

I don't remember my mother's tears; I know she cried. Her oldest son was crazy

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April 10, 2020



My parents -- 1984

Diary Friday 10 April 2020:

I don't remember how I said goodbye forever to my parents, my family. All I know is that I really meant it.

I don't remember my mother's tears but I know she cried. Her oldest son, the first of her six children, was crazy. That is most likely what my whole family thought at this time. But they knew they could not stop me, dissuade me from my crazy ideas.

During the last months of 1974 and the early part of 1975 I behaved ever more strangely. I kept talking about a coming nuclear war that would leave our civilization in ruins and wipe out most of humankind. What was even worse was that I actually wished for it to happen. I felt it was both inevitable and necessary.

Sometime in 1974 I had read Jack London's book 'The Call of the Wild,' about a dog who took to the wilderness of Canada's Yukon Territory. I had also heard a lot about 'The Late, Great Planet Earth' by Hal Lindsey, though I never read that book. These stories undoubtedly influenced my thinking.

By 1974 I had shed any vestige of belief in the triune God of the Catholics with whom I grew up and also the Allah of the Muslims whom I had encountered in the Middle East.

I believed in nature, in a kind of pantheism. Human civilization defiled our planet. It was like a cancer that gradually overwhelmed the Earth. It had to be destroyed so nature could recover. Our civilization would annihilate itself in a nuclear war, and bands of human survivors would roam parts of the Earth living a new Stone Age. I wanted to be part of these, perhaps even a leader.

I don't remember how this thought came to my mind but I believed the nuclear war would devastate the world in 1979.

At first I wanted to travel to western Canada and live in the woods there, awaiting the holocaust. But an American friend pointed out to me that the southern hemisphere was more likely to escape total destruction since most nuclear targets were in the north.

I changed my plan and decided to travel eventually to Patagonia. The Canadian woods remained my first destination, though, because I felt a strong attraction to them, perhaps inspired by 'The Call of the Wild.' I also believed I had to pass a survival test before heading to my final destination in Patagonia.

So my plan was to try to survive for at least a year more or less in a Stone Age setting in western Canada, and then head south to Argentina. I didn't give any thought to how I could accomplish that feat, crossing all the countries on the way after basically becoming a Stone Age man.

Thinking back today I feel I really was crazy.

My last job in my home country Luxembourg was as a van driver delivering refrigerators, washing machines and TV sets to households throughout the tiny nation