

If you were to ask any of the people I've known over the years, they would probably tell you that I am goal-oriented. I enjoy the focus that comes with having a task, setting a plan, being passionate about the process, and heading towards the goal. Sometimes that may be a totally single-minded flurry of activity to get there ... and in others, it's a methodical stepwise process to inch steadily towards the destination.

I used to think it was all about the goal - and attaining it.

In recent times, I have discovered that it is truly all about the process ... and though goals do help to define the road we're on, they are not the "be all and end all" in the mix. Life involves growth, and within that growth lies the opportunity for evolving focus, process, perspective, and how we define ourselves.

I have found myself thinking about this a lot lately. I was reading the newspaper, as I do every day with my morning cup of java, and I found myself at the live music listings. We've just finished up with the craziness that is the SXSW Music Festival recently so that's had music on my mind as well. As I was looking at the listings, I thought back to a time when my world revolved around live music and how incredibly important music in general was to me. It is what brought me to Austin, and that was certainly a monumental decision in my life.

Those first few years in Austin involved a lot of music - either playing it or going to hear it someplace. Whether it was sitting at the feet of Buddy Guy on the dance floor of Antones ... or playing with "Third Degree" at Valentine's open mic on Mondays (and the free BBQ was amazing!) ... or watching Eric Johnson on the night that Stevie Ray Vaughan died ... or playing Poodie's Hilltop Bar (unbeknownst to me, a bit of a biker bar at the time) ... it was all about living deeply within something that mattered to my world. It left me with many memories and stories ... but it also allowed me to discover myself - which lead to yet many other roads, many other paths of discovery.

Then I stopped to think a moment. It's not that the passion for music has changed - because I know in my gut that it hasn't. A student of mine shared some musical compositions with me recently - and it was like going back to 1990, not so much for the style of music as the desire to create, to play guitar, to let my mind wander to that raw creative element. I pulled out a few CDs to listen to in the car (yes, I am still in the world of CDs and am barely able to work within the

Written by Allan Besselink
Friday, 27 April 2007 19:00

realm of the iPod) and they evoked the same spiritual and emotional response in me as they always have.

So why have I not picked up my guitar to play in so many years? And why isn't it one of the pure focuses of my world now?

Because ... well, because we grow. It's no less important to my soul ... but it's role in my growth has evolved and changed. Different things become important in our development at different times in our lives. Our perspectives, our world view, changes as we grow. And though it means no less to me, it holds a different place in my world. It has allowed me to explore "me", my inner workings, my spirituality and my heart. It opened that world up to me - at a time when it was conducive to do so. Perhaps it now serves as a very steady bedrock, a foundation upon which my life has evolved.

Though I am sure that I can describe many roads that built upon previous travels, one that strikes me vividly is my discovery of the writings of Ayn Rand. How did I ever find out about her? Through music - strangely enough. Neil Peart, drummer for the Canadian rock group "Rush" (an amazing musician and profound lyricist as well) stated that she'd impacted his writing significantly. I'd done a review of Peart's lyrics in my senior English class in high school (pre-dating my guitar playing days by at least two years!). That being the case, I dove deeply into her works - starting with "Atlas Shrugged" and continuing from there.

Her words, such as the following quote, have had a profound impact on the way I view the world:

"Nothing is given automatically. Neither knowledge, nor self-confidence, nor inner-serenity, nor the right way to use your mind. Every value you need or want has to be discovered, learned, and acquired."

From one road - I found another - which impacted another - and so on ...

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Our goals ... those things we strive toward - change. Those goals - can become mere benchmarks as we grow and evolve and learn how to live fully. But along the way to those goals, we have the opportunity to discover ourselves, redefine ourselves on a totally different plane - at the drop of a hat. It's not that goals become any more or less important - again, it's about the growth involved as we seek to learn more and be more in the process.

But what remains consistent, through any and all roads I travel, is the guttural response of pursuing the process passionately. It's about having a deeper belief in something, a desire, a burning inside you to fully explore whatever that particular road has to offer. Whether it's been work related or personal, the only way I have been involved in something is if I truly believed in it - and it made me feel alive. If we have the time, and the good fortune, we have the opportunity to pass down many wonderful roads in our lives. Even in the difficult times, it all serves as an opportunity - for growth, for self-realization, for wisdom, for peace.

The flow of life - it is an amazing thing. Seasons change - goals change - we change. With the growth and development of each and every cell in our bodies, we are different people moment to moment, day to day, year to year. It's as though we re-invent ourselves - constantly - evolving, flowing. Yes, the flow of life is truly an amazing thing to behold.