

[Steven Slosberg](#) to the Class of 1969 50th reunion website in February, 2019 (photos added):

"From 1975 through 2007, I wrote for *The Day*, a daily newspaper published in New London, CT, mostly as a columnist, a plum job. Early on, under the indulgence of a kindly editorial page editor, I wrote about most anything. The following, about Edward Nylander and Rhonda Nakata, was published in *The Day* on Dec. 18, 1984, with the headline: 'Eddie's last, lost search.'"

Eddie carried us that winter. Eddie the Orphan. The one with the big laugh.

Phantom Eddie. I saw Rhonda's name on the list of lost souls sent out this month by the class, and I thought of Eddie. Rhonda's dead.



Eddie would know that. A few of us knew that. She died of leukemia sometime in the '70s. The class isn't aware. There is a reunion ahead, 15th now, and they want to update the alumni reports.

They want to know if anyone's heard from Rhonda. Eddie left word about how to reach him.

Ohio, then, years ago. The flatlands of Lake Erie, lake of brown ice, and, 20 miles to the south, the aging elms of Tappan Square. During that last winter before graduation, Eddie lived in town, above a bakery, off the square. You could see the college and the elms in snow from his window.

Eddie came from Oregon, and arrived the first fall before any of us. He claimed his room, a single, in the freshmen dorm, arranged his artifacts, donned a tie and greeted us as if he'd been there for months when we trundled by with our luggage, our fears and our parents. Eddie never mentioned his.

I heard later that his father was a career man in the Air Force, and that his mother, mentally ill, was in a hospital in Portland. He also had two sisters and a brother. Eddie talked only about one sister. She was his family.

It was a small college, small town, small circle of friends.

Eddie started out with us and stayed with us, though, before long, we came to him. The year I met him he was Proper Eddie. Hair, clothes, trappings, all regular and right, about to unravel like the rest of us. Eddie went a little further. His excesses were exotic, fascinating. They were staggering.



First was Wagner, the music booming day and night, the relics of the Third Reich arranged in neat and sinister tableaux throughout his room. Eddie had this chesty, open laugh, and was always the generous host, welcoming us. We were his guests.

Eddie stayed in town that first summer, working nearby and living off campus. When we returned in the fall, he had memorized every song Bob Dylan had published. His execution was flawless.

Sometime during that second year, Eddie chucked it, selling everything and leaving for Europe, where he donned a monk's garb and literally walked the land. Eddie the zealot, the pilgrim, the college dropout, on leave, voluntary sabbatical, doing Europe on bare feet. Apostle Eddie.

The college readmitted him and it became Eddie and Rhonda. John and Yoko. Rhonda was Japanese, from Chicago. They shared a room in town, two art students, our icons. For a project they constructed papier-mache genitals. The art department rejected their work and we had our furor. They were our couple.

Then it was three-piece Eddie, the businessman, the master of disguise.

Eddie mastered it all, whatever he adopted. His concentration was prodigious, a rigorous self absorption and detail, and always that laugh.

We went through the final year, frequenting Eddie's place, interested in Eddie's interests. He didn't finish with us, staying in town after we left, making the college his home.

A year or two later I passed back through and visited Eddie who by then was employed by the college as a yoga instructor. He had another coterie around him, and that familiar geniality. He seemed content. He was seeing the daughter of the man who ran the bookstore.

But Eddie married someone else, a woman who had been a few years behind us in college. They moved to Colorado and settled

in Boulder, where Eddie continued to study and practice yoga. The marriage had its troubles, and they split.

Not long after, Eddie walked into a cave in Boulder, assumed the full lotus position and took a picture of himself. He made copies of the print and sent it to several friends, saying this is how people would be able to reach him.



Then Eddie returned to the cave and burned himself alive.

I don't want to disturb the dead.

But I think about Eddie, and about Rhonda, and the rest of us and our time together. I have this letter from the class officers, with a list of people they called lost souls.