



Dot-to-Dot

The Creative, Comical and Covert Adventures of dick boak

Palisander Packrat Publications, Nazareth, Pennsylvania – London, England

and excerpts
from the gradually decaying journals
of dick boak

Tears
Anti-Man
Co-Incidents
One Man Book
Metamorphosis
dick boak's Infinity
Conceptual Survival
Fred Filiment's Stolen Novel
Approximations Of Impossibility
Messages From The Universal Mind
Trash; A Collection Of Words, Illustrations, & Other Garbage

Actress Susan Richardson (Eight Is Enough) was married to Steven Sharp, the brother of my great friend Judley in Hollywood.
She would occasionally look over my shoulder while I was drawing, scratch her head and say "impossible."
One day after doing this, she reconsidered and said "no, its not impossible. Its an *Approximation Of Impossibility*."

I'll never forget that.

Edition # _____

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Unless otherwise indicated, all of the artwork, guitars and text in this book are the work of dick boak.
The extensive photographic contributions of John Sterling Ruth are identified in the index.

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I began signing my name with small letters in the mid-sixties.
It was the influence of the poet e. e. cummings.
He was a product of the typewriter generation.
I thought he did it to show how humble he was.
It never occurred to me that his shift key may have been broken.
May he rest in peace.

This book is dedicated to
my daughters Emily and Grace
who showed me how foolish I was to have not had children sooner,

and to my wife Susan Ellis,
an artist in her own right,
who has shown tremendous patience with my idiosyncrasies
and creative tangents for more than two decades.

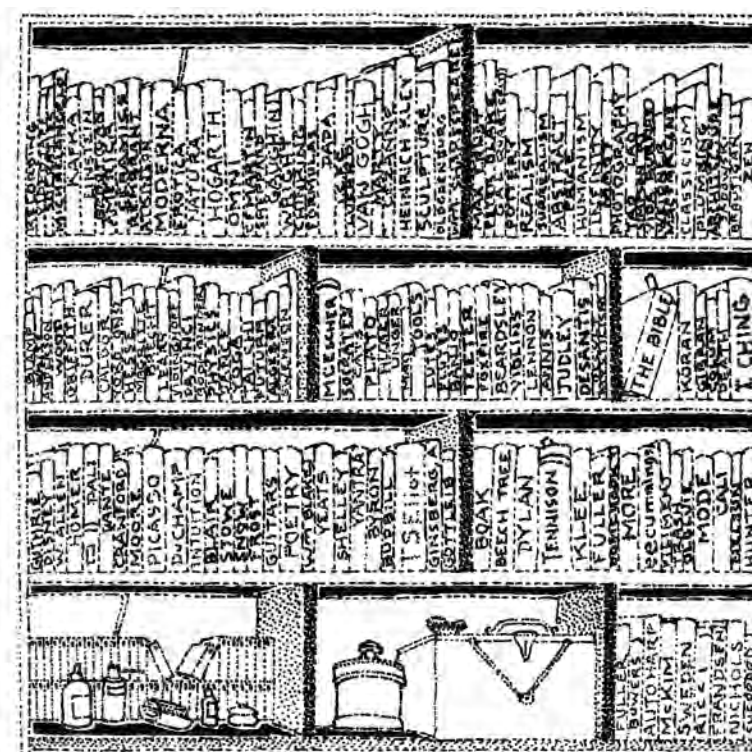
and to:

Thomas Dickson Boak & Helen Crawford Boak, Dale Unger, Rudy Hilt,
David Costa, Larry Sifel, Jeff Harding, Rafe Scheinblum, Steve Miller, Tullio DeSantis,
C. Frederick Martin III, Chris Martin, Elizabeth Macfarlane, Nancy Cliff, Judley Sharp,
Pablo Picasso, M. C. Escher, R. Buckminster Fuller, Lou Gottlieb, Albrecht Dürer, Vincent Van Gogh,
Frank Lloyd Wright, Richard Brautigan, Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dali, Aubrey Beardsley,

and to a thousand other friends and heroes who caused me to question or advance my own thinking.



*Special thanks to John Sterling Ruth
who broke my creative logjam by photographing
many of the digital images and illustrations in this book.*



Where to classify
this book:

- ✓ Fiction
- ✓ Non-fiction
- ✓ Fantasy
- ✓ Autobiography
- ✓ Confessions
- ✓ Illustrative Art
- ✓ Guitars
- ✓ Do-It-Yourself
- ✓ All of the above

Bookshelf of Influences
Detail from "Church Of Art" (See Page 151.)

“What is a movie but life with the dull bits cut out.”

Alfred Hitchcock

Connecting Dots

A long chain of experiences and circumstances led me first to the gathering of this book and subsequently to the title "Dot to Dot." Please indulge this brief delineation.

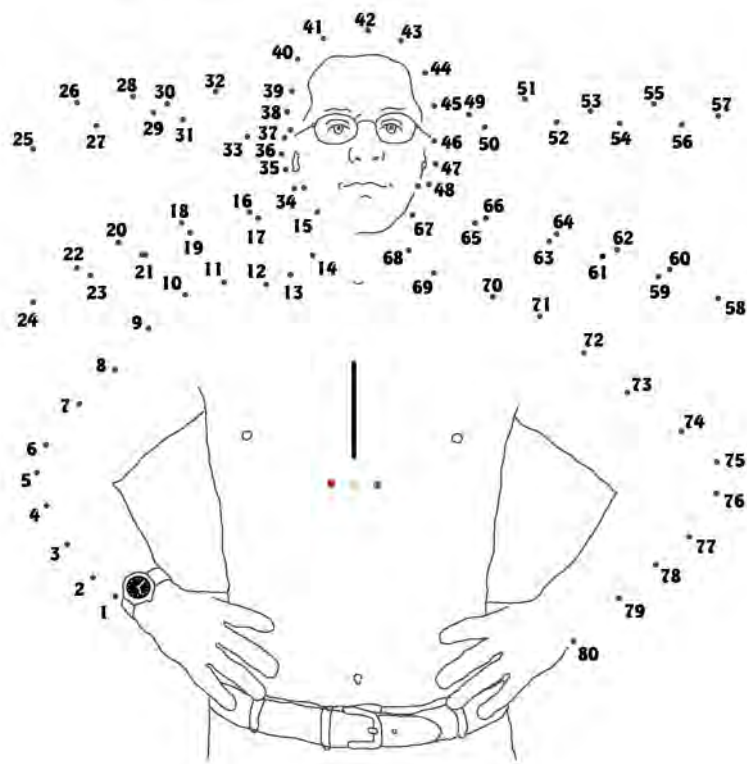
Drawing has certainly been one of my most important pursuits. My illustrations have always emanated from a more technical approach, given that much of my formal training has been in the area of mechanical drawing. As I committed myself to conceptual art and as my illustrative direction gradually congealed, I began to envision the completed drawings as representing small islands or oases of time. They seemed to beg for explanation, being inextricably "connected" to my personal thoughts, relationships, travels and history.

People will always extract their own meaning from art, but the thematic and technical progression from one piece of work to the next can reveal a directed and logical evolution. While artwork is a form of captured history, a particular piece can't reveal the passage of time and experience that caused it to unfold in the first place. In fact, the increments between outbursts of inspiration contain the critical creative plasma, providing the perfect context with which to truly understand the art. In my own experience, the time gaps were strewn with journal entries, songs, discarded sketches, photographs, poems, stories, and hundreds of other life fragments. Here, I have attempted to arrange them, and while many of the endeavors included here do not deserve great attention, they do in context show a logical progression.

As I struggled to produce this book over the course of more than three decades, my task increasingly became one of connecting the dots – the dots being the drawings and other tangible

offspring of my varied creative diversions – geodesic domes, guitars, simple architectures and an assortment of fabricated objects, all destined to meld into a personal culture of sorts.

In the simpler sense, I suspect that nearly everyone has drawn dot-to-dot pictures as a child. Tiny numbers adjacent to their corresponding dots guide the child's pencil zigzagging through a maze that gradually evolves into a semblance of recognizability. It's rather like life, I'd say.



The notion of connecting the dots is obviously pertinent to the drawings themselves, especially the extended exercises in pointillism that characterized the last decade of my tediously neurotic pen and ink illustrations. These pieces are made up of tens of thousands of dots and the literal space between them represents a significant contribution of time and concentration.

At the intersection of architecture and mathematics, I have always held a deep reverence and fascination for Buckminster Fuller and his multi-faceted geodesic designs. Domes have many vertices – dots if you will – geometrically positioned on the surface of a sphere. Connecting the dots creates struts that yield a delicate strength and spatial beauty.

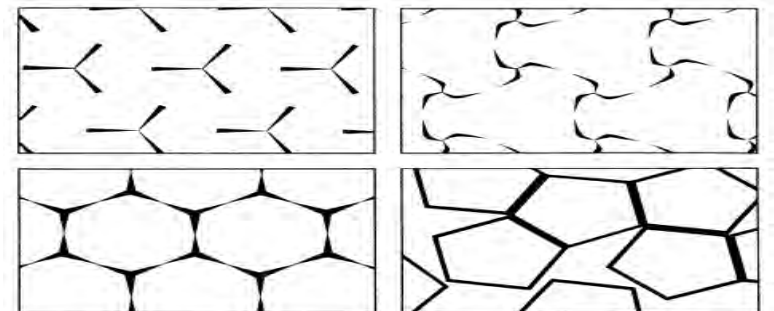
Dabbling in a variety of mediums can reveal one's intuitive sense and develop a consistency in the approach with which tasks are executed. In the end, the intuitive approach becomes the art itself and any resulting by-products are merely representations of an individual's method. Jumping from medium to medium is a dot-to-dot process, and before long, the skills begin to meld until a stability of purpose emerges.

Early in my fifties, I underwent coronary bypass surgery. This was a hereditary wake-up call to say the least. While recovering from the operation, I had six weeks to myself to face my mortality, to delve back into the book, to furnish the written context, to connect the dots of my life. Oddly enough, below the primary incision, there had been three drainage tubes that left a neat row of dot-like scars on my abdomen, and the center dot formed a perfect exclamation mark with the incision. This pattern of a line and three dots soon became a significant personal symbol and I readily adopted it as my logotype.

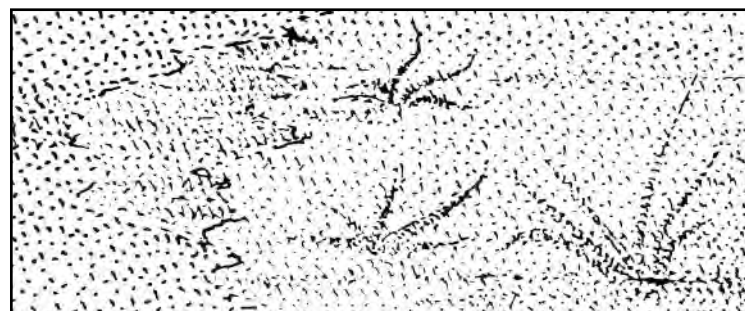
When I was laying out the title page for this book, I was startled and intrigued to discover that the centers of the O's in "Dot To Dot" aligned perfectly when superimposed upon the three dots from my adopted scar-tissue logo. To me, this was a clear vindication and indication that my choice of titles was at least pertinent.

I could philosophize further about my symbology and reasoning for assigning each of the three dots a primary color, but there are after all only three, and color does ease the monotony of black and white.

Connecting dots implies movement. Like cities on a map, they are destinations of the future and footprints of the past. Connect them with me if you will, or simply jump..... from dot to dot.



From the booklet and animated film "Symmetry."



Dot detail from "Elephants."

Introduction

I started working on books when I was about four years old. I don't really remember anything very tangible before then. I was a somewhat hyperactive child, but given a specific project, I was quite capable of extended self-entertainment. My mother was very good at keeping my energy well focused. She gave me some paper and told me to make a book, so I started making books.

I have been working on this particular book all of my life. Every time it came close to being done, some new project or technology would emerge that seemed to invalidate or supersede everything beforehand, so I would begin compressing and chopping until everything was once again in a state of disarray. It never occurred to me that I could simply write a second book. Maybe now I will.

In art school, they teach budding artists to develop a single recognizable style. I certainly developed a very specific style of illustration, but eventually I reached a point where I could no longer maintain the level of time and concentration required to take it any further. So after nearly two decades, I abandoned pen and ink drawing in favor of woodworking, then guitar design, then a dozen other mediums. I have never hesitated to move into new areas, but I do regret leaving the old ones behind.

At the age of seven, I was determined to become a doctor. I spent an unnatural amount of time reading medical journals in the waiting room of our family physician. He didn't seem to mind. Eventually, my thirst for medicine led to medical illustration, then to the purity and idealism of art. I have been an athlete, a poet, a musician, a hippie, a revolutionary, a woodworker, a builder of geodesic domes, a teacher, a jeweler, a potter, a husband, a desktop publisher, a concert promoter, a guitar maker, an advertising director, a computer nerd, a father, and I suppose an author. I don't believe I've mastered any of these things, but I certainly have immersed myself.

I like to compare the accumulation of skill to scattered droplets of mercury on a mirror – each droplet representing a different artistic medium. As one acquires seemingly unrelated abilities, the beads of mercury gather and fuse, solidifying one's creative



Various incarnations of Clyde Clod.

confidence. Oddly, I had collected a significant amount of mercury in a small jar as a child. Back then, no one suspected that it could cause children to begin thinking like this.

My oldest brother Tom went to Philadelphia to audition for Dick Clark's *American Bandstand*. We watched for him with great pride that afternoon on the TV, but we didn't see him. Even though he wasn't picked, he was still our hero. When he returned, he gave me a white business card with an illustration of a goofy-looking cross between a dog and a man. Beneath the drawing it simply said "Clyde Clod." I thought this was so cool. I copied that picture over and over and over again until I could draw Clyde blindfolded. Clyde became my alter ego, my trademark, my personal Alfred E. Neuman. I drew tall Clydes, short Clydes, fat Clydes, and Clydes with glasses. I drew Clyde's wife, Clydia, and little baby Clydes. I earned the admiration of my schoolmates

with my steady and unrelenting barrage of Clydes. Without ever realizing it, the muscles in my right hand were getting very used to drawing.

When I entered my years of puberty, "blank books" started to become popular. Some marketing genius had zeroed in on me as the target. After I filled one book, I would begin another. All and all I have filled nearly twenty journals. For a while I numbered them. That became senseless. I could never find anything in them anyway.

My fascination was in the process of filling a blank page. Some fantasy in the young mind leads one to believe that one's personal experience is in some way valuable or important; that others may perhaps find benefit or inspiration in the occurrences of the past. This is of course an idealistic, arrogant and self-deluded fallacy.

Many nights I would sit down with my journals and write demented, boring, uninspired gibberish. Sometimes I would draw frighteningly embarrassing pictures. I would usually try to remove or cover these failures with photographs or magazine clippings if I had the energy. Sometimes I would create something that seemed right. While in the process of creating, I always believed I was embarking upon something of great importance.

That's the fuel of dreams. I dreamed I would be famous some day. Power didn't interest me very much. Money interested me, but only on the coattails of fame. I figured that I would pump out a miniature sub-culture that, in a roundabout way, would bring me respect, admiration, acceptance, notoriety, women, and multiple offers from talk show hosts that were willing to indefinitely fund my irresponsibility.

I suppose that may be what has happened.



Bill, Dick, John & Tom, circa 1955.

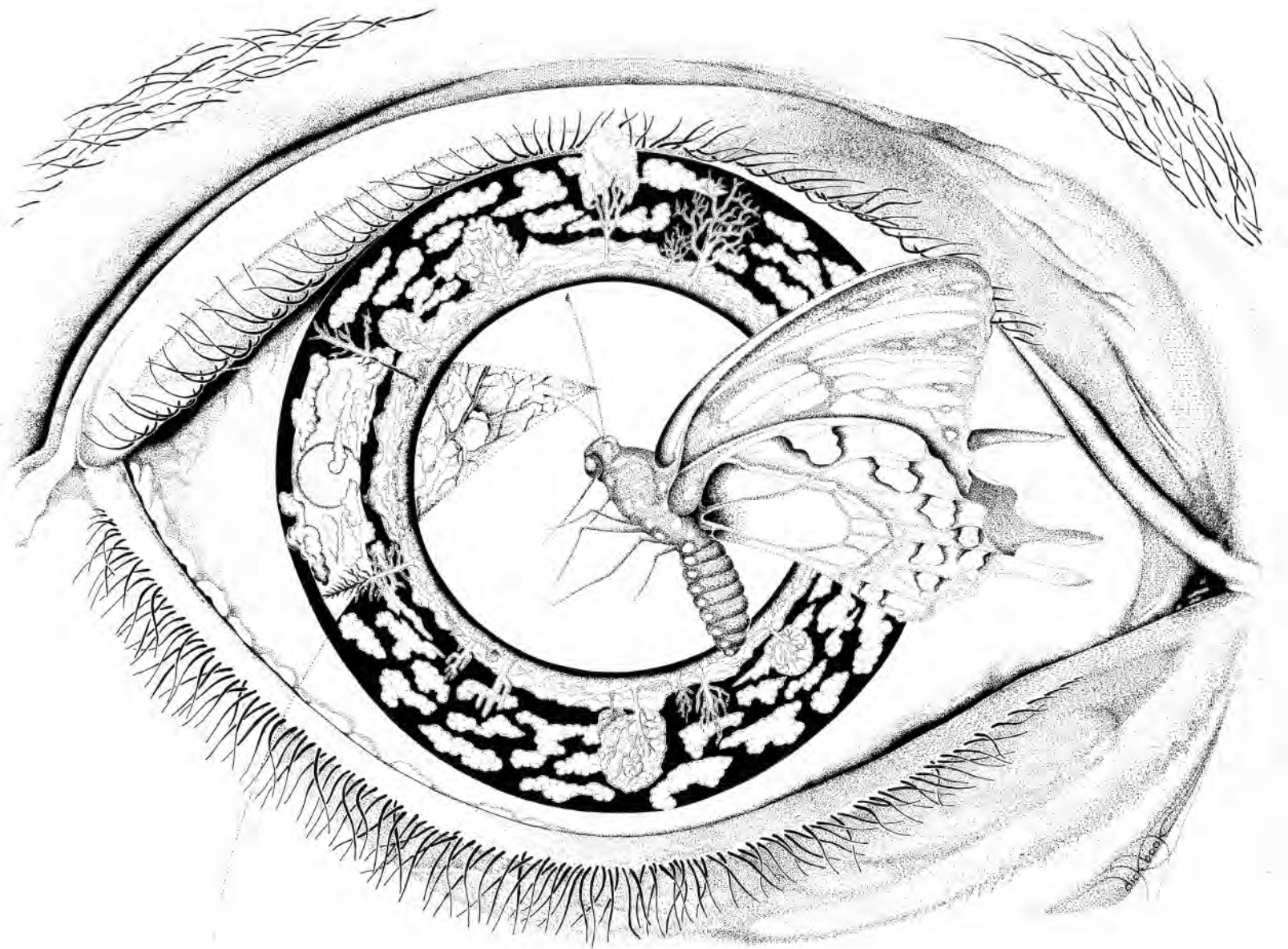
Respect For Vision

At age six, I found myself sitting on the curbstone with Richie Redline, my next door neighbor, counting the broken metal bristles from the giant orange street cleaner that invaded our block once a month with its spraying water and wide circular brushes. These bristles were seven or eight inches long, jagged on one end from where the brittle metal had snapped from a sudden bump or manhole cover, and sharply pointed on the other from constant grinding against the asphalt and gravel of suburban streets. We had collected fifty or sixty of these treasures over about a five-block area. We undertook various projects with the bristles, the most intriguing of which involved flexing them between the thumb and middle finger until they sprang with a pinging sound out of our hands, across the street with lightning speed toward Mrs. Downey's picture window. This was great fun for us, though Mrs. Downey, good-natured as she was, failed to see the humor in it.

It was then on that clear and vivid June afternoon near the yellow fire hydrant that one such missile backfired its way into the pupil of my right eye. A red curtain draped downward across my vision and I ran to the back door screaming, holding the blood back with my hand.

Horried, my mother provided immediate aid with a clean moist dishtowel. Holding me with one arm, she dialed Gaylord Ojers with the other. Dr. Ojers, a neighbor and friend of the family, was an eye specialist and surgeon. Ironically, the local optician's daughter had had a similar accident weeks earlier in Dr. Ojers' back yard.

Within twenty minutes, we met him at the hospital. After a quick assessment, he cautioned that there was a 50/50 chance that I would lose sight in that eye. Several hours later, I awoke in bed with both eyes bandaged shut. The darkness helped prevent any motor activity from disturbing the stitches in my cornea. For the better part of a month, I was totally blind. My mother and an assortment of nurses and family friends read vivid stories to me daily. In the adjacent bed, there was a young weight lifter who had sustained serious injury to his face while bench pressing a heavy barbell. I remember the nurses talking about his jaw. They said there was



Three Worlds, Pen & Ink, circa 1973.

an opening from the underside of his chin to the inside of his mouth. Naturally he couldn't talk to me, and I couldn't see him. What a pathetic pair we were. There was a mysterious partition between us. Eventually he was removed for oral surgery.

After a few weeks, the doctors finally removed the bandages from my good eye. They had taped a blue translucent cone over the other that prevented any direct light from shocking the healing tissues. The operation had been somewhat successful since I could see patches of light. For the next week my world was shaded in blue, but a small portion of the cone was snipped each day revealing an increasingly larger circle of the world until finally I found myself

back at home in wrap-around sunglasses.

Many years later on a bright afternoon, I walked the four meandering blocks to Dr. Ojers' home. On the way, I savored the fresh chlorophyll of the grass, the collage of lime, grey and tan in the sycamore bark, and the ant-colonized crevices between the worn sidewalks. Since emerging from my darkness, I have never taken these small details for granted.

Dr. Ojers had retired from practice. When he answered the door, he looked different than I had remembered; weary perhaps, his skin looser and lacking color, but his eyes were still clear and kind. I presented him with my framed illustration of *The Old Grist Mill* (See Page 94) and he understood.

Visual Distortion

Not long after returning home from the hospital, I stood in the hallway and gazed at the light streaming in through the windowpanes. Sunrays seemed to be entering my eye through the damaged portion of the iris and an unusual diffraction was occurring. I envisioned giant atoms, electrons, and molecules floating in thin air, emblazoned with pastel rainbows and illuminated star patterns.

With my left eye closed, my vision could be broken down into split images. A slow and careful rotation of my head could increase the separation of these images. With careful concentration, it became apparent that one image was emanating from the natural opening of the pupil; a second less distinct "ghost" image came through that area of the iris that had been surgically removed.

Remaining stationary for any length of time would cause my right eye to focus differently from the left. By allowing these two disparate images to merge, I could cause objects to distort and expand, though the effect could be terminated quickly by redirecting my focus into the distance.

The natural surface of the cornea is smooth and glassy, but with significant scar tissue from sutures, mine had become quite irregular. With my head at just the right angle to a light source, I learned to manipulate my vision to produce rather spectacular and entertaining prismatic effects.

Since very little contraction of the damaged portion of the iris was possible, being in bright sunlight was very difficult. Tossing a tennis ball into the air for a serve was especially hard. My right eyebrow began to hang slightly lower to compensate and facial lines became more defined from squinting.

Only in rare instances of very bright light, did I actually see vibrant color out of the right eye. In normal light I perceived primarily diffused or muted color as lesser fractions of their full intensity.

Ironically, I grew thankful for the accident. It provided me with a unique and bizarre perspective that enhanced my visual appreciation and provided fuel for my creativity. Poor eyesight forced me to work in very close proximity to my drawings and to examine objects with a progressively more neurotic obsession for detail.

Conventional art instruction encourages standing back and looking at the whole picture. Of necessity, I defied convention, making a concerted effort to construct larger images from smaller pieces. In a sculptural sense, this was more akin to assembling shapes with grains of sand as opposed to chipping away from a block of stone.

The temporary deprivation of any perception is perhaps vital to the true appreciation of that sense. The complete loss of a sensation is known to strengthen the remaining ones. The five perceptions (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting) are our only connections with reality. Without them, we have no vantage point for consciousness.



Flames of Vision (Detail), Pencil Sketch, 1975.

Dexterity & The Covert Childhood

While recuperating from the eye accident, my Uncle Jack had presented me with a popular toy called a "Labyrinth," a well-crafted wooden box about 14" square with a floating table. The tilt of the table could be controlled with two black knobs on the sides of the box. Sixty numbered holes were drilled into the table and an inked path wound a convoluted course that bypassed the holes. The object was to navigate a small marble-sized metal ball through the maze without dropping into any of the holes. I was obsessed with this game and spent many thousands of hours mastering it to the point that I could traverse forward and backward as many as twenty five times throughout the course without failing. I began experimenting with two, then three balls at the same time. My eye/hand coordination was progressing at such an amazing rate that any developmental setbacks from my injury were certainly recovered and surpassed.

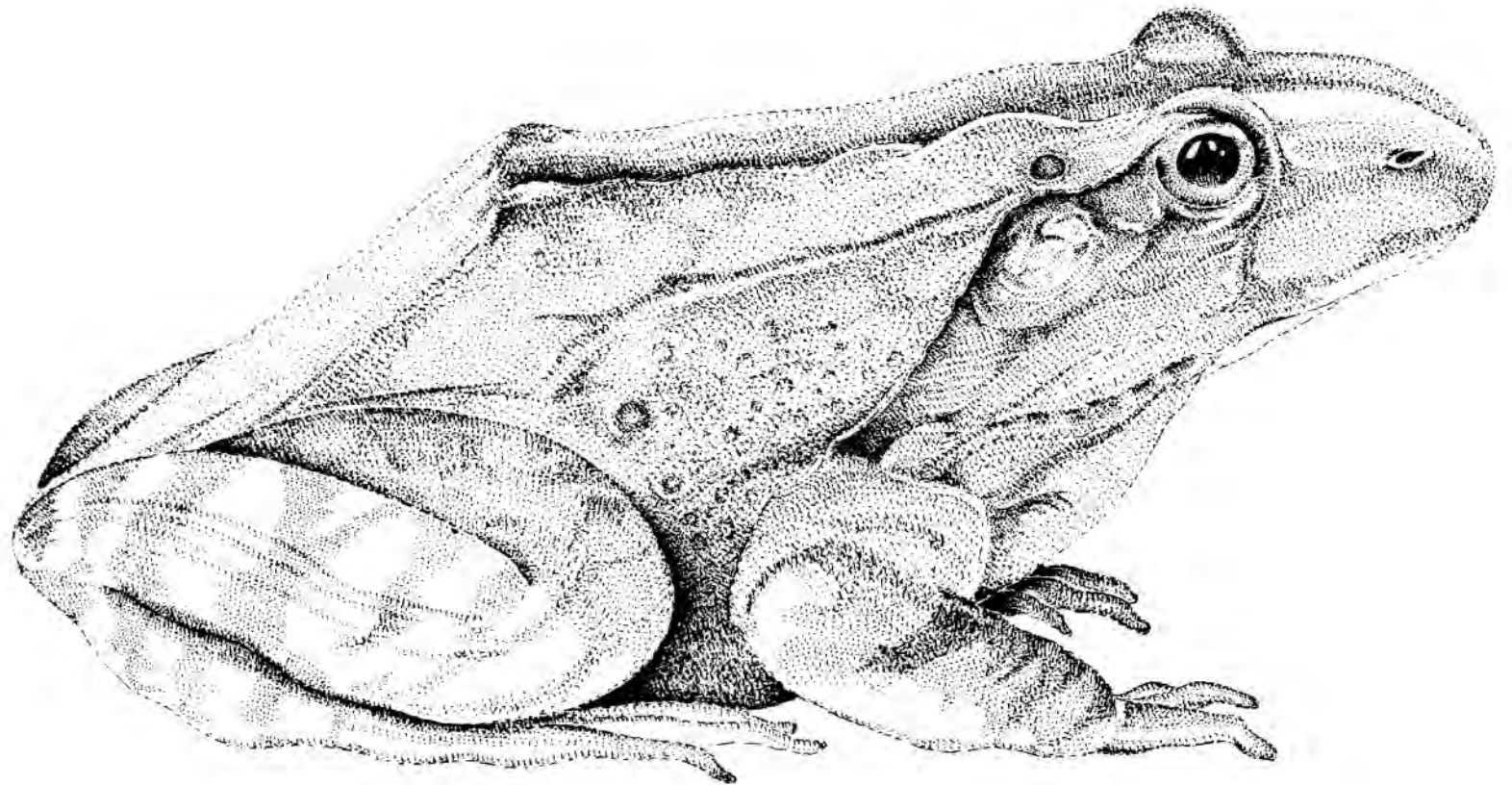
There were other childhood games that followed my obsession with the maze. One was "Tantalizer," a platform of sorts with an open top so that you could peer into it from above. There were two open sides as well, so that the right and left hands could perform various manual tasks within the arena. A visual blockade was placed so that you could not see what your hands were doing without looking into a mirror on the back wall of the platform. This forced the reversal of all operations into a backwards mode. I spent hours making backwards tracings of various geometric patterns supplied with the game, and my ability to work through the mirror became fairly refined.

I mention these two games because I believe that some perceptual changes were occurring. The optic nerve makes a crossover from the brain to the eye. A right-handed person generally develops a dominant right eye, so it naturally follows that the left side of the brain will develop more fully as a result. With such a severe impairment to my right eye, a forced shift in eye dominance was occurring. The weaker right side of the brain was developing. My manual dexterity gradually increased. I became fascinated with vision and medicine, and my natural childhood creativity started to intertwine with an unnatural obsession for mathematics.

Frog Medicine

As a child, I practiced calligraphy and spent an inordinate amount of time developing my handwriting. I made many tedious books ranging from illustrated flags of the world to collections of short poems in haiku meter. My experience in the hospital and my general proneness to accidents left me intrigued with the idea of becoming a doctor, and I spent many afternoons reading medical journals that were given to me by our family physician. I memorized the names of all the bones, arteries, muscles, nerves, and internal organs of the body and kept rather crude illustrations of this medical knowledge. I was particularly drawn to the many medical models like "The Visible Man," "The Visible Woman" (with fetus), "The Visible Brain," "The Visible Tooth," "The Visible Heart," and many other visible or dissectible biological specimens including frogs, lizards, dinosaurs; even the Visible Ford V-8 engine which seized up on me because I used vegetable oil instead of "3-in-1."

I remember dissecting frogs during summer vacation. This was done strictly in the name of research. The notion that animals might have rights had not yet merged with the social consciousness. After an involved explanation of my elaborate plans, I managed to bamboozle the local pharmacist out of a small vial of chloroform so that I could anesthetize my green patients with tiny gauze face masks. This proved ineffective and I was forced to secure their arms and legs to my corkboard surgical area with an assortment of my mother's hatpins. Following the textbook instructions, I made an incision with my scalpel in the shape of an "H" on the tender white underbelly. At the time, this reminded me of the small individual Kellogg's breakfast variety packs that if opened carefully, could be transformed into a makeshift milkproof cereal bowl. I carefully unfolded the skin, revealing each of the digestive tract organs one by one. With most of the entrails removed from the abdomen (but still quite attached and functional), I accidentally poked a nerve with the probe. To the horror of my gallery of nine-year-old onlookers, the frog twitched. Freeing itself of several pins, it hopped off awkwardly under my nearby bed, dragging the organs in tow. This effectively ended my career in medicine.



In Favor Of Frogs, Pen & Ink, 1974 (Collection Of Jim & Debbie Masker).

A Frog Leg Fantasy

We were young and there was a crystal clear Canadian gleam in our eyes. We would practice our agility by running along the jagged rocks. At that time frogs were certainly primary elements in our lives and we would spend our days corralling their slippery green bodies into bait buckets for the local fishermen.

So it was one day that Uncle Bob came up to us, thumbing his way through the almanac, explaining that the water was predestined to freeze in exactly 10 days, 4 hours, 17 minutes, and some seconds. This tiny fact intrigued us and we carried it around with us for a few days, allowing it to evolve from an improbable reality into an absurd fantasy.

And so, acting on blind intuition, we spent the next few days preparing for the freeze. I kept a sloppy record of the water temperature, attempting to forecast the exact moment. We covered the entire edge of the bay, planting small arsenals of Black Cat firecrackers and M-80s left over from the Fourth of July. Carefully, we attached high speed fuses between the power nests. I

checked my system to the last detail.

On the day of the freeze, I sat patiently with my thermometer immersed at the water's edge and waited. Uncle Bob was right, even though it didn't happen exactly when it was supposed to.

Just before nine o'clock, the thermometer read 31.9° and the firecrackers detonated. As planned, all of the frogs were instantaneously startled. They all jumped head first into the water just as the water was freezing. A few lazy frogs that jumped too late hit their heads on the new-formed ice and went limping off in confusion, but the majority hit the surface perfectly and were caught head first, frozen at their waists, their legs skyward and kicking.

Two days later, when the ice was hard enough to walk on, we rigged up the canvas basket on the electric power mower and quickly cut eight bushels of frozen frog legs. They taste like chicken drum sticks when they're lightly breaded.

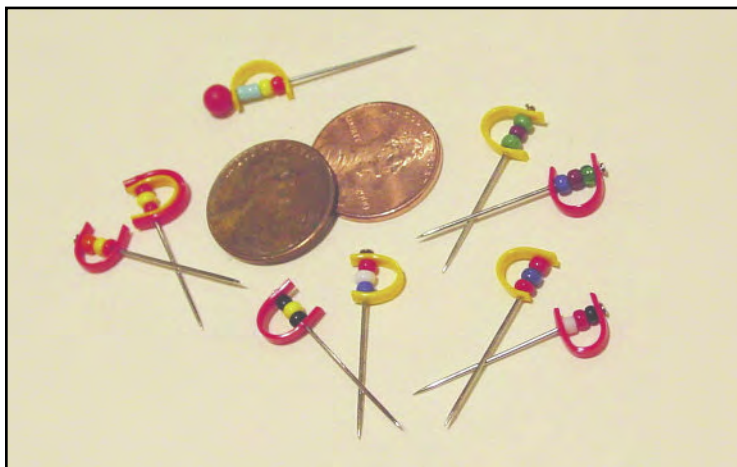
That was years ago though. Now I am in favor of frogs and would never allow a frog leg fantasy to ever become a reality.

The Darker Side

In the meantime, my brother Tom had devolved into a lifeguard at the local pool. While not engaged in the rescue of innocent pubescent girls in bikinis, he spent his time mastering the art of braided lanyards. These brightly colored relics were fashioned to bear shiny chrome rescue whistles, a necessity of the job. Hence I was introduced to the art material "gimp," at the ripe age of seven.

At the time it seemed that there were few fruitful directions for a child's burgeoning creativity to follow. I fashioned tiny gimp handles that could be applied with three color-coordinated Indian beads onto the shaft of an ordinary sewing pin. These made very attractive miniature swords with highly decorative hilts; novelties that sold quickly and easily to droves of second graders at Edgeboro Elementary School for a penny apiece. Armed to the teeth with their Boakian weapons, a near-riot ensued on the playground that afternoon, resulting in my brief but traumatic one-day suspension from the second grade. My parents were cautioned to regulate my commercial enterprises thereafter.

During these relatively uneventful but highly formative years, I observed my friend Timothy Sloyer crash his bicycle into the front of an Impala. I cried with confusion at my grandfather's funeral following his aortic aneurysm. Dared by a classmate, I vented my frustration one evening by breaking off several car antennas in sheer terror, hiding in the dark bushes, my heart racing. I smoked sugar-tipped cigars and attempted to mask the odor by gargling with mouthfuls of Crest toothpaste prior to facing



Gimp & Indian Bead Lancers With Pennies, circa 1956.



Mr. Stripes, circa 1955.

my father as he unlocked the front door. Lacking a proper can opener, I broke the neck off of a quart bottle of Budweiser and guzzled it away, jagged glass to my lips, all as a subconscious contribution to my impending machismo.

Speaking of machismo, my older brother Bill was quite the athlete. An entire wing of the cheerleading squad was assigned to his personal bolstering. He was a particularly exceptional tennis player and had attained the #1 position on the high school team in his sophomore year. We worshiped him!

From the age of five, I had been carefully groomed to follow in his competitive footsteps. I practiced incessantly and could fire up a serve or put away a slam with the best of them. My one significant shortcoming was that at 4' 10", I could barely see over the net.

Billy Buck was my tennis friend and though he was older, we shared the same age bracket. We were equally matched, but given that he was several feet taller than I was, he had a natural advantage. To my great frustration, he would generally beat me, or I would defeat myself, especially in the important matches.

So Billy Buck ranked #1, and I was #2. We would carpool off to tournaments together in station wagons. He would win all of his matches and I would win all of mine, and accordingly we would end up in the finals opposite each other. Without

exception, he would take home the winner's trophy. In a remarkably short time span, I amassed several dozen trophies that were quite impressive until close inspection revealed the sad epitaph "Runner Up" engraved on each of the brass plates.

I became increasingly frustrated with this predicament and began to vent my anger by banging my racket against the court. On one sunny day in July, I found myself at the Sand Island Tennis Club in Bethlehem for the city tournament. I looked around. I couldn't believe it. There was no sign of Billy Buck anywhere. This would be my lucky day, my shining moment. To the delight and applause of an overflowing spectator gallery, I pounded my way through four quick matches only to find that I was pitted in the finals against none other than the king of lobs himself, Philadelphia's finest, Richard Cohen.

Richard Cohen was not an inspired or exciting tennis player. In fact he was immensely boring, and to top it off, his annoying mother accompanied him to all of his tournaments. He was, however, persevering and consistent to a tee. I would serve up a fireball to him – one that would easily singe any other opponent – and Richard would calmly angle his racket at the ball, lightly lobbing my thunderous serve back across the net in a high arc. I would squint into the sun, position myself carefully, and slam the living daylights out of the ball. Ping. He



Proverbial Alfred E. Neuman Complex, circa 1957.

would lob it back. Slam, ping, slam, ping, slam, ping..... for twenty volleys until I would lose patience and impale one into the back fence.

He pulverized me. At match point, I slammed my racket down so hard that it shattered into a dozen pathetic splinters. I was so ashamed. I couldn't even look him in the eye or shake his hand like the good sport that my father had so carefully tried to groom. Instead, I ran off the court into the bushes where I fell apart in an uncontrollable breakdown.

I never entered another tennis competition. With this, the termination of my tennis career, I placed my temper on permanent notice. I would never again expose myself to a situation that would allow such venom to be released. For better, or more likely for worse, I, like so many of my fellow males, would learn to suppress any undesirable emotions, packing them firmly down into the compressed murky well of the psyche.

One positive aspect was that with more time on my hands, I gradually acknowledged my more sensitive side. I became enamored with my schoolmate Nancy Cliff, and I showered her with platonic poetry and Mars® "Forever Yours" candy bars during our covert meetings at Holly's Woods between the school playground and the cemetery.

In my sphere of male comrades, there were two kinds of kids. There were the cool guys with their tight T-shirts, pegged pants, white socks, pointed



Chevy Tailfin Glasses, circa 1959.



Dorky wrestling pose, 1961.

shoes, and greased-up dos. These Marlboro-puffing Fonzarellies were from Pembroke Village across the tracks, better known as "the project." I, on the other hand, was spawned in the cozy middle class splendor of Edgeboro Manor. My fellow pre-pubescent cronies were an array of pimple-faced mini-Mafiosos and dorky street urchins. To the delight of my parents, I was a well-dressed little cake with my hand-knit sweaters and penny loafers. But to be cool and stay popular, I made sure that I nurtured the Mick Jagger within, risking detention with the occasional thirty-second butt break in the boys' room, or chancing certain expulsion by flushing contraband M-80s down the toilets.

Honestly, I wasn't faring well as a teenage hoodlum. I just didn't look the part. I was only 85 pounds, barely five feet, and my mother had outfitted me with a pair of light gray and blue plastic glasses with temples that resembled the tailfins of a '57 Chevy. I did, however, have a well-developed sense of humor. So armed with my monaural 33 1/3 LP of Vaughn Meader's comical parody of John F. Kennedy, I thrilled my classmates in a bold and highly successful bid for Student Council President. Rodney Butch, a handsome, red-headed, highly

qualified straight-A genius was no match for my perfectly intonated Bostonian rendition of "Ask not what your school can do for you...." especially since the entire front row in the auditorium that morning was stocked with hand-picked female campaigners who upon the conclusion of my comical oratory, stood up and held brilliantly colored letter panels that spelled out: "VOTE FOR BOAK." It was breathtaking..... a nearly unanimous shoe-in.

Six months later, I was personally devastated by the assassination of the young and charismatic president and I was quickly faced with the fact that I was grossly unqualified as a politician and equally unorganized. But with the very patient counseling and understanding of Mr. Mavis, our Social Studies teacher and Student Council advisor, I immersed myself in social consciousness. Through an incredibly high-pressured sales campaign of very low quality confections, my little constituency of Northeast Junior High School student council members were able to coerce enough cash from the local community to install 48 linear feet of wooden benches in front of the school, plant two lovely red



A mostly recovered Timothy Sloyer presents the John F. Kennedy Memorial Citizenship Award, 1961.

maple trees near the bus stop, and “adopt” two destitute Asian refugee children through a mail order contribution of \$244 each. This last altruistic effort, we were assured, kept our adoptees fully supplied with milk, food and clothing for a year, though now I suspect that the funds probably never got much further than Paramus, New Jersey.

As Student Council President, it became even more of a challenge to balance my image and remain popular. To keep my darker side alive, I perfected my billiard skills under the wry tutelage of my pool hall professor, “Fast Blackie” Krajczar. At Blackie’s, I maintained my connection with the less fortunate, often returning home with their precious dollars, gambled and won in thrilling money games of eight-ball, nine-ball and straight pool.

In junior high school, I became engrossed with soccer. Brother Bill was center halfback for the Liberty High School “Hurricanes,” a team that drew its talent from thousands of immigrant European families that had moved to Bethlehem to work in the steel mills. The effect on the local soccer team was dramatic. They were undefeated for more than a decade. In fact, they went for several years without any goals being scored against them. It was both exciting and pitiful to watch.

Louie Vida was a terrific player and we became great friends. His family had fled Hungary during the communist insurgency. The family had been well off



Fresh from Hungary, the Vida family vigorously pursued the American Dream and gradually found their piece of it.



The undefeated Liberty High School soccer team included me (glasses) and my lifelong friend, Louie Vida.

in Hungary, but had used their money and influence to flee the country. Louie’s father was a tailor of extraordinary talent, but he spoke very little English and it was difficult for him to get a decent job. They settled out of necessity in a very poor ethnic section of southeast Bethlehem.

One weekend, Louie invited me to come over to his neighborhood to play soccer. I went in my clean corduroys and button-down shirt. Let’s just say I got a little “roughed up” by some of the project kids and I went home looking considerably worse than when I arrived. I was determined that I would learn to act and dress in a way that would gain acceptance into their circle.

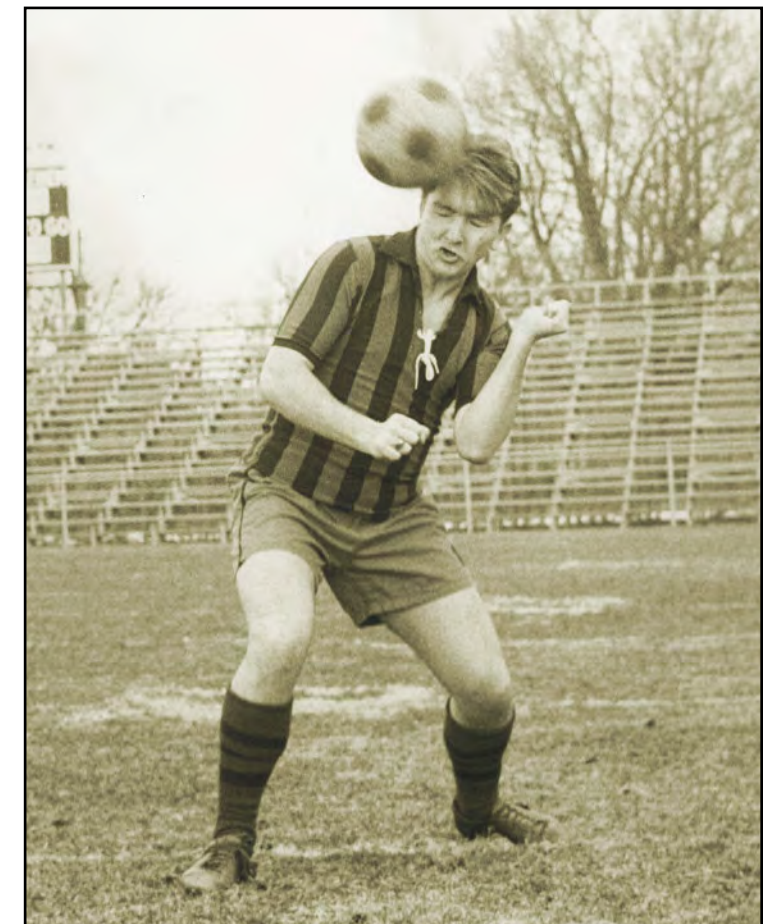
On my next visit, I dressed in a torn oil-stained gray sweatshirt with a pair of frayed jeans. Louie expended some energy toward my protection as well, and so through soccer, I learned to empathize with the less fortunate. To the dismay of my parents, I was aspiring to be one of them.

Louie’s family gradually worked their way out of the project into a nicer suburb just north of town. During my visits there, Louie’s mother embraced me (quite literally) as her own. She would sit me down on her old couch and serve me up a huge plate of home-baked Hungarian pastries. I was vigorously and repeatedly encouraged to consume several times

my body weight of these offerings, washed down with illicit sips of cognac. I suspect that my bloated cries did not translate well into Hungarian language or custom. Mrs. Vida remained intent to put some meat on my lanky bones.

“Dickie... eat! Dickie... eat!” was her plea until I would apologetically beg leave of the Vida household and wobble home.

And so, I learned the ways of the real world and my sense of social conscience and justice developed. Regardless of any latent integrity, I was still entangled in the web of hopeless adolescence. An overabundance of neighborhood necking parties led to a fairly debilitating case of mononucleosis. This did not bode well for my tenth grade attendance record or for my report card in general, especially considering my near-nightly deception of library excursions that generally led me to the stairwell of Blackie Krajczar’s Golden Cue Billiard Parlor. I didn’t know it at the time, but my public school days were numbered.



The soccer ball clearly knocked some sense into Louie Vida who succeeded in family dentistry as well as life in general.

Song For Blackie

"Blackie Krajczar; Billiards Expert,"
 headline in the news.....
 silver cue stick, khaki pants,
 and worn out Navy shoes.
 Strutting round the table
 with his cocky boyish grin;
 looking up, he takes a stroke,
 the seven ball drops in.
 Gamblers gaping, Blackie pacing
 looking for a duck.....
 Sees a dead one lying there
 glistening with luck.
 Smack! The cue ball rebounds.
 The nine ball hits its mark.
 The eight balls in his sockets
 illuminate with sparks.
 Ten ball in the corner.
 Two ball in the side.
 Twelve ball off the cushion.
 Four ball on the slide.
 One ball, low left english.
 Three ball, double kiss.
 Five ball, combination.....
 never did he miss.

I started cleaning tables
 and sanding reglued tips.
 I based my pride on excellence
 and flawless pinball flips.
 Blackie was my hero,
 my teacher and my friend.
 He taught me billiards graciously
 until the bitter end.
 Some bastards drag his name down
 because he hit the tracks.
 They say Mosconi beat him
 but they didn't have the facts.
 Blackie was a hustler.
 He sometimes played his best,
 and when he did not even Fats
 could put him to the test.....

If you go to the pool hall
 be sure to chalk the stick.
 Keep your eye upon the object ball
 and everything will click.
 Be aware of your position.
 Gamble if you choose,
 but never take the apple
 or most certainly you'll lose.

"Blackie Krajczar; Billiards Expert,"
 headlines in the news.....
 died the other evening
 and left me with the blues.

Photograph Courtesy of Ethel Foley



"Fast Blackie" Krajczar with a perfectly set break shot at his Golden Cue Billiards Parlor in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Blackie, Billiards & The Road To Ruin

During junior high school I continued my focus on drawing, science and mathematics, though the billiard parlor down the street began to lead me astray. A colorful and charismatic character named Blackie Krajczar owned and occupied the premises. Blackie schooled me in the art of handling a cuestick and I was introduced to the cocky jargon that pervades such places. In return, I brushed down the tables and swept the floors. At the age of eleven I was earning a modest income gambling with high school students who thought they could shake a few dollars out of a naive kid.

Blackie was an extraordinary pocket billiard player. There was a steady stream of billiard greats in and out of his establishment, from Minnesota Fats to Ralph Greenleaf to Willie Mosconi. They would drive in from New York and invariably a big money game would transpire. Most of the time Blackie would win.

One day there was a big money game going on. The air was very tense. Blackie was behind, but it was his shot and he was on a run of nearly 100 balls. There were a lot of people watching. I was standing in the corner with a bottle

of ice-cold orange soda. Blackie reached across the table to make a difficult shot and that's the moment the orange soda bottle slipped out of my hands and smashed on the floor. Blackie missed the shot and his opponent ran the rest of the rack. I was devastated. He didn't speak with me for days, but eventually we got back on track.

Though I never observed this first hand, Blackie loved to go the race track where it was rumored he would wager the substantial winnings from his billiard gamblings. In due time he lost the pool hall, but he was remarkably resilient if not outright lucky. He would soon resurface in another location – his loyal clientele following him wherever he might go.

Blackie was respected as one of the top billiard players in the world, but he was resented by those who envied his talent. When he died at the age of 54, an inadequate eulogy appeared in the obituary of the local papers, accompanied with a photo that showed him with his coveted cue stick and that devilishly confident gleam in his eyes that was his trademark.

John "Blackie" Krajczar, 54, of 2410 Covington Ave., expert billiards player, former city fireman and former owner of city billiards parlors, was pronounced dead on arrival Saturday at St. Luke's Hospital where he was taken from his home. He was the husband of Mrs. Eileen Lofts Krajczar.

Mr. Krajczar, who had engaged in national billiards competition, opened several establishments for the sport in Bethlehem since 1965, last operating one on E. Broad St. until a year ago. He at one time worked at Sarco Manufacturing Co., Allentown.

Several years later, I acquired a beautiful antique Brunswick billiards table with a three-piece slate surface. As part of the restoration of the old table, I inset a small ebony plaque about the size of an index card into the Brazilian rosewood rail above the ball return. On it, inlaid in mother of pearl, is the inscription:



All intentionally successful shots made on that table are dedicated to the memory of Blackie Krajczar.



A serene sunset at Iron City Fishing Club on Georgian Bay.

Keeping Store

A week following my sixteenth birthday, I boarded a Greyhound bus for Pittsburgh where I met up with fifteen other teenagers who had the distinct fortune of being hired for a summer of work at Iron City, a members-only fishing club just south of Parry Sound, Ontario, Canada. We bussed to Buffalo, then around Toronto and up to the beautiful windswept islands of Lake Huron's Georgian Bay.

I had worked the previous summer as a waiter and had graduated to the lofty and more desirable position of storekeeper. My storekeeping partner and roommate was Rusty McCrady, who took to calling me "old man." I wasn't very old, nor was I even remotely close to manhood, but I was generally looking for new ways to test my cleverness and bold defiance. Rusty was a willing co-conspirator and the store provided a daily array of prime opportunities.

The store was tiny; perhaps sixteen feet square, with a hinged flap that folded up, yielding a large window and service counter. The store existed to supply basic provisions to the members and their children during the two-month outing period from early July to late August. The inventory was limited to an assortment of candy bars, tonic and soda (referred to in Canada as "pop"), crackers and nuts, toilet paper, light bulbs, post cards, stamps, worms for fishing and gasoline for boating.

I had a terrific little eight-foot hydroplane that I had built in junior high school shop class thanks to my very open-minded and patient shop teacher, Les Gosling. The plans were gleaned from a cover story in *Science & Mechanics* magazine that falsely boasted: "Build Your Own Hydroplane For Under \$15 In Eight Hours!" After \$300 and eight months, the boat made its glorious emergence from the shop. I accurately dubbed it *The Whiplash* and painted it bright yellow with red racing stripes and a small eight ball dotting the "i." In spite of a bewildered customs official, the boat made it into Canada atop the family station wagon. Upon arrival, the transom was christened with a ten horsepower Scott Atwater outboard engine that zipped the tiny wedge across the bay at thirty-eight miles an hour – a veritable Harley on the water. Might I add that there were several adorable teenage girls that were titillated with me and my little racing boat, and they lined up for free fifteen-minute rides. After several weeks of storekeeping, however, my meager summer salary



The Iron City Fishing Club store.



This studly photo from the cover of Science & Mechanics magazine inspired the construction of my personal hydroplane.

was nearly fully consumed refueling *The Whiplash*. In desperation, I sought alternative methods for maintaining my mobility and popularity.

In order to reach the boats at the dock, the gasoline hose was quite long. Accordingly, it held about a half a gallon of gas between the meter and the nozzle. The pump was very primitive, as was the Canadian Borough of Weights & Measures. One day I discovered quite by accident that after servicing a customer, the meter could be keyed off and the hose could be drained. Conveniently, there were dozens of empty quart containers in the garbage can on the dock. These were left over from dispensing oil into the gas mix, one bottle per five-gallon tank. I drained the hose into two of these quart bottles that by some stroke of luck had just enough oil residue left over to produce the perfect ratio for my little engine. I tucked these two quarts away. A few minutes later the next customer pulled up to the dock for gas. The moment I squeezed the pump trigger, I watched with fascination as the meter jumped instantaneously ahead to \$0.85, accounting for the gas I had drained. It occurred to me then that the trick was to engage each customer in conversation when the dispensing began so that they didn't see the pump jump ahead. Fortunately, all of our customers were fairly well to do. Rusty and I rationalized our deception as a sort of taxation for our courteous services. Rusty thought it gave new meaning to the term "a proper hosing."



Christened in July of 1965, "The Whiplash" makes its maiden voyage from the back bay of Iron City Fishing Club.

So the quarts accumulated into gallons and *The Whiplash* sped endlessly around the bay. A few miles away was Camp Hurontario, a rustic summer facility where parents could deposit their offspring for three-and-a-half weeks of canoeing, island-hopping, camping and character building. Every day, the supply boat from Parry Sound would bring a large gray canvas bag full of Iron City mail. It was our job to unpack and sort these letters and packages into alphabetized cubbyholes so that the members could pick up their mail after lunch. Occasionally (and quite by accident), we would receive Camp Hurontario mail mixed in with our parcels.

Hurontario mail was mostly comprised of hastily wrapped care packages from guilt-ridden moms and dads. The boxes were usually dog-eared or badly damaged in transit and often the contents were exposed or ready to spill. With such cases Rusty and I took it upon ourselves, unauthorized postal inspectors that we were, to confiscate any items we considered contraband (or useful) prior to sealing up the packages for eventual forwarding. Such items included, but were not limited to, chewing gum, home baked chocolate chip cookies, bikini bathing suits, risqué paperback novels and loose change.

After the canvas bag was fully assimilated, it would reside up on a hook in the corner until the next morning when it was exchanged for a full load of mail. A raucous band of little kids were always

hanging around the store. Given the right ratio of sugar and carbonation, they could rise to unprecedented obnoxiousness. Rusty and I usually took this in good stride until one of the little varmints would cross the line. This would require drastic and immediate action. We would seize our "prisoners" through the open counter window, hoist their pint-size bodies head or feet first into the store interior, stuff them into the canvas mailbag and cinch them up onto the hanging hook. Of course we left an ample opening at the top for air, and if there were ever any sign of tears or panic, we would negotiate their quick release. Typically though, the children flocked to our perimeter and misbehaved with the sole intent of becoming our captives.

There were many loopholes in the loosely knit storekeeping system and as red-blooded American teenagers, we sought to uncover them all. For one, the Canadian government had made one major error in planning their six percent provincial sales tax chart. A customer could come in and buy a bottle of pop for a quarter and not pay any sales tax, but if they spent twenty-six cents or more the tax would kick in. So when the cabin owners came by to replenish their supply of soda and mixers, we would diligently calculate and collect their payment, including all applicable taxes. After carting the cases away, Rusty and I would ring each bottle into the register individually and throw the extra change into a cigar box for staff-related entitlements.



A small technical glitch in the fuel dispensing mechanism led to a summer of tenuous yet free nautical navigation.



The ICFC Bell calls campers to every meal. This is a special place of family traditions, in spite of my teenage shenanigans.

So that the members, especially their children, did not have to carry around cash or change, a punch card system was initiated wherein five or ten dollar cards could be charged to each member's account. There were at minimum four inherent flaws in this system, Rusty and I being flaws number one and two respectively. Flaw number three was that the younger children, let alone the general membership, were incapable of tracking even the approximate amount of expenditures made on these cards. Flaw number four was that people would depart camp without checking to see whether there was any remainder left on their cards, which there almost always was. Multiply these flaws times the hordes of campers that arrived and departed every summer, then add in the tenuous earnings from the Canadian sales tax kitty, and the result was that the storekeepers were cunningly, albeit unfairly, treated to free sodas, candy bars, worms for fishing, peanuts for our domesticated chipmunk population, and only when absolutely necessary..... Ivory soap.

In revealing these misdemeanors, I extend my sincere apologies to any unsuspecting victims. I am hopeful that the same statute of limitations and leniency toward juvenile offenders exists in Canada as it does in the USA. In the event that I have unveiled any deviant behavior still being applied by modern-day teenagers, I'm sorry but you'll just have to rise to a higher level of resourcefulness.

Photo by Tallie Sloan



Cover Of "Meta-morphosis." Silkscreened, 1966

Blair

The Boak family's creative, athletic and witty third son was going down the road to ruin. This was unacceptable. My parents had close friends whose son Buzzy was attending Blair Academy, a private boarding school for "young men" in the tiny hamlet of Blairstown, New Jersey. I was ushered there in my suit and tie for a meeting with an overly starched admissions director who explained to my parents with great concern and detail that my prior year's showing would require that I repeat a sophomore year at Blair. With great dismay, I packed my bags and left my entire world behind me.

It didn't take me long to reinvent myself in my new environment, though I had a difficult time accepting that I was now what I had previously come to despise.... a preppy. I was effective, however, in projecting an Eddie Haskell charade upon my dormitory masters and classroom instructors. For my fellow students I maintained my truer self perhaps: the devious and clever prankster, cigarette smoker, dare taker, Beatles mop-top, and impish comedian.

The Middle Class Tragedy

(from *Metamorphosis*, 1967)

(8:00 am)

And the sun rises again
over the white-washed microcosm.
Then through the arteries of the house
flow simultaneously the tired bodies
down the staircase,
two by two,
upon the sunny side down eggs
lying cold in the kitchen.
Father's munching his corn flakes
guaranteed to stay crisp
(provided you keep him dry)
"Just a little squirt of rum
in my coffee please," he says.
"No cream or sugar.
It's much too early for that."
Mother's in complete frantic
(as Mother's usually are)
Grandfather didn't like the eggs,
Or the coffee, or for that matter, anything.
So he drank her cooking wine
And now there's nothing left for Mother's tantrum.
The kid's are crying already.
It seems that one wanted Kartoons
And the other wanted Kaptain Kangaroo!
So they compromised as children do,
To watch the channel 5 news
And seeing that neither wanted news
They cried instead.

(11:00 am)

But things are softer now.
Father's off to the office
And Granddad's out cold on the couch.
The baby's locked in the crib
Secured with cotton and barbed wire.
And the kids have gone to school
secured with smoke bombs and squirt guns.
Mother's fixing onion dip and crackers
with sprinklings of rare sugared ant wings,
and her hopes of maintaining
the utmost social status
are vain
without the garden delicacies
discussed with disgust
in the Wednesday Morning Flower Club.

(1:00 pm)

The party's over now and Mother,
again in complete frantic,
rants and raves
over the Gin, Vermouth and Bourbon
that so coincidentally walked unnoticed
out the door with the
Wednesday Morning Kleptomania Club.
A Salem to soothe the nerves
and a slow slow count
from one to five hundred.
Oh the hell of it all!
The kids will be home soon
Trailed by the usual toothleth leeches
And the stray wounded animals
Seeking the refuge of security.

If only they knew what security was like...

(3:00 pm)

"Bang you're dead!" and the kids are home
to crayon the walls
and trampoline the beds
and pinch the baby
and burn the sickly gray dog until -
it goes plowing out the door,
tail in mouth, seeking refuge.

(5:00 pm)

And then to Mother's pleasant surprise
the cute one has buried himself
in scores of Downy disposable diapers...
And the dog returns with father,
newspaper in mouth,
teethmarks to the "Great Society."

(6:00 pm)

Father's in his chair
slurping his martini
avoiding the olive
at the same time
staring through his toes
at the human comic strip.
And Mother's in the pantry
cooking marshmallows and Rice Krispies
with a pinch of arsenic
to keep the spirits up.
A smile of chagrin at the thought
of her cunning witch-like craft.
Granddad's playing double solitaire
with himself; jumping up
as fast as his heart will let him
to take the Queen of Hearts.
(the only card without a move)
He always did beat Grandma
when she was alive.
And John's in the cellar
with his beer and his billiard cue
shooting a masse with a left hand twist
on the twelve ball.
He made that shot once, but never since
and now he's a cross-eyed neurotic
locked happily in the cellar.
Only one member left in this family.
The dog, so wrongly named George,
and George's rabies shot is tomorrow
though he has no teeth;
he sits contented nibbling grass
and swallowing roaches that constitute
his healthy rabid diet.

(6:45 pm)

The house is quiet now
except for an occasional explosion
of Granddad tripping over a spade
or Mother's hungry disposal
or the cow-bell on the dog's tail.
Yes, all is quiet now
except for the kid who dared to cry.

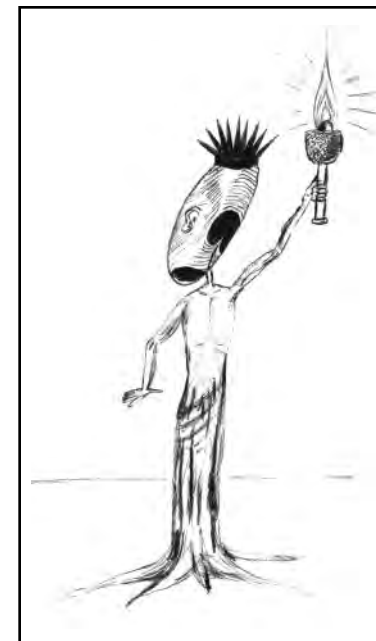
(6:46 pm)

But then it happened, without a word
and Father gulped six martinis
in amazingly rapid succession
over the King of Black Spades.
And the dog howled, and the kids cried
and Mother spilled the Rice Krispies
and John growled in the cellar.
Everyone wished they were dead
except Granddad, who lay out-
stretched upon the paisley carpet
and Father said one holeymary
and Mother crossed herself
and the kids cried some more
but the stillness prevailed...

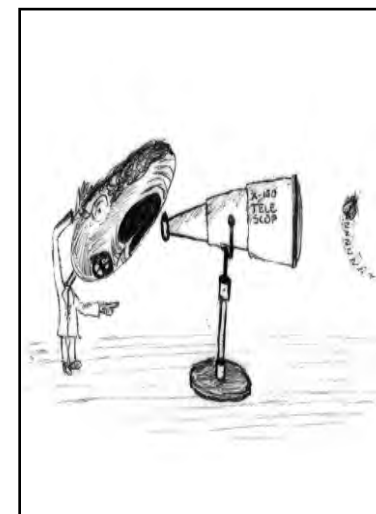
(7:00 pm)

Then Mother exclaimed, "Dinner is served."
Father staggered to the table
and George's dog food rolled unnoticed
under the cellar door.
No one said grace, except Granddad
who had other commitments (obviously)
as did everyone.

And then the roof fell in!



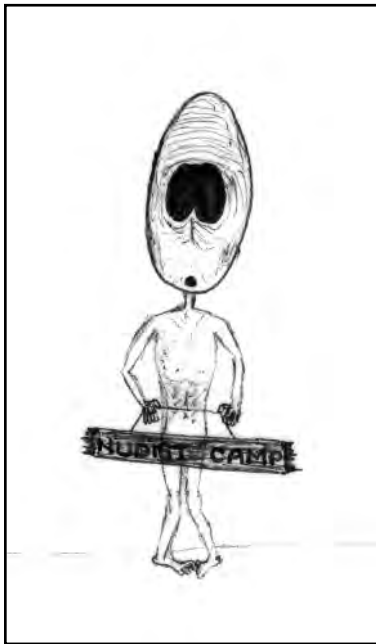
Freedom



Flaws Of Science



Peace



Nudity



Racism



Rain

(from Tears, 1968)

To A Janitor Crying In A Closet

Behind a locked door
with brooms and cleaning fluid,
brass door-knob polish and dirt stained rags;
his companions and possessions –
he sits, the sad king
of his own linoleum world,
with dust streaked tears,
dripping from a plaster face
into a waste can.
his friends are the neat jars
with their keen patented odors
sitting like grandmothers
on their dark wooden shelves
and the brushes and brooms hang
intently upright
listening to his inward sorrows
that never escape
closet doors.
the day is black behind his hidden door.
the keyhole is a star
in a universe of midnight secrets.
unseen in the dark
unseen in the smiling streets
he vanishes to the night – behind a locked door
labeled "Custodian"
where he weaves his crown of thorns.

Georgy Kessel's Dog

georgy kessel's dog died today
standing alone in the wet cement sidewalk
he waited eternally.....
frozen..... like a greek statue.
people walked by and laughed.
they'd never seen a dog cry
before.....
georgy kessel's dog died today
and a little boy with a beard
lay wounded in the grass and wept.
someone said it was georgy himself
but his parents denied it.
"georgy never had a beard"
until his dog died...

an immortal dog died today.
the mayor says he's very sorry
and he'll buy the kessels a new dog
after the sidewalk bill is paid
and this will never happen
but.....

georgy kessel's dog dies today
and everyday..... yesterday and tomorrow.
nobody cares
except a dog
and a small boy with a beard
running silently and still
toward an ice-glazed hill of Calvary.

A 3 1/2 X 2 1/2 Wallet Sized Photograph

I found you
waiting
in all of your platinum beauty
lying face down
on the wet sidewalk
dropped by some false grinning lover
by mistake (or otherwise)
into a thought
and I picked you up

wiped the grime from your textured face
dried your tears
smoothed out the cardboard wrinkles
and brought you back
to a black and white life

in my mind

I loved you
cherished you
as the only beauty in my world
your gentle image was close to me;
closer than you could have ever been

then
as if you knew my love
you walked away
mysteriously
through my fingers
away from my wallet
lost in a gutter
face up and waiting
with your posed smile

Love Is

Love isn't purple miniskirt
to green-eyelid kissed
or fancy flake fingernails
coated with silver cutex
glowing in
a darkness
or fake eye-brow blue
with comb and brush
teased
into tweezer desire.

Love isn't naked
navel
or pink pearl on paisley
or spider leg webbed stocking
cherished
in left rear levi pocket

Love isn't visible
to mascara drip-teared eyes
of un-beauty

these may be
but
Love Is.

The Last Page

The first word
and the last blood stained page
the last of faded frustrations
i feel diffused now
like the star's light
miles away yes
this word game
it's no good
the last page ruins it all
everything I say
is torn
by smiling prodigies
and frowning idiots
i'll tell the truth.
this page is five minutes of thought
unlike the rest
but don't worry about me
it's all a phase
and i don't believe a word i say

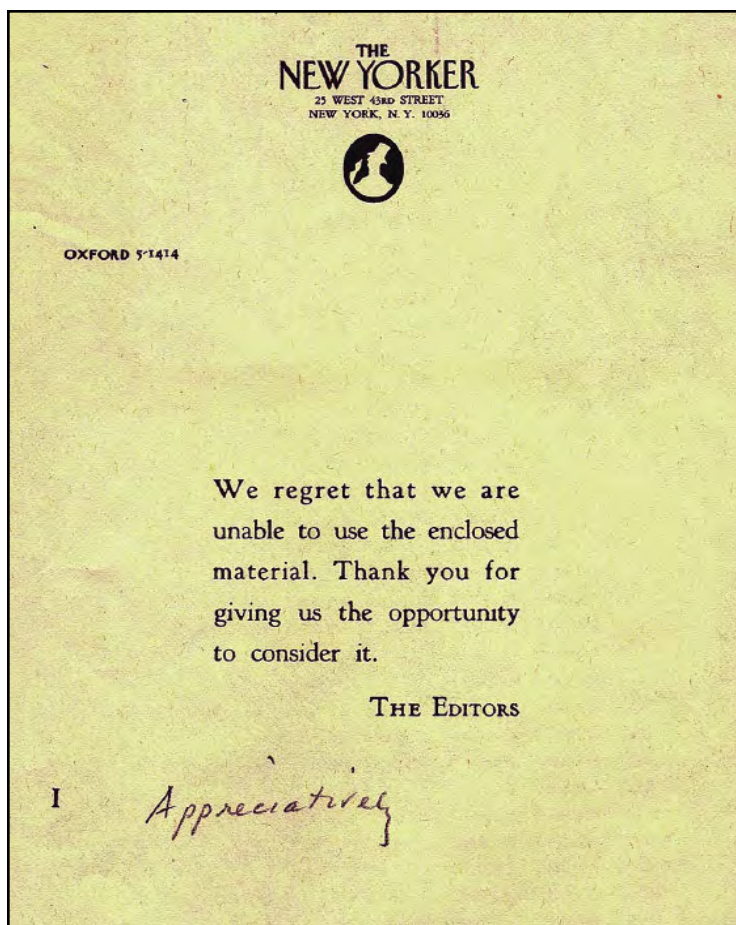
(even these last pages)



Cover of "Tears." Typed and spray painted. 1968

To Blair's credit, strict discipline forced me to maximize my capabilities and pursue my interests. An open-minded creative writing instructor exposed me to the beat poetry of Lawrence Ferlinghetti that fermented well with the Bob Dylan lyrics echoing from my contraband record turntable. Robert Atkinson, my drafting mentor, concurrently recognized my drawing skills and opted to develop them by tormenting me toward compulsive perfection of drafting detail in India ink. I responded well to these challenges and raised the ante by tackling the complete works of England's biting social satirist Evelyn Waugh.

I skipped sports for a semester in order to undertake a solo writing project wherein I isolated myself in the student lounge. Through a process of staring in deep contemplation, I managed to churn out daily mini-tragedies, often accompanied with crude and confusing illustrations. These were gathered and pruned into my first publication unoriginally entitled "*Meta-morphosis*," a Kafka-esque transformation of sorts to which, in my cockroach splendor, I was beginning to relate.



Encouraging letter from New Yorker Magazine. 1968

And so, my rare and forgotten first edition of 250 was painstakingly silkscreened and personally published on a hand-churned A. B. Dick mimeograph in the dusky basement of Locke Hall.

I was on my way.

My little publication was popular with the student body. I think they related to the general terror of being a teenager. As a self-appointed spokesman for my peers, I considered it my regular obligation to shock adults, especially my parents, at every possible opportunity. At home, this typically happened at, but was not limited to, the dinner table. The poetry I was writing certainly had the desired shock effect. My family as a whole had a difficult time understanding *The Middle Class Tragedy*. I had painted a rather dismal portrait of my father as an alcoholic, which he definitely was not. My mother was beleaguered in her noble attempt to raise four rambunctious sons, but she was not the frenetic or unstable socialite that I had described. And my brother John was doing the best he could do, given the calculated harassment that I put him

through. In hindsight, it appears I had borrowed images from my relatively normal, albeit "middle class" family and woven them into a web of exaggerated parity and satirical shock.

At last I had found my style!

College Prepped

Although I was #4 in my class of 100 at Blair, I didn't fare very well on my SATs. I was naturally adept at mathematics and I came away with very high scores in that area. But my real aspiration was to continue along a literary path as an English major so that I could pursue the lucrative field of poetry. My verbal scores, however, left serious doubt about my general intelligence. A second round of testing didn't improve the situation very much. My aspirations for Duke and Bucknell were shattered.

Given that I was a relatively good student left some hope for a college with more relaxed standards. I was, after all, a fine citizen, well rounded in athletics and extra curricular activities. My darker side remained my secret for the most part; at least it didn't come up during my token interview with the Admissions Director of Gettysburg College. Paying students were a valuable commodity for under-endowed barely liberal arts institutions, so I was quickly swept up with several of my fellow Blair graduates who shared my predicament. I rationalized all of this by extolling the virtues of small colleges where individualism wasn't sacrificed to numbers. Anyway, I had a nifty job lined up at Bethlehem Steel to occupy my summer and fill my coffers.



Prepped out with classmate and surfer Arthur Smith at Blair.

My long hair wasn't well received on my first day of work at the #1 Bridge Shop. In hindsight, it was perhaps a mistake to express my Conscientious Objector sentiments to my fellow steel workers. Nor was it popular for me to actually sweep with the broom I was issued, as this made the other union workers look bad. Painfully I learned the rules and eventually graduated from scale grinder to chain hooker to part number painter, a clear acknowledgement of my artistic calling.

After a small scuffle wherein Frank the redneck nearly pushed me to my death from the third story fire escape into a semi-molten ingot, I was transferred to Central Tool. There the metal lathes were spinning out beautifully crafted shells for the Vietnam War effort. My job was to shovel the sharp scrap metal spirals into a wheel barrel and cart them off to the remelting hopper.

One day, one of the metal lathes jammed up and needed to be rebuilt. There were an assortment of gears strewn across the shop that day and one of them found its way into my lunch pail in the name of the peace movement.

Of course, they machined a new gear and had it all polished up by the end of the next day, but that was a full day's worth of bombs that didn't get made, and the gear made a handsome ashtray.

No question, I was pushing my luck, but I squeaked though that job intact with a few weeks to spare. Before summer was over, my parents, my younger brother John and I headed up to Iron City Fishing Club, our family summer vacation spot on Georgian Bay in Ontario. As I have previously mentioned, Iron City is a beautiful and remote spot, accessible only by boat or seaplane. My grandfather had joined the club in the 1920's and all of my uncles, aunts and cousins on my mother's side attended almost every summer.

MC5

A few days after our arrival, my notorious cousin "JC" Crawford appeared in camp with my Uncle Jack and Aunt Marty. JC was a year or two older than I was and had always been very talented and popular. As a child, he excelled as a magician and developed a business performing at parties. In his early teens he became proficient on the drums and piano, but his real talent rested in his personality and in his ability to tell incredible stories.

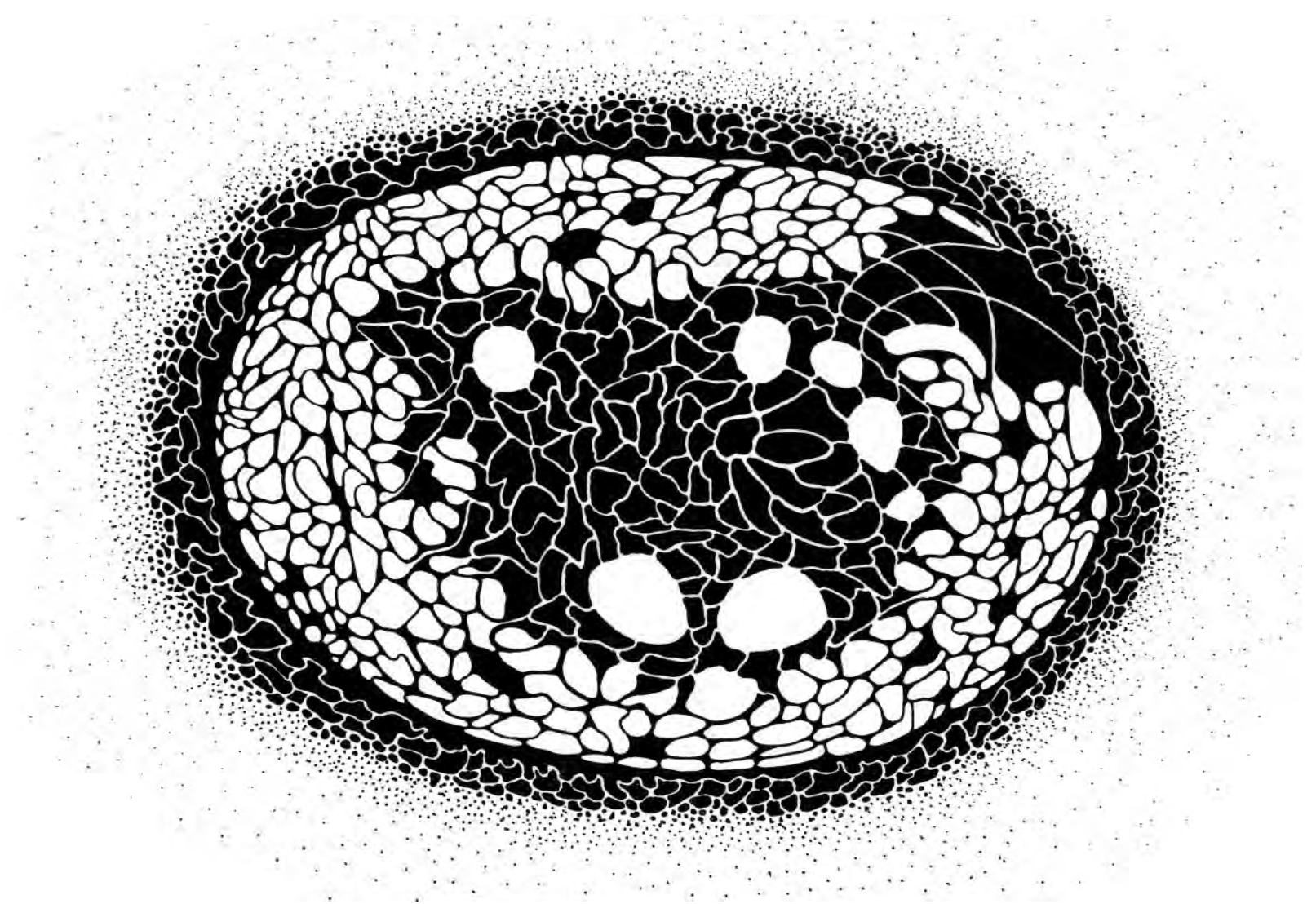
JC had been residing in the Ann Arbor and Detroit areas of Michigan that were epicenters of the '60s radical movement. He had been playing drums with "The Prime Movers Blues Band" and "Commander Cody" for few years prior to hooking up with John Sinclair, a counterculture entrepreneur who was heading up the notorious "Translove Energies" commune.

Translove booked bands and provided concert staging and lighting, and it wasn't long before John Sinclair began to manage a local hard rock band called the Motor City Five (MC5). John invited JC to a gig to see the band at the University of Michigan Student Union and JC was blown away by the band's live performance. Later John asked JC whether he might like to help manage the group. JC said "yes" and that was that.

The MC5 soon signed with Electra Records, and with the prodding of activist Huey P. Newton, John Sinclair formed the White Panther Party. Soon the MC5 gained national notoriety for their politically insurgent live concerts and record releases. Their first album yielded a hit song of sorts called "Kick Out The Jams," the lyrics of which were just a bit too far over the edge for the radio. Although JC was not one of the five musicians, he was certainly a critical force in the band, being mysteriously credited on the album cover as the "Spiritual Advisor." For all practical purposes, JC acted as the road manager and "MC" of the MC5, providing fervent narration before, during and after the show using his highly developed

charisma and rhetoric to whip the audience into a frenzy. There was no question that JC was Mr. Cool. With his long blonde hair, leather moccasins and sunglasses, he possessed an aura of mystery and his peers at Iron City, myself included, found him awe-inspiring. The fact that he was a rock star was simply icing on the cake.

One evening, I found myself with JC on the back boardwalk toking on a bowl full of hashish and listening to one of his outrageous stories. This was my first real encounter with cannabis, at least it was the first time that anything actually happened. I must confess



Egg, Black Flair Pen, 1970



The MC5's first and most successful album featuring J.C. Crawford's passionate and revolutionary "Kick Out The Jams" verbiage. (Story continues on page 140.)

that I was puzzled about the big controversy. Being high on pot seemed rather creative and fun; not the evil and addictive criminal vice that society had warned me about. The ritual of passing the pipe seemed quite social. Listening to music was a particularly heightened experience and song lyrics from my favorite groups took on a new level of meaning. After analyzing the situation, I came away feeling that I had been deceived about the dangers of marijuana. Of course I kept this to myself as I packed up my Beatles and Stones records and headed off to Gettysburg College for freshman orientation.

Gettysburg Address

I settled into my new dormitory life at Rice Hall. I'm afraid Blair had prepared me a bit too well for college. I had already covered nearly all of the course matter offered in my freshman year. That gave me plenty of time to expand my consciousness.

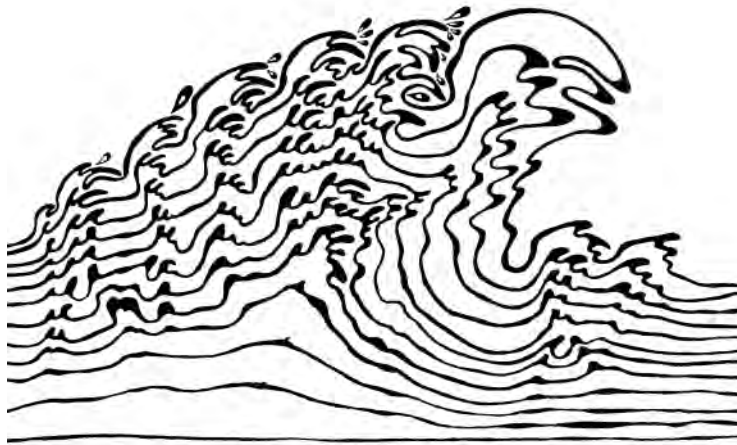
On urban college campuses around the country the counter culture was going strong, but at Gettysburg the hippie movement was limited to a meager band of colorful but pathetic outcasts. Without hesitation, I enlisted in this group.

My friends from Blair really stuck together: Al, Lucy, Tucker and myself. They'd all experienced similar summer diversions. I told them about my adventures with cousin JC and with a grin, Al revealed a small slab of hashish. This kept us occupied for the first semester. We furthered the significant parental investment in our education by attending several legendary rock concerts: Jim Morrison and *The Doors* in Philadelphia, *The Grateful Dead* at Shippensburg, and on our own Student Union stage *Spirit*. When *Cream* went on their "Goodbye" tour, we all hitched rides down to the Baltimore Civic Arena for the concert of a lifetime. Afterwards, we walked from Baltimore back to Gettysburg in a rain soaked-stupor. An entire volume could be written about that defining evening.

Though I kept up with creative writing, my real interest was turning toward art. To the complete exclusion of my distribution requirements, I signed



Blair and Gettysburg cohorts Al Hunter (left) and Richard "Lucy" Lusardi (right) flank cool guy bearing wine bottle.



Preliminary sketch for *The Wave*, Gettysburg, 1969.

up for some courses with an impassioned sculpture professor named Norman Annis. I found him to be a tremendous inspiration. I'm not sure he wanted to admit it at the time, but I sensed that he liked me too and saw some promise in the unusual directions that my art was taking.

I drew a simple drawing called *The Wave* which was inspired by a classic Japanese painting and with Norm Annis's skeptical encouragement, the drawing came to life in the form of an under-lit light sculpture. Individual topographic cross sections of a wave were scroll cut from 1/8" masonite, painted in variegated aqua tones, mounted in evenly-spaced succession in a sturdy free-standing frame and draped with black fabric on all four sides to prevent any leakage of light. With head-scratching faculty approval, I arranged to occupy the corner of one of the heavily-traveled lounges in the Student Union Building. With all of the lights out in the room, I would crawl underneath *The Wave* in a cramped, almost fetal position and rotate a spotlight in slow circular motions. The effect was very dramatic. Actually it was quite psychedelic, especially when accompanied with an appropriate Pink Floyd instrumental. Each scroll-cut section would light up and then darken in a graceful but staccato visual progression. I suppose you had to see it to truly "get it," but *The Wave* was a happening of sorts. Friends and *Wave* enthusiasts would relieve me from time to time, each taking a surprising degree of pride in their individual approach to animating the light sculpture.

A second extended sculpture project was called *Life Sculpture #1*. This consisted of five successive scroll cut Celtic crosses signifying Birth, Action,

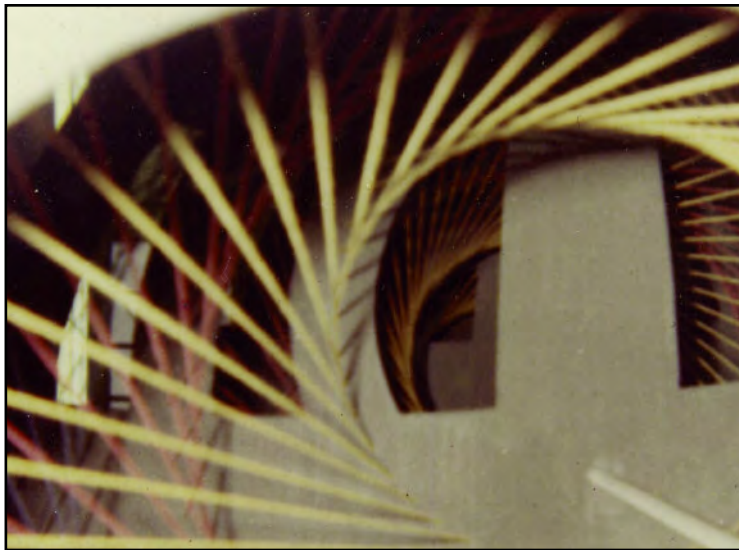
Reaction, Death and Rebirth (or some such lofty philosophical progression). Each cross was circumscribed with three concentric rings signifying The Mind (center ring, yellow), The Body (middle ring, red) and The Environment (outer ring, blue). The crosses were stabilized with steel pipefittings in a straight row, with about five feet separating each section. The base of each section was curved to allow the entire sculpture to rock when touched, and touched it was!

The concentric circles were joined with an array of indexed strands of color created with tightly stretched colored twine which rotated 90° from section to section. The entire monstrosity was 20 feet long and quite difficult to move within the art building, let alone across the campus, but it was striking. I pity the poor maintenance person who had to disassemble and dispose of this monolithic yet abandoned dust magnet from the long hallway in the basement of the college chapel.

Norman Annis received the prestigious commission for the Dwight D. Eisenhower sculpture outside of The Eisenhower Library on the Gettysburg campus. We both spent late evening hours in the studio and I helped him on many occasions with the drudgery of his project. He possessed the classic artistic temperament and at one point he scrapped months of work and started over. It took its toll on him, as did the realization that my talent might take a back seat to pot smoking and the counter culture. But he got through it, and so would I.



The Wave, A Light Sculpture.
Painted masonite, pine, black fabric, light, 1969.



*Inside detail of Life Sculpture #1
Painted masonite, steel pipe, colored twine, 1969.*

Not Necessarily Stoned

As an artist and musician in the late sixties, smoking pot was nearly a prerequisite. I smoked plenty of it and unlike Bill Clinton, I inhaled. While I certainly wouldn't encourage the youth of today to jeopardize their brain cells as I did, I have no regrets. In fact, the bulk of my drawings were influenced in some way by *cannabis sativa*.

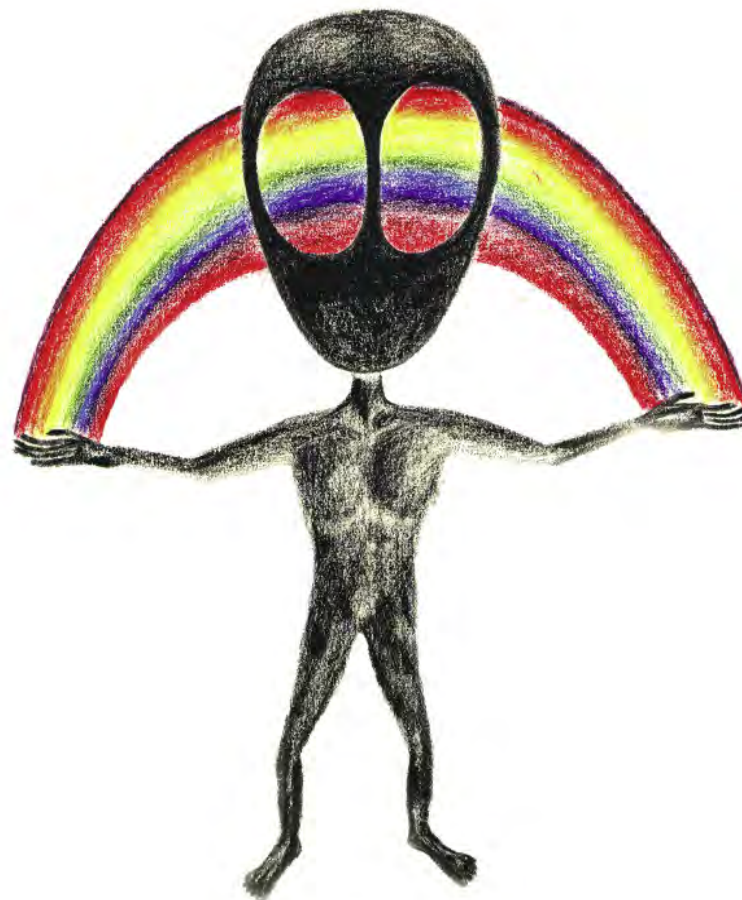
While we're at it, I guess I'd better come clean with regard to LSD, peyote cactus, mescaline, psilocybin mushrooms, and an assortment of other available drugs of the era. We were followers of Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert. Though there was certainly an element of uncharted adventure involved, we took these experiments very seriously. We read books about psychedelics and we spent a lot of time planning our "excursions."

I had taken LSD about 10 times and had had deeply meaningful experiences in a number of different categories: art, spirituality, relationships, music, nature, politics, even mathematics. I had been planning a solo art and nature trip for about a week and had acquired a hit of sunshine from Acid Dave, a local purveyor on campus. I had left the small pill on my dresser and had planned to take it on Friday afternoon at about 2:00 pm after my last class. When I got back to my dorm room, the pill was gone.

I went down to find Acid Dave, bought another hit, and went out to find my roommate, who I suspected might have either put the pill away

somewhere or taken it himself. I ran into my good friend Kip (alias "Gerbs") who said he had just seen Al. He said Al had a funny look in his eyes. I found Al about a half an hour later on the steps of the Student Union Building (SUB). It takes about an hour for LSD to take hold and by that time, Al was getting off. It was stronger acid than expected and after only 30 minutes, I was feeling the effects. It was more intense than I would have preferred and I was slightly scared.

Standing in my room, the woven wires of my electric blanket began to undulate. I was listening to Bob Dylan's *Visions of Johanna* and when I realized how strongly I was tripping, I thought that it might be better to go outside. On the back patio of the Student Union Building, the flagstones seemed to float and intersect. The patterns formed were like peace signs. I got it into my head that world peace had been realized. There were people walking hurriedly toward the dining hall and I followed them. To my amazement, upon entering the dining hall, every table had a different country's flag displayed and everyone sitting at the individual tables was dressed in the



Rainbow Eyes, Colored pencil sketch, 1969.

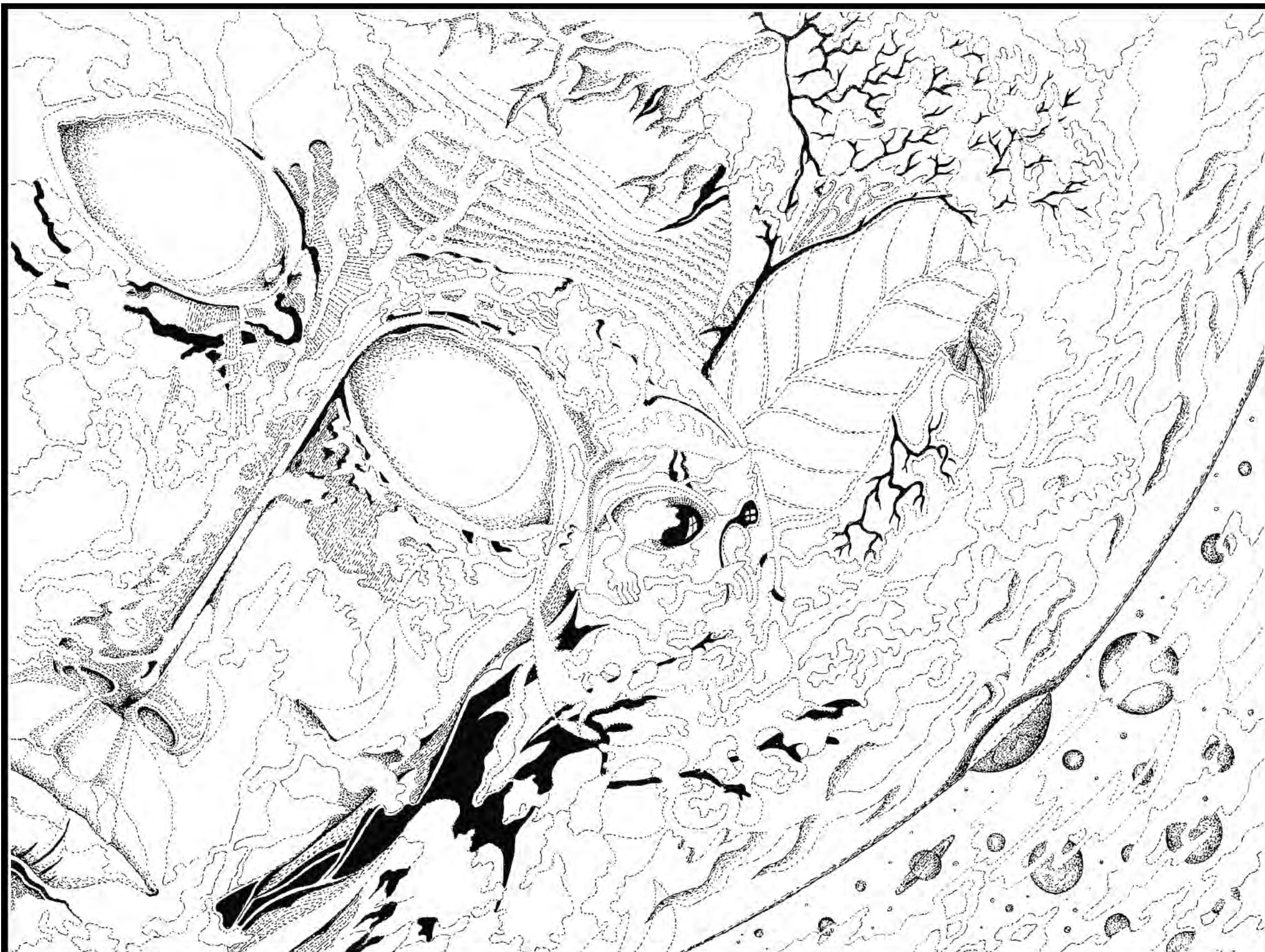


Breakfast.

native clothing of their respective country. I sat down at the table with the American flag. There were ROTC members and their commanding officers seated, eating spaghetti. After several moments of uneasiness, I inquired, "You're not planning any wars, are you?" My comment was supposed to be funny, but they didn't laugh. I got up and walked over to a stage where three musicians were playing the Beatles song "Yesterday." I walked up on stage and stood next to the string bass player, a tall black brother with an afro. When I started singing along into the microphone he said, "Hey man, be cool!" I realized then and there that I had misread the situation. My embarrassment forced me outside into the electrified air.

I didn't know it, but a basketball game had just ended and the gymnasium was emptying out onto the street. Cars were peeling away and people were running. I followed the crowd to my dorm and upon entering the lobby, I noticed a small group of students sitting intently in front of the TV. A newscaster was standing in Bermuda shorts and a Hawaiian shirt. The sun was shining and it was obviously warm where he was, but there were people skiing behind him. In an excited voice he exclaimed, "It's snowing in Florida!"

I had missed the previous segment about experimental Teflon snow that was being tested for recreational skiing in warm climates. So I took the newscaster's statement quite literally. In a mild panic, I hurried upstairs to see whether I could find Al. I needed to explain what was going on to someone. Reality was slipping away.



Disintegration of Consciousness, Pen & Ink, 1969.

Al was in our room listening to Dylan's *Nashville Skyline*, whose soft country drawl was quite mesmerizing. He too was tripping intensely, but didn't seem to be having difficulty grasping the situation like I was. We hung out for a while and he explained how he had come back from class and had seen the hit of acid on the dresser. He knew it was mine and just made a snap decision to take it. Al realized that I was slightly off the track and instead of becoming derailed himself, he went outside for some fresh air. I followed him out into the cool evening darkness and seeing a light on in a basement room that was often used for folk performances, I went in to check it out.

Inside the room were seven or eight people dressed in what seemed to be eighteenth century European clothing. They were all talking in an odd dialect and one of them was holding a pipe of the type that Sherlock Holmes smoked. I walked over to the stage where they all were sitting, pulled up a chair, and lit a match for the pipe. They were quite startled by my actions and the one holding the pipe said "Do you mind? We're rehearsing for a play!" I saw the book on the table with the title *Waiting For Godot!* I was flabbergasted. In the next hour, I began to descend from the acid and realized that I had misread a whole string of circumstances. With increasing remorse, I returned to my dormitory room where I crawled under the undulating covers and tried to sleep it off, but there was no sleeping. Instead, my mind was projecting a continuously evolving surrealistic score onto the stereo screens of my eyelids.

So I guess I had a "bum trip." I got over it in a week or so. I apologized to everyone, including the ROTC people, and I cleaned up my act a bit. I can't say that I stopped my experimentation, but I certainly was more conservative with the doses.

There were so many images that I felt were philosophical or meaningful. I wanted to capture them all. I continued to keep meticulous journals, but more of my time was spent socializing in the Student Union. That's where all the freaks hung out. I found that I could take an art tablet there and work for hours on drawings. I could listen to the conversations and music and be part of the scene, but I could also be productive. People would look over my shoulder and say "cool" or "weird." These remarks generally fortified my confidence and helped me finish some extended efforts. On occasion, someone would make a negative remark that would interrupt my spontaneity and spoil a particular drawing for me.

Tullio DeSantis was a frequent visitor to the SUB. Whether he wanted the role or not, he was the unofficial patriarch of our little scene. He was very confident, original, talented, brilliant, musical and intense, and he was definitely on the edge. His illustrations were incredibly organic and mystical to me. Like all of my more effective mentors, he intimidated me into wanting to be more than what I was. Tullio was working with Rapidograph technical pens that yielded exceptional detail. I had been working with Flair pens for the most part, but quickly changed over to 000-sized Rapidographs. Tullio introduced



The Entire Universe In A State Of Complete Contraction by Tullio Francesco DeSantis, 1972.

me to the ink drawings of Aubrey Beardsley, the engravings of Albrecht Dürer, the spiritual drawings of Kahlil Gibran, and to the illuminated manuscripts of William Blake. I found tremendous influence and inspiration with these artists. At first I simply went through the motions of mimicking their technique, but gradually I would find my own style.

Another very creative person on campus was Jeannie O'Keefe. One day I found her in the SUB creating some beautiful circular patterns in colored pencil that seemed meditative and Eastern. Thanks to *Kung-Fu's* David Carradine, George Harrison, Ravi Shankar, and *Be Here Now's* Baba Ram Dass, I had become a student of Eastern religion and I tried my hand at a few meditative "yantras." These were circular patterns or visual meditations, as opposed to "mantras" which were strictly auditory. The idea was that one could stare at these images while meditating to find inner peace. Yeah, well.

My background in technical drafting and my fascination with symmetry lent itself well to the development of these techniques. I experimented with three-, four-, five-, and eight-axis symmetry and found that when I had no specific inspiration to draw from reality, I could use geometrics to develop my finer motor skills and hand muscles. In addition, these circular patterns provided a framework within which I could weave new textures and methods that would serve me well when more tangible ideas did bubble up from my subconscious. Technical skill is, after all, merely a vehicle that can be used to deliver ideas. By itself, technique is relatively anemic, but when human emotion or experience provides a critical reason or theme, then the technique lies in waiting, ready to assist in bringing an idea or image to fruition. Isn't that what art is all about – bringing things to fruition – imitating God, if you will. The endless hours that I spent drawing were also spent in thought. In trying to analyze the process and purpose of art, the words *intuition* and *synthesis* kept cropping up. Intuition: the state of knowing something without having to discover or perceive it. Synthesis: the process of combining different ideas, influences and objects into a new unified whole.

And so I came to define my personal art as *intuitive synthesis*. I found myself crossing theoretical thresholds until there was simply neither a reason nor a way to turn back.



A safe haven in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, 1969.

Marty

With his unicycle and Robert Plant curls, Steve Kennedy was one of the Atlantian hippie icons on campus. He and his girlfriend Sandy Bloom were two creative friends of mine and shortly into my sophomore year, Sandy introduced me to her friend Marty Mayers. Marty was short and cute with beautiful eyes, but she was also a fireball of feminism. We were instantly attracted to each other and soon we were an inseparable couple on campus.

I was doing my best to get hip to the feminist movement. I wanted to be sensitive and struggled to liberate myself from all of the sexist tendencies that I had gleaned from my fellow males. Marty willfully and aggressively assisted me with this thankless process. I tried to absorb the messages from Marty's subscription of *Ms. Magazine* and read Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying*. We watched John and Yoko wrestle through their issues and we worked through ours. I was certainly non-violent and did my best to suppress my inherent jealousy when it reared its ugly little head.

This was my first serious relationship; the first time I had let all my barriers down. While Marty and I firmly resisted emotional dependency, we eventually succumbed to it. We had found a somewhat safe haven in each other; a good thing actually, since the rest of the world seemed to be spinning totally out of control.

Billboards Anonymous, Un-Inc.

Allen Ginsberg came to Gettysburg and after listening to several hours of his beat poetry accompanied by the drone of his musical squeeze-box, a group of hippies sat and smoked some joints with him behind the Student Union Building.

We talked about radical politics and activism. He had a copy of Abbie Hoffman's *Steal This Book*. I remember a brief and somewhat outrageous discussion that I had with him about the blight of billboards that were infesting the highways. I joked for several weeks afterwards about starting a new non-profit corporation called "Billboards Anonymous," the purpose of which would be to rid the countryside of these repulsive eyesores.

On a quiet Wednesday evening, my radical company "went public," at least in a vivid but highly secretive and covert dream sequence.

A religiously fundamental billboard bearing a message that I felt was bordering on the offensive stood on the eastern outskirts of Gettysburg. It was not huge in size, but large enough to obstruct a beautiful field of wheat and a backdrop of ash trees – a perfect test for "Billboards Anonymous."

The road was well traveled in the daytime but deserted in my nocturnal fantasy. I rode out at the stroke of midnight with a Christmas tree saw in my basket, ditched my bicycle in the bushes, and by the soft light of the moon, I cut through all of the supporting 4 x 4s until the sign teetered and creaked, then with a slow and graceful motion, it fell forward with a soft swoosh, and lay defeated in the grass. I skulked sheepishly to my bike and pedaled back to town, where later that evening, my new company quietly went bankrupt before the dawn arose.



Sins were committed in the innocence of a dream.

Positive/Negative

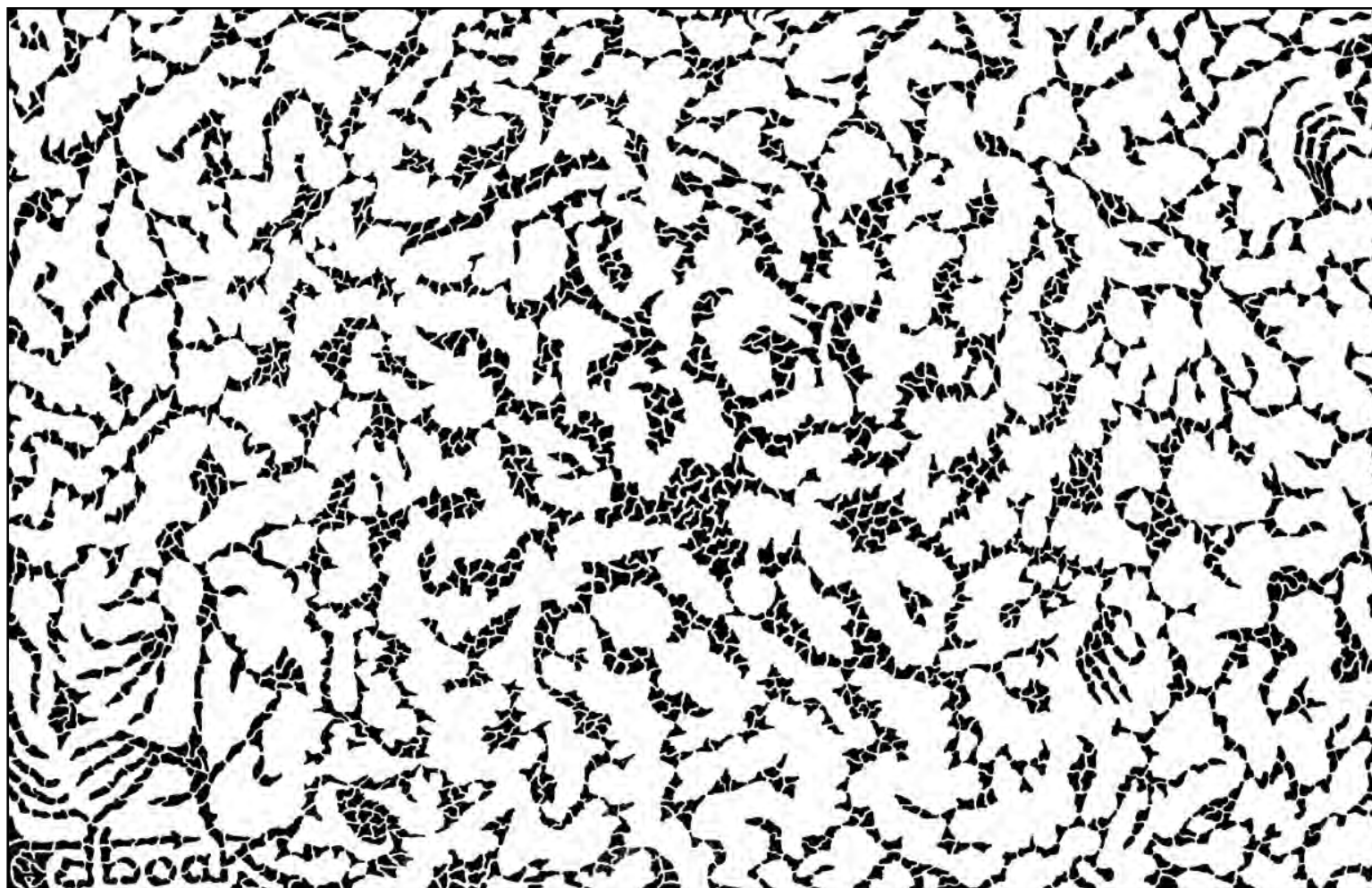
Yin/yang, black/white, male/female, east/west, love/hate, yes/no; everywhere you look there are dichotomies and paradoxes. Working in black and white, I was perplexed with these polarities on a daily basis and I began to consider the drawing process as the integration of positive and negative, black and white.

A common analogy depicts a sculptor, extracting a three-dimensional form or figure from solid rock by removing all of the material that isn't part of that form. Conversely, the same sculptor could choose to build a form in an additive fashion. Interpolating this into my own framework, I often envision a sculptor gluing tiny granules of sand together to create a form. Given my barely corrected vision, my color blindness, my near sightedness, and hence my need to work very close, this is the approach to art to which I gravitated out of necessity. It's not the right way, but it is my way.

In the same sense that a drummer must integrate silence with sound by breaking a single beat into its multiple counterparts or lowest common denominators, I became more than slightly concerned with the merging of the positive with the negative. And I must say in all seriousness that the equal rights movement caused me to attempt to blend the polarities of black and white with a certain priority for equality.

In my integration of black and white, I often allowed forms to develop in a random fashion, and as they started to grow and materialize, I would allow them to become what I felt they wanted to be.

So larger areas of black and white disintegrate into shades of grey, and purely geometric structures loosen toward organicism, or so I had hoped. I aspired to be loose, free, organic, flowing, spontaneous, animate, alive, but there is no question that I was traveling from a place of logic, mathematics, symmetry, order, calculation, precision and tediousness. It is possible to accept the unique perspective that each of us is given even if that position doesn't represent the place we had hoped we would be. It is also possible to evolve in conscious directions by pretending to be what we wish to become. But in the process of pretending, I stumbled upon my ego.



Positive and Negative Divisions Of The Subconscious Mind, Flair Pen, 1970.

Like most people in the sixties, and in particular artists, the concept of ego was difficult to understand or accept. Ego was a bad word; ego tripping even worse. It suggested a self-centeredness and an aversion for altruism.

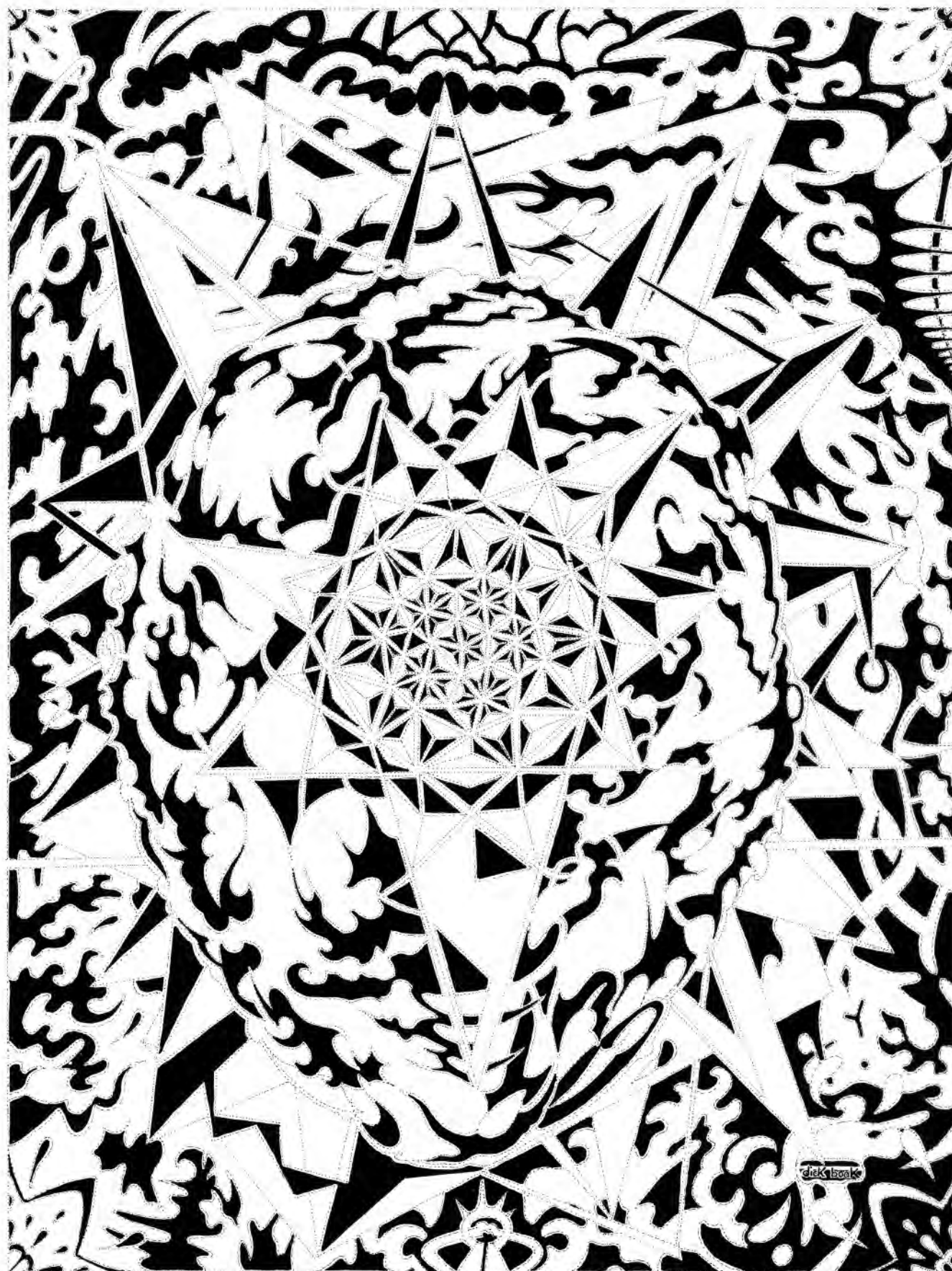
Art by its nature is egocentric. The very process is incredibly self-absorbed and introspective. The drive to create art can be distilled into a few simple motives: a desire for fame, immortality, acceptance, greed, or power. Creativity is revered and encouraged, but the motivations that feed creativity are thought to be self-serving. I wrestled with this daily, and when I wasn't addressing it, Marty was addressing it for me.

I did my best to sublimate my ego, or at least mask it in the form of insincere humility. At one extreme, I required confidence in order to proceed with my work, and when I felt confident, I felt good. My friends, however, perceived this same confidence as arrogance.

This of course was tremendously disturbing, causing me to doubt myself and my motives. I knew that I was driven by a need to be loved and accepted. I knew that I wanted to be respected and remembered for who I was and what I could accomplish.

I was thinking too much. It was partially paranoia and partially insecurity. So when my pendulum of confidence swung in the other direction, it didn't feel very good. It certainly made it difficult to be creative, but my friends liked me better this way, emotionally wounded and weak.

Eventually I realized that my goal would be to achieve a compromise of stability between the polarities of excessive and deficient confidence. Art can hopefully be forgiven in advance for any of these fluctuations and valued intrinsically as a positive process that can expel and convert the burdens of the soul into useful and meaningful reflections of humanity.



Sailors Of The TeePee (Russian Egg), Pen & Ink, 1972.

The Icehouse

As I began my junior year at Gettysburg College in 1970, I had somehow managed to convince my parents that it was a good idea for me to move into an apartment with two close friends. The rent was nominal when divided three ways, especially when compared to the escalating college dormitory costs. Kip and Luce had found a spot just south of campus in a building affectionately known as "The Icehouse". It was a dingy red brick building laid out in a long row along the railroad tracks. It contained five apartments that were stuck onto the side of an old refrigeration plant. The apartments were numbered A through E. We occupied apartment C, though it didn't really matter. There were cockroaches in all of them, and the layouts were all identically drab.

The front door entered in upon a small living room which connected to a kitchenette, a walk-in closet, and a stairwell that wound its way up to the second floor. Upstairs, there were two bedrooms and a small bathroom. One bedroom was slightly larger than the other, so we drew straws and I won. I chose the small room with the single bed, thinking that I could lure coeds into the privacy of my rat trap. That left Kip and Luce to bunk in the large room, which was also my thoroughfare, but the only bathroom adjoined my room, so I had to put up with the two of them trampling through my room at all hours of the night. It was a great arrangement.

There was a window in my room that went out onto the black asphalt roof of the refrigeration plant. I quickly discovered that the roof, with its gradual slope, made a great sunbathing salon as well as a substantial fair-weather extension of my bedroom. There was a cupola that grew upwards out of the roof like a glassed-in gazebo. The windows were tiny and slightly ajar to provide ventilation for the huge refrigeration units inside. It didn't take me long to open one of the windows fully and peer into the humming freon darkness down below.

After several weeks as an inhabitant of the icehouse, it had become apparent that the refrigeration plant was one of the distribution points for Harbison's Dairy. We had seen the ice cream trucks pull around to the rear of the building to load up for their wholesale deliveries. We had also overheard vague references of a standing tradition among icehouse residents, to go down through the roof in search of some of the frozen flavors that so innocently invited our investigation. Perhaps I had been privileged to too many episodes of Al Mundy in "It Takes A Thief." The last bastions to my barely Presbyterian conscience failed to dissuade my devious curiosity. I knotted a rope in even foot-long increments, tied it around the rafters in the ceiling of the cupola, and in the dead of midnight, I slithered down the rope, knot by knot, hand over hand, flashlight in mouth, into the frightful excitement of collegiate

debauchery. I was on top of the refrigerator room. My flashlight led me to the edge of an eight-foot drop down to ground level where a U-shaped hallway wrapped its way around the refrigerator to a small office. There was a straight ladder stored up there, which was awfully thoughtful of some unsuspecting dairy man. I quickly lowered it into the hallway and climbed down. My heart was pounding.

There were several freezer doors to choose from around the perimeter. I opened one to find a large corridor, badly in need of defrosting, with 12-pack cases of half gallons stacked neatly according to flavor along one side wall. On the other side was a twenty foot glass-topped case packed to the brim with Fudgesicles, Creamsicles, Popsicles, and Heath Bars, in an assortment of sizes and brands. I didn't wish to overstay my welcome, so I pilfered a case of Heath Bars and retraced my steps, back up the ladder, replacing the ladder, up the rope, removing the rope, back through my window to my roommates who were waiting in amazement and adulation. We made quick business of the Heath Bars. I believe the crime is referred to as breaking and entering, but somehow it seemed more like going next door to borrow a cup of milk. I developed and perfected my procedure to the extent that our refrigerator became quickly filled, and so were the refrigerators of all of our friends within a five mile radius, and their friends, and so on. There was no shortage of ice cream in Gettysburg. Abe Lincoln would have been flabbergasted.

Remember that this phenomenon was happening during the early fall of 1970. We were boycotting Coca-Cola for supporting the Vietnam war. Members of the SDS were sabotaging the military industrial complex, and I, like Robin Hood, in my modest way, was helping to liberate small portions of the material world for redistribution to the eager counter culture masses. I vowed to not liberate anything for personal profit and I promptly stole "Steal This Book" by Abbie Hoffman to keep up with the trends of the revolution.

I was really quite a benevolent criminal. I would start out on my bicycle at perhaps noon on Saturday, my bike baskets filled with Popsicles. I would cycle disruptively into the center of a softball game, tossing ice cream sandwiches like a paper boy doing his route.

"Popsicles for the people! Popsicles for the people!"

My bicycle was a particularly popular sight on hot days.

I received so much gratification and positive peer feedback from my escapade that I evolved into newer and grander levels of larceny. I would often enlist the help of my more adventurous cohorts to boost me over the wall into the lumber stalags for 2 x 4's, or to drop me through the skylight into the maintenance warehouse for pink spray paint. This color suited the windows of the ROTC building on one particular evening. Of course I stayed up so late that night that by the time I awoke the next morning, the windows had been scrubbed so thoroughly, that I wondered upon their close inspection whether I had once again imagined the whole episode.



Cardinal, Pen & Ink, 1972.

Geodesics

My brother Bill's best friend at Liberty High School was a fellow basketball star named Barry Frey. He had returned to Bethlehem to write for the town newspaper, *The Globe Times*. One afternoon when my brother Bill was in town, Barry came by and found me hard at work in the back yard assembling a small sixteen-foot-diameter geodesic dome. I had acquired a brightly colored parachute to serve as the cover. He was fascinated and came back the next day to write a story.

Back at college, I arranged with my art teacher Norm Annis to do a special project on geodesic ratios and architecture. This involved becoming familiar with the complex mathematical calculations that Buckminster Fuller had devised in order to break down the simple twenty-sided icosahedron into an assortment of "frequencies" that were more practical for actual structures. To verify my research, I built tabletop models of the various geodesic patterns and compiled all of my geometry in a final booklet entitled *Whole Earth Structures*.

During college breaks in Bethlehem, our basement workshop would invariably become my dome fabrication shop. There I would test the technical validity of various hinge designs on an assortment of nomadic dome tents and geodesic jungle gyms.



Barry Frey's photograph for the *Bethlehem Globe Times*.

City Student Builds Miniature Astrodome

By **BARRY W. FREY**
Globe-Times Staff Writer

After six months of computations and two days of construction, a Bethlehem student has successfully applied the principles of a geodesic dome as set down by R. Buckminster Fuller to a new type of camping structure.

The structure built and designed by Richard Boak, son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas D. Boak of 1819 Millard St., is, according to its designer, "structurally aesthetic and totally portable."

It is 12 feet tall and 16 feet wide at the base and is constructed along the same principles as the Astrodome in Houston, Texas. It can sleep 10 people comfortably.

Fuller, a noted mathematician and physicist, is credited with the concept which is said to be perfect engineering-wise. That is, there are no weak points as each intersection receives exactly the same amount of stress.

A geodesic dome is defined as "grid compressions or

tension members lying upon or parallel to great circles." The grids run in three directions from any given intersection.

College Sophomore

The 21-year-old sophomore at Gettysburg College said he has "had the idea for some time" but started working on the computations about six months ago.

"I went to several mathematics teachers for advice, but they couldn't help me so I just started on my own."

An art major at Gettysburg, Boak "read a lot of Fuller" and while he did not get any mathematic ratios from his readings he did "get a lot of ideas."

Finally, after a trial and error process, Boak came up with a ratio between the shorter and larger pieces of his design of 9.2 to 10.3.

He built a small model first and then blew up the proportions to its present size. According to Boak, his ratio is workable for a structure up to 20 ft. in height. After that the

ratio would have to be changed to retain a gradual curvature.

Tinkertoys

"It can be assembled and disassembled in a matter of minutes," Boak continued. "It fits together like tinkertoys."

The framework is made of white pinewood strips, but Boak says almost any material can be used. He plans to cover the framework with an Army parachute.

Boak said the materials for the framework cost \$25 and he estimated the parachute would cost another \$25.

Sixty-five individual wood strips make up the frame with the longest strip 6 feet, 4 inches. It took a full day to make the pieces and "about 10 minutes to assemble them."

As to its portability, Boak said, "It can easily fit in the back of a station wagon and probably in the back of a car" with a minimum of awkwardness.

It is weather resistant. Boak left his framework uncovered in the rain for three days and nothing warped. It can also withstand high winds, he said.

"If I could I would like to sell this one," Boak added. He also expressed an interest in continuing to build the domes as long as anyone desired one.

Kirkridge

Kirkridge is a beautiful spot atop the Appalachian Ridge about thirty miles due north of Bethlehem. I had become aware of the retreat in my early teens. John "JB" Barrett, one of my favorite teachers at Blair, had introduced me to Jon Oliver Nelson, who was the benefactor of the Kirkridge estate. J.O.N. as most everyone addressed him, was an heir to the Gulf Western fortune. A portion of his inheritance funded the purchase of several hundred pristine acres from the top of the stony Appalachian Ridge to the bottom of the plush valley below. J.O.N. was a graduate of the Yale Divinity School. He was surprisingly open-minded, intellectually brilliant,

lucid in his expressiveness, very charismatic and quite eccentric.

J.O.N. and his wife Jane had dedicated their lives to the mountain and to the Kirkridge Retreat, which was often used for weekend spiritual outings, marriage counseling sessions, and an assortment of other progressive seminars. Often J.O.N.'s philanthropy overflowed toward a seemingly endless parade of desperate alcoholics and drug addicts who took advantage of his hospitality and generosity.

After Jane's passing, the flow of street urchins seeking J.O.N.'s handouts increased in direct proportion to his loneliness. In spite of these vulnerabilities, J.O.N. was a very special individual. I was most honored to be his long-time friend and



25' test for Kirkridge Dome with metal strapping hinges.

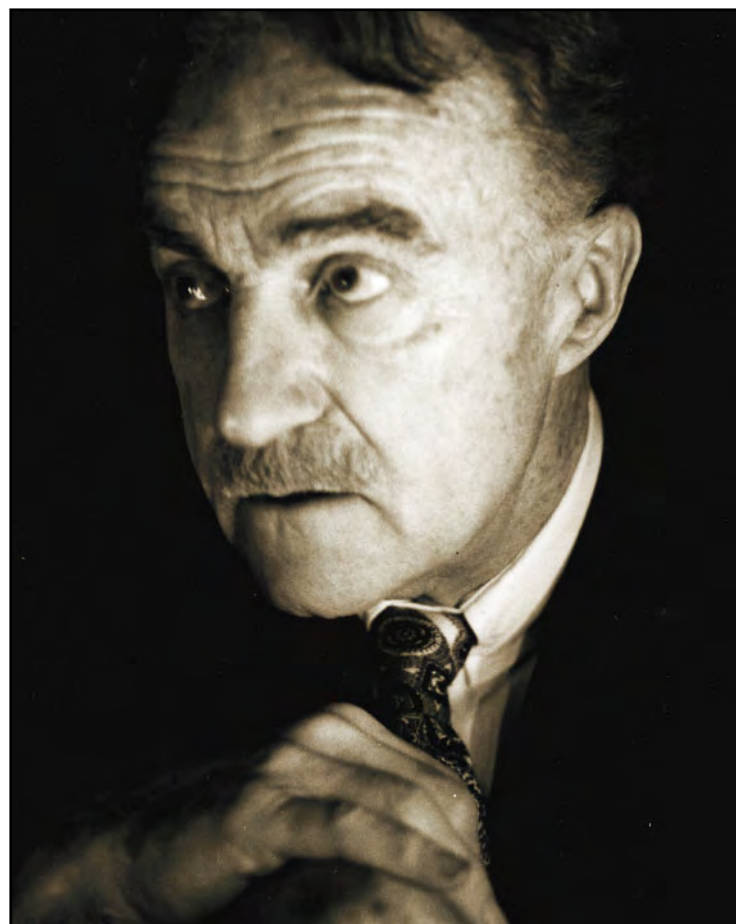
confidant. I looked to him for spiritual approval and inspiration, and in exchange, he was always anxious to hear of my current creative energies and adventures.

The small progressive School At Kirkridge was occupying the farmhouse in the valley below the retreat. I was very familiar with the school since my brother John had enrolled. When J.O.N. found out about my interest in geodesics, he asked me how much I might charge to construct a dome in the meadow in front of the farmhouse. His idea was to donate a structure to the school that could be used as a theater in the round and as a spiritual gathering place.

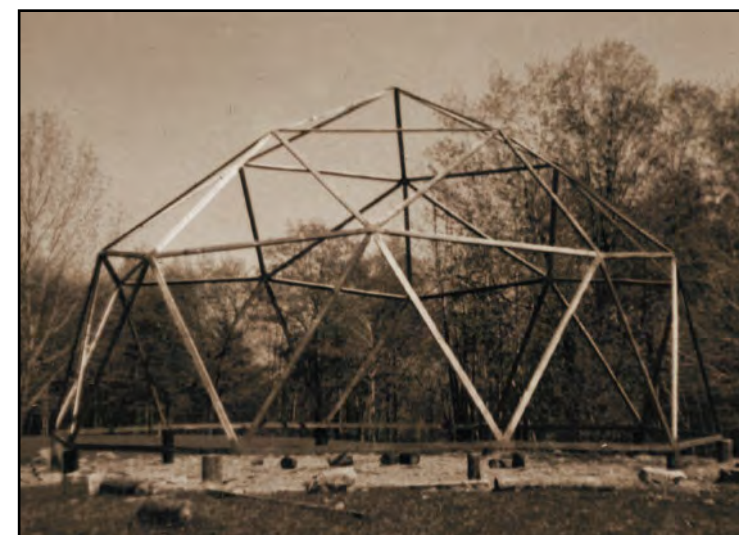
After a very inadequate analysis of the costs, I quoted three hundred dollars. This included the basic framework. J.O.N. was going to have some workers sink some sections of telephone poles into the ground at my exact specified locations to serve as a raised base for the structure so that the floor, if ever constructed, would be raised above ground level. The Kirkridge students in turn were going to be responsible for devising a covering.

I had a local metal fabricator create custom drilled and pre-bent angle irons from 1/4" steel plate. These were fastened to the ends of two by fours with heavy bolts to complete the struts. With a borrowed pickup truck and a battalion of friends, we arrived at Kirkridge on a sunny Saturday to assemble the dome.

As with the assembly of all domes, the process was fascinating and surprisingly quick, though it was immediately apparent that the struts were awkwardly large and out of scale with respect to their practicality. This was going to make it very difficult to fabricate a cover. J.O.N. realized this as well, but



John Oliver Nelson.



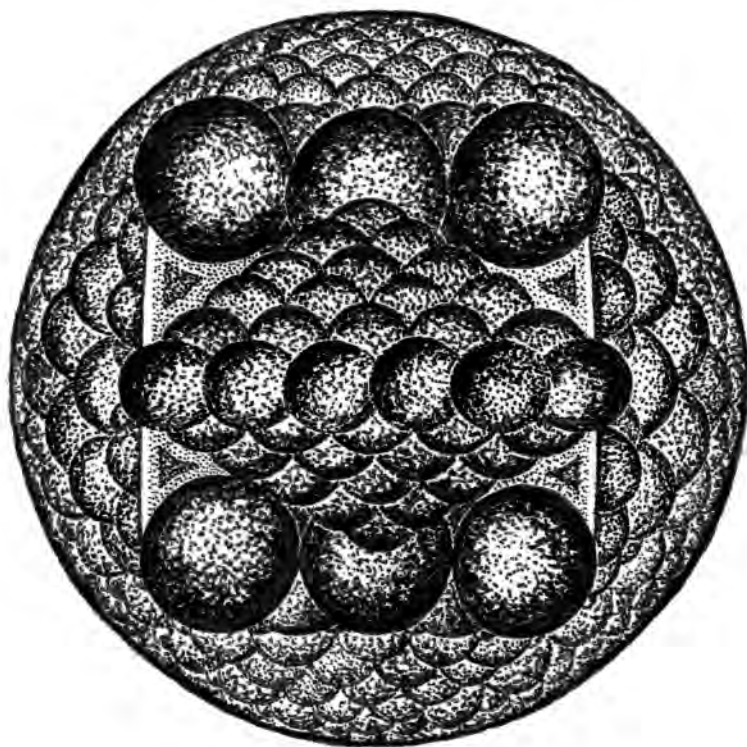
After a long day of assembly, the 40' dome at Kirkridge was raised on its telephone pole pilings and ready for a cover.

he was so thrilled with the visual grace of the dome that I think he accepted it immediately as a sculptural statement. Cover or no cover, there was an undeniable sense of being "inside," and an added bonus was that the students genuinely loved to climb on it.

I felt very close to Kirkridge and to J.O.N. In the months that followed, I spoke with him about my desire to construct an art studio on top of the ridge. The view was striking up there. On a clear afternoon, you could see the sun gleam off the World Trade Center towers in New York City.

There was an abandoned Conelrad Early Warning Radar Station and Tower at the highest knoll. J.O.N. liked the idea of creating a camper's oasis and spiritual haven for hikers that were traversing the Appalachian Trail. I envisioned a multimedia art studio and residence. For some political reason, the Presbyterian Synod needed to approve such a plan. I think that J.O.N.'s and Jane's wills must have held the property in trust for the church.

After much consideration, the Synod decided that I was lacking the proper spiritual fortitude to manage a haven of this magnitude. They were so correct. Of course, I was heartbroken, but in hindsight, I honestly don't know what I was thinking. The whole idea was such a pipe dream. And in the event that our plan had been approved, it was highly probable that I would have become one of J.O.N.'s urchins that I so vehemently despised.



Proton Yantra, Felt Tip Marker, 1969.

A Candid Survey Of American Life As Seen Through The Fading Eyes Of A Hitchhiker Approaching Insanity (Part Two)

The distance between Gettysburg and Bethlehem is about two and a half hours by car, and since I had no car, it was necessary that I resort to hitchhiking. I had developed a certain sense of futility about my ability to get quick rides, even though there were generally a fair number of vagabonds on the more traveled roads steering dilapidated VW micro-busses that were inclined to retrieve long-haired lost souls like myself from the perils of thumbing. On the back roads though, it was a different story. The locals indigenous to Gettysburg fit the stereotype of back hills rednecks, perhaps not quite as extreme as the southern variety, but nonetheless completely averse to picking up hitchhikers.

I had decided to try a new tactic. My brother Bill had been in the Marines and I had borrowed one of his olive green fatigues. I tied my hair up, buried it inside the green cap and put the uniform on, thinking that this specific attire would have greater appeal both visually and emotionally to the locals. It was a fairly

common occurrence to see young soldiers getting rides along the highway from members of the respectable upper middle class or from down-to-earth farmers. With this as my premise, I started early one morning in my disguise from Gettysburg heading north on Route 15 toward Harrisburg.

Almost immediately, a pickup truck pulled over and a gruff-looking Pennsylvania Dutch farmer leaned over and opened his passenger door for me. I hopped up into the cab whose back window was equipped with a more than adequate collection of hunting rifles and shotguns. I had been caught a bit off guard, since it now occurred to me that my uniform was going to solicit a particular conversation that I had not anticipated or rehearsed. He initiated the usual hitchhiking questions:

"Where are you headed?"

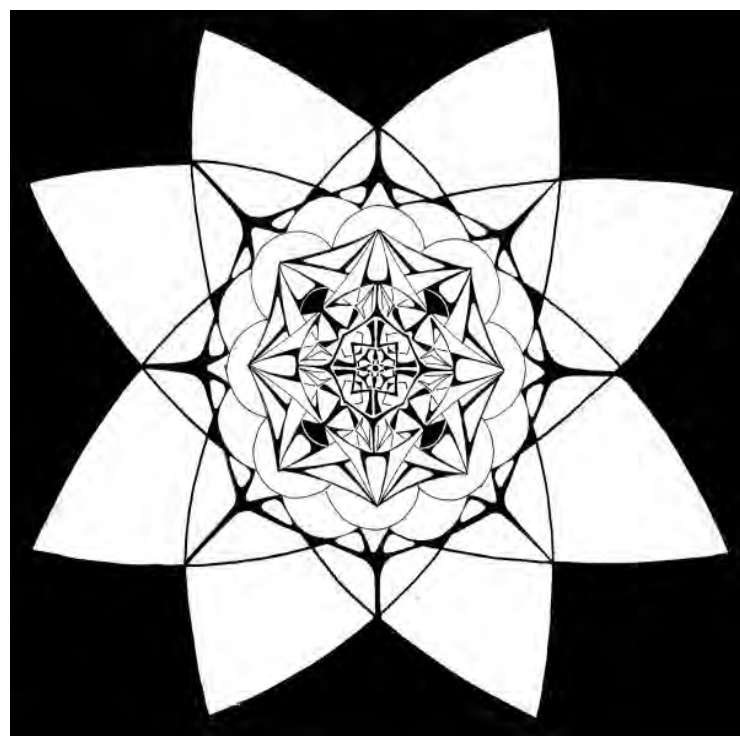
"Near Allentown," I fidgeted.

"Marine, eh?"

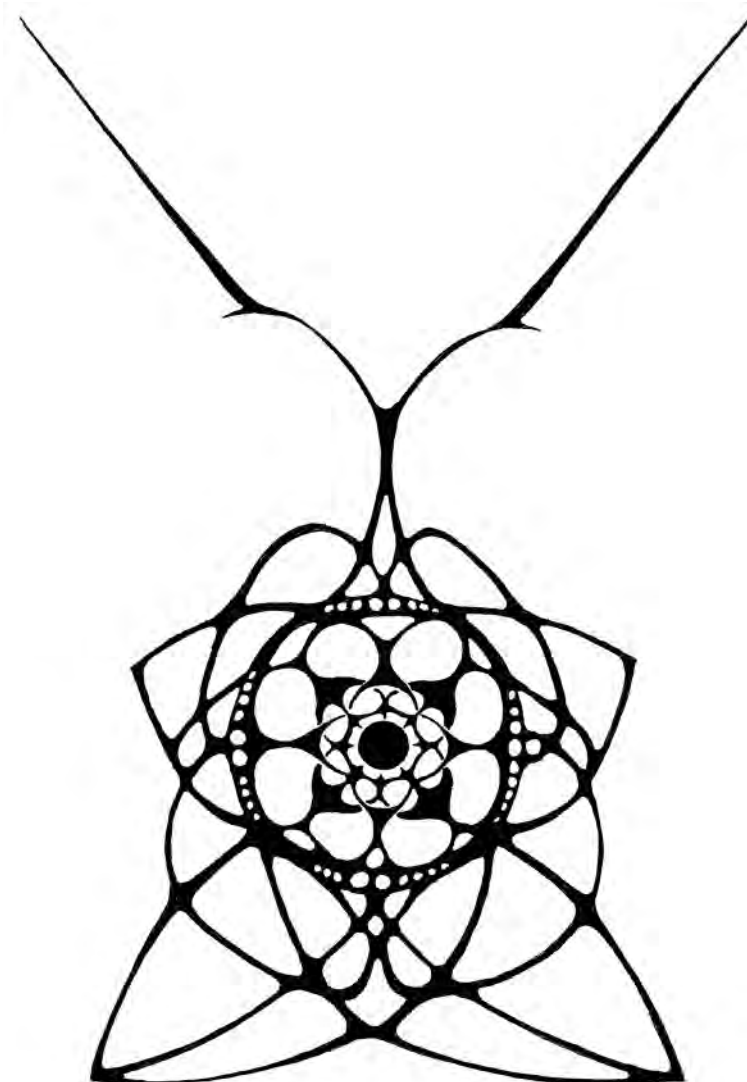
"Yep."

"I was in the army during Korea. Where you stationed?"

"Quantico." I lied with as much sincerity and macho as I could muster. Quantico is where my brother had been stationed. Inadvertently, I had decided that the best way to proceed with my charade was to answer these questions as my brother would.



Simple Eight Axis Floral Yantra, Pen & Ink, 1970.



Meditation Yantra, Pen & Ink, 1970.

He proceeded to engage me in a deep conversation about the technical differences between various standard issue military handguns, a subject that I knew absolutely nothing about. I managed rather poorly to bluff my way through however, allowing him to furnish the critical details, which he was most anxious to do.

Thank God for that, for had he discovered that I was making it all up, I suspect he might have pulled one of his shotguns down from the rack and sprayed a few rounds upon my backside. What better amusement than to uncover a treasonous pinko sheep in patriotic wolf's garb?

After twenty-five miles of anxiety and paranoia, I thanked him with a pained look, gathered my belongings and exited the vehicle eagerly onto the busy onramp at I-83.

I barely had time to get my wits together and stick

out my thumb, when presto, ride number two screeched over to the shoulder. My strategy was working great and this one was a Cadillac to boot!

After the electric door lock snapped open, I got in and adjusted to the luxury. I thought to myself how nice it would be if this ride were to go all the way to Allentown. As we sped away, he paid attention to the heavy traffic for a few minutes until we were out of the turmoil. He was balding with glasses and seemed to be about 55 years old. I supposed that he was an accountant or corporate executive. His leather brief case separated us on the front seat. I was refreshed at the likely prospect that this bookworm wasn't going to quiz me about handgun specifications. After I explained my basic direction and destination, he said:

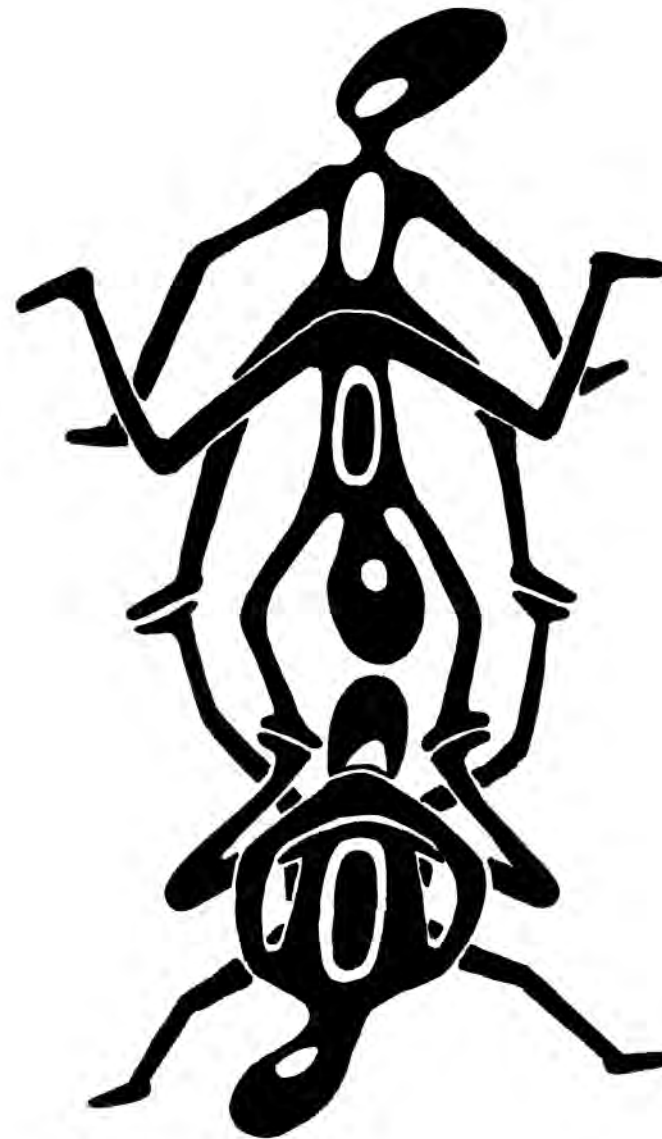
"Got a girlfriend?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact that's where I'm headed."

"What do they pay in the Marines? Are you



Yantra #58 (A Tribute To Lewis Wain's Sanity), 1971.



Acrobatics.

making good money?" His questions were served calmly like hors d'oeuvres.

"They pay peanuts until you're out of boot camp!" I was beginning to develop some confidence and boldness in my newfound acting role. The precious miles zipped away beneath us. There were long deliberate pauses in our conversation.

"You going to take your girl out to dinner tonight?" I couldn't quite figure out where this line of questioning was going, but I answered honestly. It was better than delving deeper into the details of my self-imposed masquerade.

"No. Can't really afford it," I countered casually.

"How would you like to take her out to a really

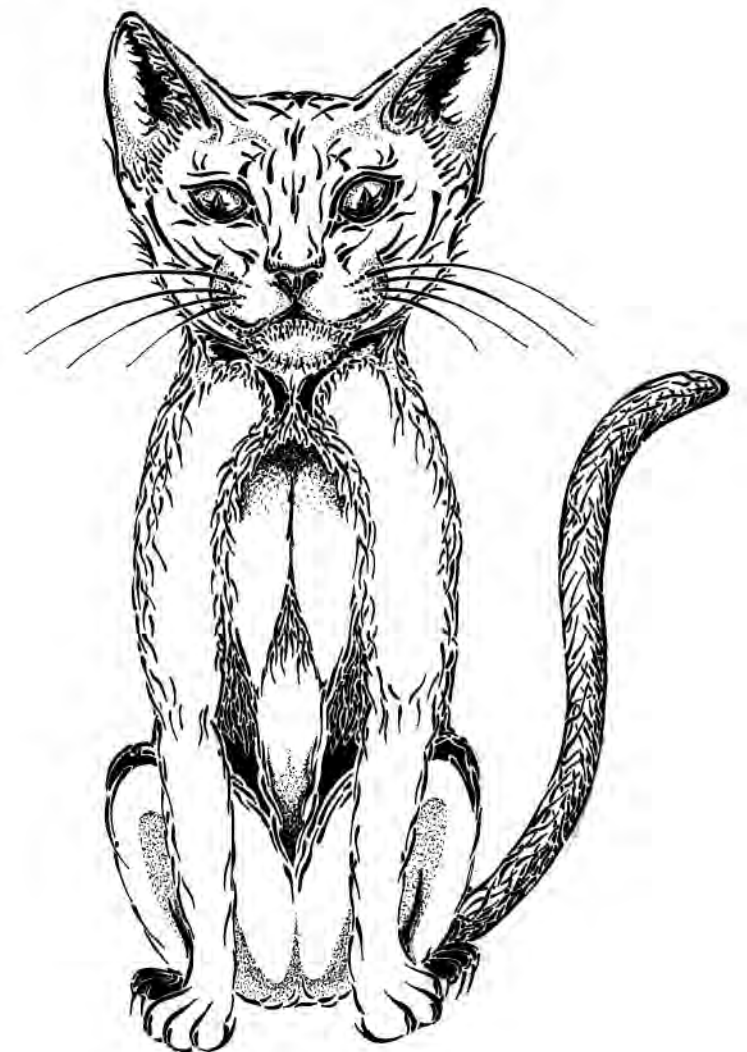
nice place?"

"I guess that would be nice." I wondered if he managed a local restaurant.

"How would you like to earn a little extra cash for that dinner?" He looked over at me with a sheepish grin. I still hadn't figured it out. I was naive, and I envisioned myself mowing the lawn at his estate – perhaps clipping the hedges, or painting the house trim off-white. I didn't answer. I just looked a bit confused, since I had no idea exactly what type of job he had in mind. He apparently picked up on my uncertainty, paused to consider how he would proceed, then he continued:

"Do you like to fuck your girlfriend?"

Whoa! This was certainly getting outside the boundaries of accepted hitchhiker/driver conversation. I began to get nervous. I sat there like a frog, ready to jump at the first sign of provocation.



Cat, Pen & Ink, 1971



Logic, Pen & Ink, 1970.

"I'll pay you fifty dollars, if you let me touch you," he paused. I was terrified. His words were stinging like a Bengay massage.

"You could buy her quite a dinner for fifty dollars." He didn't realize that the conversation wasn't really stimulating my appetite. In fact, I was close to losing my lunch on his dashboard.

"You don't have to do anything. Just sit there. It will feel just like when your girlfriend touches you. You've never done this before, have you?"

"No." I answered without returning his glance. I was shaking.

"I can pull over and all you have to do is undo your pants."

"No, I could never do that." I was losing it completely.

"What about seventy five dollars?" He bid higher, hoping that somehow my greed would displace my revulsion. I squirmed in my seat. "What about one hundred dollars?" This was getting serious.

"Please let me out." I don't know why I didn't think of this earlier.

"Don't you want me to at least drive you to the next exit?" I envisioned a pistol in his briefcase, and the electric door locks were down.

"I don't think so. Right here would be fine, please."

He slowed the car, pulled onto the shoulder and

slowly came to a stop. I was trembling. I couldn't look at him. I thanked him for the ride in a monotone. He hit the door lock release and I started to get out. With the door open, he peered out at me with a sad but frustrated look on his face.

"You know, it's not your problem. It's my problem." I nodded and off he drove. This was my first face-to-face confrontation with homosexuality. I didn't handle it very well. I was certainly glad that he didn't handle it either! I walked for about a mile. The whole experience was too much for me. Slowly I regained my composure enough to extend my thumb meekly out onto the highway.

Pow! The first car was a red Toyota whizzing by at lightning speed. The driver pulled over about two hundred yards ahead of me. I ran as fast as I could run. The red Toyota reciprocated by backing up erratically towards me. I got in, huffing. This driver was Oriental. He wore a smile that looked like it would hurt his face.

"Thanks for the ride!" I said, desperate for a normal conversation. "Where are you headed? I'm going all the way to Allentown. Actually Bethlehem. How 'bout you?" I waited.

He looked at me with the same grimace, nodding repeatedly. That's the way it went for seventy-five miles. He didn't speak a word of English and I didn't speak Chinese, but we made great time. It somehow

seemed ironic to me that at a time when I needed to have a sincere conversation, I had been served such an innocent silence. After much hand-motioning as we approached the Bethlehem exit, he let me off near the top of the ramp. I was about six miles from my parents' house. I climbed down from the overpass and began walking, relieved that my journey was nearly complete. I was tempted to find a phone and call home for a ride, but in the interim I decided to try the golden thumb one more time and sure enough, an immediate four for four!

This driver was a milkman in a white uniform with a white hat driving a white truck delivering bottles of white milk. I was struck by the absolute purity of such whiteness. My camouflage green was like a patch of Asian jungle in an ocean devoid of color. He felt compelled to tell me that his son had been killed in Vietnam and that was the reason he had picked me up. He drove me the remaining six miles out of his way to my doorstep. Along the way I converted quarts of his pure suffering into gallons of my own contaminated guilt. I think I helped him in some perverted way. I think helping me relieved some of his pain. Naturally there was no way that I could



Birds In Flight, 1971.

have revealed my disguise to him.

When I got home, I went right to my room. I began writing in the late afternoon and I didn't stop until three in the morning. The words just spilled out onto the paper. In exactly fifty-eight handwritten single-spaced pages I had captured nearly the exact spoken text of the day in play form, line by line, entitled *A Candid Survey Of American Life As Seen Through The Fading Eyes Of A Hitch Hiker Approaching Insanity (Part One)*.

I learned some valuable lessons that day. I learned that if you try to pretend that you are something other than what you are, the rest of the world will gladly participate in the deception. I learned that what you least expect is most likely what you will always find. I learned that what you need the most is what is nearly always denied. I learned that the world is a very sensitive place and that if you take something out of its rightful place, a chain of events is often set into

motion that becomes difficult if not impossible to unravel. Each of the four rides created situations that were initiated by my own deception, but reality backfired on me instead. I was proud of the play. I took it back to Gettysburg, and spent many more hours typing it for my creative writing class. I was working late at night on the nearly completed text in one of the Student Union typing cubicles. The manuscript and the original handwritten script were inside the case of the portable typewriter that I was using. I needed a break and went down the hallway for a soda. When I came back the typewriter was gone. The play was gone too. I was devastated.

The next day, I posted notices on all of the bulletin boards around campus offering a one hundred dollar reward for the return of the play. I didn't care about the Smith-Corona typewriter. I ran a weeklong ad in the newspaper to no avail. It was gone for good. Finished. Caput!

From the ashes of my loss emerged a fantasy in poem form called *Fred Filiment's Stolen Novel*. Fred was a slightly purified version of myself. Porter T. Packrat was the unknown thief of the manuscript who took on attributes of the redneck farmer and the homosexual businessman, as does the publisher Wally Watts. Mona represents Marty with whom I was deeply involved at that time. The butchers at the supermarket were the art and literary critics, and so on – a fully extended metaphor designed to replace the stolen play with a self-redeeming tale that was several levels removed from reality. To complicate the situation, I eventually produced a limited edition booklet of the same title supposedly written by myself, but published by the unscrupulous Porter T. Packrat, notorious for plagiarized and stolen manuscripts. Hence the intensely long-winded introduction to Packrat Press's own *Fred Filiment's Stolen Novel* (see page 108).

Fred Filiment's Stolen Novel

Friendly Fred Filiment fed crumbs to the birds;
A small and a humble man gifted with words.
His dream was to write the best book of his time.
He just needed good luck to put him in line.

For five years he worked in the grocery store
Packing the bags and mopping the floor.
His novel, his job and his lack of a wife
Were all that Fred Filiment had in his life.

The masterpiece novel that he began
Took him practically three years to plan,
One year to polish, one year to name.
His book was his only sidestreet to fame.

In fact, Fred was feeling a little grotesque
The day he stepped up to the publishers desk
To find Mr. Wally Watts forcing a smile
And gawking at Fred's most unusual style.

The book was a smash though the pages were sloppy
So Watts sent him back to type the last copy.
Whistling and drooling, Fred walked out the door
And bee-lined for work at the grocery store.

Fred parked his convertible under a tree
Leaving his script but taking his key.
Beaming, boasting, and strutting with pride,
He pounced on the magic door.... and was inside.

The clerks were astonished and certainly glad,
Though fearful of losing the best friend they had,
For Fred in his fame might quit packing food
And progress to a new game a little less crude.

When the head butcher asked to take a quick look
At the great work of art to be known as Fred's book,
Fred zoomed to his car to retrieve his text
But he returned empty-handed; shocked and perplexed.

It Was Gone.....

Earlier that day on the other side of town
Came a messenger named Packrat of little renown
Bearing a briefcase with the stock market file.
His fortune was gathered in greed and guile.

Packrat drove a tank in World War Two.
The Purple Heart was the best he could do.
"Kill or be killed" was the motto he learned.
"Ignite your best friends before you get burned."

Porter T. Packrat got into his car
And drove to the drugstore to buy a cigar.
Fred Filiment's convertible was under the tree.
Packrat was bargaining for anything free.....

Especially the package that sat on the seat.
A fresh written novel's an unusual treat
And who knows the value of items like these,
So Packrat took the package..... and never said please.

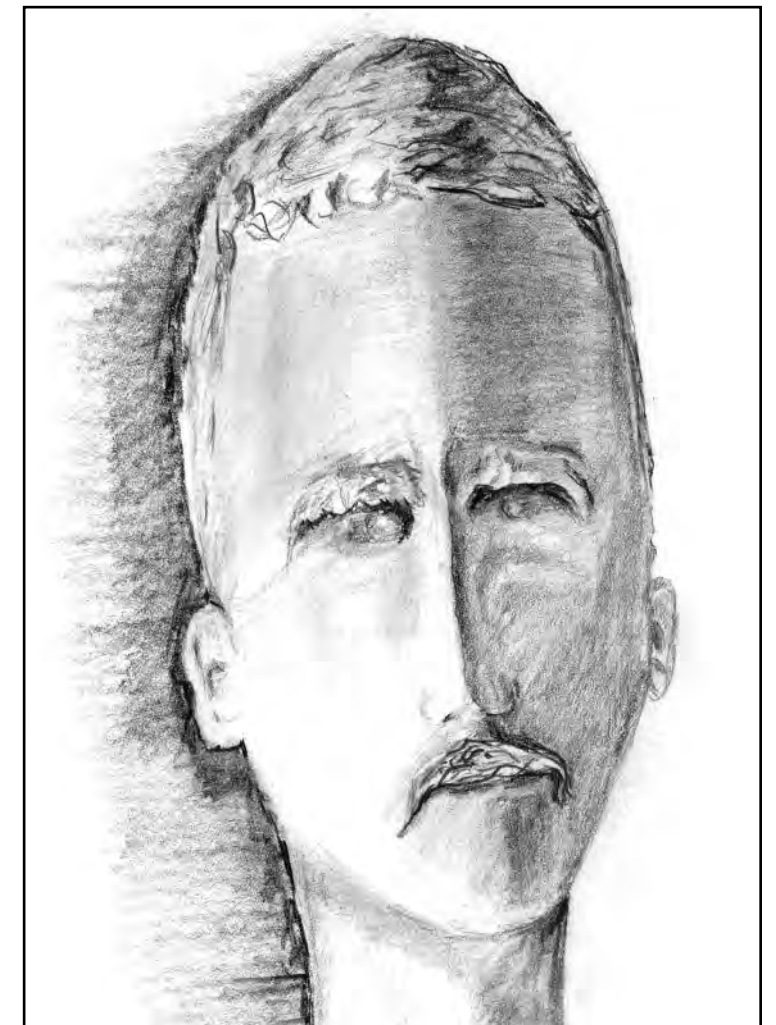
It Was Gone.....

A thief or a prankster or a Packrat had come
And in curious greed..... he did what was done.
Two shifty eyes and an odious smirk
Had absconded with five years of Fred's precious work.

The tragic affair would not have been bad
If it weren't the only copy Fred Filiment had.
Attempts to remember just increased his rage.
He knew it would take years to remember a page.

With large overdoses of manic depression
Fred lost all need for creative expression.
Burnt out light bulbs don't shine in the night
'Cause you can't fix the filament.....
without breaking the light.

Porter T. Packrat; pull out your knife
And steal the success you get out of life
From a faceless Fred Filiment discouraged and poor
Consuming his time at the grocery store.



The original Fred Filiment.

The Cage

I had been reading Franz Kafka in German class and was particularly taken by his story *"Ein Hungerkünstler"* (*A Hunger Artist*). This is the story of a circus performer who earns his living by starving himself inside a cage. This starvation constitutes his performance, and the public gives him more money for each day he can extend his vigil.

In my environmental sculpture class, I envisioned a tribute of sorts to Franz Kafka and without the knowledge of my professor, I proceeded with my plan to occupy a cage somewhere on campus. The only problem was that I required the raw materials necessary to construct the cage in a fashion that would be visually convincing. I had already acquired enough two by fours to construct a large frame. What I really needed were the bars and 3/4" electrical conduit seemed to suit the bill. These strong tubes were perfect for domes as well, but I just didn't have any money at the time.

So one night my friend Tucker and I went out on the caper. Tuck had a van capable of concealing most forms of contraband. I had cased the scenario the night before and was well equipped with the correct-sized wrenches and screwdrivers to accomplish the job. We pulled up to the electrical supply house on the outskirts of town. Tuck parked the van and went through the motions of getting the jack out to change the rear tire. This enabled him to remain by the side of the road for an extended period of time without evoking suspicion. We worked out a system of hand signals. I ran through the tall grass to the back of the building that was offset from the road by nearly 100 yards. There was a long erector set rack system that housed various diameters of conduit – all in ten-foot lengths – stored vertically in packs of ten. That translated to one hundred linear feet per pack. The packs were padlocked in position with a waist-high lateral steel bar. I spent fifteen minutes with my assorted wrenches and screwdrivers disassembling one end of the rack and removing several bundles. Each pack made a manageable haul back through the tall grass toward the van. If lights from a car appeared, I would lay down in the grass until the car passed, and then proceed. Tuck and I continued this process for nearly half an hour until enough packs were



Photo by Ken Strachen

Self imprisoned for Parent's Weekend, Homecoming and May Day in my Kafka-esque three day living sculpture "The Cage."

accumulated in the van. There were more than enough tubes for my cage.

The next day I drilled evenly spaced 3/4" holes in the wooden frame of the cage, so that the frame could be transported in a pre-fabricated state. That way, setup could be accomplished in a matter of minutes by simply sliding the bars into place. I painted the frame black and made a small placard to go with it. The sign simply said: "Freedom – A Three Day Living Sculpture." I spent a lot of time thinking about dramatic methods I could use to accentuate the effect of my living sculpture. I planned to set the cage up in the middle of the night so that I wouldn't run into any bureaucratic hassles. Homecoming weekend was coming up. That's when all the preppy

fraternity jocks would import their prissy high school girlfriends. Coincidentally, it was also Parent's Weekend and May Day weekend too. A huge peace rally was planned in Washington, DC. Kafka was laughing in his grave.

Tuck helped me assemble the cage. We picked the most traveled spot on campus, which was directly in front of the college dining hall across from the Student Union building. One of the campus security guards came by and asked us what we were doing. I told him we were setting up an exhibit for Parent's Weekend. He wrinkled his chin and nodded as if in deep thought.

"Seems reasonable enough." He shrugged.

We slid the bars into place and spread some hay

Student Puts Self Behind Bars

Dick Boak, 21, a Junior art major from Bethlehem at Gettysburg College does his "freedom thing" by spending three days in his self-built cage in front of the college dining hall on W. Lincoln Ave.

Boak, who began his vigil in the cage at sunrise Thursday expects to be there until some time today.

The student emphasized he is not protesting anything. He said his motive is to become a living sculpture for the sake of art, a vigil for peace during May Day and to observe the reaction of passersby.

Boak said he plans to quit

college because the art department will not let him "express himself."

His cage is constructed of a wooden frame with inserted aluminum pipes to act as bars. The total cost of the materials was \$20, Boak said. After he dismantles his prison, Boak said he plans to use the same materials to construct a geodesic dome, a hemispheric bubble house.

The cage measures five by eight feet and is six feet high. Movable bars make entrances and exits a simple matter. At times he has been joined by friends. Some go into the cage

with him and others sit outside to chat with the long-haired resident who is the son of a steel firm executive.

Boak says he is not a "militant activist" but is using the cage to "stimulate dialogue." He says his plan is working well. More people, students and others, stop to chat than would if he were walking about campus like the average student.

He has been living on peanuts and bananas and he will share them with his guests. There is straw on the cage floor and he has a sleeping bag. (Times Photo).

The Gettysburg Times captures the events surrounding May 1, 1971 with remarkable accuracy.

on the grass to make it look like a real animal cage. I had a sleeping bag, a drawing tablet, one of my blank book journals and a frayed leopard skin loin cloth that was intended to make me look like a caveman. My intention was to make snorting sounds, climb around inside the cage and scratch my armpits like a gorilla. I had it all figured out. I went to sleep and woke up to the thaw of dawn streaming in through the bars. It felt pretty strange.

I waited for my first victim. At 6:45 AM, I saw her walking toward the cage about two blocks down. She was a classic example – a stack of books under each arm – her body straining to compensate. This was a crack of dawn, fear of God, nose to the grindstone, straight-A student. In my three years at college, I had never seen anything like her before. I suppose we kept different hours and traveled in slightly different circles. As she came closer, I noticed that her rather thick-lensed glasses had drifted down toward the end

of her nose. Since neither of her hands was free, she was squinting and jerking her head back to try to flip them up into place. She hadn't noticed me yet. I snorted and swung my arms from side to side, waiting for her reaction.

She was absolutely horrified and made a beeline for the dining hall entrance. She dropped a few books in her haste. I growled and snorted some more. It was quite effective.

While she was inside, I assessed my performance and began to feel a sense of remorse about having put this poor introverted bookworm into such a state of shock. I decided to apologize to her when she came out, but she never did. She must have asked the cooks to let her out the side door. That clinched it. I made up my mind to speak and behave like a human being. I put my jeans on and greeted passersby cheerfully throughout the course of the day, as if the cage were a perfectly usual part of

campus life.

The cage was a hit, except for a few isolated incidents. The Assistant Dean came by to find out whether I had permission to do whatever it was that I was doing. I told him that it was part of my sculpture course, which was clearly an embellishment of the truth. When he tried to verify my story later on in the afternoon, my infuriated sculpture professor and primary collegiate inspiration came to the cage "somewhat agitated." Though he insisted that I (have someone) return his electric drill to the art studio in fifteen minutes or else, he didn't rescind my permission to occupy the cage. And so I was allowed to remain. I think there was a renegade inside him that appreciated the conceptual aspect of what I was doing.

My first full evening in the cage was fairly uneventful. Two drunken football players threatened me and a car full of rowdy frat boys pummeled the cage with empty beer cans while their girlfriends giggled with embarrassment.

On Friday, one of the local television stations came by to film a short human-interest segment for the tail end of the news. The newspapers came too and did a great interview that is one of the only remaining tangible souvenirs of that era. The headline exclaimed boldly: "Student Puts Self Behind Bars."

Oddly, these three days were among the most liberating days of my life.

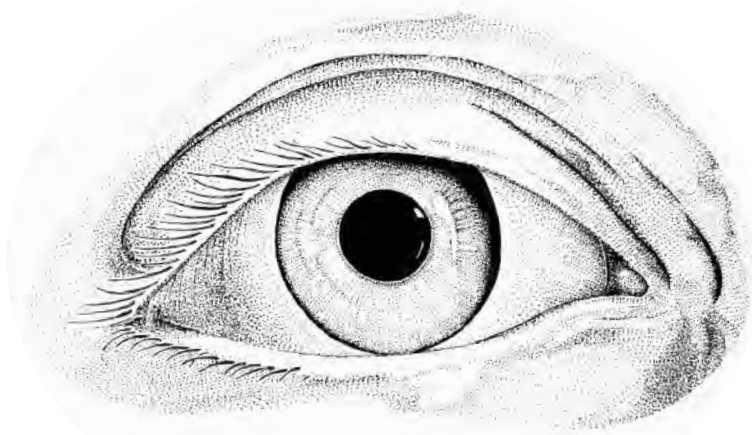


At work on a journal and entertaining an invited guest, performance art is introduced to the small town of Gettysburg.

There was plenty of conjecture about how I relieved myself during these three days. Like any red-blooded American boy, I used an empty Skippy peanut butter jar, but this only took care of half the problem. I must confess that I did leave the cage at three in the morning on the second evening for a ten-minute excursion to the adjacent dorm to answer nature's call.

The Cage didn't survive the final night. The fraternity boys just couldn't take it anymore. They worked themselves into quite a frenzy, egged on with several gallons of beer. With their confidence bolstered, they paid my little campus domicile a visit and lifted it several feet off the ground. With a remarkable display of aggression, patriotism and testosterone, they tossed my sculptural statement several furlongs, rendering it a heap of mangled lumber and conduit. Though my pride was bruised, I amazingly remained unscathed.

After the cage, my life took on an inertia all its own. I had decided to leave college and my creative energy was peaking. In the parking lot of the Icehouse apartments, I salvaged and straightened the mangled conduit, cutting the poles to exact geodesic lengths. Using a hammer and anvil from the maintenance shop, I flattened the ends of the struts and drilled alignment holes. We trucked the pieces out to "The Final Frontier," a farm/commune inhabited by Tullio and Linda DeSantis west of Gettysburg between Biglerville and Orrtanna.



Right Eye, Left Brain.



Tullio at the farm with Damon Boone, alias "The Scarf."

The Final Frontier

Tullio and Linda's farm was actually not their farm at all. They were renting it for a fraction of its value from a lawyer in town. It was a classic red brick Pennsylvania farmhouse on a small dirt road just off Route 30. Directly across the road was a huge red bank barn in perfect condition and 50 acres of land leased to neighboring farmers for corn and wheat.

The farm was a reasonable example of utopia. Linda really held up her end of the bargain. She had created a hippie's dream with hundreds of Mason jars filled with organically grown foods: lentils, chamomile, slippery elm bark, tupelo honey, rose hips, alfalfa sprouts, barley, goldenseal, royal jelly... it just went on and on, and the amazing thing was that Linda knew exactly what to do with all of it. Her meals were exquisite feasts of homegrown splendor, bursting with nature and nutrition.

One day after I had helped Linda weed her garden, she prepared Okmok pizzas. These were crisp whole wheat crackers topped with tahini, avocado, tomato, fresh mung sprouts, and slivered carrots. The inspired concoction was then blanketed with shredded Havarti and heated under the broiler until the cheese melted to a golden brown.

Tullio had a beautiful white husky named Sunny. Living on a farm, it was common to see a tick here and there and one day while petting Sunny, Tullio discovered a sizeable one burrowed in near his collar. That night, several of us burned the late lights in a long discussion about karma and reincarnation.

After much philosophical consternation, Tullio decided that since the tick had entered into a symbiotic relationship with his dog, he would allow the innocent creature to remain in residence, at least for a time.

Day by day, the tick expanded in size until after about eight days its skin was so tightly stretched that it became transparent. Tullio took a sharp pocket knife and very carefully cut the tick's body free from a relatively oblivious Sunny and set it in the grass next to a fence post where it wouldn't be stepped on or bothered. I think it's possible that on a very small scale, tick nirvana may have been attained that day.

A few days later, Linda was going through the mail and opened an overdue bill from the electric company. They were threatening to turn the power off, which concerned us given that we had little in the way of capital. Enlisting the assistance of my capable and devious friend Damon, we skulked around to the electric meter at the side of the house. The meter was secured with a thin braided wire that bore the electric company's specially embossed lead seal. This seemed simple enough. We took a very fine Exacto razor saw from my art supply box and sliced the lead seal right down the center. Loosening four screws, the waterproof glass globe came off easily. Two small set screws disengaged the



Messing with the Electric Company!

speedometer-like mechanism. Here was the crux of the problem. We tinkered with the gears behind the dial and came to the quick realization that by spinning the mechanism, we could make the numbers go backwards. We manipulated that meter for a good half hour until it seemed that we might have a few months of free kilowatts. We put everything back together in sequence, carefully super-gluing the two halves of the lead seal and burnishing the edges to hide any obvious evidence of tampering, seams or glue.

The next morning Linda called the power company to offer her innocent complaint. With slight agitation she explained that there had perhaps been a slight error with last month's meter reading. The power company quickly dispatched a representative who wasted no time in clipping and discarding our bogus seal. With great curiosity, we observed him through the living room window. After verifying that the meter was spinning, he garnered his official tool and replaced our seal with a brand new embossing. Then he came lumbering over to the screen door to talk to Linda.

"Pears yer right about yer meter readin', ma'am. Guess you'll have sum credit comin'. Maybe even a refund." Off he went scratching his head. Linda ripped up the bill and the lights burned brightly for the rest of the summer!



Judley, basking in the glory of Duchamp-ian dada.



The 17-year locusts ate everyone's crop except Tullio's.

The library on the farm included every underground and counter culture publication imaginable, from Allen Ginsberg to Euell Gibbons. Linda had a part time job at the college library and she had tremendous access to and knowledge of books.

One day she brought home a gigantic book that was the last volume from an 1851 European encyclopedia. The library had discarded the set in order to clear space and apparently, they didn't know what they had. Linda did. The book was nearly four inches thick. It contained thousands of meticulous and extraordinary lithographs and engravings, each cross-referenced to endless topics in the purely text volumes. Illustrative reference books of this variety were necessary, given that the photograph was still in its infancy. The book was an extremely rare treasure; in fact a reduced-size reprint that appeared years later remains rare and valuable. I spent weeks with this book and was thoroughly inspired by the inconceivable scope of such an effort, let alone the technical flawlessness of the engravings.

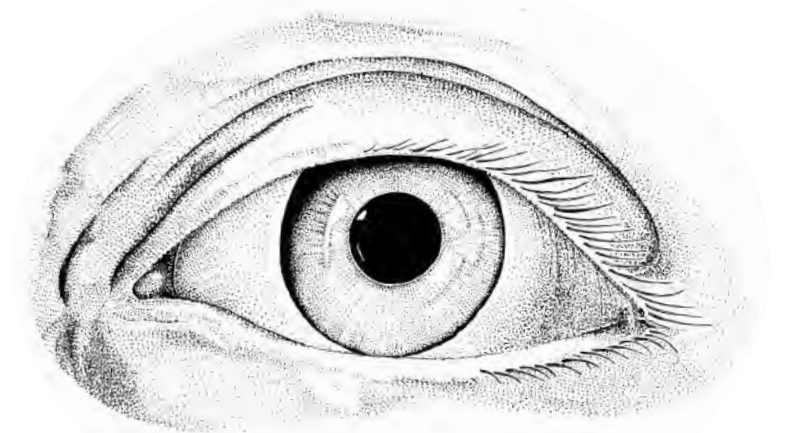
I also spent several weeks scouring the *Whole Earth Catalog*, especially the sections on architecture and do-it-yourself structures. I was devoted to Buckminster Fuller and sent him a \$15 royalty for my most recent geodesic structure. I was also enamored with the visionary architecture of Paoli Soleri whose ambitious *City of the Future* project was beginning to take shape in Cosanti, Arizona.

My friend Judley was a fairly constant companion at the farm. He was extremely gifted in a playful, almost childlike way. It seemed to me that his ability to draw came to him naturally. He had a special talent for making his characters seem animated in an almost Disney-like fashion. I envied this. We often traded spontaneous drawings back and forth to see how they would evolve. I would add structure and Judley would add liveliness. He was very fluid and expressive and I often compared his drawings and assemblages to Marcel Duchamp and the artists of the Dada movement.

To add to Judley's mystique, his fervent college friends had had a rubber stamp made that said "It's Judley" in large block letters. This enigmatic message was stamped in every men's room and bulletin board in a two-hundred mile radius around Gettysburg, which made Judley quite a legend, though no one really knew who or what Judley was.

There were many other amazing characters that passed through the farm, but Marty and I didn't want to be a further burden on the already crazy scene that was developing at Tullio's. It had been our intention to find a secluded spot to build my geodesic dome. I finally acquired a huge canvas backdrop from an old college theater performance, marked out the geometry, cut the triangles, punched evenly spaced holes along the perimeter and laced a large semi-waterproof cover together.

We were ready.



Left Eye, Right Brain.

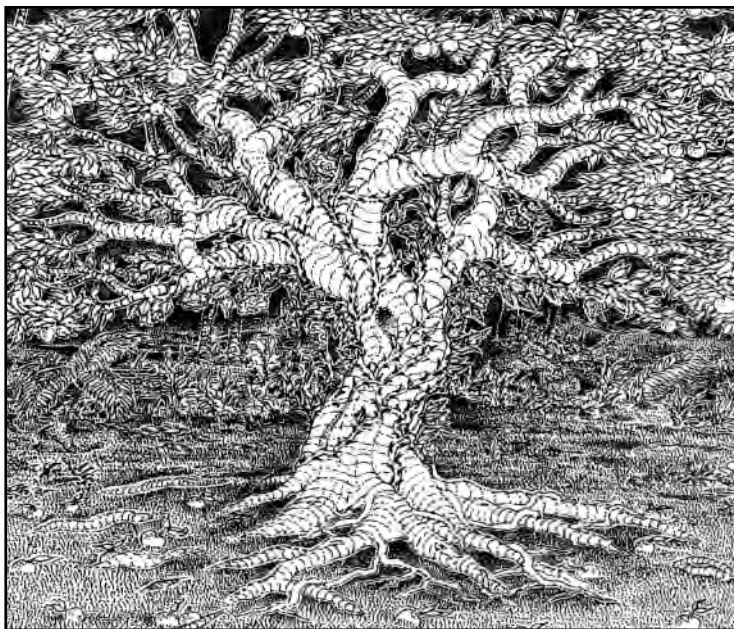
Crown Of Creation

It was a gorgeous Saturday morning in early July. Sunlight streamed through the air, thick with moisture from the previous day's rain. We woke early and organized the hundreds of pieces of the geodesic dome on the front lawn near the psychedelic mailbox. We tied the conduit struts in manageable bundles, slumped the heavy canvas cover into a wheelbarrow, and set off along the fencerow that separated the woods from the cornfield. After a half mile, the cornfield came to an abrupt end and we crossed some tangles of barbed wire at the property line by the thick woods. Half-decomposed leaves lined the forest floor. Mandrake was corkscrewing its way upward through the leaves and Jack-in-the-pulpits prayed with monkish mushrooms along swirling knurled roots. We broke through the underbrush into a dark gray thicket where black buboes choked the diseased branches overhead. Below, thorns scraped against our calves.

Then a brightness emerged in the center of the forest. A small circular clearing with tall green grasses... this might be perfect for the dome. We laid down our heavy wares: Tullio, Linda, Judley, Marty, Lee, Gary and John. They rested in the grass while I tape-measured the diameter of the clearing. Forty feet was needed to accommodate the hemispheric base, but there was a medium-sized tree slightly off center in the clearing. It limited the available space.



Crown Of Creation dome (before cover) near Tullio and Linda Deantis's farm in Orrtanna just west of Gettysburg, as viewed from tree house platform under construction.



The Apple & The Rose, Detail.

Not here. I sat down next to Marty and drank cold water from her thermos.

Now my eyes drifted back to the center of the clearing. It was an apple tree, roundly shaped but squat. The branches were knurled but healthy. Late blossoms had begun to yield small red apples. The tree was breathtaking.

Upon closer examination, I saw that wild roses had woven their way up the trunk into the strong lower branches. The vines had wrapped themselves tightly around the bent branches of the tree, causing deep ruts in the bark. Early roses bloomed along the glistening iridescent thorns. It was obvious that the two plants had grown side by side from the onset, symbiotically.

Standing back and looking at the expression of the tree, it seemed that the branches were struggling to reach upward within the cylindrical shaft-way of light created by the surrounding forest. But that reaching upward had been contained, pulled back, counteracted by the sheer power of the rose vine. A compromise had been struck somewhere in between. On many of the primary branches, young apples and remnants of their blossoms shared equal space with the deep blood-red rose petals and sharpened thorns. During its life, the tree had been changed. It was proudly sighing, aware of its beauty but pained and tired of resisting.

I was awestruck with this image. I stared into the heart of the tree and let it imprint itself onto my

retinas. There was deep meaning here. Paradox, harmony, sacrifice, parable, marriage. The human condition. I memorized it. Perhaps it would make more sense later (*see pages 161-162*).

We picked up the struts and journeyed further, still looking for a level clearing to erect the dome. The word dome was ringing in my ears. Dh from Dharma: Dhome. DhOME. dhOME. dhOMe. We came to a small gurgling stream. Linda had been reading Euell Gibbon's "Stalking The Wild Asparagus." She severed some young watercress along the bank and we sampled its intense peppery flavor. She dug up some tiny white flowers in a bed of moss and washed their roots clean. Small tubers shared the root structure. They tasted like a cross between potatoes and peanuts. Then wild scallions, wild baby carrots, unidentifiable wild lettuce. She gathered these into her backpack carefully for dinner and we trekked suspiciously forward, knowing that the further we traveled, the further we would have to retrace our steps.

Then we entered a second clearing, this one large enough for several domes. No soft grass here though, no shaft of sunlight, no parable, but peaceful and quiet. We laid down the struts, tore out the undergrowth and moved rocks away from a logical center. The process began.

First a pentagon, then the second level of five hexagons expanding and growing outward and upward. Tullio's portable tape player strained with



Crown Of Creation dome, with partial cover, fully inhabited.



*Characteristics of the Symptoms Of Death
by Tullio DeSantis, Pen & Ink, 1971.*

weak batteries squawking Jefferson Airplane's "Weeeeeee... Are The Crown Of Creation." The crown grew, a delicate eggshell... the third level, heavier, more awkward. The center pole affixed, John and Gary lifted. Bolts with washers and nuts locked the vertices in place, higher, higher, the fourth level. Lifting the center pole higher, pushing, the fifth and last level. A three frequency 5/8 icosahedron, twenty-five feet high, forty feet wide, incredible.

Lee threw a rope over a high branch. Tullio tied it to the center of the sewn canvas cover, we all hoisted. Draped upon the dome's peak, it unfolded downward to the ground. We secured it to the bottom triangles with twine and drove the anchors deeply in place. Done.

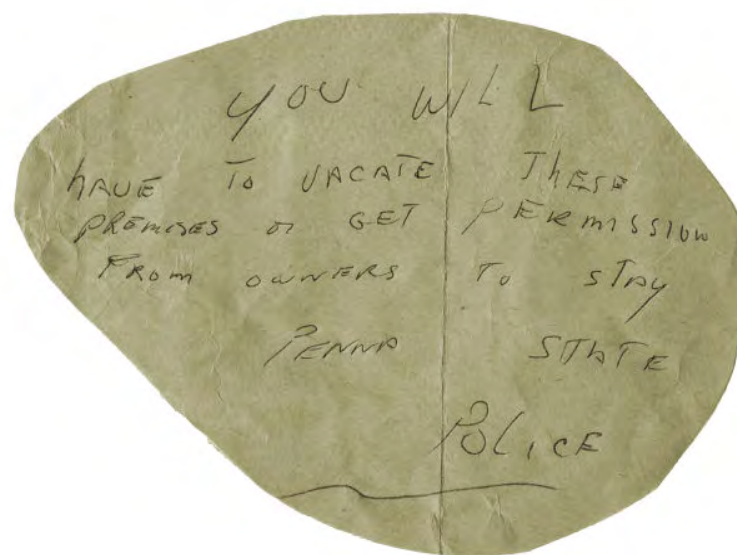
Marty and I lived happily in the dome for several weeks. People frequently visited us from the farm, which was good thing. We felt a bit isolated and

lonely out in the woods. We attempted to survive on the few items that the immediate land provided, but we supplemented this with delicacies from Linda's garden and an occasional dinner back at Tullio's. One evening when we returned to the dome, there was police tape wrapped around the perimeter with a handwritten note scrawled on the side of a paper bag: "You will have to vacate these premises or get permission from owners to stay." It was signed "Pennsylvania State Police."

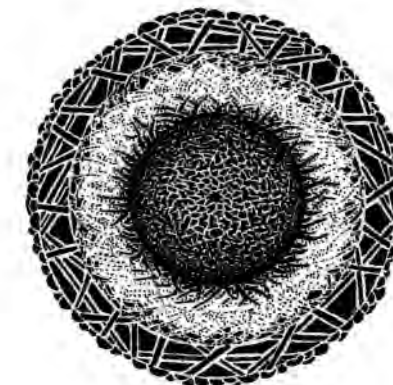
The next day, with a sense of defeat, we folded up the cover, disassembled the struts and lugged the dome back to Tullio's. I remember thinking that it had been like blowing up a balloon, holding it for a few seconds, then letting it go.

The scene at the farm got progressively worse. Tullio wouldn't come out and say it directly, but he was unhappy having so many people latched onto his utopian dream. He wanted everyone to clear out, but instead of saying it verbally, he emanated an intensely negative vibe. This was quite effective.

We started looking for other options and for ways to contribute financially to the communal aspect of the farm, which happened to be right smack in the middle of orchard country. Tullio's friend Carl was trying to make a go at farming. He had put his life savings into about twenty acres of orchard, primarily peaches. In early July, he became desperate for help, and being equally desperate for money, I was a logical candidate. Off I went with a few other naive



*Note left on paper bag by Pennsylvania State Police
at Crown of Creation dome near Tullio's Farm.*



Magma, Pen & Ink, Unfinished, 1970.

recruits, into the sweltering heat in the back of Carl's pickup to prune peaches. It didn't sound so bad – two dollars an hour and a boss with longer hair than mine.

Carl gave us a starter course in pruning. The peaches were about the size of golf balls, and they were growing in clusters of three or four. Without pruning, none of them would reach maturity. By removing all but one fruit from each cluster, the one remaining peach would get the nourishment it needed to grow to full size. The trick was to get up into the heart of the tree on a stepladder and start tearing away. What Carl had neglected to tell us was that these little golf balls were covered with a thick condensed layer of ultra-fine peach fuzz. Of course, the fuzz comes off on your hands when you touch it. That in itself would be tolerable, except that this premature fuzz has the identical consistency of fiberglass insulation. Combine this wonder of nature with 100° heat, and what do you have?

My body was dripping with sweat, so much so that I absolutely had to take my shirt off. The air was thick with fuzz. My whole body became coated. I began to itch. It was far worse than being thrashed with porcupine quills. It was worse than bee stings or cactus. It became unbearable. I tried to wash it off. It wouldn't come off. I suffered through the rest of the day. I went home and took a cold shower. It didn't help. I did my laundry. I found out that the fuzz gets imbedded permanently in clothing. I went to work the next day still itching. I began to realize why Carl got such a great deal on the farm. I began to realize why peaches cost so much!

In the middle of the second week, I realized that I would rather pay Carl two bucks an hour to not pick peaches. So I packed it in. At the time, I thought

that just blew them away. For the feminists, there were "NOW" burgers, and for the Krishnas I served up meditative mandala burgers.

One night, Art Garfunkel came in with a knockout blonde on his arm. I spotted him from the kitchen. I couldn't believe it when the waitress brought me his order for a cheeseburger.

I immediately set to work with my sharpest paring knife. I cut the words "Art for Art's Sake" in Old English script out of yellow cheese and appliquéd the letters in a circle around a scroll cut orange cheese profile of Art himself, hairdo and all! I set my masterpiece down on top of an optimum medium-rare burger and let the layers melt just a touch so that all of the edges were perfectly rounded, then I sent it out. They both got quite a kick out of this – so much so that when Mr. Marsh rang up their bill, they mentioned it to him jokingly. After they departed, Mr. Marsh promptly put a quick end to my cheeseburger art.

Occasionally, someone would come in and order late night pancakes. There was great opportunity for creativity in this. One night I got completely out of hand with a hippie couple's order. I laid out about forty cakes on the griddle from whoppers the size of record albums all the way down to dribbles less than the diameter of a dime, with every incremental size in between.

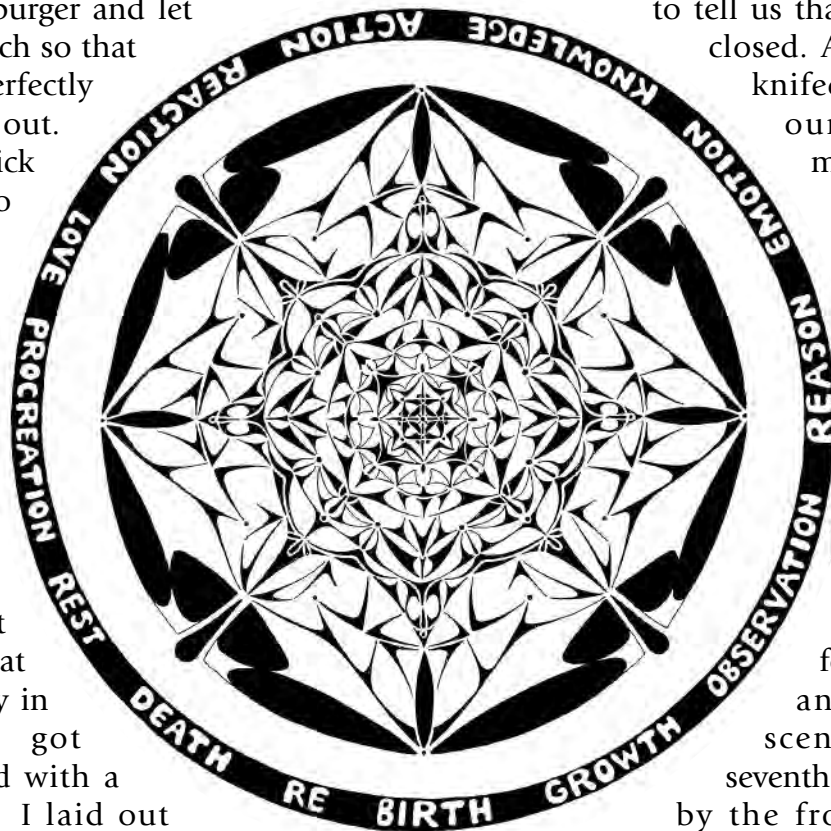
These golden brown disks could be stacked concentrically in ever-decreasing sizes and reinforced internally with toothpicks to form an impressive conically stepped pancake pyramid. Mr. Marsh was not amused with this masterpiece either. As punishment, I was temporarily forced into the back recesses of the kitchen where I secretly devoured several more pounds of shrimp cocktail.

A few weeks later on a Friday night, I arrived to

work in the midst of blizzard – not an uncommon occurrence in Vermont – but by nine o'clock it was getting pretty serious outside. The plows were out in full force, but the snowdrifts were closing up behind them like a zipper. It was hopeless, and made worse by the fact that endless swarms of northbound cars were headed up the Interstate for a weekend of skiing. HoJo's was nearly empty though, except for a few bleary-eyed drivers in need of a break. It was one hour before closing and nearly everything was put away. I was sponging the counters and planning a strategy for more shrimp consumption.

That's when the state trooper came in to tell us that Interstate 91 was being closed. A tractor-trailer had jackknifed about a mile north of our exit and there wasn't much chance of clearing the highway during the blizzard. So one by one the cars were flagged off at our exit, and they came down the ramp single file into our parking lot. There was simply no other option. Magnetically drawn by our friendly orange and blue sign, they entered in twos and fours with their ski beanies and boots. It was a mob scene. Mr. Marsh was in seventh heaven. He was standing by the front door, handing out dinner menus with a glazed grin on his face, and when the dinner menus were all gone, he handed out breakfast menus and lunch menus until the banquet room was filled. People were sitting on the floor and in the aisles.

There were two waitresses, one hostess, one busboy, Mr. Marsh, and yours truly – the night chef – the only cook on duty. The procedure was supposed to work like this. There was a wire just above head level with sliding plastic clothespins so that one could organize all of the orders in plain sight. After the wire was full, I used the counter, then the grill. There were orders on the floor. There were even



Above: *Miniature Landscape*, Pen & Ink, 1971.

Left: *Action Reaction Yantra*, Pen & Ink, 1971.

deep-fried orders sizzling away with the onion rings. There were orders for scrambled eggs and hot dogs, sirloin steaks and Welsh rarebit, fried clam strips and baby calves liver, California burgers and spaghetti. It was a nightmare. At midnight, Mr. Marsh informed us that we would staying open past closing time. The dollar signs lit up in his eyes. At one o'clock, the restaurant looked like Woodstock. At two, Mr. Marsh decided to help me cook French toast. I was losing it. The customers were screaming at the waitresses who were screaming at Mr. Marsh who was lecturing me about the percentage of milk that one should add to the clam dip batter. I started to go over the edge. Mr. Marsh saw me standing half comatose near the Hobart meat slicer. He screamed a scream that shattered my fragile state of mind, pushing me over the precipice.

"Get to work, you idiot. We've got orders to get out!" He went scurrying back toward the freezer like a shellfish to get another case of New England clam chowder. This was my chance. There was no one looking; just the muffled roar of 350 disgruntled sales clerks, accountants and their cheesy wives from Long Island and Hartford, whose winter weekends were being wrecked by this weird collision of nature and destiny.

Quietly, I untied my stained white apron and set it on the metal counter next to the steam table. Then I resigned, effective immediately, without any notice whatsoever, without a word! I was out the back door. No one saw me leave.

I escaped through snowdrifts in the parking lot to my half-buried Dodge van. I entered through the side door, opened up the sleeping bag that I always reserved for emergencies, and huddled into a fetal position in the very back of the van between the spare tire and the jumper cables. They came looking for me about fifteen minutes later. Mr. Marsh led the expedition of waitresses and busboys like Admiral Byrd out to the van.

"Do you think he's in there?" I heard Mr. Marsh's fingernails claw briefly at the ice on the front windshield.

"I don't see him," said Tom, the gay busboy, and off they went to search for me behind the garbage shed.

This was my first nervous breakdown. At least I think that's what it was. I was never formally diagnosed. I did lie there whimpering in a frozen puddle of self-pity and overstimulation for what seemed like hours, until the plows cleared the path back up to the freshly reopened Interstate.

Mr. Marsh mailed my paycheck.

A month later the place burned down. You must believe me when I say that this was not my doing, but I certainly carried the guilt for it, wondering whether some bizarre supernatural uncontrollable fury of mine had flown secretly and mysteriously through time and space to ignite the French fry pit. I must say they did a marvelous job rebuilding the place, though since then I have only ever viewed it in a blur from the Interstate.

Ironically, within a week I interviewed for and was offered a position as night security guard with the Hannon Detective Agency, protecting the incredibly controversial anti-ecological Connecticut River Hydroelectric Power Project from pinko SDS hippie



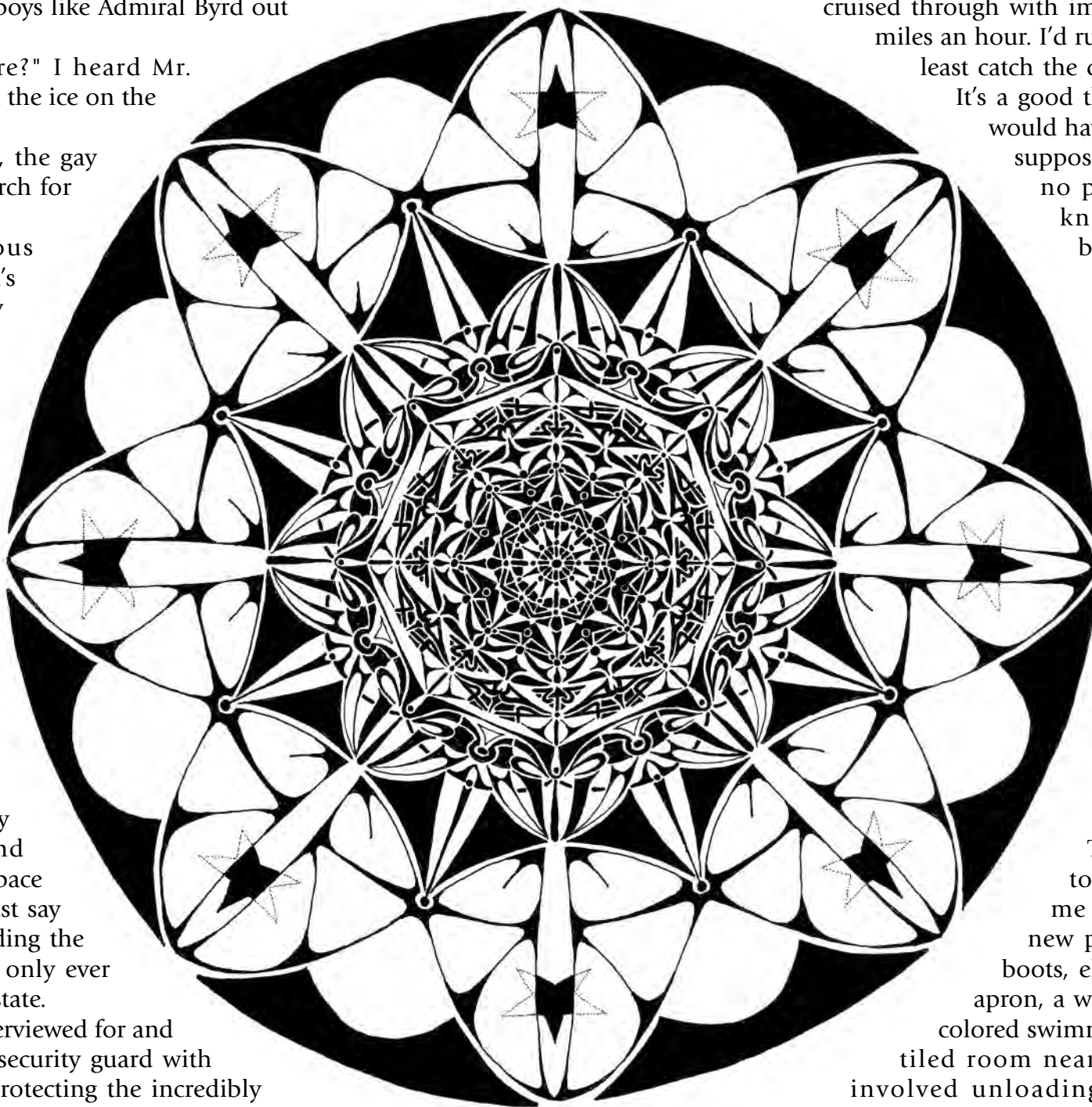
saboteurs like myself. I accepted the job and was issued my hat, black shirt and badge #233. Armed with my Rapidograph pens, I was scheduled to arrive at my post just before midnight. For eight hours, I would sit in my tiny glass-windowed booth, space heater on ten, drawing yantras and surreal pictures in the eerie silence while listening to third-rate redneck trucker songs through the static of a radio with no knobs.

The trucks paid me no mind. They were supposed to pull up to my stand, identify themselves and allow me to record their license plate numbers onto the designated space on my clipboard. Instead they cruised through with impunity and confidence at 60-plus miles an hour. I'd run out waving my arms, trying to at least catch the color or state of their license plate.

It's a good thing I kept the gate open or there would have been some costly fence repairs. I suppose it's a good thing that there were no pinko SDS hippie saboteurs that knew I was guarding the place, because I certainly was too busy drawing pictures to stop anyone!

This was a wonderful job, but it only paid \$2.10 an hour. After about eight weeks, I turned in my badge and uniform to take a job at the laundry division of the Brattleboro Retreat Mental Hospital & Old Folks Home. At \$2.85 an hour, this I believed, was to be a major move in my ever-advancing career.

I soon realized how wrong I was to have left the detective agency. When I reported for work that Monday morning, a tiny little gray-haired lady led me to the intake area of the laundry building. There I met Raoul. He was excited to show me the ropes. Raoul fitted me with the necessary attire for my new position that required rubber hip boots, elbow-length rubber gloves, a vinyl apron, a white paper hat, and a pair of flesh-colored swimmer's nose plugs. Raoul led me to a tiled room near the loading platform. My job involved unloading the canvas carts brought by maintenance trucks from the various hospital buildings. I would wheel the carts into the tiled room, then shake



Numeric Yantra, Pen & Ink, 1971.

the contents of the cart (primarily bed sheets) toward an immense floor-to-ceiling waterfall with a trough at the bottom that resembled a urinal. The purpose of this procedure was to remove any debris that may have been deposited onto the bed sheets by the patients. The sad reality was that sheets didn't get changed unless there was cause to warrant the effort, and there was nothing in the nurses' contract that required them to do anything but wrap the whole mess into a neat little bundle and pack it off to the laundry.

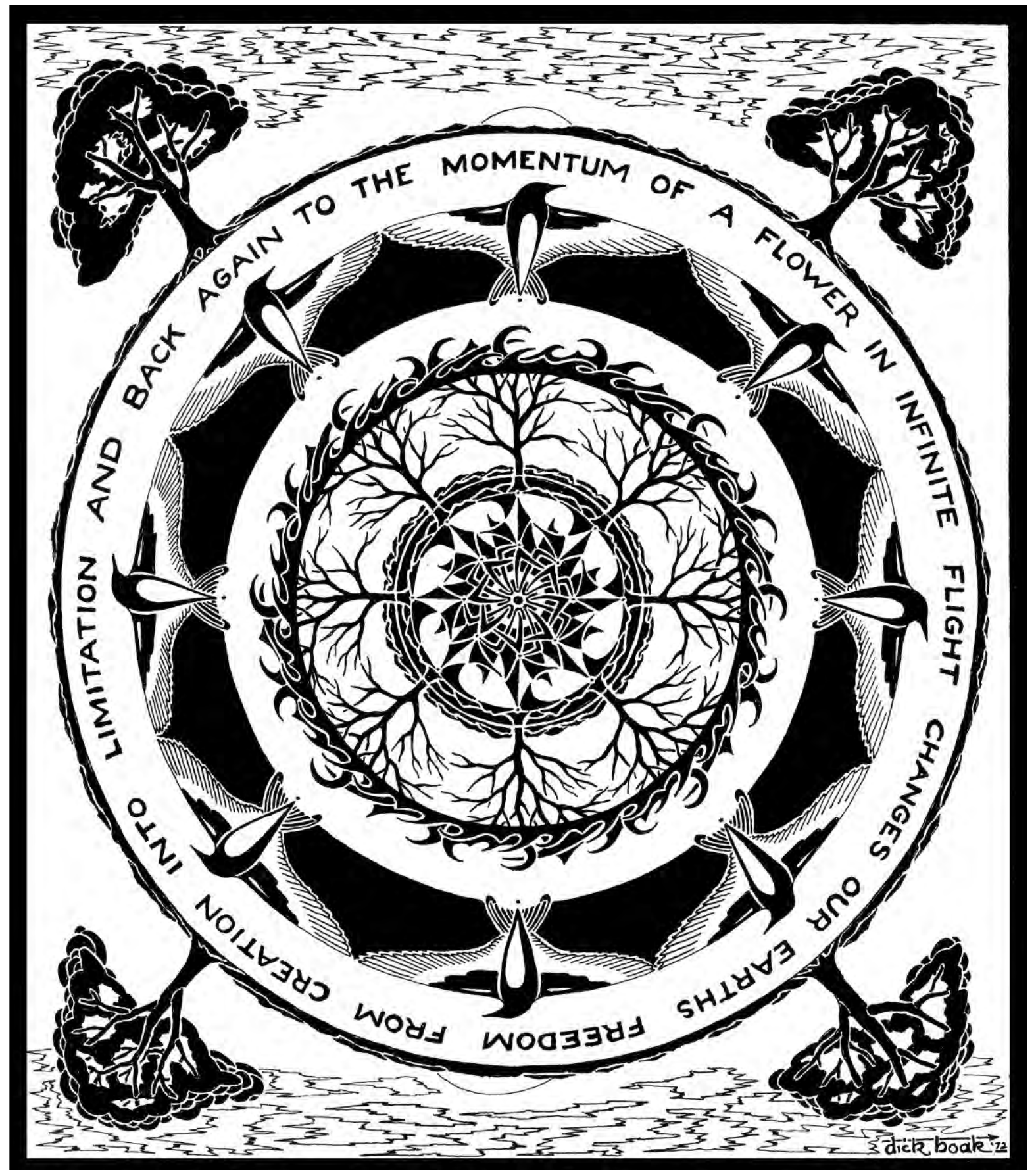
And so, I replaced Raoul as primary "shit shaker" (the unofficial job title), and he was promoted to pre-wash loader. Fortunately, the turnover was reasonably fast. Within a month they brought in another poor sucker, and with a great sense of satisfaction, I turned over my equipment, nose plugs and all, and gave him an in-depth training session which left him in such a state of depression that I'm sure he considered checking himself into the very same institution.

I moved on to the pre-washer, then to the main washers, then to the dryers, then to the sheet folding machines where I offloaded the clean white finished product into canvas carts that were trucked back to the hospital linen closets where they awaited some new bout of incontinence. It was there at the folding machines that I daydreamed about traveling to California, and religiously I saved my meager paychecks to fund the impending journey.

During this time I was relatively uninspired. It was a very cold winter and I think everyone up there was getting a bit depressed, especially during the shortest and darkest days of the year. Cold weather requires a great deal of effort: dressing in layers, chopping wood, keeping the stove going, shoveling snow, struggling with transportation and vehicles.

Marty's work schedule was often out of sync with mine, but we made the best of it with one vehicle. One night I finished work at 10:00 P.M and being the seasoned hitchhiker that I was, and in spite of the extreme cold, I decided to test my luck. I flagged a quick but short ride to the junction of Route 5 and I-91. There, I stood freezing for twenty-five minutes without the prospect of a single car.

At last a dilapidated Ford station wagon slipped to a stop and waited for me to scuttle to the passenger door.



Momentum Yantra (Word Ring), Pen & Ink, 1972.

"Goin' down toward Greenfield?" he croaked.

Actually, I was headed down Route 5 but at that late hour, it looked pretty futile. Since the Cider Mill was only a quarter mile from the Interstate, I figured I'd take advantage of his kindness. I hopped in.

"Freezin' out there."

"Yep."

While he drove south on I-91, I considered my dilemma. If I were to get off at the Bernardston exit, I'd have to cross the bridge over the creek that separated the Interstate from Route 5, into the little town, turn right and walk three and a half miles north on Route 5 to the Cider Mill.

We came over the crest of the hill and across the valley I saw the lights from the Watrous Farmette. I pointed to the farmhouse.

"That's where I live – right over there." He pulled over to the side of the road.

"Isn't there a creek down there?" he asked with a squint.

"Yep, but it's a tiny one. There's a spot where you can walk right across."

"You sure?"

"I'll be OK. Thanks for the lift."

So out I went, into the brutal air.

I picked a point toward the fence line and started through the snow. It was a foot deep and frozen on the top just enough to make it crunchy and sharp against my ankles. In spots it had drifted up above my knees. In a few moments I was at a gap in the snow fence, then downhill to a thicket that concealed the creek like a frozen wound.

The wind was heavy and gusting. It was easily 15° below with the chill factor. As I came through the barren trees and brittle shrubs, the creek became more fierce and loud. This was not the gentle creek that I remembered from the early autumn when Marty and I had carefully stacked river rocks across a span of perhaps eight or ten feet.

This was a river, 25 feet wide at the narrowest part, with fast rapids thick with slabs of flowing ice. There was no sign of our makeshift dam. How could there be?

I stood at the edge and looked down into the steel water. Three hundred yards away was the warm stove fully stoked. Bob would be there with the cats, smoking his pipe. Marty would be embroidering. I took a deep breath and stepped down, searching for stable footing in the rapids. Small steps. Small steps. I almost slipped. The water was deeper. My heart was pounding.

Freezing. Pushing. Deeper. Up to my waist, my chest. I pushed toward the other side. Wading left. Then right. A branch. Grabbing. Pulling. Up. Land. Liquid breath. Freezing. Shaking. I hobbled toward the cornfield.

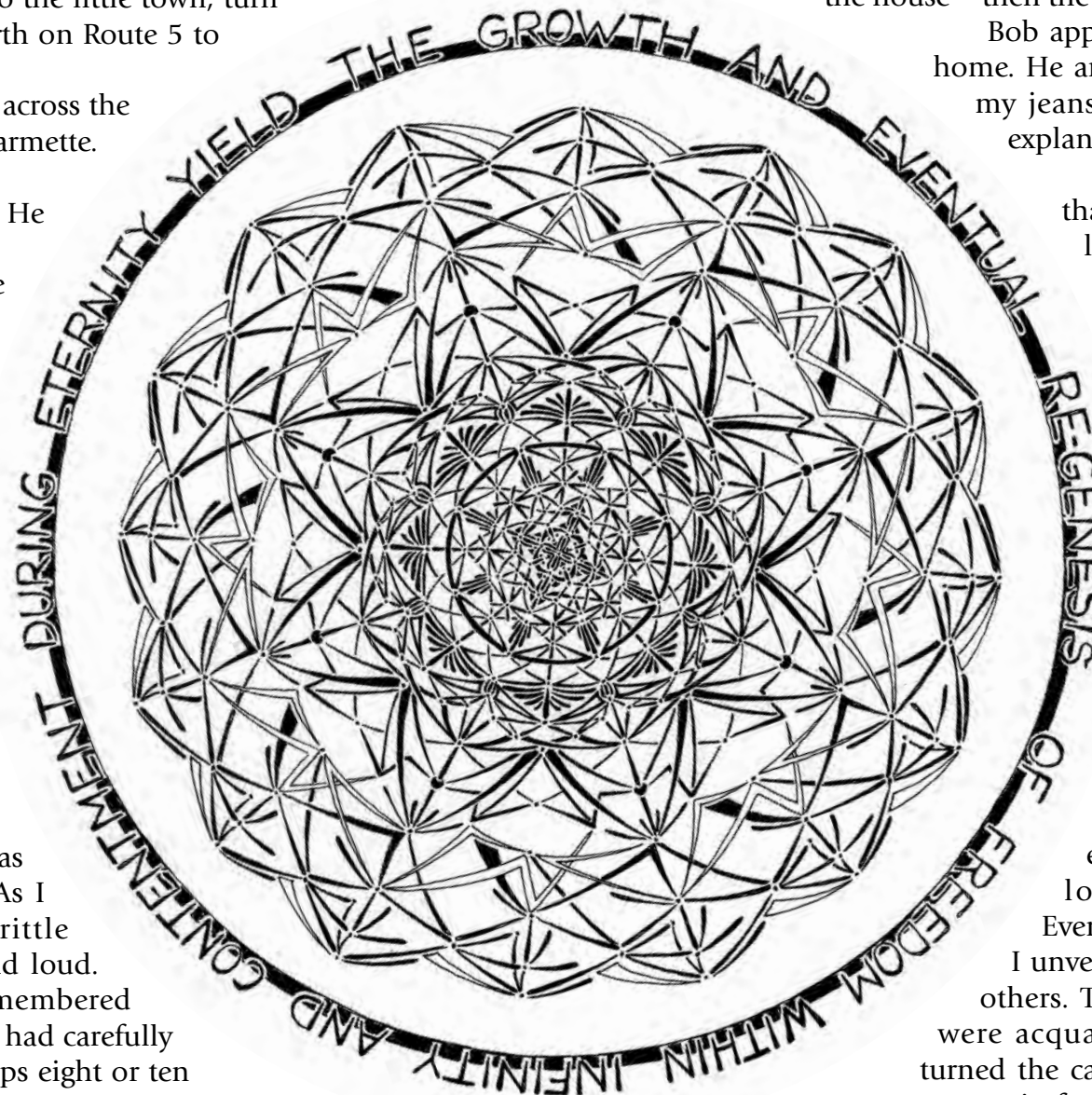
After twenty feet I could feel the water start to freeze. My pants and coat were starting to stiffen. Halfway across the field, the wind had scraped the snow away, leaving the jagged broken cornstalks. They cracked underneath me like rotting floorboards. My ears were blue and frostbitten. I held them with my wet gloves and huddled half-bent toward the shoveled walkway leading to the house – then the door. I pounded.

Bob appeared in disbelief. He pulled me in. I was home. He and Marty wrapped me in blankets and cut my jeans off with scissors by the stove. I had no explanation, only a story.

In the weeks that followed, my soul thawed out. When I was not working at the laundry, I immersed myself in word rings. These mandalas included a literary element wherein a circular poem (or perhaps a run-on sentence) was composed to convey the particular theme or progression upon which I was currently fixated.

Marty and I drove into Brattleboro one afternoon with Bob Watrous and another couple that frequented the Cider Mill. We all went into an underground bookstore where we spent a half hour looking at their great selection. I found a book by the artist M. C. Escher. I was already very familiar with Escher's work, but this book was terrific and I wanted it badly. I didn't have enough money and when no one was looking, I slipped it under my shirt. Eventually we left. In the car on the way home, I unveiled it to the astonishment of Bob and the others. They were quite upset with me since they were acquainted with the bookstore owners. Bob turned the car around and drove back to town. He let me out in front of the store. I went in and apologized to the owners, who were hippies. I returned the book and told her that I would return to buy it someday.

Until that incident, I had been suffering from adolescence to the extent that I genuinely felt the world owed me something. The idealism that I had relished had been displaced. When my shoplifting was confronted with such disapproval from people I respected, I quickly retreated into remorse and introspection. I had been raised with reasonable morals and values, but somewhere along the line, I had discarded them like some arrogant



Regenes Yantra (Word Ring), Pen & Ink, 1972.

litterbug. So right then and there, I began to address the need to resuscitate my conscience, a long and arduous task given my natural propensity for deviousness.

Bob Watrous didn't ostracize me for very long. We did admire each other on several levels. Being an art teacher, he was aware of a somewhat reclusive artist that lived down the road a few miles in the town of Bernardston, which was nothing more than a gas station off the Interstate and a string of old farm houses. The artist's name was Steven Curtis and I made arrangements to meet him and see what his work was about. I had heard he was making a living with his art and naturally I was very curious to see whether some of his commercial capability might rub off on me.

He worked in pencil and his drawings were incredibly sharp, textured and detailed. He was well read and he applied his literacy to his drawings in a mystical way that reminded me of Tullio. Steven had dubbed his work "Academic Surrealism," explaining that most of the surrealists simply juxtaposed unrelated images in a random dreamlike mishmash. Steven, on the other hand, gave great consideration to the odd imagery in his drawings. He was very careful in his fabrication of symbolism. There was nothing random about it, although it took him several hours to verbally convey the deeper meanings that would never be obvious to the common observer.

Nonetheless, his drawings were inspirational and his talent was unquestionable. He had somehow managed to find a rather famous and wealthy art patron in Boston named John Merriam who had arranged for the pre-purchase of all of Steven's work. As I understood it, Mr. Merriam was the retired corporate counsel for General Electric and he loved art. In his multi-storied townhouse along Boston's prestigious Storrow Drive embankment, he had amassed a remarkable and priceless collection.

Steven Curtis was kind enough to put me in touch with John Merriam. I packed up all of my drawings into a makeshift portfolio, tuned up my autoharp, and drove down to Boston for my prearranged special appointment.

Upon arriving, I was very nervous, but John put me at ease. He was genuinely interested in my work, but he was also immensely proud of his

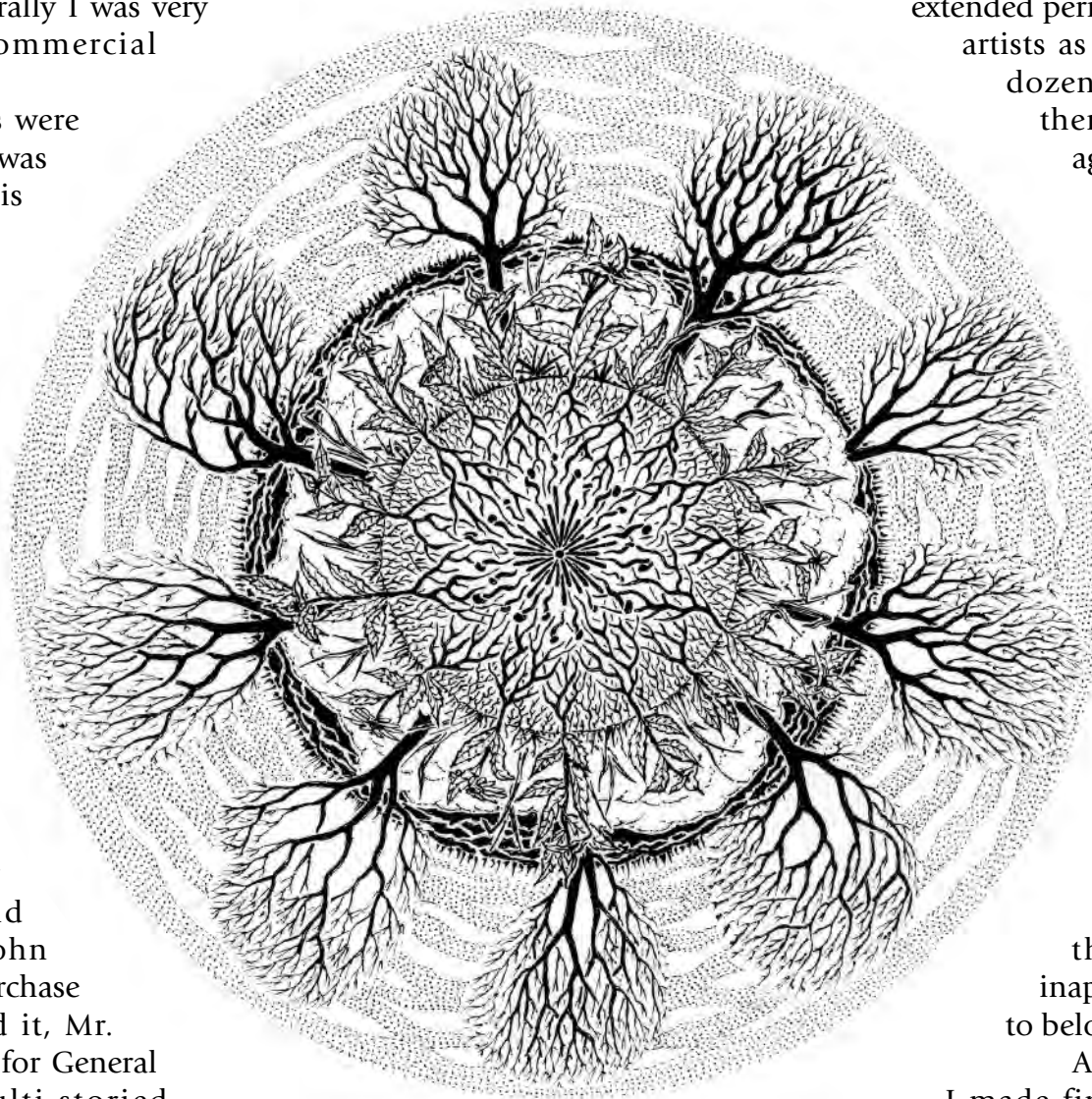
collection. Prior to any discussion of my work, he insisted on spending several hours showing me all five floors of his collection, and I must say that after that, I felt completely insignificant.

His endless drawing files were packed to the gills with extraordinary works of art. His particular interest was illustration. He showed me original drawings by Dürer, Van Gogh, Rembrandt, Cézanne, engravings by Hogarth, and virtually a complete collection of Escher mezzotints and woodcuts. He coveted thousands of drawings and explained to me how important it was to amass the complete work of a given artist for a specific or extended period of their career. He referred to his stable of artists as being "on a string." At the time, he had a dozen or so artists, Steven Curtis being one of them, who were on his payroll. They had all agreed to furnish every single work that they produced for the duration of their agreement. It struck me like musicians with their record deals. I thought it very odd.

John looked at my drawings with great care. I was so overwhelmed by the art I had seen that I could only apologize for my own work. He was curious about the autoharp. I sat on his Persian carpet and played several songs for him. He told me I was very talented, but that I was young and in need of experience. He urged me to keep working, to establish a specific style and to come back to see him with new work in a year. I never went back.

Years later, John Merriam's significance as a patron and collector would make itself known as his death would cause ripples of greed and controversy throughout the art world. Perhaps it is inappropriate for so many precious works of art to belong to one man.

As winter showed signs of receding, Marty and I made final preparations to depart for California. Sandy and her friends Chuck and Martha had decided that they wanted to come along. We had grown attached to our two cats as well. Felix was pure black and Justin was pure gray. I constructed a makeshift plywood platform to create extra storage space in the back of the van and fitted our queen mattress on top of it. All of our gear was stowed underneath, as was the kitty litter, the geodesic dome, the Coleman stove, the sleeping bags, my autoharp, and with the last minute addition of Martha's brother Bob, the combined critical belongings of six vagrant individuals.



Procreative Yantra, Pen & Ink, 1972.



Between Time & Timbuktu (A Tribute To Kurt Vonnegut), Pen & Ink, Acrylic Paint, 1972.



*Academic Surrealism by Stephen Curtis, Charcoal, 1971
(From the collection of John Merriam).*

\$3.5 million payment ends dispute over historic Tiffany glass mosaic

by David B. Caruso, Associated Press, 11/7/2001 08:31

PHILADELPHIA (AP)

A celebrated glass mosaic designed by Maxfield Parrish and Louis Tiffany will remain in the city under an agreement with the artwork's owners.

The Pew Charitable Trusts has agreed to pay \$3.5 million to settle a battle over the "Dream Garden" mosaic and permanently prevent it from being sold and moved.

The mosaic, a 5-ton mural of 100,000 hand-fired pieces of glass in 260 color tones, is estimated to be worth \$20 million. In 1916, it was installed in the lobby of what was then the Curtis Publishing Co., near Independence Hall.

The mosaic has been at the center of a dispute between four schools and the estates of the late art patron John Merriam and his wife, Elizabeth, who, as owner of 41 percent of her husband's estate, wanted the mural sold.

The four schools the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Academy of the Fine Arts, University of the Arts and Bryn Mawr College were given 59 percent of John Merriam's estate and want the mosaic to stay.

When Elizabeth Merriam died in March, her son, Robert Lockyer, continued the battle to keep control of the mosaic in the family.

But, under the terms of the deal reached Friday, Pew will pay \$3.5 million to buy out the Merriam estate's share, then shift all ownership to the Academy of Fine Arts.

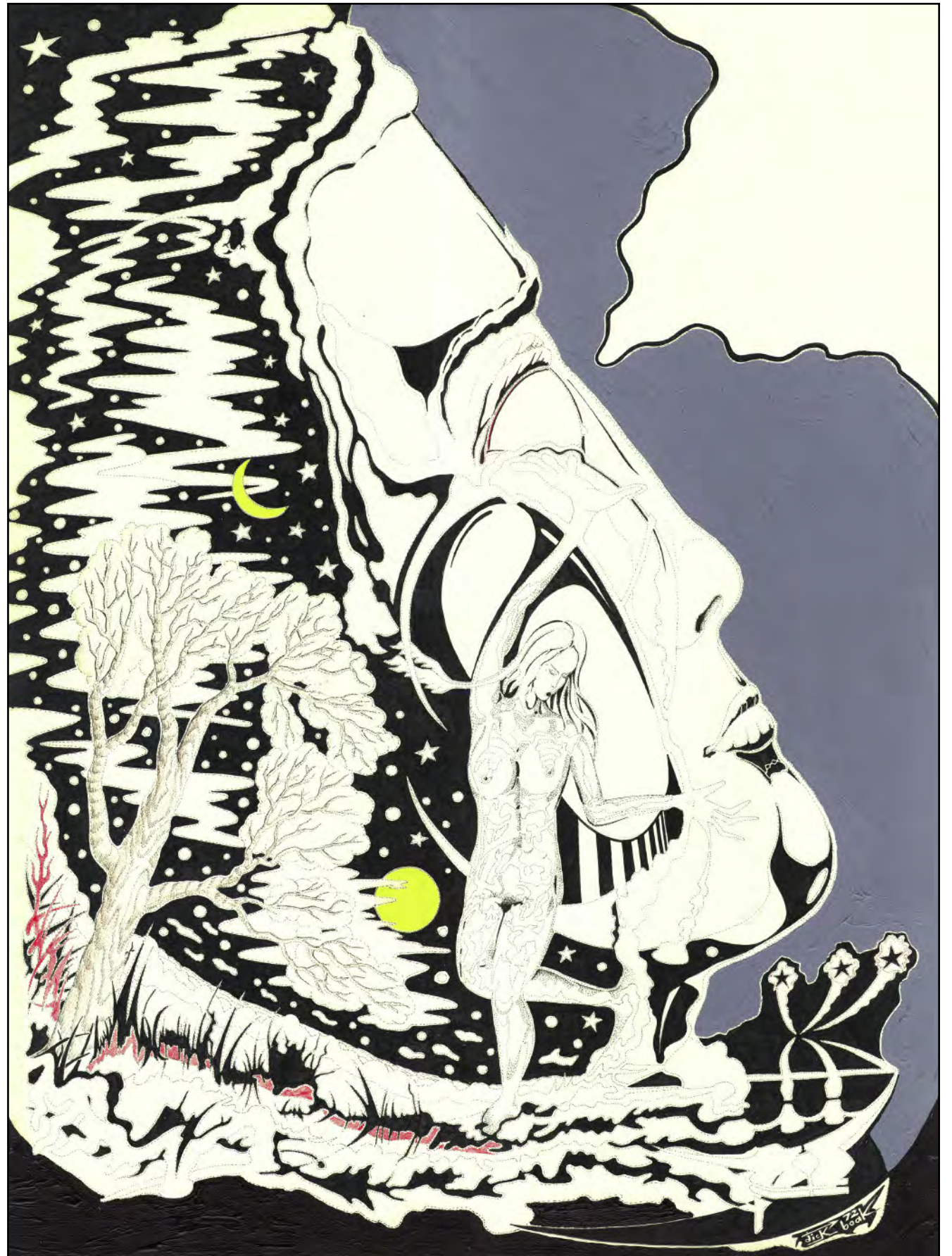
Lockyer issued a statement calling the resolution of the dispute "a reasonable compromise," the Philadelphia Inquirer reported Tuesday.

The Academy agreed to maintain the artwork and never move it from its home in the lobby of the Curtis Center, the downtown building where it has stood for 85 years. "Dream Garden," created by Philadelphia-born Parrish and glass artist Tiffany, depicts a pink and purple landscape of trees, flowers and waterfalls.

Rebecca Rimel, president and CEO of the Pew Charitable Trusts, said preserving the artwork is worth the price.

"To me, it is magical," she said. "Most Philadelphians have never heard of it and have never been there. We want to make this a must-see."

The deal was hailed by the city.



Night Dancer, Pen & Ink, Acrylic Paint, 1972.

Vagabond Gypsies

We drove down the coast to South Carolina where Martha and Bob's family lived. We stayed for a day or two then headed for the Gulf. We camped at some beautiful spots along the Florida coast, and then cut up along Interstate 10 toward Mobile. Our universal bearing failed in southwestern Alabama where rednecks cut hippies into tiny pieces, chew them up and spit them out. We found a truck stop that miraculously replaced the axle parts for next to nothing before anyone got the notion that there was a band of longhairs in the parking lot.

We followed Interstate 10 through the draped moss of Louisiana, then on through the endless monotony of Texas. There were dead armadillos everywhere. The word was that they were migrating toward Colorado and were being picked off by speeding cars, one by one. I almost bought an armadillo for \$15 outside of San Antonio, but I just couldn't figure out how to make it work with the cats.

We cruised into Phoenix from the south and saw a geodesic dome just off the ramp. There was a camp ground at the same exit so we pulled in and set up our tent on the scrubby desert for the night. The next morning I found a scorpion in my boot and there were lizards all over the tent. I walked over to the dome that turned out to be the home of Bill Woods, president of Dyna Domes. I knew all about him, since his geodesic designs had been featured in the Whole Earth Catalog. He showed me the interior of his home that leaked a bit like all domes do, but it was still impressive.

When I returned to the van, Felix had escaped. We looked everywhere with no luck. Chuck, Martha, Sandy and Bob liked the looks of Phoenix and discussed staying, so we kept our campsite for a few days while they scouted out apartments and jobs.

They found a temporary apartment and it looked like Chuck would be able to land a decent a job at a steel mill. We said our goodbyes in the stifling heat and headed north with only one cat toward Arcosanti, Paoli Soleri's utopian City of the Future. The town wasn't well-marked, so it took a long time to find. Soleri was offering an architectural work-study program. I loved his vision, at least it looked great on the pages of his incredible book *Archology: The City In The Image Of Man*.

We were sad to see how unorganized and chaotic Arcosanti was, and it was without any significant funding. We could have paid to stay, carve out a cubicle for ourselves in the hillside and devote ourselves to his tenuous dream, but instead, we decided to head west to Los Angeles. On Interstate 40 near the God-forsaken town of Needles, California, I thought I recognized a flowering peyote cactus and I screeched the van to a halt. Sure that I had found a psychedelic payload, I filled several garbage bags with these prickly treasures.

Near the roadside, I found the beautiful tubular exoskeleton of a cholla cactus that I dubbed "wormwood." I tucked it away in the back and we aimed ourselves toward Hollywood, where we hoped we would find the legendary Judley in good form. He was living with his brother Stephen, who was a genuine certified conscientious objector serving his country as a medic at the local children's hospital. He had married his high school sweetheart, Susan Richardson, who had come to Los Angeles to pursue her acting career. She got lucky and was cast in a Crest commercial, then she met a few of the right people on a street corner. This led to a small part in the immensely popular movie *American Graffiti*.

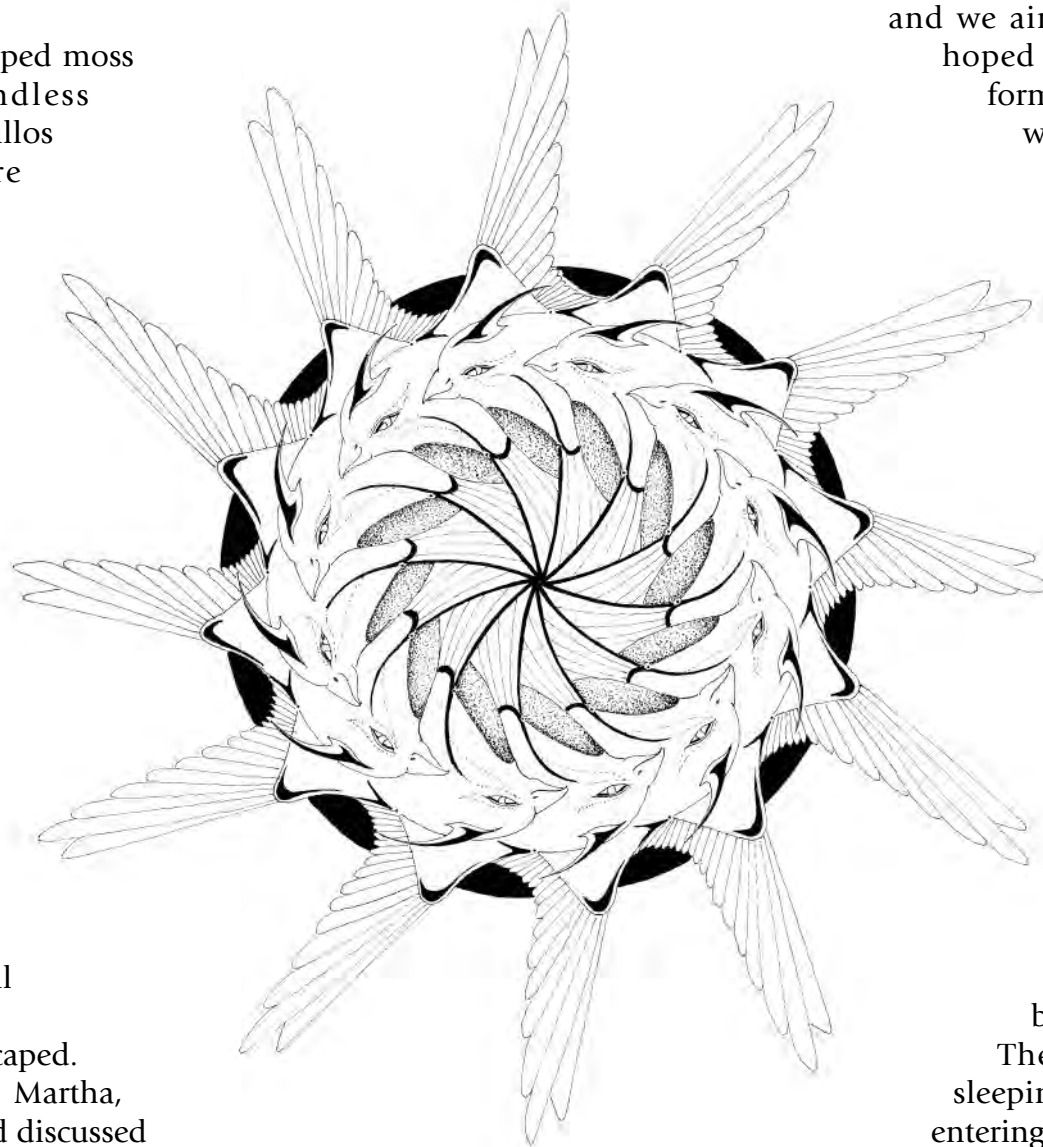
Her career took off when she was written into the script as Susan on the long running television series *Eight Is Enough*. So times were good in Hollywood. The palm trees cast serrated shadows as Marty and I pulled up next to the modest house on Winona Boulevard. The first thing they wanted to know was what in the hell all of the cactus was for. It wasn't peyote at all.

Any fool except me knew that. It was some God-awful variety of prickly pear that when bumped, released billions of microscopic spines.

These little pinpricks were everywhere: in our sleeping bags, in our clothes, in our skin. So before entering the house, we properly disposed of the cactus cache and begged permission to take a shower.

In order to maintain her figure, Susan was living on a diet of Tab, yogurt and the occasional avocado for skin tone. The rest of us were ravenous. A few days into our

visit, we walked into town to a popular restaurant called *Sir Francis Drake's*. This was an all-you-could-eat establishment and we had properly starved ourselves in order to maximize the value of our visit. We ate ourselves senseless, in fact I became ill in the men's room. It occurred to me that with a freshly emptied stomach I could start all over again, but understandably I was



Porpoise Birds, Pen & Ink, 1972.

without an appetite. That restaurant was closed a few weeks later for purportedly putting appetite suppressants in the food. Too bad.

Being with Jud, Steve and Susan was inspirational. Judley was pumping out some outrageous artwork and Stephen was a great guitarist. A bit of Judley's dadaism had rubbed off on Susan and she was filling the living room with bizarre life-sized stuffed creatures that were so inventive that the Sunday Supplement ran a feature story about them. Marty was sewing some quilt panels and I immersed myself at the kitchen table with my piece of wormwood and my 000 Rapidograph pen.

The house was a creative paradise except for one small detail. There was a tenant living upstairs who was a bit close to the edge. He was a young budding musician who owned an acoustic guitar and happened to be obsessed with Neil Young. He would sit up there in his apartment practicing the same couple of songs into the waning hours of the night, all rendered in an incredibly shrill Youngian howl.

"I wanna live, I wanna give, I've crossed the ocean for a heart of gold," he warbled.

A few days of that and it was time to get on the road. We vacuumed the remaining cactus spores from the van seats and headed up the coast on Highway 1. The van chugged along pretty well until we hit the hills outside Big Sur. The stench of burning rubber and a whining metallic screech – quite similar to the Neil Young clone we had just left behind – suggested that the vehicle needed attention. We were fortunate to find a gas station about fifty miles down the road. It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that the brakes were shot. It did take \$115 to replace them. We had no choice. That left us with a whopping \$85 to our name – a nest egg with which we intended to reach the Oregon border and purchase a parcel of land. Reality check!

Tullio and Linda had moved from Gettysburg to San Rafael in the heart of Marin County, which boasted the greatest per capita income in the country. As their usual luck would have it, they had a pretty good setup living up in the San Rafael hills. Their responsibility was to maintain the tiny forest of Banzai trees that peppered a millionaire couple's estate. For this they were paid quite well and given free lodging in the small but luxurious gardener's quarters. The last thing they needed was a pair of destitute hippies showing up in a rattling van looking

for a temporary oasis. Accordingly, our stay there was quite abbreviated. They were, however, able to point us in the right direction. Tullio suggested that given our financials, we might consider something closer and more realistic than Oregon. He had heard of a place called *Wheeler's Ranch*, a hippie commune near Bodega Bay. The commune was off the main road and accessible through *Star Mountain*, a farm owned by a San Francisco rock band. Bodega Bay was only 70 miles away, so off we went, up Highway 101 toward Novato and Cotati, then west to the Pacific Ocean.

Star Mountain was hard to find. It was completely unmarked, but the local hippies, of which there was no shortage, passed us along every few miles. We pulled through the wooden fence at dusk, parked in the gravel, and walked a hundred yards across a field to a rustic old farmhouse. There were eight or nine hippies sitting on the porch. The band blared a disjointed but psychedelic rock anthem from the inside. Marijuana smoke wafted in the breeze.

"We're trying to get to Wheeler's Ranch." I offered our destination to break the ice. A joint was passed down to us.

"Where ya in from?" asked the passer.

"East Coast." I answered.

"Well, it's too dark to go into Wheeler's tonight. Takes about three hours to go in." He motioned over his shoulder.

"Ya gotta go in through the canyon and it's a rough hike down there. Best you do it in the morning," he explained in a way that made me realize that he had spoken these same words on many occasions. We had a lot of stuff in the van and the notion of having to traverse a steep canyon in the dark was not a viable option.

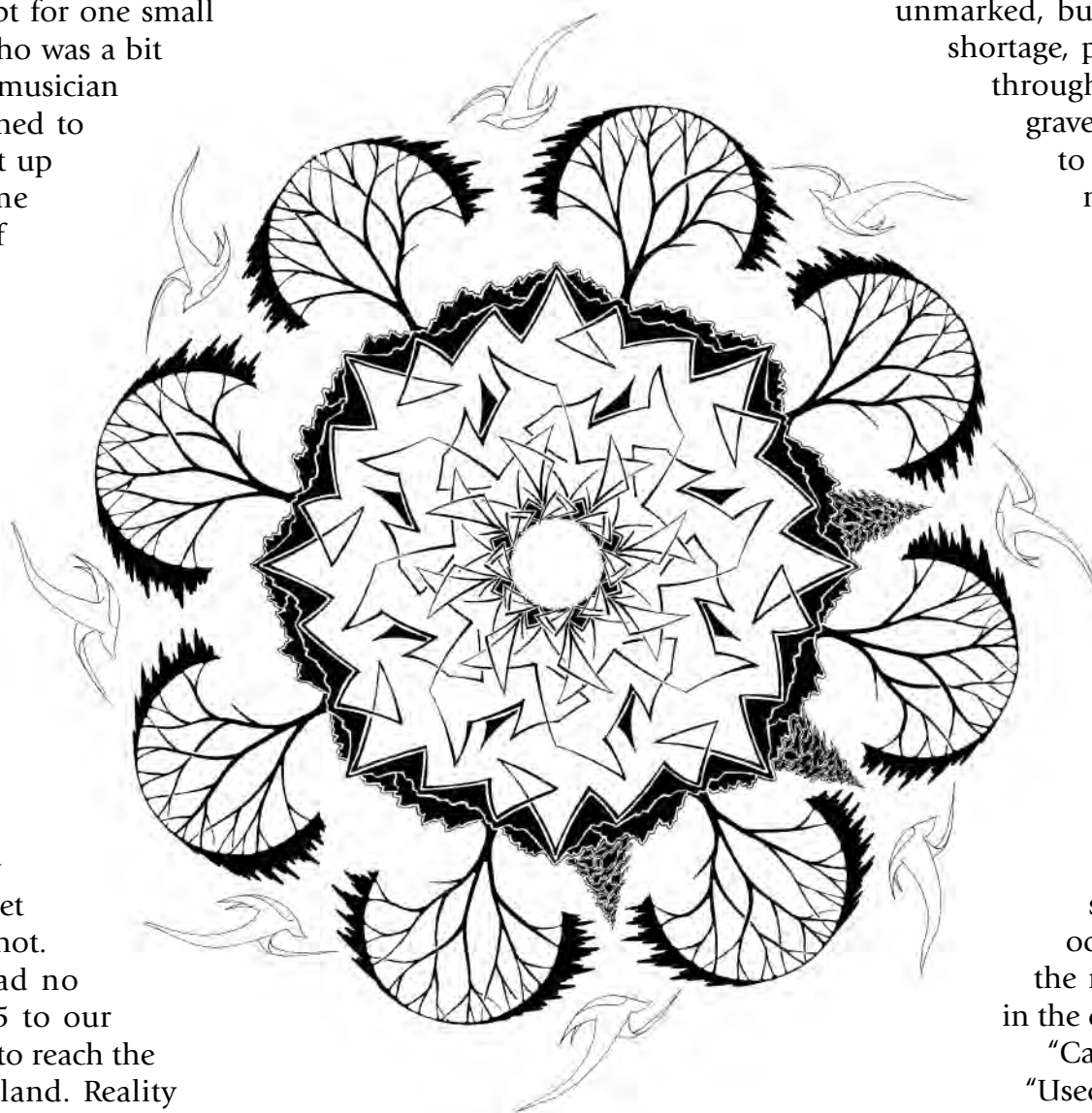
"Can't we drive in?" I asked.

"Used to be you could. There's a road in from the other end of the canyon, but you gotta go right through a sheep farmer's property to get in. Some of the dogs at Wheeler's chased his sheep. The sheep stampeded down the canyon and a bunch of 'em keeled over. So he got

pissed off and put up a metal gate. He doesn't let anyone through and he's got a shotgun."

"Can we park here tonight?" My boldness seemed justified as I passed the joint back to him.

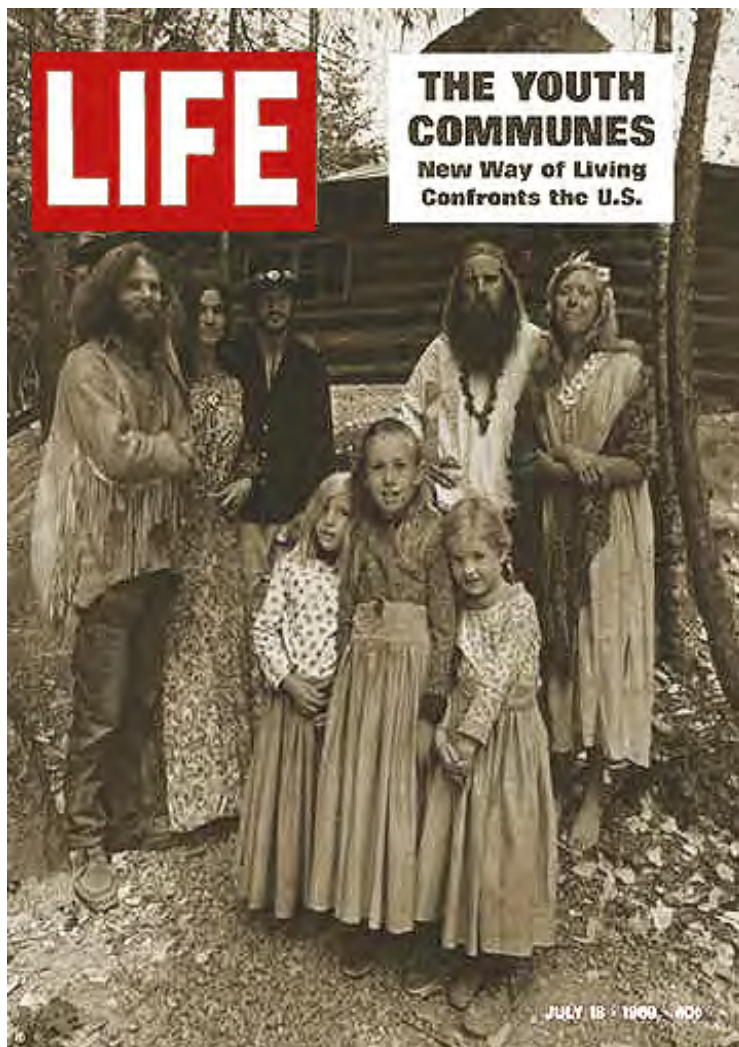
"Nope. Sorry. Ya can't stay down there." He motioned toward the



Birds In Flight, Pen & Ink, 1971

inadequate lot where our van was parked. "Cops get weird about a lotta people hangin' around here. If ya wanna place to stay, go over to *Morningstar Ranch*. That's Lou Gottlieb's commune. It's about 15 miles from here. Come back in the morning if you wanna go into Wheeler's."

A few more hits on the joint and it was time to go. He pointed us toward Occidental and helped me sketch a little map to the north entrance of Morningstar. It was pitch black and we had no idea where we were going, but we went nevertheless. The map I had scrawled ended fifty feet down a dirt road near a well. When our headlights illuminated what seemed to be a stone well, I put the van in park, turned off the ignition, hopped in the back and went to sleep.



Life Magazine's coverage of California communes like Morningstar Ranch inspired a massive westward migration of hippie dropouts in minibuses, myself and Marty included, in search of a more natural way of life.



Small ink sketch of the well at Morningstar drawn for an article in the Santa Rosa Press Democrat, May 31, 1972.

Morningstar Ranch

We awoke to the chirping of birds, sunlight streaming in through our dusty windows, and the repetitive incantations of Buddhist chanting. Marty and I peered out of the side of the van and saw a strange man in white robes with silver hair, a long beard and large black-rimmed Buddy Holly glasses. I got out of the car and went over to him. I waited for a break in his chorus of Krishnas, then asked:

"Is it OK for us to park here?"

"Ask the landlord," he replied.

"Who's the landlord?" I asked.

He pointed straight up toward the sky, gave a wry smile, then walked away chanting.

Throughout the course of this, our first day at Morningstar Ranch, we learned that our resident guru was Lou Gottlieb. As the bass player and

charismatic vocalist of the very popular fifties folk group *The Limelites*, he had made a lot of money and had bought some sizeable parcels of land in Sonoma County. One such parcel was Morningstar – forty-plus acres of former apple orchard on a lovely hillside between the tiny towns of Occidental and Graton. Harriet Beecher Stowe had once owned the property and then the Catholic Church had purchased it for a retreat. It was difficult to imagine nuns walking around the property, but close inspection revealed biblical passages inscribed around the masonry rim of the stone well. So the land had some significant spiritual history. Lou took this quite seriously.

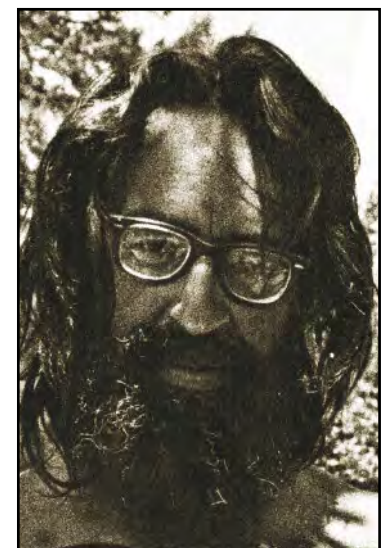
Around the time that George Harrison had dragged his fellow Beatles over to India to experience the Maharishi, Lou had had a similar journey. He had come home with an enlightened perspective and a wardrobe that would have made R. Crumb's *Mr. Natural* envious.

The scene in Haight Asbury was in full blossom and Lou was a big part of it. Hippies from San Francisco had an open invitation to come up to "The Land" and come up they did. They came to take acid, they came to be naked, they came to play music, they came to feast, they came to party, and they especially came on weekends.

Famous people came. Ken Kesey. Alan Ginsberg. The Grateful Dead. Van Morrison. It's A Beautiful Day. The place was happening.

Morningstar became quite notorious. A LIFE Magazine cover didn't help the situation. The neighbors were, for the most part, affluent – lawyers, doctors, judges and the like. Generally, they were a liberal bunch, but even they had their limits. The invasion of several hundred hippies into the vicinity every weekend had become bothersome.

A court injunction was filed against Lou. This didn't faze him, as he was firmly committed



Lou Gottlieb, front view.

to the idea that land could not be owned, but only temporarily borrowed.

So Lou went over to the Sonoma County Courthouse with his good friend, radical ACLU lawyer William Kunstler, and together they made out a simple bill of sale and deed of transfer. For the very fair price of one dollar, Lou sold the Morningstar property to "God."

And so God became the landlord. Lou recused himself of any ownership or responsibility and a seven-year string of court cases, tax disputes and injunctions of habitation followed.

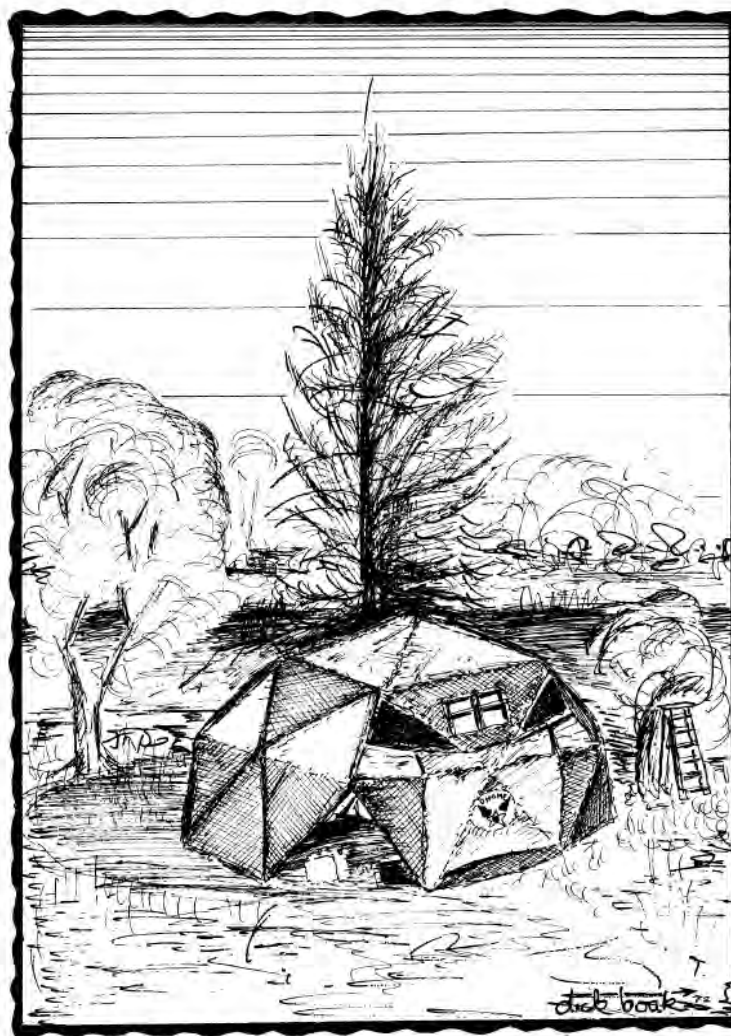
For several years, the County enforced the injunction against any new construction by hiring local bulldozers to come to Morningstar to demolish the makeshift structures that the inhabitants had built. This was fairly effective at first, but the people at Morningstar were quick in reconstructing new dwellings. It also became increasingly difficult to find bulldozer drivers. It wasn't the pay. The pay I'm sure was quite good. It might have been the fact that naked females would stand directly in front of the dozers, passing lit joints up to the horrified drivers. If that proved ineffective, then the women would climb right up on board, into their laps, rendering them speechless. This was usually enough to make the drivers reconsider the working orders.

A few months later, another driver would show up. This one would be from further away, say San Francisco. The next one from Los Angeles, then Mexico City. It became futile after awhile. And after all, it wasn't much fun demolishing people's domiciles for a living.



Lou Gottlieb, side view.

Of course, most of this happened before Marty and I had arrived in the middle of the night. We brought with us energy and defiance, not to mention a particular zest for geodesic architecture. There was a nice clearing in the apple orchard and the landlord obviously had no objection, so we got right down to work



Rough sketch of the canvas, Mylar and burlap-covered tube frame geodesic dome in the apple orchard at Morningstar.

assembling the struts of the tube frame geodesic dome and cover that had survived from Gettysburg. It went up very quietly in less than an hour to the amazement of nearly all forty-five residents of Morningstar, Lou Gottlieb included, who thereafter referred to me as "Dome Dick."

The dome served us well and the orchard developed into a thriving social section of the property. There were many factions at Morningstar. There were musicians, pot smokers, acidheads, and dropouts. There were Jesus freaks and Zen Buddhists, nudists and granola-crunching health food zealots. There were a few drunks of course and a weird sado-masochistic couple. There was even an escaped convict. I suppose we fell into several of these categories, but we were living off the fat of the land and loving every moment of it.

Dave and Georgia arrived one afternoon and

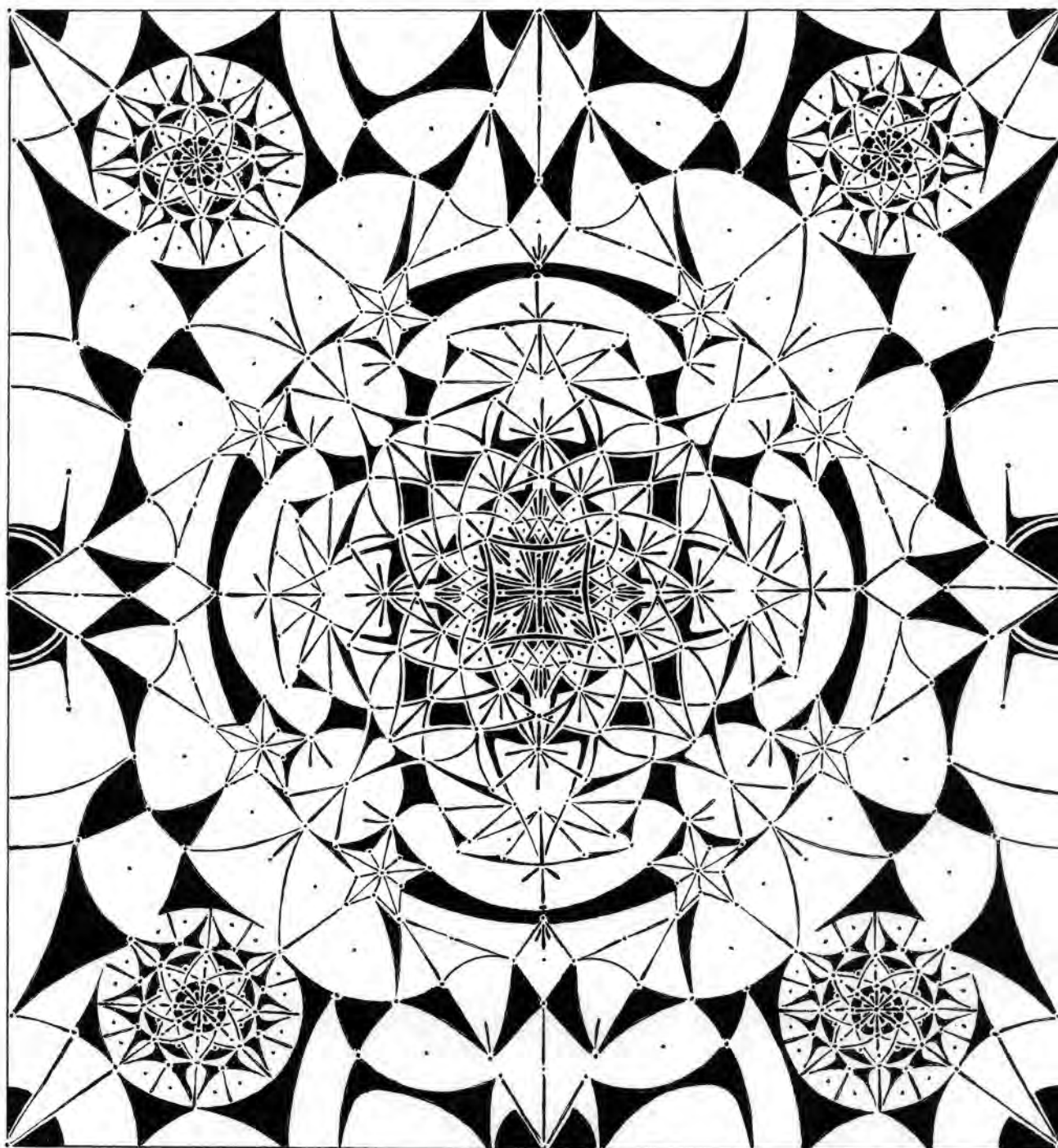
decided to park their truck just above us in the orchard. Then Ike and Nancy came, and then Big Larry. Pretty soon we had ourselves a nice little community of like-minded hippies. We shared meals, music, Top tobacco, coffee and the daily tasks that needed to be accomplished. The mood fluctuated greatly. There was a great heaviness at times, but there was also tremendous excitement in being part of something experimental and somewhat self-sufficient.

It took a fair amount of energy to live in the middle of a redwood forest without money. The heavy fog would tumble over the ridge in the middle of the night and persist until the sun burned it off at around ten or eleven in the morning. Moisture got into everything and I found it difficult to keep my drawing supplies dry. The loose communal and political aspects of Morningstar created plenty of distraction from my artwork. I decided to hitchhike down to Hollywood for a few weeks to work more intently on drawings with Judley.

I chose a beautiful day and was very lucky on the road. A string of great rides delivered me to the off-ramp west of Hollywood by nightfall. The next day I started drawing and didn't stop for several weeks. To escape any guilt about freeloading, I overcompensated in making sure I was a useful member of the household. I washed dishes, did errands, baked bread, organized the house and entertained on the autoharp.



Rapidograph in hand, I arrived at Judley's in Hollywood ready to engross myself in two weeks of constant illustration.



4-Axis Yantra, Pen & Ink, 1972.

In spite of some marital discord between Jud's brother Steve and his actress wife Susan, Hollywood was a very conducive environment for creativity. I was averaging a drawing a day and Judley was energetic and supportive. I was very stuck in my geometric mandalas. Over the course of several weeks, my yantras started to break out of their symmetrical patterns into freer flowing forms. Even so, my tightly controlled ink drawings were in stark contrast to Judley's playful Disney-esque organicism that I greatly admired. So I moved quickly along that line until I felt that it was time to go. At 6:00 AM on a breezy Friday morning, I was on the freeway with my thumb held high. Bad luck. No rides. The cars just whizzed by. Finally I sat down with my notebook and scrawled a sign that simply said "OZ." This destination



Meditation, Pen & Ink, 1972.

proved more successful, but the rides were short and took me off the Interstate over to the Pacific Coast Highway. I didn't get to Santa Barbara until mid-afternoon and it was starting to cloud over.

Five more disjointed rides and I was exhausted, hungry and caught in a light drizzle outside of San Luis Obispo. I walked to the edge of town where I spent my only cash – \$1.10 – on a pair of bad tortillas at Taco Bell. I rested on the curb for a bit, then started walking. My legs were rubbery and it was nearly dark. There was little hope that I would get back to Morningstar that night. It was still five or six hours away.

The drizzle had thickened and I was starting to consider the possibility of sleeping at an underpass, but I trudged on.

There weren't many cars on the road that twisted its way into the craggy hills toward Santa Margarita. The cars that did pass were traveling fast in the rain and several nearly ran me off the narrow shoulder. In my mind I had given up. I couldn't walk another step. If the next car didn't stop, I decided I would curl up under the tree in the farmer's field just off the road. I held up my "OZ" sign for one last-ditch effort, a desperate and pleading look on my drenched face.

Headlights came around the curve. The car hesitated, then screeched and veered onto the shoulder a hundred feet ahead of me. I ran, lugging my pack. When I reached the car, the passenger door fell open. The driver, a well-dressed man in his late forties I guessed, was slouched over and very inebriated. He strained to look up at me as I waited to get in.

"Can you drive?" he blurted.

"You bet!" I fired back, my full adrenaline pumping. I threw my pack in the back with his golf clubs and helped him slide over into the passenger seat, then I went around to the driver's side, buckled up, checked the controls, put it into drive and took off. It was a brand new Mercury Montego, souped up and filled with gas.

The car's owner was in very bad shape. He was on the verge of passing out. I was concerned that he might get sick. His speech was slurry and in spite of his seatbelt, he was wavering.

"Where're ya headed?" I offered this in full realization that hitchhikers are usually on the other end of such a question.

"...to Bakersfield," he moaned. His words came painfully.

"I'll get you there," I assured him. I had no idea where Bakersfield was and I didn't have a map, so I just stepped on it. In the meantime, his condition worsened.

"Where you goin'?" He swung his head unsteadily in my direction as his brow furrowed upward in a feeble attempt to hoist his eyelids.

I hesitated. He wouldn't know anything about Morningstar Ranch. I figured I'd give him a landmark he'd surely know.

"Up to Santa Rosa," I pointed, curious as to his response.

It took him several minutes to answer. The electrons were having real difficulty traversing through his synapses.

"I gotta girlfriend up in Petaluma," he boasted. "Do ya know where Petaluma is?"

"Sure do. That's right near where I live. I can get you there!" I answered with great hope that this particular girlfriend might mean enough to him to get me the hell up to Petaluma.

"You can get me therrrrrrrr?" and that was it. He was down for the count, his head against the passenger window, his mouth open, his eyes shut. Had I heard him correctly? Did he say something about getting him to Petaluma? And what about Bakersfield?

My question was quickly answered as I passed a road sign that



Thunderbird, Pen & Ink, 1972.

said: "Bakersfield, Route 58 East, Next Right." I looked over at him. Out cold. I looked at the car clock. 9:00 PM. The light at the intersection of Route 58 was green and I blew right through it going 70. Petaluma, here I come!

Highway 101 opened up and so did the throttle. Paso Robles. He was still passed out. King City. Not a blink. Salinas. Stone cold, then the lights of San Jose. He grumbled and fidgeted. His eyes opened briefly.

"Doin' OK, kid?" he whispered in a blur.

"Yup. Makin' good time." Before I knew it, he was out cold again. Must have been some party I thought, as our little Montego tore northward toward Petaluma.

As we cruised past San Francisco airport, I started to feel some guilt. We were a long way from Bakersfield and I doubted that he would remember much of our conversation about his girlfriend in Petaluma. There was another small problem. We were almost out of gas and I didn't have one red cent to my name.

He was stirring more now, especially since I had followed Route 101 right into San Francisco, determined to stay right on course for the Golden Gate Bridge and Petaluma. As the front tires went over the gas station hose, the "ding, ding" sound was what it took to revive him. His eyes opened. He was groggy, confused, and in serious need of Tylenol.

"Where are we?" he weakly demanded.

"San Francisco. We're just about outta gas." I replied as if I were his regular chauffeur.

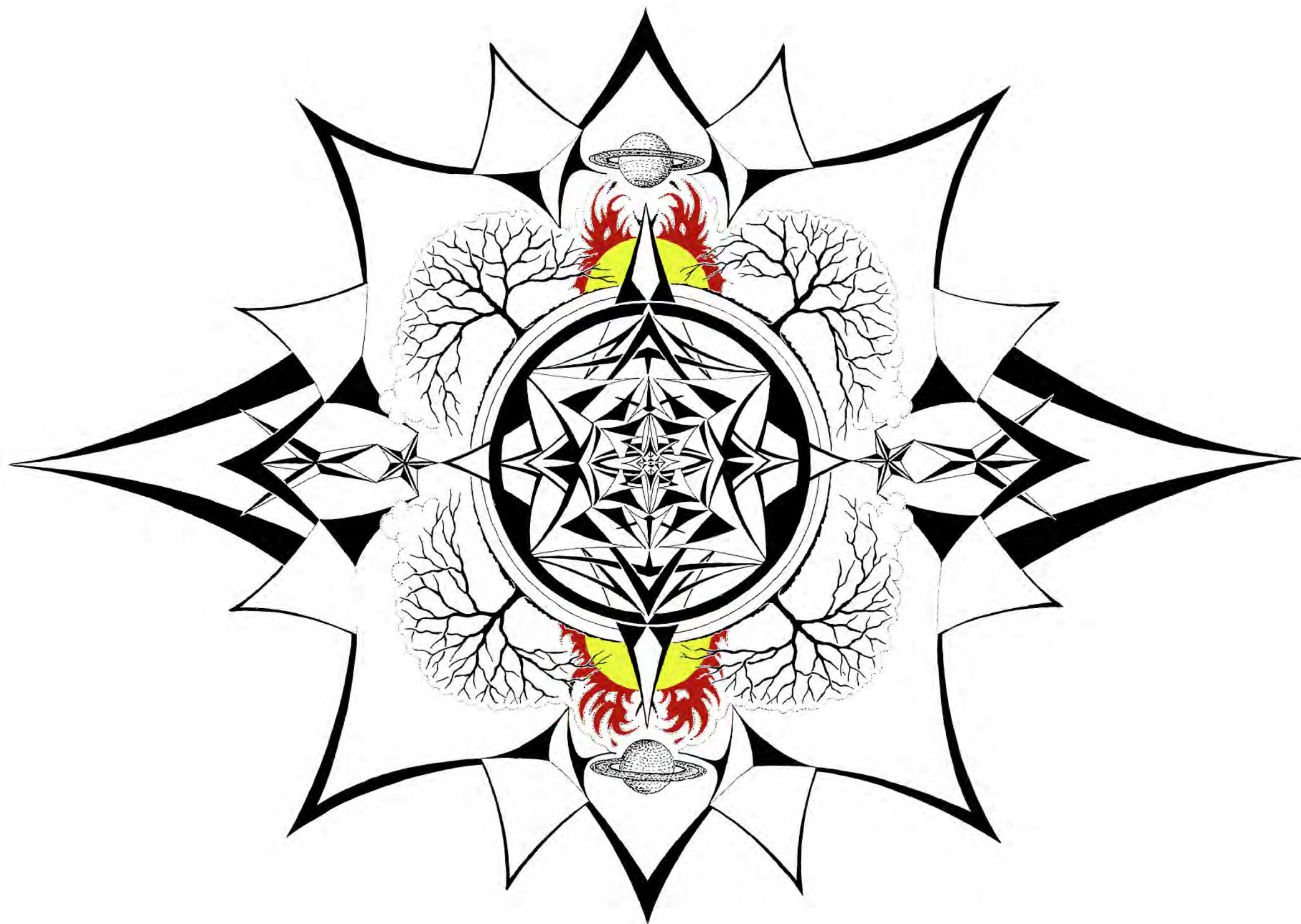
"Oh shit," he gurgled. I'm sure he was agitated, but he just didn't have the energy to express it. He reached into his pocket and pulled out his wallet. In the bright lights of the gas station, his eyes squinted. He looked very familiar to me for some reason.

He handed me his Mobil credit card and said: "Gas it up, kid. I gotta use the john." We both got out of the car. He stumbled over to the attendant and got the rest room key. I pumped the gas. It was nearly two in the morning. I looked at the credit card in my hand. It read: "Jackie Cooper." I knew that name. The actor. Wasn't he on Our Gang? Wasn't he the director of MASH? I handed the card to the attendant, a bit taken aback.

He came out of the men's room and hung the key back up on its hook. He got in the driver's seat and motioned for me to get in. After the doors were



Taurus, Pen & Ink, 1972.



Morningstar Yantra, Pen & Ink, 1972.



Indian Dancer, Pen & Ink, 1972

closed, he said:

"Mind tellin' me what we're doing in San Francisco?"

I responded nervously, "You said you had a girlfriend in Petaluma and I..." Before I got a chance to finish, he interrupted.

"I'll get a hotel room for the night. I'll drop you at the Golden Gate Bridge." We rode there in silence. It was very uneasy. We both knew I had done a bad thing, but the sight of that bridge sure was a relief. He pulled over and I opened the door.

"Sorry." I said sheepishly.

"Aw, that's OK, kid. You probably saved my life." He offered me a skeptical smile and drove off. I walked across the bridge. It took forever and I was delirious. On the other side, I set my pack down, got my trusty "OZ" sign out and miraculously, it succeeded in flagging me the first car that approached.

It was a beat up old clunker but it was moving. I hopped in. His name was Jerry. He was a speed freak. He wanted to know if I had any pot. He was anxious to trade some for a few Black Beauties. I told him I didn't have any, but if he could just drive me back to Morningstar, I could probably find him some. He talked my head off. His sentences were all very short. He got me all the way to the outskirts of Sebastopol, but he wasn't going to go any further out of his way without a more promising reason. I got out, thanked him and started walking as the lightning cracked and the rain let loose.

Instinctively, I sought shelter. I'd been in this situation before – carports, all night laundromats, baggage cars, abandoned barns, freeway overpasses, enclosed bus stops, gazebos in graveyards – these were all good prospects, but no such luck here. Depressed and hopeless, I trudged bleary-eyed up Route 116 through the deserted town of Sebastopol, when there upon the horizon came the warm mercurial glow of the lights at the K & S Supermarket. I ran on ahead lugging my soggy pack and my rusting autoharp, finding temporary shelter under the short sloping roof near the electric doors, but the wind and rain were relentless, pummeling my face with a piercing sting. Squinting, my vision slowly scoured the vast parking lot for an alternative. There was an empty garbage dumpster at the side of the building, but even vagabonds must retain some dignity. Then my eyes lit upon the yellow Salvation Army deposit box perched at the far end of the lot. I had heard rumors about



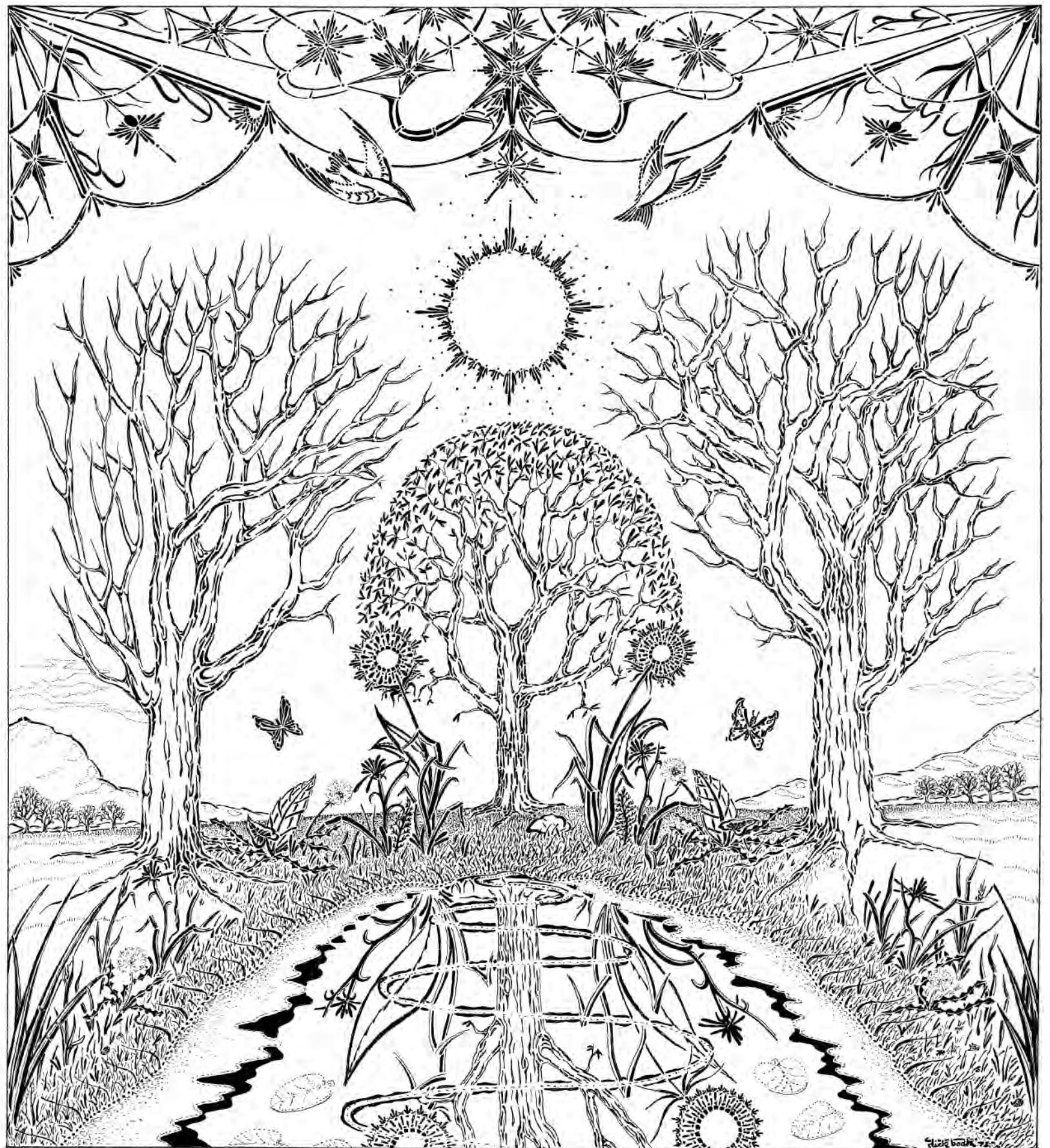
Jackie Cooper in younger days.

these tiny oases, so I walked over cautiously, making sure that no passing vehicles were scrutinizing my actions.

The deposit flaps of these goodwill stations are very large in order to accommodate big bundles and overflowing cartons of upper-class mercy – large enough in fact to deposit one's own body into, so I prepared to donate myself to charity for the night, believing that piles of freshly laundered overcoats, blue jeans, and silk stockings (with small runners) might indeed be a luxurious and free motel, let alone an ideal escape from the torrential rains, but I was immediately startled by bright candlelight and alarmed voices. As my eyes quickly readjusted, I saw the faces of two young women sitting comfortably inside the Salvation Army box upon mountains of forgotten clothing. The taller of the two, apparently at ease that I was not a policeman, said, "Come on in, but make it snappy." She cupped her hand around the candle to prevent any rain from extinguishing it or any stray light from betraying their presence. I slithered through the metallic hatch rather clumsily, allowing its weight to close upon my back with a similar lack of finesse. Plopping down into the corner, I nestled among some corduroy jackets and rubber flip-flops.

I withheld my curiosity about their presence long enough to introduce myself and give them a brief account of events that had delivered me to that odd location in the middle of the night. They seemed mildly amused, though I was concerned that they might consider my intrusion an annoyance.

My mind was eased as they relayed their incredible tale. Frannie was the petite one with dark hair, glistening dark eyes to match, olive skin, and an unrepressed smile. Laura was dirty blonde, with high cheekbones and wire-rim glasses that didn't detract from her simple beauty. They had dubbed their little endeavor "The Midnight Quiltery." I suppose it should have been more obvious to me, for they each had scissors and a substantial amount of sewing equipment, needles, thread, assorted paper patterns, and other items of necessity to the trade. They were engrossed cutting up the more



Universal Model, Pen & Ink, 1972



Mercury Rising, Pen & Ink, 1972

colorful garments into tiny squares and diamonds, then according to some complicated hemming scheme, they would hand-fabricate a multitude of patterns and appliques that would eventually emerge as quilted craft items: mostly dresses, pocket books or an occasional ambitious but funky bed spread. After being stuffed with old neckties and cotton trimmings, these creations would receive corduroy, denim or muslin backing – the completed wares ready for distribution among a random network of counter culture bohemians on a barter basis or sold through one of several head shops in Petaluma or Cotati for a less than selfish profit.

Frannie explained that they both loved to sew as a hobby and that they were always looking for new supplies of discarded garments to fuel their passion, so the rationale for their illegal enterprise came first out of necessity, for they were certainly in dire financial straits, and second out of contempt for the price that the Salvation Army tried to charge them for a bag of these discarded garments at their outlet store. Laura's position was that if the Army wouldn't come to them, then they would come to the Army. It seemed reasonable enough to me, especially in my soaked delirium and I felt like a hitchhiker who had just hopped into a VW microbus (in this case less the wheels) but with all the trimmings, thankful for the sheer absurdity of the situation.

We had a wonderful and spirited conversation that night, at the expense of some unsuspecting and misdirected tax deduction. The acoustics were perfect for an impromptu autoharp concert. The rain pounded percussively upon the metal shell of the box and the quilters sewed away in perfect cadence at a remarkable stitch. I sang and strummed and blew my harmonica with particular abandon. Before too long, the alarm clock signaled the dawn's arrival, the designated checkout time for this establishment. I exchanged my wet shirt for a tasteless Italian knit turtleneck. Frannie and Laura stuffed their knapsacks with the evening's industry, and readied themselves for reentry into the real world.

These deviously liberated seamstresses had achieved a legendary position in my mind, and on rainy nights I often lay awake in my leaky communal abode imagining them hard at work, unnoticed beneath the slightly cracked lid of the Salvation Army box. I was naturally saddened when one of my friends brought me the second page from the Sonoma Gazette. The small headline read: "Local Women Charged."

The Sonoma County Police had apprehended them the previous morning after receiving a complaint from one of the Salvation Army "soldiers" in Sebastopol. They were apparently caught red-handed, or should I say red uniformed, as they exited the deposit box. An excited Mr. Miller had made the odd discovery during his routine weekly truck pickup. Frannie and Laura were charged with trespassing and breaking and entering with intent to steal private property.

Bail was set at \$100 each – an amount that neither could produce. They remained in custody for several days waiting for the local judge to schedule a hearing.

I visited them during the final hours of their incarceration. They seemed in good spirits and in good company. They had befriended an eccentric jailbird named Mrs. Moniot who was in the habit of being picked up with remarkable regularity on drunk and disorderly charges. She was a genuine veteran of detention and the courts. After her grumbling son paid her bail, Mrs. Moniot posted for Frannie and Laura. It was a cause for celebration and we were all invited back to her comfortable ranch house in Santa Rosa for some fresh vodka, a hearty meal, warm showers and soft beds. Mrs. Moniot enjoyed the benefits of her deceased husband's insurance policy. She was alcoholic beyond retrieval and accordingly very generous to those sympathetic or forgiving of her addiction. She supported Frannie and Laura through the court hearings and she paid their respective fines for which they were quite grateful. Understandably, the bills emerged from a brightly colored quilted wallet with a denim lining.

To my knowledge, this marked the end of Frannie and Laura's criminal careers. They vanished seamlessly from my life as I settled back into my strange circumstance at Morningstar Ranch. Every time I see a Salvation Army box however, I cannot help but wonder whether there might be a candle glowing inside. More likely there is total darkness, except when the rusty lid opens to accept the excess of the affluent. With it come the soiled and worn traces of residual guilt that separate poverty from possession.



Marty and Georgia at our illicit log cabin by the orchard's edge.



Medusa, Pen & Ink, 1972