

Religion

My parents were seriously anti Organized Religion, period. Both graduates from UC Berkeley in the late 40s, believers in science and social engagement.

They taught their kids that:

#1 More people had been slaughtered in the name of Jesus Christ than any other religion and the rest weren't far behind.

#2 People used religion as a crutch to help them cope with life, and we had enough going on that we didn't need a crutch. (Even though my mother had polio and had to fasten a metal brace to her leg before she could get out of bed, and walk with the help of a cane her entire adult life)

I knew nothing about anyone's religious practices except that a lot of my friends could not play on Sundays. I never set foot in a church. I was and still am completely ignorant of the difference between Catholics, Jews, Methodists etc.

It is still not a factor in how I regard or interact with any human being. I don't care what their race or religion is. There is a lot to do besides pray.

Mission Dolores

Because I had zero contact with church life growing up I didn't know how seriously people took it. In fourth grade we had a field trip to Mission Dolores in the city. We walked into the sacred room and I bounded up to stand behind the podium on the alter. My teacher almost had a heart attack. I had no idea.

Christmas at 7 years old

For years our meals were fairly modest. Cereal for breakfast, sandwiches for lunch, and spaghetti for dinner. Catsup was the vegetable.

We always had to eat it all because there were people starving all over the world.

Our Christmas Eve was an extravagant family affair with both sets of Grandparents and occasional Aunts

and Uncles. Everybody was expected to bring a personal present for everybody. Imagine the pile! Over 100 wrapped gifts.

When I was about 7 I looked at the pile and thought “This is not right. How many people could we feed with this amount of wealth?”. I’ve never gotten over it, although peer pressure, marital pressure, and kids pressure forced me to begrudgingly go along. Now I’m called Scrooge and Grumpa.

Nuclear Bomb

We just had to accept that at any moment a nuclear bomb could explode right outside of our classroom and if we hid under our desks we might survive and be able to go home again. We did what we were told.

To us, wars had happened and would continue to happen, mostly somewhere else. Our fathers did not like to talk about their wartime experiences for the most part.

Some families had significant connections to their military backgrounds. Many did not. I was protected

and sheltered from that part of the real world, except my mother's family included Naval officers that gave us tours of battleships on Treasure Island.

All I knew about WW2 was my Dad had been in the Army/AirForce as an engineer on airplanes flying over China. That's all I know today.

Vietnam challenged the "my country right or wrong" belief as well as the "love it or leave it" chant. Still, Nuclear power has been an important part of our culture and society.