

## Home

A spiritual exploration, by Robert Roush

Home.

When you heard that word just now, did you have an emotional reaction? It's not likely that you didn't (unless you thought, I said "Homo" instead of home, and then I don't know what you thought).

But, even for those who had a terrible home as a child, the concept of home is so powerful, that instead of equating Home (with a capital "H") with something negative, we say things instead, like, "I feel as if I never had a home."

Home is something we all seek. Some of us do not know that. Some of us are home and have not considered what that means. So, let us go then, and make our visit: Our visit to Home.

When I google "home," the picture of my house (yes, MY house) that the google car took a picture of, appears right before my eyes. I guess this tells me WHEN it is (2014), that my computer immediately interprets that maybe that's what I meant by Googling "home". While I appreciate Google's efforts, it doesn't really tell me where home is; it tells me where my house is. As for time, I already know that the present is always home – so you are always home in time, wherever you are. But the phrase, "home in time" means something else... Or does it? That makes me wonder why so few people take advantage that- of always being home wherever you are, because our *whenever* can only be NOW. We can only think about the past and the future. Confused? I'll get into it a little more later. Maybe.

As a word home is defined this way...

I'm going to say this slowly, because it is innocently pregnant with meaning. As a *noun*:

*1. the place where one lives permanently, especially as a member of a family or household. "I was nineteen when I left home and went to college" More the family or social unit occupying a home. "he came from a good home and was well educated"*

Let's think about home and family. We have a similar emotional reaction to "family;" Good or bad, as we do to home. If we've had a bad family life, we tend to say similar things, "I feel as if I never had a family," or, upon moving away, we say, "my friends are my real family..." Home and family are inextricable. We tend to think of our pets as our family, and even our neighbors, as well as our relatives with whom we live.

Now, this is interesting. *2. Home is... a place where something flourishes, is most typically found, or from which it originates. "Piedmont is the home of Italy's finest red wines"*  
*synonyms: origin, source, cradle, fount, fountainhead*

Now we're really getting somewhere with this definition thing. Source. Cradle. Fount. Fountainhead. Source. When I was 21 and going to college, I had a 47 year old PhD student roommate named Joyce. Joyce was a free spirit. She had 4 children and had had 5 husbands. She was single when I met her. She kept company with a 30 year old minister from Buffalo who used to come over to spend the night with her. I loved her.

She didn't ever mention God, but, she mentioned something she called, "the Source" with a capital "S". She said, "We all return to the source, Rooob." She used to stretch out my name the way Mary Tyler Moore did on The Dick Van Dyke Show. I don't know why... Anyway, Back then, I might been known to partake in smoking a certain, "funny tobacco". At those times, I thought I

knew just what she meant. Then, years later, not so much... Now? I think I do again. Back to the definitions...

*3. An institution for people needing professional care or supervision.*

*"An old people's home" synonyms: institution, nursing home, retirement home, rest home*

We've arrived at a true negative connotation, but why? The use of the term "home" here is like trying to put lipstick on a pig. These places are not home. They can symbolize *loss* of home. Loss of independence. This doesn't mean a retirement community. The good places we go to retire don't try to dress it up. They call it community. Communities are where we have our homes, but homes are personal. They're something we make, so someone I don't know can't make a home for me the same way parents can make a home for children. That home wouldn't be mine. But, there can be a collection of homes in the midst of which I would like to make my home.

#### *4. SPORTS*

*Home is the goal or end point. The place where a player is free from attack.*

*(as in lacrosse) each of the three players stationed nearest their opponents's goal.*

So when we play, we take this allegoric journey and travel away and return home to be safe. It's stuff like this that makes me feel I can get stoned without chemical help. Are you serious? Our mass public spectacle games draw us in to watch this allegoric journey over and over again? Our movement to ecstasy watching a player arrive home in baseball is the excitement we expect to feel when we return home. Perhaps, when we return home to the source. It doesn't matter what you believe. But, why are these such powerful ideas?

In Aaron Copeland's opera, "The Tenderland". A young woman strikes out from home on the frontier. She is not only leaving, but she is expanding the frontier itself. Despite the profession many young single women ended with in those days, many found the family and the home they were seeking: ***because they made it, out of nothing***. At the risk of sounding heterosexist, men can wander endlessly. It is that coming together that creates family (and that's in all its forms from brother and sister to husband and wife, to same-sex couples to friend and confidant) it ultimately brings us home.

Right now, I am hoping that someone didn't seriously think that a Gay man was going to preach a sermon about home and not mention Dorothy Gale. That's right. The Wizard of Oz. We all know that in the end, Glenda tells Dorothy that she had the power to go home all the time. Then why have an adventure? Because, we're not ready to go home until we do. Until we learn the lessons we need to. Whether we are reincarnating for life time after lifetime to learn those lessons, or we are simply wondering which way Kansas is after burning our wicked witch, we need to accomplish something while we're out. That may mean feeding the hungry or making amends with a neighbor or family member. It all has to do with forgiveness and help – for being just what we are. Human.

It may be a little more complicated than you think, this thing we call home. Home is always the place where we are or to which we are headed. I'll say it again: "Home is always the place where we are or to which we are headed. Ultimately. If we head out - to the store or on vacation or business trip, we will come home. Unless we are homeless? Having a bigger home does not necessarily mean we are homeless. "Homeless" is a label we put on people who don't keep going back to the same space all the time. Even nomads

have patterns and cycles. For them, the pattern and cycle itself is home.

Gay men and lesbians have a history of being court-jesters, healers, teachers, counselors, clergy and merchants, making home for someone else – but often not for themselves. They have always made a place in the human web. Now, we create a home of our own – but we have not abandoned the old ways or professions. If you know a bitter gay person, be gentle. The bitterness is in being told that there is no home for us. So, we became home voyeurs. Some of us rejoice! That time is over, but, like Dorothy, we always had that power to go home. We can stop identifying with the witch and our own destruction. While we may have a witch to burn, *WE ARE NOT THAT WITCH.*

But, that doesn't mean you can leave! My little party's just beginning! Actually, there's not that much left to my "speech" today. Still, it seems a custom when we speak from the pulpit for the first time at UUCSV, to say a little about how we fit into our UU picture. "What's our angle in religion and spirituality?" if you will. So, here it is for me: If you flip your bulletin over I'm pretty much that last bullet point under, "The Living tradition we share draws from many sources," but I view figures like Jesus as rebel rousers that dared to say, "yes, you have your religion, but there's way more to it." We keep losing a grasp on concepts like, "Home." And yes, I am an unapologetic Mystic. That's with a capital "M". Why? Because we just don't know it all. We really don't know much at all. We just think we do. We're scared if there's far more to the greatness of being than we realize. The Mystical is the only door to the rest.

So, in telling my story, and in coming back home to the Susquehanna Valley, the idea struck me one day as I was looking for yet another "job," and traveling to places like Connecticut. Just about this time, Ann called me one day excited about, well, a lot

things, as Ann is known to get - like Bill's OWL class (this was more than a year before it started). I Skyped with her to "discuss possibilities" (if you haven't noticed, one of Ann's favorite things to do is discuss possibilities!). She hadn't dressed, or combed her hair when we skyped. I really was visiting her at her home. For 2 ½ years, I had read her daily devotion every day. I had left the UU church 2 years before I left central Susquehanna, but Ann kept me in the loop. She kept me in the family, and, she nurtured the seed that was home. When that sapling was ready, I knew we had to get the roots back into home soil before it was too late.

There became an urgency to return, and we worked (as, perhaps, did the angels) to come back, but, just as many things fell into place as we worked to bring about, so, I feel I would be ignorant and arrogant to claim credit, when clearly, something else was at work. We UU's call it the Web.

We travelled back and forth several times. When I was coming to move into a friend's house in Paxinos, I remember coming off of route 230 onto route 15 on the South branch of the Susquehanna. When I looked over at the river and passed by the Ranch House Restaurant, something happened. I *knew* I was finally back home. The release came, as it often does, in tears, but, the relaxation of my body was real. Home is something palpable. It isn't just a concept or an idea. I could feel it.

After Memorial Day in September, we will come home to UUCSV with the Water Communion service. We bring quite a bit of virtual water to our service for water communion and talk about where we have traveled, but, if you still have travels this summer, even if it is local, I'm suggesting that you look at a map, get off the highway, and go down to the rivers and their tributaries: to the ocean itself, in order to connect with this planet we call home. Wherever you are, that is a place someone else calls home. Look around you when you are in these places. We are all always visiting someone

else's home if we are not at our home. Buy some small mason jars and lids and take a Sharpie pen. When you walk down to the water to scoop it up, have someone take a picture. Share. Feel the earth and the force of the water: the currents carry us both away from and toward one another.

[Pause]

We have travelled far to come home. If you still need to travel, I wish you Godspeed. If you know that you are already Home, simply take off your shoes... and stay a while...

If we can say that the world religions are seeking home for the soul, home for the truth of our human existence, where is home? So, in the end, what is home to a Jew, a Christian, a Moslem or a Wiccan? Do atheists have a spiritual home? Well, look around you! You are home!

Blessèd Be!