

It was the summer of 1971. Canada was still reeling from the War Measures Act, but Pierre and Maggie remained Beautiful People. Tom Terrific Campbell was mayor of Vancouver, and Carling Heidelberg had just introduced the keg beer bottle. Claude Jutra was the Great White Hope of the Canadian film industry, but *Love Story* was the big movie of the year. Everyone was pretending to read Marshall McLuhan. Unimaginative journalists were writing about the Greening of this and the Greening of that, and about the so-called Human Potential movement, with always a pictorial on the nude encounter group. . .

*Let's go and open a hamburger stand.
It'll probably do just as much good.*

Richard Weaver

AFTER THREE FERRIES AND A day's drive that almost killed the fuel pump of my 1964 Chevy II, I arrived at Cold Mountain Institute on Cortes Island just as the sun was beginning to turn pink and the waters of Heriot Bay were beginning to turn purple.

Cold Mountain Institute consisted of three or four buildings on what looked to be 10 acres of land. The main dormitory and dining room was a large converted farmhouse. Encounter groups and the like took place in a huge back-to-

the-land cedar structure shaped like a teepee. A dark aqua, Early Richmond starter-home bungalow housed the First Family of Cold Mountaineers, Richard and Jean Weaver.

The brochure took pains to explain that the name of the institute referred not to a place, but to a Chinese Zen poet who wrote about laughing brooks and petals on a lump of snow. Cold Mountain reflected the state of mind he represented. I was on the lookout for pretension.

I parked the Chevy II in the yard beside a bunch of Volvos and went into the main dormitory kitchen, where a young woman in no makeup with frizzy brown hair over a peasant blouse and blue jeans with bell bottoms was cooking a monstrous pan of granola. In another, even bigger pot was a mass of oyster stew. The place smelled pretty good at least.

"Excuse me," I said. "I'm here for a workshop, and I wonder where I'm supposed to go."

The young woman eyed me forthrightly. "You're not *supposed* to do anything." Lesson Number One: *supposed* is not a word to throw around at Cold Mountain. "But if you like you can go into the main room with the others. Supper's in an hour."

"Thank-you."

"Don't thank me for anything."

I followed a sound of whispering like dead leaves and arrived in the combination living-dining room where about 20 other

HOW COLD WAS HIS MOUNTAIN

Richard and Jean Weaver came here to found Cold Mountain Institute and put the generation before unemployment and inflation in touch with itself.

By John Gray

people sat around nervously, having had the small talk knocked out of them the same way I had. I sat beside a seedy-looking high school guidance teacher with a peeling nose, thinning red hair and horn-rimmed glasses. He was wearing a white baggy shirt with an applique floral pattern, blue-on-white polyester-checked Riviera slacks and sandals. He smiled. I concentrated on petting a dachshund sitting on the floor nearby.

"I hear he's fantastic," said the guidance teacher.

"Who?"

"Weaver. At Esalen they say he's brilliant." This all in a top-secret whisper. "They say

he's the heaviest since Fritz Perls." The words "Fritz Perls" were emphasized the way the announcer says, "Coca-Cola."

announcer says, "Coca-Cola."

We thought we were vegetarians out of principle. It was only much later that we found out we weren't eating meat because we couldn't afford it.

Former Resident Fellow

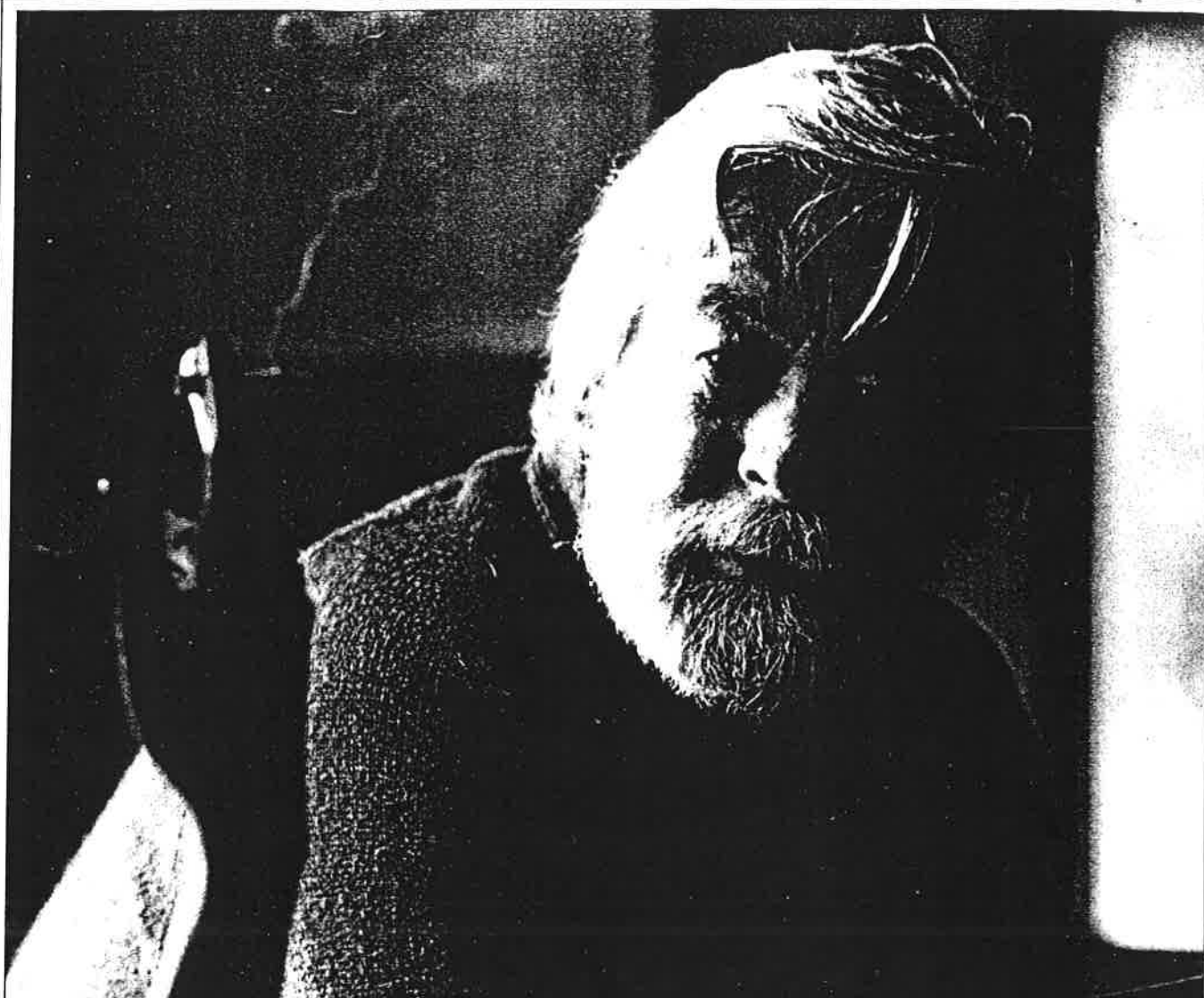
WE WERE SERVED A VEGETARIAN dinner by two Resident Fellows: live-in students who had coughed up \$2,600 for three months of the groups, the rolling, the bioenergetics, the yoga and, most of all, to be around Weaver. They were the Seekers, going for broke.

The rest of us, the 20-odd mere tourists and hobbyists about to spend a week together for 18 hours a day, divided ourselves into two main groups which I will call the Sixties people and the Fifties people.

Tending to their middle-to-late 30s, the ambitious Fifties people wore Glen plaid suits, razor cuts, Mary Quant makeup and Ma Griffe. They were usually in the professional classes: doctors, teachers, counselors and lawyers, plus a smattering of personnel department types.

The Fifties person was struggling against the lie of the Big Sell society. He sold his personality (remember the importance of the word personality in the 1950s?) and mostly his niceness: a kind of amorphous, nonthreatening benevolence that is appropriate in any situation but at the same time does not tie the nice person down to any specific morality.

Unfortunately, most Fifties people sooner or later realized



Richard Weaver: Sailor, logger, prospector, Zen Buddhist, teacher, he founded Cold Mountain for those without his breadth and scale.

that there will always be someone you have to be nice to who will never have to give you niceness in return. This produced a few problems for the Fifties man in the self-image department, but they were nothing compared to what his wife went through: she had to witness the man in her life slowly revealing himself for the suckhole that he was.

Sooner or later they came to the Crisis, and they either broke up or they didn't, but either way the Fifties man felt like a worm, and the Fifties woman was very, very pissed off. There was one Fifties couple who shouted hate slogans across the room all week.

The Fifties people in general added a lot of spice, because they could get really ugly when their manipulative niceness skills ran out and they brought in the blackmail. One guy, when he found out just how unpleasant everyone really thought he was, did a very convincing suicide threat that was pretty scary. But Richard lined up some pillows that he declared to be the guy's coffin, and had him sit there and watch everyone file by and tell him just what they thought of anyone who would pull a trick like that.

Richard often talked about the necessity of working with the richer and sicker.

Former Resident Fellow

THE SIXTIES PEOPLE were naturally about 10 years younger (although there were some crossovers). They leaned towards long hair, beads, peasant blouses with billowy sleeves, patchouli oil, Volvos and vegetarian cooking. They were hippies who had kept

one foot sufficiently in the bourgeois door to drop \$135 for a week of self-analysis and exorcism. They were nevertheless much less affluent than the Fifties people, although both groups had their Volvos in common. Human Potential devotees tend to drive Volvos.

Most of us Sixties people suffered from the natural need of a colonial people to imitate the independent society next door. Monkey see, monkey do.

Since American youth in the 1960s had concluded that it was impossible to work at anything but organic subsistence farming and not be tainted with contributing to the detonation of Missile Earth, it had found what the youth of the world had always sought: a morally superior non-activity that required no knowledge, skill or effort.

Well! How we in Canada longed to sit around Haight Ashbury and do nothing with flowers in our hair! To march on Selma and do nothing there as well, while the Fascist police beat the shit out of us with their truncheons!

In a country at peace, we rallied against war. In a huge, underpopulated country, we campaigned against overpopulation. We sat listening rapt and dewy eyed to the tales of American draft dodgers, and it was only several years later that many of us suddenly realized our own real Canadian lives were not being lived. Not only that, the problems that we were facing were of the 14-year-old variety, problems we should have grown out of. How embarrassing.

We wanted Richard Weaver to tell us who we were.

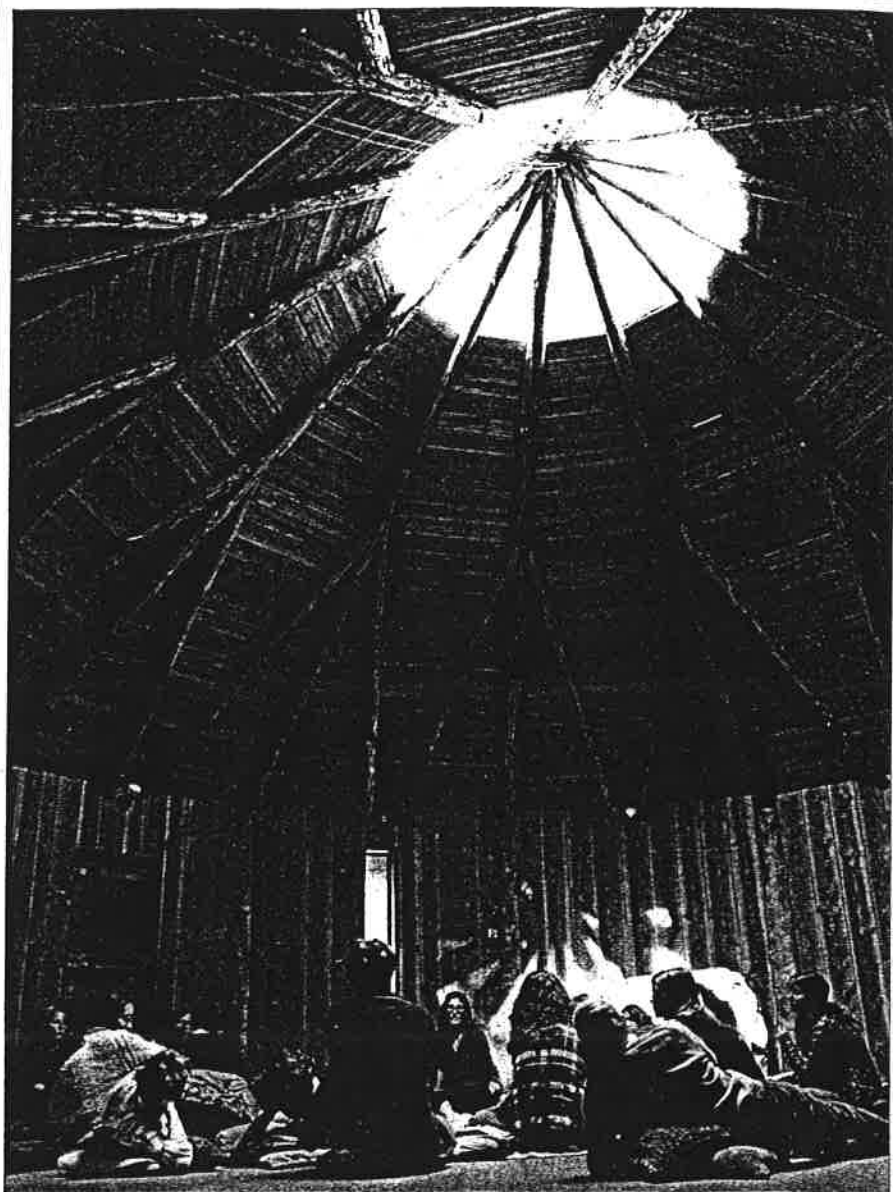
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Getting In Touch: Groups in the cedar teepee dealt with rejection, coming together again, being honest, being responsible; all those things that seemed to mean so much in the 1970s.

I don't think he had any comprehension what he was capable of.

Former Resident Fellow

A TALL, tanned, blond Resident Fellow with a long Sicilian Bandit beard led us up the hill to the cedar teepee. Barely discernible among the cedar trees, it looked from the outside like a non-denominational church designed for Cowichan Indians.

Inside was a huge carpeted area with a circle of pillows in the middle. Between every second or third pillow was a box of Kleenex. Apparently we were expected to go through a lot of Kleenex.

We sat on the pillows and tried to make our legs comfortable as we waited for Weaver to make his entrance. Some of the Fifties people were getting a little disgruntled at Weaver's absence and there were vague who-does-he-think-he-is

mumblings, while the Sixties people tried their best to pretend that they were cool and relaxed.

In walked Richard Weaver.

He was a handsome man around 45, overweight in a bulky, lumberjack way. He had a high-blood-pressure complexion, big working-class hands, longish white hair in a kind of modified 1959 fastback, a clipped white beard, and tattoos that he tried to hide beneath his shirt sleeves. He looked like a slightly Japanese Ernest Hemingway scotch drinker who chain-smoked Rothmans.

We all stared at one another for a while, as he settled his bulk on a pillow, lit up a Rothmans and let the tension build (he was good at that, and knew it).

I was puzzled. If ever I had seen a Northwestern-Tom-Robbins-Granolaland enclave here it was, and yet it was built around a guy who could have played tackle for the Edmonton Eskimos.

If Weaver was a misfit here in his own outfit, it would not have been the first time. He did not fit in at high school either, dropping out in the ninth grade and becoming a cowboy on an Idaho ranch. At 16 he lied about his age and joined the navy to fight the war, as part of an underwater demolition team. One time he and the rest of the crew were asleep in the early morning when they heard strange sounds. It was a Japanese commando unit come aboard with knives to do them in. They overpowered the Japanese and killed them, then went to the three other boats in their unit, only to find that they had been last in line. The others were all dead.

After leaving the navy he got involved in forestry, prospecting and uranium development up north. Self-educated to this point, he then took a degree in English lit and taught school in a Los Angeles Chicano-black ghetto.

In between rounding up dogies, cutting down trees and digging up uranium, Weaver became absorbed in Zen Buddhist philosophy, not surprising in a literary beatnik, Kerouac-type nonconformist in the early 1950s (he was a good friend of the poet Gary Snyder). Over the next 10 years or so he was in and out of grad schools, ending up at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, teaching and doing a PhD thesis on T.S. Eliot and Buddhist philosophy.

Don't believe what I have said.

Come and see for yourself.

Buddhist proverb

WEAVER'S DOCTORATE coincided with the development of the corporate university, dedicated to producing engineers of the Big Sell society. He was not keen on the change from chalk-dusted gowns to input and infrastructure, but he didn't know what he could do about it until he visited Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California at the height of the Fritz Perls era. Esalen was the flagship of the Human Potential movement of the 1970s. For Weaver, this was it. Teaching people to define their own lives, to be their own teachers, to learn directly from the world, to examine their own lives.

This all sounds self-indulgent to the 1980s ear, ringing with Tom Wolfe's "Me Decade," but to Weaver Esalen was the beginning of a revolution against the inherently fascist institutions that control one's life.

Fortunately our Revolutionary Anarchist had a wife named Jean who was not only beautiful in the sandy Irish genre, but also a state-of-the-art organizer and administrator. Together they founded Cold Mountain Institute, which started in a modest way, with Gary Snyder doing a benefit and Weaver doing a group in a rented motel for a week, but then the whole thing caught on like an Egg McMuffin.

Within three years they had the Cortes



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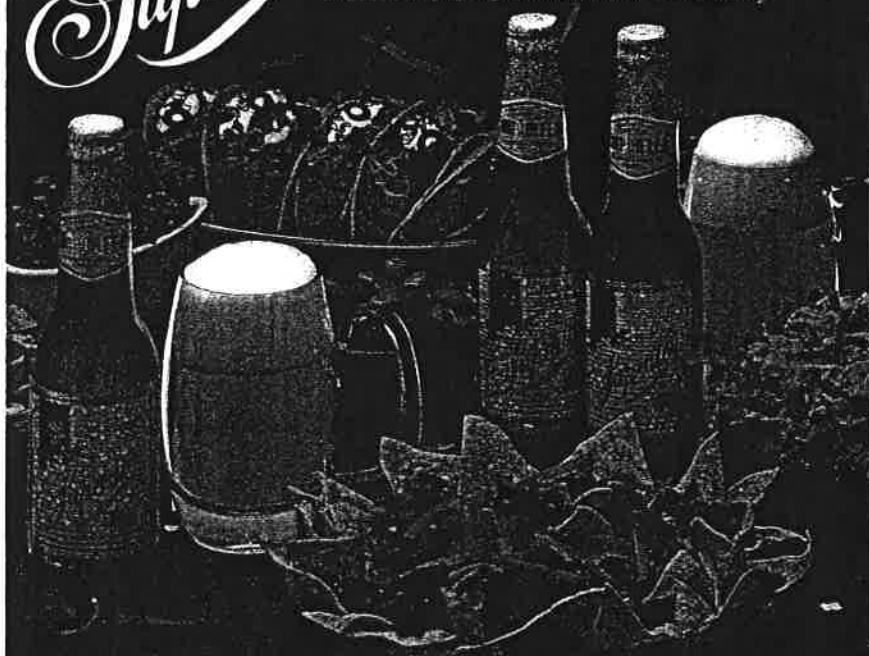
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Island property, and Cold Mountain Institute was a carnival of Human Potential goodies, from fight therapy to acupuncture. Alan Watts dropped in from time to time to hold court, as did the Lama Govinda and R.D. Laing.

How did they reconcile such diverse and conflicting movements into a coherent whole? the canny reader might well ask. Well, that's just it. Weaver didn't. Anyone could come and play out his particular schtick, just as long as he did not try and palm himself off as The Answer, as per Human Potential princes like that fat little Maharaj Ji, that grotesque reclusive yachts-

with things here is a microcosm of how you deal with the world. You may participate as much or as little as you wish, and what you do with the information you receive about how you are coming across is your responsibility, but I am here to help because as the week goes on you will find yourself dealing with what are really layers of fear."

It is difficult to articulate what then went on because on paper it all sounds so damned *wimpy*. That is why so much of the literature on this stuff reads like the *United Church Observer*. That is why Richard Weaver never wrote anything. It is not that the ideas or the methods or the leaders are



Touch The Earth rusticity of Cortes Island property appealed to many Cold Mountaineers, a state-of-the-art sewage digester reinforcing their sense of care and fondness for the planet.

man L. Ron Hubbard, or Werner Erhard (quite a fascist name for a Jewish lad named Jack Rosenberg to choose for himself, don't you think?).

Unlike the preceding fellows, Weaver desperately avoided the Human Potential junkie, the person who drops in every so often for a fix of theory and a chance to display his ostentatious grasp of the technology: "I hear you, I know where you're coming from, but I'm trying to get in touch with my feelings here. Could you give me a little more feedback?"

Weaver avoided dependence upon theories by having as many of them around as possible. The catch was that in the center of it all, like the eye of the hurricane, was no theory at all.

He was a quick study and a lot of his technique was based on intuition. He didn't turn the person's experience into an object of his philosophy.

Former Intern

IN THE CEDAR TEEPEE we listened to Weaver's opening remarks. They were maddeningly simple, along the lines of, "Look, all this thing is about is honesty and responsibility. Honesty means admitting to what is. Responsibility means not blaming it on anybody else.

"Now here in this room you have a lot of people you don't know. How you deal

sticky and trite; it is that most people's problems are sticky and trite. It just does not make sharp reading that somebody has not been able to get it up for four years and the doctors have to tear out another foot of his intestine every year and he suspects he may be a fag but the thought makes him want to puke. And Weaver had little games in social interaction that seemed to bring this stuff out in no time at all.

Richard used to say to us that by the end of the first day you should know where everyone is at, who the crazies are; and if you did open anyone up, you stay with them, no matter how long it takes. . .

Former Intern

AN EARLY GAME was to divide the 20 people into four groups; each group was instructed to reject one of its members. The reasons for the rejection had to be agreed upon and articulated both to the person rejected and to the rest of the group. Pretty childish sounding, I admit, but don't try it at cocktail parties; it tells people more about how they are coming across than they might care to know. Nine times out of 10 they have been doing it for years and nobody told them. . .

Then there was another little number where all the men lined up at one end of the room and all the women lined up at the

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COLD MOUNTAIN, continued from page 72

other, and then the women went and stood in front of the man who attracted them the most, and vice versa. Sounds pretty twee, eh?

Well, let me tell you. Some got left out altogether and they tried to act cool, but they had to deal with the fact that the opposite sex found them about as sexually attractive as a fire hydrant.

Weaver had lots of games like that, and he knew just which one would be useful and when, and he knew just what to say to someone and when. And the devil of it was that the bastard really *cared* about you, and he worked it through with you patiently and perceptively until you were finished. I can remember one dialogue vividly:

"Why do you direct plays?"

"I want to help people."

"Bullshit."

Not very edifying on paper, but let me tell you it was damned effective in life.

"Were you the fat kid on the block who couldn't fight? So you learned to fight with words?"

Weaver had this almost occult way of saying things about you that were true, just when you thought it was all obscured in the luster of confident display. Suddenly your tacky little vaudeville act just *wasn't working*; so why not start over and find out what the hell was really going on?

He had an oxygen tank that occasionally he would take a hit from.

He had a bad heart, but it was incomprehensible to me that he would die. He had such root strength.

Former Resident Fellow

THERE IS A STORY that in the early days of Cold Mountain Margaret Atwood (who had been a friend at the University of Alberta) did a tarot reading on the whole thing and predicted that Cold Mountain would be a huge success but that Richard would not survive it.

You did not need tarot cards to see that when I was there. As the week wore on, those 18-hour days with people crying and ranting and screaming, and every one of them counting on him for support and insight, I noticed he was wearing out. In spite of the number of teachers coming in, Weaver and Bennet Wong were the only real draws, and since Wong still had his private practice in Vancouver, Richard spent the first few years carrying Cold Mountain on his back. Even in 1971 he was getting tired, and that was before the heart packed it in. He moved with the measured economy of a man who knows he is slowly burning himself out. In the long silences his face became tired and old.

Sometimes his choice of training therapists was horrendous. Even naive us could see it.

Former Intern

WEAVER COULD NOT SAY NO to



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Back Home: An amiable Weaver flies to Cortes. Two months later he would be dead.

anyone. If he absolutely had to say no, he would get Jean to do it. He also had curious blind spots about people and would become very big on somebody who was really not in his league. When the person showed himself inadequate to Weaver's expectations, there would be huge blow-ups.

As a working-class, self-educated guy, he was in awe of academia in spite of himself, and liked such pretentious cognomens as Resident Fellow and Intern. He formed an affiliation with Antioch University to give the joint more class.

He was also a hard man to get informal with. People tended to be a bit frightened of him; at any moment he might say something penetrating and heavy, and you would be standing there with no clothes on, wondering how many people had noticed and sniggered behind their polite smiles.

Weaver was an outsider in his own kingdom. Once a misfit, always a misfit.

Build the raft, take it across the river, then leave it there. Don't carry it on your back.

Buddhist Proverb

WHEN I LEFT at the end of the week I knew I would not be back. Not for another group anyway. I was finished with it, and Weaver would have approved.

In the three years following I lost 20 pounds, started writing music and plays, started directing less and less, broke up with my wife. Not *all* these changes happened because of Cold Mountain, but some of them did. Directing became a drag because I did not like the way it nurtured my power drives. To write you have to develop a certain receptivity to the truth; if you have been pretending for a long time and then you stop, it plays the very hell with relationships. So there is a connection; it all fits in.

Ever since I have carried around like lucky charms memories of things that happened that week to see me through situations that are hard to take or hard to comprehend. But it was not until 1975 that I had the urge to sample the Human Potential movement again.

I was working at the National Arts Center, as bored as only Ottawa can make you, and someone directed me to a "retreat" on a farm 40 miles outside the city. I went, and let me tell you it was pretty drab, a bunch of civil servants sipping rosehip tea and talking awareness and integrated experience.

Then someone let it drop that Richard Weaver had died and wasn't it a shame because he was *so gifted*, and I guess that is what happens when you try to do *too much*, when you take this honesty thing *too far*, when you care *too deeply*.

Even though I had not seen the guy in four years and had not really intended to, I felt like I had lost a brother. I had to leave the room.

It was important that we complete the institution with the integrity with which we had begun it.

Former Director of Academics

JEAN WEAVER carried on with Cold Mountain Institute for the rest of the 1970s, and people came to the smorgasbord in great numbers. They expanded into Vancouver and their university affiliations grew. But without Richard, without that empty, theoryless center to keep the various factions apart, it was inevitable that some sort of schism should occur.

Some say the issue was whether to expand or contract, some say it was personality conflicts, some say it was differences in ideology. Probably for all those reasons Cold Mountain split like the Holy Roman Empire into the Weaver Institute and the Cortes Island Center for Human Development and the Hollyhock Farms Creative Community. Jean Weaver quietly laid Cold Mountain to rest and slipped away.

It is as though he had written his name on water.

It don't mean shit.

Richard Weaver

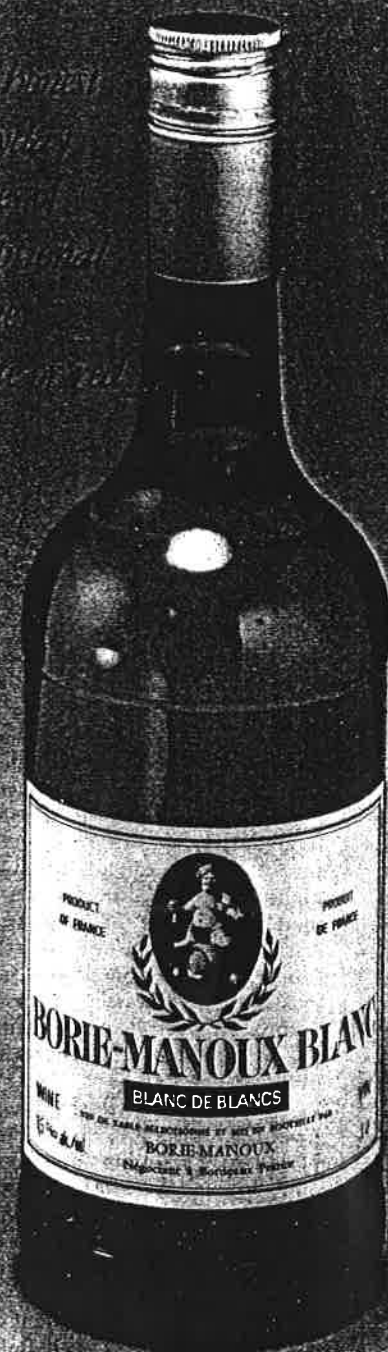
I REMEMBER before getting into my Chevy II, I went over to Weaver to take my leave. Since it was 1971, we hugged.

"Good-bye, Richard."

"Not good-bye, John. So long."

So long, Richard. ●

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