

THE ADVENTURES OF V. MORGAN FLEMING



Ganymede Jones. a radio show aired in Tulsa in the 1970's, which I helped produce- and acted in- was not just a fun pit stop in the world of media, but rather a challenging and difficult project which taught myself and my friend, Johnny Blue Star, the very core elements of trying to make something happen- from nothing! From it, I derived much of the courage to start and develop a difficult and rewarding business of my own.

Now, when I first met Johnny, he was looking for clothes in a store I worked in Tulsa. I don't know how, but we kind of launched into a discussion about our dreams. I was a booking agent on the side and Johnny- well, he was into all kinds of media.

I remember going to his house, fresh from my job of selling upscale fashion wear. There I sat, surrounded by a ton of manuscripts stacked up against the walls, looking at something called, *Skyrock and the Light Visitors*, a manuscript about the history of Rock and Roll and the Consciousness Movement. Skyrock was a renegade god who challenged Odin with his little gold drum and a strange dance called "The Odin Stomp." It was a bit unusual- and I soon found that Johnny had some peculiar ambitions, indeed.

Following my quick perusal of *Skyrock*, Johnny launched into several pieces from a science fiction musical he was developing. These songs actually led us to the storyline about Ganymede Jones and his quest through space- and the rag-tag crew I joined as his main associate on a

31st century mission through the stars. At the time, though, it was kind of confusing- but, if nothing else, Johnny seemed tremendously dedicated to his projects.

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It was a rainy day in Tulsa just before noon. The sky may have been overcast and foreboding, but our minds were full of a bright and promising future. We had a 1:00 P.M. appointment with KMOD, a local rock station where we were going to make a pitch for our show. Johnny had just put together a sales pamphlet with a photo of a painting by Leo Chandler, illustrating Ganymede Jones running across an alien terrain with weapon in hand. The radio station General Manager was bowled over by the presentation and- amazingly, we had succeeded! He wanted our copy of the pamphlet, but regretfully we could not give it to him. It was our only pamphlet! So we left the station and hitched another ride to our next appointment in the rain.

It was 1986 and many people, like myself, saw the dancing skeleton that accompanied the Grateful Dead's MTV video of *A Touch of Grey*. For most people, it was probably just a very catchy tune, but for me- it was rather more inspiring, like, believe it or not, a siren call for help. Like the Grateful Dead themselves were calling out on an unknown frequency subterranean frequency hidden in that song.

“We need jewelry, Morgan.”

A sort of fever of inspiration overtook me and I dove into creating a wide variety of models that I thought might appeal to the ‘Dead Heads,’ the title for the Grateful Dead's persistent fan base.

I drew those models using the same methods that Leo Chandler had shown me. He first traced the image of a photo onto tracing paper, then took a needle and punched through the paper to create an outline of the image. He then applied that paper to the canvas he was trying to draw on, powdering its surface of the paper so that it would seep onto the canvas. Then he would paint on the canvas. I modified this process so I could create the image on wax instead of canvas. I then carved out the image of the skull and roses, an image I could now draw in my sleep. This technique

is used by almost anyone in my craft, but I didn't know it back then and my friend, Leo Chandler, taught it to me.

After finishing the rings and pendants, I hired a lawyer to contact the Grateful Dead's business manager, Patricia Harris- and over the next 9 months we negotiated the terms of a licenses to produce the pieces. Finally, we received the rights to develop and sell the jewelry.

The result was the front page of the Kansas City Star, as well as several other papers. I also gained a kind of celebrity status of sorts. Believe it or not, some people even asked for my autograph.

The most common question I was asked was asked how did I know how to do this, "create something from nothing," or so it seemed to outsiders, some of which saw me as a struggling, unknown quantity. I would look at them and say, "Well, there was this radio show in Tulsa and we were walking in the rain with this idea..."



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