

Ray Tracing

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Ray Tracing:

This page traces Ray's trajectory from early adulthood and disillusionment with Christianity to early middle age and the life that he ultimately assembled.

Wingman Jake:

Around 2002, Ray wanted a girl he was dating to meet me. He said that I'd serve as a "foil" to highlight him, and that having a "foil" helps people get to know each other.

The usual term for "foil" in U.S. secular society is "wingman".

The Old Coder adds:

The term "wingman" makes it sound like a sitcom concept, but it used to be a common practice in the U.S. I did it myself once or twice right around the same year for a former co-worker named Charlie. According to Wikipedia, the term was popularized by the 1986 film "Top Gun".

Jake continues:

I went with Ray and the girl to the American Diner & Pub in Langhorne, PA. Ray smoked something that seemed to be tobacco.

This wasn't a good start since it bothered me for reasons related to childhood. But Ray had probably forgotten how I felt about smoking and I'd agreed, after all, to be his subordinate on this occasion.

The girl smoked some of the substance, said "Ooh", and commented further. Her reaction gave me the impression that the tobacco had had a special ingredient added. This would have been consistent with the transition to counter-culture that Ray was making at the time.

The Old Coder adds:

Jake is referring to marijuana.

For the benefit of non-U.S. and/or younger U.S. readers, marijuana was still illegal in the U.S. at the time. Its non-medical users saw it though, as no more serious a drug than alcohol and as a way to assert independent thought and membership in a different culture.

The drugs that Chameleon took were, and still are, seen as a more serious matter. Marijuana has usually been seen as off to the side from that sort of thing. However, conservative people have often sought to keep the drug illegal on the grounds that it allegedly leads to more serious pharmaceutical abuse.

My own position is that the drug is similar to other habits such as alcohol and gambling: highly damaging to some people but inconsequential to others.

Jake continues:

I invited the couple to see my college apartment, which was next to the student housing nearby, and they agreed. They followed me over. I saw them park, but after I went up I waited for them to come and it took quite a while.

After they got to the apartment, the young woman said, "Sorry, Ray took a long time". She seemed to be saying that Ray had had her perform a sexual favor.

It isn't definite. Ray is invited to comment. However, she was smiling and looking away. Then looking at Ray. That isn't how a date behaves if somebody has been delayed due to a medical issue or needing to urinate.

The part that Ray didn't think about was this:

Even if Ray had set aside his upbringing, I was still a Fundamentalist and the culture, rigid as it seemed to him, was more of a home to me than our household had been. It's where I felt that I belonged.

And this was at my Christian college. At a time when the local Christian culture discouraged even kissing on dates. Ray had also asked me to be his assistant and this evening was a favor to him.

If Ray told this girl, "Wait, let's have some fun before we go up to see Jake. You can use one of his drinking glasses to rinse out your mouth." that wasn't exactly respectful.

Or did something else happen? I'm able to reflect and to reassess things. This may make me more

rational and flexible than my supposed free spirit of a brother.

[add: How did Ray become semi-disabled?]

Ray once observed, "The worse you treat women, the better they treat you." This was, I think, in the late 2000s.

[add: context of conversation]

I was left speechless. I shouldn't have been startled. By this point, Ray often spoke in a self-centered and offensive manner. The logic of his positions, additionally, seemed to be declining in general though a degree of verbal eloquence remained.

The Old Coder adds:

Ray had decided that life was short and that he'd be the one to decide what it was right or wrong to say or do. It can be fair to go this far, and it's a perspective that many adopt, but introspection is needed or one is more of an *sshole than an independent thinker to be respected.

Jake responds:

My brother believed that he was introspective, but I don't think that he reflected much on his words and actions. This isn't unusual, of course. I'm working out what Ray and his behavior mean to me and will comment further when I see the heart of it.

House-Flipping:

[add: house flipping]

Toward the end of his house-flipping venture in Philadelphia, Ray was drinking hard alcohol during the day regularly. He was open about it and commented "I know I'm self-medicating, but..." and went on about how he couldn't afford proper healthcare.

My cousin Jason is also in the trades and his professional opinion was that Ray was using pain more as an excuse for alcohol and decreased work than was warranted and that Ray wasn't in fact disabled.

It's important to be objective about this type of assessment as it's easy to reach biased conclusions about what's going on with somebody. But Ray didn't make many attempts to communicate positively about what he was dealing with.

One time, Amy told Ray, "Did you know there are dishes in the sink?" Ray offered the elegant rejoinder, "Did you know there's poop in your butt?"

Amy asked me, "Does Ray talk to everyone this way, or is it just me?" I responded, "Unfortunately, this is expected."

[add: context for pay me to help]

Around that time, Ray stopped asking me down to pay me to help improve the house. He did call me to tell me a story about Amy.

Ray said that Amy asked him to do things when he was trying to relax. So, he said, he turned off the breaker for the air conditioning. It was the middle of the Summer. Amy said that it was getting very hot. He responded, "Now you know how it feels when you're trying to relax and someone bothers you." Ray said, "So I used that as a little object lesson."

I was left speechless again. It seemed likely that Amy's requests were reasonable and that Ray simply wasn't willing to admit that he couldn't work much, whether it was due to physical pain, depression, or alcoholism.

Soon after that, the house-flipping venture and live-in relationship ended.

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