

Thursday, May 1, 2008

**"Kaleidoscopic, fantastic images surged in on me." Farewell, Albert Hofman**

LSD image from DEA's website. Although I have never used LSD, it has had a profound indirect impact on me. Ram Dass --born Richard Alpert -- likely became Ram Dass only because he was booted out of Harvard with Timothy Leary for having conducted LSD experiments in the Sixties, so he had some time on his hands to make his trip to India that is recounted in his essential and tremendously influential Be Here Now. When Ram Dass was giving out LSD in India, trying to make further sense of the drug's interaction with people, he met Bhagavan Das, who wanted in on the acid, and who introduced Ram Dass to being here now, which is a life approach that is so critical to me, and to everyone. Although Owsley "Bear" Stanley may be legendary for his Sixties LSD manufacturing, LSD would not exist without its creator and accidental self-experimenter Albert Hofman, who left the planet on April 29 at 102 in Switzerland. After accidentally absorbing LSD through his skin as a scientist at Sandoz pharmaceuticals, Hofman experienced the following in 1943 from his first intentional LSD intake: "Now, little by little I could begin to enjoy the unprecedented colors and plays of shapes that persisted behind my closed eyes. Kaleidoscopic, fantastic images surged in on me, alternating, variegated, opening and then closing themselves in circles and spirals, exploding in colored fountains, rearranging and hybridizing themselves in constant flux. It was particularly remarkable how every acoustic perception, such as the sound of a door handle or a passing automobile, became transformed into optical perceptions. Every sound generated a vividly changing image, with its own consistent form and color." Hofman writes more about LSD, including meeting with Aldous Huxley, in LSD - My Problem Child (1980). Without LSD, the whole course of the Sixties, its counterculture, and the Deadhead culture would have taken a dramatically different path. Thanks to Jonathan Turley for blogging on Albert Hofman and his passing. Jon Katz.

Posted by Jon Katz in Drugs at 00:00