

# 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.

## Ray's Goal:

Ray Gustafson was focused for years on the idea that he deserved a woman who was sexually desirable as well. During his Bible College and/or Seminary periods, he often said things similar to "I'll end up with a super model" and "no girl is hot enough for me". Source: Ray's friend Jason.

Jason looked up to Ray at the time. Jason was concerned, but wasn't sure of what to think or say about this. "Ray is that shallow?", he wondered.

It's not unusual for a young man in the U.S. to think in terms of who is or isn't sexually attractive. Bible Students are no exception. The part which seems interesting here is that Ray believed he \*deserved\* a "hot" sexual partner. But perhaps this isn't too uncommon either.

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.

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

The comment was out of the blue. 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 Gustafson 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:

In Ray's early 30s, he became involved with a woman, Amy, both romantically and as part of a house-flipping venture. The plan was that Amy would purchase houses in Philadelphia that needed work, Ray would fix them up, and Amy would resell them and realize a profit.

During the house-flipping venture, Ray started to drink hard alcohol during the day regularly. He was open about it and commented "I know I'm self-medicating, but..." and indicated that he was using alcohol to deal with physical pain because he couldn't afford proper healthcare.

My cousin Jason is also in the trades. His professional opinion was that Ray was using pain more as an excuse for alcohol and decreased work than was warranted.

Ray proved to be less than an ideal business partner. The alcohol issue was a significant factor.

The house-flipping venture and relationship lasted perhaps 4 to 6 months. In the end, Amy broke both off. She told my mother Marie that she couldn't continue to enable alcohol abuse. She added that she felt silly because she'd enabled this with relatives in the past and had somehow ended up doing it again.

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."

During this period, Ray called me once to tell me a story related to Amy.

Ray said that Amy had asked him to do something 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."

The odd part was that Ray seemed to be proud of this story.

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

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