

Frankoni & Me

There was another apprentice at the Palace job that I got to know. He had grown up in the Potrero District, had gone to Galileo High. We'd see each other in the night apprentice classes and had gotten to be friends. I met his wife eventually, and he, mine, and we'd had some dinners together. A time too when his buddy from school & he invited me to come along on their abalone expedition to Point Arenas. For awhile we were also car pooling to work. Sometimes we argued...about the rights of women, or radical politics. We were...interested in each other. Two distinct tribes meeting at a big civic project in 1966. It wasn't exactly a sweat lodge ...it was a Palace of Fine Arts.

Frankoni turned me on to the Rolling Stones. I was playing him Bob Dylan. Show & tell. I told him how I had quit using psychedelics...and he got interested and plunged in. He was the one who came to me with the news about Morning Glory seeds. Both of us were twenty-two and freshly married. We were also holding up a sort of puppet-form of each of our fathers & having *them* meet. *How my dad was as a workingman in the big city's life...meets how your dad was etc.* It was almost a Shadow Play...we ourselves didn't really know what we were doing.

By the end of that year, we were each entering doors that the other had shown him. I'd gone where I'd thought he was and vice versa. Frankoni started carving statues from wood at home and getting stoned all the time. Let his hair grow out and started making noises about getting out of the City, out of the industrial life.

I was settling towards being a hard-ass journeyman. Cut my hair shorter & went to union meetings, seeing that if I blended in I could maybe influence the local to the left. For a half-year, the seesaw was level and we took much pleasure in our friendship. And then it started to tilt away. He thought my politics was getting boring. And I thought he was getting slack, dissipating, heading for the hills. It's strange now to think about it. It was also distinctly 1966 San Francisco. Here was a quintessential City working-class white guy...but he had married a Filipina woman and they had a baby...he was turning his friends on to Bob Dylan and weed and doing crafts. And here I was, a dropout mystic-poet-radical... who was getting convinced that he should drop all that stuff and be an urban union man to have a fulcrum-place from which to change the world.

I admired Frankoni's proletarian qualities, and I wasn't wrong. He was straightforward, hardworking, fair-minded, and loyal to a fault. He didn't give a shit what the grand nabobs of our day said or thought. I particularly emulated his jobsite style. It was hard to keep up with him...it was an athletic challenge to learn as fast what was being asked of us, and to keep moving at his tremendous pace of pure, effective carpentry. Meanwhile, he was leaving it behind... As I was leaving behind the proto-hippie traces he had first seen in me in December of 1965.

I think we both had fleeting thoughts of calling out to the other "*wait! where you going? I already did that.*" But we didn't...and parted forever.