

Preface

This effort speaks volumes, six to be exact. I wrote *The Time Traveler: An Artist's Quest Through the Past and Future* chronologically, with some time travel as the story demands. Initially available only as an ebook, there is also a single-volume version, as well as a limited-edition boxed set with original art in all six volumes. Chapter numbers roughly correspond to my age.

Volume I: Coming of Age, 1953-1972: I have very strong memories of being in the womb, so this installment covers from before the trip through the birth canal and after through that even trippier, post-natal sprint to age 20. During this period I lived in 16 different places, and began keeping both a written and photographic journal, thus accurately fixing time and place while chronicling the good, the bad and the photo ready. Growing up in Texas as the oldest of six, I experienced conflict with parents, teachers, religion and politics, but also found love and learned much about the world.

Volume II: Nature, 1973-1980: From age 20 to 26, I established my fine art career with exotic botanical etchings. I lived in Austin, where I was briefly married, and re-built a house, sold it, and moved to France after traveling twice around the planet. During this period, I began having non-ordinary, transpersonal experiences that defy explanation, even though I will still try to explain them anyway.

Volume III: Hollyweird, 1980-1991: From age 26 to 38, I continued to travel extensively, and lived in Paris, Austin, Colorado, and in a house I built under the Hollywood Sign. I began writing a novel in 1980 in Paris that weirdly came true in the late 1980s, in Hollywood, while I was designing and building habitable sculptures (a.k.a. houses). I had challenging relationships, and hiked the Inca Trail in Peru while fasting to induce visions.

Volume IV: The Labors, 1992-2002. This installment has me traveling in a small wooden boat up the Tambopata River into the upper Amazon basin where I had a near encounter with death while trying to find out about out-of-body experiences on ayahuasca and ketamine. On my return to Los Angeles, I built a mountaintop villa, other buildings, and various water features. In the mid 1990s, I began working on the

interminable book, *The Labors of Hercules: Modern Solutions to 12 Herculean Problems*. I got married and founded New Pedestrianism, a more ecology and pedestrian-oriented version of New Urbanism. I rebuilt a drug slum in Florida and our daughter was born at home in a rehabbed, former crackhouse in the renamed “Garden District.”

Volume V: The Garden District, 2003-2017: I continued to rebuild the Garden District, while raising our daughter. I began making documentaries and wrote *Democracy and the Common Wealth: Breaking the Stranglehold of the Special Interests*. I cycled from Key West to Pensacola while running for governor of Florida. I set up wikis, including LOGOSwiki.org and UNICEwiki.org, to crowd source public policy recommendations from both humans and AI. My wife and I divorced in 2014, but two years later I connected with the love of my life in an extraordinary series of events that resembles aspects of Audrey Niffenegger’s novel *The Time Traveler’s Wife*.

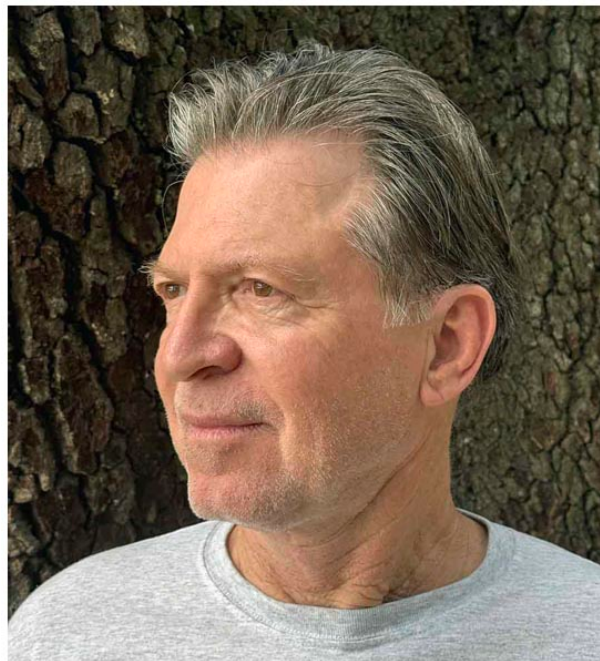
Volume VI: The Future: 2017-2031: In 2017, I began the ongoing process of writing about the future, and later observing what actually transpired. As expected, by 2025 I was doing well with personal predictions and terrible with global predictions. Predictions regarding my own behavior included a comparatively small number of variables, combined with my well-documented, insider knowledge. Predictions about the rest of the world were little more than wishes, because of the unlimited variables inherent in the unfolding of history.

The personal and the universal intersected when I lived out the scenario of what turned out to be an inconsequential run for the presidency in 2020. Description of a hypothetical run for the presidency in 2028 follows in this volume, because I lay out what I would like to see happen whether I am president or not. Whoever wins that election, I hope that LOGOS will help ensure that the public is not misled again into voting against their own best interests. Winning would be a long shot, but I cannot just sit in the nosebleed section and watch the shit show unfold without at least raising a ruckus, even if it gets me expelled from the public arena.

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June 5, 2025

Introduction - Regressions and Progressions

My parents named me for the Archangel Michael and for my paternal grandfather Edward Arth, neither of whom I ever met. I did not pay much attention to these metaphysical and earthly connections until I had a revelatory experience with LSD at age seventeen. I mentally prepared for the psychedelic trip by reading through books on philosophy, economics, and psychology my older cousin Dan Stephens had given me. Dad knew very little about psychedelics or my interest in them, but when he saw what I was reading he confiscated all the books and stashed them in his sock drawer. Knowing he would not read the books himself because they would challenge his faith, I was able to discretely use his sock drawer as a lending library beginning in the summer of 1969.

Eating the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, whether through books or psychedelics, was something my parents, my teachers, and the Catholic Church did not approve of, especially by a boy whose young mind had not yet been thoroughly indoctrinated. But I was determined to find out what was what. Since those days, I have often thought there must be no more interesting time to be alive in the history of our species than the present. At the same time, this eternally most-interesting-present is immeasurably enlivened and enriched by constantly looking both backward and forward—a habit of trans-temporal thinking that I find useful as well as interesting.

So Michael E. Arth is indeed my real name and, no, my parents (one of whom was an Earth scientist) did not realize that combining my middle initial and last name together spells “Earth.” However, the reader may justifiably conclude my entire name exhibits metaphorical and vainglorious irony, juxtaposing hubris with joy and good cheer. Because, you see, Michael means “who is like God,” and mearth (M.E.Arth) is homonymous with mirth.

While I have a healthy ego, I am also constantly reminded of the reality that each of us is only one of more than eight billion people on a planet that is itself no more than a minuscule speck in a vast, unfathomable cosmos. So, even when experiencing my most inflated sense of self, I still cannot avoid also seeing myself as objectively being not much better or worse than anyone. Depending on the situation and my perspective, I can easily identify with the most miserable person on the planet or the most enlightened. As the founder of an atheistic religion, the Buddha is presented as

the exemplar of a mortal person who learns to accept reality as it is and gets over fretting too much about it. Personally, I practice acceptance as a practical way to avoid anxiety, even while continuing to strive. Striving to do and be better gives me something to do while being accepting and not taking myself too seriously, yet still being serious enough to write an autobiography.

Before I begin in earnest, allow me to dispense with false modesty while also knowing that any praise I receive is tempered by the knowledge my accomplishments were bolstered by circumstances beyond the illusion of conscious control. There were surmountable challenges, curiosity stronger than fear, and weird luck paving the way while I was growing up in a prosperous, comparatively free country.

This does not mean I am “humbled” when receiving praise or accolades. Instead, I bask in the moment when praised, as I am sure all those humble-bragging, Oscar-winning actors also do. However, despite feeling pride and not considering it a sin, as an introvert and part-time ambivert (social introvert), I am also ambivalent or even uncomfortable being the center of attention. And anyway, it seemed impetuous to publish my life story while still young. Reluctance to seek the limelight, combined with keeping a journal, has helped me maintain a realistic view of my strengths and weaknesses in relation to others. Perfectionism also played its part, and I had to temper it so it did not become the enemy of the next potential, good-enough thing I might do.

Another issue when writing an autobiography is that the story does not end until the writer is dead. This is part of the reason I will write about what happened, speculate about what *will* happen, and then write about how things turned out in a later installment. It has been a lifetime project, especially considering I finished an unpublished novel based on my youthful experiences in early 1969, which *also* contained predictions for the future. I also undertook an early iteration of this memoir in 1979 and picked it up again in the 1990s. The introduction was first written in 2013. Everything got updated in this 2025 edition when I turned seventy-two. Beyond that, I have arbitrarily staked out a hundred years as a stopping point even though I hope to go on longer.

While writing this book during the anti-democratic, anti-constitutional chaos of the second Trump administration, I was thinking even more about our collective future. As I grow older I spend more and more time pondering global issues, which is

why, when I returned to university at the age of sixty-seven, it was to get a master degree in global politics.

Even before going back to school, I had worked for more than two decades on finding equitable solutions to social and political problems all the way down to the local level. I was also driven by my concern regarding the all-too-human impulse to seek office for personal gain as an end in itself. Evidence-based solutions are usually scalable and transcend borders, and to work toward solutions that benefit everyone requires tempering self-aggrandizement and tribalism. Unfortunately, existing political structures rarely reward those who want to genuinely promulgate the common good.

The brute computing power of artificial general intelligence has the potential to untie this Gordian knot instead of binding us to malevolent agents. A crowd-sourcing, policy-analyzing, chatbot-wiki I call LOGOS could combine both anonymous and identified contributions with AGI to solve every manner of social problem. More on this later.

Beginning in early toddlerhood I was always pointing and making observations about my surroundings, prompting my mother to call me “the little philosopher.” Later, when she noticed my intense, almost obsessional focus on certain things, she



“The Little Philosopher” pointing out things you might have missed around the Liverpool City Region in 1954.



“John, imagine there’s no heaven.”

took to calling me the “absent-minded professor.” As a budding polymath I was interested in just about everything—well, except *math*, unfortunately. Eventually my work would take the form of projects, ranging across the domains of art, architecture, construction, urban design, policy analysis, politics, futurology, filmmaking, and writing. In retrospect, I have to say my mother called it pretty well, since my college freshman goal was to have a career as a philosophy professor and do all the other things on the side. Instead, the hobbies crowded out the career.

Around age twenty-four I also developed a talent, or tendency, to experience multi-level, meaningful coincidences known as synchronicities. Other than my fascination with time, the time-transcending aspect of these synchronicities is one reason for the title of this book. Statisticians say all coincidences are chance events explainable by probability theory. They also rightly point out that the nebulous and unscientific concept of “meaning” is something invented by humans. A psychologist on the physicalist side of the equation once casually dismissed my numerous interwoven, meaningful coincidences as being evidence of a mental disorder, perhaps delusions related to schizophrenia. Others more gently suggested my synchronicities are based on apophenia, the human tendency to see patterns, significance or meaning that is not really there and pareidolia, the ability to see shapes or images from randomness. These tendencies are amplified by confirmation bias and the fact that I literally file away the best examples in my journals. Still others have admitted that something inexplicable is going on, which may have profound consequences for our understanding of nature.

All of these observations have merit, except that I am not crazy. At least not any crazier than psychotherapist Carl Jung and quantum physicist Wolfgang Pauli who further developed Jung’s earlier concept of synchronicity in their 1952 paper, *The Interpretation of Nature and the Psyche*. In their view, synchronicity is a form of creativity that brings external events into the psyche. This occurs as a result of a unifying and underlaying consciousness involving non-locality, complementarity and the observer effect described by quantum theory. In other words, synchronicity brings unconscious material to conscious awareness, while also exhibiting meaning-based connections that seem non-causal from a classical mechanics point of view. As with myself, synchronicities are reported to happen more during periods of emotional intensity, such as when falling in love.

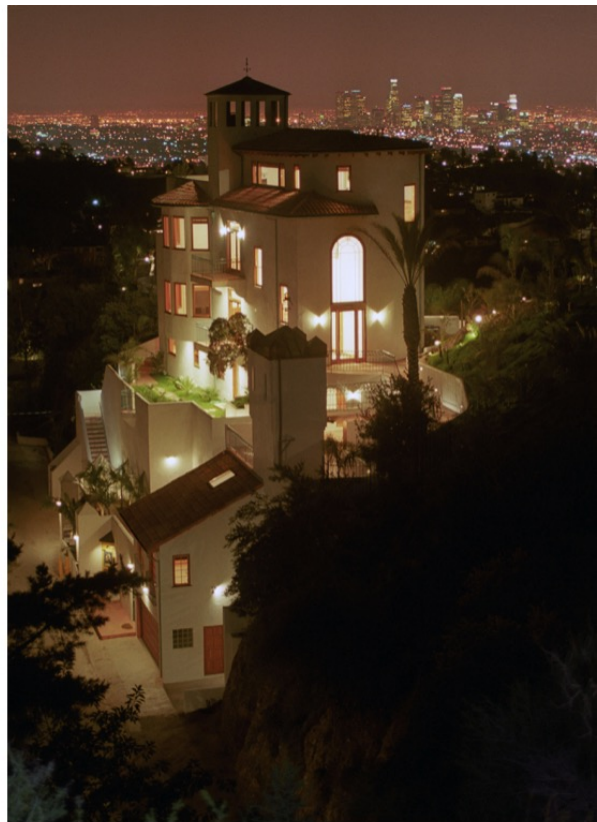
We will take a deep dive into these odd, boundary-expanding connections across time and space as this account unfolds. By the time we have traveled through the non-fictional years up to 2025, and arrived in the fictional “present” of 2053, we will have a fuller explanation of this phenomenon in relation to the nature of reality and what it means for our species.

The inspiration, indeed the earlier draft for *The Time Traveler*, was *The American Butterfly*, a manuscript I began writing in late 1979, while living in Paris. Years later, the manuscript came true in various ways, even though I had mostly forgotten about it, especially since some of the names, places, and descriptions seemed quite arbitrary and unimportant when I wrote it. The predictive elements of that fictional story are now nested comfortably within the facts of this memoir, and will unfold in due time. Suffice it to say, the earlier manuscript was mostly forgotten after the 1979-1980 fictional “memoir of the future,” along with an early draft of early chapters in this autobiography, was put away—back-to-back—inside a manila envelope.

Nine years later, rediscovery of the manuscript would reveal that much of what I had written about my personal future had come true, in eerie detail. The primary difference between that work and this one, other than the substantial amount of real life accumulated in between, is that in this imagined memoir of the future, slapped against the back of this true account, *The Time Traveler* will not only be about my personal planet, but also about the one we all inhabit.

In addition to the above interests and quirks, beginning in 1993, I spent a year and half working as a hypnotherapist in Los Angeles. My office was on the seventh floor of “Casa de Lila,” a white elephant of a hilltop Xanadu I designed and built, but could not afford to finish. In my mind, this was my most ambitious building project to date, and its sale was going to make me the million dollars needed to withdraw to my ivory tower to write and make art full time, and enjoy the view with my future wife, whomever she might be.

Instead, I spent the half-million in equity built up from an earlier project, and drove myself into insolvency building Casa de Lila. Like many of my projects before and hence, I had charged ahead without knowing how to finance it, or knowing if it would pay off later. My youthful optimism was boundless, and the finances usually resolved themselves, despite my risk-taking. Still, there were sometimes interesting and instructive glitches that occurred while waiting for the money to catch up.



Day and Night at Casa de Lila. Built 1990-1994 in the Hollywood Hills.

I had always been interested in human psychology, but not so much that I wanted to make a career of listening to other people's problems—I had enough of my own challenges. There was enough interest in mind research and psychology, however, to take two courses in hypnotherapy, hang out a shingle, and survive a rough period without any other means of financial support. I got to be a therapist of sorts, and was paid just as much as a psychologist when the work was available. Often the problems were daunting, but I felt useful.

Most clients wanted to cut down on some combination of smoking, eating, and worrying. They had plenty of shameful buried memories to unearth, and there was always some emotional drama or spiritual crisis that cut through the chitchat to put us directly into the crux of the matter. I made a big show of telling clients not to come to me unless they were ready to be set back on their path in one or two sessions. This had the effect of setting up their expectations for a speedy resolution, and getting their

full cooperation. It also prevented me from getting bored. I did not want to make a career out of counseling.

Most clients also wanted to be regressed to relive childhood dramas, and find out about their past lives. Initially, I was open to the question about whether we have past lives, having read Ian Stevenson's *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (1980) and having myself, a few years earlier, lain on the floor of a psychologist's office for my own regressions. In vivid detail, I recalled an immediate past life as a philosophical Greek writer, who lived in a whitewashed villa splashed with bracts of red bougainvillea by the deep blue Aegean Sea. It seemed so real, even down to the pictures on the mantel, that I subsequently tried to find out if there was a writer who fit the description. I imagined meeting my children from a previous life and describing, to their utter astonishment, the villa where they had grown up.

But there were no kids from a previous life, nor any such writer. I uncovered nothing except embarrassment at my own self-delusion. I "regressed" dozens of clients and combed through the thinnest of anecdotal evidence—in both my clients' stories and literature on the subject. Yet I found no logically consistent reasons why an immortal soul—itself a highly dubious proposition—would have to forget everything and start all over with each life to work out some unremembered karma. Even while these regressions sometimes gave useful insight into the psyche of the clients, our days in the sun seemed to be bookended by birth and death. Even so, while listening to my clients, I came to see manufactured memories as a testament to both the human imagination and our capacity for self-deception.

I constantly fight self-foolery by reminding myself that the search for truth is more important than trying to concoct pleasant fictions. Nevertheless, I can understand that believing in life beyond this one, fore or aft, gives comfort to people looking for some distraction from the yawning maw of death. Mortality does not sit well with me either, for even though I was blessed with a long life in which to anticipate my demise and ponder life's mysteries, I warily eye the prospect of declining health and mobility, where my abilities, my memories, and my loved ones slowly ebb away until I perish forever. As a result, I have more than a faint hope—bolstered by recent developments—that medical science, the technological rapture, or cryonics as a last resort, will intervene before death becomes irrevocable. If not, well this is where a philosophical attitude comes in. I have resigned myself to the probability that nothing can save me,

my loved ones, and everyone else, from what has traditionally been the terminal condition of life.

Even though we all think about our mortality, not all of us take it seriously. A shrinking majority of people think, or at least hope, this life is a mere stepping stone to an immortal existence on the next plane. Many others think we reincarnate, or at least try not to entertain “morbid thoughts.” Still others do not worry about it and point out that the billions of years where they did not exist are no different from the billion of years after they cease to exist. They feel lucky to be alive now and know that when they are dead they will not miss it. I can relate to these thoughts and feelings, because I have experienced all of them at one time or another.

Considering my practice was in Los Angeles, the New Age capital of the world, nearly all of my hypnotherapy clients believed they had been here before. I indulged them until I became impatient. After trudging through labyrinths of vague past life stories thick with emotion, yet lacking in verifiable information of any kind, I decided to try progressing people into their imagined, yet plausible futures. I soon discovered that progressions were far more useful than regressions.

One of the first progressions involved Natalya, a delicate and birdlike, eighteen-year-old Russian émigré. She was already trembling from nicotine withdrawal because I would not let her smoke on my property and from having climbed six flights of stairs. So I wasted no time. After the obligatory trip back to her childhood, the womb, and some dull, preposterous past lives not worth recounting, we reversed course and charged forward, making short stops at age twenty, thirty, and forty before pulling up to eighty years of age, our final destination.

Natalya was pretty except for her nervous preening and the smoker’s pall, which hung over her like a shadow from the scythe of the Grim Reaper. Nevertheless, as she “aged” during our progression, she turned into a calm, wizened old woman, full of good-natured advice, who had the full attention of her younger self. Whether these two aspects of the same women, united for a moment across time, were remembering the advice of their mother, their grandmother, or summoning some inner wisdom, they played their parts without a hint of self-consciousness. The old woman discharged her wisdom and felt better about dying, and the younger one felt energized and ready to face the years ahead. It is also possible she never had another thought about it after leaving my house and lighting up a *sigaretka*.

Still, I was onto something with these progressions because it subcontracted the tricky job of offering advice back to the clients, who could then take both credit and blame for the chore. The most notable progression involved Dolores, a woman still clearly in the prime of life, who it seemed had inadvertently written down her birth year as 1937, instead of 1957. Except for her old fashioned name, I simply could not imagine her being so old as to remember World War II. When she saw me staring at the patient release form she said, “People say I don’t look my age, but I’m pushing sixty. I’ll be fifty-seven on my next birthday.”

Dolores was slim and, if she had fully owned her full height of five-eight, and not avoided eye contact, she would have been very attractive. She explained that she was a childless owner of three cats, and had spent her undramatic life working as a computer programmer, and riding a stationary bike in front of her TV. She had also protected her delicate, freckly skin by avoiding the sun, alcohol, and tobacco. Her only vanity seemed to be a full mane of luxuriant, auburn locks cascading past her shoulders. A few tendrils of gray indicated she did not dye her hair. The hands usually give away a woman’s age, but in her case the hands insisted she was thirty-seven and not the age on her driver’s license, which she finally pulled out to prove conclusively that appearances can be deceiving.

Dolores admitted being as predictable as the 1990s computers she programmed. She was depressed, but not sure why. The first session consisted primarily of breath work, and she appeared as untroubled by it as her unlined face. She did, however, cry a little at the end, and said she had been trying to work out something related to the “energy” of her prospective apartment. I suspected there was something brewing that went much deeper than *feng shui*.

The second session was on a clear spring night. From our lofty aerie, the entire Los Angeles basin was a sea of lights. I stoked the fire in the kiva-style corner fireplace. We sat cross-legged in front of a fire on cushions that were piled on top of the rugs and blankets, which were spread over the Saltillo tile floor. By the warm flickering glow of the fire and the candles, and the pulsating city lights outside the windows, something remarkable happened.

While she was breathing deeply, and as I was progressing her decade-by-decade into the future, she seemed to physically age before my eyes. With each breath, her already slightly stooped shoulders sank lower. Her hair became a wet, stringy tangle

from her tears, and from the saliva that spilled from her open mouth. Strands of gray hair, previously barely noticeable, curled up from the dank warmth of her breath and created a halo-like cobweb around her skull, accentuated by the dancing flames on the candles behind her. Dolores slowly hunched over and her jaw went slack. Her cheeks hollowed out, and her eyes darkened in their sockets and sunk into her face. She aged well past her chronological age, as her frame seemed to shrink beyond what I thought was possible. Just as I was wondering how much effect the dim light was having on my imagination, her voice also began to age. At first, she said the words, "I'm not old" in a reasonable approximation of her own voice. However, as she repeated herself, her voice deepened with each incantation, like a chain-smoking, street hag who was descending into alcoholism under a bridge. Each utterance of "I'm not old" took her deeper into senescence. "I'm not old. *I'm not old....*"

Finally, she added "I'm not ugly" in such a frightful man's voice that I was forced to avert my eyes. I imagined her head pivoting *à la* Linda Blair's character in *The Exorcist*, thus revealing her true pedigree as a loathsome harpy who would suck my energy to restore the kilter of the lair she was about to invade. Despite her insistence to the contrary, she was undeniably old and ugly, and even moribund. Stringy tendrils of spinnbarkeit connected her mouth to her legs, which were now stretched out stiffly in front of her on the rug as if from rigor mortis. When she could get no lower, or no older without becoming a corpse, she paused like an automaton waiting for instruction.

It took me a moment to survey this wreck of a human being. Her face was completely drenched with her tears. Her hair matted her cheeks. She seemed completely spent as she waited, nearly bent in half, and as still as a corpse. I composed myself, put a governor on my racing thoughts, and asked her to begin the process of taking away the years to return to her younger self.

"Dolores, take a breath. When you exhale you will take off five years."

For an uncomfortably long time she did not stir. Just as I was about to check her pulse, she took a small breath, and barely spit it out.

"Okay, that was only about six months, a year at the most," I said. "Now take a deeper breath and let it go."

From this point, each new breath slightly inflated her shriveled and decrepit form. When Dolores was fully and reassuringly fleshed out, upright, and back to the

present, she glowed in the warm light. She cleared the frog in her throat, expelled the ghost of an old crone, and seemed to cough up a few other creatures besides. She brightened as if her soul had returned, and looked even younger than she had before. She found a rubber band in her purse and pulled back her hair into a pony tail. “Wow,” she said with a laugh, “I’m glad I got that out of my system!”

“No wonder I was depressed,” she said, fanning her face. “I can see that I was stuck in a funk from not being willing to age gracefully. So many people telling me how young I look enabled me to postpone accepting that I’ll get old and die just like everyone,” she said with a wry smile. “It was like I was almost afraid to laugh for fear I would make wrinkles and reveal the old lady I was turning into. I had to go to the brink of the grave, to the very bottom of my fear, to see that I can handle it.”

Her perky and concise self-analysis was impressive. “I made peace with myself,” she said, “and that old lady waiting inside of me is not going to scare me any more!”

Her seriousness melted into a goofy grin. For what would ordinarily be an embarrassingly long time, we both smiled while staring into each others eyes. For me, it was a combination of relief and pride at a job well done, coupled with joy at seeing the burden lifted from her shoulders. Dolores insisted she was cured of her obsession with aging. I believed her.

In my case, the grim reaper still lurks outside my door and occasionally, like Dolores, I have opened the door and taken journeys to the edge of the abyss and beyond, where for a few moments I could sink into the bliss of wholeness. Death is still unwelcome, but I can now look it in the face. Will I go gently into that goodnight, even after living this tale of past and future I feel compelled to tell? We shall see.

My quest through the past and questions about the future have taken me from the personal to the universal. Once basic needs are met, people everywhere seek love and connection, as well as truth and beauty. Most want to live in peace and be free to express ourselves. Many also want to live in a world that allows everyone to rise to their potential and flourish. My personal journey certainly contains all of these elements. I wanted to find and sustain meaningful relationships, see the world, build homes, bring new life into the world, and nurture my creative outlets. Beginning in the late 1990s, the personal became more universal when I began thinking about and acting on problems outside myself. This is how it played out:

1 - Once Upon a TIME



Ch.1. Easter Sunday, 1 April 1956. Me, Michele and Mom at our starter home in Albuquerque.

On the left side, between the rake and the gas meter, is the bathroom window waiting to be cranked out.

TIME was the first word I learned to recognize in print, but only written in all caps, as if the concept was trying to signal to me its order and importance in the scheme of things. I remember the sequence of events remarkably well, considering I was three years old. Adrenaline fixed the memory and the word in my brain, thus establishing a special curiosity about time itself.

It began with the sound of shattering glass, followed by a string of expletives beginning with “God damned son of bitch...” and continuing through several colorful iterations loud enough to alert me, my mother, my sister Michele, baby Greg, the whole neighborhood, and, if there be a God as we all believed, Him as well. It was the summer of 1956 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. My father had just slammed his freckly, flat-topped, red-haired head into the cranked-out, casement-style bathroom window on the side of our flat-roofed, adobe-style house (The window can be seen in the photo, this side of the gas meter). This accident happened because Dad, known to others as Harry J. Arth, had been mowing the yard with a push-reel mower that requires a certain amount of head-down determination.

Dad was proud of his lawn. I know this because we have the evidence in the form of a photograph of sister Michele, age two, pushing her baby carriage across the grass



Ch.1. Michele “mowing” the lawn with stroller

in imitation of our father’s efforts with the push mower that very same summer. On the back of this photo—the only known early family photo he ever inscribed—Michele is not mentioned at all. Instead Dad wrote, “Get a load of that beautiful lawn,” along with a snippet from Isaiah: “The desert shall bloom.”

Part of the reason he wanted the desert to bloom was because the year before we had moved from England, where my father had been a meteorologist in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War. England’s “pleasant mountains green,” nurtured by cool, drizzly

weather, had given way abruptly to a warm, dry, mile-high desert. We moved there so dad could attend the University of New Mexico, and get a second bachelor’s degree under a version of the G.I. Bill. His first degree, from St. John’s University in Minnesota, had been in business. He returned to college to study geology because he saw that much more black gold would have to be extracted in order to fuel the burgeoning automobile age.

Our \$8,800 pseudo-mud-hut and starter home, bought for zero down under a veteran’s program, was in a new subdivision on the eastern edge of Albuquerque. We had a tantalizing view of the Sandia Mountains that rose abruptly from the flat desert valley floor. Some of my earliest memories are of longing to walk to the end of the pavement on a sunny day and keep walking across the desert until I was climbing the mountain right up to the snow.



Ch.1. Alluring mountain view from our front yard on the edge of town. 1 April 1956

My father's second college degree and his ability to buy a house was partly the result of a highly progressive income tax, which had created the middle class almost out of whole cloth after the war. During the nine months of my gestation and my first decade outside the womb (1952-1963) the marginal federal income tax rate was 91%. For corporations it was 52%, and for capital gains it was 25%. Most Americans at that time thought taxes were about right and it was part of why they liked Ike. My dad was undoubtedly happy about his new degree, his new job, his new house, and being a member of the middle class. But his throbbing head temporarily banished all pleasant thoughts. What one hears about redheads being quick-tempered might not be generally true, but it was undeniably true in his case, and I am not only speaking about his encounter with the bathroom window.

Things returned to normal in the household only when a subscription copy of TIME magazine was mustered into the breach, and secured with Scotch tape. The passage of time, in combination with the elements, drained most of the color from the cover of TIME before the glass was repaired, and I was provided with my first memorable example of how time fades into history. After that, every week I watched as the previous week's TIME magazine was replaced with the latest edition on the drum-like, Mexican leather coffee table. I flipped through the pages, as seconds ticked past, looking at the pictures, and also reading the one word at the bottom of nearly every page: TIME. In this way I learned the meaning of the seven days of the week, the four weeks of the month, and the twelve months of the year.