

# The Secret Life of Plants

**By Peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird**

Letter from Coauthor Christopher Bird

Constitutes the First Draft of a portion of

## Chapter 2

### “Plants Can Read Your Mind”

This is a letter from book co-author Christopher Bird to Randall Fontes  
in response to an audio tape requested by Chris.

After receiving this letter corrections and  
additional information was sent to him.

Contact Randall Fontes for additional information at:

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<http://www.ebdir.net/enlighten/>

8 November 1972

Dear Randy,

I have just listened to and transcribed the tape you sent me which is self-explanatory. I am going to set down a partial narrative with questions in upper-case CAPITALS. (I am also sending a copy of this to Marcel).

+++++

In 1972 (MONTH?), Randall G. Fontes, a student of humanistic psychology and Mindu philosophy at Sonoma State College, an hour's drive north of San Francisco, who had heard of Vogel's work, paid a visit to the IBM researcher.

Vogel observed that Fontes had a real affinity for plants as confirmed by the recording apparatus which registered the student's ability to establish a relationship with them. He lent Fontes all his equipment to take back to a laboratory at the college.

(EXACTLY WHAT IS THE EQUIPMENT?)

Since then, Fontes, together with his friend and fellow-student, Robert Swanson Jr., have been experimenting with plants under Vogel's coaching.

IN the first weeks, during which they mastered Vogel's technique of affixing the electrodes of their monitoring equipment to leaves in such a way as to eliminate all spurious data -- or what engineers call "noise" -- on their recording charts, the two researchers were brought to the realization that plants, like humans, had varying characteristics, temperaments and dispositions.

"We found that each leaf, in fact, has its own uniqueness, personality or individuality," says Fontes. "Leaves with a large resistance are difficult to work with. (WHY? DOES THIS DEPEND OF THE VARIETY OF PLANT?) And each plant itself goes through phases of activity and inactivity, full of response on one day and what one could call "sluggish" or "morose" on another.

By the late summer they had settled on two Ivy Philodendrons, one tall, one short, which could be hooked into the recording apparatus ~~in order~~ to pick up their reactions simultaneously in red and green ink respectively.

Because they noticed that environmental factors in the laboratory such as light, temperature and humidity could alter the reactions of ~~their~~ their plants to a given stimulus, they ~~maximixmaximixmaximixmaximix~~ began studying the effects produced by changes in each of these variables.

One day when they were routinely checking one of the plant's responses to temperature changes, Fontes suddenly noticed a "spike" on the chart indicating an unexpected reaction.

As Fontes continued to monitor the plant, he puzzled over what possibly could have caused such an aberration in the ~~plant's~~<sup>113</sup> expected behavior. Finally, he asked his colleague, Bob, whether he had had any unusual thoughts or emotions.

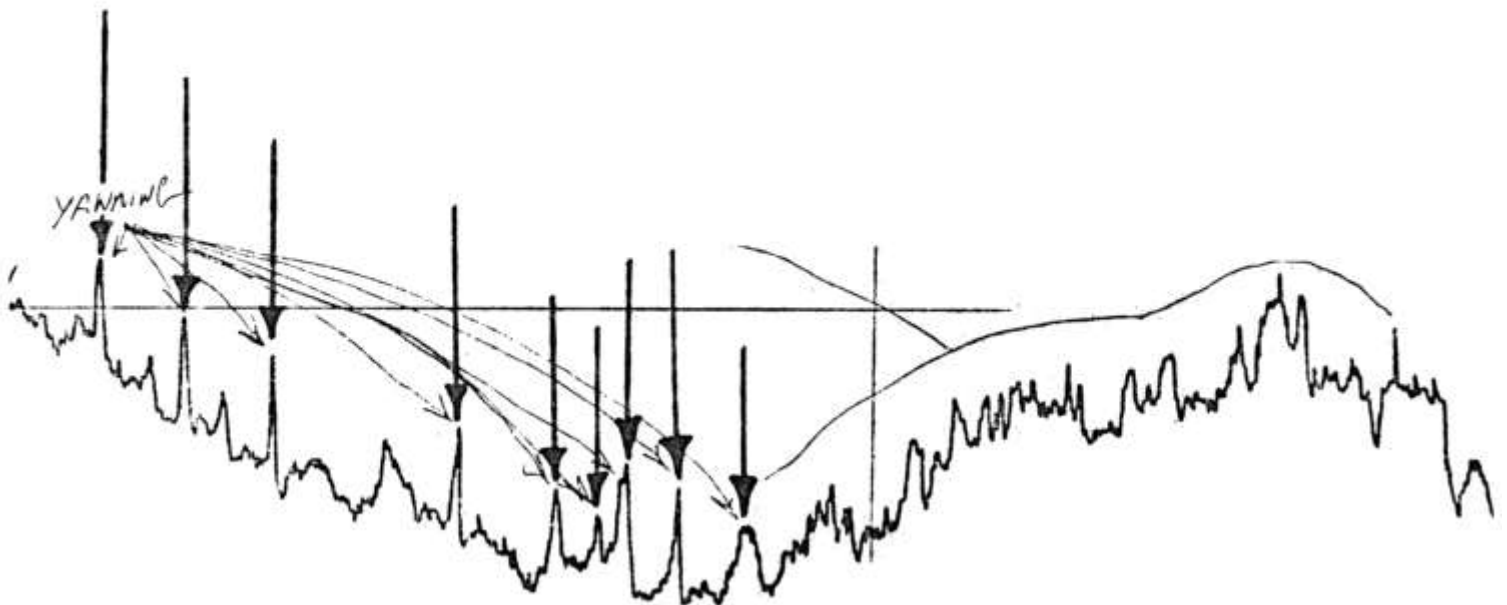
"No," replied Bob, "but I did yawn."

As Fontes was musing over this, another "spike" suddenly appeared on the chart.

"Did you yawn again?" Fontes asked his friend excitedly.

When Bob admitted that he had, they then both began yawning in succession, four times each over a three-minute period. With each yawn the philodendron registered a sharp reaction.

At the end of the eighth yawn, the ink tracing began to ascend on the graph indicating that the plant was absorbing an energy of some kind, just as it does when ~~it~~ registering a thought or emotion.



The two collaborators had apparently discovered that a plant can withdraw energy any time a person yawns in its vicinity.

Though modern science knows little about the yawn's function (WHAT IS KNOWN?), in the Yogic literature yawning --or kechrimudra as it is called in the Sanskrit texts -- is referred to as one of the ways the tired person can be recharged with vivifying "prana," a universal energy filling the universe. Pontes and Swanson may have come across a way to support this ancient Hindu contention.

At the end of October, the two Sonoma researchers decided to collaborate with Vogel to see if he could affect one of their laboratory plants from his home in San José, 100 miles distant as the crow flies.

After setting up all their equipment including a video-camera to visually record all the proceedings, they called Vogel long-distance and informed him that they were ready for him to begin. Their conversation as recorded ~~xx~~ on tape, ran:

"Can you hear me Randy?"

"Yes, I can hear you, Marcel!"

"Alright, I'm focussing with my mind on the plant. I can feel a flow of energy moving from me. Now, I'm going to try to bring the plant to a state of balance. OK, what is the response you're getting on the graph?"

"Right at the moment it's calm and riding even."

"Alright, I'll now try to release a strong emotion!"

Seven seconds passed and Fontes said:

"You just got a "spike," Marcel."

WHERE ON THE CHART IS THIS "SPIKE?"

Vogel replied: "Alright, that was a strong emotion. I could feel a surge of energy leaving me. Now, I'll relax and try to do it again."

The ~~relaxing~~ phase took 40 seconds whereupon Vogel announced: "Ok, now, Ill try to project an image of my wife."

The instant he spoke the word "wife" a sharp downward (UPWARD?) spike occurred on the graph, as revealed through a review of the video tape, followed by a (???) -second descent (ASCENT?) of the pen-recordeer indicating a surge of energy into the plant. Vogel confirmed to Pontes that there was strong emotional content when he mentioned the word "wife."

The pen-recorder then reversed direction which Pontes reported to Vogel.

"Yes," said Vogel, "I'm relaxing again."

(graph sent back to Pontes with  
6 questions)

THIS IS A DIFFICULT SECTION TO INTERPRET OFF THE GRAPH  
HOW MANY SECONDS DOES THE GRAPH SHOW PER SQUARE? IT LOOKS  
AS IF THERE SHOULD BE TEN SECONDS SINCE THE WORD WIFE  
OCCURS APPROXIMATELY 120 SECONDS AFTER THE START OF THE  
EXPERIMENT!! THE FIRST SPIKE SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE  
60 SECONDS ~~at~~ + or - 5SECONDS FROM THE START BUT WHERE  
EXACTLY ON THE GRAPH IS THIS SPIKE? (POINT A?? POINT B??,  
Which are both circled)

OBVIOUSLY THIS TAPE ENDS WITH THE END OF THE WIFE EXPERIMENT  
NIGHTWAMR?



Vogel then attempted to project into the other plant though Pontes told him that it had not been too responsive for some time and they had not been experimenting with it.

"What I do/ now," said Vogel on tape, " is to construct a mental image of this plant and, as I build the image, I focus into it. Right now, the image of the plant is in my mind and I can see it clearly. Now I'll focus into that image."

There was a pause and all at once it became clear to the research pair at the college that Vogel was experiencing difficulty.

"I feel a very strong feedback into my body," his voice came over the telephone. "There is a....(long sigh)...it's hard for me to breath. I'm getting a completely different effect. My whole body is starting to oscillate. It's a completely different reaction to what I had before."

As Vogel spoke, Pontes saw that the graph was ~~was~~ *was* "holding relatively flat," confirming that the plant was receiving no/ input from San José or anywhere else.

Vogel went on in a concerned tone: "I seem to be getting feedback from the plant. I can't penetrate its energy field. Funny, I get a feeling of a wall, a barrier I cannot break."

No trace of reaction occurred on the graph.

Despite Vogel's failure to break through what seemed to him to be a strange communication barrier with the second plant, Fontes thought the ~~second~~ <sup>last</sup> part of the experiment just as worthwhile as the first since it clearly indicated that when Vogel himself was having self-perceived difficulty, the equipment and the plant had confirmed it.

As for the first part of the experiment, they all felt sure that a communication ~~xxxx~~ from a human being to a plant 100 miles away had been sent and successfully observed for the first time in California.

Well, Randy, that's it. It's difficult to get the text flowing and keep it accurate. Let me know where I should make corrections.

I have included four pages of graphs you gave me with questions. *(type answers on reverse side of each page?)*

Do you have any other interesting graphs which illustrate things I should know?

Could you put down for me in your words what you think the downward and upward movements of the pen on the recording chart mean. Not the spiking downward and upward but the general movement.

Could you also put down in your words why the plant spikes.

Do you and Marcel agree on how one gets into contact with a plant?

During the 100 mile experiment, had Vogel sensitized this plant before the experiment began, or did he begin to sensitize it over the phone?

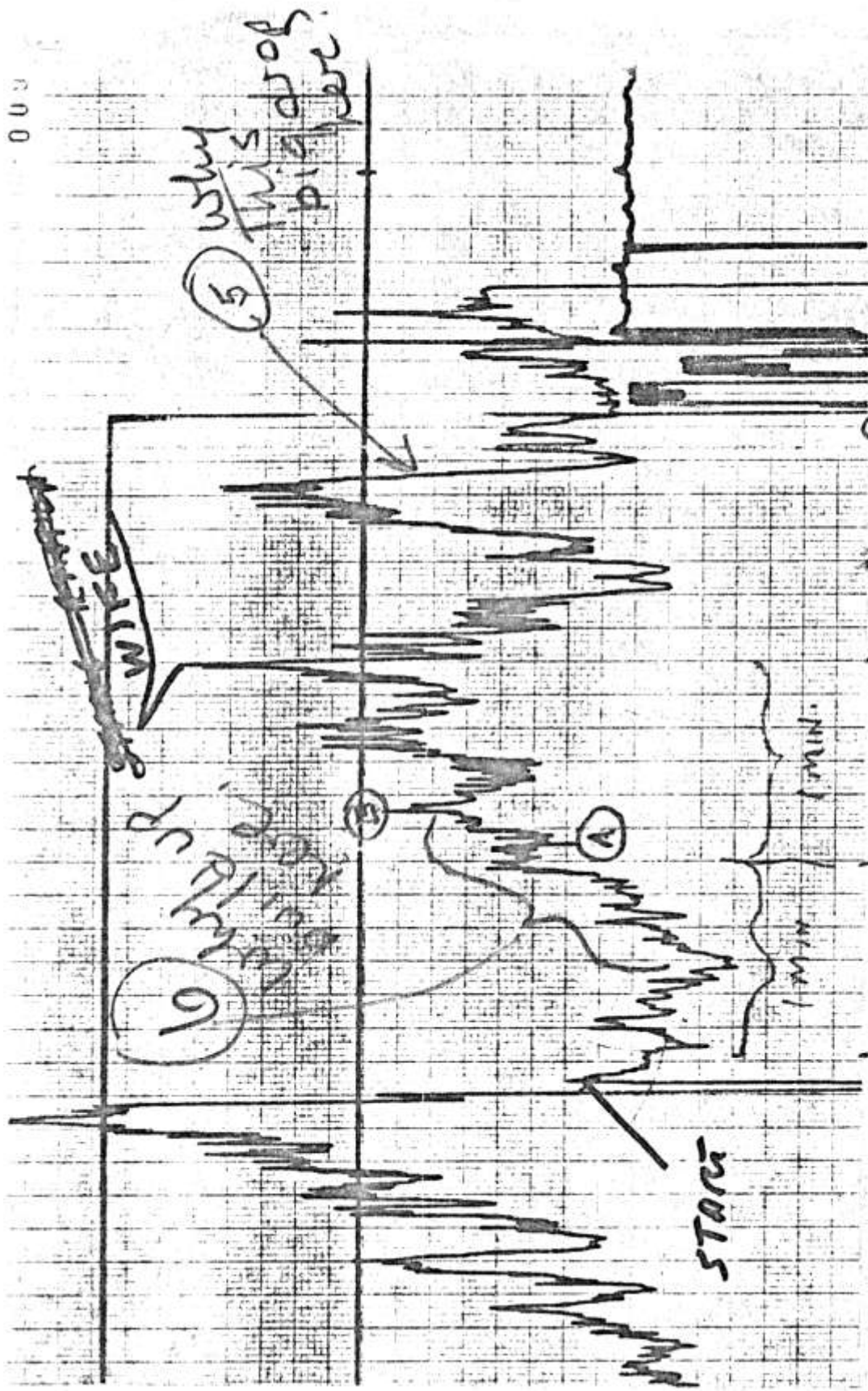
Do you plan another 100 mile experiment which will be more inclusive and in which you will not inform Marcel what is happening on the graph until after the experiment is concluded?

What have you done which should be included but which I know nothing of?

What do you plan to do in connection with Kirlian photography?

Can you come right back on all this?

Regards  
*Chirine*

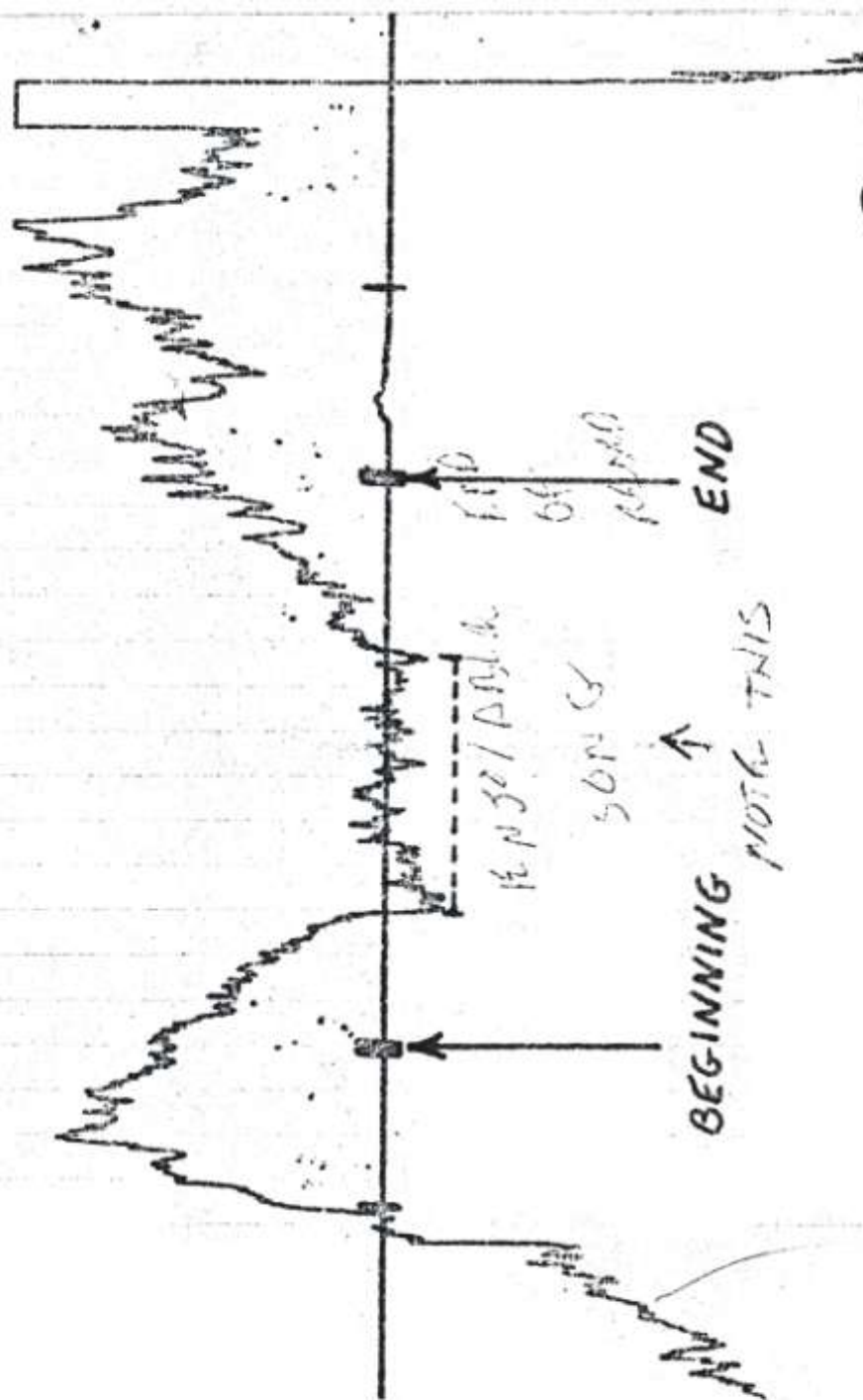


① Is this one minute?  
 ② Is A or B the first spike?  
 ③ does emotional charge from "wife" last to here?  
 ④ Is this the relaxing period after "wife" episode

⑤ why this drop is here?  
 ⑥ why this drop is here?  
 ⑦ why this drop is here?  
 ⑧ why this drop is here?  
 ⑨ why this drop is here?  
 ⑩ why this drop is here?  
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What does this show? ~~Whyxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Does it show that the plant gets calm (fairly straight graph) during the song? Does it also show that the plant builds up energy before the song is over and continues to do so after the song ends? How does this square with the sharp drop-off after the end of the Hendrix music? What is the song?

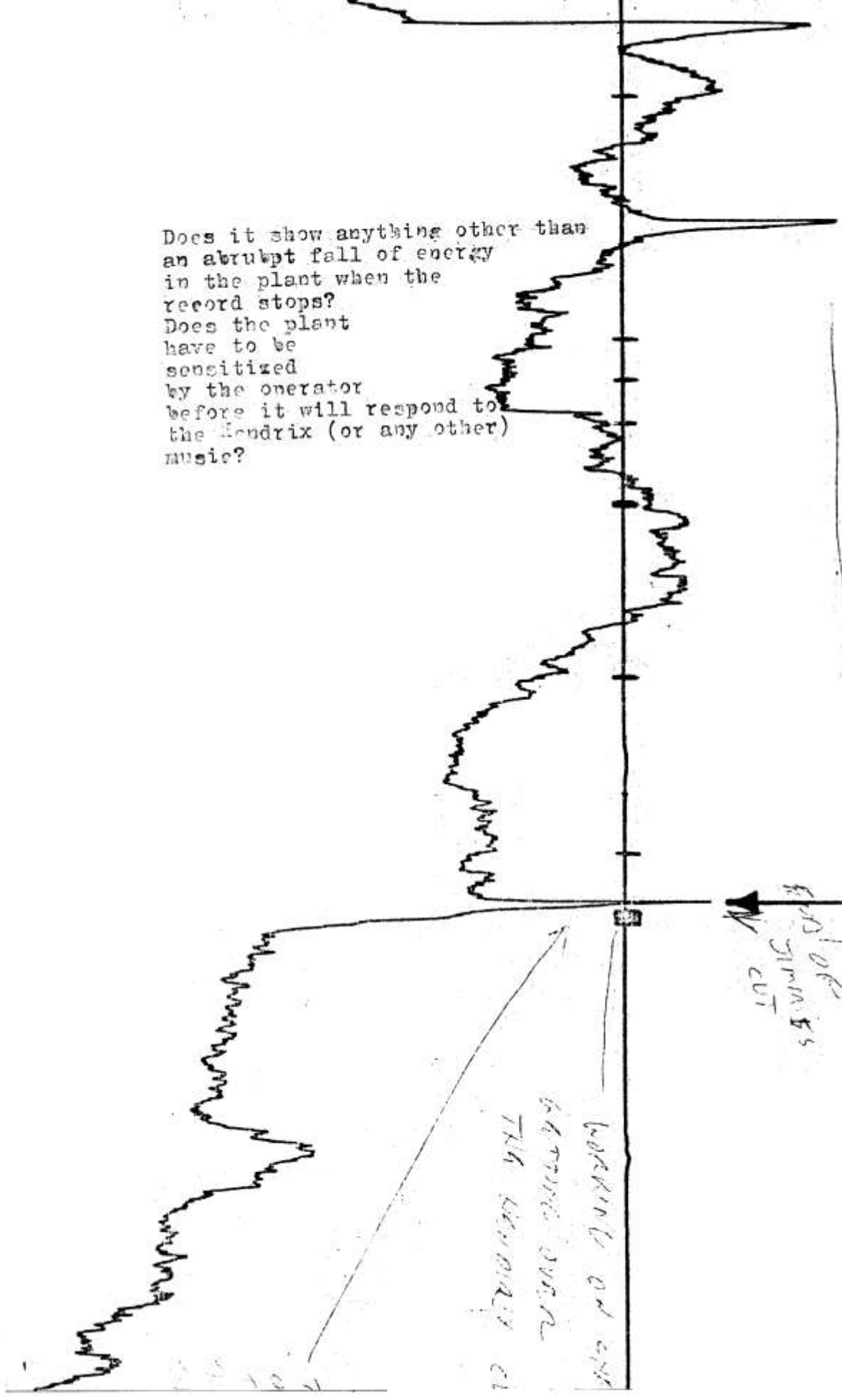
WOODSTOCK

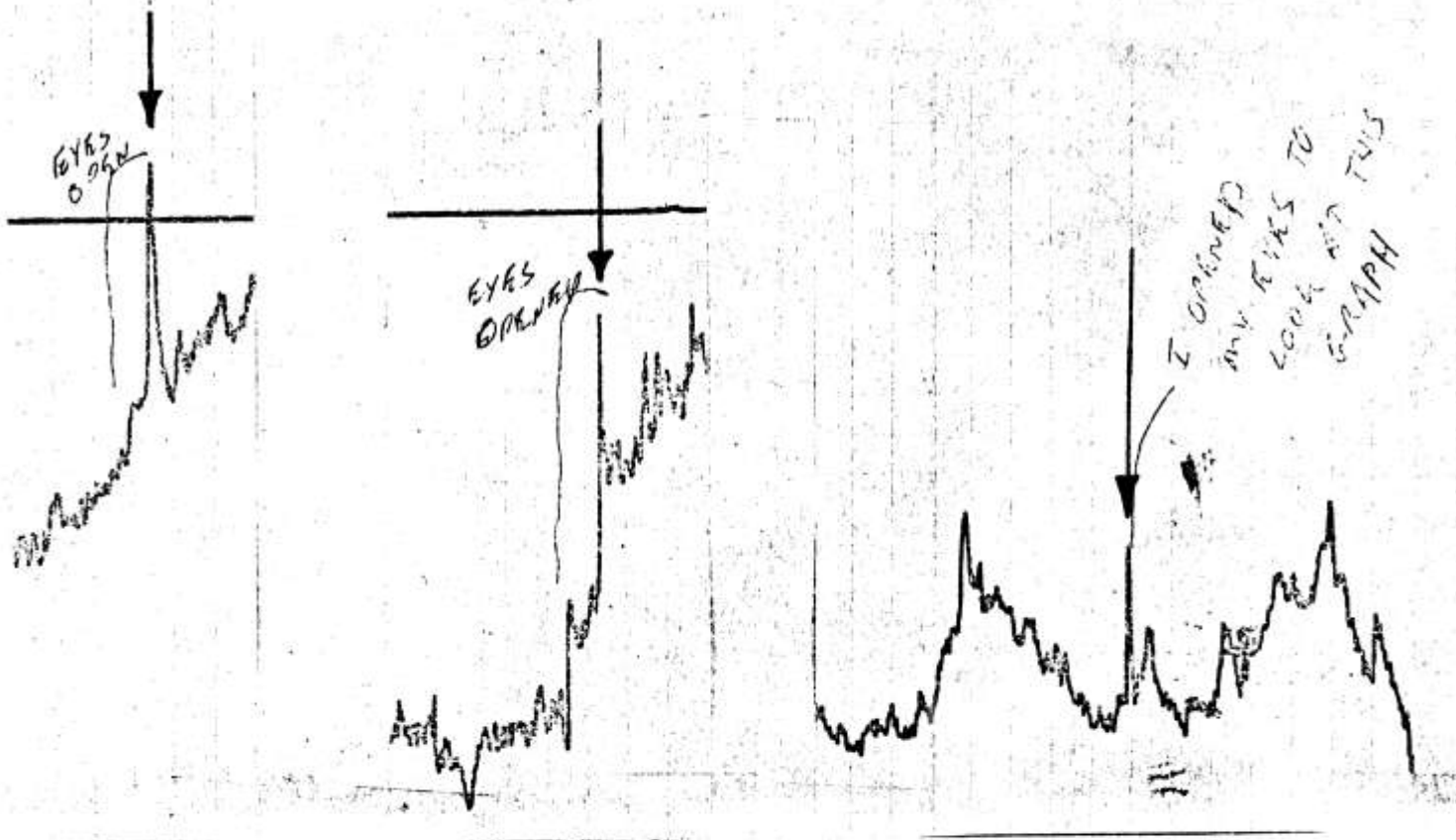
Jimmie NASHLEY CUT

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EXACT END OF RECORD

Does it show anything other than  
an abrupt fall of energy  
in the plant when the  
record stops?  
Does the plant  
have to be  
sensitized  
by the operator  
before it will respond to  
the Hendrix (or any other)  
music?





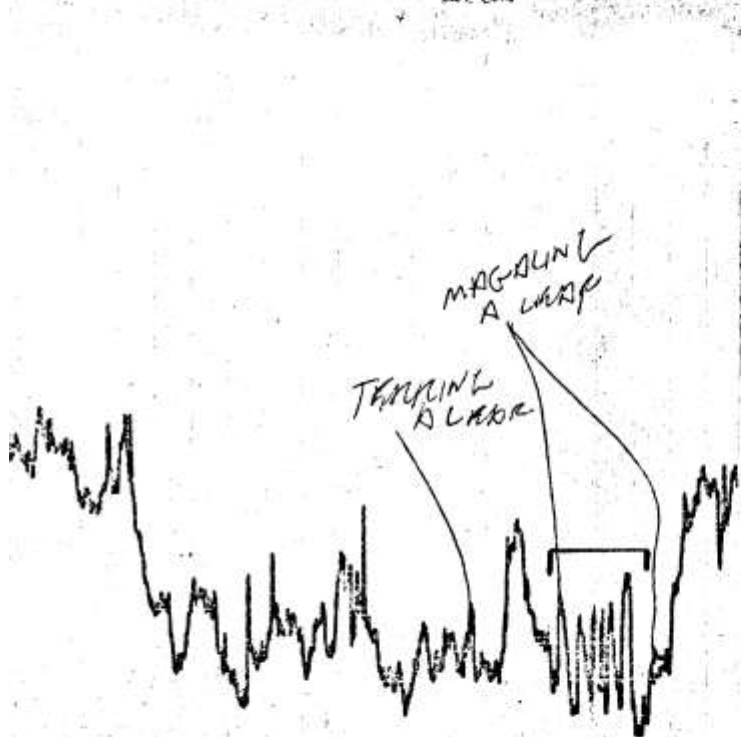
~~Does this show anything other than an abrupt fall of energy in the plant when the record stops? Does the plant have to be sensitized by the operator before it will respond to the Hendrix music? (or any other music?)~~

Where are you with relation to the plant when you open your eyes? When you write "I open my eyes to look at this graph" where is your plant, in front of you, in back of you? How far from you? Why should opening the eyes cause a reaction like that of a yawn?

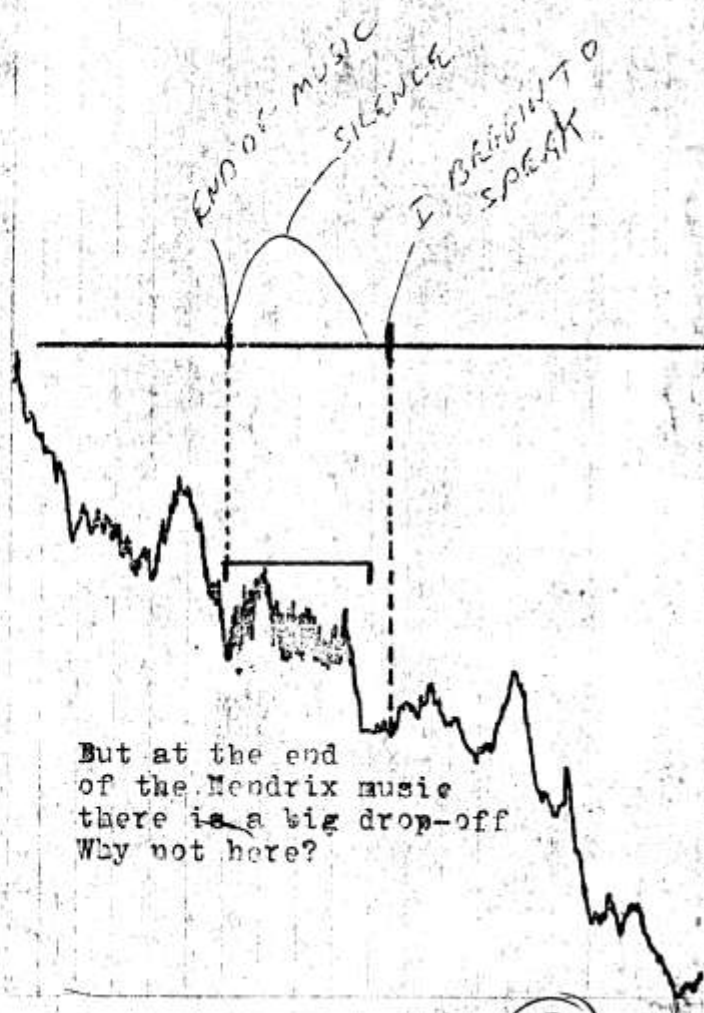


what is a "nervous  
thought" form...thought  
about what?

Which plant?  
Cutting with what?  
\*what does "with contacts on it"  
mean



is it "mangling"?? a leaf



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