

Random Oakland memories

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Here are some of my random Oakland memories. What are yours?

This Sunday in LA church, Rick Joswick will testify about the early days of Oakland church. It will be available on video afterwards on testimoonies.com

Followed by an open mic for others to share their stories.

Oakland. We sat on the floor. We shared our sandwiches, our cookies and our oranges. We wrote songs together. We stood in circles and hugged each other. We followed our guests to the bathroom. We made up songs and sang them. We kept it light, bright and corny. We love-bombed each other. We chanted all night, liquid fasted every morning and fasted every Thursday.

I was in Jeremiah Schnee's trinity at Hearst Street house. We would meet on the floor in the morning, pass around our liquid breakfast ("Put it in the blender!" was the cry when we didn't know what to do with some random food item. Some days we had spaghetti sauce for breakfast) and go over our day. Jeremiah would share some words of wisdom, then we'd lean in and do a choo-choo to start the day.

Jeremiah had some legendary spats with certain other leaders (wicked witch of the west, was one name he used) but it was more along the lines of good-natured grousing between brothers and sisters. Still, with his maintenance company and food share program, Jeremiah had his own little niche or fiefdom. Some accused him of running a cult, which we found humorous.

One brother and I would say "So, we're Moonies."

"Which is a cult."

"Right."

"And we're Oakland Moonies."

"A cult within a cult!"

"And we're in Jeremiah's trinity"

"Right!"

"Which means...."

"We're in a cult within a cult within a cult!"

I was having such a wonderful experience at the workshop, singing songs on the hill, meditating among the sheep, hearing Noah Ross's humorous lectures (with audience participation), eating peanut butter out of a barrel – that it was hard for me to understand what all the negativity was about. People literally thought that if they looked in our eyes, they'd turn into zombies and start selling roses on street corners.

Still, our lifestyle was borderline ridiculous at times. In the Actionizer program, there were so many of us living at Dana Street that we had to roll up our sleeping bags first thing in the morning, or it would be impossible to move around the house. It was a regular house, and we'd have five brothers using the bathroom at the same time. Two in the shower, taking turns soaping and rinsing; two using the sink and one on the toilet. Sometimes there'd be three of us brushing our teeth at the same time.

And as for having your toothbrush to yourself, forget it. Toothbrushes got used, and after a while it didn't matter much by who. Some tried valiantly to hold onto their own brush, and maybe some succeeded. I gave up on that.

Socks were another fluid item. If you didn't write your name on them in big block letters, and even if you did, you'd lose track of them. Or you'd see someone else wearing your socks at morning service. Try praying gratefully then, haha. Not everyone could handle that challenge.

Noah Ross had a routine he would do about negativity. "It's never something big or important. It's like "My socks!!! Who took my socks!" or "Oatmeal again! This isn't the heavenly kingdom!!"

"Well, you know, you may lose your socks, but you'll find God!!"

Try saying that to an old Oakland member and see what happens.