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The East End Docufilm Society (est'd. 2007)

My expectation for six weeks on the east end of Long Island was for a lonely, monkish seclusion with much writing, walking on the beach, and practicing music. Today, reflecting at the end of the visit, I must confess that what unrolled was the opposite of my prediction. No seclusion, no writing, little walking, and fabulous dinner parties. Here is the serendipitous tale.

Serendip #1. My friend of 30 years, Chris Shaw, suddenly turned up in the Hamptons shortly after I arrived here in mid-October. Since drawing all the four-color illustrations of my four picture books on chaos theory in the 1980s, Chris created haptak.com --- which makes software for virtual actors --- and several films and videos. Chris and I took to walking and talking, catching up the ten or fifteen years since our last meeting.

Serendip #2. Within a day or two, Andrew Bailey, my South African friend of 40 years, turned up here with his partner Connie Baxter Marlowe, en route a Bushman ceremony in the Kalahari. They have made several documentary films, in one of which I have a bit part.

Serendip #3. Andrew and Connie were staying with an old friend here, Kenny Mann from Kenya. Soon we met, and I discovered that Kenny also makes documentary films. In addition, Kenny knew Idanna Pucci and Terence Ward of Florence, whom Ray and I had met in Florence on the occasion of Courtney Ross' wedding in 2000.

Serendip #4. After the wedding, Idanna and Terence had invited me to Florence in 2001 to give a seminar on Marsilio Ficino, the Renaissance Neoplatonist of Florence. Among the seminarians that summer was Deborah Kooperstein, the Town Justice of East Hampton. So over the years, as I visit the Ross school every summer, I had visited Deb and met her partner Jacqui Lofaro. Soon after arrival on this present visit I got together with Deb and Jacqui, and learned that Jacqui also makes documentary films.

Serendip #5. On moving into my temporary office at the Ross School, I discovered that Marie Maciak occupied the office next door. She teaches film and video at the school, and told me she was recently returned from filming a documentary on Iraqi expatriots in Syria.

What should one do in a situation like this ??? Obviously, considering my temporary home had a great kitchen and dining area: dinner parties with film shows for desert !!! So, that is what transpired. I never managed to get them all together at once, but we have begun a timeless tradition: the East End Docufilm Society.

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