

## JOURNEY TO THE LIGHT

*I aspired, I achieved, I had attained, but it was time to find authenticity.  
The anguish of encountering self.*

### **Prologue**

Witnessing my father's death, that nonverbal dialogue, releasing him and witnessing him "see" the instant of his passing was profound. Spiritually, a pivotal point, the most consequential event of my life.

In an instant, not measurable by time, I saw him "see." Only because of the profound effect on my life of that millisecond do I know it was not of this world. My reasoning, comprehension, and perception were more than altered. I cannot describe what happened, other than the events in real time, which was perhaps less than a minute. I did not know what happened other than what my logical mind has tried to decipher.

It was the purest, a gift, my father and I shared. As he was preparing to go, unsolicited, we forgave each other. All the anger, distrust, misunderstandings and fear were not even part of our beings. We were in a state of grace, pure Love appeared, there were no judgements in the light of eternal love. When I told him he could go, I was allowed to see, less than a glimpse, his vision. When I say "see," I do not mean an image, a picture. However, to perceive the Light, you would have to be in it.

The difficulties relaying this story now, are the two time frames, then and now. Then, I knew nothing of the light or near death experiences. At the time of my father's passing and the three years that followed, I had no external explanation of what happened. Yet, at the time, through that shared state of Grace, I was profoundly changed.

Not to complicate this story even more, there is a third time frame. When I moved to the wilderness in 1978, it was just six months after my father's passing. In what appears to be an obscure way, I was trying to unravel this great mystery. Not just what he saw, but the radical transformation I was experiencing as a result of that fleeting moment in time.

I was suddenly transported to isolation and a transformed to a state of mind that was nothing but questions. It seems that out of the blue I wanted knowledge. Not knowledge of the worldly, but such subjects as, Perception, Time/Motion, Free Will, Self, Good and Evil, Eternal, Truth, Love and God. Then came answers. Although there was one question, one line, I repeatedly wrote and pondered.

How much can one moment hold . . . ?

There was no amount of therapy, religion, or maturity that could accomplish the undoing of a life of

pain and the animosity that existed between my father and me. We tolerated each other in name only. Never were the words "love" or the act of forgiveness expressed between us. In an instant through *forgiveness* all the bitterness that was our relationship was mysticly gone. How else can I say it? "How much can one moment hold?" . . . In one moment . . . a life time of bitterness was no longer in my being. Gone, vanished into vapor.

In that moment, time did not exist. In that moment there was All, The Eternal, Love appeared. There are no words that can describe that moment, only the result. For the first time I experienced genuine forgiveness resulting in authentic love appearing. Something my soul had been craving. But, I was not ready to understand the significant of such a gift.

I believe the stage had been set for me to begin traveling, knowing nothing, to truthfully encounter myself, searching for understanding. Searching for that Light I once had a glimpse of. I did not find it in that great Cathedral, but in the wilderness.



### **Spirituality and Mysticism**

[Note. I feel a lot of the early material dating from 1978 through 1981, should be deleted. I leave it to the wisdom of an editor as to how much is usable.]

November 5, 1978

12:00 Midnight, closed and left the house in Clayton, Georgia.

November 7, 1978

I found and rented a small farmhouse in Baker, West Virginia.

January 22, 1979

Purchased 26.40 acres - Hardy County, West Virginia.

Winter, 1978-79

Portion of a letter to a friend.

I understand now what was happening to me. I was becoming quite dissatisfied with my own life in Clayton and that house. I was not certain what I wanted or needed. Now I know. Change, it was just that simple. This change was just the catharsis needed to put me back on my feet and a clearer understanding of my own life and its priorities.

When I left Clayton, I sold almost everything with the house. I wanted to start over without a lot of possessions to tie me down. I don't miss the house or what was in it, at all. I really feel free.

Here in Baker, I am very much alone with my work. I have been working on just pastels. By the way, I will have a one man show at Vorpall Gallery in New York this spring. They are already talking about, in addition to the spring show, a major painting show this coming November.

This winter I purchased 26.40 acres of beautiful rolling hills. About one quarter is pasture or meadow, just like a park. Now that I have found the land, which I love, and the right elements of the rural and natural environment, which is essential to my work, I have to create a home and studio. This will not be easy.

Winter, 1978-79

Portion of a letter to Richard Vesley.

At the beginning of this project, the house design, I had a great sense of inadequacy, having just moved to Baker and leaving all in Clayton. I had many adjustments to make in many areas. At the same time starting to design the house, which has become more than a house. In a vicarious way the house, and the move to Baker has become a vehicle to understanding myself. I had a lot of searching to do in order to understand the priorities of space, as reflected in my life. When I came to

Baker, I had set for my self two goals, two personality traits I wanted to develop, patience and moderation. The house in many ways has become an exercise in understanding these traits.

At times I do not fully understand my own motivations, I truly believe in my work, God has given me a vehicle to understanding and the overwhelming desire to find some truth in this life. My work is that vehicle. I am possessed by passion. I must add to that passion vision. For what good is passion without vision?

Outsiders many times disrupt this order. My commitment to my work is total. The conflict lies in the very human need for companionship. As you know, I live alone and living here in Baker, I am even more alone. The need for companionship is not that great on a day to day basis. However, in the years ahead, it frightens me very much. The prospect of spending these years alone. Is that the price I have to pay? Must I live alone and find the joy in life through my work?

April 6, 1979, through September 1, 1979 --- Built the house and studio.

October 12, 1979

One might say, "What brought you to West Virginia?" and I have many answers that might sound reasonable. I ask, "why did I leave?" Leave Clayton and all I had there. Running? Running from what?

What did I bring with me that I wanted to leave?  
What did I hope to find that I did not have?  
Peace, will it ever be?  
The only way is with God.  
But, I am so weak.

I have said, "I want to be alone in order to find self and in doing so help my work." What God asks is not that great, why can't I give Him what he asks? When I am alone, I can devote more of myself to Him. Alone, I am not distracted by weaknesses. I want to blend with people and even more so with my friends, which in the past year I have cut off. I do not understand why I find faults in those that are dear to me. And yet, I need someone here, here with me. I need God to be with me. I believe he brought me here to do His work. I have such guilt about my human needs, which every day I try to overcome. He has given me a freewill. It's so easy to fall down, down without even trying. I am so weak. I try to understand. There are days I do understand.

The answer is in my work and in that is pain. I must work. Before I start, I'm always down, why? For days now I have been pacing, wanting to work, I feel dry inside. Where is the joy I wanted to find here? Can one find happiness alone?  
All of my devices are to escape the present,  
To alter the moment.  
Is that the way life is to be?  
Whatever happened to the present?

As a child and young man, out of the basic human instinct for survival, I had learned to compensate. To find substitutions for the hole that was in my personality. To find distractions from my personal history, that frightened child. This was not a conscious act, although it was an act.

The isolation, brought on by my move to the wilderness, produced a face to face encounter with myself. I had to learn to live with that person and his unresolved issues. Again, those issues were not identified. Only living with the symptoms.

The isolation was painful and confronting, no guru to guide me. However, I was bullheaded enough not to give up and escape.

Most of the populous of the world live in communities, whether it is the family unit or a metropolitan city. There is a constant interaction with humankind.

As an individual, there are many ways to be entertained, stay busy, resulting in staying distracted from self. All of which can be avoidance. I wonder, how many people have there own great empty pit, not knowing what it is to fill it, a trunk full of unresolved, 'unfinished business'?

I have a theory. As long as a person owns that trunk, that pit in their life, they will find a distraction to avoid the contents. I prefer to say, come face to face with their "self." So to avoid that meeting, we look for ways to escape our true selves, when you become restless, antsy, bored, "What can I do to fix this feeling. I think I will go out, to the bar, to the movies, meet someone for dinner, get drunk, do drugs." Anything to avoid being alone with "myself, besides, *I don't know that person very well. They make me nervous just to be around him/her.*"

I have witnessed here, a house guest, after just eight hours, pacing the floor back and fourth, literally

like a caged animal. “How can you stand to live like this? What do you do for entertainment? Are there any bars around here or a movie theater?” That person could not be alone with them self.

Until the time that I “dropped out” and moved here my life was full, very full of people and welcomed distractions. I was not at all comfortable being alone with myself for long periods of time. I was well on my way to totally anesthetizing myself from myself. My anesthetic was not drugs or alcohol. It was being an overachiever and surrounding my self with lots of people. I believe I was full of pride. I loved the attention, after all I was a “famous artist.” I could be puffed up with self importance. Yet, I could be very generous and became a fixer of other people’s problems.

The one exception to all of this was when I was working. I was in another world, a private encounter with myself. In that world time did not exist. Weeks could pass without being aware of the world around me.

When I was working there was a balance, no compensations needed. But, when I come out of that private world, I was back to the compensations.

Within a few weeks, after all the high-keyed activity of building the house and studio had concluded, I became depressed. The reality of the isolation began to take its toll. There was no one, not a living soul in my life. I found myself going to the nearby village, to the grocery store, pushing a cart, just to be around people. No one knew Robert Singleton, or that he was a “famous artist.” In the past this had opened many doors for me, not now. Slowly, my ego was being eroded away.

That great empty pit from my childhood was opening. The scab of protection was dissolving. I was that frightened child again, with no resources to protect it self. I was living the fear, but not knowing what I was afraid of. I was being confronted by my self, with no place to escape. Nothing to distract me from the hole I was falling into, falling back in time, to be that vulnerable child, lost, alone, not knowing love.

October 13,1979

If I have discovered anything to date, in understanding self or so-called enlightenment, it’s my weakness. One of which is not being able to do anything about them. I fall victim to my own weaknesses. I fall victim to other people or what I think they want from me. I will give up my own will to give them theirs. I have often thought that by living alone, making abstinence easier, “Lead us not into temptation,” I could build a stronger charter, in order to be self-sufficient. And so I have cut myself off.

Winter 1979-1980

You know,  
Sometime when you get up  
In the morning.  
You are where you want  
To be.  
You don’t want to go anywhere.



Small-panned windows,  
Straight back, wooden chairs,  
Wood stoves,  
Candle light,  
Keyboard music,  
Dark bread, white cheese,  
Conversation,  
Friends.

I like, -----  
Mountains, high up,  
Clouds.  
The light,  
Snow, cold winters,



I watched the joy of falling snow,  
Alone,  
Diminishing the joy  
To a cry  
Not heard.

## **AGEING**

Ti's the season of long shadows  
It isn't that I am taller  
But that the light is lower.  
    When the eye begins to  
Lose its sharpness  
The inner vision searches  
For light  
But finds only shadows  
Reflecting the past

Ti's the season of long shadows.  
When the eye begins  
To lose its sharpness  
The inner vision sharpens  
Drawing into focus  
More and more  
The eternal

.  
I am but a battle ground  
The eternal  
Good versus evil

By what standard can I  
Judge or be judged  
Is man the measure  
Of all things?

We are taught that in  
Death is triumph.  
But the battle must be  
Fought first.



How much can one moment hold

That final moment of truth  
Death is final to the living only.



I died a little today  
I watched the dawn  
Alone - caught between the light  
And my own shadow  
This heavy shroud that covers  
Creates a silhouette  
Obscuring the source  
but gives perception of that  
Which cast the shadow

I am but a battle ground  
A battle between light and dark  
Declared with the dawn  
What I perceive is translated to pain  
Alone - I cast my own shadow.

December 1979

True wisdom  
*To turn around and see the light  
is to understand the shadow.*  
But the Light is blinding to mortal flesh.  
For I am caught between the Light  
and my own shadow.  
Will I ever see the Light?  
To look upon the Light is to  
see the face of God.  
*Know the Son, see the Light.*

January 13, 1980

There is such a thin line between being alone and loneliness. When I am lonely, it's uncomfortable, uncontrollable frustration and energy. Trying to escape from the feeling. Reaching for something that is not there. It happens when I want to share an experience, a thought, what I am seeing or feeling, more than anything, an exchange.

How can I overcome the frustration and accept the fact that I am alone, which is very painful? Something in me resists. I must maintain a balance.

The reason I am alone most of the time is that I find most people have no vision or passion in their life beyond their biological needs. What is often misused expression. I do not think that I am above them, it's just that there are so few who are with me. So to have friends I am always compromising. If I were 100% myself, I would run everyone away. Yet, in a compromising state, people say that it is one sided.

Does anyone understand that I am trying to reach out beyond myself? I am alone and in that is loneliness. must I retreat and live out my existence in solitude?



There are people who have great wings  
To soar.  
But, when they come down  
Because of sensual life,  
To everyday people  
They break their wings.



The isolation brought on a state of awareness which I questioned, “Am I losing my mind?” I desperately wanted companionship, but there was no one. Days became weeks, weeks grew to months, which blurred into years, with no human interaction.

I began to seek what was not there, reaching out to the unknown. “Seek and ye shall find.” I sought the company of the silent and invisible. I began to ask questions that I did not understand. I began to have written dialogues, with silence.

[1981, Notes]

There is an inner voice that is silent,  
But yet communicates

It is silent with words  
But speaks to the heart

It is the darkness that a blind man sees  
Yet knows the way  
As if walking in clear light  
Knowledge of God comes in the dark  
as being blinded of all earthly wisdom

*Be silent and blind yourself  
open your heart and hear*

*Be quiet, be still  
and listen with your heart  
listen at the center  
Try not to understand  
Trust without understanding  
is faith*

*Seek not to be recognized  
But to recognize*

Because of the puritan environment I was raised in, there was a great emphasis on right and wrong, good versus evil. Words that, as a child, I learned the meaning of. My mother, being a Southern Baptist, took me to church with her. I heard the preacher pounding the pulpit, declaring the “wages of sin, hell and eternal fire.” Life, as I understood it, was an eternal black and white, no gray. Either you were good or bad. In my case, as a child, there was a disproportionate emphasis on the bad, the negative.

The duality of *will*.  
January 28, 1981

My earliest experiences taught me that life is an eternal Pro and Con; Black and White, Negative and Positive, Love and Hate, Right and Wrong, Good and Evil and God and Satan. In each, the Pro and Con represents opposing forces or opposites.

The two can and do exist, separate and apart from each other in man. However, only in man is there a true duality, a duality of two *wills*. Webster defines *will* as:

1. The power of self-direction or self-control.
2. The power of conscious and deliberate action or choice: as, freedom of the *will*.

I prefer to define *will* as man's power to act out the knowledge of his duality. Shakespeare said, "There is no such thing as right or wrong, only thinking makes it so." Duality exist only in man because of his powers of reason, his knowledge of the Pro and Con and his *will* to act, to manifest his thinking. Man then, through free choice, can bring into existence his thinking, pro or con. If man has knowledge of both, then before he acts, through his powers of reason, he will consider both or the degrees of each, always choosing between. What governs his choice? Is he singularly and solely responsible for that choice?

Each man is unique in that the individual choice is governed by his subjective values, his sense of right and wrong. There comes with this *will* a great responsibility, how will he use his *will*, to what end, what he chooses to explain and govern those actions of the freewill.

An action, resulting from a free choice of the *will*, creates motion. Motion is infinite. Every deed starts a motion, a chain-reaction. The deed multiplies itself, like a stone thrown into the center of a pond, creating waves radiating from the center. Man's deeds are perpetual. And yet we do not know what we have put into motion beyond the first few waves. Our very life is the result of all the motion which preceded us. A generation generates motion affecting the next and so on through time.

We have all heard the hypothesis: if just one event or person in history had been different or changed, how it would effect all succeeding history. The possibilities are immeasurable. Only with our knowledge of history can we retrace motion. Even that is limited because there are so many unknown variables. A very simple act, unknown, could have caused a catastrophic event affecting the lives of many. The act of giving a simple gift could contribute to the positive growth of all mankind.

If we could reverse time and motion and go back to that point in time, to what must have been a beginning, to that point when you could ask, "Why is there nothing, rather than something?" A good place to start time and motion, like a row of dominoes falling [motion]. Who or what force pushed that first domino over to start the motion which is now your life? Are you not a product of what was put into motion when that first domino fell? Could not a small flower blossoming on a mountain, change the current of the ocean floor?

We should have a greater awareness of what we *will* in to motion, our choices, our actions and a understanding of the events which led us to those actions [choices]. We do affect each other.

Because of this ongoing battle between the two, good and evil, and a desire for an understanding of the pro, the absolute good of the dual will. I must understand the Good, to make manifest that knowledge into existence by action. Love is the strongest action of good, which I believe is perpetual. To love your fellow man. God can be defined as all good, all love. God is not separate and apart from man. He is contained in each person as Love. Thus, an act of Love is a manifestation of God's existence. Conversely, without God there would be no Love, no good, nor that portion of the will to act.

Man is always looking for God outside of himself, perhaps sometimes wondering what it

would be like to see God. Know what it is you are looking for. Can you not recognize Love through the senses, feel it with every fiber? If you recognize Love then you have seen God.

Only man can hate, to hate might mean to drive God from your existence, maybe, but not from His existence. Pure Love cannot hate. Love can overpower hate. You cannot fight hate with hate.

God is not separate and apart. He is in each and every one. Then I can say that the hand that guides me is also man.

The desire to know God is all consuming, the perfect manifestation of God is a life in caring, compassion, Love. I must see it, touch it, bring it into existence by expressing it in the realm of human experience. To give of myself in order to be whole.



I am my work, my work is me, the hand that guides me is God and his love which is man. In this is a fragile balance that must be maintained. If that balance is broken, then I am no more. It must be understood that the two [my work and I] cannot exist by them self. There is a third ingredient which makes both possible, Love, God. The work itself is a manifestation of life expressed, shared.



How can I give if there is no recipient, the lack of human exchange. Human existence demands another. There can be no quality in life if it is witnessed alone. Man can and does love God alone. He has been my strength all these months. But, it is not complete. To me God must be brought into or made manifest in man's day to day existence with others, to make Him real. I am not strong enough to know that Love can exist in name alone. I fade without it. My work pales without it.



The artist must have a responsibility to motion. This is the very sense I now have about my work. What it can put into motion. I must have a clear sense of, the pro and cons of existence. This must be understood before I can touch brush to canvas.

## **THE NATURAL ORDER**

Man does not invent nor create.  
He only discovers that which is,  
The natural laws that govern the universe.  
All the laws are in complete harmony.  
There is no contradiction.

Man has been entrusted as caretaker  
of these laws.  
There is contradiction in man.



Discovery implies an element of surprise  
as a result of an accident.  
Discoveries are not made as a result of freewill.

I take no credit for anything other than those  
deeds made from freewill.



To some the sunset is the dawn

the beginning of their play.  
I prefer the sunrise.



It was so quiet you could hear a leaf fall.  
But, in order to hear a leaf fall,  
You must be quieter than a leaf falling.



When you perceive a tree, you allow it to be,  
It allows you to perceive it, by being a tree.  
If the exchange is complete, you transcend,  
allowing you to step out of self,  
becoming what you perceive,  
by letting it become you.



To a tree, the wind allows it to move.  
To the wind, a tree moves, allowing it to pass.



To a branch, moonlight allows it to be silver.  
To silver, a branch allows it to be moonlight.  
To moonlight, a branch allows it to be silver.



To a leaf, wind is a dancing partner.



To light, the sun on a brook is a dance.  
To the sun, a dance is to light on a brook.



To water, the sun gives transparent flight.  
To transparent flight, the sun gives prismatic color.



To H<sub>2</sub> and O, [+] allows it to be wet.



To a snow flake, gravity is what brings it to rest.



To a rock, a falling tree allows it to move.



To sound, air is a vehicle to vibrate.  
Air is sound vibration.



A song can grow a tree.



To the soul, music is food.  
To music, food is the soul.



A crisp apple and cheese  
Can write a song. Hmm.



To an old man, love can make him feel young.

To feel young, LOVE!



To man, to be is to LOVE.

To LOVE, is to be.



Self is that which chooses,

not to be,

in order to be,

That is not the question, that is the answer.



God is a snow flake.



## MY WORK

My work is purely a vehicle through which I continue to discover.

To think is to discover.

To do is to manifest a thought.

To draw an object is to understand.

To express an idea is to understand.

Art is understanding manifest.

I am caught up in a visual communion with life and feel that all should be moved as I, a genuine desire to share that which is unfolding before me. What I am witnessing, seeing and feeling should not be for me alone, but for all.

I put on canvas what I have felt, tempered by what I have seen.

If these feelings are shared at the moment, then to walk away and respond in some other form would be redundant. By not being able to share the moment and thus preserving it for the canvas, it is not predigested and becomes spontaneous. To acknowledge or articulate at the moment of execution is true spontaneity, true discovery.

A oneness with the canvas, I am my work, my work is me.

It is totally alien to me to peddle my work for money or recognition. It is the same as saying how much am I worth, as a person, in terms of cash or is he worthy of consideration? I will not subject myself or my work to that humiliation. I would rather give my work to those who appreciate it for what it is, not how much money they paid for it.

It is imperative that I be able to continue to explore.

Personally, I have the greatest faith in my work. I believe my work, in the long run, will contribute to, in some form, the human experience. Not in just an artistic sense, but an understanding of that portion of mankind not yet explored or answered through art.

Do not forget that man's greatest gift to man has been to the Glory of God. Architecture, the great churches and cathedrals, the great music of the church and the noblest art man has known, I do not compare my self to those greats, but I do share the same passion and vision. I have said often that when I am working, I am an instrument of something outside of myself. That alone, I am not capable. It is an other's hand guiding me.



March 30, 1980

Portion of letter to a friend.

Poor Smokey is still hanging on. The veterinarian is amazed that he is doing as well as he is for his age. It's taking a lot to hold him together. He is in no pain, just a little slow getting around. He wants to stay as close to me as he can. I don't like to think about what will happen to me when his time comes. That little creature is so full of love for me. He has been the best companion anyone could ever want.

April 21, 1980

7:45 p.m. After nineteen years, my Smokey was gone.

As I sat next to you  
it did not seem that you were gone,  
just asleep.  
I touched you. You felt the same.

I wrapped you in your blanket  
as if you might get cold.  
Picking you up in my arms,  
the warmth of your life was still there.

I carried you with such care  
to a hill, where another waits  
to take you.

I must bury you alone,  
just the two of us,  
that's how it was.

You were constant  
as I wavered,  
You were faithful,  
as I scolded.

I will bury you deep,  
deep was your love  
and deep is my pain.

Oh, earth why do you resist this spade.  
I will pry open your arms.  
Why do you resist that which  
will enrich you?

Grave you make me jealous,  
You are going to take him.

As I close your arms around him,  
You comfort him with cold silence.

Smokey,  
My stinging eyes blur my vision,  
Where did you go?



January 30, 1981

Before this day, I strongly questioned whether I would ever paint again, not knowing why. For the past two years, my heart has not been in my work. In the most recent month I have not even been in the studio.

Now I have the answer. My work has always been a vehicle to understanding and growth.

Three years ago, just before the house in Georgia was sold and directly after the experience of my father's and brother's deaths, I had a most intense revelation. This revelation came through my work.

There was a sudden understanding of the direction my work had been moving for the previous five years, but, most importantly, where it was going, what it was to be. Then, a sudden and great surge foreword, a very productive work period. In a matter of weeks, three completed canvases, three in process and a number on the drawing board.

As suddenly as it started, it stopped. It all had to stop. I sold the house, then the move to Baker and building the house and studio here. Throughout this entire transition and always on my mind, was this last work period and the incredible insights that were born.

That is exactly what is happening to me now, birth pains.

Immediately after my father's funeral and my return to the mountains of North Georgia and my studio, I began painting. This was my first and immediate available resource to answers. Through painting I could articulate my inner voice. Trying to bring into reality, through imagery, an explanation of what happened. As an image, in part, "What did he see?"

However, during the journey begun after the move here, the artist/poet in me tried to articulate in words this mystery. The following was frustrating. How inapt and inarticulate I was with words. Over and over I rewrote, searching...

How much can one moment hold. . .?  
when eyes close, Yet, still seeking light.  
Earthly vision extinguished,  
Transcended.  
Finding Clear Light,  
The Clear Still Light of a New Dawn

How many eyes will be opened,  
finding "That" Light?  
Setting into motion ascension.  
When motion accelerates  
and time stops.

Earthly vision transcended,  
framed by the fringed darkness  
of waning time.  
The triumph of New Dawns Clear Light  
accelerates motion into eternity.

How much can one moment hold. . .?  
Contracting pupils,  
brace the eye for  
Transcending Light,  
blinding earthly vision.

How much can one moment hold. . . ?  
One small flower, blooming  
on a mighty mountain,  
changing the currents of the ocean.

How much can one moment hold. . . ?  
To put into motion in a moment  
perception. . . .perpetual.

We as humans can be arrogant at times because we possess something the rest of creation does not have, Intellect. Perhaps, I shouldn't make such a blanket statement when I am speaking of my own arrogance.

In my searching, struggling to find answers, I went through a period where I thought God was pure intellect, this mystical intelligence holding all the secrets of the universe, a "cosmic force."

My approach, not conscious, was that I could explain God through the intellect. This was reflected, much earlier, in the paintings I did at Screamer Mountain. The cosmic gases and clouds combined with the hard-edged lines and shapes, all representing the mystery of an all-knowing cosmic intelligence.

Through my writing in 1980, I was trying to understand the moment of my fathers passing through the intellect. Trying to answer "How?" So much was in that moment, specifically that non-verbal union, our minds functioning as one. I began to philosophize about time, motion and the perception of both. Again, "How much can one moment [time] hold." I apologize in advance, this is a bit esoteric.

January 31, 1981

If through your perception you could stop time and motion in order to observe, it would be like taking a photograph. A photograph transcends the moment by holding in check your perception. You hold in your hand the moment which has been captured and contained. However, time and motion is ongoing, everything being in a state of flux. Everything being new from moment to moment. Motion is that portion of time which makes it perceivable, perception being in a state of flux.

To transcend conscious perception of time and motion, is not to recognize conscious perception. To recognize is to acknowledge in a subjective way, to acknowledge is a conscious function, to put in to predetermined thought [that which is your cumulative knowledge] making relative all things. The point is to reach that which is not known. A state of mind which transcends the limits of perception, the limits of subjective observation. This is a state of consciousness I will call pure perception, uncolored total input of what is being perceived. Your very sight is colored, prejudiced, forming an opinion before the facts are known. To perceive without prejudice is to have true understanding, seeing the true essence of the moment [motion and time] the object, as if you were seeing a tree for the first time. To say a tree, "looks like, sounds like, feels like," is to deny the tree its own essence, prejudicing your and the tree's pure perception. How else can you best understand that which is out of self, than to be that entity? By not allowing self to inject self, rejecting egoism, allowing the entity to be, by you not being. Allowing it to enter you with no resistance, you entering it with no resistance. Pure perception is two fold. One can not exist without the other. When you perceive a tree, you allow it to be, it allows you to perceive it by being a tree. If the exchange is complete, you transcend time and motion, allowing you to step out of self and become what is being perceived, by letting it become you. You then become a true objective observer, you being a unique state of consciousness, becoming conscious of the entity's reality.

Perception of the moment  
How much can one moment hold?



How much can one moment hold?  
Of a vision framed by the fringed darkness of waning time.  
Eyes close,  
seeking sight of a New Dawn's Clear Light,  
accelerating motion into eternity.

February 5, 1981

Way back at the beginning of all this, I said I wanted to find self in order to help my work. However, I did not understand what I was looking for. I said find my self, not knowing the self being, 'I', 'egoism', 'my will'. I had many questions, struggling to find answers.

The key was the 'I', 'my', 'mine', 'myself', all being self-centered, self-consuming. The 'I' was in the way. The 'I' had to die in order to find, not in order to find my self. It is the 'I' that is blinding, not allowing clear sight. The 'I' will not allow one to reach *out* of self in order to find what is in.

Answers do not come unless there is an articulate question.

Don't you understand !

It's not what you do that is of value. It is who you are.

The system [societies] does not work for one such as me.

I was in constant conflict with my self, fighting to shed the values I had learned and grown accustomed to, the material world and yes, the sensual world. I was celibate, however, I am human, there was desire. I fought with myself over these feelings. I saw them as a sign of spiritual weakness. The entire issue of my sexual orientation had never truly resolved itself. I was carrying many scars of a life as a homosexual. The entire past, my family, my Uncle Robert, the hospital, Dr. Walls, ridicule and prejudice, lay not-so-dormant in my psyche. But, eating at my soul. The following is one of those written dialogues with silence, I was angry that I had desire, at life and perhaps God for dealing me the hand I obtained.

March 4, 1981

Ash Wednesday

First day of Lent

What a fool I have been  
To think a thought,  
of the beginning being the start.

In the beginning, the end was,  
What was in between  
Is of no matter.

I am not, there being no existence  
only unfulfilled desire,  
to have what is not there.  
Grasping for nothing,  
only gratification.

What is it that wants to be satisfied,  
that which consumes the flesh,  
with an insatiable appetite  
devouring all?

A slave to appetite. . . Temptation  
never being full.

Wandering aimlessly,  
consumed by no direction,  
a slave to appetite,  
feed on gratification.  
Consuming that which is not filling,  
Desire.

Desire to reach out,  
the hand grasping nothing  
the eye sees nothing  
only desire itself.

My life is an endless void.  
A furrowed row,  
but no seed to plant.

Painfully, I see no end,  
nothing to nurture.  
There is nothing internal,  
only an empty shell,  
feeding on itself.

Nothing to grow and multiply,  
only consuming itself,  
seeking gratification  
from self.



After two and a half years alone in this house, on this hill, in the wilderness and without overlooking all the inner searching, I was moving toward a spiritual vocation. I seriously considered the life of a contemplative, a monastic, to enter a monastery.

I had come to recognize my soul as my core, the true essence of being, but to allow the soul to blossom, to be home in this life, would mean the death of all that is worldly, the "I" had to die. Even the soul must die while yearning but one thing, to be filled with The Light, *The Beatific Vision*.

Outside counsel and guidance was needed before such a decision could be made. I sought out the closest Episcopal clergyman I could find and we talked half the day. At the end of our meeting, he said, "If you love the church so much, why aren't you participating in the sacraments?" I answered, "What must I do?" "Come to church next Sunday."

May, 1980

Through the Sacraments of the Church a slow awakening has been taking place. I found after many months of isolation, a priest whom I was able to open up to and in one afternoon of conversation, I trusted him to guide me through all.

The next Sunday I was there in church, frightened because it had been years, many years. But oh, it was wonderful. I knew that of all places, this is where I wanted to be. From that day on this priest, Father Richard Reece, became my spiritual guide and a close, good friend.

Four months passed as I became and would continue to be very involved in the life of this small country church, St. Steven's. Somehow, through the years prior, I had not been baptized. Father Reece knowing this would be the first prerequisite for a vocation in the church, wanted me to be baptized and then confirmed.

Not too far from our little country church was another, a much older log church. Built in 1850, St. George sat isolated on a small knoll overlooking a tributary of the Potomac River.

St. George was only used once a year, which was required, the Bishop had to attend every church in his diocese at least once a year. This was about to happen at St. George's. Father Reece asked if I would like to be baptized in this wonderful old church, by Bishop Atkinson. Of course, I said yes. This was the beginning of quenching my spiritual thirst.

August 17, 1980

And so I have put into motion the desires of my heart, having put aside the need for acceptance, to feel and know peace.

Before the service, water was needed for the baptism. I was given a small basin and went to the river and filled it with water. As the service was about to begin, I told the bishop about the silver cross I was wearing. It had never been removed since that day, the beginning of this journey, at the Washington Cathedral, when I first put it on. For the first time, I took it off and handed it to Bishop Atkinson requesting of him to bless it and replace it on me after the baptism. I also handed Bishop Atkinson a small piece of paper, a

dedication prayer I had written. I asked if he would use it as part of the service. He willingly agreed to all.

When the appointed time came during the service, I got up and walked to the front of the church where Fr. Reece, a seminarian and Bishop Atkinson were waiting. I stood before them as the Baptismal vows were spoken. When it came time for the water to be administered, I became weak in the knees and faltered. I asked Fr. Reece if I could kneel, I wanted to humble myself to the lowest position. Fr. Reece said of course, helping me to kneel. The water was poured three times to the top of my head with these words: *Robert, I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

When this was completed the Bishop placed his hand on my head making on the forehead the sign of the cross using Chrism. *Robert, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever. Amen.*

The Bishop then blessed the silver cross placing it on me, he then read from the piece of paper I had given him:

*Robert, do you from this day forward dedicate your life and works to the Glory of God?*

*With God's help, I do.*

*Almighty God, giver of all good things:*

*Please grant to your servant, Robert, the strength and wisdom to understand his calling.*

*Grant that in his search he may find in himself the vision to see thy truth, to use those talents you have entrusted in him, as an instrument of Your Love.*

*Grant that through his works others may see and feel the light of thy Glory.*

*This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.*

I was baptized and the cross was placed back around my neck. There it stayed for a decade and a half. I was never to take it off, that is, until September of 1992.

September 7, 1980

Bishop Atkinson, Confirmed me and my Re-affirmation as a Christian and as an Episcopalian.

## FROM THIS WINDOW

January 1, 1981 - New Years Day

6:00 a.m.

I do not know where to start. There are so many thoughts, so many changes. Too many emotions trying to come out at once.

Perhaps a good place to start would be to describe the moment. I am sitting at my desk (drawing table) my favorite place in the house. I spend most of my time here thinking, writing, looking out these windows. To my left is a large window looking North. I can see a meadow, trees at the edge and, raising my eyes, ridge after ridge, reveal them-selves, a portion of the Allegheny Mountains. Though at the moment it is predawn and I cannot see out, I do know what is out there. Directly in front of me and the drawing table, another large window looking due East. From this window I can see the sunrise, year round. From these windows you see nothing man-made, except an old split-rail fence which crosses the meadow in front of the house. What you do see is the great harmony of nature in its totality, completely unspoiled by man.

Behind me is a small sitting room lined with book cases containing my library and collected memories and of course two audio speakers from the sound system. I usually arise between 4:00 and 5:00 a.m., put wood in the stove, first thing, an absolute necessity, dress, make the bed and turn on the radio. There is always music in this house. The radio also happens to be my only contact with the outside world. I have no telephone. At the moment the music playing is very appropriate, Vivaldi's, "The Four Seasons." Why?, Because in the pre-dawns light I can see what is happening outside these windows. It's snowing! I always feel joy when it snows. Snow to me has always been a miracle, how in a short time the whole landscape is transformed, a metamorphosis of perception

From this window I have watched the subtleties from day to day as the seasons change, experiencing their blend to where there are many more. I have seen a red fox playing with a field mouse in the early light of day. The fox looked so funny. The morning dew from the grasses had wet his lower legs. He looked as if he were wearing nickers. From this window I have watched wild turkeys mating with their ritual dance and strutted plumage.

From this window I have seen trespassing men wanting what they did not need. Through greed, which they hold in their hands, they stalk and fire, but not hitting their killing mark. Only wounding their prey, a deer, who limps for cover behind this house. The pain I felt for this creature. He will wander off deep into the forest and die a slow and painful death, not knowing why.

These windows have been my eyes through which I have seen many things, both good and bad. The eye being a window through which I come and go, experiencing what the day will bring. These windows have allowed me to see that which is not viable, where there is no language, where existence is beyond names and symbols, seeing space occupied and not occupied, neither being greater. Through these windows all is equal to the eyes. I have experienced a distant star, a distant mountain, a distant thought of a distant cry of sounds not heard, of sights not seen, of thoughts not thought.

## The Soul Speaks

From this window  
I cannot move, contained by unfulfilled  
desire.

To open the window  
may only result in  
painful disappointment,  
Friendless freedom.



Have you ever seen  
a star crying  
through an old pane?



From this window  
I am protected  
from all matters.  
Oh, to escape  
beyond this grill-work  
of a window's pain.



To break through,  
But the pain,  
To shatter the pane  
is to escape  
beyond this window,  
free outside of pains  
contained by nothing.



To be as the poem of a bird,  
ascending on still air  
rising up,  
soaring higher and higher.  
Hastening into eternity  
Till I become light



February 6, 1981

The Prior  
Holy Cross Monastery  
and Novitiate  
West Park, NY

Dear Rev. Father,

This is a letter of introduction to a member of my congregation who is very interested in committing himself to a monastic order. I believe that he has written you regarding information about your Order. His name is Mr. Robert Singleton of Baker, West Virginia.

Robert sought me out in June of 1980, seeking advice and counsel regarding the monastic life. He has spent a great deal of time in his youth within the Episcopal Church, but he had never been baptized or confirmed. In August of 1980, I and Bishop Atkinson baptized Robert, and in September, the Bishop confirmed him. On January 17 at our congregational meeting, he was elected to the Vestry. He has in this very short time become very involved in the church, and he has contributed a great deal of his time and his talent. He is a nationally recognized artist.

The majority of his adult life has been spent living in comfortable surroundings, but in isolated areas and by himself. For instance, he had a lovely home and studio in the mountains of North Georgia. Presently, he has a gorgeous studio with a modest but comfortable apartment attached, located in the wilderness of the West Virginia mountains. However, with all of this time spent alone with his work, he is coming to understand that a life in Christ means a life in community, and he would like at this time to search out several monastic orders to gain some experience in this kind of community and to receive your advice and counsel. When he writes to you, I hope that you will receive him with this understanding. If you have any questions or advice, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,  
The Rev. Richard D. Reece

February 8, 1981

The Rev. Conner Lynn, OHC, Superior  
Holy Cross Monastery  
West Park, New York

Dear Reverend Father:

The importance of this letter has been a long time in understanding. The expression of a desire that has been with in me for years. That expression is most difficult, in that it is or must be self-revealing. It has been written at least a dozen times in my head. But, when confronted with a blank sheet of paper, I seem to have only questions. Why do I have the desire to explore the potential of a vocation in the church? I truly feel compelled to move in that direction. However, I pull back out of fear of the unknown, a most basic human frailty. I even question being worthy of such a desire. Am I running from, rather than running to? My feeling can best be put in one word, self-doubt. You must understand the doubts I am experiencing at this moment.

If my life were expressed as a desire, then that desire would be to know and love our Lord Jesus Christ as he knows and loves me.

To serve God with all the fiber that is my existence.

The desire to be a part of a community of loving people. Where that love is first expressed to God and made manifest through our Lord. Where the spirit of that Love is so abundant that it overflows into all things.

The desire to give that Love in order to find it.

The desire to find peace in order to give it.

God has entrusted me with a great gift. That being the ability to communicate to many people in a visual way, the skills necessary to be a successful artist and teacher. At a very young age I recognized these skills and knew they would carry me though life. As a result I made a total commitment to develop those skills to the fullest, a commitment to my work knowing it was a very special gift from God.

That gift, however, became two-fold. Some years ago, after attaining some degree of recognition, I went through a period of self-doubt concerning my work. I had painted myself into a corner [pardon the pun]. The work stopped, I was at a dead end. I could not develop my direction any further. I asked God to please give me a sign, in order that I might truly know that I was doing His work. That very day my work changed totally. The sign he gave me was direction. The work since that day has developed a deep feeling of spirituality, moving many people to say they feel the presence of God in the painting. He not only gave me direction for my work, but, through that work I would come closer to Him. That day, years ago, I dedicated myself and my work to His Glory. That direction prepared me for the events which would be my life in successive years. I truly feel that what was put into motion that day has led me to the writing of this letter.

I am writing to you to ask if I might visit the community in order to answer the many questions I have concerning entering a life in Christ through a monastic order.

Due to the fact that I do not have a telephone, I am patiently awaiting your reply by mail as to when it would be convenient for visit. I will leave it to your discretion, being that I would be available most any time.

Sincerely,  
Robert E. Singleton

This letter set into motion my yearning. There followed correspondence with the Novice Master and Prior of two monasteries; St. Gregory's Abbey, a Benedictine Order, located in Michigan and Holy Cross Monastery, in West Park, New York.

February 19, 1981

Dear Robert,

Father Abbot asked me to respond to your request to visit the monastery. We are always slow to resolve any vocational questions concerning the Abbey, but we respect the spiritual journey you and other aspirants have experienced and we are always willing to make the acquaintance of people interested in the monastery in hopes of making available some insight into the right vocation either here or elsewhere.

I would just mention that my own experience in art [writing in my case] has shown me that aesthetic categories are never enough and that poetic intuition naturally leads to contemplation and prayer.

I was accepted to participate in the community of St. Gregory's Abbey first, as part of a "Vocation Program." I quote, *The purpose of this program is to enable these men to discover more about their vocations in the Church and the world, as a fulfillment of their baptismal vows, whether that vocation be to the monastic or priestly life or some other profession or craft.*

*Finally, and in summary:*

- 1. One does not select a vocation for oneself. One tries to find God's selection for him.*
- 2. Faithfulness to daily schedule and duties, and charity in the common life are basis for all vocations.*

June 1, 1981, The date selected for me to enter this program at St. Gregory's Abbey. Coincidentally, this was the third anniversary of my father's passing.

All was in place, but. . .

In the Monastic Breviary, The Ordinary of Daily Office, [a prayer book] there is a service, The Renewal of Annual Vows. In the weeks before I was to leave, I pondered at great length the meaning of the following Vow.

*Officiant: My brother, what do you desire?*

*Junior: I desire to commit my whole life to God and his people. And I wish of my own free will to renew my dedication to this community's life of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience.*

*Officiant: Do you believe that God has called you to make this dedication of your life?*

*Junior: I do.*

In all honesty, I could not answer with certainty the second question with, "I do."

Human nature has, sometimes, strange ways of resolving problems, answering questions. I had every intention of going the Monastery, to answer my many questions.

One morning, I lay in bed thinking about many things, my future. My mind was just wandering, when I thought of Smokey, my faithful Cocker Spaniel. After he died, I did not feel like I wanted to get another dog right away. As I lay there, I began to give this more thought. "Why don't you do what your heart wants? It's time. . . Why don't you find another black male Cocker? One, just like Smokey."

By 10:00 that evening, after a lot of running around, I was sitting in my car in front of the 7-11 in Romney, West Virginia, waiting for a rendezvous with a breeder. They arrived in a van, I was invited to crawl into the back where the dogs were. I sat on the floor as the mother, father and four puppies climbed all over me, with lots of smelling and licks, all black Cockers. I started to cry. They all looked like Smokey. How was I going to make a choice from the four puppies? I heard the owner call one of them by name, but did not understand what was said. "Did you call one of them by name." "Yes, this one. We call him Bear, short for Smokey Bear."

Bear, the love of my life. That night he rode home with me in my lap. Once home, I put him on the bed with me, he snuggled up close, and close we were, from that night on. He went with me everywhere, we were inseparable. I had taken on the responsibility of unconditional love.

The day after Bear came into my life, I saw Father Reece and told him that I was not going to the monastery. He said, "Robert, I'm glad. You would have made a good monk, but you would not have liked it."

So a little puppy, full of love, stopped me from potentially entering a monastery and becoming a monk. Or, it wasn't meant to be, or what a loving way to receive an answer.



After three years of a self-imposed exile, I broke my long silence with a letter to my life long friends, including Jack, John and Butch. It was more than a letter, it was a documentation of the previous three year journey, concluding with copies of the correspondence to the Monasteries and my intentions. This letter was sent before the revelation with "Bear." Following is the cover letter.

February 18, 1981

To my dear and close friends,

I call you that because I have never considered you just an acquaintance. But, one that, without, my existence would have been much less. You have contributed in such a rich way to both the joy and, yes, the pain of my life. You are the very fiber of what is so important to me, a friend. Human existence demands another. Although there is no single person in my life, how fortunate I am that I can say I have you as a friend.

I do not think you are aware of how important you are to me. You are truly in my thoughts every day. Seeing, feeling or responding as though you were here with me. You have been the object of much thought, reliving those many special moments we have shared. At times bring tears of longing to be with you, at other times frustration and even hostility because you are not with me. All I can say is that I love you with the very substance that is my existence.

In the past years I have been out of touch, there was a reason, which this letter will explain. I am writing you now in an effort to make up for the long silence. However, it is with great fear and reservation that I write this letter. My fear stems from being misunderstood, in turn judged wrongly by those who are important and dear to my heart.

First, I am going to be honest. To be honest with ourselves is often difficult. We color that honesty with the way we would like others to see us, disguising our true identity, pretending to be what we are not.

In the past years I have been alone. The isolation has brought on a state of mind which is not

pretentious. Why? Others were not present, no one to perform for. As a result I have been fighting the worst adversary of all, myself. Fighting, not loving, in an attempt to find some kind of inner peace and a understanding of the world around me. To find some semblance of order in this life. Attempting to purge away all those acquired affectations. Discovering how unyielding I have been, what I mistook for a strong will. What in reality were defenses to protect self from self. By being what I thought others saw. We do picture our self as we think others see us. A false self playing a role for acceptance. There has taken place a reaffirmation of those passions which were my youth. By being true to those dreams which were my youth. In the past years those dreams became tainted with jaded perception, a loss of innocent trust in what the eyes do not see.

My friends were moved by my candor and supported the decision to enter a vocation in the church. Unanimously saying they realized all along, I was moving in this direction. But, like Father Reece they were relieved when my mind was changed. Jack declared he did not want me to go because he did not want to lose our close friendship.

Shortly after writing this letter I was in New York visiting Jack. He had realized his own dream of buying and living in a large Loft located in the heart of Manhattan. It was on the top floor of his building with spectacular views of the city. Sharing his new home was exciting for me, but what delighted him was the reason I was in New York.

It was November of 1982 and a significant one man painting show was about to open at Vorpel. This was held in the main exhibition gallery with a number of major pieces to be displayed. The afternoon before the gallery reception, Jack held a pre-opening cocktail party at his loft with a surprise for me, "Butch" . . . I was overwhelmed that Butch flew up from Florida to be with me and attend the opening. John had tried to be there, but could not make it. Jack was thrilled I had agreed to attend the opening reception at the gallery because I had never attended any opening in New York. This was do to my choice of an obscure life.

I had been working in the studio throughout the years of my internal battles, although it was infrequent, resulting in not being as prolific as I had once been. I was still supplying Vorpel with work, but not nearly as much as they wanted. My slow withdrawal from the art scene had already begun.

### **The Maitland Art Center**

Maitland, Florida

There was still an enormous following in Florida and through the efforts a colleague, Jerry Shepp, I would be honored with a retrospective exhibition of my work.

Jerry was a friend from the Florida years, having always supported my work with great enthusiasm. His passion was art, not as a creator of images, but as a patron willing to champion the causes and careers of many artists both in the visual and performing arts of Central Florida. He had worked his way up from serving on the Board of Directors of countless civic organizations to the first full-time Director of the *Maitland Art Center*. Under his leadership the Center was renovated and grew in prominence locally and nationally.

Nearing the completion of the renovation, Jerry contacted me wanting to distinguish my work with a twenty-five year retrospective. He wanted this to be the first exhibition of the newly renovated art center. I agreed and was indeed honored with such a request.

Larry Bucking, the art critic for the Orlando Sentinel, wrote the introduction to the published catalogue interjecting quots from my writings.

It is rare when an artist, especially one of international repute, escapes detraction. Even those whose works are touted as the traditional essence of beauty or symmetry or inspiration have been the targets of criticism.

By any standard of measurement - public opinion, the professional critic, the best schools -

judgment passed on an artist and his work somehow escape unilateral agreement.

*“Most people when admiring something, look upon it as a thing of beauty which is pleasant or comfortable. It might be the icing on a cake. How many people stop to admire a fungus on a rock or the cell structure of an amoeba. Why cannot the ‘ugly’ things (as we are taught) in life be beautiful.”*

Altamonte Springs, Florida, 1966

Maitland Art Center is privileged to salute the exception. Robert E. Singleton is the exception; his work evokes praise, trust, envy, accolades. Always.

Perhaps the widespread appreciation of his work enjoys should have the precipitated a semantic change in hoe critics, peers and the *hoi polloi* qualify artistic ability, success.

Perhaps Singleton should be, or should have been, the benchmark by which all others of his discipline are rated.

To adopt such hypotheses as constants would be to breathe and make decisions out of context. To assert the all art should be based on that of Singleton would be to short sell the artist, to disallow him the privilege of making statements that are provocative, not absolute; to opine, not dictate; to experiment, not discover.

*“I am caught up in a visual communion with life and feel that all should be moved as I. A genuine desire to share that which is unfolding before me. What I am witnessing, seeing and feeling should not be for me alone, but for all. I put on canvas what I have felt, tempered by what I have seen.”*

Baker, West Virginia, Winter 1979/80

Whether provocation, opinionation and experimentation are Singleton’s hallmarks is not important to the magnitude of the Maitland Art Center show. Important instead is the effect Singleton’s works have on their viewers.

*“I truly believe that my work, in the long run, will contribute to , in some form, the human experience. Not in just an artistic sense, but an understanding in that portion of mankind not yet explored nor answered though art.”*

Baker, West Virginia, Winter 1979/80

The pieces selected under the artist’s own direction tributize the years Singleton gave to Florida. The show tend toward the naturalist camp that dominated the political and social currents of the 1969’s and ‘70’s. But for every conflict stylized by Singleton’s remarkable attention there, too, is a happy resolution.

Singleton’s spectacular attention to balance and harmony is no less spectacular than the admiration that attention has earned him.

Florida holds Singleton in a special, venerated position. It will always want to claim him, to claim credit for his sanction. That sanction is embraced by the Maitland Art Center in this retrospective exhibition, a tribute long expected and most deserved.

*“At times I do not fully understand my own motivations, I truly believe in my work, God has given me a vehicle to understanding and the overwhelming desire to find some truth in the life. My work is that vehicle. I am possessed by passion, I must add to that passion, vision. For what good is*

*passion with vision.*”

Baker, West Virginia, January 1979

April 9, 1983, the new renovated Art Center and the Retrospective opened. Nearly all the people from my life in Florida were there. Former students, gallery owners, patrons, collectors along with the press attended this Gala Celebration.

There were thirty-seven works exhibited, ranging from that beginning in Florida to the current works on lone from Vorpall in New York. 1964 through 1982.

April 4, 1986, another show opened at the Art Center:

New Directions

*Genesis Day II Series*

Central Florida has a special regard for Robert Singleton, and he has a special regard for the Maitland Art Center. Some seven months ago, Robert contacted me -

*“I want to do something to help raise funds to further the renovation and restoration of the Art Center. I am more than willing to offer a body of work, prior to New York, at a special price - one time only, one weekend only - to help in this project.”*

It is this generous offer by Robert that has resulted in this weekend exhibition to benefit the Renovation Fund of the Maitland Art Center through the sale of these works.

As mentioned this is a one time, once only opportunity to acquire these works prior to Mr. Singleton’s next New York exhibit. A generous percentage from the sale of these works will benefit the restoration of this state and national historic property.

We are most grateful to Robert Singleton for this offer, the opportunity to acquire new work, and for his generosity. He has given several times - Art, special pricing, and a percentage of the sales. It is obvious why central Florida holds Robert Singleton in such high regard.

James G. Shepp

Executive Director

### **SomerHill Gallery**

Durham, North Carolina

April 12, 1987

A few years ago I became aware of the work of artist Robert Singleton. The images remained with me until I was compelled to increase my exposure to this artist’s work.

He was elusive to my search having lived in Georgia and Florida before building his dream studio atop a mountain ridge in West Virginia. At last we made contact and arranged a visit at his studio.

As I drove up the winding drive to that ridge several months ago, I was excited to finally meet the artist whose images had been haunting me.

The new work that he showed me was even more exciting than I had remembered seeing before. Abandoning the usual procedure of representing an artist for several years before offering a one-person show, I made the invitation to Robert Singleton, before I left the mountain.

This exhibition consists of paintings that some would categorize as abstract. The images are almost hypnotic with their subtle modulations of color. After sitting with the artist up in his studio, watching the weather, I realized that Robert’s is painting pictures of what he sees up on that mountain. He is painting the sky.

And, if my visit that day wasn’t a perfect completion of my journey to find this elusive artist,

I found out something that made this show seem even more inevitable; the artist was born in North Carolina.

Joseph Rowand

Gallery Director

Immediately after the move here in 1978, the work and I passed through consequential metamorphose. I have detailed my change. For the paintings there were logical continuations from the light show images of Screamer. Those last works, after my father's death were, what I now call, an animation of his journey through darkness to reach the light beyond. In 1978 when I began working in the new studio here, the darkness (as color) was no longer present in any of the work. They were filled with this light that was beyond darkness.

Everything changed, my vision of images became nothing but sky filled with light. The very craft of my work became difficult, no longer spontaneous but controlled. It was if I was learning to paint all over again, resulting in my productivity slowing essentially because technique. No longer finishing a work in a week or two, now I was spending months on one canvas. Even my motivations and drives to create had changed. Many of the paintings became so personal I have never shown then outside of the studio. After the 1987 show at SumerHill gallery, I became a complete recluse, no longer showing any of my work.

There was something more urgent going on in my life, something that would take precedent over all.

In 1981, with varying reasons, I made the decision not to enter a monastic order. Although, there was one decisive reason that only time would reveal. A few more years and I would know the most consequential reason. The reason I came to the wilderness. The very reason I survived the years of isolation. I was being spared, readied for a mission. A mission my mind and heart could not have survived, had I not been strengthened.

