

Snapshots

Allan Badiner

Allan Badiner is the editor of *Zig Zag Zen: Buddhism and Psychedelics*¹ and other books, and is a contributing editor at Tricycle magazine. He has organized conferences on psychedelics at Esalen Institute.

A graduate and researcher at Harvard, and then Professor Emeritus at CIIS (California Institute of Integral Studies) where he taught for 30 years, Ralph dedicated his life to introducing new insights, discoveries, and knowledge about the scientific and medicinal potential of psychedelics.

Ralph first came to prominence as one third of the famed 60's triumvirate, together with Timothy Leary, and Richard Alpert (Ram Dass). He was also a professor, writer, researcher, psychotherapist, husband, and father. He was passionately interested in the subject of death and dying. His son, Ari Krishna Metzner, died in a bicycle accident at age eight in 1974. Ralph met with his own death on March 14, 2019 at the age of 82, on the eve of a conference on psychedelics that I organized at Esalen. Stan Grof offered a moving eulogy.

Ralph wrote books faster than I could read them. Some of my favorites are: *Ecology of Consciousness; Alchemical Divination--Remembering the Past, Envisioning the Future; The Ayahuasca Experience; Green Psychology; Birth of a Psychedelic Culture* (with Ram Dass and Gary Bravo);and *Overtones and Undercurrents*.

My daughter, India, and I equally love his small book of poems/songs called *Diving for Treasures*. The poems focus on the real joys of a lifetime. I call it power

¹ *Zig Zag Zen: Buddhism and Psychedelics*. Santa Fe: Synergetic Press, 2xxx.

poetry. In particular, the poem entitled "Life Cycle Medicine Wheel" is stunningly beautiful, deeply resonant, and shares the conditions of life in their essence: a child reacting, a man responding, a woman receiving, and the old one reflecting. The richly healing refrain has a discernible mystical liberative power as the words vibrate in your being: "No regret, No blame, No struggle, No boundary."

I remain forever grateful to Ralph for his contribution to Zig Zag Zen of "A New Look at the "Psychedelic Tibetan Book of the Dead."

Once at a CIIS program on the progress of psychedelic research he expressed cynicism about relying on medical research for the validation of psychedelics. "We can do a better job as a community," Ralph said emphatically, "and sharing our experiences with each other."

A visit to Meow Wolf in New Mexico—formerly a bowling alley and now an arts production company that creates immersive, multimedia experiences transporting audiences of all ages into fantastic realms. Deborah Snyder of Synergetic Press and a small gang of friends went to visit this odd but super creative playground. Rooms suspended in space with exits in the back of a refrigerator... at one point we climbed a 15 foot ladder. It was a little intimidating... but Ralph, over eighty years old, was already on his fifth rung-- and so I became more confident.

Not knowing the state that Ralph was in, or the journey he was about to take, I called him a few days before he died to ask if I could pay him a visit in Sonoma. I left a message for him as I was going to be in nearby Petaluma for a meeting. The

next day, I received a message from Ralph in a very clear voice saying that he was not able to meet up. Within the next few days I heard of his passing.

A few powerful and unforgettable quotes from Ralph:

When he was asked by an interviewer if he thought that society had changed as a result of psychedelic use, he replied that it was impossible to say. "I believe that the important thing is not drugs per se, but the notion and practice of expanding consciousness and taking many more perspectives into account in all situations... After all," he added, "Charles Manson used LSD, and look at what he did with it. What good was that?"

"Just as Hitler used the Reichstag burning, the U.S. government now uses the so-called War on Drugs and the War on Terrorism, to fuel fear in the population and establish a police security state."

"My vision of the future of the world is equal parts utter hopelessness and the improbable possibilities of spiritual-ecological regeneration."

"The introduction of LSD and psychedelics into the culture produced a transformation of the consciousness of the entire culture."

I am grateful and fortunate to have had time with Ralph... he enriched my life.