

SEEDS OF GLORY

An Interview

This is a transcription of a taped interview with Karl Kunst, a 26-year-old hospital engineer. It's his description of the religious hallucinatory experience he had under LSD, as obtained from Morning Glory seeds.

Also present during this experiment was Karl's wife Frieda, and their close friends, Fred and Mary Sater; Fred is a high-school teacher. The setting was a farmhouse upstate in New York, owned by Frieda's parents.

I conducted this interview between Karl and myself; my friend Lester Levoe, of Pace College, was also present and asked some of the questions. The total interview, covering a variety of subjects, lasted for more than an hour; therefore I have excerpted this portion from the middle. Karl had just explained to us, a few minutes before, that while he, Fred, and an unnamed girl tried the seeds in this session, Fred, for some unexplained reason, failed to feel any of the euphoric effects.

ROBERT WOLF

KARL: Well, anyway, this Morning Glory seed thing is very funny because I had read about it in the papers and the papers had said that none of these seeds were even available anymore, that people had been buying them up just on the rumor that it would make you high. So we went up to the farm and found that locally there was just no problem getting any of these things. Because up in the Catskills, you know, the *New York Times* is a rare, rare thing—and even then it wouldn't have made any difference.

So we bought up . . . well, we had a very funny afternoon. We went around, laughing at the top of our voices, going into all these places and copping all these seeds.

We bought about \$4 worth; at 25c a packet, that's about .16 packets. And we opened one packet experimentally and found that there were about 80 seeds in a packet. And according to the *Times* article, 200 to 500 seeds was about the average dose-range.

So we figured we'd take a little over 300 apiece, and this would be toward the bottom end of the thing. A little over the minimum, just to make sure something happened, but not all the way, you know—obviously we didn't want to try *that*.

BOB: A toe in the water.

KARL: Yes. So at the beginning none of us knew exactly who was going to turn on with this stuff; and finally when it came down to actually doing it, I was definite I wanted to try it, and then Fred was going to try. But his wife absolutely refused, she didn't want to have any part of this thing.

And then Frieda also was afraid to, but finally said she'd participate as far as staying up with us and taking care of us and so forth.

And then this girl that Fred and Mary had hired for the summer, who was supposed to take care of their kids. She was a very unusual girl: at 17, she had turned on to more things than I had even heard of, and was a very groovy chick in many ways, although she wasn't really particularly good-looking — I mean, nothing extraordinary, really.

BOB: Isn't it funny: when you think of groovy chicks you always think of them as being good-looking.

LES: With long blonde hair.

KARL: Well, she had blonde, sort of golden hair, but it wasn't particularly long. And she smoked like a fiend; which really disturbs me, because I can't kiss a chick —

BOB: I'm hip.

KARL: —that has all that tobacco smell; I'm not a smoker and I don't particularly care for it.

In many ways she was extremely nervous. You'd say "Boo!," and she'd fly three feet out of her chair, just so nervous all the time.

So, anyway, we ground the stuff up in a pepper mill, which we had cleaned out before.

BOB: Did you think about making tea out of it? Because the *Times* article said —

KARL: Well, I just decided that the best way to get at what's in them is to pulverize them, which gives the greatest surface area and the greatest possibility of quick absorbency; so we ground the stuff up.

It comes out very fluffy, because there's little moisture in it,

and it comes out sort of spongy. We had sort of half a shot-glass apiece.

We took it in different ways. Fred made a sandwich out of it; took a piece of rye bread, put mayonnaise on it, and sprinkled the stuff over it; maybe that's why he didn't get high. I took mine in a fruit-juice cocktail. The first part of it is nothing; it's a little gritty, and it's neutral tasting. Then somehow, very quickly, the next tablespoon becomes almost impossible to get down.

So we sat there. We had taken this stuff —

BOB: What did you do? You mixed it with fruit juice, and drank the juice?

KARL: Yeah. It was sort of like slush. We got the stuff down and we sat down to dinner. And we were really hungry, you know. When we sat down, anyway.

And as this food was before us . . . well, the girl was the first one; she said, "You know . . . I don't . . . feel . . . very hungry. I think I'll just . . . sit here . . . and . . . not eat." And then, after awhile, she said, "I think I'll go and lie down; I don't feel very good." And she really split and lay down.

And Fred was mixing up his plate of spaghetti, or something, and all of a sudden he said, "You know, it's amazing but I just don't have the appetite I started out with." And he had one or two bites, and he said, "I think I'll go and lie down for awhile. My stomach doesn't feel good!"

And I laughed and laughed. I mean really, it was too much . . . these weak stomachs. And so I had one bite, then two bites, and suddenly—Oh! It was so unbearable! And I ran and lay down, too!

So there we were, in the living room. Fred was laid out on the bed, and the chick was laid out on the couch, and I went to this easy chair; and we were all looking at each other, realizing that the seeds were doing something that wasn't very, very good.

BOB: Were you feeling nauseous, or—?

KARL: We really got stomach aches! And great discomfort; nothing you could really put your finger on, but it felt best when we were sort of doubled over. Pretty soon we got kind of nauseous.

We started laughing; it was so silly. Three supposedly grown up people doing something just on the weight of an article in the paper, and getting absolutely sick and perhaps poisoning ourselves! And there was nothing we could do to get it up—there it was . . . it had to go one way or the other.

LES: Yeah, it was either die or get high!

KARL: And it got worse and worse. Finally Frieda went out and

made tea. Mary split, meanwhile; she just couldn't stand the whole thing.

We sat there and we started laughing and laughing, but we weren't particularly high.

BOB: Let's see. Mary is Fred's wife. But the girl was still there . . . ?

KARL: Right. Finally the girl went "Whoop!" and ran outside and chucked all the stuff up and came back. She was very upset—because she wasn't going to get high now; she knew she'd thrown it all up, and she was really depressed.

So she lay there, because she was still feeling a little lousy. Fred and I heroically managed to keep the stuff down with tea and a little yoga.

BOB: Lying on the floor?

KARL: Fred was lying on the bed, all doubled over, and I was in the chair. We felt that if we just didn't move, and could have tea, we could keep it down. And it worked; but it was a miserable time.

About 2½ hours later, I decided "This isn't going to work;" and I wasn't really very unhappy about it. So I got up; I thought I'd better turn off the light, because if we were going to fall asleep it would be very annoying to have the light on. So I got up and I noticed that I was weaving. Tremendous vertigo; I was weaving all over the place.

And I got into the kitchen, which was very bright, and there I immediately noticed that something was working. And I was very happy. I said, "Thank God!," you know. And it was an incredible thing, because no object in the kitchen had its normal shape—all the lines were flowing! And the whole room was sort of this solid gold light. It was really beautiful! But the thing was, I had this mission, you see; I had to go and turn off the light. I had set out to do this, and I just sort of waded through all this beautiful stuff, and I turned off the light.

BOB: Did it seem like a long time? I mean, was time drawn out?

KARL: Not particularly. And I got to the switch with no trouble, and I got back; no panic or anything. And when I got back to the living room—what we call "the parlor"—that was when the most amazing thing happened. You see, the thing seems to work in a step-wise fashion, rather than gradual . . .

BOB: When you turned the light off, how did you feel physically? Were you numb, or did you have physical control?

KARL: Not much. Except for vertigo and rocking back and forth.

I wasn't very stable. But my mind was working perfectly! Inside all the illusion, there I was, perfectly clear and cool, and knowing exactly what it was and the proper time sense and everything.

LES: You knew it was an illusion?

KARL: Oh yes. And it was fine; I was glad about it. It was beautiful. And then I turned off the light and I got back, and when I hit the doorway, that's when the most amazing illusion began. Because this farm room, you see—nothing very special about it . . . some old furniture—turned into this huge, oval marble hall. It was just so big. And the most intricate, beautiful marble work. And all around it was this metal inlay—you know, real bronze or gold stuff. It was dark, of course, but you could still see.

I lay down on the floor. The girl was lying on the floor, too. And right next to us, in between us, opened up this huge, sunken pool. It was so *real*. It was so beautiful. And the amazing thing was that the illusion stayed still! In other words, I would turn my head and it would stay there.

BOB: Where were you? Where did you think you were? Because, you got back to your chair, but meanwhile it was another room.

KARL: Right, but I knew that the whole thing was an illusion. And I thought it was marvelous; I was very, very happy about it!

BOB: Could you see the *old* room?

KARL: Absolutely not; I just knew that it was there. It had completely changed, gone.

BOB: You just knew where things were?

KARL: I knew that one thing was just superimposed on the other.

BOB: You mean where a couch had been, that would be a marble bench, or something?

KARL: Well, that I don't know; because I was lying on the floor, and the girl was lying on the floor, and that's all I could see.

BOB: And this pool just opened up?

KARL: It was right in front of us. Very deep, and the water was very dark and still; it was just as if the regular walls weren't there.

LES: Oh, you mean it was a bigger room?

KARL: It was a *much* bigger room.

LES: That's what I mean; you were just seeing your illusion. You weren't seeing the room itself.

KARL: Oh no.

LES: That's what I mean. The couch was there and you knew it was there, but you didn't see the couch—you saw an oval, marble room.

KARL: Right.

BOB: Were there windows and stuff like that, too? Or what?

KARL: That I don't remember.

LES: You know, when you visualize a movie-scene-type-thing like this—

KARL: Well, the marvelous thing was—Well, first of all—Well, I'll go into that later, but what I thought was really marvelous is what it shows about the mind.

But, anyway, we were lying down, sort of like a prince and princess, you know, in this palatial hall—

BOB: Cleopatra and—

KARL: —and I looked at the girl and her face started to change. Instead of being a normal, flesh face, all the surfaces became planes, very shiny little planes, and from the top of her head, coming down, were these strings of beads. That was one illusion which didn't stay constant; it was always changing somewhat.

BOB: The beads, you mean?

KARL: The beads and her decorations and so forth.

BOB: But the room stayed the same?

KARL: The room stayed very stable. And the ground was very hard, you know . . . it was marble.

BOB: Did you feel like you could reach over and run your fingers through the water?

KARL: But I didn't try, unfortunately.

Now, I don't know how long all these things lasted, but, in any case, the whole thing didn't last very long. Anyway, I sat down, and I must again say that at this point I knew it was an illusion. I knew that the drug had caused it; I felt no panic, no loss—you know, no worry about not getting back. I just said, "This is what I've always read about and it's finally happening, and it's a gas!"

BOB: Were you talking out loud?

KARL: No; the girl was there, but she was quiet.

BOB: Did you *see* her?

KARL: I knew that she was there some place, but at this point I

had actually lost that train of thought, you know. But I'll go back to that later. Anyway, I don't know how long this thing lasted; I remember I turned around and I was afraid to talk for fear it might go away. So anyway, I sat there and this is when the next phase of the thing began. Without any warning—you see, this is the thing: there is no graduation between the stages. Without warning—in fact, if I'd had any warning of this next phase, I would have been out of my mind! I would have yelled or called for someone or grabbed onto someone.

BOB: You mean out of fear, or exultation?

KARL: Yeah, out of fear. Because all of a sudden I felt that there was an inward explosion, kind of, in the Self. And it felt like all the pieces of the "I" were rushing away from each other at an incredible rate, until they filled all space. And then it stopped! It was this tremendous "whoosh," and then everything was quiet, and there it was, you know, kind of hanging, this tremendous expanded state.

BOB: Of your Self?

KARL: Yes. And there were no more illusions at this point. I saw the room absolutely clearly, and saw everyone clearly. But the most incredible state of consciousness! Now I still—I'm not in it now, but I remember it because it was such a powerful thing that you can't forget it.

BOB: And you saw the room, and everything, just as if you were straight?

KARL: Yeah. There were no more illusions.

LES: Could you liken it to anything?

KARL: No. Because I said at that point: "Nothing that anybody has written about this thing has been like this."

BOB: You said that to yourself at the time?

KARL: Yes. I said, "It must have been what has happened to them occasionally," because I could see how they were trying to hint at it. And I saw, right away, the impossibility of describing it when I would come back. Now, again, there was this interesting sense of knowing exactly what was going on, except that this part was *real*, the other was an illusion. But this state *had* to be real, because this was *a consciousness*. And although it was drug-induced, it didn't matter. This was a sense, a state, I had never experienced before. These other illusions could be seen in a movie; they could be built.

LES: And this was partially physical too? It was partially physical?

KARL: What? This next state? No, it wasn't. It seemed to be an explosion, but that's only a physical analog of the thing. What it actually was, if I can borrow this phrase, was an "expansion of consciousness."

BOB: This sounds very Zen-ish. You know, very much like "nirvana."

KARL: Well, I felt— First of all, there were some definite things I thought about. One was that time does not really exist. Of course I have to be careful and think that perhaps many of these thoughts are elaborations of things I have read; you know, one never knows just where one is picking up some of this stuff: so I can't call it enlightenment, particularly...I'm being very cautious. But, anyway, it seemed to me that there was no such thing as time in actuality; that time was a restriction imposed on us; that all it is and all it was and all it will be is just part of the scene that is going on at all times: and therefore the feeling of guilt that human beings have, and which is the big thing that hangs them up, is a useless feeling and the biggest thing that keeps us back. "Sure, we're not good in many ways," I thought, "but this is part of what has to be. You can't fight it. It's part of the inevitable pattern. This is the way we're going to turn out; guilt is just a dead end."

BOB: You were feeling all these things?

KARL: All these things were coming to me. Meanwhile, I had no recognizance of this girl. She didn't particularly attract me. I wasn't out to make any scene with her, or anything. In fact, I was very much unaware of her until now. And then all of a sudden, in this state—All I can say is that my head felt like it was 30,000 miles across, embracing everything.

BOB: Your head.

KARL: Just so beautiful! I mean, I ended this day so grateful, in a way, for this experience. The feeling that I've had before, you know, that I'd hate to die now because there's so much I haven't lived—I can't feel this anymore, because this was such a beautiful thing! There is almost nothing I've ever felt that could come close to this.

LES: Repeat what you just said about dying.

KARL: Well, you know, I've often felt very—I've seen people die and I felt very bad; it could be my turn next. Then I've felt very sorry for myself—

BOB: Yeah. Like you might miss something.

KARL: Sure. I mean, what the hell, I've got just so many years left, and I really rebel, theoretically, against the concept of death—

BOB: But the way you felt at the time was that you'd had it all?

KARL: If death would happen then, I felt—or even now, I feel . . . if I knew this was about to happen, I would feel less regrets now.

BOB: You mean right now?

KARL: Even right now. Because this is almost a permanent experience. This is also why I've had almost no need to do it again.

BOB: This is detracting, but do you feel it made any *permanent* changes in your psyche?

KARL: Yes.

BOB: Well, maybe you'll get into that later, then.

KARL: Well anyway, as I was thinking about these things, suddenly—I wasn't looking at this girl—but suddenly I felt, again, almost physically as if there was another consciousness floating in this space. So I turned around to look at the girl and found that she was looking at me. And she had these tremendously big eyes, you know, just like a child. And I had to start speaking then, because I really wanted to know if I was alone in this thing, or if anybody was with me in it; so far, I didn't know if the girl was getting any place at all. And she said, "Oh, it's beautiful! It's wonderful. It's incredible. I never want to get out of this, it's so beautiful!" And I had to tell her that she would. I said, "The drug, you know, is going to wear off and you're going to come down out of this." She said, "But no, I don't want to": she couldn't conceive of not being in this state. Because you see, again, it was real. What your consciousness is, is *real!* I mean, that's — But anyway, I sort of spoke prophetically. I said: "You know, when you come down off this, you're gonna deny everything that happened"—sort of like Christ telling Peter . . . But I said, "Look, don't deny this, because it's really very beautiful." She said, "Oh no, I'm not going to deny anything. You know, it's just so incredible." So anyway, we sat there just sort of looking at each other, and digging each other in a completely spiritual way. It was the most incredible thing.

BOB: Did you ever think about making it with her, while you were high?

KARL: Now again, you see, my mind was very clear. So I thought back to my pot highs; I would have wanted to ball the chick right away. And it wouldn't have mattered whether the chick was high

or not. Because when I get high, I get very horny, and every chick is beautiful. But the thing was, that meanwhile Frieda wanted to know what was going on, and she wanted to know if she could lie down next to me. And I said no, she couldn't. I said, "It's very hard to explain now, but I perceive that you're not where I am and where she is, and you're so far away, there's nothing I can do." And she said, "Okay, I understand." You know; she accepted it on faith. And then I thought, "On pot I'd really be very aroused. But there's no erotic feeling at all with this girl." In fact, I don't think I *could* have made it. And I know—I've learned subsequently that a number of people who have been high on this stuff have been unable to make it. They've tried, you know, with their wives, but they just couldn't get it up. Which is also true, I think, of other narcotics. Anyway, meanwhile there was a tremendous mental strain in all of this, because our minds were working on a level they had never worked on before. And there was a mental communication that was the most perfect telepathy I have ever experienced. You know; I've done this card thing and the ESP thing, and it's worked, kind of. But this was a whole thing. This was two minds in such union that it was incredible!

BLB: How could you tell there was union? You know only *your* part.

KARL: I sensed it. And this girl sensed it, you see. And then there was also something which followed. Anyway, I finally had to lie down, because I couldn't take any more. And she laid down. And then, almost by agreement, our hands met, you know, and we held each other's hand. But it was sort of like a brother-and-sister thing. It was very, very beautiful and incredibly close, and it was almost as if our consciousnesses were funneled into each other's hand. You know, just sort of right there.

BOB: You felt very aware of holding hands?

KARL: Yes, but it was a necessity. We were getting high, in a way. I don't know if we were getting higher, but we were getting more far out, in a human sense. Because we were coming down off this cosmic sort of sensation. And now began the only really difficult part in all of this whole thing. Now began the period when nothing made sense anymore and we had only each other's hand to rely on. Everything we had been thinking before—or at least, in my mind, that I could clearly think—began going away. It was like one layer of logic peeling away and getting thrown out. And the only thing that remained in the end was this tiny kernel of, "Well, it's only a drug, and I'll eventually get off it"—which was like a beacon light, you know, that I could see. But you have no idea how

things didn't make sense. I began to feel at this point, "Every psychiatrist should go through this, because then they'd have more compassion for schizophrenics, or whatever mental derangement is like this:" all of a sudden I felt sorry for the poor bastards who are like this all of the time; now we weren't high any more, and nothing made sense anymore. I'd think things like, "Frieda's lying on the bed and she must be very unhappy that I'm lying here holding hands with this chick." And the moment I'd think that—which, after all, made sense—that thought would completely slide away and disintegrate, and another thought would come up: "Frieda doesn't mind because she understands"; and that would slide away. And then, "Frieda's asleep: she doesn't know what's going on"; and that would slide away. And "Frieda is sitting up"; and that would slide away. "She's lying down"; and that would slide away. And it began to be like planes, sliding past each other, each one a complete, logical thought. And finally, Oh, I was going out of my mind! Then the girl began to cry—that's how I knew she was suffering like hell. And then began this two hours of just *suffering*. It was a strange kind of thing; it was like a vicarious suffering, but for everyone in the world. It wasn't specific and it wasn't personal.

BOB: It wasn't a guilt thing, was it? I mean, like you felt sinful?

KARL: No, no, not at all; "Everything there had to be." But I felt pain for the condition that most people are in, including ourselves, I guess.

BOB: Did you think this specifically?

KARL: Yes.

BOB: Was this one of the plane things which kept sliding away?

KARL: No, no. This was after that.

LESS: But every thought which came into your mind was of suffering?

KARL: Yes. And I saw this girl as a child, and then I saw her within minutes become a girl, and then an adolescent, and then a woman, and then a woman with children, and then an older woman...

BOB: You mean you physically visualized—

KARL: I just saw—I actually saw her face change. It was an amazing thing to see this. But while the suffering was going on it was kind of simultaneous with the feeling, you know, of human beings, and the things they have to go through and so forth, a lot of which isn't really necessary.

BOB: How long did this pitying thing last?

KARL: It must have lasted two hours. It was awful! It was as if— The chick began crying and crying and crying, and I kept holding her and comforting her and wiping away her tears and—

LES: And you knew the reasons? You knew it was the drug? You were conscious of that?

KARL: Yes.

LES: You knew you couldn't control it?

KARL: Right. Because it really was real. This pity was profound, and deep.

BOB: It was sort of an empathy with all mankind?

KARL: It really was.

LES: It was felt, but you had no control?

KARL: It was as if all restrictions on feeling had completely gone out; and when all restrictions are loosed, after all, you *will* feel like this all the time. You will feel so emotional you can't live, actually. I mean, our restrictions and inhibitions are necessary, you know . . . these "callousness" things. Our "callousnesses" are necessary in order that we function. But, anyway, finally it became too much, and I threw up, just from mental vertigo. And then I went up to bed and I lay down, and when I got up about—by this time it was morning, about 9 o'clock in the morning—I got up about noon, and I was stoned. But I just had a big head and nothing else; it was very silly. And the girl didn't get up until later in the afternoon. Meanwhile there was nothing between us again. And I was exhausted. Finally she came down, and she started bullshitting. "Oh," she said, "Wow! I really had a strange, you know, 'attitude' last night. I guess I was kind of tired . . ." And all kinds of—You know, she wouldn't believe she was high. So I was a little disgusted with her. Anyway, we sat there, you know, playing with Fred's kids, and then Fred put on some Bach, and the first measures of this music did something to trigger, at least for a couple of seconds, this experience. And the girl stopped what she was doing, and her eyes opened wide again, you know, and we both looked at each other. And I got all weak, kind of, and had to sit down, because it all came flooding back. And right away, you know, no matter what she said after that, she knew she couldn't fool me, and she knew that I knew that she couldn't fool me, and so forth. Well, anyway, that was that.