

MARY SILBER AT LERLING FARM

I was born in Bloomington, Illinois and lived in that vicinity until I was 7 when I moved to Dallas, Texas for 2 years. I went to Catholic schools like Eileen and Wind but only for the first through third grades. From there I moved to Del Mar with my parents and 7 brothers and sisters. My father was coming to California to become a music professor at UCSD. This is when it gets to the good part. All through elementary school I loved it and played a lot of sports. I started reading a lot when I was in the 4th grade. I remember telling my teacher all the books I read. In the 5th grade I decided I wanted to be an author and play on the Lakers basketball team. I was given one of my first ^{formal} opportunities at independent study that year when I and about 5 other kids of the 5th grade classes were tested into a group called the "Power Pack" and allowed to do math on our own. Mostly we sat in our corner of the classroom and told jokes.

In the 6th grade I was in a special pilot program. It was an experiment in the open classroom. There were both 5th and 6th graders as well as 2 teachers. I thrived. I was learning algebra by the end of the year and was elected as city councilwoman to Cosmic City, year 2001.

Then came junior high and it was mostly awful. It was at this point that I became interested in free schools. My friend, Renee, and I would read Summerhill with combined wonder and happiness. Betsy Zebell, another friend, went off to Black Mountain Free School, which was organized by many of the same people as Pepper Canyon school. I remember Mr. Johnson, who taught my math class and was a very bigoted character, commented on Betsy's sudden absence, "Oh, off to the Free Zoo!" In the 9th grade I did a research project on free schools.

It was also in junior high that I started keeping a daily journal, and reached my zenith of political awareness. I did a lot of ecology reading and talking and riding my bicycle. I participated in a number of debates on the Vietnam war and worked on the McGovern campaign when I was 14. That was a really exciting time. I would go to the San Diego headquarters 2 days a week with my brother and helped organize a mock election in the 9th grade.

High school got much better for a while. I had very exciting relationships with the older kids and many teachers. In the 10th grade I wrote an extensive research paper on pacifism and began listening to jazz. The next year I lived in Taos, N.M., for a month. I had done some backpacking the previous year and as my jr. year progressed I became increasingly active in the Sierra Club. I was doing a lot of backpacking and a little rock climbing. I was elected to the Executive Board of the local Sierra Club group.

The following summer I scored upon another good group of friends. We went to the Sierras together and started our own newspaper, The Garbonzo Bean. It was through the newspaper that I met Mike and got to know the Farm through friendship with Barbara and Gene Walker. I'm 18 years old and married with Mike. I like math, science, writing (newspapers, journals, letters), the beach, the Sierras, bicycling, thinking, folk dancing, singing, playing and being a funny person.

Mike Fellows



Hello!

I'm 24. I was born in California. My parents live in University City in North San Diego. That was my home address for 12 years.

I went to public schools. In fifth grade I had a good teacher. I was in the special advanced programs. Robert and I were in the first years of Independent Study at Point Loma High. They selected from all over San Diego. It was gradeless. I was the science and math wiz. I decided I wanted something else.

My family went on a lot of camping vacations and a few Sierra backpacks. My brother and I were the first persons to buy the Zion narrows on surfboards.

I went to UCSD and Berkeley and studied a variety. I quit in 1970. I registered for the draft a year and a half delinquent and drew #7 in the lottery, considered the alternatives and joined the Air Force. I graduated at the top of my Special Forces Pararescue class. Because of my outstanding achievement I was retained despite my one-year-delayed honesty on the drug (LSD) question. I was in Alaska for a year. I had a good time.

In 1973 I took a statement to the base legal office and explored getting a conscientious discharge. The route wasn't feasible and I deserted. I was arrested and incarcerated psychiatrically. I deserted twice more, spent two months in the brig, and my claims to conscience were at last recognized. I can tell some good stories.

I was unemployed for a while and then worked at a parking lot downtown for a year. I put out a newspaper which I can show you. I met Mary when she was seventeen. We kept a lot of notebooks. Parenthetically, I just crashed the gates with honesty. This caused a traumatic period in our relationships, but now I think they like me. More funny stories.

Here it is 2:00 AM and I can't go to sleep until I write a life history almost feel like I used to back in College when a term paper was due and a grade balanced on my ability to stay awake long enough to complete it... how many potential Einsteins were lost to the 2:00 AM doze... I don't know if a personal history is a valid way to describe oneself to others (I am writing an autobiography that I will share with anyone interested) here is a list of where I have been at various times in my life:

July 17, 1949 I was born in a not so obscure midwestern city - a child of middle class Suburbia... being second in a line of seven children I spent much of my youth learning survival of the fittest and developing an outrageously long boarding house reach...

June ~~1967~~ 1967 graduated from a proper Catholic girls high school burned my uniform, oxfords, chapel veil... spent my summer working as a lifeguard, pool manager + swim instructor... was told to attend a Catholic College or not at all...

Sept 67 - Dec 69 Chose the College of St. Louis to take philosophy because of the absurd education to English + honors colloquium + student courses they wanted me to take... was a member of student government, the poetry... taught local city kids in a volunteer program...

Oct-Dec 69 Heavy political involvement in the movement against the war in Vietnam... worked at mobilizing the college campus and marched in Washington... more poetry + tear gas...

Dec 69 Quit school + refused credit for the semester in an academic protest over the firing of a teacher with "leftist" leanings... travelled home long enough to confront my family... Jan 70 - July 70 lived with a few friends in Pittsburgh in a commune pan-handled for food until I landed a job with the U.S. Census in March as an enumerator in the ghetto... continued political activity against the Vietnam conflict + Kent State shootings... marched on Wash, DC. wrote lots of poetry + began studying Eastern Philosophy...

July 70 Moved to Newark, stayed in the YUCA till I found an apartment of my own... campaigned for Gibson who was running as the first black mayor in Newark... Sept 70 - July 71 Lived in Newark... worked for the telephone company + became active in the unions at Ma Bell... decided that I needed to learn how to survive outside of a city... began teaching myself macrame, spinning, weaving, rope making, food drying, canning, gardening, tanning, camping skills...

August 71 Traveled + camped through Eastern Canada looking for land...

Sept 71 Began classes at Rutgers, Newark in English + Second
ary education... built a dug-out canoe

Sept 71-74 was hired as a creative writing + social studies
teacher on the jr. high level in a Catholic School in
Newark... continued classes at Rutgers at night...
campaign for McGovern... became very dissatisfied
with the structured school system... spent time
searching for alternatives...

June 74 - Aug 74 hitch-hiked alone through New England and
Southeastern Canada... camped + ~~climbed~~ climbed in the
white mountains...

Aug 74 - Dec 74 Rode my bicycle from Atlantic City N.J. to
Oceanside, Cal, fornia...

Jan 75 hitched through New England and re-visited White
Mountains... Snow shod up (froze my ass)...

Feb 75 - July 75 Camped out behind Palomar College in my
tent while taking classes in Modern Dance, Yoga, Advanced
First Aide, Orienteering, Computer science, Design
and Archery
Learned to scuba dive
worked as a T.A. at Palomar College teaching

English Grammar + poetry to Marines...

Sept 75 - Dec 75 Moved to Sonoma County... helped organize
and taught at an alternative school (our school) in
Ronherf Park... Volunteer work every afternoon at
a non-profit computer center where people could
drop-in and play with the computer... it's purpose
was to explore new ways of learning through games
and simulations...

Jan - June 76 worked part-time as a teacher at the Farr
and part time as a teacher at an alternative
high school in Escondido (E.O.I)

April 76 went to Baja with a group of h. school students +
others from E.O.I... learned to para-kite...
Became friends with Eileen...

June 76 Decided to go full-time at the Farm...

here I am!