WN *Columns*

World Nutrition **Volume 5, Number 2, February 2014**

Journal of the World Public Health Nutrition Association
Published monthly at www.wphna.org/worldnutrition/

What do you think?

Geoffrey Cannon

Some of the spirals in Cabo Frio in the January summer. The Virgin Queen of Heaven; Brazil's version of Unilever ice-cream; carved furniture; foliage in our garden; an iron gate in the old town

Cabo Frio. The historian of the European mediaeval period Norman Cantor is here the fourth in my series 'What they believe'. One of his themes, and mine, is heroes. There are plenty of illustrious, charismatic, dauntless and influential characters in public life, and in the arts and sciences. But who in nutrition science was or is heroic? And what does it take to be a hero? Then I continue 'What I believe', with belief #11 begun last issue, whose theme is 'Human life is not sacred'. This is a tough proposition, and in this issue I am positive, and celebrate all living including human life. This I do first by observing the reaction to the deaths of Nelson Mandela and more recently Pete Seeger. Then I move to see how wonderful is all life, whether an *urucum* fruit, or a leaf insect, or the mango tree in our Cabo Frio garden.

As usual and as above the column begins with spirals and their significance. In Brazil the summer school holidays are throughout January. This being a family-orientated sunny country, grandparents and aunties and uncles and cousins and friends take off to the beach with parents and their children. Brazil has 3,000 kilometres of beaches, so there is plenty of scope. This time was our last in our Cabo Frio house, on the coast of the state of Rio de Janeiro. My wife Raquel, whose maternal ancestry is from Baalbek, for this reason says she has around 200 cousins, a couple of dozen of whom came to stay, as did two other families. Our 9 year-old Gabriel had a great time, also because Peró, near the house, has two vast sheltered beaches with clean ocean water. Me, I photographed spirals. On the left above is the Virgin Queen of Heaven blessing a house in town; ice-cream branded with the name that was taken over in 1997 by Unilever; the pediment of a 19th century chest; foliage in our garden; and a wrought-iron gate of a restored house in the old city. More on spirals below.

Box 1

How nature, life and we evolve

Giambattista Vico (left) with New Science (next to right) was the first modern philosopher of history which, like life itself, he saw as moving in expanding – or diminishing – spirals

'Egg burst, egg blend, egg burial, and hatch-as-hatch-can'. This was James Joyce's take on the philosophy of Giambattista Vico (1668-1744, above left). The cycle of life continues for ever – so we hope. In his *New Science* (1725) Vico opposed René Descartes (1596-1650), as making a crazy attempt to reduce reality into mathematics. Vico said that introducing geometry into real life 'is like trying to go mad with the rules of reason, attempting to proceed by a straight line among the twists and turns of life, as though human affairs were not ruled by caprice, temerity, opportunity, and chance'. Cartesian objectivity is removed from time and place. Vico saw this as meaningless outside mathematics. He is right.

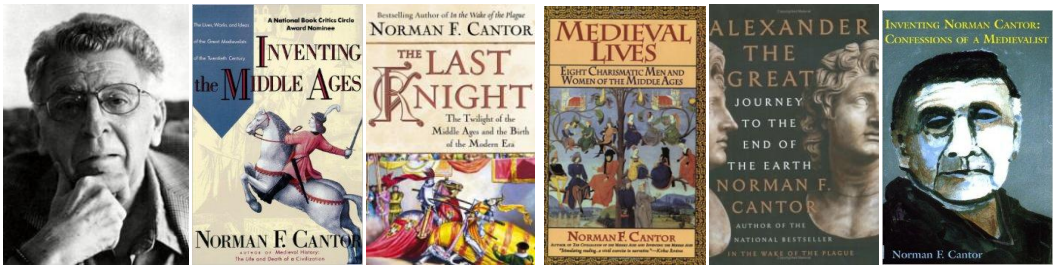
In placing humanity within history and nature, Vico's thinking is similar to that of Eastern philosophers. He was almost forgotten after the acceleration of technology within Europe which led to the industrial revolution and the conquest by European firepower of much of Asia and Africa. Hence the triumph of the 'straight arrow' notion of progress, whereby everything is (or should be) getting better all the time, where the world teems with problems to be fixed, and happiness is more money. Thinking people now know that 'progress as usual' is mad, because it is leading to the exhaustion of the natural world and irreversible damage to the biosphere. The idea that 'man is the measure of all things' is being set aside. This is where Giambattista Vico has much to teach us, as do Eastern philosophers of nature.

The spiral philosophy of life has many implications. Placing humans within nature, it implies reverence for the living and natural world. It perceives evolution as cyclical, and so implies respect for the nature of people and cultures that are different from us only in that they are not as technologically sophisticated. Because the spiral form can shrink as well as expand, it warns us that one future for the human race – though not for ants – is catastrophe. Human affairs remain ruled by caprice, temerity, opportunity and chance. Extremely intelligent and powerful people can be very stupid, are often destructive, and are sometimes malignant.

An optimistic version of Vico's thinking is that nature and the life within it develops in a way expressed as an expanding spiral form, as shown above (second from left). As time goes on, structures become more complex, but successive aeons and epochs resemble those of the past, albeit in a more evolved form. A pessimistic version, which retains the spiral concept, is that successive periods may resemble those of the past, but in a diminished form – which is to say, as a reverse spiral, a vortex. Both views place all being within nature. They do not, as does Descartes, position humans as being some sort of brain outside the living and natural world. The spiral staircase image (right) is now often used as a key to learning, so as to encourage people in any or all situations to gain facts and insight, information and wisdom, as parts of a whole way of thinking, being, and living. Understanding of anything and everything, including nutrition, begins by understanding this.

Food and nutrition, health and well-being

What they believe: 4. Norman Cantor Heroes



The historian Norman Cantor and five of his books, on the resonance and relevance of ancient and mediaeval history, his fellow scholars, and himself. His interest is in the heroes that change history

Here I introduce the idea of heroes. These are people of epic nature, whose greatness comes from putting their reputations or their whole lives on the line, and standing up against the established order of their times, and even being vindicated, in their lives or after their deaths. They change history. For these reasons they are remembered and in a real sense are immortal. In modern times Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi is an outstanding example. But they need to be understood and commemorated, including in emblematic stories about them, which is a task for historians.

How do nutrition scientists measure up? Yes, the modern profession of nutrition does have some heroes, whose courage, perseverance, audacity, achievement and significance should become much better known and understood by thinking people of all types, from heads of state, though professors within their profession, to parents wanting to protect the health and well-being of their children. But who knows this? And who are the heroic nutritionists? And who is commemorating them?

The idea of great people

We seem to be living in puny times. But in these days there is greatness and there are heroes. In *War and Peace* Leo Tolstoy rightly points out that the statement 'Napoleon invaded Russia' is absurd. He was not alone! But in also rightly saying that Napoleon was a creature of his times and in other circumstances would have led an ordinary life, Tolstoy suggests that what are seen as Napoleon's achievements were just the play of chance. That is going too far. Tolstoy himself would not have written *War and Peace,* or perhaps anything of note, if he had lived at another time or had been born and raised in another country. But both Napoleon and Tolstoy were people who themselves did indeed make and change events, one as a ruler, one as a writer, in ways that still affect us. Here is a simple example. In Cabo Frio while I was writing this column, I attended a notary's office with the buyer of our house, to sign

documents to be witnessed, copied and ahived. This sensible system exists in Brazil because it does in Portugal, because in Portugal as in France, the law is Napoleonic, commissioned and guided by Napoleon himself between 1800 and 1802.

Now for Norman Cantor (1929-2004) and why I am writing about him here. He is a vivacious and exciting chronicler of some of the times gone by that still affect us. He understands heroism. His abiding focus was on what in my schooldays I fondly called 'my period' – Europe roughly between 1100 and 1450 CE. Here he is on my favourite emperor, Frederick 'Stupor Mundi' Hohenstaufen (1198-1250). 'Frederick acted out his messianic role not only in his political activity but in his brilliant court, where Muslim and Jewish scholars participated and helped him cultivate his own interests in the rudiments of science'. In 1224 he founded the world's first state university in Naples, now named after him. 'He wrote a treatise on falconry that has never been superseded… [In] 'exhibiting all the dynamic cultural forces of his age, he raised wild expectations not only in his Empire but all over Europe… that a messianic figure and an apocalyptic moment had emerged'. What a man!

Norman Cantor's masterwork is *Inventing the Middle Ages*, on the historians who themselves have heroic qualities. The book explained to me why I was discouraged at school from becoming enchanted by Frederick, having read the 700 page paean to this Holy Roman Emperor by Ernst Kantorowicz (1895-1963) published in 1925, described by Cantor as 'the most exciting biography of a mediaeval monarch produced in this century'. This was because the book helped to awaken in Germany the sense of a new apocalyptic moment and a new messianic figure – Adolf Hitler. Ironically, Ernst Kantorowicz was Jewish. In 1938 he 'packed a couple of bags, left behind his marvelous private library and art collection, and quietly got on the train with… the English poet and classical scholar Maurice Bowra… holding the British passport that Bowra had arranged for him'. In 1939 he left Oxford for the University of California at Berkeley, and then the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton, where he was a colleague of Robert Oppenheimer and Albert Einstein. What a story!

Box 1

Books by Norman Cantor

Mediaeval History. The Life and Death of a Civilization, 1963; Western Civilization. Its Genesis and Destiny. Three volumes, 1969-1970; The Age of Protest. Dissent and Rebellion in the Twentieth Century, 1971; Inventing the Middle Ages. The Lives, Works and Ideas of the Great Mediaevalists of the Twentieth Century, 1991; The Civilization of the Middle Ages (revision of Mediaeval History), 1993; The Sacred Chain. The History of the Jews, 1995; The American Century. Varieties of Culture in Modern Times, 1997; In the Wake of the Plague. The Black Death and the World it Made, 2002; The Encyclopaedia of the Middle Ages (general editor), 2001; Inventing Norman Cantor. Confessions of a Mediaevalist, 2002; The Last Knight. The Twilight of the Middle Ages and the Birth of the Modern Era, 2004; Mediaeval Lives. Eight Charismatic Men and Women of the Middle Ages, 2005; Alexander the Great. Journey to the End of the Earth, 2005.

What does it take to be great?

Nutritionist heroes

In *Inventing the Middle Ages*, Norman Cantor commemorates the lives and achievements of the historians Frederic Maitland, Charles Haskins, Marc Bloch, David Knowles, Johan Huizinga, Richard Southern, and others, as well as Ernst Kantorowicz. In explaining these charismatic scholars of astounding learning and insight whose insights live on and even affect our sense now of what is real and true, he shows that historians themselves may play a part in and even rise above the times in which they lived. He also has a chapter on the linguist John Ronald Reuel Tolkein, who created imaginary worlds and laid foundations for blockbusting movies.

Who among nutrition scientists are in this league, and can be seen as heroes? John Rivers of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, who died young 25 years ago, felt that nutrition in his time was in dog days, a state of decline and fall. He had an explanation for why formally trained nutrition scientists generally have low profiles. He wrote it as editor of *Nutrition Notes and News*, the then newsletter of the UK Nutrition Society, a position from which he was then abruptly sacked.

He said: 'We nutritionists are on the whole a sibilant species happiest when breathing our views gently into the official ear. We are a profession dominated by consultants, advisors and official committee members, used always to acting in the acceptable shadows'. His provocation resonates now, at a time of recent intriguing revelations of the links between nutrition societies, conferences and scientists, and the Big Food transnational manufacturers of unhealthy ultra-processed products (2-4).

Here be heroes

John Rivers provoked me in a different way. 'On the whole' allows exceptions, and I wanted as I do here, to look on the bright side. Towards the end of the 1980s I organised three booklets, one by Kenneth Heaton on TL Cleave (1906-1983), one by Denis Burkitt on Hugh Trowell (1904-1989), and one assisted by Mary Gale and Brian Lloyd on Hugh Sinclair (1910-1990) (5-7). They include selected bibliographies. The intention was to publish more in the series of 'founders of modern nutrition', to continue with Robert McCarrison and John Boyd Orr. This did not happen.

The booklets summarised scientific achievement, but as I read them now, were rather more about epic or heroic qualities. Take Surgeon-Captain Thomas Latimer Cleave. He was physician on board a British battleship, the King George V, at a time when sailors, deprived of fresh vegetables and fruits, were plagued with constipation. He ordered sacks of bran to be brought on board and consumed. This treatment, obvious now, but eccentric then, was so effective that Cleave became known throughout the British navy as 'the bran man'. His life's work came afterwards. He

was interested in much more than bran, or in what became known as dietary fibre, as an addition to otherwise unchanged diets. He developed a grand theory. This is that what became known as the 'diseases of civilisation' and later as 'Western diseases', of many systems of the body, are symptoms or outcomes of a master malady, which he called *The Saccharine Disease* (8). Its common cause, he said, is industrialised diets, which contain far too much refined carbohydrate – especially sugar and white flour.

In the phrase used before the term 'scientist' was coined in the 1830s, Cleave was a natural philosopher. He was an indefatigable correspondent, but he worked alone. He was not a scientist in the sense normally used now, as denoting a scholar with deep knowledge usually of one speciality. His reasoning, guided by principles of evolution, ranged over history, medicine, biochemistry, epidemiology, statistics, and other disciplines. Much of his writing was published at his own expense. He was combative, and became infuriated by what he saw as the distortion of his thesis by others whose ideas became better known. He rejected any focus on dietary fibre, which can readily be added to degraded diets. He was concerned with industrialised diets as such. He would not have been a comfortable committee member.

Nor is it likely that he would have joined any professional body concerned with nutrition. That was not his way. He might have become seen as an insignificant eccentric, or forgotten, but he was championed by influential figures such as Francis Avery Jones and Denis Burkitt, and later by Kenneth Heaton. Now, forty years after *The Saccharine Disease* was published, new waves of writers and activists are giving him credit. Was Cleave a nutritionist? Perhaps not, at least in the current usual sense of the word. Is he a hero? Well, his life has epic qualities, he put his reputation on the line, he worked persistently against the odds, he followed his own star, he developed a grand idea, and much of what he wrote is now being vindicated. So I say yes.

My second example is Hugh Sinclair, who certainly was a nutritionist, revered in his field. His life also has epic qualities. In 1990 I took the page proofs of his booklet to Hugh at his crumbling mansion in Sutton Courtenay in Oxford as he lay on his death-bed, and I was impressed at how much this small offering meant to him. He needed to know that he was recognised. Hugh's voice was sibilant, but his views were not expressed gently. He enjoyed conspiracies and made brilliant jokes. Those who knew him or were mentioned by him had strong views about Hugh.

Every nutritionist knows that Hugh's towering achievement was to understand the importance of the 'good fats' – essential fatty acids. This alone puts him in the first rank of nutrition scientists. It is perhaps less well-known that as a senior don at Magdalen College, Oxford, and for a time its vice-president, Hugh ordered up a whole seal, which for 100 days in 1979 he methodically ate at high table, together with fish, seafood, water and nothing else, while measuring the effect of this Eskimo diet on blood clotting and other sanguinary factors, on himself. He noted that when gardening, any time he cut himself his boots filled with blood.

Here are two stories about Hugh as I knew him in the 1980s. The first was his response to an emergency. The keynote speaker from California cancelled from an Oxford conference. We asked Hugh if he could fill in, which he did. He turned up with one slide, which he took out of his trouser back pocket, wiped with his handkerchief and projected. He spoke for an hour without notes in perfectly modulated paragraphs, ending with a quotation from Robert Browning. What a star!

The second story is his response to another tough time. In 1988 I invited Hugh to give the keynote address at St Marylebone parish church, facing Regent's Park, at the service commemorating the life and work of the campaigning nutritionist Caroline Walker, contemporary with John Rivers at Queen Elizabeth College, who also died young. The church was full. Hugh was in his element, pitch-perfect, in explaining her significance, and launching the Trust founded in her name, which is her immortality.

Descended from the Viking kings of Orkney, and through them the St Clair line, a scintillating classics as well as science scholar, owner of the Sutton Courtenay mansion as from the age of 24, collector of a magnificent library of medical and nutrition texts and papers, Hugh was also founder and director of the Oxford Nutrition Survey between 1941 and 1946, and so played a vital part in enabling the British people to endure the 1939-1945 war. There is also the fascinating story of the Roslyn Chapel, created by the St Clair family, as featured in Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*. Hugh never spoke to me about such matters, but in common with founders of science such as John Dee and Isaac Newton, he knew of forces beyond human understanding that shape our ends.

Hugh also had a grand theory. This is that many diseases of most if not all systems of the body have one master cause, not caused by excess, but by deficiency of essential fatty acids (9). His general thesis and that of T.L. Cleave could be complementary, but nobody has attempted to reconcile them. A decade after his death Jeanette Ewin published her biography, helped by David Horrobin (10). Given Hugh's staggering ancestry, erudition, personality, style and insight, as well as his achievements, some touched on here, he still deserves a book that understands his stature. Is Hugh a hero? Yes, I think so.

Thomas Latimer Cleave and Hugh Macdonald Sinclair share two qualities that mark them out. They both had a way of being and thinking that would have fitted an earlier age, from mediaeval times until the technological revolution, when scholars were judged by the force and logic of their rhetoric and the breadth of their knowledge. Also they were interested not just in facts and problems but mainly with ideas and solutions. In nutrition these qualities are now uncommon.

What about all the other great nutritionists? Why is nobody writing books about them? Where are the historians of nutrition science who understand the resonance of the past in the present and for the future? Who are these great nutritionists, anyway?

Those I have mentioned above all rate a good book, or at least a chapter in a grand book on the significance of nutrition as a science in modern times. If this began in the last century, candidates include Frederick Gowland Hopkins (1861-1947), and also Jack Drummond (1891-1952), who with John Boyd Orr and Hugh Sinclair was an architect of the British wartime nutrition programme. But this list is Anglocentric. Two nutritionists who for sure are heroes by any measure, did their work in the global South. One is Cicely Williams (1893-1992), who as my first choice I will celebrate in a later column. Next to her is Tu Giay (1921-2009). Claudio Schuftan, who for many years has lived in Tu Giay's country of Vietnam, explains why:

Box 1

Tu Giay

Claudio Schuftan writes (adapted from his January 2013 column): There is a nutritional aspect to the Vietnamese victories over the US troops. Tu Giay was an agronomist and biological scientist whose greatest achievement was to compile 'a little green book' given to every regular North Vietnamese army and Viet Cong soldier. This explained what plants in the jungle were safe to eat, how to cook with fire but without smoke, and many other food and nutrition survival principles and advice. The soldiers also carried packed rations he had formulated in the most cost-effective yet nutritionally sound manner.

Tu Giay in later years at right, and at centre being greeted in the field of battle by Vietnam president Ho Chi Minh (as recognised on the cover of Time magazine in 1975, left above).

I had the privilege to know Tu Giay personally, and met him several times during my Hanoi years. His second claim to fame came after national unification in the long period of peace and prosperity this country has now enjoyed. He is the father of the Vietnamese agricultural system and programme that integrates the tending of ponds, small animals and fruit trees. In rural areas here, where most people are rice farmers, many households have a small fishpond. Tu Giay started a big national movement to put a piggery and chicken coop next to the pond in a way that their faeces are washed into the pond to feed the fish. On the edge of the pond, people were taught to plant fruit trees, thus completing the scheme of a sustainable household level food system. The system remains very popular nationwide.

Tu Giay once took me personally out on a field trip to show me the achievements of his system. I was impressed. You can perhaps guess what his biggest uphill battle was in this endeavour. This was convincing people that they should not build their own latrines on top of the pond. In times of peace Tu Giay founded the Vietnamese National Institute of Nutrition and remained its director for twelve years. He is a nationally revered person.

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Birth, life, death. What I believe: 11 (continued)
Human life is not sacred

Nelson Mandela's death created a great cry of joy from the people of South Africa for what he has achieved for his country, for the whole continent of Africa, and the world. This is life after death

It is being a big challenge to explain what I mean by stating that 'human life is not sacred'. In a sense the statement is obvious – we are not gods. But I am meaning much more than this. What has become an obsession with the survival of very damaged newborns, and very diseased elderly people, even against the wishes of parents and of people who want to die, can surely be explained only in three ways.

One is that what this really is all about is a medical practice that keeps people alive simply because this can be done, often at great emotional, practical and financial expense. Two is that in these modern times – but never before, as far as I know – those most affected have surrendered all responsibility for life and death decisions to a profession whose declared position is always to keep people alive, no matter what. Three is the general belief that as a matter of principle, life must be preserved practically at all costs irrespective of circumstances, because – human life is sacred.

But the implications of taking responsibility for life and death as a human act are immense. Should people who are irreversibly incapacitated have the right to end their lives? If they are unable, should they have the right to ask somebody else to end their lives? In my view yes, no doubt. Should parents have the right to end the life of their very seriously damaged newborn? In my view also yes for sure, and good societies will see this difficult choice as normal. Does the right to end life have problems? Of course. Could these thoughts be taken further? Indeed they could. But not now.

Instead here is a positive way of looking at the value of life and the nature of death. When people stand for something in their lives, which can simply be love and care for their children, after their deaths what they have stood for lives on. In this sense they live on. Surely we all felt this, experiencing the tributes to Nelson Mandela. This simple but I suggest profound thought occurred to me again after reading and seeing many tributes to the 'folk' singer Pete Seeger, who died recently age 94. Here he is below age 89 with Bruce Springsteen, singing Woody Guthrie's 'This Land is Your Land' in front of a vast crowd at the Washington Memorial national mall in 2009, on the occasion of Barack Obama's inauguration as US president. The tributes to Pete Seeger were joyful. His death has given him new life. Young people throughout the world who knew nothing about him in his very old age, know him now.

Pete Seeger in his 90th year with his fan Bruce Springsteen, singing the US socialist anthem for the rights of the people, the choir behind them, in front of newly elected president Barack Obama

Nelson Mandela surely will be the father of free South Africa for ever, just as Mohandas Gandhi will always be the father of India. They are now immortal. Celebrations like these surely show this

So I am feeling that the nature of the response to the deaths of two truly great people is telling us all something important about the value of human life, which applies to all people who live well. In spirit they do not die, and so death is not so very important. As taught in religions grounded in nature, death is another stage in life.

Birth, life, death. What I believe. 11 (continued)
All life is precious

Experiences in Cabo Frio. From top left: a brasil wood tree – notice the spines; urucum opening to release its seeds and hibiscus flowering to release its pollen in our garden; a leaf insect about to die

The value of human life is best gauged after understanding that humans are just one species. A good start is to value non-human life more. A world whose standards are set by people who live in the countryside would be very different from the world

now, governed as it is by people who live in big cities. Knowledge of nature puts the value of human life in perspective. My sense after living in Brazil for nearly 15 years, is that country people do not sharply separate human life from other life. That's what city people do, who observe nature on television or on holiday or in zoos, or when a wasp buzzes round their honey. Really living in countryside involves constant interaction with nature. The general effect, natural for people who have always lived that way, usually as farmers, and gradual, partial and stuttering for people like me, is that the line between the human species and other species blurs.

Please do not get a super-romantic impression. In our permanent house in the state of Minas Gerais we are not living in a jungle. But this is the tropics, and there is our own forest plot on one side, and forest at the back of the house, and so much here is so obviously wonderful. Sometimes great butterflies or humming birds come into my study, to be gently rescued. Families of *micos* (small monkeys) swarm over the roof of our guest-house for bananas, as do families of *quatis* (like raccoons and also ant-eaters). This is all a bit like having our own menagerie, except that the animals are wild. The branches of our plum tree recently sagged under the weight of maybe 20 *jacu* (sort-of wild turkeys) guzzling the fruit and poo-ing the seeds. So we live in the midst of life, which with creatures whose lives are much shorter than ours makes us also aware of birth and death. Death… three of our dogs have died, and seven cats if you count newborn kittens which I do.

All this for me gives life a sensed meaning quite different from what I felt when I lived in London, during most of the second half of the last century. Now I do not sense any absolute division between human life and other life. The same general ethical values of tolerance, support, and respect, and the same general practical considerations, apply to all forms of life. If it is appropriate to venerate human life (and it's best to be cautious about terms that have been usurped by monotheistic religions) then it is right to venerate animal, insect and plant life also.

All living things are precious. It is easy to feel this after coming to live in a tropical country. Take the pictures above, taken during breaks from drafting this column. Above left is a brasil wood tree, growing in Cabo Frio, the city where Amerigo Vespucci established the first export trade, of the tree after which this country is named. Above right is a tree in our Cabo Frio garden that bears *urucum*, whose seeds are ground and used by native Brazilians as body decoration, insect repellent, food and medicine. Below left is the hibiscus flower which grows everywhere here, which my wife Raquel sometimes places in her hair. Below right is a leaf insect which Gabriel found on his pillow one morning that apparently had come inside to die. But here it is and so it lives on.

One of the most valuable perceptions children can gain, which is natural, is respect and care and yes love for the living world. Contemplating these wonderful living things, I feel awe. Surely we all do.

Nourishment

Meditation on a *mangueira*

The mango tree in our garden in Cabo Frio. It was there before us and will be there after us, giving nourishment to the families who come to live here, their friends and families, and the neighbourhood

As mentioned above, we are in the process of saying goodbye to our house in Cabo Frio, where I have learned so much. Here I begin a meditation on the *mangueira* (mango tree) that grows in the garden. This will be continued in my next column. Something I have learned with my whole being is that a mango picked from the ground and peeled and eaten warm, is different from a mango from a supermarket. They may seem the same to city eyes, but not to people who live with a mango tree.

Temperatures here in January are up to 40 celsius (100 centigrade). Every day after dawn before anybody else is awake, I have padded out and picked mangoes that have fallen, and cut one up for my *café da mânha* (breakfast), powered on, and drunk a couple of cups of coffee *puro* (strong, black). These days I have been thinking about mangoes, so my breakfast is mindful, as my friend Carlos Monteiro rightly specifies. Mango trees bear fruit for up to 300 years. So the *mangueira* may be half a century old, and the tree you see here will be bearing fruit past the year 2214. In the right climate, like here, it needs no attention. It is not 'our' tree. It has its own trajectory of being, its own span of life, far longer than ours, and one way and another its seeds will grow hundreds of other trees, who knows where.

Euclides and Maria Helena, the master developer and builder and his lawyer wife who have bought the house, have the same taste in design as we do. We and they gloat over the same style of furniture – great pieces more a century old made with solid noble woods like jacaranda and *canela* and *cidre* (cinnamon and cedar) and

vinhático (no English word) that used to go for a song in Rio's Rua Lavrádio in Lapa near the great viaduct, because they were too big for modern houses and not plastic and shiny. Euclides, named after the logical Greek (Brazilians often have Greek or Roman names) will never chop down the *mangueira*. It will live on and nourish more owners and their families. My proof is in the picture below. This gives my soul peace.

Here are Euclides and Maria Helena, the new owners of what has been our house in Cabo Frio, together with our son Gabriel, all bearing the fruit of the mango tree, which surely will be preserved

Status

This column is reviewed by Fabio Gomes and Claudio Schuftan.. Please cite as: Cannon G. What they believe (4). Norman Cantor. Heroes. Also, What I believe (11): Human life is not sacred, and other stories. What do you think? [*Column*] *World Nutrition*, February 2014, **5**, 2, 174-187. Obtainable at www.wphna.org.

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