

Inglorious Recollections of a Bruncle

This interconnected gathering of stories relates to a life as lived, within its inhabited sphere. It tells tales of rich childhood and misspent youth; of travels to unfamiliar lands and learning new ways; of beliefs and endeavors encountered along the way. It is just one account among millions - even potentially billions - that shows the diversity of being, cooked up in a melting pot of nature and nurture, to give a unique result.

How does one define his or her life? Is it through learning achieved or places visited? Could it be a family formed, or work accomplished? Does our heritage say who we are, or is it more to do with friends we keep, the faith we maintain, the place we live in, or politics we prefer? All these assorted parts go to make one whole being: for better or worse, for richer or poorer. ('So help me God', some might add, if indeed they have cause to resort to belief in such universal myths!).

We are a product of nature and in that respect a significant portion of life is already defined and fixed, even before that glorious moment we poke our head out of the vagina to sniff the air around. Looking on from the aspect of that environment which greets us when we do finally make our entry onto life's stage, provides a very different perspective. For this new world which surrounds us is also a very fluid thing, and the choices we make will come to define our being, perhaps even more than genes inherited from parents and grandparents.

My life to date has been a glorious journey from the cradle, with some remarkable events along the way: notable for me perhaps; whether extraordinary for others to witness, is for them to say, though I would guess probably not ... apart from the odd spectacular happening, such as near-death by air, at sea, and on land!

I have not gained the fame of a president, or a prize-winning entertainer; neither have I found infamy through incredible wrongdoing, but I have enjoyed the winding road which has taken me to my eighth decade. This is the age of aching bones and sore feet, things that I would not wish on anyone (but I imagine almost everyone who passes the muster

of *three-score-years-and-ten*, has to endure). This is also a phase when accumulated knowledge (at times) enables clearer insight and understanding, thus highlights and lowlights can be seen in the setting of a greater whole, which has a past, present and future. Challenges are diminished when viewed in context: like fish observed in a glass bowl, we see more from outside looking in, than the unsure fish from inside looking out.

But the fact is that I have only inhabited a miniscule portion of the available whole, and within that tiny portion I have carved out my own story. What if I was born in another place, inherited an alternative background or travelled to different domains? Then my story would have been unrecognizable from the one which is told here. Fascinated by such thoughts, I became inspired to write a poem entitled *Whittling our Niche*:

Whittling our niche

*Imagine what one doesn't see,
Or hear, or feel, or experience,
Through any one life
On this blue-green globe.
The choice we have is limitless,
The path we choose to take,
Governed by a potent mix
Of genes and circumstantial fate.*

*Reality comes individually:
A short, sweet glimpse, a minute amount,
From oceans of people
And deserts of place.
Within some overall time-set frame
We carve and whittle our niche,
Discarding the remaining sequoia tree
For the other six billion to reach.*

.....
Duncan Gregory, 2003

And thus, to Bruncler:

Some might ask, “*So what is this peculiar word: bruncler?*” And I would have to reply that (this peculiar word) *bruncler* defines my life more than any other word in existence. As you read on, you will find the person I assumed was *me* at the start, was different to the *me* I discovered a quarter of a century later. I had been misled by loved ones who surrounded me at that time. Whether they felt it was good for me, or for my mother, I’m not quite sure, but one major result which came from knowing the truth was that brothers and sisters became uncles and aunts, while more critically, one particular nephew became my brother ... hence, the name for *me*, coined by *him*: ‘***bruncler***’.

And so, the story begins