

Conversations With Remarkable People

"Second Sunday" Salon

Sunday evening — 5 PM Potluck followed by conversation from 6 - 8 PM

Fall 2009 • September 13 • October 11 • November 8

Sponsored by Marv Thomas

A salon is a gathering of people who come together for interesting conversation. Conversation is one of the threads that run through the fabric of good community. When we dance together in honest openness, our spirits soar and our lives blossom. The salon is one stage for that dance.

The format is simple. We will gather first around a potluck to catch up with old friends and meet new ones and to chat informally with the presenter. Then we will start with the evening's guest sharing their passion and mastery until we get warmed up enough to launch into a conversation of our own making.

We all know people who have amazing things to offer from their work and life experience, but outside of the formal settings within which they hold forth—like the job site or office, studio, classroom, or the stage—few people have the opportunity to hear what they have to say. In this series of conversations you will sit with a wide variety of people who will have the opportunity to casually talk about their work. They will have a chance to share the song that sings in their heart. And as they do you will be inspired and invited to enter in with your own ideas.

This monthly series began in the fall of 2008 and so far has featured a dancer, artist, Qi Gung teacher, concert master, Buddhist monk, and other equally interesting folks.

Where: The home of Marv and Peggy Thomas; **11013 Alton Avenue NE, Seattle, WA 98125**

When: Second Sunday of each month — Potluck at 5 PM — Guest presenter: 6 - 8 PM

More Information: marv@marvthomas.com or (206) 364-9494

No Cost: These events are an experiment and gift to you

Fall 2009 Salon Guests

September 13 Leonard Shaw — Master psychotherapist

After decades of experience, a true psychotherapist will evolve into an amalgam of healer, wise sage, psychologist, mystic, lover and ordinary person. Leonard is such a man. He has worked with thousands of families, couples, groups, professional psychologists, and prisoners over the last 50 years. And mostly he has worked on his own personality and trod his unique personal spiritual path, bringing to his work a commitment to observe, moment by moment, truth and honesty and the conviction that love is at the core of a full life. Len has always stood at the cutting edge of the quest to be authentically human. Disguised as an ordinary fellow, he will impress you with his ability to be present in the moment.

October 11 Marv Thomas — Community Guy

Relationships are the heart of community. Marv, a clinical social worker and author of several books, has devoted the last 30 years to understanding the inner workings of community and developing a way to explain it in everyday language. He has come to see community as the web of relationships that makes life work. At the core of all community is a complex web of links between people. You will be fascinated by his simple demonstration about weaving those connections in your every day life. It is guaranteed to stimulate a very lively conversation and maybe change how you navigate in your personal circles of people.

November 8 Diana Garcia — Choreographer - World Dancer

Dancing is one of the most ancient forms of expression and still lives on in the heart of each of us. Dancing is at the core of what it is to be human. Diana has spent decades mastering: ballet, modern and improvisational dance and Butoh, a Japanese Zen form of expression through movement. Now she is integrating social psychology, modern psychological thinking and mystical spiritual practices into her repertoire. She studied with a Mexican shaman and Zen master and is a serious personal explorer, a teacher, performer and choreographer. She first appeared in the Salon September 2008. You will be delighted by her playful style, challenging approach and broad perspective.

Future Guests

In the works is a fascinating conversation with a forest researcher • A demonstration of Psychodrama • An experience with the originator of Café conversation • A civil engineer who will blow you socks off with the information he has about earthquakes and how engineering impacts your life • An experience in group centered conversation • An evening with a cop who works the streets while you sleep. Keep posted.

Create your Own Salon

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I am often asked the question: "How do I bring my friends together so they can renew their connections, meet new people and have fun together?" One easy way is to create a salon—a drop in gathering where people share conversation around an interesting topic. Salons take many forms, though one way is to invite folks you know to come listen to a friend talk about something they love. It could be cooking, cross stitch sewing or their experience in Bali. The idea is the guest has a chance to talk about something that is very interesting to them and others can join in the conversation. Host these events at regular intervals so that people can get to know each other. It usually takes about seven times before a groups relaxes enough to let down and be totally comfortable with each other. So be patient and keep inviting the same people back over and over.

The following story and conversation guidelines are excerpted from my upcoming book: [Embracing the Heart of Community -A Complete Guide to Your Personal Village](#) by Marvin Thomas. Use it for ideas.

Third Sunday

Ann reached up into the hat and pulled out a question. Unfolding it, she read: "Have you ever been to a psychic? Do you think they are real?"

Ed replied immediately, "Oh sure, I see a psychic. She seems to know things that blow me away. It's good. I think she is for real." And with that the group was off, with each person sharing his or her experience of psychics and what they thought of them.

Finally Sherrie said, "That was my question. I made an appointment with a psychic and I have never been to one. I wondered if I was crazy or something." To which everyone chimed in that she should go and listen with her intuition to what the woman had to say. And then they pulled another question out of the hat.

Jose and Joanna host this particular salon. Meeting the first Sunday of every month, their procedure is quite simple. They open by inviting everyone to put a question into the hat, and before they begin Jose reviews the rules about how to hold a salon conversation. You will find those rules on the next page. The hat is passed around, one at a time the questions are pulled out, and the dialogue begins. Unless the writer claims ownership, the group does not ask whose question they are discussing. Each person must respond briefly so that everyone has a chance to share. All questions are respected and all responses are respected as the truth of that person. Challenging what someone said is minimal. Instead, each person responds to the question on the floor with what springs from inside themselves. If the conversation drifts away from the intent of dialoguing about the topic on the floor, Jose or Joanna will bring it back into focus. Jose keeps the time so each question gets its fair share of attention.

A sample of typical questions

- *What qualities make civility more likely, and is civility always a virtue?*
- *Do you pray? Why? What's your definition of prayer?*
- *What is your favorite joke?*
- *Are you in favor of capital punishment?*
- *What would you like people to say about you at your funeral?*

Jose's and Joanna's salon is open to anyone who is willing to stick to the rules. They put out an open invitation by word of mouth and their e-mail network. A steady core of the same folks comes every time, with a few new people each time and irregulars dropping in occasionally. They solve the problem of latecomers by starting with an informal gathering over a potluck breakfast that lasts for half an hour. By the end of that time, most of the participants have arrived and written their questions. Then they begin with little interruption.

Salon Conversation Guidelines

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1. Share your own experience. Tell your own story. Avoid telling someone else's story. Speak your truth. Respect what every person shares as his or her truth. Let that truth stand on the floor, and add your own. Be careful not to criticize or attack what another has said or shared. Instead, add what it stimulated inside of you. Let the collective wisdom build.
2. This is a conversation, not a lecture. Keep your comments brief so everyone has a chance to share. Be careful not to turn your response into a sermon. If you want to give a lecture, save that for another place. Simply speak about what springs up inside you in response to the evolving conversation.
3. Every response is the right response for that moment.
4. Sometimes people will share things about themselves that are quite private. Hold what they share in confidence.
5. If a deep feeling arises, own it. If you get overwhelmed with emotion, you can share it or take a time-out. You do not have to rescue others from their emotions. Usually it is best to sit with feelings rather than try to do anything about them. This is not a therapy group.
6. Remember that conflict is simply an expression of differences. Each person has a truth that might be different from someone else's truth, and strong feelings can arise. Let the differences stand and keep searching for the deeper truth that is emerging in the conversation.
7. Never forget that each individual in the circle is a unique person with hopes, dreams, disappointments, and strong feeling for themselves and others. They are in this conversation because they want more vitality and connection to themselves and others. Even if someone becomes provocative or aggressive, respond with kindness and patience and respect.
8. Be careful that you do not take the dialogue off on some tangent without the consent of the group. If you are in doubt, ask others if they want to go in that direction.
9. Speak as you are moved. You can pass anytime you want. Listening can be a very powerful experience and a contribution to the circle.
10. Treat every person with generosity, and caring and with the same respect you would give a customer if you were attending them. Every person is trying their best to live a good life and deserve warmth and caring. Treat everyone as if they were a great being—they are.