Glimpsing The

Crystal Mountain

A Collection of Spiritual Writings

-- Second Edition --

by

F. Nelson Stover

Now Available

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A Collection of

Spiritual Writings

Why **Glimpsing the Crystal Mountain** was written --

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the eminent cosmologist and paleontogist wrote:

There is no concept more familiar to us than that of spiritual energy, yet there is none that is more opaque scientifically. On the one hand, the objective reality of psychical effort and work is so well established that the whole of ethics rests on it and, on the other hand, the nature of this inner power is so intangible that the whole description of the universe in mechanical terms has had no need to take account of it ...

Nowhere either is the need more urgent of building a bridge between the two banks of our existence -- the physical and the moral -- if we wish the material and spiritual sides of our activities to be mutually enlivened.

To connect the two energies, of the body and the soul, in a coherent manner: science has provisionally decided to ignore the question ... Unfortunately, or fortunately, ... the <u>within</u> of things has just as much or even more value than their <u>without</u>, ... we must advance.

To a core of people who have seen the Crystal Mountain

Nelson

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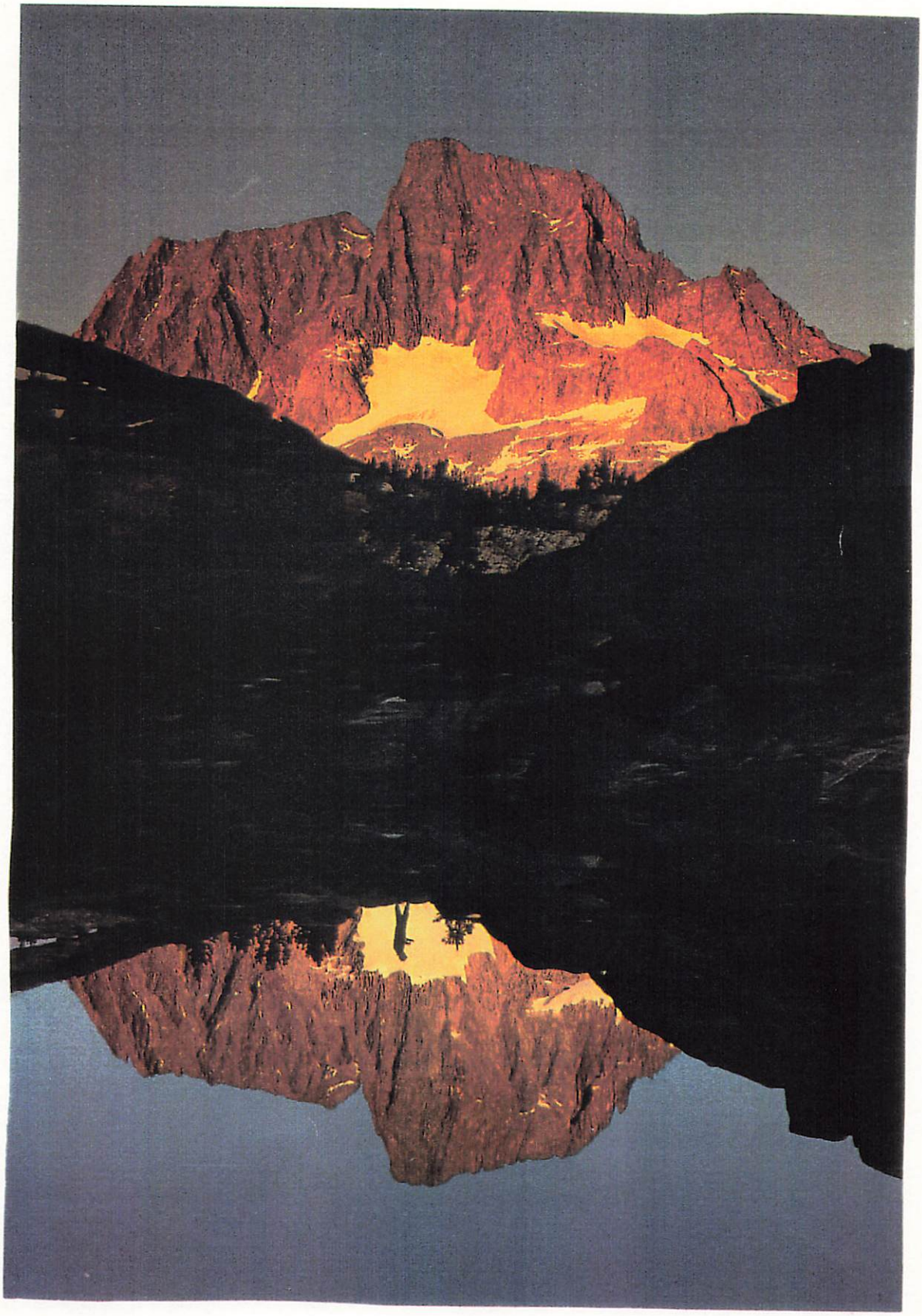

This collection is dedicated to:

Jim and June Gerding
Who befriended both my father and me
in times when we needed friends.

and

Elaine, my wife, and
Nina, my mother, both who
let me journey my journey.

F. Nelson Stover
Brussels, Belgium
1989

Glimpsing the Crystal Mountain has been self-published by the author. Persons wishing to use material from this collection are requested to acknowledge their source.

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Introduction

In **Glimpsing the Crystal Mountain**, I have pulled together some of my writings over the last 37 years. Through these writings, the reader will understand my journey in consciousness, of how the Mystery and I have come to know each other.

Throughout this collection I have chosen to leave each piece in its original style and most are presented without editorial comment or detailed explanatory footnotes. Likewise, in this collection I have not attempted to give philosophical interpretation or to provide all of the autobiographical details to fill in the chronological gaps.

In presenting these writings to the public, I am presuming that others, too, have glimpsed the crystal mountain whether they identified it or not. Possibly through this collection they will better understand what they saw and will continue the trek through its foothills.

The various parts of this collection have been printed strictly in chronological order as shown in the Table of Contents. Reading them in this way, one grasps the sequence of my understanding. A few of the pieces, like the reflections on my 40th birthday and the Diamond of My Life chart, include summaries of previous periods; but these appear when they were written.

An Index of Themes is given after the Table of Contents. In this, the various writings are grouped by subject matter. In 'The World We Live In' appear pieces about nature and society, the macrocosm of life and the universe. In 'Between You and I' are listed writings about individuals and how they get along with each other and their environment. Finally, in 'Sensing the Mystery' are presented reflections on meeting the Mystery face to face -- or seeing it out of the corner of your eye as though moving through a dense forest. Some readers may prefer to read the material in this theme sequence.

All of the material in this collection comes from my own hand with two exceptions which I include because of their fundamental impression on my own journey. During my three years in seminary (1967-70), I read as many of Teilhard de Chardin's books as I could find, a representative paragraph appears at the beginning of this collection. In the '70's, I read many of the works of Nikos Kazantzakis. The conclusion of his 'Saviours of God' also concludes **Glimpsing the Crystal Mountain.**

My own journey continues so in a way this collection is incomplete and still being written. Nonetheless, it stands on its own as a report of one person's journey toward the crystal mountain.

Brussels, Belgium
1989

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There is no concept more familiar to us than that of spiritual energy, yet there is none that is more opaque scientifically. On the one hand the objective reality of psychical effort and work is so well established that the whole of ethics rests on it and, on the other hand, the nature of this inner power is so intangible that the whole description of the universe in mechanical terms has had no need to take account of it, but has been successfully completed in deliberate disregard of its reality.

The difficulties we still encounter in trying to hold together spirit and matter in a reasonable perspective are nowhere more harshly revealed. Nowhere either is the need more urgent of building a bridge between the two banks of our existence -- the physical and the moral -- if we wish the material and spiritual sides of our activities to be mutually enlivened.

To connect the two energies, of the body and the soul, in a coherent manner: science has provisionally decided to ignore the question, and it would be very convenient for us to do the same. Unfortunately, or fortunately, caught up as we are here in the logic of a system where the within of things has just as much or even more value than their without, we collide with the difficulty head on. It is impossible to avoid the clash: we must advance.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin
The Phenomenon of Man
China, 1936

Life's Good

Background: The following five poems were written between my junior year in high school and my graduation from the university. They were compiled into a booklet entitled "Life's Good" and given to Elaine at the time of our engagement in 1966.

The dates at the end of each poem indicate the year in which they were written. The sequence in which they appear is the same as in the collection "Life's Good".

Alone

I am alone, forgotten about, nobody cares
It is dark, the light of life is gone
All communication is from without
My inner self is dead
My life is as dark as my environment
Surely my purpose is not to live like this.

Where can I go?
What can I do?
Help me. Help!

One other was like me.
All alone on the top of a hill
Condemned by mankind,
Nailed to a cross,
Nothing left to do,
Yet darkness surrounded him not.
He had lived his life in the way of the Lord,
Light was with him always.
From whence cometh the light?

Faith.
But Faith means nothing.
Ah, no.
Faith is the guiding power in all life.
Through Faith,
As the man on the hill showed us,
One is able to say as he,
  "Father, forgive them."
He had faith in mankind
  Faith they could, and would accept his
  forgiveness.
He had faith in God
  Faith He would forgive them.
Without this faith he would have died
  in darkness,
Died in vain.

Oh, that I might have faith,
Faith in God
  -- to lead me
Faith in myself
  -- to follow His guidance
  -- to lead others along His path
Faith in mankind
  -- that they might know God.

I have Faith,
I am with God and man,
  they are concerned about me.
Light surrounds me.
My inner self is awake and alive.
This is how I should live!

East Lansing, Michigan
1962

It's Great to be Alive Today

It's great to be alive today.
To laugh and live,
to romp and play,
and say,
"It's great to be alive today!"

It's great to be happy today.
To smile and grin,
shake hands
and say,
"It's great to be happy today!"

It's great to be in love today.
To care and share,
to be a friend
and say,
"It's great to be in love today!"

West Lafayette, Indiana
1964

Called to be Human

God made man
And 'tis a curious thing,
The maker of the creature called -- "man" --
Forgot to tell it what it's for.

Man lives -- and apparently rules --
Upon a planet -- earth --
That quite well suits his needs.

God gave man --
  at least so man thinks --
Dominion over "all the beasts of the field
  and the fishes of the sea"
Is man then to be only a dominioner over
  beasts and fishes?

Man has a body,
  But shall he be an athlete?
He has eyes,
  Shall he be a seer?
Ears,
  A hearer?

Now, man knows
  He is complex,
  His purpose is not a single one,
  But a complex combination of many.

God also gave man time.
Man, having time,
  has spent it in defining this complex
  combination of many purposes.

While man ponders and exists,
  God guides the world
  -- Guides but not runs --
Nothing is forced on man.
  God gives him freedom
  -- A disturbing freedom.

Oh, MAN!
When will you accept your freedom?
Not only are you not made for any previously conceived single purpose,
You are not made for a complex combination of them.

Your purpose is so simple you overlook it,
So complex it is unfathomable.

Live fully for others
-- Your life will be fullest.
Feed your mind
-- Your body will be taken care of.
Trust your enemy
-- The Lord is with them.
Be humble
-- The Lord is with you and will give you stature.

Lord, forgive us for being so blind to our true worth and purpose. Give us the strength to follow thee in humility. Lord we are so blind. May our minds never shut themselves to new views of reality but may they, also, act as if the present view is the truth.

Amen.

1963

Peace

"Peace" is a word,
like any word,
And it stands for many things.

It stands for a man who brought Peace to the world.
Who called man to be really man,
to live a new kind of life.
Who showed man how to love his enemy,
about the hardest thing to do.
Who taught that life was really worth living,
although we sometimes wonder.
Who reminded us that other people were important,
that we could not live alone.

It stands for a nation dedicated to Peace.
Which stood for its own rights
when they were denied.
Which helps others stand for theirs
and tries not to cause more problems.
Which recognizes the strife within itself,
making an attempt to harmonize it.
Which, seeing need in the world,
can send people out to help.

And it stands for a state of the soul of man.
When, while with his closest friend,
a fountain turns their favourite colour.
When a test is over
and it looks like the future can be handled.
When he's found a friend
with whom all problems can be discussed.
When someone acknowledges his worth,
giving him strength to go on.

"Peace" is a word,
like any word,
And it stands for many things.

It's a hope,
a challenge, and
a prayer.

West Lafayette, Indiana -- 1965

I'll Sing a Song

Some day I'll sing a song,
and this song will be
a song of love.

The skies above will ring,
the birds will join in
a song of love.

Some people's hearts won't hear,
but still I'll sing
a song of love.

My heart will open wide
and some one will hear
my song of love.

My song is sung for all,
but just one will hear
my song of love.

The words I often sing
but now no one hears
my song of love.

I'll always know this song
but how can <u>one</u> sing
a song of love?

My song is a glad song,
and happ'ly I'll sing
my song of love?

It is a joyous song,
we shall dance and sing
this song of love.

The skies above will ring,
the world will join us in
our song of love!

Lake Michigan Shores -- 1963

A Story of All Time

Background: This poetry was written in 1967 under the title "And the Beat Goes On". In 1969 it was incorporated, in its present form, into a monograph entitled "Toward a Contemporary Christology". The chart on the following page was based on the writings of Teilhard de Chardin and appeared in the monograph to illustrate the pathway to what Teilhard called "the Omega Point".

Long ago it was when the waters of the seas of the earth were filled with atoms and crystals and small molecules. Each in its own way, though often seemingly by chance, was seeking new ways of uniting. Crystals grew, compounds grew, and molecules grew. Yet of all the growing complex structures, none were more important than the hydrocarbons. These special molecules, formed of myriads of individual atoms linked centre to centre and each retaining its own characteristic properties yet giving its being for the whole, were finally to cross the threshold into life. Never again would planet earth be the same, for now there existed a substance able to reproduce exact copies of itself and yet remain itself.

And this was good.

But the new living matter did not lose the drive for unification which its ancestors possessed. Small bits of living matter united to form cells and cells united to form small plants and tiny animals. Time marched on and with every beat of the celestial clock, life on earth grew more complex. Each cell, each atom, which united to form the ever higher forms of life, retained its own individual uniqueness, yet participated in a new form of being. But of all the branches on the tree of life, which had grown quite large in the course of millions of years, it was a select group of mammals which were pushing out toward a new threshold. One day, in the distant and unrecorded past, a conscious creature was birthed which not only was, but knew it was. Never again would planet earth be the same for now there existed a creature aware of its existence and able to influence its future.

And this was good.

Nonetheless, in spite of its uniqueness, this conscious creature, and its descendants, never lost the drive toward unity which their ancestors possessed. Families, larger families, villages, tribes, and nations were formed as people gathered together. But further development ceased until individuals, like their pre-human and pre-living ancestors, could create that form of life in which people were bonded centre to centre, such that each retained their own identity yet expended their energies on

behalf of the greater whole. Amidst this ferment in the sea of all human life, in the year we call 1, appeared a new kind of person. Birthed into an obscure group of Hebrews, this man lived his life on behalf of others, a new kind of life which feared not death but celebrated life fully with and fully for others. A Spirit Person was born. Never again would the universe be the same for on planet earth there existed a Spirit Person, aware that life was to be lived as a member of a higher form of life than conscious life.

And this was good.

As molecules struggled to become fully molecules and thus produced life; as living forms struggled to be complete living forms and hence crossed the threshold into consciousness; as conscious creatures groped and struggled toward becoming perfectly conscious and thus gave birth to the Spirit People; so we as Spirit People live our lives today, and tomorrow, aware of the new form of being of which we are a part, seeking centre to centre relatedness of individuals, striving for the fulfilment of our form of life and aware that out of our striving and the laying down of our lives, an even higher form of being may be birthed.

And this is good.

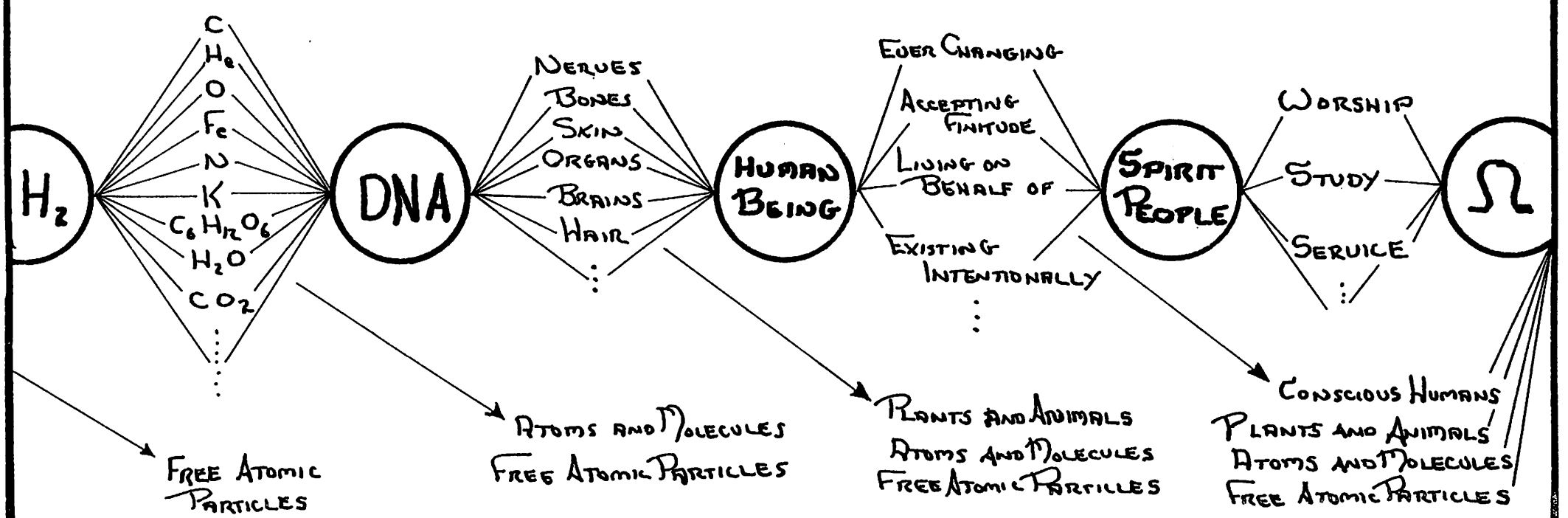
Chicago, Illinois
1969

Note (1989): In order to make this poetry more relevant to contemporary readers two modifications have been made to the original text. "Forefathers" has been changed to "Ancestors" and "Spirit Man" has been changed to "Spirit Person" wherever they appeared in the original text and on the following chart.

THE PULL OF OMEGA

CHART PREPARED IN 1969 A.D.

MATERIAL	LIVING	CONSCIOUS	SPIRITUAL
5 BILLION B.C.	1.5 BILLION B.C.	500,000 B.C.	1 A.D.
ORIGIN OF EARTH	BEGINNING OF LIFE	APPEARANCE OF HUMANS	BIRTH OF SPIRIT MAN



Key Theological Understandings

Background: This brief statement was prepared for submission to the Personnel Records Office of the United Church of Christ prior to ordination.

The highest form of Being -- the most complex complex of Matter -- calls itself Man. Its task, as the highest existent form of Being, is to push to provide the context for the creation of the next higher form.

Man's gifts of reflection and symbol creation have produced great symbolic stories of those creatures which have initiated new levels of consciousness. Holding these before them, men are doing their part in creating the cosmos.

All beings encounter that which is other than themselves and yet controls their existence. This power is unrationalizeable but it is experienced externally and felt internally: it is the final Lord of Life.

One can swear at or fight in defiance against that which drives man; or one can affirm and seek to become one with the contradictions of life. Man can decide how to relate to that unknown which does control living.

Into each human life, and the entire complex of Life, come word/events which forcefully and dramatically point to the way which the contradictions of the present might be embraced and the future shaped for all to come. Such an intrusion was Jesus the Christ, who embodied in his life, death and resurrection the complexities of this universal dynamic.

Paradoxically, no form or style can exist forever and when the new comes, the old passes away. We can decide to take ourselves out of existence in order that others might live, or be taken out of history against our will.

When the Unknown is faced and the directions ahead envisioned, virtually unlimited power and strength is imparted. The Spirit moves men of faith.

Some men try to do something to themselves or others to bring this power; however, all that is required is the decision to freely give one's self to the creation of history on behalf of all men, to exist dead to self.

Chicago, Illinois
February, 1970

My Courtship with the Church

Prepared for the Church and Ministry Committee of the Central Association of the Michigan Conference of the United Church of Christ as a prerequisite for ordination.

My relationship with the Church of Jesus Christ has been one of long standing and deep affection. Although I have, at one time or another, been related to four denominations -- Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and United Church of Christ -- these affiliations have been a part of one journey toward ordination into the Church. To talk about this journey I would suggest that there were four major stages in arriving at the celebration of being the Church. The first period began in the third grade and continued through my junior year in high school. During this time I saw my task as one of affirming the Historical Church through my words and actions. When our high school youth group visited Detroit's inner-city I first sensed that I was being called to be the Church in my own time. I devoted the next six years to deciding whether or not to accept the call. When I finally decided to accept the call, I immediately realized the need for training. Hence, I spent the next three years at Chicago Theological Seminary diligently preparing for the ministry. Finally, as I approach ordination and project my activities afterward, I see that I must be about the arduous job of building the Church into a vital and powerful body of people capable of addressing the eternal Word to a rapidly changing and highly chaotic times.

Affirming The Church

The earliest experience in the Church which I can recall occurred in a third grade Sunday School class in South Wayne Baptist Church of Fort Wayne, Indiana. The teacher was teaching us the song, "We've a Story to Tell to the Nations", but no one could get the rhythm of the chorus. Between getting mad at the teacher and wanting to do something else anyway, attention and success were waning. I decided, then, to clap out the beat loudly enough to enable the others to sing over the rough spot. With the teacher's help, I clapped, the class sang, and the Church's ministry continued.

Likewise, in our Junior High Youth Fellowship, I often had to sing extra loudly to encourage others to participate. That fellowship played a vital part of my training, thinking and fellowshipping, and I could not see why anyone would give a Sunday night to come to church and then mope through the opening songs. I am not a good singer, but when no one else will, I, at least, will give it all I have. When my

family left Fort Wayne and moved to East Lansing, Michigan, I was excited to finally find a group in which I need not sing the most loudly. My first contacts with the youth at Edgewood People's Church were both impressive and formative. While there I discovered youth and adults enthused about the Church and from there I went into the ministry.

The Senior High Fellowship elected officers each semester and by the second year I was elected Chairman of the Worship Committee, which no body else really wanted anyway. Nonetheless, I felt that the external inputs -- scripture, poetry and drama -- and the time for silent reflection in noisy times were necessary. For the remaining two years, I headed the Worship committee and from that position attempted to mould the consciousness of the students and keep them at the task of building, not idly enjoying or defiantly destroying, themselves and their society.

During these years I attempted to affirm the gifts of the Church, particularly in America. Though some may have thought it strange that I chose the Worship Committee or singing loudly, I gradually became clear that no group can be effective if it convenes, plays around, and dissipates by the next week. To the contrary, the Church has always realized the importance of worship. For me, to affirm this wisdom, the only way is to decide to worship and so design that worship to allow others to participate also.

Hearing the Call

Worship, while absolutely critical, can not alone create a dedicated Churchman. Rather, involvement in and awareness of the world also play an essential role. Hence, the most significant and thus forming event of my "courtship with the Church" occurred when the youth fellowship took its first tour of the inner city portion of Detroit during my junior year at East Lansing High School. On the trip, for the first time, I saw tattered buildings, shabby clothed kids, chuck-holed streets, crowded apartments and small houses crowded in next to each other. Then, too, I saw the thick Detroit telephone book with 13 pages of people named "Smith" and had face to face talks with negro high school students who certainly seemed human -- contrary to prevalent rumours. This experience was not an ecstatic mystical lightening flash nor was it an escape from a world which I did not like. Rather, as Moses saw the slave being beaten and responded, so I had seen a world and sensed the imperative to respond.

However, sensing an imperative and knowing what to do are separate and distinct events -- at least they were for me. The first thing which I did was to talk to the assistant minister at Edgewood People's Church who was conducting the trip through Detroit. Specifically we discussed seminary and the manner in which one got enroled and finally ordained into the Church. At that time he suggested

Chicago Theological Seminary and offered to take me there to a special conference for high school students; I went and was impressed, nonetheless, four years of college lie ahead.

Even with college ahead, I saw no need to twiddle my thumbs for four years so I began to seek ways to do volunteer service during the summers. The Detroit staff felt I was too young but I was able to "argue" my way into Salem United Church of Christ in Buffalo, New York as the fourth and youngest person on their summer youth staff. After I opened up the possibilities, two other girls from my high school youth group also volunteered to serve in Buffalo and less that a week after high school graduation, we set out -- somewhat to the consternation of my parents -- across Canada for a summer in Buffalo. That summer provided me with new perspectives on life -- cheese sandwiches everyday for lunch and no one but me to iron shirts -- allowed me to see another environment in which people live as well as sharpened my skills at conveying the Christian gospel as I struggled to convert middle-class Bible School curriculum into something understandable to ghetto youth.

Furthermore, that summer gave me the "credentials" to get a job the next summer in Detroit at the Christ United Church of Christ and the following summer with the United Church of Christ Board for Homeland Ministries as an emissary from the urban ministries to the rural youth in summer camps. In Detroit, I began to do some community organization work. Still, the highlight of the summer occurred during the discussion of the Ten Commandments. For the first time I was discussing them among kids for whom the commandment, "Thou shall not kill," was a crucial question. I became very clear, then, that the Christian scriptures really were about life issues.

My next summer job involved getting that same word which addressed black people out of the city to all people. Loaded with 100 slides, sheafs of papers and clippings, I set out for North Dakota and Idaho to tell country kids about the city. In doing so I discovered two things. First, that although urban centres had a profound effect on rural youths' lives, they had no idea of what a city was like. Even more important, as I talked with them, about their own situation and struggle, I became very clear that, on a theological level, the issues which concerned them were similar to those prevalent in the inner-city. The same gospel addressed both lives. When the summer ended I was a seasoned traveller and well on the way to becoming convinced that the Church had the Word.

In between summers I had been studying diligently at Purdue University. About the same time I decided that C.T.S. would be a great seminary, I also decided that, rather than majoring in philosophy or religion, I would prepare for seminary by mastering a "secular" discipline. Thus, I enroled as a mathematics major and by my sophomore year I had begun to specialize in Computer Science, while pursuing a minor in philosophy and religion. By the end of my junior year I had completed

enough computer courses and acquired sufficient practical skills in programming to get myself hired as an Operations Research Analyst for the summer at Ford Motor Company. While completing my assignment there, though some of my supervisors were surprised I got so far, I came to two crucial realizations. First of all, it was possible for me to do computer programming and as such to make a significant contribution to the world through enabling men to use the computer to more efficiently and accurately complete their jobs. If I did become a minister it would not be because of inability to do any other significant task. Furthermore, in conversations, observations, and reflections on my own experiences, I realized that availability of competence with computers, or any other mechanical device, was not the major issue. I began to realize that the same life issues which I had raised with the youth in Detroit, Idaho, and North Dakota were also the deep-seated issues for the men at Ford. The problem was that they had so many ways to cover it up and to hide from it that one could only get periodic hints of their wrestling with the significance and direction of their own life, but the issue was profoundly there. I left Ford fairly certain that I would never be back -- though they offered to pay for the rest of my schooling if I would -- and beginning to see that I would have to respond to that call which I had heard some five years earlier in the same city but a world away.

Prior to beginning at Ford Motor Company -- I had accepted the position of campus minister for the United Church of Christ at Purdue University who unexpectedly lost their minister in May, 1966. I returned to Purdue before classes began and designed the year's program with the campus minister for the Disciples of Christ who was to be my co-worker and supervisor. During the year I began to see a vital and influential community develop. By mid-November I had completed my application to C.T.S., decided to enter the ministry, and as a married man, and had demonstrated competencies in my confirmed vocation, while completing my senior year of college. By the end of the year I had facilitated the unification of the United Church of Christ and the Disciples campus ministries, begun the creation of a still existing United Strategy Committee for the Campus Ministry at Purdue which coordinates most of the Protestant denominations, opened and established our on-going Coffeehouse as well as building a fellowship of students to participate in and benefit from the structures and activities. My decision was confirmed and the need for systematic training, controlled experiences and official sanction became undeniably clear.

Preparing For Ministry

During my three years at Chicago Theological Seminary I sought to master each course but not to be mastered by them. My original idea conceived that my thesis would develop a constructive theology utilizing terms and concepts comprehendible by the average suburban layman. Toward this end, I participated intensely in the

constructive theology classes, utilized my electives for theology courses both practical and historical, and took a week-end course at the Ecumenical Institute of Chicago.

During the two summers which surrounded my middler year at C.T.S., I again took employment as a computer programmer -- first for Joseph T. Ryerson Steel, and the following summer for Continental National Assurance Group. These times, however, I did not see my task as being to decide if I would be a life-time programmer or even to earn money. Rather, continuing on my insights from Ford Motor company, to experiment with ways to raise serious theological issues with the working American male. At each office there were at least two men with whom I had regular and deep conversations. What I discovered was that most of the men were clear about the realities of our times. They needed, however, permission to use the historical Christian words for these realities and, more importantly, needed a concrete sign of some style of life other than their present one. Many men really didn't want the burden of a big lawn and a fancy house, except they had no alternative which seemed plausible.

Hence, as I entered my senior year, I began to seriously rethink the direction and theme which my thesis should follow. What became clear was that more critical than a theology would be a description of a style of life which takes into account the problems and issues of our day, is grounded in the Christian Word, and will conceivably be adequate and responsible in the years to come. Based on hours of conversation and experience, informed by serious reflections on contemporary theological writings of Tillich, Bonhoeffer, Bultmann and Teilhard, my thesis attempts to point the way beyond the present suburban style of adults and youth. With the completion of the thesis I complete my preparation for the ministry.

Building the Church

Thus ends my long and intimate "courtship" with the Church. I have decided, still, that the remainder of my life be given to building ever stronger the Church, specifically the United Church of Christ. This, however, is possible only with her permission and thus I seek ordination in the United Church of Christ.

Chicago, Illinois
June 3, 1970

My Creed

Prepared for the Church and Ministry Committee, Central Association of the Michigan Conference of the United Church of Christ.

I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY,

Beyond a doubt, man does not control his own life. Though each of us are given great rational powers to build spaceships and to plan for one another's care, in the midst of our building and care come events which remind us of our finitude and creaturliness. One can attribute these to fate or blame the Devil, but I call the power behind these God.

MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH:

While I sometimes want to isolate myself from the totality of the universe and say that my God is just for me and my friends, finally I know that my God influenced the formation of the Universe and will continue to the end of time. I cannot escape my God.

AND IN JESUS CHRIST HIS ONLY SON OUR LORD,

As conscious and lucid persons, to exist in the face of a God who takes creatures out of existence and then requires they use their gifts while alive, is indeed a difficult task. Many people try and hide from or ignore God but Jesus of Nazareth lived before God even to death on the cross. As the first person to obey the Father, and freely give his death, I chose him as my Lord whose leadership I follow.

WHO WAS CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY GHOST,

The first thing I must acknowledge about my Lord is that what he did lies beyond the natural, rational and human. Throughout his entire life, from before birth, he was given the power and freedom to live his life and die his death.

BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY,

But my Lord was no freak of nature for he was born of woman, just like the rest of us. Yet filial ties did not bind him, for his parents too were unique creatures. So unique, that I say, with the ancient Church fathers, that Jesus' mother was a virgin.

SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE,

Next to his birth, it is my Lord's death which makes him my Saviour. For his death was not an elongated retirement but a painful experience. When I am suffering, I always know it is never more than my Lord's suffering.

WAS CRUCIFIED, DEAD, AND BURIED; HE DESCENDED INTO HELL;

Not only did he suffer, but the result of his suffering, the end of his life, was the same grave to which I go.

THE THIRD DAY HE AROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD;

The deep secret which the Christ embodied, however, is that not even painful death is the master of men. There need be no argument over how a dead body might recuperate, Rather, the early Church knew, as do I, that only in the dying of death is life possible, only as my Saviour died could anyone know why he lived.

HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN, AND SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY;

This event, this death and resurrection, is the key event in history and exposes the truth which all men must know. Eternal as is the Father, so is the resurrected Christ.

FROM THENCE HE SHALL COME TO JUDGE THE QUICK AND THE DEAD.

Christ's decision to die and stance before his Father is now the critical criteria for humanness. Those who decide to die for the demands of the eternal God, find life. Those persons who refuse to die and preserve their own lives or who give themselves to a reduced god, die a bitter and useless death.

I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY GHOST;

That same holy power which gave freedom, vitality, and power to my Lord, may come to me as I decide to give my life to God's demands.

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH,

There is only one people able to address the Word of life to the world and thus only this group can allow people to truly live. This people, chosen by God, and after their decision, empowered by the Holy Spirit,are the people to whom I band myself and for whom I give my life.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS;

Out of the whole Church, some men are signs to me and my contemporaries. Such exemplar individuals are the Saints in whose steps I trod, and whose task I carry on.

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS;

I am human, finite and broken. The fact is I fail and turn away from God. Yet even then I am allowed to live, I can continue. Only in knowing this am I able to do what I do; little as it may be.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY,

Even at death itself my body does not become worthless and forgotten by history. Rather, only as my worn out body decomposes into dirt is it possible for other life to grow from it. What a gift it is that from my body, new life flows.

AND THE LIFE EVERLASTING.

Those lives lived before God, in the Word of Christ, and which have been empowered by the Holy Spirit, have such profound influence on history that their effects are eternal. Eternal life is an option for me when I decide not to live for myself, but rather for all of history. Difficult as it is, this is the price of eternal life.

AMEN.

This I affirm.

Chicago, Illinois -- June 3, 1970

April, 1972

Dear Grandma Stover,

When Dad's telegram arrived with word of Grandpa's death in the night, my own day came to a sudden halt. It was as though one of the foundation stones on which I stood had given way and I had no where to put my foot. For me, Grandpa has been a sign of the strength and creative potential which any man might possess. It was as though whatever little thing he touched, he made big and important -- himself included. Furthermore, he enjoyed living, not that he was never angry, but rather never bored or left with nothing to do. Few men I've encountered can match his ability to make every moment worth living. What is more, I was constantly amazed at his ability to call others to join him in celebrating life just as it is, even the rough spots. I feel confident that his clowning with the Shriners was not just an escape from the pressures of work, but rather a sincere manifestation of his hope that others might share with him his joy at being a human being.

I do not know for certain if there is a physical heaven where souls float around in angel's clothes. But I do know and deeply believe that in the eyes of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father, each man's life, at its end is pronounced good as it was and the course of the history of God's people is immutably changed. I, for one, intend to continue, until my time is over, in many of the directions he begun. He knew that no one-state company could survive, I will work with all nations that they might build together. He served as a manager and knew that one who co-ordinates and plans truly enables work to get done, whether as a religious house prior or local church pastor, I will be one who calls men to work together. He knew that though he had much, so also he had much to give; so I also will give all that I have that others might live. As Grandpa bore the name Nelson with pride, so I promise -- to you -- to be proud of my name and to pass it on to my first born son as soon as the Lord which, when he pleases, gives and takes life away, sees fit to birth a son to our family.

To you, Grandma, these are my reflections and promises. Keep living each day to its fullest, praise God daily, and fear not death for as Christ Jesus showed on Easter, death is not bad but the culmination of Life.

The enclosed picture was taken on the 2-day train ride between Adelaide and Perth across the Nullarbor Plain. I'm wearing a tie bought in Bangkok and writing plans for my new assignment in Perth as 1st Prior of the Religious House in Perth.

Grace and Peace,
"Little" Nelson

The Wind Blows in the Desert

Background: The following seven poems were written during the four years in which I lived and worked in Australia. They were compiled into a booklet entitled "The Wind Blows in the Desert" and given to Elaine as a Christmas present in December, 1975.

During this period the people with whom I was working were studying the Book of Psalms, thus the format of many of the poems parallels the psalms; the content grew out of personal experiences.

Psalm of a Transparent Priest

Oh my soul praise God,
for thou alone can do nothing,
thou alone are unbelievable,
thou alone remain humanly driven.

Oh my soul transmit forgiveness
for the Mystery of life receives all men,
the Mystery of life knows life's brokenness,
the Mystery of life demands embodied passion.

Oh my soul praise the Lord,
for tonight He has chosen you,
tonight you have hidden yourself,
tonight another soul has been saved.

Sing with all the highest heavens,
Sing His loudest praises.

Perth, Australia
May, 1972

Psalm of a Passionate Revolutionary

Oh Lord God Almighty,
  Thou whom alone knows man's interior,
  Pour Thy vengeful wrath like molten iron
    On the bodies and souls of those who hate men.
  Remove them, Lord God Almighty, from positions of care
    for Thy faithful followers.
  Hold shining mirrors of polished and silvered glass before
    their eyes,
  So they might see their own folly.

Oh thou my Soul,
  Keep thy own reflection intensified,
  Mind and guard thy own passion,
  And panic not when your things disappear,
    Defend not thy own creativity,
    Strive not for perpetual rational order,
    Weep not when thou art called into question.
  Trust the Lord and sing His praises.

Oh Lord, guard Thou my soul.

Oh thou my soul, watch in the Lord's mirror.

Perth, Australia
June, 1972

Psalm of the Internal Voices

Living what I believe is difficult indeed.

Within me a still small voice both shouts and whispers:
"Quit, chuck in the towel."
"You're beaten in Perth."
"The system is unbeatable."

NO !!!

We are the chosen ones --

Praise be to God !!!

Perth, Australia
June, 1973

Psalm of A Miracle Worker

Oh Lord,
my soul soars
like a mighty eagle.

Thou hast indeed blessed us with a miracle.

What Thou hast killed,
Thou hast indeed
resurrected,

What Thou had worn down,
Thou hast renewed.

Oh my soul, praise constantly the Lord.
For his hand is indeed mightier than a
nation with legions of giants.
Good works, oh my heart, thou doest,
Miracles, oh my soul, are of God alone.

Seek always the Lord's wind and push there.

Adelaide, Australia
October, 1974

Second Psalm of
A Passionate Revolutionary

Oh Mighty One, who lead Thy chosen
people out of bondage,
And then lead them again into servitude,
Once again the battle begins.

Now I fight only Thee,
and Thy holy henchman, Satan.

I have seen Thy face in the desert,
Known Thee on the other side of the flowing water,
Heard Thy cry from the hearts of the suffering peoples,
And felt Thy tranquillity in the dark of the night.

Mark my words, oh my Lord,
I WILL FIGHT
Until we are one.

Oh merciful Father, have mercy on me,
What right have I to stand up before Thee,
for Thou could squash me as though an elephant
were sitting on a spider.
Allow me, oh Lord, to fight under the protection
of Thy great mercy.

United States of America
June, 1975

Psalm to the Whirlwind

Oh my soul, indeed thou art privileged
  For thou hast seen the whirlwind.
To thee the wind hast whispered its secrets,
Before thy face hast the sun shone its new day;
And yet from thee hath the clouds hidden the pathways.

Oh Thou who dost send the whirlwind, the sun and the clouds,
Blessed art Thou in Thy great mercies.
Favours beyond our deserve have befallen us,
  Successes which were not of our own doing
  Have appeared before us.

Oh my Soul, rest thee quiet in the night's stillness.
For indeed thou art the son of the Father.
His love is as unending as is his dominion,
  and His power is unsurpassed even by the multitudes
    of the suns above.
Indeed, thou art marked -- commissioned by the Maker --
  to be: Commander of the Now, and
          Care taker of the Here.
    Look -- but ask no questions,
    Act -- but seek no response,
    Yearn -- but find no one home.

Oh Thou who dost send the whirlwind, sun, and clouds,
Blessed indeed art Thou in Thy great mercies.

Rochester, New York
September, 1975

A Simple Request

On the day I die,
Explain to all
That my Lord
Required my All.

Rochester, New York
December, 1975

Great Escapes

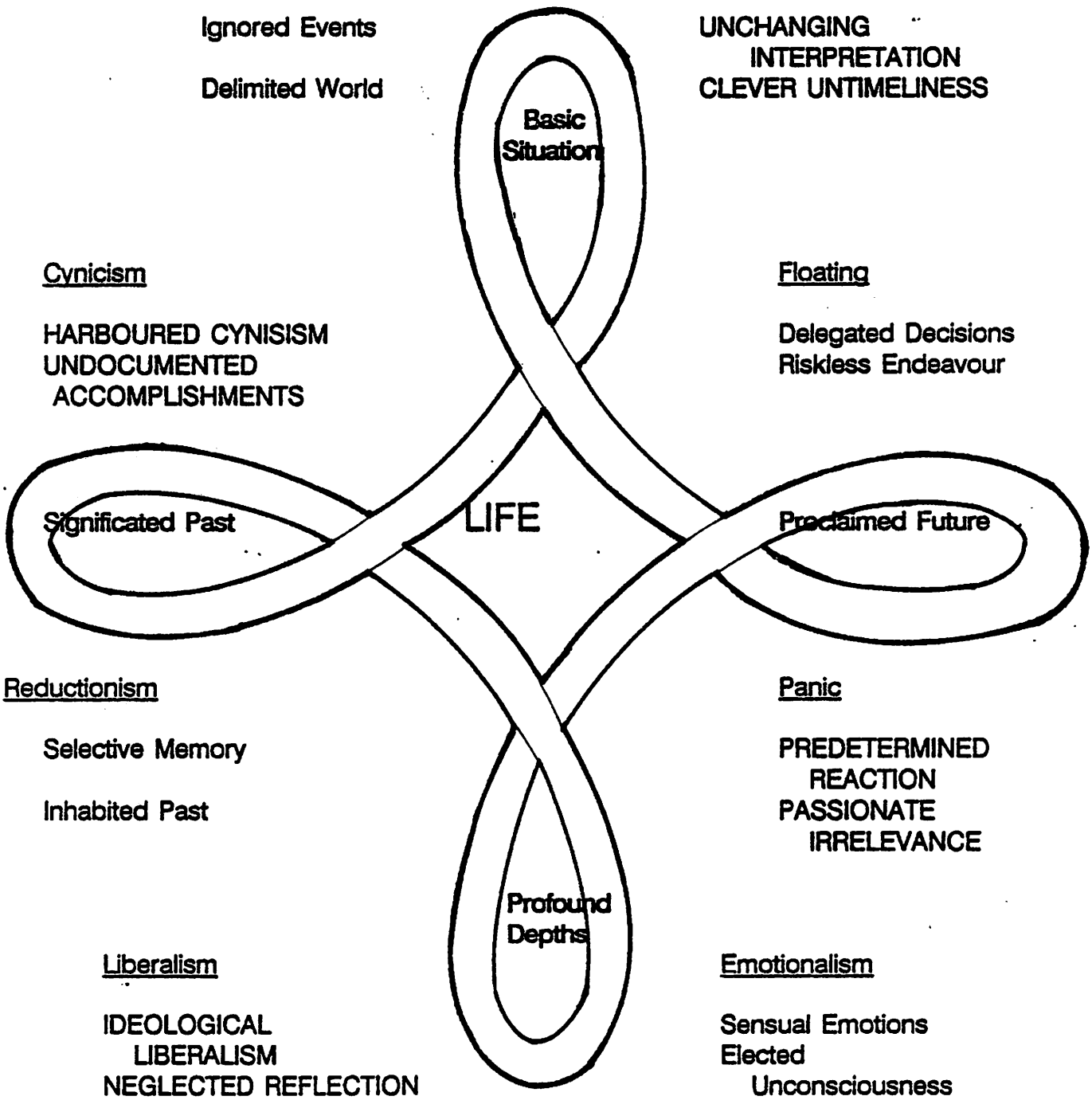
Background: During a Religious Studies seminar which I conducted in Boston for a group of New Hampshire high school students in 1976, I realised that they were all, consciously or un-consciously, systematically striving to escape the great mystery which empowers life. Based on my own experiences and other work currently underway within our organisation, I created the following screen of 'Great Escapes'. These 16 categories formed the basis of a lecture which I delivered at the opening of the second day of the seminar.

During the following year, I used the chart as a daily evaluation tool with the team with which I worked in West Virginia. The chart provided a helpful way to objectify our own relationship with the Mystery.

The eight primary categories were included in the chart which I devised in 1981 (See 'Dynamics of the Interior Universe' following). On the chart on the opposite page, escapes printed in CAPITAL LETTERS indicate the more active forms of escape, while the escapes printed in lower case letters indicate the more passive forms of escape. The prose description for this chart appears in the narrative for the 'Dynamics of the Interior Universe'.

Boston, Massechussets
1976

Great Escapes



24th December, 1985

F. Nelson Stover
4750 North Sheridan Dr.
Chicago, Illinois 60640

13 Sankli St.
Byculla, Bombay
India 400-008

Rev. Truman Morrison
Edgewood Peoples Church
469 N. Hagadorn Rd.
East Lansing, Michigan 48823

Dear Truman,

Last Sunday, as I was taking Communion for the first time in several years, my attention shifted to the Eternal Flame which the particular church keeps burning near the altar. Especially, I began to brood over the brass hood which was suspended above the glass-enclosed flame. I realised that, I think, not only do I now appreciate the symbolism of the Eternal Flame, but I also understand that centuries ago our ancestors -- who had no matches -- absolutely depended, life or death, on the ability of the priest to keep the flame alive. The hood kept anything from falling into the flame and the temple offered the most secure facility in the community. Today, we have no practical need for a flame in the sanctuary, only the symbolism remains.

From this wandering of my mind, I reflected that I have picked up a few things during the 40 years of my life, the last 15 of which I have been an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ. Over the past few days of my vacation at my folks' house in the Tennessee hills, I have tried to summarize where I am in my journey through life. As you and the congregation at Edgewood ordained me in 1970, I am sending this report to you.

One of the most difficult aspects, in this day of changing roles and expectations, is knowing in what arenas to report and by what benchmarks to measure success, progress, or failure. I finally decided to report in the three arenas of what I know, how I do, and how I am being. In each arena, I have tried to articulate three measures of my current status and then to present a few examples of how these are manifested. I have also, at the conclusion, tried to envision the next steps, although this requires more difficult decisions and produces more unclear statements.

Just for the record, I am happily married to Elaine and have been for 18 years. I am healthy and when thoroughly examined by a doctor in 1984 was given a clean bill of health on all accounts. I have been working with the Ecumenical Institute

and the Institute of Cultural Affairs through my association with the Order: Ecumenical for the past 17 years and intend to continue these relationships into the foreseeable future. I don't owe anybody any money and we have a small family savings. From this "stable foundation", my wife and I have embarked on a glorious encounter with the Mystery.

Do with the attached report as you will. Thank you for your personal support throughout the years. Please convey to the denomination my well-being, and my desire to remain in good standing on my assignment to the extended social ministry of the Church.

Yours in Service

F. Nelson Stover

A Status Report
40 Years Down the Road

F. Nelson Stover -- 1985

** Knowing About the World We Live In **

Prior to graduating from East Lansing High School, I took -- along with thousands of others my age -- the College Board Examinations. I placed in the top 1% of the nation in Mathematics and in the top 4% in English. I graduated from Purdue University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science and held several short-term jobs in this field. After graduating from Chicago Theological Seminary, I was ordained into the United Church of Christ. While I have been primarily involved in a social ministry, I did serve, for 9 months, as the interim pastor of a small church in Sydney, Australia. While at this stage of life, objective measures of academic prowess -- short of attaining another degree -- are difficult to find, I often take "intelligence tests" offered in various magazines. I consistently score in the highest category. I have recently picked up again my work with computers and hold my own on all of the micro-computers from the TRS-80 Model 100 to the IBM PC's. I am continually thankful that I took typing in high school.

For me, Science and Religion, come together at the point of actually grasping the wonder of the world we live in. The Appalachian Mountains, folded as they are in the Virginias, overwhelmed me with the power of the forces which shape the earth. Photos of exploding super-novas have led me to appreciate the long-term processes which have been required to produce the oxygen on which I depend. Trips to various zoos have dramatised the varieties of ways in which life adapts to living. Satellite pictures, also, have helped shape the images out of which I currently live. On the walls in my bedroom hang four sets of pictures: 1) three framed postcards of the space shuttle in flight and on the launch pad, 2) a large photograph of Saturn taken by Voyager from behind the planet, 3) a National Geographic map of the Universe, and 4) a montage of pictures showing astronauts on untethered space walks. Somehow, a lot of any day's problems become relativised by the walls of our family's room.

I have dined with leaders of business and industry as well as some of the world's poorest citizens; I have been welcomed by both kinds of people and have felt honoured to be in their homes. I know that in every group of people there are Those Who Care and those who don't. Some poor people care, and some wealthy people care; some destitute ones despair and some well-off ones despair. Those Who Care tend to become quickly my friends; with others, regardless of their social

position, I try to remain friendly. I realise that many people have difficulty living in a city, others have difficulty living in a low-cost village home; for me, I am where I am. In the diversity of the world, I'm really hard pressed to say who is "better off".

** Doing to Affect the World We Live In **

In summary: 1) I can organise large groups of people to accomplish a wide variety of tasks, 2) I can teach individuals and groups whatever I know, and 3) my family lives a demonstration of the simple life.

In our high school youth group, I was often placed in charge of the fund raising activities. At spaghetti dinners, for instance, 20 teen-agers would prepare and serve dinner for several hundred friends of the church. In the university, I became the head waiter in the dormitory kitchen where a staff of 70 regularly served three meals a day to 700 residents. More recently, for certain of the Institute's programmes, I have had primary responsibility for co-ordinating work-days and celebrations involving up to 400 people. I was responsible for thinking through all of the logistics and for ensuring the overall success of the venture. Currently, I am among those assuming primary responsibility for raising and co-ordinating the financial expenditures for the Institute's Rs 50,00,000 ($300,000/year) work in India. I am able to build detailed, practical plans; I can work on a team and enable the group to delegate its tasks and to achieve a consensus on its overall direction; and I know how to sell an idea to the larger body which will assume responsibility for implementing the plans of the co-ordinating team.

As a youngster in grade-school, during the summer, I often helped at the school playground by teaching the little kids how to make pot-holders (for cooking pans) and to do glass paintings. In my early years with the Ecumenical Institute, I frequently taught their Religious Studies - I course to church members both in the United States and in Australia. Since 1975, I have frequently taught the Institute of Cultural Affairs' planning methods to senior management level personnel in major corporations in Australia and India. Between 1983 and 1985, I taught on the faculty of a New Skills Training School organized by the Institute for its staff in India. We emphasised both the practical skills and the stylistic modes required for village-born people to function in the modern information age. In these schools, I wrote the curriculum, taught the classes and designed the contextual framework for the school. As an extension of this programme, I helped to design and teach a Computer Literacy course which the Institute offered to all of its own staff and to two major Indian corporations. I can give stimulating lectures and talks, lead participatory workshops and guided conversations and design curriculum for others to follow.

In an age where some people have opted for rampant materialism and amassing wealth and possessions and others are trapped in abject poverty and haunted by

immanent starvation, the Elaine K. and F. Nelson Stover family has chosen the style of voluntary simplicity. During the year 1985, we lived on a total of about $1,000, excluding the cost of the air tickets to the US for our Christmas holidays. Our total worldly possessions will fit in a good-sized station wagon; and what we have in India, we carried there within the second-class baggage requirements of the international airlines. Our room in Bombay measures 14' x 7' and we share cooking and cleaning responsibilities with the other 20 people on our staff who live in the same facility. Yet both of us use word processors to produce our reports and letters and stay on the edge of our professional fields. While, like anyone, we have our list of "we still wants"; we live each day as though we have all we need -- and have found we do. We are a highly flexible family, able to go where needed on relatively short notice. When we get to a new place -- I build the furniture we need and arrange the electrical supply, Elaine decorates the space so that it cares for us.

** Being At-One With the World We Live In **

Frankly, this arena affords the most difficulty in measurement and description but: 1) I can wait until the time seems right, 2) I can pay attention to my breath for 15 min. and 3) sometimes I can see through the present situation to the eternal.

While in seminary, I ran into a crowded stationary store to buy an eraser. Deeming it unnecessary to stand in the long check-out line, I cut to the front to pay the required 25 cents. The old man at the counter -- himself part of the reason for the length of the line -- looked at me and said politely, "Young man, patience is not a virtue; it is a necessity." I stood in the line and paid when I got my turn at the register. The old man's words have stuck with me throughout the years and I've tried to carefully decide when to call back on people, when to remind and when to move with wild abandon. To maintain my perspective on the larger scale, I semi-annually list my 60 major concerns and prioritise these in ten categories ranging from "Immediate Action" to "Underlying Ruminations". This Comprehensive Brooding Screen allows me to hold the tension between the many diverse demands which I feel. In recent years, I've noticed that people are asking my advice on timing. While my intuitions seem to be sharpening, this arena remains highly un-objective.

While living at home with my family, I attended church every week and most often went both to worship and to youth fellowship in the evening. During seminary, I began attending daily worship services and this has continued throughout my years with the Order. While in Christian countries, the services were based on various Christian liturgies; and in India we created a service using the poetry of Tagore. During the summer of 1984, I had my first introduction to the disciplines of Meditation as practised in the East. The first series of lessons focused on breathing, paying attention to the breath; then watching your thoughts. At first, I

went to sleep or fell into unconsciousness. I can now consistently pay attention to my breathing for 15 to 20 minutes while seated in a modified lotus position. While doing this, I can monitor my thoughts and sometimes focus them on a mantra. I know that when I allow myself to do this kind of meditation daily, I seem be to more effective in my overall performance of my task -- again, hard to measure. Practically, I try to wake up at 5:00 each morning and have a cup of tea in silence before the activities of the day begin; by and large my day ends at 11:00 p.m.; Sundays are shorter. Furthermore, I think that I am mastering the arts of listening and paying attention to details. Recently, while doing fund raising, I've noticed that, almost under their breath, people will answer requests; if these responses are heeded and acted upon, one's success rate increases.

On at least four occasions I have felt as though the Universe and I are one; these happened: on a high school retreat, during a summer camp at college, on a bus trip in India and when visiting the Boa tree in Sri Lanka. (Whatever else I would say here would get quite beyond the rational and hence further comment will be left to a later time.) Quite close to this arena, on three occasions, I have experienced the immanence of my own death. Twice car accidents have exposed me to situations which could have extinguished my life and once in Widen, a man threatened to shoot me -- and he could/would have. I live with the awareness that the way things seem on the surface and the way life is are not necessarily the same; the latter carries the most weight.

** Anticipations -- The Next Part of the Road **

At this time I function quite well in contexts relatively like the one in which I grew up. Historically, I have a had a difficult time learning new languages but now realise that this skill must be acquired. Sound patterns remain hard for me to master, thus I tend to forget names and misspell words. Both languages and names afford a challenge to be mastered. The physical sciences come easy to me; however, my time in India has convinced me that major non-rational arenas of knowing remain unexplored by me. Thirdly, as a great deal of my current work requires contact with the business community for acquiring financial support, I must become increasingly perceptive to their way of looking at the present situation in the world.

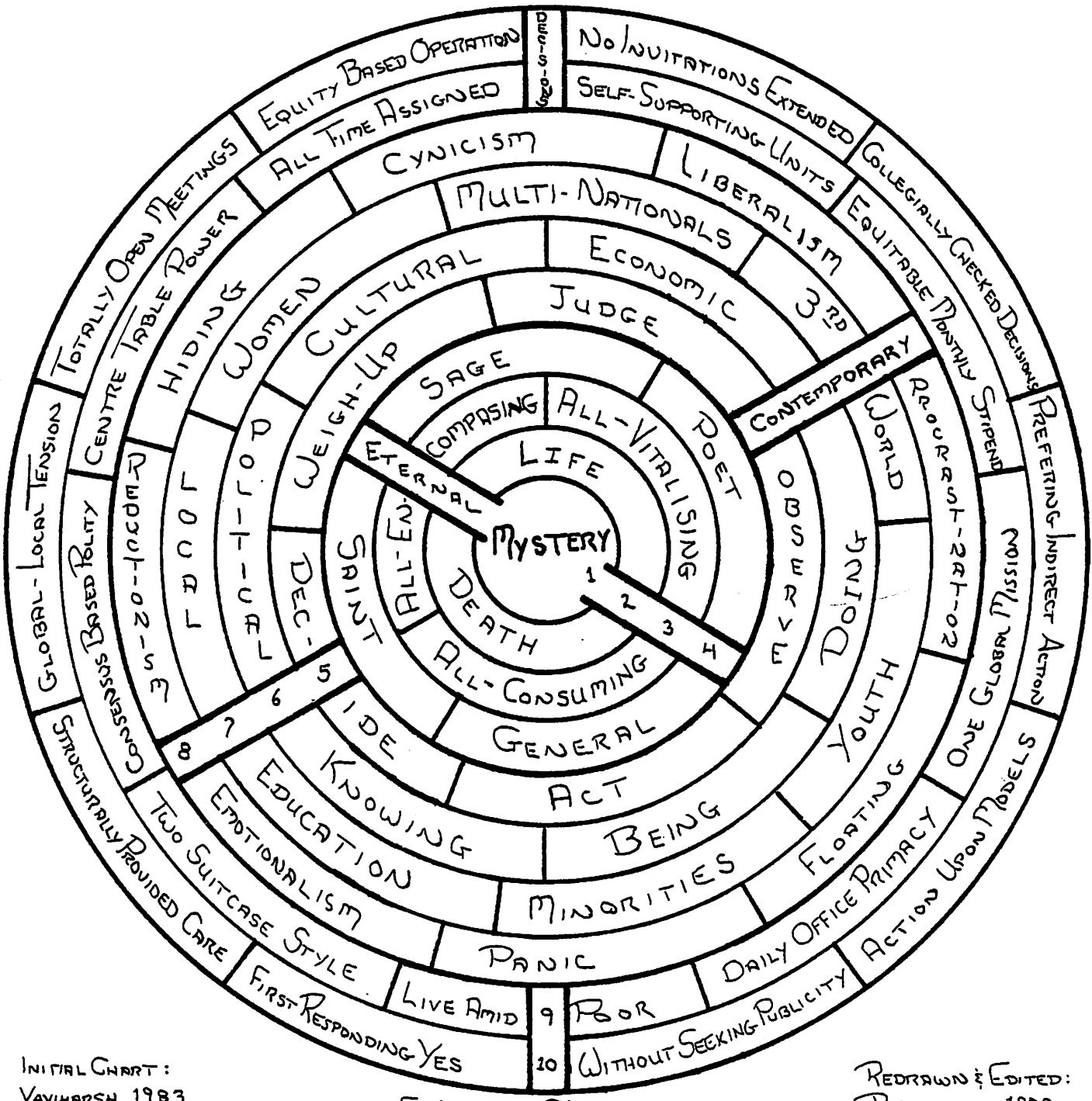
While the New Skills Training School which I taught accomplished its purpose, it was only designed to touch the tip of the ice berg. A whole arena of New Age skills remains to be conceptualised and ways designed to teach them to millions of people in every nation. Secondly, while I have been advocating financial self-sufficiency for the Institute, I have yet to be able to demonstrate this in India. Meeting this challenge will require imagination and persistence. Finally, while I intuit that I can fit in with about any group of people, teaching others to walk in

this multi-styled path remains beyond my ability. While I have some clues, consistently teaching appropriate style requires new inventions.

To sustain myself on the next section of the road ahead, I know that I must now discipline myself to be consistent in doing individual spirit exercises. While I suspect that meditation will solve part of what is required; what I read, what I eat and how I think about things will also affect my state of being. Whereas I can plan and implement single events, and even quarter-long series, I must develop the art of building long-range master strategies. Others have known this. I, too, am eager to experiment with designing the future. To accomplish any of these things I realise that I must entirely get beyond nervousness, I need to live as though I am seen through.

Gatlinburg, Tennessee
December, 1985

Dynamics of the Interior Universe



Initial Chart:
Vavihansh, 1983

= F. Nelson Stover =

Redrawn & Edited:
Brussels, 1988

The 10 Rings in the 3 Bands		
I. Eternal	II. Contemporary	III. Decisions
1. Reality	5. Processes	9. Vows
2. Manifestations	6. Dimensions	
3. Experiences	7. Revolutions	10. Principles
4. Embodiments	8. Escapes	

Dynamics of the Interior Universe

(Explanation of preceding chart)

Background

In 1982, I began working on the Chikhale Human Development Project in a village of Maharashtra, India. I understood myself as being responsible for a team of 3 Americans, 1 Australian, 1 British and 20 Indians. Within 8 months, 80% of this team had either left or been dismissed. I began to wonder if I was the problem, if in fact I was doing something basically wrong. One of the villages with which we worked was located on a mountain lake and was accessible only by riding a rickety bus for several hours along a narrow winding road.

Alone on the return trip from this village in March, 1983, I continued to ponder what I in fact believed, what I was really all about. I recalled the Christmas song about the 12 lords a-leaping, 5 golden rings and a partridge in a pear tree. The structure of that song combined with my own experiences and the corporate research of the Institute of Cultural Affairs to produce in my mind the circle chart on the preceding page. The decision to compile 'Glimpsing the Crystal Mountain' prompted the creation of these pages of prose.

1 Reality

Mystery infuses every facet of the interior and exterior universe. The degree of oneness with Mystery affects all knowing, all doing and all being everywhere at every moment. When at one with Mystery:

* One feels the calm wind and the cold fire,
* One sees the illuminating darkness and the invisible mountain,
* One hears the silent thunder, and
* One knows the intuitively obvious secret.

2 Manifestations

As soon as one thinks about the totality of reality, as soon as one acts out their experiences of reality in its fullness, as soon as one knows they have met Mystery, the oneness becomes duality. Life is to Death as:

* Femaleness is to Maleness
* Dark is to Light
* Strong is to Weak
* Peace is to War

3 Experiences

To have experienced Mystery directly, even for the briefest moment, to have realised the unity of duality, even only in one instance, transforms all aspects of future experience forever.

> When two become one, the all-vitalising power of the universe is released, the ethereal becomes manifest.
>
> This all-encompassing phenomenon has occurred throughout the history of the universe and can infect all dimensions of an individual's life.
>
> Yet manifested at-oneness releases all-consuming energies, since when two become one nothingness reappears.

Life and existence result from these all-vitalising, all-encompassing and all-consuming interplays.

4 Embodiments

When people experience the fire which does not burn, when two become one, then ways are sought to embody this reality on a sustained basis in an effective manner.

> The Sage beckons others to the experiences of filled-full living. Through an uncluttered simple life-style and through timely practical advice the Sage attracts and guides people to the profound.
>
> The Poet expresses the oneness which others only sense or intuit. Through song, art, drama and humour the Poet names the

indescribable, captures the fleeting moment and focuses attention on the significant.

The General leads the way through chaos and confusion to creative resolution. Fear and doubt disappear when the oneness is known and thus the General receives a strange strength and a decisiveness which fosters effective corporate action.

The Saint's own life becomes the vehicle through which Mystery becomes manifest in reality. The Saint's living and dying open the door to Mystery so that others' realities change.

Across the vastness of space and since before the beginning of time, Mystery has been in the process of becoming manifest; and this process has been experienced and embodied. Thus, the 1 Reality, the 2 Manifestations, the 3 Experiences and the 4 Embodiments can be called the Eternal Elements of the Interior Universe.

5 Processes

At this time in the history of the universe, human beings are becoming self-consciously involved in creating the future..

The five (or six or seven) senses have been expanded through microscopes, radio-telescopes and other sophisticated equipment. Modern mechanical devices and ancient technologies of attentiveness combine to provide unparalleled opportunities to Observe the world in which life goes on.

Furthermore, people Judge the significance of the experiences which come to them. Intuitions, feelings, past experiences, formulae, memories and rationale provide richly diverse patterns to daily encounters.

Individually and in groups people Weigh-up the pros and cons of their perceived situation. Culture, environment and personality all effect the process of weighing up the various components of current and future reality.

One way or the other people Decide. Decisions link the past to the future, between 'was' and 'will be' lies a decision influenced, but not dependent upon, having perceived a present situation, understood past patterns and envisioned plausible futures.

Finally, someone Acts. When an action happens the present becomes qualitatively different than the past and everyone, to one degree or another, lives in a new reality. Through free, self-conscious actions the universe is created.

6 Dimensions

Human existence happens in 6 independent yet interrelated dimensions just as physical existence seems to occur in 3 independent yet interrelated dimensions (up/down, left/right, and forward/backward). The first three dimensions happen more internally, invisibly within individuals, and the last three appear more externally, within the fabric of society. Movement through these 6 dimensions has created the world's spectacular array of societies.

Knowing occurs throughout Life. In their sleeping dreams, university studies or during walks in the gardens people travel a road of Knowing the world in which they live.

Everything is always Doing something. Breathing, sleeping, conducting an orchestra, building a building, thumb twiddling or jumping, the existent is committed to Doing.

The human life form, at least, also possesses a dimension of Being. Between the deeply profound and hollowly shallow lie infinite degrees of Being, of transparency to Mystery.

Societies are composed of people, things and mechanisms for interchange. These Economic foundations allow development, creativity and decline.

Within collections of people emerge organisational patterns, and ways to care for and protect the group. A society's Political structures give it recognisable form and sustaining stability.

Culture arises as common understandings and expressions provide consistent answers to life's perplexities. Through its Cultural expressions a society gives itself significance.

7 Revolutions

At every place and time in history change is occurring. At these points, the face of Mystery is most readily visible for the old is passing away, the new is emerging, pain occurs and creativity predominates. Today these revolutions are occurring in the fabric of global society in seven specific arenas.

> India launches a satellite, radios appear in remote villages; the Third World is electing to participate in the rapid social transformation which affected other nations in previous centuries.
>
> Whereas the majorities seem most dominant, the Minorities within each society continue provide the freshness and diversity which sparks new creativity.
>
> The massive global population explosion has dramatically increased the proportion of Youth in most nations. These Youth are actively seeking appropriate patterns of living.
>
> For possibly 5,000 years Women have been placed in a secondary and supporting role in social development. As Women assume equal responsibility with men, the effective human potential more than doubles.
>
> Within the structures of Education new methods, approaches and curriculum are being devised to prepare people of all ages for effective participation in the emerging global society.
>
> 'Doing business' has shifted from an individual family task into the hands of Multi-National Corporations. As a micro-cosm of the new global society, the new operational forms which emerge within the Multi-National Corporations provide models for new social patterns.
>
> Finally, social change in this part of the Twentieth Century is happening at the most Local Level. Leaders and experts all too often report on and document the past. The Local masses experimentally create the new forms in a world of rapid change.

8 Escapes

Living a self-conscious life in the face of the contemporary rapid change requires attentiveness, discipline and creativity beyond the normal human inclinations. At least 8 masterful forms of Escape have been devised for slipping out of this tension.

Some people close their eyes and hearts to the pain, suffering, chaos, joy and beauty of the world in which they live, thus Hiding themselves from reality. By living in an enclave, travelling only on high-speed thorough-fares and associating with people like themselves they create their own world.

Even knowing what real life is about, it remains possible to always choose the safe and easy way through even complex situations. By letting others risk first or continually doing things the same as before people Procrastinate having to make serious decisions.

The wonders of creative living also can be escaped by a Reduction of the fullness of time down to a self-selected part of the past in which a manageable life becomes simple.

Yet others avoid the need for significant engagement by resorting to Cynicism about the present and past. By failing to pay attention to the ongoing process of creativity they 'prove' to themselves that nothing significant ever really happens so why should they bother.

In fact, individuals can pass on the decisions required of them to others and maintain a full schedule just keeping busy following others' suggestions. This Floating maintains an image of history changing passion while avoiding active responsibility for shaping the future.

Although accepting responsibility for participating in the creative process of history, many opportunities are lost in Panic. Instead of freely deciding in the midst of wonder-filled ambiguity, actions often get based on worn-out response patterns or mis-directed passions.

Through Liberalism, many escape from the terrifying joy of encountering profound depths. The hustle and bustle of modern living often precludes the quiet reflection through which wonder emerges.

While emotions do comprise a vital part of human nature, Emotionalism -- giving final authority to feelings -- fosters a surface response to living and confuses the objectivity of living amid Mystery with the ebb and flow of emotions.

In every age, in every stage of the Universe's development, various processes have dominated the creative enterprise which has been occurring in specific dimensions. Major revolutionary change has arisen in certain arenas and these transformations have produced a backlash of escape from the new and the Unknown. The 5 Processes, 6 Dimensions, 7 Revolutions and 8 Escapes discussed previously describe these activities at the creative edge of the end of the 20th Century.

9 Vows

Every individual, finally, has to decide how to most responsibly live the life given to them, to avoid escaping from living with Mystery in every moment. After graduating from seminary, I made the following 9 vows to ensure a context of profound significant living.

a. Daily Office Primacy: To give first priority every day to worshipping.

b. Live Amid the Poor: To share with the suffering and the outcast by living where they live.

c. Two-suitcase Style: To live a simple life measured by being able to move all one's possessions in two suitcases.

d. One Global Mission: To work with others in a common task which is world-wide and history long.

e. All Time Assigned: To give all of my time to the task I had undertaken.

f. Equitable Monthly Stipend: To participate in an economic structure in which resources were equitably distributed.

g. Self-Supporting Units: To work as part of teams which were self-sufficient economically and spiritually.

h. Consensus Based Polity: To make decisions by consensus of all the people involved.

i. Centre Table Power: To allow all people the possibility of assuming leadership responsibility.

10 Principles

Ten principles of operation guided my acting out of the 9 vows. Together they held me faithful to my decisions.

a. Action Upon Models: By pre-considering the future, actions were a response to a vision and a plan.

b. Preferring Indirect Action: Rather than moving with head-on force, taking the circuitous route which releases creativity.

c. Collegially Checked Decisions: Understanding my own reduced perspective, checking with associated before taking action.

d. Totally Open Meetings: When discussing and planning to allow anyone interested to participate.

e. Without Seeking Publicity: In serving the Mystery, acting without calling attention to my activities.

f. First Responding Yes: Whatever the situation or demand, it must first be affirmed.

g. Global-Local Tension: To hold a balance between global responsibility and local needs.

h. Structurally Provided Care: Rather than 'doing good', to build patterns of action that ensure care.

i. Equity Based Operations: Rather than 'the same for everyone' to function whereby everyone has adequate opportunity.

j. No Invitations Extended: Decisions to participate in this way of life lie with the individuals themselves.

With these 10 principles and 9 vows, I set out on the next stage of the on-going journey of Life.

Brussels, Belgium
July, 1989

The Sizes of Things

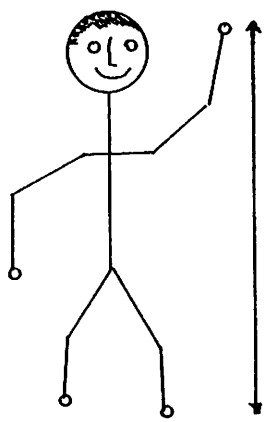
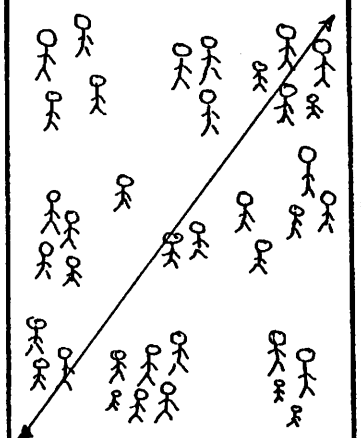
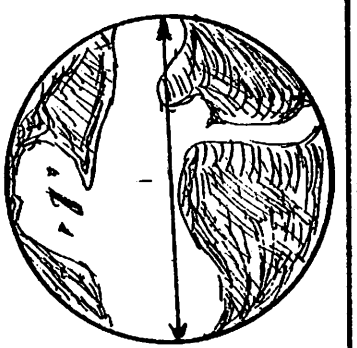
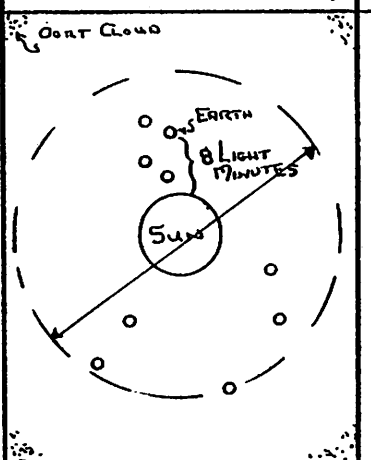
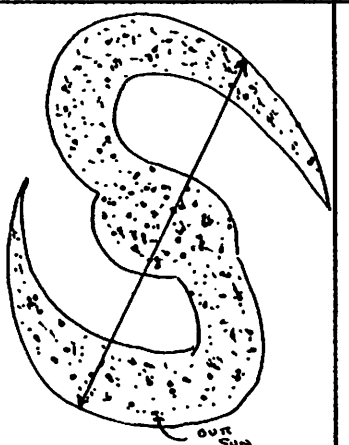
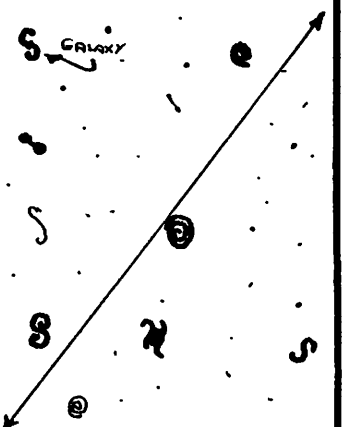
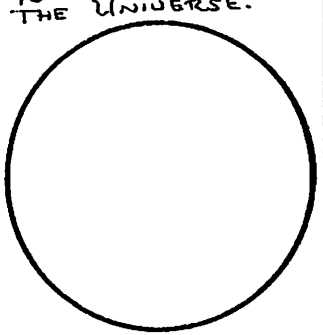
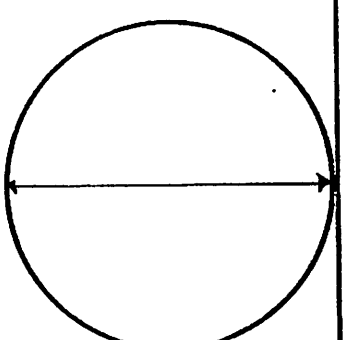
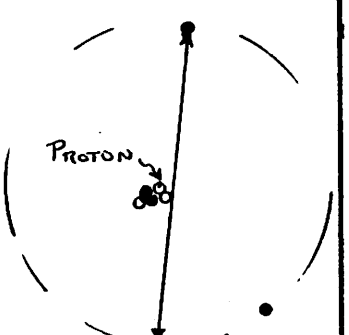
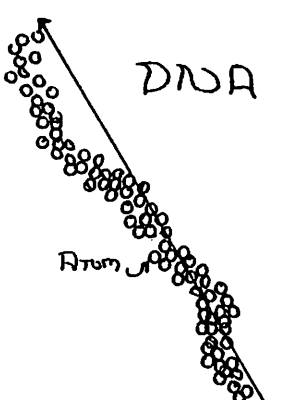
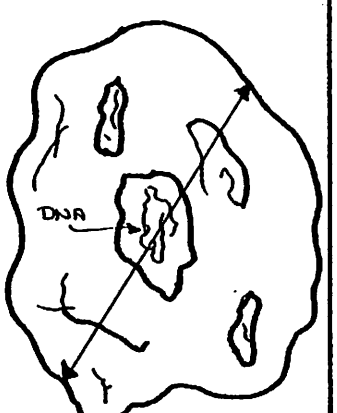
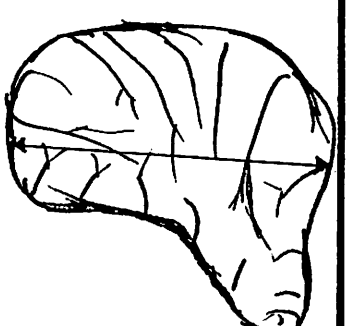
Upon arriving in India, I began to realise that many of the people with whom I was working lived out of radically different understandings of the size and shape of the space in which we lived. Especially, conversations about how computers worked and the essentials of nutrition caused looks of bewilderment. I thus devised the following chart as a talking piece for setting a perspective from which to view the space in which people live.

India
1984

THE SIZES OF THINGS

ACTUAL SIZE

1×10^{-2} m.
OR 1 cm.
ABOUT 3/8 INCH

A SELF	A VILLAGE	A PLANET	A SOLAR SYSTEM	A GALAXY	A UNIVERSE
					
2 m.	2 Km.	12,756 Km.	11.8 BILLION Km.	100,000 LIGHT YEARS	14 BILLION LIGHT YEARS
A NEUTRINO	A PROTON	AN ATOM	A MOLECULE	A CELL	A BRAIN
MAY ACCOUNT FOR 90% OF MASS OF THE UNIVERSE. 					
REST MASS OF PROTON $\times .0000000055$	1×10^{-16} m.	1×10^{-10} m.	1×10^{-6} m.	22×10^{-6} m	.25 m. OR 25×10^{-2} m.

Why a Bunny Brings Eggs

Background

Living in Egypt and India provided direct exposure to the plurality of serious options for profound celebration. This short piece was originally sent to my two nieces in Detroit. The concepts, however, provided the foundation for later work on The Global Calendar.

Did the Easter Bunny find you this year? He found us and left three chocolate eggs each. Did you ever wonder why a bunny delivers eggs at Easter? I've often thought it seemed like a funny story and this year I read an article in Cairo Today which explains how the myth came about.

The egg part started about 4,000 years ago in pharonic Egypt when the people held a spring festival in honour of the god Khons. They celebrated the coming of spring, the sprouting of new crops and the birth of new life in their domestic animals. During the merrymaking, they ate eggs since life comes from eggs even though they look dead like a rock.

The Hebrews, before they became monotheistic, also had a spring festival called Abib during which the shepherds sacrificed the firstborn of their flocks to the god of the moon. Later, during the time that the Hebrews were being ruled by the Egyptians, they adopted certain Egyptian customs, including eating hard-boiled eggs in their own spring festival. After their Exodus from Egypt, the meaning of their spring celebrations -- which often lasted from seven to nine days -- was reinterpreted. They still slaughtered the Easter lamb, but in the main, commemorated the departure from Egypt. Their celebrations included unleavened bread -- in memory of the fact that they left Egypt so quickly that they didn't have time to prepare any sourdough -- and eggs.

The Christians also had something to celebrate in the Spring. In 325 A.D., at the Council of Nicaea, the Church Fathers decided that Easter would always be celebrated on the First Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox. The people who celebrated Easter still used unleavened bread but reinterpreted it as a reminder of the broken body of Christ. They also ate eggs as their ancestors had done before.

As Christianity spread throughout Europe, some of the missionaries encountered the Germanic tribes. These people, too had a spring festival to hail the recuperating and invigorated sun which had so sorely weakened in the cold and darkness of wicked winter. They rejoiced in the lengthening days. They also performed special

rites designed to ensure the continued fertility of the soil and their cattle. Their spring goddess was called Ostara and her sacred animal was the rabbit. (By the way, did you know that if you put two rabbits in a cage, after 5 years of proper care and feeding, over 150,000,000 rabbits would be living in the cage.) So during Ostara's festival the people often baked small cakes in the shape of rabbits. The early missionaries often found it expedient to take in many of the pagan customs and use them in their new celebrations. So they ate rabbit shaped cakes and eggs, along with the bread.

The name Easter comes from the old English Saxon goddess of spring who was called Eostrae. Thus, when the early colonists in the United States got ready to celebrate in the spring time: they used the name from the Saxon, ate eggs and rabbit cakes like the Germans and retold the Christian story of the rebirth of hope and possibility even from the seemingly most final death.

Cairo, Egypt
April, 1987

The Contemporary Over-Againstness

About 40 years ago a grassroots reformer analyzed the global social situation of his time and concluded that the three main issues could be titled: Nationalism, Economic Imperialism and Racialism. Based on this analysis, he called on individuals and groups to identify and repudiate these tendencies within themselves and then to lead the world in change. Into the 1990's, what major social contradictions most require our individual and corporate attention? Today's world seems most plagued by: Fundamentalism, Hierarchy and the Debt Mindset.

Today every human being lives in a time of rampant social change unprecedented in all of human history. Values, beliefs, presuppositions and moral responses have all been called into question and various options conflict with each other on a daily basis in the lives of villagers, city dwellers, peasants and global leaders. The invention of new forms requires courage, patience and a willingness to err. In the face of the demand to create the new social forms, the tendency to reassert old patterns takes on an appealing face. In all of the major cultures -- Hindu, Christian, Muslim and Buddhist -- the rise of Fundamentalism, the reassertion of the primacy of the old ways, poses a major block to the creation of a human form for the global village in which we all live.

In the early stages of the evolution of human community, only a few educated people were able to read, write and make decisions. With an expansion of the education system, the extension of life expectancy and the shrinking of the global village through mass communication, increasing masses of people feel in a position to participate in the decisions which shape their future. The top down decision making structure, the Hierarchy where truth lies at the apex, blocks massive participation and cuts off the creativity emerging within the human family.

The Fundamentalist's two-story universe with a god in the heavens who passes on dictums to his priests on earth who in turn inform their subjects tends to support and encourage the Hierarchical approach to social organisation. However, this picture of the universe and the human community is being called into question on every front. The "God is Dead" slogan of the sixties now applies on a global level. Women, workers and minorities will no longer accept second-class citizenship. Whether in business management, political decisions or community organisation, a new set of relationships are emerging and along with them a new mythology.

In the economic dimension, the Debt Mindset where tomorrow's resources get spent for today's pleasures has put the world -- and every group and individual -- in an extremely vulnerable position. One estimate indicates that the 3rd World's debt, alone, totals over $1,000 Billion; yet few nations rich or poor have solved their debt problem. The Dept Mindset feeds off of the belief that finally somebody else will

solve the problems, so with borrowed money the present can be patched up and the future will take care of itself.

Fundamentalism, Hierarchy and the Debt Mindset offer stimulating challenges for people dedicated to inventing the social forms adequate for the 21st Century. Groups and individuals at all levels have the opportunity to identify these issues within themselves, to study the problems and to create new options, and then to train others and lead the global family into a new century.

Cairo, Egypt
May, 1987

The Way My Father Died

Everyday the sun goes down in the evening and night follows day. Sometimes storm clouds cover the western horizon and the beauty of the sunset goes unnoticed. Some days, work or pleasure consumes the evening hours and awareness of the sunset only comes after darkness has prevailed. Some evenings a person gets to see a beautiful sunset. This rare sight becomes a lifetime treasure.

Pre-Retirement

Robert Nelson Stover (often called Bob or Smokey) was born in the Ohio Oil Company's home office town of Findlay, Ohio just after Washington's Birthday in 1920. The first son of Nelson Turner Stover and Beuleah Copley Stover, Bob grew up in Robinson, Illinois, an oil refining town in southern Illinois. Like everyone, his dying began as soon as he was born; but the joys of childhood, of playing with his sister Pat and his brother Jim, concealed the darkness.

At the age of 12, while playing basketball with his friends, Bob accidentally hit another boy in the mouth with his elbow and the resulting infection put him in St. Luke's hospital in Chicago for many months. Overriding some suggestions to amputate, Bob and his mother elected to try to save the arm although no movement of the elbow would ever again be possible. Only decades later would he realize the devastating affect that the prolonged infection would have on his kidneys. In the hospital, and during the years that followed, Bob learned to care for himself even with the limited use of his right arm with its elbow permanently bent 90 degrees.

He learned to play ping pong with his rigid right elbow and when his opponent tried to take advantage of his limitation by hitting to the far left corner, beyond the right arm's reach, Bob would throw the paddle to his left hand and masterfully return the volley. No one was ever able to time the speed with which Bob's paddle changed hands -- and I never saw him drop the paddle. Bob never complained about his affliction and his decision to move ahead, despite obvious limitations, served as an inspiration to his brother and sister, friends and family.

Bob met and married Nina May Smith while attending Miami University at Oxford, Ohio. Their three children -- Frederick Nelson, Robert Brooks and Martha Jane (called Marty) -- were born in Robinson, Illinois, where Bob was working for the same company as his father. The family moved to Fort Wayne, Indiana, and later to East Lansing and Farmington, Michigan. Bob and his family were members of churches in every community and Bob served a variety of roles including: Usher,

Trustee and Chairman of the Finance and Property Committees. After his early retirement from Marathon Oil Company -- and upon receiving a pension and full medical coverage -- Bob and Nina moved their residence to Gatlinburg, Tennessee. Both became members of Our Savior's Lutheran Church and took part-time jobs in a shopping centre called "The Village".

Preparation

During the Christmas season of 1977, Bob became very ill and had to be hospitalised. Unbeknownst to him, his mother was also taken to a hospital in Findlay, Ohio, at about the same time. She was to die before the snow melted. Bob, however, was only beginning 10 years of dialysis. During that Christmas of '77, the doctors diagnosed his problem as complete failure of the kidneys -- likely precipitated by the long infection during the recuperation from his childhood basketball accident. Bob and Nina decided to initiate a program of machine dialysis which entailed making 3 trips each week to a clinic in Knoxville, about an hour from their home in Gatlinburg. A shunt was placed in Bob's arm to which the dialysis machine was attached and a new style of life began.

For several years they adjusted their schedule around the need to go to the dialysis clinic. Employers, friends and family, too, accommodated them realising that life, even on dialysis, is more precious than death. One day they heard about a new system of dialysis called C.A.P.D. This could be done in their own home, without expensive machinery and did not involve the risks of blood contamination. Although the doctors in Knoxville were sceptical of the new methods, Bob and Nina went to Vanderbilt University in Nashville to be trained in the new "at home" method. They returned to teach the dialysis clinic staff some of the finer points of C.A.P.D.

Four times each day, Bob would sit at his kitchen counter to change the fluids which performed the functions of his kidneys. In between exchanges, Bob kept up a full schedule of church activities, home repairs and worked at The Village as long as possible.

During these 10 years of dialysis, Bob knew that he was terminally ill and used the time to prepare, both spiritually and practically, for the death which was to come. He drafted and signed a "Living Will" authorising doctors to discontinue using artificial life support systems when recovery was no longer possible. He pre-arranged his funeral and began a time-payment plan to cover the expenses of cremation and internment. He included Nina and the children in the discussions and built a consensus about the way he wanted to die.

Timing

By the beginning of 1987, Bob's physical condition was deteriorating rapidly. He fell several times breaking his left arm and cutting himself in several places. In April, he resigned from the church's Property Committee of which he had been the chairman. He fell again in May and cut his head. Brooks and Marty visited him several times during the spring and they, too, recognised the rapid deterioration rate of his physical condition.

Bob had always handled all of the financial matters for his family but when the time came to pay the July bills he sat down with his wife and carefully explained the procedures for handling each of the necessary forms and files. He then watched as she wrote out all of the checks for the month of August, in advance. During the month, also, they discussed with the doctor the implications of discontinuing dialysis.

One Wednesday morning at the end of July Bob woke early and prayed. When Nina awoke, he told her that he had decided that the time had come to discontinue dialysis. She knew this was his true decision and they proceeded to try to decide when. His brother was on vacation during the last week of July, Bob's younger son was planning a family vacation beginning August 15th, and Marty was going on vacation in September. Bob didn't want his death to interfere with anybody's living and didn't think he could make it until October; so they decided he should go into the hospital on July 31st with the instructions to his doctor to discontinue dialysis.

On the morning of Friday the 31st, he awoke early as usual, cleaned off all of the papers on his side of the kitchen counter and walked out of his house knowing he would never ever return.

Dying

Doctors gave various estimates, up to three weeks, for the amount of time the Bob could survive after his final dialysis. Brooks and Marty drove from Detroit to the hospital in Knoxville on Saturday after Dad had called them to announce his decision. (Prior to leaving their homes in Michigan, they had a brief conversation with Brook's minister regarding what to expect; he basically told them to let Dad control the situation, which he did.) On Saturday, Dad was able to sit in his chair to have his evening "happy hour" drink. He requested, and had, individual conversations with his two younger children. During this quality time together, he made five requests to each of them -- later they realised that he had given, nearly word for word, the same instructions to each. These requests involved things he wanted them to do after he died, including making sure that Mom went back to church.

My wife, Elaine, and I arrived at the Knoxville airport from Cairo, Egypt, at 9:30 Sunday evening. Brooks and Marty met us at the terminal and briefed us on Dad's condition. We joked about the difficulties they had had getting in touch with us including "car to camel" phone calls initiated from the phone in Brook's G.M. car to my house in Egypt. We soberly affirmed the wisdom of Dad's decision to discontinue dialysis and our eyes dampened at the thought of his impending death. His sister arrived at the airport 30 minutes later and we all went to visit Daddy in the hospital where Mom was staying with him.

Brooks also reported that during the day before, while they were all talking, he alone was watching Dad's face. A beatific smile seemed to come across his face as though he were profoundly satisfied with life. This contentment would remain with him for the rest of his time.

Mom met us at the door to his room and asked me if I thought they had made the right decision -- to discontinue dialysis. "Yes", I replied. She was reassured; and smiled saying, "We had ten years to get ready for this, I'll have an easier time than you will." Brooks went into the room to tell Dad that we had arrived.

I went into the room by myself, Dad was no longer able to get out of bed. He just held my hand and we both cried without tears; he said finally, "It's O.K." Elaine and Pat, Dad's sister, each spent a few minutes with him and I went back in to say goodbye. He asked how long my trip had been and assured me that he would see me in the morning. Everyone, except Mom who had a bed beside his, left Dad in the hospital to spend the night in Gatlinburg. Having seen all of his family, Dad's condition slipped rapidly and he finally got to sleep about 3 a.m.

When Dad awoke in the morning, an oxygen tube was affixed to his nose to improve his breathing; he was having increasing difficulty moving even his hands but remained alert. Brooks, Elaine and I arrived back at the hospital about 9:30 and Dad asked if any mail had arrived. Mom assured him that we had left before the mail had come and he seemed relaxed. Marty and Pat arrived from Gatlinburg about 10:15 and Dad realised that the entire family was gathered. He seemed happy, content and prepared to face his death which was less than 2 hours away.

While some conversations went on among the family, we all listened for Dad whose words became increasingly quiet and simple. He asked for a cigarette, but Mom told him "No" explaining the danger of the oxygen. He asked for additional pain pills once and we finally decided to have an injection administered. About 11 he said it was time to do an exchange but we reminded him that such was no longer necessary; he relaxed even further. When he said "radishes", Mom knew he was thinking about lunch -- sandwiches with radishes.

Elaine and I remained with him while the others stepped out for coffee. Looking around the room, Dad asked if the others had gone for lunch. We assured him they had and he seemed satisfied. When everyone had returned he asked for the light over his head to be turned on. We continued a quiet conversation while his breathing became obviously slower and more difficult. Several times he tried with all his strength to fold his hands over his chest, but Mom and I usually had to help him.

Three times he quietly called, "Come on", as though beckoning death. His eyes rolled heavenward as if he was looking at that which human eyes cannot see. Finally he asked for the light over his bed to be turned out. Mom wet his lips with water from a drinking glass and Dad journeyed into his final rest in peace.

Mother held his still hands and said a brief prayer of thanksgiving for his life and his death. We all said our final goodbyes, then the tears began. Alone, and holding each other, we cried the tears of sorrow, for his passing, mixed with joy, for his courage even unto death.

In his death, as in his life, Dad taught not by what he said but by what he did. As Brooks and I carried Mom's luggage out to the car, we asked each other which would have such courage and strength to face death self-consciously. Upon returning to Gatlinburg, we had the chance to tell others -- who stopped by or phoned -- of the greatness of his death. Among ourselves, we had to admit that we had learned much in the past two days and had had the opportunity to see peace and tranquillity in a part of life (death) which few people ever witness.

As he had requested, Dad's body was cremated and the ashes interned near his home in Gatlinburg, TN. His spirit has gone to where his eyes were looking and the memories of his life and death remain in the hearts and minds of those who knew him.

Naples, Florida
August, 1987

Lessons My Father Taught Me

A wise old owl
Sat in an oak.
The more he saw
The less he spoke.
The less he spoke
The more he heard.
Why can't we be
More like that wise old bird?

-- a Birthday gift from my Mother,
author unknown

My father, Robert Nelson Stover, decided to die at the age of 67. On the occasion of his death, I had time to reflect on what he had taught me through his life and death. Dad didn't talk much but rather taught through his actions. Those who watched him learned; those who weren't paying attention missed out, and he didn't really care one way or the other.

I have summarised the 42 years of lessons which he gave to me into six simple reminders.

1. Get up in the morning.
2. Create quality time.
3. Make decisions and act.
4. Treat everyone as equal.
5. Pay the mission pledge first.
6. Take time to smell the roses.

These never came as sermons or demands, they were just what he did. Anyone wishing to join him on the road he trod was welcome and would receive encouragement and guidance; others, on other roads, would have to fend for themselves.

Getting up

I don't ever remember getting up before Dad. For many years, he had an automatic coffee pot which would produce a pot of hot coffee by 6 a.m. He would get up before anyone else, sit in the kitchen with his cup of hot coffee and a cigarette and brood. Sometimes he would make notes to himself but mostly he was just quiet.

The second quiet time of the day he called "happy hour". At the end of the day's work or at 5:00, whichever came last, he would make a martini for himself and whoever wished to join him. This time was understood to be for sitting, not discussing, announcing or reporting. Even in the busy days while Regional Manager for Marathon Oil, when he came home late he made time for quiet before eating dinner and getting into the affairs of the evening. As kids, we learned to respect this time.

I really didn't understand why he set this discipline for himself until I returned from spending four years with the Institute of Cultural Affairs in Australia. By then, I too had become a busy manager of sorts; spending days on the road and keeping a full schedule of appointments. I spent 10 days with Mom and Dad in their mountain home in Gatlinburg, Tn. Dad did what he always did; and while he didn't tell me how I should organise my time, he did let me live a day as he did. In 10 days I picked up a rhythm which he had perfected over fifty years. Since then, I, too, have found myself sustained by time.

Making Quality Time

In the final days of my father's life, my brother named for me one of the important realities about which my father knew -- "Quality Time". Everybody gets 24 hours each day, but for many this just passes with meaninglessness; Dad knew how to fill time with quality so that moments were filled with importance. In conversations, Dad did a lot of listening, asking questions which elicited responses requiring thoughtfulness. When he spoke, he told stories which pointed to the heart of the matter. "Gossip" came lowest on his priority level.

While working at the "The Village" as the gardener, he had conversations with shop owners, clerks and maintenance staff. Even in the hospital during his final days, he had conversations with the nurses and cleaning staff. After he died, those he had talked to came to us in the family to thank us for the opportunity they had had of being with and learning from Bob. While he thought he was just being friendly, people who met him counted their meetings as rare gifts.

When we were growing up, Dad would try to find at least one day each year when each one of us could "go to work" with him. We would get up early on a school vacation day and go with him on the various appointments and travels which the particular day held. Sometimes we would get to help load tanker trucks, sometimes we would watch mechanics fix cars and other times we would just sit while grown-ups talked. During the day's interludes we were one-on-one with Dad; a valuable opportunity and an indirect lesson in making Quality Time.

Decide and Act

In his life, marriage and death, Dad understood the need to make decisions about what to do, to act on these decisions and then to take responsibility for the consequences of what he did. He lived this style and expected no less from others. His doing came not as frantic activity but as deliberated action; and his thinking led not to abstraction but to involvement.

Soon after I got my drivers' licence, I went on a fishing trip with Dad, his work associates and their sons. One man had a big fibreglass boat which he pulled on a trailer behind his car. Since I was the youngest driver, I was allowed to bring the car and boat down from the campsite to the lake while the rest of the group walked to the boat launch. I had never before driven a car with a trailer and misjudged how much room I needed to allow to make the turn. I drove the car too close to the tree growing near the bend in the road when making a right hand turn and knocked the boat off of the trailer. I didn't know how much damage I had done and couldn't decide whether to run away, cry or admit what I did. Finally I realised that I had no alternative but to walk to the lake and seek the help of the others. Admitting what I had done, I got no beating or lecture; just the affirmation that I alone am responsible for my actions.

Treat Everyone as Equals

In his work and community activities, Dad had to deal with people on all levels of the social hierarchy from corporation executives to service station pump attendants. When I visited any of these people with Dad, or when he talked about them, I never got the sense that he thought himself above, or below, anyone. He could look anyone in the eye, listen to anyone and heed their advice.

This applied to social groupings as well as to individuals. In the early 1970's, while he was in the real estate department of Marathon in Detroit, Dad was designated as the company's representative to the Black Businessmen's Association. He considered it an honour for he and Mother to attend the group's functions at a time when many of his associates would have considered the task well beneath their dignity.

Mission Pledge First

Mostly Dad taught by his actions but one conversation, in particular, stayed with me for years. Early one morning while Dad had his coffee and I my tea, we were discussing Dad's activities in his church and in particular the finances, for which he

was responsible. He was telling me that although they had income a little less than their budget, at least the congregation's allotment to the foreign mission budget of the denomination was current and up to date. This, he informed me, was a principle to which he always urged the churches on whose boards he sat, "Pay the mission pledge first."

He went on to assure me that, in his experience, if at the end of the month or year the congregation had a few bills due for utilities or parsonage repair someone could always be found to make a special contribution. However, he continued, if the mission pledge hadn't been met, then donors both rich and poor would feel that the congregation as a whole was shirking its duty. They would be reluctant to make a special contribution and would, furthermore, lose some of their confidence in the congregation as a whole.

I've tried to remember this tested wisdom both in making my own family budgets and when designing the budgets and financial strategies of the organisation for which I work.

Stop and Smell the Roses

Dad lived life as a businessman, as a professional salesman and manager; but he also took time to stop and smell the roses. In our houses in East Lansing and Farmington, Dad started and cultivated sizeable rose gardens. During the summer, these flowers decorated our house and were available for us boys to take to our girlfriends. After his retirement, Dad took a job as maintenance man and gardener for The Village, a shopping centre in Gatlinburg, Tn.

Dad never said much about his roses, he just cared for them. As I grew older I came to understand that in the hustle and bustle of life and business in the Twentieth Century a person has to find ways to stop and smell the roses.

A corollary to smelling the roses involved taking care of the femininity of one's wife. During my later years in high school, Dad made a point of taking me with him while doing his Christmas shopping for Mom. In particular, he wanted me to go with him into the lingerie department of the women's clothing store to buy a womanly surprise for Mom. As usual, no lectures just "come along you might learn something worthwhile". I did.

Naples, Florida
August, 1987

Personal Reflections

on

Experiencing My Father's Death

There's bound to be a morning after,
If we can hold on through the night.
-- Posiden Adventure

Since the Christmas of 1975 when I visited my father in the hospital, I knew that he was nearing the end of a fruitful life. His kidneys had failed and he would live the rest of his life on dialysis. Elaine and I visited him in Gatlinburg several times before we left for India in 1981 and returned to the States to visit in April of 1983, August of 1984 and Christmas of 1985. During these visits, he and I openly discussed the fact that he would die and how he wanted his funeral to be arranged. Thus, his death came as neither a surprise or a shock to any of us.

Saturday, 1st August, 1987, dawned like any other Saturday in the Institute of Cultural Affairs' human development project in Bayad el Arab, Arab Republic of Egypt. Elaine had gone north to Tanta on a consultancy and the house was preparing for a week of discontinuity. In the morning, I went shopping for groceries with Ramadan; he spoke little English and I spoke little Arabic but between us we bought over LE 100 worth of groceries and returned to Bayad. After the weekly house meeting on the hot Saturday afternoon, I returned to my room to read a book. Although I thought of other things to do I just laid on my bed and read a novel. All of the rest of the staff left for Cairo or their homes in Beni Suef. For dinner I opened a small can of tuna which I shared with the guard, the cats got the juice.

That evening, Elaine came into the room at 9:30, although I had not expected her until Sunday. Looking white as a sheet, she simply greeted me with, "We're going to Knoxville." Sitting next to me on the bed, she added a few sketchy details of my father's decision to stop dialysis and we both, then, began a hasty packing process for a trip across the oceans. Filling one suitcase each with whatever seemed appropriate, we locked our valuable things in the cupboard and prepared to return to Cairo. I had not yet completed the finance report for Anne to take to Brussels but showed her husband where the relevant data was kept and told him to figure out the details. We left Bayad at about 10:30 and arrived in Cairo just after 2:00 a.m., having stopped en route to repair a flat tire. We stayed at the flat in Maadi long enough to change clothes before heading to the airport.

After Elaine heard of my father's condition at 6 p.m., she immediately set in motion the procedures for getting us on TWA's flight to New York via Paris. She had

been told to arrive at the Cairo airport at 3:00 and we walked through the doors about 5 minutes early. Over the next 2 hours we hassled the ticket counter to get a ticket credited to our VISA card and then awaited the flight's departure to see if our wait-listed position would be seated. We boarded the flight just before 6 a.m. and relaxed during the 5 hour flight to Paris. By the time we arrived in New York we had crossed six time zones.

On the planes we mostly ate and tried to relax. The shortness of the flights made long sleeps impossible in the crowded conditions. I did try to make some lists of things to do in Gatlinburg. Among other things, I did want to get an owl to go into our newly built shadow box in Bayad. When I was a young boy, I would often sit on my grandfather's knee and look at a picture book of animals, my favourite was the great horned owl and I wanted a statue to remind me of my old friend.

In the Paris airport we changed airplanes then sat on board for 2 hours while the agents organised seating on the highly overbooked flight. This delay, and the crowd in the New York airport which delayed our baggage for 45 minutes, caused us to miss our original flight to Knoxville but the ticket agent was quite helpful and we were rebooked via Piedmont. Tired but thankful, we arrived in Knoxville at 9:30 p.m. Sunday night and were met by Brooks and Marty.

The four of us sat in a vacant departure lounge and discussed the events of the past 48 hours. Laughs interspersed with choked throats as we discussed Dad's condition and the complexities of getting out of work and travelling around the world to get to Knoxville. Brooks observed that Dad had deteriorated noticeably since they had arrived the night before and that both he and Marty had had quality time with Dad and had gotten their final instructions, which they would convey to me (but never did in any specificity). Dad's sister, Pat, was scheduled to arrive within 20 minutes and we agreed to wait for her then go to the hospital before heading for Gatlinburg and a much needed night's rest. While Brooks briefed Pat on the situation, I went to get our luggage and was to meet the others at the exit. During the moments alone, I stretched my muscles, waited and brooded; the first of many tears came in brief bursts as I prepared for what was to come.

Brooks drove us to the hospital in Mom's car and we went up to the eighth floor where Dad was resting in the bed from which he would never get up. Mom met us in the hall and asked if the right decision had been made; we all affirmed what we had already expected. Brooks went into Dad's room first to tell him that we had come, then I went in. Dad took my hand but we said nothing. His face winced in a kind of a tearless cry, so did I. After a few minutes he let go of my hand and simply said, "It's OK." I left the room in silence and both Elaine and Pat had a chance to talk with Dad. I then went back into the room and both Dad and I were able to talk. He asked how long I had been travelling. I told him that I had been up for about 40 hours and he recommended that I get some sleep. He assured me

that he'd see me in the morning and we again shook hands. Mom stayed with Dad, who was restless until 3 a.m., and the rest of us returned to Gatlinburg.

Three condominiums had been arranged for the various people attending the funeral and Elaine and I checked into what we later came to call the Riccoco Suite because of the gaudy furniture and fixtures and the massive amount of nick-knacks and things which filled the small condo. Since the condo had two bathrooms, we took baths at the same time and then laid down to sleep at about 1 a.m. For the next two hours I laid in the bed crying; if I laid on my back, my ears got water in them, if I laid on my stomach, the sheet got wet.

During our life together, Dad and I really never talked much; not that we didn't communicate, we just didn't talk. Conversations consisted of stories and shared experiences with well chosen words to convey the feelings and emotions which were underlying; and our time together often included a lot of meaningful silence. When we went places together, Dad taught by pointing out that which was, to him, significant. As I lay in bed on Dad's last night alive, it seemed as though we were communicating. The same expression, the kind of winced mouth, which we had shared in his hospital room came across my face as the tears came and I recalled the high and low points of life with my Dad. Over the years, we had kept no secrets and I don't think either of us thought we had any unfinished business; but on this night we rehearsed that which had been significant. I apologised, again, for selling the stamp collection with his National Parks series in it and shared with him, again, friends I had met and places I had been; all of which I had done previously by letter and personally during my visits to Gatlinburg. Finally, I began to form in my mind the important lessons which Dad had taught me over our 42 years together. I checked my watch several times and suspect that I got to sleep about 3 a.m. -- the same time Dad did.

I usually get up early in the mornings and make tea for Elaine and myself; on Monday I got up about 6 and found some instant tea and sugar in the condo's kitchen. As I sat in the cluttered living room drinking my tea, I made notes to myself on the lessons which my father had taught me. While cleaning up the dishes I noticed first one, then two, small owl statutes sitting among the figurines on the windowsill. Elaine and I both got dressed and met Brooks in Mom's condo for breakfast. We wanted to get to the hospital as soon as possible so we left about 8:30.

We arrived at the hospital in Knoxville and talked briefly with Dad on his last morning. I stood, or sat, on his left side for the rest of his life. Elaine sat near his head on his right side with mother. Dad died near the hour of the crucifixion having spent just 3 days in the hospital. Mother said the benediction and we all cried and hugged each other. All of us then adjourned to the waiting room. We shared together some of our own individual trials and rehearsed how well Dad had

faced life's final challenge. Brooks and I removed Mom and Dad's things from the room in which the body lay and took them to the car. As the conversation continued in the waiting room, the nurses brought a pot of coffee and outside the sky clouded over and the rains began. In the other room, the nurses removed the jewellery from Dad's body and brought the things to Mom; most she kept but she gave the Timex watch to me. Out of the corner of my eye I saw the nurses wheel Dad's body from the room and I knew there was nothing left to do at the hospital.

By about 3 o'clock we returned to Gatlinburg. One of the first phone calls we received came from Edith Byers of the ICA's staff in Egypt. I had a chance to tell her of the greatness of Dad's death. As the day progressed most of the others, too, had a chance on the phone to tell of the courage they had witnessed during the day. The neighbours brought food for dinner and we sat down to eat. We talked through the plan for the coming days including the timing of the memorial service and the internment ceremony. Brooks would take responsibility for organising the internment, I would coordinate the memorial service with the pastor and Marty would insure that the reception was smooth. After a quiet meal we agreed to go to bed early.

I went to sleep by about 9:30 and awoke at about 3. During the quiet of the night I had more tears and two kinds of smiles; one like the night before and another more like a big grin. Several kinds of resolves emerged during the night including the decision to remain silent on the yearly anniversary of Dad's death. The Hindus honour death anniversaries and since Dad and I communicated best in silence, I chose this mode of honour. I also formulated the decision to write a paper on "The Way my Father Died" and had conceived the introductory poetry. It seemed as though my father was in a different place and/or that the conversations were going on with two realities. The final part of my wakeful-sleep involved saying thank you. I first got a thank you said to God for the life and death of my father; and then remembered to say thank you to Jesus also.

After a few hours, I got out of bed and sat in the living room. During this time I tried to envision the days ahead. I knew that I couldn't just jump in an airplane and return to Egypt. Something, I realised, had happened to me over the past few days and I didn't want to rush. Actually, I thought that I would like to stay in Gatlinburg until Mom's birthday and then go to Toronto to see the Stanfields. With Dad in the silence of the night, I had reflected on all of my past; now it seemed that all of my future stood open before me. Just before the sun came up on Tuesday, I knew that I knew all that I needed to know to finish my future. As I looked over my shoulder, I saw that the sun had risen in the East. I dressed and went down to Mom's flat to make some good tea for Elaine.

When I got down the ramp to my mother's condominium, she was sitting at the kitchen counter with her morning coffee, just as she and dad had done throughout

the years. I told her that I wanted to ask her a question and she said she was glad to listen. As I stood in the living room I sorta cried for several minutes before I could say what I wanted to say. It seemed that if she said "No" all of the reality of the past three hours would have been called into question. I don't know what she must have thought the question was but she patiently waited until I was able to get the courage to ask. I finally did ask if we could stay until her birthday (15th August) and she said "Yes"; I took tea up to Elaine.

One by one the rest of the family woke up and had breakfast. I finally got ahold of the pastor and he agreed to come to the house at 11. Brooks left for Knoxville at about 10 to pick up his wife who, in fact, arrived somewhat later. Since the pastor was new I was afraid that he might not know much about the kind of man my father was and I was prepared to share with him my list of lessons which I had written the previous morning. In case I wanted to talk to the pastor in private, I had also slightly cleaned up the Riccoco Suite by replacing the 14 bug shaped ashtrays on the coffee table with two small owls which I had found amidst the myriads of figurines on the kitchen window sill. The pastor led a conversation in which he helped us all talk about the greatness of Dad's life and I realised that I had nothing else to add.

After the pastor left and we had lunch, the time approached for Mom to go to complete the final arrangements with the mausoleum. As Brooks wasn't yet back with his wife, I went along with Mom and Marty. We saw where Dad (and eventually Mom) would be interred; the director recommended that we move Dad from the upper left hand corner of the wall of boxes to the place just above the door. We all agreed and I thought that Dad would have liked the place near the people. As the director read through the forms he had Dad's name as Robert N. Stover, I suggested the it be in the long form Robert Nelson Stover. We all agreed that some confusion could exist with Brooks who is Robert B. Stover; privately I've always been sensitive and proud of being the third of the Nelson Stovers.

During the later part of the afternoon, I had a brief conversation with my brother concerning the restructuring of our respective organisations. I asked him to keep available some time in August with the thought that he might address our global council on the methods and guidelines for restructuring a global organisation. He was glad to be of assistance. Also, while sitting in the living room I chanced to find the bound copy of my thesis which I wrote to graduate from seminary. Over the next few weeks I would get the opportunity to completely re-read the document and find it quite relevant to the current questioning our Order is doing.

The pastor had brought us the hymnal, a concordance, and the Bible which he planned to use for the service. During the afternoon I looked up the passage which I had decided upon in the wakefulness of the previous night. I showed the others and they agreed. Brooks and Carol arrived and Dad's brother, Jim, came just

before dinner. During the afternoon we all sat in the living room of Mom's condo and talked about our separate and gathered past experiences. We all learned a lot; I told Mom that Elaine and I had met in the chapel and kissed before our wedding. Pat recounted how Dad had hurt his arm at the age of 12 -- I always thought he had been older when the accident happened -- and how his courage inspired others. With the passage of time and the arrival of the new people at the table, the evening mood was jovial. Jim and Pat shared stories of Dad's childhood and we all recalled the fun times we had together. After dinner we all retired to our various condominiums between 9 and 10.

I went to bed about 10 but by soon after midnight I was back awake for what was to become one of the most joyous experiences of my life. For about 3 hours I lay in bed and looked at my watch periodically. I knew that my father had lived a full, complete and perfect life and I was pleased. Furthermore, I came to realize that my life, too, was received. I didn't have very many more wincing smiles, I remembered the times I had winked at Joe Mathews and imagined that smiling and winking all had to do with acknowledging the Mystery. Once and a while as the hours passed on I felt as though my chest were being opened and my insides bathed in light. I don't now remember that the hours were filled with content as much as they were with feeling. By 3 o'clock I felt like I had no more problems, pains or anxieties; I got up and went into the living room.

I sat in an easy chair with a nice footstool and the dialogue with the Mystery continued. I tried to envision the next two days and wanted to do something special for everybody. I thought of going shopping for owls and giving one to everybody at the luncheon which was to follow the internment service on Thursday. I tried to conceive of holding a birthday party for Mom and planned going to Toronto to talk with Stanfield about the things which I was experiencing. I resolved to take communion, but not in Gatlinburg. Mostly I paid attention to my breathing and let thoughts come as they might, few had to do with the past as I was walking into the future some of which would go the way I envisioned, some would not.

I considered the Church and my relationship to it. I remembered Jesus' question to his disciples asking them why they couldn't stay awake while he prayed in the garden. I remembered how my own father had asked if the others were out for lunch and realised that Elaine and I alone had stayed present to his final hours. I wondered if the weakness of the Church lay just at this point, finally all of the gospel writers had fallen asleep just before death. I knew that having watched the final hours of my father's life had given me great courage. I also considered the other major religions to discern their primary weaknesses. Building on the conversation with my brother, I built a schema of the seven primary pathways to the Mystery: Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Shinto, Aboriginal, Hard-Knocks, and Hindu. I tried to consider the gifts and shortcomings of each.

By the time the sun rose in the East, I felt as happy and contented as I had ever felt. I knew that I was tired, weak, and spiritually raw and only hoped that no one would push me for I knew I was as defenceless as a newborn child. As I got up from my chair I walked around the room, alone, with a giant smile on my face saying, "Amazing". I even started quietly singing "Amazing Grace". Just before I was ready to get dressed, I chanced to look in the fireplace; back in the darkness of the far corner were 3 owls; finding these would be the first of a series of strange coincidences which I'd encounter in the day ahead.

As I dressed, I noticed that my watch was 3 minutes ahead of the watch my father had used; I'd always thought my father was ahead of me but now I was preceding him into the temporal future. I strode joyfully down the sidewalk to Mom's and saw that she was sitting at the kitchen counter in the dark. She turned on the lights when I arrived and I made tea to take up to Elaine. She and I talked as the others arose and ate breakfast. Mother got up and opened the glass doors onto the patio and the fresh morning breeze filled the house for the first time since the we arrived.

During the morning I was especially sensitive to what was going on among the people present. I felt as though I was in an entirely different universe and that likewise others, whether they realised it or not. On Monday and Tuesday, everybody had stayed inside most of the time with all of the doors closed. Today people were sitting in the porch. Before people had stayed close together in one conversation, now groups were forming in different places talking about different things.

While I participated in various conversations, within myself I perceived three threads of occurrences: many comments and events seemed funny to me, almost like puns with double meanings; often roles were reversed (women were concerned about money and men about sensitivities, etc.); and many statements or happenings took on symbolic meanings for me which were missed by many. Marty and Klaus, the gardener, walked into the condo with what they called the Stone Cake -- I thought of the stone which had been rolled away. Mother and Pat were recalling that I was born 9 months before my cousin Connie -- I remembered scriptural births separated by 9 months. After breakfast, I returned to the Riccoco suite and took a bath, the first since Dad died, and thought of the washing away of the old to prepare for the new life ahead.

During the morning, I took a walk around the entire outside of the condominium complex; I was weak and tired, I knew, and often had to hold on to railings along the steeper walks. In the garden outside Mom's condo, I saw two printed signs for animals which struck me as funny, I pointed these out to Elaine and we both chuckled. Brooks drove me to the church to talk with the pastor about the details of the service; I thought it was ironic that the pastor talked about the administrative details and Brooks talked about the spiritual matters. The conversation over lunch,

also, seemed filled with the irony of reversed roles. The women were talking about the cost of things, the men were talking about doing service. Time and time again things seemed backwards and this struck me as funny and I chuckled inwardly and looked at Elaine to see if she, too, noticed the incongruities -- she seemed to.

As I write this reflection now, nearly a month later, I realize that by Wednesday lunch I had been awake for about 90 hours since Saturday morning and had slept less than 14 during the same time span (about 23 hours less sleep than I would normally have for that much wakefulness). I remember few details of Wednesday afternoon and Thursday, I slept all of Friday and by Saturday I had regained much of my strength.

After lunch I know that I could not quite figure out what I really needed to do at either the memorial service or the lunch after the internment. I was so happy that I just wanted to go to bed with my wife but this didn't appropriate. What did happen was even less appropriate and certainly unforseen. Elaine says I laid down briefly for a nap then got up and dressed. I thought that I got into a brief disagreement with my mother -- but now I'm not certain. Apparently I was walking around in the parking lot of the condo talking nonsense and Elaine and Brooks called an ambulance to take me to a hospital. At the time, I think I thought the ambulance ride was a dream -- it wasn't. As I lay on a bed in the emergency room of the hospital I envisioned that I was trying to decide how many points were on the letter "Z" in the scrabble board and/or where to move the letter which had no points. Everything was confused. I finally calmed down and sat in a chair with Elaine; we shared a lemonade. From that time on I had but one interest, to walk out of the hospital.

I was feeling cold and the hospital seemed to take a long time to deal with me. Eventually, a psychiatrist came and I was moved into a small room. Elaine and I looked like two little Indians wrapped in white shawls. I tried to assure Brooks that things were OK and talked with both the psychiatrist and a doctor. Later I was moved into a bed room and given some sleeping pills. I didn't really sleep soundly but the eventfulness of the past three nights subsided.

On Thursday I ate a little bit of food and went to the shower on my own. Mostly I lay in bed restless. As the day progressed my thinking became less and less controllable and by nightfall I apparently was getting violent. The psychiatrist called the police and asked to have me handcuffed. I was afraid of being shot by the police who were armed and didn't want to be drugged (the last medication which my father got was an injection to ease the pain in his final hours). In fact, I was given a shot of medicine to put me to sleep. Before I did go to sleep, I was unhandcuffed and walked to a police car which took me to a psychiatric hospital. The car had a big wire mesh between my seat and the two police.

If I did wake up on Friday, I remember nothing. As I lay in bed on Saturday, a friendly man came in and introduced himself as Dr. Cook. He said we had met the day before but I didn't remember it. I asked him to write his name down so I'd remember it and he did. He later checked with my wife and found that I could never recall people's names. I was in a cell like room with only a built in bed. In the adjoining lounge were several chairs and I went out for breakfast. I was invited to take a shower which I did. As I sat reading the paper I started to wonder how to tell the difference between me and the other people in the same ward. By mid-morning I was taken out into the larger ward of the hospital and given permission to do as I pleased; with the instructions that one of the case workers would check on me every 15 minutes.

I called home to Elaine and discovered that the Stanfields were coming soon and all of them came to visit me in the hospital waiting room. By the end of the conversations, I was feeling tired and was glad they came and relieved that they only stayed a few hours. After dinner the psychiatrist wanted to talk to me. We talked for awhile and he gave me a 500-question MMPI test to take. I returned to my cell, changed into my pyjamas and went to bed. I slept all night and woke up the next day refreshed and strengthened. Elaine and the Stanfields came on Sunday for a picnic and we spent all of Sunday afternoon in the yard eating and talking. I had dinner in the main eating hall and had another conversation with the doctor. Soon after I returned to my bedroom, Dr. Cook came in and indicated that I could move out of the special care unit. By 10 p.m. I had moved to a nice double room with a big teenager which I had met at the pool table earlier in the day. I had a private bathroom, closet and washbasin and a window with a nice view of the swimming pool.

I was released on Monday afternoon and spent the next few days at the Gerding's house with Elaine and the Stanfields. We planned to drive to Toronto but the psychiatrist advised that we fly. By Friday morning I was feeling quite stronger and in control but was glad that he had suggested that we not drive. We spent 2 weeks in Toronto and by the end of this time I felt completely back to my normal energy level; though clear that I was living in a new kind of reality -- as yet unnamed.

Naples, Florida
September, 1987

On Being Prepared

When I was in the fifth grade, we were assigned to prepare a report on the uses of per cent. Each person was supposed to look in newspapers, magazines, on cereal boxes or wherever to find 100 different examples of the use of per cent. You know, like Rice Krispies contains 50% of a child's supply of iron. On the day before the assignment was due, I only had about 50 examples and couldn't figure out any way to find the rest before going to school the next day. So I decided to mount what I had on coloured paper in a neat notebook, with editorial comments interspersed throughout. On the last page, I remember, I put a newspaper ad for a funeral home with the comment, "But 100% of the people end up here." As I recall, I got an A on the project along with some comment from the teacher appreciating the collection's thoughtfulness.

Twelve years later, when I was in seminary, we were assigned to do a report on people's relationship to their own death. I prepared a questionnaire which contained a fifty-year timeline divided into 10-year segments. Each person was asked to write where they would be living and what their main activity would be in each of the five time blocks. I asked my father to give copies to some people in his office and I passed some out to various businessmen I knew in Chicago. Most of the men who answered the questionnaire were between 45 and 55 years old. I forget most of what I wrote in the report; but I have never forgotten that less than 1/3 of the people indicated that they would die. Most just put "Retirement, retirement, retirement" in the last three boxes. I was amazed then, and still am, at how much difficulty most people have facing their own death.

As you may know, my father decided to die in early August. That event, combined with my wife's decision to go into a war zone in Eritrea have made the reality of death a constant companion of mine for the last 3 months.

I've been giving reflections at weekly feast for the last 19 years, I don't think I've ever given one on facing one's death, but I'd like to try tonight. My comments fall in three arenas: 1) about deciding to die, 2) regarding preparing to die and 3) concerning the power which comes from affirming death.

Ten years ago, doctors discovered that my father's kidneys were no longer functioning. He was put on dialysis and thus had to rely on a machine to clean his blood. This is a disease for which there is no cure and my father knew with acute clarity that his days were numbered. For nearly ten years, he lived a productive and happy life though there were many things he could not do. Since the first of this year his overall physical condition deteriorated rapidly and by May he was barely able to walk. On the last Wednesday in July he told my mother that he had

decided to stop dialysis; that is to quit living. He called by brother on Thursday and told him what he had decided. On Friday, he went into the hospital and told the doctor to issue orders that no machines were to be used to prolong his life. I arrived at his bedside on Sunday night and he died at noon on Monday.

My father wasn't angry, mad, in despair or in any way unhappy. He was in peace with himself and with all of life; he just knew that for him life was over. As I've talked with other people about my father's death, I know of numerous others who, like my father, have participated in the decision about the timing of their death. 100% of us in this room are going to die; and every day, more or less consciously, each of us must decide to live or to die -- neither choice is either good or bad but it is a choice.

Point number two. I consider it a great privilege, and experienced a great joy, to participate in the death of my father. He was quite conscious at nine o'clock on Monday morning, he wanted to know if any mail had come; by noon he was dead. His breath became slower, his eyes focused on infinity, a smile came to his face and his consciousness turned inward; then there was nothingness.

I believe that my father was very fortunate in that he had ten years to get ready for his final act of living. And in his final act he taught me, and my brother and sister and wife, a few important things.

Some of us in the Order have been doing breathing exercises where we practice sitting still for 15 to 30 minutes just paying attention to our breathing. This, is very important, for in the end, breath will be all you have. My father got up early every day and just sat quietly by himself; he was prepared for the final aloneness and thus found a friend where many encounter only fear.

On the practical side, my father had thought through the details of his funeral and burial in advance, all arrangements were made in writing and most of the bills were paid. This meant that those of us who were left could celebrate his life and death, could experience the presence of the Mystery, without being burdened by practics. I hope to do these things for myself this year and would invite and encourage each of you to do the same. Maybe the each Primary Unit should make a file folder of individuals' funeral plans and wills -- then when the Mystery knocks people could say "Hello" with greater confidence.

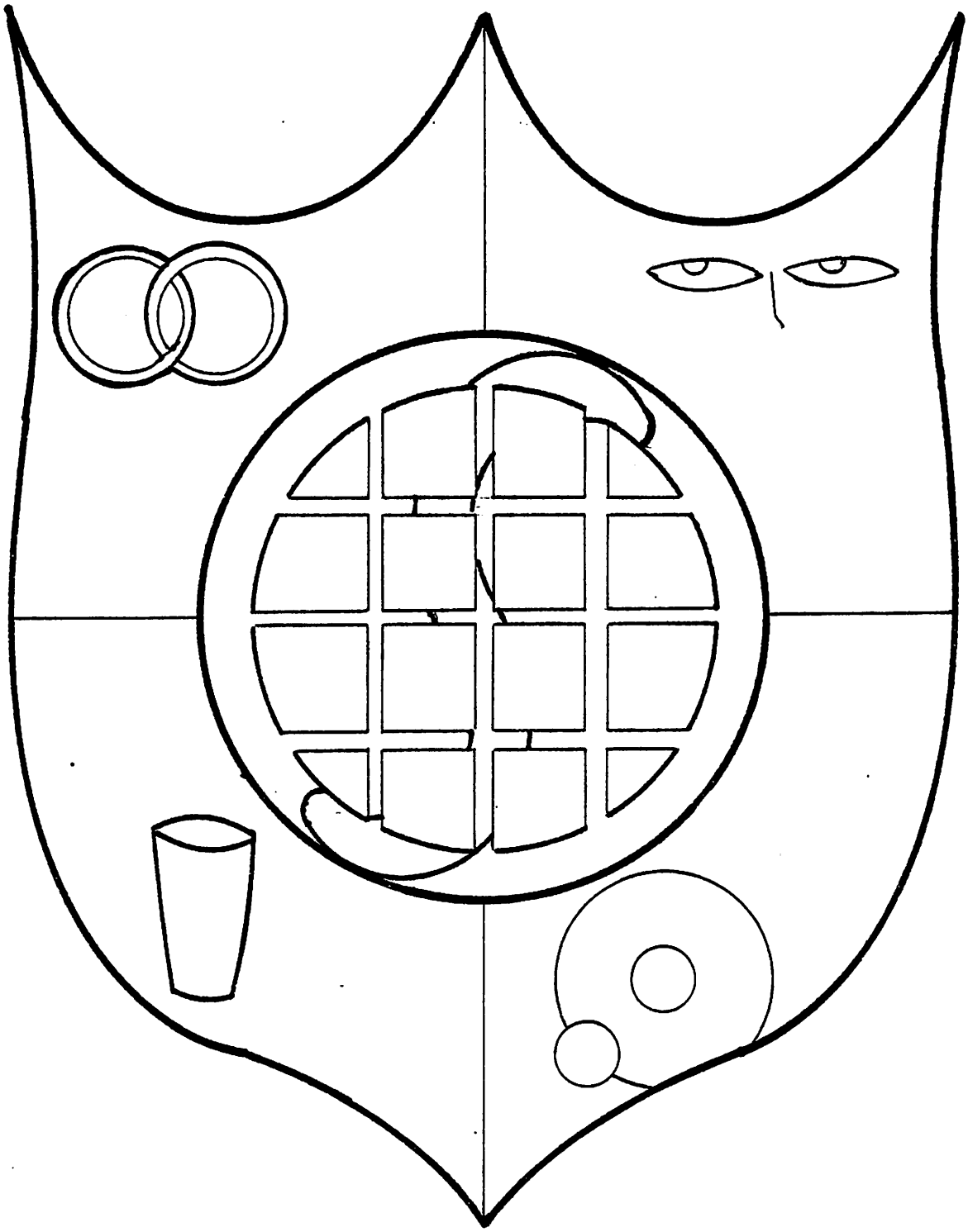
Last point. "So why is this important to me the healthy and living," you may be asking. Simply put, the person who has no fear of death can not be beaten in life. One sage expressed the same thing, "If you keep your spirit correct from morning to night, accustomed to the idea of death and resolved on death, and consider yourself as a dead body, thus becoming one with the Way of the warrior, you can pass through life with no possibility of failure and perform your office properly."

Ponder this carefully. Most people get in trouble, start making mistakes, begin hurting others, just at the point where their own life and well-being become threatened. A person afraid of death will do anything to avoid the inescapable pain of the unknown; and at this point they loose all destinal creativity and personal freedom.

All I really have to say is, "Don't be afraid of death."

Witness given
in Brussels, Belgium
October, 1987

The E.K. & F.N. Stover Family Symbol



The E.K. & F.N. Stover Family Symbol

The Symbol's Creation

Since leaving India in 1986, Elaine and I have agreed that we needed a new family symbol; this version represents an evolution in our family's symbol. On November 15, 1987, I visited the battlefield at Waterloo, Belgium. I was impressed by the strategy, courage and patience which the Duke of Wellington demonstrated in defeating the French armies under Napoleon. Upon returning home, Elaine called from Cairo to say that her return was being delayed by a week and that she had good prospects for future consultancies. I slept fairly well for the first half of that night and at 5:30, just before the alarm went off, a new version of our family symbol came to me in a dream. I got out of bed and sketched the symbol, the next day I purchased a set of French curves and drew a refined edition.

The Primary Reality

The Universe Within

Even in the earliest versions of our family symbol, the central position has been held by a yellow S-curve. The Milky Way Galaxy in which our family lives has this shape and so does the first letter of our common name. As the stars of the Milky Way can be seen anywhere on a clear dark night, the heart of our symbol is with us wherever we go.

Earlier symbols had the world superimposed over the galaxy, in this rendition the yellow light shines through. So in our own lives, the internal dimension -- the Universe Within -- has been strengthened and polished so that others who encounter us can experience its warmth within themselves.

The External World

During the first 20 years of our family, we have travelled around the world; we have met its diverse people face to face. We live and learn from this sociological reality. The six-coloured grid reminds us of the uniquenesses of the people with whom we share this globe. The number of sections of each colour represents the approximate distribution of the 4 billion people into the six groups. The yellow orientals, the blacks, the brown Indians, the tan people of the deserts, the northern whites and

the red skinned native Americans contribute unique perspectives on the appropriate ways to live and work together. Some of these we have learned to appreciate; and our family's primary task centres around helping all people to live together by learning from each other. Often we, ourselves, become the conduit for channelling the learning of one people to another.

The Yin and the Yang

Although the Chinese popularised the concept of the Yin and the Yang -- the complementary nature of opposites -- everyone experiences the creative tensions which create vitality. Male and female dynamics possess uniquenesses which combine in wonderfilled ways; day and night offer various opportunities and moods; and life and death simultaneously beckon every individual and group. In each case, one side can not be called better or right.

As in the beginning the light divided the day from the night, so in our symbol the light of the universe within divides the left from the right, the black from the blue, the yin from the yang. In remembering that all of our life is filled with this reality, we put aside value judgements and live the present with affirmation.

The Fundamental Tasks

Embodying Covenant

From the inception of our family, we have understood ourselves as a covenanted reality. The vows we took in the wedding ceremony were exactly the same and we exchanged rings; Nelson's is made of white gold, Elaine's yellow. In deciding to join the Order we self-consciously expanded the scope of our covenant.

Over the first two decades of our marriage we have come to understand many of the intricacies, beauties and pitfalls of covenant. We believe that this way of human co-creativity holds the key to society's future and strive to beckon and encourage others to master the skills of covenanted community.

Serving the Mystery

Throughout our journey, we have both understood that each individual's primary covenant has been to serve the Mystery. While we lived in Australia, we came to appreciate the life understandings of the Aboriginal people. Their primary face for the Mystery, which they called Wandjina, had eyes and a nose but no mouth. In silence, they said, the Mystery watches life; taking it in with an affirmation that defied words and ordinary understanding. We saw the same eyes on the Buddhist sutras of Nepal.

Serving the World

The cup has often been used to symbolise expenditure, the pouring out of one's self in service to others. Our family embodies service as its primary mode of operation. At the practical level, oral rehydration typifies the simple yet powerful local approaches to primary health care.

Embodying the New Age

This part of the Twentieth Century requires, of every individual, new understandings of the way matter is organised and the way human beings relate. The hydrogen atom reminds us of the electrons which operate computers and the life-giving molecules which nourish our bodies.

The Underlying Style

The Four Colours

The four sections' colours point to the operating styles which characterise our family. The white symbolises both purity and all-inclusiveness. The red-orange of the rising sun characterises eternal hope, the stance of looking for the new possibility in every situation. The green like the spring meadow holds the fullness of the earth's resources; our real situation requires living in this one world. Finally, the clear ocean blue has historically meant both courage and peace. The four colours include the three colours of our homeland's flag and the colours of the United Nations.

The External Shape

Our symbol is shaped in the classic form of a winner's plaque for we strive for excellence and set our hearts on victory. At a deeper level, the three points at the top, which emerge from the one point at the bottom, point to the trinitarian reality through which life is experienced.

Brussels, Belgium
November, 1987

January 15th, 1988

Dear Don, Diane and Theresa,

Thanks for your letter written in mid-October which arrived via Chicago. It prompted me to try to describe, briefly, what actually did happen to me in August, 1987. All's quite well now but Elaine and I both learned a lot during the six weeks between the first of August and mid-September. I thought you might be interested in knowing more precisely what happened.

I have to describe things on three levels: 1) on the level of the body, I got extremely tired and my 40+ year-old body called "time out", 2) on the level of the mind, I was thinking so many thoughts that everything got confused, and 3) on the spirit level, I had a wrestling match with God and survived. To be more specific --

As you may know, my father has been a kidney patient for the past 10 years. In the evening of Saturday, August 1st, I received word that he had decided to stop dialysis and thereby end his life (see 'The Way My Father Died', enclosed). Elaine and I left immediately for Knoxville, Tennessee via TWA. We arrived 14 hours before he died on Monday noon. The funeral was set for Wednesday night and the whole family was gathered together at my mother's house in Gatlinburg. By Wednesday evening, after four sleepless nights which had produced only about 20 hours of sleep, I had been awake for nearly 100 hours. Before the funeral, I began to wander around confusedly and I was talking nonsense. As a result, Elaine and my brother decided that I should be taken to the emergency room of the local hospital. I was so tired that I couldn't get to sleep.

We had known for several years that Dad would have to stop dialysis sometime so his death came as no surprise to anyone. On Monday evening and Tuesday our family mostly sat in Mom's living room and talked. We shared memories and had some of the finest conversations we've ever had. Dad's brother and sister came and contributed both to the levity and profundity of the dialogue. The whole atmosphere provided intense imaginal stimulation and I found my whole past and future running through my interior screens. After spending Wednesday night in the local hospital and even after receiving mild sedatives, I couldn't slow myself down to the point of getting to sleep. On Thursday night, the local doctors -- in consultation with Elaine -- decided that I should be taken to a psychiatric hospital. There I was given stronger sedatives and I slept from midnight Thursday until 9:00 Saturday -- 35 hours straight.

After this rest, I felt <u>a lot better</u>; but quite weak. The Stanfields flew down from Toronto and came with Elaine to visit me in the hospital on Saturday afternoon and again on Sunday. By Monday, I was ready to go home. The four of us spent

several fine days relaxing and talking in Gatlinburg -- a beautiful little town on the edge of the Great Smokey Mountain National Park -- and then went to Toronto. My strength increased daily and by early September both Elaine and I were ready to get back to work.

On another level, as one John Denver song says, "I talked to God and listened for a casual reply." Early Wednesday morning I felt the deepest sense of happiness that, probably, I have ever experienced. On Tuesday and Wednesday mornings I had gotten up very early and sat quietly in the living room of the condominium which Mom had arranged for us. Since my first assignment to Chikhale, I've been getting up fairly regularly at about 5:30 and just sitting quietly with a cup of tea for between 30 and 45 minutes. The two mornings in Gatlinburg were like most days except that they each lasted more than 3 hours. In addition to the normal thoughts which come and go like waves on the ocean, sometimes Life Itself seemed to emerge in absolute clarity. It seemed like my own life had been approved with a finality I'd not previously experienced and I seemed to know that I was fully prepared for the future which lay ahead. But I also realised that I was exceptionally tired and weak.

Anyway, now I'm in Brussels. ... If I've ever been normal, then I'm back to normal. We're having a great time here in Brussels where there's a large group of people with whom we can share and cooperate. We had a really great Christmas celebration!

While in Gatlinburg, I found a copy of the theseis which I wrote in seminary 18 years ago. It was entitled "New Directions for Religious Communities." I reread it in September and found it quite interesting. I'm now thinking about trying to update it in light of our experiences since 1968, as we've all been about creating human community.

... ...

Take Care of Korea.

Yours in Service,

F. Nelson Stover
Brussels, Belgium

What Do You Mean "WE"

Background

At a Polity Dialogue, held in Brussels, a guest speaker, Mr. Tony Judge from the Union of International Associations, proposed several metaphors by which organisations could be viewed. This paper pursues what might be called the "Benzine Ring Schema for a Resonating Structure". The concept is applied to the swirl of questions which often get discussed when talking about the organisational forms of the Order and the ICA.

The Benzine Ring as a Metaphor

Often when considering matters related to social organisation and interpersonal relationships, we can utilise understandings from scientific research as patterns and models. The prevalent hierarchical structure often receives justification from an understanding of a universe in which the god sits beyond stars, the stars lie above the earth and the peoples' leader stands on a mountaintop between the heavens and the masses below. Other modes have also been discerned.

Tony Judge, and others, have pointed out that the Benzine molecule, a basic component of many life-giving larger molecules, can best be represented as a "dynamic combination of several alternative structures, rather than by any one of them alone. ... (and as such requires less energy than for any one of them)." Benzine seems to alternate between five distinct forms. Tony Judge proposes that this pattern of alternation between various forms could be used in "designing/describing/operating organisations".

The Five Faces of We

In the Benzine Ring, six substantial yet open-ended carbon atoms bond together in five different ways (see Appendix A); at any one moment only one set of relationships is embodied, at the next moment another occurs. In considering the complex reality which presently gets named the ICA/Order, one also senses several operational modes among the same physical realities. Five of these could be named:

1. An order,
2. A family association,
3. An N.G.O.,
4. A movemental network, and
5. A company.

As an order, primary emphasis is given to the covenantal relationship among the members. Various forms of this covenant have emerged to hold individual understandings and commitments. A set of commissions have been established to monitor and administer the global/local aspects of the covenant. The Panchayat is selected to ensure comprehensive action, to guard the spiritual depths and to facilitate the articulation of the group's consensus. The operating modes of the order are designed to develop a demonstration community and to enable people on the journey of profound humanness.

As a family association, primary emphasis is given to the growth and development of a group of family units -- some composed of single members, some of couples, others of couples with children of various ages. The relationships among these units is maintained over time and space through a variety of communication methods. Individual units carry with them unique traditions from their personal cultural heritages and embody differing living styles through the particular spaces which they maintain. Within the context of the total structure, each family monitors its own finances and sets its own priorities in light of what it deems significant. The operating modes of the family association promote the development of self-reliant procreative units upon which society can be built.

As a non-governmental organisation, primary emphasis is given to creating a vehicle for significant engagement in the process of social transformation. By and large, individuals contribute their time and energy on a voluntary basis, motivated by the desire to provide self-less service to humankind. Frugal use of financial resources and the style of living among the poor symbolise commitment to benefit the poorest of the poor. Through symposia and exhibitions, other like-minded groups are linked together to expand the impact of the effort. The tenuous nature of this mode of operation allows immense flexibility in maneuvering around existing social structures so that new forms can be nurtured to a position of self-sufficiency.

As a movemental network, primary emphasis is given to interlinking the forces of change on a global basis. Conferences, assemblies and councils draw together concerned people from a variety of communities to create common strategies for united action. Financial and material resources are gathered on an ad hoc basis to accomplish the task at hand. This mode of operation is able to discern the cutting edge of contemporary society and to formulate initial responses.

As a company, primary emphasis is given to creating an economically viable sociological unit on a long-term basis. The operations of each particular unit are governed by the prevalent local legislation and monitored by duly elected boards of directors. Individuals' skills are marketed at competitive prices for comparable service. Within itself, this company dynamic embodies creative aspects in the light of the best available business practices. This mode of operation functions within the

existing patterns of the multi-national economic environment of the Twentieth Century.

Possible Points of Error

This pent-ocular (five viewed) resonating structure provides a possibly creative way of looking at the present reality which we have created. The above scheme offers only an initial attempt at describing the practical embodiment of Tony Judge's theoretical model. Other configurations could be created to add to or replace the five given here. The descriptions could be refined to more accurately portray reality. To the extent that I have misunderstood Mr. Judge's conceptual framework, modifications and revisions would be needed to bring about the necessary alignment. Maybe the whole perspective should be scrapped as worthless junk, maybe the Benzine metaphor does not apply to the present or desired organisation.

Further research

If this Benzine Ring Schema for a Resonating Structure is to be taken seriously, a considerable amount of further research and clarification will be required. Appendix B shows the models which I created to go from Tony Judge's theoretics to the prose of this paper. The same six nodes have been used in each diagram. These were chosen somewhat arbitrarily, quite possibly they need to be clarified. The lines in each diagram represent the bonds between the nodal elements. I have attempted to name these bonds with existing or envisioned structures. If, in fact, this naming can be done meaningfully, the current model needs refinement and completion. Finally, the mechanisms by which the five aspects interrelate, how they change -- both practically and theoretically -- and the experience of being in this sort of organisation seem a bit unclear and would have to be described.

How this Schema Might Help

Assuming that this Benzine Ring Schema for a Resonating Structure could get a simpler name and be refined to a point of believable understandability by a substantial number of people, several benefits could be anticipated. Many of the currently assumed "either/or" dichotomies would be transformed to "both/and" possibilities. For example, "either the Order or the ICA" would be understood as "both the Order and the ICA". By simultaneously focusing our corporate attention on all aspects of our organisational being we might evoke clues for strengthening all 5 instead of negating many options in an attempt to argue the supremacy of one or two. Moreover, if we could understand and embody such an obviously complex, yet

likely life-giving, structure, we might produce a demonstration of a truly new form of social organisation adequate to meet the complexity of the centuries ahead.

Tony Judge submits that a resonating structure requires less energy to maintain than would be necessary to function in each distinct mode separately. This might be interpreted to indicate that all five aspects can be embodied in a resonating manner by one organisation more effectively than by creating five separate organisations. Intuitively, this hypothesis seems accurate, yet the measures and methods for proving so appear somewhat difficult and imprecise. Clearly, such a resonating structure would require new operational images and styles which at first would seem awkward. Nonetheless, in many ways this complexity already exists within our operation and self-conscious acknowledgment of the present reality might empower creativity.

Further comments will be gladly received.

Brussels, Belgium
February, 1988

Appendix A:

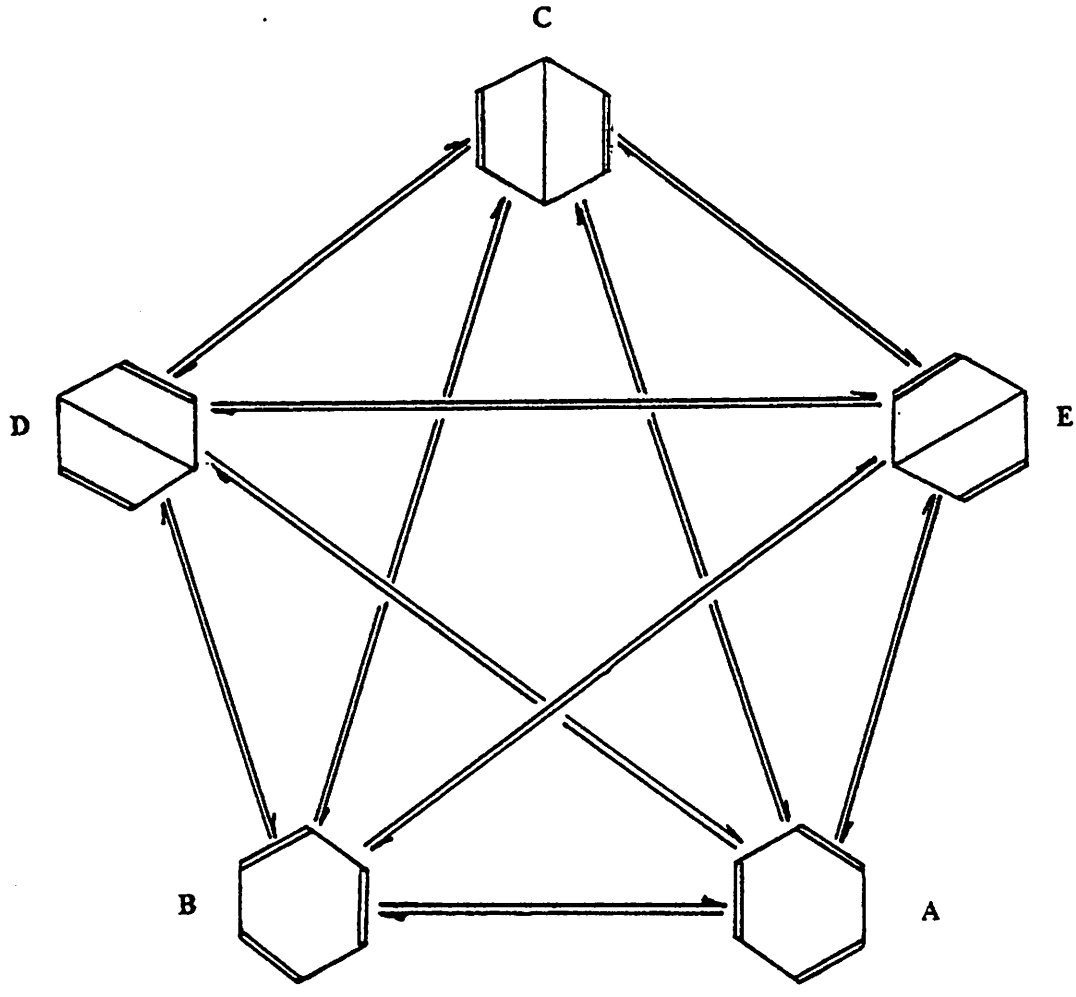


Figure 3. Resonance hybrid: an illustration of variable organizational geometry.

Some chemical molecules cannot be satisfactorily described by a single configuration of bonded atoms. The theory of resonance is concerned with the representation of such molecules by a dynamic combination of several alternative structures, rather than by any one of them alone. The molecule is then conceived as "resonating" among the several structures and is said to be a "resonance hybrid" of them. The classic example is the benzene molecule (represented above) with 6 carbon atoms. This is one of the basic components of many larger molecules essential to life. Its cyclic form only became credible when Kekulé showed that it oscillated between structures A and B. Linus Pauling later showed that it in fact alternates between all five forms above (and as such requires less energy than for any one of them alone).

This concept can be used in designing, describing or operating organizations, especially fragile coalitions or volatile meetings. It may provide a key to the "marriage" between hierarchies and networks. It could also be used to interrelate alternative definitions (or theories, paradigms, policies, etc), especially where none of them is completely satisfactory in isolation. The underlying significance then emerges through the resonance between the set of alternatives.

In one of three sets of alternatives in Figure 2, for example, each individual alternative can be usefully perceived as dynamically related to the others in the set. The set thus constitutes a resonance hybrid. Each alternative embodies an aspect of the significance of the whole, but more fundamental significance is embodied in the pattern of transformations between them, as exemplified in inter-species relations in the natural environment.

Some organization management implications of similar conceptual structures have been explored in practice by Saul Kuchinsky who, for example, indicates the management significance that can be attached to each of the arrows in such a diagram (11, p. 141).

Prepared and distributed
by Tony Judge

The UN Decade of Culture

UNESCO has declared the period 1988 -- 1998 as the "Decade of Culture", a time to emphasise and recover the diverse cultures of our global village. We could use this decade to create a set of celebrations that would bring unity among all peoples, that would allow a freshness, that would express the wonder of our times, and that would hold the ancient wisdom of many perspectives. Rather than attempting to pick and choose among the many existing celebrations and ways of organising time, we could set them all aside, developed a totally new calendar, and then re-create a yearly rhythm.

Descriptions of
A New Way to Divide up the Year

The current 52-week, 12 month calendar generally in use today has its most recent origins in the Romanic world from which the "Western tradition" emerged. It represents a composite of recommendations for marking time ranging from Julius Caeser's desire to have a month named after himself to Pope Gregory's encyclical detailing the handling of leap years. Other calendar schemes have been devised including ones having 72 5-day weeks or 28-day months which follow the lunar pattern.

The attached diagram depicts a solar year calendar having 50 7-day weeks. These are grouped into 10 equal segments (thus producing a decimal calendar in line with the growing trend for "going metric"). A Great Day of Celebration occurs at the end of each 5-week period. At the end of the entire cycle, located in the centre of the diagram, are five additional celebration days to mark the completion of the year.

An Initial Suggestion for
What to Celebrate When

Of the ten celebrations which would mark the end of the various segments four could be dedicated to the primary experiences of human existence, four to the fundamental aspects of consciousness and two to the basic sociological building blocks.

For instance, the four primary celebrations could be located near or on the solar equinoxes and solstices, the shortest, longest and equal lengthed days of the year. Practically, these might be commemorated as follows:

> Celebrating Human Love: The celebration nearest the Summer Solstice might be dedicated to celebrating human love. Life, in all its

Towards

A Global Calendar

The following pages outline a scheme for a totally new, yet historically based, global celebration calendar. The first sections provide three parallel, introductory contexts. The proposal is described in the Descriptions section. Some practical implications of adopting this schema are discussed in the final sections.

The Cluttered Blackboard

During my university studies, I took an advanced mathematics course from an instructor who did not believe in erasing the blackboard during his lecture presentations. He would begin each period with a clean board and then launch into long theoretical proofs. When he had covered the board with notations, he would go back to the upper left hand corner and begin writing OVER what he had written the first pass. Some hour-long discussions would require three or four layers of writing on the same board. In order to refer to earlier comments, the professor would often point to a space and indicate that we were to "look at what I wrote the first time over". While this method had some advantages, many of the average students experienced more than normal confusion in following the presentations.

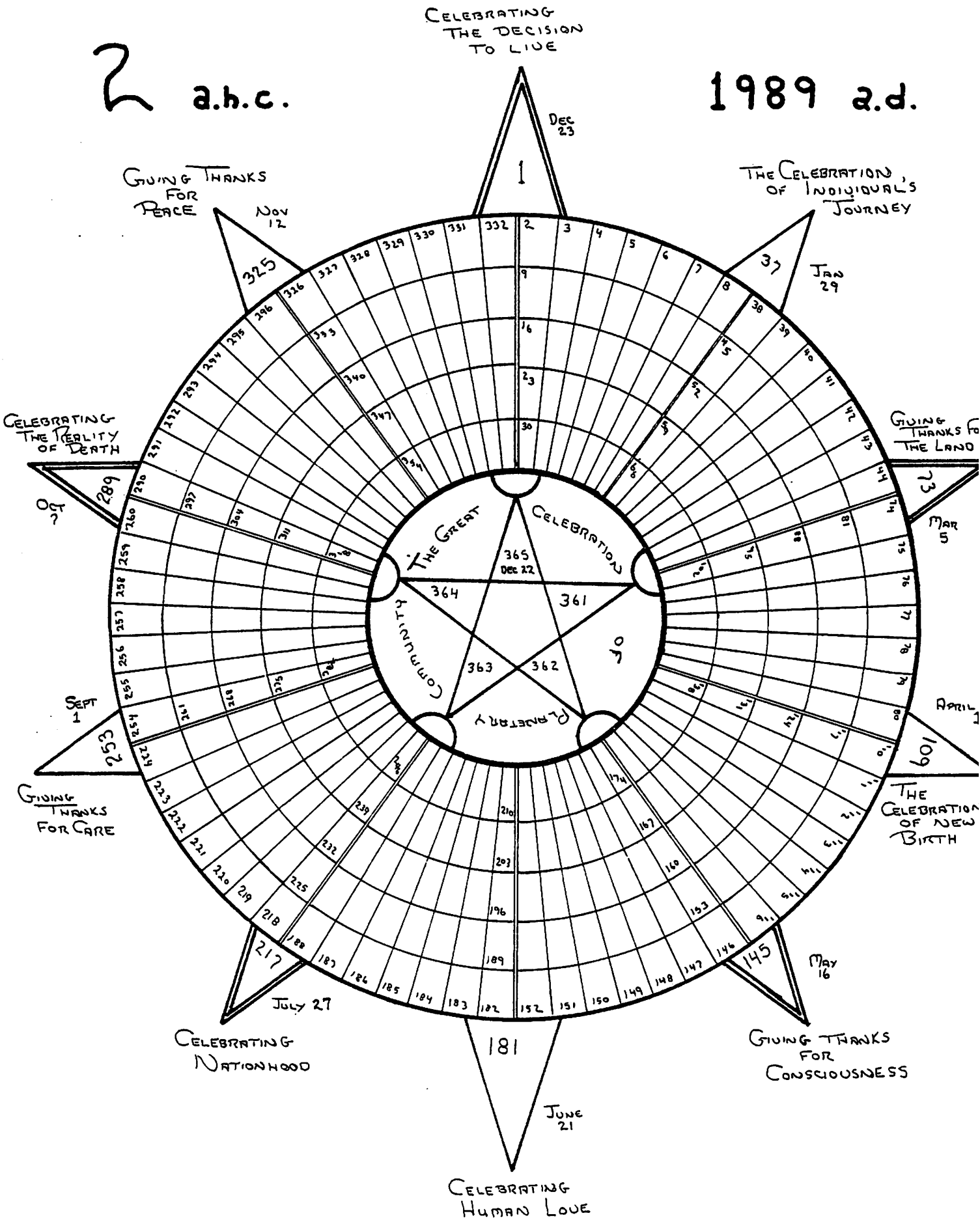
In some ways the global calendar is becoming like this professor's blackboard. As the various cultures intermix and the different religious and social traditions overlap, celebration gets juxtaposed on top of celebration. In countries like Egypt and India where two or three traditions occur in relatively equal strength, the plethora of holidays exist side by side.

The Eritrean Weekend

The peoples of Eritrea, in eastern Africa, have spent considerable energies in recent decades establishing a national identity among the nine language groups and various religious perspectives of their homeland. One point of disunity arose as to what day each week was to be considered "holy", the day off. The Muslims wanted Friday and the Christian wanted Sunday. Neither wanting to increase the friction among the two groups, nor being able to afford a three-day weekend, the nation has decided the Wednesday will be the official "day off". Shops and offices close on Wednesday and people relax and celebrate. No one is offended, anybody who wants to worship is free to do so when they wish and irrespective of cultural heritage, everybody is reminded of their unity on Wednesday.

THE GLOBAL CALENDAR

2 a.h.c. 1989 a.d.



OFFICIALLY PREPARED BY THE COMMITTEE FOR A COMMON CALENDAR

82-2 363-1

HUNDREDS AND TENS OF YEARS

<TIME TO SCALE>

TIMELINE OF THE UNIVERSE DECIDING WHAT TO CREATE

F. N. STOWER
ICA: BRUSSELS

BUILDING A GLOBAL SOCIETY

(E)

1000 a.d. | 1100 | 1200 | 1300 | 1400 | 1500 | 1600 | 1700 | 1800 | 1900

CHARLAMANE CONQUORS EUROPE

COLOMBUS SAILS TO AM.

COPERNIK CALCULATES THE YEAR EXACTLY

NAPOLEAN DEFEATED AT WATERLOO

RE-ESTABLISHING A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

(F)

1840 | 1850 | 1860 | 1870 | 1880 | 1890 | 1900 | 1910 | 1920 | 1930 | 1940 | 1950 | 1960 | 1970 | 1980

SUFFERAGETTES MEET IN SENACA FALLS

ONE HALF OF ALL HUMANITY IS ALIVE

... AND ITS STILL ONE HECK OF A NICE WORLD TO LIVE IN.
DETAILS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST.

Thousands of Years

(Time to Scale)

Timeline of the Universe
The Dawn of Consciousness

F. N. Stover
ICA: Brussels

Starting To Think About It

Harnesing Fire & Self

(C)

The First Ice Age

The First Inter-Glacial Age

Glaciers

The Second Inter-Glacial Age

Glaciers

The Third Interglacial Age

The Recent Glaciers

1 Million Y.a. | 900,000 | 800,000 | 600,000 | 400,000 | 200,000 | 30,000

Pleisianthropus (S. Africa)

Pithecanthropus

Fire Used In China

Acheulean Hand-Axe (Eur Africa & S.E. India)

Soan-Pebble Tools (N.W. India)

Neanderthals

Chase Wooly Mammoths Throughout Europe

Figuring Out The Social Forms

(D)

Experiencing The Experiences of Living

Creating Sustainable Culture

Isolated Farms | Village | Market Towns | Nations

30,000 Y.a. | 27,000 | 24,000 | 21,000 | 18,000 | 15,000 | 12,000 | 9,000 | 6000 | 3000 Y.a.

Painting The Caves In Lascaux

Aboriginals Follow Lizards And Kangaroos Through The Desert

Adding Dogs To The Family To Help With The Hunting

Proto-Neolithic

Basal Neolithic

Agriculture & Stock Breeding In The Near East

Female Figurines In The Near East

Role of Women Increases: Home, Family, Farm

Indus
- Harappa
- Mohenjo-Daro

Aryan Invasion

Sumeria
- Writing, Wheel, Taxes

Shifting To Male God (In West)

5 Other Moving Heavenly Spheres Discovered

(E)

Wandering Partnerships | Female Gods | Male Gods

Billions & Millions of Years

(Time to Scale)

Timeline of the Universe Creating Something

F. N. Stover
ICA: Brussels

The Current Cycle

(The temperature constantly drops, the substances constantly grow more complex)

Turning Energy Into Matter	Turning Matter Into Substance	Letting Consciousness Emerge	
		Cooling the Earth	Building the Life Forms
The First 5 Billion Years	The Second 5,000,000,000 Years	1,500,000,000 Years	3,483,000,000 Years

(A)

Gaseous Nebula 73% H and 27% He

The Hydrogen Stars Start Exploding Producing: H, He, O, N, C, Si, S, etc.

A Swirling Mass at 2000°C

Land Mass Splits, North & South

Age of Fish

Appalachian Mtns

Age of Dinosaurs

The Major Continents Form

Back-up

Living Out The Decision to Walk Upright

(B)

Building Up Strength, Developing a Niche

Staying Out of the Way of Ferocious Animals

Covering the Planet

12,000,000 Years Ago — 14 — 12 — 10 — 8 — 6 — 4 — 2

Sivapithecus (Kenya) → Into the Human Families

Walking Skills, not Brain Size made the Difference

The Orangutans and Chimps

Australopithecus Afarensis

A Major Cold Spell

Australopithecus Africans → Scavenging - Not Hunting

Homo Habilius

(C) Homo Erectus

Homo Sapiens

(The Continents Continue to Move: Atlantic Ocean Widens 4 cm/yr, The Pacific Narrows)

Everything That Has Happened

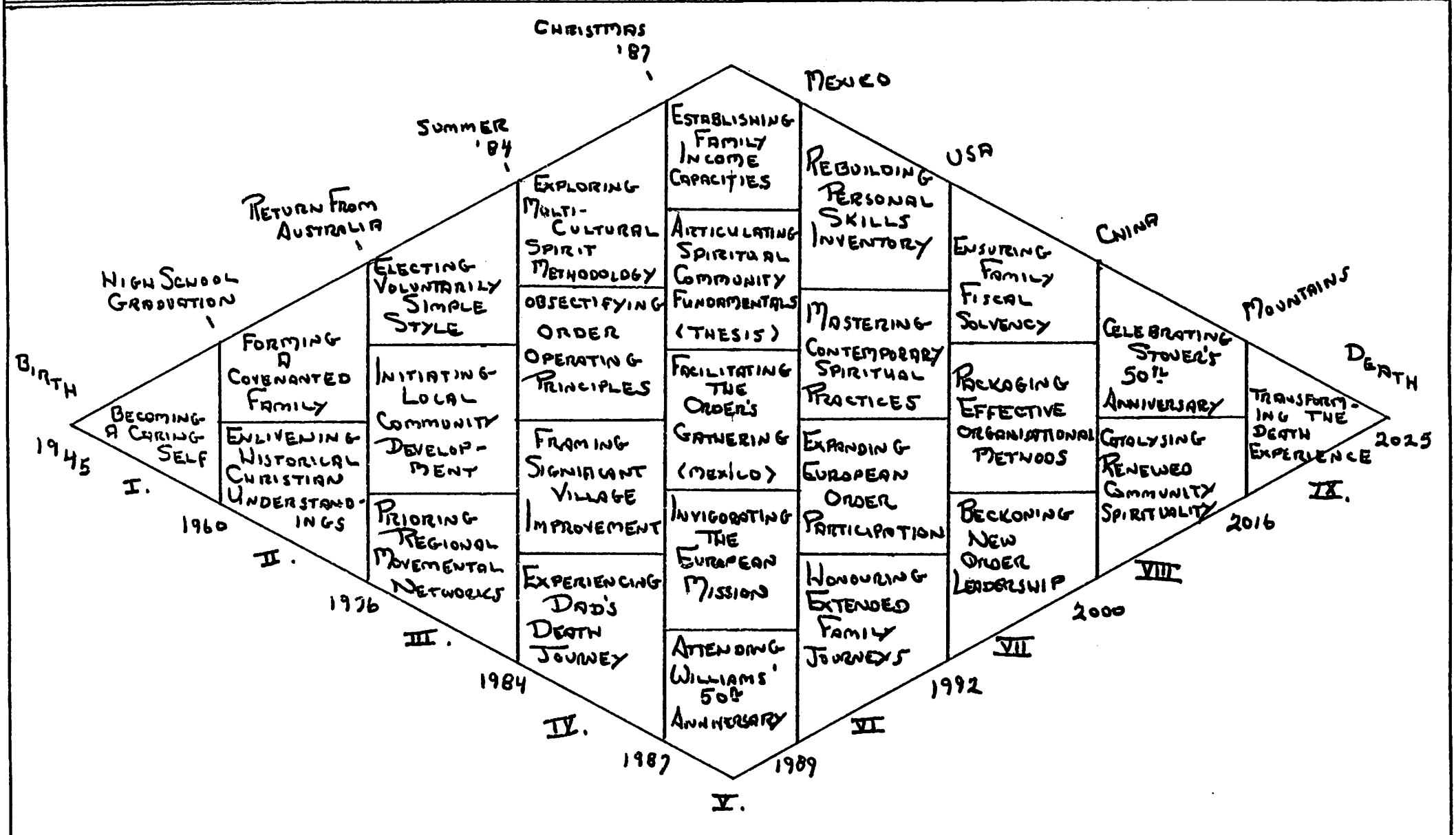
Neatly presented on 3 Pages

During the early part of 1988, several people with whom I associate were studying "The Chalice and the Blade" by Riane Eisler. During this study they were discussing the various phases of human civilisation and when the current phase began. This conversation prompted me to get down on paper, briefly, the entire sweep of known time and to try to say what was going on when.

May, 1988

March, '88

Envisioned En Route to Portugal



Diamond of My Life

Introduction
(to the chart on the opposite page)

In early 1988, my friend Brian Stanfield suggested that I read "The Black Butterfly" by Dr. Moss. I was reading the book during a 24-hour train ride from Belgium to Portugal in March of that year. Somewhere amid the rolling hills of France in the midst of an obscure paragraph of the book, the significance of my past and the purpose of my future came shockingly clear to me. I stopped reading, picked up a pencil and sketched out the basic elements of the chart on the following page. On the train ride back, I edited the chart which shows the major themes of my life for the various periods.

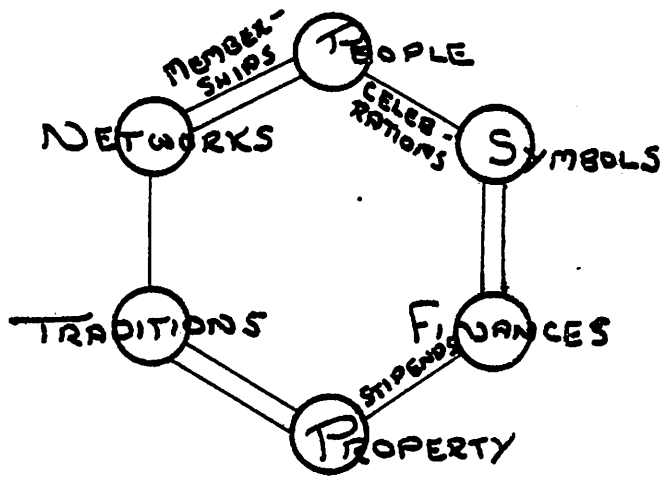
The Benzine Ring Schema for the ICA/Order System

Appendix -B-

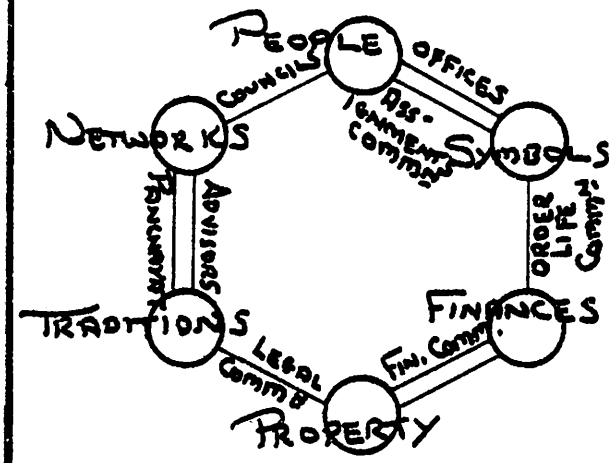
Initial Draft

Feb. 1988

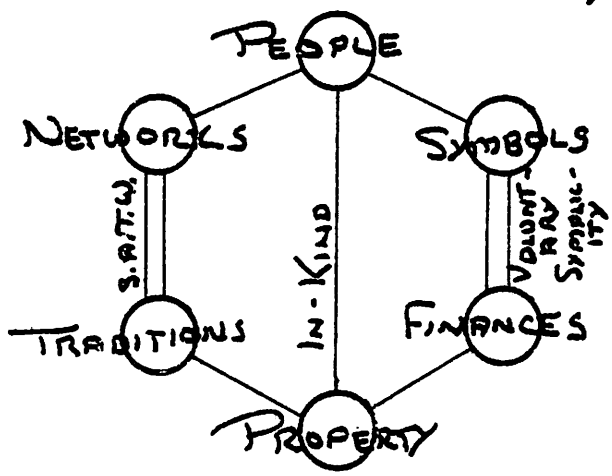
② As A Family Association



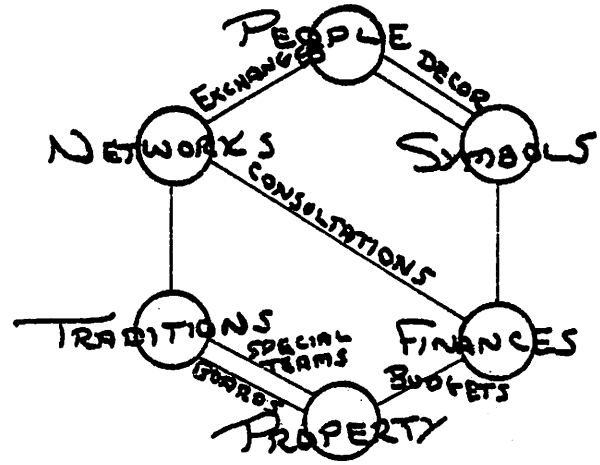
① As An Order



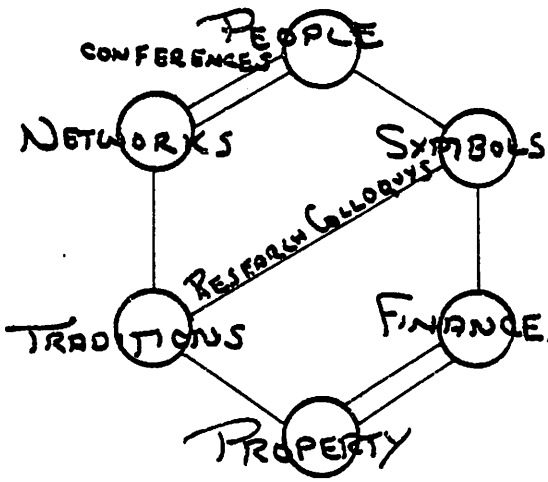
③ As A N.G.O. (A Voluntary Organisation)



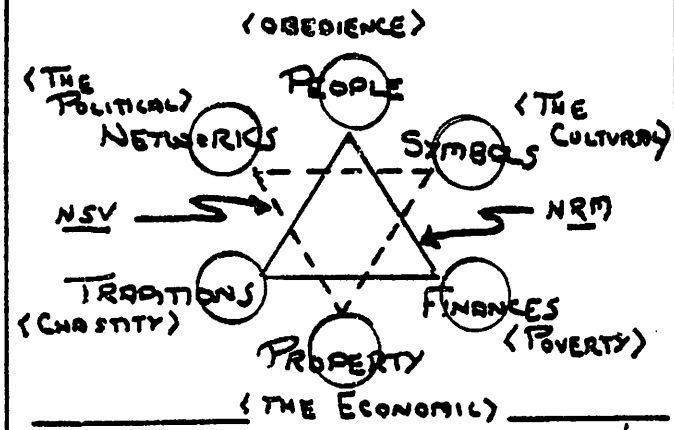
⑤ As A Company



④ As A Movemental Network



"Master"(?) Rationale



When The New Rel. Mode = The New Soc. Ven.

forms, is related to life. Human beings experience this relatedness in terms of their feelings of love for one another. Within the communities in which they live, the natural bonds of family and the relationships which develop between individuals who care for each other create the framework which sustains and nurtures people in their everyday living. Yet these bonds are known to have a fragility inherent to the human condition. The celebrations of human love would provide ways to rehearse and to strengthen these relationships.

Most societies have sought a variety of ways to reaffirm the individual relationships which hold people together. In some countries, St. Valentine's Day provides a vehicle for people to say "I love you" to others. During the Hindu celebration of Rahki, sisters acknowledge their brothers' care and support. Other celebrations like Mother's Day and Father's Day, point to the same social dynamics. Often these occasions involve exchanging stylised greetings so that possibilities of communication remain open even when the relationships become strained. Many of these traditions might be included in the Celebration of Human Love.

Celebrating the Decision to Live: The celebration nearest the Winter Solstice might be dedicated to celebrating the Decision to Live. Self-conscious creatures have long understood that once life is given, a decision is required to continue living; furthermore, the freedom to make this decision has been given along with the gift of life itself. Historically, the will to live has been most difficult to maintain during the darkest and coldest days of the yearly cycle. As a result, the celebrations of the decision to live have often been held in the winter times and involve lights to chase away the evil spirits which threaten the spirit of life. Often, too, these celebrations lie close, to or get associated with, celebrations of the New Year.

These celebrations often include the exchanging of gifts to acknowledge individuals' uniquenesses and to enable their moving into their own future. Within the Christian tradition, Christmas has provided the vehicle for rehearsing the possibility of full life which has been given to each individual. Probably, the Hindu celebration of Divali points to the same understandings of the human condition. While each of the celebrations relates to different historical events, the power of the continued observance is derived from the profoundly human experience on which attention is focused.

The Celebration of New Birth: The celebration following the Spring Equinox might be dedicated to The Celebration of New Birth. Living

creatures stand in awe of the ability of life to propagate life. In the world of nature, new life emerges in a multitude of fashions but most overwhelmingly with the coming of the spring or monsoon rains. Within self-conscious creatures, the journey through time brings new phases of existence which are experienced like the birthing of a new creature. When the new comes, the old forms must pass away; thus birth and death become united in the Celebration of New Birth.

Virtually every social tradition carries with in it the memories of the festivals which acknowledge the wonder of life returning to the barren lands. Within the Christian tradition, the Easter season has played this function. While the reality of the crucifixion remains in the eventfulness, the coming of the Spirit provides the dominating theme of the festivities. Within the Hindu tradition in Maharashtra, India, the Gunpathi celebrations mark the completion of the rice planting during the monsoon.

Celebrating the Reality of Death: The celebration following the Autumnal solstice could be dedicated to Celebrating the Reality of Death. No life is complete without the experience of death. Each individual and community knows the feeling of the loss of a loved one or a relative and in so doing realises the coming of their own death. Societies have, each in their own ways, sought ways to commemorate the living and dying of all of those who have gone before and in so doing give significance to the final act of each individual's life.

Often such celebrations have included festivities -- for death, in fact, comes as a joyous event. Within the Christian tradition, All Saints' Day was instituted to honour all the saints of the church and each individual's ancestors. The Muslims set aside a day for visiting the tombs of their forbearers. Whatever the form, the celebrations of the completed lives of those who have come before enable people to remember that they, themselves, are a part of the long sweep of history and that death, rather than being something to be feared, plays an important role in the process of life.

The four segment-ending celebrations which immediately precede the previous celebrations could be used to bring to self-consciousness the four aspects of profound living: awareness of mystery in life, the journey of consciousness, the experience of care and the sense of tranquillity. These may represent more recent developments within the global family and long historical precedence do not immediately arise. Thus, considerable creativity might emerge as these celebrations evolve.

The remaining two celebrations could be dedicated to commemorations of the great lives of those who have gone before and to the unique greatness of the nations in which people live.

> Each community and nation now finds ways to commemorate the particular significant events of its own history. These include birthdays of famous people, anniversaries of important battles and events marking the founding of the people. Often these events are marked with speech making in which community elders rehearse the stories which tell the peoples' self-understanding and which maintain their uniqueness.
>
> During the Celebration of Individual Creativity attention could be given to children, men and women from all heritages and generations which have contributed to creating the present social fabric. While globally recognised contributions were lifted up, each particular location could stand present to persons of unique local importance.
>
> During the Celebration of National Identity particular attention could be given to the heritages and understandings which shape the various social groupings into which the global village is currently divided. Set in the context of "One Great Place to Live", each local part could be strengthened to contribute its unique gift.

Practical Implications

As an excuse to start a new calendar, suppose we globally acknowledged the Harmonic Convergence which occurred in August of 1988. Many groups used this event to call attention to the one-ness of our global civilization. We could start the new calendar on the solstice which followed the most recent harmonic convergence, thus making the beginning of the UNESCO decade of culture virtually simultaneous with the beginning of the new calenderic system. We could now say that we were living in Year 1 Post Harmonic Convergence (p.h.c.). Such a decision would give 15 years before the beginning of the new century (for some people), a time in which many forms and systems will have to be reprinted anyway.

Groups and individuals could begin living in the new calendar simply by deciding to try out the new celebrations and to set aside the old ones. The Celebration of Human Love will held on the actual Summer Solstice (June 21); therefore, the Celebration of the Decision to Live will be held 180 days earlier (December 25), and the Winter Solstice will occur on day 362.

People living in the Southern Hemisphere may want to consider adjusting what is celebrated when to allow for the reversal of the solar solstices. The dates of the celebration periods could remain the same but the subject could be modified; for example, the Celebration of the Decision to Live might occur on day 181, etc.

Further Research

Obviously, considerable further action research must be conducted to implement this scheme. A first helpful step could involve people in various cultures describing the celebrations which people in their area currently acknowledge. Then a series of reflections could occur through which the life understandings conveyed by the celebrations would be discerned and related to the schema proposed above. Finally, the new celebrative practices might begin to emerge.

Brussels, Belgium
May, 1988 (a.d.)
Segment 4, 1 (p.h.c)

The House Atop the Crystal Mountain

At the centre of the universe stands a crystal mountain. Since the beginning of time it has stood, unmoving and unchanging; simple and stark and shimmering. On the top of the crystal mountain lies a pentagonal building. Its walls and the mountain can not be distinguished. In each wall one portal allows creatures to enter one at a time; nothing ever comes out, though some have seen in without entering. The structure has no covering and some enter by breaking through its floor. All that is inside is nothingness -- light and dark can not be distinguished within its boundaries. All that is, finally, comes to his house atop the crystal mountain.

From the moment of creation each entity has the opportunity of glimpsing the crystal mountain. More or less consciously each creature journeys toward this house. Seven pathways lead to the mountain:

1. The path through the desert,
2. The river through reality,
3. The village of human settlement,
4. The forest of matter,
5. The city-state of society,
6. The tunnel through complications, and
7. The air which creates no impediments.

No way contains less dangers or more benefits, all lead to the same place, and inside the building on the top of the crystal mountain all is as one.

On the path through the desert, each individual lives in solitude. Whatever happens in the world around occurs as if on a distant planet. Motivation, desire and rewards swell from within; the individual draws strength from an invisible well. To those not on the path through the desert, this way seems strange and anti-social, even futile. Yet those on this way find a richness in solitude, find nourishment in the simple and gain sustenance from nothingness. Often those on this path seem, to others, lost and many even doubt that the path leads to the crystal mountain. Doubt, however, disappears early for those on the path through the desert and the internal joy which comes to them rarely can be shared with others.

The river through reality mostly meanders like a wide, ancient river through meadows and plains, but some points on its course contain dangerous rapids and at other places lie docks for passengers to enter and disembark. Like the desert pathway, this route mostly bears individuals, though often pairs of people and even small groups also travel on it to the crystal mountain. Wonder, fascination and

amazement await travellers on this course. Sometimes the opening of a rose evokes awe, at other times the face of social injustice appears to raise indignation and bears the call to action. Whereas this river begins from many sources, it carries its load toward increasing oneness. Those on the river through reality often pass unnoticed through the social structures and practical systems of normalacy. However, they bear -- from the early part of their journey on the river -- marks which are recognised by others on this path to the crystal mountain. The river route cannot be navigated by the cowardly and though often beautiful, this way contains many hardships. Nonetheless, excitement and wonder become the life blood of those who, with eyes open wide to the world around them, follow the river through reality to the house atop the crystal mountain.

Around the mountain lie innumerable villages in which people can live. While people can move from place to place, from village to village, nonetheless life in the villages of human settlement remains life in the human villages. To varying degrees, structures and conventions emerge within the villages. Life in the villages is filled with celebrations and collegiality as well as with suffering and boredom. Life and death fill the consciousness of those in the villages. By their own labour they are sustained. Many difficult skills are required of those who live in the human settlements and increasing pools of wisdom are emerging to equip their inhabitants. The crystal mountain can always be seen from each village. Though the way from these villages to the house atop the crystal mountain comes uniquely to each individual, often the journey occurs quickly and smoothly and those in the final stages of the trip are able to prepare those who follow.

Other paths to the top of the crystal mountain go through the forest of material things. Travellers on these paths can gather, collect and make all varieties of items, comforts and symbols. From this direction, groups can convene and work together to fashion wonders beyond the capabilities of any individual. Likewise, wars, disagreements and strife can emerge as groups stake out claims for various parts of the forest or try to compete with each other to accomplish ever and ever more complex tasks. These paths provide numerous opportunities for sensing accomplishment and, in fact, those on these routes change the structures of the universe in which they live. The starkness of the house atop the crystal mountain often surprises those who approach from this way; all that is gathered in the forest must be left in the forest to travel to the crystal mountain of its own accord. From the midst of the forest, some see the starkness of the crystal mountain and are prepared when they arrive at the shimmering portals, others arrive quite unprepared.

As the conscious mass of the universe increases and the complexity of the social fabric grows accordingly, some people have chosen to live in the city-state of society. Relationships have replaced property as the source of significance. Diverse and imaginative forms of power have evolved beyond the mere interacting of things.

While this path to the crystal mountain has been forged most recently, it nonetheless draws ever increasing numbers of travellers. In many ways, the travel-guides for this path have barely been written, yet wide-spread enthusiasm is emerging for this road which sometimes seems like a modern super-highway, sometimes like an urban traffic jam and other times like a maze of winding suburban lanes and cul de sacs. From many points in the city-state of society the top of the crystal mountain can be clearly seen; however, many inhabitants either never see it or mistake it for part of their own creation. One way or the other, every resident of every city-state arrives at the portal of the house on the crystal mountain. Those who have seen it and affirmed it arrive calm and serene; those who have seen it and sought to deny it, not only arrive tense and angry but these conditions affect their every breath; those who have not seen or have ignored the crystal mountain on the horizon usually have a lot of quick decisions to make as the portals near -- as quick decisions quite often fill the lives of residents of the city-state -- many are well prepared for the their final requirement.

For millions, the struggle to get to the house atop the crystal mountain requires seemingly unsurmountable complexities, and endless work often carried out in the darkness of unknowing and without perceivable reward. This tunnel, dug inch by centimetre as the journey progresses, goes through the hard rock of the crystal mountain itself. Little can be taught or learned except to keep digging, urged or beckoned by a light which can not be seen. This tunnel emerges through the floor of the house atop the crystal mountain. In many ways, from this pathway, the inside and the outside of the house seem indistinguishable; just the digging stops.

The top of the house on the top of the crystal mountain has no covering; the entire universe -- past, present and future -- and the inside of the house are one and the same. Sometimes life emerges, starts on one of the various pathways and then, as it were, simply leaps into the house on the top of the crystal mountain. To those watching from the outside, this may be called an accident, a tragedy or a blessing; often, too, the passing may go unnoticed or unheeded. No preparation can be made for this route; it can not be chosen.

Consider carefully these pathways.
Prepare yourself as well as you can for the way you choose.
Enjoy your journey.
Enable others on their own journeys.
Listen for the sound which can not be heard.

Brussels, Belgium
July, 1988

Reader's Personal Notes and Reflections

The Silence

I believe in one god, defender of the borders, of double descent, militant, suffering, of mighty but not of omnipotent power, a warrior at the farthest frontiers, commander-in-chief of all the luminous powers, the visible and the invisible.

I believe in the innumerable, the ephemeral masks which god has assumed throughout the centuries, and behind his ceaseless flux I discern an indestructible unity.

I believe in his sleepless and violent struggle which tames and fructifies the earth as the life-giving fountain of plants, animals, and people.

I believe in the human heart, that earthen threshing-floor where night and day the defender of the borders fights with death.

O lord, you shout: "Help me! Help me!" You shout, O lord, and I hear.

Within me all ancestors and all descendants, all races and all earth hear your cry with joy and terror.

Blessed be all those who hear and rush to free you, lord, and who say: "Only you and I exist."

Blessed be all those who free you and become united with you, lord, and who say: "You and I are one."

And thrice blessed be those who bear on their shoulders and do not buckle under this great, sublime, and terrifying secret:

THAT EVEN THIS ONE

DOES NOT EXIST!

Nikos Kazantzakis
The Saviours of God
Germany
1923