

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

TO JILL WITH LOVE

**MEMOIRS OF
A MODERN DAY MYSTIC**

Jill Lowy

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

To Jill, With Love
Memoirs of a Modern Day Mystic

Copyright c 2008
Jill Lowy

Library of Congress Control Number: 2008909331

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, stored in any electronic system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise without written permission from the author. Brief quotations may be used for literary reviews.

Cover design by: Todd Engel

ISBN: 978-1-60145-588-8
First Printing: 2008

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
Please email: Jilllowy@yahoo.com

Printed in the USA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is dedicated to my spiritual mentor, who I call James. I have really, never met anyone quite like him in my entire life. He was quite an inspiration and spiritual friend that helped to transform my life. Many blessing to him and all spiritual teachers, who guide others to truth and self-realization.

I want to thank my father and my brother for their love and understanding throughout the years, especially during those difficult times. I want to bless my dear friends, Dianne and Patti for all their love and support. And I want to thank Paul for his love and patience.

May all those on the spiritual path find the wisdom, truth and happiness that they seek!

“Seek and ye shall find.
Knock and the door shall be opened onto you.”

Matthew 7:7



TO JILL, WITH LOVE



“Empty yourself of everything.
Let the mind rest at peace.
The ten thousand things rise and fall while the Self watches
their return.
They grow and flourish and then return to the source.
Returning to the source is stillness, which is the way of nature.
The way of nature is unchanging.
Knowing constancy is insight.
Not knowing constancy leads to disaster.
Knowing constancy, the mind is open.
With an open mind, you will be openhearted.
Being openhearted, you will act royally.
Being royal, you will attain the divine.
Being divine, you will be at one with the Tao.
Being at one with the Tao is eternal.
And though the body dies, the Tao will never pass away.”

Lao Tsu

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

THOTH
EGYPTIAN GOD OF MAGIC AND
MYSTICISM

TO JILL, WITH LOVE



INTRODUCTION

“Walking the Spiritual Path is learning to be awake in the Universe when everyone else seems asleep.”

Jill Lowy

My publisher once asked me the question, “If Hollywood made a movie about your life, why would anyone want to go to see it?” Ergo, if I wrote a book about my life, why would anyone want to read it? I answered, “My life has certainly had some interesting twists and turns!” She laughed and agreed.

Although the stories in this book are all true, it is really not an autobiography. I wanted to share some interesting stories about my life that relate to spirituality. I also wanted to write down my reflections and how these events impacted my spiritual development. I think that many people on the spiritual path will be able to identify with them and know they are not alone in their struggles. In my own life, I have found it very helpful to know that others have went through times of struggle, suffering, excitement, jubilation and wonder. I find it encouraging and it helps me to move forward. I hope others will find some encouragement from my stories. I also give my readers an opportunity to reflect on their own

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

spirituality. Some of the stories are normal, everyday events; others are paranormal, extraordinary events. But all of the stories relate to spirituality and to the many challenges that many of us have to go through on our own spiritual quest.



ONE

I was initiated into the Spiritual and Esoteric Arts at Lotus Temple in Chicago, Illinois. This Tradition consists of a vast array of esoteric knowledge, including the ancient arts of meditation, magic, and mysticism. It is an oral spiritual tradition passed on from teacher to disciple.

I was about twenty-five years old at the time and living in Chicago. I was also working on my Master's Degree in Psychology at the Illinois Institute of Technology. It was a time of intense study, meditation and spiritual awakening for me.

Many of the following stories are about simple interesting everyday events that had a profound impact on my spiritual conceptions about life. Some of the stories are about the magic and mysticism that we may rarely see, but are always working behind the scenes in our lives.

It is said, "When the student is ready, the teacher will come." My spiritual teacher, who I call James, influenced my life in many ways. He helped me to open up my eyes to see things from a new spiritual

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

perspective. He challenged my many misconceptions about the universe and held me responsible for my actions. By his example, I learned to stand up to the many challenges in life and to overcome obstacles in my spiritual path.



INITIATION

I was initiated into the spiritual path of the Hermetic Tradition during the spring of 1980 at Lotus Temple in Chicago, Illinois. It was a night I will never forget. The Initiation Ritual happened on a Sunday at three o'clock in the morning. I couldn't believe we had to get up so early for the Initiation. I was living in Waukegan at the time, which is about an hour away from Chicago. So I had to get up at one o'clock in the morning, get dressed and head into Chicago. The only good thing about going to Chicago this early is that there is very little traffic. I arrived at the Temple at about two-thirty. Several other people were there waiting for the Ritual to begin. There was no talking allowed, so we waited in silence for things to begin. At three o'clock, the spiritual leaders led us into the main Temple Hall. We were quietly asked to sit down before the Temple Altar. At the altar, the Spiritual Preceptor was sitting, lotus style in meditation. The room was aglow by the light of many candles. Very softly, a gong was sounded which began the ceremony. One spiritual leader created a magical circle with his sword while another chanted, and outlined the circle with beautiful lotus pedals. I could begin to feel the electricity in the air and I felt a tingling rise up my spine. It was very surreal and I could sense an unseen presence in the room. One by one, we were led in front of the Spiritual Preceptor. I watched as several people went before him and were initiated into the Temple. It was now my turn and I felt like a light bulb that had been suddenly turned on, glowing with energy. When I sat before the Spiritual Preceptor, I really felt like I was in the presence of the Divine. I felt like my soul was laid bare with nowhere to hide. I remember the Preceptor smiled, which immediately melted my

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

heart. He then whispered something in my ear, which was only for me to hear. I was then given a rope with three knots, symbolizing the three planes of creation and my commitment to the spiritual path. There were a couple more people to be initiated after me and then the ritual was completed. After the Initiation Ritual, we left in complete silence. I drove home thinking about the experience at the Temple. It had been a very powerful experience and represented a new beginning in my life.

We all experience many “initiations” during our lifetime. We are born on the earth and are initiated to life on this physical plane. We are initiated into our schools, clubs, jobs, and religious organizations. Initiation is a path of new beginning and awareness. It marks a new period of change and growth.

My initiation into Lotus Temple was a time of new spiritual beginning for me. My soul was thirsting for spiritual fulfillment. I was no longer satisfied with my life, the way it was. I was seeking a greater understanding of my place in the Cosmos. My initiation marked a passageway into the path of spirituality and opened a door to new experiences and awareness.

REFLECTION

Are you happy with your life? Do you ever look up at the night sky and wonder who you are, and why you are here on this planet? Do you hear the calling of your heart? Have you ever felt that something was missing in your life? What does your soul tell you? What could bring fulfillment to your life right here and now?

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

“O Me O life”
Walt Whitman

“O Me! O life!of the questions of these receiving;
Of the endless trains of the faithless, of cities filled with
the foolish;
Of myself forever reproaching myself.....
Of the eyes that vainly crave the light...of the struggle
ever renewed;
Of the poor results of all, of the plodding and sordid
crowds,
I see around me;
Of the empty and useless years of the rest, with the rest
Of me intertwined;
The question, O me! So sad, recurring. What good amid
these,
O me, O life?

Answer

That you are here, that life exists and identity; That the
powerful play goes on, and you will contribute a verse.”

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

PRIESTESS

Following my initiation into the spiritual path at Lotus Temple, I decided to devote my life to spirituality and began priest/priestess training. The priest/ess training at Lotus Temple consisted of an entire year or “solar cycle” (which has a mystical meaning connected with the sun and its’ complete sojourn through all the twelve astrological signs).

The priest/ess training was held weekly at the Lotus Temple under the tutelage of a Spiritual Preceptor. There were also several other people undergoing the priest/ess training with me. During the priest/ess training, I experienced many wonderful and startling events that changed my life. I spent much time examining my life, studying the esoteric sciences, and learning to meditate. I found that the world was not quite, what I had thought it was and underwent a spiritual transformation. I think some of the most valuable lessons consisted of learning about my own foibles, weaknesses, and misconceptions about the world around me. These were often difficult lessons but taught me most about myself and other people. I found that we all have a black and white mirror to our souls, and taking a close look at our positive and negative aspects is not always easy. Undergoing priest/priestess training is not like going to school or seminary. It is much more difficult as it requires work on your ego. And the ego does not want to change or see itself for what it is. During priest/ess training, I could not believe all the emotional and psychological baggage; I had been carrying throughout the years. I had to look at myself honestly and work on my problems. This was very difficult for me and still is to this day.

REFLECTION

What emotional baggage are you carrying in your own life? Is it heavy baggage? In other words, does it help you to move forward or weigh you down? Have you taken time to look inside your baggage? Take a moment now to look at the baggage you are carrying? Close your eyes. Relax. Imagine what kind of baggage you have in your closet. What color is it? How big is it? Now open your baggage and take a look inside. What is the first thing you see? Probably, you see some clothes. What memories do these clothes bring to your mind? Take a few seconds to explore them. Now take a look deeper into your baggage. What emotions or trauma are you carrying in there? Are there any unresolved feelings or pain that you may be carrying? Be honest with yourself. It is all right to have these emotions or feelings. It is more important to be aware of them. They have something to teach you! And if you listen, the baggage will help you to move forward rather than holding you back. Once you get to your destination, you will no longer need your baggage.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

ZEN MOMENT

I met Dan when I began the priest/ess training at Lotus Temple back in 1981. We both started the priest/ess training together and it was a time, I will always remember. Dan was a nice guy and very interested in astrology and spirituality. We became friends and I would visit him at his house often after class. He was one of the first astrologers I know, to begin using a computer for chart computation. He had one of those early Radio Shack computers that were pretty amazing at the time. No longer was it necessary to do all those hours of mathematical calculations to set up a natal horoscope.

Dan and I shared many metaphysical interests. I had taken many courses in philosophy and astrology while attending college. He had taken a series of astrological classes at Lotus Temple and became a certified astrologer. He was a Gemini with a very quick mind interested in exploring the secrets of the universe. He also was a bus driver and married to a woman named Joy, who was also my friend.

One of the first memorable episodes that we shared while going through priest/ess training was what I call the "Zen Moment". We were about midway into our spiritual training, when one day our Teacher asked either of us, if we knew what Zen was. I said that I had some experience with it and had practiced Zen meditation. Then he asked Dan. And Dan said that he did not know what Zen was. Our Teacher, who was seated in front of us at the time, had a large glass of water, right next to him. He immediately took the full glass of water and dumped it over Dan's head! I could hardly believe it and I just burst out

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

laughing. Dan was also a good sport about it and laughed too, as the water cascaded down his forehead

The essence of Zen is to experience life without preconceptions leading to “satori” or enlightenment. Zen is kind of like direct intuitive experience without an explanation or logical analysis. In some Zen Buddhist temples, a Zen master will give the student a “koan” to meditate and contemplate on, such as, “What is the sound of one hand clapping?” The question defies ordinary analysis, but it does have an answer. The student confronts the Master until he has solved the riddle or found the right answer.

I went through a peculiar Zen enlightenment while going through college. I had pledged to a sorority and was going through “hell week”. (Hell week is a time when pledges to a sorority have to go through all kinds of hellacious experiences in order to be accepted into the sorority). All of us were living together for one week at the sorority house. The sorority sisters would awaken us sporadically, leaving us with little sleep. We would then have to do various demeaning activities such as, washing a sorority sister’s car or cleaning the bathroom, or running down the street in weird clothing. This went on for an entire week while we were attending our normal classes at college. By the end of the week, most of us were feeling pretty exhausted. On the last day, we had to go for a long hike throughout the campus dressed in these ridiculous outfits. We were quite the sight! Then we were all filed back into the sorority house in the main living room. I remember that it was very late at around midnight and we all had to strip down to our underwear. Then in military-like fashion, the sisters started yelling at us; calling us all kinds of names and how we were unworthy to become sisters at the sorority. We were then

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

confronted; one by one, in front of the entire group of sorority sisters. Well when it was my turn, I was asked to pee in this bowl on the floor. I was flabbergasted! There was no way I could pee in front of everyone and I finally said, "I don't have to go!" And everyone laughed! I felt really humiliated and turned as red as a beet. I was then led to a small room with one of the sorority leaders and my "big sister".

Each person is assigned a big sister while going through hell week as a kind of moral support. In the room, I was seated in front of the sorority leader and next to my big sister. She told me that I had gone through all of hell week and had just one thing left to do, in order to be accepted into the sorority. She told me to give up my ring that my big sister had given me at the beginning of hell week. Now at the beginning of hell week, I had been introduced to my sorority big sister. At that time she had given me this ring. She told me to never surrender it or give it to anyone. And later, we had also become friends, so I didn't take her statement lightly. I was at a real stalemate as to what to do. I didn't know whether to give up the ring as requested by the sorority leader or to keep it, as instructed by my sorority big sister. And I had to do something quick! I was frantic and really at a loss of what to do.

Then all of a sudden, I experienced a satori or realization. It was not the result of logical deduction. In a flash, I knew the correct answer as it had just come to me through my intuition. I simply handed over the ring. When asked why I was doing that, I smiled and said, "We are all sisters here. My surrendering it to you is like surrendering it to my big sister and is a trust we have with all of our sisters". This was the right answer and I did not arrive at it by deductive logic. The answer had come to me in almost an illumination and was my Zen koan that I had solved!

REFLECTION

Have you ever been caught in a paradoxical situation? One where you are damned if you do and damned if you don't? At these moments, reason flies out the window. Normal logic is useless and you have to find another way. At these moments, you either break down or meet your intuition. Your intuition always knows the exact answer to any problem or situation.

Think about this ancient riddle asked by the Sphinx, "What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs in the afternoon and three legs in the evening?"

Riddles were used by ancient spiritual teachers to help their students move beyond normal logical thinking and tap into their intuition. "Who am I" is one of the biggest riddles. Take a moment to relax and close your eyes. Watch your breath flow in and out for ten times. Then ask yourself the question, "Who am I". See what happens. Who are you really? Do you think that you are your physical body? Then when your body changes, do you change? Do you think you are your emotions? When you are angry, are you still you? Do you think you are your thoughts? When you have a thought, where did it come from? Who is it that moves your body, feels your emotions and thinks different thoughts?

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

ILLUSIONS

I have found it interesting over the years, while being associated with various religious and spiritual organizations, how some people can be so caught up in their illusions. I remember one day, we had this woman whose name was Teresa, visiting Lotus Temple for *Satsang*. *Satsang* is basically a Hindu term meaning “Talk of Truth or God”. Our Spiritual Teacher was leading *Satsang*, when all of a sudden; our visitor exclaimed that she was enlightened by God. Well, several of us looked at each other and kind of chuckled. We basically wanted to dismiss her outburst, as clearly she was not enlightened, though I think she believed she was. The Spiritual Preceptor proceeded to question her at length about her perception. Everyone in the room was feeling uncomfortable and basically just wanted to ignore her and continue with *Satsang*. But our Teacher kept on pressing Teresa regarding her perception of enlightenment. She spoke of how she had been a teacher and that after class one day, God enlightened her. She said that God had shown her the real Truth and only she knew the right pathway to God. After further discourse, finally our Teacher said to Teresa that she was not enlightened, because he could not feel any enlightenment coming from her. She just frowned, got up and left the Temple without saying one word. She clearly was not enlightened and was self-delusional. When someone is enlightened, it radiates outward from their inner being.

I have met several people on the spiritual path who claimed they were enlightened throughout my years of esoteric study. Many of them were into ego aggrandizement or power games. It is sometimes difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff. There

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

is an old Zen saying that, “Those who say, do not know and those that know, do not say.” This seems paradoxical, but basically means that the wise sages don’t go off spouting what they know, but that the foolish and ignorant often do.

Some religious and spiritual people like Teresa, think that only they are enlightened and know God. She reminded me of the Jehovah witnesses (I don’t mean to pick on the Jehovah Witnesses per se, but only those that try to proselytize other people, who are not interested in conversion) that come knocking on your door, claiming that only they know the truth about God. For the most part they could care less about what you think and just want to convert you to their own beliefs. While living in an apartment in Chicago, I was visited regularly by the Jehovah witnesses. Normally, I would ignore them and just not answer the door. But one day, they caught me off guard and I answered the door, thinking it was someone else. I was greeted by two men dressed quite nicely in black suits. They smiled and asked me if I believed in God. I replied, “Of course, She is with us at this very moment!” They both looked at each other. Then, the taller man in black said, “So you believe that God is a woman!?!?” I said, “Most definitely, God is really a Goddess!” “Ohhhhhh!” they replied. “But you are mistaken; the Bible says that God is a He.” I said, “Well the Goddess disagrees with you and would like to set the record straight with you today!” Well at that point, the men in black wished me a good day and politely left. I have to admit that I was having a bit of fun with them and wanted to challenge their beliefs about God. All thoughts about God are just that, thoughts about God. I have never met God, so I really can’t say who or what God truly is. I do have my own conceptions of God, like most other people, but I realize that they are conceptions. God is beyond conceptions.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

There are religious fundamentalists who think that only they hold the keys to the Kingdom of God. Many Christians believe only those who believe in Jesus Christ will be saved. There are Moslems who think that only the faithful of Allah will go to Heaven. There are also Hindus who think that only their Guru is the enlightened one.

There are many pathways to God. There is no person or religion that can encompass God. God just is! And like the story of the elephant and the blind men, many people and religions think only they know God.

REFLECTION

“The Story Of The Elephant And The Blind Men”

Once upon a time there lived a family of three young blind boys who lived with their father in rural India. One day the boy's father was taking care of an elephant. The father told his sons to go and clean the elephant. This was the first time his sons had encountered an elephant before. One son was cleaning the tail, another was cleaning the elephant's leg and another son was cleaning its' trunk. One son, who was cleaning the trunk, said to the others that he was surprised at how long and flexible an elephant was “kind of like a hose”. The second son, who was cleaning the tail, said “Oh, you must be mistaken as I find the elephant to be like a rope suspended from the sky”. The third son said to the others, “You are all very much mistaken; an elephant has four huge columns like a table that connect at the

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

top!” Well soon they began to quarrel as to who was right and wrong. Suddenly their father saw that his sons were quarreling and asked them what they were fighting about. When his sons told him, he laughed and said, “You are all wrong and right at the same time!” Then he explained to his sons that an elephant was all those things and more. He went on to describe what an elephant really was.

We are like the blind sons who think that we know who God is. We fight and quarrel about who knows the truth about God. The truth is that there are many pathways to God. There are many religions that describe their pathway to God. Each religion has its own truth and no religion is better than another religion when it comes to the nature of God.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

DISTURBED WOMAN IN A RESTAURANT

One day my spiritual mentor, James and I were eating at a local greasy spoon restaurant in downtown Chicago. We were sitting at our table, just minding our business, talking and eating our breakfast. All of a sudden, James begins yelling at this woman at a table across from us! I was very startled and looked over at her. She had been cussing and making faces at him. She appeared very emotionally disturbed and made obscene gestures at us. Now most people would have ignored her and just went on with their business, but James let her have it! James told her flat out, to shut up and mind her own dam business! Wow! This was one of those learning moments for me. I normally would have ignored someone like that, but James did not. He wanted her to know that she had been violating our peace and tranquility. This was not acceptable and he was making her responsible for her behavior.

I find it interesting that many people think that spiritual leaders should be very gentle; docile, reverent type people, who never challenge others. But this was certainly not the case with James! He always stood up to injustice and hypocrisy with honesty and truth. He really practiced what he preached and lived his ethics in daily life. I liked that about James and it profoundly impacted my own spirituality.

The spiritual path is something to be lived everyday with everyone and everything. Every situation and every person that comes into our lives is part of our spiritual journey. Spirituality is not just something that you try to do on Sundays when you might go to Church! Spirituality is an approach to life and it

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

encompasses how you live your life. It is your inner guide that shows you how your actions and reactions to life, either lead to happiness or sorrow. Spirituality helps you to discover who you really are!

If there is one important thing, I learned from my Teacher, it is that you are responsible for your actions. And that our actions affect other people. We also have a responsibility to show other people that they are also responsible for their own actions. The woman at the restaurant thought it was all right to disturb other people. She had little regard as to how her actions were affecting others. And it was interesting that everyone in the restaurant just ignored her. And that I also was just ignoring her. But not James! He wanted to let her know that it is not acceptable to intrude on other people. He wanted her to learn from that experience and not mistreat any other people. It would have been very easy to just ignore this disturbed woman, but then she would never learn anything about what is right and what is wrong.

REFLECTION

Can you think of a time when someone has disturbed your peace of mind? How did this affect you? How did you react? Did you say anything about it? Often in these situations, we are being tested to see if we will stand up for what is right. How many times have you seen in the news where someone was being attacked and everyone just stood around and watched? This happens often! A woman was being raped in New York

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

and everyone closed their doors. A man was being beat up on a public bus in Chicago and everyone in the bus just watched. Another man was hit by a car in downtown Denver and left lying in the middle of the street. Many people just walked on by and did not stop to help him. You may say to yourself that this is none of my business. But what on earth is your business? Is not humanity your business? There is a time when we have to speak up and stand up for what is right. The path of spirituality entails putting your spirituality into practice in your day-to-day life. Right here, right now!



TROUBLED ROOMMATE

I shared an apartment with a roommate while going to school and living in Chicago. I was working on completing my Master's Degree at Illinois Institute of Technology, and I needed extra income to meet my financial bills. So, I placed an ad in the local reader for a roommate. After several interviews, I finally found a decent roommate. At least I had thought so!

My roommate's name was Todd and he was a salesman. I later found out that he had a lot of emotional problems. We had been sharing my apartment for a couple of weeks when one night he came home, very late and very drunk. He started yelling obscenities and making a ruckus in the apartment. I awoke in my room and started to listen to him. His yelling was directed at me and he was calling me all kinds of names. I had no idea where this was coming from! He was just my roommate and we had no relationship other than that. I debated whether I should leave my room and confront him. I decided that I would let him sleep it off and confront him in the morning when he was more rational. Well, I confronted him in the morning and told him about what he had done the previous night. At first he pretended ignorance to the whole thing and when I persisted, he finally admitted that he had some emotional problems and had taken it out on me. I told him I would not tolerate his abusive behavior. He then pleaded with me to let him stay and that it would not happen again. But I knew he was lying and would soon do it again when he started drinking. I was right because the following week, he came home drunk again and started to throw things around the apartment. I awoke from a sound sleep and

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

told him to stop it. He replied, "Shut the fuck up!" Fortunately, he immediately went to his room and fell fast asleep.

I told my friend, James about the incident the next day. He told me that I should be firm and insist that he move out as he would continue with his abusive behavior. So that evening, I told him that I expected him to move out by the end of the month. I would no longer tolerate his abusive behavior. He became very apologetic and promised that it would not happen again. I found it hard to stand up to him, as I tend to be easy going. I wanted to cave in and give him another chance. But I knew if I gave in the situation would become worse. So I made my stand and told him he had to leave in thirty days. Again he pleaded with me, but I remained firm. He then became very cold and did not talk to me for several days. One night he came home with a friend of his and started talking very loudly. He yelled about how I was so unfair and so unkind to make him move out. He called me a "fucking bitch" and that he would teach me a lesson. I was in my room at the time (which had a lock on it) and I heard him throw some things around in the apartment. I stayed in my room until his friend left and he fell asleep.

I talked to James again the following morning. I said my roommate was becoming more violent and I was concerned for my safety. He said he would come over that evening. Well that evening, James came over and we were sitting in the living room. My roommate came home just a few minutes later. He did not say one word to us! Todd just went right to his room. About an hour later, he left his room and came over to the living room where James and I were sitting. He sat on the couch directly across from James. He put his legs up on the coffee table and started reading a magazine. Then James suddenly yanked the coffee table out from under his legs. My roommates'

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

legs fell to the floor and James just smiled and said, “Oh, excuse me!”, as he proceeded to light his cigarette. I couldn’t believe it! James had a lot of guts. My roommate was very strong. He was a body builder and weight lifter. He had told me that he had beat up a lot of people in bar fights. James was standing up to my roommate and just letting him know that he would not tolerate any more of his abuse. It was kind of funny; Todd just kept reading his magazine after his feet fell to the floor. He did not say anything to James. I could tell that Todd was scared. My roommate did not say another word, nor did he ever talk to me again. He did leave at the end of the month. The only thing he left behind was a ten dollar bill that was ripped in half with a red mark along the torn edge for bills owed. That was the last I ever saw of him, thank God!

My intuition told me that this whole incident was the result of my past karma where I had been pushed around by other people. I had to learn to stand up to people and not give in to abusive people. It was a very difficult lesson, but one I needed to learn. It’s funny how the universe will bring other people and situations into your life to help you learn those difficult lessons. Those lessons are certainly not so much fun at the time, but they do help you out in the long run.

REFLECTION

Do you ever wonder why humanity is so messed up? Why on Earth are there so many problems in this world? I mean, I could imagine a much more peaceful world. Why can’t God? Why can’t we all? Have you ever heard of free will? It is because of free will, that we are most like gods. We can do what we like!

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

God does not control us. Many other things control us, but not God. He has given us complete freedom. We have complete freedom to build things up or tear them down. Of course with freedom, comes responsibility. There is no freedom without responsibility. In other words, I may be free to go and kick my dog, but I am responsible for that action. My dog may turn around and bite me! We are all responsible for our actions. According to the Bible, “we reap what we sow”. This is very similar to the Hindu law of “karma”. Everything that we do will come back to us. You know the saying, “what goes around, comes around?” That is karma. Some may call it justice, but it is a metaphysical law that works just like gravity. Everything we put into motion comes back to us. Have you ever thrown a rock into a pond? The ripples extend outward, then bounce off the shore and come right back to the center again. It is interesting to watch and contemplate this phenomenon. The next time you are at a pond (or even your own bathtub), take a moment to throw a rock in and just watch the waves as they radiate outward and then return. Such is life!

FLY OR DIE

The Lotus Temple celebrated special times throughout the year when members would gather for certain events and rituals. During the month of February, we would meet for the “Day of Petition”. This was a special day for the Temple when we celebrated the “Universal Air Element”. The Universal Air Element is known for the qualities of wisdom, knowledge and truth. This Day of Petition generally occurs around February 4th of each year. At this time of the year, the sun reaches fifteen degrees of the astrological sign of Aquarius, which is an elemental air sign. Astrologers know that fifteen degrees of Aquarius marks the mid point between the Winter Solstice and the Vernal Equinox. It is also considered a time of power for the Air Element. Pagans have celebrated this time period as “Imbolc” which is known as the time when the first signs of Spring become noticeable, and Winter begins to recede. The Christians celebrate this time period as Ash Wednesday which marks the beginning of a forty day period of fasting and purification known as “Lent”.

Our Day of Petition basically consisted of preparing a petition to the Element of Air, asking for wisdom and knowledge in one’s life. The petition is generally written in ink upon a scroll. Then it is rolled up and either tied to the end of a balloon or kite. The kite or balloon carries the scroll to the Air Element, bringing realization to the Petition.

Now on one particular Day of Petition back in 1985, the members of the Temple were all gathered at a local park, to fly our kites together, and raise our petitions to the Air Element. It

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

was a gorgeous day and there was not a cloud in the sky. It was a little brisk out, but the sun was shining brightly. Everyone was in a festive mood and looking forward to flying their kites. Each of us brought a special kite to fly that day. There were all different kinds of shapes, sizes and colors of kites. I had a simple kite that was called a “moon kite”. It was yellow with a full moon painted on it. Other people had bird kites, crescent kites and box kites.

After preparing our scrolls, we all began to cast off our kites into the wind. It was quite the spectacle to see all of us at this local park, flying our kites on a crisp clear February day in Chicago. Most everyone’s kite was up in the air as there was a good wind. However one member was not so lucky. His name was Rick and he was having a lot of trouble getting his kite off the ground. He would run like crazy with his kite trailing behind him. It would fly a little into the air and then crash to the ground. But Rick was determined to get that kite into the air. He tried repeatedly to get his kite off the ground. I was watching him while flying my own kite. At first, Rick seemed to be having a good time, but then he began to get frustrated. He was also a little embarrassed that everyone had their kite in the air except him. He tried several more times. Each time the kite would start to gain some altitude and then head straight for the ground. Rick then started to get irritated at his kite. He attempted a couple more runs and still the kite refused to fly. By this time, he was all red and several of us were watching him. I remember telling Rick to take it easy, but this just made him madder. Finally, he approached his kite and said quite loudly to it, “fly or die”! Well several of us just looked at each other in bewilderment. This was supposed to be a fun event and there was no need for him to be so angry or serious. Rick gave his kite one more chance to fly, but it would not and so he killed it.

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

He went over to his kite and stomped on it. Poor kite! Rick went home shortly after really pissed off. The rest of us gathered and talked about the incident. We had a few laughs, and then celebrated with some drink and food to end the afternoon ritual. But I will never forget Rick's immortal words to his kite "fly or die".

As I reflect upon that day, it is easy to laugh at Rick for his outburst at the park. We all have problems that we have to deal with in our lives. I can definitely identify with Rick losing his temper at his kite. Very often in my own life, I have gotten mad at things for this or that. I remember once when I was working on this wood project. I was pounding a nail into this wooden board and I hit my thumb...hard! My thumb immediately turned black and blue. I got really mad. I yelled obscenities at my hammer and then threw it as far as I could. Stupid hammer! I realize that I was just taking my aggressions out on the hammer, but it is a problem that I work on.

What I think is important in life is that you are willing to look at yourself and any problems that you have, and be willing to work on them. I think this is part of the spiritual path. And probably the most difficult! My Spiritual Mentor once told me that most teachers and gurus do not usually get involved with their students' personal problems. And he did not agree with this lack of involvement. He thought it was important to help his students to face their problems and take responsibility for their actions. An important part of the spiritual path is facing your ego, becoming aware of your problems and dealing with them. And it can be very difficult! In order to reach higher levels of consciousness on the spiritual path, you have to be willing to face your ego, confront obstacles and work on your own personal problems. If you don't do this, it can create huge

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

problems for you later on in your spiritual development. A good analogy is that of putting current through a light bulb. If you put too much current through a low wattage light bulb, it may burn out. Similarly, if you put too much divine energy into someone that has many psychological problems, they may have a nervous breakdown. So it is very important to take an honest look at yourself and work on any problems you may have. It doesn't make you any better or worse than someone else. It is just realizing who you are and to be willing to work on any difficulties or obstacles on your spiritual path.

REFLECTION

Have you ever gotten so mad, you just wanted to go kick something or somebody? Most everyone has experienced a wide range of emotions from anger to joy. It is part of the human condition. How do you handle your emotions? Do you bury them deep within yourself? Do you take them out on others or your children? Learning to be aware of your emotions is the first step to handling them positively. When you get angry, how do you feel? Where do you feel it? Is your anger in your head or your stomach? What color is it? If you can take just one second to become aware of your anger, you will start to better understand it. It is difficult to do as we generally become swept away by our emotions. One technique that I found really useful is whenever I become really upset or mad; I look at myself in the mirror. It immediately forces me to observe myself when I am angry. This puts me into reflective awareness and I become more balanced, so I am not carried away by my

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

anger. Then I can handle my anger more positively and constructively. Try this next time you are overwhelmed by an emotion.



TO JILL, WITH LOVE

MULTIPLE PERSONALITY

When I finished my BA in Philosophy at Wisconsin University, I decided I wanted to become a Counselor. I was a good listener and people would come to me about their problems. I also enjoyed helping people in this way. I knew I would need to go on to pursue a Master's Degree in order to meet the requirements for a career in this field. I chose the Master's program at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago because they had scholarships available in the field of Rehabilitation Counseling. Normally, I would not have pursued this field of counseling, but the school paid my tuition and I was able to work as a Research Assistant. I thought it was kind of ironic that I chose a career in Rehabilitation Counseling. I really wanted to be a Psychotherapist. But there I was! I think the degree chose me, rather than I choosing it. This choice did not make sense to me until later in my life.

After two years, I completed my Master's Degree and took a position at Ravenswood Hospital in Chicago as a Counselor. I worked in the psychiatric unit on the seventh floor of the hospital. The Psychiatric floor was a locked unit where patients could not leave without permission. My job was to provide the inpatients with individual and group psychotherapy. We had quite a range of patients; some were diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia and others just had acute anxiety disorders. I quickly found that counseling was not really helpful with patients who were really psychotic. They really needed medication to help keep them stable. But many other patients could benefit from psychotherapy and those are the ones, I concentrated on. I really had the gambit in terms of working

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

with a variety of people who had many different psychological disorders.

I had one patient who was diagnosed with multiple personality disorder. Her name was Maria and she had several different, distinct personalities. There were times in the morning; she would be out in the day area, rocking back and forth on the couch. At such times, she was like a little baby and could barely talk. She would just rock and suck her thumb. Then later, she would usually change her personality to Susette, who was a teenage French girl. She would talk like the wind, in fluent French. I would ask Susette if Maria could come to the foreground and then she would magically transform to Maria. Maria was her normal personality. I found it very interesting that Maria had very little awareness when her other personalities were dominant.

I did an experiment with her one day while she was another personality called, Julie. (Julie was a young woman about eighteen years old who was very perceptive and smart) Anyway, Julie was conscious of what was happening with Maria, even when she was not the dominant personality. But Maria was not aware of Julie, when she was the dominant personality. During our counseling session, I asked Julie to touch my knee, when I called Maria to be the dominant personality. She agreed to do this little experiment and thought it was fun idea. Then I asked for Maria to be present. She went through her usual trance-like state as Julie left and Maria became present. Maria then came to the forefront. It was remarkable how her facial expression and her total demeanor would completely change. Maria then asked me what had happened and I told her that I had been talking to Julie. She asked what Julie had to say and we talked for a while. Then

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

when our session was about to an end, she suddenly reached out and touched my knee! Maria instantly recoiled and said, “Why on earth did I do that?” I then told her about my experiment. She was a bit shocked, but I explained to her that I wanted to help her be more in touch with her other personalities. This exercise might be a way to do that. The experiment was interesting as I was also shocked, when Maria touched my knee. I had become so involved talking to Maria that I had completely forgotten about my suggestion to Julie, to touch my knee. And when she touched my knee, it was so sudden that I was stunned and almost fell out of my chair!

Maria had a true multiple personality disorder. There was no faking what she was going through. She had undergone horrible sexual abuse as a child that fragmented her personality. She once told me she could not deal with the severe physical and sexual abuse, so she retreated into her own inner world for help. That is when her multiple personalities began to emerge. I found it really fascinating to work with Maria. As a counselor and a Scorpio, I like investigating into the deeper recesses of the mind. Maria gave me the opportunity to learn more about the depths of the soul and the creative ability of the mind. Maria was eventually able to function in the daily world. She even got a job and lived a somewhat normal life. Occasionally, her other personalities would surface, but they learned to live together in harmony and not cause so much discord in her life.

I worked with many other people as a counselor on the psychiatric unit of the hospital. Some, I could help and some I could not. There was another patient that I found very challenging on the unit. His name was George, and he was tall and fearsome. Most of the other patients on the unit were afraid of him. He looked very intimidating and did not talk much. I

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

was assigned to work with him. After a few sessions, I learned more about him and his past. He had suffered both physical and sexual abuse as a child by his father. He had built strong emotional walls around him and would not reveal his inner feelings. After he began to trust me, he told me how fearful he was of everything. You would have never of guessed it, because he appeared so intimidating. Most people were afraid of him. And yet deep inside, he was like a frightened little boy. He once told me that he was thinking about taking Karate, so that he could take care of anyone that threatened him. I explained to him that Karate was a fine art to learn, but that it would not bring him the security he was looking for. I talked to him about the movie, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* with Harrison Ford. I described the scene where Harrison Ford had confronted a Sword Master who was highly skilled with a sword. He could flip the sword in all kinds of skilled maneuvers, showing his excellence as a sword master. You could see that he had many years of training. Well, Harrison just took out his pistol and shot him! Showing that even with all that training, it could not protect the Sword Master. George had to learn that fearlessness came from within. He had to learn to risk sharing his emotions and be friendlier with other people. For some reason, the story clicked with him and he really changed quickly. He became friendlier on the unit and talked to other patients. He became more sociable and less defensive which helped him to become happier.

I worked for a few years as a counselor on the psychiatric unit, until it began to take its toll on me. I didn't notice the effects at first. Then my friends told me that I began looking very pale. I had less energy and I was beginning to feel depressed. I hadn't realized what an emotional toll that working on the psychiatric unit was having on me. I knew that I needed a change, before I

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

got really sick. I talked to my supervisor about my situation and I was reassigned to a new position as counselor on the outpatient unit. I did enjoy my work on the psychiatric unit, but I found that you really are exposed to a lot of toxic emotions that can affect your health. I really wasn't aware of this phenomenon, until I had worked on a psychiatric unit for a while. I noticed that people who worked in the field for a long time, became either very callous from putting up defensive emotional walls, or had found a way to balance their emotions through positive outlets. I found it better for me to change my environment, which immediately improved my health.

It's interesting that before I worked as a counselor on the psychiatric unit of Ravenswood Hospital, I had read the book, *Secrets of Doctor Tavener* by Dion Fortune. This book was about a psychiatrist, who was also an occultist that worked in a psychiatric hospital. He used his occult knowledge to help treat his patients. The book described Dr. Tavener's adventures while working with various forms of occult phenomena such as; possessions, vampirism, obsessions, etc., that occurred in the psychiatric facility. I really saw the truth in these stories from my own work on a psychiatric unit. I worked with patients, who were emotional vampires that could suck the positive energy from you and leave you dry. I saw people, who were possessed by other spirits or intelligences. I also dealt with patients in a catatonic state, whose souls had left their body. Many of the so-called stories in the *Secrets of Doctor Tavener*, I found to be very true. I had quite a respect for Dion Fortune, after my own experiences on a psychiatric unit. These experiences also gave me a deeper insight into the human soul and the reality of psychic phenomenon.

REFLECTION

Have you ever wondered about what causes us to act the way we do? Why do certain people “push our buttons?” Why is it that we like certain things and dislike other things? Why do we have all these feelings and emotions that can be so overwhelming at times and glorious at other times? It is all part of our psychology and personality. A really cool exercise is to create what the mystics’ call a “black and white mirror”. The exercise is really very simple. Take a sheet of paper. On one side, list all the traits that make up your black mirror. For instance; being sarcastic, losing your temper, overly critical of others, jealousy and so on. Then on the other side of the paper, list your positive traits. These could be; peacefulness, compassion, being friendly, joyful, etc. Once you have completed your self-analysis, make a third list. This list would be the traits you would like to develop in yourself.

It is a fun exercise to do and can lead to some interesting revelations if you are honest with yourself. It may also help to facilitate positive change in your behavior. One friend of mine who was also a notable psychologist, said that; “Observed behavior becomes changed behavior”. This is because in order for us to improve or change something, we have to first become aware of it.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

CASPAR, THE SNAKE

I once had a pet snake called “Caspar”. Caspar was a red rat snake that I had purchased from a pet store in Chicago. I had always wanted a snake for a pet since I was young. I had been living alone in a small apartment and I decided to buy a snake. I remember going to the local pet store and looking at many different snakes. The store owner had showed me several different ones of varying shapes and sizes. He took the time to tell me about their nature and habits. There was this pretty yellow one that the owner said was very tame and good to handle. But it looked kind of lethargic to me, like it just sat around under a rock all day. I had wanted a livelier snake. Then he showed me several others. We went by this red and black snake that was very active, slithering around in his cage, with his forked tongue rapidly moving about. He pressed his nose to the glass aquarium and looked right at me. I asked the owner about that one and he said the snake was a bit ornery. He recommended another snake for me. But I was attracted to that one and decided to get him.

When I got the snake home, I showed him to my friends and we came up with the name “Caspar”. He was a cool-looking snake and was about five feet long with pretty black diamond markings. I would take him out of his cage everyday to practice handling him. But he really was an ornery snake and would try to bite me if I wasn’t careful. Snakes have a pretty good act in that when they coil back to strike, they can be pretty intimidating. Even if you know that their bite won’t be too painful, it is still hard to grab them when they are poised to strike. I spent a lot of time trying to tame him, but he would

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

always try to bite. After a few weeks with Caspar and many bite marks later, I became more adept at handling him.

I have always found snakes to be very fascinating. They have always been looked upon as dangerous creatures by most people in our society, but they are very mysterious and have quite a history in spirituality. In the Old Testament of the Bible, the chapter of Genesis tells the story of Adam and Eve. Here the serpent is seen as the tempter, who beguiles Eve to eat of the fruit of the Garden, leading to their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Of course, it also marks the beginning of sexuality and the knowledge of good and evil.

In ancient Egypt, snakes were revered and worshipped. Statues of King Cobras were found in ancient burial tombs and were seen as protectors of ancient wisdom. The Hermetic literature, which has early connections with Egyptian theology has an important symbol called the “Caduceus”. The Caduceus (see next page) depicts two intertwining snakes rising up a center axis or pole where they meet head to head at the top. The intertwining snakes symbolize the “ida and pingala” energy forces that intersect at various points along the polar axis called “chakras”. Chakras are vortexes of energy that are associated with certain nerve plexus along the spinal column of the human body. Certain rituals and meditative practices on the chakras can bring about heightened states of consciousness. Yogic practices try to raise the energy called “kundalini” from the base of the spine, up the chakras towards higher levels of consciousness. Tantric practices also raise this kundalini energy through specific tantra sexual rituals.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

CADUCEUS



MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

One evening, my dear friend, James had the idea to use Caspar in our next Temple ritual. I thought this would be a great idea! The ritual consisted of a primitive tantric dance, where Caspar would play the part of the serpent. He symbolized the raw sexual energy in nature.

There were several of us performing in the ritual and many others gathered around in a circle. The main goal of the ritual was to transmute our sexual energy to a higher octave of consciousness. The ritual began in darkness. The circle was cast and the candles were lit. Incense pervaded the room. There was an invocation to the Goddess, Shakti. Then everyone entered the sacred circle. The main participants were clad in primitive leather skins and covered with oil, which added sensuality to the circle. I began soft drumming which initiated the tantra dance. Then several others joined in with the drumming. Dancers began to move with the sound of the beat and the energy began to rise. Other instruments added to the beat and increased the energy in the circle. At the center of the ritual was Tara, who was playing the role of Shakti (The Divine Feminine Principle) and she was channeling the sexual energy. She began to dance very sensuously and I could feel the sexual energy start to rise in the circle. Tara's body was gleaming with dew, when she picked up the snake and began dancing with the coiling serpent. Tara and Caspar became as one, moving to the rhythmic beat. She danced round and round the circle. I could feel the temperature in the room rising. Towards the peak of the ritual, Tara began dancing with the snake more wildly. She let Caspar weave around her and continued to dance more quickly. Caspar slithered around her leg and began to move up her knee. Tara began to moan as the snake approached her oily thigh. You could feel the heightened sexual energy in the circle. As Caspar approached her breasts, she began to weave her hips back and

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

forth in sexual ecstasy. She moaned again and began to twirl about. She then held Caspar out with her hands and began to stroke him wildly, until she almost climaxed. The Ritual reached a crescendo! There were beads of sweat running down Tara's neck. Our drumming began to soften as the energy began to subside. Tara came to stillness as the circle came to silence. The circle was then closed and everyone left quietly. Everyone in the circle had been transformed during the ritual. I had felt the sexual energy rise to a state of ecstasy which was shared by everyone in the circle.

It's funny that during the dance, I could see Caspar getting very wild, and beginning to strike out, in typical snake-like fashion. It was amazing that Caspar did not bite her. But after the ritual dance, Tara brought Caspar over to me and he became quite agitated. Tara got scared and literally threw him at me. Of course, he immediately bit me! He clamped onto my hand and I had to get help from James, to get him off of me. All in all, the ritual was quite remarkable and the sensual energy of the Tantric dance was very powerful. And Caspar had played his part well.

REFLECTION

I find it amazing how we as a society are so fascinated by sex. It is quite a mysterious force that perpetuates all of creation. It is through the act of sexuality that we manifest ourselves on this planet. It is pretty incredible when you stop and think about it. So why is it that our society and most religions, for that matter, have such a negative view about sexuality? We tend to

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

suppress it, ignore it or try to control it. Why not enjoy it? Do you think that God would give us such a gift, if he did not intend for us to enjoy it?

Sexual energy is a powerful force for creativity and transformation. The Goddess exclaims that; “all acts of sexuality and sensuality are my rituals”. Do you still feel pleasure when you are having sex with your partner? Have you ever talked with your beloved how you most enjoy sex? Most people don't! Take the time to find out what your partner enjoys and let your beloved know what you like. It could be the start of a beautiful relationship!

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

PAN PAGAN FESTIVAL

One hot summer in 1982, several of us from Lotus Temple were invited to teach spiritual workshops, and lead the main spiritual ritual at a pagan festival. It was one of the first mid west pagan festivals, where there was a gathering of several different pagan and spiritual groups. The festival was a five-day retreat, out in the country in rural Michigan. Three of us from the Temple decided to drive from Illinois to Michigan to attend the festival.

Samuel, Kay and I met very early by dawns' light on a Thursday morning. We loaded my VW hippie bus and headed out on the highway towards Indiana. All was going fine and we were really looking forward to being part of the festival. Unfortunately, about halfway into Indiana, Samuel remembers that he forgot to bring several items he needed to teach his class. Kay and I ask if there is any way he can do without them. But he cannot. So we turn around and head back to Illinois. I really am not happy about turning around, and driving all the way back to Chicago, but we have no choice. Of course it begins to rain. I am already beginning to feel a bit frustrated by events, but try to make the best of it. We finally get back to Chicago and Samuel ends up taking a couple of hours, getting the things he needed. After some coffee, we head out again. We are back on the road and my spirits are starting to lift again. Half way through Indiana, we are talking about the festival and preparation for our ritual. The skies are clearing and things are looking up. Or so I thought. All of a sudden, the oil light goes on in my VW bus and I can feel the engine losing power. Oh no! The engine began to stall and I pulled over to the side of the highway. The engine sputtered a couple more times and then

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

quit. I tried to restart it, but it would not start. So there we are in the middle of nowhere, on the side of the road. This was before the advent of cell phones, so we could not call anyone. There was not much we could do, so we waited and hoped someone would pull over and help us. A couple of hours passed by and no one had stopped to help us. We decided to walk in hopes of finding a service station. After an hour or so, someone gave us a lift to the next exit, which did have a service station. We then had the VW towed to the station and the mechanic said that it would be a few days before the van could be fixed, as they needed to order some parts. We decided to stay the night at a local hotel in the area. I called my brother who agreed to drive down and pick us up the next day. We also called the Pagan Council and let them know of our dilemma.

My wonderful brother drives all the way out the next day to help us out. He is also an excellent mechanic. When he arrives, he takes a look at the VW Van. He figures out the problem and fixes it in a couple of hours. My brother, Mike is a miracle worker when it comes to mechanical things. After many thanks to Mike, we head back on the road again. We also called the Council and let them know that we would be there for the main ceremony, which was scheduled on Saturday. That same day, we would be doing the evening ritual. Later in the afternoon, we arrive in Michigan and begin heading down the back roads for the festival. I look in the glove box of the van for the directions to the festival. I am suddenly horrified! They are not there! And I have no idea where the Festival is being held. We anxiously discuss where the directions might have gone. And then Kay remembers last seeing them in the hotel, where we had used them to call the Council. We had forgotten to bring the paper with the festival information and it was all back at the hotel! We all groaned and started to blame each other. We

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

began to get depressed and felt like giving up. Everything was just going wrong. It seemed like something had been making it very difficult for us to reach our destination. We pulled off at the next exit. We tried calling the hotel manager, but unfortunately the room has been cleaned, and the paper was gone. Things were looking bleaker. We talked about going back home and giving up. Then we had the idea to chant together. So we sat down together and began chanting to the Divine Spirit for guidance. Our spirits were lifted and we felt more at peace. Afterwards, we hugged each other and found a local restaurant for some tea. We were having our tea, when some other people stopped in for lunch. They were seated at the table next to us and began talking about some festival in the woods. Holy Cow! We turned to them and asked them if they might be going to the pagan festival. Lo and behold, they were and they had directions! We were quite amazed. God to the rescue, saints be praised and all that!

The festival turned out to be a lot of fun and a complete success. Everyone enjoyed our Solstice Ritual. We met a lot of people and made many new friends. Our ordeal made me think about, how so many things can happen to us in our daily lives. We forget to call upon the Divine or our intuition, for guidance. I know too well, how easy it is to get caught up in daily events and completely forget about God. We try to handle our own problems and forget about our connection with the Divine Spirit. Most people only look to God, during times of crisis or when they feel helpless. But the Divine is always present and can give guidance everyday, for even the smallest of things. Through our intuition, we have constant communication with the Divine.

REFLECTION

Our intuition is our constant companion. If we take the time to listen, it can guide us through the maze of problems that we all have to face in life. One of the simplest ways of getting in touch with your intuition is to just listen. Try this simple exercise:

Close your eyes and relax. Either lie down on your bed or relax in your favorite chair. Take a moment to watch your breathing and let all your worries go for now. Clear your mind of all thoughts. Now imagine a violet oval, kind of like an egg. Imagine that it is huge in your mind and radiating light. Now an egg contains all the information that it needs to develop into a full grown chicken. Likewise our intuition has all the information we will ever need to guide us in any situation in our life. Now just listen to the radiant light. Don't try to make it do anything. Just listen. If you have a question, ask it. Then ask your intuition to be a guiding light in your life for now and always. After a few moments, imagine the light extinguishing just like you would blow out a candle but with the awareness that your intuition is just a heartbeat away. Practice this little exercise before you go to bed each night and you will be amazed at how your intuition will develop in your life.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

LUCKY BULLET

James and Tara were living in a residential apartment house near Chicago, Illinois. One afternoon, I get a distressed call from Tara. She says that James is acting crazy and she is afraid that he may shoot the upstairs landlord!

I zoom over to their house right away. When I arrive, James is in the kitchen and he is furious about the upstairs landlord. I talked to James about the landlord. The landlord had been remiss in fixing things in their apartment house. For instance, the refrigerator worked haphazardly and food would spoil because it would quit periodically. The heater would often break down, and it would get quite cold in their first floor apartment. James had spoken to the landlord several times, but he had done nothing to fix the problems. Now the refrigerator had quit again and all the food had spoiled. He was livid! I had never seen James quite this pissed off before.

All of a sudden, James brings out his pistol and says that he is going to shoot his landlord's car! At first I kind of smiled, because I did not think he would really do it. Then I saw that he was serious and really intended to shoot the landlord's car, which was parked in the garage. I told James, "I don't think this is the smartest thing to do." He replied, "I don't think so either!" But James proceeded to open the window in the back of the house. He aimed his pistol and shot at the car in the garage. I yelled to James, "Are you crazy!!?" He just grinned and then went outside to inspect the damage. James had shot at the car with a 22-caliber pistol. We went into the garage and inspected the car for damage. There was none! After further

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

inspection, we finally found the bullet. It had lodged into the window board of the garage. James dug out the bullet with his knife. Later, James decided to make a talisman out of it. He felt that it was his lucky bullet, as it had not done any damage and it kept him from getting into trouble with the authorities.

James finally got the landlord to do his part and fix the refrigerator, along with other things that needed repair in the house. The landlord had been evading his responsibilities because he was miserly, and had little concern for his tenant's welfare. It was quite amazing to me that James's bullet stopped in the wood, before it hit his landlord's car. I thought for sure that some higher forces were watching out for him that day.

Now you may think what kind of a spiritual teacher would go and shoot their landlord's car. Well, James would! But he would never, ever harm a soul. He just does not tolerate injustice. It amazes me how calm he is in the midst of disaster. James is like the center of a cyclone, very peaceful within while all hell is breaking loose around him. I very much admired that about him. Most people tend to get carried away by their emotions. I know I do. But although James feels emotions like everyone else, he is able to maintain calmness within. I know this because I can feel it when I am near him.

In my own life, I am constantly being tossed about by my emotions. I have always had a temper as some of my friends will attest to. I have strived hard over the years to temper my temper. But it can be very difficult, especially during stressful astrological aspects. I have struggled with my anger, fears, anxieties, and a myriad of worries in my life. As a counselor, I have also witnessed just how destructive those emotions can be in people's lives. From a spiritual perspective, an emotion or

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

inner motion has just as much impact as an outer motion and maybe even more so. There is an old occult saying; “As above, so below; as within, so without” which means that inner motions will have corresponding outer motions. In other words, if you are feeling fearful, you can actually cause fearful events to happen. On the positive side, if you are happy and optimistic than more good things will be attracted to you.

There are many ways of handling our emotions. You can suppress your emotions like damming a river, but this rarely works and usually has dreadful consequences; such as when the damn breaks, and all that pent up emotion is released. You can freely express your emotions with no holds barred, but this can get you into trouble if it is not warranted. For a little example; I may say “Hi” to someone and they do not say, “Hi” back to me. I may immediately feel angry that they did not return my gesture. Then I may come to find out that their hearing aide was turned off and they did not hear me. So my anger was not justified.

I think that the majority of people try to balance their emotions with reason. In other words, asking questions like; why am I upset, what caused me to become upset, etc. It is more of an analytic approach to dealing with the emotions and works well for most affairs in life. Where it falls apart is when you are feeling certain emotions with no apparent cause. I may be feeling anxious and have no idea why. I have counseled many people who were feeling depressed and had no clue why they felt that way.

There is another way of engaging your emotions after you have tried to suppress them, express them, or reason with them and it has not worked. It is the way of awareness. “Awareness”

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

consists of being centered in the present moment. I know about this way because I have used it a lot in my own life. I have had to deal with bouts of anxiety and fear that I had no idea where it was coming from. And many times, I knew the reason for my emotions, but it did not help me at all to deal with them. After much suffering, what I found most helpful in managing my emotions was simply to acknowledge and accept them in the present moment (at the center of my being) without judgment. For example, if I am feeling anxious, I just observe my anxiety without any internal criticism about it being good or bad. Of course, this is not so easy to do. It can also be as scary as hell for fearful emotions. But it works! Most negative emotions come down to anger or fear, which is why they are so scary, and why we do not want to accept them. But in my own life, I have found that if you face your fears with presence and acceptance, they will dissipate.

Probably the most wonderful way of dealing with negative emotions is to transmute them. This is the alchemical way! It is the transformation from one state to another i.e., turning anger into laughter or anxiety into peace. At times, I have been able to transform my anger to outrageous laughter, if I catch it just right. There is usually a brief moment of clarity right before an event happens that triggers my anger. If I am able to see clearly for that moment, I can turn my anger into laughter. For instance, if I spill a glass of milk, I normally will get angry, but if I take just one second to look at it differently; I can change my anger to laughter. Oh, look! I spilled a glass of milk all over the place. Oh, what a mess I made and then just suddenly break out laughing! It transforms a situation of anger to one of joy and peace in life. It is quite remarkable.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

A Zen Master once told me that the majority of people's problems occur on the "Astral Plane". It is on the astral plane that our emotions have real form and power. In order to move to higher levels of consciousness and reality, we have to be able to work through our emotions in a positive way. For many of us involved in spiritual disciplines, there is a quickening of evolution, which brings us face to face with our problems and past karma. If there is something we have avoided, we will have to face it. If we are afraid of something, we will have to deal with it. There is no way around it. The guardian at the gate will not let you through to higher levels of spirituality, until you have faced your illusions and fears. I know, as I have had to deal with things that I would rather have avoided. The illusions we have formed have to be broken. And most people would rather hold on to their illusions than be enlightened with the truth.

REFLECTION

What is your greatest fear? Why does it scare you? Have you ever talked to it or have you just avoided it? Many of our fears have something to tell us. Take a moment to examine your own emotions and fears. Which ones do you carry with you? When you are feeling overwhelmed, which emotion comes to the foreground? Do you begin to feel anxious, frustrated, depressed or fearful? It is at these moments that it is really helpful to first examine what you are feeling, and then accept it, instead of just reacting and avoiding them. In other words; instead of spending more energy avoiding an emotion, just observe it. If you are worried about something, observe your emotion of worriedness.

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

If you are fearful, just observe your fearfulness. What does it look like? Is it big black, dark and scary? Does it threaten to swallow you? If it does, that is OK. Just observe the emotion at the center of your being and know that it is part of you. You have created it. Once you accept that it is part of you, then you can begin to change it. We all have the ability to create, change and dissolve our emotions. They are our companions that we create or hang out with. Who are your companions? Are they worry, anxiety, and fear or are they peace, love and compassion. We choose our companions whether we are aware of it or not. It is important to find out who your companions are and what companions you want traveling with you on your journey in life.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

WALKS ALONG LAKESHORE DRIVE

One night, James called me at two o'clock in the morning. I was half awake when he called me, and he asked if I wanted to go for a walk. I said to him, "You called me at two o'clock in the morning to go for a walk!" At first I groaned about getting up so early and unexpectedly, but then for some unknown reason I decided to go. So in the middle of the night, James and I went for a walk along the shores of Lake Michigan in Chicago. After the initial shock, it was actually kind of fun. It was neat to walk along Lake Michigan when no one was around. Things look a lot different at that time of night. We just walked for miles along the lakeshore feeling the cool night air and hearing the waves gently breaking along the shoreline. On our return, we stopped to watch the sun come up over Lake Michigan. It was a gorgeous sight! Then I had to get ready to go to work!

Our walks continued on a somewhat regular basis. It's interesting, as we would hardly ever talk on our walks. We would go for miles along the lakeshore and into downtown Chicago. Sometimes we would walk during the day and sometimes at night. During the day, I would watch all the people along the lakeshore. There is a nice walking area along the lakeshore where different people walk, jog or hang out. Chicago is a big city with all kinds of diverse ethnic groups and people. Each day would always be different on our walks. They were always colorful in terms of the variety of people and the scenery. We would pass by people in jogging shorts, people in tattered rags asking for handouts, people hanging out at the beaches and occasionally gangs looking for trouble. We would walk by the boats and yachts moored in the harbor. I could hear

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

the clanking of the sails that sounded like Balinese musical bells and gongs. There were so many sights and sounds that made our walks so interesting. Our walks were my exoteric meditation. I just observed life happening in all of its variety and manifestations. I was practicing being in the present moment without any thoughts of the past or the future. I was just experiencing life as it is, right here and now. This sounds easy to do, but most people are never here at the present moment. They are always somewhere else. In other words, many people never take the opportunity to be fully aware of where they are. They may be in the room next to you, but their minds are either thinking about the past or worrying about the future. Being fully conscious is to be fully present right here and now, which all there really ever is. My walks along Lakeshore Drive were my exoteric meditations for being fully present in the moment and just enjoying the unfolding manifestations of life.

I remember on one of our excursions, we stopped at the Lincoln Park Zoo. I had been to this Zoo several times before, but this time was different. James mentioned to me how you could feel the intelligence of the animals by meditating on them. I had really never thought of this before! So as we visited many different animals, I meditated on them. It was an interesting experience! As I focused my concentration on different animals, I started to feel a connection with them. It was as if my consciousness was merging with theirs and I was expanding beyond my normal ego boundaries. The experience shook my sense of self and I saw things much differently. For instance; on our walk home, I would look at a tree and it would seem totally alien to me. It was like I had looked at this tree a hundred times before, but really never noticed it. Now I was noticing it! And there was a presence there I could feel. I stood next to the tree and let myself merge with the tree. My consciousness reached

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

for the sky above and dug into the earth below. Sap flowing through my body and the sun warming the surface of my leaves. I let my consciousness explore the tree and learn about its' subtle awareness. It was quite an interesting experience to transfer my consciousness to a variety of life forms.

Franz Bardon, in his mystical book *Initiation into Hermetics*, talks about the ability to transfer one's consciousness into objects, plants, animals and even other people. Shamans of ancient tribes have been doing this for ages. In this scientific day and age we have lost our ability to transfer our consciousness into our surrounding reality. We have become delineated in that we see ourselves as very distinct from our environment. I am here and you are there. I call it an "objectification of consciousness". Everything around us becomes an object that is disconnected from our consciousness.

My walks with James along the shores of Lake Michigan helped me to see things differently. It was like stepping outside of time. We moved in the present moment accepting whatever life presented to us on our walks. My ego boundaries expanded to include the plants, animals and other people as we moved in the dance of life. And we were just walking on the beach along Lakeshore drive!

REFLECTION

When you are going for a walk to the store, do you ever take time to notice the things around you? When you take the dog for a walk in the morning, do you ever notice the morning dew?

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

Remember the saying, “Take time to smell the flowers along the way?” Many times we get so caught up in the current of life that we forget to take time to enjoy it. You may make the same morning drive to work everyday and never really notice anything. You become accustomed to the routine of your daily grind. What happened to the magic? The magic of living right here and now, fully present in this amazing creation! Sometimes it may not feel so amazing, but it really always is. Try this exercise:

Do something different in your daily routine. Walk a different direction. Say hello to someone you don't like at work. Give flowers to your wife for no reason. Drive down a new street and actually look at the different houses. Think about the different people who live there and what their lives might be like. Look at your hands! Why on earth are there four fingers and a thumb there? It sounds silly, but we are silly. We are silly when we do not appreciate the wonder of creation. We are part of that wonder of creation.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

THE TWENTY DOLLAR BILL

Dan and I were sitting together at Lotus Temple for our weekly Priest/ess training. Our Spiritual Mentor, James was talking to us about money and other attachments in our physical world. The lure on this physical plane is to make a lot of money, and be rich and famous. Nothing is wrong with that in itself, but it does not lead to spiritual fulfillment or happiness for that matter. Jesus said that it was easier for a camel to walk through the eye of a needle than a rich man to find Heaven. Howard Hughes was a multi-billionaire and he died a very unhappy person. All the money in the world will not make you happy. And yet most people want to be rich.

I love the book by Jonathan Bach about *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*. Jonathan was a seagull among a million other seagulls. All the seagulls spent their time looking for food, but Jonathan would spend his time flying as high as he could. Flying is what made him happy. One day while Jonathan was practicing flying higher than ever, he saw some fish swimming in the water as he had an excellent view. He dove down for the fish and was able to catch his meal. Jonathan had found a way to find food while doing what he loved the most. While all the other seagulls were seeking food on the ground and fighting with each other for a small morsel, Jonathan was able to take care of his basic needs by doing what really made him happy.

Many people think that making a lot of money or looking for food as in the seagull's case will bring them happiness, but it rarely does. Real happiness comes from within, otherwise it is just temporary. A new car may make one happy for a while, but

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

it goes away as the car gets old. A new house will bring happiness for a while until you want a bigger one. And on and on it goes.

In Matthew 28:33, we read: “But seek ye first God’s Kingdom and his righteousness, and all things will be given to you.” If we seek God first which is our true source of happiness, then all the money and food we need will be taken care of. Jonathan Livingstone Seagull learned this.

Back at the Temple, James had been talking to us about our attachments to money and possessions on this physical plane. Then all of a sudden, James asks Dan for his monthly temple offering, which is twenty dollars. Dan is perplexed, but gives James his twenty-dollar bill. And James, very slowly reaches for a pack of matches, strikes a match and sets the bill on fire. The expression on Dan’s face when James lit that bill on fire was priceless! Dan was stunned. He could not believe James would burn his hard earned money. I was shocked too and burst out laughing. James was making quite a statement. And that is; the most important thing in life is spirituality and not materialism.

I found it funny that as Dan and I were leaving the Temple, he came over to me and said, “I can’t believe James burnt my temple dues. He could have just used monopoly money and I would have gotten the point.” But I don’t think Dan got the point. Some people are very attached to their money, possessions, fame and fortune. And they get so caught up in them that they forget about what is really important in life.

Dan and I completed our Temple training at the end of the year. On the last day of our training, many of us were celebrating and

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

talking about plans for the Temple in the future. We were now a full fledged Priest and Priestess. After dinner, James brought up the subject about tithing for the Temple. We were to brainstorm and discuss it among ourselves. While we were talking about ways we could tithe for the Temple, suddenly Dan turns a bright red. He was really upset. Finally, he could no longer contain himself and just about screamed, "I am not tithing for the Temple or any other religious organization!" He was really mad and angry. He said, "You guys can do what you want, but I am not giving my money to the Temple!" Then he picked up his books and walked right out without a further word or goodbye.

I could not fathom what I just witnessed! Dan had just completed an entire year of temple training to be a Priest and ended it just like that. And over what? Money! So Dan left the Temple.

It's kind of interesting that all of this happened right at the end of our training. It was like the Universe was testing Dan on his attachment to money. He wasn't going to be allowed to be a Priest, until he let his attachment go. But he clearly was not able to do this.

Dan talked to me later the following week. He told me that he was not sorry he left the Temple. He got what he was after and did not need to be a Priest. He wanted the training and the knowledge. And that was enough.

A curious thing happened though! Dan told me that he had kept notes of all our weekly Temple training sessions. Dan said that he had kept his notes in a folder in the trunk of his car. He had gotten home and found the notes missing. He looked everywhere and his notes were nowhere to be found. Dan called

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

me up and accused me of breaking into his trunk. He thought that I had stolen his notes. I didn't even know he had kept notes until he told me. I told him, "I could care less about your notes and I did not take them." To this day, I really do not know what happened to them, nor do I care. I just find it rather interesting that they disappeared!

REFLECTION

Have you ever thought what you would do if you did not have any money? Do you worry about paying your bills every month? Wouldn't it be nice to be rich and never have to worry again about finances? Think again! Many people who are rich tend to worry even more about losing their money because they become so attached to it. Many people who win the lottery are not any happier after having all that money. They begin to wonder who their friends really are. Are their friends after their money? Money brings all kinds of fears and troubles. But money is really not the problem at all! Quite simply, it is all about attachment. We become attached to things. We are attached to our cars, our houses, our stuff. There is nothing wrong with having all these things. The problem is when we feel we cannot do without them. We place our happiness on all the things we possess. Our happiness then becomes threatened when we think we may lose them. Buddha advocated the practice of non-attachment. It is having something without possessing it or being possessed by it. You enjoy what you have while you have it and if it goes away; fine, you let it go. Jesus said, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father"

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

(Matthew 10:29). Jesus is basically saying to trust in God to take care of all your needs. That doesn't mean you won't have to work for them, but the Universe does provide abundantly when you put your mind in the right spot.



TAI CHI LEE'S BIG EGO

While I was taking classes at Lotus Temple, I met an old acquaintance. His name was Lee. I had known Lee previously from studying Tai Chi in Chicago. Lee had learned Tai Chi from Waysun Liao, who was a Tai Chi Master originally from China. I studied Tai Chi with many Tai Chi instructors, including Lee. Lee was an older guy who liked to drink coffee, tell outrageous stories and smoke cigarettes. (He looked like Lee Marvin) I got to know Lee as he started teaching Taoist meditation at his own studio in Chicago. I would go there occasionally and meditate with a few other Tai Chi students. That went on for a while until Lee stopped holding meditation classes. Then a couple of years later, I was starting a new class in esoteric science at Lotus Temple and guess who was there? Lee! I thought to myself, 'this is very interesting'. After the first class, Lee came over to me and we talked about old times and recent events. He thought that Lotus Temple had really good classes and was looking forward to learning more about them. He also said that Tai Chi Master Liao had gone back to China and that he was not teaching Tai Chi anymore. Lee wanted to spend more time learning new meditation techniques and the esoteric sciences.

The class we were both taking at Lotus Temple was called *Direct Materialization*. It was the first and last time the class was ever offered. It is an esoteric science of materializing objects. I know it sounds like fantasy, but it isn't! There were about six or so people in the class, including Lee. During the first few classes, he would continually interrupt the teacher to talk about all of his experiences. After a while this got to be a

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

real drag! It was as if Lee had to show everyone how wise and knowledgeable he was. Soon everyone was complaining. So the Teacher spoke with Lee and told him he needed to keep his mouth shut. (I think he told him more politely though). Lee was much better after that. He was at least quieter anyway. After a few weeks into our studies, we were practicing materializing scents. The Teacher would have us utilize the meditation techniques to actually materialize different scents. Well, I was totally amazed at this! I practiced the technique and was able to materialize a rose scent that everyone could smell. I thought that this was pretty incredible! I could materialize a scent that I could smell and so could others near by. Fantasy had become a reality!

Later, I learned that Lee was having problems trying to materialize scents. The Teacher told Lee to talk with me to see if I could help him. But I knew that Lee was not going to listen to me. He considered himself quite superior and there was no way, he was going to ask for my help. I knew this, but said nothing to the Teacher. I was right because Lee never did ask for my help or talk with me about it. He had too big of an ego! He considered himself a very wise man and that no student could help him. Our Teacher told me that Lee later came to him in tears. He said that the meditation techniques were not working for him. The Teacher told him he had a big ego and needed to let go of it, if he wanted to learn something. Lee was neither willing, nor able do that and discontinued the classes. He never came back and I never saw him again.

REFLECTION

“The little wave does not know the depth of the ocean until it dives deep within itself.” Jill Lowy

We all have egos that help us to make sense of our everyday world. It is kind of like a mask we wear that centralizes all our likes, dislikes and experiences. Some people have big egos that make them feel superior to everyone else, and some people have little egos that make them feel inferior to everyone else. Many of us are somewhere in between. In order to reach our higher self, we need to be able to let go of our egos. In other words, we have to center our being on our higher self or God. Then we can get beyond our personalities and experience higher states of consciousness. This is the goal of Self-Realization. It is to realize that we are much more than our egos. Our inner most being is connected with God.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

BEYOND OUR BODY

Did you know that we have the ability to leave our physical bodies much like a snake shedding its' skin? I think the most amazing part is that we do it every night, but most people are not aware of it!

I learned Hermetic Yogic techniques to experience Astral Projection or OBE (out of body experience). I practiced for many months, before I had any real success. I had experienced spontaneous astral projections, but they were never under my control. My first spontaneous astral projection experience happened in the fall of 1975 in Devil's Lake, Wisconsin:

“One moonless dark night, I had just curled up in my sleeping bag. I had just begun to drift off into sleep when suddenly I found myself outside the tent, kind of walking/floating around in the dark. I was alarmed and felt really disoriented. I could not figure out how I had gotten outside the tent and what I was doing there. I cried out for my cousin who was in the tent sleeping. But he did not hear me. I went into the screen tent looking for help. I yelled as loud as I could and in the next instant I was back in the tent dripping in sweat.”

This experience was not a dream, and was my first encounter with our innate ability to leave our physical bodies.

Later, I began practicing Astral Projection following my initiation into Lotus Temple. After several months, I had my first fully conscious astral projection experience:

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

“I had been practicing the astral projection technique for about thirty minutes when I felt myself falling asleep. I concentrated on maintaining my awareness while allowing my physical body to fall asleep. I continued to practice the technique and visualized myself leaving my body. I then felt a sudden inrush of energy and knew something was beginning to happen. I tried to maintain my calm as I could feel the energy moving faster and faster. Then suddenly, I was moving through a tunnel like a freight train. I let myself flow with the energy. I felt my astral body twisting away from my physical body which was a very strange sensation. Then suddenly I was free! I had a feeling of ecstasy. I began to float around my room and spent time closely examining objects on my dresser. I picked up a wooden pentacle that I had made with the four elemental colors. The vibrancy of the colors was striking and the wooden grain was more beautiful than I remembered. I hovered over the dresser mirror where I looked at myself. I appeared to be like a ghost without much definition. I then decided to return to my body and with that thought immediately found myself back in my physical body. I noticed a strong current of energy still swirling around my palms.”

I remember right after my first consciously directed astral projection experience, I was so excited. I could not go back to sleep. I went to visit James to talk to him about my experience. I told him how amazing and wonderful things were on the “Astral Plane”. (The Astral Plane is that level of reality just above the

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

physical plane where we reside during our dream state). James commented to me; “Yes, things are amazing and wonderful on the Astral Plane.” And then, he said something I will always remember. He said, “Things are also amazing and wonderful right here and now!” I realized he was right. Things are amazing and wonderful here on the physical plane. We just become so accustomed to life here, that we forget that fact. We have also become so accustomed to life on earth that we have forgotten who we are and why we are here.

There is this wonderful story about these expert model builders. They had become so skillful in their art that they decided to build a miniature city together. Everything in their model city was created down to the finest detail. They had built their city so well; they decided they wanted to live in it. So one night, they all dreamed about moving into their city. Lo and behold; the following day, they awoke to find themselves living in their city. After many generations, the sons and daughters had forgotten all about their past and believed that they had always lived in the model city. They forgot who they really were and where they had come from.

It is like that with us. We have manifested on this physical plane and we have forgotten who we really are. We assume that we have always lived here. Astral Projection helps us to remember that we are just visitors on this earth. We have projected our consciousness to the physical plane, but we have the ability to transfer our consciousness to higher levels of awareness, such as the astral, mental and causal planes.

I think the most important thing about Astral Projection, is the first hand experience that we are more than our physical bodies. Our physical bodies are a very small part of who we are. It is

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

just the tip of the proverbial iceberg. We are all connected by a vast glacial consciousness that extends forever, but is connected everywhere deep underneath the waters.

Everyone has the natural ability to experience astral projection for themselves. It does not matter which spiritual path you are on or what religion you follow. After I wrote my first book, *Yoga and the Art of Astral Projection*, I gave a copy to my Dad to read. I didn't expect him to understand it at all. To my great surprise, he said that he had an astral projection experience when he was very young. He could remember the experience pretty vividly. He said he had been resting in his bedroom when suddenly he felt himself being lifted out of his body. He had no idea what was happening to him. He found himself floating above the backyard of his house, and he could see his mother down below putting clothes on the clothesline. He yelled out for his mother, but she could not hear him. Suddenly, he awoke to find himself back in his physical body on his bed. My Dad said he had completely forgotten about that experience, until he had read my book. My Dad is a very down to earth, kind-hearted man who is deeply Jewish. I would have never have guessed that my Dad would have experienced astral projection. But there you have it! If my Dad can experience astral projection, so can you!

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

REFLECTION

Have you ever thought about how amazing our bodies truly are? I remember watching the movie, *The Human Body* at an Imax Theatre. It was quite amazing to take a fantasy ride into the human body; sailing down the bloodstream and visiting the various regions in the body. It really made me think about how our bodies are like a universe unto themselves. We are virtually living microcosms of the macrocosmic universe.

Although our bodies serve as our temporary home on this planet, we are not limited to the physical plane. Our consciousness has the extraordinary ability to follow our imagination. In the Hermetic treatise, *The Divine Pymander of Hermes* we read;

*“And judge of this by thyself, command thy Soul to go to India and sooner than thou canst bid it, it will be there.
Bid it likewise to pass over the ocean and suddenly it will be there;
Not as passing from place to place, but suddenly it will be there.
Command it to fly into Heaven and it will not need any wings, either shall anything hinder it, not the Fire of the Sun, not the Aether, not the turning of the Spheres, not the bodies of the other Stars, but cutting through all, it will fly up to the last and furthest body.”*

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

Have you ever wanted to fly? As a child I often dreamed about soaring like a bird. I remember lying down in a field near our school and looking up at the clouds. I pretended that I could fly and would imagine myself flying over the trees, and the nearby playground. Oh, how I wished I could fly! Little did I know that this wish would come true for me on the astral plane.

Take a little trip with me: *Lay down on your couch or your bed. Close your eyes and pay attention to your breathing while you become calm. Let yourself deeply relax. Once you have become very relaxed, visualize your self floating just above your physical body. Imagine yourself near the ceiling of the room floating peacefully. Then see yourself floating upward above your house or apartment building. Imagine that you are just above the roof of your house or building looking downward. You can see the roof and the trees below. You are feeling calm and safe. You decide to float a little bit higher. Now you are way up over the trees and can see other houses or buildings in your neighborhood. You think about all the people who are living in them and how they all have their own dreams, hopes and aspirations. You begin to float even higher just below the clouds. Now you have quite the panoramic view and can see for miles. You can barely make out your house way down below. You fly higher still above the clouds like an airplane. The ground below looks like a model city and you can just barely make out the cars traveling down the highway. As you float much higher into the atmosphere; way above the clouds, you begin to notice the dark deep indigo space above the earth. You float into the ionosphere and the earth looks like a little blue globe far beneath you. As you look around, you can see the stars and planets like you have never seen them before. You fly deep into space and now the earth just looks like a faint star*

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

among other stars. You begin to feel connected with the universe. Meditate on this feeling for a while. Let your consciousness expand to the moon and stars. Then, it is time to return. Now you imagine yourself moving back towards the earth. Imagine yourself moving back into the earth's atmosphere. Now you are moving through the clouds and can see the ground below. You can now see your house or apartment. Then you are back in your room and your physical body. Open your eyes and reflect on your little journey.



THE ESCORT SERVICE

James once ran an escort service right out of my apartment and I didn't even know about it! I lived in an apartment on the north side of Chicago in Rogers' Park. James was staying with me at the time and had the bright idea to start an escort service. He began the escort service without my knowledge. Later, he told me all about it.

James had started an escort service with his ex-wife, Tara as they were still good friends. James had taken an ad out in the Chicago paper, advertising for ladies who were interested in working for his escort service. He wasn't sure how many people would apply for this kind of work. He was really surprised when he received tons of applications for his escort service. James said that he held interviews or screenings in my apartment, and exclusive showings in my bedroom. He told me that many of the girls would model for him so he could take their photographs.

James received so many calls for his escort service that he could hardly handle them. Guys would call his escort service and make an appointment to meet a girl. Then James would usually take the girls to their appointment. Sort of like a pimp. But a caring pimp! He did not want to see any harm come to any of the ladies, so he would always bring them to their appointments. The escort service would be paid a certain percentage for the evening and the girls were under no obligation to have any sex. But what they did after they were through with the escorting was their business. James told me how he would sometimes wait for hours to pick his girls up after their appointments. He

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

said it was fun running the escort service for a while, but he soon grew weary of it. He was concerned about his ladies' welfare and would worry too much about what might happen to them. Chicago is a big city and there are many bad people out there. Later, James decided to discontinue his escort service. It was after he stopped running his little entrepreneurship that he told me all about it. I was really flabbergasted! Why he didn't tell me about it sooner, I am not sure. But I guess I am glad he didn't. I would have wanted to become involved and I am not sure how I would have handled it.

I have always been very interested in the relationship between sex and spirituality. When I was growing up, I was very inhibited and did not engage in sex till I was older. But being a Scorpio, I was very interested in sexuality. This led me to the study and practice of "Tantra". Tantra is a spiritual path where the main focus is on the transmutation of sexual energy towards spiritual development. It is certainly not a path for everyone, but it is a path to spiritual ecstasy.

The ancient Pagans celebrated sexuality in many of their rituals. The "Great Rite" is a Pagan ritual that is celebrated at the Vernal Equinox where the Priest and Priestess engage in sexual intercourse as part of the main ceremony. The sexual energy is raised and transmuted to help bring peace and harmony to those in the circle. During Beltane or May Day; the pagans hold the "Maypole" Ritual where everyone dances around the maypole with colored ribbons, raising the energy for fertility and procreation.

Most of the major religions, especially here in the West tend to hold puritan attitudes towards sexuality. Sexuality is often equated with love and limited to married couples in the privacy

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

of their bedroom. But in actuality, sex is a vital force and a biological necessity for the survival of mankind. From a spiritual point of view; the sexual force can be expressed or repressed, sublimated or exalted. In many Christian traditions; such as in Catholicism, priests practice the repression of their sexuality and devote their lives to God. Many Hindu saints practice asceticism where the sexual energy is sublimated through yogic practices. Other spiritual traditions, such as Tantra, practice the exaltation of sexuality where the energy is transmuted to spiritual force towards Self-Realization.

I became interested in Tantra because I wanted to explore my own sexuality and experience ecstasy. At least that is what I thought! The Tantra Circle, I became involved with was a very small and intimate group. We were all close friends and consenting adults. I quickly learned to lose my inhibitions after several Tantric rituals with many different partners. My biggest hurdle was that I became very attracted to one of the members in our group (who I will call John) to the exclusion of everyone else. This was a really big mistake! Tantric practice is not about relationships, but practicing unconditional love and open sexuality. During our Tantra practice, all I could think about was being with him. I was not interested in the other members. This is a very natural thing in the dating world, but I did not come to Tantra for dating or a relationship. I came to experience higher levels of consciousness and ecstasy. Well, of course all that went out the window when I fell head over heels in love. I was no longer interested in Tantra and just wanted to have a relationship. But it was more complicated as John was already married to another member in our group! As you can imagine, this led to disaster and ultimately to the end of our Tantra group.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

I talked with James, several weeks after our Tantra group ended. He said that there were several things that had made it so difficult for me. He said that first, I was lonely; second, that I was selfish and emotionally possessive, and third, that I had been ruthless in not caring for the other members in the group. All this hit me very hard! I just broke down and cried tears of remorse. As a consolation price, he did say that John and I had personal karma to work out from a previous lifetime where we had been married together.

Tantra was extremely difficult for me. I went through a lot of pain and suffering. I also caused much pain and suffering to others. On the plus side, I became more aware of my emotions and negative aspects of myself. I had to learn to work through them, more positively. I absolutely lost all aspects of my shyness. I became much less inhibited sexually and more open sensually. I approached life with a better understanding of myself.

REFLECTION

What are your inhibitions in life? Is there anything that restricts you from expressing yourself? What could you do to improve your life? Have you ever thought, “Gee, I wish I was more like so and so, who seems so open and carefree?” When I was a child, I was very shy. I often wished I could be more like my cousin who was so outgoing and made many friends. It was not until later in life that I learned to open up and take risks.

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

If you could be anyone you wanted to be, who would that be? Who are your heroes? We all need role models in our life to look up to. This is your exercise:

Find your hero. Someone you look up to. It could be: Abraham Lincoln, John Wayne, Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa or Marilyn Monroe. But it should be someone who has the qualities you most admire and would like to see in yourself. Find a picture of that person and put it near your bedside. Imagine that you are developing those qualities that you most admire into yourself every time you look at their picture. Things will begin to happen in your life to allow those qualities to develop. Make sure you take advantage of those opportunities and become the person you want to be!



TWO

I decided to move to Vermont! I wanted to move to a more rural environment, where I could live closer to the land, without the hustle and bustle of city life. I wanted to be closer to nature and become more attuned to her signs and seasons.

This was another period of change for me, where I had to leave everything behind, and start a new life in a totally new environment. I moved to Vermont with no job, very little money, no family, no home and one good friend. I did have faith that things would work out.

I first moved to Vermont with James. We stayed together for a short time in a very rustic cabin in Bennington, Vermont. Later, I moved to Lincoln, where I purchased a very rural home on one hundred acres, with my friends, Dianne and Patti. We had a view of the Green Mountains that was just breathtaking!

GOOSE CHASE

After Lotus Temple closed in Chicago, James and I moved to Vermont. We both were tired of the city and wanted to move out into the country. James had been corresponding with a woman, who lived in a small cabin in southern Vermont. She was planning on visiting with her family in upstate New York, and needed someone to house sit her cabin while she was away. James wrote to her and said that we would be happy to take care of her cabin.

We arrived near Bennington, Vermont in the fall of 1985. The woman's cabin was located in a small town, just a few miles north of Bennington up in the mountains. Her cabin was really very primitive. She had no running water and only a small woodstove for heat. The cabin was really just a shack, probably originally used as a deer camp. For those of you who don't know; a "deer camp" is where the men go to hunt deer in the fall/winter. They are very popular in rural Vermont. I couldn't fathom how this woman was living alone in a shack, deep in the woods, with no running water and a small baby girl, too boot! We both met Carol, just as she was packing her truck to leave for New York. She was a single mother, who enjoyed living alone in the woods. Carol soon left to visit her family in New York, leaving us to take care of her cabin. This was my first experience living in the woods, and it took a little adjusting after living in the city, with all its' amenities. First of all, since there was no running water, we had to go outside and use the outhouse. This can be a real "pain the ass" at two o'clock in the morning, when it is cold and dark outside. Second, the cabin was not insulated at all and we needed to run the wood stove

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

constantly. The woodstove was also very temperamental, and needed constant adjusting of the air intake to make it run efficiently, or else it would smoke up the cabin. I smoked up the cabin a few times, much to James' chagrin. Carol also had a few animals that we had to take care of. She had several rabbits and a goose. The evening temperature would usually drop below freezing. Every morning, we had to crack the ice in their water buckets, so they could drink fresh water. The one saving grace about her place was that she did have electricity. But we had no television, so there was not much entertainment there. I would become pretty bored at times. I would drive into the small town of Dorset, just to pass the time. James seemed quite content to spend his time meditating. I could only meditate so long, and then I needed to do some other activities like hiking, shopping or catching a movie in town. I must say that it was extremely beautiful in the mountains. "Vermont" is a French word that literally means "green-mountain." And the Green Mountain State is really gorgeous, especially in the fall when the leaves are changing and the landscape looks like it was painted by the Divine Artist. But living in the mountains with few amenities was a difficult transition from living in a big city like Chicago.

Carol finally came back, after what seemed like an eternity, with her friend, Betty. We all stayed in the small cabin for a while together. One night, we were drinking and partying. I had a little too much to drink and headed outside to the outhouse. When I had stepped outside, the goose was right at the door. For some inebriated reason, I decided to chase the goose. The goose took off and I dove after it into the woods. James yelled that I would never catch it! But I was feeling pretty jubilant and went after the goose. I chased him down a small path that led to a nearby stream. Just as we reached the stream, the goose stopped in its tracks! It did not want to go into the water. As the goose

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

turned around, I caught it and picked it up into my arms. At first he flailed around, but then I spoke softly to it and he settled down in my arms. I walked back to the cabin with the goose comfortable in my arms. Everyone was amazed! Carol said that no one had ever been able to pick that goose up before. I gave the goose a kiss on the beak and put him down.

REFLECTION

Many times in our lives, we may have to move and start a new life. This is a time of change, excitement and new beginnings. It can be sad to leave the past behind and face the uncertainty of a new future. I do think it helps to broaden our horizons and expand our field of consciousness. Many people live and die in their place of birth, without having experienced other regions of the world. Many people also live and die in their customary consciousness, without ever expanding their field of awareness. If you could live anyplace in the world, where would that be? Are you living there now? If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you like to go? Is there anything preventing you from making plans now? I hear many people say that they would like to travel, but that they are waiting for their retirement. Then they will travel and begin to enjoy life. Often their retirement comes around, and they are too old or disabled to travel and fulfill their dreams. I think it is important to begin living your dreams now! Don't wait for someday to come. There is always something that you can do right now to live your dream. You can begin planning, saving money, and putting energy into your goals right now, that will pave the way for things to come. So you are working and raising three children,

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

but want to visit Australia. That is your dream. Well good! Begin planning for it. You can think of a hundred good reasons, why you cannot do it now. That is easy. Instead, focus on ways to make your dreams happen. Once you open the door in your mind, it is amazing how the possibilities open up. The secret to being happy is to live your dreams now!



MEDITATION CENTERS

After James and I had moved to Vermont, we began to check out various meditation centers. One of the first places we visited was; “Karma Choling” which is a Tibetan Buddhist Center located in Barnet, Vermont. It is nestled in a beautiful green valley in the rural mountains of Northeastern Vermont. Karma Choling is located off the beaten path and encompasses a few hundred acres of pristine land. It has gorgeous views of the mountains and the grounds surrounding the center are beautifully landscaped. Karma Choling was started by a very interesting Tibetan Monk named; Chogyam Trunpa and is steeped in Tibetan Buddhist tradition.

James and I visited the Tibetan Buddhist Center. They had a Temple Meditation Hall that was closed to the public because of a special ceremony. We also visited a small warehouse where the monks made meditation pillows and cushions. They also had a residence house for visitors who were staying for mediation classes. It was a beautiful and well cared for meditation center.

I said to James, “I think it is a shame that we were not going to be allowed to visit the main meditation hall.” He kind of smiled to me and said, “Oh, yes we will!” I replied, “Isn’t the meditation center closed to the public for some special ceremony?” James just said, “Yes, but we are spiritual devotees and the Universe will allow us to visit the Temple.” I thought to myself, ‘This should be interesting!’ So James and I went to the Temple Meditation Hall and the receptionist told us it was closed to the public for a special ceremony. I glanced at James

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

and gave him that, 'I told you so look'; he turned back to the receptionist, and said that he would like to see one of the monks in charge. In a few minutes, a slightly balding older monk came over to meet us. James greeted him and they had a brief conversation together. Then the monk smiled and directed us towards the Temple. I had no idea what James told him! We climbed with the monk up the stairs to the doors of the Temple. The doors were opened and we were allowed into the Temple. James turned back and smiled back at me. I was quite amazed! The powers that be had granted us entrance into the Temple. We were directed to sit down quietly and observe the temple ceremony.

The Temple itself was really beautiful with a fabulous altar and ornate decorations. It was quite impressive! There was lush carpeting and huge golden statues of the Buddha. The special ceremony was an initiation of several new novices into the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Following the ceremony, we met with some other monks, and were invited to visit one of the nearby residences. James and I drove with one of the younger monks to a temple, where some of the new initiates were living and undergoing spiritual training in Tibetan Buddhism. Although this center was affiliated with Karma Choling, it also had its' own residence and temple. There was a large building that housed several people with a nearby barn that was converted to a Temple. We had some tea and discussed Tibetan Buddhist spirituality. Some of the newer initiate monks were busy cleaning the house, studying spiritual texts or meditating. James and I visited the barn that was converted to a temple. It was very rustic, but quite clean with a simple altar. It was quite a contrast to the ornate Temple Hall at Karma Choling. James said that there was more spiritual presence here in this rustic temple barn, than there was in the ornate temple at Karma

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

Choling. I had to agree with James. I felt closer to the spirit here in the rustic temple barn, than I did in the grand temple at Karma Choling.

On another occasion, James and I went to visit SunRay Meditation Center, which was located near Richmond, Vermont. James had contacted the center to let them know we would be coming out for a visit. We were to participate in their Sunday meditation services. The only problem was that James did not get very good directions. The center was not located in Richmond, but out in the boonies somewhere nearby. We could not find the road to the center anywhere on our map, and we drove around in circles for quite a while. We became quite lost and there were no service stations nearby. Suddenly, I had the intuition to turn down this approaching gravel road. It somehow looked familiar to me. There were no signs or anything; I just had the feeling to turn there. We proceeded down the road, and lo & behold, there was the SunRay Meditation Center! It was incredible how we were guided to the right road. I mean, there were not any signs or any indications to turn there, I just knew that this was the place. Anyhow, we arrived just in time for the morning meditation. The center was actually a spacious house with a nice sunny room and open area for meditation. The morning meditation consisted of a few chants and then quiet meditation for about an hour. Afterwards, we were invited to stay for breakfast with the other members. We talked about meditation and spirituality.

SunRay Meditation Center was originally started by Dhyana Wahoo, who is a Native American Indian. She had started the center to teach and celebrate the Native American spiritual traditions. We talked about some of the commonalities between Native American Shamanism and the Hermetic Tradition. Both

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

traditions involve the study and practice of magic and mysticism. A Shaman will cast a Circle with a stick, and invoke the Spirit Winds of the Four Directions; while a Magician will cast a Circle with his or her wand, and invoke the Four Elemental Spirits (The Principles of Fire, Air, Water, and Earth). They are both centering themselves, within the Spirit and the Four Aspects of Creation. It's interesting; James once told me that a Hermetic in America would be able to go to Africa, and understand the rituals of a Medicine Man, because they use symbols and rituals that are universal. Fire burns in America, just as it does in Africa. If you learn the nature of fire in America, you will know the nature of fire in Africa. Similarly, if you know the nature of magic in Hermetics, you will know the nature of magic in Shamanism, as it is universal.

I found it fascinating, visiting some of the different spiritual traditions in the backwoods of Vermont. It helped me to appreciate the diversity of various spiritualities and yet see the common mystical center that connects them all together.

REFLECTION

There are many different religions in the world today: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Baha'ism, Native American Indian traditions, Wicca, and Paganism; just to name a few. Within each of these religions, there are multiple sects and denominations. How is one to know what religion to follow? What religion is the right one? I think a better question might be; what religion is right for you? Maybe none of them are right for you! There is no right or wrong

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

religion. Religion basically means; “the worship of God or the Supernatural.” Do you believe in God or a Supernatural power? How do you worship God? What does God mean to you? These are the questions that are important to ask. Why do you go to Church, Temple, Ashram or Sacred Place? Do you go there because your parents went there or just because everyone else goes there? What do you get out of it? I know that when I was growing up, I was raised in the Christian faith like many people here in the West. Many of my friends never questioned why they went to church. They went to church because that is what they were taught and that is what their parents did. When I was young, I always felt closer to God when I was close to nature. I would ask my mother: “Why can’t we worship God in the fields or the forest; why do we have to go to church?” I always believed in a Divine Power but did not see the need to find God in church. My mother would just sigh and say; “When you are older, than you can worship God as you please.”

The path of spirituality does not require everyone to go to church or temple; it does require that you determine for yourself, what pathway to God is right for you. And you only! Everyone else has to make that decision for themselves.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

THE JOY OF MEDITATION

It is amazing to me the amount of people that know about meditation, but how few actually do it. I have many friends that practice yoga, but have never tried meditation. They have no idea what they are missing! The popular notion of meditation is that it is helpful for finding peace and tranquility. And it certainly is. But it is so much more! There is a joy and bliss in meditation that not too many people have experienced or understand.

I began meditating when I was about twenty years old. I was first inspired to meditate after reading a book by Ram Dass called, *Be Here Now*. The book really made me reflect upon my life and the values that I held. It sparked the beginning of my spiritual awareness. I started practicing a very basic meditation, which consisted of simple breathing awareness techniques. I practiced daily and after several months, I began to experience this state of "lightness". My entire body would begin to feel "light", like it wanted to float, and with it; I would experience a feeling of joy. It was not quite a feeling of ecstasy, but more an overall feeling of well-being. And the interesting thing was that after my meditation, the feeling of joy would linger as I began my daily activities. I was very moved by these joyful feelings arising from my meditation, and would talk about it with my friends. Most of my friends knew about meditation, but had never practiced it. They pretty much thought it was just a mental exercise to bring about relaxation. Some of them had tried to practice meditation, but became discouraged when they could not slow down their thought processes. So they usually gave up quickly. I thought that it was sad as they were not

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

willing to make the effort at regular practice and wanted instant results.

Meditation does take time, effort and practice. And so do most things that are worthwhile on this planet. But if you hang in there, it is amazing the amount of joy and peace that meditation brings. Meditation is not just sitting there with nothing going on upstairs. It is not boring! But you have to get pass the normal ebb and flow of the thought processes, before things begin to happen.

One of the problems in our culture is that we tend to identify ourselves with our thoughts; “I think, therefore I am” kind of thing. However, nothing could be further from the real truth. We are much more than our thoughts and what we think. Meditation helps to bring about this realization, and can bring much peace to our worried minds. Thoughts are actually “things” on the mental plane and sometimes referred to as “thought forms”. We can hold on to them or let them go. Some of them are helpful like a good ladder and some are hurtful like thorns on a rose; meditation can help us to see our thoughts for what they are, and help us to see who we truly are.

There are many different schools of meditation out there, but they all use many similar techniques and processes. Basically, there are two different kinds of meditation that I would call: “esoteric” meditation and “exoteric” meditation. Very simply, “esoteric” meditation are those practices that involve going inward, and focus on what is going on inside of you, while “exoteric” meditation are those practices that focus on what is outside of you. Esoteric meditation practices focus on one’s inner states, and processes like breathing, emotions, thoughts, etc., that lead to higher states of consciousness and awareness.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

In esoteric meditation, it is important for one to become very receptive. In other words, one has to be able to empty ones' self of all thoughts, conceptions, and ideas to receive higher spiritual energy.

It is like that old Zen story, where a prospective student wants to learn the essence of Zen. He has all these ideas of what it should be like after reading a book or two about Zen. Finally one day, the student goes before the Zen master, requesting to learn about Zen. He tells the Master all the things he has read about Zen and wants to learn. The Zen Master says nothing, but brings out a pot of tea, and asks the student if he would like some. The student does not want to appear ungrateful and accepts the offer for tea. But he continues on with his discourse on his many ideas about Zen. The Master pours the student some tea. Soon the tea has reached the brim of the cup and starts to overflow. The student becomes alarmed, and tells the Master, "Sir, the tea is overflowing!" The Master replies, "It is like your mind, overflowing with thoughts on Zen, but if you are to really learn Zen, you have to empty yourself of all thoughts and ideas of Zen, and be open to the real nature of Zen." Such is esoteric meditation. One must empty and calm the mind in order to experience higher levels of spiritual consciousness.

Exoteric meditation is when the awareness is focused on what is happening outside oneself. Now, one might think that this is our normal state of affairs. Our everyday reality consists of focusing our awareness on what is happening all around us. But exoteric meditation is more than what I call "reactive awareness", which is our customary consciousness of the world. Exoteric meditation allows one to see or feel the connection that exists,

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

between the inner and outer aspects of ourselves, and the universe around us.

One example of exoteric meditation is the practice of “mindfulness”. This is a Buddhist meditation that focuses the awareness on the present moment. The emphasis of this meditation is to experience fully the present moment, without judgment or apprehension. For most of us; our present reality is always colored with a constant mental dialogue that is filled with apprehension, fear, and judgment. For example, I may be at a meeting for work, and not have paid any attention to a word that was said, because I was preoccupied in a mental dialogue about my next project deadline; or I may have eaten my entire lunch, without tasting one bite of it, because of a pending appointment; or I may feel bored waiting for the clock to strike four o’clock, so I can go home. If you are ever bored, you are not in the present moment! The present moment is always infinitely interesting!

An important aspect of mindfulness is acceptance; acceptance of the present moment. If you are stuck in traffic and becoming irritated, you are not in the present moment, as you would rather be somewhere else. This does not mean you have to be happy, because you are stuck in traffic, it means you just have to accept it, and allow things to move at their own pace. Every morning, I have to commute to work and whenever there is a traffic jam, I tend to get upset. I get upset because I am not accepting the present moment, and would rather be moving along the road to my destination. But if I am able to become aware and accept the present moment without judgment, then I can just experience this event; called a “traffic jam” without letting it bother me. Then it becomes an interesting experience instead of a frustrating one.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

Exoteric meditation is also intense concentration on an object or course of action, where you lose yourself in that object or action. When people who engage in sports say; “they are in the groove”, that is natural exoteric meditation. I have experienced this feeling when I have been on the cutting edge in trail running and cycle racing. It feels like you have hooked into the flow of the universe, and every move you make is natural and perfect. The sense of effort disappears and you are completely at one, with what you are doing. In *Zen in the Art of Archery*, the goal of the archer is not to hit the target, but to become one with it. At that point the archer, the arrow and the target all become one.

Intense concentration on an object is another form of exoteric meditation. In Yantra Yoga; meditation on pictures, symbols and “mandalas” are used to transform one’s awareness to a higher state of consciousness. Within the esoteric arts; there are many exoteric meditative practices where one concentrates on various objects, plants, animals, people and divine god forms. Through meditative techniques, one can experience the object of meditation from the inside out; instead of looking from the outside in. In other words, through meditation, you can experience an object, plant or being from within. In a sense, you actually become that object of meditation. I have spent hours watching geese, birds, squirrels and other animals in the park. I have practiced meditating on them and it is quite fascinating how your perception changes. You actually begin to feel what it is like to walk like a goose, move like a goose, think like a goose and fly like a goose! Our consciousness is not limited to our little mortal bodies, but can move and become wherever we put it. This is the great secret of meditation!

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

Esoteric and exoteric meditations are really just two sides of the same coin. They are just two different approaches to the one universal reality that is part of all of us. The great sage, Hermes Tremegistos said: “As above, so below; as within, so without.” Such is the nature of the One Reality. Whether we seek the divine from within or without, it is there and everywhere. But the interesting thing is that it has to be discovered. We have covered our divinity through our physical bodies and egos manifesting on the physical plane. Meditation is the best way to uncover our real nature and realize inner divinity.

REFLECTION

Look at yourself in the mirror. Spend a few minutes looking at your image. Watch your breathing and just look at your reflection. What thoughts come to your mind? (A wrinkle here and a wrinkle there, or gee; I never knew my eyes were so blue). Keep watching your thoughts and all your judgments about yourself. Then let them go. Keep looking at your reflection and go deeper. Can you do this for just ten minutes? It can be difficult, but it can be very interesting! Meditation requires time to find out who you are. Do you really want to know? “Know thyself” was inscribed in the “pronaos” (forecourt) at the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. It was the crux of ancient Greek philosophy. Most of the people, I know today are not really interested in who they are or why they are here, in this universe. They go about their lives, without ever asking themselves, the purpose of their existence. Think about it!

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

COP

When I decided to become a police officer, many of my relatives had thought I went off the deep end. My friends could not believe that I being a bonified hippie could ever want to be a cop. Some of the things that attracted me to this occupation was the sheer excitement of the job, handling emergencies, doing criminal investigations and helping people in trouble. I am also a Scorpio and I love mysteries. I like to investigate the reason for things and get to the bottom of them. So when I saw an opening for the Police Department in the Burlington Free Press, I applied for the position along with many other applicants.

When I went down to the Police Station to apply for the position, there must have been over one hundred applicants for only five job openings. I looked around at all the people and thought to myself; 'How could I ever get this job with so much competition.' I also had no experience whatsoever in police work! I was very lucky that I never had a criminal record considering some of my past experiences. I talked about the position with my friend, James. He had a lot of experience being a private investigator, and told me what they would be looking for in the interview and possible test questions. So when I did go for the interview and took the test, I was prepared. I also said a little prayer to God, asking for help in getting the job. Well, it must have worked because I scored at the top of the list when I looked at the test results, and was hired after the second interview.

For four months, I went through training at the police academy in Pittsford, Vermont. I had never been through the military

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

before, but I think that police training had a lot of similarities. We had to go through inspections, drills, combat training, and calisthenics. There was also plenty of reading and written exams. I always scored highest in my class. It seemed to come easy to me. I also achieved a perfect score on my driving test, which no one else was able to accomplish. I enjoyed it because we got to race around a driving course through twisty turns and maneuvers at very high speeds. I think I was very good at it because of my past racing experiences.

After graduation, I went to work as a police officer with the Vermont Police Department. What an initiation that was! I had to learn a lot very quickly and most of the trainers did not cut you much slack. Fortunately, there were a few other women officers on the force. They really helped me get through the training period. After a couple months, I was released to work on my own. I must say that I went through a lot of crazy experiences in my three years as a police officer. I saw the dark side of humanity and dealt with all sorts of criminal activity. I really saw how people mistreat each other in that at least fifty percent of my work involved domestic complaints. I was good at handling them because of my counseling background. I knew how to calm down stressful situations and help to resolve domestic disputes. As a police officer, the potential for danger and harm is always present. Sometimes, you can be bored as hell for a few hours, and then have an adrenalin rush, as you may be called to a bank robbery. I remember one experience where I was chasing a fleeing car at well over 100 MPH! I was fast approaching an intersection and tried to slow down by slamming on the brakes. Unfortunately, I had miscalculated how much longer you need to stop at that kind of speed. I could not stop in time and skidded into the intersection. My heart was racing as I slid right through the red light! Although my lights

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

and sirens were on, I still needed to approach intersections with caution. I was just damn lucky that no other cars were in the intersection, because I would have hit them.

As a cop, I had to deal with my share of drunks in the wee hours of the night, investigating traffic accidents, thefts, assaults and occasionally, actually helping people in emergencies. I did learn something valuable during my short career as a police officer. I learned how to be assertive and stand up to people. I had always been rather sensitive and inclined to back down in confrontations with aggressive people. Being a cop cured me of this. I learned how to deal with confrontations and be courageous. I no longer became scared or frightened in dealing with aggressive people, but stood up to them. I learned how to take charge of a situation and take responsibility for my actions. I learned a lot about fearlessness that helped to balance my personality.

An important part of the spiritual path is to balance your personality. From an astrological perspective, my experiences as a cop helped me to incorporate the fire element into my personality. I have so much water element in my natal chart that I had a tendency towards shyness and was easily intimidated. A preponderance of the water element in ones' natal chart is indicative of qualities such as: receptivity, understanding, reflectivity, intuition, etc. Those qualities I had, but I lacked the fire qualities of assertiveness, courage, leadership, etc. Being a police officer helped me to develop those qualities in myself.

REFLECTION

Life is not an easy place to live! It can be very dangerous to your health. We are constantly facing challenges and heart breaks in our lives. I guess no one said it would be easy. I remember when I was a child in grade school; there was this one girl who would always pick on me. I had never done a thing to her, but she would always try to push me around. After a while I grew tired of it. One day at the school playground, she pushed me to the ground and started laughing. I turned red and without really thinking, jumped up and slapped her in the face. She started to cry and ran to the teacher. Of course, I was punished for the incident, but she left me alone after that. Life can be like that sometimes. The universe will place people in our lives to teach us some difficult lessons.

What people in your life has been a source of challenges? How have you handled it? Did you stand up for yourself or did they need to stand up to you? Sometimes we are the bullies and we don't even realize it. Did you listen to what they had to say or try to tell them what to do? Other people can help us or challenge us. It is up to us to determine who we want in our lives and who we don't. Some can be very good friends and support us on our journeys. Others can be like vipers that challenge us to grow and stand up for ourselves.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

THE THOMPSON MACHINE GUN

James was a collector of antique guns. I really think he must have been an outlaw in his past life. He enjoyed finding old guns and restoring them. One morning we were having some coffee at his house. Out of the blue, he told me he was going to buy a Thompson machine gun. At first I was a bit taken aback. A machine gun!? What on earth are you going to do with that? I thought to myself that getting a machine gun did not seem like a very humanitarian or spiritual thing to do. I mean what are machine guns made for except to kill people? They are really not made for hunting. But then, James explained that he just enjoyed learning about the history behind the Thompson machine gun, restoring it and shooting it for fun. The Thompson was used back in WWII, but it was most notable for its use by the early Chicago gangs and infamous gangsters like Al Capone. I had never seen a Thompson machine gun before, although I had seen them many times in the movies.

James called me up one day and told me that he had finally purchased his Thompson machine gun. The next day I went over to see it. Well, it was quite the little beauty of wood and metal. I picked it up and it was rather heavy. It was an older Thompson, but in really nice shape. Although there were some little nicks in the wood stock, the wood grain had beautiful patterns in it and the metal had a nice oily shine. James asked me if I would like to shoot it and I said, "Of course!" James and his wife, Lara and I took the Thompson out in the woods to a firing range area. It was a nice beautiful day in the back woods of Vermont. The sun was bright and the birds were singing happy songs. James showed me the basics of using the machine

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

gun along with his rules for gun safety. He fired off a few rounds in semi automatic mode and then in the automatic mode. Quite impressive! Then it was Lara's turn and she shot off the Thompson in the automatic mode. It was interesting to watch her shoot, as she was short in stature and it was a big and powerful gun. But she had no problem and shot it like a pro. Now, it was my turn. I picked up the Thompson and felt its' weight. It fit comfortably in my arms and it had a nice feel. I pulled off a few rounds in semi-automatic mode for practice. Then, I switched it to automatic mode. I pulled the trigger gently and out came the bullets. It was an interesting sensation feeling the rounds going off, one after another in smooth succession. It was really quite smooth and not jerky at all. I found it very exciting and pretty cool. I had previous experience shooting a .357 magnum when I was a cop, but it was nothing like the Thompson. After we shot off all our bullets, which, does not take too long with a machine gun, we cleaned up the area and went back to the house. I told James I had enjoyed shooting his Thompson and thanked him for the opportunity.

On the way home, I thought about my experience with the Thompson machine gun. The experience helped me to question some of my preconceived ideas about life and spirituality. A very wise man had said, "All things are sacred to one who is sacred". It does not matter whether something is a tool, like a hammer or a curling iron or a computer. All things are basically manifestations of certain ideas and symbols. All guns are basically manifestations of the archetypal mars energy or vibration. There is nothing inherently wrong with guns. They are just manifestations of certain forms of energy. The dynamic, aggressive mars energy is just as important to the universe as the more receptive lunar energy. How we use that energy is up to us. Some people may use it positively or negatively. The

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

choice is always ours to make and is our freedom of will and expression. James once told me something that has stuck to me to this day. He said, "There is a reason for the thorns being on a rose."

REFLECTION

Our universe is an interesting place of contrast and duality. Taoist scripture states that:

*"Under heaven all can see beauty as beauty only because there is ugliness. All can know good as good only because there is evil.
Therefore having and not having arise together.
Difficult and easy complement each other.
Long and short contrast each other;
High and low rest upon each other;
Voice and sound harmonize each other;
Front and back follow one another."*

There can be no up without down; there can be no front without a back or heads without a tails. There can be no war without peace; there can be no freedom without responsibility. Spare the rod and you spoil the child. Abuse the rod and you hurt the child. There is a proper balance to things and everything does have its place in the universe.

What would happen if one day, everything that happened in your life went smoothly? No bumps in the road, no challenges, no difficulties and no problems. What would that be like? Try to

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

imagine it. It might seem pretty nice at first. But then what would happen? You would probably become very placid and bored! Think back in your life. What are some of your most memorable events? Do you remember the smooth events or the more difficult events? Your triumphs! Was it getting through school or college? Winning a race, or climbing up Mt. Everest? It is through adversity that brings our greatest triumphs. It is through effort that comes our greatest rewards.



TO JILL, WITH LOVE

FIREWORKS

I have loved fireworks ever since I was a little girl. I always felt thrilled to watch the fireworks every fourth of July while growing up in suburban Illinois. When I was a teenager, my friends and I would light fireworks off in the backyard. I also liked collecting all the different varieties of fireworks. When I became older, I would drive to Indiana with my brother to purchase them, as they were illegal in Illinois. It was a joy to pick and choose from a variety of rockets, firecrackers and sparklers that we would later celebrate in the night sky.

Much later in my life, after I moved to Vermont, I became interested in fireworks again. I thought that it would be a cool vocation and decided to become a pyrotechnics expert. I checked into the local firework companies and found that most of the bigger ones were located in Jaffrey, New Hampshire. I drove over to Atlas Fireworks with James one day for a visit. They took us for a tour of the facility and showed us how they manufactured fireworks. We also saw their warehouse where tons of fireworks were stored. Both James and I decided to pursue our passion for fireworks together, and signed up for a safety & training course at Atlas to become pyro-technicians. I soon found out that most of the training for pyrotechnics was done in the field. The aspiring apprentice technician starts the pyrotechnic journey, loading and unloading trucks of fireworks that are delivered to the fireworks site. There is a lot of labor that is involved in the setting up of a big fireworks display. A site has to be cleared for the fireworks that is safe and away from the public. Then mortar frames have to be constructed and set up to local safety standards. Afterwards, the heavy mortars

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

have to be set up and sometimes buried a few feet into the ground. Following that, all shells have to be inspected and set up in the mortars, and then they all have to be wired to a major electrical board. When I first began shooting fireworks, we did not electrically wire the fireworks. We shot them off, all by hand with a flare. I really enjoyed doing that. It was quite the thrill to light the fuse and hear the “thump” as the shell left the mortar. But it was also quite dangerous! Many firework technicians have actually lost their lives; being hit by shells that are either misfired or were slow to come out of the mortar.

I worked for a small pyrotechnic outfit in Vermont and did many shows throughout the state. I remember one particular firework display that we did in Woodstock, Vermont on July 3rd, 2001; which showed just how dangerous shooting off fireworks can be. We started setting up the show early in the morning. Things seemed to be going well until some dark clouds showed up. Then it began to rain. I found that setting up in the rain is miserable. Even though we would wear raingear, it was difficult to set up all the mortar frames, and load all the shells in the damp weather. And fireworks do not always ignite well when things get wet. That night, I was in charge of staging the shells and preparing them for the mortars to be fired. This basically involves keeping the shells covered with a tarp, to prevent sparks from setting them off prematurely. It also includes preparing and loading the shells in the mortars. Basically, the shells have to be placed in the mortars by hand with the wick hanging out, so the shooter can ignite them. Now this is not as easy as it seems. At night, it is hard to tell which size shell that you might have and they are all different sizes, from the little three-inch shells to the big twelve-inch shells. A twelve-inch shell can easily take a person’s head off! Each shell has to go into the right size mortar or it will not fire correctly as

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

there will not be the proper vacuum to achieve lift. This whole process gets even more difficult and dangerous in the rain. The rain makes it difficult to see and makes the ground slippery. It is easy to slip and fall. It is also hard to see what you are doing. That night, the rain began to fall harder and it was constant with no sign of letting up. It was about eight o'clock and the show was scheduled to begin soon. We were not even close to being ready and were rushing to get everything ready in time. As nine o'clock approached, we were finally ready. We were also tired, exhausted and wet from struggling with the fireworks in the rain. But the show must go on! It was now just lightly raining and the crowd was anxious for the show to begin. There were hundreds of people sitting out in the rain calling out for the show to start. We decided that the rain was light enough to begin the show. And we started it off with a single salute. Bammm!!! The crowd cheered! I felt excited and started to prepare the firework shells. Although it was miserable and wet, the show started off fine. Then about midway into the show, sparks flew out from a nearby mortar all over my staging area. I literally had to fling my body with a tarp to cover up the shells so they would not ignite. It really scared me as that whole staging area could have went off, if one of the sparks had ignited any of the shells. I was lucky that nothing happened and the show continued. Then all of a sudden, I noticed that one of the loaders put the wrong size shell in a mortar. Danger!!! The next minute was like a scene out of World War II. There was a mist in the air and it made seeing difficult. I just noticed that the loader put the wrong shell in the mortar, out of the corner of my eye. I cried out to the lead shooter not to ignite the shell, but it was too late. I yelled out to "duck", but there was so much noise from the fireworks that no one could hear me. I watched in horror as the shell went about ten feet into the air and exploded just above us! All I saw then was a blinding light and a sudden

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

sharp pain in my right eye as I was hit by shrapnel. I fell down to the ground. I knew I had been hit and immediately checked my right eye. I was very fortunate that night as I just suffered only a small cut and nothing major happened to me. Everyone else was also recovering from the shell that had exploded so close to the ground. But the crowd roared! They thought that it was part of the show and they loved it! It must have been quite a sight. We managed to finish shooting the rest of the fireworks, but it was almost comical. The lead shooter was sprinting and slipping all over the field. He slipped and fell several times with his torch flying through the air. Many of the fuses had gotten wet and would not ignite, so we had to light some of the mortars quite close. By the end of the night, many of us had temporarily lost much of our hearing. But we did complete the show and it was a big hit for the crowd. I just remember how dangerous that show was and how lucky I had not been more seriously injured. But that is what can happen while shooting fireworks, especially by hand. Now days, most fireworks are ignited electronically, so it is much safer as you do not have to get close to the mortars to shoot them off. But I will always admire those early days of shooting firework shows, by hand.

I continued to shoot firework shows for a couple of more years after that dreadful night. Even though it was a bit risky, I loved the excitement of putting on firework displays. I really enjoyed learning the art of fireworks and the amazing kaleidoscope of colors and sound it creates in the night sky.

Fireworks have always seemed magical to me. They inspire a sense of wonder and awe. Do you remember “Gandalf”, the wizard from J.R. Tolkien’s classic, *Lord of the Rings*? Gandalf was also a pyrotechnic expert. He would shoot fireworks for many of the Hobbit festivals.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

From a Hermetic perspective, fireworks are a manifestation of the fire principle. It is through the fire element that we are able to see things on the physical plane. The spectrum of colors that we see in a fireworks display is just various waves of energy vibrating at different frequencies. Red has a different vibratory rate than blue; green has a different vibration than yellow. The white light that we normally see is made up of all the different colors of the rainbow. Color not only has different vibratory rates, but it has various qualitative states. For instance, red is a very active color and is associated with vital energy, while blue is a more mellow color and is associated with peacefulness. The majority of people are not really aware of these color associations in their daily lives, but they are everywhere. For example, the color red means, “alert” or “pay attention”. Everyday, as you commute to work when the traffic light turns red, everyone knows to pay attention and “stop”. Green is a more fertile and flowing color that means, “go” at the traffic light. If you take the time to look, you can see many examples of qualitative color in your own life.

We live in a multi-level universe that manifests in a spectrum of colors. We also participate in this universe of color on several different levels. Our physical bodies manifest a variety of color and our “inner body”, sometimes referred to as our “astral body”, manifest a variety of color with psychological correspondences. Our inner bodies actually glow with whatever quality or color that is dominating in our lives. This is often called our “aura.” We cannot normally see it with our physical vision, but we can see it with our inner vision. Many people who are clairvoyant can see the different colors manifesting in our aura at a given time. When someone is angry, the color red would be predominant in their aura and when one is at peace, the color blue would be predominant. Every emotion and

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

mental state has its corresponding color. Every person is really, quite the kaleidoscope of ever-changing colors and expression.

All manifestation is connected with color. When God created the universe and said, "Let there be light" (Gen 1:3); all the colors of the rainbow were also created at the same time. It is the wonder of all creation. Whenever I see fireworks in the sky, I am reminded of that wonder of creation.

REFLECTION

What is your favorite color? Why? Usually, it is because you just like it or are attracted to it. My boyfriend Paul's favorite color is red. I like the color blue. My friend, Dianne likes the color pink. Everyone has their favorite color or colors. Do you think that a color can be good or bad? Color is just color, isn't it? It is neither good nor bad. Why on earth, do you think people judge other people by the color of their skin? Isn't this crazy? Do we judge people by the color of their eyes or their hair? I have never understood this judgment of people by the color of their skin. We are all the same! Color gives us variety in this universe. We should appreciate everyone regardless of his or her color, just as we would appreciate a fine car regardless of its color. We are all colors of the infinite rainbow, which God put in the sky as a symbol of his love for all creation:

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

“I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of:
The covenant between God and all living creatures of
every kind on the Earth” Gen 9:13



LINCOLN MOUNTAIN

I lived in an amazing little rural town called Lincoln, Vermont. Most people would not consider Lincoln to be amazing, but I did because life was so simple and uncomplicated unlike city life. Lincoln is a small beautiful rural town just north of Middlebury, Vermont nestled next to the green mountains. I lived with my friends, Dianne and Patti in a solar & wind powered home far from the reaches of normal electrical utility power. It was quite a change from my years of city living in Chicago. I had left Chicago to fulfill my hippie dream of living off the grid and off the land. I spent a lot of time learning about rural living through many books and countless issues of Mother Earth News.

After much searching, I found a piece of land out in Lincoln, Vermont. It was a hundred acre parcel off a dirt road in the middle of nowhere. The scenery was spectacular! You could see the mountains from all directions and there was a small pond that was constantly fed by a small river running through the property. The house was actually a converted camp. There was also a relatively new barn and a sugar shack. For those of you who don't know, a "sugar shack" is a small cabin where maple syrup is made. We had plenty of maple trees that could produce a lot of Vermont maple syrup. Our house had no electricity, but there was an old wind turbine, although it did not work. Dianne, Patti and I moved into our new rural home in 1984. We shared the dream of rural living in the Green Mountains and I talked them into buying the house with me. We were in for some exciting times! Our dirt driveway was almost a mile long and it was not maintained by the town. My first purchase was a small

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

4X4 red pick up truck that we could use for plowing in the winter. Winters can be very hard in the upper mountains of Vermont. We had to learn how to plow through deep and icy snow. Sometimes, we would have what New Englanders call “Nor’easters”, those storms blowing from the North East that could dump up to three feet of snow. I remember when we first moved into our new home, Dianne had been wishing for a lot of snow. I told her to be careful what she wished for. Sure enough! We really got dumped on that first year in Lincoln. It snowed and snowed, and snowed some more! At first it was gorgeous having the snowcapped mountains and the glistening crystals of snow in the moonlight. But the beauty wore off after getting stuck several times plowing the driveway. We also had this really steep hill on our driveway with trees on either side. I can’t tell you how many times we almost hit those trees during icy storms, and how many times we had to park at the base of the hill and walk up a half mile to the cabin with a load of groceries.

During one particular nasty Nor’easter winter storm, we received over three feet of snow! There just was no plowing that amount of snow. In the morning, Dianne and I were wondering how on earth we were going to get out of there. After some very strong coffee, we went out to start shoveling. It was amazing! The snow was up to my waist. We could barely push the back door open. Outside, it looked like a postcard from Alaska. Very beautiful, but how on earth were we going to move all this snow? As we worked on shoveling a small pathway to the barn, I heard the rumbling sound of a big machine. And, it was coming towards our house! All of a sudden, a big yellow bulldozer came plowing up our driveway. It was our closest neighbor, Gordon who lived in the farm down below us. Thank God! He was plowing us out. We thanked him profusely and I

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

later gave him a check for his efforts. Gordon helped us often in the years to come and we became good neighbors.

In the spring, our barn became very handy, as Patti loved horses. She purchased two Morgan horses and taught me how to ride horseback. We had tons of fun riding the horses along the trails that intertwined throughout our property. We also expanded our now little farm to include other animals such as: rabbits, dogs, cats, geese and chickens. There is nothing like fresh eggs in the morning!

Speaking of animals, there were a lot of wild animals that roamed our property. We had foxes, wolves, coyotes, deer, raccoons, skunks, tomcats, bears and big moose. In fact we had a family of moose that lived about a quarter of a mile from our house. I would go out to watch them occasionally as they tracked about the marshy areas. There was a very popular Vermont author, Ron Rood whose home bordered our property. He wrote extensively about the diverse wildlife in the mountains of Lincoln. We got to know Ron pretty well because our dog, Baron would always go to visit him. Ron really liked Baron, so our dog would go there often and not come home. I spent many evenings picking Baron up at Ron's home. We also had another dog, Amos who would go visit our other neighbor, Gordon. For some reason, our dogs were never happy just staying on our property, but would go visit the neighbors. I could never understand why they would always go to visit the neighbors when they had all of a hundred acres to roam on.

One early morning, I was walking down our lower trail and as I passed a clump of white birch trees; I saw what looked like a stump in the middle of the trail. I thought to myself that this was odd as I had never seen that black stump there before. Then all

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

of a sudden, the stump moved! It was no stump, but a big black bear! I stopped in my tracks and just watched this big black bear. It had not seen me and I was down wind, so she also did not smell me. The reason I knew she was a female bear is, because I saw a little cub come prancing down the hillside after her. When I saw the cub, I slowly began to edge my way back up the trail. I knew if she saw me, I was in big trouble. Luckily, I made it back without the mother bear ever seeing me. That was the first bear I had ever seen in the wild, and I will always remember my close encounter with her on our woodland trail.

After a couple years of living in the mountains, I began to learn as much as I could about alternative energy. My friend, James was very helpful in giving us the information we needed to develop our own power system. He had written several books showing people how to make their own solar panels. At first, we started out small with just a couple of solar panels. We did all the installation and wiring ourselves, which is no easy task for beginners. We then began to upgrade our system with a battery bank, voltage converter, regulator and back up generator. And we got the wind turbine working! It was great finally having our own electricity in the house. We had been using kerosene oil lamps for lighting, and grew weary of igniting Aladdin oil lamps every night for light. Now, we had lights at the flip of a switch, which is something most people take for granted. In time, we expanded our solar system to include about twenty solar panels. We later put up a new wind turbine that helped to develop power during the days when there was little sun. And there were a lot of those dreary days, especially in the winter. After a few years, our house had all the modern amenities, including a TV, stereo, computer, etc. We were actually becoming rather civilized in our little green mountain home. We also had a wood-fired hot tub outside next

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

to the deck. On the cold winter nights, we would run through the snow and hop into the warm hot tub. There is nothing quite like being immersed in one hundred degree water, while sitting out in a cold winter night, watching the moon and stars twinkle in the heavens.

I learned a lot about Mother Nature and rural living in the backwoods of Vermont. I became more self sufficient and developed a variety of new skills, like carpentry, electrical installation, plumbing, gardening, canning vegetables, plowing, raising animals, horseback riding, snow-shoeing, cross country skiing, and many other things that I would never have experienced living in the city. I also felt much closer to nature and more in tune with her cycles, signs and seasons. I took the time to listen to her secrets and develop my psychic senses. Later, I started the Hermetic Meditation Center, offering classes in Yoga, Esoteric Science and Meditation. People would come from miles away to enjoy the wonderful peacefulness of our mountain retreat.

REFLECTION

What could you do to live life more simply? Do you think it might improve the quality of your life? Most of us struggle from day to day with very complicated lives. We have to juggle a nine to five job, raising a family, making a mortgage, car payments, paying bills and don't forget taxes. Many of us are under so much pressure to meet our daily needs. I think it is important to our health to take a "time out". Many people think of this as a vacation. Unfortunately, our vacations can be even

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

more stressful than our daily routines. We need to take time out to “smell the roses”. One of the ways to do this is by communing with nature. Take time to feel the grass under your bare feet, the beauty of a sunrise or a sunset, the fragrance of a flower and the wonder of creation. Whenever you are caught in a rut, take time out! Listen to your soul, it will tell you what to do. There is a deep connection between our soul and nature. That is why nature can help us to feel whole again. Try this exercise:

Find a nice quiet spot in the woods or a park where you will not be disturbed. Bring a blanket. Lie down on your blanket and relax. Listen very closely to nothing in particular; just the sounds around you. Feel the sun on your skin and the wind gently blowing against your face. Let your worries go or just set them aside for a while. You can attend to them later. This time is just for you! Now watch your breathing. Your breathing connects you with everything that lives. Begin to feel outward. Feel the weight of your body on the earth. Extend your senses to include the grass, trees and sky. Feel your boundaries move beyond yourself to include the surrounding nature and everything in it. Explore outwardly. Reach outward as far as you can. Enjoy this feeling. Then begin to pull back inwardly. Bring your consciousness back to the field where you lay and back to your physical body. Feel the difference. You should feel recharged with vital energy.

THE SPIRIT VISITORS

James came to stay with us for a short time in our home in the woods. He was sleeping in the back bedroom, which had a loft area above the bed. We had a cat named Shiela, who loved to get up on the loft, and then jump down on the bed to wake James up in the morning. The cat would just miss him by a hair! I think she enjoyed doing this. I thought it was kind of amusing.

Anyway one morning, James asked me if I would like to help him invoke some friendly spirits into our home. My friend, Dianne had always smirked about the presence of spirits and I think James wanted to enlighten her. I was very intrigued and agreed to assist James in the invocation ritual. I helped James to prepare the atmosphere with incense and candles. We utilized an ancient Hermetic Ritual to invoke the spirits. Following the invocation, we went to different areas of the house and rang a temple bell to summon the spirits. Then we finished our ritual. James thought the sprits would visit us later that night.

Later in the evening, Dianne came home from work. I told her we had invoked spirits to come and visit us. She kind of smiled and said, "Oh, yeah, sure". After dinner, we were all tired and went to sleep, almost forgetting about the invocation. It was just after midnight, when all of a sudden, I awoke to a scratching sound in the bedroom. I got up and looked around but could not see anything. I thought it might be the cat. I started to fall back asleep, when very abruptly; I heard that scratching noise again. This time it was louder and sounded like it was coming from Dianne's room. I jumped up and raced to her room. Dianne was up and had heard the scratching sounds, too. The scratching

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

noise sounded just like a cat clawing its nails over a carpet. Dianne whispered to me, “What on earth is that noise?” I said it might be the cat. She said that the cat was outside! We both looked at each other in bewilderment. Along with the scratching noise, I could feel the atmosphere in the room was highly charged with electricity. It felt like my hair was standing on end. Then unexpectedly, we heard this loud boom! We both jumped. It sounded like a bunch of books had just fallen off a shelf and landed on the floor. The crashing noise came from James’s room. We both raced to James’s room. His door was wide open and the lights were off. James was still in bed and sleeping. Dianne woke James up and said, “Didn’t you hear all that noise?” James said, “No, what noise are you talking about?” He had not heard anything. We couldn’t believe it as the crashing noise had been so loud, yet nothing was disturbed in James’s room. I looked at Dianne and said, “Do you think it was the spirits?” and she said, “Oh yeah!” They had come for a visit and had made their presence known to us. I am sure James was smiling inside, knowing that the spirits had come to his call, but he never took responsibility for their visit or ever said another word about it. Even though I had participated in the invocation of the spirits, I was really astounded that they actually came!

I think that was quite a remarkable experience! It was eerie how the spirits made the scratching sounds that awoke both Dianne and I, in the middle of the night. And the noise was right there in our bedrooms, so I knew that James was not playing any pranks on us. The atmosphere had been so charged with energy, that I could feel their presence. Though we could not see the spirits, we really heard them on that dark summer night.

REFLECTION

Do you believe in ghosts? Most intelligent people tend to scoff at the idea. But they certainly do exist! There is much more between Heaven and Earth than meets the eye. I have had so many supernatural experiences in my own life, that I have no doubt about the existence of spirits, ghosts and other ethereal phenomenon. I also know first hand what it is like to be a ghost, through some of my astral projection experiences.

During one of my, “out of the body” experiments; I told my friend, Sue that I would try to come visit her at her home. That night, I practiced my astral projection technique and successfully left my body. I pictured Sue’s house in my mind and instantly I was there. It was dark outside and I tried to enter through her front door. For some reason, I could not slip through the door. (I have found that on the astral plane, you can just slip right through doors and walls.) I was being blocked for some reason. So, I knocked on the door. When Sue did not answer, I knocked harder. She did not come to the door, so I decided to leave. When I decided to leave, I instantly returned to my room. My body was lying serenely on the bed. I floated down and entered my physical body. I opened my eyes and got up. It was now three o’clock in the morning. I got up and had some coffee. Later that morning, I called Sue and asked her what happened. Sue said that she had been awakened at about two o’clock in the morning, by a knocking sound at the front door. She went to check, but no one was there. She walked back to her room and then heard an even louder, pounding on her door. At that point, she became frightened and thought, ‘someone or something was outside her door.’ She called the

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

police who came and found nothing. She had forgotten all about what I had told her the previous day. So, I told her, “That was me!” She said; “That was you!” “You scared the daylights out of me!”

⊕

BRISTOL NOTCH

It was a very cold wintry night in Lincoln, Vermont. I had just drifted off to sleep in my nice warm bed when the telephone rang. I woke up in a doze and picked up the phone. It was James and he had an urgent request! A friend of his was stranded on Bristol Notch, after their car had broken down. James asked if I could go and pick them up, as they might freeze to death up there. Bristol Notch is a mountain pass that is located at the top of Bristol Mountain between Bristol and Warren, Vermont. I groaned and then reluctantly agreed to go get them.

It was about two o'clock in the morning as I left my warm bed and prepared to drive up the Bristol Notch road. I let my new Subaru warm up, while I made a quick cup of coffee. It was really cold outside. The temperature had dropped down below zero! The stars were shining brightly as I proceeded out my long driveway towards Bristol Notch. It took me about forty-five minutes to reach the Bristol Notch. The road up to Bristol Notch is a windy mountain road with many twists and turns. It was on this road that Hollywood filmed the scene, where Jack Nicholson was bit by a werewolf in his *Wolf* movie. I could just imagine wolves prancing through the dark forest that bordered the rural highway. As I reached the top of the Bristol Notch road, I saw James's friends standing next to the road. They were huddled together and looked really cold. There were four of them and a huge dog. James had said nothing about a dog! They were quite happy to see me and were freezing cold. They were not dressed for our cold Vermont winters. I put my rear seat down, so that the big Saint Bernard dog could fit in my Subaru. They all piled into my car. James's friend, Ed had a ham radio

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

in his car that he had used to contact James. I thought it was incredibly lucky that James had been listening to his ham radio that night. There were no service stations open at that time of night, so I brought them to spend the night at my house. I put them all up in the spare bedroom with their Saint Bernard. My friend, Dianne had woken up and I filled her in on what happened. Then later we all went to bed.

Sunrise came pretty quickly and I was only able to get a few hours of sleep. Dianne, bless her heart, made breakfast for everyone. Ed made a few calls and located a service station that would tow his car to Warren. I agreed to give them a ride to town, so they could pick up their car. I was pretty happy to drop them all off at the Citgo Service Station in the morning. As we arrived at the station, Ed's girlfriend, Maria complained that she was tired of all this bullshit and wanted to get some real food at a restaurant. She slammed the door shut and immediately went walking down the highway all by herself. I was dumbfounded! She was really angry, and did not even stop to consider what Ed might want to do or offer any help. She never once said, thank you to me for helping her out of a jam, and letting her stay at my home. She just took off walking down the road! And Ed did not appear too concerned. He said he would pick her up later. I thought to myself, 'good luck with her.' At least, Ed thanked me for all my trouble and was very appreciative for getting him out of a jam. They would soon be on their way to visit James. I smiled to myself as I could just imagine Ed's girlfriend at James's house. He doesn't have much tolerance for people who are so self-centered. I got back in my Subaru, which was a complete mess because of all the dog hair. I headed back home and thought to myself, 'James you owe me big time for this one.'

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

I actually like helping people. My thought that James owed me was just in jest. It gives me a feeling of joy, whenever I am able to help someone. Doing good works is an important part of the spiritual path. We are not alone here on this planet for a reason. Everyone has the opportunity to help one another along the way. It is at the heart of Jesus' commandment to "love one another" and central to Kriya yogic teachings of "right action".

We are given many opportunities in our life to help others. Helping James's friend, Ed was one of those opportunities for me. I could have easily told James, there was no way I was going to get up in the middle of the night to help his friend, but I could not do that and live with myself. We are all given these opportunities during our life to help others. These are the times to put our spirituality into practice. The commandment should be to: "Help others as you would have them help you." The world would be quite a different place, if everyone practiced this little rule.

REFLECTION

Have you ever had the opportunity to help someone? Do you try to help your friends who are in need? Or are you like the Dickens' character, Scrooge, who is only concerned about his own welfare? It is very easy to become self-absorbed in our society. I hear many people say, "When I was in a jam, no one came to help me!" That may be so, but that is no reason not to help others. If anything, that experience should teach you that other people do need help occasionally. So reach out and help others when they need it!

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

ANGELS

I have never met any Angels per se, but I certainly believe in higher forms of intelligences that help us along the way, and especially in times of crisis. I was once helped by an angel, genii or higher intelligence during a time of crisis in my life.

I had been living in rural Vermont at the time. It was mid-winter and I began to experience feelings of extreme anxiety. I had no idea what was causing these feelings. I just began to feel anxious and depressed. Some nights, I would also have panic attacks. The panic attacks were like intense feelings of fear that caused my heart to race. I would get up in the middle of the night and my bed would be covered in sweat. These feelings may have been related to a crisis period, I had earlier in my life, but I was not sure. I only knew that I was having a hard time coping and keeping my sanity. I felt like I was constantly walking on eggshells. My nerves were on edge; I had constant feelings of fear and dread, especially at night. I spoke with my spiritual mentor about my dilemma. He gave me a yoga mantra to help with my feelings of anxiety. I used the mantra for several weeks and it did help, but my symptoms remained. I remember some nights staying awake and chanting the mantra for two to three hours, before I could get some sleep.

My condition worsened. I was just barely functioning and felt very distracted at work. I was getting very little sleep and sometimes would have multiple panic attacks. I would sweat profusely and quite often, be up most of the night. This state of affairs went on for a couple of months! I went to see a physician who prescribed some valium. This only made me feel drowsy.

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

One night after having another panic attack; I was sitting on the sofa and thought to myself, 'I don't know how much more of this I can take.' I was afraid of the toll this was taking on my body, as well as my mind. I looked upward and asked God what was happening to me! I started to pray out loud for divine intervention. All of a sudden, I heard this voice come from within. The voice was a real presence and felt like a friend. He began talking with me and telling me there was nothing to fear. He said that he would be with me from now on and would help me through my crisis. There was no name associated with my helper, but he was certainly there, and not just a voice inside my head, though I am sure a psychiatrist might beg to differ. I considered him a higher intelligence or angel or genii, that had come to help me. And I was very grateful because I slowly began to recover. I began to feel calm again. Although I still had a few more rough nights, my friend was there for me and helped me through them. I really don't know where he came from. If he was part of my higher self or a product of my imagination or an angel; I really do not know, nor do I think it really matters. What matters is that I did receive help after praying to the divine and it helped me to overcome my crisis.

I think we all have access to divine help and intervention. I think it may take many forms from angelic beings and heavenly guides to our own intuition. It may also come to us in the forms of books, friends, ministers, counselors, etc. I think the main thing is to be open to it. This reminds me of the old joke about the man who was caught in a flood.

A man had been stranded on the top of his house during a disastrous flood. The water was growing higher and higher. He prayed to God for help. Later, someone in a boat came by and offered to take him to safety. But he refused, saying that God

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

would take care of him. The waters continued to rise, getting dangerously close to the rooftop where the man was struggling to hold on. A helicopter flew over to the man and offered to help him to higher ground. But again, the man refused, stating that God would take care of him. The helicopter flew away. Suddenly, there was a surge of water that wiped the man off the roof and he consequently drowned. Afterwards, the man spoke with God in heaven after his death. He asked God why he did not save him. God answered and said, "I sent you a boat to take you to safety. I even sent you a helicopter to take you to higher ground, but you didn't listen!"

REFLECTION

Do you pray? How do you pray? Do you pray in earnest? The divine hears your most earnest and heartfelt prayers. If you pray half-heartedly, than God listens half-heartedly. When you pray, you should pray with your whole heart and soul. Then God listens. God knows your heart! You cannot fool God. You may even fool yourself, but you cannot fool God, for God is all Truth. You do not need any special prayers to reach God, though some can be helpful in directing your thoughts. Most people in the West are familiar with the "Lords Prayer":

"Our Father who art in Heaven, hallow be thine name, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory Forever."

Amen

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

This prayer can be really helpful in directing your heart and mind to God, if it is said with earnest devotion. There are many other prayers of different faiths that can help attune your mind and soul to the divine.

There is the ancient Hindu Vedic Prayer:

“From untruth lead us to Truth
From darkness lead us to Light.
From death lead us to Immortality.
Om Peace, Peace, Peace.”

The Buddhist prayer to the Goddess “Quan Yin”:

“Divine Mother of all Beings
Great Goddess of Compassion and Mercy
May my heart be home to you
Like an island in the sea.
May I feel your presence guiding me in times of trouble.
May the strength and balance of your grace be mine when I
need them,
May I walk in the Bodhisattva Way with trust and joy,
Beyond space and time, beyond the end and the beginning.”

There is an Islamic Prayer:

“All praise belongs to Allah,
Lord of all worlds,
The Compassionate and the Merciful,
Ruler of Judgement Day.
It is You that we worship,
And to You we appeal for help.
Show us the straight way,

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

The way of those you have graced,
Not of those on whom is Your wrath,
Nor those who wander astray.”

An Iroquois Prayer:

“We give thanks to our mother, the earth which sustains us.
We give thanks to the rivers and streams, which give us life.
We give thanks to all the plants and herbs which nourish us and
gives us medicine for diseases.
We give thanks to the Moon and Stars, which give us their
guiding light.
We give thanks to the Sun that brightens our way.
Lastly, we give thanks to the Great Spirit, in whom resides all
goodness,
And who directs all things for the good of her children.”

The Jewish Prayer:

“Shima, Yisrael, Adonai Elohaenu, Adonai Echad.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord:

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart,
And with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”



MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

The Pagan blessing:

“May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face;
The rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of His hand.”

And there is a simple, yet beautiful Tibetan Prayer:

“May I be filled with loving kindness,
May I be well.
May I be peaceful and at ease.
May I be happy.”

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

NUTCRACKER

Ever since I was a little girl, I have always had a very active imagination. I could picture things in my head, very clearly and imagine all kinds of wild things. Many times at school, I would spend hours daydreaming. Most of the time, I would imagine positive things, but sometimes during difficult times; I would imagine monsters and goblins, which would be very scary. Like many other kids my age, my imagination would runaway at times, and I would be scared of the darkness under my bed or unknown things that may be lurking in my closet. As I grew older, I became much more rational and my childhood fears disappeared. But later when I became initiated into the mystical and occult arts, I re-learned the power of the imagination. Our imagination can be a very powerful tool for creativity and wonderful creations, but it also can be used negatively resulting in dramatic effects on our consciousness and reality.

It was the winter of 1995 and I was living with my friends, Dianne and Patti in our country home in Lincoln, Vermont. There was a full moon that lit the night sky. This is a time when the imagination is particularly strong. I was watching a television show; I think it was the *Twilight Zone* or something like that. Anyway, the story revolved around a wooden doll that became alive and terrorized a family. It wasn't "Chukky", but something similar. For some reason, the doll image stuck in my head. The following day, I continued to think about the image and then it began to annoy me. I don't know why, but I could not stop thinking about it and my imagination started to run wild. Later that evening, I was cleaning the shelves and started dusting one of those Russian wooden nutcrackers. It belonged

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

to Patti. I immediately began to equate the nutcracker with the wooden doll on the TV show. At first, I tried to laugh it off and clear it from my mind. But the image would continually come back to me. After a day or two, it began to needle me. I started to get angry about it and then I began having feelings of fear. Now as an occultist, I know the power of the mind and the imagination. And I know of certain occult techniques for bringing consciousness to objects, such as statues and pictures. I also know that negative thoughts, like fear can cause certain things to happen. So, I began to feel frightened that I would cause some harm by energizing the nutcracker. For those people who are not aware of the power of occult energy, this will sound like foolishness, but even a psychologist will tell you about the power of self-fulfilling prophecy. So, I was caught in this circle of fear that I could not escape and felt like I was running amuck, as they say.

I spoke with some close friends who were also in the mystical arts and they advised me that I needed to stand up to my fears. I felt embarrassed that I was having these fears, and thought back to my old childhood days and my fears back then. My friend, James told me the story of how he had been bullied as a child by this one kid on his block. Every time he went to school, the bully would be there in the morning and chase him. This went on day after day and it finally began to affect his health. He lost his appetite and could not sleep. He dreaded going to school in the morning. Finally, one day he had, had enough. He was going to confront the bully, even if it killed him. The next day, he got up in the morning and sure enough, there was the bully, ready to get him on the way to school. But this time, he did not run. Instead, he took off his belt and boldly confronted the bully. He fully intended on thrashing him and began swinging the belt wildly. Well the bully was shocked and became afraid.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

He said, “You’re crazy!” and took off. The bully never bothered him again. So in essence, James was telling me that I had to face my fears as they tend to bully you, if you do not.

The next day, I also decided to face my fears. I went into the living room and picked up my feared nutcracker. I picked up a shotgun that we keep near our front door (rural Vermont can be dangerous, especially when you live far from town) and I took the nutcracker outside. I put it down and then I picked up my shotgun, and blasted it to pieces! Then I started a fire and burned the remains. I felt a sense of relief, but was sorry that I had to destroy Patti’s nutcracker (which she never missed and I never told her). Over the next few days, my fears began to diminish, although it took a while for the images to stop playing in my head, but over time they did.

I share this story because those of us on the spiritual path know the power of our imagination and emotions. They are fundamental tools that affect our reality and everyday world. Once we become aware of this power, we are responsible for its use and effects. Jesus said that we are responsible even for our thoughts. The majority of people in today’s society feel it is all right for them to think ill of other people or wish them harm, in order to get ahead and climb the corporate ladder. But once you are on the spiritual path, this is not acceptable. We are responsible for our thoughts, our imagination and our actions. We also have to stand up to our fears, as they are part of our own creations.

REFLECTION

Responsibility! It appears very often in our society that people do not want to be held responsible for their actions. Many people want to hold everyone and everything else accountable, but themselves. I know many people who think that, if they do not get caught with some illegitimate action, then they are home free. They only fool themselves! Jesus said that not one blade of grass moves without God knowing about. The Bible also says, "You will reap what you sow." The Yogis call this the law of "karma". Karma means that for every action, there is an opposite reaction; if you love others, than others will love you. If you hurt someone, then someone will hurt you. You can run from the law of karma, but you cannot hide. Every amount of energy you put into motion, will come back to you, good or bad. It is much better if you can use this law to your benefit and also for the rest of the world. Make an effort to think positive thoughts and perform positive actions. Not only will it help to improve your life, but it will also help to improve other people's lives.

Here is an exercise: *whenever you find yourself thinking negative thoughts try balancing them with positive thoughts. Whenever you think: "I could never do that" replace it with: "Maybe I could do that." Instead of saying to your child: "You will never amount to anything!" try saying: "You can do anything, if you put your mind to it!" It may seem insignificant, but it can make a traumatic change in your life and other people's lives.*

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

CRY IN THE WILDERNESS

While living in the rural mountains of Vermont, I had to travel extensively throughout the state for my job as a rehabilitation counselor. I enjoyed traveling to different towns in Vermont and exploring new places. There was always a new little town to discover.

One brisk November morning, I had to travel to Waitsfield to meet with a client. I was driving my Nissan 4X4 red pick up and I decided to take a short cut over Lincoln Mountain. It usually closes around November, but they do not put up any barriers. The town just generally puts up a little sign recommending no traveling over Lincoln Mountain.

It was seven o'clock in the morning and there was about four inches of snow on the ground. As I reached the intersection that led to Lincoln Mountain pass, I hesitated for a bit. The sign was up! I thought to myself, 'should I go over the mountain pass or take the longer way around.' I pondered for a moment and then decided that since I was driving my 4X4 truck, I should be able to drive through what little snow there was. So, up I went. I proceeded up the mountain pass and all was going fine. My truck was having no problems negotiating the steep climb. I had also put the truck into four-wheel drive. I reached the top of the mountain and thought to myself, 'well that wasn't too bad.' Then I started to head down the other side.

The other side of Lincoln Mountain is very, very steep! There is a reason they close this road down for the winter. I started down cautiously. I approached the first turn and began to apply the

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

brakes. As I pressed on the brakes, the wheels suddenly began to slide. Immediately, I knew I was in trouble! I managed to feather the brakes and make the first turn, but now the road was even steeper and I was gaining speed. Faster and faster, I went. I tried to gently touch the brakes again, but it did nothing. My truck just slid forward. The road was covered in glare ice and I was headed for disaster! It's funny how time often slows down in times of crisis. I remember looking out over the side of the road. It was straight down for hundreds of feet. There were no road barriers or trees to prevent me from falling down the mountainside. And no one would find me for days if I crashed, as no right minded Vermonter would be traveling on Lincoln pass in the winter. All these things crossed my mind, as I was flying down the mountain out of control.

Exasperated, I cried out and prayed for help as there was nothing I could do! And I thought to myself 'this is it!' The next turn was coming fast and I knew I could not make it, at the speed I was traveling. So I turned the wheel hard to the right, hoping to ram into the embankment. Things really began to happen fast! I hit the right side embankment and bounced off, back onto the road. My mind became a bit confused, as I could have sworn that the truck turned completely over after I hit the embankment. I then remember spinning in circles and hoping that I would not go over the other side of the mountain. I was jostled and tumbled around. Then quite suddenly, my truck came to an abrupt stop, on the right side of the road in a small ditch, next to a culvert. I couldn't believe it. I was still alive! I got out of my truck and kissed the ground. I thanked God and began to inspect the truck. It was remarkable, there was very little damage. My truck was totally stuck in the ditch, but I really didn't care. I had somehow made it with a little help from above. I started to walk back up the mountain to get some help.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

It was at least five miles back to my house. I really did not mind walking as I felt so elated for still being alive. I walked the five miles back to my house feeling so happy. When I arrived back at home, I called the local auto service station about towing my truck. Their first response was, "We don't go up Lincoln mountain in the winter" and then, "What were you doing up there anyway, any fool knows that you should not be driving on that road in the winter!" I tried calling up a couple other service stations and they would not go up there either. I then called my neighbor, Gordon who lived about a mile down the road. Gordon had lived in Lincoln, Vermont all his life and knew just about everyone. Gordon suggested I call Tom Goodyear who had a farm on Lincoln Mountain. I spoke with Tom and he agreed to tow my truck down from the mountain. He didn't even chastise me for driving on the mountain.

I told James about my near-death experience and he agreed to go with me to get my truck. James and I drove over to Tom Goodyear's farm. He had a big truck and was putting tire chains on all four wheels as we drove into his driveway. We accompanied him up the mountain to get my truck. We crested the top of the mountain and proceeded down the other side. I began feeling a bit leery. He had a big truck and if it lost traction, there would be no stopping it. No sooner than I had that thought, the truck suddenly began to slide. My heart began racing as his truck began to slide on the ice and was picking up speed. I thought to myself 'not again!' I glanced over to James and he had grabbed the door handle and was prepared to jump out. Then quite suddenly, the truck tire chains grabbed hold and we slowed down to a safe speed. Another harrowing experience! Tom looked over to me and said, "I bet you were scared there for a moment!" We finally reached my truck and he was able to pull it out of the ditch. We took the long way

around the mountain to get back home. No shortcuts over the mountain this time or ever again!

REFLECTION

“Sometimes shit happens!” Often times in our lives, things happen that are beyond our control. At those times, we can only pray for the best. My friend at work was parking her truck in the parking lot at work. Her foot slipped off the brake and hit the gas pedal. She rammed her truck into our building right into somebody’s office! Fortunately, no one was in the office at the time and she was not injured. Her car and the building can be repaired. She was a bit shaken up, but was very thankful that no one was in the building and nobody was hurt. Things happen in our lives that we have no control over. For those times, it is best to hand over the reins of your life to God and pray for help.

A famous theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr said, “Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know difference.”

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

RAINDANCE

I had been living in Lincoln, Vermont for about five years when we had a drought. The summer had been really dry and many of our neighbors' wells had dried up. Dianne and I became really concerned as we had a shallow well. As the ground dried up, many of the plants in our garden began to wither. I decided to do a "Rain Dance!" It was not really the popular Native American Rain Dance; but a magical ritual for invoking the water element that I had learned from many years of esoteric study.

I told Dianne that I was going to do a magical ritual to make it rain! She kind of smirked about it, but said nothing else. Actually, she really did not think there was any way in hell, I was going to make it rain. It was a hot, dry Sunday afternoon in mid-July and there was no rain in the forecast for our local area. I began the ritual by creating a magic circle. A circle is a symbol for infinity and helps to connect one with the divine. Within the circle, I invoked the ancient Gods of the Four Winds and also the Spirits of the Four Elements: Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. I called upon the Spirit of Water and prayed to the Great Mother for rain. I asked the Spirits to bring rain later in the afternoon. Completing my ritual, I dismissed the Spirits and gave thanks to the Goddess.

After the ritual, I told Dianne that it would rain later in the afternoon. She just smiled and said, "Sure it will". Well that afternoon, we went to go see a movie in Middlebury. It was a science fiction thriller. I became really engrossed in the movie and forgot about my ritual. After the movie was over, we

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

headed towards the exit door. Everyone near the doorway was marveling and pointing outside. We both looked outside and then at each other in absolute amazement. It was pouring rain! Not just a little sprinkle, but a downpour! Dianne was dumfounded! The ritual had worked! We both ran out and danced in the rain. We enjoyed getting soaking wet.

It had only rained for a few hours, but it was enough for our land to recover from the drought and our well did not go dry. I have to admit, I was also astonished to see it rain. It was one of those small miracles. You may call it a coincidence, but it really happened!

REFLECTION

Do you believe in magic? Many people believe in miracles but they may scoff at magic. Miracles are magic! Some of them may be grander forms of magic, such as; Moses parting the seas, Jesus walking on water and turning bread into wine, but they are magical events. We all have the capacity to perform magic. Jesus said, “Do ye not know that ye are gods” (John 10:34) and “...the works that I do, ye also shall do; and greater works than these shall do” (John 14:12); meaning that we all have the potential to do miracles and magic. Yogis are well known for their ability to do tremendous feats, including “tumo” which consists of sitting out in the frigid cold for hours in meditation, or being buried alive in a state of suspended animation. Some Yogis have been known to levitate and perform many other wonders. Many Saints throughout the ages

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

have been known for miraculous events, like St. Teresa of Avila, who would sometimes float just above the ground after meditation or St. Catherine, who had the gift of bilocation, and was often seen in two places at once. Ordinary people have performed amazing feats under intense stress; for instance, the petite woman who lifts a car to save her child, or the wounded soldier who saves many of his buddies under fire.

Life itself is magic! How else do you explain all this? It is happening all around us everyday. How is magic manifesting in your life right now? Are you still filled with wonder at the beauty of a sunrise or sunset? Do you still marvel at the caterpillar that turns into a butterfly? Have you lost the magic in your own life? Is there a way to bring it back? It really never left, you know. You have just forgotten about it. Take time to look for the magic in your life. Watch a sunrise in the morning. Hike up a mountain and gaze at the world below. Take a trip across the country. Do something you have never done before. Find ways to bring magic into your life!

DOWSING

I learned the art of water dowsing after taking classes at The International School of Dowsing in Danbury, Vermont. One day, I got the opportunity to use the skills I had developed, on my own property in Lincoln, Vermont.

One morning, I turned on the kitchen faucet and noticed that the water pressure had diminished. Normally we had really good water pressure, but it had reduced to a trickle. At first I thought that our well was running dry, so I checked it. There was still water in the well, but it was very low. My intuition was telling me that the well was not running dry. I became very perplexed and I began looking into other alternatives for the problem. Our well was located almost a quarter mile from the house on top of a steep hill. The water line ran the entire length and was buried about four feet deep. I became suspicious that the water line had broken somewhere under the soil.

I talked to my neighbor Gordon, who had lived on a farm his whole life and knew a lot about water wells. He told me to look for water coming up from the ground, anywhere from the well to the house. That made sense! So I spent the afternoon searching for little pools of water seeping above the ground. I could not find any signs of water except for the normal wet areas near our little stream. I contacted our local contractor who had an excavator and worked on water lines. He told me that he might have to dig up the entire water line to find the leak, if there was one. This could cost several thousand dollars, which I did not have at the time. Then the idea occurred to me to try dowsing the area to search for the leak. I had never done that

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

before, though I was pretty good at finding water. However, this was a little different, as I was looking for a leak in the water line.

Early next morning, I got out my little copper dowsing rods to look for the leak. There are several different kinds of dowsing rods that I have seen people use. I like the little copper rods that will cross over each other, indicating nearby water. I have seen other people use a divining rod that looks like a fork, which points downward when seeking water. I have also seen some old farmers use just their forefinger, which twitches when seeking water. I have had the best luck with the parallel copper rods that either crossover or move outwards from each other, when seeking water. Finding the best method comes from practice and years of experience.

I went out with my dowsing rods, searching for a water leak that I suspected was somewhere between my house and my well. I started right from my house, and let the dowsing rods guide me as I headed up towards the well. I really had no idea where the water line actually was, but the rods were guiding me up the hill. It certainly was not a straight line, but had several twists and turns as I proceeded through the woods. About halfway up the hill towards the well, the rods crossed! The soil was very soft. The rods were telling me, that this was the spot. I checked and rechecked by walking back and forth. The rods consistently crossed at this spot. I then called my local contractor to come out and excavate the area.

Early the next day, he brought out his big yellow excavator, and proceeded to dig up the area, looking for the water lines. I was watching with his assistant, while he dug deeper and deeper. All of a sudden, I saw a black water line glistening in the sun. My

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

excavator exclaimed that we had found the water line! He dug up the line for several yards, and then went down with a shovel for a closer look. Lo and behold, there was the leak! There was a small kink in the water line that was next to a big rock. It was leaking pretty quickly, now that we had uncovered it. He replaced that section of the water line. I went down to the house and checked the pressure by turning on the water faucet. The pressure had returned to normal!

I found it quite fascinating how well the dowsing rods had worked to find the water leak. I had used an old occult skill to find a water leak that could have cost me thousands of dollars. It was cool to see how we can use invisible forces to work in our everyday world.

REFLECTION

How does your intuition help you in your everyday life? Do you ever look to your higher Self or God to guide you in your daily affairs? God uses your intuition directly to help guide you. Do you ever listen to it? It is your choice. You can either listen for guidance or do things by yourself. I am amazed at how well my intuition can guide me for the smallest of things to major decisions in my life. I can pour an exact cup of water without measuring by using my intuition. I can pick out the ripest melon in the grocery store by listening to my intuition. You can get in touch with your own intuition by tuning into that silent space, deep inside of you. Ask your intuition for guidance and listen. It takes a little practice, but the more you tune in, the more it tunes in to you!

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

SEMINARY

It was in the fall of 1996, when I started seminary at Andover Newton Theological School. I remember telling my father one morning that I felt the call to go into ministry. He was quite surprised, as I had shown little interest in formal religion over the years. In fact, I really did not like many of the Christian denominations or Churches, for that matter. Nevertheless, my intuition and my heart were guiding me in this new direction.

I found seminary to be much different than I thought it would be. In my imagination, I pictured it to be a place where everyone would be like a family, spending time together in prayer, worship and study. But surprisingly, it was very academic like many other colleges I have attended. The Master of Divinity program at Andover Newton was a three-year program and I had to commute to Boston, Massachusetts every week from Vermont. My commute consisted of a long four-hour drive through three states and over many mountain passes to get to school.

At my first day of registration, I had no idea how I was going to make things work. I had a full time job and needed the income for all my expenses. I wondered how on earth, I could continue to work full time and go to seminary full time. It was really one of those moments of faith. I just prayed that somehow things would work out. I remember talking to God and asking him to show me how, I could possibly attend seminary full time, and still work a full time job. It didn't seem possible! I had talked to one of the guidance counselors and he told me that it would be extremely difficult. But that little voice inside me said that it

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

was possible. Fortunately, there were these new night classes and I was able to schedule all my classes on one day. I would commute to Andover very early Monday morning and take all four of my classes from eight o'clock in the morning till nine o'clock in the evening. I would stay overnight and then leave at four o'clock in the morning, making the long four-hour commute back to Vermont. I would then begin working my job on Tuesday morning through Friday.

I was working as a Rehabilitation Counselor at the time; four days a week, nine hours per day. So things were do-able, but just barely. And it wasn't easy! Normally a four hour one way commute is hard enough, but in New England, the winters can be really tough. I had to commute over several mountain passes and sometimes the travel was really hazardous. I remember one morning, the roads were covered with ice and it took me six hours to get to Boston. Cars were all over the road, but somehow I managed to get to seminary in one piece. It was really challenging, commuting in all kinds of mountain weather, back and forth from Vermont to Boston. I had very little social life during my time in seminary. All my spare time was spent on studying, research and writing term papers. How I managed to fit in an internship was a spectacular feat of timing and flexibility. But somehow, I managed all this and completed my Master's of Divinity at Andover Newton Theological School. But that is not the end of my story!

While I was going through seminary, I was "in-care" with the United Church of Christ (In-care means to be accepted as a student towards ministry in the United Church of Christ). And so were my friends, James and his wife, Lara. All things had gone well until my final year. One cold October evening, we were having an in-care meeting in Vermont. During our group

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

meeting, we were having a discussion on our progress at seminary. Several students were discussing many of the challenges of going through seminary. James brought up the subject of practical theology, and how the in-care committee should make things easier for those students who had to travel long distances, by providing more support in terms of finances and flexibility. Other people joined into the discussion. For some reason, several of the in-care advisors, who were mainly UCC (United Church of Christ) ministers, did not take kindly to James's suggestions, and argued against his recommendation. James attended to their arguments and further explained his position. I stepped into the (quickly becoming) heated debate and supported James's ideas that the UCC should be more supportive of students, like a Christian family. Lara also jumped into the debate and suggested that the UCC needed to be more aware of the many challenges that students face while going through seminary. What happened next was really outrageous!

There were two UCC ministers, who were really becoming upset by our discussion. One of the ministers, Reverend Thomas was in charge of the meeting. The other minister, Reverend Smith, who had actually been my advisor at the time, was also getting madder with each passing moment of the debate. I think they felt threatened because we were questioning certain theological principles and policies of the UCC in-care committee. James reasserted his ideas about practical theology and Christian principles of love and charity. Several other students also began to express their opinions. The heated discussion reached a crescendo when Reverend Smith, literally jumped up from his chair and shook his fist at James! I could not believe that he did that! And he was my advisor! It was like something in him snapped. Well at that point, you could have cut the tension in the room with a knife. Finally, Reverend

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

Thomas ended all discussion and closed the meeting with a psalm and hymn. No one said absolutely anything after the meeting.

All the in-care students were staying at the facility for the night. I first went to my room and then later met with James and Lara. We couldn't believe what had just happened, and we didn't feel comfortable staying there as we were all upset. So we decided it was best to leave. We stayed at a hotel for the night and talked about what had happened at the meeting. Why had the ministers gotten so upset, when we were just looking for the UCC committee to be more supportive of students going through the in-care process? I had brought up the notion that caring was part of the Christian ministry. I thought that students on the path towards ministry should be treated as part of a Christian family, with love and understanding, which are major Christian principles. The response, I received from the UCC ministers were that my ideas sounded like Wesleyan theology, and were different from UCC theology. James had brought up the idea of practical theology and that included, practicing one's theology in daily life. He pointed out many of the challenges that students working full time face, while attending seminary. He thought the UCC in-care committee should be aware of students' struggles and be more supportive in their endeavors. This would be putting your theology into practice or practical theology. I think most of the ministers and students at the in-care meeting understood this. But the ministers who were in charge of the meeting did not. I think they saw it as a threat to their control and leadership. We were questioning the in-care policy (how the UCC treated its students in training) with Christian theological principles, and the ministers in charge would not accept this.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

The next day after I returned home from the In-care meeting, I received a phone call from my UCC advisor, Reverend Smith. He wanted to know why I left the committee meeting without telling anyone. It would have been easy for me to come up with some excuse. I explained to him that I left because of what had happened at the UCC meeting, and that I needed time to reflect alone. I told him that I was shocked at his behavior and that I expected better from a UCC in-care minister! He then actually said that he agreed with me, and had apologized to the in-care committee for his behavior. He could not explain why he had become so upset. Reverend Smith also apologized to James for his behavior.

I thought that was the end of the matter, but I was wrong. I later received a letter from the UCC in-care committee requesting that I come to Montpelier, Vermont for a meeting, to discuss the ramifications of my leaving, so abruptly after the in-care meeting. Apparently, Reverend Thomas was not happy that I had left the In-care meeting, without telling anyone. He also had questions about my theology, and if I really was the right candidate for the UCC ministry. Well, I about fell off my chair! I could not believe they were asking me to come to an inquisition. I spent a lot of time reflecting on the matter and decided to talk to my own UCC minister in Vermont at the time. I explained the entire situation to him. He said that he had spoken both with Reverend Smith and Reverend Thomas. His recommendation was that I meet with the committee and disavow any connection to James. At that point, I knew something was amiss and that the UCC in-care committee had it in for James! For some reason, they wanted James out of the UCC and anyone connected with him! I told my minister that James was not the problem, and that Reverend Smith needed psychological counseling or something. James had simply

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

brought up a subject of concern about theology, God forbid, and discussed it with the committee. And he was nailed for it! Why on earth, had Reverend Thomas and Reverend Smith gotten so angry at James during that meeting? This, he would not answer.

So there I was, at a crossroads. I either went along with the powers that be or stick to my guns. I told the in-care committee that there was no reason for me to attend the meeting, and that I had already told them my feelings about the event, and why I had left that night. I said I had discussed my feelings with Reverend Smith, who had apologized for his behavior, and that as far as I was concerned, the situation was over.

Within a week, I received a registered letter from the UCC. The letter said I was no longer in-care with the UCC! I was essentially kicked out of the UCC ministry! And so were James & Lara! In the UCC Committee letter, it just said that we were not considered appropriate candidates for the UCC, and good luck on our future journey. We had almost expected this to happen, so it did not come as a big shock to us. James had an intuition that we would be forced to leave the UCC in-care program.

Now to the normal person, this entire event may seem to be just a big disagreement between minister and student. However, on a spiritual level, beneath the trappings of outer appearances, there was much more going on! It was actually a spiritual battle between the forces of light and darkness. I know this sounds kind of corny, but I have seen this happen before, especially with James in other situations. The reason why the ministers in charge became so angry was that they felt threatened by James' spiritual authority. People, who are in a position of power and control, can be very threatened by someone, who is attuned to a

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

higher power. This situation reminded me of Jesus, when he was dealing with the Pharisees or Jewish authorities. The Pharisees were afraid of Jesus' spiritual authority. The Jewish authorities then plotted to get rid of Jesus, and that is what happened to us! The UCC ministers kicked us out of the UCC in-care program.

Although I left the UCC, I did finally graduate from Andover Newton Theological School with a Master's Degree in Divinity. It was quite an accomplishment for me. I also think the UCC fiasco was a spiritual test, to see if I would stand up for my ideals of truth and justice, under fire.

REFLECTION

There are those days, when you wonder why you even bother getting up in the morning. You know, those days or times, when everything seems to be going wrong. Everyone is yelling at you and you can't seem to do anything right. You try to fix something and it breaks. You try to check your email and the computer shuts down. The children are crying and the dog wants to go for a walk, but you were late, and he peed all over the carpet. Now your spouse is furious. Those kinds of days! We all have them. I certainly have had my share of them. And it is during those kinds of days, that we see what we are made of. It is very easy to say how spiritual you are when nothing is going wrong. But when push comes to shove, how do you handle things then? It is during those tough days, that we earn our stripes or fall down on the floor. Whenever you are having

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

one of these days, you should try to become very aware. Notice how things are trying to press your buttons. In other words, pay attention to what things or events trigger your anger or impatience. Take note of them. If you have time, right them down in a diary. If you do not have time, then slow the situation down, by taking time out. Go to the bathroom or somewhere, you can have a moment of peace and quiet. There have been times; I wanted to throw my computer out the window because it was not working properly. At those moments, I try to leave the situation completely and come back to it later when I am more balanced.

Many times if we can just change our attitude about a situation, then we can change or soften our karma. For example, instead of resenting my husband for nagging at me about this or that, I can take a moment to reflect on, why I am getting upset. Why am I getting upset? Am I being open to constructive criticism or do I just want to fight? Is he pressing my buttons or am I being too sensitive? By changing my attitude and accepting what he has to say, even if I disagree, I can change the karma of the situation.

Have you learned about what things really tick you off? Have you taken the time to find out why? Or do you just ignore it? When things happen to make you upset, do you take time to examine yourself? Look into your own life and think about the things that drive you crazy. Slow drivers (in the fast lane), inconsiderate people, long lines at the grocery store, computer malfunctions and so on. Once you are aware of them, then you can begin to work on them. Then instead of becoming angry, you can find peace in these situations by changing your attitude. So there is a long line at the grocery store; I may not like it, but I try to accept it. As soon as I begin to accept it, the friction

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

dissipates. Or your mother-in-law (who you do not like) is visiting; you may not like it, but just try to be cool with it. Watch what happens to the situation, when you change your attitude!



SPIRIT IN NATURE

I started a Pagan Spiritual Circle during the fall of 2000 in Middlebury, Vermont. This was one of the first Pagan groups ever started in the small rural college town of Middlebury. Our Pagan Circle was connected to the Unitarian Universalist Church. The Unitarian Universalist Society had embraced the so-called “Earth based religions” such as Paganism and Wicca. (Paganism comes from the Latin word “paganis” and originally meant “country dweller”, but mainly refers to polytheistic religions, i.e., Wicca, Druidism, Shamanism, etc.) Several of the Unitarian’s principles including; the interconnectedness of all being and the respect for each individual’s spiritual path are very congruent to Pagan beliefs. Of course, things always depend on the particular church and its’ orientation or politics. Fortunately, the Unitarian Universalist Church in Middlebury was headed by a minister who was very sympathetic to alternative spirituality. Before I began the new circle, I discussed it with the minister and received her support.

I remember the first day after church service; I announced that I would be starting a Pagan Circle. I received a lot of blank stares and not much of an initial response from the congregation. The first person to contact me was Bonnie. Bonnie was a power house of energy. She was really excited about forming a Pagan Circle. She had a lot of experience being involved in the recent Goddess movement. She had also been ordained by the Covenant of the Goddess. She was very inspired by the book, *Spiral Dance*. The *Spiral Dance* was written by a very popular pagan writer called, Star Hawk. I talked to James about Star Hawk one day. He thought that Star Hawk was a good writer,

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

but that she really didn't care too much about Wicca or Witchcraft. "Wicca" is basically a term that originally meant "Wise One" and practitioner of Witchcraft. I had read several of Star Hawk's books and had to agree with James. Star Hawk is more of a feminist spiritual leader who really is more concerned about political power than witchcraft or magic. People follow her because she is a leader of the women's movement with it's association on the Goddess. Not for any spiritual connection, but more for a political power base. It's actually kind of ironic as Star Hawk was an advocate of Marxist philosophy which is very materialistic. Any Marxist will tell you that spirituality is the "opiate of the masses". There is no place for Marxism in Wicca as Wicca is based on spirituality, and Marxism is based on materialism. So anyone who considers themselves a Marxist really has no place in Wicca. At least that is my opinion. I don't mean to put down Star Hawk as I think she is a great writer, but I think there are better role models for Wicca such as: Gerald Gardner, Lady Sabrina, Janet Farrar and Selena Fox, just to name a few. But for whatever reason, Star Hawk was at the forefront of the Wicca movement, and many people adored her, including Bonnie. Fortunately Bonnie and I got along pretty well and were accepting of each other's beliefs. We basically became co-leaders of the new group.

Our little circle began to grow as more people heard about it at church. By the end of the first year, we had about fifteen people who were actively involved with the circle. Our Pagan Circle was also very active with the UU Church. We would put on rituals at important times throughout the year, and everyone in the church was invited to participate. Our own rituals were connected with the key Wicca festivals such as; Beltane, Imbolc, Samhain, Lunasagh, along with the Equinox and Solstice celebrations.

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

I remember one particular Samhain festival where we held our ritual at a graveyard in Bristol, Vermont. “Samhain” is a celebration of death and transformation. It occurs at the end of October. The leaves have fallen off the trees and plant life is withering away. It is considered a time when the veil is thin between the living and those that have passed on. We all gathered at dusk and set up the Ritual Circle. It was very dark and eerie in the cemetery. Our ritual honored those loved ones that had passed on to the spiritual world or astral plane. Ancient pagan rituals often involved the initiate having to spend the night in a cemetery, as a time to reflect on one’s mortality and death. At Samhain, we acknowledge that we are all born here on the physical plane and that we will have to leave it when we die, and continue our journey in the spiritual realms.

One of the most beautiful rituals that we celebrated together was “Beltane.” Beltane occurs during early May and is a celebration of life as opposed to death. It is a time when all of life is in bloom. Trees are flowering, the grass is green and the birds are singing. During Beltane, we celebrated nature’s power of life and fertility. At the center of the Beltane Ritual is the raising and dance of the “Maypole”. The Maypole consisted of a small tree that was trimmed of its branches, and then raised at the center of the circle. Ribbons were tied to the top of the pole. Then everyone would sing and dance interweaving the ribbons around and around the pole, until all the ribbons were wrapped tightly with a climatic finale. It is a beautiful spectacle to behold as everyone is dancing wildly with all the multi colored ribbons. The symbolism of the maypole is quite obvious. It is the erection of the life force, which brings fertility to the Earth and all who live on it. We celebrate that energy and use it to bring fertility to our lives towards fulfilling our hopes and dreams.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

Our circle did the majority of it's' rituals outdoors. It helped us to connect with nature and her natural forces. There was one particular place that we held many of our outdoor rituals. That was the Spirit in Nature Center in Ripton, Vermont, which brings up another, very interesting story!

Many of the people in our Pagan group also helped to establish and support the Spirit in Nature Center in Vermont. It was first established by Paul Bortz, who was a retired Unitarian Universalist Minister in Vermont. He had the idea of making a park where there would be various trails or pathways throughout a natural area. Each of the pathways would represent a certain religious tradition i.e., Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, etc. Along the pathways would be various signs with different quotes, or sayings from spiritual texts in a specific religious tradition. These signs with quotes would be put up from different groups, who represented the various religious traditions.

After I heard about the Nature in Spirit Center, I went to meet with Rev. Paul Bortz to talk with him about adding a Pagan Path to the park. I thought it would be simple enough, but it wasn't. Paul said that he had to talk to the board members for approval before making another pathway dedicated to Paganism. Unfortunately, the board had a lot of concerns about having a Pagan Path established at the park. The first thing that came to their minds were: pagan sacrifices, sexual orgies, devil worship and chaos. I assured Paul that these were just misconceptions about Paganism. So Paul talked to the board again, and they wanted to meet with some of the representatives of the Pagan religious groups in Vermont. There were basically three major Pagan groups in Vermont at that time. They consisted of our *Champlain Circle* in Middlebury, the

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

Burlington Unitarian Circle and the *Wiccan Church* in Bethel, Vt. I spoke with the leaders of these Circles, and they agreed to meet with the Spirit in Nature Board members to dispel any misconceptions about Paganism.

So, the leaders of the various pagan circles and I met with the Spirit in Nature board members. We mainly discussed the philosophy and spirituality of Paganism, dispelling the popular misconceptions of TV and Hollywood. We let the board members know that Pagans were generally peaceful people, who worshipped divinity as the God and Goddess, in their own unique way. Pagans believe in the motto; “no harm” and do not hurt other people. Also, most Pagans have a deep respect for nature, as they believe that the Divine Mother manifests herself in nature. The meeting went quite well and many of the board members went away with a new understanding of the “Old Religion”.

Later, the board met again and agreed to add a Pagan Path to the park. This was really quite an accomplishment! It is very hard to change people’s misconceptions and fears. Many of the members were devout Christians holding puritan values, and were very leery of anything pagan. So for the board members to accept a Pagan Path in the park was really quite amazing. Our various circles worked together in making the path and formulating signs along the trail. It was a cooperative endeavor that led to the creation of the Pagan Path to the Spirit in Nature Center. It also ended up bringing many Pagan groups in Vermont, closer together.

I think one of the biggest threats to spirituality is intolerance of others’ religious beliefs. Throughout history, mankind has fought many wars and suffered countless persecution in the

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

names of various religions. If people practiced tolerance for each others' beliefs, there would be much less hatred and war in our society. Freedom of religious belief and the right to pursue happiness are major principles that America was founded upon!

REFLECTION

I find it incredible how much intolerance there is in the world regarding religious beliefs. People have been fighting with each other for centuries, over their religious beliefs. You would think that after a couple thousand years, we would be a little more tolerant of our various religious practices, but it does not seem to be the case. If you look around the world, it is amazing how people still hate one another just because of their religion. What is it that Jesus said? "Love thy neighbor!" He did not say, "Only love thy neighbor, if he has the right religious belief!" Buddha advocated practicing compassion with all people, despite their religious differences. Taoism states; "Thirty spokes makes up the universal wheel." No one spoke is better than another spoke. They all connect to the center and radiate outwards to the rim or circumference. Why is it that we cannot live in the spirit of peace and harmony together on this planet?

Have you ever been intolerant of another's religious belief? Why? Did you even know anything about their religion, before you cast judgment? Often times, we are very quick to cast judgment, without any knowledge of what we are judging. I would highly recommend that you learn something, about that

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

which you judge, before you make any judgment. “Judge not, lest ye be judged also”, the Bible says!

I have many friends who are Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Taoist, Islam and Pagan. I love them all, despite their varied religious beliefs. Throughout my life, I have gained some pearls of wisdom from each of these religions. So can you!



TO JILL, WITH LOVE

THREE

My boyfriend, Paul and I live together in a little cabin, high in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. Both Paul and I, share a love of rural living in the mountains. We enjoy exploring the rugged beauty of the Colorado wilderness, and riding our motorcycles together down lonely mountain roads.

During the fall of 2006, Paul was offered a contract engineering position with a company in San Diego, California. I had always wanted to live near the ocean, so I decided to go with him and took a hiatus from my counseling job in Denver.

San Diego has quite a Mediterranean climate; it is very sunny and warm most of the year. We moved into an apartment that was only a few miles from Mission Beach. Although I loved living in San Diego, it turned out to be one of the most spiritually, challenging experiences of my life!

ZEN AND THE ART OF MOTORCYCLE RIDING

Motorcycles have been a big part of my life, ever since I was twelve years old. I was always a bit of a tom-girl, growing up. My brother and I would build mini-bikes with small gas engines. We would ride them around the neighborhood and in nearby fields. Once we had built this motorized skateboard, with a little gas engine on it. My brother, Mick was riding down the road with it one day, and was pulled over by some police officers. They were laughing at our little skateboard and told us to take it home.

I will never forget the elaborate mini-bike that we made from a bicycle frame, welded to hold a five horsepower Briggs engine. It looked like a motorcycle! It had a motorcycle gas tank, stingray seat and sissy bar. It was painted a nice metallic blue and gold. Our neighbor's dad had done all the welding for us and it was quite well made. We also used a five-speed sprocket in the rear, so it had five-speeds. I was the first to test ride our new creation. I was about fifteen years old at the time, and I took it for a trial run down our neighborhood side streets.

I edged out onto the road and twisted the throttle. The five horsepower engine roared, and I zoomed down the road with my hair flying in the wind. We had mounted a speedometer on the handlebars. I looked to see how fast I was going. The speedometer said 40 MPH. Wow! I had never ridden that fast before. I really enjoyed the sensation of almost flying down Ridgeland Avenue. I felt like the wind and was riding on a tide

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

of ecstasy. From that moment on, I was addicted to motorcycles. But it was a good addiction.

Later in my teens, I began to race motorcycles with my brother. I tried different kinds of racing, but mostly enjoyed riding dirt bikes. I enjoyed the thrill of racing, competition and flying through the air over motocross jumps. My brother also shared my passion for racing and we spent several years racing together. Both of us were pretty good at it and we won many trophies/awards.

I learned a lot about positive thinking racing motorcycles. There was one race in Wisconsin that stands out in my memory. It was the final race of the season for this Lake Geneva Motocross track. I was out in front, most of the race with a huge lead. As I was riding, I noticed this ditch, near the downhill section of the track. I thought to myself, 'if someone went down there, they would really be stuck.' Well sure enough, I slipped off the track and went into that ditch. I got really stuck and lost the race. Although I hated to lose that race, as I could have easily won, I learned something important that day. I learned at a very young age, that action follows thought. It was a hard spiritual lesson for me. What we think is very important! Where we put our minds, our bodies will follow, and that it is important to think positively, if you want positive results. Although it cost me the race, I have always remembered that valuable lesson.

I have traveled extensively, around the country by motorcycle. When I was nineteen, I traveled across the United States on a little 185cc Suzuki motorcycle. It was really a trail bike that I had converted to ride across country. I started out in Illinois with my friend, Terry and we headed towards the Badlands of South Dakota. We went through Wyoming to Yellowstone

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

National Park, then on to Olympia National Park in Washington. Later, Terry and I parted company and I continued my journey alone.

I headed down Hwy.1, along the California coast. I hiked among the giant Redwoods in Redwood National Park. I drove through the magnificent, Big Sur to San Francisco. I spent time, camping in the Sierra Mountains and gorgeous Yosemite National Park. I crossed the desert in Nevada. While crossing the desert, my little motorcycle seized up and quit running. I was really scared, as I was miles away from any sort of help or refuge, but luckily, my little motorcycle started again after a brief rest. I drove through Arizona to the Grand Canyon, and visited Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico.

My journey lasted a few months and covered over ten thousand miles. This really was quite a feat, especially on a little trail bike! It really helped me to become independent. I met a lot of different people and visited many exciting places. While traveling throughout the country, I was on my own. But it was an adventure, and I knew I might never have the chance to do it again in my life. I also found a sense of peace that I had never felt before. My journey had taken me out of the normal routine, i.e., going to school, working and earning a living. I was just being and experiencing life directly, enjoying the moment. In that, I found a sense of peace and freedom. I thought of it as “dancing with God”. I learned to let go and just accept things as they came, trusting in a higher power, and enjoying my journey.

Motorcycles have continued to be a large part of my life, even in my middle age. I ride with my boyfriend, Paul frequently on many trips throughout Colorado, and the Southwest. The scenery is so spectacular, especially on a motorcycle, where it

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

seems you can reach out and touch it. I find that I am at peace when I ride my motorcycle. I am in no hurry and just enjoying the ride.

Riding my motorcycle, I am concentrated on the present moment; the sun and wind on my face, the centrifugal force as I take my motorcycle into a turn, and the sound of my engine as I roll on the throttle. I am not dwelling on thoughts of the past or future, I am fully engaged in the present moment, experiencing life as it is. You might call it: *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Riding*.

REFLECTION

What activities bring you into the present moment? Do you like to: skydive, mountain climb, scuba dive, hand glide; or do you enjoy more gentle activities, such as: hiking, camping, yoga and meditation? It really does not matter what form an activity takes for you, as long as it brings you into the silent space of the present moment. Why is it important to experience this “silent space” of the present moment? Because that is where happiness lies! Ask anyone why they like to hike, sail, ski or scuba dive, etc. They do it because it brings them happiness. They enjoy it! They are able to forget about everything else and be centered in the present moment.

DIS-ABILITY

Much of my life, I have worked as a rehabilitation counselor. A rehabilitation counselor is basically someone who does counseling for people with disabilities, and the main focus is on helping them to lead productive lives. It's funny, because I never actually, wanted to be a rehabilitation counselor when I was in school; I wanted to be a psychotherapist, which I did for several years. I later decided to try rehabilitation counseling, after I became burned out as a psychotherapist.

I started working as a rehabilitation counselor for the Department of Human Services. The main focus is on assisting people with disabilities in becoming more independent, and either training them for certain occupations, or helping them to lead more independent lives. It is amazing at the amount of obstacles that people with disabilities have to overcome. Just imagine what it would be like to lose your eyesight, your hearing or your mobility! Sometimes, you really don't appreciate what you have until you lose it.

One thing that I really liked about rehabilitation is that you can help people to overcome many obstacles and improve their lives. There is state and federal funding to provide accommodations for wheelchairs, van modifications, prosthetics, medical/dental assistance, and psychological counseling. Vocational rehabilitation can also provide vocational training in terms of sending people to college towards a specific career goal, or training them in many occupational fields. I think it is really cool to help people achieve their dreams, and assist them in finding happiness,

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

through a specific vocation or career. Some of the people, I have worked with have went on to become famous artists, computer technicians, accountants, lawyers, psychologists and a myriad of other professions.

I remember a woman named, Carol that I had the privilege to work with. She had been injured severely after a motor vehicle accident. She was paraplegic and could no longer walk without a wheelchair. She had been very depressed after her accident for almost a year. She felt her life was over and had little reason to keep on living. Then one dark night when she was ready to end it all, the Spirit entered her life from the depths of her being. She told me that she had become filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit. From that day on, she no longer saw herself as a crippled person, but a child of God. She was quite aware of the reality she had to deal with, but was ready to face the many obstacles in her path. I helped her to deal with overcoming many of those obstacles by providing her with physical therapy to keep her body nimble, a wheel chair and a modified van, so that she could travel independently; and vocational training to become a psychologist, which was her lifelong dream.

I think the most valuable insight, I have gained as a rehabilitation counselor, is the realization of the myriad of problems that people have to face in this world. Many of the people that I have worked with have had to deal with severe mental, emotional and physical problems. Many have suffered years of physical abuse and have multiple disabilities that they are coping with. Some are quadriplegic and are dependant on a wheelchair for mobility. Many people have traumatic brain injury and cannot move at all. It can sometimes be difficult to fathom how people are able to deal with their situations. So whenever I begin to complain about my life circumstances, I

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

just have to think about how difficult many other people have it, and I am reminded how lucky I am.

I am very inspired how some people are able to rise above their situations and make the best out of their life. One of my favorite heroes is John Merrick, who was called the *Elephant Man*. Here was a man, born with such physical deformity that he was outcast by human society and forced to live in isolation. The only place he became accepted was as a circus sideshow “freak”. Although he was spurned by society, he had a gentle nature and somehow maintained a positive attitude towards life and humanity. I am just so amazed how John was able to transcend his circumstances. It is a testament to the indomitable Human Spirit.

REFLECTION

If you are ever feeling depressed or down and out about how difficult things are going for you, take some time to visit a local hospital. Visit the rehabilitation unit or the psychiatric ward. Take a look around you at all the different people going through so much pain and suffering. It can be quite an eye-opening experience and a reminder to you that your problems are not as bad as you thought.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

TO JILL WITH LOVE

My boyfriend Paul and I moved to San Diego, California in the fall of 2006. Paul had secured a job position as an electronic engineer at an engineering company. It was a temporary position for about one year. I was working at the time as a counselor with the State of Colorado. I decided that I wanted to go with him, as it was just a great opportunity to live in sunny California near the Pacific Ocean.

We moved into a small condo in San Diego that was about ten minutes from the beach. I must say that the weather in San Diego is pretty remarkable. It is almost always sunny with an average temperature of sixty-five to seventy-degrees. Everywhere you look there are many gorgeous plants and flowers. I found it amazing just to see such a wide variety of beautiful flowers, plants and trees blooming all year long. The beaches in San Diego are also wonderful! There are several to choose from. San Diego has the upper scale beach of La Jolla with its nice parks and public beaches. Within walking distance from the beach is the city of La Jolla with its many fashion stores and restaurants. I particularly liked the famous “Black Beach” where the nude sunbathers go. The beach has huge cliffs along the shoreline that you have to traverse down to get to the shoreline. It is quite worth the hike, as you can walk for miles with very few people around. I really enjoyed watching the wind gliders who would jump off the cliffs and ride the air currents above the beach for hours. Ocean Beach in San Diego is a nice place to go and watch the surfers ride the waves. It is also great for people watching and sunbathing. My favorite beach in San Diego is Mission Beach. Mission Beach goes for

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

several miles and interweaves along the coast with little islands and canals. I also liked Mission Beach Park that has beautiful walkways that pretty much span several miles from La Jolla to Ocean Beach.

Although I enjoy sunbathing and people watching, my favorite pastime is to walk for miles along the beach. It is my way of enjoying the elements and nature. I also practice walking meditation; paying attention to my breathing and keeping my awareness on the present moment. When Paul would go to work, I would go to the beach! It was one of the few times in my life that I did not have to work, so I took the time to enjoy it. I practiced yoga meditation in the morning and then I would spend every day walking for a few miles along one of the beaches or parks. My daily strolls reminded me of my walks along Lake Michigan back in Chicago. It is amazing what you see when you take the time to slow down and really look at things. As I walked along Mission Beach, it was almost poetry in motion. The way the waves lap against the shoreline in uniform fashion, the wind rustling the leaves against the azure blue sky. I watched the squirrels as they hip pity hop in the green grass to find that treasured nut, and the various people moving about on their daily rituals; like the new mom pushing her baby in the stroller, the energetic kids flying kites in the park, or the poor man sifting through the garbage receptacles on the beach. Everyone is out and about in this dance of life. I take all these things in as I walk along the beach.

After about three months, my sunny disposition in San Diego began to darken. At first, I began having difficulty sleeping. I would wake up in the middle of the night and not be able to get back to sleep. I was filled with these feelings of dread and anxiety. Then my daily meditations became infused with all

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

these fearful thoughts that led to panic attacks. I had no idea why I was having these experiences, but it made my life in sunny San Diego really miserable. I finally had the chance to live in paradise and I couldn't enjoy it! I tried to tough it out, but after several weeks of walking on eggshells, I finally saw a psychotherapist. Although I had little money, I needed to find out what was happening to me. The weekly sessions at least helped me to explore my troubled feelings. I decided to see this as an opportunity to work through my feelings of fear and anxiety. So, I approached it head on and started focusing on my experiences instead of avoiding them. Unfortunately this just intensified everything. It was like throwing gas on the fire! Not only were my nights filled with dread and anxiety, but my days became nerve wracking also. I became a complete wreck! I tried talking to Paul and my friends about my condition, but they really couldn't understand what I was going through. My psychotherapist also gave me some techniques for dealing with my anxiety and they just were not helping. I was sinking deeper into despair and felt like I was barely hanging on.

It was another beautiful sunny morning when I went for a long walk along Mission Beach. Although it was gorgeous out, I was feeling anxious, depressed and distraught. What a far cry from my first day in San Diego! As I walked, I questioned why all this stuff was happening to me. I was becoming more despondent and helpless. I began praying to God, asking for help and guidance. I felt that God had abandoned me, leaving me in this hole of psychological despair. I really prayed with all my soul to God, asking for help and not to forget me on this earth plane. As I continued my walk along the park at Mission Beach, I noticed these benches here and there along the walkway. I had not really paid attention to them before. I felt I needed to sit down and compose myself; I wasn't quite sure

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

what I was going to do with all my troubles. I walked over to this one particular green and gold park bench. As I approached closer, I saw that there was a gold sign imprinted into the concrete base of the bench. I wondered what it said? I looked more closely and I could scarcely believe my eyes. The sign said, "To Jill, with Love". I was completely blown away! I felt God was letting me know that everything would be fine, and that he loved and cared for me. I just could not believe of all the benches, I would choose to sit on; this bench had this sign on it, addressed to me. It was wholly remarkable and such an omen. I stayed there for the afternoon. My heart opened up and I just sat there, and cried tears of joy!

From that day, things began to look up. I no longer felt alone in my struggles, but that God was there with me. I spent my afternoons in the local library researching books on psychology and spirituality that addressed many of the problems I had been experiencing. I let my intuition guide me to the right book that I needed to help me. I was led to a book called the *Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle. I felt God was speaking to me through this book. Eckhart Tolle is a very interesting individual who after a long period of depression found enlightenment. It is one of those rare books that you can feel the power of the spirit, speaking right through the book. Anyway, Tolle's book helped me to understand many of the things I was going through, in a different light. I found his method extremely helpful in dealing with my crisis. It was uniquely simple, but very effective. Previously, I had been trying to tackle my fear and anxiety head on. This helps in some situations, but it wasn't working for me. I had been trying several yoga mantras and positive affirmations, but my symptoms remained. I also pretended to ignore my feelings and that certainly did not work. Tolle's way of dealing with crisis is one of complete present awareness and

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

acceptance. It is similar to the Buddhist spirituality of “mindfulness”. I had been practicing mindfulness in my daily life, though not on my psychological problems. Mindfulness is being fully aware of where you are and what you are doing in the present moment. This is much easier said than done as most of us are everywhere, but right here and now. For example, I may be driving my car, but I am a thinking of how I am going to tackle some problem at work or about some piece of news on the radio. Mindfulness consists of being fully engaged in the present moment with complete acceptance. By using mindfulness, I was able to come to terms with my crisis. It was very difficult at first, as it is very hard to accept something that you would rather not accept. I mean, that is why people take valiums, as they do not want to accept anxiety or stress. So I practiced awareness and acceptance of my anxiety. I became an observer and watched it without judgment or expectation. I did not try to do anything, which is what I had been doing. I just became fully aware of the present moment and observed my emotions without judgment. If a scary thought floated through my mind, I just let it be and continued to observe with complete acceptance.

I found it helpful to watch my breathing as a way to become fully aware of the present moment. Sometimes, looking at things very closely will also pull you into the present moment. For instance, watching a leaf rustling in the wind or a wind chime softly clinking in the gentle breeze may pull you into the present moment. It is really a matter of just paying close attention to what is happening around you. As I began to accept and observe my fears/anxieties without judgment, they began to dissipate. I must say it took a bit of practice and persistence, but my depression lifted, and my fears subsided. I no longer became afraid of them and was able to get on with my life.

MEMOIRS OF A MODERN DAY MYSTIC

I find it very interesting that many people on the spiritual path go through similar struggles of dealing with problems, fears, anxieties, disease, etc. Sometimes, it seems we are left to our own resources for dealing with the many issues we have to face. And maybe that is what also helps us to grow as spiritual beings. We have to learn to use our intuition and spiritual teachings, we have been given to resolve our own problems. I know the Spirit or God is always present to guide us, but we have to make the effort and develop our spiritual muscles, so to speak. This is what Arjuna had to do with Krishna's guidance in the Bhagavad-Gita, Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, and Buddha under the Bodhi tree. Each of us has to wrestle (like Jacob and the angel) with our demons, problems or karma on this physical plane toward Self-Realization.

REFLECTION

Take a few moments right now to pay attention to your breathing. Put the book down and just relax. Watch your breath as it flows inward and outward through your nose. Feel your breath flowing at the tip of your nose. As you begin to relax, pay close attention to your thoughts. Just observe them as they formulate on the screen of your mind. Do not judge them. Just watch them as if they were clouds floating in the sky. Then let them go. Who is it deep within you, that is watching these thoughts? With practice, you will come in contact with the deep stillness that is at the center of your being. That is you! I pray that it will bring much joy and peace into your life.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

Thank you for traveling this road with me for a while. May you find peace and happiness!



RECOMMENDED READING

- *Franz Bardon, *Initiation into Hermetics*; Wuppertal, W. Germany. 1971.
- *Paramahansa Yogananda, *Journey to Self Realization*; Self-Realization Fellowship, L.A., CA. 1997.
- *Goswami Kriyananda, *The Wisdom and Way of Astrology*; The Temple of Kriya Yoga, Chicago, Ill. 1974.
- *Hermes, *The Divine Pymander*; Translated by Dr. Everard, Wizards Bookshelf, San Diego, CA. 1978.
- *Dion Fortune, *The Secrets of Dr. Taverner*; Weiser, Inc., New York, N.Y. 1968.
- *Ram Dass, *Be Here Now*; Lama Foundation, San Cristobal, N.M, 1971.
- *Phillip Hurley, *Herbal Alchemy*; Maithuna Publications, Wheelock, VT. 2001.
- *Eugen Herrigel, *Zen in the Art of Archery*; Vintage Books, USA, 1953.
- *Richard Bach, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*; Avon Books, New York, N.Y. 1970.
- *JRR Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*; Geo. Allen & Unwin, United Kingdom 1954.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE

*Ron Rood, *Ron Rood's Vermont: A Nature Guide*; The New England Press, 1985.

*Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now*; Namaste Publications, Vancouver, BC, Canada, 1999.

*Jill Lowy, *Yoga and The Art of Astral Projection*; Morris Publishing, Denver, CO. 2007.

*Lao Tsu, *Tao Te Ching*; Translation by Gia-Fu and Jane English, Vintage Books, N.Y. 1972.

*Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*; Harper & Row, N.Y. 1979.

*Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*; USA 1855.



Please visit Jill Lowy's website:
www.TheAstralYoga.com . Also read her
book, *Yoga and the Art of Astral Projection* to
learn meditative techniques for expanding your
consciousness towards Self-Realization.

TO JILL, WITH LOVE