

Secrets To Living in Synchronicity.....	2
Seeing Others With Eyes of Compassion....	3
Abundance: More Than Money.....	4
Keeping Wildlife Management Humane.....	7
Practice Seeing The Truth.....	10
How Can I Prevent Signs of Aging On My Face?.....	12
The Power of The Soul.....	16

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WISDOM OF THE CRONES: Lori Aletha, Nancy Macdonald, and Libby Kresky share insights from their journeys

By Kwami E. Nyamidie

This article is dedicated to mothers, grandmothers, and great grandmothers - Happy Mother's Day!

"I don't play the guitar anymore," Libby said to Lori and Nancy, two friends she hasn't seen for more than 25 years. "I gave my guitar to my musical son," Libby added. "I now sing with the senior choral group here on the island."

This spring, Libby Kresky, 86, Nancy Macdonald, 84, and Lori Aletha, 81, met for lunch at the Real Foods Market and Café on Bainbridge Island. The last time they met was in the early 1980s. Lori Aletha directed the Academy of Yoga in the Queen Anne area of Seattle for two years. It was there she became friends with Nancy, a social worker who had moved with her husband from British Columbia to the Pacific Northwest in the 1950s. They met Libby at a retreat organized for the academy, where she had been invited to sing and play.

"I still remember Libby singing and the beautiful tunes she played on her guitar that day," Lori said.

"I remember taping her songs," Nancy said. No surprise. Libby was an accomplished musician then. She had recorded folk songs from Czechoslovakia and songs of the suffragettes under the name Elizabeth Knight. The Smithsonian Folkways Recordings now holds rights to these musical productions and still distributes them. Libby had left her job as a professor of Russian in the Midwest and had come me back to Washington State where she grew up.

After that retreat Lori and Nancy traveled with the Academy of Yoga group to Egypt and India. On their return, Lori left the academy. When academy founders Ralph and Lois Mitchell died, the three women lost touch with each other, and didn't meet again until St. Patrick's Day, 2009.

The three women talked about their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Lori now has 12 grandchildren, and 13 great-grandkids. Libby has two children, two grandchildren, and a great grandchild. Nancy has three children, six grandchildren, and a great grandchild.

They also talked about acquaintances who have died and those battling cancer or other diseases. Then they shared what they are doing these days.

Besides singing, Libby teaches a weekly astrology class at the Bainbridge Commons. She continues to practice astrology, counseling and past life regression.

Lori, who began remembering her past lives at three, remains passionate about past life

regression and still does intuitive counseling after many years of working for Boeing as a technical illustrator. She still organizes the Psychic Fairs in King and Snohomish Counties she started in the 1970s. She skydived for the first time six years ago when she turned 75. "Life is an adventure," Lori said. Nancy Macdonald continues her private practice of counseling and supervision, and is adjunct faculty of Antioch University/Seattle. There she teaches Virginia Satir's model of "becoming more fully human."

Nancy, a charter member of the Virginia Satir Global Network, is the current president of the Northwest Satir Institute and is in the process of setting up a web site. She is also an active member of the Shoreline Unitarian Universalist Congregation.

After the check-in, the topic of the economy came up.

Libby spoke about her grandparents in Kansas. Her grandfather was a Methodist minister and together with his wife, with "no money," they raised six children. Ministers in those days were not paid but received aid barrels of clothing and food from church members.

"With faith that God will provide, my grandparents raised two doctors, an opera singer, a professor, a social climber and my mother,"

Libby said.

"I realized a while ago that I have always had what I need," Nancy said.

As for Lori, she finds inspiration in life's touchstone moments, *ah-ha* instances when we gain greater insight into spiritual truths and feel in our hearts what we know intellectually.

Lori told an inspiring story. She had stopped working for Boeing and started designing architectural plans on contract for a real estate developer in King County several years ago. Normally, as a contractor, she was paid every two weeks for the work she did. On this special project, she worked for almost two months. But the contractor did not pay her.

It was Friday evening. Rent was due the following Monday. She had run out of money and decided to see the contractor in his Duvall house. At the door, the contractor's wife, who had a black eye, let her in.

The man and his wife had been fighting and he had taken off to Mexico, leaving no money for his family. He had left nothing for Lori's pay. In Lori's own words: "I drove back home to Issaquah at around eight that evening. 'What am I going to do?' I asked myself over and over again. Then I found myself reciting The Lord's Prayer. At the third time, the words, 'Give us this day our daily bread' struck me. The prayer didn't say 'Give us our bread for tomorrow.' I realized that I still had some food in the fridge. The lights were on. I still had a roof over my head.

"A feeling of gratitude for everything I had gripped me: the children, the car, the artwork and pictures on the wall, and the furniture in the apartment.

Continued on Page 4

It's been more than 25 years since the last meeting of Northwest matriarchs Lori Aletha, Nancy Macdonald, and Libby Kresky. Last month, they reconnected on Bainbridge Island to share some of their wisdom with New Spirit Journal readers.