



SPIRIT IN THE SKY

So, I bet you all can guess what happened next. My ego got bigger than a breadbox, and I set out to validate my personal self at the public's expense. It's happened again and again here in New Haven, with me and my relationship with art. But of course, those 'impressions' are promulgated by well-funded institutions and government entities threatened by my view of art and its relationship with the world at large, .

This is a spiritual journey for me, and it should be a spiritual journey for everybody..

So, let's travel back to Summer 2012 to get this story really rolling....

One hot August Saturday I was walking across the New Haven Green, after having a nice Dim Sum Lunch at GREAT WALL. Now please understand, when walking around town, I am used to being called names because of my anachronistic appearance -- Jerry Garcia, John Lennon, Arlo Guthrie, even Jimi Hendrix. When all of a sudden I hear an unfamiliar voice call a very familiar name --

"HEY BILDO!"

Now, this is my fraternity nickname. I might be remiss to disclose it.

But There is an 'inflection' in the way it is said that is indicative of one of my Brothers. I approach the fountain, to meet for the first time two recent Brohters -- , Eric Otto and James Reefer. I do not know them from Adam, but they knew me -- recognized me from NHI videos of my arrest during the THE GREAT IDEAT VILLAGE RIOT OF 2012. That that precise inflection remains after 27 years blows me away. But we are storytellers at Phi Sig, so it just proves the oral tradition is still alive and well somewhere.

We went to my house and hung out for a couple hours. Despite a 25 year age difference, and a different College experience, we really clicked, like Phi Slgs do. There is enough history and legacy to provide a common playing field. I am always surprised at the level of connection.

Before they left for dinner. I tried to lure them into a Pepe's Pizza, but Reefer had his own agenda.

"You know any place for HOT POT?" he asked.

"In fact, I do," I replied. "GREAT WALL on Whitney. I had lunch there right before I met you, and it is the only HOT POT place in town."

So, that circle of interaction closed as beautifully as it opened.
I found it very, very strange at the time. But it got stranger fast.

On Monday I received a very sad email, that my friend, and fellow Black Light Alumni, Thom O'Malley, had passed on. Remember him from the last installment -- Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas Anymore.

I had not seen him in many years, since he was living in DEEP RIVER, CT in a renovated factory known as 'The Piano Works'. When I started hanging out with my Ideal Village partner of the Future, Nancy Shea, she was living in this same building. I tried to find Thom one day while there, but found out that he had just moved to EDISON (NJ). Two ships passing in the night./

So, I attended his funeral in Concord, Mass and was reunited with many of the Brothers from my era. We talked about the Thom, the Black Light Room, and it's purportedly 'SAVED' portions.

A surprise visitor was also in attendance --- Eric Otto. He happened to be visiting Mass that weekend. Though he did not know Thom, he felt an obligation to attend.

"This is what Brotherhood is about.", he said

The details of Thom's death are cloudy. It is not something that was talked about in the open, but I feel the known facts are an important detail at this stage of the story..

About ten years prior, Thom, an extreme Mountain Bike enthusiast, was involved in a bad accident while biking out West. He suffered a traumatic brain injury which he struggled with the rest of his life. Over the year's that followed, he continued to rise through the corporate ranks, maintained his love of ultimate frisbee, and great humor, but he also struggled with depression because of the injury, and it was this depression that ultimately drove him to take his own life.

So now there are two suicides in this story.
One that broke our Brotherhood apart, and one that brought it back together.

At that point I knew I had been tapped by a "Force" outside of myself to bring the Black Light Room back into the World in memory of the most unique humans I have ever known..

The poem read at his funeral was simple, moving, and spoke to our connection with the world around us.

'Do Not Stand By My Grave and Weep' was written anonymously in 1932.

The authors true identity was not known until 1998.

At this time I would like to share this moving piece by Mary Elizabeth Frye:

Do not stand at my grave and weep
I am not there. I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry;
I am not there. I did not die.

In the wake of this service, Eric and I decided to make the Pilgrimage to Troy to see 'What Up'.