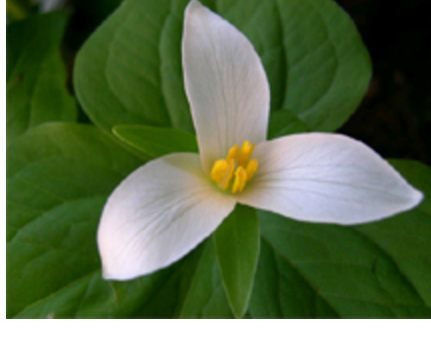


*Presencing*

JACK BLACKBURN'S NEWSLETTER

## Presencing Issue 49

### Catching Up To Presence Part III



**Climbing Entrance Mountain:** On Thursday August 25th I decided to go out for an early morning walk. I wanted to explore a dirt road that I had been told was the beginning of a new trail up an Orcas mountain I had climbed a number of times in the 1980s. The new trail avoided some private homes at the base of the mountain. In the 1980s we crossed over their properties with many “hellos” and neighborly greetings, but these are new times. As I started up the new trail I asked myself if I could do the whole climb. I was wearing a new brace on my left knee to counter the extension and

flexion problems I had been encountering for several months. The new trail was routed up the east slope of the mountain and seemed quite doable, until I got to some steep parts where I started to wonder if I should continue. But then I heard a voice inside that said: “You are doing this climb for your 75th birthday; don’t worry about making it.” But as I encountered more steep parts as I continued, I heard: “You need to find out if the 1980s medicine wheel is still at the top.” This gave me a reason to continue on; even though I was encountering portions of the trail I was sure I didn’t want to descend. At one point near the west wall of the mountain there is a cliff edge and a very long drop where I used to lay on my belly and look down. I found some trees I could brace against and eat my apple as I watched a young couple sit next to that edge. I decided at that point I would definitely finish the climb to the mountain top, but then I would continue along the ridge until I could find a safer and less public place to descend. I did make it to the top and found no medicine wheel; but now I was very elated that I made it at 75.

Indeed it was much easier hiking along the mountain ridge; many trees, rocky outcrops, some swampy ponds with east sloping creeks, but no steep cliff edges. Now my plan was to find an eastern sloop that I could descend and eventually connect with a road I knew was about a third of the way down the mountain.

**Bushwhacking:** It was peaceful and easy climbing along the ridge looking for a place to descend. Every once in a while I would find what appeared to be a trail but turned out to lead to steep incline covered with rotten branches, rock slides and root tangles of fallen trees. I looked for clear areas where I could sight down to some smooth and horizontal slopes. Everything was shaded by tall trees except steep cuts where a number of fallen trees converged into a mass I couldn’t climb over, crawl under, or follow downhill because of the loose rocks and root debris. I decided that the best way to safely descend was like Tarzan; swinging from branch to branch by holding onto long tough branches of ocean spray and arrow wood. These are very difficult to negotiate because the gravity was pulling me down the slippery, loose rock inclines while my hands were sliding down the branches while looking for other branches to grasp which sometimes turned out to be dead. Meanwhile the undergrowth included brambles, thorny vines, stinging nettles, and various clegs. Was I safer here than the bald faces of Mt Entrance? Once again I heard my ego voice say: “Well at least no one is seeing how clumsy your descent is... compared with the bald rocky faces where the trail was.” At one place I had to crawl underneath fallen trees, through the loose earth and stickery undergrowth pulling myself along with ocean spray until I realized I couldn’t move, so I just lay there caught like a fish in a net, trying to breathe. So I started to think I’ll make it down but at what cost?” I was already using my shirt to staunch the seeping cuts that had formed as a result of slips into sharp branches and stones. It all seemed like a ghostly gauntlet whose job was to assure that I would never come this way again. Many times I had to stop and plan carefully the next stage of the journey downward; planning in spite of a growing tendency to take more risks. This journey downward was already taking much longer and more foreboding than the ascent. When I finally espied the road, my muddled mind took what seemed way too long to plan the last 200 feet down. There were some trees that looked fairly rotten, plenty of loose stones to slide on and yes brambles to catch my fall. One long root overhung the last 15 foot steep drop to the road. I knew that I probably looked like I had been in a battle but I grabbed the root and let it bend to my weight until I touched the road. I did not realize how far I had walked along the ridge before descending. I did not make it back to the cottage until 7 pm. As I sat drinking a whole half gallon of guava fruit juice, I was trying to clean myself up so that I could call Koito in Japan. Meanwhile I kept thinking that I was still enclosed in roots, brambles, nettles, rotted wood and branches. Now 3 weeks later as I write this most of the wounds of that day have transformed into rough skin patches and discolorations. Nature’s guardians did their job. Will I go back? Not likely. I have done enough bushwhacking in my life.

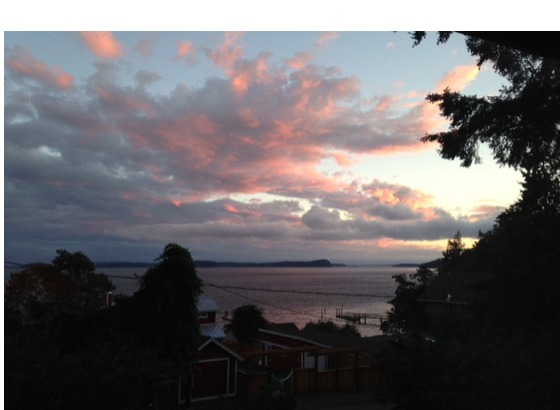


**Finding Olga House:** Yesterday Alejandro and I had our first house-warming day. I served breakfast to two of our ODD Fellow brothers. We had our first twenty-plus person potluck in the evening, and 11pm Jackie a friend from the mainland came to camp a few nights. Wow, what a transformation? Now its official we are living here and everyone is saying how lucky we are. As I’m writing this I am looking out at a rainy mud-colored white-capped sea framed by white lace curtains. When the ODD brothers helped us move in on September 2nd they called this room “granny’s room,” probably because of the white wicker furniture. I’m slowly getting used to it especially the magnificent view. This move is a very

fortuitous blending of our pasts; Alejandro’s rugs he collected all over the world, Jack’s artwork done by friends and family, Alejandro’s bonsai trees he’s tended for almost 20 years, our covered porch which can sit many persons and which dates back to 1886, our shared treatment space in which we can both see clients, Alejandro’s under-sink water filter restoring very pure and tasty Mountain Lake water (sans chlorine), Jack’s Japanese 208° instant tea water dispenser, and our large living room with cozy furniture for reading and group conversations. We are both very grateful that we have ended up in such a propitious place, also with our welcoming neighbor Llyn who really supported us in creating this miracle. We are at the bottom end of Olga road, the place where the 3-blocks-long Olga Days parade turns back on itself, just before what used to be the Olga ferry dock. It is incredibly quiet today because the B&Bs across the street are all empty and it’s pouring rain.



**From Olga to Japan:** Dear Ones, as I write this last section I am packing to leave Orcas Island tomorrow September 19th for Japan. I will be there until December 20th. I will be teaching many classes and seminars and I will also be making arrangements for various classes when I return here. I will teach another Ethics and Supervision class on Orcas, a Sidelying Somatics Class in the Methow Valley, a practitioner-client healing seminar in Bellingham, a palliative care class in the Netherlands, and various specialty treatment classes for practitioners in the San Juans, Anacortes and Mt Vernon. For those who want to keep in touch my Skype name is jackblac. Sayonara!



Open hands

Open mind

Open face

Open heart

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