

Three Celestial Objects Appear in the Night Sky
A Brief Meditation on Loss and Helping

On the evening of the day that I learned Eugenio Jimenez had died, I gazed up at the night sky only to witness an object moving rapidly, streaking perhaps, against a deep black background with pinpricks of light.

A plane? A shooting star?

Eugenio Jimenez was an intake worker in our Housing Consumer Education Center. Humble, learned, experienced, patient with a deep voice and an easy laugh. I got quite familiar with his presence during the more than two years he was part of us. In fact he was often the first face I saw when I walked into the building.

Until it wasn't. "Where's Eugenio? Did he leave us?"

"No Jim, he had to take a leave of absence. He has a lung disease and needs a transplant. We really miss him."

When I recalled that conversation I knew. That was a comet crossing the night sky. I will name the comet Eugenio and watch for its return.

Not more than two hours after Ed showed me a picture on his cell phone of Ricky W. I found myself engrossed by the web stories about unexplained pictures of a UFO released by the Navy.

Ricky had been found dead in his room over on Arlington Street. O'ded. I couldn't picture him in my mind until Ed showed me a photo.

Oh yeah, I remember.

A big grin and an affable demeanor when he was straight. A walled-off distant gaze/glare when he wasn't.

I've been watching people die from substance abuse since 1967. What's that - 52 years. I don't understand it any more or any better now than I did back then.

Unknowable, inexplicable, just beyond our grasp.

For just a moment I think I spot Ricky's big smile in the grainy image of that UFO. Then it eludes me.

A few Sundays ago I went outside at dusk and looked up at the horizon. And waited. "Holly" Hollerorth had died earlier that day, lovingly cared for by his daughter Rachel and granddaughter "Holly Elizabeth." Ours was a friendship I will always cherish.

My wait was not a lengthy one. A bright light appeared about a thumbnail up from the horizon. I immediately named it the Planet Hugo.

Reflecting on Holly's long life and its meaning reminded me of why this world can seem so warm and welcoming and why helping others is such a noble endeavor.

May you walk with ghosts.

May you peer up at the night sky on a regular basis, searching for objects as they appear. Do not let yourself become confused if they speak to you in mysterious and unfathomable ways. Simply use their illuminating the path to helping others navigate the dark night in their souls. May you learn from following the footsteps of those that have gone before you.

May this make you a stronger helper.

Jim Cuddy
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