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Subject: Adding heat and spice! (Holidays 2010)
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"Living With Purpose and Passion"

The Dan Keusal e-newsletter

Holidays 2010

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my work as a Counselor
and Astrologer,
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DanKeusal.com,
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Dear Dan,

About this time last year, a friend told me over coffee that he was "mulling some things over."



Perhaps it was the brisk winter air, the steam rising from our mugs, or the intangible presence of "holiday spirit" around us, but my mind turned to a second use of the word "mull"--that of "mulled cider." I got to wondering if there might be any connection between the two meanings of "mull"...

"To meditate, ponder, or think"--that's what my friend was doing when he was "mulling some things over." And why not: whether you celebrate Solstice, Christmas, Hanukkah, or some other high holy day, this time of year beckons us to step back, reflect, and reconnect with whatever it is that gives our life meaning.

"To heat, sweeten, and flavor, as with spices"--that's the other definition of "mull," the etymological recipe for mulled cider.

From a linguistic point of view, it turns out that the two definitions are unrelated--the first comes from an old Middle English word, while the entry in my dictionary for the second says simply "origin unknown," as if mulled cider derives from a secret family recipe whispered from generation to generation but never written down.

But what if there *is* a connection? What if the process of meditating, pondering, thinking things over...involves more than just quiet consideration? What if "mulling things over" calls us to take the people, events, and circumstances of our life...and then "turn the heat up," sweetening here, spicing there?...

Perhaps combining these two meanings of "mull" hints at how we sustain ourselves, how we make sense of our lives, and how we move forward. Perhaps it is during these dark but busy days of winter, when heat and a quiet moment alone seem hardest to come by, that we most naturally look for light, for insight, for deeper purpose.

Of course for many people, the weeks that stretch from Thanksgiving to New Year's feel lacking in such graces. Cultural pressures to be happy, to be with loved ones, and to be part of the frenzy of commercialism...fall heavily on those who are feeling depressed, alone, or financially strapped. Many of my therapy clients have spent their recent sessions talking about how difficult "the holidays" are for

them...and then looking for symbols and celebrations that can cast light into the darkness: candles, music, a favorite film, a walk by the lake or a hike up into the mountains, shared rituals and familiar foods, cards sent out to far-away friends and family...As Shelby Flint writes in her song "Greetings of the Season":

*"When the world astounds us,
and we question what is true,
may the message of this Season still be there
to lift us up and see us through..."*

Wherever you are in your journey this holiday season, may you find a measure of comfort and joy by filling a mug with something hot and spiced, and taking a few precious moments...to "mull things over."

Blessings,

-Dan

3 Good Poems

This holiday edition of "3 Good Poems" features three good *songs-holiday* songs. John McCutcheon recounts a true story of Christmas peace celebrated by soldiers on opposing sides in World War I. James Taylor takes a fresh look at the traditional Christmas story of the "three wise men," and finds some often-forgotten wisdom there. And in a song that Cris Williamson sang beautifully on her 1985 album "Snow Angel," songwriter Shelby Flint extends "greetings of the season"...

Click on the titles below to be taken to online versions of the songs' lyrics; if for any reason the links don't work, just Google the titles yourself--you'll be glad you did.

1. "[Christmas In The Trenches](#)" (John McCutcheon) [See also "Resources For A Richer Life," below.]
2. "[Home By Another Way](#)" (James Taylor)
3. "[Greetings Of The Season](#)" (Shelby Flint)

Resources for a Richer Life

Bringing you music, movies, books, magazines, web sites, events, and more that will stir your soul, and awaken the deepest, most alive parts of you....

(music) "**Christmas In The Trenches**" (John McCutcheon). This achingly poignant song juxtaposes the horrors of war with the peace of the season by recounting a true story from World War I, a day when two small bands of soldiers--one British, one German--put aside the hostilities to celebrate Christmas in the trenches. To see and hear John McCutcheon's moving performance of this song on YouTube, click [here](#). (You can see the lyrics by using the link in the "3 Good Poems" section, above).

(movie) "**A Midnight Clear.**" Set near the end of World War II, this film tells a story that echoes the one in John McCutcheon's song "Christmas In The Trenches" (see above)--two groups of young soldiers from "opposing" sides try to transcend the prescribed course of war by celebrating Christmas *together*. The Washington Post called

this "a war film completely unlike any other, a compelling accomplishment that's more soul than blood and bullets." To preview the DVD on Amazon.com, click [here](#).

(program): "Reclaiming the Goddess--Circle for Women." In this experiential, year-long circle, facilitated by my colleagues Christine Wallace and Linda Lasz, "women will together rekindle and reclaim the Goddess within. Using the archetypes of the Goddess and the seasonal wheel of solstices, equinoxes, and cross quarter days (the Sabbats), we will explore the Goddess in her many forms and bring this sacred energy more fully and consciously into our lives. We will work with ritual, shamanic journeying, witnessing, ceremony, and sacred crafting during our time together. We will conclude the year with a weekend integration retreat." *Deadline for registration is January 8th.* For more information, visit the [Reclaiming The Goddess](#) web site, or call Christine Wallace at (206) 736- 2446.

Counseling & Astrology Services

I offer professional counseling and astrology services for individuals and couples. Whether you come to me with a problem (like depression, stress, anxiety, relationship issues) or simply the sense that it's time for a change, I help you look at how that starting point is calling you to grow, and how you can respond with creativity, vitality, and hope.

To learn more, visit my web site by clicking [here](#).

To schedule an appointment,
or if you have questions,
call me at (206) 523-1340.

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That's it for this issue of "Living With Purpose and Passion." As always, I welcome your comments & suggestions. You can send me an [email](#) or you can call me at (206) 523-1340.

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