

Interview w/Bonnie Grimont (7/25/75) Long Beach

When I had first heard about him the girls had said they had met this hermit who lived on the beach and I didn't want them to go at all. But then after meeting him -- and he was very well educated, self-educated -- he was a very neat person.

I had planned to come up that weekend (I felt so badly when I heard) Everyone told me how sick he was and I thought I'm going to try to talk to him on the telephone. And I did, and I said, "Bert, I'm going to come up this weekend and I'll see you," and he said, "I'll never last, Bonnie." I said, "You know that you will -- he was always so negative when he talked about himself, even before he became ill like this -- But he didn't." (He was realistic. The rest of us didn't want to accept it.) "Thats right. He accepted his death and didn't hang on." He didn't have any reason to. If he'd tried to he would have had to change his life style; if he'd had to leave the dunes he couldn't have tolerated it. That's what I was so worried about, but sometimes the way he'd talk I thought maybe he could accept it better than I thought he could. His little cabin really was cute.

(The cabin was vandalized between Bert's death and labor day, but Harold had closed it up again.) "It's sad that they had to do that. . ."

(Talking about "unceremony.") "That was nice, I thought. I heard about it." I think he would be very pleased if he could watch in on things and realize how much he meant to people.

(Talking about Washington's Birthday, finding ~~candle~~/cabin smoldering.) Bonnie never took pictures of Bert or cabin. My husband and I did walk out to his cabin once, but we didn't know him very well at the time. Sometimes he would be angry when people came. He'd say, "WHO IS THAT OUT THERE?" (He would be angry if people he didn't want came, but angry, too, if those special to him did not.) I kept thinking of people knocking at our door, and we would feel the same way.

I lived up there for six years and the first few years I didn't know Bert. It was just saying hello to him after I realized he was a nice man. When he did the gardening, he passed by my house all the time. Do you know Pam and Wally Simon? (No, and I wish I did.) She was a very special lady, too. Very outgoing. Bert just adored Pamie. I'm surprised she's not in his will. They lost that contact. But she used to be up there just all the time. And he came to visit her incessantly. They were very, very close. I'm sure she would know things hardly any of us know except for Harold.

(I hadn't taken any pictures of Bert because I didn't want to infringe on his privacy until about a year and a half before he died, but then he began talking about the vibrations being bad for the next two years and talking about it being time "to go upstairs," as he put it, so then I did.)

I remember the day that he fell into the creek. He came to my house and he was just soaked. If he could, he came to my house about once a week. Then when I didn't hear from him, I'd tell Carol or the ranger to check on him. When the river was too high you just couldn't get over it. He said, "Here I am. Bonnie look at me." I told him, "Bert, just come in. Take off your pants and we'll put them in the dryer." It was just Bert and I. He's huge, you know. I said, I'll get a blanket to put around you. So, he was a little uncomfortable about being in a compromising situation, but he did it. Ever since that time he complained about his leg.

(Up until that time I had thought of Bert as indestructible, but then I thought we should get some pictures.. And he'd tell me that other people had taken his picture, but still I was hesitant to intrude on his privacy.

He was so political and so aware of what was going on in the world. He'd get so mad when he heard about certain things. He'd listen to his news. Nothing escaped him. (Bonnie met him in '69.) We didn't know each other really well until the last year or two. Then we became closer and closer. And he really had no one and he needed someone to get the groceries. Then when he realized -- now my daughter is 24 -- she had many young people around the house and he loved youngsters -- so if I couldn't get over there I could send the boys over with groceries or whatever. He truly enjoyed Susan and all of her friends very, very much. There's always something going on in the house and that was something to come to and I think that he felt he was always welcome. So, of course the more he changed the more we watched him. . . People are really cooperating about the book. It's as if it's meant to be. Everybody wants you to, Jane.

He talked very little about his childhood. He did tell me his father disliked him very much. He didn't go into great detail. He didn't seem to have a real home and childhood. I never really understood how he stowed away. He didn't mention this. But (He worked 10, 12, 14 ~~days~~ hours a day as a child; this was before child labor laws.) His father took the money and always he spoke of himself being the black sheep of the family.) (There was the religious thing, too. They were either devout Catholics or zealous Dutch Reformed, and he has leaned toward the Buddhist teachings all along.) (He liked Gene because he was once a minister and left the ministry) "They had lots to talk about, or rather to argue about. You know, Bert was very opinionated." A lot of little things he really knew how he was thinking about things." He really wanted to be pure. He would talk about things like this. Do you know Shirley Ingham? (No, she is another who's name I have, but whom I've been unable to contact.)

There was a lot of gossip about Shirley and other people in the area. And then he said, "You know I don't have anything to do with Shirley. She is a bad woman. The vibrations she gives out are wrong. He associated only with the people he thought were fair, right, and decent people. He had very high ideals. (I understand their horoscopes were at odds or something and he would have nothing to do with charting hers.) Right, but you know I think Bert did get certain vibrations from Shirley and he didn't want to get involved. You know, something that he told me and it wasn't too long before he was sick like this, and he said many young girls came up to see him. He told me there was this girl about 18 and she wants to come out and stay with me. What do you think about this? I said, Bert, it's your personal life and your business. But I said, she is young and if she goes around talking about it, people might not understand and I didn't want stories to get started. You have to think of your reputation, too. As soon as I told him that he said, "You're right. I'll have no more to do with her." But I was very, very surprised that he would even think of having any kind of relationship with her, the way he was talking. He seemed to feel there were certain good vibrations between them. He did like young girls. It is perfectly normal that he should like women. (He related to women far better than to men.) I don't think he had the opportunity to relate to men. (True.) (Bert's & my relationship became very different when Gene started going. He would be very cruel to me upon occasion) He has done that to me when other people were around, too. Just saying little nasty, kidding remarks like, and I'd wonder why Bert was doing this to me. (I believe it was jealousy). (Incident at hospital where I told him there were only 3 men in my life. He knew there should be he and Gene, but when he heard 3 he sat up in bed demanding to know who the third was. I told him it was my father-in-law. He said, "Ohhhh." and laid down.) Isn't that cute? That is very interesting, Jane/ And that's probably why we do like him so much. He became so involved with us as individuals. I just didn't realize all the people that he truly had. But you were too far away, in Atascadero. I knew he had Glenda and Harold, they have been so fantastic. I mean he did just everything for Bert. Bert was so fortunate to have Harold. He kept us all informed. Harold told me in the hospital that last evening he had called the nurse and said if you could just give me a pill so I could talk to my friends for a few hours longer.) That is so said and you know he was such a strong man that what could you talk about? You certainly weren't talking about his death a great deal? Did you? (Yes, we referred to it. We had to be honest with Bert.) That was wonderful you could do that. You should have done it. And he was accepting it. He needed the isolation, but then at the end he did want his friends around him. I don't know if I could be like that. And he was hurt if certain people didn't come to see him at certain times. He would say, so-and-so said they'd be here at a certain time and they didn't come. Sometimes I would call them up and say, don't say anything, but he's missing you.

Arbrey Nickstrom (?): She's one who might know a lot of little details because she great about picking up on things like that. They had a little run-in at the last. She truly admired Bert. She was a woman that spoke right out and -- just like Bert actually was himself -- the things she said to him, he said "It just gives me a headache; I'm not going to have anymore to do with this woman." I told him she truly liked him, she could take him to the doctor. She's a widow, not a widow, she's never been married, and she wanted this relationship. Of course, I couldn't say anything to her about what the problem was and they had to work it out, but he said, "No, no, no, the vibrations just aren't right. I'll have nothing more to do with Eileen (?) And I wanted to have someone around here I could leave to get his groceries and things, but I couldn't talk him into that. I knew very little about his family, his occupation, or his background. I have no reason to know for sure, but I just don't think he was ever married. (Did he ever express regret that he hadn't a wife or family?) Laughing, no I think he saw a lot of his friends that had more problems than he did. I think the colony just happened to be there at the right time. After living that way for so many years, I don't think he could take the close contact. He would even come into town and he would say, I can't stand those airplanes going over, and so I think when he started to live that way it was a necessity. Then when the colony slowly started to pull out he had just got started and there was no need to change it. His needs were taken care of there, but he never

I think his religion was very important to Bert. It was his own private religion. (Do you think he was concerned about how people viewed him?) Yes, I do. I think he was very aware of what people said and I think he was concerned about what people said about him. (In a way he was proud of his independence?) Very. (His abilities with astrology?) Yes, I think he was (an example of a very spiritual man?) Yes. I think you're right, Gene. (He used to talk about our coming to see a holy man. . .) (If you read the Buddhist bible thought, this is a fulfillment of the Buddhist philosophy.) (People see you as a Buddha) Really? (A very moral man, removed from the world, an example. . .) I can see where reading that book gave you a great insight into Bert. I'll bet that is true, because you wouldn't go around trying to explain this to people who wouldn't understand it. I had no idea. It never entered my mind. (The last few weeks in the hospital, he said, Harold make sure Gene and Jane get my Buddhist Bible.) (It was very much a part of his language and his thinking, but he didn't come right out and say, I'm Buddhist.) He was a very proud man. I feel, too, that he was very arrogant at times. (Even though he was hurt if anyone criticized him, he was very outspoken with others.) That's what made me laugh so with Eileen. He was as outspoken with her as she with him and she truly liked him just as he probably liked us when he said these things, but he was very, very sensitive about, he really couldn't take any type of those vibrations. (Do you think he had a sense of himself as a religious teacher?) Yes, you know, when you think of it, I think he did. He liked to tell us many little things. Of course, I'm not aware of anything about the Buddhist religion so it would always be that he was in that position as a teacher.

(To Gene) Did you like him, then, a lot? (Oh, yes.) Then you had a pretty close relationship, too. (Especially in the last year.) (Gene just started going with me the past two years) (It took awhile for him to get used to me. There was always this tension.) Jealousy, maybe? (Yes, but the more we talked. He would say something, then he would look at me and say, "Isn't that right?" Looking to me for support.) (One day we took a nurse and a friend out to see him. To get advice. He had them all sitting around -- he was in bed -- he had me running hither, thither, and yon and he'd say "She's my flunky.") Laughter. I don't read anymore at all. When I first met him he brought me a book a few times. ^{You know what} He was a health faddist he was. He'd borrow my Adelle Davis books and keep them for awhile. He always said I gave him the diarrhea. Giving him this rich food. You gave this food and it made me sick. He was always taking in vitamins and certain foods he thought would help him in certain areas so he was, really loved those books. Otherwise, he told me didn't read a whole lot, maybe because of his eyesight. (After he had a broken blood vessel behind his eye, he told me he just couldn't read anymore.) (Although he did want me to order for him, and I did, and took it the night before he died and read out of it to him, THE SAYINGS OF CHAIRMAN MAO) Oh, really? (Gene: 'we were sitting there reading this to him and everynight the fellow next to him would have a minister come in, so we're sitting over there reading Chairman Mao and here's this little minister sitting next to us, listening.) He liked vitamins. Everything was tea. He always drank his tea, he grew it. And I have made him tea. Oh, that tea is not any good from a tea bag; but as far as his groceries, he bought a lot of beans, and things like this. Cheese,; he did like his meats and he'd walk over to that little store for hamburgers and occasional steak. But he prepared his foods very simply. He tried not to eat a lot of sweets. I think his teeth bothered him. At Christmastime when I sent him tons of goodies he said, Don't you ever do that again. I thought he was just kidding, so I did it again. And he said, "Tell your mother NOT to do that again." I guess it was a temptation to him and it hurt his teeth. I think he got his protein. And he always got his fresh vegetables and fruits. (My story of the food and \$10) Well, he gave me about a \$100 and this was for when I bought his groceries, and whatever. So, I guess we spent about \$40 of it and then ~~xxxxxxx~~ he wouldn't need them for awhile. And I said, Bert, I still have that money -- goodness, I didn't want him to think I'd ever take any of his money -- not that he ever suggested it -- I'd write down every little thing I got -- and he said, "Oh, you remembered that, huh? He acted like he just thought I'd keep the \$60. I said, Why, Bert. . . It was as though he expected someone to do that to him. Who did that to him, Jane? Was it a long time ago? (There were a lot of people who did that. There was one man who borrowed a book of his under the guise of wanting to read it, who then sold it for \$300 or something. People he thought were his friends. He really was taken in by people) It took us a long time to prove to Bert that it was really he we cared about, that we had no ulterior motives.

(As far as I can tell his most favorite people were Harold and his family, you and your family, and Gene and I. Do you know any others to whom he was close?) No, I don't.

(Did you know of his interest in the stock market?) No. Oh, he might comment "the stock market fell", but we never thought anything of it. (Gene: one of the last times we were there he was talking about his will; then he asked us to go outside and harvest the garlic. While we were gone he got out a book and was working on his books. I went for something and he closed the book quickly and said, "I don't want you to know about this yet. Will you please go out?" So of course, I did.) It was a ledger book. Well, when was the will made up? That same day he gave us a letter to mail to Crites about the will. Did he tell you that he would leave you something in his will? I remember that he said something to me, but I thought it was a joke, you know. I never thought he had any savings. (You know what I thought he'd leave us? His Buddhist Bible and his shaving mug, because Gene and shaved him.) He declared he would not marry and Bert was so honest I think he'd be afraid to lie about something like that. It sounds like you were closer to Bert than I was. You did so many things for him. Was he close to Millie Richmond? To one person we used to see together who was pushing her religion, he said one day, "You're not like Bonnie. She's much more feminine than you are." And I could see my sister was exhausted -- she's really a lovely person and you just love her -- but, pretty soon it was like she was just battering him down with her ideas. It didn't take very much -- she wasn't coming on that strong. It didn't take much to batter Bert down like that. It was about the time he fell in the creek. She had always wanted to meet him and he was dying to meet her, but . After he had fallen into the river, he'd say, "Tell Joan to pray for my leg." He liked her, but there was a personality clash, because if you came up to Bert with too many ideas that hit him wrong it took a lot out of him.

Linda Andrews I think that is the girl I was thinking about. I think she was the little dark haired girl that was studying astrology with him. I don't think it was Mary I met. And he did give \$100 to Gloria Gould. You know who Gloria is, don't you? Ramona Gould is her mother. Who was June Dutra? I didn't know her, but I think I've heard him talk about June though. When ~~XXXXXX~~ we first moved here Gloria told my daughter she rode him to the store a lot and things like that. And he left it to Roger Kellogg, the park ranger. He was VERY thoughtful. The will says he left his household things, personal effects and personal auto to Harold. I wonder if there were things back home he thought he had a right to? (I don't know. We thought maybe it was a form will. I showed it to a law student at UCLA and she said it was no form will, so I don't know.

(The last couple of days he had Harold come in and start going over stocks and bonds and things he had) For heavens sakes. (Harold told him he didn't know anything about stocks and bonds and Bert told him he'd better start learning.) You know, I think he had a lot of money. Because, I don't think you can. . . I'll bet this is in probate court right now. Otherwise we would have received it, wouldn't we? I'm almost certain you can go through probate if you have a certain amount of money. He might have a lot more money than any of us have ever realized. (Isn't that funny? We were all so worried about him that we would take him all these things. . .) I KNOW it. (That's what amazed us. We went out to see him to get away from money and all that stuff, then when he dies we find he has all this) That he left \$100 to Gloria I can't believe. All the time I knew him I never heard him mention her name. She lived right across the street from where I lived. (You didn't even know about the amt he left you until you looked at this?) I had no idea. (\$500 to Bonnie) I'm just amazed. I just didn't think there was anything like this involved. He was a very thrifty man. He worked all those years. I'm sure he didn't get a whole lot, but he didn't spend a whole lot either. What I think is really fantastic is that you people have really been good to him. You did a lot because you really wanted to. Of course none of us thought Bert had anything, I'm sure there isn't a soul. Some people are so greedy. Isn't it amazing? I still just can't believe it. I think there's a lot more involved than any of us realized, but I don't understand about the automobile. It is incredible. Bert was always Bert to me. Always consistent. Very consistent.

Who are those people that owned that big house full of antiques? I can't remember their names but Bert told me this story: That when they were very young -- and I'm sure the girls would know the names of those people -- Bert had a run-in with that man and he hit Bert on the nose and broke his glasses. Bert had given away somethings that didn't look right to these people, Bert got a big stick -- like a clothesline pole -- and you know Bert was very young and strong -- he was a big man anyway -- and Bert evidently went after him so there was some violence in Bert. ~~XX~~ There just wasn't ever a vengeful side to Bert. But when he was young he actually told me that he had things happen. Not that he wanted to fight but he had to stand up for himself. You know, you almost get your nose broken, or something. . . Maybe that made him feel like fighting. (Maybe he felt this thing in him that made him believe he should remove himself from society. I noticed in the hospital that when the other fellow had the TV on without the sound just the glare of the changing picture he found very distracting and upsetting.) He was very outspoken. He let us know all his wants and he let us know when there were things that irritated him. He never mentioned fishing or hunting for subsistence. He said that he used to have cats and the kids were so mean to them and everything that he just couldn't keep them. But that was years before I knew him.

He just had the little pet ~~Bert~~ ^{Linda} he loved. And rabbits that lived there. Pam said he grew celery. He always drank celery tea. It would be difficult to describe Bert, because I feel like you, he was a paradox. But I feel he was a very strong person and one of the most individual people that I will EVER meet. He had a life style that was so unique. I feel he was set apart, probably the most unique person I will ever meet. Because of his life style, because of the fact that he could exist out there so long by himself and still have that social thing and still fit in. The more I think of it, the more I think that his religion was the most important thing to him. His friends were definitely very important to him. Oh, definitely. His friends were very, very important. I think they kept him in touch with reality, too. (He kept us in touch with it, too.) (I think that fits in with the religion thing, too. I think he saw himself as a religious teacher. Without people he is not a teacher.) (The isolation was an expresison of his values.) You have given a whole new insight of Bert to me. It really makes sense to me.

I think the thing I valued about Bert most was that he needed me right then. just made me need him. When someone truly needs you it just hard to refuse them. And then, he was truly a nice man, and interesting, as well. I enjoyed his company. In the beginning I think I just felt sorry for him as he needed the groceries and Pam had moved and I thought I could do just that little bit for him. Doing things for people just brings you closer. Then he would do things for me and that's how the relationship got started. The more I knew him, the closer we became, and then we moved. We were just then getting into our friendship. Had we stayed I'm sure we would have become closer and closer.

Story about ~~Linda~~ Harriet Zizzicus and Tina Nelson taking him roast beef dinner on his birthday, spending day and promising to come back. When they didn't he became very angry. Bonnie said, he would get angry with Linda, too, when this happened. "I was always trying to fix these relationships. I'd say, Now Bert, people get sick and things come up and they can't help it if they don't get back when they said they would." If he was hurt by someone he'd turn off toward them. Especially if they didn't do something they said they would. Right up to the end he was in contact with Harriet. He'd leave things in her mailbox. Like she'd recharge his flashlight batteries for him. He wasn't always as understanding about something coming up for others as he was when something came up in his own life. (He used to call us wage slaves -- he kept a calendar by his bed and before you left he would extract a promise about the next time you would come, would mark it on the calendar and mark off the days until you returned. He also recorded his pain and the severity of it on the calendar.)

Right then I think he filled a need for me. My husband was working down here and only came home on weekends and I didn't have a lot to do. When he was having a bad day he'd need to see someone, but he'd say, "Bonnie, this is a bad day for me; could you tell so-and-so such-and-such." I feel like he filled a need in my life just by being there. You know none of us ever reach out to people and tell them how important they are to us. We just never lay ourselves on the line enough that way and sometimes later on we regret it. You just don't realize how important you are to people. I think we all want to be needed and loved, especially when we like them anyway, then you just can't help but respond. And, of course, Bert was very good about coming when he said he would. He would come on certain days and when he didn't come it would turn out that he wasn't as well and then I would worry about him.

He talked about getting letters and cards from the Queen of Hearts or the Queen of Spades. It was some woman in Santa Barbara. I don't know if that name was something he worked out in astrology or how he gave her the name. When I first met him he said the Queen of Hearts was coming to visit him. But I don't know if she ever came.

(One time I took my mother out to meet him and he was so charming to her. They got to talking about astrologers, fortune tellers, then handwriting analysis and he said, "Well, a few years ago a fortune teller had come into the dunes and told his fortune, had said a blond lady was going to come into the dunes and tell him she loved him. A blond lady came into the dunes, but she hasn't told me she loved me so I don't believe in that fortune teller stuff. ~~any~~. There was a woman who used to come by herself and she was a very lovely woman and she was fair. When I got to know him I asked him if that woman was coming to see him and he responded that ~~there~~ he wouldn't tell her, there were certain things he kept to himself and I thought he was teasing. He was always teasing so much you never knew what was going on. But there were women in his life. This one lady, he said, must have spent a great deal of money bringing me all these vitamins (he showed them to us once). Was it you, Jane? No. It was a lady from the Halycon community. He said she just brought me loads and loads of vitamins. (She did. Two shelves full.) Why did she do that? (She was worried about Bert) Was she real close to him? I didn't think so, but you never know (No. He always talked about her deprecatingly, like she was kind of flaky.) He did that about a lot of people. Now, Pam (and Wally), she was little and blond and hyper and they had a very good relationship; she knew him for years. Angus said he'd never spoken to Bert for more than 30 mins at a time though he knew him all his life. Bert had great regard for his family because his family had been his employers for so long. But Angus was as surprised as I was to be named the executor of the will and to be included in it because. . . In Sept⁷² I took Bert to the hospital -- that was the month before I moved -- and before he even knew he had the cancer. Bert had attacks at night and I talked to Dr. George about him and we took him to hospital and they did nothing for him.