

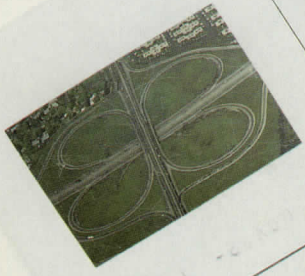
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Windstar journal

LIFESTYLES

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welcome to the windstar journal

Lifestyles are the places in which our values translate into actions. Webster's New World Dictionary defines lifestyle as "the consistent, integrated way of life of an individual as typified by his or her manner, attitudes, possessions, etc."

In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, it is obviously difficult to know at times what are the best actions to take. Conscious or not, appropriate or not, healthy or not—our lifestyles represent the accumulation of life choices. Our choices are personal. They begin inside each one of us—even though they inevitably affect others. They can be joyous, peaceful, playful, informed, and responsible. They can be filled with anger, despair, rigidity, reaction, and chaos. The choices are not easy—and sometimes seem inherently in conflict, even within ourselves.

In selecting lifestyles as the theme for this issue of the Windstar Journal, we want to emphasize the personal nature of the topic. We want to celebrate the notion that we each can improve the quality of life—starting with our own lives. This issue is not about prescribing answers. It is not about being self-righteous and pointing fingers at others. It is about acknowledging the personal difference we each do make—beginning with choices in how we live our lives. The collection of articles in this issue is not comprehensive. It is designed to stimulate perspectives—and to provide nourishment for personal reflection.

Our friend, Tom Crum, has said something to the effect that it helps at least to know the difference—to know when our actions are inconsistent with what we profess to be our beliefs, to know when we are personally out of balance, to know when we are living a lifestyle that is not contributing productively to healthy lives on a healthy planet—beginning with each of us, personally.

John Denver begins this issue with a personal look at his life—addressing with sincerity and authenticity his continuing efforts to keep his own life in healthy balance. Most of us find the balance difficult at times—especially in the face of the challenges we face as humanity,

beyond our immediate lives. John's honest searching reflects the complexity of the task.

Personal health can be an indicator of balance in living. Three articles in this issue address physical health, and how health can be affected by attitudes.

Ken Blanchard, Dennis Weaver, Vladimir Pozner, Richard Lamm, and Andrew Young are among those who offer personal insights about their own choices for living lives of meaning and health. Chungliang Al Huang enriches our understanding of the concept of lifestyles by exploring ancient and contemporary meanings in the Chinese tradition.

Jack Hassard reminds us of the importance of cross-cultural communications, as we learn of commonalities concerning issues in education within the Soviet Union and the United States. Robert Muller suggests a lifestyle of global cooperation to lead us in the present and future.

James Lovelock stretches our thinking in an interview by Larry Sessions in which Lovelock addresses some of his ideas involving the Earth as a living system.

Lester Brown, Christopher Flavin, and Sandra Postel continue with their specific suggestions for global action toward a sustainable future. In this issue, their focus is on forests and reforestation.

Mary Trahan gives practical advice for making lifestyle changes in office environments—specifically aimed at recycling paper as a start. Carrie Click's "Good News" column also offers a number of practical suggestions for actions that contribute to a sustainable future.

Again these, and the other articles in this issue, simply touch on a few of the dimensions of lifestyles today. When we at the Windstar Foundation talk about our goal of being catalysts for responsible action toward a sustainable future on a global scale, we know that our commitment must be reflected in our daily lives. We must "walk our talk," as the saying goes—or, at least, consciously aim to do so. We will surely make mistakes, and it won't always be easy—but learning is clearly part of the process.

Cheryl Charles and Bob Samples, Editors.

Contents

3	LIFESTYLE: A PERSONAL BALANCE	John Denver
8	COMMITMENT	Dennis Weaver
11	GAIA: AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES LOVELOCK	Larry Sessions
14	GLOBAL COOPERATION	Robert Muller
18	CITIZEN SUMMITRY	Jack Hassard
22	A NEW FUTURE FOR FORESTS	Lester Brown, Christopher Flavin, and Sandra Postel
26	RECYCLING AT THE OFFICE	Mary Trahan
30	OBSERVATIONS	Ken Blanchard
32	A QUESTION OF ATTITUDE	Joyce Fester
34	THE POSITIVE NATURE OF ILLNESS	Roberta Gibson
34	DOES SWIMMING WITH PEOPLE HELP DOLPHINS?	Donna Jackson
38	BENT	Don Delay
40	THE TAO OF LIFESTYLES	Chungliang Ai Huang
44	WORDS ABOUT LIFESTYLES: RICHARD LAMM, VLADIMIR POZNER, AND ANDREW YOUNG	Rolland Smith
52	GOOD NEWS	Carrie Click
56	WINDSTAR NEWS	
58	SERVICE AND CHOICE	Bob Samples





I was born and raised in a small coal mining town on the edge of the front range of the Colorado Rockies. My grandparents were immigrants who had fled the rising revolution in their Russian homeland. My mother quickly became a single parent during those dire days and my "growing up" was embraced by what could today be called poverty. We called it poor. Our lifestyle was tribal in that my grandparents had two sons and four daughters. They, in turn, married the children of other immigrants and their children became a potent ethnic mix. We shared whatever we had, and if there were ever a plum dropped in our midst—like a different (not new) car or pick-up truck—then there was the accompanying strutting, envy, and a good-natured teasing of the more fortunate family member.

If there were aspirations, they inevitably related to material possessions. A car, a house, new furniture, and fit clothes were our ever-present goals. The natural dream was a good job, a home, and good health—for they seemed to be the things that the "haves" had and we had to work for. It is clear that our dreams were dreams of "stuff." Material goods framed the good life. In sometimes subtle and other times obvious ways, our lifestyle reflected the security that we believed material possessions would bring.

This view is not unique. Across the planet, those who enter into the commerce of modern times have similar views. The word *lifestyle* has come to represent a kind of slogan imbedded in our orientation toward material possessions. Some hold openly that lifestyle has to do with the complexity of the possessions we have—power boat, riding mower, projection TV, and credit cards. If we have enough of these, we are owners of a grand consumptive lifestyle. Supporting such a consumptive lifestyle is often seen as a virtue—it is tied in with status, the gross national product, and the balance of trade. The American dream, we are told, is to own one's own home and have it filled with material comforts. Since the depression, tribal families like ours have added a college education to the dream, and our toys of status have become more electronic. In recent times, however, some other new wrinkles have emerged.

In the high school that our son will attend, the students have classified each other as either "Cowboys" or "Organics." Cowboys fit the lifestyle that has to do with security and the grand dream of stability with material possessions. (My apologies to the real cowboys we all know and love.) The Organics represent a differently motivated group. They gain status by carefully selecting a much shorter list of

possessions that they need for acquiring "the dream." Most often, the shorter list of acquisitions are of high quality and include non-tangible items such as travel and entertainment. For many of the Organics, the condition of being poor is framed in phrases like austerity and voluntary simplicity.

We are clearly seeing the emergence of the difference between *things* and *experience*. When I entered college, it was clear that I was doing so to have a better chance to acquire the *things* that led to the good life. I was without a doubt a Cowboy. Yet as I see our own son edge toward the possibility of higher education, I have little interest in *things* being the motivation for his future learning. He, on the other hand, has a healthy respect for *things*—but they are the things that provide access experience rather than stability and status.

I think a bit of a rummage into the past might help here. In the past, lifestyles were powerfully bonded to people's heritage. If we were to go back in history, there would be countless examples of how the customs, folkways, and mores of all cultures provided the scripts for the lifestyles lived by the people of that culture. The churches, schools, governments, and other institutions all became reflections of the ground rules that a people accepted to live by. Each of these institutions accepted the responsibility for keeping lifestyles consistent with accepted norms.

When tribal clans ruled social structure there were few questions about how life was to be

Lifestyle As A Metaphor For

Service and Choice

Bob Samples

lived in each group. You did as the others did and that was that. However, as urban culture emerged and its stable cities grew, the options imbedded in lifestyles began to evolve. Variations began to grow and differences were common between the communities. Often these differences represented distrust and suspicion. It is likely that in an effort to establish continuity and unity, religions and laws began to define the specifics in regard to lifestyles.

Much of the contemporary renaissance is being facilitated by what we have come to call the "age of information." Information is not controlled in contemporary society—it has become democratized. In the last century we have seen information wrested from the hands of the few and invested in the masses. As the nations of the world become more interwoven with the information flow born of the media, economics, trade and travel, the more likely we are to realize both the options we all have and the consequences of the choices we make. We are being forced to understand that our separate heritages may have to be transcended. The medium for this transcendence is simple enough—choice.

All we have to do to manifest the shift from a motivation toward consumption to a motivation toward experience and service is to choose to do so.

It is easy to say that lifestyle is a choice. Certainly, there are wider realms of choice for the Cowboys and the Organics—for they and thousands of others have access to the information flow. But do the same choices exist for the starving Ethiopian mother and child or the war-ravaged children of Central America? It seems that some of us know that we have a choice and others have extremely limited access to choice. Recently, a homesteader on the edge of the Brazilian rainforest was asked—as he cut down trees that were hundreds of years old—if he knows about global warming. No. Does he know about the depletion of the rainforests? No. Is he aware that the government is beginning to take action to stop or slow the agricultural practices he employs? No. He does not know where New York is, where Argentina is, or the name of his nation's capital. Yet this man is doing his best to provide a sparse living for his family. He is not evil nor, in fairness, can he be called ignorant. He is a good man who is left out of the loop of choice, left out of the loop of information.

Perhaps the ironic gift of the tree of knowledge is that knowledge prepares us to enter into the process of choosing. Choice is the offspring of knowledge and with knowledge, choice is inevitable. Seemingly gone are the days when we as a species were willing to give away the rights to all of our choices. We are not satisfied to live a life in which all the choices that affect us are handed over to the various institutions of our society.

Consider the recent events in China. The totality of the passion for democratic freedom became information throughout the world within a single week. The Chinese leadership was accustomed to the notion that their control of information in their own country was all that

was necessary for success. They forgot that they are now deeply imbedded in the fabric of a world society. As they resorted to the totalitarian suppression so reflexive for their regime, they forgot that the world was now watching. Their 17th century approaches were disclosed at the speed of light to all the nations of the world.

The gift of our place in history may be that we have discovered the possibility of a lifestyle that embraces experience and service without exploitation. At the same time, we have blessed ourselves with an interwoven flow of information that provides us with the reality of choice. In the future, it is clear that we will choose to consume, and we will choose to acquire material possessions—but these acts will be accom-



panied by a sense of urgency to maintain balance and harmony in the act of living on this planet.

One of the definitions of the word *style* is "The manner in which some action or work is performed." Perhaps we stand on the threshold of deciding to make our style of life embody the concept of *grace* in our manner of performance. If we choose to do so, we may create a lifestyle that can nurture harmony and balance for ourselves and the rest of life-kind on this, our planetary home.