

[Top Executive's Journey From RCA to Buddhist Awareness](#)

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David Reeves stands about six-foot-six and has that handsomely weathered look of a 19th century clipper ship captain: a captain who coolly races the wintry Atlantic in record time and has enough sense of the mystical to view the midnight skies as Pythagoras' "music of the spheres." Reeves doesn't pilot ships. He steers corporations through gale-force and becalmed economic waters. For the past seventeen years he has becalmed himself with meditation practices imported from India. He is a consummate executive who has played hard-ball in America's corporate culture, was a major Transcendental Meditation spokesman and strategist, and recently spent two-and-a-half days in a Buddhist retreat just sitting in meditation and walking, sitting and walking while the universe effortlessly orbited around the anatma, "non-self." The retreat is a high water mark that is still leaking into his life.

We first ran into Dr. Reeves - he holds a doctorate in business - on the flight between San Francisco and Hawaii. He's currently a consultant to United Airlines. In an extraordinary crossroad of karma and intuitive timing, he and Hinduism Today publisher H.H. Sivaya Subramuniaswami sat in adjacent seats. It turns out that Reeve's Buddhist teacher of the past eight years, Sujata, had titled his book *Beginning to See* after some of H.H. Subramuniaswami's early publications. It was through Sujata's book that Reeves shifted from Mahesh Maharishi's TM to the Buddhist "awareness" meditation.

At our publisher's invitation. Dr. Reeves visited the monastery on the island of Kauai where Hinduism Today is produced. In between a tight schedule that he is half-heartedly trying to dial back to a more sedate pace, he spent an hour in our offices that overlook Kauai's spectacular mountain range. He laughs, "If you think I'm hyper now, you should have seen me before awareness meditation." At age 56 he says he is trying to retire. Again, a half-hearted attempt. "Projects have a way of coming to me," he says in a cheery voice that belies the still-present thrill of management. "But I leave myself open to them rather than forcing them. The inner is taking care of me."

He is a veteran of media interviews, both from his days as a prince in the TM aristocracy and the several years he spent as a school district superintendent, earning wunderkind status for turning two lackluster California districts into bright stars in the education system. He says anybody could have done it, but that is probably not why he was hired for the tough job. So as white mists shrouded the tropical forests outside, we listened to a Reader's Digest version of David Reeve's life as an executive following first Hindu, then Buddhist meditation regimens.

When he picked up a MBA from Stanford University, California, in 1959, he drove himself like a Ferrari to achieve - so hard and fast in his first thirteen career years that one day he knew he needed to get out of the fast lane and start walking through life, to become a little more self-reflective. Reeves offers a glimpse of his early years: "In between undergraduate and graduate school, I became the youngest officer in the history of the Sixth Army division, sleeping only two or three hours a night in Korea." Korea would be his first contact with Asia - with Buddhism - but at the time it didn't mean much to him. After graduation, he taught at the Stanford graduate college and helped to rebuild the university's business operation. He was the purchasing agent for Stanford's two-mile long linear accelerator "atom smasher." Here he got his first taste of physics jargon and concepts that physics professor/yogi Mahesh Maharishi would later infuse into TM.

In 1966 he checked out of Stanford University and headed into corporate America, first managing materials facilities for RCA, then into Mariott Corporation as group vice president of the non-foods division. At this point, we are curious if he knows John Sculley, chief of Apple Computer who had left a sure presidency of the huge PepsiCo to take over Apple in 1985. "Oh yes. I knew him. Even before he was at Pepsi." Sculley has flirted with metaphysics, but applies it more to a vision of mind interacting with computer.

In an abrupt about-face. Reeves left business and returned to education as school district superintendent. The school projects, though a success story, were also taxing and enervating. By this time, his search for some stillness in his life had become earnest. "I was about as stressed out as anyone could be. And I certainly stressed out everyone else around me. TM was just coming along in those days [1972]. I was 39. So I decided I needed to plunk down my \$175 and learn to meditate." We inquire how he learned about it. "Just general press. People were doing it. I had heard about it in Sacramento, California. I went and I learned my mantra and I learned to meditate. Gee, this thing works. And then I discovered it was working for virtually everyone who wasn't fighting it."

Within a year, meditation became his next career, a combination of manager and communicator for TM. "Time magazine said years ago that my generation, born in the 1930's, we're the translators. The audiences I spoke to knew nothing of TM, but they could relate to me in the blue suit and vest and my credentials as a real person. I was an L. Ron Hubbard [promoter of Scientology] and I had a very high signup rate. Huge numbers of people signed up after my talks."

This was TM's moment in the sun, the mid-1970's. Reeves ended up on the TM road show, flying to new locales across the states and into Europe every few days or weeks. It was definitely an adrenaline ego rush. He was with a group of high-powered TMer's who meditated for hours every day and pushed to make TM a household product like Tide detergent or Crest toothpaste. "My TM experience never really deepened - perhaps because I, myself, didn't follow it deeply enough. Many of us began to see that TM as a personal practice wasn't taking us far enough. I think we all owe a great vote of thanks to the TMer's for awakening something in huge numbers of people. We tend to all be superficial anyway. Life has a lot of fabric to it and a lot of depth and all you have to do is sit and look at a leaf and start to see."

After eight roller-coaster years with TM, Dr. Reeves ran into a short, simply-phrased book called "Beginning to See." It was skillfully written by a Buddhist monk - Sujata - of American nationality who had spent two years in the forests of Sri Lanka practicing "awareness" meditation. Reeves reflects, "I was fascinated by his simple little book. I was fascinated by keeping life simple, by cleaning up."

So, under Sujata's wings he began the process of stripping awareness into a Buddhistic empty state and "vacuuming the garbage out of my mind" as he phrases it. Actually, Sujata simplified his life as well. When Dr. Reeves first met him, Sujata was running the Stillpoint Institute in San Francisco. He subsequently shed the institute and privately teaches small numbers of students. Reeves explains about "awareness," "In its simplest form, you sit quietly, not thinking anything, the mind still and when you can't sit anymore, then you get up and simply walk, and after you finish walking, then you sit quietly. If you think about it, one could do that forever." We ask him if there is a goal toward a state of pure consciousness. "Sure. Maharishi often talked about this pure consciousness, but the vast group of TMer's were never able to get from here to there. Not that I have gotten from here to there, but I have certainly gone a little bit into understanding." He tells us that his two most memorable experiences have been the precious minutes spent meditating with Maharishi and the Sri Lankan Buddhist guru of

Sujata. We ask for a final piece of advice for our readers, many of whom are executives. "My Buddhist teacher said be loving and kind. We understand the human heart when we understand how to be loving and kind. Love all creatures. Be gentle and easy on ourselves and gentle and easy on everybody else."