



# Noesis

The Journal of the Mega Society

Issue #190 May 2010

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# About the Mega Society

The Mega Society was founded by Dr. Ronald K. Hoeflin in 1982. The 606 Society (6 in 10<sup>6</sup>), founded by Christopher Harding, was incorporated into the new society and those with IQ scores on the Langdon Adult Intelligence Test (LAIT) of 173 or more were also invited to join. (The LAIT qualifying score was subsequently raised to 175; official scoring of the LAIT terminated at the end of 1993, after the test was compromised). A number of different tests were accepted by 606 and during the first few years of Mega's existence. Later, the LAIT and Dr. Hoeflin's Mega Test became the sole official entrance tests, by vote of the membership. Later, Dr. Hoeflin's Titan Test was added. (The Mega was also compromised, so scores after 1994 are currently not accepted; the Mega and Titan cutoff is now 43—but either the LAIT cutoff or the cutoff on Dr. Hoeflin's tests will need to be changed, as they are not equivalent.)

Mega publishes this irregularly-timed journal. The society also has a (low-traffic) members-only e-mail list. Mega members, please contact the Editor to be added to the list.

For more background on Mega, please refer to Darryl Miyaguchi's "A Short (and Bloody) History of the High-IQ Societies"—

<http://www.eskimo.com/~miyaguch/history.html>

—the Editor's High-IQ Societies page—

<http://www.polymath-systems.com/intel/hiqsocs/index.html>

—and the official Mega Society page,

<http://www.megasociety.org/>

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*Noesis* is the journal of the Mega Society, an organization whose members are selected by means of high-range intelligence tests. Jeff Ward, 13155 Wimberly Square #284, San Diego, CA 92128, is Administrator of the Mega Society. Inquiries regarding membership should be directed to him at the address above or:

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# Editorial

**Kevin Langdon**

This was to be the second Astronomy and Space issue but that issue is not ready yet and this regular issue is being published to avoid further publication delay.

The Mega Society publishes this journal every few months. The society has a members-only e-mail list. And we operate a website, with basic information about the Mega Society and many recent issues of *Noesis*, which is available to the public at:

<http://www.megasociety.org>

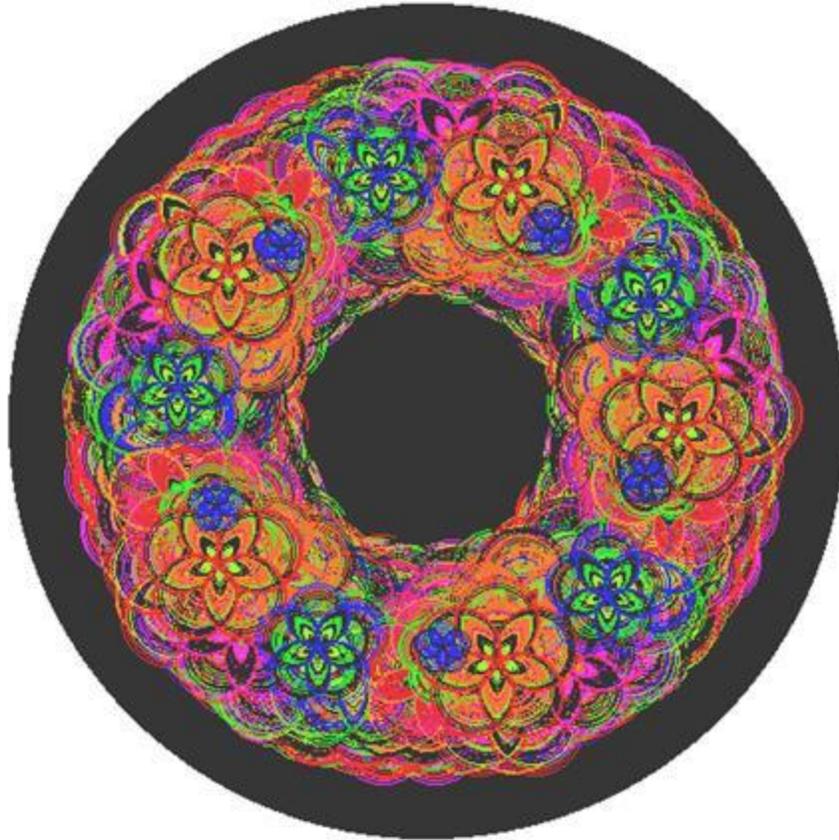
This issue of *Noesis* contains several interesting and thought-provoking articles.

“Idiotic Geniuses,” by Garth Zietsman, is an exploration of the relationship between high intelligence and psychological disorders. “Scientific Illiteracy in Dan Brown’s *The Lost Symbol*,” by Chris Cole, demolishes a pretentious but vacuous piece of pop pseudointellectualism. Jeff Ward’s “The Story of Zard” reveals the true story behind this mysterious figure. “Stannage Street” is part of a series of short autobiographical essays by the Editor. “Nasca Update” is a note on recent developments related to Jeff Ward’s “Going Over the Lines Once More (a visit to Nasca)” (*Noesis* #182, Sept. 2006, <http://www.megasociety.net/noesis/182.pdf>), by Chris Cole. And “Sunrise,” is a short poem by May-Tzu (Richard May).

The images on the cover and on pages 4, 7, 14, and 16 are from the animated computer graphics program *Hallucinations 2.0* (forthcoming), by Kevin Langdon. Copyright © 2010 by Polymath Systems. All rights reserved.

As usual, we need contributions. This issue is smaller than usual because we didn’t have enough material to publish a bigger one. Material for the second space science issue and our next regular issue, from Mega members and nonmembers, will be appreciated.

The deadline for the next issue of *Noesis* (Part 2 of our Astronomy and Space special issues) is July 15.



## Idiotic Geniuses

Garth Zietsman

I am interested in the phenomenon of idiot behaviour by unquestioned geniuses and very high IQ people.

Why, if the  $g$  factor is reflected in every task which requires thought, is it possible for extremely intelligent people to be truly stupid? It makes a bit more sense when you understand  $g$  a little more clearly. The essence of the  $g$  factor is that it is the efficiency with which we form neural networks in response to experience. Low IQ people seem to have low performance across the board because they have trouble forming any network. High IQ people form those networks relatively easily but whether a network forms still depends on having the formative experience. High IQ people show quite marked inequalities in abilities because they pay more attention to some experiences than others. Genius level achievements usually require an unusual level of focus (obsession with something to the exclusion of other things) in addition to high  $g$  levels, so it stands to reason that the extraordinary ability of a genius tends to be confined to a narrow field and that many may perform badly outside their fields.

There are a great many examples of geniuses behaving, and indeed thinking, badly. One area is romantic relationships. Divorce does decrease with increasing IQ, so it would seem smarter people are wiser about relationship issues, but in my readings of biographies of geniuses I was struck by the fact that they seem just as irrational in the throes of passion as anyone else. They seem just as prone to make bad choices that come back to bite them.

For example Schopenhauer proposed to a 20-year-old when around 70 (OK, so it was worth a shot, but he must have known he would have been laughed at), Byron married someone most calculated to make him unhappy. Shelley married his first wife (still a schoolgirl) on an impulsive whim to save her from a father who was being beastly to her, after a single conversation. Feynman didn't appear to apply his mind when he married his second wife. Marilyn vos Savant married while still in high school, rapidly had 2 kids and got divorced. She then (in spite of the fairly good sense she displays in her column) married someone else who proved even less satisfactory.

**Editor's Note:** While Marilyn's first two marriages ended in divorce she has been married to her third husband, Dr. Robert Jarvik, famous for his artificial heart innovations, for over twenty years.

I recently read a book of love letters written by various geniuses. The letters were hardly elevated, balanced or dense with ideas but rather were at the same level as stuff we wrote at school. It isn't as though passion is impervious to intellect either. One just has to read Kahlil Gibran's love letters to see what can be achieved if you apply your mind. Many super-bright people simply do not think through some areas of their lives—particularly where strong feelings are involved.

Then there is the failure of a disturbingly large fraction of Mega society members to finish college, gain employment that makes any use of their intelligence, earn above poverty level incomes, etc. This seems to happen mainly to those from working class or poor backgrounds with no mentor or examples of success. It also seems to happen to children growing up with extreme wealth where the spur to achieve is absent and the obvious role model is distant, e.g., Warren Buffet's kids. It seldom happens if the family is middle class, where the need for achievement is fostered, and if dad (or an uncle or brother) is successful. Experience, practice and good examples are essential, even if you do have a stratospheric IQ.

Many high IQ people are inclined to book learn and to master areas that are self-contained—maths, programming, chess, economics, etc.—because it is here that their superiority is most marked. They are less inclined to get involved in learning by doing and in the messy, uncertain real world. They end up being superb in their closed worlds but worthless outside of it. A large fraction of hyper-educated experts are like that. People who study long hours, and seldom leave their rooms, in order to get superb grades, come across as virtually helpless, naive and immature when they leave their schoolbooks and step outside. Specialisation is necessary for genius level performance

but it backfires when those individuals trade on their reputation in their fields to pontificate outside their fields.

I don't believe super-high-IQ types need have bad relationships, failed careers or low EQs. Let's focus on relationships. In theory the more intelligent the person the more able he or she should be at forming and managing relationships. High-IQ people simply need to take the field of relationships seriously and apply their IQs to it. If you don't want to piss on your brains like Bobby Fisher you need to be humble in areas where your ability is unproven and apply yourself to learn about it.

If you want wisdom, in addition to a high IQ you need a broad erudition (particularly about procedures—how to do things) and experience engaging the world. Goethe is a good example of a wise and balanced genius.

Geniuses become stupid for three reasons. They don't have experience and role models that force them to learn and apply their IQ to an issue and so simply don't develop the required neural net; they are arrogant; or they made their decisions under the influence of strong emotions.

One qualification: while a high IQ does mitigate the effects of mental illness it can also become the servant of it. In the hands of intellects like Nash or Gödel paranoia probably becomes nastier and more comprehensive because more and better reasons can be found to justify it. Notice how odd people in high-IQ societies seem to be quite efficient at causing trouble. I imagine that for bright mentally-ill types this increased efficiency can be turned inward too.

If I had to take advice I would give points for:

- the advisor being intelligent.
- the advisor's field being relevant to the advice.
- the advisor not being too invested in the dominant theory of the day in his or her field.
- the advisor being widely read (and frequently in touch with experts) outside the field.
- the advisor having been around the block and appearing to be successful.
- the advisor not having an incentive to slant his advice, e.g., ideology, financial dependence, etc.
- the advice making sense to me.

And, of course, I would seek advice from more than one source.



## Scientific Illiteracy in Dan Brown's *The Lost Symbol*

**Chris Cole**

Dan Brown's latest novel, *The Lost Symbol*, was released on September 15, 2009. This date was chosen because the sum of month, day, and last two digits of the year equals 33, which is also the number of vertebrae in the human spine, the temperature at which water boils in Newton's scale, the highest degree to which a Mason may aspire, and so on. This is some of the arcana in the book.

Brown's last book, *The Da Vinci Code*, was one of the best-selling books of all time, and *The Lost Symbol* looks to repeat this performance. It is therefore of concern how scientifically illiterate the book is.

Before criticizing the book, we should acknowledge that it is a tour de force of technique. The book is hard to put down. This style of novel was (re)introduced in crime thrillers by James Patterson. Patterson was an advertising executive in a prior life and applies the short-attention-span technique of that genre to his writing. Each chapter is very short and ends with a cliff-hanger. Tension is maintained by interweaving two or more story lines to make the reader wait at least one chapter until each cliff-hanger is resolved. Brown adopts this technique; there are 133 chapters in 500 pages of *The Lost Symbol*, so the book contains 132 cliff-hangers, which is undoubtedly difficult to orchestrate.

Ad executives are experts in appealing to the viewer, but here is where Brown trumps Patterson. *The Lost Symbol* promises to reveal to the reader the Ancient Mysteries that allow the reader to become a god. Who wouldn't be interested in that? Of course the problem with promising this to the reader is that you can't deliver. In *The Da Vinci Code* Brown does not make such lofty promises, but in *The Lost Symbol* he ups the ante. One supposes that, Lucas-like, he doesn't have anyone around him to tell him not to go there. Or maybe it is Jackson-like? At any rate, he rushes in where wise men fear to tread.

Like *The Da Vinci Code*, *The Lost Symbol* is filled with venerable conspiracy theories. Unlike *The Da Vinci Code*, *The Lost Symbol* is filled with specific scientific claims. Not content to stick with platitudes about the unlimited potential of the human mind, Brown trots out something called "Noetic Science."

But Brown is no scientist. This is abundantly clear from the number of elementary mistakes in the book. For example, on page 50, he states that a certain person must be alive because his hand bled after it was severed from his body. The logic is that since bodies don't bleed after death, the person must have been alive when the hand was severed. Of course it is a non sequitur to conclude that the person must still be alive, but ignoring that, the hand was severed from the body, hence it was severed from the circulatory system, hence it had no blood pressure. Of course blood will flow out of a body part both before and after death, so the whole argument is ignorant of cause and effect.

The book is replete with similar instances of scientific illiteracy. On page 74, it is claimed that the human body contains millions of cell; on page 125, a Taser delivers a million volts; on page 156, a flashlight battery lasts less than ten minutes; on page 167, a security screening X-ray determines metal density; on page 249, 16 letters with several repeats have 16! different permutations and a computer takes more than a few hours to examine them; on page 313, a CCD works better when supercooled; on page 440, EMP is commonplace in law enforcement; on page 456, a helicopter's lift is affected by the shape of the object it is flying over; and on page 470, a line of longitude is said to be over 24,000 miles long.

More importantly, Brown misunderstands the essence of science. The sole scientist in the book thinks that the world will never know of her work because her notes are destroyed. This crisis is resolved when it is revealed that someone has made a copy of her hard drive. This confuses the map with the territory. It is not the notes that are the science. It is the reality behind the notes. The symbol is not the truth.

As a result of this illiteracy, Brown uncritically accepts the claims of Noetic Science that the human mind can directly affect matter. To quote Feynman, this is "something that has been looked into and nothing has ever come of it." Feynman also said, "The trick is not to fool yourself, and you are the easiest person to fool."

# The Story of Zard

Jeff Ward

## The Election

It was my high school sophomore year, and they were dividing my school, Shawnee-Mission, in two. (The school is located in the sprawling Kansas City suburbs of Johnson County, Kansas, and had an enrollment of about 2,000 at the time.) Next year, my current school would be renamed Shawnee-Mission North, but I would be attending the new one: Shawnee-Mission East. Having been forced into brand-new schools twice before, first in 6th grade with Belinder and then in 8th with Indian Hills Junior High, I knew what this meant, and it was not good.

It was spring and time to elect next year's student officers of both schools. The officers were the usual President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. That meant a total of eight officers to be elected, but each student could only vote in the election of their own future school.

Student elections were fairly meaningless anyway, because the officers were given little power to do anything that mattered. But they were especially meaningless this time, because two of the four Shawnee-Mission North offices and all four of the Shawnee-Mission East offices were uncontested. In other words, six of the eight contests had only one candidate. In retrospect, this situation played right into my hands. I probably would have done something like Zard anyway, but an election with so many uncontested offices created a situation ripe for entertaining a bored and turned-off student body.

## The Beginning

In the beginning, it was not a big deal. There was this meaningless election, and the halls displayed campaign posters containing meaningless messages about candidates and an election nobody cared about. At the same time, a television series about the fictional hero El Zorro was on once a week. I thought it was pretty good and watched most episodes. I especially liked the idea of a mysterious masked crusader going around using his sword to mark things with a "Z." At some point, the idea occurred to me to create a similar character who would be a candidate in the election. I would combine "El Zorro" with Ward, call him "El Zardo," and advertise his existence with a campaign poster.

So I made one. It was a crude drawing of a man on horseback, dressed in black and wearing a mask. The poster also had a big Z like the kind Zorro made and the caption, "Vote for El Zardo." The paper came from a package of 8½ by 11 paper of

various colors available at the local drug store. It was the kind of paper used in grade schools for arts and crafts projects. In this case, I believe the color was orange.

The drawing was intentionally crude and childish looking. With my lack of drawing ability, this was easy to achieve. The whole point was to be silly and crude rather than clever or artistic; to produce something that made people stop and say, "What on earth is this?"

I put up the poster near my Spanish class. It was a good location because the classroom was in a back corner of the first floor where hall traffic was light. The big question was how long it would stay up. I figured it was only 50-50 that it would make it to the following day. But when the next day came, it was still there! I thought to myself, "This seems to be working. Maybe I should make some more."

## **The Posters**

When I decided to make more posters, I realized that the Zorro copycat theme was too limiting in subject matter. So I shortened the name to the more generic Zard, thus creating almost unlimited possibilities. Some of the posters were crayon drawings on colored paper. One was a crude drawing of three black mice. The caption said, "Three Blind Mice, See How They Run And Vote For Zard." Another was a crude drawing of a human face, cross-eyed and looking totally idiotic. The caption said simply "Vote Zard."

My 8th grade brother Bill, with considerably more drawing talent than I, drew a pretty good picture of a hand holding a pencil that was crashing through both a ballot with Zard's name on it and the table the ballot was laying on. The caption said, "Vote Hard For Zard." Another had no picture at all and said simply, "Vote Twice For Zard."

Most of the others involved cutting out pictures from magazines, pasting or taping them onto a sheet of colored paper, and adding a caption in crayon. I only remember a few of them. One was a color photograph of a beagle with the caption, "If You Eat Pard, Vote For Zard," Pard being a well known brand of dog food in those days. Another showed a colored picture of a birthday cake with the caption "Vote Zard" without any explanation of what one had to do with the other. I imagine this caused a few people to scratch their heads in bewilderment.

Then there were the movie monsters. In an old magazine, I came across a bunch of black and white photos of monsters from various movies. Some were really hideous. I cut out at least three of them and made posters with the caption "Zard Loves You," or some similar message. In another magazine, I found a black and white photo of the profile of an elderly looking gentleman. I don't remember who he was, but he was not a person anyone had heard of or would recognize. I would describe his appearance as looking something like the actor Ben Kingsley when he became famous a few decades later. I made a poster using this photo and the caption, "Vote Zard." Clearly, this person

was way too old to be a student at Shawnee-Mission, but there was no explanation of why he was on a Zard poster. This may have raised a few eyebrows.

## **The Posters Go Up**

This was tricky because they had to be put up in secret, but be in plain sight during the school day.

The technique was to put a circle of Scotch tape in each corner of the back of a poster, place the poster face down against a fairly large object, and then press the object against the wall. I would carry the posters and a Scotch tape dispenser in a three ring binder notebook that could be completely closed with a zipper. When I selected a spot, I would stand next to the wall with my back to it, take out the poster and tape, and, hiding both behind the binder, apply the tape. When it looked like no one was paying attention (which was most of the time), I would turn around and, holding the poster and binder as one unit, press it firmly against the wall. Then I would step back, still holding the binder but not the poster that was now hopefully attached to the wall, and stare at the poster as if I just noticed it. Amazingly, I put up about 30 of these, and no one ever saw me (with one exception to be described later), despite the fact that I put them up in busy hallways between classes. I put up two or three per day, and from start to finish the whole process took a little over two weeks.

## **The Circle of Conspiracy**

From the beginning, it was important to keep Zard's identity a secret. For one thing, I could get in trouble. For another, I thought the campaign would be more interesting if no one knew who was behind it. As an extension of this idea, I never identified any office that Zard was running for. Why not make it even more mysterious and leave that an open question?

Very few people knew who was behind the Zard campaign, but even so it is surprising how well the secret was kept. One of my best friends, Ed Tharp, helped make some of the posters although I was the only one who put them on the walls. I know a few of the ideas were Ed's, but I can't remember which ones. Another good friend, Steve Ross, knew it was me. Probably Vern Kinney did as well. Dave Wardlaw, in my Spanish class, also knew, because I told him about it after I put the first two or three up. Still, the secret was well kept, and it wasn't until much later that it became common knowledge that I was behind it.

One person did figure it out, however. Soon after the election, Val Lewis approached me in the hall and stated flatly, "I think you are Zard." With my most innocent voice and expression I asked, "Why would you think that?" He replied, "Because all you have to do is change the first letter of your last name to Z and you have 'Zard'." I simply smiled and walked away.

## The Parade

It was two or three days before the election and some of the posters had been up for as long as a couple of weeks. I was in the upstairs hall about 10-15 minutes before the start of the first class of the day. The hall was crowded with kids talking, opening and shutting lockers, and walking back and forth. I was standing there doing nothing in particular when I realized that I could hear singing. Maybe humming is a better word—it was a “da-da-da” to the tune of the theme song from “The Bridge On the River Kwai,” the 1957 movie. It got louder as a group of around ten upper class boys came up the stairs and proceeded down the hall singing in unison. It was a parade, and the lead guy was holding up, for all to see, the “Ben Kingsley” poster. The group continued down the hall, singing all the way, and eventually paraded through the entire second floor before descending to the first floor. I don't think I ever laughed so hard in my life. I was literally rolling on the floor with tears in my eyes. Zard had become a very big deal at Shawnee-Mission High School. I think Steve Ross and Ed Tharp were with me at the time. Maybe they remember it.

## Caught

The last one up was the last one made and was one of two contributed by my brother Bill. He found an old paint rag in the basement. It was approximately 2 by 3 feet which made it the largest "poster" and the only one that wasn't 8½ by 11. The cloth was probably white or close to it originally, but age had turned it into a dirty cream color. It also had numerous small stains of varying colors and was really ratty looking. Bill got some paint, I think it was red, and in crude letters painted, “For Rich Or Poor Zard Gets More.” Silly, meaningless, and perfect.

I knew it could not be put up in the normal way because Scotch tape would not stick well to the cloth. This one would have to be applied with tacks. There were some cork bulletin boards in the halls that would work perfectly. As long as I moved some papers around so that the rag didn't cover anything on the bulletin board, people would probably leave it alone during the remaining few days before the election.

The only problem was that, unlike the paper posters, putting this one up in secret was a lot more difficult. So I decided to do it after school. During the day, I checked out various bulletin boards and settled on one near the top of a staircase on the second floor. It was in a niche in the corner next to where two halls came together at a right angle, but situated so that it could only be seen from one of them. It was nice having the stairs right there so that I could make a quick escape by going down to the first floor and then out the building. The escape would take less than half a minute.

About half an hour after the final bell, the halls were empty. I went to the bulletin board and first rearranged a few papers to obtain the necessary space. No one was around. Then I got out the rag and four tacks, one for each corner, and quickly began attaching the cloth to the bulletin board. Just as I finished putting in the last tack, an

upper classman appeared at the opposite end of the hall. He was heading downstairs, but he stopped, turned, looked at me, and asked, “Zard?” I looked at him and said, “Yes,” then quickly went down the stairs and out of the building. I don't know who he was and, to my knowledge, I never saw him again. He was the only person who ever saw me put up a poster. I wonder if he remembers it today.

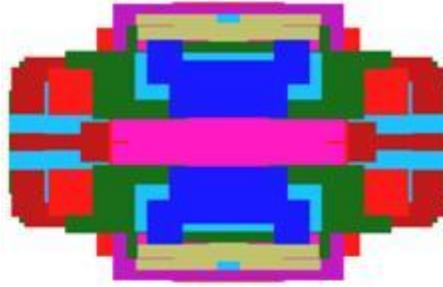
## **The Election and Its Aftermath**

A few days later, the election was held. No official numbers were released, but an acquaintance who helped with the counting told me that, for the uncontested offices, Zard received about 90% of the votes as a write-in candidate, even though the ballot provided no space for write-ins.

Before school started the day after the election, all the campaign advertising was taken down and presumably disposed of. This is my biggest regret: that I couldn't save any of the posters because I would love to have them today. I remember many of them well, but there are some that I don't remember at all.

The next year, at Shawnee-Mission East, I tried the same thing. But the new school's administration was as strict as I feared it would be, and they were taken down as soon as they went up. Zard then passed into history. Or did he? I have reports of “Vote Zard” graffiti appearing in Italy, England, the Philippines, South Africa, Peru, and various other corners of the world. I wonder, is Zard still campaigning somewhere?

**Editor's Note:** A friend of mine and I did something similar when we were at UC Berkeley in 1960. We created a fictitious organization called “ASREC” (the letters stood for nothing). We made posters with provocative statements on them. The only one I remember read “Both sides are wrong on Cuba. –ASREC.” There were a number of glass cases around campus containing official notices. The glass was in two panels, with one sliding in front of the other. The panels were locked but we found that it was possible to slip a poster into them between the panels. We amused ourselves this way for several months and we were never caught in the act.



## Stannage Street

Kevin Langdon

After the breakup of my first marriage early in 1974 I moved into an unusual communal residence in Albany, California (a small city which is a corner cut off of northwest Berkeley). The focus was on spiritual paths. There were several kinds of Buddhists, Sufis, people who were trying to return to the roots of Christianity, practitioners of yoga, followers of the Greek/Armenian spiritual teacher G.I. Gurdjieff, and others.

During the year I lived in the Stannage Street commune the population varied from about 12 to around 30. This community occupied two houses side-by-side and four or five outbuildings. Every bit of space was utilized. For a while I lived in the attic of one of the houses.

Stannage Street could fairly be characterized as a hippie commune (though some of us had been part of the bohemian community in the San Francisco Bay Area in those times, with its astonishing explosion of rebellion and creativity, since long before the rise of the hippies in the late 1960's, and we tended to regard the hippies as flaky Johnny-come-lately imitators). Few of the residents had jobs and one or two of the female residents often went around topless at home.

There were no house rules and there was a great deal of chaos. Keeping the house clean was a struggle. Dishwashing was a particular problem. Dirty dishes piled up until the sink and counter tops overflowed, then someone would have to do a dishwashing marathon. I arrived at the place determined to pitch in and do my share of the work but the state of the kitchen was daunting and I rarely washed dishes. I was hardly the only one and the dishwashing generally fell to a few residents who realized the need and rolled up their sleeves.

A different person signed up to cook dinner each night (we fended for ourselves for breakfast and lunch). One of the residents would make popcorn or french fries when it was his turn to make dinner. This annoyed me very much—especially because he was allowed to get away with it.

Because there was always a crowd of residents and visitors on certain evenings, various “spiritual teachers” often came to our house to give talks on the teachings they represented. Some were pretty crazy or just peddlers of New Age platitudes but a few didn’t deserve the quotation marks. Among those who spoke at our house two stand out.

The Tibetan teacher Tarthang Tulku was impressive—insightful, willing to engage with us, and forthright. He presented the Buddhist teachings in a practical and down-to-earth way. I feel fortunate to have had this exposure to him, as he later became somewhat reclusive, meeting primarily with his own pupils.

And I was also impressed by the Zen teacher Mokurai Cherlin, a very intelligent and articulate exponent of Zen Buddhism (though he was not very sympathetic to those following other paths). He spoke about the difficulties of our human situation and the duty of working for the liberation of all sentient beings.

At one point, one of those present for his talk began to realize that what he was saying was coming uncomfortably close to home. He asked, “Where does the responsibility end and how can you get out of it?” And Mokurai replied, “It doesn’t end anywhere and you can’t get out of it.”

There were many lively and thought-provoking discussions of a wide range of subjects, with and without special visitors present. For a while there were good times at Stannage Street and a strong feeling of community.

But, unfortunately, one of the residents of the community fancied himself a Sufi teacher but he didn’t know as much as he thought he did and he had very strong authoritarian tendencies. He started creating unpleasant and unreasonable rules and insisted that everyone play by them. Those who did not comply were subjected to verbal abuse.

Little by little, the more sensible residents moved out, leaving only the self-styled “guru” and his pupils. I was the last holdout. I refused to kowtow to this wannabe spiritual teacher and I was demonized for it. Later, looking back on it, I was chagrined that I’d found myself buying in to some of the negative characterizations of me by these loony cultists.

My cat, Arcady, was sensitive to what was going on and she selectively peed on the beds of those who were the most negative toward me, which I considered very amusing. Those who slept in those beds were less amused.

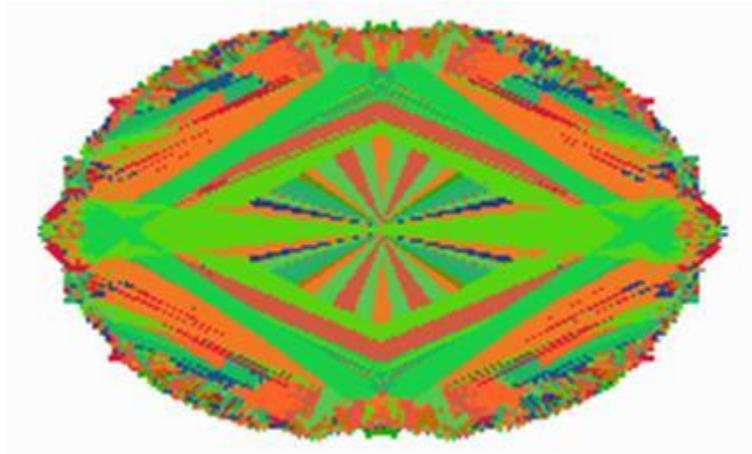
At one point they tried to throw me out of the house. I had to call the police, who informed them that I was a rent-paying tenant and that they couldn’t evict me without going through the standard legal procedures.

At this point, not being completely insane, I began looking for another place to live and I moved out within a few weeks.

## Nasca Update

Chris Cole

A while back our esteemed Administrator and experienced world traveler Jeff Ward traveled to Peru to visit the Nasca figures and returned with photographs from the air which were published in *Noesis*. At the time I hypothesized that the lines were intended to be walked on. The current issue of *National Geographic* contains an article on the lines, explaining that this is now the generally accepted purpose of the lines. So you heard it here first. Actually, I suspect this has been known or hypothesized for a long time in the archeology community, but it was fun nonetheless. So, Jeff, got any other mysteries you've uncovered in your wide travels that you'd like solved?



## Sunrise

No one  
— listening  
— the taste of Braille shadows

— May-Tzu