



In the Center of the Fire: A Memoir of the Occult 1966-1989

James Wasserman

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In this daring exposé by a survivor of a unique era in the New York occult scene, James Wasserman, a longtime proponent of the teachings of Aleister Crowley, brings us into a world of candlelit temples, burning incense, and sonorous invocations. The author also shares an intimate look at the New York Underground of the 1970s and introduces us to the company of such avant-garde luminaries as Alejandro Jodorowsky, Harry Smith, and Angus MacLise. A stone's throw away from the Velvet Underground and Andy Warhol's Factory, William Burroughs' "bunker," and the legendary Chelsea Hotel was a scene far more esoteric than perhaps even they could have imagined.

When James Wasserman joined the O.T.O. in 1976, there were fewer than a dozen members. Today the Order numbers over 4,000 members in 50 countries and has been responsible for a series of ground-breaking publications of Crowley's works.

The author founded New York City's TAHUTI Lodge in 1979. He chronicles its early history and provides a window into the heyday of the Manhattan esoteric community. He also breaks his decades of silence concerning one of the most seminal events in the development of the modern Thelemic movement -- detailing his role in the 1976 magical battle between Marcelo Motta and Grady McMurtry. Long slandered for his effort to heal the temporary breach between the Orders of A.'.A.'. and O.T.O., James Wasserman sets the record straight. And, he meticulously chronicles the copyright contest over the Crowley literary estate--of which he was an important participant.

This is also a saga with a very human tableau filled with tender romance, passionate friendships, an abiding spiritual hunger, danger, passion, and ecstasy. It also explores several hidden magical byways including the rituals of Voodoo, Tibetan Buddhism, and Sufism. Finally we are given a bird's eye view of the 1960s hippie culture and its excesses of sex and drugs, and rock n roll--along with the personal transformations and penalties such a lifestyle brought forth.

Reconstructed from personal memories, magical diaries, multiple interviews, court transcripts, witness depositions, trial evidence, and extensive correspondence, this book elucidates a hitherto misreported and ill-understood nexus of modern magical history. It also shares tales of a mythical moment in American life as seen through the eyes of an enthusiastic participant in the hip culture of the day.

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