



**Timothy Leary's**



**Trip Thru Time**



**R. U. Sirius**





R.U. Sirius is a writer and editor. His books include *Counterculture Through the Ages* with Dan Joy and *Design for Dying* with Timothy Leary. He's currently working on three books — *Use Your Hallucinations: MONDO 2000 in 20th Century Cyberculture*, a political diatribe titled *Steal This Singularity* and an as yet untitled collection of Timothy Leary's best writings.

PUBLISHED BY FUTIQUE TRUST

*The word "Futique" (the opposite of 'antique') was coined by Timothy Leary when he began designing mind-expanding computer software in the 1980s. Futique, Inc., a "Hollywood-based" company, was a consortium of artists, writers, programmers, designers, educators and, of course, philosophers all working toward a common goal.*

*In 1995, after being diagnosed with inoperable prostate cancer, Dr. Leary put all his assets IN TRUST for the future – and so Futique, Inc. became The Futique Trust and was created to manage and oversee his affairs.*

*The Futique Trust oversees all aspects of the estate and owns all rights to Timothy Leary's work and image.*

© 2013 FUTIQUE TRUST. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.  
COVER AND BOOK DESIGN BY AWAKEMEDIA.COM



# Timothy Leary's Trip Through Time

*by R.U. Sirius*



## FOREWORD

by Michael Horowitz

*Timothy Leary (1920-1996) had an enormously varied career as a West Point cadet, clinical psychologist, psychedelic drug researcher, activist philosopher, popular culture icon, prolific author, sloganeer, gubernatorial candidate, prison convict and escapee, personal computer advocate, and iconoclastic figure on the American landscape.*

*He used virtually every form of media available, from books to stage performances, from records albums to computer software, from academic lectures to bumper stickers, to get out his message of personal transformation based upon humanist principles and cutting edge science and technology.*

*Timothy Leary was without question one of the most controversial figures of his era, if not the 20th century. He was a polarizing figure in a time of generational conflict, a bold challenger of the status quo (perhaps his most enduring mantra is “Question Authority, Think For Yourself”). The author of some 30 books and nearly 400 research papers, essays and articles, he interacted with many of the leading intellectuals of his era: Aldous Huxley and Arthur Koestler, Charles Mingus and Thelonius Monk, Marshall McLuhan and Ram Dass, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and William S. Burroughs.*

*Leary’s charisma and ability to articulate both the inner visionary landscapes and the socio-political implications of psychedelic consciousness-expansion made him, in Ginsberg’s words, “a hero of American consciousness.”*

## INTRODUCTION

**When I first met Timothy Leary in 1980, he told me “credibility is overrated. I want to be incredible.”**

Nevertheless, there’s a great temptation, in writing up Leary’s life, to perform an intervention against the popular caricature of him as the sort of madcap, slightly brain-fried acid doctor who brought bedlam to middle class America, and to, instead, make him as credible as possible. And he was, frequently, credible... insightful... erudite... scholarly... well informed... culturally sophisticated — an intellectual’s intellectual. He was a renaissance man — conversant in nearly all of the sciences; in everything to do with psychology; in literature and the arts, history, sociology and popular culture. He was an inveterate theorist and a sometimes fierce combatant in the cultural and political discourses of his time (and not just those related to drugs). By being very selective, one could do a fairly impressive job of dressing him up in academic tweeds. But were he around to participate in that, at some point, he would shuck it off. He would kick off his metaphorical shoes and light out for the territories like the fictional character he most identified with - Huck Finn.

Leary’s life and work subverts — and intentionally so — any attempt to get the adjudicators of serious intellectual credibility to give him another look. After all, more than anything else, he longed to extract the giant stick from their collective rectums, leaving them bereft and... laughing.

And so, we have ahead of us, in this book, several Timothy Leary’s (Leary claimed there were 24 of him).

There is, certainly, Leary The Thinker. I’m going to do my best by him. I honor his theories and observations. He may even someday get his wish to be named the MVP — Most Valuable Philosopher — of the Twentieth Century, although that will require a whole bunch of things to go right (or wrong, if you’re a fundamentalist or ideologue of any type) and a future selection committee with a pretty decent sense of the absurd. In any case, I’m going to try to be very selective about putting forward his best ideas; quoting his most insightful quotes and showing his wide range of interests.



Then there's Leary The Man and his life. As a follower of life extension, he planned to live thousands of years, but the truth is he packed those thousands of years into his 75. Trying to rope all of his actions and their impacts on other people and the world at large into some sort of coherence will drive an average man crazy, but let's just say that he wasn't merely a revolutionary — he was a revolutionary on the front lines during the first experimental wave of mind amplifications. And if the private lives of revolutionaries are notoriously messy, when you drop psychedelics onto that fire, the resultant chaos can seem pretty diabolical unless you've mastered your Twentieth/Twenty-first Century Taoism and learn how to Go With The Tsunami.

The odd thing is that Tim could be a pretty regular guy. During the 1980s, particularly, with his wife Barbara and his stepson Zach, he could be found building a swing set in his backyard; or shopping with Barbara for stylish household furnishings, or exercising daily (well, almost daily) at the neighborhood gym or sitting in box seats watching the LA Dodgers.

Tim was never your outsider freak living in the proverbial burned out basement (although he did make a wane attempt at tent life during the height of the hippie era. It didn't last.) In fact, here's a funny story. When he got out of prison in 1976, Leary spent a day in New York City with a reporter for *Crawdaddy*, a very hip rock magazine from that time. He decided to join the reporter that night for a rock concert. As they stood on line, whispers started going around... "Timothy Leary is here." So a bunch of kids gave up their spot on line to crowd around an older dude. The guy was wearing blue jeans and a blue denim jacket bedecked with peace signs and Grateful Dead patches, a giant grizzly beard and hair down to the small of his back. Meanwhile, the silver-haired middle-aged gentlemen dressed like a golf pro on his way out for cocktails at the Hyatt Regency beamed at the scene benevolently, unaccosted.

So there were a lot of Timothy Learys running around during the better part of the Twentieth Century, ranging from madcap outlaw prankster to academic psychologist. Toward the end of his life he said, "Everybody gets the Timothy Leary they deserve." Maybe so. Still, I try here to stay true to the facts (when facts are called upon) and, in so doing, hope to illuminate Timothy Leary, the thinker and the man.\*

# 1920-1950

---

## TIMOTHY LEARY IN EARLY LIFE

### **Birth, 1920**

Timothy Leary was born on October 22, 1920 in Springfield Massachusetts. His father, Timothy Francis Leary (better known by his nickname Tote), was a dentist, and his mother, Abigail Ferris Leary, a housewife. At the beginning of his 1983 autobiography, *Flashbacks*, in a segment he titled “my conception of my conception,” Leary playfully claimed that he was conceived the day after the start of alcohol prohibition. Since his father liked his drink, he imagines that his parents were imbibing an illegal substance as they made little Timmy.

### **Father Leaves, 1933**

When Timothy was 13, his father ran away from home. Although he shared some of his mother’s anger and sense of abandonment, Timothy also harbored a certain fascinated admiration for the man who “dropped out” and escaped the trappings of early Twentieth Century bourgeois American family life.

In 1956, Timothy would seek out and reunite briefly with his father, who was by that time a wandering alcoholic. When Tote died in 1957, Timothy received his possessions... a comb and a nailbrush.

### **First Conflict with Authority: West Point, 1940**

In 1940, after becoming bored while attending Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts, Timothy enrolled as a cadet in the US Military Academy at West Point. West Point was (and is) the pre-eminent training ground for those pursuing a US military career. It was there that Timothy Leary had his first major brush with authority.

Leary was alienated from day one by the abuse heaped upon plebes as part of the military tradition and responded poorly to the demanding, disciplinary daily routines. After receiving many “demerits” for

various infractions, he was accused of being part of a drinking party with other plebes and then refusing to confess to superiors about it. He was subjected to “shunning” — his fellow cadets were not allowed to speak to or interact with him. In an early sign of his unconventional interest in subjective experiences that others might consider extreme, Leary thought of his social isolation as an interesting experiment. But faced with the possibility of a court martial, he resigned. He was honorably discharged.

## **Marriage To Marianne Busch, 1945**

In 1945, while enrolled in ROTC during the Second World War, Leary met and married Marianne Busch, described by one of her friends at the time as “a wild girl... unable to control her sexual impulses and her rebellious impulses.” In 1947, the Leary’s had a daughter, Susan, and in 1949, a son, John (who would become known as Jack).

## **Dr. Leary, PhD, 1950 (College and Graduation/Early Liberalism)**

In 1950, Timothy Leary ended a college career that took him from the University of Alabama to Washington State and, finally, to UC Berkeley, where he received his Ph.D. It had not been an easy road. In 1942, he was kicked out of the University of Alabama for spending a night in the girl’s dormitory. (He also lost most of his hearing in one ear as the result of a bout with bronchitis during that period.) He finally found his comfort level as a graduate student in Berkeley where he became a passionate activist in the liberal American Veterans Committee, an organization that saw itself as an alternative to the more militaristic American Legion. Another leading activist in the organization, Cord Meyer, would later become an important CIA operative and bureaucrat.

# 1950-1958

---

## The Budding Psychology Theorist

While the popular view is that the Timothy Leary of legend was born (or reborn) poolside in Mexico in 1960 as the result of the ingestion of psilocybin mushrooms, many of the ideas and sensibilities that would follow Tim through his days were formulated in the 1950s, when he was in his thirties.

During this period, while working first as an Assistant Professor at UC Berkeley and then as Director of Psychiatric Research at the Kaiser Permanente Hospital, Tim earned the nickname “Theory Leary.” Dissatisfied with both the Freudian and behaviorist paradigms that dominated the field, he advocated and wrote novel theories influenced by the interpersonal psychoanalytical ideas of Henry Stack Sullivan, the more radical self-actualization theories of Abraham Maslow and his own observations.

While working at Kaiser, Leary found himself alienated by the typical authoritarian procedures in which the diagnoses of patients — and the administrative decisions on what to do with them, for them, or to them — were made at staff conferences in which the individual whose fate was being decided had no voice. Leary further noted that the most powerful people in the psychology field were the ones who spent the least amount of time actually working with people. He figured that this created a tendency towards abstract theories that were not grounded in people’s actual experiences. Leary devoted himself to the notion that doctors should relate to patients as equals and that both psychologists and students of psychology should spend more time “in the field,” interacting with troubled people in their real-life environments.

Calling his theory (among other things) Nuclear Psychology, Leary declared that “human behavior should be studied the same way that nuclear physicists study the behavior of atomic particles.” In other words, psychologists should create environments where people could be observed in intensified interactions. He called these situational

environments a “cyclotron” — a term from experimental physics for a particle accelerator.

It was during this period that Leary started incorporating charts into his explications — a practice that he would continue throughout his life. His first and possibly most influential chart was the Interpersonal Circumplex. The idea was that people (Leary did not like to call people seeking help “patients”) could understand their social interactions by locating themselves on a chart in which they measured how they perceived their status, dominance, power and control compared to others; and how they perceived their relation to such qualities as trust, friendliness, warmth and sociability. Here again, the emphasis was on the person and not the “analyst.” Leary conceived of the psychologist as a coach, advising but not dominating the troubled person. Today’s Life Coach owes a debt to Leary’s interpersonal theories.

Leary was one of several psychological theorists working on similar ideas at that time. It was the beginnings of transactional analyses — a theory generally credited to Eric Berne, who would popularize the ideas in his 1964 bestseller *Games People Play*. And it was the beginnings of group therapy, which was considered wildly experimental at the time. As Leary himself put it: “In 1947, a medically trained psychiatrist considered group therapy as recklessly dangerous as requesting a group of patients to perform perilous surgical operations on each other.”

In 1957, Leary published his theories and findings in a book titled *The Interpersonal Diagnosis of Personality*. The book, which emphasized individual self-esteem over social adjustment, was called “the most important book on psychotherapy of the year” by the *Annual Review of Psychology*. Personality tests that were designed by Leary based on his theoretical work were widely adopted.

Those familiar with Leary’s later theories will note that he was already concerned with what he believed was the robotic unconscious nature of most human activities and was searching for ways to help people be more conscious.\*

## Interpersonal Diagnosis of Personality by Timothy Leary, 1957

### Routine Reflex Patterns

*The average adult is challenged, pleased, bossed, obeyed, helped, and ignored several times a day. Thus, the flexibly functioning person can demonstrate the sixteen interpersonal reflexes many times in any one day. A small percentage of individuals get “others” to react to them in the widest range of possible behaviors and can utilize a wide range of appropriate reactions. Many, however, do not react with consistent appropriateness or flexibility. One might respond to the pleasant stranger with a disapproving frown. Each subject shows a consistent preference for certain interpersonal reflexes; others are very difficult to elicit or entirely absent. Most individuals train “others” to react to them within a narrowed range of behavior patterns, and in turn show a restricted set of favored reflexes. Some show a very limited repertoire of two or three reflexes and reciprocally receive an increasingly narrow set of responses.*

*The individual may be quite unaware of these spontaneous tendencies to complain to his wife, be stern with his children, boss his secretary, depend on the office manager. When he consistently, routinely favors certain mechanisms with one individual significantly more than chance explains and tends to pull certain responses from the other to a similar degree, then a role relationship exists. Most durable relationships tend to be symbiotic. Masochistic women marry sadistic men who tend to marry women who tend to provoke hostility. Dependent men tend to seek nurturing superiors, who in turn are most secure when they have docile subordinates to protect.*

Leary's theories were avant-garde for their time, but not shockingly so. He was one of several intellectuals working in psychology who were developing a new approach to the inner lives of troubled people. Among the older, dominant schools of thought, Freudians focused on deep traumas that came from childhood and that were thought to be lodged in the patients' unconscious. As Leary saw it, “the Freudians saw the human unconscious as a dark and scary cesspool.” The behaviorists treated humans more or less like dogs that needed to be trained by simple stimulus-response techniques to behave in socially appropriate ways. The new school of thought that Leary and other

colleagues were building emphasized the potential for people to self-define and create their own pathways to a more satisfactory life. Rather than dwelling on trauma, the new transactional, existential and self-actualization theorists emphasized the ability to change present relationships and build on positive feelings and experiences. It was the start of what came to be known as the Human Potential Movement.

Leary liked to describe his personal life during the 1950s as square, conventional and middle class. This narrative allowed for a colorful contrast with his post-psychedelic adventures, beginning in the 1960s. It's true that Leary was not part of the 1950s countercultures of the beats or the hipsters. He lived in the suburbs with a wife and two children and concerned himself primarily with career success. But he was hardly your average middle class fellow. He was a liberal agnostic in 1950s America, which, in itself, was enough to make one suspect. In 1952, he took his family for an unusual vacation to Spain organized around his search for a poet, Robert Graves, in whom he'd developed a passionate interest. He was mad for the wildly imaginative writings of James Joyce and Lewis Carroll and the works of the Spanish romantic painter, Goya. He was a serious fan of the hip jazz stylings of Miles Davis and Charlie Parker. Finally, Leary and his wife Marianne had an open relationship — something that was about as unconventional as you could get in 1950s middle class America.

In 1955, On Leary's 35<sup>th</sup> birthday, Marianne went into the garage, turned on the car exhaust and committed suicide. Leary was devastated. He tried to find comfort with his lover, Mary Della Cioppa. They married in 1956 and divorced by the following year.

Some commentators and biographers blame Leary — and his desire for an open sexual lifestyle — for his wife's suicide. Throughout the rest of his life, Leary himself occasionally expressed feelings of guilt about Marianne. On the other hand, it's not clear that the lifestyle choice was Tim's alone, and it does seem that Marianne was probably bipolar. In the final analyses, who can really make that sort of judgment?

In 1959, still in a state of “black depression, [with] flashes of frantic, restless anxiety [and] panic,” he took his kids with him for another walkabout in Spain. It was there that he had what might be called his first psychedelic experience, albeit without drugs.\*

# 1959

## **The first Death–Rebirth Experience: Leary’s description of his “nervous breakdown/breakthrough” in Spain, from *High Priest*, 1968**

*In 1959, I sailed for Spain on the S.S. Independence, American Export Lines, with my two children, Susan, age nine, and Jack, age seven.*

*We settled in a villa in Torremolinos on the Costa del Sol. There the kids trooped off across the field to school each morning while I stayed home to die messily.*

*The coast of Spain -- Malaga to Gibraltar -- is the southernmost part of Europe, and down to this bottom sift and fall the psychological dregs of the Continent -- drunken Swedes, cashiered Danes, twisted Germans, sodden Brits. The main occupation of the Torremolinos colony was drug taking and the drug was alcohol.*

*I had brought with me a trunk full of psychological data — thousands of test scores and numerical indices that demonstrated with precision why psychotherapy did not work. In America, I had a staff of statisticians and clerks and rooms of calculators and computers to handle the data. But I had said good-bye to all that and sat sweating in a small room in a Spanish house adding and subtracting long columns of figures. Hour after hour.*

*It was a brutal yoga. Each laborious calculation was proving that psychology was just a mind game, an eccentric head trip on the part of psychologists, and that psychotherapy was an arduous, expensive, ineffective, unimaginative attempt to impose the mind of the doctor on the mind of the patient.*

*Each arithmetical index was pushing me farther and farther from my chosen profession. The dying process was slow.*



*I would throw down the ballpoint pen and walk fast to the main street of the village and sit in a bar and drink and talk detached-zombie-fashion with the expatriates and leave abruptly and run back to the house and continue the paralyzing calculations, sweating in panic.*

*Boredom, black depression, flashes of frantic, restless anxiety. No place to go. In December the rains came and the Mediterranean was gray and cold. On Christmas Eve I met a young, runaway prostitute from Valencia and took her home. By New Years I had the clap.*

*In the middle of January I moved with the kids to a steam-heated hotel, but Jack's unhouse-trained puppy and my distant gloom freaked the owner, so I moved to an apartment tunneled into the rock at the foot of Calle San Miguel. It was a cave with oozing stone walls. The beds were always damp.*

*There the breakthrough/breakdown started.*

*It began in the head. One morning my scalp began to itch. By noon it was unbearable. Each hair root was a burning rod of sensation. My hair was a cap of fire. I ran down the beach and cut my feet on rocks to keep from ripping my fingers through my scalp.*

*By evening my face began to swell and huge water blisters erupted from my cheeks. A young Danish doctor came, injected me with a huge needle, and gave me sleeping pills.*

*In the morning I was blind -- eyes shut tight by swollen tissue and caked with dried pus. I felt my way to the bathroom, lit a candle, and pried open one eye before the mirror.*

*In the oblong glass I saw the twisted, tormented face of an insane stranger.*

*A Spanish doctor came and gave me more shots and more sleeping pills. He had never seen such a case before. Jack and Susan crept into the room to look at me with big sorrowful eyes. The bed was cold and soggy but I slept. The third day, the disease had spread to my body. Huge watery welts blossomed on my back, stomach, and flanks. Both the Danish and the Spanish doctors shook their heads, and both injected me from large metal hypodermics.*

*In the afternoon I hired a taxi and was driven to Malaga to consult the specialist. His eyes bulged and he shook his head and gave me two injections. Before returning to Torremolinos, I sat at a sidewalk cafe and drank a Coca-Cola. A pretty young Swedish girl joined me. She was traveling with her parents and was bored and rebellious, hungry for adventure. She steamed with erotic vapor. I looked at her and smiled weakly. See you later.*

*Back at Torremolinos, the doctors agreed I should move to a steam-heated hotel. We had to smuggle the dog in. Jack and Susan left to stay with a sabbatical family from the University of Pennsylvania.*

*By night the disease had spread to my extremities. My wrists and hands were swollen to arthritic paralysis. My ankles and feet ballooned. I couldn't walk or move my fingers. I sat in the darkness for several hours and then came the scent of decay... overpowering odor of disintegration.*

*I got up from the chair, but my feet buckled and I fell to my knees. I crawled across the room to the electric switch and pulled myself up to flick on the light.*

*Jack's puppy had been very sick and a rivulet of yellow shit ran along the floor. I would be expelled from the hotel if the chambermaid found the evidence. I crawled to the bathroom and pulled down a roll of toilet paper. For the next hour I crept along the tile floor cleaning up the mess. It was slimy mucus, the color of peanut butter.*

*I crawled to the bathroom. The toilet didn't work. I crawled to the window, which overlooked the back yard of the hotel and heaved out the wad of toilet paper. There were electric wires about four feet below the window and the discolored strings of paper caught on the wires and hung down like banners swaying in the breeze. Flag of my action. Using an umbrella as a cane, I hobbled along the hallway, down the back stairs, and across the rutted muddy back yard. Each step was torture. I fell several times. I stood on a packing crate and flailed at the paper banner like a madman fighting vultures. By the time I wrenched back to the room, two hours had elapsed. I was weak and trembling. I slumped in the chair for the rest of the dark night, wrapped in a Burberry mackintosh.*

*I died. I let go. Surrendered.*

*I slowly let every tie to my old life slip away. My career, my ambitions, my home. My identity. The guilts. The wants. With a sudden snap, all the ropes of my social self were gone. I was a thirty-eight-year-old male animal with two cubs. High... completely free.*

*I could feel some seed of life stirring inside and energy uncoil. When the dawn came I moved my hands. The swelling was gone. I found a pen and paper. I wrote three letters. One to my employers, telling them I was not returning to my job. A second went to my insurance agent to cash in my policies. And a third long manuscript went to a colleague, spelling out certain revelations about the new psychology, the limiting artifactual nature of the mind, the unfolding possibilities of mind-free consciousness, the liberating effect of the ancient rebirth process that comes only through death of the mind.*

*The ordeal in Spain was the first of some 400 death-rebirth trips I have experienced since 1958. This first trip was non-chemical.*

*Or was it? \**

# 1960

---

## Timothy Leary's First Psychedelic Trip

When David McClellan, director of the Center for Personality Research at Harvard asked Timothy Leary to teach there under his aegis, he told Tim to “stir things up a bit.” In his later years, Leary liked to quip, “I think he got his money’s worth.”

Leary first heard about the effects of psilocybin in 1959 from his friend Frank Barron, who had recently tried the mushrooms and came away impressed by their visionary properties. Timothy reacted negatively to Barron’s suggestion that he try them. Lacking any awareness of psychedelic substances — and in spite of Barron’s vivid description — he thought of drugs, along with such gross physical methods as electroshock therapy, as blunt, harmful, coercive tools that behavioral psychology used to force patients to conform. However, the following year — perhaps undergoing one of those much vaunted “midlife crises” as his fortieth birthday was approaching — Leary suddenly got the urge to try the mushrooms.

Timothy Leary’s poolside psilocybin trip on August 9, 1960 in Cuernavaca, Mexico is an oft-told tale — central, as it is, to the history of Western psychedelic culture.

The ‘shrooms were copped by Leary’s friend, historian Lothar Knauth, from “Old Juana,” a disheveled, hunchbacked old woman in raggedy clothes who led him wordlessly out of town and onto an old dirt road before effecting the deal.

Timothy Leary’s first trip began pleasantly. He felt lightheaded “as if from laughing gas.” One of the people who had not taken the drug had been assigned to take notes. He was nerdily-dressed in oddly mismatched clothes. Leary, seeing him scribbling earnestly in his notepad, went into fits of laughter that only increased as he reflected on the pomposity of socialized professionals, himself included.

As the trip intensified, he had a brief moment of panic, worrying that the effects may be too strong, and that his kids, playing blissfully unaware inside the villa shouldn’t be around a bunch of drug-crazed

adults. He had one of the straight adults take the kids off to the movies for the afternoon. Then he let himself go.

In *High Priest* and other autobiographical books, Leary describes visions of “Nile Palaces, Bedouin pleasure tents, mosaics of flaming color, jewel encrusted reptiles, mosaics lit from within.” And then he re-experienced all of evolution; floating “down through snake time, fish time, giant jungle-palm-time, green lacy fern leaf-time” until “hello, I am the first living thing.”

The idea that the tripper recapitulates or even re-experiences all of evolution became one of Leary’s main models for the psychedelic experience. While psychology was his career path, it’s clear that he was consistently influenced by the sciences. (Given some popular assumptions about Leary, I should be clear that by science, I mean mainstream, published-in-*Scientific American* science; not the sort of esoterica that would be popularized in countercultural circles during the later ‘60s and ‘70s.) We first saw this in the 1950s when he applied metaphors from nuclear physics to his psychotherapeutic models. And we see it here, as during his first trip he conjures the Darwinian evolution of life on planet earth. (Later, with the introduction of LSD, he’ll roll all the way back to the big bang.) Within months of his first experience, he would start speaking of the psychedelic experience as a way of tuning in to messages coded in DNA — DNA having been discovered less than a decade previous — and he would continue to display an interest in — and knowledge of — the latest in genetic science across the remainder of his life.

As with many psychedelic spokespeople, one of Leary’s flaws was that he assumed that just about everybody would have the same experience he did. The evolution trip — while perhaps not entirely unique to Leary — reflected his scientific orientation, as much as it reflected specific qualities inherent in the drug, although it is now widely accepted that Sir Francis Crick made breakthroughs in the discovery of DNA while under the influence of LSD, so perhaps something really is afoot with the perception that these molecules tune us in to the evolutionary process.

Leary famously said about his first psychedelic trip, “*I learned more about... psychology in the five hours after taking these mushrooms than... in the preceding 15 years of studying and doing research in psychology.*”

# 1960–1963

---

## The Harvard Psilocybin Project

As summer turned to fall and it was time to return to Harvard, Leary was determined to apply what he had learned to his profession. He had little trouble persuading David McClelland to approve the Harvard Psilocybin Project and soon thereafter he discovered that he could order a substantial quantity of synthetic psilocybin from Sandoz Laboratories in Switzerland, which was producing the drug under the tutelage of Albert Hofmann — the chemist who had discovered LSD.

The experimental protocol that Leary settled on called for giving subjects psilocybin in a non-clinical *setting* — in pleasant and spacious surroundings that would be conducive to “pleasant, ecstatic, non-anxious experiences.” The observer was expected to be “collaborative, open and humane,” establishing the best possible mind *set* for the subject to have a positive experience. (Contrary to general public perception, Leary had already suggested this notion of set and setting during his exploration of therapeutic psychology.) Observers and subjects were to be interchangeable. Everyone participating had to be experienced. The research would be closed to undergraduates. Among those who volunteered to work on the project, there was Richard Alpert, the fellow professor who would soon become Leary’s sidekick before striking out on his own and eventually becoming the Hindu guru and all around bodhisattva-mensch, Baba Ram Dass. He was also joined by grad students Gunther Weil, Walter Pahnke and Ralph Metzner. Metzner would also become a lifelong friend and inveterate explorer of altered consciousness.

## From Huxley to Ginsberg: The Crusade Begins

As he began running experiments with grad students, Leary sought out the eminent English writer Aldous Huxley who happened to be in the neighborhood lecturing at MIT. Huxley had written what is probably still the most influential psychedelic trip report ever, *The Doors of Perception*, about his experience with mescaline. Leary shared psilocybin with Huxley, who advised him to act conservatively

regarding spreading word of this extraordinary substance. Huxley suggested that he slowly and cautiously spread the psychedelic experience by sharing it with influential artists and intellectuals.

Ironically, one of the first influential artist/intellectual to make contact with Leary was the revolutionary beat poet Allen Ginsberg. As a part of the beat culture (forerunners to the hippies), Ginsberg had already experienced his share of mind-altering drugs including amphetamines, LSD, mescaline and peyote. Marijuana was pretty much part of his daily life.

Having gotten wind of the Harvard professor's experiments, Ginsberg volunteered himself as a guinea pig. With his longtime lover Peter Orlovsky, he paid the professor a visit. According to Ginsberg biographer Barry Miles, about an hour into the trip:

*Suddenly, out the window, Allen saw a flash of light, which reminded him of the Star of Bethlehem, and as the music of Wagner's Gotterdammerung thundered in the room, "like the horns of judgment calling from the ends of the cosmos — calling on all human consciousness to declare itself into the consciousness," it seemed to Allen as if all the worlds of human consciousness were waiting for the Messiah. "Someone to take on the responsibility of being the creative God and seize power over the universe and become the next consciousness. ...I decided I might as well be the one to do so — pronounce my nakedness as the first act of revolution against the destroyers of the human image. The naked body being the hidden sign."*

*...He got up from his bed, put on his eyeglasses, and walked downstairs naked, closely followed by Peter. They headed for the study, where Frank Barron, Leary's coworker, who shared the house, was sitting at a desk. They stopped in front of him. As Leary came into the room, having ushered his young daughter to safety on the third floor, Allen raised his finger in the air and waved it. "I'm the Messiah," he said. [If the Twentieth Century has taught us one thing, it's that charismatic visionaries with leadership potential shouldn't listen to Wagner!] "I've come down to preach love to the world. We're going to walk through the streets and teach people to stop hating."*

While Leary moved to distract Ginsberg from his immediate plans to wander naked into the suburban streets of Cambridge, Massachusetts to bring peace and love to the world, Ginsberg decided to prove he

was the Messiah. He asked Leary to remove his hearing aid, so he could heal his hearing. Leary did this, and then pointed out that Ginsberg was still wearing his glasses. When Ginsberg wanted to call his friend, beat writer Jack Kerouac to tell him that “It’s time to seize power over the universe and become the next consciousness,” he had to go off squinting in search of his address book, at which point he realized some limits to his new godlike powers.

This somewhat ironic deflation of Ginsberg’s messianic psilocybin insights didn’t curb his enthusiasm for turning people on to the wisdom he had found in the substance. He and Leary made a pact to change the world with psychedelics.

In retrospect, we might wonder why Leary didn’t usher Ginsberg — with his “I am the messiah” shtick — quietly out the back door. After all, by the end of that decade, anyone who declared himself the messiah while high on hallucinogens might have been asked to take a number and join the others in the waiting room. But this was Allen Ginsberg, king of the beats and author of *Howl*, one of the Twentieth Century’s greatest poems. And besides, it was the first Messiah trip, so why not play along? While charging out into the suburban streets naked preaching love was probably not the best strategy for seizing global consciousness; more broadly, the naïve, idealistic spirit of nakedness, peace and love surely appealed to the professor, much as it would to the oncoming “Woodstock generation.”

Following on Huxley’s advice, Leary and Ginsberg set about guiding important writers, artists and musicians through psilocybin trips. Ginsberg’s address book provided an excess of promising targets.

Their results were decidedly mixed. Most of the intellectuals and artists who they turned on found the drug to be a worthy experience, but they were — each in their own idiosyncratic way — ambivalent about its effects and/or unwilling to join the crusade. On his trip, Jack Kerouac had a great time being Jack Kerouac — restless and verbal — and he later wrote to Leary begging for more, all the while giving mixed reviews to the drugs’ enlightening qualities. Arthur Koestler — one of the leading intellectuals of the Twentieth Century — fell into an apparently pleasant reverie listening to Bach; but the next day, he claimed he didn’t get off and then, later, declared the experience “false, ersatz. Instant mysticism.” The poet Robert Lowell thanked



Leary for his epic religious visions — saying, “now I understand what Blake and St. John of the Cross saw,” yet he remained his usual gloomy self. When Ginsberg tried to reassure him, saying, “Don’t worry. Love conquers all,” Lowell responded, “Don’t be so sure.” William Burroughs had a massive bummer in Tangiers and a few years later wrote, “Listen: Their Garden of Delights is a terminal sewer... Their Immortality Cosmic Consciousness and Love is second-run grade-B shit.” Finally, there was the mad jazz genius Charles Mingus, who just smiled and asked if they had anything stronger. Most of their “targets” had good trips; a few had bad ones... but none joined the crusade.

Why did Leary and Ginsberg and their magic pills fail to ignite a wave of advocacy among Ginsberg’s friends in the intellectual cognoscenti of the early 1960s? On the one hand, we could decide that the intellectuals were correct. The mind magic supplied by the pills simply was not the great thing Timothy and Allen thought it was. On the other hand, we might conclude that successful intellectuals who were already pretty well defined publicly by their philosophic views and their mental perceptions might have had something to lose in letting the psychedelic experience divert them too far from their hard earned paths. \*

# 1961

---

## Timothy Leary's First LSD Trip

It was during Leary's time at Harvard that he had his first LSD experience. It was October, 1961 when a somewhat demented British prankster named Michael Hollingshead showed up at Leary's shared communal household in Cambridge with approximately 5,000 200 microgram doses. Timothy wasn't having it. He was familiar with psilocybin and wanted to continue exploring its therapeutic and spiritual insights. It took Hollingshead two months to get the man who would later be labeled the "LSD guru" by the media to finally try it.

As was often the case with Tim, he tried it because his friends Maynard and Flo Henderson had taken some and seemed to be having a good time. In fact, they seemed to be in a divine state. Flo's laughter, Leary wrote, "was the chuckle of someone who was dead and done and sitting on some heavenly mountaintop and looking down at the two billion years of evolution the way you'd look at a transient episode in a child's playground." Seeing a beautiful woman in a state of grace, Timothy Leary just had to follow on.

## Timothy Leary's Description of his first LSD Trip

*I guess this is the time, Michael," I said. With quick bounds he was out of the room, and I could hear his tennis shoes rippling up the stairs, and he returned with the mayonnaise jar, and the tablespoon, heaped to overflowing with the sugar paste. George Litwin, just about to leave to go home to supper, was sitting next to me. Michael glanced at him. He nodded -- Why not? -- and took his spoonful.*

*It took about a half hour to hit. And it came sudden and irresistible. An endless deep swampy marsh on some other planet teaming and steaming with energy and life, and in the swamp an enormous tree whose roots were buried miles down and whose branches were foliated out miles high and miles wide. And then this tree, like a cosmic vacuum cleaner, went ssssuuck and every cell in my body was swept into the root, twigs,*

branches, and leaves of this tree. Tumbling and spinning down the soft fibrous avenues to some central point which was just light. Just light... but not just light. It was the center of life — a burning, dazzling, throbbing, radiant core, pure pulsing exulting light. An endless flame that contained everything... sound, touch, cell, seed, sense, soul, glory.

God, the hard eye of God. Merged with this pulsing flame it was possible to look out and see and participate in the entire cosmic drama. Past and future. All forms, all structures, all organisms, all events, were illusory, television productions pulsing out from the central eye. Everything that I had ever experienced and read about was bubble-dancing before me like a nineteenth century vaudeville show. My illusions, the comic costumes, the strange ever-changing stage props of trees and bodies and theater sets. All spinning out from the momentary parts of the central God-eye-heart-penis-light.

After several billion years I found myself on my feet moving through a puppet show. Where does Timothy Leary belong in this dance of illusion? I thought of my kids and walked somehow upstairs to the second floor landing and opened the door to my daughter's room. Susan was sitting in bed, the classic thirteen-year-old with her hair up in curlers, frowning in concentration at the schoolbook in her lap while rock and roll music blasted through the room. It was pure Saturday Evening Post cover Americana. The puppet doll teenager glanced up. "Hi, Dad." She was biting a pencil and looking at the book. I slumped against the wall, looking with amazement at this marionette stranger from assembly line America. She glanced up again, quickly. "Hi, Dad, what would you like for Christmas?" She went on biting the pencil, frowning at the book, waving slightly at the beat of the music. In a minute she looked up again. "Hi, Dad, I love you."

A shock of terror convulsed me. This was my daughter and this was the father-daughter game. A shallow, superficial, stereotyped, meaningless exchange of Hi, Dad, Hi, Sue, How are you Dad? How's school? What do you want for Christmas? Have you done your homework? The plastic doll father and the plastic doll daughter both mounted on little wheels, rolling by each other around and around on fixed tracks. A complete vulgarization of the real situation — two incredibly complex, trillion-cell clusters rooted in an eternity of evolution, sharing for a flicker this space-time coordinate and offered this rare chance to merge souls and bring out the divinity in the other, but desiccated and deadened into the Hi Dad Hi Susan squeaks. I looked at her beseechingly, straining for real contact. I was stunned with guilt.

*With microscopic clarity, I saw the egocentricity, the sham of my devoted father routine. Is it too late? Can I come back... glorify this rare trembling opportunity? I turned and slowly walked downstairs to the front hallway. Eleven-year-old Jack sat on the floor watching television. I sat down next to him. Without taking his eyes from the tube he said, "Hi, Dad. Great program, Dad." Once again the piercing realization of my blind misuse of this divine Buddha child.*

*I followed his gaze to the television set. Jack Benny, wise, noble, long-suffering guru, was going through a routine about death, the transience of life. Memories from my boyhood — Fred Allen, Jack Pearl, Will Rogers, Charlie Chaplin. Each week the cosmic television show repeating the same message, infusing into the frail, karmic forms of Benny, Allen, Rogers — the ancient messages, comic and tragic. Don't you see? It's spinning by you, blinding you. Don't you catch on? You're going... you're going. Use the few seconds that remain.*

*I suddenly knew that everything is a message from the impersonal, relentless, infinite, divine intelligence, weaving a new web of life each second, bombarding us with a message. Don't you see?! You're nothing! Wake up! Glorify me! Join me!*

*Then there were three men on the TV screen. One was in a barber's chair; one was facing him and the other had his back turned. The third man suddenly wheeled around and said, looking straight through the television tube, into my eyes, "You've been dead for two seconds." (Laugh track laughter)*

*The cosmic playwright uses diverse messengers to get the point across. It's in a flower. It's in the light of a star that takes millions of years to reach your eyes. Sometimes, for the stupid, he even writes it out in words in a television drama, for those whose obtuseness can only be opened up by the boob tube.*

*I'd been dead for two seconds. And this is what hell is like. I could look back over the past forty years with chagrin, with pain at my blindness. Every second presented me with a golden chance to tune in, to break through, to glorify, to really groove and dance with God's great song. And every second of every minute of every hour of every day I grimly played out my narrow little mental chess game. The action was still continuing on the television*

set, but my consciousness was shrieking in remorse. Agonbite of inwit! Waste! Waste! Fool! How many times had I heard the message? In all the great religious books, in all the poems, everyplace it confronted me. Forget yourself. Tune in on the big picture.

Then I heard music. I looked up at the screen and saw Doris Day leaning towards me, her hands beckoning. What was she singing? "The second time around, I'm so glad I met you, the second time around." It suddenly dawned on me, that's what death is; that's what hell is. It just keeps going. There's no end to it. You have your first chance to touch and taste direct contact with God's energy and then when that's over, a second time, you repeat the whole process, but it's different. There's a plastic film between you and the divine process around you. Your egocentricity, your deadening mind has created a plastic hell. That's the meaning of ghosts and anguished spirits, doomed for eternity to exist, separated from life, that precious, fragile gift that we squander every second of this so called mortal reality. The second time around. Second time, it's the carbon copy. One little interval out of step. This time you are one vibration beat behind that ecstatic intersection which the living call life and which the tormented call paradise.

Later, I swam into the kitchen. There was a book on the table. I flipped it open. In a second I saw the history of every word on the page tracing back, back, back, back, to the beginnings of written language. Back down to one sentence -- the death of the father, *morte du pere*, and in that sentence, boiled and bubbled down to the essence of the one word, *morte*... there it was again, the grim confrontation.

I sat on the kitchen floor, looking at my body, my skin of delicately treated leather, exquisitely carved but dead. I saw plastic veins, blue and pink, and I saw celluloid fingernails. My mind was spinning like a computer that had no connection with anything live — no flesh, no cell, no sweat, no smell. I had lost my senses. *Morte*. Death. With only the mind to spin out its universe of thoughts. Now you know what hell is. The mind cut off from the body, from life, from seed, from cell.

George Litwin staggered into the room. He was now a nineteenth-century Frenchman: cocky, carefree, courageous. He swung around and looked at me with anguished eyes. We were both dead men, trapped in the doomed submarine. We said nothing, but our eyes met in sympathetic terror. Gone, gone. It's finished.

*It was straight telepathic communication. I was in his mind; he was in my mind. We both saw the whole thing, the illusion, the artifice, the flimsy game-nature of the mental universe. The popeyed look of terror changed to mellow resignation and the Buddha smiled. He murmured the word, "Harvard," smiling. I said, "America." He said, "Duty." And I said, "Love." He flinched and then nodded, smiling sadly, "Yes, love." That was the ultimate confrontation. The last shattered secret from the Buddha bag. It's all an illusion, even love. And what's left? The wise, cool, all-seeing eyes and the slight smile around the mouth. Acceptance, peace, resigned serenity. It's all in your own mind, baby, the whole bit from beginning to end. It is the spinning out of your own chessboard. Caesar, Alexander, Christ, America, Timothy Leary, George Litwin, even love -- they only exist because you think them. Stop thinking them and they do not exist. Then George was gone. I floated to the door. Perhaps outside the house I could find something solid, real, tangible.*

*I ran out to the lawn... snow, trees, starlight. It had never been more beautiful. Etched, sharp, magnified. I stood there listening for the answer. Where is the center? What is real? What can we do? Then rapidly, but completely, in careful detail I recapitulated the social and intellectual history of the human race. I relived and worked through every solution that the human mind had attempted. Society, migrations, groupings, tribal wanderings, invasions, the planting of crops, the building of cities, the restless searching for possibility and meaning, the moral codes, the taboos and kinships, the emergence of stumbling species groping for answer, for order, for center, the lost mutants trapped in their forebrains, trying to think and act their way back to the center. What to do and where to go? I could foresee the outcome of any action I should begin. And slowly, like a string being reeled back, I retraced my steps to that central spot in front of the fire where the session had begun. Here was the beginning. Michael, the master trickster, sitting silently and waiting. Maynard and Flo on the couch. Flo draped across Maynard's lap. I said something. Flo sat up and replied. Maynard's head went back and laughed. Then I repeated the same message; Flo sat up, Maynard laughed. I repeated the same message. Flo sat up and Maynard laughed. We were trapped in a time loop. Doomed forever to repeat a brief television commercial, over and over again at the station break.*

*Flo and Maynard were beautiful, stage-dressed, made-up characters. The classic frail beauty, and the dapper young musician, costumed for their parts.*

*I looked at Michael. His sad face bore the record of all human suffering. He was clearly one of the twelve apostles, cast for the moment in the funny little drama of Michael and Cambridge, come to teach us the ancient message that the center is back by the fire with your friends. Quiet detached trust and mutual acceptance of the ultimate cosmological horror. Limited. Limited. Limited. Trapped in our nervous systems, struggling to catch one glimpse every decade or two of the ancient cellular membrane meaning of life. Waiting patiently through those long periods of plastic isolation, until that next vibrant contact came...*

*...My previous psychedelic sessions with psilocybin had opened me up to the sensory levels of consciousness, pushed consciousness out to the membrane frontier, contact points of eyeball and light, ear canal and sound. Psilocybin had sucked me down into nerve nets, into the somatic organs... heart pulse and air breath. It had let me spiral down the DNA ladder of evolution to the beginning of life on this planet. But LSD was something different. Michael's heaping spoonful had flipped consciousness out beyond life into the whirling dance of pure energy, where nothing existed except whirring vibrations and where each illusory form was simply a different frequency.*

*It was the most shattering experience of my life. I sat there, a part of Einstein's equation, seeing it all, terrified and confused, desperately looking for some structure that would last against the ruthless bombardment of energy waves. And through it all, sitting with his head cradled in his knees, was the architect of enlightenment, the magician, who had flicked the switch to this alchemical show of revelation. Michael, the trickster.*

*As I watched him, looking for an answer in his face, he changed. No longer the cool, cynical Buddha eye. I now saw him as the lost victim of the revelations he'd unleashed. As I studied him carefully I could see scars on his face and hands and even threads of antennae sticking up from his skull. He shot a piteous, resigned look in my direction. He is the victim of some greater power. His consciousness has been captured, perhaps by intelligences from another planet. He is not a free agent. He knows what he's doing but he has no control over it. His turning us on is not an act of love and glorification but some sort of compulsion. He has to do it. He wants us to share the immobilization of his profound vision, to share his celestial dilemma. His cosmic loneliness. How can one act when one sees that all form is an illusory package of vibrations, just like your television screen? Nothing but beams of light, while we comfort ourselves with childish explanations of philosophy and religion.*

*The effects of the drug began to wear off by dawn. I was still higher than I had ever been before, but at least some structure was coming back. The flow of vibrations had stopped, and I felt myself freezing into a mold of plastic. There was a terrible sense of loss, of nostalgia, for the long hours, eons really, when one was at the heart of meaning and the radiant core of the energy process.*

*I walked up to the Ferguson's room. They were sitting transfixed, feeling the same despair at their ejection from paradise. I knelt before Flo with my head in her lap. Tears came down her eyes, and I found myself shaking with sobs. Why had we lost it? Why were we being reborn in these silly leather bodies with these trivial little chessboard minds? For the rest of the morning I was in a daze, stunned by what had happened, trying to figure out what to do with these new revelations; how they make sense, what to do with life routines, which were obviously pointless, senseless, and completely artificial.*

Timothy Leary interpreted this first LSD trip as a death-rebirth experience. He imprinted that model and it became part of his psychedelic philosophy for the next several years. It would inspire him to rework the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* into a manual for the LSD trip. \*



# 1961-1962

## Experiments with Convicts and Christians

In tandem with his activities with Allen Ginsberg and the experiments with grad students, Leary's group conducted two experiments that are legendary in the annals of psychedelic history. The first was the Concord Prison project.

Searching for a way to perform an experiment with measurable results, they came upon the idea of giving psilocybin to prisoners. They could then measure the recidivism rate and, hopefully, have some statistical proof of the positive therapeutic effects of the drug. When the Harvard administrators refused to approve the plan, Leary did the Learyesque thing — striking out on his own, meeting with prison administrators and gaining their approval to share psilocybin with five volunteer prisoners. Leary, Metzner and Weil would conduct the session and, in keeping with Leary's egalitarian views, they would dose with the prisoners.

When the Harvard guys and the prison guys came on to the effects of the psilocybin, Tim found himself feeling ill at ease. Even with the provision of some art books and jazz records, the prison environment couldn't have been more oppressive... and they were hanging with "criminals." The set and setting was, to say the least, not optimal. When Tim said what he was feeling aloud, one of the convicts asked him why? Tim told the prisoner that he was afraid of him. The prisoner then told Tim that *he* was afraid of *him*. "Why?" asked the prisoner. "Because you're a criminal," Tim replied. The prisoner then told Tim that he was afraid of him "because you're a mad scientist." They both started laughing. From that point on, the prisoners and the psychology professor and students had good trips. Another convict, in prison on a morphine charge, simply couldn't believe his good fortune. He started laughing about being allowed to get so high in jail.

The Harvard Psilocybin Project was able to report good rehabilitation rates from the Concord Project, although the statistics and methodology were later challenged. What we do know is that some people who were stuck in a miserable prison had some refreshing moments of illumination and ecstasy.

In retrospect, prison recidivism may not have been the cleanest slate upon which to test the long term efficacy of psychedelic therapy, since there are so many difficult factors involved. Ex-cons face multiple, near-insurmountable challenges trying to reintegrate into a society that usually refuses them opportunities. Besides, a more aware, tuned-in convict might simply conclude that the outside is, fundamentally, just as criminal and corrupt as the inside and return to doing whatever he feels he needs to do to get along.

The other legendary intervention by the Harvard group into the world-at-large happened in a church on the day before Good Friday. At Walter Pahnke's insistence, a skeptical Leary finally relented and joined him in an experiment with twenty religion students at Andover Newton Theological Seminary to see if psilocybin would provoke a religious experience. It was a double-blind experiment, so half of those present were dosed and half were giving a placebo. The results were impressive. Of the ten students that were dosed, nine of them still recalled having a genuine mystical experience on that day decades later.

More recently, results from a legal experiment with psilocybin conducted at John Hopkins in 2006 showed six in ten subjects having a "full blown mystical experience" and eight in ten reporting a gain in their sense of well-being.

## **Too Loose for the Harvard Squares**

As busy as they were conducting all these activities, the denizens of the Harvard Psilocybin Project still found time to experiment on — and amongst — themselves; in fact, a bit more than the establishment types at Harvard liked. By late 1961, relations with what Timothy would later call "the Harvard squares" were starting to fray. McClelland collared Leary and Alpert, repeating complaints he'd been

hearing about partying and irresponsibility amongst the psychedelic project crew and friends. He rung a promise from them to be more cautious and follow a protocol.

But by spring of 1962, Herbert Kelman, a conservative professor who, it was later learned, had received funding from a CIA front group, started leading the charge to rein in Leary and his project. A faculty meeting was arranged that attracted a gaggle of bystanders. The project was roundly excoriated and Harvard put the project's psilocybin under lock and key. (By then, they were already into LSD, so this had no effect on their personal stash.) But what really finally brought down the great Leary-Alpert Harvard drug experiment was an article in the school newspaper, the Harvard Crimson, by a very young Andrew Weil — the man who would go on to become America's alternative medicine guru. Weil was jealous of Alpert over a relationship Alpert was having with an undergraduate. The article reported on the meeting and repeated claims by Leary-Alpert's critics that the project was run carelessly and irresponsibly. This, in turn, led to a tabloid-style piece about druggies running wild at Harvard in a Boston daily. And with that, the Harvard psychedelic goose was cooked.

It would be 1963 before both Leary and Alpert were officially let go by Harvard. On departing, Leary quipped, "Psychedelic drugs cause panic and temporary insanity in people who have never taken them." By then, they and their cohorts had already made preparations to exit academia as spiritual revolutionaries by forming the International Foundation for Internal Freedom (IFIF). This was the first organization dedicated to the idea of cognitive liberty — the position that the right to control one's own consciousness and alter it (or refuse to alter it) with drugs or technology was a profound civil liberty. It was also the first organization dedicated to instructing ordinary citizens in how to use psychedelic drugs so as to derive the most benefit from them.\*

# 1962 – 1964

---

## Did the CIA Kill JFK Over LSD? The Strange Case of Mary Pinchot (Meyer)

One of the most captivating elements in Leary's richly eventful life of intrigue is the interaction he had with the late Mary Pinchot (Meyer). An elegant society lady and artist who mixed with the powerful in Washington, D.C., Ms. Pinchot first introduced herself to Timothy in 1962 during the Harvard years. At their first meeting, she told him that she was part of a group of women who appreciated the potential of LSD to increase sensitivity and awareness and were conspiring to get some very powerful American political players to turn on to the drug. They figured this would increase the likelihood of world peace. She wanted Tim to teach her how to run an effective and meaningful psychedelic session. Tim sent her on her way with a few doses and a pile of papers with his various instructions on how to trip that she could just as easily have obtained through the mail.

Over the next years or so, Timothy heard occasionally from Mary, and helped her to some acid. At first, she reported success. She'd convinced her very powerful lover to try the drug. Later, there was a panicked call. The women's subversive conspiracy had been uncovered. She was in danger. She also warned Timothy that the powers-that-be did not look kindly upon him. In his autobiography *Flashbacks*, Timothy writes that soon after the assassination of President Kennedy, Mary called and told him, "They couldn't control him any more. He was changing too fast. They've covered up everything." At this point, Timothy understood that Mary's powerful lover was the martyred president.

A few years later, Timothy learned that Mary had been murdered in late 1964 and that her personal diary had been found and destroyed (later investigators have uncovered pretty good evidence that the diary had been destroyed personally by James Jesus Angleton, the chief of CIA Counterintelligence at the time). The murder itself looked suspicious and has been the subject of numerous books and articles suggesting a government conspiracy. It wasn't until he made

a brief attempt to investigate the murder with a friend that Leary discovered that Mary Pinchot had once been married to Cord Meyer, the man he'd frequently been in conflict with when they were both powerhouses in a liberal veterans organization while in college, and who had gone on to become a right wing CIA operative.

Some Leary biographers are shocked, just shocked that some of his stories may have contained a bit of blarney (Ok. A few bits of blarney). Personally, I was amazed to discover that any of this was true! He did actually have a friendship with Mary Pinchot Meyer, as confirmed by Nina Burleigh's 1998 biography, *A Very Private Woman: The Life and Unsolved Murder of Mary Meyer*. The biography also confirms that Mary had a passionate affair with JFK, putting Timothy one very lysergic degree of separation from the President. Burleigh was also able to confirm that Mary and JFK smoked marijuana together in the White House. She was not, however, able to confirm that they took LSD together.\*

# 1963-1968

---

## **Without an Institutional Net: Life at Millbrook & the Hippie Explosion**

### **Techniques for Ecstasy**

Having been officially booted from Harvard, Leary and Alpert, joined by Ralph Metzner and a few other troopers, made several attempts at self-exile, starting off in Mexico — where they had already run psychedelic workshops the previous summer. But in the process of publicizing their plans, they stirred up gossip in the local Mexican tabloids. When Leary tried to straighten the situation out, the US State Department intervened with the President of Mexico to get them tossed out of the country. It was the first direct indication that they had opposition at the pinnacle of power. Brief, unsuccessful, hapless attempts to set up a scene on the islands of Dominica and Antigua also ended in deportation. Our bedraggled seekers ended up back in the US, where they finally had a stroke of luck.

Peggy Hitchcock was already a friend and a psychedelic enthusiast. Her brothers Billy and Tommy — successful investment brokers and heirs to the Mellon fortune — had a massive 2,500 acre estate in Millbrook, New York about 90 miles north of New York City. The main house was a 64 room mansion. They didn't use it, so they turned it over to Leary and crew so they could carry on their psychedelic experiments in peace.

The early years at Millbrook were relatively calm. The group experimented with psychedelics — Leary's model was a weekly LSD trip and a little hashish every evening at sundown. They also experimented with other consciousness techniques. They were spiritually promiscuous, running the gamut. They experimented with Hindu, Buddhist, Sufi and other models, sampling prayers, meditations and exercises — and they read widely regarding various methodologies for remaining as conscious as possible.

Leary became particularly fond of the methods of the Russian mystic, G.I. Gurdjieff, who tried to decondition people from their habitual perspectives and personalities by giving them unusual, unpredictable and sometimes shocking exercises. Herman Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game* — in which the protagonist and truth seeker Joseph Knecht engages in a kind of pragmatic mysticism — puzzling out the meaning and purpose of life by intersecting with the universe as a playable game that requires understandings in aesthetics, mathematics, music and other disciplines also served as a model for the pursuits of the Millbrook commune. The setting of the novel, Castalia, served as the new name for Leary and company's efforts. They called themselves the Castalia Foundation.

Millbrook, during those early years, supported itself by offering workshops where people from outside the group could pay to undergo these various techniques and experiences, sometimes using psychedelic drugs and sometimes not.

Once again, Timothy Leary was probably a little bit too good at publicizing the venture. Almost instantly, Leary, Alpert and company were featured in many of America's major magazines of the time — *Look*, *Newsweek*, *Saturday Evening Post* and *Esquire*. Naturally, Tim couldn't resist the occasional provocative statement. Soon everybody in the small conservative village of Millbrook, New York knew that they had some incomprehensible and possibly disreputable strangers in their midst.

Still the early months at Millbrook were relatively idyllic — a time of great bonhomie and spirited experimentations in consciousness. \*

# 1963 – 1964

## **The Death of Aldous Huxley and The Psychedelic Experience**

In fall of 1963, Leary, with help from Alpert and Metzner, had completed the manuscript for his first post-psychedelic book. In *The Psychedelic Experience*, Leary and company reworked the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, the Eight Century Tibetan Buddhist guide through the death experience, into a psychedelic trip guidebook.

In late October, Aldous Huxley's wife Laura phoned Timothy and told him that Aldous was dying and wanted to see him. When Leary appeared bedside, Aldous announced his intention to take LSD as he was dying and asked Timothy to guide him through by reading to him from his *Psychedelic Experience* manuscript. Timothy suggested that it would be better if his wife guided him through his final trip. On November 22, 1963, Laura injected her husband with 200 micrograms of LSD and guided him "into the light." On that same day, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated.

The book, *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on The Tibetan Book of the Dead* would be published in 1964 and eventually sell close to 60,000 copies in hardcover (paperback sales unknown.) It would launch at least as many trips and serve as the inspiration for The Beatles song, "Tomorrow Never Knows."\*



# 1964

## The Seven Tongues of God

Leary wrote several articles during this period that would reflect his thinking in the coming years. Appearing in *The Psychedelic Review*, a periodical being edited out of Millbrook by Ralph Metzner, his piece, “The Seven Tongues of God” show the existential and scientific areas of inquiry that would continue to haunt much of his later work. In this piece, Leary delineated “seven basic spiritual questions”:

- 1. The Ultimate Power Question** Cosmology... What is the basic energy underlying the universe — the ultimate power that moves the galaxies and nucleus of the atom? Where and how did it all begin? What is the cosmic plan?
- 2. The Life Question** Genesis, biology, evolution, genetics... What is life? Where and how did it begin? How is it evolving? Where is it going?
- 3. The Human Being Question** Anatomy and physiology... Who is man? Whence did he come? What is his structure and function?
- 4. The Awareness Question** Epistemology, neurology... How does man sense, experience, know?
- 5. The Ego Question** Social psychology... Who am I? What is my spiritual, psychological, social place in the plan? What should I do about it?
- 6. The Emotional Question** Psychiatry. Personality psychology... What should I feel about it?
- 7. The Ultimate Escape Question** Eschatology, Anesthesiology (amateur or professional)... How do I get out of it?

In this essay, Leary finds satisfaction neither in the reductionist sciences of the mid-Twentieth Century that had abandoned the idea of exploring the big questions nor in the religions that were disinterested in the tools and ideas provided by such cutting edge sciences as astronomy, physics, genetics, paleontology, biochemistry,

evolutionary theory, physiology, neurology, psychology and anesthesiology. He also suggests that, with the aid of psychedelics, we can experience the insights that are provided by the sciences and sense how they merge with our profound, revelatory and sometimes ecstatic religious epiphanies.

One can read, in the ideas and organization of “The Seven Tongues of God,” the evolutionary and eschatological musing and patterns that would emerge more precisely and with greater confidence in Leary’s 1970s writings.

## The Invasion of the Merry Pranksters

Millbrook was still in its meditative stage when the Merry Pranksters arrived in the summer of 1964. The acid and speed fueled trip taken across America by Ken Kesey’s raucous tribe is, of course, legendary, thanks mainly to the very popular Tom Wolfe book, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*.

Excited to finally meet up with their East Coast brethren at the end of their cross country adventure, the Pranksters roared up the long driveway at Millbrook with rock music blaring, hootin’ and a-hollerin and tossing smoke bombs. The few frightened Millbrook residents who were outside ran into the house. Leary was on a meditative retreat and, on top of that, feeling unwell with the flu. Momentarily, friendly — or, at least, peaceable relations were established, but it was not to be the enthusiastic joining together of the east and west coast scenes that the pranksters had hoped for.

Wolfe dramatized the scene, depicting the pranksters sneering at Millbrook’s “crypt trip” (prankster Ken Babbs did, in fact, use those words to poke fun at Leary’s death-rebirth model for LSD tripping and the quiet meditative environment at Millbrook), but it wasn’t all quite the mano a mano standoff that legend has it. Eventually, Leary came out of hiding. He and Babbs and Kesey injected DMT together and formed a long lasting friendship.

It’s one of the ironies of Leary’s public reputation that his differences with counterculture heroes like Kesey, William Burroughs and Hunter S. Thompson have been much mythologized, but his close lifelong friendships with these same three men rarely merit notice. It’s also

ironic that many of the same people who excoriate Leary for being irresponsible with the psychedelic movement just adore the legend of Kesey and his freely freaking pranksters. Just sayin’.

## A Fairy Tale Wedding . . . and Divorce

During the summer of 1964, Leary fell in love with Nena von Schlebrugge, a stunning model (If they had supermodels back then, she would have been at the top of the list) who had appeared on the covers of *Vogue*, *Mademoiselle* and *Harper’s Bazaar*, all by age 16. Now at 23, she was marrying the hero of east coast psychedelia.

At the elegant wedding ceremony and party — in a scene that encapsulates the various strands that would make up Leary’s social circles for the rest of his life — earnest intellectual psychedelic seekers and proto-hippies mingled with jet-setters and high fashioned beautiful people, virtually all of them stoked on the LSD that were being passed around. Charlie Mingus and Maynard Ferguson performed with Miles Davis’s sidemen and the whole thing was filmed by legendary documentarian D.A. Pennebaker. The honeymoon, which took the newlyweds to Japan and India, was less fun. The connection the couple had found together in Millbrook seemed to disappear under the stress of travel. During an LSD trip in India, they experienced their alienation from each other as like a “thin film separating them.” Soon after returning, the couple would divorce, but not before engaging in a three way LSD experiment with Richard Alpert. This trip would clarify not only the separation between Leary and his wife, but also between Leary and his sidekick.

Nena went on to marry noted Tibetan Buddhist scholar Robert Thurman, who she also met at Millbrook. The couple had two children, one of them being the actress Uma Thurman.

## Eastern Wisdom — the India Trip

The honeymoon trek to India (where he and Nena met up with Ralph Metzner) would not be a total philosophic loss for Tim. He found time to write — reframing the *Tao Te Ching* as a poetic psychedelic meditation for a book that would be published in 1966 as *Psychedelic Prayers from the Tao Te Ching*. He also met Sri Krishna Prem, a Hindu wise man who told Leary that his path lay not with him in the East,

but in the West and The Future. Leary was deeply influenced by the advice for years to come. He was even more influenced there by Buddhist philosopher and German expatriate Lama Govinda, who suggested to him that he develop correspondences between mystical systems like the I Ching, astrology, and tarot and his ideas about personality types.

This can be seen as a turning point in Leary's philosophical evolution. During his first LSD trip, Leary concluded that the categorizing, patterning, busy human mind was all an absurd illusion and that the only possible response was a "Buddha smile," and here was a Buddhist philosopher who he respected telling him that his job was to be busy minded with categorizing and revealing patterns.

In the 1970s, Govinda's suggestion would influence Leary to work mystical systems into his otherwise science and technology oriented Future History Series. \*

# 1965

## **Sending an Emissary to Turn On England**

After returning to Millbrook from India and finding it had devolved into a chaotic bacchanalia complete with crazy head trips and even fistfights, Leary slowly broke up the rowdy crowd that had gathered. One strategy involved sending Michael Hollingshead away on a mission. He was sent home to merry ol' England with half-a-gram (6,000 200 microgram doses) of LSD and instructions to conquer the country. Hollingshead wound up giving first LSD trips to Paul McCartney, Keith Richards, Donovan and radical psychologist and author R.D. Laing among many others before finally succumbing to his own excesses, which landed him in jail for nearly two years.

## **The Arrival of Future Wife Rosemary Woodruff**

Leary was cheered by the arrival of Rosemary Woodruff on the scene, a young, girl-next-door pretty former model and Greenwich Village bohemian who was just finding her way out of a relationship with a junkie jazz saxophone player. Once again, Tim was in love. This time, the wedding would wait a few years, but the ecstatic couple wasted little time in proclaiming their devotion by painting the “Maha Yantra,” a symbol of spiritual and sexual union, high on the mansion chimney. \*

# Winter 1965

---

## The First Bust is the Deepest: Framed at Laredo

It was a fateful Winter Solstice, December 22, 1965, when the Leary family — Tim, his daughter Susan, his son Jack and his new lover Rosemary drove toward the border crossing at Laredo, Texas headed for Mexico. Timothy, aware that the kids were being neglected in the hubbub of psychedelic life, had planned a family vacation. As they made their way toward the border, he asked if there was any grass in the car. There was. It was a relatively small stash — less than half an ounce — that Rosemary had in a silver snuffbox inside a sewing kit. It was deeply buried underneath lots of other stuff. After a brief attempt to find it, they gave up. Nobody expected Americans — even the Leary family — to be smuggling weed into Mexico in the 1960s. The smuggling went in the opposite direction.

As they hit Mexican customs, Leary was greeted by a familiar figure. It was Jorge Garcia, the same official who had deported him from Mexico two years earlier. Although Timothy had already received a letter of assurance that he could re-enter Mexico on a family holiday, the officer told him that he was *persona non grata* and refused him entry “until I can check with officials tomorrow.” Now the Learys had to turn around and pass through US customs, coming from Mexico. In a frenzy, they dug out Rosemary’s stash. She was about to toss it out of the window when they noticed that US agents were already swarming the car outside. It was obvious that it was a set up — the entire procedure had been planned between US and Mexican authorities.

Susan told Rosemary to give her the pot. She stashed it in her panties. It didn’t work. The agents found a single marijuana seed near the front seat. After that, everyone was strip searched. They found Rosemary’s stash — now in Susan’s most private of places. The entire family was held — Jack in a juvenile holding cell, and Rosemary and Susan together in another cell. Timothy’s bail was set at \$10,000. Rosemary’s was \$5,000 and Jack and Susan were \$2,500 each.

Leary took responsibility for the marijuana found in the car and was charged with possession of marijuana and violating the Marihuana Tax Act.

Now it was a new ballgame. Timothy Leary was no longer the wisdom seeker who was a little too good at publicizing himself and who — in the words of Aldous Huxley — liked to “cock snoots of authority.” Now he was an outlaw — a reluctant martyr for the arising psychedelic youth counterculture.

When I write that he was reluctant, we have to note some complexities. Leary could have pleaded guilty. He could have promised to change his ways and received a light sentence. But he looked at the situation and understood that the second half of the 1960s was going to be a time of rebellion and youth resistance to grim authority. If he stood down now and apologized for something that he knew in his heart wasn't a crime, it would do serious harm to everything he had advocated up until that point. So he bucked up and, facing a potential thirty year prison sentence, he chose to fight the marijuana laws on religious and constitutional grounds.

Let's be clear. Timothy Leary was not a born martyr. He wasn't big on self-sacrifice. He believed that you could do good while feeling good — in fact, you would probably be a more generous spirit with your fellow humans if you were also generous with yourself. (I think of this as a Whitmanesque generosity as opposed to a St. Thomas Aquinas generosity. Walt Whitman openly gloried in erotic pleasures, exulted in his fame and sang his “Song of Myself.”) Leary rejected the Judeo-Christian emphasis on guilt and sacrifice. He wanted to replace it with a relaxed, life-affirming and, yes, pleasure-seeking tolerance. Timothy Leary didn't want anybody to have a shitty time fighting wars, fighting laws or being confined in an iron prison. And he certainly didn't want that for himself. Nevertheless, when history called, he answered.

Leary was convicted of violation of the marijuana tax act in fall 1966 and sentenced to a shocking thirty years in prison. Released pending appeal, he was eventually able to take the case to the Supreme Court where, in 1969, he and his representatives overturned that law on the basis that it violated the Fifth Amendment guarantee against self-incrimination. The tax act part of the charges was dropped, but he would still, eventually, get a ten year sentence for the Laredo bust.\*

# 1966 - 1968

---

## LSD Becomes Illegal

LSD was declared illegal in the State of New York in April 1966. In October of that year, it became illegal in California, by then, the epicenter of psychedelic culture. Most states followed suit. The federal government made it illegal in 1968. Under pressure from US authorities, it was also made illegal by most nations of the world during this same period.

Most legal research with LSD ended in 1968. A few research projects using LSD and other psychedelics would be permitted to start up again, starting in the mid-1990s.\*



# Spring 1966

## The Millbrook Busts

It was Spring 1966 and Tim and Rosemary were just coming down off of DMT — the ultrapowerful but short acting hallucinogen — when Jack announced that there were “a bunch of hunters” downstairs. Rosemary hid the DMT pipe under the covers and remained in bed while Tim went to see what was up. Thirteen armed deputies, lead by the county sheriff and an excitable and ambitious assistant district attorney named G. Gordon Liddy were conducting a raid.

At that time, LSD was still legal and Leary was trying to keep marijuana out of Millbrook. So the bust was almost a bust, save for a small amount of marijuana found in the possession of one of the guests. Rosemary distracted the cops by clinging to an urn filled with peat moss, asking the cops not to take “my sacrament.” Naturally, the cops — in those days, not yet very sophisticated regarding the look and smell of marijuana — thought they’d found a giant pot full of pot and left happily, arresting Timothy as the proprietor of the house and carting him off to jail. A few months later, a judge decided that the raid had not been properly conducted and the charges for this particular intrusion were dropped.

During December 1967, Liddy, now the DA, led a second and final Millbrook raid. Liddy had warrants charging Leary, Billy Hitchcock and another Millbrook denizen, Bill Haines with “conspiracy to create a public nuisance and criminal facilitation.” Police again only found small amounts of illicit materials — a little bit of marijuana and a few hits of LSD, which was by then against the law. Finding some legitimate prescription Ritalin, they also threw in a charge of “possession of methamphetamine.”

Later, impressed by his harassment of Leary, President Nixon would welcome G. Gordon Liddy into his administration as a Staff Assistant. Liddy would then write the memorandum that lead to the creation of the DEA. His life as a public official ended when he was busted and imprisoned for being one of the Watergate burglars. ✱

# Fall 1966

## The League of Spiritual Discovery — LSD

In Fall 1966, Leary and his compatriots formed the League of Spiritual Discovery. The organization campaigned to get marijuana and psychedelic drugs recognized as legal religious sacraments. As part of the campaign, Timothy wrote and published a small book titled *Start Your Own Religion*. The book included Leary's first public admonition to "turn on, tune in and drop out of TV studio games."

In the 1950s, he'd campaigned to democratize psychotherapy. Leary was now trying to democratize religion (not many budding religious leaders suggest that people start their own) in the context of the conscious use of psychedelic drugs, which he was also trying to democratize.

This was, perhaps first and foremost, a legal strategy. The federal government had made an exception in the drug laws by recognizing the rights of certain Native American tribes to use peyote as part of their religious ceremonies, so the same should apply to any other sincere religious seekers using mind expanding drugs.

## The Death of the Mind

In fall 1966, Leary and his Millbrook companions had a major off-Broadway hit, "The Death of the Mind." The theatrical performance/light show/lecture sampled from Hermann Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, with Leary in the role of Harry Haller, a middle aged man uncomfortable in his own skin who is taken through changes in the "magic theater" of the mind. They sold out the Village Theater — a 2,000 seater — for nine weeks and got mostly rave reviews. *The New York Times* reviewer suggested that Leary might deserve an Emmy. This was probably the last time Leary got good reports from the New York City intelligentsia.

## The Infamous Timothy Leary Playboy Interview

Every month, for long years, *Playboy* ran a lengthy interview with the major political, artistic and popular culture figures of the time. In those much slower media times, the *Playboy* interview had a giant impact.

In 1966, Timothy Leary had his turn. His interview — both brilliant and hyperbolic — churned great controversy mainly for its comments about sex and LSD. In a statement that seemed to be pitched straight at the visceral concerns of the average *Playboy* reader, Leary infamously said, “In a carefully prepared, loving LSD session, a woman will inevitably have several hundred orgasms.” It’s too bad that this was the takeaway from a conversation in which Leary effectively describes the acid experience, largely in sensual terms.

# 1966 – 1973

---

## The Hippie Counterculture

It's a popular fallacy that Timothy Leary was the pied piper who led America's youth down the perdition path to psychedelic hippiedom. He played a part. But in some sense, it was the young people who led him away from a comparatively moderate public stance (for example, that psychedelic drug use should require a license). Way back during the Harvard days of 1962, the Leary crew was a bit shocked to hear that LSD had become popular as a sexy, hedonistic party drug among West Coast surfers. The word was that LSD stood for "Let's Strip Down."

By the mid-1960s, psychedelic drug use was rising among the smartest college students, and bohemian youths were forming ever-larger, self-defining communities in New York City's East Village, San Francisco's Haight Ashbury, L.A.'s Sunset Strip and elsewhere.

The spread of this counterculture, which soon would be labeled "hippie," really evolved out of the beat culture. Of course, we've established that the Beat's public prophet, Allen Ginsberg, had been tapped on the shoulder by god (or so it seemed) in Leary's presence and instructed to bring psychedelic wisdom to the world. But these cultural outsiders, Ginsberg included, had been experimenting with drugs, psychedelic and otherwise, since they began to hang together at the end of the 1940s. In New York and particularly in San Francisco, their presence was felt far more than that of Leary and his Millbrookians. And then there was Ken Kesey and his fun loving crew of merry pranksters. They were a leading presence in the San Francisco scene that would come to define the hippie movement.

Finally, influenced by beat and bohemian culture and whatever kind of zeitgeist was emerging with the generation gap, rock and folk musicians were also starting to take the trip by 1965, and by 1966 their song lyrics were starting to spread the tripster spirit. By 1967, every pop musician to the cultural left of Pat Boone was making a psychedelic album. When Leary, during a visit from members of

the Grateful Dead, first listened to The Beatles groundbreaking *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, he said, "I think my work is done."

So while it's nearly universally accepted within the contemporary psychedelic research community that seeks to legitimize and legalize the substances in a psychotherapeutic and medical context that Timothy Leary is singularly responsible for the demise of their research, it seems likely that these drugs — and LSD in particular — would have become a pop culture phenomenon and a "scourge of youth" at just about the same pace it did even if Timothy Leary had never sucked down those 'shrooms poolside in Mexico at the start of that amazing decade. And it was the spread of LSD among young people that put paid to the research community. \*

# 1967

## The Human Be-In

On January 14 1967, the new psychedelic youth culture came together for a “gathering of the tribes” in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. It was called the Human Be-In and was organized mainly by the folks from an underground newspaper called *San Francisco Oracle*. The press release for the event declared, “For ten years, a new nation has grown inside the robot flesh of the old”... and predicted that people would gather to “celebrate and prophesy the epoch of liberation, love, peace, compassion, and unity of mankind.”

There is pretty much universal agreement among those who were there that the spirit that day was beautiful and transcendent — a splendid moment in time. This was the apex of innocence and flower power, before confused hordes of youthful runaways invaded the Haight Ashbury. Acid chemist Augustus Owsley Stanley (better known as Owsley) passed out his clean and strong LSD to most of the approximately 20,000 blissful participants and no bad trips were reported.

From the stage, in a very brief appearance, Leary introduced his “Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out” message to his largest audience to date. Dick Alpert, Allen Ginsberg and a number of other counterculture heroes also spoke. But the spokespeople weren’t the focus of this very independent countercultural community. They were mostly there to trip off each other and dance to the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane and other local psychedelic bands.

The national media ate up the Be-In, and hippies in general, broadcasting images of stoned, ecstatic, laughing, sexy young people into living rooms all over American to susceptible teenagers and young adults. For a few years, the “hippies” would be... well... the hippest thing in the world.

The day after the event, *The Oracle* sponsored a conversation between Leary, Ginsberg, poet Gary Snyder and philosopher Allan Watts on Watts’ Sausalito houseboat for publication in their next edition. Most

of the conversation revolved around the other fellows' skeptically interrogating the value of Tim's "Turn On Tune In Drop Out" mantra. Leary's arguments didn't particularly shine brighter than the other thinkers in this illustrious group, but he held his own.

In later days, Leary went back and forth on whether "Turn On Tune In Drop Out" was a misstep. By the 1980s, he would tell people it should be replaced by "Turn On Tune In Take Over," a slogan that had already been popular in the radical left counterculture of the early 1970s; and privately, he would discourage young people who would tell him that their psychedelic insights were making them want to drop out of society, telling them to bring their insights into the institutions instead. But for the most part, he would continue to defend his late sixties slogan as having been misunderstood and valid for its time. With the Vietnam War escalating, police repression increasing and the cultural gap between generations turning into an abyss, leading edge young people virtually demanded radical messages from any elders who wanted to stay in the game. Leary threw his two cents in, in opposition to the growing political call for revolution in the streets.

## **Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out, Timothy Leary, from Flashbacks, 1983**

*"Turn on" meant go within to activate your neural and genetic equipment. Become sensitive to the many and various levels of consciousness and the specific triggers that engage them. Drugs were one way to accomplish this end.*

*"Tune in" meant interact harmoniously with the world around you — externalize, materialize, express your new internal perspectives. "Drop out" suggested an active, selective, graceful process of detachment from involuntary or unconscious commitments. "Drop Out" meant self-reliance, a discovery of one's singularity; a commitment to mobility, choice, and change. Unhappily my explanations of this sequence of personal development were often misinterpreted to mean, "Get stoned and abandon all constructive activity".*

## The Marriage of Timothy and Rosemary Woodruff Leary

By late 1967, Timothy Leary was drifting away from Millbrook and he and his partner Rosemary were spending more of their time in California. So when Rosemary finally consented to be married, the event took place at Joshua Tree National Monument in the Mojave Desert. The ceremony was, nominally, performed by an Apache medicine man, although he was too spaced out on mescaline to say very much. Ted Markland, a character actor who had regular roles in *Bonanza* and *Have Gun Will Travel*, filmed the ceremony, which was attended by a mix of hippies and Hollywood types, with everyone totally blitzed on various hallucinogens.

In *Flashbacks*, Timothy remembers a joyous celebration, with people making spontaneous music, topless women sculpting the air around them and the Indian medicine man who was to conduct the ceremony unable to do anything but laugh hysterically. “That’s the way we were,” Leary writes, “always involved in one joyous pagan celebration or another, whirling in religious ecstasies and heroic adventures. For us the planet was without original sin, designed for our sacramental pleasure. We were not alone. Millions were out there with us. The pageantry of those days! Where did they go?”

## A Farewell to Millbrook/ Leary Theory During the Millbrook Era

In February 1968, in the light of busts and perpetual police harassment, the Hitchcock brothers decided to put an end to this piece of psychedelic history and ordered the eviction of Leary and company from the Millbrook estate.

If the Harvard years were about applying the psychedelic experience to a psychotherapeutic model, the Millbrook Era was about exploring cosmic consciousness on a bigger playing field, often in terms of eastern spiritual models of enlightenment, and about bringing that consciousness to the world. It was also, of necessity, about raising the flag of psychedelic drug exploration as a personal civil liberty — the right to control one’s own brain. And finally, it was about starting to come to grips with the social and political implications of an unexpected generation gap around psychedelic drugs and figuring out how to speak to the alienation of youth from the mores and values of mainstream society. \*



# 1968 – 1969

---

## A Brief Return to Berkeley During “The Revolution”

Tim’s first impulse, upon being released from the Millbrook hive, was to take Rosemary and Susan (Jack had already left a year earlier, joining the great migration to the streets of the Haight Ashbury) back to his old stomping ground of Berkeley, California where he still owned the family home. By now, Berkeley was a buzzing center of the international counterculture. But Tim was not attuned to Berkeley’s late ‘60s culture of protests, riots and apocalyptic revolutionary rhetoric so his stay in Berkeley would be brief.

## The Brotherhood of Eternal Love

At the invitation of a group called The Brotherhood of Eternal Love, in 1968, the small Leary family unit made its way south, to the sunny climes of Orange County, just outside of LA.

In 1966, a notorious working class gang of tough marijuana dealers from Orange County invaded and ripped off a Hollywood party over a pot deal gone bad. Among the items they grabbed was a bunch of LSD. They didn’t even know what it was — except that it was obviously a drug. One day, the gang leader, John Griggs tried it. “This is it!” he told his followers. “A religious experience.” He threw his gun into the ocean. In nearly an instant, the Street Sweepers gang became a religious psychedelic commune. And the skills they’d learned smuggling marijuana from Mexico... well, that still fit the profile. They added acid and hashish to their sales repertoire and became such a successful underground operation that they would eventually get dubbed “the hippie mafia.”

Timothy Leary’s *Psychedelic Prayers from the Tao te Ching* became a sort of holy book for the Brothers and Leary a guru. Being at loose ends anyway, the Leary family unit was happy to head to Laguna Beach and be glorified and feted by their high-flying friends. The Brothers were the ultimate ecstatic warriors of the psychedelic

revolution. They were following the logic (such as it was) of '60s psychedelia — this was the idea or vibe that the more people consumed psychedelic substances, the closer we would get to an advanced enlightened society... even if there was some freaking out, fucking up and weirdness along the way. What do you think?

The legend of the Brotherhood and the Laguna Beach scene is the subject of numerous books and articles, the best one being *Orange Sunshine* by Nicholas Schau.

## High Priest & Politics of Ecstasy

1968 saw the release of Timothy Leary's first semi-autobiographical book, *High Priest*. This book bravely, poignantly, poetically and hilariously tells the stories of fifteen psychedelic trips taken during the Harvard years (plus the nervous breakdown/breakthrough in Spain in 1959)— the trips that turned Timothy Leary into the legend of a mind. Many of the adventures I've already described are included. If you're going to read one Leary book about the psychedelic experience — with the emphasis on actual experience and not on the insights inspired by them — this is the one for you.

Later, 1968 saw the release of a collection of Leary essays under the title, *The Politics of Ecstasy*. Much more a product of its time than *High Priest*, *Politics of Ecstasy* crackles with its effervescent, confident and whip smart explication of how psychedelic experience intersected with generational politics and a demented war mongering repressive sociopolitical structure to create the mad countercultural explosion that was, in fact, peaking heavily that very year.

EXCERPT

### The Politics of Ecstasy, Timothy Leary, 1968

*The Next Lunge Forward*

*Where will the next evolutionary step occur? Within the human cortex. We know that science has produced methods for dramatically altering and expanding human awareness and potentialities. The uncharted realm lies behind your own forehead. Internal geography. Internal politics. Internal control. Internal freedom.*

*The nervous system can be changed, integrated, recircuited, expanded*

*in its function. These possibilities naturally threaten every branch of the establishment. The dangers of external change appear to frighten us less than the peril of internal change. LSD is more frightening than the bomb!*

*We are, in a real sense, prisoners of the cognitive concepts and intellectual strategies that are passed on from generation to generation — the cognitive continuity of history. And the stuff of it is words. Our current reliance upon substantive and limiting concepts will be the amused wonder of coming generations. We must entertain nonverbal methods of communication if we are to free our nervous system from the tyranny of the stifling simplicity of words.*

### *Turn On or Bail Out*

*The danger of LSD is not physical or psychological, but social-political. Make no mistake: the effect of consciousness-expanding drugs will be to transform our concepts of human nature, human potentialities, existence. The game is about to be changed, ladies and gentlemen. Man is about to make use of that fabulous electrical network he carries around in his skull. Present social establishments had better be prepared for the change. Our favorite concepts are standing in the way of a flood tide that's been 2 billion years building up. The verbal dam is collapsing. Head for the hills or prepare your intellectual craft to flow with the current.*

## **Timothy Leary & "The '68er Revolution"**

In 1968, the Vietnam War was escalating along with the opposition to it — particularly among America's youth. The student radical movement was exploding, not just in the U.S., but also in Mexico, Japan and Europe — particularly in France, where students and workers participated in weeks of protests, occupations and riots that nearly overthrew the government of Charles de Gaulle.

While Leary occasionally ridiculed America's military-industrial machine and mentality, he had encouraged psychedelic youths to simply turn their backs on it — to transcend political dramas and ignore the battles that had been taking place during the previous years. Finally, in 1968, he got into the act. In the underground newspaper *Berkeley Barb*, he praised the youth revolts at Columbia University, in France and in Germany. And he surprised the psychedelic politicians — Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin and the Yippies — with a spontaneous press conference in Chicago, colorfully

endorsing their plans for a “counter-convention” during the upcoming Democratic Convention that would take place there that summer.

The Yippie’s Chicago action was planned as a “Festival of Life” — a celebration of the life-affirming, open, wild and playful spirit of America’s head high youth — in opposition to the Democrats, who were nominating their pro-war candidate, Hubert Humphrey, despite the divided-but-majority votes for antiwar candidates cast during the primary (Prime antiwar candidate, Bobby Kennedy was, of course, assassinated).

It soon became clear that the city of Chicago was not going to allow the counterculture to stage a provocative festival in tandem with the Democrats’ gathering. They denied all permits to use the city’s parks as camping grounds or for public performances or to allow those gathering to march in protest anywhere near the convention itself. Mayor Daley’s stance was belligerent, and Abbie and Jerry responded in kind — or at least, so it seemed (much of what they said was deliberately ambiguous or tongue-in-cheek outrage, like threatening to dose the water supply with LSD, a technical impossibility). With the mood in America darkening after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Leary dropped out of the Chicago protests, predicting that the kids who went would be subjected to police violence and that the whole thing would be harmful to the antiwar cause anyway. Most of the other early endorsers also dropped out.

The ’68 Chicago Democratic Convention protests were, of course, met with such violence that a government study called it “a police riot.” As to whether it helped or harmed its cause, I’ll leave that to historians to iron out.\*

# Christmas 1968

## **The Laguna Beach Bust**

During the Christmas season, as the legendary year 1968 was breathing its last, a patrolman named Neil Purcell — the scourge of Laguna Beach dopers who was known for planting evidence if there was nothing to be found — pulled Timothy, Rosemary and Jack over. According to Purcell, when Timothy opened the car door to provide his license and registration, he smelled marijuana smoke. The Learys were busted — first of all, for two marijuana roaches allegedly found in the car ashtray. Leary always contended the weed was planted. This provided the excuse for a broader search. Rosemary was found to be in possession of a large chunk of hashish (with the Brotherhood of Love seal of approval on it) and 12 hits of LSD. And Jack Leary was also found to be in possession of a small chunk of hashish. \*

# 1969

## Victory! Now On to the Statehouse!

In the aftermath of the Laguna bust and in light of continued harassment from Purcell, Rosemary and Tim retreated to a mountain cabin in Joshua Tree, California, far away from cops and media. Meanwhile, Leary's lawyers were due to appear before the Supreme Court to challenge the Marihuana Tax Act. Although they tried to keep track of Supreme Court announcements by tuning in to news occasionally via shortwave radio, the Learys were caught by surprise when television crews from ABC and NBC news showed up at their hideaway to ask him about his victory. His lawyers, they informed him, had succeeded in overturning the much-despised Marijuana Tax Act on Fifth Amendment grounds. Much to Rosemary's surprise (and distress), he spontaneously announced that he was going to run for Governor of California.

The Democratic primary was actually not until the following year. Whether Timothy was aware of that at that particular impulsive moment is uncertain.

Leary's plan for his gubernatorial campaign involved getting his Hollywood and rock star friends to create a celebratory film about how he won the election and, in so doing, get people to daydream about Timothy Leary's altered State of California. It would all seem like so much fun that the voters would respond by making it a reality.

His campaign positions, though few, were largely libertarian. He would eliminate the state income tax, but replace it with a \$1,000 a year "frivolity" fee that would entitle the licensee to purchase hard liquor, guns, fishing rights, tobacco and marijuana — which, of course, would be legal. In certain licensed areas, prostitution, gambling, nudity and most mind-altering drugs would also be available to those who had paid the frivolity fee.

It's pretty clear that Timothy didn't put a lot of thought into his platform (for instance, how would a \$1,000 licensing fee be within the reach of the students and street hippies who would form his campaign

troops?). He was more concerned with stirring up some dialogue and having some “flamboyant fun.”

## **Come Together & Give Peace A Chance**

To support the campaign, Leary — with help from Rolling Stone publisher Jann Wenner — gathered together some major players in the rock world — Jimi Hendrix, Stephen Stills, John Sebastian and Buddy Miles. Together, they recorded an album of Leary’s poetic/hyperbolic psychedelic raps that would be released in 1970 under the title *You Can Be Anyone This Time Around*.

Then he got a call from John Lennon in Montreal. He and Yoko Ono were holding their “bed-in for peace” — a bit of antiwar performance art that would give the peace movement its marching song for years to come, “Give Peace a Chance.” Lennon invited Timothy and Rosemary to join Tommy Smothers and a gaggle of Hare Krishna devotees for the “Give Peace a Chance” recording. The much-viewed video of the event shows them both — with Leary naked from the waste up, grinning and clapping enthusiastically.

The following day, Timothy asked John Lennon if he would write a campaign song for him — telling John that his slogan was “Come Together. Join the Party.” Lennon started writing the song that, after some alterations, would become The Beatles hit “Come Together” and handed Leary the tape.

## **And in the end . . .**

As the historic decade of the 1960s reached its end, Timothy Leary testified for the defense at the trial of the “Chicago 8.” The eight antiwar activists had been picked out by prosecutors and accused of having conspired together (some of them didn’t even know each other) to foment riots during the Chicago Democratic Convention. Although the straighter members of the Chicago 8 expressed some hesitation at bringing Leary in to testify, he proved to be a succinct and earnest witness. During sworn testimony, he attested to the peaceful intentions of his friends Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin. The “8” were pleased with Timothy, but were convicted nonetheless.

Unlike his work in the 1950s with psychotherapy; his early work with psychedelics as therapeutic tools at Harvard, or his work with consciousness and spirituality during the Millbrook years; during the late 1960s, Timothy Leary was caught up in a swirl of constant activity — not to mention constant ego strokes — that no doubt distracted him from producing new ideas. He was a popular lecturer on University campuses and a kind of guru to the psychedelic spiritual outlaws in the Brotherhood and to myriad acid heads in general. He was promoting his books and his gubernatorial campaign — all the while, meeting with lawyers about trials yet to come. So it's not surprising that Leary did not seem to come up with new theories or paradigms during this exciting period. He was, in a sense, just one of the stars of the counterculture explosion, and probably less influential than many others. Certainly, at the very least, John Lennon (the only rock superstar to fully embrace his role as counterculture spokesperson), Abbie Hoffman and Allen Ginsberg held greater sway with the youth counterculture during this period. \*



# 1970-1976

---

## The Unkindness of Strangers: Prison and Exile

### Jail

The new decade began with Timothy Leary in court facing charges from the bust in Laredo, Texas. On advice from legal counsel that he would win his case on appeal, he waived his defense and was found guilty. Then it was back to Orange County to face the charges in the Laguna Beach bust. At first, Timothy was confident of victory — the defense could prove illegal search and seizure. But after Jack and Rosemary’s lawyers convinced them to plead guilty, Leary had to choose between defending himself or leaving them holding the bag. So once again, his lawyers didn’t put up a defense, promising good results on the inevitable appeal.

On March 9, Tim appeared before Judge Ben Connally for sentencing in the Laredo case, expecting to be released on bond pending appeal. To his shock, Connally sentenced him to ten years in prison and ordered him held without bond because he had “openly advocated a violation of these laws.” Meanwhile, Rosemary Leary was sentenced to six months and released on bond. A second appeal to have Timothy released on bond the following week failed, with the judge famously calling Leary “a pleasure-seeking irresponsible Madison Avenue advocate of the free use of marijuana and LSD.”

Activists and even mainstream media outlets protested that Timothy Leary was now being jailed not for violating the marijuana laws but for speech — for his advocacy in writings and lectures. Thus began years of legal defense fundraising and petitioning on Leary’s behalf — petitions defending his free speech would be signed by such leading intellectuals as Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, Nat Hentoff and any number of newspaper and magazine editors and publishers. It’s to the eternal shame of the ACLU that they never took up the case.

Leary had predicted to several people that he would never do any prison time. This, undoubtedly, speaks to some big blind spots in his

character. But it also speaks to the reckless optimism and belief in the overwhelming magic and power of the psychedelic counterculture that was current at that time — such that it is probably difficult for anyone who wasn't there to understand. As Hunter Thompson so famously phrased it, “Our energy would simply prevail. We had all the momentum; we were riding the crest of a high and beautiful wave.”

In prison, most of Timothy's fellow inmates held him in high regard, not only as someone who had stood up to the man but as someone smart and interesting they could talk to for legal or personal advice or just to alleviate their boredom. They called him “doc.”

His notes from prison were published in the book *Jail Notes*, with an introduction by Allen Ginsberg. It wasn't Timothy's finest writing, but interesting in parts for its rugged and erotic passages, with Leary poetically embellishing various wayward or ribald stories he heard from fellow prisoners.

## Escape!

When it came time for him to take a psychological test to determine if he should be locked up in maximum or minimum security, Leary was pleased to note that he had written part of the test himself. He used the test to portray himself as a docile model prisoner and was assigned to a “country club” at San Luis Obispo.

Although he found prison dynamics interesting, and would write cogently about them in various books and essays, Timothy Leary wasn't looking forward to sitting in stir for ten years. On top of that, he was looking at a possible 24 years for the ridiculous second Millbrook bust for “maintaining a public nuisance” related to the handful of people found at Millbrook with small amounts of grass and LSD. After a few months inside, Tim whispered to his wife that he wanted to escape.

Well, what prisoner facing hard time doesn't dream of escape? But this was Timothy Leary. Rosemary started making arrangements for taking him underground. The Brotherhood of Eternal Love would provide the money and the Weather Underground, the radical quasi-guerrilla gang of left countercultural antiwar fighters would supply the skill and moxie needed to get Tim out of the country once he escaped. All Tim had to do was get over the fence.

Leary eyed the telephone cable that connected a pole inside the prison to one on the outside. He was able to determine that it could hold the weight of a medium sized human being. In a conversation with a trusted prison friend, he determined that 8:30 pm on Saturday nights — when prisoners were allowed to leave their cells to watch a movie — provided a window of opportunity. Let's let Tim take it from here:

*I lay in bed shuffling the 24 Tarot cards. One: Moonless night. Two: Fog. Three: A Saturday night; wait until the patrol car returns from CMC-East with the snack bar trustees. Four: Paint white trim on the sneakers black. Five: Write farewell note and leave in locker. Six: Leave cellblock before or after 9 PM TV break when prisoners flood the halls. Seven: Wait until the central hallway is empty or all prisoners are walking with their backs to side door. Eight: Slip out side door and walk to the tree. Nine: Climb Tree (five seconds). Ten: Leap to roof, silently. Eleven: remove sneakers. Twelve: Lie down on roof to detect position of guards and patrol cars. Thirteen: If seen, be prepared to make a desperate break. Fourteen: crawl across the roof to connecting corridor to cellblock 324 (60 seconds). Fifteen: Creep to the end of 324, avoiding TV antenna wires (90 seconds). Sixteen: Put on sneakers and handball gloves. Seventeen: Wrap hands and feet around cable and pull self across (ninety seconds). Eighteen: Slide down pole on other side of fence (five seconds). Nineteen: Climb down bank and cross outer perimeter, avoiding barracks, alert for the fire watch — to reach highway (four minutes). Twenty: Run half-mile north along Highway 1 to turnoff with three trees (four minutes). Twenty-one: Wait for pick-up car with right blinker flashing. Twenty-Two: My contact is Kelly. My name is Nino. Twenty Three: Flee the country. Twenty Four: Live happily ever after.*

It all went almost according to plan. Leary got out there and got a grip on the telephone wire. He started pulling himself — hand over hand — towards the fence. But about a third of the way, he was exhausted. He felt like he couldn't make it. Then, a patrol car turned up its high beams. Leary thought he was caught. He had visions of being humiliated — “poked down like a raccoon with a stick.” But the patrol didn't see him. At that point, some inner strength — his survival instinct — kicked in, and he pulled himself along that wire all the way over the fence. Just before he crossed over to the outside of the prison, his glasses fell off. Leary wrote, “I wanted Errol Flynn and out came Harold Lloyd.” He reached inside the fence and was able to recover his spectacles and headed down the road to meet his getaway car. Leary didn't know that the Weather Underground was managing

his escape from the US until he got into the getaway car and was introduced to two young weatherwomen. Having been sufficiently radicalized by police harassment and prison time, he was happy to find himself in their practiced hands. Leary was given a new identity — 41-year-old businessman William McNellis — and was taken for a celebratory meeting with Weather leaders Bill Ayers (better known to Fox TV viewers as “President Obama’s terrorist pal William Ayers”), Bernadine Dohrn, Mark Rudd and Jeff Jones. After rapping into the night about The Revolution, Timothy was taken to a safe house in a rural area outside of Seattle, Washington where he met up with Rosemary. Then the whole crowd went to a drive-in where they smoked weed and watched *Woodstock: The Movie*.

The Weather Underground issued a press statement declaring that they had assisted in Timothy Leary’s escape from a prison where he was being held “against his will and against the will of millions of kids.” In an accompanying statement, Leary wrote, “There is the day of laughing Krishna and the day of Grim Shiva. Brothers and sisters, let us talk no more of peace. This is a war of survival.” He ended his statement with the provocative flourish: “I should be considered armed and dangerous.” He wasn’t armed, actually.

## Flight

With Rosemary Leary now settling into her new identity as business school graduate Mary Margaret McCreedy, she and “William McNellis” flew to Chicago, where — using the three forms of identification provided for them by the Weatherfolk — they were able to obtain passports. They then, separately, went through customs and boarded a plane headed for Paris.

Once in Paris, they were given the option to become quiet exiles. Old souls from the French Resistance (World War Two) could help them get settled underground and begin a new life. So they had to decide whether to cool it or take up the Weather Underground’s offer to unite them with Eldridge Cleaver and his exiled chapter of the Black Panther Party in Algiers. Timothy was inclined to kick back for a while and enjoy his newfound freedom, but Rosemary felt that they owed it to the Weatherpeople to try. So Tim went to Algeria to check out Cleaver’s scene. \*

# 1970 – '71

---

## With Exiled Black Panthers in Algeria

At first, the vibe with the Black Panthers in Algiers, Algeria was good. Eldridge Cleaver was congenial, and a group of Yippies, including Anita Hoffman (wife of Abbie), flew in to cement this bravura marriage of the psychedelic movement with the political revolution. (Anita later wrote that, beneath the surface, the competing egos of Eldridge and Timothy were insufferable.)

While Cleaver was ready to unite with Leary and the psychedelic movement, mainly out of respect for the Weather Underground, the proposition was riddled with difficulties. The Algerian government — a puritanical regime in a largely Islamic country — was not about to give sanctuary to the world's most famous acid renegade.

To seek asylum, the Panthers told the Algerians that Timothy Leary was “a black antiwar historian.” But what was the point of having Timothy Leary around if it wasn't for him to be a public figure bringing all the heads into the revolution? ‘

What followed was a situation comedy that could only have played out in the early 1970s, with the Cleavers worshipping North Korean dictator Kim il Sung (and naming their daughter after him) while the Learys were sneaking off to the Algerian desert to have extraterrestrial 600 microgram LSD trips. Adding to the anxious surreality were rumors that Cleaver had murdered a fellow Black Panther Party member for having an affair with his wife Kathleen.

Given that the member of the Algerian Government weren't completely isolated from international news, the inevitable happened. Reports of the scandalous LSD guru's presence in Algeria quickly went all around the world.

As the Panthers were sweating their precarious position vis a vis lying to the Algerians about Timothy, Cleaver discovered several thousand hits of LSD that one of Leary's pals had smuggled in with the intention to “turn on Africa.”

Things turned even more farcical when Tim, along with a bunch of Yippies, leftists and Panthers, was pushed into a trek around the Arabic world with the intention to meet with various revolutionaries and militants. The trip was a series of mishaps, stumbles and missed connections, but Timothy had a good time anyway, slipping away from the group several times, including in Egypt, where he posed for a photograph that, unbeknownst to him at the time, was similar to a photo that had been taken of Aleister Crowley at the same spot.

Finally, farce turned to slapstick when members of the international press recognized Leary while the group was at a hotel in Beirut, Lebanon. What followed was a car chase and then a foot chase through a restaurant and a casbah until, finally, Leary was trapped inside a bathroom by a pack of reporters. For once, he was speechless. Fortunately, he was rescued by his traveling companions who whisked him away.

Somehow the bedraggled lot of them made it back to Algiers. Then relations between Cleaver and the Learys turned chilly. Mainly, the problem was that the Learys wanted to continue their bohemian ways while Cleaver acted like their parole officer. Another factor was Cleaver's rising tension due to infighting — death threats included — with Huey P. Newton, the Chairman of the Black Panther Party, who was back in Oakland, California. (It was later shown that the battle was created and escalated by FBI agents working for their COINTELPRO program to destroy the radical left and black power movements.) Finally, Eldridge put Timothy and Rosemary under house arrest and issued a public statement to the underground in the US telling Leary acolytes “Your god is dead because his brain has been blown by acid.”

The Panthers' prison, though, was not so well guarded. The Learys soon escaped into the arms of the Algerian government, which was unhappy about Cleaver and his gang announcing to the world that they had “arrested” someone on their turf. The Algerians protected Timothy and Rosemary, momentarily. But more to the point, they wanted to get rid of them. In a few days, the Algerians had supplied them with passports in their real names and they were being shoved out the door. ✱

# 1971 – 1972

---

## With “Goldfinger” in Switzerland

Set loose to wander the world under their real names while the US feds, Interpol and even the White House were out for their capture, and without any other options, the couple nervously decided to accept an invitation from a radical group for Tim to come lecture in Copenhagen. When Leary checked in with his French Resistance contact — a lawyer and information broker with high level establishment contacts — he was warned not to go because Interpol was waiting there to grab him.

Believing they had a connection in Zurich Switzerland who would hide them, the Learys booked a flight there that had a stopover in Geneva. While changing planes in Geneva, the Learys received another message that they would be met by someone there who could provide them with temporary sanctuary. After a series of complicated maneuvers, they eventually found themselves at the luxurious home of yet another rogue character — this time, an upscale French gunrunner and raconteur named Michel Hauchard. Timothy wrote, “It was Goldfinger, welcoming us to a new life in Switzerland, land of freedom.

Thus began nearly two years of high living under Hauchard’s protection, punctuated by arrests and threatened extradition. While Swiss lawyers fought to get Leary permanent sanctuary, the US Government wanted him handed over. It was a cat and mouse game, with Leary, at one point, held in a Swiss jail in solitary for a month. During that time, he wrote most of his book about his escape, *Confessions of a Hope Fiend*. The title is a play off of Crowley’s semi-autobiographical novel, *Diary of a Dope Fiend*, which had just been rereleased, and his actual autobiography, *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*.

Leary also began the project Lama Govinda had suggested to Tim during his visit to India, charting congruencies between various mystical systems like the I Ching and Tarot with the Periodic Table of Elements and with various stages of human evolution in both the individual and the species as Leary understood them. It was the raw

beginnings of what would become the central subject of his influential Future History series, released later in the decade.

While in the Swiss jail, and certainly under duress, Timothy also signed an agreement entitling Hauchard to 90% of the royalties from *Confessions of a Hope Fiend* which was expected to be a giant success thanks to the high profile prison escape and Weather Underground/Black Panther associations.

And then, Rosemary was gone. Exhausted by years of busts, jailings and exile — and alienated by Timothy's need for public attention at almost any cost — she left with a young idealistic hashish smuggler associated with the Brotherhood and was in exile for over two decades.

Soon after, Timothy met the Englishman Brian Barritt. An unapologetic space cadet whose sole interests were psychedelic-enhanced forays into the cosmos and the works of Aleister Crowley, Barritt was just what Tim needed — someone to help him liberate himself from both the religious piety of his earlier psychedelic experiments and any sense of responsibility he might have felt towards the political revolutionaries who had driven him nuts (The feeling was, to be fair, mutual) in Algeria. Barritt turned Leary on to all things Aleister Crowley, believing that Leary was following, literally, in many of Crowley's footsteps. From that point on, Crowley's sensibilities would become an important spice in Leary's philosophical gumbo.

Leary and Barritt both started taking frequent high dose LSD trips (with a brief detour into heroin). With the spiritual, cultural and political agendas now pushed into the background, Leary tripped out on a new model. The idea was that pleasure, self-indulgence and aesthetics were evolutionary traits and that individuals who were liberated from the struggle for survival had a right and a duty to the species to occupy this happy, novel and creative stage of development. His guideposts were conscious hedonic pleasure (what he would later call "hedonic engineering") and evolutionary theory. Adventures that seem frivolous when compared to finding god or starting the revolution — such as skiing or mountain climbing or even driving a sports car on acid — turned into philosophical gold as Timothy transmuted his experiential revelations into the stuff of evolved "brain circuits." His writings about these trips, most of them



published in *The Intelligence Agents*, make for particularly pleasurable reading. At once frivolous and revelatory, Leary's joie de vivre had never leapt off the pages in quite the same way.

While in exile in Switzerland, Leary had the opportunity to spend time with some major figures that intersected his world. He spent an afternoon chatting pleasantly with Albert Hofmann, the Sandoz chemist who had discovered LSD. Hofmann had mostly positive things to say about LSD but objected that Tim had popularized the drug amongst adolescents. He met with Christophe Wenger, psychedelic enthusiast and grandnephew to Hermann Hesse, who gave him a prized Hesse painting. And he partied with Andy Warhol, who confessed to Tim his mutual fascination with Crowley. But it was the time that he spent visiting with Keith Richards and his common law wife Anita Pallenberg that would have the greatest consequence. Keith and Anita were in tax exile nearby in the south of France, along with the other Rolling Stones and their enormous entourage — all of them using and abusing the entire spectrum of drugs while recording the revered *Exiles on Main Street* album.

It was through Pallenberg that Leary met the woman some say was his *bête noire* — although that depends on whose stories you believe. Joanna Harcourt was the wild child daughter of European aristocracy who had followed the Euro Trash sex drugs and rock and roll party circuit before finally falling into the well-punctured arms of Keith and Anita. Smart, sassy and spoiled, she was infamous all around Europe for behaving outrageously in refined social circles. As Timothy colorfully described it, “she boogied naked on the glass table tops.” Pallenberg had told Joanna that Leary was the world's greatest philosopher, but a lonely man.

When Timothy and Joanna met, they immediately started taking vast quantities of acid together nearly every day. It was a period of high rapturous magic for the couple, but all of it tinged with a hint of hysteria. They were each, in their own way, flipped out desperadoes. Tim's desperation was as real as an armed Interpol agent while Joanna's was more of a spiritual and emotional sort, but they saw themselves in each other. \*

# 1973

## Captured in Afghanistan

When Leary's final bid for permanent asylum in Switzerland was rejected, he had to hit the unwelcoming road — a heavily tripping man without a country. Joanna joined him. This time, the exile adventure would be woefully short.

The couple made it safely to Vienna, Austria where Timothy met Joanna's famously regal mother, Marysia Ulam Krass Harcourt-Smith, heir to various fortunes and part of the family that owned the Harcourt publishing empire. A few days later, Dennis Martino — a dubious character in Leary's ongoing entourage who seemed to always show up at sensitive moments and who later turned up as a DEA Agent — suggested that Leary could find asylum in Afghanistan, where the Brotherhood had a powerful ally from their hashish smuggling business who was friendly with some of the Afghani royals (this was before the Soviets, the warlords, the Taliban and the US army totally fucked the place up).

As soon as the trio — Leary, Harcourt and Martino — landed in Kabul, a man approached Timothy, asked if he was Timothy Leary and snatched his passport right out of his hand. He handed Leary a card that read, "James Senner, Third Secretary, United States Embassy." Then the Afghan police came along and arrested him for not having his passport. He was taken to a prison that was in an abandoned hotel. With six armed guards stationed outside, Joanna was allowed to join Tim for a miserable night together. During two days at the Afghan prison, they were treated increasingly well, while the royals tried to figure out who Timothy Leary was and why he was so important. A nephew of the King who was a Leary fan got wind of their presence and visited Tim and Joanna, sharing some powerful Afghani opium.

On day three, they were bundled off to the airport where they were greeted by American DEA agents who put them on a plane back to the US, along with two armed agents to keep watch. During a stopover in England, Timothy demanded asylum from the British government.

No chance in hell. Leary was already considered *persona non grata* in England for having smoked pot in public with John Lennon and Yoko Ono.

## The Prisoner 2

The photograph, circulated all over the world, showed the captured fugitive — the man who President Nixon had declared “the most dangerous man alive” — laughing wildly as suited agents escorted him in handcuffs. The man was facing long years in prison — at 52, maybe life. Why was this man laughing?

Timothy Leary had met with the legendary media philosopher Marshall McLuhan back in 1966. McLuhan suggested two things. First of all, he should have an easy and memorable advertising slogan for his movement. This inspired “turn on tune in drop out” which was, thereafter, actually used in slightly altered form in dozens of major and minor advertising campaigns. And he told Timothy that he should always smile. His smile would be his logo. By signaling happiness and vitality, he would be the best advertisement for his product.

Still, given what was awaiting him, did he really want to smile this time? And it does look like he was having a genuine laugh. I asked Tim about this the first time I met him. He told me he started laughing because there was a giant swarm of reporters and cameramen there and the cameramen would crouch into position to get their shots, but the g-men who were walking him kept on speeding up. So all these cameramen would keep literally falling over, getting up, crouching again ad infinitum... and he found it funny.

Less entertaining (and less public) was his transfer from the Orange County Jail back to San Luis Obispo — this time to be dumped into solitary confinement.

## Neurologic — Raw Beginnings of 8 Circuit Brain Theory

Leary used his time in solitary well — writing the monograph *Neurologic*, which was the first time he fully described the lower four circuits in his evolutionary theory. (These were the “The Biosurvival

Circuit,” “The Emotional-Locomotion Circuit,” “the Mental-Manipulative Circuit,” and “The Socio-Sexual Circuit.” His three future circuits — “The Rapture Circuit,” “The Ecstasy Circuit” and “the Neurogenetic Circuit” — were the rough beginnings of the “future circuits” that he would develop later.

The cool thing about *Neurologic* is that it’s lucid. It’s crackling with Learyesque sparkle and enthusiasm for freedom and the future while, at the same time, it’s almost clinical in its deconstruction of homo sapien behaviors, as they reflected the “tribal rituals” and taboos of contemporary civilization. Although Timothy would never have said so, there’s a sense of calm vengeance as the beleaguered prophet essentially skewers everybody’s God, flag and country (or tribal identity or political gang), showing how many of humanity’s dearest attachments are rooted in a mix of genetic programming and vulgar accident. This is the man who — at this point — even described himself as “a burned out case,” striking out with a crisp and brilliant (if quirky) piece of work. (Of course, most people, even in the counterculture, weren’t going to understand it anyway. They would just consider it more weirdness caused by LSD. But for a few of us, it was like a bitch slap from another dimension.)

## The Escape Trial

At his escape trial, in an attempt to destroy his own credibility as a witness, Timothy let his eccentricities rule the day. His statement that “When I’m behind the wheel of a Chevrolet, I’m a Chevrolet. When I’m being the wheel of a Plymouth, I’m a Plymouth” was so widely noted that it was satirized by Saturday Night Live and then, many years later, by David Letterman. He was going to be convicted, obviously.

## Timothy and Charlie

After his inevitable escape conviction, Leary was moved to Folsom Prison where he was thrown into the bottom tier, considered the worst part of the worst prison in the country. Leary wrote that he had reached “the absolute Dantean bottom.” He quickly discovered that he had an appropriate next door neighbor for the lowest circle of hell.

Neighbor Charles Manson started the conversation by sending him over some tobacco and some books, including *In Search of the Miraculous* by Gurdjieff follower P.D. Ouspensky and *The Master and the Margerita* by Michail Bulgakov. Manson told Timothy, “This is the bottom of the pit... It is bliss here” and “LSD is like the invention of the wheel.” Leary and Manson talked philosophy for a bit. Manson wanted to know why Leary didn’t assert his leadership over the movement and tell everybody what to do. Leary responded, “That was the point. I didn’t want to impose my realities.”

Leary spoke frequently with Manson during his Folsom stay. In 1993, I had the occasion to chat with Timothy about Manson. He told me that Charlie could be really sharp, philosophical and observant for brief periods. But then, he would become tiresome — biblical and whiney — the archetypal resentful lifelong prisoner who got a raw deal from birth endlessly repeating his litany of woes.

In terms of Timothy’s writing and philosophical insights, his second go around in the prison system was more productive than his first. The context that he had been developing for understanding human behavior that was reflected in parts of *Neurologic* could be studied and applied with terrible clarity in the prison system. In fact, if you go back to his earlier, pre-Harvard writings, you find his idea of the cyclotron — a situationally-intense environment in which the various psychological traits on his earlier transactional psychology graph (not that different from the lower circuits in his new system) could be observed and hopefully changed. Prison was a cyclotron where Timothy had the opportunity to observe “mammalian politics” at its rawest and most intense. Some of his best writings about the prison experience — most of which were actually written while in prison — are found in *Neuropolitics*, a collection of writings originally published in 1977 (more on *Neuropolitics* later). Leary also used this time to further develop the evolutionary theories that would become known as the 8 Circuit Model of Consciousness, and wrote big chunks of the text that would wind up published in the five books that made up his Future History series. \*

## The Kahoutek FAIL/The Starseed Transmissions

And then, there was the comet Kahoutek. Somewhere on the back pages of the daily newspaper, it was noted that a comet was going to pass near the earth. Nobody was paying attention. Leary suspected a possible conspiracy to hide an impending apocalypse. What if the comet was headed for Earth and, to avert chaos, the powers-that-be weren't telling people?

There was no such conspiracy and Kahoutek sailed by without so much as a fiery wave hello.

Timothy later blamed this foolishness on his “prison blues.” Still, the coming of the comet inspired him to compose a classic bit of over-the-top Leary prose, *Terra Two: The Starseed Transmission*. It's a favorite among many Leary aficionados — making up for its skewered sense of reality with its visionary inspiration, poetic prose and its longing for escape from the bondage of gravity. The short monograph — which would be published and distributed by Joanna — contains his first explicit advocacy of space migration and immortality. \*

# 1973 – 1974

## **Abused in Prison?**

Leary also, apparently, suffered some abuse at the hands of the prison authorities at Folsom. As described in Robert Greenfield's *Timothy Leary: a Biography*, as the scene begins, Joanna is giving Allen Ginsberg and his fellow beat poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti a ride to see Timothy. After being made to wait an unusually long time, Leary is led into a special visitors cage. Greenfield quotes Joanna, "... Tim came into the cage and his head was shaved and he had blood all over his skull. Very very frightening. He said they had yanked him out of his cell in the early morning and insisted on shaving his head. They shaved it in an extremely clumsy way and he got cut. It was only later that I realized they did it on purpose. They wanted him to look awful in front of his visitors. To show their supremacy over Tim to Ginsberg."

Soon after this, he was moved to Vacaville, a psychiatric and medical facility also widely noted at the time for prisoner abuse and the subject of much conspiracy theory around experiments in mind manipulation. \*

# 1973 – 1976

## **Chic Chick Amongst the Miserable Hippies**

Meanwhile Joanna Harcourt was in San Francisco “organizing” his defense. He was not in good hands. It wasn’t Joanna’s fault. She had been a free-floating hip European socialite and had no experience with the US counterculture. She didn’t know the myriad characters who had intersected with Timothy throughout the ‘60s and into the ‘70s — many of them now carrying mixed emotions — who would play a part in any effort on his behalf.

The counterculture itself was suffering from a near-deadly hangover. The hyper-optimism and confidence that had guided many through both the spiritual and political phases had by now utterly crashed, particularly in the San Francisco Bay Area. Infighting was rampant. Paranoia was the main currency. Heroin, cocaine and quaaludes were circulating even amongst many of the most righteous freaks. It was a massive collective depression. Without a prior history, it would be hard to develop a strong sense of loyalty to this unattractive assemblage.

Into this desultory scene waltzed a beautiful daughter of European aristocracy representing their most complicated political prisoner with talk about neurologic, perfect love and extraterrestrial contact. Many, including Allen Ginsberg, suspected that she was a double agent who had led Leary into the Afghanistan trap. But more likely, she was just a confused young woman stoked on Timothy’s charisma and brilliant ideas, with little awareness of the serious issues like Vietnam, Nixon’s drug war or the overkill directed against the radical movement that haunted the people she was hanging with. So basically, they didn’t like her and she didn’t like them. \*



# 1974

---

**Hello, FBI?**

**This is Timothy Leary.**

**Can I Help You?**

In early 1974, after sending a message through a fellow prisoner warning the Weather Underground, Timothy let the feds know he was ready to cooperate. The next set of byzantine moves could fill a Grisham novel, but I will try to be brief.

Dennis Martino — by now working full on for the DEA — hooked up with Joanna through a haze of heroin, coke and hash. Joanna ripped off an acid chemist for \$60,000. These were just two jolly elements in a swirl of bad actions happening on the outside, while Leary languished now in the Vacaville State Prison, not quite sure how he could play the feds and extricate himself from being the only major figure from the counterculture to actually spend his life in prison for his part in “the madness of the sixties.”

At the same time that he was trying to exit through the front door, Timothy and Joanna were also plotting ways to sneak out the back. One cinematic escape fantasy had someone helicoptering into the prison yard with strobe lights flashing while playing strange synthesizer sounds so as to give the impression that a UFO was swooping down. They’d throw down a rope ladder and Dr. Leary would have joined the sky people.

Fantasy escapes aside, he had to play ball — or hide and go seek — with the feds, if just to gain their trust enough to get into a minimum security situation.

What followed depends on whose story you believe. Timothy’s story — as related to a friend of mine — is that while the feds probed him, he probed them. If he could ascertain that they already knew something, he could give them that and embellish it with a distracting story — something he was good at. In many things, Timothy’s sense of himself as a master strategist was probably belied by reality.

But when it came to up-close person-to-person psychological gamesmanship, he was still that guy from the 1950s who wrote the book on it. So I find his version quite credible.

Leary was brought to Chicago to testify before a grand jury about the Weather Underground. He never got to talk to the jury, but the state inquisitors he did talk to prior to the planned testimony were hung up on foreign influences. What international commies were behind the Weathermen? Leary saw them as all-American kids. Furthermore, he'd ascertained during his travels that the serious commies wanted as little as possible to do with America's wild 1970s ultra-left. He told the feds this and they canceled his grand jury appearance.

He was transferred to Sandstone Federal Prison near Minneapolis where they were going to send him out into the yard with the other prisoners under the name Charles Thrush — a songbird... or in other words, a snitch. It was, basically, a death threat. After Leary strongly objected that he wouldn't go out there under anything but his real name he was thrown into solitary instead. While in solitary, a guard brought him a copy of Thomas Pynchon's epic 760 page novel *Gravity's Rainbow* which he proceeded to read three times, making notes in the margins with a pencil. The novel, according to Timothy, was about "CIA mind-control, drugs and rocket-politics" and it had a profound influence on him. He wrote a brief but insightful commentary about it that later appeared in *The Intelligence Agents* in the context of other passages about CIA and military control of American psychology after World War 2.

By now, Timothy Leary was one of the "disappeared." No one, aside from Joanna, who by now was in full cooperation mode with the FBI and DEA, could find out where he was. At the same time, the feds leaked a report to the media that he was cooperating. The paranoia that was already rampant amidst the Hip Left heated up to boiling point. Counterculture spokespeople denounced him, as did his son, Jack Leary.

In an apparent attempt to rattle him, the feds bounded him around from prison to prison, in a sort of good jail/bad jail routine. Eventually, he landed in a small jail near Sacramento. It was there that he and Joanna would hatch another escape plot. ✱

## The Timothy Leary Outlaw Legend that Might Have Been

It was potentially the most cinematic moment in Timothy Leary's storied life and might have turned him into a Twentieth Century American outlaw legend on par with Jesse James or Billy The Kid.

Fearing that his limited hangout with the Feds wasn't selling, Timothy and Joanna started working on a plan for escape. By this time, Timothy had used his social engineering skills to become relaxed friends with the guards and FBI agents who he was dealing with from day to day. In fact, the FBI agents weren't even cuffing him as they took him around searching for Weather Underground safe houses and the like. Joanna, meanwhile, had tested to see if she could smuggle a gun into prison during her visits. She could.

The FBI guys had taken them to Seattle, where Timothy had led them on wild goose chases searching for the Weather Underground safe house where he and Rosemary had been reunited. Joanna was permitted to join him.

The day arrived when he was going to make his break. Joanna had a gun in her boot. She was ready to use it if necessary. Then, to Leary's amazement, a .357 magnum that one of the agents had been carrying slipped off of the front seat, falling quietly behind him — directly in front of Timothy. He picked up the gun. In a matter of seconds, Timothy Leary realized he couldn't do it. He was not prepared to terrorize and possibly kill the agents. He quietly slipped the gun back to the agent so that his partner wouldn't notice. Not only didn't he want to kill the dude, he didn't even want to embarrass him.

It would be interesting to see an appropriate novelist write an alternative history in which Leary and Harcourt go through with their escape. Does it end a few days later in a Bonnie and Clyde hail of bullets? Does Timothy issue science fictional outlaw manifestos with a Philip K. Dick edge from hiding for years to follow. Does Joanna become the ice queen of the 1980s Miami cocaine underground? Does Leary get caught and die in prison, a legendary hero of the radical left languishing with a life sentence and no hope of parole? Go ahead. Write it up! \*

# 1974 – 1982

---

## SMIZLE, Darn Ya, SMIZLE

At the same time that Timothy Leary was passing through the byzantine maze of American jurisprudence, he was getting long isolated hours without distraction. It was, in fact, a much needed contemplative and literary hermitage.

He had spent his life investigating interpersonal dynamics, but this time, it was personal. He'd been buffeted about — navigating his way through controversy and arrest; through life as the head of a psychedelic commune; through the ups and downs of the '60s counterculture movement. He'd been held in captivity at the hands of the US prison system, a renegade chapter of the Black Panthers, a European gangster, and the highest reaches of the US justice system, the politically powerful and law enforcement. And all the while, when opportunity struck, he'd bathed his psyche in neurochemicals that, when used properly, enhance and broaden and — let's be honest — exaggerate one's pattern recognition abilities.

On top of all this, in the mid-1970s, he was still one of a relative few people on Earth to have a bunch of people waiting for him to tell them “the answer” — to provide an ultimate cosmic perspective — not to mention solutions to human misery. And throughout the 1960s and '70s, that may be the one obligation that Timothy Leary took to heart.

And so, right in the midst of his cat-and-mouse game with the feds, he went to work, expanding the evolutionary theories he'd presented in *Neurologic* into the 8-circuit theory of consciousness. He also wrote most of the content for his Future History series, wherein — aside from explicating his evolutionary theories from every possible angle — he reveals and satirizes everything he'd learned about “lower circuit” human behavior and interpersonal politics at its most raw. And he sent out the first explicit transhumanist signal of the late Twentieth Century —

## Space Migration Intelligence Increase and Life Extension — SMI2LE.

While the counterculture was contracting into bitterness and shrinking ambitions, Timothy Leary was calling for more expansion — literally. SMI2LE suggested that the neural expansiveness we'd learned from psychedelic experience should be matched by an actual expansion of human possibility based in science and technology. As his friend and cohort Robert Anton Wilson put it, SMI2LE called for "More space, more time and more intelligence to enjoy same." What's important here is not whether SMI2LE has turned out — or will turn out — to be the paradigm for the future. What's important is that Leary opened up new imaginal space that would motivate a number of very daring and creative people to explore science, technology and consciousness in an optimistic context. This influence would be part of the evolution of a flourishing and inspiring culture in the 1990s. \*

# 1974 - 1996

---

## Robert Anton Wilson

Leary's partner in exploring the ideas behind SMI2LE and the 8 Circuit Brain Theory was the brilliant "cult" novelist and prankster-philosopher Robert Anton Wilson, whom he had met in the mid-1960s. Articles by Wilson appeared in both the underground press and in *Penthouse* and *Oui* magazine advocating and explaining Leary's SMI2LE concept before Leary himself had done so in anything other than self-published manuscripts.

In his 1977 book, *Cosmic Trigger I: The Final Secret of the Illuminati*, Wilson chronicled, among other things, his experiences with psychedelic drugs, Crowleyan magick and Leary himself. The book treated Leary respectfully, even heroically, as a scientist who had been unfairly harassed by the US Government for his views and experiments. Wilson formed a Berkeley group called The Network to advocate for SMI2LE and did further work with Leary's theories, mostly during the '70s and '80s. His book, *Prometheus Rising*, is probably the best book to read for understanding Leary's 8-Circuit-Brain concept and is built around exercises readers can explore to possibly reprogram imprints or activate potentialities. Leary himself wrote, "Robert Anton Wilson has done a much more lucid job than I of delineating, describing, and defending this model."

The relationship between Leary and Wilson's theoretical exploration is so tight that the 8 Circuit Brain Model, along with both of their various exhortations to achieve neural flexibility and avoid static thinking, has been labeled by some as "The Leary-Wilson paradigm." In fact, the ultimate message, if any, from the Leary-Wilson model is to avoid philosophic or political certainty at all costs. In Wilsonian terms, always take your Belief System (B.S.) with several grains of salt. Step outside your Reality Tunnels frequently. Or as Leary used to tell all his audiences, "Don't believe anything I say." The two men remained close friends throughout their lives.

# 1976

## Release . . . or Thank You, William F. Buckley

In early 1976, when Leary appeared before the parole board, they were still unimpressed by his cooperation. They set the next hearing for two years later. It looked like Timothy's hide-and-seek game with the feds was to no avail. Then, in Spring 1976, US Attorney John Milano — who had come to like and admire Leary — appeared in court waving a copy of an article Leary had written that was published in William F. Buckley's conservative *National Review* reviling the '70s ultra-left and their lawyers as "the Outlaw Industry." Leary's reputation with the left was now sufficiently battered and he was granted parole. ("The Outlaw Industry," in fact, is a flawed but insightful piece, although Leary would later regret comments he made about Mick Jagger, John Lennon and Bob Dylan.)

Leary was told that people inside the office of California's new governor, Jerry Brown, had pulled some strings to insure his release. Brown, at that time an iconoclastic and hip young Democrat with a yen for Zen and fringe philosophies, was not particularly a Leary fan, but some of his friends were. Leary suggested that they exerted some influence on the governor.

## How The Feds Got Their Pound of Flesh

When all is said and done, it seems that Timothy Leary told the FBI some of the story of how he got out of jail. How much? Did he play them, telling them only what they already knew? Or did they play him?

When Leary said he would cooperate with the feds by answering their questions, the feds promised that he would never have to testify in court in any criminal cases. And they didn't, at first, reveal any intentions they may have had to exploit Joanna Harcourt. What followed was the use of Joanna on the outside and various pressures on him on the inside to see if they could get more from him — up to and including an implicit death threat in Minnesota. And finally, they did pressure him to testify in one criminal case.

After his release, Timothy said that no one was harmed by his cooperation, which seems to be basically true, arguably with the exception of an incident involving George Chula, the Brotherhood attorney who had defended him in the Laguna Beach case.

According to Leary, Chula was seen by the authorities slipping him a chunk of hashish in prison. As the result of that small act, the authorities were able to extract their pound of flesh. Rather than blow his entire strategy and resign himself to a virtual life sentence, he testified against Chula in court. But it was Joanna Harcourt who really busted Chula in a set-up stage managed by the DEA.

George Chula wasn't convicted of the charges resulting from Timothy's testimony. He ended up doing 45 days in prison because of Joanna's testimony but was not disbarred. Still the government had extracted their pound of flesh — giving Leary haters the only concrete harm that they can point to resulting from his entire interaction with the feds.

## **The Weather is Fine**

Michael Kennedy is a famous radical “super-lawyer” (who also represented Ivana Trump in her divorce settlement with The Hairpiece). He was also, according to some, the central overground connection to the Weather Underground during Leary's escape. He is one person who still seems to carry resentment against Timothy for his FBI cooperation. And while Kennedy may have been discomfited by whatever Timothy gave up about his escape, he never suffered any legal consequences and seems to have done very well for himself.

In perhaps the biggest irony — during the late 1970s and early '80s, the leaders of the Weather Underground turned themselves in. Having organized thirty bombings (“symbolic acts” in which no one was killed) against sites associated with the Vietnam War and political repression — among them the US Capitol Building and the Pentagon — leaders Bill Ayers and Bernadine Dohrn got probation. Mark Rudd spent less than a year in prison. They were all welcomed back into the arms of academia. Another leader, Jeff Jones, who was caught by police, also got probation.

Why did the Weathermen get off so easy? Because, in pursuing them, the FBI used illegal surveillance techniques. (These techniques, no



doubt, are so legal now thanks to antiterrorism legislation that US Attorney General Holder could conduct them personally dressed like Elvis and surrounded by the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders in front of cameras on a popular reality show). In fact, Leary was told by an inside source that a lot of the strategies around the Chicago Grand Jury and the pursuit of the Weatherfolk were really about internal FBI politics and infighting. And it does seem that they were more anxious to mess with Weather's lawyers than to catch the actual "mad bombers." Maybe they wanted to weaken the lawyers so that they wouldn't pursue legal action against the FBI for their illegal surveillance?

Mark Felt, the Associate Director of the FBI, was convicted of a felony for violating the civil rights of suspected Weather Underground associates. In 2005, we discovered that Felt was "Deep Throat" — the man who brought down Richard Nixon by leaking information to the Washington Post. Is it weird enough for you yet? Put him on a love boat with Mary Pinchot, phone up Alex Jones and make his week.

A brief observation. For thirty bombings, the leaders of the legendary guerrilla warriors of the revolution basically got probation. Timothy Leary spent four and a half years in prison for a little bit of marijuana, and likely would have spent the rest of his life there if he hadn't played ball, or chess, with the Feds. I'm happy for the Weatherfolk, but I think the scales of justice are smiling on Timothy.

And so the crazy, tragicomic action-adventure movie portion of Timothy Leary's trip through time — the years of prison, escape and exile — comes to a close as Leary emerges from prison broke; with his reputation in tatters and, as usual, excited and full of plans for the future. \*

# 1976 – 1996

## Transhumanism with a SMILE

Leary emerged from prison in 1976 as one of the advocates for advances in the human condition that would soon be called transhumanism. At that point in time, you could probably have counted the number of proto-transhumanists with a voice in the world on the fingers of one hand.

In fact, going back to 1974, about a year after Leary expressed, in his *Starseed Transmission*, his wild prison fantasy of taking 5,000 advanced mutants out to galaxy central, Gerard K. O'Neill, a physicist and professor at Princeton University released a paper claiming that human settlements could be built in space at Lagrange points — locations where a habitat could theoretically remain stable. One of these stable points was called “L5” and it soon became the focus of a movement to colonize space. Besides Leary, a number of major figures in 1970s culture became part of the movement for space colonization including Carl Sagan, Freeman Dyson, Stewart Brand— a former Merry Prankster who had started the *Whole Earth Catalogue* and was about to become, arguably, the central figure in the creation of digital culture, NASA astronaut Rusty Schweickart , and California Governor Jerry Brown, who sponsored a conference to explore the possibilities. (This is where he got the nickname “Governor Moonbeam.”) Other people cycling through the movement who would later become widely known for their participation in other techno-movements included K. Eric Drexler — considered by many the father of nanotechnology — and Hans Moravec, one of the early proponents of “strong AI” (Artificial Intelligence that exceeds human capacity.)

The enthusiasm for Space Migration dissipated not so much because the L5 concept was unworkable as that it was way too expensive to pull off. While space colonization fell into disrepute, arguments are once again being raised that it is the only way to resolve problems of population, energy consumption and the psychosocial impact that the absence of a frontier might be having on the human species.

Timothy Leary's arguments for Space Migration were tied in with his advocacy for Intelligence Increase and Life Extension (SMI2LE). Always one for sloganeering, Leary came up with "No Rejuvenation without Space Migration" believing that issues around overpopulation, limited resources and the potential for exhausting personal and cultural novelty on this limited planet could be answered by spreading out and finding new adventures in the stars. (He would later believe he'd found an answer to at least the latter problem in Virtual Reality.)

The potential for technologies that increase intelligence and expand lifespans beyond their apparent biological limits has become the obsession of a large and growing movement called transhumanism. The first of eight points in "The Transhumanist Declaration," written in 1998, reads, "We envision the possibility of broadening human potential by overcoming aging, cognitive shortcomings, involuntary suffering and our confinement to planet earth." In other words, SMI2LE. Leading transhumanists rarely acknowledge that Leary defined the movement with precision 38 years ago. \*

# 1976

## A Difficult Re-Entry

On April 26, 1976, Timothy Leary finally exited the US prison system through the front door, never to return. Almost immediately after his release, the feds came to him with stories of death threats, wanting to put him in a Witness Protection Program. Leary saw this as an attempt to keep him in their system, but decided to play them temporarily for free transport and some housing in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

He and Joanna Harcourt lived there briefly, but despite the thrill of breathing free air once again, Timothy was not in the best of spirits. He was freaked out about what the FBI had done to his reputation and consulted frequently with his friend, Robert Anton Wilson, about what to do. He and Joanna drank heavily and fought.

After a couple of months, they split up. Robert Anton Wilson told friends that the main source of conflict was that Leary was unhappy with the extent of Harcourt's cooperation with the feds. In *Flashbacks*, Leary, less specifically, said only that she'd identified with them too much. Joanna claims that Timothy signed off on everything she did. I have no reason to disbelieve her... or believe her... and I can say the same of Timothy — which I guess leaves this story in stalemate. Leary soon settled in Los Angeles alone. \*

# 1977 – '79

---

## Future History Series

From 1977 - 1979, five Timothy Leary books that he would call his Future History Series were released by obscure independent publishers. The collection of books — *What Does WoMan Want*, *Exo-Psychology*, *Neuropolitics*, *The Intelligence Agents* and *The Game of Life* — is sort of like the original Velvet Underground album, in the sense that probably only 1,000 people read them when they first came out, but they all went on to be futurist scientists, media activists or tech hackers. On the other hand, unlike *The Velvet Underground and Nico*, the books never became trendy. The percentage of people who would understand and enjoy Leary's unique combination of edgy science speculation, corrosive assaults on automatic and authoritarian character structures and trippy playfulness that sometimes edged towards silliness, would be small.

The first release from the series, *What Does WoMan Want* is primarily a fictionalized, romanticized, quasi-autobiographical account of Leary's exile. The sharpest focus is on his time in Switzerland — but it includes scenarios going back to the 1960s. "Commodore Leri" is the protagonist — a hero, certainly, but a sometimes bumbling and confused one. Leri has been sent from Galactic Intelligence to mutate the dominant species on a barbaric planet into evolved spacefaring mutants. Along the way, he gets into a ton of trouble and meets fellow mutants — the most important ones being, of course, beautiful women.

While the egoism behind this literary conceit was roundly criticized, the book is a unique creature of its time and of a singular experience that almost justifies the metaphorical self-glorification. The real meat here, though, is in the elegantly stylized passages that reveal games people play in high risk situations and Leary's ultimately optimistic evolutionary perspectives.

At the close of the book, Leary (or Leri) introduces the idea that mind altering drugs feed transcendent reward circuits built into the brain, suggesting an evolutionary and alternative path towards fulfillment

that could lessen or displace tendencies for humans to find fulfillment in brutal competitive sports like big business, state power or war.

The next release, *Exo-Psychology*, subtitled with playful arrogance *A Manual on the Use of the Human Nervous System According to the Instructions of the Manufacturers*, is really the uber-work of the series. In it, Leary explains and re-explains the 8-circuit brain theory. He aligns it with the notion of imprinting and re-imprinting, an idea taken from Konrad Lorenz's ethological studies of imprinted behaviors in animals. Leary suggests that human beings imprint their orientations toward the world during four different periods of vulnerability prior to adulthood. The fully formed adult is seen as completely stuck in robothood — his or her free will being severely limited by a combination of genetic predisposition and the accidental events that occur during those periods of vulnerability.

Leary holds out the possibility of overcoming undesirable imprints with precisely controlled psychedelic therapeutic sessions or other methodologies, mainly neurological shock tactics like those that were employed by Gurdjieff, Aleister Crowley, or by headfucker groups like EST or Scientology. The danger is that the new imprint may come attached to a new system of control (see Scientology).

For some readers, particularly of the transhumanist bent, the book is rendered intolerable by the weaving of mystical symbol systems into the evolutionary patterns that Leary explores and predicts. Each of the 8 circuits is divided into three sub-circuits representing the reception, integration and externalization of that particular level of consciousness. This makes for 24 sub-circuits — twelve representing those accessible to ordinary waking human consciousness and another twelve representing transcendent or post-terrestrial or post-human states. Leary makes correspondences between these and the twelve signs of the Zodiac as well as with symbols from Tarot, I Ching, and Kabbalah. He theorized that these systems showed a kind of intuitive pattern recognition that would eventually be recognized as having precipitated more scientifically comprehensible evolutionary patterns. In doing this, he was also completing his promise to Lama Govinda.

The observant reader of the segment from *Exo-Psychology*, included below, will notice similarities with "The Seven Tongues of God," the article I presented earlier, written by Leary in 1966. \*

## Section from Exo-Psychology, Published 1977

*One cannot evolve from one's robothood until one realizes how totally one has been robotized. A succinct presentation of this point will be found in Gurdjieff's comments on mechanization quoted by Ouspensky: In Search of the Miraculous.*

*Exo-psychology suggests that there are as many realities as there are neuro-anatomical structures for transceiving signals. As the seven neuro-anatomical circuits unfold, so do seven broad classes of reality.*

*1. The First Reality, Biocellular, is the imprinted-conditioned world of the infant perpetuated in the viscerotonic survival techniques of the adult.*

*2. The Second Reality, Locomotor-muscular, is the imprinted-conditioned world of the crawling, brawling, walking child perpetuated in the emotional-political techniques of the adult.*

*3. The Third Reality, mediated by the left cortex, is the imprinted-conditioned world of the child learning to manipulate L.M. symbols and is perpetuated in the linguistic-technology of the adult.*

*4. The Fourth Reality is the imprinted-conditioned world of social-sexual, domestic responsibility.*

*5. The Fifth Reality, Body Consciousness is the reception by the body of direct, natural signals uncensored by survival imprints and selectively aware of the demands of gravity.*

*6. The Sixth Reality is the imprint of the nervous system of and by and unto itself — Einsteinian consciousness no longer frozen to larval circuits or to the body. Brain reality is a relativistic, changing Niagara of millions of bio-electric signals flashing around a thirty-billion cell network. The statement "consciousness is no longer frozen" is not metaphorical; it refers to biochemical-electrical changes at the synaptic level that liberate the flow of signals from routine patterns. The term "static, imprinted-conditioned world" refers to neural-wired programs hooked to reality-islands.*

*7. The Seventh Reality is the reception by the nervous system of RNA signals from DNA molecules within the cell — genetic messages leading*

*to symbiotic interspecies telepathy. Since reality is energy registered by neural structure, we can “see” only what we are ready instrumentally and conceptually to receive. At the Seventh Circuit DNA-RNA signals are monitored.*

*8. The Eighth Reality is meta-physiological, meta-biological and involves contelligence (consciousness-intelligence) projected out from the Quantum Projection Booth.*

*Exo-psychology defines an Interstellar Neurogenetic outlining the DNA pre-programmed course of individual and species evolution. A complete philosophic system generally includes:*

*1. A cosmological explanation about where we came from and how it got started.*

*2. A political theory explaining the factors involved in the destructive and harmonious expressions of territorial autonomy, control, freedom, restraint, mobility.*

*3. An epistemological theory defining truth-falsity and right-wrong.*

*4. An ethic defining good-bad, virtue-sin.*

*5. An aesthetic defining beautiful-ugly, artistic-unartistic*

*6. An ontology defining the spectrum of realities*

*7. A genetic teleology explaining where biological evolution is going and how it will all turn out.*

*8. An ultimate metaphysiological neuro-atomic eschatology explaining what happens when consciousness leaves the body.*

*Neuropolitics, the third release in the series, opens with sharp but brief missives that he'd sent out from prison, most of them published in obscure underground journals. Much of it is a coded response to the questions that had been raised by his escape, imprisonment and interaction with the feds during those years. A number of articles revolve around the perversity of spying, questions about openness and secrecy and speculations and insights about brainwashing and*



the Orwellian nature of the drug police. In a few essays, Leary sees himself as locked in a peculiar karmic dance in parallel with the fall of President Richard Nixon in the Watergate scandal — the leader of the free world and his “most dangerous man in the world,” one of them falling down from grace and the other falling up into the stratospheres. He then goes on to explore his 8-circuit brain theory and his SMI2LE advocacy.

EXCERPT FROM

**“Secrecy,” by Timothy Leary from *Neuropolitics*, 1977 (originally written in 1973)**

*Secrecy is the original sin. The fig leaf in the Garden of Eden. The basic crime against love. The issue is fundamental. What a blessing that Watergate has been uncovered to teach us the primary lesson. The purpose of life is to receive, synthesize and transmit energy. Communication-fusion is the goal of life. Any star can tell you that. Communication is love. Secrecy, withholding the signal, hoarding, hiding, covering up the light is motivated by shame and fear, symptoms of the inability to love. Secrecy means that you think love is shameful and bad. Or that your nakedness is ugly. Or that you hide unloving, hostile feelings. Seeds of paranoia and distrust.*

*Before the FBI there were no secret police. Before World War II there was no CIA and America was much less concerned with secrecy. The hidden sickness has become lethally epidemic in the last forty years. They say primly: if you have done nothing wrong, you have no fear of being bugged. Exactly. But the logic goes both ways. Then all FBI files and CIA dossiers and White House conversations should be open to all. Let everything hang open. Let government be totally visible.*

*The last... the very last people to hide their actions should be the police and the government. We operate on the assumption that everyone knows everything, anyway. There is nothing and no way to hide. This is the acid message. We're all on cosmic TV every moment. We all play starring roles in the galactic broadcast — This is Your Life. I remember the early days of neurological uncovering, desperately wondering where I could go to escape. Run home, hide under the bed, in the closet, in the bathroom? No way. The relentless camera “I” follows me everywhere. We can only keep secrets from ourselves.*

*None of the legal experts get the point of Watergate. The Special Prosecutor for the Watergate scandal chasing leaks from his own staff. We recall the political scandals involving secrets. The heroic figures around whom Washington now revolves: Dan Ellsberg and Tony Russo. Brave Russian dissenters uncovering the secrets that everyone knows about Soviet repression.*

*Now comes the electronic revolution. Bugging equipment effective at long distance. I laugh at government surveillance. Let the poor, deprived, bored creatures listen to our conversations, tape our laughter, study our transmissions. Maybe it will all turn them on.*

*Concealment is the seed-source of every human conflict. Let's forget artificial secrets and concentrate on the mysteries.*

Finally, *The Intelligence Agents* and *The Game of Life* take the essential ideas introduced in the previous books, particularly *Exo-Psychology*, and plays with them with a puckish exuberance that fairly leaps off the page. These books may be the most fun of the series — but you probably have to be tuned into Leary's assumptions and specialized language to appreciate them. \*

# 1978 – 1992

## **Work and Family**

During the last years of the 1970s, Timothy Leary met Barbara Chase, a tough and attractive LA scenester. They fell in love and, after taking Ecstasy (MDMA) together, got married. Soon thereafter, they and Barbara's young son Zachary rented a house together in Hollywood. (And still later, in Beverly Hills.) He signed with a lecture agency, returning, basically, to the same source of livelihood that had provided most of his income since he gained his notoriety in the mid-1960s — lecturing and entertaining audiences drawn by his legend.

It was the start of a long, relatively normal period of contentment — albeit mixed with a party lifestyle that found him and Barbara hanging out with rock stars and Hollywood celebs. Certainly, some coke was sniffed and some alcohol was consumed (his pals included Harry Nilsson and Ringo Starr), but Timothy also took advantage of the opportunity to be an attentive stepfather to Zach, something he failed at with his own biological children during the preceding extreme times. \*

# 1979

## **We Won! Or Did We?**

As the terribly ambiguous decade of the 1970s drew to a close, the American mainstream was battered by the loss of the Vietnam War, a punctured self-image from the fall of Richard Nixon and the conspiracy revelations that resulted from it, a long recession, and confusion over changing mores around sexuality, drugs and religion. It seemed like the entire country was questioning reality, as even the president, Jimmy Carter, declared a “crisis of faith.” In a televised address, Carter told America, “We’ve learned that piling up material goods cannot fill the emptiness of lives which have no confidence or purpose.”

With Carter in the White House (a scandal revealed that his young staff was smoking pot and doing coke with abandon), Zen Governor Jerry Brown running California while hanging with Linda Ronstadt, Jane Fonda and Chicago 8 veteran Tom Hayden, and a new generation of Democratic Senators bringing their young staffs to Washington, Leary declared, “Successful heads are now running the government.” And then came the Iranian hostage crisis, Ronald Reagan and the 1980s. \*

# 1980-1987

**Think For Yourself and Question Authority . . . with a Personal Computer**

## 1980 - '81

### **The Stand Up Philosophy Tour**

In 1980, Leary hit the road for his first-ever speaking tour of nightclubs. He called it his “Stand Up Philosophy” tour but, in essence, he was marketed as a stand up comedian. His early appearances were amusing, but sort of random and muddled — lacking a theme or theory to build on. The few thousand or so people who were zonked into his SMI2LE and 8 Circuit evolutionary brain theories got little for their money, as Timothy — presumably deciding all that was too complex for the nightclub circuit — stuck mostly to irreverent political and cultural commentary. When I saw him in Rochester, New York in 1980, he sort of bombed (and not in the Weatherman sense).

Two things emerging in the early 1980s would give him a renewed sense of focus when he hit the road throughout the rest of the decade — the election of the authoritarian reactionary Ronald Reagan to president and the rise of the personal computer

# 1980-1996

## Was Leary a Liberal Libertarian or Libertarian Liberal?

Reagan's rise was, like Nixon's, personal for Timothy. He knew that as Governor, Reagan, who was unfailingly hostile to the counterculture, had involved himself with his legal harassment in California.

Even before Nancy Reagan took the lead in massively escalating the 'War on Drugs,' Leary was critical of Reagan for his hostility towards détente with the Soviets; his proxy military actions aimed at Nicaragua and El Salvador and his budgetary cuts aimed at the poor. Even more than policy, he disliked the vibe, the swaggering return of the spirit of macho imperial militarism that Reagan represented. And for Timothy Leary, the fact that many baby boomers were lending themselves to that Reaganite zeitgeist represented a personal failure.

During the late 1970s, Leary had pronounced himself a libertarian, and some asides in the Future History Series had an almost Randian flavor. Under Reagan, he sounded more like a liberal and frequently referred to himself in those terms. What gives? Was he merely contrarian — libertarian during the Carter years and liberal during Reagan? Were his politics muddled?

During the 1970s, Timothy had said, "Politics should only be discussed down on all fours." He had contempt for ideology and political correctness from any direction. So it's not surprising that his politics would be situational and hard to categorize. He could also tend to be a people pleaser, so he might have sounded like a leftist to his leftist friends, a liberal with his liberal friends and a libertarian with his libertarian friends... and evasive when necessary. One thing he did make clear, he despised the Republicans and hoped for better from the Democrats.

With his personal life being far less extreme, Leary felt a desire to comment on the daily social issues in the news. He was sometimes moved to send letters to the editor of the *LA Times*, but the Times never published them. So he started sending them under a variety of other names and personas. To his delight, most of those were accepted.

# 1980 - 1996

---

## Getting High on the Personal Computer and The Internet

Leary emphasized the personal computer and the internet starting in the 1980s, but his interest goes back further. There are references to the importance of computers and cybernetics in Leary's writing going all the way back to the 1950s, but he started to get really excited about the development of commercially available personal computers as soon as the Apple II hit the market in 1977. That year, he told a disbelieving audience at the national Libertarian Party convention about this thing called the Internet. Eric Garris, libertarian activist and former webmaster for Antiwar.com, recently wrote about that appearance:

“At the 1977 Libertarian Party Convention, mind-expansion advocate and LSD guru Timothy Leary gave a speech that few of us took very seriously. He spoke of something called the Internet, a network that would connect computers worldwide, allowing participants from around the globe to sign on and retrieve text, photographs, audio and video instantaneously, and to communicate in realtime with anyone in the whole world who also had a computer and a connection. He said that it would be the new revolution against the current social order and stifling status quo. He predicted it would be much, much bigger than drugs in its ability to overthrow the establishment. Whereas tuning in, turning on and dropping out had been of great interest to a somewhat narrow subset of the population, everyone would be able to use the Internet, in his own way, and thus the new revolution against the old order would transcend class, age, nationality and all other demographics.... nothing would ever again be the same.”

By 1982, Leary had incorporated the promises of the personal computer and the Internet into his rap. He would playfully compare the birth of the Apple in a garage to the birth of Jesus in a manger and called Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak “those acidhead hippies, St.

Stephen and St. Stephen.” (Actually, only Jobs, the less saintly of the St. Stephens, was an acidhead). In a public appearance in Berkeley promoting *Flashbacks*, he compared drugs and computers, saying:

*“We don’t have to talk about drugs. We should talk about the end points, which are the dimensions, functions, achievements, and possibilities of the human biocomputer, which can be activated any way you can activate it... To get the computer to give you a certain reality, you have to know how to activate it. There is a code. In this sense, I find it useful right now to think of drugs as access codes to open up dimensions of the brain that you want to use, either as furniture, or to create your new reality.”*

As usual, Timothy was more than a little hyperbolic and over-optimistic about the evolution of the digital computer. In a 1986 interview I conducted with him for *High Frontiers* magazine, he told me: “We’re designing computers that would be the size of *Time* or *Newsweek* ... which you could fold and stick in your pocket and would cost less than \$40... less than a pair of Nikes.” Of course, 27 years later, we’re not quite there yet.

In 1985, in collaboration with programmers and designers Bob Dietz and Peter Van den Beemt, Leary developed a computer software program for Electronic Arts. Called *Mind Mirror*, it was based on his 1950s Interpersonal Circumplex. The players could locate their social tendencies and then possibly improve them with responses that they might then try in real life. Of course, the earlier transactional analyses work had a 1950s flavor. For the game, Leary wrote amusing questions — sophisticated and playful in a trendy 1980s sort of way. It sold 60,000 copies. An updated version of *Mind Mirror* is in process.

Throughout the 1980s and into the ‘90s, Leary was, for the most part, treated with respect in computer culture circles. He spoke at various computer conventions and at companies like Autodesk, the creators of software for architectural design. (A history of the psychedelic and countercultural roots of the digital computer revolution, *What the Doormouse Said*, by *New York Times* reporter John Markoff, was released in 2005.)



In the segment, Personal Computers, Personal Freedom from his late '80s article "How I became an Amphibian," he put the rise of the Personal Computer in the context of the evolution of media technology and the evolution of his personal life and vision

EXCERPT FROM

## **Personal Computers, Personal Freedom**

From "How I Became an Amphibian" Originally written in 1989.

Published in Chaos & Cyberculture 1994

*Once upon a time... knowledge-information was stored in extremely expensive mainframe systems called illuminated volumes, usually Bibles, carefully guarded in the palace of the duke or bishop, and accessible only to security-cleared, socially alienated hackers called monks. Then, in 1456, Johannes Gutenberg invented a most important piece of hardware: the moveable-type printing press. This knowledge-information processing system could mass produce inexpensive portable software readily available for home use: the Personal Book. Until recently, computers were in much the same sociopolitical situation as the pre-Gutenberg systems. The mainframe knowledge-processors that ran society were the monopoly of governments and large corporations. They were carefully guarded by priestly technicians with security clearances. The average person, suddenly thrust into electronic illiteracy and digital helplessness, was understandably threatened.*

### **The Mainframe Monopoly**

*My first contact with computers came in 1950 when I was director of a Kaiser Foundation psychological research project that developed mathematical profiles for the interpersonal assessment of personality. In line with the principles of humanistic psychology, the aim of this research was to free persons from dependency on doctors, professionals, institutions, and diagnostic-thematic interpretations. To this end, we elicited clusters of yes-no responses from subjects and fed back knowledge in the form of profiles and indices to the patients themselves.*

*Relying on dimensional information rather than interpretative categories, our research was ideally suited to computer analysis. Routinely we sent stacks of data to the Kaiser Foundation's computer room, where mysterious technicians converted our numbers into relevant indices. Computers were*

*thus helpful, but distant and unapproachable. I distrusted the mainframes because I saw them as devices that would merely increase the dependence of individuals upon experts.*

*In 1960 I became a director of the Harvard Psychedelic Drug Research program. The aims of this project were also humanistic — to teach individuals how to self-administer psychoactive drugs in order to free their psyches without reliance upon doctors or institutions. Again we used mainframes to index responses to questionnaires about drug experiences, but I saw no way for this awesome knowledge-power to be put in the hands of individuals.*

*I know now that our research with psychedelic drugs and, in fact, the drug culture itself was a forecast of, or preparation for, the personal-computer age. Indeed, it was a brilliant LSD researcher, John Lilly, who in 1972 wrote the seminal monograph on the brain as a knowledge-information processing system: *Programming and Meta-Programming in the Human Bio-Computer*.*

*Psychedelic drugs expose one to the raw experience of chaotic brain function, with the protections of the mind temporarily suspended. We are talking here about the tremendous acceleration of images; the crumbling of analogic perceptions into vapor trails of neuron off-on flashes; the multiplication of disorderly mind programs slipping in and out of awareness like floppy disks.*

*The seven million Americans who experienced the awesome potentialities of the brain via LSD certainly paved the way for the computer society. It is no accident that the term “LSD” was used twice in Time magazine’s cover story about Steve Jobs, for it was Jobs and his fellow Gutenberger, Stephen Wozniak, who hooked up the personal brain with the personal computer and thus made possible a new culture.*

## **Hands On/Tune In**

*The development of the personal computer was a step of Gutenbergian magnitude. Just as the Personal Book transformed human society from the muscular-feudal to the mechanical-industrial, so has the personal electronic-knowledge processor equipped the individual to survive and evolve in the age of information. To guide us in this confusing and scary transition, it is most useful to look back and see what happened during*

*the Gutenberg Mutation. Religion was the unifying force that held feudal society together. It was natural, therefore, that the first personal books would be Bibles. When the religion market was satiated, many entrepreneurs wondered what other conceivable use could be made of this new-fangled software. How-to-read books were the next phase. Then came game books. It is amusing to note that the second book printed in the English language was on chess — a game that became, with its knights and bishops and kings and queens, the Pac-Man of late feudalism. We can see this same pattern repeating during the current transition. Since money/business is the unifying force of the industrial age, the first Wozniak bibles were, naturally enough, accounting spreadsheets. Then came word processors. And games.*

*The history of human evolution is the record of technological innovation. Expensive machinery requiring large group efforts for operation generally becomes a tool of social repression by the state. The tower clock. The galley ship. The cannon. The tank. Instruments that can be owned and operated by individuals inevitably produce democratic revolutions. The bronze dagger. The crossbow. The pocket watch. The automobile as self-mover. This is the liberating “hands-on” concept.*

*Power to the people means personal technology available to the individual. In viewing the home computer movement, I am often reminded of a homely parable from America’s cultural past. Some three-score years ago, the most popular soft drink in the land was derived from coca leaves and cola nuts. A magnificent ritual accompanied the distribution of this sparkling energizer. Place: the soda fountain. Mainframe technology: a large, gleaming steel tank filled with syrup and connected to a stainless-steel pipe from which bubbled phosphorus water. A white-coated priest pulled the handle and the elixir was mixed before the very eyes of the dazzled consumer. One day a mysterious gentleman called on the president of the soft drink company and handed him a small white envelope. “This contains two words that will revolutionize your business and multiply your profits,” said the visitor. With trembling hands, the executive extracted the paper from the envelope and read the two words: BOTTLE IT. Who could have foreseen the enormous cultural consequences of the personal bottle? The basic issue: “Hands-on” replaced the priestly, white-coated attendant. The personal bottle replaced the fountain shrine. Power to the individual! It was no accident that Coca-Cola instantly spread around the world as a symbol of American egalitarianism. Everyone likes the “pause that refreshes.” The addiction, by the way, is not to the stimulant or the sugar, but to the freedom of choice.*

*The slogan “Coke Is It!” really refers to the individual option provided by the hands-on technology.*

## **Evolution/Revolution**

*Nothing less than a new symbiotic partnership is developing between human brains and computers. In evolving to more physiological complexity, our bodies formed symbioses with armies of digestive bacteria necessary for survival. In similar fashion, our brains are forming neural-electronic symbiotic link-ups with solid-state computers. It is useful to distinguish here between addictions and symbiotic partnerships. The body can become passively addicted to certain molecules, e.g., heroin, and the brain can become passively addicted to electronic signals, e.g., from television. The human body, as we have noted, also requires symbiotic partnerships with certain unicellular organisms.*

*At this point in human evolution, more and more people are developing mutually dependent, interactive relationships with their microsystems. When this happens, there comes a moment when the individual is “hooked” and cannot imagine living without the continual interchange of electronic signals between the personal brain and the personal computer. There are interesting political implications. In the near future, over twenty million Americans will have established intense interactive partnerships with their computers. These individuals will operate at a level of intelligence that is qualitatively different from those who use static forms of knowledge-information processing. In America this difference is already producing a generation gap, i.e., a species gap. After Gutenberg, personal books created a new level of individual thinking that revolutionized society. An even more dramatic mutation in individual intelligence will occur as the new species grows up linked symbiotically with personal information processing systems.*

## **Childhood’s End**

*It seems clear that we are facing one of those genetic crossroads that have occurred so frequently in the history of primates. The members of the human gene pool who form symbiotic links with solid-state computers will be characterized by extremely high individual intelligence and will settle in geographic niches that encourage individual access to knowledge-information processing software. New associations of individuals linked to computers will surely emerge. Information nets will encourage a swift, free interchange among individuals. Feedback peripherals will*

*dramatically expand the mode of exchange from keyboard punching to neurophysiological interaction. The key word is, of course, “interaction.” The intoxicating power of interactive software is that it eliminates dependence on the enormous bureaucracy of knowledge professionals that flourished in the industrial age. \**

# 1980s

## Reuniting with Friends and Family

The 1980s was a period in which Timothy reunited with friends and family. In 1983, Leary and the former Richard Alpert, by now Ram Dass, spiritual guru to the New Age communities, were reunited when they were invited to appear together at Harvard — the very institution that had pushed both men outside the academic mainstream twenty years earlier. The pair — with their radically different world views had been tossing barbed comments at each other in print for at least ten years, but once they got together in person, the love between them was plain as day. Ram Dass became a Leary family favorite, much beloved by Barbara and Zach for his kindness and sense of humor.

Michael Horowitz, Leary's archivist, who had been put through some changes when Leary told him to let the FBI go through the archives in the '70s, renewed his friendship with Timothy, as did his wife Cynthia and their daughter, Winona Ryder. Michael and Cindy had made Timothy a Godfather to Winona back in the 1970s. Leary was thrilled to get to know the young movie star. Horowitz was intimately involved with Leary's work through the remaining years and remains actively involved with the Leary Estate.

In the mid-1980s, Leary renewed his friendship with several counterculture celebrities. He and Abbie Hoffman appeared on stage together several times and they spoke frequently — often about Abbie's problems with manic-depression. When Abbie committed suicide in 1989, Timothy could talk about nothing else for months. He also developed a stronger friendship with William S. Burroughs. The two men now had much in common. Both emphasized the need for space colonization and shared an obsession with brain technologies, both for self-enhancement and as used by unfriendly agents in the interests of mind control. Ken Kesey came down from Oregon to visit fairly frequently. Timothy finally became friends with Eldridge Cleaver and they would hang out together sometimes when Timothy was in Berkeley. And whenever he was in New York City, Timothy

would visit with Andy Warhol. Attempts to re-establish a relationship with his son Jack were unwelcomed. Jack's trip through drug busts and the legal system are a story every bit as harrowing as his fathers. His daughter Susan, meanwhile, developed full-blown paranoid-schizophrenia. Leary saw her occasionally, which usually resulted in some extreme acting out. Susan was also violent and abusive to her two children. After his granddaughter Diedre was taken from Susan and put into foster care, Leary started getting together with her frequently, taking her out to L.A. Dodgers games and that sort of thing.

On the whole, the early and mid-1980s were a good period for Leary. He didn't do a lot of writing, but following the publication of *Flashbacks*, he developed a new public image as a reasonably sharp, professional, together guy — at least among people who were paying attention and were willing to let go preconceptions. But there were some personal difficulties on the immediate horizon. \*

# 1982

## The Leary-Liddy Rematch

In 1982, Leary toured with his former nemesis G. Gordon Liddy, the man who had invaded his home at gunpoint to bust him twice in the mid-1960s. The motivation? \$10,000 per night each. The appearances were framed as a Left versus Right debate. Having both done time, the two men felt a commonality despite their differences. The conversations themselves will never be compared to the Socratic Dialogues.

Ironically, Liddy, who represented a philosophy of discipline and obedience to state authority in these debates, now represents himself as an anti-government fanatic. In 1994, he suggested to his radio show listeners that they should shoot BATF agents (“aim for the head”) if they invade their home looking for guns (but not, I would guess, DEA agents looking for drugs).

A documentary film about the tour, *Return Engagement* by Alan Rudolph, was released in 1983 to generally poor reviews. \*



# 1983

## Changing My Mind, Among Others and Flashbacks

The early 1980s saw two Leary books released by mainstream publishers. *Changing My Mind, Among Others*, a collection of some of his most accessible writings going all the way back to the transpersonal psychology days, was published in 1982 by Prentice-Hall. His autobiography, *Flashbacks*, was published by Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam Books in 1983.

While both books are excellent, it's *Flashbacks* that put him back in the public eye. He appeared on most major radio and television talk shows; was interviewed by a variety of print outlets and toured the book, appearing at local radio and TV venues wherever he went. He got positive notice in unlikely places like *USA Today* and *Newsweek* and rave reviews in the alternative newsweeklies. (Reviewers at the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* trashed the book, but they were unique in that.) In contrast with the earlier unfocused speaking tours at the start of the decade, Leary was on top of his game while representing his life and philosophy.

In spite of the media attention that had been heaped upon his 1970s misadventures, what Timothy actually had to say about any of it had been almost entirely relegated to the fringe press. So the release of *Flashbacks* was, in some ways, the first chance he had to represent himself in the American media since the '60s. This time he took advantage of the opportunity to be more presentable, more reassuring and less provocative than he had been the first time around, while still being irreverent and funny (The mainstream culture by then had also become more sophisticated).

Leary looked forward to seeing his life story turned into a film. Despite numerous flirtations, that didn't happen within his lifetime. We're still waiting. \*

# 1983 – 1996

---

## TFYQA

### Think For Yourself and Question Authority

As he headed into the mid-1980s, Leary decided that his message had always been “TFYQA — Think For Yourself and Question Authority.” Some jokers on the Internets actually credit Leary with inventing the popular “Question Authority” slogan. Speaking on behalf of the Leary estate, we’ll take that!

Around 1986, Leary started touring with an unusually well organized, sweeping and coherent lecture he called “The Roaring Twentieth Century” (not that it was lacking in comedic asides and occasional sideways rambles). Returning to his penchant for finding correspondences, the talk made associations between the leading scientific paradigms, the new popular technologies, the music styles and art movements, and the popular cultures of each decade in the Twentieth Century. The purpose was to impress upon his audience the nature of accelerating change, bringing it up to the digital age that was just beginning to take root. He then explained the opportunities the new media was going to give people to escape the centralized message machine of mass medias like radio and television and to make their own media and messages — to use the new tools to think for themselves and question authority. ✱

# 1988-1994

---

## Cyberpunk

In 1984, William Gibson published *Neuromancer*, the science fiction novel about a pair of body modified hackers named Case and Molly Millions who fight the powers (for entirely selfish reasons) in a world dominated by a fusion of corporations and underworld mercenaries; complete with a virtual alternative world called cyberspace and L5 space colonies, among other things. It was the first in a trilogy of books by Gibson about this world, and it brought the notion of cyberspace to the edgier denizens of popular culture. In it, Gibson describes cyberspace as “a consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation... A graphic representation of data abstracted from banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the non-space of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding.” The book was the leading representative of a new genre of science fiction that was labeled “cyberpunk.”

Whereas science fiction up until that time tended to be built around big technologies in space — massive supercomputers, giant spaceships etcetera — cyberpunks recognized that the future was small — made up of handheld thinking machines, brain and body implants, genetic manipulation, designer drugs, molecular technology.

Leary started talking up cyberpunk as soon as it emerged, and by 1988 he was going at it pedal to the metal. Early in 1988, with a company called Interplay, Tim got the rights to create a video adventure game called *Neuromancer* based on the novel. As other plans emerged for a film to be directed by Chris Cunningham, Gibson gave Leary his blessing and agreed to consult on the project. When the film project died, Leary distanced himself from the game project, which was released in 1988 by Mediagenic (a subsidy of ActiVision) without any credits for Timothy. Meanwhile, he and Gibson became lifelong friends.

In the actual world, young computer hackers were identifying with cyberpunk and throughout 1988 – '89, Leary centered his lectures around this phenomenon and the cultural signs that reflected it.

Leary saw the cyberpunk figure as a Ronin warrior — traditionally, a serf who abandons his master to make his own way through the world. The hackers, or cyberpunks, would subvert systems of dominance like corporations or states (or the combination thereof) and bend technology to their own needs and desires. They were characterized by a hunger for data, mediated speed and informational complexity — the mental acceleration earlier generations associated with LSD would be experience by interacting with — and creating in the data stream.

In tandem with his full immersion into cyberpunk, Timothy also began identifying with techno-paganism. About paganism, he wrote, “Pagan rites always celebrate the same natural, instinctive, guileless, eternal values: Peace. Pure ecstatic sexuality. Equality in the eyes of the Higher Powers. Joy. Rapture. Mirth. Tolerance. Affirmation of life... of the human spirit.... the naked human body. Irreverence. And merry laughter.” He, and a computer programmer named Eric Gullichsen, collaborated on an article titled “High Tech Paganism/ Digital Polytheism” in which they made correspondences between the Tarot, the rituals of Crowleyan Magick and computer programming. ✱

# 1988 - 1996

---

## Virtual Reality

Timothy became friends with Virtual Reality (VR) mainman Jaron Lanier some time around 1986 or '87 when Jaron was deep in the middle of evolving his VR system and forming his company VPL Research. By 1988, he was incorporating it regularly into his rap.

I had a front seat for this meeting of the minds because Lanier used to visit the Berkeley house I lived in to court a young woman there. At that time, Jaron said Leary was the smartest man he'd ever met and Leary suggested that Jaron's brain should be bottled as an intelligence increase agent. Around that same time, Leary also met Eric Gullichsen at a hackers conference. Gullichsen was a Future History Series fan, a fellow Crowley imbiber and already zapped into the coming importance of Artificial Realities — a concept that had been put forth by a man named Myron Krueger — preceding Lanier's Virtual Reality efforts by several years. Leary and Gullichsen immediately made plans to write a book together. (It never got finished, but I cannibalized some of what they did write while organizing Timothy Leary's last book *Design For Dying*. And they did write two fantastic articles for my *Reality Hackers* magazine, predecessor to *MONDO 2000*). Gullichsen eventually started his own VR project.

As we entered the 1990s, VR became the New New Thing. There were conferences piled on top of conferences — many of them in San Francisco, but also at universities and all around Europe. There were parties celebrating VR — many of them with no VR equipment on location. People who had never been in Virtual Reality were celebrating the very idea of it. Articles about VR appeared in every newspaper and magazine of note.

Timothy Leary became one of the usual suspects invited to speak about or comment on VR. He also wrote contributions to a slew of academic books about VR or cyberspace — its importance and likely impact.

It was a whole different role for Leary. The '60s and 70s were long past. The emerging "cyberculture" had plenty of theorists and philosophers. Leary was no longer the guy who was supposed to have all the answers, both cosmic and practical. He was one voice among many in the emerging cyberculture... and he liked it that way. "I never liked gurus," he said. "I'm Irish. Irishmen aren't gurus."

Of course, he put together his own little VR road show, which included a giant event in New York City introducing the natives — who were way behind the West Coast — to cyberspace. He was joined by Robert Anton Wilson, and by Eric Gullichsen, who provided a very raw Virtual Reality experience to audience members.

Leary told audiences that cyberspace was the new LSD. He actually meant it. He felt that the opportunity to share 3-dimensional alternative worlds would activate those new evolutionary "brain circuits" by allowing people to share the contents of their imaginations in ways that had been previously limited by language. He also believed that VR would replace one-way entertainment medias. People would no longer "sit like amoeboid slugs in front of the TV," but instead would play in these participatory alternative spaces. In a rewrite of *Exo-Psychology* titled *Info-Psychology* he indicated that Virtual Space opened up a new frontier for growth and exploration just as actual space travel would have. (The attempt to turn the "post-terrestrial" evolutionary "circuits" from his '70s theory into Information Age evolutionary "circuits" seemed poorly thought out. It could probably be reworked today in terms of post-human and post-biological possibilities.)

Of course, as usual, Timothy saw VR — fully immersive 3d shared environments — coming into common usage in a very few years. This time, though, he was not alone in his excessive optimism. A whole subculture, including many technologists, scientists and theorists less noted for a penchant for hyperbole also believed that VR was in the pipeline to be used as an entertainment medium and then very rapidly as a communications medium. \*

## Was Leary Authentic or All Hype?

There is this question, in many quarters, about the authenticity of Timothy's enthusiasms. Was he a snake oil salesman or just an excitable boy? I would have to say that both those aspects of his character were inseparable. You couldn't very well go out on tour touting Virtual Reality as the next great thing in mind expansion and then tell your audience that it would probably take another 30 years. So there is that. But if you actually read the materials he wrote about cyberculture and cyberspace (many of them published in his collection *Chaos and Cyberculture*), it becomes clear that his excitement was real and his thinking on the topic was not frivolous.

A little personal story may be in order here. One time in the mid-90s, I was hanging out with Timothy. We'd gone to a party. This young woman came over to him and asked him if he'd looked at a video she'd sent him of her performance work. He became wildly enthusiastic, telling her that she was doing the most wonderful important work — the most contemporary, the most relevant and on and on. Later on, I ribbed him, implying that he had been blowing smoke up her ass. (Of course, if it's Timothy Leary, you want him to blow some of that smoke into any of your orifices.) He got really peeved and ranted at me for an hour about the girls' video. It was clear that he had watched that video obsessively and had meant what he'd said.

That incident sort of defines for me how I experienced Leary. I was attracted to his ideas but, before I met him, I basically assumed that he was going to be a full-on trickster who would be pushing out the blarney 24/7. So rather, the thing that impressed me was how genuine — how earnest he usually was... and even a bit naïve. He had a peculiar mix of sophistication and naïveté that I think sometimes got misinterpreted. Of course, there was some blarney, too.

# 1988 – 1992

---

## Tragedy and Loss

In the middle of those years of living virtually, Tim hit some rough patches in his non-virtual life. In 1988, his daughter Susan — by now completely disconnected from reality (from Schizophrenia. She hadn't taken drugs for years and was militantly against them) — shot her boyfriend point blank through the head. He survived, but she was charged with attempted murder. Timothy had been quietly tormented by his daughter's condition, often writing letters to her that he couldn't bring himself to send. On September 3, 1990, while in jail, Susan hanged herself.

About a week after the news of Susan's suicide appeared in newspapers, I saw Timothy and his wife Barbara at “Cyberthon” — a massive VR celebration put on by Stewart Brand and the *Whole Earth Review*. All of countercultural and cybercultural San Francisco gathered there. When I first saw him walking towards me, he looked pale and small. Barbara seemed to be holding him up. When I asked him, meaningfully, how he was doing, he gave the old Leary smile and said he was great, but clearly, it wasn't true. At that time, I didn't know that Barbara had also announced her intention to leave him. He spoke that night, poorly. I don't think the disappointed crowd realized the tragedy he had just undergone.

By early 1992, Barbara was gone. She had ruled the roost, maintaining their Beverly Hills home as a sort-of sanctuary for family life. They didn't have a lot of people hanging out or crashing over.

When Barbara left, the house party started. The Leary house became a nexus of constant social activity. At any time, you could find down-at-the-heels artists and playwrights, neohippie ravers, aging punk rockers and artistic celebrities. When I was there, Helmut Newton, Billy Idol, Gibby Haines and Trent Reznor all dropped in and Yoko Ono waited in her limo to take Timothy to the LA Symphony. I answered the phone to find Johnny Depp, Mark Mothersbaugh, Perry Farrell, and Harry Nilsson on the other end. But for the most part, the house was filled by young admirers. The main drug of



choice was alcohol, but there was everything else too — acid, ecstasy, heroin, cocaine, what-have-you. Speaking occasionally on the VR/Cyberculture circuit gave him some focus, but for the most part, Timothy seemed adrift. ✱

# 1989 – 1996

---

## Leary and MONDO 2000 magazine

I'll make this brief, since I was a co-publisher and the Editor-in-chief of *MONDO 2000* from 1989 – 1993 and I don't feel like overindulging.

*MONDO 2000* magazine, which started off as *High Frontiers* in 1984, was the result of the influence that Leary and Robert Anton Wilson's ideas and writing had on me. Over the years, it grew and changed to reflect ideas and influences from a wider variety of publishers, editors, writers and theorists and the flow of culture and technology in general. Nevertheless, the magazine — particularly in its earlier years — was largely composed of reports on Learyesque obsessions like transhumanist technologies and philosophies, virtual reality, cyberpunk, antiauthoritarianism, psychedelic explorations, intelligence increase drugs and, perhaps most of all, an embrace of the intersection of pop and counterculture, all of it laced with absurdity and without a trace of purism.

Leary was a Contributing Editor and our man in L.A. throughout the early years. Among other things, he contributed interviews with William Gibson, William Burroughs and David Byrne. I am, to this day, sad that David Bowie canceled the interview when he discovered who our man in LA was.

Leary used to visit and stay at our Berkeley “technogothic citadel” (as described in various media outlets) and even surprised us by dropping in on our Thursday 5 PM editorial meetings a couple of times. He never charged us a penny for his work. ✱

# 1992

## **Rosemary Woodruff Returns**

In December 1992, Timothy met with ex-wife Rosemary, who was still a fugitive, running a bed and breakfast under an assumed name in Northern California. On the day they met, Timothy asked her to marry him again, but she refused. In 1994, Timothy raised money to take her case back to court to have the charges against her dropped. After over two decades of fugitive life, Rosemary decided to turn herself in. Timothy traveled to an Orange County courtroom with *MONDO 2000* music editor Jas. Morgan where he told the judge, “She was a young woman in love. It’s all my fault, your honor.” The judge dismissed all charges and Rosemary returned to public life. \*

# 1992 – 1996

## The Ravers

One thing that cheered Timothy during this difficult patch was the rise of the raves. Acid house had long since conquered England with what was probably the greatest psychedelic countercultural eruption in its history — leading to spontaneous public gatherings in the middle of the night, tens of thousands of young Brits dancing in open fields to loud electronic music — events that, of course, became illegal. The scene was brought to the USA, largely thanks to an Englishman named Mark Heley, who wanted to hook up this techno music dance culture to US cyberculture.

The rave scene carried many of Leary's favorite tropes. They were psychedelic, upbeat, urban, playful and, in contrast to many of the old hippies, they embraced technology. Even better, they had an underground DIY ethic. Ravers would devote endless time and energy to create events — preferably underground and unauthorized — for the sheer joy of bringing people together. Timothy saw it as a new flourishing of the best aspects of the early years of the hippie culture. He called the ravers “hippies with beepers.” Numerous house music recordings featured Leary's voice and in 1996 he recorded an entire album, *Right To Fly*, with Simon Stokes. \*

# 1994

## Chaos and Cyberculture

In 1994, a small independent publisher released a collection of Leary's writing — along with interviews that he'd conducted in the 1980s and '90s — titled *Chaos and Cyberculture*. It included a long and well realized essay titled "How I Became an Amphibian" that covers most of Leary's points about technoculture and a wonderful piece on Hermann Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game*, which also (surprise!) turns out to be about the digitization of everything. There is also an entire section in which he lucidly savages the War On Drugs; and lots of other stuff, including his great anti-Reaganite rants.

I found Leary's embrace of chaos as a theme during the '90s interesting. I think it contrasts in a way with his neat systems of evolutionary circuits and correspondences. It's almost like he was finally battered by life's vicissitudes into a sort of Techno-Taoist acceptance of the uncontrollable messiness of life and evolution.

EXCERPT

### "The Reagan Generation" from *Chaos and Cyberculture*, 1994

*During the 1980s the gentle tolerance of Woodstock was replaced by a hard-ass Marine Corps attitude. The pacifism of "Give Peace a Chance" gave way to a swaggering militarism. The conquest of Grenada. The glorious bombing of Qaddafi's tent. The covert war against Nicaragua. Star Trek gave way to Star Wars.*

*The War on Drugs made mellow marijuana prohibitively expensive. The DEA made sure that the peaceable, visionary elixirs like 'shrooms, mescaline, LSD and MDMA became inaccessible. So good-bye to turn on, tune in, drop out... and hello to the motto of the 1980s: Hang on. Hang in. Hang over.*

*And what did the War on Drugs produce? A booze epidemic. Alcohol, the drug of choice of the NRA, the Bubba hunting crowd, the American Legion is back in the saddle. Turn down! Time out! Throw up!*

*And cocaine. An epidemic of toot, snort, snow, blow, base, crack has the inner cities wired and fired. Cocaine, the drug that fueled Hitler's SS and the Nazi Blitzkrieg suddenly is turning the inner cities of Reagan-Bush America into battlegrounds! Guns, rifles, automatic weapons conveniently supplied by the NRA and your government-licensed gun dealer. Just walk up and name your weapon, Bucko. No questions asked. Turn out! Shoot up! Drop dead!*

*And here's a pharmaceutical plus for the post-Woodstock America; what unique new Rambo drug did the stand-tall, muscle-bound Reagan-Bush regime give our youth to replace the wimpy Carter years? Steroids! Turn off! Tune out! Pump up! \**

# 1995-1996

---

## Dying To Have Some Fun

### Good News! Inoperable Prostate Cancer

In January 1995, Timothy Leary announced to the world that he was dying of prostate cancer. Not one for regular doctor visits, Timothy had probably had the illness for some time and he was inoperable. When Leary called his friends to tell them the news, he was cheerful. “Good news! I’m dying.” He said that he’d been looking forward to dying all his life. He’d certainly had some death/rebirth experiences, as we learned at the beginning of this trip through time.

### Plans for Cryonic Preservation

He wasn’t just looking forward to dying. He was looking forward to coming back... not as a wise owl or a laughing hyena — he wasn’t talking about reincarnation. He was planning on rejuvenation. Leary was going to have his head frozen by the cryonics organization ALCOR in the hopes that he could return later in a healthy body in a more technologically advanced and, hopefully, happier world.

Cryonics, as most people know, is the attempt to preserve a deceased person in cold temperatures so that they can be resuscitated when the appropriate technology exists. It is considered dubious by the vast majority of scientists. Leary said of cryonics, “It’s the second dumbest thing you can do, next to dying and letting the worms eat you.”

### Partying to Death

Meanwhile, Leary decided to turn his dying process into a celebration. He invited all of his friends to come pay their respects while he was still alive. When we came to visit, he cheered *us* up. Ever the experimental scientist, he shared openly all of his reports — objective and subjective — about how he was experiencing and thinking about the dying process. And while in a condition that would confine

most people to a hospital bed, Tim spoke candidly, insightfully, and sometimes even lucidly to the people through the media, granting interviews nearly every day.

Dying in public was his last command performance. For a year-and-a-half, he challenged the last and greatest taboo. I don't merely mean the taboo against confronting death head on. In that, he joined Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, the Hemlock Society, Jack Kevorkian, the hospice movement, Ram Dass, and so many others in bringing intelligence, sanity, and courage into that still sadly underlit area of human experience. But Leary did that thing that only Leary would do. He challenged the solemnity of dying. He realized that the ultimate indignity was to have everybody around you lose their sense of humor; to have everybody treat you like a walking bummer; a grim representative of the unhappy facts of death.

During this time, Timothy was surrounded by loving friends and supporters — many of them in their twenties. These young friends helped him build and maintain the webpage Leary.com on which Timothy and others posted daily reports on his condition, drug intake, visitors, insights and so on. It was, in essence, one of the earliest blogs and a popular one at that — it made several lists as one of the ten most popular or influential blogs of 1995.

There were bad days during which he was pain-wracked and sick, but he always rallied for some fun, whether it was going to a Ministry concert or getting a bunch of wheelchairs and having his young friends join him in dropping acid and racing wheelchairs around downtown Beverly Hills.

He had numerous reunions with long lost old friends. Rosemary Woodruff came to stay for a while. All the alumni from the Harvard psilocybin project visited. Yoko Ono was a frequent visitor. He had friendly visits from several people associated with the Weather Underground (although not from the leaders). And finally, his son Jack came to visit. He arrived in the middle of the Harvard reunion. Timothy tried to make him feel included, but he slipped away without anything like a happy reconciliation — something I know Timothy deeply wished for. ✱



# 1996

## Soul Not On Ice

In March 1996, the cryonics group Cryo-Care moved a cryogenic preservation chamber into the Leary house. The point was to get Timothy on ice as soon after death as possible. The young people hanging out there found it ghoulish but had fun decorating the equipment with random “inappropriate” stuff. And then Timothy added to the strange fun by announcing that he was thinking about dying — self-euthanizing — on the Internet.

Euthanasia is, of course, still illegal so Timothy’s final act might have also been, appropriately, his last big bust. But then, the Cryo-Care people yanked the preservation chamber, because they didn’t like all the fooling around. At that point, Leary decided against cryonics, declaring that he didn’t want to “wake up in 50 years surrounded by a bunch of humorless men with clipboards.” In truth, many of his friends say he was looking for an excuse to ditch the cryonics scheme, which had basically no support from the people nearest to him.

## Timothy Leary’s Dead

By the end of May 1996, Timothy Leary was fading in and out of consciousness. When Robert Anton Wilson and his wife Arlen visited him, he didn’t recognize them. It was time. On May 29, two days before his death, Carol Rosin recorded a final interview with Leary. He told her, “My life work has been to empower individuals.... Ride the light into space.” On May 31, surrounded by friends and family, he lay unconscious for a long time. Then he opened his eyes. He repeated the words, “Why? Why not?” around fifty times. He fell asleep. A few hours later, he woke up, looked at his stepson Zach and said, “Beautiful.” That would be Timothy Leary’s last word.\*

# 1997

## Timothy Leary in Space

After Leary's falling out with the cryogenics company, Carol Rosin — a friend and a leading activist against the militarization of space — made arrangements with a company called Celestis to have his ashes sent into space. On April 21, 1997, Leary finally headed into the cosmos, along with Gerard K. O'Neill and *Star Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry.

## Aftermath — The Leary Legacy

### Timothy Leary's Dead (Film), 1996

The film, *Timothy Leary's Dead*, directed by Paul Davids, released not that long after his death is a fun, sympathetic portrait of the man that got reasonably good notice during its brief theatrical life. It contains a scene in which Leary's head seems to be severed and then placed into cryogenic storage. The scene is, of course, a fake, but many people believe that he is on ice because they watched the movie. Some friends and family members were upset by the scene. No doubt, Leary would have considered it a great prank from beyond the grave.

## Design For Dying, 1997

Following Timothy Leary's death and trip to the stars, I was honored to be asked to edit and complete his book *Design For Dying*. The book contains encapsulations of his philosophy of life; covering: the meaning of life, cybernetics, language, drugs, psychology and mutation — under the theory that, in order to explain death, you first must take a flyer at explaining life. It describes his madcap celebration of his dying process and contains various thoughts and instructions regarding preparing for death as well as theories about the death experience (one of which was discussed by Ethan Hawke in Richard Linklater's film *Waking Life*). It delves into the technology of cryogenic preservation and digital preservation of personal data. Finally, it includes stories told by friends of Leary regarding their experiences with him during this period.

# 1999

## Timothy Leary: Outside Looking In

In 1999, the book Timothy Leary *Outside Looking In*, subheaded *Appreciations, Castigations and Reminiscences*, edited by Robert Forte was published. In it Allen Ginsberg, Winona Ryder, Albert Hofmann, Aldous Huxley, Hunter S. Thompson, Ram Dass, Frank Barron, William S. Burroughs, Andrew Weil, Terence McKenna, Ken Kesey, Anita Hoffman, Michael Horowitz, Ralph Metzner, Paul Krassner, Robert Anton Wilson, Rosemary Woodruff and others spoke or wrote about Timothy.

## Smoking Gun Releases Partial FBI File, 1999

In 1999, Smoking Gun — self-described as a large collection of public documents on crimes, celebrities, politicians, and the FBI, published small selected documents that the FBI had provided to them about Leary’s cooperation under the title “Turn On Tune In Rat Out.” The “Friends of Timothy Leary” (myself among them) released a counterstatement to put the news item into perspective. Among others, the statement was signed by Andrei Codrescu, Ken Kesey, Tom Robbins and Susan Sarandon.

## Two Biographies Published in 2006

Two Timothy Leary biographies were released in 2006. The first, *Timothy Leary: A Biography* by Robert Greenfield received a great deal of press attention, with reviews in all the major outlets.

It would be ungenerous of me not to praise Greenfield’s hard work in researching this massive, excruciatingly detailed work, as it has been a major source for me in the very work you are reading. Nevertheless the book — considered a “hatchet job” by many Leary fans — is seriously flawed. In fact, as a friend of Timothy’s, one almost feels a responsibility to pick the book apart as a defense attorney would, but I have neither the time nor the inclination.

Briefly however, there are three major flaws with Greenfield's bio.

1: He chose to believe anything anybody said that contradicted what Leary said about events in his own life. There is no skepticism as to the value of, or, in some cases, the sanity of the source. Conversely, there is nothing but skepticism applied to Leary's own version of things, except when his version is the only thing Greenfield has to move the story along.

2: The voice of authorial judgment intervenes several times in absurd ways, starting early on with a comparison of Timothy to Adolf Hitler.

3: He has no sympathy for — or understanding of — Leary's writings, talks and ideas. It seems, perhaps, odd that someone would spend so much time delving into the life of a man whose intellectual pursuits he held in such disrespect, but a look at Greenfield's other works shows a fascination with the 1960s counterculture and with the rock stars of that era (and Timothy was a bit of a rock star). Also, he must have seen that the various incidents from the 1960s and '70s would make a hell of a dramatic story (with cinematic potential). Greenfield evinces only mild interest in Leary's psychedelic philosophizing and virtually ignores his prison and post-prison work related to technology and evolution in favor of shabby tales of economic hustling and celebrity whoring. (There was a bit of that, certainly.)

Having said all that, the bio can be valuable to the discerning reader who can still find evidence of genius and humanity amidst Greenfield's onslaught. On the whole, the book is rather poignant so long as the sophisticated reader keeps these caveats in mind.

*I Have America Surrounded: the Life of Timothy Leary* by John Higgs was released the same year by small presses in both England and the U.S. The British author has a far greater appreciation for Leary's experiments and ideas and seeks to explain them — for the most part, cogently. The book is a fun read, with a fair amount of emphasis on items of interest to Europeans, such as Tim's psychedelic occult experimentations with Brian Barritt and his recording of an album in Switzerland, *Seven Up*, with the Krautrock band, Ash Ra Tempel.

Higgs doesn't ignore the sometimes-ugly complexities involved in Leary's release from prison and includes criticisms from various

lovers, friends and acquaintances, but on the whole, presents an upbeat version of Timothy Leary that is virtually the opposite of the more influential (at least within literary circles) Greenfield portrait.

## Societal Influences

Research into the psychotherapeutic and medical effects of psychedelic drugs started up again in the mid-1990s, largely thanks to MAPS — the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies. Leary supported MAPS in their initial phase and, at least some of his ideas like set and setting, have an influence on the ongoing experiments. A book by David Jay Brown titled *Psychedelic Drug Research: A Comprehensive Review* reports on all the promising research and experiments using psilocybin, LSD, Ecstasy (MDMA), Ketamine and more. Even Harvard once again allowed an experiment, with MDMA, within its hallowed halls. In April, 2007, *Time* magazine ran an article titled “Was Timothy Leary Right?” about recent legal research with psychedelic substances.

Perhaps more than anything else, Timothy Leary contributes to the new wave of psychedelic research by providing the scientists and advocates with a convenient target to kick on their way up the ladder to legitimacy. In virtually every media report, Leary provides a point of contrast in which his “irresponsibility” is blamed for the end of the earlier research and the bad reputation surrounding psychedelic drugs.

Harvard also now has a Hedonic Psychology Laboratory under the direction of Daniel Gilbert. Leary coined the phrase Hedonic Psychology in a 1973 *Psychology Today* article but the current crew at the laboratory doesn’t acknowledge any influence from Leary.

The transhumanist culture has grown and developed a greater following. Max More, considered by many to be the instigator of contemporary transhumanism, has acknowledged Leary’s *Exo-Psychology* as an early influence and a number of people within the culture also acknowledge him, albeit not generally the more well-connected and influential ones. Ray Kurzweil’s seminal book *The Singularity is Near* includes imagined conversations between Timothy Leary and an advanced post-singularity being, but his “Tim Leary” doesn’t really sound at all like Leary.

The space movement is livening up again. In particular, there is a movement afoot to build a space elevator as a means to resolve our clean energy problem by capturing and sending abundant solar energy back home, and to begin lifting humans into space colonies. Leary's friend from the space colonies movement, Keith Henson, is an important activist in the movement.

In June 2012, the New York Public Library bought Timothy Leary's papers. Since then, there have been a series of wonderful posts from intern Alison Rhonemus about all she has discovered while processing the material. It's a joy to read these fragments through such fresh unjaundiced eyes. The material will all be ready for public viewing soon. We predict a renewed interest in Leary as the papers reveal that he was a smart, often serious, and compassionate human being.

Boing Boing, one of the world's most popular and influential blogs features Leary as a sort of patron saint. Mark Frauenfelder, who started *Boing Boing* as a 'zine back in the late '80s was an admirer and friend. David Pescovitz, also one of the originators of the blog, got involved with digital culture and moved to California as the result of interviewing Leary for a newsweekly in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Richard Metzner, founder of the popular Dangerous Minds blog is another Leary enthusiast.

Douglas Rushkoff, one of America's foremost media critics, has been deeply influenced by Leary.

David Jay Brown, who wrote the aforementioned book on contemporary psychedelic drug research, was influenced by Timothy Leary and Robert Anton Wilson. He just released a book that features a roundtable discussion with Leary, Wilson, John Lilly and others titled *Mavericks of the Mind Live!*

David Pearce — seemingly without any influence from Leary, but definitely influenced by psychedelic experiences — authored a visionary transhumanist “book” (available online) titled the Hedonistic Imperative and started the “abolitionist movement to end involuntary sentient suffering.”

In 2004, Dan Joy and I released the book *Counterculture Through The Ages*, an attempt to define the qualities that make up counterculture and show how countercultures crop up all through human history. Leary and Joy originally formulated the idea for the book and they planned to write it together. Joy came to me with the idea after Leary failed to turn in the manuscript post-death. We used the introduction that Timothy had already written.

Anterro Alli — a filmmaker, theatrical producer and experiential workshop leader — released the book *The Eight-Circuit Brain: Navigational Strategies for the Energetic Body* based on his active working with the 8 Circuit Model in 2009. He has also given workshops using the model as a means for undergoing transformative experiences.

Jason Silva, an excitable filmmaker, futurist, public speaker and former host of a Current TV program has regularly incorporated Timothy Leary into his way-optimistic discourse — even picking up the banner of the stand-up philosopher. His new series *BRAIN GAMES* appears on the National Geographic Channel.

I'm sure I've left way too many people out. The list could go on forever.

## Timothy Leary Today

It's a strange time in American culture. On the one hand, we're starting to legalize marijuana; we're finally giving gay people their civil rights; we're very multicultural and fairly environmentally minded. We question authority, even beyond reason (which can be problematic, when it comes to things like scientific authority and fact-based politics.)

On the other hand, our civil liberties are gone. Sure, on a day-to-day basis most of us still have free speech. The Fourth Amendment against illegal search and seizure, on the other hand, went away with the drug war in the 1980s and never came back. Habeas Corpus, derived from the 13<sup>th</sup> Century Magna Carta, died during the last decade and President Obama has not seen fit to bring it back. And the

president can kill Americans overseas (and maybe even in the US) by putting them on a list, without judicial oversight. There's perpetual war (now in the form of Special Ops. If the Republicans come back, we'll probably be back to invading nation states). There's a National Security Complex that's so big and well funded it makes the former East Germany seem like a bunch of underfunded goofy amateurs. You know the rest.

## **So do we drop a dose of Timothy Leary into this mess?**

Somewhere in his work, he may have something to tell us about how to deal with the oncoming legalization of marijuana and the medicalization of psychedelic drugs – and the problems of teens taking bad legal drugs like mephadrone (“bath salts”), DXM and mom's Oxycontin. Timothy had some things to say about real drug education and even offered another one of his slogans: “Just Say Know.” And with the eventual coming of legal psychedelic therapy, we may get the opportunity to test his theories of psychedelic re-imprinting.

Transhumanism is spreading and Leary may have something to tell us about keeping the goals of self-enhancement aimed at evolving a humane, playful, novelty-rich culture as opposed to just building up IQ points and biological years out of some unthinking Western goal-oriented pursuit of quantity. Incidentally, back in the early 1980s, Leary argued with Marvin Minsky for IA (Intelligence Amplification) over AI (Artificial Intelligence) – putting the human being at the center of the intelligence explosion.

I think he would have something to tell us about the imposition of austerity by international finance. Timothy's politics may have been a mix of liberalism, libertarianism and leftism, but if there was anything he despised, it was austerity – whether as reflected in a conservative man's personality or by a systemic lack of generosity.

We know there's something in his bag of tricks that speaks to the democratic uprisings brought on, in part, by the latest wave of technology. He has, in futique forethought, some supportive perspectives on the Arab Spring, Occupy, the radical transparency groups like WikiLeaks and the open culture movements.



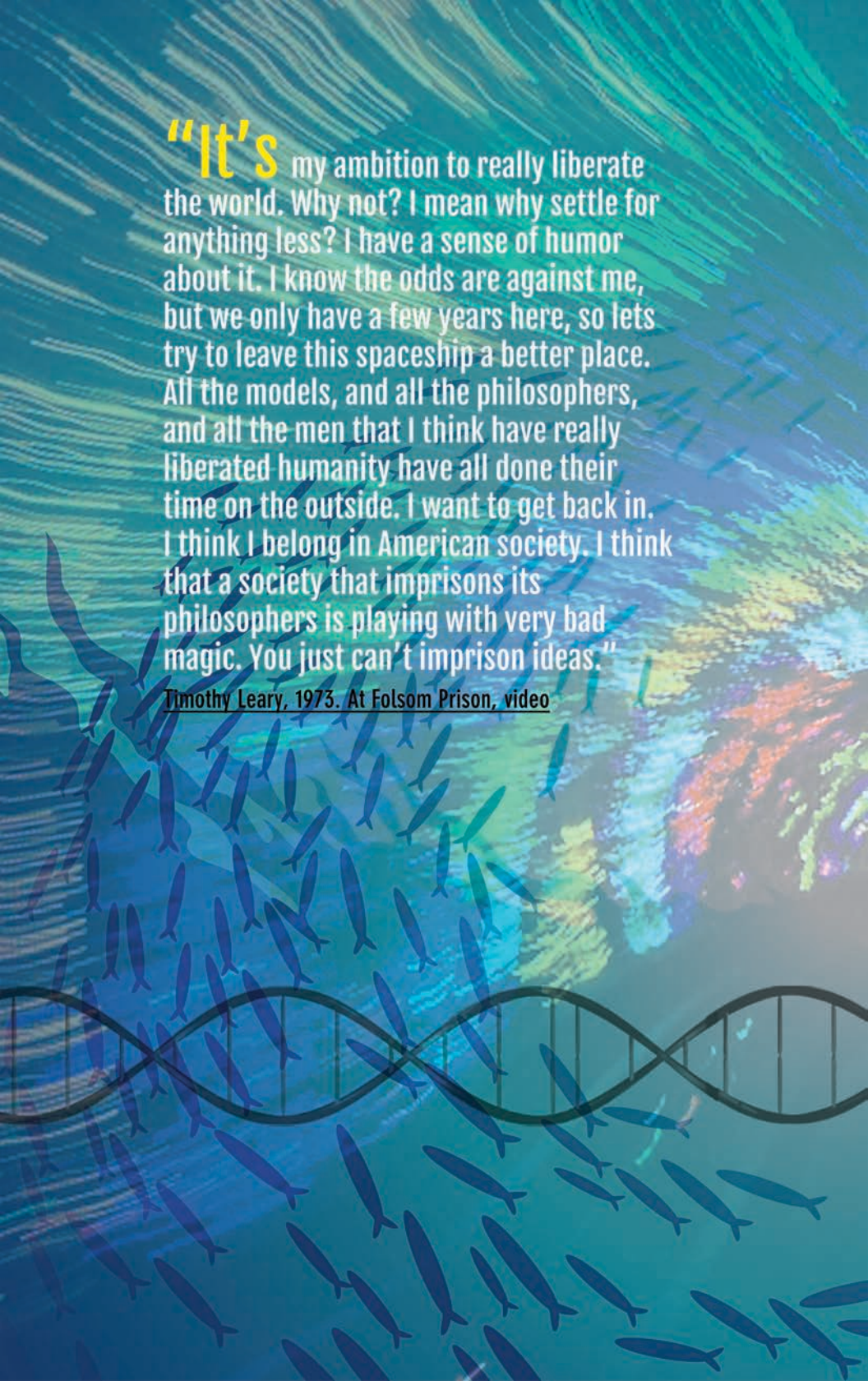
He would — as he always did — have something to say about the politically correct excesses of liberalism. He was, after all, a smoking man who didn't like excessive intrusion upon his personhood. He'd give no quarter (short of war) and brook no excuses for Jihad or any form of religious fundamentalism.

Finally, he would have had a lot to say about what you have to do just to get on an airplane. My god, I may have to stop there! I can't imagine Timothy Leary having his balls searched in an airport without winding up in Guantanamo. It's the better part of caution that I now conclude this trip through time. ✱

**“Human beings have a right to change their consciousness, and it is unconscionable and absolutely wrong for any government or any person to stand in the way of someone choosing to change their consciousness.”** -TIMOTHY LEARY







**"It's** my ambition to really liberate the world. Why not? I mean why settle for anything less? I have a sense of humor about it. I know the odds are against me, but we only have a few years here, so lets try to leave this spaceship a better place. All the models, and all the philosophers, and all the men that I think have really liberated humanity have all done their time on the outside. I want to get back in. I think I belong in American society. I think that a society that imprisons its philosophers is playing with very bad magic. You just can't imprison ideas."

Timothy Leary, 1973. At Folsom Prison, video