

A memory from South Minneapolis where I grew up. It was early summer of **1981**, walking back from a party across Pearl Park at night from a post-semester graduation 'schools out' season kind of high school party in someones house with their parents away. I was with my sweetheart of the time, Lisa, who had to be home before midnight. So we were leaving the busy party early to get her on the last bus on Chicago Avenue.

Pearl Park mostly consists of an open field for sports year round, and walking across at night in this innocuous area was usually completely empty. This time we heard a distant call from off to the side, saying *"Hey, brother, Come smoke with us!"*

We were already a little high from the party, and this was unique. Four (or I think it may have been five) bearded guru looking guys in white robes sitting cross legged in a semi-circle, in dim light at the edge of a paved area for basketball. We walked over with curiosity. The main spokesman did the talking, saying in a sage-like tone. *"We are world travelers, and all of us brothers have been to every country in the world, collectively."* As they slowly smiled and nodded in satisfaction. All that we teenagers could say was something like, *"Wow, cool."*

They had a coffee can full of weed in front of them, offering to share. I replied, *"Thanks, but we have to run, she has to catch the last bus soon."* They smile and ask if this park is safe to sleep in. I suggested to try further over near the wooded area more off the beaten track. They thanked us and we scurried on in dazed dreamlike disbelief at this encounter.

A few weeks later I was in Boulder, Colorado visiting my sister Jill, her then husband Mitch, and one year + old kid Casey. On a nice weekend morning walking around the mall — a street closed to cars as a main drag for pedestrians and sidewalk vendors. Where I saw, on a central riser, those same bearded, robed guys sitting cross legged in a row! This time in broad daylight, and among crowds. I still knew it was them, easily. I walked up and said, *"Remember me from the South Minneapolis park at night a few weeks ago?! I was with my girlfriend."*

They slowly smiled and nodded amongst themselves and to me, saying with that sage-like manner, *"Yes, brother. It is indeed a small world."*

I consider that to have been a remarkable coincidence. Recalled now 43 years later, and interesting enough to write about. **The Four World Travelers**, or was it Five?

~Dean Gustafson, in the far flung future of the year 2024