainier, closer to Mount Adams, I think, as I recall, and an F-16 just flew over our heads and I can just imagine a *campesino* or someone in Pakistan feels just a complete and absolute terror.

BRENDA HILLMAN: Yeah, absolutely, and the fact that they are clumsy. That as much as they are supposed to be able to see the food on the plate at these weddings where they're gonna drop the bomb, they're clumsy. There are often mistakes made. There are women and children being bombed every day, and the fact that the *increased* use of these machines is being condoned. Because both our President and the Vice President have come out saying this is much better for our combat troops to have this alternative.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. Talking with Brenda Hillman, visiting poet for SPLAB for Fall 2011. Her latest book is called *Practical Water*. I'm Paul Nelson. Let's go back to the book again. There's a great

poem which I've used in workshops. Well, first, actually, first there's an essay on page 33 and that'll be a great way to set up and give the average listener a sense of what you're trying to do.

BRENDA HILLMAN: OK. The poem is entitled "Reportorial Poetry, Trance in Activism" and it's a poem, it's a prose poem but it is an essay. And yeah, I think it pretty much explains itself with its title. I'm interested in trance as well as activism.

Reportorial poetics can be used to record detail with immediacy while one is doing an action & thinking about something else.

Experience crosses over with that which is outside experience; the unknown receives this information as an aquifer receives the replenishing rain. Meditative states can be used to cross material boundaries, to allow you to be in several places at once, such as Congress and ancient Babylon.

I recorded notes in Washington while attending hearings and participating in actions to make the record collective and personal. Working with trance while sitting in Congressional hearings, I recorded details into a notebook.

If bees can detect ultraviolet rays there are surely more possibilities in language and government. The possible is boundless.

Whether or not you have strength to resist official versions that are devastating the earth and its creatures, you could in any case send back reports. If political parties will not provide solutions, the good can occur when people gather in small groups to work for justice in each community using imagination without force.

People could leave their computers at least briefly to engage with others in public spaces. It is then the potential of each word comes forward.

If you have no time or strength, act without time or strength because they may follow. In the meantime you could imagine that you have them. {lineation, punctuation etc. shd match printed text}

PAUL NELSON: [pause] Yeah, that really sets it up well and sets up the next few poems that are in the book, and one is on the very next page, which would be great to read. What got you interested in combining these two endeavors? Being an activist and being a poet, do you remember? Was there an "aha" moment?

BRENDA HILLMAN: Well, certainly. Oh, you know, I was a student activist in the late '60s, early '70s. And then when I was raising a family, starting to teach and writing, I was doing less direct *action* and then when the Iraq war started, I mean, I've been interested in environmental activism all the way along, but when the Iraq war started, I went to a Gandhian conference on non-violence and I was really interested in what *more* you could do. And the "aha" moment was being at that conference and-, and thinking, "I have to do something. I'm too upset and I'm too depressed." And I was profoundly depressed and I felt bollixed and paralyzed. And so I thought, "I'm gonna go home and do something." So I started doing tax resistance, war tax resistance, which is a whole long, you know, and tale that I can tell you about but then I decided to work with Code Pink because it was feminist and it had a lot of flair and humor and a lot of street theater and I loved that. So then I started going to Washington on my own dime and just going because I thought I could have more effect that way.

PAUL NELSON: And the next poem comes directly from that. It's a poem about being in a hearing and doing what you say you do in the essay. Could you read that?

BRENDA HILLMAN: Yeah. It's called "In a Senate Armed Services Hearing," and it was about the confirmation of General Lute, and he had a great name, General Lute.

From my position as a woman

I could see

The back of the General's head, the prickly

Intimate hairs behind his ears,

The visible rimless justice raining down

From the eagle on the national seal...

The eagle's claw held pack of arrows and its friends.

A fly was making its for sure, maybe, algebra cloud in the Senate chamber.

It fell to us to see how senators reshuffled papers, the pity of the staples

To sense when someone coughed after the about-to-be czar General said:

I don't foresee a long role for our troops

There was a rose vibration in the rug.

From its position on the table, the fly could then foresee the soon-to-be smashed goddess as in Babylon.

More perception had to be, began to be.

Filaments rose from the carpet as the General spoke.

The senators were stuck.

What were they thinking, sitting there as dutiful as lunch patrols in junior high.

From my position as the fly, I could foresee as letters issued from their mouths,
like,

General, I'd be interested to know some of the letters regretted that.

Fibers in the carpet crouched.

From the floor arose the sense the goddess Ishtar had come down to bring her astral light with a day-wrinkled plan.

From my position as a thought, I thought she might.

She might come in to rain her tears on Senator Bahy and Senator Clinton, on Senator Warner

in his papa tie & Senator Levin, on Senator Reed &
Senator Hill — rain tears into their water glasses, Ishtar
from Babylon they had not met
before they smashed her country now or never.

Then someone, Clinton, I think it was, but it might have been Bahy asked whether this confirmation will give breathing space for the new General to un-occupy.

How do the dead breathe, Senator, from my position as a fly

And I forgot who asked what isn't even in the same syntax of this language I'm trying to make no progress in,

Asked *how* the army would un-occupy? By north or south?

A voice beside my insect ear said, 'These senators all have their lives, kids with stuff to do, folks with cancer, some secret shame in a quotidian

The thing in front always producing panic, just like yours, the voice went.

Just like our life.

I tried to think if this was true, but was too weak from flying above this notebook to pity them.

From my position as a molecule I could foresee 12 senate water glasses.

Each bubble had an azure rim; the ovals on the senators heads were just like them.

The breath they used when saying, A for American Interest, made the A stand still. It had a sunset clause.

They tried to say, 'Safety' but S withdrew; the S went underground. Would not be redeployed. Refused to spell.

Till all the letters stopped in astral light, in dark love for their human ones. {lineation punctuation etc. shd match the printed version}

PAUL NELSON: The first line is "From my position as a woman." I mean, what one can suggest that these are generals, that are men, that are making the wars, although women increasingly are getting higher up in the ranks, but how did you end up starting like that?

BRENDA HILLMAN: You know, lines will come and I feel like the most important thing about writing poetry or poetry that interests me is whether you have lines that are working or not. That is memorable language. So you're sort of on the wait. You're kind of like a sea anemone or something, waiting really slowly and I think more of a sea anemone than a Venus flytrap or something because the sea anemone, it's sort of helpless and soft. And it's sort of waiting in this receptive thing 'til the little fish will come by. And then it'll close as slowly as possible. But you're waiting for your line like that. And if you don't really have a good line, so it comes to me and you know, I think if you're in training, if you're doing your writing every day, your lines will come to you as your magical force. And they come to you and you recognize them and you know if they're not good or if they're good. And so it came to me as I was recording the notes in my notebook. And just writing, re-writing and I'll recopy, recopy, recopy when I get the notes. And then they start to shape into a poem, and this poem is particularly narrative and as I was talking last night about undermining or mining the traditions of the narrative poem, it doesn't have to be like a realistic reportorial poem in the sense of, you know, I'm gonna only report my life. I think narrative is much bigger than that.

PAUL NELSON: And the life of the fly.

BRENDA HILLMAN: And the life of the fly.

PAUL NELSON: And the molecule.

BRENDA HILLMAN: And the molecule. And . . .

PAUL NELSON: And the letters. Now this is the second poem and I didn't, you know, it was just kind of a happy coincidence that letters are sent in and have lives and refuse to deploy and what have you. Want to elaborate on that?

BRENDA HILLMAN: Yeah. Well, again, it's part of the weird, I guess, maybe I think about witty animism and in a recent poem I'm asking the seeds that have been engineered by Monsanto to refuse to sprout in the Central Valley. So I . . .

PAUL NELSON: I hope that works [laughs].

BRENDA HILLMAN: Uh, yeah. Well, the action that I'm suggesting to poets is that they take their poems and cut them up in tiny word seeds and mail them to the CEO of Monsanto, and like so he'll open the envelope and all these little word seeds all fall to his lap. I mean, alas, somebody else will have to clean up the word seeds, probably not him. But at least it'll be an activism that will be somewhat absurdist. Maybe it's a sort of cabalistic notion or, again, animist but I think that letters do kind of develop this sense of this life is greater and that they have a feeling, or a qualified feeling. And I know John Ruskin would call that probably pathetic fallacy or something.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

BRENDA HILLMAN: Like you're projecting your own feeling onto them. But it's not really *true* because feeling would exist whether we're here or not to feel it.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. You know what, when a person arrives in Seattle there's the Pike Place Market, maybe see the Troll, maybe to go to Kerry Park to see the view, although yesterday wasn't the greatest day for a view. You wanted to see Occupy Seattle.

BRENDA HILLMAN: Yes. Well, I'm very interested in the Occupy movement and Bob and I were at Occupy Cal the other night where there was tremendous brutality on the part of the police and Occupy Cal and Occupy Oakland are the nearest Occupies. Well, there's Occupy Berkeley and there's several other Occupies in the Bay area that are wonderful. But Occupy Oakland is a very vibrant, large community right now. And I haven't been able to participate as much as I would like but I'm very, very interested in the movement and I *love* what's going on and so I wanted to see what Occupy Seattle looked like and was very interested to go there. I took some pictures of the signs that are completely wonderful and you know, I forget the one but the . . . what, they call it the American Dream because you have to be asleep to believe it and I love, love that. And unf**ked {un-asterisk this?}, I'm not supposed to say it, right?

PAUL NELSON: No, it doesn't matter. That's fine. It's fine.

BRENDA HILLMAN: Oh, OK. Un-f**k {unasterisk} the world. [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

BRENDA HILLMAN: And I really love seeing the camp there and, you know, we had some interesting encounters with your friends there and . . .

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

BRENDA HILLMAN: Yeah, it was good.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. And you believe that the activist community has some . . . I don't wanna say "lesson," but the *information* for the poetry community and vice versa.

BRENDA HILLMAN: I *do*. I think they interact. I don't think there's a clear line of division. There shouldn't be a line of division. And, you know, people are gonna be engaged at one level or the other, more or less. But poetry should be *brought* there. Poetry of different kinds and, you know, I don't think there's such a thing as a particular kind of even high modernist poetry that doesn't belong in those places. And we can listen to poetry of people that are living there right now. And we can bring poetry there and be part of the assembly. It can be part of the assembly. In Oakland there's a group of poets that I'm on the poetics list of, Occupy Oakland Poets and there's all kinds

of really amazing stuff that's being fed on that list, and we're just trying to feed each other with reading material and certainly works about urban planning and things other than poetry and poetics, and we're having a really vital discussion about tactics and non-violence, diversity of tactics, questions that are coming up in light of the violence that's been done to the community.

PAUL NELSON: And you say "include the people whose instinct might be to be violent." That they should be included as well on some level.

BRENDA HILLMAN: I love teaching *The Eumenidies*, the play, because there's a moment, and we were talking about this last night, where Athena . . . another name for the Eumenidies is the Furies and they're called the Furies throughout the epics, and they're always doing mischief, or more than mischief – they're burning ships and things when Aeneas tries to leave Carthage and there's a lot of stuff that the Furies, the Furies are the earth spirits and they're coming along and . . . It's a very good metaphor for that sort of untamed part of the impulse in creatures, in human creatures and other creatures. But the intentional violence that needs to be done is almost the Dionysian purge or something. And my disappointment in that play always comes when Athena makes this bargain and says, "Now, you all behave and we're gonna give you this little place in our democracy, and our place for you is to do this. And you can do your tagging on this little blackboard over here. And if you do your tagging on this blackboard then you don't have to mark up city streets. And you don't have to do vandalism, blah, blah, blah." And so she changes the name to the Eumenidies and, you know, everybody's supposed to be happy. OK, democracy can function. And *yet*, you know, there's a war that . . . the code that you go on living by is the necessity of military violence, that it's OK to go over and slaughter Sparta or the next city-state because that's sort of announced. So, in fact, the Eumenidies are *not* tamable. There *is* no way. There's no way of taming the Furies. I do think you can have conversations, I do think you invite, and I think of my grandson who has a little Furies and, you know, we all know that that's true of children. And it's true of Black Block participants as well, who've done their participation in the community.

So I've marched with the anarchists and the Black Block folks, who people seem to be very frightened of, and I don't think that people should be excluded from the community. Now, you know, when actions *begin* you have a choice of whether or not to participate. And you have a choice of whether or not to be in the way of somebody's action. And I'm not going to be the police who stops them. But, you know, other people can sign up for that job if they feel inclined.

PAUL NELSON: Doesn't it hurt the movement, though, and doesn't it allow the deployment of riot police with their helmets and their masks and their clubs and, you know, your husband got the business end of that club the other night.

BRENDA HILLMAN: Yeah, he got the business end of the club not because any of the students started any . . . and we were chanting peaceful protests and there was not one, as far as I can tell, one example of student, even, pushback. People were holding out their hands to be arrested and that clubbing started because those police had been told to protect a particular part of the lawn where the students were insisting that their tents belonged because they're students at the University who are paying their fees and they wanted to make their protest. That had nothing to do with anarchists or Black Block people or anybody who starts with violence. I know there's a philosophy of starting with violence. It's not my philosophy. It's not my tactic. But I insist on inclusion in the community. And you know, I think that we've made a kind of . . . I think we have to include people, at least, in the conversation as we devise strategies and techniques and talk. So, you know, nobody's sitting down and talking to people that they're trying to exclude. Or *many* people aren't. Occupy Oakland *is*. I think they're trying to be as inclusive as possible and it's a really good community in that way.

PAUL NELSON: You say the root of Occupy is to grasp or to handle. You went to your root dictionary and you're a radical because radical means "to go to the root."

BRENDA HILLMAN: Yeah, yeah, that's true. Radical and root. And, yeah, I love looking up roots and this, the book that I'm working on, my Fire book, actually started because Bob and I were driving, a few years ago we were driving past a field and I was thinking about, it was in the autumn

and I was thinking about, “Gosh, all those pumpkins in the field, they have white eyes, and they came from these roots that go into the earth and the roots go down, down, down, and they *touch* the fire and that’s what every single word does, too, is touch the fire.”

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. And so how do you think it, Occupy, I mean, Occupy movement. In your poem and the time between *Practical Water*, when that was published and this moment here in time, November 12th, 2011, Occupy went from something the evil American imperialist machine does, to something being done in cities all over the world, as a protest to that imperialism and colonialism and violence.

BRENDA HILLMAN: Yeah, I love that about language. I love that language . . . I wrote a poem in an early book called *Cleave and Cleave*, and of course cleave and cleave both mean, one means hold tight to yourself, and one means cut. And they’re opposites in the same word. And I love that Occupy is now the same as Cleave and Cleave. That it’s very much like a word that’s been turned, like a pancake. It’s just been made to *serve* the interests of the redemptive and the resistance. And that is just so cool.

PAUL NELSON: Being involved in Code Pink and being involved in the Occupy movement allows you to stay uncomfortable and to be a little unhappy all the time, a couple of things you said that poets should do, last night

BRENDA HILLMAN: [laughs] Yeah, I actually borrowed that idea from Salinger. Not the uncomfortable, but he said in one of his stories, J.D. Salinger, the thing about being a writer is that you know that you will be a little unhappy all the time. And I would change that to be a little uncomfortable all the time, or *very* uncomfortable. And it doesn’t mean that you can’t have a good fulfilled life and an evolved consciousness and so on. And I think of myself as a fairly, actually fairly joyful person. But I do not feel at ease with our capitalist system and the way things are going. And I don’t think it’s a matter of a gentle reform with a few tweaks. I think it needs an overhaul. And I mean an *overhaul*.

PAUL NELSON: Are we living in a time in which capitalism is dying? I mean, in the next 50 years, something will replace it because it’s essentially, like the Ouroboros, it’s eating its own tail. I mean, how long can it go? Does it get to be, the CEO is making 200 million times that of the lowest paid worker? That’s not tenable or sustainable in any way.

BRENDA HILLMAN: I feel like when I go into some of these megastores, I feel as if I can smell the stinking corpse of capitalism, and not just in the stores but just in the kind of [inaudible] with which we have to live . . . and I mean even, you know, the uncomfortableness comes in even in the fact that we have to use the kinds of machineries that are made really, you know, by underpaid workers who are not in unions, who we insist on supporting with our government. And there’s *literally* no other way to get a cell phone than to work. You can choose a plan that may not be a horrible sellout, but chances are the machinery itself is made by underpaid workers who are really suffering.

So, yeah. I think part of the complexity and the difficulty of being ourselves and having to get through the decades ‘til something *changes*, is to be miserable, some part of your week, about this [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. And the poem, in some way, gives you a little solace? Is it cathartic? I don’t wanna go to poetry as therapy, but there is some kind of joy that comes from writing about it, is there not?

BRENDA HILLMAN: Well, not just *that*, but I think like the layers that we’re talking about are . . . You can layer the worst kind of difficulty and a great ecstatic pleasure in the same poem. And particularly when you’re not . . . I feel myself relying less and less on the human to bring me joy. Not that interactions, making new friends or whatever, or, you know, our trusted beloved family relationships that we adore. We rely on human beings for our gratification and solace but there’s so much more about the universe that’s so fantastic and beyond comprehension that’s a great source

of amazement that you don't really just have to stay in the sociopolitical realm. But I feel like you *can* escape it.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. Well, the Indians called the divine "the great mystery." And that's a subject of another one of your tips. I wrote down these words during your talk last night:

Nurture, indefinite states, paradox, mystery, uncertainty. Embrace the mystery of existence. Living with metaphor. And there was also the phrase, spiritual longing.

BRENDA HILLMAN: Yeah, I guess that's something I've sort of borrowed from the Gnostic and, you know, Ginsberg, Blake, Gnostic writers, as they are. And I feel like it's part of my own heritage, that I'm not really interested in getting out of. My mom is from Brazil and she taught us early on the word for this kind of longing while you're standing in one place. You're still homesick, which is *saudades*, which is the longing for, it's sort of a homesickness, but it's really *beyond* homesickness. It's kind of a yearning that can't be satisfied. And I think of it as Gnostic longing, that's like there's a home elsewhere, that I'm not counting out getting back there. And it's not like we should all, you know, drink the Kool-Aid and die of, you know, in order to get on the satellite and carry us back to the only heaven there is. I think heaven is *here*. And I think also there are the unknown places in a greater existence, that we can't be so arrogant as to think that there aren't other states.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. Is there a poem that you'd like to leave us with today?

BRENDA HILLMAN: Well, on that note, I guess. I could say . . .

PAUL NELSON: And you know, I love the-, the poem that's for the Watershed and I think that's really important, and I also think that could have been a topic of conversation, how we go to the local and the national or the federal gets less relevant. We start buying our food from the local farmers market, or maybe even grow it on the corner, an empty lot, and we start making a lot of these bigger systems irrelevant. That might be one strategy, and I think that's one that is being used more and more, especially around here.

BRENDA HILLMAN: Yes, definitely. Well, like in that poem. It's probably a little too long to read, but it's called "Berkeley Water" and I gently tease the Berkeley culture for their interaction with vegetables and fruits in the farmers market, but I'd actually like to end with "In the Trance," which is this kind of short poem. I've done hypnotherapy for a lot of years with a practitioner, and then I've done it myself. And there's a whole set of figures that I encounter when I'm kind of in a trance state and one of them turned out to be an anarchist and I-, I address her in the poem, or *she* addresses me. "In the Trance":

A pretty anarchist said to me
It's not that a great love happens
What happened became your great love.
Her echo had an ancient glow and so
Proved buoyant for my little craft
I left the world and felt a world
The bee loading its gloves with powder
The albatross wanting one thing from the sea.
Nothing can wreck our boat said she
And when the water felt the glacier
The future held a present tense

The present held a future without cease. {make sure lineation spacing punctuation etc. matches printed version} PAUL NELSON: [pause] Well, it's just been a great delight to have you in town. Thank you so much for-, for being here and for your work and we hope to see you again soon.

BRENDA HILLMAN: I hope to be back and I'll keep reporting on the Fire [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: Thank you. Brenda Hillman has been our guest, the visiting poet for SPLAB for Fall 2011. The SPLAB Visiting Poet series is made possible in part by contributions from For Culture and Poets and Writers.

PAUL NELSON: It is a very rare achievement that Nathaniel Mackey has accomplished in American literature. An innovative gesture with a dense and yet accessible approach to writing poetry and prose, his work is steeped in jazz rhythms and the improvisation found in that medium, as well as the West African cosmology of the Dogon people, all done with *duende*, a *cante jondo*, and *alma jonda*, deep song and deep soul. His serial poem, with two main strands, "*Mu*" and *Song of the Andoumboulou* take that form to new heights, with a rare humility. The latest chapters in the ongoing saga come up this fall with a release of *Nod House*, inspired by Robert Duncan and Robert Creeley, among others. Mackey also uses the poem as active consciousness, as experiment in consciousness. He's author of several books of poetry, including *Splay Anthem* in 2006, which won the National Book Award. A collection of *all* the segments so far of his epistolary novel has just been released, entitled *From a Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate*. He's also published criticism, *Paracritical Hinge*, among those books. He edited the journal *Hambone*, and has been awarded a Guggenheim grant. Nate Mackey, welcome to Seattle.

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Oh, thanks for having me here.

PAUL NELSON: It takes a certain amount of courage to write in a way that the mainstream U.S. American writing community would call obscure. Tell us what makes you take this risk.

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Well, it's a risk that's been taken by many of the authors and artists that move me most. And in some way I'm just doing what seems to me to be the thing to do, which is to try to go some deep place, both within one's feelings and within one's thoughts. And one does run a certain risk of not speaking to everyone or even not speaking to *most* people when you *do* that. But as somebody who has been spoken to by that mode, it comes quite naturally for me to pursue it myself.

PAUL NELSON: You know, when I interviewed Victor Hernandez Cruz he said that poetry has not been marginalized in this culture, but the culture has marginalized itself. Does that resonate with you at all?

NATHANIEL MACKEY: I'm not sure what he meant by that. It could mean a number of things. To *me*, it suggests that the culture has cut itself off from some rather basic human needs, desires, aspirations, and to the extent that poetry speaks from that place. The culture has marginalized itself from poetry. That certain urges that define us as humans. Certainly U.S. society and the kinds of concessions to a certain kind of capitalist understanding of the world has taken us away from those things.

PAUL NELSON: Some people refer to it as an industry-generated culture.

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Well, I don't know if it's that anymore. It seems to be a finance dominated culture at this point. It's really, you know, bankers and that kind of thing. The industrial belt is plagued with unemployment and the industries, the factories are rusting. So it really isn't that anymore. It's something much more abstract than that. When it was an industry-based culture, at least you had the concrete products of industry and labor, etc., etc. But *that* has been-, been marginalized. And that might be another way in which what Victor was saying applies. That the satisfaction that people get from working and seeing the rewards of their work, that's been displaced by something else. Most people don't have access to it, but the kind of work that is rewarded is increasingly kind of speculative, manipulative thing that has to do with numbers and online trading and behind-the-scenes deals and that kind of thing.

PAUL NELSON: Smoke and mirrors.

NATHANIEL MACKEY: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: Now because the culture in this country has that quality to it, that's influenced by commercial interests, maybe more than anything else, is this part of why you've gone to Dogon culture and Spanish culture and other world cultures, or other cultures around the world for inspiration?

NATHANIEL MACKEY: No, I don't think so. I've been very influenced by things in the culture of the United States. I mean, that's my first cultural acquaintance, so to speak. And-, there were certainly things in there that had a deep influence on my. . . as someone growing up.

You know, that's why I've gone to those other places, is . . . it's a bit more complicated than some kind of recoil from some kind of impoverishment of U.S. culture. I think it has to do with the fact that we are just more in touch with other parts of the world than we used to be and growing up, that was a part of my education, it was a part of, you know, . . . you know, the increased availability of the arts and artifacts of other parts of the world. So it would be part of that, and the fact that one has access through reading, as well as the electronic media would be a part of that, as well. I find things in those other places that speak to me and that resonate to me and it's very interesting to me that that's the case. That we are not as culture-bound in the realm of mind and imagination as we may be in some other ways.

PAUL NELSON: When I think about you talking about U.S. American *influences* and growing up in Los Angeles, was it Central Avenue where all the jazz was in L.A.? Was that before your time?

NATHANIEL MACKEY: That's before my time, and I wasn't in L.A. I was south of L.A. in Santa Ana, Orange County, which is about, oh, about a 30, 45-minute drive from L.A., and I didn't really have much experience of live jazz. I began listening to jazz in my early teens, when I was in junior high school. One of my older brothers was listening to Duke Ellington and Miles Davis and others and I started listening to his records and that got me interested.

My contact with L.A., to the extent that I *was* in contact with L.A., the L.A. jazz scene, was really through radio. There were a couple of, at that point this was in the 1960s, there were a couple of really great jazz stations broadcasting. There was one called KNOB, the Knob, they called themselves. It was a 24-hour jazz station. And then there was one called KBCA. And it was through listening to them that I was able to deepen it further, my acquaintance with jazz.

I think it wasn't until I was about 17 or so that I actually heard live jazz in a nightclub and L.A. was one of the places, you know, well . . . there were no jazz clubs in Santa Ana or in Orange County, or at least none that I knew of. And so it meant going to a place like the Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach. There was another place, I can't remember. I think it's long gone now. I think it was called Marty's on the Hill. I remember going there. There was a club that I heard, there was a group that Bobby Hutcherson and Joe Henderson had together for just a second.

PAUL NELSON: That's *Double Rainbow*, wasn't it? Around that time of that record?

NATHANIEL MACKEY: I don't remember. But they played at a club that . . . I wish I could remember the name of that club. But it wasn't there very long, and they didn't have that group together very long. But I remember, and this would have been after high school, this was when I was in college and home for the summer. And I remember going up to hear them. It would have been around '66 or '67. But that was *way* after the Central Avenue stuff, the historic stuff that you're referring to.

PAUL NELSON: Which was the '40s and '50s, wasn't it?

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Yeah, I was, you know, I was just getting born in 1947 [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: [laughs] Well, I grew up in Chicago so I know, you know, that Central Avenue scene has resonance for me but I'm not sure exactly the timeline. Talking with Nathaniel Mackey. He's the author of *Splay Anthem* and *From a Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate*. I'm Paul Nelson.

Well, let's continue that jazz theme. You've talked about rhythm in your work as "interrupting a certain uniformity of pace," and what I get from that is like when jazz guys play behind the beat or a little bit ahead of it, playing with the beat, do you think that adds to your work's perceived difficulty? In other words, you know, most folks are down with the 4/4 time, but you start throwin' AACM or Don Cherry kind of time signatures at 'em and they start to get a little nervous.

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Well, first of all, I don't think very much about the difficulty of my work. That's not something that I think is particularly fruitful to think about, about poets, generally. I think there's been really too much emphasis on the difficulty of poetry. Maybe it goes back to T.S. Eliot's thing, that modern poetry has to be difficult. And I think that often that difficulty is manufactured. Often that difficulty is a preconception that people bring to poetry. So I don't tend to think about what makes my work difficult, 'cuz I don't . . .

PAUL NELSON: But could you talk about the rhythm and talking about how you *use* rhythm in that way and maybe how listening to jazz might have influenced that?

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Well, I know that listening to jazz has influenced it. There are certain things that our environment puts into our minds and into our bodies and in ways that are conscious. Some ways are conscious and some ways are unconscious. I remember reading a comment of Gary Snyder's, way back where he talked about doing this kind of work called riprap, and in fact, one of his books of poems is called *Riprap*, and it's some kind of, you know, placing of stones or something like that. But he said that he came to see after doing that work and writing and looking at the poems that came out of that period, that the *rhythms* of that work had very much gotten into his system, so to speak, and that had exerted an influence on the rhythms and the poems. And I think that's true of the things that we find in our environs. And certainly the kind of listening that I've done to, you know, the music I listen to, jazz being one of them, but *other* world music as well, it's gotten under my skin, so to speak. And it comes out in the way that I write and in the way that I *read* what I write. I don't so much think of it as a conscious, deliberative process where I think, "Oh, gee, a jazz musician would do this, so I'm gonna do this in this line." It is {has?} kind of flowed out of what I do. And what I listen to and what I'm attuned to and even beyond that, other things. You know, the emotional environment one is in, You know, the physiological things that one is going through. Whether one is, you know, how old you are or how young you are. All those things, I think, come into play in determining how one writes.

I know you're interested in Charles Olson. I think that's one of the things that Olson was, you know, was trying to say in the "Projective Verse" essay, which is that the *body* of the poet, the physiology of the poet is a determining factor in the porosity of the poem. And that, of course, was a pretty revolutionary statement at the time that he was making it, in the middle of the 20th Century, in 1950, late '40s, 1950 because American poetry and poetics' *thought* about poetry was so dominated by by the New Criticism, which really prioritized the poem on the page, and didn't even want you talking about the poet's biography or the poet's historical setting, let alone talking about the poet's body, the poet's *breathing*, that kind of thing.

So the kinds of rhythmic disposition that you're talking about in my work comes out of a lot of things and certainly jazz is one of them and early on I felt a connection between jazz and the kinds of theorizations that, say, someone like Olson was doing with the attention to breath because jazz is a very breath-conscious, breath-determined music.

PAUL NELSON: And you could also, you know, look at Kerouac, talking about spontaneous prose and a real direct link to bebop, but those two processes have a lot in common.

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: When you're writing, you know, you talk about writing and you don't say to yourself, OK, now insert, you know, Fred Anderson rhythm or Hamid Drake or whatever. But you *do*, this is what I'm wondering. Do you, is it a *sound*? Is there something you're hearing? I mean, you know, Olson also in that essay called it a verse, a use of speech, least logical and least careless, and with the ear as measurer.

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: So, you know, I'm getting that he's tracking some kind of sound. Duke Ellington said, "If it *sounds* good, it *is*."

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: So maybe that's a poetics, too.

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Yeah. And at one point in *The Maximus Poems*, Olson says, "By ear, he sd," and I think that he's referring to is Ezra Pound. But yeah, by ear. I certainly was moved by sound, and poetry's affinity to music. As you know, Amiri Baraka says that poetry is musicked language. And my instincts were there early on. I heard poetry is something that cultivated the musicality of language, which is not exactly the same as the musicality of music. But that went into, and made a resource of, . . . qualities of rhythm, duration, qualities such as assonance, alliteration, certainly rhyme, obviously, that are at our disposal in language. Yeah, but also a certain percussive quality that you can get in language, as well. So those are the things that interested me in beginning to write poetry and continue to interest me. They continue to be central. Sound, you know, what Pound calls melopoeia, is one of the determining factors. And and it can lead one into discoveries at the level of meaning, the semantics of the language and of the poem. It can lead one into discoveries with regard to *rhythm* and porosity, as well.

So I've been very moved by that, and very motivated by that, and probably I do let my ears lead me. I think one also has to let that come into play with the voice and that's another thing that Olson talked about in "Projective Verse," that, you know, T.S. Eliot he said had a fine ear, but he hadn't gone down deeply enough into his own throat.

And one of the things that, you know, we talk a lot about poets finding their voice, and usually that's taken in a kind of metaphorical sense,. but I think it means something more literal than that. You really have to, you know, find out what you can do. What your own, what your voice can do and what you wanna do with your voice. One of Amiri Baraka's early pieces, it's called "How You Sound??", and so finding out how you sound is very important.

As a younger poet, when I was just beginning to read poems publicly, and in college I would go to, like, an open mike thing and I found much to my distress that I had written things that I couldn't *read*, and that clued me, you know, to the fact that I had to sound the poem out when I wrote it, as I was writing it. And you know, the test is: OK. You just wrote that. How does it sound? Can you read it? You know, if you're having trouble reading it then that's telling you something.

PAUL NELSON: And it's a tough place to learn when you're in public, just spitting this poem out and . .

NATHANIEL MACKEY: So tell me about it.

PAUL NELSON: . . . and [laughs] you have to learn it that way. You know, we mentioned projective verse a couple of times. I've engaged in a pretty serious study of it since 1995, but I get in a lot of elements of the community who are even aware of the essay, the poetry community, that is, some folks feel that it's old hat, but yet I get the sense that the possibilities of it have just been, the surface has just been scratched. What do you think?

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Well, I don't think it's old hat, and you can just tell by the comments I've made so far that it's still a reference point for me. You know, it was a very important moment for me to read that essay and to become acquainted with the poets associated with Black Mountain College, Olson, Duncan, Creeley, at that point, Baraka or Denise Levertov, etc.

And I think there is a kind of gnomic quality to that essay, where it doesn't give up all that resides in it, and you can keep going back to it and pulling things out of it. I'm not sure that Olson, himself, knew everything that was in that essay and in that way, the essay is something of a poem. And there are some parts in it that are quite riddlesome. And you can tease things out of them and into and think of it, and I've taught courses on Black Mountain poets for years and it's always interesting for me to see what students make of certain propositions that Olson is putting there.

So I think it's still quite vibrant and I think it's still, you know . . . old hat? I don't know, who am I to say? [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: Miriam Nichols has written a whole book saying that it deserves reconsideration and I think she may be on to something, and she's discussing many of the poets that you mention, and she's also working on the life story of Robin Blaser, and was also close to that school.

You've talked about a kind of poetry which includes "a willingness to reside within a rift of some sort of blur, a qualification distinction or in-distinction." Can you elaborate on that?

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Well, I think it's a poetry that is not so absorbed in or motivated by an attempt to create coherences that it overlooks certain, you know, telling fissures and rifts and breakages. Certainly the sense that I was *taught* as a student in high school and college. It's different from that. When I was in literature classes as a college student, the thing that was extolled when we studied poems, when we studied a short story, when we studied a novel, was the way in which the piece of writing cohered and the way in which, you know, everything was working towards this unified effect. And that was the influence of the New Criticism 'cuz that was the big thing that poems were there for, for the New Critics, is to give you this unified effect. And there was a certain economy that was privileged or a sense of economy that was privileged, you know, by that way of looking at the poem. That there's nothing extraneous there. That there's no wasted motion. And it sounded *good*, but it didn't jive with a lot of stuff that was going on. You know? It didn't jive with a lot of stuff that was going on in, you know, *lived* experience, both individual and collective. It didn't jive with a lot of stuff that was quite *moving* and quite impactful in the arts.

PAUL NELSON: As if life were a movie and we can edit the tape before anyone sees it.

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Yeah. So the stuff that was most resonant for me, and that was the most meaningful for me, was stuff that was acknowledging and that was not acknowledging fracture, breakage, a fragmentation, things fall apart. And finding a way to live with that. To *sing* it, to even celebrate it, or at least to abide with it. And examples are multiple and I won't start giving examples. But that's what's behind the kind of statement that you just read, that I made.

PAUL NELSON: At least to recognize it and then to communicate in some way that you know it exists.

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. I was gonna give an example, but I . . . [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: Go ahead. One more, if you wanna do *one* example, one example.

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Well, one of the examples that I give in one of the essays that I wrote, “Cante Moro.” It’s from a Sonny Rollins performance where he, it’s on the album *East Broadway Rundown*, and on the title cap tune, towards the end, he actually takes the mouthpiece of the saxophone off of the saxophone and starts playing the mouthpiece, the severed piece of the horn. And that’s kind of, that’s alliteration {an illustration?} of the kind of esthetic that has informed so much of the music and art that I’m referring to. Where you find a way to make fracture tuneful, or atonal, even, if it needs to be.

PAUL NELSON: You’ve also talked about a kind of poetry in which you said, “Certain kinds of wholeness are not available to us.”

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Mm-hmm, yeah, yeah. Certain kinds are not available to us, or the ones that *are* available to us are inadequate. They exclude so much, or they are made at the expense of areas of experience and areas of response that are vital and necessary. In one of the pieces that’s included in my first book of criticism, *Discrepant Engagement*, a piece called “Sound and Sentiment, Sound and Symbol,” I talk about the idea of predatory coherence. A coherence that is arrived at by preying upon that which does not fit, and either blanking it out, ignoring it, marginalizing it in some way, excluding, and rendering it null and void. Predatory in that sense. That which doesn’t fit becomes a victim of this will to coherence and the thing that I was trying to suggest in the passage that you quoted is that we have to be wary of the will to cohere because, as we’ve seen, the will to cohere, certainly in the West, has led to these conquistadorial regimes that just regard, for example, the non-European, as irrelevant. You know, to be subjugated or eliminated. But certainly not to be invited in as a vital participant and a source of information about the expansive possibilities of being human.

Ralph Ellison says something about this in *Invisible Man*, you know. I’ve forgotten how he puts it, but it’s something like, the mind that has found an order has to guard against being seduced by that order. And being seduced into a kind of blindness to the things that that order does not accommodate.

PAUL NELSON: And here comes Nat Turner, watch out. [laughs]

NATHANIEL MACKEY: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: I mention that, that came up in a conversation last night. You’ve categorized the notion of Duende as suggesting one is not in command of certain things. It seems to me to have a resonance with Blaser and Spicer’s practice of Outside, but also with ancient traditions in English poetry such as Caedmon’s Hymn. Do you see your work as being a part of the practice of Outside?

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Yeah, I think that there’s an ice, for me, a happy resonance between what Blaser talked about as the practice of Outside in referring to Spicer’s work, and to what the jazz musicians, who in the ‘60s began to break with bebop, and not confine themselves to, you know, the harmonic constituents of a piece in their improvisations, the kinds of things that Ornette Coleman, for example, began to do. And to play in *this* way, in this post-bebop way, was to play Outside. You played Outside the chord changes. And so the kinds of excursions into relative incoherence, incoherent only in relationship to a certain set of expectations, interested me. And in that sense, I feel aligned with that kind of practice, and a kind of excursion into the Outside. You know, because of the sense that one is not in complete control and that there are things that extend *beyond* one’s control that are vital and that one has to, in some way, account for, or at least show a certain amount of respect for.

PAUL NELSON: Be open to.

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Be open to.

PAUL NELSON: You started doin' serial poems called *Song of the Andoumboulou* and you're asking for these kinds of energies. Isn't that a petition to these kinds of energies, don't you think, in a way?

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Well, yeah. I mean, "Song of the Andoumboulou" is a Dogon funeral song that is directed to the spirit world. And the spirit world is the unknown world. And the "Song of the Andoumboulou" is an admission of limited knowledge. It is an admission of mortality. It comes in a ceremony that is specifically addressed to mortality. Someone has died. It's also a confession of weakness, in a certain way. A confession that one is not in control. So it's death, to begin with. In *my* case, it's an invitation to an "other," an other-ness, an altered, in that one, it's a piece of music that I heard on a recording in the early 1970s, a recording of Dogon music, and so it's coming from another place on the globe, another culture in the planet so it's obviously fated {freighted?} with a lot of cultural specificity that is foreign to me, and that I don't know. It's also, at that time, though I was reading things about Dogon culture and cosmology, Marcel Griaule's *Conversations with Ogotemmel*, neither that book nor the liner notes of the record that I heard this on said anything about the Andoumboulou, other than to suggest that the Andoumboulou are the spirits. It was only in later years when I read more about the Dogon that I found out a bit more about the Andoumboulou, that they were this predecessor type of human being that failed, etc., etc. So I was invoking something that I would later come to know more about. But I was at that point drawn in by the sound of the music, by certain things about it. And moved into an area where I was to be, you know, instructed. I was to be given impulses and instruction and later, more information about that. So it wasn't a serial poem that I began, you know, knowing as much about where I would go with it, as I've subsequently come to *know*. And so in that second sense it was courting the unknown.

PAUL NELSON: After about 30 years you start to get some ideas about where it's goin'. Some . . . some ideas.

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Well, a few [laughs]. A few and, you know, it opens up in all kinds of ways. And you begin to see things there that you hadn't seen before. For example, the connection between the "Song of the Andoumboulou" and cante jondo, a flamenco deep song that you've mentioned already. I mean, by the time we get to *Whatsaid Serif*, my third book of poems, a lot of Spanish stuff, flamenco stuff comes into the poem at that point. And that had a lot to do with a certain correspondence I was hearing between certain vocal qualities in the singing of the "Song of the Andoumboulou" on that recording, a raspiness in the voice, etc., etc. And you know, one of the hallmarks of flamenco singing, cante jondo. So it became a way to navigate myself through a number of correspondences and it's come to relate to different things at different times, but to become a work of accumulation and accretion.

PAUL NELSON: The Andoumboulou are described as these progenitor spirits, these spirits yearning to become fully human. In a sense, can we say that *we* are the Andoumboulou?

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Well, that's what *I've* been saying.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

NATHANIEL MACKEY: I've talked about them as a rough draft of humanity and I've come to identify them with, not with some exotic African culture in the *past*, you know, pre-literate, etc., etc., etc., but to identify them with *us*. You know, the species, the human species and a species trying to become more human, trying to come closer to living up to the ideals that are packed into

that, that we're human, humanity. Move, you know, as opposed to inhuman, which we use so often to describe acts that are repugnant to us.

PAUL NELSON: Say is there like, there's been some slippage in recent years. Maybe that's just the way it always is. Let's talk about one of the poems from *Splay Anthem*. Your serial poem has two main threads. We've talked about *Song of the Andoumboulou*, and "Mu" is the other thread of it. I'm thinking of the notion of one of the aspects of "Mu" you've mentioned is, well, there's the Don Cherry reference. There's the reference to Jane Harrison and Charles Olson's use of the word *muthos*, and there's also the mythic lost continent which some called Lemuria. There's a poem in there called, "On Antiphon Island," and if you could read that maybe we could talk about it after you read. This is from *Splay Anthem*, talking with Nathaniel Mackey. He's the author of *Splay Anthem*, and also a new book of prose, a whole collection of his collected epistolary novel, *From a Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate*. I'm Paul Nelson.

NATHANIEL MACKEY:

On Antiphon Island they lowered
the bar and we bent back. It
wasn't limbo we were in albeit
we limbo'd. Everywhere we
went we
limbo'd, legs bent, shoulder
blades grazing the dirt,
donned
andoumboulouous birth-shirts,
sweat salting the silence
we broke... Limbo'd so low we
fell and lay looking up at
the clouds, backs embraced by
the
ground and the ground a fallen
wall
we were ambushed by... Later we'd
sit, sipping the fig liqueur, beckoning
sleep, soon-come somnolence nowhere
come as yet. Where we were, not-
withstanding, wasn't there...

Where we
were was the hold of a ship we were
caught
in. Soaked wood kept us afloat... It
wasn't limbo we were in albeit we
limbo'd our way there. Where we
were was what we meant by "mu."
Where

we were was real, reminiscent
arrest we resisted, bodies briefly
 had,
held on
to
 “A Likkle Sonance” it said on the
record. A trickle of blood hung
overhead I heard in spurts. An
introvert trumpet run, trickle of
 sound...
A trickle of water lit by the sun
I saw with an injured eye, captive
music ran our legs and we danced...

Knees
bent, asses all but on the floor, love’s
bittersweet largesse... I wanted
trickle turned into flow, flood,
two made one by music, bodied
 edge
gone up into air, aura, atmosphere
the garment we wore. We were on
a ship’s deck dancing, drawn in a
dream
above hold... The world was ever after,
elsewhere.
Where we were they said likkle for little, lick
ran with trickle, weird what we took it
for... The world was ever after, elsewhere,
no
way where we were
was there

PAUL NELSON: When you hear that and you read the preface and you get this notion of this lost continent, whether or not it existed, we think, “Did it exist?” I mean, were we taken slaves back then? Or is this about Africa? The mind starts racing with some of the possibilities in hearing something like that and reading something like that.

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Only the shadow knows [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: [laughs] You mentioned in an essay on Robert Duncan’s war poems, “Gassire’s Lute,” about the notion of a world poem, and is that a more accurate description of what you’re trying to do with these two threads? And if so, why don’t you describe the world poem?

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Well, I don't know if I would call it that, although it certainly comes out of the cross-cultural internationalist impulse that Duncan talks about when he talks about the emergence of what he calls the world poem among certain modernist poets – Pound's *Cantos*, Williams's *Paterson*, H.D.'s *Trilogy*. And I see my work related to that. I qualify the term "world poem" because it does suggest a kind of closure and coherence that, as you can tell by the remarks I made earlier, I'm a little wary of. I don't think that the world poem can be thought of as an achievement. It has to be thought of as an aspiration and maybe a necessary {necessarily?} *failed* aspiration. So to the extent that the world poem suggests something that has been achieved and captured, I'm a little, you know, I'm a bit, you know, I back off.

PAUL NELSON: Hesitant.

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Yeah. But the impulse towards an inclusiveness that goes beyond certain accepted or expected boundaries, yes, I'm doing that. I *want* to do that. I try to do that. And the thing I don't want to be gathered from that is that what I'm doing is inclusive enough to be touted as some kind of blending of all of the world's cultures, because it's *not* that. There are some strands that run through there that I go back to again. And I have, you know, I have my favorites [laughs]. The Eskimos don't get a lot of play in my work, and there are all kinds of other places and then cultures that don't show up a lot, although you'll find, you know, why do the Dogon keep coming up? Why is Brazil such a . . . So in that sense, it's not a poem that's trying to be encyclopedic in its worldliness. It's the expression of a desire for worldliness but a desire that goes in certain directions and winds up in certain places in a recurrent way.

PAUL NELSON: Well, certain flavors. Maybe gumbo over sushi and what have you.

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Yeah, yeah. That's right. That's right.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs] Right. And then of course, you know, you talk about the world poem and is that limiting? 'Cuz we could talk about the cosmic poem, which includes the other . . .

NATHANIEL MACKEY: We could, yeah.

PAUL NELSON: . . . constellations and universes and . . .

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: . . . and what have you, or however you wanna get into outer space. You've talked about yourself in your work as being "a slow improviser," and you say that "it rarely comes in one fell swoop, dribbles, rather than a river." Can you talk about the balance between the organic, meaning the poem that just comes and you don't even have to touch it, and the revision aspects?

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Yeah. I don't recall any time in recent years that I've written a poem that just came in, you know, one fell swoop. Parts of poems do that. Lines, passages, even extended passages do that. But for one thing, my poems tend to be presented as fragments. "Song of the Andoumboulou: 35," for example, is being marked as something that is a part of something larger. It's the 35th part of something called *Song of the Andoumboulou*. But even within that, there will be parts within that part, there'll be sections separated by a bullet or a part separated by a page break and a horizontal line, that kind of thing.

PAUL NELSON: And what does that indicate when you do that?

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Well, it indicates that these are parts, that they are portions of a poem that are coming in at different times, coming in in different places. The placement on the page is trying to suggest something about that. Page breaks are trying to suggest something about that.

They're just different ways of segmenting the poem. I think poetry stresses segmentation. Even poems that don't do the kinds of things I'm talking about. The line break is an underscoring of segmentation, especially when you get to poets who actually sound out that line break with a caesura. There's something at the very heart of the genre that is invested in the cut {?} of segmentality. And in *my* work, I view, you know, augmented that with other means of marking segmentation, segmentivity or whatever the word would be. The bullet, the page break, the line, the placement on the page.

But anyway, that's trying to give some sense of there not being a homogenous, uniform time and space in which these things occur. Even though one can read the poem, in a homogenous, you know, five {live?} time in space. When I read one of those sections, it'll go, you know, if it goes for five minutes, you will hear them as though they were all within that space.

As far as the process that brought them into *being*, it's actually much more strung out and staggered than that. Both in terms of the amount of time that it takes to read the poem is deceptively compact. And I think that's probably always true, with all writing. The process of writing is more strung out. I mean, you read a paragraph that may have taken three weeks to write, but it doesn't take you three weeks to read it.

So in some ways this is just highlighting something that's endemic to the medium, more generally. But I want to be open to that which comes in and I do that by keeping a notebook, by writing things down as they come in, and then finding out what they may be trying to tell me, finding out where they fit. And the actual, you know, getting the poem together will come after they've come in. .

And then there's also the fact that when you sit down to write and put things together, things happen then, too, things that you hadn't planned on. There's been a lot of thought about that, and there continues to be a lot of concern with and attention to improvisation and I think that we're just kind of beginning to scratch the surface of what improvisation is. It's not just spontaneity, which I think it has tended to be confused with. But at the same time, it's something we both give this kind of magical aura, as though it were, you know, really something happening on another planet. And at the same time it's something very mundane and everyday. I mean, we're doing it right now.

PAUL NELSON: When you *drive* you do it.

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Yeah, yeah. We're doing it all the time. So in some ways, we've put improvisation up against a kind of straw man. I don't know what that straw man is. Regimentation?

PAUL NELSON: Formalism?

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Organization, formalism. But it's something that we don't tend to achieve. Maybe it's an ideal of control. But, you know, we don't have that. To me, it's interesting how *hard* we think about something that is so commonplace and right at our fingertips. You know, there are academic conferences on improvisation now. Scholarly journals devoted to improvisation. I just got the announcement of a new issue of a journal that comes out in Canada. It's the *Journal of Studies in Improvisation*, things like that. So I always say I'm a slow improviser because I *am*. I want to get . . . and we probably *all* are, but I don't know. Maybe some are faster than others and some are slower than others, but the idea that you're just doing what's in the moment, and you're going very quickly from moment to moment, is probably the dominant picture of improvisation. And it's certainly not the *only* picture of improvisation and I'm trying to get onto the table the idea that there are different kinds of improvisation, and different time senses and pulsings of improvisation that are out there and are possible.

PAUL NELSON: Slow burn?

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Slow burn, yeah. [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: Can you talk to us about the new work comin' out this Fall?

NATHANIEL MACKEY: It's called *Nod House*. It's a continuation of the serial work – *Song of the Andoumboulou* and "*Mu*." I think that it, what? *Splay Anthem* ended with "Song of the Andoumboulou: 60" and this one goes from 61 through 85. I've forgotten what the corresponding "*Mu*" numbers are. The title suggests a kind of somnolent state. A kind of half dream, half waking, *Nod House*. But also the other sense of the term, nod, which is the giving of assent to something. And in a conscious way and sometimes in an unconscious way. So various senses of nod are at play in the book. There are two sections. Part One is called "Quag." And Part II is called "Quag," and Quag is described, characterized at one point as Nub's New Colony. "Nub" was the final section of *Splay Anthem* and it was the name, a very polysemous name for a place, a condition, etc., etc. and it wanted to suggest a certain kind of diminution and crisis. And "Quag" comes out of that and as you can hear in just the term itself, it suggests a predicament of being stuck and the fact that it's *repeated*. That's the name for the two sections suggests the kind of stasis, the kind of being stuck.

And *Nod House* is in some way exploring the inner recoil, in search of some kind of spiritual nutrient – nutrients, I guess I should say, plural – that we go through in that condition of stasis and crisis, critical stasis.

And the book is following through with those two serial poems and the intertwinement of them, "*Mu*" and *Song of the Andoumboulou*. And it essentially continues the work I've been doing for these few decades and, you know, comes out of *Splay Anthem* in the way that I've suggested, but probably in some other ways as well. And and opens up into new things, as well.

PAUL NELSON: When you say the word "Quag" in U.S.A. in 2011, we see the two Quags, quagmires that are going on in Iraq and Afghanistan, and how these have been described by critics as Vietnam in the sand. So is there a nod to these quagmires in what you're doin'?

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Yeah, yeah. You know, writing out of a sense of that backdrop, seemingly unending backdrop of war that we've been involved in. And in fact, I think there are a few lines at one point that go something like "Quag's ash falling for ages."

And, you know, how to live with that. And I think part of it is this inner recoil that I've talked about. You know, falling back away from it, into one's self.

One of the motifs that recurs throughout the book is just the phrase, "What's so was." There's a poem that's called "Day After Day of the Dead," and it says at one point, "Nobody wanted to know what soul was."

So the project and the challenge of soul-making in the face of these very inauspicious external events that just seem to *be* there, unremittingly, seem to be the quagmire we find ourselves stuck in is one of the things that I think the book has some expression of, and some response to, and it seems to be a test for us. It seems to be a test for us to have to live with these conditions, as previous generations have, as we know from world literature, world music, these kinds of trying

situations have been, you know, the bane of human existence for quite some time now and it's our turn.

PAUL NELSON: These endless violent occupations. You mention this notion of soul-making. It reminds me of Keats, how this planet is a veil of soul-making, and for the poet who, my assumption is that the poet is a person who is seeking a deeper consciousness. Having a backdrop of endless violent occupations, if we can see it through the lens of Robert Duncan and your essay on his Vietnam War poems, "Gassire's Lute," we can sense that while they *are* trying times, it's an incredible opportunity for a *poet* in these kinds of times.

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Well, it's an opportunity to be more conscious of the not-so-obvious dimensions and ramifications of war, that it's not just out *there*. One of the things that Duncan wrestled with was the way in which . . . You know, one of the slogans during the Vietnam War period was "Bring the War Home" and one of the things that Duncan sort of implicitly and sometimes explicitly insisted on was that the war already *was* home, at home. And one of the things that the poet can *do* is to point that out, is to throw light on that and that's one of the things that Duncan was doing in his poems of the Vietnam War period. And, you know, it's something that . . . poets are often perceivers of direness. And sometimes it's difficult for a society to see the relevance of the poets and their predilection for perceiving direness. And sometimes when times of external manifest, calamity and crisis occur, it's a bit easier for the society to see the relevance of the things that the poets have been saying. And in some ways, Duncan is talking about that in his war poems. He's talking about it in *The H.D. Book* when he writes about H.D. and her war trilogy. H.D. talked about it in the war trilogy. And I think it's an opportunity, if that word doesn't rattle too much, that's met with mixed feelings. So the way in which expression becomes angled and graded and textured and nuanced and complicated in the work of somebody like Duncan, becomes another way in which one sees the conflict and contradiction and manifesting itself in the work itself. In Duncan's view and I think in *my* view, too, the translation of that into some kind of, you know, counterpoint, some kind of musical apprehension that allows one to let these different things have their moment. And, you know, of slide {?} and having their moment and move through one another in the ways that they need to. And in that way, it's an attempt to become more capacious in what we can . . . let be. And let speak to us.

PAUL NELSON: It's been a real honor and pleasure to have you in Seattle and I hope that you'll visit again soon. Thank you.

NATHANIEL MACKEY: Well, thank *you*. I've enjoyed talking with you.

Technicians of the Sacred

PAUL NELSON: Over 4,000,000 Americans are estimated to be practitioners of a religion that predates Christianity. That would make it the fastest growing religion in America. We're talking, Wicca, or the Old Religion as Phyllis Curott likes to call it. A Wiccan high priestess, Phyllis says "The bias against modern witches has a very old historical precedent."

PHYLLIS CUROTT: It's a start, and in fact it's a religious prejudice. Most people don't understand where it came from. It came from the persecutions, as you said in your opening, 200 years worth of persecutions, that grew out of the Inquisition, actually, the success of the Inquisition. The accusations against witches had previously been made with tremendous success against the Jewish community in Europe. Exactly, the entire image, the big nose, the wart on the nose, the copulating with Satan, worshipping Satan, killing Christian babies, all that stuff, all of which is a great big lie, was what was used to persecute Jews.

PAUL NELSON: Phyllis goes beyond setting the record straight in her new book *Witch Crafting: A Spiritual Guide to Making Magic*. She ties in the fact that quantum physics is validating some of the notions of Wicca, like the belief that *everything* has energy. Wicca is about magic but, Phyllis says, "not parlor tricks."

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Magic, to me, like I said before, it's not something that you *do* to the universe with your mind or even with your heart and your body. It's a dance that you do *with* the universe. Magic, it's all the events that flow once you've gotten the blindfold off and you've made a connection to that indwelling divinity, and you've learned how to *see* it and connect to it in other people and in your pets, and in your garden and in the sky, and in *all* the marvelous aspects of nature that surround us and empower us.

PAUL NELSON: A woman who has spoken to the United Nations alongside the Dalai Lama, Phyllis Curott is a spiritual heavyweight and also just plain fun. A look at *Witch Crafting*, today on the program. I hope you enjoy it. Thanks for tuning in.

My daughter Rebecca is a typical ten-year-old American girl. She's into Nickelodeon, Britney Spears and witches. That's right, witches. Not the stereotype, ugly Halloween witch, mixing eye of newt into a caldron to put an evil spell on some man, but something resembling the spiritual practice of 4,000,000 Americans who are reviving an ancient tradition that predates the three main Biblical religions: Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

Perhaps it was the *Harry Potter* books that sparked Rebecca's interest. Perhaps the success of those books is just another sign of the end of the intense patriarchy of the last 2,000 + years. Patriarchy exemplified by 200 years of witch hunts, by the laws that once considered women property akin to chattel, and all the modern-day manifestations that are coming to an end as women reclaim their birthright, a natural, powerful connection to the eminent divide {imminent divine?}. Phyllis Curott is a modern woman, an author, social and spiritual activist, practicing lawyer and Wiccan high priestess. Her new book is *Witch Crafting: A Spiritual Guide to Making Magic*. Phyllis, a pleasure to have you on the show today.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: A pleasure to be on the show today.

PAUL NELSON: This is gonna be good. I'm really looking forward to this. You know, as we did with the last witch we had on the show [laughs] . . .

PHYLLIS CUROTT: [laughs] You mean, I'm not the first?

PAUL NELSON: No.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: I'm not your first witch?

PAUL NELSON: Francesca beat you by about four days. Friday.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Oh, all right. [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: You know what she did? She did an invocation to make sure that this interview happens for the best and highest possible purpose of all living things everywhere. Would you so honor us?

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Oh, that's lovely. That's very lovely. Every moment that we have to communicate with somebody else is a moment of magic. It's an opportunity for us to see the sacred in each other, and to find it in ourselves. So thanks to Rebecca, and thanks to you and thanks to the people who are listening, I wanna say thank you because it's an opportunity for me to do what I love best, which is to have that moment of connection. So that's my spell, that's my thanksgiving and that's my prayer.

PAUL NELSON: Amen! And may it be so. You know, if you could have told me ten years ago that I'd be interviewing witches with my daughter listening, I'd have called the paramedics myself [laughs] but . . .

PHYLLIS CUROTT: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: . . . the world is changing, isn't it? Changing in your own experience, probably so.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: It is. Yeah. Well, if you'd asked me 20 years ago what I wanted to be when I grew up it was not going to be a witch [laughs]. It wasn't in my high school yearbook and it wasn't . . .

PAUL NELSON: A witch *and* a lawyer.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Well, the lawyer's the dark side, you know? [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: I see [laughs]

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: I bet people still wanna stay on your *good* side with those two.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Oh, yeah, [laughs] absolutely.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Listen, if, you know, if those fundamentalists really believed the truth about those crazy things that they think, I would stay completely out of my way if I believed that stuff.

PAUL NELSON: What crazy things *do* they think?

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Oh, you know, the old party line that started 500 years ago and to some extent started 5,000 years ago, that witches are evil, that they worship Satan, that they have green faces and warts on their nose. What do you think, Rebecca? No green face, right? That they cavort with Satan, kiss him on the butt, and other acts that we will not discuss.

PAUL NELSON: Thank you very much.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yes, and you know what else? That they kill Christian babies. Fly around on brooms. I've been trying, I've been known to fly around on a broom or two in my day but the rest of it is just a stereotype. And in fact, it's a religious prejudice. Most people don't understand where it came from. It came from the persecutions, as you said in your opening, 200 years' worth of persecutions that grew out of the Inquisition, actually, the success of the Inquisition. The accusations against witches had previously been made with tremendous success against the Jewish community in Europe. Exactly. The entire image, the big nose, the wart on the nose, the copulating with Satan, and worshipping Satan, killing Christian babies, all that stuff, all of which is a great big lie, was what was used to persecute Jews, to torture them, to kill them, and to confiscate their property and to disenfranchise them from the political and cultural life of Europe. It was a very successful campaign. And it as turned on sort of the remaining competition, as it were, which were the practitioners of the old religion of Europe. The indigenous shamanism of Europe and the Middle East, and it was a persecution of women, largely women. There were men and women who practiced the religion equally, but the persecution was focused primarily upon women. And it was really the women's holocaust. They went from being people to being property that could be disposed of and killed by husbands and brothers, and they weren't allowed to receive an education. Very much like what's happening to women in Afghanistan. You couldn't teach a woman to read or write. She couldn't own property. She couldn't inherit it, she couldn't run a business. They weren't allowed to practice medicine, which they had as herbalists and as midwives who birthed babies, and they couldn't practice their religion. They couldn't function as the shamans in the villages where they lived. And so the old religion was almost entirely wiped out.

PAUL NELSON: Maybe it's a manifestation of that patriarchy and prejudice, but when we think of shaman we think of man. We think of maybe native American man or African man. But obviously, women had that kind of connection, and it was the old religion. Why don't you give a sense of the history of that.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Well, heaven, my, I mean, the fact is that Western Civilization, we tend to think of Western Civilization beginning with Greek culture, with Plato, you know, and the old boys network but in fact Western Civilization was born in the lap of the goddess, or *from* the lap of the goddess. The earliest signs of the human attempt to express its vision of divinity were figures of female goddesses, way back, 25,000 B.C. 25,000 B.C.! And the very first religions actually worshipped goddesses, and they go back to 7500 B.C., throughout the entire, the Fertile Crescent, what we think of as the Middle East. They were, by and large, peaceful cultures. They were agricultural. They worshipped a goddess, and there were women who served as priestesses. The fact is that much of the culture that we have inherited now was influenced by 10 to 12 critically important priestesses. They were called the Sibyls and they had sacred sites, sacred centers, temples that were devoted to a particular goddess, scattered all around the Middle East and Thebes. The most famous, of course, is the Oracle of Delphi, and she was the counselor of Athens, which was the most powerful city-state, and which is what we think of when we think of the birth of Western Civilization. But no decision was made, no political, social, military, economic decision was made without a consultation with the priestess at Delphi first. And there was one, the Libyan Sibyl, who was devoted to the goddess Isis, the Cumaean Sibyl was the counselor of Rome, the establishment of Rome. So for thousands of years, the fact is that women played a critical role as priestesses, as wise women, and as counselors and informers of culture.

PAUL NELSON: We're talking with Phyllis Curott. She's a Wiccan high priestess and her new book is *Witch Crafting: A Spiritual Guide to Making Magic*. I'm Paul Nelson.

Now, my daughter's 10. Knowing that she had some interest in this, the Harry Potter books helped, the change in culture that's happened has helped. When did *you* first know that you had witch-like tendencies?

PHYLLIS CUROTT: [laughs] Well, you are really getting a jump on the game. I wish I'd started when I was 10. Really, it sort of started for me in my second year in law school, very unexpectedly, what I now understand as a shamanic break, which is essentially a kind of spontaneous opening of consciousness to a broader experience of reality. An experience of the world as alive, as divinely alive. And all kinds of crazy things happened. I started having dreams that came true and a keen sensitivity to other people's thoughts and feelings. I could sort of *read* them very quickly and then sort of what I *sensed*, they would suddenly say. And I just had this sense that I wasn't alone, you know? That there was a presence accompanying me. And I started exploring. It was in New York and it was the late '70s and I had never taken drugs during the '60s 'cuz I was a political activist, fighting against the war. It was either drugs or politics and I picked politics. I had *no* frame of reference. Esalen was out here on the West Coast. It might as well have been, you know, in Australia for all the difference it meant to a New Yorker. I went to an Ivy League School, got my degree in philosophy, and I was at law school in New York. I mean, hardcore.

PAUL NELSON: You went to Brown University.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: I went to Brown University.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yeah [laughs] But these experiences were phenomenal and I think initially I was unnerved by them, but because they had this objective component because I would have a dream and then it would come true. Because I would sense that the phone was gonna ring and then it would ring and I would think it would be, you know, a long-lost friend, and it was, and things that you couldn't predict. I realized there was more to reality than I had ever been raised to believe. You know, there was just more goin' on, and I started trying to figure out what it was, and being a rationalist, I started looking into physics. And I discovered quantum physics and the idea that everything's energy, and everything's interconnected, and that human beings have a capacity to affect reality at this very amazing level of energy that we mostly don't see but which is there, all the time. And events started to play out. That's what I talked about in *Book of Shadows* and I was led to a coven of witches in New York. And it was the last place in the world I ever could have imagined myself. Not in a million years. Not in a million years. I was offered an invitation to study with them, and I said, "Thank you very much," walked out the door. I *never* intended to go back. But the universe sent me a very powerful sign in the form of a Sibyl, the Libyan Sibyl who I'd been dreaming about, and she appeared and I decided I better go check it out. And I didn't find a single green-faced hag, no warts, nothing, no Satan, none of that nonsense. There's no Satan in the old religion. I just found a group of fascinating women of *all* different ages and races and religious backgrounds and they were seeking the goddess, and they were seeking the power that they had within themselves to create the lives that they wanted. Lives that included gifts that we mostly neglect, but that are a part of all of us.

PAUL NELSON: Well, there's a couple of things in that answer that I wanna follow up on. One is the notion of quantum physics, 20th Century physics and I say that very distinctly, 20th Century 'cuz we *are* the 21st, and this is old stuff. It's not new . . .

PHYLLIS CUROTT: That's right.

PAUL NELSON: . . . but it hasn't seeped into the culture yet.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: That's right.

PAUL NELSON: And that is, even though this board right here, or this book, seems really solid, when you get down to the very smallest particles, there's a lot of *space* in it.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yeah, it's energy and space. Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: Tell us. You know more about it than I do.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Well, I have a lay person's understanding of quantum physics. I've always-, I mean, it scared the heck out of me when I was in high school. I just wanted to run for the hills when I had to take physics classes. But as I got older I started to get more and more fascinated. In very simple terms, quantum physics tells us that everything is energy. At its simplest level. Within an atom is a particle and then within the particle is spin and and space, and energy. It's all energy. You're energy, your father is energy, my voice going out into the ether is energy. *Everything's* energy. It's a huge *field* of energy. Organized, as Rebecca and as me and as a microphone and as a book. But it's all energy, and it's all *connected* in that field. And most remarkably enough, that the human mind has a capacity to interact with the universe at that energy level, to make things happen. And it's phenomenal. What kinds of things? Healing. Fascinating. There are all these studies being done now about the power of prayer. People who don't know that they're being prayed for have a higher recovery rate from terminal illnesses when they're prayed for. They don't *know* it. They have no idea they're being prayed for. They have a statistically significantly higher recovery rate than people who are not prayed for. It's *amazing*. Magic.

PAUL NELSON: Thank you, Larry Dossey, for pointing these things out.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Hey, you know?

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Right. The problem is that, you know, witches have been so misunderstood that what we take, you know, what we understand, what we perceive and what we work with, it's easier for Larry Dossey to say it, and to be *heard* than for a witch to say it here.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, someone who's a Vietnam vet and an M.D., and has credibility and . . .

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: . . . in the *old* ways . . .

PHYLLIS CUROTT: That's right.

PAUL NELSON: . . . who understands the new ways.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: That's right.

PAUL NELSON: And that's the essence of a shaman.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: That bridge between worlds.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Absolutely and . . .

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: . . . I think that part of my ability to speak to the mainstream and the credibility I have comes from the fact that I'm a lawyer, an Ivy League lawyer.

PAUL NELSON: Who spoke before the U.N.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yeah, I was very active with the Beijing Conference on the status of women and also the Parliament of the World's Religions where a lot of very significant religious leaders showed up, including the Dalai Lama. We are out of the broom closet, little by little.

PAUL NELSON: And that's something I had to point out. Did you write that, "broom closet?" Or . . .

PHYLLIS CUROTT: If somebody else wants to claim credit for having said it first, that's fine with me. I don't know where I got it from but . . .

PAUL NELSON: But the notion of being . . .

PHYLLIS CUROTT: And it's the truth.

PAUL NELSON:: . . . but the notion of being closeted, like a gay person, but in your case, *broom* closet.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yeah, with all those dust bunnies. Made me sneeze. I couldn't deal. I was allergic. I had to get out, as fast as I could. I got out in 1985 and I've been out ever since [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: Well, a couple of things about the Bible and about traditional religion. First of all, you said in the answer to a previous question, there's no Satan in the old religions.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Right.

PAUL NELSON: That was something, well, the *new* religions, the ones that have been around for 2,000 years.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Belongs to them. He's theirs. He's their demon. They created him. He appears for the first time in the Old Testament. And each religion – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, has their own relationship and ascribes their own measure of importance to Satan, to the Devil, but he belongs to the Biblical religions. He's *their* personification of evil. He doesn't exist within the indigenous shamanism of Europe. We don't have a personification of evil, arguably because it's a nature religion. It's an earth-based spirituality and when you look to nature as the embodiment of the Divine, which is what *we* do . . . In other words, that quantum energy, that energy field, that energy is sacred, it's Divine. That's how we experience it, using the practices that I describe in *Witch Crafting*. Shamanic practices that help us to get the blindfold off. See that quantum energy, to see that happening, and we *see* it in the world around us. That, it's like . . . the world is the body. It's the outer form of that inner energy, and that energy is sacred. And when we work with that energy, we understand that we're connected. And we begin to see that all kinds of things are possible, that we're able to make magic. Lost you, I lost from you.

PAUL NELSON: No, no. Well, well the notion of Satan.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Oh, see, I, boy did I wander far afield. [inaudible]

PAUL NELSON: But that's good because . . .

PHYLLIS CUROTT: OK.

PAUL NELSON: . . . you know, you talk about that, that he's theirs but let's look at the Bible as metaphor, for example. OK, so maybe there's not a guy with horns who lives underground and it's real hot there. Maybe that's just a way of explaining it to people 2,000 years ago in a way they'll understand. But about the notion of evil.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: OK. Right.

PAUL NELSON: OK? So, is there no evil on the planet?

PHYLLIS CUROTT: No, there obviously is. I'm a New Yorker, you know? I was in New York when September 11th happened, and there's only one word to describe that and I mean, it was transparently evil. It was ferociously evil. The question is whether that evil is innate within each of us, or whether it is a function of a malady that can be remedied. And thank you for bringing me back because the point is that in a nature religion, when you look to nature as the expression of the Divine and it is your spiritual teacher, evil doesn't exist in the natural world. If I'm out in a jungle and a lion jumps out and eats me for lunch, I'm lunch, and it's a tragedy for me and my family, but it doesn't make the lion evil. You don't find evil existing in the natural world. It does, however, seem to exist in the human community. And so the question is: Where does it come from? The Biblical face will tell you that endemic. It's part of who we are. You know, we defied God. We were thrown out of Eden. There's tragic flaw within all of us . . .

PAUL NELSON: And it's Eve's fault!

PHYLLIS CUROTT: . . . And it's, of course, it's Eve's fault.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Runnin' around without any clothes on, you know? And it was the snake's fault that . . . who was Satan, right?

PAUL NELSON: Right, right.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: So I'm sorry, I just don't buy it because nature is my teacher and I don't find it there. But I find it with human beings so where did we . . . why? To me it's the symptom of being separated from the sacred. It's a *madness* that has overtaken us for thousands of years because we've been living . . . in a world that we *believe* has no divinity. That we live in a world where God isn't present. God isn't present in the world. You go *mad* in the absence of the most important thing in the world, which is that sacred presence. You go crazy and you engage in acts that are evil. Out of that wound, I mean, that's a wound. The most important relationship that you can possibly experience has been denied to us, and in its place is this pain, is this terrible loss, and this woundedness, and that's, I think, the origin of evil. That's where it comes from, that disconnect.

PAUL NELSON: One other thing about the old religions is that they believe in miracles – Jesus walking on water. Turning water into wine, these kind of things, but you talk about miracles like that today? They wanna lock you up.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Oh, yeah. One of the distinctions I think I made in *Witch Crafting*, the point is that other religions call it miracle, and the reason it's a miracle is that it comes from their one true god. There's no difference between, in a certain sense, what they consider to be a miracle and what we refer to as magic. They claim to have the only true path. I think the minute anybody says they have the one true path to the Divine, they don't have any path at all.

PAUL NELSON: Watch your wallet when that happens, right?

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Hey, you know? The fact is, though, it's interesting to me that maybe there is a distinction between miracles and magic because a lot of miracles are indeed supernatural. They are contrary to the laws of nature. Walking on water runs contrary to the laws of gravity. Changing water into wine is physically impossible. Magic, however, is very real. It's not supernatural. It

works with the natural laws that we live with, those laws now including the laws of quantum physics, not just Newton's physics. Magic is real. It is as real as the sacred. The problem is that in the traditional religions, they've substituted faith for experience. Witches *have* faith but the faith comes from our experiences, not from a belief in something that we can't connect to.

PAUL NELSON: It's an experiential thing.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: It *is*.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: That's exactly what it is.

PAUL NELSON: The reaction to the events of September 11th seem to reinforce that it is a man's world and war, competition and domination are the way of the world, have been here forever and are here to stay. What gives you hope that this summation is wrong?

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Oh, boy. The fact that I'm sitting here talking to you and that Rebecca is sitting next to me. The fact that this is my second book and the first one is selling 3,000 copies a month. There's a *movement* afoot. Species evolve when their survival depends on it. Our species is on the verge of extinction from overpopulation and destruction of the environment and depletion of natural resources. And from the kinds of self-destructive behavior that September 11th is just . . .

PAUL NELSON: Exemplifies.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: . . . Exemplifies. Species evolve when they *have* to. We *have to* evolve. What's missing is right at hand. It's the values that we've suppressed. It's the values that-, that are associated with the goddess, with the Divine feminine, with compassion and nurturance and connection, with a rediscovery of the Divine dwelling within ourselves. That God is not just, as it was described to me by a rabbi and a priest, some potter who created a pot and then left, but the Divine is *always* present in ourselves and in the world.

And my hope comes from these practices because they really *work*. I mean, I've been doing this for 25 years now. I *do* it. I'm the ultimate skeptic. I'm a lawyer. I want *proof*! And these practices work. I get proof. I have these phenomenal experiences. I live a magical life. It keeps me going. It sustains me, and I live in a kind of gratitude.

When September 11th happened, I woke up in the morning with a splitting headache. I don't get headaches. My head was just exploding in pain and I took aspirin and it didn't do any good. And I got in the car, I didn't know what had happened. I was driving into New York City and I got pulled over to the side by a phone call and a friend saying, "Where are you? Do you know what just happened?" I got turned back by the police when I tried to get into the city and it was a few more days before I got in, and I talked to several other of my women friends who also woke up that morning with these *screaming* headaches. The web had been ruptured in this hideous way and we're all connected in that web, and we felt it.

But we're also connected in joy, and I think the thing about Wicca that we've realized is that what happened on September 11th blew a hole in our hearts and the hole never goes away when you suffer that kind of loss. But with the gifts that brutality offers us, we have a capacity to grow a bigger heart around the hole. And that give me hope.

PAUL NELSON: May it happen! Bookofshadows.net is the website?

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: Is that correct?

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yeah, and . . .

PAUL NELSON: OK, bookofshad- . . .

PHYLLIS CUROTT: . . . and witchcrafting.com.

PAUL NELSON: Oh, very good. So there are a couple of different websites that we'll have links to on our website: inpeoria.org. Our guest Phyllis Curott is the author of *Witch Crafting: A Spiritual Guide to Making Magic*.

PAUL NELSON: We continue now with Phyllis Curott. She is a Wiccan high priestess, an author, a social and spiritual activist, practicing lawyer and the author of *Witch Crafting: A Spiritual Guide to Making Magic*. Absolutely fascinated. Early in the book you talk about how *meditation* is the first step to making magic. Why don't you tell us why that's so important.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Well, traditionally, magic has been defined as the art of changing consciousness at will, and it's been confined to that for many years because, I think, in large part because a lot of the influence on contemporary Wicca has come from ceremonial magical traditions which were very patriarchal, based on the Bible, based on the Kabbalah, "in the head." Meditation is more than just the mind though. It is the first step *like* changing consciousness at will is the *first* step in making magic. It's just the first step. One of the primary reasons it's important is that a mind that's constantly babbling, it's talking all the time or worrying all the time, can't *see* what's right in front of it, can't see the sacred. There's just too much noise. There's static on the line. And so it *misses* the most important thing. You know, you can't hear the conversation because there's all this rattle going on. So you have to learn to quiet the mind. And the minute you start to quiet the mind, that inner voice begins to sing. And you also are able to apprehend the singing all around you. You're able to start to see the sacred. So it's the first step.

PAUL NELSON: And the universe has ways of sometimes breaking through that chatter and if we're paying attention, like maybe to someone's conversation going by, and I've never seen this word before. Is it Cledon?

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yeah, yeah.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. I never saw that word before. I looked in my big dictionary. I looked at dictionary.com.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: Finally did a web search for it, and *your* name came up with it. And so . . .

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Is that true?

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, that's a true story.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: I'll be darned.

PAUL NELSON: With Google.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: In the poetry biz we'd say it's a found poem. Or we work . . .

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Oh, I like that.

PAUL NELSON: . . . we'd work that into a poem as something found. But they can have a Divine message. Maybe you could tell us about that and about the case involving John Lennon you describe in the book.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Oh, right. A Cledon is a very ancient . . . the Greeks really were very aware of it and it generally, it's a *message* from the Divine. It's a magical message from the Divine that comes through the voice in the crowd. Usually a child. Usually a child, I think because they are so generally innocent and open, sensitive, very sensitive. And so able to hear things that the rest of us don't hear because we're worrying too much.

One of the stories in *Witch Crafting* is about a Cledon with John Lennon. After he was shot, there were lots of us in New York who went to Central Park right near the Dakota to gather and people were lighting candles and they were singing. And they were singing a lot of John Lennon songs, and at one point this guy came over and was very *angry*. And said, do you have it there?

PAUL NELSON: "I fought the war for your sort."

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Right. And was furious, and they responded . . .

PAUL NELSON: With the line from John Lennon from *A Hard Day's Night*, the movie, and John Lennon said: "Bet you're sorry you won!" And it was in unison.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: And in the book you say how this was John's way of cheering these people up who were in tremendous, *tremendous* pain from having him be assassinated. As my father said, it shows you have a disconnect between his generation and mine.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: "So they shot a Beatle, big deal."

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Exactly.

PAUL NELSON: That was his reaction.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Exactly. So the Divine is always present and it's constantly sending us messages. Personally, that's what I think a witch is. A witch is somebody who's paying attention.

PAUL NELSON: That's very good because Allen Ginsberg said, "Poets are people who notice what they notice." Right?

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: So there's some similarities there.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Absolutely. Well, the creative impulse, whether it's a poet or an artist or a musician, that's, I mean, one of the greatest magics is music. And the creative impulses, {impulse is?}

the life force, that's sacred, that's holy. I mean, these days the only shamans that we have left aside from the witches that are making a resurgence, and so the artists, the writers, the poets, the artists, the musicians.

PAUL NELSON: Not just a resurgence of witches, but you say over four million Americans consider themselves Wiccans, which would make this the country's fastest growing religion. Where do these figures come from?

PHYLLIS CUROTT: A number of places. One of the primary sources was a statistical study that was done in the late '80s and early '90s, out of the University of California, and a study had been done for about 15 years of Wicca and goddess spirituality and its growth. And at that point the numbers were about 100,000 to 125,000 based on organizations, conferences, publications, mailing lists, etc., etc., etc. Whatever they use to try to cull numbers. And what they found was in examining over that roughly 15-year period, they found that the numbers were doubling every 18 months. Every year and a half there was a doubling in size. So if you extrapolate from that, you would come to a figure, somewhere between three and five million – about four million.

There are other sources that are really fascinating, though. One of them, I think it's the Marketing Director from Barnes & Noble, who puts the numbers based on book sales at about ten million, which I think is probably on the high end because witches read *so many* books because really, there aren't enough teachers so people are learning from books. But there are a number of sources and I think tolerance.org, is that it? Or religioustolerance.org has a nice article on the statistics involving Wicca. It's obviously very difficult because a lot of people are still in the broom closet so it's hard to get a fixed number. But that seems to make sense. I mean, everywhere I turn, there's Rebecca. There are witches everywhere.

PAUL NELSON: Why do you think that *is*? Why do you think so many people are interested in this?

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Oh, there are a number of reasons. Certainly the rapid growth, I think, had a lot to do with women. The critique that they ran of culture was very naturally extended to religion. And the patriarchal religions have been downright hostile, from the story of Eve through the restriction of priests and mullahs and rabbis to men, the demeaning of women. Religion has been used to oppress women, not to empower them. And women went looking for a spiritual home, and they found it in the old religions of the goddess and they have been a tremendous influence on the creation of Wicca, of modern religion. And the Goddess is Amira {a mirror?}, that's really empowering for women. Young women have come to it because also it's *empowering*. Women are very disenfranchised in this culture and it's a source of power and a source of *strength* and encouragement.

The other reason is, it's a *practice* and it *works*. You don't have to be a woman. You can be a man. These are techniques that are accessible. Anyone can do them and they really connect you to the Divine in yourself and in the world, and you really do start to live a very magical life.

PAUL NELSON: Pandora's Box has been opened, hasn't it? [laughs]

PHYLLIS CUROTT: [laughs] I hope so! I hope so.

PAUL NELSON: Well, you know, when my daughter opens a book like yours, she's very interested in sections on spell-casting. I think she asked me, can she make things float? I forget exactly what it was, but it was something like that, and it seems to me that not just ten-year-olds, but the average person, that might be one of the first things they wanna *look* into. And yet, spell-casting is not, you say, not about immediate gratification, and when some spells *don't* work, we may want to be thankful for that.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: That's right. One reason that I wrote *Witch Crafting* was that I was really frustrated with so much of the literature that was out there, and it was very spell-oriented and when people think of witchcraft, they think of magic, they think of spells. And the approach has been very mechanical. You know, what's a spell? Yeah, it's the secret formula. It's like the special way to make the machine operate. That the universe is a machine and if you just have the right herbs and the right oil, and the right potion and the right words, and you pull the lever, you know, the boyfriend will come down the chute. And it doesn't work that way, 'cuz the universe is not a *ma-chine*. The more you use these practices, the more you realize the universe is alive. It's conscious, it's interactive, it's alive. So a spell is not something you do to *manipulate* a machine to make it *give* you something that you *want*. It's a very dynamic co-creative religious practice that you-- Magic is something you do *with* the universe. Not something you do *to* the universe, and a spell is something that you create *with* the universe. And its purpose is very much like a prayer. The difference is that people pray when they feel helpless and they usually pray to a male god. When you work a spell, or cast a spell, you're invoking the aid of a divinity that's greater than yourself. But it's not just a god, it can be also a goddess. But most importantly, you're going to the well of your own power, your own *gifts*, and you're bringing it up and giving it shape, and sending it out into the world. You're creating your destiny. And you never use a spell to control *anybody* but yourself. Spells are *not* supernatural. They work with the natural rhythms of your body and of the earth and the moon and then the sun. You harness those energies. There's *nothing* supernatural about it. Certainly nothing *demonic*.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Probably a good time to talk about your definition of magic and the definition of Aleister Crowley, *his* definition of magic. Maybe why don't you talk about those few things.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yeah, well, the definition that the movement has worked with for a long time, to me, is just a starting place, and that's this idea of magic as the art of changing consciousness at will, Crowley, and then changing events and conformity with will. Dion Fortune and Starhawk also sort of popularized this idea. It's a great place to start. Like meditation, you know, it's a great place to start but if we confine magic to the head, we're missing the whole point because it's an earth religion. It's about the heart and it's about your body and it's about the earth and it's about nature. It's not just about imagining things. It's not about, you know, sitting in your living room and *visualizing* things. It's about life. It's about being alive. It's about being fully present in the world.

Magic, to *me*, is not something that you *do* to the universe with your mind or even with your heart and your body. It's a *dance* that you do *with* the universe. Magic, it's all the events that *flow*, once you've gotten the blindfold off and you've made a connection to that indwelling divinity, and you've learned how to *see* it, and connect to it, in other people and in your pets, and in your garden and in the sky and in *all* the marvelous aspects of nature that surround us and empower us.

PAUL NELSON: Magic is what happens when you have encountered the Divine.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Precisely

PAUL NELSON: That's how you say it in the book.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: Well, speaking of magic, there's a section of the book called "Real Magic," early in the book, and I think it would be a great place to do a little reading from it. Maybe starting with page 37, the last paragraph on that page, starting with: "In fact . . ." and then going to page 38, the words, "had experienced it, too."

PHYLLIS CUROTT: And he hands this to me without my glasses [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: Well, if I may . . .

PHYLLIS CUROTT: I will make magic and I will instantaneously be able to read it.

PAUL NELSON: Excellent. Well, let me just restate: We're talking with Phyllis Curott. She's the author of *Witch Crafting: A Spiritual Guide to Making Magic*.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yeah.

"In fact, magic is as real as the cold, wet nose on my dog, Webster, and he's experienced it also. It was the middle of summer and my soon-to-be ex-husband Bruce [laughs] and I had just adopted our Cairn Terrier. That afternoon a terrible phone call came to tell Bruce that his father had died. I was sitting in the living room, on the living room floor with Webster, as Bruce walked into the room to tell me his sad news. And as I was looking at him, the air all around his upper body began to shimmer, the way the horizon does during an intensely hot summer's day, and the space around him seemed to glow. And just as I noticed this, Webster began to growl. The hair on the back of his neck literally stood up on end, and he took several steps towards Bruce. He stood, staring at him, Bruce later told me, at a point just over Bruce's right shoulder. 'I can feel my father,' Bruce said, a stunned look on his face. 'He's *here*.' Although he was feeling shocked, he began to talk to his father, telling him he could feel his presence. He expressed his love and then mentally asked what his father wanted him to do about his mother, who was now alone and was not well. He heard his father respond that he should take care of her, that she would be with him very soon. And she died exactly one month later. And then Bruce told me later, he began to feel uncomfortable, wondering if what he was experiencing was *real*. And so he told his father that perhaps he should go visit his brother, who was grieving and could probably be comforted by his father's presence. And in the instant that Bruce communicated that, he felt his father depart. And at *that* very moment, I saw the radiance disappear. And Webster finally sat down, and he relaxed. And the {then?} Bruce told us that his father had left. Any doubt I might have had about the experience has disappeared when I realized that this little creature, Webster, had experienced it also."

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, animals are really tapped into that and yet one of these symptoms, I think, of the patriarchy is the way we treat animals in this culture. You know, putting hogs in crates on top of each other, on top of each other, on top of each other, and the very machine-like way in which we treat *food* in this country, whether it be hogs or cattle or what have you, some of the practices that go on. Environmental degradation might be seen as a symptom of the patriarchy of the last 2,000 years. You're agreeing with this.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Oh, absolutely. I mean, the fact is the Biblical cosmology says that God placed man upon the earth and gave him dominion over all the creatures of the earth. So we've essentially lived for thousands of years with this idea that it's a warehouse. We can take whatever we want from it and then treat it like a garbage dump and just sort of *throw* the stuff away.

One of the most powerful experiences that I had at the very beginning, when all of this stuff was just starting to happen, and I didn't have a name for it at the time. I was a lawyer. I was in Louisville, Kentucky. I was there on an organizing trip. I was fighting organized crime in trade unions, and when the day's meetings were all over, I piled in the car with a bunch of these trade union guys, and they took me to this country and western bar, and we're driving along. I knew nothing about Louisville, Kentucky. We're driving along and there's this huge wall on the right side while we're driving. And it was like all of a sudden we drove into this cloud. It's the only way I can explain it. And it was like this terrible pain and sadness and sense of helplessness came over me, and I sat in the backseat, and I was crying. It was such an overwhelming emotion that just came out of nowhere. And I couldn't let these big, tough union guys see I was crying, you know? They

wouldn't take me seriously. So I wiped my face. And one of the guys opened the door after the car was parked and I said, "Where *are* we?" He said, "It's a stockyard and the slaughterhouses." And then I realized that what I was feeling was the consciousness of all those animals that were being killed on the *other* side of that wall. And that, I became a vegetarian after that. I do eat meat now, but I don't eat a lot of it. I very rarely eat red meat. Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: Any free range meat? No hormones?

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: And the other thing, I think is the reverence in {reverencing?} way . . . I mean, the animals understand that metaphor you used earlier. You go in the woods, you get eaten by a lion, and it's not evil, it's lunch.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: It's the food chain.

PAUL NELSON: And they understand the food chain. But the way in which we treat it, you know, in a very mechanistic way, is not right.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: That's right. The native Americans, many of the tribes, the wonderful stories that when an animal is hunted, at the moment of its death, that the hunter would go to the animal and draw its last breath into his, and immediately begin to do prayers. And in fact, before the hunt, generally the shamanic approach is to do a ritual, to *call* the spirit of the animal, to *ask* it to give itself to you. And as soon as it dies, to give thanks and to make an offering for it, and *never* take more than was needed, ever.

PAUL NELSON: Well, that's just another symptom of our disconnection to the Divine and . . .

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Exactly.

PAUL NELSON: . . . certainly to the Divine Feminine. Circles have a certain power, too. You talk about that in the book, casting a circle. We have a writers' circle here and magic happens in that.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Do you?

PAUL NELSON: When I get into the schools and lecture on poetry, I ask the kids to get into a circle. For *me*, it's a way of showing that it's not *me* passing this wisdom down, that there's no hierarchy there, that I'm learning from them, as well, which I'm probably learning more [laughs].

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yeah [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: there's something magic about circles. *Why* is that?

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Well, you just said it. I mean, for one thing everybody in a circle is equal. I've been doing this for 25 years so, yes, and somebody who's only done it for five minutes, there's a difference in our *experience*. But a priest or a priestess is a *teacher*. The job is not to intervene or intercede or even interpret. It's to facilitate. It's to teach the person what *you've* learned so that they can use it for their own journey. And sitting in a circle is an expression of that essential equality.

Also, energy moves in spirals, which in essence is a form of circle. That's the *natural* movement of *all* energy through the universe. It's circular, it's spiral, it's circular. So the minute you're in a circle, you're sitting and you're working energy, 'cuz that's one of the things that we *do* in circle, is we raise energy and we work with energy, Divine energy, and we use it to transform ourselves

and to create our lives and to make magic. And so that energy is moving in exactly the way energy moves. That's why we *cook* in round pots because the heat is equally distributed throughout the entire contents of the pot.

PAUL NELSON: And if we could see waves, we would see them as spirals coming through.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: That's exactly right. It's also a symbol of the goddess and it's an expression of the infinity, the essential infinity of the spiritual aspect of the world.

PAUL NELSON: Well, I'm not gonna give her the last question, but if my daughter can pull down this microphone real quick and . . .

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Oh, great.

PAUL NELSON: . . . ask one short question since you've been very good. Rebecca Rose Nelson, here, my ten-year-old daughter, one question to ask of Phyllis, what would it be? I'm putting you on the spot, I know, but the first thing that comes to your head?

REBECCA NELSON: Well . . . when do you start, I mean, like with me, I'm very interested in this but . . . when would I start, like how you started to sense these things, the telephone calls and the . . .

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yeah.

REBECCA NELSON: . . . the cloud of the slaughterhouse and . . .

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yeah. You know, I think maybe you've already started. See, I think that those capacities are a part of all of us, and in ancient cultures it was more accepted because our survival depended on those talents, those skills. Mothers have them. That was one of the things that I recognized right away. I always knew when my mother was calling me or when she needed me. I could *hear* her, and I *bet*, my guess is that you probably have that kind of very special relationship with your father, and probably with your mother. Paying attention to that, and that's what a witch is. You just start to *pay attention*. Do you have a pet?

REBECCA NELSON: I have like . . .

PAUL NELSON: Four? [laughs]

REBECCA NELSON: . . . four. Yeah.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: [laughs] Oh, boy. Well, pick one. Animals communicate all the time, and that's another way of developing your skills. By talking to your animal, treating it as an equal and asking it to show you what it needs and to communicate with you.

REBECCA NELSON: Like, through the mind or something?

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yeah, yeah. When my dog needs certain things, he sends me pictures and I can see them very clearly, and he's very sensitive to my moods. So, my guess is that there's probably one of those four pets that you probably have a very special relationship with, so you cultivate that.

And you told me yourself you had that very remarkable dream that you had. When you have a dream like that, write it down. It's like a muscle and the more you use it the stronger it gets. And the whole reason that you have that, it's not a parlor trick. What it is, is an expression of the fact

that we're all connected and that everything is interconnected and that we all *need* each other, and that that's what life is all about.

PAUL NELSON: We'll make sure you get a copy of the book, Rebecca.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: And, last question – we're almost out of time, and it's a horrible thing to do, to give you this kind of question with very little time. But . . . you know, you can . . . minutes ago {to go?}.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: It's a great interview.

PAUL NELSON: Your book was scheduled for release September 11th, 2001. Do you see irony in that? Or what do you see in that?

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Yeah, tragic irony. I was confounded and then a very good friend of mine said, "Well, the universe always seeks to establish balance." And so, in a sense, the book being released on that horrific day was a very small, a really small contribution to restoring the balance, to restoring life in the face of death.

PAUL NELSON: I think you're being modest. You know what? I asked this of the last witch that was on the show, Francesca, and I don't think I communicated it well, but I think that, you know, I have friends who are working in the environmental movement, and they say we've done damage that can't be repaired for thousands of years. And I disagree. I think if we can cultivate the kind of magic that you've cultivated and worked together, millions of people, that we can do things that we can't even possibly imagine at this time. To restore the earth, the balance, and maybe to create new species or bring old ones back. I believe that.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: I think you're right. To heal the wound at the heart of our culture, and that's what this path is about. It's a path of the heart and it's a path that helps us to grow a bigger heart. You asked me to start with that magic, that blessing and the blessing was the magic that comes when we communicate and when we're in the presence of each other and the best of each other, and that's how we begin to do it. Now that was the point of the book, was to show people how *easy* it is and how incredibly rewarding it is. It's a different way to live, and it's the only way that we're going to live.

PAUL NELSON: It's already impacted my life and I *wish* you much success. Thanks for being on the show.

PHYLLIS CUROTT: Oh, thank you so much, and thank you, Rebecca.

PAUL NELSON: Witchrafting.com, is the website.

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PAUL NELSON: The 1960s was the dawning of the Age of Aquarius. We're getting ready for a full blast, just as we begin to find the balance after the extremes of the 1960s. That excess that accompanied the expanded consciousness of the '60s in the struggle to find a balance is personified by one of the gurus of that era, a quarter of a century ago. That guru is Bhagavan Das, born as Michael Riggs in California, immortalized without his prior knowledge, by the Ram Dass book, *Be Here Now*, which has sold hundreds of thousands of copies.

The spiritual memoir of Bhagavan Das has just been released, entitled, *It's Here Now: Are You?* And Bhagavan Das is our guest today. Welcome to the program.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Thank you.

PAUL NELSON: Honor to have you here, as well as your wife, Uma. Before we get going into the questions, you've brought a lovely, exotic instrument in with you, so can you tell us a little bit about that, and grace us with some songs and some music?

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yes, it's called an ektara and it's made out of a gourd with a long bamboo staff, covered with a goatskin, like a banjo, with two strings that are both tuned together . . . and used by mendicants and Sadhus in India, wandering minstrels.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, and you're gonna grace us with some songs and start the interview.

BHAGAVAN DAS: OK.

PAUL NELSON: Beautiful.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Demma.

[06:52 – 08:28 Music]

PAUL NELSON: Well, that was beautiful. Delightful, what a great way to start the interview. Bhagavan Das and his wife, Uma. Can you translate that for us? [laughs] Exactly what that means?

BHAGAVAN DAS: Sure. Jia is praise or hooray, or salutations or praise. Ganesha is the elephant-headed God who is the remover of obstacles, the Lord of the Beginnings, and symbolically, Ganesha is the Ancient one of the Earth. It is the Earth God, the elephant. It's the elephant god so it's acknowledging the earth and asking for that support.

PAUL NELSON: Hmm. Now, I realize that part of the title of your book is a take-off on the Ram Dass book, but why don't you tell us exactly why you chose the mysterious title of your book.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Well, I chose it because It's Here Now, meaning the reality of non-dual wisdom, the enlightened state of awareness, it's always with us. It's always here. It isn't anywhere else, and we just have to show up for it. So, *It's Here Now*.

PAUL NELSON: One might take this, look at the book as someone who's realizing the times that we live in, the time of tremendous change, the time that John O'Donohue, a former guest of this show, referred to as "the time *after* the death of the old gods and before the birth of the new gods." Jean Houston says, "We are the people of the parenthesis," going through tremendous change. So one could interpret *that* from the title of the book, as well.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yes. I think a new god image is coming forth in our consciousness.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. How do you describe that?

BHAGAVAN DAS: Well, I think that the old ways have all come apart. As all the cultures have blended and with the websites and the Internet and . . . everyone's everywhere [laughs]. So . . . [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: It's like the conversation I was having with my friend at breakfast today, going to Mexico to a Chinese restaurant and getting these weird hybrids. Food is one example of the mixing of the different cultures.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. When you were 16, you describe in the book a situation where you came home drunk . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: . . . but it wasn't home. It was to the wrong house, and you had an epiphany of sorts if that's . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: . . . that's possible when you're drunk . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: . . . that everything in your California suburb was *exactly* the same.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: Why don't you tell us about that.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Well, you know, the whole idea of . . . it was just . . . the same house, the same cars, the same mom and dad, the same people, the same sisters. Everyone had the same dog . . . [laughs] It was really kind of scary to me. It just seemed like this mechanical, mechanized . . . everyone was just moving on this conveyor belt, just like chickens going from the birth to the death without any awareness or consciousness of originality or uniqueness.

PAUL NELSON: And that was when you realized you had to seek [laughs] your path somewhere else, basically. Is that accurate?

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. And I went through the book and I make little notes in the book, little things that might be interesting to ask. I made quite a few notes, as you can see there. So I'm just gonna pick out some experiences and ask you to describe them. The first thing I'd like to get into is a sense of the difference between the cultures, and I guess the difference between American culture and Indian culture is exemplified by the intense energy at the Temple of Tirupati. And you compare that [laughs] to the energy of the trading floor of the New York Stock Exchange, and to me it was really exemplified by that. Why don't you describe your experience in the Temple.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Tirupati is the richest temple in India. I mean, it is just like *billions* of dollars go into this Temple, and the image in the Temple is probably 20 feet high, carved out of this solid black stone, like a mountain. And it's just *covered* in gold and diamonds and rubies and emeralds and in the interior of the Temple, there's hundreds of Brahmins chanting these intense, melodious San-

skrit chants. And there's just millions of people queued up, like 24 hours a day, going into the Temple, with offerings. The atmosphere of devotion, people have come from miles around. This is like their once in a lifetime experience, to come to the Temple, and they all shave their hair. So everyone's bald. They all give their hair to the god. And they get blessed with whatever they want, basically, which is usually material things. Like, they want a son, they want a better job, they want good grades in school. They're very practical.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. *You* wanted your hair [laughs].

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yes, I wanted to *keep* my hair.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah [laughs].

BHAGAVAN DAS: I was there strictly for enlightenment. And, you know, the heartfelt devotion of it. So it's like that frenzy of that Stock Exchange, only everyone's shouting mantras, and holy names, like, I love you God, Thank you, God, Govinda, Govinda and just this massive devotional hysteria.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Which really gets you caught up.

PAUL NELSON: Very intense prayer and and yet when we look at what's happening on the New York Stock Exchange, that might be *our* culture's version of prayer, in a way.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Absolutely.

PAUL NELSON: And we *get* that. They get the money quite often. They get what they are praying for quite often, and yet there's not enough money that could fill up the hole that that's trying to fill. I guess we can get into that as we go along. Another example of the difference in culture is that in India, if you meditate a lot, you say in the book, people will support you with food because they feel as if you're doing work that benefits society. A notion in this country that would seem ludicrous to a lot of people . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: . . . but not in India. Why don't you tell us about that.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Well, the idea of having a whole culture of professional mystics, or professional saints, and what they do is they maintain a life of poverty. So it would be like the bums that we have here on the streets. But they would be respected and they would be kind of cleaned up bums. They wouldn't be all drunk and down and out and messed up with people kicking at them and giving them dirty looks. They'd be respected, and therefore you'd find these Sadhus or people that have like a really tight ship. And they may have like one piece of cloth on, that's ragged, but it's all clean and they're all tidied up and they're doing their practice and their hair is, you know, together and . . . You know what I'm saying? Their back is straight. They're doing their beads and they're benefiting the society because they're putting out those vibrations.

PAUL NELSON: "Cleaning the psychic airwaves," I think is how you described it, which is something I can relate to.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yes, yes. Exactly.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. Why don't you tell us about your initiation and the way you received your name, Bhagavan Das.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Well, I was initiated at the Kumbh Mela, which is a fair that's held every 12 years, when Jupiter goes into a certain constellation. And the nectar pours out of the sky, astrologically speaking. And this fair usually draws about 30 million people or plus.

PAUL NELSON: And amazing things happen, like people, elderly people throwing themselves in front of wagons coming by to die in that particular ritual.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Exactly. There's so much devotion going on. I mean, you have . . . imagine, 20, 30 million people, all praying, chanting, going crazy for like three or four months, in one spot, with just intense devotion. There is millions of . . . naked Sadhus with hair down to their feet. It's absolutely the most amazing spectacle of devotion that you've ever seen and, you know, all of these people are bathing in the river. And the *river*, for *miles*, is simply covered in flowers. There's just hundreds of thousands of flowers. You wade through the flowers to get into the river.

So, in this atmosphere, 1966, my guru, Neem Karoli Baba, also known as Maharaj-ji initiated me and I covered myself in ashes, which is the sign of renunciation, and he gave me the name Bhagavan Das, which means "Servant of God." And I took off wandering all over India. That's when I went to Tirupati, was from the Kumbh Mela, at that time and spent the next six years living in caves, living as a hermit, spending all my time meditating and chanting. *Determined* to get enlightened. [laughs] In this lifetime, now.

PAUL NELSON: Uh-huh. Be careful what you wish for, right?

BHAGAVAN DAS: Right.

PAUL NELSON: Was it at that particular ritual where the Divine Mother came to you as this incredible . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: . . . beam of light? Right.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Right. I had an experience, so the day after I was initiated by Maharaj-ji and given the name and became a Sadhu or a professional mystic, I came to the tent of the most famous woman saint in India, named Anandamayi Ma. And she has been in a God-intoxicated state, or like a trance state her whole life, ever since she was born. And she stopped feeding herself when she was about 18 or 20 years old, somewhere in that, and so she's constantly just fed and taken care of, and had no desires for her body, what her body did. So she was in a very incredibly high state of consciousness.

And I walked up to give her a rose, up to her tent, and I stood outside the tent, quite a distance from her and her whole body looked like this light was just like a white cloud of light. And I was just standing there, like looking at her in awe and devotion, and the next thing I knew, she started coming towards me.

She got up off of where she was sitting and walked through the crowd, and there's probably 20-, 30,000 people in the tent. And I was just so blown away just by the vibe of standing there, seeing her in the distance, you know. I couldn't do anything at that moment, and she floated towards me like this cloud of light. Came up to me. I gave her the flower, the rose. She held her hand out. And then I went down and touched my forehead to her feet, and went down into the center of the earth. The earth opened up, and I went into it and I'd been worshipping the Divine Mother, ever

since. It's been my form. In other words, I got the initiation and then I got the form. So it was like, mom and dad.

PAUL NELSON: Of all the people who she could have gone to at that particular event, she came to *you*. Why do you think that was?

BHAGAVAN DAS: Well . . .

PAUL NELSON: Is it important to ask *why*?

BHAGAVAN DAS: I don't know. You know, I mean, I'm maybe this tall Westerner with blonde hair, but I think maybe it was just the destiny of touching me and giving me that blessing, and experience, so that I could be sitting here now, and write this book, and that I could be of some help to my people.

PAUL NELSON: And putting some water on the source of the fire.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yes, yes.

PAUL NELSON: I opened the interview with a description of the Aquarian Age. It's a simple one for people but *you* say that, in the book, that we're living in the Kali Age. Why don't you tell us about Kali and the Age that she exemplifies.

BHAGAVAN DAS: The Kali Yuga or the Age of Kali is the age of blackness and destruction, where everything is crazy and young kids kill each other and everything's topsy-turvy and the only thing that confers rank or status is money. And [laughs] getting all and so on and so on, right?

PAUL NELSON: Sounds accurate so far.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yeah, exactly.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

BHAGAVAN DAS: You know, widespread pollution and people are just greedy and selfish and do not really have spiritual values. And women are mistreated very badly. And this is called the Kali Yuga. It's the age of dissolving. The way it's looked at in India, it's like the bull of dharma has four legs. And in the first age, Satya Yuga, he stands on four legs. And then he loses a leg. In Treta Yuga, the silver age, he stands on three legs. And then Dvapara Yuga, the bronze age, he stands on two legs. This is the legs of Dharma or integrity of, you know, spiritual principle. In Kali Yuga, he stands on one leg, so he's crippled. But as things get darker and darker, there's more and more light here because the kids look around and they *know* what's real. And we start to not fall for it anymore because we have to come back inside. So in a sense, it's really the best age. Because everything's gone. You can't just, you know, *depend* upon anything anymore.

PAUL NELSON: Certainly the things that we've depended upon in the past, the old systems, and we see the entropy, the late states of entropy that our system's in.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: Government, economy and so on and so forth and go on down the line. The Hopi have proverb, a prophecy perhaps, and I'm gonna paraphrase it, which is horrible. I apologize for that but . . . In this time at we're living in, the time of the cleansing, the time of enlightenment . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: Mm-hmm, exactly.

PAUL NELSON: . . . there will be people so captivated by their own fear, they will literally drop dead. So we see that in this time we have an opportunity for enlightenment, living through this age, or dying and coming back and perhaps being better able to *deal* with this kind of an age. You see that as accurate?

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yes. I mean, my understanding, what I've seen with the Hopi prophecy, according to the Hopis has been fulfilled. The age of destruction has happened. And they made four trips to the United Nations to bring the message of "Stop it!" Right? And no one listened. So it's taking place. We're all heading off the cliff. But they say there is a red road. There is a road out, but it's straight up. And they draw the line, like, we're going from here to here on a vertical. And then there's this straight-up road. So it's like, straight up to God. It's like, straight up. Let's go.

So . . . someone who really wants to do a spiritual practice now and really get *on* it, you can get more merit and more advancement in three days than you could, say in 30 years, right? A long time ago, or in another age, like in the 1800s or, you know, in the ancient times. In other words, it's so bad, it's so dark. No one's calling God up on the phone, right? Everyone's busy with the world. So God's . . . You know what I mean? You can get through.

PAUL NELSON: Operators are standing by.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Operators are standing by to take your call. And you will be able to really get incredible . . . Ramakrishna said, "In the Age of Kali Yuga, if you could pray and cry out to God for three days, that you would have enlightenment." I mean, nothing else to do. You lock the door on your room. You unplug everything. You sit down and you just go for it. I love you, God, I love you, God. Help me, help me, I can't do it. You know, you throw yourself on the mercy of the Divine. I mean, but, if you do it. But there's the potential.

PAUL NELSON: And there's the big "IF" [laughs].

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yes. [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: We're running out of time for segment number one. We asked you to be here for an hour. So we still have some time. What I'd like to do is close the segment with more music.

BHAGAVAN DAS: So, sure. We'll sing to Kali Ma, the Goddess who takes away the darkness, the Goddess of Kali Yuga, the Black Mother.

PAUL NELSON: Part 2 of our interview now with Bhagavan Das. He's the author of his spiritual memoir, *It's Here Now, Are You?* And we were just talking before we started the segment about Allen Ginsberg, and your first meeting with Allen is described in the book. He was a man who . . . you also talk about the excesses with sex and drugs and I do want to get into that in this segment. He's a man who certainly had a high libido.

BHAGAVAN DAS: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: And yet your first meeting with him, you recognized him as an incredible holy man.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yes. Well, you know, I remember in 1963, sitting in the library in Carmel, California, having just seen Joan Baez sing. And I was sitting in the library and I picked up a copy of *Esquire*. And there was a picture of Allen Ginsberg standing in the Ganges with water buffaloes around, with his hair down to his back, you know, to his waist. And I remember sitting and staring at that picture for like an hour or so. I first read “Howl” when I was like 15 years old, and Allen . . . it spoke to me. Allen’s voice, his incredible, you know, candor that he . . . that he was. What he was just really spoke to me, his being.

So . . . we met in 1971, and it’s like we’d known each other forever. I mean, he was truly a hero of mine, and an inspiration, to go off and be yourself, and do something original.

PAUL NELSON: From the *heart*.

BHAGAVAN DAS: From the heart, absolutely. So when I *met* Allen, having lived and been with many holy men in India, I recognized another holy man . . . in Allen.

PAUL NELSON: Did you have a chance to meet with him before he died, this past year?

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yes, I did. I was blessed to be able to spend about three hours with him. Just about a month and a half or two months before he died.

PAUL NELSON: How do you think he’s gonna be remembered in 200 years?

BHAGAVAN DAS: I think Allen’s gonna be remembered as . . . just, I mean, really one thinks much more of a greater human being. See, Allen was just such an incredible Renaissance genius. You know, that did poetry. In other words, he was this great being who happened to do poetry, and he showed me all of his paintings when I was at his apartment. His paintings were magnificent. His photographs . . . he just had this incredible life force. He had so much energy and so much heart, and he just gave it . . . Allen showed me how to just, you know, put everything into whatever you do. Like, every moment’s *the* moment. Every time’s the *first* time. And first thought, *best* thought. Don’t censor yourself. Just do it. Step out and just, you know, really go for it.

PAUL NELSON: That sounds familiar.

BHAGAVAN DAS: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: And the “first thought, best thought,” I remember him saying that himself . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yeah, yes.

PAUL NELSON: . . . on this program, which we reran the week after he died. You know, I listened to the interview three years later in preparation of playing it, and . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: . . . just the amount of knowledge, *wisdom* that was passed on . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: . . . you know, and I could listen to it again and *still* get a lot from it.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Right.

PAUL NELSON: It's just amazing.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Right.

PAUL NELSON: A Bodhisattva, you think?

BHAGAVAN DAS: I think so.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

BHAGAVAN DAS: I think, I do.

PAUL NELSON: He . . . he had a very high libido and . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: . . . and *you*, as well. This is one of the . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: I have a very high libido.

PAUL NELSON: . . . one of the issues that you've struggled with over the years.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Right.

PAUL NELSON: And you know, my intro for the first part of the interview was talking about the first blast, the Dawning of the Age of Aquarius where, you know, we were getting out of this repressed Victorian sexual sort of ethic . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: . . . and perhaps went a bit too far . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: . . . with the free sex and . . . and the use of drugs. What advice do you have for people who struggle with . . . sexual addiction, I guess.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Well, I realized, first of all, that I was never gonna be able to have as much sex as I wanted, with as many women as I wanted to, and that there was no end to it. And that it becomes a huge distraction [laughs]. I mean, you can only do so many things. And so what I've done, it's like, somehow the . . . that's the *juice*, and that's the energy. There's gotta be a real . . . there's gotta be sex in it. I mean, that's where art comes from, great art. And most people that are really successful and are really hot and really happening have really high libidos . . . across the board. Whether they're businessmen, whether they're artists, whatever they do, they succeed and they have very high libidos.

So . . . it's really channeling the energy. So that's the juice that it enables you to sit in meditation for three hours, that enables me to sing for hours and hours and hours and not get hoarse and really put that out, and keep going with it.

But I think . . . you can't dam the life force. You've got to let the life force flow, and trying to control sex is very, very difficult. You've gotta find out that *everything* is sex, first of all. That all life is sex. That everything is sex. So that the sexual energy isn't just localized in a genital sexual

intercourse way. That every encounter is this in and out, pulsating yin and yang, opposites. Everything's opposites. So unifying and bringing the opposites together is the thing to do.

And sex is not something that you can make holy or sacred 'cuz it is *totally* sacred and holy So if we open our eyes and we look twice, right? We're able to see how incredibly sacred and powerful it is, and then give it that respect and honor and it will tell you what to do. You follow me?

PAUL NELSON: Bringing . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: You won't be overriding it with your head. You won't be power-tripping with women or men and just going into this addiction . . . with the sex, you know.

PAUL NELSON: There was a period of time when you had that sexual addiction.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yes, oh, definitely.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yeah, yeah. Because I had . . . I was a celebrity and it was like, I was like a rock star and . . . you know, I was this beautiful blonde god, and I just had lots of, you know, women throwing themselves at me. And I just went for it. And then basically just grossed myself out [laughs] because it wasn't really what I wanted and there was no connection, and it was just . . . it becomes a big energy trip.

PAUL NELSON: They're the . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: And a power trip.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

BHAGAVAN DAS: And so my ego was so puffed up and I, I got it and then it was like, OK. You know? So what.

PAUL NELSON: What's next?

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: Who's next?

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yeah. Who's next and then it becomes the obsession, as I said, becomes like a huge distraction. You can't get enough sex, right? 'Cuz there's always . . . and whoever I was with, right? There was always someone more attractive and prettier in the room, over her shoulder. Right? So you're creating a lot of emotional pain and a lot of, you know, you bring out a lot of passions that . . . you know, it's difficult to deal with.

PAUL NELSON: Makes things complicated, doesn't it?

BHAGAVAN DAS: Exactly. You know, my idea was to have 20 wives and 30 children . . . but it doesn't really work. And I tried having *two* wives at the same time. But, you know, they just didn't like each other [laughs]. So it became too much of a problem. You see what I'm saying? A distraction, and so . . . I think that . . . you can't stop it. You've gotta put it into, you know, your passion. Into your work.

PAUL NELSON: Into a creative act.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Exactly. So that sex isn't the only thing that's creative. I mean, that's why we're a sexually obsessed culture 'cuz we don't paint, we don't draw, we don't do poetry. We don't do anything else. So sex becomes the only thing we have where we're actually *connecting* with the god force, or the life force.

PAUL NELSON: The only way that we . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: . . . see as acceptable in the society to deal with that energy.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Get a guitar. I mean, that's the juice that's gonna make you sit up on your bed for eight hours and play guitar. Follow me? That's the sexual energy, that's the libido or . . . or sew. Or make some beautiful something . . . or create, or do pottery or, you know? It goes on and on. Make jewelry [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: Playing guitar for eight hours, meditating for eight hours, you said in the first interview that we can get the same juice that took someone 30 years ago . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: . . . many, many years to get to, where we can get that in the same three days. If you were to orchestrate a three-day ritual for someone who wants to experience that consciousness . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: . . . what would it look like?

BHAGAVAN DAS: Solitude . . . completely. Complete solitude. No input from any kind, from anyone. Total solitude. Away from the hustle and bustle and the noise. Make an altar. In other words, consecrate a spot, a space. And the altar would have on it whatever it was that really touched your heart. Wherever your libido was. What *form* of God do you love? I mean, that form and then worship that and pour out in devotion and longing towards that object of devotion. And then God, or the Divine Mother will come through the object of devotion and meet you there.

And it can be . . . OK. Let's get really simple, for people with no isms who don't wanna, you know, no religious connotations, a candle flame. Light the flame. What a perfect symbol of God. A flame . . . the fire, right? See? It's really simpler than it's made out to be.

PAUL NELSON: It's better to light a candle than to curse the darkness, so the old saying goes.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yes. And pray and really pray out, and call out and really, you know, invoke . . . God, you know, in whatever way. I mean, curse God, if you hate God. In other words, get involved in it. Get passionately, emotionally into it. You're talking to your lover. Demand that God come to you. You see? And something will really happen, you know?

PAUL NELSON: You see fasting as being part of this?

BHAGAVAN DAS: I think that food becomes a distraction on some type of trip like this. In other words, you just eat a little bit, it's not like you limit the senses. So that you can stay on the beam. It's like a vigil. And staying up all night is really powerful, right? Keeping a vigil all night. I mean, I believe that, you know, the name and the name or the word in the breath is the way, is the

quickest and best way to short circuit the mind mesh, and get out of the little mind or the neurotic mind. And get into the heart and into our soul.

PAUL NELSON: Getting back to sex, which we were talking about a moment ago, the . . . I guess, getting the sexual energy up a few chakras is the key. And one of the ways to do that is through Tantric sex.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: And you were initiated into that . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: . . . when you were in India. Perhaps you can describe this for us.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Tantric sex is pulling the energy into the heart. OK? And it's really worshipping the partner as the Divine Goddess. So you're worshipping the woman as the Divine Mother, and then she *becomes* the Divine Mother, because your worship is really sincere and real, and vice versa.

So there is a true acknowledgment and an adoring of the Mother. And the Mother, when I say, "the Mother," it's like you think, "Well, what about the Father?" But the Mother, meaning . . . to me, the Mother is form. OK? All form is the Mother. The Father is formless, to me. You see? And that's how I look at it. So we have had this Father God who's basically a formless god, you see? I mean, in the Judaic, Christian and the Islamic trip. It's God the Father, but it's the sky. It's just space. Or it's angry Daddy with a club in the sky, the Ruler of the Universe. And then what happens in that type of religion is the women, you know, don't fare so well, and neither does Mother Nature. We then can clear cut the forest, pour poisons into the rivers because we don't see the river as like the blood of the Mother, and the Earth is a living being, and the Rock is living. You know? And we don't ask the Rock before we move it. Or we don't talk to the stone people. Or we don't talk to the plants. They give us everything and, you know, this is what I'm saying, devotion to the Mother, and so through Tantric sex, you really acknowledge that the woman's body is divine. We all come from *her*. All of us come. So we *acknowledge* that she is divine, and in that act of breathing, and looking in each other's eyes, the energy is pulled up. So it's not an orgasmic sex. It's not wham, bam, thank you ma'am . . . at all. It's a *whole* experience that may take like six hours. Maybe two or three hours of foreplay. Maybe like a two-hour massage.

PAUL NELSON: And no ejaculation.

BHAGAVAN DAS: And no ejaculation. But the woman should come. The man should hold back, and truly satisfy the woman. And then if you decide to come, then that . . . or you may *not*. You follow me? In other words, it's not like you don't have to come but it . . . being able to discipline yourself. Otherwise you're just out of control. You can't even have good sensuality or sexuality if you can't, if you don't have concentration and discipline.

PAUL NELSON: When we talk about discipline and concentration, drug use comes to mind.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: And one of the stories from the book, well there's a lot of discussion about drug use and your own drug use and drug use by your guru, he took, what? Three or four tabs of . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: He took three tabs of . . . Owsley White Lightning and one tab was like 305 mics of like pure LSD 25. So it was a guaranteed, major ego loss trip, one tab.

PAUL NELSON: At *one*, and he took . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: At one. He took three.

PAUL NELSON: . . . three. And his brain didn't melt.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Nothing happened. I sat in front of him. Ram Dass and I sat in front of him for like, hours. Absolutely nothing happened. He carried on . . . I mean, he was the same. How could anything have other . . . there was nowhere for him to go.

PAUL NELSON: Page 89, I marked this down. "When you practice staying completely clear during intoxication, you're preparing for a conscious death," is what you say in . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: Right. The Tantric way of using intoxicants is that you take the intoxicants and it becomes this sort of a sense of not letting them take *you*. But you take them. So in other words, take the intoxicants and bring it into a spiritual context. Right? So you want to meditate. You want to pray. OK. You want to get into like, you know, a spiritual mode, but you've been working all day. So you, you know, bring your wine to the altar, you know, and you put your ashtray on the altar. And you roll a joint and you sit there and you stare at your Divine picture and you get just high enough, right? You just, you know . . . and you get into the mood of praying while you're slightly intoxicated. So the intoxication isn't taking you but you're *using* it to override the mind. You're relaxed, so it's just like people do with the TV. You know, take two martinis and take it to the altar. Take it to God. And don't just sit in front of the stupid, you know, 'cuz the TV's the altar.

PAUL NELSON: And it's a . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: People . . .

PAUL NELSON: . . . it's a drug. We *know* that. Yes.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: But if you *don't* have a spiritual practice, or if you're not coming with that intent . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: . . . as children often are not . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: Right.

PAUL NELSON: . . . and are almost always are not . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: Right.

PAUL NELSON: . . . the drug eats *you*.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Exactly. So, you know, it's one of those Tantric things, that you know, Tantra is a very dangerous path because it utilizes everything for awakening. But the thing is, the kids are doing it anyway. They're doing the drugs anyway and so give them spiritual music to listen to. Or give them something that's gonna take them into a deeper place in their soul. And not just, you know, focus it that *way*. So that's, you know, what I would say. I think that it's very dangerous

and yet I think that in a certain sense, it's very necessary for our people. We're a drug culture and we're obsessed with, you know, money and sex and everything else, and it's very hard for us to get out of our heads. And I think a little intoxication helps. In the right circumstances, setting is everything.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

BHAGAVAN DAS: You don't take it at a party. You don't take LSD at a crazy party. You don't know anyone, right? Or at a concert . . .

PAUL NELSON: Bad trip.

BHAGAVAN DAS: . . . bad trip. You know? Yeah. Take it in the right setting. You know, go camping. You know what I'm saying? With someone you love, someone you respect. You know what I'm saying? Set it up that way. You're gonna have a *great* trip. You know? Lie under a tree, watch the clouds move through the sky for eight hours [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: One of the things we haven't had you do during this interview is *read*. And I've . . . I've got a bit there on page 97, that I thought would be appropriate. Actually, there were three or four different things I thought would be perfect. The right kind of length and to get a point across. I believe that's gonna need a little bit of a set up so . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: OK.

PAUL NELSON: . . . why don't you set it up for us and then read for us.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Maharaj-ji my guru, Neem Karoli Baba, he was famous as a miracle baba. And what he did was he . . . everything around him was miraculous. And he performed lots and lots of miracles. He physically disappeared in front of me. His body absolutely disappeared and there was nothing there but a blanket lying on a chair.

PAUL NELSON: And in the car or somewhere . . .

BHAGAVAN DAS: In the car, exactly.

PAUL NELSON: Yes.

BHAGAVAN DAS: I was driving, 70 miles an hour and he disappeared. And there was no one there. And then he came back.

PAUL NELSON: And you weren't taking drugs at the time.

BHAGAVAN DAS: I was *not* taking drugs. There was no drugs involved. But . . . you know, so . . . Maharaj-ji performed a miracle a minute. Food, money, a trip to the hospital, whatever the people needed it was taken care of. One time I brought Maharaj-ji eight apples. He put them under his blanket and he had no other apple. Then he started giving out the apples, and I counted as he did. One, two, three, 13, 48. I carefully counted. From the eight that I gave him, 48 apples came out from underneath his blanket.

Another time a man came to see Maharaj-ji because he had only one rupee. The man said, "Maharaj-ji, this one rupee note is all I have. I need more." "Give me your rupee," said Maharaj-ji. He took the man's rupee and put it in the fire, in his cooking stove. "What are you doing? That's all I have," screamed the man. Maharaj-ji took a pair of tongs and I watched him pull numerous one-hundred rupee notes out of the fire and give them to the man.

Maharaj-ji hid his miracle attainment. That was his illusion. But the miracles were so common that it got to the point where I hardly paid any attention to them anymore. It was so matter of fact. They were the background of reality. Whenever questioned about them, he would answer, "I did nothing. God did it."

Or he'd say, "Don't ask me. Go ask God." And then of course it would happen anyway. Or he'd berate people. He'd say, "Oh, you, all you want is stuff. Get out of here." And he'd cry. He go, "Nobody wants God. All they want is stuff."

PAUL NELSON: Microwave ovens [laughs].

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yeah, exactly.

PAUL NELSON: We're just about out of time with our second segment. And so . . . the question I'll leave you with is: If there's anything that people get out of this book, what do you hope that is?

BHAGAVAN DAS: I hope that what they get is that, you know, start your spiritual path now. Now . . . now is . . . now is the beginning and courageously, be originally you. And there is no way but the way, and don't take anyone else's way. Find your own way. Find your own way. It's a Do-It-Yourself, it's a one-on-one. Right? And that's really what I would like to do, is to show people how . . . because I kept, you know, stumbling and falling down and wherever I fell, using that to move to the next place. That, you know, I followed my heart. Follow your heart. You know?

PAUL NELSON: I'm very impressed with your work. The book is wonderful. Very easy to read.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Thanks.

PAUL NELSON: Continued success. Thanks for being on the show.

BHAGAVAN DAS: Yes, definitely.

PAUL NELSON: Bhagavan Das has been our guest. His book is *It's Here Now. Are You?* A spiritual memoir.

PAUL NELSON: For hundreds of years in the Western world we have been told or have assumed that indigenous peoples are genetically inferior and, like children, are thus in need of protection; that the protection offered has been the conscious or unconscious attempt at total annihilation, as a sidebar for now. The notion that science was at the core of what justified attitudes and laws governing generations of indigenous peoples is important. Science is important because 20th Century science is validating what indigenous peoples have been saying for thousands of years. Take Werner Heisenberg, the {missing word?} of the famous uncertainty principle, who suggested that we can never know what nature is like because in order to observe it, we must pin it down and thus *change* it. Now, an indigenous man, a chief of his people, steeped in the methodologies of his own, and the dominant culture says ancient indigenous modalities may be valid ways to prove what his culture has said all along. He says the quality of generosity is actually a *law*, and that *not* being generous will *kill* you, and this can be proven through the indigenous modality of the vision quest. Of course, Richard Atleo prefers the word, “oosumich” but we’ll get into that.

Our guest today is Umeek, Dr. E. Richard Atleo, hereditary chief of the Ahousaht, grandson of Keesta, the last of the Ahousaht whalers. He’s a research affiliate at the University of Manitoba and author of *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview*.

It was a delight to hear your presentation today at the Center for World Indigenous Studies, and to read your book, and to gain a kind of intimate access to your culture’s cosmology that I consider quite an honor, and by reading the book and hearing you speak today. Thank you for that opportunity.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: You’re welcome.

PAUL NELSON: Can you tell us about your ancestral homeland, the territory of that Nuu-chah-nulth people?

E. RICHARD ATLEO: My ancestral home, yes, a place called Ahousaht, from which we get the modern term, a Ahousaht, which actually means “people of Ahousaht,” but as is usual, in initial interactions with newcomers to the land, Ahous became Ahousaht through a misunderstanding. So to call a place a Ahousaht is very much like calling a Seattle, a Seattleite, a person from Seattle, for example, or a Vancouverite, as a person from Vancouver, and that becomes the name of the place. Well, so that’s what happened to *all* of our communities [clears throat]. West coast of Vancouver Island, we now call ourselves [inaudible] because that’s our own designation of a people that live alone in the mountains, and that’s what the name means – people who live alone in the mountains.

I’m not sure what else to say about my [laughs] central {ancestral?} homeland.

PAUL NELSON: Well, that Nuu-chah-nulth was bastardized to be Nootka at one time. Is that correct?

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Nootka is, yes. When Captain Cook . . . There is an official literary version of Captain Cook’s arrival, and there’s the oral version, which I will provide. The Nootka, the Muchlet people, the Mooachut people who lived in that area have a story that it was foggy when Captain Cook arrived, and that he was lost in the fog. And so they said to him, “Nootchehe,” and probably with a course {?} of arms because Nootchehe means to go around the corner, or around the point, to safe harbor. It doesn’t have “safe harbor” in there, but that’s the indication of the word, or the phrase Nootchehe and probably, over the ocean waves and the wind and so on, the Nootchehe it sounded a bit like Nootka, over a distance, and so we became known as Nootka, as a result. {check the spellings on the Native words here}

PAUL NELSON: To get a sense of what part of the world that is, the west part of Vancouver Island, near Clayoquot Sound.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Exactly, yes.

PAUL NELSON: I understand that you are a hereditary chief and I'm wondering, you don't *live* in your ancestral homeland, and yet you're a hereditary chief. So can you tell us about your responsibilities as chief?

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Yes, the contemporary hereditary chief is a person that, as the term suggests, descends from a line of people who were hereditary *leaders* within the community. And had very specific and heavy responsibilities to the land, to resources, to the people and to manage the reality that, as they perceived it, in an attempt to find a way to balance the contrary forces that are found in reality. The forces of creation, the forces of destruction and all of the contrary forces that human beings experience in their everyday lives, whether it's in the ancient way or the contemporary way. And not an easy task, not . . . and demands strength, demands faith, demands all kinds of things that we really, I don't think, possess today.

PAUL NELSON: And so as chief, what kinds of things are you expected to do?

E. RICHARD ATLEO: There are practical family responsibilities. For example, my brother married a woman who brought a child into the marriage and the child was not connected to the father, and so in order to make a meaningful connection for that child, we performed a ceremony of adoption, using our songs, using our rituals and as a result, that child became a very responsible member and continues, to this day, to be a responsible member of our community, holding responsible positions. As a matter of fact, surpassing many of my *blood* relatives in terms of commitment, responsibility and so on. So the responsibility of a chief then is to provide the context, the framework for certain kinds of issues that may arise, a framework in which to resolve issues that may arise in a community, such as an issue of identity for this particular child.

We provide {a? the?} framework for marriage ceremonies, for international agreements with fish farms, for treaty negotiations. The treaty negotiations being conducted are conducted in our name so while we may not be directly hands-on involved in the *treaty*, it is done in our *name*.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, I'm thinking the modern, you know, North American culture – my parents live in Chicago. My mother's family is in Miami and Cuba; my dad's family is in Chicago and California. Here, I'm living in the Seattle area. So we understand that in the "dominant" culture this is normal. But you live a thousand miles away from home, roughly. So you're still able to conduct business in that way.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Well, first I want to address the issue of what was called diaspora in our discussions. We have a diaspora that is created by conditions of colonization, by the conditions of constitutionalism within Canada that created reserves, and created certain conditions that, in order for anyone that became successful in school, to be able to put their success to practical use, they had to leave the community because there was no work within our communities. There were massive kinds of restrictions to our people over most of the 20th Century, for some of which were not allowed to move without permission, and for most of which who were not allowed to get loans. Our reserves were special areas where they had no real commercial value, couldn't use our lands for commercial purposes until recently. And so with all these restrictions, it was just not *reasonable*, if we wanted to make *life* of any kind, we had to *leave*. Go to the cities and places of employment. And so our people are scattered but we, traditionally, had a concept of what we call *glaon hil steath* {check spelling if possible}, which means, "outside and inside." Literally, in the modern terminology, we'd call 'em summer homes and winter homes. And so now, have extended that concept to the diaspora. In Winnipeg, I am *cla-ah*. I'm outside. And when I go home, I am back, *hilsties*, back home in the interior.

And so I wanna maintain that sense of connection because through e-mail, through modern technology, distance is really not that relevant in terms of communication. So we watch our children and relatives on the screen, through modern technology. You can talk to them and watch them on the screen, on the computer screen.

PAUL NELSON: And with indigenous technologies, non-locality is the concept anyway, isn't it?

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Now, yes. Yes, that's true.

PAUL NELSON: I understand you were the first aboriginal man to earn a doctorate in British Columbia. What was that like?

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Most amazing! When it came time to graduate, the Dean who was making the announcement *forgot* that he was supposed to make this kind of announcement. So I passed through and was sort of knighted by the President of the University. And then when I returned to the audience there were several thousand of us graduating from UBC, he said, "I forgot." And so he had me stand up again and announce that I was the first aboriginal in British Columbia.

I often was congratulated for that but it was very much a mixed blessing because in the 1930s, *all* the students in Grade 8 took the same examination. The highest score in the 1930s, in that one year, was a gentleman from my reserve, and he was not allowed to go to high school. I use that particular example, a true story, because *I*, graduating in the late 1980s with a doctorate degree, the *first* one in British Columbia, was actually a disgrace. It marked a tremendous *loss* to British Columbia, Canada, and to the world, that so many talented people were not allowed to express, not allowed to fulfill themselves, not allowed their intelligence the free rein to perform as they could have quite easily.

PAUL NELSON: Was a black mark on the Province.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Yes, that's one way to look at it, yes.

PAUL NELSON: Mm-hmm. And I'm wondering if having a foot in each world then opened you up to grief from some of the elders in your village?

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Opened up to?

PAUL NELSON: Well, there's a story in your book about how you were talking in your given tongue, your native language and someone said, "You sound like a white man."

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Oh, yes, yes. The process of Western education changed the cadence of my original language and it was like putting it on fast forward, I suppose, because it sounded funny to my relatives. And that was quite a shock for me because I was 13, I remember. I was 13 years old when it first happened. I was speaking my language and my aunt said, *in* my language, she said, "He sounds like a white person talking." And that cut me to the heart. She didn't realize it, of course. She didn't *mean* any harm either, you know, it was just an observation, but it was a *cutting* observation. PAUL NELSON: Has it been difficult to be equally conversant in both worlds? You have a doctorate, and so the dominant culture, and yet, obviously, this book of research on your *own* culture is amazing so you're a historian and researcher of your *own* culture, so you have a foot equally in both worlds. Has this given you grief in your homeland for this, I guess, catering to the white man's ways, to put it bluntly?

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Yes, I think there's bound to be some misunderstanding and some misgivings. On the one hand, our responsible leaders, elders, parents in the community, they've always en-

couraged their children to get an education all throughout the 20th Century, but on the other hand, we have this oppression. We had this oppression, we had the differences. And when a person *did* become successful there was some resentment of that in the community, and so there's some put-down of anyone with a Ph.D., anyone with a doctorate degree. And so there's some inconsistency there, which is actually quite *natural*. I see it as being very *natural* and it will take time for the transition to take place before people are able to recognize the *value* in a Western education. It isn't a complete education, in my *view*, but it's a very valuable form. It's a necessary kind of education because the Western education, the technology, the science, that is our contemporary and very necessary environment that we need to orient ourselves to, without losing our own identity, and that's the challenge.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. Talking with Dr. E. Richard Atleo. He is the author of *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview*. It's a book that has recently been published in paperback by UBC Press. I'm Paul Nelson.

Your great grandfather, Keesta, as I understand, the last of the old-time whalers. Quite a process involved in capturing a whale at that time. Can you tell us about what time that was, what? About 125 years ago, is that accurate?

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Yes. Somewhere in that neighborhood. We don't really know for certain except that it was the latter part of the 19th Century, and he being born circa 1860, and nobody really knows exactly when he was born either. But elders remember him as being rather old at the turn of the century. Not *really* old but he was quite a mature man.

And settlement did not really seriously take place in our part of the world until the turn of the century when people began to bring livestock and so on out to the coast and build their home there. And even then it was several decades before the full impact of civilization began to *erode* our way of life.

Keesta that haven't {had?} lived his adult life growing up and heading a house into which I was born, lived as the way of his ancestors did, and taught *me* those same ways so that in beginning, as a three-year-old or four-year-old child, I would have to *ups wease*, which is simply the beginning of training for *oosum* and as a small child, and before breakfast, made to run down to the beach and dive in the ocean and come back. And that was it. That was *up swease* {is it up swease, as here, or ups wease, as above?} but very important initial training process.

Keesta, himself, as a whaler would practice what we've called Oosumich, which I have called knowledge acquisition methodology, that is a method to acquire knowledge, a method to access knowledge from the spiritual realm. And so for that purpose he would isolate himself for long periods of time, and fast and pray and deny himself the physical pleasures of the world in order to focus on the spiritual concerns that he had.

Assuming that the spiritual dimension had power, had knowledge, had treasures that he could access through a correct methodology.

Now science, the fundamental requirement in successful, scientific experimentation, the classical form, was neutrality. Scientists attempted to be neutral in their observations, so as not to *bias* the information that . . .

PAUL NELSON: You talk about being objective . . .

E. RICHARD ATLEO: . . . Being objective, exactly. Now, of course, this has been challenged by feminist theory, and rightly so. However, there's a lot of credence the classical form of research {that?} created this technology and continues to create marvelous technology. So it has served

classical science and scientific methodology. It's very legitimate. I sometimes find difficulty [laughs] because I'm thinking in the child {in Nuu-chah-nulth?} and then that gets in the way.

Oosumich is also a methodology and when it's practiced, the critical stance in Oosumich, according to our origin stories, is what I call the insignificant leaf approach. According to one of our stories, where the swelled-headed approach of Son of Raven was unsuccessful in accessing the resource. But when he became an insignificant leaf, he was swallowed by the daughter of the great chief who owned the resources and there was an immaculate conception, and she became pregnant. And so Son of Raven became then an inheritor of the resources owned by the chief, and that's how we got the light.

So humility, then, is the proper stance in Oosumich, just as objectivity is the proper stance in science. Now, if we *merge* the two together, and make them {a?} more *complete* knowledge acquisition *system*, scientists will have to buy into the humility [laughs] aspect because without humility there's no seeing in the spiritual realm. Our stories are very plain that if you attempt to access information or any kind of resource from the spiritual domain other than through humility, you will not succeed. You will *not* get the information you want.

PAUL NELSON: That's one way to narrow the field [laughs].

E. RICHARD ATLEO: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: But your great-grandfather . . . and when you talk about Oosumich, this is likened to a vision quest.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Yes, yes. The word Oosumich has in it the root *oo*, which means "be careful." And so it's based on the view of reality that perceives it as along a spectrum, which might be divided in two. On the one side, we might call it the dark, evil, destructive aspect of reality, and the other side, the beautiful, the creative, the glorious, the harmonious, the balance. All of those things that can describe Qua-ootz, owner of reality. And for some reason, creation, the design of creation is such that we don't understand why the reality is this way. But we accept it and embrace it. And so we create ceremonies, and we create *teachings*, to *manage* this reality as we perceive it, through Oosumich. Cannot perceive this reality with our physical eyes, but more with our spiritual eyes through Oosumich. Physical eyes, of course, will corroborate what we see through the spiritual realm but the spiritual realm will give you a greater kind of certainty about the nature of reality than the physical realm. I know that empiricists, you know, will abhor this kind of statement but . . .

PAUL NELSON: That's something we definitely have to follow up on before the interview is over.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: I do wanna follow up on this notion of how you don't necessarily think it's a great thing, but you realize it is the way it *is* and you *deal* with it. For example, in Nuu-chah-nulth, the word for love includes the experience of pain. So right from the beginning, I mean, it's that pop song, "You Only Hurt the One You Love". Well, this is old news to you guys.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: [laughs] Yes. Very, very interesting. I must explain it. Personally, I did not understand these concepts initially. I was not able to analyze these words and take them apart. Quite interestingly enough, it was after I had learned how to do that through the Western education system, that I was able to take *yaw-uk-miss*, which is our word for love, and discover that it was the same word for pain. And when I spoke these, at a conference where elders were present, they immediately could see that it was, and there was such wonder in their eyes, such affirmation in their bodies and body language, yes. And they were speechless with wonder.

PAUL NELSON: It was a revelation for that.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Revelation, exactly, yes.

PAUL NELSON: Whereas I see the ladies in the audience now nodding their heads, saying, “Yes, I know what that’s all about [laughs]. That’s not a surprise to *me*.” Well, there’s another word in your language and that is the title of the book is *Tsawalk*. How would you define *Tsawalk*?

E. RICHARD ATLEO: *Tsawalk*, literally, in our language means “one.” *Tsawalk*, *acla*, *qacca*, *muu*, 1, 2, 3, 4. *Tsawalk* means “one.” And initially when I developed a theoretical concept around that, it was initially a theory of *context* because I perceived in my research at the university that every variable I examined had a context of conditions attached to that variable. And so that was in the beginning and with discussion with my professors, some of them also had the same kind of ideas. In education they examined conditions. A student would-, would be found in a certain set of conditions in the school, and so they examined those conditions, or at home and they examined those conditions. So there were a set of identifiable contexts that scientific research could be conducted in. And over time I realized that the word “context” is very useful in smaller situations, and I needed one that was more inclusive of reality. And so I deliberately chose an Nuu-chah-nulth word because a Nuu-chah-nulth word doesn’t come loaded with preconceptions. And so then I could define it as I saw *fit*. And of course, that’s one of the prerogatives of academics, is to do that. Is to coin a word and then define it. And so it’s inclusive then of spiritual and physical dimensions of reality, as we *perceive* it. And spiritual being, being the preeminent dimension of reality, upon which the physical depends and at all kinds of implications.

PAUL NELSON: I was just going to say, the interconnected nature of all reality. That might be a good definition for *Tsawalk*.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: Right.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Yes, yes, exactly.

PAUL NELSON: Unlike Western culture, which suggests if you can’t measure or see something, it is not real, the theory of *Tsawalk* assumes a spiritual primacy of existence.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: So things start from that realm and everything in the *physical* realm, which we can touch or we can smell or we can feel or taste, these are mere *shadow* of what begins in the spiritual realm. Is that accurate?

E. RICHARD ATLEO: No. I would like to sort of back up because so far we’ve been talking about the Nuu-chah-nulth worldview as rather a proven kind of state of existence. And I really didn’t want to give that impression. I really wanted to, when I wrote the book, I wrote the book from a propositional point of view. That is, when I spoke about generosity, for example, I didn’t want to present it . . . I wanted to say that from a [inaudible] perspective it is as *law* but when we move it into the research area, I want to present it as a proposition, that it must *remain* a proposition because evidence from oral cultures, according to any definition from a scientific perspective, is not acceptable. So I would like, I am *certain*, I am very *confident* that the data, the information of my ancestors, the legacy of my answers, the information that *they* produced, the data that they produced, the belief system that they *have*, can be subjected to credible, authentic, legitimate forms of research methodologies that scientists can recognize and approve. Once they understand what

we're trying to *do*. That if we subject it to authentic research that some solid affirmation of data can be found, fact can be found, or credence can be given, to information provided by acceptable research methodologies.

PAUL NELSON: Well, let me go to Newtonian science for a moment, the one that allegedly has been validated through double-blind placebo studies or what have you. And not just that science, but what gives it credence. You quote Thomas Hobbes in the book. A famous quote about life for indigenous people being nasty, brutish and short. That's a paraphrase "Though his scientific modalities would be in *question* by an decent scientist, he's been allowed to shape attitudes towards indigenous peoples, and also to shape *laws* for hundreds of years." Would you like to elaborate on that?

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Well, the quotation about Hobbes was there because a Supreme Court Judge in British Columbia, used Hobbes as evidence. One of the peculiarities of the Western culture is that if someone writes a book or writes a paper and it gets into publication, and then over a hundred years, something happens to that writing. It's *suddenly* hallowed. You know, it takes on an authenticity that it doesn't deserve because it was written 200 years ago, because it was written 300 years ago. And that's an observation that *I* make. Shakespeare is literally an icon in all literatures, but if we really examine Shakespeare, what did he write about, you know? And I've never seen Shakespeare critiqued in a negative way. It's always been critiqued in a positive way.

PAUL NELSON: Right. You haven't talked to some of the poets I know . . .

E. RICHARD ATLEO: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: . . . but that's a different [laughs], I mean, in terms of his poetry . . .

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Oh, OK. So, yeah, right. OK. I should really stick to the subject here.

PAUL NELSON: But Hobbes, I mean, he's making this and it's been quoted by a Supreme Court Justice in Canada, and yet when you look at the scientific modality of some of his contemporaries, for example, the early explorers and their scientific research was a lot more credible than what Hobbes is quoting.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Well, what Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke, what they did at their time was acceptable and it's very much like armchair quarterbacking. That is, they wrote down suppositions, using logic, using their own logic. And so they, because they had access to the theory of evolution that existence on the planet developed along an imaginary line called the evolutionary line, and on this line the most advanced species were the Europeans, and so they imagined that other species would be less advanced because they were not like *them*. And so they *assumed* that Aborigines were more primitive in this evolutionary process, and to the point where they {thought?} aborigines had no laws. They had no organized societies, and they were instinctive rather than, you know, intelligent, and they did *not* go and check their thoughts. They used their logic and applied the logic to their writings. Their writings are very logical but flawed, *seriously* flawed. But that kind of work was acceptable at that time. And I think what's often forgotten, and these people are still studied in political science, and so people that take political science learn incidentally about the primitiveness of Aborigines. And there's no balancing of the perception of the individuals in those texts. There isn't another text that says, "Well, you know, Hobbes had no evidence, and Jacques Rousseau had no empirical evidence for the ideas that he propagated about Aborigines."

PAUL NELSON: He could have very well been throwing darts at a dartboard that he filled out and come up with similar results.

We're talking with Dr. E. Richard Atleo. He is the author of *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth World-view*.

We're back with E. Richard Atleo. He's the author of *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview*. It has recently been published in paperback by UBC Press. I'm Paul Nelson

Dr. Richard Atleo was the guest of the Center for World Indigenous Studies today.

When we talk about these statements created by, these opinions shaped by people like Thomas Hobbes and his contemporaries, it might be, you know, we could shake our heads or say that's bad science or do whatever, but the limitations of their view have really affected the life and well-being of indigenous people for 300, 400 years.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Yes, that's true. And it's my belief, contention, that these academics, they were academics of their *day*, were largely responsible for much of the. . . Theirs weren't the only belief systems by the way. There was other information that was available about Aboriginals that was *good* information. It's little known that, I think it was in the 16th Century, a Royal Commission was done that found that Aboriginals were indeed people, that they had organized societies and so on. That they should be dealt with as people should be dealt with *anywhere*.

PAUL NELSON: That the chief of these peoples sort of served a role of high priest, as well as leader, as well as political leader.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Yes, that was observation by [inaudible] {Munoz? from context below}, a Spanish explorer that came up the coast and conversed with [inaudible] and made observations about the society of the day.

PAUL NELSON: It was rather complex.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Yes, yes. Well, Munoz' observations *provided* sort of tip of the iceberg type of observations about our society. Not complete, there was some misunderstanding provided as well but that's quite . . . he was not a trained observer. I mean, many of the people that came and made observations were not trained observers.

PAUL NELSON: He got it pretty well, don't you think?

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Yes, he did. He did very well. I will have to concede that, yes. Now, information about our societies has often been subjected to *misinterpretation*. So you can take the same sort of event and if you interpret it from a scientific worldview perspective, that event comes out very poorly.

PAUL NELSON: For example, if I say tell us about snot boy . . .

E. RICHARD ATLEO: [laughs] Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: . . . you'll immediately have a problem with that.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Exactly. As well as wolfer-troll, yes.

PAUL NELSON: Right, right, right.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Yes, exactly.

PAUL NELSON: We should be talking about Son of Mucus is what I'm referring to.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Exactly, yes. For example, an observation was made in a contemporary text about Nuu-can-whaling. Nuu-chah whaling they called it. And I did a review of the book and there's a statement in there that's intended to be neutral, and the statement was: Many whaling ventures were unsuccessful and it was just left that way, many whaling ventures were unsuccessful. And that was rather the dominant description of the whaling aspect of our people. And it would be very much like saying, "Alexander Graham Bell had 1236 failures during his experimentation." And you failed to mention [laughs] . . .

PAUL NELSON: By the way, he did also do this thing called the telephone. We'll tell you about that later.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Exactly. Exactly.

PAUL NELSON: Right, right. Well, you know, I'm looking at that part of the world, Clayoquot Sound and thinking that the Indians on the east coast of North America, tremendously devastated, and as you get further west the devastation continued but I'm guessing that we get up here to the Northwest and it's not as bad as it was, not *complete* devastation. There's still remnants. Some cultures have survived. And I'm thinking, is it because of your area that you were able to avoid some of the worst brunts of colonialism?

E. RICHARD ATLEO: No, that would not be our interpretation. The worst swept the entire continent, from coast to coast. The diseases decimated our populations to-, to a horrendous degree. During the residential schools, it has not been really publicized and only recently has information surfaced that . . . We have testimony from people that were recently alive and some that are still alive, where TB was deliberately spread amongst our students. People were made to sleep with an infected TB person. There were girls that . . . where abortion was committed and the girls died as the result of the abortion because at that time, they didn't know much about how to do abortions, I suppose. And there were a lot of deaths that took place in residential schools that were never reported, that were kept quiet. As a matter of fact, right across the country. And that's a *recent* kind of information. One of the very significant anthropologist in Canada has made the statement that banning of the Potlatch was not significant. I find that a horrendous statement for a person who didn't live, was not an Aboriginal, a very respected anthropologist, is a good example of how misunderstandings continue to the present day. Many of the deaths in my own community I would attribute to the banning of Potlatch, to the laws that were created in Canada, that were placed in the Constitution of Canada. So all the powers of the *state* brought to bear against my people. I think my grandfather perished, as did my father, as a result of these laws that disempowered the chiefs, the people who governed our communities, who maintained *order* in our communities. And when they were disempowered, then chaos naturally came in like a flood. And *will* every time you-, you loose-, every time you relax because our teaching was: You must be vigilant. You must always . . . and so the rule of law, as in the West they say, the rule of law was always very strongly upheld in our communities through the [inaudible], through teachings, through songs and dances, and so on. And when that was relaxed, then the destructive forces came. Came in like a tsunami flood. And so we have all of what research has shown us today, the highest incidents of every dysfunction, including death, in our communities.

So, no. No part of the continent escaped the massive brunt, destructive brunt of colonization.

PAUL NELSON: After September 11th, in the United States, we forget about it now, but there was a huge spread or fear of anthrax, and I'm wondering if you think that the perpetration of biological warfare against indigenous peoples is somewhere in the back of the consciousness or somewhere in

the unconscious of American people, and that's why there's the anthrax thing scares them so much. Because . . .

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Very much so. The distribution, deliberate distribution of blankets, as gifts, that were, blankets that were *infected* with disease, smallpox and decimating the entire. . . it's biological warfare against indigenous people that was perpetrated over the last 200 years or more.

PAUL NELSON: Yet, in Canada, there's been some progress, politically. In 1997, a Canadian Supreme Court decision which made oral histories legitimate evidence in the eyes of Canadian law, a huge advance. Would you agree?

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Yes, that was called [the] Delgamuukw Decision and what is very interesting about that decision is that it affirmed Aboriginal rights and title, and accepted oral histories as evidence in the court of law. And that's a landmark decision. However, the fact that oral histories are accepted in court as evidence does not mean, of course, that when we Aboriginals present our oral histories, that they will be accepted, verbatim, as fact because they are *not*. They will be treated in the same way that any other kind of evidence: Is it credible? And of course, at the moment, at *this* moment, most of oral histories are not deemed credible from the Western perspective. And so we need a lot of work to do yet in that area.

The other thing is that the recognition of aboriginal title and rights in Canada is a principle and the interpretation of which is still to be done. So that what does it mean to be [inaudible] for the Ahousaht people. What is it? What does it mean? What does aboriginal rights and title mean for *us*? The Supreme Court of Canada has not defined the specifics of that and so that work is very much a moot point still. It's a point of negotiation. So we sit at the treaty table and so it's a struggle where we are at a disadvantage because we're on *their* playground. We're on their playground and they're gradually accepting some of our ways. But predominantly, the rules of the game are their rules.

PAUL NELSON: Still going in the right direction though.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah. I remember being in Canada, I think, when Paul Martin was being sworn in as Prime Minister, and was watching him be smudged by native elders. So to see, to just picture President Bush allowing that to happen, to me, is inconceivable. So I would then argue that Canadian Aboriginal people have a leg up on their contemporaries, or their counterparts here.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: That would appear to be so. However, I think a good deal of skepticism always is warranted when observing the behavior of politicians.

PAUL NELSON: [laughs] No matter what kind of . . .

E. RICHARD ATLEO: You should know and understand that the Prime Minister of Canada is leading a minority party. He has a minority in government and so he must woo as many people, groups, as possible. And so be smudged then, he hopes to garner as many Aboriginal votes in Canada as possible.

PAUL NELSON: So you say it's a pure, political act then.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: Well, we won't have to put you on the spot regarding politics. Can you elaborate on why you say in the book that the experiment with colonialism is over and it has been a failure?

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Yes. That is one perspective. A successful colonial experiment would have *meant* the disappearance of any culture other than the cultures that came over to this continent. The fact that they were unable to do that . . . the actual word that was used by a Jesuit missionary in 1632 was-, was extirpate. We must extirpate an educational process all of the thoughts, habits and feelings of the Aboriginal children and inculcate, right, the Western, the European thoughts, habits and feelings. And of course, at that time it was thought to be a kindness that was thought, because on the evolutionary scale, we're the most advanced if we make *them* like *us*, then it's a kindness that we perform towards them.

So in either way, it will mean a disappearance of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal identity as we know it. Because we retain our identity, because we retain our songs and dances, because I am Umeek, it's been a failure to that extent. To the extent that we have been destroyed and many of our ways have been forgotten. It's been successful to that. So it's a mixed . . . it isn't a complete failure but in important ways it's been a great *test* for a way of life. That if it was not authentic, if it did not have legitimacy in the dimensions of reality that I speak of, that is the spiritual and physical dimensions, then the existence of it would have been jeopardized and may have gone out of existence. But because it *is authentic*, it *is* legitimate, because it *is* authentic. Because the existence of it is actually *not* completely controlled by the human being, that there are greater powers involved here, that allowed us to continue as we are, and for that we are grateful and thankful.

PAUL NELSON: We're talking about the realm of the spiritual and in your culture you say spiritual experiences are necessary for an effective management of reality.:

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Yes. I think that this is where the perspective of Aboriginals, indigenous peoples with a reputation for spirituality, I think it will, in the future, be a necessary compliment to the survival of the human being. I think science, with its great wonders and powers, as a technological advancement tool, serves to provide certain necessities for the human being. But none of the values that are necessary for survival on this planet. And I think that values can be derived. The authenticity, the legitimacy of values can be derived, not from ideologies but from spiritual quests where human beings can re-learn or remember, in fact, what was always the legacy of the human being. That the human being has a legacy in the spiritual realm, that many communities have forgotten that, but if and when they strive to remember, they *can* and they can have access to that same kind of information that our ancestors were privy to. And they did not always manage successfully but most of the time they were able to do so.

PAUL NELSON: If they strive to remember, and if they're *humble*, which is an important part of it.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Yes, and that can be a difficult task for many of us.

PAUL NELSON: Mm-hmm. You say to the Nuu-chah-nulth people that generosity is not just a good trait but is actually a *law*. It's akin to gravity. Generosity.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: I find it exciting that I think it's possible to subject some of the statements that I make in the book to an investigation. Some investigations have already been conducted about prayer, for example, where people who pray, the double-blind experiment kind of thing where people will pray specifically in one way for a plant, in a creative way, and destructively for another plant. And watch what happens to those plants. Where one will shrivel and die and the other will blossom.

PAUL NELSON: Or even a dish of bacteria that . . .

E. RICHARD ATLEO: A dish of bacteria, yes. Yes, and there are other kinds of experimentation that can be done that are very pragmatic, such as analysis of brain chemistry. Analysis of what hap-

pens in the brain, and I know that relatively speaking, very little is still known about our brains. There's still a lot more research to be done. But nevertheless, a great deal of information is already known. And so what can be done is to analyze brain chemistry while in certain states of, conditions that can be identified as spiritual. And there can be groups of people that can participate in this kind of experimentation and when it's replicated over and over again, and when it's very rigorous from a scientific perspective, a lot of things can be *learned* about a relationship between the physical and spiritual realm. Things that *we* learned as Nuu-chah-nulth people over millennia, and proved and designed our life ways, our communities, our governance system, our management of resources, from the findings of Oosumich.

PAUL NELSON: I would love for you to paint us a mental picture. How would something like generosity, for example, be proven to be something that is necessary for good health and well-being and how would one do that, using the vision quest process?

E. RICHARD ATLEO: There were different kinds of research. There's . . . I forgot again the technical name, quasi . . . well, never mind. There's research where you look back and you examine data historically, historical data. The experiences of people that can testify about certain outcomes from spiritual activity. The activity of generosity, for example, I would classify it as a spiritual activity. And so one can interview thousands of families, of people who practice generosity and probably would have to be a lot of indigenous peoples, maybe a lot of Christian people, or those religions that have generosity as part of their teachings. Examine those people, you know, and of course, not examining the religion. Just examining the practice.

PAUL NELSON: And the experience of the people.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: And the experience. So that's one kind of study. Another kind of study would be to have people participate willingly as they do in many other kinds of experimentation. And even people, for example, that aren't in the habit of *giving* may want to participate in this and to test this proposition that generosity always works, that generosity never fails. It *never* has failed a people that managed to survive in spite of famine, in spite of all kinds of problems that crop up naturally in existence, but did not *deter* them from this *law* that we call generosity.

So one can then do long-term kind of research in this way. And test the results. OK, did you suffer? You know, or what degree did you suffer, as a result of *giving*? Or, did you benefit from it? And so you will find, I'm certain, that for example, even in monetary funds, if some people in Christian societies give ten percent of their earnings, and some, with greater faith, will give a larger percentage, up to 75 percent. Can you believe it? You give 75 percent of your money away regularly, and not *only* do you maintain your . . . but wealth increases, as a result.

PAUL NELSON: Hmm, ha., it's interesting. On page 123, you have a long list of potential things that could be researched. Do some spiritual experiences require more effort than others? Under what conditions are creative spiritual forces stronger than the destructive forces? And so on and so forth. It's a great passage, and if we had more time I'd ask you to read that.

How does a song lose its power away from the place where it came from? In other words, how much power would one of your healing songs, in your territory, have in South America or Europe?

E. RICHARD ATLEO: A song, well . . . Songs are products of the environment in which they are created, and so they take their energy and their power within that context. And when you take anything out of context, then it is often disempowered. So secret knowledge, for example, when something is meant to be secret, and then it is divulged, then it loses its power. And that is a principle that was learned in our societies. There's some things that are meant to be secret and when they are *exposed*, then they lose their power. They are disempowered.

So when some people talked about our Clayoquana {check spelling if poss.} ceremony, then the elements of it were misinterpreted because they were placed in a scientific context. They were placed in a different worldview context. They were placed in an environment where they could not live. The Clayoquana could not survive in that environment. It thrives in a Nuu-chah-nulth environment. It's dynamic, and one can see *wonders*. And lately, we *have*, in the performance of a [inaudible] experienced wonders, just as our ancestors did.

PAUL NELSON: One last question. Is the environmental crisis we find the earth in, with global warming and constant war, and shootings here in the United States, another school shooting recently, is this simply the maturation of a phase?

E. RICHARD ATLEO: I'm not sure simply. It would appear to be simple, but I think that is a much more complex phenomenon we're observing. But certainly the abuse of an environment and what we understand about cycles, that when we send out good, we receive good. When we send out bad, we receive bad. Whatever cycle we begin, you know, it just goes around. So what goes round comes around, I think is a street phrase that's very apt for an Aboriginal perspective.

PAUL NELSON: And the mountains and Nature will get the last word.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: The mountains and Nature will get the last word, yes [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: It's been a delight to have you on the program. Thank you so much . . .

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Very much so.

PAUL NELSON: . . . for your great work here and continued success.

E. RICHARD ATLEO: Thank you.

PAUL NELSON: We've been talking with Umeek, Dr. E. Richard Atleo. His new book is *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview*, and you could find that, paperback version on UBC Press.

PAUL NELSON: Hello, and welcome to this week's program. I'm Paul Nelson. This week we bring back not only one of our favorite guests, but one of our favorite *humans*, for that matter. He is known as Beaver Chief, a spiritual leader and Native American man. His ancestors, the Salish, were the first people of what we call the Pacific Northwest. He says his ancestors did not fight the European settlers, but lost their land *anyway* because they *did not* and *could not* comprehend the notion of land ownership.

BEAVER CHIEF: And today we still don't understand this but it's become a truth, a reality. Everybody owns land and they've been destroying it. And now they're turning to us to look at us and we're helping them again. We never learn, do we? We keep on helping people even if they hurt us.

PAUL NELSON: It is the job of Salish medicine men and women, like Beaver Chief, to provide medicine to anyone who *wants* it and *needs* it - even descendants of settlers. I asked him, "What would happen to the medicine people who did *not* share their knowledge and medicine?"

BEAVER CHIEF: We'll get fat heads. No [laughs]. Our heads will get fat, just like a lot of the people that are in politics, you know? They don't give the wisdom. They don't give the knowledge so that they can *get* wisdom, I should say.

PAUL NELSON: Our guest today is Beaver Chief, one of the coolest humans on the planet. I hope you enjoy today's program. Thanks for tuning in.
It has been a long time since we had a chance to interview our friend, Beaver Chief. It has been a long, *long* time. We rectify that mistake today as we talk with one of the most amazing holy people I have ever known.

Beaver Chief is a Native American man, registered with the Lummi tribe in northwest Washington. A spiritual leader who brings out the traditional teachings of the Northwest Coast Native American Salish people, and who comes from a long line of Indian Shaker doctors.

Those teachings come in the form of songs, stories, drumming and dance. Many of the songs are now available on a compact disc entitled *Red Cedar Medicine Circle Songs* by Beaver Chief. It's our pleasure to welcome him back to the program. Beaver Chief, thanks for coming down today.

BEAVER CHIEF: Thank you, Paul. It's good to be here.

PAUL NELSON: It's been a long time.

BEAVER CHIEF: Yeah [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: It *has* been a long time. I was lookin' back. You're not even in the new book, the last interview that we did, I think, was about two years ago. Wow.

In the past interviews that we've done on the show, you've never talked about your parents on the program. You've talked a little bit about your lineage and your grandmother, but why don't you tell us about your parents, their parents and your line of Indian Shaker doctors.

BEAVER CHIEF: A lot of times we don't talk about our folks that are living 'cuz they're our closest, well, for *me*, it's my closest teachers. And we don't talk about our teachers until they're passed, and not a lot. But my mother is the eldest of the Jamesons from over in Lummi and she was put inside the Shaker Church when she was very small, to keep her safe from a lot of dark negative energies that were coming to our family. And she studied that and watched her mother and great grandfather do the Indian doctoring. She also knows *that*, but we don't call it studying, you know, these things. You live, you *live* this way. And if you asked my mother, my mother would never

say that she studied anything. She just lived a way, and it's all inside of her action and her reaction to life, and now she does things.

And I don't talk about my *father* because it's our mother and our grandmother, the lineage side that we hold very high here and that we bring out. We have to keep certain things sacred, *secret* so to speak, but sacred, away from the public because there's certain things that help us to be our self. Where we can relax in a certain refuge of sanctuary. And if we tell *everything*, then people think that they *know* everything and then they start telling us about our self. That happens a lot to me.

PAUL NELSON: And then we have trouble, don't we?

BEAVER CHIEF: Yes, very much so [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: Yes, we *do*. Well, you know, we're not asking you to disclose anything sacred or any secrets, so you know that, and I suppose a radio program [laughs] is not the most . . . although, you know, this one leans on the sacred side but we can understand that it's going out to who knows. Who knows who is listening to this right now, so I can appreciate that. But I guess the point I wanted to bring out is that you have healers on both sides . . .

BEAVER CHIEF: Oh, yes.

PAUL NELSON: . . . of your family, yeah.

BEAVER CHIEF: Yes. Yes, my grandmother comes from the Indian doctoring tradition. She moved down from West Saanich in Vancouver Island, and my great-grandfather from *this* side was Lucien Jameson from Lummi, and he was very well-known. They called him a Big Indian Doctor, and that meant that he Indian doctored all over the place and nobody's . . . this is strange to say, but it's the truth, it's the way the old people used to talk . . . Nobody's power was more bigger than his, and they have stories about him holding a candle in the big windstorm and the candle-light is blue, and it doesn't go out, and he does his healing doctoring songs. And one of the songs was on the CD. I was given permission by some of my old people to bring the song out, to bring it out. Patiuse, his name was Patiuse Isador Tom, he was a big Indian doctor up in Lummi. Also, he gave me my great-grandfather's song, and then Joe Washington, my other uncle, he said, "He don't know nothing. Here, I'll tell you the song. This is the way that it goes." 'Cuz they always did that to one another [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: And what song was that?

BEAVER CHIEF: That was the Indian doctoring song that's on the . . . I believe it's on there.

PAUL NELSON: I don't *see* it.

BEAVER CHIEF: Oh, maybe it's a secret [laughs]. Excuse me. It's not on there, huh?

PAUL NELSON: Not one of 18, grandfather, there's grandfather song on there. Is that the one it is?

BEAVER CHIEF: No. That's another one. That one comes from a Hitaloc, Frank Hilaire in English, and that was from up in Vancouver Island, West Saanich, also. And that's a song that means in translation in English, "I have come to help you, can't you see? Can't you see?" You know, and that's on there. Excuse me. I guess it's not on there, Indian Doctor Song.

PAUL NELSON: Well, on the *sequel*, I guess, we could put that on if it's not on one of . . . you had one or previously to that.

BEAVER CHIEF: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: Why don't you tell us a little bit about the Salish people. By the time the settlers reached the Pacific Northwest, there was nowhere to run.

BEAVER CHIEF: Yeah.

PAUL NELSON: It was either fight, swim, or decide not to fight. And that's pretty much what happened.

BEAVER CHIEF: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: To a certain extent. I mean, worse here in Auburn, Washington, which was originally called Slaughter, named after a man who died in the quote / unquote Indian Wars of the mid-19th Century. But, for the most part, this notion of being here in the Northwest corner of the country made the Salish people *different* from other native civilizations. Tell us about that.

BEAVER CHIEF: I can tell you a little bit about what I know about that and from my own perspective, is that, oh, yeah, you know, we didn't . . . we did not fight. We got swindled out of ours, our land up here. And we didn't understand and to this *day*, we still talk about what our forefathers said about the land. That, how can you own the land? These are our visitors. They've come to visit us. If they choose to . . . *want* this then we'll give that to them. We'll give them that *choice*. We'll help them to live their dream. Because we couldn't understand how you could own the land and all these things. And today, we still don't understand this but it's become a truth, a reality. Everybody owns land and they've been destroying it. And *now* they're turning to us to look at us and we're helping them again. We never *learn*, do we? We keep on helping people even if they hurt us. We keep on turning around. I know I got away from this question a little bit, about what you asked me.

PAUL NELSON: But this is very important to talk about because, you know, it's decided, I guess, by the elders to say "No, we're gonna go ahead and *do* this." And there's a lot of pain. I mean, I could see the pain in your face in just talking about this. And yet, we realize that you can't own the earth. And when you *do* own land, what happens to it? Somebody lives downstream. They all have to deal with it. So it's this notion that is prevalent in the Western mind, that you're separate from your environment, or the mind is *separate* from the body, and it's a very machine-like, a very mechanistic approach to dealing with things that *you* know, and that your elders know, and have been taught for thousands of years, is not the way things are. The way things are is that we're all connected. And so I think what you're talking about is very important.

BEAVER CHIEF: Yeah, so, thank you. 'Cuz I'm *like* that. I get away from things and so I'd like to stay on this. It's real important to *me*, right now, that people take care of their land, that they've won it, and that they've received over the time from maybe their grandfathers or grandparents. But to take care of it, you know? It shouldn't have never been an issue about clean water and clean air here, in politics and things like this. This is our right as human beings, and we're all connected, and it's very important. There's many, many sicknesses that are gonna come from all the pollution in the air, from all the development and the progress they call progress. 70,000 people coming to Seattle for a game, and then another 70,000 coming for another game, a baseball game, a basketball game, all these things. But nobody thought about traffic. They just thought about *money*. And I say to that, "Look what you've done. Look what you've done."

All of your "progress" that you say that Native people are . . . we gotta move them out because their old thoughts don't go along with *our* progress and economics. Look what you're doing. Look at the economics that are doing . . . I mean, not all economics are *bad*, but look what's been

happening. Nobody *thinks* completely, or maybe they *do*, and they like to put out a ten-year thought and they have a process of all these things, and they know what's gonna happen because they set it up like that to happen. Like the wars. I don't wanna go into the wars but I do know about this, is that I've been studying and watching the people here for a long time. And I've watched our government *here* in Washington state look at things, and we've grown little by little. Now they're talking about a thing called a light rail. If they're gonna talk about this light rail, I look at that and I say, "Why not make it all the way from Portland, all the way up to Canada? Why *stop* in between and have it just for there?" Because it's gonna be *needed* and there'll be all these things. Is that progress? Or what's going on? I know there's a lot of people that'll argue about the pollution and all this, but look what's going on. 70,000 people driving 70,000 cars, coming to what they call a "sports event." You know, there's something wrong there. And all the old people in the houses suffer from emphysema and all of these sicknesses that we cannot even control.

PAUL NELSON: We're talking with Beaver Chief. He's a spiritual leader who brings out the traditional teachings of the Northwest Coast Native American Salish people. He has a brand new CD out, as well, that is entitled *Red Cedar Medicine Circle Songs* by Beaver Chief. I'm Paul Nelson. You say that teachings that you *have* come from the First World, and yet we now live in the *Fifth* World. So why don't you tell us about these different eras and what it portends. You've already told us about some of the prophecies but it doesn't take an Indian to know that with all the pollution, someone's gonna get sick [laughs]. Not to *demean* that, but you know what I'm sayin'.

BEAVER CHIEF: Yeah. There's . . .

PAUL NELSON: That's what the. . . yeah, the Fifth world, the First World and the Fifth World.

BEAVER CHIEF: Well, in the First World . . . I can share this with you. In the First World, everything *spoke*, everything *talked*, 'cuz we could *hear* each other. We were all in harmony with each other in the First World teaching. Saying that the trees would talk to you and you would *hear* them like you're hearing *me* right now. And they would talk to you and tell you things. There would be the mountains and the rocks and the whales and the fish and the birds – they all spoke to you, and you spoke to *them*, just like we're speaking now. In the First World, that's when the drum and the drumstick came together. They were going along, talking, and they heard the sound of a cry, and it was crying over by the tree, and crying over by the mountains, crying over by the ocean, crying *everywhere*. And the drumstick said to the drum, "Let's go and see if we can *help*." And the drum said, "I really don't want to get involved with this." But the drumstick said, "Come on. Let's go over there and see if we can help." So they went over and that's when the drum and the drumstick came together, and that's when the sacred cry, the First Song, came out. And it's the same words for "cry" and the word for "song" is the same in our language. And it came out and that was a creation story of this. This was passed down from generation to generation, and this is what I understand about the First World. The First World was a very powerful place.

Some people like to share a lot and tell me about . . . I've been looking at this time about the Hindu and Lord Shiva and Ganesh and all of the different deities and Ataras {?} and everybody. And I was thinking about that, and I was thinking about *their* First World teachings from over in India. And I was thinking . . . I wondered if that wasn't really their First World teaching, or it was *before* that, their First World teaching. And then that was another world where Lord Ganesh was doing . . . where the Bhagavad Gita comes in, that's the Bible of the Hindu.

I don't want nobody to get upset with me but that's how I know it. That's the Bible of that, and I appreciate that. I appreciate all religions in this time, because they tell us a great story, a beautiful story. But we have to look and feel it our self. When we're reading it or listening to it, we have to really feel it our self because what is these words *really* doing their best to generate with this feeling that it wants you to know. 'Cuz the story may be a little bit different but the *feeling* is the

same. If you can *feel* the word of the person that's telling you this story, or reading it out of a book, it's very important to remember the *feeling*. 'Cuz the word is just a story and it sets up the feeling to come through. It transmits to the mind and then that way the mind gets out of the way of the *heart*, and then the heart can feel it once again. And sometimes we say, "Well, that story is kind of strange, *but* I can *feel* something. Something is good about this."

I don't know if you're following me. I hope I didn't lose you.

PAUL NELSON: No, you're I'm making notes about this one [laughs]. I'm makin' a little note on this. But I did wanna hear about the Fifth World, which we live in now.

BEAVER CHIEF: Ah, the Fifth World. Well, you *know* it [laughs]. I mean, the Fifth World is . . . it's where everything is coming together. Everything looks *good*. Everything looks sacred and pure. That means that everything *is* that, but . . . it's not all *for* you. You have to choose the things that are for *you*. And work with *that*. And leave the rest alone. Don't destroy it. Let it be. Let it *be*. Because it'll come for you to understand, and somebody else will come and pick up that *part* to put it together with *your* part that you *carry*. This is where all the parts come together and it's like golden.

PAUL NELSON: It's a time of integration.

BEAVER CHIEF: Yes. Very much so.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

BEAVER CHIEF: This world *now*, that we're living in, is something that's so amazing. I like going to The Spice{?} {this place?}, the elderly, places where they eat and have rummage sales and things like this, and I go *talk* to them. I go talk to them and they say, "You know, we always loved your people. We always loved your people." The older people of Washington state, I go see. And I said, "Yes," I said, ha ha, "It's time for us to look at each other. Look at us. We would never be able to eat together if Christopher Columbus or whoever didn't get lost and went crazy and went 6,000 miles off of his course and . . . you know, discovered us." [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

BEAVER CHIEF: So I love that. I love that. I tell them that and they smile at me. Because we would never be able to do this, to integrate our eyes together, our hearts together. I mean, we don't even have to mix our bloods. Our blood is the *same* already.

You know, sometimes people will have such a high prejudice of color and race and all these things. That's all right. They can still *have* that, but we just have to *look* at each other's soul, just for a moment, in any place and help one another. The integration of this is very important.

PAUL NELSON: It's a beautiful thing what you're talking about. I see it in art, and what we're trying to do at the Spoken Word Lab, you know, the integration of art and social services. Because from that machine mentality, everything gets broken down into *parts*, and some people say, "Well, we fund the arts. We don't fund social services. Go to someone else for money." And then we'll go to the social services and they say, "Well, we don't fund arts. Go to someone else for money." So it's this kind of shell game that we play with them, and yet we believe that we're working on a deeper level. And you're talking about integration being the *key* element of the Fifth World, the modern times. It's just music to my soul. It's amazing.

What else is music to my soul is your new CD. It's music to *everyone's* soul who wants a copy. And we have cut number one queued up. Should we *play* it and then talk about it afterwards? Let's . . .

BEAVER CHIEF: OK.

PAUL NELSON: . . . Let's do that. We're talking with Beaver Chief and the new CD is *Red Cedar Medicine Circle Songs* by Beaver Chief. This one is entitled "Salmon Song."

Since we're kinda limited on time here and just about out of time for this segment, why don't you tell us a little bit about the "Salmon Song."

BEAVER CHIEF: The "Salmon Medicine Song" is a song that we sing, giving thanks to the salmon for allowing us to live together. The salmon comes and then we give thanks in a good way and we eat and share on the flesh of the salmon. And the spirit helps us to be well in this time, and to remember where we come from. To remember that we're all connected.

PAUL NELSON: And when the salmon are gone, will the people be gone?

BEAVER CHIEF: Yes, that's what we believe. That's the reason why we always look at our salmon, and we look at our trees and we look at everything. Everything is connected. If one thing is gotten rid of, then we know that the rest is yet to follow.

PAUL NELSON: A lot of salmon look pretty sick.

BEAVER CHIEF: Yeah. And so do a lot of Native people.

PAUL NELSON: Well, I guess what we should do is put out your website and phone number for more information. I'm laughing 'cuz we host your website on our site. It's www dot in Peoria dot O-R-G (www.inpeoria.org) and look on the left side of the frame and you'll see Beaver Chief and his website so click on that to find out all the latest information. And the phone number in Seattle, with the area code first:

BEAVER CHIEF: 206-782-5781.

PAUL NELSON: More with Beaver Chief in a moment. We're talking with Beaver Chief. He's a spiritual leader who brings out the traditional teachings of the Northwest Coast Native American Salish people. And this is the "Salmon Song" from his new CD, *Red Cedar Medicine Circle Songs* by Beaver Chief.

The "Salmon Song," Beaver Chief from the new CD, *Red Cedar Medicine Circle Songs* by Beaver Chief, which is available in many different stores in the Puget Sound region and some of those are listed on the website for Beaver Chief, which is at www dot in Peoria dot O-R-G (www.inpeoria.org) That's I-N, P-E-O-R-I-A, dot O-R-G.

While the song was playing, you mentioned something about Bill Gates. I made a mental note [laughs] of that. That you wanted to talk about him. And we've talked about this in the past. I remember slightly, and I didn't listen to the old interviews before we did this one, but I remember you saying that when some of that Microsoft money is unleashed in the Puget Sound region, there's gonna be a renaissance here, an *amazing* renaissance, and I just heard a figure on the radio the other day, or perhaps it was in the newspaper, that the average salary at Boeing, which for many years has been *the* prime employer in the Seattle area – the average salary is \$40,000 a year. The average salary of Microsoft is \$400,000 a year. So there's a lot of money in the hands of people

who work at Microsoft and the people who are in upper management and certainly we know how much money's in the hands of Bill Gates, 'cuz it's reported by *Fortune 500* every year. But what were your thoughts about Microsoft and Bill Gates?

BEAVER CHIEF: I was just thinking that this is a mystical place, Washington state, the Seattle area, and that maybe Mr. Gates and the people over there can hear us, and give something to us, some donation to us. Us being the SPLAB that Plays in Peoria Productions because I really support what's going on here for the children, for all the people, actually, with the poetry and just all the programs that are being put together here. And I really support this a hundred percent, and I feel so good about this 'cuz I had a dream about having a children's art center and this feels like this is what this dream is formulating into. I can see it happening and I like helping in this manner. The only person that believed in me back a long time ago, really believed in me, was Steven Jesse Bernstein, and he helped me to write a paper on this. And now, here I am and I'm looking at all of this, and I know that Mr. Gates has a lot of mystical thoughts about this planet or else he wouldn't have never been blessed with this. And so I'm looking forward to seeing all of these projects through It Plays in Peoria Productions get off the ground and fly. Fly *high* like an eagle and move in a good way. And it's got the support of my ancestors, and I know that this man wouldn't have never been allowed to come here and to do his magic with Microsoft if my ancestors didn't open the way. And so it's all in the universe. It really is. And I give thanks for this in this time. And I'm looking forward to manifesting the dream, and *my* dream is to have a temple. 'Cuz there's been a temple *seen* above the Seattle area by different mystics that I've met throughout the world. And that's the temple that needs to come down and manifest into a reality here. And the temple, it doesn't have to be *big*. Just a small place, where we can do meetings and drumming, and that's my dream, and it'll come together. And so will yours.

PAUL NELSON: I got some *big* dreams, Beaver Chief. Some *huge*, huge dreams. I mean, this is just the beginning of what I wanna do. And I'm humbled by your saying what you have to say about that. I didn't expect that's where it was going.

BEAVER CHIEF: I apologize.

PAUL NELSON: No, no, no. No apologies are necessary. I made you cry on the program once [laughs] so I guess we're even! [laughs]

BEAVER CHIEF: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Kinda threw me for a loop there, so I'll go back to my text here. And that is to talk about SiSiWiss. That's what the medicine is called, of your ancestors. Why don't you tell us about that.

BEAVER CHIEF: SiSiWiss in English, it comes out three ways, and it's the sacred breath, the sacred ocean and the sacred life. And it's like all indigenous teachings, they have a way of the breath. I was just in Hawaii at the beginning of November, I was called over there to do some blessings. And I was over there and I met a man who told me the meaning of "Hawaii." *Ha* means the breath, *wai* means the water, and the *i* on the end of Hawaii means how you are in the universe and how it's with *you*. And so that was very sacred to me and I appreciated that. And I'm sorry for making you cry.

PAUL NELSON: No, no, no, no, no. Ha, it's all good. It all happens for a good reason. The *Red Cedar Medicine Circle* . . .

BEAVER CHIEF: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: . . . is what you call your sacred circle when you conduct one in the Puget Sound region, or in New York state or even in Switzerland when you visit there. Can you give us a little bit of the background and the history of the Circle?

BEAVER CHIEF: Yes. My cousin, Johnny Moses is the leader of this Red Cedar Circle, and his grandfather before him was the leader, and before it was just open to any *Native* people with open mind and heart, because that's all there *was*. It wasn't [laughs] . . . it wasn't all the different mixtures of different people. Now it's open to *anyone*, *any* person with an open mind and heart, and we've been having . . . well, gosh, we've been having the Circles meeting for at least 15 years, up on Queen Anne Hill, at Third Avenue and West Lee Street, at the Queen Anne Christian Church, which only has around 45 members inside of its church, and it's the oldest Christian church on Queen Anne Hill. And we do that every Wednesday night at 7:00, 7:30, like that. And my cousin is there, or one of the members of the Red Cedar Circle, are bringing out the Circle and making a space available so that people can come in and join in, in ceremony of drumming, singing and dancing, in our old traditional way. And there's people from all walks of life that are studying *now*, in *this* time. They've been studying for about 12 years, our way, and a few of them longer than that. And so we had to come together and we created the Church of SiSiWiss. And my cousin Johnny Moses is the head of that, and I'm just a helper there. I don't . . . I'm not even registered or nothing [laughs] but that's the way that I like it. I like to be more of a helper 'cuz whenever we register things, it seems like somebody hurts us with our registration, if you know what I mean.

PAUL NELSON: Oh, God, yeah [laughs]. Well, not one treaty has been lived up to by the American government so I guess people of your tribe are a little bit careful about signing things. Yeah, I can appreciate that.

You know, it's interesting here that the question that I had lined up was: Why is it proper for these teachings to come out *now* and to anyone who seeks them, even settlers, or the descendants of settlers? And I still want that to come out, that question, but with a slight twist: What happens if you *don't* teach that? What happens to you and people who have the knowledge, now that the teachings are supposed to come out?

BEAVER CHIEF: We'll get fat heads! No [laughs]. Our heads will get fat, just like a lot of the people that are in politics. You know? They don't give the wisdom. They don't give the knowledge so that they can *get* wisdom, I should say. They like to keep everything. You ever been hired for a job and somebody won't teach you everything about the job? Because they wanna keep it for themselves?. And they only show you a little bit of it, and they say, "Oh, you don't know all this, so you can't be promoted." Well, you could learn the whole idea of the job and be the president of that place, if they *allowed* you to be. But there are always, this is a cutthroat thing inside the United States that I've found. They don't want you to know everything. They only want you to know that little part.

PAUL NELSON: They wanna *control* . . .

BEAVER CHIEF: Yes. And . . .

PAUL NELSON: . . . what happens to them. That turns into cancer, doesn't it?

BEAVER CHIEF: That's been happening all the time, yes. It's been amazing. People don't look at a person for who they are anymore. They look at what, what is that you can do? And they think that *that's* who they are. What you can do is who you are. This is not true in everything. You know, you do a job. That's a job. That's not who you are. But the United States have turned it into that's who you *are*. You're a painter. You're a *plumber*. You're a trash collector. You're this or that. But that's not who you *are*. You have to remember who you are. You cannot get into this game so

much. This is what happened, the cancer has set in and everybody thinks this is who I am and so I want you to be like this. No. You're a spiritual, beautiful *being* on this planet.

PAUL NELSON: A spiritual being having a human experience.

BEAVER CHIEF: Yes, exactly! That's it. You got it [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: It's not original. I've heard that, probably on this show before.

BEAVER CHIEF: Yes.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah.

BEAVER CHIEF: But it's *true*. It's true. How many times have we heard the same thing? And how many times have we *not* listened to what we've heard?

PAUL NELSON: Not knowing kills the youth; knowing and not remembering kills the elder. That's an Igbo proverb, that my friend Azay taught me.

BEAVER CHIEF: Oh, that's all good.

PAUL NELSON: Of all people. That's right, yeah.

BEAVER CHIEF: It's really good. It's really good. You know, people always look how to stay *young*. How to stay young – they always look. That's one of the things that I've noticed. You're young if you just keep on *moving*.

PAUL NELSON: It has nothing to do with skin cream?

BEAVER CHIEF: [laughs] No, that's a luscious, luscious extra.

PAUL NELSON: We're talking with Beaver Chief, a spiritual leader who brings out the traditional teachings of the Northwest Coast Native American Salish people. I'm Paul Nelson.

We talked about the teachings of the Coast Salish people, but you've learned from people of other traditions, including Archbishop Thomas Gill of the Catholic Church, and one of the founders of the Krishna Consciousness Movement in America. Tell us about how *those* experiences have shaped the person you are today.

BEAVER CHIEF: They've shaped me very well. I like wearing robes [laughs]. I . . .

PAUL NELSON: So that was not from *your* tradition.

BEAVER CHIEF: Well, no, it was. There was, oh, we had different robes that we wore, tunics and our button blankets and things like this, but a lot of people don't understand what it *is* to wear a robe or what it is to wear these things, ceremonial clothing that you . . . It captures the energy from the earth and brings it into your body, up inside the robe. A lot of other things, too – bugs and [laughs] all these things, you know. But that's part of the planet also. A bee, I remember one summer one bee stung me. Boy, got in there real good and [laughs] went up the robe and I couldn't get it out. I had to lift the robe up. That was a sight! But anyway, I just give thanks.

And they've taught me how to laugh, too. Taught me how to laugh. I mean, I already knew how to laugh, but how to laugh inside *their* religion and *their* way of life. I learned how to laugh also, and I learned why stop and ask a question to somebody other than the leader? And so I go directly

to the leaders of all the religions and talk with them and laugh with them. And it's really nice and I learn so many more things. Because not only in their tone of voice or their sight of what they're wearing, it's inside of their whole essence. It comes out. If you can sit with any sacred person, at any time, and everybody *is* sacred. But there are some that are really evolved and they look very strange to other beings 'cuz a being, an enlightened being in *this* time, looks very strange. And they like to laugh. They like to eat. They like all kind of things. A little casino gambling – they . . . [laughs] they like a little bit of everything.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, but it doesn't turn into a jones for them.

BEAVER CHIEF: No.

PAUL NELSON: No.

BEAVER CHIEF: No, no, no. It's just something. It's just something else. It's like this or like that, as our friend Snoop Dogg would say [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: [laughs] Oh, my God. From Krishna Consciousness to Snoop Doggy Dog, all in one package. Beaver Chief, thank you very much. You know, when you take the Circle and you combine that with a full moon, you have a very powerful thing, and we're planning on doing that here, at the Spoken Word Lab in 2000, starting in March. Is that what you told me?

BEAVER CHIEF: Yes, I'd like to.

PAUL NELSON: Yeah, you're more than welcome to *do* that. Tell us about the combination of that powerful Circle and the full moon.

BEAVER CHIEF: A lot of our people in the Northwest are people being . . . The Native people here, the spiritual ones, do not do open gatherings on the full moon because the full moon has so many energies coming through. But that's what I *like*. I like the rock 'n roll. I do. It's a rock 'n roll on the waves of the energy. And sometimes you can get . . . what do they call . . . possessed by all the energies of the full moon but I ride with it. And so I enjoy it, and bringing out all of the teachings of that moon. The Grandmother Moon is one of the most powerful energies, and it's a reflection of the light of the sun. It's true, but there's an energy, a special energy of a blue energy that comes over the body, mind and soul. And it's just powerful to have a drumming circle on that day.

PAUL NELSON: Can you give us an example of something happened one time at a circle during a full moon that you can relate without using names, obviously? Is there any incident that comes to mind?

BEAVER CHIEF: You mean like . . .

PAUL NELSON: Something that happened to a person that was just *amazing*, it was magic, transcendental, something like that on one of the circles during the full moon.

BEAVER CHIEF: Well, a man came to our circle. He wanted to come. He was an African man. Still *is* an African man [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: [laughs] You don't want him to be an African *dog* after his soul were . . . [laughs].

BEAVER CHIEF: [laughs] Well . . . [laughs] He came there and, I'll say his name because he doesn't mind. His name is Ambeelee Tisodiget and he came with his big drum and he's from Kenya. And he came, and he's about six foot four or so. And he came and he sang a song. And I ran into his girlfriend, well, a friend of his actually, in the University District, before that, and that's how we

got together. But he came in and he had all of his big djembe and his gris-gris, that's what they call their medicine things on there, and he was just *powerful*. And he sang. And it was like going all the way back into the ancient Africa, and he pulled the voice back out and it was so beautiful. And we became dear, dear friends and he came to me and he told me that he knew that I was . . . Now, he *said* this. He's a very powerful man, and he came to me and he said, "I . . . I know that you were my father in another life." And I looked at him and I said, "Son, come here!" [laughs] 'Cuz that's the way I *am* [laughs]. Has somebody else seen it? OK [laughs]. So be it. But, "Come here." You know? And I'll hug them and we hugged and I gave him a gift of hematite. A hematite necklace that was just raw, tumbled stones tied in double knots all the way around. And I gave it to him. I said, "I forgot to give this to you when you were my son. Here, now you can have it."

PAUL NELSON: And then you spanked him and told him to take out the garbage, right?

BEAVER CHIEF: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: All right. Maybe not. There is a Full Moon Song on the record, too. Does it need any explanation?

BEAVER CHIEF: Not at all. If you're so inclined to sing this song, with a full moon, you'll understand it. Listen to this song with a full moon. You'll understand.

PAUL NELSON: This is a song from *Red Cedar Medicine Circle Songs* by Beaver Chief.

[Oh, I remember this song. Absolutely. I've heard that at a couple of different Circles. This is simply entitled "Full Moon Song." *Red Cedar Medicine Circle Songs* by Beaver Chief, available in different stores in the Puget Sound region, Borders Books and Music, and more information by calling 206-782-5781, or on the website, in peoria dot O-R-G (www.inpeoria.org). That's I-N-P-E-O-R-I-A dot O-R-G. And just click on the Beaver Chief pages.

You know, as we listen to this song, I'm reminded of the Western scientists who are beginning to realize and recognize and *prove* with empirical, scientific Western thought, that song does actually, it actually *heals* people. Now, your people have known this for many, many years. What other things do you *know* to be true that will likely be proven by Western science here in the near future?

BEAVER CHIEF: Well . . . [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: That's a big one, isn't it?

BEAVER CHIEF: Yeah. That is.

PAUL NELSON: Well, you could give us a couple of nuggets, if you want.

BEAVER CHIEF: That there's something in with all these savage Native American Indians, as they call us, our saying and how we live. There's something *in* that, living in harmony with your universe, your surroundings. Enjoying the life, taking time to laugh, to cry, to get angry, to kick a stone. And then to bandage your foot [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: [laughs]

BEAVER CHIEF: But all of these things, they'll find that this is the way. They're starting to find out all of these things that we've spoken about. Take care of the planet. Teach your children to be respectful. All of these little things will be proven that this is the truth. And that we *can* talk to the

spirit realm and that we do know about the dead and that we *do* know some things but we'll never tell you if you ask us point blank [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: The Mayan people believe that the end of, well, the end of the Mayan calendar is winter solstice 2012. That's the end of time. Do you see these changes that you've been talking about really happening between now and 2012?

BEAVER CHIEF: Yes! Just think, if you never have no more time, then you're gonna be living [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: I'd wish I could get rid of my watch right now! You know? [laughs]

BEAVER CHIEF: [laughs]

PAUL NELSON: The *end* of linear time.

BEAVER CHIEF: Mm-hmm.

PAUL NELSON: We're out of linear time now. So, boy. After 2012, you can be on the show for weeks!

BEAVER CHIEF: Right [laughs]. Then we'll really be doing an interview [laughs].

PAUL NELSON: That's right. We'll get really down to some stuff, but then, by then we'll hopefully all know all this. But thank you for reminding us.

BEAVER CHIEF: You're very welcome.

PAUL NELSON: And it's a pleasure to have you on the air, *always*.

BEAVER CHIEF: [inaudible – whispers]

PAUL NELSON: Beaver Chief has been our guest. His new CD is *Red Cedar Medicine Circle Songs* by Beaver Chief, available at Samadhi Yoga in Seattle, and other places you can find out on the worldwide web. Meantime, we'll leave you with one called "The Dreamer Song."

[49:20 – 29:41 music]

BEAVER CHIEF: "The Dreamer Song." There's over 200 dreamer songs in our area. This is one of our dreamer songs that I've been given permission to share on this CD. I just give thanks in this time. Dreams are like flowers. There's always room for another flower, another dream. So when you realize your dream, make sure to *add* it in a good way, and never destroy another person's dream, but to give thanks for your own in this time of greater change.

I give thanks in this way, by sharing this song. All the songs that are on this CD are very, very sacred to our people in the Northwest Coast, and I give thanks to all of you.