



Rainbow

By Phil Coyote

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This book is dedicated to my mother. She didn't know where I was most of the time during those years. Neither did I.

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Introduction by Jodey Bateman

These are memoirs of the counterculture by my friend Phil Coyote from when he was almost ten years old at the Los Angeles Love-In in the spring of 1967 until he was 22 in 1979. Above all this is Phil's account of his personal experiences with an important social movement, the Rainbow Family, which Phil first encountered when he was 14 in 1971.

In the mass media we hear that the counterculture is over and the fads that were its surface symbols have either disappeared or become commercialized and irrelevant. Yet the Rainbow Family, which has done so much to give direction and coherence to the counterculture, is still very much alive. Every year as many as 20,000 people come to the national Rainbow Gathering, which is held in a different wilderness area each year over a period of several weeks centering on the Fourth of July. Starting in 1975 there have been regional Rainbow Gatherings in various parts of the United States, some of which have drawn as many as

8,000 people. Gatherings based on the Rainbow Gatherings have been held in Canada, Mexico and several European countries.

There are now young adults whose parents got involved in the early days of Rainbow who were born into Rainbow and have spent all their lives connected to Rainbow. There are people who spend the year going from one regional Rainbow Gathering to another until they hit the National Rainbow Gathering in the middle of the summer.

Yet most of the publicity that Rainbow gets is in rural newspapers in the areas where the gatherings take place. Most news of Rainbow travels by word of mouth, especially in the informal network of communes, cults, places that give food and shelter to the homeless, music festivals, barter fairs and hang-out places from which Rainbow draws so many of its supporters.

In this informal network the counter-cultural tradition is still alive and being passed on from one generation to another. The mass media paid much attention to the counter-culture in the years from about 1967 to 1972 while many of the young people who were involved were from well-to-do backgrounds. As soon as most of these affluent youth left the counterculture for other things, as far as the mass media were concerned the counterculture ceased to exist. To a large extent, the counterculture has been left in the hands of people from low-income backgrounds like Phil Coyote or Barry Plunker, the remarkable leader of Rainbow who Phil discusses in his memoirs.

Certainly the counterculture youth of the 1970's who troop through Phil's memoirs are not the "gentle people with flowers in their hair" of the 1967 song. Most of them would have hooted at the idea of being any such thing. Their lives were harsh, even if better off than previous generations of their families.

Phil's generation of working class youth grew up in the late Sixties and early Seventies, at a time of record prosperity and economic security such as the American working class has not known since then.

Many working class women felt economically secure enough to break free of marriage relationships that they found oppressive. Divorce hit an alltime high. These women were economically secure enough so that they did not go into desperate poverty that divorce would have brought them in earlier decades. But their incomes were still relatively small and the difficulties of being a single parent were great. Many of their children left home and took to the road like Phil.

Phil and the others had spent their whole lives in a society that took things like social security, unemployment insurance, welfare and food stamps for granted.

Although most workers had not joined unions, enough of them were unionized so that wage levels were high, even for non-union workers. Phil and his friends may have been only barely aware of things like social security and labor unions, but they could see the effects. The society was so prosperous that it produced an excess great enough to support Phil and other dropout youth - even in such forms as supermarket dumpsters full of nearly fresh food.

With the greater economic security, leisurely ways of life, which had been characteristic only of upper class youth and artistic fringe groups began to spread downward to upper middle class youth, then to the lower middle class and finally to low income youth. The economic security of the society as a whole gave them the freedom to move around in relative comfort. Stressing that word relative. Phil and the others know all too well about hitchhiking across hot desert or in cold, heavy rain.

All over North America and Western Europe, a generation of the welfare state produced young people who felt that they did not have to get to work immediately or stay in an educational system that was a preparation for work. They could take their time and find out what they really wanted out of life - not acting out of desperate survival necessity. This is the core of the counterculture.

One of the things that Phil and his friends looked for first was an extended family to compensate for their often-shattered nuclear families.

The Rainbow Family grew out of two rallies of youth in what was called the Gathering of the Tribes held in 1968 and 1969 in a canyon near Nederland, Colorado. A man named Don Kelsey called these two rallies. Each of them drew about 2,000 people. Barry Plunker and others who had been to the Gathering of the Tribes felt inspired to call a rally of their own. Barry had the dream to do such a thing since childhood. For practice, Barry and his associates coordinated the Vortex Free Rock Festival near Portland, Oregon, over Labor Day weekend of 1970.

They took the name Rainbow from the Rainbow tipis the Eagle Scouts loaned them to use for their coordinating center at the festival.

By the time Phil got involved with Rainbow in 1971, plans for the Rainbow Gathering in Colorado were well underway. The original Gatherings of the Tribes in Colorado had been held at the well-publicized height of the counterculture. But by 1971, the counter-cultural morale was getting low. Although most counterculture people would say that they were "not political", the counterculture had innumerable connections with the left wing youth movements of the time. Many young people in these movements were burning out as the war in Vietnam

went on and on and they seemed to be unable to stop it. In the campus fringe areas where left-wing movements had thrived and counterculture runaways had looked for shelter, crime increased. Relatively benign and euphoric drugs like marijuana and LSD were replaced by much more harmful substances like speed, heroin and the old favorite, alcohol. People wanted to blot out consciousness, not expand it.

The Rainbow Gathering of 1972 was a tremendous revitalization for the counterculture. About 20,000 people showed up. Barry and the others had not expected to call another gathering, but then cult leader Patterson Brown sent out invitations for a 1973 gathering on Indian land in Wyoming without telling the Indians about it. Barry and his associates from the first gathering had to find a place for a gathering site in a nearby national forest so that the Indians would not be offended.

From 1973 through 1977, the gatherings were less than half as big as the first gathering in Colorado - sometimes less than a tenth as big. Rainbow at this time seemed relatively small and intimate.

Phil and his friends felt like an extended family, secure in their position in the Rainbow scheme of things. They cherished a relic called the Stone of Many Faces which Phil and others carried around for whoever wished to view and touch it.

But then the 1978 gathering in Oregon drew 20,000 people. Phil and his friends, who called themselves the Rainbow Security Camp, were reprimanded for alleged irresponsible behavior that could have been ignored or easily corrected in the earlier, smaller gatherings. The security camp young people felt disoriented by the thousands of new people who did not even know of their existence, much less acknowledge what little authority the security camp possessed.

After the 1979 gathering in Arizona drew crowds about as big as the Oregon gathering, Phil pulled back from Rainbow and began to try to find a new security in religion and a wife and child. He still kept in touch with Rainbow, but did not participate nearly as much. The story of Phil's life from that point is his to tell - but it should be mentioned that the Stone of Many Faces, which meant so much to his network of friends in the early days of Rainbow disappeared about that time.

Rainbow Gatherings still draw crowds of 20,000 or so. The Rainbow Family is still a force among working class youth for environmentalism and against racism and war.

Preface

In the summer of 2001, I received a surprise visit from a very old friend of mine, Denny Deubel. He had tracked me down at my high desert abode. He arrived unannounced; no advance phone call, no letter. I think he liked the spontaneity of this sudden appearance. Just like old times.

I'd just finished my first draft of this book, and after lots of exchanges of updates on the goings on in his life and mine, I led him to my Macintosh, where he proceeded to read and read and read.

After he was done reading, Denny said that the narrative had helped him fill in some blanks and he praised me for accuracy. That was a pretty good compliment, coming from someone who had been in on some of the adventures that I recall in this volume, and who personally knew a lot of the history and the characters recorded herein.

After spending the night Denny drove off, just as suddenly as he had arrived. He was living in the back of his pickup truck. Just like old times.

"You are your own guru," Phil Youth from "You are your own guru," Phil Youth from *The Rainbow Oracle: How To Blow Minds and Influence People*, 1972.

Chapter One: First Hits

It was the spring of 1967. My sister and her husband were enmeshed in the alternative world. Olivia and Bill wore their hair long: hers was down to her waist, his was shoulder length. Pot, acid, booze, uppers, and downers were some of their recreational pursuits.

Olivia went deeper into the hip scene than just drugs and partying. She even left Bill for a short while, changed her name to "Angel", and lived on the Sunset Strip in Hollywood when the hippies were there before the Strip ended up reverting to sleaze.

Bill joined her in going further into the hip world when she returned from her trip on the Strip. They would go to see their favorite rock bands in concert and had all of the latest albums. Their house displayed psychedelic art posters, incense was burning, and hanging bead barriers rather than doors separated rooms.

Bill would take Olivia and I when I was almost ten-years-old to the Love-Ins at LA's Griffith Park. I got my first hits of hippiedom there. There'd be a rock band blasting and all the "freaks", as hippies called each other, would be sitting out on the grass as the band rocked out. Wine bottles and joints were passed around freely. Off from the crowd a little, longhaired dudes threw Frisbees back and forth.

And the eccentrics were always around:

"Caesar", a graying, older man, would show up in red ballet tights with a Roman style olive leaf crown on his head. The freaks would raise their hands in the fascist style ancient Roman salute and yell, "Hail Caesar!" whenever he came on the scene. I saw Caesar leap out in front of a hard rock band and proceed to dance sensuously as he pulled out about a half dozen joints, light them all up at the same time, then proceed to pass them out one at a time to the crowd. They went wild. "Hail Caesar!" they cheered. Caesar used to be called Bungalow Joe. He was a gay dude, and lived on an S.S.I. check, probably for being nuts. My sister managed to get a job at Social Security before she went whole hog for the hippie trip, and she worked at the office where Bungalow Joe used to do business. One time he leaped up on her desk and started dancing on it o The Social Security workers were aghast by this strange, sudden expression of spontaneous theater. As he danced, he sang: "Hello my little pretty, I'll sing you a little ditty!"

Two communists were always around as well. General Hershey Bar and General Wastemoreland. These middle-aged men wore army uniforms that had plastic toy jets attached to their epaulets and protruding from above the visors of their hats. Any student of the Vietnam War can recognize the hilarious parodies of these two men's names. They would pass out antiwar and communist literature and pat dudes on the back. "You're wearing the best uniform there is," they'd assure. "The civilian uniform." I really doubt these dudes were part of any KGB plot. It was all street theater and the hippie climate gave eccentrics a chance to perform.

But it wasn't just the Love-Ins or my sister that influenced me. The media constantly was showing student unrest, GI drug use in Nam, and other alternative happenings. Underground radio carried the "heavy" songs from the albums of the Doors, the Beatles, Steppenwolf, the Mothers of Invention, Hendrix - the stuff AM radio wouldn't touch. Student strikes were even occurring at the local high school. Clearly, something was happening. I wanted to be part of it. By 1969 at twelve years of age, I became part of it. I was now getting high. I felt accepted when I took drugs. I belonged. My home life in the LA suburbs stunk. The establishment was plastic, phony. Why did I have to attend school to achieve a future that might never come? I could die tomorrow. Why did I have to go out to kill or be killed, fighting people I did not know for some rich dudes sitting behind desks? Why participate in wars? Voting? Questions filled my mind.

LA was plastic. Where are aii the freaks? They began to disappear from Hollywood by late 1970. hit the road several times in order to find them. Put out my thumb and got to Big Sur. A few freaks. Went south of San Francisco. I got discouraged and went home.

I tried again in the summer of '71. An older man who looked just like Tim Leary picked me up in a Volkswagen van at an on-ramp on Interstate Five, north of LA. He had a test tube of some real fine pot, red in color. We smoked the whole thing. It was Panama Red. I stayed the night on his couch in Oakland.

"What are you looking for?" he asked me in the morning.

"I'm looking for the freaks."

"You need to go to Berkeley."

He then gave me a ride to Berkeley. It was amazing. Just my cup of tea. There were Freaks everywhere.

I met a hippie named Charlie who sold candles. He understood what I was looking for. "You can come to the commune with me," he offered with a smile. At last, bingo! Charlie had shoulder length blonde hair, a scrubby beard, wore cloth patched pants and an army jacket. His feet were shod with army boots. He was a pretty easy going guy and a rather pleasant fellow, soft spoken with an agreeable smile.

We hitchhiked that afternoon across the San Francisco Bay towards the commune. On the way an old former bread truck stopped to pick us up. The driver had a long beard and hair he could sit on. The truck was loaded with freaks, seekers, like me. And the pot flowed freely.

We got there, out in the woods outside of the little coastal town of Bolinas. It was a new experience for me all together. People walked around nude. Brown rice and veggies were the mainstay. There was a communal house where everyone met and I was welcome to stay there.

But within a week the commune was breaking up. A man named Peppie seemed to be a leader. He was heading to New Mexico with some of the people. A lady named Cora Lee had a school bus and was heading north to Oregon. I chose to ride with her, as did Charlie, and Boogie, a curly haired guy. I'd heard that a lot of freaks were in Oregon, so I felt I was heading the right way.

We got up to Mendocino on the northern California coast. We partied there with a lot of freaks on the beach. Wine, pot, flutes and drums playing, driftwood shelters to crash in. The waves breaking, the forested hills near the rugged cliffs providing awesome scenic backdrops. Heaven.

Cora Lee was a very smart lady. She was middle-aged but pretty, with long black hair and well defined features. She spoke about spiritual things mostly. The main

topic of conversation was how off the wall Mick Jagger and the Stones had been. Their latest album, "Let it Bleed", was very negative. And Jagger's behavior at the Altamont Speedway concert, where the Hells Angels had served as security and killed a black man who had allegedly pulled a gun on Jagger during the outdoor event, was not good, Cora Lee, Charlie, and Boogie agreed. He had created the vibes that led to the tragedy, they concluded.

Chapter Two: Caravan to Congress

I do not recall whether we got to Oregon on that bus. It's a blur. I did get to Oregon, however. I just don't remember how. Maybe pot really did put a damper on my memory.

I arrived at the Rainbow Farm, a commune outside a little town called Drain, out in the woods. I heard a sound. "OOOOMMMM." What is that sound? I followed the sound into the main communal house, a rustic, wood, two-story structure. I went upstairs where the strange noise of a multitude of voices emanated from. Seated on the floor were a large circle of freaks, men and women, hands joined around the food that was set on a low table in the center. "OOOOMMMM," the chant continued. I joined hands. I wondered what this was all about. I knew nothing of Hindu Sanskrit.

Then it ended. A young man with long black hair and striking features, handsome to behold, began kissing the hands to his left and right, a ritual that was followed by everyone else. He had a look of bliss on his face - peace. His name was Garrick Beck. He was the son of Julian Beck and Judith Molina, the originators and leaders of the world famous guerilla theatre troupe, the Living Theatre. Garrick was married to Karen, a beautiful young woman, and they had a child, a girl named Eden Star. They had opened up their hundreds of acres to the freaks and were preparing for the World Family Gathering, an event that was to occur on a mass scale somewhere near Aspen, Colorado on July 1st, 1972.

The talk about the gathering was everywhere at the Rainbow Farm, the seat of the Rainbow Family of Living Light. The talk often contained expectations that something spiritual on a big scale would occur. This often led to ridiculous fantasy. For instance, one man I met claimed he was going to arrive at the gathering on an elephant.

When I went to the kitchen at the communal house one day, I met the cook, Dominic. He was a short, stocky man, with dark hair and a beard, with lots of body hair. He was drunk on wine and chasing a woman around the food preparation table, laughing. When he calmed down he wished me well as I

caught a ride heading to the next place I'd heard about, the Rainbow House in Eugene, Oregon.

The Rainbow House, located on Lincoln Street, was a strange abode. On any given evening about 150 persons could show up for dinner. People roamed about the two-story building in the nude. Residents were careful to be discreet with marijuana, however, due to the presence in town of undercover cops. Yoga exercises were often being practiced. It was the ultimate crash pad.

It wasn't long before I met the main player at the Rainbow House - Barry Eugene Adams, aka Barry Plunker. He was a psychedelic hipster with a redneck background. Barry was from Helena, Montana, and spoke with a country drawl. He had dropped out and carved out an alternative life in '66 and '67 in San Francisco's Haight Ashbury district, living, among other places, in a tree in Golden Gate Park. Barry later headed to Washington State into the Cascade Mountain area, near the town of Marblemount, where he participated in helping draft resisters get to Canada as part of a hip outfit called the Outlaws.

Thereafter he met Garrick Beck, who hung with a group of hippies known as the Temple Tribe. Together, fueled on by a mystical experience where a rainbow appeared, they had come up with the idea of the Rainbow Family, meaning all races, religions, walks of life, were one in the pursuit of peace and love worldwide.

Barry was unique. His hair was red and curly, never longer than shoulder length. He wore wire-rimmed glasses and had a scruffy, slight beard. His pants were often leather, usually he had a vest on, and sported a crumpled hat that had a myriad of spiritual and social statement buttons pinned around the brim. Barry carried a homemade instrument that he called a plunker, hence his name. It was formed like a sitar somewhat, though far less complex, with a coconut shell serving as the base, a stick serving as the neck, with tennis racket strings stretching from the base up the neck, connected at the far end to tuning pegs. Plunker would strum the strings and tell stories which he would use to convey mystical sermons of wit and wisdom. He was domineering and egotistical at times, but never controlling. He clearly never wanted to be in charge, he desired recognition. Thus he was not a boss. He tried to be in the spotlight. He was a ham. It was all theater to him, and he loved it.

Barry had a blue school bus and was going to be heading out in it on a caravan to spread the word about the World Family Gathering. Plunker explained that he expected 144,000 people to show up at this gathering that he said would be near Aspen, Colorado. Councils would occur there where differences would be resolved and visions would be shared. Something great, something cosmic would

happen. The caravan would spread the word through invitations he had printed. They would be distributed to everyone we met, and even displayed in the most personal way. He and others wore a silk-screened version of the invitation on the backs of their coats or vests. We would journey to colleges, to freak areas, to the Hopi Indians. We would go to the U.S. Congress to present the invitation. No one was our enemy, he said. We would defeat hate with love. The cops, the establishment, the government, had not yet awakened to this. Because was an underage runaway who wanted to be free, I would speak to Congress about minor's rights, he said. And when he said everything, he was a type of pied piper. Or should I say pied Plunker?

He would strum the thing and tell of his ideas like a master weaver of a grand tale. My new name, Plunker said, was Phil Youth. I was to represent the wayward youth of America, he decreed. I accepted the position.

I was going on a magical mystery tour with a colorful cast of characters:

Our driver was an ex-Bandido outlaw Biker named Hawkeye. He was short, skinny, and grubby, with dark shoulder length hair and a scruffy beard. Hawkeye loved to listen to the bands Pink Floyd and Hot Tuna.

Byron was an older middle-aged man with long hair and a beard. He liked to get drunk. He also made rings out of silver spoons he collected that he hawked at fairs, swap meets, and on the streets. He'd saw off the spoon ends and pound the spoon handles around a spike with a hammer, then a gavel, to make them. People just loved them, crowding around him as he set up his makeshift shop, thrilled to watch him create these unique pieces of jewelry, anxious to buy them.

There was Jeff and Shelly, a young freak couple.

There was Barefoot Bob. He was a Mormon hippie from Utah who could preach up a storm, as I would soon find out. He never wore shoes, hence his name. With his reddish blonde long hair and beard, Bob looked like a kind of John the Baptist, and acted like one in front of a crowd, feverishly spreading the word about the World Family Gathering.

And there was Doc, our grungy, long-haired mechanic.

I was wearing an army jacket, standard hippie ware in those days, and I was most pleased to sew the Rainbow invitation on the back of my jacket before we embarked on our sojourn. I can't remember it word for word, but I'll paraphrase the document somewhat: it said that we who are children of God, friends of nature, and of humankind, calling ourselves Rainbow Family Tribe, humbly invite:

The document proceeded to name many types of people from several walks of life, all of whom were invited "out of love." When it got to politicians, they were invited "out of charity." And then it proceeded to describe the gathering and its proposed location near Aspen, Colorado, stating that it would occur on 3,000 acres and that 144,000 persons would attend. Of course, the number came from Saint John's Revelation. And the name of the gathering, New Jerusalem, came from that book as well and possibly from Garrick Beck's Jewish roots (he had some familiarity with the mystical tradition of the Kabala). My guess would be that Barry wrote most of the invitation, as it is loaded with his humor and vocabulary, and that some of Beck's ideas were incorporated, as Beck was very influential.

We embarked, heading north to Seattle, where we stopped at the commune called The Church of Jesus Christ at Armageddon, aka The Love Family. This group of about 300 people followed a man called Love Israel. His name by birth was Paul Erdmann. He had been born in Germany, and had been forced like all German younger children under Hitler's dictatorship to be a member of the Nazi Jungvolk, a branch of the Hitler Youth for little kids. He spoke both German and English, and enjoyed taking trips to Switzerland. Of course, Love did not identify at all with his early exposure to Nazism or anything racist. Love really believed that he and the group of people with him were the embodiment of Jesus Christ, and that their mission was to usher in an age of peace and love.

Love was their leader. Everyone who joined the group initially received from Love a Hebrew name out of the Bible prior to baptism. Upon baptism, Love granted the convert a virtue name: Richness, Integrity, Strength, etc., which was to signify the converts' asset to the rest of the group. This religious group lived in twelve houses in the then posh neighborhood of Queen Anne Hill. We stayed at the house of Serious, one of the elders. Serious looked like Abe Lincoln in a robe (the Love Family wore robes a lot). We were staying at his house because our proposal concerning the gathering was serious business. The Love Family always did things this way.

When we were served dinner by some ladies (the women were submissive to males in this society), Byron, quite drunk on Love Family homemade wine, remarked to Barry: "Did you see how horny the ladies are?" Perhaps he was right. Celibacy before "sanctioning", as the Love Family called their marriages, was mandatory.

After many pipe-fulls of pot, and much discussion of Barry's dream in the presence of Love Israel, the attendance of the Love Family at the gathering was assured, despite the differences between our groups. "You are a different tribe," Love assessed. "We're just different tribes, that's all."

Among ourselves, we felt that the Love Family was different, all right. They were known to have formerly gotten into a circle, held hands, and had one person put a wire into an electrical outlet and allow the juice to run between them. They had also been known to huff teluol, a powerful chemical solvent, a practice that actually had killed two of them. The two member's bodies were left for three days in anticipation of a resurrection. But these practices were no longer done at this time. That was reassuring.

I got off the caravan for about two weeks. The rest of the caravan went on to other places in western Washington. I had met a beautiful young lady named Shelly at a house where some of us were staying in Seattle. The caravan left without me after I had made it clear that I was staying with this lady. But the caravan was going to drop by the house to see if wanted to continue on the trip, in about two weeks. This lady had a big test tube full of cocaine. Her and I snorted most of it. I got so high I crawled down the hall (we were upstairs), and was at the top of the stairs thinking about walking down. It looked like a mile down. I couldn't attempt it, so I crawled back to the bedroom. For two weeks we were having a lovemaking marathon, not just in the house. We went up to her cabin in the rural area of Alger, near Bellingham, and spent some time. We also went to a big outdoor rock concert at Sky River. But like a prolonged one-night stand, the affair ended.

When the caravaners returned, I was back at the Seattle house, ready to roll.

A strange scene occurred on the outskirts of Seattle. At this time we had a pickup truck traveling with the bus. The bus was broken down. We had both vehicles parked in a roadside pull-off area where Doc was working on the bus. I was in the parked pickup with two of our entourage and we had commenced to getting high. We had loaded a big chillum pipe with dope, lit it up, and had the bag of pot in plain view on the dashboard as we proceeded to smoke up a cloud. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a police patrol car pulled over right in front of us. The two officers were looking directly at us. We were so shocked we didn't even move to hide everything. We were caught red handed. "Shit! We're busted!" one of my smoking buddies blurted out. We were frozen with fear. But the cops didn't arrest us. They proceeded to pull out their own dope, roll a joint, light it up, and smoke the thing. Then the cop driver flipped us the peace sign and the patrol car spun off and away.

We headed to California and stopped by California State University in Chico. There we did a performance on campus. It was out on the green amidst a large crowd of students. Barry had formulated a play called "Pied Together" to advertise the gathering. It was a kind of mystical rambling about some children who were hunting for freedom. He would narrate the play in his country drawl

while he plunked his plunker. The climax of the show was when the children found "Freedom", an actual character in the play. We all had our parts in the act and lines we'd memorized. Anyway, "Pied Together" was a hit, and we concluded this performance by passing out invitations to the gathering.

After the play, Barefoot Bob hit center stage. His eyes were aflame as he preached about the gathering, starting by reading the invitation at a yell. Next he paraphrased sections of it in his sermon. He went on, "The only thing that will stop me from spreading the word would be a bullet in the head!" The crowd went wild. Chico was won over, just like that. The gathering was the talk of the town in the alternative community of Chico.

We headed to San Francisco where we all had parts in a movie in Golden Gate Park. Some alternative producer was behind this gig, and it was really weird, one of those art expressions. We all put on sheets and would run and leap through the park. Perhaps the vial of LSD we had on the bus made it seem like this performance made sense. We flooded Frisco with invitations. We also stayed with the Good Earth Commune in Haight Ashbury, where the media interviewed me. I admitted that we used psychedelics as sacraments. Whitey, a member of the commune, told me that he never would admit to taking psychedelics to the media. I was soooo naive.

To Berkeley. We stayed with the Earth People's Park folks. They had a big house. Basically, this was one of the back east origins alternative groups noted hipster clown Wavy Gravy had been involved with. They had opened up a free land community in Vermont called Earth People's Park. Well, every kind of crazy thing was going on in that house. Soft drugs to hard drugs, a maze of rooms where people came and went, rock music blared, and the parties never seemed to end. A lady from this group fell in love with me. She would accompany me on the caravan as far as Arizona. Once there, she found that the feeling was not mutual, so she headed back to Berkeley.

South to LA. We went to the show "Hollywood Squares" right while they were shooting in the studio. Barry pranced right down the aisle and gave invitations to the celebrities while they were seated in their squares. Such audacity! It caught them completely off guard and blew their minds. Plunker was well received.

Into Arizona and the Navajo Reservation. By then we had picked up a freak couple that were on their way to the Steve Gaskin Farm, a commune in Tennessee. Barry had a relative who had married a Navajo lady, and the couple lived out in a Hogan on a Mesa. We stayed there, and it was a real trip to meet Barry's Navajo in-laws in such a distinct, scenic area. The sweeping spaces of the land, the beauty of the culture, all made an impression on me.

We ate some peyote. Then we headed for the Hopi Reservation to meet with the Hopi tribal elders. The stuff was hitting as we entered the ancient stone town of Oraibi, the oldest continually occupied settlement in North America. Plunker spoke often of the Hopi. They were popularized with mystics by the book by Frank Waters, "The Book of the Hopi". These indigenous people had a history of prophecies, such as the coming of the white man, the atomic bomb, the thermonuclear threat, and the end of this age and the beginning of a new one. They were expecting a True White Brother to come who would usher in the new age of peace. He would have the Hopi's missing stone tablet and would be identified by this item. The Hopi had at first mistaken the Spaniards to be such at their advent hundreds of years ago. But the Hopi soon learned that this was not the case when slavery and abuses occurred.

We were invited into a kiva. This was the underground, circular ceremonial shrine. It was during the ceremony of the washing of hair, a traditional rite wherein the elders prayed and would instill values to the young men. Though we had the woman who was heading to the Gaskin Farm with us, the Hopi made an exception in this case, allowing a woman into the men's kiva, a first in their ancient history, I was informed. Barry invited them to the Rainbow Gathering. An elder who was over a hundred-years-old then spoke to us through his interpreter, a younger man named Thomas Banaca, who recorded everything the old man said on tape. The elder looked ancient and worn, like the high desert that he was a part of, yet he had an air of vitality. The old man spoke in Hopi. Banaca translated: "You young white people speak about changing things. But you must first change the white man, who has used the earth for materialistic gain." We exited the meeting feeling that we had received confirmation for our mission.

The bus headed east into Arkansas. When we pulled over to take a piss stop one night the local cops came to harass us. I was in bed with a lady when they came on board, flashlights glaring. Though I tried to hide under the covers, it didn't work. As a runaway, I was under arrest. My amazing stint on the bus came to an abrupt end. Phil Youth was never to speak to the U.S. Congress.

I was taken to the jail in Fort Smith. I started trying to carve out one of the bricks with a nail I'd found to work through the wall and escape from this old, dingy place, but didn't get very far. I was sure I'd be there forever.

A plainclothes cop came to question me. He asked me if I took LSD and smoked pot. He asked me if I masturbated. Strange question, I thought. I denied everything. He was an older man with a face right out of a scene from "Deliverance", with an accent to match. "We're gonna take ya down to the pea farm and put ya to work, hippie boy," was how he closed the interrogation.

Two things this guy did find out during his questioning were where I was from and who my mother was. He showed up again the next day and said I was going to take a bus home. I was overjoyed until he drove me up to the gallows where Judge Parker, the famous frontier "hanging judge", used to host his necktie parties. "I oughtta take ya up there right now and hang ya, hippie boy," he scowled.

Being handcuffed around this guy only added to the feeling of terror he instilled.

Chapter Three: Fallen Angels

Somewhere en-route to LA I slipped off of the bus and stuck out my thumb. I eventually ended up there anyway, and experienced meeting the weirdest bunch of people I ever met - the Manson Family.

Why did I go to meet the Manson Family? Why did I keep meeting with them over about a three-week period?

When I got to LA the hip scene was virtually over. The street scene on the Sunset Strip had degraded into a center for male and female prostitutes. Venice was a junkie haven. Topanga Canyon had ended up full of big money drug dealers.

Maybe the Manson Family are the last real freaks left in LA, I reasoned. I also wondered if Charles Manson had been framed. How could I be sure that the establishment had been correct in saying that some of his commune had really committed those crimes? Maybe they were all innocent, peace loving hippies. Boy, was I naive.

I was staying with my mom and had seen on television news how the Manson Family was holding a sidewalk vigil in front of the Hall of Justice, where Manson was awaiting sentencing in downtown LA. I thought, I'll find out the truth for myself. I hitchhiked to the vigil site.

There, I met Lynette Fromme, aka Squeaky, a wiry, redheaded gal who was leading the Manson Family during Charlie's incarceration.

I also met some more of the Manson Family girls, Country Sue, Gypsy, Sandy, and some blonde guy whose name I cannot recall. The Manson Family had all recently shaved their heads in protest of Manson's recent guilty verdict and now had stubble growing.

Squeaky was barraged by questions from me.

"Is Manson innocent?"

"Yes, he is."

"Did the Beatles' "White Album" really contribute to the crimes he was accused of?"

"No. That's over played."

"It's wrong to kill people. I believe in promoting peace and love. What do you think?"

She said that she did not necessarily agree, that killing people was not always immoral. This sent a shiver down my spine. I sensed that something was wrong. I had to find out the truth.

I continued. I returned for another visit. Squeaky would do karate-like kicks into the air when there would be a pause in our conversation. "The Soul rules," she would say. She liked to say how children and animals were more in tune with things. She said that Manson was their father. It all seemed like brainwashing. Little did I know at the time that every time she was talking about "The Soul," that she was referring to Manson. I was soooo Naive.

Squeaky ushered me over to a book that they called "The Book of the Dead". It was a handwritten narrative, quoting or written directly by Manson. The book described a situation called "The Last Run". These were instructions for the Manson Family to return to Death Valley on motorcycles with the liberated Manson at the helm. Following the instructions of "The Last Run" were the signatures of each Family member. By the names of Family members were, written in blood, swastikas by male names and an x by each female name. Carved on the foreheads of Family members via paper clips were corresponding symbols.

Another item they had was Manson's hand embroidered vest, solid psychedelic embroidery that the girls worked on. The vest had locks of hair hanging on it from each Family member. I thought the embroidery looked neat.

"How do you do it?" I asked.

"We just do it. The Soul rules," Squeaky replied.

"But where did you learn to embroider so well?"

"You can do anything you set your mind to do. It's like if someone tells you that you can't sing. Then you can't sing 'cause you think you can't sing. But if you believe you can sing, you can sing."

Squeaky had something in mind for me to do. She wanted me to go into the Hall of Justice with her. I was barefoot and asked her about that. She said it didn't matter. So I went in with her and she led me into an elevator. We were going up to the trial, she explained. The elevator opened. A group of formally dressed men, probably the prosecution team, I don't know, were standing in the hall outside the courtroom. "Go up to them and tell them we want our father back," she instructed. I didn't know what this was all about, but I was up for the gag. I went up to these guys and said, "We want our father back." These guys in suits and ties looked frightened. If only I had been smarter and less naive, I wouldn't have gone along with Squeaky's instructions. I guess that when you're a kid you're pretty dumb. Anyway, someone in the group of men noticed my bare feet and said that I wasn't allowed in the courtroom. He told me to exit the building as well, which I did.

Squeaky gave me a bunch of Charles Manson's poetry and his album that he made with the Family, called "Lie". Its cover was a parody of the famous Life magazine cover and had the same photo of Manson's face with the weird stare. When brought this stuff home, my mom had a real cow. She did not want me hanging out with these people at all and forbade me to visit again.

But I did. I was talking with the Manson girls in their van when I started laughing at some of their rhetoric. I don't remember what was so funny. Suddenly one of the girls looked at me with a real weird stare, similar to the Manson stare. "You won't be laughing when we have heads hanging from our belts!" she shouted. I realized instantly that the question was answered. These ladies were indeed into a philosophy where human life had little or no value. I could not hang out with them at all. Again and again I had told them that I believed in peace and love, that love would overcome hate, that violence was not the way. And I had invited them to the Rainbow Gathering. It seemed that my words had fallen upon deaf ears. I diplomatically excused myself and left for home. I burned Manson's poetry and smashed his album. I was done.

Chapter Four: Wheeler's Ranch

I had gone to northern California, finding my way to this large hippie enclave near the coast. It was a beautiful place, Wheeler's Ranch - hundreds of acres in the woods between the towns of Sebastopol and Bodega Bay. Gorgeous hills and canyons, with about three hundred freaks living on the land in A-frames, shacks, and small rustic houses. Here it was primitive. Wood stoves, kerosene lamps, and privies the rule of thumb. Its owner, Bill Wheeler, had deeded this land to God, in this way opening up Wheeler's Ranch as free land - a place where anyone could go to live. It was not a commune; rather, it was an anarchistic community. Changing my name to Poet, I moved into an A-frame with a dude

named Guitar Rick, who, true to his name, played the guitar and sang rock songs at the many parties that always were happening.

Life at the ranch was easy. There always were government commodity foods to eat, or natural, home grown food from the gardens. Just about everyone you visited with greeted you with pot or acid, or coffee and tobacco. You'd hike up and down the trails and dirt roads and always make a friend, or a lover. I took some acid with a lady named Linda and fell in love with her. We'd make love here, there, and everywhere.

The other people I met at Wheeler's Ranch stand out in my memory. I'll never forget them:

Maverick was a guy who said he didn't know his name or where he was from. He lived down a canyon called the knoll. Eight-foot tall marijuana plants that he fertilized with dog blood and guts surrounded his shack there. He would hunt stray dogs with spears he had fashioned, eat the poor critters, and wear their skins as clothing and their teeth and claws as jewelry. One time I ate some of his dog jerky and dog stew. It wasn't bad. Maverick always had a wild, beast-like look in his eyes, kind of like a stray dog. You are what you eat?

Another person I won't forget was Alabama. She was a lady in her forties who lived in a shack with her young son. The place wasn't kept up at all. She and her son always had acid. Problem was, the kid was only about eleven-years-old. He smoked dope as well. I saw a lot of that back in those days.

There was a dude named O.B., an older guy, probably in his sixties back then. He lived in a nice cabin, grew pot, and always gave you some for free if you asked.

Then there was Dirty Dan and Vickie, his old lady. Dan was kind of hyperactive. He and his clothes were never clean, true to his name. Vickie was pretty and kind of like Dan's opposite. She was clean, very mellow and laid back. He was out going and talkative. Dan always had some dope or acid to give away. Of course, there were so many people at Wheeler's Ranch that I cannot recall them all here. Let's just say the place was very lively.

Strange things happened at Wheeler's. There was a communal cult there called The Oak Grove. Their name came from the fact that this cult lived in some pretty nice rustic, oak houses that were on a hill in an oak grove. The Oak Grove people had a leader, I don't remember his name, but he appointed leaders who each had one of the astrological signs, which meant twelve of them. Most of us did not know much about the Oak Grove folks because they kept to themselves.

Whenever there was a party they'd show up and sit in a row facing everyone, while they and everyone else were on acid. Very weird. It made regular hippies feel like these folks felt they were more spiritual than everyone else at Wheeler's.

I remember when Bill Wheeler held a big meeting to have the Oak Grove people leave the ranch. It was on Hoffy's Hill, a high point where meetings, parties, and potlucks were routinely held. About everyone who lived at the ranch was in attendance. The usual pot, food, and communicating was going on. Then Bill Wheeler told some Oak Grove big wig that he was giving him and the entire Oak Grove cult a school bus and that they had one day to board the bus, lock, stock, and barrel, and drive off, never to return. The Oak Grove guy argued and resisted. Bill jumped on top of him and started beating the guy up. The Oak Grove dude lost the fight and basically yelled uncle. He agreed, under force, to drive off within a day's time with the Oak Grove group in the bus. What had caused Bill Wheeler, a man noted for following the path of Ahimsa, nonviolence as taught by Gandhi, to react so forcefully and violently? The possible answer was spoken in hushed tones. Rumor had it that the Oak Grove wackos had performed some sort of blood sacrifice. Somehow Bill had learned of the rumor second hand, so the story went. Bill was outraged and shocked by the allegation. So was I. But I never learned the details. And I doubt Bill ever learned them all either.

On the lighter side, the appearance of Mellow Jello was quite amazing. Dirty Dan had a vial of this new drug. He explained that it was very expensive to make because it was a chemical or compound synthesized from the Sassafras Root with certain B vitamins added. Mellow Jello was gray in color, a jelly-like substance about the thickness of honey. One drop sent you off for three days. Dan showed up to turn on about fifty people, including myself, at Hoffy's Hill around the campfire one sundown. He told us that Mellow Jello had been formulated for the Hell's Angels to help them get peaceful. And it was made by Owsley's chemist! He then administered the drug. When it took affect, I noticed that it was the ultimate high. I was ultimately high in a new way. I felt totally at peace and in love with all humanity, totally blissed. My worst enemy was my friend, who I loved. I thought: Wow! -If only we could get this stuff to the UN, all the wars would stop!

After a night of conversation around the campfire, we watched the sunrise. Turning towards the west we could see the Pacific Ocean and hear a foghorn. Sitting on the west side of the campfire was Dan's beautiful old lady, Vickie, pretty as a picture, with the sunlight glimmering on the sea behind her. Every man in turn, myself included, gave her a little kiss, and then walked down the hill to our homes. It was a spontaneous ritual.

What was strange was that after the first day of the Mellow Jello high the next two days were drowsy ones - only the first twenty-four hours were super euphoric. Was this drug really made from the Sassafras Root, or was it an early form of the drug, Ecstasy, mixed with something else? I never saw this substance again, and really doubt I'll ever learn the answer.

After the Oak Grove weirdos left, their homes were left open for a while. One night Linda and I slept in one of the vacated houses. Near where we were sleeping a young, long-haired, bearded man was crashing in the nude. Tony, an older man who was a drunk, sleazy and obnoxious, came in the house and tried to get fresh with Linda. He would not take no for an answer. Bravely, the bearded nudist came to Linda's defense. He jumped on top of Tony and beat him up. Tony left the house, vowing to get even with me because I had thanked the young fellow for stopping him.

Tony got even, all right. The next night he ripped off O.B.'s pot patch, taking all of the plants. He had taken my boots, unbeknownst to me, from my little shack while I slept. When he ripped off the patch he planted my boot prints at the scene. He then planted some of the pot stems under the floor of my shack, below a trap door, during the next day when I was out and about. Tony sealed my fate when he put a friend of his up to helping me to "discover" the stems. His friend said they looked old, somebody must have long since left them there - finders keepers. I fell right into the trap. I was soooo naive. I started boiling the stems to make THC containing resin, which I smoked openly with guests and passersby.

Someone, via Tony, told O.B. that I had taken his pot. O.B. took me to his pot patch site and compared my boots to the prints. They matched. He was convinced that I had ripped him off.

Next thing I knew I was told by an envoy that the whole community was having a meeting in the knoll to address the issue. It was imminent. I had fifteen minutes to show up. I smelled a lynching in the making. .Maverick hunts and eats dogs, no telling what he and other folks might do to me, I thought.

I ran almost five miles, all the way to Bodega Bay, where I stuck out my thumb. My time at Wheeler's was over. Poet had ceased to exist. Phil Youth had escaped.

Chapter Five: The Rainbow Gathering

I was really tired of having to lay low because I was under age. I decided to try something. I convinced my mom to write a letter wherein she stated that I was under the care of Barry Eugene Adams. I had told mom what a great guy Plunker

was and that he really watched out for me. Realizing that she couldn't keep me home, she did it. Then we went and had it notarized. It turned out that this little document did just fine with the cops. They'd ask for ID and I'd also show them the letter. They no longer would take me in.

I got back to Eugene and found Barry Plunker. The Rainbow House had disbanded. It was the early spring of 1972. I was now fifteen-years-old. We were crashing at a big, two-story pad.

I met a hip, straight looking guy out on the street who had a new car and was heading to Denver, Colorado. I asked the man if he could take two riders with him. No problem, the dude said.

Plunker was at the crash pad asleep in a chair early in the morning when I gently shook him, asking, "Are you ready to go to Colorado?"

He woke up and looked at me with a very surprised look, "Let's go," he said.

We were off!

Arriving in Denver at the forefront of the Rainbow Family invasion of Colorado, we first went to the Order of the Holy Family, a mystical Episcopalian monastic order headed by Father John, a priest who had a deformed hand. The symbol of this order was a cross supported by a peace sign. The brothers and sisters at the monastery were sworn to poverty, chastity, and obedience, and were committed to peace and helping the poor. Father John was very receptive, providing us with food, lodging and support. Soon due to Father John's help, we found a large, older apartment complex where we could stay in a community room. It became Rainbow Headquarters.

Once established, we went to the state capitol building. We stated that we needed to speak to the Governor concerning the gathering. Instead, a meeting with the Lieutenant Governor and several other officials was arranged - rather quickly, I'll add. We were ushered into a large room. Waiting for us at a long table were the Lieutenant Governor and other officials. Because we were Universal Life Church ministers (these credentials could be obtained for a small donation to this Modesto, California organization) we had introduced ourselves as Reverends from the onset of the encounter at the capital. We were addressed by this title throughout the meeting, which turned into a question and answer session. They asked the questions, and Plunker answered most of them.

"Who are the Rainbow Family, Reverend Adams?"

"We are brothers and sisters from all faiths and walks of life, all races and creeds, worldwide, but we have no set membership and no leaders. We include all people seeking peace everywhere." "Where is this group based?"

"In the human heart."

"Where is this gathering to be held?"

"Somewhere near Aspen, Colorado."

"How much land and whose land will be utilized?"

"Three-thousand acres. Whether on private land or the public land, we don't yet know."

"How many people do you anticipate will attend?"

"144,000." This last answer really raised some eyebrows from the panel.

We next journeyed to the headquarters of the U.S. Bureau of Land

Management where we met with some top officials from the Bureau and the U. S. Forest Service.

"What basis do you have to justify having this gathering on federal public lands, if indeed that is the course that is taken, Reverend Adams?"

"The First Amendment to the Constitution which guarantees freedom of religion and the right of the people to peacefully assemble."

"How will you manage sanitation?"

Plunker then described slit trenches where the excrement would be covered with ashes, then buried. He then squatted down to demonstrate how the trenches would be utilized. The fed rangers couldn't help but chuckle at that, Plunker was so outrageous.

"I'm kind of concerned," the head official began. "There are a lot of folks up in these mountains who wouldn't take too kindly to a gathering of this sort up in the woods. Some of them may bash some heads."

Plunker looked over at me and whispered, "He's talking about his friends."

We headed back to our headquarters at the old apartment building. There we never had a dull moment. We had other hipster folks crashing in the community room, and all of us would socialize and party with the renters, most of whom were hip or strange:

There was a real mellow African American guy staying there. He later ended up convicted of an armed robbery and going to prison. I still wonder if he really did it.

And there was a wino hip dude named Mountain. He'd lie around and drink himself stupid. Word had it that his liver was gone and he didn't care.

But perhaps the strangest guy there was Mohammed. He was the heavy weight boxing champion of Persia, he said. He was muscular and bearded, and had the classic Middle Eastern accent.

One night Mohammed got really drunk on wine. He sat cross-legged and entertained us all with Barry's plunker, strumming the thing while he droned out Persian songs in Farsi, his native tongue. We then ate some dinner, standard hippie style, rice and veggies. Mohammed pointed to some spilled grains of rice. "This is sin," he said.

Mohammed then tried to commit some real sin. He invited me into his room and then suddenly slammed and locked the door. Barry saw this move and came to the other side of the door. "Mohammed, what are you doing?" "I want him for the night, Barry!" answered Mohammed.

"Mohammed, we don't do things this way in this country."

"But he is pretty, and I want him!"

"No, Mohammed! That is not our way in America! Now open the door and let the boy go!"

Mohammed realized the gig was up. He opened the door. "Why is this not your way here?" he asked, drunkenly leaning on the open door and staring at Plunker.

"He's like my son," Barry said, staring back.

"Oh, that is the same in Persia. I am sorry."

Barry and I took some acid one night and he asked me to design the cover for a book that would be known as "The Rainbow Oracle" or "How to Blow Minds and Influence People". On the cover he said that he wanted a map of the gathering camp. I complied and designed the map of the first Rainbow Gathering, New

Jerusalem - Mandala City. Barry said to consult the Book of Revelation in the Bible and see how many gates there were. Twelve it said. I decided on the New Mexico Zuni Sun Sign to serve as the map of the layout of the gathering. The circle in the middle represented the central council area. The twelve gaps between sixteen rays, four of each which stretched to each of the four directions, represented the twelve gates where greeters were to be posted. For reading material, plenty was submitted by lots of people. I contributed a poem. In it I coined the phrase, "You are your own guru." I signed it "Youth". Barry was pleased. We soon had the book published and distributed. A dude named Greene had artistically incorporated my Zuni Sun sign gathering layout on the cover. The volume was well received by the hip community, immediately becoming a collectable cult classic.

Barry and I made a side trip to Boulder to see Allen Ginsberg near the University of Colorado. The hall was packed. The event consisted of Ginsberg and several others chanting mantras while they were seated in the lotus position on stage. Barry pranced down the aisle about midstream through the show and approached Ginsberg on the stage, handing him an invitation to the gathering. Ginsberg was polite and receptive to Plunker, even familiar acting with him as the two engaged in conversation. Barry had now invited the beat poet. I doubt it was their first encounter. After all, they both had been in the Haight during "The Summer of Love".

Our side trip to Boulder having proved eventful, we returned to our headquarters in Denver.

Then Garrick Beck showed up. With him he brought a new relic - the Rainbow Stone. It looked like sandstone and was about the size of a football. It was kind of flat in appearance, about the size of a football around, and looked like its front and back was joined by a smooth layer in the middle. On its front there were about seven faces that looked carved and kind of Olmec or Mayan in appearance.

Garrick now told his story of how the stone tablet was found on the Rainbow Farm. "We were given some Hopi corn. We went to the garden and began planting the corn in the Hopi way, the men put a stick into the earth, and the women dropped kernels into the holes that were then covered up. When we were done a rainbow appeared which stretched west to east from the garden to a tree stump on the hill. We walked up the hill to the stump. The stone was sitting there on it. Everyone asked each other if they had seen this object before. No one had." Clearly, Garrick was pointing out that this could be miraculous. And, of course, everyone had the same thought: That this could be the stone tablet that

the Hopi were waiting for that the True White Brother was to bring to them, ushering in a new age.

Barry surely felt he was a primary candidate for the post of True White Brother. Many of us felt this way. Even the crumpled hat and red cloak he wore seemed to match Hopi prophetic descriptions of the hat and cloak that the True White Brother would wear. But those hopes were soon dashed. With Barry and Garrick in the lead, we embarked on another caravan to the Hopi. When we got to Oraibi, the elders, upon viewing the stone, were quick to state that this was not the stone that they were expecting. Instead, they said, it was our stone.

Meanwhile some important developments ensued. Chuck Wind Song, a Rainbow person who was searching throughout northern Colorado for a viable gathering site, hit pay dirt. In early June at a café in the small Rocky Mountain town of Granby, Chuck met a local rancher who, legend has it, had years before seen the Rainbow Gathering in a vision. The rancher owned land high in the Rockies around Strawberry Lake, and up on Table Mountain, the latter being a sacred site to the Arapaho Indians. The rancher agreed at the café meeting to open up his property for the gathering.

Thereafter an initial group of hippies went up to a large meadow near Strawberry Lake owned by the rancher and began setting up for the gathering. As the crowd grew, most of the gathering site included the Rocky Mountain National Forest surrounding the rancher's meadow, with the meadow serving solely as the main council area.

Within a matter of weeks hundreds, then thousands of freaks were camping up at the gathering site. What had started as a trickle of hippies was turning into a flood coming into Colorado - a state where hitchhiking was illegal. Soon we were hearing rumors that the jails were filling up with incarcerated hitchhikers.

Then we got word that local law enforcement was blockading the gathering, setting up roadblocks and not allowing persons or supplies to go to the site. Barry and I went up near the site. We headed to the parking lot, where a sea of buses, cars, and vans were assembled. Thousands of freaks were waiting there to be shuttled up to the path, where they would hike miles to get up to the gathering site. But this all depended on if the authorities lifted the blockade. We didn't know whether that would occur. But we believed it would happen. We just didn't know when.

Meanwhile Garrick Beck and others were busy routinely leading large groups of people on foot on a twenty plus mile hike through the mountains, bi-passing the blockade to the gathering site. These hikes were going on continuously, making a

major dent in the effectiveness of the blockade. Perhaps thousands of hippies stealthily entered the gathering site this way.

Finally the authorities gave up. The blockade was lifted. The vehicles were allowed to shuttle people and supplies to the entrance path where the long hike up to the gathering site was encountered.

It didn't mean that harassment by the cops was over, however. The cops stopped the panel truck I got a ride up to the entrance path in. They shined a flashlight inside to view the about twenty or so hippies. "We love you!" all the riders yelled in unison as the light was flashed from face to face. The cops quickly withdrew. It was just too much.

Multiple thousands of freaks poured in with no end in sight. Up the path they went - it seemed like an endless stream of freaks heading into the gathering site.

Kitchens to feed the people were quickly established, staffed by volunteers. The kitchens, set in different locations in the woods, became like small villages with their own unique flavors. There was "Little Harlem", staffed by African Americans, where a real soulful cultural scene was reflected by food and conversation; "Love Kitchen", where the Love Family dished out not only food but good vibes; and "Rainbow Kitchen", where a lot of people like Barry, Chuck Wind Song, Garrick, Dominic, Byron, myself, and others who had been working on the gathering for some time camped. At every kitchen the smell of marijuana smoke permeated the air. Singing and instrumental accompaniment, all acoustic, on guitars, congas, plates (played by forks and spoons), and dancing, often continued into the night until early in the morning.

The councils held at the large meadow near the lake were democratic events. Anyone could speak. But the rules were thus: a wooden staff was passed to the speaker. No one could interrupt the speaker who held the staff. The speaker could speak as long as she or he wanted. The council circle was always huge, with hundreds or thousands in attendance. Usually council sessions started and concluded with all present joining hands and chanting Om. The council meetings had many speakers. It might be someone mystical, praying or sharing. It could be someone political, like when Yippie leader Jerry Rubin spoke at length, explaining the significance of the black flag of anarchy, which he displayed.

A huge party was underway everywhere at the gathering. People took drugs, went naked, talked, related, made friends, saw old friends, and played.

Some got kind of bizarre - like Goldfinger, from the STP Family, and some of his cronies. I'd met this character in Berkeley. He wore a trench coat and gloves. He

always had a sock and a can of gold paint. He would spend his time spraying the paint onto a sock and huffing the stuff. He was called Goldfinger because his gloved fingers were gilded-looking due to this practice. You'd be walking down a path and Goldfinger would be huffing and falling over off a log he was sitting on, and so would his pals.

Most folks went for more healthy thrills, however, like the hot rocks heated sweat lodge near the ice-cold lake. Getting plenty cooked in the steam bath and jumping into the lake was super refreshing. I did it. It felt fantastic when you hit the water, and you'd come up after being submerged and here was this beautiful, pristine lake, surrounded by awesome mountains touching the sky.

I saw Barry walking on a path where masses of people were passing by, back and forth. He walked at a slow, steady pace, his arms kind of stretched out, his plunker in his right hand. His mouth was wide open and his face had a look of total amazement. He had lived to see his dream come true. It made me realize that a small group of people can have a huge influence upon thought and events. News of this gathering had been spread by word of mouth and the personal distribution of invitations. It had been promoted initially by only a few. Now about 20,000 people were attending it, another 15,000 had passed through, and the gathering was well known in hip circles around the country, and even was being discussed in diverse parts of the globe. I too felt Barry's amazement.

There was an announcement in the council by Bear, a Rainbow person who hung out in Oregon. The image of a white buffalo, in the form of the shape of snowfall, had appeared on the face of Table Mountain, he said. Sure enough, we all looked up to the mountain and the shape of the snowfall did closely resemble a white buffalo. Bear, whom I had met in Oregon, had often said that the appearance of a white buffalo would be the fulfillment of a Native American prophecy that he expected to occur in some way at the gathering. Others said they saw a cloud in this shape as well.

I left the gathering on July third. I had expected something more dramatic. I wasn't alone in this - a lot of us had. Where is the end of this age and the beginning of a new one? Fences and technology haven't disappeared and the world hasn't returned to a more natural state. Barry had often hinted at these expectations. But they were not to be.

On July Fourth several hundred persons who had hiked to the top of Table Mountain observed a moment of silence. It occurred at high noon. Love Family representatives read a proclamation. Some who attended said they went through a mystical experience.

But I had already left. The dream was over. I had awakened. The world, unchanged, with all its problems, is still here.

What I didn't know, nor did anyone at the time, was that the Rainbow Gathering would not be a one-time experience. It was destined to become an alternative institution practiced on a global scale.

Chapter Six: Rainbow Gathering Two - The Sequel

It was like losing everything. The gathering had ended. The messed up world continued unchanged. I was on my own. I made a sign saying LA at the gathering parking lot on July Third and got a ride from a curly haired guy in a Volkswagen van. He was heading to LA. But by the time I got around Lake Tahoe, a bruised rib I had obtained from sleeping on some bumpy ground at the gathering got the best of me. I decided to get off the van. I was in such pain and needed to seek medical attention. Didn't find it though. No insurance. Pretty naive.

1972 ended rough. I went back to LA and tried to get back in school. Ha ha. Nope. It wouldn't work. I'd seen another world and no longer fit into the straight scene.

I'd seen many things in that other world, other types of alternative folks who weren't cut from the same cloth as the Rainbow Family. When I'd gone to Boulder, Colorado during the spring of 1972 I again ran into a group of street people known as the STP Family. Sure, I'd already met some of these folks, like Goldfinger, in Berkeley. This time they made an impression. Later in this book I'll explain the complexities of this group, but here I'll just describe what you'd see on the hill, the university neighborhood where they hung out. You could spot them panhandling for booze or dodging around the corner to make some deal. They were usually unwashed, wearing lots of leather, and sometimes accompanied by dogs. They stood out. They were rough individuals who really had style.

I was in a van when we went to the hill and we gave a ride to two STP dudes. They were identical twin brothers named Rick and Dave. Both wore patched leather pants, dirty bandanas around their necks, had long, dirty, dark hair. We spoke briefly. I didn't know that these guys would end up my friends later, but they did.

I wandered into a bar. There I met Michael Polizzi, aka Michael Bear (not the Bear from Oregon). Bear hit me up for spare change. I didn't have any, but I invited him to the gathering. He ended up my partner later on.

My attempt to return to school having abruptly ended, I left LA and ended up with Barry again. This time we were back in northern California. We met up near the Mendocino coast. There were a lot of these times when you'd connect with people you knew by chance. That's the way it was on the road. It was mystical, cosmic even.

I first met up again with Rob Roy, a big, bearded, lanky, long-haired dude, in Mendocino, along with Fawn, his old lady, a pretty, dark haired girl. They had Morning star, their baby with them. I had become acquainted with Rob Roy and Fawn at the Rainbow Farm.

I also ran into Tony DeLorenzo there, aka Tony Angel, who I had met with Barry prior to the gathering. Tony was from New York, and was an ex-prospect for Hell's Angels. We had worked together to promote the gathering. He was tough as nails and street wise as a fox. Tony was nobody's fool. I wouldn't want to be on his bad side in a dark alley.

There we were, Rob Roy, Fawn, Tony, and others out at some cabin out in the woods, when Plunker pulls up in a pickup truck with a dead black bear in the back. "I found it out there in the road, dead, south of Cave Junction," he explained. It was road kill.

We had this peyote - bunches of this spineless, hallucinogenic cactus. So we ate peyote, skinned the bear, and commenced to eat bear meat - for several days as Barry shared his other latest discovery, a book called Seven Arrows, written by a Northern Cheyenne Indian named Storm that described the beliefs of the Cheyenne. Several pages of the book included beautifully illustrated depictions of medicine wheels and shields that were very colorful. We marveled at these and the meaning of the book as we pondered its revelations. The bearskin was made into a shield inspired by the book.

We cruised northeast, peyote with us, heading out into the manzanita tree covered hills near the town of Laytonville. Once there we looked up a friend of Plunker's named Ira. Ira was a devout follower of the Urantia Book, a thick volume that claimed to have been written by heavenly messengers. This book purported to hold the entire cosmic plan, and Ira and his wife held this volume to be scripture.

Rendezvousing with us on Ira's land was Ken Keyes, founder of the Living Love Ashram, a group of New Agers whose motto was: "Always us, living love." Keyes, a real nice man who lived in a wheel chair, advocated love and understanding and really tried to live this ideal. He pulled up in a private, converted greyhound style bus with a whole entourage of friends. Some of them retired to a geodesic

dome on the property with Barry and I where we all commenced eating peyote. Barry wound up having sex with a young lady who was a follower of Keyes. I paid little attention. I ended up going into what I perceived to be an out of the body state. I was looking down at all of us from above. Morning came. We all said our goodbyes as the day progressed.

During this period of time love found Barry. He began hanging around with a lady named Sunshine, a wild sort of gal, clad in buckskins, who used to hang with the STP Family in Boulder. They would be together for several years, eventually parenting two children.

We went down to Bolinas, Plunker and I. We partied around. Went to a small rock concert at a local hall. Grace Slick from the Jefferson Airplane was there, drunk, escorted by two dudes who were holding her up by her arms as she stumbled along, verbally rambling on. Barry pointed her out. He was familiar with her from his days in the Haight. A freak who was with us remarked about the Airplanes' big mansion in Bolinas, heavily monitored by security surveillance systems: "Weird trip," he said.

I split up from Barry and stuck out my thumb, heading back to LA, then east.

I would winter in New Mexico in an abandoned adobe house near Santa Fe. I fetched wood, carried water, and lived on practically nothing. I loved the panoramic view of the mountains, the high desert, and the clear, blue skies. There were other freaks in the area, so I wasn't alone. I had company when I wanted it. But I could only sit still for so long. Come the spring thaw, I was restless again.

I headed back to Oregon. Upon arrival, the news I heard was inconceivable. A second Rainbow Gathering was going to be held in the Wind River Wilderness of Wyoming.

But something was wrong with this picture. A man known as Paterson, who had a following, was behind promoting the second event. Paterson, who later would call his group of followers the Christ Brotherhood, was using the Rainbow Family label. But he was a modern day Gnostic. He ran his followers based on the ancient Gnostic manuscripts that were discovered in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, with the Gospel of Thomas as the primary source of enlightenment. Paterson utilized the four gospels from the New Testament as well. But everything was according to his interpretation. No one could marry and free love was practiced. No one could hold a job and welfare was utilized. Women wore men's clothes. Parents of members of the group were not to be recognized as such. To join the group one

had to give everything away - to Paterson and the group, of course. If you asked Paterson or his followers where they were from they would say, "The light."

Because Paterson and his cult had already sent out thousands of invitations, another gathering was imminent. We had no choice but to go to Wyoming. As it turned out, we averted a disaster.

I had just been reunited with Linda, my love from Wheeler's Ranch. We soon journeyed to Wyoming where we sought out the gathering seekers.

There was a lake where all of the freaks were camping while the gathering site was being sought after. It was located in the Wind River Range of mountains, high up. There were hundreds of us in the regular hippie camp, and a separate camp where Paterson and his followers were. The days and nights were spent with acoustic music and marijuana, which enhanced the social mood. It was a beautiful place, but we knew we would have to leave soon, as the summer of '73 wore on into mid-June.

There were politics, lots of politics. Paterson was convinced that the gathering was to take place on the Arapaho-Shoshone Reservation. Those nearby tribes had already said "No." Barry and Garrick had been contacted by some of us who were opposed to Paterson's plan, having been updated on the events through correspondence. Plunker sent word that to violate the wishes of the Native Americans was wrong. We were already on the same page. A big council was held where Paterson laid down an ultimatum: Follow him onto the Reservation or go your own way. Unanimously, hundreds of us in the regular camp refused to follow Paterson. We would not violate the wishes of the Arapahos and the Shoshones.

Paterson then led his followers onto the Reservation where they were arrested for trespassing. We had chosen the other course, which proved not only to be right, but successful.

Barry and others showed up and began negotiating with the US Forest Service for a site. It was secured, a beautiful set of canyons near South Pass, Wyoming.

The Rainbow Gathering was becoming an annual cyclic tradition. Even at this time of a second gathering out of necessity, this wasn't clear to us. Yet it was coming to pass.

Thousands of hippies converged quickly upon the gathering site near South Pass. The whole thing came together well: kitchens, a medical tent, councils, and

a seemingly endless amount of reunions, parties, get togethers, especially at night when the campfires were lit up and the music filled the air.

There were two straight looking guys from Texas in attendance. They decided to get peyote. Quickly they journeyed to south Texas, picked a bunch, and returned with the cacti. They put huge piles of peyote way on top of a ridge, where thousands of people trekked to sit and eat the cacti. And eat cacti they did, many staying up on top of the ridge to enjoy the effects, others eating some, then slowly making their way down the ridge to the bottom of the canyon to return to their camps or wander about visiting.

Some guy on that ridge tried to make it with Linda. I caught him with her and put a stop to it, escorting her down into the canyon. One thing I learned then is that if you had a woman you loved in the hippie world, you'd better keep a close eye on her - there were plenty of horn dogs on the prowl.

It was a beautiful spot, this gathering site. There was a stream where the main, large canyon converged with a smaller canyon. Many would bathe in that stream, washing away the dust and cooling off from the summer heat. The terrain was breathtaking, providing dramatic vistas. The night sky was bright with a fantastic view of the stars.

Chapter Seven: The Big Apple and Canada

The second gathering ended. Linda and I eventually decided to journey to the east coast, hitchhiking all the way.

In New York City we looked up her uncle. "I never knew why my family refuses to even acknowledge my uncle," she recalled as we headed up to his apartment in Brooklyn. A long haired, gracious, and well-mannered young man met us at the door. "Please be my guests. Whatever I have is yours. Make yourselves comfortable."

I looked around. It was roomy and plush by New York standards. Linda and I sat on the couch. Her uncle reclined on a big easy chair, opened a nearby cabinet and produced a huge jar full of Colombian Gold pot. Rolling a sizeable joint, he lit it. In silence we smoked and got really blasted. "Linda, its time you knew the truth," he began. "As you know, I'm the black sheep of the family. Well, its because I'm gay."

He knew that this did not shock us. We were tolerant people and he could clearly see that. But we could tell that he felt he had to explain why his own kin had ostracized him. "I am not ashamed of who I am. But they couldn't accept me."

"So that's it?" Linda asked, outraged that her parents had kept her from knowing her uncle over this. "Just because you're gay?"

"Yes. That's it."

"Ridiculous!" I added.

Linda's uncle smiled. "Life isn't fair. I'm used to that. If I didn't have my work to keep me positive, I'd probably be depressed."

"What kind of work?" Linda asked.

"I'm an Episcopal priest at a cathedral here in the city. I'll take you guys there in the morning. But for now just relax and enjoy my hospitality." That evening he provided us with a marvelous spaghetti dinner and an extra bed in his guest room. In the morning, a sizable bacon, eggs, hash browns, toast, orange juice, and coffee breakfast.

After breakfast he got us really stoned again and we all went to the cathedral, into the sanctuary, then up the stairs to the pinnacle of the bell tower. "I love New York," he said, as we gazed over the city skyline from above. We then descended back down the stairs to the sanctuary. He showed us where he kept his pot. It was where he kept the communion above the altar. "It's a safe place for it," he said.

Before we left the city we went to Washington Square Park in Greenwich Village to experience an outdoor free concert. David Peele and his band were playing, cranking out some real good rhythm and blues based rock and roll. Off a bit from the crowd, I began toking some pot with some yippies. As I got stoned, I noticed John Lennon standing across from us enjoying the music. "He's probably really digging this," I said to one of the yippies. "I mean...this music is kind of like the stuff he started with in Liverpool."

There was a sudden pause in the music. Some yippie idiot got up to the microphone and started giving out addresses of hip notables who lived in New York. John Lennon's address was at the top of the list. Lennon got a look of disgust on his face. He turned and walked off from the concert and into the street. "How's he supposed to live a normal life when you crazies pull this kind of shit?" I asked. Not that I really knew what a normal life was all about.

Just prior to leaving the Big Apple Linda and I split up. I don't remember how or why. Maybe I smoked too much pot and it really did put a damper on some of my memory.

I journeyed up to Quebec, getting there with a trucker who smuggled me across the border. I hitched to Montreal and hung out with French Quebecers who smoked hashish voraciously up on the Mont Royal. I then decided to journey west. On the way out of Montreal a college professor picked me up in a Mercedes Benz. He lit up a joint as a send off.

I continued journeying into Ontario, towards Toronto. I had made up my mind that I was through with the states. Canada seemed so much more mellow, less stress, a whole new world, no major role as the world's cop, not hated by much of the world. In fact, a lot of American freaks traveling abroad were sewing Canadian flags on their backpacks to avoid anti-American sentiments.

I was out on the freeway hitchhiking west. A van pulled over and I got in. A long-haired, bearded, short man sat in the driver's seat. We took off.

He lit up a joint and we got very high. "My name is Ray Nadeau," he said, with a Quebecor accent. "Where are you going?"

"West, I guess, but I'm not sure where. I'm from the States. I'm tired of it down there. It's way too political. I'm going to stay in Canada."

He glanced at me thoughtfully, yet quickly, as he stroked his beard with his left hand while his right kept the wheel steady. He got his eyes back on the road as he spoke. "Then you can stay with my wife and I. I will give you a job with pay and your dream will become a reality."

I was overwhelmed. "No, Mister Nadeau, I won't take pay. But I'll work to help you. Money doesn't interest me. Your offer of lodging is accepted, though."

He looked amazed. "You are my guest for as long as you need a place to stay."

First we would stop in Toronto. "You like music?" he asked. "There's a big free concert at Hyde Park. Let's party a little." We entered the park area and the music was blasting. The crowd was huge. We parked and proceeded on foot into the crowd. Ray pressed for the front, near the band. We got there, and Ray began lighting up joints, one after the other, passing them out into the crowd as we mingled about.

When the concert began to wind down we left. "I like to get high, and I think that everyone should get high," he said as we drove off.

Ray had a flat in town and we crashed there that night. There I met some of his employees. Ray explained that they worked in his small factory where they manufactured scented sand-cast candles, which they sold at a booth on Young

Street, a major avenue that was frequented by party animals, counterculture types, and tourists.

"I want you to meet Jimmy," he said. I shook hands with this cool black dude. "Jimmy is from Jamaica. Like you, they don't think he should be here."

He then introduced me to Jay. "I'm a Marxist, struggling to bring about the day when the working class will be in charge of everything and everyone will be equal," Jay said.

We all sat down and got stoned, listening to Cat Stevens on the stereo, Nadeau's favorite artist, singing "Peace Train". Then we crashed.

Come morning, we all put in half a day's work making candles. Ray didn't slave drive - there was no pressure. We'd stop for pot breaks and listen to music while we worked. Creating beauty, candles that would be loved by customers, was what counted.

That afternoon we'd go out to Young Street and work the booth, selling the product.

Another night at the flat. "We need to go out to the country and get back to nature," Ray said as we all smoked a big hooter. "Anyway, my old lady is up there at my farm, and she's setting up a food co-op at my house. I could use a little help with that, but we'll have some fun in the process." Jay explained that he would stay and hold the fort in Toronto while the rest of us headed north. Ray agreed to that. We would be journeying about three hours north to the little town of Maple Leaf, near Bancroft.

But first we stopped at the Rochdale, a huge Toronto skyscraper that was mostly occupied by freaks, which housed, among other things, an underground radio station. Ray copped some acid there. It came in the form of little red pills. Jimmy and I decided to take some about two hours before we got to Ray's farm.

We stopped at Algonquin Provincial Park, about two hundred kilometers north of Toronto. Jimmy and I climbed to the top of a wooden observation tower. We were really getting off. That acid was strong stuff. The trees were swaying in the wind and the clouds were emitting every color of the rainbow.

We climbed down from the tower and got into the van with Ray, who drove off to the nearby small town of Bancroft.

When we got there, Ray said he had to stop at the bank. We went into the bank with him. It was really weird. Jimmy and I were peaking on the little red pills. All I

could see in my psychedelic state was greed, money, people all wrapped up in money. Jimmy was going through something heavy too.

We had seen a river when we had rode into town. "Let's get out of here Jimmy," I said, freaking out spontaneously with him. "Let's go to..." I began, and we both said it in unison, "the river."

We both quickly went outside, ready to cross the street and make our journey for mental relief to the river. Suddenly a red Mercedes Benz blocked our way, pulling up by the curb in front of us. A woman with red hair, wearing a red dress, got out of the driver's side and walked around to the passenger's right side in front of us, opening the back door. Jimmy and I were speechless. Our mouths were wide open and our eyes were bugging out of our heads. A little girl, with red hair, wearing a red coat and a red dress, got out of the back and the woman took her by the hand. In the little girl's other hand was a red line, a leash, leading to what hopped out - a poodle, wearing a red collar and a red coat.

"Aaaaaah!" Jimmy and I cried out, frying on our red pills, running around the rear of the Mercedes and across the street to the beginning of the down hill run to the shore of the river. Spontaneously, both Jimmy and I whipped them out and began peeing in the river. Peace for a fleeting moment.

Then a voice, and a face peering down from the top of the embankment at us peeing in the river: "What're you doin' down there, aye?" It was a cop. Ontario Provincial Police, to be exact. Like lightning, Jimmy and I concealed our dicks quickly in our pants and went up to speak with the officer. We were speechless though, too high to talk, as we scaled the embankment to meet the cop. "Where are you guys from, aye?" the cop inquired. We just couldn't talk. Too stoned. Somehow I forced myself. "Wait here. He'll tell you," I said, turning towards the bank. I ran to get Ray.

Ray came over with me.

"Where are these guys from?" the cop pressed.

"They're my employees and they're from Toronto," Ray answered confidently.

"You guys are from the big city of T...O. aye?"

Jimmy and I nodded in speechless, stoned unison.

"The reason why I'm askin' I" the cop explained, "is because there's a lot of people comin' up here who aren't supposed to be here."

Yea, like Jimmy and me, I thought.

Ray smoothed things out, giving the cop a sample, a scented sand-cast candle, as he explained our work and how his wife was forming a local food co-op. Ray surely had the gift of gab. The encounter ended with him inviting the cop over for tea. Canada was indeed very mellow. In the states we would have been hit for ID and searched.

We went to Ray's farm, a piece of land that included a barn with a stone foundation, an organic garden, and a two-story house.

Ray introduced me to his wife, a pretty, short woman with long dark hair. Like Ray, she too was French Canadian. One day I remarked that I was lonely and that I wished that I had a woman. Ray then offered me his wife. I informed him that though I appreciated the gesture, I wasn't into using someone else's wife.

It was black fly season and this natural drawback prevented us from working in the garden much. Swarms of these little flies, which would bite mostly on the heat centers of the body, the armpits and the crotch, would literally chase us into the house. Between the black flies and the overpowering humidity, I was realizing that eastern Canada wasn't my cup of tea. I began thinking of heading west.

Ray gave me some acid, a big white pill. My suspicion told me that an LSD pill that big must be cut with something. I wished I had responded to my suspicion. The stuff was bad. I ended up going on a trip where my visual and auditory senses became confused. I was seeing out of my ears and hearing through my eyes. It was too much. I lay on the couch, thinking to myself: It's only a drug and drugs wear off. I lay awake on the couch, covered my head with a blanket, and waited for several hours before it did. I told Ray one morning that I had to go; that I hated the humidity and the bugs. He tried to persuade me to stay, but I had to go.

So I stuck out my thumb and headed west.

I practically walked across Ontario, it seemed. In Sault Sainte Marie I met a lady who was hitching west to Winnipeg, Manitoba. She wanted some company and protection. We got a ride with a trucker all the way to Winnipeg, where the lady put me up for the night.

I continued west to Moosejaw, Saskatchewan. I was hitching by this town, bypassing it. A Camaro pulled up and got in. The driver was an Indian dude and he invited me to party with him. And party we did. We went to a big bar and got sloshed. He then put me up for the night.

Hung over, I continued west and made it to Medicine Hat, Alberta where I stayed at the youth hostel.

In the morning got a ride from two dudes and a lady who were heading into British Columbia. "You wanna get high?" the driver asked. Dumb question. They had a lot of Lebanese hashish. We smoked and got very high.

As we headed up from the foothills approaching the east side of the Canadian Rockies, the mountains seemed to touch the very top of the sky awesome to behold. Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven" blared from the eight track.

We got up by Banff, Alberta when we came upon a Royal Canadian Mounted Police roadblock. These cops were in the mood to hassle counterculture types. But because we quickly ascertained what was about to happen because the cop aggressively motioned for us to pull over and park, the girl in the car ate all the hash. It was about half an ounce. Whew! We knew she was going to stay stoned.

The whole thing turned into a series of all night interrogations for each of us. We were all hauled over to the cop shop, searched, and asked questions separately. I was taken into a small room and seated at a table by a husky looking cop with a crew cut.

"Where are you from, aye?" the big Mountie asked loudly, pacing.

"4214 West King Street, Toronto, Ontario."

Obviously, the cop was trying to see if I was from the states, but I had perfected my Canadian accent, and I knew all the right answers.

I was asked who the Prime Minister was.

I knew that.

I was asked what the last letter of the alphabet was.

This, I knew, was a key test to see if a person was from the states. "Zed," I answered correctly. An answer of "Zee" would have gotten me deported.

He questioned me about my age.

I said I was 18.

More questions followed. It seemed like it lasted forever.

Finally, exhausted, we were all released and allowed to continue driving west.

We were all very sleepy after a whole night of being interrogated. I fell asleep in the back seat after I laid down, head and torso on the seat, legs lying out towards the floor. In my sleep I felt some bumps. My back hurt. I was awakened by crying. It was the driver. The car was motionless. The back seat door was open. The driver was crouched down on the ground next to me where I was still laying on the back seat. I looked over at him. He looked back at me, and pain turned to relief. "I thought you were dead," he said.

"I ain't dead yet", I said as I sat up, then sprang to my feet from the vehicle.

He explained how he had fallen asleep at the wheel, the car had gone off an embankment, crossed two sets of railroad tracks, missed a concrete building by a couple of feet, then rolled over about three times before landing upright. "It's amazing that we're all alive and no one is seriously hurt," he added.

I knew the cops would be on the scene soon. I got my US birth certificate that I kept folded up and hidden in the bottom of my sleeping bag and threw it out into a field. Sure enough, they came, asked some questions, and even offered us a motel room.

But I decided to keep heading west. I didn't want to stick around. I got through the mountains and hit the big coastal city of Vancouver,

B. C. The freak section of town was called Gas Town. It was a typical street scene with street musicians, panhandlers, dope dealers, and tourists.

What stood out about Gas Town was "Ace", the self-proclaimed mayor of Gas Town. He was an older man, slightly obese, who wore a huge top hat and a formal tailed coat. He had a microphone wired to a speaker that he carried as he gallivanted up and down the street, making incongruous sounds and whistles on the thing constantly.

I panhandled and got enough money to take the ferry over to Vancouver Island. I explored the cities of Victoria and Nanaimo, but was turned off by the constant rain, so I managed to get back on the ferry to Vancouver.

Chapter Eight: Sagittarius, Taurus and Pisces

Having seen a lot of Canada, I changed my mind and decided that the States are where the action is. There just wasn't enough going on for me north of the border. I would return to the United States.

I went to the border port of entry at Blaine, Washington. The customs officer at first had trouble believing I was an American because I lacked ID. "How do I

know you're an American?" the officer pressed. "I'm supposed to believe you just because you say so?"

I wasn't going to be turned back. I had lost my birth certificate, I explained, then I looked the customs official right in the eye and shouted, "I'm a US citizen! I demand to be allowed to return to my country! I believe in baseball, John Wayne, mom, and apple pie!"

"You're an American all right," he said with a chuckle. "Get out of here!" he barked, allowing me return into the USA.

I hitchhiked south on Interstate Five into central Oregon. There I managed to run into Dominic, the Rainbow cook. Dominic was on a school bus caravan headed by Medicine Story, the current rising star in the Rainbow pantheon.

Medicine Story was known only as Story at this time. That was his first name. His full name was Story Talbot, and he was actually an ex-playwright from New York. Story had a full beard, a wide brimmed leather hat, and definite acting skills. Like Barry, he loved the spotlight, but unlike Barry, Story was in the midst of finding himself; something Barry had already done. In fact, I got to see much of Story's metamorphosis transforming from an east coast originated hipster into a Native American medicine man.

There were some full-blooded Indians in the caravan, two gay dudes, Flaming Rainbow and Bob. There were other assorted individuals, including a little bearded guy, and a sweet older hippie lady named Sara whom I had met before at the first gathering. I had again reunited with Linda, so I wasn't solo on this caravan, which Story said was to travel about spreading the Rainbow message.

The caravan stayed at different pads out in the Oregon woods, including one where I had to listen to Story go through the throws of passion with some college chick he had gotten to put us up. He was near middle-aged, and was somewhat of a playboy, a lady's man. He had real charm and personality, with a kind of theatric flair.

We got out to some land. Story had gotten his hands on a vial of pure acid and a tipi. Story carefully had the tipi put up according to a book he held in hand as he read from it, instructing volunteers how to put it up.

After the tipi was up, everyone met in it for a council. Story spoke of how he had recently participated in a sweat lodge ceremony. He had emerged from the lodge, jumped in the water, and been reborn as Medicine Story. It was a spiritual

experience, he explained. He had coincidentally found out about his distant Indian ancestry, he added, a look of pride beaming from his face.

Story was undergoing a transformation into a new way of life that would keep countless hippies and Indians spellbound, even landing him a job as a cartoonist for Awkwesasne Notes, the Iroquois tribal newspaper - quite an achievement for a man with such a distant Native background. Perhaps what this proves is that there are Native American religious conversions that have more to do with spiritual rather than racial reasons. After all, if you think about it, there once was an African American ex-slave who went west in the days of the mountain men, and didn't have any Indian background. That guy is legendary. He married a Crow Chief's daughter, became a Chief.

As the council concluded, Story, now Medicine Story, who soon would become beardless, wearing Native American apparel right out of "Little Big Man", produced the vial of LSD. Everybody took a drop on the tongue. As we all got off on the acid, Story got nude, everybody did — it was hot around the central fire - except for Linda and I. Spontaneously, unplanned by anyone, the thing started turning into an orgy. I looked over to my right, and the little, bearded guy was trying to hump my old lady's leg.

Story paid little attention to the sexual antics going on in his midst. He reached for a guitar. Medicine Story, guitar now in hand, strummed and sang a Pete Seeger song:

"One blue sky above us -

One ocean lapping all our shores-

One earth so green and round Who could ask for more? -

And because we love you, we'll give it one more try, to show our rainbow race, it's too soon to die"-

The thing was madness.

"Let's get the hell outta here," I said to Linda. I took her by the hand and we exited the tipi into the night.

Linda and I decided to leave the crazy caravan. We headed for the southwest, hitchhiking all the way. In Arizona a truck driver raped Linda while I was crashing in the cab of the semi. When I awoke she told me, crying, what the man had done. I had lice at the time. I flicked some on him, and then told him to go to hell as we got off his rig.

We got to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where we found out about a community called Towapa, located in the hills below nearby Sandia Mountain. We hitched up there. We had to pass by the adobe village of Placitas, in the shadow of the mountain, and then cut off on a dirt road that led to another. The second road followed a cottonwood tree lined creek into the community of adobe houses, each house set apart from each other in the hills, offering panoramic vistas of the high desert.

We stayed in a large, one room adobe house occupied by some rather sordid characters. There was a young guy from the STP Family with a youthful face and wild ways. He was known as Young Jesse. Like most STP Family, he had a severe drinking problem, and often went to Albuquerque to hustle money for booze. So did the others that Jesse hung out with in that house. Jerome, an African American dude, was always drunk if he could help it. Gypsy, wearing all the STP Family style full dress regalia: dirty leather patched pants, filthy bandana, vest with conchas attached. Gypsy too was on the bottle, and like the others, could quickly fall into a fight during a drunk.

Linda and I were still bliss hippies of the Rainbow variety. We would walk around nude, smoke pot, and didn't drink. We didn't really go for the STP Family drunken excesses. Not yet, anyway.

One night the STP crew consumed a fifth of Mescal. Jerome jumped on a black youth who was crashing in the house and wrestled him helpless, then raped him. I was shocked. Then Gypsy and Jesse fought over the last drink left in the bottle to determine who would eat the worm, and Jesse prevailed. I really wondered why these guys didn't seem to care about much of anything, it seemed.

The next day I was Gypsy's victim. I walked through the front door, nude as usual, and Gypsy attacked me, hitting me with his fists and kicking me. I fell to the ground and curled up into a defensive fetal position as he gave me a final kick, screaming, "All you do is walk around with your dick hanging out!" Apparently, Gypsy was already drunk. It was about ten in the morning. He'd started early. Strangely, he treated me like a bosom brother right after the beating, crying, saying how he had no place left to go and that he was going to stay in the mountains. It was the blubbering of a drunken man.

I quit going nude after the beating, as did Linda. We began drinking with the STP guys.

Gypsy never gave me any trouble again. Young Jesse never even began to. Jerome never did either. Gypsy and Jesse seemed to go by a code. To them family was defined in a very personal sense. Family was people in their group

who they relied on and who relied on them. It was family who "watched your back" in situations that quickly could turn ugly on the streets - getting drugs, panhandling the wrong person, walking through the wrong neighborhood. Of the three STP type dudes, Jesse seemed to be the most authentic. I was intrigued. He seemed convinced.

The STP Family began in New York City, probably in 1967. A man who went by Mike Motherfucker put up some of the early members of the STP Family. He was a member of the Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers, hence his handle, an organization once listed as part of the radical student organization, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Thus the actual kids that Mike helped out initially were part of the Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers - the name itself a possible take on the title of a song, "Up Against the Wall, Motherfucker!" by the New York City counterculture band, David Peele and The Lower East Side. Eventually, these street kids that Mike had helped out became known as The STP Family, having their own title and ways. The key founder of the Family was STP John. He is noted for being on the forefront of moving the Family from New York City to the Nederland and Boulder, Colorado areas. It was an exodus of transients. Also notable in the formation of the Family in these early days were John's partners, Bishop and Little Brother.

For all the mishaps or misbehavior that many Family members engaged in, most were really aware of what was happening on the streets and highways of America. They also truly had a sense of loyalty towards each other. They were a pseudo-psychedelic outfit with inner city roots, and old time street gang norms.

John was shot and killed on the Boulder, Colorado hill while trying to stop a heroin dealer who was polluting his brothers and sisters. So began a kind of martyrs' roster for the group. Little Brother and Bishop too met their own untimely deaths, as did another Family member known as Deputy Dog, who was assassinated by a law enforcement officer. When Family members opened a bottle of booze or wine since the time of these deaths, a taste, a small libation from the top of the bottle, was ritually poured on the ground, "for the dead". The ritual libation seemed strangely tied not only to the Family members who had died, but to the musical taste of the Family.

The Grateful Dead was the Family's favorite band.

Slim, another, now late, STP Family member who I drank with on several occasions, confided to me the true meaning of STP. "People say it stands for Street Trucking People, Shitty Toilet Paper. That's all bullshit. It really stands for Sagittarius, Taurus, and Pisces, the astrological signs of John, Bishop, and Little Brother." I didn't know if Slim had given me the names in the right order

according to their concurrence with the signs stated. But I had no reason to doubt him. He had been there from the onset, from the Be-In beginning.

As the cops poured the heat on the Family in Boulder, Family members had branched out. Some lived on the road and met in the different college towns around the country. Others settled down in places like Bennington, Vermont, or the small mountain village of Cuba, New Mexico.

There was a definite pecking order in the STP Family. There were the "originals" who had been in the group since its inception. Then there was the "second generation", meaning those who had joined since then.

Joining was a painful process for some. An initiation, like getting kicked in the mouth by a Family member, or some other painful inconvenience, was imposed. The initiation process could be a sick joke, disregarded, or a serious ritual; depending on which STP members you hung out with. Whether a joke or not, a Family member had to select you. It was a strange honor.

Petty theft generally wasn't looked down upon by some in the group as long as the victim wasn't Family. But this wasn't written in stone for the whole group - some STP Family didn't steal at all and said: "That's bad karma," in regards to stealing. Perhaps these expressions against theft were remainders of some of the ethics of Mike Motherfucker and STP John.

And there were more rituals. One was a handshake that included both persons spitting on their palms and then joining hands. Another was only practiced by some STP Family: The application of an STP tattoo with a burnt road map's ashes mixed with wine serving as the ink. Another custom of the STP Family was the formation of "originals", the pants many of them wore. Whenever a hole came about in one's pants due to wear and tear, a leather patch was sewn over the hole. And this continued until the pair of pants was solid leather - a joining of all the leather patches. "Originals" were never washed and were a funky testimonial to all the owner's road experiences. This whole thing was an outrageous modern day group of young people living like something out of a Dickens novel.

As I've pointed out, alcohol was the drug of choice for the STP Family. Jack Daniels Black Label sour mash whiskey was a favorite. Red or white port wine, or Mad Dog 20/20, the most potent of wines, was often sucked down. That was the sad part. I remember many STP Family members waking up in the morning with "the shakes", withdrawals from alcohol addiction, forcing them to panhandle for more booze.

It was a lot to take in. Here was a counterculture group that clearly had early New York City street gang customs, a personal and less than universal definition of family, living on the streets from coast to coast.

After all the disappointments with the Rainbow Family's apocalyptic predictions, the STP Family seemed more real to me. But you didn't just join. You had to be accepted, and that took time. Hanging out with them was the start. But this would soon stop. I'd resume it later.

As the winter of 1973 set in Young Jesse, Gypsy, and Jerome all left Towapa for warmer weather.

Linda and I moved to a stone house down by the creek. It was a pretty little one-room house, built tight, with windows and a fireplace.

A Hispanic man named Cleo built this house. He and another Hispanic guy, named Leroy, were the original squatters at Towapa before the hippies came. These guys drank a lot, coming in and out of Towapa, staying as honored guests in anyone's house they wanted. They had gotten on well with the hippies because, like them, they both loved a party and a story. Both of these men were clean cut, and to meet them one would never guess that booze, a little acid or peyote, as well as regular pot smoking would be their thing, while the guitars were played and the congas were keeping beat.

One night Cleo showed up at the house drunk, started a fire in the fireplace, and told me his story, a story I had heard about from others, that he usually told with tears whenever he became soused. Cleo told me of a bombing mission over Japan. How he felt responsible for the deaths of thousands of women and children. And he cried and cried. It was eating him up. All I could do was listen. What could I say to this? Nothing. He needed to tell it again. And I listened.

There was another Hispanic gentleman who showed up at Towapa from time to time. An older, heavysset man named Romaldo, who had considerable land holdings in the area. He came to check on his cattle, which grazed in the Towapa hills now and then.

Rumor had it that Romaldo actually owned Towapa but had allowed the hippie squatters to reside there. Romaldo was always nature's child. He would talk about his cattle, what type they were, what they ate, how they behaved; or what the weather would be; or the right way to make an adobe house out of mud and straw.

The winter was cold, snow and wind abounding, and firewood was a constant necessity. I loved getting wood in the manner it was obtained at Towapa. A simple backpack rack was taken out into the hills and arroyos along with a long stretch of rope. Dry bottom branches from the juniper and pinon trees were broken off by hand, laid on top of the backpack rack, then tied as a bundle which was carried on one's back to hearth and home. The air was fresh during these trips, and the exercise was exhilarating. The views during these wood gathering ventures across the high desert were breathtaking.

Above where I lived, uphill some, was the abode of Keith and his lady, Demone. Keith had a heroin problem. He often would beat her. I couldn't understand why no one would stop him. I intervened once. They both told me to get fucked.

Further uphill was the residence of Spencer and Thomas. These two guys seemed to hold all the stories of the local area. One night they told me a strange story, each alternating with parts of the narrative, as I listened transfixed. They told a story of gold, greed, jealousy, and murder. Nearby there was a place called the Montezuma Ranch. Long ago, local legend had it, the Aztec Emperor Montezuma had shipped his gold north to keep it from being taken by the Spanish conquistadors. The hidden cache of gold, so went the story, had been buried somewhere on Montezuma Mountain, located on the Montezuma Ranch. Spenser and Thomas later pointed out the mountain to me during a supply run. It stood stark and jutting, like a blade cutting into the sky against the backdrop of the hills.

A freak who went by the handle of Ulysses S. Grant had in recent years settled at the Montezuma Ranch. He closely resembled his namesake, the famous Union general and U.S. President. He even campaigned for governor, appearing for the press upon a white horse. But the private side of US Grant was unknown. He had been secretly searching for the Aztec treasure.

Grant killed his woman along with a man who had been living at the ranch. He had dispatched them with a machete, due to jealousy over an affair. Maybe the double homicide was a crime of passion, plain and simple.

The story delved even deeper. Perhaps his lady and her paramour had stumbled upon the treasure as well, and were planning on bamboozling Grant out of the golden horde he had sought.

A chill filled the room as the cold wind blew in through an open window while Spencer and Thomas concluded the macabre tale. I shook. How very strange, how mysterious this tale is, I thought.

"What ever happened to Ulysses S. Grant?" I asked.

"He disappeared," Spencer said. "Became a fugitive, I guess. He's never been seen around here since."

Come the spring thaw, Linda and I needed some excitement. Being cooked up for the winter in a stone house had made us restless. We decided to thumb our way up to Berkeley.

Life on the streets there was summed up by the common term for the town, "Berzerkeley". It fit. We'd drink wine and hard liquor and hang out with the likes of Tom Rush, a very charming original STP Family dude. He always had something funny to say. When a voluptuous woman was encountered, Tom would say, "Hootcheecoo, mama do." Something secretive, "Eesh kameesh." For a street person, Tom was rather good looking, with real personality - traits that were useful assets on the streets towards survival. His brown hair was below shoulder length, he had a short beard, and often wore an overcoat. He was an entertaining man. When he panhandled for change people often found him hard to refuse, confounded by his looks and charm.

We also would hang around with Puerto Rican JJ, a short, frizzy haired, STP Family dude from New York. He loved his wine, a good song, and his butcher's knife, an implement he carried to defend himself if somebody sought to do him serious harm. Now, this guy wasn't violent or aggressive. He just had that thing to protect himself, he said.

Along with these characters was a guy called Wilbur. He loved Tom Rush like a brother, had his own brand of charm, and almost equaled Tom in wit.

And there were others, We'd sleep in some bushes around a church. For camping company there were some other STP people: Asshole Dave, Cindy, his old lady, and their kid, a little girl named Lalu. Dave was a little older and somewhat wiser than we were. Tough as nails, nobody in their right mind would have messed with Dave. We really felt safer having him around.

Asshole Dave was a very private guy - he'd hang out alone a lot, and was known to be very decent to anyone who was decent with him. And around the streets his name was never talked down.

Berkeley was a bummer though. The cops were always hassling street people. No wonder: Pimps, hookers, rip offs, and crazies were on the prowl.

It just wasn't safe.

Chapter Nine: Mom's

By late summer we'd had enough. JJ, Wilbur, Linda and I decided to head south. Tom stayed in the Bay Area. It was pretty hard hitching south. Wilbur had a dog named Lady, and all together, counting the dog, there were five of us. But we persevered, stayed together, and managed to get to the LA area. Suddenly, thrust into this greater metropolitan concrete jungle, we had no place to go.

"Let's go to my mom's. She'll put us up," I suggested to the others. My mom lived in Pasadena at this time. She rented a little house from her brother, my uncle Bill, on the busy avenue of Los Robles. The house was located in back of his, where Bill dwelled with his wife, Billy, and one of their daughters, my cousin Leslie.

Uncle Bill and my mother, Muriel, were both two of ten children of a former mayor of Seattle who broke the Seattle General Strike of 1919. Mom was the youngest of the brood, Bill the next to the youngest. Their father, my grandfather, was also the founder, builder and owner of San Clemente, California. His name was Ole Hanson. The son of Norwegian immigrants, he had made and lost two fortunes and was on his way to making another when he died in 1940.

Ole's wife, Nellie May Leona Rose - Rose being her maiden name - mom and uncle Bill's mom and my grandmother, was from a prominent Dutch Family on her mother's side, the Van Valkenburgs, and the prosperous Rose Family on her father's side. She was beautiful, light skin, with beautiful long black hair, dressed like a queen, "Black Dutch", she had said, describing her background. In reality, she descended from the Mohawk Tribe, Dutch nobility and British royalty with some Ashkenazi Jewish in the mix. Ole was handsome, with red hair, penetrating eyes, well dressed, with perfect manners. Powerfully connected: The friend of several U.S. Presidents, especially Theodore Roosevelt. He was also the architect of the "Red Scare", which put many communists and suspected communists in jail... the precursor of the Cold War. But, Ole had received from the Secret Service, memos that Lenin had sent operatives to incite a revolution starting in Seattle that was meant to spread across the nation and overthrow the US government. When Anna Louise Strong instigated the strike with the operatives, they used the IWW, the Industrial Workers of the World to do their dirty work. Ole was actually a friend of Unions, supported Women's Suffrage, was for universal healthcare and against child labor. Today more educated scholars are discovering the real Ole Hanson, not the one painted as a radical by the left.

Anna Louise Strong went on to go to the Soviet Union and assist Lenin, then Stalin in his purge of 20,000,000 persons. When she was done with that she went to China to help Chairman Mao murder 50,000,000 Chinese. What a gal.

Most of their lives Ole and Nellie were rich, mostly from real estate, and lived in mansions, enjoying the luxuries of servants, private schooling and tutors for the kids. But the middle of the Great Depression changed all that.

Especially for their kids. After the money was gone, uncle Bill had gone on to become a dancer, then a jazz drummer. My mom became a singer, and then she went into burlesque, performing with burlesque comedy counterpart Lenny Bruce at several clubs.

When I was a baby mom had to separate from Cliff, my dad. She said they didn't get along. They fought a lot, she recalled. They were never married or anything. He was a handsome guy, an interior decorator and a jazz drummer. Mom, though small, was attractive, with auburn hair she could sit on. Mom took me as a baby on the road to different clubs and theaters in the western states where she was performing, balancing the difficult tasks of earning her living in this most public of ways while eluding a search for her by my dad. One time when my dad had found her and was beating on her upper floor hotel room door on a snowy night in Denver, my mom escaped out the back window with me in her arms down a fire escape.

My older sister Olivia had to endure these journeys as a child. I guess mom settling down with my aunt Nell, her sister, Ole and Nellie's eldest daughter, was good for Olivia and I. Traveling around is never good for kids.

So in the early '60s when mom decided to slow down from the travel, business, and excitement of burlesque show business, mom moved in with aunt Nell to save on expenses. Aunt Nell had invited her to do so; she felt an obligation to take care of her siblings, something she even had done for her mother, Nellie Mae Rose, when aunt Nell was growing up with nine brothers and sisters. Aunt Nell had practically raised all of Ole and Nellie Mae Roses' other kids. And after Ole had died Nell even cared for her mother, whose hair had gone white after the death, and whose eyes had gone blind. It was said among my family that Nellie Mae Roses' health had declined, evidenced by these physical changes - due to grief - she had loved Ole that much. She died only six years after Ole.

Aunt Nell, my mother, and their siblings, were brought up living and being treated like nobility. Yet when the money was gone, Nell accepted her lot and worked for a living. And all that was left of this faded glory were the things. My aunt Nell still kept her house full of priceless art objects and antiques that were my grandfather's. We moved in with Nell when I was 5, and we lived with Nell - red-haired and wrinkled, dressed well, but hunched over forward some - mostly until I was about 13.

In the house, in another room, lived aunt Marjorie, my mom and Neil's sister. Quite prudish, aristocratic acting, and eccentric. Perfectly dressed. Long hair kept up, makeup just right. Her room was laid out with antique hand carved French and Italian furniture that was kept immaculately clean. Nell supported Marjorie, who refused to work, never able to accept the family descent into the working class.

When I was about six-years-old Nell sold the house, moving us all across the street into another Covina, California tract home in that suburban LA area.

I was a cub scout, rode my bike, and did what kids do.

But there was always the fighting, the arguing in the home between Nell, Marjorie, and my mom. There was the not being allowed to sit on certain furniture, and learning and practicing perfect etiquette. That's the way Nell ran things.

My mother, who was reduced to working for minimum wage because she was too old for burlesque, just put up with Neil's meticulous and proper ways. She had accepted her lot early, and held to no delusions of grandeur.

Mom was always kind to Olivia and I, caring, gentle. She often would sing me to sleep as a child. When I was scared of the dark she would do this. I remember falling asleep to her beautiful voice singing softly many times as a child. She loved her kids. And we loved her.

My dad, however, never came around except once for ten minutes before I hit the road. I never got to know him. I guess that bothered me some, deep inside. When other kids had dads to take them to sporting events or other father and son social events, I felt left out. Because I didn't have a father, I was lousy at sports and couldn't compete well on any game field. I just didn't have the fatherly coaching. The other kids out on the field would make fun of me.

Meanwhile the kids I played with on the streets were always the wild types, looking for adventure, or minor mischief and trouble.

My personal world as a child was strange. I slept on a bed that had been owned by a king of Spain. I wandered about in a house that seemed haunted by Ole Hanson. His photo portrait hung on the wall, and the house was furnished with priceless art objects and antiques. I engulfed myself in reading history, studying art and literature. I created my own world where I accepted myself, didn't have to be embarrassed striking out at baseball and made fun of.

I was almost ten-years-old when I noticed that something was happening, that there was a big change occurring, when I realized the advent of the hippie. Bill, Olivia's new husband, started taking Olivia and I to the Love-ins. This soon got me thinking, eventually deciding by the time I was 12 to rebel from mainstream society and to embrace the hippie culture at large in search of freedom, identity, and acceptance - rather than the regimented, self-doubting, rejection filled, and fatherless life that I knew. And it was when I was about nine that my uncle Ted Hanson moved in. One of Ole Hanson's favorite sons, medium sized, handsome, and well dressed, Ted had first worked for his father during Ole's glory. He then became, even when the money was still plentiful, a professional rodeo rider, roaming throughout the western states and riding broncos and bulls for the fame, excitement, friends he made, and the glory of it. Then Ted married

Tiny Yorba of the Yorba family, one of the original Spanish families that had settled California in the 1700s. The Yorbas had once owned huge land holdings; lived luxuriously in beautiful white stucco, red tile roofed haciendas, in the early days of California, before the Anglos had come. But the marriage failed eventually, and Ted became the owner of a truck driving company. Then came a heart attack. He retired and moved in with Nell, at her offer of course, to split the expenses as he aged. His money was running out.

Ted was fascinating. He would take me on trips to rodeos, to meet his rancher friends, on long walks where he would teach me things about life, ethics, right and wrong. He was a positive male role model for me as a kid, though not a perfect one. Rarely, if my aunts and my mom were arguing, he'd guide me through the door into the garage where he would produce a pint of vodka, take a drink, then give me a shot. These were reasonable attempts to get away from that stress, and use them to make me into a man as well. But my friendship with Ted only lasted about three years. He went senile some, and our relationship faded.

Now uncle Ted was in a nursing home. Nell and Marjorie were living in a condo near the beach.

Now Uncle Bill was an older househusband. My mom was a graying nurse's aide. And into their Pasadena, California scene - Bill and Billy, his wife, and Leslie, their teenage daughter, in the front house, and my mom in the house in back - enters JJ, Wilber, Linda, me, and of course, Lady the dog.

Mom, still good looking under her graying hair, just kind of stared at our strange group as she welcomed us in the door. She had an expression of slight shock. It soon passed though. "Make yourselves comfortable," she simply said, then

proceeded to point out the floor space where we could sleep in the living room, where the bathroom was, etc.

Uncle Bill's daughter, my cousin Leslie, was usually out and about. She was the steady girlfriend of the lead singer for a local band that played at high school dances and clubs around the area. She soon would take me to watch them play at a local club. I wasn't impressed. He was an unknown named David Lee Roth. And the band was known as "Mammoth," later to be known as Van Halen.

Into this menagerie of suburban survival we had arrived, but not alone. We'd arrived with company. We all had lice. First thing, we had mom get us some lice shampoo and we began killing the critters.

Then JJ and Wilbur mentioned that they wanted a gallon of wine. "Here you are boys," Mom said, offering a five-dollar bill. "You're going to end up getting the wine anyway." Wilbur then went to the store and returned with the jug of Gallo. Our vagabond entourage proceeded to get drunk.

Uncle Bill showed up. He loved to talk, and he seemed fascinated by people who lived on the edge. He was short and wiry, quick to perceive the relevance of any conversation and engage in it with gusto. He always made sure that hipsters knew that his generation had been the precursor of later hip developments. "We smoked pot," he told JJ, Wilbur, Linda, and I, as we sat mesmerized by this short man who waived his arms in the air with enthusiasm as he spoke. "This was the thirties and forties. It helped us to play better. We'd buy the stuff in Prince Albert Tobacco cans, so now there's the common term used today, a 'can', meaning an ounce of marijuana. It was just a now and then thing for me in those days. But some of the cats really hit the tea or the booze."

Bill listened intently as each of us told a little about life on the road and on the streets. He would smoke his Marlboro IOOs and drink Nescafe when he engaged in conversation. Inevitably the conversation got around to music. He said that most of the rock drummers didn't really know how to drum, that they kind of faked it. Bill really believed this point, so much so that on one occasion he had chased drummer Alex Van Halen out of his house, tapping him on the head with some bush drumsticks in order to drive the point home.

Bill headed back to his house in front. We all felt like we had just spoken with one of the coolest old dudes around.

JJ collapsed suddenly in the kitchen. My mother rushed him to the ER. It turned out that he had chronic pneumonia. Mom had gotten him there in time to save his life. After about a week he was recovering and was released. He made it clear

that he wasn't going to forget this. "You saved my life moms. You and your son will always have a place in my heart. If I hadn't come here to your place, moms, I would've died." Chances are he was right. If he had collapsed on the road or the streets of Berkeley, especially if he was drunk, it could've been too late. Most people wouldn't have given a shit.

After JJ's close brush with death Wilbur and JJ decided to head towards Arizona and took off. The LA area was too big of a metropolitan monster for them.

Linda and I decided to stick it out in Pasadena. I got a job, the first one in my life, at a car wash. Linda started working as a waitress. We were burnt out and tired. I think we both desperately wanted to stop and settle down.

And mom was so proud of us. She had spent enough time worrying about my safety out on the streets and highways. Now it looked like maybe her worries were over. "I'm so glad you both found jobs," she said.

But it was not to be. I soon hit the road and left Linda behind. I couldn't handle the greater LA scene either. Linda then went to Hollywood and became a prostitute.

Mom just accepted all this, I guess. She had long since realized that there was no stopping my friends and I from doing whatever we wanted to do.

Chapter Ten: The Bad and The Good of STP

I went back to Berkeley. The scene was really dead. I spent most of my time drunk again, sleeping at night in the church bushes. It was disgusting. Here I was again in a city I had sworn off, doing the same old thing. Winter set in. Enough was enough. Arizona, here I come.

I hitchhiked all the way to Tucson. Though the weather sure was better, lots of sun minus the rain of the Bay area, the streets were tough and mean. The hang out was Fourth Avenue and especially the Fourth Avenue Park. It was another dead end, a place to drink, smoke dope, and always look over your shoulder for the Tucson police, who were overly aggressive to chase the transients out of town in service of the tourist industry. Getting money for whiskey and wine was always a chore. It seemed that the snowbirds weren't very generous with their spare change.

It wasn't completely desperate though. At a party I met a lady named Vickie who was a local. We had a night of romance that led to a friendship that would continue later in the game.

I heard that Austin, Texas, was quite the party town. Soon I was on my way into the Lone Star State.

When I got to Austin I went to the hang out, Guadalupe Street, right in the University of Texas neighborhood. It was there that I met another STP Family original, Duffy, an African American. He was crouched on the sidewalk when he saw me panhandling and walking by. He immediately summoned me over. His clothes were real designer type stuff and he had a black, slouched hat on. Duffy was basically lonely. We got something to eat, then some booze and got drunk. He explained that he was both Black and Irish in extraction and that his surname was McDuff. We hit it off pretty good from the start and continued partying around town together.

After becoming acquainted with Duffy, I met another dude named Butch. He was a stocky, blonde guy who was hanging around, smoking dope, drinking, and carousing.

I didn't know why, but Duffy and Butch just clashed. It was a real personality conflict. If I was hanging around Duffy, I'd hear something bad about Butch. If I was hanging around with Butch, it was visa versa. The whole power struggle between these guys was baseless.

The animosity between these two came to a head one night. Duffy invited Butch and I over to his pad, a split-level basement. Butch showed up. I did too. Duffy and Butch started arguing. Next thing I knew, Duffy had a gun out, a big revolver, and was brandishing the weapon, challenging Butch to fight, and telling me to step aside. Butch told Duffy to put the gun away, "Let's settle it hand to hand, like men." Duffy put away the piece, and then drop-kicked Butch full force in the face. Butch went down and Duffy was on top of him, raining fist blows quickly upon his head with one hand while he was ready to pound his head in with a lead pipe he had raised in his other hand. Butch quickly got his legs up around Duffy's front neck and toppled him onto his back. Then Butch mounted him, took the pipe away, and began beating Duffy's head repeatedly with the pipe until he was almost senseless. Duffy told butch he'd had enough and Butch got off of him. I left the scene. It was senseless all right.

Thank God I ran into Otis. He was another STP Family guy who I'd met back in 1972 at the first Rainbow Gathering. Otis was tall and lanky, loyal as a brother, and very mellow. Sure, he liked to drink, but he never gave anyone any trouble. Otis was also African American. His folks were poor sharecroppers from Louisiana. He wasn't very educated, having grown up so poor. But what this man didn't have in book learning he made up for with a warm heart. I always felt at ease around him. He's one of the few people I ever felt I could completely trust.

"Phil! It's real good to see you here!" was his greeting as we ran into each other on Guadalupe.

We powwowed. We both decided that we would rather be in the Oregon woods. Austin wasn't everything it was chalked up to be. We decided to leave town.

We had some real rough going trying to get rides.

"The problem is, Otis, is I suspect some folks here in Texas are prejudiced. They think we're a couple of niggers. I mean, I'm long haired and grungy and you're black and grungy."

"Yep. You're probably right, Phil."

It seemed like we walked through most of Texas. And that's plenty to walk through.

We'd gone west a ways, and come nightfall, decided to roll out our bedrolls up on a hill above the highway. At dawn we got up and headed down to the road to try to get a ride. Right on the ground in front of us was an unopened six-pack of beer. I picked it up and we both expressed our glee with the find. All of a sudden a patrol car pulled up. Two cops, overweight Boss Hogg types wearing Stetsons, hit us for ID, and then pat searched us. Picking up the six-pack, one of the cops quipped, "Well, at least you boys have breakfast." The six-pack was hurled back to the ground and the cops got in their car, laughing, and sped away.

When we got to Odessa, Texas, we were hungry, thirsty, tired, and worn out. The beer had been warm and didn't quite satisfy our thirst. We just couldn't get a ride out of there. Out of desperation, I came up with a plan. "I've had it Otis. Let's go to the Catholic Church and try to get some help. They've got a long tradition of helping folks out." Otis gave me a look like, "Where did you come up with this?" But he went along with the idea and we began our search for the church.

When we found the church we went next door and knocked on the rectory door. A young priest came to the door, dark haired, with a rather noble presence. "We're hitchhiking through town," I began, half way wondering how far I'd get before the door was slammed in our faces, "and we're stuck here. We're tired, and hungry, and..."

The padre interrupted. "Please come in. Whatever I have is yours." Otis looked at me like I really pulled one off. I hadn't. This priest obviously was real in his beliefs. He was the one who was extending his hand. I really didn't quite expect this. The cleric motioned for us to sit. "I can accommodate both of you for the

night. You two can use the guest room. I'm cooking some dinner now. You guys can eat, shower, sleep, have breakfast, and then be on your way."

We expressed our gratitude and proceeded to become the beneficiaries of his hospitality.

At dinner the priest explained that he was from Spain and that he was a Jesuit who was serving a Hispanic flock in Odessa. When asked why he came here from Spain, he put it simply. "I was called."

In the morning we hit the road, fed, rested, and supplied with a ten dollar bill the padre gave us. We didn't wait long for a ride. It was a pickup truck heading for Sacramento, California. It was one hell of a ride. The driver drove real fast and we were in the open back exposed to wind and weather, spooked by the driving skills of the guy behind the wheel. It kind of made you wonder if you were going to make it to Sacramento alive.

But we did get to Sacramento. We then headed to Oregon via the coast. Otis decided to settle down in the hip community of Takilma, in the southern Oregon woods.

I journeyed on, making the rounds to the different hip communities in the back woods, spending time here and there, doing some chores to earn my keep, and then moving on.

Chapter Eleven: Hippies and Hillbillies

I was eighteen-years-old and it was just about the end of winter, 1975 when I heard that the Rainbow Gathering was going to be held again - this time in Arkansas. By now the event had developed into an annual affair. I knew it was the ultimate get together, the ultimate party. I wasn't about to miss out on this. But there would be some stops along the way.

After a long ride and arduous hitch, I arrived in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The hang out was on Central, the main old Route 66 thoroughfare that ran right by the University of New Mexico. I did well panhandling, which led to a lot of whiskey and wine. I had a place to crash at the home of some friends - two STP Family twin brothers - Rick and Dave, both Geminis astrologically, whom I had met in Boulder back in the spring of '72.

Another STP Family guy who went by the handle of Pig Pen was also working the street. I was panhandling by a supermarket off of Central when he suddenly came up, looked at my solid leather patched pants, dirty bandanna. "You think you're STP?" he screamed, and then proceeded to kick me full force in the teeth.

"Now you're STP!" he yelled, and then walked away. That was my initiation. Unfortunately I later would endure a second one.

I went up to the tiny adobe town of Cuba, New Mexico, and managed to get an adobe house to stay in for free - it was un-cared for. I visited my neighbor, H.B., an STP Family member who had a nice old pad. He seemed to be very mature and settled down. No more crazy street antics for him. He'd been there, done that.

Back to Albuquerque, hung out with STP Family member Slim, so named for his thin, frail frame. He had been a part of the Family since the start. We managed to get drunk on booze. He expressed that this life was hell. Slim wasn't happy hanging out, living on the road and the streets.

Some years later I heard the tragic news. Slim's depression had caused him to take his own life.

I knew about a hot springs up north of there and headed up to the place, where Dennis Hopper had filmed his famous skinny dipping scene in the cult classic "Easy Rider". When I got to the springs, located beside the Rio Grande River in the bottom of its Grand Canyon like gorge, Tom Rush was there, bathing with a lady, apparently his girl friend. I got naked and got in the hot water. Tom looked like he had seen a ghost. "That's all right you're here, Phil. We'll do some hanging out, have some fun around here," he said with a smile. He looked worn out, despite the therapeutic bath. "STP is dead, man," he said, explaining his depression. "It's dead action. Gotta move on, get into something different." I told Tom I agreed. Though he had been through more miles and trials than me, I felt it too. I was weary. I told him I was throwing my "originals", my leather patched pants, into the Rio Grande. He said he approved. "Its dead," he repeated, as I threw the Family emblem into the river and we watched the pants float south. Those pants are on their way to the Gulf of Mexico, I thought.

Tom and his lady and I ended up hanging out in Santa Fe and getting drunk. Then we split up. I spent a little more time in the area, but soon headed to Arkansas.

I was the first to arrive in Arkansas for the gathering. I started hanging out in Fayetteville, a small city set in the Ozarks where the University of Arkansas was located. I was somewhat a curiosity because it was quite unusual there to have anyone living on the streets panhandling. Wine and whiskey were easy to come by here because the panhandling was good. And it wasn't long before I was hanging out with a good-looking woman. There were places to crash, both at

people's pads and abandoned buildings. I was starting to like it in Fayetteville. Spring time in a nice Ozark setting with all the comforts of home.

Soon word reached me that a Rainbow Family camp had been set up out in the Ozarks east of Fayetteville. I thumbed out to the little town of Marshall, and then went 22 miles down a dirt road to the little hamlet of Snowball. I'd only seen what awaited me on the TV and in the funnies: "The Beverly Hillbillies" and "Li'l Abner" to be exact. Old men were sitting on porches of little cabins, chewing tobacco and whittling. They were wearing overalls and wide brimmed hats. Half clad young women and kids who were barefoot, just like in a "Lil Abner" comic strip. They were decent, friendly people.

"Which way to where the hippies are?" I asked one of these old gentlemen of the hills.

"Them folks are up that that li'l ol' road about two-and-a-half miles. You'll see an ol' empty cabin on the right, then a li'l cabin on the left where Ebby Crumley lives. Just keep goin' straight ahead past that and you can't miss 'em."

The directions were good. When I got there I had a tipi to stay in. There were lots of hippies all around. I guess the camp must have had a couple hundred people in all. Michael Bear, who I had met in Boulder back in 72, was camped in another tipi with his old lady, Peanut. Camped with me in the tipi where I stayed was Red David, so called because of his long red hair and beard, who I had met in Oregon. Nearby was David Paul, part Swedish, part Yakima Indian. Also camped there was Freedom, a Vietnam vet who was making the most out of living an anarchistic lifestyle.

Bear had been learning Bluegrass music since he had arrived in the Ozarks. He would strum on his guitar and sing songs like "The Tennessee Stud" and "Fox on the Run" around the campfires at night when the parties got good. It was a new and exciting experience for him, this hill music, especially when he got to play with the local hillbilly musicians in Snowball, who would join the jam with banjos, washboards, and fiddles.

Bear was a large man, built big, but not fat. Dark, shoulder length hair and beard, with an Italian schnozz. His Surname was Polizzi, and he was of Sicilian extraction out of New Orleans, the city where he had met Peanut, his woman.

She was short, blonde, and very jealous, due to the fact the he would often seek romance with other ladies on the side. But her jealousy, which could present itself in violent rages towards Bear, didn't dampen his activities, just his mood.

Bear had the most expressive of faces. When he was happy or elated, bliss could be read on his face like a road sign, every line and curve of his features telling the story. This could be observed at such simple things as eating tasty food. "Mmmm. Mmmm. This is good!" he'd say, while his face said it all. Equally, a bad situation was expressed oppositely by his facial expression and words. A confused look would overcome him and he would voice how terrible the experience was.

Bear and I were walking down the road towards Ebby Crumley's one morning. "You gotta meet him, Phil!" he said enthusiastically. "He's amazing."

I had a lot of questions to ask Ebby. It just fascinated me that real Hillbillies existed. We got to Ebby's and the medium-sized old man greeted us into his small, one room cabin. On the wall was a picture calendar that dated from the 1940's. The place was cluttered but somewhat organized, everything in its place, but not immaculate. The overalls that Ebby wore were stiff and unwashed. He wore a dirty, slouched and unwashed wide brimmed felt hat. He had been whittling a piece of cedar wood when we arrived. I asked him about this custom. "Are you carving something?"

"No. I jes start with a block of cedar wood and shave it down to nothin'."

"Do you drink moonshine?"

"Yep. To relax and steady the nerves. It's a good medicine too, for some ailments. After it's run through the still we put charred hickory sticks in it. Then it takes on a mellow color and taste."

"Do you believe in God?"

"Have no doubt about 'im."

"Do you use herbs?"

"I've been gathering herbs here all my life, since I was a little boy. I know where the Goldenseal and Blood Root is. I use 'em for medicine and sell 'em."

"What are your favorite foods?"

"Groundhog gravy, salt pork, possum pie, and squirrel."

"What do you think of the hippies?"

"I heard years ago over the radio that people were gonna be comin' out here lookin' for fresh streams. Y'all are welcome on my land."

Bear and I left Ebby's amazed. For all the nonsense about the entire South being a haven of prejudice, I found quite the opposite exhibited by Ebby Crumley and the other hillbillies I met around Snowball, Arkansas.

These folks were simple, and had simple values - right and wrong. They judged people by how they treated them. And if you showed respect to them, they showed it back. Another thing. Their closeness to the land and each other in community was enviable. No TVs and a close, interpersonal relationship to their peers seemed to thwart distractions and encourage wholeness. I envied Ebby Crumley.

The natural environment was a little hard to adjust to. It was incredibly hot and humid as summer set further in. The Ozark Mountain forest reminded me more of a jungle than anything. Long vines hung from the trees, the rivers were full of water moccasins-venomous, black water snakes, and the woods teemed with deadly poisonous vipers of other varieties, coral snakes and timber rattlers. Meanwhile if the ticks and chiggers didn't drive you crazy biting away at your flesh, the mosquitoes would. Still, the scenery was awesome, green rolling wooded hills. In the morning you always heard the whippoorwills singing their songs.

Life in the camp was otherwise pretty carefree, despite the natural drawbacks. We had plenty of food, pot to smoke, peyote to eat, and acid to take. And there was plenty of romance to be had. But the camp wasn't the gathering site. We had yet to find that.

Sure enough, Barry Plunker showed up to make sure that happened. He looked the same as when I first met him. He didn't seem to age much. And he was wilder than ever. He walked up to Freedom, who was tanning a piece of deer hide, and asked who he was.

"Freedom," was his simple answer to Barry.

"I've been looking for you for a long time," Barry said, referring to the character in his pre-Colorado gathering play.

It wasn't long until Plunker had gathered several of us to go on a gathering site-hunting caravan. Birdy, a tough little lady from Massachusetts, Freedom, Tony Angel, and I were recruited for the trip. And Kilo, a Mexican American dude

who'd hung out in some STP circles. Of course, Bear and Peanut decided to go as well.

We headed off in a school bus down to some reservoir out in the woods in central Arkansas. The location was miserable, offering no potential as a possible gathering site. This we ascertained after one day at this mosquito-ridden swamp. We'd found out about this place from an Ozark Mountain spaced out hippie who had been promoting the gathering prior to our arrival. This guy had met us at the reservoir, and commented, not knowing about our developing disgust, "You can see rainbows coming out of the concrete pipe." That was enough. A mosquito infested swamp surrounding a man-made lake with concrete pipes just didn't fit the bill, even if rainbows were present.

A local good ol' boy had joined us on the caravan. He was young, clean cut kid who drove an old pickup truck. We'd all decided to take some real good LSD one night as we were driving through the Ozarks to find a campsite. This young guy told us he'd taken it lots of times before, but we could tell that this would really be his first trip. While we were on the road, by the time the acid took effect, we noticed that he suddenly had accelerated the throttle on his truck and surged ahead. Then the truck started to smoke as he pulled over. We stopped the bus behind the stalled vehicle. The truck was irreparably dead. The redneck kid was laughing hysterically behind the wheel. "What a trip!" he yelled. "What a trip!" Tony Angel assisted the young kid by escorting him over to the bus. Freedom looked over at me, smiled knowingly, and winked. "Yea, what a trip!" he quipped.

The school bus was approaching a little hamlet named LA, Arkansas. "That's where I'm from!" the redneck kid shouted. "Pull into town! I gotta see my folks for a minute!" I went into the little run down house with the kid. The kid's dad looked like he'd had an encounter with a lawn mower, the crew cut was classic. Both he and his wife were grossly overweight. The acid enhanced all of this. The kid explained that he was going on a trip with us up into the woods. His dad accused him of being drunk. Then the kid accidentally knocked over a vase. "You people are a trip!" the kid exclaimed after the item hit the floor. I could tell he was by now even more lit up.

We returned to the bus and down the road. Finally we found an off-road campsite, right by the Buffalo River, near a bridge. We all got out, made a fire, and relaxed. Tony Angel, Birdy, and I walked off a bit, lay on our backs all night, watching the stars and talking. Conversation in such an aware psychedelic state always ran deep. God, politics, life, love, thoughts, feeling, it all could be covered, and often was.

Tony had fallen asleep. It was dawn. Birdy and I arose, wandering off, exploring the meadows that were surrounded by the woods. Then we split up to explore on our own. I saw a beautiful rhythm. First the whippoorwills would sing. The fog would start to rise. Then the vultures would fly from tree to tree. It was such a beautiful, natural routine. I was entranced.

Back on the road. A full day's roaming in search of a gathering site led us to Kyle's Landing. There were meadows by the river to explore, to search for the site. It was gorgeous, rocky, green and lush.

Night set in. Kilo took some acid and wandered off, playing his flute. The sound was enchanting, hypnotic. He was barefoot on this elusive track, mostly unseen as he stayed one step ahead of the group, seemingly charming us to search where he had already ventured. And this continued till dawn.

The dawn brought the fat cowboy hat wearing sheriff and his posse. He basically told us to leave the county or someone could get hurt. He wouldn't want to see that. It was a plausible deniable threat. Barry told me right after, "He's from the klan." That explained everything in this area where I soon heard that black men dared not stop for the night lest they disappear without a trace.

The hunt for a site had ended up being a fiasco. We returned to Ebby's without accomplishing our goal.

That didn't stop Barry. He went off again, soon returning with news that he had found the site. That set in motion a migration of the campers at Ebby's over to the site, located in the eastern Ozarks where the White and the Buffalo rivers converged. Once there we would be able to accommodate the other hippies who were coming into the state to attend the event.

The gathering site, at last! We soon had a parking lot in place, a main camp located beyond the end of a long, dusty, downhill trail leading to the Buffalo River, where the shallows of the Buffalo had to be waded. There the camp spread out along the river, which was lined with willow trees. High wooded hills were above the camp. The place came alive as hundreds of hippies waded across the river, carrying supplies, commencing to erect tipis, lean-tos, and tents. Soon the sound of drums, flutes, guitars, accompanied by singing, filled the air. Dancing to the music was everywhere.

Of course, the solemn council circle, located in the middle of the camp, would convene on a daily basis, and the hundreds in attendance discussed any issue that was brought up. This was routine.

But the man who introduced himself to all at the council one morning wasn't routine. He stood in the center looking very "straight" - short hair, clean-shaven - yet not so "straight" - naked except for a loincloth, bearing a cheap, fiberglass bow in his right hand. "I am White Eagle!" he boomed, "I am the chief of the Rainbow Family!" He strutted about the circle, looking at everyone like he was a Marine Corps Drill Instructor who was just waiting for someone to laugh. He then sat down in the circle. A few chuckles could be heard. No one took him seriously, but his whole display was so bizarre that very few had initially laughed, though this was completely ridiculous. Soon White Eagle was all over the gathering, organizing work crews, assisting in the kitchens, helping out here and there.

Rumors about White Eagle soon began to circulate from campfire to campfire. He was negotiating with the US Forest Service for the next gathering site, pawning himself off as the leader of the Rainbow Family, so went one rumor. This rumor was appalling because no one person could negotiate without council approval. Also, we all knew that there really wasn't any leader of the Rainbow Family. Even Barry and Garrick dared not claim that nonexistent job. Another rumor abounded that White Eagle was an escaped mental patient.

The weirdest rumor about White Eagle circulated in Rainbow circles well after the Arkansas gathering had ended. Randy, a Rainbow Family brother who wasn't known to lie, had stated to me and others that he had seen White Eagle meeting with some other men at a big table at a locale in Portland, Oregon. All of the participants at the meeting, said Randy, including White Eagle, wore suits and ties. Gone was the bow and loincloth. "Feds," said Randy. "White Eagle is a fed."

True, some very strange investigations of counter-culture groups are on record to have continued into the Seventies. But if White Eagle was part of a federal effort to infiltrate the Rainbow Family, that's fine, because all anyone ever could ascertain would have been the truth - it was a harmless bunch of hippies, nonviolent, never bent on the overthrow of the US government.

Personally, I've always really just believed what proved to be true: that White Eagle was a harmless eccentric - another performer to whom life was but a stage.

We weren't going to be hassled by federal law enforcement in Arkansas anyway, conspiracy theories aside. Local county government would prove to be our nemesis.

Barry had explained that there could be opposition. Security had to be tight. In response volunteered to organize and run the Security Camp, hidden in some bushes by the river. At Security Camp I organized a 24-7 watch. Coffee was kept

on the fire to keep awake lookouts that were posted at key concealed locations on the high hills, working rotating shifts. When a shift ended the lookout would return to the camp and be replaced by his coffee wired co-volunteer. Barry had told us what the code word alert would be when persecutors were seen coming. The lookouts would yell, "Babylon!"

I now believe that this system actually helped to create the mess that ensued. We hadn't anticipated that there were canoe tours on the river that would pass by the encampment where many of our folks were roaming about nude due to the intense heat and humidity. Soon some of these canoes were slowly passing by, tour guides at the helm, straight moms, dads, and kids onboard. "Babylon!" came the yell from a high hill. It was echoed by another lookout. Then the yell was mimicked throughout the camp, "Babylon!" Hippies, nude men and women, climbed up into the willows, hanging there in plain sight of the tourists, to view the canoes which carried whom they probably thought were cops or vigilantes. "Babylon!" they yelled as the confused, all American tourists drifted by, their eyes and mouths opened wide in shock and disgust at the bizarre naked scene that had suddenly exposed itself on the shore.

David Paul and several others and I had just built a traditional style Indian sweat lodge out of willows down river from the camp on the other side of the waterway. We had removed our clothing and were heating up rocks to put into the small, circular, blanket covered structure wherein we were going to pour water on the stones and sweat, pray, then jump into the river. Suddenly a jeep pulled up on the nearby dirt road. Out jumped cops with handguns drawn. "You're all under arrest for nudity!" one of the cops loudly growled. Immediately we all jumped in the river and started swimming upstream, against the current. I looked back. One of the crazy cops was pointing his handgun at us. Bang! Bang! Bang! He was shooting at us! I went underwater, scared shitless. I got near the other side of the river. One of the cops had gone by the shore upriver, crossed where it was shallow, and was waiting for me. I was tired and drifting, trying to hide in the willows that were in the water. Barry Plunker emerged from the brush and looked at the cop. "C'mon, just let the boy go!" he pleaded. I continued to drift downstream away from the cop and Barry, who realized was continuing the dialogue with the cop as a diversion, helping me to escape. I had an Indian style loin cloth on, so I wasn't entirely nude, but I guessed that this was nude enough for those engaged in raiding us. I climbed up onto the shore and began to crawl, unseen, concealed by the brush. Through the bushes I made my way silently past the cop and Barry, who were still arguing. I could see the main camp.

I got closer and saw hillbilly types carrying shotguns, rounding up those who were nude. It was a strange sort of roundup. I decided to make a run for it to get in a tipi. I bolted swiftly, almost reaching the door of a lodge. Then a gruff,

tobacco faced man, shotgun in hand, pointed his weapon at me, ordering me to stop, telling me I was under arrest. The hillbilly aggressively motioned with his shotgun, just like I was a prisoner of war or something, ordering me towards the mass of hippies who had formed into a big circle where the posse was taking some arrestees away. The folks in the circle joined hands and started to chant "Oooooomm."

While this went on a nude young lady who was being taken to jail hugged some friends goodbye, then turned to me and offered me her Mexican serape blanket. I took the item, wrapped myself in it, and mingled with the crowd. Meanwhile, my captor had become fascinated with the sight of all these chanting hippies, and in the process had lost track of me. In effect, he'd lost me in the crowd.

One of those who didn't get away was my future wife, Golden Bear. Michael Bear had only briefly introduced me to her during one of his romantic escapades with her that he tried in vain to conceal from his other half, Peanut. She had recently married a Mexican hipster named Miguel in order to get Miguel US citizenship. The ruse never worked out, however, due to the fact that the hillbilly preacher who performed the ceremony never registered the ceremony with the state. Two cops carried both her and Miguel away during the nudity raid. Miguel pleaded in broken English, "But I haf me pants on!" En-route to jail, the voluptuous Golden Bear, entirely nude, was lustfully glanced back at by one of the cops who was in the front seat of the patrol car. He was an obese man, eating a banana in a rather perverse way.

That was minor compared to what other gathering goers observed just prior to the raid. A van pulled up in the parking lot, the side doors sprang open, and a redneck man was clearly seen having sex with a calf.

The Arkansas Rainbow Gathering had proved to be a volatile affair, and somewhat of a gamble. Though the nudists all eventually got out of jail, and those who remained for the cleanup following the gathering even went into the area's county seat and picked up trash in the town, this gathering had come very close to being the scene of local government perpetrated violence. And even the cleanup efforts of the hippies, done in good faith, couldn't undo what had happened. Two separate and distinct cultures had clashed. One was sedentary, traditional, and had the weight of local law on its side. The other was nomadic, new and experimental, and survived often underground, beneath the weight of law. When the hippies had suddenly intruded, extreme hillbillies like Ebby Crumley had welcomed them with open arms. But that small faction of hill people was apparently a fractional minority. The mainstream of Ozark residents had not been open to the hipsters. They had made that very clear.

Having had enough of the strong-armed tactics of the local posse, I left the gathering on the Fifth of July with Vickie, the same gal I'd met in Tucson the previous winter. Folks were already leaving, and Vickie, who called herself "Wanderer", was standing across the river yelling her goodbyes to her friends in the main encampment. I decided to go across the river and tell Vickie that I was going with her. She liked the idea, and we were off.

We embarked on our hitchhiking trek towards the southwest and Tucson. It was another of those romantic flings, nothing major. When we reached Tucson, Vickie Wanderer wandered her way, and I wandered mine into further adventures.

Tucson was an ideal place to be when the weather turned frigid in much of the rest of the country. I soon briefly left Tucson that late summer, going up to Santa Fe. But as summer turned to fall, and fall became colder, I returned to Tucson, intent on spending the winter there. I ran into Bear on Fourth Avenue. He and Peanut were renting a small house in town where I was welcome.

From there more travels and adventures followed that Bear and I shared. We camped out in the desert, lived in some Navajo hogans near Winslow, Arizona, and eventually wound up at a ranch on the Mexican border near Bisbee, Arizona.

A hip guy named Ed owned this ranch. He rented a small cabin to Bear and company for a small fee. It overlooked the Mexican Sonora Desert, offering some of the most breathtaking vistas of that region's sweeping spaces and mountains. There was a small group of us there. Along with Bear and Peanut and I was Dog Man, a tall, lanky sort of grunge, and Bobby Lee and Golden Bear, his old lady, the same gal who had been arrested in Arkansas for nudity.

I didn't know yet that Bobby Lee went crazy when he got drunk. His violent and crazed behavior when he was tanked was legendary. But I got an introductory taste of it firsthand one night. Weld all made a run in Bear's old pickup truck to nearby Naco, Mexico where we bought some wine and Tequilla. We'd polished off all the booze, achieving a sizable buzz. Golden Bear and I were extremely attracted to each other and Bobby Lee noticed the flirting glances. It was now dark, and Bobby Lee was outside while the rest of us were kicked back in the cabin. Then Bobby came to the door. In plain view of everyone he started shaking and twitching incongruously, ripping off all of his clothes. He then walked off around the cabin out of view. Crash! Went a boulder through the window. Crash! Went another one through another window. Crash! Came another one. Bear got the confused look he always got when things went wrong. "Hey, man! What's Bobby doing?" he asked, unable to comprehend the violence.

Golden Bear had gone out to quell the destruction. Then we heard her: "Help me! He's killing me!"

I'd had enough. "Let's go!" I said, rushing for the door.

"Let's go!" Bear and Dog Man repeated.

We found Bobby naked on top of Golden Bear, choking her.

We pulled him off and all started punching and kicking him. "We're STP, motherfucker!" we yelled at Bobby as we gave him a real licking. Ed the rancher showed up with some rope and hog-tied Bobby, binding his hands together to his feet. "I told you never to do this kind of thing again, didn't I Bobby?" he said, as he tightly knotted the rope. We then drug Bobby into the cabin and bound him to a chair for the night. Then Ed forced some tranquilizers down Bobby's throat.

Chapter Twelve: The Gambler, an Ominous Dream, the Indians, and the Gathering

Missoula, Montana: I'd just arrived there in the early spring of 1976 for the next Rainbow Gathering that would occur this summer somewhere in the mountains of the Big Sky State. I hit the taverns of this college town, roamed the streets, and once again ran into Bear and Peanut. They'd had the same idea and were biding their time in anticipation of the upcoming event.

"I gotta hotel room," Bear told me as we walked down the street. "You can crash there. We'll be having some fun and making some money," he said with a smile. "Just stick with me."

It didn't take long before I found out what kind of "fun" we would be having "making some money." Bear and I would go down to the local gambling halls and play the games. Whether it was Poker or Keno, it was kind of hit and miss, based on the skimpy finds we could bum. What we really needed was a mentor, someone to teach us how to gamble and win, at least more than we were winning.

Then it happened. I bummed fifty cents and bet it on Keno, choosing my date of birth as my lucky numbers. Suddenly I had hit the jackpot and had fifty dollars. Bear and I were overjoyed.

Then he approached us - the gambler. He was dressed in a brown disco style polyester leisure suit, wearing brown cowboy boots. His red hair was slicked back above a pockmarked, smiling, mustached face. He had a certain flash to his eyes, and could talk like he had sold used cars all of his life.

He took Bear and I aside. "Look," he began. "My name is Wes. I've gotta get into a real good five card stud game where the money is good. Give me the fifty bucks. I'm gonna win. I'll split the winnings fifty percent with you guys."

Bear looked confused, lost. "How can I be sure you'll win?" he asked the stranger.

"God told me," Wes replied, looking Bear straight in the eye.

Bear then agreed to the deal on the spot. I concurred.

We watched. Wes sat down in seat number five. He looked around the table at the beefy, Stetson wearing competition while the first hand was being shuffled. "I hope everybody here is ready to lose their money tonight," he said with a grin, "because I'm gonna win."

The cards were dealt. Wes folded on the second card and didn't bet. This happened several times in succession. Another hand - then he didn't fold, held on to the end, and won. The same pattern, folding without betting on the second card, then holding onto a good hand and winning, continued for about three hours.

"Time to go," he said, sprightly getting up from the table, scooping up the large pile of chips he'd won.

"It's been a good evening." He grinned at his rancher competition. No one grinned back.

He'd done well. Our cut was several hundred dollars. Sure beat panhandling.

"How do you do it?" Bear asked Wes as we sat having coffee in the nearby diner.

Wes scanned us, keeping eye contact, as he began to explain. "I can tell you guys. Most people I can't tell. They'd never believe me. They'd think I'm crazy. One night I took LSD 25. Then God told me to take all of these people's money. He told me I'd win if I wore brown and sat in seat number five. I've been doing it ever since."

"But...don't you have any practical strategies you use?" Bear pressed.

"Just remember this," Wes replied. "If I don't have a good pair, a high pair by the first two cards, I fold and don't bet. A lot of people keep it going on nothing, or a pair of twos, or something dumb. That's just plain foolish. But I don't go further unless I feel there's a good chance."

Apparently this man who claimed to be God's messenger to the poker tables had a practical side.

Wes gave Bear and I some lessons on his poker technique, which we soon utilized in the poker halls around town. While the method increased one's success rate somewhat, it wasn't fool proof - someone could often come up with a higher hand. We'd win more, but we'd still lose some. It was just the nature of the game. This was especially evident one night when we saw Wes drop about a thousand bucks at the table. Wes looked really shook up and depressed after that game. Had God abandoned him? Or had he just hallucinated the divine mandate to gamble as he did? I tend to believe the latter.

I went through some soul searching. Gambling just wasn't for me. It could too easily become an obsession, a compulsion, even the driving motivation of one's life. Bear was becoming enmeshed in the games. I wasn't. I wanted out.

Bear and Peanut went out for breakfast one morning. I left, leaving behind a note saying goodbye.

I hitched back to Berkeley, planning to make it a short trip, then to return to Montana. Hanging out again on Telegraph Avenue, I began to wonder if I'd died and gone to hell. Especially when I ran into my old true love, Linda. She was working at a massage parlor as a prostitute. We went back to her rundown hotel room.

Linda's life as a prostitute bothered me.

"Why are you doing this?" I asked.

"I need the money."

I had some peyote. We both ate some of the hallucinogen. We'd been making love and were laying on the bed having an after the fact cigarette, really feeling the effects of the drug. Then some horny dude came up to the door, pounding aggressively, yelling for Linda. We both were silent. Linda didn't answer. The man went away.

Linda then looked at me, asking, "What am I doing here?"

"Come with me to Montana," I urged.

She immediately agreed. We soon were on our way, leaving Berkeley and the madness behind.

It turned out to be a very sad journey. We hitched up to Montana for sure. But the lure of the money had already left an impression on Linda. Unfortunately, money was one of the things I never could give her, or security. I was a road person, a vagabond, a young man who didn't even know how to drive, had never held a job, and didn't even know how to write a check. She left me, returning to California and the working girl's life. I didn't blame her.

In Missoula word reached me that some Rainbow Family were up at a cabin Barry Plunker had just east of Kalispell, located near the west end of Glacier National Park. When I reached the cabin, set back on a dirt road in the woods, it was a great reunion. Barry and Sunshine, his lady, Kilo, Dominic, Freedom, and Tony Angel were all there. I settled in, enjoying the company and a big bowl of stew and some after dinner pot. Everyone was in good spirits and relaxed.

That night as the outdoor campfire died down, I retired to my sleeping bag inside the cabin. I quickly fell asleep and had the strangest dream. In the dream Dominic and I were going to go somewhere in a truck. Kilo then said he was going to go along. I felt like this wasn't good, like Kilo was up to no good. Then I saw two women, a thin lady and a fat lady. Next, Dominic and I walked off with them. Strangely Kilo was nowhere to be found.

I awoke that morning wondering what this dream could have meant.

After breakfast it was evident that a laundry run needed to be done in town. Dominic and I volunteered for the job. We were entrusted with this duty and a pickup truck. The laundry was loaded. Dominic got behind the wheel and I took the shotgun seat, when suddenly Kilo insisted that he go along. I recognized my dream coming true. It was very strange. As in the dream, I felt that Kilo was up to no good.

But Kilo was well known for often being up to no good. Already notorious for being a petty thief and a con man, Marque Antonio Esparza, aka Kilo, had been raised in an upper middle class Mexican American family in San Antonio, Texas. Having thrown aside his familial world of opportunity, he had embraced the hippie dream, only to find discouragement and poverty due to his shunning the work ethic. Influenced first by another con man named Ronnie, himself notorious for thieving, conning, and being the originator of "the mad gypsy philosophy", a sort of hedonistic, slick, nomadic mannerism which included conning ndive hipsters, but never your own associates, Kilo had embraced this philosophy entirely. He didn't rip off "Family", but anyone else was fair game. He was always on the move, making his getaway. Kilo later had encountered certain STP Family members and incorporated their bravado. But there was a difference. While some STP members did thief on occasion, or play a con game, they often were very

up front about their behavior. Some didn't thief at all. Alcohol had taken a grip on Kilo early on. Often he would get drunk and beat on Marsha, his old lady. Kilo never was initiated into the STP Family, and to my knowledge, never belonged. He was on his own. Kilo was hard to figure. He was a world of contradictions. Sober or on psychedelics he came across as the nicest guy you could meet. He could be helpful. He could be kind, considerate to the less fortunate, and kind to Marsha. Always nice towards their little son, Boogie. He could be mystical, spiritual, and philosophic. But this stocky man of short stature, dressed in hand woven Maya Indian garb, with penetrating eyes shining forth from a face surrounded by curly, shoulder length hair, appearing like a seeker of enlightenment, was actually quite predictable. When he drank he was bad, very bad. But on occasion he was unpredictable. He could be good while drunk, or bad when not.

Reluctantly Dominic and I allowed Kilo to ride along for the laundry run. It would prove to be the wrong decision. Sure, we made the laundry mat, loaded the clothes into the washing machines. Then we got distracted and led down the primrose path by Kilo. He insisted that we go to downtown Kalispell. Wouldn't take no for an answer. Yea, we'd be back to put the clothes in the driers, he said.

Downtown, he insisted that we cruise by a park situated off on a neighborhood street a few blocks off the main drag. We did, and Kilo spotted some teenagers drinking from a keg of beer. "Stop!" Stop!" Kilo yelled. "Let's party!" Dominic tried to explain to Kilo that we couldn't stay long as he pulled over and parked the truck. But Kilo wasn't listening. We joined in the drinking. Every time Dominic or I said we had better get going, we had laundry to finish to return to those waiting, Kilo would ignore us. Consequently we partied until the keg was empty and we were thoroughly drunk.

It was only the beginning of sorrows. By the time we got over to the laundry mat we were beyond thoroughly drunk. We all whipped it out and pissed right out on the parking lot, locals be damned. Staggering into the laundry mat, we decided we were too wasted to move the laundry into the driers. Sorry folks, it'll have to be hang-dried, due to circumstances beyond our control. So we bagged it up wet and headed towards Plunker's cabin.

But there was a fork in the road. East, and we'd get to Barry's. South, and we'd be on the way to some lakes, each of which were surrounded by lakeside cabins. And worst, Kilo had recently met a young, attractive blonde named Buff, who he knew lived in a lakeside cabin down the South Fork. "Let's go to Buff's!" he yelled.

Dominic refused. "No Kilo. We have to get home with the laundry."

Kilo then reached over and grabbed the driver's wheel and commandeered the rig down the South Fork. "We're goin' to Buff's!" he shouted. It was getting dark as we sped down the South Fork road, deeper into the woods. Dominic and I knew now that there was no stopping Kilo. He was out of control. Perhaps he'd see Buff, she'd brush the drunk off, and we'd be back to Barry's a little late, but there nonetheless. We drove a considerable while into the night before we spotted a group of cabins near a lake-shore. "That's it!" Kilo barked. "Pull in!"

Dominic steered the pickup into a central grassy area surrounded by cabins. Then the truck got stuck in some mud. Vrrrrrm! Vrrrrrm! Vrrrrrm! Dominic repeatedly tried to get the truck loose, revving the engine. The truck only got stuck deeper. Kilo and I got out of the vehicle and tried pushing it as Dominic revved it some more. It was no use. All of a sudden there was a huge circle of people surrounding us, yelling at us to be quiet. They were bicyclists who had been on the road all day. They were exhausted and the escapade had interrupted their sleep. Dominic got out of the truck and tried to reason with them. One of them was really ticked off at the whole noisy, drunken incident and started to yell at Dominic. Then Dominic, drunk as he was, thought he was imitating Christ. He fell on his face, grasping the angry bicyclist's feet, kissing them, frantically repeating, "I love you! I love you! I love you!" The man, shocked and revolted by the hairy, dark, drunken little man's sudden act, which the angry bicyclist misinterpreted to be one of perversion, began striking Dominic with his fists, thinking he was fending off a bizarre sexual assault. Kilo then pushed the man away from Dominic shouting, "You leave the old man alone!" It was madness. Turned out to not even be the set of cabins where Buff lived.

A sheriff's deputy showed up, having been called to the scene, pulling the truck out of the mud with a cable. He didn't check to see if we were drunk or anything. Nor did he know about the altercations involving Dominic, the bicyclist, and Kilo.

There was a major problem though. Kilo got behind the wheel. Dominic and I thought we would be heading to Barry's. Nope. Kilo turned south. "We're going to Missoula!" he shouted in response to our pleas to return to Barry's with the laundry.

I'd had it. Enough was enough. I punched Kilo in the face. He then punched me back rapidly three times in the face, immediately pulling the truck off the road, getting it stuck in the ditch. The cops pulled up right away. Kilo was arrested for DWI. Dominic and I were left with the truck. It was late at night. We were broke. It looked hopeless.

Then a white Corvair pulled up. An attractive blonde, a thin lady, was driving. In the passenger seat was a heavy, yet attractive lady. They said they had a chain

and would pull us out. This they proceeded to do and we got the truck properly pulled up onto the road's shoulder. What happened next was spontaneous. I opened the driver's door of the Corvair and embraced the driver, kissing her. Meanwhile, Dominic walked around to the passenger side, opened the door, and did the same with the passenger. We were met with quite agreeable responses. Next thing we knew we were being driven off in their car to their home for a night of romance. Come morning, we were treated to bacon, eggs, toast, and coffee, and then driven over to the truck, which we proceeded to drive back towards Barry's.

It was strange. I realized as we drove back that my entire dream had come true.

Our response from everyone waiting for their laundry at Barry's was far from sympathetic. Dominic and I tried to explain that the whole adventure had been Kilo's fault. We were met by hostile stares. I even went so far as to try to put a cosmic twist on the whole thing, telling about my dream. Same response. Barry approached me. "I disown you," he said.

Our host had spoken. Dominic and I knew that we were no longer welcome, at least for now. We had to fend for ourselves for the time being. To us it was like being shunned by our tribe, just like the disciplinary measures of Native Americans of old towards tribal members who violated the rules. The difference was that Dominic and I knew that we were innocent. Kilo was the culprit, but the circumstances made us all look guilty. Time would vindicate us, we were sure, but we would have to spend some time apart from our friends. Fate had mandated that.

A little of the Rainbow Family belief system before I tell of the adventures Dominic and I shared following our shunning. Most Rainbow folks believe in reincarnation. There was a strong leaning towards the Native American beliefs as well, and many Family members were convinced that they had been American Indians in former lives. There were strong Hindu influences, such as the belief in Karma, that what one does in this life determines one's fate in this life and the next one. And Dharma, that one's position in life is due to the actions in a past life. But there were always exceptions. Occasionally there were persons who held to orthodox Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, and Native American beliefs that would form part of the Rainbow Family. The truth was, it was loose knit, there were no real leaders, and tolerance for differing beliefs was cherished.

We drove off in Dominic's old station wagon, heading south towards Missoula. Perturbed, distraught at our shaming. On the way Dominic pulled over, saying it was time to seek divine guidance. I went out into the woods seeking a sign. Then I saw some geese heading northeast.

"Perhaps we're supposed to head that way, Dominic," I suggested.

He looked at me inquisitively, asking, "What's over there?"

I thought a second. "First you hit Glacier Park, then the Blackfoot Reservation."

He stared blankly.

I continued. "Let's go and invite the Native Americans to the gathering."

Dominic agreed, turning the car around. We would invite the Blackfeet.

Dominic was into what was known as the ascended masters. It was a belief that was spread by different New Age groups that held that certain saintly persons had perfected their own divinity and ascended to higher heavenly realms where they interceded with God for those who had yet to attain to a higher plane. The group whose literature he read was known as the Ruby Focus, out of Sedona, Arizona. This group later changed its name to the Rainbow Focus, possibly due to Rainbow Family influences, and was allegedly in touch with ascended beings, including St. Germaine, Michael the Archangel, and one Monka from Mars. Dominic even had printed and was distributing his own ruby colored Rainbow invitation for the upcoming gathering, inviting all "godlets" to attend the event. There were stacks of this invitation in the back of his station wagon. He loved to quote the Psalm, "Know ye that ye are Gods?" to back up his theology. According to Dominic, as a mini-god, or "godlet", one could perform miracles just like Christ.

After a good deal of time of the road we were nearing Browning, Montana and the Blackfoot Reservation. We were broke and the gas gage was on empty. We'd imagined together the gas tank full for some while already, and it looked like this "godlet" method had worked.

"Imagine the gas tank full!" said Dominic, seeking to continue to employ our divine powers. We continued to imagine together.

I see it, Dominic!" I shouted.

"I see it full!" Dominic shouted louder.

The car quit running, out of gas, and we managed to pull over.

"We lacked faith!" Dominic howled. "Now its up against the wall!"

We hitchhiked to a remote gas station, bummed some change, filled a borrowed gas can, put a gallon in the tank, and were enabled to proceed to Browning. We

pulled over on a side street and slept in the car. I awoke to a flashlight checking out the interior of the car. I remained motionless, covered by my sleeping bag. It was the tribal police.

This was not a good time on any Reservation on the Northern Plains. The activism of the American Indian Movement, which had led to the Wounded Knee uprising of 1973, was a fresh memory in the minds of Bureau of Indian Affairs officials and Tribal government workers. A tribal "goon squad" which intended to eliminate all forms of dissent and radical efforts to achieve sovereignty notoriously oppressed the Lakota activists of Pine Ridge in South Dakota. Some in other tribal government's payrolls were following this pattern of abusive oppression at this time as well.

Come morning, we went to an Indian center located on another side street. Running the place was a gentleman named Wilbur Fish. Fish was Cree and Blackfoot. He was handsome, had long braided hair, and wore traditional moccasins. He proved to be quite understanding towards Dominic and I. He agreed that many of the hippies were seeking to find harmony with the natural world and therefore were more open to understanding Native American traditional ways. He heard us out when we spoke of the gathering and thought the event to be interesting. Then he offered us a place to stay on his uncle's land, right on Cut Bank Creek. When we went with Fish out to his uncle's land, we arrived first at a run down older house set in front of the acreage by the road. Fish escorted us inside where he introduced us to his uncle, explaining to him that we needed a place to stay for a while. His uncle, a middle-aged man who looked and acted older than he was, welcomed us. Dominic then drove his station wagon onto the acreage down a small dirt road and into a meadow near the creek.

We set up camp near the station wagon, though we soon found out that we were welcome to use the house for cooking. "I'm gone sometimes, so go ahead and cook in the house when I'm gone," his uncle told us. "I'd kind of like you guys to keep an eye on the house when I'm gone away," he explained.

Dominic was thrilled with the offer, being the self-made Rainbow chef that he was, used to cooking for thousands at the gatherings. Before long he not only was cooking there when Fish's uncle was gone, but when he was home as well. Fish's uncle would have friends and relatives over and Dominic would be serving stew and Indian Fried Bread. The social atmosphere was getting interesting. I'm sure the food contributed to this. Indians would teach us some of their language, beliefs, legends, and lore. They were quite amazed to find some hippies who were fascinated with all this.

We spent about three weeks on the reservation, inviting Natives to the gathering, enjoying the breathtaking views of the east slope of the Rockies and the rolling hills and plains to the east. It had been quite an interesting visit.

Dominic and I went down to Missoula and split up. We each would soon approach the gathering separately.

It was now mid-June. The word was out - a gathering site had been found in the mountains above the Teton River, northwest of the little town of Choteau, Montana.

I hitchhiked northeast towards Choteau. En-route I met an African American hipster who was also heading to the gathering. We started traveling together, arriving near the final road leading towards the trail that led to the gathering site. We'd gotten a ride to a small, cabin-like general store. We got stuck - we couldn't get a ride at all - for one thing, there wasn't any traffic. Then it started to rain very hard. Lightning suddenly struck about ten yards from where we stood. Spooked, we decided to stop into the store and browse to get away from the lightning and dry off. A middle-aged woman who ran the store approached us.

"Are you boys hungry?"

We nodded.

"Well, c'mon into the living quarters and have some dinner."

We were escorted behind a curtain into a dining room in the back, and then seated at a table complete with venison stew, bread, butter, and milk. We were starved and ate heartily.

"Why are you doing this for us?" I asked. "I mean, we're hippies and you're straight."

She answered saying that she did this because we are human beings.

Our hunger satisfied, we returned to the road and caught a ride on the back of a hippie flat bed truck going to the gathering. The truck, loaded in back with hipsters and supplies bound for the gathering, took us to the hippie filled base camp located by the Teton River.

There I met up with Freedom and Tony Angel. They told me that people were already going into the site and we should prepare to embark.

They made no mention of the laundry incident. Apparently it was history.

We then took a ride up to the parking lot. Vehicles of all sorts were assembled, and folks were carrying supplies up the path to the different camps. The whole thing began to unfold. A Security Camp from where Freedom, Tony Angel and others would police the event was set up at the mouth of the canyon. From there they would be on call in case someone turned violent, to subdue the crazy or crazies, then turn them over to the authorities. Other camps were set up further up the canyon and in the surrounding mountainous country, complete with the usual kitchens and medical tents. It turned out that about fifteen thousand people attended.

About center ways up the canyon a major camp was happening, known as Hobo Heaven. Bear and Peanut, Kilo and Marsha, Dominic, and I all made our residences there, where the music and partying went all night long. This was the largest camp. It was also the place where many of those who lived on the road came together.

Then Goldfinger, the STP Family gold paint huffer, showed up at Hobo Heaven, and the party really took off. But he was clean. Gone were the trench coat, gilded gloves and other grungy apparel. He was even wearing new Levis and a nice shirt. He'd quit inhaling paint, he told me, and was about to get married to a young lady who was accompanying him. He then stood up with the lady next to the campfire and announced that he was marrying this girl to the crowd. "Let the festivities begin!" he roared, as the wine and marijuana came forth, the acoustic music and dancing emerged, contributing to the celebration. The partying went on late into the night. A makeshift Universal Life Church preacher came forward and performed the wedding ceremony. The crowd lavished Goldfinger and his new bride with gifts: dope, money, expensive imported clothing, and fine blankets. Then the partying continued until dawn.

The marriage didn't last beyond the next day. In fact, it was no marriage at all. It was a scam. Goldfinger had arranged the whole ruse to get high, get goods, and get laid. "It was the best way to get a good party going," he confided to me after the fact.

In the real world of real ongoing relationships, Bear and Peanut were going through quite a row. She had caught him making advances towards a young lady who went by the name of Rainbow Day. She then proceeded to get back at Bear. Right in Bear's face at the main fire at Hobo Heaven, Peanut burned a beautiful buckskin shirt that was Bear's prize possession. It was an embarrassing moment for Bear, but one that Peanut felt was well deserved.

Meanwhile the gathering was going well. Councils where a myriad of issues were discussed, proceeded orderly. Minor first aid was dispensed with care at several different medical tents. The food at the kitchens was usually tolerable.

Except when Dominic, nude and sweating over the fire, attempted to produce pizza for the starving masses at Hobo Heaven. He labored for hours, only to come up with a whole-wheat flat bread with a runny tomato sauce. It was a low point in his culinary endeavors.

Perhaps one of the most surprising things that happened at the gathering that year was when Adolph Hungry Wolf, a young man who had studied the traditional Blackfoot ways under a very old elder of that tribe, showed up to run a traditional sweat lodge ceremony near a little creek that was bubbling in the canyon. Both he and his wife were united in the pursuit of living in harmony with nature. She was a full-blooded Indian, and was very keen at assisting him with advice when he spoke about the "old ways". I attended the ceremony, which occurred in a small, dome shaped, willow-framed structure that was covered with blankets. In the center of the sweat lodge a small pit was in place for red-hot rocks that were heated by a fire outside the structure, and then moved into the pit just prior to the ceremony. The ritual consisted of the smoking of tobacco in a peace pipe, praying, and singing a traditional Blackfoot song as we sweated due to water that was poured on the rocks, which then emitted hot steam. Once we had sweated beyond our endurance, we exited the sweat lodge and proceeded to pour a bucket of the icy water from the stream over ourselves. Very refreshing, like being reborn, is the only way to describe the sensation.

It was thrilling to meet Adolph Hungry Wolf. I had been reading his "Good Medicine" books for quite some time, which preserved and shared some of the ancient and interesting religious and cultural ways of the Indians of old. It all made sense to me. I could clearly see the advantages of a life close to nature, as opposed to the technological rat race.

Speaking of traditions, ever since the first gathering the ritual of thousands holding hands and keeping a moment of silence on July Fourth had been observed at all the Rainbow Gatherings.

But at the Montana gathering it was to be kept differently this year. Garrick Beck began sharing with the different camps that he envisioned the moment of silence to occur right at the Canadian border, to form a circle with Canadians on the other side that would cross international boundaries. This human circle would go beyond the political lines. He described it as a "hands across the border" ceremony, similar to those performed already by communities on both sides of the line, but with deeper implications. This circle would occur at the border

crossing for Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park. The International Peace part of the park's title would get out the message that we all sought to convey, he explained.

Word of the joining of hands at the border had been spread among the hip communities north of the border. This would make sure that the event would occur with an adequate northern half of the human circle intended.

Then, right after Garrick had been spreading the word of the border circle, a Bureau of Indian Affairs official, a Crow Indian, showed up at the gathering councils stating that we were not allowed to cross the Blackfoot Reservation. The problem with this was that this was the sole route to get to the intended border crossing. Many people then became apprehensive about the plan, fearing arrest.

But on July Fourth a huge caravan carrying hundreds of persons left anyway for the ceremony. I was riding with Freedom and others in a truck. It was a bit spooky as he kept pointing out unmarked vehicles with automatic weapons on board, parked by the side of the road as we proceeded. Freedom had always made it clear that he wasn't naive about the government's dark side. He'd experienced it first hand as a lone sniper in Vietnam, a political assassin hunting communist commissars, he said.

We arrived at the border. More of the plain vehicles with M-16 A-1 rifles in view. The circle was formed. The moment of silence observed. It was fast and simple. We must have been there for less than five minutes. The caravan then proceeded to return towards the gathering. The ceremony had occurred without incident. I had been sweating it. I breathed a sign of relief.

Chapter Thirteen: Santa Fe to Rainbow Club Med

When the gathering ended I left with Marsha, Kilo's old lady, and Boogie, their child. We took off in a panel truck driven by a character named Forest, a young hipster who happened to be heading south to Austin, Texas, via Santa Fe, New Mexico. Marsha was just taking a break from Kilo, planning to reunite with him in Austin.

I never slept with Marsha or anything like that. We were friends. I always respected the bonds between couples.

Our trek took us first to the Crow Fair, a huge Indian Pow Wow on the Crow Indian Reservation that displays one of the largest tipi villages on record. Quite an awesome sight, seeing all those white tipis set near the area of the Little

Bighorn River. The dancing in traditional garb to the beat of the drums amid this setting was stirring.

We continued after the Crow Fair to Cody, Wyoming. Leaving town, looking for a place to camp in the sagebrush covered hills, we drove onto a spot set back from the main road. We were awakened during the night by the headlights of a lone rancher's pickup truck.

"This is private property," he said.

"All we need is a place to sleep," I explained. "We won't make a mess.

We'll pack out our trash and you won't even be able to tell that we were even here."

The rancher nodded in approval. "If you don't make a mess and yer all outta here in the morning, I guess it ain't doin' no harm."

Come morning, we kept our word and didn't leave so much as a cigarette butt behind.

We continued into Colorado and then headed south into New Mexico. When we reached Santa Fe I decided to stay there. Marsha continued with Forest to Austin. She told me to meet up later with Family in Austin. I responded saying that I might.

But for now, I wanted to spend some time in Santa Fe. I had my reasons. This city was my favorite spot on the continent. Founded in the late 1500's by the Spanish, and before that an Indian pueblo, this was the oldest continually inhabited city in the country. And it showed. Old adobe buildings and homes still abounded. Native American, Spanish, and Anglo cultures mingled. Set in the high, picturesque desert, with the nearby Sangre de Cristo Mountains as a backdrop, it all added up to an awesome place to be.

When the weather was nice, as it was most of the end of that summer of 1976, I would sleep in the bushes by a church just off the plaza. I'd keep my bedroll hidden there during the daytime so that didn't look too much like a transient while I was hanging out.

The main hangout was the plaza, a central square park that was surrounded on all four sides by streets, which were lined by buildings facing this central park. In the center of the park was a monument surrounded by a circular concrete bench. Most of the street people spent a lot of their time in the plaza and on that bench.

People met up with friends, found out where the parties were, made dope connections, and panhandled for change.

Often once dope or booze was obtained, people went south of the plaza two blocks to another park, which followed both sides of an often-dry river. There among the trees and bushes they found the cover necessary to light up a joint or crack open a jug and pass the stuff around.

It really wasn't bad on the streets of Santa Fe. In fact, it was pretty easy.

George, a barefoot, guitar playing, itinerant Hispanic troubadour, showed me where to get a good warm meal for practically nothing. It was called a Frito Pie and was available daily at the Greyhound Station for about a buck, which was always easy to come up with via panhandling. It was a big bowl of chili with Fritos and chopped onions. I got in the habit of starting my day with one.

Santiago Lucero, a man with wire rimmed glasses, shoulder length hair and a small beard, often went dumpster diving and would have some of the freshest day-old pastries available in the river park.

Besides these advantages, panhandling provided booze. Pot was often around to smoke for free.

Paterson and his Christ Brotherhood were around for a place to stay and a nice hot meal when the weather got cold. I utilized this option more as fall set in. They'd tired of Eugene, Oregon and migrated to Santa Fe sometime after the Wyoming gathering fiasco. They were renting several houses around town by pooling together their welfare checks. They had a house for street people to stay at, and other houses where the upper echelon of the organization lived. I'd stay mostly at the one geared for street folks, but because Paterson and his crew knew me somewhat, and probably wanted to recruit me, I often could stay at the other houses as well.

There also were some pretty nice kids around who attended Saint John's College, located on the outskirts of town. Often these kids had dope. They would invite me to a party at one of their pads, where we'd get blasted to the music of the Grateful Dead on the stereo.

A nice looking lady named Saucy used to hang out in the plaza. We had a fling whenever we'd meet up. She had long blond hair, and somewhat of a wild streak, always ready to accompany me to a party or out and about town for a good time.

One time a good time could have turned fatal for me. Saucy and I were in the plaza when this big Native American guy invited us over to his house for dinner.

He seemed quite charming and hospitable. We arrived at his small adobe house for dinner that evening. As the night progressed we ate, smoked some dope, and drank some booze. A couple of nice looking Native girls arrived to join the party. Then I asked to change the eight-track tape. My big host said ok, so I walked over to the stereo and changed it. Then he hauled off and hit me in the mouth, full force. Blood poured out as I staggered over to the kitchen sink, woozy from the blow, and washed myself off. Just then two more big Native American guys arrived at the front door and the host was greeting them there. Meanwhile one of the Native girls snuck over next to me and whispered, pointing to the kitchen back door, "You'd better get out of here. They plan on killing you." Saucy was next to me. I took her hand and we ran out the back into the night while the host was still distracted greeting his buddies.

I later found out that the Indian host's house was the local hangout for the American Indian Movement (AIM), and didn't doubt a bit that I was set up to either take a beating or get killed by some racist prejudiced bigots. Hatred and prejudice are not unique to white people solely. Unfortunately it is a worldwide disease. I'm not saying that every member of AIM was anti-white. I'm just pointing out that you always get a few idiots in every group, culture, or organization.

Saucy and I ran over to the Christ Brotherhood crash pad for the night. I really felt fortunate that the Indian gal had been brave enough to warn me.

As fall began to turn into winter another romance came my way. Her name was Elias. She was an attractive, olive skinned brunette from New York. We'd partied together, but had never been attracted to each other before. She had a steady boyfriend, a younger guy named Tim. But when she broke up with him we just kind of fell in together.

She took me over to the small house she was staying in outside of the nearby village of Pecos. We made love all night. I'd had a lot of women but never one who was this beautiful and sexy.

That night I found out that Elias had a strange string attached to her. She told me that the house we were in was actually rented by a guy who went by Gray Elk, and he was putting her up. He was an older man, in his mid-fifties, and she said she wasn't sleeping with him. But he had a crush on her and was dominating her life. "He might even show up tonight," she explained.

"He stays in another house nearby, and seems to think he owns me or something. He might stop by to check on me."

I was right in the saddle with Elias when Gray Elk came in the front door and shouted, "I told you not to do this sort of thing!" before he turned away, leaving the premises. Elias and I were later having another romantic interlude at another locale in Sante Fe. Gray Elk, having located her whereabouts, came to the door and started pounding on it loudly. "Elias! Are you there? Open up! It's Gray Elk!" We stayed silent until he left. He was stuck on her, he was repulsive to her, and I was smack dab in the middle of it. It was an awkward feeling.

As winter got colder, I remembered Marsha's invitation to meet up with her and Family in Austin. The invitation was now inviting due to the cold wind and snow. In Austin a warmer climate surely awaited. To Austin I went.

I soon located a house where not only Kilo and Marsha were staying, but a whole group of Rainbow Family as well. Everyone was planning on taking a trip south of the border: to Michoacan, to be exact.

Behind this venture were a Rainbow couple, David and Kay Beckwith. They were both from Illinois. He was blonde, bearded, and robust. She was tall, brunette, and adorned with lots of jewelry like a gypsy. They both had a mutual Mexican friend who attended the University of Texas in Austin, courtesy of his rich father. The friend's name was the same as his father's Don Enrique - and junior had extended his hospitality, inviting David, Kay, and any friends they brought along, to stay at his hacienda, Casa del Viento, meaning House of the Wind, located near his father's mansion on his father's estate, set below the mountains of Michoacan. Word had it that the Enrique land holdings were among the largest in all of Mexico. They employed a small army of campesenos who worked in the fields of the Rancho. The Enriques were very rich. No gratuity would be withheld. We were more than ready to embark to our own private version of Club Med.

And so we did. David and Kay Beckwith drove us south in their van. Kilo and Marsha with Boogie, their little boy, Chuck Wind Song and Birdy were all on board for the trip.

Charles Homer Mills, aka Chuck Wind Song, had been in on the Rainbow scene from its inception. Like Barry, he was also from Montana. He had served a stint in the Navy prior to immersing himself in the counterculture. He was an ex-biker who had been a member of the outlaw gang, the Iron Lords, before joining up with the Rainbow Family. He had been at Vortex, a major free rock concert in Oregon where the Rainbow Family had first really come together. He later helped to promote the first Rainbow gathering in Colorado, even to the point of locating the first gathering site, as I have previously noted. At the Wyoming gathering Chuck was instrumental in opposing Paterson's plan to hold the gathering on the

Wind River Reservation. It was at the Wyoming gathering that I had met Chuck, and we had become immediate friends.

Chuck always wore a vest, was in his late thirties, and had shoulder length hair crowned by some baldness. Always clean-shaven, with a beak-like nose, he was pretty sharp with his wits and a good communicator - skills he used as he vagabonded around the country to survive. He could convince someone who picked him up hitchhiking to not only put him up for the night, but to give him free reign over the fridge and to turn him on to some dope and money for the road.

Chuck had an item with him that he'd "liberated" at the Montana gathering. Wrapped in colorful, hand woven pieces of blankets was the Rainbow Stone - the same rock that Garrick had found on Rainbow Farm prior to the first gathering. When he disclosed that he had the stone, I asked him how he had gotten it.

Chuck answered, "I felt it was time to free it...to liberate it. Only certain people had been keeping it, and they weren't sharing it. It was in Garrick's tent at Montana. So I went in and took it."

Our van arrived at Mexican customs at Nuevo Laredo. The border guard took one look at this group of hippies and was reluctant to let us in the country. Kilo and I met with the customs man in a little office. Kilo, fluent in Spanish, conversed briefly with the guard, then produced a twenty-dollar bill, which he quickly passed down low to the guard, who placed the note into a drawer. We then drove into Mexico.

We traveled all day through the desert, arriving at night in the peyote fields, where we picked whole gunny sacks full of the cacti.

We then proceeded further south. The next day in the evening we arrived in the little village of Coroneo, Michoacan. It was a tiny adobe village located in the mountainous northern part of the state. Typical, its center was a small plaza with an old church, and a pulqueria - a bar where the intoxicating juice of the maguey cactus was dispensed to the peasants cheap.

Further down a dirt road we arrived at the Don Enrique Rancho. Stone houses were here and there where Mexican workers lived. This was all set in a panoramic backdrop of sweeping spaces where huge nopal cacti, similar to the prickly pear, had lined the valley floor, which was surrounded by mountains crowned by pine trees.

Then we arrived at the first hacienda, the mansion owned by Don Enrique the elder. It was huge, surrounded by adobe walls.

"Now we just head in the back further, about a couple of miles," said David Beckwith, as we continued further into the Rancho. We soon could see Casa del Viento, a two-story mansion, un-walled, set up high on a sweeping plain.

We arrived and settled in. David and Kay took Don Enrique's personal bedroom for their abode, Chuck, Birdy and I took the living room, and Kilo, Marsha and Boogie were in the guest room.

Our first week was spent eating authentic Mexican food and peyote, strolling through the countryside, and sun bathing. It all seemed idyllic. We could buy good food cheap in Coroneo, and freshly rolled tortillas from a peasant woman who lived about a half mile away in a little stone house. Cigarettes and booze were cheap as well. Plus we'd brought an ample supply of pot to hold us over.

Don Enrique the elder arrived to greet us one morning. He was tall, handsome, and probably about sixty-years-old. I marveled at this man, wearing a big sombrero and a hand woven serape, whose English speaking skills shamed my own. "I wish to extend my welcome to you all," he said. "My son told me that you would be coming. As friends of my son, know that both his and my hospitality is extended. Enjoy your stay here."

We wanted to see the surrounding areas as well, so we left one day to explore the nearby towns. We boarded the van and went into the nearby state of Guanajuato, where we passed through the little village of Amealco, a town that seemed very much like Coroneo. Then we continued to the larger adobe town of San Miguel de Allende.

San Miguel was fascinating. It too was set in the same sweeping spaces, surrounded by mountains. In the center of town was a beautiful, large plaza, which reminded me of Santa Fe's. Leading to the plaza were quaint, cobblestone streets. Nearby the plaza was a huge partially outdoor market place teeming with people, loaded with stands that had goods for sale of all varieties. We could buy good coffee, fresh fruits, vegetables, and even locally made blankets for a pittance. There was an internationally renowned art college in San Miguel as well. This added to the atmosphere, giving this place the flavor of an artist colony. People from Europe, Africa, and Asia could be met as one walked about the streets.

Kilo was driving the van. After we parked and had explored these surroundings for a while, he chanced upon a small pack of little children who began begging for change. He conversed with them in Spanish and found out that they lived at an orphanage. Kilo then insisted on driving these kids over to their residence. There we met the man who ran the place. Kilo questioned the man at length and

ascertained that the man was legitimately trying to assist orphans. "Well, let's cough up some bread," he said to us all. "C'mon, we can spare some money." We gave the guy about twenty dollars in Mexican pesos. I'll never forget his expression of gratitude, "Gracias. Muchas gracias," he repeated. "Vaya con Dios," he said, or "Go with God," as we departed.

I think we did. Kilo had been drinking Tequilla for most of the day, and I'm sure this had boosted his charitable mood. As we drove through Amealco on our return trip to the hacienda that night, we noticed a peasant man lying out in the middle of the street we were on which led to the plaza. David was at the wheel by then due to Kilo's drunken excess. "Stop the van!" Kilo roared. "Stop the van and pull over now!"

David complied. Kilo burst from the front passenger seat and approached the man whose head was bleeding. He set his head in his lap, cradling it, as a multitude of cars bypassed the scene, as they had probably been passing up the man for some while. Kilo conversed with the man in Spanish. Soon they both were genuflecting, making the sign of the cross, Catholic style. A local militia member, serape and sombrero wearing with an automatic weapon slung across his shoulder, approached the scene, curious as to what was occurring in the middle of the street. "Consigua una ambulancia!" Kilo ordered. "Get an ambulance!" The militiaman looked bewildered, but he soon complied. The ambulance arrived and took the wounded peasant away. "Is this the way for good Catholics to behave?" Kilo had lectured the militiaman and the ambulance crew, as the man was loaded on board for transport to a hospital. Of course, the lecture had been in Spanish and the rest of us had not understood it. Kilo translated what he had said as we headed back to the hacienda after the episode. "I said it because I was disgusted," he explained. "The injured man told me that he had fallen down and cut his head badly about three hours before we got there, and no one, not even the authorities, had stopped to help him."

Saint Kilo. Who would've thought?

I soon had a bad feeling, almost like a premonition or something. I had a sense that some impending disaster loomed. David Beckwith was returning to the states temporarily. The offer was there for any of us to ride back with him. I did, entering the USA through Laredo, Texas.

Good thing I did. At a later date and place, Chuck Wind Song recounted what had occurred after I left. The story was later confirmed by Kilo. Considerably drunk in the village of Amealco one day, Kilo started raising a ruckus in the plaza. When local militia arrived and tried to calm him down, Kilo grabbed an automatic rifle from one of the men and leaped on top of one of their vehicles, pretending

he was shooting at them. The militiamen overpowered Kilo and cast him into the local jail.

It was an adobe hovel with bars where inmates slept on straw stuffed mattresses. An old man was begging for water as Kilo was urinating in the urinal. The man came up and started drinking Kilo's urine, even as it was exiting his penis. This disgusted Kilo so intensely that, having somehow obtained a book of matches, he began lighting the mattresses on fire - an action that prompted the guards to hurl buckets of water into the dormitory. This was met with the glee of the thirsty old man, who got down on his face and began to lap the water up. Kilo too was gleeful. He had taken this drastic course of action to get the old timer a drink in the first place. Kilo proved to be a little too crazy for the local authorities, so they let him go.

Chapter Fourteen: Waldo

Once I arrived in Laredo, Texas, I said goodbye to David Beckwith. I then stuck out my thumb for Santa Fe. Word had it that the next gathering would be somewhere in New Mexico anyway.

I knew I would be arriving in northern New Mexico in the dead of winter. There would be snow and below freezing temperatures awaiting me. I didn't have a place to stay lined up, and I knew I could only stay at the Christ Brotherhood for just so long before I got "the bum's rush" and was asked to move on. But, because I knew enough people in Santa Fe, I felt that I would be able to find a place to stay. I had a stroke of luck when I arrived in Santa Fe. Dominic was visiting at the Christ Brotherhood's crash pad for street people. He was staying at an adobe house set near the edge of town, sharing the rent expenses with others. He invited me to stay there.

At the house Dominic introduced me to a beautiful blonde lady from Oregon. We were immediately attracted to each other and got together, deciding to hitchhike together west to California, where we then parted company. She headed to Portland, Oregon. I went to Berkeley, then up to south and central Oregon, bumming about on the streets and at rural hip communities, biding my time till spring.

When the spring thaw began to warm things up, I returned to Santa Fe. There I ran into Randy, the same Rainbow person who had alleged after the Arkansas gathering that White Eagle was a federal operative.

"C'mon out to Waldo, Phil. You'll love it there. The city will only burn you out," he advised. I gave heed to the call, jumping on board his old bread van, determined to relax in a country setting for a while.

Randy drove southeast on a rural highway, continuing until we got to the adobe village of Cerrillos, set in the high desert hills along the cottonwood tree lined Galisteo River. We drove through the dirt streets of the village, and then crossed some railroad tracks. The road then continued west along the railroad tracks, surrounded by barren, stark, desert hills. We turned south down another dirt road, crossed the railroad tracks again, and followed the road to a bed of sandy soil along the Galisteo River. "We're home," Randy announced as he brought the van to an abrupt halt.

I got out of the van, looking around as began to walk. I could see a strange looking stone house set on the top of a cliff overlooking the river. It looks like an owl's head, I thought, noticing the structure's structural composition, the way its windows were set amidst the pattern of stone. This house truly resembled an owl's head.

I returned to Randy's van. Nelly, his old lady, a thin, vibrant lady in her late twenties, was now with him. She had been waiting for him here in the wilderness of Waldo while he was in Santa Fe.

"Waldo is a nice place," she told me. "But it's only as nice as the people. Why don't you just get out and explore it?" she encouraged me. "You'll see what I mean."

Randy rolled a joint, lit it, and passed it to me. "But first this," he added, as we proceeded to get stoned.

I walked along the river towards the strange house that looked like an owl's head. It was across the river, set up on top of a cliff above the waterway. I was determined to look at this architectural marvel up close. I crossed where the river was shallow and almost dry on what appeared to be an old concrete dam, rather small, which provided a safe passage for me. Once across, I followed the path that continued up the side of the cliff towards the house. I reached the top of the cliff, and then approached the house. Smoke poured out of a stone chimney. Someone was home. I felt someone watching me. It was like I could feel the gaze of a pair of eyes upon my back.

I turned around in response to this feeling, seeing a tall, blonde man gazing at me curiously. He had shoulder length hair, and was wearing a set of fine, clean white shirt and pants, knee high Navajo style moccasins, with a silver concha belt

about his waist. "Howdy stranger," the blonde man said as he slowly walked up to me, extending his hand in anticipation of a handshake. "I'm Charles," he said, as our hands met with a shake that seemed to be barely a touch. "And you are?"

"Phil," I answered awkwardly, still surprised by somehow having sensed his gaze on my back. "I'm here with Randy for a while," I offered, explaining briefly my presence in Waldo.

Charles intently looked me in the eye. "Good enough," he said.

"Welcome to Waldo. Allow me to show you around."

He escorted me first to his door and we entered his house. It was simply furnished, with two rooms, one a living room and bedroom combination complete with a bed and an easy chair, the other was a simple kitchen, with a small wooden dining table set and a wood burning cooking stove. The walls were entirely stone, with mud serving as the mortar for the mason work. Skinned and dried pine tree trunks served as the beams for the ceiling, and smaller branches crossed the beams, the beams and branches supporting the roof, which was covered on the exterior by dirt.

"You built this place?" I asked, awed by his home's earthy coziness.

"Yes," he said. "I built it myself, with my own hands."

He motioned with a wave of his arm towards the door. "Follow me. I'll show you more." We went down a path that led west and arrived at a small, one room adobe house. A short man with long dark hair met us at the door. "This is my friend, Kelly Cargo," Charles introduced. Kelly and I exchanged a handshake. "Just passing through?" Kelly asked. "Or are you staying a while?" he pressed.

"Don't know," I answered.

"Where are you from?" I asked Kelly.

"Both Charles and I are from Texas," he offered. "But we like it here."

Charles and I continued on our trek. He led me down the cliff and across the river by way of the shallow crossing I had followed towards his house. We then followed the river east among the cottonwood trees until we got to another one room adobe house, this one even smaller than Cargo's hovel. An attractive, middle-aged brunette lady met us at the door and welcomed us inside, offering us wooden chairs to sit on. Seated, I noticed a small boy with long blonde hair sitting on the bed. The child began to softly play a bamboo flute. As we

conversed I learned that the woman, who I noticed had a British type accent, was originally from India. Her name was Feather, and the boy, her son, was also Charles' son. She and Charles gave no explanation as to why they lived in Separate abodes. I figured that it simply wasn't my business.

It had gotten dark. Charles stood up, and I did so on his cue. We said our good nights to Feather. We then went west along the river until we reached our place of parting - he would continue to his house, and I would cut north towards Randy's van. As we were about to separate, Charles said, "This place is a place of rest. Take advantage of that. You look road weary. Rest a while."

He smiled and we went our separate ways.

Tired, I got to the van and laid out my bedroll in the extreme rear of the vehicle. Randy and Nelly were asleep. I soon was as well.

When morning came we gradually awoke. What I mean is - each one of us - Randy, Nelly, and I kind of slowly slithered out of our beds, exited the van, started a fire, and put on a pot of coffee. Then we put on some oatmeal and waited for it to cook. Meanwhile, we all three were gathered by the campfire as Randy started the day rolling a big, fat joint. The coffee was done, so we each poured a cup, sipping the java down as we each, in turn, took big draws off of the reefer. We were really waking up and feeling good.

"How long you guys gonna be here?" I asked.

Randy and Nelly both answered saying that they didn't know. Maybe they'd be going to Oregon eventually after the New Mexico gathering took place.

They bounced the same question back off of me.

"I don't think I'll be here very long. But I might be back. It's a good place to know about."

The oatmeal was done. I ate my share.

"I'm gonna go and visit Feather for a bit," I said. I stood up. "What are you guys gonna do?" I inquired.

"I think we'll be going to Santa Fe to get some supplies," said Randy, finishing off his bowl of cereal.

"We'll catch you later then," Nelly said.

I followed the river over to Feather's. As I neared her house I could hear the faint sound of the bamboo flute being played by her son in the nearby cottonwood trees. I knocked on her door, and she welcomed me in, offering me one of her wooden chairs to sit on.

I was curious about Waldo. "What's the history of this place?" I asked.

"It was once a small railroad town about a hundred years ago and thereafter," she said. "Coal was mined here and nearby. They would ship the fuel out from here. But eventually the coal was mined out and the town died."

She offered me a cup of herbal tea. I accepted, and gave her an attentive look, anticipating more history.

"How did you and Charles end up building your homes here?"

Feather looked thoughtfully for a moment into space. She then continued.

"Charles found out about this place. He came out here first, alone. Then he met an old man's spirit, the spirit of a man who lived here long ago. The man gave Charles permission to move here. After that, Charles returned to Texas and got Kelly and me. After we arrived, the houses were built."

I finished my tea, thanked her, and excused myself.

I went up to Charles' house. He was chopping some wood outside as I approached. Charles stopped his chore and invited me inside. As we sat down, Charles put a dipper into a pail of water and offered me a drink, which I took and quenched my thirst. I returned the dipper to him and he got himself some water, proceeding to drink.

"Who owns this land?" I asked.

"Well," Charles began slowly, "It goes something like this. The Department of Army Engineers claims they own it. Some local Spanish ranchers say they own it. And the Indians of Santo Domingo Pueblo really own it. They were here first. In other words, it's in dispute."

"How does that all work with hippies living here?"

"How it works is that technically we're squatters. I went to the Santo Domingo Indians and asked if we could live here. They said it was ok as long as we take care of the land. I figure they've got legal title anyway."

I settled in and rested for several weeks, helping the residents of Waldo with simple chores, enjoying the vistas to the west - I could see the colorful high desert spaces to the ends of the earth, it seemed. To the south were several canyons surrounded by pinon and juniper tree covered hills. I loved hiking in these hills and canyons to gather firewood, or to just get away.

Once when I was visiting Charles at his house I took a good look at the big hills to the north. One of them, directly north of Charles' house, looked exactly like an owl facing to the south. In the lore of many Native American peoples the owl is considered a messenger of death. I wondered what this all may have meant in conjunction with Feather's story of Charles meeting the spirit of an old man who used to live in Waldo, combined with Charles' owl designed house, which I now realized was facing a large hill that resembled an owl. Is Charles' specialty being in touch with people on the other side? The very thought was spooky. It was something I would never dabble in.

It was now late spring. Randy and Nelly went on their way, driving off from Waldo. It was time to go for me as well, so I hit the road to Santa Fe. I got off at the Christ Brotherhood crash pad. Then it snowed, briefly, but fiercely. It was a blizzard, late in the year.

Chapter Fifteen: Gold, Diamonds, and the New Mexico Gathering

I stood gazing out the living room window at this cold fluke of nature. "It's snowing," I said aloud to myself.

"Yes, it's snowing," another voice, a somehow familiar one, echoed behind me. I turned to see the grinning face of Gary, aka Baba Dada Dass, his eyes meeting mine. "It's time to go to the gathering," he said. "Are you ready?"

Gary was about thirty-eight years old. He was a wandering itinerant comedian who could sell a snowball to an Eskimo. Humorous and funny, he always had a way with words of wit. I'd hung out with this dark haired and bearded sojourner, who always wore hand-woven Guatemalan Indian attire, at the Arkansas and Montana gatherings somewhat, and never ceased to laugh from his wild antics and well-tailored quips. And there he was, out of the blue, telling me it is time to go to the gathering.

"C'mon, Phil. The car is waiting outside. Grab your shit. Let's go!" I grabbed my bedroll and Gary escorted me outside. A brand new sedan awaited us, and a very straight, short haired, and clean-shaven young man greeted me with a huge smile as I approached the vehicle. "Put your stuff in the back seat," Gary directed. I proceeded to do so.

"Wait until you see the gold and diamonds," Gary said to me after I put my bedroll in the back. The mere statement caused my mind to reel in excitement. I got in the passenger side front seat, the straight guy got in the middle, and Gary got behind the wheel.

"The gold and diamonds?" I asked as Gary drove off, south, beginning our desert trek towards the gathering site, hundreds of miles away in the Gila National Forest. Gary smiled.

Now outside of Santa Fe, Gary asked the straight man, while lighting up a pipe of the best Afghanistan black primo hashish, getting us all stoned.

"Should we show him now?" said Gary.

"Of course," the straight guy answered.

Gary pulled the car over. We were alone in the high desert. Gary exited the vehicle, summoning us to follow, and we did, around to the trunk of the sedan, which he popped open with the key. A three-tiered black case was then opened with another key. Inside of each tier were small briefcases. Gary removed the first one from the top tier and opened it. A pile of 24 karat gold and diamond necklaces glimmered. The middle tier was opened, its briefcase produced and opened. It held rings, necklaces, and bracelets that were all 24-karat gold, and gold and diamond Swiss wristwatches. The bottom tier was opened, and its case as well, revealing more of the same. "Wow!" was all I could utter. We reentered the sedan and continued south.

"Let's get some more beer," Gary said to the straight man, who I learned was also named Gary. Straight Gary said that his credit card would cover it, and we got a case of brew. After that, Gary lit up some more hashish. We three became unequivocally impaired as we continued south.

It was night. We sped south through the empty desert wastes, now obscure by the darkness. I had to ask Gary what the story was. Straight Gary, the car, the horde of gold and diamonds. "Explain," I asserted.

Gary responded as he drove. "I was hitchhiking in Oklahoma City. That's when this guy here picked me up in this car. He told me that he was a top guy in the Moonies, and that he was miserable. He wanted to be free, so I invited him to the gathering...and here we are."

Straight Gary broke into the conversation. He explained that he was in charge of eight states for the Moonies. He had been entrusted with selling the gold and diamonds for the cult. But then he had snapped. He wanted to be free, he

explained, and had just drove off, heading west. That's when he ran into Gary Baba Dada Dass, he said.

The hashish and beer kept rolling. We became thoroughly bombed. I decided that I would do what I could to help free Straight Gary from the grips of the mind control cult he was enslaved to. I had recently seen some news clips on the methods of deprogrammers who assisted cult members to break free from the brainwashing perpetrated upon them by cult groups. I wanted to do my part to free this man. What alarmed me most was that he kept quoting Sung Mung Moon, the leader of the cult, saying, "Father says," about any issue that would come up in conversation. Clearly, this man longed to think for himself, and I became determined to help him to do so. "Call no man on earth father," I said, and Gary, catching onto my intentions, repeated my phrase. We continued together, Gary Baba Dass on the left, and me to the right, telling Straight Gary, in the middle, that we were all brothers and sisters, that only God was our father, not any man, and that he could think for himself and come up with his own views and opinions.

Straight Gary responded positively to all this, saying that he agreed and that freedom was what he was looking for.

"I have a new name for you," Gary said to Straight Gary. "Your name will be 'Verde', which means 'green' in Spanish. It is very close to 'verdad', which means truth."

Straight Gary, now Verde, was elated to be given the new name. He responded to this gift by saying that he was honored to receive the new title, which he would bare with pride from now on.

A spontaneous thing occurred, influenced no doubt by our mutual hashish and alcohol-influenced state. We suddenly all felt the need to pull off of the highway somewhere in the Gila Wilderness area. We drove down a dirt road, and then pulled off at an obscure, remote point encircled by juniper trees. We three stumbled out of the vehicle and sat cross-legged in the dirt. Verde surprised us by saying that he intended to give away all of the gold and diamonds to the Rainbow Family. Gary and I explained to Verde that we were only a small part of the Rainbow Family, and that it was vast, including everyone everywhere who recognized that they were part of it. But we could assist him in giving it all away, if he wanted help, Gary offered.

Verde agreed to that.

Then Gary went over to the car, popped open the trunk, and grabbed three candles, a yellow one, a blue one, and a red one, which he carried over to where Verde and I were seated. He placed the candles in a row upon the earth, and having lit them, he resumed his cross-legged seat. Gary spoke, "Now we shall divide the gold and diamonds three ways. Each of us will give away all of this jewelry. We solemnly promise not to sell any of it. It is now free."

We all promised to abide according to these guidelines. The jewelry was taken from the trunk and divided three ways. After this each one of us buried a necklace from our pile as a token of our agreement to the terms. Another round of beers and another pipe full of hashish brought the makeshift ceremony to a close.

Strangely, the next day we found out that the Rainbow Family seed camp, the pre-gathering rendezvous, was located at a place called Diamond Creek. We pulled into this locale that was surrounded by ponderosa pine trees, late that morning, finding Kilo and Marsha's school bus. I entered the bus with some of the gold and diamonds, which I had placed in a coffee can.

As I passed through the doorway, I noticed that the wall above the stairwell was painted yellow, blue, and red, the exact colors of the candles used during the stoned-out ceremony where Verde, Gary, and I had promised to give away all of the jewelry.

Kilo and Marsha warmly greeted me. Bear and Peanut were staying there with Sarah, their new infant daughter, but they were out and about, Kilo explained. Kilo stared at the coffee can intently before I exposed its contents. He told me that he had just seen me in a dream the night before entering his bus with a can with some items for him. I then poured out the contents on the table, scooping up a handful of the jewelry, pushing it towards Kilo. "This is for you to give away to Rainbow people for free. It must not be sold or traded." He nodded. I then told him of how Gary, Verde, and I had come to the agreement and of the terms. Kilo agreed.

But I had immediate apprehensions. How can I trust him, a complete scam artist, to keep the terms of our agreement? I figured that there was nothing I could do about it. I had no real control over that.

Very soon the New Mexico gathering site was located. The usual routine of setting up kitchens, council areas, medical tents, and a myriad of different camps occurred as thousands of hippies flooded in. The gathering site was stretched out along the Gila River for about two miles. The river was more like a stream at this locale. It was surrounded by pinon and juniper tree bearing hills, many of which

were mesa-like in that these hills were flat on top. Small canyons met the river. Many of these canyons bore quartz crystals that jutted in clusters from the rocks. There were caves in these canyons which had ancient smoke residue that gave evidence of ancient fires which were lit by the ancient ones, the Anasazi, the ancestors of the Pueblo Indians. Pottery shards could be found too, quite ancient, which added to the testimony of early human habitation.

Amidst this natural setting the gathering took off. As it did I gravitated to the Security Camp, also known as the Shanti Sena, which is an East Indian Sanskrit title that means "Peace Police". Barry Plunker had come up with both the title and the duties of the Shanti Sena prior to the first gathering in Colorado. Mahatma Gandhi had actually organized the original Shanti Sena in India, but that's another story. But that could be where Barry got the idea. Barry's original idea had envisioned a group of hip volunteers who would non-violently overcome any violent offenders. They would then turn the perpetrators over to the civil authorities. This would eliminate the possibility of local authorities policing the gathering and falling into the routine of arresting hipsters for societal taboos such as nudity and pot smoking. In other words, we would police ourselves solely based on issues like the prevention of violence, the prevention of commercialism, and alcohol consumption. Commercialism and alcohol use would be dealt with by asking the perpetrators to change their behavior or leave. But solely violence was subject to rendering the offender to the local authorities.

As time progressed the Shanti Sena Security Camp had regressed from its mission. Elements that were some of the most street-wise characters to ever travel down the highways had taken control. Tony Angel, Freedom and Mariah, his new old lady, Bear and Peanut, Kilo and Marsha, Gary Baba Dada Dass, Chuck Wind Song and Birdy, Red David and I were all now part of this camp. There were others as well, Crazy John, the long red-haired and bearded STP Family guy from San Diego who wore mountain man style garb, and Mo and Candy - Mo being a husky dude who played the saxophone religiously, and Candy, a rather articulate and broad-shouldered gal.

There were also close associates who intermingled with Security Camp while retaining their own unique roles. One group was the hipster Hispanics. They included the Guatemalans Mario and Carlitos. Mario being the charmer extraordinaire - well dressed in hand woven Maya Indian clothing, attractive, with classical Maya features, a straight large nose, jet black shoulder length hair. Carlitos, the subtler charmer, black hair and bearded, dressed in Maya finery as well. With these two was Alfredo, more Spanish than Indian, originally from Tucson, about thirty-years-old. Thievery was his thing. Kilo would dodge in and out between the Security Camp and the Hispanics with the greatest of ease.

From what I could tell, all of my friends in the Security Camp and its associates, with the possible exception of Kilo, honored the terms regarding the gold and diamonds. They never tried to hustle them. Verde, Gary, and I had a great time giving people throughout the gathering a necklace, a watch, a bracelet, for the first few days, until the items were gone from our hands and were worn by hippies all over the gathering.

I was searching for my identity at this time. I had recently camped out in a desert canyon, and awoke in the middle of the night to see a coyote sitting only about six feet from me, staring at me intently. I fell back asleep, awoke again, and the coyote was still there, still looking at me. I thought about coyotes after that experience. Ranchers try to eradicate them, yet they survive, and even multiply. They are survivors. In different Indian lore the Coyote is a trickster, living by his wits to survive - sometimes using his wits to get something that he wants, but it always backfires on him. I felt like that. Like all of it. It was then that I took on the name, Phil Coyote.

Verde, the other man with a new identity, was in bliss. saw him at his own camp up a canyon a little ways from the river. It was morning and he was getting up, having slept between two women. A smile of satisfaction was on his face.

A terrible event occurred, and members of the Security Camp responded accordingly. A mentally ill man became violent, throwing large stones at people, in fact hitting a pregnant woman with one of the rocks. The offender was tackled by Security, tied up, and escorted to the Security Camp, where he was kept tied to a tree until the authorities took the maniac into custody.

It was responses like this, to real threats, that kept the Security Camp in business while a blind eye sometimes was turned when it came to improprieties. Most of the transgressions of Security weren't overlooked, however, they were undetected. Some boozing is one example of this.

I went through a phase, one of burnout, at this gathering. The petty hustles combined with life on the road were taking their toll. I was weary of what I felt was a merry-go-round of travel combined with the struggle to survive. I sought brief refuge with a very strange cult for a few days.

The Christ Family was notorious. In any city where they were encountered one would spot them, standing out from the normal backdrops of people and things, wearing white robes, barefoot, and carrying their bedrolls. They would assail a crowd very dramatically, issuing forth their usual verbal barrage, accompanied by pointing or other bodily expressions. "No killing! No sex! No materialism!" the rap would spout loudly as the group of men and women, who looked like they had

just arrived out of a bible movie, converged onto, say, a college. Then as onlookers gazed in shock and wonder at this weird display, the Christ Family would get more refined in their verbal assault. "You're wearing leather. No killing!" and "You're fondling her brother! No sex!" and "You're getting into a Mercedes sister! No materialism!" They traveled about in groups, walking along the highway, sometimes sitting, never hitchhiking - yet rides always were inevitably offered and they'd accept them. Their robes were sewn from white sheets. They wore folded-over white tea shirts tied about their head, sort of like Arab headgear.

The group of Christ Family at the New Mexico gathering was staying in a cave above the river. I climbed up to it, and to my surprise, Crazy John was already staying with the three white robed occupants who were busy smoking Top tobacco. Apparently John, that Security Camp regular, known for being an NRA member, and always armed, it was rumored, was tired of the world.

I'd taken a hit of acid prior to going to the cave. I was just peaking on the drug as I entered. The white robes looked dazzling-bright as the leader, a man who introduced himself as Charles, welcomed me.

As nightfall came I listened to Charles as he explained the beliefs of the group, as the other two Christ Family members filled in the blanks on these tenets of their faith. Crazy John, himself not on acid, listened somewhat as the night continued, then he crashed out as Christ Family Charles continued explaining the philosophy to me, a wide awake listener on LSD.

This is what I learned from Charles that night. Everyone was caught in a wheel, a circle of birth, youth, maturity, old age, disease, death, and rebirth. What one did in this life determined the incarnation in the next. You could wind up any form of life depending on this. Reincarnation was the law. But through the "Three Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven", no killing, which included not eating meat or using animal products, not engaging in any violence), no sex, and no materialism, one could escape the vicious cycle of desire, which leads to being trapped in the circle of rebirth, and transcend into the heavenly realm of bliss after death. The parallels with classical Buddhism, I thought, were striking. I also learned that the Christ Family believed that they were the reincarnated saints of the New Testament. Charles was allegedly some apostle. What was even stranger was that the founder of the cult, known as Jesus Christ Lightning Amen, thought he was the reincarnation of the aforementioned messiah. He had received this self-realization, as well as the whole belief system of the group, during a forty-day fast in the Mojave Desert of California. He had formerly been a biker in Ocean Beach.

For the next few days I would hang out in the cave, eat vegetarian food with the white robed residents and Crazy John, and listen to Christ Family Charles continue to tell me more.

"What did you do before you got into this stuff, Charles?" I asked.

"I was an air conditioner salesman," he said, grimacing at the memory. "I hated it. When the Christ Family came to town, I knew they had the truth." He paused to smile, puffed his home rolled cigarette, and continued. "I left everything. My job, my wife, my home, possessions, and my worries." His smile got bigger across his face. He seemed like he was about to laugh. "I never regretted it. .and I never looked back."

Just then, a tired man, weighed down by a huge backpack, huffed, puffed, and collapsed as he entered the cave, wearied by the climb from the river. He was wearing an alpine style hat that had a small bird feather in the hatband. There was a small bird nest in the cave, and out from the nest a small bird flew to the tired man's hat and grasped the feather in mid-flight from the hat with its claws, carrying the feather out of the cave. "See?" Charles exclaimed, "The animals know that using animal products is wrong!" My mouth was hanging open in amazement.

Charles had done his best to recruit me into the Christ Family. It was working. I was impulsively convinced, thanks to my LSD enhanced interpretation of a bird's nest building habits. I was soooo naive.

I returned to the Security Camp and gave away all of my possessions. Everybody thought I had lost my mind. Perhaps I had. I was down to a pair of pants, a tee shirt, and a blanket. Friends tried to convince me to reconsider, but I was unrelenting in my pursuit of what I thought to be an ultimate truth.

This changed soon, however, due to the most basic of human instincts. A recent flame known as Debbie Little Wolf, gave me some personal attention in a nearby cave and my need for sex was awakened. It apparently hadn't gone anywhere. She was a real beauty, with perfect curves accented by pretty blue eyes, complimented by long blonde hair. In effect, she snapped me out of it with very little effort.

Back to normal again, it didn't take long to get some basic new possessions - shoes, a sleeping bag, a shirt, a coat - my friends turned me onto these items - kind of like welcome back to reality gifts. I soon was out roaming around to see some of the sights and happenings at this gathering.

And one of the sights I encountered was very strange indeed. There was this little man, slightly taller than a midget, who was always shirtless, dirty, bearded, and covered with body hair. He went by the name of Hobbit. He certainly looked the part of one of those little creatures from the Tolken books. Hobbit had been fishing in the river with a stick pole, some line, and a hook, when he managed to catch one. Suddenly I noticed that a woman known as No Guns, a large woman, notoriously known as a radical vegetarian and animal rights advocate, was overpowering Hobbit, wrestling him to the ground, and was dragging him off as he yelled for help. No Guns was clothed entirely in white. The scene looked like some sort of restraint scene from "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest". When asked by an onlooker what she was doing, No Guns said she was turning Hobbit over to the Fish and Game people.

But of all the sights and happenings at the New Mexico gathering, one stood out among all the rest - the day "Grandfather" David Monongye, the authentic Hopi elder, arrived at the gathering riding on a donkey.

I don't know how Michael Sun, a somewhat blissed out guy who really followed the Native American lore and prophecies with a keen interest, managed to pull this one off. He had apparently invited the over 100 year old Hopi to come to the gathering. The elder had accepted the invitation, and Sun had driven Grandfather David to the gathering. Where he managed to get the donkey to transport the elder man remains a mystery.

David Monongye stayed in the tipi circle where he would speak each day at the councils. When the hippies would in unison chant "Ooommm", both at the beginnings and endings of the council sessions, Grandfather David would state, "Our prayer is said in silence."

These statements were rebukes, attempts by Monongye to point out that he felt that his tradition practiced a method of prayer that was more in tune with nature. When the old man spoke, looking weathered and worn like the high desert landscape, yet with a strong voice that could be heard by all, every ear was upon him. No one interrupted. He spoke of how his tribe's ancestors had migrated through this area long ago, and that the pottery shards which were scattered about as well as the blackened caves from ancient fires were evidence of this. He spoke of respecting this place and preserving it. And he spoke of living in harmony with the earth rather than exploiting it. There wasn't any "show" in any of his speeches. It was a real man saying how he really felt.

After the July Fourth moment of silence at high noon, it seemed like this gathering started to wind down quickly. Before long the tipi village was being dismantled.

The canvas was off of one tipi where the Rainbow Stone was kept on display. The stone had been kept by a hipster from Oklahoma known as Pip, and Pip, when asked by me if he was taking the stone, looked at me and said,

"I hauled that thing into here, and I'm not hauling it out."

A certain amount of superstition was now being identified with the rock. Since Chuck Wind Song had "liberated" this strange thing from Garrick's camp at the Montana Gathering, many of us who had kept the multi-faced stone had reported having incredibly bad luck. Now Pip was the latest one. I had first encountered a report of this type from Chuck in Mexico. He had wanted Birdy to throw it off a bridge into a river at one point, he said the luck had gotten so bad. Kilo too had kept the rock for a short stint, and encountered terrible luck as well. Red David and I had kept the stone briefly, having "liberated" it from Kilo one night when he was beating Marsha up during a drunk. Then the stone had passed solely into my hands. I had kept it for a while. Then I had given it to Pip prior to the New Mexico gathering. I too had noticed some bad events when it was in my charge. It seemed that no one was willing to take the rock as it sat in the bare tipi frame. I took it again. I didn't keep it long. I soon gave it to Chuck Wind Song.

Chapter Sixteen: Cardinal on a Mission

I was leaving the gathering for Quebec, Canada. I planned on hooking up there with a group of hip Quebecor nomads known as the Solar Gypsies. With me was my new fling, Debbie Little Wolf. We hitchhiked north all the way to Las Vegas, New Mexico. There we were soon hard-pressed for a ride. We waited for hours without results.

Then a Ford Granada pulled up. It was a brand new car. We got in, me climbing in next to the driver, and Little Wolf climbing in to my right. Lo and behold, it was Santiago Lucero behind the wheel, grinning behind his wire rimmed spectacles.

"Santiago! I haven't seen you since Santa Fe!" I exclaimed. "Where are you headed?"

Santiago looked like he was in a trance as we sped off. "To Quebec," he said. "To a free country."

Little Wolf and I were elated. How on earth did we have such marvelous good fortune?

"What do you mean, a free country?" I pressed.

Santiago slowly said that he was in possession of some important microfilm that had to be shown at a Roman Catholic Bishop's conference that he planned to attend in Quebec.

We rolled a joint, got blasted, and further questions filled my mind. What is the mysterious, frail looking man, who is so soft spoken, even saintlike, doing in a brand new Ford Granada with microfilm heading to Quebec? It seems like yesterday that he was feeding hungry people in Santa Fe from his dumpster diving.

I gradually got some of the story from him. He had been at the gathering and we just happened to miss each other there, he said. A man who had rented the car in Texas, then had stolen it, had given the car to the Hispanic bunch, Mario, Carlitos, and Alfredo. This man was said to be a direct descendant of the famous Comanche Chief, Quanah Parker, and was hiding at a New Mexico Indian pueblo because he was wanted for manufacturing synthetic heroin. The Hispanic hipsters had then given the car to Santiago, telling him to get rid of it. Prior to this, Santiago said, he had stumbled across the microfilm. He had been praying for a way to transport it to Quebec. The car had been an answer to his prayers.

We reached Pueblo, Colorado, stopped to get something to eat at a fast food joint, courtesy of Santiago, and then headed for the library.

"What are we going to do, read?" I asked.

"Yes," Santiago replied. "We will read...and more. I'm going to find a microfilm viewing machine and show you what this is all about."

Seated at the machine, it was we three only - no one else was around. The microfilm was inserted. We could all see visibly an old newspaper article, written in 1945, prior to the first use of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, stating that a new, powerful weapon may be unleashed upon Japan, and pinpointing cities where leaflets were dropped over Japan warning the civilian populace.

"What do you notice about the cities on the map displayed that were blanketed with leaflets from American planes?" Santiago asked.

I studied the map. "Santiago...it looks like every major city in Japan got the warning leaflets except for Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the two cities where the US dropped the atomic bombs," I said.

"Exactly," he responded. "The Japanese took these warnings quite seriously, and a good portion of their civilian populace were evacuated to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And, according to plan, those cities were targeted, after a false atomic

bombing attempt was made on another major city just to throw the Japanese off, hiding the true targets. The US has covered up this war crime against humanity."

We returned to the car. I was speechless. Could this be true? I wondered as we sped north. Our northeasterly trek continued through Colorado, Nebraska, Iowa, and into Minnesota. Little Wolf and Santiago would switch off on driving to allow each other sleep and to make time.

We were speeding north through Minnesota when a furious rain, a real down pour, started barraging the highway. Little Wolf was driving about sixty miles per hour when the car hydroplaned, spinning out of control. It rolled completely over sideways onto the side of the road, landing upright. Miraculously, none of us were hurt, and the vehicle suffered no damage.

When we reached Duluth we were completely exhausted from the drive. We pulled into an upper class neighborhood, parking the car by the side of the street amidst the large, older, picturesque homes.

We were now broke and getting hungry. Little Wolf and I volunteered to go out to a main street and hustle up some change for some food. Santiago said he'd watch the car. Out on a main thoroughfare, Little Wolf and I saw a tall, lanky man walking towards us. He came up and looked us over.

"You people look like you are hungry," the tall stranger said. "Please let me buy you some food at McDonalds."

I told him that there was a third person in our party at the car, and the man, who identified himself as Paul, bought three large meals to go at the fast food restaurant. He then accompanied us to the car, telling us that he made his living by making and selling rosaries. He said he did so because he was a devout Catholic. Paul entered the car with us and distributed the food.

Off the cuff, I mentioned that he must be named after St. Paul.

"Yes, that is my patron saint," he said, producing a blue rosary from his shoulder bag, hanging it over the rear view mirror, saying, "St. Paul wrote that he was always in danger of being cast into prison."

Then he left.

A vision came into my mind. I suddenly saw a color picture of police squad cars all around us, their bar lights blazing. I felt this to be a premonition. But, the spirit being willing, but the flesh weak, I immediately dismissed the vision to be my imagination.

The food was eaten. I noticed that Santiago was gone.

"Did you see him leave?" I asked Little Wolf.

"Didn't even notice," she said.

The next thing I knew there were police squad cars all around us, their bar lights blazing. The cops told us that they had done a check on the license plate of the Granada and that it had come up stolen. We were informed that we were under arrest for grand theft auto.

"Officer, we are only hitchhikers," I spoke up to the cop who seemed to be in charge.

"Yes, well, if that's the case, where's the driver?" he inquired.

"Take me for a cruise. I guarantee I can find him," I answered. The cop had pat-searched me, but didn't cuff me. A good cop knows how to use people to get the job done, and can feel people's vibes, whether they're up front or not. I wondered as we cruised the nearby streets whether I would really be lucky enough to find Santiago. But, after about three blocks, I noticed him walking real fast like he was trying to get away. "That's him!" I shouted, pointing right at him. I really didn't know if Santiago would be held responsible for the car theft or not, but I knew that Little Wolf and I had truly only hitchhiked into this mess. We weren't going to hang for somebody else's bad, whoever it was.

Santiago joined the cop and I in the squad car after the cop pat-searched him, placing him under arrest. We then were taken to the station. We were booked, and Santiago and I suddenly found ourselves in jail. He sat peacefully on his bunk. I was pacing in turmoil.

"Grand theft auto!" I yelled. Turning on him, I grabbed him by the collar, pulling his face close to mine. "We're charged with grand theft auto! Look at the mess you've gotten us into!"

He responded in a seemingly sanguine fashion. "Don't you have any faith?"

I released him and held my head, seating myself on my bunk. This was hell.

A guard opened our cell door, summoning us down a small corridor. We were led to a door, which he opened, and with a sweeping motion of his arm, he urged us to enter. Sitting behind a large desk was a dark haired, burly detective. "Please be seated," the detective said, and we plopped ourselves down on the two chairs facing his desk.

"Mr. Lucero," he began, with a forceful, yet bewildered and inquisitive tone, "I have viewed the microfilm you had in your possession. This intrigues me. What are you planning to do with this?"

Santiago looked totally at peace as he spoke, "I am taking this, which is public record, to a bishop's convention in Quebec to be viewed by those in attendance."

The detective looked even more bewildered.

"What do you do for a living, Mr. Lucero?" he asked, obviously trying to figure out the situation.

"I am a Cardinal in the Roman Catholic Church," Santiago replied, adding that the detective may confirm these credentials by calling the Archbishop of Santa Fe, the governor of New Mexico, or a certain federal judge in Colorado, or the Vatican. Santiago followed up on these references by providing the phone numbers.

"But what about the car, Mr. Lucero? It was stolen in Texas. How did you acquire it?"

Santiago told the whole story, how second parties down had given him the car, not the actual thief. That it was an answer to his prayers to get him to the convention to share the microfilm.

The detective just shook his head at this peculiar situation. He summoned the guard, who led us back to our cell.

The guard awoke us in the morning. "You guys are free to go. All of the charges have been dropped. Sorry for any inconvenience. Please accept our apologies."

I was more bewildered than the detective had been. Why had Santiago kept his true identity a secret from so many? Why had he chosen to live like a vagabond, feeding hungry people from the refuse of Santa Fe's dumpsters? Was he fulfilling vows of poverty and charity? Was Santiago Lucero even his real name?

But I didn't press him to reveal the particulars of his secrets. As Little Wolf and I were reunited, all that crossed my mind was how fortunate we were to have been set free, and that we still had a sizable journey to accomplish.

And an accomplishment it surely would be. The car was gone confiscated for return to the rental car company. We were all flat broke. Not a red cent to our names. These two factors added up to us three hitchhiking north, dependent upon faith and fate.

The strangest thing occurred as we walked north, hitchhiking along the banks of Lake Superior. Hunger set in. We noticed a sign for a rest area. Each of us wished out loud for the specific kinds of food we wanted to find in the rest area's dumpster, once we encountered it.

"I want to find some Fritos, a big bag of them," I said.

"I want to find a whole cooked chicken," Little Wolf added.

"I want to find a watermelon," Santiago said.

When we got to the dumpster, we found everything we had named, still fresh, right on top - a bag of Fritos, cooked chicken, and a watermelon. We ate heartily.

We got to Grand Portage, Minnesota. There we camped for the night in an old, abandoned cabin that had its windows broken out. The mosquitoes were large and in swarms, and though we each tried to shelter ourselves with our sleeping bags, the critters prevailed, managing to bite us up exceedingly, keeping us up all night.

That was it. Little Wolf and I had been through enough. We felt like Santiago's wild escapade with his microfilm and car with spurious origins had been responsible for us having gone to jail. Really, we would have rather hitchhiked to Quebec without any hassles. Along with this, we were not willing to become dinner for mosquitoes and black flies. I knew of the bugs awaiting us in Ontario and Quebec, and had no desire to continue to proceed in this direction. I told Little Wolf how I felt. Santiago said that he would continue to Quebec with or without us. Little Wolf told me that she would rather be in the arid west where there were less blood-sucking bugs. It was a recipe for a split up, and it happened, thanks to our short stint in jail and the flying bloodsuckers. Little Wolf and I decided to turn back and head west. Santiago, dedicated as he was, would proceed to Quebec.

Without much adieu, Little Wolf and I left Santiago and hitched south and then west through South Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, and Washington. We then continued down into Oregon, where we split up. We'd had enough of each other and were starting to argue. I'd miss her, but I knew we'd meet again, perhaps on better terms. Now that I look back, I think that the stress of the whole journey had grated our nerves raw.

Chapter Seventeen: Drunken Dinosaurs, Bedlam in Bisbee, and Life With the Cardinal

Where did I end up? Back in Berkeley. It was like a bad dream as I sat in the small park at Haste and Telegraph wondering why I was here again. Street urchins and college kids. The place was still crazy.

I guess that misery loves company. Who did I meet up with wandering down the street? Tom Rush. He was just as burnt out as I was, disdaining Berkeley at this point. We crossed the bay together and partied in San Francisco. The street scene was over. We both knew it. No amount of fun could eliminate the gloom we mutually felt. We were like drunken street dinosaurs staggering about, in denial over our kind's extinction.

I felt a lot of respect for Tom. Even if you have a run-in with this guy, you can't dislike him if you've spent time with him. He's one of a kind, with charm and debonair. If anyone is a survivor of the school of hard knocks, this streetwise STP Family street veteran fits the bill. The depression was getting to Tom though, the hardships of this lifestyle. It was getting to me too. We were both in gray moods.

I was pushing Tom to go where I wanted to go, to do what I wanted to do in Frisco. I wouldn't even listen to his suggestions. He got frustrated and told me off. I felt bad. But I couldn't retaliate. I loved him. He was an icon to me - I almost idolized him - but he never knew it. We split up. I left the city. I know that I had antagonized him by pushing my own agenda without even considering his wishes. Tom was not in the mood to take any shit. I can't blame him.

When I left Frisco I was missing the southwest. I decided to take the long and arduous journey to Tucson. It was a long hitch through California's Central Valley, then south and east through the Mojave Desert into the Sonora Desert. But I endured the trip, arriving in Tucson as fall arrived, anticipating the winter.

Tucson was still a drag though. It was way too big of a town for me to enjoy spending any length of time in. I began to wonder what I had been thinking when I had decided to come here. Though I had a decent place to crash, an apartment with some other street hipsters, and even a little romance with a tall brunette at this crash pad, a few weeks in this metropolis was plenty. So headed for the mining town of Bisbee, Arizona again, southeast of Tucson.

There was a place called the Maize House, located high atop a ledge of a large hill that was open for wanderers to crash at. I laid my bedroll there. To get to this place, one would have to climb some concrete stairs up the side of a hill, stairs that probably included over a hundred steps. There were a lot of old houses that were hard to reach like that in Bisbee, where the copper miners had lodged crowded in the most seemingly inaccessible high points up the hillsides and

canyon walls in order to be near the open-pit copper mine, located on the south side of town, called the Lavender Pit.

From the Maize house I would descend down the steps into the old western style downtown area. There I would panhandle some money for booze, coffee, tobacco, and food. It seemed that there were always enough tourists to hit up for coins each day. I rarely lacked provisions.

It wasn't long before I managed to find other places where I could crash for free in Bisbee, so it became somewhat a comfortable place to be, especially since I was well aware that the colder weather was beginning to engulf the less temperate areas of the country.

But I wasn't the only one who was aware of Bisbee's benefits. Jimmer, my good friend, was soon in town as well, hanging out, enjoying the annuities. His real name was James Patrick Doherty. He was tall, lanky, and Irish. Irish to the core. When he drank whiskey, his eyes, set behind his wire rim glasses, would light up, and he would enjoy a good laugh. But if you wanted to fight him, watch out. He didn't play. Jimmer had a very noble trait as well - he was well known to try to intercede and avert conflicts between others. Perhaps the most funny thing about Jimmer was that you could always tell when he was giving someone a hard time, especially when he was drunk. He usually wore a handlebar mustache, and had a look somewhat like the actor, Sam Elliot. When he was displeased with someone, his mouth would curve negatively down, sloping like his mustache. He had an expression that hit you like a smile's evil twin, it looked truly mischievous.

Jimmer and I would be enjoying the sunshine, meeting people, getting high, and lounging about by day. At night we'd hit the bar, a real crowded, smoky place located at the bottom of a winding canyon street. It was usually filled with the most red-necked sort of clientele. But we got along with everyone. In these parts hipsters and rednecks got on OK. Both types of persons just wanted to be left alone by the government. Jimmer and I would save up some change for drinks, buy a few at the bar, and soon we'd be the recipients of someone's generosity and we'd be drinking their booze. It happened every time.

Jimmer and I arrived at this watering hole one night, in keeping with our routine. We had just obtained our usual initial round of drinks. Then we wandered from the crowded bar into the back room where there were people seated at tables while others played pool. Then we noticed them - two of the notorious hipster Hispanics, Mario and Carlitos, who were staggering about, drinks in hand, near the pool table.

We said hello briefly, but the hipster Hispanics were so tanked that they barely acknowledged our greetings. Mario and Carilitos were sloshed. Both were adorned in all of their Guatemalan finery, hand woven, colorful Maya Indian garb, and huarache sandals on their feet.

Carlitos began playing pool with a tall, dirty, red-neck dude. Suddenly, to the utter horror of Jimmer and I, Carlitos threw his glass of booze upon the pool table in front of his billiard opponent, and the booze splashed all over the front of the man. The man recoiled in shock, shouting, "I don't want any trouble!" Carlitos only smiled a sick, drunken smile, and slouched back.

I glanced towards the bar. Mario quickly approached it. He slapped his hand on the ass of a voluptuous blonde woman. "Aaah!" she screamed in shock and disgust. "What the hell?" Her burly, bearded, red-neck old man blurted as he stood up, ready to fight Mario, turning to face him.

Mario's legs slouched into a bold, curved stance as he faced the offended man. Mario set his left hand upon his own left hip, stretching out his right arm near the man's face. "Gringo! I would not wipe my ass with you!" he yelled, as his hand and fingers made rapid butt wiping gestures.

The whole bar must have known the offended couple. In unison they stood up, reminiscent of an old Frankenstein movie where the villagers are united in their efforts to extinguish a public menace. En-mass they chased the two hipster Guatemalans out of the bar and into the street, intent on kicking their asses. Jimmer and I had managed to move ahead of the rush of the crowd, staying between the crowd and the two fleeing offenders. Then we actually stopped the onrush of tanked up avengers as they flooded the street. Jimmer and I waived our arms in front of the crowd as we stopped, turning towards the flood of people, yelling, "Stop!" in unison to avert bloodshed. The crowd was startled by our intervention, and came to a sudden halt.

Meanwhile the two fleeing crazies were running up into the canyon, hurling a few large rocks towards the crowd, which luckily fell short of the multitude.

Having prevented an already ugly scene from getting worse in the bar, Jimmer and I resumed our easygoing, seemingly carefree existence in and around Bisbee.

When it became late fall I got a bug to go back to Waldo, New Mexico. I knew that the colder weather was setting in up there, but I was certain that between Waldo and Santa Fe I would be able to make it through the winter, if I decided to

stay. I knew enough people in that area by now to really not have to worry about a place to sleep.

I hitchhiked up to Santa Fe and spent a little time around the plaza, crashing at the Christ Brotherhood crash pad for the night. The next morning I went towards Waldo.

A local Hispanic dude let me off on the dirt road above Waldo. I walked down to the river below Charles' house. Looking up towards his house across the river and up on the cliff, I noticed smoke curling out of the chimney. I figured that Charles was home. I crossed the river at the shallow crossing, climbing up the path. I walked to the door and knocked.

The door opened. I faced the grinning face of Santiago Lucero. "Santiago!" I exclaimed, "What a surprise! Where is Charles?"

"Gone," he said, leading me in.

"It is very good to see you," I said.

"Are you hungry?" he offered. "I've got some tortillas and beans, some chili peppers."

"Famished," I responded instinctively.

We sat down at the table and ate.

After dinner, Santiago rolled a big joint of Colombian gold pot. We then got a real good buzz on, in silence. The wind began to howl as we finished the doobie. He began to fill me in on the latest Waldo news. "Charles and Kelly Cargo are away right now. They formed a band called 'Trinity', and have been busy in Albuquerque recording an album." He stooped to put a small piñon log in the fireplace, and then continued to speak. "I've been watching the house, and the whole of Waldo with Feather during their absence. Charles and Feather know you, and I'm sure you are welcome to assist me in this endeavor."

I took the news in. "Yea, I can do that, I guess," I said.

As the next two weeks past by, Santiago and I set into a routine. I'd gather the wood, and he'd chop it. I'd make the coffee in the morning, but Santiago would cook the meals. On Sunday mornings I'd have the place to myself. Santiago wouldn't dare miss morning mass at the Catholic Church in the nearby adobe village of Cerrillos. He'd awake before dawn and then walk six miles, round trip, to fulfill his spiritual obligations. By the time the church bells were summoning the

faithful, Santiago was already at church, shaking the parish priest's hand. He'd be inspired after mass. "There is nothing like a high mass," he'd say. "It is heavenly."

From time to time I would visit with Feather at her small adobe hovel by the river. I was curious about the musical aspirations of Charles and Kelly. I'd seen them play acoustical guitar and sing a little. She said that it was just something that Charles and Kelly wanted to do to express themselves, and they weren't seeking fame and fortune or anything like that.

This was their art, she explained.

Around Thanksgiving, the first major snow fell, blanketing the landscape of Waldo with a white, frozen, icy covering. Santiago and I kept the fire going, sitting close to the fireplace, blankets draped over our shoulders.

"I wouldn't mind being where the weather was warm right about now," I said.

Santiago glared into the fire, seemingly transfixed by the small blaze.

"Where would that be?" he inquired.

"San Diego, California," I said. "Nice year-around Mediterranean climate," I rambled dreamily. "A lot of smaller communities with beautiful rocky hills to the east," I added, mentally wandering.

"Let's go," Santiago said.

"What?" I asked, not expecting this response.

"Let's go," he repeated assertively.

I didn't question it. We'd had it with freezing our asses off. Before I knew it we were rolling up our few possessions into our bedrolls. We walked by Feather's, telling her we were on our way west. She said that she could watch Waldo herself, and she wished us a safe trip.

Chapter Eighteen: Chasing the Sun

From Cerrillos we hitched a ride to the south side of Santa Fe, and then we caught another ride to Albuquerque. From there we managed to get a ride west to Grants, New Mexico. We had stood on the interstate near Grants for several hours without even the offer of a ride. It was quite discouraging. It looked like nothing would change. Plus, we were cold and hungry. We had virtually no funds, not even a red cent.

Then a small, new Toyota stopped. We got in, Santiago in the back, me in the front passenger seat. "Where are you headed?" I asked the driver, a man in his mid-thirties with a shag hair cut and a blank expression on his face.

"El Paso," he answered, as his foot pressed the accelerator and we zoomed off, about six hundred miles northwest of El Paso, heading west.

"I hate to break it to you," I began, trying to tell the driver, who I instantly realized was deranged. "But you're heading west several hundred miles away from El Paso. El Paso is southeast of here."

The driver's blank expression seemed to be more evident. "You mean I'm going the wrong way?"

"Yep."

"Look, Santiago and I will help you get there, ok?" I glanced back at Santiago. He smiled, nodding in the affirmative.

"Ok," the driver responded.

Santiago and I then formally introduced ourselves to the driver, who responded likewise, telling us his name was Jay. We had some pot, and so did Jay, so we kept lighting up joints all the way to El Paso. We talked with Jay at length, finding out that he was from Albuquerque, heading for El Paso to see a lady friend of his who worked as a stripper. We couldn't help but notice that Jay was always really spaced out. I began to wonder if he had just gotten out of some sort of a nut house.

When we arrived in El Paso it was early in the morning and still dark. Jay drove all over the city looking for this girl's apartment. He couldn't find it. It turned out that he only had a first name, no address, no work place, and no phone numbers. I began to wonder if this girl even existed, or if she did, if Jay even knew her. Maybe he had seen her perform and this was some kind of deranged obsession of his.

Finally, after a night of going nowhere and everywhere in El Paso, I suggested that Jay take us all out for coffee. He said ok, and pulled the Toyota up to a 24-hour restaurant. Just then the sun began to rise. We exited the car and entered the restaurant, taking our seats at a big table by the window, beginning to suck down multiple cups of java. I began to think over Santiago's and my situation. *We were going to San Diego, got stuck in Grants, and finally got a ride going the wrong way with a nut case who we've volunteered to help out for no good reason - for nothing.* It looked bleak.

"Look Santiago, its too late to go west. We blew it," I said as we sat chain smoking.

"Yes, but we have been journeying towards warmer weather."

Well then, we'll just have to keep heading towards another warm winter refuge," I responded. "We can keep going towards the sun," I continued. "So lets get out of here and keep hitchhiking."

"I can take you guys there," Jay spoke up.

"That sounds good to me, Jay," I said agreeably. "Can you pay for all of this?"

"Sure. I've got lots of travelers checks. Food, gas, lodging, is all on me."

Santiago lit another cigarette, took a relaxing long puff, and asked, "Where should we all go?"

I thought for a moment. "Guatemala or Florida," I answered.

Santiago nodded. "One is a foreign country, very nice," he said. "But there is some political unrest there at this time that could prove to be dangerous. For me, being Spanish, I could understand some of the culture. But for you two it..."

"...Could be difficult," I interjected, completing Santiago's speech.

"Florida," I said.

"Yes, Florida," Santiago agreed.

Jay nodded slightly, blankly staring into space. "Florida," he mumbled, standing with us as we prepared to reenter the car. Immediately we were speeding east. Santiago and Jay would take turns driving to avoid burnout, and come nightfall we would either camp out or get a motel room. Restaurants or groceries were up to our collective votes. We were in good spirits, rested and fed, as we traveled through Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama. Finally we entered the Florida panhandle. We felt good about the journey, having already accomplished an unusually long stretch of miles with only one incident.

But that incident could have proved disastrous. It happened in east Texas. A large truck had suddenly stopped directly in front of us as we were cruising about seventy miles per hour. Santiago was driving. In a split second he barely avoided crashing into the rear of the truck by passing it on the shoulder of the highway.

"How did you do that so quickly?" I asked him right afterwards.

"I always pray," he said.

"How far south into Florida do you think we should go?" Santiago asked me from behind the wheel as we continued into the panhandle.

"As far as we can," I advised. "Key West."

Leaving the panhandle and heading south, our first stop in Florida would be the college town of Gainesville.

That was a strange layover. We first went to the University where the usual non-conformists were gathered about on the college green, sharing alternative ideas, as the saffron robed Hare Krishnas chanted and danced in their midst. We three sat on the grass, taking in the scene, enjoying the sunshine.

It wasn't long before the real serious dropouts approached us. It was sure as gravity that we would attract those types. We helped out two white-robed Christ Family guys, listening again to their standard rap. We drove them to a salad bar at Pizza Hut (an extravagance Jay paid for).

We then returned to the college green where we were approached by a Rainbow Family result. Result, I say, due to the fact that this hipster was part of the newly formed Peace Camp group, an implemented concept of Barry Plunker's, which, on paper, proposed the formation of peaceful, back to nature examples of living on public land that would serve as examples of alternative living, providing, theoretically, land to those who did not have any - a basic human right.

This Peace Camp hipster convinced us to go to some woods on the outskirts of town where he and five of his colleagues were camping. They were all dirty and funky sorts, and greeted us like we were their deliverers. Next thing I knew, we had agreed to transport these guys in the Toyota south, to Miami.

Now we had nine of us all crammed into a small Toyota driving to Miami. Nine of us were in a miniature economy car. It was insane. People were sitting on each other's laps. It didn't smell nice either.

Even Jay, a crazy as he was, wouldn't fork out any dough on these guys. His practical side, probably long dormant, kicked in. Consequently, the Peace Camp bunch was taken to the Miami blood bank to get some money. After that, we let them off in the midst of the big city. Good luck.

I had to pretty much manage Jay's behavior while we were in Miami. Example: We were getting groceries when, to my utter shock, Jay stole an orange and started to stuff it in his shirt, in plain view of the checkers and customers. I

ordered him to immediately put it back. I asked Jay why he was doing this. "An angel told me to take it," he replied. I wondered if the stressed and confined stuffed Toyota trip had set Jay further off.

"We're outta dope," I pointed out to Santiago and Jay as I held up an empty baggy.

"Yes, that is so," Santiago began to explain. "The last joint was smoked with the Peace Camp crew," he elaborated.

"Yea, and so was a whole bunch of joints," I added, as we drove through Little Havana, Miami's famous Cuban neighborhood.

"Well, we'll just have to find our way to Coconut Grove and score some smoke," I said. "I hear that's the place to get it."

We were lost, however, and had no idea how to get to Coconut Grove from Little Havana. We stopped the car for a red light by a Cuban restaurant where we saw some old Cuban men engaged in conversation.

Santiago, at the wheel, had me roll down the passenger side window and asked these gentlemen in fluent Spanish for directions to Coconut Grove. He got the whole spiel. We followed these guidelines. They led us perfectly to our destination.

Getting a small amount of pot in Coconut Grove was ridiculous. Some guy with red hair, dressed like a tourist, Hawaiian style shirt, shades, and bright blue shorts, said he could score for us. He took Jay's money and walked off like he was working for the CIA or something, looking so suspicious. He came back with a large bud of Colombian Gold that had been doubly expensive. The flamboyantly dressed dope scorer had taken a cut of the cash off the top as payment for the score. Upon delivery, he walked off and disappeared. Obviously, by the way he had behaved, there was a lot of heat around. Just then I noticed a police squad car cruising very slowly, surveying the area. "Let's get outta here," I said, and we drove off on our way to Key West.

To get there one has to hop over the whole chain of Florida Key islands by traversing a series of bridges that connect these isles, enabling motorists from the mainland to travel to each of the Keys across this part of the Gulf of Mexico. It was fascinating to travel so far out to sea by way of these bridges, which are truly marvels of engineering.

When we arrived in Key West it was night. We decided to go back to another island to camp, known as Key Largo. That was a miserable experiment.

Mosquitoes attacked us relentlessly. And another form of bug, far more irritating, kept biting all night. They are unseen but felt, hence their common name: no see 'ems. We ended up staying up all night, seeking refuge in the Toyota.

Come morning, we again returned to Key West. It was not a street person friendly seen that awaited us. Cops harassed anyone who stopped for too long at one place, ordering loiterers to move on or go to jail. The police routinely picked up drunks. It was a tourist scene with an aggressive police force working to keep it looking clean on Duvall Street, the main hangout where most of the bars were. We looked way to freaky, I figured, and far too obvious as transients all hanging out together. Besides all this, Jay was now broke. I told Santiago and Jay that it was time for me to head out on my own. Santiago said he was going to go to work on a shrimp boat. Jay didn't have a clue what he was going to do, but he seemed to be saying that he would hang out with Santiago. Maybe he'd work on a shrimp boat as well.

I said my goodbyes to Santiago and Jay and walked west on Duvall Street. As I was strolling by a bar that had an open area facing the sidewalk, I heard a voice summon me. "Hey you! Come here!" Looking over to where I heard the voice, I saw a bearded man with a scarf tied about his head and a patch over one eye. He looked like a pirate. "Come here!" he repeated. I went up to the table where he sat alone. "Sit down!" he ordered. I did.

"You're new in town, right?" he asked.

"Yea. I just got here yesterday."

He stared hard at me with his one eye. Then he ordered me a rum and coke. As I began to drink, the one-eyed man said, "You're broke too, huh?" I nodded, and then finished the drink. He ordered me another. We didn't speak much, but he seemed to enjoy my company. Then he ordered me another. By then I had a very good buzz. "Here, take this," he said, handing me a twenty-dollar bill. "You'll need it." Before I stood up to go my way I asked him his name, saying I wanted to know who to thank for all this. "My name is No Man," he answered.

As the evening turned to night, I had no idea where I would sleep. My sleeping bag was hidden in some bushes so the ever-vigilant police would not easily spot me as a transient. Luckily, I had the twenty bucks that I knew could hold me over in a bar. I walked down a side street, attracted by the sound of rock music coming from a place called The Green Parrot. I went into this smoky watering hole, noticing that it was full of hipsters getting smashed to the sound of an over amplified juke box. Seating myself at the bar, I began drinking rum and coke,

scoping out the place for the possibility of connecting with someone with a place to crash.

Two long-haired dudes were sitting by each other to my right.

"Man, I've had enough," one said to the other.

"Let's go back to the island," his partner answered.

"What island?" I asked the man who'd just mentioned it.

"Christmas Tree Island. We live there for free, along with a lot of other people."

Seeing my chance, I asked if I could go with them to the island. They both said sure.

The two men accompanied me as I got my sleeping bag. Then they led me to Key West's western waterfront where they had a rowboat waiting. We launched the boat. They began to row us into the darkness of the night upon the water. The lights of Key West provided some guidance at first, but as we went further out to sea they provided little navigational help. Soon I could barely see a dark mass of land getting nearer. "There she is," one of the rowers said. "Home."

We beached the boat. One of the men tied her firmly with a rope to a pole. Then I was escorted to a small lean-to and told that I could use it for my abode. They walked off into the dark night.

When I awoke after dawn I thought I was in paradise. The water was turquoise blue, crystal clear. You could see the bottom. The island was lush with foliage, yet no mosquitoes or other pests were evident. The weather was warm and comfortable, as was the water, I soon found out as I stepped into it at the shore. And constantly, a gentle balmy breeze softly blew by.

In wonder at this place, I began to hike around the island along the shore, exploring it. Here and there I'd notice huts and shacks set back in the foliage. I'd walk up to them and meet the hippie inhabitants. I noticed rowboats and canoes tied at the shore near where these primitive lodges were set back in the bush. From my conversations that day with those who were living on the island, I learned some of the background of this place. The navy had formed it when they had dug up some of the shallow seashore for a submarine base. Over time birds and wind had brought seeds, which grew into small trees and shrubs. Later the hippies came as squatters. Travel back and forth to Key West had to be done under cover of darkness, I was told, because the Coast Guard patrolled the quarter-mile stretch of water between the two islands. And one had to row hard

about mid-journey because a strong current went towards Cuba that had to be resisted.

I soon figured out my mode of survival on this hip Gilligan's Island. Food was no problem. The hippies already there would invite me over to their huts for breakfast and dinner, which often included dishes like fried conch, tropical fruit, coconut milk, and roasted fish. Pot and rum was in abundance for a relaxing buzz. The only problem was waiting for a ride in one of the boats to town and back. Rides were available only early in the morning, before dawn, or after sundown.

In town I'd get invited to parties at private pads, or I'd make it to the hip hangout each evening, the sunset pier, where every hippie who hit town always ended up.

Twice at the sunset pier I found romance - one was a brunette who took me up to her hotel room for the night, the other was a blonde who I took out to the island for a night and a day where we smoked pot, made love, and swam in the clear, warm water. There was something about the southeast that I couldn't get used to. The humidity. It just got muggy. The sweat would pour off of you. Sometimes it got hot at night. You couldn't even sleep with a blanket over you. Sure, Christmas Tree Island had a breeze and far less bugs than Key West, but how long could I stay isolated offshore? I began to miss the dry weather of the west. I soon wanted to leave. I had a problem though. Hitchhiking was illegal in this neck of the tropics. Stories abounded of hitchhikers going to jail.

Chapter Nineteen: Returning West

I devised a plan. After getting my boat ride to Key West, I walked to the highway heading towards the mainland. I just would stand by the side of the road. Every now and then I'd stick out my thumb in a discreet manner, barely noticeable, and hope for the best.

It worked. A brand new Mercedes Benz pulled over, driven by a short haired, bearded, well-dressed fellow. He told me that he was heading for Tennessee and I was more than welcome to ride along. He explained that he was hauling several pounds of Colombian Gold pot in the trunk. He had picked me up for that very reason. He would never get pulled over, he said, with a guy as hip looking as me, because no one would be so foolish as to have a hippie in the car when they were hauling dope. This dope runner was using me for reverse psychology.

The ride went nonstop to eastern Tennessee. When I got out of the car, I noticed that the weather was way below freezing. I knew I'd have to deal with this for a while. My best bet was to keep moving and stay on the road. I managed to

panhandle about ten bucks from a ride, ducked into a restaurant, and got some food. As I was heading out the door, the clerk, a young guy, started to preach to me hell fire and brimstone, and even was grabbing at my jacket in his zeal as I exited the establishment. Back on the interstate, I walked while I thumbed, keeping my movements rapid, brisk even, to keep warm.

Then a big semi truck pulled up ahead of me. I ran up to hop in the cab. As I climbed on board the crew cut bearing young driver greeted me, saying, "I don't ever stop for hitchhikers, but something told me to stop."

I asked him where he was going.

"Owensboro, Kentucky," he answered.

He told me that he was a "born again Christian", and that he was staying with another guy who had turned his life around as well.

The conversation turned to eschatology, the Christian theological prophecies concerning the "Last Days", and the second coming of Christ. I told the driver, Dave, about the Christ Family, and how they followed a man who claimed to be Christ. "The end is nearer than I thought," he said, referring to Mathew's eschatological account of Christ's words, "Many shall come in my name saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many."

Dave told me that my news of what is going on out there must have been meant for him. This was probably why he was guided to pick me up.

We arrived in Owensboro, where Dave had his freight unloaded. Then he drove us in the semi over to the small tract house that he rented with his roommate. Once there, he gave me ten dollars, some food, and a new backpack.

He told me of his older brother. "I think he's right in some ways, but he's kind of deceived," Dave began. "He lives out in the woods. I think you could relate to him. You'll see what I mean when you meet him."

It was evening. Dave drove me in his four-wheel drive out on a rural road deep into the woods. He pulled over to the roadside and parked, got out of the rig, and pointed up into the woods beyond a small stream. "We cross this creek, and go about a quarter of a mile over there. He's got several cabins up there, where he lives," he said.

We crossed the creek, leaping from rock to rock and hiking up a small dirt road until we saw a small group of cabins. We continued. There was no sign of life. "Jeremiah?" Dave yelled. "Jeremiah? Are you home?"

Jeremiah emerged from the woods. "Yea, I'm here brother." I marveled at the giant of a man who approached us with quick, long strides. He was about six-foot-five in height, wearing logging pants and suspenders, and an open flannel coat. His brown hair and beard, with hints of gray, went down past his waist, and his face had a rugged look, weathered and worn. "Who's the stranger with ya, Dave?" he asked, his big hand outstretched to mine.

"This here is Phil," Dave said, as I shook the big man's hand. "I picked him up hitchhiking."

Jeremiah said that was just fine, and that we should stay for dinner and the night. We agreed to do so. We were soon led to a big cabin, the guesthouse, where Jeremiah lit a fire in the cook stove, fried some chicken, and served a meal fit for a king.

After dinner Dave told me that Jeremiah was religious like him, but they had a major difference. Jeremiah smoked pot. Dave was against that. Later, as night fell, I asked Jeremiah if he had any pot. He said, "Yeah," and went away, returning to the guest house with a big marijuana plant, which he then stripped of its leaves and flowers, placing them into a plastic bag, handing the bag to me.

Dave and I made ourselves comfortable in the guesthouse. As I was drifting off to sleep, I thought about Dave and Jeremiah, what good folks they were. I felt very fortunate to have encountered these gentlemen who lived their religion, despite their differences.

In the morning, at my request, Dave drove me to the highway and let me off. We said our farewells. I walked down the Interstate. It was way below zero. A local man stopped to give me a ride. When I got in, he asked me where I was going to sleep come nightfall. I told him that I would probably crash under a bridge. "You'll freeze to death," he said, whipping out his wallet, quickly handing me a twenty-dollar bill as he let me off.

I hadn't gotten very far. I was now in Louisville. Walking into town, I found an old, rundown hotel where I rented a room for the night. It was just too cold to be out on the road. Once in the room, I smoked all the dope that Jeremiah had turned me on to. I slept like a baby.

Come morning, I hitchhiked like a driven man, trying to keep myself from freezing. I was lucky. Into Tennessee, Arkansas, across Oklahoma, Texas, and into New Mexico, got almost back-to-back rides. I stopped for a few days in Santa Fe, but soon continued west, into California, then up to Oregon, stopping in Portland.

As I got off of the highway and was entering downtown, there was a nearby park off to my right that I noticed. "Phil!" I heard coming from the park. I glanced over in response to the call. It was Duffy, the African American STP Family legend, seated on the grass, beckoning me with his hands. "Phil!" he repeated. I went up to Duffy and we hugged. Seating myself next to him we engaged in small talk, which he followed up by producing a fifth of booze. That was consumed rather quickly, getting us both very drunk.

We proceeded together into the Lovejoy District, an older part of the city, where we hung out as night fell, panhandling change, sharing our adventures since our time together in Austin.

All of a sudden he pulled out a foldable knife. He handed it to me, guiding my knife-holding right hand over to my left upper index finger. "Cut it!" he ordered. I hesitated. This did not look like fun. "Cut it!" he shouted again. Duffy then grabbed the knife from my hand and sliced my left index finger. The blood flowed. He then cut his left index finger, rubbing our bloody fingers together. "If you weren't STP, you are now," he said. This was my second initiation. I wondered how many of these initiations I'd have to endure.

It was a full moon. I had been apart from Duffy for about fifteen minutes panhandling. He came up to me and said, "Let's go." I looked into his eyes. He had a wild look, very much like the night when he had pulled a gun on Butch in Austin. I figured that Duffy had plans, probably to commit a crime.

I was apprehensive. "No. I'm not going with you Duffy," I asserted. "I'm gonna hang out here."

I could tell that Duffy wasn't used to hearing no for an answer. He looked shocked at my response, so much so that he was almost speechless. "Have it your way," he said, having somehow forced out the words, He turned away and walked off into the dark streets.

I breathed a sigh of relief.

Sometime much later I heard the news: Duffy was convicted of murder in Berkeley and went to the joint. I wasn't shocked. No, it wasn't the same night I'd refused to accompany him, but it proved to me that he was off track, that my intuition had been right.

After crashing in some bushes, I hit the road into Washington State. I was heading towards a community I'd heard about called Flowering Tree, located near town of Oroville, near Canadian border. It was east of the Cascade

Mountains, up on the lower part of Mount Hull, a jutting, cliff bearing, sagebrush and ponderosa pine covered precipice, where a sizeable number of nonconformists lived. The community was set above the Okanogan Valley, a dry, arid region. Apples were the primary crop in that valley, watered by a massive irrigation system that pumped water from the Okanogan River.

Arriving at Flowering Tree, I encountered a real back-to-earth community. The residents lived in Mandan style earth lodges and tipis. They wore home-tanned Native American style deerskin clothing, and endeavored to harvest wild roots and herbs. They also grew a lot of their own food. It was impressive. For years I had heard hippies talk about getting back to the land. Now I was experiencing people who really were doing it.

Interesting enough, Bear and Peanut were there with Sarah, their child. So was Red David. I could tell that something was wrong by the looks on their faces. It was hardly the welcome I had grown to expect. Then Bear told me the morbid tale. Kilo had returned to Mexico with Marsha and their son, Boogie. He had gotten drunk and got into a spat with the federales. Kilo and his family had been in a van and were being pursued. Shots were even fired at them. Kilo got Marsha to take over the driving and slow down, allowing him to jump out of the vehicle and hide. The chase of the vehicle continued, the story went, and Marsha had accidentally driven the van off of a cliff in her effort to escape. The accident had killed her, but Boogie had survived, unhurt. It was a very unpleasant story. Unnerving. This shocked me. But I went on.

For the most of the winter I dwelled in an earth lodge with Red David, Bear, Peanut and Sarah. It was amazing, the beautiful sage and pine covered country, inhabited by people who were endeavoring to live in harmony with the land.

But Flowering Tree never was my home. I had not labored to help create this place. Others had. Bear, Peanut, Red David, and I were only interlopers, not permanent residents. Come early spring, we all left for our own spaces somewhere else.

I journeyed south to southern California, and then partied up the coast into Oregon, then back into Washington. I traveled up to Seattle and went to the Love Family on Queen Anne Hill where they still had twelve houses, each supervised by an elder.

Within a few days I went out to the Love Family Ranch, north of Seattle, set back in woods near Arlington. The three hundred or so members of this group were busy going into their Passover celebration, and there were festivities, along with the eating of unleavened bread.

The high point of this year's celebration occurred when the whole Love Family took some pure LSD that I had turned them onto. Love Israel was sitting in the midst of the celebrants in their sanctuary when he had them all join hands together with him. Everyone was peaking on the acid by then. He visualized something. Then he asked how many people saw a crown in their minds. Every hand went up. I too saw this vision. I really believe that the human mind can transmit this sort of thing to other minds. This phenomenon currently defies science, but someday we may understand it.

Then Love lit up a big pipe full of the best sin simea bud marijuana and honored me. "This one's for you Phil," he said, as he had one of his men pass the pipe to me. I smoked, almost blushing.

Paul Erdmann, aka Love Israel, never was a dangerous cult leader, in my opinion. He was an old psychedelic pioneer who was sincerely trying to help people to think positively and care about each other. Sure, he had some off-beliefs, and may have inadvertently screwed some people up. But, I never disliked him as a person. If someone was going to join a cult, the Love Family was probably the best outfit at the time. I know to the outsider looking in, this is hard to buy. But if you've gotten a chance to drop the "cult leader" stereotype and hang out with the person, you see things differently.

Love Israel always treated me good. He tried damned hard to get people to learn to live together in peace.

Love even had some big time players who were members of this group. Logic, whom I became acquainted with, was the actor, Steve Allen's son. And Richness, it was rumored, was a Dupont heir.

One thing really turned me off. Love stood up during that acid session and asked who had seen the Father, referring to himself. A claim of divinity was more than I could take. I hitchhiked away soon after that, even though I was feeling rather ill.

I headed towards Idaho. I was very ill. I had hepatitis A. My eyes were yellow and my shit turned gray. I felt like I was going to die. I couldn't even stand while hitchhiking, so I sat. I knew of a hip community in northern Idaho, and went there. When I arrived, I rested in a cabin where the residents gave me elk steaks, garlic, cayenne, and goldenseal. Through eating high protein meat and herbs I recovered in about two weeks.

Chapter Twenty: Love Illusions, the Oregon Gathering, and Beyond

Something happened right after I got well. A beautiful young woman walked into the cabin to borrow something. We were both attracted to each other. I got up enough courage to introduce myself. Her name was Paula.

Before long Paula and a lady friend of hers were telling me that they were driving towards Colorado. I asked if I could come along and was tickled pink to hear a yes. I went down to Boulder with these ladies, and upon arrival, told Paula to meet me in Santa Fe. I then continued on my way.

When I reached Santa Fe, I hung out around the plaza and partied around town. After about a week of this idle folly, I saw Paula walking down the street. I was amazed. I hadn't really known if she would follow through and come to see me. We sat down to talk in the plaza on a bench. I wondered why this brunette beauty had even considered getting to know me. It floored me.

Gradually, after small talk, our conversation turned towards the pretty New Mexico countryside. "This is really a beautiful area," she said. "You know this country well?" she asked, already knowing my answer.

"Yes," I replied.

"Then show me some of what you know," she said.

I told her of Waldo, and Paula's spontaneous response was, "Let's go!"

We hitchhiked towards Waldo, getting a ride as far as the village of Cerrillos. We walked the remaining three miles to Waldo. We were completely exhausted when we got to Charles' house.

Charles was home, and he hospitably welcomed us into his abode, offering us some stew for dinner. We joined him at the table, and then he asked the question: "How long are you staying this time Phil?" I didn't know the answer. I really wouldn't have minded staying forever here. I loved the countryside, and I was very much in love with Paula, though I hadn't told her. But I didn't have a home here, really, and no place for Paula and I to live together. Charles looked us both in the eyes, scanning us for an answer.

"I really don't know, Charles," I explained. "Maybe for a long time."

It was now dark. "Camping out or staying in the house tonight?" Charles asked. Paula and I looked at each other.

"Camping out," we both said in unison. We took our bedrolls out into the desert and made our bed, then made love. We merged. Paula said she had never had sex that was that good. Neither had I. We were satisfied.

In the morning we went back over to Charles' house. Paula helped Charles prepare breakfast, while I chopped wood outside. The sun had just come up, and the air was cool and crisp. The exercise was invigorating. The colors of the dawn were reddish upon the high desert landscape. *It feels good to be alive and in love.*

After breakfast was done, Charles told us that he was leaving Waldo with Feather and Kelly Cargo. He had found a new home to settle in further south along the Rio Grande, and he wanted someone to have the house. "I'm giving this to you, Phil and Paula," he said, waving his right arm in a sweeping motion that seemed to encompass not only the house, but also the whole of Waldo. "Now it's your turn," he concluded.

By the end of the day Charles and the old Waldo crew were gone. Paula and I were alone in the modestly furnished house, feeling like we were on a honeymoon. In a way we were, and we made the most of it.

There was one other resident at Waldo, however. Kelly Cargo had left his house to a dirty, bearded guy who went by the handle of Lame Deer. He was often drunk, and had run up a tab of credit at a small local store to get beer and wine, which he never intended to pay. Mostly, Lame Deer minded his own business and posed no trouble for us. He was usually passed out by evening, not being the type of drunk who was out and about raising hell. Paula and I settled into a domestic scene. She'd grind wheat berries and bake bread. I'd fetch and chop firewood. We were out there doing the male and female roles, and enjoying it. It was almost three months of bliss. We even planted a field of corn, squash, and beans near the river. The plants sprouted, and soon were growing healthily.

Life was good. Charles had left us an ample supply of bulk grains to eat, and kerosene for our lamps. Other supplies could be panhandled for in Santa Fe. The water from the Galisteo River was good to drink - we never got sick from it. I'm so very, very happy, I thought to myself.

Then three strangers appeared. Straight fellows. They arrived in a gray van and said they were looking to drop out and get into the hip scene. It was late June when these men showed up. I knew that the Rainbow Gathering was beginning up in Oregon this year. Irresponsibly, I decided on going there. After I told these strangers of the event, they said they would head there right away. Paula, of

course, decided to accompany me. We would go together. We left our field of crops with Lame Deer to care for, and off we went.

It was a long journey through northern New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, and into Oregon, near Roseburg, where the gathering was being held. All of us kept high on pot all the way there and that lessened the effects of the burnout from the rapid pace of travel we engaged in. The drive was nonstop, except for food, gas, and restroom stops.

As we converged upon the gathering site, these straight men that had provided us with transportation, were amazed at the large masses of hippies that they saw walking through the woods, or up and down rural dirt roads. One of them exclaimed that he had never seen anything like this on earth, and he had traveled around the world.

The straight transporters soon faded off into the gathering to find a place to camp. I knew where Paula and I would camp. We soon made our way there, to Security Camp, where we were welcomed by the likes of Bear and Peanut, Tony Angel, Freedom, who was still hitched up with Mariah, Chuck Wind Song and his new love Patty, Mo and Candy, Red David, Crazy John and his new counterpart who went by Laurel, Jimmer, Kay, Randy, and a host of others.

It was quite a party. Booze (not officially allowed at the gatherings) was flowing, plus a big batch of the best pot there for the smoking. The music was excellent. Some of the finest acoustical musicians frequently frequented the camp due to their taste for dope and booze which accentuated creativity due to a loss of inhibitions. The musical times around the campfire were better than many a studio produced album. Let's say they were precious, non-recorded, artistic expressions.

But there were drawbacks. It wasn't all fun. Half of the time it rained. We'd huddle in our tents and shelters and wait it out. Our food supplies were limited, forcing us to go to the kitchens for meals at times, where the gruel could be thick and sticky, or half cooked. It was a far cry from the steak, eggs, and hash browns that we would rustle up at Security Camp every other day. Perhaps the worst inconvenience of all was being frequented by unwanted visitors who seemed to think they could just move right in. Again and again we'd have to gently inform such types that they'd have to camp elsewhere.

Bear was going through some soul searching one afternoon as we sat by the campfire. "Why is it that we just can't get a piece of land and live together there?" he asked me, a puzzled, kind of desperate look on his face. "I mean, we hang out together for some of the year, traveling like crazy gypsies or something, get

separated, but keep meeting up all over the place. Then we all get together at the gathering and split up again, rambling down the road."

I thought about it for a minute. *I've asked myself the same question many times in different ways.*

"It all comes down to money," I answered. "We go down the road because of the lack of money and we don't have a home because of lack of money," I said.

Bear looked confused, then angry. "Fuck a bunch of money!" he growled. He pulled out his wallet, removing about five one-dollar bills, flinging them into the fire. "Fuck a whole bunch of money!" he yelled.

"Yea, it's only paper," I added, watching the greenbacks burn into nothing. "But it's what people use. It's not money that's the root of all evil," I continued, "but the lack of money."

Yea, money. There wasn't enough of it to go around. We all knew that. It all boiled down to survival, when push came to shove. And nobody wanted to cut their hair and work flipping burgers. That was unthinkable, like being joined to a plastic, concrete edifice.

A Lakota Indian guy named East Man showed up at the main tipi circle and caught the Rainbow spirit. He announced at the council circle that he would lead a pipe ceremony. To conduct the ceremony, he said, he needed seven virgins to bear the pipes. Red David was sitting next to me at the council circle and quipped, "That's gonna be a tall order to fill around here."

While there were plenty of peace pipe style pipes around with red pipestone smoking bowls (the red pipestone is from a quarry in Minnesota and is held sacred for pipes by the Lakota), all of them had been used to smoke marijuana communally. This was not what East Man was used to. Tobacco, or red willow bark mixed with tobacco, is what the Lakota use in ceremonials. The Lakota man had the hipsters who contributed pipes that were to be used in the ceremony scrape out the bowls of the marijuana resins. The pipes were then purified with sweet grass smoke.

Whether or not East Man actually found the virgins he was looking for or not I do not know. I doubt it.

I do not remember the particulars of the ceremony, but I remember that it held a lot of pageantry, and ancient symbolism. It was witnessed by thousands of people. Set among the tipis, it seemed to christen the Rainbow Family as a valid, back to nature tribe. It was the high point of the entire gathering.

The low point soon came. A man who was climbing on some rocks slipped, falling to his death. Richard Alpert, Timothy Leary's former associate, now known as Baba Ram Dass, had encountered the dead man, and displayed no shock or horror at the scene. For this, persons criticized him behind his back. But what the critics do not realize is that Baba Ram Dass is a Hindu. In his way of thinking, the body is a shell. It is shed at death and the soul is reincarnated. To Ram Dass this is as normal as eating. Thus Ram Dass' lack of "shock" at the incident doesn't mean that he lacked compassion.

Another famed hippie who attended the gathering that year was Wavy Gravy, the clown from the Woodstock Nation. It seemed like he was everywhere at the gathering, encouraging people, and helping out. Along with the clown makeup he wore, I noticed that he carried a plunker, similar to the one Barry had. Some questions filled my mind. Had Barry Plunker copied Wavy Gravy's act by carrying a plunker? Or had Wavy Gravy copied Barry Plunker in this?

Paula and I were separated one day. She did not return to our tent that night, and came back the next morning. In her absence I suspected that she had been off with another man. So when the blonde who I had been with at Key West showed up at my tent and seduced me, I went along with it.

When Paula showed up she explained that she had not been with anyone else, but had merely hiked too far and decided to camp out. In response I told her what I had done. I was sooo naive. She became visibly upset. "We don't do that sort of thing where I'm from," she said, as she began to pack her things. I'd blown it, and I knew it. I begged and pleaded. But it was no use. My short-term relationship was over. Overwhelmed by this sudden chain of events, I sat in the doorway of the tent and watched Paula descend into the crowd below, on her way out of the gathering.

I immediately reasoned that it was just one woman and that there were others. I ventured out near the main camp and decided to do something about it. Sure enough, I spotted a beautiful blonde lady lying nude in the sun. Walking up to the woman, I struck up a conversation, and turned on all of my charms. Within a half hour we were up at my tent making love.

When the gathering ended I joined Chuck Wind Song, Freedom, Tony Angel, and others on a hippie school bus bound for who knows where. We soon parked near a cabin residence outside of Roseburg. Chuck was romancing some lady who lived in that cabin. I didn't know all of the complexities of what was occurring with this lady, but I learned later that this lady had in her possession a hot credit card, which she passed on to Tony. One night we stopped the bus at a mini-mart where Tony exited the bus to buy some beer with the stolen card. Next thing we knew a

small army of squad cars were around the bus and the cops had arrested Tony. We were all searched at gunpoint.

That was enough for me. It wasn't long before I got off the bus and stuck out my thumb. After that fiasco at the mini-mart, I just felt safer that way.

It was safer. I proceeded up into north central Washington State virtually unmolested by the cops. It really could get tiring, getting searched and harassed. I wanted none of that, and got none.

When I got up to the Okanogan Valley I went up to a piece of land known as Spring Creek. It was up in the mountains, set in the pines above the valley. Crazy John was staying in the main house of this community, where earth lodges and cabins dotted the rugged terrain, inhabited by back to the land type hipsters. The main house was a two-story older homestead cabin, rather rustic in appearance. John made a point of showing me around the community, expressing admiration at the construction of each dwelling we would encounter on the tour. But I was bored with all this. I'd seen it all before.

I found romance, however. That interested me. First with a lady from New York, and then with an Italian hippie woman from Rome. When life seemed dull, romance somehow always made things more interesting.

There would soon be an event that had the potential of sparking up some of my other interests. There was word of a Native American spiritual gathering that was scheduled to take place soon at Spotted Lake, across the border in the Canadian Okanagan country (they spell Okanagan with an a, not an o, before the g up there).

A whole panel truck full of us made the journey, and we bought some beer on the way. When we arrived at Spotted Lake one of the hippies walked over to the campfire and asked the Indians if this was the right place. Problem was, he was carrying a beer in his hand and this was an Indian spiritual gathering with strong "no alcohol" rules.

Red David, who also had arrived at Spring Creek following the Oregon Gathering, was with us on the trip and was the first one to spot the transgression, putting two and two together. "We're gonna get thrown out," he told me. "It ain't right us drinkin', and it ain't right us bringin' alcohol to an Indian spiritual gathering."

David then walked over to the campfire and approached the Indians there. He bowed down his head and said, "Forgive us for our darkness," turned away, and walked back to the panel truck.

Our entry had really been flawed. We were lectured, and rightly so, by Indian elders and youth alike who told us horror stories of domestic violence, car accidents, and addiction, all based on personal experiences of having known a loved one who had suffered or died. Our driver, the guy who bought the beer, agreed to leave, and so did most everyone else. The Italian girl and I decided to stay because we had only drunk about one beer and were not intoxicated.

The event, which lasted several days, was quite interesting. Spotted Lake, so called because it had visible spots on the surface of its water caused by its strong natural mineral content, was long known to the Indians as a place of healing. Sick and wounded people had been laid in the water and seemingly miraculously recovered, we were told. There was a buffalo skull, which was kept by the fire and moved by a medicine man around it, clockwise, in keeping with the sun's movements during the day. Stories of old, traditional tales, were told by this medicine man, known as Napoleon, whose Indian name was Rainbow Watcher. During meal times a huge feast was always available, with meat, bread, fruit, corn, pies, cakes, coffee, and traditional dishes, like camas root.

The highlight of the event occurred when the white owner of the lake, whom the Indians called Winter Hawk, arrived. He addressed all in attendance, telling them that he was setting aside this lake for the use of Indians, solely, and that the property would not be sold, even though many had expressed interest in buying the site.

When the event came to a close the Italian lady and I returned to Spring Creek.

I had a problem. She had fallen in love with me. I couldn't have cared less. I probably could have grown to love her. But I lacked the maturity to even grasp that idea at the time. My only way of dealing with it was to avoid her and to ignore her. After a while it worked.

There was a down side to cutting the Italian girl loose. I was alone. The more time I spent on the road the more I became conscious of that fact. *But what do I have to offer anyone anyway? A series of highways? Other guys at least have someone to share their lives with. My lot is solo. I have to get used to it.*

The whole life on the road had turned into a desperate merry-go-round. The same highways were traveled over again and again. Money always proved to be a necessity and had to be obtained. The dream that we would have our own

place in the sun, a piece of land where we would live together, had faded into nothing. We were awakening from our sleep and the dream was ending. It was starting to seem like it was every man for himself.

Fall came and I went back in Santa Fe, hanging around the plaza, getting nowhere. Sure, there were parties to attend and highs to be had. But I was reaching the end of the adventure. I had become imprisoned by a perpetual hunt for freedom. *I want out of this gerbil ride.*

I hitchhiked out to Waldo, and walked through the dead field of corn, squash, and beans Paula and I had planted. Lame Deer had let it die in our absence. But we had really let it die. *A drunk couldn't have realistically been expected to care for the crops, could he?* I stood alone in the middle of the dead field and cried my guts out.

I'd bide my time in Santa Fe until the snow would fly. I knew I'd be gone at the first sign of winter. I kept my ear to the Rainbow grapevine, ready to join the next set of events. But I didn't know why anymore.

Chapter Twenty-one: Caravan to Nowhere

Word of the expected events reached me once the weather turned cold. Down in Clifton, Arizona, the Rainbow Family had set up a Peace Camp on federal land. It was open to all who desired to live there. Though I didn't really fit into that category, I figured a visit would be worth my time.

The hitchhike to this southeastern Arizona site, set along the Gila River, only took a day and a half for me to get there. The setting was a windswept mesa set above the river, surrounded by barren mountains that stood stark against the sky. The landscape was gray and foreboding in its barren emptiness.

As I explored the camp in this desolate environment, I mentally logged the layout of the camp. A main army tent where several hippies lived and the kitchen was located, and several smaller groupings of personal tents set to the east and west that gave a more private and personal experience to their inhabitants than the group army tent provided.

One reassurance about the situation was that the well-known Rainbow Gathering cook, Dominic, was there to cook the meals. He was quite capable, due to his culinary experience in the hip scene, to brave the blues away with his masterful abilities of making the plainest dishes taste good to the pallet. "That tastes good, Dominic," is a compliment I had heard at many hip feed events.

Having Dominic there not only made the food situation better, it added an old air of familiarity to the scene. Just having a friend in the midst of this new situation set me somewhat at ease.

But it wasn't enough. I still felt alone. That would soon change.

They came in like a flood - from many different directions. The timing was right, it seemed. Bear and Peanut, Mo and Candy, Gary Baba Dada Dass, Jimmer, Red David, Verde, Chuck Wind Song and Patty, and a lady named Baca. They all converged on this happening.

It naturally fell upon me to give every group or individual among this inflow of persons a tour of the Peace Camp. I oriented the new arrivals, trying to make them feel comfortable in the new environment. None of these associates of mine could find enough comfort at this place to tempt them to desire staying here for any length of time. Supplies were scanty at best, and lodging, except for what one packed in, was almost nonexistent. We soon all met and decided to leave together in the near future, possibly heading south.

Denny Deubel, aka Two Bulls, also arrived on the scene with some pure LSD-25. I first met him at Chama, New Mexico, back in 1973 when we both worked as extras in the movie "Bite the Bullet", starring James Coburn and Candice Bergen. Denny kind of looked and talked like the actor, Fes Parker, and even wore a coonskin cap besides. He'd been attending every Rainbow Gathering he could get to for several years. Now he was hanging out with our clique, serving as the psychedelic candy man, handing out the acid with real gusto.

We all tripped on the acid and wandered from one end of the Peace Camp to the other, into the night. We kept the campfire by the main army tent lively as we told stories to those who had been at the Peace Camp before us, keeping them fascinated with our tales and experiences.

Come early morning, before dawn, I felt I could finally sleep. The stimulating effects of the acid were wearing off. I'd met a New Zealander gal named Jill. We retreated together into our own private corner of the vast army tent where we got to know each other better. By dawn, Jill told me that she would leave with all of us when the time arrived.

And the time arrived. As a group, my associates and I left for Eden, Arizona, a hip resort which featured a series of gushing hot springs, natural food and accommodations, courtesy of a large assembly of new age oriented hipsters. It was only about thirty miles from the Peace Camp to Eden, so the trek wasn't exhausting.

The political situation we encountered there was exhausting. A guy named Fred Free managed Eden. He lived in the main house, a large white plantation style abode where massage rooms and steam baths were housed. Fred was assisted by male and female cronies who lived in a series of white duplexes that were set back from the hot springs behind the mesquite and locust trees, kind of hidden in the desert. Every person at Eden was a professing vegetarian and was into natural healing. It was common knowledge, however, that certain high placed cronies often frequented the nearby Mexican restaurant in town where they would indulge in tacos and meat burritos.

Our conflict with Fred Free and the Eden cronies rose out of a conflict over diet. We had arrived in a school bus, a pickup truck with a camper on the back, and a plain pickup, all parked in a circle where we had a campfire at night set in the middle. We had purchased some steaks and were cooking them in the camper, then distributing them to our hungry group. Fred showed up and became very angry with Gary Baba Dada Dass who was serving as our master chef in this enterprise.

"You know full well we do not allow the eating of animals!" Fred yelled at Gary, getting up close to his face.

Gary smiled and calmly looked at Fred going off. "Big fish eat little fish," Gary said, continuing to serve a plate to me as he began to ignore Fred, to Fred's utter disgust, causing the Eden big wig to prance off in a huff.

We started to notice that we were getting the cold shoulder whenever any of us went up to the main house or showed up for one of the natural meals that Eden served. Apparently Fred and his cronies figured we hadn't yet arrived at their plateau of self-realization and enlightenment. We didn't give a rat's ass.

Then it got worse. The hipster Hispanics showed up at Eden. They set up their own campfire, set in a clearing surrounded by desert bush, and proceeded to consume large amounts of booze at night, beating on some drums they had procured, inviting Eden cronies and valid Eden guests to come and drum with them.

One guy had brought an expensive, handmade drum to the hipster Hispanic percussion session. He had left to take a break from drumming, returning to find his instrument gone.

"Where is it?" he cried. "It was just here!"

Mario, Carlitos, and Alfredo all denied knowledge of its whereabouts. Unbeknownst to the poor guest drummer, and to Mario and Carlitos, Alfredo had quickly stashed the drum in the desert for later retrieval.

The ripped off man rightly suspected Alfredo, and told everyone at Eden of his suspicions. This contributed to further conflict because Eden residents and guests noticed the close relationship our group had with Mario, Carlitos and Alfredo.

Alfredo wandered into the main house one night, quite drunk, and helped himself to an expensive Oaxacan blanket that had hung on the wall. A resident caught him carrying the item under his arm, heading for the door. The resident alerted a whole group of residents, who then surrounded Alfredo, chanting "Ooom" in order to instill good vibes to the situation.

Alfredo's defense was comical at best. "You greengos took all of our land," he slurred. "All I was doin' was takin' a lil back."

Despite this performance, Alfredo was compelled to give back the weaving.

It wasn't good. We wondered how long our stay at Eden would last.

One last transgression sealed our fate. We would have to leave Eden, for sure, after this one. Red David followed one of the domestic geese that roamed the property, and killed the boor bird, plucking its feathers, and roasting it over our central campfire one night. Though the goose was good eating, the Eden residents and guests, of course, did not concur. The incident raised an uproar. We knew then that we were out of there.

At the last moment, right as our camp was poised to leave, a hippie named Firefly and his old lady showed up and joined our camp, complete with a flatbed truck with a covered back, which housed a horse and hay.

The hipster Hispanics left first, heading northeast. They were anxious to go, prodded out by Alfredo's recent outrageous exploits.

Our camp packed up and drove off next, heading east, leaving Peanut and her child Sarah behind. She had agreed to meet up with gear later.

We had recruited a pretty woman named Paris, who served as a source of erotic pleasure for Bear, Chuck, and I, so the trip would not be boring.

The vehicle occupant setup for the trip was: Chuck, Patty, Jill, and I riding in the back of Firefly's rig, reclining in the hay next to the horse. Red David, Mo, Candy,

Jimmer, and Baca commandeered the school bus. Paris and Denny Deubel rode in the pickup truck. Gary and Verde were in charge of the pickup and camper rig that actually belonged to Verde. Our caravan passed through southern New Mexico quickly, entering Texas, and continued, following the Rio Grande south.

On the road one day we spotted a dead deer, a road kill, and immediately pulled our vehicles over by a tree-hidden turn off. Red David and Denny went up to the highway and picked up the carcass, carrying it down to the hidden area where they strung it up on a tree, gutted it, skinned it, and proceeded to carve it up into steaks. The meat was put into the refrigerator on board the camper, and the hide was scraped and salted for rawhide.

We continued south, stopping in another tree-hidden area along the Rio Grande. We made a campfire as the night set in, roasting venison steaks over the flame. Life couldn't have seemed more generous at the time. Verde sat next to me. I was very curious about the aftermath of the gold and diamonds fiasco. I just had to ask. "What happened after the New Mexico gathering?" I probed. "Did you get in trouble for giving the gold and diamonds away?"

Verde pulled out his wallet, removing an official Moonie ID. It looked ridiculous, I noticed, as he held it over next to the firelight. His photograph showed him with an expression of hilarious laughter. Verde explained, "I returned to them (the Moonies) and told them that I had given all of the jewelry to the Rainbow Family. When they asked me who the Rainbow Family was, I explained that it included numerous people worldwide, and had no leaders or viable organization. They then welcomed me back, issued me a new ID, and told me that I had to work for them for quite some time to pay for the gold and diamonds. That's what I'll be doing for a while after this trip," Verde smiled. It felt like he was saying, "It turned out ok."

As the fire shrank into embers people began to retire off to bed. I sat up for a while looking into the glowing coals thinking about not only this journey, but also all of them since I first left home. *There's no point to any of it. I'm heading nowhere, I thought.*

Morning came with a rude awakening. The local sheriff drove his jeep into camp, awakening everyone. He asked for Ids, explaining that he had to keep up with anyone camping along the river as there were drug smugglers and illegal aliens constantly coming from the Mexican side of the river. We got our pot of coffee on the fire as he drove off in a cloud of dust.

We made contact with some missionaries. What church they belonged to, I do not know. Bear and I were welcomed into the mission house where we joined hands in a circle of the faithful. A chant about Jesus commenced.

Bear and I joined in the chant, closing our eyes.

It concluded, and Bear opened his eyes. "Did you feel that?" he asked me. I hadn't felt a thing. "Did you feel that?" he repeated. "It's Jesus!" he exclaimed, his eyes opened wide with all of the wonder of a child who had discovered something. "That's the answer, it's Jesus!" Bear and I did not know what to do about Jesus. I was more versed than he through reading and hearing the gospels as to what the Christian faith was about. Bear was touched, however, by a religious experience. We decided together that we would live honestly and follow Jesus. But our sudden religious zeal was soon thwarted. Bear got horny and slept with Baca. I wasn't into celibacy either and soon was back to my old self as well.

The caravan continued south. We were determined to go all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. We made our camp near Brownsville, and some of us journeyed in Firefly's vehicle into town. We wandered about, walked across the Mexican border, bought some burritos, and then returned to the states. Bear had also bought some tequilla, and he and I quickly downed the bottle. "We're STP!" he shouted, spitting on his hand and offering the wet paw to me, which I responded to by spitting on my hand, and shaking his in the STP Family handshake. We were trying to cope with feeling alone and being on the road in the only way we knew how.

Funds were becoming nil. Gas, food, and dope were all concerns commonly held and voiced by all. To satisfy these wants and needs, Candy called some rich yippie activist friends of hers in Florida collect. They wired us two thousand dollars to Brownsville.

Now financed, the caravan got on the road again. We continued south, and the day wore on into evening and night. Everyone had taken more of Denny's acid as the night set in. The situation in Firefly's truck became very strange as a thick fog enveloped us. So thick that Firefly nor his wife, nor Bear could see from the front seat very far. Navigation was very poor. Those of us in the back only saw fog. Then, with a gust of wind, lights and rumbling, a semi truck brushed by us, nearly side-scraping our truck. "Good night!" I yelled from the hay-strewn back, as the semi righted itself into its lane in front of Firefly's rig, avoiding hitting the rest of the caravan. Chuck, Patty, Jill, and I all realized how close we had come to a real tragedy. It caused Bear to reflect on death. "Where is Marsha?" he asked as he peered back at us through the cab's rear window.

Our caravan arrived at the gulf. Winds of near hurricane proportions were blowing there on the shore. All of our vehicles had parked, and most of us had gotten out to walk about in the wind. The gusts were so strong they almost carried us away. It was safer in the shelter of the vehicles, to which we quickly returned.

Then we were on our way to Padre Island, arriving at the gulf beach area before dawn. The wind had died down. We made our camp on the sands of the beach, still flying on the acid.

Bear and I walked off from the camp along the beach, listening to the sound of the crashing waves. We were very high, speechless at first, as we walked along. We came to a long pier, and walked upon the structure, feeling the pounding of the surf rocking the pier as we moved towards the end. The first light of pre-dawn glowed over the eastern horizon, lighting the sea, as we arrived at the end of the pier and stopped. A closeness, a mutual feeling of brotherly love came over us. We began to converse about living right and truthfully - about how we felt that God had set up everything on the planet. And still, Bear wondered where Marsha was. He closed his eyes, standing tall, a look of sublime bliss upon his face, and took a deep breath. Then he opened his eyes and looked at me saying, "Let's go back."

Dawn shot across the water, lighting up the sky, as we walked back to the beginning of the pier. As we walked back along the beach we came upon Red David sitting in a half lotus, facing the ocean. "Hail Atlantis!" he exclaimed, really tripping out on the legendary lost continent. "Hail Atlantis!" he shouted again.

When we got back to camp we cooked some venison and made some coffee. Then everyone wandered off to sleep until the early afternoon, exhausted from the acid fueled journey to the sea.

When we awoke we found that we were in a tourist resort area that had nothing to offer us. We were only on Padre Island for about two days when we all decided to return north a ways. None of us had had enough forethought to really research where we were heading in advance, a practice that would have surely thwarted this caravan, had any of us done our homework on our destination.

North, near Laredo, we stopped, having located some old abandoned houses where we made our abode. There was some consternation about where we would go from here - no one knew or had any ideas. Though we were in limbo, plans to quickly head out to who knows where (and no one knew, we'd just drive) were already underway.

Then Gary reported to everyone that Verde's camper truck was broken down, and that he needed some money to repair the rig. Eight hundred dollars to be exact, out of the remainder of the two thousand bucks. He would have to go to Austin to get the parts. Candy then relinquished the cash to Gary, who took a greyhound bus to Austin with Verde. Bear, MO, Candy, and I went to see Gary and Verde off. As the bus drove off, Gary humorously flipped Bear off and smiled. Bear didn't like that. He suspected that Gary was ripping off the caravan. "I'm gonna hit him when I see him again, Phil!" he said. A confused and angry look came over his face, as he waved his clenched fists through the air in sweeping, boxing motions. I found out later what happened, but Bear didn't even have a clue at the time, blinded by his suspicions. So, Gary and Verde had thought that they had major engine problems with the truck when they left. But when they reached Austin, comically, they discovered that all that was needed was a ten-dollar part. If they had turned back by then to return the money, they would miss this caravan to who knows where anyway. And finding it would have been a nightmare. So, Gary and Verde, stuck with the money, did what seemed to them to be the logical thing. They spent it on booze, women, and dope.

But in Bear's suspicious mind, Gary had committed the unpardonable sin - he had ripped off family - in a very big way, by leaving with that cash. And Bear was certain of this, even though this wasn't the case.

Our group, now going broke, was stranded without the ways and means to get anywhere. It looked very bleak. Gas was minimal. The food was running out - we were down to oatmeal. Booze was a real luxury, and we were scraping resin out of pipes to smoke to get a little buzz. The abandoned houses we were staying in had no plumbing or running water. We had to haul water in containers from town, and we had to shit in a field. Even Denny's acid was gone. There would be no means of mental escape. After about a week, the full extent of the implications of going broke really sank in, to the disgust of everyone.

We had a sudden stroke of luck. We met up with two big, burly, long-haired dudes in Laredo who worked on the oil rigs out in the desert. These guys worked hard all day long and made good money besides. What they liked to do when they got home was party - drink hard liquor, listen to music, romance women, and smoke good dope. They figured we'd provide a good party atmosphere, so they put us up at their big house out in the country. The place was set back in some trees, was an older one-story sprawling wooden structure with a big screened off front porch that had one of those swinging couches facing the front yard. One of the kickbacks they got from putting us up was pot. Chuck had managed to get hold of about a thousand bucks somehow and had just used some of the money to purchase a good score of Mexican bud. The other gratuity these guys got was sex. One of them was sleeping with Paris, and the other dude started bedding

down with Baca. The days at this pad, while these guys were at work, were pretty much a smoked out haze. We'd just sit around and smoke lots of dope. When night came the oil rig dudes would arrive with about a gallon of Jack Daniels Black Label whiskey, the tunes would get cranked up on the stereo, the dope would continue to get smoked, and the whiskey flowed in rivers. Most of us were getting pretty drunk.

Some of us weren't. Chuck and Patty didn't drink. They were playing the game real smart. They'd realized that the caravan had already burned out, and they weren't going to be left with nothing. They had already spent about three hundred dollars on the dope. Now they were often gone during the day. None of us could figure out what they were up to. When they drove back to the house in a used red convertible Volkswagen bug and started loading up their stuff, it became obvious what they'd been up to - they had gone car shopping and were jumping ship on their own.

Bear wrongly saw this as the second ultimate slight. First, according to Bear, Gary had ripped everyone off and headed to Austin, and now this. Chuck Wind Song and Patty had gotten money, taken care of themselves, weren't sharing with the group, and were heading out, Bear said accusingly.

"You'd leave us all to die!" Bear shouted at Chuck and Patty, pointing his finger at them. Bear's face contorted into a confused and angry look as he strutted over to Chuck and Patty, still pointing his finger at the couple, who now stood ready to board their packed Beetle. "You're just thinking about yourselves!" he roared, by now his nose almost touching Chuck's. "You wouldn't help me if I was lying in the gutter with my throat cut!" he shouted into Chuck's face, clenching his fists as he yelled.

Then Bear turned his massive frame around to face the audience of caravaners who were witnessing this angry spectacle from the porch. "None of you would!" he shouted at the onlookers.

Chuck had showed reserve and constraint at the verbal onslaught. How could he explain to Bear that Patty and he had enough foresight to realize that it was over, that they had to go? How could he explain that he felt, rightly so, that the ship was about to sink?

Bear began approaching everyone in the caravan one at a time, demanding that they give him back everything he had ever given them. No one resisted the big man, not even Chuck and Patty. When it was over he had blankets, jewelry, dope, money, and other odds and ends. If it was going to be every man for himself, then Bear would take care of number one.

Bear didn't take anything from me. I was the only one who he felt had not violated his trust, or the trust of the group. "You're Family. You know to never rip off Family," he told me after his confiscation effort.

Chuck, who he told me could have pooled his resources and helped the caravan effort to succeed, especially angered Bear. "He showed his true colors," he said. "And they were all dark."

Bear had just quit speaking when Chuck and Patty drove off, leaving behind a trail of dust. I didn't blame Chuck a bit. In my mind I couldn't really blame anyone who was jumping this sinking ship. Chuck had horse sense. He wasn't going to waste his time going nowhere. But I didn't stick up for Chuck and Patty. I knew it would only lead to further conflict. There had been enough of that.

In Bear's mind there was a certain sense of desperation, which he shared in our private conversations. He envisioned a group of us sticking together, eventually buying a piece of land where we would all live together in harmony - a kind of completion of some cosmic plan. I had shared this vision, but it had gradually died, a victim of years on the road reaching their logical end on this crazy caravan. By the time Bear had become enraged with Chuck and Patty, the dream was finally dead. I had finally awakened to the reality of the real world.

The end of the caravan had come. Its demise occurred rather quickly. It was like Chuck and Patty's cutting out had served as a real wake-up call. The day hadn't ended before everyone was starting to pack, ready to disperse in different directions. By the next morning everyone was leaving, either alone, or in small groups. *Yea, it's every man for himself.*

I left with Bear, Mo, Candy, and Denny. We headed for the Mexican border en-route to Guatemala. Denny had revealed to us that he had a sizable undisclosed amount of cash iced. It was understood by us that he would bankroll our trip. For all of Bear's rhetoric about Chuck and Patty hoarding things and not sharing, Bear didn't even mumble a word after finding out that Denny had been keeping a stash of cash. After all, Denny was now going to bankroll Bear's trip.

But as we approached the border, I fell victim to some serious apprehensions. *What if a conflict with Denny happens, or he just plain tires of paying our way? I, for one, am broke. I know that Bear, Mo, and Candy don't have much. Being in Central America with no cash, where cash means everything, doesn't appeal to me.*

When we arrived at the border my four companions began to walk together across. I froze. Bear turned around and looked at me - that confused look coming

over his face as the others turned around in suit. "What's wrong?" he yelled over to me. "C'mon, Phil! Let's go!"

I shook my head.

"C'mon, Phil!" Candy echoed.

"I'm not going," I replied. "I'll catch you on the rebound," I said.

Even Denny spoke up. "If it's the money, don't worry," he said, seemingly reading my thoughts. "I'll cover you."

I again shook my head. "No. I'm gonna stay."

Bear shook his head as well, expressing his displeasure at my choice.

"Ok, brother. See ya!" he shouted.

Then he and the others turned around, continuing their walk into Mexico.

I'm alone. Maybe this is the way it's meant to be.

Aftermath

Kilo had received Marsha's body from the Mexican authorities in a cheap, wooden coffin some time before our last caravan. He had her remains cremated. Painfully, he had earlier stood at the same pier where Bear and I had later vibed together on acid during the last caravan. There he poured out Marsha's ashes into the sea. This was months before Bear and I walked out to the end of the pier by coincidence. Strange how Bear had wondered where Marsha was and we ended up at her final resting place. Everyone noticed that Kilo had a death wish after Marsha's demise. Perhaps he blamed himself for Marsha's untimely death. Perhaps rightly so.

Yeah. The final story of Marsha's demise was different than the one I had heard right after she died. According to the second version, Kilo was drunk and beating Marsha. The federales tried to stop him. He had Marsha get behind the wheel of the van to save him from arrest and kept beating her. She then pulled the van off the cliff, figuring if Kilo was going to kill her, she'd take him with her. Kilo leaped out the passenger door just before the van went down into the abyss. The sad part is that many of us were afraid of Kilo and this prevented us from intervening when he beat on Marsha.

Michael Bear made it to Guatemala with Mo, Candy, and Denny. But, within a month, he contracted spinal meningitis. He returned to Austin, where he was admitted to the ER. Apparently a brain tumor was also detected. Surgery was necessary. Kilo signed the papers allowing the operation. The tumor had exploded, its toxins had entered Bear's spinal fluid, a complication due to the meningitis. Bear died. He was twenty-seven years old. He was laid to rest in a mausoleum in New Orleans.

Peanut, Michael Bear's widow, settled down in Oregon where she raised their daughter, Sarah and a son.

Kilo too would meet his end on a summer night in Las Cruces, New Mexico about five months after Bear. His was a violent death, at the wrong end of his own recently acquired .38 caliber pistol during a drug rip-off deal gone very bad. It was a fatal head wound. He was twenty-seven years old.

The Bear from Oregon who had announced the appearance of the white buffalo at the first gathering died. This happened in 2003, quite some time after he had endured the misfortune of ending up paralyzed and in a wheel chair due to a diving accident.

Boogie, Kilo and Marsha's son, was raised by Kilo's parents after Kilo's death.

Mo, the saxophone player, and Candy, the broad shouldered and articulate gal, settled down together somewhere in Maryland.

Denny Deubel, the Fess Parker look alike whom I worked with on "Bite the Bullet" back in 1973 and who was the psychedelic candy man on the last caravan, became somewhat of a loner and a fruit tramp. He lived for years somewhere alone in north central Washington. He died eventually of complications due to Parkinson's Disease.

Chuck Wind Song, the man who found the first Rainbow Gathering site and had enough horse sense to cut out of the last caravan, split up with Patty. He found a home near Missoula, Montana. He later moved to that town and died there after being on oxygen for some time. I visited him in 2014. Some years later, he died.

Patty returned to school and became a registered nurse. Last heard from she was living near Tonasket, Washington. She married a very fine man from New York.

Red David, the redheaded guy from security camp, lost an eye in a barroom brawl. He made his home in Tonasket, Washington. Then he vanished, never to be seen again by any of us who survived.

Jimmer, the tall Irish American who looks kinda like Sam Elliot and helped save the Mario and Carlitos from the mob in Bisbee, was sentenced to ten years in a federal prison for pot- a statistic in the Drug War. He settled down once released in eastern Washington.

Kay Beckwith, the cosmopolitan lady who hooked us up with Rainbow Club Med, moved to Illinois, Seattle and other locales. She's still adorned like a gypsy.

David Beckwith, Kay's robust ex, lives in Illinois.

Gary Baba Dada Dass, the wandering comedian who helped Verde and I give away the gold and the diamonds, is married with children. He doesn't go to Rainbow Gatherings anymore. Gary lives in Chico, California.

Eden, Arizona, word had it, was bought by the Rolling Stones many years ago after Security Camp was there. The hot springs resort has changed hands since then.

Vickie, who was once Dirty Dan's old lady at Wheeler's Ranch and was the recipient of those little kisses on Hoffs's Hill, now lives in Montana. She's gone by the handle "Feather" for years (Not the Feather who lived at Waldo). She in recent years has been traveling the world, attending Rainbow gatherings.

No telling what ever happened to Charles or any of the old Waldo crew.

Paula got married and moved to Hawaii. It took me years to get over her, and Waldo.

Waldo is an abandoned haunt of windswept ruins now.

Don Enrique, Jr. succumbed suddenly to pneumonia many years ago. It killed him. No telling what happened to Rainbow Club Med.

Depression got the best of Firefly from the last caravan. Suicide some years back.

Mario went on to become a trader in Latin American and Native American handicrafts. He found solace in Hungry Horse, Montana. He now lives in New York state.

Carlitos settled down in the hills of northern California. Eventually he was deported by the INS to Guatemala, but he came back to the United States. He eventually passed away from Cancer.

Dominic, last heard from, was living in a tiny house in Chico, California. He eventually passed away.

Tony Angel died in 1983 due to cancer of the liver. Some said it was from Agent Orange exposure in Nam, others said it was alcohol. Perhaps it was both.

Freedom, last heard from, was living in Chico, California. He eventually died of cancer. He had become a good family man.

The Security Camp was abolished. Consequently, an "A Camp", which means Alcohol Camp, arose and has been tolerated, where drinkers congregate. Thus the worse of two evils emerged.

The legendary precursor of the STP Family who was once known as Mike Motherfucker vanished. Living or dead, I don't know.

The STP Family still exists today, though not on the road and streets. Those few who survived are older, settled down, and used to meet at annual reunions.

Tom Rush? I don't know what happened to him. Really doubt he's on the corner of Haste and Telegraph in Berkeley.

Randy, who turned me on to the remote New Mexico community of Waldo, lives in Seattle, Washington.

Nelly, Randy's lady at Waldo, is gone. She was the victim of a serial killer in the Seattle area.

Crazy John ended up being a much-in-demand head of security at rock concerts and other alternative events. He still does security work at Rainbow Gatherings as well. He was bright enough to see the security work at the gatherings as a career opportunity. He went by the handle John Buffalo. He recently died in San Diego, California.

Paterson was still waiting for the apocalypse somewhere. But he slept with an underage girl, fled to Israel, and was busted there. He was extradited and did prison time. I doubt Paterson still has a Christ Brotherhood organized. Living or dead? I don't know.

Otis, the mellow STP Family dude, died in Takilma, Oregon. I still feel like he was one of the only people that I could ever trust.

Young Jesse went to prison after he had the mishap of passing out drunk near the scene of a crime. He was at the wrong place at the wrong time. Many said he

is innocent. That was a long time ago. Where this STP Family legend is now, I haven't got a clue.

Jerome died. STP Otis shot him after Jerome raped him. Otis was cut loose by the authorities soon thereafter.

Otis too has passed away.

Ira and his wife died in a tragic accident. Their propane fuel heated steam bath exploded, killing them both.

Linda, my first love, wound up hooking on the streets of New York City by the early eighties. Dead or alive, whereabouts unknown.

Any suspicions anyone ever had about White Eagle were false. He proved to be a helpful man who still attends Rainbow Gatherings. Life is still a stage for him.

The Rainbow Stone was lost. Birdy was hitchhiking near Lincoln, Nebraska and had her stuff ripped off by a driver, who just took off with it all after letting her off. The rock was in her backpack. Birdy lives in Maine.

Love Israel lost much of his following due to accusations of misappropriation of funds. He ended up staying at his Arlington, Washington ranch where he raised his kids. He continued to promote positive thought among his followers who remained. Serious was still with him for awhile. He died of cancer.

Lynette Fromme, aka Squeaky, Manson's second in command, ended up in federal prison for life without parole for attempting to assassinate President Gerald Ford back in the Seventies. But eventually she was paroled. She lives with her biker significant other in the Northeast.

Country Sue was more fortunate. She broke free from the Manson Family in the Seventies and became a natural healer. Where she is now, I know the area but won't say. I respect her privacy...She lives in northern California.

Medicine Story remained a medicine man, known for having done much good for his fellow human beings. He has passed away.

Alabama from Wheeler's Ranch was killed while hitchhiking in Montana in the 70s. I never learned the details.

Don't know what ever happened to Alabama's druggy son.

Jerry Rubin was hit by a car in Los Angeles and died.

Allen Ginsberg passed away.

John Lennon was assassinated in 1980.

David Peele passed away.

Baba Ram Dass passed away.

Wavy Gravy is alive and well, still doing good deeds.

Byron, the libation-loving spoon ring maker from the caravan to congress, passed away.

Doc, the mechanic from the first caravan, is still around somewhere. He shows up at Rainbow Gatherings once in a blue moon.

Barry Plunker went on to promote more Rainbow Gatherings, eventually finding himself battling new federal regulations that seemed to attempt to bring the gatherings, as customarily held, to a halt. The US Forest Service wanted the Rainbow Family to sign permits to have the gatherings. This was a first. Then they tried to put Barry in federal prison for "gathering without a permit". Plunker appealed the action. But the government still sent him to federal prison for three months. He has made Missoula, Montana his home.

Garrick Beck moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he became a successful merchant of gems and semi-precious stones. Still, as with Plunker, it was open season on men like Beck, because he continued to promote Rainbow Gatherings. Apparently the US Forest Service had an agenda. They had even formed a special task force to deal with the Rainbow Gathering phenomena. Beck too was charged with "gathering without a permit". He too was sentenced to three months in federal prison. His crime? Attending Rainbow Gatherings, I guess.

And the US Forest Service wasn't done. Also sent to federal prison for three months were Rainbows Stephen Principal and Joanee Freedom.

But really, Plunker and Beck were among four people singled out for federal golf clubs because those two men are the counterculture legends who were influential in the formation and spread of Rainbow from day one. Yet they weren't and aren't alone in it. I was one of the originals... I know. And the US Forest Service is well aware that Rainbow has always had a "No leaders" outlook, muting authority for anyone to sign for Rainbow - this despite the immense impacts of men like Plunker and Beck. Despite this outlook, Beck did finally sign

a permit for the 2003 Rainbow Gathering that was held in Utah, however. Times have changed.

But both Barry Plunker and Garrick Beck received a very high honor: They were awarded the Cannabis Cup and declared Counter-culture hero's of the year in Amsterdam, the Netherlands in 2006. Chuck Wind Song accompanied them to Amsterdam for the festivities.

My Aunt Nell, uncle Ted, uncle Bill, and aunt Marjorie have all long since passed away, in that order.

Bill, my sister Olivia's husband, died in the 90s from excessive drug and alcohol use running his body. A friend of Olivia, my sister, asked about the whereabouts of several of Bill's friends. They were all dead.

Olivia worked for the postal service. My mother lived with her. Mom died in 2013. Olivia retired and lives on the beach in Southern California.

I've only met my father three brief times in my life. He became a junky and a bank robber, taking down banks from California to Puerto Rico. He was busted in Florida, did Prison time, parole and then eventually died at a nursing home in Long Beach, California in 2011.

I currently live in Washington State, North America. I've been married to Vickie Golden Bear for about 38 years and we raised five kids, trying to give them a life we never had and to protect them from a lot of the ones that we did have. I am making sure my wife gets the help she deserves. She has dementia. I am staying true to her and keeping my wedding vows. I knew her ten years before we were married. I was at every birth. I named every child. They're all grown now, and poor Vickie finally, after years of my care, ended up in a lock down memory care facility after she suddenly ran off to visit one of our daughters 150 miles away. I love Vickie so much.

And amazing changes happened to me. I accepted Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah as my Master and Savior. He saved me completely from all my missings of the mark and made me a new creation. He guided me and I became Vegetarian and partially Vegan. I quit smoking tobacco and pot. Gave up alcohol. I walk miles every day. I feel like I'm 50 again....and I'm 66 as of this writing. And He is very real and very much alive. And Yeshua (Jesus) is pure love. In Him I found true inner peace and love....And you can too if you only will trust Him. He has transformed me. I love all humans and animals and all life. I am truly happy inside. I was searching all my life for the truth. And by God's grace I found it.

Meanwhile, Rainbow has expanded worldwide and continues to grow. Gatherings are held in many nations around the globe, attended by mostly thousands of the young. In America there are now regional gatherings as well as the national one. Barter Faire's in North Central Washington State continue much of the Rainbow traditions. I was at the first one, as were several of us, long ago. About 15,000 people attend the fall season version of the event every year. There are also self sustainable eco-villages that keep Rainbow traditions alive in many places on the planet.

In Loving Memory

There were many other counterculture persons - STP Family, Rainbow Family, and Independents - who were there and didn't survive. Unfortunately, they did not make it into the narrative - there was just no way to fit them all in. I will pay tribute to the memory of some of these friends, associates, and people I met as follows: Adam, STP Family; Mike Two Beards, STP Family; Kenny Red Port, STP Family; Sleeping Bags Bob, Independent; Raunchy Ron, STP Family; Gypsy Jake, Rainbow Family; I Am, Rainbow Family; Al, Independent; Three Feathers, Independent; Two Feathers, Rainbow Family; Richard Eagle Feather, Rainbow Family; Buckwheat, Rainbow Family; Joe, Independent; Heinz Little Eagle, Independent; Faith, Rainbow Family; Little John, Independent; Shiva Dass, Rainbow Family; Bobby Lee, Rainbow Family; May they all rest in peace.

----- The End -----