

THE BIRTH OF THE HEART CENTER

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I came down with this cold and can't sleep, so I will tell you a story. Looking back on my life, there is an argument to be made that in my own way much of it was spent in an attempt at community. I could tell the stories of how I tried to distribute pre-tax profit to my employees, or about hiring a cook and for years offering them a free lunch, and Friday night dinners for the community, and so on. But what I will tell is a little bit about the Heart Center, which is the building right next door to where we live.

The Heart Center was founded in the final days of 1972 and the first days of 1973, around the turn of the year. Way back then I was very much the occult student. I was vice president of the Michigan Theosophists and somewhat skilled in the writings of the Golden Dawn, Rudolph Steiner, Madame Blavatsky, and especially Violet M. Firth, known to the world as Dion Fortune. And let's not forget that cultural crossover Aleister Crowley. When Crowley was still little known, I had (and studied) his complete works on microfilm, but I digress.

This blog is about the Heart Center and how it came to be. In late 1972 I was in Detroit the night before, and had stayed up late talking to a very dry occult scholar who definitely had a bad case of the Ivory Tower.

Anyway, I woke up the next morning with a terrible headache. It was so bad that I found my body dropping to the floor where it began to go through some very strange motions, over and over. Later I was told that this is a traditional yoga asana sometimes called "The Cat." It involved vigorously bending my body at the waist much like a cat throwing up a fur ball -- probably more than you want to know. Anyway, it was spontaneous and quite natural. I simply could not 'not' do it.

The upshot of all this was that through this exercise, and very gradually, I cast off (like a snake sheds his skin) not only my headache and all of the intellectual accumulation from the night before, but also my entire tendency to leave the body in 'intellectualisms' of any kind. That was the outer part of the experience, the physical. There was also an inner component.

I won't say too much about the inner meaning of it all, but suffice it to say that for a time (quite some time) after that I was able to participate consciously at what I can only call 'communion,' how people commune in the moment. I was aware that the mind continually gives birth to the moment and that when uncomfortable things arise in the mind when we are with others, everyone sees them, but that we all tend to turn inward simultaneously and take it personally, and do not refer to it publicly. It is like the proverbial elephant in the room. I know this would take a whole blog just to describe, so here I will just touch on it lightly. I just did.

During the physical asana or posture I was spontaneously performing, a graphic image formed in my mind. It was a symbol of the heart and the flame, intertwined as one. Call it the inner and outer, the young and the old, whatever. It literally symbolized my experience and it became a symbol I have used ever since. With that symbol I formed what I then called the "Heart Center," a sanctuary for communion studies. Remember the true nature of communion was what I saw in the experience I had.

It was at that point that I began to have gatherings at our home, eventually inviting some of the finest astrologers in the world to come visit and teach, to commune, astrologers like Dane Rudhyar, Noel Tyl, Robert Hand, John Townley, Michel Gauquelin, Jeff Green, Steven Forrest, Robert Schmidt, Charles Harvey, Charles Jayne, Theodore Landscheidt, and scores of other astrologers. The Heart Center has been going for some forty years now. All of this is prologue and I enclose a drawing of the stages of my vision made at the time of the experience that I drew out right after I went through it

Anyway, we had this symbol, a mission, and a center that was founded in 1972 and which eventually many astrologers visited. In 1980 we relocated to Big Rapids, Michigan and my company Matrix Software was housed in an old converted single-car garage at the back of my property. I think at one time we had four people in there working. Eventually we moved to larger quarters.

In time the house next door to us became vacant. At the time it had eight rooms that were being used for bedrooms. I was a bit worried that a fraternity would move it, so I bought it, and it became the permanent home for the Heart Center. And it was soon not empty.

For years that house was filled with all kinds of (I guess they were eccentric) people. My kids grew up surrounded by folks of all colors, creeds, and persuasions, a bit of the cosmopolitan in a small conservative town. We had a swami, a Sanskrit scholar, the head of the Hari Krishna astrologers, a well-known jazz critic, a physicist, a mathematician that had actually helped to program the original lunar equations for the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, a Russian programmer, and the list goes on and on. This is aside from an endless stream of astrologers coming and going.

And we had a great big dining table that filled a whole room. It must have been fifteen-feet long, around which not only the house guests sat, but also my wife and kids. And the kids did not always like all of the house guests and they were quick to let them know about it, usually at the dinner table. There are endless stories of what went on. I will tell just one of them and I won't name names to protect the innocent, not that there were any.

One quite famous astrologer who lived there for a time would Bogart the television in the living room. He had to watch his soaps, game shows, or whatever he liked, come hell or high water. Pretty soon we could not have any 'communion', much less discussion in that room because this person would make everyone uncomfortable, and if we tried to talk, he would keep turning up the volume, until we left.

This eventually led to the banishment of the TV from the living room into this particular astrologer's own room, which was on the same floor. He agreed to do his TV watching in his own room. We could have discussions with guests in the living room once again. Of course he never kept his word, but would (when no one was watching) wheel the TV out into the living room and to the heck with anyone else. And another guest (the Sanskrit scholar) would often join him.

One night we had a terrible lightning storm. My wife and I were up in our bedroom next door and we went to the window to watch the weather. But as we looked across at the Heart Center, we could see that damn TV was back in the living room and the two of them were in there watching. I didn't really care except when visitors were there. Just then a terrible lightning bolt came down into the house next door and blew that TV right up. There was a huge flash and then it all went black. Nothing. Anyway, that was the end of the TV. No one ever mentioned it.

I guess I am getting old enough to tell stories. Glory be