



Dennis McKenna



Stanislav Grof

convinced that he would take part, on bad days he said he certainly did not want to expose himself to all that hubbub. After he had decided to stay home, we sat at the table and I asked him: ‘What would you want to say to them if you were there?’ My grandfather formulated his message of greeting in very little time, and I wrote it down for him. He regrets his absence, since he was very impressed by the earlier symposium.”

The World Psychedelic Forum did not result in a “clash of civilizations” as it had two years earlier, but again different worlds did meet in the large and busy hotel lobby. The Swiss National Soccer Team checked into the hotel the same time as Forum attendees. Many television crews were present, some for the conference, but most for the soccer. It was not too difficult for the journalists to tell the difference between the two teams.

A number of speakers used the opportunity to visit Hofmann at his home, among them Stanislav Grof and Carolyn Garcia, a former member of the Merry Pranksters who presented him with an Acid Test “certificate.” Other visitors during these last days were Roger Liggenstorfer and his partner Chris Heidrich, Günter Amendt, Juraj Styk, Mathias

Bröckers, Carmen and H.R. Giger. Although he did not let it show, the visits took their toll. In the nights after lengthy visits, he slept poorly and “often was dizzy and had difficulties with his balance. He fell repeatedly, but like a child, very relaxed, and has gone beyond hurt,” as the tenant and caretaker Hedy Brodbeck recalled.

The Ultimate Journey

Early on the morning of April 29, 2008, Albert Hofmann died of a heart attack at the age of one hundred and two in his house on the Rittimatte. Three days earlier, a musician offered a harp concert as thanks for the experiences he’d had with Hofmann’s discovery. His daughter Beatrix Nabholz found the concert “very moving and a final bouquet, even though my mother is sorely missed.” Two days before his death on Sunday afternoon, Hofmann was still able to visit his neighbor Margrit Diem on foot. Simon Duttwyler telephoned him the evening before his death. Nothing indicated that the end was coming: “He was lively and in good spirits and wanted to organize another house concert. That later consoled me. I learned of his death through a phone call from one of my brothers. I felt sad, but also relieved. My grandfather had reached one hundred and two years, he didn’t have to suffer, and could not have had a more beautiful morning to leave on his great journey.”

Hedy Brodbeck had been constantly linked to the Hofmanns’ home via mobile intercom. Since Anita’s death, she visited Albert Hofmann more frequently. “We often ate dinner together. On the evening before his death, we sat for a long time and talked

about anything and everything. Around ten o'clock, I said that it was probably time for sleep and helped him as usual to go to bed. On this night, however, he hardly wanted to let me leave. When we reached his bedroom, he wanted to know how my father had died. I told him that he simply went to sleep in my arms. He thought that was very beautiful." The next morning he called her at half past seven and said: "I'm so cold." She went over immediately and he told her: "Now I have to die." He asked her to phone his son, but she couldn't reach him. Andreas Hofmann called back shortly to say he was not in the area and couldn't get there that fast. She telephoned the doctor who advised her to give him two diuretic tablets. Meanwhile, the housekeeper had arrived. "About one hour later, around half past eight, he died in my arms with a smile on his face," Hedy Brodbeck remembered. A few minutes later, son Andreas arrived, and an hour later, daughter Beatrix, who had phoned her father almost daily, reached the Rittimatte.

Albert Hofmann had never feared death. He would say that he did not believe in a life after death, but knew about it. He was quite sure that death was merely a transition to another life. He even was curious about the afterlife and looked forward to meeting his loved ones again.

In his last interview one week before his death, he confirmed his opinions: "Meanwhile, LSD no longer is a problem child. I am proud of this wonder drug that opens the doors of perception. LSD has brought happiness to many people. I don't think that I need LSD to die; I can face death with joy. I am looking forward to seeing my relatives and friends again. And when we die, we won't enter a void;

we won't be lost. There is just a transformation." To the final question on the meaning of life, he replied: "To rejoice over creation. The beauty of creation is the best drug in the world," and he sent the reporter off with the question: "Do you hear the silence"?

Even before all the family members had been informed, the news of his death spread on American websites and could be read in his Wikipedia entry. It remains unclear how the news found its way so quickly across the ocean, although none have come forth to admit they posted it. Albert Hofmann was survived by his children Andreas and Beatrix, ten grandchildren, and as many great-grandchildren.

This funeral service was also held at the peaceful St. Margarethen church. His son Andreas read the summation of his life that his father had written himself. Hofmann's colleague from work, Jürg Rutschmann, with whom he had become friends shortly before retiring, paid tribute to his achievements and closed with a conversation he'd had with his friend: "When I was bringing Albert Hofmann home to his mountain paradise Rittimatte after a get-together with Sandoz friends, we sat for a while and looked out into Alsace and talked about everything under the sun, as one so lightly puts it. He summed things up by saying that despite the incredible progress of science, particularly in our lifetime, a sensible and honest scientist would have to conclude that the mysteries of the world, of the cosmos, of life and of human nature have not gotten any smaller or less challenging. We are left with a stance that could be rendered by the lovely word *Mirari*, suggesting we look, be amazed, and marvel. Albert



At the last visit by the authors in April 2008

Hofmann has now ceased working to advance science, he has stopped looking. May his amazement at the fragile beauty and miracle of the world live on in us and in those who follow to advance the natural sciences.” Organ music from Bach and the sounds of Volker Biesenbender’s violin opened and closed the ceremony.

The chapel was full. Many relatives, friends, colleagues from work, acquaintances and residents of Burg were among the mourners. The family invited them to come to Bottmingen Castle afterwards.

Their children, Andreas Hofmann and Beatrix Nabholz, planted two trees on the Rittmatte, a field maple for their father and only few feet away, a linden, which was their mother’s favorite; and buried their parents’ ashes beneath them. Daughter Beatrix explained: “In their later years, they often spoke of Philemon and Baucis, and hoped that like them they too would die together.



This wish was almost granted. That is why Andreas and I planted the trees at their graves so the two can continue to talk with each other, as in the Greek myth.”²¹⁹

The authors visited Hofmann a few days before his death, reporting in detail on the World Psychedelic Forum and brought him greetings from many presenters and visitors. Even in his last days, he was able to walk unaided but for a cane. As so often before, he led us around the house and rejoiced over the blossoming plants and fresh spring green of the trees and meadows. Until his last breath, he was living full of joy, vital energy and with an alert mind. Even though Albert Hofmann is no longer with us, his LSD will never again vanish from our world; of this, its discoverer was certain. We share his hope and wish that LSD will once more be authorized for

meaningful and safe use, that it may contribute to expanding human consciousness and making the world a better place. The summary Albert Hofmann wrote ends with the words: “Nature, the creation, was described by

Paracelsus as the ‘book written by the finger of God.’ In my life I was fortunate to have this profoundly uplifting and comforting experience: To whomever understands how to read this book, not only with scientific curiosity but with wondering, loving eyes, will be revealed a deeper, more marvelous reality in which we are all secure and forever united.”