

Author's inspiration comes along the pilgrim's way

Based on an article by Mike Levin in the Kitchissippi Times, March 23, 2006

Sometimes you have to go for a long walk to find yourself. Trekking 400 kilometres along a pilgrim's path has a way of focusing the mind, especially if you're twice retired and eager to seize life's meaning. A part-time Kitchissippi resident, Mr. Broadbent has spent a lifetime recreating himself. The most recent incarnation veers sharply toward self-help, including a recently released book called *Living from the Heart*.



“Life for me is about learning, connecting to values, taking responsibility and finding out what it is that we really like in ourselves and also what we want to change,” he says. Which is one reason why Mr. Broadbent has twice flown to Spain to walk parts of the Camino de Santiago, an 800-km route that the devout have used for at least a thousand years to get in touch with the truths in their lives.

“Actually, walking the Camino is not a solution. It's about how it affects you afterwards, what you've learned from all that time by yourself and that contact with nature—and what you do with it. It is, after all, just a place with a history-- plenty of fascinating history. Our ancestors did this type of thing, looking for salvation. It's in our DNA and accessible to everyone,” he adds.

About five years ago Mr. Broadbent realized how many of the things he loved about life had been lost in settling comfortably into suburbia. That prompted the first retirement, from his position as Chief of Training and Information at Labour Canada. And the end of a long-term relationship. Next he became an information technology consultant. It was very mainstream, very busy and very well-paying. But it, too, lacked the resonance he was searching for.

He recollect his personal transformation when rambling through parts of the Camino in 2003. “I went as a hiker and realized I had become a pilgrim—someone who seeks truths off the main roads. It's a pretty common result because you connect with community, mindfulness and nature. “Inner growth can happen anywhere” he adds. “However leaving normal routine behind, walking in the hills of northern Spain, meeting fascinating people, being alone, enjoying good food and conversation and meeting a physical challenge helps to focus one's personal quest. I came back more peaceful and started to write poetry.”

There's often an epiphany along this path, and his came after his first trip in a labyrinth in Northern California while gazing at miniature wild-flowers. “I had this warm feeling in my heart. I realized that's the feeling I want in my life, all my life, and the one I want others to share,” he explains.

In 2005 he returned to Spain with McKellar Park resident Margaret Ault. The trip was a very different because they went injured. “We had planned to walk 800 kilometres but were limited to 400.” “We learned to speak Spanish in drug stores and hospitals.” He adds wryly. He was also studying the history of the Camino to beef-up his knowledge for the Camino-seminars he gives in the Ottawa-area.

Broadbent now works as a personal coach, seminar leader, a consultant and an author. In all four he uses his new understanding of life to bring peace and inspiration to people he deals with.

His findings are captured in his 110-page book, *Living From the Heart: Learning to Live Without Struggle, With Lessons from the Camino de Santiago*. He helps people find their inner strength through his workshops and other writings. As a personal coach he helps his clients learn about themselves and re-create their lives. “I'm still being coached myself. I've learned that's it's important to help people structure their lives and to give them the tools to define where they are. It's about change, which isn't difficult if you can connect with your values,” he says. “I like changes, because that's where the energy is. I know, I've been through plenty.”

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