

## *From the Kitchen*

19 May 2010



The earth is cloud-hidden and the sky a range of blues. Yes, I'm flying again. It seems to be a new habit, writing while travelling.

Certainly, viewing the earth from the perspective of 35 000 feet makes a difference when thinking about things. This may be why people sit on top of mountains to meditate. Of course, one can meditate anywhere, but being able to sit with eyes open and see a large part of the earth's surface spread out below automatically gives a different quality to the meditation.

Hurting through the air in a closed container is also not the same as floating and gliding suspended from a paraglider. Paragliding, or hang-gliding, forces a more intimate relationship with the atmosphere – the air currents and thermals. There is immediacy, as there is with sailing.

When I do something that requires awareness outside the norm, my focus is not that of the day-to-day. When sailing, I sense the wind and the currents, my brain processing nuances in speed and direction, my hands feeling and responding to the changing tugs on the mainsail and tiller. When I'm merely out and about, I don't have the same keen awareness of the wind, because it isn't necessary.

When I listen to music, I pick up so many changes in the layered sounds, indentifying instruments, recognising harmonies and cadences. I can do the same when in the bush, if I decide to *really* listen to the birdsong and the sounds of the wind in the vegetation.

As I've written before, when I have a camera in my hands, I see things very differently and see things I otherwise may not. I assume that people who are single and wanting to be in a relationship will look at other people around them and notice things about them that I would not, as I'm not looking.

I am a storyteller. I thus weave things I hear and see into possible scenarios. When reading others' work, I'm aware of their use of language, the way they create characters and how what they've included in and omitted from their story makes it a pleasure to read, or not. These are the winds and ocean currents of the story.

Outside all these, how much am I aware of the winds and currents of life? If I trained myself better to be aware of them more keenly, I would probably sail through life more easily and less often hit rocks or get stuck in shallows, or get tossed around in storms I did not see coming.

All this musing as I watch the changing shapes of clouds and the changing light playing on them. I can see the roads below and tiny moving dust clouds caused by cars. The drivers cannot see what conditions are like at their destination, but I can. There are very local rain showers in places, moving areas of intense sunlight, larger areas of dust where the wind is scouring the earth and small and large patches of things burning. I can see all this but can do nothing to influence it and I'm not affected by it. If I were potentially at the mercy of all this,

I would not have the vast overview – it's one or the other. The one thing this lofty overview gives me, is an appreciation of how local and ephemeral it all is. I would be wise to remember that when I'm grounded again.

There are also the internal currents, tides, zephyrs and maelstroms to be aware of and respond to. Failure to do so may cause winds to escape. I learned in England in the 1970s that my body can tell me whether something I am about to ingest will have positive or negative effects on me or be neutral. Much of this I learned through trial and error and through having to endure the consequences of ignoring the messages. The most obvious thing I learned with this training was that my body expresses the negative signs of having that extra cake or that third cup of coffee, before I actually indulge. Thus I am spared the clear consequences.

The plane commences its glide path down to Melbourne airport. Its autopilot receives a stream of information which it uses to make continual corrections. It has to respond to wind speed and direction, air temperature changes (affecting lift), turbulence, etc. When I'm back on *terra firma* I will again have to do my own navigating through the vicissitudes of life, responding to the currents and winds. That is, after all, what makes life exciting.