

Thomas Berry's Funeral

Greensboro, North Carolina
June 3, 2009

Herman Greene

It was the didgeridoo—the most ancient of all instruments other than clapping sticks and drums—that called us to remember. We remembered how ancient this event was that we were a part of, the funeral of our dear friend and mentor, Thomas Berry, who brought us into deep time.

Before the service there was the viewing. Thomas's now faded body lay as he left it, not made to look lifelike, in the Narthex where we gathered. Those old friends from far and near and the many Berrys, mostly from North Carolina gathered. It seemed clear that Thomas was not there...he was everywhere. Still I knelt and thanked this flesh for being such a faithful vessel of love, and dedicated myself anew to carry on.

I want most of the memory of this event to rest in the voice of Malcolm Kenton, who is one of the “children” who brought to us during the service such hope that what Thomas was about has just begun.

We remember the music of Peter Berry on the Irish harp and Anne G. Berry on the cello that still resonates within.

We remember dear Margaret Berry, Thomas sister and companion, without whom Thomas's work would not have been so widely carried to the world. We marveled as she led the Berrys in remembering Thomas and honoring him with such dignity and, perhaps I should say, such precision and elegance.

Afterwards we joined in celebration only tinged with sadness at a reception in the place where he lived his final days Well-Spring, Greensboro, North Carolina. I thought of the old gospel tune “Why should I feel so glad, when I should feel so sad...” Its The mystery of death and resurrection was very much felt.

This man, Saint Thomas, lived his life fully to the end, never losing his consciousness, never losing the ability to communicate deeply, never losing his wish to know “What are you up to?” before he offered anything of his own.

“What are you up to?”

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A Didgeridoo