

On Film and Digital Media

Finding Tatanka

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Video: Finding Tatanka (83 minutes)

Director: Jacob Bricca (jacob@tatankamovie.com)

Producers: Jacob Bricca, Jonathan Crosby, and Edward David Sullivan

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Videographer Jacob Bricca created *Finding Tatanka* to gain greater understanding of his father, Kit Bricca. He hoped to fill in blank spots that have remained in their relationship across the years and, hopefully, to reach a resolution that might enrich it. The result is a video case study of this father–son relationship and more largely, of a visionary known over the years as Kit, Chris Cougar, Buffalo, Buffalo Waves in the Breeze, and *Tatanka*. All of these fathers resided within the same man. We are introduced to him in video footage of Jacob’s childhood, narrative accounts of Kit’s childhood, and within current interviews with Kit’s life-long friends and acquaintances. As the film unfolds, we soon realize that Jacob’s progress in understanding his

relationship with *Kit the father* depends almost entirely on understanding *the phenomenon* that is Kit Bricca the man.

At the outset of *Finding Tatanka*, we are introduced to Jacob’s essential dilemma: “As a child I grew up watching my father and his friends change the world. I was proud to have a Dad who worked with Joan Baez to stop a war, who had organized with Cesar Chavez and Delores Huerta to build the mighty United Farm Workers Union, and who had gotten Amnesty International USA off the ground. ‘Anything is possible,’ he told me, and I saw the world changing around me. It really seemed like it was true. But somewhere along the way, that Utopian vision vanished and in a way, so did my Dad.” Jacob describes



Figure 1. Kit Bricca (a.k.a. Tatanka) and Jacob Bricca.

his father's disappearance into several seemingly incompatible "identity transformations," including activist, spiritual visionary, commodities dealer, film-maker, and solar energy sales representative. Like Jacob, viewers looking across this surprising range of pursuits will be gripped by the central question he's asking—Who *is* Kit Bricca. As an outsider looking in, I asked myself another question at the outset of Jacob's search: Assuming Kit is not a sociopath like "The Great Imposter" and that he has a modicum of psychological coherence that makes him recognizable, what motivates this kind of change?

Kit was born in 1945. Kit explains that he wanted "to do good in the world with my life." Abandoning his plans to be a priest, he became a member of the Bay area activist group that protested the Vietnam War in the late 1960s and helped to bring it to an end. Jacob remembers those years as a young child—"It seemed like my dad was the one who made it all happen." Kit was a central figure in the antiwar movement. The tumult of those years is recreated with film of the confrontations between war supporters and protesters. He and others spent time at the Institute for the Study of Nonviolence where they experienced "a moral, ethical, and spiritual presence." Jacob shares a note that Kit gave him during this period: "Jacob Paul, will you take a walk with me and see the world as it should be seen?"

Kit's widened support of other movements, including the United Farm Workers and Amnesty International USA, placed strain on his marriage and his family. He served as Campaign Manager for Dave Harris, leader of The Resistance movement, when the efforts were made to take their ideas into mainstream politics. Harris' bid for Congress failed. The moment culminated in awareness that "the generation of the 60s got isolated" and "had seriously underestimated what the historical trend was". A former activist defined the transition: "A lot of us still could not find what we were looking for. The experience was not there for us anymore. Some of us moved on with our lives. Some of us kept looking. Kit was lost." The Institute disbanded and the community family dispersed. Jacob remembers "an overwhelming sense of loss". It grew worse when Kit and Patricia divorced. The magical years of social change on a huge scale had ended. What becomes of those who, when quite young, have walked on the moon?

Jacob Bricca uses the second half of *Finding Tatanka* to answer this question and, more importantly, to engage his

father more directly to clarify and to re-establish their personal relationship. Postmovement life finds Kit remarried and settled within a new family. He became a life insurance salesman ("I was in the top 10% of my company and a million dollar round table producer. I woke up in the morning and didn't feel myself being an insurance agent."). He joined the antinuclear movement and was drawn to solar energy. In debt, he began visiting psychics to deal with his discomfort, his worry about the future, and where he fit in. He became a successful commodities dealer, building a house large enough for all of his children. Jacob reveled in the environment: "I spent my two remaining years in high school soaking up his encouragement." Then the stock market crashed and Kit was broke again. He eventually joined The Butterfly Clan, a group devoted to the evolution of enlightenment. He left his children and moved from Palo Alto to Sandstone, Idaho, where he adopted the spiritual name *Tatanka* (Buffalo). Jacob's attempts to contact his father in Sandstone failed.

After 6 years, Kit returned to California. "The Butterfly Clan has disbanded after a falling out of its leadership. His work prospects had dried up and he said that he missed us all. . . . But perhaps he had simply grown restless and was looking for a new way to bring about change." Rather than confront Kit directly, Jacob "decided to make a film instead, hoping that my role of filmmaker would give me a perspective that I lacked as a son." The closing moments of the film illustrate the success of his effort: "I had assumed there was a break between the secular crusader for justice (Kit) and the mystic who now called himself Tatanka. But after three years of filming, I now saw that he had always been both. Far from leaving his idealism behind, *it sometimes called to him so loudly that it overwhelmed his better judgment*. Knowing this helped me to be more honest with him."

In the final resolution, Jacob reconfirms his love for Kit, telling him that "sometimes it just makes me sad because what I see is a lot of energy going into a lot of different areas. And I don't know if that's all you're trying to do [but] *you've already made it*." Kit weeps and hugs Jacob: "Thank you for saying that."

Finding Tatanka closes with the following update:

"Kit found employment with Quality First Solar and soon became one of their leading salesmen. He recently left to canvas for Greenpeace."