

Interview with Jim Horton

Interviewer: Unknown

n.d.

Q: There were basically twelve of you there that were kind of searching for the same answer and trying to look for what you were looking for. Was that their reason for joining?

A: Pretty much the same, yea, the same reasons. I don't think to the same degree. My reasons I found out later. I would ask people ten years, fifteen years, twenty years later when I see them, if they had the same sort of experiences that I had and I found that I was fairly unique to myself as far as the intensity of it. The degree of it. The other people were not as passionate I think. To answer your question, Yes. Everyone that was there was there for that reason. That reason was being liberation of the self through meditation, through this Divine Light Mission, under the guidance of this guru to become enlightened. To be enlightened and live in enlightenment whatever that might be. Yea, we were all there for the same reason.

Q: Did you know all of those guys before or some before?

A: Yea, but not real well. In fact I didn't have a lot of. I knew a lot of people. I was president of the senior class, real popular, that sort of thing. So I knew a lot of people and a lot of people knew me but I had a real small circle of real close people. They were not part of that community. Most of the people I had met. There were a couple people there that I had never met before. In hindsight there were a couple of women there that I should have made more of a play for but at that time I was so involved in what I was doing. It is really bizarre looking back on it. But I wasn't even sexually orientated. It was like I didn't have any sex desire. Everything that I had was going toward "How do I get back to this light?" That was it. That was the whole jest of it. It was what my life was all about. How to get there and how to stay there. Actually you know, a lot of this is just coming back to me, Actually I got to the light a number of other times but I always got kicked out. So then it became not only how to get the light again, how to experience the light. How to stay there. You could never stay. You eventually find that out. You can't fucking do that. It's not part of the rules.

Q: So that friend that you tripped with there at the park, did he have the same as you did? One kind of passed out.

A: No, he went unconscious. Another fellow, he went walking down this pathway and walked down a trail. I remember this distinctly man because this is so bizarre. Like nothing else is bizarre here. He walked down this pathway and I remember at one point wondering "Is Jimmy OK?" As soon as I thought that I could feel myself or consciousness leave my body, go up and look over the area. Go down the path, find him, see that he was OK, come back to my body and go back in. Man I can see that now like it was yesterday. It is incredible.

Q: That's trippy

A: I will tell you what. There was not a day that passed from that time, let me see I was 31, I was 19 no I was 18 at the time. It was a good 20 years when not a day passed that I didn't think about that experience. I mean not a day man. Every time, all of the time. It was incredible. Just incredible.

Q: The commune you went to. Did you find out about that through the guru?

A: Actually we opened it up. We got the house for that reason, to be together. This Divine Light mission had a commune downtown or mission downtown and this fellow had a house in Platte City. Him and his

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wife had the house. He got hooked up with the Divine Light Mission and through him we started talking about "Let's all live together". That way we can spend more time meditating and not having to worry about working so much and all of this. It started I guess on our own. The mission didn't say here is a house, go live in it or something like that.

Q: Was daily life just getting up early and meditating? Did you meditate for a good part of the day that you weren't working or working on the house?

A: Yea, meditation. Like I said. We tried to be self as sufficient as possible which in hindsight we weren't very successful. Because we weren't farmers, we really weren't canners, and vegetables people. I think at the time I was probably a vegetarian. We spent time tending the garden and keeping the place up. It was an old raggy farm house. It always needed something done. Then yea, there were times where we would spend two to three hours at a shot in meditations. Just seeing what happened.

Q: By yourself and together sort of thing?

A: Yea, by yourself and together. There were a couple of times when we got really zapped by meditation. I was with another person there, there was a guy there who was named Richard Hamlin. I remember distinctly, we meditated together for what we thought was fifteen minutes. Later we come out and three or four hours had passed. Things were floating and twinkling. You know wow.

Q: Were many of your meditations drug induced?

A: No, none of them were. Not at that time. That was what was so amazing with that particular deal, was that we got a very similar drug like affect with no drug. It was like pure meditation. The idea was the drug LSD was just a trigger. The meditation could be an equally strong trigger if you could figure out what to trigger, I guess. Sometimes you were lucky and sometimes you weren't. I remember spending most of the hours in meditation thinking, "Why is my mind thinking of this. God my butt hurts." It wasn't all ideal at all.

Q: The passion you had, the others were they like any other sort of lifestyle? Did some of the others have sexual orientation? Did everyone there pretty homogenous in the fact that they all mingled and meditated but that was the concentration except some worked outside the commune while the others helped keep it up?

A: Yea, we all had the same goal I guess. The same understanding of what we were doing there. One couple was married. I think another couple there were an item. A single mom there, a couple of guys there, single guys, there were single women there. They wasn't sexual orientated there. My deal was pretty much the meditation part of it and for the others it was a little more social I think. We still got out and about. We still went to concerts and stuff. We did normal things.

Q: What was the age groups, the variation of age?

A: Twenty six, Twenty seven down to about twenty with a few little kids thrown in. Little kids two and three years old.

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Q: Did they just hang out and play like normal kids do?

A: Yea, as far as I can recall.

Q: Did you have many visitors or many people quit, new members?

A: We did have visitors because we had this thing called Sad San. It was, how do I explain it? We were in this Divine Light Mission we were not only recruiting people, we would tell people of the meditation and what not. We had a social structure there. I know that we would have periodic meetings where people would come in that we would invite. If you were interested in meditation we will be having a discussion. If you are interested in Divine Light Mission we are having a discussion group or whatever. We would put posters up and flyers promote the Divine Light Mission. Not promoting our particular deal but the Divine Light Mission in general. People would come over and we would talk meditation. Talk meditation.

Q: The Divine Light Mission downtown was that made of a lot of people?

A: Yea, more down there. It was a pretty big set up for a while. I don't know what the numbers would have been.

Q: Was that an actual communal group or was that just a leisure group?

A: Kind of like a coffee shop, well not really. It was a communal set up in a way that I think a some people lived there. Remember those old, rambling apartment type big buildings down town? Three to four stories. Around three stories. You had the meeting hall and then people lived upstairs. People lived in that house. That is where they had to live. That's also where they ran their mission from.

Q: Was their group similar to yours?

A: No, bigger. More diverse. I would say the bulk of it was about the same age group. Most everyone was the same age group. You look at it back then everybody was between twenty seven and twenty back then. It was the middle of the baby boomers coming through. Everybody was that age. I think there was more diversification. There were a few older people, old people. Back then if you were over thirty you were old. There were a few older people involved.

Q: You said that the meditations were not drug induced, did many people still do drugs for recreation?

A: None. The only drugs that I was really involved in was marijuana, hash and psychedelics. What ever kind of psychedelics you could run into, LSD, psilocybin, mushrooms. We knew that any of those drugs impaired your ability to meditate. Not only if you were under the influence at the time but for days and days afterwards. Pretty much during that whole time period, it was no drugs sort of thing. It is kind of ironic in a way, at least in my journey, that LSD had a big influence in the beginning with the Tibetan book of the Dead, the Psychedelic Experience and all of that. It may have had something to do in the beginning but when we got to the communal sort of living it was a big no no. I do recall we transgressed. I am sure I smoked a joint here and there and what not. I can't remember exactly the time frame. At one time I listed all this out so I could remember and keep a record. There was almost no drug use at all. What a shame. That would have been a good place to do drugs.

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Q: Do you remember the best things/worst things from the communal aspect living?

A: One of the cool things I remember was that the meals were always kind of cool. Having that many people eating at the same place at the same time. I remember it was neat actually taking stuff that you grew and you knew you grew it and not only ate it for an occasion but day after day. There was some sort of satisfaction there then. You were self sustaining. Like I said, when winter hit we had to go to the store. We didn't have anything stored up. That's for sure. That was one of the fun parts. Another one of the highlights was when you had the group together meditation, not chanting, but meditation discourse and talking what not. You could just feel the energy feeling rise in the room. There was real electricity going on. It wasn't a forced sort of thing. It was a real deal going on. It was real neat when that happened. That was cool. A couple of times that we really got deep in meditation, that was big time cool. As the downer side just having to do chores and stuff was always a downer. Tending a massive vegetable garden isn't real fun either. You know tilling soil, pulling weeds and throwing away rocks and stuff like that is not my idea of a good time anyway. No matter how down to earth it might be. There were sometimes philosophical differences on what the group was doing or where the group was headed. What was the goal here? To hit enlightenment? Following the guru? That was not always pretty in discussions like that.

Q: How was the group led? Did you have a leader? Democratic? Anarchic?

A: Well, kind of free flowing. Ultimately though, the head of the group was the fellow who owned the house. It was his house. I guess by default you have the house you have the power. That would be the leader, yea. There wasn't much to lead. It was just kind of a free flow that kind of flowed. There had to be someone hopefully responsible that always referred to.. It was coincidental he was the oldest. He had the house for quite a while and it was his place. It was his deal probably.

Q: Do you appreciate all of that? Are you glad it happened? The entire story, the communal part in retrospect?

A: In retrospect, the entire story? Yeah, I am glad that it all occurred. Like anything, I guess, there is hindsight. But I don't wish it never happened. I might have made different decisions but that is hindsight. There are other times where I wouldn't have changed anything about it. I glad I did it. I wish I would have done it differently or done different things with it. But at the time it just seemed like the thing to do.

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Horton: It's a weird journey or a weird story. It was in the context of being in the late sixties. In this area anyway there wasn't much known about hallucinogenic, LSD or drugs in general. It just wasn't a big deal like it is now because no one knew about it. So back then I got a little bit involved with taking LSD here and there. I went to a mountain concert. Have you ever heard of Mountain? Mountain was a heavy metal band. Where you got your acid back then was the park, Loose Park downtown, and there would be people selling acid in the trees. So I bought some acid one time, LSD. LSD is acid and we didn't get off on it. We got ripped off. We took this acid and nothing happened. So we were kind of bummed out. We went to this Mountain concert some time later and bought some LSD from this guy. We asked him "You are not going to rip us off are you? This is real shit?" He said, "Oh Yes, this is Orange Sunshine." We don't know names but Orange Sunshine is really powerful stuff. So I pop it in my mouth and he says, "You didn't take the whole thing did you? That's an eight way hit. There are eight hits of acid in there." So I am sitting there watching Mountain pound away and getting more fucked up and more fucked up. One of the lines from the song was "Open up your heart and let the sunshine in." It was kind of one of those immediate, the band is talking to me things. Open up your heart and let the sunshine in. Let the sunshine take over. So I am getting more and more messed up and what not and this thought comes into my head but it wasn't my thought. It was like a voice, a voice from far away. An ancient type thing saying, "Life and Death and God are all the same. They exist only in the moment." It was like BOOM. Doors opened, lights flashed, windows broke. It was like a fucking earthquake went off, like the universe exploded. Life, Death and God are all the same. They exist only in the moment. I was like, "That's it. That's the truth. That's the truth in everything. So we leave the concert and we are just overjoyed, at least I am. I just found the truth to life. It started with innerness. Life, death and God were the same. So I start doing research on the deal and I come across literature of Timothy Leary. Who Leary was, was the psychologist doing the LSD research. So I started reading his stuff and thinking that maybe there is something to this LSD as means to finding truth. I start using LSD as a truth seeking drug. Leary had written this book, let me see now, well we were living down town here, down town Park. This guy from the door way comes and he goes, "We here that you are interested in Timothy Leary. You need to read, well he goes, "My mind is void, your mind is void. My mind is your mind as your mind is my mind." It was another one of those, just like the Life, Death and God thing was boom another opening up, My mind is the same as your mind, your mind is the same as my mind riddle. I say, "How do you know all of this stuff?" and he goes, "It was published by Timothy Leary." He had written a book about his psychedelic experience. It was his interruption of a book called The Tibetan Book of the Dead. Have you ever heard of the Tibetan Book of the Dead? The Tibetan Book of the Dead was supposedly written by Tibetan Buddhist thousands of years ago who had died and remembered the death process, was reborn and remembered the whole thing and then wrote it down. So their deal was to keep from being reincarnated. If you understood what happened at death and could go through the death process and know what was happening and looked for certain things you could be reborn where you wanted to. You could kind of direct your rebirth. So kind of picture this now. Here I am, nineteen years old, pretty smart guy. I had scholarships, kind of an Erika sort of person. I tried LSD, powerful stuff, which I don't realize how powerful it is, Trying to find the truth to life. Reading all these weird little things, you know, clues on the way and getting blown away and stuff. So I thought instead of following Timothy Leary's book on the psychedelic experience and reading about that, I will find this Tibetan Book of the Dead and I will study it. This will all make sense to you eventually. So I get this book of the dead and scholarly work that

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has been done by anthropologist and started studying it and part of it went right back to what had happened at the Mountain concert with Life, Death and God are all the same. They exist in the moment. It didn't say it in those words but it was close enough to where it was like "Whoa!" you know. How did that voice come into my head and then out here I read about it later? It blew me away. This must have been the summer of '71, spring of '71, yeah spring of '71. So I read this Book of the Dead, I am taking acid, trying to figure this whole thing out. Where did the idea come about? It came about that you could experience death if you took enough acid but you couldn't overdose. So you wouldn't actually die. So I spent two weeks fasting, two weeks pretty much meditation and I got a hold of pretty much pure LSD from this chemist that we knew downtown. The normal dosage of acid would be about 150 milligrams, I mean 150 micrograms and we decided that we would take, there were three of us, we were going to take 2500 mics. More than ten times the recommended dosage, or not really recommended but normal dose, in an attempt to experience death and be able to look at it and then come back and see what it was like. So that was the game plan. In hindsight it was kind of like psychic suicide you know? You were going to deliberately take a dosage that would fry your ass. So we prepare for it and attempt it down here in the rock house where my parents lived. Me and two other guys. What was bizarre about the initial taking of it was it took affect immediately. We were playing with a deck of cards and cutting cards, predicting what cards would come up on the cut. Ten of spades, ten of spades. Three of hearts, three of hearts would come up. Seven of diamonds, seven of diamonds would come up we were like whoa. Then it was Ace of spades, death card, Ace of spades. Let's try that again. Shuffle the deck back up, Ace of spades, boom ace of Spades come out. We are thinking things are getting hairy so we head to the woods. We don't want to be around civilization now. So we head for the woods at Park College here and I'll go first. I go up there and one of the guys I am with passes out, falls unconscious. The other guy.. We are at the end of this point overlooking the river and all of a sudden things, we just went out of control. The Earth became liquid, hallucinations, giant Mandela darma wheels coming out of the valley. We were just freaking gone man, so fucking gone. The trees in front of us transformed from trees to spirits. These spirit then became, they had triangular smiling faces and their limbs would move like they were arms and they were real happy and joyous. They were happy and joyous. We shot down a tunnel, long, long tunnel, boom, exploded in nothing but white light. Pure white light. I mean like unbelievable white light, you can't imagine. It was bright but wasn't harsh. It was warm but it wasn't hot. It was like perfect, just perfect. So we are just laying there in this white light and all of a sudden, flies hundreds of them all over my body. Wake up, come too, brush the flies and stuff off, and look up and the tree spirits have frowns on their faces and their arms are moving to get your attention and turned around and there were people coming up the road to where we were. These people came up on horseback we talked to them for a while so we were completely straight. It was like nothing had ever happened. The people left and as soon as they left we turned back around and the trees starting smiling again, the limbs were looking like things were happy, let's go. Shot back through the tunnel, hit the light again, boom here we are again, deep in the light. The same thing flies and insects all over the body. We came out and the tree spirits are frowning, getting our attention. We turn around and another group is coming up. We went from being that gone to being perfectly straight, not perfectly straight but straight. Talk with these people, they left, but we, it was like it was it. It was gone like somebody had pulled the plug. That is the experience of the white light. Obviously we didn't know what the fuck had happened. We didn't know, I mean. We should have had an idea with the Book of the Dead but we were just

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completely blown away. Completely blown away. This is spring of '71. I go from there we go, I go to MU. I had a full scholarship. So I go to MU and I was going to be a philosophy major and I started taking classes but the only thing that I wanted to know was what happened at the point? Were there really tree spirits? Was there really a white light? What was the white light? There is no question there was. I was looking for somebody or something to justify what happened. You are not just completely crazy. There is a reality there. So of course at MU the entry level semester classes, they are not going to help you out very much. I went to different philosophy professors, psychologists and "Hey, this is what happened to me." Yeah you just had a hallucination. I pretty much got blown off. So I stayed in school for a semester and then left. My whole deal after leaving was to find out what happened and could I recreate it of course. Which I found out that I could not recreate it I could not recreate it no matter how. No way, no how. I tried to. Same conditions, same doses. We were pretty scientific in trying to figure this stuff out. We couldn't reproduce the experience. Different things lead to different things. I spent some time, a few days at Western Missouri Mental Health. Luckily I ran into a guy there who said if you count a hundred to zero backwards, we will let you out of here. So I did and he eventually let me go. Pretty wild. I guess my parents obviously put me in there. I was so far gone trying to figure out what had happened to me. In hindsight I was pretty far out there. I was pretty far gone. So during this same time period. Let me tell you what, let me finish up this story and then we will get into the communal part of it. What I figured out later on, that what had happened to me was probably the classic near death experience. Because later on, in fact, just a few years ago I taught a class at the university and had a group going for a while in near death experience support group. What had happened to me was a near death experience classic example. Shot through the tunnel, white light, just all of the different stuff. I really experienced death or got near enough to that is what happened. That is what started the search for other people that had the same thing. Of course, I couldn't find anybody that had either a near death experience or white light experience. I ended up running into, I can't remember how this guy came about. There was this little guru guy at the time named Guru Maharagi. A fourteen year old kid from India. Who was setting up ashrams, meditation centers around the country, looking for devotees. That is what he was doing, looking for devotees. I hooked up with these people and part of hooking up with the, what did they call them? The Divine Light. The Divine Light Mission was the mission. Part of being hooked up with the Divine Light was finding people who had similar near death experience or white light experience. For one was companionship but the other was still to figure out what the hell had happened. The whole world was just completely shattered. There were, they called them, mahagmes. Mahagames was like a holy man or like a teacher who was one of the hierarchy who would initiate a person in the art of meditation according to this guru. There were four different meditations. One was a mantra that you would speak to yourself. One was a technique you would do with your tongue to get the sensation. Anyway, the dude somehow put two fingers on my temple and a fore finger right on my third eye. When he did that he pinched something just right where I shot down the tunnel and hit the light again. I was like, "Holy Shit. We're on to something here." You know, here we go. He could reproduce that thing, not to the same degree but he was able to reproduce the experience. This is the real way, the path. I found the way to go. It was really hard and I didn't do a real successful job at it trying to figure out this white light stuff, this near death stuff, working, paying bills and stuff. I just couldn't do it all at one time. I decided the only way to pull it off was to be able to live with other people who were doing the same thing and we wouldn't have to worry so much about bills. We wouldn't have

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to worry about the money angle and we could spend more time figuring out how to get back to the light. That was the whole deal, getting back to the light. I hooked up with some folks and we lived on a farm house outside of Platte city. I think there were about twelve of us who were at the core. We set up a pretty regimented disciplined life style. We would get up at five in the morning, do meditation for half an hour till five thirty, we did some exercises type stuff until six and then that is when we started our day. A couple of people worked outside the deal. If you didn't work outside the deal you tended to the little farm we had. You gardened, stuff like that, maintained the house. I lived there for about over six months, almost a year, yeah pretty much a year. Doing the different meditations and doing out thing. It fell apart, at least for me it fell apart kind of two reasons. I had borrowed a fellow who lived there, I had borrowed his dirt bike which I had no business doing. I wasn't a very good bike rider. I was on a gravel road and wrecked it. I crashed his dirt bike. I tore myself up pretty good. Skinned myself up, tore skin off. Broke my arm, dislocated my shoulder, roughed myself up pretty good. So I left the community then. I left about the same time as that because most of the people there were thinking that this meditation that we were in too, was anything we got from the meditation was the result of this Guru Mmaharagi. He was the guy, he bestowed his grace upon you. My deal was that this guy is just a character in this whole play. The light is the main thing. The meditation is the main thing. Then he is not a vehicle or anything like that. Not a Christ like figure. Because of that they split and I split also. I ended up hooking up with a girl I met a few years earlier who nursed me back to health. It took me months to get all healed up from that motorcycle wreck. That is a different story after that. I eventually figured out that I just couldn't do that, that lifestyle. I couldn't do that intense search for the light lifestyle and live in this world. It just weren't compatible so I put the whole deal on the back burner for about, Well, actually what happened was I put it on the back burner for about five years. Every five years for the next twenty five years, something would happen in my life that would bring me back to some sort of searching again or searching for another key to the question "What was that light that zapped me on August 1st?" It wasn't my doing, something would just happen. For example ESP training over the years, it came out. Some other meditation came out. All these different things came out. All in about five year cycles. After learning about the near death experience stuff is when I started getting into that and really learning the near death experience stuff. Trying to figure out what had happened. I don't know how much of a commune story that is but it kind of goes back in with the commune and that is why we were there communing. Because of the meditation trying to figure out what happened with the light.