

Memories of Arne Naess

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Arne had a peaceful presence within him, and a love for life like no other person I've known. After my father introduced us at Arne's home in Oslo, Norway, Arne picked me up and put me on his knee. I was very young, but he listened to me in a way that made me feel important, and showed he cared about what I had to say. I looked up at him, and he asked me if I knew how to box. I said yes! And we began to spar. After the match, Arne took me outside to his garden and told me where the wild strawberries grew. I hunted through the weeds on my hands and knees until I found a small sparkle of red. The berries were tiny, but contained an explosion of sweet flavour.

During my family's stay in Norway, Arne and Kit-Fai invited us to spend time with them in their mountain hut Tvergastein. While we were at Tvergastein Arne and our family went to the summit of Mt. Hallingskarvet. I will never forget how easily Arne (then 85) climbed the face of the mountain leading us on the way to his sacred Eagle's Nest, a tiny hut high on the cliffs above Tvergastein. I hiked along behind until we reached the small hut built on the edge of the rocky cliffs. The perch looked out over mountains and valleys; a quiet sanctuary among the clouds. Although we were 76 years apart, we played together unfazed by this difference in age. Arne always carried a mischievous smile, and his eyes glimmered with a sense of humour that was child-like and easy to relate to.

When Arne last came to our house in Victoria, he was barely through the front door before he was on the floor rolling around wrestling with our chocolate lab puppy Hazel. I can remember later taking Arne by the hand and leading him into our back yard. I keenly wanted to show him how I could climb the thick trunk of our family's plum tree. Before I had gotten to the top, Arne was scampering up behind me. We giggled while we imitated chipmunks among the top branches, and laughed as we traded secrets on the way down.

I feel blessed to have spent time with Arne. His wisdom has touched me in many ways. He truly appreciated every thing around him. He radiated a joyful glow wherever he went. He taught me to play the piano with more emotion, how to chop kindling for the fire, and that Norwegians don't have to eat their vegetables to be strong and live long!