



## Perspectives on *Generosity of Spirit*

NEWSLETTER # 7

August 2010

### **Introduction**

The spirit of the Grateful Dead and Jerry Garcia was generous to the core. That spirit is of great benefit, particularly in these difficult and challenging times. Yet it seems as if self-centeredness has taken hold in the culture at large over the last several decades, standing in contrast to the core values surrounding the Grateful Dead concert com-

munity and its legacy. This newsletter seeks to get to the bottom of the changing face of the culture of sharing. Rex, generous in its *raison d'être*, founders' principles, and supportive community, hopes these perspectives help move renewed energy toward a broader society of kindness and giving.



Photo: Bob Minkin

Moonalice. L to R: Roger McNamee, John Molo, Ann McNamee, Pete Sears, Barry Sless.

### **Choosing Empathy Over Greed** *Interview with Roger McNamee*

*A Co-Founder of Elevation Partners, Roger McNamee has been an investor in technology and related growth industries since 1982. Roger serves as a director of the Rex Foundation, Move, Wordnik, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Museum, and National Geographic Ventures. Roger also plays bass and guitar for the band Moonalice.*

At the age of 4, Roger was handing out leaflets for the John F. Kennedy presidential campaign. By age 12, he was a full-time volunteer for Eugene McCarthy, and at 17 was actively involved in George McGovern's presidential campaign. His early political involvement was just part of what resulted from being raised in Albany, NY, in the late 1950's to early 1970's, the second youngest in a very large, politically active family with a number of draft-age

children during the Vietnam War. With his father active in the Albany Urban League, Roger not only got to meet Jackie Robinson at the age of 10, he also gained an early understanding of the issues and challenges surrounding integration.

Expected, even in his elementary school years, to be an active part of dynamic dinner conversations that embraced the exchange of new ideas and affirmed the political process, Roger developed a strong sense of empathy along with a value system grounded in participation and personal involvement.

Roger believes that empathy is a core element of generosity of spirit, compelling reflections such as:

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Furthering a Tradition of  
Grassroots Giving

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NEWSLETTER EDITED BY

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The Rex Foundation is  
named after Rex Jackson,  
a Grateful Dead roadie  
and later road manager until  
his untimely death in 1976

REX FOUNDATION

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***“Real generosity toward the future lies in giving all to the present.” – Albert Camus***

## Message from the Executive Director

The legacy of the Rex Foundation is the spirit of generosity and concern that evolved in the culture surrounding Grateful Dead concerts. The Grateful Dead were always known for generosity and the performance of numerous benefits. Their decision to start the Rex Foundation enabled them to more actively provide community support, rather than respond to requests. The fans responded, too, by readily paying for their concert tickets, especially at Rex benefit shows where the protocol was no guest passes or comp tickets to help increase proceeds for Rex.

It is now 15 years since Jerry Garcia passed away. As the lead guitarist for the Grateful Dead and founding board member of the Rex Foundation, among his many other accomplishments, Jerry Garcia demonstrated a high level of vision and leadership around creativity and acts of generosity. As one way to pay tribute to his contributions to music, culture and community, we seek to explore what it means to put forward *generosity of spirit – a level of generosity that extends beyond a specific act or monetary contribution.*

I have the privilege of experiencing many dimensions of such generosity through my work at Rex. Each day I connect with people who offer their time and resources to support Rex, and then express thanks for this opportunity! The people who carry out the work at grantee organizations do so with heartfelt passion, clearly for reasons beyond receiving a paycheck.

I also read the news, watch the talking heads on TV and observe the ever-increasing tendency of people to react angrily to differing viewpoints. I feel a sadness when I see polarization among people who I’m sure share common concerns and mean to do well by others; they react as though they have been personally attacked, rather than taking the time to consider their own part in creating the dynamic, as well as seeking to understand the other person’s situation. I believe that as a culture, we have, for quite some time, been bombarded with and beaten down by fear-provoking situations, from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, to the economic downturn. The prevailing media and political messages provoke dissension and distrust rather than promote a more constructive, compassionate approach to problem-solving. I also know that not a generation has gone by, including the years that gave birth to the Grateful Dead and surrounding culture, when there have not been major challenges to address.

With all of this in mind, I felt a personal desire to bring to light some perspectives on what helps spark the spirit of generosity that is part of all of us and that helps us positively navigate through the complexities of life. I hope the write-ups here provide some good food for thought and kindle renewed affirmation for what we all have to offer as kind human beings.

*Sandy Sohcot*

***“What we do for ourselves dies with us. What we do for others and the world remains and is immortal.” – Albert Pine***

***The photographs in this newsletter include favorites from some of our beneficiaries. The photographers are from these organizations. Thank you all for your support.***



## Empathy (continued from page one)

- Can you imagine circumstances other than your own?
- Are you able to step out of yourself enough to imagine the effect you have on others or the effect other people have on those around them, and does it matter to you?

While recognizing the context for his strong commitment to involvement and philanthropy, Roger notes that this sense of empathy is challenged in today's society. He has observed that the 1980's brought about a social norm to accumulate as much as one could without a lot of constraints, where it became acceptable to not concern oneself with the needs of other people. Instead, over these last 30 years, self-centeredness and near-term profit-taking have been valued over empathy and generosity, enabling unbridled economic activity and social permission to be selfish.

Troubled by the current fear-based political discourse and recognizing that he is not likely personally to solve the broader threats of such forces as global warming, greed or war, Roger and his wife Ann seek to make a difference to the people around them. Roger says, "We take a Rex-like approach to philanthropy. We may not be able to solve big problems, but we can help lots of people." Roger describes the philosophy behind their acts of generosity as striving to make the world a better place:

- Leave nothing but a smile on the face of people around you;
- Do not take good luck for granted; it's good karma to look for ways to say "thank you";
- Do things for which you don't need credit.

We asked Roger: "What do you think shaped the culture of the 1950's to 1970's that inspired people like your father, to contribute to positive social change, and what has changed?"

Roger posits the following points in response:

- The United States had two defining events in the 20th century: The Depression and World War II. In both cases, the whole country got involved in massive efforts. American society after 1945 was made in the image of these large-scale responses: Big Business, Big Religion and Big Government. This fostered wide social acceptance of submitting oneself to some larger cause.
- Today, this acceptance no longer exists. People identify with America, but won't support higher taxes to fight wars, build schools, or fix infrastructure.
- People born before 1940 made a series of serious

decisions by the time they were 25 that were effectively irreversible: where to live, who to marry, where to work. There were safety nets to catch you if you fell, yet you had very few choices.

- Today, we have the polar opposite to this experience. Everyone has unlimited choices, but they have to make many decisions very quickly, with essentially no safety nets.

- Roger sees society at this time in a moment of profound transition – figuring out how to navigate the social contract, and being at odds with how to relate to the role of government and abstract forces such as big business. We hear people say, "I hate the government." Yet, in the face of disasters such as the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, people seek strong government response and realize the market is not likely to fix such problems.

- As a country, we are behaving in a fashion that suggests we don't perceive a common bond, except with such things as the Olympics.

We asked, "So, where does generosity of spirit play a role in addressing the current situation?" Roger

reflects on his own sense of obligation and resulting actions:

- We started at square one – help those who have helped you, such as colleges.
- Keep a low profile – if you need credit for your contributions, you may not be as generous as you think.
- Look at what matters – we see education as vital and have made a point to help undocumented students go through college and become fully productive members of the community.
- Look at people in our peer group to see how we can help – very few musicians can make a living just from being part of one band. Many have to be in 3 or 4 bands. Bands can play 40 gigs profitably, but only a handful can live off of 40 gigs a year.

Musicians find it harder and harder as they get older, and often end up playing the same thing rather than evolve, just to survive.

- Moonalice was created to change this model. Among other things, we play a full schedule – more than 100 shows a year. For the musicians, Moonalice takes the uncertainty out of an uncertain way of life, helping improve mental and physical health, and, as a result, helping generate better music, better art and enhanced quality of life.
- Roger sees Moonalice as an extension of his "generosity





New Old Time Chautauqua in New Orleans after Katrina

of spirit" philosophy. Roger notes, "We could contribute to the symphony, but rock 'n' roll is more our speed. Moonalice is building the kind of music scene we enjoyed 30 years ago. The scene includes not just fans, but also poster artists, jewelers, mug makers, tie dye apparel artists and the like."

Roger is concerned that "generosity of spirit" is being threatened by a weak economy. He is concerned that we live in a time where fear has the upper hand over hope. Thanks to the Moonalice tour, he visits small towns all across the country. With so many communities devastated by the economic downturn, people have lost confidence in institutions they used to trust. Such conditions give people an excuse to disengage, to not want to be involved, or to believe they cannot make any difference.

Roger believes that while society struggles to reach consensus on how to address such major issues as immigration and global warming, individuals have the opportunity to go "hyper local", and focus on their immediate circle. Moonalice does the same, following the philosophy, "Just say 'Yes' when asked." He points to this philosophy as a key part of the world of the Grateful Dead, when in

early years, the band demonstrated empathy by quickly responding to requests for benefits. The fans of the Grateful Dead helped further this empathy, generating a growing community that nurtured generosity of spirit, including starting the Rex Foundation.

Concerned that today's political environment causes people to feel they are powerless to affect the outcome, Roger says, "Not true!" He says, "Rather than see things as insurmountable, break apart the issues to see what we can do." For example, with such daunting threats as global warming, we can take small steps to make a difference, such as turning out lights and being, as the Chef Jamie Oliver suggests, a vegetarian 3 days a week. If we don't have money, we can volunteer. We can make a huge difference with our time and ideas, as well as our money. We can look around and ask, "What needs to be done?" "What can I do?" "What works for us?"

Roger suggests that the world needs us to think outside ourselves, to think, "How can I make a difference today?" He believes we have more under our control than we think, and that we ought to keep in mind what he sees as the secret – "Being generous makes you feel good!"



## ***The Culture of Fear Breaks the Social Contract***

### ***Interview with Pam David***

*Pam David is Executive Director of the The Walter & Elise Haas Fund, which is a generous supporter of the Rex Foundation project The World As It Could Be. While more recently connected through this project, Sandy Sohcot has known Pam for many years, first collaborating on the issue of Welfare to Work, when Pam was Chief of Staff of the San Francisco Dep't of Human Services.*

When asked how she would describe the concept *generosity of spirit*, Pam considers the idea in several ways:

- I think of it much like the Golden Rule, as doing something for others as you would have them do unto you. It's inherently 'self-ish', though not with the bad connotation we usually give that word.
- Such generosity is based in deep feeling and understanding that your life and fortunes are connected to others; you are doing something not just to be nice, but because of seeing your connectedness, and that what you do matters in the world.
- Generosity is a way of being in the world that understands our connectedness and mutual interdependency.



Pam observes that we live in a U. S. culture today that is the opposite of generosity of spirit, where we have lost track of what our interests and responsibilities to each other are. She sees that the social contract has been fundamentally broken and damaged since the 1980's. Pam believes the fear that has been generated in political and media discourse has caused many to see people with seemingly opposed viewpoints or dealing with issues not their own as the "other," rather than embracing differences and seeing that we are all part of a common humanity. For example, Pam notes that we cannot disconnect from those affected by Hurricane Katrina or the Haitian earthquake, or the lack of adequate health care. Instead, we must see, even if we are not directly affected, that their problems are our problems. Pam sees the irony that with all the social networks and technological connectivity creating a global community, we still don't act as one – that we are still divided in nation states, thinking we can build fences around our lives, and, therefore, be safe. Pam suggests that it is hard to maintain a space for "generosity of spirit" in a culture dominated by fear, because there is not much support for such spirit day-to-day.

In response to, "What do you consider the major influences in your life that have led to your own embracing of generosity of spirit?" Pam provides the following reflections:

- Growing up in a Jewish, though not religious, home and

neighborhood in Chicago, with a strong ethic toward volunteerism and service;

- The times I grew up in and came of age – the 60's/70's. I was in high school between 1966 and 1970, the height of the anti-war movement, student's rights, civil rights...
- At age 14, caught up and compelled by what was going on around me, I started with fighting to wear pants to school, then moved to lowering the voting age to the draft age, and on to anti-war work.

- Also at 14, I got involved and spent a year in a discussion group with peers from the south side of Chicago. This experience provided a major life lesson: It is an accident of birth as to how we are where we are. All of us in this group were the same – just as smart, just as funny – except for our life circumstances. I had resources that others in the group did not have.

- I was fortunate to grow up in the context of large social movements that compelled me to activism at an early age, to see the value of doing something and to believe that my actions, with others, could bring about real change.

There was a shadow side to the political activism of the 60's/70's that has influenced Pam's involvements today.

Pam recalls the "New Left" of that time, of which she was a part, as being so sure of being right, and very dogmatic. As a result, many were made to feel they were not "good enough" for the movement if they didn't fully "march in line" with the jobs they took or thoughts they expressed. Pam sees that many in this movement were unrealistic about where the world/the U.S. was at that time, and what it takes to create real change. Pam believes, "Real change is more than about being right...and more, even, than winning hearts and minds, it is a lot of little stuff, about living one's values, and how you treat people – it is equally about the process and authenticity of self."

As Executive Director of the Walter & Elise Haas Fund, Pam helps carry out the Fund's mission to help build a healthy, just, and vibrant society in which people feel connected to and responsible for their community. The oral histories of Walter and Elise Haas helped frame this mission. The families of Walter and Elise came to California in the Gold Rush 1850's. Being among the small number of Jewish people, they experienced the prevailing attitude of anti-Semitism, and were considered to be among "the others." Walter and Elise were born in the late 1800's to families that had, despite anti-Semitism, forged successful business institutions and strong community groups to support San Francisco commerce and culture. Pam



Parents' Circle: Families Forum of Israeli and Palestinian Bereaved Families

cites World War II as a seminal event influencing Walter & Elise. Walter Haas and his cousin, Daniel Koshland, as leaders of the Levi Strauss Company, provided Letters of Passage to hundreds of Jews, with whom they had no other connection, to leave Germany and other Nazi-occupied territories and to come to the U.S. It was Walter Haas who went on to coin the phrase "Socially Responsible Business" as part of guiding Levi Strauss. Both Walter and Elise contributed their time and leadership, as well as dollars, to multiple boards of business and cultural institutions from the Community Chest that became United Way, to the San Francisco Recreation & Parks Commission to the San Francisco Museum that became the Museum of Modern Art.

Pam draws on her life and professional experiences to recommend the following ways to promote and nurture generosity of spirit:

- Talk about it – As we face growing challenges of how to allocate finite resources and deal with other complex issues affecting the economy, environmental health and relationships across all levels of community, from families to global collaborations, we need to expand the political space in U.S. culture, currently miniscule, to embrace and appreciate nuance and complexity.
- Build connectivity, in real and virtual settings, that provide opportunities for and encourage rational, accurate and constructive interactions.
  - Be mindful that Internet social networking can be problematic and cause more polarization by enabling people to be mean and generate massive negative reactions in the absence of accurate historical and factual information – we can all take more responsibility to call this out and help shift away from polarization to connectivity.

- Do lots more of what we are doing, with greater intention, to create and expand mechanisms such as the arts to raise awareness in our culture about human-ness.
- Re-examine the role of education in providing what we need to know to build democracy, including how to build common ground.
  - Help youth understand problem-solving and living in a complex world, so that they relate to each other, resolve conflict, appreciate living in a global community with mutual responsibilities and connectivity.
- Appreciate the smaller, positive occurrences that promote this spirit:
  - Encourage and support grant making that enables grassroots, non-profit organizations to keep up their work.
  - Facilitating conversations among organizational leaders and in community forums on the complex issues in our communities really does make a difference in re-affirming and encouraging positive actions.
  - Support the day-to-day work of organizations and initiatives that bring a human rights perspective and subsequent renewal of empathy and care for others – key ingredients of generosity of spirit.

While concerned about the current state of our culture, Pam is optimistic about what the future holds. She is hopeful that diversity as a way of life will foster a greater sense of connectedness among the next generations. As more children grow up with, and who themselves are, multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural people, and seek to answer "Who am I?", they and those around them will see they are a healthy mix of many dimensions. We as teachers and learners can help pave the way by our own renewed sense of generosity of spirit.





Committed Partners for Youth

## ***Profiles of Some Rex Foundation Beneficiaries*** ***Demonstrating the power of individuals to bring about positive change***

The following sampling of Rex Foundation beneficiaries helps to illustrate how *Generosity of Spirit* can be manifested by positively addressing very challenging situations.

### **Committed Partners for Youth (CPY)**

CPY acts as a clearing house and training center for volunteers who want to mentor various segments of the at-risk youth population in the Eugene area. They work with at-risk and troubled middle school students. In addition, CPY works closely with the juvenile justice program, focusing on youth aged 6-17 with one or more incarcerated parents. The mentors take kids on outings, camping trips, have monthly meetings and just “hang out” with kids who need nurturing and adult life models.

[committedpartners.org](http://committedpartners.org)

### **New Old Time Chautauqua (NOTC)**

In 2006, the Rex Foundation helped fund the New Old Time Chautauqua’s Jambalaya Tour to Hurricane Katrina-ravaged New Orleans and Mississippi, where they presented free vaudeville circus shows and workshops to survivors and heroic volunteer workers. Since 1981, NOTC has focused on under-served communities, but this tour was the first time they responded to a major crisis.

The experience was life-changing – no longer an arts organization that sometimes did service, NOTC became a service organization that used art to fulfill a mission of helping to build community through laughter, education and entertainment. The volunteer performers learned that these qualities were a needed respite from a difficult and confusing situation. They learned the value of the exchange of humanity through play and humor, and were

humbled that people who had lost and endured so much were still generous, gracious and full of gratitude.

[chautauqua.org](http://chautauqua.org)

### **Peaceful Tomorrows**

Families of 9/11 victims have organized to seek ways to educate, advocate and work toward non-violent responses to terrorism. Their mission is to seek effective non-violent responses to terrorism, and to identify a commonality with all people similarly affected by violence throughout the world. By conscientiously exploring peaceful options in their search for justice, September 11 Families choose to spare additional innocent families the suffering they have already experienced, as well as to break the endless cycle of violence and retaliation engendered by war.

[peacefultomorrow.org](http://peacefultomorrow.org)

### **Gift of New York**

The Gift of New York provided the families of those who died in the 9/11 attacks with access, at no cost, to the full range of the New York area’s theatrical, artistic, cultural, sports, and live entertainment through April 30, 2003, to help people in their transition from crisis to recovery.

Gift of New York was set up as a temporary charity

### **Parents’ Circle: Families Forum of Israeli and Palestinian Bereaved Families**

The Families Forum members have all lost a close relative due to the ongoing violence in the Middle East. Since its founding in 1955, the Families Forum has promoted reconciliation as an alternative to hatred and revenge which have been the prevailing responses of Palestinians and Israelis to the ongoing violence in the region. The

Rex Award supported the Parents' Circle programs that specifically involve young people.

[theparentscircle.com](http://theparentscircle.com)

### **Military Families Speak Out: Gold Star Families**

Gold Star Families Speak Out is comprised of families who have lost a member during military duty. These families are a support, advocacy and resource group for families who have lost a soldier any time since 9/11. They have been effective in lobbying military leaders to advocate for better conditions for soldiers in the field, including improved communication, training and equipment and for changes in policies and procedures such as repeat tours of duty.

[gsfso.org](http://gsfso.org)

### **Burners Without Borders**

Following the 2005 Burning Man event, several participants headed south into the Hurricane Katrina disaster area to help rebuild devastated communities. They focused their initial efforts in Biloxi, Mississippi, and later Pearlinton. Over the course of eight months, BWB volunteers gifted over \$1 million worth of reconstruction and debris removal to the residents of Mississippi. BWB has since emerged as a community led, grassroots group that addresses needs where existing cultural and societal systems are failing. Current projects include relief efforts in Haiti; furthering environmental awareness in Beijing and working with street children in Mombasa, Kenya.

[burnerswithoutborders.org](http://burnerswithoutborders.org)



Photo: Orion Trist

Burning Man, 2006

## **Resources – Publications, Organizations, and Websites**

### **“Money and the Meaning of Life”**

by Jacob Needleman

Currency Doubleday, (New York, 1991)

Money exerts a deep emotional influence on who we are and what we tell ourselves we can never have. This is a remarkable book that combines myth and psychology, the poetry of the Sufis and the wisdom of King Solomon, along with Jacob Needleman's searching of his own soul and his culture to explain how money can become a unique means of self-knowledge.

### **“Generosity of Spirit”**

You Tube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLvGN3jIG5k>

From the above: Yiddish verb: *farginen*: to open space, to share pleasure, the exact opposite of the verb to envy.

### **“Learning to Give”**

<http://learningtogive.org/materials/folktales/>

The Fetzer Institute's *Generosity of Spirit* project team offers stories which speak to the gifts and challenges of leading a generous life.

### **“Major Barbara”**

by George Bernard Shaw, 1905

Script available free of charge at [www.gutenberg.org/etext/3790](http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/3790), or from Penguin Classics ([www.penguin.com](http://www.penguin.com)), and George Pascal's film version as part of a collection of films of Shaw's plays available from [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com). (Note: We recommend the book version because of the excellent preface by Shaw on recognizing the importance of using money to eliminate poverty.)

### **“The Man Who Planted Trees: Generosity of Spirit as a Source of Happiness”**

by Jean Giono

Chelsea Green Publishing Co, 1985

This is a touching story of Elzéard Bouffier, who devoted his entire life to reforesting a desolate portion of Provence, in southern France. He single-handedly planted 100 acorns each day before, through, and after two world wars, and transformed a sorrowful place into one full of life and joy. Jean Giono's words offer a tribute to how much good one person can accomplish in a lifetime and advise on how to live life with deep meaning.