

Three Cosmic Tales:

Conception, Birth, Death.

It was late spring of 1971 and I was cruising the streets of Denver in my black 69 VW Bug, looking at all of the beautiful young women out enjoying the warm sunny day. I had a few hours to kill until I met up with my best buddy Art who had recently moved to Utah while I was still hanging my hat in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. I was vastly immature, extremely horny, and craved the attention and affirmation of as many women as possible.

I spotted a gorgeous young hippie chick striding confidently down the street with a full-on blonde Euro-fro. As I slowed to check her out, she gave me a mega-watt smile. I u-turned at the next intersection and pulled up next to her. I asked her where she was going. She replied; “Back to my place, want to come?”. I could not believe my good fortune. She jumped in my car and off to her pad we went. Her small studio apartment was neat, clean, sunny, and decorated in 60s hippie motif. It also smelled strongly of Pachulia oil, which was one of many powerful aphrodisiacs for me.

We proceeded to smoke a little pot, listen to music by the group Joy Of Cooking, who I had never heard before, on her tiny portable record player and did some light smooching. I impetuously asked her if she wanted to join me and my buddy Art, to go camping that night. Art had reserved a campsite in Roosevelt National Forest in the Rocky Mountains. She did, and a plan was hatched.

Art had driven over from his home in Salt Lake City in order to meet me and camp in the mountains together. When I met up with him a couple of hours later and informed him that my new friend would be joining us his face perked up and a sly grin crossed his face. Art was smart, funny, and classically handsome, but lacked the self-confidence that he merited. That was due to the fact that he had grown up in the large shadow of his brother Newt, who was a genuine scientific genius. Newt did his Post-Doctoral work at Los Alamos, birthplace of the atomic bomb, then stayed on to do research and development there for the remainder of his career. Science smart but maybe not moral smart.

So, a few hours after we met, Lynn was riding between Art and I in the front of his VW bus, wending our way up, up, and up through the great peaks. After devouring the delicious vistas of one of the most visually stunning mountain ranges in the world we pulled up to our campsite at dusk. Heavy clouds

were moving in at the exact same altitude which we were then occupying. We quickly gathered some dry wood, built a fire, and put up our tent before everything went totally black. We cooked then ate by the light of the fire but soon used up the small amount of firewood we'd had time to gather. After the last embers died out, we really had nothing to do outside in the total blackout, so we crawled into the tent. It was fairly good-sized, so Lynn and I staked out one side and Art took the other.

Lynn and I started smooching in earnest and were soon naked and making slippery, giggly, love. After a long session, we took a break engaging in breathless talking and cooing. Then another round and another break, and another, and another, all in absolute blackness with nary a peep out of my buddy whom we assumed had nodded off.

Many hours later we had run out of hormones and strength but were still so amped up that we were wide awake. Lynn gushed "I just can't fall asleep". At that point Art finally chimed in "Me neither".

The next morning, shortly after we had finally dosed off, we awoke to a bright sunny morning. Art got up and went outside to gather wood for cooking breakfast leaving Lynn and

I to lay in each other's arms and bask in our giddy joy. At that point a very consequential question entered my mind, a few hours too late. "Are you on birth control?" "No, I don't want to put those synthetic hormones into my body" Lynn serenely replied. "Uh, what if I got you pregnant?", I stammered. "I'm not pregnant" she confidently asserted. "If I ever get pregnant, I will know the moment that I conceive". I had never heard of such a thing as "instantaneous conception awareness", but I was assured by her confidence and really eager to believe. It turned out that she was correct about not being impregnated and we carried on a long-term long-distance affair.

Fast forward thru the next four years that included Lynn and I parting company, the better part of a year tripping through Canada, a couple of minor arrests, a couple of draft notices (negated by the minor pot charges), and my eventual move to a small commune in north east Iowa.

It was one hour past midnight December 31st, 1975 and the tiny farmhouse at the spiritual center of the commune was rocking hard. The farm was owned by Jim B. who was paralyzed from the neck down due to a diving accident. Jim's brother Tom, and I had just finished replacing all of the rotting floor joists in the kitchen, with brand new ones, a couple of weeks previous and had decided to test them out. The test

consisted of getting as many friends as humanly possible packed into the kitchen with my good stereo cranked to the max, then dancing on that new floor as hard as we could.

It was colder than the proverbial witch's tit outside but the Ashley wood stove in the living room plus the heat radiating off of the dancers in the kitchen kept it toasty inside. Matter of fact I was so toasty as well as drunk and stoned that I decided I needed to get out of my waffle weave, full-suit long johns immediately. I made my way across the jam-packed kitchen to the stairway up to the bedrooms, one of which I shared with four other single folks.

By the door to the stairway sat Teri, a cute young woman. Teri and I had conversed a couple of times previously but I knew very little about her. She was best-friends with one of my fellow communards, Vicki, and had driven up from Chicago to join in the New Year's Eve fun. I was too intoxicated and sweaty to produce a suave pick-up line so I casually invited her to accompany me upstairs and she casually accepted. Immediately upon reaching the bedroom, we both stripped off our clothes and fell onto my single mattress which lay on the floor, located in my corner. We had the room to ourselves at that moment, and made good use of the privacy.

The sex was quick and I only had my own pleasure in mind. As I finished up, I was fully prepared to roll over, lay down, and pass out, all in less than one minute. But as I rose up into the “pre-roll over position”, I noticed that a huge change had taken place. I was no longer enveloped in a “drugged out”, haze verging on unconsciousness. That had completely evaporated and been replaced by a psychedelic blossoming causing my heart, head, and body to soar. I was suddenly focused and energized. I quickly put my clothes back on minus the waffle weave, as did Teri, and we returned to the party where we danced like never before. The unprecedented high lasted about two hours. At that point I started to feel drunk and sleepy again. I returned to the bed alone and was asleep and/or passed out within minutes.

I didn't think about the experience until two months later when I talked to Teri on the phone and she told me that she was pregnant and that I was the father. Since we had only had sex that one time, on one hour past New Year's Eve, I immediately thought of Lynn and what she had said about having instant awareness at conception. Apparently, that cosmic awareness was not limited to just the woman.

More about that:

Birth

Sometime in March 1976, I was on a phone call with Teri, whom I still barely knew. It changed my life forever. Without preamble, she got right to the main event. “I’m pregnant and you’re the father”. I fell silent, stunned at the enormity of what I had just heard. I told her I needed time to absorb what she had just told me and that I would call her back shortly. I finished the conversation up with an unfortunate and insensitive remark; “This is all kind of taking me by surprise” to which she tersely replied, “Yeah, it took me by surprise too,”

The moment I hung up, I knew with crystal clarity that I wanted to be the father to this baby from this woman I knew almost nothing about. My desire to be a father went back to my late-teen years.

I was very close to my cousin Barb who had four kids by the time she was in her mid-twenties. I had spent a lot of time with Barb and her brood of kids. I quickly realized how much I loved the little tikes. I loved reading stories to them, playing

games together, and wrestling on the floor. I even liked changing their stinky diapers which was pretty unheard of for a teenage boy. I had also bonded and spent a lot of time with my friend Pam's two small children, while we lived on the commune, Albert and Margerat.

Within ten minutes, I called Teri and said "I want to, and will be, the father of this baby. I don't know how it is all going to work but we have six months to figure that part out. When can I see you?" Soon we met up in person and developed a basic plan.

One of the first big things that we agreed upon was our desire to have a home birth. We didn't know of any mid-wives in the area where I lived, but had heard about a larger commune, of over one hundred folks, that let people come live at their place, have a home birth with their mid-wife, then leave shortly after. One Sunday, when Teri was up, after phoning ahead, we traveled about two and a half hours north and a little east up into South-west Wisconsin for our initial visit with the mid-wife, Carol. It was to involve a pre-natal exam and to see if we would be found acceptable to move in for a couple of months and have our baby at their commune, simply called, The Farm.

We sat in a very large living room of the biggest house on the communal land waiting for the mid-wife to finish another pre-natal check-up scheduled right before ours. There were about twenty other adult folks hanging out on that sunny Sunday afternoon in mid-August. There were no kids present and we later learned that they were all upstairs napping (in the same room!). They seemed to be gentle and genuinely friendly souls who asked many questions in an effort to get to know us better. After about thirty minutes, Carol, the mid-wife and un-official leader of the commune entered the room and introduced herself to us. We were quickly ushered into a room in the back of the house that served as the Farm's medical center. Carol talked to Teri about how her pregnancy was going as she did the pre-natal exam, which lasted about fifteen minutes. She then declared that everything looked good and that the baby should arrive around the beginning of October. Then, turning her eyes to me, she said "You two don't seem like a couple". How she divined this without asking any questions about our relationship, and only being around us for a few minutes, I could not say. I replied "No we aren't really a couple at this point. We had casual sex and got pregnant. Teri will be moving into my house in a few weeks. We have agreed to raise the baby together and see how our personal relationship works out."

“I understand”, said Carol. “But if you two aren’t in a romantic relationship by the time the baby comes, you won’t be allowed to attend the birth of your child.”

My emotions were in a whirlwind. First off, I was completely flabbergasted by this woman who could intuit so much about us after being around us for only fifteen minutes and not asking any relationship questions. I was taken aback by the prospect of possibly not being able to attend the birth. But I also had an immediate and intense faith in this woman to safely steer the three of us (Teri, baby, and I) through the biggest event of our lives. I had long been interested in telepathy but had never really experienced any compelling evidence of it until that moment. I humbly murmured “I understand”.

All the Farm required of us, was to move in five or six weeks before the due date, which we did. Then stay for two weeks after the birth, which we also did. During our time there, we were assigned to specific work crews, same as all of the rest of the residents. Teri joined the childcare crew and I worked with Carol’s husband Donald overseeing the construction crew.

It was a magical time. Teri and I woke up every morning excited about the prospect of our new baby and feeling very blessed to be in this beautiful secluded spot far out in the country with people who got along so well and were into the well-being of us and our baby. They did smoke herb, but abstained from alcohol and all animal products. Complete vegans. We worked with, ate with, and spent hours talking to our new friends and housemates. There was no effort to get us to join the group. We were accepted as friends who were there for an extended visit. Teri and I usually retired to our room shortly after supper. Our room was directly above the living room and it was easy to hear all that was being discussed, as we lay in each other's arms, often laughing, kissing, and giggling. As with any large group there were joys to celebrate and trials and tribulations to work out. I remember on many occasions overhearing long discussions that often bordered on arguments about someone not doing their share, or having a negative attitude toward another resident, or just generally "bringing down the group vibe". The debate would go on for twenty, thirty, or even forty minutes with no comment from Carol. Then someone would say "what do you think Carol?" She would then quietly explain in simple, rational, non-judgmental language what she thought was going on and how to solve it. It was always on point. It never shamed anyone or made anyone want to say "I told you so." She really did seem to be able to "see" into the

spirits of those around her and guide them, in the least intrusive way possible, to a common positive direction.

As we listened to this woman that we were growing more and more in awe of, we were also falling in love with each other. Granted it was an adolescent type of love as we had not had the time to really get to know and love each other deeply. But it definitely forged a romantic bond between us and when Teri went into labor there was no doubt that I was going to get to see my first child enter into the world.

There was a sizable support crew on hand in our tiny little bedroom that night just past midnight on the first day of October, *exactly* nine months to the hour after our New Year's coitus. The small room was lit with candles and kerosene lamps since the house did not have electricity, but was suffused with a glow of holy energy. I was not expecting this spiritual aspect, but quickly accepted it as an element of the unknown which was a part of this incredible journey we were embarking upon.

The house also lacked running water. A bucket had been discreetly placed in a closet for Teri's use but I was instructed to go outside when I needed to pee. And pee I did. I had been hydrating heavily all day, drinking many glasses of water

as the excitement built. So, I necessarily had to make many trips out to the back yard to urinate. Outside was the silent, obsidian, counterpoint to the cosmic light, sound, and energy of the birth room. There was no moon, nor a cloud in the sky. Plus, we were a long way from the nearest town or farm so there was virtually no ambient light. The result was a zillion shiny stars seemingly poking thru every millimeter of the ink black sky. As the night went on, I continued to bounce back and forth experiencing this astounding shift in environmental stimulation, taking some of the birth light with me into the dark and some of the star-studded dark with me into the light.

At a little after one am, Carol said "Push now Teri". And push she did. Apparently, Teri has very powerful muscles down there because the baby came shooting right out past Carol's outstretched hands and slithered down the plastic sheet covered bed in a gush of poop, pee, and blood (blood and poop were possible signs of fetal distress) as the umbilical cord unwound behind her. At that instant I wasn't sure if the baby was alive or dead. But I had the realization that this little being had already changed my life forever. Even if there was no life after that birth, I had felt the miracle of creating a life. I had proudly followed the development of the fetus and the corresponding growth in Teri's belly. Something had come over me during that time and at the moment of birth, I had, for the first time, felt God force in my life. Meanwhile, Carol

quickly plucked up the little run-away female up and examined her. She had already started to breathe on her own and everything was perfect as she laid the calm little girl on Teri's chest so she could suck. The blood, the urine, and the feces made no dent in our excitement. We were both as happy as we had ever been in our young lives and felt nestled in the bosom of the holy spirit. I got to cut the cord and soon our baby girl was passed to the assistant to get cleaned up while the other ladies put on fresh bedding and gave Teri a sponge bath in the bed. In a short time, our small family lay together, dressed, and clean, and in awe of the age-old transformation that we had just newly experienced. To this day it stands as the most important moment of my life. The day I first became a parent.

We quickly decided that we wanted to get to know our freshly arrived bundle of joy before we picked a name that would fit her for the rest of her life. When we called our respective folks later that morning (first grandkid for all of them), Teri's folks seemed to take the "waiting to name the baby" in stride while my folks got very stressed out. "You should have had a boy's name and a girl's name picked out in advance" my mom beseeched, right before she handed the phone over to my dad. Due to her high anxiety levels concerning the issue, he was the contact person from that point forward.

Every day he would call and every day I would deliver the news that we still hadn't picked out a name. He had possessed little to no understanding why I was pursuing a hippie lifestyle, and even less about why we had had the baby at a commune instead of in a medical facility. He had been born at home as well, but had suffered life-long embarrassment about it due to the fact that his folks hadn't been able to afford to have him at a hospital.

But he tried to remain patient and stoic always, as he received the daily "no name yet" report. Mom was too stressed to talk directly to me but could be heard in the background yelling questions which dad would dutifully relay to me. Finally, at day seven, Teri and I had arrived at a name. I had previously informed her about the wonder of my alternating between the starry ink black sky and the spiritual energy of the birth room on that magical autumn night. So, in an homage to the harvest season and that endless star-riddled sky that seemed to keep me grounded during the birth, we named our wonderful new daughter Autumn-Star. She already had such a sweet, settled personality and her name fit her perfectly. Now it was time to tell our parents. Teri's folks once again took everything in stride like Autumn-Star was just another name as common as Mary Theresa or Katherine Ann. I knew that my folks would not be as sanguine in response to their first grandchild's unique name.

I made the call and my dad answered as usual. I dove right in. “We have a name for the baby”. “Lay it on me” he dryly replied. “Your beautiful little granddaughter’s name is Autumn-Star”.

My dad and I are very different people and were never close while I was growing up. The one bond we did share was our love of smart-ass humor. So, as I patiently waited ten, then twenty, then thirty seconds for his reply, my curiosity was greatly piqued as to how he might respond. When he finally did, he did not disappoint.

“Well, I guess that’s better than Stumbling Buffalo”, he deadpanned. I laughed so hard at that moment and scores of times since, when recounting the story. Of course, they loved her with all of their hearts, along with the two boys, Casey and Oakley, who came later, and the unusualness of any of their names never came up again. Those three kids of Teri and I are now happy, healthy, self-supporting adults, and great parents, who have given us a total of eight bright, smart-ass grandkids, none of whom are named Stumbling Buffalo.

Post Script: A couple days later when the cosmic glow of our daughter’s birth had started to wane a bit, my thoughts

turned to the reality of the task ahead. Sure, I had changed a few diapers and done fun stuff with my little cousins and young housemates, but that was a far cry from the rigors of full-time child rearing. With anxiety flooding my consciousness I turned to Teri and stammered “Do you know anything about raising kids?” She then reminded me that she was the oldest daughter in a family of ten kids and stated “I pretty much raised the youngest ones as my mom was working full time by then”. I laid back on the bed, let out a deep sigh of relief, thankful for this strong smart accomplished woman who had become my partner in parenting.

Death

My marriage to my first wife Sue only lasted a couple of years. Between the severity of her Cystic Fibrosis and the pain of what we were told to be related maladies, she was taking heavy duty painkillers. Likely in too great of doses for her ninety-pound body. The result was that she was often in a dream state, unaware of her condition or what was going on around her. Between the severity of her condition, and my severe immaturity, our union ended under a fog of pain and sadness.

I had made the decision to leave as I was dangerously close to the brink of suicide. I knew that if I walked out, I would be carrying a tremendous weight of guilt. So much that I might well end up killing myself anyway. But I felt that it was my only chance to survive and if I could not bear the guilt of abandoning my sick wife, I could always off myself at a later time.

I felt that deep sense of guilt and shame every day in all of the years after I left her. On the frequent occasions when I took acid, I ended every trip going off by myself, thinking of Sue, and sobbing deeply until I was completely cried out.

When I learned, from my mom, that Sue had rallied after a surgery to remove part of her blocked colon, I was very happy and a bit less guilty. It turned out that the un-diagnosed blockage of her crimped colon had caused most of her pain and illness when we were together. With that taken care of she was able to go back to living a somewhat normal independent life. She even met a man whom she eventually married. That removed another portion of my guilt, though a significant amount remained and it continued to visit me whenever I thought of her.

Meanwhile, Teri and I had gotten married and had two more kids. They were boys named Casey and Oakley. We had also purchased our dream parcel of land and built a small cabin on it out of re-purposed materials, with our own hands. The very cabin that those two boys were born in, with a mid-wife named Lerie in attendance.

It was a sunny summer day and it was an uncharacteristically quiet day around the cabin. I was home alone, as Teri had taken the kids and gone to visit a friend of hers so that the kids could all play together. It was about 10 am, and I had yet to consume any marijuana that day and had been abstaining from alcohol for a couple of years. I decided to go outside and enjoy the beautiful environment.

As I stood in the front yard enjoying how the sun refracted off of the breeze swept leaves of the hardwood trees overhead an unprecedented feeling rose up in my consciousness. I started thinking about Sue, which I always did on a daily basis. But this time there was an astounding difference. For the first time since the day I had left her, I was feeling absolutely zero guilt. I started thinking about all of the good times we had had together in our cozy little mobile home. And how sweet our love had been. I then began to remember how much she loved kids and her disappointment that she would probably not be able to successfully carry one to term, due to her

illness. Then I thought of something I would have never imagined before that moment. "I should write Sue a letter and tell her about Teri and our three kids. I bet she would like to get acquainted with them. And they could meet her and we could all meet her husband. I will do it. I will sit down and write her and propose that we pick a spot somewhere between here and where they are living in Iowa, for a get together". I felt overjoyed at the prospect of our two families getting to know each other and possibly having an ongoing friendship. I was also ecstatic about the millstone of guilt having instantaneously evaporated from my consciousness.

That evening, I received a call from my mother informing me that Sue had passed away that day. I immediately and intuitively replied, "What time did she die?" "Around 10 am" mom informed me. I thanked her for letting me know and quickly ended the call. Without revealing the nature of the call, I told Teri that I needed to go for a walk.

I went out the front door, into the darkness, and stood in the exact same spot where I had had the profound revelation that morning. Then I had another even more profound one. "As Sue's spirit left her body she directed it to me. She was letting me know that I should let go of the guilt and just remember the love and good times that we shared". I began to sob deeply as I had many times before when thinking of Sue. But

these were tears of joy and redemption, not tears of sorrow and guilt. I have never again felt guilty when I think of that incredible woman and the gift of unparalleled value that she had bestowed upon me.

A few years later I ran into her mother Barbara, a deeply religious and spiritual lady. A lady who had never shamed me or expressed any antipathy toward me for abandoning her sick daughter. She and her husband Ed had always been unwavering in their kindness and support of me in my journey after I left Sue.

I took her aside so that we could have a private conversation and recounted what I had experienced at the moment of Sue's passing. She understood and validated my interpretation of the event. "Yes, I am sure that is what happened and that Sue wanted you to know that you should not feel bad about the way your marriage worked out. She never stopped loving you and always hoped that you would find happiness".