

The Wonder of It All!  
The Depth of our Belonging to the Evolving World

## Dave and The New Story

When I scan my life in terms of the New Story, what emerges are increasingly interrelated threads of outdoors, politics, and spiritual experience. I grew up in the 50's and 60's the son of a sporting goods merchant in a medium-sized, safe mid-western community that offered what seemed to me like endless outdoor possibilities. That was a kind of all-seasons, free-range childhood, in which I could hike, swim, ski, skate, bike and camp with few restrictions. Feeling close to nature seemed like an almost ordinary occurrence, continually at hand by opening the back door and going out. Yet, despite my religious upbringing and study – as an Episcopalian – I had no words for those moments. My favorite magazine was *National Geographic*, reinforcing the core magnetism of people and place in my life, with an urge to explore the different.

As a teenager and college student I also found myself drawn to politics; it was the 60's after all! I completed my major and then in my last year hung out in the School of Natural Resources, feeling a strong kinship with others who named our radical interdependence. Together with many others, we put on the country's first Teach-in on the Environment in March, 1970. I also found the writings of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, along with Aldo Leopold and Garrett Hardin, who all awakened in me a sense of abiding connection with all life and its mystery.

Instead of following my dad's advice to go to law school, I got a master in city and regional planning, longing for some way to make a positive difference in the world. After following my love to Germany and then three years in the German federal ministry of cities, I returned to the States and found a niche in transportation research via an MIT degree. As an applied behavioral scientist, I focused on helping public agency groups and organizations master transitions. Together, we grappled with some vexing set of circumstances – new technologies (e.g., PC's), new bosses with new agendas, or simply a puzzling new world that didn't work the old way. In the 80's I discovered Quakers, attracted by their very democratic forms and long-time quest to put their values into action.

Mid-career – in the 90's – I increasingly sought more environmental clients and discovered people like Paul Hawkin, Joanna Macy and others who took a more activist and systems-oriented approach. As my spiritual life unfolded in a Quaker context, I found myself drawn to others also looking for meaning “in unity with nature.” In the early 2000's around the time of Al Gore's *Inconvenient Truth*, I began to feel great urgency along with despair and anger about what humans are doing to the Earth. Also in those years I heard of The New Story and Thomas Berry, the self-described geologist, and met Mary Coelho at a conference on his work.

With the good fortune to have Mary move to Cambridge, increasing opportunities emerged to study both The New Story as well the roots of justice cutting across the Meeting. In the latter group, we looked at food one year and money another – with the second leading to serious conversations about how the Meeting's endowment is

The Wonder of It All!

The Depth of our Belonging to the Evolving World

invested with regard to Quaker values, including environmental. Around the same time, many of us joined with other faith communities to lobby state lawmakers to enact climate-related legislation by bringing the moral dimension to the fore.

Fast-forward to today, I'm increasingly able to notice surges of joy simply at being alive and connected, particularly outdoors, whether swimming in Walden Pond or cross country skiing in the Carlisle woods, and to see that others have such mystical experiences too. Yet, as the threads of environment, politics and spirit grow increasingly intertwined in me, I've become convinced that unless we can link scientific understanding of the global climate crisis to spiritual concerns of our hearts and to action, we stand little chance of averting a planet no one wants our great-grandchildren to inherit. As a result, I'm looking for ways to link with others open to this view. So I'm immersed in a number of climate action groups, all acknowledging our global pickle. But, there's an important piece missing – how on Earth to live consistent with the New Story that's emerging?

I'm no longer seeing the transition to living the New Story as an intellectual exercise I master with more reading, leisurely conversation and donations to the right causes, but rather an incredibly urgent task requiring me to face long-held beliefs and assumptions about the world and my place in it. **And, that's a major challenge for me!** ...internally, to move from my introverted comfort zone of theoretical and conceptual constructs to being in touch with my heart and gut, as well as to move from what Buddhists call "the small self" to "the large self" ...not to mention to change externally, as a well-off American white male, having a lot of privilege and comfort to lose, as well as significant behaviors to adjust – from how I get from place to place, where I vacation, what I eat, in which causes to spend my time, as well as to what I pay attention moment to moment. This all seems pretty scary to me, as I confront long-ingrained habits and fears in moving from the ego- to the eco-centered. Yet, along with my individual behaviors and mindset for close scrutiny also come our collective intents as expressed in institutions reinforcing the Old Story of separateness, domination, survival of the fittest, of thinking racial or economic injustice is deserved, or of not needing to worry about the fate of the Earth because we will "go to heaven" and transcend it all. And that's where collective action comes in for me.

In short, I'm here right now because I think I can and we all can live the New Story, not just think about it, but help in tangible and specific ways – both inside us and outside us – for the Old Story to have a respectful and speedy demise and for a new world to be birthed through awakened consciousness and deeds. We now have a chance to reinvent ourselves at the species level (as Thomas Berry suggested), to make The Great Turning, to belong in a sacred way, to embody the New Story... or else face extinction. As a Buddhist said to me recently, "we need to do the work individually and we can't do it alone."

Please join me!