

## The Adventure and Wonder of Transformation *Reflections on the Peyote Road and ITP*

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There are many ways to achieve transformation. Linda and I met in 1967, the Summer of Love. A huge shift and transformation of the social paradigm was occurring. This shift involved creative expression, art, music, dress, grooming, sexual freedom, civil rights, anti-war politics, Eastern spirituality, yoga, meditation, marijuana and psychedelics. As young, healthy and curious college students, Linda and I tuned into the Zeitgeist – the spirit of the times.

I happenstance secured some mescaline which I ingested while doing yoga and breathing exercises. I was totally unprepared for what occurred. Suddenly and unexpectedly a bolt of lightning coursed up my spine and ignited a thermonuclear explosion. The simultaneous ignition of every atomic bomb on the planet would have been a hummingbird's whisper compared to the magnitude of that explosion.

I experienced the Big Bang. I was instantaneously transported 13.8 billion years to the moment of creation – the center point of all consciousness – peace, radiance and ecstatic wonder beyond comprehension. My ego was totally annihilated. While experiencing eternal boundlessness unity beyond time and space, I had a profound knowing, "I always was, I always am and I always will be." Forty-five years later, this experience has been one of the most influential experiences of my lifetime. My understanding of reality was totally and permanently transformed. We are limited human beings on the planet Earth, and paradoxically we are the Universe.

As a young attorney, I was determined to stay within the bounds of the law. I was aware that mescaline was the psychoactive compound in Peyote. I learned there was a tradition of Indians coming to Texas near Laredo annually putting up a tipi and having a Peyote prayer service. Linda and I made our own pilgrimage to this annual meeting place and met the Indian elders. We bonded on deep levels with these remarkable Indians, who were the grandsons and granddaughters of the fabled horse riding Indian warriors of the Southern Plains, the Comanche, Apache, Kiowa, Cheyenne and Arapaho. These tribes, along with other Indian tribes, were decimated, conquered, removed from Indian country and restricted to reservations in Oklahoma, where they established the Native American Church (NAC) in 1918. The NAC uses Peyote as a sacrament.



Jerry & Linda Patchen at Peyote meeting 1970

Thus, Linda and I began an adventurous odyssey of over four decades of attending Native American Church meetings throughout Indian country. The beauty and wonder of a Peyote meeting cannot be adequately described. We experienced unimaginable visions, and became steeped in the cosmology of Indian people. Simultaneously, I provided pro bono legal representation to the Native American Church on behalf American Indians to secure and protect their rights to religious freedom to use Peyote. I served as an Officer in the NAC, and represented individuals charged in various states with possession of Peyote, winning every case. I also represented the Peyote dealers in Texas, who are licensed by the Texas DPS and DEA to dispense Peyote to Indians.

In a shocking decision in 1990, the US Supreme Court overruled a well-established precedent, and held that the states could prohibit Indians from using their sacrament Peyote. The Supreme Court effectively ruled that police power is superior to religious freedom. A dark cloud hung over the continued use of Peyote by the NAC. I created the strategy of petitioning the US Congress to enact the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and to amend the American Indian Religious Freedom Act to ensure continued religious use of Peyote by the NAC. Working with Senator Inouye, I provided vital support at a critical time from Texas DPS and the Texas Attorney General's Office that overcame the concern of various Senators that the use of Peyote could not be effectively regulated. For my efforts, on behalf of Native American Indians, I was awarded the distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award by the State Bar of Texas in 2005.



Jerry & Linda Patchen at ITP Slient  
Meditation Retreat 2016

In addition to our own unique journey, there are many paths to transformation. Countless individuals have experienced dramatic positive shifts in their being and consciousness through psychedelics. However, there are many more individuals who experience transformation through other means such as religious devotion, meditation, love, selfless service, nature, vision quest, fasting, aikido, yoga, expressive arts, focused vocation, right livelihood and Divine Grace to name a few.

Although I continue to represent the NAC, over a decade ago Linda and I searched for greater context and understanding of our visions and life's meaning. Synchronistically, we were introduced to ITP. In the practice of ITP, we experienced a quantum leap in our transformative process. ITP has fostered extraordinary levels of love, joy and appreciation within ourselves individually, in our relationship and with others, while enhancing our peace, balance, vitality and health. The ITP community has been a well-spring of support, strength, purpose and inspiration. We embrace change in our life with a high level of confidence in the wisdom of the Universe. We have immense gratitude for the ITP path of transformation and conscious evolution. Through ITP, the road goes on forever and the journey of adventure and wonder never ends.