

REGISTRY REPORT

An eNewsletter published monthly for
the Stoic Community since May 2007

Stoicus communitas:Stoikos koinonia



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Erik Wiegardt, Editor

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New Stoa News

The **Multimedia Center** is here now at New Stoa. And if you haven't changed your address for the Stoic community, NOW is the right time to do it. Bookmark www.newstoa.com and stay in touch. The multimedia center has five ways for you to get to know us better, plus a magazine rack to catch up on the world news of the day. Just click on the gold type to expand the page -- and your mind. Come back frequently, everyday if you can, to see what's new at New Stoa.

Directors Videos

These YouTube videos were written and created by Erik Wiegardt, Director of New Stoa. The

Registry on YouTube

New Stoa's video channel on YouTube. It includes videos made by members of the Stoic community as well as Favorites, Subscribers, and Comments. If you wish to add your video to our channel, please contact the Director at cyberstoic@aol.com

BLOGS

Written by individual members of New Stoa's Registry. If you wish to add your blog, please contact the Director at cyberstoic@aol.com

Registry FaceBook

Our location for getting acquainted with other members of the Stoic community. This includes photographs, profiles, and opportunity for brief or long discussions. You must sign up with Facebook to join us here.

Registry Report

New Stoa's monthly eNewsletter featuring Stoic news, an introduction of new members, and an interview with either a member of our community or a prominent figure from the world who has agreed to an interview with us, including the physicist Bernie Haisch and academic authors AA Long and Martha Nussbaum.

Magazine Rack

Take a moment to catch up on today's breaking news from around the world and from all the best sources – NY Times, CNN, Telegraph, BBC, Al Jazeera – wherever news is being made.

New Members

Zsolt Barczy (1967-) is a Strategy Advisor who currently lives in Europe (Geneva, Utrecht and Budapest), where he is a Strategist at the Strategy Center at Nyenrode University. He said, “Let us all Stoics unite and make others as happy as we are...”

Jake Garland (1988-) a student living in Orange, California, said, “I have long been shaping and molding my religious and ethical beliefs, and I believe the best beliefs are those that never completely solidify. That being said, I've long considered myself an agnostic atheist with humanist and Buddhist leanings. Until, that is, I stumbled upon Grecian Stoicism. It seems to fit my set of beliefs and values nearly to a 'T', and I highly admire it as a belief system. I wish to learn more, engage in discussion, and maybe contribute what I can.”

Tristan Shaw (1991-) is a student in Vancouver, British Columbia, who has been studying Stoicism for just over a year and is fascinated with the ethical practices. He said, “I would like to join the online movement by becoming a member. I also write for a website called strike-the-root.com.”

Frank Wagle (1944-). “I am a retired engineer who lives in Indianapolis, Indiana. My path to Stoicism has taken me from Catholicism as a child, through Atheism/Antitheism, Zen Buddhism, and Taoism; none of which ever gave me complete satisfaction. I remember reading Cicero and Marcus Aurelius in high school. I guess some of the ideas stuck because, as I look back, it seems that most of the time I lived my life following basic Stoic principles. I recently picked up a copy of Seneca and immediately realized I had been a Stoic all along. So after a long circular trip, it's great to be back home.”

Spotlight

on

THE BEST OF 2007-8

Published and edited by Erik Wiegardt

*The month of May celebrates the second anniversary of **Registry Report**, and what better way to celebrate than to take a quick look at some of the great photos and quotes that have made this eNewsletter one of a kind.*

*

“How it Came to Be”

First Issue: May/June 2007

The eNewsletter began when I made an inventory of all the names and email addresses of the Registry and found that many of the members were no longer accessible because they had changed their email addresses without notifying and updating us here. I sent out an email to all the remaining members that I could find, and this is what I said:

07 MAY 07

Dear Stoic:

As a tribe, the Piraha natives of the Amazon are described as being nearly extinct. They have between 250 and 350 members, depending on who's counting, and their numbers are decreasing. That's more than twice the membership of our tribe, the Stoic community, and our numbers are also decreasing. So, can we be described as being even more nearly extinct; and, does that really matter? Do we care?

The Stoic Registry was founded on 08 MAY 96, almost eleven years ago. After an enthusiastic beginning, the years went by, and fewer new Stoics came to the Registry to be counted. Then, gradually, many drifted away — about a third, maybe more. I stopped counting. They left us in two ways: some asked me to remove their name altogether, but most just changed their e-mail address and became unreachable.

Eleven years. At one time or another I've communicated with each member of the Registry. Some of you returned my e-mails; some did not. Based upon eleven years of experience, I've come to believe that most contemporary Stoics just prefer to be left alone. I could be wrong. It may just be that no one has directly asked you what you want. What do you want? Other than having your name and personal information listed in the Registry Archives, is there something more we can be doing? What does the Stoic community need to grow and be strong? Please don't just ignore this question. Let me know what you think, and I will pass your suggestion(s) along to the other members in a follow-up e-mail.

What am I requesting? Suggestions from you. What kind of suggestions? Suggestions that you believe will help our community grow and be strong. I, for one, do not want our tribe to cross the "finished" line into extinction even before the Piraha of the Amazon. We shouldn't be decreasing; we should be increasing. Don't we live by the most excellent philosophy in the history of the world? I think so. If you agree, now is the time to do something about it.

I look forward to your reply.

After several emails back and forth between the members who responded, Dr. Uri Wernik's suggestion for a monthly newsletter was agreed upon by the community as the solution to our situation. I asked for volunteers. No response. So, the first issue of the Registry Report began as follows:

[excerpt]

“Well, no one eagerly stepped forward to accept responsibility for this newsletter, so it looks like I'm it. Sorry if you're disappointed. However, there is good news. There's only going to be half as much of it. I'm not convinced we as a community want or need a lot of togetherness, which makes a bimonthly report a more reasonable effort.”

As Editor-by-default, I interviewed myself for the first issue in keeping with a long-standing belief that no one should ask others to do what one is unwilling to do.

James (Rob) Falla

Issue #2: JUL/AUG 07

[excerpts]

Rob was born in Ontario, Canada, in 1972. He moved around a lot in his early years because his father often changed jobs from being a bricklayer, to a roughneck, a heavy vehicle mechanic, a truck driver, and et cetera. After attending about twenty primary schools, he settled into a more stable educational program at Fanshawe College in London, Ontario, where he studied Business Administration and Accounting. He also studied Philosophy and Chinese. In 1999, Rob moved to the

UK with his German (ex)wife, which allowed him to migrate to the UK under the European Union rules that grant the right of free movement to European citizens and their families. He is currently employed as a Technical Author in the mobile phone software industry in Cambridge, UK. . . .

ERIK: Regarding your great grandfathers, the ones you spoke of who first emigrated to Canada, would you mind giving us a brief introduction to their lives?

ROB: On my mother's side, her father migrated to Canada from Scotland in the 1940s. Her mother was born into an already long-established family. Her mother's father's father (my great, great grandfather - it's getting confusing) was born in Japan. He migrated to California in the late nineteenth century and on to Canada in the early twentieth. His father was a daimyo, something like a mayor of nineteenth century Japan, connected at court and wealthy. But, he was the second son, and according to their tradition he had little chance of making much of a life for himself there. His father encouraged him to travel to America, "the land of opportunity." He arrived with plenty of money and looked for work.

The only job he was able to get was at a bakery, which was the beginning of his career as a highly regarded chef in Canada. In the bakery, he was only able to work in the evenings, because the customers took offense at his presence when the shop was open. . . .

Jonathon Nagel

Issue #3: SEP/OCT 07

[excerpts]

*Camp Victory, Baghdad, Iraq. **Jonathon Nagel** is a US Army Sergeant in a camp next to the Green Zone where it's 122 degrees Fahrenheit in the daytime and 106 degrees at night. Heavy mortar shelling pretty much every day. Occasionally he has to drop and duck for cover as they whiz right past his ear. They don't sound like they do in the movies, he says. Jonathon is with Reserve Unit 324 MP Detachment, military police, attached to TF 134 Multi-National Force, Iraq. He is a member of an assessment team that tracks every detainee in custody in Iraq and reports directly to General Petraeus, the 4-star General in command of all military operations. He's not allowed to discuss his job in any detail. Jonathon has been there for about a year. . . .*

ERIK: Here's a really sticky question. As you may be aware, the House of Representatives recently voted in favor of pulling most combat troops out of Iraq by April of next year. If the Senate comes up with a similar bill, Bush will veto it of course, but the question I need to ask is: Does this political maneuvering back home personally affect you at all — emotionally, intellectually, glad, sad, angry, indifferent? Then, I want to expand the question to get your assessment of how your comrades feel: Do you hear any strong opinions voiced around you about this kind of Congressional activity?

JONATHON: Our mission here in Iraq is not finished. Like the Spartans of old we are taught to never accept defeat. In fact, in the Army, it's part of our creed. The warrior's ethos: I will always place the mission first, I will never accept defeat, I will never quit, I will never leave a fallen comrade. The members of Congress place their own careers and politics above the mission in Iraq. If we leave now we are accepting defeat, we are in essence quitting before the mission is done, and we are leaving our fallen comrades, the Iraqis, to civil war and infiltration from Iran and Syria. As you can see, a pullout now is contrary to *everything* we are taught to believe in the Army. I think it's time to let the military fight this war and not the politicians. But again that is just my opinion and not that of the Army. I cannot stress that enough!

ERIK: OK. I'll make a note of it in the newsletter. Now, I'd like to see your world from a different perspective. It seems that all we ever hear and all we can imagine is that where you are and what you are doing is rather unpleasant. Is there anything pleasant about your life in Iraq right now?

JONATHON: There are several things over here that are pleasant! I get to interact with soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines from all walks of life. This includes Active, Reserve, and Guard from every part of the country. I have talked to soldiers from England, Australia, Macedonia, Turkey, the Czech Republic and the list goes on. I've talked to local nationals during guard duty and to men and women that live out in Baghdad and come on base every day to work. I've talked to workers brought in from India, Pakistan, Nepal, et cetera. I've spoken with Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and Eastern Orthodox Catholics. I've gained a world of experience while over here. Made great friends that I will have for the rest of my life. . . .

Issue #4: NOV/DEC 07
omitted by request

Andrew DeGroot

Issue #5: JAN/FEB 08

[excerpts]

Andy hails from Cape Town, South Africa, where he was born in 1981.... He has an extensive educational background beginning with Boston Primary School, then Settlers High School, and finally graduation from Fairmont High School in 1999. He directly enrolled at the University of Stellenbosch for a Bachelor of Science Degree with majors in Nutrition, Genetics, Physiology, and Psychology. After receiving his Degree in 2005, he went on to take an honors degree in Wine Technology at the Institute for Wine Biotechnology that same year. In 2006, he re-enrolled in the Institute where he is working toward a Master of Science Degree. . . .

ERIK:Were you raised in a religious home? If so, are you still a member of any faith?

ANDY: My mother was raised an Anglican, but became a Presbyterian as an adult. I was confirmed in 1998, but have only attended one Easter service and one Christmas service since. I cancelled my membership earlier this year, because I never felt comfortable with Sunday School or church attendance. Too emotional. And, many Sunday School teachers had their own agendas and gave their warped version of reality to us, expecting us to agree with them. I remember one of them saying that evolution couldn't have happened because of certain verses in Genesis. I was quite young, but that didn't sound right to me. Scientific evidence versus a few Bronze Age scribbles? There's a big imbalance there. Many of the traditional denominations have been infiltrated by a lot charismatic thinking. I doubt the members of the Presbyterian church I attended in South Africa bears any resemblance to the Calvinists that founded the church in Scotland. I don't want to see people holding up their hands to the ceiling and crying during a church service. . . .

ERIK: I would like shift gears a bit and ask about your introduction to Stoicism. When did you become a Stoic? Was there any person or book or event that made you decide you were a Stoic?

ANDY: I don't really know exactly when I became a Stoic, or if I am a Stoic in the true sense of the word. I know that I'm inspired by their writings and how it can be applied to life. So, in that sense, there is something "Stoic" about me. But, I think that modern people will obviously cherry-pick the bits

that they like from an ancient system and discard the rest. . . .

Regarding my introduction to Stoicism, I first became interested in 2000 after seeing the film, *Gladiator*. For someone who had been reading history for years, especially ancient history, it made a very big impression on me. During my undergraduate years when struggling with my studies I often watched the *Gladiator*, nearly every weekend my last two years. It was very reassuring. It sounds quite daft, I know, but there was something in that film that inspired me to fight on despite my troubles. It was only later that I found out it's called "fortitude." I also started reading Roman history more extensively. I read about Marcus Aurelius and was amazed that an emperor had written a work that was still in existence. I collected Epictetus along the way and gradually came to realize there was a subtle Stoic theme in *Gladiator*. I also realized that I had exhibited some of these qualities before, earlier in my life. I had also identified many of them in people I have come across in life, many of them who have never heard of, nor read the works of the Stoics. People like my grandfather, for example. . . .

Registry Report adds photographs!

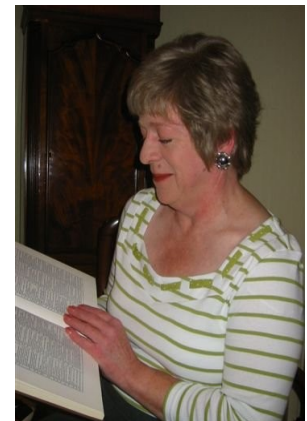
Giulia Harding

Issue #6: MAR/APR 08

[excerpts]

For this interview we're in Liverpool, the "Capitol of Culture," with former BBC current affairs presenter Giulia Harding. She lives today where she was born ... the only child of John and Joyce Harding. Inasmuch as she can tell the story so much better than I, we will continue in her words.

GIULIA: Dad had an interesting war [WWII], including being among the first recruits to the No. 2 Commando unit. After being blinded in one eye he spent the rest of the war in Military Intelligence, winding up as a Major. His post-war career was in the business of importing canned food, especially tomatoes, from Italy.



Giulia Harding

I was educated first at a Church of England primary school and then at Belvedere, a public trust school. At 17, I started work for the local firm of newspapers. I did a full formal apprenticeship before joining the BBC in Merseyside at 21. I then worked on and off in BBC radio around Britain for the next 25 years. I did the odd stint in TV, marketing and PR, but Momma-Beeb always called me back. I ended my career as a current affairs presenter in the Midlands in 2001 to return to Liverpool to care for my Mother, by then widowed and too frail to manage on her own. I think they call it down-sizing – less money, but less stress and much nicer than consigning mum to an old folks' home. . . .

ERIK: For those of us who are not familiar with celebrity status, major or minor, perhaps you could touch on the good and bad of being a celebrity.

GIULIA: Once you're known in a community and regarded as having some kind of influence in political circles, people want you on their committee, trusts, charities and so on. They just want your name on their notepaper, and it's a lot of hassle. I learned to avoid most of them! I'd reached a point in my life where I needed to figure out what really matters as I was trying to do too many things at once.

I'd also had a lot of ill health and needed to figure out what I could actually manage. Hence the pack-up decision. Stoic philosophy concentrates your mind effectively on what really matters. In that instance Mum mattered more than my career.

I'm sure it happens to many people. After thirty-odd years in a job, one begins to get a little tired of it all. What once seemed vitally important suddenly starts to look meaningless and vaguely absurd. So one day you're earnestly reading the six o'clock news headlines, and the next day you realize you're barking out terse, to the point of meaningless, statements to the rhythm of a tune that sounds as though it was written for a knife-throwing act in the circus. "That's it," I thought, "enough's enough." Stoic philosophy pops up here of course. Very useful to know how much of something is enough.

ERIK: Wonderful imagery – the TV personality barking “to the rhythm of a tune that sounds as though it was written for a knife-throwing act in the circus.”

Can you elaborate on how Stoic philosophy “pops up” for you at this time? It sounds as if you were experiencing the kind of world weariness that usually drives people to cynicism, heavy drinking, depression, or joining a convent, but for you it was the Stoa. Can you remember exactly how Stoicism became important to you at this time?

GIULIA: Interest in Stoic philosophy happened thus: my Dad was fascinated by the Shakespeare authorship question which led him to research the life of John Florio. He died with the job left half done, so I carried on, and it was Florio's interest in the Stoics that caught my attention. I soon realized that Stoic philosophy had a huge influence on that whole era, particularly on contemporary literature and religious thought. The relatively youthful Anglican Church was searching for a moral philosophy, and newly translated Stoic works were catching everyone's attention, including Queen Elizabeth, who translated Stoic works from Latin herself.

It's interesting that the leading Freemasons of the time sponsored the translation of Stoic works. James I continued the interest, but it waned with the demise of his reign and the deaths of some of its leading proponents, finally evaporating as the Puritans moved in for the kill!

ERIK: I assume you're referring to the regicide of Charles I and the Protestant fanaticism unleashed during the administration of Oliver Cromwell. What then?

GIULIA: My father died in 1999, and I'd spent the following two years racing back and forth between my job in Shropshire and my Mother's home in Liverpool, where she was very ill and going rapidly downhill. When she broke her hip, she broke the spell. I decided to give up the job, sell up the house, pack up my belongings and head home to take care of her. "Put her in a nursing home," people said, but I'd seen the nursing homes, and a dog-pound would have been preferable. I couldn't have lived with my conscience if I'd done that, and that's something I remind myself of whenever the going gets tough. Mum is now 85 and can do almost nothing for herself these days. I hoped I could work part time, but she cannot be left alone for more than two hours at a time, so here I am, living the Stoic life of a full-time 'carer'.

All the years since my father died I had been working on trying to finish his project to make a study of the life of Renaissance linguist John Florio and his relationship with William Shakespeare. In exploring all the things these two had in common, I found they both seemed to subscribe to the tenets of Stoic philosophy, then very popular among the literary and Court circles. The first English translations of Epictetus were dedicated to Florio. I then found your organization on the internet and met Ben

Schneider, who taught me a great deal more about the Stoic philosophy in Shakespeare, a fine subject for study by the way.

ERIK: Would you give us some insight into your practice of Stoicism today?

GIULIA: How many of us are ‘accidental Stoics’? I wonder. We’re drawn to this philosophy because we’re already halfway there. Epictetus gives us a splendid armature upon which we can sculpt our own personal model for dealing with life’s ups and downs. It certainly helped me to cope with the sea-change in my life, and I believe I have become a nicer person and more effective too. I have learned patience and fortitude, economy and moderation. I grow vegetables, a hobby which requires a Stoic outlook when the weather turns against you and your potatoes drown in the mud. I may even be close to understanding how much is enough.

Stoic philosophy teaches us the difference between ambition (which is good) and mere discontent (which is bad); the value of constancy in one’s friends and family; how to be useful; how to enjoy small pleasures and triumphs; how to quiet the pendulum within to a steady tick-tock that doesn't batter the sides of the clock - if you know what I mean. I suspect it also helps us to understand our own orbit - and then use it to the full. To be comfortable in one’s own skin is a fine thing if you can do it.

ERIK: That was excellent, Giulia. For anyone who may have hurried through the last couple of paragraphs, I recommend rereading what you just said.

I want to get back to the work on Florio you inherited from your father. . . .

*

For those who are curious about Giulia's continuing Shakespearean interest, I recently received an essay from Giulia that shows it is alive and well. This excellent work begins:

Shakespeare’s Sonnets pose a problem for modern scholars. Most today agree that the poem bound with them, “A Lover’s Complaint” is not by Shakespeare at all. It has been specifically excluded from the latest edition of his complete works (edited by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen for the Royal Shakespeare Company), a decision which reflects current thinking and is a fairly definitive conclusion to many years of debate. The poem appears to be modelled on, but is considered inferior to, Samuel Daniel’s “The Complaint of Rosamund”. In its original publication however, we find these words on the title page: “A Lover’s complaint – BY – William Shake-speare” which raises a wider issue. If this statement is actually a bare-faced lie, surely it should be admitted that the whole volume is open to more sceptical scrutiny. Where there is one deceit, there may be others and it would be useful to discover why there was any need for a falsehood in the first place. . . .

* * * *

NEXT MONTH: THE SECOND YEAR

Thank you for reading,

Erik