The Story of a UU Verger*:*

Eleven years of memories in service with the UUFSC

by Jeff Rudisill

PREFACE

This is the story of how the UU Fellowship of Santa Cruz County has shaped my life, leading to my personal growth and transformation, as I served as its first and only Verger. This story is infused with my personal experiences both inside and outside the Fellowship. I share this tale with current members of the Fellowship for the history it contains, gleaned from my fading memories. I dedicate this narrative to the Fellowship members of those times, and to UU-ism. I'm thankful for the guidance shown to me on my path to "become a Great Bodhisattva and save all sentient beings," the quixotic goal in my remaining days.

INTRODUCTION

"What the hell is Unitarian Universalism? Some kinda' cult?" These were my thoughts when I first heard the term from my very good friend, Bill McClure. Bill and I owned and operated the Formerly Married Society, a singles club in the Washington D.C. area. At one point, Bill told me that he was a UU, so no need to worry about winding up in a Jim Jones hell. For us, FMS was a part-time gig wherein we exercised our social proclivities while doing a 9-to-5 as engineers with the local Ma Bell company, C&P Tel Co.

These were the 1970s, and great times these were. After selling the FMS, I discovered that the Rockville UU congregation had established a highly successful singles program. Not willing to give up the singles scene, and since my house and home were in Rockville, I quickly became involved with this singles group, participating in their training and becoming one of the leaders of the discussion groups that preceded the revelry which followed later in the evening. This, I came to believe, was how singles groups could become most effective and genuine. But still, I chose not to delve into the principles of UU-ism itself.

The journey from Rockville, MD, to Santa Cruz, CA, is a winding tale, but some parts need to be shared.

Background.

1977 was a rough year for me. In July, I lost my fiancé in a car accident. I'd lost my lover, confidant, companion, kindred soul, business partner, and friend. My direction in life became uncertain. For several years, I struggled with alcohol abuse. Still, with professional help, I eventually left the Nose-less-one, John Barleycorn, behind. It was a time for introspection and personal growth. I continually read self-help and spiritually oriented books.

By 1981, I concluded that there was no future in the D.C. area. I decided to sell my business, home, and all personal items that didn't fit into my recently acquired 1977 VW camper van. With that, I headed West: up the Eastern seaboard, across southern Canada, then South and back North again along the West Coast — several times. I wasn't alone; my constant K-9 companion, "DJ," made the journey feel like "Travels with Charlie."

Corvallis, Oregon intrigued me. I attended my first UU church service there, and after spending a month in Corvalis, headed south to stay with my sister and brother-in-law, Susie and Mike, in Rialto,

California. I arrived around Halloween in 1981 and stayed with them through the holidays. Realizing I was overstaying my welcome, the Universe, as it had in the past, provided a living situation suited for living in a van-a security presence at the Arroyo Motocross Park near Devore, CA. There, I spent the winter of 1982 hiking the hills daily and continuing my personal healing and development.

COMING TO UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM: THE FELLOWSHIP

Late in March of 1982, after experiencing enough of Southern California as I could stand, I bid a fond farewell and headed back north toward Oregon. Choosing the coastal route, I arrived in Santa Cruz and was captivaneh by its possibilities. A voice inside said, "This is the right place for you, Jeff. One of my top priorities was to find a living situation that aligned with my newly adopted concept of Voluntary Simplicity, as described by Duane Elgin. At the same time, my brief experience with Unitarian Universalism compelled me to visit the Fellowship.

On that Saturday in May 1982, which happened to be a workday at the Fellowship, I met Ed Dwyer and several others. Ed welcomed me warmly, and soon became a role model for me.

The following day, I attended the Sunday "program" and had the opportunity to meet Dr. Harold Edgerton, the President of the Fellowship. During our conversation, I discovered that Dr. Edgerton and his wife, Wendy, were also from the Maryland suburbs of Washington, DC. They had been members of either the UU Church in Bethesda or Chevy Chase—though my memory isn't clear on that detail. This common ground helped us connect.

During these two brief visits, I learned that the Fellowship was considering the need for a caretaker. One belief I developed during my personal growth journey was that "the Universe provides," but only opportunities. With this mindset, I spent the next couple of days drafting a letter to the UUFSC Board, outlining my proposal to serve as a temporary caretaker.

I considered the responsibilities and potential impact of this role, and found I was eager to contribute my services to the Fellowship. Once I finalized the letter, I personally delivered it to the Board, expressing my willingness to discuss the proposal further. A copy of that letter is included in Appendix A.

I was truly elated when the UUFSC Board of Trustees embraced my proposed arrangement. DJ and I took on our role as a nighttime security presence, parked in our VW camper under the warm glow of the mercury vapor lights right in front of the Fellowship. This marked the beginning of an extraordinary journey that not only deepened my connection to the community through various events but ultimately led to my election to the Board. Taking on the role of Treasurer, I succeeded the esteemed Barney Brookman, another former UU from a congregation in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C. I fondly remember two other Board members from that period, Grace Hershaft, and Larry Castleman. These shared experiences resonate deeply in my heart, evoking nostalgia and cherished memories.

My desire to become part of a community became manifest. Here, I could contribute my time and energies to the growth and support of the Fellowship. I was clearly a UU. Having investigated several spiritual paths on my journey, none held the interest for me that UU-ism did. I discovered the title 'Verger,' a role that best suited the responsibilities I was fulfilling: a caretaker and attendant who looked after our spiritual home while other congregants were away. The one who took care of the "holy" objects; our buildings and grounds

First Ministerial Search
The UUFSC, or the 'Fellowship', had always been led by its members, and in 1982, there was a strong sentiment to maintain this tradition. I was drawn to the idea of empowerment among the laity and the post-Christian orientation of the Fellowship. As I delved deeper, I discovered the rich history of the Fellowship movement, a significant force in the Western States, championed by Munroe Husbands and others. However, many members also recognized the need for a minister to provide a central focus that was lacking. After a transformative six-week Minister On Loan program, a Ministerial Search committee was formed. I was honored to be elected to serve on that Committee, chaired by Rosalie Kraft, with Harold Edgerton, Helen Eidemiller, Odette Emory, and Phil Gillemot as other members of that committee.

Our Committee worked hard and traveled considerably to review candidates. These candidates were not from the "A" Team, as the Fellowship could only offer a part-time, low-paying position with limited benefits (no housing allowance). Luckily, we found a great candidate in David MacMillan, a recent graduate from Harvard Divinity School, who had the social activism credentials necessary, at that time, for our congregation. We believed David would grow in his role in the "pulpit" (or "lectern" as many congregants at the time would've prefered), and he did. Though somewhat lacking in dynamics, he more than made up in sincerity, humor, and humility.

Ministerial Housing
Since there was no housing allowance, David promoted the construction of a Granny House located on the rise to the Northeast of the Fellowship building. He would live there, on-site in semi-seclusion, behind a huge pine tree. I clearly remember the construction was supervised by a curious fellow of perhaps some undeserved infamy, Bill Kaysing (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Kaysing). Bill had an unusual persona and a "how to live simply" philosophy that I found engaging. He also had experience promoting and constructing Granny houses. Through that experience, David showed me how to paint a house, sharing the talent he developed working as a professional painter in a "previous life." My memory dictates that the original Granny House was constructed on a 12' x 8' footprint.



The "Granny House" modified into the "Green House."

As an aside, beneath that same giant pine tree next to the Granny House, I buried the remains of a yearling mule deer that had tragically learned not to stare at headlights if seen on Freedom Blvd. This was after David had moved from the Granny House and donated it to the Fellowship. Later, another deer's body in the adjacent field was brought to my attention when the neighbor's dog carried its heart back to his master. This deer was most likely another traffic victim, and I buried its body where it lay.

The Fellowship's first minister
David's ministry was well received, especially by those of us with an abiding interest in social justice. The first Gulf War was heating up, and there was a tremendous outpouring of anti-war sentiment, with multiple programs and discussions at the Fellowship. David inspired us all by committing to a fast, which he continued for days to the point where we all became concerned for his health. He was out in front at street demonstrations, was arrested, and had his picture on the front page of the SC Sentinel. At that time, insecure about my ability to respond appropriately to non-violent necessities during demonstrations, I limited my participation to "spiritual" involvement. I've archived Fellowship voices speaking on that war.

On the lighter side, David created the persona of the Rev. Pastor Basket, which he brought forth in full regalia during pledge drives to alleviate the pain of giving. At the time, I developed a belief that UUs were, by and large, rather parsimonious. On his "Send Off" gathering at a Santa Cruz restaurant, and in keeping with his sense of humor and humility, David was cheerfully and humorously "roasted." These recordings have been archived.

David and I
We both lived on-site at the Fellowship for some time. Though we crossed swords more than once, it was, to my knowledge, never about shared space. We respected each other's privacy.

Very early one morning I was awaken by a tremendous crash on Freedom Blvd. A pickup truck, trying to pass another vehicle on the grade just up from McDonald Rd, collided head-on with a van coming the other way and spilling the truck driver's brains onto Freedom Blvd. David and I both responded after the CHP had arrived. I remember the CHP Officer shaking his head, offering the comment on the empty beer bottles littering the scene, "Breakfast of Champions." David fulfilled his calling as a "person of the cloth" by administering last rites to the deceased.

Conflict between David and me eventually manifested in boundary issues between the laity and the minister. This unfortunate situation sometimes created not-so-subtle divisiveness between David and me, which created tensions throughout the membership; some wanted a more robust and traditional ministerial presence, while others didn't. Still, others were neutral. I was a firm believer in empowering the laity. As a member of the UUFSC Board at the time, I expressed dissatisfaction at what I perceived as David's encroachment on the laity's authority. This dissension brought focus to my role as a Verger. Was I a disruptor, living for "free" off the Fellowship? Although I had never actually heard such a charge, it was apparent to me that this dynamic had presented itself.

When David first arrived, he independently and wisely created a detailed list of his activities to document his work. In a conversation with him, he confided that this was a prophylactic measure — a preemptive step to forestall claims of "doing nothing." This wisdom was not lost on me. Following that example, I created a log of my activities and time invested as Verger, thus showing that, based on a range of monthly values for the Verger's quarters and range of values for my time acting as the Verger, the "exchange" was equitable.

UUFSCC's second minister
Leslie Heyboer – *[to be further developed]*

THE PHYSICAL PLANT IN 1982

The Building and Its Architecture

There was a rumor circulating that the architectural design of the Fellowship building was inspired by Safeway stores. This doesn't seem to hold water, as most Safeway stores of that period were of the "Marina" style, based on the San Francisco's Marina Blvd store, where, incidentally, I spent many luncheon breaks while teaching radio production at Western Public Radio workshops, located across the Blvd at Fort Mason. Most likely, this rumor was based on the first design, as reported in Wendy Edgerton's history of the UUFSC, which, as she noted, "... was rejected because it looked too much like a supermarket; and cost too much."

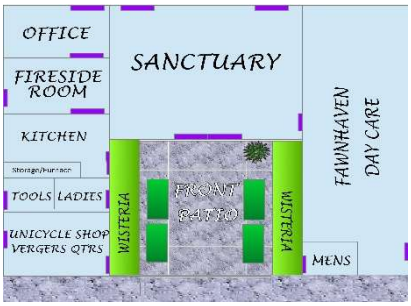
Although the architecture, with considerable additions, remains basically unchanged, the Fellowship in 1982 wasn't physically the same as today's Fellowship. The central structure, which has been extensively updated since then, remained the same; it consisted of the Sanctuary and two wings. One of the wings was rented to *Fawnhaven* Daycare and used on Sundays for the new Fellowship RE program, which was beginning to show signs of re-growth. At the time, Carol Sampson, whom I later joined in wedded bliss, along with co-chair Carol Parker, established a fledgling RE program. "My" Carol left shortly after I arrived; we were "ships passing in the night" and wouldn't meet again until 1991. Carol Parker's husband, Richard, was the capable chair of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, and their two children were among the majority of children in the program.

Inside the Sanctuary, the walls and ceilings were bare, with exposed beams. The ceiling peaked at nineteen feet, give or take a few inches. Over the years, suggestions for "finishing" the interior were usually met with strong objections from some members that the interior was "already finished"! They would have none of it, thank you very much. As we all know, change can be a challenging process. It required time, vision, personal dedication, material resources, and a certain distancing from the status quo to create the current Fellowship.

The other wing of the building was divided into six areas. At the very front, facing the gravel parking lot, was the Unicycle Shop, a mini-thrift shop featuring member-donated items. It was open "for business" after "programs" on Sundays. This room later became my living quarters when the Fellowship decided to create a Verger's living space (see Appendix B). Behind this room was the Ladies' room, followed by a storage area accessible only from the other side of the building. The kitchen was the first room encountered when entering the Fellowship through the side door. The kitchen led into the Fireside Room, which was used as a meeting room and had an exit door that opened onto the grassy area, complete with stepping stones. The Fellowship office, with an exit door opening onto the back grassy area, was located at the very back of the wing.



Original exposed beams and walls



UUFSCC building, original footprint

The exterior of the Fellowship was clad in plywood siding, which, over the years, had shown significant weathering. The glass windows leaked during heavy rains, and there were plenty of them

in the Fall and Winter of 1983. One year, the Building and Grounds crew wire brushed the entire building and treated it with linseed oil.

The Land.
The wooded hills behind and the ample open fields adjacent to the Fellowship added to the beauty of nature. During Sunday services, horseback riders from nearby stables could be viewed, sauntering through the trees on the trail behind the Fellowship, reinforcing this natural setting. Some members, considering future development plans, explored ways to prevent such passage. Fellowship member Ed Newman, a practicing attorney, noted that the stable owners could likely claim a prescriptive easement right for continued use due to the long-established usage of the trail. This potential legal encounter dissuaded that option at the time.

These fields and "forested" undeveloped spaces surrounding the Fellowship's 3-1/2 acres allowed my constant canine companion, DJ, and me to continue the near-daily hiking routine we'd developed. Up the hill, through the vast field unhindered by not-yet encroaching high-end housing developments, we expanded our explorations to the other side of the barbed wire strands, going beyond *that* field, continuing into the tree growth from where we could look down upon the Aptos High School grounds. After discovering an immense and recent paw print on that trail, I decided that we'd leave this area to the wild critters, undisturbed by us in the future. Our "usual" hike was a circular path around the vast field, densely populated in the spring by CA poppies and lupine; up the hill, around the top of the field, and back down the other side, which was bordered by a dense growth of Manzanita. One of my favorite pictures captures DJ and me resting in the shade, awaiting our hiking guests on the return hike.



Jeff and DJ on the hiking trail next to Fellowship

During one of these early hikes, I came across an 18-24" diameter pipe protruding vertically about a foot above the ground. A pointed metal cover was lying close by, sporting a rusted chain, but access to the pipe remained open. Dropping stones into the chute, It took a considerable number of seconds to hear the results which always indicated "no water" at the bottom. Also, that this hole was of considerable depth. I was overwhelmed by the nightmare images of someone – me, DJ, or other life - falling into its open maw. I secured the covering as best I could and often stopped by for a visit during our hikes, speculating on the hole's origin. Though most likely a water well drilled during a previous time, it was easy to fantasize the possibility of an underground bunker created in response to a threatened Japanese invasion during WWII. Such an imagination.

Clearly, coyotes lived in this underdeveloped area. I made the questionable decision to contact county animal control, which responded with an officer who brought no-kill traps. Checking on these traps daily, we only discovered a trapped Blue Jay with a bloodied head, having continually banged its head against the cage in an attempt to escape. We released him and animal control recovered the traps. The next evening, I took a night hike into the area and found a tiny coyote cub hiding in the bush. I placed him/her in a 5-gallon pail, determined to do everything I could to save it. I rushed the poor creature to the Santa Cruz 24-hour emergency veterinary care on Soquel Avenue. While I watched the vet draw blood, I suddenly, without explanation, nearly passed out. The vet returned with the message, "no-hope." The next day, I was further saddened to find fresh adult coyote scat at the exact location where I found the cub. Sometimes, trying to help doesn't always work. Still, my determination to try remains, tempered by the understanding about who is really being served.

To Bee (or not to Bee)

At some point during those years, I took an interest in honeybees. After bee-ing trained by a nice beekeeper fellow who lived on Hanover Street in Santa Cruz, another student and I were motivated to build our own beehives. Actually, this other student, again whose name escapes me, was the designer and builder, and he supplied all the materials. I may have helped him construct the actual hives and supers, but otherwise my involvement was minimal. We purchased the frames and starter foundations, as well as smokers and hive tools.

I framed a 4" x 4" x 8'raised stand to elevate the hives about 2 ½ feet off the ground, where the bee colonies would have some security from predators and other pests and be more easily accessed by me, the beekeeper. I positioned the stand and hives out of view behind the large Monterey pine tree, located near the corner where the Bryan's building would later be constructed. Over time, I had a peak of five colonies, some from capturing swarms that were reported to the fire department by folk who, understandably, were afraid of these masses of beautiful buzzing creatures, who are never more mellow than when they swarm.

Beekeeping was a peaceful endeavor for me. I only really worked in the autumn, when the hives were overflowing with golden wildflower honey. Then I was "forced" into the chore of extracting that "food of the gods." Fortunately, there was a fellow beekeeper a mile or so away who graciously loaned me his extractor with the caveat that it be returned, in a reasonable time, and that it was VERY CLEAN! The extraction process was physical, tedious, and messy. One of the biggest challenges was keeping the bees away from the honey. I could only do the extraction in my apartment, which meant continually opening the door, letting in more bees.
The raw, unfiltered honey was stored in sterilized quart Ball jars, most of which, as best as I can recall, were donated to the Fellowship. I also shipped jars of honey back East to my aunts and cousins as holiday presents, and kept enough for myself.



Verger Jeff, "keeping" bees

In conjunction with keeping bees, I also undertook "square foot gardening." The meager production of carrots, onions, squash etc. from this endeavor were shared at the Friday evening gatherings which were ongoing in those days.

Access to the natural world nourished my soul then, and it's memories still do. I am integral the natural world of which my essence was created and to where it will ultimately return.

THE WORK AND OTHER EXPERIENCES OF A UU VERGER

Early in 1982, when I first arrived and became a UUFSC Member and the first and likely only Verger, it was only expected that I stay in my van with DJ, parked in front of the Fellowship during the nights. As I became more involved in Fellowship life, I began doing chores. Mary Jack was the Admin Assistant at the time, and I developed a cordial relationship with her, helping where I could. Upon converting the Unicycle "shop" into Verger quarters, I took on more regular and extensive duties, primarily but not exclusively, janitorial responsibilities. Self-supervised, I relied on feedback from members to adjust those responsibilities.

Cleaning

Every week, I cleaned the entire Fellowship, sans Fawnhaven daycare - the Sanctuary, office, Fireside room, kitchen, and both bathrooms. This entailed:

- Dusting all surfaces. Keeping the cobwebs from taking over the Sanctuary ceiling was a 20-foot challenge, resolved with a feather duster on an extendable pole. Running the duster between the ceiling and wall rafters, cleaning one-quarter of these areas each week over one month, kept the cobwebs in check. In the kitchen, counters, sink, and stove tops were scrubbed. The refrigerator was cleaned inside and outside as necessary.

- Floors: The Sanctuary, office, and Fireside floors, each with carpeting, were vacuumed. The kitchen and bathroom floors were swabbed with a mixture of TSP and odor control liquid.

- Both bathroom sinks and bowls were thoroughly scrubbed.

To ensure the Fellowship was spic-n'-span for the "programs" on Sundays - soon to become "services" - cleaning days were Fridays.

Responding to Urgent Issues

Although there was no formal agreement between me and the Fellowship, my understanding of a Verger was that a Verger would be the responsible on-site member to address non-administrative issues that arose in real-time. It was "on me" to handle such matters as they presented.

The "Big" One

Of all the urgent issues while living at the Fellowship, the Loma Prieta Earthquake takes the Blue Ribbon. Until this violent quake, this East Coast transplant had appreciated the novel and unexpected shaking and rumblings deep in the earth. That changed at 5:04 pm on October 17, 1989.

DJ and I were inside the Verger's quarters when the unimaginable shock hit. I opened the back door, seeking safety under its frame. Thirty feet away, the power pole supporting the transformer was weaving back and forth as though it were a sapling in the wind. While considering the danger I might be in should that pole decide to topple, I became mesmerized by the earth itself, rippling like the ocean in the face of an oncoming squall.

The shake, rattle, and roll went on "forever". When this finally stopped, I shut off the gas and began to survey the building with trepidation about the glass windows. The windows survived intact, but a later County inspection pointed out that those windows were not safety glass and needed to be. Research into glass replacement yielded an acceptable solution: installing transparent security film.

Pleasantly surprised that the windows held up, I froze, breathless, when I noticed that one of the two huge speakers suspended from the ceiling rafters had broken one of its chains and was dangling precariously above the baby grand piano from the one remaining chain. This piano, donated by Paul Pfieffer, a long-time member, needed immediate rescue! Fortunately, it was resting on a piano dolly, so it was easily moved to a safe location.

Everything else was in order, including the water heater and chimney. Without access to Fawnhaven, I was unable check their premises.

Some entries from the Verger's "log"

- **February 12, 1984, 1:20am**: knock on the door. I looked out the peephole and saw a monster standing there. I went out the back and around the front and saw a huge man with long scraggly hair, his head and face covered with ice. I asked if he was okay. He said he was on his way home, walking, and slipped and fell into the ditch. Could I call his friend to pick him up? I led him into the kitchen, called his friend, and made some tea while waiting. His friend came by shortly in a nice new Buick. Friend told me Walter was retarded and thanked me for my help.

- **September 29,, 1984, 9:15 p.m.**, I returned to the Fellowship and saw lights on in the kitchen pantry. I opened the kitchen door, and found the office door open. DJ ran ahead into the back office as I noticed the center desk drawer sitting on the floor. I could tell by the way she wagged her tail that someone was standing there behind the wall.

I immediately called her back and went to the apartment to call the Sheriff. Went back into the building and saw that the desk drawer had been replaced. I cautiously checked the office and found the back office door not shut tightly. Immediately, I closed and locked it in case the intruder was still outside.

Went out to the front to wait for the Sheriff, and at 9:35pm, the deputy finally arrived, checked the premises, and found that the back door of the sanctuary had been pried open with a screwdriver. The deputy believed the intruder was searching for food or money. I believed the construction at the house next door attracted him. 11:15 pm, checked the premises, all secure.

- **On June 15, 1986, at 3:45 a.m.,** I awoke to human cries for help. Listened out the back door. Heard, "Oh, God, Dennis, don't!" The voice sounded like it was coming from the bus stop near McDonald and Freedom Blvd. I phoned 911 and reported the cries. Listening more, I heard "Please! Somebody called the police! The Sheriff said they would dispatch a unit, and I was to call if I had any further requests. At At 4:10 a.m., I walked out to freedom. The Sheriff's car went past and stopped at the bus stop. There was another car there. Heard loud talking on the Sheriff's radio. Walked back, checked the building. Everything was secure.

- **April 14, 1987, 10 pm:** heard brakes squeal and a thud, ran out and saw a dog lying in the road. The driver had stopped. I was very upset. The dog was killed instantly. The tags gave name and number; a neighbor's house sitter called the owner, answered, made arrangements to pick up the dog.

- **August 12, 1990:** A biker took a spill on Freedom in front of the Fellowship and brought his bike here. I dressed a deep cut on his elbow, and an enlarged brush burn on his shoulder. He called home, had a buddy with him on another bike. He got back on the bike and the two rode off.

- **July 22,, 1993, 2:57 a.m.:** The fire alarm went off. Carol and I both jumped out of bed. I checked the premises while she called First Alarm. As suspected, one of the detectors must have malfunctioned. The alarmThe alarm wouldn't reset, so we switched to the the silence position, and went back to bed.

Undated

- An empty gravel parking lot was an ideal place for immature male drivers to develop their "donut driving" skills. My presence couldn't prevent this, but it did mitigate the occurrence;

- An empty parking lot, well shielded from the roadway by a thick border of trees, was also an attractive nuisance for anyone wanting to "not be seen". One afternoon,, I interrupted a a pair of Monterey County Sheriff deputies, one male, and the other female, "just sitting" in their patrol vehicle. Politely asking them about their business and if there was something I could do to help, the female deputy got out of the vehicle and approached me in a threatening manner. I was a bit unnerved by the "force of law" being on her side, but I respectfully stood my ground. Having exhausted her displeasure at the interruption, she soon returned to the vehicle, and they drove off. Lesson: I "fought" the law and I won.

It became clear to me over the years that the Fellowship was frequently a refuge for many a Wayfarer on Freedom Boulevard. I would often drive into the parking lot and find someone parked

under the trees, enjoying their lunch or just taking a break from life before their finals at Cabrillo. Many knocks at my door have been from motorists seeking help with some problem. Although it may not be apparent to the Fellowship members, for these folk, we're a significant part of their lives. It is not only the facility's security, but also being here to help others when they need it, that brought a lot of meaning to me as the Verger.

Social Life & Pledge Drives

Electing to have a minister increased the financial burden and brought the Annual Pledge drive into prominence. Once a year, financial commitments, in the form of pledges, were, and still are, asked for and given to support the economic solvency of the Fellowship: an imposed but critical issue when money is valued more than good works. Or life. This has traditionally posed a significant challenge for most UU congregations. Studies have shown that UUs statistically enjoy one of the highest income levels of any faith group, but according to some figures, UU giving, collectively, ranks as one of the lowest among religious groups. To squeeze blood from that turnip required some good ole' UU ingenuity. As with any pledge drive, wisdom demanded that pledges be solicited based on the importance of the institution and its good work, rather than by pleading for money to pay the phone bill. Two of the approaches during the 1980s were the Silent Auction and a celebratory performance. I was part of two of the latter.

The first "show" the intrepid volunteers tackled featured a stage with a curtain and performances long since forgotten, but highlighted by the energy of Bea Koeppel, a former USO volunteer and likely a "hoofer." Bea was the most gracious of people and dearly loved by all. Her warm and welcoming nature made everyone feel at home, and her personal touch was evident in every aspect of the event. She often hosted hospitality events at her home overlooking the environs of Soquel. I had the honor of MC-ing that show.



Little else is remembered from that event, including its financial success. Still, the second "show" was, by some measures, "quite a production." The second "show," which I also MC'ed, was more memorable for me. It included marvelous three-part harmony, good keyboard accompaniment, and a solo performance by yours truly. This event is in the archives.

OTHER UU INVOLVEMENT

UU Leadership School

In her published Fellowship history, *"From These Beginnings*," Wendy Edgerton writes, "The Fellowship sought to strengthen its leadership potential by sponsoring representatives to the PCD Leadership School" (p. 52). Harold Edgerton prompted my attendance at the next school, which turned out to be a "cognitive reference experience" for me, significantly shaping my life.

I wanted more, a greedy devil I am, so I attended the Pacific Northwest Districts' Leadership School in Port Angeles, WA, the following year. The focus of that summer's school was Conflict Resolution. I was introduced to the work of Speed B. Leas, a pioneering spirit in conflict management associated with the Alban Institute at Duke Divinity School. Several years later, I was fortunate to record his seminar at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco.

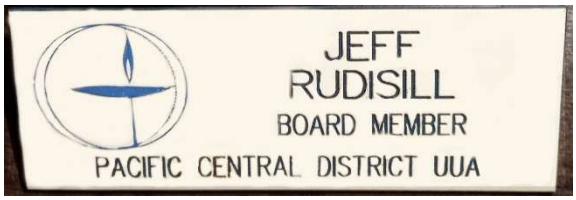
One statement of Speed has always remained with me: "The first sign of conflict in a religious institution is that institution's sign out front." Too often, we tend to ignore and deny conflict. Members of the Fellowship were no different. I overheard one member responding when asked by a bystander, "Oh, we don't have any conflict in the Fellowship," this, after she had witnessed physical violence at a Board meeting. Recognizing and appropriately addressing conflict before it escalates is a calling for all ministers, lay and professional.

I was hooked. I applied to become a trainer for future PCD Leadership Schools, where, over several summers, I further developed my understanding of group processes while strengthening ties with other UUs throughout the District. Ultimately, I learned that it's one thing to "teach" conflict resolution and quite another to practice it personally.

Service on the UU Pacific Central District Board of Directors

My involvement with PCD Leadership School introduced me to other UUs throughout the PCD. Attending that first school with me was the new PCD District Executive, Robbie Cranch. Robbie was instrumental in recruiting me for the PCD Board, where I continued to expand my UU horizons and involvement, working with many other dedicated UUs throughout the District. All District Board meetings were held at congregations across the District, so travel was required, but it was also rewarding for the experiences it provided. On the PCD Board, I met the only other self-identified UU Verger, Clark (the last name escapes me). Like me, Clark lived on-site at the UU Church of the Monterey Peninsula and performed a function very similar to mine. Meeting him helped validate my own position as a "Verger." Curiously, he'd independently came up with the title, Verger.

As a PCD Board member, I served on a committee focused on promoting UU growth throughout the District. We met regularly at Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley. Again, communing with these new UU friends was inspirational. Our committee researched and identified Salinas, CA, as an opportunity for growth. The small existing Fellowship in Salinas seemed to be "sitting on the franchise", as one member put it. Further plans for expanding in Salinas were vetoed by the then UU minister at Monterey who saw any growth in Salinas a detractor to the Monterey Church.



LIFE OUTSIDE THE FELLOWSHIP

Being the UUFSC Verger was not a full-time "job", nor was it expected to be. As the Verger, my role was to assist in the maintenance and operation of the Fellowship's facilities. During the day, with Fawnhaven fully occupied and the Fellowship's Admin Assistant, who was initially Mary Jack and later Shelly D'Amore, overseeing the building and grounds, the area was well-maintained.

Consequently, to supplement my lack of income, I substitute taught throughout Santa Cruz County, including a long-term substitute teaching role in the computer lab at Ohlone Elementary School. While there, I interacted with Jane Boone, a Fellowship member and Librarian par excellence.

Later, I worked with Senior Network Services as their Money Management Specialist. And starting in 1986, I was the lead instructor for week-long workshops held at Western Public Radio, located at Fort Mason in San Francisco. These workshops were attended by audio producers from Public and Community Radio throughout the US, and it was an honor to work with these producers. However, as we'll see, the dream that motivated me when I left the East Coast was an audio recording studio.

Real to Reel Audio Productions and how it related to the Fellowship

When I embarked on my Journey to the West in 1981, I was determined to create an audio recording studio and master the art of audio recording. Shortly after my arrival in Santa Cruz in 1982, I met Elizabeth Gipps and Sybil Glebow. Together, we formed an informal group dedicated to radio production. Elizabeth, a Santa Cruz personality with a radio show on KZSC, the local UCSC student radio station, and Sybil, a talented cello player and composer, were instrumental in our journey.

Through Elizabeth, I was introduced to Ed Porter, a Santa Cruz High School educator who also sublet spaces on the second floor of the Neary Building at 1364 Pacific Ave. Most of the rental spaces were photographic darkrooms, serving local photographers. However, there was a small room, a closet, available at the rear of the building, which we agreed to rent.

Our first endeavor was creating two :30 public interest radio spots for the then-trending Nuclear Freeze Movement. I demonstrated my ignorance of audio recording by pasting egg cartons on the walls of the small closet in our rental space, and we set about "producing" these radio spots. The production quality sucked.

Well, as I believed, the Universe does provide. I don't remember how, but fortunately, we met a Clio award-winning radio commercial producer, whose name has long since escaped my memory, so I'll refer to him as Tony. Tony had connections who contributed to these productions at no cost: a professional voice talent and a local audio recording facility, located in a converted church in the 7th Street area of the city. I learned a great deal from the single recording session.

My significant contribution was writing the script for the radio spot, which related the current nuclear situation to a game of Russian roulette. The second spot centered on a speeding train, equivalent to a one-megaton atomic bomb, rushing toward oblivion. Elizabeth's voice can be heard at the end of each spot. These recordings, a testament to my passion for audio production, are now part of my archive.

Real to Reel Audio Productions, not more than a dream and a rented closet in the rear of the Neary Building, had limited value for me as it prevented me from focusing on developing my stated "dream" - to create and operate a recording studio. Ed Porter, our "landlord" and friend, mediated an amiable settlement between me, Elizabeth and Sybil, and so began a multi-year endeavor to design, build and operate a 24 track analog audio recording and production studio, using every inch of the rented space, which, in total, was approximately 16' x 12' x 10'; divided into a small studio and even smaller control room.



Jeff Rudisill at the console in the control room of his 24 track studio

The rest of the story of my career in audio is material for the future,, but credit must be given to Mark Shamlian for his dedicated assistance in building this facility, and to Clair DuBois who gently reminded me of my financial obligation to Mark for his service. Both Mark and Clair were Fellowship members.

Relocating to the Verger's apartment

Around 1987, the owner of the building, Redwood Management, as nearly as I recall, notified me that they were converting the second-floor space in the Neary Building to office spaces, and that I would have to vacate. Fortunately, they provided plenty of notice. At first, I looked for alternative locations to relocate and ultimately decided to "scale back" and relocate my recording operation to the apartment at the Fellowship.
E
With the approval of the UU Board, I added an additional layer of 5/8” drywall to the interior of the apartment, covering all exterior walls, and suspended this drywall on resilient channels to isolate the room from traffic noise on Freedom Blvd. Several Fellowship members contributed their energy to make this happen. Several challenges were overcome: to wit...transporting 10 sheets of 4' x 12' x

5/8" drywall, weighing nearly half a ton, on the roof of my VW camper van, again with the invaluable help of Mark Shamlian, and getting this drywall into the apartment before the rain came. Some of the Fellowship members who helped with this chore were Nelda Moyer and her husband, Trish Brokckel, and many more whose names and faces have slipped away.

Another challenge was adding a large, dual-pane glass window to the outside wall, providing a view of the yet-to-be-imagined Bryan's building. Where and how should this glass be procured and mounted? Yet again, the Universe provided. One Sunday, an interesting new face appeared at the Fellowship. I noticed he was driving a Nissan pickup with structures on the side designed to carry sheets of glass! In a conversation with this fellow, he offered not only to acquire the glass and transport it to the Fellowship for me, but also to install it. Ya' gotta' have faith in this Universe!

I set up the equipment that I hadn't already sold in the corner of the apartment, and stored the Ampex AG 440 ¼ "mastering tape deck in the closet of the apartment, where any noise created by the operation of the tape deck could be blocked by closing the sliding doors of the closet.



Jeff at the recording controls in the UUF apartment



Ampex AG440 1/4" Tape Deck

TIME TO MOVE ON

In 1991, Carol Sampson, her mother, Betty, and son, Justin, returned to the Fellowship, a place that would play a significant role in our spiritual journey. Her father, Bill Sampson, would become an essential part of the Fellowship's life several years after Carol and I had moved away.

Carol caught my fancy. As a practicing "witch" in the Coven "Rising Moon," centered near Campbell, CA, on the other side of the mountain, Carol brought the pagan aspects of spiritualism with her. Carol became a founder of the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans (CUUPS) group not only at the Fellowship, but nationwide at a UU General Assembly.

I was attracted by Carol's energy. Several other male companions of the practicing women joined me in the Wiccan rituals. Although motivated by my attraction to Carol, the expansion of my spiritual awareness became an integral part of my being. What an incredible feeling of community this became for me! It soon stimulated the creation of a men's group, a significant development that further enhanced community life at the Fellowship and contributed to my personal development. The Men's group provided a space for us to share our experiences, learn from each other, and grow spiritually.

My interest in getting to know Carol better, combined with a growing need for female companionship, prompted me to ask her to dinner. She said, "No," but I heard "not now." Later, I asked her to dinner again. Again, she said, "No." Ok. Now I have become even more determined. After an appropriate interval, I asked *one last time*. I kept this "last chance" to myself, but if she said "no" for the third time...well, "that's that then."

This time she said, "Yes." From that evening on, our mutual attraction grew more profound. After a brief courtship, we decided to get married, giving little or no consideration to what this would mean for me as Verger, or her as a mother. On March 14, 1992, we were married at the Fellowship in a Wiccan ceremony, a significant event that marked a unique and personal milestone in our spiritual journey. The Fellowship Hall was overflowing with Fellowship members, friends, and guests.

The rehearsal dinner was especially memorable for me. As the person responsible for preparing the spaghetti and salad dinner, I failed to recognize how long it would take to bring a four-gallon pot of water to boil until after the rehearsal was nearly over. To the rescue came Iran Mosinen, and, though the dinner was "a bit late," it was served and enjoyed by everyone, even more so due to the delay. Iran was essential, not only by saving the dinner, but also with the cleanup.



Iran rescues Jeff in preparing the rehearsal dinner.

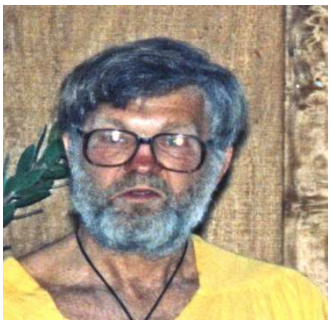
The wedding itself was a memorable affair, as all weddings are. Our first concern was the weather. Betty had arranged canopies behind the building as a precaution, but Carol 'cast a spell' for no rain that day. I 'cast a spell' to keep away all 'lions and tigers and bears' from the reception. Both 'spells' seemed to work, except for the persistent 'Henry-in-the-trenchcoat', who always managed to show up if there was free food and drink. Henry's love for freebies was truly unmatched. And the canopies did provide shade for the reception.

We had three officiants/ministers – hers, his, and ours. Carol's "minister" was Jinni Stahl, a member of Carol's Coven, casting blessings for the two of us. Marvin Miracle not only hosted a planning brunch at his home for Carol and me, but also served as "my minister," reading a selection I chose

from Robert Fulghum's *"All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten."* Leslie Heyboer, the Interim minister at the Fellowship, was the "official officiant," calling for family, friends, and Fellowship support for our union.



Jinni Stahl



Marvin Miracle



Rev. Leslie Heyboer

Fred DeLis, a professional concert pianist and the Fellowship's pianist, provided accompaniment. An interesting note: Carol and I were to enter through opposite back doors, which were standing ajar, but unknowingly, Fred closed the back door, "locking" me out. Ouch.

Dave "Woody" Wood served as my "Best Man." He also directed incoming traffic in the parking lot and was part of the Men's drumming group. Woody, with his sons, released doves on the patio after the ceremony.

- Leah Wood introduced the ceremony; the Fellowship Choir was in tune.
- Carol's Coven cast a circle;
- A five-person A cappella singing group provided vocals;
- The Fellowship Men's group added drumming.
- Carol's father, Bill, and my brother-in-law, Mike Stapleton, were the videographers;
- Casandra Fox took stills.
- Carol's sister-in-law, Diane Sampson, baked the cake, and Mary Bailey decorated it;
- Justin, Carol's son, was not only part of the singing group but also played clarinet and performed audio recording duties;
- The Men's group assembled the home-made dance floor after the ceremony.
- Ted and Margie Echeveria gifted us with a weekend honeymoon at the Pine Inn in Carmel, complete with limousine transport and a fruit basket at the facility. I could go on, but I need to go on.

Here are some stills of the wedding contributors. A video of our wedding is archived.



Fred DeLis



Dave "Woody" Wood



Lea Wood



Rising Moon Coven



Vocal Group



Drumming



UUFSCC MEN'S GROUP **Assembling Dance Floor**



Bill Sampson



Mike Stapleton
Videographers



Kasandra Fox
Photographer



Justin Sampson
DJ



Mary Bailey – Cake Decorator



Dianne Sampson – Cake Baker

The Bryans Building

As our romance was blossoming, the Fellowship began planning a physical expansion which led to the decision to construct The Joe Bryan's building. The primary goal was to provide additional RE classroom space for the older children, and larger quarters for the Verger. Carol and I, in our commitment to the project, contributed significant physical energy to its construction. In anticipation of continuing to record audio in the new space, I installed resilient channels to add an additional layer of 5/8" drywall, effectively reducing the impact of traffic noise from nearby Freedom Blvd.



Bill Sampson tours Bryans under construction



Newly completed Bryans Building

Then, in the summer of 1992, a pivotal moment arrived when I received a letter from the audio department at Computer Curriculum Corporation in Sunnyvale, offering me a position as an audio producer. This was not just a job offer, but a life-changing opportunity, completely out-of-the-blue. I later discovered they had contacted Leo C. Lee, Director at Western Public Radio, seeking referrals for the job. With a mix of hope and trepidation, I submitted a demo tape and attended an interview and was soon hired as a CCC employee. After two weeks of commuting 'over the hill,' we made the courageous decision to leave the Fellowship and move to San Jose.

Not long after our wedding and several months before we left the UUFSCC, I experienced a profound loss. DJ, my Constant Canine Companion of 15 years, left a void in my heart that could never be filled. Recognizing her pain, I found a compassionate veterinarian who made 'house calls.' An hour after eating her favorite dinner, while lying on the very familiar seat in the back of our VW van, she peacefully departed. In preparation, I'd purchased a Sycamore tree and buried DJ under it, on a rise parallel to the front of the preschool, from where a hose could be run to water the Sycamore. At one time, this location was considered for a memorial 'garden.'





With the loss of DJ, the Universe gifted me with the most significant event after our wedding. That was the day Carol came to me and said, "Jeff, you're going to be a daddy." What a thrill! What an event! We had decided to let nature take its course, neither trying to nor avoiding getting pregnant. On May 10, 1994, baby Liam (William Sterner) Rudisill, was born at our new home in San Jose. His mother, Carol, was attended by Rising Moon Coven members, a very competent midwife, Saras Wathi, and her husband...that would be me.



Picture appearing in San Jose Mercury News

Epilogue

I was a Unitarian Universalist. I am a Unitarian Universalist. I was and am a Christian, a Buddhist, a Taoist, a Confucian, and a pagan. I am all the learnings and wisdom I've gathered over my life. Life. The single and ineffable value, manifesting with infinite presence. I am so grateful for my life with the UU Fellowship, and the meaning and growth I found during my time with the building, the grounds and, most importantly, the people I knew and cared for.

Appendix C – The Verger's quarters.

The room in the front East wing of the 1982 Fellowship was originally the Unicycle Shop. Members would gather after Sunday programs, look over the clothes and knick-knacks contributed by others, and sometimes even purchase those items. Clair Dubois, along with several others, was instrumental in keeping this operation on track. After serving as Verger for not quite a year, several members (I'm sure including Clair) decided to convert this space into an efficiency apt to provide me an indoor living area. It was at the front of the building, where I could more easily survey the building, parking lot, and entrance from Freedom Blvd.

This approximately fifteen-foot square space provided a 3' x 6' closet; a small kitchen area with a two-burner/sink combo and 3' x 2' counter space (pantry storage underneath); a separate bathroom with toilet, sink, and single-person shower. The rest of the space was a living area. My bed was three couch cushions that could easily be stacked during the day. I installed a small writing shelf on the interior wall and found a used office chair at the Skyview flea market – an essential shopping spot for me then.

After I closed my audio studio in Santa Cruz and unsuccessfully searched for an alternative space, I decided to seek, and received, permission to "soundproof" the Verger's quarters and use this space to do essentially voice-over recordings and productions. With the help of Mark Shamlian, we transported twelve sheets of 12' x 4' x 5/8" drywall from the supply house in Watsonville to the Fellowship on top of my VW camper. At roughly more than a half-a ton, this was a rather foolish but ultimately successful endeavor.

After arriving at the Fellowship and with rain threatening, I was able to enlist the help of several members in getting this drywall into the apartment.
There are so many stories about our Fellowship and the campus. Let's get these written down before it is too late! What are your favorite stories?
All you need to do is write your story as a "**Reply All**" to this email or the subsequent ones which will be generated, and we will have a record. No story is too small or insignificant. Here are a few topics to consider. Please add yours. Also, add people to the email list who I may have left off.

2. The Green House: minister's house? Teens remodel? Red tagged? Chris O'Leary repairs and painting.

David MacMillan was the first minister to serve the UUFSC. The Ministerial Search Committee selecting him as the candidate included Rosalie Kraft (Chair?), Helen Eidemiller (Pres), Jeff Rudisill (Verger), and several others who slip my memory; perhaps Barney Brookman was among them. David was, as I recall, to serve part-time. He initiated the plan to put a Granny House on the knoll by a huge pine tree (Monterey pine?), where he intended to live. A non-UU...quite a character himself, provided the initiative, plans, and materials, and supervised the construction of that Granny House. After David left, the structure became a resource for the RE group, along with a Tee-Pee, which arose with energy from the Echeveria's (Ted and Margie). The tall pine at that site became a resting place for a yearling deer killed on Freedom Blvd, which I carried back to the site for burial.

While living there, David and I responded to a horrible traffic accident one night on the hill just east of McDonald road. While I stayed back, David performed last rights for the victim(s?), who tried to pass on the hill and struck an oncoming van. The CHP officer's comment on the empty beer bottles found in the victim's pickup was: "Breakfast of Champions."

3. The tool shed: Original one moved here from someone's property. Torn down and replaced by current resin shed because of termites, rot, and need to accommodate mower.

Another interesting older fellow, non-UU, needed a place to store his "Granny House", aka shed and received permission to put it on the UU property. It became a catch-all after he apparently abandoned it. Perhaps he even originally donated it to the Fellowship; I don't remember.

4. Trees on the property. Every one has a story. The large oak trees. The box elders in front which became a nuisance and have been mostly removed (by Woody and others) and one that almost killed John Thieman. The olive tree on the front patio (Woody?). The ornamental trees around the patio. The lemon tree outback. Three trees out front of office/library, middle one removed because of root damage to parking lot. The wisteria. Landscaping on front patio and elsewhere.

The blossoming crab apple tree was a wedding gift to Carol and me from Mary Brooks in March 1992. The Fellowship was for many years "hidden" from view by the dense trees lining the property along Freedom. The other tree special to me was the Sycamore I planted as a grave marker for DJ, my constant K-9 companion. This was located about 20 yards up the grade opposite the playground of the Day Care center, in front of the line of pines separating the Fellowship property from the neighbor. It didn't survive the expansion of the parking lot, if, indeed, it made it that long.

5. The finishing of the building using part of a bequest. Before and after?
6. The solar-electric system and why it is no longer present.
7. History of rentals, including Rose Blossom.
8. Remodeling history. Was one of the front bathrooms once a shower?

What was originally the Unicycle Shop when I arrived in 1982 was converted into the Verger's quarters, which included a small bathroom with toilet, small shower, and sink.

9. Kitchen history, physical building/remodels and uses. Ernesto's work. Michelle's stove. lighting.
10. The gallery (name?)/library room history.
11. Minister history
12. Caretaker history.
13. Patio history. When paving stones put in? Repairs (a sink hole!). Furniture.
14. Weather stories: flooding of parking lot and outback. wind storms. etc.
15. Major events (50th/150th anniversary, etc.)
16. History of hospitality time. when began? volunteers for each week? Jayne, Michelle, Mary, et. al take over.
17. Music history: Sunday services and special events. Music directors, choirs, etc.
18. The back oak grove. Plans for memorial grove.
19. History of Work Days.
20. Parking lot: when was it paved? What was it like before?

From at least 1982 until 1993 the parking lot was gravel, and would occasionally be used as a recreational spot for

Bob Bates