

Celebrate Life:

Viva La Vida!

by Namaya

Celebrating the Sublime & Absurd of Live

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Dedicated to my friend and mentor

Ross Trentacosti

Artist, teacher, bonvivant.

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Celebrate Life -Viva La Vida!

Yes.

Yes - to life. Yes - to the extraordinary possibilities in life. What inspires you? What is *your* manifesto in life? What satisfies you deeply - to the bone? “Celebrate Life” are stories, anecdotes, and, yes, poems about the journey of life. Don’t be scared of the poems. They ain’t fancy or intellectual things; they’re more *bread and butter* poems about life, and they might even make you laugh.

You can start the book at any point and you can read it for a few minutes or longer. Some of the stories may even serve as a reflection of your own life. They’re quirky stories of life in southern Vermont, the kindness of strangers around the world, dealing with TSA agents, coping with family and disappointment, and ultimately, it’s about celebrating life with the spirit of Zorba the Greek, who lived his life with passion and intention - he loved well, enjoyed his friends, and lived in the moment.

When people ask me, “How are you?” I say, in all sincerity, “If life gets any better, I’m going to have to give it a refund.”

I write stories, perform, create art, play music and tennis, and work with my community projects ... this is a life that is deeply satisfying. Yes, I work, but my work is joyful, even when it requires a great deal of effort. I thought work had to be difficult and make me feel miserable, but I discovered as I got older I had a choice, and work could be fun. Work is my avocation, my passion, and what I profoundly enjoy. But how many of us are following our deepest passions? How many of us are following our true joy? As a friend asked, “Unblocked by fear and doubt, what would you create in life?”

Even when you have your “9 to 5” job or the *mom dad job* that always seems to consume more of your life than you could have imagined ... how are you finding the fun and joy in life? When I had a 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. job, I woke up at 4:30 a.m. and wrote for a couple of hours before my day job. This was my sanctuary during the day. Even now, when life gets a little too busy, I still keep my morning sacred. I wake up, drink a cup of coffee and quietly sip it while I look to the sky and the trees outside my window. I do my yoga stretches, play my classical guitar, and then devote the morning to my writing and my art work. In this way, I am able to set the tone and the mood for the day. Yes, I have the “business of life” to deal with, but first I make this time for myself. I still have to work to make a living, but by living simply, and focusing on what I really love to do in life I find that I have more than enough money. With an absolutely terrific awesome wife that I have been privileged to be married to for the past twenty-five years, and work that I love to do... I feel like I won the Big Time Lottery.

First Cup

The first cup
of coffee
strong and black,

savored slowly
reverentially mindful
as a monk.

Each sip
a slow revelation to
wakening.

For too many years, I jumped out of bed at the sound of the alarm clock and launched myself into the world. I slowly realized this was not the way I wanted to live my life. What works best for me is to wake up slowly, have my breakfast without a radio, television, or cellphone, and quietly start the day. Even now, halfway through life, I'm still learning to find a more gentle way of living my life, and by doing less, I'm accomplishing more. The lines from Blake's poem, "Auguries of Innocence," captures this sense of wonder and presence in the moment.

*To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour*

What is your intention in life? What is your fun? Why are you truly here? Beyond the expectations of family or friends, what is your truest passion in life? In order to reach this point of a life of intention perhaps there needs to be a process akin to the 12-step program where you detoxify and purge- *the would-have-been, could-have-been, should-have-been, and might-have-been.*

This is the challenge and the choice for me. How do I create a life where I can pursue my true passion and joy? How do we dare to dream the dream of our lives and live it? *Celebrate Life: Viva La Vida* is the invitation to fully embrace your life and vision and live it. How do we live a life with a joyful spirit?

Joy is not a giddy, ecstatic state of being, but rather it's about being fully present and awake in my life to the small miracles of beauty that surround me. The more open I am to joy - to seeing this beauty and enchantment, from the dance of the wind across Blue Heron Pond at my home, to the exquisite beauty of violet crocuses peering through the late spring snow, the more I am opening myself to joy. Joy is a life of passion, intention and celebration. I celebrate this miracle of life in all the ways that it comes – sad, joyful, with its doubts, ambiguities and disappointments and all of this is the mix in *Celebrate Life*.

Yes.

Dare to be a rEvolutionary. Dare to be extraordinary in life! Discover the enchantment in your daily life.

Celebrate life! Viva la Vida! Celebrate *your* life.
Yes!

Ask for what you want in life

What is your true passion and joy in life? Is it a life of travel and discovery? Or do you aspire for adventure? Are you happiest working in the community and serving the needy? Do you want to get up on stage to sing and dance? Is your joy your family and home, and raising your kids? There are many wonderful choices you can make, but what is the one or more that makes you the happiest and gives you the deepest contentment?

When I was a homeopathic physician, I did this visualization with patients and it was to help them visualize the life they wanted. Not the life they *should or ought to do*, but a life that was profoundly satisfying.

This is the visualization that you can do. In this *house of many rooms*, each room represents a year of your life, if you are twenty the house has twenty one rooms, and if you are fifty the house has fifty one rooms, etc. . . . The house could be anywhere in the world, in the Caribbean or in the mountains, but this is your house. Each room represents one year of your life. Some rooms are closed and some filled with a lot of debris. We all spend too much time in the rooms of the past sometimes identified as – old loves, missed chances, not good enough, not smart enough, not happy enough, unhappy, self-loathing, and if you had a happy childhood – wonderful memories. But the one extra room is called NOW. This is the room of the present and the futurity of what you truly want. You can have anyone or no one in this room. This room is the best and idealized place for you and it is the room where your deepest hopes and aspirations can come true. This room has your favorite music and books, and maybe even a time transport machine to your fondest hopes.

When you have the time and energy you can empty out the old rooms, but the key is that you live in this one room of Now. What will you create?

An Aspiring Con Artist

At the age of three, my niece
was a quiet, thoughtful and
kind child, little did I suspect
of her underlying tendencies.
We were on the boardwalk at
Venice beach, I bought us
two ice cream cones.
She finished hers quickly and
then asked, "Can I have a taste of yours?"
"Of course you can, dear."
She was soon devouring
my ice cream and spied me waiting.
She paused and looked up at me
with brown innocent eyes.
And after a tiny fake cough said,
"I can't give it back to you, I have a cold."

Be the Rose

I never expected miracles as a
Homeopathic physician, but
I was open to the possibility.

A woman came into my office,
who was an alcoholic & apparently abused,
a spirit more broken than mended.

On her breast rising up to her
collar bone was a rose tattoo.

After two hours of listening
in the spirit of compassion and love, I gave her
a homeopathic dose of *stramonium*.

A remedy, as I saw it, for “One who was lost in the
wilderness without their tribe.”

I didn’t expect to see her again,
there are too many wounded spirits
in the world, who cannot find their way home.

About a year later, an attractive woman
came to my office and she said,
“You don’t recognize me? I saw you about a
year ago and you gave me some small pills.
I didn’t think much of it, but afterwards
I had a dream about how my life could be different.
I realized I didn’t have to be a victim
nor trapped in the lies.”

“Yes, I remember you, but you’ve blossomed.”

“It’s strange you said that, doctor. Before I met you
I had felt like the sludge in the sewer, now I feel like
the rose growing from that sludge.”

After she left, I looked up *stramonium* in
my reference book,
“Grows in refuse and dung heaps.”

Be the rose.

Best Parents & Best Children

We were too old to have children
when we married
and concentrated our parental love on
our nieces and nephews.
We aspired to be the best Aunt & Uncle we could
and informally adopted children along the way.

However, our best parenting is to ourselves.
We became *parents to ourselves*,
the parents we wish we could have had.

Those wonderful parents are great!
They are very loving, kind, give lots of hugs,
they're rarely grumpy, and offer plenty of
time for us kids to play and dream.

They give us exotic journeys to fill our imagination
and buy us lots of books, take us to museums and art
shows and give us enough allowance for
our special toys.

As *children*, in turn, we're the best kids parents could want!
We're very loving, kind, and give lots of hugs.
We're rarely grumpy, mostly obedient when the occasion
suits us, generally happy and always playful.
We only require love,
kindness,
and time to
dream.

We are the parents to ourselves.
We are the children to those wonderful parents.

Life is just the way it is**1**

Take it as it comes
 See what you become
 Be the best if you dare
 But only if you care

If you're in for revolution
 Do your own evolution
 Fly down from the trees
 Crawl among the fleas

Get a fateful itch
 To make the switch
 And live your life
 Without such strife

2

Cry for the pain
 Dance in the rain!
 Choose what you do
 It's all up to you

Whine or complain
 Or sip champagne
 Only you can change
 The links of your chain

Cry, laugh, or dance
 Life is short, take a chance
 Kiss a beautiful stranger
 Life, is worth the danger

3

Try a new attitude
 Or live with gratitude
 An attitude of gratitude
 May lend needed altitude

Life is cruel or kind
 Don't pay it no mind
 A change of season
 Will change that reason

Hide away underground
 Or claim the highest ground
 Embrace the loneliest fear
 Or live outrageous & clear

4

Take it as it comes
 See what you become
 Be the best if you dare
 But only if you care

Reach for your life
 Dance the edge of a knife
 Celebrate it complete
 Life bitter & sweet

Win, draw or loose
 It's what you choose.
 Live large, blow a fuse
 If you wish just refuse

Life is just the way it is
 It's all up to you.

Sophia Loren at the Ice Cream Store

When I was a young
teenage boy a
beautiful buxom
women in a dress
two sizes too small
and generous
cleavage would
bend over the ice
cream counter to scoop
out a serving.

One scoop, two,
and one more
at the front
where she would
have to lean
all the way
over towards my
famished eyes
as I drank in
those luscious
velvety curves
of desire ready
to melt on my
tongue.

“Would there
be anything else, love?” she’d ask
as she handed me a
towering ice
cream cone.

“Yes, would you
be able to put on
some sprinkles?”

For the finale,
the coup de grace,
the consummation
of the feast

she’d lean over
the counter to
reach the sprinkles

and the generous
scoops threaten
to topple over as
she adorned my
ice cream cone.

p.s.
I’m allergic to ice cream; nevertheless,
faithfully every week during the summer
I bought an ice cream cone. and gave it to a
friend.

Best Boyhood Summer

There is a place for swimming,
running, hiking, and doing other
boyhood things,

but my favorite summer nook
was in the old library at my
hometown.

The librarians knew me smiled,
and handed me a book as I walked in,
“You’ll like this one.”

In the far back recesses was an
old leather couch worn to
a buttery soft comfort by
decades of readers.

I put my shoes on the floor,
pool towel beside me,
stretched out and dived
into the cascade of fiction and
history.

The library smelled of
well-read books as I nestled
into the couch for that long
hot summer afternoon, while
I was cool and swimming in
my imagination.

When I came home my mother
asked, “How was the pool today?”

“I couldn’t have
imagined a better day.”

Far More Fun Being Grown Up!

Being a child is a bit of a pain
having to do what you're told.
Got an itch to dance in the rain,
do as ya' please without a scold?

Childhood years are so overblown
as a time of idyllic carefree fun.
Me? Far more joy now I'm grown,
spend my days playing in the sun.

I can be anything that I want to be.
Do what I please to do.
Only one I need to delight is me!
Each day is a surprise in all that is new.

I eat dessert first, then my dinner,
or a piece of chocolate for lunch.
Pancakes not making me thinner,
I eat a second helping for brunch.

My work is my play, day by day.
My cares fly free in the breeze,
nearly all my fears drift away,
as I hammock siesta in the trees.

Far more fun being grown up!

The Toilet Seat

Everything I needed to understand about life, economics, and recycling I learned from my toilet seat.

A toilet seat is not a very elegant topic for an essay, but, if we can be candid, it's a subject that's dear to many of our hearts and points beyond. My toilet seat was getting a bit rickety. It's a firm oak seat, nicely polished, but the screws were falling out, and I thought maybe I could get one of those luxurious soft plastic seats - and maybe even one that was heated! It gets cold on those Vermont winter nights. Thought it doesn't compare to the one my friend in NYC has with a toilet that lowers the seat, washes your bottom with a warm soapy spray, and then blows you dry. Your hands never have to touch your body. Nevertheless, my concerns are far more pedestrian when it comes to this creaky oak toilet seat.

I went down to the hardware store and there was a rack of plastic,

padded, and oak seats, and even a heated one. I evaluated them in terms of comfort, durability, and where they were manufactured. I'm particular about where I park some of my most valuable terrain. Most were made in China, but I'm trying to avoid buying products from China whenever possible. I found my choices reduced to mahogany models from Brazil. Given my reticence to import toilet seats from exotic locales merely to meet the all-important needs of my posterior, I was in a quandary. The matter of what I sit on in the morning for my constitutional may be of interest only to me; nevertheless, wars have been waged over far less. I realized this wasn't a decision I could take lightly and realized this problem required careful deliberation.

I returned to the seat of my throne and connected with my primal soul. Though the seat creaked and groaned a bit, I realized that my antiquated toilet seat suited me just fine. Sometimes it's important to put our ass on the line for ecology.

Dennis and Bob

My friend Dennis and I were drinking at a bar and having a jolly good time when suddenly a woman walked in. She was quite attractive and looked at Dennis and said, “Bob, how are you doing?”

Despite his confusion he started to have a lovely chat with this woman. As things happen in life Dennis and this woman, I think her name was Melissa, were getting along splendidly. They got up from the bar and Dennis said to me, “I guess I’ll see you tomorrow.”

I had lunch the next day with Dennis who was still nursing a hangover. “So Dennis tell me how did your date go last night?” He started to laugh and rolled on the floor, “You wouldn’t believe it?”

“Try me.”

“We went back to her apartment and had a great time last night.”

“And, so what was the problem?”

“In the morning time she asked me, “Bob, you want coffee?””

“Sure thing, baby.”

“After a few minutes she came back with two coffees. According to Dennis she looked bewildered, dazed, and terrified all in one moment. She dropped the two coffees on the floor and said, “You’re not Bob! Who are you?”

Chapter 4 Dig your creative soul!

Riding the Creative Dragon

The creative journey has little to do with an MFA in art or poetry, or how much you make or don't make from your art or craft

The creative journey, whether as a painter, community activist, poet, dancer, or any one of the thousands of creative expressions is about connecting to our profound capacity to wonder and create.

In Malta last winter I was at one of the oldest Neolithic sites and there was a tiny statue of a pregnant woman. This icon represented the desire to express a belief or an idea of beauty which is so compelling. I was so moved by this very simple, almost childlike, statue. In its simplicity was beauty.

When I was in eighth grade, a teacher told us to write a poem about clouds. I had never written a poem and I don't remember what I wrote. However, I remember the teacher scolding me for the poem and telling me how bad it was. It's ironic I've spent most of my adult life writing and performing poetry.

In short, NEVER LISTEN TO THE CRITICS. Sure it is vital to continue to develop your craft and skill, but don't let teachers or others put you down. Write, draw, create and dance your truth. Oftentimes, my art is about my thinking or exploration on a subject and then somewhere at the end I realize it may be good enough to publish.

Though I love the accolades and applause, the best applause I received once was, "I was at your performance and read the poem, *Life Is* I was deeply depressed but I wrote that poem down, put it on my mirror, and that lifted my spirits." When my poetry or art can inspire you, then that is applause enough for me.

My greatest "payment" as a performance poet was with my friend and the great poet Hayden Carruth. Hayden was very elderly and I performed one of his poems, and though in ill health, he creakily stood up to give me a standing ovation. I could not have been more honored.

I cherish poetry that inspires and speaks to the deepest level of our humanity. Art that makes us wonder, dance that makes us get up and swing, photography that opens our eyes, and jazz that causes us to soar. Not the paintings that cost a gazillion dollars, but the art that exists in the everyday.

Ride your creative dragon.

Obligation

My paintings may never
hang in a museum nor be seen
by more than friends.

My poems may never
be heard nor read by more
than a roomful of people.

My songs may never be
heard by more than
a few.

My creative work that
I devote my life to may
not find an audience in
this life,

but as an artist my
obligation is to wake
up each day and
create.

What is your obligation?