

## Joe Meheen, Interviewed by Jan Prince, January 23, 2002

(unedited – posted by Leif Smith, Explorers Foundation, August 2008)

**Jan:** You have been chosen for an interview because of several reasons. Number one, Leif Smith recommended you, and number two, in talking to you it is very clear that curiosity about things motivates a lot of what you do.

**Joe:** even tho curiosity killed the cat!

**Jan:** What do you think has influenced you most, who or what, as far as searching and being curious about things?

**Joe:** Well I really can't put my finger on a person or an event that caused this. Ever since I remember as a kid I've always wanted to see how things work or what happens when I—when I got older of course, I was brought up as a Moslem by my parents. And I was pretty devout. I was practicing it you know by saying my prayers three times a day and so on and so forth. then by the time I was 14 my father called me into his study and he said, "I brought you up to believe in something. Because I fully believe that belief in a person is a necessity for not only his sole, also for his mind. But I think you are smart enough now to go and choose a religion for yourself." so I went back and talked to a lot of priests, and Buddhists, and rabbi's and everybody almost. and I found out they are all saying the same thing that I was taught as a Moslem that: don't lie, don't cheat, be fair—the ten commandments, virtually. And I got curious why all of these religions are saying the same thing. I traced it all the way back to the Jewish religion. I found out that Christ was originally a Jew so that's obvious. that's why his

sayings and feelings and so forth was the same. And Mohammed used to travel back and forth to Jerusalem with his grandfather and his uncle. they were caravan merchants you know. And he ran across a Jewish rabbi and across a monk, Christian monk, and I think that's where he got all of his teaching and so forth. and then came back and created the Islam religion. So that being what it is, I said, "there must be a possibly a supreme being or power that is actually instigated these things." and then I started looking around, looking for signs. Because I read someplace that even though we can't see god, we can see signs of it. Like if the hunter is walking out on the snow and sees the footprints of an elk, he knows there must be an elk even though he can't see it. so we see those footprints all over; the way the plants behave, the way the bugs behave, the interdependence of the whole nature on each other. Either there is somebody there or something there that's extremely brilliant and can invent all these things, or it must be a power or something that rules the whole universe. And that kind of stimulated my, I guess curiosity, to say well, "what if we do this, or what if we do that." And so forth.

And also as a kid, they (his parents) wouldn't buy me toys. They would buy me tools. and I made all of my own toys. If I wanted a car, they bought me these little wood working tools and stuff like that, and I'd just go in the basement and build myself a car. I remember one case I had seen a movie of the, I think it was, in those days of course, wasn't Lawrence of Arabia, but something similar to that. And I set out to recreate that whole battle scene by building myself the hills and the rivers and everything else. then I made little men out of cardboard and used pins as a sword, you know. And so forth and so on, and it just, that has actually stimu-

lated by curiosity; as well as inventiveness. Because, unless you are curious, you can not be inventive.

It does sound cruel, but one of my childhood games that I played. We had a huge pine tree in our yard, so I would pick out part of the pine and carve myself a boat. And we had always a pond in our yard, so I'd take two or three ants and put them on this boat and then I'd catch flies and pull one of their wings so they couldn't fly away. and let them loose on the boat. And then float it out and watch how the ants eat, the flying. For them trying to catch the flies and how devious they get and what they do. so it is a little cruel but its like working in a lab to see how animals survive as they do. And these have been the things that really make me curious and I just wonder — I always want to think out of the box.

Like all of our rules and regulations. Who says that we have to do it this way? There may be a better way of doing it. some of the rules and regulations there might have been a reason for them, for it, at the time. It's just like if you have an epidemic, you inoculate everybody. but once the epidemic is gone, you don't go around inoculating everybody again. so some of our laws on the books are antiquated and unnecessary and we should eliminate them and do something else. so, again, this goes back to my curiosity of how we evolved to be who we are, and what we are doing. And why, as animals, we are one of the animal species, but we have given this brain to think and provide for our survival by sewing clothes to keep us warm and eating foods to stay alive. But that's not enough for us. Just pure existence is not enough. We always have to work with poetry and music and science and what have you. Then I go back and say, "well, if we evolved from these

animals, from monkey or whatever, if you believe in Darwinian theory, why is it that they don't have the same curiosity and brain power as we do?" These are things like that that I often think about.

One of my hobbies in childhood was to graft different trees. Like take a peach tree and graft it to another whole tree, and so on. Amazing how many of them survived and we get this oddball fruit, that is neither an apple nor a peach, you know. And again shows that there is an interrelationship, not only in plants, also in animals. Human being that goes way, way back to a long time ago and I love to grow plants for example. And one of the things I do is play classical music for the plants! Turn the radio on for them when I work and they are growing beautifully. Now my curiosity is whether I should just stop playing music for them and see if they deteriorate or not. But maybe the other way around is better—is play music to some plants that are not doing so good, see if that helps. Now how that works scientifically, maybe the sound vibration or airwaves or whatever, that hits these plants it stimulates their absorption of nutrients and water from the ---and then the perfect example of that, if we listen to music or we're happy and so forth, through eating some food we digest more of the nutrients than we would if we were unhappy or sad. so again, if we are related to each other, something is coming from this.

**Jan:** Yes that makes sense—that connectedness. It sounds as if when you were young that you had access to nature a lot?

**Joe:** Yes I did.

**Jan:** do you think having that access and being in nature affected your capability of being curious?

**Joe:** Now that you mention it, it is true. As a matter of fact the other thing my parents did: they made me earn my own, even allowance. so I went and got a bunch of chickens and they laid eggs and I'd sell the eggs to the household, to the family. But I didn't enjoy that as much as I enjoyed growing carnations. Not the large carnation, you know the pinks, the tiny small ones? You know they are very prevalent in Iran, so I took a patch of the garden and grew carnations. I used to sell flowers to the flower shops and for a while I started a lottery business. I'd just gather around – of course the lottery, grownups wouldn't buy it, but gather toys and things that nobody wanted, fix them up and then start a lottery!

**Jan:** how old were you when you did that?

**Joe:** Oh, about ten or eleven. But the best one that I did was started a family newspaper. We had a lot of family in Iran, of course, and I solicited the services of my friends, the same age as I was in the different households. We were all close and knew each other—friends and families. And they were my reporters.

**Jan:** Oh, ho, I can see some possible trouble here!  
(Laughter)

**Joe:** So if the member family didn't subscribe to my newspaper, or wasn't willing to take some ads in my paper, they heard a lot of gossip about them. So, that was a pretty lucrative business!

**Jan:** So, both the fact that your parents encouraged you, or actually insisted that you earn your own money, you were inventive about it?

**Joe:** Yeh, I had to find different ways of doing it. I think we become inventive as a matter of survival. And uh, I love nature so I watch animals, and I have little squirrel out here and I give him different scraps. Find out which ones he picks first and takes off with. And which one he likes last. But eventually the squirrel takes all of it. But he's got preferences about what he could have. You watch the otters, you know, they go and get a clam and in order to open it up, they put it on their chest and beat it against a rock. so it is an inventiveness or curiosity on the part of the animals to survive. so we as human beings, even takes more inventiveness and inventiveness depends on curiosity because we say, "I wonder if this stick or a stone works in what I'm trying to get." So the two are kind of interconnected to each other.

**Jan:** Yeh, that makes sense to me. Um, you've been in, given your business, a lot of negotiations or agreements to something, um, have you found that curiosity is something you use in situations of conflict or disagreement?

**Joe:** Yeh, in an obtuse way. If you are curious enough to put yourself in the other person's shoes and start thinking like they do, you know. Or find out what kind of incentive they have, or makes

them tick, or that you could take advantage of it as a leverage. A long time ago, we were working for the department of transportation, we were doing a bunch of bridges in Colorado springs, and I was in Russia giving a lecture. So, we had an engineer, a graduate of DU, who I have had given him the task of doing this bridge. He entered into the computer a wrong number for something we call a sheer connector that connects the deck, the slab of the bridge to the beams. And this particular bridge was designed using these ??? connectors. Well, he entered into the computer the ultimate load of the sheer connector at the force that it would break, against giving it a factor of safety and giving it a smaller number. But the highway department, in those days, they would check all of our design by running it through another computer program to see if everything is proper and nice. Well, a serious of events or errors happened. I wasn't here to check my designer's work, the highway department were too busy to check the design. so they went ahead and started building the bridge. And when they got around to running that design check or what they call a strength of the bridge, evaluation of it; they found this error. And they came and said, "Well, we have to tear down the bridge and build a new one."

I said, "No, you don't have to do that." So, my insurance company got involved in it, we carry professional liability. And the insurance company wanted to bring in all kinds of lawyers and, the highway department had to bring in their lawyers. We got into an argument because I found a way of doing it which could be about \$170,000 to correct it. They wanted to rebuild the bridge which would have been over \$400,000. so I told the insurance company, I said, "Leave the lawyers out of this. Because they are my major

clients and I want to work for them again. I don't want to create animosity here."

So the insurance company was very upset, but they couldn't do anything because it was my choice. So I went to the highway department and I said, "Look. It's as much your mistake as it is ours. Because you didn't run that check program when you were supposed to. And you approved my plans. You signed them and approved them for construction."

So, I said, "Each of us have to pay half. I'll go along with that. But I'm not going to pay half of a new bridge. I'm going to pay the half of the scheme that I have worked out to correct this mistake, rather than building the new bridge." And they agreed. So we paid only \$80,000 rather than \$400,000 because I got into the head of these people that I was talking to and I knew they would be reasonable when it comes to that. If we got the attorney's out of the way, to let us have a direct connection. When attorneys are there, there's just no hope.

So sometimes, yeah, in negotiations some inventiveness does enter it. I have also another way of earning my keep. I go to a contractor and I said, "This set of plans that you already have, you know what it's going to cost you to build it. And you have a contract. I will redesign them and redo them for \$0. But whatever money you save, give my 25% of it. If I don't save you anything, you don't owe me anything. But if I save you \$4 I want \$1 back.

And one contractor took me up on it. And when we finished, about 8 months or a year later, he came back and put a check on

my desk and it was exactly three times my fee. And this is the type of thing that I can do. I don't know whether it is curiosity or is it being a good negotiator or what it is, but I'm willing to risk with the contractor, with the owner of something costing more or costing less and things like that, and these are ---they other thing is that I think all of the people have degrees of inventiveness and degrees of curiosity. And some of them to the higher extent and some of them to a lower extent. so when were are doing things that was mandated in 1936 or even in the 1800's, they had good engineers in those days; they had good writers and good musicians and so forth. But, our lives has changed; we are different people. so why are we doing things the "tried and true" way? Why can't we do things better, less cost, more adaptive to our culture or preferences or feelings? I'm not saying we should have disrespect for the past, what I'm saying is that we should learn the lessons from the past and try to improve them.

When we first started as human beings or evolved, we couldn't write, we couldn't rea

**Jan:** What do you think makes the different, what are some of the factors that create the difference between people who aren't very curious and people who are?

**Joe:** I think we are all curious. but the people who really don't show any curiosity is sheer laziness.

**Jan:** Talk to me more about that.

**Joe:** Well, it's too much trouble to figure things out or even make mistakes. If we are curious we are always facing failure. Or even danger because we could open a box that is full of bees or something!

**Jan:** so you think it is the fear of failure and danger?

**Joe:** Uh, huh.

**Jan:** Have there ever been times—go ahead you were going to say something—

**Joe:** Well, its I believe that this is tied into your IQ. If your Intelligence Quotience is very low, you're not all that curious either. But if you have a mind that has a high IQ, it doesn't like to be lazy and sit around and you know put up with mundane things. so it always is trying to stay one step ahead of you and go a little further than ordinarily you need to go—in your thinking in your actions or things like that. So I think that has something to do with it. See its all parts of our bodies, some people are very strong and great athletically. They can play basketball like nobody else can and so forth. Well, they have just as good a brain in their heads as Einstein, but it depends which part of our body or our system we chose to train and give it a free reign to go further than ordinarily you have to. And I think our brain is something that we really don't use it to the highest extent. We use the rest of our body to the highest extent. But I bet you we won' even use maybe 25 – 30% of our brain. so we've got all this reserve – wonderful stuff that we just let it go to waste.

**Jan:** Right. Have there ever been times when you were not curious?

**Joe:** Depending on what it is. Curiosity is always there. Even if you make a new friend, you wonder, “How am I going to interact with that friend. What is going to be our relationship?” Or so forth and so on. Or even you go down to the nursery and buy a plant and you start watering it. You are always, regardless of what you do, you are curious. You open up a book to read—that’s curiosity, because you want to know how it ends. If you were not curious you wouldn’t read it.

**Jan:** How do you think modern media, like television, affects curiosity?

**Joe:** It’s the worst thing that can happen to us. If you could get the news or the facts without being embellished, that’s fine. but you are – the problem with the media these days are they make you look at events through their eyes. Not from your own eyes. And that is an entirely different think, you know. It’s just like somebody lying to you, or embellishing a fact—so really, that’s why I never read newspapers.

**Jan:** How do you find out what’s going on in the world if you don’t read newspapers.

**Joe:** Oh, I read them or listen to radio – most of my finding out what is going on is listening to radio as I’m driving somewhere. Or if I have time watch television. but I take all of it with a grain of salt. Again, its – I’d rather read books to satisfy my curiosity

than read newspapers. Because newspapers are mostly about common things, they never write about something deep. Even their editorials are made for the average consumption of the public.

**Jan:** The lowest common denominator. so what are you curious about now?

**Joe:** Well, I don't know. My main curiosity again, as you get older, and you get towards the end of your life, your curiosity changes too. Most of my curiosity now involves things that I want to make a difference before I go. I would love to come up with a new way of feeding the world or providing shelter for everybody. It has just gone that way toward less selfish and more motivated for making a mark before I go, you know. and that brings on the curiosity again about the deity. If I can make a difference and if there is somebody up there that can make more differences, why isn't he doing it. so if he's not doing it, he can do it, but he can wipe out disease, he can wipe out aging. If he is that smart, he can do anything he wants to. Then why isn't he doing it? There must be a reason. so am I going overboard trying to make a difference of providing for feeding everybody or better shelter, or whatever I can do in my profession to make this a better world, maybe its not supposed to be!

**Jan:** so once again you are using your curiosity to go into the other person's shoes only this time it's God!

**J;** Yeah, exactly. Thinking, what would I do if I were there. I mean here's a mother that's got a sick child and she's distressed and

she's crying, or just lost her husband or something—Why? Why does it have to be that way? Why not have everybody happy, have unemployment down to 1% or 1.2%? And then it gets me back to what motivates people to commit crime. One of the things that I have believed from the time I was a young man, not a child, but a young man—I think our way of dealing with criminals needs change. In other words it just doesn't make any sense to get somebody whose committed murder or steal or something and lock them up in a room and just feed them and exercise them and so forth. If I were in that position, I was that prisoner, I'd rather die. And at the same time, I'm the type of person who saves all of my letters that are written on one side, use the back of them as scratch paper or to sketch on. I feel that human beings also, are an item, or a product of this world, and why can't we utilize them in a good way. Like we can prevent fruit from spoiling. So, why not find a way of getting these criminals, and some of them are minor offenses like using drugs or selling drugs or something—especially since we know it's going to cost us \$40,000 a year just to keep them in prison. For that kind of money we could send them to Harvard!

I think rehabilitation is extremely important. And that we not only save money, we save the public from being subject to the crime, as well as helping these criminals to become somebody. Because from the day we are born, we're not born with criminal intent or we're not born to become a famous doctor, or whatever. sure, genes have something to do with it, but it's the training and the nurturing, and teaching that we get when we are coming up in our formative years that gets us to the point that we commit certain acts. And so, why can't we -- we have --- my theory of education

is: if you want to educate the children, you have to start out by educating the parents. Because that's what has to take place.

**Jan:** I notice a theme throughout this interview, and you talk about curiosity as a sense of inner connectedness of everything, big picture and I would use the word, in some of this, of wonder.

**Joe:** Uh, hum.

**Jan:** What is for you the difference between curiosity and wonder?

**Joe:** Well, curiosity is, as you say, is a form of wonder. We all always wonder anyhow. Even we look outside to see whether it is snowing or the sun is shining. But if we get curious enough to say, "How can I get that sunshine into this room," then you either go and put some more windows in or go and get a mirror and train it so it will always shine the sun into the room; or something like that. Now curiosity comes from wonder. And then, acting on your curiosity becomes inventiveness.

**Jan:** so it goes from wonder to curiosity to inventiveness? Is there anything else about curiosity or wonder that I haven't asked you about that you think I should?

**Joe:** I have to go back and kind of look and see how you develop curiosity or wonder and so forth. Again, they say necessity is the mother of invention. so a lot of our curiosity comes from animal type curiosity, of wondering if you can eat the nut that is on the tree or something—whether it is going to kill you or cure you. So

we are all continually, every one of us, are curious about certain things. But some of it comes about from necessity, some of it comes about from just being naturally curious—you want to go further to find out something and find out what's going on. It's similar—you go mountain climbing sometimes and people want to know what is on the other side of that ridge, and there are people that say no, I've gotten my exercise, I'm not interested to find out what's on the other side. Now that type of curiosity has nothing to do with survival, has nothing to do with benefitting anyway. You're just curious, you want to see what is over there. and that's another type of natural curiosity which I'm not bragging, but I do have. I always want to see what's on the other side of the ridge.

**Jan:** Are you curious about what's on the other side of this life?

**Joe:** Yes, very much. As a matter of fact, that's my major focus on curiosity. Again when you get to be older and older and closer to your end, the more interested you are and I think you and I talked about this, that I always wondered why we are here. What are we doing. I mean there must be a purpose to us, because when a bee goes and gathers honey to feed himself or his family or whatever, it also pollinates that plant, so it will bear fruit or develop seeds or something so, again we are interconnected to each other. And if that is the case, then there must be a higher purpose for us especially with the brain power that we have, than just being here and consuming a certain amount of food and maybe reproducing some our species and then go away. I mean—why spend a hundred years or 80 years, or however long we live, for just that? We should be producers, not consumers. And that has been my major curiosity, and I don't know how I can carry it fur-

ther, who I can ask, other than just going out to nature and trying to look around you, and maybe you see some signs that will tell you maybe that's where we are going or that's we are going to do. Part of that again comes from dreaming.

**Jan:** Tell me more about dreaming.

**Joe:** Well, I dream a lot. And I see scenes that I have never seen before. but, it is people I'm familiar with, people I know. Ever since my father died I dream quite a bit about him. And but, sometimes these people even look different and act different than human beings are used to. And I wonder where that is coming from, and two incidents that happened to me that still make me think that maybe we go away and come back in another shape or another body—one was when I was in Pakistan doing some work. I went over to India to see the Taj Mahal and city of Agra, near New Dehli, near Taj Mahal actually, that was built by the Mongol king that was king in those days, and built a beautiful city and – all sandstone, everything is sandstone, paving is sandstone, the buildings are made from sandstone. It is actually more interesting from the point of view of an engineer to see, than Taj Mahal itself. Taj Mahal is not a big deal, it's just a shrine. But we entered there was about 20 of us I think, joined this tourist group. The guide warned us. He said, "Don't wander off and get lost, it will be very difficult to find you." But as I walked in and looked at the parade ground and went up to the parade stand, I could everything that was happening. I could see the regalia and these horses and riders with colorful banners and everything, as though it was yesterday. Then I wandered around into the palace part of the town, and got into the prince's quarters and it was as though I had come home

from the office! I knew every room, I knew every hallway—it was as though I was there yesterday. And I came out when they were yelling for me, I just walked out and we went away.

Another time when I took a trip to the Orient, we had to make a stop in Narita, Japan going to China, and we stayed overnight and the next day we sort of had a free day. We couldn't catch the plane till five o'clock that evening. And I've always been interested in mosques or temples or churches and so forth. so I went to this well-known Narita Buddhist temple and as I walked in, I know I had been in there before. And it was very, very eerie, I just sat on one of the benches for three hour's and I could see it with my mind's eye. all the people came and went and the priest's in the Japanese garments, and so forth and so on. so I have a feeling that we've been here before. Maybe not on this earth.

Now I wonder how many more earths are all over the universe, that have people on them. They may not look like us. You know! But there are plants and animals and atmosphere is there, and so forth. and I wondered if sometimes were not sent there, or are we being sent there or not. Now the curiosity tells me that maybe, my great-great-great grandfather was the prince in that Agro city, and the genes were imprinted with the memories, and it finally go to me and that part of the memory I still have.

**Jan:** It was triggered by being there.

**Joe:** Yes. And it makes sense because the mongols conquered Iran, Ghengis Kahn came with the mongols and conquered Iran and they like the country so much that they stayed. And lot of

the soldiers and officers and so forth married Iranian women. And I still see it in my mother's face. she's short and stocky and looks like a mongol, you know--same shaped nose and eyes. So I wonder if it didn't just come down from that mongol king who built that thing, down the line to me now. And it might go into my children.

so maybe we don't go to heaven and then given another assignment and send us back. Maybe its our genes that are just traveling everywhere in different bodies and different shapes.

**Jan:** I had an experience like that in Ireland, and as far as I know, I have very little Irish blood in me.....

**Joe:** And of course, it often happens when somebody says something to you, you've heard that before. They have said the same thing to you yesterday, ten days ago, or something like that. Cause you already know what they are going to say, and what their reaction is going to be.

**Jan:** Given that nature and the necessity to be inventive has facilitated your ability to be curious, what do you think a challenge for children today to be curious? I mean, a lot of them aren't around nature, they aren't given time to be curious. What do you see?

**Joe:** It is a shame, I really feel sorry for them. Because by nature human beings are curious. But if you take away all of that from them---that's one reason I will not use computers. I think the programs that are written are written by somebody else. It has limitation to it. It doesn't give my brain the free reign that I want it to

have, to go where I want to do. Maybe, it's to me; to me television is a good dictionary. I don't mean television, I mean computer. And you can do some manual things a little quicker, because they are a better calculator. A little faster, however, in human beings, especially people who are curious, if you don't have sufficient time to think about what you are saying or what you are writing, or something like that, then all you are doing is, again, becoming mechanical.

You see, being mechanical kills curiosity. The reason that a lot of factory workers are unhappy is because they will be doing the same thing day in and day out. Putting this bolt in here—you see to me if they want to torture me, I want them to give me something like that.

When I interview -- the other thing about curiosity is that it builds up your experience. The old saying, when I hire somebody they might have ten years of working someplace or ten years of experience, but I'm more interested in finding out whether they have one year of experience ten times over, or in fact they have ten years of experience.

**Jan:** It reminds me of albert benezra -- .....he said the same thing you just said, that experience is different than just repeating the same thing over and over again.

**Joe:** Yes, it's the same thing about living. Curiosity causes enjoyment in life. Well, when I'm curious of something and finally I reach the "eureka," or reach the end of it where I have discovered something, it's the same as a mother giving birth to a child. It is

something that gives you joy, you see. It's the same as, why are we always interested in making new friends. Rather than pick five friends and say I don't need any more friends, that's all I need. It's that interaction and curiosity between people that takes place.

**Jan:** The word that's coming to mind, and I'd like you to think about it a little bit, is evolution, or growth.

J; Yes, yes. And after all, it's the experiences that gives us our growth, you see. Because every time, even starting at childhood, if you burn your finger, you won't touch the fire anymore. But, if that – if you have no other experiences to teach you something—what is pleasant, what is unpleasant, what can happen, what can not happen, then it becomes a mundane life. I think the reason that we have a large amount of suicide in the youth, especially in the teenagers, is because they feel that they have lived all that they want to live, there is nothing else they are curious about, or that they want to know about life. And they are through, you know. If you keep kids, especially youngsters, teenagers, interested and increase their curiosity, then they are not willing to commit suicide. Then they want to see what is going to happen tomorrow. It's to me, if you are not curious you have given up.

**Jan:** We might be done for now. Who knows? .....Let me see if there is anything that comes to mind that I'm curious about. One of the things that Clydette and I are exploring is, "how can we help people tap into their ability to be curious, when they desire to?" so let's say, especially in a conflict situation or they feel hopeless or helpless—to be able to say oh, here's my curiosity tool, I'm going to pick it up. Any thoughts about that?

**Joe:** Yeh, actually this kind of goes back to if I can start from there—is I have always believed that we can communicate with anything that is alive. I sometimes go to the zoos and I look into the eyes of that tiger—just straight look at him, find out that tiger is just staring at me and then I wonder whether he is trying to tell me something or is he just afraid of me or is he feeling that maybe I'd make a good piece of food, and what have you. And we do communicate sometimes with, not only people, with animals and other creatures in ways that we don't know. So I have a feeling that eventually we are going to get to the place where we don't even have to talk to each other. All we have to do is just tune in our brains and communicate fluently. That is when we wipe out language, we no longer need a language. Because, and uh, so to make other people curious you have to communicate with them, to entice them to become more curious. It's a matter of communication, and sometimes we just see things that are quite trite and things that are just used over and over and over again, and that doesn't stimulate curiosity of people who are not curious. You've got to give them something that---you've got to tease them.

**Jan:** And how have you teased people to help them become more curious?

**Joe:** Sometimes I frankly don't want them to be curious. Because where I am I like it! But it's just interaction. Just talking to a person about your own curiosities, it stimulates them.

**Jan:** Oh, OK so sort of demonstrating it in the way you are.

**Joe:** Yeah, or set an example. Like we had a party the other night, we're trying to get our Rotary people to become more in tune with other Rotarians families and homes. So I went to one of these parties, I think there were about 4 couples and me, about nine of us. And the host, finally after we had finished a nice meal and everything, said, "It's time to converse with each other. Each of you, both husband and wife, have to tell us how you met each other." And it was interesting how these people are married to each other and have been married years and years—their first encounter is different—each of them saw it with a different eye. So if you can stimulate people so they can start seeing things in their minds eye and that creates again curiosity. Then the question came, "Why did these couples see things differently?" and that again stimulated the thoughts, processes, so forth, that why was it that certain things were important to one wasn't to the other one?

**Jan:** so, there was one question that helped people see things – how differently it was, and further questions to say, "Why do you think that is?" So it's enticing with questions and perspectives, helping people think through things.

**Joe:** Yeah, teasing in the sense of challenging. so if you challenge, then they will take some action about it. It's the same as – they asked Sir Hillary, "Why do you want to climb Himilaya." he said, "because the mountain is there." so that mountain sometimes challenges some of us but not the others. but some of the others may have a different challenge. Maybe they want to swim the English Channel or they want to – I don't know, get 6 Ph.D., whatever the challenge. It's basically challenge that is the starter, or pilot light, of curiosity. If we are not challenged, we're not curious.

**Jan:** Wonderful, well this was delightful, as I knew it would be.....

**Joe:** Yeah, we have a natural curiosity even about strangers that we meet. Again that's a challenge.

**Jan:** What I am getting throughout this with you is that, I'm getting a sense of an active mind, of a mind who jumps around and sees things from different positions and that is always pushing the envelop, so that the mind is out this way. do you ever get curious internally about emotions or things like that.

**J;** Yes, and that – the reason, well let me tell you, it's kind of a difficult thing. sometimes when we face a real difficult challenge, then we give up on it.

**Jan:** so if a challenge seems like we can conquer it, we usually stay curious.

**Joe:** We stay curious, but we really don't do anything about it. I know what you mean by emotions. of course we hear something funny, we laugh, and we see something sad, we start crying. But going over the inner emotion of people, who are especially related to each other, like two people who are in love, "why do they fall in love?" Why a certain person is attracted to another person, you know? Whether they are gay, or normal or whatever you want to call it. There is that curiosity in me that why is it that people I meet, I'm attracted to them differently? some of them because of their physical appearance, some of them because of their mental

capabilities. But some of them maybe, what they call a soul. I've been always curious, "What the heck is a soul people talk about?" I guess it's something that is inside of you, you know. and it has nothing to do with your brain or your outward emotions, it's inward emotion, that is there all the time. and some people come through with it. They prove that they really have a soul, because—so I don't know. Have you ever read *The Virtue of Selfishness* by Ayn Rand? Well, again, it's there she is talking about being selfish, as a virtue. Now I'm curious whether that is true or not, you know. And sometimes it is, sometimes it isn't.

**Jan:** I'm just reading a book called, *Awareness* by Anthony de Mello, he's now dead. It's a compilation of his teachings. He was a Jesuit priest, very schooled in Buddhism and Eastern religions as well. And he's got a little thing on selfishness that could be lifted out of the *Virtue of Selfishness*, which is amazing coming from a religious person. It's an interesting statement, he said, "so, if I asked you to give up your happiness for me, then you're going to expect me to give up my happiness for you. Then we have two unhappy people but we're sacrificing!" and I went, Oh got it. He did that in one short piece.