



In Loving Memory

Jeffrey J. Malenfant

1954 - 2016

Saturday, May 21, 2016

Riverside Cemetery, Wakefield, Rhode island



(Self portrait by Ilketelevisionsnow)

As you know, Jeff left this world on January 21, on the night of a full moon, four months ago today. His wishes were to be cremated and have his ashes returned to his hometown, to be buried near the banks of the Saugutucket River. We're here today to honor his request and to celebrate his life, his art, and the unique joy he brought to so many.

Jeff was born here in Wakefield and grew up on Willard Avenue. By all accounts, including his own, he was an odd little fellow. He loved to dress up in his suit with his hat and cufflinks. When he found something he liked, he became totally absorbed in the subject. One example was his love of history, and

especially the Civil War. It was more than just reading everything he could find about it – he recreated battle scenes in the backyard with his toy soldiers. Some had an arm or leg cut off, others died and were ceremoniously buried – and his mother was still digging up the dead in her flower beds well into Jeff’s adulthood.

We met here at the infamous Unity Club in Sept. 1980. His famous opening line was “*Wanna play some tunes*” (back in the days of jukeboxes) and I did, and we did. In the fall of 1982, he took me to visit New Hampshire and, in May 1985, we moved there, setting off on our life’s grand adventure.

In New Hampshire, Jeff threw himself into his photography, starting his business called **Wilderness Light Photographs** ... named for the light you see at the end of the day when the sun dips low in the sky and sets the landscape aglow. Every day, rain, shine, or snow, he was out making photographs, selling them to local newspapers, nature publications and any place he could. He built his own darkroom and taught himself the dizzying formulas and ratios for mixing chemicals and printing his own photographs.

In December 1988, we got married in a small family wedding and went to Ireland the next year for our honeymoon. In 1993, we bought a 400-square-foot cottage on two acres of land in Tamworth.

The following years were filled with good times and hard work as we built a home and created a place we loved. In the late 1990s, Jeff noticed the first symptoms of the disease that would eventually rob him of nearly all movement – a rare motor neuron disease known as Progressive Muscular Atrophy. There was no treatment and no cure.

As we began to adjust our lives to what this meant, Jeff reached a point where he could no longer lift his cameras or carry his equipment. It was something that might have crushed the spirit of a different man, but Jeff just turned and looked for some other way to express his artistic self.

It was the beginning of the computer and internet age, and it became his new tool for creativity. With it, he could draw, write, create videos and music, and connect with artists around the world. In the years that followed, he was at his happiest and most prolific as an artist, unburdened by the disease that was slowly robbing his physical strength.

He adapted the persona “**liketelevisionsnow**” as his artist name with the accompanying comment, “*Ain’t it always like television snow!*” He also appeared under the name **Max Shellman, Agent to the Stars** in various collaborative ventures with other artist friends. Max’s promise was to *Make YOU the Star you Want to Be!*

During all those years, Jeff encouraged and supported me in my work and my continuing education. I always felt like he was my biggest fan and, in turn, I was his. In 2010, I left my full time job when Jeff could no longer walk or sit up.

The next five years became a loving time of renewal in our relationship. We threw ourselves into publishing projects including a book of his poetry and his friend Yannick's drawings called *My Public & Concrete Alibi*, and a twice yearly magazine named *Un<>Cut*, and later *Re<>Dux*. He reached out to artists around the world and gave them the opportunity to highlight their work free from the usual critiques and publisher reviews. He loved encouraging young artists because he understood how difficult a path it can be.

Jeff created projects like *A Thousand Peace Cranes for Japan* where he invited artists everywhere to make peace cranes, which were sent to the Hiroshima Children's Museum to wish them healing after the terrible tsunami that had engulfed Japan.

Hundreds of artists participated in his *12-12-12: The End of the World Project*, sharing their perspectives on whether the world would end in Dec. 2012 as the Mayans had supposedly predicted. He sent and received thousands of pieces of mail art from nearly every country on the planet and documented all of his work online.

When Jeff died, the outpouring of support from the art community was deeply touching. I know he would have been greatly surprised at how many lives he affected and how many smiles he brought to people during his time on earth.

Jeff loved music of all kinds, especially the Beatles and Patti Smith, but also Frank Sinatra, Miles Davis, Kenny Chesney and Fairport Convention. He enjoyed rooting for the Celtics (sometimes) and his beloved Yankees although, in later years, he begrudgingly gave the Red Sox their due.

He wasn't religious but found an affinity with Buddhist ideals and wisdom, and he sent Zen circles to friends and art exhibitions around the world. His sense of humor and ability to create voices and characters were endless, and I often told him I stayed with him because he made me laugh at least once every day.

In his urn, Jeff will be traveling the cosmos with a few items of personal significance. The ashes of Tyke, his beloved Jack Russell Terrier are with him. Our first wedding bands, which we replaced for our 20th wedding anniversary. The last cigarette he kept but never smoked. And one of his toy soldiers.

The Balinese statue that will watch over him for now is their cultural gesture of "***Welcome Home***".

(You are invited to share any comments at this time)



(On My Back, for Jeff by Yannick Dangin Leconte)

At our wedding, we shared a reading “On Marriage” from *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran. Today, I’d like to end by sharing with you from Gibran’s writing on death:

You would know the secret of death.

But how shall you find it unless you seek it in the heart of life?

If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life.

For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one.

In the depth of your hopes and desires lies your silent knowledge of the beyond;

And like seeds dreaming beneath the snow your heart dreams of spring.

Trust the dreams, for in them is hidden the gate to eternity.

For what is it to die but to stand naked in the wind and to melt into the sun?

And what is it to cease breathing, but to free the breath from its restless tides, that it may rise and expand and seek God unencumbered?

Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you indeed sing.

And when you have reached the mountain top, then you shall begin to climb.

And when the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall you truly dance.



Merle Bird, R.I.P. liketelevisionsnow, by Yannick Dangin Leconte