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THE TWELFTH HOUR

THE TWELFTH HOUR: A COLLECTION

Don Davison

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A special thanks to Louella Holter, and to Tina Rosio, from W.

Again,
to Patricia, for everything

All of Don Davison's books have water on their covers. Water is one of the most essential attributes of the planet Earth; without it, life as we know it would not exist. It deserves our most considered attention.

Davison's collections of poetry all end with "Finding Pieces." Many of you have asked, where did the rules for the Game of Life come from? They come from many places and different times. Good hunting!

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LIFE'S DREAMS

Brief moments of wind-whipped desires
captured in still photography linger
to give sustenance to a weary traveler
who pushes on.

One asks,

“Does wondering permeate the halo
of your dreams?”

Semper! Semper! Semper!

But,

I am constantly washed free
with the effervescence of each new day.

I'm queried,

“Upon occasion is your breath
caught in short shallow gasps?”

Yes! Yes it is!

But only until my body speaks to me
from well-groomed habits of running.

Then a peaceful calm returns,
regenerating that vital force
for yet another windmill.

“And does a realization seep in
that windmills are only windmills?”
comes the question.

Never! Never! Never!

I accept the challenge of life's adventure
and give my all to the Quest.

There is no other way.

Life provides that shining moment of coincidence,
giving my “me” to me in that holy grail of self.

I bathe in an eternal well of happiness.

DRAGONS

There is a manifold season of Dragons out there.
Must I continue to read The Psalms?
Is contrite supplication my only alternative?
The never-ending bridge to self is long indeed.

* * *

There is only to sit the Charger
and meet the dawn with sword in hand.

MY MINOTAUR

The primitive urge is to defend –
to protect Zirahuen from the marauding beasts.

Huge and destructive,
they desecrate the hallowed moments
shaped by dreams and time.

Sweat and anger mix –
the one to motivate and the other to quell.

When will the wall be done?

When will the hoards be barred
from that sacred place?

Can I construct the gates –
and will I know which

are the gates of hell
and which

the gates of heaven?

Please stay with me, Father.

The journey has been long.

You were with your Son,
from Gethsemane to Pilate's Palace
and on to Golgotha.

I know you are with me now –

Be with me then!

MY WORK

I labor in the darkness of the Platonic Cave,
loosening fetters on those who wish to see.

It matters not who sets them free.

In the dim light of awareness,
they many times can't see who is there with them.

The knowledge of the Master and the Truth
guides the dropping of the bonds.

Will they stay in the shadows,
or brave the brilliance of the Truth?

It matters not.

The gift is choice.

The ebb of my time flows in the river of life
towards the Eternal.

Amen!

MOTHER AND CHILD

Indomitable spirit of the species –
a wandering anthropoid,
hominizing, vulnerable.
Leading each generation towards the future –
holding their hands,
peering into darkness,
occupying space.
There is forever a moment of transcendence
for each and every Mother.

THE GAUNTLET OF OUR TIME

Our time is full of questions.
Information mounts so quickly.
In adolescent paranoia,
we peek and anxiously wait.
Shame is something we avoid – at all cost.
Scream now!
Yes!
I want to be me!
All me!
Only me!
And of course as I do,
I must know that you and I are One.
We must stand for one and One for all,
so that the sequins
of ourselves send a message to the species
that becomes a mirror
in which we see the beauty of the Whole.
Stand still!
Mirror that magnanimous beauty of the soul!
Hush!
Be silent!
The Holy is at hand!

GLOWING WINDOW

Light in the castle window!
The torrents of time and circumstance
 bleed our being.
 We must be there.
The gauntlet has been thrown.
 We have responded.
 Where is our time,
the hearth, the fire, your touch?
 The winds howl.
 The silence screams.
Agony is frozen in life's forms.
 Endless battles,
scouring wrong from right,
 forever tired and hungry.
 The road is long.
 The light is dim.
 Finally,
 there upon the hill,
 sustained by hope,
 the knight dismounts.
The door swings wide.
 The staircase scaled.
 At last, repose,
 her form, his arms.
The silence of the lost fire in the ashes
 speaks of long hours of sharing.
 Dawn will come!

GOD

I grew up wandering through hardwood forests
among maple, oak, birch, aspen, hemlock,
ash, butternut, tamarack, balsam and pine.
I held their leaves and stroked their needles.
I smelled their births and their deaths.
I felt the Enveloping Presence.
I spoke to my God and listened to His music
in the sighing of the great forests.
I pondered His purpose
and felt the pain of the world.
I wanted nothing more
than to work in the Father's Vineyard.
I knew there must be ways
to bring lost souls to fires
fed by sacred signs.
So I left home.
It was not so much a leaving
as a must-go-forth.
A calling that stirred a soul
and kept me focused
on the lives of those who had gone before.
I searched the Great Books
of philosophy and theology.
I felt strongly about the ancient answers
that spoke to the
depths of that which is called soul.
The journey has been long –
and the involvement manifold.
There have been times,
when working in the Vineyard,
I have looked to the end of the row –
and found a never-ending Vineyard.
The Father's garden is large indeed!

THE WAITING GRASSES ...

Tossed and turned,
tussled and tranquil,
tipped and tweaked,
twisted and threatened,
tempested and tucked,
touched and tinged,
browned and broken,
all tweedy thins of Heaven's thoughts.

... IN THE LOW

Moist treasures and laden moments
at the mile-plus post,
when heaving lungs pull gems into nostrils
and across palates.

Subtle sensitivities that lie in time
become magic moments late in fall afternoons
when pregnant pockets,
freed by the misty fingers of gentle winds,
release fragrances of rotting grasses,
with molds
adding heavy musty flavor to the meal.

Then I heard someone say,
"Isn't that marsh with its dry dead grasses
an ugly dull place?"

THE LAND

To pay for the land –
a piece of steppe, a piece of canyon,
a piece of lakeshore,
a piece of flat land, a piece of rock,
a piece of sand,
a piece of valley, a piece of forest, a piece of land.
Some with water, some with trees,
all with blood, sweat, and tears.
What is the cost of the land
for wandering nomads, chariots and slaves,
kingdoms and continents?
How much does it cost?
How much?
The desire blurs the vision and the senses,
all of them,
The purpose of life is brought to question.
Why a piece of land?
A primitive urge pounds away at a man's
heart and soul
rending the fabric of the Holy,
and still ...
THE LAND!
There is always the bend of the river,
the bottom land,
the broken ground and the sweet smell
of fertile soil and sawdust,
and dreams in drops of sweat.
Time is suspended in plans,
some with water, some with trees,
all with blood, sweat, and tears.

We labor,
lost in being with an insatiable thirst
for a primitive conquest;
a piece of ground.
And in the end,
at the banquet table of life,
to taste the dust.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

He sat with his legs crossed
in a beautiful easy chair,
before the roaring flames in the fireplace.

A Count? A Duke?

In his Reading Room,
a vast array of books,
his whole world

filled with treasures from the ages.

In that waning hour he stood,
closed his book,

and walked slowly out the door.

He left his study for his home,
a tiny studio apartment,
really a recycled motel for those who are lost,
the homeless, the forgotten.

A baron in the Library,
a pauper on the street,
we must maintain our public libraries!

THE MISSION

It's almost as if I stood
on the edge of a savannah,
at the mouth of a cave,
the end of a pier,
the head of a drawbridge.
Roving expectations,
what were they?
Eyes cast to distant horizons,
a missionary?
Have I cursed the wind long enough, Father?
Have I reached the crossroad?
Am I at the bend of the river –
that Nordic Lake,
that shore?
How long before we rest?
How long before we are free to feel
the softness of the sun,
the gentle mist of spring,
the breeze,
the crispness of fall air?
There they are!
A brace of birds
following the winds of spring north,
seeking fuller being,
bringing closer union.

ETHNOCENTRISM

– Phasing –
from many points of view
to You.
Humanity is One!

PACHANGA

Welcome to the party!
And so to life I came!
I didn't know the Guest of Honor.
He seemed to be everywhere and noplace.
I'm sure I saw Him.
I just can't remember exactly who He was.
A Host of great proportions and magnanimity,
He shared everything with all His guests,
and gee, we sure had fun!
Thanks for inviting me!
Is there something I should bring?
Are there games I need to play?
It wasn't until I had been at the festival
for some time
that I realized to thank Him
was all that I could do.
And yes, I developed a thirst for life!
To be,
is that miracle of presence at His party.
To stay if only I can –
and yet when all is said and done
I must leave.
But wouldn't it be nice
to be invited once again?

A PRAYER

Father,
I have presumed upon your beneficence!
And You have laid it out for me ...
all of Your Gifts:
Your Presence,
my spouse,
our children,
my work,
and friends,
and I have walked among them in a shadow.
I must light a candle!
Abba, Father,
Eli, Eli, Lamasabacthani!
“My peace I give to you,
my peace I share with you.”
I must see!
Help me to see!
Not my will, but Thine be done.
Help me to know Thy Will!
I come to You in this dark hour
of my own making.
I shall,
in Your Name,
resurrect Your Spirit in my life.
I shall walk the morrow in Your Presence.
I shall lay the fruits of my labor at Your Feet.
Amen!

SETTLER'S TRACKS

There are
bits of bone,
piles of stone,
weathered wood,
and rusty nails.

All echoes
in the winds
of

lives exhausted.

Parts of the endless pilgrimage

as

The Blessed
and the beyond beckons ...

THE EYE OF THE STORM

Why do we see so clearly
when the mist turns to fog
and outlines lose their stark relief?
Is the stillness of the creeping gray
what we need to own
our time?
Does the Divine Presence
manifest itself when the
brilliance of the difference has retired?
Is that finally when
we fold into ourselves
and know the still warmth of Truth?
Can this be one of those
“Golden Moments”
when
THE ETERNAL
is at hand?
* * *
Thank you,
Abba,
for speaking in such gentle whispers
through the mistletoes of the storm!

THE TABLET

As I slip a refill into my writing case,
I am reminded of a scabbarded sword
with which and upon which
insight draws the blood
of understanding
for the chalice of communication
that sanctifies with virtue
the lives of wounded souls.
Memories and values emerge
from weary pages of the past,
forging bridges to the crucible of forgiveness,
where a baptism of desire
brings children to a fire
fed by sacred signs.
A deftly moving mind and hand
sends symbols to exhausted and numbed hearts.
Who,
when they catch a glimpse of eternal truths,
are somehow set free to fly in the grace of love.
Abba,
in this whirlwind of time
lend me strength to maintain my mind's
and hand's focus in the battle,
as I too seek
the Living Flame.

THE PLAY

I was just remembering ...
when derricks' silhouettes stalked the sky
and moist diesel smells purged
pregnant possibilities.
Where mounds of buried bentonite bags,
symbols of hoping effort,
awaken dreams among the shadows of memory's hall ...
of children and cattle growing fat
where wells flow.
And the incessant noise of a rig
as the bit chewed through
calcareous cemented sandstone,
a sedimental shield,
the sealed cap.
All efforts seeking the regolith of the dome
where nestled percolated droplets.
From deep space in the fossil-rich organic lode,
the carboniferous Chainman Shale,
oil seeps from the layered mother lode.
Trailer tracks and mobile laboratories stand
where weary eyes stare, seeking signals
from pinches of the relics
of a bit's trip through the ages.
Late-night hours spent
with sagging eyes searching, separating
cotton seed shells from shale,
and then,
florescence!

And given a good market for what the Sheik
still sells,
a Christmas Tree
spewing ancient sap into waiting tanks
holding teased treasure for noisy monsters.
And then I see the caravans
of rattling road-runners
on their way to refracting palaces.
All from the “mina de liquido”
of Black Gold far below.
The excitement of the hunt still lingers
as now
other tasks demand my will.

THE TEAM!

From being alone to a member of
... the Team!
When one and others do their thing
and have it count for all!
A here-and-now focus
that lets me be only me, all me
... and so much more.
The job!
My work!
An opportunity to define myself by what I do!
To understand what's to be done –
and how to do it well!
That flow of excited energy ...
and at last to be finished!
A yes! to all who are there.
Is there some Holy Bond that says
we *must* play with others?
Are we bound by our being to be the corpus
of the corporation?
Is it that *Person* can only be *Real*
standing side by side?
We are that rational social being,
a homofaber,
a destroyer,
a freedom-loving,
symbolizing, soul-seeking sentient thing
who craves the spirit of the group.

TRUTH

Truth is a spoonful of honey,
the tenacity of the ever-searching bee,
a barometer of biology.
We must learn to leave their homes alone.
Pesticides and leached salts
left on shores of inland lakes
interdict with a maligned
and heavy ignorance.
We must keep our tracks shallow
as we seek sustenance
from the soul of the earth.

SYMBOLIC RELATIONSHIPS

Venn diagrams,
concentric moments superimposing,
merging.

The species speaks.

The planet listens,
waiting expectantly,
because ...

it has been crying
for some time.

WAILINGS

Through canyons and
across savannahs,
under ledges
next to rivers,
in the depths of forests,
from firesides
and caves,
come echoes
of crying children,
gracing the silence of the orb,
penetrating the deep reaches
of each and every valley and mountain.
Bridging time
they have shared their
pain,
hunger,
and fear
through moon-lit nights
and sun-filled days,
still giving gifts to the present.
For them we labor in the fields.
They will survive!

ALWAYS

Somewhere in the Great Cosmos,
somewhere,
there is a you.
In moving, I move towards something.
Finally, we touch.
In this Great Cosmic Dance
I find a partner,
“An Other” with whom I spend my time,
bleed my being into.
To touch and hold,
I, you! You, me!
A chance encounter that comes when two,
who in finding each other,
choose each other.
They were also called Holds,
those places where men and women
gathered together to live,
to grow crops and to raise children,
to live out their lives.
Love is ...
a sharing in time and space,
a choice that two make that says,
“You are something that resonates
deep within me,
a music that comes from some
mutual internal and eternal rhythm.”

This touching is something we can choose to do
daily,
season after season,
for a lifetime.

It is an eternal confirmation of choices,
a choosing of each other again and again.

Love is ...
an exercise of freedom
that gives meaning to one's existence,
a sharing of all that is within a person
for a lifetime.

Love is ...
a commitment to a wholeness,
including dreams,
those impossible personal points of departure,
a helping of each other to maintain a vision,
seen only during this current existential moment.

Love is ...
an overlapping of vortices,
mighty forces that run through us.
What Great Heart gives this sharing time to us?
These miracles of moments,
days, weeks, months, and years,
and children to grace holidays and seasons,
to bring forth grandchildren.
And still I wonder
why I see so clearly
after tears have washed my eyes.

MAN'S INDUSTRY

Potsherds, bits of flint, a bowl, an arrowhead,
all labors' leavings
of the few and of the many.
Did we do enough?
How much was done?
And finally,
did we do too much?

MEADOW OF MY YOUTH

I want to circle again the meadow of my youth,
that space ringed with grand inspiring vistas
and an unknown beyond,
where melodies were never mixed with dirges
and everything was light.
There was no heavy anything
and big was out of sight.
When first I circled that sacred space,
in full vigor and yet naïve,
it was only to run with complete abandon.
There were no touchdowns.
It was a time when dreams were fresh
and trails short,
in a place of freedom to climb
when hands were strong and pains were few.
There were no summits.
All energies were spent
quenching curiosity's thirst.
Wander and wonder consumed the seasons.
There were no degrees.
I want to circle again the meadow of my youth,
to touch and be touched
by that soft gentle warmth
of lazy summer days
when the buzzing of a fly was my only concern.

When winter was soft and white
and my only thought was to dive into it,
to roll around feeling bare skin
touch frozen crystals
and shout, "Yes!"
When spring clouds were gray
and rain was warm,
or was it I,
who with warm heart
greeted everything from some
holy free space of deep thankfulness?
When color splashed across the meadow's edges
and gentle breezes
salted my path with leaves
of every shape and kind,
and I collected them by the fist-fulls
intending to keep their brilliance forever.
I want to circle again the meadow of my youth,
that space ringed with grand inspiring vistas
filled with soft gentle touches of everything
drowning me in mystery and beauty,
sheltering me from the unknown beyond.

ADVICE

Who am I to think that I have something –
something to offer other members of the species?

All are heroes,
the vast, current, multicolored wave of humanity.

That we have endured is laudable,
knowing that we will always succumb.

Time and change besiege our bodies
and our minds.

And yet –
each dawning finds us scurrying
towards a current purpose.

We are existential by fiat,
reflective in repose,
never too long.

The sun sets and we sleep.
That holy wave of nocturnal quiescence
bathes our battered selves.

After which,
once again,

we rise for another day.

And somewhere in the pristine present,
hiding in its nowness,
we feel and see something.

It – whatever it is –
causes us to believe enough to hope,
to give ourselves again
to the task of being a person.

The truth is I can only speak of myself to myself:

“I love life.

Among its many manifestations,
I love my wife and children the most.”

THE SOUND OF LEATHER

The lay of the land,
rising and falling,
stretching out in front of history.
We lift the saddle,
the first sounds of the leather speak.
They come from deep within the soul of the grain.
Years spent in service to the owner,
a hide's duty to protect,
lasting long after the first season is done.
Tanned and cut to shape,
a form hiding content.
A decked tree,
Pommel, bow, and cantle,
flanked with stirrups.
Weathered, worn, all held by cinch straps
carrying curiosity towards destiny.
Sweat-stained and dry,
the sounds begin their gentle sharing.
Weight touches buckle and ring,
and a gentle squeaking begins its tale.
The dialogue sets souls searching,
breathing out its toughness in small murmurings.
A rider sits his place and listens.

The soft sounds of the leather
melt into the wind.
Flat slaps of reins stroke the neck.
Smooth topsides give birth to
underbellies of suede.
The timeless symphony of the leather
is at hand.
May I sit the saddle long enough
to hear the last note.

THE ROOT

Broken and twisted,
frayed and torn,
severed from bold trunk,
a bristled root.
You lie hanging across the trench,
crotched and wide,
driven deep in sustenance's search.
Years spent in damp darkness laboring
– laboring so that silent
great soft needles could spike the air
and catch like clutching fingers
notes from the evening's breeze.
Now,
given way for concrete's bed,
will the footing hold the edifice
the way you held the lofty pine?

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The first –
was delivered one quiet winter evening
while all gathered
at my middle son's request.
We knew some great pronouncement was at hand.
With his lady at his side he said,
“We are going to have an addition
to the family.”
Hearts leaped for joy, the coming of a
“little-one”
to fulfill the dreams of a new family season.
Tearfully, joyful hugging was shared all around.
A new beginning was at hand.
Time passed and the wonderful event occurred,
A son for my son and his lady,
a grandson,
a great-grandson and much more.
It was a magical moment
when hopes and fears burst forth.
The heroic exercise
– so filled with legend and mystery –
a child is born.
The second –
a mist-shrouded Christmas Eve it was
when our eldest son said,
“Lisa is pregnant.”
Depths of joy were revisited.
Heart-felt hugs were shared.
Fears and hopes came forth
to wash us once again.
With wonder and awe we waited.
Pictures of these times,
all framed in hearts,

remain for us to revel in
as the years roll by.
They are moments in time
when God's hand touched us.
A prayer to all on Christmas Eve:
"Oh Great God,
shed Your Grace upon us
as we live in life's long search
for Your Eternal Flame."

SMOOTH STONE

Life is bittersweet.
I'm not interested in litanies of the tart.
Mix in the *Truth*:
Tempests come – calm happens.
May the smooth cold stone turn to soft alabaster.
May wrinkled old hands and bent fingers
find their way once again over familiar ground.
Two monoliths lead to the well.
We have come so far together to be so far apart.
And so ...
you ask me why I cry out and moan.
I cry for what was and could have been.
The ache belongs to yesterday, today, and tomorrow.
Where are your touching eyes longing for the other?
What are your tuned ears anticipating?
How long since nostrils filled with well-known scent
opened wide and flared?
Where has the smile gone that flitted
about the corners of your lips,
sending subtle messages of,
“Yes! Me, too!”
I miss your arms, those that encircled me,
told me with their pressure,
“Hold me, I trust you!
I am a glowing ember!”

And yes, where are your hands,
those seeking stroking senders of sweet messages
to every part of my body?
And too, where are your breasts,
those gentle swells, chalices of life, faithful fountains,
hardened tips of treasure?
Where is your flat stomach,
that soft smoothness between your hips
those holders of life's cradle,
those sweeping curves that tell the difference?
Where are your toes,
those tentacles of touch
that crossed through caverns of darkness
beneath the quilts to find me –
all of me?
And where are your soft soles,
the undersides of arches,
the bottoms of your feet that brought
you swiftly gliding to me?
Did I massage them hard enough, soft enough,
often enough?
I miss them.
Where are your ankles,
those sensuous turning pockets
that spoke volumes
of places and of history?
And where are your calves,
those pumps that pushed you towards your obligations
while pulling one by the hand and carrying the other?

Where are your thighs,
those stalwart thrusting perches
– for children?
Why have you chosen to acquiesce,
to let the throes of passion subside and disappear?
I long for your participation, your invitation.
Play is what I miss the most.
To reach out
and find no one there is chilling enough –
to be pushed away
drives a dagger deep into my heart.

MY FATHER

His movements weren't flashy,
no jerky indecision.
Never was there any worry about where he was.
Nothing precipitated childish fears of,
"Where should I be?"
There was only wonder about him
and his purposeful presence.
Could he ask a question you couldn't answer?
Sure, but mostly he said,
"See that? See this?"
He was always giving instruction
to an inquiring mind.
His form is frozen in time –
one hand against a tree,
the other holding his axe on his shoulder,
head tilted into the crown,
looking for porcupines, lost in reverie,
noting the harvest?
We seldom knew.
Or –
one hand on the hilt of his axe,
the other on bent knee.
One might have concluded he was tired,
But I never saw him that way.

An eternal busy presence,
moving at a pace all his own.
Saved from the tumult of the world
for me to have,
to grow next to, to mature with.
Were there moments of repose?
Naturally!
With a beer, a can of peanuts,
and the "Pack" at hand.
And, Oh Yes!
There were those evenings in
"The Big White Chair"
with book or pamphlet.
Words seldom spoken, lessons always learned.
The hope is
that I have shared
some of his presence
with my children.

STUCK

Cobwebs and dust cloud the view.
The swelling of the season
warps the wood.
Windows and doors are stuck.
Fear has given birth to anger.
The gentle lingering touch is seldom there.
No playful presence softly
pushing needs before the sun.
Excitement was the key.
We expected fulfillment
and chance encounter
to fill all yearnings.
The maiden with whom
I chose to make life's journey,
she must forever be
that and much more.
Remember when we threw
sashes and doors open
on that search into self,
each other, and the world?
We felt freedom, some forbidden,
and stepped forward with our faith.
It must have been in self and other,
that is all we had.

We must know
yearnings are not expectations,
they come from some eternal template
rising up to be touched.

Touch takes two,
making mutual confirmation
gifts of needs shared,
from the depths of one to one.

THE FIRE

I knew it well.
It had inspired so many dreams.
The little aspen log cabin
sat on the southeastern shore
of Lake Lucerne.
I cannot count the times
I walked by and wondered
what the inside looked like.
It didn't matter that I never knew.
The dreams of having a cabin of my own
far outweighed the lack of knowing.
And besides,
for a young mind,
the ownership of my own creations
was paramount.
Then it happened.
I don't recall just how I got there ...
Ah, yes I do!
My father came by in the small green fire truck
and picked us up.
I don't know why I say "us,"
the memory is so personal.
I don't remember anything
or anyone
except the fire, myself, and my father.

Flames were shooting through the windows
and portions of the roof
when we arrived.
I rushed up to the burning cabin
and feeling the intense heat,
backed away quickly and turned to say,
“Hurry, let’s save it!”
My father, standing off,
surveying the whole scene, said,
“We can’t.”
Holding a tiny spot where a hot ash
had burned my arm,
I remember a deep feeling of anguish
and frustration.
He instructed us to grab Pack-cans
and to watch for small
fires spreading from around the cabin.
Attentions were turned to containing the fire.
A young mind and body
that couldn’t take “can’ts”
glanced back helplessly
as the entire cabin folded into the flames.
In minutes it was gone.
In those same minutes powers were lost,
mine and my father’s,
and a dream was jeopardized.

How quickly we think we grow up
– sometimes.
Life's need is to see the Truth
and then maintain a fidelity to
the visions of our dreams.

THAT'S ALL!

What is this thing called life –
mundane delights,
or some holy universal purpose
bound by days and seasons?

And so ... life is ...

A hat.

Wool shirts.

Jeans.

Boots.

A woman

enveloped in the essence of hay.

Children playing and the sounds of laughter.

Touching leather and warm soft wood with knots.

Families and memories.

Hugs.

Smiles.

Tears.

Tequila and lemonade.

The odor of horse dung.

Dripping with sweat and work left for tomorrow.

The smell of fried potatoes.

A wolf dog companion.

The majestic presence of horses.

Snowflakes and silence.

The brilliant heat of the sun.

Grapefruit juice.
Bacon and eggs.
French toast and steaming waffles.
Maple syrup and raspberry jelly.
A fire's soft flickerings.
Naps with a wool sarape.
Nudging notions.
A good pencil.
Thirst and a cool glass of water.
Rubbing burning eyes.
A nose tingling with drifting smoke.
Chewing melted cheese.
A friend's presence.
The deep sharing
of today's deeds
and tomorrow's dreams.
Sipping tea with honey and lemon.
A mouth full of swirling German chocolate cake
with ice cream.
Sitting down to cookies and milk.
Mixing a root beer float.
Sensing acrid gun smoke.
Gripping a pistol.
Setting a cheek to the rifle stock
and an eye to buckhorn sights.
Holding the hilt of a knife.
A fork full of almost-burned barbecue sauce.
Tender steak.
A salad with oil, vinegar, and peppers.

Breaking and biting into heavy bread.
Placid lakes with islands.
Rushing rivers.
Paddles.
A canoe.
Running in the rain.
Nostrils full of the fragrance of balsam.
Slicing fruit cake.
Tongue, teeth, and palette mushing pumpkin
or mincemeat pie a la mode.
A book.
History's treasures.
Hominid tracks.
Sharing others' efforts.
Plum pudding with brandied orange sauce ...
Sunsets ... Moonrises ...
Misty mornings over water ...
You ...
Is that all?
Yes!
Yes!
And yes! Again!

THE PRESENT

Lives spent moving towards history.
Lives spent moving against history.
Lives spent moving away from history.
Lives spent in anxious machinations.
Lives spent in huge waves of history.
Lives spent in small slices of history.
Lives spent in rivulets of history.
Lives spent leaving blood on blade and glade.
Choices made of the heart.
Choices spawned of the mind.
Choices surging of the soul.
Choices –
all renderings of the universe's efforts.
How far behind am I?
How far ahead am I?
How do I live in the now?
To know and be is all there is.
All of us ...
one,
free,
now.

TO KNOW

Shimmering mosaics,
Monet's moments,
all are eternal change.

Nothing
says as much
as a lover's touch.

What drips from the word *romance*
that satisfies so the depths of our thirst?

We wait.

The answer comes
when next to them we stand
and the connection snaps the soul to attention.

TO RUN

Who knows what dreams are wrought
in madness's wake?
Why hidebound in this human form
when to all four I'd like to take?
To lope with ease from meadow
through the broken foothills and beyond,
ears cocked, eyes sweeping terrain,
more than conqueror of vast expanse.
To sit on haunches tucked beneath
and quickly to the ground I come,
stretched out in full form now.
To rest at the ready,
to bound away again for prey in sight.
The hunt's begun.
What circles in my mind I'd run.
Caught in midstride,
hung gently in the air with me.
How cursed with two feet can I be?

VISIONS

I see the grain and call Your Name.
Can't they see it is the same?
I see the grain and call Your Name.
Can't they see it is a game?
Sons and daughters cry out in pain.
Can't they see there is no gain?
I see the rain and call Your Name.
Can't they see through the pane?
I see the lame and call Your Name.
Can't they see there is no strain?
I see Your World dancing beyond their gate.
Can't they see it's not too late?

THE CRACK IN THE WALL

That's the plan, I guess,
remodel the old mess.
Change every poorly executed piece
of the old house.
Spray every corner, kill every louse.
Cover it all!
And fill in that ugly crack in the wall!
Put up curtains with lace.
Come on, get into every little place.
Cover everything in varnish!
Clean it all out, do away with the tarnish!
Finish shelves, hang fixtures, repair windows, encase wires.
Set sockets, fix the fireplace for fires.
Straighten doors, change the plumbing, fix it all!
And fill in that ugly crack in the wall!
Yes, I can and I will
make it a fine furnished home,
for her and the children,
clean, neat, and just right,
no place for a gnome.
It wouldn't take long, it wouldn't take much
a few days or maybe weeks,
several gallons of varnish, some tar for the leaks.

Cement would do it all,
to fill in that ugly crack in the wall.
We can have it ready by fall.
Just do it! Have a ball!
No wait ... what is that?
The noise, I mean, the song of a bat?
Check the whole house with the eye of the hawk.
Scour the walk.
See what came in from the thicket.
What soft cadence, what charming melody,
it must be a cricket?
A delightful symphony!
No wonder the old house was so clean
and bug free.
Souls take flight
with a dainty song for the long winter's night.
Wait just a minute! Hold on to your brush!
Remember the list? Keep quiet! Just hush!
What? Did you call?
I'm thinking we shouldn't cover that corner at all.
Don't cover that ugly crack in the wall?
No! No, not at all!
Be gentle I say,
we'll have some guests in this house
who'll love it that way.

* * *

Our house and theirs – what a beautiful old place
filled with children, stories, and grace.
Celebrations a'plenty, with apples and pears,
solitude and warmth with plenty of airs.
And the guests came and commented,
“What a beautiful old house,
no room for a snake, no room for a mouse.
But wait! What gall!
Why don't you cover that ugly
crack in the wall?”

BROTHER SNAGS

In the San Francisco Peaks
the storm laid down its gifts
of wind and rain and lightning.
St. Francis,
Brother Patron to us all,
noted well the turmoil
that spilled upon the apron of his peaks.
Brother Sun was warming Brother Earth
when Brother Wind brought Brother Storm
who befriended Brother Clouds
from which came Brother Rain and Brother Bolt.
Brother Fire embraced Brother Trees, and
bathing them in Brother Flame
and Brother Smoke,
gave birth to Brother Snags,
who will stand for decades sheltering
Brother Bird and Brother Beast.
And too –
The vagaries of my hurried heart are calmed
as I stand in awe, a witness,
beholding the sacrifice of all my Brother Trees.
They are transfigured now
before uncomprehending eyes.
To saintly stately statues standing simply naked
in the brilliance of Brother Light,
I bow to Brother Snags and say,
“It’s done!”

COLLAPSE

We live in an age of disintegration,
an age of coalescence.
Broken circles mark the places we have been,
movements we've made and unmade.
We didn't know how to learn the depths of love
before we experienced dying embers.
Time doesn't wait.
The old ways gave us time to learn.
When did we move from the then to the now?
How can we get from the now to the then?
Learning to believe all over again
is most difficult.
To reach out when there is nothing to touch
is almost impossible.
Someone to share
the belief with would be heaven.

CONVERSATIONS

You must forgive me –
when I listen to You I hear mostly echoes
from the past,
mine, my children's, other's.
Some are ancient,
too many just yesterday's.
I am reminded of
belligerence, intransigence, ignorance,
capricious unloving arrogance,
and tears.
Now, more than anything, my eyes are moist.
Forgive the teardrops.
Although they may also be for You,
always they are for me.
My mind seeks refuge
in the shadows of the rafters
and the contours of the logs.
In the dark and light patterns of the grain,
the swirling of the knots.
I continue to search
for the all-possessing
– ever caressing –
love of the Eternal Hand.

DIET

We know more about food now
than we have ever known,
and as knowledge conflicts with habits,
we need to maintain a fidelity to the Greek axiom:
Not too much – not too little.
No matter who we are
we have some awareness of
fat, salt, vitamins, and drugs,
compatibility and soft aerobic exercise,
all taken in small- to medium-size bites
chewed slowly for an appropriate time.
How simple it is!
So honestly elegant!
To “see,”
to be true and mine now
because we have grown to love
the Truth of One more than anything.
We are also beginning to accept
(beyond the mundane arguments of the day)
that spirituality plays an important part in healing.
We understand that honesty and commitment
are the two most important ingredients of growth.
No matter how many recipes we write down
for garlic, olive oil, tomatoes,
and a glass of red wine,
none of them matter unless we know:
We are the recipe.
We are the cookbook.
We are the Truth of One Now.

DOREEN OF ENCIAN MEADOWS

It happened during the season of white butterflies –
mornings were filled with intermittent showers,
after which the cascading of almost perfect angels
with tiny blue-black dots on the upsides of their wings
made a calling.

It was then that it came to pass.
A special envoy laid the invitation
on the readiness of her heart
and she left us.

We were shocked into our grief –
as most of us are oft want to question
the Brilliance of the Divine Plan.

In the early flush of tears we were temporarily blinded.
Ensconced in the temporal,
and embracing only pieces of “It,”
caused that second wave of pain and flooding questions –
all meaningless
in the Light of the Truth.

Then,
as the viscidities of the temporal were washed away,
we came to know the Truth.
She had transubstantiated in her salvation.
Alleluia, Amen! Amen, Alleluia!

And yet –
we linger in our human suffering,
not quite knowing enough of
the Grand Design.
But hear me now –
the story has been told of her coming.
The Brilliance of her Shining Soul
lit the Garden with its Presence
and she stayed forever,
melting into the Perfect Light.
Questions of the “lesser ones”
were whispered in awe –
“Who was *This One*
who was transfigured so quickly?”
In his bowed and holy passing,
St. John the Divine said in hushed tones,
“She is Doreen,
Doreen of Encian Meadows.”

DRAGON WINDS

From the madness of dreams
to the evils of the heart,
there is a quickening
that stirs the soul.

The profane swims amongst the sacred
as the temporal births the eternal,
youth bridges time's tempests,
and age cements truth to wisdom.

Fronds of the pine
hang in the azure.

Not forever!

The eternal-now screams silently,
"Come!"

DUST

Pebbles from the sky,
ours with which to do or die.
We hang in space,
a precious piece of God's cluttered
universal garden.
Are we the centerpiece?
has long been answered in the negative.
Now the question:
Whose job to care for the species?
A shared responsibility;
the laws of nature do not lie.
And yet not all are presently known.
God's mansion is immense.
The challenge is to keep on looking
while we own the few we understand.
Asteroids and comets
– heaven's rain –
particles, dust, larger chunks are always there,
pushed, tugged, sent in a curious course.
Was the destination the objective?
No.
"Touch" was the immediate need.
Clear skies are more than just blue.
We need to appreciate the magnitude
of our watch.
The hominid must always live peering out,
on guard for those gifts of ellipticals
crossing our plane.

DUSTY TRAIL

There is only the sound of pounding feet
landing on caliche,
footsteps in the broken crust leaving trails
of rising dust.

To the Hacienda of Guadalupe,
Hormigueros and beyond,
with sightings of hawk, eagle,
and a flock of curlews,
over shards of broken pottery
and empty rifle shells.

And still I run.

The path almost invisible now,
the desert slowly reclaiming its own.

The memories, too,
are fading ones when signs have left their places.
The smells of desert winters are faint
to non-existent.

What veil keeps the mind from scenes
of decades past?

Empty thoughts, heaving lungs and drops of sweat
are my only companions.

To force the purpose beyond the gates of remembered times,
a pace is set.

Nothing is left but to
“run the arrows” of the present,
to escape exhaustion the only goal.
And so I run and run and run.
Hours later shuffling feet bring me home
and they ask,
“Where did you go?”
I answer, with some trepidation,
“To run the arrows”
and then I look away
for I have yet to eat my favorite horse.
They say, “Hum,”
turning their attention to the next topic
of conversation.
I leave to write my thoughts.

EVOLUTION

As brawn's to be,
life's for taking if you're free.
Truths are never quite what they seem
betwixt distance, shadow, and beam.
Souls hurt in want,
searching in vain through tome and font.
Intellect matched by size
was not to know and be as wise.
Spindly legs offer little support,
leaving a stream of bodies and small report.
Why risk life and limb
in toiling tasks to save one's kin?
The music moved my soul to tears,
but for evolution's role was met with jeers.
Darwin didn't have it all quite right.
There's always something more than might.

THE GENOME

From the hinterlands of time
a species comes –
movement of our kind.
Washed by the shores of circumstance,
mingling incessantly,
interchanging colors, shapes, sizes.
Contours of cultures,
whipping winds of change,
manifold variegations.
Too fast?
Too many?
Too slow?
Enough?
The hominid always follows
organic movement.
Finally
we become aware of ONE
resource interface
moving.

THE FLASHING GREEN LIGHT

A pulsing little green light
bathes its surrounding space in a soft glow.
The message machine maintains its eternal vigil,
forever touching us
with the mundane and necessary.
Staying in *The Know*
with the malady of information
is a penchant of our times.
The condition is brought on by a new use
of time and space,
enabling us to push too many events
into short lives.
We live so far from family,
leaving messages extends a presence
of solicitations, invitations,
and reminders of love.
Existence is change,
technology a part of daily life.
Seldom do we reflect and ask ourselves:
What did we do before we had this gadget
or that one.
A small voice says,
“We had much less on our plates
and were more calmly focused
in the beauty of the present.”

LIFE

We are brought to our present course
when undulations of the shifting
of particle to wave excites
and forces ejaculations into moist caverns
as squirming halves
penetrate a drop of life's perspiration
and attach themselves to the banks
of creation's river become whole
by feeding on the flowing gift.
A perspective emerges and says,
"Yes to the light."
Then a shadow of ignorance says,
"No to the darkness."
Movement brings forth pain and an angry scream
which finally says,
"I do not know about the darkness or the light!"
And yet
we are re-membered
and must re-call
it's all been said,
"As it was in the beginning,
is now,
and ever shall be."
And the word became flesh.

LOST

Too many sisters and brothers are caught in

“I think so ...”

“Because of them!”

“Because of my insecurities!”

When can they be sure and say,

“Its me, only me, all me,

or at the very least

all mine now?”

LOUIE

There was no glass of wine,
no sunset toast,
no sunrise service.
Nothing stood out, nothing extraordinary.
A life came to an end.
From child to adult,
a spouse, a father, a carpenter, a friend,
all gone now.
Children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren
remember, and so do I.
He was a trapper, a hunter, a fisherman,
a man who lived a full life.
How often do I recall the days we spent together?
In crisp November dawns,
I remember finger stubs deftly rolling a cigarette.
And in waning afternoon light,
I recollect images of an indefatigable soul
ready to hurry on ahead
and stand at the point of one last drive.
Always sharing what he knew
with those who had an interest,
never boastful,
just a man of his word.
Could excitement overwhelm him?
I retain a most distinct memory
of wet cold men and lake trout.
Are we ever aware of the ways
our lives touch others?
Never completely.
As I reflect on the woof and weave
of myriad souls' paths,
I stand in awe-inspired silence,
too ashamed to even say thank you.

LUNA

The rising burning orb shares sustenance
and sanctuary for the soul.
Passing lunar months feed
the quiescently romantic with the ephemeral
and discrete.

Your wavering luminosity
now present, now hidden,
sets stages for that deep well of imagination
to pump images into being.

Or,
is it that reflections of the soul
lie buried
within the eons of our pilgrimage
in this eternal now?

Adventure and repose
– those twins of the diurnal –
fame and fortune,
ecstasy and orgasmic ...

Hush!

Be silent and remember.
Sense the essence of new-mown hay.
Touch with closed eyes the beauty of the present.
Nurture the effervescence of our belonging.

Hold!

Adventure is at hand!
A keen urge swells the chest.

We mount the charger.
Dragons roam the land.
To both we owe
precious soul-blood
dripping from our lifelong hourglass
into the sands of eternity.

MEADOW MONSOONS

With the smell of moisture in the air,
remnants of the storm now fading,
swallows sweep the meadow.
Lupines with their multicolored cohorts,
dew laden, backs bending,
brilliant soldiers of their turf,
bow in the visitor's presence.
Sun's rays lick the valley of its fog,
lifting insects on drying currents
to their guests.
And I,
in the early morning light
as heavy heads of nature's grain
bob gently in the breeze,
say wonderingly and thankfully,
"Good morning" to my God.

* * *

Shifting sanguine snippets catching waning light
still salt the sky as twilight meets starlight.
For a fleeting moment stillness reigns.
A stage is set for an evening visit
– the afternoon's swallows' repast.
Triflings of the grasses tell me
the wind is nodding good night.
Flights finding food feed nature's plans
and a soul's heart.
Amid such abundance
a tear of joy is shed.
Darkness driving visions beyond the now
forcing me to leave –
in parting I say gently, reverently,
"Good night" to my God.

MOON

You rise so silently –
tell me ...
How does your pale silver sheen move,
casting shadows
from blackness and from light?
Perchance –
are you that mysterious companion
of peaks and valleys
sharing hidden sanctuaries for all to see?
Warden of those holy places,
was it you who kept flickering candles
from being the only guardians
of virtue?
Why do you choose to send
your hallowed streams
sifting through barred cells' apertures,
resurrecting hope for
those within?
And was the Holy Grail
cast from the essence
of your light?
Your regal splendor
creates semblances of temples
and of kingdoms.
Is yours the same golden light
that danced like bobbing angels in rolling seas,
feeding the hearts of buccaneers
with lusty dreams?

And too –
did remnants of your golden shafts
light the trials of
the Knights?
From window sills and gardens,
did you swoon anxious ladies' hearts?
I think
still you kiss
the breasts of mountains
and pull succor
from their wombs.
I know there are those dreams
that suckle fountains
bathed in your sensuous soft light.
Silver-white drops
of perspiration reflect
the rainbow of your soul.
From passion to quiescence,
your rising reigns supreme.

THISTLE

In the context of our times
we are given to see signs.
The thistle's crown
holds resting a beautiful butterfly
with tattered wings.
Where do we rest?
Where do we all rest?
In the Hand of the Father?
Surely it must be there!
The movement of time is a sword's blade –
there must be a place of repose.
Help me to that glade or glen,
that edge of space where sanctuary
meets the sun's rays,
where time stops
and we know only the peace of God.
“Grant us eternal rest
Oh Lord,
and let perpetual Light
shine upon us all!”

ECOLOGY OF ACTION

We live in a time when the what of the now
entered the who of the now,
snapping a piece off,
leaving fragments of the self floating
in a turbulent sea.
Attachments to the wandering
without of others,
stand lost by the wayside.
Who asks themselves what should be done
to save us from our frenzied apathy
as we sit and watch another episode of Survivor?
Time has given us the wealth of time.
Plant! Tend! Harvest!
Beware of a bloating nothingness
as it flashes incessantly away from the light.
Cup the chalice of our mates
in tender time
and fondle tips to life's gentle purpose.
Be gone,
oh you savages of wanton ignorance!
Where life is left, softness reigns!
Leave it alone!
Embrace it all!

HANDS ON!

Do it now!

Touch!

Caress!

Listen!

Living with the word turned flesh
is an absolute.

If there is a living dialog,
we are touching.

Admonitions:

Those lost in the existential smoke and mirrors
or our current confusion,
those panting and out of breath,
they must stop and take the extended
hand of truth.

There is an ocean of difference between
healthy skepticism
and the deception of paranoia.

HISTORY DOES NOT RUN BACKWARD

History, of any kind, does *not* run backward.

With this profound statement
the organic truth sets the arc of movement
and its complementary understanding:

We must *live* our lives!

From astrophysics' toiling efforts
to the presence of *person*
change brings closer union
– fuller being.

“To see or to perish” has been written.

“The word became flesh”

is true in the birth of each new child.

The reciprocal is also true –

as flesh becomes the word of universal understanding,
the word nurtures the flesh.

To debate in ecumenical circles
without understanding
is to spit in the face of the All.

Turning one's back on life is an excuse to embrace death.

Visions that preempt life
are wasted smoke from meaningless sacrifices.

We now know enough to realize
that the freedom of the existential totality
belongs to itself now and forever.

Human life can only be maintained
by a fidelity to a knowledge of,
a caring for,
a responsibility to,
and a respect for
each and every thing.

An idea or a belief is never sufficient.

Both must live to complement what is already
here, there, and everywhere.

And if they do not, they are worthless
in the journey of humankind.
It is true that a mad mind
can harbor a child for a while; however,
it is only in wearing that maturing mantel of
“active concern for life and growth”
that we add a loving purpose to the human mosaic.
Who has ever returned from the dead to say,
“My understanding was complete”?
We must live *open enough*
and *closed enough*
to further the Grand Design.
From the bowels of history,
we have become predicates of the now.
Our lessons must deal with the facts of the present:
I am here now!
Is a commandment blessing us all
with the ability to effect change,
a change that harbors and promulgates life,
life that in embracing itself, gives of itself
so that other selves may follow.
Indeed,
“As it was in the beginning,
it is now,
and it forever shall be.”
Hold fast to the nurturing moment,
it will become today’s and tomorrow’s gift.

I AM!

I am but a pebble
skipping along the surface of a pond
and then –
there I lie, bottomed out.

Dappled rays of weakened light
illuminate memories when elements
battered my body, enraged my mind,
tore at my soul.

In my watery grave,
I await the next breath of the universe,
yearning to bridle and mount the steed of self,
to wend my way,
to ride again the cyclonic winds
of time and circumstance,
becoming another *one*
learning to mix inexorably and eternally
in a new now.

IN THE FACE OF FEAR

Every age has had its choices –
to run, hide, submit, succumb,
and even expire,
or to stand tall, be creative, courageous,
meet the challenge:
choose life!

The truth of the human presence
provides a history of surmounting mountain-tops
and being swept away in valleys.
There has always been a relationship
between life and death.

In the face of this,
we have proven resilient.

We have,
in the face of war,
natural disasters, and pestilence,
survived.

More of us have more and are able to do more
than ever before in the history of the species.

This seems to fly in the face
of the daily myopic media coverage
of the human story.

(This by no means belittles
the wonderful programs
of archeology, natural history,
and daily heroics.)

Fear's immobilizing ugly face
has never gained the upper hand.

There have been those moments
of doubt

and the wonder about death
that formed the background of an omnipresent
feature of the human portrait.

Yet it is to the foreground,
“that which is yet to come,”
upon which we have fixed our gaze.
This has enabled us to continue
to manifest our sense of
“I am!”
in the face of fear.
Adverse human circumstances
have provided opportunities
for celebration and reflection
– and more reflection and celebration.
One could say,
we are the dancing, singing, pondering species.
It is in the joy and exuberance of life,
as well as the studious create-it,
fit-it, change-it attitude,
that we have always said
a resounding yes to life!
There has always been a preponderance of
faith, hope, and love.
The innate drive to an awareness
of the presence of the person is:
There has always been a preponderance of faith.
“Yes, we can and yes, we will.”

IT TAKES TWO

Does it take a dialog to set the record straight?

Yes, it does!

To enter and to become one with,
is the Holy Human Grail.

Blessed we are and blessed we must become.

It is from that sacred triumvirate of
Thought, Word, and Deed
that we take our roles and parse communion
to and with all others.

When do we become aware of the holy undertaking?

It is always in those silent inner sanctums
of the self

that we are given to realizations
of yeses and nos.

The paths are many, yet the way is narrow.

In the end there is forever only One
with whom we learn that sacred dance,
have that inner struggle,
win the Great Battle.

Hearken to those troubling moments
when we must choose to capture
flights of the mind,
those that mirror the Divine Will.

As truth floats across the necessity of our understanding,
stand still and reflect.

Grab that spiral-double-helix of "His and mine,"
and holding on to both,
become that bond
that makes the real stay its course.

IT'S OVER!

The war with the Taliban is won.
Oh, there will be stragglers –
even a few converts,
but theirs was a lost cause
from the beginning.
When that *Eddie Bauer* catalog
was found
and they looked.
Oh, yes!
Every bearded one of them looked.
They looked at the Ummah,
the lithe, free, beautiful women
smiling at them
from the pages.
Would it be that their minds
would own their eyes and say,
“I looked.
I liked what I saw
and I looked again.”
To be proud with integrity is all there is.
If you can't even own your own,
you lose!
You've lost!

LATE SEPTEMBER

Crispness owns September morns.
Dew moistens humus.
Nostrils inform.
Limp grasses hang.
Seasoned leaves stir.
The sun's muted brilliance fights
a shortening day.
Stiff foliage is accompanied by stiff joints.
Waning rays almost warm
outstretched supplicating hands.
Stark colors fade to dead pastels.
Clustered clouds silver once-blue water.
Shimmerings attempt portents
of future's dreams.
Shadows wash.
Lingering druthers hint.
Rustlings whisper,
"Hurry! This too must pass."
The west's cauldron is swallowed.
Burnished-black silhouettes long for tomorrow.
Fear accompanies.
Day leaps, embracing evening.
Death's door opens.
Sleep comes.
We awake.
Dawn's splendor crowns the world.
Born-again eyes touch unbounded hope.

MEMORIES

How can a photograph, like a memory,
be so alluring when it only holds
a simple slice of time?
Moments in time –
What holds them together,
glues memories to the heart?
When, in knowing the wider world,
how is it that we wish so for those tranquil settings
of our youth?
The times – my times –
which one –
ones are the one(s)
that matter most?
And why?
Land and trees, water and rocks,
moss and lichen,
first memories of first things,
paths remembered and forgotten.
Which ones will come fluttering
through my memories,
abruptly crashing in upon a current intent?
Lost and found,
always with my own truths.
I still wander on those paths of time
when purpose seems so hard to find
as time adds to our understanding
swirling wonders to occupy my mortal hours.
Life's simplicities
and moments of grandeur
happen between births and deaths –
deaths and births.

MUSIC

Wagner's operas – crescendos
sweep us into the state of the moment,
group reactions,
animal instincts,
herd behaviors,
raptures.
Oh ye of little faith,
beware!

NEVER BORED!

How is it that flashes of brilliance
come with ignorance nipping at their heels
and God laughing uproariously?

It is that
amid mundane scatterings,
a recognition of profane encounters,
one finds –
if one seeks the one in,
or a to and from
“the other,”
the sacredness of it all.

OLD CHURCHES

“Just another old church,” some tourist says.
I get anxious
and glance around hurriedly.
Then I remember
the church in Ocotlán,
and smile.
A fuzziness emerges
and then I remember
the church of Santo Domingo
in Oaxaca.
A crisis comes
and I remember
the church in San Miguel,
and then they come in a flood,
from Ixtepeji to San Cristóbal,
from the cathedral in Cuernavaca
to Santa Prisca in Taxco’s delightful square,
to El Santuario in Chimayo,
they come.
From all across the land they come,
and I remember.
I give a smile to the uninformed tourist
and say,
“Take another look and wonder why
the builders took so much time
to do the job so well for Him.”

OUR WORLD

I see ...
scars on the mountains,
smog in the valleys,
scum on the streams, rivers, and lakes.
There is trash in the ravines
and scattered along the roadsides.
What have we done to our world?
When will an ancient shudder send us into
lamentations?
How long must we wait before we realize
we have failed to instruct our children –
walk with pride and awe
on the breasts of
Mother Earth.

POETRY LOST...

Welling up ... and gone!
While I took my children on walks
exploring the history of Timber Ranch,
hunting quail at Rancho Aguililla,
to Hueco Tanks after mulies,
at the Aransas with wild hogs,
the Lincoln for grouse,
the Santa Fe hunting elk,
the Gila encountering mystery,
the Kaibab exploring,
and finally,
the Coconino chasing a dream.
From hardwood forests
to alpine moments and the deserts,
from east Texas pines
to south Texas brush and llano,
to cliff dwellings and ancient sea beds,
we trekked and were struck with excitement and awe
by being's grandeur.
We explored and we hunted.
And yet,
I never told them the
"whole story."
Please!
Give me another moment!

Q & A

“Give me one thing that tells you
of the beauty of the world!
One thing that beyond doubt indicates
a truth that of itself
would be enough to say,
“The struggles of history have been
worth the effort.”

“Just one?

Ah ...

a sunset losing itself in a cloudy February sky,
the foreground full of soccer fields
and teams of young athletes,
who in rushing about meet the ball
and tumble into each other.

Then leaping to their feet continue on
with the game

in the true spirit of the sport:
playing to win yet knowing to play
is to risk a loss or gain a win.

Beautiful young girl athletes
testing selves against others and the game.

In this –

history has delivered a vast storehouse
of freedom –
to live one’s own life and to love one’s choice.

READING ON A BRIGHT DAY
AFTER A RAINFALL

As logos seeks to discover,
it must be a going and coming,
a while there, a while here,
and meanwhile everywhere.

The "I,"
a participation in
as a choice,
must recognize
the attention to the will,
and be reminded of the
"what for?"
of the one.

Reading Heidegger
is like swimming in a clear, cold,
spring-fed lake
on a bright sun-shiny day.
You can only see so far,
and then there is a shimmering
that gives everything an ephemeral eternity
as one goes about discovering the disclosedness
of what is already there.

Remember!
Da-sein is!
Da-sein moves!
Because Da-sein cares!

PETROGLYPHS

A Prologue

It is not known where our story really begins; it is thought that there is some connection with Father Augustine Schwarz and his presence in Arizona in the early part of the twentieth century. But surely there were other important antecedents to this interesting story.

The story begins with an Apache youth some 10 to 12 years of age who, without known parents, became a student in a mission school in Arizona around 1923. He was called Pounding Eagle. It was said that it was a name given to him by the elders when he was very young. He had found a piece of a broken pick and he used it as a chisel to carve on the rocks that he would climb on when he wasn't doing all of those things that the young do. He was a gifted artist and had a facility with languages. Apparently, a meeting with Father Schwarz and the school children during which Pounding Eagle had the opportunity to spend an afternoon taking a walk with the priest seems to have had a profound effect on his life.

Bits and pieces of oral history have left us with these central elements: Young Pounding Eagle was a conflicted, yet brilliant student. He had an admiration for his tribal culture and history as well as an insatiable curiosity about the Bible and his science courses. This combination of interests and ability evidently struck Father Augustine as a combination with great potential.

In any event, there are snippets of recollections of those who knew them both that it was during an afternoon walk that a fundamental transformation took place in the young man's life. He became dedicated to leaving what was called "A Path." He

enjoyed talking about the Apache warrior's commitment to the tribe and the astonishing commitment of a white man who had come from afar to dedicate his life to other people. And of course, there were the Gospel narratives.

The story seems to be that when Father Schwarz was asked why he was in the Southwest working with the native American tribes, he may have answered by saying something like, "I have always felt that to each there is a path and when I was very young and reading the travels of St. Paul, I decided that if I could do the same, travel to other places (he had wanted to go to China and yet, as luck would have it, he was sent to Arizona) and instill in the minds and hearts of others a commitment to find their own path, that I would be fulfilling my obligations to myself and to my brothers and my sisters."

This dedication to path finding and sharing apparently came at just the right time for Pounding Eagle. He had been thinking and talking for some time about an aspect of his culture that he felt was an essential ingredient to his personal life journey. He often spoke of a "Vision Quest" that he felt honor-bound to make. It was not long after his walk with Father Schwarz that he left the school and was only heard of again some years later when he appeared as a young doctor who was dedicated to caring for youths with addictions: "misaligned points of view" he called them.

During group sessions with his patients he would tell them about his own story when he was growing up and how it became necessary for him to leave his school and find himself. He would refer to a path that he discovered and followed throughout his own life.

PETROGLYPHS

Jack Landon and Jim Channing had a friendship that spanned some 35 years. They were close neighbors when they started their elementary schooling and had attended the same schools all the way through high school. It was only during their college years that they had both gone their separate ways. Jack attended Texas A&M and received an MD degree specializing in bionics. Jim had attended UCLA and after degrees in philosophy and chemistry opted for law school and a JD degree specializing in corporate philanthropy. Their paths crossed again in Phoenix when they returned to establish their professional careers. Jack's practice dealt with traumatic limb severances and the attendant problems of the costs of some of the sophisticated prosthetics. Jim's corporate clients needed opportunities to give back to the community some of what Jim called their *obscene* profits. He was also quick to add that without those profits he would not have a job.

Both spent their time gaining the kinds of professional reputations that we could all wish we had. They were both married, with wonderful families. Jack's wife Suzanne and Jim's wife Sherry, Suzz and Cher, respectively, were wives dedicated to professional careers as well as maintaining home fronts for overworked and tired husbands and fathers, who would spend their "spare" time coaching every sport imaginable that all young girls and boys should at least try and their parents think they should experience. They were blessed with children of the same ages, except for Jack and Suzz, who had a tag-along little boy some 5 years younger than the other four. Jim and Cher had two boys who were 10 and 12 and Jack and Suzz had two girls 9 and 13. Jim had teased Jack unmercifully about the "man thing" until along came the little "Jackster," who now, at 4, was the darling of everyone's heart. Jim's boys referred to him as "our little brother."

Over the years, Jack and Jim had managed to maintain a commitment to each other; every summer they took 3 to 4 days off and did some “serious hiking” together to get away from it all and to set their souls right—not an easy task in the twenty-first century. They would often spend evenings after a picnic supper, when the little “rascals” had retired, discussing the ups and downs of their fast-paced world. Their wives would be engaged with their own perceptions of the trials and tribulations of aging, motherhood, and demanding careers. Often the concluding remarks were, “Who makes up these rules?” And, “Why are we so driven?” All “Type A,” they couldn’t answer the first question and thought they knew all too well why they were so driven.

Jack and Jim, “The boys,” as their wives affectionately referred to them, set out on their annual outing on September 10th, 2011, a week after the school year had started and before the great calamities of scheduling would descend upon them.

The North Rim of the Grand Canyon had always been on their list and this was now their goal. They would stop by Snake Gulch Rock to ponder the ancients and their leavings and then they’d head on to their main objective, the Esplanade Trail. Some rock-climbing friends had recommended to them that some offshoots of the trail could provide excellent “reflective hideouts” for Type-As. Fact of the matter, all of their friends were As who were forever calling the kettle sitting next to them blacker than themselves. Such is the camaraderie of some of the century’s young professionals and home makers.

The day was hot, hotter than they had expected, yet they felt well prepared and more than ready for their adventure. Both fit men, they managed a good pace and were even ahead of schedule as they descended the trail. Their plan was to spend two nights in the canyon giving them two full days to meditate and discuss the “personal things” of their current busy lives:

families, professional commitments, friends, and the world at large.

Their first day was one of those perfect autumn days when the exuberant face of Nature matched their own; their spirits soared along with the sides and spires of the canyon. They spent their first night at a little seep still dribbling from late summer rains. The evening's conversation centered on how each one felt blessed to have such friendship and such wonderful wives and how lucky they were to have healthy, boundless, energy-endowed children.

The following day they decided to find some of those "interesting places" mentioned by their friends. Someplace off the beaten path would sit well with these two accomplished warriors of the twenty-first century. What could possibly happen? After all, they had each other.

As always seems to be the case, accidents come when we least expect them and they can be devastating. Jack had just jumped to a large boulder and was about to make his next leap when his foot slipped and he fell. The fall was not very far, yet when he landed his right foot wedged in a crack with his toes extended downward and caught under another stone. His left foot slipped off the landing rock and with all his might he extended his leg to catch his balance and landed on his back on a sharp rock. His left leg was overextended, and the last thing he felt before he landed was the tearing of his left Achilles' tendon. Everything then went dark and blank. When he regained consciousness he felt no pain, no sensation at all in his lower extremities.

He had called out to Jim who was several yards ahead of him. Jim heard the muffled cry and turned back quickly to assess the situation. Jack had blacked out and lay still over a large rock. Jim raced back to him and knelt beside him. There was a flicker of an eyelid and Jack mumbled as if from some deep trance, “Achilles tendon . . .,” then nothing. Jim put his hand on his friend and Jack said quickly, “No! I feel nothing below the waist. Don’t move me!” The lexicons of the facts were laid out in his mind even before he had called out to Jim for help.

Jim knelt beside his friend, feeling absolutely helpless. As Jack lay motionless and unconscious, Jim thought, “God! Don’t let this end here.” Jack moaned and slowly regained consciousness. He said in a measured tone, “I can’t walk and we are going to need to get some help as soon as possible.” Jim’s mind was already racing; they had filled their water bottles before starting out in the morning and they had their backpacks loaded with the essentials, and yet there was only one thing that would solve their problem—immediate medical evacuation. They had tried their cell phones earlier and found that they were in the proverbial “dead-zone” in the canyon.

Jack broke the momentary silence. “Jim, it’s up to you. I can’t move and risk any further injury. We are going to need EMTs as soon as you can get them. I can try to maintain consciousness while you get up high enough to make a call.” It was as if Jack was in an operating room and giving calm orders to a surgical assistant. As Jim shook his pack off and placed it near Jack, he said, “You have water here where you can reach it. I’m on my way!”

He glanced back down the trail that they had come up and thought of the long trip down and up from where they had started. His challenge was to get out of the dead zone as quickly as possible to get a signal and call for help. He turned to face the almost sheer cliff directly ahead. He looked down at

his friend and said. "I'm good to go. Take care of yourself and I'll get help before you know it."

They both knew that time was of the essence, and they both knew that they could rely on one another for whatever was needed, whenever it was needed.

It did not take Jim long to reach the cliff. He quickly studied the face to the left and to the right. He could see no place to get a good first step up, much less one that would lead to some plausible way to scale the rock wall. There just wasn't any apparent weakness to the face, no way to get higher to get a signal for his phone. Finally, after some further studying of the wall, he thought he could see a series of small ledges that might serve as a "ladder" to a chimney and then on up to the top of the rim. And yet, try as he might, he could not reach the first ledge.

"Come on!" he shouted out loud. "There has to be a way!" He thought, *I could pile up some stones and get up high enough to reach the first ledge. From there on it will be a free climb. I must concentrate, and maintain my weight over my feet.* Searching about, he saw only a small space, some 10 to 12 feet, in front of the cliff face and no handy rocks to pile up like a pedestal. His mind raced. *Maybe, just maybe, if I run full-tilt straight at the cliff and leap at the face, I can get just high enough to reach the first ledge.* A second later he was racing toward the face and as his climbing shoes caught just enough traction, he propelled himself up high enough to slap his hand over the ledge, feeling as he did an indentation, some grooves, just enough to offer a handhold. Hanging on the ledge with his right hand, he threw his left up and grabbed on with both hands. *Three points of purchase,* he thought, as his feet hunted

for any tiny anomaly in the sheer stone cliff. He needed just enough to steady himself while looking for his next purchase.

He was just an amateur climber with limited experience, including reading some climbing magazines, but it would have to be enough. His left foot found a tiny rise and he felt the pressure on his fingertips diminish. Breathing deeply, he studied the space above him while he raised his right leg and began the process of testing for his next three-point hold. *It must be where I can use the strength of my legs. I must hug the face just close enough to allow myself to use all my strengths.*

His searching right foot found a foothold and slowly he pushed himself up, resting his arm on the ledge. As he glanced along the ledge his eyes caught the indentations his fingers had felt. There, to his surprise, was a petroglyph, words carved in the top of the ledge. “Be One!” *What on earth? ... Where did that come from?* Shifting his eyes up to the face of the cliff he saw a small crack large enough to insert the fingers of his right hand and get a good finger-hold. Using his current purchase he raised his left hand and inserted his fingers for a good finger-lock. He then started pulling up his right leg. He slowly got a foot on the ledge, and reaching up with his left hand he placed it in another crack and slowly raised his left leg. He then found himself standing some 10 feet up on the face of the canyon wall. He looked down again at the carved letters. “**Be One!**” Questions flashed through his mind: *What does that mean? Who put it there? How was it put there?*

Returning to the task at hand, he began to search for another foothold, another handhold. He could see another small ledge some 8 feet up; slowly he inched his way toward it. And again, when he placed his fingers over the edge he felt indentations, grooves. As he pulled himself over the ledge, he saw again that there were more words carved in the ledge. “**Stand Still in Silence!**” As Jim listened to his labored breath and pounding

heart, he wondered, *Who would write these words? Anyone climbing up this face would have to be straining and breathing hard, just like me.* Then he thought for a moment and said to himself, *Maybe what these words are telling me is to be careful in my movements and silent in my mind so that I pay attention to what it is that I'm doing.* Then he added out loud, "Duh!" in that self-deprecating manner of those Type-A personality crossovers, those from the Gen-Xers to the Millennials.

In thinking about his progress and the time it was taking, Jim's mind was battered by his attempts to stay focused on the climb, his concern for Jack, and his nagging wonder about the carvings and what was intended by their meaning. Struggling and almost slipping, he managed to gain a foothold and lift himself to the third ledge. His fingers had already told him again there was awaiting him some gift of someone else's climbing efforts. The ledge was narrow but some 5 feet in length. He sought out handholds and when he was secure, he read the message. It was spread out along the full length of the ledge. "**True, Not True – Mine, Not Mine.**" Resting for a brief moment at the end of the ledge, he couldn't help but reflect on the sum substance of the words. "**Be One! Stand Still in Silence. True, Not True – Mine, Not Mine.**"

What exactly did they mean? He glanced up to his next target, a smaller ledge just above his reach. He studied the face, hunting for any handhold. He could find nothing. He thought about the height of the ledge and thought to himself, *I could make a dynamic jump and catch hold of the ledge.* Then he reminded himself, *Don't leave contact with the stone! One must know where one is at all times in making an ascent.* To be "flying in the air" for the briefest of moments could prove to be deadly. And yet he could find no handhold with which to get himself started toward the next ledge. His analytic mind kicked in and he turned the rule on its head. There must come a time when the rules could not be followed. The laws of the universe

demanded an existential response to an ever-changing world. Then he reflected on the “other one,” the one who had gone before, and he drew inspiration from not only the message of the words but their tracks in the stone.

He measured the distance in his mind. *I think I can make it if I position myself sideways and give it all I have while staying focused solely on reaching my target. I must lead off with my right foot, and extending my body to its full length, with my left foot my last contact with the ledge and my right arm extended to its full length, I will have access to the full stretch of my body.* Then he thought again of Jack, who was probably passing in and out of consciousness. *Well ... if he remains immobile it could inhibit any further damage.* Returning to the task at hand he said to himself, *he has his challenges and so do I.* Tensing every muscle in his legs and arms he slowly bent down, and in an act of faith in his athletic ability and his power of intention, he leapt towards the next ledge. His right hand slapped on the ledge and his fingers felt, almost as if they had intended to find, grooves in the stone. They were there!

His digging feet were busy searching for any kind of purchase. Suddenly his right foot found some protrusion, some slight bulging in the face. He was able to brace himself by grabbing the stone with his left hand, and then he raised his left leg toward a vertical jutting-out little ledge, one that could have served as a handhold, had it been horizontal. Slowly he lifted himself up to the fourth ledge. He struggled to find another handhold above him so that he could pull his entire body into a vertical position. He found another crack that was large enough for a good hand jam and was able to right himself and get situated on the ledge.

Then, as was his current *modus operandi*, he looked down to see what the benefactor of the carvings was now giving him to mull over as he continued to try to save his friend. “**Own It**

Now!” He blurted out, “What on earth is all this about!” *Are these some kind of commandments, imperatives, some ... what?* His lawyer’s mind kept trying to fight off the logic, if any, of the messages and to maintain a focus on the task at hand, and yet he couldn’t help but feel that there was some important message contained in the trail of words strung along the ledges.

And so it was that he scaled the face with omnipresent urgent thoughts. *Hug the face! Three-point purchase! Weight on my feet and legs! Hurry! But take your time! Is Jack okay? What was the message in the words? I must make it to a place where I can make a call.* Several times he had tried, to no avail. He had to continue on with his climb.

The next ledge greeted him with a pleasant aphorism: “**Act in Love!**” This was something that he felt could have meaning for anyone at anytime, and yet in this current moment he was thinking of his friend and his family. Jack and Suzz had a deeply caring relationship and three tremendous children. He had to make it in time to get Jack some help. He thought of Cher and his son Mark and “Little Charlie,” a namesake for his grandfather. Jim thought for a moment about his father and his tenacious grandfather. Both men had been stellar examples of fatherly love and commitment. He was truly blessed. The more he thought about his and Jack’s personal and professional situations the luckier he felt. Wives that were best friends, men who were best friends, children who were great friends, it doesn’t get any better than that.

Meanwhile, somewhere down below, Jack struggled to remain conscious and to accommodate the needs of his embattled body. The point of impact, his lower back, was beginning to emanate some pain. That could be a good thing. It was so far just a low roar, manageable but omnipresent, except when he lapsed into unconsciousness. His fatigue was his major nemesis. He must stay awake. He had no idea how long it

would take to get high enough to get a signal. All he knew was that Jim would do everything he could as fast as he could. That was the kind of guy he was. Whenever they were working on a mutual project Jim would say, "Let's get 'er done! Then we can play." Jack's grandfather had often used that expression when he'd spent summers on his grandparents' farm, and Jim had borrowed it, especially when they needed a little extra boost.

Jack reflected on the current state of affairs: down and injured but not beaten. It was something he had used with his trauma-ridden patients. "Never give up!" was his mantra for them as well as for himself. His mind wandered to his family, to his wife and children. There was just no way he wasn't going to make it out of this canyon and back to his family. He knew that he needed some really personal and meaningful way to stay focused. It was one thing to have a lengthy surgery and to commit to long hours of operating on a difficult amputation or some kind of corrective surgery; it was quite another thing when one's own body was injured, feeling the slow advent of the long-term effects of trauma. He recalled the saying, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." He thought about that for a moment. *Only when one cannot be creative!*

It was essential that he focus on something that would give him that edge of meaningful intent, something that would help him to recharge and stay the course. He could wish for a Zen Koan, a candle of reflection to mirror and hold the truth. He decided that he would recount his entire relationship with Suzanne, how they met, what brought them together, how they had spent their time at the university. She was a Texas ranch girl. And that just about said it all. There was nothing she thought she couldn't do. Jack admired her for that resolution and commitment. He had to stay focused. As he struggled to maintain his consciousness and commitment to hydration, he reveled in his reflections of their escapades. He would make it!

As Jack maneuvered ever so gently his upper body from time to time, his hands dug into the surrounding sand, seeking a space deep enough to find some semblance of coolness that the rest of his body could share. It was then that he felt some object, some pliable roll of something. Digging ever so gently with his hand he freed the object, and pulling it from the cool depths, was surprised to see a leather roll tied with a leather thong. Almost embarrassed at finding what someone had rolled up, tied up, and put in such a secret place, he slowly untied the thong and unrolled the small sheet of parchment. He could barely make out the letters. It seemed to be a list of words.

- 1. Be One**
- 2. Stand Still in Silence**
- 3. True, Not True – Mine, Not Mine**
- 4. Own it Now**
- 5. Act in Love**
- 6. Dedicate Yourself to Growth**
- 7. Follow All of the Rules**

What does this mean? Not knowing enough, and as one who always sought order in everything, his highly tuned medical training began to work over the list to see if there was some inherent pattern or purpose. He read the list over several times, until he came to see an inherent simplicity: Perhaps there was just one word that said it all. “One!” he breathed gently. Then he sifted the list down to its basics: One, Still, True, Now, Love, Growth, All. He went over his list of words, reflecting on the fundamental meaning of each one. As he kept going over the list in his mind he kept coming back to “One!” – one person, one silence, one truth, one mine, one now, one love, one everything. There was an incredible power and purpose connected to *one*. One self, one life, one love, one purpose, one ... *everything!*

As his mind snapped to its current purpose, he knew he could maintain whatever level of consciousness he needed in order to take care of the issues at hand. He knew, deep down inside himself, that he could do whatever it took in order to survive.

Dripping with sweat, Jim kept moving toward the next ledge; if he could get to the next two ledges there was a chimney that opened up and he could maneuver his body into it and follow it all the way up the cliff's face until he could get a signal.

While standing on his current ledge Jim put his hands up, and as he felt for the next place to gain some handhold, his mind kept thinking of the words he had encountered on each of the ledges. Slowly a distilling took place in his mind: One self, one silence, one purpose, and one now, one love. He thought, *This guy was persistent and well focused. That's all I need to be until I get high enough to catch a signal. Just stay focused.* "Just" was one of his favorite words. The whole study of law, justice, was a seeking after the truth, whether it happened before, would have consequently happened, or would happen in the future if things stayed the way they were or whether ... whatever ... *just* was what it was, a word that *just* about said it all.

As his searching fingers and feet came upon sufficient protrusions or indentations, he slowly raised himself to the next ledge, fully expecting to find another message. And yes! There it was: "**Dedicate Yourself to Growth!**" "*Just* growth?" he whispered. That is all it takes in all things, a person dedicated to some purpose, whatever the purpose, a direction of being that when it finds itself in some new space, while still coinciding with self, while maintaining a sense of well-being, screams "yes!" in some self-confirming way. And that was exactly what he was doing. He was on a mission.

With renewed energy he moved on and up to the next ledge and was greeted to what seemed like some kind of joke: **“Follow All of the Rules, A Holy Endeavor Is About to Begin!”** Jim’s ironic side led him to exclaim, “I’ve already started!” Immediately his rational mind chided him. *And so you have and so you will continue.* He carefully raised his body into the bottom of the crevasse. He finally felt secure. He tried his phone. There was one bar of a signal. He muttered, “Not enough yet!” Putting his feet up in front of his crouched body and hunching his body while pushing up with his legs, hands, and arms, he slowly made his way up the fissure, stopping every few yards to try and get a stronger signal.

On his eleventh move (he had a penchant for counting) he tried again and there was a strong signal! He dialed 911 and gave the coordinates of his current location as well as the facts at hand. He also indicated that slightly below where Jack was lying, there was a spot where a hovering ’copter could drop personnel and evacuate an injured party. He shouted out to Jack, even though he thought he was too high up and too far over to be heard, “Help is on its way!”

He knew that Jack would hear the helicopter and know that help was coming. He did not want to attempt to climb back down when he knew the facts of the matter; in his own case, he had been tested to the limit of what he knew and was. It was another one of those climbing counter-intuitive but true moments; weight on your feet, don’t rely too much on your hands; it’s much harder to climb down than it was to climb up. A friend of a friend, a rock climber of some notoriety, someone who knew Walt Shipley, had reiterated one of Walt’s “greatest personal truths on climbing”: *Gravity is the only law I understand.*

He felt very lucky to have made it to the fissure that he knew he could use to scramble to the top of the rim. It would take

him, perhaps, only several hours to reach the lodge at the trail-head. He moved along the rim to his right to try and catch a glimpse of Jack. No such luck. He remained in a place that he thought would offer the best place to witness most of the action of the rescue operation. He wanted to stay as close to his friend as possible. He needed to know that Jack had been rescued. He would then get in touch with Jack's family and let them know what had happened, and that Jack was on his way to the hospital. He had already called Cher and alerted her. She would contact Suzz and they would be waiting at the hospital when Jack arrived.

Jim waited for about 25 minutes for the chopper to arrive and in just a few minutes they carried out the rescue. His heart took a leap when he saw Jack, who had been strapped into a basket, rise up over a spire. Jack raised his hand and waved. Jim waived back and clasped his hands together in a gesture of togetherness and to convey a job well done.

After the rescue was over and while Jim was walking along the rim, he reflected on the strange set of circumstances that had led him to see a possible way up to the chimney and a way to get high enough to get a signal and finally a way to get to the top of the rim.

The ledges had been that "ladder" he sought and all things had gone well. It was then that his mind returned to the "messages" he had discovered on each and every ledge. He returned to his ruminations on the intent and value of the writings. One self, one silence, one purpose, one now, one love, growth into one's self, one All *justly* encompassing the all of everything. These were not idle pieces of wisdom. They were profound expressions of humanity's ability to express sentiments about life and the species' purposeful participation in the accumulation of wisdom. They were simple statements of simple facts that encompassed the depths of the human circumstance. They were,

he concluded, a very concise way of providing a path—he smiled at the word “path.” Anything but ... yet he pictured a gentle hill and dale meandering and a path through pastoral scenes, then, interrupted by his pragmatic side, it came to the forefront of his thoughts and he shouted, “Just one of everything! Wow!” Then, shouting in an exuberance of relief and life, he said, “Get ’er done!”

When Jim returned from the canyon, he immediately went to the hospital and gave Jack an enormous bear hug. “We made it!” he said. “Yes, we sure did,” chimed Jack. Their wives looked at one another and left, as Suzz said, “You guys need a moment alone.”

After the door closed they were quiet for a minute and then Jim began his story of the ascent and the words he encountered along the way. He also shared the wonderings about the strange words and the impact they had on him during his climb and walk back to the lodge. Jack listened carefully and nodded thoughtfully. When Jim had finished with his story, Jack said, “Well, I guess we both had an encounter.” Jim asked, “What do you mean?” Jack related his discovery of the scroll and shared what his thoughts had been as he worked at maintaining a state of consciousness.

They were silent for some time. Finally, Jack said, smiling, “I guess we were the beneficiaries of some truly wise old soul.” “Or some very smart, young committed person” Jim offered. “Right, someone with a sense of humor, accomplishment, and gratefulness,” Jack added. Their discussion continued with their individual connections of oneness and justness as well as their other related thoughts, including the tremendous joy they both felt about their happy reunion. Jack finally offered, “I think I now have a simple message that I can share with my patients, something that will let each one incorporate their own readiness and commitment to whatever task lies before them.”

Jim nodded in agreement, adding, “I have decided to share this with my corporate clients, some of whom really need to slow down and set a new stage for their personal and professional commitments.”*

* With the aid of modern medicine, Jack recovered fully from his injuries. He and Jim are still taking their retreats together.

EPILOGUE

Jack and Jim both eventually shared the story of their “findings” with their wives and children. They explained how they felt about the commitment of someone who would leave for others what they were fortunate enough to discover and how they both felt obligated to integrate the meaning of the messages in their own personal and professional lives.

They commented on how they had been blessed to discover a path and how important it was to leave a path for others. Both families agreed that a person’s most important accomplishment was to leave a path that others would find useful and be rewarded in their own way.

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An elderly man, still active in his late nineties, still thinking of ways to maintain his commitment to social intercourse, to the sharing of his knowledge with others, sat in the late afternoon sun reading the Arizona Republic newspaper. He came across an article about two hikers, who in their trials had found triumph and had simultaneously discovered strange words, words left to tell, left to describe a path that aided them in their mutual life challenges. Laying the paper across his knees, he looked into the setting sun and remembered Father Augustine Schwarz and a late afternoon walk, a walk that inspired a young man to take his own “Vision Quest,” and of a personal journey long ago. And nodding his head, he smiled.