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HEARTBREAK
AND RAGE:

TEN YEARS UNDER SUN MYUNG MOON

A CULT SURVIVOR'S MEMOIR

K. GORDON NEUFELD

“Heartbreak and Rage: Ten Years under Sun Myung Moon.”
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Manufactured in the United States of America.

This is a true story.

*Nevertheless, except for the names of prominent
Unification Church leaders, all names have been changed
to preserve the anonymity of those involved.*

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INTRODUCTION

There are two stories in this book. First, there is the story of a young man who was manipulated through mind control into joining a cult whose true nature he was not told about for some time; and when, after four years, the bonds of mind control began to fray and loosen, it nevertheless took another six years before he was ready to leave.

Second, it is the story of a person with desperate emotional needs who believed the religious group he had joined could address his needs; but later, when he concluded it could not, he left.

For those who have never experienced being caught up in a cult, these two narratives may seem contradictory. The public would like to believe that there is one single cause for cultism; that either cults draw their members exclusively from especially vulnerable and needy people; or alternatively, that they entrap their members through mind control, while their former psychological and emotional states played no part in the entrapment.

The truth lies somewhere between these two models of cult involvement. Certainly, emotional neediness may open a person up to cult involvement; it may even lengthen the time or alter the course of that person's involvement; but it cannot account for the incredible persistence a cult member will show in trying to remain with a cult long after it has stopped relieving his emotional neediness, and indeed has begun exacerbating it. And while mind control may be the "clincher" that gets a person thoroughly enmeshed in a cult, it should not be seen as a static condition that lasts for life. Rather, the bonds of mind control begin to rot and fray after only a few years, though they often leave lasting scars that can persist indefinitely unless treated.

In recent years, cult apologists have tried to assert that mind control has been discredited in the psychological community; but in fact, it is still widely accepted, and is even cited in the DSM-IV, the American Psychiatric Association's diagnostic manual, under 300.15, "Dissociative Disorder NOS", a diagnosis that explicitly refers to cults and brainwashing.¹

That said, it is also true that mind control has often been misrepresented, leading the public to believe its victims become robotic and lose all ability to think independently. The reality is much more subtle: mind control merely erects road blocks in the mind, so that certain thoughts (such as the idea of

¹ Steven Hassan, *Releasing the Bonds: Empowering People to Think for Themselves* (Somerville, MA: Freedom of Mind Press, 2000), p. 169.

leaving the group or going against its principles) become too frightening to be contemplated for long; however, in other respects, the victim of mind control appears normal. Those mental road blocks can be torn down without having to resort to drastic tactics such as deprogramming; nevertheless, when a cult member is forced to tear them down on his own, his recovery is apt to be slow and fraught with the peril that he may return to the group.

Unlike many other accounts written by cult survivors, this memoir recounts the complete arc of one person's cult involvement—my own—uninterrupted by a deprogramming. It describes in detail the entire process from the initial transfixion to the final letting go. It is my hope that this account will be of assistance to other cult survivors who are still struggling to attain a similar resolution of their own cult experiences.

K. Gordon Neufeld
July, 2002

PROLOGUE:

THE KNIFE INSIDE ME

I have always felt a desperate need to justify my existence. Of course, such a quest is impossible; yet knowing this has not prevented me from making it the driving force of my life. Since my birth in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada in 1953, and throughout my childhood in Calgary, I have felt that I do not have the right to exist, and that I must make amends to everyone else on Earth for the fact that I nevertheless continue to take up space on the planet.

Yes, I am aware that this is absurd; indeed, I have long sought to free myself from these thoughts. I used to experience the pain of this feeling as if it were a knife inside me, piercing me through the heart; and so I have longed for a way—whether through psychological therapy, or through the love of a woman—to pluck this knife from my heart.

Three feelings are particularly connected to what I have called “the knife inside me”. First, there is a sense of worthlessness; secondly, a feeling of alienation from everyone else on Earth; and finally—and inevitably—depression.

It would be handy if I could offer some straight-forward psychological explanation for how I ended up feeling this way. Yet my childhood was a largely uneventful one. I grew up in a normal middle-class neighborhood and attended good schools, and I suffered no major traumas during that time. I can find no psychological explanation in my upbringing that can sufficiently account for the intensity of these feelings, and though I have a few theories about their origins, I will not explore them here.

Whatever the source of the knife inside me, its main effect has been to make me feel separate from everyone else. I was shy about initiating friendships throughout my school years, and the boys that I hung around with in grade school were mainly loners like myself. However, when I was old enough to attend dances or start dating girls, I found I could not attempt this at all. I was overwhelmed with feelings of guilt and shame whenever I even tried to approach girls. The only school dance I ever attended was a “sock hop” in the seventh grade. I felt so awkward and out of place at this dance, and so riddled with inexplicable guilt and shame afterwards, that I resolved never to attend a school dance again. I never did.

The guilt and shame I felt then was connected to the feeling that I did not have the right to exist. If I approached a girl, and she then rejected me, this

twisted the knife still further inside me; it reinforced the feeling that I don't deserve to be, which (I felt) I ought to have known long before I dared to approach her.

I tried two different tactics during my school years to overcome my feelings of alienation. For a while, I became a quiet dreamer—reading thriller novels and playing with model railroads and building model ships—so I could escape into my own fantasy world by losing myself in my private obsessions. For a while, I went to the opposite extreme and became the weirdest, most rebellious, and just plain oddball student at the entire school. In high school, I was famous for carrying around up to a dozen ballpoint pens at a time, with which I would do bizarre stunts such as simultaneously inserting them into my nostrils, ears and under my lips. Because of my penchant for wordplay, students would often ask me, “Gordon—what’s the joke of the day?” and I would try to make something up on the spot. These foolish tricks certainly got me attention, but not the kind I was hoping for; I became an amusing side show, but I still felt alienated from the others. As this sunk in, I became more and more depressed.

As early as age 13, the idea of suicide entered my thoughts, but fortunately I always pushed it away before it formed into any particular plan. One day in the eleventh grade, while pondering whether I should actually go through with my death wish, I came to a decision that instead I would try to make something of my life, even if I couldn't be everything I wished to be. From that moment on, I took more interest in my studies, and fared better in my grades, while toning down my antics.

Around this time I began to take an interest in environmental issues, since I was so stricken with shame about my own consumption of resources. How could I justify the expenditure of so much wealth on myself, given that I lived in a privileged society, when so many other people lived in poverty? I soon expanded this to a concern about overconsumption in my society generally. The buzz-word in those days for environmental problems was “pollution”, so I read many books about air and water pollution and assisted some anti-pollution groups. I was especially struck by an image from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, where he ironically describes how the average man staggers down the pathway of life trying to shoulder the burden of his many possessions. I resolved that I would go through life carrying as few possessions as possible. (This is one of those youthful resolutions that proved to be less than realistic later on). As well, I became an admirer of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, and for more than a year I read every book I could find on the remarkable Mahatma, whom I told people I intended to emulate.

There was one aspect of Gandhi's life that I did not feel I could imitate, however: his celibacy vow (which he took only at middle age, after marrying and having four children). I had a normal teenager's desires for sex, and did not feel I could go through life entirely lonely. Yet as mentioned previously, I couldn't bring myself to approach any girls, so it was starting to look like I was going to end up emulating the Mahatma anyway. Of course, this greatly added to my depression.

However, at age 20, I finally decided to do something about this problem. I dared to telephone a girl. Sandy was someone I knew from a Geography course we had both attended at the University of Calgary. I had only sat beside her through numerous classes and even walked her home several times. It seemed not altogether impossible that she might go on a date with me.

Fortunately, Sandy agreed. But by daring to ask her out, I had exhausted my bravado; after that, I didn't know what to do with myself. My first date might have perished of awkwardness if Sandy had not taken charge. This was early in the summer of 1973; the famous Calgary Stampede was well underway, featuring rodeo events and a popular midway. Skipping the rodeo, we went straight to the midway, and strolled past barkers hawking chances at stuffed animals and tickets for the "Pot o' Gold". "Do you believe in women's lib?" Sandy asked suddenly. I responded vaguely that I sort of thought that maybe I probably did. "Good," she said, seizing my hand in hers.

Sandy was full of surprises. We went to a dance in the beer garden (located in a hockey arena), and at the end she told me that her parents were away for the weekend, so why not come home with her? This was more than I had ever dreamed of. My first date was supposed to be just "practice", basically just to see if I could even do it. Suddenly, the prospect of having actual sex loomed before me—frightening and compelling.

As it turned out, Sandy, a good Catholic girl, merely had in mind an extended session of upper torso groping. She was not about to "go all the way" on the first date, especially with a man as hesitant and retiring as I was. But I was still amazed by what had happened, and I continued to see Sandy or to correspond with her for several more years.

Soon after this date, I moved to Montreal for one entire winter. Montreal was completely different from Calgary. Most people spoke French, and the city was in Eastern Canada, which I had never visited. I went to Montreal to try to start my career as a writer, which I felt was going nowhere because of university. If I didn't have papers and exams hanging over me, I reasoned, I could get some *real* writing done for once. But the truth turned out to be just the opposite: without deadlines, I couldn't get *anything* done. In the entire time I was in Montreal—some nine months—I only managed to write one depressing poem titled "Lonely Man's Song" and one surrealistic short story named "How to be Forgiven for Existing".

I returned to western Canada the following year to resume undergraduate studies at the University of British Columbia, which offered Creative Writing courses I was eager to take. It turned out that my first girlfriend, Sandy, had chosen to attend the same university, so we rode out to Vancouver on the train together. I saw her frequently for the first few months we were there. Sandy took on a greater load than she could handle, however, and when it became overwhelming, she suddenly withdrew, and returned to her family in Calgary. I did not really understand the seriousness of this until I went home for Christmas. I found Sandy in the hospital following a suicide attempt. One day, she simply decided she'd had enough. She drove her car to the airport and

threw her keys into a snow bank. Taking a flight to Vancouver, she checked into a hotel and swallowed an overdose of sleeping pills.

Sandy's doctors doled out anti-depressant drugs and told her to take life "one step at a time". I wasn't impressed with this treatment, even though Sandy recovered somewhat and was able to go home a few weeks later. It seemed to me that they were only propping her up temporarily, so that they could discharge her. No long-term solution for her emotional pain, as far as I could see, was evident. Having just read *The Primal Scream* by Arthur Janov, I was much influenced by Janov's views. In this, his most famous book, Janov dismisses conventional therapeutic approaches as "patch-work solutions" which merely put a bandage over a person's problems, but which fail to cure emotional pain. Janov claims that his own Primal Therapy, on the other hand, actually *cures* neurosis by discovering its source. I found these arguments very persuasive, and after reading Janov's first book, I read all his subsequent books, such as *The Primal Revolution*, becoming more and more convinced. Only Primal Therapy would do, I decided; everything else was a waste of time. It seemed to me that Primal Therapy was not only what Sandy needed, but also what I needed. Primal Therapy, I believed, would allow me to draw the knife from my heart.

The short stories and poems I wrote for my university courses started to be entirely centered on this theme, though I used a variety of symbols to get the idea across. In my story "At the Point of Intersection", the symbolism is at its most transparent. There, the nameless protagonist is walking down a highway that cuts through empty space. He is carrying a knife whose purpose he doesn't remember. Nothing else exists. He cannot even remember who he is or why he is there. When, at last, his path intersects with that of someone else—the attendant at a lone gas station illuminated by a single light—he discovers that due to the Laws of Relativity, the attendant's watch reads a different time from his own. He realizes that he is ultimately alone in the universe. He goes into a phone booth and dials the number for Emergency. The voice that answers advises him that "If you want to know who you are, you must look at the face of the one you have killed." By forcing himself to recollect what he has been trying to forget, he discovers that he has in fact killed himself, and simultaneously discovers that the knife is lodged in his own heart. Letting out a primal scream, he wrenches the knife free and sends it sailing "in elegant spirals, blade over handle, handle over blade, blade over handle into space."

Above all else, this story shows the almost magical relief I hoped to obtain from Primal Therapy. However, the treatment I so desperately desired was prohibitively expensive, and only available at two locations in the United States from its inventor. A few other therapies had sprung up which imitated Janov's ideas, but Janov had copyrighted the term "Primal Therapy", so these other therapies were forced to call themselves by similar terms, such as "primal feeling therapy". Janov claimed that these imitators were actually dangerous, since their therapy did not deliver the original Primal Therapy, but instead a perverted and harmful form. Both Janov's Primal Institute and his

imitators placed advertisements in *Psychology Today* magazine, so I jotted down their names and phone numbers—mostly in California—knowing full well that I probably could not afford any of them. Nevertheless, the way I saw it, I had to have Primal Therapy or nothing.

I had taken out student loans to complete my Bachelor of Arts in English and Creative Writing. Therefore, not only did I not have any spare money, but the degree I had received was unlikely to open the doors to any money-making jobs in the near future. The only solution I could think of was to work as a construction laborer in northern Canada, where wages were high for manual labor positions. I decided to seek work in northern Canada after my graduation—perhaps in Fort MacMurray, Alberta, where an oils sands reclamation project was under construction.

However, I never got any further north than Edmonton—which is not very far north in Canadian terms. I found a job on a construction site on the outskirts of that city in late spring, 1976, and lasted about two weeks before an accident knocked me out of construction work permanently. I fell from an open roof beam to a platform 30 feet below and the resulting injury to my spine—a crushed lower vertebra—meant a hospital stay and a lengthy convalescence at my parents' home in Calgary. So much for my plans to work in northern Canada! Still, I was receiving Workers' Compensation payments from the Alberta government, and was under doctor's orders not to work for a few months. It occurred to me that I might as well make use of my free time by heading south to California where I could check out Janov's two Primal Institutes, and also investigate his imitators. In addition, I planned to do some sightseeing, since I had never before visited California.

In early August, 1976, therefore, I traveled by bus to Vancouver, where I stopped over to visit some friends with whom I had once lived (in a shared house we had nicknamed "Asylum ½"). I visited with them for several days, and even exhumed my old beer and wine-making equipment from a dank corner of the basement in order to brew up a batch of apple wine, as I had been so fond of doing when I lived there during my university years. I laid down the must, expecting to return later to rack it off. Then I bought a round-trip ticket on a flight to San Francisco that would supposedly bring me back to Vancouver in two weeks' time.

Two weeks. That's how long I expected to be away. My original ticket was for just two weeks.

PART ONE:

JUSTIFICATION BY WORKS

CHAPTER ONE

FALLING OFF THE EARTH

The T-shirt I wore proclaimed in bold white letters on a dark green background: “The Earth is Flat!” It was a sunny Sunday afternoon, August 22, 1976—my second full day in San Francisco. I was sight-seeing on Fisherman’s Wharf near Ghirardelli Square.

“How do you know it’s flat?” a stranger suddenly asked. It was a clean-cut young man, wearing round wire-rimmed spectacles and vaguely shapeless, practical clothing, who was standing beside another young man, who was shorter but dressed similarly.

“Because I fell off it,” I shot back sardonically. I then explained that I didn’t really believe the Earth was flat, but I liked to joke about it. As they questioned me casually, I explained that I was a visitor from Canada, and that I planned to spend two weeks in California before returning. They told me their names: Flip and Drew, and they invited me to a free dinner at a house on Washington Street, in the tony Nob Hill neighborhood. They claimed they were part of a group of people living communally—“teachers, students, professionals and so on”—who called themselves the “Creative Community Project”, and proffered a slip of paper with their address on it. Then they told me that they had their own bus, which they called the “Elephant Bus”, which I could, if I wished, take right to the free dinner. I told them it sounded all right, but I would think about it.

The well-groomed appearance of the two—in an era when long hair and scraggly beards were almost mandatory—suggested they were part of a religious community, even though they’d said nothing about any beliefs. I suspected this was a come-on for some kind of religious group, and I was not particularly open to religious ideas. Still, what harm could come from just going for dinner? I had nothing else planned. In any case, I still had an hour before the “Elephant Bus” showed up—time enough to make up my mind.

I had flown into San Francisco on a Friday, so even though my main intention was to check out Primal Therapy, I knew there would be no point in visiting any therapy centers before Monday. I might as well make the rounds of all the tourist traps while I had the opportunity, so on Saturday I proceeded to do just that. The next day, after leaving the youth hostel, I continued my meanderings on foot throughout San Francisco, map firmly in hand. First I rambled down the entire length of Market Street to the Embarcadero, then

through Chinatown to Telegraph Hill and the Coit Tower. From the top of the Tower, I saw the full masted sailing ships – a special interest of mine—near Fisherman’s Wharf, and decided to go down for a closer look. Somewhere along the way, I bought a postcard depicting some crab vendors and mailed it to my friends in Vancouver, one of whom kept this card (and the letters that followed) and returned them to me years later. That first card contained nothing but puns. “Dear Asylum ½,” I wrote, “I don’t want to sound like an old crab nor do I want to appear shellfish, nor indeed do I want to clam up rather than being my usual oysterous self, but I met a suspicious-looking fellow on the wharf who said he was a Mafia lobster and showed me his Mafia identification card with his name on it: “Crust, A. Sean, hit man”, so I hit him. Gordon.”

After mailing this card, I continued on my way until I found a sunny spot on the grass in front of Ghirardelli Square, where I opened my backpack, and pulled out the novel I was reading—*A Singular Man* by J.P. Donleavy—and started to read. It was probably the backpack that attracted the attention of Flip and Drew: it told them I was a traveler, and therefore likely to accept a free meal. As soon as I finished my reading and stood up, they approached me.

After our brief conversation, I turned around and went to a nearby open-air restaurant, and pondered whether I should go. I couldn’t think of one good reason why I shouldn’t accept their generous offer of a free dinner, so I headed down to find the Elephant Bus.

A number of members of the Creative Community Project were waiting when I arrived, and they approached me at once. I learned that they liked to call themselves “the Oakland Family”. It was hard not to like these people; they were so friendly and wanted to know everything about me. Some of the Family members were attractive young women, and I was delighted when they paid eager attention to me.

The “Elephant Bus” was a converted yellow school bus, painted over with a gray mural that looked something like an elephant. When I climbed on board, still more Family members shook my hand, asked my name, and wanted to know where I was from. As soon as the bus started up, a young man at the front produced a guitar and asked everyone to sing along with him. They sang “If I Had a Hammer” and other folk songs. Not only did they know the words to all these songs; a few of them even made hand gestures to go with the words. I was beginning to think they were all a little too cheerful for their own good, but at the same, I was charmed by them.

The bus climbed up San Francisco’s famous hills to a classic three-storey home on Washington Street. The house was meticulously painted, clean and brightly-lit; and as soon as I came through the front door, a pert young sister named Annie, sitting at a desk like a receptionist, pushed forward a guest book for me to sign. A basket for “donations” stood alongside the guest book. Annie inquired who had invited me. It seemed to be important to her that either Flip or Drew should sit beside me throughout the evening, but since neither was available, another “brother” from the Family sat with me instead.

The living room contained almost no furniture. Everyone sat cross-legged on the floor, in little knots of four or five. It was easy to distinguish the guests from the Family members: the guests were mostly travelers from all over the United States and Europe; if they were young men, they usually sported long, stringy hair and beards. If asked—which I was repeatedly—I would launch into my usual spiel: where I was from; what I was doing in San Francisco; and what I did for a living—aspiring writer. I met many nice young “sisters” in the Family, and I was flattered by their unguarded friendliness toward me. (Who knows, I thought: I might at last find a girlfriend among these beaming California girls!)

Abruptly the strumming of a guitar signaled that dinner was served. Everyone stood up and assembled in the dining room, where vegetarian casseroles (made from squash and cucumbers from their own farm) and salads were set out. Once everyone had been arranged in a circle around the serving tables, the master of ceremonies called for a number of rituals to be observed. Newcomers introduced themselves and stated where they were from (and, no matter what they said, it was wildly applauded by the Family members); more singing ensued (with or without hand gestures); and a moment of silence was observed to give thanks to “God or whatever you call your higher power”. Afterwards everyone formed a line around the buffet table, but even before I got there, a plate of food was thrust into my hands by a smiling “brother”. (The Family members evidently considered this an important act of kindness). I accepted the plate gratefully and went back to the living room and sat down on the floor next to my designated Family member.

After all the guests were again seated on the floor and began to eat their dinners, holding their plates over their laps, the guitar-player stood up again, and announced that he was the emcee for the evening. He led the Family members and guests through another round of songs, introduced a few individual Family members who sang their own songs—invariably about being lost souls who had discovered perfect happiness—and then introduced the speaker, an energetic woman in her late twenties named Terry. I recall almost nothing of what she said. It was as bland and effervescent as mineral water, and as insubstantial as air. The only point that sticks with me is a reference to the isolation of urban people—how men and women on elevators or buses are afraid to talk to each other, and therefore end up staring at the elevator numbers or reading a newspaper instead of speaking. That hit home with me because it reminded me of my own shyness and loneliness.

Terry’s talk suggested that the Creative Community Project was the answer. At the end of her speech, she introduced a slide show about their farm in Boonville in Mendocino County, where the Family members gathered every weekend for recreation and games, and she invited the guests to go along with them. It all sounded pretty laid-back: one slide even showed a group of people stretched out and napping on the grass, which Terry called “Activity A”, as though this happened often at Boonville.

As soon as the lights went up, the hard sell began: registration forms were produced, and a “workshop fee” of twelve dollars was mentioned. The

farm certainly sounded like a relaxing, cheerful place to spend a few days, but I had other plans, so I begged off. The brother who had been appointed to sit with me throughout the meal did not try very hard to dissuade me (since I had told him of my agnostic views), and none of the others who dropped by after the slide show were successful in getting me to say more than “maybe” to their very earnest wish that I should go. In the end, they settled for inviting me back for another free dinner again the next day.

And with that, the evening ended. I walked back through darkened streets to the youth hostel. (I suppose I was too naive to worry about being mugged). Somewhere along the way I passed a Shell service station where the letter “S” had fallen off the sign. This amused me because I thought the owner was disparaging his own business. Later, when I became a committed Unification Church member, I decided that the broken sign had been a message from God telling me that the entire world—apart from the Family—was “hell”.

When I went to sleep in my hostel bed that night, I had no plans to go back to the Creative Community Project; after all, I had other plans.

The next morning was a Monday, and that meant that I could get on with my main purpose for visiting California. I caught a bus to South San Francisco, where a branch of The Primal Institute was located. I had no appointment; I decided to just show up and look around. I’m not sure what I expected to learn by doing this. In any event, after consulting my map and walking a fair distance, I located the residential side street the Institute was on. Two little boys spotted me as I walked down the street, and began to emit mock “primal screams” in my direction. They shrieked gleefully to my retreating back until I was well down the block. “Weird,” I thought. Then I entered the Primal Institute.

There I found an austere receptionist who listened to my explanation of why I had appeared. No, she could not let me “look around”, because patients were being treated inside. When I explained that I was also planning to visit some of the therapy centers of which Arthur Janov did not approve, she coldly handed me a magazine article explaining why only Janov’s Primal Institute was capable of administering Primal Therapy properly. (The article was written by Janov). I then explained to her my dilemma—I was a visiting Canadian who couldn’t afford the official therapy, which was more expensive than the non-approved versions, but I nevertheless felt that there was no choice, since I believed all other therapies were useless. Upon hearing this, she warmed to me a little, and admitted that she too was Canadian who lived and worked illegally in the United States because it was the only way she could afford the therapy. To oblige her, I sat down in the waiting room and read the article, which eased none of my doubts nor solved my dilemma.

After I got back to the city, I moved on to the next item on my agenda. There was a therapy center that imitated Janov’s ideas in the Nob Hill district on Washington Street, not three blocks from the Creative Community Project. I went there at once, and explained that I was simply checking the place out. The people here were much friendlier; they had a few ideas about how my financial problems could be resolved. I felt that this second visit was more

promising. Returning to the sunshine, I sat down on the grass in nearby Lafayette Park to plan my next move.

I suspect that many important decisions are made in exactly this way: on the spur of the moment, based on casual coincidence, with nothing particular planned. It was a fine sunny day, and though I intended to take the bus to San Anselmo (north of San Francisco) the next day to visit another of Janov's imitators, there was nothing planned for that particular afternoon. I was free to go sight-seeing again. But I realized that I was also only a few blocks from the Creative Community Project, and hadn't they said I should come by early and help them prepare dinner? Making dinner for more than a hundred people was no easy job. Perhaps—since it was so close anyway—I should go over there and do just that. After all, they were such nice people, and I always enjoyed "doing my bit" to help others.

What I did not know—and only learned much later—was that the Family members urged guests to show up early so they would already be inside when the picketers arrived. During the summer and fall of 1976, picketers from an organization called "Eclipse" stood outside the Washington Street house nearly every day, just before dinnertime, to warn people that the Creative Community Project was actually the Unification Church of Sun Myung Moon. But when I arrived at the house, it was still early in the afternoon, so no picketers were there to warn me.

Annie opened the door with surprise—she hadn't yet taken up her customary position behind the reception desk—and I was shown to the kitchen, where I was asked to chop squash and other vegetables for the casseroles they served every day. A few other sisters were already in the kitchen when I arrived, and as I sliced and diced I did not mind answering all the usual questions. They certainly acted as if my story was utterly fascinating, and I reciprocated by asking for their stories. As usual, they all ended their stories the same way, by having discovered the ultimate "Truth" (and the way they said it, you could practically hear the capital "T").

The dinner program that followed was almost identical to the one I'd attended the previous night. This time, however, when I seated myself on the floor, there was no designated "host" for me. Suddenly, however, a buoyant, black-haired and round-figured sister named Mary-Jane sat down next to me. As usual, we asked each other for an outline of our lives. Mary-Jane grew up in Philadelphia, but eventually landed in California. Before long she started to press me to go up to the Boonville farm for a mid-week workshop they called the "Sheep Barn Experience". I offered the usual objections: my round-trip plane ticket was only for two weeks; I wanted to go to San Anselmo the next day; and though the farm sounded very nice, it didn't fit my schedule. Mary-Jane countered by saying that the workshop was only for three days; I could leave on Tuesday and return on Friday night; and in any case, it would be fun.

It suddenly occurred to me that unless I went, Mary-Jane couldn't go. That surprised me. The previous day during the slide show, Terry made it sound like the Boonville farm was a place where the Family members routinely went for recreation. Couldn't you go up there anyway? I asked her.

No, she answered, and then, more hesitantly, well, yes. She looked a bit uncomfortable, so I didn't press the point. If I wanted to please Mary-Jane, I realized, I would have to go to Boonville. I began to consider this idea. I didn't, after all, have a fixed agenda for my stay in California; if necessary, I could delay my flight back to Vancouver (and the way my ticket was set up, there would be no extra cost); and no-one back home would be alarmed if I returned late. Why not check it out? It was only three days. Before long, Mary-Jane had convinced me to postpone my excursion to San Anselmo so I could attend the "Sheep Barn Experience", and I produced twelve dollars in traveler's checks to pay for the workshop. As if to clinch the sale, a freckle-faced sister named Becky pointed out to me that the bus to Boonville happened to pass right through San Anselmo. She was probably hoping that if I got on the "Elephant Bus" for a ride to San Anselmo, they could persuade me to go to Boonville instead. (What she didn't mention was that the Elephant Bus only went to Boonville late at night, long after dinner was over, and that I probably wouldn't want to be dropped off in an unfamiliar town in the middle of the night.) In any case, the extra arm-twisting wasn't needed; I had already decided to go, so senior members of the community put their hands together to devise a plan that would get me there early, before I could change my mind. Instead of waiting for the Elephant Bus, they suggested I go with another guest (and his appointed shadow) in a car up the Pacific Coast Highway—the scenic route. The scenery was the clincher; I readily agreed. (It later occurred to me that they also wanted me to take this route for a more mundane reason—namely, because it does *not* pass through San Anselmo).

Late in the morning on Tuesday, August 25, the four of us set out in a Family car along the road that hugs the Pacific coastline. Mary-Jane and I sat in the back seat, while the front seat was occupied by another Family member—I think her nickname was "Poppy"—and another guest, Andrew, a young accountant from England who, like me, just happened to be passing through San Francisco. As usual, we repeated the stories of our lives as we drove along. It was a fine sunny day and the scenery was as beautiful as promised. I noticed, however, that in spite of the mix of men and women in the car, there was no sexual tension in the atmosphere—mostly because the two "sisters" gave off almost no sexual vibes. Our chatter was light and innocent and the day went by with little to mark it in my memory. Around six o'clock we turned off the coastal highway and proceeded east to the town of Boonville, close to Ukiah. After passing through the town, we came to the gates of the farm. A formidable wooden gate, marked with a "No Trespassing" sign, stood in the way, and a brother who acted as a guard checked us over before he let us through. The property was completely fenced off, I suddenly realized. By this time, I was too committed to back out, though the sight of the gate troubled me. We drove on through, passed some small buildings near an apple orchard and a vegetable garden, and then traveled up a rutted dirt road until we arrived at the sheep barn. There wasn't a sheep in sight.

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