

The Redoubtable Hammy (14 years deCamped – inconceivable)!

Of this October 2019 it will be **14 years** without Hammy. Inconceivable! He was born October 30th, 1934 and left us October 2nd, 2005.

"Hammy" was Hamid's own name play in poking fun at himself with the double entendre of applying that appellation to his name by hitting upon his own tendency to be "an excessively theatrical actor". - "Mmm... indeed..."

His email address was at first quite curious and confusing to me. It read: harec@ followed by a dot net. 'Harec'?... - And then ahh, yes, I finally got it. He combined his Subud and given names into his call letters for his email address, namely Hamid and Hamilton of course, then Arthur, Robin, Eric - and ending with a 'c' for Camp - HAREC.

It is a given that Mr. Camp is for-certain-entertaining-all-the-seraphim up above. And from our grateful "spiritual" aspect we in surrender from our own contact within understand as best we can that Hamid is - obviously - should be where he is. We get that, it's only us lot down here who still pine for but even a mere glance of his countenance. What an entity was he, to be certain. He was redoubtable in many ways. And for this particular Cookie, I swear, not a day or at tops - three at the most may pass if that, where I don't in some way, manner, fashion, recall something about this tallest tree. Mmm... 'tallest tree'? 'Oh, but Hamid was diminutive in physical size', you say. Possibly, maybe... but for me I always looked up, way up to him. I was Mini-Me to Hamid, my very dear brother, fellow vigil sharer during Ramadan, fellow thespian, madcap, appreciator of the workings of life, fellow love of 'the music' whatever genre it be, Hamid's own music, or Strayhorn's "Lush Life" - "... and jazz and cocktails...", and more, more, more love, love of, love, love...

EXTERIOR. DAY. OUTSIDE SUBUD LOS ANGELES ON WILSHIRE OFF OF STANLEY, CIRCA MID 1990'S.

A Saturday after latihan. Hammy and 'Mini-Me' outside the LA latihan building. Hammy smoking a 'surrendered' ciggy.

"Doing Rama's this year?" the 'All-Knower' (i.e. 'himself') asks his brother whimsically with import and with noted theatrical English accent.

"As ever and always", I respond, mirroring his/our English accent, "And you?..." "Of course, dear boy, always, to be sure", as he casts off feigned disinterest with the wisp of a slight smile of overall charm as he shrouds some hidden inside information, the swine.

I submit, "Then perhaps we'll speak over the blower as we've done in past Rama's during late night vigil"?

With his calculated concealment intact he averts his eyes and fans my flame of interest by baiting me with an air of snooty pride as he leads me on (myself hanging on for his any word, yearning for any meatless scrap he might throw me) by delivering the forthcoming line suggestively, his voice trailing off after uttering his last word, "Afraid not, dear boy, won't be in town..."

"Really? Well, tell us, please do. What's going on, dear boy? Doing a show? Trotting the footlights elsewhere, are we? Don't be coy; don't keep it ALL for yourself, tell us. Where are we off to now, dear boy?"

"Not a show...doing Rama's... (dramatic pause while squeezing every drop of Hamidian self-satisfied vainglorious nectar for effect) in (beat, beat, beat) - Chilla's this year!" - The prideful audacity of his hubris of sheer delight that he will be in Cilandak is not mistaken by one jot! It's all over him that he will be traveling and doing the fast at the source, the origin of our contact. The swine!

I attempt to control my envy, "Really? Sink me! Going to Chilla's for Rama's? Well done, dear boy! You're heartily excused." The SWINE, I say to you!

DISSOLVE TO: NEW YORK CITY. WINTER, 1967.

EXTERIOR. NIGHT. FOREBODING, MEAN CITY STREET.

Dead cold, late November, three characters walk north on Twenty-first Street towards Fifth Ave. At Fifth Ave, all three turn corner heading uptown to Twenty-third. They pass the northern tip of the Flatiron building as they cross to an IND subway entrance prominently sticking out of nowhere like a phantom oasis in a concrete desert. Hands jammed in jacket pocket, collar turned up, he says a word or two to the other two characters before departing. He

walks away shoulders hunched, huddling himself against the cold of the winter's night. Hamilton Camp descends the stairs of the subway and then disappears out of sight.

'He's something else', the two characters left standing there concur. 'I don't know what it is. He's just got it is all. And now that he's left, I'm missing him.'

DISSOLVE TO: LOS ANGELES, 1975

INTERIOR. WINDSOR PARK MANSION. NIGHT.

'Larry' - Lorenzo and Henrietta Music's living room.

Taking place is an event with notables celebrating a television sit-com's accomplishments. Some celebrities present include Grant Tinker, President MTM Enterprises, and his wife Mary-Tyler Moore etc. - the list goes on. Near the end of the evening an impromptu set of a mere two or three tunes are heard. The man in particular enters into a clearing in the living room and sits down on a chair, crosses one leg over the other and places his guitar on his lap. He tunes his instrument. His body, his arms, his expression all merge into one, the parts serving the whole. His eyes express complete focus, acute concentration as in such intimacy and focus as the act of coitus - nothing will deter or impede the execution of his objective. He zeroes in on the neck of his guitar, his left hand concertedly and swiftly adjusts the tuning pins, listening fervently as he picks at one string, then tuning another, then one more, then back again to the one before - then done, he's set to go. There's a reverence, an aura, illustrative of Miles's raspy-voiced description of Monk when Thelonious would sit before a piano, "Look at him there, like playing in a church - he's sanctified". Then he plays - one song, then another - gorgeous. He closes with a tune he'd recently written, the centerpiece of his three-tune set. At the finish, Mary-Tyler Moore approaches him almost davening to him in reverential appreciation. The tune, bitter-sweet and pungent ends with this stanza:

"...Well I'm off again, boy
Got to catch a plane, boy
Off into the setting sun
Can't stand the winter winds, no
Can't believe it,
Where's the time all gone, long gone...
Mmm, Doesn't Time Fly...

When You're Havin' Fun...
Mmm, Doesn't It Fly...
When you're race is done...
Havin' fun...
Done..."

DISSOLVE - ONE WEEK LATER.

INTERIOR. DAY. "CAMPTOWN", HAMMY'S HOUSE, HIS ROOM.

Upon urgent repeated request he lays down on tape "Doesn't Time Fly When You're Havin' Fun". As he comes near the close of his rendition a horn, a car horn is heard through the open window several streets away. The horn perfectly, even eerily intones *in key* the exact harmonic accompaniment Hammy was playing at that moment. The unsolicited car horn inclusion even "compliments" him yet again a second time.

RANDOM MONTAGE CLIPS:

A note from Hammy handed over to be collected with other notes to be put in a package to be sent. Luckily in the passing of it this reporter was fortunate to oversee the one-line contents of the note written. The notes were intended for the brother/son of a brother/father who was in the deepest trouble and in even deeper pain. The note simply read, "Hold tight on to the rope of Allah." It could be said in one line Hamid earned his helper wings in sincerity and in real helping - in just one line.

Hammy's version/take on Tony Joe White's POLK SALAD ANNIE. The way he'd hit "Give me a mess of it!" - which isn't the way the line actually goes and who cares. It's Hammy's take on it, his blatant licentiousness, his downright naughtiness in the way he'd accent it, well - to fracture you, like so many times - to provoke tears to stream down the cheeks with such funny, such downright mind-freeing funny!

Photographer Sahlan Simón Cherpital in town (L.A. early 90's). He's thinking of re-locating to L.A. and starting up a career as a headshot photographer. Hammy instantaneously launches into a mimic course of poses that he (Simon) should "know" when setting up his actor subjects as they sit to be photographed. All of the following poses performed at no less than breakneck speed: Hammy sporting a simple smile, then an animated one, then more severe, then downright serious, then the hand behind the back of

the head, elbow raised in such a way as to imply casual cool (completely false of course), then leaning in with a touch of Edgar R. Morrow's "See It Now" earnestness before leaning back with both hands again clasped to the back of his head with a broad smile. - Side-splittingly funny! Pure genius of detail and execution of characters.

One day he was toddling off to a chiropractic appointment. He was running late and couldn't find his keys, and then it was his cell phone he couldn't find, and then - he wasn't there - he'd bolted! I teared after him in my car to his chiropractor. He dissed me (for whatever his always derogatory but filled with love reasons) before and after his appointment, at which point he again misplaced his keys on the counter of the outer office. When the chiropractor told him that he'd left his keys, he grabbed them off the counter with the greatest irritation while looking at me accusingly as if it were I who was the one at fault for him forgetting his keys. Later I wrote him an email saying how much I enjoyed being his "personal secretary" of the day and would be willing to provide my services to him anytime/all the time in the future. I grabbed the opportunity in that email to state to him point blank how much I so loved him. He wrote back: [Oh pshaw. Get along with you.](#) (this was accompanied with a little graphic of a mini character dropping his pants and shaking his ass mooning).

Mr. Camp was not one to be overly generous in the 'handing out compliments' department. I forever took the greatest unabashed joy at Hammy's coming to a one-man show I'd put together (in the mid 90's) twice! Part of the baggage and torment that is suffered by many in the arts are the too plentiful doses of self-doubt. He too would suffer pain in this area. That's why his acknowledgement of my abilities by attending my show on two occasions (with insightful discussions afterwards) meant literally, the world to me. In addition, despite my, shall we say, "definitive" impersonation of himself - often to his face ("Son of bitch does impressions.") he loved my Olivier from "The Entertainer" as well as my Bogart, not to mention my Thelonious's 'Round Midnight' on piano. - I found the world, the world in Hammy - my inscrutable infuriating annoying, distant so ever-close brother/ally - who would 'hang' with no one, not me, nor with anyone else - no one. Yet somehow he managed in true mutuality of some indefinable aspect we intrinsically shared, he did 'hang' with me, assuredly and palpably and memorably. Thank God.

Often he would nail me for my bare-assed vulnerability solely because he shared the exact piercing vulnerability himself. I never "tested" the question and never doubted it — the relationship proved its legitimacy to the both of us. I'm not dreaming, fantasizing — we were connected to the hip — of this I have no doubt. Some ancestry, some mutual perspective bonded us someplace. Dare I say, we even look 'somewhat alike'. Hamid's son Louis bowled me over once when he blurted out of nowhere, "Cookie, you're looking more and more like my father every day." What a thing to say — I mean yeah, man — THE THING to say, I'd say!

In the kitchen having a cuppa at Camptown of a weekday morning when this observer was lucky enough to be staying with Rasjadah ('Shahddie') and Hammy and the family for a few weeks. Himself nursing his coffee in his oversized cup. Then before taking the L.A. Times to the kitchen nook where the table is fixed by the corner windows to sip and read his paper, he adds to his coffee his half & half and conservatively, no less than twenty million heap-fulls of sugar. And while doctoring his brew he extemporaneously slips into pure routine on anything and everything; as in making commentary when some of the cream spills, his conscious ignoring of it, the cavalier way he stirs his cup then removes the spoon with a royal flourish, casually casting it aside on the counter as if he himself were some bloody lord or something. All of this seasoned with quick-change timing and endless invention. — Fractured with laughter is this consummate admirer, guest, brother, colleague, fellow-traveler — on the floor! And all present, Shahddie, Henny, Louis, Hamilton Jr., Laksmi, and any and all grandchildren roaming about — from none of them, not a single one — nothing — ABSOLUTELY NOTHING, not a smirk, not a chortle, a wink, a nod, an acknowledgement — nothing! And I'm dying — in the spirit of the moment wanting more though I've been duly blessed with his hilarity. With Hammy you cannot ever get enough! And even in that good fortune I still suffer from never getting enough of the pure aliveness, spontaneity and invention of him!

His telephone messages — always brief, typically biting with that tone of superiority he could adopt with his routinely enhanced obligatory English accent, as in:

"Cookie, Ellie? ("Ellie" was my wife Elna — "Sidebar, your Honors" — Hamid often would say of some occasion where I

might visit for whatever reason with or without Elna present, he'd say, "Well... I hope you can make it, dear boy, it would be lovely if you could... 'In-ShElnah'). Back to Hammy's voice message on the phone machine: "Cookie?... Ellie?... - Hammy and Shahddie here. Are you there? (pause, pause, pause) Oh, you're not there. Or are you there, skulking in a corner listening to this and not picking up. No matter. You're clearly up to no good. But give us a bell when you get a chance, would you, dear boy? Shaddie and I were thinking of having you both over for Dilly's (his granddaughter) birthday next week. That would be of a Wodnes-day, say around sixish? Give us a bell, would you, dear boy?"

There was a time when a profound heart-wrenching heaviness was upon me due to a personal incident that so decimated my feelings and spirit even to the extent of not being able to get quiet in any way. It was bad. While on a chair alongside the wall in the latihan room I sat filled with this unbearable grief and the inability to even get up to do the latihan. Sat there for the whole half hour before himself (now finishing his latihan) sat down next to me to put on his shoes. I leaned over to him and whispered that I simply could not get quiet enough in any way to do the latihan. He took a pause, then leaned over to me, the smell of his Royall Muske cologne mixed with the faint and fresh scent of cigarette smoke was comforting, warm, uplifting even. He simply said to me without looking at me, "...just throw yourself into the ring, dear boy." - Another one-line-helper-hat-trick! I got up and my mess intact, walked onto the floor, mind-wrecked, heart heavy - and was miraculously given the grace to surrender and receive the latihan.

Now not to speak ill, but definitely to speak balanced, Hammy's redoubtable self was also, and this is an understatement, not the easiest person to deal with. Unquestionably, I place him in a category of his own as being one of the most remarkable characters I've ever met and beyond fortunate to know and collaborate with and - all the rest. Along with his being a brother-friend and sometime fellow-working-together-thespian, I swear, I witnessed actual demons and striking moments of darkness in him so profound as to raise any and all hairs on anyone's neck. And moody? Forget about it. He could, as we know, be painfully and woundingly judgmental and dismissive. I had a good number of run-ins with Hammy. But wait - in ANY heated situation I ever shared with him he had the capacity

of completely not only letting it go but forgetting the incident altogether, as in not harboring or holding on to the issue in any way – not even a drop of recrimination remained in him. It's as though the matter magically evaporated. His character was authentically large. And this fact all the more is a testament to the power of Hammy's surrender in the latihan and his deep unwavering faith.

He leaned well – seriously. Find him by a counter or a hitching post – whatever. Whenever he leaned on anything, twirling his ciggy around or just nattering, he did so with such restfulness and comfort as to put you at your ease. And he looked so cool when he leaned. He simply was a great leaner. – I mentioned him twirling his cigarette above. If you were fortunate ever to witness this extra 'sideshow' it was remarkable. He had ciggy twirling technique DOWN to a fine art. Hilarious and manic and insane and clever and pent up and inventive. – Hammy twirling his ciggy – a bona fide sight to behold!

First or second day of Rama's one year, himself, Rusdi Lane and Mini-Me standing on the corner at Wilshire and Stanley (outside the Subud LA house) – Rusdi, sporting an Islamic skull cap, smoking a kretek, makes it quite clear he is not doing Ramadhan that year. Hammy asks him why. Rusdi says he needed to go out dancing. We both acknowledged lovingly that this was a legitimate reason for not doing Rama's. Hammy inquires further, asking Rusdi about his night-life. Rusdi brings up the matter of two ladies he has been dancing with. – And now the rest is not for publication. But I guess here we go. Hammy machine guns a suggestion of involvement with the two girls of such detailed and graphic proportions as to close down not only our first or second day of the fast but Ramadhan altogether – and into the bargain possibly any and all religious institutions of any stripe permanently! Yet the words were so purely delivered, even innocent somehow, with no apparent "intention" to illicit passion. This lightness of humor by Hammy was all the more enhanced when Rusdi, the non-fasting smoker in our trio, suddenly turned "Christian" on us and appeared to be the one who was the most shocked. On my part, I saw beyond Hammy's graphic suggestions about what we'd do with those women to see the purest, funniest, most sincere, believe it or not, uncluttered surrender. Hammy was doing his Ramadhan in the right state, light and humor-filled. There was no break in his fast from what he said. I could see and feel that and our laughter was so free and unencumbered by any commentary or judgement.

His unconditional depth of feeling when he performed at a Bob Gibson memorial concert in a club at the Santa Monica pier. He didn't say anything about his seminal partner, not one word did Hamid utter. What he did was, when announced to come to the stage he walked with head slightly bowed along the far left walkway of the auditorium towards the stage, ascended the stairs to the stage while holding his guitar by its neck with a immistakeable grip of strength and power. When he positioned himself behind the microphone he placed the guitar strap around his shoulder. Then after a swift moment or two adjusting the tuning pins, he began to sing. Cannot recall in the slightest what he sang. It was a beautiful intense ballad. I cannot recall the tune as I was too powerfully taken in by the effect of the deep feeling that poured forth from his being. Upon the tune's close he acknowledged no applause from the audience whatsoever - none. Instead he pointedly removed his instrument from his shoulder, took hold of his guitar, again gripping it by its neck, then swiftly walked to the side he'd come up, descended the stairs and somehow camouflaged his physical body into the mix of the indefinable audience as he summarily managed to, as if by some supernatural instrumentation - altogether dissolve.

We shared several years' worth of late-night phone conversations during Rama's. A glimpse into a man's breadth of scope and knowledge of which I had no idea he was so capable and informed. He retained facts and spoke of conceptual understanding of an expansive array of subjects. He was versed in poetry, art, history, religion, even mathematics, for God's sakes, you-name-it. The list went on and on and the information was literally at his fingertips to be spouted out at the drop of a hat. He was amazing in his relating to me his understanding and views on Spengler, Gibbon's "Rise And Fall Of The Roman Empire". He'd quote verbatim from Edward Fitzgerald's The Rubiyat of Omar Kayam with instantaneous facility. He'd erupt with all sorts of other poetry (Yeats, Gerard Manley Hopkins etc.) and no end of "bits", of course; all of it ingested into his being out of genuine interest - an autodidact extraordinaire - absolutely mind-boggling! The suggestion was made he could take on an altogether new career traveling anywhere and everywhere as an uncommon lecturer lecturing on anything and everything from philosophy to religion, low to high comedy - anything! - As it was Rama's and both of us doing the fast the thought never occurred to record our conversations (which even though it was Rama's

should have been recorded). These nights drew us closer together I think almost more than any other discourse we ever had. And then charmingly at the close of any late-night exchange he would always lay out a triplet of good wishes to me for the early morning meal, the fasting for the day, and then the breaking of the fast in the evening. His voice would go tender and warm and unspeakably loving as his dulcet baritone would descend lower and lower until he basso-profundo trailed off with the last syllable as he'd lavish upon me slowly at a great measured pace, "Salaamat Sa'ur (the morning meal)...Salaamat Puasahhh...(the fast itself) - and then with the greatest relief, as though he'd on the phone just now taken his first sip of tea after having just broken his fast) Salahhhmat Bukkkaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh! (the break fast). Then we'd both crack ourselves up with the sillies before ringing off.

When around him (quite many a time) the feeling of his quiet and the latihan within him could be keenly felt. He often was a powerful transmitter of the latihan. This fact was verified by a non-Subud colleague of Hammy's, Philip Proctor (of Firesign Theatre renown) when Philip once reported that he also on occasion "caught a buzz" off of Hammy's state just by being near him.

Two pioneers of Subud New York, Lucienne Farkas and Lucas Mason, had a conversation after a talk Bapak gave once in New York. Lucienne said to Lucas, "Bapak says we're supposed to be detached. Are you detached?" Lucas said he wasn't. And Lucienne said she wasn't either. When Hammy shuffled off I felt his release and freedom from this world. And it felt (and still does from whatever inside track I can get a grasp of) to be wonderful. But I unfortunately, just like Lucienne and Lucas, am not detached. Like Ralph Davila said when he called me to inform me within an hour or so of Hammy's passing, "He's one of the ones who's not supposed to go." I felt powerfully in his departure a sense of, "Hey! You can't go away. Wait a second. You're going up to the flower-laden kingdom of God with all the Hosts of Heaven and all the accompanying perks - and leaving me/us down here?!"

The Los Angeles Times obituary on Hammy made mention of his diminutive size. As reported, I never found that to be true - ever. Even Hammy (unless he was "playing short") never gave off the slightest indication he was concerned or thought of his height as being an issue in the slightest.

The Times article had it wrong. Diminutive? As I said, I always found myself forever looking up to him in brotherhood, like-minded approach to the aesthetics of life, of course our Subud connection, and much more beyond that of the whispers I've communicated herewith.

Like the two characters said who were left standing there in the freezing cold at the IND station in New York years ago, 'He's something else', 'I don't know what it is. He's just got it is all. And now that he's left, I'm missing him.'

- Michael Cooke