

## Untitled Text by Alexander Shulgin, circa 2007

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Many, many years ago, while I was still a research chemist at The Dow Chemical Company, I received a cutting of a plant from someone in Mexico. I was told that the plant was *Salvia divinorum*, that it was a psychedelic, that it was orally active, and that no one knew what was in it. So I went to the nearby lumber company, bought some wood and windows and built a small greenhouse out near the employee's parking lot at Dow. I put the cutting in there, it grew like fury and in six months I had a greenhouse completely filled with *S. divinorum*.

This was in the days before desk top GCMS's even existed. My primary tool for exploring the unknown was spectroscopy, so I made a bunch of extracts with a variety of solvents and failed to get any information that would lead to identifying any compounds that were present. A general feeling of being made a fool of took over, so I bolted down as much of the leaf as I could and it all came up as vomit. I had no mental effects at all.

Quite a few years later, I had the pleasure of meeting Albert Hofmann at a party down the coast from the San Francisco Bay Area at a place called Esalen. I told him my story and he told me that years before, probably at about the same time I had gotten my cutting, he had received a cutting from Mexico. He built a small greenhouse behind Sandoz in Switzerland and in a few months he had a greenhouse full of *S. divinorum*. His principal tool of exploratory analysis was chromatography. He went through his research tools with extracts from the plant and he also failed to find anything of interest. He also swallowed as much as he could of the leaf and he also threw it up. There was no mental activity at all.

What a pleasure to find that the two of us, unbeknownst to one another, had walked the same path. Everyone now knows that "oral activity," (in the case of *Salvia divinorum*) means not swallowing, but chewing it up and keeping the chewed material in your mouth.

I mentioned MDMA to Albert and he had not heard of it. I fortunately had some with me (this was before it was made illegal) and I offered him a dose. He said he was a little bit sensitive to stimulants so he would start with half a dose. Within the hour he said this was very nice material and took the other half. So about six of us shared a very nice afternoon together. He said he thought his wife would enjoy MDMA, so I gave him two more doses to take back to Switzerland.

Years later he confessed to me that he much preferred MDMA to his famous "problem child," LSD, adding that he thought it best not to reveal this heresy to any but a few close friends. I said that I thought this a wise decision. I have a feeling that now, having had his 101<sup>st</sup> birthday, Albert wouldn't mind my having told this story to the rest of his admirers.