

Author: Tom Beaver
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1901-1920: Early Experiences

It seems commonly to be the case that childhood spiritual and/or psychic experiences, if dramatic enough, are not only remembered into adulthood, but set a person off on a life-long spiritual journey. This was the case for John, who when he was in his '70s and '80s spoke of two such experiences.

John had an early personal spiritual experience, at around 9 years of age circa 1910—a vision where he held onto the feet of Jesus and was pulled up into the cosmos, and of Jesus telling him, “I will always be with you.”

John also had an experience at age 17 (in 1918) of being given up for dead due to the Spanish Flu; he survived the night and dedicated his life to the service of God.

The 1920s: Adventism and Nikola Tesla

John's mother Della was a kind of seeker herself. She was religious, but as John remembers it, she wasn't dogmatic about it. Born a Mennonite, she practiced the Methodist faith and its camp revivalism when John was a boy. John was evidently religious as a boy—his mother thought he'd be a preacher. Then, when John was a teen, Della converted to Seventh-day Adventism. By 1930, she'd left Adventism, and that year she even went to a fortuneteller. But soon after she settled in for the rest of her life in the Baptist Church.

Like his mother, John as a teen was a follower of Seventh-day Adventism, and in the mid-1920s he attended (and graduated from) its Emmanuel Missionary College, in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Adventism at the time was directed by the visionary experiences of its recently deceased leader Ellen G. White. White had been part of the apocalyptic Millerite Movement as a girl; then over the rest of her life (she died in 1915) she received a series of visionary prophecies which she wrote down into several books as the foundation of the Adventist Church. Her ongoing visions spoke not only of the imminent end of the world and 'second coming,' but of a myriad of things including healthy living and vegetarianism. As for John, it was at Emmanuel College that he met his soon-to-be wife, Rhea. Rhea had been raised in a Seventh-day Adventist family, but she herself was ambivalent about it, and only reluctantly accepted baptism into the church at John's urging. By 1928 John himself had left the Church because, John later said, of its fundamentalist tendencies.

Also, during these years John was reading about the experimental physicist (and the actual inventor of radio) Nikola Tesla, the writings of whom he later in life called “our Bible.” Many of Tesla's words in the early years of the 20th century were given out in extensive magazine articles, which John most likely read. These interviews included personal anecdotes by Tesla of his seemingly psychic abilities (they were interpreted as psychic by Henry Ford, who attempted to partner with Tesla in parapsychological research). In 1986 Fetzer said about himself in this time period, “As I experimented and studied more of Tesla's work, I recognized that there are energy wave forms in the

physical world. And I began to wonder if there were other, more subtle wave forms that we can't see with our eyes." And so, it seems that Tesla led Fetzner to start thinking about a connection between science and metaphysics, a connection that took on more and more importance to Fetzner as his life went on.

The 1930s: The Journey Continues into Spiritualism, Freemasonry, and Astrology

We have second-hand testimony (from Judy Skutch-Whitson) that John's interest in Spiritualism may have been triggered by the loss of his 'first love' in the WWI- era Spanish Flu Epidemic, with John subsequently contacting her through a medium. It is certainly the case that Spiritualism flourished in the USA during and after WWI, with people flocking to its visionary mediums in search of lost loved ones who vanished due to war or the flu epidemic. Perhaps it was a lost love that sparked John's interest in Spiritualism, but we have no first hand record from John confirming this; or perhaps he simply was comfortable with the notion of taking direction from contemporary visionaries because of Ellen G. White; or perhaps he was seeking to make contact with his father who had died when he was two years old (we know of several documented Spiritualist-contacts with his father through the years). However this may have been, by 1934 at the latest, he was visiting Camp Chesterfield, an Indiana Spiritualist Camp northeast of Indianapolis and just 80 miles south of John's birthplace, Decatur, Indiana. John consulted with the mediums there numerous times over the next 30 years, including for help on his two genealogy books in the later '50s and '60s. John would go to a couple of particularly trusted mediums, Charlie Swann, and Lilian Dee Johnson, when he reached dead-ends in his genealogical work. John told me that the medium would put him back on track, directing him to the proper cemetery, etc., to continue his family search. John lists these Camp Chesterfield mediums in the Acknowledgments page his genealogy book, *One Man's Family*. John also received 'Spirit photos' of ancestors from Swann that he confidently used in his genealogy books. John also said that, from the 1940s on, each time he would go visit Camp Chesterfield he also would bring home 3-4 metaphysical books from their book store—that this was his source of metaphysical books in the early days. Rhea Fetzner mentioned Chesterfield trips by John multiple times in her diary, although according to John she did not ever go there with him. John's interest in spiritualism carried through the mid 1970s when John twice made contact with his deceased mother (Della died in 1958) and father, and this not only with Chesterfield mediums but also during personal séance sessions in London with Ena Twigg, a world-famous medium who was known for solving the famous Bishop Pike case, and whose client book reportedly included Churchill, FDR, and De Gaulle.

In terms of Freemasonry, John became a Master (3rd Degree) Mason (Scottish Rite) in 1934, and stayed active and progressed through its degrees at least through 1969, when he which reached the pinnacle of the Masonic Order, the 33rd Degree. Freemasonic teachings regarding the roles of the conscious and subconscious minds are central to John's 1967 essay, "This I Believe," as well as to his 1971 writing, "America's Agony." In 1981, a sketch drawn by Jim Gordon, which was serendipitously passed along to John and which John recognized and was struck by, thus leading to John's meeting Jim, featured Masonic symbols. Jim Gordon said that John had been "seeing" the symbols from the sketch, which was a symbolic drawing representing the Archangel Michael, and thus when John saw the sketch he recognized the symbols at a deep level.

In addition, in 1938 John went to an astrologer in Washington D.C. ("everyone on the Hill was seeing her," John said) who predicted a highly unlikely and quick victory for John in his "590 Case," his quest for a 24-hour radio license from the FCC which had been dragging on in the halls of

Washington at that time for five years, and which seemed by 1938 to be sliding into failure for John. This prediction came true, and John said late in his life that this occurrence was one of the things that made him take serious notice of parapsychology.

The '40s and '50s: Rhea Joins in with Adventures with Fortunetellers, Mediums, UFO's

In the later 1940s, Rhea's diary indicates several visits by both John and Rhea to fortunetellers, including one in 1952, for advice when John was thinking of selling WKZO Radio. As late as 1948, John visited the same Washington D.C. astrologer who had given him the 590 Case prediction. And also in 1948, there was a successful table-tapping séance at the Fetzer house attended by Rhea and John's older sister, Hattie.

John told me that in 1944-45, as Assistant Director of Censorship for Broadcasting, he saw reports of Nazi 'foo-fighters'—that is, UFOs—interfering with Allied planes in their bombing runs over Germany. This triggered a lifelong interest in UFOs in John. In 1974 he gave a speech at the Kalamazoo Outlook Club entitled, "The Flying Saucer Hoax," which was actually a speech laying out his belief in the phenomenon. And in 1977, he arranged to meet with the former head of the 1950s and '60s Project Bluebook, Dr. J. Allen Hynek, who by that time was saying, even publicly, that the project had been a cover-up and that UFOs were real.

The '50s and '60s: Dowsing, *Masters of the Far East*

John successfully dowsed the deep-well water on his Tucson ranch shortly after he bought it in the 1955, and as late as 1961 there is correspondence between a national dowser's organization and John (and with Rhea as well). In the early 1980s John had dowsing demonstrated to his "Monday Night Group" (additionally showing that the effects of dowsing were increased if one was holding onto a crystal).

John was fascinated by a work entitled, *Masters of the Far East*. This work, a multi-volume book series published one volume at a time from the 1920s through the 1950s, tells the purportedly autobiographical story of the journey of a self-professed mining engineer, Baird Spaulding, to Tibet to meet and associate with Tibetan and Theosophical Masters. This work was thoroughly studied by John (almost every word of every volume is underlined by him) because of the author's supposed engineering background, as well as the work's scientific-like content. *Masters of the Far East* is extensively quoted in John's 1973 "Preamble to the Fetzer Foundation"—in fact the whole Preamble is based on the work.

The '60s and '70s: Theosophy, the Ouija Board, "This I Believe," Jean Dixon

As for Theosophy, John owned and read the multi-volume works of Alice Bailey. Theosophy's strong influence (as well as that of Freemasonry) can be seen in John's 1967 speech/essay, "This I Believe," plus in his 1973 "Preamble to the Fetzer Foundation," as well as in his 1971 "American's Agony." In each of these writings, the Theosophical (Blavatsky) notion of a "Central Spiritual Sun" is pre-eminent.

John's use of the Ouija board may well have begun in earlier decades, but in the '60s he would operate the Ouija board with his WKZO secretary at the time who, according to testimony, was talented at it. John also used the Ouija Board while doing genealogy research in Germany in the mid-'60s. When he reached an impasse because Fetzer records seemed lost due to a centuries' earlier church fire, John got out his Ouija board that he had taken with him on his trip. It correctly informed him that the records had been moved to a different church in another city. Later, Carolyn Dailey reported, she and John also used the Ouija Board together in the 1970s to trace an ancient Egyptian past life where the two were close friends.

In 1967, John wrote a speech entitled, "This I Believe," which foreshadows both his 1971 "America's Agony" and his 1973 "Preamble to the Fetzer Foundation." Here are just a few passages from the speech, showing Theosophical and Masonic influences, as well as Tesla's influence regarding Spirit as energy in a scientific-like context.

I am not addicted to church activity, although I have had exposure to strong fundamental religious teaching ... it is my view that there is a crying need, the world over, for a new concept concerning the extra-terrestrial order of things in relation to individual spiritual needs ...

The physical man is an intricate electronic device with a set of transistor-like cells built in from head to toe. ... Each and every one of them vibrates with cosmic energy and is a permanently adjusted miniature receiver of electronic wave-forms from [the] Central Source — the Universal Mind ... the subconscious mind of man is in complete attunement with and has every attribute of the Universal Mind at all times. ... The conscious mind is your center of control. ... The single most important event in the life of the individual ... is to develop an awareness of this relationship between the two minds. ... Look within to see God's presence.

In the late 1960s John and Rhea befriended Jean Dixon, the famous psychic who had tried to forewarn JFK of his assassination peril, and who had also advised FDR in the White House several times later in his presidency. When in 1969 John received the National Association of Broadcasters Distinguished Service Award, the highest award of the broadcasting industry, Mrs. Dixon and her husband were John's guests of honor at the award dinner. Their friendship eventually dissipated when (we speculate) Ms. Dixon pressed her idea with the broadcasting industry for the creation of a multi-million-dollar foundation to help children around the world.

The Early '70s: Parapsychology

Judy Skutch-Whitson introduced John to famous psychic Uri Geller; parapsychological researcher Andrija Puharich (Judy also said she introduced John to Hal Puthoff, head of the SRI/CIA Remote Viewing Project, but Hal denies ever meeting John); as well as to J. Allen Hynek of Project Blue Book, who told John that UFO's are in fact real. John expressed a sincere desire to be taken up by a UFO. John and Judy also discussed the channeled *Urantia Book* together.

In 1973 Fetzer met Apollo astronaut Edgar Mitchell, and John soon joined Mitchell's Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS) Board, which he continued on for about three years. According to Mitchell, John wanted Noetics to prove to the world the existence of life after death, and John was frustrated by IONS' seeming (to John) slow pace of research.

In 1973 John led the Fetzer Board to pass a resolution stating that The Fetzer Foundation would support research in parapsychology. He wrote to one of the board members at the time, "I

have conferred with many outstanding scientists throughout the country that are attached to certain universities and foundations that are instituting studies in the field of human psychology; some call it parapsychology. As you know for some years I have had an interest in that subject. I have decided this will be a major undertaking of the John E. Fetzer Foundation.” John next traveled to England and Germany in the summer of 1974, meeting various parapsychology researchers there.

Again in 1973, John wrote an extensive “Preamble to the Fetzer Foundation,” which made detailed references to the Theosophically influenced book, *Masters of the Far East*, including:

Millions of light years from our universe is a spheroidal nucleus, originally established as an Alpha Electromagnetic Field. ... man is transistorized from head to toe, [so] that he can receive these high frequency wave forms, amplify or regenerate them thousands of times over from their original frequency and retransmit them, similarly to that which is done through the retransmission of microwaves in our known forms of electronics.

Throughout these five volumes [of *Masters of the Far East*] there have been many references on extrasensory perception ... Judging from various comments concerning the white Light transmission, it suggests some of the forms of transmission are sent out as beams of Light as a carrier wave. By using amplitude modulation through the mind, wave forms are modulated into intelligible characters of transmission.

Also in 1973, John wrote to colleges and universities both in the USA and Europe, enquiring about their interest in parapsychology research and courses. Locally, Kalamazoo College and Nazareth College both responded affirmatively, and John pursued possible joint activities with both. It is through the Nazareth contact that John met Jim Keating, a teacher of a course in parapsychology at the time, who eventually introduced John to the Les Initiates metaphysical group and to their leader, psychic Ken Killick (who became John’s personal psychic for a few years in the late ‘70s). Also out of this group of people came Lloyd Swierenga and Cleora Daily, and through Cleora, her husband at the time, Chuck Spence. In the first half of the 1970s, as well, John and Rhea traveled to Japan and to Europe to meet with university academics who were conducting research in parapsychology (in one case, the German Government was supporting some of the research).

In 1974 John submitted to an interview with *Psychic Magazine*, in their “Business Issue.” In the interview John talked about using his intuition, that is, his inner voice, to make business decisions. “Success is a thing that I’ve always taken for granted, and I should suspect it’s because I do trust intuition, to the point that I don’t make enough wrong decisions to undermine a successful rhythm.” The article goes on to state that, “Although he admits to not practicing it personally, Fetzer thinks meditation is a valuable means of achieving personal growth...” (Within the year Fetzer would test this hypothesis for himself.).

The Mid-to-later ‘70s: The Fetzer Journey Begins to Turn Inward

Both John and Rhea were initiated into TM in 1975, as was Carolyn Dailey and several of the Detroit Tigers, including Hall of Famer Bill Freehan and Manager Ralph Houk (1968 World Series MVP Mickey Lolich also attended a TM ‘intro’). TM was prominently mentioned in Rhea’s diary from early 1975 through the end of ‘77, and, according to John, Rhea continued the practice past that time period as well. In 1975, John personally met with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, who urged John to take TM into the inner circles of Washington DC. John advised the TM organization on television matters,

both in Los Angeles and on a trip in 1977 to TM headquarters in Switzerland. Thus John was regularly meditating at least as early as 1974.

In 1975 Judy Skutch-Whitson brought to John *A Course in Miracles*, introducing to John the philosophy of “non-dualism” (that the material world doesn’t really exist, is a dream, etc.). John studied *The Course* deeply for the next 5-6 years, and its philosophy became a prominent part of his worldview for the rest of his life. John also made it a particular point to meet and befriend the “scribe,” or channeler, of *The Course*, Helen Schucman.

In the later 1970s, John and Carolyn Dailey were taken through the Silva Mind Control course by Sister Elizabeth Reis of Nazareth College (who was later a member of “The Monday Night Group”). The Silva course, popular in the USA at the time, involves psychic development and ‘remote viewing,’ as well as spiritual diagnosis and healing. In the 1980s John had “The Monday Night Group” take the Silva course as well.

In the later ‘70s, Jim Keating (a Nazareth College professor who was teaching a parapsychology course there and who was a Fetzer board member in the ‘70s) introduced John to Ken Killick and Lloyd Swierenga, both of whom were members of the Canadian-based mystical organization “Les Initiates.” Killick was the group’s ‘guru’ and Swierenga was the head of its Michigan branch (headquartered in the Kalamazoo area). Les Initiates’ main interest was working with spiritual ‘ley and grid lines’ to ‘heal the planet.” Killick became John’s close ‘psychic advisor’ in the late 1970s, advising John in many areas from John’s health to his investments to his baseball dealings. This relationship continued for approximately four years, until several pieces of less-than-accurate information caused John to cut ties with Killick by mid-1981. It is notable that Killick introduced Lloyd Swierenga (mid-80s Fetzer Executive VP) to John, as well as Cleora Daily (‘80s era “Monday Night Group” member whose husband, Chuck Spence, became the very first Fetzer Foundation head). Other members of this group were Mary and Dean Hardy of Allegan, Michigan. Killick and the Hardys were deeply interested in ‘pyramid power’ and wrote a book together about it, as well as building two small pyramids on their property, which John Fetzer visited several times, meditating inside the larger of their pyramids. The Hardys also had a significant UFO experience, a ‘close encounter’ type experience that supposedly affected one of their son’s mental state for the rest of his life.

Looking for a dramatic direct spiritual experience, John took LSD in a controlled (and legal) medical environment in Tucson. The experience was reportedly dramatic for him, but also disturbing—and he never repeated it.

The Early 1980s: Reincarnation, and John meets Jim Gordon

In a tape-recorded interview in 1982 for a possible biography, John detailed his philosophy of a group of people reincarnating together again and again, including John, to try to accomplish a spiritual goal in the world. John’s own various past lives (as John believed them to be) became the “Hall of Records,” a circle of busts at the Fetzer Institute in the later 1980s (the Hall of Records was dismantled in the 1990s).

After a serendipitous meeting with John (mentioned earlier), in which Jim gave John some accurate and timely psychic medical advice, Jim Gordon began channeling the Theosophical Great

White Brotherhood Masters for John; John's "Monday Night Group" of advisors (which included Mike Gergely, Carolyn Dailey, Bruce Fetzer, Cleora Daily, Sister Elizabeth Reis, Chuck Spence, Rhea's personal doctor, Margaret Zolan, and her husband Frank Henry); and by 1985, for the Fetzer Foundation executive "Core Group" (Lloyd Swierenga, Chuck Spence, Bruce Fetzer, Carolyn Dailey), thereby boosting the global spiritual importance in John's mind of the Fetzer Mission and the Fetzer Foundation by focusing it on the healing of illnesses. After 1985 these channeling sessions became private affairs for John only, but they continued until his death (the private sessions often consisted of past life information on John's employees and cohorts).

10. The mid 1980s until John's death in early 1991: "Surat Shabd yoga" meditation practice, laying out his spiritual charge to the Fetzer Board, Jim Gordon Part Two (MSIA).

On a spring 1983 trip to Egypt, Jim Gordon met John-Roger (J-R), head of MSIA (Movement for Spiritual Inner Awareness), which teaches "Surat Shabd yoga," originally an ancient Northern Indian and Persian meditation practice involving 'Sound and Light.' Jim was initiated into the practice by J-R, and by 1985 John was initiated into the movement. John was dedicated to this meditation practice for the rest of his life. An adjunct to MSIA was the "Insight Transformational Workshops" of personal/spiritual growth, two of which John enthusiastically took, as did some of the employees at the Fetzer Foundation at that time.

As far as the Foundation/Institute goes, in 1989, John wrote his "Final Principles" which strongly encouraged his board to engage together in spiritual practice (the writing was so esoteric in nature, based as it was upon Theosophical, Masonic and MSIA principles, that it was not well understood). He also put forward this notion to the whole Fetzer Institute staff in the November 1990 dedication ceremony for the "Fetzer Hologram," which took place shortly before he left for Hawaii, where he died three months later.