



# UU ORIGINAL VOICES

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Grand Traverse

Volume I

Fall 2020

## A Collection of Our Writings



The Hairy Carrot

This bag says you were raised in California. Those tidy irrigated fields, with all your kin. What a good home it must have been. Everyone cared for you. People attended to all of your needs. Your health and well-being was their daily work.

One surprising day you were yanked from your bed. The morning air prickled your lanky orange physique. Your lush green topknot was scalped off, you were roughly showered and scrubbed, blow dried and popped into a clear plastic bag. At least you could see out. And you were not alone. You were shoulder to shoulder with a several of the guys from your neighborhood. Naked and chilled. You knew something major was afoot.

The cold overtook you. Lethargy dissolved into slumber. You missed out on all that took place, truck rides, much shifting of cargo, unpacking and stacking. You came to in the back seat of a car, in a grocery bag, tight up against some broccoli, crowded by some cans of black beans.

Once awakened by the warmer temps of transit, it was hard for you to fall back asleep. The Life Force was strong in you. Waiting in the vegetable bin of the fridge, you worked on a personal project. The urge to grow and live overwhelmed all inhibitions and doubts. You summoned up all the inner strength you could muster and sprouted hairy roots, up and down, all around. You, my little friend, fueled by gritty determination and the moisture gathered by these auxiliary roots, pushed out some fresh lemon-lime greenery past your scabbed-over top.

You have emerged a vegetable victorious. You deserve to continue on as a carrot. I will spare your top inch. Set in a tiny dish of a water upon my countertop, you can grow to be all that you can be. I promise never to think of you as a mere houseplant, some kind of botanical pet. You will be a tiny monument to tenacity.

-The Northwoods Writrix

## TWO TABLES

Often as a youngster I sat on a set of encyclopedias, legs dangling at the oak dinner table after Dad, sisters and brother had parted ways. A dish of stewed tomatoes under my nose had long ago cooled into clots, its chunks of celery and onion pale as flesh. Mother wrote lists, and by this time one was curling across the oblong glossy table. Dad, as usual

impatient for answers, was eyeing the encyclopedias while I squirmed, loosening the bindings and traced waves along the wooden expanse. A year earlier my big brother let me help refinish this family heirloom. Industry, highly valued, drew the family closer. Meals may have been tense, but the table itself was a bond.

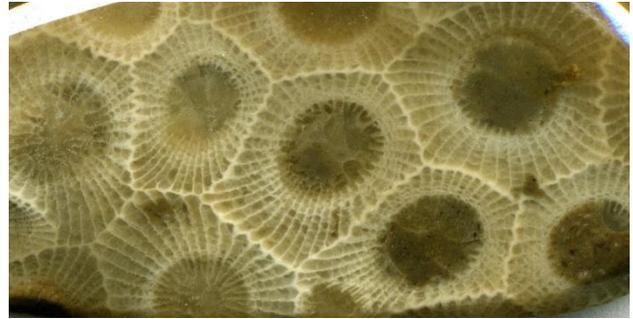


Another table became memorable when I was a young adult. This, retrieved from the homestead of former in-laws, was a maroon monster with two leaf extensions. Through a worn and chipped top coat, underlayers of olive and grey, quite possibly bruises, peeked through. The workmanship was solid though. This piece of carpentry had stamina and, after the upheaval of a move and divorce, certainly deserved becoming a project of devotion. Daily after work I stripped off paint, first curdling a crimson goo, eventually scraping at layers closer to the bone.

My 9-year-old son early on became distracted, abandoned his clay and potter's wheel, often reaching for a scraper. It was only while sanding the table that summer that we recognized Douglas fir, its tough knotty grain. It felt like we were learning features of an identity - resourceful pitch pockets, a citrusy sweet nature - getting closer to the core as our shoulders ached and our hands stroked the surface. Enhancing flaws became an art project to the tune of the Beastie Boys. Then, a rubbing down with Hope's 100% Tung oil which drew warmth from the wood. Some history bloomed in the patterns, a substance of value.

We agreed it was a chunk, at least 100 pounds all told. Too much for me alone to tilt and hold steady, but together my son and I managed to attend to the knobby clawed legs. By the time the project was finished, it was autumn. Time for him to return to school. Of course our friend, the table, went with him back to the homeplace. No longer the color of blood, and a dining surface suitable for communal meals, studies and artwork.

-- by a writer trying to make sense of history --



### Polishing the Surface

I polish Petoskey stones on a 6 wheel grinder. The process begins with paddling a kayak down the shoreline with my dog Honey, swimming in the lead. We go down to where there are more stones on and close to shore. I get out of the kayak and walk the shore looking for Petoskeys. The best hunting is after a storm, when the water is calm, again, and they seem magnified as the sun shines through the water. This part of the process isn't finished until Honey has a wild time with a towel as I try to dry her before she comes into the house. She believes fully that this is a special game, and we dance around, me trying to get the towel around her hind legs, and her, trying to grab the towel and play tug-o-war. This always ends up being the highest energy moment of the day

Then I sort the stones to find the ones with the best contrast for polishing. Once chosen, the stone meets up with the 80 grit wheel that shapes it and removes

blemishes. On to the 120 grit, where things begin to smooth out. The 280 grit wheel removes all the scratches and the stone becomes smooth. The 600 grit wheel begins the polishing, then on to the 1000 and 3000 grit wheels. Now, we have one very smooth and shiny stone. Next to the buffing wheel on the bench grinder. A little Zam polishing compound goes on first, and then the stone gets buffed on all edges and sides.

I then hold that polished stone and am in wonder. When we take off the surface, below is such beauty and pattern. Is it also the case with us? Get below the surface, and find beauty and patterns of life that could go unseen. Polishing Petoskeys is a good metaphor.

Mary Van Valin, September 2020

## CHARLES THE CHICKADEE ADVENTURES

Charles the Chickadee determined that today was a good day to ask his girlfriend, Caroline, to join him in a lifelong commitment. The marriage of the two beautiful chickadees was set to happen in the garden next week.

A few days after the engagement was announced, Caroline started to have second thoughts. She imagined herself bogged down trying to please her mate and never having time or freedom to do the things she loved the most. Her emotional state deteriorated to incredible worry and Charles could tell she was not happy. He tried several different ways to get her to voice her concerns, but she kept on singing the song of worry. He was at a loss as to what to do so he took a couple days to himself and flew across the woods to a different neighborhood to sit and think while smelling the new and different flowers. He met some other chickadees there and they all introduced themselves and asked Charles what brought him to their neighborhood. He told them about Caroline and how she seemed very sad and wouldn't talk to him. A

very wise, older chickadee named Gus gave Charles some advice. He said that if they started off their married life with bad communication, it would probably never get any better and they would end up being miserable.

Charles took this advice to heart and went home to talk to Caroline and told her that he didn't think they should marry. Caroline was so happy to hear this that she immediately gave Charles a fresh juicy bug.

They pecked goodbye and Charles went back to his new group of friends and became Gus's adopted son. He made a lot of really good friends and met a young Chickadee named Barb and they spent many happy hours together.

To be continued.....  
Judy the Chickadee Lover

