

**David Briscoe**

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# The Road To French Meadows

When you leave the main highway and find yourself upon the side road that leads into the camp, you discover stillness. It invites you in as the trees take your gaze and lift it branch by branch up to the highest sky until you are flying with a bird that has found freedom there. On that road you are an honored guest, and if you are as quiet as everything there, if you agree to leave your chattering mind behind, you begin to move among the rocks and trees like a lynx or a breeze.

Especially at the edge of the road, the tiny flowers have arisen to create lanterns of color lighting the way along the shady places. Occasionally patches of yellow flowers turn their blooms in unison, giving salutations to the sun. It is a miracle to be there, to be allowed to enter into that place. You are careful as you walk along not to disturb or startle anything.

The boulders are as alive as everything else. Those in the sun are warm and feel nice against the early morning chill. They are wise and determined to last long after I have gone, especially the heavy gray ones that lay unperturbed like the rumps of resting elephants. Other lovable boulders lumber along the roadside. They are too big to hide although they try. They surprise and befriend you with their shyness.

If you stop on the road and look into the deep woody areas all around, you forget how you came to be there or even that you are there. Only those corridors of green exist, and you are seeing with the relaxed eyes of a quiet creature that is not pursued by past memories or future anxieties. There on that road, without the noise of the past or future

banging in your brain, without an obstacle of thought, without the clamoring desires, is unbridled beauty and you are of it. In that instant you have understood your whole life. You want to give the moment to the passerby, to the jogger – to everyone, but it is for each to discover for oneself.

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At the French Meadows campground there is a stream. If you listen you can hear it moving all the time. During the day it is there behind the goings-on, behind the talks, behind the noises of people moving about. During my lectures I sometimes stopped so that we could listen to the sound of that stream. It was calling to us all the time, not noisy, but a strong song beyond the trees.

At night, when you awoke to the silence of the camp and its darkened, wise trees, the stream was there lingering like a watchful friend about your tent and moving through the grounds to blend with the spirits of bears, snakes, and fallen branches. To every campsite it flowed, buoying up and distributing dreams among the sleeping campers before moving on to where it must go.

When you walked along that stream, especially where the big rocks seem to sleep underwater, you were privileged to be in its presence. During every conversation, at dinner, and behind the sight of those tender deer that approached the camp kitchen as we all watched with a child's wonder, was the pulse of the stream. When a friend was in distress, there was the stream's fluid voice calming the chaos of the person's mind. And always when self-doubt and self-concern consumed me, the force of the stream arose to clear it all away.

The stream is there now trickling along under the ice of a Lake Tahoe Forest winter. Even though the campers are gone, it continues on, for moving on is what it dreams of doing, what it lives to do. And though I am far away from that place as I write these words, I still hear that immensely steady stream. There will always be a stream somewhere in this world, moving.

When I look in the eyes of my friends, I see the stream. Daily on TV now there are the faces of East Berlin, Warsaw, Bucharest, and Prague, and they are the stream. The cries of the mothers and brothers of the fallen revolutionaries are the surging of the stream. The hopeful hearts of the young friends who carry the portrait of their lost compatriot in the protest march are of the stream. The stream is freedom, abundant and plunging. It cannot be stopped. It can be thwarted for awhile, frozen, dammed, but the throbbing stream will always find a way to continue, to dribble along until it gains momentum and begins to rush and overpower everything that would inhibit it.

The stream flows in you, in every person, animal, plant, rock, and particle of light. In the air it is there; we suck it up to savor it. There is no possibility of preventing it from flooding through and releasing everything home to eternity. Listen to the stream in yourself, in others. Hear it in the thunder, the breeze, see it everywhere and under all circumstances. There is nowhere that it is not trying to surface and overflow. □

*David Briscoe and his wife Cindy direct the Macrobiotic Center of Kansas City. He is the author of A Personal Peace: Macrobiotic Reflections on Mental and Emotional Recovery (Japan Publications, 1989).*

Macrobiotics America

P.O. Box 1874

Oroville, CA 95965

Phone: (530) 532-1918

Email: info@macroamerica.com

www.macroamerica.com