Darby Campbell

Elizabeth Barger interviews excerpts for reading

EB:…And that’s when I got really involved with Code Pink. And you know, I feel like, you know, Peace Roots Alliance we started at 9/11. And then after that I felt that Peace Roots was like one of the co-founders of Code Pink. Me and Judy Meeker, we’re very active. And she started More Than Warmth. Have you heard of More Than Warmth?

DC: I haven’t.

EB: Yeah, that’s a- She was a teacher and after 9/11, you know, the kids talked about, you know, those Afghan people and she said, “Yeah, you know, it’s getting really cold there and there’s a bunch of kids there. You know, we ought to make them quilts.” And they got interested in the human part of it and to reach out. The meme of the More Than Warmth is that it’s not political and it’s not violent. It’s what kids think- friendly things. They got to where they were saying, “Don’t put peace signs on it.” Because peace signs are political. And it’s true, you know. No praying hands, no rainbows with the towers, no bombers, no guns. Nothing like that, just things that make you feel good. Childish things- hearts and kids would- would take little squares like this (holds hands to show about an 8” square) and they would draw a picture.

One of them who I thought was so friendly was this little boy, who hadn’t- who wasn’t going to do it. And he’s sort of around the edges- “I’m not going to do it.” And she said, “Well, you don’t have to do it. Go into the other room and do something else.” And then he came back with this picture of five or six kids, all different heights and colors. Saying, “We can all be friends.” And they were all holding hands. And I just- every time I hear that story and I see that little drawing that he did, I just- it chokes me up, because I really was- the feeling that More Than Warmth has.

You should look it up sometime. Because I could go on and on. It’s still going on. We’ve sent quilts to Bethlehem, quilts to Iran, quilts to South America, quilts to Katrina, quilts to the Pine Ridge reservation, quilts to Standing Rock. You know, we’ve sent quilts all around the world in distress and natural disasters and wars and conflict- where people need. And we- she does a lot with kids that are rescued from slavery. And it’s a good program and it’s still happening. I think we’ve involved almost with 20,000 children.

DC: Interesting.

EB: And- so.

DC: I’m really curious about the relationship- where you’ve kind of talked about you guys as a community set apart from what the rest of the world is doing, but then you also seem very engaged in reaching out to engage, to advocate, to assist, to help other parts of the world.

EB: Well the thing is- the part that I always took seriously, was at the front of the caravan was “out to save the world.” And I thought, “Well, what else is there to do? I mean, it needs it.” (laughs)

DC: Is that- was that like the motto? Or?

EB: It was that part of the motto. And some people thought that it was a little arrogant (DC laughs) that we were going to save the world. You know I think that’s a – that’s a useful thing to try to do because the world’s in really bad shape. And it’s getting- I was talking to Stephen once- I said, “Stephen, I’ve been doing this for over 50 years. I’m a really serious about making things better. It’s looking worse.” (laughs) And you know he said, “Well, you know, what if we weren’t doing it?” And I remembered the reason that I do it is because of the twelve avatars. You know, there’s a Jewish story that there’s twelve avatars that are keeping the world together. And they’re righteous people. And I thought, “Well, you never know when you might be one of them, but you better be ready.” And so you never know. I may have been one at one time, or you may have been, but there’s sometimes when you just do the right thing and you know that’s what- or you’ve seen people do just the right thing exactly sort of out of the blue and it seems to click. And so you know, I think, “Well, even if I never am and I never know I am, I’m still going to be ready to do it.” So that’s why I keep doing it, in my imperfect and small way. (laughs) You know, because I figure that you never know. You just never know. And I like that story in the bible about the nine handmaids and there’s some that, you know, get their stuff together and they’re ready for when the call comes. And then there’s the others that are goofing off and then they get there and the gates are closed and they can’t get in. Well, I think that’s kind of a bullshit story, because I don’t think anybody should not have the gates open to them (both laugh) when they’re coming to them. Still, I understand what that means.

EB: Well, I was staying with a lot of the people at “Monday Night Class” and “Sunday morning Services” and my nurse friend, she didn’t come and she had gone more like the SNCC way. And I was not into guns even though I know how to shoot a gun and I know about what they were getting into and that’s why I didn’t I guess. But I wasn’t, I wasn’t into that at all. I would go to the park and I would take peyote tea. I would pass it around at some of the- there was always, you know, people hanging around at the park and everybody knew everybody. Sort of, but like I found out that I was called “The Peyote Princess” and I had no idea, I was not into, from that place. I thought, “Well that is really weird.” (DC laughs, both laugh)

DC: It had a nice alliteration, though.

EB: Yeah. Shit, man. I had peyote tea, for two years, you know? I’d bring a gallon or two to meetings and pass it around. Because it would get us off and we would feel pretty connected and groovy. It wasn’t like when you get into when you’re eating the peyote. You know, it can be heavy. But you know, I never got sick on peyote. And some people did, but I, I would just get royally high.

DC: Is the tea different than-

EB: Well tea is not quite as strong, you know? Eating it- it’s harder to eat it. Because it’s not good tasting at all. It’s nasty tasting stuff. Although, I never felt bad eating it. It was just, you know, you just did. That’s how you got through. (DC laughs) It was not something that I wanted particularly, because of eating something, it was just that way of connecting and getting through the taste, was part of the yoga that you went through to do it and to connect with the peyote.

…

DC: So that kind of activity was, for you, mostly about feeling connected to the people around you? Or-

EB: No, it was mostly just getting high.

DC: (laughs)

EB: Yeah, I didn’t care if I connected or not.

DC: Fair enough.

EB: You know, I just wanted that high, and if somebody was there with me, it was lovely. You know, and a lot of times there were people there with me and it was lovely but I never particularly desired any of that. And I didn’t desire to be connected by the peyote people.

DC: Okay.

EB: And it was- I desired to be connected with marijuana. But I always was and I always- anytime I wanted a psychedelic, it’s always been there. When I haven’t wanted it, it’s not been there.

DC: Interesting.

EB: Well, I think that’s - I think that is all part of it. I think it is a really high spiritual trip. And you know, there’s some people that need it, but I sort of figured out- I don’t hardly smoke at all anymore. But I know how to get high. So I just try to stay stoned all the time. (chuckles) I don’t need to smoke it. I never liked to smoke. I prefer to eat it.

And I have been- I know- One time I went to a party and they had some brownies and they said, “There’s grass in this.” And I had before that- I had taken- I’d had a margarita. But I didn’t think about it. Because it had been a while before. And I wasn’t- I just like margaritas. I like tequila. So I drank a margarita, but I wasn’t looking to get drunk or anything. And I ate this one brownie. And it was a suckeroo. I mean, I was sitting there watching someone talk to me about some kind of project they wanted me to get involved in and I thought, “You know you’re really wasting your time because I am not there at all.” (both laugh) And I got so high that I did get sick. I had to go outside and barf over the edge of the cut. And I said, “You got to take me home, because I don’t think I can get home by myself. I’m discombobulated, totally.”

The next day I was so stoned it was lovely. (DC chuckles) I thought, “Man, this is stoned!” (both laugh) And I was stoned for about three days on that. Because it was, it was, it was very high. And then when I got to that place where it felt good I just stayed there, you know, because I liked it. (laughs) But it, it was like a- it was like a reminder, you know every once in awhile you need to get into the golden ruler. You know, “Oh, yeah, this is where it is like. This is what it is like. This is how-” that I said, I don’t want to do it how I got started because that was- that was not useful. It was fun and I was out of control. And it was kind of interesting to see that, but it wasn’t useful, except that it got me into the other place. But you know, I don’t like that place where I’m not learning anything, I’m just kind of out of it.

DC: I like that word useful.

EB: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: That’s an interesting way to talk about it.

EB: Yeah. It’s not that I ever sought that, which I think is interesting, you know. I think I was always a little psychedelic. I think that’s part of schizophrenia. I think I’m crazy as hell, but see I’m not afraid of it. And I think that is the difference between me and the people that end up in-

DC: Yeah.

EB: -in insane asylums. This is an insane asylum. (DC laughs) This is about as sane as it gets, you know. And it’s crazy out there. I mean, I cannot believe the insanity of what we agree to. You know, in wars and pollution and that kind of thing, it’s just. I think, “Now that’s insane.” I know I’m crazy. And compared to what this country and this society calls sane, I’m not there at all. Never have been. I’ve always been crazy.

One of the things I think that, you know, I’m alone a lot because I just don’t put up with bullshit. But I see the- you know, there’s people that say, “I have wires coming out of my head! Oh my god!” And I say, “Well, of course, you do. That’s your energy, you can see it.” You know? It’s just energy. I can see auras. “Oh! Everything!” You know, it’s just life energy. When I was little I would see the life energy around every blade of grass. And I’d say, “I’ve got to remember that.”

Because, you know, I don’t see it all the time, because I forget to pay attention. But you can, if you need to. And you should always remember that everything is so alive that is alive. And even like the stuff that’s inanimate- there’s rocks that just do things to you. You know? You’re around an area and you can feel it. If you’re paying any kind of attention, this is a holy place. But, almost every place is a holy place. (laughs) There’s just some places that people forgotten to be respectful.

And I stayed with my nurse friend who very much started to get into SNCC. She would go out with her partners into the country practicing shooting and I’d tell her, “You guys are silly. You should practice shooting with silencers in the city, because every time you go out into the ranch country everybody knows you’re there! A bunch of black and white guys with a white girl shooting in their area?! They know what you ate for dinner. They know everything about you!” You know? I said, “I’m surprised you come back alive. You should stay in the city, because it is safer!” (laughs)

DC: Did they ever run into trouble?

EB: No.

DC: Or did you guys ever have trouble with the police?

EB: There’s a lot of other stories there. One of the guys that we knew, he was a big dealer. He got murdered and thrown off the cliffs at Rejas. (traffic sounds)

DC: Did you know who had done it or-

EB: No, but probably mafia. And I had a friend whose family was mafia. And he came and asked if he could stay at our house when the police came because they wanted to ask him. You know? So, here I am boiling a thousand peyote buttons on the stove and I had just taken a little bit of speed because I wondered what that was all about.

And the cops come to the door. So, I invited them in and sat them down and gave them tea, not peyote tea. (both laugh) And they didn’t want any food. And I had to keep it together. Which I did, but I was just sweating a lot. (laughs) I didn’t ever take speed after that. (DC laughs) For one, I could feel that it was effecting me, but for two, I didn’t let it happen. So if I am still in control, what am I going to take that stuff for? (DC laughs) It’s not good for me, I can tell. But- So, we had a nice time. They talked about my friend who was murdered and what they knew- that they would tell us- of course not much. But it was pleasant for about an hour and a half. Oh my god, I’ll never forget that. And- But that was just some of the things. You know? And it wasn’t, it wasn’t even you know sometimes you read stuff like that and it sounds kind of funky and yucky, but the house was clean, and the people were nice. Even the cops were nice. I mean I couldn’t complain; it was just an interesting experience. (both laugh)

DC: Oh, that’s so strange.

EB: You’re right. I was amazed because peyote smells pretty strong when you’re cooking it. But I was also-

DC: Do you think they were aware?

EB: I’m not sure. I don’t know. Because I was cooking other things, so there were other smells, but I definitely put on some strong stew after they came in (DC laughs) that would have a lot of peppery smells. And I invited them to have some, but they didn’t want it. Thought it smelled great and we ate it afterwards, too. And it was really good. (laughs) Yeah.