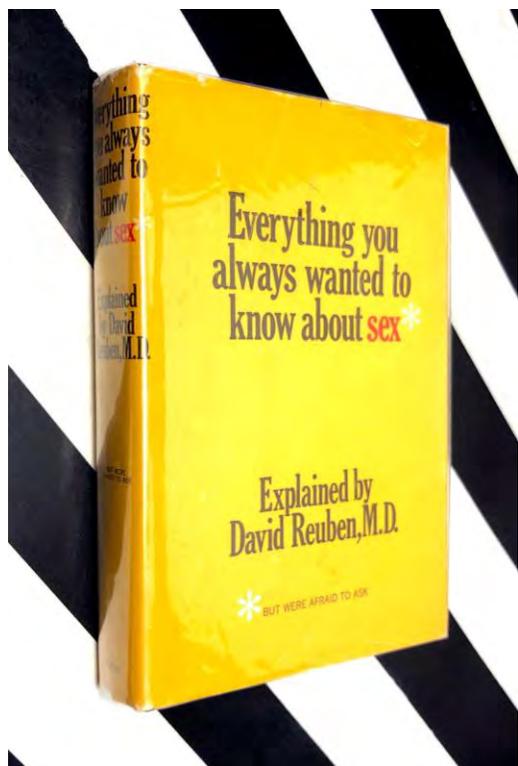


## A further section, from when I was sixteen - *Salvation and Yearnings*

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Would you believe, I keep on thinking of (hopefully interesting and significant) things. Now I'm almost to 50,000 words, and just at the point of meeting my spiritual father.

Here's a further section, from when I was sixteen.

Plenty of soap-opera-ish relationships unfolded. Louis and Ana invited a famous artist friend, Jim G, and he bought the land across Thompson Creek from us, and down the hill from them. He built a simple cabin, then began work on a big elaborate place, that (in the Japanese style) was to utilize heavy close-fitted wooden beams.

Our close neighbor Patty had a sister, back east, who was severely handicapped. When the sister passed away, her caregiver, also a young lady, came out to visit. She fell in love with Jim G, they quickly married, and she moved into his cabin. Until her mother showed up, and over a course of weeks, successfully pried them apart. Sorry to say, Jim G never did get very far with his grand new house.

Down the road toward the east, far at the end, one couple Danny and Charity built a cabin. They did not own the land, and hoped to eventually claim squatter's rights. The real owner was a man named Kaptyn Dozier (sp?), pronounced Captain. We met him one day, when he came along to have another look at his land. Turns out he was fine with the young couple staying there, but no way could they ever claim that land.

Soon a young lady named Star came along, the older sister of Lewis, a kid I'd gone to school with. Small World Department! She settled on that same eastern road, about halfway down. Before long she met Peter and Nancy's friend Keith the welder, and they got married.

One time Tom W's brother came to visit, and stayed a few days. He planted some marijuana along the creek, near our house, and considered that a real coup. (I think it was him, memories are fuzzy.) We did not have the heart to explain that, with no protection, banana slugs would eat the sprouts. Maybe even enjoy it, I have no way to know.

But I did plant some of my own, protected by wood ash and little chicken-wire fences. Just three small plants. Still, enough to yield maybe two ounces, after drying. I came to enjoy the stuff, but actually it was a very bad idea. Mostly because the smoke affected my sinuses, so for many years after, I'd get infections which brought on terrible and hard-to-help headaches.

Dad had warned us kids against smoking cigarettes, and we never did. He even kept a bargain to give us each \$100 when we turned 21. By then I'd long since quit marijuana, and regretted its use every painful day.

Elaine and I continued to stay involved with 'EST' in San Francisco. This involved a class that was held about once a month. Not being drivers or having a car, we'd hitchhike down 101 into the city, and stay with a family we'd gotten to know, Liz W and her teenaged son David. They had a house near the famous Haight-Ashbury district, and we'd usually stay two nights. I don't think they charged us anything, but Liz expected us to do household chores.

One night she held a party, with several local friends. Which included use of their awesome wooden hot tub, out back. With, it soon turned out, nothing on. Which, for me, was the usual procedure anyhow. Elaine, wisely, stayed away.

Good idea, as these were urban libertines, what my dad would call swingers, and the party soon morphed into mutual massage and then a small-scale orgy. Liz just watched that part, as did I, until I got nervous and retreated upstairs.

Even with no direct experience, I'd read Desmond Morris's *The Human Zoo* and David Reuben's *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex*, so I did know what was going on, well enough.

Had I wished to join in, nobody would've objected, yet once again I dodged that particular situation. I was astonished at their expertise, with rapid simultaneous orgasms, and got turned on enough I might've caught on fire. However, it just didn't seem like a preferred situation for me. The next day, Liz had little

to say about it.

My spirituality remained intact too, and as Alan Bloom speculated in his famous tome *The Closing of the American Mind*, those factors may have a direct link. My believing friends would say that I was being protected, by guardian angels and my better ancestors. Hard to prove, however, these events and many more were highly improbable.

Another improbable event occurred on the way back. At that time, and in the next several years, I hitchhiked some long distances, and never once had any trouble. Quite the opposite, and more on that later.

This time, Elaine and I had trouble catching a ride north, much less any long ones, so by the time we got to Santa Rosa it was getting dark. I think we'd have been all right, maybe scrounged up money for a motel room or bus tickets, but it turned out we never had to.

We were thumbing for a ride at the wooded College Avenue freeway entrance to 101, when our neighbor Andre came along. His yellow pickup truck had a permanent cover over the truck bed made of wooden shingles, you couldn't possibly miss it. Of the hundreds of places and times he might have stopped for gas, that was his exact choice. Dare we ask, was it a mere coincidence?

Other friends made their way north. One of Tom's brothers, from Tucson, came to visit, along with his girlfriend. They stayed a short time, and overnighted at my cabin, even though my clueless nerdy self didn't clear out for them. (In fairness, several other couples I knew didn't care whether I was around or not.)

Sheldon hitchhiked up a couple of times, as did Eric, who brought along a Berkeley friend named Doug. They'd enjoy the back country quiet, and we'd hike around. They'd also sample my homegrown.

Mom was always a rolling stone, and Jan was hardly a model of prim stability. They would travel, up to Eureka and perhaps beyond, leaving me and Vikki as the adults of the household. Neither of us being close to 20 years old. This included our ongoing day care a.k.a. school activities.

This responsibility once developed into a major event, a very serious occurrence, which was covered heavily in the Eureka and Ukiah newspapers. There were also TV crews, though I did not see them directly. Thank God all this didn't have a tragic outcome.

Each day we had a horde of kids over, who played inside the cabin or across the dirt road in our garden area. We had plenty of food and toys and all, never a problem in a year or more.

One day Judy, a new neighbor, showed up. Her son Karl was just 3 years old, and she wanted him to try out our school. Mom and Jan were away, and I do not recall if my sisters were around. Vikki and I, probably one or two other folks, were there to take care of everyone.

Karl was intently playing inside the cabin, and the rest of us went across to play outside. Judy came by to check on Karl, then departed, We saw her and waved, but did not speak. But! Young Karl decided to follow mom outside, and went out the east-side door, out of our line of sight. He was obviously set to follow his mom home, but headed in the wrong direction.

We went back in the house shortly thereafter, and did not see Karl, thus assumed his mother had picked him up. It wasn't for another hour or two that Judy came back, and the shocking reality set in.

Quickly we gathered neighbors, and looked all over the house and surroundings. No Karl. Then one man found the same toy I'd seen him playing with, laying in a mud puddle, maybe a quarter mile to the east. That's when we understood what had occurred.

Hippies or not, we called the sheriffs, and they called in the Army. Literally. Well, the National Guard, with a helicopter that landed in the meadow by Peter and Nancy's place. The state Job Corps, then known as the Ecology Corps, sent in teams of young men. As the news spread, many more volunteers arrived, along with a disaster-scene chuck wagon to feed everyone.

Someone selected Marco to ride in the helicopter, to help direct the search from above, and I (slightly jealous but I brushed it off) lead ground search teams. We continued, with brilliant flashlights, calling Karl's name until well after dark.

Nothing. Yikes. Three years old, alone in the dark.

In the morning, with hundreds of people available, the search method changed. We formed long lines, with each person spaced a few feet apart, and combed the woods intensively. We reviewed the situation, and I re-confirmed that Karl had certainly been walking east.

So the longest line yet, set off toward the dead end, and across the forest toward Whitethorn. I picked one

of the hardest spots, right at Thompson creek, with cold pools and fallen logs and such. Turned out that Marco's sister Della made the opposite pick, at the far north end of that same line.

Thankfully her hearing is much better than mine! She was moving along the hillside, and heard something. So she broke off the line, and headed farther uphill. And there he was! Hungry and scared and cold, but otherwise okay.

Only a few people had radios, so word spread slowly. We'd emerged at the road, and nuns at the abbey fed the searchers a snack. Their prayers were answered, as we all heard the good news. A photo of Karl and Della being reunited appeared in the Eureka newspaper; I still have that clipping. (It's the one that refers to the Big House as a commune.) One searcher was also a stringer for the Ukiah Daily Journal, and they ran a full page article, which I did not see until years later.

We continued our daily school activities, with all the regular kids, and no further problems. Not even any serious illnesses or injuries. Karl did not return, and of course, we understood.

### **Salvation and Yearnings**

Speaking of school, I was officially a student there. No classes at all, however mom did present me with books I was expected to read. Which, of course, I gladly did. So I graduated in 1974, however I never did get a physical diploma. Not that, as it turned out, people were asking me to present one. I have no idea how many Americans have graduated from school at home, without being home schooled, but I am among that number.

Much later, just in case, I got a GED from the Hayward Adult School, with top scores. Not that anyone wanted to see that either. Religious volunteers, and truck drivers, are about as blue collar as can be.

Along with books, we had a battery powered record player. Good old 45 vinyl albums, mostly popular bands of the day. I know many of the songs by heart. But I wasn't a serious fan, knew hardly any details about the bands or vocalists or the songwriters.

I kept on studying science, and participating in 'EST' and, while in the SF Bay region, a few other places.

Via Eric F and friends, I was introduced to an Irish lady who described herself as a Druid priestess. Shannon was quite a character, soft spoken but making extraordinary claims. Her young husband was Mormon, and I'd see LDS-sister volunteers at their apartment in Oakland. Our acquaintance continued for about a year, and later on, my mother and others got to know her as well.

We loved to stay in Mendocino, and briefly, had a dentist there. One time, several of us were driving on into San Francisco, and we passed through the little town of Boonville. Just east of town a simple roadside sign caught our attention. It read: International Ideal City Project.

Interesting! What was this place? Nobody in sight, just a long driveway. We had places to be, and Google had yet to be invented, so we continued on our way. We would all be seeing much more of the place, within two or three years.

As for religion, my interest continued. A local (actual) commune, along the road into Whitethorn, became a Christian hangout. I cannot remember the exact history, or what they called the place, but it was affiliated with larger (now famous) Lighthouse Ranch ministry near Eureka.

These eager folks were called Jesus Freaks, or in hindsight, Jesus People, the sort of successful youth ministry that numerous denominations hope to replicate today. I was invited, and with dubious curiosity, attended a service there.

One young man, who I didn't know very well, invited me to accept Jesus and be saved. From my reading I understood the notion, yet this had never been put to me before. It was quite proper Protestant doctrine, presenting the Roman Road a.k.a. the Four Spiritual Laws. So I got on my knees, and in all sincerity, prayed together with him. Boom! Done. Saved for eternity.

At one point they held a major revival, with an evangelical preacher and a Catholic authority, perhaps the region's Bishop, as speakers. The Catholic fellow emphasized divine mysteries. "We do not know, cannot understand," he proclaimed. "God is mighty and we are mortal, and we will never know. All of this proves how very great God really is."

Okay, well, that's one way to look at things. My silent response was, God gave us a brain, so why not use it? Decades later I was exposed to some impressive Catholic scholarship, however, none was in evidence that day. I gathered more and more questions, kept reading and visiting other religious places, and found no satisfactory answers. Yet, somehow, I always felt confident that I would find them.

All the rest of my life, when a concerned Christian asks me, "Are you saved?" I can respond with candor, "Yes I am." A great relief to us both.