

# ***Overcoming Bipolar Disorder: A White Eagle Healing Story***

***By Jay Busemeyer***

## **PREFACE**

This story is like a drama or a play slowly unfolding. Fortunately, I have been blessed with the opportunity to share the telling of this story in a draft form with a number of friends and new acquaintances from whom I have already received much helpful feedback and suggestions! I invite the reader to email me at [jaybus3@netzero.net](mailto:jaybus3@netzero.net) with comments, questions about bipolar disorder or suggestions for improvement with this book. As might be expected, many of the readers thus far are familiar with the teachings of White Eagle and to others this may be entirely new material. Some are Christian and others are non-Christian, perhaps following another spiritual path such as Vedanta, Buddhism, Judaism, New Age or even agnostic. The purpose of this preface is to offer a broader explanation of my intention in writing this book\* .

Given my present circumstances—working full time as a computer programmer, happily married with an 9 year old son, teaching classes part time in Tai Chi Chuan and guided meditation, and presenting occasional stress management workshops—the writing of this book thus far has been a slow process! God willing, it will find its way eventually to publication and into the hands of those readers for whom it may most benefit. I am speaking primarily of those who suffer from depression or bipolar disorder, or perhaps some other form of mental or emotional dis-ease. I am confident that the various practices I have employed are likely to help anyone who may be suffering from anxiety or emotional pain. In these pages I hope you will find inspiration for your own recovery, finding an assortment of items (much like a menu or buffet) to choose from which may be beneficial to your healing path. These may include Zen meditation, mindfulness of breathing, practicing present moment awareness, positive thinking, prayer, affirmations, visualization or guided imagery in connection with spiritual healing, Tai Chi, yoga and more recently the addition of Omega 3 fatty acid (1 to 2 grams/day) in the form of flax seeds to my diet. The Omega 3 has definitely helped with the increased production of serotonin for

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getting a good nights sleep! In recent years, a good deal of research is being done with the effect of larger quantities (more than 5 grams per day) of Omega 3 fatty acid, primarily using fish oil tablets, in the treatment of bipolar disorder.

All of the practices mentioned above I have tried at one time or another and have found to be helpful in my journey to wholeness. Each individual is unique! These techniques may be used with or without conventional treatment such as counseling and/or medications—depending upon the severity of need. I freely admit there are times when I have benefited a great deal from conventional treatment for bipolar disorder. Yet my emphasis in this story relates more to an alternative path, one that has required courage, persistence, and help from above to keep on keeping on along this healing path. When considering the long term effects of taking medications, some known, others unknown, it seems to me its well worth the effort to explore the alternatives. Working with a trustworthy holistic doctor or therapist may be the best option. If a person is currently taking medication for treatment of bipolar disorder, it is *strongly recommended* that he or she seek professional advice before discontinuing any medications.

This is not specifically a 'how to' book. However, it is my hope that you may find some helpful descriptions, web links or book references to other sources for more detailed explanations and encouragement.

This story may also appeal to those interested in spiritual healing. My personal experience with healing relates primarily to my own core belief which is Christian. The White Eagle teachings and absent (or nonlocal) healing are undenominational and may be considered unconventional because of our belief in reincarnation, spirit guides and angels as helpers in our return in full consciousness to the Father-Mother God. Being nondogmatic, all men and women are seen as free to choose the path most suitable to their own particular needs. I trust that as we progress along our chosen path we may find that our core belief expands during periods of meditation, prayer, singing or chanting to include all other core beliefs in the supreme consciousness of one divine essence or spirit of LOVE which unites us all! I certainly acknowledge that other forms of spiritual healing exist. Examples may include Reiki, Tibetan Buddhist, Native American , Taoist, and many others which may work perfectly well in assisting people who are seeking help in overcoming various forms of anxiety and depression. Of course it is my hope that the reader will find something that appeals to him or her in the White Eagle teachings. If there is a special need during periods of emotional distress, may I suggest a small pocketbook of White Eagle sayings for everyday life titled The Quiet Mind, available through most bookstores, or through the website of the White Eagle Lodge (<http://www.whiteaglelodge.org/>).

May God bless each and every one with whom I may share my healing story.

Jay Busemeyer  
Revised December 2003

# FOREWORD

This book is like a silver lining surrounding those dark clouds of doubt, fear, and disappointment which at times can seem so overwhelming. If you, or someone you love, suffers from feelings of depression or hopelessness, then please read on! This book is about a healing path, one that took years for me to discover, but a joyful path leading to health, vitality, and creativeness! It is my hope that these words may lead others to find—more easily than I—that living spring of Christ or universal love within each one of us and the whole of creation.

*Overcoming Bipolar Disorder: A White Eagle Healing Story* is based upon over twenty five years of personal struggle with bipolar disorder and the remarkable transformation which has taken place through the gift of absent (or non-local) healing I have received during the past six years of my life\*. The healing experience will be described as faithfully as I can with the assistance of journal notes I have kept during this time. What has prompted me to write this book is a quiet realization of deep inner peace, and the gift of Joy not only for myself but for my family. I have a newfound sense of God's loving presence and guidance in my everyday life, free from the extreme mood and energy swings which had been such a dominant factor in previous years. I am convinced that my nervous system, my physiology has changed! I have been made whole, more capable than ever of self-regulating my creative energy and also in making appropriate responses to life's challenges. Perhaps more fundamental, my thought patterns have changed! I see all of life in a new light, with purpose and meaning even in the midst of life's pain, in every test or obstacle we may face.

What is Bipolar disorder? Bipolar disorder is often described as manic-depression. Its basic pattern is one of normal everyday functioning offset by periods of high energy and euphoria (mania) usually followed by low energy and at times prolonged depression, then a period of normal functioning once again. Its frequency and duration of episodes vary with the individual and life

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\* I was on the White Eagle healing list from November, 1995 through October, 2001. I have actually been free from any medications for bipolar disorder since December, 1990.

circumstances. Like a roller coaster, it can be a very wild ride, and a dangerous one at that. It is estimated that bipolar disorder affects at least 2 million Americans at any given time (or about 1% of the population). For the reader who may not be familiar with the teaching and healing work of the White Eagle Lodge, there is a beautiful description which can be found just inside the back cover of most of the W. E. books. The Lodge is described as:  
*A place for growth and understanding... Here men and women may come to learn the reason for their life on earth and how to serve and live in harmony with the whole brotherhood of life, visible and invisible, in health and happiness.*

White Eagle was the spirit guide of Grace Cooke who, with dedicated support from her husband Ivan Cooke, founded the White Eagle Lodge in 1936 in London, England. White Eagle\* has referred to himself as merely the spokesman for a group of wise souls in the world of spirit, beyond all denomination, who have humanity in their care. The name White Eagle is chosen because it signifies one with spiritual vision, a spiritual teacher. As a symbol of the new age the white eagle soars into the heavens and sees far and wide.

How does spiritual healing come about? Let's listen to what White Eagle has to say about the healing power of Christ:

*Spiritual healing comes about by the power of spiritual aspiration. When the thoughts are truly aspiring to the Christ, then the light of Christ—the rays of Christ—falls into the heart; and as soon as the rays of Christ are felt in the physical body, having great power they can reverse the order of things. Where there was dark showing in the body, they reverse the order to light and the light takes possession, dominating the body and controlling the physical atoms. This is how miracles are performed.*

*...No disease is incurable, but, at the same time, the cure of that disease rests not upon the healer, but upon the will of the patient, and upon the will of God.*

THE SOURCE OF ALL OUR STRENGTH, pp.92-94

In my own personal experience of spiritual healing, I have repeatedly felt the sweet essence of divine love as described by White Eagle in the passage above. It has not been an instantaneous healing, with all my problems removed, but a very gradual one requiring a great deal of trust and perseverance. Often times the effort was more than I could bear, and particularly during periods of intense struggle, I would invoke my favorite image of the Master Jesus standing on the clear blue waters with golden sunlight streaming from his heart and hands into mine. I have used consistently, on a daily basis, a healing affirmation based upon the instructions sent to patients placed upon the White Eagle absent healing list:

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\* The interested reader will find more information about White Eagle and his special relationship with medium Grace Cooke at the web site for the Mother Lodge in England, specifically at [http://www.whiteagle.org/the\\_lodge/history.htm](http://www.whiteagle.org/the_lodge/history.htm) .

*Divine light is in me. The Christ light permeates, heals, and empowers every atom of my being. I am the resurrection and the life.*

My usual daily 30 minute meditation practice is to visualize a blazing six pointed Star\* rising just above mountain peaks radiating golden healing light to every cell of my heart, mind, and body. The Christ Star is a symbol of the cosmic Christ, the Son of God, often referred to by Grace Cooke as the Golden One. It is a symbol of perfect health and perfect balance between the physical and spiritual worlds. It reminds me of Jesus' own simple prayer in the Our Father, 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven'. The upward triangle can be seen as a symbol of humanity reaching up to heaven, to the world of spirit from which we have all come, and the downward triangle the response of the Comforter, the universal Christ spirit in its many forms (both human and angelic) reaching down to aide us in our return to the inner Light.

It is important to note that White Eagle's method of meditation and absent healing may be used in combination with traditional medical treatment and (or) alternative therapies. This varies with the individual needs of the patient. In my own case, I did benefit from psychotherapy (1 year) and lithium treatment from 1986 to 1990. I felt it was necessary at that time in my life, but since then I have been free from any type of medical prescription for bipolar disorder. I found certain undesirable side effects with the prolonged use of lithium (such as inhibited short term memory functioning) which led me to explore alternative treatment modalities. Additional side effects of lithium will be described more fully in later chapters. I am aware that there are other, newer drugs available today for the treatment of bipolar disorder, but I think it is best for me to confine my discussion to my own personal knowledge. My experience with the absent healing service of the White Eagle Lodge began in November of 1995, and continued through October of 2001. I have also joined in the work of giving healing to others and have found it to be a most wonderful experience, very powerful indeed! This service is free of charge and is provided by dedicated members who feel in harmony with W.E.'s teaching, working alone or in groups all over the world!

Am I now living in a state of perfect health? Am I living in a state of constant bliss? No. I continue to face emotional challenges, the ups and downs of daily life we all have to face and eventually master. I am, however, living much more confidently, creatively and thankfully than ever before in my 48 years! The path of spiritual unfoldment, as taught by White Eagle, includes many soul initiations leading to spiritual rebirth and the eventual joy of service to others. The first part of this book describes in story form my life of searching, of the many peaks and valleys living with bipolar illness. This includes accounts of

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\* For both 2 and 3 dimensional views of the Star image, please see [www.thestarlink.net](http://www.thestarlink.net) along with further information about this symbol and its purpose.

much needed assistance from others offering me encouragement and wisdom along the path! The second part will focus on the healing process, and will include quotations from my journal notes<sup>α</sup>, letters and the White Eagle teachings which have served so well as guideposts on my healing journey.

This is my dream: to live a life of joyous, creative love and healing service! May this book be of some help in extending that dream to others on a similar path, living out their own healing story in unique ways. To borrow a phrase from our Buddhist friends, may all beings be happy! May all beings be free from fear and suffering. Whether in this life—or in the next—may all beings be well!

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<sup>α</sup> Please note this is a work in progress. My intent is to add chapter by chapter (likely a total of 10) and distribute initially free copies on paper and to publish electronically with a personal web site.

# Part One: A Long Ride Home

## Chapter One

### *The Second Coming of Christ*

“To each one of you has been given the power—the power to increase the Light of God on Earth...if you would let your light shine before men, shine forth in the darkness, you must use your freewill, deciding for yourselves to become enrapport, in tune throughout your being, with this Ancient Light, the Ancient Wisdom, the Light of the Son...let us work from our souls to send forth the Light. Oh beloved brothers, take this light with you, let it abide in your heart and radiate from your lives!”

#### *WHITE EAGLE from the Stella Polaris, 1939*

As a much younger man of about 23 years of age, having recently completed my bachelors degree in psychology, I had no clue as to who White Eagle was or how his teachings would come to influence my life in later years. I was indeed searching for meaning in what seemed to be an absurd world, one dominated by materialistic concerns and a busyness which I simply could not relate to. There must be more to life than the mere conformity to generally accepted standards laid our for the new graduate. Having tried a brief stint at youth counseling in a low income area near the university, struggling with feelings of depression and questioning my ability to make a difference in the lives of the teenage youth I was hired to help, I found myself switching gears.

I certainly enjoyed traveling! I discovered an ad in the classified section of the newspaper for a reservations position with one of our nations leading airlines. Many people with liberal arts degrees wind up in some sort of sales position, I comforted myself. Why not try this for a few years and enjoy the money and the travel benefits. I applied for the job in the downtown Cincinnati office and was accepted. Training began in Dallas, Texas in a matter of weeks. This was in April of 1977.

I had mixed feelings about going out of town by myself for the first time in my life. I was confident that I could do the job but would I enjoy it, would I fit in with the corporate atmosphere? There were many other people near my age who would be attending the week long training session, so why should I be

unduly concerned about loneliness. Although a bit nervous, I looked forward to

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the flight to Dallas and found it to be exhilarating!

This was a delightful change from the previous months of questioning and doubting myself, wondering how I was to get on with my life. Recently, I had turned to the Bible and to prayer, taking long walks in the woods and asking Jesus to light up my life. I was drawn to the simple but profound statement of Jesus in St. John's gospel, "I am the light of the world. He who follows me will no longer be walking in darkness. He will have the light of life." This was very appealing to me. I felt intuitively that if I sincerely applied myself to the teachings of Jesus as found in the gospels, and in my deepest heart implored his presence then I would find this light. Having been raised a Catholic, I was familiar with the basic tenets of the orthodox Christian faith but since the age of about 16 I had stopped attending church on a regular basis. I had found the ritual to be somewhat flat and empty of personal meaning. Now, however, as an adult my quest was far more sincere. I desperately needed help and was searching for a better way to live my life.

Like most college students in the early seventies, I spent a good deal of my social life drinking beer and smoking marijuana with my friends and classmates. Most of this behavior developed after my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday—when on the *exact day* after much emotional prodding and discussion—my first love decided to call it quits. I found out some time later from my younger sister Karen<sup>α</sup> what really happened. Karen was just one grade behind me in school, and she and I often hung out with the same group of friends. We were fairly close growing up together

Karen later revealed to me that my girlfriend Debbie (not her real name) had taken up with and eventually married a much older man whom she had met through working as a waitress at one of the Bob Evan's restaurants. Debbie and I had been living together since that previous summer. We had a delightful vacation traveling together to Niagara Falls and on into Canada. We were both still attending college and I was anticipating that we would marry sometime after graduation. She was really the sweetest, kindest and most affectionate woman I had known. I suspect that my own periodic depression and uncertainty about the future led to the failure of our relationship, as well as her desire to have children. The loneliness and the heartbreak left me seemingly little recourse but to fall in with the party line. Music was a constant source of pleasure and comfort to me. My favorite artists were Neil Young, Jackson Brown, Bob Dylan, The Who, Dave Mason, and many others. But after several years of escaping reality through

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<sup>α</sup> I was the 3<sup>rd</sup> child of 8 in our family, 4 boys and 4 girls (my father was very proud of this!) In a later chapter I plan to elaborate more on my childhood and family upbringing.



what became a daily habit of “getting high”, I was indeed ready for a new direction.

I had no idea what was about to unfold in my subconscious mind. My older brother, Jerry, had been introduced to transcendental meditation and the use of a mantra while still an undergraduate student at the University of Cincinnati\*. Jerry was tall and thin, much like myself, and 3 years older than I. He had long hair in those days and a dark goatee which added a certain strength to his features. I often looked to Jerry for advice and encouragement. He was much more goal directed than I was, and this has proved to be an enduring quality. Jerry went on to get his Ph.D. in psychology and over the years has become most successful in his chosen field of research, decision theory.

Knowing of my struggle with depression, and my turning to the study of the gospels he suggested I use the name of Jesus as a kind of mantra. At that time neither one of us was familiar with what is sometimes called the “Jesus prayer” as outlined in a classic book, *The Philokalia, or Way of a Pilgrim*. The usual form of this prayer is “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me”. I opted to repeat simply the name of Jesus—or the words Lord Jesus— over and over again. I was simply not aware of the dangers\* of unguided use of such a method, particularly in what proved to be a very stressful situation!

These were some of the personal factors I brought with me to the training classes for the airline reservations position. I arrived at the training facility, which, as I remember it, was a long, flat one story rectangular building much like a school. It lacked imagination. However, I settled in quickly enough with the content and pace of the training. I had no problem keeping up with the material and I enjoyed the challenge of learning something new and different! I did not sleep well that first night. We had shared rooms and being a very light sleeper, along with the extra mental energy I felt leftover from the day’s activities, I spent much of the night trying to relax.

By the second and third days of training I was beginning to question the training techniques being used by the airline. It seemed to me an unnecessarily large dose of corporate propaganda and a continuous feeding of image making scenes, loud advertising music, stereotypical voices, airlines uniforms and constant smiles. I felt as if we were being brainwashed! Not getting nearly enough sleep at night was surely aggravating my sensitivity to what appeared to me as unreasonable conditioning methods for new employees. I began to repeat the name of Jesus at night as I lay in bed, both as a prayer for help as an aide in relaxing my mind and body. I felt confused, not knowing what to do. Should I leave the training and turn my back on both the job I thought I badly needed and

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\* There is a powerful force or divine fire, sometimes referred to as kundalini, which may be channeled, trained and transmuted into a wonderful expansion of consciousness, but is best done slowly and patiently under the guidance of an experienced teacher or guide.

the travel opportunities that would come with it as a corporate benefit? I was very reluctant to do so! So I continued on as best I could, but then something completely unexpected happened.

At the close of the third or fourth day of classes, feeling a great need for some privacy I went out for a walk into the near by field of grass and a few welcome trees. It was April, and the spring weather was most refreshing. I had been continuing with my calling the name of Jesus periodically during the night, and was seeking insight, help with my dilemma. The outer world seemed cold and artificial to me, lacking in authenticity. Although people seemed friendly enough in the classes, I didn't really connect with anyone or talk about my feelings or objections to the training methods being used. While standing near a tree I experienced what can only be described as a flash of lightning in my consciousness. I was immersed in a cosmic light which was totally beyond me but somehow within me. It was an expansion that I was completely unprepared for, a divine fire of love and light which I associated with the Christ.

I cried loudly and fell to the ground, repeating the name of Jesus. I felt tremendous joy at my discovery of this transcendent reality which was far more powerful and real than anything I had ever read about or even heard of. I was overwhelmed. I was lost in a far greater being of limitless energy. I remained in that spot on the ground for quite some time. There were thoughts beginning to form now, thoughts about the second coming of Christ, a new world coming to birth. Yes, the unreality of the present world would give way to a new life of peace, joy, brotherhood and love! God is Love! It's true, I cried in amazement. I felt tremendously blessed by this experience, and that I was somehow mysteriously called to become a leader in it's growth and development.

I'm fairly certain that no one had seen me while I was out among the trees having this most incredible experience. I slowly came back into the building and joined the others in the cafeteria for dinner. I remember the peculiar feeling that others could sense or know my thoughts, that I was experiencing telepathy for the first time in my life. I felt love for others, a kind of high feeling or a sense of happiness but also suspicion. As time went on during my last day there I grew paranoid, not knowing why people were looking at me in what I felt were strange ways. I began to lose my sense of judgment, questioning more and more the training methods and intentions of the people in charge. I even began to suspect that I may be in some kind of danger, that I was rocking the boat, questioning the system too loudly (for the most part, all of this was a very strong subjective feeling, rather than any specific overt behavior on my part). It was clearly time for me to go home.

I met with some of the managers and even a psychologist (or psychiatrist most likely) the next morning. First my parents, then my older sister Chris was contacted and it was agreed that I would fly home with Chris later that day. I remember Chris as an avid Beatles fan! She was a liberal child of the 60's majoring in sociology, and, as it has turned out, a life-long nonconformist. Chris was a warm hearted, compassionate person who seemed to me to have it all

together. A good marriage, a good job as a recruiter at a private Catholic university (Edgecliff College in Cincinnati), and she had lots of friends!

The airlines was kind enough to allow her to fly to Dallas for free and accompany me on the flight home. I remember Chris looking very sad and asking me a lot of questions. It was a real comfort to see her as I knew she was someone who loved me and I could trust. Yet I felt that she did not really understand all that I had been through—how could she?— or what I was feeling even then as we flew back to Cincinnati. I am deeply grateful for her love and gentleness shown to me that day.

I had a long talk with my parents and my brother Jerry about all that had happened at the training. I don't believe I went into the intense spiritual awakening that had occurred in any detail. They were all in agreement that I must see a psychiatrist and get medication to help calm me down. I strongly disliked the thought of taking medication and felt I was being pressured to conform to the generally prevailing view of life and society—normality. I finally agreed and took medication for a short time (perhaps a week or so) until my nervous system had returned to normal and my sleep as well. I trusted my family and felt that it was best to cooperate even if I questioned the methods of psychiatry. Looking back many years later, I can see that the drug I took was beneficial for short term use as it helped me regain the mental balance and clarity of thinking I had lost. Fortunately for me, a close friend of mine knew of a psychologist who might be able to help me better understand what had really happened in Dallas, Texas.

Dr. Walter Clarke proved to be one of the most influential people of my entire life. He was a Godsend in my time of need. He had the look of an old hippie when I first met him, a kind of frizzled grey hair over the ears, dark rimmed glasses, but with a sparkle in his eyes! He often wore a coat and a tie which puzzled me a little bit. He described himself as an existential psychologist, a long time professor of psychology and religion at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. Of Irish descent, Walter grew up in the state of Wyoming as an only child. His childhood was a difficult one. His father was not well educated, was a blue color worker and also did some professional boxing! He was not averse to hitting Walter when he lost his temper with him. His mother was not all that affectionate with him either, as I recall from our conversations over the years, although she was not abusive. Walter was determined to get a good education in spite of his difficult upbringing, and gradually became interested in becoming a Catholic priest. He spent a number of years in a Catholic seminary before determining that he preferred to live independently. He then went on to get his Ph.D. in psychology from Stanford University in California. He came to Xavier University for a teaching job and remained in Cincinnati living as a bachelor for the rest of his life. In addition to teaching classes, he also counseled students and eventually other people outside of the university as well. His living room became like a second office where he offered his services at no charge for anyone in need. I believe he did this for over 30 years! He was a gifted

counselor, giving both practical psychological advice and encouraging philosophical and spiritual discussion with a wide variety of clients. His was a giving heart, compassionate, wise and loving. He was an excellent role model of gentleness and strength. A true healer.

Walter agreed to work with me and listened attentively to the details of my experiences in Texas. He said he shared my concern about the corporate training methods, that they do stress conformity and some of the methods are questionable. But that I was not in any real danger and there was no need for paranoia. I should have simply left the training sooner when I realized it wasn't for me. We also talked at length about my spiritual experience and the Christ energy of divine love that I felt so overwhelmingly. He introduced me to the concept of mysticism, and we talked about some of the Catholic writers such as Thomas Merton who wrote on this topic extensively. Walter became a mentor, a friend and counselor for life. The first book on spirituality he suggested I read was *Jonathon Living Seagull* by Richard Bach. That book struck a lasting chord with me about the primary importance of spiritual freedom and authenticity as compared to the necessity of earning a living. I wanted to soar far and wide in the sunlight like that bird, yet we all have to eat!

I met with Dr. Clarke weekly for quite some time. We talked at length about what he called my cyclothymic personality, with its endogenous tendency towards extreme highs and lows. He encouraged me to consider taking up the practice of yoga and meditation, to learn greater self awareness and eventual self control over my emotional states. "Yes, the world is a tough place to live", he said, "especially for sensitive people like yourself!" Walter's astrological sign was Leo, and I'll always remember the large black and white artists conception of the strong but gentle lion which hung in Walter's living room where he did much of his counseling work. Walter felt that we were karmically connected, believing in reincarnation as he did, and that it was his job to protect me (in a counseling or spiritual father kind of role) from harm that I may bring upon myself or discover in the outer world which clearly doesn't share my idealistic views. Another obvious concern of Walter's was that I *did not attach my self to the experience of Christ consciousness*, or make any grandiose claims. "Jay friend", as Walter was fond of saying, "the glorious Christ being lives within us all!"

One of the most important ways in which Walter influenced me was in that he introduced me to the wisdom of the Eastern religions. Walter planted the seeds in me for a truly holistic appreciation of both Eastern and Western thought. Advances in science and in modern psychology were valued and assimilated in Walter's way of thinking. So too was the wisdom of the Buddha, meditation, yoga, the Bhagavagita, Hindu, Zen and Sufi masters. I can remember a most beautiful and intriguing icon Walter had on his mantle in the living room (underneath the lion picture). It was a facial image of a very peaceful 'Buddhist-Christ', with the brow showing a 'third eye' energized and glowing slightly. Walter felt that I could learn a great deal from studying the lives of both Jesus and Buddha, and other teachers (and traditions) as well. There were many sources

of enlightenment in Walter's view. The Bible was the word of God, yes, but not exclusively. This attitude towards global learning has remained with me over the years and eventual lead me to the wonderful inclusiveness of White Eagle's teaching.

## Chapter 2                      Vision on a Hilltop

*"Beloved brethren, we know that life sometimes seems to you chaotic, but if you could see all human life from a higher aspect...you would know that in spite of all appearances humanity is in the throes of a spiritual awakening. You may feel despondent about world conditions...this is a phase through which humanity is passing...but if you will stop and think more deeply about things, you will recognize the existence of a spiritual power which is slowly pervading man's life, and stimulating his consciousness of a spiritual life.*

"...the old ways of thought and the old materialistic view of life are passing away and we see this new life of humanity as in a golden light."

The Happy Life, White Eagle published in Stella Polaris,  
Dec 2000 - Jan 2001

The White Eagle quote above lends support to a visionary experience I had in the summer of 1981 after a period of extended solitude during a rather lengthy retreat. While prayerfully considering how I might put this into words, I had to stop and ask myself "what is the purpose of writing about this vision... what do I hope to accomplish?" If it is merely to draw attention to myself in any way, it is useless and a waste of time. If it may in some way be helpful to others, in that it is a hopeful vision of a wonderful future for humanity, then it is indeed worth the effort. From the viewpoint of Jungian psychology, particularly considering the topic of highly charged emotional complexes which can lie deeply buried in the personal subconscious mind, or the archetypes which are related to the collective unconscious, I believe it is also worthy of exploration.

I was in my 28th year and had been living at Walter's house that spring having been recently separated from my wife, Theresa (not her real name). Our separation was due mainly to differences of perception concerning my slipping, once again, into unemployment! I had given my all to the high school teaching position at Marian, a Catholic girls school where I had been hired to fill the gap in their math department. I taught algebra, geometry and trigonometry to a less than enthusiastic audience of teenage girls! This was only my second year of teaching, and my first year in this high school. Previously, I taught 7th and 8th

graders language arts and religion at a Catholic school in Cold Springs, Kentucky.

No doubt my own lack of teaching experience and the periodic bipolar fluctuations—especially insomnia— added to the problems I encountered in both schools. In any event, many of my students were failing and I knew that in past years they had been allowed to pass on from one year to the next without really putting forth much effort. They were often playing during our math class and not taking me at all seriously! I had even offered make-up exams after school to help them reach a satisfactory level of knowledge so as to pass to the next grade. This was about 1/3 of the class I am referring to.... many of the other girls were very fine students and a pleasure to teach! The principal told me in no uncertain terms that I had to pass these children. I stormed out of her office and resigned shortly thereafter.

My wife and I had only been married for only a couple of years. She too was a high school teacher, but well established in one of the better public schools in the city. Theresa was a beautiful young woman, petite with long dark hair. She had taken ballet lessons while growing up and had gotten pretty good at it from what I could see! She was also a life guard in the summertime, and a daily runner. She had difficulty understanding my predicament and could not accept my "quitting my job" in April of 1981. This was a very stressful time for me! Our relationship had never really been on solid ground psychologically, and Walter had more or less advised me (in a gentle way) to hold off on getting married. To his credit as a truly wise and compassionate man, he did not hold this against me when marital problems did come but offered me a place to stay till I could get on my feet again. I was responsible for my own food and personal expenses but no rent was charged for my private room on the 2nd floor of Walter's very modest house.

I discussed with Walter my desire to visit a monastery for an extended period of time to investigate my intense longing for a more secluded life dedicated to prayer, manual labor and contemplation. He felt it was a good idea to look into the matter so I wrote a lengthy letter to the Prior at Mt. Saviour after reading an article in a Catholic magazine featuring their hospitality. My request for a summer visit was approved. I planned to spend 4 to 6 weeks participating in the life of the monks as much as possible while living in the guesthouse. The monks at Mt. Saviour, a Benedictine monastery, are known for their hospitality and have many visitors in the summertime. The monastery is located near Elmira, NY, with about 1000 acres of secluded, pristine land and trees.

Finally the day arrived. I set out in my light green Dodge Colt, a small economy car I purchased in 1979 when I started my first teaching job. The drive to Elmira, NY was long but pleasant! I left early in the morning just after sunrise. The excitement I felt was truly incredible as this was my first extended, personal trip driving anywhere alone. Adding to the magic of the moment was the growing

sense of anticipation I felt in regards to the much longed for answer to my heart-felt questions about monastic life. Is *this* the life I was meant to live? The long expanses of open country road in Pennsylvania were a real joy to me! I remember the warm sunshine on my face, spring breezes blowing through the open windows, birds singing sweetly, mile after mile of tree covered hillside...all of which made for a delightful journey. My heart was free at last to seek it's greatest desire. I sang psalms and prayed much of the way, occasionally listening to music on tapes or just relishing the silence and solitude. To be sure, there was also some nervousness about not knowing what the outcome of my search would be. Was I really willing to embrace the monastic way of life? The vow of celibacy admittedly would be a major challenge for me, as would the lack of mobility. Yet Mt. Saviour's 1000 acres of rolling hills, woods and grazing pastures for sheep didn't sound too limiting!

Upon my arrival I was treated cordially like any other visitor and shown to my small, very simple private room in the guesthouse. Just a bed, table, lamp and chair was all. Enough space to move around in and get dressed. But it was quiet! I later found out to my amazement that the Benedictine monks who lived there had very modern quarters, with clean, pleasant rooms, new furniture, a beautiful library, quite nice really. There were about 14 monks at the time, and I considered myself as a potential novitiate to the order. I needed to speak with the prior about all of this, and I was told we would meet sometime the next morning.

Prior John (I don't remember his real name) was indeed a very gracious man, gentle, kind and a good listener. I felt truly blessed to be allowed to come and participate fully in the daily life of the monks, sharing meals with them, singing psalms in the chapel several times per day, with holy communion each morning during the Catholic mass. I was asked to work in the library and bookshop as an assistant, a job I thoroughly enjoyed. I felt privileged to be left alone there upon occasion (to mind the store) if the others were all busy with other duties. In addition, I volunteered the use of my car to pick up visitors who needed transportation to and from Elmira to the monastery. In those days was the monastery was about an hours drive or so from the city. Father John and I met several times during my stay and I felt he appreciated my sincerity and wanted to give me every opportunity to determine which path was best for my life: layman or monk. There was no pressure of any kind place upon me, nor was one path considered to be higher or any better than the other, although in my own mind the monastic life was surely the ideal.

One of the fondest memories I have of my visit over twenty years ago is of several conversations with Brother Luke, a gardener of award winning roses, a most gentle soul full of deep inner peace and loving-kindness. I can also remember the relaxing sounds of the sheep 'baahing' throughout the day, the rolling hills splendid for long walks, and the woods for solitude. There were lots of visitors, women as well as men, one in particular whom I enjoyed talking to and found to be rather eye-catching. For the most part, I kept to myself, my



prayers and my books when I wasn't involved in communal activities. I can remember a beautiful small chapel where they played soothing classical music before the chanting of the psalms (periodically throughout the day) or preceding the daily Catholic Mass each morning. Other memories include a most beautiful painting—very inspirational to me—in the chapel. \*

There was another side to my experience at the monastery, the seeds of which I surely brought with me. I am referring to the deep inner conflict and growing tension I was experiencing as a result of living in a world which in many ways I simply did not agree with! The overly materialistic ways of society, the busyness of city life with its incessant noise and pollution, the self-centeredness and lack of caring of within the human family were just too much for my young mind and sensitive emotions. I was struggling to make sense of the earthly life. I spent long hours studying the Bible, being fascinated with the prophetic works of Isaiah, Daniel, Hosea. I read nearly all of Thomas Merton's books which have touched the hearts and minds of millions in our world today. Merton was an outspoken critic of the dominant Western world view of economic progress at all costs! Some of his most prophetic works include *Disputed Questions*, *Contemplation in a World of Action*, and *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*. These were some of the books I had with me during my visit to Mt. Saviour. I had also become immersed in the classic mystical writings of St. John of the Cross, such as *The Living Flame of Love* and *Ascent of Mt. Carmel*. Not exactly what you would call light summer reading!

Near the end of my stay at Mt. Saviour, I had what is undoubtedly the most profound experience of my life. I was unsuspecting of the awesome vision about to unfold regarding upcoming changes in our world. One evening, after taking my usual stroll up to the top of a hill for a panoramic view of the setting sun, I felt what can only be described as flood of energy flowing through my body like a volcanic eruption, all powerful yet loving and wise immensely beyond my limited ego perceptions. I saw nothing in the way of images but what I felt was divine fire! Along with this fire I experienced incredible pain, an intuitive sense of tremendous pressure which was building up not only in my own consciousness, but in our earth, our society! In that brief moment of time I was a microcosm feeling the pain of the macrocosm! I overwhelmingly sensed there would be a period of chaos and suffering, a breaking down of the old order of things. It felt to me as if we were facing on the horizon of the future a kind of global crucifixion. And through it all I sensed a dawning light, a new order of things, a spiritual awakening. This awakening would bring with it an infinitely more harmonious, cooperative and loving society. I remember writing down the words later that

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\* The Mt. Saviour web site at [www.msaviour.org](http://www.msaviour.org) indicates this was a 15th century painting from the Flemish School over the Blessed Sacrament altar. There is also a 14th century statue from the French School, Our Lady Queen of Peace in the crypt. Photos can be seen under the TOUR link.

evening “one does not reach the dawn save by the path of the night!” Mystics often refer to a dark night of the soul... this was to be a dark night (or purification) for the collective Soul of the earth! My own life was headed for this same kind of awakening, and I deeply sensed a calling to leadership. I perceived myself in a significant role (very much like in a dream or a play) in the transition from the old way of life—which was crumbling— to the new life of gentle peace and harmony. Tears streamed from my eyes. I covered my hands and wept with such a feeling of immense love in my heart. What I experienced was an incredible blending of pain with joy, then bursting light, a glowing fire in my heart. Surely this was the fire of God's love! It was as though I were present with Moses at the sight of the burning bush, or even the Lord Jesus at his transfiguration. I remained in that spot for quite some time, alone, slowly gathering my strength and returning to my bodily senses. I returned quietly to my room and told no one about this revelation until I had returned home to Cincinnati.

What on earth could this possibly mean? Who would listen to such talk as this, or even want to hear of such a vision? At times I was fearful that I was really on the edge, that my imagination had gotten the best of me! Was I losing touch with reality? Yet the thought persisted that God was indeed calling me to form a lay persons contemplative or meditative practice, to find peace within. The challenge was to integrate my monastic longings for a more contemplative existence with married life and all its responsibilities! I was awestruck, uncertain as to how this might unfold in my life, yet with a feeling of euphoria and hopefulness. What a tremendous drama God had revealed to me. I remembered the words of Juliana of Norwich, the famous 13<sup>th</sup> century mystic, “all shall be well, all manner of things shall be well”.

It took several days for me to calm down from this expansive state while at the monastery. I know now (in the year 2001) that many people have had similar powerful intuitions and predictions regarding the evolution of our planet, but at that time I was not yet ready to discuss this with anyone. I waited until I returned to Cincinnati to seek help in gaining some understanding of what this could possibly mean. I realized from my five weeks at Mt. Saviour that the vowed life of a monk was not for me, although I certainly appreciated its peaceful rhythm of contemplative prayer, study and work. I shared much of what I had learned about the Benedictine way of life with my friend Walter, but did not go into the ‘vision on a hilltop’. I was still living with Walter at that time, and I knew as a psychologist he would have been suspicious—and understandably so—of the bipolar element in what I had just experienced. Rather I chose to discuss the incident with a Catholic priest whom I felt more free to express myself. His name was Fr. Jim O'Brien, a well loved and respected physics professor and counselor on the campus of Xavier University. Jim was a most gentle and wise priest, one in whom I could deeply trust. Admittedly, I was looking for a spiritual—rather than a psychological—interpretation of my vision. I was hoping for confirmation rather than dissent.

Fr. Jim listened patiently to my story. He could not tell me what it meant, other than to say that if there was anything to it, if it was authentically spiritual (a true vision) there would gradually be some physical manifestation or connecting links in my everyday life. He didn't know of anyone interested in combining contemplative, simple living with community life for lay people. He suggested I visit the women at Grailville in nearby Loveland, Ohio. At Grailville there was open farm land, truly wonderful silence, a place with retreats on ecology, feminism, social justice issues, and meditation. I didn't know anybody at Grailville at that time, and I felt uncomfortable approaching them so I decided to simply wait and see what may develop in time.

Not long after my visit with Fr. Jim, I left Walter's house and moved back into the apartment on the other side of town with my wife, Theresa. Walter was supportive, not judgmental, but simply allowed me to make decisions for myself as I thought best. He offered advice more or less only when I asked for it. Theresa and I still had hope for our marriage, and the months of separation helped us to realize we still felt love for each other. Her parents attended an Episcopal church, and one of the ministers there was also a published writer. I agreed to go back to work (whatever I could find, which turned out to be a cashier in one of the IGA grocery stores) and to begin writing. I had a deep need to express myself, to try to communicate what I had experienced and what I was learning in my efforts to remain married while pursuing my contemplative longings. The title of this book was intended to be: A Married Monk. It never materialized.

About a year later (1982), I had a related experience while deeply immersed in prayer and meditation. I had been studying Zen Buddhism, again influenced by Merton's writing. I felt a definite need for more groundedness, and I had a strong curiosity about what it was that had led Merton to Zen. While kneeling one morning in a very private room (more like a storage closet) in our apartment, I intuitively realized that both Jesus and Buddha were pioneering figures in the history of humanity, and that the emerging new spiritual consciousness would be a synthesis of East and West. I sensed a holistic integration was going to be the pathway for the birth of this new consciousness. But what did my life have to do with any of this? Where was the connection between my rich inner life and the everyday outer world of work, marriage and residence in the very politically conservative town of Cincinnati, Ohio (sometimes known as the city of Seven Hills).

Much of what follows in this book relates to my attempts to discern what is real from what is merely fantasy and projection. As a person struggling with bipolar disorder, on more than one occasion I have wrestled with the phenomenon of ego-inflation or an exaggerated sense of self-importance (projecting into the future). There was occasionally the thought, the enticing fantasy, that I was to become a very important person such as a world teacher or leader! At the same time, I knew that to become preoccupied with this fantasy was psychologically dangerous, and I often prayed for guidance and

clarification as to what was genuine inspiration and what was sheer illusion. Inevitably, a period of depression and painful disillusionment would follow any exaggerated feelings of self-importance. Is all this stuff just 'delusions of grandeur' I would often ask of God? It has taken many years for me to sort this out, to let go of self images and find true peace in forgiveness and deep inner healing. Gradually I have found acceptance of my everyday, ordinary self as a being in progress towards God, finding my way—with a great deal of help from the gentle, loving spirit known as White Eagle and those dedicated absent healers—to wholeness and happiness. I have now come to believe that each one of us is called to some form of leadership, or perhaps more simply to service of the Christ light (the Master) within. In White Eagle's most recent publication, *The Light Bringer*, (p:84) there are the following words of wisdom, a guiding light for these times of so many trials and tribulations:

*"All the great social problems you face, from war to the greed you see in society, are due to breaking the law of love. It is largely by suffering that humanity learns to listen to the elder brethren, who, from time to time, restate the simple truth. This truth, this path, consists of ways of service to relieve suffering, to help the younger brethren towards harmony and happiness, towards Christ, the ultimate goal of every soul!"*

As I reflect back on this experience of twenty years ago, I cannot help but wonder what does it mean to me—and possibly to others who may read this book—today? Is it of any real value? Has it helped me to prepare for some of the chaos we witness in today's world? I believe it has. I trust that by telling my story today others may also benefit, and keep their hopes and prayers alive for a better world!

It seems apparent to me that the events and circumstances of today's world relate—in some mysterious way—to that vision of twenty years ago. I can't help but notice how we are indeed seeing quite a bit of disarray, increasing signs of global warming with unstable weather patterns, financial pressures and intense debates in both state and national government, and local incidents of racial strife. Here in the city of Cincinnati, for example, we are currently living in a declared state of emergency—with a mandatory 8pm curfew—due to several days of rioting. The violence was a direct result of a white policeman shooting an unarmed black man, Timothy Thomas, who was only 19 years old. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> killing of an African American by white police in the last 5 months, and number 15 since 1995. No white men have been killed by police during this time. On Saturday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, Timothy's funeral drew national attention from such organizations as the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, whose president is Martin Luther King III, son of Martin Luther King Jr.. The shooting and subsequent riots have occurred within a few blocks of my place of employment, so it's only natural that the shock is felt perhaps more intently as this local crisis has emerged.

On a national level, later, in this same year of 2001 (September 11<sup>th</sup> to be exact) the tremendous tragedy of the destruction of the twin towers in the World Trade center in New York city occurred. Thousands of lives were lost in this incredible incident of terrorist attack on American soil by hijackers of 4 commercial planes. Two planes crashed in New York, one in Washington, D.C. (striking the roof of the Pentagon) and one in rural Pennsylvania. The impact of the loss of life and the subsequent downturn of the American economy has been enormous. For me, personally, it seems as if the darkness and selfishness of humanity, with an all too obvious lack of respect and mutual cooperation in resolving our differences, has come to a critical point in human history.

What can any one person do? I believe that it is counterproductive to focus too much of our energy on news of negative events and the multitude of problems facing humanity today. We can triumph over this darkness with the power of the universal Christ light, sending our healing prayers to all who have suffered and helping materially in any way we are able to give. We must not forget the importance of daily seeking the inner stillness and certainty of God's love which can and will bring peace, healing and brotherhood to all life on our planet. As human beings living during this period of transition, we are the channels for this light. Our united loving thoughts, prayers and dedicated actions will overcome the destructive energies currently manifesting in our world. I believe this is the message of the universal Christ spirit, that together with the angels of light and all our elder brothers and sisters in the world of spirit the power of love will overcome the forces of darkness. \*

I often think of the words of the Our Father as Jesus taught us to pray, "...Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven". It seems to me that we human beings most definitely need the intuitive guidance and assistance from those who reside in heaven in order to find peaceful solutions to the complex problems facing humanity today. It is through our cooperative efforts that humanity will eventually bring to fruition this beautiful prayer which has been repeated by Christians for over 20 centuries. White Eagle affirms this vision of peace on earth, speaking through the human voice of Grace Cooke, in his hopeful message recorded Easter Day 1972 (available on cassette tape) entitled the Coming of the Golden Age.

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\* The interested reader may want to see White Eagle's book *The Light Bringer*, first published in May, 2001. Here the question of whether there is to be a new world teacher for the Aquarian Age is discussed. White Eagle looks at the coming 50 years as a time when "unbelievable changes will come... brotherhood between all people and all things will be established." Surely the potential for changes of this magnitude is within the realm of possibility, if diverse peoples of our world can unite their vision and combine real efforts to create peace with a more equitable distribution of the worlds wealth and natural resources. It seems to me that as more people discover the source of true happiness within their own consciousness, in the spirit of love greater cooperation becomes possible among and within nations of the world.

*“ The universal life, the God life, in earth will be perfected! Make no mistake about it, we are telling you a profound and ancient truth. “ Amen.*

## Chapter 3      Ordinary Mind is the Way

“Form is no other than emptiness  
Emptiness is no other than form.  
Feeling, thought, volition and consciousness  
Are likewise like this.

— from The Heart Sutra

The Heart Sutra is the shortest and the most popular sutra (a sacred text often recited or chanted) in what is known as the Mahayana branch or “Great Vehicle” of Buddhism. It emphasizes the supreme importance of the wisdom of non-attachment, and the doctrine of emptiness (all things being impermanent). Please see Appendix A for the full text of this marvelous sutra. The short excerpt shown above points to the necessity for me at that time in my life, in the years following the vision I experienced while visiting the monastery, to simply let go and learn to how to live peacefully in the reality of the present moment, whatever that reality might be. This is easy to say and very hard to do! My turning to the study of Buddhism in general and Zen meditation practice was a natural effort on my part to find my own center, to live in a more healthy and balanced way. This was not for me a rejection of Christianity, but rather an exploration into the wisdom of the East, complementing my spiritual journey, helping me to become more of a whole person, and to live in what is often referred to as the eternal Now.

One of the insights I have gained from both studying and chanting the Heart Sutra over the years is that no one individual—exclusively— has the whole truth. Even Jesus said “there are many rooms in my Father’s house”. We may think of the “Father’s house” as varying states of consciousness or levels of awareness of truth and love. Our visions and multi-faceted spiritual experiences may present us with a spectacular point of view, much like a kaleidoscope! Yet if we are capable of momentarily setting aside our particular beliefs and mental concepts of God, we can then adjust the knob a few more turns and look again through another writer or teacher or spiritual tradition’s point of view. As a result we will see perhaps quite a different form of truth which may also be quite spectacular and useful in it’s own way! It is often said that Ultimate Reality or God is best experienced in deep interior silence, when we let go of our thoughts, feelings, and images of God. It is also reassuring to know that the divine reality creatively expresses itself in a great variety of forms, both personal and impersonal.

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It is interesting to note that most Buddhists prefer the word Emptiness to express ultimate reality, where as most Christians, I think, would prefer the word Fullness, or a personal description of God like Father. If we hold on too tightly to our own particular form of meditation practice or personal devotion, we limit our ability to see from another person's (or spiritual tradition's ) perspective, and we also limit our ability to enter into peaceful dialogue\* with others. However, as we ascend to higher and higher peaks of awareness, mystical experience becomes more of a common or shared experience—across the boundaries of spiritual traditions—of pure Joy in the limitless freedom and love of the supreme being or cosmic Self. Each one of us is on a spiritual journey which is truly endless while paradoxically fully present now!

Shortly after my return to Walter's house from my trip to the monastery, when I still had a good deal of unstructured time on my hands, I remember distinctly a profound yet peaceful experience of what I believe relates to the Buddhists term anatman or no self. I had been up most of the night praying, reading, meditating. It was quiet and there were no disturbances whatsoever.

There was an opening in my consciousness unlike any other I had experienced. The walls of my prison house seemed to melt away! There were many tears of joy which later became a great calmness and a feeling of complete liberation from self. It was as if there was no 'Jay' anymore, but life itself living in me. I remember walking downstairs and getting ready for breakfast. The universe is walking, I thought to myself with amazement! There was an incredible lightness in every step. I proceeded to cook with delight a soft boiled egg, made coffee and toast. Both the cooking and the simple pleasure of eating was a marvelous experience. Even Walter commented, "Your looking especially peaceful this morning, Jay." We had a pleasant conversation and then I proceeded up to my room. Later, I took a walk in Spring Grove cemetery and continued to enjoy the most profound peace and lightness of inner being I believe I have ever experienced. I felt no need to tell anyone about it, but rather just enjoy this incredible communion with all of life! This sensation persisted for about 2 days before my normal state of awareness as "Jay" returned.

The normal, everyday awareness of Jay at about that time included periods of absolute trust in God and hopefulness about the future. Alongside these brighter moments there were times of doubt, confusion, uncertainty. My

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\* An excellent example of this kind of dialogue can be found in the book, *The Good Heart, A Buddhist Perspective on the Teachings of Jesus* by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 1996. The Dalai Lama spoke before an audience of three hundred and fifty Christians and 'a sprinkling of Buddhists' at the 1994 John Main seminar, an annual seminar presented by the World Community for Christian Meditation.



early practice of Zen meditation, with Walter's guidance and encouragement, consisted mostly of breath counting. This may be described as follows:

Count one on the inhalation, two on the exhalation. Concentrate on really feeling the breath enter through the nose, then moving down into the abdomen (breathing into the lower portion of the lungs), then feeling the belly and the chest rise a little with the in breath. And then slowly fall with the out breath. Continue counting three on the inhalation, four on the exhalation and so on up to ten. Simply return to one again and repeat the process over. If the mind wanders off and you lose your count—which is very common, especially for beginners—just return to one and start over!

The benefit of this type of practice, even for as little as ten minutes at a time, was very noticeable for someone like myself suffering from emotional instability and periodic mood and energy changes typical of people with bipolar disorder. With persistent practice, I did experience some measure of self control, calmness and stability. For someone dealing with high energy states, or periods of anxiety, the method of breath counting is fairly easy to do and is likely to be immediately helpful in restoring balance. Combining meditation with journal writing, I was able to gradually gain some insight into the high periods, the transitory nature of the “spikes” of energy I sometimes felt, and the periods of insomnia. I could read over my notes from one of these periods, examining the ideas and feelings of elation... and later depression. I have found over the years that keeping a journal is definitely a useful tool in gaining perspective over time on the pattern or cycle of thoughts and mood changes associated with the disease. My study of Zen and the discipline of breath meditation was a big help in bringing calmness and clear seeing into the many ups and downs, challenges and growth areas of my life. Years later, I began to study the White Eagle teachings and to practice visualization as an integral part of my meditation (along with following of the breath). I found this to be of greater help particularly during periods of anxiety or depression. I think in part this depends on the individual, whether they may respond better to focusing on the breath exclusively (as in Zen meditation), or combining this with the use of imagery as I have done (and is taught by White Eagle\*). In addition to my efforts to learn how to meditate as an effective means of self control (rather than relying on medication, for example), the spiritual healing I have received is without question in my mind a significant factor in my gradual healing and overcoming of the illness. Meditation alone has helped me tremendously to stay balanced and keep me from going ‘over the edge’, but the spiritual healing has actually *changed* my mind and body in such a way as to reduce the intensity of the struggle and to slowly restore more normal

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\* For further information on using the breath and combining this with imagery, please see *A Way to Happiness* by Ylana Hayward.

functioning in my day to day life. This topic will be developed in much greater detail in subsequent chapters.

A few months after my visit to the monastery, I returned to live with my wife, to make another go of it. The persistent problem I had of finding steady employment and balancing the inner and the outer worlds continued to challenge me and the stability of my marriage. My full time job as a cashier in a grocery store (IGA in Amelia) on the east side of town came to an end, as did my hopes of writing the book to be titled "A Married Monk". I had begun painting houses for financial support after having made the decision to return to school. After much deliberation, I had opted to enter a 2 year program in biomedical engineering technology at what was then called the Cincinnati Technical College. Although I had retained a personal interest in psychology, and continued to read a few books related to the workings of the unconscious, including complexes and archetypes as proposed by Carl Jung, I was simply not steady enough emotionally to take on graduate studies or a career in this field. Obviously, I was also very resistant to the idea of taking medication to control my illness, but preferred to focus my energy on technology as applied to medical purposes. It was in the summer of 1983 I returned to my good friend and mentor Dr. Walter Clarke's house once again to take up residence on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Walter had offered me a place to stay while attending school so I could get back on my feet again. "Good Lord, Jay" I can almost hear Walter say, "you've got to do something about this!"

Outside of Walter (and Fr. Jim O'Brien), there were few people who I felt comfortable in talking to about my experience in the monastery. One person whom I definitely respected and could confide in to some extent was my older brother Jerry. By this time, Jerry had begun his career as a teacher and researcher at Purdue University in Indiana, and was becoming ever more successful in his scientific publications in decision theory. We would exchange letters back and forth, with occasional phone calls and visits over the years. I went to see Jerry and his family in LaFayette, Indiana. I related to him, as well as I could, about my vision while visiting Mt. Saviour. He found it somewhat incredible, I think, but remained open minded. "So what does it all mean, Jay?" he would ask. "Even if what you saw or felt is true, what can you or anyone else do about it?" Jerry would then go on to explain to me how science is the best avenue we have for expanding our knowledge, for making practical improvements in computers and airplanes, for example, or for making new drugs to help cure people. I think he found my interest in Biblical eschatology, Christian mysticism and Oriental wisdom somewhat disconcerting...and that I was not fully appreciative of western knowledge and it's many accomplishments\* .

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\* Jerry and I have, over the years since then, come to appreciate each other's position more fully, acknowledging the need for greater balance of both left and right brain functioning, of

Jerry did acknowledge that weapons of destruction and the threat of nuclear war (also products of science) were of very real concern to him. He even at time had nightmares about it! So we had interesting discussions about how to promote world peace and maintain security for U.S. citizens. As for my career, Jerry had tried to encourage me to take up the study of mathematical psychology, which he was very much involved in (and remains so today). I was an excellent advanced math student in high school, and along with most of my classmates received a full years credit in Calculus from achievement testing. However, I found the algorithms and matrix operations applied to psychological data a bit too abstract and theoretical for my personal preference. After talking it over with Jerry and a few other friends and members of my family I decided it was time for a new direction.

My interest in biomedical equipment was stimulated by a couple of week long visits to the hospital. The first one was in the spring of 1979 when I was taken to a hospital emergency room for a condition known as spontaneous pneumo-thorax (more commonly called a collapsed lung). I was working as a social worker at the time, a live-in child care worker at St. Joseph's Orphanage with a group of teenage boys. This was a highly stressful position—with very low pay! I can remember one of the boys threatening to stab me in the back during my sleep! Not likely, I thought... but possible? In any event, the collapsed lung signaled my exit from that particular job. I called my mother and told her I was having difficulty breathing. I felt a pain in my chest but I could lay down in bed and breath "about half way". Mom came and picked me up in her car and this sensation of limited breathing capacity continued all the way to the emergency room.

I honestly thought that I was going to die! The really sad part was that I was ready to go. What I mean is, even at the age of 24, my life seemed far too painful and difficult to maneuver. I had not yet been medically diagnosed as bipolar, but I knew that something about my life was just not right. During the entire crisis, I kept praying peacefully, repeating the name of Jesus, or perhaps the phrase 'God is love' much like a mantra. I was in a state of complete self-surrender. Thy will be done, O Lord. I almost felt like a spectator at the emergency room. As it turned out, my condition was quickly treated with the insertion of a  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch tube into the chest cavity in between the right shoulder and the chest. This tube is connected to a pump which reinstates a vacuum in the chest cavity, allowing the lung to re-inflate once again as the inner pressure from the inhalation of the lung exceeds the pressure of the chest cavity of the body. The recovery from such a procedure requires about a week in the hospital (at least in those days... now maybe your out in a day or two!). I experienced a sense of profound peace, an inner knowing of the greater reality of the life of the spirit as light and love and freedom from the anxieties of the physical dimension

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reason and intuition. Even so, our individual tendencies towards one or the other remain quite strong.

of existence. I was grateful to be alive and well in my physical body and felt my life now had a definite meaning or purpose. I continued to pray and read spiritual books—such as Thomas Merton’s *He is Risen!*— for most of my stay in between visits from my family and a few friends. I was also much relieved to be out of the social work environment, resolving to look for another job when I got out of the hospital, possibly teaching at a Catholic school, elementary level.

Towards the end of my stay in Our Lady of Mercy hospital, I can distinctly remember being allowed to get out of bed and walk for the first time after about 4 days of bed rest. At that time Theresa and I were still dating. She came to see me and we walked together over to the solarium. This was a modest size room, with a glass opening in the ceiling and with windows all the way to the floor. There were hanging vines, a few flowering plants and indoor trees. It was getting close to evening and the sun was getting lower in the sky, with a golden beam of light caressing our faces. There were beautiful fluffy clouds in the sky and the whole scene was really quite wonderful. After just a few minutes, the sun broke through from behind a cloud I experienced a flash of divine love, a merging of my soul with the heartfelt love of Christ. I felt completely confident that everything in my life was going to be alright... I was indeed in a state of euphoria! I was crying tears of joy while Theresa, standing next to me, I’m sure was trying to understand what I was feeling, and why. I regained my composure...we talked for a few minutes and the next thing I remember is asking her to marry me! Looking back in retrospect, I believe it was a case of my projecting a deeply moving inner experience onto the outer world and believing that yes, God was going to bless our lives together, and that everything would work out just fine! Here was a beautiful young woman in need of a love both gentle and affirming, affectionate and true. I truly wanted to help her become more of a whole and happy person. Unfortunately, or so it seems, I was also unaware that she possessed a strong need for security, and for a more conventional lifestyle than I was able to embrace. She accepted my proposal gladly and we were married a few months later at Bellarmine Chapel (June of 1979). Fr. Jim Obrien was the celebrant in our wedding.

Re-visiting this experience, I do feel that my emotions were quite strong and that I was not in a calm or clear enough state of mind to truly evaluate what was happening. We surely had problems in our relationship that had not been resolved and likely neither one of us was psychologically ready to be married at that time in our lives. About six months earlier I had attempted to break off my relationship with Theresa. She became quite depressed showing serious signs of dependency and lack of self-esteem. Between April and June, I had many doubts about getting married...I did my best to discern what to do. I include this rather humbling story with the hope that other people who may suffer from bipolar disorder will gain some insight into their own experience of emotional highs and lows—even genuine spiritual experiences—and realize the need for a degree of calmness and patience in making important life decisions. Everything we experience through our intuition is filtered through our own energy fields or

layers of perception, which are often distorted by our own desires. It has taken me many years to develop a truer sense of inner guidance with greater stillness, humility, and love slowly, sometimes painfully, growing and maturing along the way.

As it turned out, there was a second (and final, thank God!) instance of the collapsed lung, about 2 years later, and once again the emergency procedure along with about a week's recovery. This time I knew exactly what it was and what to expect in the treatment process. I was not fearful, but neither was I upheld in a state of grace! This time I struggled more with accepting the pain of the event and the recovery process (asking why a second time, Lord?). While in the hospital I did feel a stirring of curiosity about some of the medical equipment being used such as heart monitors, defibrillators (emergency devices used to restart the heart beat in a more normal fashion) and IV pumps. I think this second visit to the hospital stimulated my interest in learning about biomedical equipment, how it was designed, manufactured and maintained. In the Fall of 1983 I enrolled in the two year electronics program with a major in biomedical electronics at Cincinnati Technical College (now called Cincinnati State). While living at Walter's house during that first year of school a good friend of mine was also having some marital difficulties. He too was in the midst of a career change from teaching in a Catholic high school to enrolling as a student at Xavier University in their hospital administration program. John and I met on the campus of Xavier, where the chapel was also located where Theresa and I had been married and where we attended Sunday evening liturgy. John asked Walter if he could join me up on the second floor (there was an extra bedroom available) and we joked about Walter's house becoming a 'temporary home for wayward husbands!' It was a pleasure to have John's friendship and mutual support for a few months at least until John returned to his wife and family. John was a devout Catholic, yet very open minded and liked to discuss with me the teachings of Zen and other Eastern concepts such as reincarnation. We enjoyed taking long walks together over in the nearby cemetery where there was a multitude of flowers in bloom and peaceful water fountains flowing in the ponds. Ahhh, the joy of springtime! "Shall we follow our natural inclination", I asked, "like bees drawn to the pollen of fragrant blossoms, and look for the sensual pleasures of female companionship? After all, we are a couple of friendly, healthy, nice looking guys, right?" But no! Our Catholic upbringing and that still small voice of conscience kept us on the straight path. All along I felt a strong sense of wanting to be faithful to my wife, even if we were separated. The Hindu concept of ahimsa, or of not harming others if at all possible, has long been part of my inner guidance.

Walter assured me that this inner voice was karmically conditioned (deep within me) and it was indeed best to follow it's promptings rather one's natural sexual desires. "The pursuit of sexual gratification—without a loving commitment—ties us to this level of existence" Walter used to say. "And you don't want that, Jay." Although it is perfectly natural to enjoy the sensual

pleasures of the body in a truly loving relationship, there are karmic consequences to our self seeking choices where we may be inclined to give in to our more physical desires (having sex without love). Intuitively I knew this to be true and have lived by this wisdom as best I could during all the years I have struggled with bipolar disorder. No easy task, this ideal of self-control, especially when one's mood and energy swing to periods of euphoria! The high phase often leads bipolar individuals into promiscuity with the associated boost in self-confidence, heightened verbal skills and spontaneous sense of humor.

The next two years were dedicated for the most part to doing hard physical work and studying electronics and computer programming at school. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to paint my uncle's house during the summer and early fall as school was just beginning. This was a very large wood frame house with lots and lots of scraping off the old layers of paint! I really put myself into it, thankful for the work and the kindness of my relatives. Just be in this moment, I often reminded myself. Give yourself completely to the work! This helped to ground my energy and take my mind off of the visionary experience and the ensuing sense of disillusionment when I returned to Cincinnati. I was beginning to read books on Buddhism, a number of them by Dr. D.T. Suzuki, considered to be one of the foremost teachers of Zen in the West. Suzuki's sense of humor and unusual communication style were very appealing to me. One of my favorite early books, a translation by D.T. Suzuki, is a collection of lectures given by one of Suzuki's Japanese teachers, So yen Shaku, while touring the United States in the years 1905-1906. The quotation below offers a sample of the kind of natural wisdom and balance I was—and still am—seeking:

*“Enlightenment is not a special psychic state which excludes or suppresses the ordinary exercise of other mental faculties. Enlightenment must go along with all psychological phenomena... it does not stand separate from other states of consciousness... Enlightenment is constant and not sporadic. It permeates every mental fiber and works without rest. It is not something extraordinary that takes place by fits and starts. Spiritual enlightenment sheds light on the very reason of consciousness, for it is not a particular event of our psychical life.*

*When a Buddhist scholar was asked what was the Path, he answered, ‘The normal state of mind’. In other words, spiritual enlightenment consists in following the natural course of human activity, for the enlightened mind to find the ultimate reason of existence in their desire to drink or to eat according to their natural appetite, in their sympathy for the misery and suffering which are endured by the ignorant masses, in their aspiration to fathom the mysteries of nature and life, in their ever-assiduous attempt to realize the ideals of loving kindness and universal brotherhood on this earth.” — Zen for Americans p:139, 140*

Obviously, I was in need of greater balance. I was trying to learn the art of being open to receive inspiration, trusting in the inner vision, yet not being overwhelmed by it! The art of maintaining my psychological health by focusing on the concreteness of the here and now, “chopping wood and carrying water” as the Zen saying goes. ‘The Tao\* is in the paint!’ I would remind myself. And in the water, the washing of walls, the scraping and priming, the putting up and down the two 20 foot sections of ladder in the mid-day heat of the sun. This kind of physical work requires a letting go of preoccupation with the future, no matter how great the psychological pull of the vision! My God, I’ve got to eat! I needed a new direction, ‘right livelihood’ as the Buddhists say. To realize that nirvana is samsara, or how to find God in the midst of everyday activity became my goal. Like most people, this has been an ongoing learning process with many, many incremental steps of trial and error.

One of the casualties of this learning process was my Bible study. One day, while feeling quite depressed and confused by the apparent disconnectedness of my vision at Mt. Saviour monastery and the everyday life I was now immersed in, I took a long walk through the park. I recall it being early morning and no one else was around. My Bible had been a precious possession for the past 5 years (since my conversion experience of 1977), with voluminous notes in the margin from hours of prayerful study, often late at night when I couldn’t sleep. I seriously questioned the usefulness of this habit now, and all the images and insights I had received. I was angry with God, disappointed. Even the story of Job could not comfort me now! I sadly tossed my Bible into the dumpster at the park. Perhaps I had overdone my Biblical reading while neglecting the concrete requirements of everyday life. The Bible images and numerous stories had become for me a kind of fantasy, an escape from reality. I had imagined myself as a spiritual leader like Moses or David, or one of the prophets! In any event, I desperately felt the need to move on in my life and it was not until a few years later that I purchased another Bible. With the help of Zen my notion of truth was expanding—painfully so—and I later came to believe that the Bible is one of many sources of guidance and inspiration, and is best understood in the context of its origin. It is both timeless wisdom and a historical document of rich complexity.

It was also around this time that my interest in Christian and Buddhist dialogue began to develop. I continued to enjoy reading the works of Thomas Merton such as *The Asian Journal*, and *Mystics & Zen Masters*, also Dom Aelred Graham’s *The End of Religion: autobiographical exploration*, and *Zen Catholicism*. These were ground breaking works by pioneers in the 1960’s of East-West cross fertilization. I was fascinated by the prospect of an emerging global spirituality which embraced the highest and the best of mystical traditions

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\* Zen, or Chan Buddhism, originated in China around 520 AD. Chan Buddhism came to be influenced by Taoism, hence Zen Buddhism (as it is called today) has both Taoist and Buddhist roots.

from around the world! Years later I discovered the provocative writings of Bede Griffiths, especially a book called *A New Vision of Reality: Western Science, Eastern Mysticism, and Christian Faith*. Bede Griffiths spent the second half of his life (1955 – 1993) living in India, pioneering Hindu and Christian dialogue and interfaith practice in his ashram. I have also enjoyed (more recently) studying a number of the Dalai Lama's works which have undoubtedly contributed enormously to greater peace and understanding in our modern world. This book (the one you are reading!) is a modest attempt to continue on into the next millennium in this important work of promoting global spirituality based upon the inner foundation of universal love and wisdom, with respect for the unique contributions made to humanity by each of the world's religions. By the year 1993, I was well prepared to receive White Eagle's unique vision of a harmonious blending of East and West, incorporating Native American wisdom as well. I feel truly blessed to have received his guidance and considerable expansion of my own perceptions, with deep personal healing in the process. White Eagle's approach to East-West integration—that is to say, my personal understanding of the teachings—will be developed more fully as this story unfolds. The personal healing journey, of course, provides the main context for this book, although I do hope to shed some light on the ongoing evolution of Eastern and Western thought.

To return to my story...*going* back to school was not really difficult for me. For the most part, I enjoyed the classes and readily took to the rigors of homework, study and exams. We studied the basic laws of electricity: things like Ohm's law ( $V=IR$ ) and *Kirchoff's* voltage law (the sum of voltage drops around a loop is zero). It seemed an interesting parallel to me that as Resistance decreases, the current across a device increase ( $I = V/R$ ). Consequently, if R comes very close to 0, then the current (I) goes to infinity. This seemed to me a simple physical analogy of what mysticism is like! As our Resistance to God's laws (or the dharma of Buddhism) becomes closer and closer to zero... or in other words, as ego or self-will decreases sufficiently close to nothing, the current of God's energy (or the infinite current of Love) maximizes through our individual creative expression. This may help to explain the incredible energy exemplified in the lives of the saints, sages, and mystical pioneers of all ages.

I was finding all sorts of parallels with the physics of electronics and my own life experiences. I remember studying the 'energy hill' of transistors. Nothing much happens until there is enough energy to turn the transistor ON which results in a steady flow of current. They are either ON or OFF which accounts for their usefulness in computers as carriers of binary logic (0 or 1). It seemed to me that there was an "energy hill" within my own mind and body... sometimes quite difficult to get my brain turned on! Operational amplifiers were especially interesting to me. The phenomenon of 'voltage clipping' (the mathematical result of combinations of input and feedback resistors) seemed especially appropriate to my bipolar condition. How to regulate the peaks and



valleys of my mood and energy swings—without the use of drugs— so as to produce a more predictable and reasonable output? Meditation practice coupled with a few yoga postures I had learned did help quite a bit with this, but the problem of energy fluctuations still remained at times quite challenging. I was able to keep focused enough to make straight A's in the 2 year program, and was rewarded with a pretty good job at The Christ Hospital's clinical engineering department upon my graduation in June of 1985.

During this period of living at Walter's house and returning to school, I did spend a good deal of my time not only studying electronics and computers but also learning how to meditate. Particularly during the holidays and school breaks, I had more time to read and explore the different feeling of, for example, repetition of the Jesus prayer ('Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me' was the form that I sometimes used) and breath counting or Zen meditation as described previously. I was just beginning to realize the energy variations of opening one's heart chakra in the devotional practice of the Jesus prayer compared to the mind calming effects of concentration on the sensation of breathing (emptying the mind, calming the emotions in the here and now). It was not an easy transition for me to the study of Zen, but I felt it was a good path for me to take! There was one psalm that I referred to—and often prayed—that put my mind at ease with regards to my adventure into Buddhist teachings and the practice of Zen:

“O Lord, you search me and you know me,  
You know my resting and my rising,  
You discern my purpose from afar.  
You mark when I walk or lie down,  
All my ways lie open to you...

Behind and before you besiege me,  
your hand ever laid upon me.  
Too wonderful for me, this knowledge,  
Too high, beyond my reach.

O where can I go from your spirit,  
Or where can I flee from your face?  
If I climb the heavens, you are there.  
If I lie in the grave, you are there.

If I take the wings of the dawn  
And dwell at the sea's furthest end,  
Even there your hand would lead me,  
Your right hand would hold me fast.”

Psalm 139, from the book of Psalms  
Used by the Trappist Monks of Genesee Abbey

During the time of Jesus' life on earth, there were many conservative Jews who could not accept his going beyond the conventional boundaries of their fixed belief. Today, we find there are many conservative Christians who cannot accept the notion of Christian-Buddhist dialogue, or the possibility that Jesus and Buddha might be friends. I found the following quote from John's gospel to be helpful to me as I struggled with the question of Biblical truth and the uniqueness of Jesus' as Lord and Savior. "I solemnly declare it, before Abraham came to be, I AM." —Jn 8:57 This I AM which Jesus refers to is beyond the boundaries of time and space. This is the same I AM, I came to believe, that the Buddhist enlightenment experience (sometimes referred to as satori) represents. The I AM can be understood as cosmic consciousness, the ISNESS of universal life, or the ground of our being. Similarly, when Jesus said to Thomas, "I AM the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me" I felt intuitively the Way that Jesus refers to is ultimately a Way of love, of healing service to humanity, and self-surrender. The way of the gentle Christ love—without judgment or condemnation. This kind of interpretation is much more appealing to me, more inclusive of other spiritual traditions and enlightened teachers than a more literal interpretation as defined by conservative Christians. Later in my life, I found White Eagles view of this scriptural passage as one that points beyond the person of Jesus to the cosmic Christ of universal love speaking and manifesting through him. "The mission of Jesus was to bring to humanity the teaching of love, because all human development, and the development of the earth itself, is based on that common denominator, love... love is the fulfilling of the law, love in man's heart is his saving grace\*."

The question naturally occurred to me, why Zen? Why study Buddhism at all? Is not the Jesus Prayer adequate for healing? Why didn't Jesus heal my bipolar disorder right then and there, back in the early 1980's when I was studying the Bible and praying so fervently? I have no doubt that Jesus could have healed my disorder at any time, for example in 1977 when I had my first profound spiritual experience with Jesus and what I believed to be the Christ consciousness. I often prayed to the Lord Jesus for healing. But it was not God's will for me to be cured in this direct way. This is what I honestly believe today. My difficult karma was meant to bring me eventually to the East, to learn greater wisdom and self-discipline ('right effort' as taught by the Lord Buddha), accepting the gift of increased self-awareness, realizing my need for balance

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\* The interested reader will find more of White Eagle's interpretation of this verse on p:124 of the 1979 edition of The Living Word of St. John.

between the inner, devotional life and the outer life in the world, taking more responsibility for my health and doing all that I can to alleviate the pain of my condition. Not only my practice of meditation but also a few years later (1986) taking up Tai Chi Chuan and the study of Taoism has been a very real help in eventually coming to peace with the natural order of things as they are. Yet even with all of this study and personal effort, grace (help from above) was definitely needed in order for me to overcome the extremes of the disorder! This is where the White Eagle absent (or distance) healing comes in, transmitting the golden rays of the Sun of God through the loving hearts and minds of the healers, with the assistance of healing Angels\*. So too I believe the Master Jesus is involved with this healing, as I have continued to this day the use of frequent prayers, affirmations and communion meditations with him.

As a fitting close to this chapter, I would like to add a White Eagle quote which speaks to my heart:

*“Do not think of God as a Universal Power without intelligence or love or personality. God still takes form among you, and you must look for Him—Her in form everywhere in your life. Seek and you will find. He—She comes to you specially in the forms of the Illumined Ones, the Elder Brethren, and in the form of the Golden One. God has created you, man and woman, in His—Her own image and possessed of infinite possibilities.”*

— Golden Harvest p:54

For additional White Eagle sayings, and relief of stress and anxiety, please see <http://www.whiteaglelodge.org/sayings/index.html>

### **About the Author**

Jay Busemeyer is certified as a Stress Management trainer. He currently teaches Stress Management , Guided Meditation, and Tai Chi Chuan classes in Cincinnati, Ohio and at Park Hills in Northern Ky (about 15 minutes from downtown Cincinnati). Please feel free to contact him with any questions about bipolar disorder, about this book or classes via email at [jaybus3@netzero.net](mailto:jaybus3@netzero.net)  
Thank You and may God bless!

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\* For more information about the healing work of the White Eagle Lodge, please visit their web site at: <http://www.whiteaglelodge.org/healing.html>

# APPENDIX A

## The Heart Sutra

As chanted by the members of Zen Shin Sangha,  
The Cleveland Buddhist Temple

“Avalokitesvara, The Bodhisattva of compassion, doing deep prajna paramita, Clearly saw that the five skandhas are sunyata, thus transcending misfortune and suffering. O Sariputra, form is no other than sunyata<sup>\*</sup>, sunyata is no other than form. Form is exactly sunyata, sunyata exactly form. Feeling, thought, volition and consciousness are likewise like this. O Sariputra, remember dharma is fundamentally sunyata. No birth, no death, nothing is defiled, nothing is pure, nothing can increase, nothing can decrease. Hence: in sunyata, no form, no feeling, no thought, no volition, no consciousness; no eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind, no seeing, no hearing, no smelling, no tasting, no touching, no thinking; no world of sight, no world of consciousness; no ignorance and no end to ignorance; no old age and death and no end to old age and death. No suffering, no craving, no extinction, no path, no wisdom, no attainment.

Indeed, there is nothing to be attained; the bodhisattva relies on prajna paramita with no hindrance in the mind. No hindrance, therefore no fear. Far beyond upside down views, at last nirvana. Past, present and future, all buddhas, bodhisattvas, rely on prajna paramita and therefore reach the most supreme enlightenment. Therefore know: prajna paramita is the greatest dharani, the brightest dharani, the highest dharani, the incomparable dharani. It completely clears all suffering. This is the truth, not a lie. So set forth the prajna paramita dharani. Set forth this dharani and say: Gate Gate Para Gate Para Sam Gate, Bodhisvaha. Heart Sutra.”

Many people who read this book may be totally unfamiliar with Buddhism and the unconventional language of the Heart Sutra. The core notion of sunyata (emptiness) implies that ‘no person or thing ‘ exists independently. Our perceptions may be such that there is multiplicity in the world we live in, and in our senses, and in good, better and best among our choices but within this multiplicity there is a more fundamental unity which contains everything and nothing. There *is* interdependence and causation in Mahayana Buddhist thought, but not any abiding reality in the conventional perception of the independent existence of people, places and things.

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<sup>\*</sup> Japanese term translates as emptiness

I was introduced to the Heart Sutra while living in Cleveland, Ohio and attending the weekly meditation service held by the Zen Shin Sangha during the years 1990 – 1993. We chanted the sutra after periods of sitting and walking meditation. I found it to be helpful for me in letting go of some of my bipolar tendencies, habits of clinging to thoughts and ideas which were exciting to me but later evaporated with my changing mood and energy swings.