

PATRICK STRONG (UNCLE DADDY), RIVERCIDE.COM

Angela: First of all, what name do you want to be referred to as, nickname-wise?

Uncle Daddy: Well, my real name is Patrick Strong, but for the sake of rivercide.com I use "Uncle Daddy." At 36 years of age, I've had many nicknames, all of them totally off the mark. Most of them I gave myself as nom de plumes to hide my identity. Of course, after you've had the Department of Justice raid your work place and access your internet accounts and your hard drive in their quest to prove you're involved in money laundering for hemp PACs, you lose all sense that these nicknames are much of a shield. Big Brother knows all. I presently use the "Uncle Daddy" moniker on <http://www.rivercide.com> as a sort of sideways barb at the notion that everyone out here in the I.E. is some sort of barefoot, inbred hillbilly who prefers to walk on down the hall to find love. You can call me what you want. My present "new" bandmates call me "Jimmy Pat Porn," because now that I got broadband internet and porn, when it comes to needing companionship, I don't care.

Angela: Why rivercide.com?

Uncle Daddy: Rivercide.com came about last summer as a two-fold tool. First, I've always wanted to have a site that reflects my love/hate relationship with the town of my birth and residence for many years. Rivercide is a weird place to say the least. I've never had the reason to cough up the money to do it just for the sake of doing it. I've always been a broke ass fucker that could live for a couple of months off the money needed to start a website. Last year, following my revival of "the t-shirt," its success led to the Press Enterprise doing a human-interest story on me. My roommate, Todd Ivanovitch, a tech geek par excellence and fellow Christ Killer (a.k.a. member of the chosen tribe of Israel), instantly convinced me to get a website up before the story came out so I would have a vehicle to sell more shirts. He provided his services as webmaster for free, as he too has a few bones to pick with this town, and we got it on the web quicker than a Viagra erection. The money generated from the t-shirt sales more than covers the cost of doing a site that gives me much joy and a vehicle for my writing.

When we went to check domain names, I was pleasantly surprised that rivercide.com was available. Considering that there's a band in Pennsylvania named Rivercide, a play called Rivercide, and that people have been using the 'cide suffix for this town for as long as I can remember, I was amazed that it was open for sale. If my site were called anything else, it wouldn't have the sting that I envisioned for it.

Angela: Give short description of your site. What was your vision? Has it changed at all?

Uncle Daddy: Rivercide.com's mission, if you will, is to flaunt the dark underbelly that resides in these hinterlands and causes many from outside its borders to gasp and turn their noses up in the air. I've always felt that there's a weird energy, vibe, or whatever way one cares to try to quantify that uneasy feeling one gets when they come into the area. Don't get me wrong, I've had some great times out here and have met some exceptional people, many of whom are smart enough to

eventually leave and take their talents, abilities and intelligence with them, leaving more of a void that's getting harder and harder to fill. I've partied in all the major cities on the West Coast, and there's a palpable desperation in having fun in Riverside that you don't get in those more "sophisticated" and urban settings. I personally like that feeling, a reflex, survival of the fittest mode of party. You can more than let your hair down in Riverside, you can set it on fire and the only reaction you'll get is probably having the guy next to you light his cigarette off of it. The people who have lived here for a while have that blasé, gallows sense of humor that you find usually in more desperate situations, like battlefield M.A.S.H. units, and my website reflects that whole-hog-heartedly. But, that's all changing now.

Not to get too maudlin, but Riverside is going the way that many other cities before it have in terms of gentrification. This is a total and complete shame. I'm not one to compare this little hamlet of hate to places like Austin, Portland, Seattle, S.F., etc. When they fell to the encroaching onslaught of yuppiedom, it was tragic that such cool places like that became unavailable rent and living wise to the freaks that helped drag them up from the ashes. But, for Riverside to go this way just mystifies me. It's a bit of a shit-hole, and other than some of the people here, its only redeemable qualities are cheap rent and the centralized proximity to all of Southern California. Of course, the SUV swine that are driving up housing and rents enjoy those qualities too. I just figured that it would take a bit more time for such coddled pussies to risk a home invasion robbery of method up gangsters for "cheaper digs." Never underestimate your enemy.

Angela: How can you connect your site to local values? Community?

Uncle Daddy: My site acts as a mirror or more than likely a funhouse mirror to the local values of this "community." In other words, I prefer to magnify those dark recesses that people of "booster" ilk would care to overlook in their quest to turn Riverside into some homogenized and sterilized, Irvine-esque, glass menagerie. In 1998, we were one of the designated "All American Cities." In that same year we made the national press three times, all of them racially fueled and two involving shootings including our mayor and city council getting shot up and the virtual execution of Tyisha Miller by the cops. In the wake of a string of incidents like that, the local Chamber of Commerce would look with their bonked-in-the-back-of-the-head, glassy-eyed [expression] and with a straight face say that ours is a community that "passionately expresses its diversity and has a police force working ceaselessly to keep our streets free of crime." On the other hand, whereas my perspective and bent is hardly "objective," on my website I'm fairly sure I come closer to the truth, whatever that may be.

Angela: Why did you run for office? Describe your duties if you had been elected.

Uncle Daddy: Quite honestly, and I hate to harsh your buzz or chill your activist blood, I ran simply as a way to promote my website and sell a few more t-shirts. I knew going in from the start that I wouldn't have a chance in hell to win Ward I. The two top contenders, Betro and Fick, spent 90K and 45K respectively on the first part of the run. When you consider that each only garnered between 1300 and 1500 votes for all that money, for a position that only pays 36K a year, you

could see that I was up against some power hungry gluttons who desperately wanted the position. If by some weird fluke, some 3000 plus new voters would have hit the polls and put me into power, I would have been in over my head and hated. But, I would have enjoyed it immensely as I shot down every land rapist that tried to tear down some old building and put up some new shiny mall, especially that Villaggio abortion that's slated to go up across the street from the Fox Theater in the next couple of years. I wouldn't have stopped the progression of Riverside joining the ranks of the United Malls of America but there would have been a four-year period of building constipation and I would have been the cause; that fine cheese turned into an annoying lump in the colon called Riverside.

Angela: I think that this community is empowering in that I am surrounded by people who contribute actively to creating our own culture. These artists aren't just making art and promoting themselves, they also make an effort to connect their talents to serving our art community/other artists.

Uncle Daddy: Well, they have no choice really. Most of what little art and culture that receives any type of promotion or help through the city is a little dated and seems to be more of a community sales pitch. Other than the CMP, I wouldn't call anything the city has thrown a little cash into to be anywhere near, and I hate to use this word, "progressive." As it has been in the past, one is more likely to find finer art work or more powerful writing in a local private "on a shoestring" gallery/collective or coffee shop or bar than hung in the museum or promoted by city hall. Desperation and balls-out anger always makes for better work. The manic madman with a Kinko's card or a graveyard print shop job is more likely to turn out readable work than some moneyed swine with a city grant to write a nice little ditty about "overcoming the odds of a (fill in the blank) to come to terms with (fill in the blank) and finally reach a state of a more fully self-actualized and harmonious citizen." And, as far as art is concerned, I've seen more powerful talent and statements by taggers and graffiti artists than some of the trash promoted by the city.

Angela: Sometimes I feel like geography and the architecture of Riverside affects the artsy element.

Uncle Daddy: Here in Riverside, we live in kind of a vacuum. Sure, L.A. is a stone's throw away, but realistically we might as well be out in the mid-west somewhere. The city at times can be aesthetically pleasing, especially after a good rain or on a blustery winter day or fall evening. It can have the feeling of your worn-out robe or fuzzy slippers. And that "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" kind of comfort zone helps one to relax and be a little reflective, at least until the next bullet zips by or the cop copter is buzzing over your house in a circle. Of course, in the summer Riverside is a pizza oven running full blast, with air quality only second to Mexico City or Victorian England. But, that kind of stifling oppression makes for good art too. An art scene by definition is a local entity that feeds on itself. As a necessity to both the artists' sanity and need to create, they have to band together in various groups and circle the wagons so to speak. Local rock musicians aside, the writers, painters, photographers and various other practitioners of the "plastic" arts seem to really bond together and enjoy each other's work and drunken debauched company. The music scene is a whole different conundrum that I rant about in detail

on my website and will spare your readers my bile on this subject at this time.

Angela: Why do you think that a city like Riverside has such a strong DIY ethic?

Uncle Daddy: Do we? I thought we have more of an "I don't wanna' do anything" ethic. Well, I'm just projecting my own slack on the rest of the community. That DIY ethic comes from the fact that we aren't going to get any help from anybody else. It's a shit-rolling-downhill kind of vibe that overlaps in all things. Nobody is going to help so if you want it done, you better get to work and I'm speaking of artistic ventures here. Notions of "growth" aside, which are always framed in perspectives of investment in the community (i.e., what will make this real estate more valuable); anything of an artistic nature has to be a homegrown venture. Don't expect some high society grand dame to come from off the hill and start dumping cash into anything in this area other than an old, vacant building to sit on until the price is right to sell to someone who will turn around and sit on it for another decade or tear it down to put something up that's bright, new, and shiny. The artists in this area are mostly lone wolves that have to pack together sometimes for survival's sake. Which as you know can be kind of fun at times, except like now when I'm nursing a vicious hangover.

Angela: Give some tips on networking/how to actively participate in the Riverside arts scene to the young upstart yearning to get involved.

Uncle Daddy: Why would you ask me that? You know I'm a hermit these days that only has to get out to a bar about once a week for my sanity. Well, I'll think back a decade ago and see if I can jog my memory. Today, I would imagine it would be the same routine as in the past, just find a hole and fill it. Merely scout out a venue that is devoid of a scene and create your own, or do what I did, which was to find something already in place and take it over like any good barbarian horde would; become an ersatz Attila the Hun. Like combat, the artist with the greater strength will prevail. Except in art, the vanquished are usually allowed to live and rejoin the community. Although it would most certainly speak of commitment if the next art opening or open mic had a few of the lesser artists' decapitated heads or livers stuck onto pikes around the stage or sign-in page. It would also make for better art if a few lives were on the line. Tenacity also counts, although it's not as necessary out here because there are enough people that want/need to do something. Once you get the ball rolling, it usually gets out of control fairly quick. As the old saying goes, "nothing succeeds like success," or, to quote Curly from the Three Stooges, "If at first you don't succeed, keep sucking till you do." That's Riverside in a nutshell, desperate, messy, necessary fun that leaves you with a slight twinge of "Oh my god, I can't believe I just did that."