



Sleeping Where I Fall: A Chronicle

By Peter Coyote

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In his energetic, funny, and intelligent memoir, Peter Coyote relives his fifteen-year ride through the heart of the counterculture—a journey that took him from the quiet rooms of privilege as the son of an East Coast stockbroker to the riotous life of political street theater and the self-imposed poverty of the West Coast communal movement known as The Diggers. With this innovative collective of artist-anarchists who had assumed as their task nothing less than the re-creation of the nation’s political and social soul, Coyote and his companions soon became power players.

In prose both graphic and unsentimental, Coyote reveals the corrosive side of love that was once called “free”; the anxieties and occasional terrors of late-night, drug-fueled visits of biker gangs looking to party; and his own quest for the next high. His road through revolution brought him to adulthood and to his major role as a political strategist: from radical communitarian to the chairman of the California Arts Council, from a street theater apprentice to a motion-picture star.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

As the generation that launched America's counterculture in the 1960s matures into its gray ponytails and 401(k) plans, one might expect the autobiographies of its celebrities to be tinged with apology for goals unrealized. Indeed, with only a few notable exceptions, such as Peter Fonda's *Don't Tell Dad*, most celebrity autobiographies from '60s pop culture icons seem rooted in either bitterness or desperation. Fortunately, in *Sleeping Where I Fall*, Peter Coyote neither apologizes for his wild days nor waxes romantic for them. Nor should he.

This wise and witty, tightly crafted narrative reports on the turbulence of that era with philosophical integrity, wry humor, and unmitigated honesty. Looking back over his days with the San Francisco Mime Troupe, a street theater group that sought to break the conventional boundaries between performer and audience, Coyote rhapsodizes with equal vigor about the company's artistic triumphs and the pulchritude of its actresses. While his developing acting career and romantic misadventures comprise a great deal of the narrative, an even larger part dwells on his life as one of The Diggers, the band of anarchistic counterculturalists who fought against commercial culture's ability to co-opt the superficial elements of youthful rebellion by rejecting the very notions of ownership and extrinsic value. "The Diggers," writes Coyote, "understood that *style* is infinitely co-optable. What could not be co-opted was doing things for free--without money." And what things they did! Coyote recounts the lives and times of poets, actors, farmers, and philosophers who participated in a profound cultural experiment that tested the very limits of human consciousness and fell--eventually--to the excesses of personal indulgence.

Coyote's evolution from callow thespian to revolutionary communitarian to seasoned philosopher is fascinating, as much a social and political history as it is a reminiscence. The stories unravel like tender after-dinner tales in prose that captures the rasp and tickle of Coyote's corduroy voice. In the end, *Sleeping Where I Fall* reveals a man as complex and unpredictable as the totem animal from which he takes his name. --L.A. Smith

From Library Journal

Coyote not only survived the excesses of the Sixties and Seventies but emerged from years of journeying through the counterculture to achieve success as an actor. Considering the numerous casualties among radicals, who, like Coyote, were heroin junkies living on the edge of society, this is a rare feat. In this frank yet sensitive memoir of those years, Coyote contradicts romantic notions of communes by recalling the discord and petty disagreements typical in his own communal living experiences at Olema ranch and Red House. He describes the chaos created by the Diggers, an antiestablishment group of which he is usually considered a founding member and leader, famous for their stores where everything was given away free, and he remembers his stoned life in Haight-Ashbury. Eventually, he surfaced to work with the San Francisco Mime Troupe, for which he received a special Obie Award. Coyote's thoughtful, articulate writing displays a compassionate wisdom that puts this chronicle in a class above the typical actor's autobiography. Highly recommended for relevant subject collections in academic as well as public libraries. ?Richard W. Gregrath, Univ. of Nevada Lib., Reno

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From [Booklist](#)

Film actor Peter Coyote recounts his exploits in the 1960s and '70s in this literate insider's account of the San Francisco/Northern California hippie scene. As a member of the San Francisco Mime Troupe and, later, the Diggers, Coyote (the name is totemic) was at the center of the action and a witness to many of the era's

countercultural events. He colors the historical perspective of those events with highly personal memories of his life on the road and in various urban and rural communes. He also resurrects long-dead ghosts: Emmett Grogan, Janis Joplin, John Lennon, poet Lew Welch, not to mention the idealism that propelled the whole movement. While avoiding the pitfalls of nostalgia, Coyote reflects on the serendipity of his own life, from upper-middle-class upbringing to heavy drug-user to Wall Street broker to chairman of the California Arts Council to respected and sought-after film actor. He is at once contented and optimistic, and occasionally apologetic; the zeitgeist that informed Coyote 30 years ago has not abandoned him. *Frank Caso*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Arthur Furr:

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