

**The Visit**  
By Frank Hall

It happened when I was five years old. It's difficult, if not impossible, to describe. The experience was characterized by the almost physical presence of Other; it occurred several times during a period of a few weeks, or so.

I had an overwhelming, positive experience of some kind of Benevolent Presence. I recall going to bed early, so I would have some time alone (since there was always at least one other brother or two in bed with me) and I would lie on my back and wait for it to come to me; hoping for it to return, almost praying for it to happen again.

I don't remember the first time it happened, and I don't remember how or why it ended, or when I stopped 'welcoming the visit.' But the experience was profound and has stayed with me these sixty years, and counting.

Somehow—and I can't explain it—that early experience remains at the foundation of my spiritual life.

I continue to have many experiences of the ecstatic, when making love or encountering Nature.

For example: One day, fifteen years ago, I was standing on a mountain peak in late August, after several hours climbing on horseback and foot with eight others while on a men's retreat in Montana. The weather began to turn and we decided we should head back, but before leaving I was asked to recite Chief Yellow Lark's prayer. I began: "O Great Spirit whose voice I hear in the wind." and suddenly a howling wind roared up the canyon and we stood in a profound silence before I continued, "...and whose breath gives life to all the world, hear me. I come before you one of your many children."

My mystical/spiritual experiences are characterized by a paradoxical sense of letting go, but at the same time of consciously inviting or even 'willing ' the return of that Presence. I find (experience) my Self (higher) by losing my self (ego.)

While I cherish each one of those moments I acknowledge that I don't understand it in the least.

Whitman summarized it in his signature poem, Song of Myself: "There is that in me-I do not know what it is-but I know it is in me. I do not know it-it is without a name-it is a word unsaid. It is not in any dictionary, utterance, symbol. Do you see O my brothers and sisters? It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is eternal life—it is Happiness."