

# THE SACRED ARCHIVES OF ADIDAM

## Digital Preservation Magazine

Summer 2014

### An Interview with Charles Campbell

Photographic Preservation Team Leader

By Claire Murdoch



*This interview is part II of our three-part overview of Adidam's Sacred Archives Photographic Preservation Project.*

*Charles Campbell is a long-time devotee of Adi Da Samraj and plays an integral part in the preservation of the photographic Archives that document Avatar Adi Da's entire Lifetime.*

Q: Thank you, Charles, for sitting down with us for this interview. In this process of converting the photographic slides into a digital format, you play an important part. So I wanted to first introduce you and talk about how you came to Adi Da Samraj.

Charles: Sure, I moved to San Francisco when I was 21 to be a dancer. That was my only goal in life. The last thing in my mind was finding a spiritual teacher. But one of my first jobs in 1974 was at Stacy's Books where one of my co-workers was Bob Delollis (a long-time devotee of Adi Da Samraj). He would come in with a little cassette player and play a tape called "Garbage and the Goddess" and other early talks by Bhagavan Adi Da. And that's how I came across Adi Da Samraj. It was just one of those wonderful, graceful connections.

But I knew what I wanted to do, and it had nothing to do with having a Guru. However, I did start reading Adi Da's books, and for 7 years, as I was dancing in San Francisco, I continued to read them. No other spiritual books were interesting to me, but I wasn't ready to be deterred from my conventional life yet.

Then in 1981, I went to Massachusetts for a visit, and a friend of mine called, and she said, "There's going to be a Celebration of Good Company this weekend. Do you want to go there and find out more about Adi Da with

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me?" I said, "Yeah, let's do it!" It was a wonderful weekend of events with videos of Adi Da and music, and at the end of it, they did a raffle. Just before they were going to pull the winning name out, I felt this descent of a very calm, but strong force. I felt it in my body, but it also felt like a blanket coming down over the whole room. I've since identified this as a characteristic quality of Adi Da. But at the time, I didn't know what it was. All I knew was that after this force descended, I knew I had won the raffle. I was so calm. I'd never been so sure of anything. And so when they pulled the name out and announced me as the winner, I wasn't even surprised. I already knew I had won. I signed up to be a student that day. And then I moved to Seattle to be a part of the Adidam community there.

Q: What drew you to serve the Sacred Archives?

Charles: This is an interesting story, because I'd never thought of serving the Archives. That wasn't a part of my goals, but I didn't know what my goals were. I'd come to a point in my life, at 56, where I couldn't make a living being a dancer anymore and I didn't want to do any of the other work I had already done. So I just sat down in front of Bhagavan's Murti Photograph in my little hovel in Santa Rosa and I just did the "Prayer of Changes". I mean it wasn't profound or anything. I just briefly prayed for right livelihood. I'd come to a place where I knew I needed Help. And then I remembered that when you pray, you have to also change your act. So I went on a retreat at The Mountain Of Attention. I thought, "I've got to do something with my life". So I went on a retreat for 5 days. And on the 3rd day, I was asked to serve in the Sacred Archives. I went to the photo lab with Scott Campbell and he showed me how to scan a slide, and I started to work. Then at the end of the day, Elliott Mehrbach completely surprised me by asking me if I'd like to move to the Mountain Of Attention and do this service full-time. It was a no-brainer. It was obviously Bhagavan's answer to my prayer.

Q: That's such a great story!

Charles: Yeah, He just intervened. He plucked me out of my life in Santa Rosa and deposited me here. And I've been here 3 years now. I asked Scott, how did you know I was the right person? 'Cause you know he's very particular. And he said, "I just knew".

Q: That's great. So what is it that you do here?

Charles: Well, I get boxes of slides that have been prepared by Jane Lind, who is the chronologist. And they are put in basic chronological order. I put them on my light table, and I do a little refining of the order, and then each one has to have a unique number. So I number them with a location number and the date, as close as we can approximate it. Then it gets cleaned as best as we can - mostly dust particles - we can't get off mold or scratches. Some of these have been around a long time and were treated less than gently through the years. They start at 1972, so that's 40 years ago.

So I have 3 computers here connected to 3 machines. And each machine has in the front here a feeder. So I can put up to 50 slides at a time into the feeder after they've been numbered and cleaned. And then the machine sucks them in and scans them. Each one takes 5 1/2 minutes, because they're very high resolution. They're 130 megabytes in the end. That's like 13 times the size of my first hard disk in my IBM XT. Each file is huge. So that's what we do. I have 3 wonderful assistants, Mary-Anne de Vibraye and Laurel Patterson help with the numbering and cleaning. And Al Young helps with the final stage of the process, double checking, which is crucial. We want to make sure that the digitized photo matches the same number as we've written on the slide. And we want to make sure the slide has been scanned correctly, not upside down or backwards or whatever. So he does the final checking. And then they go back to the Archives vaults and I get another bunch.

Q: How many photographs do you think you have to do?

Charles: Scott's estimate, and I've only been doing slides so far, I've done 134,000 so far and Scott's estimates there is a quarter of a million total. So I did something very silly when I came here. I said, I'll commit to doing the whole project. So I'm in year 4. I figure I'm about halfway. I need to accelerate it, because I don't think I can stay for 3 or 4 more years. So I'm going to try to do it in 2 1/2 more years. I'm trying to finish it by January 2016. That's my goal.

Q: So how has this work served your relationship to Bhagavan Adi Da?

Charles: Well it's beyond any expectations I might have had. It's phenomenal to be graced to see all these

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pictures of Bhagavan and the community of devotees. Some of the best pictures are of the community of devotees in the early 70's - the happiness of devotees

who had found...well He had found them and they're....you remember how deliriously happy we were to have found Him? So I've seen all the iconic photos that you see on book covers, and then pictures that we don't see very often that blow my mind. One of the things that I've seen over and over is that no matter what Bhagavan is doing, in any photograph, you know, He Is Who He Is! He is radiating the Divine Being, no matter what else is going on in the room. So that has been a real revelation to me. You know, I get Darshan all day long. How could that not serve you?

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Q: So true, and thank you so much for your service Charles.

***If you are inspired by the work that Charles Campbell and others are doing at the Sacred Archives of Adidam, please consider making a monthly donation. Every dollar you donate will go directly to fund this all-important Digital Preservation Project.***

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