

Miriam Tuttle Speaight

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Winter of 1977.

Joanna Stone lived with my family, the Tuttles, in the late 60s or very early 70s while she attended RIT Rochester Institute of Technology, in the Silver-Smithing program. We had a third floor attic room where she stayed. I was a teenager and I remember sitting on the squeaky bed talking to her. She photographed her silver pieces in our backyard using a piece of blue velvet fabric as background. I remember my father encouraged her to enter a piece in the Religious Art Festival there in Rochester, NY. She created The Peacock of Immortality. I don't know when she brought Nick to meet us, it must have been after she graduated because they were traveling in a remodeled short school bus. Did it have a wood stove in it? Possibly. I just remember that Joanna had really short hair and she privately said to me "Isn't he fantastic?" Nick did seem to be that unconventional guy, a wizard at anything he needed to do and funny. All qualities necessary in a boyfriend. I did not attend the best party of their lives, the wedding, but I did visit during the summer of 1976. I had graduated college in Ohio with a BS major in Agriculture and was working on an organic farm in Concord, MA. I must have managed to slip away for a visit. Joanna's wheels were turning. She asked if I could come live in their attic room to take care of baby Abel so she could have some studio time. So after the vegetable harvest was over, I did just that. I spent the fall and winter with Nick and Joanna and the Ba. Nick called Abel the Ba. And he called Joanna Sweet Popsie. Nick was always busy on house restoring jobs or working on the Bonsai trees or making the Bonsai pots. Joanna and I had our morning coffee together in our favorite cups before she went off to the studio. Abel and I played and ate lunch together (usually cheese and Joanna's homemade oat bread which Nick only lovingly tolerated) listening to story time at noon, a novel read by an elderly gentleman with a lisp on the NPR. station. Mid afternoon

Joanna would come home and I would go to a dairy farm in Amherst to do the evening milking, 210 Holstein cows, my other job. If I was around at mealtime, Nick was the in the kitchen and would shoo us out. I don't know when I left, it was warm weather. I wrote a story about my time there which I now cannot find. The characters were The Ogre, Sweet Poopsie, The Terrible Ba and the Wandering Waif. Did I come up with the "Ogre" name for Nick and it stuck? It was a humorous little story describing our life together where my character mostly washed the Ba's terrible diapers. Once when the Ogre rose up to be his ferocious self, the Waif held up one of the Ba's terrible diapers and the Ogre fainted dead away. Nick was an amazing man. Excellent at anything he did. He wanted to be ferocious at times, during the time I knew him, but he was, underneath his Ogre exterior, a sweet and loving person. Rest well, thou good and faithful one. You have done much good in the world, through your bonsai, your houses restored, and many other endeavors since that winter of 1977, which are undergirded with your genuine love for each living being you have touched, human, plant or animal. We will not lose that part of you, My love to Joanna and Abel.