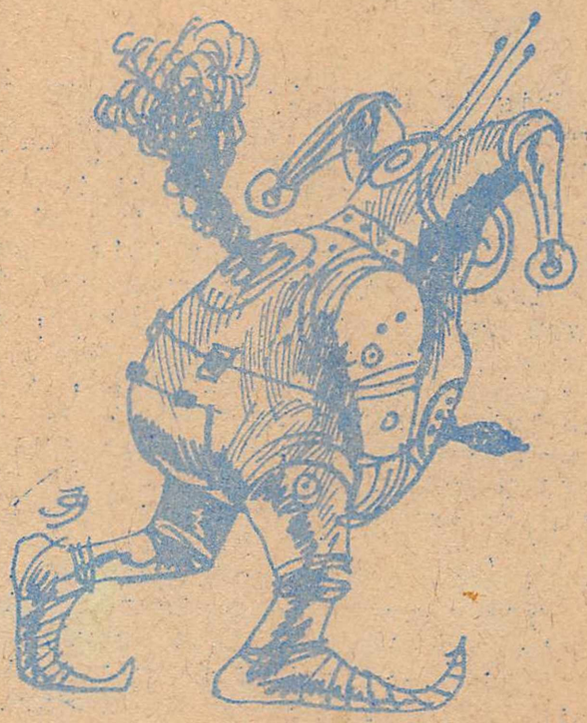

FOOLSCAP

FOOLSCAP #9 is a small magazine published for the Fantasy Amateur Press Association and a few friends by John D. Berry, whose current makeshift address is c/o Brown, 2916 Linden Lane, Falls Church, VA 22042. In case of future doubt, mail will almost always reach me eventually if it's sent to 35 Dusenberry Road, Bronxville, New York 10708, although I only pass through there occasionally. This is the third FAPA issue of FOOL, and you may consider it as a postmailing to the 145th mailing (November, 1973). This issue is going to quite a few more people than the last two did, many of them not even fans and probably a bit mystified by the whole thing. FOOLSCAP, at least in this instance, is something of a statement of where I am and what I am doing (and in this way it's getting back to what it was in its very first issues, when it served that function among others). To get a copy, all you have to do is ask nicely, and perhaps send some stamps or something to jog my memory come mailing-time. The print-run this time is being raised to a whopping 125, and there are a few extras of the last issue lying around if anybody wants one. The artwork in this issue is all by Jack Gaughan, and mimeography will be done on the thundering QWERTYUIOPress. The actual date of publication, which bears little relation to any earlier dates or allusions within these pages, is November 20, 1973, and I wish you all a happy Thanksgiving (except in Canada, where I hope you already had one). Happy birthday, too, while I'm at it. This fanzine is dedicated, with good feelings and lots of egoboo, to Alice Sanvito, Colleen Brown, Terry Hughes, and Robin White. This is, if I've counted right yet again, Roach Press Publication #82, and despite all evidence to the contrary it is still known as "The Trufan's Quarterly Journal of Fact and Fancy." Don't let that fact escape your decaying memory. Have you made sure you woke up today?

FANNISH SOUL

I just got back from this year's World Science Fiction Convention, our own peculiar gathering of the tribes and communal celebration within the enigmatic science fiction community. I have ambivalent feelings about that community, as every other sf fan has, but it is mine, and I've grown up in it. It often seems to me that the yearly in-gathering ought to take place in an open valley fading off into wooded hillsides all around, with the different tribes grouped around a multitude of blazing campfires and colorful plumes and banners blowing in the wind. But science fiction fans are almost universally indoor people, although a number of us have been expanding our worlds beyond that, and some of us don't even wear glasses. So our conventions are found in big hotels in busy cities, near bookstores and restaurants and highways and public transportation. Our community usually comes as quite a surprise and a bemusement to the hotels, though.

The Torcon was a very Canadian convention, although it was also very much the epitomy of a worldcon. Nothing really outstandingly unique, like the unimitated experience of the Baycon in 1968, but a very good con in a very fine city. I'd had a memory of loving Toronto from the first time I went there, a year and a half ago in the windy, snowy winter, the time that after leaving Toronto I spent two days and nights on a Canadian National train only to have its engine and first two cars hit a mudslide and fall into the North Thompson River in British Columbia, leaving all of its passengers to finish their journey to Vancouver by bus. Before riding out to the Rockies, I'd spent several days in Toronto and loved the place. The essence of being in a foreign country pleased me, even though the culture in Ontario is close to that of the northeastern United States. I noticed all the English touches, but because I'd been in England I noticed the North American differences too. Toronto has streetcars, one of my favorite means of transportation, and it also has clean subways and ordinary buses, all costing a quarter if you buy four tokens or a book of tickets. You never need a car in the city, and because the buildings are all built on a human scale outside of the very downtown you can enjoy just walking. (In the downtown area, where the con hotel was located, you'll find the tallest building in the British Commonwealth right across the street from the one that was the tallest building in the Commonwealth before the other one was built. It's like that. But that's a very small area.) Houses are often built of brick where over the border in New York they would be built of wood, but as if in compensation (I much prefer wood to brick) there's none of that horrible siding that's so common throughout New York State. And everything is Canadian. It isn't very different from the States, but if you let yourself be aware of subtleties, you're conscious of it all the time.

There was less of the incessant searching for a party that went on last year in Los Angeles, when eight or ten of us would wander the halls feeling incomplete and sure that somewhere there must be a real party. Perhaps it was merely that this time I knew better, so I simply dug the people and the scenes that I found myself in, seldom looking for anyone in particular and almost never looking for "the party." In the evenings large groups of people would retire to a secluded room and smoke dope, always muttering happily about how it all had to be smoked up before they went back across the border. To enhance all this and to tempt those of us who don't like to smoke but love good bakery, one fine person had brought an unending supply of magic brownies and carrot bread and banana bread and maybe another one or two. No homemade food that I saw at the con was free of herbal essence except the rye-oatmeal bread that I'd made myself. The counterpoint stimulant was a ceaseless variety of excellent Canadian beers and ales, which cover a greater range and have more character than their American equivalents. (Except, of course, for Mike Glicksohn's beloved Ballantine India Pale Ale, which he used to have brought across the border for him by friendly fans but which I'm told is now sold in Canada. I share his enthusiasm. Have you ever had the stuff?) The parties flowed like water.

One of the unusual things about the con was the attention paid to fanhistory. A lot of the speakers who got up behind a microphone during the weekend made references and comparisons to the Torcon 1, the first worldcon to be held in Canada exactly twenty-five years ago, but the real focus of the fanhistorical aspect of the con was in the All Our Yesterdays Room. Susan Glicksohn put in an immense amount of work and worry to set up this room, as an attempt to create the whole feel of fanzines and fannishness in a context accessible to all the 2700 attendees of the Torcon. How many of those people ever set foot in the room is a good question, but as Susan said if one or two or half a dozen new fans wandered in and looked at the displays and talked to the people and browsed some of the fanzines, and in the end they caught the spirit of the thing and become the promising new fans of 1974 or 1975, then it was all worth it. I hope such a thing happens.

The result of the con site selection was gratifying: Australia won the 1975 worldcon, to nobody's surprise except perhaps some of the Australians who have been skeptical of their own success for so long. I never did meet all the Australian fans at the convention, but I met Shayne McCormick briefly while I was dashing off to dinner, and I spent quite some time one afternoon sitting at the registration desk talking to Bruce Gillespie. The desk closed while we were there, and neither of us, of course, had anything to do with registering the thundering herds, but people would keep coming up to us and trying to give us ten dollars for a membership, or asking us to page someone, or needing the urgent help of somebody who knew everything. We looked blank and pointed these people in appropriate directions. Among other things Bruce and I talked about was the Down Under Fan Fund--a subject I also pursued with Lesleigh Luttrell--and I emphasized that somebody had to take the bit in his teeth and get the Fund going again, otherwise it will die of lost momentum. I'm not sure whether it was a result of these conversations or independent manipulating, but the other day I got a letter from John Bangsund telling me that he's running as one of three candidates for the DUFF trip from Australia to Washington in 1974. With luck we'll see John Bangsund at the Discon II next Labor Day.

The Discon is liable to be a weird, fun convention. All through

the Torcon. Jay Haldeman kept grinning and chuckling to himself (and to me on several occasions). "These poor people," he would say, looking around at the crowds in a large party or the hotel mezzanine, "they don't know what nuts they've got as chairmen!" Alice and Jay Haldeman are, of course, the co-chairmen of next year's worldcon. Already they've put their house on the market and started living in a school bus. "They don't know. We'll blow their minds!" Alice was seen riding a bicycle through some of the parties on the last night of the con. "Ah, the sense of Power!" Jay kept saying. I think next year's worldcon should be interesting.

Not a great deal more stands out in my mind about the Torcon; as I said, it was a very good con, but there's really nothing special or unique to say about it. It was pleasing to see Bill Rotsler honored by being Fan Guest of Honor, although once more he failed to win the Fan Artist Hugo that he so richly deserves. (But then, so have all the winners and most of the nominees--something that cannot be said of any other Hugo category.) I enjoyed Bill's speech at the banquet, low-key and rambling though it was, yet it pointed out to me that one can be a marvelous conversationalist and storyteller (as Rotsler is) and still not have mastered the timing techniques of speaking to a whole hall full of people. Bill got off a lot of funny lines, but he didn't have a natural feel for an audience. Robert Bloch's GoH speech, by contrast, could have been delivered in an unknown language and still gotten laughs at all the punchlines; Bloch is a master of pacing when speaking at a convention banquet. He is also both a very bad and a very good punster. Some of the puns and jokes in Bloch's speech were woven so skillfully into the meaning of what he was saying that they caught you unawares, but others were just tacked on or led up to by an anecdote that had no point except the pun. The former got laughs; the latter got groans. Which is as it should be.

This was my sixth worldcon, in seven years. Despite being the largest yet, this was the best one I've been to since 1969. The worldcon is sort of the punctuation point of my year, a time when people come together and things change. It's good to start off a new year well.

I have been terribly depressed. Again my fantasies of a primitive tribe, traveling, trying to figure out what I'm not getting. I talked and talked about it. It was resolved into the need for a gang people to hang out with, to laugh with, to eat with. The need to dance, to act, to play, move and scream, goes ungratified. The closest thing was the women's theater group. I can't seem to replaceiit. I need to perform, to act extravagantly. Sex is the only thing like it--but too specific.

--The Journal of Gail Kuentsler, 1972, from WBAI Folio, Oct., 1972

He who can be unreserved with each passerby has no substance to lose; but he who cannot stand in a direct relation to each one who meets him has a fulness which is futile.

--Martin Buber

My neighbor's willow sways its frail
Branches, graceful as a girl of
Fifteen. I am sad because this
Morning the violent
Wind broke its longest branch.
--Tu Fu

While I was away in Toronto, there was a violent storm in Westchester County and three of the big trees from the yard behind my mother's house were broken by the wind and fell across the old stone wall into our yard. They were big, healthy trees that had stood there for more than my lifetime, yet they fell to nothing more than wind. I hadn't noticed the wreckage when I drove up to the house late at night, and in Canada I'd had no news of the storm, but the next morning I woke up to the loud sound of chainsaws.

"Who's cutting down trees?" I wondered, turning and trying to burrow back into the pillow for some more sleep. But the noise kept intruding, and the thought of some of the beautiful old trees in the neighborhood being cut down kept irritating my mind. I don't like to see trees cut down. So I finally got up and went to the window to look, and my eyes widened as I saw the big trees down, leaving unaccustomed holes in the foliage behind our yard, amid a carpet of branches and leafy debris all over the grass. It was a scene of destruction overflowing the usually well-kept backyard. I got dressed and went down and outside to see what had happened. At that time I had very little idea of what needed to be done--the destruction seemed complete and well over-with, and I wouldn't know where to begin to clean it up. I trod on the leaves and small branches and gazed at the tree trunks lying over the low wall into the garden and the rosebush and everything smaller that had been in the way. The sound of the chainsaws came from one of the two yards that abut on the back of ours, where a couple of workmen were methodically cutting one of the fallen trees up into three-foot sections--roughly three feet long and a couple of feet thick for most of the length of the trunk. I clambered over the wall and greeted one of the workmen, a young guy about my age.

"What happened around here?" I asked him, gesturing about.

"There was a big storm last weekend, knocked down trees all over the county. Three big ones came down here. You live in this house?"

"That one, over there. What happened, did they get hit by lightning?"

"Nope, the wind did it. You're lucky none of them hit a house."

"Jesus, it must have been some wind. I was out of town, didn't know anything about it. Anybody get badly hurt?"

"No, nobody hurt, but lots of trees and power lines down, and plenty of houses got hit. It was a mother."

I watched him working a moment more, then I climbed back into our yard. When I was back on the grass, I turned and looked at all the fallen trees. "Goddam," I said, and went back into the house.

The yard where the men with chainsaws had been working got cleared in a couple of days, but the debris remained in ours and the other one. My mother's gardeners came on their usual day and cleaned up all the leaves and twigs, but they are not foresters and didn't touch the trees. So one afternoon my friend Frank was over and I showed him the wreckage, and he looked it over and said, "We ought to get a couple of axes and chop them up."

Frank had been telling me how good it felt to go up to his uncle's land in New Hampshire and chop down trees there. They were trees that

his uncle wanted down anyway. Frank loved the hard work of wielding an axe--something in which he used all of his energy--and feeling the wood give under the falling blade in his hands. He told me about the patch of pine trees on his uncle's land that had grown up among the sugar maples and were choking them; Frank wanted to harvest the sap from those maples, and he urged his uncle to cut down the pines and haul them off to a lumber mill to sell for a handsome price. Wood sells well these days. No, said his uncle, you'll never make any money that way. Yet he agreed that the trees ought to come down. I believe they may have been among the ones that blocked his view off the hill. Frank couldn't understand why his uncle wouldn't come out with him and cut down those pines. I couldn't see why Frank's uncle would hesitate, either, but I knew why I was just as glad he wouldn't: I've learned over my life a large respect for trees, a loving respect that has grown over the years much like a tree itself, and I hate to see them cut down. That's what irritated me enough that morning of the chainsaws to get me out of bed: more than the noise, it was the thought of the trees being killed. Especially I hate to see a tree cut down for a bad reason, wiped away by someone with no respect for the land he is changing, for a purpose such as building a cheap tract house or making a parking lot. I've been profoundly depressed by the sight of a couple acres of land covered with the broken trunks of a forest of trees, cut down wholesale, smashed and waiting to be pushed aside by bulldozers and hauled away in an anonymous mass. If a human being is going to cut down a tree, it should be done for a good reason, and he should do it with respect for the tree. Each one of those pines is unique, just as each man or woman with an axe is unique, and so is the bulldozer and the chainsaw. No one should ever forget that, but many do.

It was a crisp fall day--the first to grace the end of summer. I was lazy, but Frank was serious about cutting up the trees ourselves, and he meant to do it now. I took him down to the cellar to look for an axe, and we found two; one was a bit worn in the handle, but both were sharp enough and usable. We were to become woodsmen after all. We hefted the axes just under their heads and brought them upstairs and outside.

It took us a while to decide how best to attack the fallen trees, for they were entirely tangled with each other and the lesser foliage, and it took then some lifting and heaving to get the first trunk out where we could get at it. Frank went to work first, cutting off a heavy limb, which I hauled out of the way and began chopping up myself. Lifting the axe, then swinging it down; it bit into the wood and I had to wiggle it to get it free. Swing it up again. For a right-handed stroke, left hand grasps the end of the handle, right hand holds it up under the head and slides down the handle as I raise it over my head--then down in a long swing to hit the log at a slight angle from the right. The next a left-handed stroke. Keep them alternating. At first I put all my muscle into the downstrokes, once I got over my nervousness of the blade, but after a while I learned to let momentum do the work.

Frank told me about making kerfs. Instead of cutting a notch, a V-shape into the log, let the sides of the notch fall a few inches apart--two cuts, if you're neat and accurate, slanting toward each other but not so they'll meet--and as you go deeper into the wood it'll split along its horigzontal length between the cuts and a chunk will pop out. Maybe fly out and land twenty feet away. That's a kerf, and if you're good (which I was not, but Frank was sometimes) you'll get a lot of big ones and your work will be easier. They make excellent

firewood.

My body felt good as I chopped wood. My muscles are used to being unused, since I stay inside and read and write and sit so much. My arms and shoulders got tired, and the rest of my body could feel itself moving. When my arms got so tired that my axe-strokes landed far from where they were aimed, I stopped, put down the axe, and sat down to rest. At Frank's suggestion I found a pair of old garden gloves and put them on; I could already feel the wisdom of that, as the palm of one of my hands was beginning to feel sore. I went back to chopping, got into the rhythm, and learned to stop just before I got tired.

We hewed off branches and cut through trunks and chopped everything thick and thin into lengths under thirty-four inches, since that was the width of Frank's family's fireplace. We finished off one tree and started on another, cutting it off at the wall and hauling the top part over where we could get at it easily. We were both sweating and smiling and our minds were clear.

It was joyful work.

That's the essence of it. It was pure joy to take that axe in my hand and chop up those fallen trees. I had no qualms at all; the storm had killed the trees, and someone was going to chop them up and take them away, so that someone might as well be me and Frank, on our own time with our axes, instead of a paid company of men with very noisy power chainsaws. I didn't know what would happen to the wood if they got it, but I knew what would happen if we did: it would spend a few months drying in a pile in Frank's yard, then it would slowly be burned, piece by piece, in his fireplace during the winter. It seemed that it would be well used.

And I had never done physical work that was as satisfying as that. I was outdoors in the wind, where I like to be, not sitting uncomfortably trying to make myself slow down and appreciate it, but working at something that needed to be done. I was changing things, but disturbing nothing. It was quiet work, only the sound of the axes thudding into the wood and our occasional conversation. And to think that people could be paid for doing that! Immediately I conceived the way I wanted to live: carrying an axe with me, wandering over the surface of the country, cutting wood as I came to it and as I needed money or food or a place to stay: a wandering woodcutter. And so I saw myself, that afternoon under the sunlight. Glad, moving without while at peace within; doing with my hands and arms and shoulders and back, simply and well.

I'm waiting for another tree to blow down so I can enjoy it again.

As I watch the moon
Shining on pain's myriad paths,
I know I am not
Alone involved in Autumn.

--Ōe no Chisato
trans., Kenneth Rexroth
100 Poems from the Japanese

KISHIKE

What's in this section all comes from my correspondence since the beginning of this year. I'm not going to bother with dates or with telling you who each bit was written to; you should be able to tell all you need to know from the context. Most of the passages come from letters to Alice Sanvito; some come from stuff I wrote for one or the other of two private apas, and a few from letters to other people.

* * *

When your letter came, I didn't read it immediately. I saved it, reading whatever else came in that day's mail. The day was fine, the sky was blue, the air was cold, and the sun was shining, so I stuck your letter in my back pocket and went out for a walk. I don't know this area yet, so I just walked off down the street from Ted's house. At the bottom of the hill, where Tuckahoe St. should go on but doesn't, I found a wooded alley between two yards, and it opened onto a grassy field beyond. I jumped across a muddy ditch and sauntered across the field, toward a stream that ran down its middle. There is a small wooden bridge over the stream, which is called Four Mile Run. Kids were playing in a playground nearby. I pushed some dry leaves together for a mat and sat down beside the stream, watching the water flow and the sunlight twinkle on it, listening to and feeling the wind. After a while I thought, I've got my day started well. Now I'll go back to the house and read Alice's letter. Then I remembered that I had stuck the letter in my pocket, so I reached back and pulled out the envelope, opened it, and sat reading your letter by the stream. That's a nice way to hear from you.

Right now I'm sitting in a chair on the Whites' front porch, which is roofed and screened, listening to the birds and to old rain dripping off the trees. The main room of the inside of the house is too crowded, so I'm taking away one of the people (me) and also finding a quiet, pleasant place to write. The only fault is that the light is failing out here. This is a suburban place, but heavily wooded, and with a little twist of my mind I can strip off all the houses and the streets and see the land underneath. It's really very pretty country, much like Westchester County, where I grew up, but just enough different to be always new to me. The person in the house with the greatest sense of the outdoors is Robin, but she feels cooped up by winter. I don't give a damn about winter; I like to get out and get in touch with the weather just as much in rain and snow as in bright summer sunshine. (It just started raining again, hard. This covered porch is a wonderful thing. I wish I had a big old house with a front porch that stretches across the entire front of the house, like many around here. A good old country porch, you know? Some of them, here in Virginia, even have two-storey front porches, so you can walk out from either

floor and sit in a comfortable chair and watch the day.) Yesterday was another sunny day with warm temperatures--most of them have been since I arrived--so Michael and Edie and I drove out into the country, wheeling along little country roads in Michael's VW bug, finding all the neat stuff off the main routes. (Michael and Edie both know this area very well, but I've only been around with Ted a few times, and once into the country west of here on the way to Flordia.) We went down to the deadend of Yates Ford Road, then walked down the dirt track that cuts on further down into a valley, the track muddy because it acts as a run-off for the water when it rains, all the way down until we reached Bull Run. It's a small but respectable river there, at the bottom of a wooded valley; this was nowhere near the battlefield, which is on another part of Bull Run, farther out from Washington. On either side of the river, whole groves of trees had been flattened by floods accompanying hurricane Agnes last summer, and they all lay dead, facing downstream. Michael showed me the remains of an old mill and bridge, and the old Yates Ford, which was used in Revolutionary War times. I tried skipping stones on the river, but I couldn't get a good angle. We would have gone on farther out into the country, but Michael's car was giving him trouble, so we just went back into the towns, to Big Jim Lawson's place. I like going there, because I like Jim; he's easygoing and friendly. We listened to records and talked about books. We smoked a lot of dope, and I enjoyed that, too. I've been cultivating my appreciation of dope by only smoking it occasionally, when the setting is right and I feel like it, never when I'm going to want to concentrate on something an hour or two later. I don't like to be constantly stoned. How I feel depends on the grass, too; I think I prefer weaker stuff that I can smoke a good deal of without getting stoned out of my mind. I've been gradually getting back into the appreciation of grass since September.

Very weird. The rain has quit again, and there's a kind of ground-fog. I just took a walk around the yard, and it's still light out there, but it's really getting dark on this porch. I'm going inside.

It's pretty hard to write a letter continuously around here, with people popping in and out and Kitten making her presence felt all the time and hassles often being hassled out right here in the living room, the only room in the house that's suitable for many things. Ah, communal living! At times like this, I sometimes wish for an empty log cabin, miles away from anybody and not even accessible by road. (Someday I have to try that, take a total retreat from everything and everybody, go off into utter isolation and stay there for a long time. And see what happens. How would I react to it? Would I thrive, would I discover new depths to myself, or would I not be able to stand it? Someday I must find out. Dick Ellington says that every person has to be able to live alone. He said that once to someone who replied that she could never, ever stand to be alone; when she was, she sought out other people immediately. I know that I need solitude pretty often, to recapture my own sense of balance, but I wonder sometimes how much of that need comes from my habits of being a loner. I've traveled alone a great deal; when I tried traveling with two other people, early in my stay in France, I found it terribly wearing. I noticed it then, and since then I've made some effort to find out how much solitude I need, how much is habit. Traveling with one friend after that didn't bother me, and since then I've gotten rid of some of my intolerances that came from traveling alone so much. I've had more chance to find my limits of solitude than my limits of crowding and confusion; these

days I'm testing the latter.

There's a neat graveyard near here. If you walk to rich & Colleen's house, or just to the main street, from here, you pass right by the graveyard, and it's a lot easier to cut through it then to walk along the side of the road, where there are no sidewalks and there's not much room. Most of the headstones date back to the 19th Century, and the whole thing sits on a gentle hill, covered with green grass and big, healthy, comfortable old trees. Right nextdoor, bulldozers are ripping up the land to put in an apartment complex--the "Single Swingers" apartments that Ted and other local citizens fought but couldn't stop--and the mud sloches over onto the lowest corner of the graveyard. One grave is awash in mud, but everything else in untouched; they're not going to rip up the graveyard or anything. I love to go there on a sunny day and walk around or sit under a tree and gaze off into the distance, watching the squirrels and listening to the birds. It's very easy around here just to sit on the ground and look at the ground. Dig your fingers into it. Lie down on it. It's cold, but you can gather dead leaves together and make a nest.

A couple of friends of mine in Palo Alto are connected with a place on campus called The Bridge, which started out as a drug crisis-and-counseling center and has developed into a community center of sorts; I visited the plae with them just before I left Palo Alto, and they've got an old house full of rooms, of which one is simply a place for quiet thinking and meditation. It's a second-storey room with three glass walls made up of small panes, and the floor is all soft rugs and pillows, so you have both a feeling of coziness and a feeling of expansiveness. I spent some good time there that evening, thinking about what I was going to do, and just relaxing. Emptying my mind, and taking up what I wanted to think about, slowly, unhurriedly. I appreciate meditation rooms. Some people I know say that if you only use a place for one purpose, for a long time, it will pick up the vibrations of that activity, so that if you keep a meditation room "pure," it will eventually possess a feeling that will induce peace and a contemplative mood in anyone who enters it. I don't particularly believe that, although I don't dismiss it either. But I like the idea of keeping one place set aside only for quiet meditation.

"Sundown letter."

It isn't really sundown, but I thought of calling it that yesterday evening, when I poured myself a glass of wine, bundled up in a coat and sweater and gloves, and went out into the Whites' back yard to sit on a stump and watch the sun go down. There aren't many rooms in this house that face west, and even if I could find a comfortable seat in one from which to watch the sunset, I'd have to peer out of a small window obscured by a screen. I don't usually see the sunset, but every time I'm outdoors on a sunny day I raise my head and look at the clouds in the sky. Two days ago I was walking back from the public library, and the sun was setting behind me, but the most spectacular sight was the ruddy glow on a bank of clouds in front of me all the way home.

It snowed! Winter hasn't seemed to exist in Northern Virginia, as the snowstorms all bypass us and dump their contents farther north or farther south, but there is actual white stuff on the ground right now. Not much, really, just a few patches; it hasn't snowed for more than about ten minutes at a time. We may never get enough to go sled-

ding down Tuckahoe St., which is what Ted wants to do (and I'd like to too!). I came east hoping for a real winter, and what happens? St. Louis gets icestorms. The Catskills get ten inches of snow. Even Florida gets snowed on. But Northern Virginia? A couple of flurries that don't even deserve the name. Let it snow well!

Listening to "Music of the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance." It reminds me of the time when I learned medieval dance. That was my only brush with the Society for Creative Anachronism; most of the people in the Society take themselves too seriously, but in those days Felice Rolfe was serving as a focal point of medieval activities in Palo Alto, and somehow whenever such things centered around her they seemed more sane and pleasant. I learned to move in the style of a medieval dancer, like a peacock strutting. I knew the basse dance, the bransle de montard, and a couple of others; some of them were most undignified hopping-and-jumping dances. The music we learned to came from a tape recorded by a group in Berkeley that had reconstructed authentic medieval music (which they carefully distinguished from the music of the Renaissance). I like such music, especially when I feel like being quiet and simple, yet light and quick.

The day is warm, although the sunlight is muted. Today is the first day of March. It's late winter, and I'm ready for spring. It was warm enough this morning to go out without a coat and walk barefoot in the grass for a while. I sat on the treelimb Ted had cut down a few days ago and listened to the birds; getting outside clears my head out. Later Ted cut up the branch, and I carried the logs around to the back. It's been just warm enough to make me remember the warmth of summer, and to long for it. If the weather turns cold and dreary again I'll feel terrible. I don't even want it to snow any more; my mind is primed now for spring.

Robin made whole-wheat, organic bagels the other day, and I helped her enough to learn how it's done. I'd only gotten into bagels for the first time last fall, when I was taken to a deli/restaurant in Los Angeles, but I became an instant bagel fan. The ones we made here were fantastic (still are; there are some in the freezer). We did the whole bit: bagels with lox and creamcheese, and a big bowl of borscht. It was <u>good</u>. My food of choice is hot and spicy, but by contrast this was refreshing and pleasing.

We also both tried our hands at making granola, from a recipe Robin had and a few vague memories I had of watching granola being made in Columbae House. We filled all the flat pans we could find with granola, and we used all the shelves in the stove to bake it. Some got a little burnt, but on the whole it was highly edible stuff. I prefer to make it rather than buying it. The supply is almost gone again, so perhaps we'll do it again sometime soon. I enjoy doing things like making granola; while you're doing it there's no question of "What am I doing here?" or "Why am I doing this?" It's all very obvious, and the rhythm and patience help to work away some of the tensions of everyday life.

In one block on Wisconsin Avenue, Terry and I ran into about fifteen religious freaks, all trying to get us to come to their meeting and chant "Nam Myo-ho Renge Kyo." Each time we'd push past one of them, we'd find another one in front of us. We were swimming through an ocean of religious nuts. Terry took one of their free brochures as

protective coloration, and we broke free. I keep forgetting, until it's too late, to answer people like that in French.

"Celebrations for a Grey Day." That's what I'm listening to, that's what I feel like. There's a bit of water left from the rain during the night, but it's not really wet. Just grey. Today is the sort of day that might be good for sitting in the library. I need a good grey day with nothing to be done. I haven't been very relaxed lately. Another round of colds is sweeping through the house, and it's filling up my head right now; in addition, there are a couple of sore places on my back that hurt sometimes when I move wrong, and that's as annoying as having hair pulled. In sitting down to write this, I'm trying to quiet myself, smooth out my mind and my body, become centered.

I've got a cup of hot buttered rum by the typewriter now, and I can hear the rain pelting the roof. Have you ever had hot buttered rum? The recipe I use is a little improved on the standard variety: the bulk of the liquid is apple cider or juice instead of water. You heat the cider to near-boiling and fill a cup or mug about 4/5 of the way. Then you put in a big pat of butter, a stick of cinnamon, a tiny bit of powdered cinnamon, brown sugar or honey (depending on whether you want to eat sugar or not), and you fill the rest of the cup with rum. Colleen bought a bottle of Jacquin's Dark Rum, which is cheap, and I find I like dark rum better than the light, Bacardi-like stuff. It changes the flavor. We tried using Chivas Regal once when we had run out of rum, and brandy another time, but it becomes a different drink then. Dark rum is best. As much or as little as you like. (It doesn't need very much, but you can load it up too.) Hot buttered rum is a smile-producing drink. Try one.

I've been slipping into organic eating over the past couple of years, and since getting out of college and dorm foods I've been trying to find what's natural for me. I prefer unprocessed foods. I like meat, but I feel fine not eating it very often. I've found that I've lost my taste for most sugar, although there are still things that are just full of white sugar (such as glazed donuts) that I love; my teeth don't like much sugar, though, because I once let some cavities go too long, and even though the dentist filled them they still hurt if I eat too much sugar. That's karma in my mouth. I don't have a negative attitude about choosing the food I eat; I have a positive attitude in that I try to eat what feels right. So I don't follow anybody's rules, only my own taste--which tends to get more organic as I get more in touch with my body's reactions. We're all just trying to undo what's been done to our food over the past industrial century, after all.

At the moment I'm in Bronxville, sitting at my mother's desk in the wood-paneled living room in the old house on Dusenberry Road. This morning I went out and just walked slowly around the yard, touching the trees and wondering what each one was. The shape of those trees formed my childhood world, as the slope of the ground and the lay of the rocks and the courses of the rain run-off did as well. I went across the street and sat on a big, ball-like rock that's split by young trees, where I used to sit or climb or play when I was a kid. These days I always see the years laid on this place where I grew up. I walked down the street and climbed a huge old willow and watched

kids playing. They loved the sheer thrill of jumping and falling down on the grass.

It was around the time I was finishing up highschool that I first started getting into contact with my brothers and sisters as adults. The reason was simply that I was finally growing up to the point that the tremendous differences in our ages didn't matter. (One brother is 10½ years older than I, the other a couple of years older than him, and my sister about two years older than the second brother. I found out fairly recently that I was an accident.) Our father was also opening up much more to us--to all of us; it wasn't simply my coming of age. Unfortunately, he died just then, a few days before I graduated from highschool, and all of us have felt the loss of the direct communication we might have had with him if he had lived. Since then, I've found myself holding my own with my brothers and sister. At family gatherings I'm not joked about as the kid any more; I'm included in the joking and teasing that my family delights in, on an equal level. And I return it the same way, although it doesn't come as naturally to me as to my brothers. So I feel more kinship that way than I ever did as a child or an adolescent.

It's only been in recent months that I've noticed the strong feelings of family ties that I mentioned a couple of months ago. My mother is strongly concerned with ancestry and family characteristics; she can reel off the family history by the hour, and recently I've been fascinated to listen to her do it. (I've also picked up a sort of "alternate" family history from my sister, who notices and remembers all the darker, wilder sides of the family, the stuff that doesn't fit my mother's pleasant, conventional façade. Then there were my father's tales of our ancestors, which my mother debunks but I like too much to disbelieve. One of them is that it was an ancestor of ours in Scotland who originated the song "You Take the High Road and I'll Take the Low Road"; he sang it on the gallows just before he was hung for sheep-stealing.) Listening to my mother talk about the traits of my ancestors and the way they've cropped up in me is like a whole alternate worldview; it doesn't fit into my usual independent view of myself, but rather sits alongside it, separate. If I think in terms of my place in my family, the way I am a culmination of characteristics from my forebears, I feel closed in a bit too much for comfort. I don't really like to think of myself as just another character in one of those multi-generation English family novels.

I couldn't really say <u>why</u> I've started feeling the connection between myself and my ancestors now. Perhaps it's part of my search for roots, and it's only now that I'm out of adolescence and most of my rebellion that I can accept the part of my roots that go back through my parents. I'm sure that it helps that I have extensive knowledge of my family's history on tap, unlike a lot of my friends, who can only trace their families back to their grandparents. The one branch of the family that we don't know much about is the Berry branch. My great-grandfather, John Hamilton Berry, came to this country from Scotland in the middle of the 19th Century, and all the information my mother has from before that is the date he supposedly came, the names of his parents and siblings, the fact that his father was the first person killed in a train wreck in Great Britain (what a crummy distinction!), and the fact that his mother and her other children also crossed the ocean, but to Canada. When I was in Edinburgh three years ago, I went into the records filed there, the old parish

records of births and marriages (there were no death records in Callander parish, where ole John Hamilton came from). I found a John Berry and some dates that didn't match the ones I had but could have fitted in around them, but I didn't have the time I needed to go any farther back. My father always told me that ours was the Huguenot branch of the Berry family in France, who fled to Scotland following the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre in the 17th Century, and I was hoping to find some record to see if that was true or not. No luck. But next time I'm in Edinburgh, I intend to check some more.

This winter I've had a hard time centering. It's often felt as though my head was a muddy pool of water, and no matter how much I pushed or stirred I couldn't see clearly through it. Most of the time I haven't been too sensitive to other people; I've been too wrapped up in myself. Sometimes that's gotten me into hassles with people which I should have known better than to let happen. Oh, I've been aware that I wasn't very clear, but I couldn't seem to do much about it. Even so, people have put up with me when I was being obtuse, and that fact strikes me as marvelous. But it all feels as if it's come to a head. I guess I just had to let my ego-tripping run its course, and now it's all come up and hit me in the face, and at last I feel that I can get out of the mud. I've been relating to people better, more freely than I was before, and with luck and paying attention I think I can clear out my murky head. It's a good feeling.

Why does slickness sell? I think I can understand the phenomenon, although I'm as much repelled by it as you are. I saw entirely too much television just watching those two rock programs. One obvious thing about tv is that it is literally, physically compelling, almost hypnotic. Have you ever walked along a street and seen a glow emanating from the window of somebody's house or apartment, and you've been able to tell immediately just by the character of the glow that it's a television? You notice that if you're in a room and somebody turns on a tv but you've gotten out of being tv-oriented; it strikes you as a strange compulsion to look at the glowing screen. But of course all that doesn't apply to radio. I think the reason so many people like the dumb, abrasive shit that goes over both tv and radio is that they use the media as a way to shallow their minds. They don't want intellectual stimulation; they want to lose themselves in mindless entertainment. I've noticed that, for all my abhorrence of commercial radio, if I'm engaged in something like driving where I want my mind lulled but not too intensely occupied, I can listen to the unceasing chatter and cruddy music of an AM station more easily than I can listen to an FM station where the DJ may actually be saying something. I've almost never listened to WBAI in New York, because when I flip around the dial and hit 'BAI it's always in the middle of some kind of talk, and I just don't want to start concentrating on it in the middle. If I had a program guide and could plan ahead to listen to a show I was interested in, I might listen more often.

Most people are already locked into the whole media trip; they've been brought up in an environment of radio and tv, deoderant advertising and used car salesmen. It takes a considerable effort, a conscious will, to break out of the pattern, and most people aren't very interested in that. So they listen to dumb radio and they watch dumb tv.

The people who get me are those people who walk around the streets carrying huge portable radios that are always turned on. I wonder how they sleep at night.

Yesterday the sun was playing with the clouds in a blue sky, so Terry and Colleen and I went for a walk to Four Mile Run Park, which is the place I've told you about with a small stream over near Ted's place. Actually, we didn't walk that much; we took along a frisbee, and we ran and jumped and played frisbee and laughed a lot and generally freaked out the people we passed working in their gardens. Well, not all of them; one old man beamed happily at us and said, "How are you?" We liked him. When we got to the park it was soggy, since it had rained the day before, but we bounced across the bridge to the playground. The wooden bridge is so flexible that you can feel the give every time you take a step. I leaped into the air and bounced across the bridge, and Terry and Colleen bounced a little too in sympathetic vibration. We swung on the swings, and Terry got his feet wet because there was a puddle under his swing and he forgot to keep his feet up. We slid down slides, and I waded in Four Mile Run, which was cold and muddy. We lay in the grass for a while, on the driest spot we could find, and we soaked up the sun and felt the wind and listened to the birds. We could easily have fallen asleep there in the grass, but Alicia was coming home from kindergarten at 2:00 and Colleen doesn't like to have her come home to an empty house. So we walked back.

Did I tell you that we've discovered The Swing that you swing the sun up with? It's out at Rio's, this huge old wooden house out in the country where I've gone with Ted and Michael. The swing is a simple wooden board tied by long, long ropes to the branch of a huge tree high overhead. It's a <u>great</u> swing. Terry's seen it, and he agrees that it must be the place you swing the sun up. It even faces east. We haven't gone out there at dawn to take our turn, though.

A few days ago, Colleen and Terry and Alicia and Kitten and I took a drive out into the country in rich and Colleen's new car-car. (It's a bright orange Mustang. Vroom-vroom!) We kept going all the way out of Fairfax County, heading toward a range of hills that are the first ridge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. It was an exquisite, beautiful day, not a cloud in sight, and we had set out late, so by the time we reached the hills the sun was nearly setting behind them. As we drove down a little road that ran along the foot of the hills, that sunset light that I love was shining on all the farms and the forests, turning them golden glowing. We found a dirt road, called "New Road," that ran off toward the hills, so we followed it past cows and meadows and lots of trees until it intersected Mountain Road, and that ran up into the hills. No road seemed to go to the top of the ridge, but we took one to its end, where it petered out into a trail that went steeply up a slope. We started up the trail, but it was really a bare track, not cleared but slightly visible in the surrounding brush; the trail led over one rise, down to the stream that flowed by the road farther down, across the stream and up a steep slope on the other side. After that it disappeared in the trees. I had gone ahead of the others to see where it went. It was the kind of trail Bruce Telzer would love, the kind that's hardly there at all. We would have loved to climb it all the way to the top, but there was no way we could have taken the two kids along, so we turned back. On the way back down the slope, I held Alicia's hand to keep her from falling, but it was I who slipped on the leaves and fell on my ass. She felt very pleased about that. We spent some time around the end of the road; Terry took Alicia down to play by the stream, while I sat with Kitten and looked and listened to the water flowing. It was peaceful, except for the bugs, who didn't bite but swarmed around our faces. One of these days we'd like to go back, with more time and no kids, and hike to the top of the mountain.

Terry was going to go into Washington with Colleen and me to see the exhibition of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist Paintings from the USSR at the National Gallery (some prime French stuff from the Pushkin Museum and the Hermitage, never before shown in this country, and only here this month). In the afternoon Terry called and told us he was still working. He'd get off work at five and meet us at the museum. rich was also going to meet us at the museum when he got off work; he works only a short distance away. So Colleen and I went into Washington, getting a ride in from her driving instructor (rich just learned to drive, and Colleen's in the process) right up Constitution Avenue to the National Gallery. And into the Russian exhibition, with a detour through one of the permanent rooms of Impressionist paintings in the hopes that when we came out some of the crowds in the Russian rooms would have thinned out. No such luck. But I did see a Cezanne in the regular room that finally turned me on to Cezanne. It was a bunch of houses on a hillside in Provence, and, despite the fact that it was all done in muted colors, the full brilliance of the southern sunlight and the bright, dry countryside came out. A marvelous painting. I'd always wanted to get into Cezanne since reading Hemingway's praises of him; Hemingway said that he learned a lot from looking at the Cezannes in Paris that he later applied to his writing, and since I love his writing I wanted to see what he got from the paintings. I don't think I've picked up anything that applies directly to my writing, but I'm learning to appreciate Cezanne.

The Russian exhibition itself was fantastic! The rooms it was in, unlike the rest of the museum, had bright spotlights on each painting, which brought out the colors vividly. There were 41 paintings: two Monets, one Alfred Sisley, two Renoirs, a Pissarro, five Cezannes, seven Gauguins, seven Matisses, one Maurice de Vlaminck, two Andre Derains, two Henri Rousseaus, a Georges Braque, six Picassos, and one Fernand Leger. A feast of painting! The Picassos mostly didn't turn me on, since they were almost all either cubist or from a drab early period; I appreciate what Picasso did with cubism, but the work of his that I love is either earlier or much later. (It really shocked me the other day when I found out that Picasso had just died. As Colleen said, "I thought he was going to live forever." He almost did.) Oops...I left out the three van Goghs in my list, which would be a bad thing to do, since two of them were among my favorites in the exhibition. One, called "Cottages, Auvers, 1890," was so beautiful that it almost made me cry; it was painted in the last two months of his life, near Paris, all in vivid greens and blues with bits of orange and cream, a picture of a line of old thatched cottages on a slope with the ridge in the background. He must have been very happy when he finished that painting. Colleen and I stood in front of that for what must literally have been an hour or two, at different times. We had a lot of trouble getting a good look at the paintings; every time we'd back up to get a good perspective, some asshole would blithely plant himself in front of us. Have you ever noticed that there are always a couple of people in an art gallery who manage to get between you and <u>every single</u> painting you want to see? They were there. I even tried standing on the bench in the center of the room to get a look at one Renoir that always had a crowd before it, but a guard asked me to get down.

What I truly love are the Impressionist paintings, and the things they do with light. But at the same time I learned an appreciation of the Fauves, whose stuff I had never seen much of. All the Matisses except one turned me on to one degree or another. I loved "The Road in the Mountains" by Derain; I know I'd heard his name before, and I'd

seen paintings in the same style, but I'd never been conscious of seeing his paintings. This one is a riot of shape and color, an almost abstract rendering of brown hillsides and the winding road overlooking the distant sea. The California coastline should have been painted by Derain.

Colleen and I must have pretty close tastes in art, because we kept getting captivated by the same paintings. I think the guards must have thought we were art students; we were both terrifically excited by the exhibition, and we ran around doing things like sliding down the marble-floored hallways, surprising people who were walking. We felt very authentic when we both got hungry and discovered that we had a grand total of 57¢ between us. We went down to the cafeteria and shared one salad and one cup of coffee, which was all we could afford. Then we had to leave the cafeteria because we couldn't stand the sights and smells of food. We walked outside for a moment, and as soon as we got out onto the sidewalk we stood transfixed: the sky came directly from the paintings we had seen. It was bright blue, with fluffy, whirling clouds in shades of grey and glowing pink, as the sun neared setting in the west. We couldn't believe it; it was like being in one of the paintings. We stood out there, just looking, for as long as we could stand the cold wind, then we went back and looked at the exhibition again.

rich finally arrived, with some money, and we all satisfied our hunger in the cafeteria. But Terry never showed up. We kept making tours through the museum looking for him, but he never came. When we got back that night, he called and told us that he'd worked thirteen hours that day; he'd gotten off at 8:00, dead tired. We went over to Ted's for a while and saw Terry, and he looked sunburned, thoroughly exhausted, and rather happy.

Goddam, Harpers Ferry is beautiful. Terry and Colleen and I drove there yesterday. The day was clear but cold, with a lot of wind and just enough clouds to get in front of the sun whenever the wind was blowing at its height. Harpers Ferry is a small, very old town that nestles on the hillside in the angle between two rivers. The Shenandoah runs into the Potomac at that point, both of them big rivers, and maountains rise on all sides; three states come together there, too, so Harpers Ferry is in West Virginia, but Virginia begins just a couple of miles the other side of the Shenandoah, and the Maryland state line is right on the near end of the railroad bridge that runs across the Potomac. Those mountains are beautiful, much like the Catskills. The town is usually a tourist trap, but it was virtually deserted yesterday. The hill on the Harpers Ferry side isn't as tall as the mountains on the other two banks, but it's tall enough that it takes a long climb on a flight of stone steps carved out of the rock to reach the top. Near the top, overlooking the angle of the two rivers, lies Jefferson Rock; Thomas Jefferson is supposed to have said that the view from that rock was worth a transatlantic voyage. It <u>is</u> gorgeous: white water below, cliff-faces rising into mountains on either side, and waves of hills and mountains going on down the Potomac. The wind was cold, though. At the real top of the hill there's a big, grassy graveyard, with large trees all around. We picnicked under one of the trees on the slope, drinking wine to warm us up, eating peanut butter and eucalyptus honey sandwiches on corn rye bread, three kinds of cheese, and brownies. We know how to picnic well. We went over the hill and sat for a while is a seat-swing (like the one on the porch where Terry and Chris and Claudia and Doug used to live in Columbia) in somebody's yard, next to

a stone wall, overlooking the river. Then we went back to our tree, partly on foot and partly by rolling down the hillside, turning over and over wildly and trying to avoid hitting gravestones. We huddled under a blanket on the grass, watching the clouds in the blue, blue sky and trying to forget how freezing cold it was. We lasted most of the afternoon, but we couldn't stand the cold after a while, so we didn't actually stay to watch the sunset from the mountain, as we had planned. It was beginning to set, though, when we went down; I remember stopping halfway down and gazing in awe at the beauty of the sunset light on the mountainsides and the rivers. It was an incredibly fine, peaceful, joyful day; we all wished we weren't going back into the city area in the evening. When we got back, we were tired, but Colleen made delicious tacos and we drank hot buttered rum before the fire, and later she made chocolate chip cookies with peanuts and sunflower seeds. Mmm, good. There's still a plateful on the table in the livingroom.

It's been over two weeks since I left Virginia. On Friday the 13th of April (Thomas Jefferson's birthday, according to the calendar I just looked at), I bought an old Volkswagen van from an amiable guy who works at Kennedy's Natural Foods and lives in a huge wooden house out in the country. The van is nine years old, with a rebuilt engine and a fair amount of work put into it; it had been kept lovingly, and the inside has curtains and a lot of carpet scraps with which the previous owner was going to line the walls. He did line the insides of the front doors, so now they're furry. He also installed four speakers and a Blaupunkt AM-FM radio, which has kept me well-entertained ever since I bought the van. Almost the first thing I did as its owner was to take it in to Loy's Automotive in Falls Church, the local VW shop that Ted and Michael both take their bugs to, to have my new van completely checked out for bugs of its own. It had them, more than I had expected. Loy's is thorough, and they found things wrong that the old owner hadn't even known about. Really. It cost me $186 to put the van into the condition I would be satisfied with, but when the work was finished the thing ran like a dream. I left one thing unrepaired: it takes a rubber band to hold the gearshift in fourth gear, but this makeshift method works, and the mechanic said it wouldn't get any worse if I left it, so I saved $30 and kept my rubber band. Right now the van says "DAVE ELECTRIC & Mobile Home Service" on the side, a relic of its function two owners back in North Carolina, but I've toyed with the idea of taking a suggestion of Terry's and calling it "Uncle John's Van." Perhaps.

This wonder of modern German automotive engineering has so far carried me somewhere between 1000 and 1500 miles without mishap. (I'm not going to run downstairs and look at the mileage indicator.) On the Thursday night before Easter, I piled most of the belongings I had in Falls Church into my van, finally put on the new Virginia license plates, and took off up the interstate for New York. A few hours after me, the Browns and Terry Hughes left in the Browns' bright orange Mustang and drove straight through to West Shokan, NY, to spend the weekend in the Catskills, but I stopped overnight in Bronxville, then wound my way at a leisurely pace up into the mountains the next afternoon. The Easter weekend was supposed to be another large tribal gathering like those at Thanksgiving and Christmas, but a number of expected people didn't show up, so the weekend was mostly quiet and relaxed. The Statons had a party Saturday night, with some of their local friends I didn't know and those of us who can loosely be called "fans," and we all consumed many bottles of wine and handfuls of bread and cheese.

It was a very partyish party. That day contained most of the highlights of the weekend, since earlier in the day rich, Colleen, Alicia, Sandi Gerber, Kim & Zan & Sabrina Bethke, Terry, and I climbed a three-mile trial up Slide Mountain, the highest peak in that part of the Catskills. The trail was pretty easy, although we all pooped out a bit on one long, syeep slope; the view from the top and the crisp mountaintop air wiped out all thoughts of the tiredness in our feet, as we could gaze out over the entire region, mountain after forested mountain, and all the towns and roads were buried under the trees. We would gladly have stayed to watch the sunset if we had had the equipment to camp out overnight, but we didn't, so we had to come back down; as it was we finished the descent practically in the dark. Slide Mountain, especially on that easy trail, is one of the most climbed peaks in the Catskills, but even so we felt the same exhiliration that leads people to climb the highest mountains in the farthest wilderness.

One of the people who didn't show up for Easter was Alice, who couldn't find a ride east from St. Louis. So, once the weekend was over, I turned my van westward and in two days covered the distance between the Hudson and the Mississippi. If I'd had a fast car, I might have gotten there sooner, but with a VW van you have to take things slowly and easily; it's a great teacher of patience. I found an old friend whom I hadn't seen in ages in Cleveland, Ohio, and stopped there overnight, which made an unexpectedly pleasant break in a long, wearing drive. I picked up every hitchhiker I saw along the way, and one of them drove all the way through the state of Indiana, while I got some rest in the back. It was funny when he would stop for hitchhikers, and they'd climb in the back where I was lying with my eyes shut and ask him where he was going; he'd have to explain that it wasn't his van at all and he was just a hitchhiker too. One guy we picked up shared some Norwegian goat's cheese, which looks like peanut butter and tastes like butterscotch, and a Canadian girl gave us all hot peppers to eat. "A hot pepper will put you in a different place," she told us. "Your head won't be the same after you've eaten one." She was quite right. I'd been feeling kind of dopey before eating her pepper; goddam was I awake and alert afterwards. The guy with the cheese played slow harmonica as the sun set and we got nearer to St. Louis.

For most of the last two weeks I've been living in St. Louis, in the apartment that Alice shares with an indeterminate number of other people. It's a very home-like place; I might even say "mellow," if that word hadn't acquired the status of a dope-smoker's cliche. I guess there are basically four people who live here: Alice, Bill Burgdorf, Michael, and Jerry. The population seems to fluctuate, though, as people wander in and out and sometimes stay a while. (Me, for instance.) I can't remember how much Alice has described the people she lives with, but they strike me as a pretty nice bunch of people--especially Bill, whom Alice says she sometimes thinks is Zen consciousness. This apartment is on the top floor of a six-apartment building, one of the old, small buildings with grass in front that have always characterized St. Louis in my mind. Trees grow all up and down the street, and with the onset of spring the whole city has been green. This part of the city, called the West End, seems to be the cultural center of St. Louis, or at least the counter-cultural center. If I had any desire to live in the Midwest, I could easily dig it here. Just down the street and around the corner are most of the places Alice has mentioned, like Duff's restaurant, the bookstore that Bill used to own, etc., and almost everything else you might want to go to is within walking distance. Forest Park lies only a few blocks to the west. There's no worthwhile

system of public transit (just a few infrequent, expensive buses that don't go where you want to go), but you can get where you want to go on foot or by hitching. My van has been useful while I've been here, allowing us to take large numbers of people to places like Washington University, which lies on the other side of the park in University City and has lots of cultural events, and one night even out to Meramec Junior College, somewhere in the county, for an evening of Idian music and dance.

My stay here has been a bit like September in the Bay Area; Alice has shown me St. Louis much as I showed her and Terry San Francisco and its environs last fall. I get a good feeling from this city. It's not so big that even the counter-culture seems monolithic, a feeling I've often had in the Bay Area; St. Louis is a comfortable city, and there's a very nice sense of community in the West End. It's nice to be able to walk down the block and run into most of the people you know and like. Even I've been able to do that, as I've gotten to know some of the people I've met here in the last couple of weeks. Alice and I have been doing most of the things there are to be done around here, like walking in the park, visiting the Zoo, going to Shaw's Garden (the Missouri Botanical Garden), going folkdancing at Wash U, buying vegetables in the Farmer's Market in Soulard, and general wandering of the streets. One afternoon we went down to the riverfront and saw the Mississippi overflowing its banks and a number of low streets; the riverboats were moored right next to the top halves of streetlights sticking up out of the water. On the embankment a vendor walked around selling "fresh stale peanuts" and "genuine plastic diamonds," as Alice says he always does on sunny days. Last Saturday we went out to Wash U for a rock festival. I had never heard any of the people playing, but from the afternoon I gained a liking for Leo Kottke, Steve Goodman, and David Bromberg, and a dislike for the Ozark Mountain Daredevils. I understand Weather Report was very good, but they were on last and it was getting cold and late, so we left. Two people I saw at the concert were wearing t-shirts that said, "One Grunch But the Eggplant."

I've been here, as I said, for nearly two weeks, and now I'm getting the itch to go again. Alice was going to come east with me for a while, but she's decided to stay in St. Louis. This afternoon it's gotten dark and wet; while I was listening to a report on the radio of oncoming thunderstorms, I could hear thunder in the distance, and shortly afterward the tornado warning sirens went off. For a while it rained heavily. Now the overcast is disappearing to the northeast, leaving a sharp contrast as you look north between sunlit trees and a still-dark sky. If the storms and tornados are gone by tomorrow, I intend to set out for Virginia tomorrow afternoon.

A grey, lazy morning, my second cup of Chinese tea, a typewriter in rich's attic. Falls Church is incredibly lush, everything green that was just budding when I left. The early magnolias and tulips are gone, but they've been replaced by far more flowers of different kinds, including lots and lots of roses. Alicia loves to bring in flowers, so there are cuttings in pots and wine bottles all over the house. Colleen loves flowers. She also gets hay fever from the pollen. So she sneezes violently every once in a while and keeps the flowers anyway. (I'm not sure I'd do that if I had hay fever, but it's nice to have them around.) I learned something about attitudes toward plants the other day, when Alicia picked a small flower (buttercup, I think, but perhaps it was a dandelion) from the front lawn. It turned out to have

a second stem coming out of the first one, with an unopened flower on the end. Alicia wanted it to grow and open, even though it had been picked. Colleen said, "Maybe if you put it in a glass of water it will grow." My attitude would have been (was, in fact) to be sorry that the unopened flower h'd been picked, and to go find another one instead. Very different. I think Colleen's is the attitude you need to make things grow: to care about each individual plant. Perhaps I'll learn that eventually.

Why do people always pick flowers instead of letting them grow? I think it has something to do with the way we blithely change everything we touch.

You may object to suburbs, but you would find Falls Church beautiful in terms of its plant life. Since the city is old and most of the yards and houses have been here for a long time, there are lots and lots of huge trees, in great variety, and most of them have very distinctive, almost sculptured shapes. I like a place where the trees have enough room to grow up big; in the Eastern forests, too often, the trees are so crowded together that they're all small and slim, although in the West they're often bigger and farther apart. I just read something, in a book on the Potomac River, about the huge forests that used to cover all the Tidewater lands along the Virginia coast. At a time when, supposedly, there was not one tree left in England big enough to serve as a mast or a keel for a ship, in the forests of America "every tree was a mast." The Indians in that region made a habit of burning back the forest, to create more broken ground so the deer would multiply, and the result, according to observers at the time, was that a person on horseback could ride through even the densest woods; it was all like parkland.

Last weekend, on a hot day, Colleen and Terry and I (les Trois Musquetiers!) visited Great Falls Park along the Potomac. The Potomac is really a reasonably large river, if you're not judging it by Mississippi standards, but it's a placid river for the most part. At Great Falls, though, it goes through an immense outcropping of the original underlying rock that has been thrust up by some geological process; in the midst of the gentle Virginia/Maryland countryside so blanketed in green you find stark, jagged islands of rock and a raging torrent of rapids. "I didn't know the Potomac did things like that," I said when I first saw Great Falls. It took me a while of sitting by the river and listening to it to get beyond all the things and places it reminded me of and appreicate it for itself. We dangled our feet in a smaller creek that ran down through the rocks and trees to join the river. I told Colleen all about how if she fell into the river she'd be in Maryland.

"Why do you keep talking about my falling in the river?" she asked, backing away.

"All right, let me put it this way," I said. "If I got up on that rock and pissed into the river I'd be pissing on Maryland."

("And they all moved away from me on the bench....")

I've finally got a copy of <u>The Tassajara Bread Book</u>. It's a book that I've been seeing around for years, and I began to get familiar with it while I was in St. Louis, where Alice has a well-thumbed, flour-covered copy that she made some fantastic things from. I determined then and there to buy a copy of my own. I meant to pick one up at the West End Bookstore, Bob Powers' bookstore just down the street from Alice's where I spent plenty of time sitting, browsing, and drinking tea; for

all the time I'd spent there, I had bought nothing, and it seemed appropriate to buy the one book I did mean to spend money on from Bob. But I forgot. When I got back to Virginia, I thought I would buy it at a discount from Michael's bookstore in Springfield, but it turned out he was out of stock. A couple of weeks passed. I could have bought the book at a big bookstore in Georgetown, but its manager was snotty about sitting down in the store, which to me is a necessary ingredient in a good bookstore, so I decided not to give my money to him. Finally, one afternoon, I went out with Colleen and Alicia to the University Bookstore in Fairfax, a used book place full of funky old volumsandnice people. They did not have a second-hand copy of The Tassajara Bread Book; I asked the owner and she told me the only copy she had was at home and was her own, quite well used. (I did find a copy of Richard Farina's Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up to Me in the 10-cent rack. It was a good day for books.) On the way home, though, we stopped in at Big Jim's bookstore in Oakton, and there right in front we found a whole stack of Tassajara Bread Books. I bought one and took it home.

Colleen made up some cottage cheese pancakes one morning using the bread book, but I hadn't actually begun making bread myself. Then we all came up to New York, and I left the book behind. I was sorry I had, because I figured that making bread might help to keep me sane in Bronxville. But Colleen decided that she wanted a copy of her own, since I'll presumably be moving out of her house soon and taking my bread book with me, so when we were exploring the Village last Thursday she bought a copy and gave it to me. My copy in Virginia is now hers, and the one here is mine.

I was going make some quick bread on Sunday morning for the picnic, but my mother had no whole wheat flour or other whole, natural ingredients, and I didn't want to begin my baking career using processed products. The Tassajara Bread Book comes from the Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, which is the first Zen monastery in this hemisphere; it sits nestled in a valley along the Big Sur coast, and I believe I spotted a meditating person there as we were riding up that coast road last September. At least, I looked later on a map and it seemed to be about the right place. The whole feel of the book is very much in keeping with the way of life I like; even the physical design of the volume makes it a pleasure to pick up and hold (it uses brown type, a softening device that I've only seen used before in Stephen Gaskin's Caravan).

> "Bread makes itself, by your kindness, with your help, with imagination running through you, with dough under hand, you are breadmaking itself, which is why breadmaking is so fulfilling and rewarding.
>
> "A recipe doesn't belong to anyone. Given to me, I give it to you. Only a guide, only a skeletal framework. You must fill in the flesh according to your nature and desire. Your life, your love will bring these words into full creation. This cannot be taught. You already know. So please cook, love, feel, create."

I have still not actually made bread from a recipe in this book, or made bread in any other way for that matter, unless you count occasional pancakes. And I've never done them from scratch. Today, however, I went to Bronxville's friendly one-woman health food store and bought whole wheat flour, unbleached white flour, and corn meal, as well as a bottle of unhydrogenated, cold-pressed soy oil and a smaller bottle of blackstrap molasses. The other ingredients are around me. I am ready, now, to make bread.

On the way back from St. Louis I was in no hurry, so I took four days and drove through the back roads of Kentucky and West Virginia. I even dipped down near the Tennessee border and went through "The Land Between the Lakes." Beautiful hills, tiny villages, back country people; a lot of slow, meandering driving. And when I got near the eastern edge of West Virginia, a state that seems to have almost no flat land within its borders, came the high ridges of the Appalachians: gorgeous mountains, all running in northeast-southwest ridges that the roads wound up and down, occasionally running up a valley for a while between the mountains. I stopped for tha last night at Mouth of Seneca, WVA, where a rugged outcropping of rock sticks up out of the green-carpeted mountains and the North Branch of the South Fork of the Potomac River runs through the valley as a clear, rushing, fish-filled river. It did my head good to stop there long enough to get the feel of the place. When I finally went on over the mountains and descended into the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, I felt that I was coming home.

The sunset was warm and cool today, and I sat on the grass behind our house, leaning against a rock. I contemplated maps, looking at alternate ways of going down to Virginia this weekend and of coming back up next week, on our way to Martha's Vineyard. After that I wrote for a while, and I listened to the birds.

It rained heavily all day. I spent much of the afternoon reading in the 1911 History of Martha's Vineyard, learning a lot and getting my mind befuddled by the vagaries of 17th Century prose from all the documents and accounts quoted. The end of the afternoon I spent in the Mandala Bookstore in Vineyard Haven, reading everything that looked interesting until the owner began closing up so she could go home and eat. This time I bought two books, a Dashiell Hammett mystery and the Book of the Hopi. The latter looks like a beautiful book and one that I'll become absorbed in. It combines two of my interests, mysticism and learning more about the Indian cultures of America. It should give me some basis besides second-hand theories for my understanding of Indian ways of relating to the earth, and what that means or can mean in our culture. My head is very unsettled these days about lifestyles. I can use good examples before me.

This summer is not a good time for me. My friends and I are getting into weird relationships and everything's getting kind of confused. I don't really understand all the reasons I feel so bad, and that's bothering me. One thing that's happened is that I've been through a lot of situations that call for a lot of patience on my part, and I've used it all up. It's just gone. I don't have any patience with anybody any more, and I've been cross and irritable with everybody around me. It isn't natural for me, but it doesn't seem to matter what I tell myself I "want" to feel like or "ought" to feel like; I just feel rotten, and much of the time pissed off. There's nothing very central to my life; the closest thing I've had has been finding a place to live, which was sort of a leftover from the spring and even the winter. A certain amount of my enthusiasm is involved in moving into the apartment and creating a new home, but it seems sort of minor. I do have a few ideas for projects I want to throw myself into when I get back to Virginia, and maybe they'll give me some motivation, but to do them I've got to get myself physically feeling better so I'll have some energy. Right now, no energy. Or very little. And a terrible frame of mind to go with it.

It's night now, and the rain has stopped. The tires of the cars

in the street sound wet, and when a light shines in through the old windowpanes it illuminates old raindrops. Some people walk up the brick sidewalks past the house, for this is the main street of town. Down on the waterfront, I'm sure a lot of people are walking and shouting and laughing--it's Saturday night of Regatta weekend--but fewer than there would be without the rain. The bars and various night spots must be doing a fine business. The liquor stores, too; people do a lot of drinking around here, especially the summer people, most especially the yachtsmen. This is a crowded island in the summer, between the Fourth of July and Labor Day. This would be a perfect night to bundle up and go to the beach; lousy weather, nobody would be there. Here, a big rambling old house built of wood, with high ceilings on the ground floor and slanting ones upstairs; fireplaces in almost every room, although some of them have been plastered up into the walls; doors everywhere, and big wooden-framed windows; soft-pine floors, for some insane reason, which I once drilled a half-inch hole into by tipping back on only one leg of a chair and twisting; antiques like the narrow, high desk at which I am sitting. Across the street on the other side of a wide yard is the hugest elm I have ever seen; it spreads and spreads and spreads as it grows, each branch as thick as a lesser tree's trunk, and in both height and breadth it dwarfs the three-storey Victorian house under it, cupola and all. In the towns some trees have grown like this, but the ancient forests of the island have been reduced by fire and man to endless acres of scrub oak and some pine. Except where the pines prevail, there is thick, weed-like undergrowth. But last summer my brother told me that the trees up-island didn't use to arch over the Lambert's Cove Road; they're bigger now. The colored clay cliffs at Gay Head are slowly tumbling into the water; a little faster tonight. The air still smells of honeysuckle and the sea.

Some hot wax just dripped on my thumb. Do you think this is significant? I don't. It is, however, sort of indicative of the state of this room, which is rather bare and empty. It's the livingroom of my new apartment--"our" new apartment, actually, as Terry slips slowly towards sleep in the other room--and there is nothing to sit on but the floor. In chair-filled rooms, sometimes I love to sit on the floor, but when there's no choice my body longs for a big, comfortable easy chair. What I feel the lack of most keenly, besides a mattress to sleep on, is a solid desk or table and a good, tiltable chair, where I can write, type, and think. That will be one of the first things I get.

This really is 827 Walker Road, just like it says up there in the corner of the paper in front of God and everybody, no "c/o" or anything. It's only part of 827 Walker, but that doesn't matter. The rest is a big house where the Clapp family live--two fairly young parents and two small kids--and this apartment is built onto the side. Since moving in we've discovered that we get a very good cross-section of everything the small kids say: cry, yell, shout, or wail, along with an assorted series of thuds from upstairs (which I understand is not regular fare). We have no qualms about generating noise of our own. Outside our door is a small farm, sloping down the hill to a pond, and beyond it rolling forest. We wake up to the sound of roosters, and when we walk out we've got to scatter the ducks from the front steps. We've got a wooden porch that faces back down the slope, and beyond the porch a bunch of chairs under a big tree. The property is full of big trees. Walker Road runs by the front of the house, which means the back of the apartment. We've discovered that, although it appears to be a pleasant country lane, barely wide enough for two cars abreast and overgrown on both sides, it

is in fact some kind of local speedway, where the drivers come barrelling around blind curves at fifty and sixty miles per hour, and swerve into ditches a lot when they encounter anybody foolish enough to to be caught on foot or on a bicycle. Mailboxes, they say, have a short lifespan along Walker Road. On the other side of the road, alas, you can see the land divided up into lots and a plethora of modern houses, obviously all recently built. (They are, at least, rich people's houses, so they're not all the same. But I suspect that we'll be able to watch the march of suburbanization during the year we live here.) You can get into Falls Church from here by just driving out a couple of miles to the far end of Walker Road, taking a stretch of another small road, and then going straight in on Route 7, which is a major through route around here (it becomes the main street of Falls Church); or, you can go a couple of blocks to the nearer end of Walker Road and drive by a beautiful series of winding, wooded roads, which will get you into town a little later but without driving on more than one major route at all. We do live in the country.

Our new home consists of two small bedrooms, side by side, and a large living area with a kitchenette off the side. Well, also a bathroom. It's all painted white, of course, but it has a set of floor-to-ceiling bookshelves along one wall. We inherited some books with the place, too, some of them fascinating, some of them very dumb and bad. There's no furniture, except a cot that Terry's sleeping on; I've been sleeping on a pile of rugs and stuffing a couple of sweaters into a pillowcase in place of a pillow. My mother passed on to me a few odds and ends of kitchenware that she could spare, but the first time I ransacked her extras for stuff like that I took it out to San Francisco, and it's still there. A lot of useful stuff is stored with the Canfields. We have here, for instance, not one single pot or pan suitable for heating water on the stove, so I can't make any tea. We haven't stocked up on food yet, either, although I brought down a few vegetables and things that we hadn't finished up on the Vineyard. There's a general store in Great Falls, at the near end of Walker Road, and according to Tina Clapp the local farmers all bring their surplus in there and sell it cheap, so I plan to make a regular stop there at least once a wekk. Ah, patterns! We've just moved in, and we haven't really established any patterns yet; what concerns me is setting good ones in the first place, carrying out all of our intentions and not being half-assed about it, which is so easy. Beginnings are important.

I'm beginning to feel like a yo-yo. First I went up to Bronxville to care for my mother when she had an operation, then back down here for a weekend. Then up to Martha's Vineyard for two weeks. Then back down here. A few days after I got back, it was up to Bronxville again so I could drive my mother to Martha's Vineyard; a weekend there, then she paid for me to fly back to Washington. Bounce, bounce, bounce. Now I've come to rest for a while; I don't intend to go anywhere in particular until the end of August, when I'll be off to Canada. The next month sould be a nice, quiet time of consolidation. My three aims are to fix this apartment up so it's homelike and a place I like to be, to get a few projects going around here so that I feel tied into the community, and to write. It's about time I sat down and put all excuses and laziness aside and started writing. Not letters, not fanzines, but real stuff.

Our front porch here on the farm faces west, away from the road and down the slopes of garden and barnyard to the stagnant pond, and

the woods rising beyond. I've hauled one of the Clapps' springy metal lawn chairs up onto the porch, where there isn't much room with some old garbage cans and my bicycle, and sometimes in the daytime or the evening or late at night I sit out there, one foot on a bag of feed and the other pressed against the porch roof's supporting column, until the flies get so thick I can't stand it any more. I'm looking forward to the fall, when I may have to put on a jacket, but at least the bugs won't be so thick. (We've had two cool days yesterday and today, cold in the mornings, and already the flies seem fewer.) Summer around here is not really a time to be outdoors; it's more a time when you search out screened-in places and houses that stay cool through the day. Our apartment has no effective screening, but it does stay cool. We don't get the breeze inside, though, unless it's very strong and the door's open.

You can't see a long distance from our porch, because there's a huge tree, a maple I think, just outside, and its branches and leaves hang down almost to the ground. You can peek through and under them and catch a glimpse of the pond and the horses that live on the other side, on somebody else's land. In front of our porch, under the tree, the ground is covered with large gravel, and this is the domain of the ducks. Also occasional chickens, who look so silly bobbing and pecking along past the placidly waddling ducks. There's a line of round log cross-sections that leads from our porch around front as a path, to keep your feet dry and clean I guess, but in fact you'd best avoid them altogether if you don't want to slip on slimy duckshit and fall on your ass. They're hazardous.

From all the trees in the yard, Tina Clapp has hung flowerpots with various kinds of plants in them, some flowery, some long and viney. They aren't everywhere, but at each appropriate crook of a limb there hangs a pot full of green. It gives a beautiful effect and makes you think about what is indoors and what is outdoors, what is natural and what is man-made. In the side yard hangs a basketry swing with a tall, rounded canopy where you can sit and quietly swing in small circles.

Our pond is pretty useless, since half its surface is covered with green algae, but I found one that's bigger and not stagnant. It's at the commune of people I met when I picked up that hitchhiker, the people who live within a couple of miles of here and do woodworking and painting and such. Before Richard went back to Charlotte, we took Ted and Robin and Kitten and Eileen out there to meet them; Ted was particularly interested in meeting the guy who's into mushrooming. Only one person was there, the girl Jay; everybody else had gone into Washington for a free concert that afternoon. But we all sat around and talked, learning a bit more about their life there, and Jay took us out to the pond. There's a rickety wooden platform that extends out over the water ("We didn't build it. We would have done better," Jay said). The pond is full of fish, perch I think she said, and they haven't been fished for a year and a half at least, since these people moved into the house. Jay considers the fish her friends, and they will swarm up to her and nibble bread from her hand. Or from anybody else's. Kitten was afraid of their biting, but I fed them some and let them try to eat my fingers and found their bites didn't hurt at all. They soon figured out that my fingers didn't taste very good anyway. Jay said it was a strange and fun experience to go swimming in the pond and feel the fish swim around you. I haven't been back there since then, but I'd like to go swim in their pond before the summer's over.

It's evening now, and raining. As I looked up from the typewriter, a flash of lightning illuminated the distance, between the leaves of

the maple tree. Right now the rain is undoubtedly falling in through the open windows of my van and soaking it, but I'm not going to run out and shut the windows.

The letterhead on this piece of paper is that of Les Gerber's record company. He's been running a slowly-expanding business of issuing unavailable and sometimes bootleg classical recordings ever since he and Sandi and their kids moved up here from NYC a few years ago. At this very instant, I'm sitting at Les's desk in his office, which is a smaller mobile home right next to the larger mobile they live in, both sitting in the grass by the edge of Esopus Creek. Up the hill a bit from here runs Route 28, the closest thing to a major road around here, and across the Esopus rises a whole set of green mountains. When I was living in California and coming east to visit, I would get to New York City or my mother's house in suburban Bronxville, and I would wonder why the hell I had come back to such a place, but then I'd come up here into the mountains and I'd remember. This is the country that cleans out my soul. Phoenicia lies a few miles into the Forest Preserve from Woodstock, and there's a loose-knit community of friends of mine here, mostly ex-fans or otherwise connected to that super-tribe of fandom that you never fully get away from. I came up here from New York after the con, while waiting for a new (used) transmission to be put into my old VW van. I drove up in the van, but since only the first three gears work now, I took all the back roads and never went faster than 35 mph. That's perfectly okay, except when I'm on a two-lane road and a lot of people get lined up behind me waiting to pass. When the line gets too long and there's nothing but curves and double yellow lines, I just pull off the road for a while and let them all go by. Then I trundle on at my nice 35 mph.

I just made myself the biggest cup of coffee I've ever seen. Les has a gigantic ceramic cup, white on the inside and darkish blue on the outside, decorated in raised patterns of black lines and flowers, which must hold half a quart. He says he uses that when he <u>really</u> needs a cup of tea. I am using it so that I won't have to go back over to the house and heat up water all over again when my first cup runs out.

October is my favorite month, as the wind blows cool and the murky summer sky clears. Virginia seems part of the Northeast in the fall and the winter, unlike its steamy Southern summer. Some of the leaves are turning--by the library last night I saw a few branches of brilliant orange and gold among the green--and in the refrigerator is a bag of apples that Colleen and Terry brought back from the Blue Ridge Mountains. I'd like to go up into the mountains myself for a couple of days while autumn is in full bloom there.

((In case you're really puzzled and would like some sort of a chronology for figuring out where I was when this stuff was written, I'll give you this rough one, in much the same spirit that authors of English generational novels give family trees or historical novelists dynastic charts: it was in January ('73) that I came to Virginia, staying with the Whites; some time in March I moved over to the Browns, having had no luck in finding a place of my own; after Easter I went out to St. Louis, then back to Falls Church and the Browns' in early May; in June I spent a couple of weeks or so in Bronxville, NY, came back to Falls Church for a weekend, and went with Terry and Colleen to Martha's Vineyard for a couple more weeks; after the Fourth of July I came back to Virginia and lived with Terry Hughes in Great Falls until the Torcon: I spent a month away in Canada and New York and came back to find us evicted.))

NOTES TO MYSELF

I have been reading Wendell Berry's description of his native land, a place by a river in Kentucky, of his permanent relationship to that place and the increasing realization of it through his life. His vision is an organic one, a vision of being at peace within nature. Roots are at the bottom of his life, and he sees human beings as best when they live harmoniously within nature.

While reading and thinking of the undominant place of people in Berry's world, I also began thinking of the writers whose deepest credo is the transcendence of man, that his highest good is to grab hold of reality and transform it. No single writer's name comes to mind, as none came to mind when I was reading the passage. Yet the idea is very clear to me, and it stands in opposition to Wendell Berry's vision.

I hold both ideas in my mind, and there is room enough for both. That is what amazes me, what is worth recording. It's not that I possess some overview that can assimilate both disparate ideas, catalog them under some broader definition, and so inevitably reduce each and draw some of the life out of it. The two ideas simply exist, side by side, each one whole and full of its own meaning and implication, and I feel no strain in understanding both.

--Mon., April 30, 1973
St. Louis, Missouri

Clear and cold. It is night, with a bright, silvery half-moon shining high in the sky. Stars, hard and constant lights, hidden then released by foamy clouds that sweep slowly, ever-changing, across the sky in the night wind.

Behind me, the river: roaring tinkling; rushing all the time along the rocks and through the valley. Before me, across the road: a field where horses grazed during the day, greenly grassy. Beyond the field lies the forest, a shadow of trees, and behind them the hills--hilltops in the valley; on into mountains, all covered with trees.

I could leap the fence, throw myself away, and run laughing across the moonlit field and into the trees. It all lies real before me. Never would I be seen again.

--Thurs., May 10, 1973
Mouth of Seneca, West Virginia

This afternoon I went back to the marina on the Hudson in Yonkers. The day was perfect, blue and clear with warm sun, light wind, and cool clouds. My nose was full of the water smell as I sat on the pier and rested my feet on the ledge below me.

Down the river I could see the George Washington Bridge, and beyond it, slightly hazy, the spires of Manhattan. Up the river I could see the Tappan Zee Bridge spanning the wide point of the Hudson, and beyond the bridge stood the bluffs and mountains of the river valley. Across from me, the Palisades loomed out of their vegetaion at the base, sheer vertical cliffs rising to more trees at the top, and between us the sun glittered a wide, brilliant path on the water.

notes to myself--ii

To my left a few people sat by the river, the nearest a stout housewifey woman sitting in a folding lawn chair with a sandwich bag beside her and wearing a kerchief on her head. She got up every once in a while and walked up and down the breakwater, lifting square crab pots out of the water by the ropes that held them to the land, examining each one, then throwing them back in again. While I was there she caught one large crab.

--Fri., September 7, 1973
Bronxville, New York

Here I sit in one of the two old armchairs I brought down from New York in my van, the other one across the room, looking out the screen door at the weeping willow branches and listening to the falling rain. I'm also listening to an old record and drinking tea. It is cool, but wet.

Here I sit listening to the rain on the first Tuesday afternoon in October, 1973. In a one-storey house which at times has felt like home, in Falls Church, Virginia. A few yards up the street in one direction is the actual line of the City of Falls Church; a few yards down the street in the other direction lies Highway 50, which runs west all the way through Cincinnati and St. Louis to California. I know people along the way. I know other people here.

Today I should be moving over to another hose in Falls Church, where it will be less crowded for me to stay. Five days ago, when I came home at last from a month away, tired and rejuvenated and worn out --all three from different parts of the trip--I found we'd been evicted from our apartment because the rent didn't get paid on time. Our belongings had been neatly boxed and were sitting on the porch. The next night we moved everything and stored it temporarily here in Falls Church. I guess tonight, after supper, I'll move over to the other house.

When I came back to Virginia my van was full of stuff to fill our home: these chairs, a table, a lamp, a big pot, records and a tuner and speakers that only needed a turntable to be able to play those records.

The rain stopped falling while I was writing this. Tell me, Universe, what does that mean?

This land is a soft, gentle land. It rolls, but not hugely like California or New York. There is very little steepness. Almost nothing is flat; it's all slopes, yet the top of the land seems flat. The contours remind me of the top of a lump of dough, when you're making bread and you've been kneading and folding--smooted and creased, but without jagged edges or deep crevices.

It is farmland. What woods there are look tangled and leafy; most is fields, grassy or planted with corn or spotted with dairy cattle and horses. Ponds lie in low places. Roads, true country lanes, bound these fields and are in turn bounded by them. The roads lie often in cuts, one land wide, with overhanging earth and thick plants on one or both sides. That is why I sometimes feel enclosed: I am limited to the narrow roads, while the fields stretch all around, owned, fenced, and posted.

To walk on a quiet, unpaved country lane in the afternoon sunlight, no cars about, and to be stopped suddenly and rooted by the sound of the wind blowing through a field of dried, brown corn stalks.

--Sun., October 7, 1973
Waterford, Virginia