

No Center Stripe: traveling unmarked roads with my father. Gerald J. Meyer, Jr.
2008 Lulu Publishers Reviewed by Michael T. Caley

A few decades ago, George Leonard, co-founder of the Esalen Institute, published a two page essay about learning in an issue of the Co-Evolution Quarterly. My original of this essay is long gone from my papers and the Volume, Issue and pages are long gone from my mind. However, two of the bullets George wrote still linger. "Real learning produces a sort of ecstasy" and "Real learning occurs when you do not know you are learning". These may linger because I have found them to be true throughout my life.

With some trepidation, I would add to George's list: "Real philosophy occurs when you do not know you are philosophizing". This is the essence of Meyer's amazing little book. The advertising material accompanying "No Centre Stripe" says: "This non-fiction book is a middle aged son's first person account of a 2005 drive across North America with his retired father. Traveling in a 1960's vintage pickup truck and camper, the two drive smaller roads and camp in quiet places or stay with those they know. They spend two months wandering from coastal South Carolina across to Canada's Vancouver Island and then down to California".

All of the above is absolutely true and amazingly inaccurate. Based on the description above and four paragraphs that follow, I would not buy this book. However, several folks I know are going to receive copies for Christmas 2009.

This is the best book I have read in several years. It is wonderfully written. Reading Meyer is like being part of a conversation with someone you love and admire. His prose flows and wanders as does a conversation and a stream. He segues from the story of his family's tragedy to descriptions of the countryside as they travel and camp to observations about the plants, animals and birds they see. Along his way he interpolates some of the best philosophy and ecosophy I have ever had the pleasure to read.

You will meet wonderful people in this book and Meyer's descriptions are always sufficient but never more than necessary. Real people living real lives and individual philosophies. This lovely little book reminds me, at times, of Aldo Leopold, David Abrams, Richard Bach and many others. Doubtless each reader will find their own favourite writers herein.

It is Meyer's style and his drift in and out of deep philosophical matters that make this book so extraordinary, for me. I find it is always dangerous to recommend books and movies, etc. I have often started a well recommended book only to be disappointed. Anyone disappointed by Meyer's book, I don't

want to know, because we probably have nothing to converse about over a locally crafted beer.