

314 words, column #42  
Java Talk  
(for February 14 to February 20, 2008)

## **Every Age Is The Best Age**

*For Goodness Sakes, Snakes*

Around fifteen years ago, I clipped a poem titled, 'Nice Snake', by Godfrey John, from an edition of *The Christian Science Monitor*. The poet said, "This poem is spun from a story I was told of an actual little girl in Africa." I have saved this poem all these years, often thinking about its meaningfulness to me, especially the line, "Innocence is immanent".

When I was little, growing up and playing in the midst of a Garry Oak ecosystem, it was not unusual for the boys to collect wagonfuls of snakes. The girls tended to be more interested in finding furry buds, from native Pussy Willows, to keep as little pets in grass-lined matchboxes. So, when someone asked me if I was afraid of snakes, I said I didn't know. But, later, while sitting in a crevice on one of the rock outcrops, I suddenly found myself surrounded by snakes, and was definitely terrified. Until my twenties, I remained far too afraid to go anywhere I thought snakes could be.

Then I moved here, to another Garry Oak setting. And now, many years later, I have a good collection of stories about how I had to get over my fear of snakes, especially with my cats bringing them inside. Mowing the lawn also meant watching for snakes, so as to not hit them, or be startled by them. But, being on a hill, I also "persuaded" them to slide over the lawn edge to the lower boulevard, until it was noticeable there weren't any snakes left. Fortunately, the boulevard has always been filled with native plants.

I plan to tell 'Nice Snake' at the next Victoria Storytellers' Guild's "Stories at Fern", where all types of stories are told and listened to. This month's gathering is on Monday, February 18, 2008, from 7:15 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., at 1831 Fern Street. (Adults \$5, Students \$3).

Deidre Hill