

Memoirs of a Bodhisattva

Short stories by Skip Nelson



CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE RICH AND FAMOUS

During my life I have often been in the right place at the right time and have mingled in some way with the rich and famous.

The following is a list of people I have met and the circumstances of those encounters.

Frank Sinatra

Was a client of a limousine company I worked for. I would go to his office in Hollywood and his home at least three times a week.

John Wayne

My ex was a private nurse for John Ford and Wayne was often at his house and at events we all attended. He became a familiar face.

Woody Strode

Again, met through John Ford. He visited the old man often. And we also hung out at different events.

Eric Burdon

Was also a client of a limousine company I worked for. I would take things to his house in the desert from offices in LA.

Clint Eastwood

Met at an event in Beverly Hills. Introduced by Woody Strode.

Robert Mitchum

Met also through John Ford at the first AFI Lifetime Achievement Award Show at The Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills.

Richard Widmark

Met also through John Ford at the first AFI Lifetime Achievement Award Show at The Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills.

Lee Marvin

Met also through John Ford and his family. Ford's daughter, Barbara, was a personal friend and we all sat, one afternoon, in Studio City sitting on the floor of a cottage drinking. I actually got drunk with The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance.

John Ford

My ex was his nurse in Palm Desert when he was dying of cancer.

BB King

I saw BB twice at a small club in North Seattle. Met and shook hands both times. \

Bo Diddley

My ex and I went to see Bo one Sunday night at a club in Palm Springs. Hardly anyone was there. At break time, we invited Bo and his daughter to sit with us and bought them drinks.

Milt Jackson

Saw Milt at a small club in Palm Springs also. Talked at break.

Catherine Russell

Chatted with her after a performance at Jazz Alley in Seattle.

Georgie Jessel

Was a passenger in a limo I drove from Los Angeles to Palm Springs.

Ted Kennedy

Met him at a political function in LA in the mid 70s.

Jesse Jackson

Met Jesse at Chicago O'Hare between flights in the cafeteria.

Lynda Carter

Was a passenger in a limo I drove from Los Angeles to Palm Springs.

Peter Falk

Was on a pay phone bank at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel and heard a familiar voice behind me. It was Columbo.

John Gavin

Again, met through John Ford. He visited the old man often. He was a bit of a dick.

Bill Lear

Met him when working for a TV production company in Palm Desert.

Magda Gabor

Was a passenger in a limo I drove from Los Angeles to Palm Springs.

Cantinflas

Met him during The Desert Circus Celebration in Palm Springs.

Liberace

I would see Liberace all over in Palm Springs. During one Desert Circus event I lit his candelabra.

Count Basie

I went back stage at one of his performances and was fortunate to have a chat with him.

Al Sharpton

Met Al while walking on the sidewalk at Barack Obama's second inauguration.

Gerald Ford

Betty Ford

Met through friend and Ford Chief-of-Staff, Penny Circle. I was a photographer for them for a couple of years.

Linda Hopkins

We attended a performance of hers in Palm Springs and the next day went to a local church and Sunday Brunch where she attended. Had a great chat with her.

Peter Bogdonovich

Met through John Ford. He would visit the old man often too.

Sybil Shepherd

Also met through John Ford, via Peter Bogdonovich. At a party in the Hollywood Hills we shared a joint in the bathroom.

Johnny Mercer

Met Johnny Mercer at the same party.

Mary Martin

Delivered an Express package to her while delivering mail.

Lloyd Bridges

Probably the first star I met. He pulled up next to us at a stop light on Sunset Boulevard while on a family vacation to California in the 50s.

Steve McQueen

Met him in a small burger shack in Rancho Mirage, CA.

Red Skelton

Used to run into him at the local grocery store and he literally almost ran me off the road one day on a mountain highway in his Rolls Royce.

Ginger Rogers

I would see her offer in the same grocery as Red Skelton. Very nice and unassuming.

Walter Matthau

At lunch one day, while working for the limousine company, Walter came in with a stray dog and asked to use the phone to call the owners.

Bob Hope

I was hired to take photos of Bob Hope for a golf tournament.

Frances Rich

Ms. Rich hired me to photograph her home and artwork above Palm Desert. We became close friends.

Robert Wagner

Natalie Wood

We would often see them around Palm Springs. The last time was when she was pregnant. They were in JC Penney looking at baby furniture.

Elvis Presley

I met Elvis almost by accident. My ex father-in-law was his Cadillac salesman in Palm Springs. I was at his home in Palm Springs and met him three weeks before he died.

Cliff Henderson

Met Cliff through his wife, Marion Henderson and was hired to photograph his air racing memorabilia museum.

Susan St. James

Also a passenger in a limo I drove to Palm Springs. Somewhat of a bitch.

Monty Alexander

Met Monty at a small club in Palm Springs. At break we had a drink. Both he and my ex were from Jamaica.

Peace and Love,

Skip Nelson