

Outsider



Seanie

In Jan. 2000, I traveled to Mt. Isa in Central Australia to visit my brother's grave. I took an overnight bus from Alice Springs to journey through a dramatic landscape of distant bush fires and kangaroos' that darted occasionally like ghost-like apparitions in the lights of the bus. I thought of Seanie and his affinity for this surreal desert world where beauty and death are lovers and I realized that the reason why flowers in bloom have no future is because their completeness is not limited by reflection. My brother was not a reflection either and just as a flower his early death contained a message. The night passed into a beautiful sunrise that incongruously silhouetted the distant billowing smokestack of Mt. Isa.

Mt. Isa is a small town set adjacent to a silver mining facility. It is located in the middle of a most forbidding and unforgiving desert that quickly allowed me to understand how it claimed my brother's life back in 1978. Seanie was twenty eight years of age at the time of his death. He worked the various mines as a heavy equipment mechanic and it was not unusual for him to travel large distances between jobs. He was traveling in the Simpson Desert between the towns of Birdsville and Bedouri when he lost his way by going off the already barely distinguishable track that only an experienced traveler in the area could decipher. His jeep ran out of petrol and became stranded. He tried various techniques to survive but his desperate attempts came to naught. Two years later his skeletal remains were discovered under the jeep. The jeep had finally been spotted by a light aircraft flying over the area.

No family member attended the funeral. Perhaps, we were all in shock and did not want to allow in the information that Seanie was actually dead. Mt. Isa seemed like another planet to us and no one wanted the responsibility of saying goodbye. There was a service for him at the local church in our hometown in Ireland which was attended by his many friends, all in various shades of disbelief. I remembered when my mother

turned to me before the service for assurance that Seanie was really dead so that she could finally accept and instruct the priest to announce it from the altar. The death was verified through the dental records so I nodded to her and put the final clasp on the fact that Seanie was gone. I still wonder. I'm sure we all do and every time I see a hitch-hiker or someone out of place I always look very closely.

Seanie left Ireland in 1972 to travel the world. He was curious about truth and felt that what he had experienced so far in his life did not measure to it. He based himself in Australia from where he worked to make the money he used for traveling. He had our mother mail funds to his various ports of call. She was his bank. He always traveled with a back-pack that was usually filled with books. His appetite for information was insatiable and he declared that he would not stop traveling and learning until something made sense. He back-packed through most of South East Asia, India, South America and North America, taking breaks only to return to Australia to replenish his money supply. He had a great affinity for Australia and spoke highly of it. Ireland, on the other hand, seemed to drain him and never became an option for him to return to. He was offended by the patriarchal control the Catholic Church had on the minds of the people and he recoiled against it to the depths of his intuitive soulful knowing. Seanie was pure and his intuition was crystal. I have a large picture of my mother looking at me as I write this, she is smiling.

During his travels Seanie became lost in the world for a period of about two years. The family and I became very concerned. We notified the Red Cross to be on the look-out. Finally, I received a phone call at my home in New York. It was Seanie. He had been picked up on the streets of San Francisco by a crisis intervention unit. They evaluated him and then urged him to call me. I sent him the money to come to New York and when he finally appeared in Grand Central Station at 2am I did not recognize him at first. He was skin and bone and it hardly seemed possible that he could walk at all. I cried but did not let him see - he knew anyway. I bought him boots and clothes and he spent the next two months with me and my wife.

After he gained back his normal weight and was sufficiently recovered mentally I began suggesting that he return to Ireland to be with the family. He had misgivings because an important part of his discipline was the act of letting go. He knew the traps of the needy and had already purified himself into a higher state. He did not want to weaken his resolve to truth. Nonetheless, he decided to return and arrived in Ireland looking fit and healthy. He was received with great love by family and friends but, of course, no one could understand him. His awareness had made him an outsider and as much as he tried he just couldn't fit in. He agreed to undergo psychiatric counseling at an out-patient clinic where they

promptly labeled him 'borderline schizophrenic'. The Psychiatrist asked me why I thought Seanie had lost his way. I told him that perhaps Seanie was closer to the way than we were. In later years I found this to be true. He accepted a position as a mechanic in a local garage and I remember my joy when the first engine he put together worked perfectly. I was relieved to hear this news because I felt it might entice him to stay in Ireland where I felt he might at least be safe. But, Ireland was not for Seanie and again, my father and mother and the rest of us had to reluctantly say goodbye to him. This time, not knowing that it would be our last farewell. He returned to Australia and after a few months my mother and I received checks with a thank you note. Shortly afterwards he became missing again until his body was finally found under the jeep in the desert.

Back in Mt. Isa I booked into a motel in full view of the smokestacks. I was depressed. I prepared myself to visit the grave and next morning as I was about to leave, I turned on the TV to find it playing the life story of John Lennon. Seanie, in my mind, was all about Lennon and as I watched I felt him deeply through John's life. I proceeded to the grave with my Walkman playing sounds from the Beatles and Stones. I spent about an hour at the grave. It was quiet and I was alone. I buried my 'hippie' necklace under the grave-marker and did various druid type rituals to honor him. I remembered my mother whom in her dying years came to visit the grave. I remembered John Lennon and his gift to the world and I remembered Seanie for the beauty of his purpose and the incredible loneliness by which he had to achieve it.

As I was leaving the graveyard there were two young men trying to fix a motorcycle. They asked if I could help them. It was three miles to Mt. Isa and they had been stranded for hours. I should add that I am very far from being a mechanic, nonetheless, I decided to take a look. It took no more than a couple of seconds for me to see and fix the problem. I told the young fellow to try it out. He started the bike and took it for a test run. When he got back he looked at me astonished as if I had just performed a miracle. I had, or should I say, Seanie had. It was a nice pat on the back and a beautiful communication to honor my visit.

I thought about bringing his remains to Ireland to be interred in the local cemetery in our hometown but thought better of it because Seanie was in Australia, the country he loved. Furthermore he was part of the history of the local Irish Club whose members so honored him at his funeral and now make regular visits to the grave. I visited the club and was received most graciously by the two noble souls most responsible for it providing a home away from home for the many Irish working in the mine. Ben and Chris informed me that the mine has very strict standards for pollution control and that what I viewed coming out of the stacks was

not a threat to health. Chris took me around in her 4-wheel drive and introduced me to the beauty of Mt. Isa. I began to see it as a moment between worlds - Seanie's place. I knew he was at home here in the bosom of these good folks and when I finally said goodbye I felt at peace.

Note:

During his stay with me in New York Seanie talked of many things that I felt intuitively to be true but did not have the background to comprehend. Years later after I began to write I realized that our information had become the same. He had passed it on to me or perhaps it was Tom who died in the desert that day and Seanie is still continuing his work through me. If we are indeed what we 'think' then I know Seanie to be very much alive in me now. The result of Seanie's sacrifice and the process of my subsequent education has distilled into a small textbook that outlines the territory of human existence. It fleshes out the most fundamental and overlooked building blocks of life without which all thinking is subject to instability and ultimate destruction. The book is called *Eternal Recurrence ...a step out of time* (www.onepositive.com).

The following poem is from a newspaper clipping dated June 29th 1978. It was found in the pocket of Seanie's jeans when the body was found.

The Outsider

He is an Outsider because he stands for truth
The Outsider is a man who cannot live in the comfortable
 Insulated world of the bourgeois,
Accepting what he sees and touches as reality.
The Outsider is not sure who he is.
 The Outsider is not a freak,
 But is only more sensitive than the
 'sanguine and healthy-minded' type of man.
The visionary is inevitably an outsider.
The Outsider's problem is the problem of freedom
 The Outsider is primarily a critic,
 And if a critic feels
Deeply enough about what he is criticizing,
 He becomes a prophet.

- Colin Wilson