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JIM NATICHIONI, PATH GUIDE



I am Jim Natichioni of RightLivelihood.com and I have written the inspirational book: **Finding Your Path, Tales of Right Livelihood**. This excerpt is from Chapter Twelve: “Authors Perspectives on Money, Fulfillment and Simplicity” and relates to the cycles of life on the journey. To read more please visit [RightLivelihood.com](http://RightLivelihood.com).

**Finding your path and right livelihood:** This chapter is broken into three parts: your money or your life choices; select authors paths to right livelihood; and the continuous transitions undergone in my attempts to balance nature, simplicity and work. The saga of how money fits into our dreams continues as we question how we choose to trade our life energy for pay. The disenchantment within our society is no longer confined to non-conformists as we come to terms with the consequences of our producing and purchasing habits. Work remains central to identity; is the purpose behind your work to maintain the accepted ‘standard of living’ or do you have another plan? The key is to know the facts and make a conscious choice instead of just moving through life as a bystander to your own destiny. In this chapter there are stories about authors and the personal choices they have made on their path towards a meaningful existence. Their stories bring passion and adventure as, similar to my quest they seek to balance right livelihood with nature. In search for a simpler life and without a plan in place my personal experiences run the gamut of emotions.

## **The transition of this writer from one end of the good life to the other:**

Now I had left that path, that town, and had come to this town, my hometown. In Framingham I worked light construction with the Abelli boys for a while and realized the only part of construction that came easily to me was painting so I went into the painting business on my own. I lived with my friend Terrell for about a year when he made an interesting comment about my lifestyle: “Jimmy,” he said, “you’re no different than the rest of us, I thought you were a Yogi and a hiker and an environmentalist and into all this alternative stuff, but I don’t see it. You play a little ball, watch the ballgames, and go out with regular gal’s and eat vegetables, what else do you do?” Johnny was as right as rain. Since I moved away from the Telluride mountain environment, an atmosphere conducive to alternative and natural living, I had essentially stopped living the life I advocated.

With Dr. Johnson’s blessings, I shut off the television and began to cook gourmet organic whole food meals again, and grow wheat grass and alfalfa sprouts. I wrote in my Essene daily journal. I dusted off my Myata bicycle and Norwalk juicer and resurrected my old yoga routine that I had practiced religiously for many decades. Plants and pictures were hung and oriental furnishings were arranged judiciously. I re-furnished ‘my place’ and incorporated feng shui aspects by placing a water feature in the career corner, three coins in the prosperity corner and pink plants in the relationship corner.

This routine did not help me much with women, but Dr. Johnson had a point. Until I was happy with my lifestyle, I should not look for someone else to fill the hole or

chasm in it, not look for someone else to make me happy. I itched for freedom and soon tired of painting and nesting and the “burbs” of Framingham.

**Kahlil Gibran:** Yet I cannot tarry longer. The sea calls all things unto her...I must embark. For to stay, though the hours burn on the night, is to freeze and crystallize and be bound in a mould.

### **Parking the truck and enjoying the bike ride:**

**The Vineyard:** I moved to my Brother Rick’s vacation house in Martha’s Vineyard. On the island, life made sense again. My family and all of our friends would ferry over from Woods Hole for grand times and events. The spirit of the place was defined by a little plaque that hung above the toilet, ‘We aim to please, you aim too, please.’ I earned free rent by helping Rick build an additional room onto the house, parked my truck for the spring, summer, and fall seasons, managed the “Veg-Out” restaurant thirty hours a week, swam in the Atlantic, and practiced yoga daily. I rode my bike everywhere, from errands to day trips to work. By living in places like Martha’s Vineyard at the very least I was able to enjoy the ride in beautiful surroundings. The other thing that I have always been good at--and my wife and any of my ex-girlfriends can vouch for me on this one--is relaxing. I can relax with the best of them. It is said that leisure and beauty are fundamental to our existence; since our pace of life constantly accelerates, we need to make time for both.

**Mom and Dad:** It was a very simple, very peaceful, very glorious time, until the day I received a phone call from my sister. “Jim, Mom’s not doing well, check the ferry schedule and please come home.” The day my mom passed on was the saddest, most surreal day of my life. It was a day resplendent with the most spectacular New England foliage, and I thanked god for that beauty, as it was the only thing that got me through that day. It was within a year that my father joined her.

**John Keats** (as often quoted by Dad about Mom) A thing of beauty is a joy forever.

### **My journey to find me in a new place is circuitous:**

My stay back home had come to a sad end; it was time again to move on. I was looking for a place to get lost so I left with a heavy heart and light baggage, feeling alone for the first time in my life. A few weeks after Dad’s passing I felt a stirring inside, as if I had awakened from a long slumber. “The wheel of appearances revolves around quickly;” where is Jim the Telluride lumberyard manager or Jim the teammate or husband, where is Mr. Popularity. I was still my mother’s son, still the kid from Framingham but who else? Like Siddhartha after his epiphany I belonged to no class of people and had no group or cause to identify with. No, I could no longer look backwards; I would have to blaze a new trail.

I called my friend Sully and we headed out west on a low-budget search for our new settlement. Our first stop was Creede, Colorado, where Sully and his soon to be ex-wife Victoria asked me to mediate their divorce settlement. On our two month journey, Sully and I checked out towns near Utah’s National Parks; Flagstaff and Sedona Arizona, The Gila Wilderness and Santa Fe, New Mexico; we bypassed the Sierra Nevada because

Sully did not like California, and went on to Ashland, Oregon, Crater Lake National Park, and many other wonderful places.

Along the way we took our time, hiked, biked, cross-country skied and even worked a little for room and board. We liked Ashland, Oregon so much I decided to apply for a job there. I went into a gas station rest room to change shirts and shave with cold water. I emerged with twenty little pieces of toilet paper stuck all over my face. Sully broke up laughing so hard I decided to skip the interview. My heart was not into it anyway.

**The Crest:** We ended up in a town called Crestone, Colorado, a village where you could count more deer on main-street than people, and more monasteries than homes. This very remote, very spiritual enclave in the Sangre de Cristo mountains served as the idyllic power spot where I chose to hone my triathlon and golfing skills, journal in my Essene Book of Days, practice celibacy and live as simply as possible. Soon after Sully decided to stay in Creed, I decided Crestone was a little too remote and headed to the east coast to regroup.

Back in Framingham, I fortified my bank account with a couple quick painting gigs. I gave away nearly all of my meager furnishings and accessories and gathered what was left of my belongings, which amounted to: my road bike, my mountain bike; my Norwalk Juicer; a couple of paint brushes and my favorite paint bucket, my camping gear, some jeans, and flannel shirts. I moved. This time there was no coming back.

**The Garden:** On my way to anywhere I stumbled onto Old Colorado City. Living within a stones throw of the Garden of the Gods State Park, I enjoyed the same peace, solitude and health that I had found on the slopes of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean and on the bike lanes and swimming pools of San Jose California. Having spent much of these few years under the influence of my friend Sully's natural lifestyle, it soon became time to get back to the other reality. As if on cue, my commercial real estate executive friend Chel called: "Nate, I have a big commercial painting project down here in Tallahassee, when can you drive down and give us a bid?" No strings, no commitments, no design, I just followed the jet stream south to Florida, where I would spend the next three years under the influence of Chelius' hard driving lifestyle. Influenced first by the ascetic and next by the executive, I had a hard time making up my own mind and a harder time changing what appeared to be my lot in life.

#### **'Still runnin' against the wind':**

In The Wandering Taoist, The Grand Master of Huashan said that you come into this world with problems to resolve, which is why you must meet so many hindrances in this lifetime. Those who refuse no experiences and who overcome their obstacles can leave this world fulfilled and go to a higher plane, those that do not will suffer the same recurring problems until they are resolved. The summer of life is the best time to resolve your predilections and the best time for achievements; I did not take advantage of that summer. When autumn approached, the consequences of my summer's actions and ambivalence appeared and the cycle continued.

**Bob Seger:** And the years rolled slowly past and I found myself alone...I found myself further and further from home...I was living to run and running to live...I found myself searching for shelter against the wind. Well the drifter days are past me now, I've got so

much more to think about, deadlines and commitments... *Well I'm older now and still running against the wind...Against the wind.*

Buddha suggests that people like me work out our own salvation, and that we do it with diligence. What Buddha loathed most was fatalism; the belief you can do nothing about your lot, saying: "There's a path to the end of suffering. Tread it." He suggests that we need a map to understand life's obstacles, which forks to take, when they appear, and which directions to avoid. To stay on course a rigorous training should be undertaken and service to mankind should be foremost.

All the time bouncing from one state to another, I had no plan and no idea where I would move next. It did not seem to matter much. My costs were so low; I knew that after a period of withdrawal I could go back to the activity of painting and 'catch up' financially. I did not get ahead or progress in the American sense of the word, but I felt pretty good. There was still something missing. I could not balance my existence; I was alternately too passive, then active. My dilemma remained: 'the yurt, the steady job, or the pastoral middle ground.'

Unlike Buddha I had no mission, no work that I could sink my teeth into and hold onto like a bulldog. Buddha led his countrymen away from the stifling caste system and the suffering human condition down the path of salvation. He served as a tireless advocate for his cause, but took time to retreat into nature. His work and his lifestyle were one and the same. He kept busy with a large order to run. He trained monks, spoke publicly, and did personal consulting. He may not have owned a corporation but his work was the equivalent of running a large organization. The payment he accepted in exchange for his services was in a form of support other than money. The next chapter continues to examine the balance of our immaterial needs with our material needs.