

## ***Preface***

America in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is a spiritual wonderland. If you're starting out on the sacred path, you can probably find a church or guru or tradition that feels like home. If you're not a joiner, you can build your own enlightenment out of countless revelations and cosmologies.

It certainly wasn't like that when I was growing up in the Fifties. Spiritual people could be Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish... and that was about it. Like so much else, however, America's inner landscape shifted forever in the 1960s. Adventurous seekers dug up the esoteric and occult and made them popular. Eastern teachers arrived bearing unfamiliar wisdom. It was a great time to explore the inner planes.

One of the most important influences on the spiritual revolution of the Sixties was Transcendental Meditation. TM is a simple meditation technique popularized by the Indian guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Thanks to Maharishi's brilliant marketing, millions of Americans learned that meditation is a powerful and effective tool. Most of them didn't stick with the TM technique itself, but many continued to explore spiritual alternatives. The cultural explosion that followed—the “human potential movement” and the New Age—began with Maharishi as much as anybody.

I was one of the thronging masses who learned TM back in the day. I wasn't content to sit with my eyes closed, however; I wanted to find out if Maharishi had anything else to offer. My curiosity led me into the Movement, the world-wide organization that Maharishi established to teach TM and bring enlightenment to the planet. I spent five years in the Movement, from 1973 to 1978, as a hanger-on, volunteer, and student at Maharishi International University.

When I left, it was for the usual reasons. I got a job, a wife, a house in the suburbs—the whole nine yards. I continued to meditate, but I was out of the Movement loop for two decades.

Then I went back. In part, I wanted to reconnect with the spiritual life I'd neglected since young adulthood. I'd also heard of some unsettling developments in the Movement and I was curious to find out what was going on firsthand. There might have been a small midlife crisis in there somewhere as well.

Starting in 1999, I made periodic visits to the American headquarters of the TM Movement in Fairfield, Iowa. I got in touch with old friends and I made a number of new acquaintances at various levels of the organization. I met Movement leaders, former members who left for a variety of reasons, and the ordinary but wonderful Iowans who look on in bemusement. For a few months in 2001, I took a local apartment and lived in the town that's at the center of America's spiritual revolution.

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