

An overdose of life

by Hans Kratzer
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One summer night in the concert hall Melkweg in Amsterdam. There is a guest appearance of Snoop Dogg from Long Beach, California, a leader of the global music business. On a Youtube-video that documents this gig, acts the hall like a steam boiler, which is heated by twisting bodies and the rhythm of hip hop music.

Snoop Dogg wears a dutch oranje soccer jersey. "Has everybody a good time," asks the rapper, "Yeeaahhh" echoes it to him. But Snoop even directed his gaze into another direction. A good friend will come on the stage now, his name is Phil, he announced to the audience.

(Already approaching from the side of a grafted with all kinds of art Wheelchair vehicle.)

Inside sits a thin person, his face hidden behind a hat, sunglasses and a white mouthguard. Two hoses result of a respirator into the nose of the surprising guest, who seems very fragile.

"Get up again and again. Losses are not accepted. Chasing the dream! "

How would you imagine yourself a friend of Snoop Dogg, a musician whose career was also accompanied by dubious stories? People who know the scene would probably think about a, with thick rings and gold chains hung gangsta rapper from some american Big-city ghetto. But the friend, Snoop invites to the stage is the exact opposite of such types. His name is Philipp Herold, called Phil by himself and in no way comes from the milieu of drugs and pimps of the U.S. South, but from the brave lower bavarian village of Tann.

Such a duo even the global colored Melkweg sees not every day: here, the wiry dark-skinned superstar, there the thin pale Phil, drawn by his heavy physical disability – such friendships normally only exist in movies such as "A second Wind".

What a spectacle! Snoop Dogg raps, waving his arms, presses his chanting into the microphone, next to him Phil moves his wheelchair to the music circle, he bounces back and forth, turns fluently, the scenery looks as innocent as a puppet of the Augsburg doll crate. The audience screams, Phil would like to wave back, but he can only move his thumb.

His body is stiff and paralyzed.

The disease broke out in babyhood, now Philipp Herold is 32 years old. But in his weak constitution pluggs an overdose of life. He never complains, but insists at every opportunity: "I'm just disabled by the way!"

For someone like him is the existence too precious to be whining about, no matter how laboriously it could be. On his Facebook page he posted a few days ago: "Never give up. No matter how many times you crash, get up again and again. Losses are not accepted. Chase the dream! "

Phil's life expectancy was three years. Now, 30 years later, the doctors talk about a miracle. "I even knew as a teenager, that I have to do more than others in order to achieve my goals," says the brave fighter during the interview. With his will never to give up, he manages it again and again to entrain fellow sufferers, but also people who live on the sunny side of life, spoiled stars from the show-, movie- and music business. Snoop Dogg is not his only friend in this atmosphere. Each concert organizers would envy Herold because of his contacts. The Rolling Stones, Sting, Beyoncé, Cher, Aerosmith, Leonardo di Caprio, Robert De Niro, Franz Beckenbauer – the list of his prominent supporters could be continued almost indefinitely. How can Phil Herold manage it to win all these world stars for himself? The search for an answer leads to his hometown. Munich, Türkenstraße, briefly before Christmas. In an apartment on the first floor of the house number 37 Philipp Herold grew up.

Although the family is living in Tann since a long time, where they built a house which is perfect usable for disabled persons, they held on to this apartment in Munich. Monika and Gerhard Herold introduced a fruit and vegetable shop in 1980, worked 16 hours a day and were happy when their son was born. Till after a few months Philipp was not able to lift his head up.

A muscle biopsy at children's hospital revealed the damning findings: Philipp is terminally ill, he suffers from spinal muscular atrophy. It's a freak of nature. The progressive destruction of nerve cells in the spinal cord leads to muscle wasting and paralysis.

Meanwhile, Philipp has to get ventilated 16 hours a day. Since several years he can only move a thumb.

This Tuesday it was his father, who has driven Phil from Tann to Munich by a specially for his requirements converted bus and carried him up, along with a caregiver into flat on the first floor. Phil is supervised 24 hours a day. Seven days a week. "There must always be someone with him," says Gerhard Herold, the father, a quiet one, mid-fifties with Karl Lagerfeld hairstyle.

Most of his sufferers in Germany live in institutions

The care of their son, brought the parents to their physical and mental limits. "We have managed it that Phil can live in a familiar environment," says Gerhard Herold. That he lives after his own ideas, can work on the computer and even that he can make great travels is anything for granted. The most of his more than 400 sufferers in Germany live in institutions.

To avoid this Phil Herold has become an employer. "I engage people, who help me to cope with my everyday life," he says of this model, whose funding is provided by several insurers. "This is still cheaper than an institution," says his father. The only problem is: It's hard to find appropriate wizards.

Some candidate jumps rapidly.

The assistant Christopher, who supervises Philipp currently in the flat in Munich, works for Phil since a few years. He routinely regulates the processes, almost everything works without a word, he can quasi read the thoughts of his on a couch lying boss. Now he turns his head in the direction of the party, moves his arms and legs, puts in the right moment a mug next to his head, so that Philipp can hold food over a straw. He keeps the phone right next to his ear when he makes a call.

The apartment in the Türkenstraße is also a studio. Large art is leaning against the wall, pictures, created by Phil Herold using the computer. He works at night and

sleeps during the day. "At night I have the best ideas", he says. "Some were born for the never-ending night!" he has written on his Facebook page.

Ten years ago, Phil Herold passed the audit- examination with distinction for media designer and then worked in a software company as a graphic designer, at that time the disease had not yet progressed to this point.

During his training, he discovered art as a new source of his life. He produces large pop Art pictures, color-defying, fairytale like, photorealistic.

Meanwhile, his works are hanging in galleries around the world.

The career of Phil Herold began when he celebrated his 20th birthday in Munich. In a hotel he met the jazz musician Branford Marsalis, Jeff Watts and Eric Revis. "This night should change everything," he recalls. The trio took him to a concert to Burghausen, then the musicians moved their aftershow session of a Jazzcellar, unsuitable for Phil's wheelchair to Tann. When their new friend is in New York over the summer they introduce him into the local nightlife.

Phil Herold the charming exotic wheelchair accessibility, docks with success at the New York cultural scene. "Phil the Thrill" they call him there.

The pop-art artist and gallery owner Michael Perez is the first who exhibits Herold-pictures. From that time on it goes very fast. Soon his works are seen in Los Angeles and in Berlin. Several times Herold returns to America, meets stars like the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Oliver Stone, Eric Clapton and Carlos Santana. He is allowed to experience their concerts backstage.

Even the jaded Rolling Stones are impressed. As they had a guest appearance in the Munich olympic stadium in 2006, Keith Richards and Ron Wood visited between the soundcheck and the show Herold's exhibition at the Philharmonic and bought two images. After the concert Phil may celebrates in a small circle with the Stones.

The artist makes use of this privilege for actions that will make the world a little bit better.

The proceeds of his pictures flows into charities. He supports for instance "Community of action child in need" in the red valley, of which he was once cared for as a child with disabilities. A portion flows into the Franz Beckenbauer foundation to support physically and mentally handicapped people. The remainder of the proceeds will go to the from Phil L. Herold, 2010 in California founded, "Forever begins foundation" for exploration of spinal muscular atrophy and other rare muscle disease.

He has a head full of hopes. 2013 should get the year of Phil L. Herold

His 30th Birthday Phil celebrated in Los Angeles. In America, he feels happy, even if these trips costs a lot of money because of berth on the plane. "The people love me there," he says, "and the nights at Sunset are unbeatable. Here I feel at home."

In America he had the idea for his newest project, his most ambitious ever, because "it is waste of time to do something mediocre!"

"The Skills Project " calls Herold this plan, in which he wants to make photos of celebrities with a special camera, in fact in a context, which exemplary stands for their lives and their success.

Franz Beckenbauer will bring his first player pass, Mick Jagger his first record player. The list of stars who have pledged contains names such as Kanye West, Michelle Obama, Kevin Costner, Mark Zuckerberg, Bill Gates, Campino and Wladimir Klitschko.

In Munich, it is easy to encounter to Phil Herold's pictures. In a large

showcase on the wall of Ballabeni Ice Cream Saloon in the Theresienstraße they are seen 24 hours a day.

But only a few passers take notice of it, maybe their eyes are dulled by the screaming images of consumer advertising.

Celebrated in America, Phil Herold is ignored in Munich yet.

It's gone night, Phil the Thrill moves back to Tann, his head full of hopes.

2013 should get his year - not just in America. When they depart, he says: "To create more than I have believed I can is a great feeling!"