

THE PIE
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Before I tell you about “the pie that changed things” let me say something about my weekend with the permaculture folks at Little Artshram (<http://www.littleartshram.org/>) in Traverse City Michigan. I was invited there to give some presentations on (and I will now coin the term) what I will call “Inner Permaculture” to the Traverse City Permaculture Design Project. I was mostly presenting some basic dharma concepts and how they might be practiced plus introduce our own center here in Big Rapids, Michigan.

I was looking forward to being with these folks because I was trained as a naturalist from an early age and assumed there would be some shared views. Other than that I had no expectations, which is always a good thing.

Needless to say the experience with these folks was beyond anything I could have expected. I don't know just how many there were but somewhere around 35 to 40 students, mostly younger but also some older. I am sure I was the oldest one there.

The whole permaculture course of study is under the direction of Penny Krebiehl and Steve DeGoosh and aside from myself, there were presentations by Trevor Newman and Mark Angelini of “Roots to Fruits,” an ecological design company that creates edible landscapes that you can dine on and other marvelous works. You can read about it at <http://rootstofruits.biz/>. Penny and Steve also presented their work.

I won't try to describe permaculture to you here but suffice it to say that it is concerned with sustainable land use design, but it is much deeper than that. It really involves everything we do and every level of society and activity, but the accent is hands-on action to efficiently use what we have right around us, including each other, in a meaningful way. But let me get to the most remarkable part.

I mentioned that I am no youngster. I have been around and I emerged intact from the 1960s so I know something about community or at least how I feel it should be anyway. And did I ever find it this last weekend. This folks (to me these are kids!) started at 8 AM and went into the evening fully stoked. Classes and events were packed back-to-back with only time out for a quick meal, some Qigong (Chi Gong), and a roll in the snow. Every last student was as serious about what they were learning as I can imagine possible. They don't blink.

It was like one united group mind working together, happy, singing songs, dancing around, celebrating each other, including me in their group – you name it. I know a little about community, much of it more a dream than reality, but what I saw in Grand Traverse Commons with these permaculture friends was all reality. I was humbled in the presence of it.

Somewhere deep inside me there must have been a sigh let go as I realized that so much of what I care about is in good hands, hands far better (and younger) than my own, and that nature as I know it will continue to be loved and cared for long after I am gone. There 'is' a next generation folks and I have seen it, felt it's presence, and been embraced by it. I am grateful.

My understanding is that this kind of care and attention to our environment (permaculture

activity) is happening all over this country and all over the world. If so, thank all of you so much for caring for Mother Earth enough to actually take caring action.

And now about the pie.

This photo (terrible picture of a tired me after loading all my stuff in the car to go) shows director Penny Krebiehl giving me a goodbye hug and offering a homemade pie as a 'thank you' for coming. Now, about the pie. It was an all-berry pie and Penny had baked it herself early that morning. I no sooner got back to my home (where my son Michael Andrew and his sweetie Micah were caring for my little dog) than they had to try out that pie. I was still unloading the car when I heard shouts of "This is the best pie I have ever had in my life!" ring out. By the time I got to it, perhaps half of it was already eaten. It must be something I thought.

I have to agree that this is one incredible pie. It is already all gone here. Thank you Penny and thank you Permaculture Design Project folks for an unforgettable experience!

Michael

