
The Great Raid Debacle.

Late at night, on September 29th, the Berkeley Police raided O.T.O.
They

hit Merkabah House first, entered a detached dwelling behind Merkabah House, and then went off to break up Thelema Lodge. Yes, that's right, Berkeley PD raided a church in Oakland.

There was a search warrant, and the objects of the search were major drugs, paraphernalia involved in drug sales and use, and records of drug dealers. One would therefore characterize this effort as a connected series of "Crack House Raids". Of course, there was no crack, no dealing and no point to the raid. I understand that rolling papers were taken, pipes and something identified as a "bong". The rolling papers included Drum Brand, only sold with Drum Brand Tobacco and taken from beside a partly filled can of Drum Tobacco. Several people were listed on the search warrant as residents to be given special attention, including one person who actually lives in San Francisco, and yours truly, Bill Heidrick. I was listed as living at Thelema Lodge, a place I have been able to visit to teach classes about six hours a month on average. I would like to be there more often; but my home has been in San Anselmo since 1971 e.v., and Grand Lodge duties spare me little time to enjoy the many events at Thelema. Since I was not there, I had to learn all this indirectly. These are my opinions of that happened, based on accounts of the witnesses and from documents.

The raid commenced with a knocking at the Merkabah house door. A resident opened it, and seventeen police with drawn guns burst in on a Hermetics class. Our members and guests were thrown down and cuffed without further preamble. Two were released after questioning (didn't live there and weren't on the list). The others were told that they had to give urine samples then and there or face 90 days in jail. A document purporting to justify this violation of civil rights was flashed, and mention was made of a new state law no one there had heard about. Copies of the document have been recovered from the police report and related papers. Bye bye, 5th amendment! It was nice knowing you, 4th amendment! I should note that more than seventeen officers seemed to be present, but only seventeen names of officers appear on the police report.

All remaining in the house were charged with narcotics intoxication, pending urine test results, I suppose. A couple of hypodermic syringes were

produced by an officer, alleged to have been found in a sink that had just that day been cleaned. None of the people at the house recognized the syringes, and none used intravenous drugs. Other items of a similar nature were found by the police in locations where nothing was seen before the raid. These syringes were not charged against anyone at arraignment, according to the charges I have read. Two of the people taken to the Berkeley station were

released that night, one being told that the reason for his arrest had been forgotten, the other being held until it was clear that no matron was available to assist in her incarceration. Six in all were charged from Merkabah house, and after the charges finished dropping at arraignment only narcotics intoxication (urine tests were not back yet) and smoking paraphernalia charges were maintained (as best I can determine). There were illegal weapons charges earlier, with the ritual daggers and swords torn from religious shrines in the house giving that dubious base. The illegal weapons charges were dropped.

Most of the officers appeared confused. Remarks of "why are we here?" have been reported by witnesses. The officer leading the raid and some others made themselves busy, tearing out and emptying drawers and the like. They trashed the place. A little humor was evidently not lacking, and several books on occultism were arranged in a little display on one of the beds to make a nice picture. A baby photograph was seized and described in the police list as "showing infant white male child w/ black cross across front of body." This was a photo recently sent to a friend by the mother. The black cross was a creative interpretation of the straps of the car seat shown in the photo. One officer was interested enough to offer criticism of a painting on erotic themes, but it was too large to fit in the van. Two of the people in the house were making love in a bed room, and they were taken naked from the house and thrust into the police van. A couple of O.T.O. members from Thelema Lodge went over to the site during the raid, were questioned and released.

Off the jolly crew went with their involuntary guests to visit Thelema Lodge (in Oakland, remember). There were word games and similar entertainments: "Who's got the warrant? Do you have the warrant? ... Ah' we forgot the warrant" --- a copy was found in Merkabah House a few days later, in a spot where nothing had been seen after the raid. The Thelema Lodge copy of the search warrant was also discovered several days later, crumpled up in a cat box. Since it was Rosh Hashana, seasonal anti-semitic remarks were demonstrated by the officers for the edification of any prisoners who might chance to be Jewish.

On reaching Thelema Lodge, the two Thelema Lodge inhabitants who were

not

detained at Merkabah house were seen to drive up to park at their home. The police dragged both out of their car and hustled them into the house. The police gained entry by being admitted and by crashing in several interior and at least one exterior door. The exterior door was described as not being seriously damaged in the police report, but the frame was smashed. The rush, floor, and cuffs procedure was repeated. Two members of the O.T.O. were questioned and largely ignored. The others were given the full treatment; urine samples and the like. One of these refused the urine test, and he alone

appears to have been charged with the syringes that mysteriously appeared by spontaneous generation at Thelema Lodge --- again never before seen by any of the folks who live there. One person was charged with the infraction of having less than a 1/4 ounce of marijuana.

Several rooms were trashed downstairs in a vigorous but inconsistent fashion. There was some breakage that does not appear in the police reports. It is rather difficult to understand what training led to the techniques in evidence. Photos show clothing and papers all over the place, but there seems

to have been little effort to look behind the thousands of shelved books or under seat cushions and the like. Some rooms were given a minimal look; others ended up like an earthquake in a thrift shop.

The situation upstairs took some additional turns. Our Temple was broken

up and generally desecrated, making it difficult for the Gnostic Mass to be held two days later. One of the members is a student of pyrotechnics (safe and sane style fireworks). He had a room rented upstairs for storage of his materials, colorants, tubes and chemicals --- all obtained legally. This presented a new option to the officers. A call was made to the judge who issued the original search warrant, and a verbal extension was given to include bomb making supplies. We do have a list of the chemicals and "Fire Works Components" (yes, the police did identify the components as fire works),

including at least two substances that cannot exist. Possibly that sort of error can be excused by misreading bottle labels, but really ---"flowers of sodium"! The name of the owner of the fire-works chemicals was identified by the police and written into the report. His name was also on the door to the room. It would appear, however, that this brother was not in the target list.

The two brothers who had been pulled out of a car in front of the house were charged with possession of these materials. The actual owner of the materials

was identified by the police, was in the house and was not charged. These two

brothers therefore have felony charges for possession of materials not in their own rooms and known to be the property of a person released without arrest. Naturally we are glad that our brother was not charged for his

legally owned property, but it is a bit much to see others charged who had nothing to do with the material. Chemicals were spilled and not cleaned up during the raid.

There is no doubt in my mind that the officer in charge knew he was visiting desecration on a church. He characterized the Temple as "temple" in his report. He knew that the place was known as "Thelema Lodge", and he used the term of opprobrium "cult" to describe the group. I really must take exception to that term "cult". We have been in existence for more than eighty

years, have more than 1500 members in 26 countries, and the word "cult" does not appear on our letters of religious tax exemption from the Federal Government and the State of California. I don't recall our being called a "cult" in the case we brought and won in the IXth District Federal Court in 1985 e.v., and our religious status was noted in that decision. The discriminatory language got worse.

When the six arrested at Thelema Lodge were brought with the six from Merkabah House over to the Berkeley Jail, it became immediately apparent that religious persecution was the name of the new game. Our members were called "devil worshipers" consistently by the jailers. These remarks were spread beyond the jail. Abusive language appears to have been used in an attempt to prejudice. There are Satanists in the world, but for an officer to use the language "devil worshiper" to characterize the religion of a person in custody

is in no way different from an officer calling civil rights marchers "niggers". This language is used to dehumanize and to deny due process. It has no place in public, let alone on the lips of arresting officers and jailers. O.T.O. has it's own religion, and does not give place for the Christian "Devil" to exist outside metaphor. Quite frankly, this "devil worshiper" tag is not even ethical if applied to real Satanists of education much beyond grammar school. I have met several over the years, and most could

not be said to worship the "Devil". For non-Christians, Satan is more often the symbolic hero of John Milton's "Paradise Lost" than a foolish mental disorder with a pitch-fork.

In jail our members and friends were subjected to the verbal abuse already

mentioned, but there were other things. No one had been read their rights, and only after the arrest papers became accessible did anyone learn of a very fine print statement of civil rights on a paper that had been signed under pressure without time for reading. Ordinary requests made by prisoners were honored by the jailers, but not identical humanitarian requests made by our folk. One of our people had suffered an injury when he was allowed to tumble down stairs during the raid. He had lost sensation in his right arm, and was experiencing an increasing loss of motor function. His requests for medical examination were refused to his face. With persistence, he was finally heard by an officer from another part of the building. When the matter was brought to the attention of a judge, this brother was immediately released on "OR"

(own recognizance). This was on the third day of his incarceration, and he had been denied his first phone call for about 60 hours.

Arraignments were held Monday and Tuesday, with everybody still in custody

being released on "OR" following arraignment. Most charges had been dropped, and further court appearances are scheduled later this month.

At this writing the homes are still in great disarray, but enough clean-up

has taken place to discover over \$380 missing from Merkabah House and almost \$500 missing from Thelema Lodge. That's rent money, personal cash and temple refurbishment funds. Some of it may have been lost in the street during hasty searches, but there is no explanation for most of it vanishing from boxes, drawers and the like. Also missing are initiation reports plainly marked the property of Grand Lodge (with address!) and being readied for forward.

While I sat typing this account, a call came in. The affidavit that led to

issuance of the search warrant had surfaced. This entire raid was based on the verbal assertions of one individual, with the complicity of another. I will restrain myself from describing the mental and moral qualities of that person. Suffice it to say that the lurid details offered to the ear of the officer were so absurd that I cannot imagine anyone crediting them for a moment. I was accused of conducting something unfathomable called "a black baptism" in the yard behind Thelema Lodge. Preposterous nonsense about minors, drugs, and the like abounded in the document. The officer entered Merkabah house a few days before, posing as a plumber. He wandered about the rooms trying to "smell" amphetamines. He had to be instructed before entry on

how to pour a can of cleaner in a drain and how to soap a gas line joint. When he was asked to snake a blockage, he had no answer. For heaven's sake! Education in the public schools is a disaster, but ...! I would also like to know why Oakland PD appears not to have been contacted about the Thelema Lodge

address. It seems only natural that Berkeley PD would consult Oakland PD before doing Elliot Ness impressions in Oakland. What would have happened if someone in the house had called 911 before identifying the intruders?

I can't help wondering what impact the big cocaine seizure in southern California and the Night Stalker trial sentencing may have had on this decision to go so far on so little. It's too bad the news about the Oklahoma sheriff didn't attract as much attention. That guy is on trial for allegedly trying to kidnap a suspected drug dealer out of Texas to drag back to Oklahoma

for torture with a hot curling iron. Could it be that the admitted drug problems in this country have induced hysteria? Has the fundamentalist hate literature that has been flooding police agencies and service magazines actually been believed? Some of that trash lists the Star of David, the Star and Crescent of Islam, the Peace Sign, the Pentagon from the American Flag and the reverse of the Great Seal of the United States as "Satanic Devices."

Several years ago I wrote a piece on the revival of "The Blood Libel"; this blithering nonsense is full of it.

By all accounts, most of the officers drawn into this exercise were reasonable and professional individuals. It seems to me that only a few of the officers were responsible for abuses, although those were very serious indeed. I wasn't there. All I have to go on is what the officer wrote in his reports and what the witnesses said. Pray to the deities you still are allowed that you can continue to say the same.

The folks at these locations need personal help to replace losses and repair damage. If you can help, please contact the Lodge.

Grand Lodge needs donations (tax deductible) to build up the legal fund. Attorneys have to be paid, and civil rights cases aren't cheap.

Contributions to the O.T.O. Legal Fund should be made out to "O.T.O." and sent to:

Ordo Templi Orientis
P.O.Box 430
Fairfax, CA 94930 USA

Classes and meetings will continue. Attend at your own risk, but please check to determine changes in location and the like. We hope enough of our friends and confreres will stand with us in the free exercise of the Thelemic religion and the ordinary rights of speech, but we will understand if folks would rather stay home. The people at Merkabah House and Thelema Lodge share rent and have their own rooms. Those places are home. It did happen here.

--- TSG

