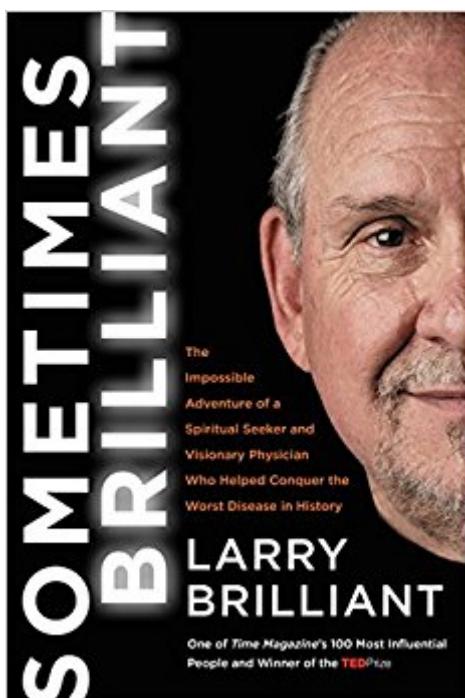


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# **Sometimes Brilliant: The Impossible Adventure Of A Spiritual Seeker And Visionary Physician Who Helped Conquer The Worst Disease In History**



## Synopsis

When a powerful mystic steps on the hand of a radical young hippie doctor from Detroit, it changes lives and the world. Sometimes Brilliant is the adventures of a philosopher, mystic, hippie, doctor, groundbreaking tech innovator, and key player in the eradication of one of the worst pandemics in human history. His story, of what happens when love, compassion and determination meet the right circumstances to effect positive change, is the kind that keeps hope and the sense of possibility alive. After sitting at the feet of Martin Luther King at the University of Michigan in 1963, Larry Brilliant was swept up into the civil rights movement, marching and protesting across America and Europe. As a radical young doctor he followed the hippie trail from London over the Khyber Pass with his wife Girija, Wavy Gravy and the Hog Farm commune to India. There, he found himself in a Himalayan ashram wondering whether he had stumbled into a cult. Instead, one of India's greatest spiritual teachers, Neem Karoli Baba, opened Larry's heart and told him his destiny was to work for the World Health Organization to help eradicate killer smallpox. He would never have believed he would become a key player in eliminating a 10,000-year-old disease that killed more than half a billion people in the 20th century alone. Brilliant's unlikely trajectory, chronicled in *Sometimes Brilliant*, has brought him into close proximity with political leaders, spiritual masters, cultural heroes, and titans of technology around the world—from the Grateful Dead to Mikhail Gorbachev, from Ram Dass, the Dalai Lama, Lama Govinda, and Karmapa to Steve Jobs and the founders of Google, Salesforce, Facebook, Microsoft and eBay and Presidents Carter, Clinton, Bush and Obama. Anchored by the engrossing account of the heroic efforts of the extraordinary people involved in smallpox eradication in India, this is a riveting and fascinating epidemiological adventure, an honest reckoning of an entire generation, and a deeply moving spiritual memoir. It is a testament to faith, love, service, and what it means to engage with life's most important questions in pursuit of a better, more brilliant existence.

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## Customer Reviews

Dr. Larry Brilliant's Extraordinary Career

Dr. Larry Brilliant today.

Image 1: Larry Brilliant (background) with his Indian guru, Maharaji (1973). Maharaji would accurately predict that Larry Brilliant would become a United Nations doctor, working on the smallpox program — a program which did not yet exist at the time of the prediction — to eradicate the disease. Larry Brilliant (middle) at the World Health Organization meeting in New Delhi (1974), to discuss smallpox eradication.

Larry Brilliant with Czech epidemiologist Dr. V. Janout, showing a smallpox recognition card in the Ranchi district, India (1974). The UN smallpox team that Larry Brilliant was a part of visited half a million villages, knocked on 150 million doors, and made more than two billion house calls over the course of twenty months. Larry Brilliant with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in San Francisco in 2009. Larry Brilliant at a White House meeting about Ebola with President Barack Obama, in the Roosevelt Room (2015).

“Sometimes Brilliant is more than just a piece of medical history. Larry Brilliant tells an inspiring and compelling story of a truly global effort that crossed boundaries, defied political ideologies and serves to this day as a case study on the amazing power of collaboration.” (Sir Richard Branson)  
“In an age of global crisis, Sometimes Brilliant is a beacon of hope. An improbable and engaging account of how the world came together to eradicate one of the most deadly diseases in our history. A must read for those dedicated to create necessary and lasting change.” (Judith Rodin, President, The Rockefeller Foundation)  
“Fabulous! A wildly inspiring, wondrous, improbable, heartbreak, and triumphant tale. Makes you want to do beautiful courageous things.” (Jack Kornfield, founder of Spirit Rock Meditation Center and author of A Path with Heart)  
“One of the best books I’ve ever read, period. An extraordinary adventure, scientific odyssey, and spiritual journey of the highest orders. Beautifully written and deeply inspiring; a klieg light in the darkness. Brilliant in every way!” (Dean Ornish, M.D.,

Founder & President, Preventive Medicine Research Institute, Clinical Professor of Medicine, UCSF, author, The Spectrum and Dr. Dean Ornish's Program for Reversing Heart Disease) "Sometimes Brilliant is a candid assessment of a tumultuous time and an insider's account of what can be achieved through the sheer force of a shared vision." (Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook and bestselling author of Lean In) "Larry Brilliant has been an incredible inspiration to me, as a spiritual advisor, teacher and friend. His life story is nothing short of remarkable and this book will serve as an enduring inspiration for many generations to come." (Marc Benioff, Chairman and CEO, Salesforce) "A brilliant story teller reveals a life of endless curiosity. Having worked with and known the author for 43 years I can verify that some of these stories may actually be true! I highly recommend this book." (Bill Foege, M.D. MPH, recipient of the Presidential Medal of Honor, former head of CDC, and author of House on Fire) "I couldn't have made up a story half as interesting or thought provoking as what I just read in these pages. This terrific book brings to light the power of the karmic yoga path. Do yourself a favor and read it." (Chade-Meng Tan, New York Times bestselling author of Search Inside Yourself and Joy on Demand) "What a welcome relief to see this story of someone with soul and a great healing spirit coming out of Silicon Valley, to actually - literally - help in saving the world." (Mark Anderson, CEO, Strategic News Service) "This is the story of life that you couldn't make up if you tried. Inspiring, terrifying, touching and transcendent, with a cast of characters from the widest possible spectrum of humanity. An astounding book to treasure and devour." (Jay Walker, Founder, Priceline.com) "Truly magnificent. Sometimes Brilliant mixes a gripping story, a primer on compassionate service, and a guide to purpose-driven social action into a can't-stop-reading narrative. Sometimes Brilliant is in turns wise, funny, and inspiring" and always terrific. (Daniel Goleman, author Emotional Intelligence and A Force for Good) "Maharaji has now written another book and this is it." (Ram Dass) "Larry Brilliant has touched many lives in person all over the world. The famous, the not so famous, the establishment and the counter-culture all figure in this remarkable memoir. Sometimes Brilliant will touch still more lives with its humanity. An extraordinary life extraordinarily well-lived." (Stephan Chambers, The Marshall Institute for Philanthropy and Social Entrepreneurship, London School of Economics) "Steal this book! Steal this book! No, wait that was Abby Hoffman from the 1960s. Now I say: Buy this book! Buy this book! It's a really uber-awesome slab of tree flesh, a true life adventure of a life well lived to make the world a better place." (Wavy Gravy, Clown Prince and Master of Ceremonies at

Woodstock) "Larry Brilliant's story would be worth reading just for the fascinating cast of characters he introduces and the turbulent times he describes so vividly...a rare bridge between science and spirituality, and a reminder that real progress in improving the lives of other human beings is within our grasp." (Steven Johnson, author of *The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic*) "Dr. Larry is more than sometimes brilliant. He combines the deep tenets of living a spiritual life with an activist's heart-full desire to relieve suffering" • the perfect illustration of what is meant by fulfilling your life purpose through karma yoga. And his brilliant light shines on. (Parvati Markus, author of *Love Everyone: The Transcendent Wisdom of Neem Karoli Baba Told Through the Stories of the Westerners Whose Lives He Transformed*) "Sometimes Brilliant is an epic, life transforming story, about the triumph of Love against all odds. Sometimes Brilliant should be required reading for students at all Universities across the globe & for world leaders who want to find creative solutions to overcome the myriad threats of the 21st century." (Salman Ahmad, founder of the rock band Junoon, Professor of Islamic music at Queens College, Polio Goodwill Ambassador & author of *Rock & Roll Jihad*) "Sometimes Brilliant is a gripping, illuminating and entertaining inside look at one of the greatest medical triumphs of our time - wiping smallpox from the face of the planet." (Roger L. Martin, Institute Director, Martin Prosperity Institute, Rotman School of Management) "This book reads like an adventure novel by one of the most innovative figures in global health telling the fascinating tale of smallpox eradication - one of the great triumphs in public health." (Peter Piot, Director London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine) "Sometimes Brilliant is a mesmerizing read" • a window inside some of the most unique social and spiritual movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and the story of how people from a dozen nations came together to eradicate one of the world's most terrible diseases. I can't recommend this book highly enough. (Jim Wallis, New York Times bestselling author of *America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, and the Bridge to a New America*, president of Sojourners, and editor-in-chief of Sojourners magazine) "No one but Larry Brilliant could honestly tell his tale of smallpox eradication, dropping names like Ken Kesey, Wavy Gravy, Arthur Miller, Baba Ram Das, Timothy Leary, the Dalai Lama and the Hog Farm alongside some of the greatest heroes in the history of public health." (Laurie Garrett, Pulitzer Prize Winner and New York Times bestselling author of *The Coming Plague*) "Tears of gratitude and awe stream from my heart experiencing the Spirit of Guidance manifesting in our dear Dr America, Larry Brilliant, as he so masterfully tells the story of his blessed life in *Sometimes Brilliant!*" (Pir Shabda Kahn, head of an American Sufi lineage) "What can I say?"

It's wonderful. It's Larry on the page. It shines with Maharaji's advice to us: love and service. (Mirabai Bush, co-founder and senior fellow for the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society)

When a powerful mystic steps on the hand of a radical young hippie doctor from Detroit, it changes lives and the world. Sometimes Brilliant chronicles the adventures of a philosopher, seeker, unconventional doctor, groundbreaking tech innovator, and key player in the eradication of one of the worst pandemics in human history. His story—about what happens when love, compassion, and determination meet the right circumstances to effect positive change—is the kind that keeps hope and the sense of possibility alive. After sitting at the feet of Martin Luther King Jr. at the University of Michigan in 1963, Larry Brilliant was swept up into the civil rights movement, marching and protesting across America and Europe. As a radical young doctor, he followed the Hippie Trail from London over the Khyber Pass with his wife Girija, Wavy Gravy, and the Hog Farm commune to India. There, he found himself in a Himalayan ashram wondering whether he had stumbled into a cult. Instead, one of India's greatest spiritual teachers, Neem Karoli Baba, opened Larry's heart and told him his destiny was to work for the World Health Organization to help eradicate deadly smallpox. He never would have believed he'd become a key player in eliminating a ten-thousand-year-old disease that killed more than half a billion people in the twentieth century alone. Brilliant's unlikely trajectory, chronicled in Sometimes Brilliant, has brought him into close proximity with political leaders, spiritual masters, cultural heroes, and titans of technology around the world—from the Grateful Dead to Mikhail Gorbachev, from Ram Dass, the Dalai Lama, Lama Govinda, and Karmapa to Steve Jobs and the founders of Google, Salesforce, Facebook, Microsoft, and eBay, and Presidents Carter, Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama. Anchored by the engrossing account of the heroic efforts of the extraordinary people involved in smallpox eradication in India, this is a riveting and fascinating epidemiological expedition, an honest reckoning of an entire generation, and a deeply moving spiritual memoir. It is a testament to faith, love, service, and what it means to engage with life's most important questions in pursuit of a better, more brilliant existence.

Smallpox goes back thousands of years. 300-500 million people died of it in the 20th century alone. Among other things, this is the story of how the scourge ended, the only time humans have ever eradicated a disease with vaccines. But it's also a story about a good guy who met a saint and then got pushed by that saint into playing a role in the fight against the disease. I once asked a friend who

was a rabbi if he believed in miracles. He said that if you're closed off, no one can ever convince you that they exist, but that if you have an open mind, you see them everywhere. I suspect that's how this book will work. I don't know if it's reasonable to read the book as a miracle story. But if it is such a story, it's a pretty big miracle. Brilliant talks about doing the work without making it about him, and about the need not to get a big head. The book is human scaled, it's the story about a single guy and the work he did, alongside many other people. So you have to step back and remind yourself of the scope of what has happened, of those 300 million people who died, the constant stream of people who were being infected, who would have died, the people who would be sick or dead today, but aren't. It's a very important story.

Sometimes Brilliant: The impossible adventure of a spiritual seeker and visionary physician who helped conquer the worst disease in history. Unfortunately I read about a book every two years. This week however, was different when I picked up the book from my husbands dear golf buddy Larry Brilliant. The book signing was last night, and I made a concerted effort to get what little reading I could and the two days that preceded! So far, it is quite possibly one of the best books I've ever read. For anyone who believes in your life's purpose, was alive during Woodstock, has an affinity for the 60s in San Francisco, has a vested interest in world health issues, making the world a better place, or just needs a bit of inspiration in our current election cycle - this book is amazing. And I would hope it is destined to be a best seller. I'm only on page 80, but the tales start as a young Jewish boy in Detroit, then from to their Turk Street apartment in San Francisco, and then on the road with 20 hippie buses along the silk road bringing medical supplies, food and love to people in need. With wavy gravy as their ultimate hippie cheerleader. I know that it was this period of time that they meet up with Steve Jobs, and I would imagine he will be there somewhere in the book. Larry has had a colorful life; he helped eradicate smallpox, was the grateful deads doctor, founded the Seva foundation, headed Google philanthropy for several years and much, much more. At the book signing, the front two rows were of white-haired men and women, with what I'm sure were many, many stories to tell, wavy gravy included. We overheard him talking to an eight-year-old girl about caring a rubber fish on a stick. It was perfect. I feel so grateful, that he wrote this inspiring book, while he is still thriving and making a difference. Julie Johnson

One of the best books I have ever read, period. An extraordinary adventure, scientific odyssey, and spiritual journey of the highest orders. Beautifully written and deeply inspiring; a klieg light in the

darkness. Brilliant in every way!

The remarkable story of how one man can leave his mark on the world in tremendous and simple ways - and how a path of searching and learning leads us precisely down the roads we're supposed to be on (even when we're not sure about those roads). Sometimes Brilliant is both a lesson in world history as well as an inspirational journey in faith and healing. It's a worthwhile reminder that this life is full of twists, turns, tragedies, beauty, and extraordinary meaning and depth - and that we as humans have an exceptional ability to overcome the odds and change peoples' lives. All we need to do is listen and keep an open heart. Thank you, Larry Brilliant, for the beautiful reminder that we all have this gift.

I love this book. What an amazing journey! His story is so inspiring! The people he's known, and the wonderful things they've accomplished. The work to wipe out smallpox is a fascinating story. The first part, about his family and his spiritual path, is inspiring. I was already familiar with some of the people he mentioned, Wavy Gravy, Krishna Das, Ram Dass and his guru, Neem Karoli Baba. I highly recommend this book. I couldn't put it down.

This is a fabulous book. It's the perfect combination of service and devotion, the true meaning of karma yoga. Larry's heart is as big as grand idea of unity expressed through the story of smallpox. How people of all colors, from all different nations and beliefs, came together to help eradicate suffering for humankind, as foretold to him by Neem Karoli Baba. And it's a gripping read!

I loved this book, was inspired, comforted, and challenged by Dr. Brilliant in a way I have not experienced in years. I am a medical doctor and anthropologist and have worked through epidemics of cholera, malaria, meningitis, and most recently, Ebola. When, later in the book, he began talking about the psychological trauma the work and personal tragedy inflicted upon him, I sobbed alone in my study for an hour. Dr. Brilliant has always been a bit of a hero of mine, but I must admit that early in the book I began to falter in my admiration. But the journey into his radical behavior was necessary in order to appreciate the entire picture. Thank you for sharing your amazing story with us in all of its raw, sometimes disturbing, sometimes smelly, and always riveting honesty. Now, I need a rest!

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