

Me and My Shadow

By Mary Jane McCormick

I continue to adapt to this thing we call retirement, which I have re-coined 're-time-ment.' I almost get exhausted just thinking about the pace I had to maintain when I was in the work force. What a difference it makes when I'm not chasing time down the rabbit hole.

The forgotten books on my shelves are now jumping into my lap. I have rediscovered authors like Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell. I am grappling with two me(s); the one that came into the world whole and intact and the 'ego-me' that society insisted I become.

At an early age, we all go through a cultural process in which we sort personality characteristics into those that are acceptable to society and those that have to be put away. We end up with some variation of 'ego me' and 'shadow me.'

Carl Jung spent years discovering and describing where these rejected characteristics go and how they collect in the dark corners of our personalities. These parts of ourselves are relegated to the shadow because they find no place in that artificially imposed structure we call culture.

So I've made a decision to take a look at this misconnection between me and my shadow. The 'ego me' divides everything into opposites: right or wrong, good or bad, light or dark. I'm hoping that acknowledging the 'shadow me' will give my life more room to breathe.

The book I'm reading titled *Owning Your Own Shadow*, talks about how the first half of our lives are devoted to study, career, family and social positioning. The second half can be devoted to restoring wholeness; that wholeness each of us was born with. This has everything to do with balance. This is one of Carl Jung's greatest insights: that the ego and shadow come from the same source and exactly balance each other.

I guess what I am hearing is that there is gold in them there shadows. And to think all this time I thought they were skeletons in my closet. Not sure where I am going with all this but I can sense a promise of a new vitality.