

## CHAPTER ONE

### "For Sale"

For Sale: 1981 Yamaha XS 1100 Full Dress Touring Bike w Shaft Drive, 68,500 miles, Good Condition, \$1200. Call ...

With some hesitation, the ad was placed in today's paper, the *New Era*, along with a 12 foot aluminum fishing boat, complete with two oak oars, a 4 HP Evinrude trolling motor, fuel tank, life jackets, and a homemade trailer.

Also for sale: a 1975 280Z with fuel injection, fair condition, which I had, up till now, intended on pulling behind the RV. However, with gas prices currently soaring well above \$4.50 a gallon, I've decided on overhauling the '87 Honda Accord and pulling it along behind the RV instead. The Honda got 37 miles per gallon on the highway when I kept it under 65, and a quite respectable 33 mpg at 75 on the way to Arizona and Texas two years ago.

Besides, it's a clutch, which is far more convenient to tow, since I won't have to crawl under it to unhook the drive shaft every time I want to pull it, as I would the Z, an automatic. Ever try to crawl under a Z? And, after all, it gave me no more than 22 mpg on the way to Eloy, Arizona, a year ago, when I last visited Desert Rose.

The motorcycle must go, the boat must go, the Z must go, and I must go. While I cannot explain why in so many words, it's simply time to move on. For as surely as the Canadian geese know when it's their time to head south for the winter, something akin to a cold winter

wind is stirring my soul, blowing my anchors away, and hoisting my sails. And while the great birds seem to have an inner compass telling them which way to go, I cannot as yet find mine, though I know it's in there somewhere, just waiting to guide me along in the proper direction. When it is time, it shall remove the veil, come out of its karmic hiding place, and proceed to give me all the proper signs: geographical, metaphysical, perhaps even spiritual. All are necessary for the journey I now find myself upon.

Four score and several years ago Alan Watts translated much of Zen Buddhism into English, making the astute observation that the most common error people make when it comes to understanding religious truth is in mistaking the signs, or symbols inferring an intended meaning, for the spiritual reality hidden within. As an illustration, let us suppose that you are traveling on the highway to the city of Riverside, but instead of following the exit ramp on into town, you just plow headlong into the sign! You know... the one posted along the trail.

Now the fundamentalist traveller will confidently assert that he's achieved his goal and arrived at the destination which his map, a recently revised New Modern English Fifth Edition, professionally edited by the most clever and capable of cartographers, clearly illustrates, while the more astute journeyman might ponder matters a bit further and wander on down that little ramp into town where he can find a hot cup of coffee and grab a donut. A good cup of Jo, after all, helps jumpstart the brain when you're road weary, giving you time to rest up until you can think a little straighter. And a donut fills that pothole in your belly.

Next, and at your leisure, you ask Angela, the gal with the halo who's a waitin' on you, to give you directions to the Mission Inn which, by chance, is just a quarter mile up the street. While you're happily enjoying the enticing aroma of the fruit of the tree of your long journey thus far, that other fella's havin' to call AAA for a tow truck to get his car off of that sign post as he's trying to explain to the Officer at the scene what the hell just happened!

The good Officer is telling the gentleman to take it up with St. Peter, in charge of Crash Control. Actually, it's Judge Peter, who at that very moment just *happens* to be down at the coffee shop sharing a cup of tea with that other feller who just got into town. Turns out he was on his way over to the Inn anyway, so he offers to walk you from there and introduce you to Norm and Millie, the tour guides.

Angie smiles, and says: "You can leave your car in the parking lot awhile at no extra charge. That way you won't get ticketed if you decide to stay a few hours longer than you planned."

As you smile back and nod your head, accepting the offer, it occurs to you that maybe that veggie sandwich on the menu might be quite appetizing by the time you get back from the tour. Who knows, maybe she'll even join you for another cup of coffee.

Sooo... about the time you and the judge set foot in the grand entryway of the Mission, the tow truck arrives, and Bubba gets his Cadillac hauled off to Dewey, Fixem, and Howe. That's the Auto Storage and Fender Bender Repair Shoppe in the little town of Limbo, just east of Nowhere, California, where they promise they'll get right to it.

"We've got microwaveable hotdogs in the machine over yonder,

right there next to the restroom. Plus instant coffee for a buck, and day-old donuts dropped off fresh every evening after midnight by Big Mack.”

He’s one of the drivers, they explained, who regularly stops into the coffee shop for leftovers (as well as to see Angie, whenever she’s workin’ the late shift.)

How many illustrious theologians does it take to screw in a light bulb? How many angels can fit on the head of a pin? I dunno, Bubba, do you? Zen again, maybe it’s a loaded question, one where you’ve gotta be loaded to even contemplate. That holy water smells a bit like bad wine, and the padre appears to be a bit tipsy. Maybe that’s why he’s dropped four light bulbs from the top of that ladder already.

“Here, Father, let me help you.”

“Why, thank you, my child.”

“You’re not my daddy, Padre. My daddy worked for a livin’. Three jobs! Farmin’, meat cuttin’, and Police Magistratin’ in the fair little Mid-Western town I grew up in.”

When he wasn’t doin’ any or all of the above, he was either fishin’ for catfish, flushing pheasants from the cornfield, outfoxing ducks in a blind, or shootin’ at some of those high flyin’ Canadian geese overhead. Then again, come deer season, we always had plenty of fresh venison, an occasional antelope (shot while at play, no doubt), and even a bristly black bear to baste and bake over the burnin’ coals alongside the river one fall, I do recall.

“Mmmm... Bear stew. Home on the range!”

My ole man had a built-in compass, one that never failed. He’d

wake up in the back of a car in the middle of the night on a hunting trip to an area he'd never been before in his life and tell the driver he'd just missed the turn. No kiddin'! Us boys could never pull one over on him. Even his instincts had instincts. And he could smell that bear over the mountain ridge while everybody else was talkin' 'bout the fine fragrance of coffee and biscuits, or beans and bacon, over the mornin' campfire.

Extinguished theologians the world over, meanwhile, ponder such questions as farmers, hunters, carpenters, or mechanics, would never even consider, and yet most of 'em haven't the horse sense to tie their own shoes til they've been taught how in school. They have to read it in a book: "Shoe Tyin' 101", from 3 to 5 on Mondays and Thursdays. \$245 per credit hour. "Get yer PhD here, or online, from the University of ... 'By the time, I get to Phoenix, she'll be yawnin'..."

I never finished college. Couldn't fix my sights on exactly where my talents lay and concerns coincided, tending to take more of a shotgun approach to academia than targeting through the crosshairs of a finely scoped rifle. So I was in and out over a ten or 'leven year period, punctuated by a sliver of cabinetmaking, and a couple years of mechanic school.

'Twas all I could do to wrench myself away from the ever elusive subtleties of "Being and Nothingness" by Jean-Paul Sartre, one evening, when a table full of youthful philosopher wannabes were being masterfully manipulated by, and hypnotically held under, the grand spell of Herr Doctor's age old metaphysical question: "Are you *here*?"

As the opportunity arose to espouse theoretically impressive hypotheses, extemporaneously interspersed with rhetorically defen-

sible postulates, carefully crafted from a collage of collegial concerns, passed playfully from one student to the next, each of whom appeared appropriately perplexed whilst pondering pre-doctoral dissertations smothered in surrealistic, cranialogical cerebralisms (syntactically speaking), all were profusely spewing forth a-logical, altruistic (albeit anemic), ambiguities animated with imperceptible *a priori* postures befitting Hollywood B-minus movie sets.

“I’m *not* here!”, the first proclaimed, asserting himself with a familiar confidence in the customary—kiss the teacher’s: “Ask another deep question of me, O enlightened one.” The second wasn’t quite so sure of herself, yet managed to feign subliminally disguised fortitude to pull off a desired bluff suitable for such occasions. The third, and the fourth, agreed that they were there (not wanting to be counted absent), although they weren’t quite sure where *there* was, and admitted having to further apply due consideration over the matter with open minds and sufficiently stressed hearts after class.

As the discourse rounded the antique rectangular table with well-worn matching chairs, each exquisitely carved out of old-growth mahogany, intricately inlaid with rosewood and teak, my thoughts returned to the inequities of life on the reservation back home, alternately focusing on the famine in Bangladesh, or engulfed by the endless, eternal war in Viet Nam. (Excuse me, “Police action”, right?). Before the dark charade could corner me in its intractably entangling web, however, I quietly arose from my humble seat of learning, tactfully turned toward the door strategically reserved behind me, and existentially exited the room.

No flippin’ way was I *there*, man! Not in that stagnant pool of

superficiality, populated by pseudo-intellectual minds fueled by over-privileged bellies which had never tasted of hunger. 'Twas as though all present were a little too securely insulated against the spate of destructive societal storms external to their comfortable frat houses, and whose inhabitants hadn't enough sense to come out of the pouring rain cuz that course hadn't been offered yet!

I doubted the implied commentary *à la mime*, unmistakably understood by any novice of Zen Buddhism, wood register, whether mahogany or maple. Louder than the sound of one hand grabbing the doorknob, my yearning spirit cried out in quiet disgust: "No, my over-fed friends, I'm definitely not *here!*"

For to me, that one simple insightful explanation of the *sign*, by Mr. Watts, inherently held greater intrinsic value than all of the pompous ponderings descending from philosopher's chairs and the huff and puff precipitating from pious preacher's pulpits for the past fifteen hundred years. Such simple depth of discernment illustrates the wisdom of the east, 'round which analytical western philosophers aimlessly wander to this day, caught up in the cozy confines of academia's aquariums like a hundred yards of tangled fishing line. The only fish they're gonna catch is in the frozen food section of the local supermarket, or fetched from Charlie Tuna's can! Like a Tibetan archer's well-aimed arrow, the Surah of the Sign shot straight through the heart. Und Zen?

I stopped by the local NAPA store picking up a new belt for the Tecumseh Air Conditioner on the RV, an '84 Chevy Sportscoach III in exceptionally well preserved condition, and only slightly antiquated, with but 97,789 miles on the odometer. I bought it out of an instinctual

impulse only six weeks ago, after a two hour interlude to consult with my sage, old friend Arthur, whom I had come to Beaumont to visit. "Don't look back!" he advised me.

Although I had made the left turn to where he lived at least fifty times before at the light on Pennsylvania Avenue, I somehow serendipitously missed it that Saturday afternoon. So had the car immediately in front of me. On down the block a bit, lost driver number one made a U-turn, which lost driver number two (me) promptly followed. Before I could straighten out my wheels in the rebound, however, my eyes caught sight of a fine, vintage, Recreational Vehicular Wagon, an RVW, blue trimmed in off-white, which I found myself pulling over to the curb for to get a closer look.

It spoke to me, and I spoke to the owner, calling him on the phone at the number posted on the windshield, and he agreed to meet me there in half an hour, which gave me time to speak to Arthur (we often spoke), who was always offering friendly counsel with an unbiased opinion derived from the wisdom of his years.

Arthur's illustrious heritage included his father, a Buffalo soldier who helped round up Pancho Villa and later served as an Officer in WWI, as well as a brother who served as a Tuskegee Airman during WWII. Art enlisted in the Navy during the Korean War and helped build the first microwave tower for the military. Amidst the many stories he recounted to me were fond childhood memories of his own grandmother, who had been born into slavery prior to the Civil War. He helped me to realize a personal connection with our history that was only two lifetimes behind us, its true reality being considerably closer to the present day than the far distant past, changing my previous perception.

The owner of the RV, an elderly gentleman, had purchased it to live in while building a house down in Escondido. Although he himself had put very few miles on it, he figured it got 8.6 miles per gallon which, for a 33-footer, passed for pretty fine by me.

He explained that he had bought it from the original owner, who had kept all the maintenance slips and service records from every oil change and tune-up, each set of tires, rotation or replacements, including batteries, brake jobs, and occasional engine repairs that ever had been done. With four brand-new Michelins on the main drive axle and the steering tires nearly new, only the rearmost pair were showing their age, but then, so am I. Still, they had plenty of tread left on them and were rarin' to go some more.

I found myself so impressed with the vehicle that I was hard pressed to counteroffer him much less than the initial asking price, which was quite reasonable. A regular land yacht it was, featuring wall-to-wall walnut. Real wood, too, that came from actual living trees from the forest, instead of artificial composite factories in the east.

No pre-sanitized, post-industrialized, machine-mortified, pre-fabricated fiberboard covered with vinyl-synthesized veneer stamped onto the surface with repeating woodgrain patterns patently pretending to be original. Rather, the kind they nowadays refer to as "old growth timber", organically grown from natural bird-dropped seedlings in God's country over a century ago, tended to daily by free-range mountain squirrels and, just like the Conestoga wagons and prairie schooners of old (the original RV's of the 1800s), filled full of frontier families heading west. Why, this deluxe, elite, 6-axled boat was, from wheel to wheel, the real deal. Bonafide and beautified, qualitatively

quantified, and soon to be quite highly prized and properly legalized by me, pending some paperwork down at the DMV.

The first thing to be taken care of upon reaching my adobe abode was a good washing and thorough waxing, an application of a compendium of ultra-chromium cleaning compound, some very vigorous vacuuming, elbow greasing, dash dusting, window debugging, and indelible detailing from a fine tooth bristle brush. No cavities would be left under the hood to be filled in with Blondo amalgam later on. No sirreee!

Finely flossed from bumper to bumper, headlight to tail, inside and out. And speaking of flossiphy, some waxed dental fiber works wonderfully well to reattach the holds to the pull cords of the aging cotton curtains. I'd used such methods in the past to repair the canvas of a small tepee and an old dilapidated pop-up camper which my kids turned into a playhouse in its final years. It's reminiscent of sinew used by the Lakota in fashioning their traditional dream catchers and such, one of which accompanies me on my journey, a gift from a man named Medicine on the Pine Ridge, a couple of hundred miles west of where I grew up, in the general vicinity of *Dances With Wolves* country, which reminds me of a book I've never quite been able to finish.

*Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, by Dee Brown, tells the true history of the conquest of the indigenous peoples in what came to be called America. I've never been able to get through it. Too close to home, maybe.

Tatanka Iyotake, or Sitting Bull, was held as a military prisoner for a time in 1881 at Fort Randall on the west side of the Missouri River,

and about fifteen miles from home. His incarceration followed a rejection by the Canadian government of a request to settle his people north of the US border for their safety from increasing hostilities during the westward expansion, by then in full progress.

My friends and I used to ride our bikes out to the Fort from time to time to fish and camp out below the dam and wander among the ruins, sometimes discovering arrowheads or .50 caliber lead pistol and rifle rounds imbedded in an old hillside target practice range along the river banks.

Sitting Bull was also called "Slow" by his people, as he took his own sweet time in making important decisions, always praying to Wakan Tanka for guidance in His own time. A man, or many men, cannot move a sitting bull buffalo, hence the name, for he embodied such firm resolve that he was immovable once he'd finally made up his mind, much to the consternation of the US Government and irritating the hell out of its generals.

He lived in the most challenging of times, this Hunkpapa Sioux Warrior Chief, during, and enduring, the encroachment of the European settlers upon the land which his people had freely roamed for millennia. First came Lewis and Clark, the famed explorers, who made the journey with their guide, Sacajawea. Then came Yellow Hair, General George Armstrong Custer, who found gold in the sacred land of the Paha Sapa, or Black Hills, which brought hundreds of miners seeking their fortune, which brought even more soldiers to protect them from the Sioux, although in truth, it was they who were ultimately threatened by the invading fortune hunters, whose values elevated shiny, yellow metal over the glisten in the eyes of indigenous people's lives.

My grandparents homesteaded east of the Missouri in 1895 when a major section of land on the Yankton Sioux Reservation was opened up to the farmers. Midnight Bill, as Grandpa was known, came from Maine, and was nicknamed as such because he was known to always be working til midnight when even the cattle were fast asleep.

His father, a member of an artillery unit which came down from the north to help free the likes of my friend Arthur's grandmother from the chains of southern slavery, got his goiter shot off by a rebel soldier in the Civil War trying to keep them on her. Fortunately, that feller's aim was off just enough to allow Great-Grandpa to survive the wound or, needless to say, he and his progeny, including the one telling this tale, would not have been conceived. Death has a funny way of finalizing specific ancestral lines...

Nevertheless, he fought on in several battles and witnessed General Lee surrendering his sword to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox in April of 1865. Grandpa lost his goiter, and Lee lost his war.

Grandma "Gusty" left Sweden at age 17 with a young female friend of hers. Together they boarded a ship bound for the promised land, leaving behind them the poverty and deprivation they knew back home. She had to lie about her age to gain passage aboard the ship, the minimum age for transport being 18 for single women. Having some relatives in the Sioux Falls area who had told others from the old country about the abounding opportunities to plow virgin prairie sod and encouraging them to come, come they did. "Land in America!" was about all it took to provide sufficient incentive for many to mobilize their pioneering spirit.

Gusty was the first woman to stake a claim in that particular section which had been opened for settlers, according to my father's recollection, and the President's own signature assured the deed. She was more sophisticated than Grandpa, or perhaps just a little more highly evolved, for she staked her claim by building a soddy, while Grandpa just dug a hole in the ground. Evidently, he was a caveman: genus *Neanderthalis Dakotas*.

Grandpa had been first in line, but stepped aside so the lady could go first, peering over her shoulder to see where her plot lay, and choosing his own 160 acres in close proximity to hers. When the two of them later married, they now had 320 acres between them to plow, plant, and cultivate, with enough grazing pasture for a few head of cattle. The work was hard but the harvests were plentiful in the good years, when drought or hail didn't ruin the crops.

My father was born to them in 1905, the middle of five sons, all of whom lived til their late eighties or early nineties. Dad passed away six weeks shy of his hundredth birthday, having farmed into his eighties, hanging up his coveralls only after mom died, but three days before their first set of grandchildren were born, twin girls of their mother and me.

Mom taught in one of the many one-room schoolhouses scattered about the prairie and was descended from several generations of Quakers on her mother's side. Dad was tougher than John Wayne, yet he surprised me with his eloquence when writing his description of mom's final hours. The nurses sensed that her time was fast approaching and attempted to get my father to leave the hospital room. He growled at them that he would in no wise abandon her now, but what

touched me most were his own tender, written words of when “she slipped from my hands into God’s...”

Thirty-odd years ago, some very odd, I travelled the states with just my right thumb, plus a few good pairs of Levis and tennis shoes. I never learned to play tennis, but if the shoe fits, ya gotta wear 'em til they're worn out. Starting out from a small mid-western farm town in rural South Dakota seemed at first an unlikely point from which to journey forth into the big wide world, but not for long, once acquiring the knack for catching rides caught on.

The mooing of cattle and rooting of hogs had long accustomed my ears to nature's voice, along with the sounds of neighing horses in the yard, and terns calling from the shoreline where fish were always jumping for bugs in the creek that passed through the pasture land to the south, while at night crickets chirped, frogs croaked, and lightening bugs lit up the sky.

I ventured out along old asphalt roads that led to double-lane Interstate highways begun in the Eisenhower years after the War in which my father served stateside and my uncle in the Pacific. My father was too old, or so they thought, to be of useful service in the battlefields, but I bet he could have outfoxed Rommel or snuck up and patted Patton on the helmet without either one of 'em knowing what hit 'em.

Dad told us a few of his stories from that time, but my uncle never seemed to wanna share any of the horrors he had witnessed first-hand in the islands of the Pacific theatre. All we knew is that he carried a radio on his back, which made him an especially valuable target for Japanese marksmen.

My father had been working for a major meat-packing company in Chicago when war broke out and, upon enlisting, Uncle Sam made him a meat inspector. After he had been engaged in his work awhile, he discovered something was amiss and blew the whistle on his former employer for cheating the military out of millions of dollars. They had been overcharging the government by including the weight of the dry ice in with that of the meat when tallying up the bill which they handed to the Army, while young men overseas on various fronts were getting the meat blown off of their own hindquarters. His former foreman reminded him that the company used to sign his paychecks, to which my father replied, "Uncle Sam does now..."

After the war he returned to his roots and started farming. To him, hard work was the best way to be blessed with prosperity and on your day off, go fishing. He seldom went to church other than for weddings and funerals, saying he felt a helluva lot more religious out on the river sitting in a boat than on some church pew sleeping through a sermon.

"Our father, which art in the north forty, plowed be thy ground. Thy work be done, thy harvest won, on earth as it is in that John Deere magazine." That was his old testament. The new one was called *Field and Stream*, and was much preferred, complete with pictures of wild turkeys, big, beautiful, trophy bucks, many helpful hunting tips, and plenty of fish stories.

You could leave the pair of bulls in the pasture, go out and catch catfish till midnight, thus multiplying the fish and gatherin' loaves from the wheat field, feeding not only your own family, but about five thousand other folks. It's a miracle what a little fertilizer and sufficient

precipitation will do. It ain't rock science, but close enough for non-government work.

All it takes is a little faith, some pesticides, and lots of hard work. The Great Spirit sees you sweatin' and sends rain. Kind of a covenant thing, for the rainbow usually shows up somewhere along the way, usually 'bout late afternoon or thereabouts.

I thumbed my way all the way to New York and back a couple of times, California as many, and south to Cherokee country over Christmas break one winter with a friend whose dad was head of the local BIA, having run our hometown office before being offered a position in Pawhuska. This trip proved to be quite memorable when a man named Howard Hughes picked us up in his pick-up truck in Kansas and gave us a ride to the Oklahoma border. Nice man, Mr. Hughes. Said he was a Mennonite fella. Had a friendly smile, too, as I recall.

That was in December of '71, my freshman year of college. The previous summer I had left Rapid City, South Dakota with \$7.02 in my pocket, thinking I was simply going home as intended, some three hundred miles to the east, when a van full of hippies picked me up on I-90 heading to Pennsylvania. Since my sister was living in New York City at the time, I made a hasty decision that I could not pass up the opportunity to pay her a surprise visit.

"Hello, Mom? Uh, I'm gonna stay a few days with some friends, OK? I'll be home in a week or so." A mere 46 hours after leaving Rapid behind, the last ride let me out at the northern stem of the core of the Big Apple. I still had one green frog skin left in my wallet, sparingly saved for subway fare, to get to my sister's neighborhood. Mr. Rogers didn't live there...

She did, however, and had been attending Barnard College, an affiliate of Columbia University, at the time. 'Twas her I blame for in-

spiring me to waste far too much precious time in unproductive philosophy classes pondering pointless platitudes amidst irrational theories of class relativism, other non-essential absurdities, and lots more of such equally intriguing items of the intellect. That was her thing. Why did I think I had to make it my thing?!

It really wasn't my thing, but it was a thing, after all, and the early seventies had a lot of things to be sifted through, mainly left-over baggage from the sixties.

"Hey, man. What kinda thing are you into, man?"

"Peace, man."

"Oh, wow! I mean, like, yeah, me too, man."

"Cool..."

I arrived in So Dak via the hitch-hiker express in time to register for fall classes at the infamous USD, which had a reputation as a Liberal Arts party college, and signed right up for Philosophy 101. My student advisor was a professor of Greek, but I was determined to study German, 'cause I planned on a thumbgeffarinzutrippen by autoshtoppin durch Deutschland der nachsta zummer. I'd already been to Disneyland as a child and I figured, "Hey, man, sprechen Sie Deutsch?"

I learned enough to ask questions aber nicht verstehen zie answers. But for me, Munich getraumpinimdertennisshoesundhikin definitely sounded cool. To this day, however, I regret having missed the opportunity to study ancient Greek with a highly qualified and capable instructor. A real bummer incognito ergo, I assume, for he was the consummate scholar of professorology, a Greek geek of the Aristotelean kind. If anybody "knew", it had to be him. He had knowledge oozing out of his fingernails, man! With the red bow-tie, the Buddy Holly

super-geek glasses, unmatched day-glo argyle sox, and everything.

Only two years prior to hitchin' to NYC, in 1969, I rode there with my buddies on a bus tour with the MYF, or Methodist Youth Fellowship. Every couple of years a few of the small farm town faithful (those that could rustle up the bucks) went to visit the UN, followed by a jaunt (in those days it was called a jaunt) down to DC to see some historic sights, observe Civil Rights, view urban blight, behold the Bill of Rights, while pondering politicians' fights over Treaty Rights (and wrongs), along with women's rights, and whatever other highlights appeared in our headlights. For to us youngins at the tail end of the sixties, it was all plain "Outa sight!"

"Right on, man! *Cool...*"

The following summer, at a church camp along the shores of Lake Poinsett, a memorable sermon affixed itself like glue to the boards inside my young head. The preacher gave a lengthy, but inspiring talk, entitled: "Are you traveling? Or are you going somewhere?" Well presented, it was food for thought that would stay with me, stuck to my ribs, you might say, and, as on other adventures later in life, this early one held profound meaning.

Riding subways in New York and taking in the nation's capitol was an abbreviated, encapsulated look at the big wide world previously known to us only through our TV sets where Walter Cronkite (the great white grandfather guru and Official CBS Nightly News Buddha) enlightened everyone in America. The world was becoming real now, and I was beginning to taste it, see it, smell it, pollution and all, as my eyes were opening like a newborn kitten's, slowly but surely, over the natural course of time.