



Friends of
Esalen

Updates, insights and editorials from inside the Institute for our Friends

Esalen's New Tidal Wetlands Living Machine®

by Caroline Levonian

I am more than a little embarrassed to admit that prior to noticing the recent construction of Esalen's Living Machine®, I am not sure how often I have paused to consider just where the water I brush my teeth with, shower in and flush, ends up. In discussing the development, philosophy and long-term impact of this project with Juliet Johnson, Esalen's Long-Term Development Planning and Sustainability Coordinator, I find myself privy to a terminology hitherto unfamiliar and a few of the finer technical details escape my layperson's understanding. Her passion and enthusiasm, however, are immediately contagious. And it becomes apparent that last December's inauguration of California's first operational Tidal Wetland Living Machine® at Esalen is an exciting and significant milestone, both in terms of the implementation of our Long-Term

Development Plan with its emphasis on responsible use of land and water, and our community's commitment to sustainability – not merely as a practical imperative but as a natural and inevitable manifestation of the values on which Esalen stands. We now understand that human potential has as much to do with our relationship with the land as our relationships with each other.

Situated at the entrance to Esalen's magical gardens, the organic form of the Living Machine® consists of six wetland "cells," each filled with gravel and plants which will eventually grow to provide habitats for birds and insects – a rich botanical and visual addition to our environment. The cells drain and fill throughout the day (although the water always stays at least six inches below the surface of the gravel), simulating tidal action, as microbes use oxygen to clean up to 7,000 gallons of grey and black water each day. A significant portion of Esalen's wastewater from the laundry, guest and staff accommodations is thus recycled as the clean water becomes

Sustainability, Integration & Change

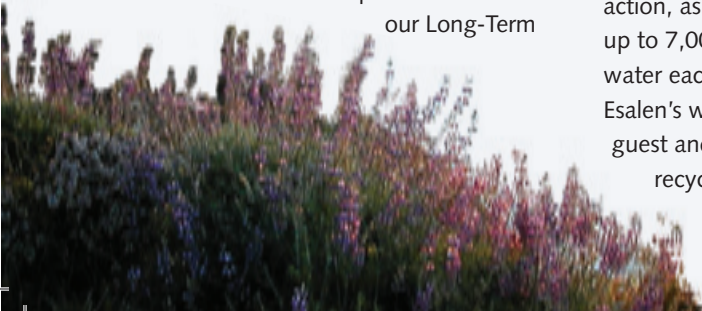
From Esalen CEO/President
Gordon Wheeler

Sustainability, as we all know, is the byword of the day, and for good and urgent reason. At Esalen, we understand sustainability to mean not just our footprint on the land, but the health and viability of our human systems as well, in the widest sense. Thus our organizational processes, our shared mission and purpose in coming together to live, study and do this work are all part of our commitment to making our presence on this unique and magical spot a balanced, sustainable enterprise aligned with natural creative principles of belonging, responsibility, and respect.

Thus when we talk about growth at Esalen, we don't mean growth in size of the organization, numbers of "customers on site," revenue for its own sake. Rather, we think of growth in mission focus and impact/outreach of our transformational programs and initiatives, growth in understanding and skill in the practices we believe in, and commitment to becoming the kind of model we aspire to create and offer to the world.

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Our second key term in planning for change is this word “integral.” Located here as we are, far from town resources and services, and serving as we do in a living, residential community of staff, practitioners, and interns, we know from experience that any change to any dimension of this tightly integrated system—housing, hiring, work spaces, community resources and activities—immediately ramifies through the system, sometimes with unintended effects.

Today, all of us, at Esalen and beyond—residents, seminarians, conferees and other visitors, in the context of our shared world—are stepping up to that world’s call for greater consciousness, co-responsibility, and mindfulness about shared purpose and shared impact. You can see the signs of this in our pioneering wastewater treatment/recycling facility, in the uplifting of our Farm and Garden program for greater mission and educational impact, in enhanced organizational support for staff, and in the growth of sustainability, social action, and spiritual activism courses in our catalog and residential education programs.

As we evaluate and implement changes, we are committed to submitting each element of change to a fourfold test: (1) does the proposed change support/enhance the delivery and impact of our *mission of integral personal and social transformation*? (2) does it support/enhance our commitment to heightening *sustainability and lightening our environmental impact*? (3) does it enhance *health and support of our living community here at Esalen* which is such a large part of our transformation agenda, and on which all our work depends? and (4) is the proposal *financially viable and sound*, so that Esalen can continue to grow in mission and consciousness, into its sixth decade and beyond?

We welcome comments and ideas from our wide Esalen community around the world. Your input may stimulate others, as together we evolve toward the best living solutions we can create and craft. Welcome, as always, to the conversation!

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available for landscape irrigation, and potentially for toilet flushing in new buildings in the future. By reusing treated wastewater onsite, the amount of water taken from the Hot Springs Creek is greatly reduced by about 380,000 gallons of water per year – the equivalent of the daily water usage of 7,700 guests. The Living Machine® uses approximately only a quarter of the energy used for other comparable water treatment technology, and the life of our leach fields is prolonged due to the cleanliness of the water that is not recycled, thus reducing our impact on the fragile cliff shelf as less water moves through the leach fields.

In addition to the direct environmental impact of the Living Machine® its value as a visible and high-profile educational tool is already apparent. It seems I am not alone in having my awareness of wastewater treatment and sustainability raised by this new and intriguing structure. In the three or so months it has been in operation, Esalen has hosted over ten groups of people who have come to learn about the Living Machine®, and at least two other Big Sur businesses are considering installing similar systems. As Juliet points out, the creation of a wastewater treatment system that can be considered a beautiful asset to our grounds marks a radical and meaningful step forward in our eco-consciousness. The Living Machine® is a deliberate and conscious symbol of our commitment to live with, acknowledge and hold ourselves accountable for the waste we generate and our impact on the land. And it brings the

The Living Machine® uses approximately only a quarter of the energy used for other comparable water treatment technology...

ever pressing issue of responsible management of our by-products quite literally into full view.

So with Phase 1 of the Living Machine® project running smoothly and inspiring curiosity and learning in staff, visitors and seminarians alike, Juliet and her team are of course turning their attention to the further development of this project. Phase 1 will be extended to include wastewater from Tobacco Row and Motel Row, together with the installation of more subsurface drip irrigation for landscaping to increase the proportion of water recycled. Phase 2, targeted at treatment of the wastewater from the lodge, baths and more guest housing, is already being planned.

At this stage in the project’s development, heartfelt thanks are extended to all our Friends and donors, with special recognition to Marion, Allan and India Hunt-Badiner, Terry Hunt and the Roy A. Hunt Foundation as well as Mary Ellen Klee and the Estate of Edmond Dickson Watts for their generous support of the Living Machine project.

With your continued support, Esalen’s progress toward sustainable community and land and resource conservation can continue to be cutting-edge, with many more Esalen visitors and guests taking increased environmental awareness away with them.

Caroline Levonian is currently participating in Esalen’s Extended Student program.





Esalen and the Arts

by Nancy Lunney-Wheeler, Executive Director of Programming and Cheryl Fraenzl, Programs Director

At a time when arts curriculum is being drastically cut back from public education, and continues to be marginalized from professional training and development, Esalen remains committed to offering a full, vibrant program in self-exploration and self-expression through a wide range of arts media. In addition to our rich tradition of seminars and trainings in personal growth and psychology, relationships, somatics, spiritual exploration, sustainability, social action, experiments in philosophy and science, and more, we continue to support and expand arts education at Esalen. In 2008 alone, you will find almost a hundred creative arts programs drawing on a wide variety of arts disciplines – including dance, theatre, writing, music, film, painting, and more.

About six years ago, Jayson Fann, a talented young artist who had already been developing and transforming Esalen's Art Barn into a full creative arts center, proposed that Esalen dedicate a full week each year exclusively to the arts, culminating in a daylong Arts Festival, for all the workshop participants, the whole Esalen residential community, and the public as well. Jayson promised to draw on his extensive contacts with artists and art movements around the world to deliver a multicultural array of performers, musicians, and other creative artists to participate in the Festival, some of whom would also teach the week's workshops as well.

Esalen and Esalen Programs decided to take a chance on this gifted artist/entrepreneur, naming Jayson, at 29, Director of the Arts Festival. And so what began as an act of faith in a talented young man's ability to make his vision a reality, has become one of the most exciting annual events at Esalen. We are proud to announce our Fifth Annual Arts Week with six exciting workshops, including one for the whole family to attend, running from June 29-July 6, 2008, with the all-day Arts Festival, scheduled for the afternoon and evening of July 4.

Be sure to join us if you can for a workshop from that week which will ensure that you'll be on campus on July 4th, for an event that

Jayson describes as "bringing people together to share their art, their culture, their spirit, to develop a greater understanding of each other through the arts." We're including information on the workshops and the Festival Day below, so you can make your plans early and reserve space in this wonderful event!

And don't forget to check out the Esalen website and catalog for all the other arts workshops that offer the chance to enliven your year and expand your capacity for experience and expression, not just in the arts themselves but in all aspects of your life.

Arts Festival Workshops

Arts Festival Workshops will run 7 days from **June 29-July 6 2008** and include the following workshops. For more information on these and other Esalen workshops please visit www.esalen.org.

- Mapping the Soul: Collage, Poetry, and Creativity with Patrice Vecchione.
- Afro-Cuban Music and Dance, with Francisco Aguabella & Pedro "Muñeco" Aguilar.
- Family Arts Creativity Celebration with Jayson Fann & Festival Artists.
- Mirror in the Waters: Art, Ritual, and Performance with Luisah Teish & Leilani Birely.
- Soul Voice Song: The Music of SoVoSo with David Worm & Sunshine Becker.
- Improv: Expanding Yourself with Laughter with Clifford Henderson & Dixie Cox.



Return to Origins: Esalen and Stanford's Aurora Forum

By Jeff Kripal

I was on a book tour last spring, giving readings of *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion*, which had just come out. One of my scheduled stops was at Kepler's Bookstore in Menlo Park. A man named Mark Gonnerman contacted me before the advertised event. He runs something called the Aurora Forum at Stanford University. His invited speaker list was certainly impressive enough. So far, it had included figures like His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, Arun Gandhi, Christopher Hedges (who recently wrote a book on Christian fundamentalism as a kind of "American fascism"), Jacob Needleman, Alice Waters, and Cornel West. Mark explained to me that they consistently drew large audiences to Kresge Auditorium for these events. He asked me if I would consider being such a guest speaker. And, oh yes, could I ask Michael Murphy to join us?

I'm generally a cheap date, so I said yes. But I would have to ask Mike. He's much more discerning than I. I knew how to tempt him, though. I knew that Mike had met Frederic Spiegelberg at Stanford during his college days, in the spring of 1950 to be exact, and that he had had a kind of conversion experience to Spiegelberg's comparative vision of world religions, which had a distinct Indian accent and drew appreciatively on the evolutionary mysticism of Sri Aurobindo. I also knew in which lecture hall this had happened—Cubberly Auditorium. I explained all of this to Mark. Not that I had to. It was all in the book, which he had read carefully. I suggested to Mark that it would be a grand idea to hold this Aurora Forum not in Kresge, but in Cubberly, as a kind of "return to origins" for Mike. Mark immediately and generously moved the venue to Cubberly. Mike couldn't resist. What a cool idea. Okay, it was my cool idea. I'm occasionally good for something. Not much, but something.

So there we were. The three of us. Sitting on a bright stage looking out on a few hundred people at Stanford University on a dark rainy evening in December. The brightness of the stage and the conversation contrasted sharply with the gloom and wetness outside. I was worrying about my shoes, which were quite raggedy, in contrast to my outfit, which I had bought for this occasion. "Geez," I thought, "do my shoes have to be the thing the audience sees first?" I often have such profound thoughts.

We were all double-miked, not in the Murphy sense, but in the microphone sense. One set of microphones was for Mark's Aurora Forum.

The other set was for Jerome Gary's film crew. They were filming the event for Jerome's potential feature documentary on Esalen.

During the ensuing forum, I privately transcended my shoe-consciousness while Mike spoke eloquently and warmly about that first classroom experience with Spiegelberg. He pointed out where he was sitting in the auditorium (toward the back right corner). What he heard ("Brahman!" echoing through the room). How it changed him forever. It was quite powerful. I then talked about Spiegelberg as a professor of comparative religion, as an academic, and about his own initial conversion experience in a wheat field in 1917. It

was there and then that Spiegelberg had a mystical experience of God in and as the natural world, after which he encountered a little gray church, whose artificial walls and exclusive claims now horrified him. It was because of that contrasting experience of cosmic consciousness and the little foolish church that Spiegelberg developed his notion of a "religion of no religion," that is, of a cosmic spirituality of nature and evolution beyond (and within) all religious institutions and faith claims.

I walked out of the auditorium with Mark, Mike, and Dulce Murphy. Jerome and the film crew stayed behind to pack up. It was still raining. I was marveling again about how close the connections are between the Academy and Esalen. I was also thinking about how Esalen's Center for Theory and Research's (CTR) events and activities can be seen as so many extensions, so many developments of that first classroom experience of Michael Murphy in Cubberly Auditorium.

Intellect and spirit. Head and heart. East and West. It was all already there, in the beginning. And it continues to evolve every year.

In 2008, CTR, Esalen's think tank, is sponsoring many cutting-edge invitational conferences. From helping to solve the most pressing issues of the environment to the most essential questions of the soul, the spirit of Esalen, born in Cubberly, is alive and well in each and every CTR conference. For more information on Esalen's CTR programs please visit www.esalenctr.org/. For more information on Stanford University's Aurora Forum or to listen to the Esalen lecture please visit <http://auroraforum.org/events.php?id=50>.



Michael Murphy and Jeff Kripal at Stanford University standing below a painting of Leland Stanford Jr. Photo by Mark Gonnerman

Jeff Kripal is chairman of the Department of Religious Studies at Rice University. He is the author of *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion*. He will be leading a workshop at Esalen on the weekend of May 30th based on his book and the history of Esalen.

Butterflies & Transformations

– Books and More Books



by Gordon Wheeler

For many of us, Esalen means first of all a world of transcendent direct experience—person to person, heart to heart, individual to community, the embodied in the magic of nature. Meanwhile, behind and beyond this directly felt world we know there's a world of books, the outpouring of ideas, practices, and personal stories that link and orient us in the great work of transformation that we're all a part of.

No one can know the number of books that have been directly and indirectly influenced by Esalen, across nearly the past half-century now. Esalen historian Jeff Kripal (*Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion*) counts it in the many thousands, with each season bringing a new crop, and each crop containing its special treasures.

Among those treasures this season is one of the most unusual, most engaging, and most visually stunning volumes ever to come directly out of an Esalen inspiration and collaboration. This is the newest offering from prolific and longtime Esalen leader/authors Ken and Maddy Dychtwald, in fresh collaboration with artist Dave Zaboski and his seven-year-old daughter Grace.

The result is *Gideon's Dream*, an inspired tale for children (of all ages!), presenting the theme of transformation through the classic metaphor of the caterpillar who dreams intuitively of more, then wakes up to find himself inhabiting a new self, in a new world. That new self is of course a Monarch butterfly, itself emblematic of the magic environment of Esalen.

This is the first children's offering from this talented team—the first of many, hopefully. Read it and see why classic storytellers Deepak Chopra and Jack Canfield both call it “inspiring”, “uplifting”, “classic.”

Moving from the metaphorical to the comprehensive, transformation is taken up by longtime Esalen leader and trustee Marilyn Mandala Schlitz, together with her Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS) colleagues Cassandra Vieten and Tina Amorok, in *Living Deeply: The*

Art and Science of Transformation in Everyday Life. Based on a decade of research at IONS, and with additional material from a stunning array of wisdom teachers, this volume is a transformative experience itself, just to read. Not only is transformation outlined and framed for the reader, but the seeker gains direct guidance on how to get started, how to sustain, the what and why of “practice,” as well as what you can expect to gain from the quest.

On the level of personal healing, *Tales of a Wounded Healer* tells a dual story, of a remarkable body of work and courageous clients, presented by a remarkable teacher, healer, and living embodiment of

transformative power itself. Mariah Fenton Gladis, one of Esalen's most revered and beloved teachers for years, has herself been dealing with the chronic, progressive challenge of ALS for almost 30 years now. Her presence and her story both are among the most inspirit-

ing, uplifting gifts on offer anywhere in our

world: if you haven't received this gift, don't miss her next appearance at Esalen. Meantime, don't miss this book.

And then there's the miracle of touch. Peggy Horan, pioneer and venerated mentor/teacher in Esalen Massage, has captured the essence of her own wisdom legacy in the lovely new volume *Connecting Through Touch: The Couples Massage Book*. With this offering, you can initiate or communicate a process of personal transformation with someone else—whether that someone else is an intimate partner or just any lucky recipient or friend. The benefits of this priceless gift of human contact will accrue to both partners in the exchange, in support of all your other practices of personal and social transformation. Read, enjoy, apply, and reap the benefits of these and more inspiring titles -- all available of course in the Esalen bookstore or by visiting www.esalen.org.



Gordon Wheeler is President and CEO of Esalen Institute.

Generosity and Sufficiency

by Spencer Sherman

Generosity is a virtue—even an instinct—yet it runs counter to one of our culture's core beliefs and omnipresent messages: *money will make me happy, and having more will make me even happier*. Living generously is a challenge in the face of that powerful message. And it's not just more money we want—we want more time, more joy, more enlightenment. I regularly feel the desire for all of these “mores”.

A sanctuary like Esalen allows us to connect to our inner resources, yet our culture at-large tells us the itch behind each of these “mores” can be scratched by some external item. Here's the irony: when we chase after external things, we necessarily move away from ourselves, and since most of what we want actually comes from within (joy, peace of mind, happiness), moving away from ourselves makes the situation worse.

Of all the external “mores” we want, money is probably the trickiest. When was the last time you got the message from any mainstream cultural source that you *already* have enough money? Or even that there actually exists such a thing as having enough?

I know how my body and wellness suffer when I'm stuck in the “more money” mindset: stress, anxiety, dissatisfaction, bickering with my loved ones, the sense that something is missing. And there is another, less obvious side-effect: the demise of generosity.

Attempting to cultivate generosity in a “more” state of mind is like trying to grow vegetables in soil depleted of nutrients. If our energy is focused on bringing in more, it's that much harder to give. If we're constantly striving to grasp something beyond our reach, we're not reaching out to offer something from within. Generosity flows from a sense of sufficiency, of feeling that we have enough.

And so, the first step to creating more generosity is experiencing sufficiency. I do this by cultivating stillness, by creating a haven from the “more” messages and their discombobulating racket. One of the joys of coming to Esalen is its physical stillness, the darkness, which creates the perfect setting for going within.

During my visit last August, my four-year-old daughter was flickering with energy like an East Coast firefly, when we arrived at our room, saying over and over, “I want to see the stars!” As we walked barefoot on the lawn under the star-painted sky, she began singing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star. I joined her—four-year-old helping 45-year-old with the words—and felt a deep joy and generosity within and without. The image, still with me eight months later, kindles generosity on call. Thank you, darkness, and thank you, Esalen.

Throughout that visit, I noticed how the physical darkness of Esalen allowed me to see more brilliant stars than I could have imagined,

The Way Forward Esalen's 7th Annual Benefit Weekend – November 7-9, 2008

“Unique and magical—a rare combination of mind-opening ideas, direct contact with activists and thought leaders (both presenters and fellow participants!), and on top of that, a whale of a good time. We ranged from tears to hilarity, from sober contemplation to excited dialogue to moments of sheer raucous fun. And we found ourselves stretching our pocketbook for Esalen initiatives and auction items just too good to pass up. Wouldn't miss it for anything—we came straight home and put it on our calendar for '08.”

—A participant at the 2007 weekend

Amory Lovins, the most influential American voice on sustainable energy solutions

Robert Reich, leading economist, author, political historian and former Cabinet member

Sam Keen, renowned author and teacher in the exploration of passionate engagement and the shadow

Chungliang Al Huang, philosopher, musician, teacher of Tai Ji and the art of movement meditation

Ken Dychtwald, psychologist, gerontologist, author, “age wave” visionary, and event emcee

Anna Halprin, author, teacher, and seminal figure in the world of dance

Michael Murphy, Esalen co-founder, chairman, author, and philosopher

Joseph Montville, retired diplomat, leader in Esalen's citizen diplomacy outreach initiatives

Patricia de Jong, prominent progressive voice for religious dialogue
Anisa Mehdi, award-winning documentary filmmaker and voice for Arab-American dialogue

Whatever the outcome of the November '08 elections, the new administration and the world community will face unprecedented challenges and opportunities in the years ahead. Our world urgently needs inventive solutions, “outside the box” initiatives, and new relationships among old adversaries. Join amazing world visionaries and committed supporters as we explore together ways to move forward. Learn about exciting Esalen initiatives created to meet these challenges. And participate in our unique “What's the Value of Anything” auction.

This not-to-be-missed experience promises to inspire and empower while allowing ample opportunity for dialogue, informal conversation and contact in the magical setting of Esalen. All speakers are generously donating their time. By participating, or sponsoring others to participate, you join in shaping the Way Forward, while providing funding support for Esalen's green renewal and non-revenue-generating programs.

To sign up or learn more, please contact Nancy Worcester at 831-667-3032 or nancy.worcester@esalen.org, or visit www.esalen.org/benefit/.

Throughout that visit, I noticed how the physical darkness of Esalen allowed me to see more brilliant stars than I could have imagined, and I made a connection...

and I made a connection—the willingness to sit with my darkness around money might have the same illuminating effect. As I remained present with my money demons, and witnessed and examined them, I uncovered a powerful sense of sufficiency unfettered from the obsessive quest for *more*.

You might use the opportunity of your next visit to Esalen to embrace stillness and darkness, and from that sacred place, to cultivate deeper generosity by doing one of my favorite sufficiency-finding exercises: expand your net worth statement.

Begin by simply tabulating the worth of your material possessions: home, car, stocks and bonds, etc. Now comes the hard part—hard because you don't receive a statement of future earnings on the value of family, community, your health, or even the lifetime value of your skills and character traits in the work world. Instead, you have to calculate the monetary value of these things for yourself, in your own terms.

If you had a choice between having a million dollars in the bank but losing your friends, or keeping your friends but having less money, how much less would you accept to keep the friends? Where your health is concerned, how much money would make it worth your while to risk a chronic illness or disability, or to shorten your expected life span? What amount of money would you accept in exchange for your sense of

humor, or to be blessed with one? Consider each of these things, and anything else you count among your immaterial “assets”: your partner or children; your yoga practice; your sense of taste or hearing; your intelligence and imagination. Then, add it all up.

Take a good look at that true net worth number—your marketplace value right now. Chances are the number is bigger—the value greater—than you would have imagined, assumed, or supposed. If so, could it mean that right now, you have more than you need for contentment? Might you have already grasped what you thought you were reaching for? Maybe you don't need to crave any further; instead, maybe you're free to shift your striving energy toward enjoying what you have, not acquiring more.

That's sufficiency, and a sense of sufficiency is the root of generosity. When we dwell in the energy of sufficiency, magic happens. We can give of our spirit, time, money, good will and talents without fearing that we will deplete our stores or run out.

We become open, and ironically, that openness primes us to receive far more than we give. Magic, indeed.

Spencer Sherman is a financial advisor and author of the forthcoming *The Cure for Money Madness*. He will be teaching a workshop at Esalen, along with Anne Watts, on the weekend of August 8-10, 2008 entitled “Financial Intimacy and Freedom for Couples.”



Heartfelt Thanks to Our Generous Friends of Esalen

We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to the many wonderful Friends of Esalen who generously support our operations and special projects. The following is a list of friends who have given \$500 or more from **January 1 – April 14, 2008**. **Bold** below indicates a lifetime donation and/or pledge of \$100,000 or more. *Italics* below indicate the commitment of a multi-year gift.

Trustee Circle – gifts of \$100,000+ *Vinnie A. Murphy Trust*

Coast Circle – gifts of \$50,000+ *John E. Fetzer Institute*

Anniversary Circle – gifts of \$30,000+ *Roy A. Hunt Foundation (Marion and Allan Hunt-Badiner, Terry Hunt)*

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Sustainers Circle – gifts of \$500+ *Deborah Aaron • George Berg and Gail Topping • Marcia and Donald Hamilton • Jack Healey • Bill James • Sonja and Michael Saltman • Anand Sharma • Tony Speakman • Jack Sunday • Nancy Tew • Tom and Grace Tate • Quinton Wacks • Tobias Wegenast*



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