

Uncle Sam Wants Me. Chapter Four. Life Changing Events.

After my folks cut off their support in the fall of 67, I was financially self-sufficient and completely independent in thought and deed. I was fine with living in low rent shit hole apartments so that I could budget more money for pot and Richard's Wild Irish Rose wine. I had switched over from working at the nearby gas station to working at a large truck stop out by Interstate 80 for a slightly higher hourly wage. Since the semis ran all night, there were more vehicles to service during the wee hours, but I still got some assigned reading in. One night the boss showed up and spied me reading Plato's Republic. From that point on I was known to him and my co-workers as Plato.

When I got off shift at 7 am stinking of diesel and wearing my stained work duds, I only had time to grab a quick breakfast and head to my 8 am class. The sorority sisters sitting near me wrinkled their perfect little noses and rolled their lovely eyes in disgust. I had never felt more manly.

I found the semi drivers and their rigs interesting and often engaged them in conversations about destinations, loads, and interesting situations that they had encountered. I was not a conventional "non-conventional". The idea of not making my

own money and bumming off of someone else was abhorrent to me. The thought of driving a big rig appealed to me. Get paid good money to drive around and see the country with no boss looking over my shoulder. Maybe I would give that a try some day.

I was also starting to ingest LSD and magic mushrooms when my schedule allowed for a twenty-four-hour break. Eight to ten hours of tripping, which I often spent tramping around some secluded woods, and the rest for wind down and sleep. I never looked at it as “partying” like many younger folks did later. The experiences were helping me gain new perspectives on my past, develop ideas about my future, and cement my anti-establishment mind set to the point where I was even becoming skeptical about what constituted “reality”. I had one foot planted in consciousness expansion and the other foot planted on the sticky diesel crusted pavement of the truck stop. I didn’t even fit in with the misfits. I was OK with all of it.

And even though my life was filling up, I still made time for my assignments with Sue. Sue was a very “straight” (it meant being a “square” follower of authority back then) Christian girl who believed that us having sexual congress outside of marriage was a serious sin. Fortunately, it was a hurdle that she was usually able to overcome. She also was against

drinking, drug use, and anti-government protest. So, I kept those parts of my life separate from my relationship with her. It wasn't that hard to do since we lived twenty miles apart. Me in low rent quarters in Iowa City and her still at her folks place due to her illness.

In late spring of 69 two events occurred that threatened to upend my freewheeling lifestyle. The first was a pregnancy scare. I had been using the notoriously unreliable "pull and pop" method of birth control and it had worked fine for two years. All of a sudden Sue's normally "regular as clockwork" period failed to materialize. By the time she was ten days late she was falling apart psychologically which included frequently breaking out in tears. Her wonderfully supportive mother, Barbara, was quick to pick up on this sea change of emotion.

Sue confessed, to her, that we had been having sex and was afraid that she was pregnant. Rather than chew her out, her mom embraced her and they cried together. After they were cried out, her mom firmly but gently explained what the future would hold. She would take Sue to the doctor for a pregnancy test as soon as they could get an appointment (they didn't have those convenient at home tests back then). No one including Sue's dad Ed needed to be informed unless the results indicated that she was with child. Sue and I would no

longer engage in sex until we got married. Sue immediately agreed and notified me later that day. The next day Sue got her period. But the cat was out of the bag and Sue's mom would be keeping a close I on my comings and goings.

After much discussion, Sue agreed to continue to have intercourse if we would start using condoms, set our betrothal date for some time in the next six months, and a make a public announcement of our intent to get married. We soon agreed that the wedding would take place on August 30th, 1969, almost exactly one month after I was to turn twenty. Sue was the only female that had ever wanted to have regular sex with me and I could not envision life without it. And in my own emotionally immature way, I did feel love toward her.

I had been having sporadic contentious contact with my folks, but I contacted them right away. I did not want them to hear about it through the grapevine. Mom, sensing a major shift in the power dynamic, insisted on a full-on church wedding that her and dad would foot the bill for. Tuxedos, groomsmen, maids of honor, the whole enchilada. And oh yeah, a nice respectable haircut. My devotion to a take it as it comes, mind-altering lifestyle, crumpled in the face of a future without a reliable and enthusiastic sexual partner. Then the other shoe dropped.

I received notice from the Selective Service to report for my pre-induction physical in early August. Once a person passed their physical, they could expect to be quickly notified to report for induction and be sent to boot camp in thirty days. I had expected to have to deal with the draft after I turned twenty but thought I might have a few months of breathing room instead of one damned week.