

Sketches of the Once Upon a Time

A Few Epiphanies and Other Hallmark Moments



MICHAEL J. HOLSHOUSER

Sketches of the Once Upon a Time
A Few Epiphanies and Other Hallmark Moments
© Michael J. Holshouser 2021
World Rights Reserved

Sketches of the Once Upon a Time
A Few Epiphanies and Other Hallmark Moments
<https://sketchesoftheonceuponatime.blogspot.com/>
<http://www.thestillnessbeforetime.com/breadcrumbs.pdf>
<http://michaelsbreadcrumbs.blogspot.com>
© Michael J. Holshouser 2021
World Rights Reserved

Michael J. Holshouser
1112 Cedar Creek Drive, Unit 4
Modesto, California 95355-5213
The United States of America
mjholshouser@gmail.com

Pronunciation: Holtzhowzer

All have the express written encouragement
To distribute this creation freely to any and all
Who have the eyes to see and the ears to hear
The mystery in which each and every one
Equally participates in so many ways.

Lyle

As I approached the last wisps of childhood, my best friend, Lyle Bibens, died of leukemia. He was the oldest of three adopted children by the couple at whose wedding my parents had met. Our families often spent cordial evenings together in our homes, as well as many vacations Camping at Seacliff Beach on Monterey Bay along the Northern California coast. Lyle and I were bonded from the earliest memories by countless adventures Whose vague memories have been fondly recalled many times in the years since.

It was my first human death.

Out alone on the lawn in front of our ranch house in Hughson about a month later, the reality of death suddenly dawned on me: I would never see Lyle again. I wept uncontrollably at the loss of relationship we had so enjoyed.

As the tears dried, without any prompting, I took from his memory the quality I most admired: His audacity to step into any situation and start conversations with strangers as we wandered about. For me, who was at that youthful time much more reserved, it was always something of a shock.

This was perhaps the first time, and certainly not the last, that an epiphany twinkling, a moment of sudden revelation or insight, clearly made itself known in the dawning of this philosophical mindset.

First Koan

Sometime in the very way hazy long ago, cousin Debbie Hunt had a boyfriend named Teryl, who was my intro to the Buddhist slant. At some point the three of us were hiking Mount Tamalpais in the Bay Area, and I uttered some comment about how astounding San Francisco Bay must have been before Manifest Destiny took root, and things begin their descent into the world I so decry today. Teryl's Zen-ish response was that it was really the same as it had always been. It was likely my first koan; one I am still trying to crack.

The Nightmare

Dreams have never been a high priority in this existence, But there was a recurring one that began back in the years before adolescence. One in which I felt helplessly, hopelessly, powerlessly trapped beneath a suffocating, bean-like torrent, Which only ended when I finally realized it was my spirit being conditioned by the world. It may well have been the first intuition of all that has since transpired.

Manhood

One agreeable day in high school in the junior or senior year,
While chatting casually with a small group of male peers,
it suddenly dawned on me that I needed to learn to become a man.
From that day forward I would take as my own, emulate, as I had from Lyle,
any qualities esteemed from the many as yet unknown men whose paths mine would cross.

The New Tack

I had taken three years of drafting since the freshman year of high school.
My relationship with the hundred-ish peers I had been with since kindergarten
in the small rural town of Hughson at the center of the Central Valley of California
was sociable, but relatively aloof, so sitting alone at the drafting table for hours and hours,
with the thought that I might someday become a draftsman, or even architect, was a natural fit.
The drafting room was at the west edge of the campus across from the band room in another building.
One day while working away, listening to the band practicing, I suddenly realized a deep yearning
to be more sociable, to participate with others and my future in an as yet un-articulable way.
That was my final year of drafting, and a senior year very different from anything
theretofore experienced in the first twelve years of public education,
and the first of many tacks in the voyage that fostered this.

The Epiphany Voice

The Hughson Union High School Awards Ceremony for the Class of 1972
was held out on the old football field a few days before graduation.
I was called up seven times for awards of recognition and small scholarships.
Looking out at my applauding classmates as I walked down the steps of the small stage,
the epiphany voice clearly stated in its ethereal way: "Surely, there must be more to life than this."

Old School Daze

What pleasure I get from playing with language to the best of my moderate ability.
Thank the gods for computers, for word processing and its spelling, thesaurus, and grammar support.
It makes clear the remark the old woman made about there being so many spelling errors
back when I briefly soloed the Waterford News in the old school daze
of manual typewriters, erasable paper, and whiteout.
And real cameras and darkrooms, too.
Oh, how I so often long for that simpler time,
Where a pleasant sense of solitude and serenity reigned,
And the world with all its tangles was far away, only barely important.

Commentaries on Living

Sometime during my years at Modesto Junior College, while in the library walking through the stacks, three small hardbound, pastel-colored books leapt into the awareness and drew me like a magnet. They were the “Commentaries on Living” by Jiddu Krishnamurti, an Indian philosopher. Checked out the first one, and though it seemed worth reading, it made me sluggish. So, I fairly soon returned it, and a week later nonchalantly pilfered all three. It would not be until I had entered the working world a few years later that I was finally able to read them without drifting off into drowse mode. It was the beginning of a lifetime of quixotic exploration, both inner and outer. Finally, ten or twenty or whatever years later, in a pang of rarely felt compunction, I bought the paperback versions and dropped all three into the sidewalk book return box. Rest assured that it was a move bemoaned many times since. Wondering if they are still there ...

That Voice

I was driving west into the late afternoon sun on my Honda CB350F motorcycle. It had been a long day with a girlfriend in La Grange where she lived with mother and son. There were two winding ways to get to Waterford where I lived in a trailer over twenty miles away. As I came to the deciding fork, the epiphany voice in my weary head clearly said: “if you go this way, you will be in an accident.” Sure enough, as I came to a corner on Lake Road somewhere east of Turlock Lake, Fatigue caused me to brake badly and start fishtailing toward some ugly-looking barbed-wire. It was take it down and risk the asphalt, or tack on and find out what piercing rusty metal could do. I chose the former and carry the reminders to this day.

Moral of the story: Do not ignore that voice.

What Happened to You?

Many mothers incline to filter their grown-up sons as the ten-year-olds they so long ago were. How often have we heard ones with mass murderers on death row tearfully declaring their innocence? After returning from my odyssey, mine became increasingly aware that I was no longer her little boy. One day, out of some blue, she exclaimed about the man I had become, “What happened to you!?” “Life,” was my answer.

The Fearful Body

Russ Kalen was one of the more than a few chiropractors through the years who spent many sessions trying to put my Humpty-Dumpty body back together again. I recall him one day stating as he popped something back into place that it would not long stay: “Mike, I think your body is afraid of you.”

Sure Smells Like Cookies

The first seven years of my childhood
were spent in a newly-built G.I. Bill three-bedroom home
on East Pine Street, at the time a twelve-house cul-de-sac in Hughson, California.
There is little to tell of the early years before moving to the thirty-acre peach ranch on Hatch Road,
but two stories stand out, shared years later by Betty Goesch, a neighbor at the corner of 7th and Pine.
The first is that at some point I wandered around and turned on all the water faucets on the block.
The second was that my mother would take me down to Betty's for a morning coffee klatch.
Betty always brought out cookies and milk, and I must have been somewhat vocal
about shamelessly asking for them before they were courteously offered,
because Betty says my mother told me I should not ask any more.
My response, according to Betty, was to enter her house .
take a whiff, and announce that it "sure smells like cookies."
Nothing remarkable, nothing extraordinary, but mildly amusing that the
rascal-rogue-cad-rake-blackguard-scalawag-scoundrel-reprobate-ne'er-do-well nature,
was evident at such an early and supposedly innocent age.

FIN