



Oval Reflection, Pen & Ink, 1973

Gorilla Architecture

In the months that followed, I engrossed myself in the architecture of Morningstar Ranch. There was an abundance of eucalyptus growing around the property. The young shoots grew like weeds in straight dowel-like poles that were perfectly suited for geodesic domes. I cut a batch of carefully measured struts for Larry Hope, who lived on the edge of the orchard. Larry had some money and to reciprocate for my effort, he financed the purchase of enough eyehook connectors and wire to complete several domes.

Sandy had left Phoenix and in her odyssey, she hooked up with her old boyfriend's brother "Weed" in Gettysburg. They were coming out to California and Marty had invited them to stay with us at Morningstar. When they arrived, it became apparent that our orchard dome wouldn't house four people. On top of that, Sandy had a baby on the way.

Our orchard neighbors Ike and Nancy had a four-year-old named Matt. They had been living out of their van, but as fall approached, it was beginning to get much cooler at night. Like Weed and I, Ike wanted to build a more permanent and substantial shelter. We decided to pool our resources and skills in the construction of two Morningstar cabins.

Ike had a daytime job at the Santa Rosa Post Office and was one of the few people we knew who actually used money. Ike had seen an interesting ad in the classifieds and one afternoon, we went off in his van to investigate.

Down Route 101 below Cotati, there was a large poultry farm that had a few dozen old chicken coops that were soon to be replaced. The farmer was selling the coops for \$15 a piece on the condition that the buyers remove the entire structures. These chicken coops were fifty feet long each and loaded with 2' x 4's, 2' x 6's, and 2' x 8's in a wide assortment of lengths. Ike paid the farmer \$60 and we spent the next week with our claw hammers pulling nails, sorting and loading lumber, and hauling chicken wire off to the dump. There was enough lumber for several houses and gradually we organized and stacked it at the edge of the orchard.

A local lumberyard was always in the market to sell their overly abundant redwood cuts-offs. These long and irregular pieces were flat on one surface and contained only a small sliver of wood. The rest was bark, but for \$10 a truckload it made great lapped siding. Ike took out his wallet again and bought several vanloads.

There were several good-sized fallen trees along the edge of the property. We borrowed Larry's chainsaw, cut six of the trunks to their maximum equal length, then set three in a row into position at Ike's site, saving the other three for ours. Upon

this foundation, we laid 2' x 6's vertically, then 2' x 8's were laid flat as flooring. The sound of hammers resonated and echoed through the hillside. This was surely very distressing for the neighbors and before long they formed a small group of vigilantes who pulled up in a pickup truck on July 4th and set fire to the dry grass along the road just below the orchard. It was a windy day and the fire spread quickly up the hillside toward our construction. We were terrified. I'm not sure how, but with the help of everyone on the land we managed to stomp it out, then douse the leading edge with the few jugs of water we had. We were much more fearful after that, keeping dozens of filled water jugs at every site as a precaution.

Water in general was a big problem. There was plenty of fog, but it didn't rain much. We were all in constant need of a bath. We devised ingenious solar showers by hoisting water jugs up into the trees, but the jugs were arduous to carry and too quickly emptied. There was a tiny stream that ran through the property, but it was just a trickle. There was plenty of water at the bottom of the hill, but it was simply too far away. We had visions of lush vegetable gardens, but not without some form of irrigation.

I had a brilliant idea. I decided to dig for water. I didn't have any experience in this area, but I did have a shovel and a lot of energy. I was confident that there was a water table below me. I just didn't know how deep it was.

I picked a nice spot on the waning edge of the orchard and broke ground. I dug all day and only got about six feet deep. There was no sign of any moisture. The next day I dug some more. Ten feet and still not a drop. There was a mountain of dirt around the hole as tall as the hole was deep. The third day I was twelve feet down in my hole, struggling to get the dirt out, when Lou Gottlieb came over to see what all the commotion was.

"What're you doing down there?" he queried.

"Digging for water," I replied with stoicism.

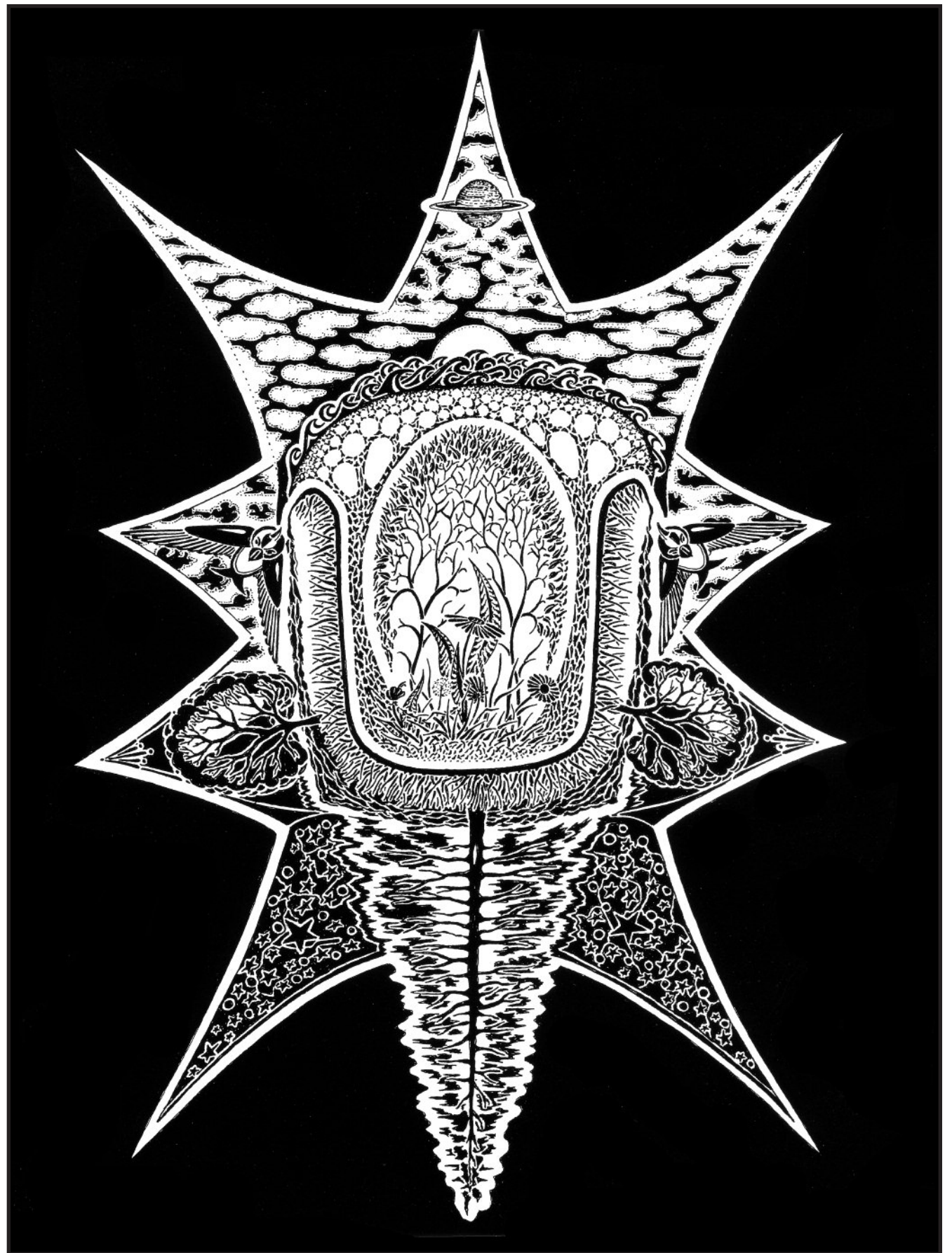
"You know how far you'll have to dig?" he asked.

"I hope not too much deeper." I was getting worried about the direction this conversation was taking.

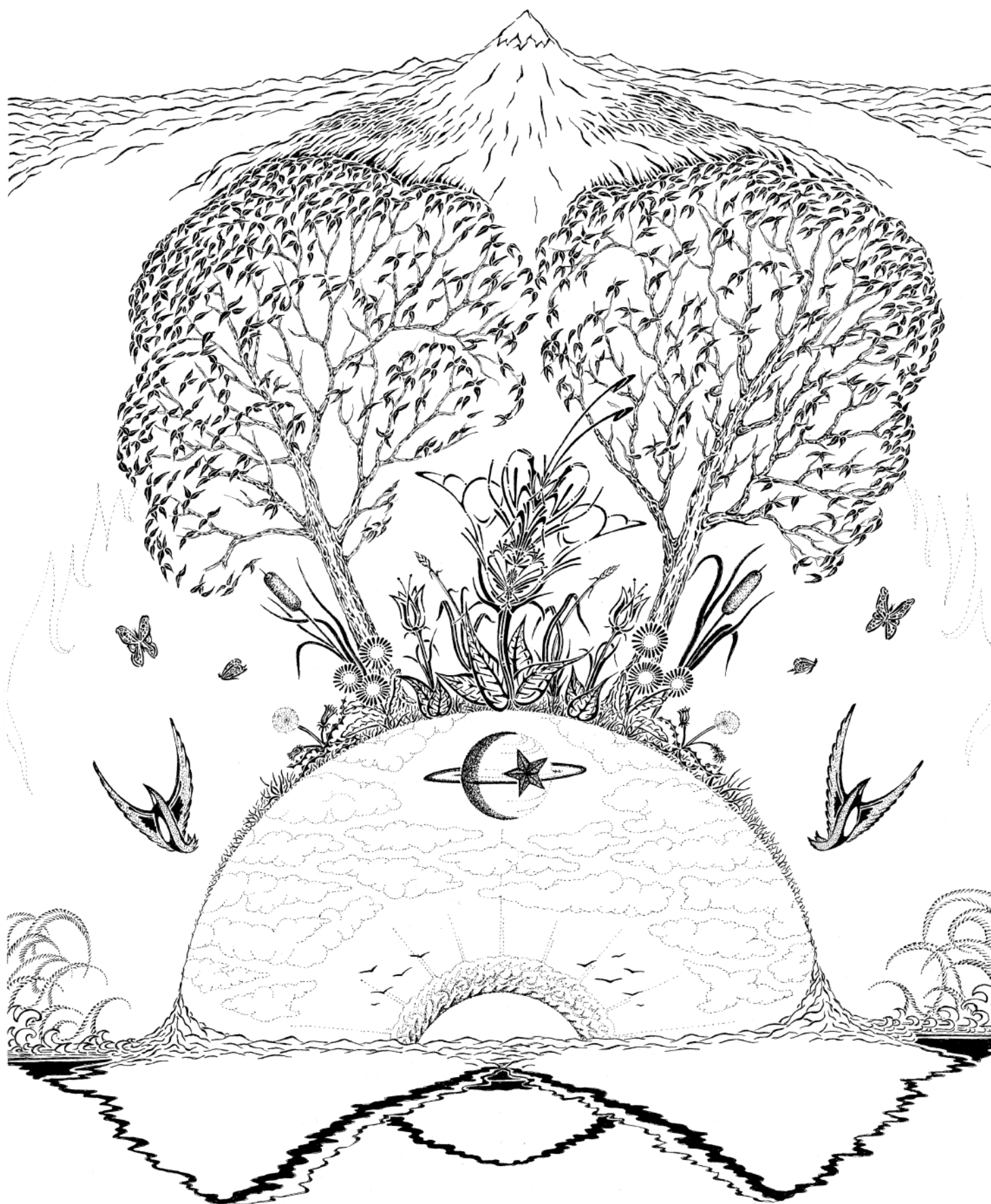
"As far as I can tell, you're going to have to dig about two or three hundred feet deeper." He informed me of this with no malice or sarcasm, just the simple facts.

I stopped digging. I must say that he spoiled my little project. I suppose he saved me a few hundred feet of digging and a lot of blisters. In any case, we had a giant hole in the middle of the orchard with no apparent purpose.

Another brilliant idea. I decided that the hole would make a rather deluxe and long lasting outhouse. I built a simple grid of 2' x 4's across the expanse and covered that with plywood flooring. With eucalyptus poles and eyehooks left over from Larry's dome, I constructed a small yet proportionate geodesic bubble and sheathed it with canvas sides. Larry bought some clear Mylar in town that



Ten Pointed Star, Pen & Ink, 1973



Universal Model #2, Pen & Ink, 1973

made a perfect pentagonal skylight. We didn't have any means of flushing so for the time being, I put two pieces of plywood down to make a Japanese style toilet. My orchard oasis was open for business.

This arrangement was so much more pleasant than the alternatives around the property that everyone at Morningstar, including Lou, started using it. After three or four months with forty-five people, we were still not even close to approaching the capacity of my crater. We had, however, significantly begun the filling process.

One afternoon, I was working with Ike on his cabin when all of a sudden we heard a horrific scream come from the direction of the small dome. We looked at each other, hesitated for a second, then darted over at lightning speed to see what had transpired. The screams were coming from the outhouse, all right. Someone had left the boards apart and Ike's four-year-old son Matt had fallen in. I held onto Ike as he lowered himself down inside. He grabbed Matt's arms and we hoisted his unhappy little body out of there but quick. He wasn't hurt, but what do you do in this situation? He looked like a little mud wrestler, partially mummified with toilet paper.

We took him down the hill to the creek and washed him for several hours. That helped somewhat. The key word is somewhat. So we washed him for another hour until we came to the sad realization that this poor kid would no doubt carry the aroma into his teens. From then on, I refrained from entertaining any projects related to irrigation or plumbing.



Ike Eichenlaub (Blindfolded), 1973

The Legend Of Egor

With the help of Weed and Sandy, Marty and I had made significant progress on our luxurious contraband cabin for four, complete with a trap door in the floor, on the southwestern corner of the property.

We were always busy accumulating any useful items. Somehow, we had managed to find two Coleman stoves in working order, and we decided to barter one of them with a couple from Wheeler's Ranch, who oddly enough had two Coleman lanterns. Wheeler's was about fifteen miles west toward Bodega Bay and I had been assigned the task of making the simultaneous delivery and pickup early one Monday morning.

I awoke at about seven and mixed my usual 50% coffee, 50% cocoa concoction. I got dressed and made my way down toward Dave and Georgia's tree house where our Dodge van was parked. This very same van had delivered us miraculously from Brattleboro, Vermont down through the Carolinas to New Orleans, San Antonio, Phoenix, and Los Angeles to our humble dwelling, and though the vehicle was on its last legs, it was our only tangible asset and form of transportation.

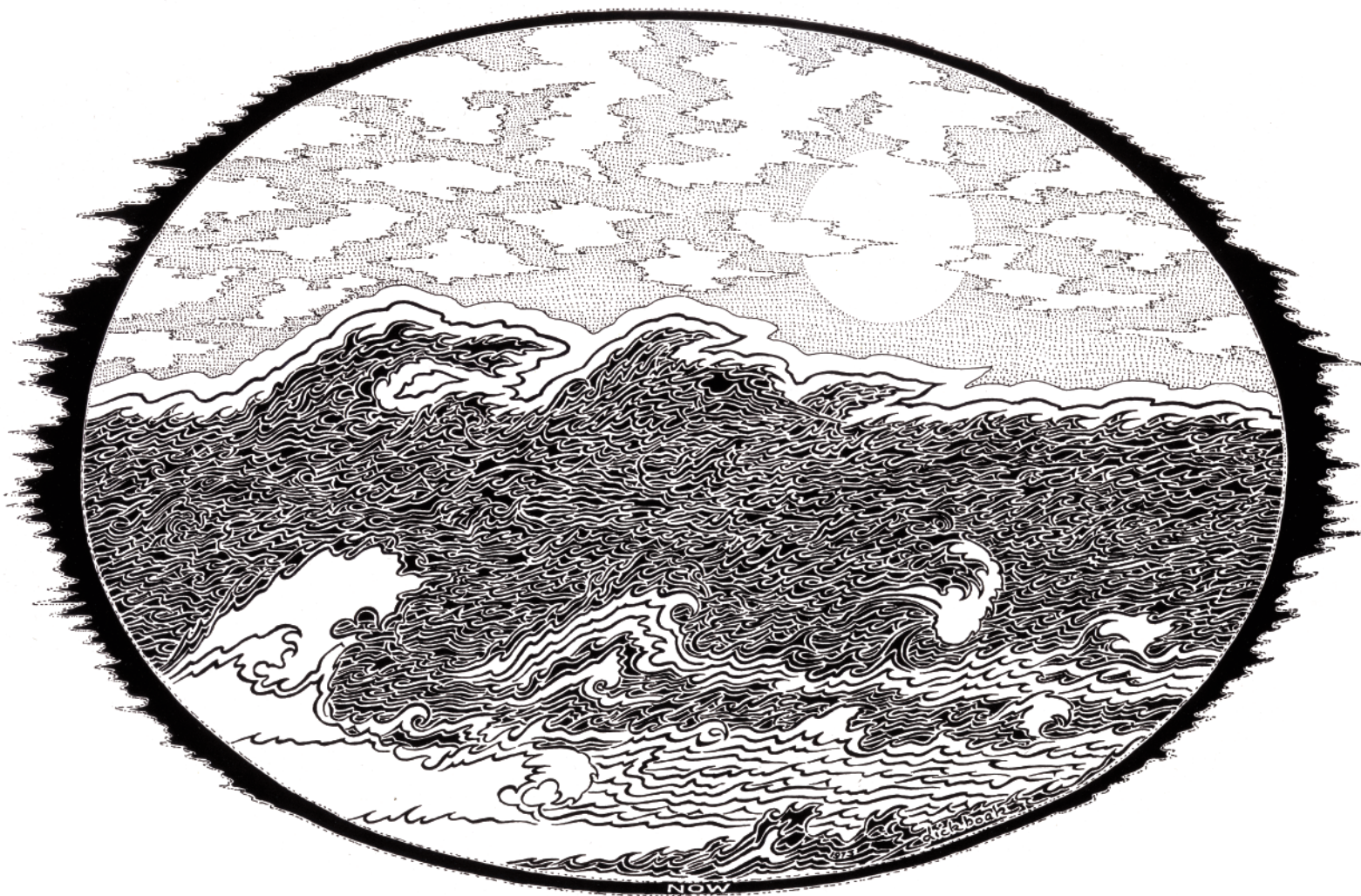
As I started the engine, I heard the familiar squeal of Egor, a pathetic excuse for a dog who, like us, had chosen Morningstar as his haven. Egor was probably going on three or four years. He was small yet quite plump, off-white in color, perhaps the shade and texture of curdled milk. His fur provided an excellent canvas upon which a vast array of mud, automobile grease, bacon fat and worse could accumulate. Egor had earned himself the unfortunate distinction of being the most destitute, despicable, and despised creature on the grounds. This was not an easy task, given the many mangy animals and tenuous human beings on the property, but Egor, no doubt the product of an endless parade of human neglect, had somehow descended to the challenge.

Egor had no scruples, no couth. He could, however, ferret out our very few valuables with his wet sniveling nostrils. He could successfully straddle an available thigh with relentless energy and he always mistook scolding for encouragement. These were Egor's strong points.

In search of hydration, Egor would lick tree trunks where other dogs had just relieved themselves, and to satisfy his insatiable hunger, he would feast upon such delicacies as could be found at the bottom of the orchard outhouse. Or he would eagerly drag the carcass of a local road kill into the midst of an otherwise enjoyable community meal. Of course, Egor endured tremendous abuse, well deserved I might add, but I felt an ounce of pity for him on that sunny morning as he waddled



Organic Yantra, Pen & Ink, 1973



Now (Japanese Wave), Pen & Ink, 1973

sideways toward the van, slobbering and quivering with his clumsy sway.

It occurred to me that Egor might respond favorably to affectionate treatment. Behavior modification, positive feedback, I'm OK – You're OK; all of the contemporary psychological trends seemed to bear some validity, in human circles anyway. And so I patted him on the head and opened the passenger door, thinking that it just might be a real treat for Egor to accompany me on a morning ride through the countryside, breathing some fresh air and taking in a change of scenery. Egor seemed to like the idea, for he hopped up onto my lap with great confidence. Smelling like a fermented garbage heap, he blurted a little fart of joy, flung a tiny missile of drool onto my blue jeans and assumed his designated shotgun position. Away we went, Egor and I, down the twisting dirt road

toward Occidental. Egor got a little seasick from the bumpy ride and chose to retire to the back of the van. Although I couldn't get a good look at him from behind the wheel, I was privileged to hear his convulsive coughing and smell the fetid aroma of his regurgitation. The gas station in Occidental provided me with the setting to survey the damage and sure enough, there were two little piles; one from the front end and one from the rear, but both of similar color and texture. On the verge of gagging, I completed cleaning Egor's mess with an excessive allocation of heavy-duty blue windshield towels donated by a skeptical but sympathetic attendant. With a perplexing look at Egor, and vice versa, we resumed our journey.

Egor seemed in better spirits, for he was frolicking around in the back of the van chewing on an old boot and ripping tiny pieces of vinyl from the seats. I

knew from experience that this was an indication of his genuine and thorough contentment.

The road from Occidental to Bodega Bay gets progressively more treacherous as you approach the jagged hills of the coast, so I decided to pay more attention to my driving and less to Egor. I think he picked up on this immediately though, for he tried to distract me by crouching down on the back seat, then springing up with swift ungraceful lunges upon my neck, followed by his trademark straddle and hump. By that time, I had ceased to be amused with Egor's antics, as my earlier strategy of positive reinforcement didn't seem to be effective. I gave him a good block with my arm on about his tenth jump to keep him off my shoulder, and he retired to the back of the van with a seemingly apologetic whimper. As I cornered a poorly banked curve, I was weighing the merits of strict canine discipline against the mild pangs of pity I was feeling, when all of a sudden from the very back of the van I heard Egor begin a galloping charge that brought him airborne directly on top of my head, the van swerved out of control and SMASH... right into a giant redwood tree.

Egor snickered. The right headlight was completely demolished and the frame had buckled into the tree. The sound of hissing air broke the silence as the van sunk defeatedly forward and to the right. I got out to take a look. Egor followed, eagerly wagging his hips while his tail remained stationary.

Scraping bark off the front grill, I mumbled curses under my breath. Egor was scurrying up the side of a wooded knoll where I'm sure he was plotting new terrorist acts. I take that back. Egor was incapable of thinking in any remote sense of the word. All of his actions were, by some drastic oversight of God, instinctive.

I got the jack out and propped up the front end to remove the flat tire, but the axle was bent and the mangled sheet metal prevented the flat tire from being removed anyway. In anger, I kicked the rim, hurt my toe, cursed for ten minutes more, then glanced over at a field of cows. Egor, thinking that he had found some better companions, waddled bravely toward them.

Just then a farmer pulled up in a heavy pickup truck. He got out, took his hat off, scratched his head and evaluated my situation. "Got a little problem

here.” he understated, as I relayed a synopsis of the whole sordid story from start to tragic finish pointing over at Egor and the cows, who at this juncture were becoming increasingly annoyed with his nipping.

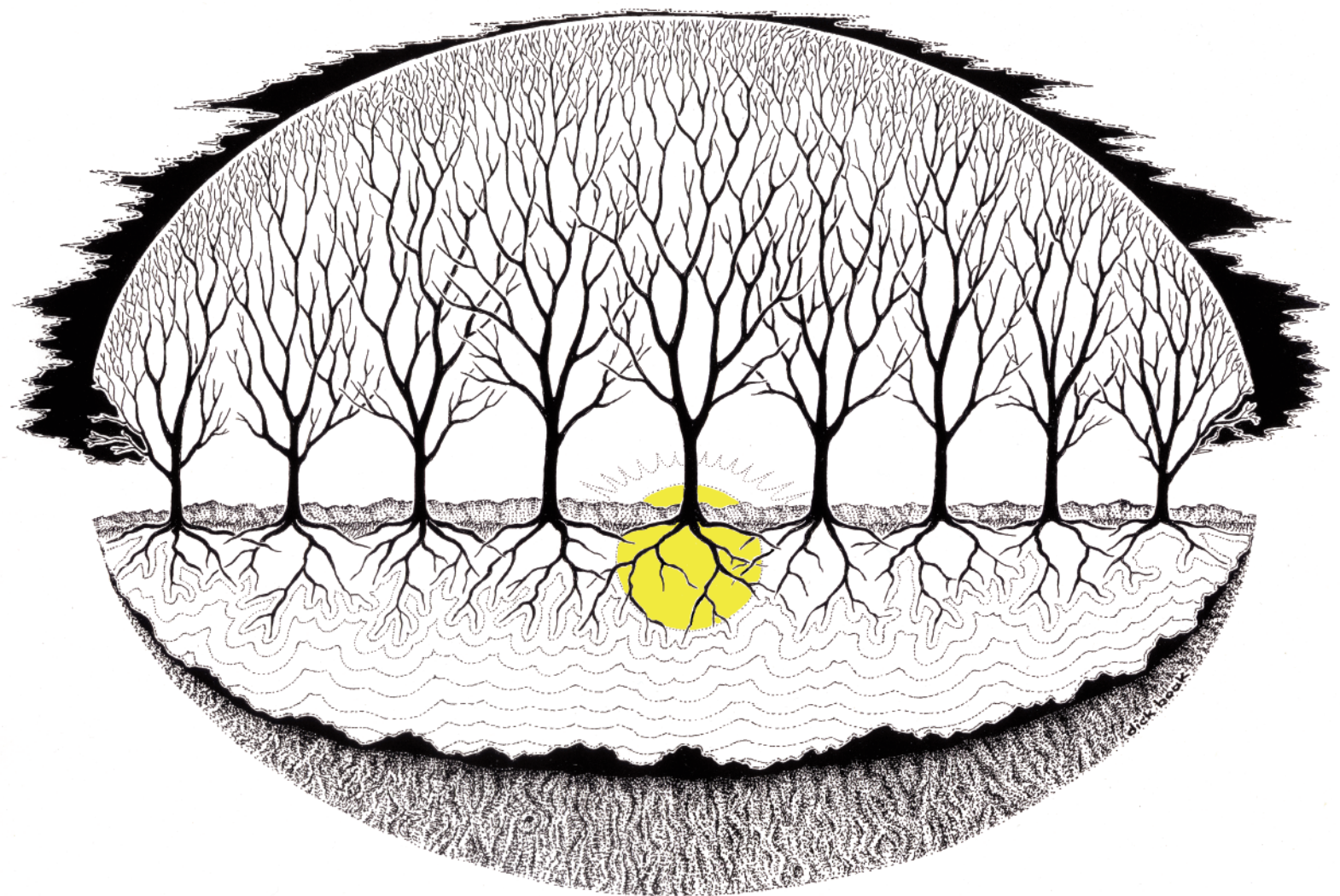
The farmer had a chain hitch on the bed of his truck and he suggested that we back it up to the frame of the van and give it a healthy yank to free up the tire and straighten out the axle. We rigged it all up, allowing several yards of slack in the chain. The farmer got into his truck and started the engine while I supervised the operation with hand signals. Egor, having caused a near stampede, had been given a resentful kick by a cow that didn’t appreciate having his hooves gnawed upon. He tore across the meadow up a slight embankment and onto the road where he waddled over and nonchalantly positioned himself directly over the chain that linked the two vehicles, front paws on one side, rear paws on the other. In spite of my frantic arm waving, it was too late. The truck had surged forward, the chain tightened and snapped, and Egor went somersaulting upward in what appeared to be a fifteen-foot vertical lift. He landed miraculously on all fours, and with a steady yelp, he tore off like lightning up the hill.

I didn’t think I would ever see Egor again, and in a sadistic sense I was relieved at the prospect.

The chain was as effective on the van as it had been on Egor. I changed the tire, hammered some torn metal out of the way, thanked the farmer, bid him on his way, and prepared to depart myself, picking up several scattered tools and loading them into the back of the van. I was just about finished when Egor came tearing down the hill and jumped into the open side door of the van. Apart from a faint paranoid evasiveness in Egor’s eyes, he appeared to have conveniently forgotten the gist of the morning’s activities.

Off again we went, against all better judgment, Egor nursing his front paw and I attempting to contain my inner rage. We arrived at Wheeler’s Ranch two hours late, but the lantern people had been patient. We made our brief exchange and with a mild bark from Egor, we headed back for Morningstar via an alternate, more level route.

My conscience would not rest well if I were not to mention the fact that on several prior occasions,



Sunrise Sunset (Small Version), Pen & Ink, 1973

usually late in the evening, Egor’s name had come up in casual conversation among the many inhabitants of Morningstar. These talks invariably hinged upon open conspiracies and ingenious plots all designed with one single thought in mind – to put Egor out of his misery, assuming that misery was indeed the best word to describe the perpetual disaster that followed in his path. These conversations provided a humorous release for our cumulative Egor-inspired angst. No one really took the idea of euthanasia seriously, although such thoughts certainly did occur to everyone upon sight of Egor in his frenzied and obnoxious intrusions to otherwise peaceful days. To be entirely truthful, it did occur to me briefly at the beginning of our journey together that Egor might stray away from the van long enough to become attached to the people over at Wheeler’s, or some such incident, thereby

relieving us of his presence. That thought, however, only occurred to me. It certainly was not my conscious intention while cruising en route to Freestone Junction at 45 miles an hour, that Egor would once again take an unsuspecting leap from the back seat, ricochet off my left shoulder blade, and plummet out of my open driver’s window onto the macadam. Perhaps it was cruel that after recovering my direction and composure, I didn’t slow down or turn around. It may, however, be of some interest that in my rearview mirror, I witnessed that plump little bundle of beige bristle bounce like a water balloon into the tall grass, flip over once or twice, shake himself off and trot apparently unharmed, impervious and ready for new adventures across California’s smooth hillsides.

I couldn’t get Egor out of my mind for weeks, in spite of the damage to my van that thereafter limped



Yama (Hindu God Of Creation), Pen & Ink, Colored Pencil 1973

worse than Egor ever did. Soon it gasped and sputtered to a halt, its engine rusted and corroded, its body dented and deformed, its brakes worn down to bare hot steel, its battery completely devoid of spark. Not so with Egor. He was a survivor.

And survive he did, though it took him nearly a full month to sniff and waddle his way back to Graton Road and our tiny dirt path. There I met his gaze in complete disbelief. He maintained a safe distance, as did I, for with both fear and respect we knew not to test destiny any further.

Reconnecting

Even though my dropping out had created considerable tension, I had never stopped caring about my family. I tried to call them every two or three weeks. Occasionally I would send a post card. One day when I called, my mother put my father on and we had a nice talk. He was going to be traveling on business in San Francisco and asked if it would be all right if he came to see me. I couldn't exactly figure out how this would work, but I agreed and gave him careful directions to the edge of the property. He in turn suggested an exact rendezvous time. Weed, Sandy, Marty and I straightened up as best as we could and kept an eye on Graton Road. Sure enough, he pulled his rental car off the road at the bottom of the hill just below the orchard. In his suit and tie, he made his way up the hill in our general direction. I met him half way and shook his hand. We were not huggers, but we both knew how unusual and great it was for him to be there. I had been gone for almost a year and was fairly oblivious about the impact my decision to explore an alternative lifestyle had had upon my family. It was particularly hard for my mother, given that she could not reach me by phone or mail.

I gave my father a brief tour of our living conditions. I'll never know exactly what he thought, but he was clearly out of his element. He invited us into town to get cleaned up and have a nice dinner. He had rented a room in Guerneville. It sounded pretty good to us.

On the way, he stopped and bought us a fresh change of clothes, then we each took a long shower in his motel room. We didn't look right in our new clothes, but we were headed for a nice steak house where I'm sure our upgraded attire was appreciated. We ate like horses and answered my father's questions about our lives. After dinner, he took us to Safeway and gave us some money for food. We filled several shopping bags with provisions we had not seen in a long time. Then he took us back to Morningstar and dropped us off at the bottom of the hill. I hugged him this time and thanked him, then we said our goodbyes. Years later I would find out that my father's excursion to California had nothing to do with business.

Disintegration

Our house was complete and thanks to Egor, our van was barely operational, so we had no other choice than to focus on our communal life style. Ike finished his house too. It was shaped like a big cash register, with a loft in the top where the dollar signs would normally pop up.

We had all been passing around a book entitled "Zen Flesh, Zen Bones" that was filled with short parables called "koans." Ike and Nancy had found the book so meaningful that they signed up for a zazen seminar at Big Sur. At the last minute, their vehicle blew a gasket and they were forced to borrow our van instead.

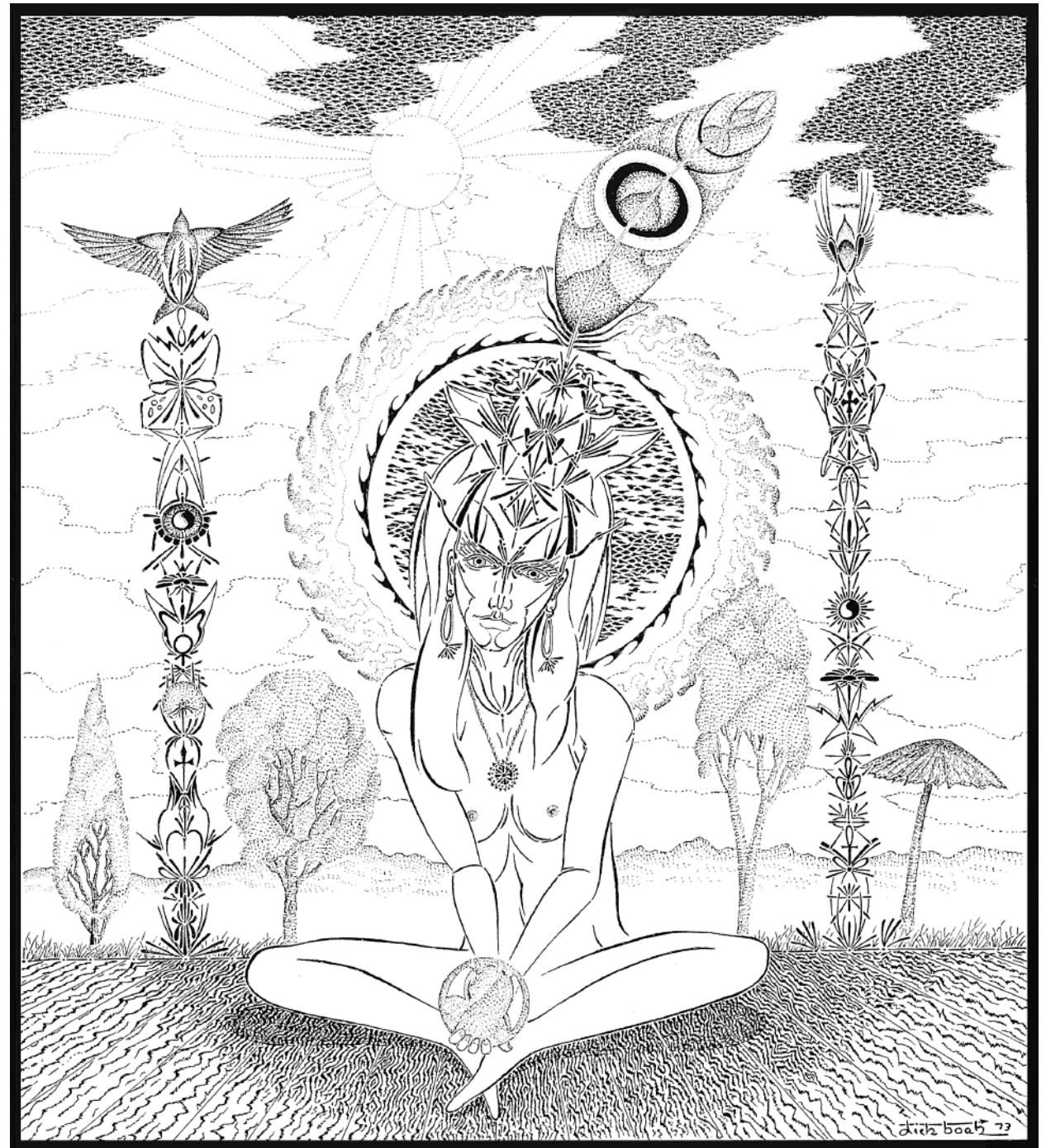
Upon their return, we all enjoyed hearing the stories about their intensive week-long seminar. At dawn on their first full day, they arose to a breakfast that consisted of tea and oatmeal, then they meditated for three hours seated on stiff round black cushions. The Zen master walked around to insure that everyone was keeping good meditative posture. If someone started to drift, they'd get a good whack on the back with a split bamboo stick. The crack of the bamboo was more alarming than it was painful.

Rice and water were served for lunch, followed by another four hours of meditation and bamboo whacking. At five o'clock, there would be an hour of free time, then a dinner of rice with some vegetables and tea. The Zen master would offer his insights about the evolutionary thought process that everyone was enduring, then there would be a few more hours of meditation before retiring onto a bamboo mat. This routine was repeated verbatim for a week, after which the participants hopefully had shed all earthly desires and attained a level of enlightenment roughly equivalent to the \$130 that it cost to undergo the incredible week-long deprivation.

Ike and Nancy had made it up the mountain in the van just fine and had endured the week without losing too much weight or sanity. The problems occurred coming down off the steep incline. The brakes hadn't really been changed for several decades and were riding on bare metal. Any sense of nirvana or peace was quickly replaced with sheer terror. Miraculously, they managed to get back in one piece. The van did not.

With hitchhiking now my sole mobility, I spent more time on the land drawing and cutting eucalyptus poles for a large geodesic dome that I envisioned to be a library, day care and community center. The dome was fifty-six feet in diameter and thirty-four feet tall – my most ambitious effort to date. It was a beautiful sight to see it crystallize like an eggshell on a sunny afternoon with the help of a few dozen stoned gawkers. I didn't have the money to put a covering on it, so the Morningstar Community Center and Library pretty much just sat there without much of a community and not a single book. Surprisingly, the uncovered shell did have a distinct inside and outside, and people did stand inside with confused looks on their faces.

The small vigilante group that had set fire to "the toes" of Morningstar had now grown into a group of eighty-three irate and unhappy neighbors. With their increased numbers, they had more clout and lobbying power at the county courthouse in Santa Rosa. They were successful in reactivating



Hindu Goddess With Crystal Ball & Totems, Pen & Ink, 1973

the injunction against God, and a few brave policemen were dispatched to investigate the purported new construction. When the police car pulled into the orchard, I was alone, drawing at the kitchen table. Quickly, I lifted the trap door and climbed down into a crawl space under the foundation. Moments later, I was looking up through the thin cracks in the floor at the black boots of two officers, who snooped around our very modest domicile for at least twenty five minutes, looking for contraband or any clue as to the identity of the residents. They found an envelope with my name on it and clomped away, unaware that I was only inches away from them through the entire duration of their visit. After I listened to their engine turn over and their wheels spin in the dirt, I lifted the trap door lid and re-emerged, covered in sweat and bursting with adrenaline.

Building Stop Sought At Ranch

Warrants have been asked against two men accused of building structures at Lou Gottlieb's Morning Star Ranch on Graton rd.

Sheriff's deputy George Phillips said construction was continuing at two structures on the 31-acre ranch in violation of a court order banning all construction.

Deputy Phillips went to the ranch Friday and said he found work was continuing on one building in an orchard on the west side of the ranch and another on the southwest corner of the property. He had made an earlier visit in August.

The warrants were asked against Matthew M. Eichenlaub, 25, and Richard Payne Boak.

The next few weeks moved quickly. Warrants were issued for Ike and me. The officers had carefully conferred and decided that as the obvious ringleaders of this subversive tribe, we would be taken to task for our misguided crimes: building without a permit and violating the local standards for proper plumbing and garbage disposal.

God was not faring very well in court either. Over the course of nearly seven years, the case had been tried and appealed up through the legal system, from the local Magistrate to the County Court, then up to the Appellate and Superior Courts and finally to the Supreme Court of California. The gig was up and Lou knew it. He made a valiant effort though, dressing up in a blue suit that reeked of mothballs and was several sizes too small. He didn't actually represent God. No person could do that, but he did speak eloquently and at some length about his firm conviction that land was too precious to divvy up among the masses. We all cheered him from the gallery, which of course was not only inappropriate but also damaging to an already tenuous case.

The judge deliberated for several seconds, then handed down his decision. He found God to be incompetent,

inadequate and irresponsible as a landowner. He invalidated God's deed to Morningstar and restored the property, complete with nearly a decade of back taxes, to an unhappy but well dressed Lou Gottlieb. He ordered the residents of the land, excluding Lou and his immediate family, to vacate the property immediately or face arrest.

The following day a small fleet of police cars arrived, trailed by a yellow school bus that struggled clumsily up our bumpy dirt road. They parked near Teepee John's and proceeded to arrest anyone who was brave or foolish enough to show themselves.

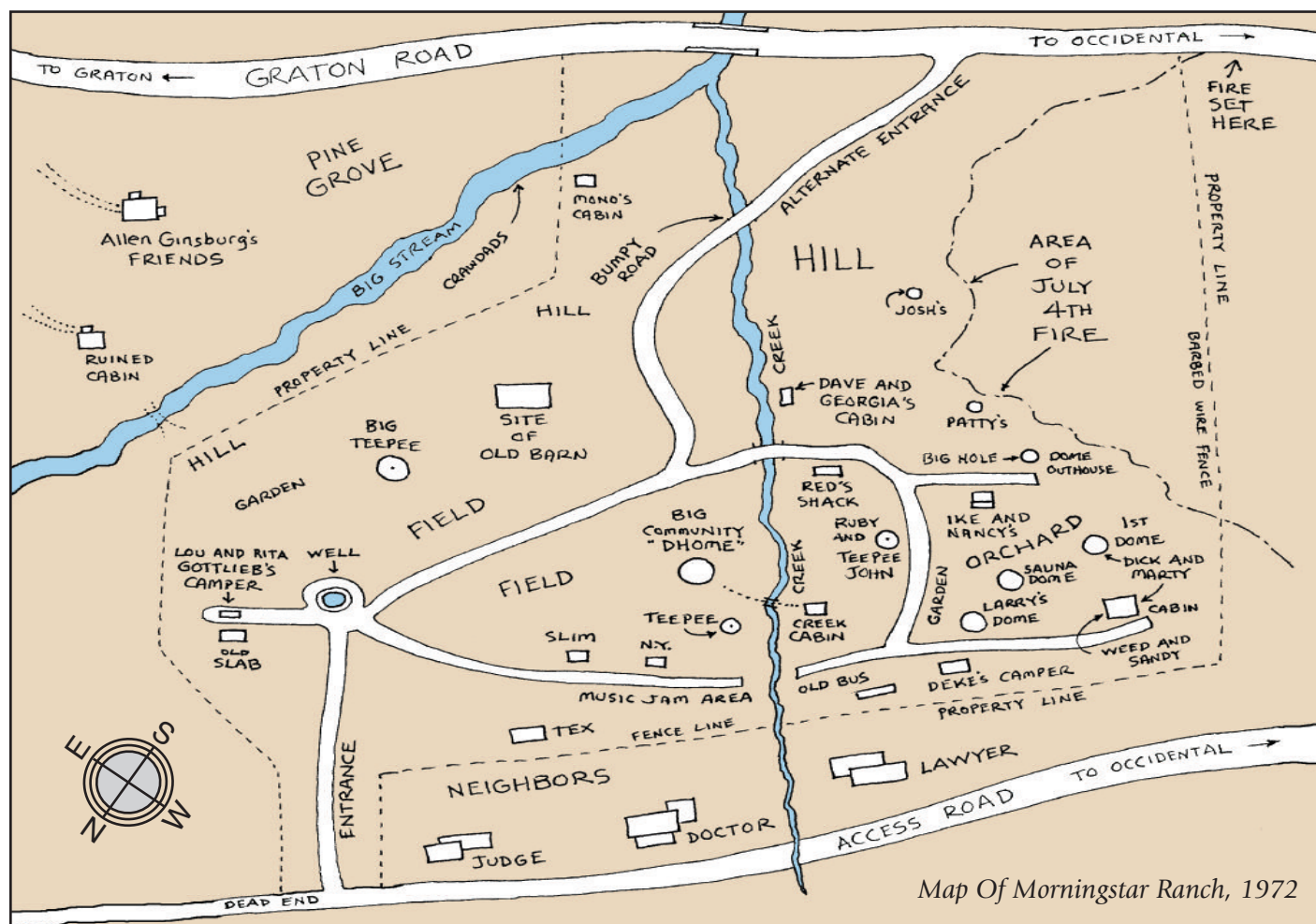
Marty and I hid under the trapdoor until the police finished rounding up all of inhabitants they could find. About eleven people were captured, mostly because they wanted to make a political statement. The yellow bus jerked its way down the hill, off to the Sonoma County courthouse.

Sandy was about to have her baby and didn't want to get caught up in any further legal turmoil. She and Weed quickly found a small tourist cabin in Monte Rio. During the rainy season, the place rented for next to nothing. Once Sandy and Weed were settled, Marty followed. I stayed at Morningstar and continued to work. I hated to see yet another of our utopian experiments disintegrate and wished to stay, as long as there was any hope for rejuvenation.

There was a quiet and unusual hermit named Josh that lived in a small yurt-like hut on the edge of the orchard that overlooked Graton Road. Though he didn't speak very much, he loved to play the conga drums. It was logical that he should be our sentry. Whenever the police would make the sharp turn and head slowly up the rutted road to make their daily rounds, his drums would start and everyone would hide. This was effective for about a week, but there were only a handful of people left on the land. The social interaction at Morningstar had dissipated. After a few days, Teepee John, Josh and I were the only ones left, aside from Lou, Rita and their young son Vishnu who had the legal right to remain.

The next day, Teepee John headed off for the Hopi reservation in Taos, New Mexico where his wife Ruby and their children awaited him. Josh had vanished too, so I was alone. I had been cutting eucalyptus poles for the orchard sauna, but it seemed progressively more futile. To top it off, I had been bitten several times by tiny fiddler spiders in the woods and the bites didn't seem to be healing.

Ike came by to check on me and offered to take me and our remaining possessions over to Monte Rio. I accepted. Like everyone else from Morningstar, Ike had been searching for a place to live and it looked like he had found a nice house down in Oakland.



We stayed for a few weeks at the rental cabin near the famous Bohemian Grove in Monte Rio, but the owner had sold the property to a developer and the tiny cabins were scheduled to be demolished. Fate was chasing us.

We picked up and moved to another small grouping of summer rental cabins in Guerneville. DeSmits (we called it "DeShits!") was right on the water under the bridge. At \$20 per month, this would have suited us fine, except that upon our arrival it started to rain and didn't stop. The river rose a few inches every day and before long we were partially submerged. This was not going to work.

Fortunately, word reached us that Ike and Nancy's oasis in Oakland had come to fruition. Ike had landed a great job at the Oakland Post Office and we were all invited to come down to "Morningstar South." It was a large house on the east side of Telegraph Avenue just south of Berkeley. It had a huge living room with an old upright piano and several big bedrooms. The largest room upstairs was the common room where anyone could lay out a sleeping bag. Ike, Nancy and Matt had a bedroom to themselves. The other remnants of Morningstar: Patty, Dave, Georgia, Larry, Sandy, Weed, Duane, Marty and myself (plus a stream of assorted transients) were scattered either in the common room or on couches in the living room.

My spider bites still weren't healing. To compound the problem, the infection had spread to my scalp, arms and hands. Finally I went over to the free clinic in Berkeley. There I was quickly diagnosed with staph infection. It had internalized and I was in pretty serious condition.

I called home and found that my grandmother had passed away. After hearing about my staph infection, my father offered to fly me home to recover and to attend the funeral. Without hesitation, I picked up my ticket for United #128 at the airport and wrote delusional poetry during the return flight.

It was good to be home. I saw our family doctor immediately and the antibiotics he prescribed cured me within the week. My grandmother's funeral was a dichotomy of emotion. She had gone downhill and had been a tremendous burden on my mother, so there was a sense of relief on top of the grief. In the days that followed the funeral, my mother and her brothers decided what to do with the rather large house and all of its contents.

Since I longed to return to California, I offered to deliver all of the furniture and boxed items to my uncles, brothers and cousins in exchange for plane fare back to San Francisco. I loaded up the Ryder rental truck and headed from Bethlehem up to Boston, then to the suburbs of Washington, D.C., then out to Pittsburgh, on to Cleveland, and finally to Chicago

where I delivered my final load and turned the truck in.

Nearly a month had transpired and I missed all of my friends, especially Marty. Sandy had had her baby and had left for a commune similar to Morningstar called God's Land in Kettle Creek, Kentucky.

I had notified Marty that I was returning. She met me at the airport with Duane who had driven her. By the time we arrived back in Oakland, it was evident that Marty and Duane had become involved. Things were going to be very different. I did my best to be liberated, to suppress my jealousy and hurt, but inside I really wasn't handling it well.

Down the street from our Oakland house, there was a religious group called the *Universal Life Church* that had befriended us. They sold flowers on the street corner to raise money for their headquarters. During my emotional turmoil, they had invited me to a dinner and lecture with Richard



Repressed Anger, Pen & Ink, 1972

Observations From The Window Of Flight #128

San Francisco To Chicago

(Flying The Turbulent Skies Of United)

From the heavens, it's obvious
that erosive patterns have formed.
Water runs from the slopes.
The rivers resemble veins of a leaf,
or arterial pathways.
Mountains with snow and buried pine trees
reflect like wrinkled aluminum foil.
Clouds are stuffed into valleys
like ointment in open wounds.

Flying from west to east
nature is defied
by the acceleration of time.
Departing in the darkness
of early morning,
the sunrise chases us
from the rear horizon.
Black, yellow, orange,
light blue, deep blue...
ahead we chase the day toward dusk,
deep blue to hazy gray,
then black again.
The sky is confused and so am I.

Birth And Death Are The Same Door

Somewhere deep within a dreamless sleep
Your birth is hidden.
So protected that the truth of the future
Is forbidden.

Restful eons in the arms of the void
Then one day the door is opened.
All your instinctual fears are deployed
When your umbilical ties are broken.

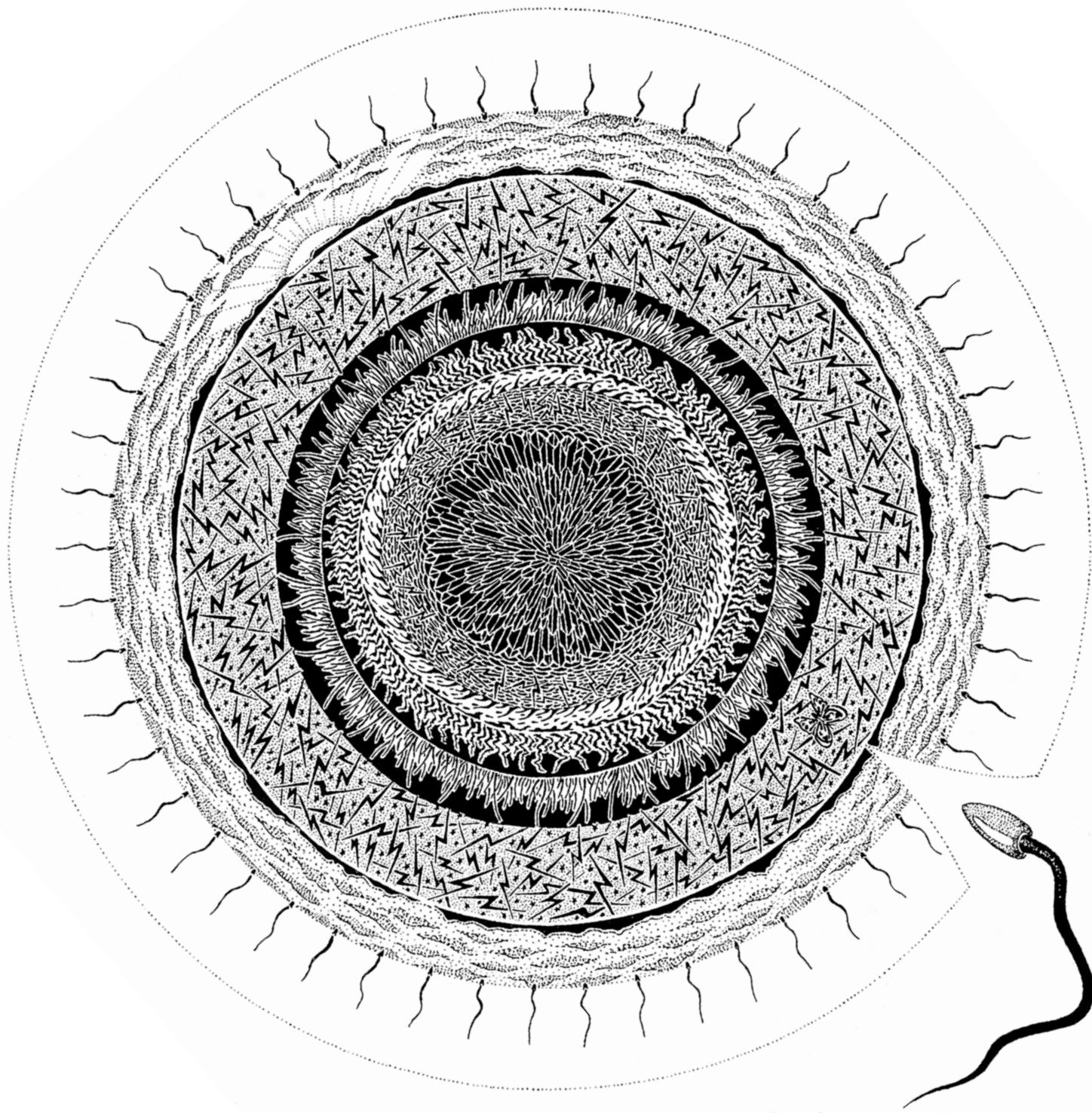
Screaming for air when you find
That your former life is finished.
Eyes wide open as the pain of transition
Is diminished.

All memory is washed away.
A new life is filled with empty pages.
Senses separate the night from the day
As your perception adjusts to the ages.

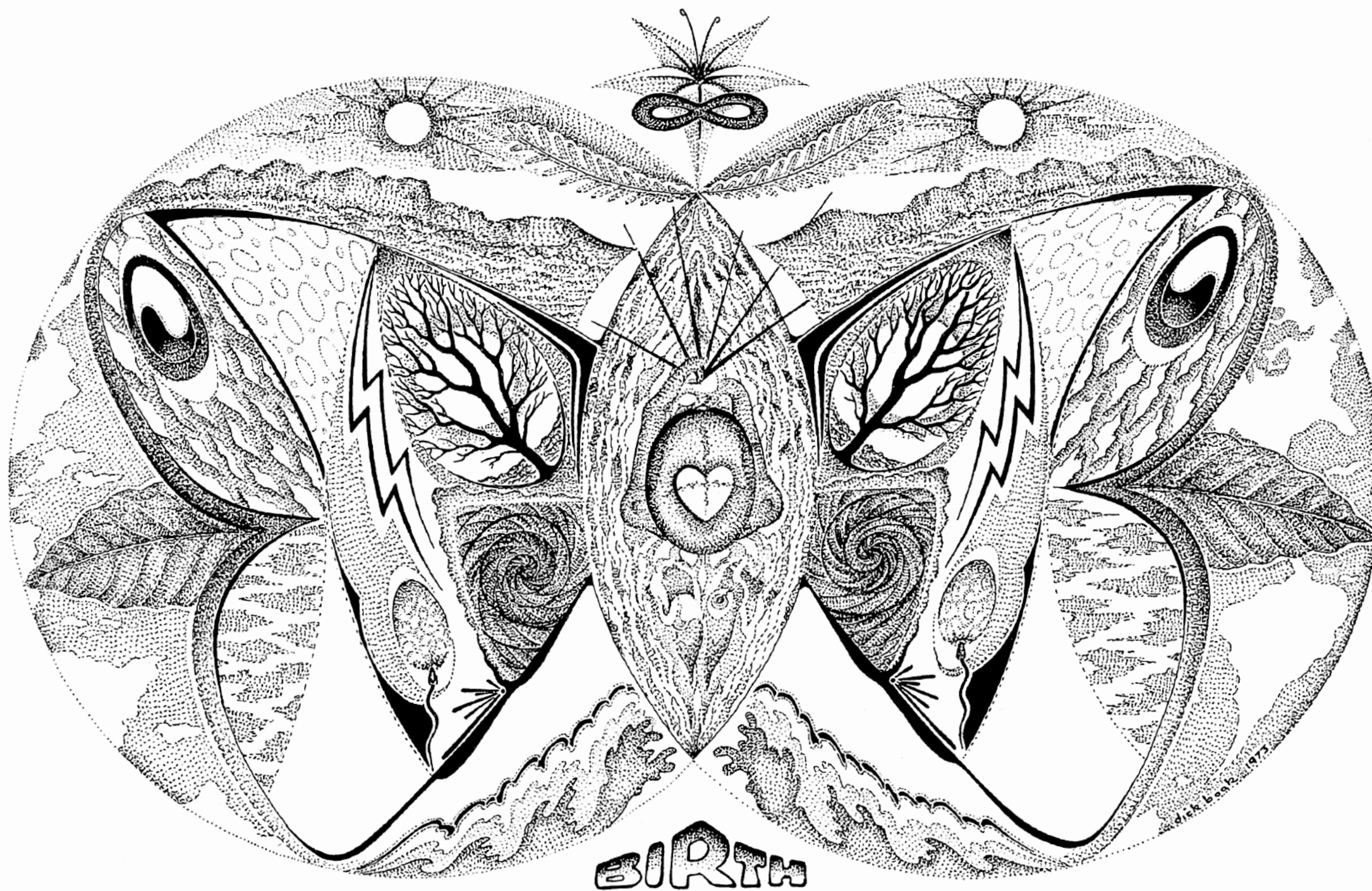
Destiny leads you through the
Magical maze of your direction.
The pattern has taught you
Not to place your faith in resurrection.
From the moment of your very first breath
Life seemed like an endless tunnel
But when you witness an old man
surrender to death
It seems more like a closed funnel.

You wish to remain here
Attached to the props of your existence.
I really can't blame you
For approaching unknowns with resistance.
Time leaves its mark
in the lines of your face
Though you can never really detect it.
Peace of mind lies at the end of the race
If we can ever learn to accept it.

*Commemorating the birth of Magic Bloom
Kennedy, and the death of Hazel Crawford.*



Conception, Pen & Ink, 1973



Birth, Pen & Ink, 1973



Snake Bird Violence (Jealousy), Pen & Ink, 1973

Alpert (Timothy Leary's friend) who now used the name *Baba Ram Dass*. I was a fan of his popular book on eastern spirituality, "Be Here Now," so I willingly attended.

After the lecture, I received an invitation to attend a three-day seminar at *The City Of The Future*. There was considerable pressure to do this and though I initially declined, Friday came around and my utopian curiosity got the best of me. A full bus of people departed from Oakland in the morning heading north. We arrived two and a half hours later at a property that was just west of the small town of Philo. To call this a city was a big stretch. In fact it was a small grouping of pre-fab trailers with surrounding open fields. There were at least a hundred young people there and everyone was way too happy for my taste, though I tried to stay open-minded. I participated for the duration of Friday evening into the mid-afternoon on Saturday.

I had befriended a fellow skeptic and together, we were trying to decipher what the whole "City Of The Future" thing was really about. By Saturday afternoon we had our answer. These were the followers of Reverend Sun Myung Moon and their clear intent was to brainwash us into committing ourselves to the *Universal Life Church*. In the process, we would be asked to sign cards giving up all of our earthly and personal possessions in support of their cause. When I asked whether it was all right to leave, I was taken to a special group that expressed great concern for me and tried to make me feel "loved." I needed to get out of there.

After dinner, it was getting dark and I saw my



Revenge, Pen & Ink (Unfinished), 1973

chance. I placed my sleeping bag and backpack in the bushes while no one was watching, then in the middle of a great spiritual sing along, I slipped out and fled across the small access bridge to the tiny road that connected Philo with Albion. My friend had told me not to head toward Philo because "they" would come after me in that direction. Instead, I scurried west on Navarro Ridge Road into the heart of Georgia Pacific's redwood forest toward the ocean. My good friend Dennis from Blair had an older brother named Philip who, like me, had pursued the counter culture dream in California. I knew Philip and was aware that he lived in Albion with his wife Annie. I headed in their direction.

I really was quite scared that a car full of Moonie disciples would be sent to retrieve me. When I saw headlights approach, I would quickly hide in the trees or drop in the tall roadside grass. But this was a logging road and there were virtually no cars. I trudged on toward Navarro until I saw several lights in the distance. It was Navarro all right, but there was no town – only a deserted restaurant set back into the trees. A pay phone glowed with fluorescent splendor in the corner of the parking lot. It was three-thirty in the morning.

I called information to get Philip's number. I had no change, so I was forced to call collect. Annie answered, obviously in a deep sleep. She reluctantly accepted the charges. I felt so guilty calling them in the middle of the night that instead of asking them to pick me up, I told them I would try to be there in the early morning. Graciously, she gave me basic directions. I resumed walking. It was nine more miles to Albion.

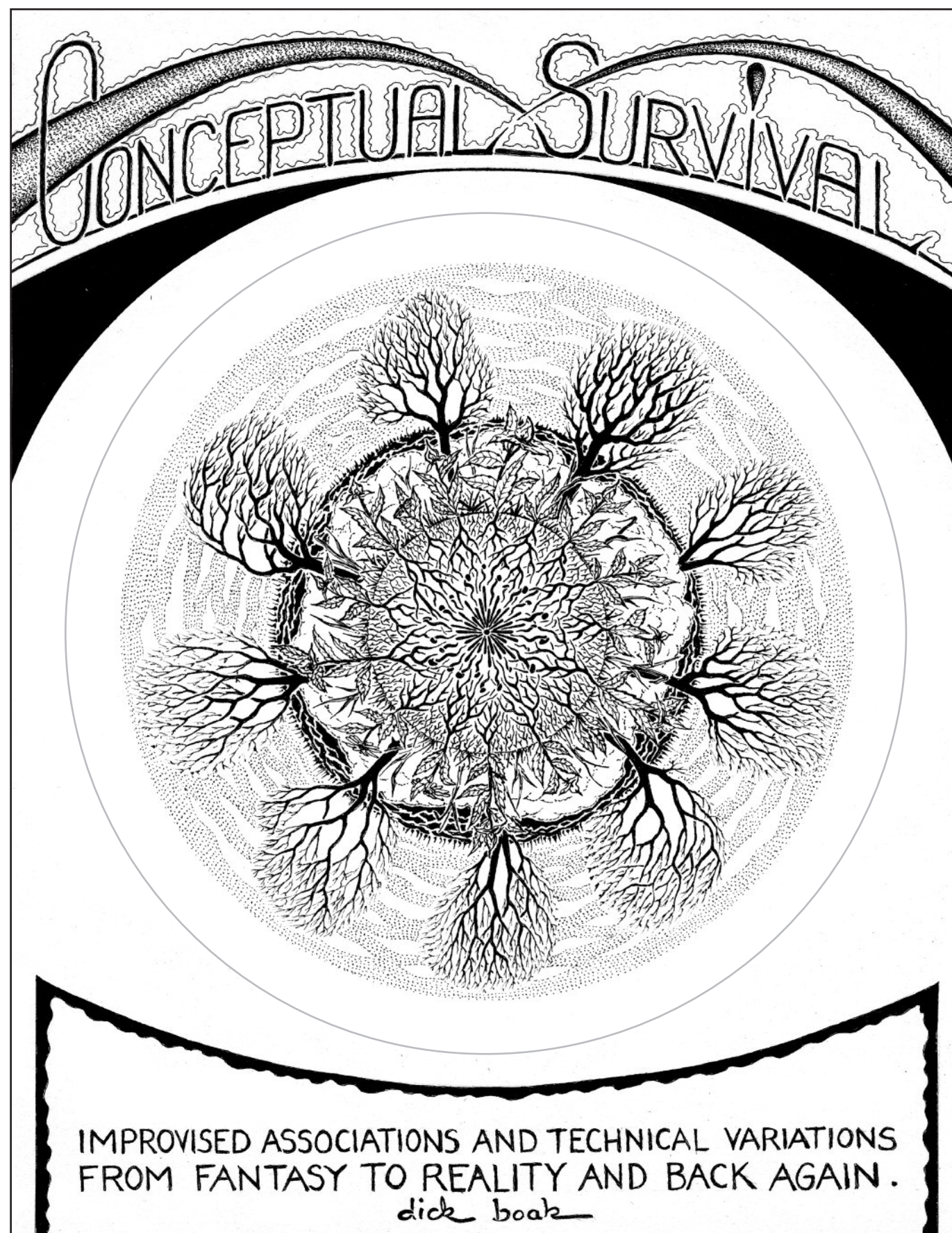
I was delirious. It was so thoroughly pitch black in the forest that I couldn't see my own body. The only way I was able to navigate was to feel the macadam under my feet. At four-thirty, it started to pour. I kept going. I arrived at Philip and Annie's at eight-thirty, totally drenched and exhausted. They fixed me herbal tea and gave me a spot to crash. I stayed for a day and a half, helped chop some firewood, then hitchhiked back to Oakland.

I'd pretty much had it.

There was way too much emotional tension at the Oakland household, so after several weeks of cleaning Holiday Inn carpets from midnight to dawn, I collected my meager pay and headed south to warmer and friendlier territory. For \$15, I boarded the *People's Express* shuttle at the San Francisco airport and streamed off to Hollywood where my friends Judley, Steve and Susan awaited.



With Susan Richardson



Opening Sleeve For Hollywood Portfolio (Circle cut out to allow next page to show through.), Pen & Ink, 1973



Tribute to Pablo Picasso, 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, 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 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 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



Involuntary Vision, Pen & Ink, 1973



Children On The Beach, Pen & Ink, 1973

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,



Old Man With Goose, Pen & Ink, 1973
Destroyed drawing recomposed in Photoshop. 2001

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

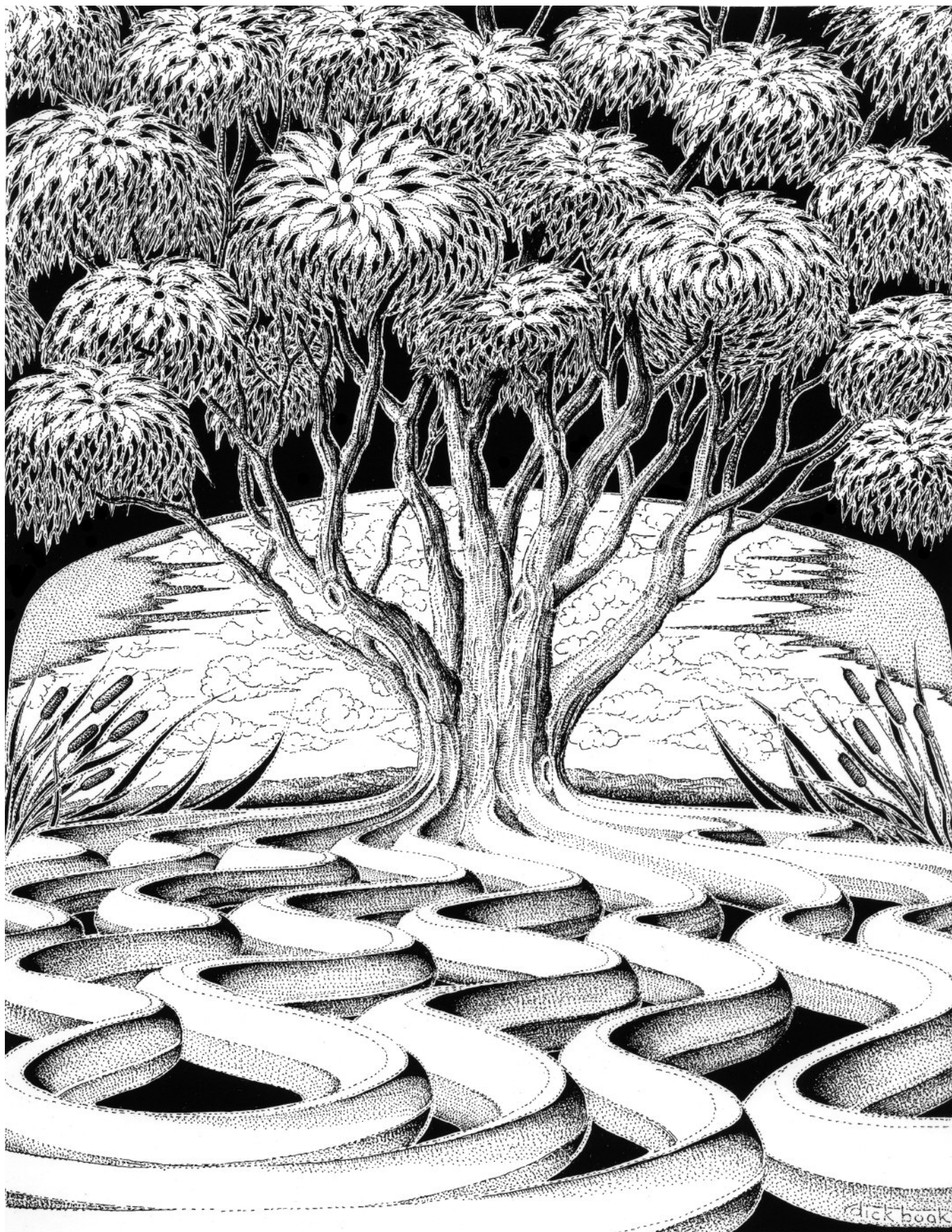


Photo Courtesy of Jud Sharp

Susan Richardson with one of her handmade dolls.



Susie's Dolls, Pen & Ink, 1973



Tree From Griffith Park, Pen & Ink, 1973

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 impression of an eye, but this could also be readily interpreted as a sun. Clearly, I was avoiding human figures in my drawings. To be honest, I wasn't very adept or confident with human forms, but I also chose to exclude humanity because of the tremendously detrimental impact man was having upon the environment and upon nature.



Photo by Steve Sharp

The unusual trees that still line Vermont Avenue in Hollywood were the inspiration for Trees From Griffith Park. (Photo Courtesy of Stephen Sharp)

Religions of the world typically adhere to the premise that mankind is far superior in intelligence to the animal kingdom. Most religions believe that only humans have souls. Animals are relegated to a purely instinctive existence without consciousness or self-awareness.

In my observations of animals, I perceived very definite souls with uncanny intelligence. It takes tremendous effort for humans to survive. Animals perform these same tasks with great integrity and simplicity. They do so without any assistance, props or technology. They utilize local materials to create organic architectures that are every bit as beautiful and functional as Frank Lloyd Wright structures. As part of the food chain, animals will resort to aggressiveness and violence, but they possess a remarkable dignity in their ongoing struggle to survive. Without question, they are deserving of our highest esteem, especially given that they do not violate their environments.

Trees and vegetation do an even greater job of living in symbiosis with other living forms. Granted, an argument can be made that plants are devoid of soul, feeling or consciousness. Their beauty and benefit is, however, intrinsic and deserving of respect and protection. Mankind fails miserably in this regard, continuing with arrogance on a progressively destructive track that threatens the existence of vegetation, animal life, clean air, and ironically of mankind itself.

Photo by Steve Sharp



The plush exotic gardens near Winona Boulevard furnished the flora for Winona Landscape Fantasy. (Photo Courtesy of Stephen Sharp)



Winona Landscape Fantasy, Pen & Ink, 1973

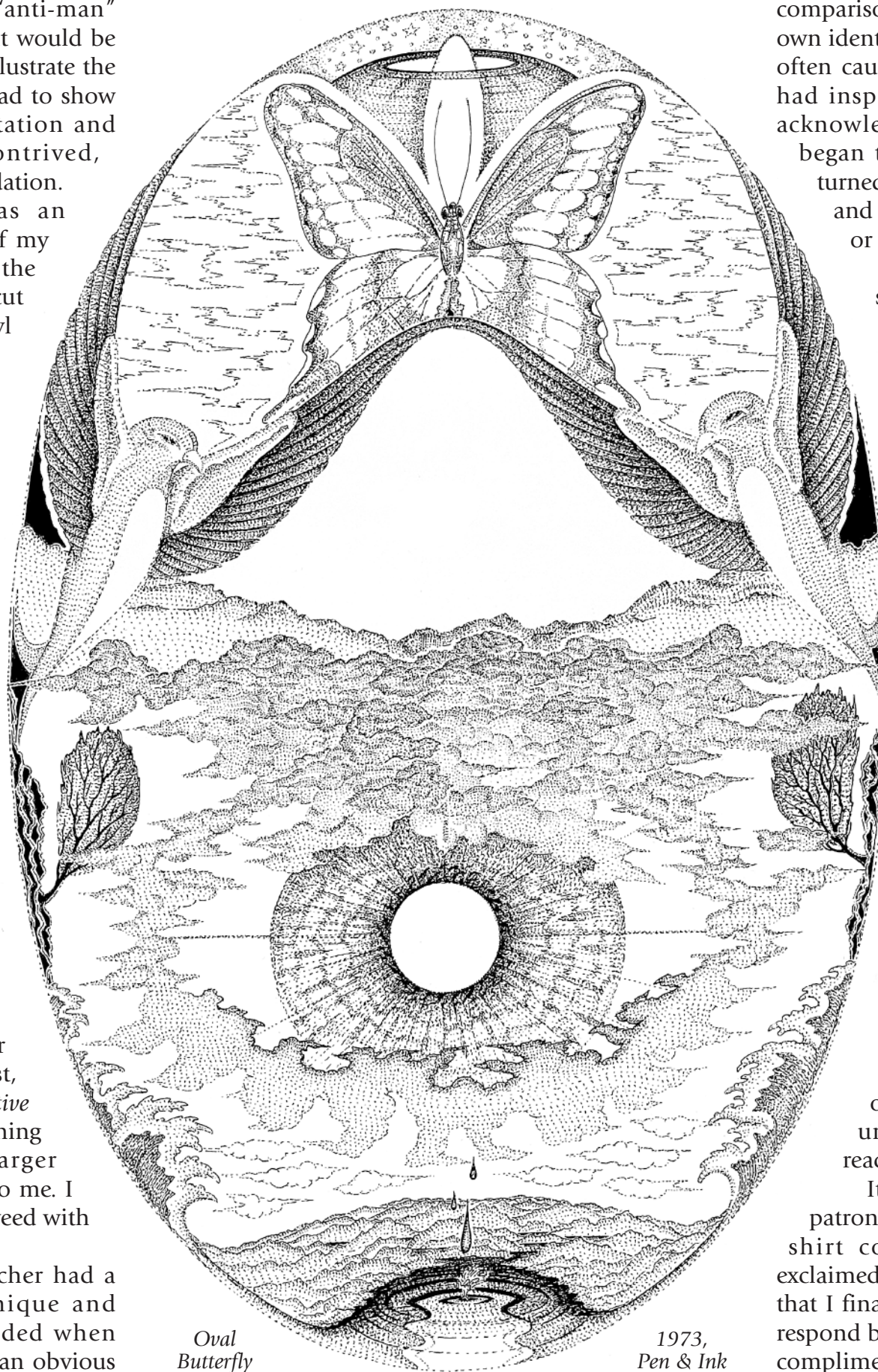
So during this time, I adopted an “anti-man” philosophy in my illustrations. Perhaps it would be more accurately stated that I refused to illustrate the existence or impact of man, opting instead to show self-sustaining environments of vegetation and occasional animal habitats, uncontrived, harmonious and devoid of human degradation.

Oval Butterfly was completed as an introductory panel for the front end of my illustrative journal. The white panel in the center was intentionally and carefully cut away, then mounted in its protective vinyl sleeve to reveal what lay beyond.

While I was addressing specific parts of a book, it seemed logical that I should create end papers of the type found in older manuscripts. These are often processed with a swirled resist or imprinted with a nondescript pattern. *Spiral Frontispiece* was drawn for this specific purpose.

As the seasons change, the cycles of life become evident. I was sitting on the curb and was enthralled to notice the entire regenerative cycle of the dandelion occurring right in front of me: the seed delicately perched at the end of its silken airborne javelin, then awkwardly sprouting upward and downward simultaneously in the soil, emerging with its pale jagged leaves, the maturing plant with closed pastel buds revealing tips of brilliant gold, the yellow flower poised upon its tubular and bitter stalk, the soft almost geodesic translucent globe of the discarded flower gone to seed – then with one swift gust, the seeds disperse to repeat the *Procreative Dandelion* once again. The idea of containing a complete life cycle within the larger macrocosm of the plant itself appealed to me. I tried this same strategy later with a milkweed with less successful results.

There is no question that M. C. Escher had a tremendous influence on my technique and approach, but I was genuinely offended when people would make what was no doubt an obvious



*Oval
Butterfly*

1973,
Pen & Ink

comparison between us. I was struggling to find my own identity as an illustrator and as a writer, but was often caught in the influential traps of those who had inspired me. Instead of trying to avoid the acknowledgement of my influences, I gradually began to execute tributes to honor them. This turned out to be a much healthier arrangement and it provided occasional fresh subject matter or diversion from illustrative tedium.

Like a million other hippies, I had scoured *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran and was captivated by one of his mystical pencil drawings. I adapted and rendered it in my pen and ink style with some satisfaction. I did the same with Escher’s woodcut of trees reflected on the surface of a pond. The clear benefit of this exercise was that I quickly grasped the technical trickery and magical realism of ripples and reflections.

After learning to acknowledge and be proud my influences, I encountered another emotional issue related to my artwork. I was completely incapable of accepting compliments. Granted, some people just didn’t relate to my drawings, but more often I would receive praise for my work or upon close inspection, onlookers would tell me that they liked a particular aspect of a drawing that I was working on. For some odd reason, I felt compelled to counter-balance any praise I received with instant self-criticism and deprecation. Usually I would express this by pointing out areas of detail within a drawing that were unintended or flawed. In any event, such reactions were inappropriate and insincere.

It wasn’t until an encouraging friend and patron named Mary Kinnear grabbed me by the shirt collar in frustration, shook me, and exclaimed: “You just don’t know how good you are!” that I finally realized how valuable it was to simply respond by saying thank you when someone offers a compliment.

My drawings continued to focus on the simplicity of nature with exercises like *Sun Through Trees*, that inadequately attempted to demonstrate the ironic visual phenomenon that background sunlight can overpower the foreground of an image. There I go again degrading my work, thank you!

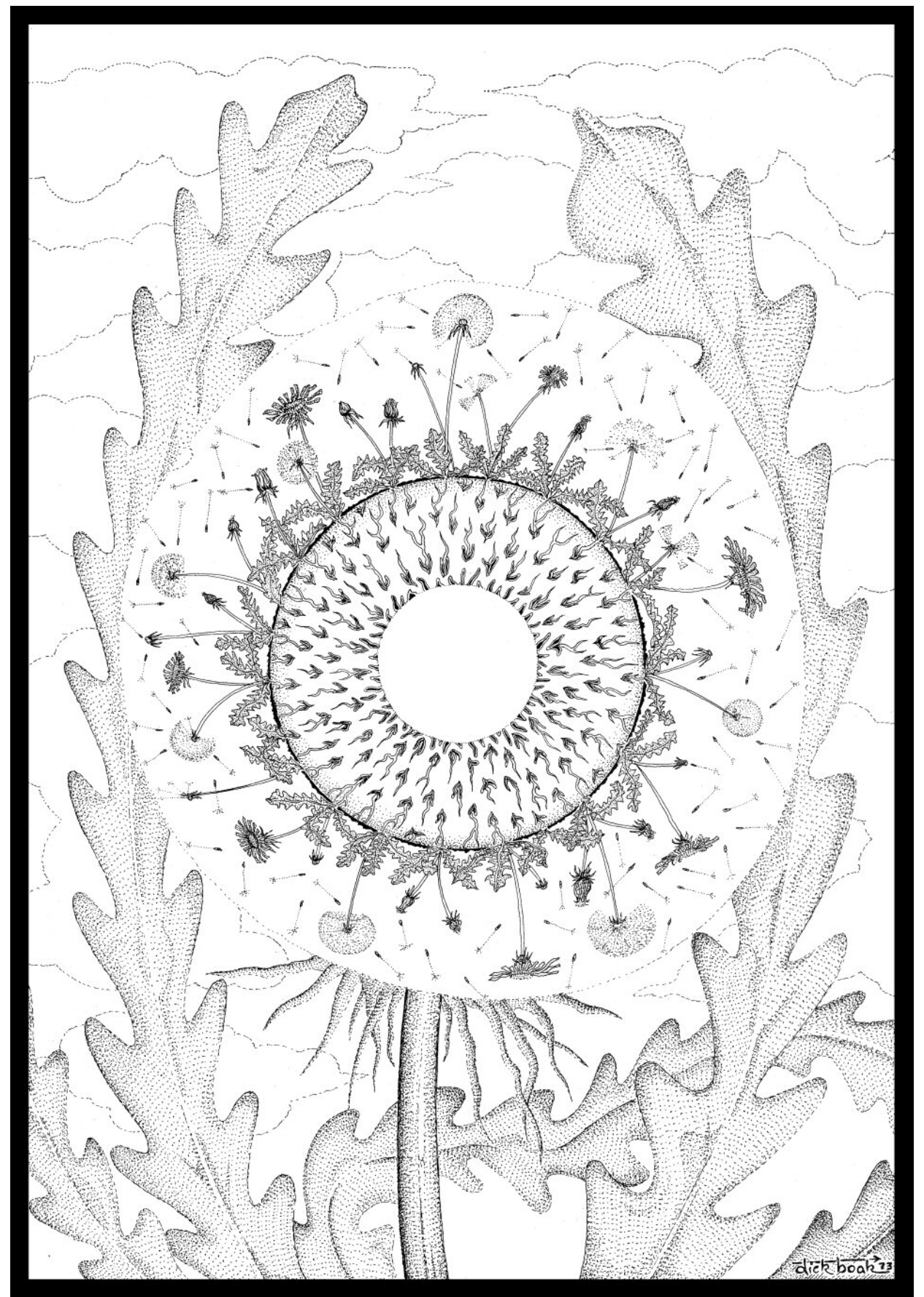
I had religiously saved the exoskeleton of Cholla cactus from my journey west through the desert. I took it out of its protective box, lit it with a desk lamp and sketched it, letting it take its own shape. It started to resemble a woman's head, then it began to appear meditative. An almost Hindu *Wormwood Vision* emerged, interesting but also slightly disturbing. I don't recall why I felt compelled to add a Saturnian ring. Perhaps I had spilled a drop of ink in that area.

In any event, the texture of the cactus was much more interesting than this woman, so I struggled to identify a vehicle or framework that would serve to accentuate that texture. The triple helix appealed to me when I landed upon it by accident. There had been a lot of talk about the unraveling of DNA in the news. The notion of three strands seemed to nest well with the simple philosophical trilogy of "mind, body, environment"

(Continued on Page 79)



Tribute To M. C. Escher, Pen & Ink, 1973



Procreative Dandelion, Pen & Ink, 1973