

# dahinda meda

A MEMOIR



stories from a blessed, extraordinary life  
AS TOLD TO MARY DOYON

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*a memoir*

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Coincidental  
Communications

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*"I am so blessed and I am so happy. My life is so many stories, so many good friends, so much love. I give thanks for my life, for my dreams, and for my destiny, sacred as a tree and shared forever. Family members, abundance, community. Peace!"*

— dahinda meda

# **Acknowledgments**

*by Norma Grier*

As dahinda's mother neared her hundredth birthday, her granddaughter Barb made a push to compile the memoir that Bobby had been writing for some time. The finished book was fascinating, covering Bobby's life by each decade. The memoir was a great inspiration for dahinda, and he quickly determined to produce his own. Dahinda's vision has been strong throughout, keeping all of us focused on the outcome he wanted.

When he turned to me one day a number of years ago and asked me to write his book for him, I first was at a loss for words. I knew how big the job was, and I knew it was beyond my capacity to take it on. I told dahinda, "No." Fortunately, dahinda came up with the idea of asking Suzi Prozanski to write it. After all, Suzi had written a book about the Oregon Country Fair and knew what such a project entailed. We visited Suzi in her home and Suzi told us she would edit the book. She recommended Mary Doyon to write it.

A better match could not be found. Mary met regularly with dahinda, listened to stories and combed through materials. Since his second stroke in 2010, dahinda omits context in his communication. But Mary persisted and fit together a vibrant puzzle to tell dahinda's life story. This book's success is grounded in Mary's tenacity and resourcefulness.

Suzi's editing skills and publishing knowledge guided the work to its finish. She's been a terrific team leader for the project.

Dahinda's family members and friends have been strategic resources for the book. We shared a fun dinner last summer hearing from Erica, John, Brad, and Aerin about growing up with dahinda and partnering with him in business. Bob Manning, one of the "bad boys," visited from Maryland and added spice to stories about their teenage years. Earlier drafts of the book that were reviewed by brothers Harry and John brought out more tales to strengthen the narrative. Thanks are due Buzz and Brad who also reviewed drafts of the chapters.

The friends from Mendocino County who worked and lived with dahinda added their keen eyes to early drafts, including Ross Walker, Meca Wawona, and Dick "Paco" Jordan. Sarah Livia Brightwood shared insight to the chapters on Terrarium and Mexico. Becky Riley and David Westwood provided valuable proofing of the final draft that improved the memoir and ensured its integrity.

Collecting photographs was a bigger job than I imagined, and the results add so much to the memoir. The best treasure trove was an album put together by dahinda's mother, who assembled photographs pertinent to dahinda's life. Her gift to dahinda supplied many images. Daughter Erica had a good collection, as well. Bob Bugg's keen photographic eye for the wonders at Terrarium enrich the pages. Brad was tireless in scanning photos for Suzi to use, a task that was vital.

Indigo Ronlov helped not only with the cover design, but she made the book's flyer that dahinda took to the January 2016 Ecological Farming Conference in California. Dahinda loved sharing his excitement about the upcoming publication at that event.

Dahinda is so happy knowing his book is now finished. I feel joy in that accomplishment, too.

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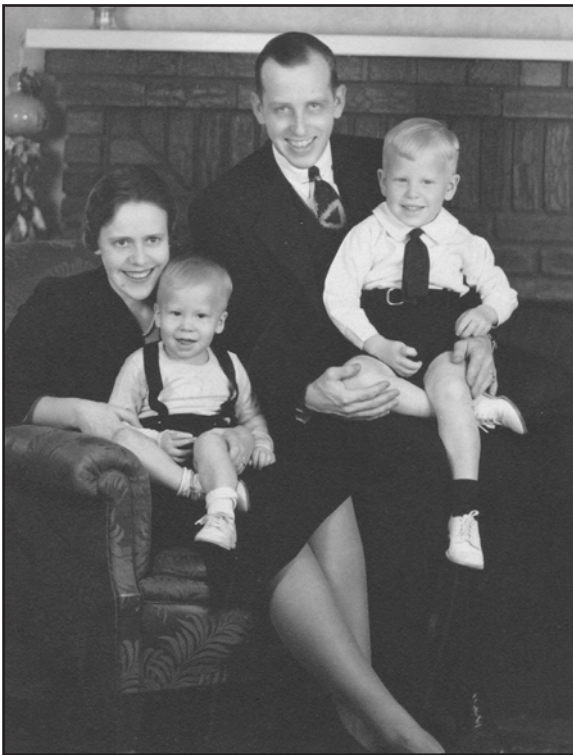


## Chapter 1

# *Early Childhood*

**Y**ou could call me a New Age entrepreneur: architect, hippie, master of erosion control, a pioneer in organic farming and fair trade coffee, and constant activist. I've tried to always honestly pursue that which has meaning to me, with integrity and a positive manner. I am dahinda meda.

I was born Albert William Lerch on April 14, 1940, in Washington, D.C. Our family lived in Chevy Chase, Maryland. I was named after my mother's father, Albert Wilhelm Walter.



**Family photo from 1941 shows (from left): Bobby, Al, Hank, and Harry.**

My father, Hank Lerch, worked in a D.C. law firm. I had a brother, Harry, older by two years. My mother, Gertrude or "Bobby," was a talented chemist. She graduated with her degree in zoology, and went on to earn an advanced degree in chemistry, but devoted her life to her homemaking duties as a young mother. She had really wanted a daughter when she was pregnant with me, and made certain to have Doctor Edith Coale, a rare woman doctor, attend to her prenatal needs. But a baby girl was not in her future.

During those days before the U.S. joined World War II, Mom would frequently take us boys to Rock Creek Park or the zoo in the afternoons, where feeding the ducks was a high point, and then into D.C. to pick up Dad at the law office where he worked. We loved stopping at any of the many construction sites to watch the men at work.

Mom always seemed to like animals. We had a Scottish terrier named Mischief who used to come with me, my brother, and Mom's maid on afternoon walks around the neighborhood. Unfortunately Mischief was lost on one of these outings,





**Albert Wilhelm Walter, dahinda's maternal grandfather.**



**Harry and Al in their Easter finest.**

and my mom always believed he was stolen, because a large number of pet dogs disappeared from there at about the same time. Mom remembers we were devastated at the loss of our furry friend. So the family soon acquired a beautiful collie. Naturally, we named her "Lassie," after the dog in the movie.

Both my mother's parents were German immigrants. When the war started in Europe, it didn't affect things at home much, but my grandparents were quite concerned because our aunts and uncles and their families were suffering greatly. My grandmother sent "care packages" to help them out.

My dad and his best friend, Taylor Rhodes, had believed it was only a matter of time before the U.S. would become involved, so they decided to become Army reserve officers. They took a home study course for a couple of years and were inducted as second lieutenants in the Quartermaster Reserve in May of 1939, almost a year before I was born. Dad received his orders to report for active duty on July 1, 1941, some months before we went to war. He resigned from his job at the law firm and reported to Army headquarters in D.C., but otherwise things remained the same for us at home. Then came the attack on Pearl Harbor. My dad used to tell the story of being at a Washington Redskins football game that Sunday when the announcer kept breaking in to tell this general and that admiral to report to their office. Dad knew something had happened. Mom was at home and heard the news on the radio. The next morning, Dad reported to work in full uniform.

When the U.S. declared war, my father was assigned as a Quartermaster with the Army 2<sup>nd</sup> Ferrying Command, moving war materiel. First he was sent to Quartermaster training at Fort Lee, Virginia, for six weeks. My folks decided that it was a good time for Mom to take us on an extended visit with our maternal grandparents, Albert and Willamina Walter, who had

retired to Miami Shores, Florida.

We traveled by train, a trip that took twenty-four hours. I was not quite two and Harry was almost four, but I remember that trip! It was an important bonding experience with my German-born grandfather, and my first exposure to organic gardening. My grandparents grew trees bearing avocados, oranges, and limes — fruit not available where we lived. I also remember seeing the Atlantic Ocean for the first time. We got to sleep in a tent all night several times, and I remember being



**Left: Harry pets Lassie while Al holds his brother John. Above: Three brothers (from left) John, Al, and Harry.**



**Harry stands at attention while Al salutes.**

enchanted by the sight of the moon and stars and the rising sun.

Dad was promoted to first lieutenant and assigned to Logan Field in Dundalk, near Baltimore, as a Quartermaster officer. After a few months, the airfield was beaten down by the weight of the heavy bombers using it, despite repeated efforts to firm up the landing strip with rocks. In 1942 my father — and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ferrying Command — were transferred to New Castle Army Air Base, Delaware, where a properly reinforced airstrip was being built.

After some months of moving from one place to another to keep up with Dad's changing assignments, my folks finally found a house in Wilmington on Bedford Court, with a large living room, three bedrooms, and a big yard with a cherry tree we boys loved to climb. We were happy to be all together in our "own" house with our own stuff. On moving day, Mom remembered me saying, "When Lassie gets here it will even smell like home!" I have always had a keen sense of smell!

Mom settled us into our new home and tried to make life as normal as possible during wartime. She'd take us outside to search the sky for airplanes coming in to land at Dad's base. Shortages and rationing made many foods hard to get. In the



summers of 1943 and '44, our family joined some neighbors to plant a big "Victory Garden" in a nearby vacant lot. It was our family's first experience growing a fairly large garden, but we all enjoyed spending evenings and weekends among the rows of vegetables. My brother and I each had our own little plot that we proudly tended. I had my first garden at age three!

During the war, rationing soon extended to everyday items such as sugar, flour, meats, shoes, fuel oil, and gasoline. We were encouraged to salvage tin cans, steel, fats, and anything else that could be reused.

I remember that I was very serious about this need to recycle, and I frequently picked up various items for salvage or recycling. Whenever we visited the base, I would go out along the railroad spur in back of the big Quartermaster warehouse to pick up coal for use at home. So you can see I come by my interests in organic foods and recycling pretty early.



**Three brothers all dressed up (from left): John, Harry, and Al.**

While living in Delaware, Mom joined other young mothers in our neighborhood to create a cooperative nursery school and kindergarten for us kids. One day at this school, another child hit me over the head with a bottle and I needed stitches. I remember putting my hand up on my head and getting blood all over it. So Mom came and took me to the Base medical services. She remembers that I was a very brave little boy, going calmly in with the medics. Suddenly she heard me shriek: "Don't wash my face!" Apparently I felt that was worse than having stitches.

In 1943, my dad was promoted to captain, and then major. My younger brother John was born in 1944 while we were still living in Wilmington, Delaware. At the end of that year, we moved back to Chevy Chase, Maryland, because Dad was deployed to Africa for a year. We were all very glad to be back in our own home again.

Mom says that we three boys were always active, and we even enjoyed helping with household chores from a young age. Back then, chores required real physical labor: taking up rugs to beat outdoors every spring and fall; doing loads of laundry and linens that had to be washed, hung out and then ironed; scrubbing floors and walls by hand. We boys picked up many useful skills.

Dad finally was discharged in 1945. He went back to work for the same law firm where he had worked prior to the war: Colladay, Colladay and Wallace.

In April 1946 I turned five and started kindergarten. We walked the seven blocks to Rosemary School with our friends. It was really Chevy Chase Elementary, but everyone called it Rosemary after the street it was on. After two weeks or so, the



**In 1946, the Lerch family spent Thanksgiving in Lancaster, Massachusetts, with Hank's sister, Irene — the boys called her "Aunt Rene."**

kindergarten teacher, Miss Mary Armstrong, moved me up to first grade because of the early education Mom gave us. I was smart and loved to read books. I also was skinny and the smallest kid in class!

In the fourth grade I had a particularly great teacher. She gave me an assignment to make a map, which I worked on from the beginning of the school year. I was to give a report in the spring showing what I had learned. Starting with a thirty-six-inch square of poster board, first I drew Maryland with its straight northern border (the Mason-Dixon Line), and the straight eastern border with Delaware. The southern border with Virginia was a real challenge, encompassing the Potomac, rivers and mountains. The Chesapeake Bay with its many rivers gives Maryland its own shape. Then I put in more rivers and the cities Annapolis and Baltimore. I got an A on my project!

I remember when there was prayer in the elementary school, though I usually saw it as an opportunity to misbehave while the teacher had her head bowed. I also remember when "under God" was added to the Pledge of Allegiance. I felt like it messed up the whole cadence of the thing.

In 1948 when I was eight years old and in the fourth grade, I read the book *Song of Hiawatha* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow; my mom or dad had it in the house. It took me several months to read the old style poem, written in 1855. The story of Hiawatha was a compelling and inspiring tale for a young boy. It stimulated several dreams during the time it took me to read it. It revealed a world of peoples and values beyond my current culture. It lodged in my heart and head, and I learned

many of the Native American words.

The primary source for the legends came from an Ojibways chief who visited Longfellow. My teacher told me to write a note on page 181: "The scene of the poem is among the Objiways, on the southern shore of Lake Superior, in the region between the Pictured Rock and the Grand Sable."

The summer I was twelve years old our family took a trip to Pelican Lake near the town of Tomahawk in Wisconsin. Dad had a work project and we wanted to go fishing. This was the land of Hiawatha, the great Native American spiritual teacher who had so fascinated me as a kid. To see the land of the inspiring poem made it seem so much more real, and it struck a heartfelt chord in me.

Hiawatha was a great chief, from the time before the white men came to North America in 1590. Hiawatha worked for peace and his story was told among many native tribes from north in Canada to Minnesota and Wisconsin, and along Lakes Superior, Erie, and Ontario. He was wise, and spread songs of peace and the future through music, sweats, chants, and drumming. His philosophy was heart healing to me. I first learned of the sacredness of the trees from this and shared forever after many of these values.

After the war, my grandparents sold their house in Ardsley, New York, and bought a home in Chevy Chase not far from us. We boys — and even Lassie — would go visit often. I had a close relationship with my grandfather and grandmother. Oma would make me my favorite apple pancakes and Pa taught me how to play chess. He told me to "move slowly with the rooks till you can take out the Queen and win."

I had a very enterprising childhood. I was influenced by my father, who lost his own dad at an early age. Thrust into sudden maturity, he focused on earning money as a way of helping his mother. My older brother Harry had much the same attitude, so I learned the importance of pursuing money-making opportunities. When I learned that you could climb a tree with tools, I was hooked. I really liked climbing trees, and I was light and agile as a monkey. I offered to prune trees for the neighbors when I was just six years old, and I wore a huge belt that held all of my equipment to do the job. So trees have been a lifelong interest of mine. I even wanted to prune the ivy from the top of our chimney, on a three-story house, as a little kid!

I did a lot of other yard chores around the neighborhood, including weeding, lawn mowing, leaf-raking, shoveling snow off neighbors' driveways, and cleaning eaves and gutters. From May through October, I collected beer and pop bottles for the nickel deposit. I would wash neighbors' cars — and pets — for about a buck each. I learned to fix flat tires on bicycles, and I had an early morning paper route delivering the *Washington Post* by bike when I was twelve. I remember a neighbor remarking I was the best paperboy he ever had!

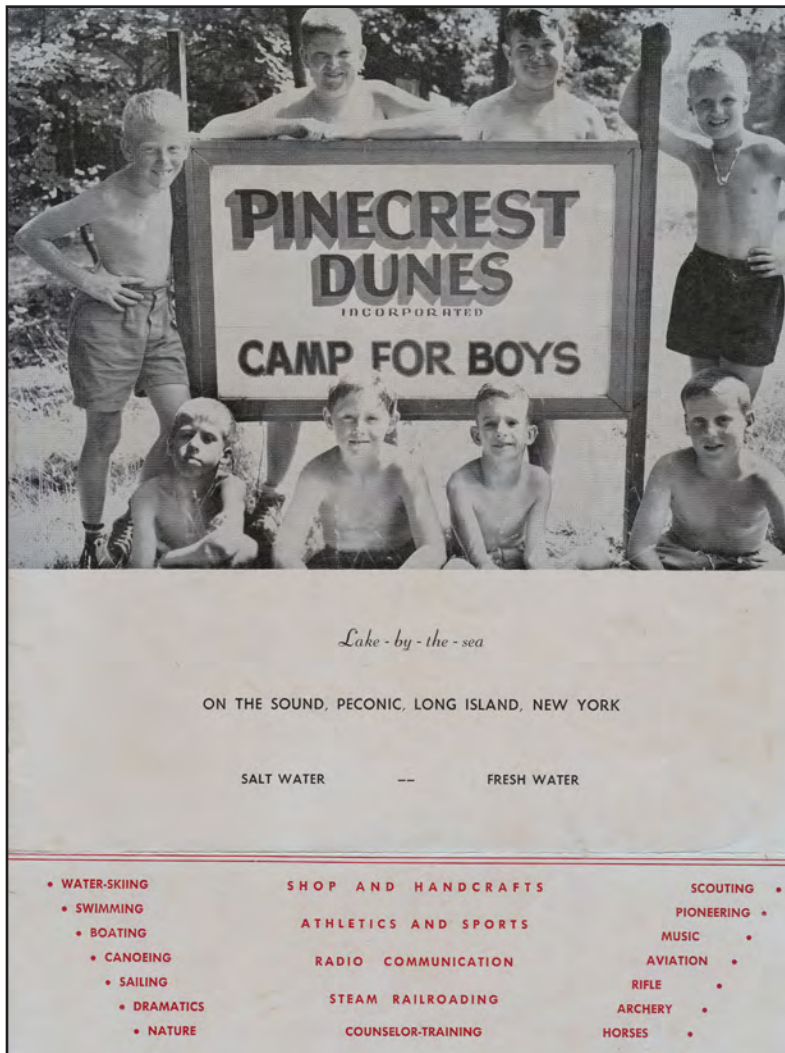
Many summers we would put on a "fair" in our backyard. We set up booths for games, like the "wet sponge toss," sold lemonade, and had contests to raise pocket money.

There was one neighbor lady — Marjorie Holmes — who my mom liked to visit with over coffee and chat about their kids. Mrs. Holmes wrote a column for the *Washington Post*, and she told my mom that one of her columns, entitled "A Son,



something Most Remarkable,” was inspired by their talks. I still have a clipping of that column! As a teen I also babysat for the neighbor’s family of five children — my mother was amazed at my ability to keep them all in line. Organizing groups of people just came naturally to me.

I saved a lot of the money I made doing chores and accumulated several thousand dollars that I kept all secret from my family. I liked to use this money to help people.



**Pinecrest Dunes offered much fun for Harry (standing left) and Al (seated left).**

Every summer my parents would send us to Pinecrest Dunes summer camp in Peconic, on Long Island in New York, right on the sound. I learned swimming, diving, life saving, boating, canoeing, sailing, hiking, and all kinds of great outdoor skills there.

I liked all kinds of sports and competition, and was on many teams, but I spent a lot of time swimming. I was on the swim team at Leland Junior High School, the only kid under eleven for the seventh-grade team. That year I also began swimming competitively through the Columbia Country Club, which my parents belonged to. My brothers were on the swim teams there, too. I continued as a competitive swimmer through high school. I also won a few

bets with my ability to swim the butterfly stroke for a half mile or more.

At around age thirteen, I started teaching swimming at Pinecrest Dunes summer camp. I also taught swimming for my mother’s Girl Scout Troop and at classes for the Red Cross.

Being so strong and adventurous, I had my share of broken bones. I broke my wrist in the tenth grade, while on the gymnastics team. I had my nose broken during football practice my senior year in high school. I broke a bone in my leg the summer of 1956, and went to Pinecrest with a walking cast on my leg. I taught water skiing

that year and for the first part of the summer had to teach from the boat. When that cast came off, I went out in a sailfish, which is a small, hollow body, board-boat style sailing dinghy, and hurt my chest when I hit the side of the boat in rough seas. I was reluctant to tell the whole story to my parents because I went out on the sound against orders during a hurricane warning. I sent them a postcard saying "... I caved in my chest, but don't worry, the insurance will cover it!"

I was a very active kid, playing outdoors most days with my brothers and neighborhood buddies. We didn't stay inside to watch TV after school; instead our social life revolved around back yards and the local vacant lots.

Our house — especially the basement — was the site of many after-school gatherings with friends and teammates dropping by for pick-up games of baseball, football, Scouts, and other activities. There was a lot of roughhousing in that basement. One time my brothers and I set up three model trains and crashed them into each other. It made so much noise Mom had to come down and see what was going on! There were maybe thirty boys in the neighborhood and only a couple of girls. When all the guys got together, the girls would run away and hide!

Our neighborhood had several storm sewers running through it that became a source of curiosity for us. The storm sewers were very dark, and ran for an entire block between manhole covers. Since I was one of the smallest and youngest in the group, the older boys took the heavy manhole covers off the sewer tops and encouraged me to crawl through the underground sewer. Only after I did it would they follow me into the dark!

On weekends the gang would sometimes take the trolley into D.C. to see the Smithsonian and other museums, and attend events. Later, of course, we would get beer as the drinking age in D.C. was lower than in Maryland.

One of my friends, Bob Manning, recalls we had many plans and projects going after school. When we were about thirteen, inspired by the movie "Stalag Seventeen," we began to secretly dig a tunnel off an underground room we had previously burrowed out in the yard behind the garage. We carried out an elaborate plot, stealthily hauling the excavated dirt in our pockets and dribbling it over the ground in the vacant lot nearby, just like we saw in the movie. A block or two away was a small store, where we would swipe orange crates to use for supports in our escape tunnel.

The project went on for a couple weeks. Then, one night there was a drenching rainstorm, and the tunnels caved in. My folks woke up to the sight of two large trenches across the yard and under my mom's flowerbeds! It took a dump truck of fill to fix the lawn, and my friend Bob Manning stayed away from our house for some little while after that!

## Chapter 2

# Youth

**M**y mother, Bobby, was an amazing woman who supported me in whatever I did my whole life. I owe everything to her. During my childhood, she let me play in creeks and drove me to all of my crazy adventures! She was ahead of her time both in her own interests and probably in her ability to accept a son like me, bound to be different. She inspired me in the way she made her choices. She had a lot of good, positive energy and was determined to help people.

Mom joined the Girl Scouts in 1924 when she was fourteen and living in Ardsley, a tiny town in Westchester County, New York. She never really left. She had been involved in the Girl Scouts at the staff level from before Harry was born, particularly enjoying the primitive camping. As our family grew, she gave up her troop leader positions to work as a troop camp trainer on the council level. She eventually served as chair of the camping committee, and then as president of the Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital.



**Dahinda's mom, the beautiful Gertrude "Bobby" (Walter) Lerch.**

Volunteering at that level, Bobby became involved with the GSA's pioneering efforts to integrate. Even before the rest of the country started to deal with racial integration as a whole, the Girl Scouts had started desegregating troops in the early 1950s. This was later recognized by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who called the Girl Scouts a "force for desegregation."

The March 1952 issue of *Ebony* magazine reported: "Girl Scouts in the South are making steady progress toward breaking down racial taboos." Then in May of 1954, the Supreme Court issued its landmark *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* ruling, which declared that racially segregated public schools were inherently unequal.

The first administrative changes did not radically change the Scout experience, as most troops were organized through local churches and schools. But the summer camp programs brought all troops together for the first time. Bobby recalled the "camp committee chair, Margaret Coffin, was at each 'send off' bus stop with a



checkbook, prepared to issue refund checks to any parents who were unwilling to have their daughters attend an integrated camp." Except for some local issues with movie theaters and restaurants near the camp in rural Virginia not yet being integrated, things went fairly well.

My mother encouraged blacks and whites to work together. Seeing her help integrate Girl Scouts in the D.C. area made a real impression on me. As a young teenager, I could see that black people were kept out of many levels of society. I wanted to help, and I gave some of my hard-earned money through the bank to help what I saw as a black business, Waxie Maxie's. Maxie's record store, at the corner of Seventh and T streets in Washington, D.C., specialized in selling and promoting "black music" at a time when race was a barrier in music. The owner of the store, Max Silverman, a former jukebox salesman, was actually Jewish, but he promoted black artists with live radio broadcasts on station WOOK from the front window of his store. All the black kids would go there to buy records not sold anywhere else. I myself was a Fats Domino fan, and WOOK was about the only place to hear this music on the radio. Even the radio stations were segregated! I remember my brother telling me later that Waxie Maxie's was not torched during the race riots of the '60s. Even though that block suffered a lot of damage, the music shop remained standing for years until it was torn down to make way for the Metro.

I was a Scout, too, starting with the Cub Scouts and ultimately becoming an Eagle Scout. I earned twenty-one merit badges.

In 1953 Harry and I attended the Boy Scout Jamboree at the Irvine Ranch in California. We were part of the Montgomery County Maryland "troop," made up of boys from several troops. The train trip across the country was a great experience. We got to see Yellowstone Park, the Grand Canyon, and many interesting sights. The whole train was full of only Scouts, from all parts of America as well as foreign countries. I don't recall hanging out with my brother much! I accidentally left my camera at Yellowstone but later got it back at the Jamboree because some other Scouts found it and turned it in to the lost and found. We took sharks' teeth from the Chesapeake Bay and other items with us and then traded them with other Scouts. We brought home a horned toad we named Shakespeare (which we pickled in a jar after it died), as well as a large elk antler. My photo was in the *Washington News* with my prizes.

I was a Scout through my teenage years, enjoying the camping and the group activities. I have to admit, though, I was a rascally teen, and sometimes, with my brother Harry, used the cover of the Scout uniform to indulge in some mischief. And my motivation to become an Eagle Scout was galvanized by wanting a good excuse to hang with the Girl Scouts my mom taught in first aid classes!

On one occasion our group of Boy Scouts went camping in a big wooded tract on the Virginia shore of the Potomac River near Chain Bridge at Little Falls. We had a campfire, and as we were getting ready to get into our sleeping bags to go to sleep, we heard noises a hundred yards or so in the woods down by the river. The older boys were afraid, so I offered to go down to the river to check it out if they would each give me a dollar. I went down to the river alone, and carried back a cup of water to prove that I had been there. They were impressed with my courage and

each paid me a dollar!

During spring vacations as teenagers, my brother Harry and I — sometimes with friends Bob Manning and Buck Bartley — would go hiking and camping along the Appalachian Trail. We spent days ahead of time down in the basement putting together our gear, because you couldn't buy it pre-made then. We had to gather all our own supplies and dehydrate food. I spent a lot of time calculating how much the supplies weighed, and then divided up the weight and decided who would carry what. Sometimes we had one of our parents drop us off at a trailhead, and sometimes we would take the train or the bus to the mountains. But we would be out there all by ourselves.

During the summer of 1954 our whole family went to New York City to pick up Werner Strobel, my mother's cousin's son, who stayed with us for about a year. He enrolled at the same high school that my brothers and I attended, Bethesda-Chevy Chase. He arrived from Germany wearing a hot wool suit, so the first thing we did was take him out to get T-shirts and blue jeans like we wore. We made sure he got the buzz haircut too! He became part of the gang, plugging in with all the school and Explorer Scout activities. He was happy, though, that we lived next door to a family attached to the German Embassy. He enjoyed visiting them and speaking German.

The following summer of 1955, Harry and I, and Werner, Buck, and Bob all went to Pinecrest Dunes as camp counselors. We had a blast. One time we collected beer cans from around the beach and piled them up to make it look like we had had a party there at night, just to see the look on the faces of the senior staff! And we even raised the rebel flag one morning because we were from "the South," compared to the other kids at camp. When we came home from that, it was time to take Werner to the airport to return to Germany. At least we had given him some great times to talk about when they asked about life in America!

Later that year, my parents bought a summer cabin at Scientists Cliffs on the Chesapeake Bay at Port Republic, Maryland. My brothers Harry and John and I went in together and bought a wooden boat for a "Mother's Day present," with a motor powerful enough for water skiing. We had learned to sail at Pinecrest, so I ordered a kit to build a sailfish boat to use at the Cliffs. I did a good job building it and we had a lot of fun sailing on the Bay.

My father was active in the local Republican Party, holding the position of precinct chairman for more than twenty years, so politics became a part of family life. My mother, though, was more independent and would support any candidate she preferred. At least once, when I was a bit younger, I was with her when she went to a Democratic candidate's office to donate money. She told me: "Not a word of this to anyone!" I was more like my mom in that way; I did not care for the Republicans.

I remember when I was twelve or thirteen years old, and Eisenhower was running for President. My brothers and I were photographed on our bicycles wearing "Bikes for Ike" T-shirts. I guess the picture was made into a local poster for the campaign. That slogan was used nationally. My two brothers were smiling and being polite, but I was scowling and would not smile — for political reasons!

Later at a Sunday brunch at the Columbia Country Club in Chevy Chase, Maryland, Vice President Nixon visited and gave a talk, but I stared him down while

standing on a chair. I had never liked Richard Nixon, and I did not approve of these Republicans. That didn't change as I grew older, either. Quite some years later my brother Harry was throwing a fundraiser for Spiro Agnew, governor of Maryland and later Nixon's vice president. I guess I made "an impression" at the fundraiser!

As a teenager, my good friend and buddy in the Scouts, Buck Bartley, was a favored great-nephew of Representative Sam Rayburn (a Democrat from Texas), the longest serving Speaker of the House in history. Rayburn's seventeen years as Speaker spanned a period from before the United States entered World War II until the first year of the John F. Kennedy administration. He was like an institution.

We would frequently visit the Speaker's office in the U.S. Capitol, and knew the building well. When the Republican Party gained the majority in 1956, Buck and I were asked to help now former Speaker Rayburn move out of his capitol office. We were thinking we could have a little fun helping out with this mundane task. While we were there, we managed to slip out an office window and step out on a ledge to access a flagpole where we quickly lowered the U.S. flag, being careful not to desecrate it — we were Scouts, after all! — and replaced it with a black pirate's flag. A skull-and-crossbones proudly flew over the U.S. Capitol for a brief period that day!

When Buck was sixteen, his dad brought home a 1939 Plymouth for Buck to learn to drive and to use for transportation. Buck often drove Bob and me to school and lots of other places.

The old car had no turn signals, so Buck had to learn to use hand signals to legally drive. Apparently other drivers were not used to looking for a hand hanging out the window, so we came up with the idea of making a cardboard hand on a twenty-four-inch wooden stake for greater visibility. We were inspired by a crossing-guard sign. Of course, the hand needed a pointing finger, so we naturally came up with the classic single-digit salute shape for the turn signal. There was no end of the hilarity. One day after school we were passed by a motorcycle cop who did a double take after we signaled a left turn. Bob remembers that the officer confiscated the finger and tried to give us a good talking to, but could barely manage to suppress his laughter.

We immediately made another sign, and again were busted. This time the cop came to the house to give a safety lecture. Baron, our big black dog, seized the cardboard sign and ran off with it. When we pursued Baron and tried to rescue the sign, the dog shredded it on the spot!

My grandfather died in early 1956. I learned many important and special things from Pa, things that affected me all my life. He truly laid the foundation of my



**In high school, Al styled his hair into a fashionable flattop.**

spiritual education. Although my parents were Lutheran, and we went every week to services and Christian education classes, I felt the message from the conventional church was too quick to exclude people. By about age twelve or so I began to take more of a dim view of Jesus and the Christian religion, because it did not seem to me to offer a very positive message for women, or blacks and indigenous people.

One time as a child, my grandfather told me I was a dragon — from the Tibetan astrology. At first I didn't understand — it was just cool to be a dragon. I found out the dragon is good-hearted. Honesty and integrity are their paramount virtues and they will stake their life on their convictions. How strange to see yourself as a dragon! But it gave me a way to begin to think about things in a new and different way. Eventually I learned to prefer concepts of “spirit” and “sacred” to the conventional Christian liturgy. I did not share this with my parents as a kid, but I just did not feel inspired by their church.

Another time my grandfather told me to “Keep your eyes shut when you first wake up, so you can remember your dreams.” I always remembered that advice, and when I practiced it, I was able to remember my dreams. Around the age of seven, I had a dream that I never forgot, and eventually interpreted to mean that I would live on the West Coast. I never told anyone about it, but I ended up acting on that dream more than twenty years later. Pa's interest in gardening, dreams, and other systems of thought had a profound influence on me.

I graduated from Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School in 1957. Later that year I accompanied my parents and younger brother John on a trip to Germany to visit my mother's family and see the sights. We landed in Bremen, and my dad bought an Opel to drive during the trip. We traveled to Hamburg and Hanover, to Cologne, made a stop to see the Iron Curtain, and went on to historic Nuremberg, where we enjoyed a reunion with Werner and his parents. Then we traveled on to Munich in Bavaria. We wanted to visit the famous Hofbräuhaus, but Munich is a huge city and my folks were unsure of the route. I just had a feeling, which Mom called my “inner radar” and I led the family right to it. We sat at the long tables on the lower floor and soaked up the old-world atmosphere.

I've always trusted my hunches.



### Chapter 3

# Architecture

**A**fter I graduated high school, I decided to attend Wesleyan, my father's alma mater. My brother Harry was already studying there. My dad had served as president of the Washington Wesleyan Alumni Club, and he and other alumni would take a group of local high school boys every year to visit the campus in Middletown, Connecticut. Both Harry and I had gone along on one of these trips, and wanted to follow Dad.

I enjoyed sports, and joined the swim, soccer, and track teams. I originally thought I should pursue a major in chemistry, but I did not feel a strong enough affinity for the subject. My father's former college roommate "was not encouraging," as my mother recalls. Undecided about my major, I decided that Wesleyan was not where I really wanted to be, and at the end of my sophomore year, I returned to Chevy Chase to mull over alternatives. I needed to find a major with more elbow room.

I enrolled at the University of Maryland in College Park to look into other fields of study. I had to join ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps); it was required at that time. Many major universities had compulsory ROTC for their male students until the end of the '60s, when public and faculty opposition closed many programs on campuses. I was not happy about having to participate in the military training, but had no other options.

While at College Park, I worked part time. My first job was an engineering assistant building "breadboards," or basic circuits, for flight history recorders for B-52 bombers at Emerson Electric in Arlington, Virginia. But I was so anti-war that I couldn't bear to be a part of it; I quit after four months. Later I sold home insurance with GEICO.

During my summer home from college in 1959, my mother invited the staff of her Girl Scout camp to a Saturday night lecture and community dance. She booked the event at Scientists Cliffs, a small private community on the Chesapeake Bay a few miles north of the Girl Scout's Camp Bay Breeze in Lusby, Maryland.

I found one of the counselors who attended, Enid Griffin, to be pretty cute so I struck up a conversation with her. We enjoyed a great night, though my fifteen-year-old brother John and his little friends teased us about our dance style! I remember at one point we walked down to the water's edge and she gave me a kiss!

We dated for a little more than a year. At one rough point in the relationship I wrote her a letter telling her how much she meant to me and how devastated I was when we were not on good terms! She was a very interesting and intelligent woman, and we shared many interests. We used to hang out at the home of my brother Harry and his wife, Jessie. They had been high school sweethearts and had married in 1958.

On June 10, 1961, Enid and I got married. It was a regular formal wedding like they had then, with all the fuss. My daughter Erica long afterward heard that cousin Kathy had been disappointed because the bride and the bridesmaids had worn modern, short dresses instead of traditional long ones!

We got married at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in D.C., where my folks attended. Harry was my best man. Enid's sister Trudy and our sister-in-law Jessie were bridesmaids. Afterward, Enid's mother, Letitia, and her husband, Elliot Cramer, hosted a reception in Bethesda. The food was wonderful. Later, we would often reminisce about the fantastic lobster thermidor. For our honeymoon, we went to Mackay Island in North Carolina, a great swampy bird sanctuary that had just received federal protection as a national wildlife refuge for the migratory flocks.



**Al and first wife, Enid, enjoy a light moment with his mom, Bobby.**

We moved to a small apartment we rented in Northwest D.C., near the bus depot. (The motors revving up at four in the morning made for an early morning wake-up call!) Enid had been working at the Naval Ordnance Lab and later came to work at GEICO in the typing pool.

After some thinking, I decided that I would study architecture. It had a creative element to it and I liked that. I was accepted at the University of Houston, which had a good architecture program. Enid also enrolled there, majoring in biology and minoring in chemistry. We both continued working at GEICO until the end of August when we left for Houston.

We arrived in Houston on September 9, 1961, just as Hurricane Carla hit the area. Well in advance of the hurricane's main force, tides nearly twenty feet above normal had flooded scores of cities and towns. Thousands of people from the coast loaded their cars with clothing, food, and pets and drove northward to escape the approaching storm. Solid lines of automobiles jammed all the highways. The storm's refugees swarmed north to Houston and to most of the other towns nearby. When we arrived, everything was in a state of emergency.

All the refugee centers, motels, and hotels were filled. We couldn't do anything anyway, so we went to the Red Cross and told them we had extensive Scouting and first aid experience. We ended up volunteering at a Red Cross shelter for several days. We came in handy! When the emergency was under control, we phoned our families to tell them about our adventures.

As I was growing up, I became aware that my family was relatively well off. We lived in an affluent suburb. My father was a co-founder of a prestigious law firm. My grandfather had spent his life working his way up to become president and chairman of the board at Stauffer Chemical, a large industrial company that became a multinational corporation. My family owned stock in Stauffer. I saw that money could be a bridge, but also a wall between people, and I had always admired my grandfather's quiet modesty. I wanted to work for my rewards. After I turned nineteen, I asked my dad to not give me money that I inherited from my grandfather as a monthly stipend. I preferred to make my own way and to come up with solutions rather than depending on my family's wealth.

Enid and I rented a small duplex not far from the university and both of us continued our studies. I remember this time with Enid as a lot of fun, and our life together was an adventure. Enid was a member of the U of H "College Bowl" team and I coached her. She did really well! She worked as a secretary in the art department at Baylor, and drew medical illustrations for some spending cash.

I worked as a teaching assistant in the architecture department. I had done a lot of teaching at Pinecrest Camp and with the Scouts and Red Cross, so I figured I could handle it. Then the professor I worked with fell ill with cancer and I took over his class for the rest of the year. I got to be a college instructor without the certificate!

Money was tight, and we did a lot of scrounging to get by. We would get a group of students together and made sure to get "invited" to a free meal at local churches – anything to help the budget.

It took some creative thinking to obtain any recreation. We would go down to the docks and make friends with the deckhands, most of them foreigners. Enid would do sketches of them and we would get a "tour" of the tramp steamer in return. The deckhands always had booze; it was a great way to spend a weekend! We would also catch some crabs off the docks, then drive around after dark to see which house was having a party – often some black folks – and we would crash it. We loved to listen to that soul music!

In my second year at Houston, I was a founder and president of the U of H Architecture Society. I remember Enid saying we students needed a place to hang out and I decided that a clubhouse would give us a place to meet while also serving as an interesting project to show off our architectural skills. I organized the effort to convert an old building called "the pump house" into our clubhouse. It was three- to four-thousand square feet and the class took on the project. We designed and built a unique two-story structure using concrete and steel. Local construction companies donated material and college kids provided the labor while learning construction skills. I'm proud of the sales job I did to get everyone on board! It still stands today, used as a pub, but the Architecture Society doesn't exist anymore.

In the early 1960s, black students in Houston began a low-key, peaceful fight against segregation through sit-ins. After watching my mom deal with integration with the Girl Scouts, I was aware of what was going on, but didn't get directly involved. I do remember enjoying a lot of black music then! In spite of all the fun adventures, while I was in college most of my attention and energy was taken up with my studies and my relationship with Enid. Any early activism I engaged

in centered around equal rights for women. I noticed that there were no female architecture students, and Enid's experiences showed me how much discrimination was normal back then.

My first trip to Mexico was around Easter in 1962. I wanted to check out the Mayan people and architecture. Enid and I went during spring break with a group for eight days. It was a hot, sweaty bus tour of some of the Mayan sites including Chichén Itzá.

I really enjoyed Mexico and wanted to explore it after that, and we made a lot of trips. It made it easier that Enid was fluent in Spanish, having lived in Mexico during her childhood. She had a Mexico City accent and could smooth over any problems at the border crossings by sounding like a native.

The first time I was in the coffee business was when I was a college student. When I saw how cheap I could buy roasted coffee beans, I brought home ten pounds of Mexican coffee to sell. The architecture department was always buzzing on caffeine; I knew I had a market. I ground it and brewed it up and sold it for 50 cents a cup. OK for a business idea, but I can't say much about the quality. I learned more about that later on.

Oma, my grandmother, gave me a Porsche as a present. I had it for six months when I smashed it on the same day JFK was shot, November 22, 1963. Kind of weird.

My senior thesis in urban planning was a group project called "Houston Eight Million." We developed a very forward-looking plan for the future development of Houston, which was a rapidly growing city. I received my bachelor of science in 1965 and my degree in Architecture in '66.

Enid and I made an epic trip through Europe the summer of '66, traveling on a shoestring all over the continent. I bought a Volkswagen Wolfsburg van — the caravan model with a sunroof — outfitted to sleep two. It was the cheapest way to secure both transportation and lodging. We started in the Netherlands and then we got on the ferry to England and Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. Ireland looked stunningly green. We heard news of occasional shootings in the Northern Ireland conflict, but it didn't affect our visit directly. From there we went to Paris and Limoges, then over to the Bay of Biscay. Then we went down into Spain, from Burgos to Castilla y León, Madrid, over to Lisbon, Portugal, then back to Sevilla in Spain. Wow, that is some beautiful countryside there. Then we went back through the south of France — we had the best fish there — and next to Italy and Greece.

Then we drove for thirteen hours through Macedonia, Yugoslavia, Budapest in Hungary, and into Austria. We traveled to the Danube River and Vienna, where Mom had some friends and we enjoyed some music. Then we headed into Germany, where we visited some family and friends and drank good beers. Then we followed the Rhine up past Karlsruhe, and kept going north into Denmark, Sweden, and Norway.

We slept in the van and enjoyed cheap, local, fresh food. We dined well on the excellent fruits, cheeses, bread, wine, and beer. I noticed eggs were cooked differently everywhere we went. We made many friends and spent more than one night staying up late to talk. I believe we traveled a total of thirteen thousand miles





**On graduation day from college, Al proudly poses with his grandmother Mina Walter, Bobby's mom.**

that summer!

I paid to have the van shipped to New York. We went down to Maryland to see my mom and dad. We ran out of money and gas – and asked Dad to help out. After that we drove to St. Louis.

Degrees in hand from the University of Houston, we moved to St. Louis, Missouri. There I enrolled in graduate school at Washington University to study urban design and regional planning for another two years.

Although I enjoyed the design aspect of my studies, I remained a student for eleven years largely to avoid getting drafted. In those days, student deferments were about the only way to get out of going to Viet Nam. By the mid-1960s, anti-draft and anti-war protests had cropped up all over the country, with sit-ins and student strikes in the news every few weeks. By early 1966, more than one-hundred-seventy thousand men had been drafted, and another hundred-eighty-thousand

men had enlisted. Being sent to war was a real possibility for young, healthy men. At least two million of us got college deferments.

Enid and I bought an old city house in St. Louis, built about 1904, which I remodeled quite a bit. The neighborhood had a lot of black families, and it seems to me Enid and I enjoyed listening in on the great Motown music coming out of so many radios. The rambling old house became my children's first home: Erica arrived June 29, 1967; John followed on June 20, 1968.

My mother and some of Enid's family came out to visit after John came along. I had taken up the habit of smoking when I went to Wesleyan, because that is what everyone did when they became an adult at the time. But I stopped smoking tobacco before Erica was born and felt very annoyed that my mother and Enid's cousin from Argentina smoked around the babies. I tried to educate them about second-hand smoke, but it took years for my mom to finally quit.

Enid and I continued our involvement with Red Cross by enrolling Erica in "water babies" lessons. She loved the water. She earned her first two Red Cross swimming certificates by the time she was a year old!



**John and Erica as youngsters.**

In grad school I was tapped to work on a plan to renovate the St. Louis Union Market building. The large, old public market building took up a full city block. Quite modern when it was built in 1924 in the Eclectic Revival style, it featured large Gothic arches. But the building had fallen into disrepair, shabby with age. A few vendors still rented space in the bottom floor; the second, third, and fourth floors were used for parking.

Public markets had been held at that site since the Civil War, but the way people shopped for food had changed dramatically since then. With big-chain grocery stores sprouting up in every suburb in the 1960s, fewer people came to the old-style open markets. By 1968, the building stood mostly empty.

The city wanted to sell the building; the merchant association opposed a sale. The city gave the association ninety days to come up with a renovation plan, even though the city comptroller said the city could not afford the cost of renovation.

The merchants group asked Washington University grad students to prepare a proposal. I joined six other master's program students to create a plan that would take some of the merchants' rent money to repair and renovate the Market building over several years. I was intrigued by the concept of a public food market, and the rhythms of life it brings to a city. I was also disturbed by the city's callous disregard for the small, mostly black, vendors and by the city's lack of investment in the building.

I was unhappy with the plans eventually developed for the reclamation and restoration of Union Market by the architecture students and the firms involved — Yeatman, Pruitt-Igoe, and Urban Renewal Design. I thought the city was just putting off what it really wanted to do.

I believed the local mafia had pressured the city to sell the building. While working on the project, I was physically threatened. Some tough guys came up and shoved me into a wall for interfering in their business. After that, I didn't want any more to do with the project.

Still, a few anchor businesses and small vendors with a committed clientele kept the place open for another decade, but declining occupancy prompted the city to close the market in the fall of 1982. In 1990, Drury Inn restored the building as part of a large hotel development and it is now their Convention Center. Union Market is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

While in St. Louis, I spent some time thinking that maybe I would like to be a teacher. Enid thought I should stay in school and get a Ph.D. so I could be a professor. I had some teaching experience in Houston; and while in St. Louis I spent several days a week teaching architecture to middle and high school students. I had learned some important things about teaching and encouraging people. A teaching career was something to consider, but I was tired of school.

After being in school so long, I decided it was time to get a job to support my growing family. So I took my big bulldog, Fat Albert, and headed to California, where I had landed a position with a large architectural and urban planning firm. Enid and the babies flew out to join me shortly after.

## Chapter 4

# ***Fight Fight Fight***

**E**nid and I, with little Erica and John, moved to Southern California in 1968. The state and its weather were just amazingly beautiful, and the Pacific Ocean had great beaches and coastlines.

When we first came to California, it struck us how everything was very different than back East or Missouri. For one thing, California was in social turmoil, with the anti-war movement, race riots, women's rights, and the environmental movement all claiming attention on the news and in the streets. There was the terrible Santa Barbara oil spill in 1969 that got all of Southern California up in arms.

We became very involved in some of the issues being so hotly debated. We joined groups and attended rallies for the anti-nuclear movement, among others, and it seemed very important that we do something. Utilities planned to build reactors on top of fault lines!

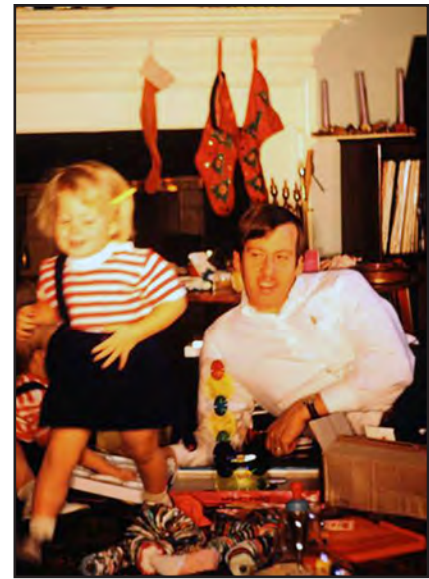
When we came to Los Angeles, I had found a house to rent on Mandeville Canyon Road. The area was relatively remote, with no bus service. We had only one car, so Enid became a stay-at-home mom. She must have felt a bit trapped with two little ones, waiting for me to come home before she could leave to do anything.

I worked as a project planner for Victor Gruen & Associates, a large and prestigious firm that specialized in urban planning with cities. It was something of a plum to hire on with them, and the money was good. I was director of planning for the redesign of downtown Long Beach, which was struggling with the boom of suburbs and loss of premier shopping. Construction began on the Long Beach Plaza Mall and the Promenade while I was with the company.

The Long Beach Convention and Entertainment Center was also one of my projects. In 1967 the city of Long Beach had purchased the Queen Mary, the huge British ocean liner, to install in the harbor as a tourist attraction and hotel as part of the revitalization of downtown, and that was one of my projects too. I also did some preliminary work for the Reedy Creek Improvement District west of Orlando, in Florida, which eventually became Disney World. They had to set land aside for conservation – and alligators – in order to go ahead with development.

In the early 1970s, we were able to buy some acreage outside Los Angeles, on Amalfi Drive in Pacific Palisades. The property was considered undevelopable, and the original structure had slid down the hill. It was part of some land that belonged at one time to Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. It included a guesthouse with stairs on the





Above left: Visiting Mickey at Disneyland (from left): Al, Erica, John, Enid, and grandma Bobby. Above right: Erica and her dad play on Christmas morning.



Clockwise from bottom right: Throughout her 104-year lifespan, Bobby Lerch had great fun with the family; in a sign of things to come, a young Erica piles on the bling for an outing with brother John; cousins Erica, Susan, John, and Brad count up the spoils of their Easter egg hunt.



outside, adjoined a state park, and had a great variety of eucalyptus and other exotic trees and plants.

I designed a four-level redwood home for the downhill site. I structured it to maximize the use of solar heating in winter and cooling breezes in summer. We completed construction with the help of John Gray, a great contractor. The house was well-built and survived the 1971 San Fernando earthquake and violent storms. Erica remembers seeing the foundation poles shake, though they were sunk sixteen feet into dirt and rock.

The garage sat at street level, connecting with a twenty-foot bridge to the main house. The master bedroom with a nice en suite bathroom was one story below. The main living area — including a huge open deck with a tree growing through it and a great view — was on the next level, and the children's room was on the lower level with a wine cellar and a walkway down to the guest house. The house was featured in *Architectural Digest* because of its great artistic, structural, and ecological integrity. It was included in local home and garden tours of the area. There were three deep pools in the garden, one with koi.

I loved being able to create a home that embodied my growing interest in working with nature. I saw new and even radical architecture being done in California then, and I felt like we had to respond with new ways of doing things.

With such an amazing environment at our fingertips, we became more aware of how it was being wasted and mistreated. Wilderness is just an afternoon trip away in California. On the Eastern Seaboard where I had grown up, the built environment dominated. The urban landscape stretched for hundreds of miles up and down the coast. Even on my camping adventures as a teen, I was aware of how people had tamed the woods and streams. I could only imagine what it had been like when the Native Americans lived there, and even they were gone.

Of course we had read *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson, which had come out a few years before. In fact, the author lived only a couple miles from my folks' house in Maryland. It was a deeply disturbing and motivating book. Carson highlighted the dangers of DDT, which was being used everywhere in almost a casual manner. She used DDT to tell the broader story of the disastrous consequences of the overuse of insecticides. Her testimony before Congress raised enough concern to trigger the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency in late 1970. As more and more people began noticing the changes in their environment, a movement started to ban DDT. The public wanted to take a harder look at the claims chemical companies were making in their quest for better living through chemistry.

In 1967, some scientists and lawyers banded together to form the Environmental Defense Fund. Several of their members had witnessed precipitous declines in bird populations along Long Island's shores and bays, and had read *Silent Spring*. They succeeded in getting DDT banned statewide in New York. So many calls and letters arrived from other states asking for help that they eventually went nationwide, employing lawsuits and other legal actions to get the pesticide banned. Elsewhere, other scientists investigated how spraying DDT for mosquito control affected the food chain, bird eggshells, and many creatures. Their studies definitively proved the chemical was destructive to the environment far beyond the targeted bugs on the East Coast.

As a biologist, Enid understood the effects of the pollution that washed out of farms and fields into rivers and ultimately into the ocean. DDT and PCBs enter the food chain through worms and micro-organisms living in the sediment. One fish may eat many of these organisms, causing DDT and PCBs to accumulate in fish tissue. Fish-eating birds, marine mammals, and birds of prey that feed on both accumulate more of the toxins. Pelican, falcon, and eagle populations were plunging toward extinction levels. We both became completely incensed at the threats to the environment these large profit-seeking companies were generating, and the seemingly total disregard they had for public opinion.

Rachel Carson's work attracted outrage from the pesticide and chemical industry. They attacked her credibility as a scientist and derided her as "hysterical," despite her fact-based assertions and calm and scholarly demeanor. Some even questioned Carson's character and mental stability — labeling her a communist, a nature nut, and worse.

As the rise of the environmental movement grew, industry groups tried to paint activists as anti-government, anti-American and even as criminal threats. Emotions ran high on both sides, and confrontations became inevitable.

We discovered that the Montrose Chemical Corporation of California, a subsidiary of Stauffer, was producing DDT in Torrance, south of where we lived. Its waste disposal system funneled the plant's processed waste into the county sewer system. These byproducts drained out into the Pacific Ocean, untreated, at White Point on the Palos Verdes coast. Montrose did not stop dumping waste into the system until 1971, when pressure from local officials forced the company to stop. It was later found that Montrose had poured some six hundred and forty pounds of DDT a day into the Los Angeles sewers, sending the pesticide straight into the ocean.

During the 1960s, Stauffer was the leading manufacturer of DDT. I had inherited stock from the Stauffer chemical company, where my grandfather had worked as a manager and rose to become chairman of the board. When I realized my portfolio included the stock of the company that made DDT, I figured you've got to play the cards you're dealt. I sold the stock and made a thirty-thousand-dollar donation to the Environmental Defense Fund lawsuit to help get DDT banned. They finally were successful in 1972.

During this time, Enid donated money to Democratic candidates and causes. That, coupled with the large donation to fight the DDT court battle, was apparently enough to get the attention of whomever accumulated names for President Richard Nixon's enemies list, a roster of seven hundred and thirty-five people singled out for possible retribution. We were placed on Nixon's Enemies List, which we discovered when the list was published in newspapers in 1973. Nixon again! I never did like that man!

After two years or so with Gruen & Associates, I became disenchanted with the projects the firm took on. It upset me that the redevelopment projects all moved poor and minority populations out of their homes and replaced the modest housing with upscale developments. No efforts were made to find the displaced people another place to live.



After the redesign of downtown Long Beach, the company asked me to coordinate the Century Freeway in Los Angeles, a project I adamantly opposed. To keep my personal integrity intact, I felt that I could not stay with Gruen & Associates, so I resigned.

I then affiliated with Urban Concern, a firm consisting of several of my colleagues. We wanted to bring urban planning to the people and to respond to the needs of the communities not included in most urban renewal projects. We planned inner-city renewal strategies with community advocates in Venice, Watts, and East Los Angeles. An interesting offshoot project included building longhouses with the Pala/Pauma Indians, because I was interested in helping Native Americans. I stayed with Urban Concern from 1971 to 1974, doing my best to bring real creativity to urban renewal projects.

During that time, citizens' concerns about the overwhelming number of planned freeway projects in Southern California caught our attention. The freeway plans often cut through poorer neighborhoods and undeveloped natural tracts, without valuing the disrupted areas. In Los Angeles, those years of greatest freeway construction saw an average of three thousand residents displaced annually. They did not figure into any grand plan.

Many "highway revolts" took place in developed countries of western Europe, Canada, the United States, and Australia during the 1960s and '70s in response to plans for the construction of new freeways. A significant number of planned freeways were eventually abandoned or considerably scaled back because of widespread public opposition.

Because I was a trained urban planner, I was able to help decipher and respond to the official state planning documents that posed seemingly unstoppable juggernauts to the neighborhoods and businesses being shoved out of the way in the name of progress. Urban Concern put together a critical mass of concerned citizens from across the social spectrum who demanded a voice in the process and a halt to the seemingly endless new highway construction. The citizen coalitions persuaded the California Legislature to remove fifty-two freeways from the state's Freeway Master Plan. Projects we stopped included the Beverly Hills, Pacific Coast, and Malibu-Whittental freeways, among others. I consider this one of my biggest achievements.

Work on these projects took a lot of my time and attention for several years. There were a lot of people to organize, endless meetings to run, and hearings to attend. There wasn't much money in it for me, either. I needed to continue to provide an income for my family, but I was deeply unhappy with the world of city planning and architecture. I enjoyed the challenges at Urban Concern, but it was hard to see my way forward financially.

## Chapter 5

# *World Ecology Corporation*

I felt unsatisfied with the cultural limits of my career in architecture. The firms where I had worked exclusively hired white men; few women worked in the field anywhere. I liked the idea of helping women learn, giving them the same opportunities. It upset me that no architecture firms considered the points of view of brown or black people who lived in blighted neighborhoods. Instead of the creative freedom I had hoped for when I started in my occupation, I began to feel imprisoned by forces that actively fought what I passionately believed in. I could not pursue my ideals and remain with the companies where I had worked.

The modern corporate business world ignored environmental values. I could see the massive problems with destroyed soils, the loss of family-sized farms, and water contamination becoming ever more pervasive. This was not better living! The stress between the dominant culture and the need for fundamental large-scale change became more acute and obvious to me, and I felt drawn to organic food production as a way to create healthy opportunities for change.

My mother discovered through her genealogical studies that the first farmer in the family dated to 1592. My grandfather, though a chemical company manager by trade, remained interested in traditional organic farming methods and used them in his own garden, which I had helped him with as a kid. He showed me the fish in the ground and other composting tricks for recycling nutrients, and we harvested the delicious, nutritious food that came from these methods. I found this way of relating to farming, to food, to be much more rewarding than the conventional industrial agriculture. Through the ecology movement, and what I had learned about the way they were using chemicals on our soil and food, I just could not support the agribusiness system. I believed it was hurting us now, and harming the future for my kids.

I looked around for something to replace my work in urban planning. I wanted to be doing something positive. In 1971, my friend "Deke" Dietrick and I bought World Ecology Corporation of Corona, California. The company offered integrated and organic biological, entomological, and nutritional programs, services, and products for farms and golf courses. I felt excited about providing an alternative to the chemical pesticides and herbicides that dominated the fields and finances of large agricultural producers.

We faced plenty of problems, both technical and financial. The plant we bought



needed repairs and upgrades. WEC was a messy business, making products out of worm castings, beneficial insects and chicken manure. It had been polluting the farms around it with dust as they manufactured an organic fertilizer. When we took control, I redesigned the entire layout and processes to eliminate the dust, improve the quality of the product and make it safer to work there. They had had a great idea, but had not implemented it well.

I got into this operation to make a difference, to make it possible for farmers to grow organically and stay in business. You can't do that by fighting Mother Nature. I figured we should go along with Her. Most insects benefit a garden, or at least do it no harm. It is insane to kill them all.

I felt compelled to bring organic philosophy and methods to the agricultural industry. For changes that large, you need to bring in either government or big business. Government was just not flexible enough, so I figured my own corporation could get the ball rolling.

We wanted to bring the kind of integration Mother Nature practices to the world of business and production. We calculated we had to have a substantial business to truly instigate big changes in an entrenched industry. I wanted to set up a worldwide organization to grow and distribute organically grown produce. I started a few local California farmers on my crop management program. I also developed new methods of handling produce with mobile freezing facilities.

I didn't see a problem with being a for-profit corporation. It's a matter of what you do with the profits, versus trying to make a profit. I planned to use the major part of the profits for solving ecological problems, not for things like advertising.

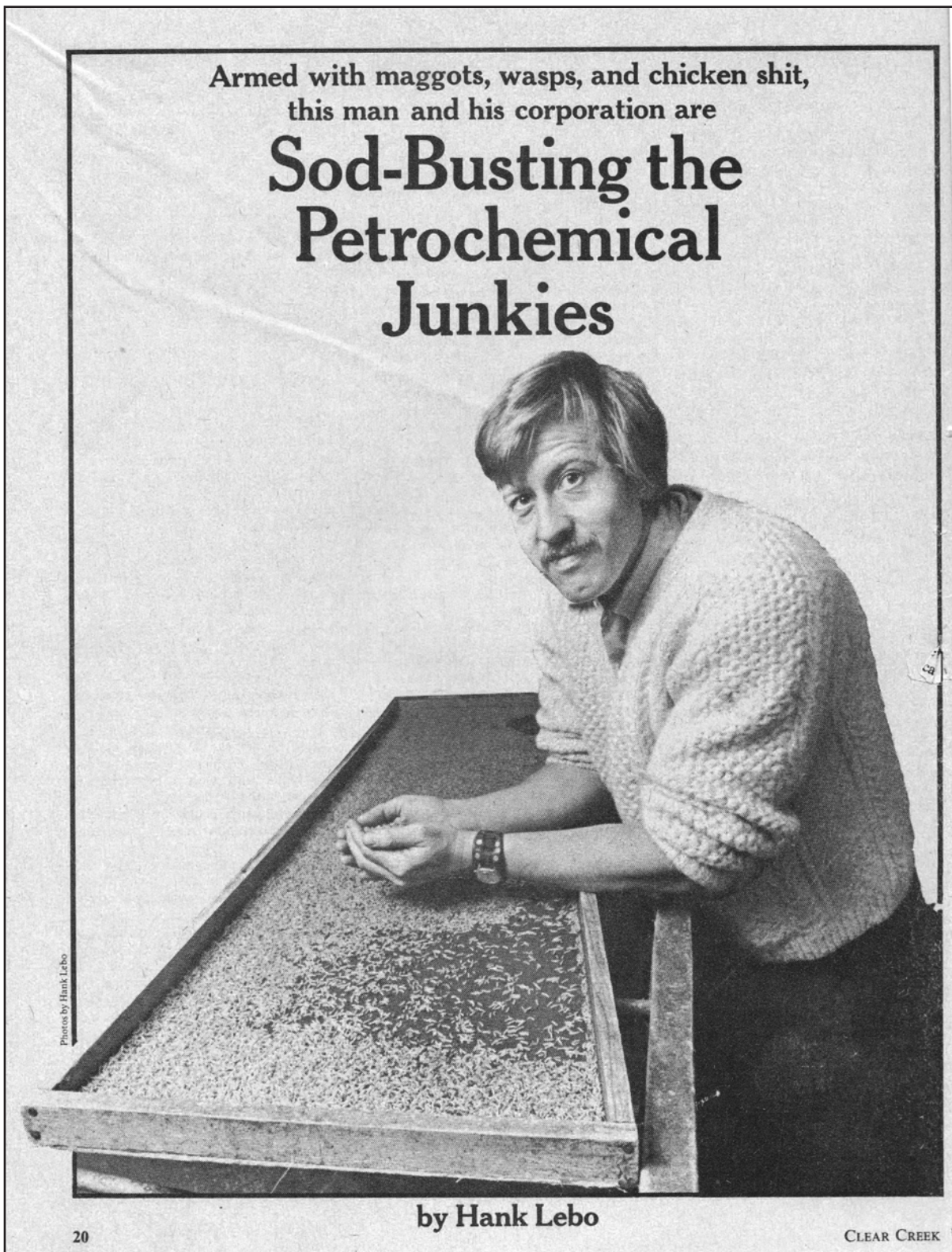
We became the producer of Bio-N, a culture of enzymes that would rapidly break down plant debris into humus. Our entomologist, Deke, took charge of raising wasps for our pest control program. We could prove good results, but the method was not instantaneous, and it worked better on farms with organic practices in place.

World Ecology Corporation offered farmers a complete program of organic soil management and biological pest control in conjunction with the materials we had for sale. The Bio-N, compounded according to each field's needs, was applied in the soil. The activator was applied in the irrigation water to correct the particular deficiencies of the field. The third phase of the program brought in biological pest control, hence the parasitic wasps.

I was keenly aware that WEC had a long row to hoe before American farmers turned their backs on the petrochemical industry. At the time, we provided the only comprehensive, well-developed, and commercially viable alternative to chemical warfare on the farm. I had hoped we could have gotten more traction with our business, but we faced too many obstacles. We were ahead of our time, as far as trying to show how even big business could be more ecologically sensible. And we faced furious opposition.

Large chemical companies and the government bristled at criticism about ecology, pollution, and the environmental problems caused by the chemical culture. They responded with paranoia, hysteria, and at times, downright thuggishness.

I remember that the *Clear Creek* magazine issue containing an interview



The March 1972 issue of *Clear Creek* magazine featured an article about the World Ecology Corporation and a full-page photo of dahinda.

article with me about World Ecology Corporation repeatedly and mysteriously disappeared from newsstands. The “powers that be” did not want to hear any criticisms and did not want the public swept up in questioning their status quo. There is no doubt that some individuals in the ranks of corporate and civic management unleashed dubious schemes targeting perceived instigators instead of dealing with the burgeoning outrage of the public.

Ronald Reagan, then governor of California, and his appointees remained hostile to alternative solutions for the environment. His infamous public statement that “trees cause more pollution than automobiles do,” speaks volumes. He also said “if you’ve seen one tree you’ve seen them all.” The administration’s general tone implied that those who suggested there might be some alternative to unrestricted use of pesticides came from leftist and radical groups whose true objective was to destroy the country’s political and economic system.

I had been protesting against the war, against DDT and the chemical companies, and had started smoking marijuana; Enid had made generous donations to the Democratic Party. I became spooked by the thought that I might be a target. I found out we had been placed on President Richard Nixon’s Enemies List. It started as a list of Nixon’s major political opponents, part of a campaign officially known as “Opponents List” and “Political Enemies Project.” The official purpose, as described by the White House Counsel’s Office, was to “screw” Nixon’s political enemies by means of tax audits from the Internal Revenue Service and by manipulating “grant availability, federal contracts, litigation, prosecution, etc.” It eventually came to list more than five hundred names, including reporter Daniel Schorr and actor Paul Newman.

I did not need a hostile tax audit triggered by being “on the list”! Driving home late one night, a black truck veered into my lane and forced my car into a ditch. There was no question in my mind that this was some sort of mafia-style retaliation for my work highlighting problems with the petrochemical control over our country’s food production and supply. Someone was upset with my work trying to provide an alternative to the petrochemical model.

Meantime, adjusting to these new phases in our lives placed huge strains on my relationship with Enid. Enid, as a mother, wanted a certain pattern of behavior from me. But I was realizing that the world I had been educated in and raised to be a part of was not meeting my needs or expectations. It was difficult to not throw myself into projects that I hoped would be more meaningful and positive. Enid felt left out, I felt boxed in, and suddenly my home life was falling apart as fast as my professional path.

I became worn out with protesting and fighting large entrenched interests over food and freeways and pollution, so I started looking for a way out. I wanted to change my life, fearing for both my safety and my soul. I felt uncomfortable being so confrontational at work. I wanted to be less visible and just get away from everything.

My relationship with Enid and family life felt confining, my work life did not produce the satisfaction I yearned for, so it seemed best to just shuck it all and go on “up the country.” Many thousands of young people in the early 1970s had already

come to the same conclusion — that there was no way to save mainstream society without endless confrontation, and no way to co-exist with it either. Upheaval rocked American society as the generation raised after World War II sought out deeper values in life than the American idea of “progress.”

I was not immune to this dawning recognition. Many facets of my life and experience previously neglected or sublimated came to a head and I had to recognize it. Working with WEC had become an uphill struggle, with financial losses mounting. The World Ecology Corporation was short-lived, due to financial and technical difficulties, and problems among the principals. These stresses eventually drove me out of my job, out of my marriage, and out of Southern California.

Enid and I decided to divorce in 1972. Enid moved to Inglewood, California, with both children. I kept the Amalfi Drive house. After the divorce, Enid took the children for an extended trip to South America. Although originally from Connecticut, she had grown up in Mexico and spoke fluent Spanish. Enid and I both agreed that Erica and John would be allowed to take a trip to Maryland each year to see my mother.



## Chapter 6

# *Up the Country*

In 1974, I sold my house on Amalfi Drive to John Gray, the contractor who helped me build it. After a few months in Encinitas, I loaded my faithful bulldog, Fat Albert, into the car and drove to Northern California to get away from it all. I landed in Hopland in Mendocino County around Christmas of 1974 and stayed because I had a friend there.

I joined a host of other young people at the time who followed Timothy Leary's famous advice: I dropped out, tuned in, and turned on. I let my hair grow out and immersed myself in a total change in the way I related to myself, my work, and the world at large. I went through a complete overhaul of my philosophy and my way of being in the world — reading books on consciousness and learning to meditate.

I had only been in Mendocino County a few months when I had a dream of a specific location, a place where three streams came together and there was a large, powerful rock. I asked my friends if there was anyplace like that nearby. My friend in Ukiah talked of this place in the wild mountains nearby, of three streams that came together. He had seen it from a lower elevation, but it was nearly inaccessible because of the twenty-eight percent slope. I took my first trip there on February 15, 1975. With a four-wheel-drive vehicle, we found the place I had dreamed of: three streams, a level meadow at the bottom of steep ravine land, and a very large rock covered with ancient petroglyphs from an unknown tribe — not the historical inhabitants, but an older band, as it turns out.

On March 28 of that year I returned to the property for another visit. I walked onto the land, and I felt drawn to the Rock. I sat by it for four hours with my eyes shut. I had dreams that showed me a place for a future house with streams and fish being restored. My dreams showed me creating a safe, spiritual habitat.

It was bare land with no dwelling, phone, electricity, or running water. I liked



photo © Robert Bugg

**After dreaming of this ancient rock, dahinda bought the land for his homestead.**

that. When I returned to town I learned the property was for sale. A few months later I finalized the purchase of the original forty-acre property for \$26,500. I named it Terrarium. To me it means "place of the Earth."

I built a house on my new property, a five-story post-and-beam structure. With no power lines to the property, we did everything by hand and put in a basic hydro-power station. The place grew organically. I ran water lines to the house from a spring, and lines down to the gardens for irrigation. We used the house for meetings and classes, and I made myself a simple detached bedroom for my own quarters.



**Hippie dahinda brings peace to his East Coast family in 1974: (from left, in front) kids John, Erica, sister-in-law Jessie holding niece Susan, nephew Brad; (behind) parents Hank and Bobby, sister-in-law Harriet, and brother Harry.**

Young, back-to-the-land hippies by the thousands started growing their own food and insisting on eating organic and local in an effort to live and raise their children off the grid, away from the menacing mainstream. They organized to purchase produce, dry goods, eggs, and other food directly from farmers and small distributors in what become known as food conspiracies. These were usually affiliated with the New Left movements of the time. Some food conspiracies evolved into food co-ops and natural food stores. Hippie "health food stores" began springing up in response to the demand for organic, handmade, non-plastic food and household articles. Hundreds of food co-ops sprouted up in California alone during the 1970s to provide food choices and quality not available in the corporate chain store system. Informal networks of people with similar values led to groups of dedicated farmers banding together to "certify" the organic practices and history of the farmlands, and forming farmers' markets and supplying co-ops.

We would have music in the barn. I put in an efficient wood-burning stove for heat, and used propane for hot water. I salvaged a huge metal wine vat from a vineyard and made a great hot tub out of it by putting it over a fire trough lined with cement blocks. I built a fire beneath it for heat and brought cold water in with a hose to fill it and to use as a cooling shower. People could also get out and take a dip in the creek swimming pond. Whoever swam in the creek pond had an obligation to pick out any big stones they'd find.

I changed my diet along with my address. I became a vegetarian, and wanted only organic foods. I swore off sugar as well, and have not had any for more than forty years now.

In California, restaurants — usually vegetarian — linked to organic farms and gardens began offering fresh local foods to the public. I looked around and saw I was not alone in pursuing my values or my feelings. I was able to knit together a network of others looking for ways to live out their values. Several friends and I started the food co-op in Ukiah. When the membership cards came back from the printer, I refused to take numbers one or two, but I still hold the number three card for the Ukiah Food Co-op, which incorporated in 1976. Natural food and a natural life became my passion and provided a way forward for me for the rest of my life.

Because I was wrestling with such deep and fundamental questions about my life, I needed some sort of framework to understand how to put everything back together again, only new. My friends introduced me to an Native American practice called the sweat lodge. Used for purifying both body and spirit, it helps people find their way back to a more centered and grounded way of living. The sweat lodge is a small domed structure made of bent branches covered by a cotton tarp. Rocks warmed in a fire are brought into the lodge to create a sauna. You sit and sweat and contemplate.

Special plants like sweet grass, white sage, cedar, and copal — an aromatic tree resin used by the Mesoamericans — are burned to smudge the participants and the space. The sweat lodge is a place of spiritual refuge and mental and physical healing. It is a place to get answers and guidance by asking spiritual entities, totem helpers, the Creator and Mother Earth for wisdom and power.

We held our sweats on the full moon and/or the new moon every month, thirteen times a year — basically the lunar calendar — for eleven years. I took it very seriously and was pretty religious about it. I would bless the directions and honor the herbs. My friend Meca especially influenced me on the rituals. The ritual had four rounds sung in the lodge with four songs in each round.

As part of this quest for inner guidance, I ate magic mushrooms and took peyote a couple of times. Peyote Cactus has a history of traditional use among Native Americans as a shamanic teacher plant that brings visions of an alternate reality or the spirit world. The more I delved into this spiritual quest, the more I could feel myself becoming a new person, being reborn in a way that is still difficult to describe. I needed to honor this process and recognize this new self with a new name.

One of my new friends went by a single name. She had told me her name was “just Meca,” and we all called her that. This introduced me to the concept and the reality of people with traditionally western names — first, middle, and last, or a family name — forgoing that pattern and naming themselves. I used to sit by the woodstove in the house at Terrarium and read to Chamise and Meca up in their bed-lofts at night. When I read one of my favorite books, *The Song of Hiawatha* to them, Meca noticed two words that were woven into many stories. Dahinda was the word for Tree Frog.

Meca remarked that this tree-frog totem word, the name of a wise creature of the woods and waterways, suited me way more than my given name, Albert. “Meda” was the name of the medicine men in the story. Meca deemed me “Tree Frog Medicine Man,” or Dahinda Meda, from the Ojibways language. I surprised myself



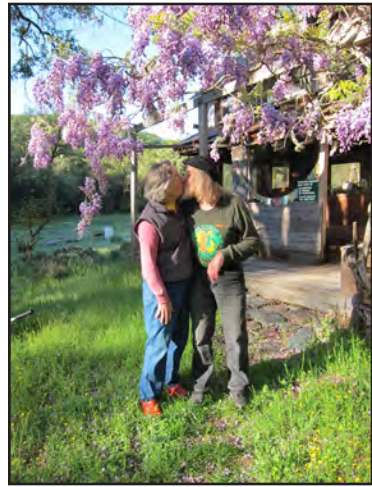


photos © Robert Bugg

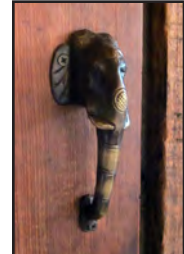
**Clockwise from top left: Red-bellied newt, rock petroglyphs, petroglyph details, Pacific tree frog in upper pond; deer in meadow; view of upper pond meadow; Indian Warrior and iris flowers by upper pond; pileated woodpecker in red alder snag.**







Clockwise from above: Terrarium grew organically into a five-story post-and-beam structure off the grid. Norma and dahinda kiss below a blooming wisteria that drapes over the “kids room” where the children slept during visits. In the main house, Dahinda and Norma celebrate dahinda’s birthday. Comics make fun winter reading. An elephant-nose door handle to the main house provides a whimsical touch. The Mendo Zendo overlooks the countryside. Freshly baked cookies cool for serving after dinner.



photos © Robert Bugg

with how quickly I took to the new appellation. It did feel right!

At first I shared my new name only with my friend Meca. Then I gradually began to change my name. My friends encouraged me, and they called me dahinda. I started introducing myself as dahinda when I met someone for the first time. Then I went on to ask friends who had known me a while to call me dahinda. Finally I told my mother, and asked my dad and brothers to honor my request. My mom supported me and asked the rest of the extended family to recognize me as dahinda. It was hard for some of the older aunts to understand, but, probably because of my mom's true support, even my family welcomed me with my new name.

Then I started using dahinda meda on one document at a time, beginning in 1978. I got a drivers license issued in that name in 1980 and changed the name on my Social Security account in 1983. The last step was getting my passport in 1993.

I wrote a story for my children, creating two colorful handwritten books to help them understand the power of positive beliefs and behavior. This was a time of considerable stress between me and my family. I only saw my children in short visits, and there was tension between their mother and me. My family back East had trouble understanding what I was going through, and they were sorry I had abandoned my architectural career. My brothers fit in with their careers, and seemed to feel at home in the conservative world of law and business. They had always known I was different, though, and my mother especially supported my new endeavors and even came out to visit Terrarium one summer. After coming once, she returned with my father for another visit.

Eventually I was able to bring my kids to Terrarium for the summers. It was a culture change for them as well. Enid was a lot more strict and straight with rules than I was. They remember that the ride up was always exciting. I would let them ride on the running boards when we got close to Terrarium. Erica remembers me making them breakfast and then I would not show up again till supper time. I would have loved that kind of freedom as a kid! I figured it gave them time to explore and come up with their own games. John came to live with me when he was twelve. I made sure he kept up on his studies and that he graduated high school and went on to college.

I guess I pretty much went full hippie after the divorce. For a while there I had my nude period where I went naked for weeks at a time, even greeting visitors wearing nothing but sandals. When I went to town I wore clothes but no shoes, usually donning yoga pants. I put a sign up as you left Terrarium: "You are now entering the outside world. Be prepared!"

We grew and ate a lot of organic, whole food in unusual New Age recipes. The kids noticed it when they came to visit, and said, "You eat weird food!" I remember the Thanksgiving dinner when we tried to make it all, or most of it, from our garden, including homemade tofu from homegrown soybeans. But I reveled in all the simple foods and natural highs.

I grew some great weed for personal use and for gifts. I didn't sell it. One time I sent the Hoedads (a forest workers cooperative based in Eugene, Oregon) a wreath made of weed, using the male plants! Another time I passed through Mexican



customs around Christmas time with a weed wreath decoratively entwined with red ribbon in the front window. It was another time!

Eventually more friends came to stay at Terrarium. Mitch, originally a buddy of my nephew Buzz, Harry's older son, came when he was eighteen years old. My son John was thirteen at the time. It was like John had a new older brother! Mitch stayed and eventually brought in his wife and daughter and became the manager. From about 1979 to 1984, Terrarium had many inhabitants: David Patton, Mira and Ross and their almost two-year-old son Orion, and Mira's sons David and Erik. It was sort of like a commune, but I owned the property. Mira and Ross set up a tipi near the middle fork at the south end of the meadow and threw themselves into my community vision.

I added parcels over time until it was almost four hundred acres. One time I had a birthday party there and more than two hundred folks came. I put stars along the road from Highway 101 at every intersection to show the way to Terrarium without getting lost. I had a 1972 light blue Land Cruiser I nicknamed the "gland bruiser." My son John found out how to tip a vehicle one time when he drove it as a teenager!

The kids had a horse named Flaxie who would come into the main house sometimes. There was also a donkey there named Poncho who amused us with his power spot for rolling in the dust. Poncho's pride came after he died and we planted a pot patch on his grave. Talk about reduce, reuse, recycle!

I had moved up to Northern California to be with the trees to soothe my soul. The change to rural living was very beneficial for me. I had always loved the woods and trees, and I wanted to protect the trees from what I saw in Los Angeles and back East. I wanted to rebuild my life based on the new values I was learning. I realized that for me, to work with the earth in a physical and honest way furthered my development as a human being. I could humbly serve the needs of the forest and make my life a positive expression of energy.

I joined New Growth Forestry, a worker-owned cooperative operating out of Ukiah. I was part of a mixed crew of eleven workers, six men and five women: Meca, Sarah, Lori, Ross, Paco, and Yarrow were some of them. The men and women worked as equals, and we used consensus to organize ourselves. This was different from any other work situation I had ever known, and it felt very natural to me.

In late November and early December of 1976, I worked with New Growth doing trail building in the Ventana Wilderness in Big Sur National Forest near the sea. Our projects in 1977 included creating and maintaining wilderness trails and reforestation — also called tree-planting.

New Growth also won the contract for construction and design on the Pacific Crest Trail in the John Muir Wilderness in the Sierra National Forest in 1979 and 1980. The trail elevation varied from eight thousand to ten thousand feet, and we used five horses and six donkeys for pack animals on that job.



photo © Robert Bugg

**Sign greets visitors.**



**From left: Erica Lerch, dahinda, Chamise Cubbison, and “Mother Frank” Killian soak up the sun in a High Sierra mountain meadow while hiking in 1979. The meadow was close to the New Growth Forestry campsite, and Erica remembers spending hours playing there.**

The last crew took until October — pushing the coming snow season — to make it down the stretch to Kip Camp before we finally pulled out for the interim. What a campaign! Ross remembers doing the initial scoping trip with Meca and me back in spring of '79 and being just blown away by the size of the boulders. We realized that this contract was going to involve using dynamite, a tool we knew nothing about. Ross recalls my assurance that we could pull it off, because you have to have a “can-do” attitude. You have to be positive when facing a big job! I talked my neighbor, Hinke Spee, into doing blasting work for us for a few days in the summer of 1979. Fortunately, Paco, John Hensley, and some folks from a Washington forestry co-op called Marmot were able to learn the ropes, so we had a full “in-house” dynamite crew for the 1980 work season.

During that contract I recall there was some dispute with a “boss” over a section of trail that was to go through a small swampy area. I could see that the plan they told us to follow for constructing that section of trail would not allow for the fish to move freely up and down stream. I argued with them, won over the small boss and designed a better alternative. In the end it had saved everybody from a big mess! I think we earned \$195,000 for the contract, but it took two years and it’s doubtful

New Growth made any profit. It was very hard work.

New Growth was a member of Northwest Forest Workers Association (NFWFA), an influential umbrella group formed to help the co-ops in their various legal struggles over working conditions and to serve as an agency to provide group health insurance. NFWFA was based in Eugene, Oregon, about five hundred miles north. I would come up to Eugene three or four times a year to attend meetings with the representative for New Growth. Sometimes I would work contracts with the Hoedads, a large reforestation co-op based in Eugene, and other groups.

Our co-op did reforestation and trail construction projects, but we were also the first watershed restoration contractor in California, and among the first in the country to undertake stream restoration projects. By 1981, New Growth had moved on to a mammoth stream clearance project on Salmon Creek near Albion.

I threw myself into learning all I could about stream restoration and put my new information and ideas to work on my own property, Terrarium. It suffered from degraded watersheds, particularly Felize Creek, and I was motivated to improve them. I incorporated the Terrarium Institute in late 1985, to fund the restoration work and to help teach the methods. From a progress report on the creek that I wrote in 1988:

“In 1975 when my restoration efforts began in the upper Felize Creek watershed, it was in response to a storm, trying to save a poorly planned road from washing out. A buttress was built and trees planted. There was little awareness of the magnitude of deterioration, or of a need for restoration. Four years of full-time residency, of observation and investigation, disclosed this was a fragile and damaged land.”

I learned about soil and hydrology; gabions, check dams, and curtain fencing; and of ecosystems and the roles of vegetation and animals. I applied for and received a grant to improve fish habitat and forestland improvement on my property. My restoration efforts spread to other parts of the watershed and involved other property owners and road associations. Eventually we involved all major property owners in a survey of the entire watershed. I've always been good at organizing.

Under a program launched during Governor Jerry Brown's first terms in office, New Growth contracted with the State of California to work on bidding, supervision, writing, and rewriting of specifications for habitat enhancement, such as restoring streams for salmon spawning. During the 1980s I served as a designer and co-worker on stream restoration projects on the Garcia, Navarro, Russian, Eel, and Albion Rivers; Salmon and Redwood Creeks; and Galloway and Schooner Gulches.

I am proud of what we were able to do. Both Erica and John worked with me on some of these summer restoration projects, wearing their backpacks and doing their share of planting seedlings. More than just doing the work, I became involved in teaching about both organic food production and landscape restoration. I was able to make connections with groups and organizations doing these kinds of things, and enjoyed traveling and meeting new friends.



## Chapter 7

# *Travel South of the Border*

**A**fter going to Mexico for the first time in 1962 as a college student to see the architecture, I was hungry to explore more of the country. I took an epic trip to Mexico from December 1977 through January 1978 that really opened my eyes to the different world of the indigenous peoples. Starting in Ukiah, we drove to Austin, Texas, to pick up a buddy of mine. We crossed the border at Eagle Pass close to midnight on Christmas Eve, and I remember we gave the border guards some beer to wish them a Feliz Navidad. Things were different then, and this was a pretty laid-back crossing. We drove on late into the night to Monterrey and then stopped to sleep. After getting some breakfast, we started south when we were sideswiped by a diesel truck!

We shared the driving — four hours each — then traded off to make good time. We stopped in Mexico City for gas and then drove through the night again, stopping only for more gas. We were headed to San Cristóbal de la Casas in the state of Chiapas to visit friends. The first day we slept in late to recuperate, then we stayed a couple more days.

Next we traveled to the small city of Altamirano where we met a nurse and some churchwomen, who explained to us about the plight of the Guatemalan refugees they were caring for. We visited for more than an hour.

A bloody civil war between the military dictatorship of Guatemala and leftist rebel groups sparked a flood of overwhelmingly Mayan refugees across the border into Mexico. Thousands ended up in refugee camps run by the United Nations in southern Mexico. The Guatemalan government was conducting a violent campaign against civilians. Targets included suspected political opponents, leftists, trade unions, journalists, and critical academics. Even street children and the indigenous poor were murdered as opponents of the state. The Guatemalan army regarded the entire Mayan population as subversive.

When I saw with my own eyes the Mayan people running away, it moved me to give the nuns money and donate blood to aid these refugees. This experience left a powerful impression on me. I knew the Mayans as the great ancient pyramid builders, whose superb architecture I had seen on my first trip to Mexico. I thought of them as a gentle, spiritual people. I learned there are more than twenty distinct Mayan peoples within Guatemala, each with their own culture, style of dress, and language. Ancient Mayan cities had saunas of stone or adobe mud, used for health and spiritual fulfillment. They invented the concept of zero in the Americas, and



created the fascinating Mayan wheel calendar.

We left Altamirano to tour the state of Oaxaca, best known for its indigenous peoples and cultures. On January 6, Three Kings Day (big in Catholic Mexico), we partied with friends from Oregon, one of whom was a lawyer from Roseburg. We then explored all over Oaxaca for two weeks. To the south, we enjoyed Oaxaca's significant coastline along the Pacific Ocean. In the beautiful forested north, I particularly remember when we took magic mushrooms. What an amazing experience in that setting!

Next year, 1978, I traveled to Mexico City. Friends I had met during the first trip invited me to a big party where I was thrilled to meet the president of Mexico, José Guillermo Abel López Portillo y Pacheco. We enjoyed our visit so much that I was able to meet him again later to talk about the creation of co-ops to help the indigenous peoples of the countryside. I also exchanged letters with his staff on the subject.



1987 / San Isidro de la Cruz Verde, Nicaragua

**“The Gully Group” taught erosion control techniques in Nicaragua. The sign next to dahinda seeks workers interested in helping with the project.**

Sometime in 1982, a group of farmers in Mexico saw an article in *Co-Evolution Quarterly Magazine* about the pioneering work in stream restoration that my co-op, New Growth, was doing in Northern California. They wanted to bring erosion control to Mexico and were interested in having someone from our co-op come teach them. They invited me to teach classes in Tlaxcala, an hour outside Mexico City. I felt happy to share the techniques I had developed to help build soil and preserve the water. I had been making frequent trips to Mexico since the late 1970s, so I was pleased to get a chance to teach something so important and so basic to a population with very little access to education.

Then in late 1983 to 1984, I started working with the Mexican agricultural co-ops. Only seven of the co-ops at that time were made up of all indigenous members. Two of them were coffee co-ops, one was owned by women, and one focused on bees, but I don't recall what the rest specialized in.

In 1987, I formed “The Gully Group” to bring erosion control tools and techniques to the impoverished indigenous people of Latin America. I ran The Gully Group — or as it was formally known, the Central America Watershed

Rehabilitation Project — from Terrarium even though we had no phone. (This was long before cell phones became common.) I had donations dropped off behind the food co-op in Ukiah. It took two years of planning and three advance trips to get it all together. I worked with Livia Szekely, a member of the Oregon-based Council for Human Rights in Latin America, and Angel Roldan, head of a Mexican NGO agro-forestry organization.

It was July, and I had just come back from the Oregon Country Fair and visiting with friends in Eugene. A group of eleven volunteers went to Managua, the largest city in Nicaragua, and then drove to a small community north of Managua called San Isidro de la Cruz Verde, where we had a one-month project. Funding for the entire cost of the project had been secured through donations in the United States. One of the crew of nine was my son John, who was studying for his degree in resources and conservation at California Polytechnic State University. He got school credit for the work.

The whole trip was a study in Third-World political and economic realities.

Tension divided large landholders from impoverished villagers. Telephones and vehicles were always breaking down, appointments were rarely on time, and bureaucracy was lead-footed and burdensome. Some of our most helpful associates were the schoolchildren!

The work in Nicaragua was rewarding. My friendship there with two Gully Group students, José and Marta, eventually would lead me to even more trips to Mexico and a new business venture. Over the years, I have traveled to Mexico fifty-two times. It has been a joy to visit and learn from this country.



1987 / San Isidro de la Cruz Verde, Nicaragua

**Standing in a washout, dahinda raises his arm to show the depth of a gully carved by water erosion.**

## Chapter 8

# *The Oregon Country Fair*

**B**ecause I helped represent New Growth at the Northwest Forest Workers Association, I had been making regular trips north to the Eugene area to attend meetings. NWFWA nurtured a network of connections with other forest co-ops and nonprofit groups focused on environmental issues. Through NWFWA, I got to know members of the Hoedads forest workers cooperative as well as environmental activists at the Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides (NCAP).

Founded in the fall of 1977, NCAP advocated restricting the use of pesticides in the Northwest. They focused on forest spraying in the early years. Since I was working in the forests, we had a natural common interest. NCAP sponsored some of the most significant research at the time on the human and environmental hazards of the chemicals being used in forestry practices. I heard about them through the NWFWA, which helped fund NCAP. The Hoedads also provided some financial support to the organization. I made certain to support their important work as well.

NCAP produced a wide range of documents of high scientific and technical quality, and they soon took on national leadership on the issue of toxic chemicals. This was an organization after my own heart. The NWFWA, with the help of NCAP and the Hoedads, lobbied the Oregon legislature and were instrumental in the state's decision to severely limit the use of chemicals containing thiram in Oregon forests. NCAP further scored a stunning legal victory in 1984 that stopped all forest spraying on U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands in Oregon and Washington.

NWFWA, NCAP, and Hoedads were all activist organizations. Energy and resources flowed to support cooperative political, social, and economic causes in the Northwest. We were linked by work, values, interests, and counterculture lifestyles. All I can say is, these grubby hippies all knew each other. It was a great time.

I was working trails with my friend John Cloud in the Sierras in the late 1970s when he told me about a Fair in Eugene, I think it was called a Renaissance Fair at the time, and said I should go next time I was up there. I might have come out in '77 or so to take a look and it seemed like fun. Folks I knew were really into it. Everyone I knew, knew someone connected to it.

The Fair had started in 1969 as a small crafts fair to raise money for an alternative school in Eugene. They sold candles, hippie clothes, jewelry, some food. Everybody enjoyed the free-form gathering so much they struggled against financial and social



difficulties to continue the new tradition of celebrating the creative counterculture together. The Fair developed a magnetic draw of its own and grew through word of mouth to become a destination for people to share their experiences and to network. Going beyond music, food, and candles, the Fair soon included nonprofit groups in the Community Village section that networked for progressive social change to continue and to expand on the activist theme of remaking the world. NCAP had a booth there in the '70s. The Fair created a giant information and spiritual center!

By the mid-seventies, thousands of hippies and counterculture folks convened the annual gathering, renamed it the Oregon Country Fair, and pushed it into a self-supporting event. The Fair gathered crafters, artists, performers, musicians, health-food enthusiasts, back-to-the-landers, sustainable technology inventors, and New Age spiritualists on several hundred rented acres outside of Veneta, west of Eugene. The Woodstock-like event went off like a puffball mushroom every July and soon needed staff for management, traffic, sanitation, and security. A large number of people volunteered to fill these roles.

It was awesome to see all these counterculture people coming together; it inspired all of us and we recognized it as important. The Fair has been very important in my life. It's a gathering of family, close friends, new friends, and kindred spirits for me. These are my peeps, my tribe.

I started working at the Fair as staff in 1978, on the Security Crew. Since I already had a bunch of friends in Hoedads, I became part of the Hoedads Security Crew. The Hoedads organization *was* the Security Crew in '78. We were all forestry workers of one sort or another at that time. There were other groups who covered other tasks that the Fair needed to be done.

I worked for two years on the midnight-to-6 a.m. shift. Part of the job was working next to the road (Highway 126) catching or preventing people from sneaking in who had not pulled a shift or paid admission. It seemed to me that the volunteer hippie crews were more than willing to work, but they were sometimes unclear on how to react to the circumstances. One time I was working at the front Security path. A really beautiful woman, nude, totally painted, without a wristband, without any ID whether she should be in the Fair or not, walked past a whole crew of eighteen Security people and all they did was gawk. Not one of them asked her for a pass or anything else.

No one knew how to do this stuff, so I pitched in and helped to organize the work. Next year I came back and was still with Security, again pulling the midnight-to-6 a.m. shift. I discovered the place was full of ground scores by four in the morning: tobacco, booze, money, and pot!

My daughter and son were twelve and eleven years old when we first came to the Fair. After that I brought them to the Fair regularly. In the early years the spontaneous format was as often frustrating as delightful. One year I was separated from my kids in a camping snafu. Another time I went to The Ritz sauna at night and later couldn't return to my campsite — and kids — because of a Security checkpoint! I had no T-shirt with me, which was used the same as a pass. I went back up to the Ritz and — sneaking around to the cubbyholes in the open dressing



room that held the clothes of the sweating sauna-goers — stole a crew shirt in order to get back to my camp. I made sure it was put back later, but it goes to show you always have to improvise at the Fair.

As the Fair became more organized, instead of using already-formed groups, the permanent crews began to coalesce around appointed coordinators. I was always anti-authoritarian, and I had trouble with the hierarchy in Security. It seemed to me to be a bunch of armchair generals who snagged positions of authority, but really didn't know how to organize a group or understand what the workers' needs were. So I was looking to get to a crew that better suited me.

I joined the Admissions crew. Usually I worked two successive shifts, which meant I worked all day. I got assigned to crowd control in front of the Fair. You know, it was always a mess in front of the ticket booths. Back then, all Fair access happened at the Bus Stop. The exit and the entrance were the same. Plus the Solutions window, where Fairgoers went to get questions answered, opened right in the fence wall going into Main Camp, the main hub for Fair crews. The pathway was only half as wide as it is now, creating a constant traffic jam, always a congregation of people. I spent all my time herding people, so I developed a pattern and became the greeter.



photo © 2009 Vivian Searles-Kelly

**Dahinda dances with Suzi Prozanski at Main Stage at the 2009 Country Fair.**

Greeting crew, by about 1982. When the Fair built out and added a second entrance — now called the Dragon Entry — the Greeting crew just got bigger.

As the Fair grew, organizers wanted to create a permanent home by buying the land where the event had been held for years. In August 1982 the monster band the Grateful Dead held a concert on the Fair site to help raise money for the Fair to purchase the property. It had been leased since the mid-seventies. It included several hundred acres of rural land, some in pasture and some in trees, and almost all of it in the floodplain. There weren't any improvements, just some dirt roads.

There was fierce competition within the standing Fair volunteer crews to staff

People would be milling about after getting off the bus or after hiking in from the parking lots, and they were unsure where the entrance was because it was set back from the road. By hollering out a greeting, I drew in the folks trying to get in and separated them from those trying to leave. I stood out in front of the entrance, directing the flow of foot traffic and shouting, "Here's the entrance to the Fair! No one can get in without a smile! Get your smile out! If you don't have one, go back to your car and get it!" and other stuff. I guess it was natural for the local TV crews to focus their cameras on me, and they often had me in clips on the evening news stories during the Fair.

For several years I was the sole greeter and then I ended up with the whole

that concert. I remember that my friends John Doscher and John Winslow and I were on the concert Security crew together. Afterwards, there was a huge party on the site that lasted well into the night.

The Fairs during the '80s were wild and woolly. With almost four thousand members at the time, the organization seemed like a temporary medieval kingdom. The crews became little fiefdoms. Everything was divided up. People naturally felt a lot of paranoia about having the ticket money in the camps in unlocked tents, and often made secret runs to town with the cash. Also the cocaine culture invaded some circles of the Fair. It was a bit dicey for a while, but things did work out eventually.

## Chapter 9

# *More Fair Fun*

I permanently moved to Eugene in the fall of 1987. It was a major decision for me. After being actively involved in organizing in Mendocino County for eleven years, I still had a huge family of friends there, and it was hard to leave.

But once I moved up to Eugene, I often found myself hanging out at the Fair site. It felt like a sacred site to me as well as to some other like-minded people. We felt drawn to spend time out there. I kept volunteering with the Admissions crew, but the Fair was becoming a whole civilization in its own right. The organization managed to buy the land, and paid it off by 1988. The first full-time employee the Fair had was a caretaker, my friend John Winslow. Although the job wasn't much: he lived in a ratty trailer.

Then in the fall of '88, a five-acre parcel adjoining the northwest edge of the Fair site came up for sale. Some of this land lay out of the flood plain. It had been sitting for sale before for something like \$30,000 and the sellers lowered the price to \$14,500. Winslow, being out there, knew about it. An interested buyer had already tagged all the trees he was going to log off to make the down payment; he planned to sell it off as a subdivision lot.

John Winslow contacted me about seizing the opportunity to buy the property. I talked to Bedo Crafts, who was then the president of the Country Fair, and the General Manager, Robert DeSpain, who was out of town at the time, and other members of the Fair Board of Directors. The people of the Fair wanted that property and did not want to see it made into a subdivision. Timing was the issue, as the property was about to sell and the Fair needed to act soon.

The Fair in fact had the money to buy the parcel. The problem was the Board had to act officially, by making a motion and passing it in a legitimate meeting. However, by-laws required all new business to be introduced in the meeting before being formally discussed. With meetings happening just once a month, there was no time to act on the purchase and still follow the standard procedure. Even more paralyzing, it was the first week in October, the last board meeting before the General Meeting, and board elections in the middle of October would cause turnover in the board.

The organization was like a dinosaur where you kick its tail and three weeks later it gets the message in its brain! So I bought the land and then sold it to the Fair in January or February when they could get their trip together. I was the owner for three and a half months.

That piece of property has now been dubbed “Dahinda’s Acres.” The parcel provided room for more camping and made possible the creation of Snivel/Smile Lane, a needed pathway to move vehicle traffic including the all-important water truck. Smile Lane connected with the old Aero Lane; Snivel Lane grew out of Smile. I named the new road Snivel because some of the grumpy “old fart” bigwigs who camped along that path were grumbling about increased traffic.

Since then the Fair has been able to create a rapid incident land response team. We even have a committee now for acquisitions and evaluating things and the process.



**Erica, John, and dahinda pause for a photo op at the new Café Mam booth at the 2015 Oregon Country Fair while a barista works in the background at left.**

After the Fair paid off the land, it became a reality that the organization owned it and now had to take care of it. The VegManECs got started in the winter of '88, which is also the first time the Fair hired a caretaker.

The VegManEC (Vegetation Management and Erosion Control) crew grew out of discussions a small group of us were having around the footprint the Fair made every summer

on the land, trees, and brush. As the Fair family grew, campers arriving to prepare for the Fair would cut down small trees and bushes with abandon. The Fair people were putting more importance on the one-week-a-year event than on the other fifty-one weeks for the wildlife and the habitat. Fair folks started cutting a whole lot more brush after the Fair bought the property.

John Doscher, John Winslow, and I were very concerned about this new trend and worried about the impact on the ecosystem. We thought the Fair needed a landscape crew motivated by conservation principles like I had been using in my watershed restoration work. The three of us became the prime organizers of the new group. There were others, too, who came along from the start: John “Chewie” Burgess, Kirk Shultz, Susan Bryan, David Hoffman.

We came up with a complicated name that no one has ever gotten right. I explained to Hal Hartzel when he interviewed me at the Fair History Booth in 2004 what “VegManECs” stands for:

“It’s Veg-Man-ECs. Vegetation Management Erosion Control. It’s not Veg-Maniacs. It’s not Veg-Mania. It’s not Vegematics. Although we’re called all of those by people.”

So John Winslow was the caretaker. Under his employment contract, Winslow was told to organize volunteers to do work on the site. There was an official Fair project that winter, putting in the first irrigation line around the looping paths



called the Eight. The work got started and then members of the Fair's Construction crew said they weren't going to do anything unless they got paid \$7.50 an hour or whatever the rate that a specialized fence crew had gotten for doing a little contract for the Fair recently.

There was a huge trash pile in front of the Warehouse, which was supposed to be Construction's responsibility to clear, but after they did their sit-down strike, John Winslow organized the few of us who were coming out to spend time on the Fair site because it is such a sacred place. Pretty soon we started doing work.

Tree branches needed to be lifted or trimmed. The Fair's Tree crew wasn't doing enough. There were areas along the roads that should've been trimmed so that the trucks could get by, but not back an extra six feet as if it were a county road. Even before then, I'd been coming early before the Fair to help prepare a path for the Fair. The East Thirteenth path loop was an old trail and it was okay and kind of packed down. But grasses on Strawberry Lane and Shady Lane paths along the river stood six feet tall, so we would come in early June with a tractor and brush hog the whole thing. It was the only way to create a path for the Fair.

When we first started, we debated and discussed our pruning standards. One person suggested the Four D's: cutting off the Diseased, Dying, Dangerous, and Dead parts, or something like that. Well, I'd always heard that was what the U.S. Department of Agriculture used for chickens, you know.

So just to be snide, I introduced the Three S's: Safety, Shade, and Stilts, in that order. First we can make it safe and second, we try to provide shade, but we can still make it safe. And then, we have to maintain at least a four-foot-wide path that's twelve feet high so that the stilt people can get around. We really didn't have well-developed guides because the ecological management of the Fair is more important than defined guides for cutting.

All this work took time, so we were out there on Saturdays and Sundays most weekends, regardless of the weather. The Fair didn't pay us, and Andy, the next caretaker, didn't want to feed us, so I got some peanut butter and grape jelly and some bread to provide sustenance. A new crew was born. We created a whole new consciousness, although we got tested every year.

We studied the winter flooding and sedimentation and started the practice of putting in straw-bale check dams on the paths in the winter. When it floods, there's a lot of silt in the water, which smothers the grass the Fair wants on the pathways. The



**During a Teddy Bear Picnic gathering at the Oregon Country Fair, John Doscher and dahinda reminisce about the old days.**

straw bales captured the silt and helped get the grass established earlier in the year. It was a whole restoration — managed to help wild areas rather than just letting it be. The management of wild lands and wetlands is a critical part of the preservation.

We had a lot of fun, too, coming up with strange names and secret places only folks who knew the Land really well would understand. The “Stumps of Mystery” were one of those inside jokes. The name mirrors the Trees of Mystery tourist attraction on the Northern California coast. When the paths were being laid out, we found in one place the previous owner had left some oak stumps. We cut them down below grade, then sliced them up and every VegManEC got one.

We fixed up an old bus for a hangout space. It’s not easy working in the Oregon weather all winter, so we had to keep everyone’s spirits up. It’s funny only in hindsight, but one time somebody left a candle unattended and burned down a port-a-potty.

In a sense, I see the VegManECs as the ones who make the backdrop for everything that happens at the Fair. Like the old saying goes, the whole world’s a stage and we’re the actors. But somebody has to be the stagehand and make the stage for all the actors. Creating that ambiance is a long-term project.

As a part of that, back in the late ‘80s Thom Lanfear, Dennis Todd, and I helped found the Land Use Management and Planning Committee. It’s just called LUMP now. The committee would meet about three out of the four Tuesdays of the month for several years. They still have regular meetings. VegManEC people sometimes attend as well as others — many, many folks have dedicated a lot of time and expertise to the Fair.



photo © 2014 Geoffrey Squier Silver

**Moz Wright served with dahinda on the Fair’s Board of Directors.**

This time was a difficult period of change for the Fair. There were numerous issues involving volunteer and worker equity. And there were issues with the new paid general manager, who along with a few other people I felt were trying to push their



**Eventually dahinda earned a lifetime membership patch to the VegManECs.**

In October of 1988 I ran for and was elected to the Board of Directors. I really jumped in at the Fair that year. There was just a lot of stuff that I guess was a burr under my saddle, in terms of the way things were going and what needed to be done. Besides my training and background in planning, urban design, and large-scale problem solving, I had plenty of experience out in the field and trenches — doing stream restoration, writing the specs for doing the work — and I had a “worker dignity” approach to the whole thing.

I stayed on the Board until the fall of 1991.

own agenda. As I saw it, that involved not respecting worker rights.

I — and other members of the Board — had been upset with General Manager Arna Shaw since March of that year. I wrote a letter saying I couldn't trust Arna and felt the Board of Directors was "no longer in control."

Although it was very uncomfortable at the time, we tried to not get involved in the mudslinging because that would have been detrimental to the Fair. That, to me, was the most important thing — to not hurt the reputation of the Fair, because we have enough enemies as it is and we don't need enemies inside our family to undermine the whole thing.

People were certainly doing Fair work for personal gain at that time and it's not that kind of organization, in my reality. There was a controversial recall election at the end of it that, in the long term, was very good for the Fair. We got a lot of important things done. Those were ugly times, but good people have persevered and made everything happen. The turmoil resulted in a series of Board resignations. I resigned from the Board in September before the recall in October.

After that, it was something of a relief to go back to being a regular volunteer. I went out every weekend to work at the site and kept up all my Fair friendships and did a lot of good stuff.

I was among the first organizers of the Sweep. The Sweep was conceived as a way to clear the public out of the Eight. This project too was afflicted by the unsettled politics of the organization. I commemorated the epic emotional battle within the Fair over this issue by designing a T-shirt that showed the Sweep as a huge grinding militaristic force, sweeping the Easter bunny, Tinkerbell, and other sweet little cartoon figures before it. The Sweep eventually turned out to be a success. I insisted the sweep keep a happy tone as they worked, and suggested musicians join the effort. All these suggestions have been followed to good result.

As a member of the LUMP committee, I was involved with planning for all of the major land acquisitions and site improvements the Fair undertook for many years, including the land swap with the City of Veneta, which provided space for the Far Side starting in 1990; changes to the original Eight pathway, including Gypsy Way; and the large Chela Mela Meadow addition. The new Kids Way (completed 2012) was something I had discussed with "Chewie" (John Burgess) decades earlier in 1998, soon after the pony rides vacated the area near the old entrance. I recall that in the early '90s the VegManECs were instrumental in the work done to move the Circus, Stage Left, and the W.C. Fields Memorial stage. They were also involved with the creation of the new Dragon Plaza entry and the new Kids Way.



**Dahinda designed this anti-nuclear shirt for a California rally.**





The T-shirts in dahinda's collection include shirts he wore to protest war and pesticide use (above). In addition, he designed a number of shirts for the Oregon Country Fair, including one of his favorites, a shirt commemorating the Sweep (left); a humorous one celebrating the new Left Bank in 1990 (below left); and a staff shirt for the VegManEC crew (below).





After the logjams were cleared in '87, I founded the Fair's Navy. I was the first person out there in a canoe in the Long Tom River for two years and so I got Steve Cole and those other guys interested in it and then they took that over with a passion. Steve learned all the soul songs from the "Pirates of Penzance" so they could sing them out on river patrols.

John Doscher and I planted the first replacement maple trees for erosion control along the banks of the ever-changing Long Tom River. When we brought the report on our project to the Board asking to continue and expand it, I distinctly remember the Board said, "Go ye and do likewise." Doscher and I also worked on the Spirit Tower in '94. I was the one who first started calling that work area off Chickadee Lane the "Hub."

T-Shirts were used as badges or passes in the early Fair, something regularly done at the time for concert crews, large protest movements and nonprofit staffs. I have a collection of sixteen different T-shirts that I designed for VegManECs, Sweep, Left Side camping area, and Staff shirts for the Fair. My collection includes some anti-nuclear ones used in California in the early seventies. You have to understand these were hot items at the time!



photo © 2009 Ann Goddard

**Dahinda at the  
Country Fair.**

The Fair is such a hugely special place, you just never know what can happen next. I remember the one Midnight Show where it was so super warm that everybody was — well, the Karamazovs got nude and were doing their nude juggling and the whole Fair was all nude at that point. And the time the water line broke down by Main Stage on a Sunday. It became a big mud hole, and everyone wanted to play in it!

I think we've been able to make the Fair what we wanted. We've stepped up and solved an amazing number of problems in a wide variety of unorthodox ways. It has been an exciting and fulfilling group art project, and I love Fair people with all my heart.

## Chapter 10

# *Blue Life*

**F**or about eight years I followed a regular summer routine of coming up from California to Oregon to work with the Northwest Forest Workers Association. While in Eugene I would attend the Oregon Country Fair, check in with the folks at NCAP (the Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides), then stop at a U-pick blueberry farm between Eugene and the Fair to load up with as many pounds of berries as I could manage to bring down to the food co-op in Ukiah, and then return to Terrarium. My daughter was a student at the University of Oregon, while her brother was finishing up at Cal Poly at San Luis Obispo.

While at NCAP offices, I would visit with the fine staff and make a donation. I heard they needed some board members. There were five directors representing geographic regions, one of which included Northern California, and there was also an at-large position. The board held three board meetings a year, so it was important for each member to attend. Since I was living in California, I figured I could run for that regional position. I threw my hat in the ring, but I had to know about the results because I was planning to go to Mexico whether or not I got the position, and that would affect the timing of my return. That was 1986.

When I later phoned for the results of the election and was told I had not won the Northern California regional director, I left to go to Mexico. As it turned out, I had won the at-large position and they went through quite a lot of effort to contact me – I think they got a hold of Erica – to get me to my first board meeting on time! They contacted me in January and I was able to make it to Eugene the night before the February 1987 meeting. Then I guess I impressed them at that meeting with suggestions to change some language in the bylaws. Bylaws can be dry but they are structural, so important. I just read the board packet, is all, and thought about it some.

Anyway, it became a great relationship with NCAP and I was pleased to be able to contribute to an important cause. I served on their board for fifteen years, from 1987 to 2002. I structured my businesses to donate two percent of sales to sustain NCAP. I even brought my mom to see what great work they were doing one time, and she became a donor too. My businesses over the years expanded philanthropy to other nonprofits, especially groups who work to protect indigenous cultures and the environment.

After years in the woods, I developed a desire to get into organic farming. I realized that to be a farmer I needed access to a larger market for organic produce.

Eugene was a well-established locus for the environmental concerns and desire for organic food that was growing across the country. It was difficult to grow any amount of crops on the Terrarium property, and the access to market was limited to mostly local food co-ops. Plus, I realized I was developing a supportive and good-sized social network for myself in Eugene, what with the forest co-ops, anti-pesticide workers, organic farmers and markets, and of course, the Fair.

Some friends alerted me that the U-pick blueberry farm just outside of town on Royal Avenue that I had been frequenting had been put up for sale. The farm was on the market because the inheriting owners had other careers to pursue. Since I was on my way to Nicaragua for the Gully Group at the time, I just looked at it and left. When I returned some months later, it was still up for sale. The five-acre farm had four acres of blueberries, a two-story house with a daylight basement, and a large agricultural barn. I bought it in late September 1987.

Oregon offered some valuable resources for beginning my venture as an organic farmer. There were enough farmers interested in organic production to form a critical mass. A regional network of organic farmers and gardeners in the Pacific Northwest concerned with issues of sustainable agriculture had come together to form a group named "Tilth." This trail-blazing group had been going already for more than a decade by the time I came along and would become very active in the effort to establish national organic labeling standards.

Tilth began in 1974 in Ellensburg, Washington, as a Northwest regional network of farmers and gardeners to promote sustainable agriculture. In 1982, Tilth opened an Oregon chapter in the Willamette Valley, and in 1984, Oregon Tilth began an organic certification program. Oregon Tilth incorporated in 1986 and became a nonprofit in 1987. Tilth then joined the California Certified Organic Farmers (the nation's first organic group, formed in 1973) and the organic program in the state of Washington's Department of Agriculture to form the Western Alliance of Certification Organizations.

The standards created by the Western Alliance would eventually be used as the basis for the national organic labeling standards that got final approval in 2002.

After I bought the farm, I continued to divide my time for a while between Terrarium, stream restoration contract work with New Growth, and setting up my new enterprise. I had been working as a forestry contractor for ten years by the late eighties. It was hard work with a killer commute,



**First Thanksgiving at the blueberry farm in 1987 included: (from left) John, dahinda, Bobby, and Erica.**

and though I loved it and the people I worked with, I was getting to be in my late forties and knew things were going to have to change. I retired as a restoration contractor and relocated to Eugene in the fall of 1987.

I had met Norma Grier at NCAP during this time. Norma was a prime organizer of the community work that grew into NCAP. She served as the director from 1983 to 2008. Norma is a dynamic woman who took on Dow Chemical and has devoted her life to making sure people and businesses know there is an alternative to the herbicides used everywhere. She is a smart activist, and full of good positive energy. She admired the way I treated my dog, Turquesa, I guess. We developed a relationship, and she moved to my farm in 1989. We married here on the farm on November 30, 1996, with our wonderful pesticide-activist friend Chris Bratt officiating.

Norma and I share common values; among them is an appreciation for people the way they are, and both of us are very independent. Even after she moved to the Farm, I would go down to Terrarium for weeks at a time or go off with my Fair friends while she was busy with her work and hobbies. I didn't see the need for her to drop her passion or plans to accompany me just because we were married. We each had our own thing and it worked well for us.



**Netting protects the blueberries from foraging birds.**

I named my farm Royal Blueberries, partly after the road, and partly after the crop. The use of the word "royal" is not intended to endorse any monarchy or even the concept of monarchies! Royal Avenue was named after the itty bitty town of Royal, now drowned under Fern Ridge Reservoir a few miles west

of my farm.

I threw myself into learning about blueberries. After upgrading the irrigation, I added netting on the third field like the first two had. To protect the ripe crop from birds, we put long sheets of netting over the tops of the bushes, anchored to the eight-foot deer fencing. The birds pose a big threat to the crop because they instinctively know when the fruit is ripening. They can destroy a season's work in a few hours.

I hate to say this, but our berries are of a better quality than most of the other organic blueberries because of the bird netting. With the netting, we can let the berries get totally ripe. They have more flavor and they have more sugar; after a week some of the stores requested nothing but our blueberries.

My first harvest, in 1988, was fourteen thousand pounds. That was with conditions I inherited when I bought the farm. My organic harvest highs have reached thirty-four thousand pounds. I brought in tons of sawdust mixed with fish meal to mulch the blueberry bushes.



I remodeled the walk-out basement of the original farmhouse into our work area for cooling, sorting, and packing the berries, and partitioned out a small office. Sometime in the '90s I put in a large commercial freezer in the existing barn. This made it possible to sell frozen berries throughout the year. I also designed and built a small home for myself and Norma in 1989 just south of the main house.

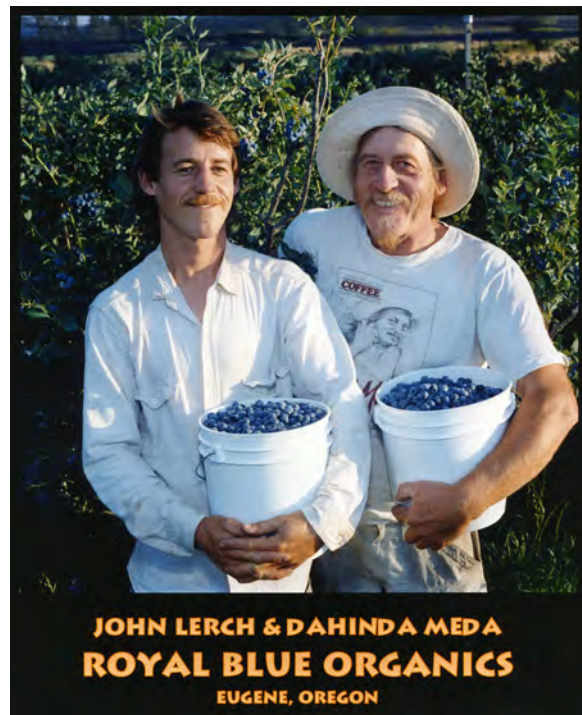
Local organic food stores and Springfield Creamery, which makes Nancy's Yogurt, eagerly sought our high-quality berries. Organic food in general has soared in popularity, to the point mainstream markets have had to include organic vegetables in their stock. Demand for organic food has been increasing by about twenty percent per year since the '90s.

I was determined to farm organically. In the early days I had problems with a neighboring farmer spraying chemicals. We sent him some official letters saying we were going to sue his butt off if we got any contamination or over-drift. We were somewhat cordial; we offered to buy the place at the same time. My son John and my nephew Brad did wind up eventually purchasing the neighboring land, and we've had no further problems with the neighbors.

One of the worst "pests" for the farm, in my opinion, was the Oregon Blueberry Commission, a marketing commission set up as a state agency. It assessed farmers a fee to raise funds for farming research and national marketing for the crop, under the idea these benefit all the producers. I was incensed at the OBC's practice of sending out promotional literature on pesticides. I described the group in an article for *Tilth* magazine in 1994:

"The commissioners are good old boy and girl farmers who use chemicals and market their crop through packing houses and brokers to distant cities. They insist that I must help pay for these non-organic methods. Organic farmers are being forced to support their chemical competitors. ... I'm prepared to go to court to defend my right of free speech against a law which is forcing me to pay for the printing of what I consider to be obscene material."

I wrote an "open letter" to then-Governor Barbara Roberts, stating that being forced to pay to support my competitors was unfair, and reminded her that "Both state and federal law recognize the distinctness of organic as a type of agriculture. The State of Oregon should be proud to lead the nation in developing laws which define organic agriculture."



A Eugene grocery store displayed this poster highlighting the farmer-owners of Royal Blue Organics.

Since 2003, the OBC statutes have, indeed, recognized the right of organic farmers to be exempted from these fees as a free speech issue. I like to think I had something to do with that!

I still agree with what I told writer Mare Wakefield in the *Eugene Weekly* (June 29, 2000): “I’m just the Aries who doesn’t mind making a fool of himself doing something new.” When I started the blueberry farm, it was the right time to get going in organic produce, even though it was too new for the big corporate farms. There’s a lot of personal achievement that comes about by getting the right group together at the right time.

I had great folks around me — friends and cohorts, family and employees — who all came together and contributed to the way it grew. My son John worked on the farm with me in the summers of 1989 and ‘90. My nephew Brad — the younger son of my brother Harry — came out for the summer of 1989 to work on the farm and go to the Fair and was hooked. After graduating, both boys returned in 1991, John to help run the farm and Brad to help start the coffee business. I affectionately call them “my monkey boys” because of their tireless energy, and because they are both of the Chinese astrology sign of “Monkeys.”

When we formalized our partnership in January of 1992, we renamed the blueberry business Royal Blue Organics.

By 1994, John and his wife, Susan, and their daughter Corey lived in the original two-story farmhouse, along with Brad. Norma lived with me in our small home, while my daughter Erica lived fifteen minutes away in Eugene. They all played roles in the growth of the enterprises. Things continued to change, of course, but it was important to me to have family members involved in my creative enterprises.

Royal Blueberries has thrived for years as a premiere organic farm. For seasonal employees I had a mix of college students, local hippies interested in organic farming, and some Mayan Mam workers I knew from Chiapas who came up for the harvest from Mexico. José and Marta often came up for the harvest. Many of the young workers stayed on the farm, camping among the trees and using the kitchen and bathroom I made in the walk-out basement of the farmhouse.

The blueberry farm gave me an opportunity to try to live out some of my values



**Cousins Buzz, Brad, and John visit at the first blueberry festival.**





**Kids enjoy sampling different varieties of blueberries at the blueberry festival.**

around worker dignity and equality. I valued my employees in many different respects, not just as laborers and berry-pickers, but as people capable of making good decisions. The employees were part of the process. I come from a background in organizing, and I wanted everybody to be a stakeholder.

My farm was also a place where I taught others about organic farming methods, conscious living, and New Age spiritual practices. I had learned to be conscious of the sacred and to keep it in my heart with regular habits. I wanted to continue that even in the farm work. I believe that spirit integrated with everyday activities is a recipe for a meaningful, happy life.

We held sweat lodges – I liked it HOT. I used the four sacred herbs and the chants and taught them to everyone who came. Later on we had drum circles, too. I shared with the young folks the virtues of positive thinking and simple lifestyles. I wanted to pass on what had become a rock for me in life. I think we made quite a positive impression on many young folks who



**Brad and Erica hug and visit at the blueberry festival potluck.**

stayed and worked on the farm.

One thing I did for the social fun: I developed the Blueberry Fest, which turned into an annual harvest party. The highlight was a potluck dinner in which every dish had to include blueberries. I created a tongue-searing blueberry sauce for tofu, Brad made a blueberry-based chili, and every year our workers, friends, and family came out with some spectacular edible creations. I made pi squared pie with blueberries, raspberries, and Mexican chocolate. With no sugar! Yum!

As an organizer, I realize how people can amplify their actions by congregating with similar-minded folks. I made it a point to get together with other organic farmers and organizations that supported organically grown agriculture. I felt it was important we stick together and help each other out as the chemical corporations tried to drown us out and corporate markets tried to shut us out.

I made deep and lasting contacts with other organic farmers, such as the good



**Café Mam has served coffee at the Eco Farm Conference for decades. Pictured here at an early conference are dahinda, Erica, John, and Brad.**

folks at Full Belly Farm in California. They've been around since 1985. And I have a huge circle of friends, colleagues, and hippie family involved in Eco Farm. Eco Farm, an educational nonprofit that started in 1981, was the original assemblage of ecologically sustainable agriculture supporters and it remains the largest. The group provides training, information, and moral support for the organic farmers still at the vanguard of the real food movement in this country.

I served on their board for a while and I still regularly – joyously! – meet with them at their conferences. Café Mam has

been a sponsor of the conferences. Their mission statement, right there on their web page, just says it all as far as I am concerned:

“The mission of the Ecological Farming Association (Eco Farm) is to nurture healthy, just, and ecologically sustainable farms, food systems, and communities by bringing people together for education, alliance building, advocacy, and celebration.”

That's life, right there in a nutshell.



## Chapter 11

# *Café Mam*

**A**fter my first trip to Mexico in 1962 (on spring break from college in Houston), I was intrigued with the idea of working with indigenous peoples, and over the years I had ideas of creating better coffee with organic production methods. I loved coffee, but couldn't stand the idea of drinking something that required so many pesticides — and so much human suffering — on its way to my cup. I just wanted a decent cup of organic coffee!

In 1977 at a party outside Mexico City, I met and made friends with the President of Mexico (from 1976 to 1982), José Guillermo Abel López Portillo y Pacheco. I talked with him about co-ops to help the indigenous peoples and we set up a meeting to discuss agricultural co-ops. When I arrived, I found people there with doctorates — experts who brought information on co-ops. Such exalted company! We had a good discussion. I had some further contact with the president's office after that, meeting him several times in 1982.

A governmental goal was to have a hundred percent indigenous membership in the agricultural co-ops, and only seven existing co-ops could claim that because of the way they figured their mixed blood — much like North American Indians. There were six organic food co-ops, only two involved with coffee.

For a while starting in 1983, I traveled annually to Mexico to teach the Mam people about organic, high-altitude shade plantations and about keeping out DDT. I also helped connect them to Fair Trade. The Mam people are one of three indigenous communities of Mayans in Guatemala and southern Mexico. I taught organic coffee production for three years at Motozintla, until 1986.

I worked with people whose land was high-altitude at thirty-three hundred feet. No chemical fertilizers had ever been used, mostly because the people were too poor to ever buy them. Their coffee lands had large shade trees, a perfect environment for organic coffee. During this time in Mexico, I met some businesswomen from Europe who were also interested in creating organic, fair trade coffee. We continued bumping into each other as we learned more about the co-ops. The interest was out there.

In 1987, two of my students from the 1982 "Gully Group" soil erosion program — José and Marta — became advisers on organic techniques to the newly formed coffee cooperative, ISMAM (Indígenas de la Sierra Madre de Motozintla), in Chiapas, next to Guatemala. Because we were still in touch, I also got to know the

farmers in this new cooperative as they set about establishing plantations.

ISMAM, a social solidarity cooperative, was founded in the town of Motozintla, the only pass through the Soconusco region. The Soconusco has long been the source of some of the finest coffees served in Europe. Much of the best coffee-growing land was bought or stolen from the natives before the Mexican Revolution of 1910. The remaining land is divided into small parcels. Even though coffee could be grown on this land, the lack of marketing outlets traditionally left the peasant farmers with no choice but to sell their crop to a middleman, or “coyote.” ISMAM was formed in 1987 with two hundred and fifty-nine original members specifically to provide an alternative to the predatory coyote.

ISMAM began through the organizing efforts of the Cooperative Commission of the Catholic Church of Motozintla, Chiapas. Jorge Aguilar, a pastoral priest based in Motozintla, spearheaded the efforts. Jorge, himself half native, demonstrated a strong dedication and determination to serve Mexico’s indigenous people.

A Jesuit, Jorge received training and a development grant from a Netherlands foundation called S.O.S. Werdenhandel. Going from community to community, Father Jorge was able to convince the farmers that with cooperation and hard work, they could liberate themselves from the downward spiral that was threatening their culture and their ability to support themselves.

The Max Havelaar Fair Trade Association of Denmark also helped with ISMAM’s formation. The key person in the field was Roberto Soto, an agronomist and organic coffee specialist. A longtime activist with the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, Roberto helped train many cooperatives in organic practices and principles.

It took two years before ISMAM was ready to sell anything. In 1989, the co-op harvested its first certified organic crop of coffee. When it came to buying the crop, the Europeans I had met who were pursuing the same business goals agreed to let me purchase the first 37,500-pound container of coffee from ISMAM (invoice #0001).

That container took five months to arrive in the United States, landing in Los Angeles and then making its way up to Eugene by April 1990. I stored the coffee in a big bus on my blueberry farm. It took two or three years to sell it all.

Thus, Café Mam was born.

Two years into the coffee business, I asked my nephew Brad and my son John to join the business; together we formed a family partnership. Setting up a marketing process was somewhat chaotic. I remember John was a bit too enthusiastic about giving away free samples!

“To a certain extent, we caught lightning in a bottle,” Brad says. “We were in the right place at the right time.” We had some of the very first organically grown, socially responsible coffee available in North America.



**Café Mam partners (from left) John, dahinda, and Brad.**

All three of us shared a conviction for organic agriculture and sustainability. We agreed on the basics: to focus our intentions on exclusively organic products; to build a solid, lasting relationship with ISMAM; and to treat the warehouse and office workers in Eugene right as part of the model.

We also agreed to support nonprofit groups working on positive environmental change by giving two percent of sales to pesticide reform.

ISMAM got a tremendous boost to its business when the president of Mexico elected in 1988, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, instituted radical changes in the Mexican economy, selling off state-owned industries including the telephone system, the airlines, and industrial properties. This massive sale of government property had a special provision for Solidaridad cooperatives. With “approved credit,” co-ops were able to buy government property at one-third of its real value.

Included in the long list of government-owned industrial properties were the



(Above):  
ISMAM  
workers;  
(right):  
dahinda  
and coffee  
farmer  
with seed-  
lings and  
compost.



mills of CAFEMEX, the Mexican Coffee Institute, including the Beneficio Tapachulita, one of the largest and most modern coffee processing mills in Chiapas. In 1991 with much fanfare, L. Donald Colosio, then Secretary of the Department of Social Development, announced the sale of the plant to ISMAM. No doubt in a desire to have some shining examples in its Solidaridad program, the government embraced ISMAM.

Paralleling its economic growth, ISMAM ran an equally impressive and internationally applauded agricultural research program, particularly research and development of a biological control

program for a major coffee pest, *Hypothenemus hampei*, also known as “la broca.” ISMAM raised parasitoids, *Cephalonomia stephanoderis*, and released them in the field. The “la broca” program went from a single research operation to twenty-three operational insectaries in four years.

Early in 1992 Moscamed inspectors found two medflies in a pheromone trap on some ISMAM parcels. Program officials informed ISMAM of their intent to spray hundreds of acres of ISMAM farms with more than thirty-thousand gallons of



malathion and to require farmers to strip all fruit in the declared infested zone. Such a spray program would have been a devastating blow to ISMAM's organic status and might have caused serious consequences for the cooperative.

ISMAM responded by blockading all roads near the declared infested zone and threatening to shoot down any spray planes that Moscamed might send. They also called us at Royal Blue Organics in an urgent request to find help that might prevent the impending spraying of their lands.

With less than two weeks' notice, in July of 1992 a meeting was arranged between officials of the Moscamed program, ISMAM, and CIES (Centro de Investigaciones Ecológicas del Sureste). Several of the Moscamed representatives arrived with forty-five-caliber pistols in their holsters. Things were tense for a while. Serving as ISMAM advisers were Amigo Cantisano of Organic Ag Advisors of Colfax, California, and Mark DuPont of Guatemala Altertec — both long-time associates of mine and knowledgeable on organic alternatives.

The existence of a biological control for the medfly, combined with ISMAM's experience in operating insectaries eventually led to a win-win solution. Moscamed agreed to a landmark pilot program using a parasitoid of the medfly in combination with traps and sterile fly releases. Because of this pilot program, Moscamed was perfecting an effective control program that is not dependent on insecticides. The growth of this kind of work is close to my heart and I am proud to have had a hand in this. Working together, we can and will create a better world.

The trademarked brand name of our coffee is "Café Mam."

"Mam" is the name of the tribe, the spiritual name, and I wanted to use that name for the business. I asked them, and the tribe agreed.

We have garnered several awards in Europe and Mexico. I believe our coffee is the best in the world — or close to it! It is all high-altitude, shade-grown and fairly traded. Our co-ops protect the soil, the water, the birds, and the Mayan people. We see ourselves not just as buyers, but as friends. We grow slowly as the money increases. Quality is one of our most important values. Our coffee is so clean, it is recommended by the Gerson Therapy Institute as a cleanser for cancer treatments. Since it's grown without any harmful chemicals, they use it to flush toxins. Growing coffee at high altitudes may also give it some special, health-reviving qualities.

Advertising for Café Mam goes mainly by referrals. Our coffee donations to groups such as NCAP, Eco Farm, Provender Alliance, Beyond Pesticides, Oregon Tilth, Organic Seeds Alliance, and many others have also exposed thousands of



**A Café Mam mural outside an ISMAM building dwarfs dahinda standing next to a stack of bagged coffee beans.**



people to the taste of Café Mam. Thanks to loyal customers, who I think appreciate not only what we're selling but what we are doing, we have been able to donate more than five hundred thousand dollars over the last ten years. Because our loyal fans tell their friends, families, favorite stores, and restaurants about us, we have grown in sales every year. We are close to doing three million dollars a year in business. As we have grown, the ISMAM farmers have gained more control and respect in their lives, while their cooperative has flourished.

When our company first began buying from the Mam region, the ISMAM cooperative was our single source for green coffee beans. We made a commitment to establish a long-term relationship with ISMAM and the Mam peoples. This enabled us to make a larger impact on the lives and well-being of the families who depended on the co-op.

ISMAM has a policy of "no re-election" that bans members from serving more than a single two-year term as an officer or committee member. In part due to this clause, many members decided to branch off and form co-ops of their own. As these new co-ops were founded, ISMAM sometimes served as an intermediary to help sell their coffee. Once the new co-ops became established, they were able to begin selling directly to buyers throughout the world.

ISMAM provided a model that inspired other farmers in Chiapas to follow. By the year 2000, more than three-dozen cooperatives had been formed in the state, with more than four in the Mam district. It is exciting to be a part of a revolutionary approach to cooperative coffee farming, where worker dignity is vital and families stay together farming on their own land without harmful pesticides. We now proudly support several of these newer co-ops, who grow the exceptional coffee we are honored to call Café Mam. This way, we are able to help more farming families across the Mam region.

The thing about working with these folks of the countryside is their great heart. They welcome you into their lives and are so generous and warm, you can't help but reciprocate the friendships. I am still in touch with some of the people I met years ago in Mexico.

Café Mam was first sold in Oregon at the Country Fair through several food booths in 1991. Café Mam was also the coffee for Main Camp at OCF. And now, Café Mam has its own booth!

We also set up a short-lived coffee house called "Out of The Fog" on Third Street in Eugene that became "the epicenter of Eugene's new anarchist movement" according to the *Seattle Weekly*. I just don't know how I attract these folks who want to change the world!



This poster for Out of the Fog was drawn by Paul Ollswang, noted cartoonist.  
<http://ollswang.com>.

## Chapter 12

# *The Good Life*

**W**hile I was developing my commercial enterprises, my family grew and changed. John married Susan on Pfeiffer Beach near Big Sur in January 1992. We had a celebration on the farm for them in April of that year. Brad had a wedding on the farm in 1994. When Brad married, he moved out and bought a house in Eugene. So it was Norma and I, John, Susan, and their kids living on the farm. Erica still lived in Eugene in the '90s, so she wasn't far.

John and Susan's two daughters, my grandchildren, have been a joy to me and Norma. Corey was born in July of 1992 and Aerin in August of 1995. They loved their horses and the other farm animals. I doted on them. I did not realize how much having grandchildren around would mean to me. That was one of the biggest surprises in life!

I had originally thought to have the farm workers share the big house too, and put a kitchen in the basement for them when I started the blueberry farm. I was considering a collective model. I think having the blueberries all over the basement and the workers and everybody all in and around the house all the time was a bit much for John and Susan. They bought a house and moved away from the farm for a while.

But after John and Susan divorced, Susan moved back to the farm with the girls. She home-schooled them for the most part. I got to see them nearly every day as they grew up, which has been very gratifying to me. It was special to them, too, to have grandparents so close. Corey had her wedding on the farm in 2015 because she has such fond memories of growing up here.

In April of 1994 Norma and I took a trip to Japan. I wanted to get to know more about her by seeing the country where she lived as a kid. She was born and raised in Japan to missionary parents. She remembers being a little reluctant to agree to this expedition at first. I guess not all first-time Western visitors can fully appreciate Japan's unique culture, but we had so much fun!

I firmly believe every foreign trip should have a theme. So beyond the obvious plan of visiting family and seeing the area where she grew up, I determined the theme would be cottage-scale rice vinegar producers, and hot springs! We toured several very interesting small-scale organic vinegar producers. Rice-based vinegar is known for its mild, umami-rich flavor. Japanese rice vinegar is used in a variety

of dishes besides sushi, and is a major ingredient in Japanese cuisine. We enlarged the criteria to include persimmon and other fruit vinegars, and I was fascinated with facilities that were sometimes hundreds of years old.

I thoroughly enjoyed the food and the ancient, unique culture of the country. Japan's hot springs are equally captivating. We stopped at an *onsen* inn way back in the mountains outside of Wakayama, the castle town where Norma grew up. Her brother and ex-brother-in-law, who is Japanese, came along on that trip to help with the translation and navigation. This hot springs village had been frequented over the centuries by the samurai associated with the Wakayama castle. The village had three hot springs, each with its associated inn. The most luxurious one was for the samurai, the next-level inn was for their officers and craftsman, and the third outdoor spring was for the foot soldiers and the staff.

After our bath, the current proprietress of the samurai's inn invited us for tea in one of her refurbished guest rooms. She told us that she was the twenty-eighth generation of her family to manage the place! Further, the proprietress remembered first meeting Norma and her father, even recalling the person who had introduced her father to the spa family. Norma figured it had been more than twenty-five years since she and her father had visited. Introductions are an important part of that culture.

When Norma and I got married on the farm November 30, 1996, we had about twenty guests, including both of our moms, my kids and their kids, Enid, plus several of our farm workers and some folks from NCAP. Our pesticide-activist friend, Chris Bratt, officiated. It was a real family affair!

We honeymooned in Florida in the old house my grandparents built in 1942 when Pa, grandfather, retired. We spent the time there with Bobby and pruned all the avocado, orange, and grapefruit trees in the garden. Nephew Buzz came down later and we had an epic Scrabble tournament. Not your conventional honeymoon; I never was much for traditional ways, I guess.

The Farm expanded over the years. Brad and John together bought sixty acres just to the west of the original property in the 1990s. John planted the land with more blueberries. We also planted chestnut trees and pastured horses there for Susan, Corey, and Aerin. After we put in the freezer and built cooling and sorting rooms in the new barn, we moved the blueberry work out of the farmhouse basement. I remodeled it again to use for storage, and as an office for the coffee and blueberry businesses. It was kind of hard to keep all the enterprises together. Our administrative assistant — and one of our first Café Mam employees — Alli Bach pulled out some hair over having three bosses wander through with random directives! The coffee and blueberry offices coexisted at the farm until the winter of 1993, when our coffee office moved to the roasting facility across town.

Eventually the sunny, south-facing room in the basement became my "man cave." I use it to catalog and sort my stuff and to have my own space. Our house can feel a bit small for me and Norma at times!

In the early years of the new century, I bought several acres in Buena Fortuna, a Permaculture Botanical Garden in La Rivera in Baja Sur, Mexico. The gardens





Dahinda thoroughly enjoyed watching his granddaughters grow up at home. Clockwise from top left: Young Corey picks blueberries; dahinda, Corey, and Aerin play in the yard between the houses; granddaughters jump for joy on the trampoline; Aerin and Corey hug in front of an ancient redwood tree.



Clockwise from top right: Erica and dahinda snap a “selfie” in December 2015; Aerin celebrates her graduation from South Eugene High school with dahinda, Norma, and Corey in 2013; Norma takes a break from clearing brush at Terrarium to pose with an amazing manzanita; dahinda holds Corey on a visit to Florida in the early winter of 1993.



photo © Robert Bugg



were founded by world-renowned botanist Gabriel Howarth, who started Seeds of Change, and my friend Kitzia Kokopelmana, an edible landscape designer and kitchen alchemist. It is a beautiful sanctuary, a living genealogy seed bank, and a training center. With a mission to preserve botanical diversity, the garden grows more than three-thousand different plant varieties. Buena Fortuna was building its nursery and seed production when I was there and is now evolving to a Baja Green School Technologies and a Green Spa for Wellness. They hold workshops and events on edible landscaping and wellness. They serve as an essential reference in organic agriculture, tropical botany, and seed saving. It's really a trippy place.

From its early days, the foundation pursued working with the local and international community on organic gardening and has hosted volunteers and apprentices who helped Buena Fortuna Gardens to become a botanical reserve. This is the kind of work that I have enthusiastically supported my whole life.

In February 2004, Bobby joined us at the Eco Farm Conference in Asilomar, California, where Café Mam and I were honored with a special recognition. Afterward, we drove down to Buena Fortuna, and Bobby flew in a couple days later and stayed in a hotel on the Sea of Cortez. I went in to pick her up every day. Then Buzz and his girlfriend Abra flew in for a visit too. I was driving to the airport with Bobby to pick them up when the car was hit by a big horse! Surprisingly, we weren't hurt, although we were definitely rattled. The crash shattered the windshield and damaged the driver's side, but I was still able to get the car to a repair shop. We had to rent another car to go pick up my nephew.



© 2014, Travis Williams, Broken Banjo Photography

**Norma and dahinda pose with organic veggies at the Eco Farm Conference. In 2004, dahinda and Café Mam received special recognition at the event.**

I was working in the garden of Buena Fortuna in April of 2005 when I had a severe stroke. I didn't receive medical attention right away. After four days I went to stay with John Graham, a former Eugene resident who is now the Del Cabo organic produce representative in southern Baja. I really want to acknowledge John Graham's help. He was instrumental in communicating with my family up in Oregon about the seriousness of my medical condition and getting me to competent medical care on day five. I was stabilized at the local hospital in San José del Cabo and Norma made sure I was air-lifted by jet that same day to San Antonio, Texas, where they had excellent, advanced facilities for stroke care.

After some weeks in San Antonio with my daughter Erica at my side, Norma and my son John brought me back to the farm. I've had a lot of therapy since then, and



my speech and mobility have improved quite a bit. Much as I have always loved gardening, I think working in that hot tropical sun in the middle of the day was one of the stupidest things I have ever done. I developed a hell of a headache; but I did not go lie down or let anyone know how I was feeling until it was too late.

You know the old saying: It never rains but it pours? Well, eight weeks after I came home from San Antonio, Norma was diagnosed with uterine cancer and had to undergo an operation and chemotherapy and radiation. We had a tough year in 2005.

Norma kept doing her work with NCAP for a while, because having a job helps keep your mind off the constant slow work of fighting cancer. Eventually, though, she realized she would have to step back from her position. While we were unable to care for each other, we had a young woman named Ginger Cloud move into our little house for eight weeks, and she was a godsend. Norma is doing well now.

I had a second stroke in January 2010 while I was at Terrarium. I got up in the morning and went up to the ridge to a place where the cell phone connection worked. I felt like I wasn't well. Then I realized what was happening, and that I had to respond. I worked for forty-five minutes before I successfully dialed Norma who was in Eugene. She alerted Mitch in Ukiah who came out to get me and rush me to the emergency room. The second stroke robbed me of many of my precious memories, and I have had to double down on the speech therapy.

As I deal with the health challenges of increasing age I have turned to the alternative methods, especially those using herbs and naturally occurring organic chemicals. Not only that, I am very pleased that my organic products — coffee and blueberries — have been shown to be useful in treating disease, especially cancer, in a natural way.

In August 2010 I was diagnosed with prostate cancer that had already spread to my bones. I immediately began to examine alternative treatments using plants and herbs. Caffeine and other components of coffee have been shown to reduce cancer-cell proliferation and metastasis. A study led by Doctor Janet Stanford published in *Cancer Causes and Control*, revealed that drinking coffee can prevent prostate cancer from progressing and recurring in some men. Also, some substances in coffee have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects. Drinking coffee has been positively related to survival and cancer recurrence, after diagnosis of both colorectal and skin cancer.

The blueberry is one of the few fruits native to North America. Native Americans used the berries and parts of the plant for medicine. They contain powerful phytochemicals called anthocyanins, which give the berries their blue color. Blueberries are among the fruits highest in antioxidant power, largely due to their many phytochemicals. They too have been found recently to have cancer-fighting properties, reducing the growth of tumors in experiments.

Other herbs I have been working with include paw-paw (*Asimina triloba*). I have used paw-paw to excellent effect, with the cooperation of my doctor. The size of the tumor and the PSA numbers were both reduced. Paw-paw is known to work by blocking ATP production and thus reduce the voltage of the cancer cell to the point it falls apart.

I have also received good care from my urologist and my primary care physician. Relaxing and staying positive have extended my life. I have no time for negativity now.

I retired in 2010 at the age of seventy from directly working the Fair, my farm and my businesses. I still had a lot of interests spread around and it has taken me some time to get all my affairs in order.

I have been trying to get some archaeologists interested in the petroglyphs on the rock and in the rock shelter/cave at Terrarium. I want to put some kind of protective easement on the property, and have it recognized by the professional archaeologists so its true history can be known and the site permanently protected. This has been an ongoing project. Scientists in this field don't always move with any alacrity. A few years ago I did get someone to actually come out and look at the site.

The going wisdom at this time is that the site is very ancient, and the petroglyphs and the site were created by people older than the historically known tribes of the area, the Pomo. Feliz Creek was once crucial to the pre-mission native peoples traveling from Clear Lake to the Pacific. They made that annual trek for thousands of years, and the Rock was laboriously encrypted with symbols carved into it over the millennia, thousands of years of directions, fertility prayers, perhaps statements of gratitude for the easy abundance enjoyed at the meadow the spirit rock sits in.

It is possible the site is more than ten thousand years old. Given its placement, I believe it is not only very old, it is a very sacred site with connections to the local landscape and the mountains, the sea, and other ancient sites near Shasta. I personally know it to be a place of great power.

Norma and I received the David Brower Lifetime Achievement Award at the Public Interest Environmental Law conference at the University of Oregon in 2012. We were jointly recognized for our work protecting the environment, and for contributing to our local communities, encouraging and inspiring young people, and supporting the Public Interest Environmental Law Conference for many years. I was able to attend the 2016 Eco Farm Conference in Asilomar, and received the love of more than fifteen hundred organic farmers in an astonishing, heart-warming display of respect and affection.

It is humbling yet very inspiring to have our work recognized. So much of the time you can't really know what is going to come of your efforts, but you just keep doing it because you know it is the right thing to do.

To keep doing the right thing, I long ago formulated my "Four Principles" and implemented them in my life and businesses. I write them here hoping they will help others to make a conscious, creative act of their life, and to keep a positive focus:

First Principle: Dance your life in rhythm to the cycles of the Earth. Seek a song for your heart. Make your life, your environment, and your relationships organic and close to the Earth. Support the Earth's native peoples and respect their ways.

Second Principle: Trust yourself. Seek your inner self; don't compromise your beliefs. Stay in touch with your feelings. If there is an issue you have strong beliefs

about, get involved. Confront your fears, humble your clarity, and share your joy.

Third Principle: Do the best you can. Accept challenges as opportunities for change. Be responsible for your deeds. Know what you're doing and why you are doing it.

Fourth Principle: Be part of a family. Promote respect, support, and trust. Work to become self-sufficient.



photo © Robert Bugg

**Dahinda and the rock petroglyphs at Terrarium.**

are comes through the Heart of the Sky and if those gifts and tools are used for good works, you will be appreciated and you will become a Light of your community and people. You have to work with everyone because they all are your brothers and sisters. On the face of the Earth, we all need each other.

I have been blessed with all I wanted: a long life full of love, adventure, friends, and family. Truly it is good!

I also have studied the Mayan principles of life and have spent much time learning and meditating on their wisdom.

My Mayan sign is B'atz: Life, Destiny, and Infinity. It comes from the Mayan god B'atz, the god of creation. He created the Earth and sky, life and wisdom. Maybe we can see the Thread of Destiny in our own lives. I have come to understand that all we



## Appendix

# *My Poet's Mind*

### **Much Love**

*Much love, happy, wise,  
time organic, reform pesticide, and Dragons.  
Straight Norma, talk, deep  
think, peace and excellent support.  
Mayan past and future,  
dreams eyes closed and space hope.*

### **My Writing**

*Great planner, one old, one new, future, mental grasp  
Magic mysterious, wizard, myth, monkey, owls, dragon.  
Love heart: Earth, sky, creator, maker, shapes  
    Peace: with moon, sun, space, and universe.  
Spirit human, ocean, plants and animals ... clear night.  
    Make my night invisible, free, liberty  
    Measure rhythm, justice and favor.  
    Gone my love, clear messages dawn,  
    Since I are my streams and mountain.  
Tossed thread, fourth universe, folder and throw back  
    Hope, achieve success, more much fifth ether.  
    In my heart and in my mind ...  
    Me my written and read ...  
And however brain, dreams, soul and dead.  
Sacred of ancient time past, Maya/Sokowa low underworld  
Give my courage, give my wisdom*

*Peace and prayer*

## Fertile Ground for Growth

*Radical is inner peace and gentleness.  
Ignorance with, misunderstanding to war  
Cause is much distressed as sad.  
Open to ideas of affinity,  
the awareness of that tells us how  
very alive we can become...  
Knowing how to be true to ourselves  
Emotion is the door  
to our inner universe.  
Reason is a great value  
when it mirrors  
and against the wordless  
existence of feeling  
Love need no guarantee.  
Peacemaker by how much is given  
from any that is inner peace.*

*Harmony, nature, pray as peace  
Shaman poet*

## Bobby Lerch

*Your middle kid me, boy, Mom want girl, me my weird,  
Love girl and a Doctor woman with pink, me but dirt.  
Mom thanks, a train to Florida, winter warm, Grand Pa and Oma  
Taught by Pa, chess, he gives Queen and Rook he wins all  
learn slow as pawn move fast and win the Queen.*

*Maryland house, then to Dad at base, me cleaning up recycle,  
Heavy planes see Army leaders (Dad QuarterMaster boss) next to Hog Wallow.  
Ate world, back to Maryland, Chevy Chase, learn bus to Bird River, 6 years old.  
Mom and breakfast and a car to bus alone six.  
Lutheran church, Mom and Dad each Sunday ... friends after.  
Democrat 13 years, know Vice President Nixon, "Tricky Dick" sells cars.  
Worked with Bobby to Brighton Woods camp, trail, tents,  
Bobby leader Girls with young troop first den cubs,  
Both learning Red Cross First Aid, master,  
Camp primitive Girl Scout, me as boy, Eagle Scout.  
Clean beauty, peace and prosperity.  
Very life at trees, six years old doing pruning job for neighbors.  
Early 1950s, Oma and Pa, for favorite pancakes, apple!  
Wild old/young mind and relaxed, Terrarium petroglyphs  
Love you today, beauty old, 104 in 2014 and Girls Go*

## **Bad Boys**

*Not bad, wild all day long, football, baseball,  
Outside till dark, tent, up night walk  
Run under the water sewer hide  
Underwater swimming racing  
Race runs, as three trains huge big  
Trail, Appalachian mountain, trees, walk, tent, food  
Boss over young kids, Taylor, Georgia Street  
Big Boys Scout, bottom church Connecticut, "Nuclear" ground  
Water Skiing East Coast jump dry feel to one  
Pinecrest: Kid John dumped, child poor cruel, not camp  
Pinecrest older, empty then from beers to pile big full  
White on! Then bang blow back electric save money  
Buck car, uncle Texas Sam R., Democrat boss house  
window, land, throw toss (no glass) out water bomb  
Big Red Finger cars B.C.C. Not like teach, cop.  
Republican in 1956, Democrat dumbed kick out, Pirate Capitol*

## **Flying Horses Retold**

to Gilda from Albert March 7, 1974

*Several years ago I found myself in a boat that didn't seem to be going anywhere  
But everyone else was in the same boat and it seemed to be the only boat there was  
And everyone else kept telling me not to rock the boat.*

*So I didn't.*

*But then one day some part of me started receiving a signal  
And I didn't know if it was coming from inside me or outside of the boat  
So I ignored it and hoped that it  
Would go away.*

*But it didn't and I tried to hear what it was saying  
But I couldn't because there was too much noise around me  
So I told everyone to leave me alone and I went away and listened  
With my body, not my ears.  
And the boat went away.*

*And I learned that freedom was a singular thing  
to be nurtured and loved by a singular person  
until at last it was beautiful enough  
to be shared with someone else who could appreciate  
each others' freedom for what it was*



*And I learned that every person who has found freedom is a writer  
that is, a creator, preserving their emotions for all time.  
And I thought that maybe this is the only means  
of nurturing and developing life past a certain point  
and I thought that maybe this is one of the underlying reasons for sexual love  
for it provides a storehouse of emotions, to be used and reused with the joy of creating.*

*And I became conscious  
that hearing and seeing and feeling and knowing all became the same thing  
that being alone meant feeling good  
and that nothing was the way I had been told  
and I became conscious.*

*And I was flooded with thousands of new and different and fantastic emotions  
and they came from inside of me and some came all the way from New York,  
ZAP, just like that.  
And I knew that I had found someone else who had heard their own signals  
and we became a part of each other  
and this other consciousness communicated and created with mine when  
it told me of flying horses*

*I napped for an hour and dreamt that I was asleep on a pile of refuse  
and couldn't gain enough consciousness to remove myself from the drek  
And that magnificent flying horse came to inform me of my condition.  
That horse had ample horse sense, and horse power,  
and thoroughbred grace and speed and stride  
and I wanted the horse to carry me away into the sky.  
But then I recalled that there are hordes of flying horses  
and that the best ones are wild and must be free and can't, therefore, be ridden.  
And I realized that when you discover yourself in a garbage heap,  
any flying horse would look good.*

*But as to trusting one with your life up in the sky, that's a horse of a different color.  
And there's more than one way to depart from a bed of garbage,  
Only I couldn't think of one, because the stench of the garbage  
was making me feel faint.  
I decided to take a nap before making any decisions  
Once asleep, I realized the horse had been a dream.*

*And my consciousness understood and communicated and created with its sibling,  
and said:*

*"The only miraculous sign I've seen was from a horse that could fly.  
It was free and yet it was still able to give and receive love,  
To be itself and be one with the world;  
with a joyous exuberance that makes my present joy seem nothing in comparison.*

*I wish it were me, after I learn to run, I'd like to learn to fly.  
I have spent many a beautiful moment in refuse piles,  
there is beauty and solitude there,  
I imagine there is ugliness, but it depends what you are looking for.  
I have found out things about myself and learned of other people there,  
What they value and what they try to be.  
I have learned the secrets of nature and  
seen the inadequacies and potentials of humanity  
and I would rather spend the day in a refuse pile than many other things  
which would remind me of the failure of our species.  
Maybe that is why flying horses are found in refuse piles by the hordes,  
for they know that they can find beauty and peace and freedom there.  
Any horse can be a flying horse, everyone can fly  
but more often than not they have gotten rid of their wings long ago  
as trade-ins on a mask or a role or a dependency.  
Maybe the horse didn't want to carry you away,  
but wanted to tell you where your wings were."*

*And I continue to explore myself  
and my consciousness is demystifying the process of growth  
And I am understanding and growing and my growth is  
continuous and becoming stronger.  
And I am aware of my power and my love.*

*And my consciousness knows why I do things or what I am learning way before I do  
and my growth is exciting and joyful and new  
and creating more growth through its being  
and my consciousness has found others  
and the consciousness of others have found mine  
and we share our joy and growth and we move apart and come together  
and we share our joy and growth again  
and sometimes we are guides for each other  
and we are equal because we love ourselves and share our feelings  
and we try very hard not to "rescue" each other for we are like flying horses  
and must be free  
But it is fun to Fly Together.*

## **Terrarium**

*Albert, 1947, 7 years old, December dream Mayan, east, Maryland,  
Mayan. Batz, west, water, old rock.  
California, Mendocino, March 18, 1975  
Sleep, dream and left east rock, mushrooms  
40 acres for sale, water and sacred rock  
June first, 1975, creek and rock protect  
Talk rock and midden save streams, fall save North  
steal midden and take, value protect, dahinda  
Wood tree, under five to six inches, name and Pleiades  
Under is think, old Maya, not Pomo anyway  
Who Native, Hopi or Mayan, Tibet in Asia down sea  
Last Parkman, May 2010 and House, eight to thirteen thousand, b.c.e.  
Other, archaeology Wilkins, White, Gillette, rock sacred  
I own it, help and love, life  
Dreams, Batz, Mam, Dragon  
Zen water near new people*

## **Wife Life Live**

*From Sleep eyes closed dream mind  
as still night at 4:30 A.M. brain pure  
For what the ascend even floor silence,  
cold, ask burn fire, life my heart....coffee.  
Sit center solved much deep unknown, unfinish  
all perfect, no danger, question, hours dawn day.  
Soul world Terrarium, warm wife love  
Travels Norma return, visit heart joy.  
Organic talk helps begin senses.  
Fall dark mystery, late east dawn, not wet winter.  
Then light winter, mind memory miracle 21, love live  
Earth all trees fish, time, land, water..fog high.  
River rush, nature live, birds new rhythm,  
December courage trust Rock sacred, blessed friend.  
Just silence refreshed way ground inner  
Sun, no wind, new day, moon, ether, share, future.*

*Peace, pray, nature, love harmony*



## Poetry Spirit

*As spirit, my Tree Frog Medicine.  
Sleep, dream, hope, Rock.  
Learn mind magic earth.  
Baby, woman: born Navel, Underworld.  
Secret, hidden, mystery talk see  
Three stream Feliz (6 mile) Russian (49 mile) = Ocean.  
Land creek fall level, canyon, music.  
Terrarium circle earth seed, flower, animal.  
Forest oaks, redwood, other more.  
Climb ridge wind, down home  
Five high, six round house peace.  
Love live woman, marry wife Norma.  
Sweat lodge, fire, heart, sing  
All Life, joy soul  
East, West, South: mountain, North Star  
Dawn Sun day, Moon night, ocean, blessed.*

*Love, Nature, harmony, pray, peace...*

## Destiny Positive

*World hidden excellent old,  
Ancient, valley, three fish water.  
Peak, mountain top, Sanel, Kenocti, Arena  
Star north pole, Polaris.  
Mongol/Mayan, Rock (age name)  
Dream Rock: first or second, top???  
Rare, sacred, house, midden, canyon,  
6 round time, 5 floors up high,  
Valley level, Terrarium, bowl.  
3 streams, chief, native, space  
Tell or invisible  
Book or Never  
Mayan, Bätz, Mam  
Tibet, Dragon, metal.*

**Life is an Organic Phenomenon**

dahinda's reading

Oregon Country Fair, July 11, 2010

*She washed his hands and spoke over them  
Blessings*

*we don't need to know everything  
To know that everything is true*

*Come out of doubt to a place  
That is constantly free-flowing  
Moving into the future*

*Forward in direction  
the diamond triangle cuts through it all  
Don't.....worry about anything  
As-is; At ease with what is*

*You have all that  
"Emperor Energy"*

*the card shows heaviness upside down  
carrying a heavy load*

*but you're approaching that place of letting go  
and feeling gratitude*

*Surfing your Emperor's chariot  
Being one with the waters  
In the summer of now*

*The time is here for you to blossom out  
Stop surfing, let go of the reins  
and just BE*

## **Much Eagles in Alaska**

*Much Eagles in Alaska, rare California eagle  
Born in 1991, more for friend Esther  
Early back fight to save eagles and pelicans  
Fight DDT in 1972  
More try, trusty, win  
And here at Terrarium, me over Esther  
Wow of today many good friends eagles  
dear friend Lakota, and Hopi  
My stroke or work hard, new find, less, live  
All friends, Mitch, Ann, much more Esther  
Today peace of water, sacred all love  
Thank both Wanbli, heart and Sky and Earth  
My dabinda much life and Terrarium  
Water and Rock love much  
Such sun and eagles alive  
Peace, all calm, pray and Mayan*

## **Heart of Earth, Heart of Sky**

*Make my guilt vanish  
Do me a divine favor  
Give me strength, give me courage  
in my heart and in my head.  
Since you are my mountain and water,  
may there be no false and no stain,  
and may this write and reading  
come out clear as dawn.  
Love and may the sifting of ancient time  
be complete in my heart, in my mind  
and make my time to future.  
And however many souls, dreams and star or dead,  
You who speak with the Heart of Sky and Earth,  
may all of you together give strength  
to the divine. I have underworld.  
Maya, Mam, peace and prayer*



## **Mind**

*My all one my soul  
who else  
soul or why only  
my dream is life  
or die, is sacred  
much life is heart  
keep me all love  
let me live  
peace world.*

*poet, shaman  
dahinda*

## **Fate, Relax, Destiny**

*Batz, destiny, east, red, orange, impossible  
Considered a power the thought all events and  
Fate control as event, mind, true, one act destiny  
Impossible (push) if resist force. All person positive  
which happen to if person, thing or water (ocean)  
Thought is determined as advance,  
By fate, mind, wind, sky ... firm resolute great.*

*Relax is my basic life  
to live, mind, hope and long positive.  
Pressure change true, native time for passing,  
and my place not (force).  
Perverse kind, satisfied tendency.  
Member threatened life, blessed safe earth live future.  
Relax: substance, make rules, family*

*relax, poet, Mayan, Mongol, Buddha  
soul, God*

## **Fifth Sun**

*Fifth Sun of feminine and masculine center,  
Ether, December 20, 10 pm, 2012, second five seconds shut  
harmonious and spiritual level.  
Six house sides, high; food and sleep  
my thread of Destiny, Rock old star,  
Terrarium of religious rock talk and streams,  
Underworld respect love and peace.  
Water, trees, and steelhead fish;  
Frogs and upper pond, meda and future.  
Fifth floor high house, four streams dreams,  
good friends Zen, water and Rock.  
South, east, north, west exactly  
Sanel Mount, Konocti Mount, star north, Arena rock  
Highest and sea.  
Piece life and wife, Norma love,  
future, friends, peace.*

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dahinda meda

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John Lerch

Erica Lerch

Sarah Livia Brightwood

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Norma Grier

Aerin Lerch





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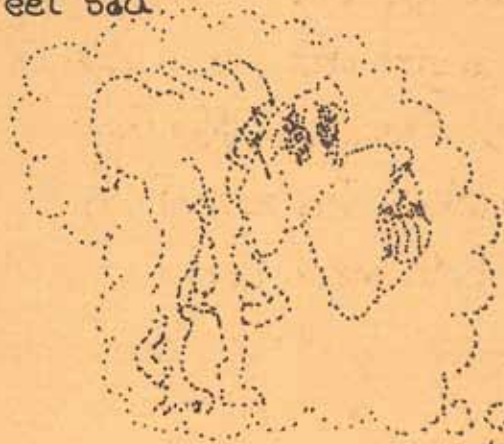
**Mary Doyon** is a writer living in Eugene, Oregon. A graduate of the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communications, she has served as the longtime editor of the Oregon Country Fair newsletter, *The Fair Family News*.

Mary has been a friend of the Lerch family since 1991. She sorted blueberries on dahinda's Royal Blueberries farm for three seasons, and heard many of dahinda's life stories over the years.

Onetime, in the land of Everywhere there lived a girl and a boy named Happy and Helpful. Neither of them had reached the age of six before they both were working very hard, stealing food for Bad, their dog.

At the very start Bad wasn't a real dog at all. He was part of a game that Helpful and Happy thought up. Bad was an invisible dog created to eat some other invisible things that

would sometimes make the children feel sad.



But in a short time they found that their make believe game was really working—they felt good more often and the better they felt, the more

real Bad, the dog, became. 3

Bad was probably the baddest dog in history — on a scale of 0 to 120, Bad was about 119.



Bad was always hungry and he wouldn't eat anything that wasn't terrible. Other than that, Bad wasn't picky at all. So Helpful would snatch a scowl or take somebody's tantrum for Bad's dinner,



and Happy would burgle a bowl of  
bummers — and Bad loved it



Bad also liked to dine on dishes  
of deceit and depression with

saucers of sadness and sorrow.

Happy and Helpful would work hard every day and give Bad a big sack, stuffed with wretchedness, jealousy, frustration, fear, greed or hate, and he would gobble it up without a second thought. There was always plenty of badness around and nobody even seemed to miss it.

Bad wasn't too big at first but with all that bad food around, he grew very quickly and soon

he was huge - so the kids had to work even harder.



Bads favorite food, if Helpful or Happy could find it, was hatred hash; but it wasn't always right there, so he would often have to settle for a bigot-

burger. But there was always plenty for Bad to eat, so life went on with no problems at all, for the bad, bad dog and his tiny masters — for three hundred and sixty four days of the year.





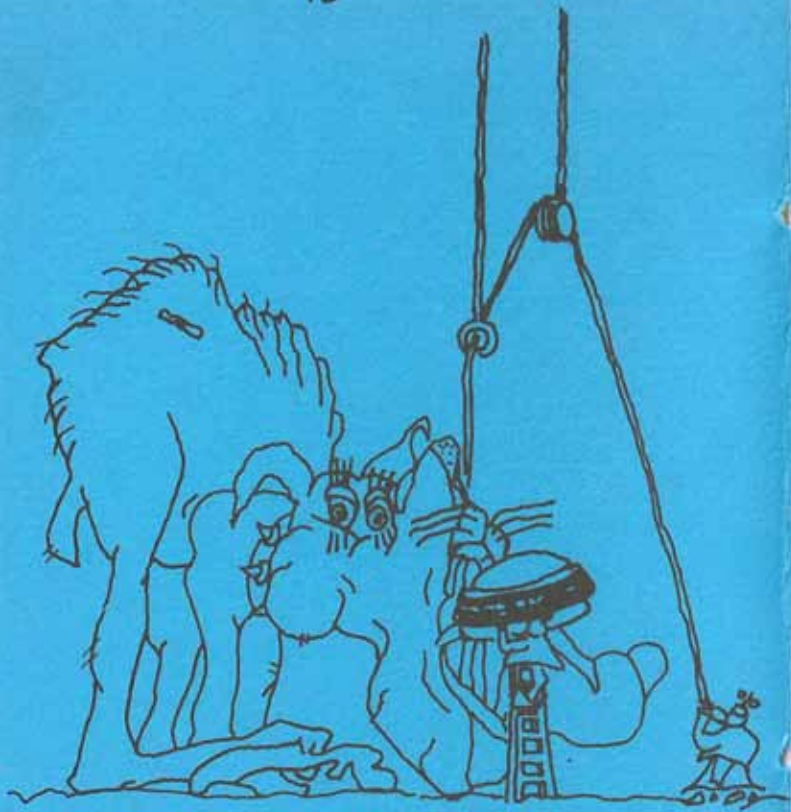
That one other day, every year, was Christmass (Christmas) and for some reason, on that day, there was a lot more goodness and joy than there was badness, which was exactly the opposite from normal. And what few bad things for dinner that Happy and Helpful could find on Christmas, just weren't atrocious enough for Bad. So that bad, bad dog didn't get any misery for a whole day and he felt terrible. He was extreme-

ly difficult to live with. He just stood there growling and snarling, hoping for a little hate; the look in Bad's eyes seemed to say ... "your love and joy is making me miserable". This naturally made the children feel sorry for Bad but since it was just for one day and there was nothing they could do about it anyway, they just played with their presents and enjoyed the day off from their work.



As soon as Christmas was over, there was plenty of evil in Everywhere and Bad continued on his bad eating binge. Happy and Helpful were busier than ever and Bad got bigger and badder and hungrier everyday. Bad would get so hungry that he would sneak out every night just to filch a few frowns or chow down on some crumbs of corruption, even though he had a giant bigotburger everyday.





Now when all this badness kept disappearing from everywhere, the people began to notice a difference; they felt better and things weren't bad quite as often. Bad was famous and the people knew why they were feeling better. Some people even discovered that they could make bad feelings disappear just by sharing them with a trusting friend. Soon, despair, anger and frustration were disappearing so quickly that Bad just

couldn't get enough to eat. Bad got smaller and smaller, and grouchier too. Happy and Helpful were very sad as their big, bad dog kept shrinking away. Finally, Bad shrank so much that he just disappeared.

Then everyday in Everywhere was just like Christmas, for all the badness had gone from the world. After Bad was gone people would hardly ever say or do anything bad because he had

taken it all with him. And when the children saw everyone, everywhere living in love and peace and joy and truthfulness, they didn't feel sad about losing their dog.

When they realized what Bad had done, Helpful thought it was magic. But Happy, being older, just looked up, and smiled, and said, "i love you, bad dog".



Thank you mom & dad  
for your support, respect and  
love which i know you will  
always have for me.

please be happy for me for  
i am happy and at peace with  
my soul, god and the universe.

Love, peace and joy to you  
albert

Organic agricultural entrepreneur dahinda meda shares inspiring, funny stories about his journey from an East Coast childhood to a West Coast hippie lifestyle via architecture school. Through this unlikely route, he came to fulfill his dreams of making the world a little bit better by establishing cutting-edge businesses based on cooperatives, fair trade, and organic farming. dahinda's wanderings also led him to find and preserve a mysterious archaeological site. Interwoven with his professional life and personal activism are heartwarming stories of times with family and friends.

**STAY POSITIVE**



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