

GMVS 50th Anniversary...a little something from Ash...Skiing, Seeing, Being.

By Ashley Cadwell

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Back in the days of Mad Acad I applied for and received a grant from the State of Vermont to develop a course entitled, "Skiing, Seeing, Being." I know: whoa?!?! It was an attempt to get at why what we were doing was not just fun, but also generative, even educational.

The basic premise was a well established theory of education championed by John Dewey, a renowned educator, whose home is enshrined in Burlington: that we learn through a process of having experiences and then reflecting on them, describing them, and embedding them in our memory.

So, I wondered, are we learning through skiing? I suspected two things. First of all, that you don't learn from the experience unless you reflect on it. You're just free range adolescent chickens, having fun no doubt, but not really getting anywhere, except slightly happier to become food for others. But, secondly, I thought that if we created a practice of reflection that it could migrate into other areas, like learning how to write and read (that I was supposed to be teaching), and thereby develop a sense of self, of being.

So, it was a practice of skiing (experience), seeing (reflection, class with Ash), and being (discovered through describing and writing, integration into self).

It turned out to be a fun and productive practice. After all, who among us ski junkies doesn't like to talk about our skiing, particularly peak experiences.

So take a moment to recall a peak ski experience, maybe one you've remembered in the past few days. Got one? See it for what it was. Describe it. Feel it (Exhilarating? Excruciating?...). I would posit that if you reflect on that experience you could draw direct connections to other experiences and to who you have become, who you are, to where you find meaning and joy.

I have a daily practice of meditation, a practice I started way back at Mad Acad, that has developed over the years (the yin of the yang of howling...just wait a minute, we'll get there). At sunrise I get up and sit for 20-30 minutes. Truth be told, if I'm at home, to prepare myself I make a latte and to sip in our California cedar hot tub. Then I sit.

Over the past few weeks, as this celebration approached, while sitting I felt a wave of emotion building, bridging into insight. I realize that emotion is simply: PEACE. In the midst of these crazy times, peace.

Being at peace with who I am. Knowing that who I am can be traced to many roots. One tap root is Mad Acad/GMVS, Al & Janie, and each and everyone of you. Our relationships are essential to me. Over the past days I have witnessed that the same is true for you.

I am forever grateful for the relationships born and grown here over the last 50 years.
I pray that the more will be born and grow over the next 50 years.

That at GMVS student athletes, faculty and parents will continue to discover their true selves and find meaning and peace; to ski, see and be.

Love you each and all, Ash

Now, way back when, we developed a collective experience, a ritual even; a way to periodically check in with our collective consciousness. It is intensely personal; to some embarrassing, until they break through to the other side where they discover we're all in this together. That is the point. It goes like this....the howl.