

Rain over the lake  
(in four marriages or less)

In this dream I am a rain drop falling down towards a lake. I am aware that I have an identity as a rain drop, but unlike a snow flake that is unique, I look like all the other rain drops around me. It isn't going to be of any value to get out of myself and look at my outer form to derive any sense of identity, so I have to look inside to know who I am. I don't have much time as gravity is pulling me closer and closer to the lake below. Once I am in the lake I will merge with all the other rain drops and the water that is already there to become a part of the lake. I don't know if my identity will survive this experience and the only way that I will know this is to know who I am before I fall into the lake.

I am aware of myself as an individual rain drop so from this I conclude that I must have an identity that is different from all the other rain drops. The question is whether identity is defined by individual form or if it will survive once I am in the lake and no longer have my form as a rain drop. I have to know my identity so that once I am in the lake I will be able to experience my identity from within the whole of all the water in the lake. I don't know if my identity is defined by my form and physical existence or if it is generated by something that is independent of form. If my identity is generated by a spirit which is who I am, how do I become aware of my spirit in a way that isn't dependant upon my physical being. The lake draws nearer and all I have are more questions instead of answers. Once I am in the lake will I have an awareness of an identity other than that of being in and of the lake? Why does this identity that I experience now desire to remain identifiable once I am part of the much greater whole as part of the lake? Will my identity merge into the lake and once the sun comes out tomorrow to evaporate water into new rain droplets, will new identities be generated to go with these future rain droplets or will these old identities be recycled along with the physical properties of the water?

In this flash of a dream I am falling and the experience of falling causes me to jerk in my sleep and I am awakened. I am awake. I have awakened. I never hit the lake as a rain drop in a dream so I don't know the answer to all of my questions. I am a young man of almost fourteen years of age with this experience from a dream that I have an identity but I don't know who I am. I have to choose classes in school that will give me the education that I need so I can grow up and get a job. All these voices outside of me are telling me which choice to make. They are pointing me in the direction they want me to go in because that is who they want me to become. I go to the mirror to comb my hair and my face has broken out again. The skin on my nose feels like a volcano is about to erupt. My mother is yelling at me to hurry or I'll miss the bus. I feel like I am falling into the lake and I don't know who I am.

Hunger does this to a person. It makes their mind flit about like a hummingbird. It is the anxiety of things being out of control and if control isn't restored then there will be no more food and the lake below will absorb what is left back into the whole. There is a sense that somehow one can think their way out of the situation they are in and bring things back into balance once again. It is like the rain drop saying to its self, "If I think hard enough then I'll float and not fall into the lake." It is a natural response to an adverse situation. The mind races through a series of situations and reviews everything to see where things went awry. Old memories come up. One starts to see their life like a flag on a flag pole blowing in the breeze. How others view the flag is dependant upon which way

the wind is blowing, or if there is a breeze at all. How much control over my life did I ever have or do I have today? Is my identity defined by the design on the flag or by how others are able to view the flag? I can't ask the others in this quest because all they can relate back is what they see, which is dependant upon which way the wind is blowing. Does wind define me or does my design define me, or both? It is a loop back to the rain drop falling into the lake with a sense that there isn't much time to derive a sense of self before being immersed in a pool of water that will do everything to destroy all sense of self.

Even more startlingly, there were very few around that could guide me in deriving a sense of self that could do so without imposing their own ego into the process. The dream was accurate in one aspect of reality. One might get a snap shoot image of self for a fleeting second before being immersed back into reality of everyday life but the added dimension of anxiety in trying to make sense of this impression is that there are no teachers to help process this image through. I read everything I could get my hands on that might offer an understanding of identity. Science fiction captured my imagination, so I chose classes that would allow me to go to college. I thought that I could study my way into the space program and become an astronaut. In some hindsight, I suppose I felt that by being in "outer space" I would be further from that lake and have more time to review my solitary identity before falling into the water below. I never saw that desire before now. So I went with that idea as an identity of "future self" that as a young lad I have the freedom to pick and choose from a very short list of careers offered to me. Society implied that within this was the hope that eventually an identity would emerge that I would align myself with and go on to become a productive citizen in society.

A lot changed in the world around me during those four years of high school. No one cared that I had a dream that I was a part of a thunder cloud when I went through puberty and I was still having dreams of being in the clouds. Inside the clouds were people and they would sit and talk to me during my dreams. I couldn't tell anyone these dreams. No one was listening. I had this reality during the day where I was attempting to become a person that would please everyone around me while this other reality was happening at night. I started reading long into the night and going with very little sleep in an effort to escape this experience that was in conflict with my waking reality. It is impossible to avoid sleep, but I tried. Sleep deprivation does funny things to a person. I started to experience dream sequences while awake. The dreams overlapped into my everyday reality. Class mates thought I was using drugs and rumors went about. I became more isolated.

Music was becoming an important part of my life. I was hearing something in the music that gave me a sense of freedom. I could float in the feeling of a song while listening to the radio late at night and escape this anxiety of not knowing who I was or what I was going to do with my life after I got out of school. I started to read poetry and then write poems to express my inner feelings. I felt freedom through the experience of writing. This war that was being fought inside of me could be projected out on a piece of paper and it wasn't inside of me all the time anymore. I showed my poetry to friends and teachers and they laughed at them. "Rain drops falling on my head."

I went to college and started out studying physics. I hated physics. It was the most boring subject I was taking. I hated college. I wanted to dance. I wanted to move. I wanted to flow in the liquid freedom of a mountain stream. I didn't care how tall the flag

pole in the commons area of the campus was. (One student used the method of measuring the flag pole in “flag pole units” and determined that it was one flag pole unit high. The professor accepted this answer sense he didn’t define which unit of measurement had to be used.) Friends from high school would come by the dormitory on the weekends and ask me to go out drinking with them. The first few times I sat and drank a soda while they had beers. I watched them get silly while I sat there hating my life. I asked one of them if I could taste their beer and they let me take a sip. It tasted terrible. They told me I had to develop a taste for beer. It took a few more tries but I did. I got silly also. It was a break from hating my life. I took more and more breaks over the next year and a half. The dreams continued. Some mornings I would wake up and my eyes would still be flashing from the dream of lightning the night before. My brother-in-law, Jack, had changed his major from engineering to art. I liked what I saw so I took an art course in the spring of my freshman year. I didn’t hate art.

Here at this computer writing I stop for a minute for a smoke break. My stomach hurts but I don’t know if it is from the lack of food or because the coffee I have is the cheapest brand you can buy, which was given to me by a friend. I ate a few hours ago. It was a piece of corn bread, the last piece left from a pan of corn bread I made three days ago. With it I had some blueberry fruit spread. I think it is the coffee mostly. I haven’t had any meat in my diet for a week now. Well, there was one can of chicken noodle soup the other day which has meat in it, I think. Back to the smoke break and then more rain stories. “Rain” by the Beatles was a favorite song during high school.

I dropped out of college for a year. I had started out that summer planning to work and save money for the following year of school. I had gone by the office on campus where this person had a list of job opportunities and she told me that there were a lot of requests for yard work. I liked doing yard work. It was out side and I didn’t have to mow grass on rainy days. A friend who was a few years older than me had come back from Vietnam and moved into a house trailer near my parents. I started going over to visit with him when he was home. He was smoking a lot of pot so I helped him out with all the pot he had to smoke. One day we smoked pot in my dad’s car and I forgot to roll the windows down to let the smoke out. My dad went to use the car after I got home and smelled the smoke. My parents kicked me out. I found an apartment off campus and moved out. I started back to school that fall but dropped out after a month and got a job at a factory. I was smoking pot all the time. It didn’t stop the dreams. The plant manager kept trying to get me to come to his house so he could take photographs of me. I knew what kind of photographs he wanted to take and I wouldn’t go. He fired me. I got a job at the scrap yard where a friend was foreman. I worked for a few months before I got injured on the job. I almost lost my arm. I had a bad reaction to marijuana where my heart started to race real fast every time I got high, so I had to quit. I asked a friend to help me with recovery since I didn’t want to go into the mental hospital for marijuana addiction. I went back to school that summer and stayed in school all the way until I graduated, including summer classes. I majored in fine art. I learned to splash paint on the canvas or glazes on pottery so it looked like water splashing in mid-air.

Art doesn’t give a person an identity but it does offer a process whereby one can derive an identity. Imitation of others is the first step in becoming an artist. The students who imitate the teacher get the best grades. I wanted to paint the insides of clouds as I had experienced them in my dreams. None of my teachers were cloud painters. I made

passing grades, which was all I cared about. I took sculpture and was able to make models of the physical concepts I had experienced in dreams that I couldn't model through physics. I studied everything about art I could get my hands on. I liked art from the Far East because they were concerned with concepts beyond the physical presence of an object, or the denial of physical presence that happens in abstract expressionism. They were looking inside the rain drop to see what made it a rain drop beyond the obvious fact that it was a rain drop.

I got married. I wasn't in love with the person so much as I was in love with the idea of marriage. The marriage fell apart before I got out of college. I moved out of town into a cabin in the woods and lived there while I finished up with college. When I graduated from college I lived in the cabin through spring and summer. I would have anxiety attacks where I would jump up from my seat and wonder where I was suppose to be right then. I had been in college for three and a half years nonstop and every moment of my life had been scheduled to be somewhere. For the first time in my life I wasn't suppose to be any where except where I was. I ran out of money so I fasted for two weeks instead of going out and getting a job. I had tea and honey. After two weeks I had an experience during waking hours that competed with all the experiences of this separate reality I had been experiencing during dream time. I knew I had to give this experience a context or I would go mad. I left the cabin and got a job. I started reading everything about Native American culture I could get my hands on. I came to understand that this experience would have been considered a vision quest had I been living in a tribal culture. I had an identity defined by an experience that was free from any interjection from outside forces in my life but it was completely outside the context of my social construct with respect to the society and world I was living in. All the experiences from dream time that made me feel like I didn't belong in my world had exploded into a waking nightmare that I had no way of applying to my life other than through art. I knew who I was, or had some flash of insight into this inner self, but it wasn't something where one could go down to the employment office and apply for a job based on this identity.

In the passage of ten years I had gone from the radical experience during a dream of knowing I had an identity, yet to be identified, that would survive immersion in the lake of social construct, to having an experience during waking moments that defined my identity after having been immersed in the social construct of high school, college, and a marriage that had not been dissolved through a legal divorce yet. We were estranged and getting stranger by the hour. In "flag pole units" I was one useless college degree and one failed marriage shy of a full flag pole. In "rain drop units" I was rising up out of the pool of ego death in the heat of the sun and becoming anew. I was awake. I had awakened.

I read a book by Doug Boyd about a Cherokee medicine man named Rolling Thunder. Destiny pointed me west to Nevada to meet him. I went. In my dreams that morning I was to met with him a voice told me that I didn't get a teacher in this life time. The entire universe was my teacher. I woke up, ate breakfast, and left. I didn't met Rolling Thunder until March 1988, eleven years later, after I had a dream about him where he told me that if I lived in the traditional way for one year I would take over his work after he died, which was to feed the People. I was legally divorced in the fall of 1977 and got married a month later to my second wife, who had gone to Nevada with me. She was already pregnant with our first son when we got married. She had met Rolling Thunder while we were at his encampment. He kissed her in the mouth like a lover. Later

I related this to him and he denied that he would have done this to a woman that was married to another man. He would have considered us to have been married that summer of 1977 but I think someone forgot to tell him that she was there with her man. This is a small detail in rain drop units, but a big detail in flag pole units.

We can go by numbers here or we can indulge in names. Identities are important. I spent ten years of my life coming up with one that would survive the heat of battle, except the only battle I was ever in was that of survival in a world I didn't belong in. Cindy (the first wife) had introduced me to the vegetarian diet and the idea of fasting. I wasn't real big on either of these but tried it some. Patty (the second wife) was also into the vegetarian diet and fasting along with a lot of other spiritual concepts and ideas. Hers were based more on European models that I would associate with tangents of the Catholic Church, as she had grown up in a Catholic home and went to Catholic school up until high school. It was a strange mix of ideas but it allowed me to broaden my base of information to include models of spirituality from Europe as well as the Native American and Far Eastern concepts I was looking at. I went for nearly seven years without eating meat. That first bite of turkey at Thanksgiving at the end of this was real good.

The dreams were acute during this time period. A lot of them were written down as poems. I would write them down on paper with pencil or pen then punch them down with a manual typewriter borrowed from my mother. I sent out copies to poetry journals for publication. A few got published. Most came back as rejects or never came back at all. I felt like editors were laughing at my poetry the same way my classmates had done in high school. I knew these poems were important in some sense of knowing that a voice gives meaning to the hour, place, and spirit of life. I decided to self-publish a collection of poems. The title of the book came from the second poem, a long poem, titled Spiritual Animal. It was a long rambling bit of verse written in an hour or so one day that combined dreams, visions, meditations, and daily experiences from that time and place. From it comes a few lines which is what motivated me to write this essay.

“Brothers and sisters have let themselves become castrated.  
Caught up in the game of letting fear control their expression  
of emotions.”

One of the classes I took during college was Black Art History. The professor required that we read a book called “Love's Body” by Norman O. Brown. At the end of the quarter he asked for a show of hands of everyone who had read the book. Another student and myself were the only ones that held up our hands. He related that there was a reason why he had assigned this book as required reading. It wasn't a book about art history at all, never mind Black Art History, but about the identity of humanity through Freud's vision of psychoanalysis and beyond to include literary sources that a classics professor could associate together in one book. Our teacher explained that in this book the dynamics of sexuality were expressed that showed what he felt was an important turn of events in the Black Man's identity during the Civil Rights movement. He stated that it wasn't until the Civil Rights movement that one observed white women openly dating and marrying black men. In his opinion this was a counter-move to the rising power that was being generated by the Civil Rights movement. If the white fathers of America couldn't control Black Men in this country then their white daughters would do it through

their sexual bodies. It was a strange concept to be introduced to in an art history class and one I didn't get for many years. Now, four marriages or less later, I am starting to understand the dynamics of identity and the ego-death that Love's Body is talking about.

In childhood development one can watch a small child start to explore the world around them and know that one day they will walk over to the wood stove and touch it. There is no way to communicate to them that the stove is hot and they will get burned so that they won't do this. All one can do is wait and pray that the child won't be burned badly when it finally happens. It always happens. I watched my three children go through this. After that I could say "Hot!" and they knew what I meant. When a person experiences pain there is a basic survival instinct to avoid doing that act again. When survival is dependant upon going through the experience over and over again then this puts the person in conflict between avoiding pain or going through pain already experienced in order to generate survival. Women have more than one child because the positive aspects of parenting over-ride the negative experience of childbirth. A man can go through a terrible marriage and divorce, then turn around and enter into a new courtship like it won't happen again the same way the last one did. Sometimes it doesn't and sometimes it is worst. The second marriage was much worse than the first one. The second divorce was traumatic. Art and poetry embody the expression of that experience, both the pain of going through it and the bliss of being out of it.

The details of my life from 1982 when Patty and I separated until 1991 when Edith and I were married are important in the context of this narrative and are documented in other sources, both in legal papers (some of which have been destroyed and I had no access to while they were in existence) and in art and poetry. The meditation on the rain drop going through the anguish of an identity crisis prior to falling into the lake was manifested in life in very real terms. Even in knowing who I was in a spiritual context didn't help me face the crisis I was confronted with in 1986 and my only recourse was to create in every discipline I would express myself with. It was through this expression of visual art, literary works, and sound recordings that I was able to hold on to this threatened sense of who I was. Going through allegations that suggested that I had committed a terrible crime and the reaction I got from others showed me that people were willing to accept the idea that something was true in spite of the fact that no crime had been committed. The mere suggestion that a crime had been committed was enough for them to consider this to be a fact. In flag pole units I was a Bic lighter that was used up and discarded. Patty did every thing she could to destroy me. She even suggested to others that I might attempt suicide, which I considered to be a subliminal suggestion from her through them, as a way to manipulate me into killing myself. So far it hasn't worked.

In rain drop units my life was going to continue. A water color painting entitled "Aegean Sea" is the perfect illustration of the death and rebirth of the ego through this time period. I did a series of oil paintings that no one has ever seen. I did a series of works entitled "the penis is not a weapon" that very few have seen. It is hard to show these works. The pain associated with them is too great. I can't endure this pain over and over again in my life. I do the work and put it away. Someday it might be valued as a testament of faith in the ability to survive against all odds. I would bet the farm on it but with the advent of foreclosure immanent, it would be an empty wager.

By the fall of 1986 I knew I had to create a new circle of friends and start life again beyond the "Patty years". I started to hang out with artists my age in Knoxville and

do a volunteer television series at the community access cable station there. I went to Rainbow Gatherings around the country and made a few friends there. I met a woman at a musical festival in Knoxville and had a relationship with her for several years. I went to a workshop for environmental activists in the fall of 1990 and met Edith. The next chapter of the rain drop descending into the lake began.

Throughout my life I have had experiences that I put in the context of being Native American although I grew up in an acculturated society devoid of much of my Cherokee heritage. It wasn't until 1977 during the visit at Rolling Thunder's encampment that I had my first experience doing ceremony with other Native American's. The folks staying on the land there outside Carlisle, Nevada, would get up before sunrise and gather around a fire and say morning prayers. I'm not a morning person so this wasn't something that was in harmony with my body rhythm. It wasn't until 1982 that I did my first sweat lodge ceremony and Sacred Pipe ceremony. In going back and reading some of the references in my writing prior to this time that would reference ceremony, I have always been amazed at how accurate I captured the feelings of something I had not experienced at the time. Those experiences throughout my life, both in dream time and in searching for identity, had given me a similar feeling to those I would have when I finally did the ceremonies I had been writing about. I have written about a few ceremonies that I have never taken part in, such as the peyote ceremony. In 1989 I attended numerous ceremonies across the western part of the United States including Sun Dance on the Rosebud Reservation of South Dakota. Doing ceremony felt really good to me. It gave my life, dreams, and visions a context that I didn't have otherwise.

In the fall of 1987 I had met this woman from Texas who was Ponca. We had a short relationship and for a brief time she had been telling me that we were suppose to get married. I didn't want to marry her already, so I enjoyed the relationship while it lasted and was glad it was over. Meanwhile I had a dream, part of which I never told her the full details about, where I was given the opportunity to ask Rolling Thunder a question. This woman claimed to be his granddaughter and he had some trouble denying this since he had spent a lot of time in Texas while working for the railroad. His extra-marital relations continue to be the topic of conversation when his name is brought up, especially amongst women that hate this sort of life style. Anyway, she wasn't his granddaughter, but she used it to open some doors for her that wouldn't have opened otherwise. So in the dream I asked him if I was supposed to marry this woman. He looked at me for a minute and then it was like I had double vision or something, because there was two of him in front of me. Then he went back to one image of himself. I knew that this was to show me that this was a very important dream. He said that I was asking him the wrong question and, yes, the answer was that if I lived my life in the traditional manner for one year I would take over his work when he died, which was to feed the people. He then said he would show me the kitchen that I would feed the people from. It was a small setup under a canopy like one would use at a craft fair. A woman walked up and he introduced us and said that she would help me work in the kitchen. As I turned around the size of the kitchen had grown so large one could feed a small army from it. Then he took me to a closet where he was going to select some items that would help me in this task. He filled a large burlap feed sack full of Sacred Pipes, eagle fans, drums, rattles, and other sacred objects and gave it to me. I woke up from the dream.

A few months later this woman and I went to California where I finally got to meet Rolling Thunder. He was giving a talk at the Jewish Center in Palo Alto. I could see that he was not in good health but chose not to tell him the dream at the time. I had already stopped working at the carpentry job I had and was getting by on donations at the time. I had been making jewelry and selling it to make money but that wasn't working either. For the next year after the dream I made \$50.00. no matter how hard I tried I couldn't make money from selling my work or get a job. The \$50.00 came through after I had been stopped a few miles from home one night because I had a tail light that was out. The deputy noticed that I didn't have the county road tag on my license plate so he gave me a ticket. I sold some art work and bought the tag ten minutes before I was suppose to go to court. I figured after a year of this, things would get better. It got a little better, but not much. I don't know if it is because I didn't tell Rolling Thunder the dream at the time or if this is just how it is going to be for the rest of my life. After that experience when someone would come up to me and say they had a dream, I would tell them to take "No Doz", an over the counter drug to stay awake on. To me dreams are very powerful and can affect a person's life, sometimes in a very challenging way. I understand better why I was trying to avoid sleep and dreaming all those years ago now. When I dream, I get job assignments and I have to do them.

Rolling Thunder almost died a few months after I met him. He got mad about something while in California and kicked the tires on his van or something like that. The bruise didn't heal because he had sugar diabetes and gangrene set in. He had to have his leg amputated at the knee. When Edith and I went to Nevada to visit him in 1991 that is how we saw him. I told him the dream and after I was finished he responded to the message in the dream about me taking over his work when he died by saying, "maybe so." That was all. He told me some other things that he said I would need to know and I could tell that he was passing over some things in the ether that weren't talked about but we both knew was happening. He grilled Edith real good about the challenges she was about to face and made sure she understood what she was getting into. While we were alone one day he told me that the woman I had been with in California was trouble and under no circumstances should I marry her. That was funny. She ripped me off of two water color paintings already, so I knew not to trust her.

So marriage number three starts with me doing a lot of ceremony and not making much money. Somehow these are supposed to go together in Native American culture, since one can't sell ceremony. I don't get a check in the mail once a month like a lot of my friends that live on the reservations get. I can sell my art. I did a three day vision quest in 1992 and came down from that experience with a design to paint on my drum. The design would help people that came and asked for help with physical problems when I used it during the ceremonies. I was given a prayer to say at the start of ceremony. During the experience "on the hill" I was told to be available twenty four hours a day for the rest of my life except during those times I needed to leave home for family reasons. I would get to take a break from this and go to Sun Dance or attend other ceremonies around the country, but most of the time I have been here waiting for people to show up and ask for help. Selling art is easy, so long as the person has money to buy art and can tell the difference between rain drops falling from a sacred dream and bird droppings from a crow. Some that have looked at my art had money. For some reason they didn't buy it though.



Edith gave birth to this beautiful baby girl in 1993. I had been honest with her about my life prior to our meeting and she was aware of all the challenges I had faced and the context of my identity before she got pregnant. After the last divorce and the issue that followed, I was a little nervous about getting married and starting a new family. Trust me, this was a healthy fear. Still, I faced this fear and moved on into this new relationship and family. Maggie was a blessing in my life and continues to be. Every day I spend with her has shown me new things about this world and about life. She is the best example of that dream in 1977 where the voice said that the entire universe would be my teacher. She is the greatest teacher I have ever had. Edith has been a very important teacher also. Today I could say she has been the second most important teacher in my life but the balance of good lessons and “wood stove blisters” makes it all a bitter sweet memory. We were divorced two years ago. In the process she used ever fear I had ever related to her to try and manipulate me into getting a job. She has tried to destroy me in ever fashion Patty tried, including giving false information in a criminal complaint against me to get me arrested. The details were different (thank God) but the intentions and impact were the same. It kept me from seeing my children.

The answer to the question is yes, no, and all of the above. I don't know that much about the science of rain but if I follow the process correctly, rain drops form on a particle of dust that is airborne. When the moisture collects to the point where the dust is unable to remain airborne, it falls to the earth as a rain drop. As the rain drop looks inside to find its identity, it would be different from all other rain drops because of the unique nature of the dust particle. It is through our imperfections that we are defined as identities separate from the wholly total pool of spirit. The spiritual teachings of some schools of thought are that once we cleanse our inner being of this imperfection we will merge with the sacred whole and humanity will be liberated from the karmic wheel. That dust particle in the spiritual realm is called desire. So long as we have desires that create conflict we will have lines drawn in the sand that keep us from experiencing unity. If we were to include the drive to procreate as a desire that should be overcome then it stands to reason that once humans stop parenting we will cease to exist. From where I'm sitting it looks like this challenge would be up to the women to carry through with because we all know the men aren't going to stop responding to the opportunities that life offers them. On the other hand, after a good joke like that last line, I don't think that this is what it is all about. It gets muddy in there sometimes. Lakes do that sometimes. Here's my life and here's what those lines from Spiritual Animal are here for.

In the context of duality with respect to identity there are two forces at play in determining who we are. One is that inner vision of self that the rain drop searched for in my dream 40 years ago. The other factor is the identity that others see us as being. I have very little control or power over how others see me to be. Who they see me to be is based on their understanding of others and I can't change their viewpoint. I can go to school and study art, sell art, call myself an artist, and for all purposes and intentions function as an artist, but if the person looking at my art doesn't consider my work to be art, then they aren't going to accept my identity as an artist. So even if I have an identity that I accept as being the true word that expresses who I am, if there is doubt about my identity in the other person's mind, I can't function as a person of that identity in their reality. When the rain drop falls into the lake of doubters, it loses its identity. It has no power to function in its identity while it is in that lake. To question someone is to take away their identity. The

person has the choice of gaining an identity from the other person based on their criteria or the person can leave that relationship and regain their identity. So long as they remain in the pool of doubt they will be dysfunctional in spite of their best efforts.

With the inner awareness of self, one could also see the particle of dust as being the kernel of truth from God. My identity is defined by God or the Universe. In the ceremony of vision quest, I am given the opportunity to engage in a ritual that provides me with the experience of interplay between the Universe and my self without any other human intervention. From this I can derive an identity. With this awareness of self I should be able to immerse myself in the lake of daily life activities without losing that sense of identity, yet at the same time I should also be able to experience my role as part of the whole in that community of people. If a person chooses to challenge my identity and I choose to respond to that challenge and attempt to prove that I am who I found myself defined to be through a sacred ritual, I lose the sacredness of that experience by responding to the challenge. I have no defense when challenged regarding my identity. Responding to the challenge strips me of that identity. Failing to respond is considered an admission of guilt in Western Culture, so I'm damned if I do and I'm damned if I don't.

While reading everything I could get my hands on back in the mid-70's one book I bought was *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* by Wilhelm Riche. This is one title you won't find in a lot of artists' libraries, but you should. The use of symbols is very powerful and regardless of the nature of one's art there are symbols or symbolic messages in almost all art. Art has always had an impact on society in one way or the other. The lack of art in society has an impact also. When one understands the power of an image and how it can affect others, then one has the responsibility to choose their images and symbols very carefully. The safe way to deal with this is to paint flowers and pretty landscapes that have no other message except to convey beauty of the pigment and brush. To go beyond this and actually attempt to say something with one's art is a risky endeavor, both spiritually and professionally.

With the question of "who am I?" considered and responded to from several different perspectives with respect to the rain drop in a dream, and a brief reflection of the rise and fall of rain in the past forty years of my life, I find that most people don't care about identity. Fear is the primary controlling factor of their life. Loss of identity is a psychic castration of the will and the rendering ineffective the kernel of truth at the heart of the matter. Hence the words:

"Brothers and sisters have let themselves become castrated.  
Caught up in the game of letting fear control their expression  
of emotions."

It is very easy to control large masses of people. Just watch television for a few hours and you will see what I mean. You will have experienced one of the best methods of controlling your thoughts that has ever been devised. The process of controlling others allows one to get a group of people to do things that go against who they are, were they in tune with their inner self. People love to give up this control to this "greater force" because they can justify their actions by saying they were following their duties. During the last job I had I was told to put down false information in the data base to make the boss look good. I did it. I was given the work assignment and I did what I was told and

the pay was the same as if the job assignment had been to put down the true record of events for the day. I didn't feel good about doing this. I couldn't justify it. I was laid off at the end of the last job I had and never went back when called when the next job started. They had no trouble replacing me. When the fear of not working is greater than the fear of being dishonest then there will always be a line of people waiting to take over the jobs that people like me can't do because of spiritual integrity. In that desire to break the will of a person of spiritual integrity so that they become like everyone else, all a person has to do is create a situation where the person can't generate an income in any other manner except to seek employment. When they use every fear issue they know about and that fails, then they will do all they can to starve the person until they give in or die. History gives us many examples of people who chose to die rather than compromise their spiritual integrity. Being turned into a hero after you're dead isn't exactly a very good consolation prize.

When I was a child there wasn't a lot of evidence around me that would suggest that I was of a Native American people. The first art class I ever took was in college. No one in the community I grew up in cared that much about Native American culture or art. There were a few that had driven to California and had stopped at a reservation in Arizona to see the Indians there, but that was about it. I don't know of anyone in my family that has been to the National Museum of Art in Washington DC except me, although it's easy enough to go there from where they are. I didn't set out to become this person that embraced my indigenous heritage, it just happened in the process of finding my self. When I looked inside the Sacred Circle I saw myself there and I've been comfortable with that ever since. I didn't intent to become an artist when I took my first art class. I didn't even know that was an option at the time. It just sort of happened that way. I didn't want to become an art instructor and I didn't want to be something other than an artist and just do it at nights or on weekends. So one day I woke up and realized that I had not asked the question of "who am I?" for several years already. I was in my skin and of my self and that was enough.

The last few weeks I have been destitute to the point where I have very little food. I have anticipated the electricity being turned off, but obviously that hasn't happened yet, or this bit of writing wouldn't have happened. The mortgage is in foreclosure again. I anticipate getting the letter in the mail any day now that tells me when the auction on the court house steps will be. At this point in time I have no money and no means of making any. The telephone has been disconnected for a month now. No one comes to see me. I am isolated. This gives me time to reflect and think back over my life. If that is all she wrote, then it's been a good run. I made some good art and did some good to help others when they came and asked for help. I answered the question I spent many years asking. On the other hand, if this is a time for spiritual retreat and review before the next task comes forth, then I don't mind sharing some of what I've been reflecting upon.

It's difficult to consider the lessons I've learned from life and relate them to others when one of those lessons is that people don't have much in the way of spiritual integrity, nor a very strong sense of identity beyond that defined for them by others. There's nothing worse than insulting your audience by suggesting that they're swine in the pig sty so here's a few pearls just to prove that they're really pigs. There has to be a better way of saying it than that of speaking out of anger. When I look back over my life and remember that there wasn't much in the way of guidance in my quest for identity it

suggests to me that others have the same void in their life as well. I was driven to seek out answers and make the sacrifices to this end. My anger is borne out of the feeling that this journey and the works created along the way are of no value at this point in time. In looking at these feelings and wondering how I could relate the challenges in my life I found that I've already spoken about this issue. Spiritual Animal said it already. I can't sell ceremony. If a person comes and asks for help and I have no reason to say no, then I have to respond by doing whatever it is that I can do to help that person. They have to ask in a certain way and they have to agree to show their gratitude in a certain way, but I can't charge them a set amount of money. People have come and asked for help and gotten help and then not followed through in their commitment to show their gratitude. There is nothing I can do to make them honor their commitment. I can't stop helping the next person when they show up because the last five people have gotten help and not given back in some manner or fashion. While I can't charge for ceremony, that doesn't mean that it isn't a two way street. People keep missing this point. They get their needs met and screw me. I don't know how to correct this problem. I ask for help and get none. Very few seem to care and they aren't able to provide support. So I am waiting to see what will happen next. May the Gods be with thee.

January 19, 2007

## **Rainy day, dream away (Jimi Hendrix)**

It's Sunday afternoon and it's raining. The temperature is barely above freezing. I haven't had a fire in the wood stove for over a week now. One day I added wood to the fire but it went out anyway. I have a propane furnace that is keeping the house warm. The food choices are getting smaller and smaller. My body craves meat and sugar. I try not to focus on the very real possibility that in a few weeks the mortgage could be auctioned off at the court house steps and I'll lose everything I've worked for. I have no money. The car has enough gas in it to get to town. I have no way to move my art work or any of the other things I've managed to collect for domestic and professional purposes over the years. Unless something happens I anticipate putting what I can carry in a back pack and walking down the road one day, leaving everything else behind. I don't know where I would go, but that doesn't matter. I have no place left to go.

I printed out what I had written two days ago and read it. It needed some editing. A misspelled word here, a few extra words there and so forth. I let it be for a day and thought about what I was trying to say that I had failed to relate. I read it again and marked the changes needed to be made. I made the edits and have an idea of what I want to add that will fill in the missing parts of what it is I'm trying to say. I had been coming down with a cold and it was hard to keep my thoughts clear because of the sinus infection. I am still getting over the cold but it doesn't seem to be as bad as it was.

One of the things that I left out in the time line was a very important event in January 1990. In November 1989 I came down with appendicitis and had to have my appendix removed. After I recovered enough I decided to do a fast and meditate on why I was here. It wasn't enough to have an identity, it had to have a purpose and I couldn't seem to find where to cog in at with my life. I was living in a small house without

running water thirty minutes from the nearest town in an isolated part of upper East Tennessee on the edge of that imaginary boundary between Southern Appalachia and Central Appalachia. This area isn't a region where one is going to find a lot of support for art by way of patrons buying work from individual artists. I could go to Knoxville and get an art show in various venues and everyone would tell me how good my art was, but no one bought it. So something isn't working here. What is it that I am suppose to be doing so I can better understand how to apply who I am to this process of functioning in a reality that doesn't provide much support for who I am and what I do. It took seven days and I cheated a little and listened to the radio on Sunday night.

I heard an interview on public radio of a person who was concerned that the Ice Age was a cycle that had reached the end of the "melt-back" period and a new cycle was about to start. I understood the climate changes he cited and thought about this information in light of who I was and what this might mean to me in my life. I saw that there are around seven different skills needed in a tribal culture in order to survive without the carbon-based resources available today. Metal tools would not be available after a short period of time without coal or other fuels to make them with. Plastics would stop being manufactured. This would leave humans dependant upon the resources they could gather in the area where they were living. In a time of dire need a person could learn one of the seven skills fairly quickly so I understood that teachings others to do pit-fired pottery or flint knapping wasn't my purpose, although I could teach these if needed. As I worked down the list of things that people would need to know that weren't prevalent in current society the key skill that appeared to be lacking was the ability to work together in a tribal culture. The best way to teach this was through the model of ceremony. I called my mother up and told her that the Ice Age was coming back. She said she would put up extra food for the following year. I told her that an Ice Age lasts 100 thousand years each cycle. She said, "Oh, I guess it doesn't matter then."

I still wasn't sure how to apply this to my life and I still needed funds to live on. That summer I got work helping a friend move a log cabin on the western side of Knoxville that was in the path of an Interstate extension. I was promised a job in New York City at the end of that job helping him do some carpentry. I wasn't fond of the idea of living in New York City for more than a few days at a time and especially not fond of being stuck there without the resources to come home if the job wasn't going very well. The cabin deconstruction projected ended and I waited for the new job to start. Each week I checked in with my friend and he said to check back the following week. I had let the electricity be turned off anticipating a few months out of state so I was cooking with a camping stove and using a kerosene lantern to see with at night. I thought about what I would like to do as a career if I had to get a steady job. One of the things I considered as an option was to become an art therapist. I checked this out at the library and sent off for information from the colleges that offered degrees in art therapy. I liked the one in Portland OR and I had enjoyed the area when I was there in 1989. I needed to take some classes in art education in order to bring my credits up to the level needed to get into graduate school. I needed about \$140.00 to start classes at UT but I would need to pay the rest of the tuition for that semester within a month. I had a plan and a goal. All I needed now was a little money and a place to stay.

I went to everyone I knew that might be able to loan me some money and asked them to help out. Classes were starting within a few weeks and I didn't have much time. I

didn't have time to get a full time job and make the money and no one was buying art. I decided to go to a Sun Dance that was being held in Maryland and spend the week there, then come back and see what developed. At the end of the Sun Dance people were giving the person I went with and me funds to help us get back home with. When we got to my place I told that person to take what they needed and I would see what was left. The next morning I got up and counted the money. I had \$138.00 in cash. It felt like a very clear sign that I wasn't suppose to go to college and become an art therapist. I took my electric bill and paid it and started cooking on the electric range again. I got the phone service reconnected. When I called my parents they told me that my friend had called the same day I left for Maryland and said I needed to be there in a few hours if I was going to New York with him. Later another person that went with him said that it was a terrible situation and he finally had enough and came home. He was still owed \$1000.00 in wages from that job the last time we talked about it. I'm glad I never went.

A friend I'd met in Maryland came by on the way back out west and stayed a week. After he left I had a few weeks to hang out and enjoy late summer before I had to worry about getting more food, funds, or firewood. During that time I had another experience that I don't remember exactly how it came about, but I remembered it as a vision and worked from there. Most experiences of insights would come during dreams. Fasting alone would offer insights or experiences that I would categorize as visions. Insights would come while saying daily prayers, but they would usually be of a nature that addressed the daily challenges ahead. There have been a few times when an experience would occur that came out of the blue, so to speak. One such experience had happened a few years earlier while visiting the Etowah Mounts in northwest Georgia. While standing at the edge of the channel that had been created at the edge of the field where earth had been removed to build the mounts, I experienced the insight of men running through the channel and around counter-clockwise towards the highest mount. About ten years earlier I had read an article about running ceremonies that had been done throughout North, Central, and South America, so I knew I had experienced a time-jump back to the time when a running ceremony had been occurring.

It's hard to talk about this sort of experience. I've always been paranoid that if I related much about this that I would be forced to take chemical medication to stop it from happening. I knew that some artists were put on this kind of medication and they had trouble doing art while taking their medication. I was able to function well enough without the medication, so I didn't want to risk being put on it. I had corresponded with a Native American in prison for a number of years and he had related several visions he had in prison but told me to not respond to these or relate them to anyone. He shared a list of people who he said were medicine men that were incarcerated in order to suppress them from serving in their role in their community and they were all on medication to keep them from having visions. As a friend related to me some years back, just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get you. So I'll risk mind-numbing drugs and continue.

When I was a child, my sisters and I had gone on a day trip into the Smoky Mountain National Park with our grandparents. My grandfather wanted to take us for a short hike to show us Bear Cave. My younger sister got tired before we made it all the way, so we stopped and turned back. My grandfather pointed to the cave, which I could make out a short distance away, and said quietly, "Our people used to go there and sing."

Later I was told that Bear Cave was where the Cherokee myth related that all the animals of the world had emerged from. They would go there each year and do ceremony until the Removal 200 years ago.

All of this came together in that late summer day in 1990. I knew that I couldn't go do ceremony in the National Park without some preparation and I didn't want to ask the United States government for the right to pray in the Old Ways. I knew from the dream about Rolling Thunder that I was suppose to "feed the People" or provide spiritual nourishment, and I knew from the vision nine months earlier that I was suppose to teach the Old Ways through ceremony. I knew that the Cherokee had done running ceremonies from the vision at Etowah and I knew it was part of our culture to sing animals into this world. About this time a buffalo walked into the living room and started talking to me. This wasn't the first time that something like this had happened. After Patty and the boys had left I had the experience of a large fish floating into the room and talking to me, but this was late at night at the end of a long day of doing art. Later I did a wood sculpture that I titled "Sturgeon" to reference the experience. It's still available if the idea of buying a work of art that references a paranormal experience excites you.

Still, this was right after breakfast and I was well rested at the moment. The only thing I'm less comfortable with other than telling about this experience and getting locked up in the nut house is the experience of a buffalo walking into the living room during broad daylight and talking to me. Come on, you guys! This is something that is suppose to happen to someone doing vision quest on Bear Butte in South Dakota after fasting and praying for four days. Could you come back later, like maybe when I have the chance to properly prepare myself for a vision? "Yellow Buffalo" (who had a name none-the-less) related a ceremony to me that was to be done in Bull Run Valley. The purpose of the ceremony was to call the buffalo back so when the Ice Age started there would be large game available so we could survive. Yellow Buffalo had black hair like all the other buffaloes I had ever seen, but yellow is the color of the south for me, which is where vision has always started for me in the cycle of seeing sacred things. A few weeks later I did the ceremony as it had been related to me to honor the vision and I was done with it. Some folks heard about it and wanted to do one in the spring, so in March 1991 I did another "Bull Run for the Return of the Buffalo".

One of the things I had to do was make a Sacred Pipe to be used in the sweat lodge before the Runners went out and did the ceremony. I argued with Yellow Buffalo about this because I didn't want a Pipe. My line was that in my family a man had to be married in order to carry a Pipe. Okay, you try arguing with a buffalo standing in front of you in your living room. I made the Pipe. It worked real good. A month later I met Edith at the workshop for environmental activists. She was working for an NGO in North Carolina addressing toxic waste incinerators. I could tell when she spoke during the workshop that she was very angry and having trouble keeping her emotions from causing burn-out in her work. The first chance I got to talk to her in person was the second evening of the workshop. She had had a few beers already and was lying out on the grass looking up at the full moon that October night. The first thing she said to me was, "Do you believe in reincarnation?"

A few months later I attended a ceremony in Virginia and met RG, who was to become a big factor in events for the next fifteen years. He asked me to go with him to do a sweat lodge ceremony in northeast Alabama in January 1991. During the sweat I had

stood up in the lodge because it was ten degrees and the person pouring water wasn't making it very hot in the lodge. If I continued to sit on the ground I would have gotten a muscle cramp in my legs from the cold. During the last part of the sweat it got nice and warm and I had an experience that got my attention. I felt myself being lifted up out of the lodge and taken up into thunder clouds. There weren't any thunder clouds around the area that night, but that's where I went. A door opened up and a coyote walked through and started talking to me. It told me that the buffalo had heard my prayers and they were coming back. They also wanted to know if they could bring some other relations with them that had also been hunted to extinction in this area. I said the more the merrier. I dropped back into the lodge and almost fell over the hot rocks in front of me. Something grabbed me by the shoulders and stood me upright enough so I could sit down. By this time RG had grabbed my legs and then helped me sit down also. Later he told me that he had noticed that I had left the lodge and he had a ball of dirt that he jammed onto my feet as soon as I came back to help me stay there. Then he said he could tell I was falling forward but before he could grab me I had been secured enough to sit down. Never trust a coyote unless you have cheese cake to throw out afterwards.

After that, in the words of the Old Ways, I gave the Bull Run ceremony to the people. We did the second Run in March and the third one in the fall of 1991. At the end of that Run Edith and I held the marriage stick inside the Circle of people that had gathered to take part in the Run. She broke that stick on March 6, 2004. She handed me that stick with a look of triumph and walked away. A few minutes later a quiet voice whispered to me, "She broke the addiction stick." Edith's drug addiction had been a very destructive force in our marriage and on the group of people that had been coming to do ceremony. She has never owned her part in this or made amends for the "injuries" caused by her active addiction nor admitted to her mistakes from the time she claims to have started recovery until now. Throughout much of the relationship I felt more like a rain drop in the sea spray pounding the rocks along a coast line than I did a part of a harmonious body of water like a lake.

Over the next 15 years people would come and take part in ceremony and I have related the various dreams and visions many times. I had researched climate changes and verified some of the information related in the interview I heard in January 1990. I learned more about the buffalo that had lived in this area after starting the Bull Run than I had any idea existed. The Eastern Black Buffalo are said to not be extinct, but are endangered and the last known herd is in Canada. A few years after I started the Bull Run, someone told me that the herd was reported to be migrating south. Sixteen years after hearing the interview about the Ice Age coming back, I think about the impact that had on my life and whether I've spent all this time chasing soap bubbles in a hail storm. An animated film came out recently about the Ice Age. It reminds me of the film Charlie Chaplin did about Hitler which was said to cause people in the United States to not take the threat he posed seriously until after World War II was well under way. It is said that after "Dances With Wolves" came out, everyone wanted to be Indian. "Dances With Wolves" like most films out of Hollywood, isn't about Native Americans but about white people interacting with Native Americans. The two main characters in the film were white people. Neither were all that good looking.

Within a few years problems started to arise with the Bull Run. New people showed up and ego issues came into play. Some people think that a vision is like a car,



when you give it to the People, they can drive it however they choose, even under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol if they like. I would explain that people aren't suppose to take part in ceremony while under the influence of drugs or alcohol nor use drugs or alcohol during the ceremony. A ceremony such as Bull Run is said to go from the time the fire is started at the sweat lodge until the fire has died out. It wasn't long before people started smoking marijuana after the Run was completed but before the feast, while the fire was still burning. RG's daughter and Edith were two of the people that did this at almost every Run they attended after 1991. Using drugs during ceremony diluted the integrity of the ceremony and there was no way I could stop them from doing this. Others showed up under the influence. My heart grew sad to see this. Changes with how the ceremony was done were made by others without discussing them with me to see if it was in harmony with the vision. When I attempted to address these issues the retort was made that there was no problems with Bull Run. The only problem was my ego. I had no defense with which to respond to this accusation. After ten or so years of this I did a ceremony where I destroyed the Bull Run altar and the Bull Run Pipe and walked away from the site where the first ceremony had been held. Another Pipe was made and a new site was chosen to hold the Run. This lasted two years. The people hosting the Run wanted to take it over also. The last three years the Run has been held here. The ceremony had been held here during Memorial Weekend for four years prior to this and at other areas in the Eastern United States as well. That was part of the vision to do the ceremony anywhere where the Eastern Black Buffalo would have migrated.

During this same time period the other three ceremonies that I've done have been "vision quest", where I've put people on the hill for one, two, or three days and nights, "doctoring lodges", where people have come and asked for help for physical problems, and stomp dance. The first two ceremonies follow a strict protocol and I was given some insight into how I was suppose to do these during my own vision quest in 1992. I started hosting the Cherokee stomp dance on this land several years after Edith, Maggie, and I moved here after having a dream during the winter to start honoring the stomp fire each full moon of the warm months of the year, seven times each year. In the dream I related to the person telling me to do this that I didn't know how to do stomp dance, as I had only been to one stomp prior to the dream. It was related back to me in the dream that help would come and my lack of knowledge would not be a problem. From this I was of the understanding that someone who knew how to do stomp dance would come and teach the people what we would need to know. Instead I've either remembered enough from that first stomp to do it right or else I've had dreams where I've been shown what I needed to know.

When a person would ask to do a vision quest or sweat lodge ceremony they would usually be asked to do a feast and giveaway at the end of the ceremony or within a year after asking for help. Some did it and some blew it off. It would take some time for me to prepare for each ceremony spiritually, mentally, and physically. Part of the physical work was to make sure that all the things needed to do the ceremony were prepared. All of this took time and effort on my part. When it came time to do the giveaway the person is suggested to give gifts that would express their gratitude for the experience and also offer any funds they had to help offset the expenses incurred in doing the ceremony. I would suggest that people gave any funds they had to Edith so there would be no way anyone would say that I was selling ceremony. It was always very

important to me that my reputation was always clear of this charge since I knew of other places and people that were charging people to take part in Native American ceremony. Sometimes the funds would go beyond the amount incurred to host or do the ceremony and other times we didn't get enough to pay the long distance phone calls needed to be made in order to contact those attending. Issues like this are always going to be hard on a family. I would try to address the issues the best I could but others like RG would intervene with their own version of how things should be done. After one ceremony RG spent the night and had breakfast with us. On his way down the driveway he stopped and called me over. He pulled some change out of his pocket and handed it to me as his giveaway. It wouldn't have paid for his breakfast at any fast food place on down the road.

Another person did a vision quest. At the end of it she gave me a painted stick with a few domestic bird feathers tied to it. She gave another person a really nice rocking chair. People like that really don't understand the intent of a giveaway. One woman showed up with no preparations for vision quest or giveaway. I did my best to honor her request to do ceremony, then asked her to come back within a year to do a feast and giveaway. She showed up with no food, so the community had to provide the food needed so she could do her feast. Afterwards she did a giveaway and gave a person that had never been to ceremony before a really nice gift. She gave me a broken piece of pottery. I don't remember if she gave Edith anything to honor her but I don't think that she did. She hasn't been back since and I haven't missed her. Another person asked for help with a physical problem and a year later she gave me two dozen bottles of root beer and gave Edith a paper saying she was contributing \$5000.00 to pay for the back porch on the new house. Since the deed to the property was in Edith's name at the time, I had to give Edith a cash settlement on the property in order to take over the mortgage and move back home. It's a great back porch, in part because I opted to design it and have others besides the original contractor help construct it. A few of the various kinds of root beer were almost as good as my favorite brand. A few were so bad I poured them out. Again, it was good that the person honored Edith, but there was a lack of balance in the overall way she went about honoring her gratitude.

Balance and harmony are important in Cherokee culture. Honor and respect for each other are important in Native American culture overall. In my overall experience very few people that came to take part in ceremony had any concept of what it meant to do any of these. For them the way of doing things followed the secular way of competition and the spoils of victory. Some would attempt to impose the ways of the Western Culture religious values that follow a line of authority where one person is the top dog, and then they would do whatever it took to be top dog. Some came expecting to gain an experience that gave them some degree of notoriety by way of "vision" similar to a hallucination so everyone else would look up to them. There were some that got the importance of the spirituality of the Old Ways and did their best to help out when they could. There are several ways of looking at all of this and that is what I've been leading up to.

While I was in school I was taught that the Greeks broke things down into three different categories with respect to the individual. There was the ego, the super ego, and the id. Three ways of categorizing things today that would be similar might be the personal, intra-personal, and transpersonal. With the personal, or ego, I would be concerned about my identity from within my self. Secondly, I would be concerned with

how others viewed me in my every day interaction with them. If I am effective in communicating my needs and aspirations to others and responding to their needs and aspirations, then there are good relations between us. There is some ego fulfillment that is derived from this process, whether it is in domestic issues or the need to make a living. Human beings have a short list of basic needs including food, clothing, and shelter. We are social animals so we have the need for interaction with others in order to have good health and spirits. Through working together we achieve some or all of these things. Very few people function independent of others in achieving their basic needs in life as adults. So it is important how well I interact with others in order to survive in this world. At the moment it doesn't appear that I'm doing a very good job of this, but that doesn't imply that it is because I've done a poor job of communicating my needs or failed to respond to others when they communicated their basic needs. As for the last two marriages, the primary cause of things breaking down had more to do with the other two having active addictions throughout the relationship than of any other factor in the relationship.

Of the last category, the transpersonal, it is important to understand what a vision is and how one should go about applying it to their life. As it is related to me, the transpersonal means transcending the ego. Beyond the basic physical needs, humans have the need to respond to spiritual yearnings and have a relationship with the mysterious forces that we intuit in our reality. History gives us many examples of how we have gone to great lengths to respond to our sense of spiritual interaction between the physical and the unseen. In the process of identifying ourselves from within the cosmic soup we have had to look within to know who we are. Some gave it a glancing nod and said, "Yep, I'm in there.", and went on about their lives. Others have dedicated many years of their life to this process. Some have made a career out of the role of introspection and serving others that needed guidance in their own quest. The process has included taking journeys to far away places or the construction of places like the pyramids or large buildings where people could come together to share in the experience of acknowledging and honoring the Creator. The means by which a person comes to serve in a role varies from place, time, and culture throughout history. The most common thread throughout history is that a person was chosen by the unseen forces that we interact with rather than choosing the role for them selves. We don't categorize all of these unseen forces as positive influences upon our lives and there are ways with which we can go through the process of checks and balances to see if there are good intentions or bad in a person's actions when said to be honoring a dream or vision. The primary means of doing this is to see if the person is doing things for the good of all or if they are attempting to derive selfish rewards from their efforts. Of those that have accused me of the latter, none have stepped up and shown that they were any less guilty of the crime they have accused me of. That doesn't automatically make me guilty of that which they accused me of. It just means that they would probably be found to be guilty of the spiritual indiscretions they have accused me of. In response to my accusers I have held up an empty hand. Their hands have remained in their pocket and I assume they will keep their hands in their pockets until they die. So far I've not been proven wrong with regard to that assumption.

Granted my life was in a bit of a crisis in September 1990. I felt the need to come up with some way I could generate an income. Instead I was given a vision and I endeavored to honor it. Once honored, I was done with it. When others requested that the ritual be held again it became a ceremony for the People. The experience that gave me

the Bull Run vision was in response to my need to understand where I was to go with my life. I wasn't intentionally seeking a vision at the time. My efforts were driven by the need to survive and I considered that to be a basic need issue. Obviously my reality at the time was conducive to experience of having a vision similar to other experiences prior to this, particularly the one in 1976 when I had also been living alone without any interaction with others for several weeks. All the animals that were observed in that experience were physical though, at least until the final event at sundown. Yellow Buffalo wasn't up to having me throw an ash tray at it even if I had wanted to. My only concern throughout the years I took part in Bull Run was that it be done with respect to the vision. Others chose to deviate away from the vision and to dishonor the Pipe I had made specifically for that ceremony. Those who had been the main ones in that process had a history of drug addiction throughout their adult lives. Some had even gone to prison for drug related crimes. It appeared to me that they considered ceremony and Native American culture to be similar to that of the drug culture and they endeavored to function at ceremony and through their interpersonal relations during ceremony as though we were all taking part in a party where drug usage was going on. I know of one person who showed up for sweat lodge ceremonies many times where they were under the influence of drugs and experienced a miscarriage a few months after they took part in their last ceremony here.

Humans are prone to addiction. The spiritual aspects of addiction can be considered in many ways. In Native American culture one of the ways addiction is addressed is through stories about the Sacred Trickster. For the Cherokee the trickster is represented by the rabbit. Most of the Brier Rabbit stories as told by Uncle Remus came from the Cherokee. In my Brier Rabbit story where I did battle with tar baby I was 20 years old and recovering from drug addiction. I pleaded with Bear and Fox to do anything except throw me into the brier patch of art school. I came into this experience of doing ceremony and working with others knowing some of the issues with drug addiction. What I didn't understand was that I had gone through life threatening experiences such that I knew that was no longer an option for me but others had not. Ceremony fulfilled a spiritual need for me that drugs had failed to provide. I went into the journey of sharing my dreams and visions with others with the naive notion that they would understand what I was trying to relate to them. I look back over the last 17 years of my life since having the vision that I was to teach others how to live in the co-operative spirit of the Old Ways and feel as though I failed. Along with this is the experience of three failed marriages where I feel as though each woman had been attempting to divert me away from my spiritual path and convert me into a normal, civilized man. Failing to do so, they each in turn attacked my character. Each accused me of being gay or of having been involved in sexual activities with other males as though to suggest that the marriage failed because of my sexual orientation.

Fear does that. When I look back at my experiences and notice that very few times in my life was there anyone around that could help me understand how to go about grasping my identity, never mind anyone actually telling me who I might be, I understand how very few I've encountered have any concept of how one goes through the process of self-awareness. If a person has little or no understanding of how to derive an identity from within, then they are going to have some natural fear of anyone who might be involved in that process. That isn't to say that I could tell anyone else who they are. That

isn't my job. I can offer some guidance or assistance in helping them come to a better understanding of what they know, but they have to have some knowledge based on their own experiences first for me to be able to do this. Looking for an identity through the process that transcends the ego and offers an identity that isn't derived from the ego is a pretty scary process. Had I known better at some point in the past, I would have said, "Don't shoot me. I am only the messenger."

Fear is a base emotion and can be like a forked stick. We can choose to use it in a positive manner or we can let it guide us down a self-destructive path. When a hunter is out looking for a bear to kill, fear can heighten his senses so he is acutely aware of every sound, movement, and absence thereof. If other animals run away when a bear is near and the hunter notices that none of these animals have been around for the last ten minutes, then he is going to pay very close attention to what is around him. That is a healthy use of fear. When fear causes a person to lash out in anger and say hurtful things, that is a negative use of fear. Hunters that crack under the stress of seeing a bear and start yelling at it in anger don't live very long.

None of the dreams or visions I've experienced suggested ways to address the fears that others might have. All addictions are fear driven. When you try to argue with a fool, a person observing you that doesn't know either of you can't tell which one of you is the fool. When immersed in a lake of social interaction with a group of people who are fear-driven, the person who has chosen to face their fear and use it in a positive manner is reduced to the same degree of spiritual integrity the others function at. When removed from that sea of addiction-driven, fear-based social reality, I am no longer the same person I was when I dove into the waters. Hopefully, given my survival, I will emerge a better person from the experience. I will probably be less tolerant of others in their efforts to impose their fears upon me. I should have known better in the past. I probably did know better. I think Samson knew better than to let Delilah cut his hair, but he let her do it anyway. Like me, he probably just wanted to get laid. Unlike him though, I haven't cut my hair. I'm not perfect. I'm just damn good.

Oliver Loveday © 1/21/07/9:15pm EST

## **Post-Script: Rainy Day Women #12 & 35**

"Oh, they stone you when you're trying to be so good.  
They stone you just like they said they would.."

From Rainy Day Women #12 & 35 by Bob Dylan

While I was researching climate changes and population patterns in 1991 one of the bits of data that I came across was that there had been approximately 200 million people on this planet at the end of the last Ice Age. For the next 20,000 years the population had followed a steady growth of about 2% per century until the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. During a period of several decades there was what has been referred to as a

mini-Ice Age, including one summer around 1815 when it snowed all summer in this region. When I related to my mother that the Ice Age was coming again, that is what she thought I was referring to. Since that time the population growth on the planet has followed a much different curve on the chart to where there are now over six billion people on the planet and growth continues exponentially. From this I have the sense that the human gene pool is designed to kick in with increased fertility and rapid growth right before a planet change that will cause a decrease in population. The effect is to increase the gene pool as much as possible to increase the chances that the species will survive, in this case, through the next Ice Age of 100,000 years.

When I reflected back over what I had written regarding “Yellow Buffalo”, I noted that I did relate that I don’t remember exactly how the Bull Run for the Return of the Buffalo vision had come about. The process of intuitively knowing what to do in the starting of a new ceremony took several weeks. During that time I had started to smoke pipe tobacco every day and for several hours at a time when possible. I have referred to the experience as being a tobacco induced vision at times. The image of Yellow Buffalo talking to me was more of a holographic memory recall of a dream than it was an apparition generated in front of me. The latter makes for better special effects in Hollywood movies but that isn’t exactly how it happened. There are times when humans have paranormal experiences that can’t be explained away like when a man on a sail boat collapses during the night, only to wake up the next day with the vague memory of someone at the helm while he was out for the count. My experience was nothing as dramatic as that, nor did it need to be.

A lot of the art work I have done over the last 30 years has been concerned with generating the visual image of energy transference that I have seen during dreams. This might be the energy between two people during a conversation or the energy of a thunderstorm over the landscape. This abstraction of memory from a long series of dreams that came during my student days and soon afterwards were easily depicted in the manner of abstract expressionism, although I don’t consider my work to be a continuation of that school of art. In marketing art one needs to be able to relate something of the art in verbal terms that will hook the buyer into wanting the piece. Often times when I am in a gallery during a show talking to a would-be buyer my mind has gone completely blank. With the need to survive from the sale of my art work and the continued inability to articulate what is going on with my work, one of the concerns with this bit of writing is to work through some of the background to see if I can unlock the tongue-tied dilemma.

The current crisis I am confronted with is factored in with people who have emerged over the last two years. I have intentionally avoided mentioning them because the matter isn’t resolved yet. I have also avoided profiling others in this writing because their stories of who they are and how they got to be this way isn’t that important in the context of the question generated by the dream 40 years ago. Generally when we pool our energies the sum is greater than the parts. When one person is intentionally sabotaging the efforts of others for reasons they may or may not be aware of, the resulting sum is less than the sum of the parts. Relationships where one or both parties are in active addiction is almost always of the latter. As a friend related a few months ago, I need to go to an AI-Anon meeting. Post-out: 1/22/07/12noon EST