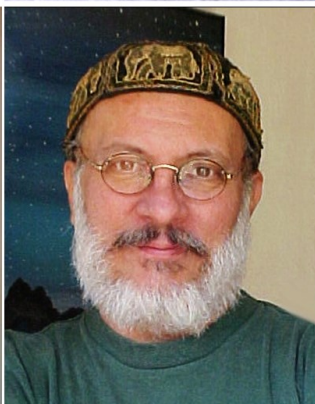




*Meetings With  
Remarkable  
Moments*  
**DOUGLAS DAVIS**  
*March 29, 1951 - January 10, 2023*





## Introduction

Everything you are about to read is true.

The events that took place in my life so far were nourished by the interaction with people, by being in the right place at the wrong time, or by being in the right place at the right time!

My anecdotal stories and achievements left impressions on people. I bulldozed through life in my quest for Enlightenment, and pursuing self-discovery about why I am so weird. Despite feeling like a stranger in a strange land, I'm proud to have taught people, and amazed at how I got so lucky. For me, everything I do or choose to absorb must have purpose and meaning.

Everything is measurable. In fact, a little too measurable. Actuaries, data gatherers, and psychologists can peg you in a short time. I am unusual. If a graph was made of people's lives, some have bad luck, and many have good luck. I am an extreme algorithm.

My greatest fear is being caught unawares.  
My greatest joy is discovering something new.



*Favorite photo of a wave breaking with the Flagler Beach pier in background.*



## **Preface**

I did not seek fame, wealth, power or love.  
They came unto me, because I was my authentic self.  
I let all but one go. Love is self-effulgent,  
because I am my authentic self.

I sought enlightenment.  
I sought the hidden in the obvious,  
and the obvious in the hidden.  
I strove to remember that everything is connected,  
that everything has meaning and purpose.  
I surrendered to the Tao.  
That my fate was revealed through synchronicity and coincidences  
Which I could not escape.  
And they did not escape me, because I am my authentic self.  
My greatest fear is being caught unawares.  
My greatest joy is discovering something new.  
I am neurodivergent. For me, there is no box.  
I cherish my authentic self.  
Love, Wisdom, and Power found me, because I am my authentic self.  
Angels come and visit me, because I am so much fun to hang out with,  
because I am my authentic self.

I sought not certificates, degrees, and information.  
I sought knowledge through sensation.  
I realized experience is the best teacher.  
Thank you, my authentic self.

Thank you to any human being who got within 6 feet of me,  
or heard my name.

No one gets me, not even me.



## **Satisfaction Is Not Overrated**

I am the hero of my own mystical journey. My quest for the Holy Grail began at an eerily early age. Even at nine years old, I was developing a strong sense of me, myself, a timeless self. That induced dreams, visions, and sensations in my body, so I paid attention to them. Some sensitive children have an imaginary friend. I had an imaginary milieu, a knowing. I knew that I knew something, but I couldn't remember it. Besides, I loved being human and hungry for the invisible, so there began my mystical journey.

The following stories are a hodgepodge of experiences that must be told. Individually, they are complete unto themselves. If you stand back and look at the whole, there are not only chapters, but stages of personal growth, very much spiritual growth, but also prologue. It's as if I did exactly what I needed to do to be ready for the next project or to ascend to the next level of my journey.

At the age of 18, I was a hermit in a real log cabin in the woods for a whole winter. Reading Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and Buckminster Fuller was cathartic, because they excited my sense of actual oneness with nature and life. But my favorite books were Siddhartha by Herman Hesse and Kundalini by Gopi Krishna.

I identified with Siddhartha and saw how the quest is long term. I grew up privileged, insanely provided for. But I gave it all up. I saw how Siddhartha went to extreme measures to become a great soul. I experience everything as being predetermined. It just takes time.

I found another map, the one created by Gopi. After 70+ years, the stages of awakening Kundalini and his subtle, meaningful stories mirrored my experiences—a series of clues that remain fresh in my mind today. This all happened early on. I was only 18. I learned to trust, and swam with the coincidences, and became famous for being weird. Such is the cocoon for a Mystic.

The next chapter of the process began in the 1980s when I became rich, famous, and powerful. Just as Buddha abandoned sacrifice and poverty to become a wealthy rug dealer, I took on the adventure as well. Trying to hide



my mystic self from the world and from myself, I found Maharaj Ji. He provided a new map for my journey. Suddenly, it gave me meaning, but also a hidden glimpse into the juicy, unpredictable barrage of experiences and events in my life. Experience is the best teacher, because you get to absorb and realize it for yourself. Hence, the myriad path to Self-realization.

I will briefly refer to stages in my life to his levels on his map. Everything is ceremony.

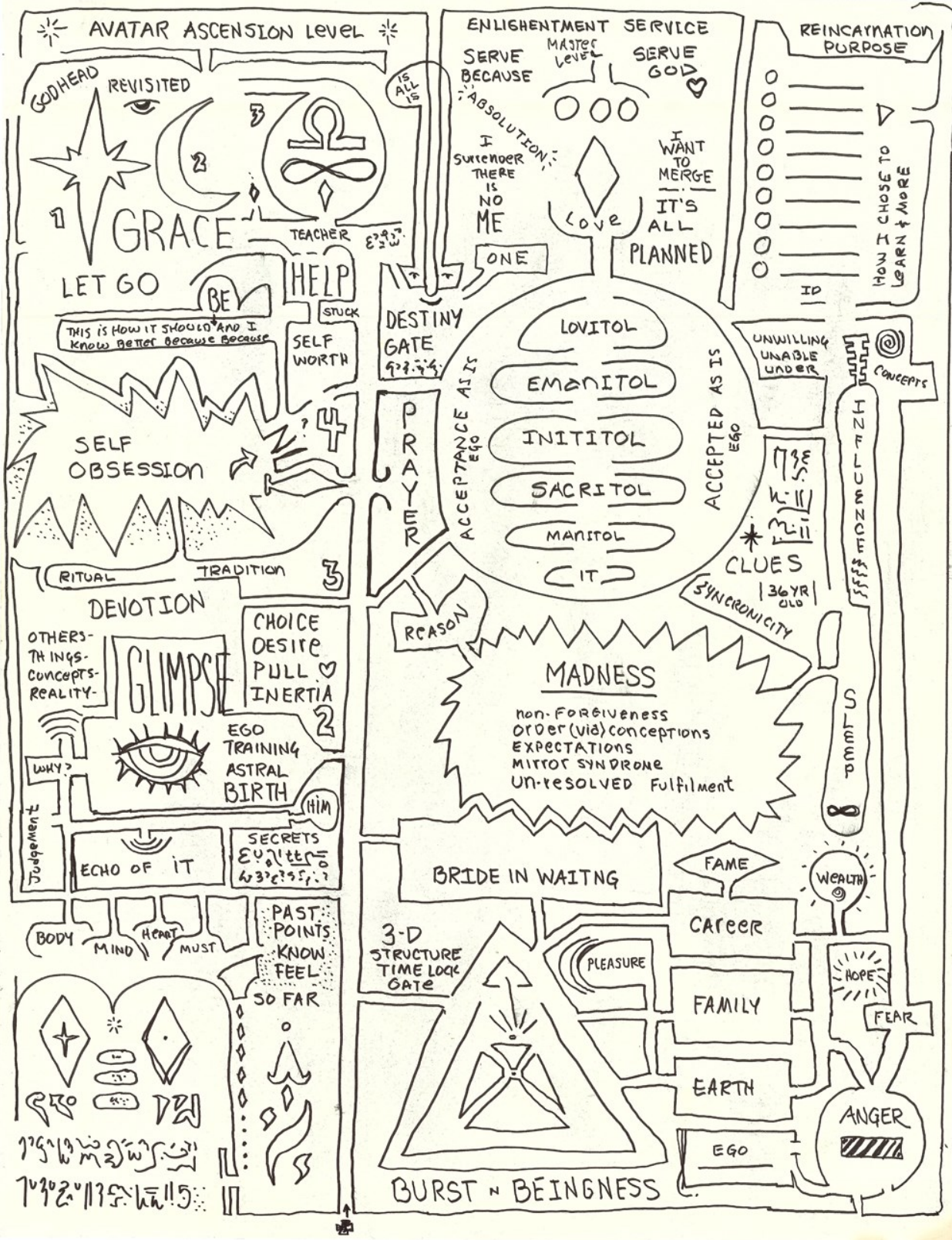
As a person, I look for meaning in everything. In my late teens, I came up with the idiom, The Hidden. I also agonized over why people do what they do. This lasted until the end of my first marriage – I'm guessing around age 28. Next, I created a new life, new friends, new job, and new interests. I literally reinvented myself.

So, that is my journey – the maps, correlation, cause and effect, as charted and chartered by my Higher Self.

Sorry I can't be with you. I wanna feel your vibe, and you can vibe me.







## My Favorite Obscure Brag Job

Talk about unusual things. During college and while raising a family, I had a part time late afternoon job at World Color. This company was famous for its worldwide color separations for print, such as catalogs, magazines, and postcards. Have you ever seen those postcards where the sky is just a little bit too blue? Or the flowers too red or bright? This is done by a specially trained artist technician called a Dot Etcher. The technique of too blue sky is done by masking. My job was to *not* do that to the sky, obviously a gimmick to sell postcards.

The transfer from any image, photo, artwork, or transparency to print involves using a special camera. By using a color wheel of cyan, magenta, yellow, and black, it actually takes four photos in sequence, and using a special screen, creates dots that compose the image. Those dots are different sizes used to create an image. Each of the four negatives has different dots in different areas. When the four negatives are aligned – each a different color of cyan, magenta, yellow, and black – the result becomes a colorful picture. Each of the four negatives are then burned onto a photosensitive metal printer's plate. The printer will take the four plates to his printer and ink each one cyan, magenta, yellow, and black. The size of the dots makes full color images look lifelike on paper.

As a Dot Etcher, I was both a technician and an artist. My job was to work at a special water wet light table, where I examined the negatives with a tiny magnifier called an Agfa Lupe. As a quality control worker, I looked at hundreds of separations. I could tell by looking at certain areas whether something was off. Maybe all the magenta dots were too large, producing an off-color print image, making the printer man scream. What to do?

This part was dangerous. The negative was wet and soft, and I used an even swipe, a total bath rinse on it of Potassium Ferro-Cyanide. Each brisk rinse reduces the size of the dot, which eats the silver in the emulsion, so basically, it's an acid bath. I would look at the dot size through the Agfa Lupe each time until the dot size was correct. Distinctively yellow, the acid bath I worked with was also similar to painting.

So, here we are, back to the tacky, weird, fake color postcards. I did that. While the negative was dry, I used rubber cement to mask certain areas. Rubber cement keeps an area dry. In a landscape, I covered all the trees with cement. I then wet the magenta separation on the running water light table. And then, using the Potassium Ferro-Cyanide with a brush, I just brushed the acid on the sky, shrinking the magenta dots to almost zero which results in a terribly blue, oh-God-no, blue sky. I was dangerous. I could isolate that to any image separation, any of the four colors of any size or shape on the negative.

Sure it's tacky, but there's more. Big Advertising Agencies, companies, artists, photographers, and customers required an artist technician to cover a flaw, bump up the pizzazz, tone down an area, focus on a product, use a different color scheme, and it's all legit.

Finally, this is a lost art. Photoshop does this in just a few clicks and swipes from a bloated menu. No wet light table, no Potassium Ferro-Cyanide, no special four negative camera you can play with, adjust, or use to make history.

Next time you see a rag comic book or the Sunday funny pages, look at the colors through a magnifier and check out the size of the yellow dots mixed with the cyan dots used to magically make green. I love magic, I love science, I love art. And I feel immense satisfaction that millions of people have seen my efforts, which were a tiny part of the whole process that just made the entire machine from start to finish possible worldwide. Yes, I worked at World Color.



## Eclipse

The legend of crazy during a full moon is widely known, and an eclipse is not far behind. This is one of three personal encounters with crazy during my first solar eclipse.

In the summer of 1963, everyone was excited about seeing the eclipse on July 20th, as its shadow swung over Maine. We had a 34-foot cabin cruiser moored at the Centerboard Yacht Club in Portland harbor. Every weekend, starting on Friday afternoon, we hauled enough belongings, vittles and Dad's two cases of Budweiser to the boat, enough to last us until our return on Sunday night. We would cruise up the coast, between all the small islands, for a calm scenic ride.

Dad had this obsession about where exactly his craft was anchored. He always worried it might be too close to his neighbors, who he thought were idiots. He fixated on placement, so today would be the third time he'd moved it, but not by himself. Bigger boats and burly men were involved. Actually, Dad liked seeing his boat clearly from his daily vantage point during his trip to and from work as he crossed the "million-dollar bridge."

Eclipses take time. People like a great excuse to party. Centerboard Yacht Club was a party place, unlike the snooty club in Yarmouth. The dock is maxed out space-wise with boats and people. I could tell that Dad was aloof, nervous, and fidgety about something. History tells us we all have to look for red flags.

The club had a fulltime launch tender who ferried owners to their craft. But every owner also owned a little dinghy or punt (AKA rowboat) that was crucial to tow on every trip. Everyone was super busy and enthralled with the idea that it would soon be dark as night for 10 minutes. People had their special eclipse filters and boxes ready.

Then I see it. The look in my dad's eyes. He grabs our rowboat and we row out to our mooring, the furthest boat out in the cluster of about 40 in all. So far out, the people on the dock are so small that in some instances you can't tell their gender. He's rowing, very quiet. I have no clue what's up, because our boat is docked and Mom and Beth and Chris are hanging out there. I'm suspicious. I'm already altered from the cosmos.

I mentioned the eclipse is starting. He replies, "This will only take a few minutes."

He reaches for the buoy that is ours and starts pulling the line, the rope affixed to a heavy-duty chain which is welded to a large old refrigerator. It's big and heavy enough to keep our boat swinging with the tides and the wind. Gruffly, he directs me to sit on the bow and lean back far enough, but don't fall overboard. Now I get it. I'm ballast, and he's going to move the fridge himself.

He pulls each chain link slowly over the punt's wooded gunnel. With each chain link scraping over the edge, his end of the punt gets lower, and I'm starting to balance and ballast as best I can. While not admitting that this is crazy as a loon, he keeps pulling. The chain digs into the wood, and the weight causes that corner to dip into the cold sea bit by bit.

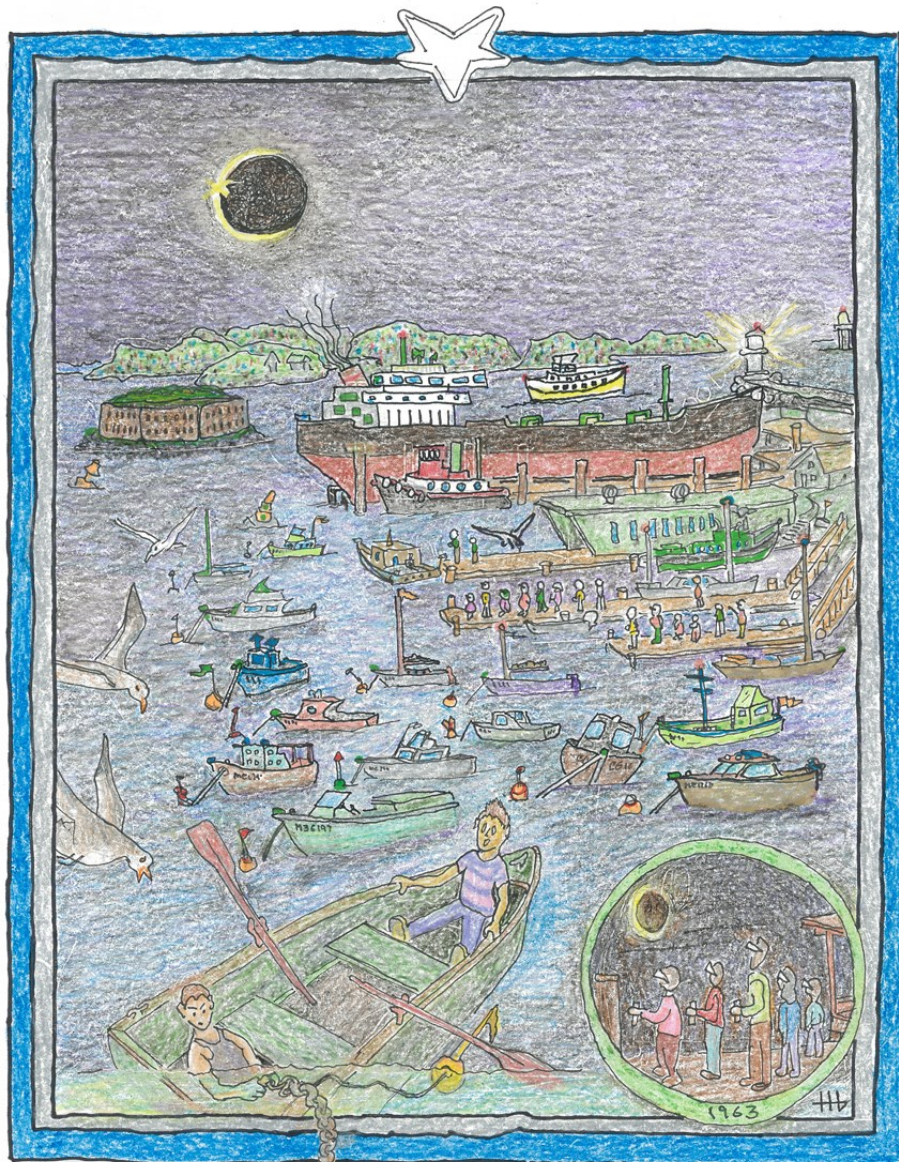
Now it's getting darker. Dad keeps pulling. Water flows in. I can't bail, because I'm half out of the boat over the bow. It's getting darker. Dad keeps yanking. Water rushes in, about a gallon each time. It's getting even darker. He's angry that this isn't working for him, but he keeps pulling. I'm only 13, but I can see that this is not only crazy but an epic fail.

Suddenly, I notice my duty of balance and ballast is not working. The punt is level. The punt is full of water, and the chain is stuck, and he won't let go. The boat is full of water. It's freezing cold. We're sinking, the world is dark, and no one has a clue that we need help. Everyone is looking up. No one can see us or hear us. We are yelling and waving an oar just enough so as not to tip over. The punt is heavy wood; we are level and filled with the water, and this is beyond self-repairable. So, for 10 minutes more, we wave and scream, starting to shiver.

Suddenly, appearing between two boats, the launch tender heads toward us at full speed. Men to the rescue. They sidled up to us, and I got in the launch. The men freed the chain from the gunnel, and it distinctly rattled back into the sea, leaving the buoy swaying like it had never happened. Because the fridge never moved. We left the punt tied to the buoy, and it was barely visible. Finally, we got back to the dock. Mom was hysterical, and most people were too high or too wasted to even know what happened. I don't remember much after that. I was only 13. My brain was far from fully developed. I remember changing

clothes and wrapping up in a big blanket, and that was that. We never talked about it. I knew better than to ask.

Maybe that could have happened any day of the week, but I know better. This was my first encounter with an eclipse—a bit of crazy—and now I know the signs and tells. My brain is fully developed.



Solar Eclispe  
July 20 1963



## Weathering the Storm

I love it when a noun becomes a verb. *Weathering the storm*. Yes, we have all been in many. Hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, and even lightning. Everyone has been in one or two, but I have been in all of them . . . several times. Yep, I've been hit by lightning twice, but that's a whole other story.

I love thunderstorms. All of them. The smell of ozone, petrichor, the negative ions. I love to stand outside, sheltering, counting lightning strikes timed to thunderclap. I've seen lightning strike a tree just 50 yards from me. From my porch, over 30 years, I've seen lightning kill six trees in a half-acre area. Hope no one builds there. There, you are all caught up.

At 6 years old, I experienced my first earthquake in Maine, of all places. My grandmother and I were in the kitchen for breakfast. The ground shook, wobbly, wobbly. I tried to crawl under the giant cast iron stove. All I could see was Grammy's legs and slippers. I stood up, and I vividly recall us staring at each other and both laughing out loud.

My second earthquake was in California – no surprise there. It was fairly major. Cathy and I were visiting her sister. She lived in this lovely little California cottage on a San Bernardino mountainside. High density neighborhood. You don't even have enough grass between dwellings to mow. It's the second day of our visit, and it's 6 a.m. Boom, rumble, rumble. As the earth unleashed, the noise of the building crunching, glass shattering, and kitchen stuff rattling was loud. Then quiet. No electricity, no street lights. Silence for about three minutes.

Finally, we heard people in the cul de sac: "Hello? Everyone alright?" No cries for help. Judy found a flashlight. We are all fine. No water leaks. We all just gather personal items in the dark. It's dawn, and the gray blue light creates a silhouette on the horizon. The hillside and building look okay. As the morning grew brighter, light sifted into the building through the floor to ceiling cracks. Once we were finally able to see, we realized the building was so askew that we couldn't get out. Door frozen, two remaining windows frozen, and back door had a dirt-slide up to the doorknob. Warning: The door opens *in*.

I took some handy object and broke what was left of the glass and scraped all the glass edges from the frame, and we crawled out the window. Then the

sirens started. But no smoke. The neighborhood came together with snacks. Finally around noon, we packed our safe-and-sound VW bug with personals and essentials, and we drove in traffic at 5 miles per hour to the home of the sister's boyfriend place in Hollywood.

My first flood and hurricane was on Champion Street at Higgins Beach during a hurricane in 1958. Just one block from the shoreline, we had a darling little wood cottage. Because it was 1958, weather reports were limited to a transistor radio. Basically, the storm came on fast, and we were trapped at the beach. There was only one way out, and the local civil defense beach dude said the road was already under storm surge.

I remember Dad and Granddad yelling in the storm, getting the shutters up and nailed, making them secure. Mom was totally freaked out. Grammy was moving smaller stuff away from windows and moving larger things like a bookcase and stuff in front of the windows. At that point, the howl of the storm was constant. Seeing all four candle flames in each corner of the room flat out horizontal from the wind inside was . . . freaky. Finally, too windy for candles, all we had was an old train-style kerosene lamp.

For a few hours, the howl went on. Eventually, it got worse, and the adults became alarmed. We could hear moving water right outside the building. Not good. Mom grabbed my bro and me, and we bundled up on the bed. I heard my dad in the next room screaming "Jesus Christ" too many times in a row. Mom, while squeezing us, blurted, "Jack, Jack, Jack." Grammy and Granddad, pretty much watching my parents lose it, were quiet, and looked at each other like, "Yeah, we've been through this before."

I look over the edge of the bed, and I realize the braid rug, popular at that time, was moving. Then it floated away. After that, I saw the water come through the tiny cracks in the 1910 hand-hewn wood floorboards. *Oh, now I get it.*

I lay on the bed watching the flickering shadows from the kerosene lamp on the ceiling, and I fell asleep. The next day was your basic chaos. The end story is that Higgins Beach saw the corps of engineers build their first sea wall. Granddad bought another cottage up the hill and a bit further inland. It was made of stone. All stone. We called it Beachstone.

## **I Was Foxfire Before Foxfire**

The Legend of Maple Syrup. The taste is remarkable. The syrup you buy today is corn syrup with flavoring. Real maple syrup, distilled from live trees, is like buying Cognac.

I love trees. I was so young when I first tasted maple syrup, but old enough to be creative. I lived in a neighborhood, but my back yard was literally woods. Old growth variety. One spring, with a bit of snow still on the ground, I noticed certain trees were bleeding. This clear fluid was drooling out of the trunks! Pine trees do this as well. It's called sap. Don't touch it, and certainly don't eat it. (This isn't entirely true—it used to get processed and became chewing gum.)

This clear liquid had a very subtle, plant sugar taste to it. There must have been two dozen trees ripe and ready within 100 feet of the back door. After a few days of brainstorming, I hauled my little red wagon out there, filled with those old glass milk bottles with the big lips, a couple of coat hangers, pliers, and a bunch of 3" copper ends – just little short pieces of copper pipe – and a hammer.

Tapping a maple tree isn't difficult. Push the copper tube just far enough into the tree to hold the weight of a full bottle. Wrapping the coat hanger around the copper pipe and the lip of the milk bottle is all that's needed. I tapped my first five trees. Stood and watched in near darkness, as it gets dark in Maine at 4:30, and I was a little disappointed because nothing was happening. Well, that would soon change.

The next morning, as excited as any 9-year-old boy is with a new project, I ran out to look at the trees, without my wagon or even my coat.

All the bottles were full! And overflowing. Panic and success at once. I had no other empty bottles that day! Mom had a huge stove pot used for cooking 4 lobsters at a time, perfect for simmering. I remember carrying two bottles at a time back to the kitchen. All five bottles in the pot. Five empty bottles that I could then replace in their spot. In my adventure to be creative and fun, I basically created a monster. More bottles, more coat hangers and pipes, better production logistics. (I didn't what that word, logistics, meant back then, but I do now.) And never leave the wagon back at the house.

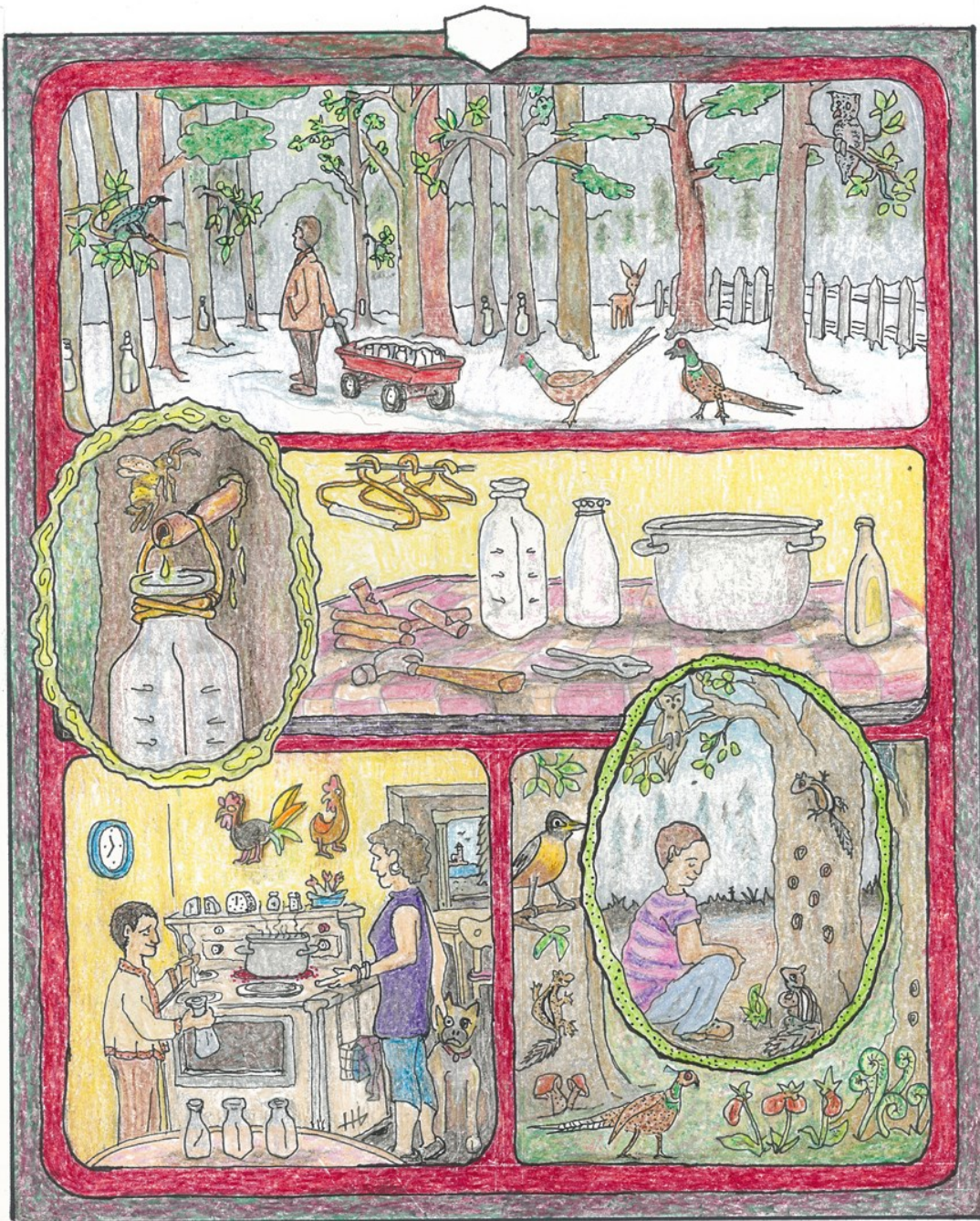


Yeah, never leave without your wagon. One clear, sunny day, the morning run already completed, I checked at around noon without my wagon and all the bottles were full again. If you ever hear a Northerner say, "The sugar is running," that means it's at its peak in the very short season, and it literally runs and runs.

I did this for five years. I grew up and became a teenager with other things on my mind. I also went to school in New York and was absent in the spring for obvious reasons. The week I came home from school, my parents were in the process of moving, because they had sold the house. Walking around the house—bare walls, boxes, most furniture gone—I was okay, no reaction really. I went to the back yard—swing set gone, sandbox rotted, a new fence erected by the neighbor. Change happens.

During my last nostalgic walk through the woods, I remembered that I had a tree fort, seeing lady slippers grow wild between the trees. The TREES. I walked over to one and saw the history of my pleasure. Each year I had tapped a different place. The healing bark circles, each a different age and a beautiful timeline, made me cry. I was only fifteen, but I had a sense of gratitude that lifted me up beyond my grief about moving, of not sapping anymore. I hugged the tree and thanked it for the gift. I hugged just about all of them. I felt a couple of them return the energy and love.

I can still visualize the mornings with a slight chill, seeing deer and chipmunk footprints in the fresh fallen snow, investigating the strange things on the trees, and drinking the liquid of the gods. Thinking back, I feel my relationship to trees and to birds is my motif in this life. I was a shaman in the early 60s. I didn't know what that was, but I was doing it.



Distillation

## Leak Soup

For a week now I've been composing the narrative of this complex episode. Call it the inexplicable confluence of events, or a destined moment with all the flavor of Mothman and an unlikely Shaman, with what I call AAOA, a.k.a. Aux Angels on Assignment, all coming to single point. Either way, decide for yourself as I attempt to explain how it came to pass, using the hidden meanings of a small series of events that remain intimate to me, because I am an INFJ personality type. For those not familiar with the Myers-Briggs Personality types, the INFJ, which stands for "introversion, intuition, feeling, and judgment," is the rarest type of personality. I experienced this via repeated visits from my higher spirit self, juxtaposing itself into what I simply call "normal reality."

My friend, Sharon and I had been planning a trip back to the east coast of Florida, Flagler Beach and St. Augustine, for a few weeks. We had planned it for the week of March 23<sup>rd</sup> for two days, but colder temps and spring break influenced us to reschedule it for the week of March 29<sup>th</sup>, which also happens to be my birthday.

On the fridge is our dry-erase message board, and we do a countdown each day and add little cartoons. Each day I changed the date, I would also use a black marker to add a couple birds.

Despite a schedule change, most times it is advantageous to go with the flow. We were looking forward to seeing a few old friends in Flagler, eat at the *Funky Pelican* restaurant on the pier, and check out the city of St. Augustine.

Sharon had a late night date in that area, and she was excited about the trip. We were really hoping for a couple of good days of beach weather, and being free of the nasty pollen affecting both of us, pollen so thick we could literally see it floating in the air off our porch.

We arrived at Flagler in good spirits. Crossing the scenic bridge and seeing the abrupt change from miles of pine trees to an aerial view of the beach from upon high is a small rush. Our first stop was the old A1A Motel, which had once been our summer abode for six weeks. The 60s retro motel was remodeled and under new management, with the inevitable rate hike. We didn't cotton to it at all for future fun. We walked next door to see the owner



of the cafe and visit the gopher turtles. Unfortunately, we didn't see the turtles, and the owner drew a complete blank on us. We felt that was pretty much a clue as a final end to an era.

We had already decided it was too windy to just sit on the beach, even though we had brought all the beach accoutrements: chairs, towels, and a boogie-board. We decided to go for a short walk instead.

We love birds. Birds are often a messenger for good cheer and an accelerated moment, always a good omen. We came upon a large grackle sitting on a patch of lawn. He looked wounded. Carefully, we approached him, and he seemed fine with this. He wasn't standing or sitting. He appeared to be kneeling, which is why we thought he was injured. He looked at us without fear. Turns out he was fine and eating a big worm. I took a picture, and he even seemed fine with that. You never know what a grackle will do. One of us said, as we walked on, "That was interesting."

We headed for the Flagler Museum but arrived two minutes after closing. One of us said, "Okay..." in a tone one would use when things don't work out. At this point we were just a little fogged from allergies, more than a little hungry, and a tad bereft.

We decided on an early dinner at the *Funky Pelican*. Good food was a certainty, and we really needed that. Dinner was great, the service was delightful, and we got to watch the flock of grackles on the pier through the huge windows. Sharon was chatting about her date later, and I was holding space for her as the anticipation was growing. We'd already mentioned how things were awkward so far, and it had only been a few hours. Passing on dessert, we left, feeling a little better.

If you know the pier in Flagler Beach, you know the crosswalk. It's laid out wide, with enormous stripes and yellow flashing lights and additional signs all around it. You must stop for pedestrians. Sharon stepped off ahead of me by two to three steps. I was less than halfway across my half of the street, when I heard a loud noise. A black sports car was approaching from the left, and I could see it out of the corner of my eye. He was not only *not* coming to a stop, he gunned it, and I swear I could feel the breeze from the whole car as he sped by. What a tool. After he narrowly missed me, I reacted with a yell, which he ignored. There were witnesses but we decided to blow it off.

We decided then and there that maybe Flagler wasn't what we needed that day.

We then decided to go on to St. Augustine. Bright-eyed, fed, and enthusiastic about seeing new things in St. Augustine, we headed north. Along the way we decided to stop at the St. Augustine Pier, which Sharon had been to before. Yet in all my years in Florida, I seemed to have simply missed it.

Though it was still windy, we dragged out our cameras for a few possible photo opportunities. We took only a couple of photos as the "light wasn't right." The pier was filled with jumpy, loud grackles—too jumpy to pose for a decent photo—which is why it was so unusual to see the grackle in Flagler so docile.

As we were leaving, a huge grackle flew around me. He landed on a cluster of radio antennas right over my head and was screaming at me. I stood under him and got a great shot of him, as he was only five feet from me, but I had a feeling that I shouldn't take a snapshot. I wish I had, but I go with my feelings. He continued yakking at me. Sharon said, "I think he's trying to talk to you."

We piled in the car and headed north again. Our motel, The Scottish Inn is right on Anastasia Blvd, near the Mellow Mushroom restaurant. Sharon unpacked and decided to take a short catnap before her date later. I decided to go outside and smoke my Bugler cigarettes and take in the sights from the pool area. The pool was closed for the evening. I headed to the boulevard, and I saw a bus bench about a half a block north.

As I approached the bus bench, something looked a little off. As I tried to sit down, I noticed it was too close to the curb, a little too close for comfort for me. There was only four inches of grass between the bench and the curb! If I sat down, my feet would spill over the curb edge. I decided to sit side-saddle on the end of the bench and enjoy my smoke and meditate, recall the whole day, and hope in my little personal moment of trance that I could sort it all out and make sense of it.

I looked around. The town is cute and well-groomed, but the boulevard was pretty busy. Sharon and I had been talking about moving there someday, or maybe a little farther north. I was expanding my senses to imagine what I

would do or where to go in this town to maybe ground some roots or find a new purpose.

I was sitting there completely engrossed in my own space when, *whoosh*, an SUV darted toward me, jumped the curb, and missed me by about two feet. If I had been sitting on the bench facing the curb, he would have crushed my legs, or worse. The SUV didn't even stop. He pulled off the curb and continued forward at a brisk pace. Then he turned right into the parking lot of the business next door. Only he didn't stop. He only cut through it and went down the adjoining road.

I sat quietly, took a deep breath, and thought, "What the hell was that?" Yes, I almost got hit again. Twice in less than five hours. Hmm. I rolled another cigarette. I sat quietly and expanded my senses up and outward. I was not mad or rattled. I would say instead that I was confused. Holding the space for a fun trip and having the expectations of something good to happen was not unrealistic.

Now I felt Sharon's anticipation about her date. I sorted through the previous events, snatching tidbits in my mind like the Grackles, and even thought a few times, "What am I doing here?" I let it all go.

I forgave the guy in the SUV. It wasn't personal, I'm sure. He was probably texting or something. I never got the feeling that it was "my time" at all. In fact, I felt protected. Having forgiven the SUV driver, I was still curious where the SUV went and why. I walked through the parking lot, and turned the corner, only to realize it was just a short street to a residential cluster of little homes. But something caught my eye, a glint from a large saw palm tree on my right. I walked closer. Now the tree is more fat than tall. It's totally covered in palm frond stubs. They stick out like little shelves. The tree has never been shaved or groomed.

Quick as a wink, I see where the glint came from. Even in the dark I can clearly see a cluster of Angel dolls and Angel figures stuck in the tree. Six of them at eye level. I get totally blissed out. Of all the cool weird things to happen, I am led to a tree full of Angels. I look around. Is it folk art? Who did this?



After a few moments, I just smiled and walked away. I decided that I would show Sharon when she got up from her nap. Then I realized I had a lot to tell her. I felt badly because it was starting to become too much, in that it was a distraction from her date. At this point it's all a jumble and feels like soup in my head, like alphabet soup – lots of letters and words but no coherent sentences or thoughts. I sit down on the bench again and finish one of my last 2 cigarettes and simply reflect.

As I said, today I am along for the ride. Later I tell Sharon the story and show her the weird bus bench and the Angel Tree. As expected, she is amazed and stunned and loves the Angel tree.

But I bet she's wondering if she wants to stand so close to me now.

The evening goes on... Sharon goes to her appointment. I smoke my last ciggy and sit in the motel room. The room is O.K., but only a couple of buttons on the TV remote work, leaving me helpless and wondering "What the hell am I doing here?"

Then I remember – I'm here to hold the space for Sharon and have a birthday treat. I surrendered and fell asleep.

I awoke early. Barely light out at 7a.m. I lay there for a few moments, and felt how I was feeling, if you know what I mean. I realized I had a sad feeling. I thought maybe it was disappointment that had settled in from the day before. I laid there for about 10 minutes and actually started to cry. My chest was aching and my brain was dull and fogged. I felt like I was in a trance. This all-too-familiar feeling was no stranger to me. Many of my other stories are completely reliant on this state of consciousness, but this morning was different.

I remembered that I needed to walk to the Jiffy K for a coffee and a fresh pack of Bugler. I got up, grabbed my wallet and phone and headed out the door. I went to the street and noticed I wasn't walking very fast. Outside, I saw a Jiffy open down the street, about a block and a half away. I walked, slowly. Ahead



was a row of nicely groomed buildings, including a high end jewelry store. I mean, a list of high-end brand names on the signage and just below them is a little plaque that says ATM. I thought, *how odd, you can't extract enough out of an ATM to buy something at that jewelry store!*

I keep walking. My attention is drawn to an empty lot with a view adjacent to the jewelry store. It's empty but gives me a clear view of a small marina. I thought, *maybe photo op time*, but no. I'm standing in an empty lot, just standing there, for almost ten minutes. No photos, no real reason, the scenery is boring – just a place. I turn around and head back to Andalusia Blvd. I have been up almost an hour by now, no coffee and no cigarettes. I thought, "I'm feeling strange today; I hope I'm not too sick for coffee."

As I cross the lot and cut through the jewelry store parking lot, I see a young man at the ATM. I thought, *wow, he's actually using the ATM*. He's young, thin, spry, and of course, he has a skateboard. But he's walking.

We are both walking at the same pace, and while we are hundreds of feet apart from start, we somehow converge to the same exact place on the roadside, right across from the only open space in the grassy median that separates north and southbound traffic. There are no other pedestrians in sight. Traffic is really starting to pick up, as it's getting to be drive time on Andalusia Blvd.

We wait. He's standing right next to me. We're looking in both directions for an opening. I look right at him but he doesn't look back. Instead he drops his skateboard and before I can say stop, he pushes off to cross the northbound lane. He misjudged. At least for my comfort level. A car narrowly misses him. I mean by a couple of feet and at 40 mph, and that was almost a miracle. The oncoming car lays on the horn. While riding his skateboard, the young boy turns his head around to face the car and proceeds to give the car a gesture of his appreciation.

And then, from skateboard habit, he uses his free foot to push off and speed up his smooth skateboard descent blindly – right into fast moving traffic. The closest vehicle narrowly misses him, but the white SUV pacing beside it, and slightly out of view to the boy, nails him squarely. A horrible sound and I watch as the impact sends him flying through the air like a ragdoll. I watch him sail a good 15 feet into the air. He is thrown so high and so far that

he swirls twice in the air and is thrown a hundred or so feet forward. He then lands in the road up against the curb.

I am calm. I move forward and stand on the median. The skateboarder lies there. I see his crumpled body. I see blood coming out of him. The two drivers stop and get out. I don't move. I am planted in the median. I am holding the light from above and I can feel it coming down. I watch.

After 2–4 minutes a sheriff's deputy arrives. He makes no attempt to revive the kid. He take pictures and herds traffic. I have been a photographer all my adult life. This is an epic moment in photojournalism. But I was not that guy this day. I stayed motionless. I decided to take one photo to show Sharon. Then I put the phone away. I stood there for 30 minutes as the fire trucks arrived, the additional police support, the ambulance. Rescue did administer CPR and other life-saving techniques, but by then it had been 15 minutes since the initial accident, and he was obviously already gone.

EMTs were just starting to load him into the truck when I looked down to my left. There, standing next to me was a large grackle. He's looking at the accident. Then he looks up at me and looks back at the accident. Suddenly, he flies off. He broke my trance.

I moved toward the scene. I spoke with no one. I felt invisible, though I had been standing in the median for 40 minutes. So I walked through the scene unnoticed, bought my coffee and cigarettes. The store was abuzz, lookers, gawkers, the curious, some people crying.

I left the scene. My coffee and ciggies and I went back to the hotel room, but Sharon was asleep. I went outside and sat on the bus bench. I was in a daze. I spoke out loud and asked myself, "What the hell was that about?" I mean all of it, all the close-calls, all the bird warnings, like mothman. Then I heard a voice in my head say, "Go touch the Angels." So I got up and went to the Angel Tree and touched each one and my heart burst open. I realized now what the tree was. It's a memorial. I heard the next day that a child was the victim of a hit and run there just months before.

Just when I thought it couldn't get any weirder, I have an ongoing joke with my daughter about roadside memorials. She told her uncle years ago that I said people were buried there at the spot where the roadside memorials had

been placed. I corrected this by saying, "They aren't buried there, they died there." The uncanny part is, after 15 years, one day I texted her a small reminder of that joke... completely out of blue... specifically on 3/23, the day we were originally supposed to go to St. Augustine.

Sharon woke up and was ready to check out promptly at check-out time. Sadly, her appointment the night before had gone tragically badly and I held the space for her as we headed for someplace to eat breakfast. She was as ready to leave the beach as I was. But I hadn't told her yet what unfolded while she was sleeping. We drove to a restaurant, ate, talked about her date, and afterwards we sat on a bench outside the diner. I was quiet, calm, still holding the trance. I told her the story. She hugged me.

We cut the trip short at that point and drove home.

Once at home, I felt better. I was standing at the kitchen sink, looking out the window. Across the yard was a big grackle poking in the grass. Coincidence? Ten minutes later I see him again. An hour later I see him again. That is unusual. He just hung around.

That night we watched TV excerpts and the online news stories about the accident. I was wondering what that was all about, I mean on a level we can hardly understand. Why me? Why the warnings?

Sharon did her prayer walk that night and her Guides said I would have a realization about it later.

All in all, I have been doing these kinds of metaphysical Shamanic interactions all my life. It's a major portion of who I am. There have been short periods in my life where I unsuccessfully tried to hide it. Sometimes, when I'd leak something out, my wife would call me Salgoud, my name backwards. It happened so frequently that I could no longer hide it. I decloaked and began teaching. I taught for ten years. Then I got sick and was told to stop and rest. My allergies are so extreme that I have trouble forming sentences, let alone making new friends.

For the last 2 years I have been consciously trying to hide it and deprogram. Lately my frighteningly accurate horoscopes have been saying it's time to re-emerge from my sabbatical and get out and meet people. My allergies have so

poorly affected me that I am hesitant, and I've declared out loud to Sharon at least 20 times in the past year, "I am hiding." It's become a small joke.

The next day, or three days later, I was meditating and had my realization. It's obvious that I can no longer hide who I am. Or what I am – which is a magnet for the weird and a helper of people. I try now and then to hide, but I can't. An old friend, Thomas, told a new spiritual friend who was looking for weird spiritual people that, "Out of the top 10 mystical weird things I've seen in my life, I would say 7 of them are associated with Douglas."

On the fourth day after the event with the skateboarder, I did a meditation and relived the entire event. I saw it, felt it, smelled it, heard it, remembered details. I wept; I processed it. And then I healed. I realized now how much of a trance I was in during the 2 days, and how much I am now awake and grateful that I was there.

I plan on contacting the driver who hit the young boy. I know he will want to be reminded that it was not his fault. I am the lone witness to the event and I know I will know when to contact him.

For me, the whole soup of the experience, the ongoing mishmash, is drawing to a close. All the words and meanings are coming together.

My power is leaking out again and it's no longer time to hide it. That is why I have named this story Leak Soup.

I am Thanking the Universe again for another new assignment coming.

I have given my being to The Highest Love and I will continue to be wherever the universe wants me.

I have consulted the Guides about the young boy and he is fine. He was met by his uncle in the place we go, and he was lifted up, as they say.

Last and certainly not least, after the tragic incident, I noticed on the fridge message board that I had prophetically drawn a whole flock of black birds. Just in case you didn't know, a flock of grackles is actually called a plague of grackles. Now that is just a coincidence.



## Life Changing Moments

This is a memory illustration from 1966. I was barely 16 years old when I drove my grandfather many miles from our home to Baxter State Park for an overdue return to his favorite fishing camp.

We have all heard the myths and history of the proverbial pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. From leprechauns hiding their gold from greedy humans to the tragedy of Euclid's Greek play about selfishness, the myth pervades our history. But I saw it become real!

We were fishing in this beautiful pristine lake, nestled in a valley by Mt. Katadin. It was early and misty in the morning, when the sun began to break through the fog. Suddenly, there was an amazing rainbow with such vivid colors that I'd never seen before, and the way the sun sparkled on the water looked like pure gold! We sat in our rowboat watching it until it faded. I will never forget that feeling when I got to see a small miracle.



## Art Book Interview

Interviewer: I just want to scoot past the shock of the words I might use to refer to your art. Words like peculiar, child-like, weird, simplistic and enormously busy and detailed. Saying that, how would you describe your art?

Me: I'm chuckling because I would use all those words and if you appreciate my display of crayonism. I wouldn't call it art. Much of the chats and angst within the artist community are the silent semantic war of... is graphic illustrating really art?

In the last 60 years, especially in the last 30 years, a new player came to the table. For many decades artists and most people did not consider photography an art form. They thought it had more of a documentary nature. The purists thought that photography was stealing, and not very creative. Luckily, photography eventually had an amazing welcome to the art scene.

I would rather call myself a graphic illustrator. My gift, which I discovered in my teens, leaned heavily towards composition, structure and form. I had an instinct for what seems likeable, attractive, or impressive in layout and design for print. I arrange the images in my creations to be naturally pleasing and un-awkward as it can sometimes be in amateur art. The irony is that my creations are pleasing, but some of the "sneaked in" content is enormously awkward and winds up being called weird or peculiar.

Interviewer: Your creations are similar to the images we see in coloring books or those drawn by a child. Do you take offense at being accused of drawing like a child because it is easier?

Me: Right. I constantly see the world around me, night and day, as a cartoon. I file memories away in a cartoon picture. In recreating the cartoon, I try to transcend the 2-D format to extend to the 3-D experience by drawing with depth and perspective.

As an example, a child can draw a refrigerator, and is not likely to draw it at an angle, just front forward. I not only draw the refrigerator at an angle, but with the door open and the produce drawer pulled open. Yes, the crayons and rounded edges make my work look juvenile, but it's all far beyond kid art, because I make scenes busy, complicated, mysterious, and detailed.

Interviewer: This would be a good time to ask you how that evolved. Why so many little fussy additions?

Me: Therapy. From the age of my tweens, I doodled incessantly. The results were complicated and relaxing. My brain is weird. Some claim I have neurodivergent attributes. I'm hyper-vigilant. I woke up and forever now, I see everything. I notice everything. I scan, associate and feel everything. So my brain reduces it to a cartoon, but I never forget certain details. The majority of humans are not aware of their surroundings, just what they focus on. I have trouble with focus, but I *see* everything. When I create a memory, the scene is busy, detailed, because that's normal for me, because everywhere I go, the world is busy and detailed.

Interviewer: That sounds like the kind of mindset and techniques that artists use. Why do you not call yourself an artist?

Me: I really admire people who can put feelings in their art. I'm in awe of people who can paint or draw, and who express so much emotion, which becomes obvious upon viewing. But I can't do that. I get dizzy staring at a Pollock. But I cannot express my feelings in my art. Instead I graphically create a scene from which I have strong memories or feelings, or I remember a WTF moment. My form of communication is more an empathic performance than impressionism or an intellectual transmission. I want you to feel what I felt with whom, where, when, why and how I perceived it.

So we are back to graphics, as in journalism because I am a visual storyteller.

Interviewer: I noticed in one of your books, you have an accompanying short, anecdotal story with each picture. Are you a storyteller with visual aids? Or are you an artist who has to explain his image?

Me: Wow. I guess both. I explain my image or illustrations because I'm complicated and complex by nature. The story complements not just the art but the viewer's experience of the moment. My pet peeve is when I pick up a coffee table art or photography book and all I get is pictures. Maybe a location but always with a title, as in, *Serene Beauty*. I want to know more. I want to know why you are where you are.

## Short Shorts

### Intro

I create an impression wherever I go. I create a disturbance. Around the house, the saying is, *Geez, I can't go anywhere without...* (fill in the blank). This is the source of so many anecdotal stories.

But there's more. I also attract attention simply by being me. This makes for my 15 minutes of fame. I have had my 15 minutes of fame at least 30 times. This was not planned. I'm a celebrity by accident. And you'll see my anecdotal stories are by accident also. Right place – wrong time? Wrong place – right time? When you are free to be who you really are, that energy will shift the whole universe to help you be who you are (a dougism). If you can't do something important, at least be cinematic (another dougism).

### Every Morning.

In the morning I need a cup of coffee just to make my coffee. I have mood levels. Luckily, a charmed person gave me my favorite cup. It comes with an easy-to-read graph. I only have my coffee one way, with chocolate.

I have mood days. I wake up a different person every morning. It takes me a cup of coffee to feel who I am today. Then I drink more coffee because the coffee makes "the me today" realize what I can do, or will do or won't do. I'm not a worrier. My morning monkey-mind rush is either coming up with funny ironic dougisms, or I'm writing either happy or grim existentialist philosophy. I thought I was weird, but there are others who be trippin' on the bean.

I'm not a coffee snob. If you go to Starbucks, your pleasure is \$26.85 a gallon. So is Royal Crown. I have never had a Starbucks coffee. But that will come someday, I am positive. I already have a plan. I will give them my name as Gay, make them say it out loud.

In conclusion, I am proud to say I enjoy Cowboy Coffee. One afternoon I offered my new dating interest a cup. She thought it was delicious. Another day, her comment was equally as enthusiastic. She asked what kind of coffee it was. Confused about it, I explained that I use the morning grounds and add a



bit more. The 2nd run is less bitter. She didn't like that information and she always made the coffee after that. Fine with me. A bit of Tom Sawyer there?



## Every Night

The Beach Street house is a whole story in itself. This amazing story in the old, wooden house is our experience and the event is true. Actually, it happened every night. Our daughter, Kriya, would get put to bed on time, every night. Her crib was by the window. I'd get her blanky, tuck her in, and position her bottle of apple juice. So sweet. Then I'd tiptoe out the door, but leave it slightly ajar. A good fifteen minutes later, Cathy and I would sneak up to the door and peek in. Bottle rolled away, blanky off, sound asleep on her back or tummy. So cute. Yes, she was sleeping and motionless.

Some nights we could see her astral body, her ectoplasm, very vague but still there, hovering 2 feet over her body. This cloudy, yet transparent moving shape was so free floating. We learned by accident that if we startled her, she'd wake up. If we open the door very slowly, something eventually gives out a tiny sound, or she can feel our presence.

Then suddenly we can see the whole form. Her astral essence would suddenly regroup into a tiny, thin line and zip back into her body. Each and every time she would jump a little bit as her essence slipped back into her body quickly and fully. Formerly sleeping and safe to detach, her infinite Self returned and animated, re-animated her little body. By the way, the term Anime comes from the Greek and means Soul. It's a sacred and cosmic event that we occasionally showed to some friends. As a result, Kriya then gained a few additional

adoring fans as a result of such a spiritual thing everyone thought might be true and finally saw the proof.

## **Ikigai Every Day!**

For the last 30 years my heart has been open. It radiates a warmth and body chemistry, a feeling from the thymus gland that opened my God Complex. No, not a control freak, more like a Creator. As I practiced Patanjali Yoga, my inner yoga consists of a list of activities that balances my Inner, Outer and higher selves and compulsion. I practice or am in tune with my Ikigai. Loosely translated from Japanese, it's your reason for getting up every day enthused.

## **Travel Safe**

I love the new expression, Travel Safe. Safe travel has been a thing for all of us everywhere since the birth of life!

On the spur of the moment I had to fly from Florida to Maine and back to Florida. The only flight I could get was out of Jacksonville, Florida, 100 miles away. Despite it being winter and only 50 degrees, I bundled up, hopped on my big motorcycle and caught the plane on time.

My return flight was awkward. I had to switch flights in Atlanta at 2 in the morning. Which means I landed in Jacksonville at 3:15 a.m. I came prepared, though. Knowing I had a 2-hour drive at 3:30 a.m. with the temperatures at 45 degrees, the task was going to suck.

In Atlanta, I had some coffee and fumbled through my wallet. Desperate times call for desperate measures. I pulled a hit of LSD out, timed it in my head and swallowed with confidence. As I sat in a window seat, the acid started kicking in just as the plane circled Jacksonville. Oh my, the lights on the ground, the sounds of the plane, the acid making me feel suspiciously over-confident. I believe I'm holding my shit together really well. The air is chilly, wet and seems 10 degrees colder.

My motorcycle is still in the lot, unmolested. All I wanna know is... will it start? *Boom.* All good. I'm totally buzzed and I hit the on ramp to the Interstate. Like most cities, the turns, exits and roundabouts in Jacksonville can be tricky.

Sure enough, 25 minutes into the journey, I am lost. I find myself on the Jacksonville Beach ramp. I see an all-night pancake house. I don't need coffeeee, heh-heh, but I do need help and directions. Fortunately, they were able to help me get home.



7.25<sup>th</sup> 2022  
Hum Y spirit guide double Top-most scared I have ever been.

## **Being in Sync with the Universe**

Those days when you reach for the phone milliseconds before it rings. Taking your foot off the brake pedal milliseconds before the light turns green. Suddenly thinking of someone and they call you. Hesitating to check your mailbox, and 10 minutes later you hear the mail person. You put something in your purse or pocket without thinking and oddly, you need it later. You see number sequences like 11:11, 12:21 or 4:44. You forgot where you placed something and then forgot about it, and a year later you remember where you put it because you need it now. You misplace your keys and while annoyed, you are delayed 10 minutes only to discover that an accident occurred at the same moment. You see something that reminds you of a person you haven't seen or communicated with in a long time and you run into them the next day.

## **I Knew it! But not What!**

You know how people corner a psychic when something awful happens to them and ask the question, *Why didn't you see it coming?* I have an answer for that. To put it into perspective, I was listed as one of the top 10 Psychics in Florida in 1997. For two decades I gave classes in my house and gave readings. What kind of bubble does a Psychic actually live in? As a practice, each practitioner has an on-off switch. Of course, there are moments when the on switch comes all by itself. Such a quiet Sunday afternoon, just when you kick up your feet to read and watch the show *Ancient Aliens* on TV. Then, things get weird. I felt it. I'm a little concerned. Fleeting thoughts have slippery socks. But the feeling doesn't go away.

The uneasiness prevailed and I was led to walk around my home "sense-searching," because I sensed that something was awry. With no time. But it wouldn't quit. I felt my heart racing, something looking or smelling wrong. I let it go for a second.

But then I'm on my hands and knees, feeling outlets, checking plumbing in the laundry room, the kitchen, checking the stove, the HV/AC system, the bathroom, hot water heater, essentially everywhere. Something feels terribly wrong but no can find. I quit. I put up my feet and start to read. A bit later, I hear a funny noise in the kitchen. I walk in to be met with a stench I can't place. The odor is similar to diesel and rotting tires. My eyes are watering. I



looked under the kitchen counter and to my horror, a can of Fix-A-Flat had exploded. The ooze is spreading.

I stuff what I can into the garbage and gather things it touched and plastic bag that assailant to the outside garbage bin.

Coming into the house, the reek was over the top. Is it flammable? Will I suffocate? I opened all the windows and luckily, the doorway to the kitchen from the dining room, which had no door, was small enough to block. I nailed two blankets to cover the opening and contain the smell. Two hours pass by. So, the psychic knew something was going to happen, but didn't know what. It happens.

Why did I not know exactly what it would be? I'm lighting incense and running fans and the place still reeks. Sharon, who was away visiting her mom all day, arrives home. She was really a champion about it. We both were. After all, it was summer in Florida, the heat was unbearable, and the loss of access to the kitchen, except for basic needs, was a two-week deal. I scrubbed the inside of the cabinets with solvents and soaps and baking powder and other absorbent deodorizers, and as a sealant, I painted the damaged area 3 times.

### **A Three Broom Winter – Snow Ditch Archeology**

What? My memories and experiences of winters past living in Maine. A huge storm comes – boom! – in the early morning. The snowplow accidently takes out your mailbox. Gone. So you stick a broom in the snowbank with a basket hanging for the mailman. No problem, it's a thing. Then, the 2nd storm comes and again, a snowplow takes out your broom and basket. Then, by the 3rd and 4th storm, more brooms and baskets were taken. That's a message of a rough winter. Spring comes, and the snowbanks recede. Neighbors, in the same situation, do each other favors by returning each other's brooms, baskets and yes, the original mailbox, via a bit of snow ditch archeology.

### **My Favorite Thing About My Favorite Car**

I had an old Jaguar. A 1962 Four Door Princess Sedan. The interior was amazing. Leather bucket seats and embroidered cloth ceiling. And wood, real



wood, in appropriate places, part of the arm rest and on the windowsill. Wood built into the middle console. And an all-wood dashboard. Impressive.

Equally unexpected, it had a huge steering wheel. The wheel was 2 feet wide, wider than your shoulders. The car had 2 horns. One was a tweety little honk, a courtesy honk. The second honk was *blat*, more the *get the fuck out my way* horn. Cool.

I like multiple choices. The glove box was a trip; it was big and deep. You could get your gloves lost in that depth. But right under the glove box was a shelf for your gloves. The dash also had a large ashtray, not a little slide-out box. The best, absolute best, was the lighter. Cars today do not have lighters unless you order them. During the past two decades, the lighter had no label. It was pretty obvious what it was. All cars previously had the label LIGHTER, a tradition from the early days, when there were so many dials and levels and everything came pre-labeled. And manuals. Manuals taught you everything, from setting the timing and valve adjustments to more. Today the manuals say, "Do not drink the battery fluid." The lighter was labeled, and correctly I might add. The fat little lighter was labelled CIGAR. How cool is that? And one day I realized, the ashtray was designed just right to fit three used stogies!



## **Blunt Time**

If you're skinny, you are on drugs. If you're fat, you need to lose weight. If you smoke weed, you are a druggie. If you drink, you're an alcoholic. If you dress up, you are conceited. If you dress down, you've let yourself go. If you exercise too much, you're a jock. If you don't exercise, you're lazy. If you speak your mind, you are rude. If you don't say anything, you're snobbish. If you're

sociable, you're a party animal. If you stay to yourself, you're detached. You can't do anything without being criticized.

We live in a society where generalizations brand us for life. If you hear those voices, you are not a victim. If you ignore those voices, you made a choice. If those voices are *your voice*, then you paved your own road ahead. Don't blame the outer voices; it's *your own* asphalt.

Self-improvement is an addiction and is never-ending. With each goal reached, the question is, "What's next?" Where is the line? WTF?

## **Epic Wedding**

I watched the love of my life, my soul mate, my best friend, get married. In fact, I was chosen to walk her down the aisle and give her away. I love her husband and I'm happy for her. She has always wanted to be happily married.

She decided to get married on the beach in St. Augustine. We are at the edge of the sand next to the parking lot, waiting for the signal to walk about a hundred yards to the spot where her intended and 14 family members are watching for us to come.

It's very windy and it looks like there's a storm bearing down on us. We have to hurry! But suddenly there's a huge gust of wind that creates a sandstorm, and we are slammed by a 10-foot wall of sand. People start running from the beach, passing us on their way to safety. Seeing her in her bridal gown, many of them said congratulations as they rushed by.

Sharon, already nervous about the event, puts her face in my back and wails in shock. I have turned toward the wind, and I raise my hands to ask the storm to stop. I've always had a thing with the weather.

Meanwhile, her Maid of Honor, Terry, runs to grab Sharon's veil that has blown into the sea oats on the dunes. She continues to sob as the wind subsides. She takes a moment to get herself together, and the minister signals for us to walk. She is still sobbing a bit here and there as we cross the sand to the makeshift altar.

The storm holds off, though it is still windy, as they say their vows through both tears and laughter. It's a ridiculous situation, but we made it. After the ceremony, everyone gets a few photos on the beach and heads to the reception at Art in Motion car museum. Sharon and Mark stay behind for a few more photos. She told me that after they told the photographer to go, they stood watching the ocean for a few minutes by themselves. When they turned to look at it, a rainbow appeared just for them, so it seemed. It only lasted a moment before it faded. And the storm had passed. They saw it as a promise that everything was going to be OK. And it was.



## **The Sign-Out Sheet**

Placed in the center of the dining room table was a pad called “the sign-out sheet.” This was invented one night during our early honeymoon years, when we were celebrating along with our own normal ways of relaxing at night. We were still both having Virgo-oriented parts of the evening which were either commanded or crept up – say, something important about work. Trying to do something important or even communicate clearly while messed up is a chore sorely wasted while wasted.

Because we were even further Virgo-ey, we invented a way to have "that line." The sign out sheet, i.e., we are no longer responsible. No longer responsible for anything said or remembered. No longer responsible for anything. Signed out and party time, no exceptions – and tons of forgiveness. Both Bernadette and Betty agreed to this little plan. The only rule was, you couldn't sign back

in, a protocol established to prevent impaired judgement. Another perk to the sign out sheet, which became obvious and perfect was, you could sign someone else out. This worked.

## 42

Numerologists agree that five is a critical number in the world of math – sacred geometry and mysticism. But there remains, on our cultural tongue, the age-old question, “What is the secret of life, the universe and everything?” Douglas Adams, *From Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, may have actually hit on the answer. The supercomputer in the novel tabulated that, after eons and eons, the answer is 42. What?

Somehow 42 fits in with our cultural psyche. It's being used as a reference more and more. Once I was sitting in my office with 3 gentlemen, and the conversation turned a bit existentialist. Suddenly Paul said, “It all centered around 42.”

The doubter, Jim, replied, “I keep hearing that, but it's just a number.”

Paul and I looked at each other. Paul said, “Ah, 42 appears in life many more times than you realize.” He paused for a moment, then continued. “It's liquid stock for the soup of life.”

Now I spoke up. “Jim, how old are you?”

Silence. He hesitates. “Uh, 42.”

I laughed. “Okay.” I gave him my wallet. “Count my money. How much do I have?”

Jim, counting, “42 dollars.” Paul laughs.

The third guy, quiet up till now, asks me, “How did you do that?”

*Do what?*

I respond, "The universe is functioning all around you. You just aren't seeing it. You think, in your hubris, that you control everything. But you control nothing. You live in a trusting, delusional fantasy."

Jim said, "No I don't. The material world is solid; it has no intelligence."

"Okay, you have no control; you just think you do. Look for the tells, the signs, the messages that you must look larger and see what's up after awareness of your smallness."

Jim says, "That's bullshit."

The other guy, a bit Zen, says, "Still means nothing."

"Okay," I said, "Jim, you're going home tonight and your whole world is your mental construction. You think the stove will work or you assume your toothbrush will be there. Then, a knock at the door, United Parcel Service guy is at the door. 'Hey, where do I sign?' UPS guy, handing me the clipboard, 'Line 42.'"

The room went silent, but I laughed out loud. "The UPS dude exits and my employee, Crissy walks by my office door. I call out, Crissy, what's the secret to life, the universe and everything? As she continues walking down the hall, she calls out, '42.'"

Two days later Jim calls. "Hey Doug, look, a couple things. We should make an appointment for that project coming up soon. But first, you are weird. I got home and the stove worked but my toothbrush was gone. My wife replaced it but forgot to unpack the new one. That was just a coincidence, right?"

"Oh yeah, we were just messin' around with you."

"Okay, Doug, let's schedule an appointment in May to set up the project."

We check our calendars. He says, "How about Tuesday, May 6th?"

Me: "Sounds good." Silence for a moment. "Jim, you there?"

"Yeah," Jim says.



“Jim, you do realize that's in 42 days, right?”

Never heard from him again, ever. He didn't even cancel the appointment. But I saw that coming.

Finally, the world has taken on the age-old question and the new Artificial Intelligence has now arrived at the same answer – 42.

### **Weird Turned Wonderful**

I've only borrowed money from one person in my whole life. I have a BFF in my life and we trade all resources, and money happens to one of them. In 1970, after long weeks of travelling, I finally had an opportunity to settle in. “Settle in” as have a key to an actual residence.

From an early age, my love of radio as a companion was important to me. It takes time to figure out what is important to you. We hear that often. I was between jobs but had enough, a little actually banked, but no extra. I wanted to get a stereo FM radio, which was a fairly new thing back then.

Now, my Grammy was a live-in householder. Translation, she didn't have a job either. Anyway, I asked her, then pressed her to loan me some money, often enough that it was obvious I was begging. It wasn't much money, but I sensed her reluctance. Finally, though, she gave me a loan for a stereo radio. The model matters but that's not the point. I told her that music was an important part of my life and this was something that would pay off. I had no clue what that meant at the time.

A couple weeks later I got a job with the phone company. I was security guard at the door in the morning when all employees came to the 8 a.m. shift. I had to check everyone's badge, whether I recognized them or not. It was a thing. One day an employee came in with the wrong badge and I caught him. I rang the boss, and he was taken in the building and that was that.

But two days later I got promoted with a pay raise. I passed a security clearance and the next thing I know, I'm on night shift and in a 5-story office

building with *all* the phone companies servers and junction boxes. I'm in the queen beehive. My job is to monitor 3 dials. Every half hour I log the stats of the dials on three clipboards and on the charts on the wall. If anything changed, I make a call.

I loved that job. For one thing, I felt honored and cared about it. Yeah, when all the phone companies and cable companies shut down at night, we wonder if anyone is watching. The answer is no. No one is watching. What was I doing while on watch? I sat in a management-stuffy chair and read books. I read all night every night.

So I got paid and so did Grammy. And I bought her something neat, an auto card shuffler. Grammy, Dot and I would play cards. Spite for Malice. This game is a cross between Fish, poker, solitaire and Gin rummy. The games use 3-4 decks and takes 2 hours to play. I loved it.

I bought some new decks, but the old ones were broken in perfectly, soft and just right thanks to the card shuffler. I carried that stereo radio around for 20+ years. I even sent Grammy a photo 20 years later taken right by it and said thanks again.

If you think that's sweet, 10 years later I was a videographer and my friend and I started a radio station. Yeah, my very own freaking radio station. Every 3-4 months I would send Grammy and Grandad a video tape of short clips of this and that, always including something about what fun the radio station was and including a mention of how Grammy and Grandad made this possible. Is that not a sweet thing for a grandson to do?

Grandparents are patient. I went from a preppie to a hippie and then to a yuppie. I miss music and I love music. The irony is, and it's not God's punishment, I am deaf. I think I used up all my hearing quota too soon, too early, but for the greater good.



## **Form Building and Pre-Planning In the Higher Realms**

When I travel, I travel with goals, not just to sightsee. I multi-task at home and I multi-task when I leave home. I had two weeks to prepare for a trip to Mexico for an Important Spring Equinox event at the Pyramid. But my psyche knew of things and it kept letting me know. For weeks, I would hear in my hypnagogic sleep, a state sometimes referred to as waking dreams, the word Tulum. TA-loom. Over and over.

I spoke of it to one of the friends I was going on the trip with. He said, "Oh, we are going to Tulum, it's on the coast. Bring your swimsuit."

I had a role in the city state of Chichen Itza. I was initiated by Hubatz-Man – the High Mayan priest. He blessed and returned my handmade crystal wand in the ceremony. The historic site, Tulum, was a plot of land with many small stone buildings. It also had a small beach nestled in a cove. The four of us who had traveled there together were sitting on the beach.

I was watching a group of people not that far away, grouped by some rocks for a private area. I didn't pay that much attention until a young man left the group and walked past us toward a nearby place to change. In his towel, he had an elongated object. I stopped him and smiled and inquired, "What do you have there?" Poor guy was so nervous, he opened his towel to reveal a crystal wand very similar to mine. "What are you doing?" I asked.

He pointed toward the group and an older woman in startling but subtle flowing garments was standing, watching us intently. "High Priestess," he said. I drew him to my towel and friends, and I opened my knapsack and pulled out a wand. He was amazed. The group I was with was watching.

I wrapped my wand in a towel, and walked toward the priestess. I bowed a bit and presented my wand to her. She received, blessed it, and handed it back. Now, I hear, as clear as a bell, in my head, that she says, "Welcome, you made it. Use the power wisely."

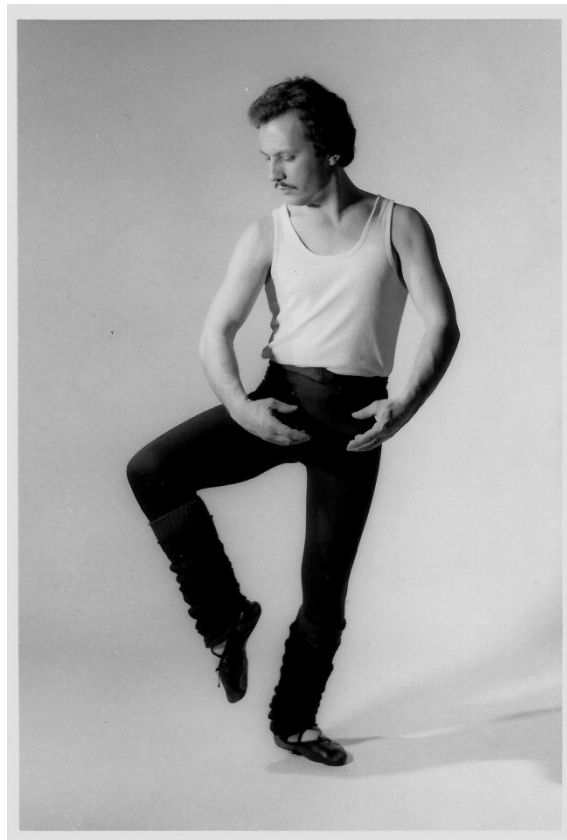
I wrapped my wand in a towel, bowed again and my little finger hooked her little finger for a few seconds. She looked at the group and then smiled at me. I made a quick, gracious exit.

Okay, I could make this all about me, but it's more than that. Can you imagine the power and coincidence that the whole scene played out for her followers? The theme being trust. An American walks up in the middle of a ritualized initiation for others – like a ghost, I show up. She no doubt tells them, “That’s trust and action which happened right in front of you. It was a coordinated destiny, not just chance. Listen to your messages.”

### **Came In an Hour Early**

I was a ballet dancer for many years. This required days, weeks, and months of repetition. Pain is normal. Not much uniqueness happens. Most adults pretty much agree that despite, going to school every day, they can hardly remember a specific day in 5th grade. But I do.

During a performance of Firebird, on stage, I felt a horrifying sting in my right leg. I kept dancing and it got worse. That night I limped home. The routine treatment is cream and a prescription. The next day, back to practice and class. My leg was wicked sore, still limping, but that was normal. I joined the warm up class with the tweens. Not ten minutes in I hear screams and one of the dancers was pointing at my leg in horror. It turns out I had blown out a hamstring, and my entire leg was bruised from my hip to my heel, and she could see it through my white tights! Needless to say, I was sent home to recover before I would be allowed to dance again.





## **I Look Sick When I Wear Yellow, Pink or Orange**

Clothes don't make the man, but they certainly help in certain circumstances. My dad always said, "dress for success." My cozy pajamas will assure me sound sleep, but not success. I have a clothes quirk, and a mindset from who knows where. I always wanted to be the scruffy guy who was successful anyway. Kinda the way you see the not-so-handsome man in ordinary clothes with a woman a couple of levels above his pay grade. She likes him for who he is and he, in turn, is nice to her.

I was comfortable wearing the same clothes, even the same colors, several days in a row, just because I felt like it. And I wore the same sports jacket every day in high school. I am wearing a 7-year-old shirt right now. Which means, I have 8 years' worth of photos, many candid, with me wearing the same two shirts in every one. But my closet has many styles and levels. I own a couple of suits, a tuxedo, and various fashions needed for the right occasion. I like to go to thrift shops and buy what looks likeable and comfy. It's not until I get home or own it for a while that I discover it's a quality name brand.

Clothes are a costume.

I dress down because I don't want to attract attention. I hide by being casual, like a movie star with a hat and sunglasses. I have whole circles of friends who only know me dressed up for beach life or other casual moments.

## **The 10th Gift**

In the 1980s, I belonged to a Christian Cult named WOW. But not for very long. The WOW people, meaning Word on the World, were very dedicated, almost to the point of being delusional. But during my time in the cult, I learned the techniques from the New Testament, called Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Unbeknownst to the cult members, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are very similar to various New Age practices. Yes, despite similar processes, each group has different names for it.

I dated a fabulous woman in the WOW group. She thought she was grooming me for a position in my faith and in the group. Whether this is a primal human attribute or it's supported simply by ego, the delusion of salvation exclusivity

is understandable. I have also been very passionate and absorbed in the endeavor I am learning. My passion from spirit comes from within and Upon High, not from memorizing scripture. I experience little signs and tells from the universe to let me know they *are* signs and tells, and then it's up to me to continue growing and find my connection to spirit.

One of the signs I see involves number and patterns. Another sign is that I will go on a spin to see the connection offered. One week I was seeing SWORDS everywhere. Now, my lady friend was a warrior. I know warrior archetypes. I am not a warrior. But this particular spin I was on revealed that there are archetypal symbols used, not just for conflict with opposing forces, but conflict with the veil of disconnection to spirit. I saw the sword as a Key to my freedom.

One night, several weeks before I met the WOWs, I was chatting with a friend about my swords over a cocktail and I noticed that I had a tiny plastic sword with my garnish. I laughed, because every coincidence is always fresh. I placed the sword in my wallet, and I exclaimed, "I am armed."

Several weeks into the relationship, the woman determined that I was a philosopher, not a warrior. She wanted me to forge ahead and spread the word to overcome ignorance. I laughed and responded, "Oh, I am a man of peace. I have messages for people who lost faith because they lost their authentic experience and can't find the words for it." She seemed to understand but didn't. I asked, "So where is your sword? Did the universe give you your sword yet?"

Yes, my mind and heart is my sword. But yes, I am armed with my talisman, my reminder, my charm. I pulled out my wallet. Over the past few weeks, the wallet had developed a whitening mark on the outside leather in the shape of a sword. Opening my wallet, I pulled out the pink sword. Never assume a man of peace is not trained in the art of warfare. I felt badly, in that my parlor trick was not a put down, but more of an example of how connected everything is. She decided she wanted to become more involved in her church and learn to be the minister, but not have so much a solid connection with the actual Gifts. I was not keen on an organization aspect and we parted ways amicably.

## **Did I Really Need a Signier Sign?**

Things were going great until I met this woman. She had an intoxicating, effervescent glow about her. And she was hot for me. So we went out on a few dates and things got heavy, but they also got more complicated. I became all twitterpated and went down the rabbit hole because I could not, for the life of me, figure her out or what the chaotic deal was.

Poor Sharon. On quiet walks with her dog Radar, she would patiently listen to me ramble. I pick things up, junk, shiny things, like a crow. I spied a glint in the grass and grabbed it. It was a piece of polished glass shaped like a diamond ring gem. Cool – a sign – guess I’m lucky.

Another hellish week of high weirdness and suddenly I feel tired, anxious, stressed, reactive. She keeps baiting me for conflict, and I try to be the gentleman I think I am. Sitting on my porch, my refuge which contains all my plants and porchy things, I'm contemplating my life, my choices, my sick loyalty. I'm not as much interested in analyzing whether I'm codependent. More like, *this chick is hot, and playing me double, playing me long game and short game.* I'm wondering to myself, should I stick it out?

Suddenly, my whole body jerks and the motion makes me hit the shelf next to me. On top is a 17-pound Florida Chert Rock. This rock rolls off the top shelf onto my chair, down my back, pushes me onto the ground, and makes a big hole in the chair. The rock obliterates the seat. I stare at it for a whole minute, looking for a clue. A meaning or is it just a coincidence? My nature is to seek peace. This woman was a constant crazy maker. Doomed to fail, no turnaround. It only lasted 4 more days.

## **Pushed My Buttons**

In the 1980s, Bernadette and I would go to the Mall. Her job required job attire, and she had a charge card at J.C. Penney's. Entering from the inner courtyard, I immediately spied some awesome Hawaiian shirts. Good design, good material and a good price. I bought one on the spot.

At home, we were getting ready to go out. I became confused. The buttons were reversed, that is, on the wrong side! Awkward and fumbling. She explains that women's wear buttons in reverse. Now I'm self-conscious. But I love the shirt!

In a group of a dozen people, I got three compliments during the evening for that shirt. Each time I blushed, got nervous and to one patient woman, I mansplained the story. A couple of days later, the bank teller at my local bank complimented me. I was still nervous. OMG, I'm wearing a blouse chicks like. She really pushed my buttons.

One night, on a spur-of-the-moment date, I hooked up with a lady. Since she was leaving rather late, and it was a bit chilly, I offered her my shirt as she left. I saw her a couple of more times, but never saw my blouse again.

My thrift store purchases are often epic. On a whim, I bought some men's shirts. One turned out to be an everlasting favorite. I call it a Cuban Barber shirt. Off-white loose-fitting shirt with extra-large pockets and flaps and epaulets. The shirt also had cool brown buttons that looked similar to wood. Imagine my shock when I went to button it up and the buttons were reversed. This was a man's shirt. Opposite side of the earth – I gave up. No biggie. I look good in it. I've come to learn that it's not about lady buttons or man buttons, it's culture. Normal man buttoning was the start of normal. But the rich would craft their clothes in the reverse as a sign of prosperity. Secret fashion code. So, my Cuban Barber shirt with reverse buttons is classy.

## **French Exit**

I am a top-level narcoleptic. Briefly defined, narcolepsy is measured in five basic levels. The round-the-house saying for me is, *Doug has two speeds, fast and off.*

I am also famous for my French exits. I measure my fatigue level in 3 clicks. I am asleep before my head hits the pillow. I've been like this my whole life. And as a child I woke, having visions at night and visions in the morning of the coming day. Visions at night are caused by auditory messages. Dreams in the morning are pretty basic, but if I am not awake, I enter into a hallucinatory state.

During the night, I sometimes sleepwalk, roll over and have cataplexy, a feeling of being paralyzed. Several times, I'd have a lucid dream, where you think you are awake but you can't move. You can't move because your body feels heavy, it's hard to breathe and you hear a sound like a roaring train. Your body is asleep, but you are awake. This scares the crap out of the majority of people when it happens. In a moment of insecurity, their fears and anxieties increase, and this experience is called night terrors.

I no longer have them because, over time, I've killed all my dragons and demons. The intensity is, however, useful. This is a doorway to astral projection. I can experience all three states during long meditation sessions. I don't always have a choice which state opens for me. Each state has its own facets.

My most common experience in travel meditation is voyeurism. No, not like that. I travel to public places and see things happening and or sit and listen to people's conversations. These are not random mind droppings. Over the years I've learned that what I saw or heard is needed, either for me, or as a psychic message for someone else. The most popular myth about top-level narcolepsy is one where, as an uncontrollable symptom, a person falls asleep mid-sentence. This is both true and false. Someone who falls asleep repeatedly during the day mid-sentence is extreme and has a brain disorder. But many narcs get tired quickly, enter a hype state, and if unstimulated, will fall asleep. Committee meetings, boring movies, driving too long on a turnpike or a lonely boring road, trying to read – the list can go on. One of my "tells" that I am tired and approaching click 1 is that I crave a cold beverage, or ice-cold watermelon. When I am rested, I like a warm beverage and warm watermelon.

## **Mother Figure**

I travelled to India specifically to meet Holy people and to learn from Sadhus (holy persons) and mystics. In my search, I found one called Mata Ji. She's the embodiment of love and compassion. Her darshan (effect on you) is life changing. I got an unheard-of moment with her, her two handmaidens, and two other seekers. The three of us were sitting there on the floor and the interpreter welcomed us. From Hindi to English is not that hard. People of



India speak with more body language and head movements that reveal much. The girls and Mata ji were translating back and forth. The questions were rudimentary and Mata Ji was giving comfort.

I'm not bored, I'm listening. We are on the flat roof patio of a 3-story building, with tent canopies and decorations. Mata Ji is speaking Hindi and I'm looking around too much. So many birds I have never seen. Mata Ji stops. She whispers to her interpreter. I was asked, "What are you looking at?" "Birds," I say, "My birds."

"Ah, your birds," Mata Ji smiles and says in great English, moving her arm toward me and with a brisk wrist break wave, indicates OLD SOUL. The interpreters smiled and the two girls looked shocked. I smiled. As Mata ji started to get up, she reached into the tuck of her chair and pulled out a garland and the interpreter hung it around my neck. The girls didn't get one. I don't remember anything after the garland went over my head. I think I was outside, just watching people getting in line for lunch. The mother figure, always loving, always inspiring and validating.



## **Which coincidence do we celebrate the most?**

Bernadette and I had a close circle of friends that consisted of six of us. We would have dinner and a wine tasting every week. Spring arrived, and we were invited to a wine tasting and potluck pool party on a Sunday afternoon. Thomas, Richard and I all had Hawaiian shirts. The host had on a Hawaiian shirt. The first two couples arriving, the guys had Hawaiian shirts. We were all screaming and laughing, not because of the shirts, but because everyone so far brought potato salad! So we are up to 12 people, 7 potato salads and the doorbell rings. Three people walk in. One dude has on a Hawaiian shirt. We all scream and laugh and the new arrivals are mortified. They brought potato salad! We are hysterical. The third dude had on a bright yellow shirt but he also brought potato salad. So in the end, we had a potato salad tasting along with a wine tasting. The photo has been lost, but not forgotten.

I've been called to Jury Duty many times. It's an adventure every time. You never know whose life suddenly is in your hands. I knew ahead of time it was a big deal, and was prepared for voir dire? Out of the whole crowd of many potential jurors, I find myself one in 12 in the jury chair. A woman over the traditional age was suing her gynecologist for malpractice because he induced labor so he could attend a golf contest later. Each side gets to vet each juror. The prosecutor gives a brief rundown of the circumstances to be assessed and the charges. Right off the judge asks, "Anyone here know what Pitocin is? About five of us raise our hands. Several had heard of it. Me, I know exactly what it is, and what it does. How is it you know that? I delivered both my own children at home and have also been to 27 home births.

I got bounced from the Jury.

## **Scanned**

If I wear leather shoes, dress slacks, a white shirt, a watch, and I go to the store or a public place, the wrong people nod and acknowledge me. But the others don't. Like black people, eccentrics, artsy hippie types, old ladies and blue-collar old men. If I wear unfaded jeans, a blank neutral t-shirt and canvas shoes, everyone acknowledges me, because I am no threat. To the people who scanned and acknowledged me in a white shirt, I am now

invisible. Business clothes people scan and look at each other to intuit if they know you, and what you do. They are predators.

I dress too safe to be a predator. Usually we consider predators to be in boots, faded jeans, wife beater t-shirt and a ball cap. They are just like all of us, but they “don't cross dress classes.” I never talk to people with patches on their hats or garments. I do, of course, but no people with patches from police to rednecks. All clothes are a uniform or a costume. By the way, I do thank the firemen and emergency ambulance people. If I'm in bad way, they will pick me up no matter what I am wearing.

My wife and I used to joke about her boss, Dr. Lemuel Morre. At the office, he was always in a suit. When he came to work on weekends, he was in a suit. Ran into him at an outdoor art show, in a suit. She bet he wears a suit to mow the lawn. She happened to drive by one day and sure enough, he was mowing his lawn in a suit, but the jacket was off.

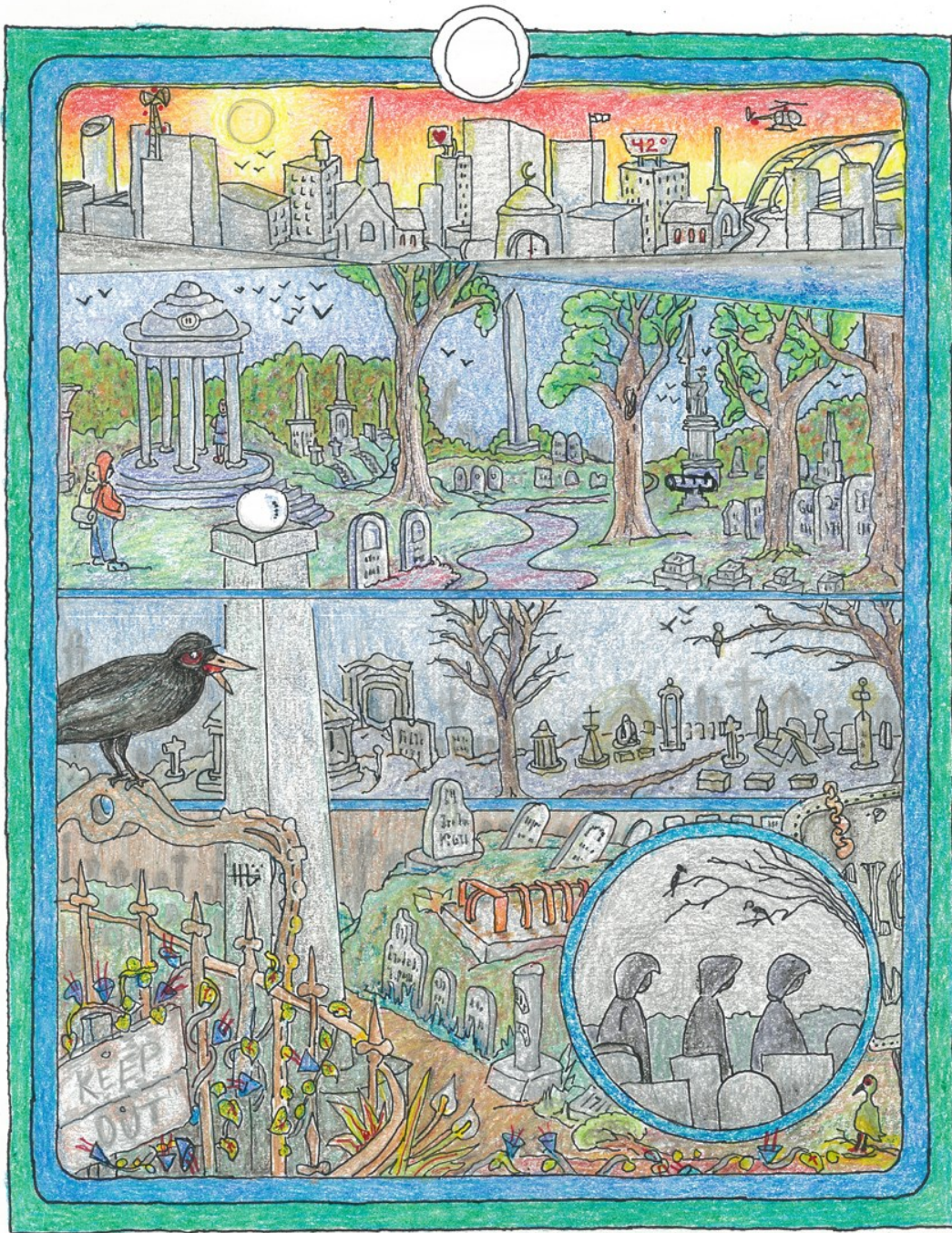
### **Are these places you should be or shouldn't be and that's why you do it?**

What do the following have in common: under two famous bridges, in 2 graveyards, in several temples in India, on at least 10+ beaches, 4 ashrams, in 3 celebrity bedrooms, in 7 cemeteries, on top of a pyramid, in a cave in the Himalayas, inside a lighthouse, inside a tornado bunker and in the rubble of an earthquake? I slept there.

There is a 4-star difference between a graveyard and a cemetery. The word cemetery can be traced back to the French, cimetiére from the medieval cememeterium, a place for the dead. Also tied to the Greek Koimeterion for sleeping place or dormitory.

Anyone can be buried in a cemetery. Graveyards, on the other hand are next to churches and limited to members only, with limited space and specific markers. In a cemetery, you can have any manner of size or structure.





USED FOR THE REASON  
REASON



## My Life as a Videographer

### Chance Favors the Prepared Mind

The transition from professional photographer to professional videographer was an alchemy of right place, right time and obsession.

Video, the new rage, the access to affordable video equipment and home VCRs – the possibilities exploded. I left Johnston's Photography in the late 80s. After a decade of still photography I grew tired of waiting for film to develop. Video was instant gratification!



I opened Main Street Productions, a full house service. I hired a few people and I had interns from the University of Florida. Looking back at my career, I was glad I'd been trained in college in photojournalism, storyboard writing, and multi-media. I enjoyed making Training Tapes,

Documentaries and video presentations. I slipped into a huge opportunity – VCRs were the trendy gold of the decades.

Some of my activities are not considered achievements. I consider them more like lucky breaks. For 3 years, my creations appeared on cable TV 24/7. For years I had the contract with UF School of Dentistry to duplicate the Final Exam Videos. I was a secure business with "no stealing the tapes" on campus. I kept them in a safe.

I was contracted by Columbia University about a new therapy program. Using a video camera and a new designer drug, suicidal and depressed patients were

allowed to share their thoughts on camera. Twenty years later, the use of psilocybin for therapy was more widely advocated. I would travel to summer camps for a week to shoot action shots and make a continuous 1-hour video. As par to Meyers Briggs, in association with the Center for Aptitude and Psychological Testing (C.A.P.T.), I made training tapes and videotaped their conferences.

- For another job, a big city groomer for a political grooming company would hire me to video, stop and replay political figures practicing their speeches and curing their mistakes. Very enlightening.
- I shot a training tape on how a company uses jacks and water supply pumps to raise sinking buildings in Alachua County.
- I shot 5 dangerous training tapes for the states leading Police Dog Trainer. The trainer was a man dressed in a whole-body suit. The techniques involved different commands and ways a police dog could immobilize and even kill an alleged, non-compliant person. Scary.
- I transferred 8 mm, Super8 mm and other tapes and old home movies to video for customers. I also shot aerial videos. I shot 8 broadcast television commercials including those of famous people.
- I shot videos of Doctorate students demonstrating their research projects.
- I edited hours upon hours of video footage, old 16 mm 8 mm movies of the World Reunion of survivors of D-day.
- I shot video depositions for attorneys and the court in high profile cases.
- I filmed 6 home births and videotaped 14.
- I've filmed weddings, receptions, family reunions, funerals.

I was in a business relationship with my chief engineer at the local radio station. We had a DSL line to a satellite upload dish in St. Petersburg. Since the engineer worked as a civilian contractor, which I had also done at Pease

Air Force base, I got a top security clearance. Our project in the 1990s was that we had to make duplicate copies of the video training for the Model Jets owned by Saddam Hussein. When war came, you saw how Saddam jets were not active. The training tapes had an error.

In conclusion, I honor my staff and interns for helping, but mostly for helping my dream come true, as I helped them make their dreams come true by video projects of a wide variety.

### **Higgins Beach**

It's up to me to make this as short as possible. Every summer I grew up in a beach community. Since the beach life period spanned 18+ years, I've decided to start in the middle. My Grandfather was in real estate. During the winter, he worked in Westbrook and in summers, everyone packed up and moved to the beach. He had 9 rental cottages and the only available parking lot, carved right onto the beach.

Every summer I was exiled to live there. The main residence was the only stone cottage and was appropriately called BeachStone. Aunt Dot was a schoolteacher, and in the summers she converted the garage into a souvenir gift shop.

Summers were never boring for me. I carved out a life of excitement and adventure, and I got paid. My job at age 14 was to jockey cars into the parking lot. From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., I would accept the money and move cars around as beachcombers would come and go. I used the time to read many books, made friends, met some famous people on vacation, and mostly stared at the waves.

I adore wave watching. I watch the curling, rushing mass of water create an endless progression in my mind, a beast to be ridden. I have to mention here that I made my own skimboard. The flat beach, unlike most beaches in Maine, was perfect for a skimboard.

At 14 I finally started surfing. Having a home at the beach had its perks. Teen surfers would either hitchhike to Higgins with their surfboards, (a quick easy ride, since dudes with trucks would say, I got this) or my friends, for

convenience sake, would leave their boards at my cottage overnight. Carrying a 9 foot fiberglass surfboard 6 blocks to the beach twice a day was so terrible.

I love to humblebrag. I had a chance, weather permitting, to surf in the morning before work, and in the early evening. It only took a year or two for the sport to become so popular, the gremmies (inexperienced young surfers) were selfish and not caring that the surfboards were dangerous to other swimmers. A war started with the city, and after much ado, surfing was banned from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. That cut the accidents way back. Yes, accidents happen. I've had my leg and head bloodied many times.











## **Animal Crackers**

Imagine, if you will, the perfect porch facing a wall of woods, the railing abundant with plants, a comfy chair, and all the time in the world to enjoy it. From 7 a.m. to midnight my hourly – yes hourly – visits to my sanctuary were cathartic. I had three intentions: rest and healing, cigarettes or weed outside only, meditation in sunlight or the dark of night. I love the outdoors. All of it. Even lightning, wind, and thunder.

But in a sense, I'm an intruder. I'm inserting myself into an existing environment filled with creatures, surprises, and mystery. As I relax and become in tune with all that is around me, I see and feel many of my encounters as not only a meaningful symbol, but also as a spooky spiritual message in the moment. Animal totems are fun. But even more fun is when you are surprised when they initiate an encounter with you, and not the other way around. Enjoy my 24 brief stories and pictures of the zoo on my porch, or as I call them, close encounters of the weird kind.

### **It Just Got Bigger and Bigger**

We are so lucky. From the 2nd floor porch balcony, our view is just all bushes and tall trees. For mid-city living, we are so very lucky. One very tall tree, covered in vines, is home to raccoons every year. We notice movement at eye level as three or more climbers use the ropes of the vines. The vines are Muscatel grapes.

Looking over the railing at the ground, the view is pretty bland. One day I noticed a 12" square patch of yellow sand. Thinking it was an ant hill, I shrugged it off. Over the next 3 days, the sand patch got bigger. A couple of nights later, Sharon noticed an armadillo in the parking lot. That's not unusual. About a week later, seeing the sand patch wider and longer, but not taller, I let go of the idea of ants. As a side note, we want ant colonies to stay close. It's not an old wives tale, it's a farmer's truth that ants predict inclement weather. Not a rainstorm, not a gale; they predict floods and hurricanes. I've seen them move 5 days ahead of a hurricane 1,000 miles away. I've also seen them not move when the prediction warning proved a no go. They just pack up and leave for much higher ground. So the patch is not an anthill. The landlord was not digging.



Then I see the opening. Under a rotting log, an unattractive hole about the size of a soccer ball. The sand was a porch for a critter. Sharon was all excited. She suggested it might be the armadillo. So I Googled it. It was a den, and the porch is called an apron. Over three years, I never saw them come out. I learned they have two openings, the other too far into the dense bushes for me to see.

The second year the apron got even bigger. She had babies. The smell of the apron makes it easier for the babies to find home. By this time, I had a small handle on the ways of armadillo life. Pretty happy discovery for a city boy. On Facebook, I saw posts about armadillos and a variety of concerns from those unfamiliar with what was going on in their yard. I was glad to share. Our den was only 21.5 feet from our porch stairs, pretty close for a wild animal. Armadillos eat bugs, snails, etc. Good for the yard. I made a two-fold verbal agreement with the critter one night. "I won't use the leaf blower to disturb bugs and grubs." The other, "I won't eat bugs and grubs if you don't eat my plants and garbage. Okay, you can stay."

## Web Design

Every summer there was a different infestation. This particular summer, out of nowhere, a giant Golden Orb Weaver spider made our porch eaves and walls her home. It didn't take her long to make maximum use of the empty space. Each week the circular web grew larger, with cables attached to eaves and windowsills. We coexisted for almost 2 months. Sharon and I would make funny, sarcastic or progressive comments.

One day, I was sweeping the porch and I discovered something cool and disgusting. A small pile of spider poop. Not just a splat, but a pile 2 inches high and 3 inches around.



Mostly gray if you are wondering. Man, she found the perfect spot to catch bugs. One day, Sharon and I come up the stairs and were shocked. The web faced us at that angle, and with the setting sun backlighting, the web glowed. But dead center in the cobweb was a perfect hole. A bird had missed through and ate our momma spider mid-flight. I miss her.

Update: The next summer there were more spiders. Plural. Hundreds. Every tree branch, every plant – those baby Orb spiders were everywhere. Mama had completed her mission.

### **Birdwatching ~ Not**

Early dusk is a great time to view the horizon of sky and trees from my porch. The world is becoming quiet, no glaring sun, and one can even sense the trees and plants starting to relax. The sky is peppered with little birds in flight, not so tiny I can't identify them. It's more like, it annoyed me for weeks I couldn't identify them!

In one conversation, I mentioned to Sharon the odd birds with funny wings that I see often. One early evening, a few weeks later, I pointed to the sky, "Sharon, look, the funny birds are back, look!"

Silence. "Douglas, those are not birds, those are bats."

I should have known they would be bats. I knew well enough about a local, very deep bat cave. It has an opening in the drainage of the Gainesville Mall only 6 blocks away. Hidden and surrounded by bushes, the entrance is a best-kept secret. I've been there. The stink was uninviting.

Yeah, equally embarrassing, and not just to name-drop or brag, I dated the famous, national doctor who built the University of Florida Bat House. Many evenings over a glass of wine, we brainstormed ways to overcome a problem due to carpenters. In addition, a friend who runs the art program at the Reitz Union on campus showed me the top floor of the Reitz closed off due to a bat infestation.

Animals, pets, critters, creatures, lions and tigers and bears. Ah, no bears and tigers and lions thankfully. At the Denver Zoo, I saw the 2nd largest bear on



record. I live near the center of a small city. No shortage of entertainment or instant thrills from the animal kingdom. Night and day, my 2nd floor porch with a great view is very safe, but safe is relative. The porch is a magnet. If I had a video that was a time lapse of the porch for 31 years, you would come to the same conclusion I have, which is that every year is a different cycle of invasion. I'm amazed by the variety of creatures that I have interacted with as we've been visited by many creatures great and small.

Two springs in a row, never before, never after, we were infested by little round bugs. They swarmed on the wooden utility shelf. Oddly they like a stuffed toy that had the same colors. They were harmless. I rather enjoyed them. They swarmed around in a sweet, charming way, rather than in an ominous predatory swarm of say, La Cucarachas. But then, there were too many. I fished a few out of my morning coffee. No pesticide needed. I put dish soap in a spray bottle and sprayed them twice a day for 3 days. I felt bad they had to move, but they didn't die. You should know, though, my first choice was to rent an anteater.

### **Searcher Ants**

In my long life, there are certainties to accept. I've had the pleasure of searcher ants finding me interesting or tasty. Against great obstacles, searcher ants persist in getting on my skin. This is starting to get under my skin. I sit on a second-floor porch. Nothing in my proximity attracts ants. But they cannot resist the urge to explore, leaving their home to find a treasure, the poor ant's last destiny. Those days I forget to look for him, and he is already on me.

### **Wood Bees**

Let it bee, let it be.

My porch shelf freaked me out. Over the course of weeks, the pile of sawdust grew and grew. A weird-looking bee the size of a bumblebee ate her way into the underside of the top shelf.

Being the nature lover that I am, and enormously curious – I let it be. Mystery continues as I have no clue what the yellow topping is on the shelf. No pics of bees, though. My shots were blurry.

I have since learned its name. Of all things Latin or cultural, it's called a wood bee.



### **This Health Food is Neither**

It took man's best friend to save the day. I wasn't a fan of the hipster trend Lucky's Market. The fact that Lucky's was odd was the hook, like drinking beer in the aisles, a hot, single slice gourmet pizza, a coffee shop, paper bags only, the whole look of the cliché health food store. My only compliment is that during the slow checkout line, the little barriers had a good read like, "Everybody was tofu fighting," and "Don't go bacon my heart."

We tried to get good food there. Aisles stocked with boxed health food. Health food, my ass. We bought a box of Rice Chex. More like cardboard chex. Inedible. But perhaps critter food! Curious as to who or what would eat that crap, I scattered the Rice Chex out in an uneven line, about 40 foot long, on the grass. A weird sight from the window but a bit of an adventure.

Day 1, still there, Day 2 still there, Day 3 still there. We have birds aplenty, and too many cats, 3 raccoons, 1 opossum, a night avenue for armadillos, a rabbit or two, and did I mention birds? No one would eat them.

Day 4. I look out the window as I'm making coffee, drat – because it occurred to me I have to go clean them up. Later, sitting on my porch, sipping coffee, forgetting totally all about it, I see movement out of the corner of my eye. A good size blonde Labrador is snorting them up as fast it can! Wait...what? In less than ten minutes, a stray dog is my helper angel. Gone, every single Chex.

### **Field Trip for Danny the Dragonfly**

Back in 2005, we got in the truck to do errands. We spied a dragonfly gazing at himself in my mirror. Travelling across town, we make a stop for an hour. We come back to the truck and he is still gazing. Travelling again across town we make another stop. Danny the dragonfly is still there. My companion and I are laughing. We had to take a picture.

We finally arrive home, and as we are walking away from the truck, he flies up, circles us a tad too close and then buzzes off. Danny's back safe at home. True story. Guess he gets to humblebrag to his friends that he flew 60 miles per hour today. Well done, Danny.



## Poor Momma ~ Poor Doug



Years back, I heard a ruckus in the yard. I saw a feral cat thrashing in distress in the leaves. She had her head stuck in a soup can. Her consistent motions made angel wings in the dead leaves.

She has no intention of running. I have no intention of helping because, well, it's a mad cat. I left her there for about 20 minutes. She had

calmed down. She heard me get closer and she started thrashing. I walked away.

Sharon drove up as I was standing over her. Finally, the tired cat surrenders. Speaking in a soft soothing voice, and with slow movements, I pick her up in my arms. Cradled and firm in my hold, she feels safe. I decide to pull the can off her head with my right hand. I give it a really good tug and pull. I assess that there is no sneaking up to it. I grab the can and lovingly hold the cat and I rip the band aid off.

I pulled as hard as I could. I don't recall much after that. I'm standing there with a can in my hand. I recall her flying high and fast off to my left and landing about 15 feet away. I feel a strange sensation on my chest and tummy. I look down to see blood. Feral cat scratch fever, and a thing I won't do again.

## In the Dark I Did, Almost Did

Sharon works late into the night during the precious quiet time. Late being until 4 a.m. The house, the yard and the street are silent. She has the hearing and perception of a canine. Dogs' ears. Bark, Bark. She knows when something in the night lurks.



Me? Not so much. I have hearing challenges. At night, before bed, with the porch light off, there is my last look at the sky, plus a cigarette with weed and a little meditation in the chair. One night, since we have multiple porch chairs, I ventured out on the dark porch intending to sit in the chair farthest from the door. In the dark, I walked past the closest chair and saw the silhouette of the downstairs large black cat. I almost pet him. Cat did not move. I went to the far end to sit, and halfway through getting a total buzz, I watch movement in the chair. Then, a big raccoon jumps off, turns to give me a look, and waddles off down the stairs.



Going inside I said, “We know I’m really buzzed, but I almost pet a raccoon on the head sitting in the chair. Remind me I told you this tomorrow.”

### **In the Dark He Did, He Really Did**

I usually sit in the first porch chair by the door. I go out. I make no noise; I smoke and meditate. The above raccoon encounter was not the first or only. In the course of many visits, the big butt raccoon visits without fear, which usually involves looking for vittles.

Three different times a fat raccoon has wandered up while I’m chillin on the porch. Two times I watched the raccoon stop in the dark and almost walked right across my foot. I can feel the paws through my socks and even my sneakers. I never scare any critters off my porch. Animals sense things.

Imagine you are me and sitting in complete silence. You catch the roving raccoon out of the corner of your eye. He walks by, stops and looks at me. I’m just watching. He then sidles over and sits on my foot. I love those moments. After about five minutes, I was sad to see the raccoon go off into the night.

I still get a kick out of Sharon’s reaction the next morning when I informed her that a raccoon sat on my foot for five minutes last night. Drat, it doesn’t even surprise her anymore. But she loves the story.



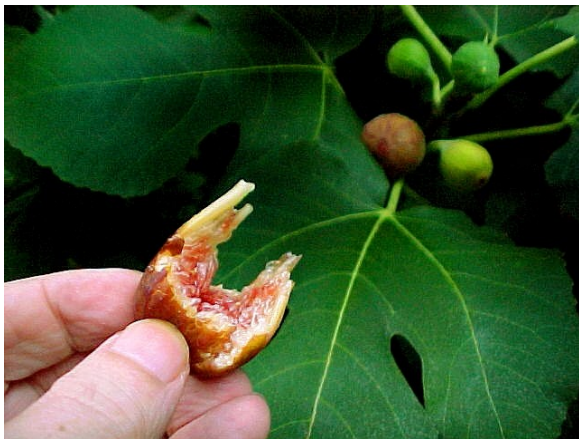
## What? Us?

Working late into the wee morning hours, Sharon hears a pattering on the roof, so she investigates. A Raintree is growing not 13" inches from our 2nd floor porch railing. Imagine a five inch trunk to it, but it goes up and up before branches make for good critter climbing. The next morning she shows me a great photo of three trash pandas (you might call them raccoons) looking guilty as hell.



## Critter Climbing

In 1982, I planted a fig tree at the foot of my porch stairs. For the last 25 years, come May and June, the tree is laden with ripening figs. Plenty more than I can eat in a given day or week. With more than I need, the urge for me to be super protective of my fruits was not even an issue. I was glad to share with the local critters.



I'm not a big fan of squirrels. The squirrels not only knock over my potted plants on the railing, they jump on the hanging bird feeder with basic squirrel shenanigans. They also actually eat certain plants. We lost 3 hard-to-find plants because they nibbled on them down to the roots. The squirrels were foiled by the fig tree, though. With 7 cats in the yard, and since cats love to catch

the little tree rats, the cats simply sat on the wall waiting for the snack to arrive.

To our delight, several raccoons would come at night and have fun. They are quiet, so in total darkness and with no wind, the branches would move silently. Every other season or so, a momma would bring her babies. Fun to

watch. The fact that raccoons wash their food is not a myth. I left a pail of water by the tree for some reason or other. That night, I spied a fat raccoon, on her haunches, washing her figs.



### **I Love a Lone Cat, Hate Group Cats**

When it came to cats, the porch was not all fun and games. A new tenant, Jen moved in downstairs and brought a few cats. We already had two ferals in the neighborhood. Those two were never a nuisance. There was a man down the street who fed the local feral cats in two places on our street, but far enough away that they kept to themselves. Until Jen left her food outside for her three cats.

Within 6 months, Jen and the cat guy had set up a free-range cat zoo. It went from 5 cats, plus his up the street that bred with other cats, and suddenly there were 22. They were sick. There were four additional litters in 3 months and all had the genetic eye disease. Kittens died. It was a different drama every week. We were beside ourselves.

Then, a cat lover with brains and a real heart moved upstairs over Jen. Over 6 months, she set out cages and trapped them, one at a time, to be adopted or



fixed and returned. Then the cats went from 22 to 12 to 7. We were stuck with the seven until Jen moved out. The girl upstairs moved out. The new tenant in Jen's place came with 5 dogs.



### **The Unusuals**

One of the gift surprise encounters of the porch theatre is not just the constant animal traffic. The biggest thrill takeaway for me is that you see animals you would never expect to see. City tree rats, like squirrels, and cats, and birds are common and aplenty. Now, if I saw a giraffe, I would know I was dreaming. Twice though, at after 2 a.m., usually under a crescent moon, I have seen a fox. They are taller, thinner, and have a cute nose and a super long tail. There's a certain dumbness or cluelessness to regular dogs. I can see now, by experience, how lucid and crazy sharp and cunning a fox is. No joke. Nice colorings.

### **Tarot in Real Life**

There are two tall trees side by side at the end of my driveway. They are spaced about 3 feet apart and remind me of columns, as in a gazebo or temple. Why? Because from my position, the Full Moon is rising between them.



I don't consider owls to be birds. Owls are creepy, mystical, and their own entities. We had a Barred Owl nest 20 feet from my bedroom window. He would just be looking at me on the porch. At night, window open or not, we'd hear the cacophony of owls. We listened and it was a triangle, three in communication. Sharon lived 10 blocks down the road and she could hear the same three.

I found an owl feather once. It's in a safe place. I'm not one to keep

animal parts. It's just not something I gravitate toward. In childhood, I had a rabbit's foot on a chain for good luck. Not very lucky for the rabbit. My girlfriend, June, also loves animals. And she likes animal parts. There were many weeks I would find a dead squirrel or bird in the fridge and/or freezer. She would switch them out. I am a bit of a witch or shaman. I totally get the magic, compulsion, and it was fascinating to see. Just don't open anything with the word June on it.

Birds have been messengers for me since I was a child. An owl would have a message or portents. Does it mean one thing? A symbol? Its message in the moment, unique to a connection. It will be made known later.

Driving along in my neighborhood with a canopy of trees and slow children, I was buzzed by an owl who missed my windshield by about 12 inches. Now, owls are fluid, quick hunters. He didn't just fly by, he swooped up, wings in place, his body turned slightly toward me for 1/1000th of a second. They can do that. And he flew off. The sunny day was obliterated by his shadow as the car went dark. I think I told three people that day I got swooped.

That night, Ben texted and said my friend Chet had passed away. At that very hour. Do I need a signifier sign? Owls don't always mean death. They may just make you more lucid and let you know the universe is participating. But sometimes, an owl is just an owl.

## **While Raking – I Got Raked.**

Family days have requirements. Safe home for the kids, laundry room, fenced yard, pool and upkeep. A realtor hooked us up with a Rent-to-Own. On the awkward, least-walked side of the house – we all have one – we inherited a pile of a couple of years' worth of just pine needles. A cup of coffee and I get right to it, raking in just my casual sneakers, socks and jeans. The dense needles are a bit sharp and the depth goes well above my ankles. Like a laborer in the wheat fields of old, my rake, like a scythe, pushes and piles. However tiring, this is very satisfying.

The needles have crept up into my pants and socks. One needle in particular kept stinging no matter which way my foot turned, unlike the previous needles. Not that bad, I thought. However constant and quite irritating, not now is my non-action action and I kept working for another 30 minutes.

Standing proudly before the glory of my completed task, me thinks I am wheezy from raking, but wheezy ain't the right word. I brush the needles off my pants. The pants are cleaned and now the socks. As I pull up my pant leg, just above the sock line, I see a bulging artery and WTF, I see a scorpion! The source of my pinch is hanging on me with his tail in my leg.

I'm usually smooth and calm during a crisis, but not this time. I screamed and shook my leg so quickly, so hard, the scorpion flew off a good 20 feet. Light-headed, with my leg starting to ache up to my knee, I wobbled into the house and my excited utterance was born from panic. Cathy quickly called the Poison Control Hotline to confirm the hospital was a yay or nay. Questions, questions, what's with all the questions. Not us – them.

Whittled down, our location, exotic pet or local, big or small, duration of bite, the color and pattern. End result, it's okay, they said, no need for a hospital. It won't kill him, he will just wish he were dead! Give him a good amount of painkillers and he'll crave cocktails the first 48 hours. He will lose use of his leg for a few days and be very lame for a week. His delirium will be similar to a strong flu. If he shows signs of respiratory problems, go to the emergency room. That's it, good luck.

Being only about 35 years old, I had not yet quite grasped the art of pain management or even charted it. It was horrible. No leg use for 5 days, sick as a



dog with the flu minus hacking, and lame for two full weeks, with a minor reminder for a whole month. I always rode my 750 Honda motorcycle to work but couldn't do so for 3 weeks. No way my leg could support that.

This story is not complete. A week later, Cathy saw a scorpion in the kids' bedroom. A few days later, another by the front door. Neighbors talk, and we got the skinny and the down low. The area has a history of vacancies because the house sits along The Scorpion Trail. The lot behind us is empty. There is a ravine across the street going in the same direction as the Scorpion Trail. I love nature, which I can't change, but I can change my address. Since this problem was already known among realtors and our agent, not revealed at time of our contract, it was terminated. We got two weeks free rent and our deposit back. We didn't even stay a week.

Gee, I went to rake up the yard, usually a harmless thing, and got raked by a force bigger and more important than I am, Mother Nature.

### **In the Final Days: Frogs**

I can't remember a summer when I didn't have a little frog on the porch terrarium. Those tiny ones are so cute. Once in a while there would be a large green or brown frog, but not for long. The local cat munched on them. I can testify by the evidence left on my doorstep.

My porch has a front door and glass sliding doors off my bedroom. When Sharon was working in the living room at night, I would use the glass sliding door. Apparently one frog adopted me. About every other night he would jump on me whilst sitting in my chair. It was so cute, that one. This went on for weeks. The upside, he likes me. The downside, he's getting bigger every week with all the bugs! We never saw where he was camping out.



One night I opened the glass door and he jumped on my head. The second night was the same. He really loves me. A few days later, we found him hiding in the slot above the glass door. I was scaring him. He continued to jump on me for a week, and then disappeared.

The next season, we saw three different frogs simultaneously in three different locations. The next week we saw more. They would jump on my glass door anytime, their silhouette so cute. The next day, I went out and there were 11 frogs sitting on top of the drip lip over the door. They were poised like vultures, waiting for the bugs and gnats to fly by.

The irony in this story is the timing. This happened the summer before the winter alarm about COVID. In hindsight, we had a plague of frogs before the actual plague.

One year we got a whole slew of Cuban Frogs, brown and icky. We still took photos. The one or two we posted on Facebook were met with criticisms and a call to death for them. Invasive species. I guess the native green tree frogs. We had both green and brown ones. No, I'm not killing any frogs. They lived peaceably among dozens of anoles.







## **People Who Took Me Where I Wanted to Go**

Here is a shout-out and a few bios about my experience with visionary and skillful people in my greatest love, photography. Every one of them was clever and skilled. They didn't just show me camera skills. They all, each in a specific genre, showed me what the high-level standard was and what close to perfect is.

### **Richard Turner**

Richard Turner was my last year college instructor. A commercial money-making product-driven Madison Avenue type. Great, since I progressed into that field and made tons of money and thousands of people have seen my work. Today, millions of people are photographers, but this level is where millions, even thousands fail. That's why, after your cousin blew the last photo session, one affirms, always hire a professional.

Richard's advice to me? "You're a very good photographer. But don't measure your best work as your goal. Your goal is to understand your worst baseline and bring the bottommost level up. And no product should ever be average."

He gave me a referral to the best photography studio in North Florida. They hired me without an interview. Mr. Turner and I were still in touch years later. He collected cameras himself and I personally sold him his favorite ones, several SX-70s. My alma mater also had a display area where I donated a large collection of my work.

### **Ansel Adams**

Ansel Adams' black and white images are known world-wide. Most familiar are the ones from Yosemite. Using an 8 x 10 camera, and a tripod, he would climb where he shouldn't go to study and wait. He is famous for waiting all day for the "light to be right." He is also famous for being a stickler with the Zone system, a way of measuring grayscale from black to white.

I took a day workshop with him. He was instructionally helpful with my view camera; now I knew a couple techniques not even thought of. I was so thrilled. I asked him to sign my camera. He looked at me, walked away and didn't speak to me the rest of the day.

Truth be told, I think his art is boring as fuck. If I see another static photograph of a weird rock, a tree stump or a group of rocks by a tree stump, even with cool clouds, I will puke. I call this form of photography "stealing." Very uncreative; it's just point and shoot. But I am always looking for a groovy one to surprise me.

### **Jerry Uelsmann: Symbols**

My most favorite master and the one who broke me free of my artist bondage was Jerry Uelsmann. Jerry was the groundbreaking photographer who brought "Art Photography" to a high level at the time, and his work is still breathtaking today. I've seen his darkroom and it's a lab tech's dream. The process he uses, with seven enlargers, I am familiar with, though I have only used three at a time for a single finished image.

I was at his book signing in the 1980s at Goering's Book Store in Gainesville, Florida. I own two large photographic prints of his (worth a pretty penny now). I found his point of view inspiring on all levels of his awareness. I offered to be a model for him but immediately acknowledged that I was too normal looking. He laughed.

His work speaks for itself. By the way, he was the first to receive a Doctorate as a photographer. On the psyche side, he made many of us believe we could be successful and appreciated in the Art Photography field. Up till then, you were looked down on by artists. They believe photography was not a real art. My experience of the evolution of photography is that it's a metaphor for our own ascension. An old expression is, if it's not on the negative, then it's not on the print. One started with a negative to make a positive. Today, with digital, we get both instantly.

Art and photography are different. Art is someone painting the feeling in the moment of their own perception. Photography is documenting the subject as it really is. The evolution of photography is to become art.



## Sharon and Kriya

My BFF Sharon and my daughter Kriya blow my mind all the time. I monitor their photography every day. I marvel at their photography every day. Why? Because they seem to have the knack, the talent and the eye. They say they picked up their skill by learning what a great photo is from me. I say they are clearly good photographers and it took me years to learn how to take a good photo, and for that I am a bit embarrassed. But glad for them.



## **My Spiritual Mentors**

My first spiritual buddy was Meher Baba.

My 2nd spiritual Buddy was Khalil Gibran.

My 3rd spiritual buddy was Yogi Ramacharaka.

My 4th level buddies included Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, Richard Maurice Bucke, Lobsang Rampa, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Gopi Krishna, and Brother John, Richard Bach, Carl Jung, and Abraham Maslow.

My 5th level spiritual buddy was Gurdjieff and his besty Ouspensky.

My 6th spiritual buddy was Ram Dass.

My 7th spiritual buddy was, and still is, Guru Maharaj Ji aka Prem Rawat.

My 8th spiritual buddy is Alice Bailey.

My 9th spiritual buddy is Sandaarian and Patanjali yoga.

My 10th spiritual buddies are the guides and angels from upon high.

## My Life as a Photographer

I am a humble photographer. I feel fortunate that I got to "mess with photography" in a very high-level way. I reincarnated so I could experience the leap in time spanning from 18th Century technology to the 21st century in one lifetime. The sweet spot.



There is no easy or humble way to put this. I am a professional photographer. I've been getting paid for my work for 50 years. I have taken over ONE MILLION photographs. I went to the 3rd best photography school to learn the full gambit. I consider myself a Jack-of-All-Trades.

Most photographers specialize. I am the dude you called to do anything. I have all my negatives since 1969 saved as digital images. What started as a hobby and side hustle turned into a skilled career.

And then, with retirement, I was able to share new images as art and preservation. I'm appreciative of those artists who have also taken millions of pictures and do it out of love and beauty. What made me a professional was I was paid top dollar to deliver an excellent product in a timely, sophisticated way. The success is not measured by the amount of images, nor just personal satisfaction monetized. Out of those 1,000,00 million images, I got directly and indirectly paid for more than \$500,000.

Unlike 95% of people, who throw away their negatives, prints and all too soon, photo albums and scrapbooks, I not only save all of mine, but purchase ephemera from estate sales and flea markets. So, that makes me a preservationist as well as a photographer.

The downside is, looking back at family photos and events I've attended, I find I'm not in any of the pictures because I'm behind the camera. And, in many of

the family and people photographs I have, some look glum or annoyed because Doug is in their face again.

These days, I'm being asked for photos from long ago because the print is the gift, however late in the timeline. I'm grateful for the people who took and saved images. Everyone is and can be a photographer. Millions of images are being uploaded to the internet. And I am in awe of the creativity.

And the sweet spot is that I'm a photo snob. A photo and art judge, I know the old cameras and darkroom techniques and the new digital opportunities. Photography is a compulsion for me and my creative aspect as well as my documentations outlet. As I mentioned, between my archaic negatives and digital camera work, I've taken well over one million pictures to date.

Even though my dad once stated there's no money in photography or art, my education and skills in photography were essential in several other endeavors in my life. I made money and achieved fame. And since sharing is caring, most pictures were for others. My favorite pictures are my compulsions, which, fortunately, led me to greater things. I take pictures every day.

I started out as an artist. I had an innate sense of composition and perspective, and my brain was groomed to be an editor in photo mags. I get a sense of what interests people and why, and most importantly, when. From press print to the internet, I've nailed it. As an artist, if I were to judge myself, I'd be a B+. Over the years I've learned that I can't put emotion in the painting. I'm more of an illustrator or a graphic artist. Going to college for 4 years for photography, I applied my art sense to pictures, but I'm still a commercial hack for money and my own art photography based on deep meaning for me only.

I was fortunate enough to be taught, assisted by and inspired by some Great Masters of Photography. The most popular or recognizable name would be Ansel Adams. A workshop in the woods and mountains with 6 other people, lugging my 4 x 5 view camera and tripod, was a rare opportunity and also boring as fuck. He did personally touch my camera and showed me an obscure technique. I was such a fanboy, I asked him to sign my camera. He gave me the look-no-look and walked away and didn't speak to me for the rest of the afternoon. No biggie. If I see another picture of just a rock or just a tree trunk or just a rock and a tree trunk, I will scream.



In 1974 I was privileged to take a 1/2 day workshop/ lecture with Philippe. There were only about 11 of us. It was very intimate, and he talked to us, not at us. He changed my life, or gave me a clue I already had, so it was more than validation, it was birth! The combination of his Russian accent and New York City accent, as fun to listen to as, say Kissinger, was not distracting. He was elderly then, and all his anecdotal stories from the past had an underlying meaning or message. Not so much on technique, because the medium had changed so much. His photographs and philosophy were about creating the photo from scratch with what you had and making people feel and think.

He asked us, one at time, why we take pictures. Only 7 of us were straight up camera people, the others were followers and icon attendees. I replied, "To tell a story, not just to capture an image of shapes." To this day, I'm still doing that.

## **20 Brutal Truths**

You are going to die and you have no idea when.

Everyone you love and hate is going to die, and you don't know when.

Your material wealth won't make you a better or happier person.

Your obsession with finding happiness is what prevents its attainment.

Donating money does less than donating time.

You can't make everyone happy, and if you try, you will lose yourself.

You can't be perfect, and holding yourself to unrealistic standards creates suffering.

Your thoughts are less important than your feelings, and your feelings need acknowledgement.

Your actions speak louder than your words, so you need to hold yourself accountable.

Your achievements won't matter on your deathbed.

Your talent means nothing without consistent effort and practice.

Now is the only time it matters, so stop wasting it by ruminating on the past or planning the future.

Nobody cares how difficult your life is, and you are the author of your own life's story.

Your words are more important than your thoughts, so start inspiring people.

Investing in yourself isn't selfish. It's the most worthwhile thing you can do.

It's not what happens, it's how you react that matters.

You need to improve your relationships to have lasting happiness.

Pleasure is temporary and fleeting, so stop chasing fireworks and start building a constellation.

Your ambition means nothing without execution – it's time to put in the work.

Time is your most valuable asset – you need to prioritize how you spend it.

## Living Days

My life achievements are based on statistical analysis. Not just a one-time thing – leaving a generalized conclusion and with no base control factor for comparison. Instead, my life motto is, “I will try anything three times just in case....”

Today is not my birthday. But I did the math and I am 26,000 days old. I prefer to call them living days. Most days I live in the trance of the moment. I appear to plod along doing my stuff, like others, keeping track of the day of the week and measuring the experience of my life in sensual, seasonal changes, or cups of coffee. Being neurodivergent, I measure things all the time. I count, I keep track, I look for patterns in events, symbols and numbers. I consider myself a kindergarten actuarialist. In the repetition of daily life, all the activities, the possessions, the experiences can be measured, in a totally encompassing way, a “big picture way” as in bulk, right down to the most minute information.

I ask you, how many times in daily and monthly repetition have you done something? How many specific objects have you owned? Do you remember? Our memory is selective and elusive. You remember your first car, you remember your favorite car, you remember your worst lemon, and you remember your last car. And I now I ask, how many have you forgotten? Up to now, how many vehicles have you owned? In my life, as a private citizen I have owned 83 vehicles.

I found the following data both delightful and horrifying.

Stats. This is a list of all the things I've done. Things I could do, some I literally had to do, and those I couldn't help but do.

Number of days I have lived so far: 26,000  
Chickens I have eaten and consumed: 14,879.  
Times struck by lightning: 3  
Times I've seen a UFO: 0  
Times I've won the Lotto (with three 0s or more!): 3  
Cars and trucks I've owned: 58  
(not including...)  
    School Buses: 3  
    Motorcycles: 7



Boats: 5  
Surfboards: 7

Times I've been on a real Rollercoaster: 1  
Times on a cruise ship: 0  
Passports I've owned: 2.  
Years forbidden to have a passport: 18  
Times I have panhandled for food: 1  
Actual serial killers I have known: 1 ( so far)  
Times I've gotten fired: 0  
Bones broken: 0  
Times my nose has been broken: 7  
Bumped or rubbed by a shark: 4

Different nude beaches: 4  
Times at a nude beach: 25+  
Bought Starbucks coffee: 0  
Times I've eaten Hogs Head Cheese: 1  
Chicken wings I have eaten in one sitting: 38

Children: 2  
Grandchildren: 1  
Times I've been married: 2  
Lived with a significant other: 3  
Flown in a commercial plane: 13 times  
Flown in a little plane: 6 different ones, 26 times  
Different plays I've been in: 2  
Spoken to an audience larger than 4,000 people: 15 times  
Spoken to an audience larger than 25,000: 4 times  
Spoken to an audience larger than 3,000,000: 1 time  
Self-help workshops I have been to: 45+  
Movies I've seen: 32,000+  
Vendor tables for books and crystals: 11  
Pets I've owned: 8  
Books I sold on Amazon: 40,000+  
Hours played on Xbox or PlayStation: 0  
Hours of meditation: 11,890+  
Times I entered Samahdi: 5  
Cosmic Consciousness: 3

Heard the WORD, Holy Name: 3  
Hours spent thinking about what to wear: 600  
U.S. States I know my way around in: 46  
Countries I have visited: 7  
Trips to the moon: 0  
Drank juice boxes: 0  
Body piercings: 3  
People I have insulted on purpose: 16  
People I have offended: dunno  
Nights in jail: 0  
Holding cell: 2  
Years of college: 6.5 with a 3.9  
Times I have taken different music lessons and woefully failed: 9  
Music instruments I have owned: 28  
Music instruments I currently own: 3  
Jury duty selection process: 7  
Actually served: 0 times

Boiled peanuts eaten: 1, not one serving, 1 peanut  
McDonald's hamburgers: 0  
McDonald's fish sandwiches: 200+  
Tried Dippin' Dots: 0

Cults I have belonged to: 5  
Cults I have been kicked out of: 3  
Churches I have been kicked out of: 4

Cups of coffee: 32,187+  
Glasses of Kombucha: 0  
Traffic accidents: 1 (in my hippie bus)  
Words in paper print (before internet): 4,000,000+  
Actual photographs I have taken: 1,000,000+  
Pounds of weed smoked: Uh, over 400 probably  
Number of Pro football, hockey, basketball, hockey and baseball games: 0  
Orgasms: [roman numerals]  
Vaccines: at least 20+  
Heartbeats: ??  
Transfusions: 0  
Donated blood or plasma: 30+

Donated body: 1  
Skydiving: 1  
Hours surfing: 10,000+  
Number of shoes: 127  
Watches: 17  
Tattoos: 0  
Stitches in my head: 27  
Radiation days: 44  
Times I voted for the President and they won: 4  
Ballet performances on stage: 327+  
Hours practicing ballet and rehearsals: 9,000  
TV commercials I have acted in: 12  
TV commercials I have shot and produced: 11  
Newspaper articles about me: 16  
Number of shoes, boots and sandals: 327  
Times I have been in Love: 11  
Number of times fallen out of love: 1  
Eaten Maine Lobster: 206  
Eaten Florida Lobster: 4  
Incidents of sleep paralysis and OBEs: 125+  
Times I have actually died: 2  
Times I almost drowned: 1  
Times I have been brought back to life: 4  
Times I've been admitted to the emergency room: 7  
Ghosts I have seen: 5  
Times I have watched *The Fifth Element*: 27  
Businesses I've started from scratch: 5  
Employees over 8-year period: 300+  
Times I've been sued: 0  
Actual miracles I have seen: 9  
Miracles I have performed: 4  
Oceans and seas I have surfed in: 5  
Times I've caught an STD: 2  
teeth extracted: All  
Students and interns I taught radio work to: 300+  
Students I have taught metaphysics to in my home: 500+  
Students I have taught on 2 campuses: 107+  
Times I was completely homeless: 4  
Times I've hitchhiked across the United States: 7

Times I've driven across the USA: 10+  
Different beaches I have slept on: 15  
House fires I've made through: 4  
Tornadoes: 6  
Decent earthquakes I've trembled in: 3  
Pounds of chocolate I have eaten: countless  
Times I have struck or hit someone: 0  
Times I've told anyone with meaning from any level, I LOVE YOU: countless  
Babies I've seen born in real life: 29  
Graveyards I've slept in: 2  
Cemeteries I've slept in: 7

In conclusion:

If you feel like you haven't done anything with your life, make your own data list as evidence. You've had a great life, full of surprises and doings and treasures.

Not to scare you, just perhaps to just remind you that the above is how Amazon, Publix, AI, Walmart, META, Facebook, Google and corporations see you. If you have a pattern, corporations know what you are going to do before you do. The upside of that is you can decide your trends, and the world provides.

Finally, as I have lived in 7 decades, two centuries and two millennia, it is apparent I have lived eccentrically and been privileged. I was born during the sweet spot. I have lived with more comforts and opportunities than any king or the richest people who ever lived for thousands of years. That birth of a new paradigm, the New Age of everything has changed exponentially in my lifetime. Amazing.

## Haunted House

After 5 years of being adventurers, Cathy and I decided to put down some roots, hunker in, and begin a new, different life. Yay. Found the cutest house with a reputation. Would you move into a haunted house? So many suspicious things might come to mind. It took us a few months to figure it out. Haunted? Oh yes! And cheerfully, we report we would still have taken occupation had we known beforehand. My wife's parents' house in Massachusetts was haunted. In just the attic alone, the ghost would roam one end where we saw her occasionally. There was a room in front of another room at that end. A room we would absolutely not go in.



This cute house on Beach Street, Daytona, was cheap and had really good vibes. The landlord gave a brief rundown on the backstory of the building, which was intriguing, and he spoke of how things would get even more interesting and detailed as the months went along. In sharing the history, the landlord casually mentioned in passing it was rumored to have "friendlies" – but they had no personal accounts. In the end, it wasn't creepy; in fact, it was a bit fun and very educational.

With a newborn on the way, with me starting college, and with Cathy, friends and I holding a meditation group twice a week in the living room, a routine was established. Because it was a ninety-year-old wood house, all the creaks and odd noises became normal. But as the days and nights went on, things began to happen.

It's 2 a.m. "Douglas," my wife is nudging me. "Wake up, listen, someone is in the living room." I sit up. Sure enough, noises. We had one of those bent bamboo cane-spliced rocking chairs which we could clearly hear moving slowly back and forth. There were additional subtle sounds, which after about the 5th time, we discerned was the sound one might make while flipping



through a magazine. Holy Cow! Of course, I got out of bed to check. I crept to the top of the stairs for a look, quietly came down a few stairs to peek. Nothing. Back to bed. This went on a few nights a week for years.

The backstory on the house began decades ago. It was originally built right on the peninsula on the Halifax River as a boating/dock clubhouse. Deemed surplus, it needed to be moved in 1956 for progress. It was sold for only \$1 in a government disability program, but it had to be moved at the new owner's expense. It was sold to a pair of twins on disability. They were little people, and the sisters had the house moved two blocks to Beach Street. The house was only slightly remodeled, or rather, adapted. This explained much, because visually things were off in the house. The cabinets were lower, and all the doorknobs on the super cool solid wooden doors in the whole building were lowered five inches. I wish I had a photo of the scars left where the old doorknobs were. When we finally caught up with the landlord, he told us the sisters eventually died there. They had no family heirs, so it sat empty for 10 years. The new owners, before we moved in, were using it for storage of furniture for their other rental properties.

It gets better. Now, Kriya was ready to be born. A home birth in the screened Florida room was perfect. So Kriya was born in a haunted house.

By this time, the Carsons had moved from Massachusetts to a place only a mile away. Nuna's house had 2 spare bedrooms and a pool! It was a common weekend adventure to spend the whole weekend there. Friday nights we would leave the house. Then every Sunday night, at dark, arriving home we schlepped all our stuff from the car into our house. It's our house. We just opened the door and made a ruckus.

Cathy would do baby stuff with Kriya upstairs and I would turn on lights, put leftovers in the fridge, and do busy stuff in the kitchen. Lots of house creaking noises. It took us a couple of weekends to figure out we were not the only ones making the ruckus. Oh, oh, something's going on.

I would be in the kitchen and hear shuffling and light banging in the living room, but it wasn't Cathy. After a couple of my shout-outs - *what?* - I got no response from Cathy. Cathy would do the same sometimes, hear noises and think I was being too loud unpacking and call out with no response. Finally, it came to pass and we figured it out. The noises upon our arrival home were not

us. We looked at each other, wide-eyed and mouths open. Our ghosts were mad.

So, we sat down one night for – not really a séance – more of a house meeting. Attempting to make it a bit of a group hug, we negotiated a compromise. We explained that we were more than happy to share the space if they were. As a courtesy, we would give them an hour's warning before we left to go anywhere. We would actually speak out loud to them and leave the premises tidy for them. Upon arriving home, before unlocking the door, we would knock a few times and ask permission to come in.

Well, that changed a lot. Fewer tantrums and they felt respected. Still, the rocking and magazine reading at night went on but hey, that was part of the deal. We stayed for a few years. Our son, Ben, was born and shared the house. So, four of us lived – no, wait – 6 of us lived there. Just in different dimensions.

## Short Shorts

A direct, personal command from my trusted Guru is called *agya*.

"For you, only talk about what you have personally experienced."

Shout out to all my old friends from 1970. We all lived in a 3rd floor, 6-bedroom flat on Park Avenue. Cold and with 3 feet of snow outside, we lost time by sitting around in trendy, awkward bean bag chairs drinking Boones Flavored wine, licking Zig-Zag papers, reading R Crumb and Rolling Stone and listening to The Moody Blues, The Rolling Stones, The Band, Crosby, Stills and Nash and Country Joe and the Fish, (*Whoopie, we're all going to die*), while theorizing how to avoid the draft,

My future wife and her sister are in the back bedroom on a floor mattress, singing along with Laura Nero on the record player, while frantic Tim is looking (again) for the escaped Boa Constrictor which his roommate forgot (again) to feed. Michael and Randy are behind closed doors cutting up a fresh kilo of Mishmakahn from a-Mexico-through-Toronto connection of all places. They bought it for \$150 and are complaining because they ran out of new baggies. No biggy, the weed will all be gone in 3 days anyway.

Meanwhile, a quiet dude is attending to the aluminum foil and grow lights in his closet. And we all have sideways eyes watching some unknown guy, who smells like Patchouli oil, do dishes and take out the trash, but he never speaks and no one remembers how long he's been living here or who's friend he is. Probably just came with the apartment, we guess.

One night we all figured out the cat litter box in the hallway wasn't being cleaned daily. It was just not being used, but no one wanted to touch it just in case there *was* a cat – unless the Boa ate it.

How brave we all were to just exist peaceably in a smoke-filled room and just eat and eat from an endless pot of rice on the stove with confidence, because Bobby says whole civilizations live on rice alone. One night, in a stoney epiphany, John, Michael and Tony, as we all lend our cheers and support, decide to go rent the third floor warehouse flat in the original Old Port

building as a clandestine teen bottle club. And come spring, three months later it's the coolest thing in Portland.

### **My Most Memorable, Anti-Climactic, Let Down**

Contests are cool. But coming in 1st is not all it's hyped up to be. In four years' time, in my immediate orbit, were four friends who attended Embrey Riddle Aeronautical University. They were either roommates or part of our meditation group. I'd heard about the annual fundraiser river raft race from my roommates.

After I graduated from college, I needed to decompress and re-program myself during the abrupt change. I had a little cottage a block from the beach, and got a part-time day job on Seabreeze Avenue at a place called The Silver Bucket, which was a local watering hole and oyster bar. The place was hip, with all old wood architecture, brass railings, and free peanuts with shells on the floor. I shucked oysters and served beer and made great money. The irony is all of the night shift workers were Embry Riddle students.

The Annual Embry Riddle River Raft Race fundraiser entry time came and the owner decided to sponsor our own team. About 8 of us parlayed our knowledge and enthusiasm into a possible method of crafting. There was no doubt among this group that we were out to win and enjoy it too. We heard rumors and saw photos of past races and the craft they used. As a result, we lashed and cinched 8 big truck tire inner tubes together to create our raft.

The morning of the race was crazy. With 100 participants in various craft, and about 200 there to watch, the chaos of getting ready made time speed up. We got our ID tags and number for our craft and launched into a big cluster of people in the water ready for the starter gun.

We didn't get off to a good start. We got locked in a group who were not controlling their craft. The team leader was in the stern and I was on the bow, but Tim was calling the directions. Still, it wasn't long before everyone in the race found their rhythm and the race was on.

All I heard was *row, row, row*. In no time, I noticed that there was no one on all sides of us. I turned around to look at 40 craft and the closest craft was only

10ft away. *Row, Row*. All I can see from that moment on is nothing but the river and the finish line and a crowd waiting. Since I am on the bow alone, it feels like I cross the finish line alone. I missed everything. We made the owner proud, but I would have enjoyed the event more if we had been stuck in the middle, fighting hard, and screaming fuck off.

Sometime in the mid-80s, Ben and I went to the Mall for sneakers and a gyro. By this time, he's all of 10 years old and digging it being in this particular mall for the 1st time. As malls go, this one contains much wide open space. The rage back then, the TV store would roll out their biggest Big Screen Box TV for people to enjoy. A small crowd had gathered to watch a thriller video as we walked up. We happened to be standing up close next to the big screen. Just as the thriller ended, via a bad edit, a commercial popped up and no one moved. My face, filling the whole screen, was an ongoing commercial for Cox Cable on MTV. For a full 30 seconds my face is blah, blah, blah. I turn toward the crowd, who are trying to figure out what the heck was going on, I am pointing at Ben because he's frozen with his mouth wide open, and so cute.

The ad finishes. Ben looks up at me and says, "Good one, Dad." The crowd applauds, mostly because Ben was so cute. Later that night, we are watching TV and my face comes up again. He turns and looks at me. I think he was confused. Perhaps he thought the mall thing was a set up. Shocked, he asks, "How often are you on TV for real?"

## **Movies on VHS**

I don't do pranks often, but when I do, everyone laughs. Somewhere in the early 90s, Kriya moved in to stay as long as she wanted. She had the guest room with a big TV, cable and a VCR. One quiet night, knowing I have a stash of movies, she asks, dad, you got any good movies to watch? I'm doing paperwork and I get up and hand her a tape with a hand written label, *Movies*, and go back to work. About 25 minutes later, she walks in exasperated. "Daaad, they're all previews, just previews!" Since I did video production at the time, I had 2 VCRs rigged up. Every time I'd rent a movie, usually something offbeat – my tastes – I would dub the beginning 3 previews onto an ongoing collection of previews only for my memory suggestion file. The tape is a full 90 minutes; I think I still have it in a box somewhere.



## **No Fear of Flying, Just Incompetence**

I love period movies. And I'm living in one. Let's go back to a period called 1988. Living in 1988, as compared to 2022, is more than a slow adjustment – it's completely different. Bernadette and I were flying to Phoenix. Being gone for 10 days involved luggage. Unlike today where you are under a microscope, back then the airports were easy doing and easy going. There was a crowded relaxed line at the check in. We each had two suitcases to check and 1 carry-on each.

The woman at the counter was jovial and upbeat. I'm checking my luggage. Between us there are 4 bags to be checked. As she is tagging, I casually joke, "Would you please take this one to LA and the brown one to Philadelphia and the green one to Boston?"

She looked at me and smiled, "Sorry, we don't do that."

"Yes, you do. You did it last time." The crowd behind me laughed out loud.

Bernadette said, "Oh, Douglas!" I haven't been put on the no-fly list yet; I'm still with the jokes and I get scanned by the TSA, but I keep my head down and use only carry-on whenever possible. I long to live in the good old days. This new movie needs better writing.

## **I Took off in a Small plane and Didn't Land In It**

One Friday night, Sharon comes over to visit Kriya and me. She's excited about an Adventure Club event. "Hey, you guys wanna go skydiving tomorrow?" Wide-eyed, Kriya declines, but I say, "Sure."

"Okay, we leave at 6:30 a.m. We need to be in Williston by 7:20. Only 6 of us are jumping today."

I've flown in small planes so many times that my nervous level is at zero. Jumping is such an exact process, that I felt safer when, in the past, I hired a complete stranger to take me up for low level photography shoots. I have stories.

A fun thing I will never do again.

I've been scared out of my wits a couple times. It's the kind of scary when you freeze and almost pee your pants. You know those low flying banner planes, the trailing messages hovering over the beach and sports arenas? I've been in one. It appears they fly very slowly. And slow is not quite the word for it. I'm going with borderline suicide, and thinking about surviving in great peril.

Once I was asked to assist a pilot who needed a 2nd person to fulfill his aviation requirements. He needed to fly a banner. I knew him well enough to agree. Most banner pilots fly solo. A sunny, only slight wind and a field trip to the beach shore and I already wanted out. The banner is laid out on the tarmac. The plane takes off and when airborne, flying over the banner ahead, a hook grabs the leash and lifts the banner into the air, but not without shocking the plane almost to a stop thanks to the tug and the weight. The plane is pretty basic – no doors, no frills, as light as possible. Everything is rickety. I haven't even gotten to the beach shore and already I want out.

The pilot says we are fine. We fly up the coast of Daytona Beach. The wind is blowing. Now every plane has a stall warning. Planes need to fly at a certain speed and have adequate lift. The 40 minute flight had 5 stall warnings. The goal was to fly as fast and slowly as you can. But the drag of the banner is unpredictable. The stall alarm comes on; the pilot pulls the throttle a bit. We fall about five to ten feet and then perk right up and fly right again.

Back at the airfield, he drops the banner, and I could feel the plane, minus the drag, felt 900 pounds lighter! What a career job that is. But the money is good. The adrenaline poison from that trip stayed with me for 2 to 3 days. That was a fun thing, but never again.









## Irritant, Allergy or Poison? No, You're Just Sensitive

These flowers are my enemy, my adversary and the source of my brain fog hibernation mode. We all, regardless of age, possess some form or kind of sensitivity. We live in a strange society where it takes a 60-second TV commercial just to sell you a bottle of aspirin. But there is no known antidote for the wretched stink of the soap powder aisle – well, except to avoid it entirely. I purged my life and home from scented things, be it a night light release, an open bottle of plastic air freshener, or a myriad of different toxic spray cleaners, dishwasher soap, scented laundry detergent, fabric softener, dryer sheets, car fresheners, and the list goes on. Stink be gone, you give me a migraine!



Of course it's all poison. That's why they put it in the products; it kills stuff. The MD white coat shamans lie to me. The lab tests show your reaction to milk, eggs, gluten, tartrazine, and food dyes, but those are only irritants. Even though they make you really ill with brain fog, they are not allergies. If you had an actual allergy, we would make you buy two epi pens.

Meanwhile, I eat two pancakes and I swell up. I go from a neck size 15 to 17 in no time. No concern, just take 2 Benadryl and sleep it off. With eerie confidence, 2 out of 4 allergy doctors will tell you either, "No, it doesn't matter which way the wind blows, east or

west, just take a shower after you go out," or "Yes, it does matter if the wind blows east or west, just take a shower after you go out."

Check out the astonishing cedar tree pollen clouds on YouTube. Scary. *I'm being followed by a bloom shadow.* The beautiful yellow trumpet-shaped vine

flowers, called South Carolina vines, bloom twice a year. Usually, the vine climbs as high as it can and one has to look up to see them. I was sick for 3 days and shocked when I discovered that they were blooming right over my head. I couldn't see them due to the roof at our new home. I found a fallen one and freaked out. We were living there and I discovered that they followed me.

### **Collection of Memories**

Bernadette and I went to California for the adventure of memories. The variety of experiences were pretty noteworthy. Beforehand, as a group project, every year Thomas, Bernadette, Jill Keezer and I would do collectors' day. Thomas started with his asparagus collection. Bernadette was very thrilled with artichokes ephemera, Jill with camel stuff, and I had cameras.

I'd been raving about Castroville, the artichoke capital of the world. I had driven through it many times on my school bus tours. Not much of a quaint town, it's basically a farming town, and each farm is 600 acres. During a hot midafternoon, we took refuge in the Artichoke Museum. Formerly a small two room school house, it looks like a museum now, as well as a welcome center.

Later we went out back and took a scenic route. The plants look prehistoric. Artichokes are basically a bud. It's also okay to have them frost nipped, which brings out the flavor. As we were sharing stories with the curator, we discovered, as always happens, that she used to live in Gainesville and graduated from the University of Florida just five years earlier.





## Happy New Year

One of the things Cathy liked about me was my entertainment gene. I felt comfortable acting out or doing silly pranks for her. Kriya was just 5 months old and we are living in the Beach Street house. Summer is year round in Florida. My Happy New Year kit included some pretty lightweight firecrackers and little rockets.

It was still daylight and a nice evening. Cathy sat on the porch stairs, with Kriya on her lap, ready for a show. Nothing too loud or dangerous because Kriya didn't like loud noises. I set off a couple little sparkly, twirly things. I set off a couple twirly things that whistled. I set off a mini Roman candle – pretty.

I also have two little rockets, only 3" high. They look harmless. I am standing in the middle of a large lawn. Cathy is a good 5 car lengths away. I announce a rocket is next on the list. Cathy says, "Be careful, those are dangerous. You could hit us."

I did the math in my head, *Naw, what are the chances?* I lit the rocket and the fuse was so frisky the rocket tipped over on its side, pointing straight at the porch. *Boom, whistle*, it was headed straight for the one spot in the entire world I didn't want it to go. It flew in a trail of smoke right into the overhang awning 3 feet over their heads and exploded right behind them on the porch. I hope I have a picture of the hole in the awning. That concluded the entertainment for the evening.

## You Don't Have an Accent, I Do

We travelled across the county, coast to coast. At that moment in time, each town, city and state was unique unto themselves. During prior years, we had travelled mostly horizontally, taking different routes and states. On our first attempt at going south, more south in Florida than Tallahassee, we enjoyed a new, to us, cultural shock. Driving all day and then late into the next morning, at least to 3 a.m., we finally stopped for fuel. Back then, we enjoyed service stations. Full service stations where the staff would come to you. They filled your tank, cleaned your windshield, even checked your tires.

We land in Jacksonville. I'm tired. Cathy and I are using 2, maybe 3 word sentences. A guy comes to our window, inquiring how much gas. You could fill a tank for \$10 back then. "Fill her up." He comes back, his face in my open window. "SCHECK-YUR-OLE?" I was stunned. Again he asks, "Scheck yur ole?" I look at Cathy and she looks at him, then me, then him and shrugging her shoulders, says, "Sure, why not." He lifts the hood and checks... the.. oil! He hears us go OHHHH! out loud.

He comes back to the window and says, "Sorry about my accent, it's the old South."

I say, "You don't have an accent, we do!" Said in my most slow, exaggerated Maine accent.

## **Indian Respect**

Emergency! I used to do pranks, tricks and something, "attention getting" because I have the "show and tell gene." Sadly, I had one go awry when young Kriya was crashing with Bernadette and me for the weekend. I had this thing with fire and rubbing alcohol. I could burn a small puddle of alcohol pooled in the palm of my hand. This way I could reveal a dancing blue light and not feel it. Okay, I admit I was a little buzzed this day, and my enthusiasm was unchecked.

We were in the backyard and I attempted the trick, but the flame went out too quickly. I try again but was a bit careless. I mistakenly left the cap off the bottle and when I went to light the 2nd pooling, the lighter ignited the fumes from the plastic bottle and it shot off like a rocket (I never found it). The flames scorched my hand very badly. It looked awful, 2nd and 3rd degree burns, so much so that the skin on the top of my hand separated and puffed up like a giant African frog throat. A dome the size of a half baseball. Pink, red and black underneath.

The Emergency Treatment Center took me right in. No waiting for this one. A 4.9-foot-tall Indian woman who cared for me was so amazing. The 2 nurses cleaned and triaged the surface of my hand. The Indian doctor looked at me so sympathetically. She told me I was going to be all right, but the healing could take 3 weeks.

Grabbing her burn kit, she says she going to fix me right up. I'm sitting on the padded exam table. I'm eye level with the burn but I have to look down to see Kriya and the doctor. The doctor takes a little paddle and begins to smear Silvadene on just as I was saying, "Not sure of my pain level at the moment but I usually need some strong meds when I ...."

A little later, I woke up on the floor. Flat on my back. I have no memory of when I fell off the table. I blacked out. Looking up, I see Bernadette, Kriya, a nurse and my doctor hovering over me. I wobbled up and they checked my blood pressure, etc. We started over. The Silvadene was cool. I had to change my dressing and rebandage twice a day. And yes, it took three weeks to heal, but it never left a scar. I don't do that trick anymore.

## **California Travels**

One adventure we had, however awkward at the time, eventually proved to be pretty amazing. I had already been to Idyllwild, an artist community, years before. A quaint little town in the San Bernardino foothills. We looked around and basically, it was pretty touristy. Bernadette was ready to leave and I was not. I felt like I wanted to buy something. I putzed around an antique type shop and spied a basket of old brass keys that caught my eye. "Douglas, let's go," Bernadette said.

Ah, Salgoud is looking for something. (Salgoud is Douglas backwards, and it's what Bernadette called me when I did something "weird.") I found the perfect key. It was only a dollar. I felt satisfied. But it was really 8 years later when the purpose of the brass key was revealed. The previous night, I slept poorly and had my narcoleptic visions. The next day, even by lunchtime, the expression I used is, "I can't wake up." Plus, I was on some kind of spin. Restless, sad and nervous, I paced and couldn't concentrate.

I meditated for a bit and then I heard my Higher Self voice say, *Go get the key*. It was sitting on my altar, safe and ready. I was told to put the key in my hand. Specific instructions came with success. The key, resting gently on the edge of my hand, moved all by itself. It rolled over 180 degrees by magic, not by moving my hand. I now call it the key trick, but it's not really a trick. But one must be holding space for it – a certain level of calm and intention. No clue

how I knew, but my guide knew. I have not shown Bernadette the trick since our split.

During an early morning hike in the foothills of the Big Sur, the valleys are cool, dark and damp, which is good for the ecology. As we look up through the treetops, the golden light from the morning sun illuminates the tips and tops of ancient, 330-foot-tall sequoias and redwoods. As the sun rises, the golden light horizon line creeps down and the trees go from dark silhouettes to green, pine-laden branches. We step out into a clearing, and behold, before us is the event of a lifetime. With a perfect wide and tall view, the trees are not green but speckled in what appears to be an ornate rug wrapped around a tree. Whoa, all of the trees before us were wrapped in speckles.

Then it happened. The sun warmed up the sleeping butterflies. From the very top they spewed, millions of Monarch butterflies. Millions. The sky went dark as they reconnoitered. I hear the local radars can pick them up. They camped just 1/2 mile from us. But, arg, I had no camera, just a wild tale.

## **Subtle Differences**

Living in another country is an education. I urge everyone to do it. Not just for a weekend but for a healthy length in one spot so you learn the customs and idiosyncrasies of daily life.

In Mexico, the Yucatan specifically, the resident population is very different. They are friendly, patient, kind, helpful, and curious. After 5 days in the Yucatan, I fell right under their spell. I was happier, more open, and absorbing.

As an empath, I am absorbing at light speed. During a busy traffic day, I see a young woman step off the curb into traffic going both ways at about 25mph. She smiles and the stopped car driver waves and a large bus stops and the driver is waving and smiling, like, *no problem* and it's such a great day! I couldn't believe my eyes. If that had been anywhere in America, people would be honking and screaming obscenities.

No one in Mexican culture is better than anyone else. In America, there is not only an entitlement of space, attitude and action, but really, so many rob others, as if the others are not entitled to have what they own. I was with a

small group, and we travelled one evening to a larger city. The stone structures were amazing. They have whole covered cantinas with long tables so people eat communally. Or you can find a little place with a table for four and drink Dos Equis.

I stepped outside to get some air and saw, for the first time in days, a young American couple. I smiled and greeted them with, "Cool, finally, someone from America, good to see you." They looked like they were from New York City – they had that look. The woman says nothing but the man says, "What the fuck do you want?" Yep, another vulgar stupid American. I just turned around and walked away. Silence is golden.

In Mexico, I love saying *gracias* and they love saying *de nada*. When you say thank you, they say *de nada*, meaning, *Think nothing of it or no problem*. And it's true that what I've experienced was profoundly relaxing. It's very hard to teach Americans meditation; they are constantly fucking uptight. They need a week on the beach to get to a relaxed place, and then they probably discover they already know how to meditate.

Upon departure I learned a saying, though I can't spell it. *Ah-Sumah*, The Hope of Tomorrow. So much more feeling than, "Have a nice day."

Back in Gainesville, I walked down the sidewalk on University Ave to hit a couple of shops. I would smile and nod and no one responded. If they did, they looked away. Such grumpy faces. I felt so sad. This was 1996, not 2020 during a plague and economic inflation. This was during the good old days.

## **Travels in India**

The India of today is not the India of the 1970s. If you saw the movie, *Gandhi*, then you have an idea of how much of a third world country it was. India is dangerous on so many levels it's hard to even possibly imagine. There are many rules and customs, but compared to life in America, there are no rules there. If you get into an accident, one works it out privately. If you call the police, they will arrest you both. There is no towing service.

If you see a dead human, animals, broken vehicles or trash in the road, if you touch it, you have to bury it. No rules on the road. Moving is the only rule. You



can drive on either side, and the combination of movement on the roads, including old cars from the British, ox wagons, 3-wheel motor bikes, all animals, cows wandering hither and thither, the road is dangerous. Trains are no better. I rode for 6 hours in a rickety 1930 steam locomotive with 30 passenger cars held together by gum, tape, wire, and clamps. The rooftops were filled with riders. All this is normalized after a few weeks.

All along the active roads are vendors. They make and sell hot japatris, cooked in buried urns. At a little table, they're selling hot chai and little flavorless biscuits. Or, at the best, you get a cup of chai, a hot towel, a soapy straight razor shave, and another hot towel to finish for 1 cent. I was cool with a straight razor on my neck, cuz if they cut you, the shave and tea is free.

What scared me the most? One of the coolest places on the coast is Goa. We hung out for a day and a night but left the next day. The dense jungle butts up against part of the beach. A large tiger came out of the brush and though only a quarter mile away, he started chasing the six of us visitors. Primal nature at its finest. Luckily, as the creature got closer, two loggers with a huge camel suddenly appeared between us from out of the brush. One logger had an antique shotgun. While the tiger stopped at the sight of the camel and the men, the logger fired at it and the tiger ran off. We left.

## **Frozen**

My sister married her high school sweetheart (and they are still together today). Cathy and I went to visit them in South Portland. I love old wooden Maine houses. This two-story home did not have HV/AC but was outfitted with 3 wood stoves. We were just in time to see my niece Maddy born and just a week fresh from the hospital. Even though it was March, the climate was still wicked cold as hell. Maine only has two seasons, winter and 4th of July.

Cathy and I, though travelling frequently at the time, were still acclimated, had blood thick enough to handle the cold. We spent the night. We crashed on the couch and floor with our sleeping bags in the living room. The woodstove was cold. A large galvanized fire water bucket next to it was frozen solid. I showed Beth. She said, "Oh yeah, that happens. It's our thermometer." The funniest joke I ever heard her tell.



## Vegetarian

How is it so many people have been made fun of for being vegetarian? Like meat is the end-all and be-all of the food chain. My abstinence from meat was not an intellectual exercise. I don't like the way raw meat looks, or smells, and when cooked, how I feel afterwards. I am not a food snob, but I am finicky. I went vegetarian in the fall of 1968.

As the years rolled by, I was placed in two environments. The first was that everyone is a non-meat eater and convos about meat and defending the position are not an activity amongst us. The 2nd environment, where people are not vegetarian, I have never met a single meat person who knew how or understand the head space of a vegan. "You're a vegetarian?"

"Yes."

"Well, what do you eat?"

I ask, where do you shop? "Publix."

"They have a meat counter?" I ask.

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Back wall."

"The whole back wall?"

"No, about half the back wall."

"Okay, so that's where you get meat. I eat everything else in the grocery store."

I love their shocked face. Can't argue with that.

But things are different for me today. My food sensitivities and allergies, combined with my attempt to avoid processed foods, fake food, corn syrup,



sugar, dairy, eggs, carbs, snacks, farm fish and sugary drinks, my fascination with everything else in the grocery store is long gone. Oh, the irony.

One observation I've made, and an observation from a cultural perspective, is a primal need for ritual – cultural, religious and social etiquette. We love to break bread. This is a ritual of bonding, trust, and safe entertainment. *Come break bread with me, or have a drink, or a cup of coffee.* As soon as a normal hears that I'm vegetarian, they interpret that as, you are so gross, I cannot break bread with you ever.

And the irony is the die has been cast in the first minute of introduction. Have you ever noticed the first thing a vegan tells you is they are vegan? No one is going to starve, and we're not going to starve together. I'm pretty much starving on my own. The grocery store is a frustration. I can only eat 11 specific things. Not 11 genres, 11 individual things. Fuck you and your food trip. I'm going to outlive you.

### **Plastic Fantastic**

Sometimes, and it's always a pleasant surprise, something innocuous surprises the crap out of you. The large window in my living room was adorned with pieces of stained glass, and glass vases. One day, I spontaneously placed a 12" round plastic Publix party plate behind my candle for experimental looks, and because I liked the circle with radiating lines. I'm not sure how much time went by – weeks, maybe a month – until a glorious moment and my visual life would change forever.

Puttering around in the kitchen and making my coffee, I sauntered in the living room and almost dropped my coffee cup. Colors bright and pastel, glowing and fuzzy, the rising sun through the plastic plate caused giant elongated rainbows all over the room! I'll admit that in the prior weeks, I



hadn't felt very confident and secure about my life path, and was feeling a bit uninspired.

Suddenly, everything changed. I felt Grace had come to visit, and after that day, for years the rainbows came. Friends, family and lovers have all enjoyed the 20-minute rainbow show. The arc moves both up and down and slowly from one side to the other. It's the angle of the sun, and because of the earth and sun orbits, a slightly different path or pattern occurs each morning. I found the plates at thrift stores for only \$1. I've given about 6 to 8 away.

My collection of stained-glass art fills both the living room window and the kitchen window over the sink. The path of the sunlight in the morning is less discernible. But, for about 4 days a year, the ray comes through my Templar Red Cross Glass and, through the trickery of light, turns my water red, white and blue. If you don't see the miracles around, you are not paying attention. Or they just bonk you on the head.







### **Geez, I'm Not Sad, I'm Quiet**

I spent two months at the beach. Interrupted a couple days by having some dental surgery, and Sharon going back and forth to Gainesville for work, I socked myself in at the best place to stay in Flagler beach. Right on the beach, with a high deck hovering over the sand. I used the time to rest and in time, made some new friends. I made friends with a beautiful young woman, about 25 who worked at Burdines in the make-up section. She could have been a model. She made me nervous because she was so attractive and wanted to hang with me.

The manager was partnered with a guy who was rather annoying. He was about 40 and drove a motorcycle. Made friends with a realtor and we chatted often about real estate in Gainesville. Made friends with the Beanery owner and he introduced me to my first Coney Island chili dog. Made friends with a waitress at the Topaz restaurant. I made 7 friends, enough for email addresses

and so on. As the prophet Angel said, “You will make friends and the tide will go out.” After 6 years, now I am still friends with one. The others are all dead.

## **Holi Fest and my Destiny Validated**

The Hindu Festival of Colors, known as Holi, celebrates the coming of spring. The Holi Fest is becoming more popular and well known. I've been to three. My first was in India. I was pummeled for hours – you can't even possibly imagine the beautiful chaos as paint and powder and paint from every direction covers you.

My second participation was in Key Biscayne with my Guru and his Lila, or divine game, to provide Darshan (gaze of a deity) by giving us a directional spray of paints and sharing the bliss. This day not only made me a bit famous but was life changing. It's a rare honor to have Maharaj Ji give you direct orders, a message or even just speak directly to you. He arrived by small pleasure craft onto the beach. Only a couple hundred of us, tops, swarmed to greet him. There was paint and blissful screams. I'm taking photographs on the fringe of the crowd and Maharaj Ji heads into the camp area. I follow closely. He climbs on top of his Winnebago and he realizes he has snuck off so cleverly the crowd hasn't realized what was happening.

For 30 seconds, it was just me, Maharaj Ji, and two of his close helpers. He looked at me and says, “You want to go to school? Okay, school it is.” Now, I had been active in propagation and holding meetings. I wondered what he meant, like am I fired or did I just get a blessing? He showered us all with various paint colors and that Holi was legendary.

As we were leaving, his best and closest devotee met us the gate and said, “Maharaj Ji wants your film.” I gave him two rolls. I took it in stride. Which is why I don't have any cool pictures. But, a few weeks later, with new materials from headquarters, three of my photographs were distributed internationally from the event. My photo is the iconic picture from that Holi.

The third Holi I attended was in Miami. About 8,000 attended. There was a large stage and the premies (followers) had rigged up two heavy-duty fire hose cannons so he could get us all good with the colors. Just 3 months prior to the Biscayne Holi, I had applied to a photography college, the 3rd best in the

U.S. I had my interview but was told there was a 6-month waiting list, a whole two semesters. I took it in stride. I arrived home two days after the Holi and on the 3rd day, I received my letter of acceptance to start in 2 weeks. Boom. The Maharaj Ji has kept every promise he made me.



## **Working Construction**

This is a story to be believed or, at least considered. Working in close quarters with a crowd of blue collar construction dudes requires patience. Every day we break for lunch for an hour. We all wander off to our personal respective eating areas.

Except this one day was unusual. It rained hard before lunch, and we took refuge inside the building. This day, we were all crowded in a long, wide basement hallway. About 30 of us were lined up, leaning against the cement block wall, facing each other with about 10 feet of open space between us. The rain was weird, the lightening was weird, the air was weird and heavy, and everyone was in a mood. I mean, oddly agitated and restless.

We, the masons, were on one side and all the carpenters were on the other. The temperament of the masons and carpenters couldn't be more unlike each other. We masons are quiet; carpenters are gossipy, restless and always trying

to cut, fix and cut again pieces of life and wood into a complete finish. Today they are in bully mode. We eat and the chit chat is riotous.

Suddenly, I have a rep for being a meditator. In fact, my nickname was the Guru. I was respected for being different, and over the weeks and months I was never an asshole. But being vegetarian, a meditator, and not an alcoholic, I was the brunt of bully jokes. I'm trying to set a mood here. The worst bully carpenter was off on some kind of spin. We could all tell he was upset. He gulped his sandwich but sipped on his cola slowly. And every time he set it down, he would bang it, sometimes twice, on purpose. Sip, bang bang, sip.

The air grew heavier and weirder. I finished my food, and the room got quiet. I closed my eyes. I'm not even in an asana position. I can hear the carpenter sip and bang. Then a pause. My eyes are still closed and it's raining. Everyone, all 30 guys, are sitting. My eyes are closed. I can feel, I can sense, pull a Kung Fu thingy right here, because I hear him sip the last sip.

A pause and then he did it. I could hear the whistle of the flying can. I know he was intending to rattle me. I sense the flying can, and with eyes closed, I put my left arm up and I catch the can in mid-air. I slowly set it down beside me. I continue to meditate. I immediately hear quiet shuffling and some quiet footsteps. I'm following my meditative energy for about 2-3 minutes and then I open my eyes. Everyone is gone. They all split. Couldn't take the excitement.

I got up and left the empty hallway. I left the can sitting there. The next day, as I walked through, despite the construction activity, the sole can was still sitting there. No one wanted to touch it.

### **You Sleep Where?**

I slept in my closet for 4 years. I had a great walk-in closet. It was so big, I had all my clothes hanging there, a large upright bureau, shelves along the side, and I still had room for a single-wide mattress. I loved it. I am a rabbit and I like my hutch. I like to sleep enclosed.

Formerly, by my own design, my bed always had a canopy, more of a lace or Indian print bedspread tacked to the ceiling. Seeing the illustrations of hidden beds in old stories, buried in the wall with a drape around them, always intrigued me. The closet was as close as I could get to my unique abode from

both a choice and need. My room was filled with desks, computers, books, and more of that list, so the room was full. Luckily for me, my lovers love my quirkiness and were game about sleeping and partying in my closet. The fun comment was, "I'm very happy being in the closet and I'm straight."

## **Break Bread With Me**

Cuts like a knife. I've belonged to many cults. And I can be loyal as heck to others without actually joining. I live in a very populated area of the Hare Krishna movement. Most everyone I know from the past recalls eating the Indian lunch on The Plaza at the University of Florida. One of the national Krishna headquarters is just 14 miles up the road. The saffron-robed devotees are everywhere here in the city and all my friends have at least one devoted friend.

Back in 1970, I went to a Hare Krishna festival in Golden State Park. The place was like a giant mosh pit of flowered birds, everyone singing and drumming and dancing in circles. I got pulled in. I was wearing farmer hippie overalls, and an embroidered T-shirt. With my long hair and beard I stood out among the crowd.

I'm not really dancing or chanting. I'm strangely lucid and have no clue what's going on. I get mushed into the center circle, which is not only going round and round, but forward as well, on the wide asphalt path in the park. Suddenly I'm in the very center and I see him.

He was magical. Glowing. Every cell of his body was vibrating. The moment became slow motion. Before me was this beautiful being. Amid all the chanting, the sound made another sound in the music. I heard a distinct separate melody embedded in the noise. He exists in a golden throng with 6 devotees carrying him. They stop to change the people carrying him.

The Lord Prabhupada is looking at me. We made eye contact, as if we were frozen. He points to me and I hear, clear as bell, his voice inside my head. Truly telepathic, he says, "Love my devotees, protect and honor my followers." And he nods his head and off he goes.



Just as magically as I somehow slipped into the fray of love, I suddenly realize I'm on the fringe. I would now come to know that experience, the bliss, the time loss, and that "affected" change in my darshan. It cut like a knife through my worries, through my mind, and it sorted something out for me. The evangelist preachers call that "being slain in the spirit." A vibration changed and a healing was apparent. I was touched on many levels by his holiness and that feeling has never gone away.

During my brief dating period, I met and dated a Krishna devotee for a couple of months. She was very smart. I like to "date up," as they say. Despite both of us being on separate, unique spiritual paths and practices, there were similarities to appreciate. For a while, we were experiencing normal dating paradigms, as we should.

Malika had snow-white skin. She was almost whiter than Sharon. Malika was a sun sign with bright blonde hair, and she shined like the sun, unlike Sharon's skin tone, which is more moonglow. Malika and I were making a veggie lunch and she brought bread as I was making basmati rice and something else yummy. This was a plump, soft, white bread with light brown crust.

I pulled out a serrated knife and I felt the room go cold. Malika turned so pale, she was paler than Sharon. I didn't even think that was possible. I felt her genuine panic. "Please, no. I can't have the knife that has touched meat touch my food."

As I'm writing this, it occurred to me that I handled the situation intellectually, but not in a warm and fuzzy way. "Oh, this is my bread knife. No meat, I don't cook meat here. Look, the stove is not greasy. I use this to cut bread. What do you use?"

She replies, "A regular knife."

I ask, "Does it squish the bread?"

"Yes."

Smiling, I saw the look. So I sawed off a few perfect slices with no squishing. It cut like a saw and a knife. And then we moved on to more food.

But, when I think back, maybe I've already got one foot out the door. I should've given her a hug and asked her if she was good with it. I did care, but I didn't realize I had emotionally distanced myself.

We had fun for a few more weeks until one night, she invited me to go to Jacksonville for a big Krishna event. There would be food and fund raising. Basically she wanted me to panhandle money for ISCON. I said, "You know, I'm a hustler by nature, and I like to fundraise but mostly by delivering a service or product in fair exchange. I can't panhandle for a cause I don't really believe in."

"Oh, do you not believe that Krishna is God?"

"Ah, no."

"Well, Doug, I feel sorry for you that you don't believe Krishna is God."

I don't remember anything that was said after that. I got quiet. I felt embarrassed, like I had dissed God, her God, any God, oh, God. My God honors Krishna but my God also deserves praise and thanks. I trust god. "No need to panhandle, there is no lack." That cut like a knife. And I didn't hear any roosters crowing.

## **Bowling**

I like bowling. I loved taking the kids and they loved it, too. It was the time before keeping score was important. But I haven't been in 3 decades. I haven't been since the alleys went to electronic scores. We did the old way, pad and pencil.

All the people in my immediate orbit had and have no interest in the sport. People make fun of bowling. Of course, there are those who did and those who didn't. My dad was in a league, every Friday night. Up north, people are big on candlepin bowling. These are slender and instead of big bowling balls, you use little ones the size of a softball. Dad was hooked because it was a family activity. His Aunt, his mom's sister was famous for the game. World famous. She was the world's best bowler from 1920-24 and then again in 1926. World's best. She is placed in the Sports World Hall of Fame. Grammy had to go there to accept the award on Mamie's behalf. I remember my aunt taught

me many things. She taught me to do wooden jigsaw puzzles. She owned a large set of Viewmaster 3D viewers. She bought and hung my favorite Maxfield Parrish scene which Grammy gave me and which I still have hanging in my bedroom.

## **Flagler Art**

Over the years, I've learned to make a sand flower with a wide spin and my big toe. It's something I've been doing for years. I often watch the reactions from afar. People will be inspired to create art alongside it or finish the flower. Up high, from the porch at Flagler Beach, I had a bird's eye view of the flower and all those who passed by.

One night, an unusually high tide washed out the flower. In the dark I made a new one in fresh sand. Sharon and I befriended a cute New Age couple from Germany who were only staying for a couple days. It was fun to watch them enjoy American beach life. The next morning, as Sharon and I watched the sunrise, she shushed me and pointed over the railing. Our little new gal was sitting in the flower. I doubt she knew that we made it. But I am positive it just added to her experience. It was so cute. She left us a note as they were leaving. I was on the porch when they drove off. With an open car window, she waved and as I watched them depart, she continued to wave until out of sight. So precious. Parting is such sweet sorrow.



## Kung Fu Power

My weekly trip to the Waldo Flea market was always eventful. Great finds, a bit of banter and friendly faces. One week, I tried to buy a microscope from a familiar face, but the gossip about me had spread to him. I had a reputation for being an avid buyer and I had money. The man changed his mind mid-sale. I reflect back that maybe he was selling it too cheap, or because I wanted it, it must be valuable, but he pulled back.

The next Saturday it was gone; the second Saturday it was gone. The third Saturday it's back on the table. I pointed to it and he nodded yes. I looked down at his boxes, carriers and packing, and I could see a box the scope was shipped in. Meaning, he had sold it online and it came back. I bought it for only \$25. He was smarmy, so I decided I didn't like him.

Two weeks later he's back at the market. I have a small carry sack in each hand and I walk up to the table. I had inspected the microscope and it was dandy except one little adjustment knob was missing. Still had a spindle axis, but no actual knob. No biggie.

Very innocently, I walked up, and all I was going to ask was, "Did you happen to find a little tiny knob?" But I never got a chance. He took one look at me and yelled, "I don't want to fucking talk to you, get out of my face!"

I started to ask what was going on, but I barely got three words out before he walks out from behind his table and charges me. I'm stunned. I'm standing in the market aisle, I have glasses on, a bag in each hand, and I think I'm going to get yelled out up close and personal. He is yelling and comes at me and gives a double-pepper punch square in the chest. My chi energy, my core strength, my grounded feet planted, I didn't move a muscle. He punched me really hard and I should have fallen over. I didn't even flinch. My innate Kung Fu Chi mode.

He looked shocked. I looked at him expressionless. People were looking on in amazement at the shit show. I remained still and quiet. He's packing up all his stuff on the table in a hurry and talking to himself. It's only 10:30 in the morning and he's splitting quickly.

The vendor woman next to him said, "I saw that, kept your cool. It didn't even faze you. Do you want me to call security?"

I said “Nope,” and pointed out that he’s leaving.

She said, “Good riddance. We don’t need that element here.”

Sometimes, vendors arrive hung-over or desperate or are having a bad week. Some days I’m grumpy or distracted or moody, and I can be standoffish. Sharon had an experience with a vendor one morning as we were walking by a man’s table filled with old, odd stuff. He said something and I said something jokingly as I walked away. He came after me as I had my back turned.

Sharon stepped in between us, and she said that she doesn’t even think he knew she was there before, but suddenly she just appeared in front of him. It was enough to break his trance, and he turned around and walked away muttering. She has always been my protector. Don’t mess with the guard Dog! (It’s her sign in Chinese astrology, and she can be loyal, friendly, and fierce.)

### **How many?**

I saw a meme asking the rhetorical question, “How many friends do you still have from 20 years ago?” I was surprised by the various answers. I didn’t answer by leaving a comment, but I did an inventory. I have a friend on Facebook from every five-year period of my life from birth to the present.

I have other friends from block periods that are not on Facebook, but are in touch anytime. The answer is fascinating to me. We live in a transient, disposable society. We go through friends like cheap Tupperware. In fact, some of my friends still might have my Tupperware and a Pyrex dish.

I think old people enjoy running into old friends because we affirm we ain’t dead yet and we want to know why. Facebook is pretty important to me these days. The other popular sites are for show-offs and Facebook is literally a living genealogy and ancestry detective source for the living!



## Whale of a time

Sometime in the early 1960s, while I was living in Cape Elizabeth, Maine, and literally on a cape called Trundy Point, a dead whale washed up on our rocky beach. Much ado about something! It became an instant looksee for locals and tourists. It was quite obvious that this was a whale of a fishy problem. Trundy Point was not really a beach, more of a cove where the whale was washed up. And making things even more difficult, the cove was so rocky that no tugboats or Coast Guard boats could get within a 3/4 mile of the beached whale's location.

I had no qualms about touching it. I was probably only 13, and we did not get a picture. But I got to see a whale up close and personal. I saw the eye, the mouth, the colorings and pinkish lines underneath, and even barnacles. And after a few days—the bugs and the flies and the smell. The event made the local paper a few times.

After a week in the summer sun, no one wanted to go near the poor creature. No one was able to drag it out to sea, so a local and authorized endangered species business in Gorham finally dissected it and hauled it away. I like weird things and during my next visit to Maine, I plan on going to that business to check it out.

## Wait, I Got This

My boss Sam and I travelled to The Dome in New Orleans for a professional photography shoot. We had a few hours to kill early in the evening, so we went to Bourbon Street. This famous street was crowded with people just a week before Mardi Gras. The outdoor musicians, the smell of stale booze bars, iconic signs overhead, and the atmosphere was lively with buskers and tricksters. One of the highlights was the \$1 bets. Young, black teens stop you and ask, "I'll bet you a dollar I know where you got your shoes." Sam is puzzled and I'm wondering, "How would he know that?" Never underestimate a Gypsy. The boy ain't quitting; he bets a \$1 he knows where Sam got his shoes. Sam bets. Loses a dollar. "You got them on your feet."

Sam thinks it's funny. Later, another boy comes up and asks Sam, "I bet you a dollar I know how many kids you got." Sam is thinking two ways, *I have two*

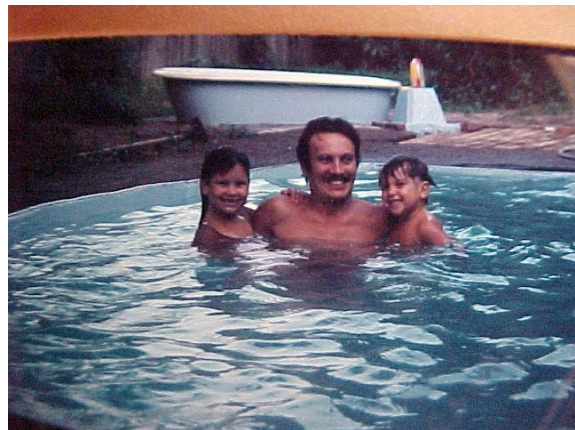
*kids, easy guess, high percentage.* The other part of this is, Sam knows it's a trick question. The trickster asks again.

So I interrupt, and say, "I got this." I pull out a dollar and say, "bring it." He says, "Zero. You be human. Goats have kids and you ain't even got any goats." Sam and I do look citified. The gypsy reaches for my dollar. "Hold on, young blood," I say. I'm still holding my wallet and I pull out a picture of Amy, my goat. Sam looks at me like I just won Las Vegas, not a dollar from a street vendor. You can't trick the trickster.

## DIY

After working construction as a mason's apprentice to pay for college, I learned just enough to be dangerous. I had a big back yard and two cute kids, both of a single digit age. They deserved and needed some Florida fun. I dug a hole and built a swimming pool. Only 9 feet long, 6 feet wide and descending from 12" deep to 2 feet deep, it sure beats those plastic round ones.

A year later, we moved to a better house and had space for another pool. We wanted something a little bigger. One thing led to another and it was too big. By the time we hired a backhoe and made space for fabricating the cement walls, and some required plumbing, it just made sense, cost-wise, to not make it too small for the effort. The only picture I have is before the tiles were laid in. We only stayed a year. Too much trouble to keep the kids from drowning in the pool. Seriously, it's a thing.



## **When the Mackerel are Running**

Quick, before the seagulls come! During my teen years, when I lived at home, a frequent field trip for my dad and me is a short story worth telling. In the early evening, while the light was good, we'd head to the yacht club because the mackerel were running. We would tool out into Portland Harbor, with our 32-foot cabin cruiser while towing our punt, pram, dinghy, (basically a rowboat). Then we'd turn on our sonar and look for the schools of fish.

You would think throwing chum is a quick start, but it attracts seagulls to your spot. Maine seagulls are huge and unafraid of humans. They are intimidating and greedy. Sonar reveals a school of mackerel, where the surface of the water is swirly. The cold water Atlantic currents streaming in between the little islands of Casco Bay are perfect for fishing.

I climb from the stern into the pram, with a galvanized bucket, roll up my sleeves, and signal ready. Dad takes a pole with a leader containing 5-7 Moosehook Wobblers, a chrome fish with a tri-hook. Instantly, as he reels in the line, fish are jumping in frenzy. My right arm, with tan hands, and a bit of white skin between the fingers, becomes the lure. I reach in and pull out 2-3 fish at a time, fully clomped onto my fingers. Reach in, pull out. Their little cartilage teeth hardly break or cut my skin. In the time it takes Dad to catch 6-10 fish, I have filled the bucket in less than ten minutes! But now the seagulls have found us. We are surrounded by 100+ hungry seagulls.

I like cleaning the fish. Dad liked cooking the fish in the broiler. We recycled brown paper grocery bags to soak up the fish oil. Dad would bring fish wrapped in paper as a gift to his clients.

## **Pi Day, 3/14**

Did someone say pie? I love pie. Remember pot pies? Well now, heh-heh, we have real *pot* pies. Remember those illegal magic brownies? Now they are medicinal brownies.

My bucket list this year is to make Waffle Brownies. Why not? I make salmon pie. But I love pie every week. One year, Sharon and I ate a pie a day for 2

weeks. Pumpkin pie at \$2.99 each. It was a great food value. Radar, her dog, loved pumpkin pie.

I spend much of my time alone. Idle hands are the devil's plaything. I cannot go for norms. Laws, yes, norms no. Today we celebrate Pi Day. 3.142596.... Infinite.

## **Rock Radio**

I used to build working crystal radios. My first experience with a real crystal radio was in my grandparents' basement. I was born 3 years after the invention of black and white T.V. Before that, people listened to the radio. Tube amplification came to replace rudimentary crystal radios. Funny-looking but as good as magic, they were just a few wires and a crystal arranged a specific way.

My second exposure was a birthday present. Shaped like a rocket, with an earpiece and a wire with an alligator clip, if you followed directions, you could get all the local A.M. stations. I would clip the radio wire to the ground wire on a telephone pole and listen joyfully. Then came those cute little transistor radios, fully functional and amplified. Somewhere in the early 90s. I discovered, as a repurposer and vendor of crystals, that as another side hobby I could make and sell reproductions of old crystal radios.

## **From Hornets to Angels**

My favorite place to sit at sunset in Flagler Beach was in front of the Beanery Cafe. A couple of chairs and a small table outside. I usually just sat and watched life go by. I'm in a good mood and rolling a cigarette. A young black couple saunters up the sidewalk and stops to say hello. I invite them to sit. An exchange of small talk soon turned as he felt comfortable enough to continue his conversation to his lady friend. I was interested because, without being overtly religious, it was holy talk, Satsang, words with meaning. I joined in. It suddenly felt like we had been sitting for a long time.

The man asked to roll a cigarette and I said, "By all means." The conversation turned to the topic of fear. The word "bees" came up. The woman saw a

mosquito and waved it away, but she was watching me. I spoke up. "Fear is a chemical. A stronger force influences a lesser force. The only force I use is love and synchronicity."

Just then a hornet buzzed me. Checking me out he was. I'm not afraid, I am a friendly. My perception is humble. I held out my hand and finger and the hornet landed on the tip of my finger. The couple was watching. "This is pretty amazing," I said. "I mean, I hope you're enjoying it."

He turned to her and said, "See, this is how it's done, this is grace and connected." He asked me if it was okay if he could give me a message. I said, "By all means."

He then proceeded to tell me my whole life in small blocks, not vague codes, but pretty specific codes of which I knew what he was referring to. He proceeded to tell me my present and future. It's interesting how we think we can see what we are doing while doing it, but another person's objective or meaningful perspective can be illuminating. He said, "You are making friends here, but the tide will go out. You will meet a woman, a younger woman – wait, you have already met her. And in the end, she will eventually save your life. You will safely struggle for a purpose ahead, but it will be cloaked for a time. And, you will forget half of what I have said."

## **I Look Foreign to Everyone**

I am a world citizen. Sure, I love me the United States, but I am not a nationalist. I'm a worldly person. The whole world is my neighborhood. I was lucky to be born here. Perhaps there are better places to live on the planet, but with all our quirks and foibles, I prefer it here because it's half naughty and it's the seat of innovation. It's a melting pot of ideas, peoples and cultures.

People from other countries find me humorous. I have darkish skin, and I often say subtle, disparaging things about the U.S.A. and the fact that I refrain from making judgments makes foreigners feel comfortable. For a decade, I invited people into my home to share our experiences on a spiritual level. Part of the spiritual journey is being open, compassionate and believing in union. Religious levels seem to involve judgement, inclusion and exclusion and



absurd rules. Americans are annoyed and because I don't do shit, they become impatient. Yeah, I'm aware of the dichotomy. Get over it.

One day I look around and the 9 people in my living room sharing a spiritual evening are all from a different country: Switzerland, Sri Lanka, Australia, Mexico, Denmark, Canada, Israel, and India. The following photos are from my meditation class....



## I Got Clocked Real Good

I love time and clocks so much, I aim to write a page about it. But this is a story about my fascinating, psychopathic, neurotic Jewish girlfriend with a cute body and face and a phosphorescent glow (to me) that lured me in. Our erratic relationship was long, and confusion was part of the charm.

Weeks in advance, I was invited to a birthday party of one of my students with a plus one. June was busy that night, so I brought Sharon. What June did not know was that she wasn't invited to the birthday party. The party was a full, semi-posh affair with a catered sit-down dinner, drinks and a band to dance to all night.



Sharon and I did not stay for the band. Upon arriving home, it took a while (ha ha) for us to notice that the clocks were weird. My house had 7 clocks. June, as in a particular movie where an angry female had boiled a bunny, came and unplugged and stopped all my clocks. (She saw the invitation on the table and knew that we went to the party without her.) I could tell how long it took her to stop the clocks by following the progress of stopped time. It took her 8 minutes to unplug one because of the extension cord disappearing in bookshelves. Another clock took 7 minutes from that time to stop because its cord was also hidden. Kudos for effort.

I never found those two missing outlets. It took me a few days to put things back in order. A few days later, we hooked up again and neither of us brought it up. Sharon and I bring it up often, *boil the bunny*. I got off easy. But I got my clock cleaned for no reason? Best prank ever.

## **Giant Fish Every Time**

Every summer from 1961 thru 1968, I would live at Higgins Beach with my grandparents. From Memorial Day to Labor Day, the little beach community was busy with tourists and a few locals.

After a few weeks, the locals began to stand out. About twice a week, a legendary local fishing enthusiast would walk by, rod and tackle box in hand. A few hours later, he would walk back to the parking lot with his rod, tackle box, and the biggest sea bass I've ever seen. These seabass were 24 inches and up. People started to notice.

He was not a friendly man, at least in public with a big fish. He liked fishing and the quiet and the success, no doubt. But he would not engage people about fish questions or anything else.

On the left of the cove is a river. On the right, dangerous rocks, typical of Maine. The fisherman would go off to a secret spot, out of sight, unless you made a great effort to see him. People actually spied on him with binoculars to see what lure he was using. He kept it in an opaque bag and would only tie to his leader under the water. No one ever saw his secret. This went on for years. No one else was successful, or we would have seen them.

## **My Best Prank Ever!**

I had been away for a week on a Videography Business trip and finally returned home. Full of vim and vigor, I wanted my kids, Ben (5) and Kriya (9) to belly laugh for me. The set up was simple. I pulled the toaster away from the wall. I grabbed a small bottle of chocolate sprinkles. I spread enough sprinkles behind the toaster and a couple of canisters perfectly. Those sprinkles looked very suspicious. I called for the kids; they came running in. "I'm gonna make raisin toast, who wants some?" I pull the bread out, slide the toaster toward me. "OMG, look, ew, roach poo." Kriya has a wrinkled face and Ben's looking like he really wants to see. I take my hand and pull the sprinkles out onto the forward counter. They are staring. "This looks yummy!" I bend down and proceed to slowly lick them up, being sure to show some on my tongue. Kriya screams "Dad!" and Ben falls to the floor on his back screaming. LMAO on the floor.

## **Project Bike**

I decided I was going to relive my childhood by recreating my own invention which I stole from a newspaper article. My first bicycle was a red Columbia classic. My second bike was a free gift from my cousin. Pretty basic old bike. I painted it blue. Back then, all steering wheels were plastic. I snagged a little white motorboat steering wheel from the Yacht Club launch yard. The inside ring was easier to work with.

I removed the handlebars and shaft from my project bike. The handlebars were not affixed to the column shaft. I had the welding guy at the boatyard weld the steering wheel to the shaft. He did it for free because it was just so unique. All bikes then had brakes that were controlled by your feet, no hand brakes. My blue bike had a steering wheel. Now that I'm retired, and live in a bike friendly community, I'm going to do it again. I will find a bike and a steering wheel and have my friend Mark weld it together.

## **What a guy!**

In the early 90s, I was still friends with my ex's family and my brother-in-law and nephews. Chet was a master guitarist. My nephews are in a band. I live in Florida and I am a program director at a radio station. Travelling between Florida and Maine is a seasonal journey for the wide family.

One year I recommended two music acts that the crew had to catch on their summer sojourn. There's a small nightclub in Kennebunkport, Maine that we all have a history of enjoying. Chet and the crew arrived for a rare one-night only concert. It's sold out. They are hanging out in the parking lot, smoking and resting and a guy, also out smoking by the back door asks, "S'up?"

Chet said, "Oh, we're travelling from Florida and wanted to see this musician. My brother-in-law who works at a radio station said he was a must see."

The guy nods his head and says, "We aim to please. Let's see what I can do." He disappears. He comes back with a waiter, brings them in through the back door, brings a spare table and chairs to the front row of the stage and says, "Tonight is free for you." Chet and the crew are tickled. They order snacks and

beverages and keep looking through the kitchen door to thank the guy. Must be a dishwasher or something, right? The lights dim for the stage lighting and out walks the smoking dude. It was John Gorka himself. Halfway through the set, Gorka tells the audience their story and the audience applauds.

### **Snarky Gene Pool**

I'm fascinated with my ancestral genealogy. On both sides of my upline, there is documentation of many generations.

I learned in science class that it is genetically impossible for my green-eyed father and my blue-eyed mom to birth a brown-eyed boy. My brother and sister both have blue eyes. That explains why my snarky aunts on my dad's side asked, "Where did you get those big brown eyes?" I thought I was just handsome or charismatic. My aunts and uncles on my mom's side all know why I had brown eyes. What a way to find out.



## Ecstasy and Tragedy

### Three Significant States

Sometimes the three favorite states I love most disappointed me. I travelled around so much and so often in the United States in my lifetime that I am pretty familiar with 47 states. I've never been to Hawaii, Alaska or Washington State. With so much travel under my belt, when the time came to make a choice, or the opportunity to move arrived, my best affinity was for California, Maine and Florida; my three favorite states.

I'm a realist – everything on its own merit and, well, demerit. I love Maine. I grew up there. Love the seagulls, sea, hills, the food tastes better, I have great memories, and love the clean water.

I hate Maine. It's cold, only has two seasons. Gloomy all year round. The consciousness is snobby but intellectual. Spend time to figure shit out. Slow to warm up. I've had a dozen people say, "You are the nicest person I have ever met from Maine." I only visit Maine in September, or when I have to.

I love California. The excitement, the people and the land. I love the ocean for surfing. I love the Big Sur area, which has the best scenic and most dangerous road in the U.S.A. The consciousness is 10 years ahead of the rest of the country. Everyone lives in their own creative bubble, from raising horses to Hollywood.

What I hate about California, everyone is in their own plastic, small talk, shallow, self-evolved bubble. The roads and highways. You have to get on the freeway to get anything. You can only schedule 2 things a day cuz it takes years to get there.

I love Florida. Florida casual pest control – open screen door – let the roaches out.

## **Flower Power Hack**

In 1978, Cathy and I flew to Higgins Beach to hang out with my grandparents. I caught up on some decent waves at high tide. The water was cold and my body, after Florida warm water, was stiff and cranky from the cold water. I wiped out and the surfboard bashed my head. I hustled out of the water, bleeding like a banshee. Head wounds do that.

Dripping all the way up the road to the cottage, there was no way of hiding the evidence from the family. I got hosed off outside, and the 2" slice on the top of my head cleaned. The hospital was 30 miles away. My aunt summoned the nurse two cottages down and she said I really needed stitches, but showed Cathy how to put a butterfly bandage on it.

Unfortunately, that didn't work. Cathy always had her handy herb and homeopathic paperback in her purse. The herb book suggested finding marigold leaves, crushing them and making a poultice. She placed an oily wad on the top of my head and wrapped my whole skull with it. I went to bed and slept off my headache.

The next morning, after breakfast, we redressed my injury. It was a miracle. The Marigold oil, an aggressive astringent, dried up and completely closed my boo-boo. We were all so impressed, we called up the nurse again to show her. She said it looked like a 3-day scab. My aunt, already plant friendly, suddenly saw a whole new world of potential instead of flowers and vegetables. Five years later, Aunt Dot opened the first herbal greenhouse store in Greater Portland, called *Mainely Herbs*.

## **The Hidden Tapes**

When I had my video business, Main Street Productions, I did enough legal work that I had to be bonded. My range of services was very wide. Our services included video depositions, video inventories, after-event documentation, and videotaping environments off limits to unauthorized persons. I had a good reputation for being reliable.

On a more consumer use level, we filmed parties, weddings, and in our lab section, we performed film to video transfers. One day, I made an

appointment with a gentleman who had a project requiring some discretion. He had 9 rolls of home movies, some old and some taken a little more recently as the Super 8 industry was on its last legs.

I had a machine that, while the movie was running on a projector, to screen in a shadow box, the camera was pointed at the screen and a high end VHS recorder. Now, we have all heard of The Eagles, the world-famous rock group. Most of them are from Gainesville. While their latest song was still in the top ten 30 weeks in row, in my hands were the home movies of their childhood, teen years, and just jolly traveling about, and even a practice session. Gold mine! Such a temptation, but not really. I felt honored that the family trusted me. It was fun. I've seen rare intimate footage only a few have seen. Since this was in the 80s, there was no Internet, no Facebook, or Tik Tok.

## **Whatever**

The morning alarm goes off and Bernadette and I get ready for work. I'm making coffee and Bernadette's in the shower. There is no rain but I hear noises outside. Going into the bedroom to check on the noises, I look out the window and it's windy. There is a green light and the lawn furniture is going in two different directions. The noise sounds like a freight train.

I push Bern onto the floor and I grab the mattress as I lay on her and put the mattress over us. The windows blew out and the roof rumbled like a drum. It was a tornado. I'm in awe and my ears are ringing. She gets up and says, "Thanks," and goes directly to the bathroom to put on her makeup.

The path of the tornado went right over our house. But not before taking down the trees across the street and wiping out the home behind our house, jumping over a large church, and then completely leveling a whole shopping strip – all seven units–to bare floor cement. We never saw where all the debris went.

I grabbed my cameras and Bernadette, fully dressed, grabs her purse, runs out the door. "Kiss kiss, I can't be late."

I'm bewildered. This is a huge thing and Bernadette is ultra-casual. I then realized, she grew up in Oklahoma. This happens all the time. No biggie.

## **Beatle Archeology**

*Between northern Massachusetts and mostly Portland, Maine, there are 9 full wall-sized indoor exact replica murals of the cover of Yellow Submarine, hidden under new paint, I'm sure. Could be one still exists. In the winter of 1969, I painted large, exact, professional replicas of the cover.*

I was the rage of the winter. I used outdoor, high gloss, sign paint, and the image is surely embedded in the undercoating by now. I also understand that Portland has had a lot of lead paint reparations in the last 10 years. This indoor wall graffiti goes back 50 years now. I can't help but wonder what someone thought upon the discovery and perhaps such a discovery is yet to come.

On the subject of the Beatles, my wife, Cathy and her sister, Cindy went to Shea Stadium. They had great seats. At the end of one set, Ringo threw his drumsticks into the crowd and Cindy caught one. I doubt if she still has it, and these days, most personal souvenirs need a certificate of authenticity, which is not available.

## **Still Here and Thanks for all the Fish**

In 1978, we all, Cathy, me, kids and a few friends moved to Gainesville, Florida. Typical of Gainesville, our large 4-bedroom place and in-law suite was a Family Ashram, as described by our cult. One of the rooms I rented was to my best college friend who was part of our cult. One of the perks of the Guru Maharaj Ji techniques is to have Satsang and less chit chat. We take the time to share our experiences, growth and new perspectives.

Before moving to Gainesville, I had a hobby, shared by Cathy, which is fish. I had a side gig in Daytona breeding African Grabinzas. I sold my gig to another person and packed up and moved one large tank. This tank was 5 feet long and 29 inches high.

The bubbling and light from the fish tank were great additions to the house. We were all vegetarians. But I would indulge in a piece of fish now and then

because I like it and need it and it's my best protein source to metabolize because of my blood type. (That's a thing; there's a book.)

Over the course of a few months, I noticed something peculiar, very peculiar. Cathy thought it hilarious. I thought it was cosmic. When I would come by to just look, the fish in the tank would swim toward me. I know, you're thinking they respond to the giant who is a food source. Cathy was in charge of feeding. No, this was a phenomenon. My body and mind were at peace, from meditating and just being. One day I noticed they avoided me when I came to watch them. A couple days later, they are back grooving on me again. The next day, they all avoided me. Hmmm.

The theory of cause and correlation exploded in my head. I had eaten fish the night before. The fish knew it. They somehow sensed a predator. Epic. So, I'm standing next to the fish having Satsang with Gary. I'm pointing and gesticulating with great enthusiasm. I'm rambling in my trance of Satsang, and my arm and hand knocks the aquarium light in the water, and I keep talking.

As the light, which is always on slowly sinks into the water, I just reached into the water to retrieve it. Then I reset it on top and I'm just yakking away. I look at Gary and he has a WTF x 10 look on his face. Fearless, stupid or trusting, I'm non-plussed. I could have been electrocuted. But it's not my time. So, Douglas, Mostly Harmless, is still alive. But when I depart, I will say, "So long and thanks for all the fish." And those crazy, other half dozen close calls.

## **Rolled Another One**

I grew up in a very conservative bubble of rules and ways. It took my soon-to-be wife to pull me into a different reality. We went to the State Theatre on Congress Street to see the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*. We got really ripped on weed before the show started. The theatre seated maybe a 100. But this showing had probably only 25 people scattered about. This was 1969 and theatres were pretty rudimentary then; cloth seats and painted gray cement floor.

About 10 minutes into the movie, Cathy reaches into her purse and pulls out two Michelob beers. WHAT? This was unheard of (back then). That's what you



get when you date an older woman from Massachusetts. She also brought her own crackers. I love this woman.

We finished our two beers and she pulled out two more, and then a bit later, two more. The epic *2001* is a long movie. Somewhere after a couple brews, Cathy accidentally kicked a bottle on the floor by her seat. The bottle rolled under the seat, *roll roll, chink* and it hits the brass legs on the forward seats. Then it kept rolling, *roll, roll, chink, roll chink roll chink*, all the way to the front. I'm mortified; Cathy is laughing along with just about everyone else.

I'm sure of two things; the story was most likely retold and folks figured out they too can sneak stuff in. Cathy is a trendsetter. My 2nd wife, Bernadette, was wholly more conservative. Our first movie, I snuck in her favorite snack. She was mortified. But I did one better. I snuck in a small jar of her favorite wine. The next time she snuck in cheese.

In 1970 I lived in Hollywood. Not Hollywood Florida – the other one with the big sign. I lived two blocks from Hollywood and Vine. Yes, where the stars are on the sidewalk. I went to school in a building right on the strip. I lived a block from the famous ranch market. I saw two actors who were stockers and cashiers. I lived directly across the street from MGM studios. This was the secret entrance side. My two-story apartment building had an underground garage. Movie stars would park their vehicles there and just sneak across the street.

I lived rent-free because my best friend was the manager and there were always vacant rooms to crash in. I chatted with Cary Grant, and other actors, waved to Merv Griffin. By the way, most of your daily, weekly ongoing shows are filmed in Burbank. I could see the Hollywood sign from my kitchen window. I took day classes in film basics and night classes from a Sufi Master, Sheik Al-Washi.

## **Wrong Super Power**

Wouldn't it be nice to have your very own Super-Power? Well, we all have one or two. Perhaps you haven't realized it yet. You will: It takes time, with some obvious or sneaky tells or clues.

My superpower involves plants. It saddens me a bit, because while my thumb is fairly green, I also have a brown thumb. I can kill specific plants. Killing them not only by touching, but eerily, just by looking at them. I do so love the very plants I can't have. Geraniums, coleus and tomatoes.

I have a strong past life connection to the Middle East. I figured out by age 25 that I have this skill, or as I call it now, a curse. After some research, I discovered those were very popular plants back in the days of the Incense trail. Geraniums and coleus were used medicinally and for teas. Those three plants are very popular in this millennium. But I cannot grow them. If I see them anytime, anywhere, I can't touch them or even look at them.

Now, realistically, the plants don't die and/or shrivel up in 2 minutes like in the movies. It takes about 3-5 days. But I consider this phenomenon a freak of the Matrix. My curse – I can live with. But, if I had ill feelings toward someone, I would not look at their plants to kill those. Perhaps this is what people might see as a way of Putting a Curse on someone. Magic is a strange occult power: and I am a strange man, but not a monster.

## **Super-Fund Site**

I lived on a dead-end street for 31 years. The street butted up against the fence to an industrialized area, a massive piece of property 600 yards from me. Koppers, a busy lumberyard that specialized in making telephone poles from start to finish, including creosote soaking, had been operating for 80 years.

As the city grew larger, this place that was once on the edge of the city limits became a problem. Encroached by expanding residences and small businesses, the site became a nuisance for noise, smells, and dangerous logger trucks. Environmental attitudes were changing. The testing levels, once ignored, now contained important data that became the ire of many people and caused weekly protests outside the gates. The Hogtown Creek and surrounding land had become dangerously polluted.

For a few years, things quieted down. It looked like Koppers was downsizing. Not because of the poisoning but because of the cost of wood production, and the new demand made cement utility poles faster to produce at a lower cost.

Suddenly the poisoning is a big thing. Koppers sells the land to a real estate conglomerate.

Betting on a long-term investment, the new owners make a deal with the Environmental agency to make attempts to clean up dangerous topsoil and abandon the idea of flipping the property. This makes it a Superfund Site. They are literally getting paid to do nothing as long as they do nothing. The remediation process was just a Band-Aid and a bit of a ruse. All for show. I knew people on the inside who said my property was not poisoned, not dangerous. I had a fig tree and I worried the roots or topsoil were making my fruit inedible. Those in the know said no worries. My place was safe.

### **Take Me Home. I'm Hungry!**

In 1975, while we were living on Beach Street, I had a few unusual encounters.

Any quick chance I got, I took my camera, and would walk around the neighborhood looking for photo ops. Walking the sidewalk a block from our house about 5 p.m., we saw a man was sitting on a bench. Approaching, I nodded. He looks at me and says, "Take me home, I'm hungry." I look at him and he repeats, "Take me home, I'm hungry." This older black man, with white curly hair and not fat, but not malnourished, was genuine. He didn't ask for money. I'm a block away. I say, "Let's go."

As we're walking, I say, "You can eat at our table with my wife and newborn. We're vegetarian, but eat all you want. I'm pretty much a starving student so I can't promise leftovers."

Cathy was nonplussed; we had enough food. The four of us sat at the table and with an odd air of familiarity and calm, we just ate. There were a couple of questions here and there. After dinner, he asked if he could be excused as he was feeling better. We said goodbye.

### **We're Family?**

Just before I got my first car, even though I had a driver's license, I still hitchhiked into Portland when I had a chance. At near the end of a winter day, I'm just two miles from home, starting the walk, and hitchhiked from a busy

intersection and route. A Chevy Impala with four teens drives right by me from behind. They lob a beer can at my head. It stings but I'm worried that I'll smell like beer when I get home. I regret it now, but I yelled at them, and may have included an obscenity.

The car screeches to a halt, back up lights on. I felt that tingle in my spin and my legs get a bit rubbery. Three dudes jump out of the car. Before I know it, and not expecting it, the blonde gives me a 3-hit pepper punch in the face and the other guy punches me in my ear. Just as the second round was starting, with the three guys grabbing me, I heard a horn honking. Keith Toothaker and his dad arrived just in time. The hoodlums ran off but not before Keith's dad got the plate number. They take me home. I go to the hospital. Police arrive, photos are taken and Dad's pressing charges.

I'm home and Dad's upset. The Toothakers come back to see how I'm doing. They went to the police station to rat on the boys. Three hours later, we get a call and the boys were arrested. They were from South Portland. I was not the only one they attacked. Three were in jail that night. Come Monday, they're still in jail. A hearing was set for two of them who claimed they were Not Guilty. Because we were juvies, they had to appear in court that afternoon. And so did Dad and me. My face was a fresh mess, really ugly.

The dads of the hitters, from what I could see, were blue collar bullies themselves. Pretty scary. The judge was mad, appalled at what happened. The blonde, Chris Cloutier, got 6 months in jail. The other guy got probation for 6 months. My dad felt vindicated. Over the years, in one of my moods, I went over it in my head. One time I was mad and had words with him recently in my head, though it's 30 years later. But I don't like that or do that, much anyway. The greater Portland area is not that small. But it is Maine.

In 2020, during the plague, I was messing around with Ancestry. I have 1<sup>st</sup> cousins and 2<sup>nd</sup> cousins and 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins. But I have another cousin to my first cousin. How shocked I was to discover that Chris Cloutier is that very cousin to my 1<sup>st</sup> cousin.

## **How I Found Astrology**

I've been following my horoscope, a daily read in the paper since I was 15 years old. I found them fun and uncanny. Every year, on my birthday, Sydney Omarr would nail my type with some very specific, consistently occult references. My wife also liked astrology and she was more fascinated with The Birth Charts aspect.

Up until 1972, compared to how my life would change, I was not social at all. Suddenly I'm surrounded at school, work and home by too many people. We had meditation classes in our home two nights a week. Shocked by the variety and behavior of people, I started to discern, to assess better.

One day, I asked Cathy if she noticed that Sandy was an emotional clone to Rachel. Cathy laughed. "Spot on, Dougman. They're both air signs with Moon in Aquarius and Pisces rising."

Oh, now I get it. I would use this knowledge for all aspects and endeavors of my life. In the process, I do agree with the doubters, that 12 signs are just too few. I have since learned there are 124 types. I see clusters and some types I have never met because our paths, karma, never crossed. That's the power of astrology seeing.

## **Is It Me or Not Just Me?**

Flagler Beach was our choice for a 2-month vacay stay, right on the beachfront and next to the Beanery Cafe. A few nice things happened at the Beanery. I love my morning coffee. The pastries and crumpets looked delicious. A young surfer dude was the baker and sandwich maker. The owner's wife served customers.

But I have to share a WTF moment. The third morning in a row, as I was standing in a short line, I memorized the etiquette, the ordering code. It's my turn and the woman behind the counter asks, "How can I help you?"

"Large coffee, black, to go."

She pours the coffee and asks, "How would you like it?"



“Uh, to go.”

“No, what do you want in it?”

“Uh, black to go is good.”

“Look, you want cream or sugar?”

“Uh, black, to go.” I realize it’s not the owner wife, and she looks fairly bright. She comes over to the counter, briskly and obviously annoyed. “Fine. The cream and sugar and sweeteners are on the convenience stand.” She points at them. I’m stunned. I’m not sure what’s going on. And neither does the pastry chef; he’s frozen looking at us. I paid, said thank you and left. Jezzum, I needed coffee to go get coffee that day.

I never went back. Drove to the dollar store and bought a coffee maker for \$12.99. You know, as I said, she looked pretty bright. Hmmm. I think her elevator goes all the way to the top, but the doors don't open.

## **Justified**

Whatever you say about the history of drug culture in the last 60 years, I don't care. Too complex. Putting alcohol and opioids aside, the popular use of pot and psychoactive drugs has turned 180 degrees in authoritative opinion. Duh! My perspective is an oversimplification, but it's a justification combined from my own experience since 1966 to the present, as a form of therapy and my own INFJ observations of countless people over the years.

Theory: There are two types of users, those who wish to escape and forget, not to remember, and those who wish to connect and remember. I have used weed and psychedelics as therapy to remember. One day I woke up and saw reality and discovered it was all fake.

## **Do You Hear That? It's Called a Cut!**

The desert of Arizona is long and flat. You really get a sense of how small and helpless you are standing in the desert because you can see 50 miles in every direction and there is absolutely nothing. Now, think of that at night, the dark of night at 3 a.m. As Cathy and I were hitching from coast to coast, we were put in that situation and as creepy as it was, it was exhilarating.

We were let off at an important junction for our journey by a trucker. His hitcher-friendly suggestions about a shortcut route to the next on ramp were spot on. However, it required a 3-mile hike to the adjacent parallel highway. It turns out it was actually four miles, but in the desert, perspective is optional.

The horizon at night changes in the desert. There are places where there are small hills. The DOT has carved through them, and those small chasms are called cuts. In a vehicle going 70 m.p.h., the time it takes to pass through one is barely a minute or two. Walking is different.

As Cathy and I were walking through the cut, we heard a whooshing sound that seemed to be all around us. We look up, and we can make out a cloud of movement that turned out to be millions of bats flying low through the cut just above our heads! We walked for what seemed like a long time with the bats all around us, and we finally made it back out into the open desert where the bats dispersed into the night. What a surreal feeling that was.



17

I AM BOMBED

## **Presidential Pardon**

In the early 1980s, a local ATF agency made a push to crack down on tobacco and alcohol sales to minors. Gainesville is a university town. No biggie. I'm in my late 30s and obviously a grown man. At Publix, I got carded for two bottles of wine with my snacks in the 10 items or less lane. I laughed as I thought of a good retort and complaint, as carding everyone is now a matter of store policy. Reaching for my wallet, and smiling, I speak. "No problem, but I'm so old, I remember when Eisenhower was President."

The young cashier looked up and inquired, "Who?"

About a month later, in the same lane, same store, I got carded again, but by an older woman. Repeat. Reaching for my wallet, and smiling, I speak. "No problem, but I'm so old, I remember when Eisenhower was President."

The cashier paused, looked me in the eyes and said, "I heard about you from my granddaughter who also works here."

I responded, "Oh wow, I love coincidences. You know, I was hoping for a presidential pardon on this."

"You and me both," she said.

## **Karma Cafe: Just Desserts**

I am not good at math. It's all Greek to me. Ironically, much of our math started in Greece. Once in a while, I will pull out a math prank from my intuitive bag of tricks. During my businessman/employer phase, occasionally taking 1, 2, or 3 members of my staff out to lunch was my pleasure. The four of us decided to audition the new restaurant very close to the radio station. Not a deli, not a chain, this place was fancy. I called it a place like Lawyer Lunch.

I knew I wanted fish, so I handed back the menu unread. Looking through the menus, someone made the joke, as most do, the old "Don't get the lobster" joke. The food was good and our attentive waitress inquired about dessert. I looked at her for a moment. The others are watching me pause, and I said, "If I



can guess the total of the bill within 3 cents, may I have a free ice cream for dessert?"

The waitress is good for game. She says, "Okay, I'm up for this; let me ask my boss."

She returns with the chef. We repeat the question. The waitress to the chef, "He didn't even look at the menu."

Chef says, "If you can guess the total within 3 cents, I will give you all free ice cream for dessert." They leave; they come back. It's so funny. She's holding the check folder against her chest and there is a moment of silence. Without even blinking, I say, "\$37.47, not including tip." And shrug my shoulders as if it's purely a wild guess. We all enjoyed our dessert.

## **Time Capsule**

Speaking of time and art, my photography has been placed in a time capsule to be opened many years from now. I was commissioned by the City of Daytona to record and immortalize the city functions, infrastructure, and city service organizations, such as the Fire Department, Police, Rescue, City Hall, Mayor, City Commission, historic properties and specific events. Mostly things no one has permission to see or access. Such an honor. The irony is no one alive now, expect perhaps my granddaughter, will see them.





## **You Slept Where?**

A buddy and I went on a field trip to Bimini Island in a seaplane. Because it was December, a tad off-season, we were fortunate to get a room at the most popular inn on the island. I'm shocked at how many Americans have not been to Bimini.

But the only real lure is great scuba diving and the tropical peninsula tip for nude fashion modeling and it's at the tip of the Bermuda Triangle. It also has a healing well, a freshwater spring filled with minerals including lithium which oozes out of the mangroves. It is the last flowing well out of four that were popular in the 1400s. It is the real Ponce De Leon Fountain of Youth.

The inn was converted into mostly rental rooms and a full bar, a notoriously infamous bar among them. Why? Because the building is Ernest Hemingway's former home. We slept in his actual bedroom. We drank where he drank and drank. All the walls on the first floor, two rooms, are plastered with 8 x 10 black and prints of Ernest and his adventures. I wish I had taken pictures of his pictures on the walls.

## **Kid Stuff**

My wife and I were both born in Portland, Maine. I moved from Maine in the early 1970s, because of the weather. So both my children were born in Florida. In time, they both moved back to Maine, including their mother. I'm still in Florida.

My younger brother and my sister and I were all born 5 years apart. As the decades go by, we suddenly realize we all have a first grandchild born in the same week... Ripley's stuff. What are the odds?

I find it interesting that when my brother, sister, and I flew the coop, we all lived as far apart as we could. Me to Florida, Beth to Maine and Chris to California. My dad was in New Hampshire and my mom in South Carolina. Funny.

## **What's Your Middle Initial?**

It gets better. It was only in my 40s when I realized an odd pattern. It hit me pretty hard, not in a painful way, more like the adrenaline crush of “Duh!” and “Is fate a real thing?” Following my axiom, “The hidden is in the obvious and the obvious is in the hidden” proved true once again. At my age, my history of and with family and partners has accrued.

My Moms middle initial is M. My first wife’s middle initial is M. My second wife’s middle initial is M. My second wife’s mom’s middle initial is M.

Kriya doesn't have a middle name, but these days, Kriya thought it should be Marie, like Nunna, and the rhythm is right. I wanted to, and could not—and Kriya cringes—have Monuenza as her middle name. My BFF and soulmate, her middle initial is M. My girlfriend June, her middle initial is M. My Asian girlfriend Betty, her middle initial is M. Paula, my last live-in girlfriend, her middle initial is M. Amanda, my last long-term catfish pen pal, her middle initial is M. I've had two other girlfriends who also had a middle initial of M. Now I ask girls what their middle initial is. Swoon or run? As I pen this, I realized the only two-man friends I see socially are named Mike and Mike. Another M is in da house: Sharon’s hubby is named Mark.

## **I Love Trees and Trees Love Me**

And righteously back they do. Life at 535 was a mix of reality and living in the home of a mystic. As a meditation teacher and businessman as well, I am grateful for the bubble I live in. My hands-on life is in sync with my inner voice and guidance from Upon High.

My unit 535 has a large parking lot and I live on a street with no sidewalks. Plenty of room to park for my class. I also worked at home, so the place was quiet during the day. I'm typing on my desktop in my business head but in my zone. My writing zone. Just like when I play solitaire, my inner voice is yakking and sorting stuff while I'm completely functional in a game or business.

I'm writing the last hour it takes to finish. Planning on driving to Office Depot for inkjet ink, but I want to finish. Over the period of 15 minutes, I heard my

inner voice say, *Leave now*. A bit later, *Go to the store now*. I continue writing. Then *LEAVE NOW* for the third time.

I grab my wallet and keys and head for my beautiful white Mercedes Benz. Out in the driveway, I wave to my neighbor, Henrietta. So, if I am told to be somewhere, there's a reason. Being hyper vigilant to an upcoming coincidence or something, you don't have to get ready if you are ready. Driving home, my eyes are peeled, I'm chill, and I have no doubts. My guides are always spot on.

Now, my guides *have* sent me places at times where nothing happened. I casually asked them once, "What's up with that?" They replied, "We were just checking to see if you were still listening." I wasn't the least bit offended; I took it as a compliment.

Arriving home, I pulled into my parking spot on the lot. *Uh-oh, I can't*. Right where my car was parked under a tall pine, in my spot, is a tree limb. Not the branches you can pick up 2 at a time. This was a living pine tree limb. Over 28 feet long, the base of the limb was 11" across! Henrietta and her two kids walked across the street all excited! "Lordy, we watched you leave and you weren't gone even 2 minutes when we saw the crash and heard the boom-boom." I'm looking at it and her, and I smile, rendered speechless at the wonder of it all.

That was 25 years ago. I still have things happen similarly but in a different way, and I'm always surprised, which is surprising and my best feature which is why I'm connected, I guess. Taking nothing for granted.

The next day, the tree dude with a chainsaw is cutting up the pine branch. I'm dragging debris I can schlep to the street, and I hear a voice. Two unfamiliar chicas at Henrietta's are yoo-hooing me and I hear Henrietta's screen door bang open. "Don't be messing with him, he got the power, I mean it, he got the power." Neat. The tree dude said the limb wasn't dead; the tree separated from the tree, leaving a hole. Weird. The universe warned me; the tree spared me. I made friends with trees before I got here.



## **Bad Neighbors**

The stats show that five out of five people have a horrible neighbor story. Funny wording because the neighbors are horrible and so the story is horrible. But no one really wants to hear my terrible neighbor story. If justice had to be done, after weeks of mayhem, it took care of itself before we too became a target. A set of horrible neighbors moved next door, two horrible neighbors and our enthusiasm to go to war with either of them was snuffed out because they went to war with each other. We also decided at that point to move, so we kept our heads down.

How bad was it? There was a WTF moment every single day.

One morning as I'm pouring a cup of coffee, I look out the window as I'm stirring and I'm so shocked, my face didn't know what to do. From the second floor, from my kitchen window, I see the lot is filled with SWAT vehicles and 6 SWAT snipers are pointing their weapons at the building, including my kitchen window. I repeat, A SWAT sniper is pointing his weapon and watching me through his scope. What a show. The Gainesville Police, Alachua County Sheriff's Department, an EMT Rescue unit, a van of five burly plainclothes guys with a battering ram in their hands, and six SWAT guys in full armor. The bust was upstairs. The bust broke the front door, the bedroom windows and the glass sliding doors. They dragged 3 people out of the place, brought them to the ground and had them hogtied with zip ties face down on the parking lot pavement. Not for ten minutes either, face down for 2 hours.

We looked it up online. Prostitution, conspiracy, possession of controlled substances, distribution, and outstanding warrants. The place was boarded up for a few months. Everything, absolutely everything they owned, was thrown away in a dumpster. The other crappy neighbors were overjoyed. But they then proceeded to go wild and there was no relief. We were so pissed when we found out that not only were we moving in June, so were they. No justice.

## **In the Cool of the Night**

One of my favorite thrills when crossing the many deserts in my school bus occurred at night. The desert is mean during the day. At night, a whole culture thrives. Starting during the Summer of Love, travel was safe, and lacked the



hundreds of laws and conveniences for a trillion-dollar industry, including trucking and travel.

Back then you had to be innovative. The deserts start in western Texas and run all the way through Arizona and New Mexico, up to the San Bernardino Mountains near the California coast. Over many trips and years, I learned a few tricks; today we would call them life hacks. At night, if hitchhiking, it's easier to catch a ride at the gas station or rest area.

But another group uses the highway at night. Cross country bicyclists. They also stop at gas stations to rest, but also to network. SAG duty. SAG stands for Supplies and Gear. Since my gas tank was small and would only get 9 miles to the gallon, stops were frequent. The cyclists would request (and we would accept the duty, with pleasure) for us to place their SAG by certain signs at certain exits along the way, the way being 50–90 miles up the road. I often assigned a friend on the bus to be the organizer. We kept a list of where we would place their goods. It became a wonderful thing.

## **Celebrity Crush**

In 1969, while I was taking art classes at Gorham State Teachers College in southern Maine, my teacher asked me to ride along to upstate New York to deliver a painting. Thinking it might be Timothy Leary at his Victorian Mansion, I was eager. Hours later, traversing a winding, dirt road in the woods, we pulled up to a modest stone and log wood cabin. A slender man with a trimmed beard greets us. He said "Welcome," and noticing my little Argus 35mm, he said, "Sorry, no cameras."

We go in, and the place is filled with props, souvenirs and much eclectic weird stuff. Most notable were a couple of long tables and five typewriters, each with paper stacks, and a wastebasket next to this amazing large fireplace. On the mantle sat a glass chalice or brandy snifter half full of "black beauties," the nickname for amphetamines (or speed). Yep.

Still unaware who he was, I then recognized his voice as he lit up a Viceroy cigarette and the way he held it – it came to me - Rod Serling. In the presence of a master, I kept my mouth shut. Looking around at all the souvenirs, five typewriters with stories ongoing (pre-computer age), I was in the Inner

Sanctum of greatness. Each typewriter was a different ongoing story or script. No computer file folder, no save memory. Totally old school.

I wonder how many stories wound up in the fireplace. That's all I am ethically allowed to share with you, though I guess it's safe to announce that we got high. I totally forgot about Tim Leary. I tried to score a photo online today of him with facial hair, but Getty images wants \$399 for it.

### **Reader's Disgust**

I like short stories and I cannot lie.

In the beginning was the Word and the word made manifest is language. I learned to read. What I like to read is or was a mystery. Is it nature versus nurture? I grew up on *Readers Digest*, *Life Magazine*, *Parade Magazine*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Glamour*, *True*, *Redbook*, and *Cosmopolitan*. Never *Sports Illustrated* or *National Geographic*.

I like short stories. I particularly like short info stories, parables and short relationship stories. Not so much Spanish Novellas, more character driven, what's-up-with-that plots. It's an appetite I indulge myself in continuously. Drove my wife a bit crazy because she didn't understand it. "But why?" I never answered her, and I didn't understand the question.

I'm so under the influence of the Kool Aid of writing, I'm not aware I'm writing a short story 50 years later. I should email her this. I only saw her, ever, ever read anything but her herb books, birthing book, and her astrology book. I'm sitting on the couch, reading *Redbook Magazine* and she comes in all excited. Her Linda Goodman's *Sun Sign* book and her *Moon Rising*, *Venus Mars* books are open. Both books had a of couple sentences on why I read short human interaction stories.

### **Pretty Petty, But Pretty Good**

Bernadette and I bought a house in a quiet area. The dog next door was not only neurotic but untrained. Our bedroom was on the far end, away from the street and that addition ran 6 feet away from the property line and the old

couple's chain link fence. But that dog's ears were so good, you literally couldn't set your water glass down on the nightstand without it catapulting into a long-winded barking session.

You can imagine any other noise. Not just a sudden noise – any noise at any time for any reason – it seemed to never stop. Bernadette was beside herself, unhappy, desperate and over it. I love dogs, but constant barking is unnecessary. What to do? The old couple next door was too absorbed and deaf in pet love to understand that Bernadette and I had no quiet time.

Yes, what to do? We did a bit of remodeling and I had a pile of debris – or so it was deemed – thought I might need that. I found a solid, 4 x 8 foot sheet of old 70s paneling. The backside was blank. Using red paint, I wrote “No BARK” in the largest letters it would fit and nailed it to the side of the house facing their back yard and kitchen window. What an eyesore. But it worked.

## Levitate

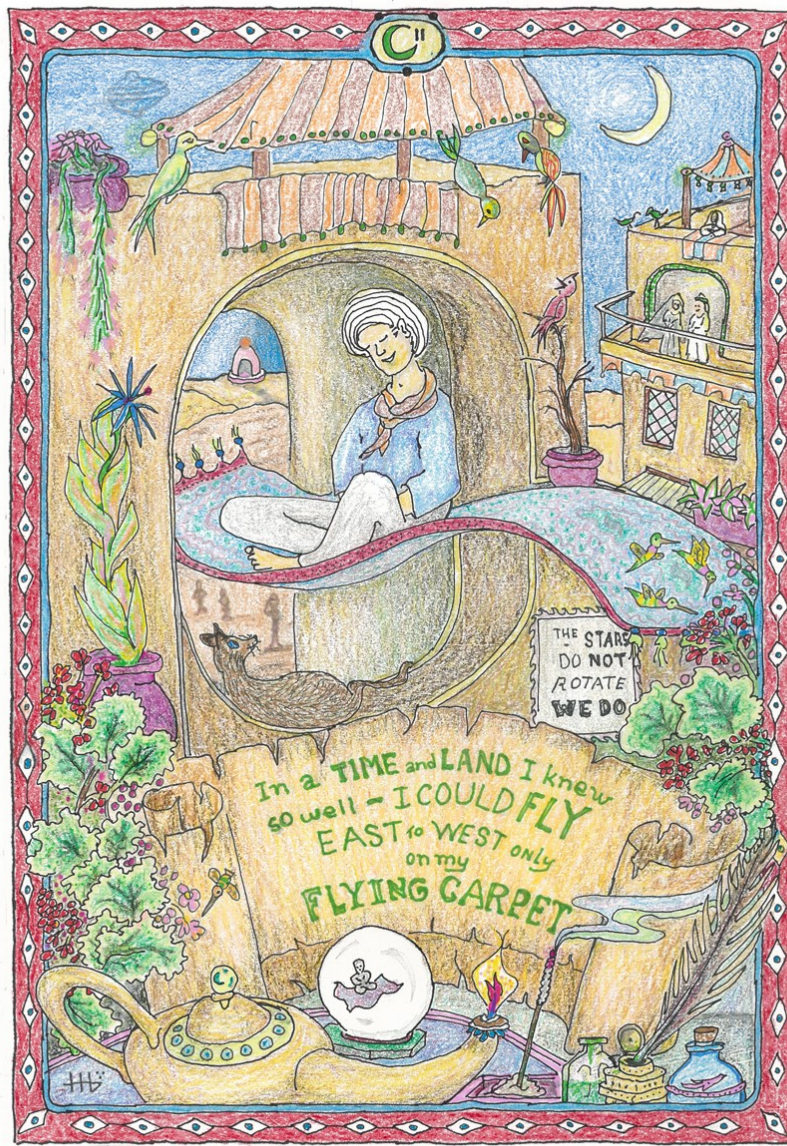
In the late 80s, I wrote a short film script to enter into a contest about a Florida locale-based movie. Basically, the concept came from watching a shuttle launch. People ask why the rockets curve off to one side. The answer is, the earth is rotating away from them. The earth moves from east to west. Here in Florida, we rotate at 93 m.p.h. What if you could levitate? You wouldn't have to move, only let the earth pass beneath you. By taking a fix on the stars, and not on the horizon, keep your fix on the stars and the earth will move under you. Pick an open space or wind up crashing into oncoming buildings, cars, and people. A desert would be a good





place. Maybe get a cute carpet, sit on it, levitate, and go west. No buildings. Our myths are believable! Our imagined fairy tales may have merit.

So, I imagine myself in a full Arabic Genie costume, turban, curly toe shoes and all... sitting and floating on my magic carpet in the old Middle East. And as I approach the buildings, I am grateful for the arched doorways. My turban needs clearance. The script didn't win any awards or mentions in the contest; besides, it was written during Desert Storm and the topic was taboo. But the concept and visuals were terrific. Sadly, the dialogue was terrible... Liftoff and crashed.



10/28/22 done  
10/25/22 create

THE STARS DON'T ROTATE

## **Barcode NOT**

I meditate every day. I often go through periods of inner change and acceleration and I have a ritual practice for that. I meditate more and keep track. When I am in public, people look at or ask about the tattoo of a barcode on my hand. That is not a barcode. Each time I meditate, I draw a small line on my hand, so I remember to remember.

## **What's in a name?**

Words are spells. Every word and sentence is an incantation. One's name is a spell. A name is not just a form of ID, like an inventory identification number. A name is an enchantment. It's an expression of the beingness of a human as a unique individual. What if Taylor Swift was named Katragena Keladosia Doso?

My name is Douglas Brian Davis. I rarely use or speak of my full name. I either sound like a law firm, Douglas, Brian and Davis, or a serial killer; they always go by 3 names.

I was about 9 years old before I realized my name wasn't *Oh, Douglas*. Oh, Douglas! Oh, Douglas became synonymous with exasperation. And rightly so. I never did anything mean or criminal, I just upset people's versions of reality with something unexpected. Oh, Douglas has followed me to this day. I've even heard Sharon blurt it out.

Kriya has one name for me, Dad. But instead of Oh, Douglas, its "Daaaaaad!" Now that I'm older, and a grandfather, my look and vibe is – as my brother said – I have a kind face. To my granddaughter Minka I am Puppa. The name fits.

## **Short Version: Asked and Answered**

Just because someone uses the term "married life" doesn't mean it's a negative. Married life is its own entity. In the second year of our marriage, Bernadette was at work and school. One day, I came home from work and Bernadette was very annoyed.

I could feel the chill. "How you doing, what's up?" I asked.



"Douglas, GRU turned off the electricity today but I called it in and its back on. When was it due?"

"Not sure, I didn't mark it on my calendar."

"Why not? How do you decide to pay the bills? Do you just throw them up to the ceiling and see what sticks?"

Oops, fight or flight. I went to grab the bills in the den which had soft square ceiling tiles. She followed me in. I use humor for protection, and with a half-assed smile I throw the stack of bills up... and one sticks to the ceiling. The corner is magically wedged in the tile seam. While she stood there with a bit of an O face - that's all her face would do - I reached up for the hanging bill and said, "Well, it looks like the cable bill is next."

### **And This...**

In the late 60s, the band, The Band, had a hit song on FM radio. It played in the background for years as my theme song. Not Rocky, not The Lone Ranger, not the opening credit music to The Alfred Hitchcock Hour, though I love instrumentals and wish I had the music ring on my phone. The song, Frannie was a poetic ballad and I heard it, but I didn't really hear it. What does it mean? My spiritual Higher self, unbeknownst to me, was sending me a tell, a reminder, and some would use the expression: "It spoke to me." But the meaning was not revealed to me until I was in my 70s. My mental musing fantasy is that I am not in the Matrix, I am in my own dream and I send myself messages, tells, and signs.

### **Unethical Gifts**

Theft is a hard lesson for some people to learn. Being robbed is an inevitable thing. People steal and victims don't like it. I'm stunned at how angry and vicious victims become. Sadly, in human nature, a small percentage of humans steal in one form or another. It most certainly will happen to most people, and that is a hard reality.

Instead of being in the headspace of a victim post-event, what would it be like to know ahead of time, or be able to see someone steal and allow it, simply watch them steal and you are clandestinely gifting them? My parents would clean out and dump my room once or twice a year. I felt like it was stealing. But that was the construct of the paradigm and I went with it.

Over the years I've watched people steal from me. I actually enjoy it. It's a study in human nature. Every one of them felt it was okay or they were entitled to do so, or just thought, "I can, so I will." What is that force that compels such actions and thoughts? That's part of why I watch.

The other part is compassion, not enabling. It's not a psych profile as much a relationship on spirit level. I am self-cleansed enough to be objective. I'm cleansed enough to feel them in their situation. It's as if I can feel their need and eliminate the middleman to ask for charity, since I'm giving it to them. I sense their sense of lack and trust and emotional desperation for instant gratification.

The other side of the coin is the person who steals for the thrill of it or just genuine *fuck you I don't care*. I usually nip them in the bud in a sideways way. They hate that they got caught and then they hate me for it. Money and things are not that important to me.

If I share with people that I watch and let people steal from me, they ask how can you do that? This is why I can do that.

## **The Men in Black**

I used to be openly psychic and then I had to keep it a secret. Between my first and second wife, I dated around and was more social in several circles. I'm not big on chit chat or small talk; conversations are difficult for me. But in a small circle of friends, I've been known to add a bit of this or that here and there. Sometimes I will let out a big zinger. That has gotten me in trouble.

Once I dated a girl who kept track of some of my blurts. One house in particular, I would point to and say, "That house will burn down as soon as we pass by it." There had been a rash of church fires in Gainesville over a year's period. For months I would point to certain churches and say, "That will burn

down." People have heard me say, "Two banks will be robbed this month." One was my own bank. It really creeps people out.

People asked me why someone was burning down the churches. I knew the answer. Word of mouth spread and not in a good way. People react to people when they do the ooey-ooey. People react when you predict a bad thing and it comes true. I got visited by two men in suits. By the time the hour-long conversation was over, I forgot which investigative authority they came from. But they left satisfied that I wasn't the arsonist and they were also concerned that I was upsetting people. I wasn't particularly annoyed. I never answered the question three times, as in, "How did you know all that?" Truth being, there is no right answer, any answer would not be 100 percent.

## **Cardboard Sheriff**

*The depth of your character is measured by what you laugh at.*

Not all wedding humor is funny. I have a whole chapter on my videography career, and over the years, dealing with people, I've seen some things. Luckily, I got this one on tape. Videotaping a wedding is far easier than photo still shots. The camera just runs. Human nature is consistent. Some people will be shy and some will be hams.

In one wedding, the characters were young, closely-knit spoiled brats. The pre-wedding was jovial with some antics, the wedding went off without a hitch, and it came time to exit with a line and throw rice. I'm filming in real time and I can walk around and be at any angle or place to catch the best footage.

The car drives up to the walkway, the attendees are lined up, the rice is ready, the doors open and out walk the bride and groom. I notice three of the groomsmen are very agitated and hovering around the car. I notice there are no wedding signs, *Just Married*, shaving cream, whatever.

The bride and groom approach the car. The wedding photographer is taking a classic pose of the bride sitting in the car, when all of sudden, I hear a groomsman whisper in my ear, "We hate the bride, we hate her. Be sure and get this." The bride is in the car, door closed, the groomsmen are messing with

the groom and I'm circling around the car. I get closer to the dudes. There's a driver starting the engine. The groomsmen shuffle and block while another gets in the car with the bride, and locks the door.

Another groomsman walks by me, face in the camera and says, "We're stealing her; we have a motel somewhere in Florida," and he jumps in the car, speeds away with exhaust fumes, leaving the groom standing alone, bewildered. And the chatting crowd in the background is becoming concerned.

The groom says, "It's just a prank," and asks the bridesmaids, "What's going on?"

His dad walks him back into the building. The mom is pissed, and asks me (on camera) "What's going on?"

"I dunno," shrugging my shoulders, "a wedding prank?" I laugh nervously.

The photographer asks me the same question. I have no clue and my nervous laugh is offending him, I'm trying to be on camera courteous. I pretty much stop shooting. People are crying, and we're all standing around like herd of penguins because we think they're coming back.

I pack up and leave. Monday morning I get a call and a visit from the Mom and the other Mom, the photographer and a lawyer. I'm doing business as normal, hand them the tape in my stylized case, a receipt. Suddenly I'm getting the third degree. All they remember is me laughing at the end and are very angry and scared. They have not heard a word from the bride or any gossip and they are actually filing kidnapping charges.

The lawyer asked me if I would testify and I said, "Sure, but it's all on tape. I can testify this is the original and no one has seen it. Please sign the receipt." I never heard from them again.

But a year later, I'm socializing with our in-person wedding network group, about 8 of us, and the topic comes up about the kidnapping. The follow-up story went like this: It took four days for the cops to find them. The bride was not happy. Two of the 3 were charged with kidnapping and jailed.

I have something to add to that. I videotaped it live, and the tape was used as evidence. They clearly confessed during the event. It was a total disaster and over before you knew it.

## **Angel Headquarters**

I am a Mystic or a Seer. I see things and know things. I know people, I can feel them, see their Higher Selves, assess their service and role in the community. Sharon and my former students all agree, I am the Teacher of Teachers. I work with angels. Real angels, Angels from Upon High. I also work with local angels.

Local angels are the people around us who are doing good things with good intentions. Angels on Assignment. I am not the head of the group, more of an Envoy. All earth angels get their direction from upon High. You would think all angels would unite. In a compressed definition, angels don't work directly with other angels. They don't necessarily join and assist other angels, but what we do is we don't interfere with their service. We don't get in their way. We all coexist in our assignments. We are supported by the Higher and we bring our vision to locals. I know all the Angels in Gainesville. They provide service to self or service to others.

## **Dignity is Keeping Your Cool**

My top choice dining is... a Chinese buffet. Being neurodivergent, I like my food in sections with no mixing and several trips for separate foods. If I don't like the water glass, I won't drink. But the coolest quirk I have is the middle plate. I always go with someone. Between us we have our remnants plate. We put our shells or ends in the middle, not to one side of the main plate. The waitress will often grab it while we're eating, thinking that the plate is completed. Doing her job. Sometimes we inform her and she can pick up the plate when we go to the buffet. I've learned over the years to grab two fresh plates. I hide one under my main serving plate in case I need it.

Tonight was the perfect example of why I should be chaperoned. Four of us were eating at a round table. A lazy Susan was in the middle, my side dish to my left. All 3 of my friends went back to the line for more food. I'm sitting alone and eating. The table is a bit cluttered. I have two forks, one with a



greasy spill handle and a good one. I'm momentarily flustered about what to do with the messy one, not wanting to set it down on my remnants plate.

Suddenly, our waitress comes up from behind me, grabs my plate... and in slow motion, I react by reaching for the plate to say, "That's okay." But I have a fork in my hand and the Universe has other plans. I clearly recall seeing my left hand drive the fork into the back of her hand. We both freeze and look at each other. I pull back and she lets go. I whispered "I'm so sorry," and I put the fork down and she's looking at me, grabbing other dishes like *whatever*, like it happens to her often. She blew me off. But she left the dish.

My friends came back and I told them what happened, and the waitress swung by and my date asked her if she was okay. At that point, I realized she doesn't speak English. That was really awkward. One friend said, "We can't leave you for a minute." I said, "Ten minutes is dangerous." I left a good tip and we waved on the way out. Maybe she was checking to make sure I left.

## **Pheromones are Real**

For 2 months in 1970, Cathy and I camped in Big Sur in the foothills of the Las Padres National Forest. A 2-mile hike back and up the foothills in meandering thin paths of the dried grass takes just 2 hours. The valleys got narrower and deeper and the best spot was next to a running stream with a man-made dam forming a generous size small pool. Best spot ever.

After a few days, the Ranger stopped by to introduce himself and the area. He was curious about how long we planned to stay and gave us a few tips. After chatting for a half hour, he got a good sense of us and we of him. The topic went from bears to Bigfoot. Bear tips are always good to know, especially when you're in their yard.

As we are absorbing bear information, he goes on about Bigfoot sightings. We went from an open mind to a more open mind, but really, it was one of those, "That's not gonna happen to us" moments. He gave the five bullet points. Great guy. He said he would check on us, but we never saw him again. I didn't mean that the way it sounded.

About 5 weeks into the camping trip, we befriended a long-stayer, and Cathy's sister Cindy and a friend came to visit for a few days. Every day was heaven, nothing of any concern. We knew the ambience of the woods, the echoes, the stream, all sounds, the birds, crickets, wind, smells. We can even tell what time it is by the light and shadows.

Why do things happen just when you're chilled and not paying attention? It's about 5ish. Shadows are longer, not as bright. "Cathy, why is it so quiet?"

She stops and listens. "It *is* quiet. You feel okay?"

I feel weird. I'm hypervigilant and an empath. Cindy goes, "What's happening? Is it an eclipse?"

"No, just getting ready to cook supper."

But we're all standing around looking at each other. "Do you hear that?" I don't hear anything. Why is my heart beating so fast? Why are our legs shaking? OMG, what's that smell?

Okay, I've seen real fear in people's eyes before, but everyone was fucking freaked. We all huddled in a fetal position with our backs against the wall. The two guys had clubs at each end of the line. I had never felt that much fear, for no reason. The quiet, the air was thick with something very bad. Someone wet their pants.

About 20 minutes later, the air lightened. The crickets and birds started again. The ringing in my ears stopped. We never saw a thing. But we all agreed our experience hit on all five bullet points for Bigfoot. As I said, we never saw him again. But I can smell your feet, Bigfoot!



## **The Blind and Deaf Duo**

Evening walks with Buddy were always a pleasure. A dog and his man friend. Being that both of us are disabled, we trust each other and look out for each other. And rightly so. He is blind and I am very deaf. We send signals to each other. Sweet little guy, I carry him down the stairs, and on the ground, he starts snorting like a vacuum cleaner. Tonight he is not leashed. No need since there are no cars or people. It's so quiet. He's hanging close, and we are sauntering along, passing under an old oak tree with long, low hanging branches.

Suddenly my heart jumped up into my throat, my knees gave out from under me but I recovered before falling. I look down and Buddy is lying completely flat with his stomach glued to the pavement, all four limbs spread out. I instinctively grab him up and cradle him. He's shaking and I hum and he can feel it in my chest. I need it too.

As loud as a dual semi-truck air horn can ever be, blasted a few feet from you, the loudest, scariest, WHOO-WHOOO went right through my bones and took my breath away. Poor Buddy. I think he passed out. I run away with Buddy in my arms like *you ain't getting my dog*.

I look up. Not 5 feet over our head is a full-grown owl looking at me. I see him. He's big; his eyes are mesmerizing.

Buddy and I went inside for safe keeping. He cuddled up to me on the bed, but I was really cuddling him. There's no thunder jacket for a spontaneous owl scare. The memory still gives me a bit of the willies.

## **Drop Dead Funny**

I visited Mom and Beth in Maine for a couple of days in the summer of 1971. Beth and I went on a field trip to Two Lights State Park to catch the sights and have some food at the famous Crab and Lobster stand on the peninsula. Clear day, slight wind, watching the tourists, looking for big boats, enjoying the sound of the buoy's bell ringing and the loud cawing of the big seagulls.



As far as scenic lighthouse places, it's pretty drab. Surrounded by a fence you can't get near it. A few small concrete buildings are scattered around. But hey, it's still fun.

I may have been taking pictures but Beth and I were just putzing around when, out of the blue, (literally) and without warning, absolutely no warning, the foghorn goes off not 10 feet from where we are standing. I woke up flat on the ground. Spread out like I'm holding on to the earth to keep from floating away... my ears are ringing. Beth is laughing. We look around and there is no fog, but we can see a bit of haze. I remember now I was taking pictures because I recall dinging my camera. We walked around the building and there was indeed a warning sign on the whistle house about the foghorn. I haven't been back since.





## **Big Fun – NOT!**

I love the sound of 20 children screaming. A special birthday party goes awry. I get hired to videotape at a local pre-K school. I get there on time as the festivities begin. Some presents are presented, the birthday cake and ice cream, and the anticipation is very high.

With 20 children, 3 teachers and about 12 Moms, there were rumors of a visit from Sesame Street characters. A van pulls up in view through large windows and Cookie Monster and Big Bird emerge. Some moms go out to assist. Meanwhile all the kids are lined up at the window, watching.

In hindsight, I think 2 things. First, because they were looking through a window, it's much like a TV and very visual but dissociative. Second, they should have just left it at that, a look out the window. As the characters are walking even closer across the lot, teachers hurry everyone to their seats, Moms have cameras out, the kids are excited. The door opens and Cookie Monster walks in and trips and falls over something.

The place fell quiet. Cookie Monster hams it up like that was supposed to happen. I'm filming and things like that don't startle me. There's a rustle at the door and it's a wall of yellow. Big Bird can't get in. He bows down and crawls into the room on his hands and knees sideways with an assist from 2 moms. The kids are bug-eyed, mouths open.

Then, Big Bird gets up. Yes, up and up and up. He's freaking 9 feet tall and the ceiling is a tad too low. Mayhem, screams, panic, crying, trembling and children trying to hide under the tables. One teacher is insisting it's alright and calm down. Right, Cookie Monster was no help, he's standing and he's just a big blue blob out of the corner of their eyes, not helping!

The freaks manage to get out the door and head for the van. I wonder if one of them called out or not, "Are we still getting paid?" Some kids are in their seats and others are in their moms' arms. The teachers are nervous.

No one is looking out the window except one little girl. I pan over to her mom and Mom is 10 feet away but staring and grooving at her beautiful child watching Big Bird and Cookie Monster leave. My fee \$65.00 – the event, PRICELESS!

## **When Illegal was Bad, But Fun**

Now that the fuss is over, I can safely brag that I have grown weed on and off over the decades. In January of 1970, my winter indoor project, I started 3 great plants. By March they were about two feet tall. I had an opportunity to travel for the summer, and I had to relocate my plants. I brought them to Grammy and Grandads. They had a circular garden of wildflowers and small trees.

I repotted the pot plant into their garden on the far side, out of view. Maine had a hot summer. I eventually returned to visit Grammy sometime in late September. Why it took me so long to remember that I had planted dope in the yard eludes me. Guess I figured it wouldn't make it.

At dusk I went out to the garden to look. I'm poking around the yard, looking down, eye level, kind of crowded, I pushed back a small tree to look when I realized that it wasn't a tree, it was a 9 foot pot plant with a trunk 3 inches thick. Not just one, but all three were 9 feet tall. Gah! What luck! Crazy right? Do you know how hard it is to harvest that size crop and hide and transport it?

## **Why Did I do that?**

My morning coffee is often my cognitive therapist. Of all my addictions, coffee is the longest lasting. That's not why I'm in therapy. My morning coffee ritual reveals much to me as I simply stir my Hershey's syrup into my coffee cup. It's my morning test.

Stirring is required, stirred, not shaken. How do you stir your coffee? Clockwise or counterclockwise? It's a tell. Not if you are left handed or right handed. It tells you that you are in your right brain or left brain. Most mornings I am right brained because I dream. The mornings I am left brain, I usually arise with a task and have lists, or make lists, in my head.

When I am right brained, I unconsciously stir my coffee counter-clockwise.

When I am left brain I stir my coffee, clockwise.

My experiment was, I noticed I was stirring...clockwise, head down, impatient. So, I looked out the window for a moment and my right brain kicked in and I stirred my coffee...counter-clockwise.

Glad I don't play poker.

### **The Most Fucked-up Thing I've Ever Seen**

I consider myself a World Citizen. Being a Hippie, a Liberal, well read and well-travelled, during my life on earth, I've seen some pretty scary, messed up things. The most heartbreaking, mind boggling and fucked-up thing I've ever seen has left me visually traumatized for 50 years.

Four of us took a weekend field trip to the coast of the Mendocino area, North of San Francisco. We all love nature and trees, so we visited the redwood forest about 25 miles inland. The rolling hills are hidden by the massive trees, creating an illusion that hiking is no problem.

Deep into the forest about a mile in, climbing up and down hills, surrounded by giant trees and a planet of pine needles, we saw a clearing up ahead. Cool. We were ready for a rest and snacks and climbed to the top.

Logging is murder. Logging and ancient forest harvesting of trees 500–1000 years old is a crime.

The four of us stood facing a horizon of giant redwood trees left to rot. As far as we could see, over the cascading hills, like an optical illusion, we saw hundreds, no, thousands of cut trees. The open space was a wound to the earth and our hearts. The horror wasn't just that the precious trees were felled, but they were unused and left to rot. Who would do such a thing? Apparently, Boise Cascade, a huge corporation, got logging rights from the State. We never found out why or the cause of the policy change in that endeavor. Such a senseless slaughter.



## **The Most Beautiful Thing I Have Ever Seen**

Faerie Birthday. As part of a large spiritual group full of new moms and babies, Cathy had a great group of like-minded friends. It was Kriya's fifth birthday and oddly, out of the whole group, Cathy and I had the oldest child. Her girlfriends heard about an impromptu party for Kriya and by 5 p.m., there were 8 women sitting in our living room. Kriya had on tights, transparent veils, a gold waistband, a faerie crown, and a wand with stars and trailing ribbon. The afternoon became a golden swoon. I stood in the doorway and watched all the grownups be mesmerized by her. Kriya was feeding off the energy. It was beautiful.

## **The Most Embarrassing Thing Ever**

I love to attend workshops and New Age events. A spiritual friend, Mera, and I got free tickets to see the psychic John Edwards and the author Neale Donald Walsch who wrote *Conversations with God*. The room had a stage, with about 100 folding chairs. The first 8 rows were full. In the middle section, people sat in sporadic clusters. Mera and I sat closer to the back and isolated in our row. John Edwards was great. He was clear, awake and efficient, though it was a bit like pulling teeth for some people who were just not recognizing his clues.

John pointed to one man 4 rows back and said, "Your grandfather has passed, right?"

"Yes."

"He left you a souvenir."

"No."

"He says he left you a souvenir."

"No."

"Did he leave you anything, something?"

"Yes, a watch."



“You still have it?”

“Yes,” he said.

“Read the inscription on the back and do research. It’s a souvenir.”

“I don’t like the watch.”

This is how frustrating it is for the dead to talk to the clueless.

I will say, as I watched the speaker scan the audience to deliver messages, he spotted Mera and me and waved, and kept right on going. That was different. She looked at me like, “You know him?” John was perfect and a great warm up act.

The fanfare really began with applause for Neale Donald Walsch. He came out in a suit on the stage and his vibe was more like a politician and on automatic. Its customary for a speaker to tell a joke within the first 2 minutes. He told a dirty joke. Awkward.

He blathered on about his past and writing the book and some of his doinks, and frankly, Mera and I were bored. Most of his tape blather sounded “off.” So we are sitting there, and every time something seemed off, we looked at each, in silent dialogue.

Suddenly, right in the middle of his blather, he says, “Excuse me,” and comes down off the stage and walks down the middle aisle, at least 18 rows to us, and the whole audience turns to watch. Is this part of the program?

Now, I personally know about a third of the audience, and some do know me and Mera. Standing in the aisle, frustrated, he asks outright, “What is your problem?” We both look at him with a head tilt and say nothing.

He continues. “I want to know what your problem is? You look unhappy and I want to know what you find so offensive?”

Yikes. Mera looks away, like, *I’m not in the mood for this shit*. I looked at him and said, “We’ve been listening to you ramble for almost an hour and you

haven't used the word Love once, not once. We want to know about your experience of Love."

Silence. "Oh, that, yeah, I'm getting to that." Lie.

Meanwhile, the whole crowd is looking at us. Some are angry because we were fucking up their buzz. I looked over at John Edwards across the room and I shrugged my shoulders. He just did a slight nod. Mera is pissed and my face is beet red. I'm flush with embarrassment.

Walsh continues to blather for about ten minutes. We are looking at him and he starts talking about trust in a personal relationships and pauses and says, "Now, that's what love is..." and pauses.

Something happened to the crowd. A weird lull came over everyone. I think everyone was embarrassed for him. He finished up, got a bit of applause. He greets his fan people at the foot of the stage as does John as Mera and I sat watching.

A few people from the audience came over and reprimanded us with some dignity and one girl said she felt sorry for us and would pray for us. *Oh, please do.*

Mera and I casually slide out the side door, and we hear, "Excuse me." John followed us to the side door to have a private conversation with us. We talked for about 15minutes. He was talking to Mera; she was getting a healing. Very profound. That was pretty embarrassing and a bit frightening really. I have my own take on what went down. I've told the story orally a few times and people keep saying, A couple angels came to clean his clock and he couldn't even tell. Maybe in time.

## **Finding Money**

I find money all the time. Well, not all the time. Money finds me two weeks a month. I find money and it finds me. Money, coins, just jump out at me. The day I didn't leave the house, I received a refund check. It's been happening to me for over 20 years. At the end of two weeks, even though I am habitualized

to keep my eyes open, I see no coins or money. The other two weeks I read and take prolific notes on my own short musing quips.

### **Ben at Age Five with a Barry White voice**

In a previous story about Amy the goat saving Ben's life, there were residual side effects. But you would never know it today. He is taller than I am, has great teeth, is a league ball player and is a 19-year veteran from the USAF.

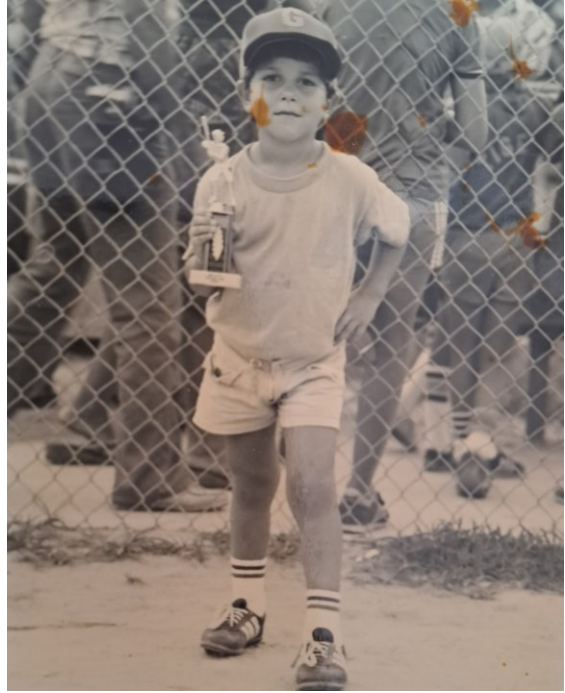
We bottle-fed Ben goat's milk for a long time, and super healthy foods. Back then it was a thing for us. By the time he was around 6 it was obvious, and upon agreement with our pediatrician, he was healthy but statistically too small. In addition, because of the calcium interactions, he was lactose intolerant. Despite a winning smile, he had visible cavities in every tooth. A bit unnerving for baby teeth.

Being a Pisces, Ben lived in a fantasy world. You could put him in a corner with a couple of toys, and balloons and snacks, and he would stay for hours. The flip side is, he was like flowing water that escaped and was freakishly curious. The rule was, if it's too quiet, something's up. Unlike for Kriya, we had to put locks on all the cabinet doors. One time we found him under the kitchen sink with a pot pan helmet on.

We noticed early on, and Cathy, being a Red Sox fan discovered that Ben had a superhuman gift for baseball which he demonstrates to this day. His talent was so obvious, we figured it out before we cemented his actual legal name and nickname.

Keeping in mind all of the above, his life would entertain another WTF event. The plumber came to fix the sink. He left his toolbox open and Ben got into it and snacked on the Superglue. Ambulance to Shands, the ED frantic as they should be.

He ended up being fine, but his voice deepened, and as a kid he had a baritone tone like Barry White when he spoke.



## Multiple Choice

I've been saying this my whole life so far... I wake up a different person every day. Pick one or two or three or all four.

- I make a new friend really easily every night.
- I am moody.
- I shock people into self-awareness.
- All of the above.



## Compassion

### **The Guru is the mirror and G, U, R, U**

From my adolescence, I've been fascinated with religion, other religions from other cultures and anything from India or the Middle East. In my tweens, I would draw pictures of exotic places and even people.

By the time I was 15, I was absorbing exotic cultures instead of baseball or auto mechanics. I didn't have to learn how to meditate, I already knew how. I would have the Kundalini experiences every couple of years and found other cultures that promoted knowledge or practices of these hidden practices fascinating.

Somewhere about 1967, I discovered Kahlil Gibran and Meher Baba. I felt like Meher Baba was my idol hero instead of Micky Mantle, or Bob Cousey instead of Michael Jordon. Meher Baba was a familiar. I saw his face and knew for decades I would be old and look like him. I was never able to meet Meher Baba because he passed in 1957. His teaching was simple. He did not speak for 30 years. He gave Satsang (the Sanskrit idea of "associating with good people") by pointing to an alphabet board. His darshan (the Hindu sight of a holy person) was so powerful he had devotees who would keep animals and birds from landing on him. He was a mystic.

I felt his teachings were sincere, and over the years, I didn't so much strive to fake it and be disciplined, but instead, as I did meditation and healings and my personal growth, I began to see that his teachings were not demanding. They were the result of being that vibration, and I noticed my series of realizations became perfectly in line with his direction and his teachings. These were mysteries revealed as I realized them myself and learned the code.

The closest I ever got to a Meher Baba ashram was in Berkely. They had a juice shop on the main drag. The people were nice and I attended a few evening talk/meditations and the experience was genuine and sincere.

I did participate with a few other gurus, all living and some very enlightened normal folks. And over the years, I went from the student to the master at Godspeed in Godtime. There is something so unique, so close, so personal, so profound when you feel the arrival. The encompassing spiritual intelligence is

supported by wisdom, Love, vibrational energy, communication with higher realms and one's archetype becomes a glowing archetype. The search for connection and enlightenment is over, the search continues for new ways to help people. The compassion, empathy and skill of one's archetype becomes manifest.

Every seeker, student, and searcher comes to that moment when they ask themselves, "What do I do now? What are you good at? What is your power and magic? What do people say you do for them?" I am not saying I am Meher Baba. But I could be. What if you saw a Meher Baba and what would he look like today? Would he look like me?

After giving Satsang and teaching meditation and other hidden arts for decades, my sabbatical of 8 years has revealed my new assignment. I am just here for you. I'm not showcasing or demonstrating or introducing. This change is about vibe and just knowing, and I am here for you. If I had a giant business card, this is what it would say.

### **Short version**

Bring me your concerns and I will listen.  
Bring me your pain and tears and I will gulp them.  
Bring me your courage and I will stand by you.  
Bring me your goals and dreams and I will support you.  
Bring me your loneliness and I will show you mine, so we are not alone.  
Bring me your joy and I will dance with you.  
Bring me your memories and I will show you their meaning.  
Bring me your doubts and I will inspire you.  
Bring me your muddy truths and I will make them clear truths.  
Bring me your heart and I will show you more of it.  
Bring me your True Self and I will join you, for we are not separate, but One.

## Dog Bowl

In July of 2021, I moved into the city proper, the historic section. My front porch, which has a rocking chair, is my spot. At least once an hour I go out to smoke a ciggy and have a coffee just 30 feet from the public sidewalk. It gives me a great, relaxed vantage point to enjoy people watching.

It didn't take long for me to notice, since it's a high density area, the amount of dog walkers. The Florida summer heat is no joke. I noticed how many pooches, given any size or shape, had their tongues out. My innate nature is, if I see a problem, or a simple need I try to fill it. Mix that with both my "creator gene" and my sense of humor, and my brain manifested a *cool doing*.



The concept popped right into my head, but it took me a week to stylize my mini project. During my cancer healing process, it was important to keep my imagination active and obsess with self-created puzzles. Symbols, icons and emojis are a huge part of our consciousness. It took me another week to find and choose easy-to-paint, cute universal symbols. I found a piece of wood and got my paints out. Three weeks into this, the people around me tolerated my announcements (every day) of my project, while also wondering why I'm trying so hard while sick. They were also no doubt wondering why it's taking so long, because basically, it's a little sign which could easily be done in a day, right?

So, as I'm painting, I realize I'm putting something cute out on the sidewalk. The history of minor vandalism and theft, as in most neighborhoods is a concern. If the object is desirable, theft is inevitable. Geez, another problem in the puzzle to slow me down.

After much thinking, and taking into account how to pull this off, I decided to go with a rather folk art, kind of rudimentary paint job to deliver the message. I didn't want it to be too professionally painted so as not so desirable to steal. I ended up painting just the silhouette of a dog and three blue water drops on the block to indicate it's a water bowl for dogs.

The wood block is very old. I love to repurpose. I thought about nailing it to the flower bed but was worried the nail would split the wood. Plus, a slight kick by a thief or a vandal is all it would take. The ads on TV reminded me, for a permanent fix, it's time for Gorilla Glue. I slathered the block and flower bed wall with extra goodness of the liquid magic, better than a nail solution. After almost a month of planning and oddly obsessing, the sign was up and water was out.

Success, the water bowl is popular. And not only with doggies. Since I sit on the porch every hour, all hours of the morning and late into the night, I've seen an array of creatures. I've seen both feral and domesticated cats, and many birds and raccoons use it.

City people are very busy. It's not like a nature walk, where you saunter through the woods, gazing at beauty. Dog walking is a daily duty. I see a count of perhaps 8-12 dog walkers a day passing by. Most are looking at their phones as the dogs pull them forward. Or they are in a hurry. It took me a month to read and learn body language. Most dogs are sniffing to find a place to relieve themselves and have no interest in water at the moment. Often, they catch the water on the way back. But I noticed a few owners were perplexed and for whatever reason wouldn't allow their dog to drink from my bowl. Odd.

Just as I incessantly talked about it a lot with my friends, I took my project and pictures to Facebook. It's now February as I write this story. I have shared three updates and posted photos of interesting moments to date. I must add, not only the number of people who liked and "hearted" my doggy bowl posts, but the assortment of replies, such as "good idea" and "you are so kind encouraged me with such positive feedback. I hope someone out there in Facebook land will copy this idea.

Every day I rinse and refill the water bowl. Leaves and pollen are an ongoing dilemma, which reminds me of past days cleaning my swimming pool. One night, I checked the bowl and behold, an odd gift. Someone left a playing card stuffed by the bowl. Oracle and tarot cards are popular in this house. To see a playing card, an ace of hearts, is considered a sign. It has meaning. Someone thanked us clandestinely in a language we understand. I joked with my housemates that it was a sign, but maybe I should ask for a signier sign. Last week, during winter, someone left a flower, a lipstick, right on the block. Well, thank you.

Yes, it's still winter. At 7 a.m., our first hard freeze froze the water solid. Pre-coffee, I'm not in the mood to take a picture. But at 9:30 a.m., the first rays of sunlight melted it a bit, and I still got a photo. This is a noteworthy pic, cuz its Florida; cool picture.

One day, shortly after I glued it together, I was enjoying my little gift to the locals, I suddenly realized that the dog, the image I painted on it, was a bit anamorphous, generic, unidentifiable. I created it, from the back of my mind, because if it's too distinct, that would make it more souvenirish for that breed of dog owner. But there's more. I realized the dog has only three legs. Our brains are interesting. We notice it but we don't notice it. Our brain fills it in or the message is delivered.

Perhaps I'm reading too much into it, but it's important to consider the irony or coincidence that it might have a meaning somehow. Consider this... We have a cat. Max has only three legs. Max is adorable and it's obvious he is fully functional since he knows no other way. And, the woman two doors down, who walks by twice a day, has a three-legged dog which looks very similar to the one I painted. Hmmm.

Sitting on the porch is sheer pleasure when there are three bird feeders between the sidewalk and my view. So far, I've seen 14 species of birds from my porch with 9 using the feeders. I am an animal lover. I don't own one; I'm a watcher over all of them. I left my job at the Human Society because I'm allergic to cats and some dogs. Except my dog Radar. I love all animals except reptiles. All this hubbub about the front yard. We have four exotic chickens in the backyard.



In conclusion, I must admit, I believed the sign and bowl would draw a bigger reaction. I watched people walk by and not even see it. Additionally, of course, sometimes I see someone look directly at it and they have no reaction and/or even turn away. It took me a month to form a theory. The reaction is because they're not dog people, period; they are solely cat people.

## **Spirit Shorts**

### **Dougisms**

I'm not mad at the world or how things are. The world owes me nothing... and yet, it has given me everything.

I've been teaching this for decades; the "Everything Happens for a Reason" is one of the top 4 New Age, Self-Help lies. Synchronicity or multiple connected coincidences happen, but rarely. Bad things happen and they are tragic. Grief is a real feeling and not cured by an affirmation. Grief really doesn't get smaller or go away. We learn to grow larger and embrace new love and dreams.

I've been a follower of Maharaj Ji since 1972. He never said anything that wasn't real or true. Every promise he made to me has come to be. Everything you need is inside you. Love and meditation is the experience to realization. Follow his guidance and people will notice in you what they so long for. He is forever in my heart, on so many levels. There is something to seek and find.

Breath is up and down,  
Mind goes round and round.  
Desires go to town.  
Humor is the clown.  
Love can be bound.  
Godly is the crown.

### **The SEVEN LAWS OF INEVITABILITY**

1. Deal with who is in front of you.
2. It doesn't start until it actually starts.
3. It goes how it goes; it can only happen how it happens.
4. When it's over, it's over.
5. You are not late until you get there.
6. Never not be where you are supposed to be.
7. If you or your psyche ain't into it, if you don't feel like it, it won't get done.

Note: Your suffering is fed by ignoring the first 4.

Our stories and myths are based on Conflict with the self, Conflict with others, Conflict with the environment, Conflict with the supernatural.

Do not regret past mistakes. All decisions, good or bad, led you to where you are today. Disregard this if you are in prison.

Don't worry if people don't like you. Most people don't like themselves. Good point. One day I went to get self-help books. No real increase in people who liked me, but I like myself much better. Love your power, Love the LOVE.

Why did God have to send himself down to earth to become his own son to sacrifice himself to himself just to convince himself to forgive us?

## **Rules of Life**

Regardless of my age, I find every day I get a little dumber. And every day I get a little smarter and wiser. And that is why life is so complicated.

When I go out, it's not rare that something epic, weird or meaningful happens to me. Instead, it's rare if nothing epic, weird or meaningful happens to me.

I saw my lines in the sand because I often change my heart or change my mind.

If someone attacks you, throw sand in their face. Just kidding.

My doctor insists I refrain from describing my ailment and symptoms and looking up my ailment on the internet. After 15 minutes with him and his diagnosis, when I ask for additional information or have questions, he says, "Look it up on the internet." Good grief.

We are all doomed to achieve enlightenment. Man's hubris: his constant avoidance of the final ceremony.

Ego and desires are constructs to hide insecurities from others and to overtly avoid the Great Enlightenment.

From a long journey in meditation, and back on earth, my inner child says I have chores. My inner adult says I have opportunities.

After enlightenment, there is nothing left to learn or demystify. You begin to help others. You only learn different ways to help them.

Nearly all of life's problems can be fixed by throwing money at it.

The hidden is in the obvious and the obvious is in the hidden.

## **Military**

In general terms, without the horror of stolen honor, I am part of a lineage, a heritage, a military family. The Davis men go back to the Revolutionary War.

My father was in the U.S. Air Force for three years. He was stationed in Panama from 1948–1950 as an aerial photographer. My grandfather was in the U.S. Navy and stationed on ships as a Radio Operator. My son was in the U.S. Air Force for 19 years and did several tours as a fire rescue trainer. My great grandfather on Grammy's side, was in the army and rode with Teddy Roosevelt and supported the Rough Riders in Cuba! My great-great grandfather died in the Civil War at Gettysburg. He was a bugler for the North.

My last encounter involving the military was when I had a video production company and a radio station. I also bought time on a satellite beaming from St. Petersburg by the airport. This allowed me to rub shoulders with connected people. On a civilian contract level, there was lots of entrepreneurial enthusiasm. Because I had a security clearance and was an aerial photographer, I won a grant to duplicate video training tapes for the United States on how to fly the jets for Saddam Hussein's Air force. Just a year before the war, these tapes were needed. Just so you know, we knew there were some mistakes, but it was planned that way.



## **Elevators**

Short Version: The origin of Brian, my middle name, from the Old Celtic, means, "he who ascends, or climbs the mountain," similar to "he who rolls the ball uphill."

I have a thing with elevators. If you also have a thing with elevators, then logically you have a history involving elevators. I can't recall the original seed thought that created such a thing, but I was always fascinated with dumbwaiters in old movies and TV shows. I take note on how often actual elevators play a role in various shows.

Growing up in an old city, I've been in some creepy elevators. I'm not claustrophobic, I trust "lifts," and I enjoy the adrenaline rush of being in one. Not from tight, close quarters; it's just that I'm hypervigilant in such close quarters with people!

In hindsight, as I look back over 70 years, I found my thing for elevators may perhaps be more kismet, fate, and destiny rather than chance. Chance favors the prepared mind. Perhaps chance is a denial code word for people who are unconscious and just not paying attention to synchronicity. Of course, not everyone is going to use an elevator as a thing. Other people have other things. For me, this elevator thing borders on the weird and is flavored with coincidences and synchronicity.

When I had an office job in Downtown Denver, on lunch break I would walk 2 blocks to ride the 9-story glass elevator. The elevator was an outside lift with 3 glass walls. I visually enjoyed riding up, as the view of the ground floor opposite street office buildings horizon disappeared beneath me to reveal the snow-covered Rocky Mountains in the background. At the top, I was no longer in the city. For months, as I rode two or three times in a row, I was almost always alone. Never was I questioned by staff.

## **Tyche: If Anything Can Go Well, It Will.**

There is no word in the English language for experiencing both good luck and bad luck simultaneously. Perhaps The Roman Goddess Fortuna comes close, as she dispenses either good luck or bad luck. The Greek deity Tyche came close to dispensing both at the same time, which, fully underappreciated at the time became an annoyance. So basically, my life pattern is a non-word.

An example, I'm the guy who gets a flat tire at the gas station.

One of the more fun examples was a great experience that requires some imaging of what life was like in 1976. The lifestyles, the innocence, the bold life of young people. For years in the 1970s, I owned converted hippie school buses. I would charge a meager fee to schlep people from coast to coast. I was also part of several cults. Everyone likes cheap, comfy transportation. I was always booked and available spontaneously when others were not.

In 1972, I became a follower of Guru Maharaj Ji. I followed him just about everywhere. He was scheduled to speak at the Philadelphia Bicentennial. His brother, Bole Ji, a lover of Big Bands, put a whole ensemble together, great musicians from the pool of followers. I was hired for a week to transport them from the ashram, to the warehouse for practice, back for lunch and then back to the warehouse to practice until 5 p.m.

Usually I would carry 12-18 young hippie people at a time. I'm thrilled, finding myself driving as service to my Guru, enjoying the holy company as well as the chatter and singing on the bus. Somewhere in the trance of it all, one of those trips where everything is dandy, despite driving through a rough neighborhood, Roxbury, if you know that reputation, an event comes upon us.

I'm going 30 miles per hour on a dense city street. My brakes give out. Boom! Nothing. I scream, "Hold On!" and we glide right into a red convertible. Boom! It was moving so the bounce was mild, I actually feel the bus bounce back from it.

But, I'm still going strong. The car brakes; I hit it again. It moves forward; I hit it again. Five times I hit that classic convertible covered in too much fancy chrome before we come to a complete stop. Everyone is freaking except me. I'm in my usual calm, but hypervigilant mode. I'm eyeballing my friends and

passengers, I'm eyeball the four black men getting out of the car. I'm eyeballing for cops.

And just like that, in just a few minutes everything was all right. So, my bus has no brakes and a smashed headlight and everyone on the bus is tired and hungry? But something happened. I broke down right in front of the City Municipal School bus repair warehouse.

Five black men come out to see what's going on. They all get a gander at the 7 hippie girls and suddenly, they all be like, "Oh, we can fix that for you right now." I've got experts fixing and checking my brake line, headlight and my rig. My passengers are happy and call it Grace because we will be home in time for dinner.

The cops arrive and pretty much have a more unique view of the whole situation than we do. I had the necessary papers, the four black guys in the red car were not making a stink, even the black cops were a bit nervous with a bunch of white hippies in the sketchy neighborhood. They tell me we can leave. Back on the bus, we have a quiet ride back to the ashram.

So that's a great story. I had good luck with bad luck at the same time. It was a moment a few of them will never forget.

It's getting better. About a month later, I got an envelope in the mail at my grandparents' house, my temp legal address in Maine and what's on my bus papers. I opened the envelope to find a nice letter and a check for \$100. The owner of the convertible thanked me for hitting her cherished collectable car, which was stored in her garage while she was away and this was my reward for finding her stolen car. Unlucky for the four men, very lucky for me.



## **Epic Field Trip**

Everyone loves a great field trip story. One of my rare visits back to Maine from Florida proved to be epic. Of all my family, parsed out as evenly as possible, I had an open window to spend time with my sister during the day. And not just any day; it was during the eye of a hurricane. We went on an adventure of a lifetime in our own hometown. We circled around from Westbrook going south to Two Lights, quickly toured Shore Acres, our old neighborhood and then topped the stormy afternoon at Portland Head Lighthouse. That trip produced three award-winning photographs for me. And a portrait of my sister she really loves.

I don't have many stories about Beth other than some from recent visits. Being the oldest, as her big brother, I babysat her and Chris. Chris is four and a half years younger than me and Beth is nine years younger than I am. I feel I should openly apologize to her and to the world for hurting her feelings. I left home when I was only 17. Which means she was only 8 years old. As the anointed black sheep of the family, I exited the family unit and left her without explaining, leaving a void in her life, meaning she lost her protective big brother. Lost the chance to make memories together. And she was under pressure in the family unit not to mention my name, except in front of Mom.

But I felt she would be safe. My mom and dad adored her. Beth was Daddy's girl. He treated her much differently than he did Chris or me. That was so good for Beth. She idolizes Dad and they are friends to this day. He's in his 90s and doing well. She saw him this year (2022).

(Doug's father passed away just nine days after he did in January of 2023.)





Award-winning photo of Doug's sister Beth

## Higgins Beach Memories

Higgins is one of those best kept secrets in the Portland area. Not very popularly used by people in the greater Portland area, it has limited parking and no nightlife as compared to all the other tourist spots. In summer, it caters to mostly Canadians. In winter, the place looks cold, desolate and a bit of a ghost town. Only 16 miles from Cape High, I understand now, out of a graduating class of 101, only 7 had ever been there. Ironically, most went to Crescent Beach only 2 miles from where I grew up and never went! That's funny.

Higgins Beach is a giant cove. But an unusually huge cove with a very unique feature. Higgins is by far the flattest beach in Maine. It is a collection of silt, the largest collection of the finest pulverized sand due to ocean geography. But there is more to it than just fine sand; it's a large tidal flat. The tide goes in and out and is measured in several thousand yards! It was rare to see a complete full tide or low tide. There was so much distance to cover, the illusion was the tide was always midway.

My beach life began at birth. Our family-owned cottages were there. Here is a picture of Mom, Aunt Dot and me. I looked peeved because, however cliché, I'm mad because I have to wait a long half hour to go in the water. By the way, from experience, it's a real thing. I challenged the myth by eating and swimming too soon. The results are in – both times I puked in the water. I've puked in the water several times and too many times right afterward. Cold water surfing does that to you. Cold water surfing is snow on the beach and ice floating along the shore. Water is always cold in Maine. It never gets as cold in Florida as the warmest day in Maine. Surfers' bellies are not weak, after many crushing waves, your belly fills up.

## **Meditations**

These are not selfies. These snapshots were all taken by other people. Their choice of moment and place.

I'm meditating on a cold January day in 1969 at Marblehead Beach. Cathy took the photo.

I'm meditating in a very special graveyard. In 1968, I saw the movie, *Easy Rider*. I wanted to visit the cemetery in New Orleans where specific scenes were made. I'm meditating on the steps of a mausoleum. Out of the 100s to choose from, we chose that one because the building was the in the Howe-Davis name. Howe was my wife's birth name.

I'm planking or levitating. Betty took the picture. At this point I can hold my arms out indefinitely or hold certain positions. The Hindus have a name for it. I learned from real Fakirs in India.

## Asparagus

It was in my own back yard.

I don't always take a vacation but when I do it has adventure, purpose and meaning. It usually takes me. But I try to slip a few things in while on a trip or vacation that energetically is three or more trips in one. This is not only enormously satisfying and anecdotally relevant, but it was probably done while I was still single.

Since 1968, I've been a bit of a health nut. First kid in my high school to go vegetarian. First person to introduce homemade crunchy granola to friends and strangers. Grew bean sprouts in 1970. Cathy shared my enthusiasm and knowledge, so I owe her a lot in her mini crusades. We had a small paperback library about herbs, cures, and proper food combinations.

Cathy and I, living in the forest of Big Sur, were already savvy about wild growth eatables and we ate wild every day.

Through 4 years in college, during my one free semester of the year, the summer of 1979, Kriya and I hopped in an old Ford window van and drove from Daytona to Maine to visit my grandparents. Since I was a photography major, I brought my cameras to take classic pictures and hook up with some old classmates who also had kids. I planned to visit my old neighborhood, eat the local food, as well as search for wild food. I was requested by Cathy to gather as much fresh grown Comfrey tea leaves as possible.

Maine food tastes amazing. The hearty temps and mineral rich soil makes home grown food elite. Corn, peas, carrots, potatoes, berries. Grandad's broccoli was magic. Grammy and Grandad had a small garden on the front side of their lot. Aunt Dot was a nutritionist teacher at Penn State University. One of my goals as I read Gibbons book was to find some wild growing asparagus. Asparagus is one of the hardest veggies to grow. You plant it but it takes 5-7 years to produce or it dies from premature rooting cuttings. The great hunter has goals.

I did find comfrey, blueberries, blackberries, rose hips, raspberries, wild carrots and tons of apples at abandoned orchards. Our 6 days at Grammie's house was filled with adventures and field trips. Kriya stayed at the big house

am I drove to Boothbay Harbor and Bailey Island. Found some abandoned houses along the way, hoping I could get some arty photos.

Every moment I am looking at the ground, the side of the road, etc. for asparagus. Nada. It was a daily joke with us, meals at my loser reports. The last day came. We had a good meal, a good time and, for me, an after-dinner aperitif. I went outside to smoke a joint and chill. I lit up and walked around the big house so no one could see. I was just curious about the back side of the building near the shed. It was a bit grown up between the shed and the yard, so no one walks there. We go around the shed. I'm putzing around with my half-finished joint and trying not to trip on anything and I look down. I'm standing in a 10 foot square of wild asparagus.



## The Culture of Hitchhiking

### The Open Road

I travel the open road, as Kerouac did. I am not homeless but I own no keys.

By the time you read this, the mere mention of hitchhiking, let alone hitchhiking across the entire USA, coast to coast multiple times, could be met with mixed reactions. Who does that? Based on my experience, not who, having mixed in, blended with multiple types of people. The question is *when*? Certainly not these days. So we go back to the old days.

Hobos, adventurers (that's me), runaways, Hippies (that's me), and people who became celebrities (that's me), and all the amazing people who pick us up are in this culture that is long gone. You can no longer stand at the entrance of a highway or turnpike or junction. You can no longer hitchhike on a freeway, turnpike, or outside a rest stop. In 50 years, the experience went from "no problem" to being obliterated because of the unity of all states who wanted to make it unlawful. Back then, we were often carded; the police were looking for runaways and warrants. I see the wisdom in this, not because of the .00005% chance of getting abducted or robbed, but people do not belong on the road or highway as a feature of public safety.

The dictionary briefly defines Culture as, "Customs, laws, dress, social standards, traditions, beliefs, and architecture."

What was it like? It helps to have a specific destination, for instance, a sign with your destination that drivers can see from a distance. We always carried a crayon for a cardboard sign.

It helps to be interesting for the driver. How you are dressed attracts the ride. Helps to offer the driver a snack. It helps to have mini-destinations en route to your destination in order to plan for strategic concerns such as food, weather, a better drop off spot, shelter, grooming and self-care, or a safe nap. Otherwise you are "hysterically loose to the wind" and vulnerable, left to chance and opportunity. But that's the beauty of it. Of course, we can't forget the popular bumper sticker, *Gas, Grass or Ass – no one rides for free*. There is always a tacky side to life, no matter what decade. I made one coast to coast trip in 6 days and under \$50.00 for everything!

Over a 3-year period, both hitching and using my school buses, many of my familiar routes were completed multiple times. Back then, America had not become homogenized. Every state, city and town was unique. Even in a 50-mile radius, each town was unique compared to others. Lots of Mom and Pop businesses. It thrills me that I not only saw the old America before it vanished; I knew those towns and cities, so familiar with them that locals could ask me for directions.

Cathy and I did it twice. We flew to California, stayed for 5 months and hitchhiked back to New England before the snow fell in 7 days. The second time, I had a school bus and we rendezvoused in Colorado, drove to California, sold the bus, and hitchhiked back to New England in 8 days. Lots of sightseeing, swimming, different food markets (no chains then) and locals love to chat-brag about their town. Travelers were unique to small towns. There was no fear back then. Cathy had already driven to Los Angeles and back a year before she met me. She was the one who showed the way.

Hitchhiking was not new to me prior to such an undertaking. As a teen, it was 16 miles to my city center and I had no car. Did it maybe 200 times? But it's a total crap shot. You can't plan to be successful for an appointment when you're a beggar on a slow day. Hitchhiking was safe back then, not only in the psyche of the nation, but I grew up in a *Leave it to Beaver* world, so local strangers were like friends. Okay, I've heard about the recent Uber tragedies. Bad doings over the line. Nothing like that happened back then. People had manners, respect, and were happy and well. Our society has gone to hell en masse, not just .00005% person.

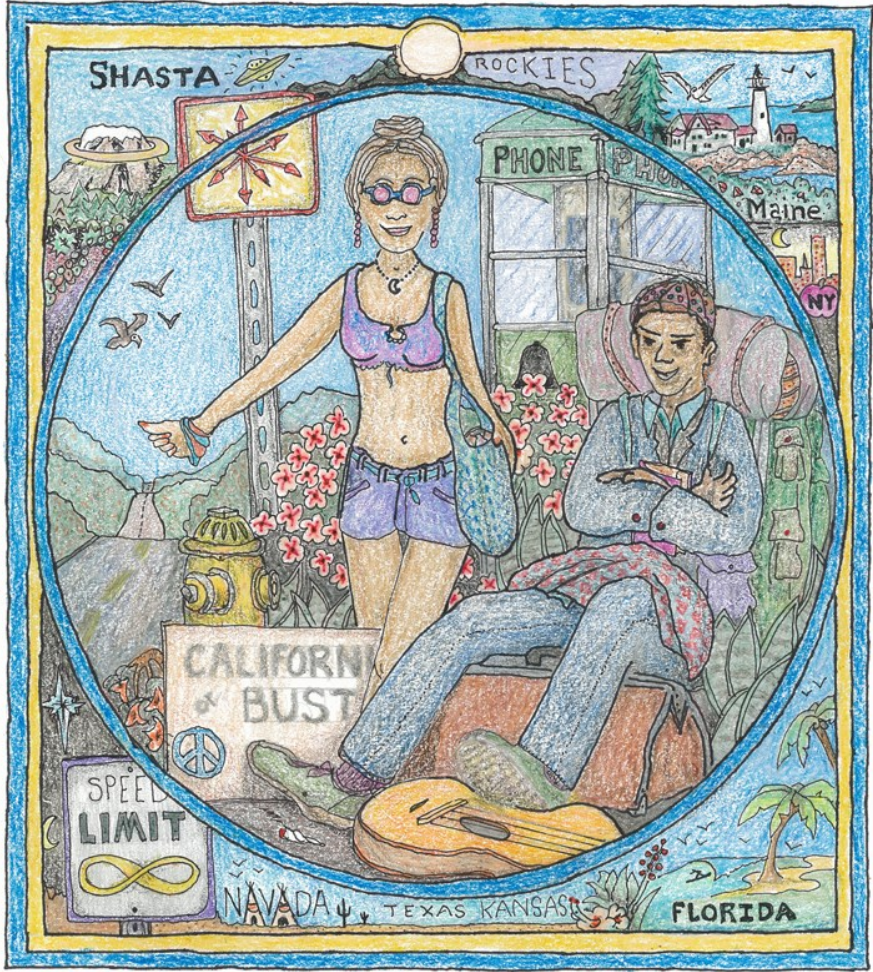
Cathy was staying at her parents' house for a couple of months. I'm staying with a friend. It's 93 miles from my place to hers. So I would ride my Raleigh bicycle 4 miles to the freeway entrance, and as always there are at least 5-7 people in line. No problem, I have a hook, I mean a bike, and I get a wild card, a free pass on the rules. I would get a ride faster than if I'd been alone, because 1/8 of the traffic is a pickup truck. They don't call them handymen for no reason. Dudes are good natured and wonder what's with the bike, broken? After I tell them what I'm doing, they ask how did you think of that? For the love of a woman.

I would never do it again. I will never drive far again. I can't and won't. Besides, I have mixed feelings when I travel. The charm of old America is done. It's one long sidewalk from state to state. Same box stores. There is comfort in familiarity – good gas, edible food. But you can't leave your house for a modest 2 days for under \$400. My own town has changed in 20 years. Imagine how it was 50 years ago. The photos I took then are now considered antiques.

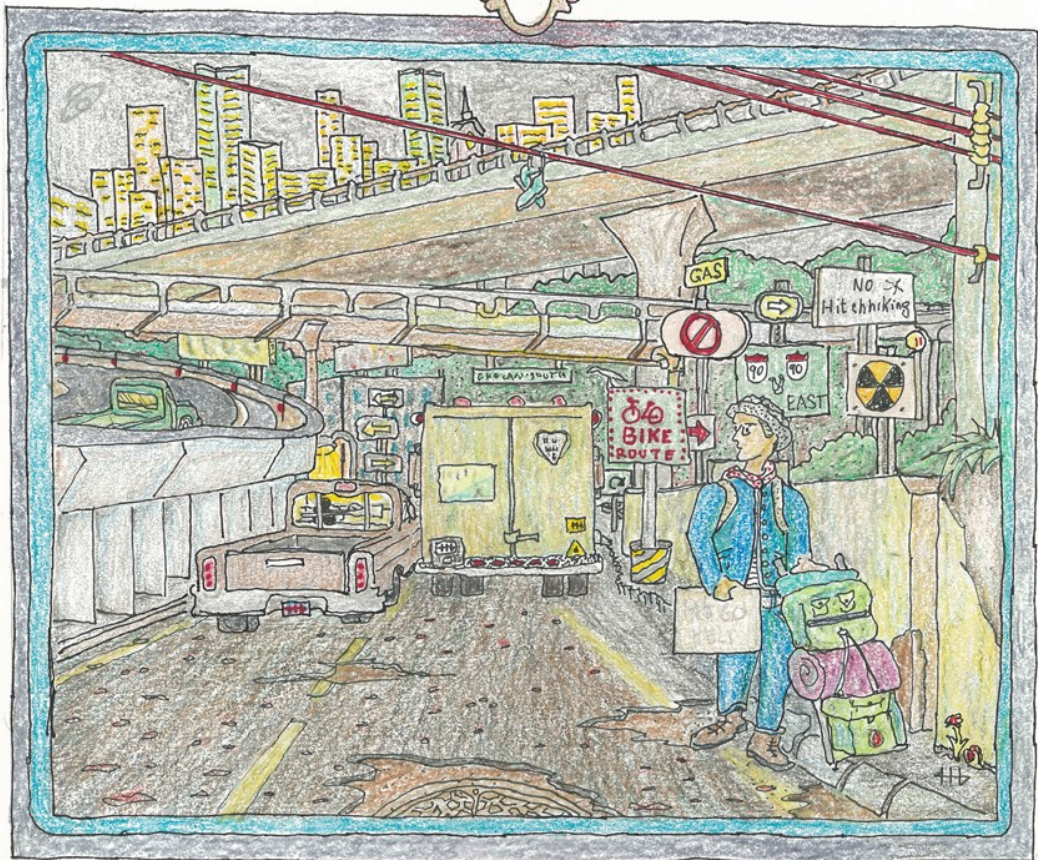
My first far away hitching trip, that is, crossing the state line, was on the 4th of July 1968. I ran away. Rumors of good time summer fun were circulated about Cape Cod. What was supposed to be a 2-day thing lasted a week. Why stop at a week. I lost my virginity on the beach at night, uh, twice.

Things happen. Somewhere between Santa Cruz, and Malibu beach, I befriended a small group of three people. This all happened by the time we got to lower Big Sur coast. As it got dark, we made a driftwood fire, camped on the beach, drank wine, smoked weed. Okay, this is the first time I have mentioned drinking and weed in this section. You can – you must – assume drink and weed is in every story. I don't want to repeat it. Just assume it. Also, hundreds of sunrises and sunsets. All were stunning. Moons at night, some pop up or drop below the horizon. Flowing rivers, green mountains, snow, tornadoes, wind devils. You may assume I enjoyed all that.

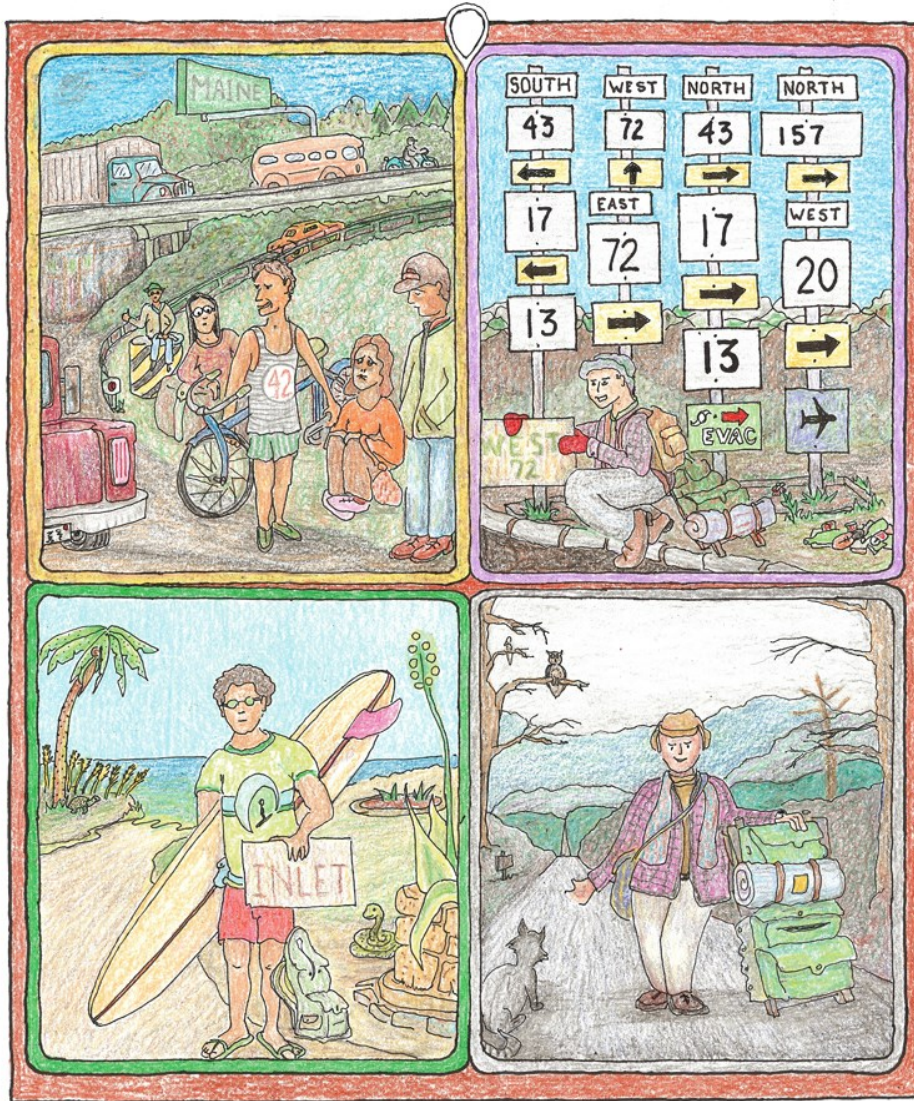
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## Normal is Relative

One day, crossing Wyoming to San Francisco, we met 3 hippies in an International vehicle. This was a cross between a truck and a station wagon. It had extra seats. For the longest time, we drove and drove. We decided to pull over and camp. We were on a rural road with miles of pasture, looking for some trees to nestle in. We chilled and told stories, but we all crashed.

Next morning, the dew was 2 inches thick. Wet is weird. I woke up about 15 minutes before sunrise. By the time I situated myself and Cathy was getting up, the light made a line on the horizon. Another person wakes up. It's getting lighter. "Guys, hey guys, this is weird. The horizon is moving." There are no sun rays, just dawn, the fog is pretty bad, which is why we are so wet. "Hey guys, I'm not kidding. The horizon is moving."

It's hard to measure here the distance we could see. The foothills were on the horizon, not sure how far away, but between us was a floating bank of fog. I wish I'd had a camera. "The horizon is moving," said the driver. We look, and in an instant, we are looking at sheep. So many sheep, so packed together, one couldn't see any individual. The horizon is moving and so is the middle and hey, they are right in front of us moving. Creepy.

We stood in awe as we gazed from left to right, up and down, at thousands upon thousands of sheep. Never had anyone seen such a sight – ever. I said, "I've never even seen pictures like these."

Cathy said, "You can't photograph this experience. Time to go."

We packed up and searched for coffee and food. About 40 miles up, a small gas station had a variety of sundry needs for locals. Such quaint, squeaky wood charm. We are on a not-much-travelled road, so it's pretty quiet and laid back. We got the usual questions, "Where you headed," "Where from," etc. I brought up how we camped 40 miles back under some pines. And I am shocked at all the sheep! Others joined in and were amused.

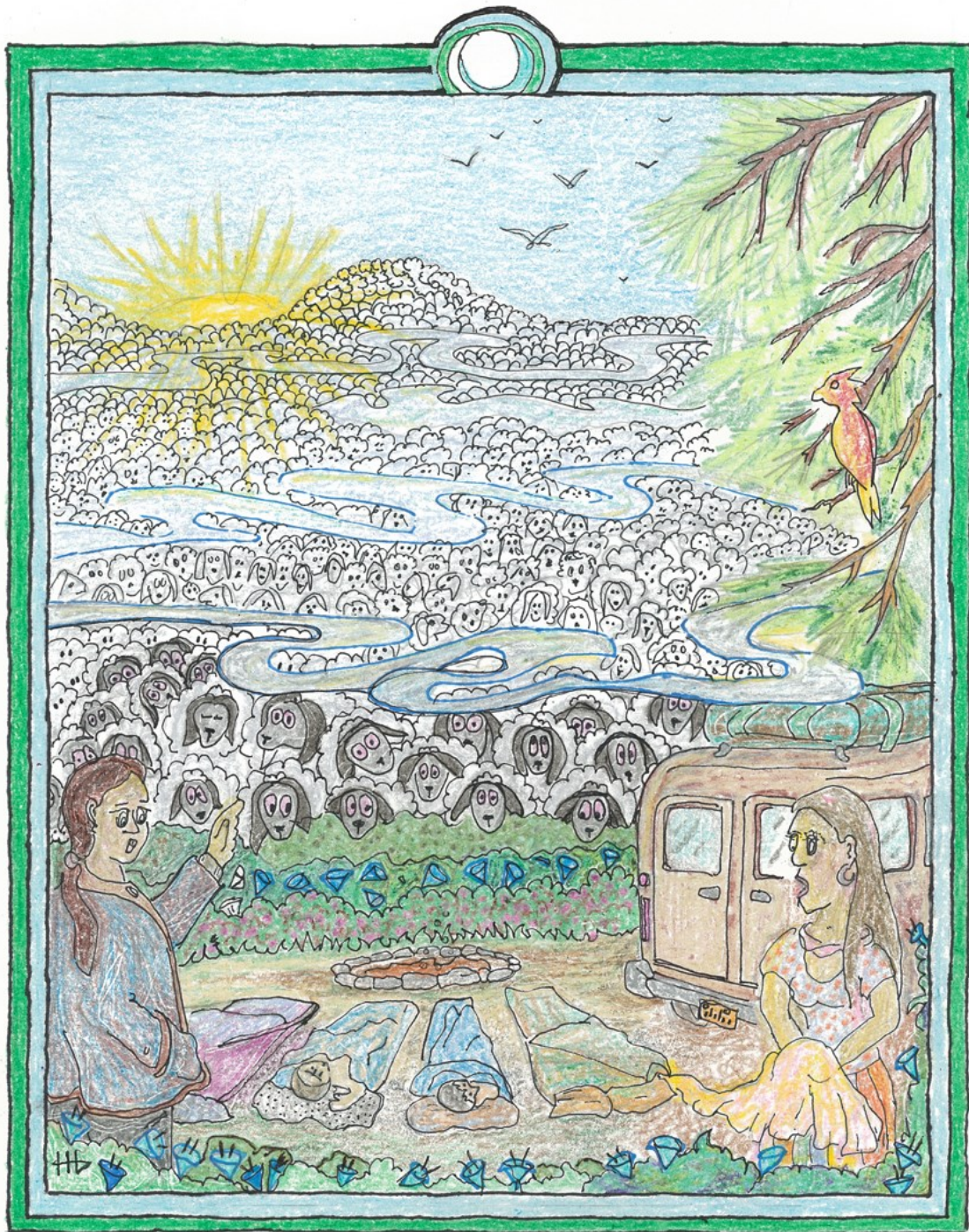
"That's all you ever see, that's normal." He laughs. "Yeah, that guy has 1.3 million sheep in that lot and only 800,000 on the other side." Only?

Somewhere on the Wyoming/California border, we stopped at a national park, a mesa lake, meaning high atop a flat mountain. This was a self-sustaining lake. The other travelers were from Baltimore and we started in Massachusetts. None of us had bathed and groomed since. The dusk was a perfect moment to swim in the weirdly warm lake. The water was amazing, silky. We didn't need soap. Water is molecularly hungry; it absorbs much. We walked out clean and our hair squeaked. Love PH and science.

Music is your friend or enemy. Who chooses? The driver and other passengers. Endure it. I even learned to like some crap. Best of all, I discovered Paul Harvey. This is interesting: over the years and miles I could tell where I was by the music selection. Except where there were no radio stations at all. Really.

Stay dehydrated. You never know when you'll get a chance to go pee. It isn't that food is expensive; it's cool when there's a chance to eat free. I've eaten out of dumpsters. Back then, they threw out good food and clean food and you got plenty of fruits, veggies, and even expired good-enough packaged stuff. No shame, we were doing something about shameless waste. Dumpsters are cool; you find other stuff. I would snag interesting stuff and then gift it to a driver if they were interested.





## People Clusters

No two people are alike, but they are a little bit alike, and they come in clusters over and over.

What do we talk about? The conversations we had with drivers were much different than the topics we discussed among ourselves. We talked about survival and fun. We talked about best scenic alternative routes. We talked about weather. We talked about places and routes to avoid. We talked about a hairy experience or a bad moment. We talked about scams, but mostly cool stuff like the best free clinic, awesome hippie people to visit, or how to get food stamps in 2 states. I learned how to get free legal advice on my draft notice right in Haight Ashbury in 1970.

You make new friends and they reappear in your life. When you are hitching with a group of others, something else happens. You speak in blocks. You never know how short or long you'll find yourself stuck together. No long stories. Warming up personal is slow. You sort of trade honorable mentions of things in your life in short random blocks.

I miss a few people because we never traded names or numbers. Once I was stuck in Barstow, California. Eww, for three days! I have run into the same people two and three times over the years in different locations and destinations. This happened twice, several months apart, at the same juncture, where I was stuck with the same dude. I ran into a guy twice in one summer who was writing a book about it. In 2012 I found a copy at the thrift store. Cool, but it was all poetry. Drat, I thought he was going to document it. Now I'm doing it. The poetry was okay. But I have a copy of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* in my back pocket. I travel the open road.



## Hobbies/Passions

### Boats

Short Version: A boat is a hole in the water in which you pour money.

I was born fortunate, that much is clear, best seen in hindsight. When you grow up surrounded with what you are surrounded with, you don't question it. It wasn't until I was 17 that I stepped back and reviewed my life up to them. How many people have this choice on a warm summer day:

- Well, shall I go to the Yacht Club today and take the 42 footer out, or,
- Shall I drive to our cottage at the beach and go surfing?

I love water. Oceans, rivers, springs, lakes, Cenotes, hot tubs and – alert: I removed my water-saver shower head because a brisk hot shower is what is right with the world.

For decades we kept our boats at the centerboard Yacht Club smack in the middle of Portland Harbor. One of the first vivid, lucid moments of my childhood was sailing in Dad's first boat at the club, a 16 foot Lightning. In 1961, he bought a 24 foot vintage wood Richardson. In 1970, he bought a 42 foot Lapstreak Pacemaker.

Once, on the Richardson, I was sitting on the bow. Already in the midst of bouncy slow swells, we crossed a tanker's wake. The bow went up, me with it, but because of the angle of the swell, the bow came down swerving left, and was airborne going right. Freaking awesome! Mom was not happy.

We lived in Ormand and Daytona Beach for five years. Right across the street from the marina. But no boats. I was an avid surfer and during the last 2 years of school, a professional aerial photographer.

We moved to Gainesville in 1978. Being 60–70 miles inland was great for kids in a *Leave it to Beaver* neighborhood. But we love water, so I built a swimming pool. No really, I built it myself. I built two, a small one and then a larger one. I even bought an old tub to sit in because I was too cheap and broke to buy a hot tub.

I missed boats, and by the time 1983 rolled around, I decided on a 20-minute drive to a nearby lake and rented a slip at the famous Buddy's landing. Over the course of 8 years, I had three boats. A fishing skiff. A Snark. And a – well, a freaking hydroplane.

In 2015, Sharon and I rented a place in Flagler Beach, a regular haunt for weekenders, but we decided to stay for 2 months. I surfed and boogey boarded every day. Tried my hand at paddle boarding even. In 2017, during a family reunion in Portland Maine, my son, granddaughter, and I went paddleboarding on Back Bay.



## Wood Butchering

If you can't be good looking, at least be handy.

Fussy, pretty, useful, fitting. If it's not worth doing perfectly, it's not worth doing at all? Bullshit! Something is better than nothing.

Everything you touch was made by someone else. With the exception of rocks and trees, everything else around you is a creation of imagination, need and ultimately human hands. Now that I mention it, we move an incredible amount of rocks and plants and cut and plant millions of trees. I'm grateful for all those who have done so. And I aim to make a contribution.

As far back as I can remember, I've been inclined and have an aptitude for reusing, repurposing and basically making things from discarded items and trash. If there is need and I can't buy retail, then I make one myself.

I didn't ask my dad to build me a tree house when I was 11; I built it myself. I was a quiet child and I watched people use tools and build so I could build my own place to be a quiet child. My parents wouldn't buy me a skateboard, so I found some wood and attached the wheels from old roller skates and make my own at 13.

I like making stuff early and I love people who make stuff. Be part of 3-D commerce. Make something for someone else. You can create anything using your heart and mind, and often the universe. Or God will help, taking into account your stupidity level. When you need resources, use your gifts as a credit card, a card in his name, his budget not yours. Do not take that power, his name in vain. Do something.

Wood butchering is the art of repurposing wood and items to create an arty or useful hack. I am not by any means a finished carpenter. I'm a freak and rerouter by nature. Over the years, I've built some cool stuff from scraps of wood found here and there. Yes, I'm the guy who picks up trash on the side of the road.

I started when I was 14. I built a round skim board from an old, thin plywood abandoned real estate sign. Cut it in a circle, gave it 5 coats of blue paint, a

white racing strip, and skimmed the water flats of the best beach in Maine for that.

I invented the snowboard when I was 15 years old. I found an old piece of plywood that had been leaning against the side of a building. The lower edge, thru rain and snow, had become curved. Not like curled on a toboggan, but a very decent lip. I cut it into a 3-foot mini toboggan with lips forward, and then nailed a pair of boots to it. I was inspired by wanting to stand up on our toboggan but it was too dangerous. Only a dozen people in the whole world saw me ski on that because I never left the neighborhood. It never occurred to me to take it to Mount Pleasant Ski Farm or Sugarloaf. No biggie. I'm doing it because I had to.

I also affixed a pair of roller skate wheels to a small plank of wood and made my own skateboard. I was forbidden to skateboard, so I snuck it out and would bury it under a certain tree in my neighbor's yard with a long steep driveway. I could ride without fear of getting caught but fear was present. I didn't want to fall. If I hurt myself, my dad will kill me. I know because the two winters previous I went rouge on my flexible flyer, hit a rock, broke my tooth, cut my lip, and bled all over my new winter jacket.

Fascinated with folk art carpentry, I remodeled three used school buses with that theme because hippies and naturals loved it. No aluminum, Formica or vinyl. Just wood benches and such.

### **Sounds like Irony**

I'm going to brag about my music career. It is non-existent. I have 50 years of failed attempts. I don't mean I died on stage, to suffer the humiliation; I died in music lessons. I left a trail of abandoned instruments behind me. This pronouncement should make one assume I have no affinity for music, but quite the opposite. There are hundreds if not thousands of people who associate me with music. But never as a performer.

In the music area, a large pizza slice of my brain is completely missing. Another slice of my brain is at nearly the savant level. The battle between the two slices was the source of my frustration for decades, until I learned to go

with what works and leave behind the inability to manifest learning, playing and performing.

My brain and ears have perfect pitch. I have an uncanny ability to instantly recognize any music I have ever heard in my life. I have an extraordinary ability to mix music, to juxtapose a music mix from different genres and make it work. So, I found a career as a Program Director at a radio station, and a syndicated columnist as a music reviewer and contributing writer to music magazines.

That's one slice. What about the other slice; how bad can it be? My bad ass failure achievements include 3 attempts at Piano 1. Two attempts at Flute 1. One attempt at Clarinet 1. A collection of wood and plastic recorders which are just noise makers for me. A history of 6 guitars and years of strumming and I can't play a complete song. Two violins later and it breaks my heart because it's my vibration. I know better than to try drums because I have no rhythm. I sang in a choir as a child until my voice changed. I'm stuck with monotone. I'm so flat and tone deaf, I'm not allowed to sing Happy Birthday. I presently have a sitar which I sometimes strum. People ask me if I play. I answer with, "I can make a joyful noise." A bit of luck there, since most people are unfamiliar with sitar music, and anything sounds a little impressive.

I have a frozen brain in that slice. You know how you can tell a joke, and peeps don't get the punchline? The blank look and they can't make the connection? I cannot memorize poems or song lyrics. I hear the melody and remember a couple of lines. My BFF, Sharon, can hear a song twice and 2 days later recall all the lyrics while washing dishes. I cannot connect the notes on the sheet music to the instrument. I cannot naturally read music.

But here is the ultimate irony. I can do it backwards. I took Music Theory 1 and 2. I can write music; I can transpose music. I can make a ditty on the piano, write the notes, write a harmony, or change the key.

I love and hate my brain at the same time.



## Amy and Connemara

Sometimes life hands you one of those thingies you absolutely must do. I am not the hero in this story. My son is, even though I'm writing from my point of view.

We bought a goat. A dairy goat. She was already named Amy. A mature milking goat is no small thing to bring into your life. Much like an adult roommate, they have their ways, and additionally we had to feed her and milk her twice a day. Some roommate.



She demanded to, and did, eat everything in sight outside. Then again, I never had to mow all summer. In no short time, she was getting lonely, perhaps homesick, so we bought her a baby chicken at the feed store. Even though we already had a dog and a cat, we guessed that Amy wanted

something more "farmy." No problem because, fortunately, Amy was our small miracle with something precious to offer.

This was in the spring of 1978. Ben was barely 2 months old. Poor Ben, he cried all the time, was colicky and by this time losing weight. Mom is lactating and he's taking to it, but he is not well. Two trips to Shands and \$1,800 later, they just don't know what the problem is. We were part of an underground home birthing network and hospitals suck. For the 1970s, it was astounding that we found an elderly General practitioner doctor in Melrose with Homeopathic, Alternative and folk medicine knowledge. He got raves from "people like us," from our network. Back then it was called a phone tree.

What a nice and very gentle man. Ben was on his table and right away the doctor can tell he's not right. Concerned, he's listening to Cathy give a "medical so far" run down while he was magically touching and looking at him wholly, not just giving a blood test. He opened the diaper and Ben's poop was

wrong, very wrong in his experience and he joyously exclaimed his quick diagnosis. Lactose intolerant is putting it mildly.

With no mummy milk, no cow's milk and no formula, *Oh-Oh, what to do.* Cashew milk and goat milk only was the solution. The doctor's fee was only \$45. Can you imagine this? He called a month later to check up. The good old days.

We quickly bought organic cashews from the health food store, put them in the blender, and about 3 feedings later he mellowed out. Health food store goat milk is not only very expensive – it's semi-processed and local goat people can't sell it retail.

We got a lead on a real dairy goat. Cathy made contact with "The Goat Couple" living in the woods near Starke. Again, highly recommended by fussy moms everywhere. In the dark of night, curling up a single lane dirt road between untrimmed trees, we enter a clearing. Behold, like some kind of Tim Burton goat castle, our headlights reveal, connected by a maze of ramps, 3 very old mobile homes. I think Cathy and I said, "Cool," simultaneously.

The couple were chatty, informative, helpful and the tour from upon high looking over a dozen small pens with goats, in the dark, was interesting. But suddenly, it got trailer nasty. All the ramps led to open doors, all the homes, all the doors, for the goats, and all the hay, leaves and other unidentifiable stuff was carpet outside and in. Ewwwww. The couple said, "The goats sleep with us and we sleep with them, whoever needs care." Ah, still icky. Gross. But sweet. I get that. Cathy would sleep with her horses when needed. I've only done that once but slept in the barn many nights.

Stunned, my brain is full. But there is more. I have to learn how to milk a goat. Tonight, right now. We all tromp over to a little goat pen with a little wood shanty. She brings a milker over and leashes her to the corner of the building, touching the wall. But her face is facing out so she can see everywhere but feel the building. I'm on the other side, sitting on a stump, being shown how to gently hold the teat, almost lovingly let the teat fill up, then press and pinch doing a firm thumb and forefinger vise, hold, then squeeze out the milk in the teat with my whole hand. That goat doesn't know me. It's not milking time. Somehow, I got it. Perhaps a past life thing. We found a good goat, and they delivered the next day.

Come 5 p.m. the first day, it's time to milk Amy. We must use the same leash, same corner, same pail, same stump and same vibe every time. I struggled but we got it. I say "we" because Amy had to be relaxed, safe and ready, too. Next morning at 8 a.m., we do it again. At 5 p.m., do it again.

I'm not a martyr here, but I had to do it twice a day, rain or shine, cold or hot, freeze and snow, same time, same spot. I have a fairly good inner clock. Her clock was nuclear. If you weren't there at the exact time, Amy would bleat, screaming the most blood-curdling primal-goat-in-peril wail that would almost rattle the windows. I do not exaggerate. This went on for 11 months. Time went on, the yard was a dystopian mess, all vegetation, grass, bushes and even bark on the trees stripped. In addition, it turns out that little chickee was not a chicken at all; it grew into a fat, aggressive, rooster, lunged at the kids. It was a mean Guinea and Cathy had to kill it. It took us over 20 minutes for Cathy and me to catch it. We didn't catch it, it gave up.

Goat milk was just what was needed. Ben grew fat, but very active and had pink cheeks. Time came to sell Amy because I had to still keep milking her twice a day. Cathy would give away our extra milk to people in the network. Then we finally sold her.

I hope you find it as fascinating as I do that five years later, the legacy of Amy would come back into our lives. A family trip to South Carolina to visit my mom and Rex was long overdue. During the four days there we had time to do a cool field trip. Rex wanted to cross the state line because dinner meant cocktails, and their county was dry. And the sound of a monthly Open House at Connemara sounded cool. Sure enough, the tour was epic.

Right off, it was the museum home of the poet Carl Sandburg, my Mom's favorite poet. The family house was left "as is" from the late 60s. With 22 rooms to view, only a plastic walkmat is the boundary line as you look through every room. I saw his bed and quilt, his desk and typewriter, his guitar, pipe and ashtray, pens, and his chair by the window. A great man cave.

Second. His forever wife, Lillian, had a world-famous brother. My hero, the artist Edward Steichen. Perfect original Albumen photographs of landscapes hung on the walls, one or more in each room. One of the top five early world-class photographers, he was an art hero. I studied him in college and longed

one day to see just one print. I told Janet so, and she replied, "Not many people at all recognize, he lives on through you, thank you so much." All the hanging Albumen prints were museum quality and not included in any of the published history books. Cool.

Third. Again with the coincidences! Basically, Connemara is a 245-acre farm. While Carl and Lillian have passed, Janet, the middle daughter, for her love of animals, is keeping up with the place. Because Cathy speaks horse, goat, smooth farmspeak language, Janet is taken with Cathy. Her mom, Lillian, is world famous all on her own. She is the 2nd most famous milking goat breeder in the Eastern United States.

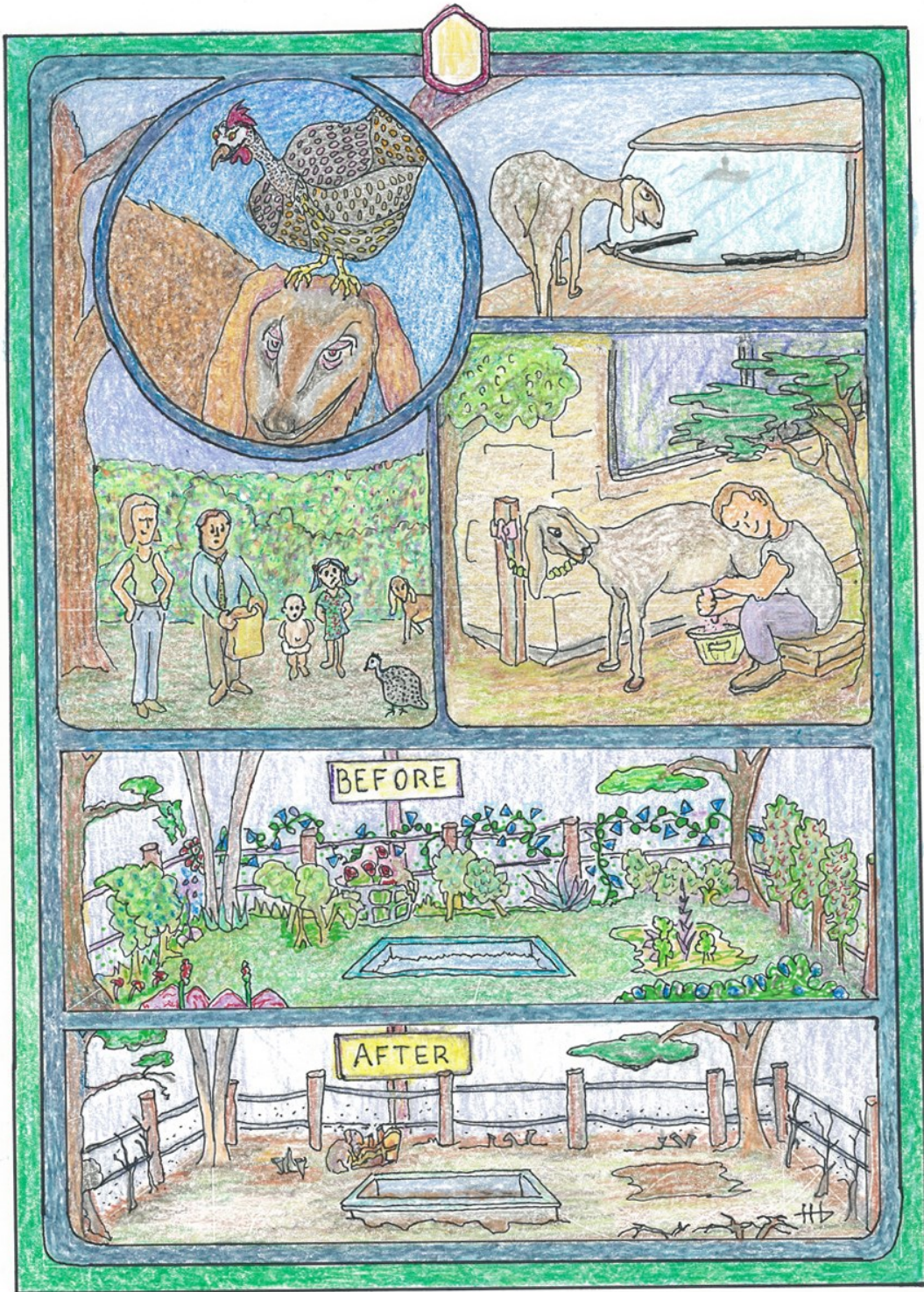
We got to chatting and were led into the unauthorized area, a wing of the 2-story house, and pulled into "eyes only" inner sanctum. A room, maybe 20 feet by 40 feet, but seems smaller because of the unusual furniture. Covering every wall space almost to the ceiling were those Library Dewey Cabinets. Hundreds of little drawers in dark oak.

Believe it or not, Janet searched her records and found The Goat Couple in Starke. The record showed that Lillian sold them goats including the great-grandmother of Amy and the lineage. This is all decades of correspondence by snail mail, all pre-internet! Besides being a prolific networker for breeding, she still holds the world's record for a milking goat who produced 5,642 gallons of milk in one year. How fortunate we were to be in the downline from such excellence. .

In conclusion, as we were departing, I told Janet that I milked sweet Amy twice a day uninterrupted for 9 months to save my son's life. Janet looked me in the eyes for 3 lifetime seconds to see if I was joshing. Then she looked away grinning and said something beautifully cryptic, "You know when you know."







## **Pride and Prejudice**

You never know who you are standing next to.

There's someone for everyone and most find each other. I witnessed first-hand the magnetic force of these connections, and I'm happy and glad for them, but I witnessed more than I realized. The irony is that something so insulting to me and yet so normal, can still be completely perfect. For example, a threshold reaction on my part allowed me to see an aspect of myself, at 20 years old, a true moment of self-growth. The guidance on writing an autobiography? It's advised not to speak ill of anyone. I'm just defining the characters, the players in this Leela (a Hindu term meaning "divine play"). So I experienced this divine game and what happened, and was the end a parable?

I had just returned from California, where I sold my renovated school bus for good money. Was only in town for few days. I went shopping in downtown Portland in an old haunt, a classy four-story department store. Anyone who knows of the old elevators with music would understand, but the best part was the ding and the auto voice of items being sold on that floor.

I went to the notions section because, as my Aunt Dot taught me to embroider, that had the best selection. I'm a hippie. I embroider during quiet times. I'm motoring around in the notions section, and I have hiking boots, farmer overalls with artwork, a long ponytail, beard, and a small combo knapsack and man purse. I realize I'm being watched, and as I move from one side of the long aisle to the other, I realize I'm being not only watched but followed by a second person. I take my sweet time picking my colors for more than one project in my head.

I hear voices not 10 feet behind me. Two girls are gossiping and ridiculing me, purposefully within earshot. "Damn hippies. So creepy. You have to keep your eyes on them every second. The hippies are into stealing."

I'm getting a sick feeling in my stomach. I'm not mad, I'm feeling the weight of judgement, discrimination, profiling and just plain old rudeness! I saunter up to the cashier with a load of sewing things. They are standing there with their arms crossed and looking at me like I have cooties. They can't decide who will cash me out, and the blonde, the meanest one, motions for the brunette and she cashes me out. The blonde is giving me dirty looks as the register is

ringing out. The blonde bitch says, "We don't accept checks." I reach into my man purse and pull out a disgustingly bulky, folded wad of cash. The look on their face, priceless. They stare at the wad. I pay and leave.

I heard a rude remark thrown to my back as I was leaving. That spoiled my whole week.

A month later I am back in town. I'm summoned to my dad's place and I am hesitant. I hadn't seen him in two years on purpose. I ran away from home because he was a dick. A mean controlling, judgmental narcissist and alcoholic. I was unsure because he'd recently divorced from my mom and my brother who was living with him, moved out, but not before punching him in the face.

But family is family. I had to just pick up and sign some legal papers, be uncomfortable for a few minutes and buzz off. Anticipating an awkward encounter, I was surprised that it turned out great. Early evening and in a good mood, he's kind of in that moment of good behavior. He's arranging stuff and talking, and he said he has company coming over in a few minutes. He says, "This girl is hot, likes to fuck," and I saw something in my dad I had never seen before. He was high on dopamine and endorphins instead of alcohol.

We square away everything and I'm standing by the door buttoning my winter jacket and the doorbell rings. The door opens and the blonde bitch from the store walks in. Since I'm already in heavy protection mode, I don't even flinch. She walks in, hugs him and as she takes off her coat, he introduces me, "This is my son, Douglas. I told you about him," (to my shock) "and he's leaving for India in 2 days." (How did he know that?) I'm thinking, *why are you bragging about my cool shit when you hate me and have been calling me a loser hippie and have been historically judgmental?*

She turns and looks at me and goes into shock. I extend my warm hand and shake her cold, limp hand and just smile. She says her name and "nice to meet you." My ears are ringing, and for her, I can literally see her brain trying to grasp the situation on the fly. Dad is clueless of the vibes, not sensing I have a history with this girl. Dad's yakking and nervous for his own reasons. I'm looking at her dead on and she's emanating, *Please don't say anything, please don't fuck this up for me.*

I reached out my arms and asked, "May I?" I said, "We dirty hippies are huggers." As we are tower hugging, instead of patting her on the back three times, which is friendship code, I slowly rub my hand up and down her pack in a soothing, healing way and she melted a bit. I stand back and let her have her moment – out of compassion.

I'm walking down the stairs on the path to the car. I turn around and she and Dad are there standing, her in front, in the doorway to wave goodbye. She's looking at me with those unmistakable woman eyes as if to say, "Thank you." I gently nod my head once, slowly as if to say, "You're welcome." Her eyes were so much different that night than the day of relentless hate. I wonder if she grew up any that night. You never know who is standing next to you.

Driving away, I was both ecstatic and sad, but I was grooving on the cosmic phenomena, the Leela ,and how it was so perfect that those two assholes are hooked up.

When a little thing means more than a little thing can be imagined.

## **The Seven Lives of Mr. Doug**

Short version: From preppie to hippie to premie to yuppie to hippie again.

I periodically dissolve all my bits and put them back together differently. I've reinvented myself 7 times. As with all of us, we do change, sometimes by design, and sometimes not by choice.

I'm starting in the middle, because this period was incentivized by my age period as well as circumstance. My midlife crisis was terrific. The shift took four years. But so much happened.

The beginning. I was born fortunate. I was born privileged, but not entitled. I got moved around by the whole family cluster, which made me tough and worldly, but I was still locked into a dumb-ass teenager buying into the whole trance. Then one day, I woke up. During the last days of my Junior year, I made arrangements proper, and ran away from home.

A month later, I have a place, taking art classes, working, I have a steady girlfriend and my carefully disguised preppie has transformed into hippie, which was natural. All this while my lifelong classmates were in Senior class. For two years we travelled all over the United States. We flew, we hitchhiked, we drove cars, I bought my own school buses. Chartered runs across USA. Being a hippie was fun. I did all the cool things and more, except Woodstock.

Then, in the winter of 1972, I got a top security clearance job at Pease Air Force Base. I cooled the hippie stuff and went back to preppie a bit more. But I did have meditation classes in my place as my expression. There I ran into a follower of a Guru I had met year earlier when I was a hippie in San Francisco. Some of us went to see him in Boston, then in New York. I joined and was initiated.

I became a premie, a lover of the whole thing via Maharaj Ji. I changed overnight, a total reboot. For the next 2 months, my transformation was so profound, people took notice. Many also got initiated and became premies. I moved up the hierarchy, as did Cathy. I'm now in suits and speaking to 5,000, 20,000, 45,000 people at a time.



Then change came again. We left the ashram to live in our community and spread the word. But winter sucked. While Cathy and I were leaving in New England for the beaches of Barbados, she was getting morning sick. We landed in Daytona. Not by chance. As a Dad I needed a career. Daytona was considered the 3rd best city in America. Kriya was born my 1st week of college. Suddenly, I was a dad and student.

## **Are Bravery and Courage the Same Thing?**

A roaring wind accompanied a 4-day blizzard in Maine in 1963. What can go wrong? What's the worst-case scenario involving a skunk you can think of? Being in Schrödinger's Box with one? Even then, it's a 50-50. I'm only 12 years old and I'm the one to slay the dragon.

We were warned and prepared for the storm. We had a fireplace and dried wood, an oil heater with an electric fan. We were socked in, as Mainers say, and the view from the windows was 4 feet of snow.

The sound of my father screaming filled the house; he must be swearing a blue streak because you could smell it, Skunk, more skunk. And every time the heat came on, the vents spewed fresh skunk. How bad was it? So bad it made your eyes water.

Maine homes have a full basement. Ours had three rooms. One room was delegated just for the oil tank. Another was a tool room and then the unfinished basement was for the washer dryer, storage and the furnace. I had never been in the oil tank room. Dark, weird, smells awful, and no light.

Its mid-afternoon and we are all desperate. Mom and Dad are throwing around ideas and options. Every so often I hear my name. Crap, they know I love animals.

For an hour they prepare me to go do something. Three layers of clothes, old hoody jacket, scarf, ski mask, mittens and 500 suggestions and instructions, none of which are clear about what to do. Armed with two flashlights, a laundry sack, I waddle out the front door, go through 3 feet of snow in a windy blizzard, down the no-path walkway. We live in a split level, so I head down to the garage and basement.

No one knows what or how it happened. We feared another animal chased it or was scared into taking refuge also. Oh great, more sketchy critters. We had a trap door to the basement we used in winter, but I'm not using that because of all the critters. I get to the garage door and it's open 10 inches. Prevents freezing shut, and is a safe vent for carbon monoxide. I see some paw prints going in, but no smell. I'm not scared.

As I get further in, the smell gets worse. Suddenly I'm in a horror movie. Everything is creepy. I actually went into the oil room, *oh, not that bad*. I hear my parents asking, "How's it going?" Thinking, "Shut up, you're gonna scare em," I guess I'm about to make friends with a skunk. No clue how. But I figured I had a 5% chance of seeing it, so I made it a bit cinematic. I put on a show. Forty five minutes later, my parents got tired of monitoring me, called me back. *Oh gee, that really sucked for you, Mom and Dad*.

On the way out, I see my footprints. I also see paw prints, fresh ones exiting.

At least, I think they were exiting. That's what I told my parents. F@cuk, I'm only 12.

This is hilarious 60yrs later. So I looked into the box and I guessed correctly.

This was the conclusion to Day Two. We huddled in the house for 2 more days. We plugged a few vents, hid in a bedroom when not sitting close to the fireplace. I have no memory of anything after that.

## **I've Altered My Tone as I Sing My Tune**

The above photograph is a re-gift from my grammy. I made this self-portrait in crayon and ink in 1970. I gave it to my grammy when I moved away to warmer climates and adventures, namely California and Florida. This 20 x 24 inch portrait hung in her house until her last cognizant days. After 45 years, during my last visit, she gave it back to me to pass on.

I knew back then that I would be a writer. I knew back then and days since I have collected photos and ephemera for my scrapbook. I have now named this piece of art, My Oughtobiography.

I've been requested by friends and family to write my autobiography. My original intention all these decades was, because I am a visual storyteller, to make the bulk of the book consist of pictures and images. But the Universe has other plans. It seems in hindsight, I am a weird magnet and my anecdotal stories are more interesting than my art.

Despite planning this my whole life, and compared to a slew of impossible things I've done and experienced, culling my stories, finding my voice, is the absolute hardest thing I've ever tried to accomplish. I am in awe of my own life. I went beyond what I could ever have dreamed or believed. During high school, I felt I was the runt of the class, least lucky, least smart, least charismatic, least likely to have a life worth bragging about.

In my 20s, I carried an attitude – don't marginalize me or underestimate me. If you tell me I can't do something, I will do it twice and take pictures. So, after weeks of thought, after discarding the tone of my book as "Look at all the cool shit I did, you losers," it was imperative that I take a more spiritual tact, so much more aligned my nature and temperament. It's not about what I've done.

Besides the material things I've completed, I'm really more of an Old Soul on a Spiritual Quest for connection and meaning. So now my book is laced with stories and events that have huge occult connections. My head is filled with the paranormal, spiritual realizations, gifts of the Holy Spirit. But, this tact is not what people want to read about really. It's too personal, too religious, too spiritual, too occult and too unrelatable. So the book is not about my series of

peak experiences and my enlightenment process. It's not about who I think I really am.

Still swimming in my head is that my life is unbelievable. I decided to switch my list of stories from accomplishments, and from situations fueling my grand self-delusion, to something else – people in my life. I picked my characters, and basically the words are just incident reports. I learned early on, if you want to make your dream come true, assist others in making their dreams come true. And it worked. All my gain and worth came from helping others.

## **It Begins**

In 2017, Sharon and I visited my family in Maine for a week. We were excited to spend time with my daughter and granddaughter. We had a few field trips planned. Kettle Cove, Italian sandwiches, the beach, lobster rolls, hang with Kriya at the old port, feeds ducks at Deering Oaks, and visit the museum.

On a whim, we all decided to get sandwiches and relax on the shore by the canoe launch. Minka and I are putzing around on the rocky beach. She's picking up goodies and I spy a weird rock. Showing Minka, I say "What dis?" She blurts out, "A meteorite." Let's pause for a moment and be stunned. I believed her. I started looking for more.

I found a dozen small cute curly ones for energy work and possibly to create a necklace. But the glory came when I found the big one. The excitement put us all in a spin. For 2 days we chattered about it. We finally all drove to the local New Age crystal store. The owner was happily impressed and sure it was a meteorite. I no longer need to go to the tourmaline mine. Best visit for sure. I did everything on the list and did a few other things. We were sad to leave. We packed our bags and headed for the airport.



## Two Times a Meteorite

This adventure peaks with me getting pulled aside by 3 airport TSA agents at the scanner and check in. They pulled me from the line to the side table. I was surrounded by 3 men in green, who asked, "Sir, is this your bag?"

"Yes."

One agent is eyeballing me to access my demeanor, another watching the first agent as he asks me questions. "May we look in your bag?"

"Absolutely, go ahead."

The agent unzips the carry-on case, opening it wide. "Sir, is it all right if I look in your case here?"

"Yes Sir, sure." He starts removing folded shirts etc., off the top and stops. He then motions to a fourth agent to come over. I'm cool as ice, cuz I know for sure I'm not carrying pot, so I'm cool.

"Okay, the reason we are searching you is our scanner picked up an anomalous, unidentifiable object containing 19 minerals and we need to see what it is." My head is swimming because it was an amazing gift to know that. Meanwhile, the arriving 4th agent brings a little kit and swabs the lining of my suitcase. Ah, wow, is that for pot or gun powder?



The swab comes up clean and the agent looks me in the eyes. I got a sense he was relieved. I'm looking back like I'm and patient and cool as Kung Fu. Meanwhile, Sharon is standing behind a couple of barriers watching me with no expression. She's vibing and she's my protector. I nod like *this is fun*.

The TSA agent unwraps this big weird, heavy rock and examines it. It's a meteorite. The real deal, and you did me a favor by analyzing it. Meteorites have 15-21 elements in them. I am a rock collector and show them at The Florida State Museum of Natural History. This one is pretty cool because it's so big. I have some little one in a box here. "No, no, that's fine."

He walks away, taking my rock to another agent and I'm thinking, "Hey, where you going?" I look at Sharon and she's a little concerned; I can see her aura. The two agents talk together as they look at it. I can't read the boss. The agent comes back with my rock. In nice guy mode, he says, "Here you go. You're good to go; have a safe flight."

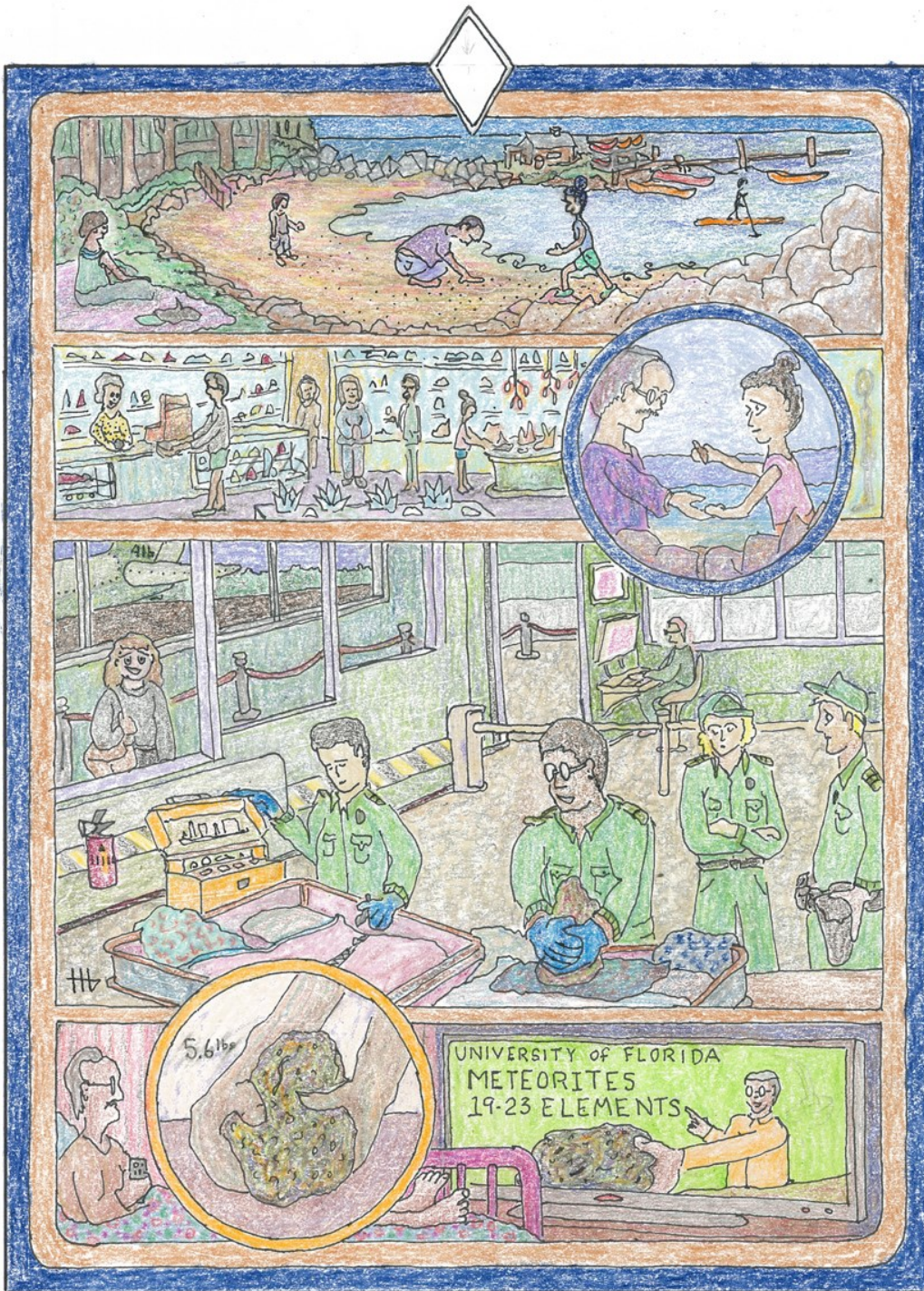
I start wrapping and packing. "Sorry I caused a problem. You know, it's a rock, my Maine souvenir, but it's a great rock!" he smiled. As I am completing the final zip wrap around, he leans in and quietly, clandestinely asks, "Where did you get it?"

I smiled. "No worry, there's more there. If you look closely at the pebbles, you'll see one that doesn't look right." I took a minute and told him exactly where to look. We board the plane.

On the plane, I retold the story to Sharon, and though she was there, I filled her in on the dialogue. "Good for you, Dougman." I think we were watching Star Wars on the screen and interrupted as we changed planes.

Which got me thinking. The approaching rocks entering the atmosphere are called meteors. Found on the ground, they are meteorites. It suddenly occurred to me, I am an Alien Creature flying in a spaceship transporting it. It's now 15,000 feet in the air going 450 miles per hour for three hours; the meteorite has become a meteor again! On land, I technically now have a twice-rocketing meteor.





## **My Life as A Collector**

The weirder it is, the more I want it.

I am a junk snob. In my opinion, the difference between a hoarder and a collector is specific. A hoarder saves the box and packing while the collector displays their prize. I have a history, pictures as evidence, that I took the opportunity back when the getting was great at the getting places. Not only did I do estate sales and garage sales, I slyly worked or volunteered at a couple of thrift stores so I could get first pick. I have a knack for finding valuable stuff, weird stuff, and treasures. I also buy stuff for other collectors.

I am a junk magnet. Infamously similar to a crow, I bring home shiny stuff because it's everywhere. I give in to my compulsion and cool stuff gets brought back to the nest. There is no voice in my life or my head that says, "You are not bringing THAT in the house." My living decor can best be described as Early Garage Sale.

But there's more. I am a visual storyteller. I have three reasons for collecting an object or multiple objects, because in my psyche, they have importance and meaning. My home is a museum. My story about each object is another difference between being a collector and a hoarder. As a curator of my own museum, which I have dubbed the Garage Mahal, unlike most collectors, who have hundreds of one tacky thing, I present a cornucopia of different and unique unusual objects. When company arrives, my very favorite observation is to see who notices what and the impression they leave with.

I have two nemeses. Ironically, they are both 180 degrees opposed to each other, but not to me. I must remain hypervigilant to their wily ways. The hoarder saves everything verses the 64 Gene who saves nothing.

The soul who is a hoarder drives me crazy. It is impossible to extract something from them because, well, it's their stuff. So frustrating because in my view, they place no specific value difference between a rare collectable as compared to an old, rusty, broken piece of crap, or a box, etc. When you try to remove any of their stuff, the common reply is, "I might need that."

The soul who has the 64 Gene, in my experience, while all well and good, has a subtle, recurring issue. These people who have the 64 Gene, their attachment

bubble consists of just 64 items. At any stage of their life, when they move or relocate, they only take 64 items. If you give them something, heads up, within 48 hours, you better look in the trash. They will have thrown something else out. Can't fill the space. One partner said, "If I can't fit it all in my car, I have too much." One partner was not just a minimalist, she did it for profit. A garage sale is where she would clandestinely purge anything for a price, and that's how I lost much of my stuff as well. Half the people in my orbit are like this. Giving them gifts or presents is excruciating. On the bright side, as a collector, their generosity and non-attachment only adds to my compulsive delusion. Neither of us is harmless if you think about it.

My worst nightmare – and a nightmare it is – because I have no control, interestingly enough, is not losing my own collection. I have let go of whole collections. Some I have sold, some I have given away, and some were just gone, destroyed, involuntarily. I sold 48,000 items on eBay and Amazon over a 10-year period.

My horror, during a natural disaster, whether they are floods, fires tornadoes and hurricanes is, of course, the agony of lost souls, children and pets. But, I also think of all the lost collections, some exceedingly rare, wiped from the face of the earth. Gone, destroyed. From a Highwayman painting to a lot of vintage scoops, or rare coins, comics, war medals, or first edition books, the loss in my mind and heart is worse than losing my own. I sold my trinkets to places where they have gone off to live greater or gone off to die. Not during a disaster; please, not like that.

In Gainesville, Florida, Collectors Day happens once a year at the Florida Museum of Natural History. I fell into the yearly show due to my collector friends. Bernadette and her artichoke souvenirs. Thomas and his asparagus. Jill and her camels. I have and have had too many different collections to show. I'm proud of my collections. I hope you fancy them as much as I do. Also, it astounds me that I did it.

I'm a retired professional photographer by education and vocation. It was only natural that my assortment of cameras grew and grew. You can see the evolution. I gave some to my alma mater, sold some, and gifted the rest. I remember that moment I felt complete. Very healthy for an avid collector.



I think I was about 9 years of age when I fully realized the absolute wonder of 3-D View Master. My Aunt Mamie Conant had a full set. One day, in the 1980s it became a passion to find some. It took me 4 years to enjoy the hunt for everything View Master!

One day you have a home, and kids. The kids bring in rocks. You start to bring in rocks. Then you go out and buy rocks because friends want to buy your rocks. So one day you look around and you realize it's okay to have a house really full of rocks. Some people like rocks for their name in their collection. Some like their rocks because they have meaning and the vibe is awesome. Some people collect rocks and they don't know why. Back in the 1950s, a sort of Dark Ages if you can imagine, the saying was, "If you don't behave, Santa will leave you rocks." It wasn't manipulative; it was an opportunity.

Books. I had 9,800+ books in two apartments. Ask me anything... no, I did not read them all. But I remember the titles. It's my Asperger's. The time came to let them all go, but just like my childhood fascination, I dove into pop-up books. They are not only fun and made for kids and adults of all ages and genres, but they are exquisitely educational and an art form. I recently showed a few to two engineers who had a need to open one. Funny to watch grown men reverse something when they don't understand how the crafter did it. Let alone thought of it initially.









## Psychic Healers

Every popular movie is essentially a whopping lie delivered in an enjoyable and believable way. Similar to the experience you get when watching a magician, you know it's a trick and you love it. These personal experiences of mine are true; there is no trick, no fiction. If you choose not to believe these accounts, or have doubts, I hope you enjoy them anyway. The idiom, "Anything is possible but not the impossible but the seemingly impossible is possible however improbable."

You've seen the photographs of 3rd world, poverty-stricken India. I saw the country for real in 1972. The Fakirs, Sadhus and Holy men are everywhere. The culture allows complete freedom of expression, and one avenue is no holds barred weird. A specific goal was to meet and learn from the spiritual Sadhus and Holy men who could perform miracles. Word of mouth finally got me to one skinny-loincloth-only dude by the side of the road. He roamed. I was fortunate to catch up to him. Sitting in the dirt, outside the line, his office consisted of a 5-foot round circle in the sand. I joined sitting on the outside perimeter of the circle with 3 others. No one had a clue what to expect.

The Holy man spoke directly to and at a young couple. "What is your wish, how can I help? One rupee," (dollar value to them, only 10 cents to us by exchange rate). I don't remember hearing them, just heard a buzz, but I remember what happened next. "Gimme me a little paper, piece of paper." Paper provided. He tore off a 1-inch square corner, put the little thing in his mouth, and handed back the paper.

## **Oh the Horror!**

Short version: You scream, I scream, we all scream.

(This story was originally posted on my Capers69 Facebook Group. Surprising how many former classmates responded with their own experiences and continued horror.)

Some of us, you know who you are, intentionally participated in this or were a victim.

In the days of old, at my home in Cape Elizabeth, Maine, before city trash pick-up was a thing, we all had to bring our garbage and refuse to the local dump. Open to the public 24/7, you got to the dump up a long winding hill, then to an open area in sight of a very scary cliff. Leave your trash by the edge, or throw it over to your heart's delight. Smelly, smokey from mini fires, sky full of seagulls, bugs and flies, it was simply a "no hanging around, don't touch anything" kind of dump.

But at night, a much different world could be experienced.

If you dared, you brought your date or some other unsuspecting friends for a mysterious ride. From the bottom of the hill, starting with the headlights off, we would creep up into the center wide open area, with windows rolled up. Then we'd pause for a minute or 2 of absolute quiet.

*Boom! Headlights on!*

Thousands, wow, it felt like millions, of frozen motionless red-eyed rats were everywhere! Thousands of rats, and just as suddenly – screaming teenagers, male and female, surrounded by rats, in a small car with no escape.

The response? "Let's do it again!" Oh yeah.



## Puff the Magic Dragon

It still blows my mind.

You will always remember your first time, even if the pot was way potent, you got wrecked, had a series of stoney conclusions and promptly forgot them; but you will always remember your first time getting high. As the New York winter doldrums melted, I befriended some older kids in my high school who would drive and drag me to the infamous Lake George on warm Saturdays. I looked 18 and got away with buying beers at the refreshment booth.

Being with older, more mature and experienced kids has its perils and perks. I was invited to sit under some pine trees on the lake's edge. My friends and new people acted clandestinely. *Oh-Oh, they brought drugs!* We passed around the pipe in a small circle of glazed eyes until we could no more.

The moment had arrived. Warm and soft, things of attention prioritized and sometimes random, and mostly time lost. The buzz felt like my brain was in a tunnel, safe, the kind of safe that makes you relax instantly. Duh, a door opened. I not only found my sense of humor but the nature around me seemed much more naturery.

Yeah, of course, I don't remember much after that. The back seat was comfy during the hour drive home. The New York City radio station played on, people chatting, but I'm the quiet one in the back, that was always me. Inspired, I suddenly blurt out, "I'm so mellow and stoned, Holy Cow, everyone needs to get stoned!" The others in the car, surprised, called out, "OMG, he speaks!" For a half an hour during the drive, between songs, the DJ kept hyping the debut of Dylan's new single which was to happen any minute.

Imagine if you will, a moment in time. You witness the whole universe culminating as it weirdly arranged itself just because you said something out loud. This very spring day, back in 1966, Bob Dylan released his *Blonde on Blonde* LP, with the famous single titled, "Rainy Day Woman ~ Song #35 - 12." You may know it better by the lyrics, because we all then heard them, for the very 1st time ever, "Everybody Must Get Stoned."

Wait, what? I'm still a bit stoned and in shock in the back seat and just as bug-eyed as my friends, who are poised rigidly, looking at me. Silence. Then cue the laughter!

I have an on and off, continued relationship with weed. I didn't smoke for twenty years, but I do currently, which is laced in with a few of my other stories.

This day in 1966 I will never forget; not just because the good pot opened a few doors and blew my mind, but because many minds were blown with that coincidence. I have come to realize this fostered my awareness of another set of doors opened; part of me is tuned to the universe and I attract coincidences, of which there were many more.

It still blows my mind.

## Paint by Number

Symbols are to the mind and heart as tools are to the hand.

This is my favorite painting. This original paint by number painting is from 1951, the year I was born. When people ask me, who is your favorite artist, I reply, "I don't have one because I have a favorite painting." The irony here is because it is a paint-by-number picture, the original company artist created it, and a customer painted it. Whom should I credit?



The very first, ever paintings I remember looking at were 3 small paint-by-number ballet dancers displayed as a triptych. I was less than five years old, and I lucidly recall staring at them many times. We moved from that apartment into the big house in Shore Acres when my brother, Chris, was born.

This picture is very pleasant to look at and it's one of those you either like or you really don't. It's personal, very personal for me, because it's a culmination

collage of 9 symbols of my "Heart's Desire," past and present. Each symbol could well be the title of each chapter of my book.

The scene is at night. I love nights best. The moon is full and I make a fuss about it every month. The silver lined clouds are so my favorite nights to watch the sky. Hard to, but I am still trying. The tall trees in back remind me of California. The exotic trees on the right are not only past life recall, but after living in my home for 30 years, my place was covered and surrounded by them. Raintree. Whole other story.

The park with a pond and the circular path with a bench have a more spiritual, mystical meaning. When I do guided meditations... this is where I go. The Garden of Truth. I started that technique 20 years before I found the painting. The lotus flowers in the foreground have been a symbolic reference since I joined the ashram with my Guru. It grows and unfolds its beauty in dirty water; it hovers, never touching it.

Speaking of my Guru, his father was also my Guru, Hans, meaning swan and that was the logo for his teachings. I also initiated a catalog for Gainesville, The SWAN Directory. Spiritual, Holistic, Alternative and Natural. The ballet dancers, remind me a bit of my first paintings. It's bigger than that. I was a pro ballet dancer for a decade. I had a ballet dancer girlfriend. In a few performances I wore the very same costume as in the painting.

Last and certainly not least, the gazebo. Such a building to represent Higher Knowledge and also a cozy place to enter. I run to them and compulsively sit in them like a cat in a box. How many lifetimes have I sat in a gazebo? When I sit in one, I am not me, but them.

This painting, this map, is hanging, no, hovering over my bed. It's in the cold of a Maine winter, and I'm around 13 years old. I made a hutch to read and draw and hide and stay warm in the under-stairs closet. Cozy. Making room, Mom looked inside a couple of old storage boxes from the move ten years previous. She pulled out the 3 triptych. I started to cry. I remembered those paintings on the wall and I loved them. "Oh, Douglas, you couldn't remember these, you were only five."

Exactly.

## **Capturing Sound**

Not long ago  
a man who loved birds  
to the woods  
he would go.

His passion for birds  
came from his heart  
and science his job  
which he loved from the start.

A walk in the woods  
with his tools in both hands  
the birds were abundant  
in line with his plans.

With his binoculars and camera  
and notebook busy,  
the birds were curious  
and choired their songs  
until he was dizzy.

"My camera and notebooks  
are still not enough!  
Others must hear this!"  
And he left in a huff.

Thinking what to do  
he discovered a new toy.  
Science has invented  
what was never before!

A recorder of sounds  
be it voice or some music,  
into the woods he carried  
so he could use it.







## Thrill

I just realized now that the culmination and the greatest thrill of my life as an artist and as a person I cannot describe. I like to show my work without actually being in an art show. There's no greater thrill than walking into a thrift store and seeing a painting that you have done for sale and coming in a week later and it's gone. I love that there's no greater thrill than seeing a book or booklet that you've written in the thrift store for sale and coming back a week later and it's gone. There's no greater thrill for me then when I walk into businesses in my local town, and I see copies of my monthly newspaper called *Touchstone* in the doorway. The feeling is awesome.

There's no greater thrill than walking into a business or home, and they're playing my radio station and I'm hearing that beautiful, wonderful connection between the people and the radio station. There's no greater thrill for me than walking into a business or someone's home and seeing an advertisement or commercial with my face on the TV screen, distributing my message. There's no greater thrill than being able to share this feeling with you without sounding like I'm bragging. For me, it's like I did share what I could from my point of view, my way, and a very humble way. I could not have done it without my gods. I have no greater love than for love itself.



## **The Mother**

There is no part of anything that isn't connected to everything. Feel it to see it.

This is the kind of cultural reenactment you would never see in National Geographic. A form of Shamanic ritual practiced for centuries and by millions today.

This is a talisman, an effigy of the Mother Who Grieves For All Abandoned, Abused and Lost Too Early Children. She's THE MOTHER, the Mary, the Mata Ji, the Kwan Yin, Hapi and more.

Created for a ceremony, she is the water bearer, the healer, the recipient of grief. The challenge of the water bearer is to contain the emotional nature in a healthy way and direct it back into the cycle of life in an elemental way.

After the ceremony, she is quickly dismantled. Her vessel is emptied of love and grace for us and is now filled with the tears of the grieving to be purified. But she, like a golem, is a vessel that must stay pure, before impurity can be contaminated by the world. The Shaman, in full glory of his service power as a Medium, and surrounded by the living beings who can cross both worlds, (such messengers), directs her powers and prayers, grounding them into this world.

## Norman

I had a pet turtle. Not the little one you buy in the plastic dish with a little palm tree. Norman was a full-grown pet Florida Slider with good looks, personality, character and he could do tricks! Norman lived free range in my home for almost three years. He was comfortable with his captivity; in fact, not so much a pet but a roommate. Where did I get such an amazing turtle? An employee, Claire, a fellow animal lover, was interested in a specific kitty, one of three from my black cat, named Black Kitty, and the timing for a trade was perfect as weaning time was close.

The deal was, I will trade you Norman, a human turtle for your cat with four ears. Yes, a cat with four ears. Claire was the perfect home for the rare cat and the deal was done.

A free-range roommate that likes water can be a substantial endeavor. But we had a schedule. I would let him swim in the tub after 24 hours of sitting dechlorinating. I got a huge fish tank, five feet in length, with a sunlamp pointing to lamp a big rock, and a lamp so he could sun himself. He didn't like it much. So, before hibernation, his spot was the kitchen sink. He loved watermelon, salad, and dog food. Yes, Alpo in can. Mystery meat and grease. The sink was easier to clean than the whole tub.

Norman had such a great personality and was so obedient, or he just liked the attention. I loved to bring guests home and play a Leela, a divine game... Upon entering, I would offer my guest a beverage. Then I would call out, "Norman, Norman?"

Inquiry, "Who is Norman?"

"My roommate." We'd move on to conversation and visiting, and suddenly he would appear. Gah, a turtle in the dining room, "You have a turtle loose!"

"No, that's my roommate, Norman. He comes when he's called." He would get a little attention. If he was hungry, he'd head for the kitchen. If he wasn't hungry, or felt like swimming, he'd head back down the hall to his room. You know how they say, *if your dog doesn't like someone you can tell?* Norman would also not like people and go back to his room. So the months went by and everything seemed fine. I did however feel some guilt. I would

occasionally feel badly because he wasn't in the wild, living out his turtleness. But he had porch visits, knew where the doors were, and never made an attempt to escape. I knew his classic escape moves from the big tank.

Every weekday after at 6 p.m., I'd come home from work to watch reruns of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. That was his absolute fave. One night, I had a VHS tape of an episode. Playing the Star Trek theme at 10 at night blew his mind! He briskly waddled in and looked at the screen and then looked back and forth at me, like "What?"

The coolest trick he would do, and I have witnesses, is he liked to watch TV. Some shows, absolutely not. Best of all he had a favorite.

Seasons come and go. Winters he would stay in his room. The laundry room was just big enough to leave a bath runner in the corner. It was folded over and made a little soft cave. The blue deep shag was comfy for him. I surmise that, like most cloth bathmats, it always had a subtle, wet, musty smell. Guess he liked that.

Summers, he spent the evenings outside in a low-sided, 2-foot tank. I made a little screen for the top. The tank sat outside my glass sliding doors and my bed alongside the windows, just feet away. Sometimes I would leave my door open and had a screen door as well.

One warm night, I awoke to a clunking sound. I vaguely see the silhouette of a raccoon trying to get in through the screen! Arrgh, it's 2 a.m., I'm naked in bed, and a vermin is stealing my Norman. I jumped out of bed, just in time to see the raccoon go over the 2nd floor porch railing with Norman tucked under one arm like his loot. I screamed, too late. The screen door was blocked by the tank.

I ran naked down the hall heading to the door, grabbing my trusty flashlight. I burst through the door, ran down the stairs and saw the raccoon run off. I looked around for him on my hands and knees. Fortunately, in the ambient light, I can see that Norman is not carried off, but on his back. I grab him. The downstairs neighbors' lights come on, probably due to the ruckus. That's when it hit me. I am on my hands and knees completely butt naked with a turtle in my hands in the neighbor's yard. Yeah.



I washed him off, dried him, and had him sleep in my bed with me. Morning comes, he is right beside me.

So time goes on, things change, and my intuition said, *it's time to go play in the wild*. I had a talk with him about a new life at the lake, and all the neat stuff he was going to eat. I owned a boat and kept it moored at Buddy's Landing on Lake Santa Fe. While he was carried in a shoe box with snacks, Norman seemed restless. I bet he could smell the lake. In the boat he was very restless. A grown man, tooling a boat and talking to a turtle.

I knew a quiet cove, free of motorboats. With not much ceremony, (but I was crying), I gently placed him in the water near the shore and reeds and let him go to live out his turtleness.



## **My Life as a Psychic, Seer, Prophet or Guru**

How does this happen? I did not choose to be awake. It found me. I did, however, study up on all the techniques, methods, and types worldwide to hone my craft. I had gotten clues and hints in my youth. But it wasn't until I was in my mid-20s that I fully considered this as a thing, a real thing. And, in my mid-40s, I was given permission to establish my own milieu and produce my own arcanum (specialized knowledge). So far, in my early 60s, I realized I am part of the big of it all and my power is being True to what we do.

So, if I get information, is it guidance or prophecy.

Yes, I see things, know things and this comes with a heavy burden. There are many psychic people. I know people who share their skill just for family or do readings for friends. Messages are everywhere. The message is not picky about who delivers it. Maybe the recipient is picky about who delivers it.

## **Uh-Oh, They're Back!**

As corny as the two expressions are, Love at First Sight, and I Knew As Soon As I Saw, from an early age I cottoned to them because I knew it was possible. My swooning crushes. We all get them. Fun as they were, there is no comparison to portents, precognition and destiny. These are my true experiences. The knowing beforehand can be wonderful and also, disturbing.

Imagine missing someone for specific months, even years, before you met them. I named it pre-grief. I call it grief because of the ache, and I added pre because you miss them before you met them, and fell in love, as most people define the process.

The hardest adjustment is when you get info and feelings as clues, but never their name or when! But you do get clues, signs, and sometimes instructions. I was lucky. Destiny involves the awareness that, the connection comes from the past. Reincarnation, we come in clusters. We make arrangements. Could be a promise, an unfinished long-term promise, an exchange of family members, doing the same thing but in a completely different time period and environment or, having a completely new start.

How can you know ahead of time when it's a new start? That's an arrangement. It's already happened. If you listen, you may do very strange things. Here are several people and extraordinary circumstances. Soulmates? Predetermined? You decide.

Jack, Connie Beth and Chris. My immediate family. Or so you think. I do not know these people. I have no karmic relationship agreement with them other than they let me join in, they agreed to house and feed me until I could be on my own. I basically hitchhiked a ride here. After I turned 15, I only spent 6 months living with them.

I lived with my Aunt Dot in New York and with my grandparents in Westbrook and Higgins Beach, summers, until I was on my own at age 17. My dad named my younger brother after him. Before I finish, this is hilarious. The joke about the boy who went to summer camp and returned home, found his parents had moved. For the last 5 decades, ranging from Maine to California to New Hampshire to South Carolina and me in Florida, we all live as far apart as



possible. I thank them for the good times. They also sense I am not one of them. I am referred to as the black sheep of the family.

Cathy  
Bernadette  
Sharon  
Lisa  
June  
Betty  
Paula  
(The Absent One)

Soulmates all, my Twin Flame is not here this round. We agreed certain things must transpire here for me without her. I would not have advanced to another spiritual level, which I did, and it makes perfect sense in hindsight. I was told her message for me is, "Be patient and treat all your women like you would treat me."





## **My Life with my Mother**

This chapter is about my mom. Big picture wise, I did not spend much time with my mom. We grew apart in my mid-teens, but her influence on me has certainly become clear, so I am dedicating this chapter to her.

Mom was weirdly intuitive. I see that now in hindsight. She knew I was intuitive and different; she treated me differently than my brother and sister. Every parent pushes or influences their wants, desires and attitudes onto their offspring. She wanted to be a star, she loved to sing, to perform, and over her life and career she accomplished that. I loved church, and I sang in the choir, sang her organized Christmas carols in our gated community.

One morning, as a tween, I said, "Good Morning," and she started crying. My voice had changed overnight. Boom. My voice then and now still does sound like Barry White or James Earl Jones. This came in handy, as I was a D.J. on a late night Jazz station and was a Sunday morning talk show host for 8 years. But sing no more.

Mom saw in me several things. I was odd, weird. While controllable I was hugely unpredictable. A constant surprise to her. As I mentioned before, I was 9 years old before I realized my name wasn't "Oh, Douglas." It wasn't that I was doing things I shouldn't; I was doing things she never would have thought of in a million years. But she went with it. I never, ever felt like she was the enemy. She didn't push me into the arts, we just understood that was where we thought alike. She saw who I was as a tween. I not only had potential, but I was eager for the arts and celebrity status because I produced and was good at it.

I've included several pictures here from when I was living at home and before graduating from High School. At 12, I wanted to take dance lessons. Dad said no. I wanted to take music lessons. Dad said no. But I did perform in two plays in my freshman and junior year. Mom was proud.

I was a very good artist and Mom bought me supplies. She was amazed at my 5th grade class wall mural. She helped get into an elite major Downtown Art Show. I was in the newspaper, as the youngest exhibitor ever, the glass wall in 1964. The paper said one judge thought, because of the variety and quality of the work, I was a grown adult.

I have some funny cool stories with and about my mom, but I want to go in another direction here. This is in the realm of high Weirdness, proof of Kismet, that we are destined to things so – well, I'll let you decide.

The page of old photographs is her prophecy page. She loved taking pictures, always a camera in hand. Sadly she was not a great photographer. Her photo albums were saved by my sister after she passed. Beth sent me some pages. This one page blows my mind! It's a Prophecy Page.

The six pictures are a portent of my adult life. I feel a sense of loss that I can't show her the outcome. I don't have to do so in 3-D because she hovers over me constantly.

On her birthday, a red cardinal comes to me in an obvious display of intent, a sign and a gift. In 2018, a difficult year, the cardinal landed on my head. I want to express that I have love and respect for my mom. No mommy issues. This is why I am comfortable with women, and able to have good relationships.

The best thing I gave my mom, because I was short on quality time, she got bragging rights. She was proud to announce that I was an accomplished graphic artist, and an upscale professional studio and commercial photographer. Blew her mind that I was a pro ballet dancer for years. That I morphed into the video world and opened a studio.

She could brag that I was on TV every day in commercials. That I used good business sense and bought a radio station. She was amazed that I taught classes at the University and Community College both. And she knew that my disturbing penchant for cults and spiritual weirdness was hard to explain. I was not only a kind man, which both my brother and sister have commented on, but I held classes in my home to teach others why it's better to be kind.

She knew I had the gift. I've delivered messages from her mom, Dad, deceased husband, my grandfather, all of them. Okay, this scared her a bit. But she was proud of me. I am extremely proud of my mom. She left a toxic marriage, formed a successful career, married an awesome man, and in short, made a good life for herself. Before she passed, she knew I had a successful bookstore, she so knew my love for books and writing. We parted clear and

friends. I wanted to write some funny stories about her, totally wacked. She was an Aquarius and lived in her own world and perception in her own head. She did not have a mean streak at all, but most of her funny anecdotal stories make her a ditz. A ditz yes, but still funny.



## First Awareness

Somewhere around the age 14, I suddenly became self-aware. Sure, I have memories and lucid moments before then, but my epiphany catapulted me into a whole other realm.

In this new realm, I discovered two things. I had power. I was no longer exclusively dependent on the parents, people, or peers about what to think or what I should do or could do in the relentless burden of time.

Then I realized my nature. I like to create, paint, draw, build, repair things. I realize now, I am also bonded with service to others. I have a desire or desires in me that I was born with.

Even though I did and still do have a constant itch to understand the meaning of life, the universe and everything, I discovered I have a greater compulsion, a conscious and unconscious daily order of operations which not only baffled those around me, (from the feedback I get). But that greater compulsion assisted me in achieving self-worth, meaning, and my success, as well as a few failures of course.

To this day, at age 70, I have an adage I live by. I would rephrase that as an adage I *do* by. Born from that moment at 14 years of age, the adage is an echo in my head. It took me years to distill it into words. What is my motivation defined? It's powerful. It's not for me to insist this is blueprint for everyone, but it's mine, I own it.

My compulsion is separated into individual acts. Ideally, why not all four as one, but the joy and satisfaction of each one solo is fulfilling.

1. Must do something important.
2. Must do something meaningful.
3. Must do something weird.
4. Must do something invisible.

This description can be anyone, not exclusive to me. All I'm saying is these are noticeable acts, acts which never change. I never have an off day or periods of time when these compulsions are not present.

One day, when I was 14 years old, I woke up as an adult. I could make my own path, journey, search, future and had my own ideas. I did not get caught up in the rebellion of teen angst. I saw the reward of being an opportunist.

I had an additional epiphany around my late 20s. That's when adolescent brains are fully formed. Because my nature is to be in service to others, I understood on some level that you can make your dream come true by helping others really make their dreams come true.

### **Imagination or Total Recall**

Assuming you believe in reincarnation, we will go further into some actual experience beginning with Meher Baba. I will quote him. He said, "When you die, the only thing you can take with you are your memories." Perhaps through reincarnation, as we enter the human body, we can indeed access those memories. I have allowed them to experience opening small doors through meditation and my sleep disorder, narcolepsy, and they walk through those doors and access memory. I took the time to do it, to make space for it and to nurture it so that I can go into those doors anytime I choose. Let's say the soul travels through many lifetimes and collects some memories. I have been able to access three lifetimes in the Middle East.

One time, I was in a place called Alhambra, and I have a title. At the time, I was a Caravan Trader who traveled the Frankincense Trail, and the third one was in a country which I believe is on the Persian Gulf, in a community where these fantasmerical illustrations or a combination of fantasy and actual vivid memories exist. I have seen many items from the Middle East in my lifetime. I recognize that some men have no feeling about it. I did do a little research online to sort of verify or be inspired by images, but most of the content is from memory.

Two days after completing the illustration, I did some more research and found that my illustration was authentically correct. It has been my experience personally and teaching this treatment as well, that the soul will only allow you to see past lives if it is permanent to your Soul's growth or your current life. These illustrations are memories and visions that I've had that I am allowed to see now.



I started drawing other scenes and experiences from real life, but in opening my memory and imagination all the doors flew open. My spirit and soul insisted that I let these out my current life. This is very chaotic, painful, and confusing, and requires much discipline for survival. This is a time period where people were not living in those conditions and this is a form of Hope.

## Ainsijam

Imagine a time when people lived in harmony, privileged by consensus, doing freely what they wanted, living in concert in accordance with need. Imagine decades, many centuries of time, no oath to countries, no religious mandates or protected resources to live and die for.

Enter the scenario of the real Harem. Traditionally a private part of the home base, but also open for socializing and celebrations. Most everyone is family related, adopted or respected servants by choice. No slaves, concubines or oppression, just family living together, appearing to us in an overly-exotic life. Hollywood sensationalized one aspect of the harem, which in time, ruined the reputation, and just about successfully erased a whole culture and fascinating history. Hollywood is about as credible a source as QAnon.

Entertainers, especially belly dancers, are protective of their history, culture, and the art itself, similarly compared to artists in Ballet. Family is equal to survival, protection, prosperity; life is all about love and caretaking of the whole family. This lifestyle, as you can see, is thousands of years old. Each person is so full of character and life, living in harmony, which is called *ainsijam*, a peace manifested.

The household had structure. For example: all boys, once matured, were prohibited from entering certain rooms reserved just for elders and women, as well as specific rooms just for women. Wisdom in that I can clearly see! Imagine more – we know it works. Women happily ran the community by maintaining order and social order, organizing community gardens, laundry, raising children together, experiencing childbirth, healthcare, and counseling while cooking dinner and treats for celebrations. They socially and traditionally expressed themselves with people, food, and dancing as entertainment in the celebration of life.

I present you with the indoor and outdoor life at the harem. Looks like a typical crazy family to me.

الانسجام



## The 4th Dimension

In our 3-D world, that being only measured in 3 dimensions exclusively, the wall between 3rd and 4th is so exclusive, we have no physical means of presenting it in a physical form. Like music which has unique ascending notes by vibration, our 3-D realm is a single note in our existence of many more, which are called duplicate or alternate realities.

The 4th dimension is an exact duplicate of what is here, not quite like a mirror image. If you stand in front of a mirror, you get what looks like a duplicate of you, but it is not – it's a reflection. The leap into the fourth dimension begins with the idea of a duplicate you, (it's also you simultaneously). Only instead of a reflection, the new or replica you is now facing the same direction. That process is still mystery done, but mathematically proven. But that switch process is not the heart of the fourth dimension.

The existence of your 4th self is able to do something 3-D cannot and something that can only happen or be in the 4th. In the fourth, a single object can be any size. Not only that, it is all sizes all the time. But these forces are also limited to their note and max out in a state of equilibrium. Not only is the object or you since we started with you in the mirror, you are not only all sizes, but you exist in all ages. Time is not the factor in the fourth. Time here is a single picture in form and seen in motions, which is our version of time.

Interestingly, whatever affects us here also affects the fourth and whatever affects the fourth also affects us here. So basically, yes, there are outside and unseen forces at work. There is a doorway to the 4th, but as I stated, not physically. Astral travel is your soul light, consciousness, higher self-traveling out of your body, through the ethers. You see and experience the astral upon your will and conscience. Yes, your *conscience* vibration, not conscious.

In the astral world, your desire to see the past and future for answers is visual and true. The fifth dimension is a higher note and solely a vibration. It's the source code, a sounding syllabic rhythm.

## **My Life as a Writer**

It was not a dark and stormy night, it was a homework night under duress for a book report. Same difference. I had read the book and pounded out two pages long hand and felt confident a C was mine. The teacher handed it back, said, I like your book reports, and I connected to that statement more the effervescent A shimmering in the upper right corner.

I like your book reports. I like your short stories. Where do you come up with this stuff? Your grammar is terrible but the ideas are interesting.  
These are all comments from my teachers from 5th grade through Junior year.

I never had a goal to be a writer. Those comments stayed in the back of my mind for years. I've since learned in my adulthood, if you don't know who you are, people will tell you.

What happened after junior year? I went to school in NY my sophomore year. The culture shock from Maine to NY was stunningly productive. I'm a teen wandering around aimlessly in life, a little disconnected, wondering what it's all about, very coffee oriented philosophical thoughts and discussions but essentially adrift with family problems and no access to any hobbies. I mostly read. Suddenly I am transported back to Maine and culture shock once again had me swirling even more.

My junior year was like being trapped. All teens feel that way, but I was too worldly, experience and I had a plan. By the time school ended, my Guidance Counselor and I had a chat about Senior year. The short version is, I had 11.5 credits at more than I needed to graduate senior year. Sir, I have been taking night classes in art and on teaching art at Gorham State. Senior year would be torture, prison and basically, I have no social life. I'm done, I am out. What do I need to graduate? Adults don't like it when you rock the boat and have your own ideas.

Remember this is 1968. It a bit of the dark ages, the Age of Aquarius was arriving, but too slowly. Get your parents' permission and pass a senior English equivalent GED exam. He said it like passing wasn't going to happen. Dude, don't you do that, you just accepted the in-your-face moment to arrive. Never underestimate me. So a month later, after paying the \$25 GED fee, I



took the 2-hour exam and aced it. I was free. Sadly, never had a senior year, yearbook or the humiliation of social disappointments.

I was traveling the United States from one end to the other. I hitchhiked (legal back then). It's a culture. All kinds of characters from real life Hobos to excited Hippies like me. I carried around my paperback Walt Whitman. A fellow hitcher saw my book and quoted a whole 9 lines of one of his poems. Whoa! He said, "I am writing a book about my experiences, my goal is to live all this and get published." Get published. Interesting, get published. I was of the mindset that getting published was an elite accomplishment. He might as well have said a doctor or astronaut.

That is pretty much true today for most people. If I told you have been published, written millions of words in print (before internet), a storyteller, monthly columnist and I share this people, the most common inquiry is usually, Have I read anything of yours? And I reply there is a good chance you have.

Another anomaly about writing is, write what? For years I believed that truly interesting things only happened to writers. What do I have to say? It took me a few years to figure out my nature, that I AM an interesting person with an unusual point of view (so I am told repeatedly) and therefore writers write and the author makes it interesting. Writing was much a gift from the universe as I just did it. The universe was kind. And I am a born assessor, critic and can peg things, situations, and people.

At 25, as a surfer in college, I submitted a few short stories to a local surf newspaper and they printed it. I am basically a 7-topic guy and not a one-topic guy, so I wrote articles and reviews and letters to a whole range of topics and one day I found myself being asked to write. A columnist, music reviews, movie reviews, factual experiences for national jazz magazines. Writing about art, photography tips and I was in.

Next thing I know I have a writers group in my living room. Famous people reading their stuff. I'm in the big league. Writers contests and even wrote and submitted two movie scripts. Okay, I admit that was stretch.

Then, I got a spiritual awakening. I did have much to say. My Higher Self was a teacher, channeled, instructor. I have a part of me, because I have Asperger's, a

bit of spiritual genius. Some people are very smart and learn a skill or career and then go show and do it for someone else or the business. I am a creator. I create something and then learn all about it later. I created a radio station and learned how to write good radio ads for people. Also TV ads. Yes, it true. But it gets better.

One day, after reading some monthly rag magazines, I thought, I can do that. I can do better than that. And I did. My BFF and I put together a legendary and cute monthly newspaper with a wide variety of topics called *TouchStone*. Much like the subjects and variety you get on the net.

So, I was already a serious book collector. Thrift stores and friends of the library book sales it wasn't long before I had 2,000 books scattered in rooms. Hey, the library was closed, the Internet was barely a thing and I write at night. This is where I the writer stopped. My motto is, Find and need and fill it.

The community was changing due to economy, events and things change. I closed the paper and became a bookdealer. A very successful and exciting pursuit for me. I felt I was doing people a huge favor, it was a giving experience by selling books. By the way, remember I told you about meeting the hitcher who was going to write and get published? I found it. Over the years I found 3 and sold them. We both became celebrities by writing, because writers write.

*“I could hear the sound of my heart beating. I could hear everyone's heart. I could hear the human noise we sat there making, not one of us moving, even when the room went dark.”*





*This is a self-portrait Douglas drew in his late teens or early 20s.*



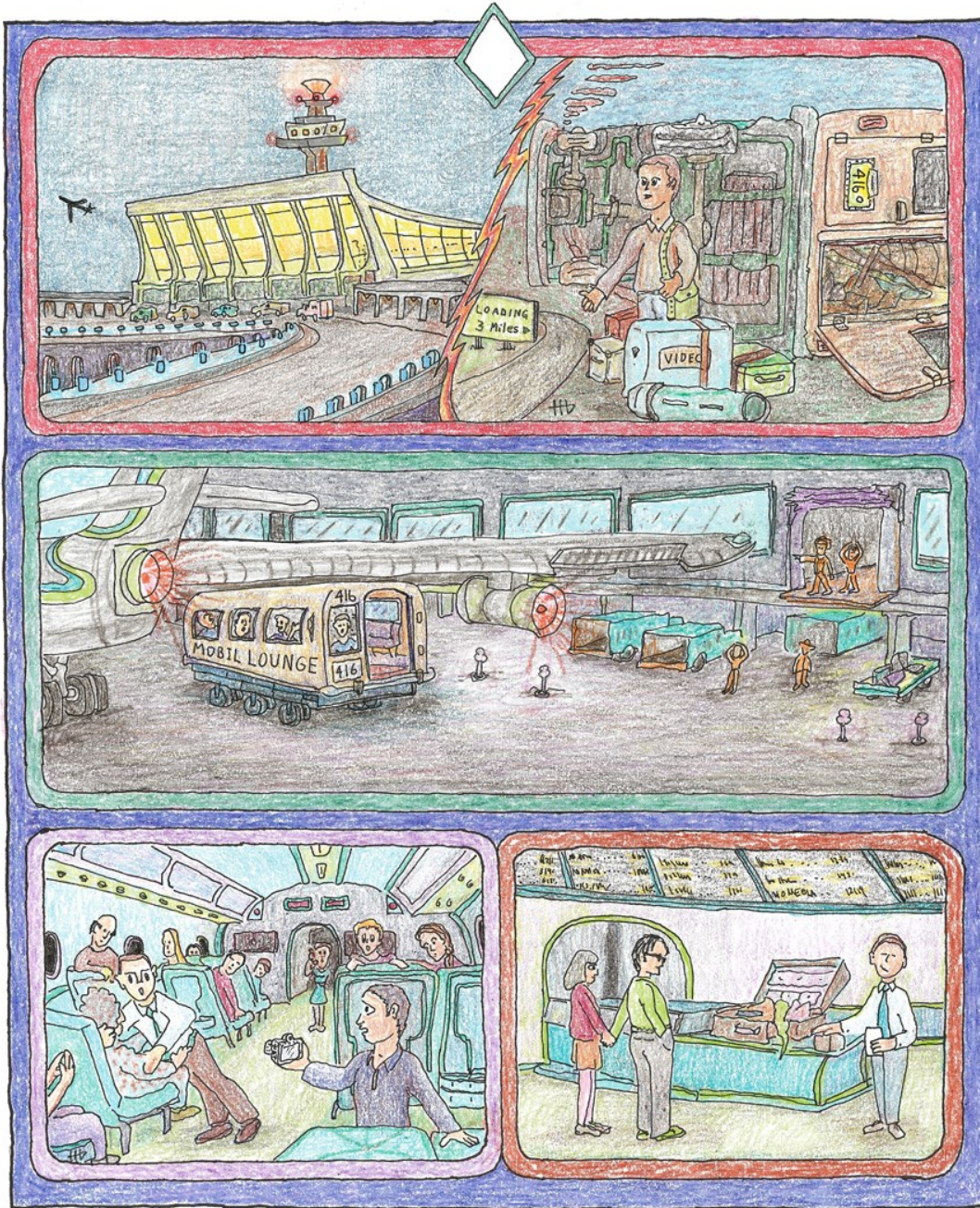








The following crayon illustrations were drawn by Douglas in 2022 for stories he didn't get a chance to finish. I've commented on those I know about. -Sharon

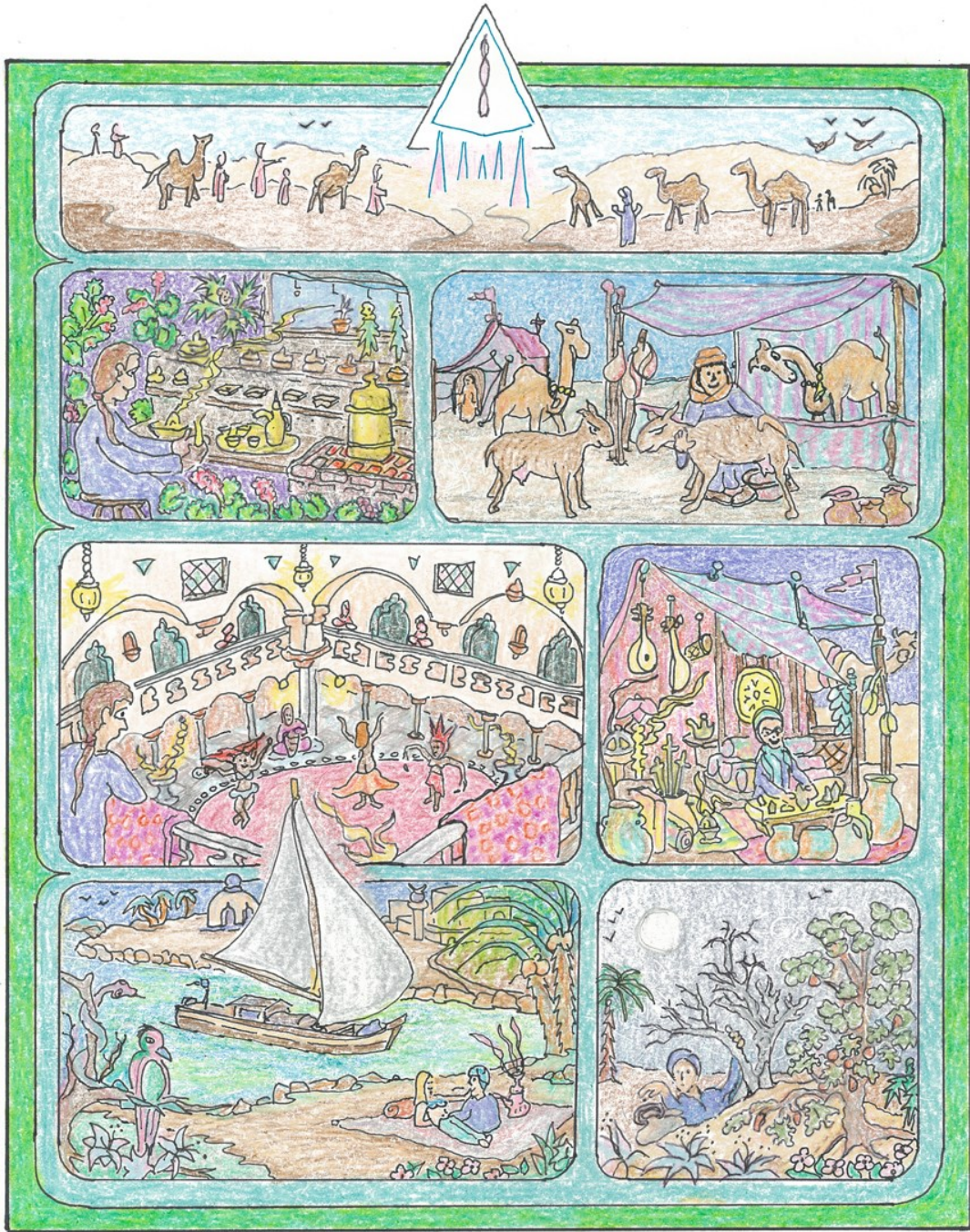






*Douglas had many connections to his past life in Alhambra.*





*These scenes appear to be from his past life on the Frankincense Trail.*





*This scene is about him camping as a young hippie at Big Sur. One night the campfire caught the sleeping bags on fire. No one was hurt.*





*In his early 20s, Douglas bought a school bus to transport premies to Maharaj Ji events across the United States. Here they are parking the bus on the cliffs of Big Sur where they also witnessed thousands of monarch butterflies migrating.*



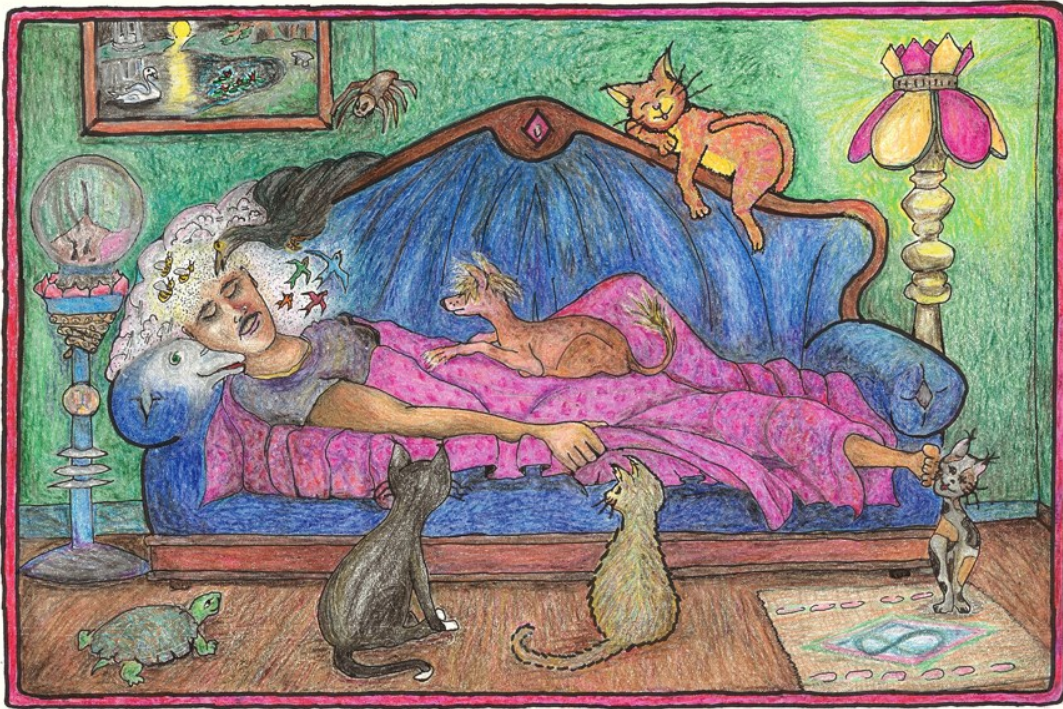
*This is his first crayon illustration he did as practice for the book.*





*This cat reflects his past life experiences in Persia.*





*Douglas is dreaming about the pets in his past and about the other animals who came to visit him in his lifetime. He had both of these lamps and the painting on the wall in real life.*





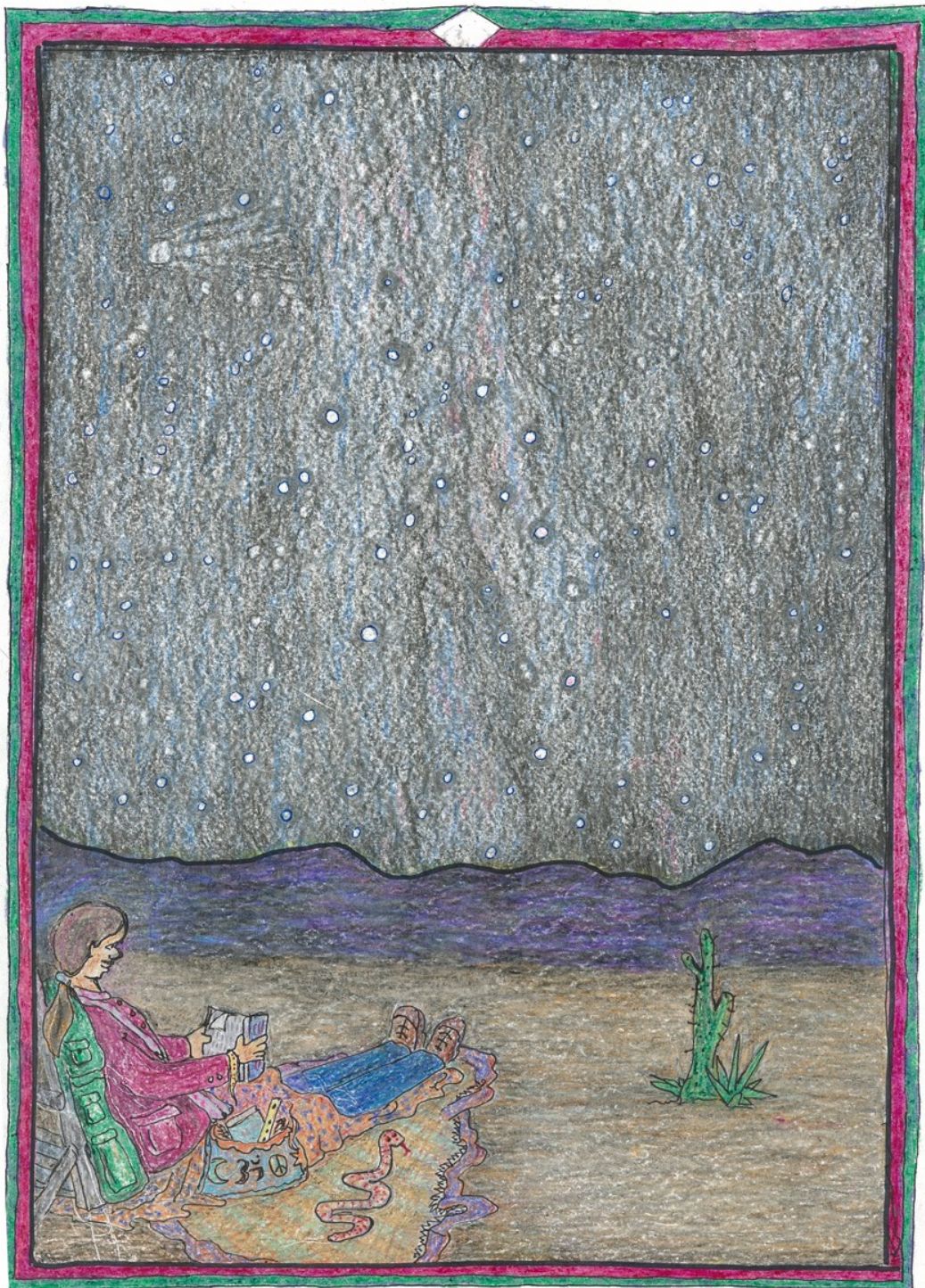
*In his past life as a shaman, he remembers striking crystals to release light and healing energy. He would rub crystals together to demonstrate to his classes.*





*Douglas had several near-death experiences in his lifetime.*





*Camping out at night in the desert was a spiritual experience for him.*





9/22/22  
2.5 hrs  
Icon Like for Earth Simulation. Emotion duality. with thousands of options in 3 different layers. Great game if you aware of context. Conflict & Wrong.

*This symbol represents the duality of the energy here on earth.*





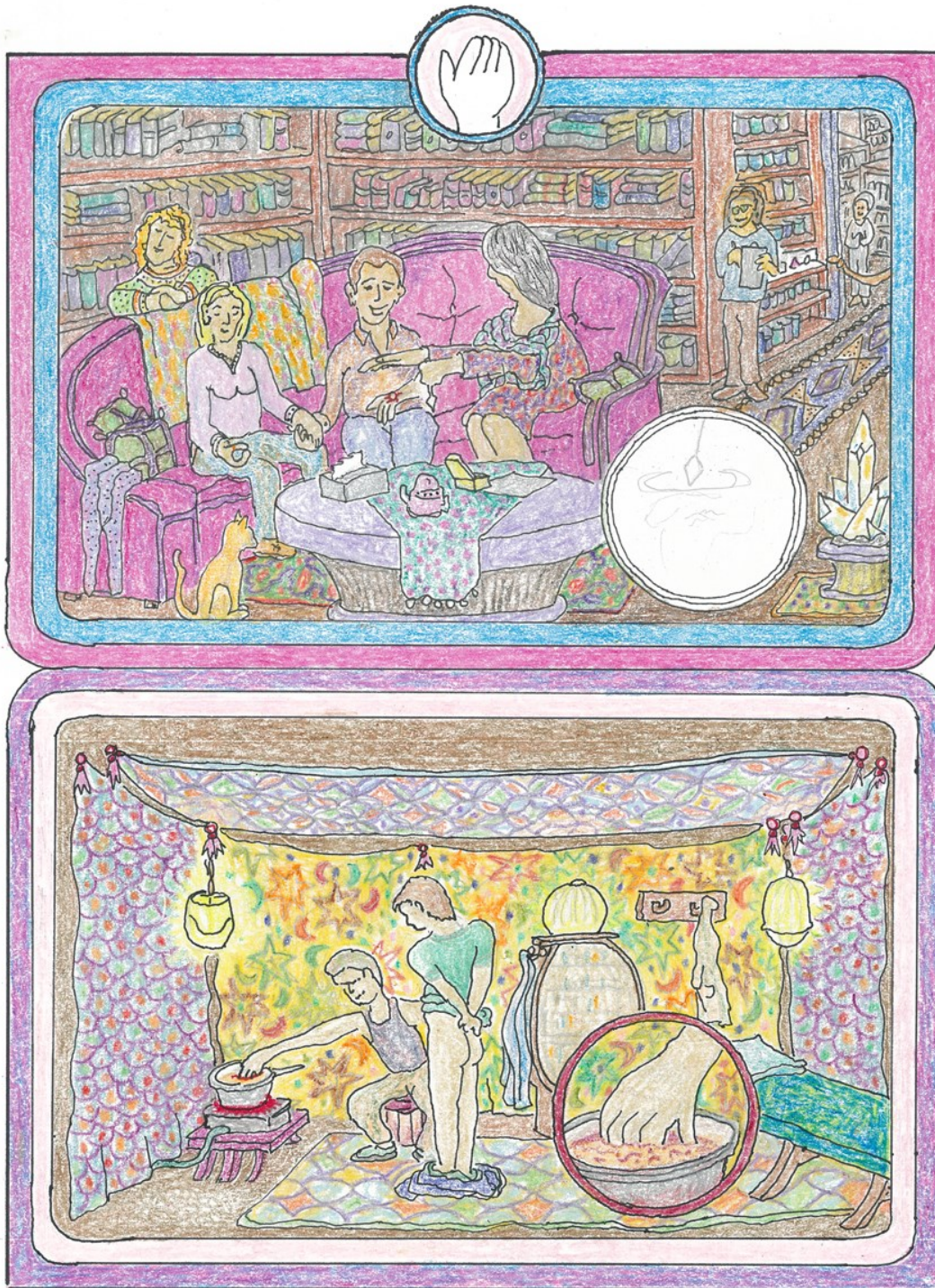
*This is another representation of his past life in Persia.*





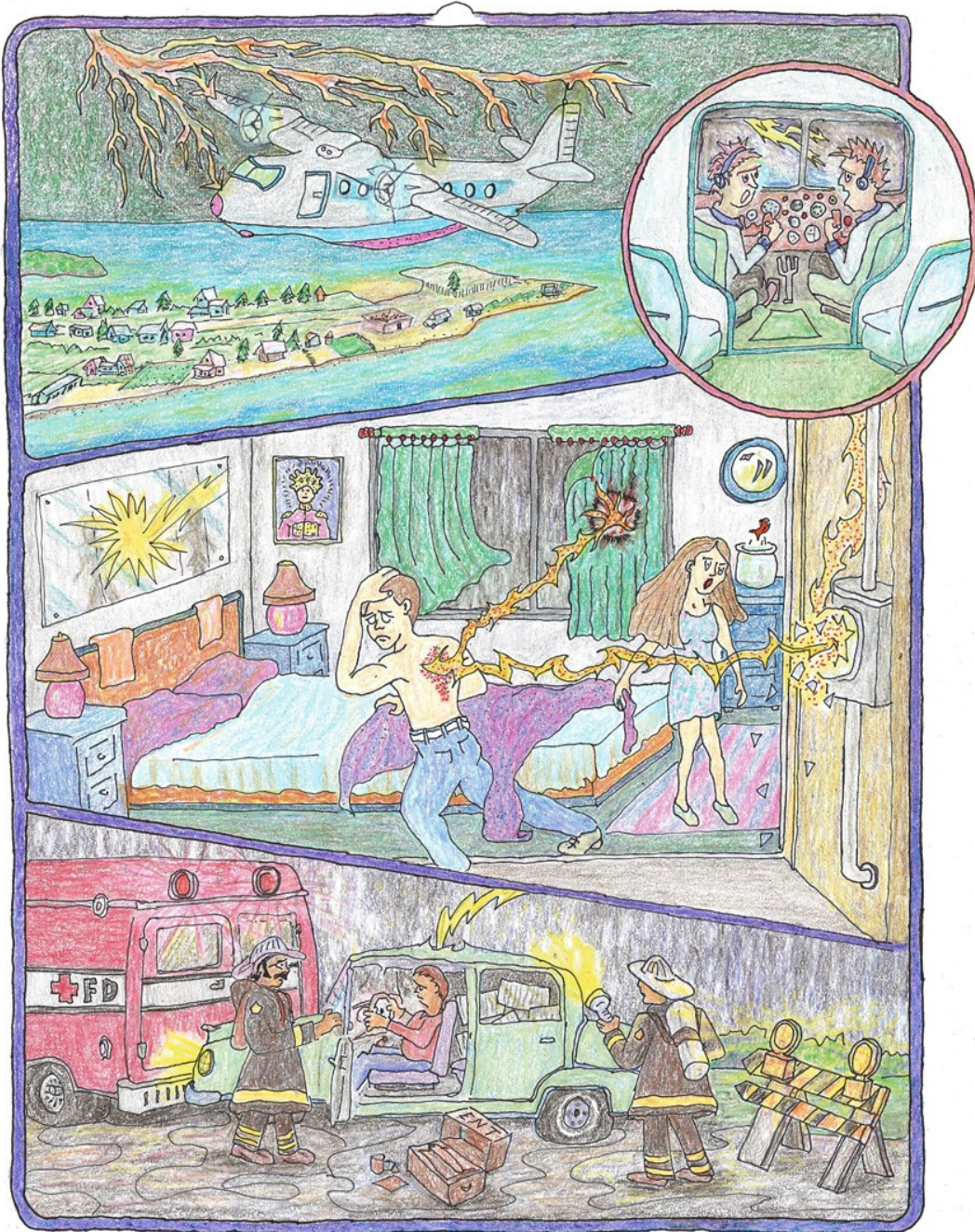
*There were several fires in the building where he lived. He called the Jesus picture the "miracle picture" because it hung on the only wall to survive a fire at its last residence. Perhaps it saved his place from burning down!*





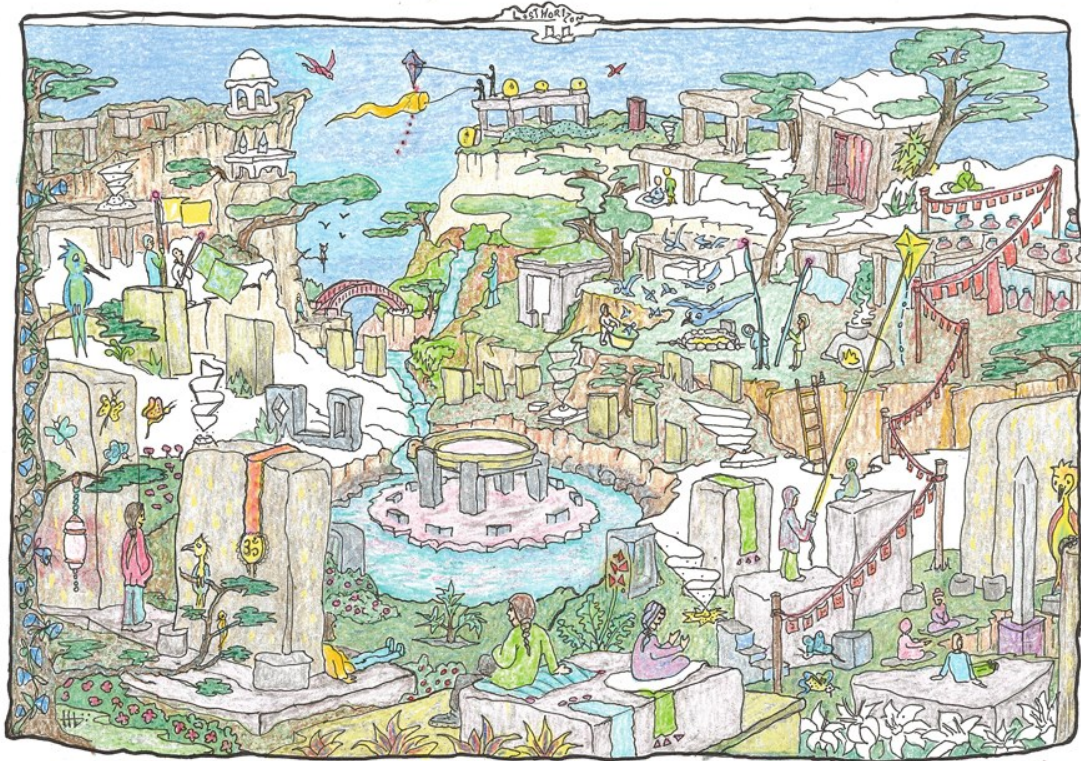
*I believe this scene is from healing sessions that he either did or attended.*



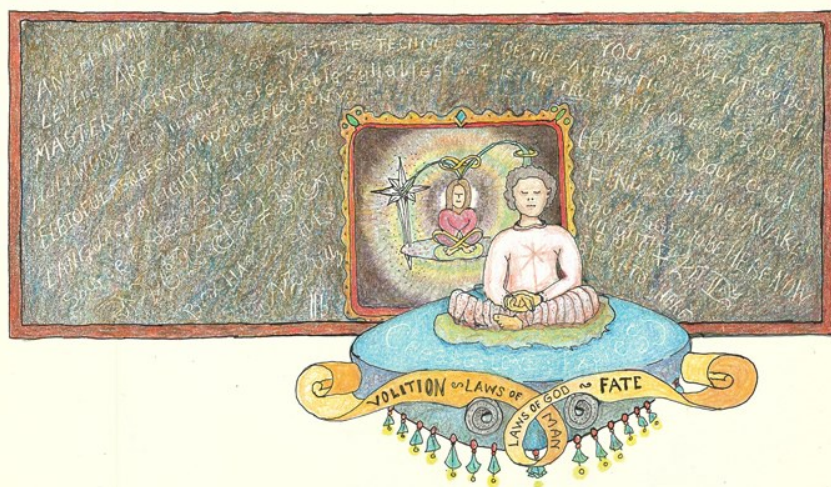


*Douglas survived being struck by lightning THREE times!*



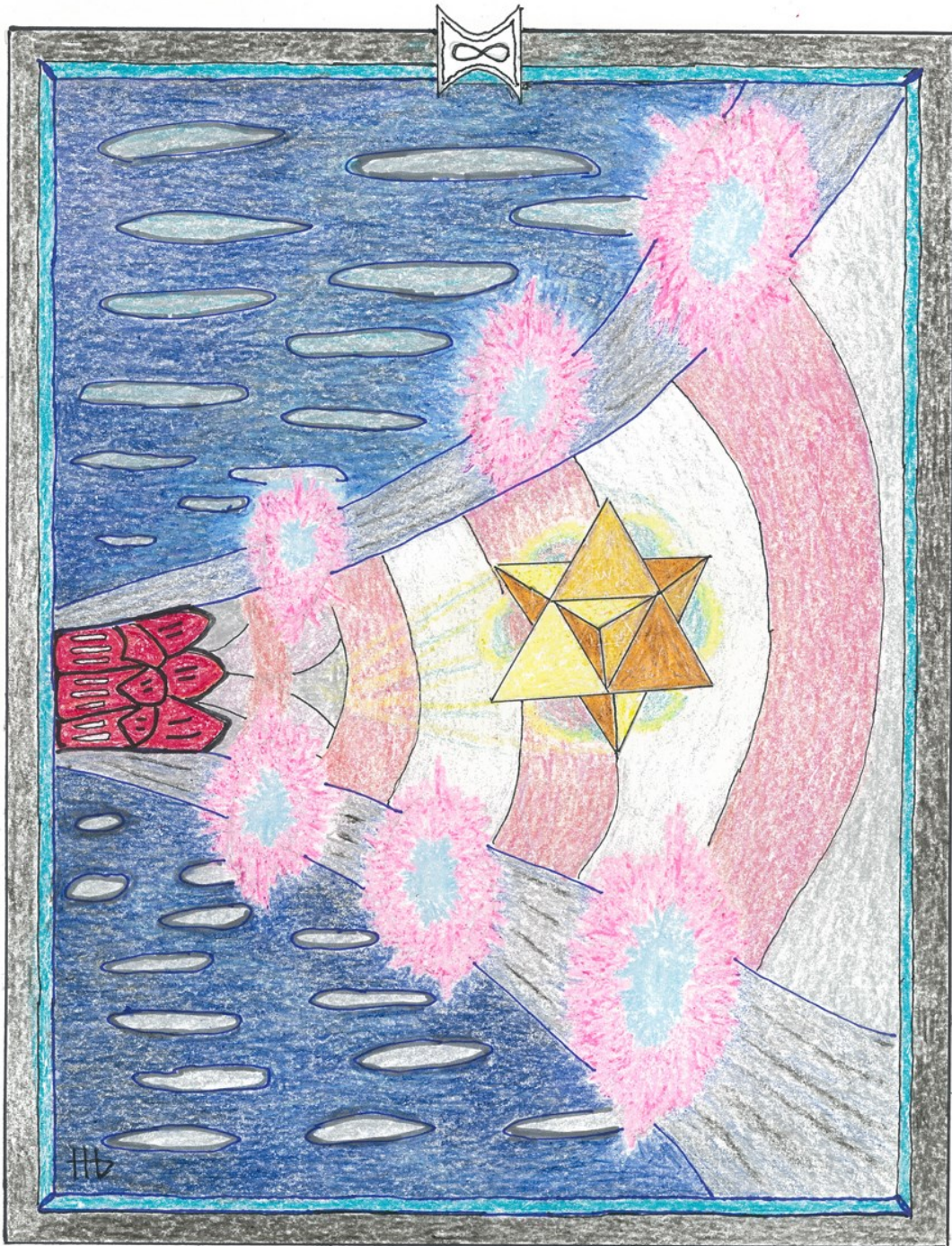


*This scene appears to be from another past life, perhaps in Atlantis?*



*Douglas said that the only constant in his life was meditation.  
He often received "downloads" of energy and messages from Upon High.*





*This appears to be a merkibah, also known as an interdimensional vehicle of light, that we can travel in with our light body.*



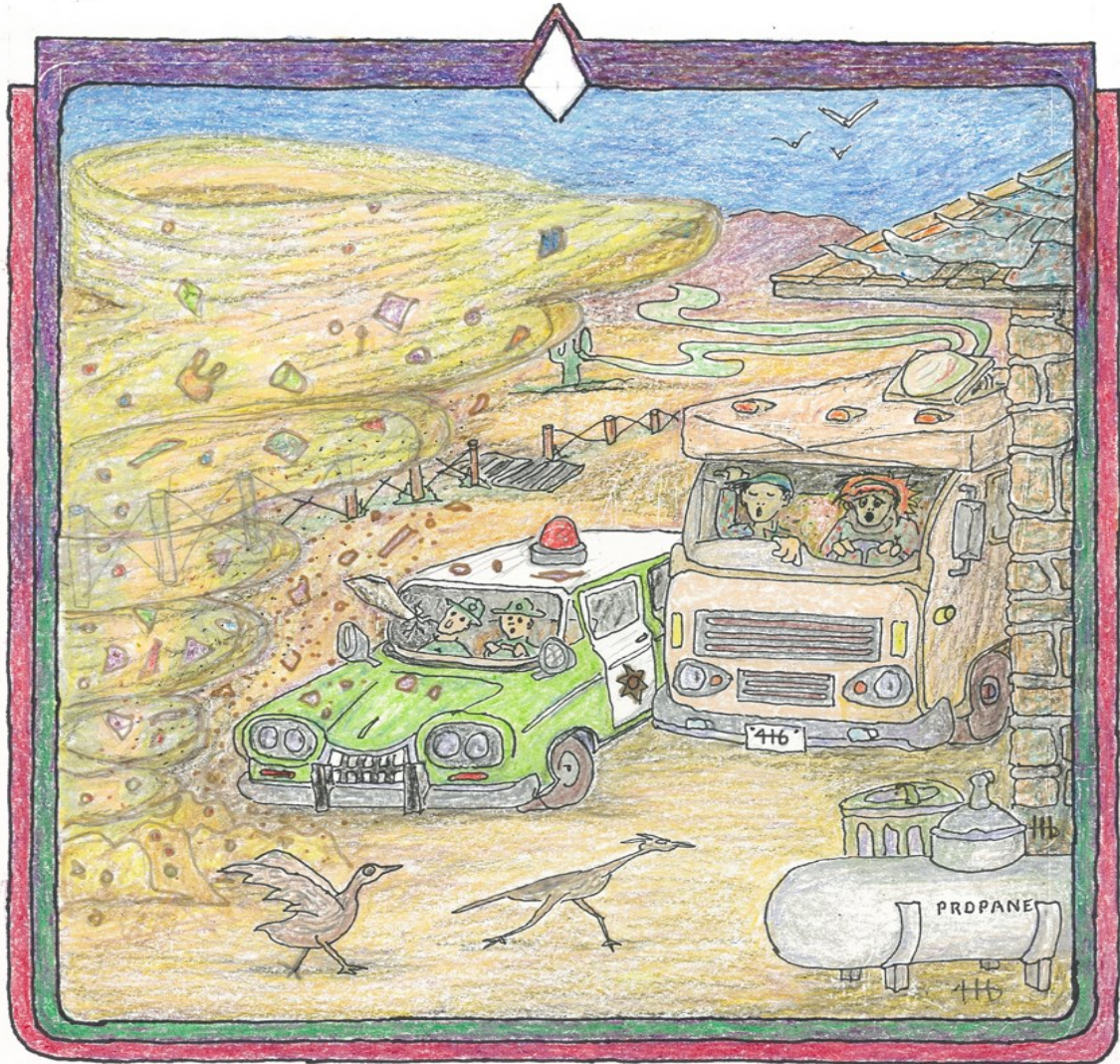


*This appears to be a past life memory when he was a shaman who worked with animals and crystals.*



*Skinny dipping during his hippie days.*





ST CULTURE OF COAST TO COAST HITCHHIKING 1968-73.  
D 10/21/22 Film 10/23  
TELL YOUR STAY PAGES LOOK WIF  
T 1971 (416)

*This is a memory from his hitchhiking days when they saw a huge dust devil cross in front of them with a chicken and a road runner fleeing from it.*





*This is a huge totem pole, but I'm not sure if it has a past life connection for him or not. It looks like a machine of some kind, also.*