



Risky Changes: An Artist's Metamorphosis From Clutz to Survivor

Norma Reznikoff/ Goodridge Furman

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New York City at the end of the W W2 , Norma was the so called “gifted” child of two immigrant parents living in the Bronx. Her 10 year old sister and she, 5 years risked drunks and sexual predators on the subway, for children’s art lessons in Manhattan . Fast Forward to Washington Square in the early 50’s, Cooper Union Art and Engineering School in the East Village, odd smells, sexism and racism. Upon graduation at age 19, a big Bronx wedding led to a life not about art but about, diapers, , smoking, yo yo dieting, shopping, and local politics in the Suburbs. Her son’s Schizophrenia led her back to college to study Child Psychology and after hitting the “glass ceiling” she let down her long hair and met , Audrey. Her consciousness was raised, and bisexuality, group sex and bigger bolder paintings happened. A major risky change Then suburban swinging, led to her escape from the “burbs” to the “big apple” to risk a new life of art and “free” love with her new model and new partner, Stash, who had already lived a risky life as paratrooper and world traveler. But, group sex and “love circles “ turned ugly, unhealthy... too risky, so they stopped. In the mid ‘70s with New York and the whole world it seemed going Disco crazy. Stash and Norma became Disco Van 2000 The Traveling Discotheque at private parties in hotels, yachts, the Towers at the World Trade Center...for record producers, rock stars, politicians, Broadway casts, sweet sixteen’s, bar Mitzvahs and the doomed Studio 54. In order to survive the unhealthy lifestyle, in the ‘80s she made another risky change. They sold literally everything and at first as city slickers they camped in a 35ft motor coach, but traveling awakened their interest in American history. They learned Black powder shooting, slept in teepees and covered wagons, learned how the early pioneers took risks .She produced hundreds of charcoal portraits of “mountain Men” “tradesmen” “squaws” and “wenches” as “Soulcatcher” while they traveled and hiked the back roads the width and breadth of Middle America as costumed Muzzleloaders. When they discovered the hellishly hot and cleansing southwest it was love at first sight. They took the risk to buy primitive land in the San tan mountains wilderness ,They called it our Rock Peak Retreat ; they hauled their water and put up solar panels for electricity. Norma started painting feverishly in oils and acrylics, out doors under a canvas awning with humming birds and bees buzzing her colored brush water. They walked the hills, experimented with exercise, made their own vitamin pills, followed fads, read books, joined gyms with some positive changes but it all felt a little risky. The “experts’ seemed to contradict each other. One incredibly hot 110degree summer they both enrolled at Arizona State University to major in Physical Education Exercise Physiology with a specialty in Adult Fitness. Which became their lives for the next 20 years. During the those years in the 80’s and 90’s they lived in the motor coach in the desert, off the grid, depending on solar panels, hauling water, painting, showing and selling her art locally, going to school, and teaching exercise, she finally quit smoking and age 60 she was in the best shape of her life. though still intrigued with the idea that we could always pack up quickly and make another risky change. But everything changed again at the dawn of 2000 when Stash was diagnosed with bladder cancer. The VA declared him 100% disabled. They built a permanent studio/home on Rock peak. In the next years they struggled through illness, surgery, blunders, VA forms, questionable remedies, fasting, meditation, trial and error, academic research, exercise, static stretching, Walkaerobics, life experience and healing. For sure there is a capacity for improvement and change for the better in us all, at any age and in any condition. And its never too late to start ... again and again and again!

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