
Ro Lee

Ro Lee was Howard Moody's secretary in the mid-1960s. _____

There was a time when the only thing that made sense in my life was my work at Judson Church. The world certainly didn't. President Kennedy had been assassinated and my mother had married her third alcoholic husband. The psychotherapist I was seeing had broken my trust. Howard Moody's suggestion that I move into Judson House was probably based on his astute observation that I was very much alone and just a babe in the woods of the big city.

Shortly after I moved in, a hippie girl I had befriended put some LSD in my coffee one night without telling me. Even though the dose was not strong enough to cause a "trip," it turned out to be the best thing that could have happened to me as it blew the lid off the repressed demons that had haunted me and started me on the path to break free of them.

Even so, I still had many problems, especially in dealing with people I did not know. Howard asked if I would like to get some competent psychiatric help. He knew a psychiatric diagnostician connected with Mount Sinai Hospital, which had a pilot program where one lived at the hospital for up to three months but could keep one's job.

It sounded perfect, and once I knew I was in trustworthy hands I was able to unravel the tangled web of events that had been my life up to that time. This was the time of President Johnson's "Great Society," and health care was available to anyone who needed it. I would never have been able to afford the help on my own.

I remember reading once that Greenwich Village was the place where young people came from all over to rewrite their identity, and that was surely true for me. Judson's beacon of sanity was exactly what I needed. It was the first church I had experienced that felt like my idea of what a church should be. When I asked Howard what was necessary to become a member of Judson, he said that one simply had to believe in a higher being.

My four years at Judson were the beginning of a life that has turned into one of service. As the poet Kahlil Gibran says, "What are your joys but your sorrows turned upside down." All the terrifying experiences of my early life are now put to use in understanding and relating to those who come to Erehwon Retreat, the healing center I established in 1992. And true to the axiom in psychotherapy, one's experiences once understood become the tools to help others turn their lives around.

I thank everyone at Judson who has helped me to get from there to here.

RO LEE

changed her name to Rosa Lee to mark her journey from an incomplete to a whole being. She lives in Rock Hill, New York.