

Hello everyone!

Although you've received this issue of the Northwest Folkdancer near the beginning of July, it was written and inspired much closer to the end of May, by the Northwest Folklife Festival. As I see it, there are many life lessons embodied in the Folklife experience which I hope will have relevance to you as we view the world at large and our experiences in it.

Take in the present. This took me years to learn, to be present and enjoy and experience what is happening right where you are. Don't stress over everything you are missing and waste energy thinking something else you're not at is better. This is especially true at Folklife when the grounds are crowded and it would take so long to get to the other location that you would miss it anyway.

Go with the changes. Seattle Center grounds were different this year than last year due to construction and availability. Maybe your old favorite vendor wasn't represented this year or a band you love wasn't playing this year. What a great opportunity to explore what was new and wonderful or just different this year. Many of us live in places where rapid change is a constant and we want to drag our heels and resist. As I often remember, resistance is futile and there is usually a silver lining somewhere.

Enjoy the tried and true and also expose yourself to something new. Remember, everything was new to each of us once. Occasionally let yourself be influenced by others to experience something they really enjoy which you've never seen, heard, or done before.

Appreciate that not everything is for everyone. We've all heard the expression "different strokes for different folks." It is possible that the new thing you try falls flat for you. I went to one showcase that really didn't move me much. Oh well. I experienced something new and learned something in the process. Next time I'll make a different choice. There's time in life and Folklife also to honor our own preferences and do the things we really enjoy as well as take a risk to try something new.

Make the best of things. Rainy cold weather is a great time to be inside dancing. Make plans but remain flexible.

Honor tradition. For example, my late brother Asha Goldberg used to fully participate in Folklife every year. As a family, we would go out to the Bamboo Garden and enjoy the spiciest possible meal. So we continue this tradition and honor his memory with a meal each Folklife.

Make new friends and keep the old. One thing I love about Folklife is refreshing connections made with people in the 70's, 80's, and 90's and beyond. At Folklife I can choose to wander about alone or put myself where old friends, newer friends and people I don't know yet are gathered. Similarly, it can be very satisfying to hang out at home and leaving the house to be with others at an event can be even more so.

Take care of yourself - food, rest, preparation in terms of supplies for the day, musical instrument warm up and practice if applicable, pacing oneself if necessary. Feed your passions and yourself.

Cherish your communities. I received a fundraising email from Mendocino Balkan Camp which contained the line "Know that feeling when someone just drops out of the dance line? Well, that's us. Our hands are dangling!" This is a poignant image of disconnection. For me, Folklife is just the opposite. There are so many communities, so many dance lines in one form or another. This richness and diversity feeds my soul.

Celebrate every day. Warren Argo, after whom Warren's Roadhouse was named, had a goal of making everyday like Folklife. I believe he had succeeded four or five days out of a week. This is a worthy goal for me also, encompassing music, dance, and connections.

Set time aside for what matters to you. Just as I and my family set aside time to be at Folklife all day everyday, we can set aside time in our lives to do what is important to us and make time to cultivate our connections with others. Take time for beauty. Spend a minute enjoying the flowers and smelling the roses.

Finally, support the things and the people we care about. Show up. Volunteer. Donate. Dance!