



NOXGEAR: Building a company

Simon Curran talks to Hanafi Fraval about building his company, Noxgear

Introduction

Simon Curran and his business partner, Tom Walters, have the right idea. They are working on their company, Noxgear, rather than in it. They offer several obsessively well-designed products. They have developed data-driven internal systems, production, marketing and sales strategies. They are currently at \$10 million in sales and looking at the next expansion in building their business. Exciting times...!

Getting a handle on the big picture

During Noxgear's early startup phase, Simon and Tom realized that they couldn't sell enough of their second product, Lighthouse, because they couldn't make enough of it. The chain of financing, manufacturing, ensuring delivery of good product, and then selling it was too clumsy and too slow. So they began to work on ways to make the whole process smoother, but in a lean, efficient way

The two partners had to take time to step back from the daily grind, to look at the big picture, away from the office. So, in the same way that one tries to make a product better in every way, they studied the company as a product to be improved. They developed the good habit of doing this exercise several times a year, although Simon admits that perhaps they only achieved 5% of the goals they set at each of these meetings. Nevertheless, over time that 5% grew to 25%, and they got closer to the big-picture plan they were trying to achieve.

Simon and Tom take the same objective approach to designing a new product, like the 39g.

(See <https://www.youtube.com/embed/GPTShYSihtA>)

"You have to stand back and not copy others," Simon explains, "but rather beat your own path and challenge yourself." So he and Tom try to think outside of the box, using new ways of doing things. After a few months, any changes they make are reviewed to see whether or not they have worked, and how might be further improved.



Top: Lighthouse. Above: Noxgear 39g, obsessively well designed, lightest, loudest, longest lasting, wearable Bluetooth Speaker.

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For Noxgear, this year was all about setting up production and QC lines. They sold a few thousand special units slowly, with the express purpose of getting feedback, identifying bugs (software/hardware), and testing price points. They invested in enough components to construct a batch of these and will crank up the production line this winter.

Data, not consultants

From experience, Simon and Tom have found that outside consultants have been expensive and ineffective. Challenging themselves to find solutions has been hard work but much more fruitful. Simon offered several stories – a whole separate topic – about how consulting companies can be an awful waste of money.

Simon and Tom are fortunate because they know how to handle data, how to write software to capture and analyze data. They have become adept at generating masses of data to clarify decisions about marketing, pricing and other important areas. The result, Simon describes, is like having a panel of knobs that can be turned up and down on a dashboard, in order to experiment with what works best. A scientific approach that includes factors for seasonality, different sales or advertising channels, what they have control of or not, and what they can measure and change allows them to optimize results.

People and team

At first, family and friends helped to enable Noxgear's early growth. Simon's brother, who manages the shipping-and-receiving side of the business, has recruited a number of people – many of them moms and their kids from the neighborhood – to help on a short-term or temporary basis. Simon describes the atmosphere on days when they are doing a lot of shipping as being like a big party. In fact, that's often the case on most days.

Now, however, the company has to start hiring more people. Two customer service workers were employed recently. For roles like ambassador, or for positions in marketing, advertising, customer service or record keeping, Simon feels they could have done better. He and Tom feel that it's important to pay a living wage, and they have paid above average for employees in these positions, which include health insurance, etc. They have paid well, expecting above-average performance. Unfortunately, that did not follow, and they had to accept that not everyone is an above-average performer. This is a challenge for the company, and part of their next step is to grow the business despite these limitations in team performance.

Expecting employees to devote the same kind of energy and commitment to a company as its founders do is a common issue. When they started the business, Simon and Tom were a little loose on setting expectations. They came to realize that even when friends and family are employees, they just don't see the company in the same way as its founders. The partners now meet twice a year with the entire staff to try to correct attitude and low performance – so far, without much success. So all options, including financial rewards for higher performance, are being explored.

Simon and Tom have just begun to investigate the process of recruiting senior staff – a CEO, COO and two engineers – who could take them out of the loop and give them back 100% of their time.

Obsessive about product design

Simon described how they push the limits in the product-design process, squeezing more from the electronic design, or reducing product dimensions, for example. This obsessive approach practically drove crazy some of the people with whom they were working, although others appreciated it.



Sarah Curran jogging with Noxgear 39g.



They kept their eyes on the numbers to make sure their margins were okay...



This level of obsession shows in Noxgear's products, from its packaging to its product features and performance. Every tiny detail has been thought through and then rethought. *[As someone who appreciates this unwillingness to compromise and the determination to find new and better solutions, I reacted with delight! – HFJ]*

On the downside one year, as peak season approached for production of the Tracer360 (see Noxgear website), the designers and production people simply could not reach the level of performance that Simon had expected of them, despite the fact that some of them were being paid \$180 to \$240 an hour. (They had used one of the two best design firms in the country!) So, finding people who can really perform is now a current focus.

Marketing

Noxgear's approach is to ask itself, what restricts us from selling? Until this year, the answer has always been the amount of money available to produce a product for sale. For example, if the company decides it needs \$2.5 million worth of inventory, it has to sequester this from the sales achieved in the previous year, plus lines of credit, and loans. "So, we have \$2.5 million inventory," explains Simon. "We know we can sell it somehow across one of a number of channels. It's just a question of how much margin we want to make. If you're having problems selling the product, you should question whether you have the right product or design."

All kinds of distributors, middlemen, salespeople, and others approach Noxgear. The company assesses each prospect for the margin that could be generated through each channel. Of course, the more people involved in the chain of distributor, salesperson or channel, the lower the margin.

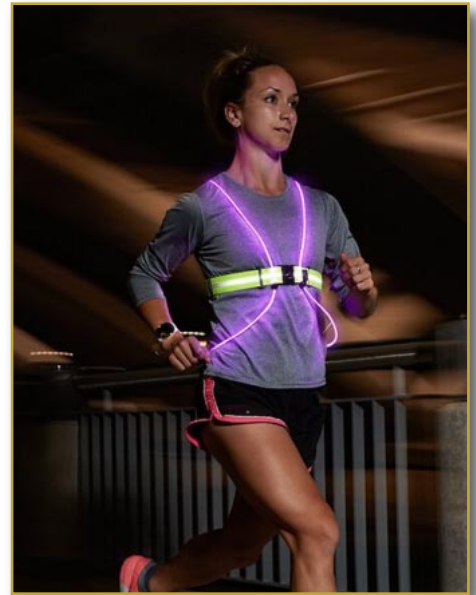
The bottom line is that going through a retail structure – distributors, middlemen, salespeople and retailers – may enable a company to sell larger volume. The trouble is that margins are then razor thin and risk is high. The same issue can apply to selling through big-box retail chains.

Marketing through Noxgear's own website, or through Amazon, is slow to reach large volume, but the margins are higher. Early in a company's development, it is better to sell directly, solving production and customer-service issues first. "It was hard work to build up direct sales. We used Facebook ads that looked like a combination of an engineering PowerPoint and the graphics from an elementary school book," quips Simon.

They kept their eyes on all of the numbers to make sure that their margins were okay, that they weren't losing any money. They were selling too little product to make a living, but they were watching for growth. "Once your processes are under control and everything is running smoothly, you have a higher margin to give you some financial cushion, and risk is lower. Large orders can bankrupt a little company," Simon warns.

Facebook financing is extremely short-term: spending \$10 to get a customer nets a return of \$15 from Facebook a couple of weeks later. There's every reason to extend oneself to higher levels with Facebook. Simon thinks that many people become distracted by the amount of money they're spending on Facebook, instead of focusing on margin.

At present, Noxgear is inventory limited, so it doesn't run its ads too hard, overselling the product and creating delivery problems. They dial back to a level that provides optimum profit, without stressing available inventory or financial resources. For example, over the peak season, the company is able to do just enough advertising to clear out all of its inventory by January 1st, rather than December 15th. Noxgear maintains a precise, refined control over this process. Simon advises that if a young company is unable to control these numbers with this kind of sensitivity, it should engage someone to help it. [Contact http://www.noxgear.com](http://www.noxgear.com)



Tracer.

“ They push the limits in the product design process...”

Subud in the Caldera

The editor writes about the north coast of New South Wales in Australia and talks about the relationship between the Subud group and the surrounding community...

I live on the north coast of New South Wales, Australia, which is an extremely interesting place to be geographically, socially and culturally. Not to mention spiritually. Geologically, where I live is a caldera 40 kms across, the crater of an extinct volcano that last erupted millions of years ago.

I live right in the very centre of the Caldera in the shadow of the mountain, which is the plug of the ancient volcano, now named Mount Warning (or Wollumbin, meaning "Cloud-Catcher" as it is known by the indigenous people).

What's the warning? Well, when Captain Cook, the British "discoverer of Australia", was sailing down the east coast of the island continent his ship hit a reef. He looked landwards for a landmark and saw Wollumbin, which he named Mount Warning as a guide to other mariners who might pass this way.

It is said that Wollumbin is the first place in Australia to be kissed by the rising sun and people climb the mountain to experience that moment. I mention this as one example of the colour and excitement of this area.

In this place which abounds in prophets, gurus, palmists, astrologers, assorted mystics, saints, tarot card readers, diviners and all manner of other soothsayers, people often attribute extraordinary geomantic powers to the caldera generally, and to the mountain in particular.

Before I came to live here under the volcano, people seriously questioned if I had the strength to withstand the forces involved. Well, I have survived so far but who knows at what cost?

It is commonly said that because of the geomantic powers at work "whatever is meant to stay together around here will stay together, and whatever is meant to fall apart, will fall apart".

This wisdom is often invoked when marriages break up.

“ Wollumbin is the first place in Australia to be kissed by the rising sun...”



Artist's impression of the caldera with Mount Warning (Wollumbin) in the middle of it all...



Market day at Uki one of the villages of the caldera, now a "sort of" epicentre for Subud activity in the area...



Working bee: socially distanced women...

The diversity of the caldera...

In and around the caldera are many towns and villages where traditional Australian rural life is pursued in activities like dairy farming, but in recent years this has been overlaid and intermingled with more recent lifestyles.

In the 1960s the area became a gathering point for people pursuing sustainable lifestyles. They used to be called “hippies”, now called “new settlers” around here.

Nearby Bryon Bay has an international reputation for a lifestyle combining sun and surf with a hedonistic take on New Age spirituality.

In fact, in and around the caldera you see a mixture of cultures and communities. Spiritual groups of all kinds flourish here; the Hare Krishnas are particularly visible, but there are many others.

The diversity here stretches from the indigenous people (their presence still is strongly felt in the rocks, rivers and forests of the land), through to the pioneering and settler lives of the European occupation, through the “new settlers”, right up to the retirees who now throng to the area as a “sea change” destination.

The Subud Presence Here...

I give this thumbnail sketch of the general area because the Subud presence here is very much influenced by the energy of the land and its human habitation.

Since the 1990s there has been a Subud presence here which to some extent wanders around the caldera. At one point, there was a Subud Growth Explosion in Byron Bay. Now the Subud presence, though still scattered, has something of a focus in the pioneer village of Uki.

We have about 60 Subud members on the address list here with a “hard core” of perhaps 25. The Subud group here is extremely active and very much involved in the activities and values of this area.

Sustainability is a theme which comes up a lot. In a recent issue of Subud Voice we had an article about a sustainability podcast Beaming Green, put out by Subud Member Jeremy Melder.

Subud members here are strongly involved in community activities like the RFS (Rural Fire Service) which is a very important organisation in our bushfire threatened world. Subud members participate in residents’ associations and grass roots activism such as opposition to water-mining in our area. We are an outward-looking group.

The level of activity within the group is also very high. One of our activities is Supper Club; every few months we gather to celebrate a cultural and culinary theme. Recent examples include French and Moroccan cuisine.

There is a working-bee group where members rotate at working on one another's properties. There is a men’s group which meets on Wednesdays for latihan, testing, talking about every topic >



Socially distanced men supervised by Penny the dog...



Kookaburras on my back porch at Wollumbin this morning...

“

I live in a caldera 40 kms across, the crater of an extinct volcano that last erupted millions of years ago...

”

under the sun and playing music. Women also meet for singing and recently quite a large group of them went away camping together. That's the sort of thing that happens in the caldera.

“ Since the 1990s there has been a Subud presence here...”

The group also found a neat solution to the problem that it was impossible to form a committee here because people are so scattered (not to mention individualistic). An organizational genius discovered that according to the constitution we did not need to be an independent group but what worked perfectly for us was to be a "branch" of Subud Australia.

So, we no longer have to form a huge committee with all the wings on it; we can get along perfectly well with just a chair, a treasurer and a helpers' group. This minimalist style has proved to be very efficient and enhances rather than limits members' participation.

The group does not yet have a place of its own. During the Covid crisis we were blessed to use the excellent facilities of the Gymea Retreat Centre, the project of Stephen and Sonia Armytage, for latihan and gatherings, especially at Bapak's birthday and Ramadan. The search for a place of our own goes on.

Many Subud members have created their own projects and enterprises here in a very wide range of fields from retreat centres to music projects and cottage industries. Australia's most important Susila Dharma project, Dharma Care, is located here and runs the retreat centre Sine Cera. The YES Quest is centred here at the moment and of course Subud Voice now emanates from the cauldron (caldera).

God willing, in future issues of Subud Voice this year, I plan to write more detailed articles focussing on the various projects and enterprises here so that maybe over the course of the year we will have been able to build up a portrait of this lively and committed group. ●

REMEMBERING SKYMONT: 1970-1976

Skymont was a Subud project in Virginia in the USA in the 1970s which combined Subud members living together on a property in the Shenandoah Valley with the development of enterprises and projects. Here is a first hand account of what it was like by Myriam Ramsey,

Myriam writes...I was going through some files and found an oral history of my life in Subud that Laurie Lathrop had recorded and transcribed. It was recorded in 1987 when I was 37 years old. I thought that the Skymont part was interesting so I offer it to whoever might be interested. I was 37 at the time of this recording and remembering events from age 20 to 26.



Myriam Ramsey at Skymont.

Skymont 1970 to 1976 by Myriam Ramsey, Part I

It was the end of April and I had been in Subud for eight months. I was 20 years old. My friend, Riva, and I had heard that Bapak was coming to the East Coast to this place called Skymont. We thought, "Wow! It would be so much fun to drive across country and stay at Skymont until Bapak arrived."

Riva, another Subud man, and I got in my car and said goodbye to California. We arrived in Washington DC sometime in May. We found the phone number for Victor Margolin and called him and he took us in for the day.

He told us where Skymont was and the location of the DC latihan. We went to latihan with the Washington group but people were not at all friendly. The East Coast and the West Coast were so different. I guess they thought we were like hippies and they didn't want hippies moving to Skymont. >

Not many people were at Skymont then. When we arrived, we were told we couldn't stay. At that time it was by invitation only and they were working hard to get the place organized. We understood and found a place about an hour away on a farm.

The farm was out in the country and I hated it. So I drove into Washington and tested with the helpers about what I should do. According to the testing it was a bad situation for me to stay at the farm and I should move.

I decided to go back to Front Royal, which was a town about 11 miles from Skymont, and stay there until Bapak's visit. At that point single women were not allowed at Skymont so living in Front Royal was my best choice.

I had spent all my money driving across country but I had my car and gas, so I drove into Front Royal. I arrived with literally no money, no job, and no place to live. I quickly found a job as a waitress and the owner of the restaurant found a place for me to stay for a few days.

I spent my 21st birthday, June 2, alone in a strange place. I worked the morning shift so I would drive out to Skymont to do latihan in the evening, but they didn't have regular latihan times. Sometimes I would get a latihan and sometimes I wouldn't.

I remember feeling scared at one point and just prayed, "God, I'm scared. I'm scared.", and all of a sudden, all of those feelings just lifted and I felt light. My situation was still the same, no safe place to live, alone, but all those awful scary heavy feelings just lifted away.

Then Robert Bachelor came and bought the Skyline restaurant. Eventually he said I could go work for him at that restaurant, so I quit the other waitress job, but still was living alone in an unsafe place.

[After the final decision was made to invite Bapak...](#)

More and more people started arriving at Skymont. I would drive out to Skymont every night, and we would sit up and talk and latihan was more regular.

After I started working at the Skyline restaurant, I found an apartment to rent. Joseph drove out from Skymont to help me move. I remember the shocked look on Joseph's face where he saw where I had been living. I remember him saying, "You live here?"

The new apartment was a small one bedroom with a kitchen. About two weeks after I found the apartment, Riva called me and said that she wanted to come and live with me. She was out on the farm without the car and it was difficult.

I drove and picked up Riva, and brought her to the apartment. She stayed with me and got a job at the Skyline Restaurant. We both started working everyday. We would work and then we would go out to Skymont every evening and just talk.

It a wonderful time with a lot of social life and interesting stories. I remember the men talking about the different life forces and I had no idea what they were talking about. I hadn't even been in Subud a year and I thought the conversation was weird, but I let it go.

Things were gearing up. Bapak was going to come and it was a mad rush to get the place ready. Not living at Skymont ended being a good thing since I had a nice apartment where I could go and rest and clean up.

When all the people started arriving for Bapak's visit, the first place they stopped was the Skyline Restaurant. So I got to say hello to all the West Coast people as they arrived.



Myriam holding her firstborn, Rob. (1973)



*I spent my 21st birthday,
June 2, alone in a
strange place...*



Once the Congress started...

Riva and I had a routine. We would get up and go to the restaurant to work. We'd wait on tables until 9:30 AM then we would change into our latihan clothes, drive out to Skymont and get there in time for the talk or the latihan.

And then we'd drive back to the restaurant and change back into our restaurant clothes and wait tables for dinner. After dinner we'd drive back out to Skymont for whatever was happening in the evening.

We spent the whole Congress going back and forth and totally missed the chaos. I never really realized until I saw the Skymont movie how chaotic it was with all the people getting soaked by the rain.

After the congress, the owners decided to let single women live at Skymont, so Riva and I moved into a cabin and bought a coal-burning stove. We didn't know what we were doing but we were young and it felt like we were pioneers.

At that time Skymont was a big social event. There was lots of laughter, story sharing, eating, and brotherly and sisterly love. Everyone had his or her little jobs. I still worked at the restaurant until it closed for the winter. That's when I met Immanuel.

It was also the first year that I did Ramadan. I think it was November. Immanuel and I were occasionally going out and talking. Then Riva met Hamilton and they were going out. Leonore, who was going to be Joseph Curran's wife and was in college, would come every summer and Christmas break.

We loved it when she came, because then Joseph would take care of our coal-burning stove since Leonora would stay with Riva and I. When Leonore wasn't there, I would be the one to take care of the stove. I'd shovel coal from the big bin into our small bucket, carry it down to our cabin and dump it into the stove.

I always felt like there was this little old Indian lady following me. One day Muftiah Contessa came over to me and said, "Myriam, when you walked into your cabin I saw this little old Indian following you." And I went, "Oh no, it's true. There is a little old lady." But after we acknowledged her, she went away. So I guess she was a ghost who liked me.

During Ramadan...

Riva and I prepared breakfast and sometimes saur for everyone doing Ramadan. It was a wonderful way to do your first Ramadan with so many other people. At the end I felt that I had to get on with my life.

I could either leave and go back to school or get married. Both would be okay steps. And since Immanuel and I had been seeing each other, he asked me to marry him and I said yes. So that's how our marriage began.

We got married and decided to stay. I think Skymont, at least for me at that point, began to lose some of its reason why I was there. I wanted to leave and for Immanuel to finish college. I was going to work, and he was going to go to law school. That's what I wanted, but it didn't work that way.

People kept arriving at Skymont. There were a lot of little businesses going on. Some people were into construction and they formed little companies. And there were the entertainment type people.

Lots of people think that people didn't work and stayed up all night. That's not completely true. Ev-



The nursery school at Skymont.

“ *There was lots of laughter, story sharing, eating, and brotherly and sisterly love...* ”

erybody was working, they were trying and it was an honest attempt by everyone to do something constructive. I don't think it was a waste of time, at least at that point. Immanuel was still working at the restaurant and he played in one of the Skymont bands.

Then Laura, I forgot her last name, and I started a nursery school. We invited all the kids. Laura had a degree from Stanford, and she was good at organizing and working with the kids in a group. And I was good at working with the kids one on one. The parents loved it because we'd take their little ones away for a couple hours every day. When summer came we used to go swimming at the pond.

Pretty soon it was time for another Bapak visit...

Everyone had a different reason for being at Skymont. One person thought it was one thing and another person thought it was something else. I was there because I was married to Immanuel and he wanted to be there. I didn't have any grand ambitions.

When Bapak came for the second time, things began to change. Before he came, there was a discussion about whether we should invite Bapak or not. I didn't really want to invite him because the place was such a mess.

Before Bapak arrived, there was a big discussion about who was in charge of running Skymont. Was it the investors who owned the place? Was it the group, the cultural committee, or the group that was trying to bond all the enterprises together? Or would it be the Subud group? Nobody really knew, so there was a struggle about how the place was going to be run.

I don't remember exactly when Bapak came for the second time. What I do remember is that the Lodge was clean. Someone had polished the floors and they looked beautiful. There were curtains and a shiny floor but there was nothing in it. There were no chairs, no tables but just a big, giant empty space.

And I remember thinking, "This is kind of significant." And then Bapak zapped us with that talk that said that Skymont wasn't anything special, that you have to do enterprises and if you can do an enterprise here, that's great. (Talk at Skymont 72 SKY 1)

The talk went something like that. Everyone was in shock when Bapak left. It really hit hard. Some people did decide to leave after that, and others didn't.

Part 2: What to do with Skymont: The Conflict, as I remembered it when I was 37...

So many people wanted Skymont to be so many different things, so there were lots of struggles going on about its future. I know Immanuel wanted all the enterprises to join together under one company. That meant the construction and the entertainment enterprises would somehow join together.

I know others had houses that they wanted to build and plots of land they wanted to sell to Subud people. The Skymonters band was very active and they were travelling and playing music at different events.

Different people had ideas toward doing their enterprise, but didn't quite know what they wanted their next step to be. They knew in their heads what it could be, and it sounded nice on paper. They liked the idea of joining together and working as brothers and sisters to create



'The Skymonters' album cover. 'The Skymonters' band was very active, and they travelled and played music at different events.

“ When Bapak came for the second time, things began to change... ”

an enterprise.

But if it's not what people want, then it's no good. If it's not the right thing to do or the right time to do it, the project won't work. So people were sitting on the edge. There was a lot of confusion and a lot of arguments.

Although I wasn't directly involved, this is what I think happened. I'm not clear on the exact timeline.

Prio brought in new investors but instead of using that money to make improvements in Skymont, they used that money to buy out the old investors.

So everything was back at the same place it started from. Immanuel wanted to keep Skymont and was trying to do things that would please everybody. I think the problem was it wasn't the direction that people wanted to go. So it slowly began to fall apart, and people began to move away.

There was a question whether the place should be sold, but the problem was the people that invested money didn't want to put in any more money, but to sell the place it was going to take money because you had to pay the mortgage while it was being sold.

But the people that were willing to put in money were the ones that were willing to keep it. So at the time where it could have gone either way, money was provided to keep the place. If everybody had stepped forward and said, "Yes, let's sell it!", maybe people wouldn't have lost money.

I think the people that didn't want to keep Skymont ended up leaving even if they had money in it, and did not participate in any decisions, and the ones that stayed were the ones that wanted to keep it.

So that's how Skymont was kept, at least from my point of view. Immanuel kept trying to make Skymont profitable. He tried to subdivide it and sell lots. He felt under a lot of pressure because people that had put money in were counting on him to pull it out. But something like that is not really good because then you just end up losing more and more and more. He kept trying year after year, and the place somehow kept going but not going anywhere, just staying in the same.

There were more people than I mentioned. I just can't remember them all. But the band, the Skymonters, had left. And most of the construction, the Ramseys had left and the Scotts had left. A lot of the construction type people had left. Just the restaurant people were still there. And Immanuel trying to keep the place all together. So things continued, you know, as life does,

[I moved out of Skymont...](#)

I finally got it together to buy a house in Front Royal so moved out of Skymont. We got a government-housing loan with no money down and low monthly payments. It was in 1976. So from 1970 to 1976 I lived at Skymont then moved into Front Royal.

I'm not sure of the exact details of when Skymont was lost. I started my new life as a single mother in Front Royal and just moved on from there. Immanuel, who was in his late 20s did do some wrong things to keep the place going, but did not do anything that benefited himself.

Usually when you borrow from one person to pay another it eventually catches up to you and everyone loses. Although I don't know any details about who lost what, I don't think it was any one person's fault.

Once we moved, I think Immanuel still tried to keep the payments going for Skymont. He sold insurance and started his own insurance agency, which was successful for a while. He managed for quite a long time to keep Skymont going in ways that weren't right, but ended up losing the place.

This was after we were separated so I don't really know the sequence of events and I had really separated myself from that whole situation. Skymont finally was lost and that was the end of Skymont.

The Skymonters "Gypsy" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsE_vNFeiRc&t=23s

The Skymonters" all "All I Need" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c86XDjMDk6E>

Reprinted from Subud USA News

MAS ADJI IN NEW ZEALAND

*In this issue we are publishing accounts of experiences people had with Mas Adji in New Zealand...
SOME STORIES OF MAS ADJI – from Hussein Rawlings...*

Using the Latihan to influence others...

Once, when a Subud member close to me was on a destructive path and I knew interference would be counterproductive, I decided to offer prayers for them, supported with a 3 day fast.

Before going to bed each night, I prayed for their protection and guidance, and offered my fast the next day in support of my prayer. Then I would fast all day until dinner. Later that evening before bed I would repeat the prayer and my promise to fast in support of it during the following day. Each evening for 3 days, (the normal prihatin approach, except not for a material goal, and continuously for 3 days).

After the third day I received news of a change in life direction and a move to another country.

Mas Adji visited a short time later, and without me mentioning it, when we were alone, he spoke along these lines...

“So, you know how to use the Latihan to influence others.

“That is good as long as you do it in the right way, as you did by turning to God and offering your prayer and fast through Him.

“We are permitted to do this provided it is always done through God, then everything is by God’s permission and consent.

“If we just do it from ourselves direct to the other person it becomes a form of magic, influencing them from our own will. Then we cannot say if it will last, or what the consequences will be for them, or for us.”

Time with Mas Adji in Bali...

At the 2001 Bali World Congress I was walking to where Ibu was going to give a talk, when a vehicle pulled alongside me with Pavarotti blaring on the CD player.

I ignored it and kept walking and the vehicle followed me for 4-5 yards before a voice called my name, saying “I put Pavarotti on especially for you!”

I climbed in and he asked, “Where are you going?” (as if he did not know!)

“To Ibu’s talk.”

I no longer recall what he said, but it was clear I would spend the evening with him, (which I must say I was very happy to do and listen to the talk later). I recall only the first few words after I got in the vehicle, and his comment at the end of the night, “We meet for breakfast”.

“Yes, Mas Adji”.

We met in a hotel dining room and after we had each selected our breakfast, he went off to get a drink.

I waited for him to return before beginning mine, suddenly feeling an ‘injection’ of fine latihan >



A collage of photos by Pak Muchtaruddin Siregar, taken from a Ya Sin booklet on the occasion of a selamatan for Mas Adji’s death.

spreading through my chest.

I turned and there he was a few yards away grinning. He had done it, and he knew that I knew it.

Visit to Mas Adji's grave...

After he died, I visited his grave at Suka Mulia (after paying my respects at Bapak's) and offered up a prayer for him.

He often said we should exercise caution about praying requests on behalf of others. He said the best way to pray for someone is just to remember the person before God, while receiving the latihan as in zikir, or we can offer up an Al Fatiha or Lord's Prayer for them (depending on their religion or our religion).

We do this because God alone knows what each person needs.

It is sufficient that we 'bring them before God' (which I understood as to hold the person in our feelings) and then surrender to God as we offer up that prayer on their behalf.

So I stood at Mas Adji's grave I offered up an Al Fatiha for him, and had only just begun when I felt the same strong injection of latihan and such a sense of his presence and love and humour, that a wave of emotion swept through me. I would have been reduced to tears had I not steeled myself to finish the prayer, (for I knew, despite his mischievous games, that he would have expected me to).

So even after death he was still applying his combination of love and latihan.

An unlikely helper...

When Mas Adji first began visiting groups, he was still feeling his way.

One evening, on one of his early visits, I arrived late from work, after latihan and all were seated around the room, about 4 x 12 yards. Mas Adji was at one end and everyone along each side, as I came in the door, pausing to see where I could quietly sit before he began talking.

Suddenly I heard him call my name, saying "Help me!" And in that instant, I knew he was talking to me in my mind, and no one else could hear it (it sounded like normal speech – not thought.)

'Me help HIM! - How can I help HIM?' I wondered, and instantly knew all I could do was to sit beside him and stay close to latihan. So, I sat at his right, about 1M away so as not to crowd him, just sort of swaying quietly as it began in me. After a short while he began talking, hesitantly at first and then warming to it, so that it flowed, and his talk imbued all us with a closeness to the latihan and love and respect for Bapak.

Before that it never occurred to me that sometimes we too can assist visitors such as him.

Buying a lamb...

Once I visited Auckland when he decided to hold a selamatan for which he needed a live sheep. 'Who can get a live sheep' he asked looking around the 15 men, his head flicking from one to the other. I realized he was receiving for maybe just a second as he looked at each. Finally, he came to me last, a country boy already grinning, for I had felt from the start it was my obligation. He laughed, and gave me \$60 dollars saying, "Be sure to use this money, no other money."

I drove out into the country and took the first side road leading up into the hills, with farms spreading up into the higher country. Almost immediately, I came across a farmer moving a mob of lambs down the road. "Nice looking lambs" I said to him. "Great condition. What will they fetch at the works?" He looked at me cautiously. "Maybe \$35."

Farmers tend to downplay the value of goods in talking to strangers, and I also wanted to buy one without any haggle, so I said, "I'd like to buy one, and I'll give you \$60". He agreed and let me choose one, which I did by feeling the small of the back, below the ribs and above the rump, which gives a good indication of whether it is too lean or too fatty. Having chosen a nicely conditioned one, we tied it and placed it in the boot.

I arrived back at Lambert's. "How much did that cost?" Mas Adji asked.

"He said they were worth \$35 but I paid him \$60."

"\$60! For one lamb!"

"It's in good condition."

>

“Never send Hussein to do your shopping at the supermarket” he told those around. “He will pay the grocer twice the money he asks for!” Much laughter from all including me.

At the selamatan that evening he told the story several times over to each arriving group of how he had sent me to buy a lamb, but I paid the farmer \$60 when he only wanted \$35! Always to great laughter.

When there was no one else nearby I said to him, “Mas Adji, because the lamb was for our selamatan, I wanted the farmer to feel very good about selling it to us.” He nodded and grinned, and I felt he knew that all along, but was just having good fun with us all.

[Mas Adji 40th Day Selamatan...](#)

I don't recall who first mentioned it, but once voiced it became a certainty. We would hold a selamatan to mark the 40th day of Mas Adji's death, to observe the day with prayer and respect and thankfulness.

It was the same with the meat. We would kill and prepare our own - a rite often observed with Mas Adji during his Christchurch visits. Only this time it would be as an offering and thankfulness for his life.

Margaret contacted a friend at Leeston and arranged for us to get a sheep from him. Howard and I set out before 0800 that Friday, the day fine and somehow different. Everything went like clockwork, with quiet content and latihan. We not only felt it within. We were also enveloped within it.

We chose a young ram, one of last season's lambs born Aug/Sept. Perfect. The man whose dogs mustered them into the corner was curious, too polite to enquire, watching as we picked it out, and brought it back.

Everyone we met that day - the farmer's wife, the shepherd, the cafe owner in the village where we stopped for breakfast after collecting the sheep - all became touched as we were, infused with the same quietness, goodwill, and respectful reserve our purpose carried.

Back in Heathcote we killed it under the same tree used during Mas Adji's visits. Paul brought out the buckets and knives, and Howard and I put the rope over the branch ready for the skinning and gutting. I faced it NW, then said the prayers while holding it on its side ready for release of life. I could feel Howard and Paul, each a little way from me at different places, directed within to their own offerings. As I moved my left hand along its throat and up under its jaw, gently extending the arch of its neck, I felt it surrender, presenting its throat to the knife. The sacrifice was special.

We participated in something much bigger than any, or all of us combined, men and animal. The latihan was quiet, sweet, pervasive. Ease of release. Sense of permission, dedication, harvest.

The skinning and gutting also went with the same flow and sense of guidance, so that although both Howard and I worked at this we never got in each other's way. We seemed to know when to hold back and give the other more scope for movement.

The three of us felt united, shared participants in something with real content. All Thanks to experience this event, every bit as powerful as when Mas Adji himself used to do this with us and do this for us

The whole process felt intricately - strongly yet gently - connected with him, through our love and prayers for him. A privilege to be present, to participate.

We washed the carcass down and then I left for work about 1130. Howard and Paul buried the head and feet and disposed of the offal. Howard is curing the skin, which he has offered me, and I accept.

On Sunday Paul rose at 0600 and turned on the spit, to have the meat ready for the selamatan following 1130 latihan. A long.... slow... cook.

We carried it up to Margaret's and carved it, then took the large platters of meat over to the house and set it amongst other prepared food. Other members waited there, expectantly, quietly. Then we all gathered, and I said a few words to commemorate Raden Mas Istiadji Wiryohudoyo, (known affectionately as Mas Adji).

On the night of his death many of us had gathered at the house at short notice for a hastily arranged supper. Old and young, some still finding their way, others in full conviction - all with different tales to tell, shared gently and easily, without restraint or embarrassment.

Tales of his assistance, of the closeness he brought among us - in fun, in worship - and of cementing our commitment to the latihan and developing our sense of Brotherhood. And always, through everything, his deep love and respect for Bapak. After, when we went home that night, it felt like when he used to visit us.

Now, 40 days later, this Selamatan seemed less related to his passing from us, and more about the gifts he brought which endure. We recalled how he developed our sincerity, patience, and understanding of what the latihan is, our depth of worship, and our own respect and gratitude to Bapak, and to The One who sent Bapak bringing us this Grace.

May God Almighty forgive our Brother any errors and grant His Blessings upon him.

THINGS WE REMEMBER MAS ADJI SAYING – Liliana MacDonald

Serious face, sentimental face. I prefer sentimental face. Serious face is not my cup of tea.

Don't be complicated. Join the Uncomplicated-Persons' Club.

Worry is imagination.

Ask permission from God before doing things, even picking a flower.

Mas Adji talking about losing his weight, said that he had to learn to like not to eat.

Keep your eye on the journey.

You should be clean and take that cleanliness before God (when you go to pray,) and he loves you for it.

Bapak's most common expression was one of Wonder. "Oooooooooohhhhhhh!", a sort of baby face expression.

If you are patient, a little is a lot. If you are impatient, a lot is a little. It is up to you how much negativity you want in your life.

If you are confused, you aren't learning.

Once the understanding comes, don't become a guru and teach others. Avoid teachers. The only teacher is your own inner, being taught by God.

A Parable: John and Jack are two people who have worshipped God long enough to get close to God, so God asked each one what they would do now that they'd been given this relationship with God.

John said: "I see that God is always good and making things good, so I will try to do good things everywhere I go".

Jack said: "I see that God can always give what is good and true, so I will just surrender and follow God's will."

God said, "OK, that's fine, but the second is the Subud Way."

About Prayer: One should always do the Dawn Prayer every day, but if you can't do that, at least during Ramadan. We are invited to do it. If we build on our relationship to God, it protects us from temptations and gives us strength to face life. Prayer should be something we like to do. Prayer is our friend. Our time, like everything else, belongs to God. We just have it on loan. In the end, God inherits everything.

It is good to see the light come, and the day arrive. Your day is then right in front of you, some- >

thing for you to do. We are meant to witness the process of the light changing. This is a kind of training for a human being.

If you have problems, problems will come to you. Don't play the game. When you pray, simply bring yourself to God. Don't have anything else in front of you. You don't have to seek God; he will find you.

Our attitudes are like a stairway we can climb up on, if they are correct.

You must face your life with a willing, happy feeling. If you feel hurt, despair, etc., these are because of things in you. Prayer helps us to face our life, it gives us strength.

Being grateful is an important condition for receiving grace.

Being happy is a condition for entering Heaven.

You have to push things to keep them sparkling. The tendency of the nafsu is to slow you down and make you dull.

Dialogue with God: express to him how you experience his love for you. Change your perceptions by using the latihan to push back the nafsu so that you can open your eyes and see the reality. ●

MESSAGE FROM WSA REGARDING TALKS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Jakarta, 8 October 2020

Dear Brother and Sisters

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused some of our brothers and sisters to feel disconnected. Discussions on Kejiwaan-related topics that are usually carried out after latihan cannot be held due to social restrictions. This situation may have created feelings of sadness and concern amongst some Subud members.

During these difficult times, we witness Subud members using open social media platforms to connect with other members by uploading talks or excerpts of Y.M. Bapak and Ibu Siti Rahayu talks ("Talks") and providing room for comments to the post. We understand that it can feel very satisfying when what we share can touch others.

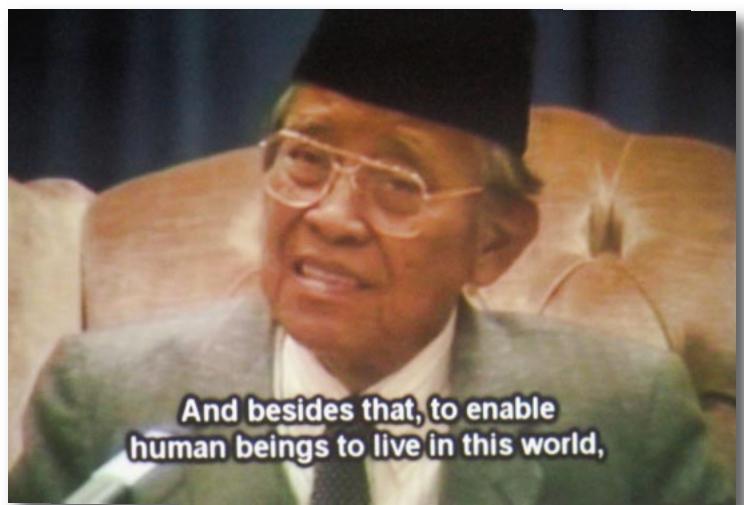
We need to remind you again, that the Talks of Y.M. Bapak and Ibu Siti Rahayu are copyright protected. The copyright of Y.M. Bapak's talks belongs to WSA, and the copyright of Ibu Siti Rahayu's talks belongs to herself. Copying and/or conveying the Talks, or any part of the Talks, without permission from the copyright owner is an infringement of such rights.

Actively pursuing copyrights infringement is another matter which requires a legal process, an exercise the WSA prefers to avoid. The numerous non-endorsed uploading of the Talks onto social media platforms, without action to counter the infringements, may lead to the Talks' copyright entering into the public domain; meaning WSA or Ibu Siti Rahayu may lose the copyright.

Another risk of having the Talks on the open social media platform is that it may be read by persons not yet opened to the Latihan (non-Subud members).

The previous WSA team already issued an official letter on the Talks' distribution, in which it states it is prohibited to upload them to social media.

As a spiritual association, where decisions and actions are based on the deliberation of individual >



members, the WSA would like to remind the country members to prohibit individuals or any of their organizations from uploading Talks to any open social media platform without prior written consents of the copyright's owner.

Earlier this year, when the pandemic started, WSA initiated periodical social gatherings by Zoom for members of the World Subud Council. In these Zoom gatherings, members voluntarily shared their thoughts and experience around work and personal matters, and so did the International Helpers. National organizations have also organized sessions for members to listen to the Talks securely.

These are examples of activities that can easily be arranged by Subud National Committees/Groups to keep their members feeling connected. Another solution to encourage our members towards a more personal activity is listening to Talks directly from: www.subudlibrary.net

The WSA relies on, and very much appreciates, your constant support in protecting the copyrights to the Talks and following the advice of Y.M. Bapak and Ibu Siti Rahayu on the dissemination of Talks for, and by, Subud members only.

Sincerely,

Suyono Sumohadiwidjojo, Executive chair of the World Subud Association

“ We need to remind you again, that the Talks of Y.M. Bapak and Ibu Siti Rahayu are copyright protected. ”

Remembering the Tokyo Congress

Isti Jenkins writes...

It was a special event for many of us who had been called to follow this extraordinary path that embraced all religions, races and cultures. The only path that made any sense to me as one who wholly believed in ONE God and ONE humanity!

I flew to London from Sydney to be opened in Monmouth Road just a couple of months before the arrival of Bapak, Ibu and the Indonesian party of Subud members who were to stay at the residence of Sharif and Hartarti Horthy in Redington Road. But that is another fascinating story! I certainly felt very much at home with this wonderful mixture of international people and never wanted the energy of radiating love to end.

After the six amazing weeks in London listening to talks from Bapak, I decided to follow the Party part of the way on their world tour and flew to Holland. Here I stayed with a Subud family until I felt the push to attend the World Congress in Tokyo in 1967. Airports were not large at this time and neither were jet planes. Travelling by Air was a special and exciting privilege. Luckily, I already knew a number of members from England who also were planning to be there in Tokyo.

I remember the wave of heat arriving at the Tokyo Airport and meeting with others to share a taxi to the venue outside of the city. The accommodation was adequate and clean. It certainly felt dif-



*Varindra Vittachi, Chairman of WSA.
Last minute paperwork.*



*Bapak arrives at the Congress with
his translator, Usman.*

ferent to share the large heated baths with other females in typical Japanese style! But there was an incredible feeling of unity and the atmosphere was vibrant... even electric. There were many of us waiting to welcome Bapak and Ibu at the time of their arrival at the entrance of the Hotel. A small cloud gathered above Bapak at that moment and the skies opened with a shower of rain... we quivered with the blessing that was shared, grateful to witness such proof of His love and mercy.



The delegation from Vietnam.

The Congress Opening started with Japanese Sumo wrestlers and followed with beautiful traditional Japanese dancers in Kimonos... a dream coming true for me of a world one could already call a Global Village. The evenings were spent listening to Bapak talks, followed by testing sessions for both men and women. Members from every continent came together to play music or sing and to share their talents. Everyday filled with activity and the joy of holding this world wide family reunion in hope of bringing World Peace between all nations...

I particularly recall one women's latihan where the feeling and singing was so harmonious and unworldly that no words could possibly describe it. We found ourselves in a perfect circle as the latihan ended. This was clearly the divine Grace of Almighty God. The characters I met were vibrant and unforgettable... many no longer dwell here on earth. At the close of the Congress, I felt lost and wondered what next for me? So was invited to join a group of others who had already planned to travel from Tokyo to Hong Kong to meet Husein Rofé before arriving in Jakarta in time for the Indonesian National Congress, but that is another story.

Here is just a glimpse of one chapter in the book of my Subud life, with Blessings from Isti.

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/FiJ8afip8opmVTXe8>

The Role of Bapak in Subud

Laura Paterson, a former Chair of Subud USA, begins a series of articles about various aspects of Subud. In the February issue she will write about the completeness of the organization as it was created by Bapak. In this issue she writes about Bapak himself, surely one of the most fundamental topics in Subud...

Some years ago, during Ramadan, I found that my awareness of Bapak and his life greatly intensified. This led me to write this article about Bapak because I know that often people who have come into Subud since Bapak's death do not always have an understanding of Bapak's life or his role.

My awareness was of Bapak as an "ordinary" man. Bapak always told us that he was an ordinary man, and that he experienced the life of a normal human being while in this world with the same difficulties, challenges and losses to which we all are subject.

I kept wondering what these experiences must have been like for Bapak. So as well as the usual Ramadan reading fare of 'Susila Budhi Dharma' and Bapak's talks, I found myself turning again to two small books, *Remembrances of Bapak's Last Days* and *Autobiography of Bapak Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjo*.

Bapak left school at an early age and assumed the responsibility of supporting his parents and a younger brother and sister. He married at the age of 25 and during the next nine years, Bapak's



Bapak as a young man.

wife bore him five children. The fourth child, a son, died when he was two years old. Bapak's wife died a year later, when Bapak was 35.

For the next five years Bapak was a widower, supporting three of his children, as well as his mother, brother and sister. At the request of the parents of his late wife, Bapak had to relinquish the care of his youngest child to them. In 1941, Bapak married Siti Sumari, (Ibu Subuh,) a widow with two children of her own, who also became members of Bapak's family.

After 1941, WWII and the subsequent Japanese occupation brought chaos to Indonesia. In his autobiography Bapak wrote, "As 1944 approached, the situation in West Semarang... became very dangerous, so with my wife and children I left Kalisari and set out for Kedu, passing through the still wild areas of Mt. Pati.

These wild parts were dangerous, as many bandits attacked and robbed the people passing through. We travelled on foot, [Ed. note: the journey lasted one month] following the river tributaries that flowed down and around the large mountain. Regardless of all this, the children... enjoyed themselves as they walked through the fast currents, up to 25cm (10 inches) deep. (*Autobiography, Bapak Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, page 43*)

At the time of their journey from Semarang to Temanggung, Bapak was a Javanese man of middle years, a man who had lost a wife and infant son, who had remarried and had a large family to support. Years earlier, at the age of 32, Bapak had received that it would be his duty to travel the world to spread the latihan kejiwaan.

He said of himself, "I was very simple. I had no knowledge, I was poor, and had low status in the society of man. But through the grace of Almighty God, as the days turned to weeks and the weeks turned to months, I came to feel that I should simply follow the Will of Almighty God." (*Autobiography, Bapak Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, page 31*)

The inexpressible grace and blessing...

This image of the journey of Bapak and his family from Semarang to Temanggung somehow illuminated for me the inexpressible grace and blessing from Almighty God that has been granted to each one of us in receiving the latihan kejiwaan of Subud.

For only through such grace and blessing, and only by simply following the Will of Almighty God, could Bapak have made that journey, and all of the journeys that followed, to become the Bapak that many thousands of Subud brothers and sisters from all around the world knew from 1957 to 1987.

Shortly after returning to Temanggung, Bapak and Ibu moved to Jogjakarta, where they opened many new Subud members and attended to their needs in following the latihan kejiwaan. Gradually Subud began to spread, and Bapak and Ibu travelled throughout Indonesia to support the new groups that were being established. Eventually they moved to Jakarta, where in 1954 Bapak's son Haryadi, a medical student, died at the age of 23

Three years later, on May 19th, 1957, when he was almost 56 years old, Bapak and Ibu made their first journey to England. Bapak spent the remaining 30 years of his life devoting himself to the needs of Subud members, travelling around the world many times over and visiting Subud centers and groups in more than 50 countries.

These journeys were made as Bapak, born with the twentieth century, passed through his sixties

“ Bapak's advice and guidance given in thousands of talks...”



Bapak at Coombe Springs with Ibu Siti Sumari and John Bennett.

and seventies and eighties, with the energy, vitality, and stamina of a man decades younger.

The journeys were lengthy, and made at frequent intervals, as Bapak worked ceaselessly to spread the latihan kejiwaan of Subud to “all of mankind”, to all those ordinary men and women who asked to receive the great gift and blessing of the contact with the Power of Almighty God.

These are some of the details of Bapak’s life as an “ordinary” man. Even taken as the events in a normal human life, they are quite remarkable. But there is one fact that has changed, beyond imagining, the lives of many thousands of people around the world: Bapak was the first human being to receive the contact with the Great Life Force, the Power of Almighty God, and to be able to transmit that contact to other, truly ordinary human beings.

Bapak told us that what we have received in the latihan kejiwaan of Subud is exactly what the Prophets received from Almighty God. Because they received the contact with the Power of Almighty God, the Prophets were able to provide their followers with teachings and advice about the right way of life.

Only now, however, has it become possible for any human being who truly wishes to worship the One Almighty God to receive this contact, and to receive the guidance of Almighty God directly within their own being.

This is possible because in the course of his life as an ordinary man, Bapak truly surrendered to Almighty God and followed His Will with complete patience, acceptance and submission. Bapak told us he was willing to surrender anything to become a human being who truly worshipped Almighty God. Bapak experienced three years without sleep; he experienced twelve years without money. Bapak simply trusted in Almighty God, and passed on to each one of us what he had received, the latihan kejiwaan of Subud.

If Bapak had not done this

If Bapak had not done this, not one of us would have been opened, not one of us would have received the contact with the Power of Almighty God. Not one of us would have felt the vibration of the latihan within our being, or known with utter certainty the reality of God’s guidance.

We would not have experienced the oneness that leads us to understand that we are truly brothers and sisters. This will be true for as many generations as there are of ordinary human beings who receive the contact with the latihan kejiwaan of Subud.

As John Tjia, a former Cahir of Subud New York, once said to me, “the postman is gone, but he has delivered the letter.”

It is very clear to me that each succeeding generation of Subud members will have the opportunity to experience the same blessings as those who were opened at the time Bapak was alive.

They will have the opportunity to experience the grace and guidance of Almighty God in the latihan kejiwaan, and they will have Bapak’s advice and guidance in following the way of the latihan given in thousands of talks during the 30 years Bapak travelled around the world to spread the latihan kejiwaan of Subud.



*Bapak towards the end of his life.
(Photo by Mikhail David)*

“ *The postman has gone, but he has delivered the letter...* ”

A version of this article was originally published in Subud USA Life

LEGISLATION AND GOOD WILL

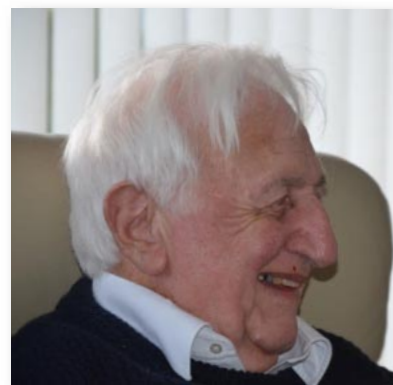
Anthony Bright-Paul writes...

It is completely impossible to legislate for Right Feeling and Good Will. In fact it is completely impossible to legislate against any of the base feelings entertained by mankind. One cannot make it unlawful for a person to hate their neighbour, but it can be made unlawful for him to throw rubbish over his fence or to block his drive.

It is against the law to murder another person, but it is not against the law to despise, or to actively dislike and even to criticise another person, especially among like-minded friends.

People can have all sorts of prejudices with immunity, at least from the point of view of the law. Indeed Judges, Barristers, Lawyers and certainly Police Officers can harbour all sorts of prejudices privately – it is only certain actions that are proscribed by law.

Everybody has hidden dislikes, everyone has people within their own circle whom they will never forgive, let alone national hatreds the cause of which can never be forgotten. Like the Holocaust. But forgiveness is not for the benefit of those forgiven, but for the benefit of the forgiver him or herself. It is an acknowledgment of the awful power of the Satanic Forces.



*Anthony Bright-Paul.
(photo by George Bennett)*

“ There is a real difference between being open to the mind and open to the soul...”

Wait a moment...

On re-reading this above I realise that I am mistaken. There have been hideous regimes of both Church and State, which probed into the innermost beliefs of a person with terrible torture. Even today the ‘thought-police’ operate even in the most advanced societies.

There is even now great pressure to think-along with a majority view with no scientific justification. But that is an entire other subject. As long as a person keeps schtum, keeps silence, does not voice his or her views, that person is safe from the law. To fall foul of the law an action has to be perpetrated. In this way a virtue is made of being ‘closed’.

In Subud on the other hand it is taken for granted that what is within must all come out, by a process of purification. This is not only necessary for the individual, to make progress for himself in both life and death, but also it is the only way that society as a whole can be saved from the endless cycles of war and misunderstanding.

Long ago Gurdjieff enunciated that nothing whatsoever would change in society until individuals find a way to change. So he instituted ‘Work on oneself.’ This was a great idea in theory. The trouble was that the Work had to use those very instruments that it was fighting against. It had to use Lower Wills to defeat Lower Wills.

In Subud it is clear that man is motivated by, first and foremost, by the Material Life Force; secondly by the Vegetable Life Force; thirdly by the Animal Life Force and finally by the Human Life Force. All this can be read about. What is abundantly clear is that mankind needs the help of a Force that this is higher than the human and indeed all the lower forces.

In Subud we are opened...

Some people object to this term, finding it difficult to accept that they are closed and that virtually everyone around them are also closed, though they may class themselves as open-minded. There is a real difference between being open to the mind and being open to the soul.

In Subud it is another matter. We endeavour to have Right Feeling towards our Brothers and Sisters and to this end we do an exercise, we undertake a training, a training of the soul. Even that is incorrect, since we do not ‘endeavour’, we are surrendered. How do we surrender? Not a single one of us can say how, since, if we could it would no longer be Subud. Thus Prio Hartono in one of Varindra Vittachi’s wonderful books.

I can only speak for myself in saying that after many years in the Brotherhood of Subud, there are many people whom I at first and for a long time I could not stand – I regarded them as my enemies, and who at this late stage in my life I now regard as firm friends. It did take a long time to lay aside strongly held views and opinions in favour of something else that Bapak recommended.

We stand aside from our own views and the funny thing is that neither my one-time enemies nor I have changed their viewpoints, only that we have clung to something more valuable – something in another dimension.

My wife Eileen is a very keen Balletomane...

With the consequence that over the last 58 years that we have been married, I have seen a great number of Ballets both classical and modern. I am only reminded of this by watching today the film of the Ballet ‘The Red Shoes’.

I quite enjoy this film in any case, as the Sergei Diaghilev character played by Anton Walbrook makes a huge impression. Diaghilev was world famous for the formation of the Ballets Russes.

Today however I was struck not so much by the actors but by the symbolism of the Red Shoes. Whomsoever wore these Red Shoes went on and on dancing - until they dropped dead.

Hans Christian Andersen was pretty percipient to write this fable some 150 years ago. For this fable carries a subliminal message for us all. We all dance with red shoes, making the same mistakes again and again and again, till – we drop dead. We think that we do the dance, but the truth is that the red shoes dance us – we are to them in thrall.

The Sleeping Beauty is another Ballet with a profound meaning. It is curious that the Wicked Witch is actually called Maleficence, which means ill-will. She causes the Princess at the age of sixteen to prick her thumb, whereupon she falls into a deep sleep.

It is only when her Prince has come that he awakens her from her deep sleep with a kiss. We also in the Brotherhood Subud have been awakened by the kiss of life, which we know by the name of the ‘opening’.

Gradually, gradually over the years maleficence that is ingrained in our very natures, gets changed to Right Feeling and to a desire not to hurt and wound the feelings of others, let alone molest them in any way. Our Prince did not arrive on a white horse, but in a Jumbo Jet wearing a brown Fedora. To how many people did Bapak, Pak Subuh, give the kiss of Life? ●

“ To how many people did Bapak, Pak Subuh, give the kiss of Life? ” ●

HOW THE BLACKBIRD GOT ITS NAME

Lucien Hinkle writes...

It was evening of the 6th Day of Creation, and Adam was very tired. All day long he had been naming the fishes in the sea, the beasts of the field, all the plants that covered the earth, the insects that dwelled therein, and all the birds that flew through the air. He was on his way home to be with Eve, and he was looking forward to resting on the 7th Day.

Suddenly he heard God call. “Adam, where are you?”

Adam was so tired, he thought, “Maybe if I just ignore Him He will leave me alone and I can get home to rest.”

Then he heard God call again, and this time He sounded annoyed. “Adam, where are you!”

Adam decided he better answer. “Here I am Lord.”

And God said, “Adam, there is a small flock of birds up in the field that you didn’t name yet.”

Adam looked out over the field and didn’t see any birds. “I don’t see any birds, Lord.”

“Well they’re out there, and I want them named before dark,” He replied



Adam looked again and still didn't see them. "Lord, I named all the birds today. I named the Indigo Bunting, the Baltimore Oriole, the Cerulean Warbler, the Bobolink, the Cedar Waxwing, the Scarlet Tanager, the Rose-Breasted Grosbeak, all the Warblers and Sparrows and Thrushes, and on and on, and I'm really tired."

Now God was more than just a little annoyed. "Look Adam, I'm God! I know. There is a small flock of... of... black birds up in the far corner of the field and they need a name."

Just then the birds flew up out of the grass and alighted a little further down the field.

"Oh, I see them now, Lord," Adam exclaimed! "I'll name them right away." So Adam quickly named them Blackbird and hurried on home.

And God looked out upon the Earth and said, "It is good." ●

THE ELEPHANT EXPERT

John Hager writes...

It was coming up to the beginning of a new school year: a time when I was usually full of ideas for my first topic designed to give the children an exciting and interesting (and, of course educational) start to their being back at school after the long summer holidays.

These topics usually lasted about 2 weeks and would, hopefully, get the children into good learning habits and a positive attitude to being back at school. This year, however, I could not seem to get either excited or positive: I felt bereft of ideas and, unusually, rather low in spirit.

Oh dear! The National Curriculum had come into schools at about this time and I wondered if that had something to do with the way I felt. It certainly meant a lot of extra work with its Attainment Targets, programmes of study, statements of attainment, detailed and specific assessment targets and the cross-referencing of all this making for a huge amount of planning that teachers now had to spend hours on before the children even stepped in the door. Yes, enough to depress anyone.

As the days ticked by and the first day back at school got closer, I got more concerned and no more prepared. This was going to be a new term like no other for me! I had never experienced such a lack of excitement or energy before. I began to think I needed a miracle. Little did I know I was going to get one.

It started quietly enough...

The idea plopped into my head that I should do a topic on "Elephants" It did not particularly excite me then. I did not think I knew enough about elephants to make this work. And really it was not the sort of topic I would usually do either. I would normally decide on something far less specific like "Water" or "Fire" which would seem to offer more obvious and far-ranging ideas.

Anyway, I left the idea hanging around with no definite decision. A few days later I went into school to go through the post and to begin preparing the school for opening in a week's time.

I opened the school door and picked up a huge bunch of brown envelopes from the floor: more demands on my time and energy no doubt! As I fanned them out for a quick overview I had to look twice.

Amongst all these letters there was one, looking almost unassuming and no different from the rest, addressed, not to the headteacher like the others, but to: "The Elephant Expert"!! I could not believe my eyes. I looked several times and yes it said, "The Elephant Expert"!

I tore it open and I actually gasped. It had been sent by a conservation group who had, helpfully, planned the whole thing in line with the demands of the National Curriculum, listing attainment tar- >



gets, assessment opportunities etc. etc.

All that I would have to do was to check the accuracy of this and adapt the whole lot to the age of the children I was teaching! I spent several minutes in a state of disbelief, followed by a struggle to understand or make sense of this.

[I had only one possible explanation...](#)

Perhaps I had mentioned to a colleague at our meeting a few days ago how low I was feeling and how I had only one idea for the new term.

Perhaps he had sent this to me, jokingly calling me "The Elephant Expert" because I was certainly not that but would be after reading this lot! So, I phoned him: no, he had not sent this and knew nothing about it. No explanation there, then.

Soon my feelings changed completely as I read the material sent: it was really good. I knew the children would love it and that is exactly how it turned out. What I was not expecting, though, was how much their parents enjoyed it, too.

They provided so many resources, photos, information, stories, paintings, models etc that as well as the classroom, the entrance hall and the main hall were completely covered in all of this. Speakers came in and the topic lasted the whole term.

There was a real buzz of excitement in the school when the parents gathered in the main hall at the beginning and end of the day and especially at a more formal opening to visitors from the wider community at the end of term!

I concluded it was one of the most successful topics I had ever been involved in. It came seemingly from nothing (a popping idea) backed up (as it had to be because I was no elephant expert) by a startling coincidence of the unexpected arrival of the fat brown envelope.

On a personal note I was so grateful to be given my enthusiasm and energy back by this startling coincidence. There was, as I had truly feared, no uninspired, unenthusiastic start to that new year, not for me, the children or, in fact, the whole school community. Wow! I am still amazed by this now - decades later!

Archives Update

From Daniella Moneta

Finally, we have a way to bring the Subud Archives into the homes of our members. This is what we all have all been waiting for. The Subud Archives website uses technology to take a further step on the road to making our archives more accessible for Subud members today and in the future. In doing so, we are able to make visible and available archival material previously held only in remote storage areas. The Archives website gives access to historical documents, videos, films, photographs, publications, interviews, and stories that tell the history and development of Subud - today as it is being made and back to the mid-1950s when Subud started to spread around the world.

Here are some of the new and most popular things we have put on the Subud Archives' website in the last month or so. Be sure to view this column each month for new and popular things that members are viewing:

[DIGITAL BOOKS THAT CAN BE READ AND SEARCHED ONLINE:](#)

In Those Days: An anthology of writings about the Early Days of Subud edited by Ilaina Lennard

History of Subud, Volume 1, Book 1 by Harlinah Longcroft

Bapak's Travel Log (in two parts: 1945-1979 and 1979-83) compiled by Faisal Sillem

Bapak on Human Welfare by an unknown author

The World Pattern of Process (concepts on Zat, Sifat, Asma, and Af'al) PhD dissertation by Rasunah Marsden



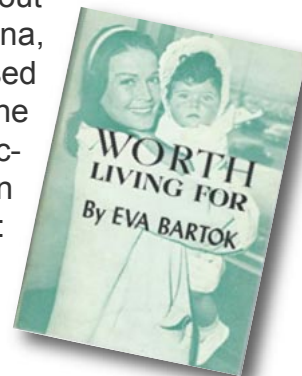
Sixteen Steps, edited by Harris Smart

'57-'07: Fifty Years of Subud in the World edited by Mufidah Kassalias

Subud Survival Guide, by Harry Armytage

Vendetta in Arcadia, Part 1 of 4 by John Panopoulos

Worth Living For by Elaina "Eva" Bartok. Elaina's story appeared in Paris Match and in German magazines in 1957. This book was published not long after Bapak's first visit outside Indonesia to the UK and brought many new members to Subud. Elaina, known at the time as Eva, met Bapak at a time when medical doctors diagnosed her life was in danger and that she would lose the baby she was carrying. She met with Bapak and was opened in Subud. She regained her health and miraculously gave birth of her daughter in a story that brought Subud to the attention of many people. The book tells how Eva Bartok, a film star, came into Subud: she was a Hungarian actress who delivered a healthy baby in 1957 in circumstances which resulted in front page headlines on all continents.



MOVIES AND VIDEOTAPED INTERVIEWS:

(including 100+ interviews made for the Memories of Bapak Project, 1995-2000)

Interviews with Mansur Geiger, Rohan Rachmadi Fiedorowicz, Henrietta Music, Rashad Pollard, Viviana Torun Bulow-Hube, Halstein Stralberg, Husein Rofé, Muchtar (Aarom) Martins, Sjarifuddin Harris, Hermina Ruetz Dobson, Halimah Brugger, Mardiyah Tarantino, Konrad Baerveldt, Sharif and Tuti Horthy, Lester and Pauline Sutherland, Rachman and Rohana Mitchell, Raymond van Sommers, Sulfiati Magnuson, Patricia Lacey, Vernon Contessa, Matthew Mayberry, and many others. Films include: The Skymont Movie, the Briarcliff World Congress film, the Freiburg World Congress, early films from Michael Rogge, as well as puppet shows by Erica Sapir like The Making of the Legend of the Half-Boy.



Photo of Harun Taormina, Luthfi (Peter) Barrett, and Luzila Barrett aka Lavinia Malone at the 9th Subud North America Congress in

NEWSLETTERS: digital and searchable publications including early historical newsletters from various countries, i.e., India, Sri Lanka, UK, USA, Germany, Canada, etc. Alborada (Cuban), Subud Chronicle, Subud Voice, Subud Writers International, Subud World News, The Pewarta Kejiwaan, SIS Bulletin, Zone One News, just to name a few.

PHOTOGRAPHS: Historical photographs that you can use (with permission) in your national or local newsletters. Photos by Simon Cherpitel, Rachman Cantrell, Viktor Boehm, albums from Bapak's family, and many other photos of various congresses, gatherings, and events in our Subud history. One of the most popular albums is Rachman's "Memorial Photos of Subud Members Who Have Passed On." See one of these photos above. If you would like to have access to the Subud Archives website send an email to admin@wsaarchives.org and an account can be set up for you. This website is restricted to Subud members only.



An interview recounting Bapak's trip to London in 1983 to have cataract surgery on both eyes prior to the Anugraha World Congress.

Here is a new video tutorial about how to find things on the Archives' website:

<https://youtu.be/ttxKRt0y2Dk>

After this video, view another about what types of material is on the Archives' website:

<https://youtube.com/embed/ZelCFWwpmSI>

Tune in next month for what's new on the Archives' website.

WHEN THE BOUGH BREAKS

by *Rasunah Marsden*

I wonder if sailing
over a crowded ocean
is much like living a life
with swells & rogue waves & storms
& the ground shifting underfoot
as one navigates across a bevy
of sunken ships, ships of ill
or dysfunctional repute
amidst endless traffic including
junk boats catamarans cruise ships
charters fishing boats & crafts
of every imagined shape & size

I wonder if bobbing around like this
imparts hold of less than useful knowledge

you know I am reminded of these things
as I head past the thronging, out into
the open ocean, not less expectant
of where the currents shall take me
no matter whether I reach the other side
for that, I am assured, i will

or whether the water stills
& time slows, which it has

or whether new storms will arise

just for now, I am in the quiet of the night
before the sun rises, & all is well.

NEW ISSUE OF ZONE 3 MAGAZINE

We are delighted to share with you the December issue of the Zone 3 Magazine 'PROJECTS & PROPERTIES'.

We have a wonderful range of articles to keep you entertained over the holiday season, including:

Talks with Area 2 IHs - get to know Valentin Pizzi in the third of an interview series with the International Helpers

Life narratives - an interview with a Subud pioneer, Michael Rogge, and his experiences of Subud's early days before it came to the west

International community - read about Zone 3's meeting with Zone 5 & 6, how the RSD Guelson project in Angola is changing lives, and Subud Chile's story of their Subud house, and the happy memories it has hosted

Reflections on Subud, enterprises, and working for Subud - share in the experiences and perspectives of members from France, Britain, Greece and Indonesia, learn about the latest enterprise initiative sweeping across the zone, and from the SPI team read about the Bapak's Talks translation project and the latest Bapak's Talk Volume 36

Zonal news - meet the new Zone 3 council members, and read about Subud France's in-person congress, and Subud Britain's online congress

Creativity and culture - learn about Subud creatives and how you can support them, including: three new books by Subud authors along with the people and creative processes behind writing, launching and illustrating them; discover how a lockdown art competition in Britain is raising money for Susila Dharma; Pao Pamaki's crowdfunding campaign for her new album; and a Spanish member's initiative to create a local platform for cultural expression

This and previous issues can be downloaded from <http://www.subud.org/western-europe>



NEW

Saving Grace – Fifty Years in Subud

Marcus Bolt

Fourth Edition (revised 2019 with corrections & additional material).

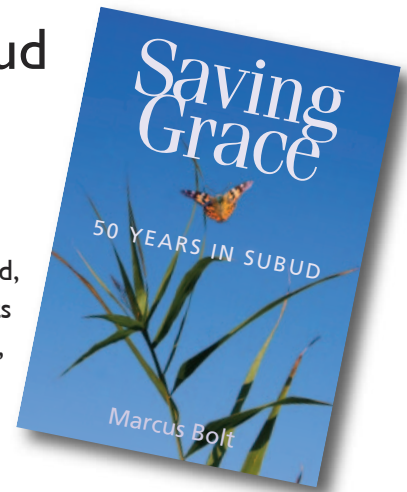
Saving Grace is a book written for those wishing to find out more about Subud, a rarely publicised, modern, yet seemingly ancient, spiritual movement. It charts one man's fifty-year involvement through his personal take on its organisation, its culture and the latihan – the transformative process at it's heart.

"Entertaining and instructive by turns, Marcus writes in an easy, flowing conversational style that gives the reader the feeling of being personally addressed. Unpretentious and refreshingly free of sanctimony, there is a generosity and a warmth of spirit about his narration that quickly befriends the reader and invites positive participation..." – Laurence Clark MA (Oxon), CBE

"In this refreshingly straightforward narrative, Marcus Bolt reflects on his years in Subud with humour, affection, insight, courage and delightful candour. There is nothing pretentious or preachy. It's all straight stuff, but straight from Marcus. And that's what makes it work..." – Latifah Taormina, SICCA

Price £11.00 plus packing and postage from SPI at www.subudbooks.com

A percentage of sales goes towards SPI's Bapak's Talks Retranslation Project



A new book from Lawrence Brazier

AN OBLIQUE LOOK AT THE WORLD

In the introduction, Lawrence writes...

This is a book about travel, people, and religion. Although I find it impertinent to write seriously about God – He's heard it all before – spirituality is also addressed.

From Muhammad Subuh: "If you can laugh from the belly you are unable to simultaneously think. You are then in the spiritual (realm)."

Harris Smart writes...

Lawrence has an idiosyncratic view of the universe. He often adopts the persona of the jester and someone who looks at life with a sideways glance, sometimes quite in askance.

Nevertheless, I am convinced he is a very serious man at heart, and this shines through in these essays. There is humour and striking observations to entertain you, but deep down he wants to get to the heart of the big issues.

The book certainly includes the categories that Lawrence mentions, travel, people, and religion, but there's lots more besides. We meet many characters in this book who include strangers he has met on his travels, as well as famous people past and present.

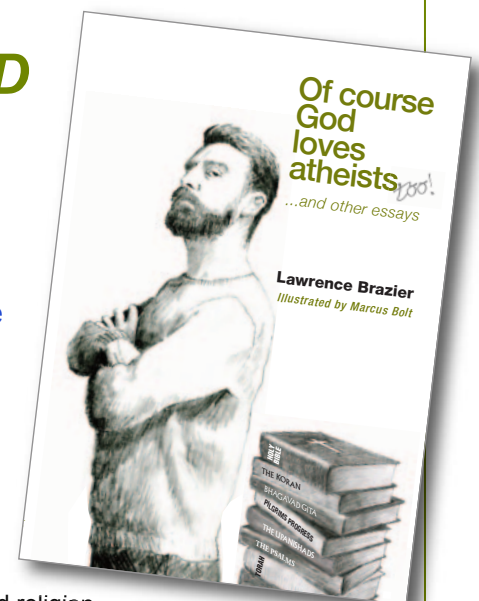
Other chapters are based on thorough research. His wonderful essay "The Orientalists", which we recently republished in *Subud Voice*, is a fascinating survey of those Brits who embraced Oriental beliefs and lifestyles.

There are jokey pieces about sarongs and getting blessed by sneezing, but above all one senses the deep wonder of his good fortune, which he has received in a difficult world.

Beautifully designed by Marcus Bolt, who has also illustrated the cover and LB's cartoons, **the book can be obtained from:**

www.lulu.com/search?adult_audience_rating=00&q=Of%20Course%20God%20Loves%20Atheists%20Lawrence%20Brazier
Click on the link above, or copy and paste into your browser. When the page opens, click the book title; then click 'Add to cart'; then click the cart icon top right (with the number of books ordered in a circle), and then follow the onscreen prompts to add your delivery address and preferred postage & payment methods

Paperback, 216 pages; ISBN: 978-71662-730-9: price £10.00 plus postage. Books normally take a week to arrive.



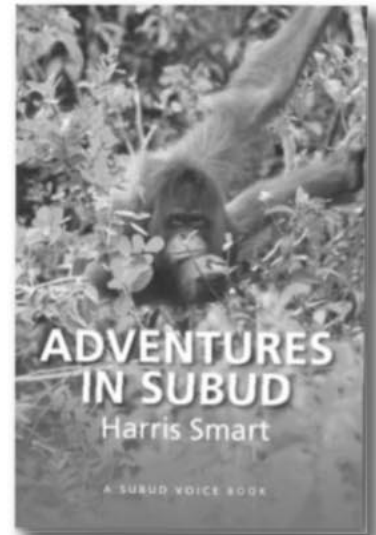
ADVENTURES IN SUBUD!

NOW RELEASED IN DIGITAL EDITION!

At the time of the Freiburg Congress I released a new book about Subud called ADVENTURES IN SUBUD. The book has been available since then on [Lulu.com](https://www.lulu.com)

We are now releasing the book in a digital format which includes all the material text and illustrations in the same layout as is included in the physical book Lulu edition.

The advantages with this new addition is that it is cheaper and you will receive it instantly rather than having to wait for it to be printed and come to you by post. The cost of the new digital version is U\$17.50 (approximately **A\$25, £13.5, €15**),



To obtain the book.. CLICK ON THIS LINK <https://www.subudvoice.net/shop>

This will take you to a page where the book is listed by a thumbnail of the cover. Click on this and follow the prompts to pay for an obtain the digital copy of the book.

The original physical book version is still available from Lulu.com. Go to [Lulu.com](https://www.lulu.com) and enter ADVENTURES IN SUBUD in the search slot on the homepage.

PROCEEDS FROM THE BOOK GO TO SUPPORT THE CONTINUING PUBLICATION OF SUBUD VOICE. WE ARE ENTERPRISING AT SUBUD VOICE!

Here is a description of the book with comments by readers...

Adventures in Subud is a new book by Harris Smart. It presents an overview of the development of Subud covering practically every aspect of Subud life including spiritual experiences, enterprises, welfare projects, cultural projects, health and healing and youth. It is 360 pages long with 120 illustrations including photographs and also cartoons by Marcus Bolt and Dirk Campbell. It shows Subud as a dynamic movement combining spirituality and action in the world.

“This is a feast of a book, rich in history, explanation and vintage anecdote, woven together through the steadfast voice of Harris Smart, long term editor of Subud Voice.

“This is a masterful and at time heart-wrenching record of our Subud experience over recent decades: replete with it hope and disappointment, revelation and joy – leavened with the marvellously irreverent cartoons of Marcus Bolt and Dirk Campbell.”

“This is the story of my community, a very precious part of my life.” *Dr Livingston Armytage*

“A book that will open doors to enquirers about Subud and is a major contribution to our knowledge about Subud and its positive impact in the world. A comprehensive panoramic view of people and their spirituality written by a seasoned journalist. *Valentine Navey*

“A varied and colourful collection of lived adventures that well reflect the diversity of human nature.” *Leonard Lassalle*

“Harris Smart’s latest (and finest) book...It aims at providing a ‘one-stop shop’ for enquirers with coverage of all aspects of Subud.” *Hussein Rawlings*

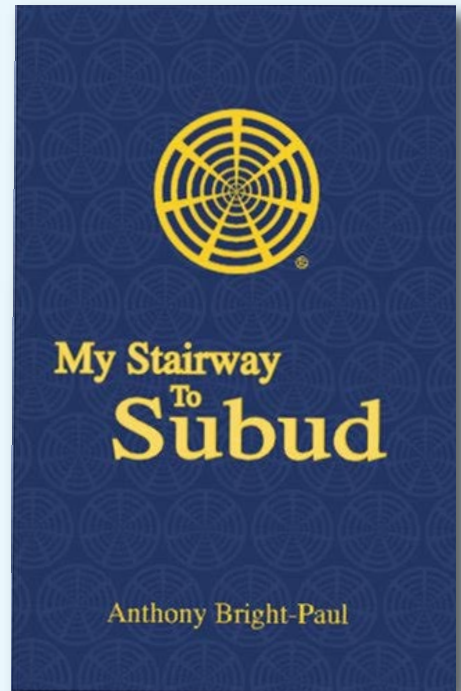
“I would like to recommend 'Adventures in Subud' to anyone on, or about to start, a spiritual path. As a spiritual path, by its very nature, is very difficult to describe I recommend that you open the book at random and read what is there. If it resonates then go on.” *Edward Mackenzie* ●

Much of *My Stairway to Subud* first appeared as the record of a young man in the early 1950s searching for values and inner understanding. At various times he was an admirer of Mahatma Gandhi, a student with the Sri Ramakrishna Vedanta Society, then a follower of G.I.Gurdjieff for seven years under the direction of J.G.Bennett, author of *The Dramatic Universe* and *What are we living for?* – His search reached an explosive climax when Pak Subuh, the founder of the international spiritual movement Subud, came to England in 1957.

Anthony Bright-Paul gives an acutely observed account of the Gurdjieff methods as performed and practised at Coombe Springs with John Bennett, and a first-hand account of both the euphoria and the upheaval caused by the arrival of Pak Subuh who brought with him the latihan kejiwaan, the spiritual training of Subud.

Because he was so devoted to the ideas of Gurdjieff, and to John Bennett personally, the story of his initial resistance to Subud, and then his complete reversal, makes poignant and dramatic reading. His chronicle of the early days in Subud in the western world is unique for its detail of this period. Available from SPI at: www.subudbooks.com

PRICE £10.00 incl P&P UK (*plus Postage rest of world*).



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Send articles, photos, cartoons etc. to Harris Smart, Editor Subud Voice,
 email: subudvoice@gmail.com
 Tel: + 61 (0)402 842 807

Submissions are invited which relate to Subud life or are from Subud members. We cannot guarantee when or if a submission will be published. Preference will be given to articles of up to 2000 words or less accompanied by a photograph, well-written in English and dealing with the activities of Subud members, or expressing a Subud member's perspective on a subject.

Articles should be written in such a way that they are intelligible and interesting to both Subud members and the general public. Sometimes this may mean providing an explanatory introduction or notes for the non-Subud reader. There is no payment for submissions. Correspondence about articles will generally not be entered into.

Submissions to Subud Voice may – be edited for a variety of reasons including the need to shorten them or improve expression. If you do not want your submission to be edited in any way, please mark it clearly NOT TO BE EDITED.

The opinions expressed in the various articles are the sole responsibility of their authors and cannot be seen as representing the opinion of either the editor or the World Subud Association.

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