

Christmas 1986

Dear Prison-Ashram Project Family,

As I sit down to write yet another Christmas newsletter to you, it's hard to believe how fast the years are rushing by. Childhood, youth, middle age, and old age seem to become hardly more than wispy clouds -- each one like a mysterious dream half-remembered, and even that half fleeing across the skies of my memory faster than I can follow.

When Sita and I began working with prisoners, we were kids in our mid-twenties, never thinking about any long-range planning. Now we turn around in what seems to be the blink of an eye, and find that we're middle-aged and have been working in this project our entire adult lives. What a graceful stroke of good fortune we've had! We never could have planned such a beautiful, satisfying job. We've become connected in Love and Spirit to tens of thousands of people (inside and outside of prison) all over this planet who are struggling to find more Truth in themselves. What a gift! What a blessing!

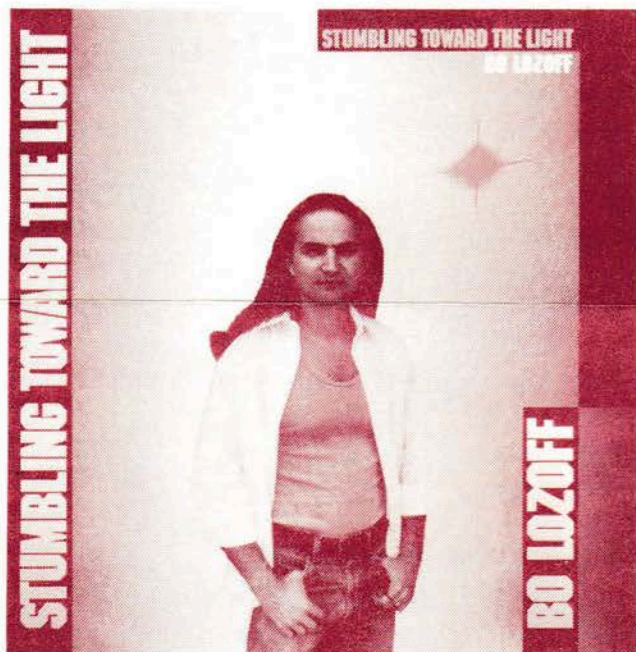
And if you're reading this, you're part of the family as well. No matter how rough your situation may be these days, no matter how many obstacles seem to be towering between you and your peace, we hope you too can take a moment to feel blessed -- to understand that this struggle for truth, for peace, is and has always been the only real game in town. Be happy and think of how much you've already changed during the past five or ten years. You're halfway home!

Nearly 2,000 years ago, another brother walked among us to remind us of these very same things. Contrary to popular belief, He didn't come to pitch one religion over another or to get us to worship Him. He came to help all of us find our own way; He came to remind us that qualities like courage, good cheer, faith, self-honesty, and kindness are the only truly important issues we need to concern ourselves with. This life is over so quickly, it doesn't matter much in the end whether we've spent it in a cell or a castle. What does matter is whether we've developed those qualities which become part of our deeper, mysterious soul -- that's where our happiness can be found.

No matter what religion (if any) you may usually follow, we hope you can use this holy-day season to open your heart to the true Spirit of Christ, which isn't found in any religion or church, but in our deepest selves. Celebrate with us your own personal link to the Spirit of Love, of strength and peace, which is always available to us if we look within our hearts. Although many people have distorted and confused what Jesus is all about, (and department stores have certainly confused what Christmas is all about!), it's really up to each one of us, quietly, to find the Truth. That's always been The Way.

We Love You, Bo + Sita

Our Offering to you for Christmas 1986:



I've just completed my first album of original songs, STUMBLING TOWARD THE LIGHT. Just like my book, this is available free to prisoners and for sale to people outside of prison, which is what helps to support all the free copies.

With help from super guitarist/producer Zan McLeod, the album was recorded here and mastered in Nashville. More than twenty top musicians and back-up singers contributed their talents to make some great rock 'n roll, rhythm & blues, and even a few folksy ballads.

To get your free cassette, all you have to do is write us and ask for one. Please be sure you have any necessary approval or clearances to receive it. If you're not allowed to have your own cassette, give us the name of a staff person who will receive it for the institution.

If you're not in prison, the album is available in LP or cassette for \$8 if bought directly from us. It may also be available from your local record store (on Rockin' Monkey Recordings label). You can support a good cause and hear some really good music all at once.

WE'RE ALL DOING TIME:

Of course, our book is still available too. We just received the second printing of WE'RE ALL DOING TIME, which makes a total now of 33,000 copies published. The book is free to prisoners and \$10/copy to non-prisoners.

Prison Book Project:

Right now, WE'RE ALL DOING TIME and STUMBLING TOWARD THE LIGHT are the only things distributed from the Prison-Ashram Project at this address (Rt. 1, Box 201-N, Durham, NC 27705). We have a very small office and we receive many thousands of letters, so we're unable to stock or go looking for other books or materials. However, there is an organization which sends out a variety of books, so if you have any other books to donate or to request, please write them directly and save us a little time: Prison Book Project, Box 6403, Prescott Valley, AZ 86312

News & Ideas:

As many of you know, last February we conducted a rock 'n roll concert tour in about a dozen of North Carolina's worst prisons. The whole thing was such a wonderful, loving success, we've been invited to make it an annual event. We haven't yet figured out the complicated logistics of taking such a large group to more distant places, but we'd be more than happy to help guide other musicians into doing something similar in their own areas. If you're a musician or even just a good organizer and would like to do something like this, just let us know. It was the most fun I've ever had legally!

One of the offshoots of our prison concert tour was an invitation to help stage an inmate talent show at the NC Correctional Center for Women. Since that prison has no musical instruments, we provided a "house band" and held several rehearsals with the women throughout the summer. On October 10th, the "Hidden Talent -- 1st Annual NCCCW Talent Show" was held, and to say it was a huge success doesn't even begin to describe how wonderful it was. Even the outside media showed up, and a review of the show was published in the local entertainment weekly just like any other concert. The local PBS television station also attended, and is doing a prime-time documentary about the show and the participants which will air in the spring.

To us, one of the best accomplishments of such an event is to break down the barriers between prisoners and community. There's nothing in the laws which require prisoners to be forbidden from sharing their talents with the community at large. In this age of modern technology, there are many ways to perform other than live appearances. We hope that this talent show is just the very beginning of finding new and happy ways to break down the bars between people inside and people outside. We'd be happy to provide guidance and suggestions to any of you who'd like to try something like this in your own communities.

Videotape Project:

On January 12, 1987, I'll be giving a general "We're All Doing Time"-type workshop at Eastern Correctional Center in Maury, NC. The prison is allowing us to bring along a professional videographer, Bill Nichols, who'll videotape the whole workshop, including meditation instruction. After editing, if we have enough funds to make copies, the two-hour videotape will be available free for prison study groups and prison video libraries. We'll also have some borrowable copies for non-prisoners who might be considering offering some sort of program in their local facilities. We'll let you know when it's ready.

Prisoner Fathers:

An old friend who's done a lot of prison work, Scott Gassman, is putting together some writings by and about prisoners who are fathers. If you're interested in writing something that may be published in a national magazine, write for more info to: Scott Gassman, 65-15 Alderton St., Rego Park, NY 11374

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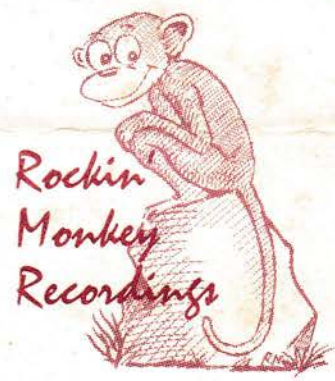
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HAPPY HOLY DAYS