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Missouri Mystic

Preface

by Jon Mundy Ph.D.

Mexican Shaman Don Juan, in Carlos Castaneda's *The Active Side of Infinity*, says that every warrior, in preparation for his entrance into the region known as the active side of infinity, begins his journey by collecting an album of pictures made of remembrances of moments that illuminated his path. The human mind longs to make sense of events that happen in time. *Missouri Mystic* is an archive of inner life, a chronicle of events, and an attempt to find meaning for a journey through the last half of the twentieth century, from a farm in mid-Missouri to a ministry in midtown Manhattan, to an itinerant ministry to the world.

God made man because he loves stories. – Yiddish Saying

My friend Alan Cohen once said, that everyone needs to tell their story, otherwise they go crazy. Like *The Celestine Prophecy* by James Redfield or *Pilgrims Progress* by John Bunyan, all our journeys are adventure (sometimes misadventure) stories. My wife Dolores and I spend a good deal of time telling each other our stories. No matter how intricate the detail, there is always more that we can yet recall. We are all looking for peace of mind, a life worth living, meaningful work, enriching relationships and an assurance of life eternal.

Of all the writing and public speaking I've done in more than forty years as a minister, lecturer and magazine publisher, the most enthusiastic responses were to the messages in which I discussed my mystical experiences as a child on the farm in Missouri, the sixties and seventies, my travels in India, my work with a Mexican Shaman, a death experience, an ongoing love-hate relationship with the traditional church, and the founding of Interfaith Fellowship along with Rev. Diane Berke, (located on Sundays inside Cami Hall across the street from Carnegie Hall in New York City), and my struggle with heart disease and cancer.

My last three books were essays on various aspects of *A Course in Miracles* (a self-study program of spiritual psychology which helps us release fear and achieve inner peace). The Course was scribed by Dr. Helen Schucman between the years 1965 and 1972 in New York City and published in 1976. This book is different. It is a story. It is your story and mine. It belongs to both of us, unique and divine. You have a story. You are a hero. You are a heroine. You are on a journey home. We are all also *already* home whether we recognize it or not.

On Writing

If you commit to it, writing can take you as deep as Zen.
– Katagiri Roshi in Natalie Goldberg's *Long Quiet Highway*

If you are born to write, you will find a way to do it. I write early each morning before showering, shaving, and proceeding into the work of the day. Morning is the most wonderful time of the day. It is quiet where we live – only the school bus stopping for our daughter Sarah, interrupts the sound of the morning birds. I write religiously, like someone practicing the piano. In fact writing *is* my "practice." Something happens when you immerse yourself in any "discipline" and writing is a good one.

The only way to compose myself and collect my thoughts is to sit down at my table, place my diary before me and take my pen into hand. This apparatus takes my attention from other objects.

Pen, ink, paper and a sitting posture are a great help to attention, emotion and thinking.
– John Adams, Second President of the United States

It's the same for me, except I sit in front of a computer. Writing is meditative therapy. It is a way of working things through, a time of soul searching. Writing is a voyage of discovery. To write is to see the whole of experience – why things happen the way they do. Writing helps make sense out of life. It helps me understand who I am now and once was. It helps me wake up, grow and belong.

Looking Within

*Your "guilty secret" is nothing, and if you will but bring it to the light,
the light will dispel it.*
-- ACIM, T-13.II.9: 2

Writing Missouri Mystic helped me look within and I have had to face a few ghosts and demons. *A Course in Miracles* encourages us to look at the dark side – not to affirm that reality. We look so that we might dispel our fears, "undo" the false and thus become open to that which is true. Some people are surprised that I "told so much." I have found that; if you tell "it," "it" can't hurt you. "It" can't jump out and surprise you.

I have, in the course of this writing, made assessments about people and events. I do not claim objective truth. This is a subjective report. Others' memories are no doubt different than mine. Almost everyone mentioned in this book read it in manuscript form and then gave me their feedback. While this process has not always been fun, it has always been rewarding.

My struggle manifests itself in my willingness, or lack thereof, to look at my own shadow and my capacity for denial. The thing about denial is that, by definition, you don't always know that you are in it when you are. The very nature of the beast is to deny being in denial. I have had tremendous resistance to looking at the dark contents of my subterranean life. Life has thus been a series of many trials and revelations.

Trials are but lessons that you failed to learn presented once again, so where you made a faulty choice before, you can now make a better one, and thus escape all pain that what you chose before has brought to you.

-- ACIM, T-31.VIII.3: 1

Over and over again, I made faulty choices. Like Abraham Lincoln, "I have many times been driven to my knees because I knew nowhere else to go."

The Myth of the Ministry

We must make the choices that enable us to fulfill the deepest capacities of our real selves.

-- Thomas Merton

At the age of nine, I announced to my family that I was going to be a minister. There was never any doubt about this. Destiny chooses us and I have always felt *called*. I believe that people know the purpose for their being early on. You must, however, cultivate it or you can lose it. The Mundy coat of arms is inscribed with the saying, "God Provides." I truly believe that, if we focus on what we are called to do, God will provide!

Psychologist Carl Jung once said that the most important question anyone can ask is, "What myth am I living? Am I living my own myth or that of another?" In 1961, at the age of eighteen, I began working as a minister with a circuit of three rural Missouri churches. I've always been a minister and a seeker and I've crossed paths with a number of saints, sages, and sinners. You can decide who is who. I've sat at the feet of gurus in India and twirled with Sufi dervishes. I've gone on vision quests with shamans in the Tamaulipas Mountains and the jungles of Chiapas in Mexico. I visited parapsychologists in Eastern Europe and Russia. I've read through esoteric literature, Eastern and Western philosophy and modern psychology. I've meditated, practiced yoga and walked on fire. I've gone through Freudian and Jungian therapy, the Landmark Forum and Rebirthing, and participated in hundreds of workshops. I fell in love with several lovely women. I worked for many years on a doctorate which I did not receive until I was sixty. Most important, since 1975, I've been a student of *A Course in Miracles*.

Success is going from failure to failure with enthusiasm.

– Winston Churchill

Stories are interesting when they are about struggle and the overcoming of difficulties. The rough road and rugged terrain make the journey meaningful and give us our strength. We who live in bodies, in time, on a specific planet – we who live in history – need stories that have beginnings and ends. My life has been a roller coaster ride; sometimes moments of incredible bliss, other times *almost* hell on earth. It has on the whole been "one wild and precious ride."

In 1976, I had a profound death experience, the description of which is central to this book. In this experience it became clear that:

1. We are not bodies.

2. There is no such thing as death.

3. We are making up this world. We could have done it many different ways. We are experiencing what I call the Western Twenty-First Century System of Glossing. As Einstein expressed it, our experience is an optical delusion of consciousness. This world – and the bodies we inhabit – is a hiding place from God. It is a world of duality (subject and object) and thus not the real world. This is, if you will, "a dream world." The real world is God's World – Heaven.

4. There is no time. Everything is happening in a radically loaded now. Or, only that which is eternal is real. Heaven is eternal. This world is ephemeral.

5. The script is written. Or, "Things always happen as they should." Or, "It has all – already happened."

Married at twenty-two and divorced at twenty-three, I vowed I would not marry again until it was a decision I could live with happily for the rest of my life. Twenty-seven years later, on one miraculous day, in my fiftieth year, Dolores, a loving, "firey," redheaded, creative, Irish Leo Lassie, *literally* rang my bell! Four years later, there were wedding bells! We have become progressively, comfortably, happily married, sharing a home, raising my step-daughter, Sarah, enjoying our mutual love of cleaning and fixing our home, gardening, bird watching, reading, hiking, biking, river rafting, movies, cooking, eating, going to fairs, sharing our home with our friends, hanging out on our deck on cool summer nights and sitting before our fireplace in winter – still talking – still getting to know each other.

Love and Peace Now and Forever,

Jon