

Spiral Vortex (Frontispiece), Pen & Ink, 1973

Spectrums

all forces are in constant opposition
neither good nor bad, optimistic nor pessimistic

spectrums form like bridges
male to female
simple to complex
stable to tenuous
technical to thematic
gradual and subtle
every space occupied

the atom to infinity
heat to cold
light to dark
white to black
with color stretched between
contrast emerges
life to death
pleasure and pain

these polarities that exist
are not meant to suggest duality
or schizophrenia
but what might be called multiphrenia

in the same way that a spider weaves a web
between two branches
and catches the fly
in coordinates therein

the life giving ecological source
locates itself somewhere in this rainbow

peace to violence
as natural climates change
sun to cloud
cloud to rain
rain to lightning
lightning to thunder
thunder to hurricane
hurricane to tornado
tornado to earthquake
holocaust insanity disaster war
and back again to a gentle wind

all of this occurs inside and outside
the mind of humanity
living
breathing
growing
progressing
procreating
sustaining
maturing
ailing
reviving
dying

the total weight of the universe
remains the same
a fixed number of particles
forming permanent structures
that defy permanence

time is motion
requiring height width depth energy
combustion
consumption

the atom and the universe
both possess the same structure
out of context they lose their size
vast expanses of space separate miniscule masses

even asymmetry is a form of symmetry
dynamics tension integrity

too abstract too real
more spectrums
abstraction is fantasy
the subconscious makes it real

expression is art
release is positive – intrinsic
beautiful awkward
gathered disintegrated
brilliant ignorant
appreciated ignored
organic artificial
pure tainted
spectrums – not poles

abstract expressionists splatter paint
toward twenty foot canvases
the result is physical emotional
they call it art

cubists chop their forms
into blocks of color and space
the result is practical suggestive
they call it art

impressionists diffuse hard lines into soft shades
the result is sensitive spiritual
they call it art

only three prerequisites for creation
a desire
a design
a means of execution

the architect and the engineer
are even better
when they work together

when they are
the same person



Sun Through Trees, Pen & Ink, 1973



Wormwood Vision, Pen & Ink, 1973

Decompression

Judley, Steve, and Susan were glad to see me. I shared my perils with them and they nurtured me back to normalcy. Judley was exploring watercolor fantasies. Steven was writing and playing his guitar and Susan had lots of lucrative television work. In her free time, she was sewing her unusual life-sized dolls that were inspired at least in part by Judley's animated artwork.

It felt perfectly natural to join right into the creativity. I began drawing with a heightened energy and commitment. Initially, I was harboring some compacted anger that needed to be expressed and I tried to draw visual representations of repression and jealousy. One of these was the image of a snake with two birds. I supposed in hindsight that it was a symbolic representation of Marty, Duane and me. I did believe that strong negative emotions like anger and jealousy could be contained and stored in their raw form, then slowly released with more positive results. There was some validity and truth to this,



Closeup of Cholla desert cactus exoskeleton.

but it became obvious that the internalization of feelings was taking its toll on my emotional health and confidence.

And so I decompressed in the unpressured atmosphere that East Hollywood offered. I had bought a thin long-sleeve Italian knit shirt for a dollar at a nearby thrift store and when I came back to the house, Susan remarked that I looked “gay” wearing it. My sexuality was already damaged and her comment really had an impact upon me. I suppose I was scared that I might be moving subconsciously in that direction. I decided that I would practice celibacy, at least until I felt right again. I focused my full attention on drawing.

Accordingly, I beg your indulgence over the course of the next several pages. My pure focus and obsession with art during this period was so intense that it deserves some discussion. Those disinterested in the technical and conceptual aspects of ink and paper might wish to jump ahead to the next section entitled “Re-entry.”

I had a Grumbacher artist’s sketchpad that was sized



Drawing In California, 1973



DNA Spiral, Pen & Ink, 1973

for 8 1/2" x 11" and I decided to adhere to that format, especially since I had a binder with protective plastic sleeves that matched perfectly. Every morning, I attempted to initiate a fresh drawing. If the drawing succeeded, it would find a place in the book. If not, I would cut out the better parts and tape them into my journals.

My housemates offered great encouragement. I often consulted with them about potential names for my collection of Hollywood drawings. I had come up with "Conceptual Survival," but Susan didn't think that this described the work very well. Because of the high level of detail and time expended on each piece, she thought that the drawings looked inconceivable or impossible. I took this as flattery as it was intended, but the truth was that at the start of each drawing I had a fairly clear image in my mind. Unfortunately, the end result was usually a relatively flawed approximation of the original premise. Recognizing this dilemma, we coined the clever but heady term "Approximations of Impossibilities." It quickly lent itself as the working title for my growing portfolio.

Pablo Picasso had died while I was in Hollywood and ironically there was a Picasso retrospective at the new modern art museum nearby. I was very moved with the sheer quantity and depth of his work and initiated a tribute that blended some of the figures from his paintings with my own ideas. In the process, I realized how critical freeform contour drawing had been to Picasso's style. In fact, the gallery presented a short experimental movie that he and Salvador Dali had made, filmed totally in the dark with a penlight as

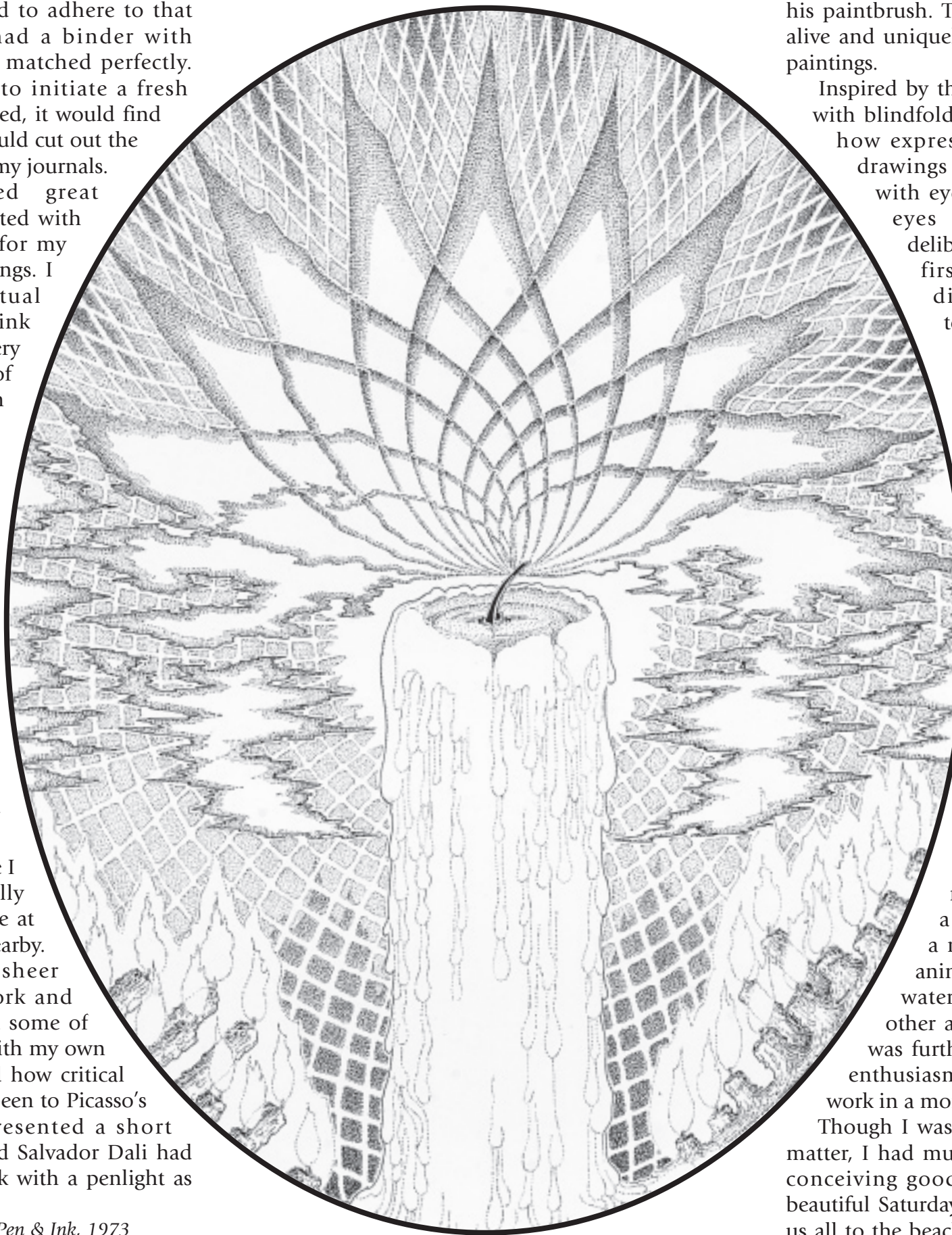
his paintbrush. The fluidity of the lines was fresh, alive and uniquely three-dimensional, just like his paintings.

Inspired by these ideas, I started to experiment with blindfolded drawings and was surprised at how expressive the lines could be. These drawings were executed quickly in pencil with eyes closed, then inked with open eyes and considerably greater deliberation. *Involuntary Vision* was the first of these drawings, a pleasant diversion from my increasingly tedious pen technique.

Anyone who has lived in the Los Angeles area is pretty much obligated to take out-of-town visitors to Disneyland and I had never been there. Jud, Steve and Susan had been many times and loved going. Being in "show-biz," Susan had some discount passes, so we all drove down to Anaheim.

In the vast parking lot and with a wry grin, Steven unveiled a joint. We smoked it and giggled our way to the ticket gate. The lines were long and there was an extremely obnoxious announcement coming over the tinny loudspeakers that instructed visitors about entry procedures into the park. We endured this message through the gates and had a spectacular day. Jud returned with a renewed appreciation for Disney animation and worked on many lively watercolors of dancing elephants and other animal personifications. I, in turn, was further inspired by Judley's unbridled enthusiasm and attempted to take my own work in a more organic direction.

Though I was technically ready for any subject matter, I had much more difficulty than Judley in conceiving good themes for my drawings. One beautiful Saturday morning, Steven offered to drive us all to the beach at Santa Monica for the day. Jud



Illuminated Candle (Detail), Pen & Ink, 1973

and I scrambled to get our drawing pads and pencils together. At the last minute I noticed that Susan had some interesting Hummel porcelain figurines of children with ducks. I asked permission to carefully wrap them up in towels so that I could draw them and she agreed. When we got to the pier, I set them carefully in the sand and sketched them in pencil against the beach and ocean backdrop. Upon returning that evening, I began inking the drawing and was very pleased with the evolution. I titled it simply *Children On The Beach*. Jud and Steve thought the figures resembled Marlon Brando and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis in their respective childhoods.

I stayed on this theme for a few days, trying to complete a contiguous second panel of the beach scene; this time depicting an old man with a cane, a bucket and a goose. Everything was going well until a few misplaced dots spoiled the expression on the old man's face. India ink by its nature is so definite and permanent. In frustration, I took scissors, cut the drawing into five or six pieces and pasted it into my journal as a drawing that had failed.

I was careful to try not to let anyone see or interfere with my drawing process while immersed, since a derogatory or even passing remark could taint my enthusiasm for a particular drawing.

A few days later, I arranged Susan's dolls in the living room and tried to capture their playful innocence. They all had names: Whodunit the Turtle, Bird, Clancy, Clock, Aphid, Berry Berry and Annie. I suppose the reason I appreciated these dolls so much was that they fit neatly into a parallel universe or sorts – a world created entirely by Susan. Jud's work did the same thing. In a less obvious way, I suppose mine



did, too.

One day, we hiked the barren canyons adjacent to Hollywood, and then drove out into the rugged San Gabriel Mountains northeast of Los Angeles. On the way, we followed Vermont Avenue leading uphill toward the short tunnel near the Griffith Park Observatory. The avenue was lined with trees that had unusual snakelike roots. I was fascinated with these and spent a day sketching them. Once I had captured the framework needed to execute the image, I began to play with the literal scene. Two of the swirling roots converged back upon themselves and I connected them with an Escher-esque twist.

Just up Winona Boulevard, there was an exotic garden. Actually, the plants were quite common for Los Angeles, but I was fascinated at how remarkably different the flora was from that of the east coast. There was an oriental look about them. I envisioned that the vegetation in California was a perfect compromise between oriental and Appalachian botany and spent a day experimenting with different ways to capture these plants in ink. *Winona Landscape Fantasy* emerged and in suggesting the lines of the grass, I borrowed the swirling root structure from the Griffith Park trees.

Bored with rectangular formats, I retrieved an oval serving plate in Susan's cupboard and traced it onto a blank page from my drawing pad. The oval lent itself nicely to single axis or mirror image symmetry. I sketched in a pair of reflected birds in flight that had evolved from my *Snake Bird Violence* drawing and incorporated other common images from my various *Universal Models*. The only suggestion of mankind was the

Hollywood Palm, Pen & Ink, 1973



Tribute To Kahlil Gibran, Pen & Ink, 1973

Re-entry

For a few days, I wallowed in my appreciation of home. Just having a mattress with sheets was a considerably luxury, not to mention a selection of food in the refrigerator. And so I settled into our suburban utopia.

Our parents loved sports and they loved to travel. It wasn't unusual for them to go away for a week or two with their friends the Bishops, especially for the summer or winter Olympics. During these occasional excursions, the responsible Boak boys would be entrusted with the management of the household. Within hours of their departure, word would spread through the neighborhood and around town. Before long, strange cars would overflow the driveway and line the street.

On one such occasion, we were anticipating a rather large crowd and thought it would be intelligent to roll up the living room rug so that drinks or cigarette butts wouldn't do any permanent damage. We were right in doing so. The party was a classic example of '70s raucousness. There were people packed into every nook and cranny of the house. Kegs were flowing in the basement and couples were making out in the coat closets.

Prior to our parent's return, we did an immaculate job cleaning every square inch of the house. We recycled the empties, mopped and waxed the floors, opened the windows and aired out the muskiness, replaced the furnishings, dusted the windowsills and polished the silver. It was really quite impressive. Mother would have relished our thoroughness.



Time Magazine

Madman smashes Michelangelo's Pieta with a hammer.

Several weeks later, long after our parents had settled back into their household routine, my mother was over in the corner of the living room and a confused look came over her face. There was a very distinctive cigarette burn in her carpet. She wasn't upset about it because she was the one who had caused the burn several years ago. The problem was that this particular burn had occurred at the diagonally opposite end of the living room where the rug had miraculously healed itself. Before repositioning a ton and a half of furniture, the rug had obviously been unrolled and set back into place backwards.

My mother was a very intelligent woman – a graduate of Wellesley, in fact – but I honestly don't believe that the reality of the situation registered in her mind. She was so trusting that I believe she convinced herself that her own recollections were flawed. She could never acknowledge the possibility that the entire contents of her living room had somehow been levitated. So she went on with her routine, fully blocking the notion that her angelic sons might have been up to no good.



Discarded study of Mary from "The Pieta." 1973



Air Dancer, Pen & Ink, 1973



Above: *Metaphysical Trellis*, Pen & Ink, 1973 Right: Amateur wood carving used as model.



New Perspectives

Many artists have executed a single work that is acknowledged by critics to have attained the status of "masterpiece." This idea intrigued me and I spent some time trying to define the exact ingredients of a masterpiece.

A masterpiece certainly needs to be the primary work of an artist, and all prior works of an artist are, in hindsight, preparatory. Most

masterpieces have a very significant theme or sense of relevance. Technical execution must be inspired and flawless. The style must define and exemplify the unique vantage point of the artist.

Picasso's *Guernica* is a great example of a painting widely considered to be a "masterpiece." I certainly recognized the incredible flawlessness in Michelangelo's *Pieta*, and given that a madman had broken through museum security

and taken a hammer to the timeless sculpture, I was both disturbed and inspired. Salvador Dali had executed several major efforts that fell into this category. I had attempted to pay tribute to Dali's work with a circular swirl of surrealistic imagery, but now it seemed time to focus in on my own themes and concepts.

In Hollywood, Jud's brother Steve had introduced me to chess. There was a moment during one of my first games when the symbolic power of each piece came to life for me – when I realized that the game could be played with compassion or ruthlessness depending upon the whims or personalities of the opponents. I also realized that some degree of sacrifice is necessary to insure the survival of the most number of pieces.

During my journey east, I gave much thought to chess and began to construct a drawing in my mind. It seemed to me that this particular theme had the potential to be a masterpiece. There was plenty of room for detail; in fact each piece was a drawing in and of itself. Given the relationship of power and vulnerability between the pieces, the game lent itself to a complexity of meaning.

Technically, I was already very immersed in the study of perspective. I had a good working knowledge of the rules, but the complicated point of view for my chess drawing idea was requiring a deeper understanding, especially since the relative size of every chess piece is somewhat indicative of the piece's power on the board.

Prior to tackling such an extended project, I decided to accept my family's invitation to join them in Iron City once again. While I was there, I played a great deal of chess and the conceptualization for my drawing continued to develop. As a preliminary study for the chess board's spatial grid, I did a simple drawing of a framework that highlighted a fawn modeled from a small wooden carving that I found in the cabin. The resulting *Metaphysical Trellis* was trite but useful.

Upon my return to Bethlehem, I was confident and ready to proceed. I purchased a 30" x 40" sheet of illustration board and started to lay out the squares of the chess board. I had decided that it would be necessary to play several games against myself, so I set up stools on either side of the board and alternated chess moves. I knew that visually I





Squinting

wanted to end up with an intriguing, balanced, and puzzling conclusion with many of the primary game pieces still in action. On my seventh round, the dynamics of the game started to look enticing. There had been a rapid exchange of pawns and without really noticing the predicament, the black side had placed itself in unusual jeopardy. One less than obvious move by the white queen yielded a clever checkmate.

I transferred the locations of each piece to the drawing and began to vertically project their relative heights. In sketching the individual pieces, I attempted to have each one enact its own advantage or predicament on the chess board. After the basic pencil drawing was close to completion, I started inking with the hope that there would still be some room for improvisation or spontaneity. I spent nearly a month enhancing what the pencil lines suggested to me and I grew increasingly more excited with the results. After the drawing felt complete, I tried to capture a verbal description of the game:



Above: Detail from Checkmate. Opposite Page: Checkmate, Pen & Ink, 1973

Checkmate (A brief explanation of reality)

There is a chess game being played inside a great open-air theater. The perspective in the room emanates from the rays of the sunset. The players are people, acting out their individual situations.

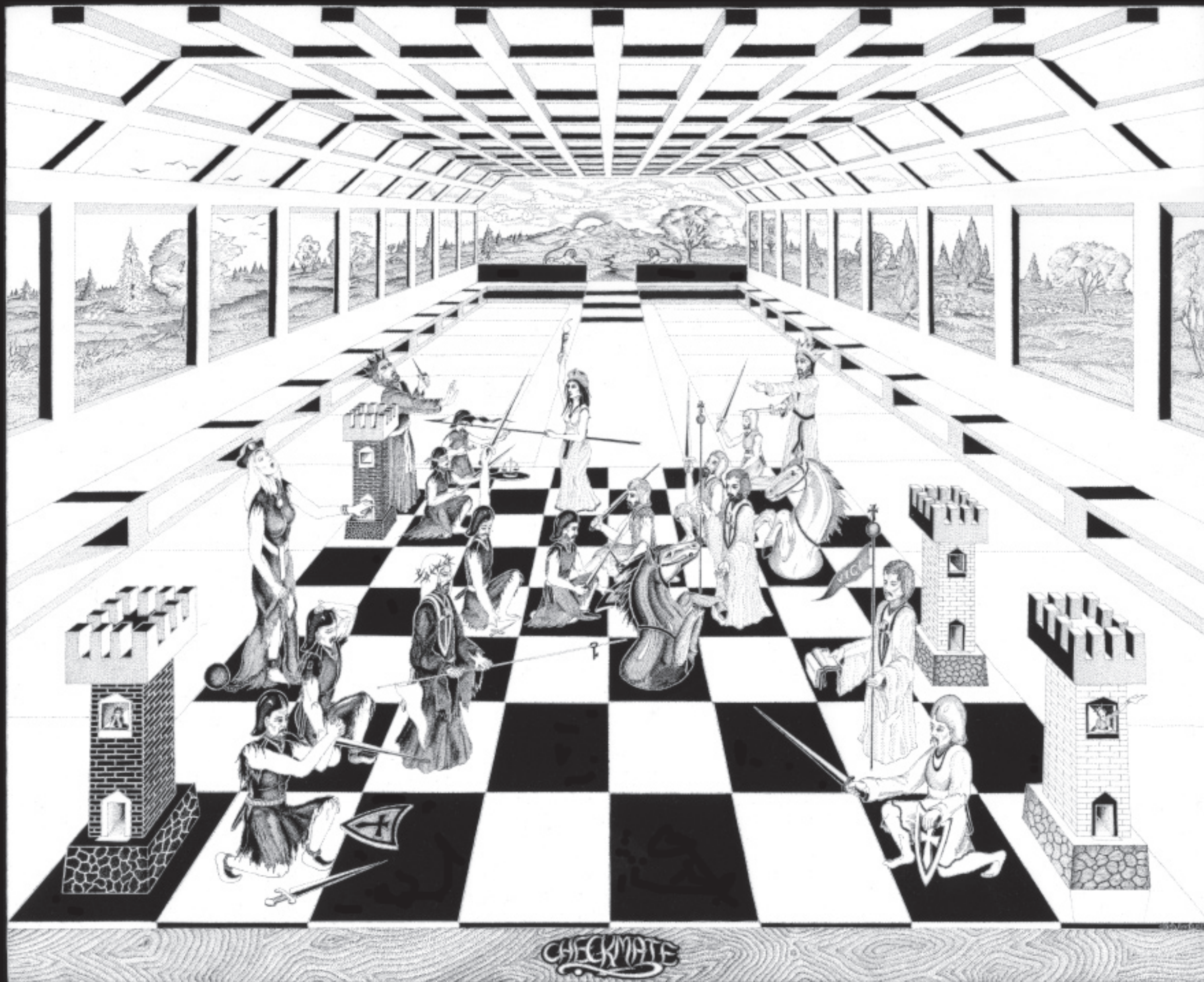
The white queen carrying the torch of liberty is placing the black king in check with her lance. His face shows horror as he raises his right hand in a defensive plea for mercy. The tiny dagger is a futile weapon, for there are no potential victims within his short reach. He is obliged to move out of check, but the white queen's attack prevents any forward motion, and since the white corner square is covered by the white bishop holding the flag "VICI" (I conquer) and the Bible opened to the Book of Job (the story of imposed suffering), it seems that the black king has indeed been cornered into Checkmate.

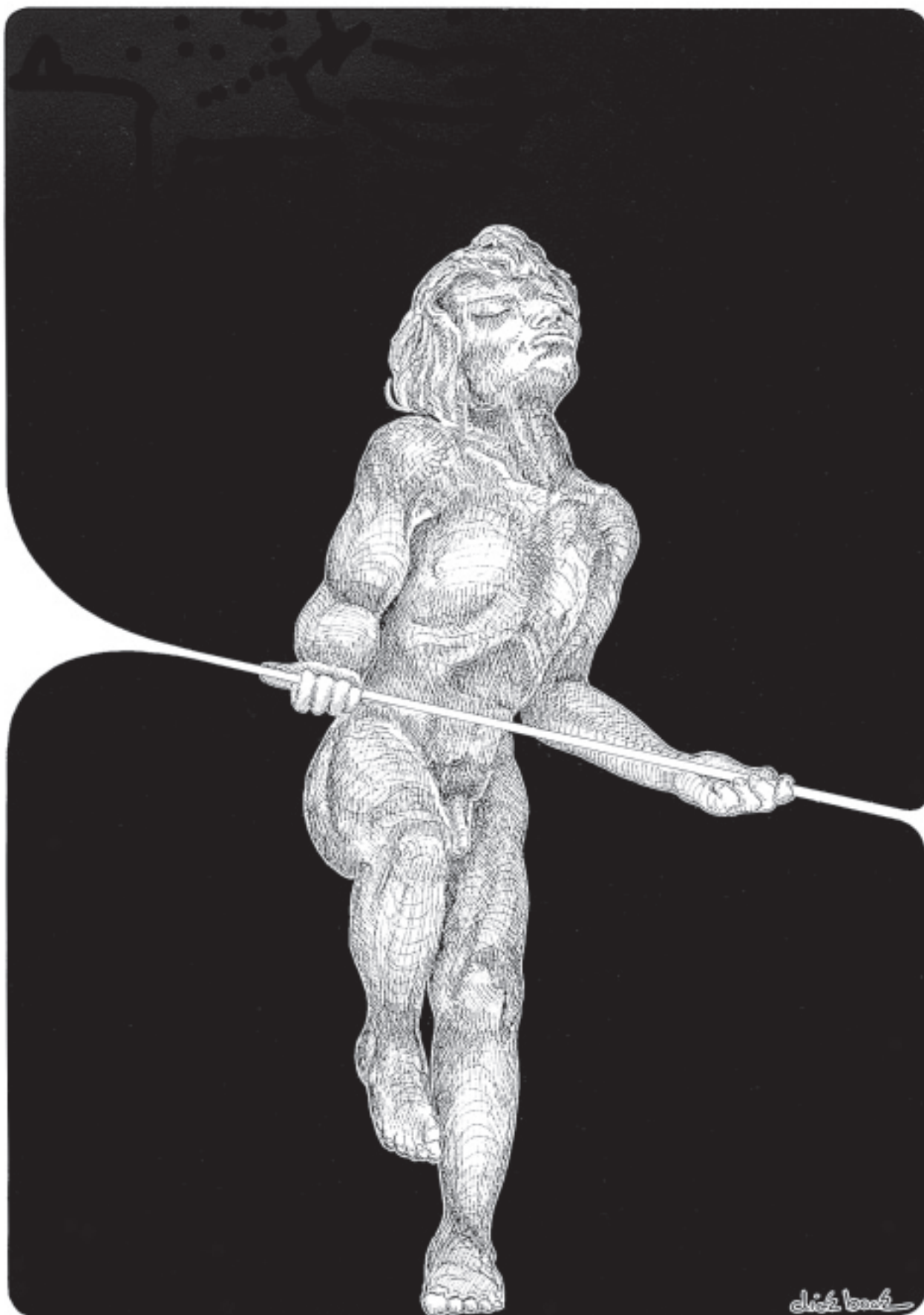
The black bishop facing the "VICI" bishop wears the crown of thorns and holds the white flag of surrender upon which he has managed to faithfully retrieve the skeleton key that unlocks the ball and chain that shackles his queen's ankle. She gestures with her hand and cries for help, but it is too late. She is on the wrong square to be of any aid in capturing the attacking queen. The damsel in the black castle weeps in full awareness of her queen's doom. The white damsel rejoices and waves her handkerchief to suitors.

The first black pawn (kneeling) clasps his hands and pleads for mercy. The second pawn scratches his head in confusion and doubt. The third pawn, unaware of his doom, motions for counterattack while reaching for his dagger in a last spark of hope. The fourth pawn is blindfolded and holds the scales of justice, while the pawn to his left plunges a suicidal dagger into his heart. The garments worn by the black team have been torn during the charge of battle.

The second white bishop is the only player on the board that knows the real irony of the game's situation. He is the one that survived to draw the picture you are viewing, which insinuates that his ploy of offering sugar cubes to the black horse as appeasement is in reality an act of distraction; distraction indeed, from the fact that the board has been set up incorrectly from the beginning of the game (the white square to the right rule), but it seems that none of the endangered are aware of this disqualifying factor, as all are prepared to accept their tragic destinies.

The sun watches patiently, aware that the game will be resigned before the black power of night has had a chance to alter the eminent outcome, which is in spite of any reconciliation..... CHECKMATE !





The Balance Beam, Pen & Ink, 1973



The Beatles, Marker and Assembled Collage 1972

Wedding Song

Since I first met this bride and groom so many years have past.
Our memories stretch back endlessly. The time moves by so fast.
Out on the curb of Langhorne Drive we shared the chessmen's pawns.
The seeds of friendship sowed themselves while mowing summer lawns.

At Pondelek's and Gregory's, with brother John and Sue,
Rick and Sandy, Roy and Jim, and every one of you.
We grew from children into men and women... every one.
We all experienced growing pains before those years were done.

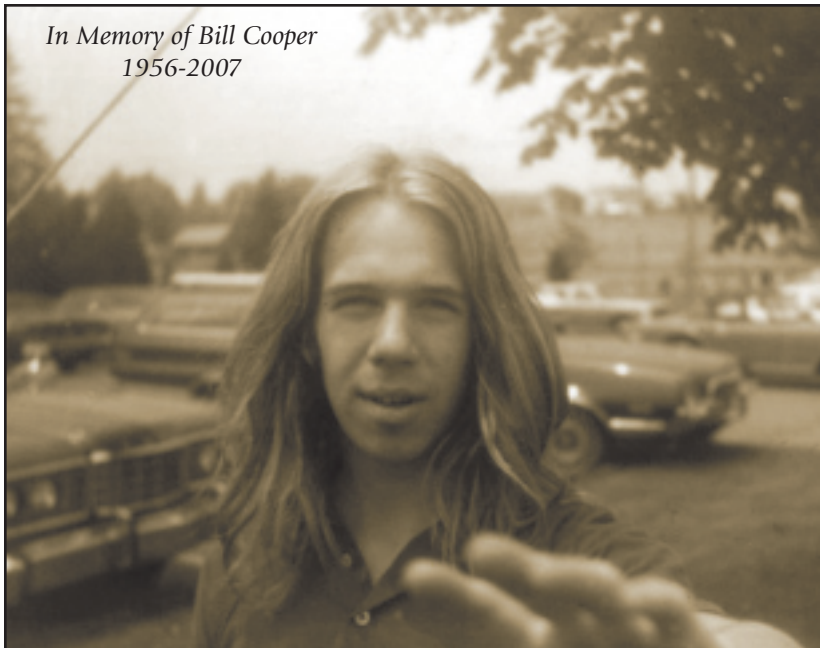
With motorcycles, loud guitars, and long unruly hair
I'm sure our parents wondered why we didn't seem to care.
But what parents often overlook when offspring seek themselves
is that all their love and influence must age upon the shelves...
like a wine that starts with bitter grapes,
the flavor won't mature
until the years have given birth
to something sweet and pure.

Here your friends have gathered to witness from the start
the blessing of this union and the blending of your hearts.
The road that lies ahead of you will now and then seem tough
but a fraction of the love I've seen will surely be enough
to nourish and sustain you
through every dream and goal.
Your home is now the house you've found
within each other's soul.

William Scott Cooper
Kimberly Anne Purcell
We pray for your true happiness.
We proudly wish you well.
This union that you've started
is shared within our hearts.
The sum is always greater
than all the single parts.

*For Billy & Kim, Bethlehem, PA
February 28, 1981*

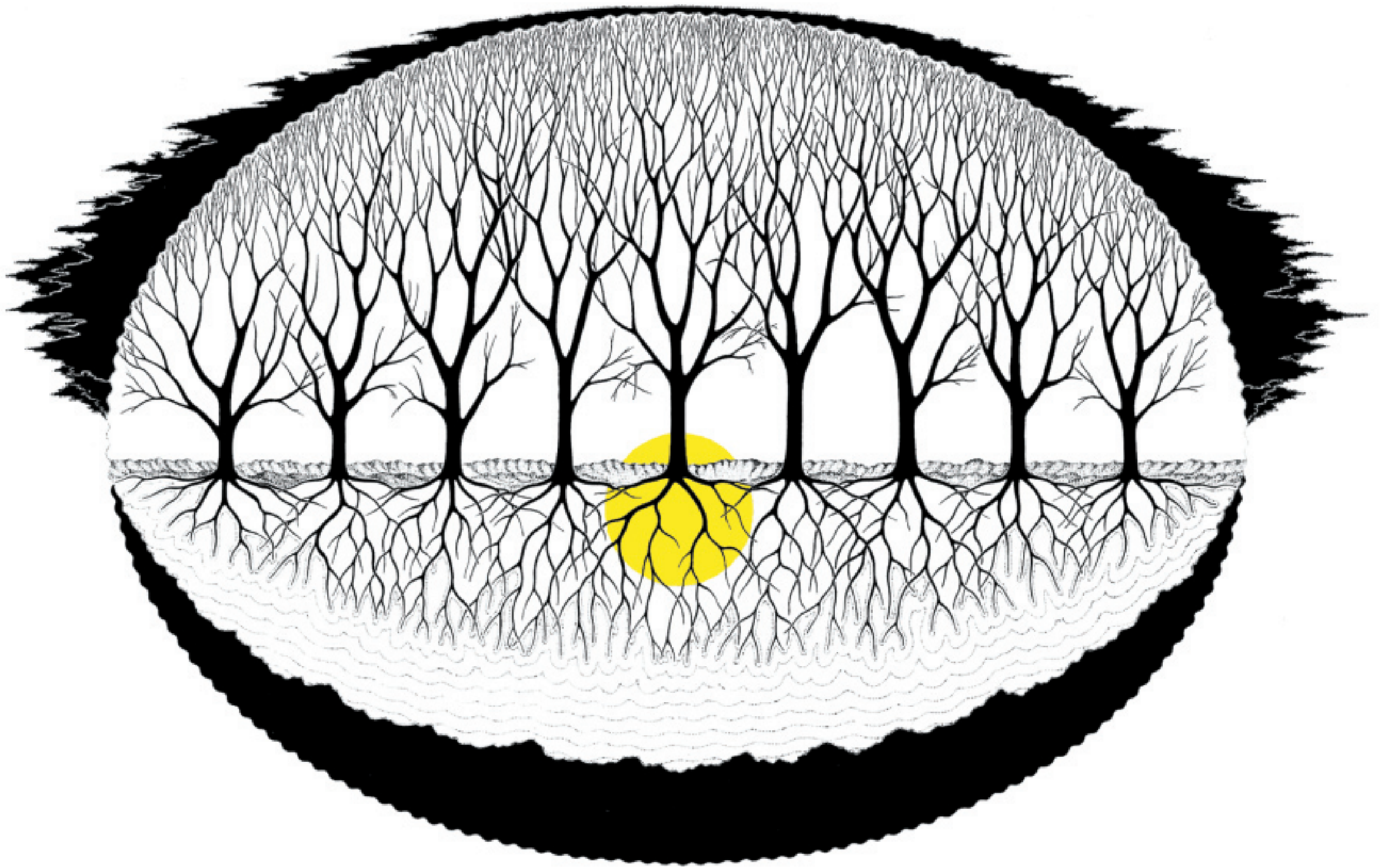
*In Memory of Bill Cooper
1956-2007*



Our good friend Bill Cooper, circa 1973.



Phallic Tree, Pen & Ink, 1973



Sunrise Sunset (Large Version) Pen & Ink, 1973 (Published by Russ Borman)

The ABCs of Printing

I had Xeroxed a number of my drawings and had even published a few small amateur editions, but upon the completion of *Checkmate* I pursued a more professional print shop. Under *Printing Companies* in the *Yellow Pages* at the very top of the alphabetical listing was *ABC Printing Company*. I called and made an appointment.

The owner was Russ Borman, a wiry and energetic local who had printer's ink in his blood. He took great pride in his craft and spent most of his waking hours at work. His business had a cramped waiting room that funneled into a twisting hallway that led to the old presses and the smell of solvent. There was paper stacked everywhere, including the stairwell that led to the second floor where he harbored an antique typesetter and a single-color Heidelberg press. There were rumors around town that he had gotten in trouble for counterfeiting. This was unlikely, though it could have helped to explain his street smarts and rough exterior. Out of sheer curiosity, I always kept my eyes open for stacks of



Russ Borman at the helm of his Heidelberg.

freshly printed twenty dollar bills around his shop.

Russ was down-to-earth and appreciative of art. He was impressed with my drawings and realized that he could be of service to me. He took it as a personal challenge to capture the unusual level of detail and I think he also saw some small opportunity for himself. The drawings really did lend themselves very well to the offset printing process.

Russ liked the reflective trees in *Sunrise/Sunset* and quickly published a small edition. At his suggestion, I hand-colored the background sun on each print and gave them edition numbers. Beyond that, he encouraged me to focus on themes that might be locally marketable. In particular, there were several local artists that were doing scenes of Bethlehem's historic Moravian buildings. These were selling well to local affluent ladies in need of living room art. After researching and completing two drawings with Moravian themes, Russ agreed to publish prints and note cards for me at no charge in exchange for his right to market them at the *Moravian Book Shop*. This was certainly a suitable arrangement for me.

Russ's press was too small to accommodate my larger *Checkmate* drawing, but he was kind enough to refer me to *Lehigh Litho*, a competitor that specialized in larger commercial runs. It was difficult for me to contain my excitement when they called to inform me that the prints were ready. I immediately sped over and loaded up. The prints came out great. I was in business.

With Russ Borman's help, I supplemented *Checkmate* with the publication of several smaller sized editions. Faithfully, I would number and sign these, though I must confess that this became rather tedious. Sometimes I would get through fifty or sixty prints and would tire of the routine. Weeks later I would attempt to start up again without remembering exactly where I had left off.

Sometimes, individuals would ask for a specific number – perhaps the last two digits of their birth year or something to that effect. I always tried to accommodate these requests briskly, though I do believe there may be several of my patrons that unknowingly possess duplicate first prints or artist proofs of the editions. I simply did not take this aspect of the art business very seriously.

In spite of such blatant unprofessionalism, I had some success selling my prints. I was insistent upon setting the price at five dollars. I felt it more important that the work be accessible and affordable, especially given that my particular fan base didn't have much money to expend. If anyone were to ask, I was quite willing to give the prints away for free. In fact, I often gave (and still give) full sets of prints as tokens of appreciation. Some would say that this devalues the art and I suspect that is true. I would rather have devalued art hanging on walls than valuable art sitting in a collector's flat file.

Nevertheless, I did my best to learn the business of art. I discovered extruded brushed aluminum frames at the local hobby shop. These were very fashionable at the time. I stocked several contrasting shades of matt board and bought a beveled matt cutter. As I took more orders for my prints, I did more and more framing, though I never enjoyed it enough to approach any level of perfectionism. Gradually, I framed enough of my originals to entertain the idea of having an actual exhibition of my work.

Around this time I met John Cali, a talented silversmith with an entrepreneurial flair. He had a thriving jewelry business in Allentown called *Sorcerer's Apprentice*. He had married the older sister of my friend Dale Patterson. Soon, I was busy learning the jewelry trade, laying out his wholesale catalog and trying my hand at carving original designs out of jeweler's wax. One of the first projects John gave me was sculpting a belt buckle for the local *Jaguar Owners Club*. Advance orders were taken and the buckles were then cast in pewter, silver and even one in gold.

So John and I became creative comrades. He shared my passion for chess and took great joy in



Jaguar Belt Buckle, Pewter, 1975



Moravian Snowflake, Pen & Ink, 1973 (Published by Russ Borman)



The Old Grist Mill, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Pen & Ink, 1973 (Published by Russ Borman)

Blair (Full Circle)

One afternoon, I drove up to Blairstown with a portfolio of my prints. I wanted to show them to Robert Atkinson, my former art and drafting teacher at Blair Academy. More specifically, I wanted to let him know how much I appreciated the education he had imparted to me. Few teachers had had as much impact.

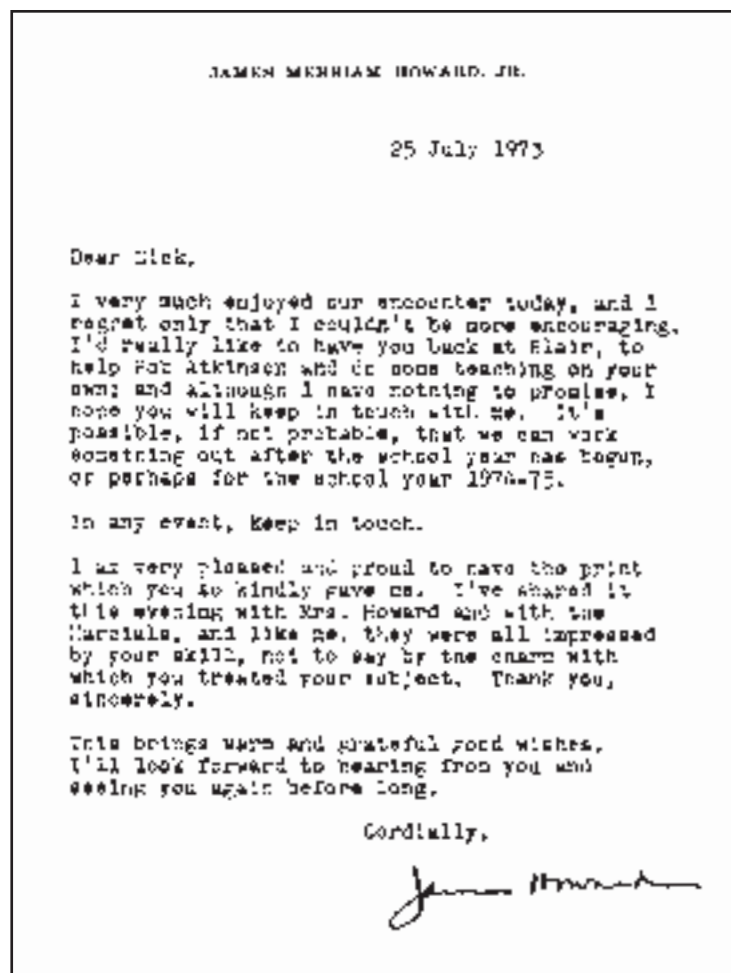
I visited Mr. Atkinson during one of his afternoon art classes and found him in a state of bewilderment and frustration. He was from the old school. He ruled his classes with sternness and discipline. For several decades, he had demanded and extracted excellence from his reluctant students. Now, a third of the way through the seventies, he was feeling old and tired. He wasn't relating to the long-haired bell-bottomed crop of peace-niks and they weren't relating to him. Instead they were making irreverent cartoons behind his back and fashioning contraband hash pipes and hookahs in the ceramics and wood shops.

The students responded immediately and intensely to my drawings. They asked a lot of questions about my travels and experiences. I think they knew that I was one of them.

Mr. Atkinson noticed this phenomena and was intrigued by it. After class, we talked about art and teaching. He asked me what I was doing. I explained



Iron City Bell, Sterling Silver Pendant, 1976



Letter From Blair's headmaster, James Howard

that I was temporarily living at home trying to make a go at being an artist.

He asked whether I might consider helping him teach art at Blair. I was very flattered at the prospect that perhaps there was some viable way for me to blend back into the edge of society, and in doing so, actually extract a meager living. I told him I certainly would consider it.

Shortly thereafter, I received a call from the headmaster's office at Blair asking me whether I was available that afternoon to come up for an interview. I made a last-ditch effort to clean up my act. This consisted of showering, shaving, and dressing in a marginally presentable beige leisure suit a size and a half too small.

I met with the deeply cerebral and mysterious headmaster, James Howard. He had known me as a student and I'm sure his recollections bore some slight suspicions. My appearance did little to rectify this. We did share a few common interests. He had

enjoyed my creative writing projects when I was a student. More recently, he had spoken in some depth with Robert Atkinson about my potential for an assistant art teaching position.

Several weeks later, I received an ambiguous letter from Mr. Howard. It appeared that there would not be a position for me at Blair in September. I was discouraged, but I immersed myself in illustration, lost wax casting, and geodesic dome building. I was working on a drawing of a family of elephants to commemorate my friend Lou Vida's first child, and my friendship with silversmith John Cali started to pay off. I executed a number of reasonably successful necklace designs for him in exchange for his indulgence of my personal casting projects.

As suggested, I did stay in touch with Robert Atkinson and in mid-November, I received a second invitation from the headmaster. Twenty minutes into our meeting, I was offered a full time position, \$25 a week salary, full room and board, plus unlimited use of the various art studios. The school year was well under way. In fact, autumn had nearly conceded to winter, but a faculty residence had suddenly become available. Blair's progressive chaplain Peter Amerman was getting married to my long time Iron City Fishing Club friend Cindy Scott. They were to move into Millbrook Cottage. The plan was that I would reside in Peter's small bachelor's apartment adjacent



Baby Elephant On A Swing, Sterling Silver Pendant, 1976



Elephants (Upon The Probable Demise Of Richard M. Nixon), Pen & Ink, 1974

to the dining hall garbage corral. It worked for me. I accepted the position and made arrangements to begin after the Christmas holidays.

I moved into my small two room apartment. It was more than I could have ever hoped for. I organized my drawing area and began working out the course load with Mr. Atkinson.... Bob as I was now allowed to address him. This protocol was quite difficult for me, given our longstanding and highly disciplined teacher/student relationship.

Blair had been a boy's school when I attended, but now it was very coed. Given that I was single and twenty four, I found the presence of attractive young females on campus to be somewhat refreshing, if not distracting. Ironically, I was in the middle of drawing the *Garden Of Eden*, complete with Eve and a fresh bowl of forbidden fruit. This personal temptation remained a dilemma and nemesis for me throughout my short-lived teaching career.

Within twenty-four hours of my arrival, a raucous pack of giggling students streaked past my apartment window stark naked in the snow and the bitter cold darkness. Openly wild behavior of this variety had become more and more commonplace. The students had somehow managed to diffuse any sense of authority that might have existed. The dress code was breaking down. Blair's long standing traditions seemed to be in jeopardy. Fueled with a high level of misplaced intelligence, money, marijuana, mischief, and the expected rebelliousness of teenagers, this flock of seagulls was difficult to suppress.

My task was to impart my knowledge of pen and ink drawing, woodworking, ceramics, design, and drafting to the student body. And when that was done, I was to fill in as the assistant soccer coach. The students were busy too, though they took every opportunity to test my resolve as a teacher.

One bizarre student named Arthur had the potential for brilliance, but his humor generally spilled over into obnoxiousness. One quick look at him and it was obvious that he liked to party. His hair shot out radially from his head as if he had stuck his finger into an electrical socket.

Arthur signed up for my woodworking class thinking that it would be an easy ride. He probably was correct, except that he made the mistake of showing up to class one day tripping on acid.

Unaware of his drug-induced condition, I did

notice the upheaval he was causing in the class. Just as I was helping another student cut some panels on the table saw, Arthur decided to bump in and demand my assistance. I lost patience with him and asked him to leave the class. When he refused, I felt compelled to escort him out physically and he fought me kicking and screaming all the way. I gave him a good push toward the door and he reeled back quicker than I had expected. His back hit the wall like a bursting water balloon and knocked the wind right out of him. When his knees buckled and he sank to the floor, I bent down in panic, resuscitated him as best as I could, and took him directly to the infirmary. He was fine, but I wasn't. Embarrassed that I had lost control, I questioned whether I was really qualified or cut out to be a teacher, but Bob Atkinson backed me and suggested that I should try to chalk it up to experience.

There was an A. B. Dick mimeograph machine in the faculty lounge that was used mostly for duplicating tests and homework assignments.

Making a plate was as simple as typing or drawing directly onto a two part master, tearing it off and applying the carbon side face up onto the drum of the press. About one hundred impressions could be made with vigorous hand cranking before the plate would start to fade.

Given my access to this press, I decided to publish a daily underground newsletter for the students with the intent of challenging their creativity. I called it *Conceptual Survival* and distributed it by means of a handful of selected students who pledged their discretion.

Conceptual Survival became a hit with the students and a handful of liberal faculty members. Topics ranged from simple loom construction to origami. Occasionally I would find unique stories worth reprinting, or perhaps a political or philosophical issue on campus that needed airing out. In total, I published nearly a hundred editions and in doing so, I solidified a solid creative bond with the majority of the students.



Detail from the Garden of Eden, Pen & Ink, 1974



The Garden of Eden, Pen & Ink, 1974



Belvedere

After a long day of classes at Blair, I had made plans to meet my brother John and his friend Andy at a rock and roll haven called *The First Edition* about 10 miles west of Blairstown. I arrived early, passed the time with some chili and Sambuca, and watched a terrible singer attempt to impersonate Jim Morrison.

John and Andy rolled in at eleven in separate cars. They had a few drinks, tolerated the music for a short while, then John suggested that we examine his freshly refurbished Alfa Romeo sedan. He was an ace Alfa mechanic and had disassembled and soaked every single part of that car clean in solvent. Sitting in the car, listening to the Grateful Dead at full volume while trying to put a feeble half-hearted hustle on three pretty but evasive females, we smoked a bowl of John's Colombian pot. From the back seat, Andy pleaded with John for a test drive, and with an abrupt squeal, John peeled out onto Highway 94, top down, stereo speakers blaring, open beers in hand, a dank cloud of marijuana still hovering, Playmate cooler packed to the brim with Molson in the back, all with the intention of rekindling Andy's fond memories of Alfa ownership. Off we flew, at 75 miles per hour and climbing, toward the foggy village of Blairstown. Andy and I were hanging on for our lives as John rambunctiously accelerated through the center of Blairstown's notorious business district, where two or three police cars would invariably linger in the sallow shadows of the local supermarket. A few minutes later and several miles outside of town, we heard the sirens and reared our guilty necks around

to the red and blue strobes flashing paranoia up our spines. While John clumsily emptied his film canister out his open window, Andy attempted to stuff two half-consumed Molson bottles under the seat. So we sat back, unsuccessfully trying to regain our composure as two flashlights approached us from behind.

"License and registration," the loud low voice reprimanded John. "You know we clocked you at eighty for the last two miles."

John, bleary eyed and cocky, reached for the glove compartment, which simultaneously plopped open as the other officer aimed his flashlight through the passenger window. There to our utter disbelief lay John's baggie full of weed, not to mention a cleverly crafted soapstone pipe, ZigZag rolling papers, and Bic lighter. In the dead silence of this tense moment, a slight but clearly audible clink resounded from under the back seat as the two foaming bottles peeked out from underneath the vinyl flap.

"OK, out of the car!" In seconds, the three of us were quite deservedly spread-eagled against the car, being frisked for concealed weapons and additional contraband. Then came the handcuffs.

"Whose pot is it?" Andy and I skulked in our silent innocence. My brother John had managed, however, to maintain the same boisterousness that had gotten us into the predicament in the first place, exclaiming with unnecessary rudeness "I have rights you know! I have the right to remain silent!"

"You know, if you're the one that owns the car, and the beer, and the pot, we don't have to arrest all three of you." One of the officers was attempting to be civil.

"I have the right to remain silent!" John regurgitated.

"Yea, I know. Shut up and get in the patrol car." The policeman obviously was not amused by John's thorough knowledge of the law.

They read us our real rights, then we were off in a flash, side by side in the back seat with the CB squawking. The wheels of justice roared down the road, every slight bump and frost heave engaging the self-tightening clasps around our already numb wrists.

We arrived at the Blairstown Police Station at 1:30 AM where we were once again informed of our

rights. An apologetic phone call was made to the local prosecutor to discuss our situation. Much of this conversation was aimed at our eavesdropping ears and intended to instill a deep fear in us so that we would break down and violate John's inalienable right to remain silent. Andy and I kept nudging John and whispering "Just take the rap John and we'll bail you out," but self incrimination was not part of John's agenda for the evening.

Finally one of the officers, frustrated by his failure to invoke a confession, got tough: "OK, you don't want to talk. Let's try a jail cell on for size."

We were herded into the back of the police car and whisked off to Belvedere, which was about twelve miles west of Blairstown. Upon our arrival, we were led to a rear door labeled "JAIL" and "WARDEN." Things weren't going well.

Paperwork had to be filled out, more questions were asked, and of course photos and fingerprints. An old codger named "Whitey" issued us our jailhouse attire, eating utensils, and bedding. As a clerk began emptying our pockets, counting our money, stripping us to our skivvies, and cataloging our belongings, brother John suddenly calculated that this was the correct moment to confess his guilt, thereby freeing Andy and I.

"Cahhhchunk!" The extremely heavy spring loaded iron door closed with a very dramatic sound. It briefly occurred to me that that's why they call it the slammer. John kept trying to blurt out his confession. "Too late for that." chuckled the old geezer as we swished up a musty and dark flight of



Brother John with his Alfa Romeo Spider.

stairs toward the cellblock.

Upstairs the jail was divided into two long sections with a narrow corridor dividing them. There were several smaller private cubicles around the corner. Within each of the larger sections, there were eight individual lockable cells that served as two-person suites, or for solitary confinement as needed. These cells were about six by ten feet in size with iron fold-down wall-mounted bunkbeds, a sulfur stained sink, and a crude lidless toilet covered with wet newspapers.

Andy and John, mistaken as the two brothers, were isolated in one of the private cubicles and I, thought to be the older ringleader, was put in the community cell that was overflowing with a generous herd of unruly Friday night offenders.

Around the corner, I could here John rattling his tin cup across the bars yelling to the guards “I have the right to make a phone call.” This got tiresome after a while, especially since one of the “felons” in my cell threatened to stick his tin cup “where the sun don’t shine!” John, realizing the sincerity of the threat,” quickly subsided like a beer losing its head.

In the mean time, several prisoners were still awake in my cell. Two of them were hand-rolling canned Bugler tobacco and watching a Jerry Lewis cop comedy on a small Sony TV placed in the corridor just outside of arms reach. This made it impossible to change the channel or adjust the volume, so Jerry Lewis it was. The movie was so absurdly appropriate though, I suspected the Belvedere Blue may have inserted a video to

Dirge For Father

Steelman retiring after 39 years.
A million girders and a billion gears
have flown from his fingertips
along with the fears
of being proven unworthy and poor.

Success comes easy when the pace is set
on a handful of aces and a healthy bet.
The odds are unbeatable
but see what you get ?
A son that's unworthy and poor.

One of his children is writing a song.
The words are confusing and the impact is wrong.
If you find it depressing
then don't sing along
unless you're unworthy and poor.

somehow subconsciously rehabilitate us. I stayed up for several hours trying to glean the most out of the experience, and after a few hassles with sleeping bottom-bunkers, I found an empty upper berth with no mattress.

One of the guards was kind enough to bring a new mattress. A man in the next cubicle was masturbating intensely with no apparent inhibition. I found out later that he had been in for three months. I suppose that’s long enough to cause some social anomalies.

At 6:30 that morning, I was jostled by “Whitey” the guard who poured a dark liquid that resembled coffee through the bars and dished out bowls of Sugar Pops and milk on a tiny tray that fit through a rectangular opening in the door. When we ran out of hot coffee, my bunkmate summoned the guard and blackmailed him into bringing some more. Lord knows what sordid details he possessed or how he had obtained them.

For an hour, we rapped about cops and jails and crimes and how long everyone would be in. Four under-educated brothers with very bad complexions were in for attempted bank robbery and transportation of guns. They had been nabbed by a suspicious cop named Cattiani, just out of the Police Academy. They were conspiring to “knock him off.” A fun group!

Another prisoner had rolled his International Scout three times and had refused to take the balloon test, hence a mandatory sentence. The masturbator was arrested for trying to switch a tray of valuable rings in a jewelry store. Cattiani got him too, though I couldn’t figure how.

An old man with no leg was incarcerated for trespassing in his own apartment. He hadn’t paid his rent and the landlord had lost patience with him.

Joe, my newfound friend in the lower bunk, was doing time on welfare fraud charges that his wife had brought against him. He had a girlfriend that he didn’t really trust and she had promised to bring him some fresh Winstons that afternoon during visitor’s hours. Once, she smuggled in some grass inside a pair of smelly old boots but Joe got caught smoking it and the judge tacked on an extra 30 days. None of the inmates could afford council (\$750 down) and bail bonds were even more expensive.

They finally let Andy make his phone call,

thinking he was me. John and I never did get a chance to make our phone calls, and it was probably best that we didn’t, since we might have had to call Dad. He certainly would have risen to the challenge, as he had on countless other occasions, but not without a major price for us to pay.

At 11:00 AM, they let us all out on our own recognizance. The two arresting officers were there in their street clothes, geeky police shoes excepted, and they drove us down to the impound so that John could reclaim his Alfa. John was rather ecstatic to have his keys back and he did drive at a snail’s pace until the cops were out of sight. We headed promptly for the *First Edition*, where Andy and I retrieved our vehicles and quite willingly went our separate ways. It was a night that we would not soon forget, and one that personally I would never trade.

John did pay a price though. We reunited in court a few months later. John rose to the occasion and pleaded guilty to speeding, possession of a controlled substance, and to what was then a small matter of open beer in the car. It cost him \$850 to have his records sealed. Andy and I were naturally happy to chip in to the cause. I’m sure John thought that having the records sealed meant that the case was “closed,” as well it should have been, except that his older brother had an incessant need to write everything down, not to mention the foolish guts to publish it. Such is the price of justice.

Ingredients Of A Good Luck Charm

Find the prescribed ingredients and follow these instructions with careful concentration:

The claw of a small bird that died a natural death.
Wait years if necessary.

A child's tooth.

A white dove from the heart of a sand dollar.

A small pouch of soft leather made from the remnants of an old pair of shoes no longer worn.

Place the child's tooth in the grasp of the birds claw. Tie the claw into a tight clench using fish line or dental floss. Place the claw and the sand dollar dove in the leather pouch and carry it with you until you see a birds nest. No matter how high the nest is in the tree, find a way to place the pouch in the nest. From this day on you will have good luck.



The framework for the Blair Academy dome went up with a breeze, assisted by Jim Masker, Rick Demmy, Debbi Goldman and many others. It came down with considerably less effort.

The Blair Academy Dome

With struts cut from 3/4" conduit, I constructed a 40' diameter 5/8" geodesic sphere dome on the lip of Blair's natural bowl in the center of the campus. A group of about twenty students and faculty helped with the assembly, which took about two hours. We covered the well-anchored dome with a surplus army parachute, tying the loose cords tightly around the perimeter of the base. The dome was a happening spot for the students, especially at night. There were lots of great stories about how it was used, as one can imagine, but I envisioned it as a spiritual spot, a place where great conversation could occur.

Several weeks after the dome was constructed, there was a drenching rainstorm that lasted several days. The dome's anchors consisted of 3' struts that were sunken several feet below each hub, but the rain had softened the ground and weakened their hold.

This small problem was further compounded by a day of exceptionally gusty winds. The parachute was filled with air and was billowing like a ship's sail. Right in the middle of Scott Landa's afternoon Spanish class, a huge gust lifted the dome up out of its anchors like a floating jellyfish or a hovering alien spacecraft. As all of the student's jaws dropped in amazement, the dome rose and drifted airborne up the hill toward the Language Arts Building. Then it made a slow

meandering left turn, hesitated, sighed to the right, rose again slightly, tipped and rolled, landing smack in the middle of the fenced-in cesspool on the downhill exit to Milbrook Cottage.

The demise of the Blair Academy dome was featured prominently in the local newspaper. This was simply another reminder that any weak hearted efforts toward durability or permanence will be quickly rebuked by Mother Nature.

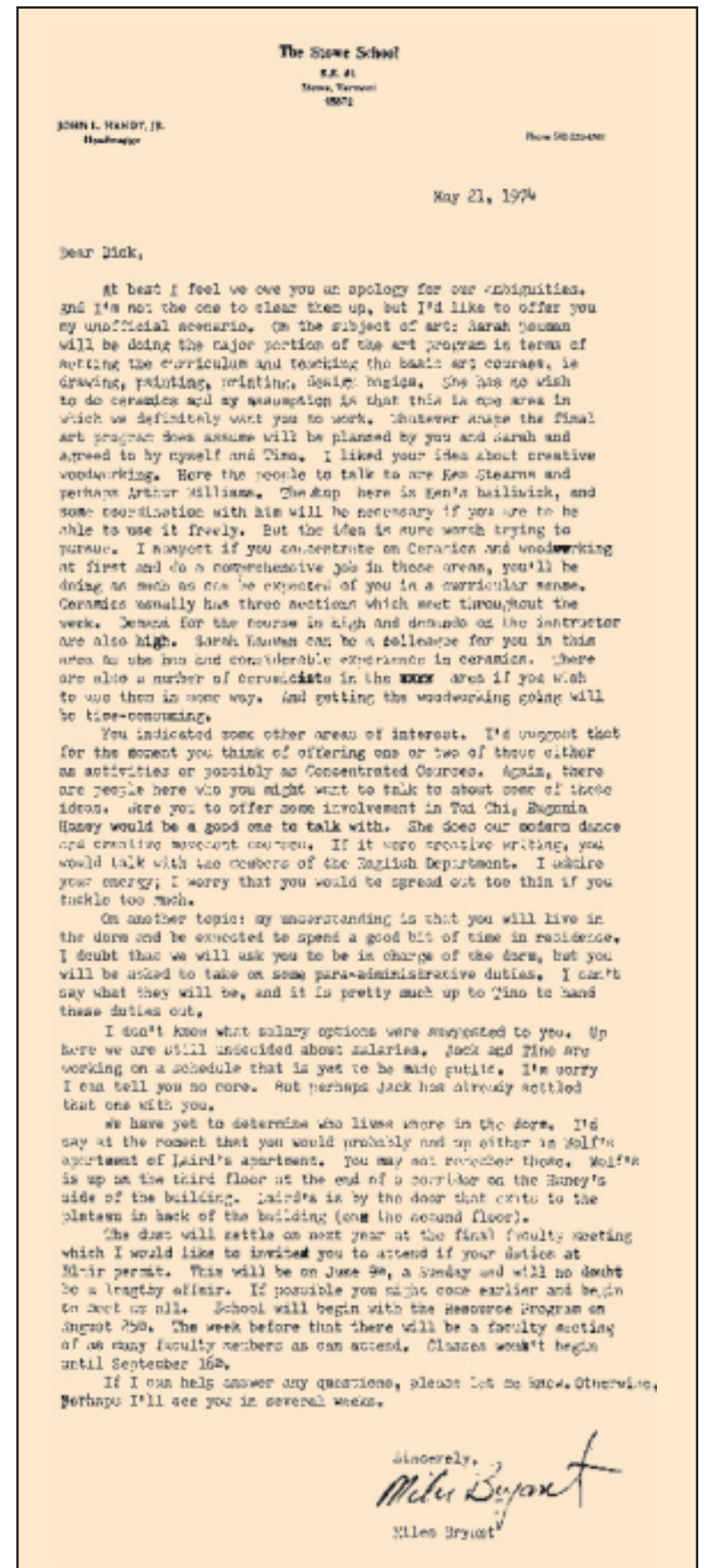
Dumpster Diving (Part One)

If you draw a line from Bethlehem to Blair Academy, it takes you right through the town of Nazareth. The Martin Guitar Company had a billboard on Route 22 advertising their daily factory tours and one day I stopped in on my way back to Blairstown. As someone interested in woodworking and music, I was amazed by the tour and remember thinking that the factory was a woodworker's dream.

After the tour, I asked the receptionist whether there were any dumpsters with scrap wood. She said there were and directed me around to the side of the building. On that particular day, both dumpsters were overflowing with sizeable blocks of mahogany and thinner cutoffs of rosewood, ebony and spruce. I couldn't believe my eyes. I pulled my car around to the side and filled the back seat and the trunk with wood.

The off-fall was perfect for my woodworking course at Blair. I had never worked with rosewood or mahogany and it was certainly a luxury. I returned to the dumpster every few weeks and gradually figured out that the garbage trucks came on Tuesdays and Fridays, so Monday and Thursday afternoons were optimum days for dumpstering.

I amassed quite a stack of exotic wood, so much so that I began to be selective in taking only larger or more attractively grained pieces. There was enough mahogany veneer to experiment with some simple musical instruments. I built a few mountain dulcimers and bazookie-esque mando-guitars. I stocked the woodshop at Blair and when that was full, I stocked my father's workshop in Bethlehem to the gills. Naturally whenever I returned home, I always visited Martin to replenish my teaching supplies.



Pointing North

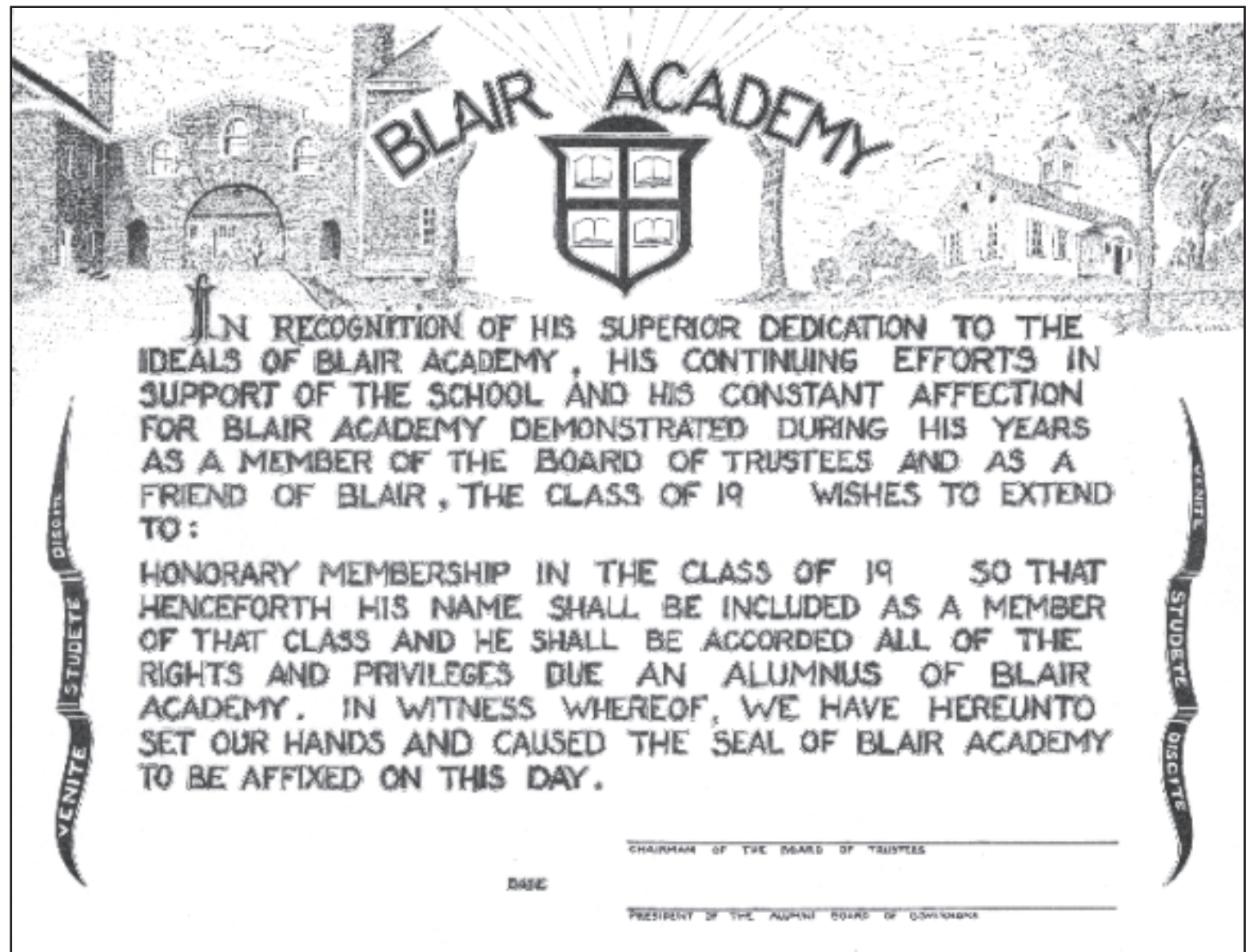
Laird Carlson was one of the more inspired teachers at Blair during my student days. While I was in California, he had defected to *The Stowe School*, a small private school at the base of Mount Mansfield. He stopped by Blair on his way from Philadelphia to Vermont and we had a chance to compare notes.

Laird and I shared many common interests and after talking for an hour, we realized that we also shared some common friends at Stowe. I had met Tom and Eugenia Haney many years earlier through my good friend John Saylor. Tom was teaching the sciences and Eugenia was doing modern dance. There had been some turmoil at the school. Claudia, the head of the Art Department, was leaving due to the untimely disintegration of her marriage. Laird suggested that if I were interested, this possible opening might be a great opportunity for me.

In the days that ensued, I spoke to my friend John Saylor who in turn spoke to Tom and Eugenia, who spoke to Laird. Before I knew it, I was headed north during the Easter break for an interview with the headmaster of the school, Jack Handy. We made an immediate connection, though it became apparent that I was going to get caught in a tiny political struggle at the school. Jack was leaving the headmaster post. Miles Bryant was to become the assistant headmaster under Tino O'Brien, the former head of *Outward Bound* at Hurricane Island. And Sarah, Mile's significant but slightly unstable other, had thrown her hat in the ring for the art position.

Nevertheless, the discussions evolved and it appeared that there might be a position for me in Stowe. The job appealed to me for several reasons.

Blair was very traditional and there was no question that I was a square peg. The Stowe School, on the other hand, seemed very utopian and progressive. The curriculum was heavily centered around *Outward Bound* survival training. The faculty members were young and creative. And of course there was the issue of remuneration. My salary at Stowe couldn't possibly be any lower than what Blair was paying me. To tip the scales further, my role at Blair was growing more and more tenuous. The students definitely had my number. I would return from my classes to find neatly rolled joints under my



Blair Academy Board Of Trustees Certificate Of Recognition, Pen & Ink, 1974

door. I suppose this was a test of my character, or lack thereof. There was no one to blame but myself and I wasn't in a frame of mind to complicate my situation by relinquishing these clandestine gifts to the school authorities. So I bided my time, focusing my energy toward the summer, the future and my inevitable move northward.

Sensing that my short tenure at Blair might be coming to an end, I was swiftly approached by Myron K. Barrett in the Administration Offices, who asked me whether I would illustrate a special certificate to honor past Board Of Trustee members. I enjoyed the challenge but felt that the completed document somehow exemplified the conservatism that I was attempting to escape.

With a feeling that I had gotten through by the skin of my teeth, I bid an emotional farewell to the graduating students and to my fellow faculty members. I sequestered myself for several weeks within the vacated studios at Blair to focus in on illustration and lathe turning, and to organize my meager belongings for my trip northward.

I rented a small U-Haul-It and jury-rigged it to the chassis of my reluctant yellow Mustang. I filled the trailer with a surprising cache of Martin veneers, woodworking tools, duffle bags, boxes of records, art books, journals, prints and original illustrations. With both excitement and trepidation, I was off to Vermont to begin the next chapter. I had no idea where the book was going.



Freeform Trees, Pen & Ink, 1973

Short Poems

Woodwind Cantata

outside the air is so frozen
that the trees creek
like a thousand old oak doors on rusted iron hinges

the wind seems
to lift the latch.

Strange Dream

A strange dream
can be like a huge piece of glass.

Today I woke up startled
searching for the broken slivers on the rug.

Cigarette Conscience

When I woke up this morning
I lit a cigarette immediately.
This is my guilty conscience showing through
telling me to punish my body
for the crimes my dreams committed.

South Vietnamese Baby Lift Tragedy

passing her silently in the hallway
her neckline dove down and crashed
like a mid-air jet collision
into an uncharted valley
of sweat beads and melting snowdrifts
the co-pilots were fortunate
bailing out in silken parachutes
side by side
down into a pool
where lost in the distraction of my eyes
they drown

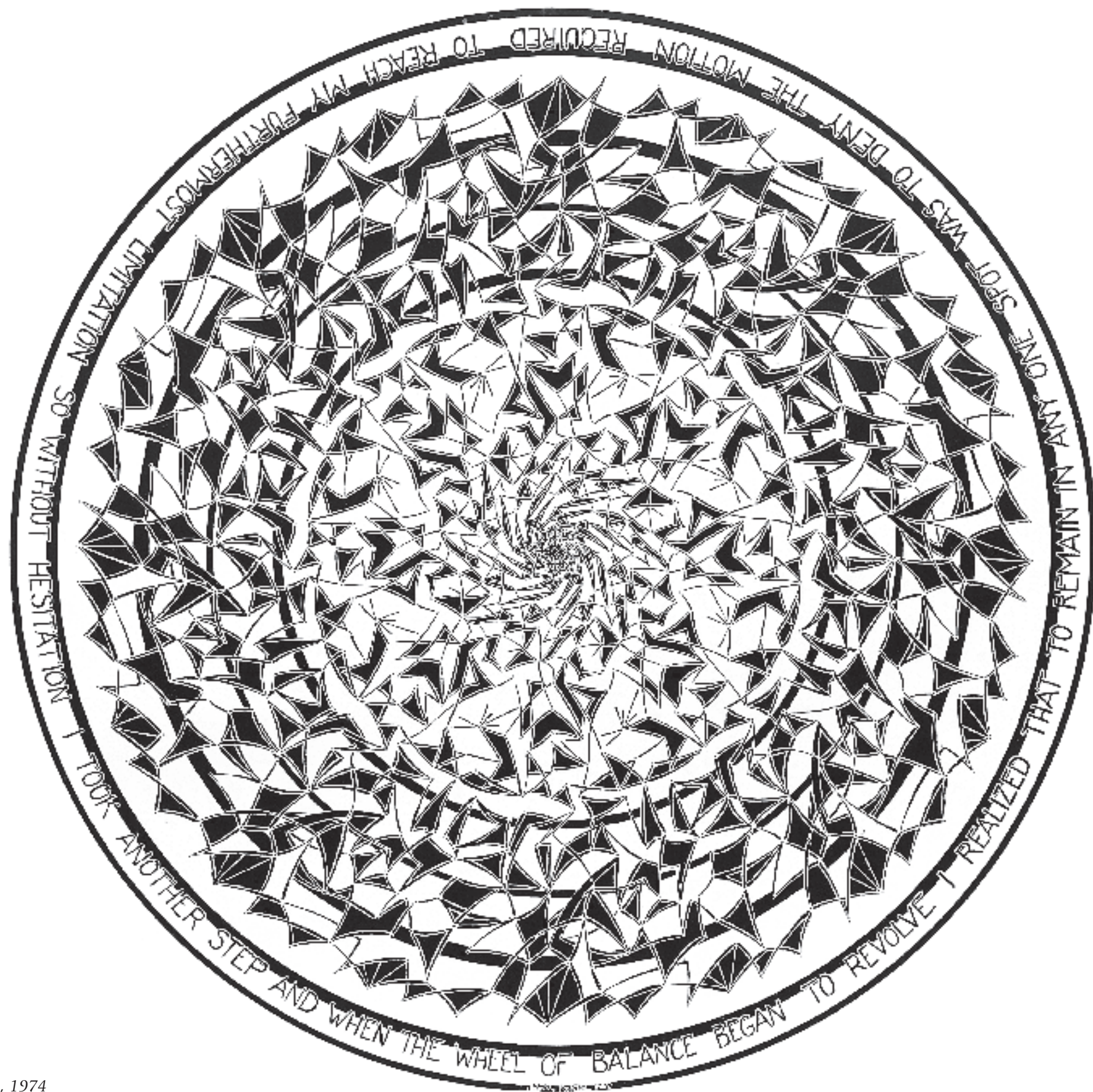
The Paradox Of Need

The more you need
the less you get.
The syndrome isn't over yet.

The less you get
the more you feed
on filling superficial need.

Striving

By pretending to be
what you wish to become
You will arrive
at what you are.



Wheel Of Balance, Pen & Ink, 1974



Bird's eye view of The Stowe School (anonymous artist) – From "Dreaming" – Pen & Ink, 1974

Surviving Stowe

I was humbled by Mt. Mansfield – its legendary slopes looming over the tiny town of Stowe. The school was perched on a hillside at the knees of the mountain, somewhat isolated from the commercialism of the community. *The Trapp Family Lodge* was nearby, as were a hundred cozy restaurants, resorts and A-frames that awaited the annual deluge of skiers who would arrive with the first snowfall and remain until the spring thaw.

The school was Jack Handy's vision. He had founded it as an alternative to more conventional private schools, believing that character could be built more effectively in a setting that focused on outdoor experiences such as hiking, camping and communing with nature. Students and faculty would gather in the mountains of northeastern New York for the pre-school summer trek in late August. After

two weeks of navigating the mountainous terrain and canoeing Lake Champlain, dozens of weak and insecure greenhorns were miraculously transformed into confident tough mountaineers. Ten-day treks were repeated in the fall, winter and spring. The winter trek, typically to the nearby White Mountains of New Hampshire, was the most intense and treacherous.

My apartment was on the middle floor of the main school building toward the end of a long corridor that was lined with student rooms. There were more student rooms above me. Downstairs was the community room, the kitchen, the dining commons and a few small administrative offices.

The school accommodated about a hundred high school aged students. They were much different from the students at Blair. Given that there was less emphasis on discipline or traditional curriculum, the students were considerably more unruly during their

out-of-class time. Skiing, snowshoeing, and winter camping were encouraged. There were a few dozen makeshift shelters scattered across the hillside behind the school and after dinner, a third of the students would bundle up with their sleeping bags and backpacks and tough it up to their snowcaves and huts. It was a genuine surprise to see these same students appear in the dining commons fully refreshed at the crack of dawn for hot coffee and oatmeal.

I immersed myself in teaching. There was an active ceramics program. I did my best to learn as much common sense alchemy as possible, but clearly, some of my students knew more than I did about wheel throwing and kiln firing. I caught up quickly out of necessity.

I was able to organize a nice woodworking area using the existing maintenance shop. This was a new course offering for the school and I had a sizeable group of interested students who joined in my experimentation with lathe turnings, inlaid boxes, and primitive musical instruments.

A local writer, David Budbill, was holding a writer's workshop and I signed up. In twelve short weeks, I produced an impressively prolific pile of immature dribble, but I did get exposed to some extraordinary contemporary writers who expanded

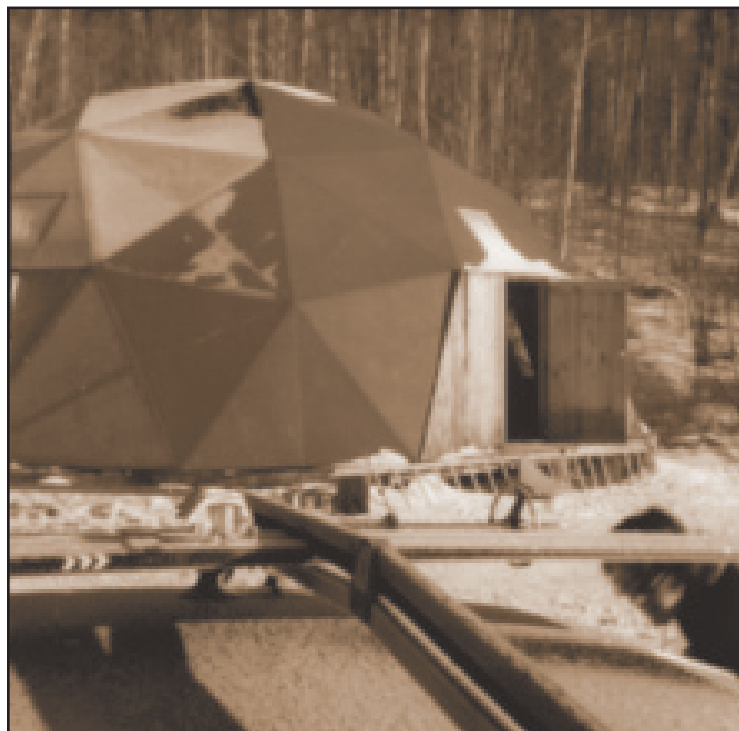


The Stowe School as it faced Mountain Road.

my horizons. About ten percent of what I wrote had some redeeming value, which I suppose is par for the course.

Tom Haney was as enthralled with geodesic domes as much as I was. Prior to my arrival, he had completed the basic shell of a plywood dome. I helped him with the finishing touches that involved painting and leak-proofing the seams with a rubber-based roofing cement.

Our math instructor, Bob Paine, had initiated an independent student radio station. WMTF 91.5 FM broadcast at a meager ten watts in the valley leading down to the town of Stowe, but on clear nights the signal could reach as far as Montpelier. Our challenge was keeping the students from jeopardizing their radio broadcasting license by playing *The Fish Cheer* or other four letter clips buried on select rock n' roll albums. I had my own show and even though the audience was miniscule, I loved the unbridled creativity that was possible with two turntables, a microphone, a tape machine, and a barrage of beat poetry. I would always sign on with Jeff Beck's *Diamond Dust* infused with the instrumental bombardment of Jimi Hendrix's *Third Stone From The Sun*, and I would sign off with *Goodnight*, Ringo's sleepy track from *The White Album*. Beyond this, my radio career did not flourish.



Tom Haney's geodesic dome theater in the round.



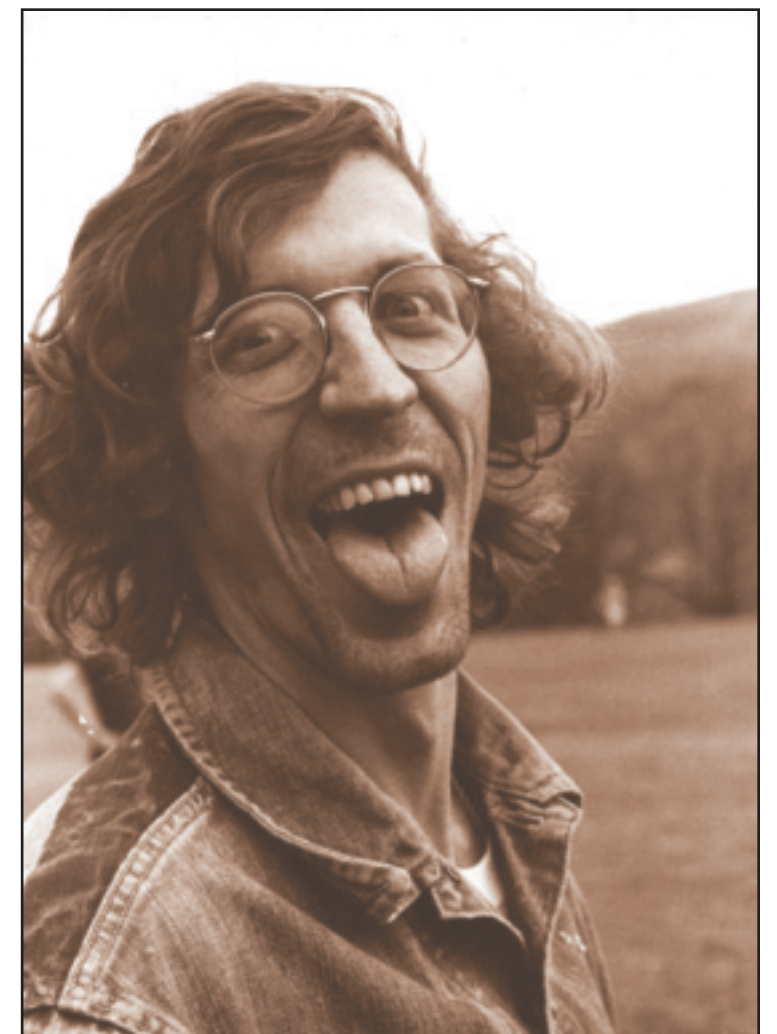
Wind Exerting Its Power Over The Land. Pencil sketch. 1975

One Saturday morning, I arose at the crack of dawn to keep an early appointment with *The Stowe Pottery*. The owner had offered to share some of his glazing formulas with me and given my shortcoming in this area, I couldn't pass up such a generous offer. Overnight, a half a foot of snow had fallen. In Vermont, you don't measure snow in inches and you certainly don't let it slow you down. I bundled up and went out to the school parking lot to get my Mustang warmed up. Instead of shoveling, I decided to back up and make a run for the road. By gaining enough acceleration, it was possible to break through the plowed snow that separated the lot from the road. This was standard Vermont procedure.

The only problem was that my back tires were spinning in a rut. It was much too early to wake anyone for a push, so I opened the driver's door, put the car in reverse and standing with half my body

outside the car, I started to rock the chassis and forth with my left leg. After a few tries, this turned out to be a bit too effective. The car lifted up and out of the ruts and took off backwards with me in tow, holding onto the car door for dear life. Since I was unable to get back in the driver's seat to apply the needed brakes, my car plowed right into the back bumpers of not one but two cars: an MG owned by Jack Handy, and a Corvette owned by Miles Bryant. Two little sports cars with one simple blow! It took particular courage to awaken them to explain the damage that had been inflicted upon their cherished automobiles.

My car was already so mutilated with fenderbenders that my vehicle may have actually improved, but my bank account and insurance premium suffered. This occurrence was one of the early indications that I would never win any awards for my driving skills.



Boakian essence captured while coaching soccer at Stowe.

The Mountain

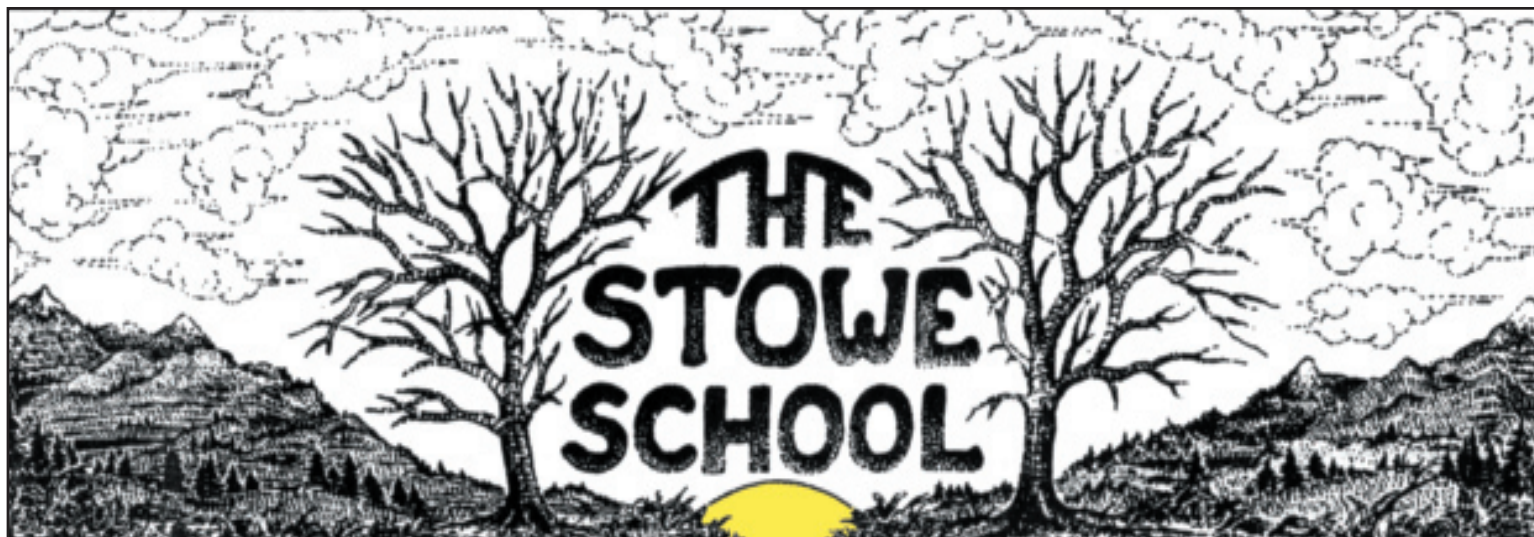
My friend and fellow faculty member, Wolf Fulton, offered to team up with me for the annual Winter Trek. I deferred to Wolf's better judgement as to our choice of destination, since he had been on many winter treks and I had been on none. He chose Mt. Lincoln and Mt. Garfield in the Presidential Range. This was considered easier than Tuckerman's Ravine but still quite challenging, especially the gusty and barren section of Jefferson Pass connecting the two summits.

About nine students signed up for our trek. We had a fairly strong group with some prior experience. There were a few hiking blisters to contend with and our packet of Polaroid film had frozen, but otherwise the first half of our journey went without a hitch. As we gradually increased in elevation, the temperature dropped, the weather worsened and the winds picked up. We reached the summit of Mt. Garfield in the midst of a blizzard on our sixth day. It must have been 30° below zero up there. We found a low stone wall in which we were able to huddle for several minutes, but it was smarter to keep moving. The cold had us somewhat disoriented. In spite of the fact that all of the trail markers were buried beneath the snow, Wolf managed to thread us onto the icy windblown Jefferson Pass that arched its way over to Mt. Lincoln. The wind was so strong that it actually pushed us unwillingly on the ice in our snowshoes. When we

Photo by John Nielsen



Overalled and long-johned, theoretically ready for anything.



Graphic heading for Stowe School diplomas. Pen & Ink. 1975

made it to Lincoln, we were exhausted and frozen. It was too cold to stay up there and the daylight was beginning to wane. Wolf couldn't find the exact location of the trail, but using his compass and topographic map, he determined the optimum direction. When we arrived at the edge of a 45° precipice, we decided it best that I proceed first, then the students, then Wolf sweeping up the rear. I took one step and was immediately startled that there was nothing beneath me. It was an immense snowdrift. I sank quickly, hit ground, then tumbled out of the drift falling and tumbling, falling and tumbling for two hundred feet, after which I landed in a ten-foot drift, upside down with my snowshoes overhead. My heavy pack kept me inverted and unable to move. In the fall, I had lost one of my ski poles and the inner and outer gloves on my right hand. I could feel the blood in my veins begin to freeze.

Fabien was next in line behind me. After he watched what had happened, he took a slower and safer route down to where I was. It took him several minutes to reach me. He helped remove my pack, then he removed his glove and helped me slip it onto my right hand. In the shuffle, he handed me his Accutron watch and asked me to hold it for him while he worked to set me upright. Fifteen minutes later, the whole crew was standing near us, I was upright and mobile, and we headed down the mountain as quickly as possible.

The snow and the angle of the slope made an ideal condition for snowshoeing. You could take one step and glide on the heel for twenty yards. In no

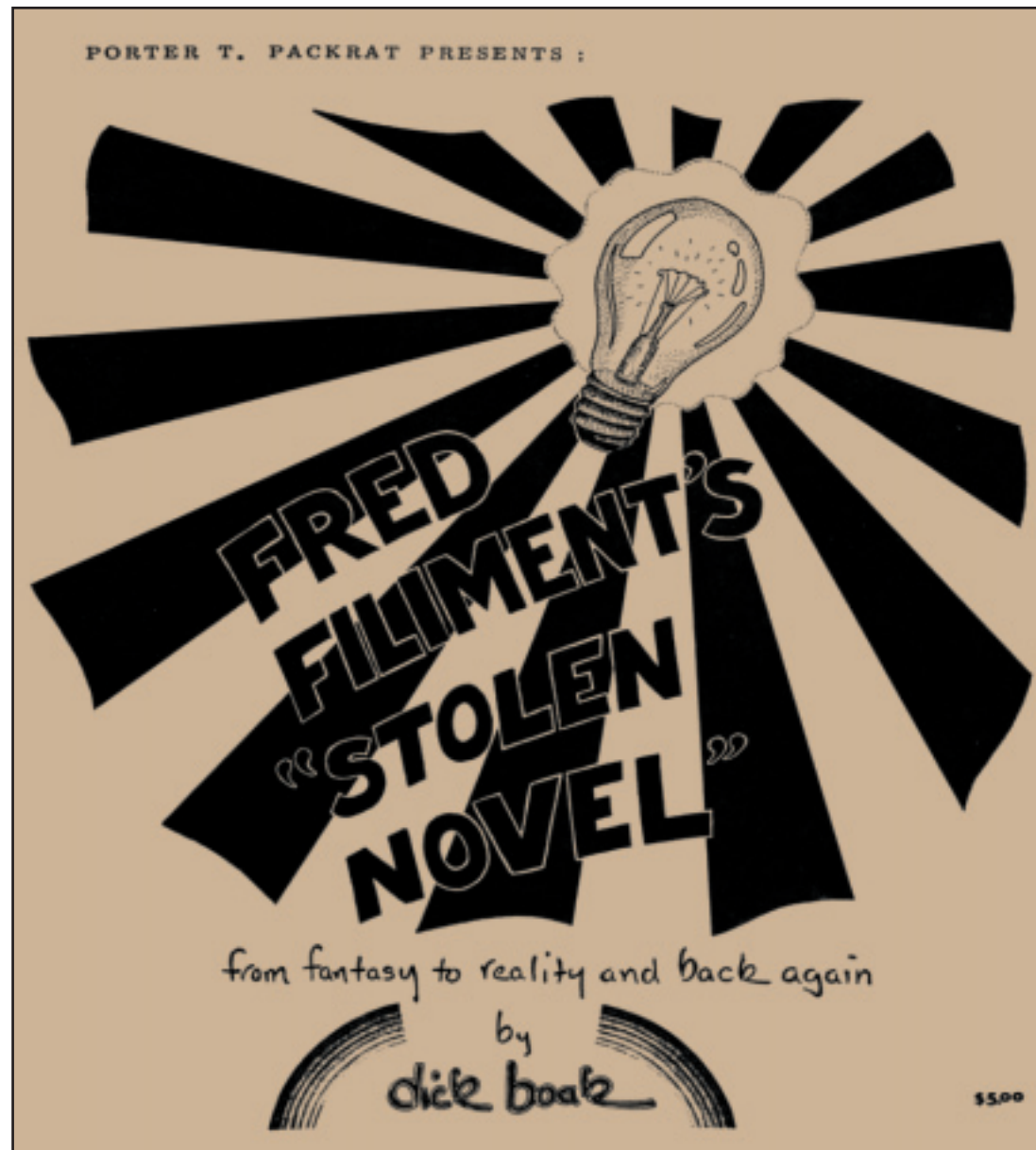
time at all, we dropped a few thousand feet in elevation.

I caught up to Fabien to thank him. He replied that it was no problem, then asked for his watch. I reached in my pocket and it wasn't there. He was very upset; so much so that he wanted to go back up the mountain to look for it in the snow. This was clearly impossible, so we hiked to our shelter and set up camp and tried to put the incident out of our minds.

The rest of our descent was without incident and in a few days we were back at the school. There Fabien informed me that the watch had been a special gift from his father, the head of a Swiss bank. It was a specially made prototype that was worth more than \$1,000. I was remorseful about what had happened and wrote him a check for the full amount. This was nearly a quarter year's salary for me. I came away financially wounded if not slightly bitter, though of course, I was glad to be alive.



"Alive" graphic for Stowe School's embossed yearbook cover. (Ironic, given my near-death mountain experience.)



Cover for "Fred Filiment's Stolen Novel." Pen & Ink, Offset Printed. 1975
Limited to 500 handbound books, this was the first product of The Packrat Press.

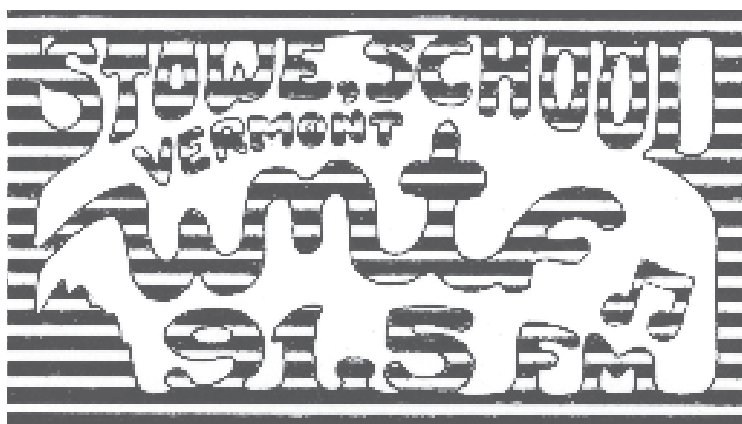
Packrat Press

After failing so miserably in the winter wilderness, I decided to focus on indoor activities for awhile. I had been given the responsibility of operating and maintaining the school printing press. This was a bit more elaborate than the mimeograph I had operated at Blair; in fact, it was a genuine one-color offset press complete with aluminum printing plates, rubber blankets and printer's ink. My basic training with Russ Borman was invaluable. After mastering the essentials and stocking up on paper, plates and solvent, I undertook to self-publish my first literary effort since *Metamorphosis* and *Tears: Fred Filiment's Stolen Novel*.

This publication was amateur in every sense of the word, but invaluable to my ultimate education about printing and authorship. I produced a limited



Cover sketch with grid (top) and finished cover for "Dreaming," Pen & Ink, 1975

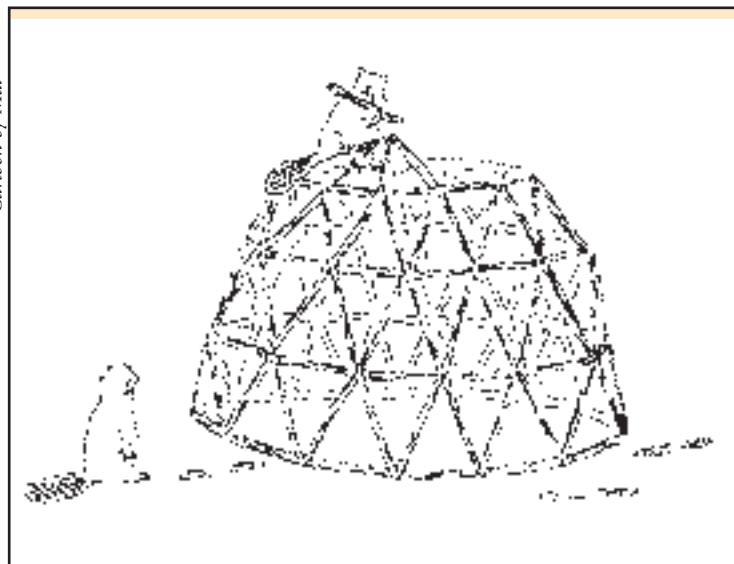


Assorted Packrat Press business cards. Pen & Ink. 1975

edition of 500 numbered and signed copies and proceeded to market them for the whopping price of \$5.00 each. In hindsight, I suspect that the amount might have been slightly less than half of my cost per book. Through this experimentation, the *Packrat Press* quietly emerged without having to bear the typical encumbrances of profit or efficiency.

After tackling such a large project, I decided to offer a simple course that combined illustration and offset printing. A group of eight students joined me in this endeavor and we published a surprisingly fresh book of illustrations entitled *Dreaming*. Clearly the best drawing in the book was by André George, who executed the flawless perspective view of the school (see page 105).

Cartoon by Mal



Buckminster who?

Buckminster Fuller

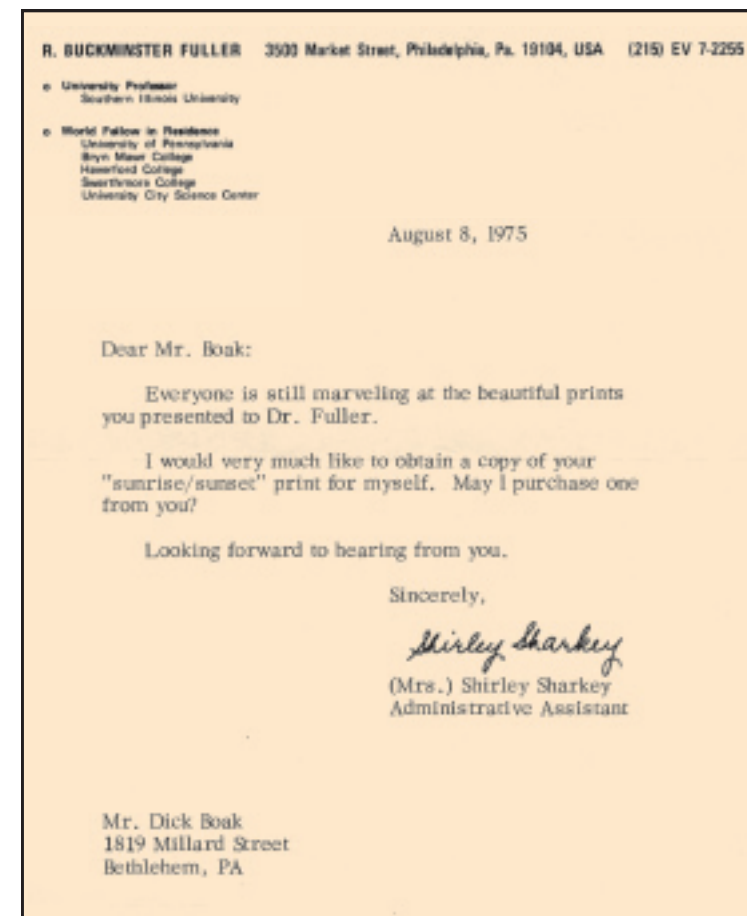
Tom Haney and Bob Paine decided to invite Buckminster Fuller to speak at our miniscule commencement exercises in June. I thought this was a long shot since "Bucky," the inventor of the geodesic dome, was world renowned. Our tiny school was not even a blip on the radar screen of significance. Tom and Bob wrote a very passionate letter though, including a slightly exaggerated section about our mission. We were all amazed when we received his letter of acceptance.

Weeks later, I was one of the privileged few to ride in the slightly dilapidated school station wagon that retrieved our precious cargo from the Montpelier airport. Bucky sat shotgun. We drove

right to the modest but natural site of the graduation. There was a podium with a loudspeaker fed by half a mile of extension cord. Dozens of draped tables had been catered with healthy homespun food, and two hundred and fifty folding chairs were set up in the middle of a vast flat meadow of wildflowers.

We certainly got our money's worth. Speaking in his highly evolved and compressed language, Buckminster Fuller detailed the unabridged history of the universe in space and time, including the past, present and future of mankind. He spoke for nearly two and a half hours, breaking only to take an occasional sip of water. Faithfully, we hung upon every word.

So much had been said that afterward it seemed silly to attempt conversation. So we broke bread in relative silence, then drove Mr. Fuller back to the airport. The school emptied quickly, leaving a hollow shell of unusual peace and quiet. For weeks, I worked in the studios, then in need of stimulation, I arranged to meet my parents in Canada.



Letter from Buckminster Fuller's Office, 1975