

## INNER TRUTH

A couple, the nicest people, regulars at the Student Union, every Sunday afternoon, they played Scrabble at first. I talked them into Chess, and they, politely went back to Scrabble.

It was in the Spartan Daily, the school paper.

His parents came down into the basement, the Games Area, where the bowling alley was, the Pool tables, the Ping Pong, and the Foosball, and the row of tables above the lanes, where the couple would play their Sunday afternoon game.

I don't remember what they looked like, the parents. Soft voices: "Thank you," they said.

“My son mentioned you,” his mother said. “We’re here picking up his things and this was a special place for them. We thought we’d see it.”

I thought of them, the parents, walking back out the back of the building, past the Pool tables, as I sprayed returned bowling shoes.

“The Bolarium,” I called it. My student job then, Friday and Saturday nights, Sundays, days, the tough shift, the sleepy one.

Ronald Reagan, the Governor then, cut the funds for mental hospitals, and the medicated would walk from their housing, formerly run down student housing, to the Student Union, in dazy chains, holding hands, not trunks and tails, but somehow reminiscent, to me, of elephants in the circus, their feet moving with the syncopation of a Thorazine shuffle. They’d sit at the tables beyond the bowling lanes and smoke.

It was a safe place, they told me, the Student Union. More than one person told me , it quieted the voices, the sounds of the bowling balls hitting the pins. Another person told me it reminded him of the sea, , that sound the pins struck.

They liked being part of a community outside of an institution was their general consensus.

I never heard a single complaint about them. There were, but nobody ever said anything to me.

College, potential draftees into the war machine and the Viet Nam War, self interest dictated that we were into politics and self preservation.

I have a number of dead friends from that adventure in hegemony and dominion.

The choice, then, as now, country or empire?

These two young people ran into that predator's mentality, that truth.

At the Bolarium, Sunday was a slow day, I brought books, studied.

Talked to this guy, Wally Sneider. "Check it out," he said, "The I Ching, Bollingen Translation, 1968, go to the end of the Preface, there I am, Wallace K. Sneider."

The I Ching, that's where I came across the idea of inner truth.

I asked my housemate, Sheila, if she had heard of it. We lived five blocks from campus, in a nice old white house built in the 1920's, owned by Sheila's husband's grandmother, Goldie Locks.

They lived in the front room, with the bay windows, then separate rooms, separate lives, Sheila in the room next to the bathroom.

We paid hardly any rent, had a pay phone in the kitchen, a kiln in the backyard, a French garden there too, a work in progress, Sheila's husband had built the kiln himself, made art pottery there.

She said: "I have it."

I still do. Still hear from Sheila, she's in East Texas, married a chef, he cooks, Sheila, she's Sheila. I hadn't really appreciated F. Scott Fitzgerald, then I met Sheila, and read Tender Is the Night.

So what happened to our couple?

She took a class, started corresponding with an inmate at Soledad Prison, and when he got out he kidnapped her.

At his trial, he said in his defense: “ I wasn’t going to kill her. I was going to let her go eventually. You killed her.”

She died in Prunedale, near Salinas, in a trailer, in the shootout.

I had told his parents: “Because of this asshole, who doesn’t recognize the rights of others, two people are dead.”

He killed himself. He had a red birthmark across his face, his eyes didn’t line up, he was a very ugly person. After surviving all he had dealt with, with real grace, he had found his inner truth.

