

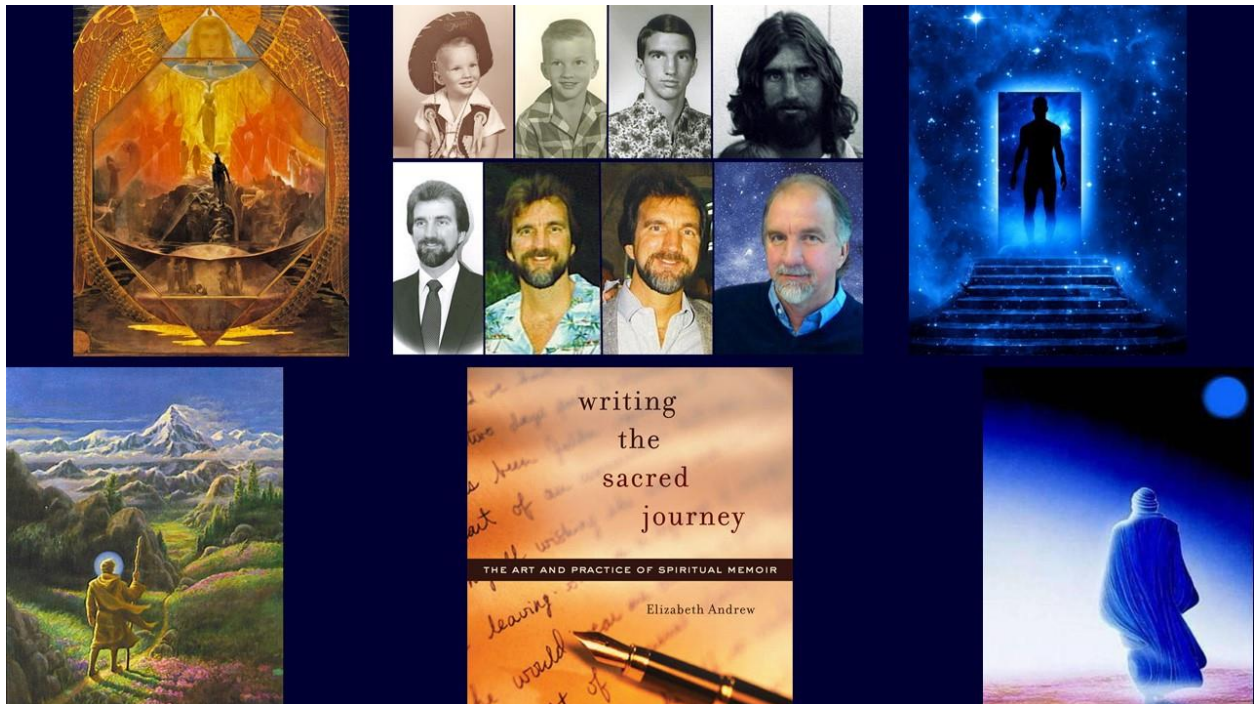
In another of my tributes (My Favorite Philosophers) on Michael's Tribute page, I mentioned that I had *hiked* up to Franklin Merrell-Wolff's ashram. Well, in truth, "*hiked*" was a euphemism. It was one of the most challenging, compelling, and instructive physical and spiritual experiences of my life.

Hiking up to the ashram together is something Michael and I discussed many times. Michael would drive from his daughter's (Heidi's) home in Pasadena up highway #395 (through central California) past Lone Pine on his way to see Mat (his younger son) in Colorado. He would always think of Dr. Wolff and me, and I would always tell Michael we should hike up to his ashram someday. Well, we never made it up there together.

So, as we embark upon this ashramic adventure, "*en(in)-vision*" Michael "*ridin' shotgun*" with me.

This adventure is lifted right out of my esoteric memoir. In my memoir, my name is Justin Case, and my esoteric life story is being told by two narrators.

The following introductory images are from various parts of my memoir:



Please do not reveal any of the true identities that you may know. If this memoir is ever published, I may expunge all indicative dates as well. I want the **message** to be **revealed**, but I want the identity of the **messenger** (and all 'civilians') to remain **concealed**.

I have used original photos when available, but since we took so few pictures in the '60s-'90s (before the convenience of cell phone cameras), when necessary, I have used internet "stand-ins" to represent the actual people and places. Some of the images are GIFs/animated images, but do not 'move' when inserted into this Word doc. ☹

This process has been like the life-review that we experience after each incarnation—all the highs, all the lows, and 'all' the stuff that nobody knows. As the Chinese Sages say: 'Know ten things, tell nine.'

Words of Wisdom

An Esoteric Memoir

or

The Legend of Justin Case

Words of Wisdom

An Esoteric Memoir

or

The Legend of Justin Case

Prologue

*Someone, somewhere, sometime ago
His eyes were clear to see,
He put his thoughts into my mind,
And gave myself to me.*

“Slip Inside This House”

Tommy Hall

* * *

From Kenneth Ring, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, University of Connecticut, NDE researcher, and author

Robert, I read your memoir this week. It is one of those books people describe in complimentary terms as “compulsively readable.” There were times when I felt I needed to do other things, but I found myself continuing to read your story. Which I found entertaining, edifying, sad, poignant, gripping and often wondrous. Overall it was certainly impressive, and very well written. So, all in all, I thoroughly enjoyed the ride and learning about your life of high adventure, low points, and dedication to your dharma. Your memoir is a sort of a spiritual picaresque, I suppose you could say, though you are more a woman-besotted rascal than a rogue.

There were many points and passages in your story I could identify with. I became interested in many of the same subjects and read many of the books you did around the same time that you began your initial explorations except I was already in mid-thirties by then and well into my academic career. So our trajectories were certainly different, but not so different that I couldn't relate to and resonate to your story. I have also had a rich amatory life and have been lovers with quite a few beautiful women, and I, too, have had a Jasmine in my life. In your case, however, you seem to have found yourself with *only* attractive or fetching women, so you must have had a considerable charisma yourself when you were young and then continuing into your prime, and no doubt beyond.

But your real marriage was of course to your esoteric studies, writing, speaking and audio-visual presentations. To that you were a faithful and devoted husband, but what a cost you had to pay for your dedication to your work. The story of your relationship with Madison was almost unbearably sad to read. Fidelity to one's work can extract a high price, and you paid it. I know something about that, too, as I have had a similar dedication to my NDE work.

But then there are also many pleasures to savor in your story, particularly about some of your profound psychedelic experiences and your meetings with remarkable men (and women). So many fascinating characters in your story, Robert. I even came across Ken Ring at the end, though he is neither famous nor fascinating. And I learned a lot about what got you into esoteric studies in the first place as well as how much you have read and absorbed over the years to further your knowledge as well as all the writing you have done. That was really impressive to me!

One thing I liked about your format was the way you were able to tell your story as a kind of an extended dialogue with a sympathetic interlocutor (of course of your own devising) whom I began to call the “Wowser” since he was always expressing his amazement at your risk-taking adventures, both amatory and other.

You are writing not just your story, but an archetypal one of your generation of psychedelically-triggered spiritual seekers, who have now reached “their golden years.” But I still think the number of people who are interested in esoteric studies these days is fairly small, so you might be writing it for your own coterie of friends and fans. And maybe for Madison.

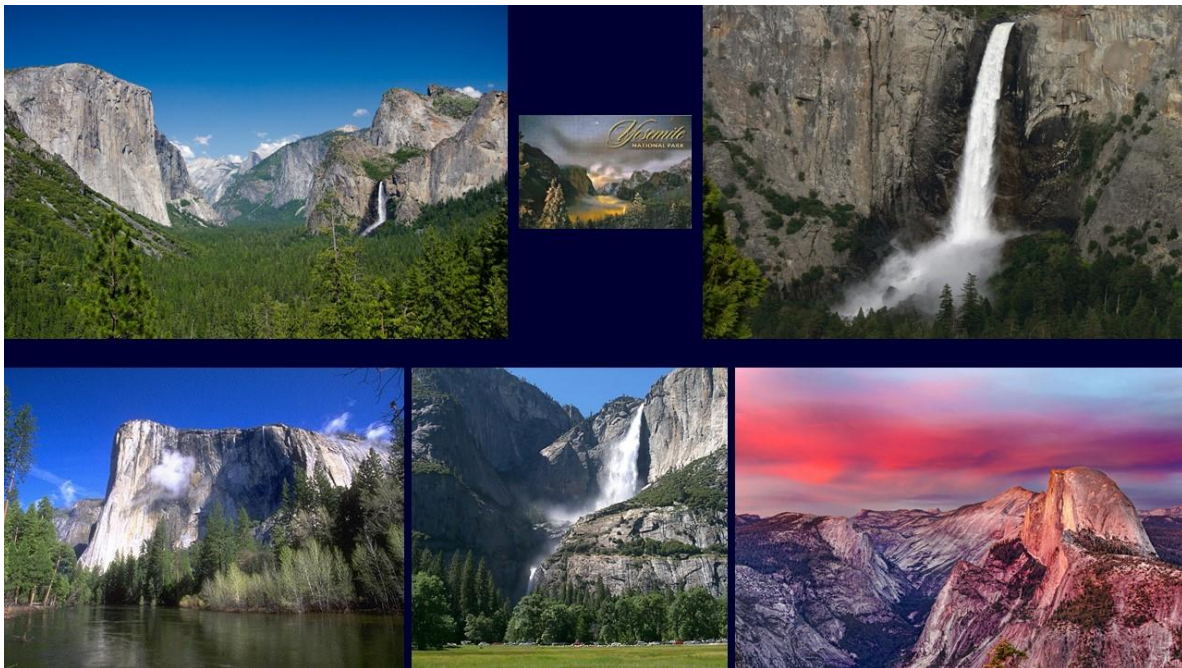
Bottom line: You can write and have a gift for narrative prose. Please take what I have written as encouragement for you to continue to write or maybe do something with this memoir. You have lots of talent as a writer, and since you have spent so much of your life quoting others, perhaps it’s time now to quote yourself.

You are really a prize, Robert — a true *rara avis*. Had I not been so pressed for time today, I would have written more about your book, but I hope I wrote enough to indicate what a pleasure it was to read it and to learn more about your amazing personal story. What you wrote was really riveting and I thank you again for going to all that trouble in order to share it with me.

All the best to you, Robert

Ken

an ashramic adventure



That summer [of 1985] Justin took advantage of his time off from [graduate school] classes, and made a solo trip to Yosemite—his *other* favorite valley on the planet.

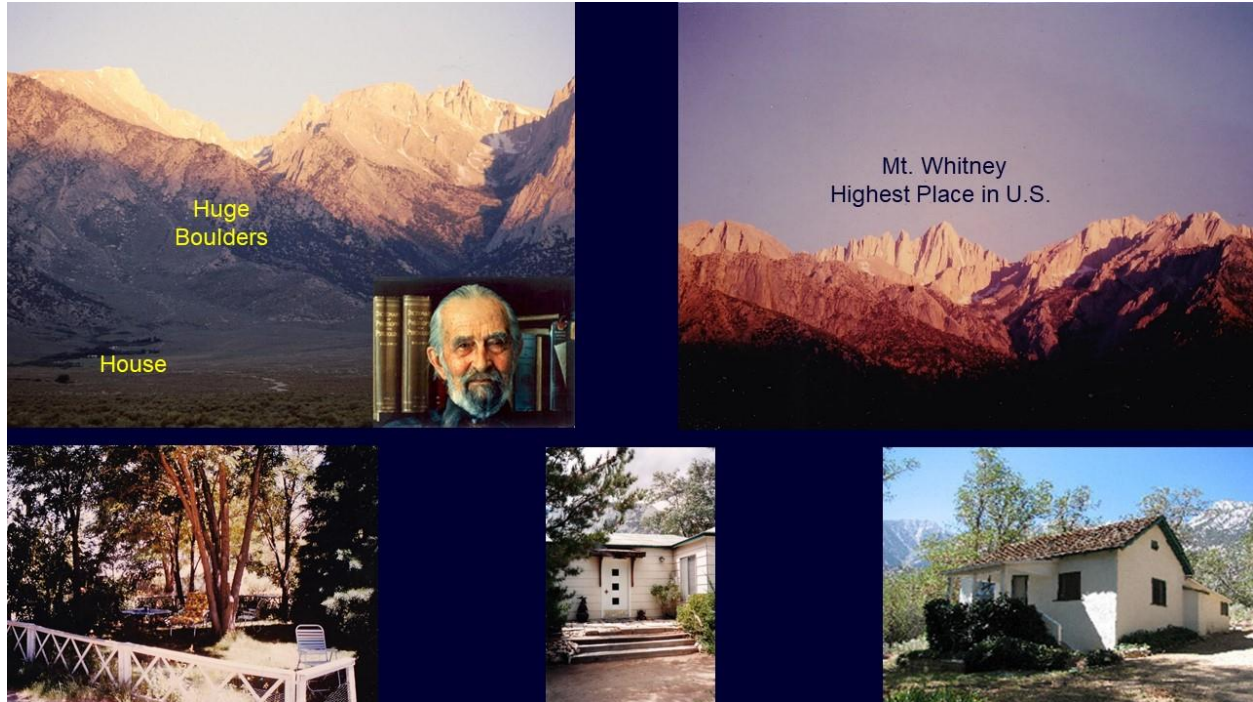
Yes, God definitely smiled on that part of California.



Justin loved John Muir, the great Scottish-American naturalist, activist, and author who played a significant role in the establishment of our National Park system, in general, and in the preservation of Yosemite, in particular. Along with Emerson and Thoreau, Justin thought that Muir was one of the greatest lovers and writers of Nature and Her glorious wonders.

Indeed—as well as being the founder of the Sierra Club, one of the foremost environmental organizations on the planet.

The Illusive Ashram



A little later Justin left the park [Yosemite National Park], and drove to Franklin Merrell-Wolff's house on the other (east) side of the Sierra Mountains for another visit.

Who wouldn't want to spend some more time around one of the greatest philosophers who ever lived?

When Justin arrived at Dr. Wolff's house at about 2 pm on a Saturday afternoon, there were a few cars parked there, but no one answered the door. Justin realized that everyone had gone somewhere.

Oh no. After that long drive, he must have been disappointed.

(not the *real* Lillian and her husband)



Actually, not really. Justin decided this would be a great time to try to search for the stone ashram that Lillian [one of Dr. Wolff's first and now oldest students who also lived on the property] and her husband had told him and Angela about during their visit in 1981. Justin remembered them saying that construction on the ashram had begun somewhere in the mountains above Dr. Wolff's house in 1930. Dr. Wolff and his group of devoted students worked on it every summer for the next 20 years.

Oh, this sounds like fun.

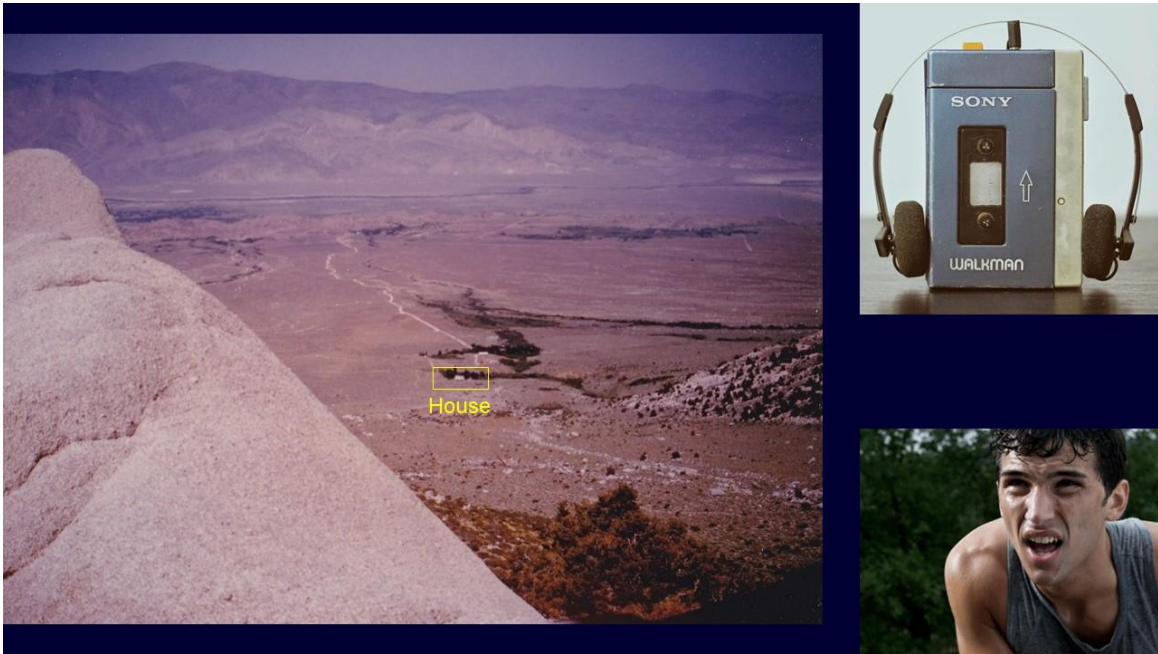
Dr. Wolff's house was situated at about 6000' on the eastern slope of the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. He had intentionally located it near the highest mountain in the country, Mt. Whitney at 14,505'.

I can see why. Sacred mountains are found in the mythology of most cultures.

You're right. This is something Justin would look into later. Anyway, so he is ready to start climbing up to the stone ashram in the foothills above Dr. Wolff's house. The only problem is that Justin had no idea where the ashram was located other than 'up there.'

However, he had noticed an outcropping of huge boulders about 1000' feet or so above Dr. Wolff's house, and he decided that would be a good place to start his search.

So, he was just trusting that he would be 'guided' to the ashram by his logic and intuition.



Yeah, he was pretty much 'flying blind.' Justin was wearing a light daypack and his Sony Walkman (think iPod that plays cassette tapes) clipped to his belt. He began the ascent. It didn't take long for him to realize how out of shape he had grown over the last couple of years as a student and someone with a desk job. He was gasping for breath by the time he reached the large outcrop.

Well, I can see why. He started hiking from over a mile above sea level.



He searched all around the outcrop of huge boulders, but could not locate the ashram. This was very discouraging because this spot had been his best guess as to where it would be located. So, he sat down and evaluated the situation. It was now about 3 pm in July, so he estimated that it would get dark around 8 pm. He figured that however much higher he climbed, he could probably make it back down to Dr. Wolff's house in 2 hours. Therefore, that left him 3 hours to find the ashram.

So, he only has 3 hours to find a stone building located in a mountain range of stone. This doesn't sound too easy.



Really?! While Justin was sitting there, trying to determine what his next step would be, he suddenly remembered having seen a dirt road off to the right of where he had turned left to park in front of Dr. Wolff's house. And that road seemed to lead up the mountains as it ran along the left side of a dry creek (Tuttle Creek), or arroyo. Perhaps that was the way to the ashram.

Sounds like a good plan.



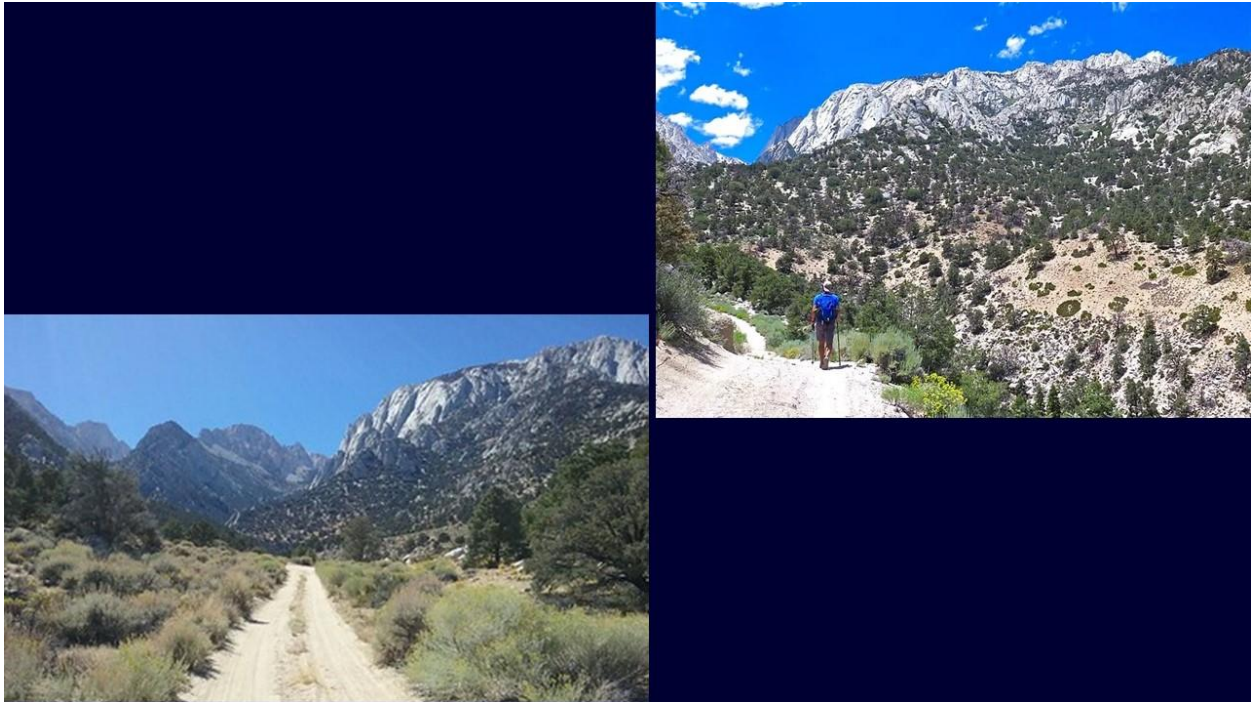
The only problem was that he was now at least a half mile or more to the left or south of the arroyo and the road.

And time is of the essence.



Exactly. So, Justin started heading in that direction, but with no guarantee that this *new* route would get him to the ashram either. He soon encountered a thick forest of low-standing, scrubby evergreens whose sharp branches tore at his flesh as he tried to navigate a path through their almost impenetrable barrier. By the time he finally fought his way through this forest of hard wooden 'spear-tips', his arms were covered with bloody scratches. He looked down at his Walkman, and it had a deep, gouging scratch on its front *metal* surface!

Wow, this is getting serious.



You think?! So, he finally stumbles onto the dirt road beside the dry creek. Then, he begins his steep ascent. He has about 2 hours left to find the ashram, and still make it off of the mountain before dark. He never thought to put a flashlight in his daypack, because he didn't think it would take that long to find the ashram which he thought was in the initial outcrop that he had explored. So, he absolutely had to head down the mountain at 6 pm.

The window is narrowing, and he isn't even certain that he's on the right path.



Correct. So, Justin is starting to grow a little anxious. But he keeps trudging up the steep incline of the road which eventually narrows to a trail. He keeps seeing the sun reflecting off of something in the distance which might be a tin roof. So, this inspires him to keep making the challenging climb. Then as he gets closer, he realizes that it was just a flat rock that was reflecting the sun.

'Fool's gold', huh?



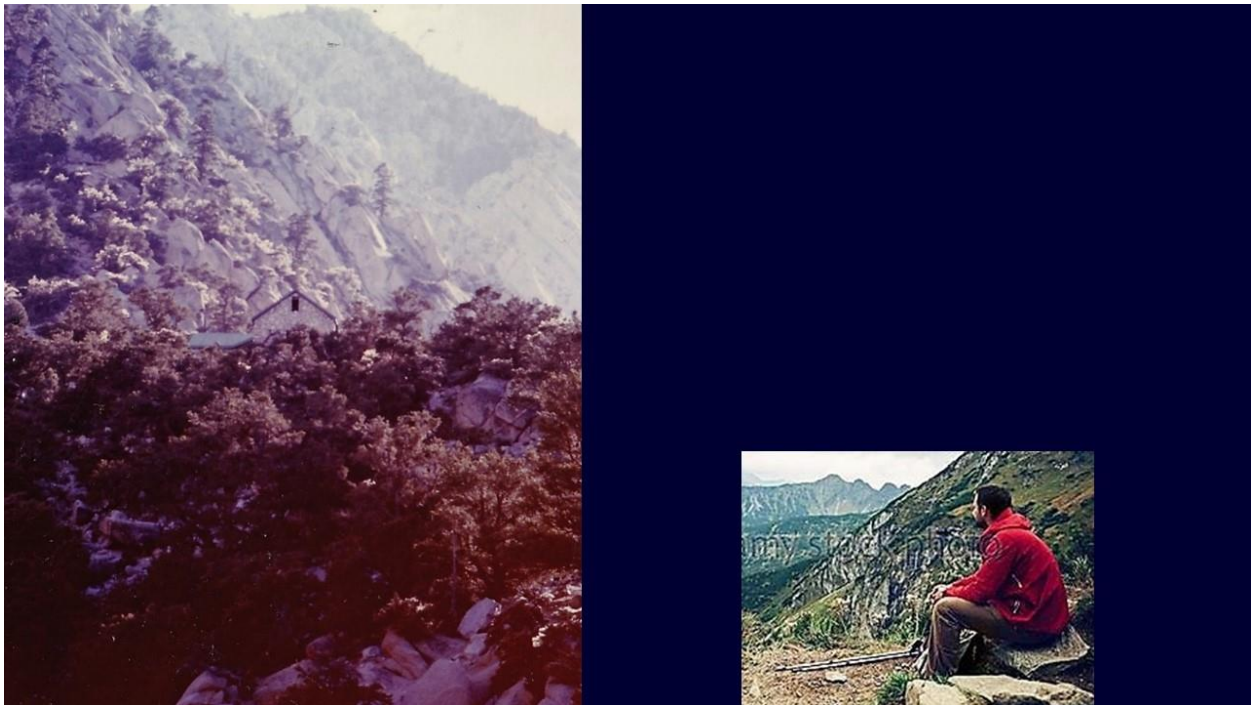
Exactly. He's getting pretty exhausted by now, and the sun is starting to set behind the mountains. His initial certainty that he would somehow be 'guided' to the ashram is starting to fade into doubt and a sense of impending failure.

How disappointing.



Then, he finally arrives at a 90° left turn in the trail, and he sees that the trail continues on for perhaps a mile as it runs beside the creek. He looks at his watch. It's 5:45. He has to begin his descent in 15 minutes. Justin is overcome with disappointment. His certainty of victory is now rapidly fading into the discouragement of defeat. Exhausted, bloodied, and despondent, he sits down on the trail. After hours of intense physical and spiritual effort, he finally just *surrenders*.

Oh, poor guy.



Then he looks up at the scene just over the arroyo in front of him, and THERE IT IS! There's the stone ashram! He immediately becomes energized and elated. He DID it! His certainty and confidence in his ability to find this sacred place had finally been rewarded, but only after paying a very steep price of admission, and *totally* surrendering.

That's great. So, his persistence paid off.



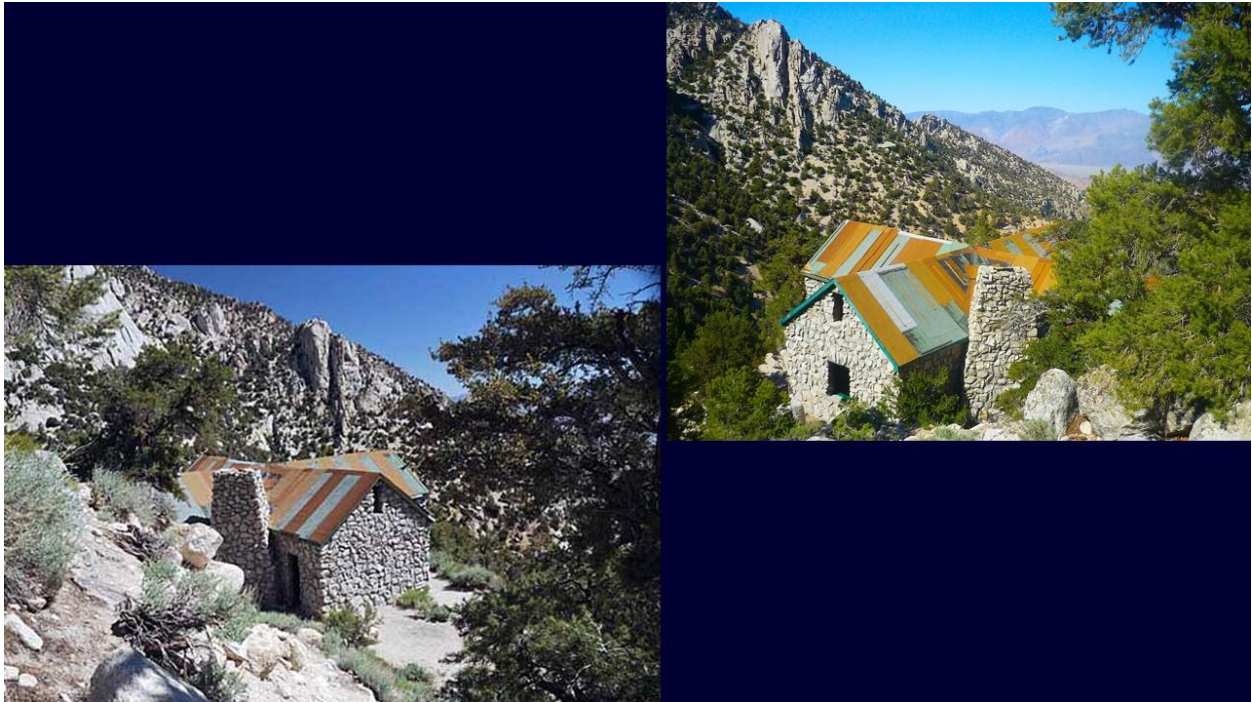
But then he wondered how he was going to get across the arroyo that now had some water in it at this higher elevation. The arroyo was 15 feet or so below the trail. Then, Justin spotted a 'bridge' of strategically placed logs that led to the other bank of the creek. He scampered across the logs.

How fortuitous!



Indeed. Then he made the short climb up to the level of the ashram.

Oh, he must have been excited!



He truly was. The Ashram was a beautiful stone building in the form of an even-armed cross, meant to represent equilibrium. It was also aligned with the four cardinal directions.

Apparently, a lot of planning went into its design and construction.



Work on the Ashram ceased in 1950 when



FM-W's wife could no longer make the climb



The building was about 2000 square feet, and had numerous doors and windows—some facing further up the Sierras, and others overlooking the Owens Valley far below this vantage point.

Yeah, you would be able to see for miles from that altitude.



FATHER, INTO THY ETERNAL WISDOM, ALL CREATIVE LOVE, AND INFINITE POWER
I DIRECT MY THOUGHTS, GIVE MY DEVOTION AND MANIFEST MY ENERGY
THAT I MAY KNOW, LOVE, AND SERVE THEE.



Unfortunately, since 1950, hunters and vandals had desecrated and partially destroyed the ashram, tearing down doors and window frames to use for firewood. The building contained a large stone altar (with a sacred inscription) and a fireplace.

Wow, it sounds beautiful.

Justin quickly took some photographs, and then sat down for a few minutes just to soak up the vibes of this hallowed hall and the energy of those who had built it. He felt so blessed to have been 'guided' to this sacred site.

What a beautiful, sacred sanctuary in the midst of the magnificent splendor of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range!



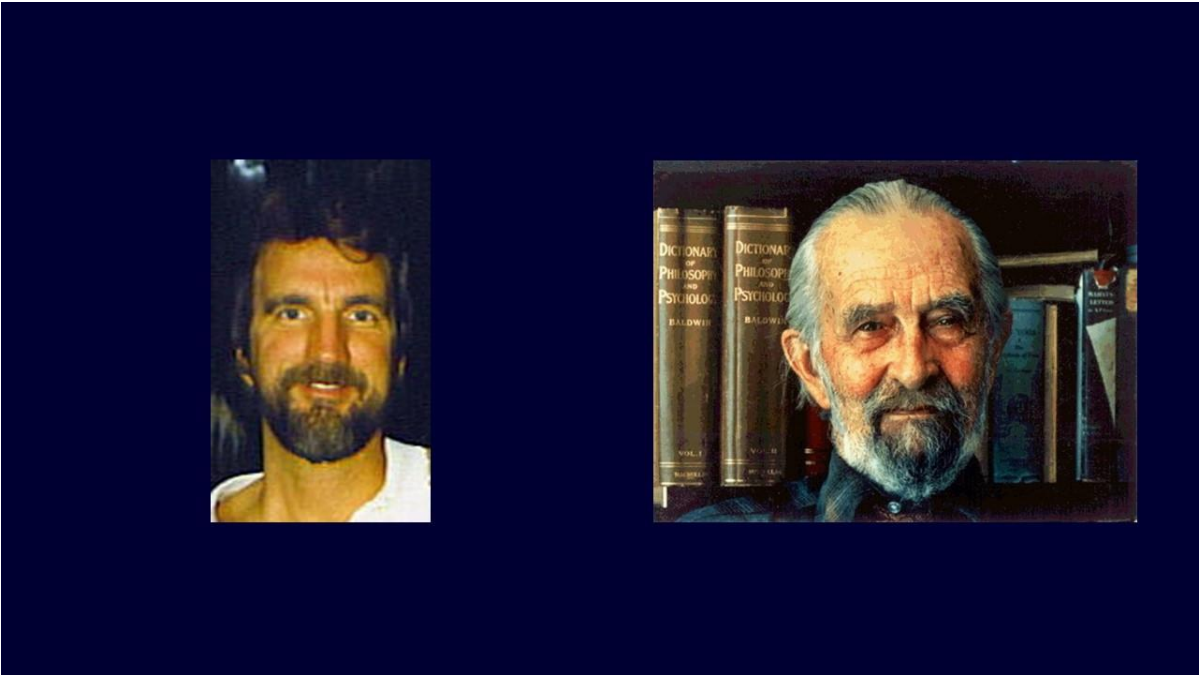
Truly. He then bid the place farewell, and headed back down to Dr. Wolff's house.

All right, mission accomplished.



When Justin finally arrived at the house a little before dark, there were a few more cars parked there, and lights were on in the house. When he knocked on the front door, Andrea, Dr. Wolff's younger assistant opened the door and welcomed him. She then introduced him to the other people that were there. They had just returned from climbing Mt. Whitney.

So, everyone was climbing *higher* that afternoon.

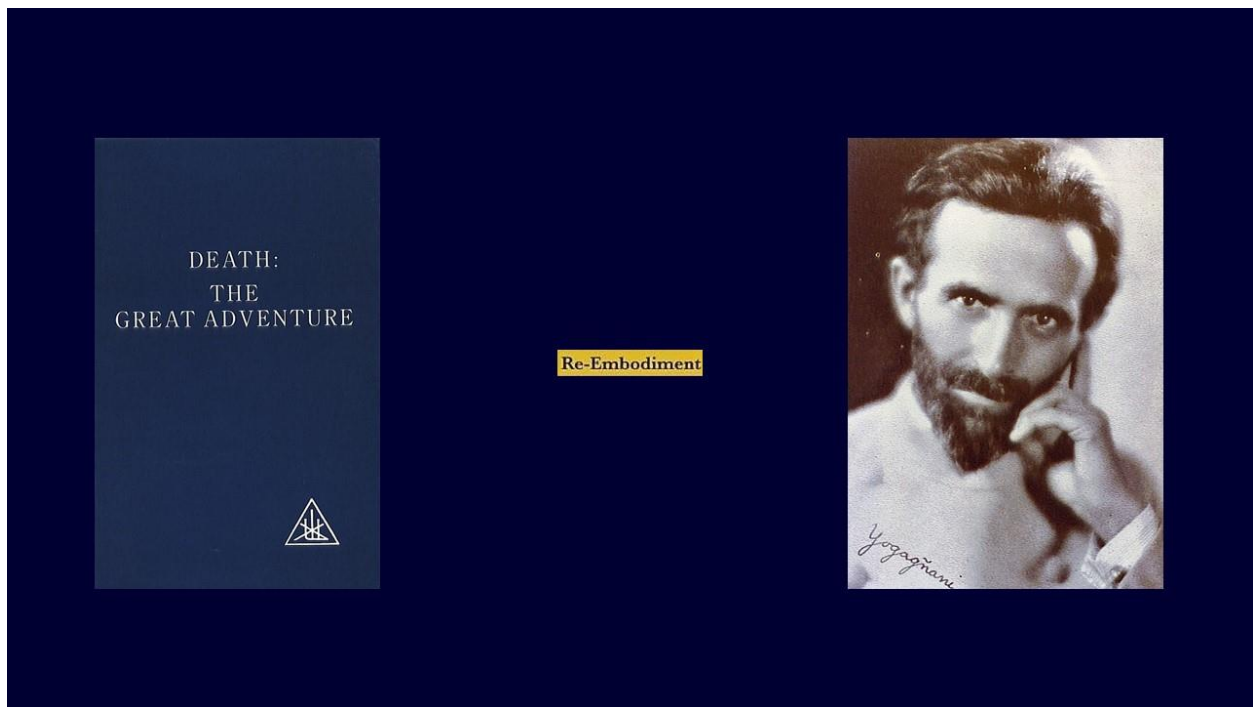


That's true. Justin visited with Dr. Wolff for a while.



Then Andrea showed Justin an old photo album that had pictures of the early group which had formed around Dr. Wolff as well as various spiritual leaders from the early part of the 20th century. Justin really enjoyed the ones of Dr. Wolff's beloved first wife, Sherifa (organizer of The Oriental Esoteric Society in Washington, D.C.) with Alice Bailey who she knew. Franklin and Sherifa had both been Theosophists as well. The album also contained photos of prominent Theosophical leaders from that early era.

Oh wow, so Dr. Wolff and Sherifa knew the woman who had written the most important books in Justin's life—as she served as an amanuensis for the Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul.



Right. In time, Justin went out to his car, and came back in with a copy of his recently published compilation *Death: The Great Adventure* for Dr. Wolff.

Oh, that's right. They had discussed the book during their first meeting in 1981.

And that was when Dr. Wolff had given Justin a copy of his book, *Re-Embodiment*, written under his pen name, Yogagñani. So, a little later, Justin told them that he was going to leave early the next morning to return home, and would not be able to stay for their Sunday morning lecture/service. He then went to another nearby house on the property to spend the night. He arose early the next morning, and returned to the Bay Area.

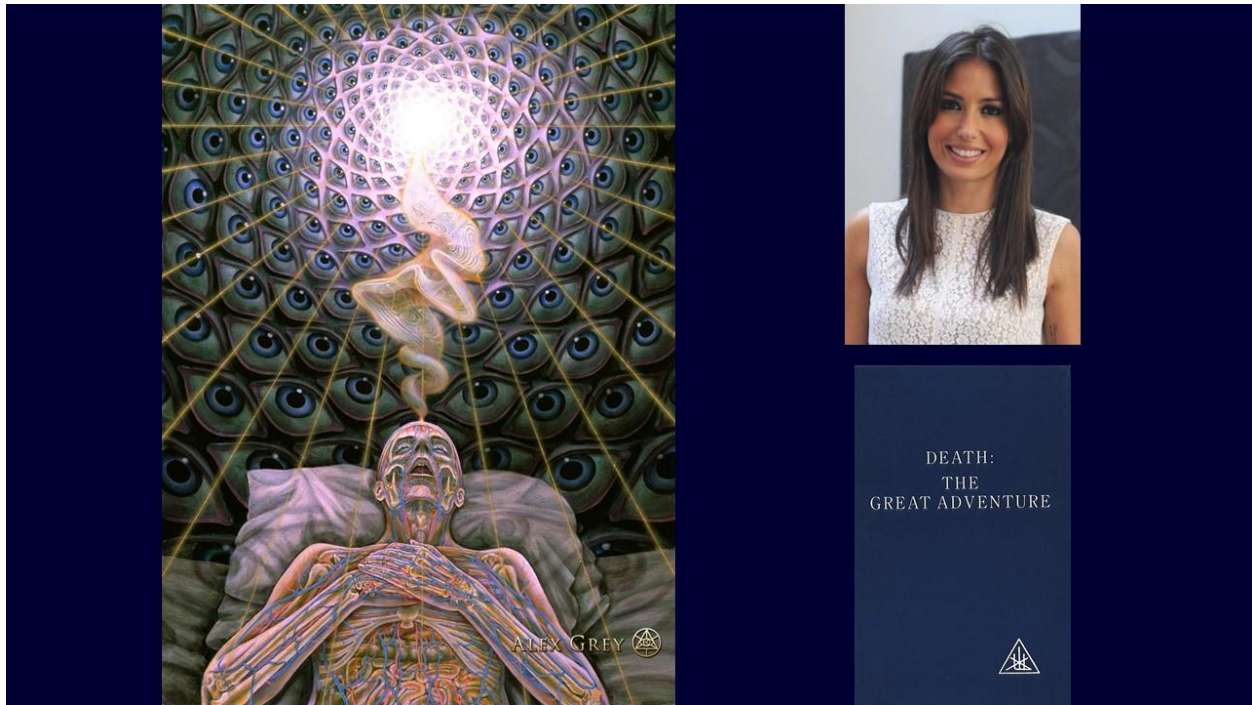
What a trip: Yosemite, the ashram, and a visit with Dr. Wolff!

The Sage Withdraws



A few months after Justin had given Dr. Wolff a copy of *Death: The Great Adventure*, some of Justin's classmates told him that Dr. Wolff had passed on. He was 98 years old. Justin recalled his first meeting with Dr. Wolff (summer 1981) when he told Justin that the Brothers (the *Mahatmas*, or the Masters of the Wisdom) had told him that he would live to be 99. But as a friend later pointed out, when he died, Dr. Wolff was in his 99th year. Although, Justin liked to think that They gave him a year off "for good behavior."

What a rich, full life of spiritual inquiry, teaching and writing!



But here's the amazing part. Justin's classmates (who had spoken to Andrea, Dr. Wolff's attendant) said that when he left his body for the last time, Andrea was reading to him out of the copy of *Death: The Great Adventure* that Justin had given him that night after his hike to the ashram.

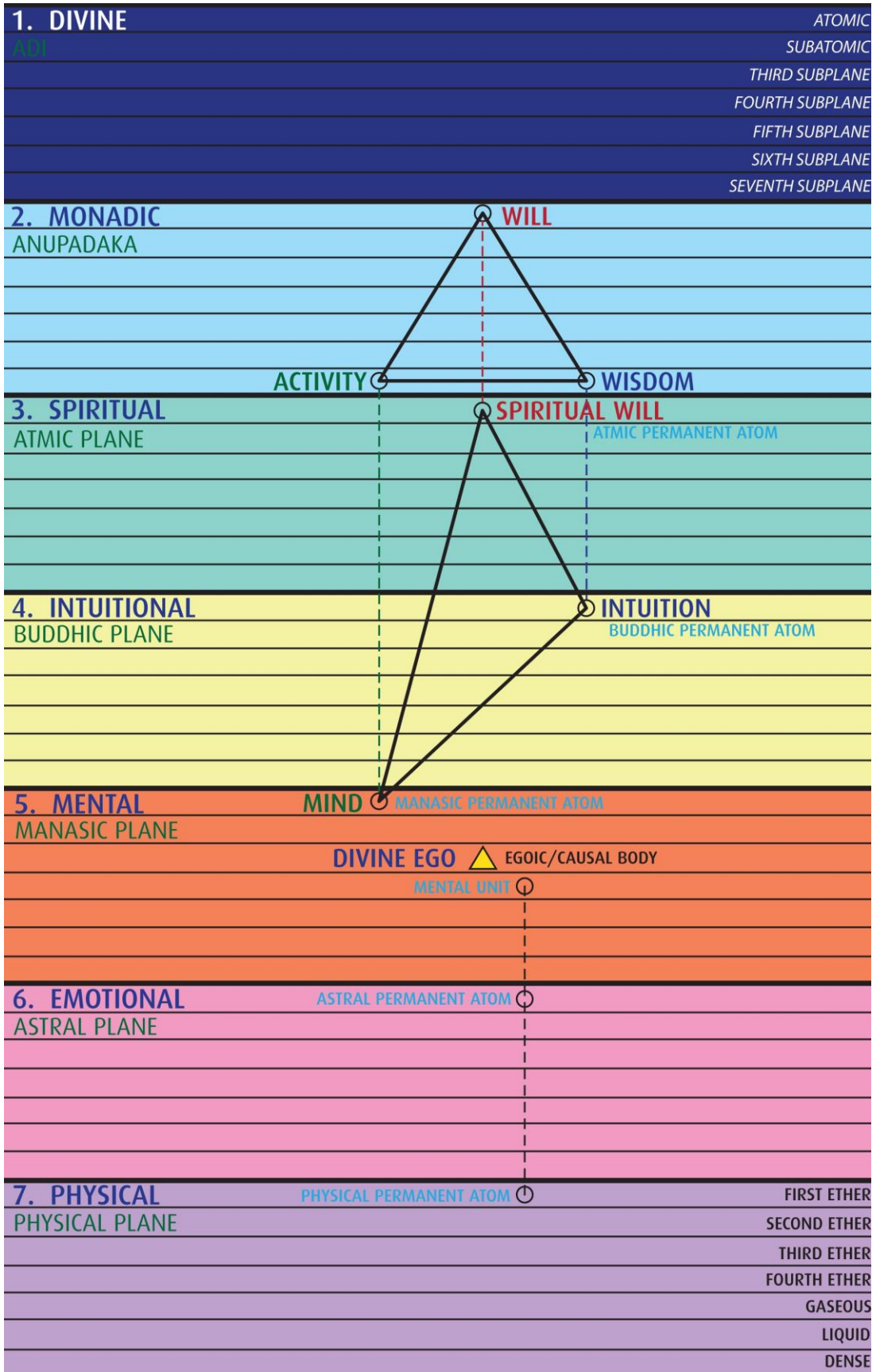
Nooo?!

Yes! After all that Dr. Wolff had contributed to Justin over the years through his books and his visits, Justin felt so honored and grateful that his own work had possibly been of assistance to this great Sage as he was embarking on the Great Adventure.

Definitely.

* * *

Justin, uh, I mean, I later evaluated my ashramic adventure both metaphorically and metaphysically.



I saw where I began the adventure, at Dr. Wolff's *home*, as representing the Dense Physical Plane (i.e., the 3 lower subplanes of the Physical Plane). This is the level of density, earth, or solid material/energy which symbolizes our most *familiar* 'home'.

Then, I ascended, with considerable effort, into the higher, rarer air surrounding the huge boulders up above his home, symbolic of the Etheric Physical Plane (the four higher subplanes of the Physical Plane). This is the level of invisible (as yet to us) subtler, ether-like physical matter/energy.

Next, I descended into Hell, the lower subplanes of the Emotional/Astral (so named because of the 'starry' appearance) Plane as I fought my way through the sharp, painful, injurious tips of the dense trees and brush. This is the level of watery, or fluidic, matter/energy.

I eventually emerged at the *dry* creek, or arroyo—the upper subplanes of the Astral Plane which is composed of 'drier', or less lower-emotionally charged matter/energy.

Then, as I began to climb up the road/path which I hoped would lead to the ashram, I had to use my discriminative mind, reading clues (is that shiny, reflected light from the ashram's tin roof, or just a reflective surface of a large boulder?), discerning new bits of information as they appeared. This is the level of the Mental Plane, represented as gaseous material/energy which contains the fires of mind.

And, at long last, running out of time and energy, with the ashram nowhere in sight, I sat down, and *totally surrendered*. The great quantity of focused intention/tension that I had generated in my Dense, Etheric, Emotional and Mental bodies, at my moment of *total* surrender, *bridged* the gap into the Intuitional/Buddhic Plane—the level of Direct Knowledge, Pure Reason, Complete Understanding, Total Love (I = You), and Flawless Vision. This level is characterized by air—so subtle, yet potentially so powerful (hurricanes/tornadoes) as well as so pervasive and interpenetrating.

Then, I *SAW* the ashram . . .

ashram (n.): "religious hermitage," 1900, from Sanskrit *asramah*, from a-, adnomial prefix (from PIE adverbial particle *ē*), + *sramah* "effort, toll, fatigue." *Online Etymology Dictionary*

. . . which my "effort, toll [toil], fatigue" had successfully led me to, and revealed.

Then, after a few moments in this awesome, glorious sacred space, I descended through the metaphorical Mental, Emotional, Etheric and Dense Physical Planes, and returned to Dr. Wolff's *home*.

I think Michael would approve of this symbolic synopsis and allegorical account of my ashramic adventure—after all he was "ridin' shotgun", right?!

* * *

An article on the ashram from the official FM-W site

<http://www.franklinmerrell-wolff.com/educate/ashrama/>