

Bob Arnold's
CAMP I.V.

[complete]

extracts from letters all to close friends
concerning a loved one



A letter is a joy of earth, it is denied the Gods
—Emily Dickinson



There is no remedy for love but to love more
—Henry David Thoreau

Susan has acute Lyme disease. Blood work will take two weeks, but everyone I took her to yesterday in the hospital said she had it. Mostso, the two women working in the tissue department of the blood lab. Their door was open, I tapped hello, and they turned and stared at the two of us. When I explained our plight, they immediately did what most human beings are still capable of doing, they got concerned. Even with Mr & Mrs No Appointment asking them questions. Everyone smiling. One or two satellite rashes now up and down Susan's legs, each one hotter than the other. The dreaded bullseye under her arm. For some reason all the rashes and bullseye took two months to show, whereas fever episodes and all the rest started in May, went into remission, reappeared in June. Now she is on oral antibiotic tablets and a rough night. The rashes are burning hotter, nausea, fever, bad news. Yesterday, before the hospital (waiting for a doctor appointment) and the antibiotics, I took her to see *Mongol* and we at least went back in time, onto steppes and characters we love. She felt fine then. More rashes and a true outburst would happen during the night.

I had Lyme disease fifteen years ago and the medicine back then, some Flagyl, made me feel much worse. Literally, a bugger. Our doctor was "overjoyed" Susan had Lyme disease because it gave us all a partial diagnosis and supposedly "100% curable". Maybe, but it's no picnic. And it's not "mono", which was our doctor's first swipe at a diagnosis for a long and troubling week.

I was with her in the ER on the 4th of July for five hours as she was admitted with a full, holiday marching band, out of screeching key! stamping down the main street to one side of us. I had to ignore that and get serious. Susan with twenty "bullseye" rashes from head to toe. An angry son of a bitch was in her and I convinced my doctor (on duty that day in the ER, lucky break) at 6AM emergency phone call to meet me at the hospital. He was all for sending us north to infectious disease specialists at Hanover, N.H., because he had never heard of such a thing with Lyme...then I told him I couldn't legally drive that distance, and Susan was failing with misery, and let's hook up in town. Good man that he is, he did.

Okay, post-ER with Susan, now back home and she's tucked in bed. I'm about to mow the big lawn...something I wanted to do last night but we got tied into visiting with our son and his wife and Susan looked so happy, as did everyone else, so the worker sat still and joked around. Carson's band members showed up. All guys now with short haircuts and beards. I asked them, "Where's the rock 'n roll?" They all snickered. Later, at home, I mow an hour. Make some supper with Susan. No grill, except what we have always used on our kitchen wood cookstove.

Susan was covered with rash sores and Lyme disease bullseyes head to toe when I got her into the ER. Had an EKG (heart excellent), chest X-ray (no tumors), then an IV antibiotic drip for the Lyme. She's shivering cold. The nurse on duty brought in a heated blanket. All usual tempo for this town: all staff, right down to the janitors, polite and efficient. A wonder. When I went later to pick up some ginger-ale, saltines, bananas, strawberries, Tylenol to get into Susan for the drive home, a madhouse of delinquents of all ages roiled in July 4th tomfoolery. I ducked away fast with my satchel and found my *horse* and took the backway out. At least the hospital and our doctor were in fit form and they now believe it is early stages of acute Lyme disease, and hopefully Susan will respond to the antibiotics and recover fully. It's an eerie spot to be in on a holiday to hear the big band parade go beating in military time down the main drag right along the hospital edge. And a festive cookout going on to boot on the hospital lawn. Packing the hospital parking lot with joyous revelers, while sad sacks like us are attempting to find a parking spot.

My understanding of it: the worse of the Lyme buggers are in April-May with the newborn, nymph-like ticks. Sesame seed-size. Susan never saw this one coming, and never a bullseye on her until last Wednesday, and then twenty came! And that after two large bouts of seven to ten days of fever symptoms, and still the dummies (us) thought it was the flu, or some such. I've had both west coast deer tick Lyme with bullseye, and garden variety Cape Cod bite and in both cases the rash showed a week into it. The west coast one cost me dearly, but I still didn't go through quite what Susan has. Or maybe I did and just forgot. Susan says I did. We were on trains for that one, with our young son Carson, it all happened in Bodega Bay where Hitchcock filmed *The Birds*. What did I expect!

Started out early that Saturday (after the ER the day before) and arrived back after northern backroad rounds in the early afternoon just in time for the rain. That cut out any grass work I had plans for. So we finally collapsed after the ER and all the medical fuss the last many weeks on end. I can't tell you the last time we have both been in bed in the afternoon getting some rest. No vacation for the self-employed. There were two times I can recall this complete in-the-zone feeling, truly, and that was when Carson was born (in this same hospital and with a nurse midwife), and taking Susan to the hospital on the 4th. Both times in the wandering unknown, both times moving on the feet we have, both times where one whole new world flipped over the present world and shook it out clean for this immediate experience. Nothing but everything stood in the way.

I met a very happy guy yesterday, with two young kids at home, and maybe his wife still asleep, setting up early for a town tag sale and all the boxes marked by his wife which was embarrassing him since I arrived just as he was piling out the boxes of stuff long before 8AM. "Diapers", "Things & Undies" — this last one got to him. In there were books, too, and another box of only vhs films. He was selling the books for 25-cents each, and the vhs

the same. A free-willing bargain. I ended up buying a dozen films I've seen already too many times just for the sake that they are very good films. And because the guy was a young father and happy.

I then moved to another tent of wares for sale and saw four old bicycles on their kickstands. I saw just the bike Susan has always dreamt of: light blue girl's bike model with two strong baskets on the back for carrying mail. Sturdy, maybe too sturdy and rigid, too. I then met your bad neighbors near New Marlboro Stage (and I know there were the very good ones, too), but the ones you described to me in a letter this year, and then you drove us down into New Marlboro Stage, and I can't quite tell you what that meant to me to have the poet and his love drive us (the poet and his love) down into the grasses of that very book and point out things. So here are part of your bad neighbors when I walk up to the blue bike and hold its handle bar for a moment and call Susan over (still a little weak, but so willing) to see if she wants to try it out. I miss, then, that she isn't ready for the world yet. She's still in the disease and recovery mode. She looks lovely, long cool summer dress, tied up as simple strap behind her neck so showing all her tan shoulders, but not ready to take a test drive. I ask the couple, probably our age, probably Vermont stock, if we can try a bike out. The woman of the couple muscles over and blurts, "What do you want to do that for?" I try to be sane and reply, slowly, "Because we may want to buy it." I believe her husband, who anyone would think was the grump of the two, but wasn't, heard the exchange and with aplomb and years of skill with his barbed partner rushed over for a bulky guy and immediately was friendly...showing us the special light for night riding, and how the back wheel had a built in brake (good ol' Schwinn) and he was more than happy to let Susan go. And she did. As I walked away from the whole scene remembering Susan riding away on the grass toward the tall maple trees of the old village courthouse. Later, at another tent, Susan returned and said she didn't think the bike would work. She may have been right, but I had my heart on it for her. While she is returning to earth within a malady and certainly the victim, and wobbly, while finding *center*, I am the little fool receiving her return with such a happiness that nearly every inch of visual and physical experience I am having, *having* her, is an epiphany.

This morning Susan's joints are all sore, troubling. If she brings this up, it has to be serious. Whether it is the early signs of the disease clamped into her, or the antibiotics doing its job and flushing the disease on a chase, may be too early to tell. We're giving the antibiotics more time and then calling our doc tomorrow morning when we are again in town. I'm calling Peggy (a close physician friend whose house I built long ago) today as well. Yesterday when we came home from all our rounds there was a big box at the door from Peggy. Since she is moving to a new house she is cleaning out clothes (women's) and some books and the box had both wrapped up together. And here I was lugging in three boxes of books from the car trunk picked up between 7-12 o'clock yesterday morning after quietly ransacking four Vermont towns. All found on a lark, side streets, library sales. That happy father at his tag sale; the two women with New Hampshire plates and a dent on the left fender with a Tupperware canister squished with books; the guy in his driveway being especially picky about old books and his prices, not realizing the 'pamphlets that aren't worth much' had the gold: a railroad oversize pamphlet with diagrams to map out a model train city. Rare. A charming old town library with an on-going sale and the two cats struck it right with a stack of new boxes of donations just dropped off and inside are a few gemmity-gems. Downstairs when we bring a full box to pay, the inquisitive librarian has to paw every book, and not with care, as if at the very last minute she'll change her mind and want to keep them. We had this

happen with a bookseller once. We worked over his sprawling damp palace of books one morning, right beside a river, in his old mill site. Hours and hours. Piled up about 30 books and this creep of creeps had the bones to say after all our work, 'Oh, I can't sell those.' I looked at him knowing he was obviously out of his tree. I smiled and said, 'Keep'em, you just lost a sale, and many many more.' We heard later he sold the business and only after that did we return to the scene of the crime.

Go find Larry McMurtry's new book titled *Books*. It'll charm you. He's such a god-awful book nerd and mainly fills his book with tales of grandiose and the high-end of book buying and selling — something I find defeating after all — when reading a book should never *ever* lose its appeal as a simple copy that costs a few bucks. Precious few are like McMurtry in the bookselling trade, who can at least convince me he dearly loves every appearance of any style book, but he makes his book jump and squeal and be juicy with the rich man tales of conquest. We now watch the great musty can of worms used bookshops go under, while the high-end rollers play footsy with one another in gilded manuscripts and cherished thousand dollar tomes. They contribute their part to the overall picture. We even have one or two such volumes in our bookstore that resembles a tree house. But we really should celebrate the true book lover, the scrunch of a paperback stuffed in a back pocket that goes somewhere, gets to be read anywhere.

Living room door open to dim Sunday morning outdoor lamp and 60 degrees. The two cats are holding.

Yesterday Chucky brought up from Colrain a whopping cord of hardwood. He knows what I like: sugar maple, black birch, lots of slippery red oak. No ash, cherry, soft maple etc., I can cut that here. At age fifty I started to buy four cord a year, and still cut 3-4 cord per year myself. After cutting this land nearly forty years I've come to the slopes and can't quite get wood out like I used to. 'Used-to': used-to be my neighbors, all long gone or even chased away working buddies, who were part-time farmer, mechanics, jacks of all trades. The one chased away by the new breed was our last junkyard in the region. I fought against the tide to keep him in business — soiled and ratty and irresponsible as he was — and I have many poems in *Where Rivers Meet* and *Once In Vermont* about these last families. We did decades of work together in the woods, trampled a sugar bush, carpentry, maintenance. They had woods rigs to help me haul our wood out. And when even younger, Susan and I pulled wood out with dog team (yes: if you consider a 'team' is a malamute and me in harness: the dog would pull *if* I pulled. Smart dog.) and wheelbarrows, and Susan and I still use the wheelbarrows to get stove wood out. It's too late in our temperament for us to have a horse and wagon to fetch the wood, but it would have been an option years back. No problem having the horse and working with it now; but we've no desire to build a place for yon horse and buying feed.

And the day started. I'm most concerned about Susan, but first we're going to get chores done and have some fun. Our doctor wants to see her at 4 o'clock. Okay, but first to chores and the fun. So we got the groceries done at the food co-op, and mailed out all the book orders (a ton), and then returned books and films to one town library, and picked up some gas for tools at home, and a little more for the car because I feel the week may change on us from our normal routine...and there's still time to kill before the doctor...so we hit a few farm stands and sample their strawberries, a little less water in them from the Vermont berry, but

not as sweet. We then see the town park along the Green River now charges money to get in! What is the world coming to. One can't even park along the side of the road where we used to always park under the tall hardwoods and run with Carson into the park and up to the river. Yep, they're making the world more miserable.

So we wander down to Greenfield Community College and find a solo white pine on a knoll far back on the campus and rest there for awhile. Susan resting, me reading big books from the town library on art, Afghanistan, and the Buddha. It's pleasant back in there. I remember it as farmland as a boy.

At 4 o'clock the doctor says what I figured: the Lyme disease has gone into Susan's joints. Let's hope just a start of things. Maybe in her knees, too. We're worried about the big bones...so we immediately got her admitted into the hospital for another IV and there will be a string of these all week until things get better. Every day. Already the young nurses love Susan and her turquoise and dresses and peace. I'm riding shotgun with books in my hand and as helper. I love to watch women just take care of things, and they do, and I stay out of the way or do some of the heavy lifting.

I forgot to say we ducked into a restaurant and had a Mexican dinner since I had a gut feeling there would be no meals after 4 o'clock. We ate heartily for \$10 combined. Shared all beans, rice, salad and felt quite satisfied when we drove away. In that very area, nearly 40 years ago, there was a bookshop run by a poet and friend of WH Auden, and who was my friend as well. Charlie Miller. He started the World Eye Bookshop (still in town but a mere reminder of Charlie's poetic domain). I bought my first Bukowski and Thoreau and Lew Welch from Charlie. Kind of sad and wandering thoughts of that today walking out into the restaurant parking lot where his bookstore burned down. Charlie was part workingman, too. Out of the galaxy of writers that grew up in the thirties and understood hard times, he worked some with his hands and knew the trees. The last time I saw Charlie he had somehow found our place and had arrived for an awkward visit of 'just want to say hello' (maybe he knew he was dying) and it happened at the front gate I built and around all the stone walls I laid up. Charlie had a smile on his face. Like me, he liked his stone.

First day at the I.V. hangout Susan was treated like a princess, bed & fresh sheets. The best of the workers setting her up, closing it up, sending her home in a wheelchair to the hospital front door with me, and then she on my arm to the car. Gentle.



Today at 4 o'clock it was a cattle ranch. Old hardknot biddies waddling to & fro, few smiles. Susan tried to introduce me to the head nurse coming to hang up her antibiotic drip bag and the woman could care less, didn't even look at me, kept on her course...and then she measured the drip to an hour and Susan corrected her and said, 'I thought it was a half hour drip?' Pause. 'It is. Oh, you're right. I'm glad you saw that.' Who's getting paid here? Too

much blood slipped out of the vein and they barely rubbed it clean off Susan's hand. Blood gauze left around her. Susan keeping up her brave smile. She tells me, when she has her eyes closed while they are digging at her veins, she sinks into meditation, remembering our days in Big Sur.

Susan tried to sleep. This time in a soft chair, no bed. I read New York poems from a new tiny anthology of city poems. The best was by Corso, easily.

As you know, Lyme disease is bacteria, not a virus. It resembles syphilis, in some ways. But not as demeaning and cruel. Let's hope. The joint pain is where the disease/bacteria has lodged into the bones. It's a free introduction to deadly arthritis and other horrors. Our job is to get this beautiful body clean of it. The bullseyes have disappeared, as have all the rashes. Joints still swollen but lessening slowly, though it's still too early to tell. This morning, for the first time in weeks, Susan declared: 'I could feel my head clearing up and it's much more attentive.' She described it as if a heavy helmet had been removed.

We've started work on getting to a social worker from the hospital to see what we can obtain in services for funding on the medical bill and even possible home care if this thing has to extend into weeks. Supposedly, we are early in the advance stage of the disease (two months into it), and there is a good chance the antibiotic I.V. will cleanse Susan thoroughly.

Half of every day is now deranged and completely out of our lifestyle. Welcome to the world of recovery.

No time to get at Carson's new house work, but I'll do something this month. I've made a promise to myself.

Yesterday we hiked down into the river and found so much of our young selves there. I swam. The water too cold for Susan's new body change, but she got halfway in.

Just back up from the river where Susan became dizzy and needed help (never before) to get across the wading part to our swimming-hole. We bought this river land on a lark years ago when a woman realtor I once knew from when I took care of her little daughter at the town nursery school (I was there as my two year alternative service C.O. as a draft resister during the Vietnam war), and she thought we might want to know about this little sliver of land running on both sides of the river (unheard of today!) which meant under the river and including mining rights to the river bed. That's where Susan and I were wading through today. We managed to buy the land advertised as 1 acre (but it was 7, I hiked it) with our neighbors at the time, a Vassar Thoreau scholar professor and his wife, who was once his student. They were all for it. And for decades, together, we protected this part of the river valley. My Thoreau friend fell to cancer, and I helped out whenever I could near the end. Still think of him often. Now the river with a little of the thunderstorm in it from noontime, but not mussy. I went in over my head work clothes and all, my usual forte. Back home I strip at home and dry all the clothes off on the sun warm hood of the pickup truck.

Chucky came up river today with another full cord of green hardwood. I piled it all and will top it off with the smaller pieces when we get back from the hospital routine this evening.

Chuck said the *Greenfield Recorder* has a front page article on a married couple both with Lyme disease. He said he'd bring up the article with his next load. He said the folks were cured.

Chucky had a new dog in the cab, shepherd named 'Colonel', its head the size of a pony. Big hot tongue hanging out. Pure breed and Chucky got it free from the state police because its two front legs were somewhat deformed; not right for a police dog. Out the dog hops from the big truck cab looking like something out of Dr. Seuss, all heart.

Buttoned up doing more body work on our pickup truck, almost twenty years old, so now just layering it on and minimal sanding is enough. Rustoleum farm equipment red paint is the ticket.

Yesterday, better known as day-four of the I.V. treatment for Lyme, the nurse was a veteran, but looked absolutely reluctant at having to stick a long needle into one of Susan's veins to begin the daily infusion. She even went and wrapped Susan's arm in a hot wet face cloth to raise the veins, even though all nurses earlier had declared 'great veins, plenty there'. The nurse also applied Novocain, but it seemed equally for Susan's benefit and her own. Maybe she didn't want to hurt this elegant and quiet patient? I sat three feet across from Susan with an art book I brought along as companion on old Southseas cultures in my lap turning the decorative pages slowly, but watching Susan silently go from ready-for-anything, to, *this-is-hurting*. If the treatment stretches another week, and it may, Susan is now thinking of leaving the catheter in her arm for two to three days and plug-in each day at 4 o'clock, instead of daily torture with a different nurse.

There was this nurse who worked on Susan and was old enough to remember plasma etc 'in bottles' (probably our age), and the young nurse sidekick with her tattoo showing at the back of her neck (Asian characters) who flounced the hour and a half we were there trying to find two AA batteries so a small flashlight would work. She approached Susan without a word because the I.V. machine was beeping and driving her bonkers. She was acting all of fourteen years old with her tolerance level. I was going to say seven years old except I've always found ages 1-10 more tolerant than ages 11-20. Two doors down, coughing came from an unseen patient sounding elderly and alone. Almost forty years moving around this town was I ever aware that this floor of interior mending cubicles existed?

When we asked at the front desk of the hospital where the social worker for the hospital might be located...we were greeted with the new faces of small town — something I'm still not used to — professionally lively and a computer screen at every turn, but, *who are you and are you here to settle a grudge?* faces raising a notch on their caliber studying us. There are no more simple questions except, 'where are the restrooms?' or "do I have to register before going to the lab?" Our own doctor's office has *never* had any of their patients go to a social worker, so they are likewise suspicious of our questions. All we two woodchucks are looking for is a possible and lawful benefit to assist our mounting medical bill. It's a no-no to think one may be treated and healed and likewise cared for as well with the financial stress. It's: *get better and then suffer on your own time with the bill*. And that's not care.

Time to get in the morning hike through the woodlot where I have been out of nearly a week now. I'm okay with that and the heat and instead have been on truck bodywork and

landscaping and painting. This house barely sleeps. I churn until midnight, Susan is up at 4. Things get done.

Susan with a fever this morning after three I.V. days in a row. This means the Lyme is still kicking in her. Won't leave. Who would want to leave Susan? I wouldn't.

Just in from Camp I.V. It's been two late afternoons in a row with the same nurse. Eileen, same middle name as Susan. Her husband of a few years (though she is our age) is a stonemason just getting out of the business. He has plans to become a violin maker in this new life. Sounds good to me. In my new life I'm selling books, publishing books, cutting trees, building stone stairways, carpentry, and scything to beat the band...this *new life* of mine since age twenty. This is a fine and gentle nurse but she is already warning us that over the weekend, when we have to be back for Susan's I.V., it will be on another floor and it may be crazy. Surgery patients mixed with off the road types like us.

I corrected two booklets for our autumn Longhouse new listing of titles (Lars Amund & Hanne) in Camp IV today and then visited with Eileen and Susan since we were the only ones in the joint. She's a pianist and loves Rudolph Serkin...so I had the opportunity to tell her my stories of when I worked for Serkin and how gracious he was. The small construction crew I was then with built the maestro a billiard studio, and then I set up a large pen for his Schnauzers, and laid in a stone path between the pen and his billiard studio. An elegant man. The work crew ate their lunch outdoors, under the windows, while Serkin practiced in his grand barn studio with its view to Mount Monadnock.

So that's what is ahead of us. Then pinning down a social worker. We're not trying too hard with the cool pleasant weather grabbing our shirts. A lovely lovely day and not easy for us to be inside. Here in the bowels of a hospital, *jessuz*.

Yes, Dartmouth/Hitchcock now in Lebanon (moved from Hanover) is a teaching hospital and with medical services. Top of the line in-state. Over excited, on the 4th, dawn hour, our doctor wanted me to rush Susan up there and straight into the infectious disease specialists arms. As if one would be on duty during the mighty holiday 4th! Luckily my doctor and I have known one another over thirty years now. We met long ago when I stumbled into the ER with a deep gash from a bowsaw raking into my left hand, and he took care of things. I've been with him ever since. So I know how he works and he knows how I work. This time he takes care of Susan.

It seems the blood test for Lyme a week ago has come back, and they are turning it around for a second look. Lyme often never shows up in the initial blood test. By the turn around it is an indication that it was positive, and they are taking a second look to make certain.

The I.V. could go all week, at least, or two weeks. Let's hope not three weeks.

Gotta think positive. And we still want a puppy. Or a kitten. Something to hold and love.

Susan's conked out. I like seeing that. The more sleep for her the better. No one understands self-employment unless they've lived it and survived it. There is little sleep and maybe some catnaps. I've been at this since age twenty. Doing every conceivable job

outdoors in the hinter country there is to do. I knew of the farmer who was killed by a widow-maker tree limb in Leyden; Chucky did, too. I've already got a poem about him but it has to take the test of time (a year) to see if it stands up. A tree-worker I once knew seems to have had a son who went to Woodstock II and this carouser caused him all sorts of sleepless nights. The day we worked together he took out what was bothering him with the limbing saw.

Are you a tree climber and take care of pesky trees? I used to be a feller, and had a friend who did the climbing. We took care of trees in the village here, many of the last huge elms. I'm out of that pretty much now and am quite happy knocking over a beech and some larger trees for ourselves. Today I dropped a many limbed beech and watched the sunlight just come gushing in as the tree went easily over, landing right on my good size brush pile.

Very sorry to hear your medical insurance isn't helping out with one test. We call ahead and if they say no, we reconsider the test. So far, all tests have been approved. We have two insurance policies, long in the tooth so never changed on the price. This is the first major hospital visit either of us have ever had in our lives...one policy is high deductible which will have us scrambling for some thousand\$, and the other policy is chiefly an accident-rider for small mishaps and bumps in the road...although it won't recognize the best healer I've ever met, who is Chinese and an acupuncturist (you were introduced to him in my tool book).

Best not to talk about poet or poetry. It's like the word zen. Leave it alone.

Some knucklehead tonight was firing off his big rifle and it reminded us of the old days when one neighbor a mile up river fired and fired and fired, and then he went and killed the local farmer's dog since he was a hothead and we thought a hillbilly feud was sure to start. Both those guys are long gone, too. I don't know what lives around here now. It's like the word zen.

One thing I thought of when walking from the book studio (a place I built with Carson for Susan in 2002) with an armload of morning book orders, listening to a propeller plane go east to west high above the tree line, that incredible persistent drone of the small engine miracle, was how very different the times now are for the simple life. Regards have been earned and made to the past simple life, and certainly many were our teachers. But I believe it is an even tougher row-to-hoe now, simply because there is next to no community support. It's one thing to live by lantern light and buck wood with a manual blade and raise rafters by logpole and knowing all your neighbors are living quite the same. Never mind grandma and pa and many brothers and sisters are there to pitch in at the grunt work, and quite another to be doing it solo, in metallic surroundings, with jiffy cyberminds blinking back at you not lifting a finger. For the past few weeks I have been selectively cutting and thrashing and piling brush of very small wood to achieve one hardwood cord. I'm not woodcutting and more making a glade and thinning out a section of woodlot preparing the ground and passage for new sunlight and opening up the big trees of maple and ash and oak to stay put. Be forest. It's getting me nowhere if I look at the thinnings of wood spread over the ground where logs have been hand tossed, often cut with bowsaw, until I lift my head and scan the canopy of brisk foliage and branch structure and then perfectly see and feel the return of native. It sometimes good for man to receive so little substance back for good

work given, while a much larger and looming goodness awaits. That early morning or twilight walk back into a deep woods clearing.

Gloom weather, not as hot, not as sunny either. Bits of rain. We can hit a cloudburst while in town and find it dry as a bone back at home. Strawberries were never quite good this year, and picking prices weren't a bargain, so we didn't pick much. Got side-tracked with Susan's health at the very least.

The blueberry patch we like is right along the trail to Carson & Becky's new house. The plan once upon a time was to visit their place and do some construction work and at intervals take breaks and go picking. It still might happen that way, all depends on how Susan recovers, and what the newlyweds want.

Always give someone a second chance, another look, an even break. Who we thought was an uncaring nurse three days ago in Camp I.V., turned out today to be welcoming, smiling wide and uneven toothed almost touching either side of her head of old blonde curls. We didn't care about her name the other day, but today we whispered to one another 'what was that nurse's name?' neither of us quite catching it, but her goodness into our lives wants us remembering her. In the meantime, there's a kid down at the end of the hall screaming his head off after tonsil surgery. I can't see him yet, but I see his young black father pacing the hallway and his white mother all alert and sparkled with concern, the kid keeps wailing. There's an old-timer plugged into some I.V. a few rows down, hidden behind a curtain, who knows the place so well he tells us through the drawn curtain that our little TV doesn't work. Thanks, I was looking for CNN. Later he tells a nurse something about pancreatic cancer and how his urine looks 'like root beer'. His voice sounds strong and lively, animated to all the action. When little Crying Tonsils suddenly appears bare foot, all of four years old, blood splots on his hospital gown, walking with mom, Root Beer perks up and wishes him well as he passes by. Here is once again the masterpiece portrait of the human soul — Root Beer may be dead in a year when Crying Tonsils turns five — and the little boy just may remember him. I remember tonsils and ice cream and the first floor hospital room and the screen window open and some of my friends from the baseball field paying me a window visit in the evening. Fifty-two years ago.

Today the low nurse on the totempole is a man. Susan is entertained watching how often he sneaks away from his duties to steal snacks. Susan, strapped into an hour antibiotic drip this afternoon. Twice as long as the previous I.V. visits. The hospital makes her look ill. Outdoors a blush returns to her face, she wants to pick up her step. In the hospital she caves into the remedy, attempts to seek recovery. I'm well, and sitting three feet from her, our feet touch, but she doesn't like the great kidder wanting to play with her comfortable swivel chair. I think I'm well but until she is well I am soaking up as much of her illness as I can to relieve her burden. Love burns into love. In the loneliest parking lot in all the world (a hospital) when we leave Camp I.V., there are barely any vehicles left, but a middle-age couple appear holding hands. They aren't attractive or beautiful people. They are the people that run the guts of a country, basic and decent, and their heads are down and not much is being said, and they never stop holding hands, and they're still walking to somewhere in this very long parking lot as we slowly drive away.

Self-employed has no beginning or end of the week. We may have a splash of weekend for two hours on Tuesday morning for some odd reason and then right back to it. Funny though, Sunday will always remain 'Sunday', the day off, even if one is working, it's in the mindset since childhood. Susan and I both worked at regular jobs since ten years of age starting after school — me in the lumberyards until age nineteen, Susan as babysitter and then retail in Los Angeles in the height of the sweet 60s. While she went off to college and graduated and remained a dreamer, I skipped college and headed into the woods and set up work-life, as a dreamer. The dreamers met by some miracle.

Your success will be through yourself and the love of your life, whomever it is and what it is. If there is love to quench your thirst, the type of forester you wish to be will probably be given half a chance. The world is showing itself as an expendable beast who could care less about human tragedy and terrific losses of life, cultures, and ways of living. So keep real quiet, there will be many days like Friday running all around. The fool is planting walnut seedlings one at a time, but at least he's a *planter*. We like planters. I once planted 80 tamarack seedlings after being given a stout crate as a gift and approximately a half dozen took. Two pathetic ones under two towering red oaks; two more down a powerline and then they got snuffed out by all the sumac; one right under the powerline, and I've trimmed and managed to coax the right-of-way utility brush choppers to make a bullet hole for the sweeping branches; and one final one, giant now and dynamic, maybe 75 feet tall right in our front yard. It took over from a dandy but dying sugar maple I dropped with rope, saw and pickup truck. Last night while eating supper out on the upstairs bedroom porch we were quietly just looking up into the soft needled tamarack's length.

That curly blonde elder says to come to the third-floor on the weekend and not to fret since she will be on call all weekend and will tend to Susan. It seems to be the dreaded third-floor, stocking all surgery and victims, while we have been all week on the second-floor right next to the nursery. Change is change. I doubt our town is as rowdy as Lexington, but I'll let you know. We'll get these two days carried out and then see the social worker (now an appointment) for Monday, and then our doctor for Tuesday. He goes on vacation for however long on Wednesday which is never good for the confluence on Susan's care, but then Peggy returns from her vacation in San Francisco and we can at least channel with her by phone if anything is pressing. Our doctor will have his substitute.

Susan remains with joint pain in all the hot spots, but lessening. That slow antibiotic old black magic doing its thing. Less fevers, plenty of night sweats, no bullseyes and maybe just a hint of the original rashes here and there. Better energy but nothing like 100%. Sleep isn't good. The disease has got a hold on her, or else the antibiotics are doing battle. A trained mind would interpret my musings in one fell swoop. My disadvantage is the same as a myriad of patients and their lovers trying their best. The guessing game. The patient being patient.

I corrected two proofs on two new booklets forthcoming from our press, planning a small one of my own, and then a few more through summer and fall. Production has not subsided. Cutting firewood mornings or at carpentry. Bookshop all week has been clipping along and we address it; better service and mailing book packages now that town life is seeing us as John Q Public every day at 4 o'clock.

Susan could use a new puppy right after this. She loves Airedales. Where the world is going, and any added expense to our meager ways, won't make sense. It may be an 'Airedale' as kitten. Some companion has to happen before winter. It doesn't look like we are getting away to any place exotic any time soon.

Reading Hemingway aloud in the car when I'm not driving (I'm a back road driver) and we are both finding him flat. New Nathaniel Tarn from New Directions is in Borneo at near 80 years of age climbing around. His traveling companion and guide is found dead of a heart attack one morning after they roll up and sleep on some ceremonial chieftain's floor. New Forrest Gander novel isn't much until he writes in more poem style prose (not quite prose poem, more hillbilly Joyce) and this perks me up as reader. ND also reissuing a whole circus bag of Kenneth Patchen which I really enjoy seeing. Putting all sorts of his old classics into one or two books. Many ways to skin a cat.

Around the other hours of the day I'm cutting much wood, making a deep glade started from last summer. The wood piles up slower this way since I'm saving the best trees and cutting the little and wolfish ones. It seems more piling of brush than getting at wood. I've one cord made up from very selective cutting. But we're so far ahead, this wood won't be burned until 2010. Fine by me. There has to be nineteen cord in house, in yard, in woodlot. Someday I may not be this prodigious.

Ah yes, the poetry scene or life or whatever they wish to call it. I can't imagine what it all amounts to. It seems these societies unite and speak for days and even weeks about the discipline of poetry, but only now and then do I ever see poetry that one would build a doorway over. Andrew Schelling was here about a month ago on his travels up to Orono. He gave a paper, and I'm sure he shared this with you, on Coyote and such and I liked what he has attempted with this. We will publish it shortly on our website, and then *Jacket* plans to take it up. Andrew's in touch with Jim K., and I described how he might contact Gary at his bookstore in Brunswick. Maybe he did.

Warm weather but nothing cruel. The mornings cutting in the woods are cool and under a canopy where the breezes reach me. When Susan was better she often worked with me. Now she comes up and brings a cold glass water jug.



This afternoon in Camp I.V. we were on the 3rd floor of the hospital with the regular patients. We were shown comfortable chairs in the waiting room where Susan was stationed for well over an hour of IV drip. I rolled over the only hassock so she could raise her legs. A shawl off her shoulders and warming her legs. I'm reading from an old book of Scandinavian poetry. The third-floor is coordinated as all women. We almost have the waiting room to

ourselves, the big screen TV across the room left silent, when an elderly couple walk in and take the first chairs. She wears a fashionable wig that doesn't quite fit around the ears. Her faithful husband seems preoccupied by sitting right beside her with a large head dozing like a donkey in the sun. She attempts to flip through a magazine moving her lips when she scans a few words, the man simply waits staring straight ahead. I hear a nurse whisper "cancer". When the woman speaks she has the running away voice of a little girl. On the way down the elevator we share a ride with our nurse of the day, the one Susan says smells of cigarette smoke when she returns from her break. Her young daughter is with her. I tell her how her mother has been very helpful to us, and does she plan to be a nurse some day. She raises her olive shaped eyes to me and says with deadly charm, "No way."

A very good morning out under the high trees up in the glade. Last pieces of business: beech logs I cut to length yesterday I got back to and bucked up on the rack today, easy as pie with the bigger Stihl chain saw. Later in the morning when Chucky came by, we compared chain saw stories, not intentionally, it just happened, as he reminisced about his first saw — a Jonsered 9-10 (came right after my Jonsered-90, and not as solid of a saw) and how his father and brother made fun of him and his big and very expensive saw. Back then, in the late 70s, a new Jonsered timber saw was fetching \$600. So was a VCR player, come to think of it. So they laughed at the big-spender youngster until they borrowed it one day to cut down a large oak and couldn't believe how butter-fast the saw went through the stump. No more kidding — now they were impressed by the judgment of the novice logger who now has run through countless saws — but he keeps the 9-10 on a special shelf in his garage ever since his father suddenly upped and died shortly thereafter all the kidding.

After the beech logs, I dropped a good-size hemlock that was only crowding a towering sugar maple, and that really opened up territory for the maples and the fluted gigantic white pine at the top of the hill. I now had a mess of hemlock branch and slash to pile, but it feathered on nicely to the pile and barely added any volume. Like folding a letter into an envelope. The breezes in the early morning were so soft and elegant they sat me down on one of the beech stumps to just feel and listen, all the work done. This is the beech Susan felt sorry to see go since the stump looks just like an elephant's foot, toes and all. I couldn't wait for Susan to come up to visit so I could show her how the tree may be gone, but her favorite elephant stump was here for some years to go as a resting stoop.

And here she comes down below where I can see her from my higher perch. I watch her glide in through the low and deep grove of ferns, purple top and faded jean overalls. The cold glass water jar she's bringing for us to share in her hand.

A weekend visit to the hospital, each day, has turned out to be a simple affair. No one in the joint! Little commotion. The front desk for registration looks bewildered as to what were asking for. An I.V.? On a Sunday? Then they read their homework for the day and all starts to make sense. So up we go to the third-floor. Our nurse from yesterday is waiting for us. We're plunked back into the comfortable waiting room with Susan plugged into an hour bag of antibiotics and I'm reading aloud whole children's books from an anthology of the best children's books from the twentieth century, complete with original illustrations. No surprise *Goodnight Moon*, and William Steig remain a favorite, and then up rides a Dr. Seuss near the end of the book to rock the boat a little more. This is the seventh I.V. day in a row. It's

getting to be a job, a clear habit, an effortless ride in and out taking the back roads and back streets we've known for four decades so we barely touch the town.

After a week of treatment the symptoms for Lyme disease with Susan are these: 102.5 fever at the start of it, now down to an occasional 99.5. Sweats every night during sleep and often a lousy sleep pattern. She wants to rise and take a hot shower in the middle of the night. Rashes have disappeared, but each spot where they were is hot and very tender, and if it is on a joint or bone, it's painful. Headaches come and go. Little side effect from the antibiotics other than being a little woozy right afterward. Maybe slight nausea. A come and go depression day after day. Exhaustion arrives with no help. Swelling of the ankles, knees and hands around the knuckles. Most sensitive where perhaps the tick bit in (under an arm), and maybe it bit twice because it's awful tender behind one ear. Concentration returns after a few days of the antibiotic I.V.; I can see it in Susan's eyes, walk and attitude. Appetite is poor, but suddenly a craving for corn and cherries! Dehydrated. Not fond of any massaging. Often cold.

Yes, back to Camp I.V. today and all through the week most likely. I've just read where some consider those with Lyme disease 'whiners'. Oh really? Call me one for standing up for and with my sweetheart, but I haven't heard a peep of whining out of her. I've also heard, these same whiners who complain about "whiners" change their tune once someone they dearly love comes down with Lyme. A lesson learned.

I get to be half the little nonconformist I am simply because of Susan attaching herself so deeply with my life. Otherwise, I'd be a middle age schmuck hoofing it into town twelve miles like I did all the time at age of 20, 21, 22 from out here. Looks mighty and heroic at that age. Daffy now at my age. But maybe I'd put a spin on it — carry an open umbrella? Walk with a lobster on a leash like Nerval? At least go by brisk bicycle during the good weather days? My beard was so long back in the old days, and it would turn white in the deep freeze mornings, I looked ancient anyway. Women would pass by (the few out here then) in a wide swerve. The car almost saying out loud, 'No way, Buster.'

It turns out we have been to Misquamicut. In the early 70s we combed all of Rhode Island. I had a friend then at URI and we'd leave here and make it to his kitchen for breakfast at 8AM. Always knocked him over seeing us waiting for him to rise on a Sunday morning. Driving down was a snap back then, now a chore. Ditto to the Cape. My family was all Cape driven and I was down in Hyannis when Kerouac lived there, but I didn't know! A 15 year old buying his books off a drugstore spindle rack. He's just down the street near the JFK ice-skating rink. We went there ten years ago to show Carson JK's house, or a guess at which house might be the old Beat's. I knew the street address. Now we avoid Hyannis and shoot straight for Provincetown barely looking either way until into Eastham, where Henry Beston had his beach hut. We found that spot when we all hiked the entire Cape Cod shoreline over five Spring seasons.

It's all *changing*. Look while you can. I know you are.

So how do the self-employed get by in America when a medical emergency hits home? Well, they better have been saving a little on the side for a rainy day. Old coffee can, in the pillow case, under the mattress, the local bank, whatever it takes. It's going to be a struggle. We do

have a paltry insurance we have been paying into ever since our wedding day. Back then I managed a retired doctor's bird sanctuary down behind his house along the Retreat Meadows. Deep in foliage gloom and high dead elm trees we kept up for the occasional bald or golden eagles. When I dropped a tree along the shoreline, I cut it four feet up so the stump would catch flotsam and debris and act as a natural barrier for the rising waters leeching into the sanctuary, which twisted with pathways I cut out for the good doctor, he with his angina and walking cane. He'd point what he wanted doing with that cane, this guy the size of Jiminy Cricket, and never did it come across as arrogant or privileged. He'd ask me, the kid with the saw and the high rubber boots, what I thought we should do. When Susan came to pick me up from work the good doctor mellowed into a serenity around her splendor and he plainly liked this young couple. He'd invite us into his house and right into the living room, past his tolerant wife, and write me my check for my work that week. And then as a professional he'd ask how we were doing for medical insurance, and we'd tell him our scrappy story of how we managed and he'd nod and say, 'That's good. Have a little insurance, at least covering a catastrophe, but don't waste all your hard work on the insurance companies'. And taking the good doctor's advice, that's what we went ahead and did.

Now we're at that catastrophe, with a high-deductible on our insurance, and even though we scrambled and got up the pay for three surgeries for our son when he was young, the blow for Susan's treatment on the Lyme will be far steeper. The zydeco of doctor visits, blood tests, ER admittance, and now a myriad of daily I.V. infusions is sure to manifest. Look ridiculous. I've watched both the waste and care that goes on in hospitals each and every second. But you'd be surprised how people react, friends show up, things are done on the outskirts of hardcore where tenderness resides. Some friends write each day asking how Susan is doing. Others call or write from Korea, Scotland, Norway, Amsterdam, Italy, Illinois, Kentucky, Florida, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Oregon, Texas, Colorado, Maine, Tennessee, Woodstock, Vermont. One friend made a surprise visit last weekend (we who receive a visitor about once a season) and wanted to know at eye-level how we both were doing, and mostso Susan. Before he left, he handed us a crumpled envelope out of his crumpled trousers, folded with hard cash, and insisted we keep it. It would have offended him deeply, and I tried! if I redirected it somehow back to his own dire needs.

Even if this country has been brought down to its knees by corporate filth, and some of its public adopts to its bad habits — and I mean a government leadership that by all means may as well be led out and publicly executed alongside any old wall for their crimes — there is an abiding goodness amongst many when times are tough. I've given to it, and I've personally received it. So *do* keep the faith.

We go into Susan's ninth I.V. in a row today, after the doctor visit an hour before hand. Then he is off on vacation, somewhere, for who knows how long. A conscientious guy so I hate to see us losing him midway, but he may have a plan. I do, if he doesn't...even if it means scrambling. Peggy should be back from her week in California tomorrow, so some semblance of connection with a doctor even if it is by phone. Peggy's son, who she went to visit in SF, managed to pick up a tick traveling from east to west with a friend by car. Haven't heard yet if it was laced with Lyme.

Susan's in little steps with the antibiotics. No "Ta-Da!" (arms flown open, big smile on the face). Never expected that. Body tender, many joints remain stiff, night sweats, rocky sleep, sometimes a low grade fever. A slow easing release may be occurring. She says she's getting irritable and feisty again, which she considers a good sign of returning health and vigor.

The social worker at the hospital has blown us off now twice. We had a professional and scheduled appointment for yesterday at 3 o'clock, and instead we met her substitute since our worker couldn't be there. This one was pleasant. She got our names at the introduction in the foyer and then asked them again when we walked to the office and she finally decided to take some notes. I asked mainly about home care in case this thing stretches into weeks and weeks. Susan didn't wear her most expensive and family heirloom favorite turquoise bracelet into the meeting. If the social worker saw our house and spread, she'd kick us out. How does one explain no money, good natural fortune, and decades of hard hard work in one place called home?

I've made the guts with Susan of three Longhouse booklets. Bought cover stock yesterday when in town, along with new woods lopers, groceries, did three loads of wash, and hit a book sale and came away with some tailings. Should have all booklets made by week's end. Would like to spread them out and about.

Somehow I'm thinking starting some carpentry with Carson, who sounds down in the dumps, may help us all. I'd like to see him finished up this month with that big wall cabinet of LPs I'll build for him. We could probably use a little change of pace from home-to-hospital ourselves, and make it home *to* Carson's *to* carpentry *to* some blueberry picking *to* hospital. It's all in the rhythm.

New Yorker cover with Obamas, I'm afraid, blew it big time. Angela Davis and Stokely Carmichael caricatures are not what my Floridian condo mother needs to see as I'm coaxing her away from country club McCain, toward the goodness of Obama. Liberal *New Yorker*, like Clintons with Obama, have put their foot into it. It's all about understanding the regular-joe and jane, especially right now. They flood and run the hospital where we go every day. They want moderate change, some spice to life, and security all at once.

I see early morning sunlight just touching the eastern hillside across the river right now.

Back in the ripe old days around here in the river valley I changed all names of my characters in my published works, real people always, just so the house wouldn't get vandalized as payback. You'd be surprised who might stumble upon your work. I've had folks come up to me, years later, and say with their own wisdom, 'I recognized myself in one of your poems.' You did? is what my eyes said back. Just nod and smile. Sometimes they were right, sometimes they were wrong.

It's real hard not to use a true good name. Some people have just the name to fit them and their doings. I've known two 'Moose,' both from Vermont. For the moment I'm keeping all the real names in this Camp IV. I may post it someday this month just to share a running commentary and my maxim that life is art. I doubt anyone would care to read it word for word.

We used to travel down to Groton, MA., to see an old friend confined to a wheelchair and living in a facility complex. He was deadly alone. He had been a rigorous mountain climber (did all the White Mountains). He decorated his two room flat with year round ghoulish Halloween paperings and had the place stuffed with books. So stuffed he pulled a bookcase over onto himself and lay there in the word debris for a day. That almost killed him right there. That was when he invited us over and told me to take whatever I wanted, just don't touch 'doze' he softly ordered, pointing to his favorite poetry and a few sweated through tomes. I didn't even bother to study the titles. Many I clearly recognized simply by size and coloring: Melville, Faulkner, Metcalf. His voice meant those were no-man's land. We boxed up a bunch of everything else and put them into the bookshop and life once again revealed the spirit of the free-man, truly, my friend being one of the best. Books ended up saving his life down the road. He had been a regular patron of the local town library and over the years had suddenly gained a romance with one of the librarians. They fell in love, she moved him out of his bachelor pad and now into a fine sunny apartment in funny-named Leominster. Home of Johnny Appleseed.

To be greeted in the doorway by a child and a held chicken is heaven.

Susan reports, right after the I.V. antibiotic, a feeling of creepy-crawlers running all through her, which often sends her to bed with exhaustion anyway, earlier and earlier.

Long afternoon at the hospital with Susan today. We are slowly gaining ground on her health, which is everything to me, and losing terrific amounts of work time. There isn't a thing to be done about it. I insist on being with her through the first two weeks of the worst pain and mystery and the hospital and will be there. The doctor was late, starting at 2 o'clock, and by day's end we didn't get home until 8. That meant running around a bit trying to land a home care situation after this week, since Susan's treatment has now been stretched twelve more continuous days. That means every day from 3-6 at least in the hospital getting prepped, to the I.V., or mucho waiting, which you know full well about in all hospitals. The home care is a no-show. One has to be nearly dead by heart or brain for anyone to come to the house, plus a surgeon has to be involved to professionally set the I.V. and that would be \$thousands right there. Even if the insurance eventually pays for some we won't contribute to the waste and hierarchy of the surgeon route.

We had an hour to kill after the doctor's appointment that confirmed Susan is improving but still with serious joint inflammation from the Lyme. More I.V. Since our doc goes on vacation tomorrow, he put her down for I.V. treatments through his vacation time. We now know where we will be.

In that hour to kill we drove ten minutes out of town to look at a possible carpentry job that didn't pan out and turned around and got back to the I.V. appointment at 4 o'clock. Susan stressed by the prolonged diagnosis on treatment deepening almost two more weeks, and this may have contributed to her painful two hours of no one at all being able to tap a vein in either arm for the I.V. She may have been dehydrated as well. I watched her go through two nurses, as if in stages of precision (the first being the worst of the archers) as she got poked and needle-stabbed in both arms four times, until finally a big mama from the ER came up the elevator and thrust through the swinging doors and asked 'Where's Susan?' She was pointed to, ever smiling, despite her setbacks. Big Mama (also named Susan) said, 'At

least you're still smiling', as she unwrapped a tourniquet and leaned down toward Susan, and I said, 'She's always smiling', and Big Sue smiled up at me. And got the needle in beautifully, and positioned it on Susan's right arm in just the sweet spot so it didn't interfere, and now she'll wear the catheter for the next 72 hours. It'll be plug-and-play tomorrow.

Yesterday I read through collected old Kenneth Patchen books now enthralled into one new volume, and my friend David Giannini wrote by morning email (without fail), knowing this was happening with Susan in the hospital and me at her side: saying 'Patchin' with Patchen', which I immediately took a liking to.

Today I read a new book of Charles Simic's notebooks which was good for the two hours of I.V. visit. Magazines in the waiting room are Good Housekeeping and Time, paperbacks neat in a row by Danielle Steele. Sampling an opening page the heroine takes all of the first page to take some steps toward a door; the text as mighty as a fluffernutter. The art work on the wall is a tiny framed painting of two large rocks in the sea — maybe Oregon, maybe Greece, Italy? Somewhere. I walk out onto the carpet hallway in the twilit hour of all-gone home, except for the night shift, and look either way up the long expanse of nobody from shore to shore. Around the bend in the nursery region our son was born twenty-three summers ago, and I still remember the swinging doors, and Susan being gurneyed through in a rush, and those doors swinging the wrong way.

We're trapped, or have put ourselves, into some eerie month long vacation with Lyme and the town hospital. It's the best way to get through it. We come and go every single day, registering Susan every day, all the paper work, often the same receptionist asking Susan the same questions: date of birth, address etc. One would think this could be done once at the beginning for a patient in continuing and uninterrupted medical visitations? A different plastic I.D. bracelet every day. We come home in the evening and take off our town clothes and fold them neatly and place them on the kitchen table by the back door ready for the next day.

It's those little things, *little* as in the way LZ used it, that now count. Many littles are now making every day here. The hurdle has been getting the strong and willful constitution of Susan geared into a perspective that this will be a long and drawn out affair. She takes encouraging turns with the recovery which lift her heart and soul, only to watch the Lyme grind in deeper and with equal willpower. I was always sure she would be in for two weeks, if maybe three, for the I.V. That's 21 days in a row, no let-up, rain or shine, through each weekend, and maybe straight up to her b'day. Gotta be done. Like I said to her, and our doctor who liked it, 'It's a job'. He did try to get us home care, and in his way he is a dreamer like we are, and dreams are made, damn it, with responsibility. It's really the only way. I've seen it happen, occur, branch into more than dreams with this attitude and teamwork. I also saw our doc go into his covey of coworkers after the appointment yesterday (I attend every one) and how one, a downer, played down the chances of the home care. She may have been right as the rules go, but she pissed on any dream or activity to wander with it. I've now experienced many nurses: some are straight ahead duty filled, others go many extra steps. All depends. There hasn't been a day yet with the same staff or even the same work ethic. What you see is what you get. Yesterday the one nurse was woefully under-staffed (suffering with absentee summer vacationers probably) and we were there double the time, very draining on the already weary patient.

The little things: I recall, vividly, in June during Susan's second blazing fever trail when I brought her to the doctor's office to find some sort of answer or beginning and the doctor wasn't there yet and so I shared how Peggy, a close doctor friend, by phone call diagnosis, had some mind to believe what Susan *may* be experiencing was 'viral meningitis'. From the other side I received a mocking face and a shake of the head as if this was an impossible notion. *Nothing* is impossible when in the unknown! Well, it turns out it was a Lyme /meningitis start to things which then resorted into full force Lyme. Peggy right on the mark and from 200 miles away by crackly phone reception.

Forget the social workers. A phone message when we got home at 8 o'clock last night relating how the social worker was calling again with an excuse. She was supposed to have called in the morning, when we asked, but for some reason (I wonder why!) she calls when she knows we are in the hospital and in the very building where she resides (an easy jaunt around the place) and repeatedly we have advocated her meeting with us when Susan is literally tied up between 3-6 o'clock at camp I.V. No, she is calling us while we're not at home twelve miles away, when we're literally right over her office ceiling on the floor above her. I'm sure you have had better luck in MA. & CT. Up here the social worker staff seems a democratic position to show off and selectively practice. It makes the hospital now feel thorough, balanced, fraternal. Hogwash. We will deal with the billing of this rising medical pay our own way, and go our own way, it's always been the one that works. We paid three surgeries for Carson and we did it month by month for quite some time.



Hello Mike, enjoy that Monopoly game with the kids! Buy 'Park Place'.

With Susan at the doctor's yesterday, sitting almost an hour in his cubicle waiting, and he's running very late on his rounds from the hospital with patients in need. Plus he's about to head out on, I'm sure, a very deserved vacation for a little over a week. I realize time seems warped: hasn't the doctor already left for his vacation? A smart cookie: knowing the nursing staff will keep a record on Susan's progress every day he is gone. We have a friendship rapport with him in the office visits, as in that harrowing day in the ER, and this means everything. The outer waiting room where we've been taken from and put into the next stage (cubicle) is a hot mess of people, a la' locker room, in all shape of bum knee, frightened mind, on a walker, crutches. It's a battlefield. Susan looks magnificent in flower blue summer dress and a glow is returning on her face after some months of insidious infection and now antibiotic soup; her bloodstream roaming with bacteria. A startling arthritic pain lodged in her joints. I sit waiting on the doctor's stool. Susan on a chair against the wall. Above her head is an Ansel Adams calendar showing his grand photograph of Mount Clarence King in the King River Canyon of the Sierra, a place where Rexroth drew out some of his finest poetry and all named for an eastern boy gone west by the name of King. My California gal, positioned this moment beneath this photograph, just-so. The doctor will come in and mull

over things with us, and Susan will be put on those twelve more straight days in a row on antibiotic I.V. He'll go on vacation. We'll go straight to jail, do not pass Go.

Add in a heat wave and the water table lowering in ponds, rivers and streams. Try to find a cool spot, or a swimming hole. A patch of standing water is all that's left in our farm pond and it's teeming crazily with the last of aquatic bug life.

Well, it's all mopey news mainly in this mopey medical month but we refuse to get mopey! Our greatest asset has always been humor, good times together, and sometimes we get a doctor or a nurse to join along. Susan saves crying for the privacy of the elevator ride between floors. So this morning's mail brings the 1935 film *The Phantom Empire*, where none other than Gene Autry, from his cowboy ranch, does battle with the lost civilization of Murania, and wicked Queen Tika, 20,000 feet beneath the earth's surface. Gene gets through the hard times with his guitar and western tunes. The queen sends up her masked army of Thunder Riders to rid Autry of his benevolent ranch and to protect their subterranean diabolic world. These Thunder Riders predate Sam Fuller's mighty riders from his film *Forty Guns* and Sergio Leone's Italian stallions from *My Name is Nobody*. This Autry (of all people!) sci-fi western, decades before *Westworld*. Be there or be square.

Susan's 11th IV day and the first one I'm missing. I worked carpentry all day, first time in days and days and I'll be painting the new shelves I worked into the book studio, ricky-ticky around the front windows and glass door. I used old maple boards that a friend at a sawmill was junking now well over seven years ago. I said, *junk them right into my pickup truck* except it was a huge banded pile and he just forked it onto his flatbed and brought the whole thing down to me. I may have burned a third eventually for cookstove fires, but I definitely preserved the rest as building material and have done much with it. Hate to see it go. Down to the last dark boards. I wonder if things are 'free' anymore? I haven't been up to his sawmill for years. Yes, I sometimes have to drill holes into the maple wood to penetrate with a screw. Tough stuff. Susan said working the carpentry is a good idea. She has some swelling in the joints, a painful knee, a low grade fever, but we still bicycled this morning along the river to fetch the mail and then extended the play, those early woods shadows along the road and river just so nice. I think a little independence for Susan's appointments at the hospital will do us both good — mostso for her to take charge of duties, a sure one-on-one with the revolving nursing staff, and to begin that aspect of the individual recovery. I may even get back up into the woodlot with the long pruning pole-saw and free up an ash tree hung in vines since last week. It just needs a few inches cut to then fall to the ground. Susan has been gone a half hour, and I'm already waiting for her to come home, report what happened in the hospital, bring the news.

Few visitors come to see us, we're always working! They must know this. When we were decades in the life of only using woodfires for everything: heating our bath water (on the stove: no hot water pipes, no shower for thirty years), cooking all meals twelve months straight, *wood wood wood*, one could see in the eyes of the visitors how in the world could they enter into *that*. I had my family up for one Thanksgiving long ago: parents, grandparents, brothers and sister and some wives and husbands, such a bevy of emotions, and when it came time for the meal they all sat at the big table and watched Susan and I, like some gypsy minstrel show, work a corner of the dim-lit kitchen around the old woodstove pulling out from many small and large iron doors and off lids: the turkey, the potatoes, the fixings, the

delicious gravy, more hot wood going into the fire, slam, bang, thank you ma'am sounds and trickery. I could see on my father's face a pleasant sigh of relief that he was actually going to get fed. They later declared it was one of the best meals they ever had. Townies. Even if they were born and raised at the foot of Mt. Greylock they had no idea what a tree was and unlike me they didn't have this thing for wanting to be instead in backwater towns like Savoy or Clarksburg. Wood culture has its affinities — I'll dream into old country photographs from Romania, Russia, China, Ireland, west coast America and dear vintage New England to see those sleighs pull wood, hay, sap, and bunches of smiling and waving folks. Carrying buckets is carrying good conversation.

Heat wave hitting strong today. House shut up like a gagged mobster in a film noir. Susan's been studying, in increments, what she can handle about Lyme disease. A little more every day on the computer from John Hopkins and the University of Chicago. It seems she was able to attract just the type of tick that does damage to 1-3% of those inflicted.

If you happen to check in with Nicolas Potter at his house-style bookshop, please extend our greetings. We'd love to see old Santa Fe before hightailin' it northward to Taos instead. And maybe Taos is a little more spoiled by now and we'd go even further north or westward or eastward...we like it out there on the plains of Springer and Wagon Mound. One day we left Taos at dawn and drove to Oklahoma into the grasslands, and then down into the furnace dust of Texas and by evening we were eating at a salad bar (huge) in Roswell and found a room owned by Russians in their motel for \$21. This wasn't that long ago. But, I'm dreaming — today Susan was on the third floor of the hospital sharing a room with a surprise roommate who happens to be a neighbor from out where we live, in with an insect bite, headaches (uh-oh) and not feeling all that well. Susan is back on a full hour I.V. drip since the half hour drip had left her feeling strange with aches in her knees and hands the day before. The comfortable waiting room on the 3rd floor where we often sit for Susan's treatment was housing a terminal patient. Under-staffed and over-booked with sick people, every room and corner, chair and bed in use.

I've stayed home to work on jobs the last three days during Susan's I.V. appointments in town and the nurses have been giving her packages of graham crackers to take home to me since they knew I liked that treat during the first eleven visits I made at the hospital with her. Today the nurses were divided between those, like Susan, who 'hate Judge Judy' and the others, with some patients, who tune in faithfully. Susan now in a full two-week blast of antibiotic medicine against the Lyme disease and it remains day by day as to her improvement. The knees that have had joint pain have for the moment slightly subsided and that is very encouraging. Four fingers, and Susan holds them up for me to see, still ache and are tender. The same ankle swollen. For some reason she is exhausted after treatment today, whereas yesterday not as much. No headaches, minor night sweats, minimal range fevers. In the morning I took her bicycle riding with me along the river like there wasn't any trouble in the world. Sometimes the predator, the beast in thee, the *disease*, has to hear you singing 'You are my sunshine', and it might even run away.

Carson & Becky have a new puppy, their first, and Carson drove her out today and surprised us in the dooryard while we were piling a heavy green load of split red oak into a cordwood rick, and as soon as Susan saw the puppy she knelt down and greeted this bundle of joy.

I've been staying home cutting stove wood and am right now polishing off cord number twenty. Chucky delivered four cord this month of premium sugar maple, red oak, black birch and we set that up to dry for two winters away. Over the last two years we've cut sixteen cord and they're piled up in the big woodshed, small woodshed, at the kitchen back door, on the woods edge, beside the flower beds (as we clear and open more yard we plant flowers and gardens) and then all the cord cairns I stacked up in the woodlot where I've been shaping out this woods glade. Plenty of wood, so far, for the next crisis ahead.

Susan falls asleep exhausted every night after supper, every night.

It's been quite awhile, on his own initiative, since Carson has hugged his mom. Yesterday, on his visit to us with new puppy, Carson, on his own initiative, hugged his mom, hugged his dad.

Our doctor is on vacation. Peggy is also gone on vacation. During Susan's last appointment before our doctor's vacation I have a vivid memory of his face wanting her well. Do you want to know how you begin to love someone who wants to save the one you love? Peggy just sent us a joyous and large picture postcard from Pt. Reyes lighthouse in California, a place we visited one early morning almost twenty years ago. The young woman ranger on duty there just started talking with us about poetry and small press publishing!

Many of our friends have written and asked about Susan and sent their good wishes. Some family, too. A phone call from Amsterdam. Chucky delivering wood asks about Susan. Janine sent a handwritten small notebook card in sized envelope addressed to Susan that she read out loud and broke down crying midway knowing just how difficult it must have been for Janine to write it with her own deranged arthritic hands.

Everyday we walk past the opposite side of the ER doors on the way to Camp I.V. One could miss it since the reflecting slider doors appear as a mirror, can't see through. At the start of Susan's ordeal with recovery we were on the other side of those doors coming through, Susan in wheelchair, being wheeled into radiology for x-rays. I stood with the technician behind his protective booth as Susan was zapped twice. It's amazing how tolerant all the hospital staff are to the often floppy but earnest extra family member.

We've started to send some of our personal mail from the hospital tiny post office, it beats heading into town with it, since we're now there every day. Susan has discovered the small gift shop sells used books! She says I should take a careful look when next visiting.

There are two different roads into town. One takes twenty-five minutes to reach the hospital, the other thirty minutes. I asked Chucky, who lives down river five miles in another state, if he ever goes to our town. He said, *Yep, it takes 26 minutes*. I wasn't even asking him how long it took for the drive.

Bicycle ride with Susan as every morning along the river. It beats the devil.

Day 13 at Camp I.V. the weekend shift at the hour we visit is pretty dead, some nurses deep in thought at a computer screen. They don't even look up. Every nurse is different — some are right on the spot with the technical end of their job and good with a needle, tubing and

the newfangled machines, and offer no gracious extras like a smile, bringing a cold drink, making sure all is comfortable. Others go the extra mile, despite being over-worked, and do their job, pick up neatly around themselves, put ice into a large cup, talk a little about themselves, and actually practice the craft of care. It's nearly delirious to see this at work coming in from a hostile world as we all do. Three cheers for them.

On the drive home we stop for an ice cream bar in 90-degree temperature. Ice cream is beneficial for the antibiotic treatment according to a wise old nurse friend who has just sent Susan a get well card from her retirement abode. A neighbor five miles up river, who we haven't seen in years since we painted her house, has learned of Susan's plight and has taken the time to drop her a card. Women are kind thinking of another woman in acute health trouble or being down. Quite different from men when man-to-man. I think of this while driving the truck back home from the hospital, with Susan my passenger by the open window, her hair blowing wild and a flush of renewal starting to show all about her face.

Of any music that makes the best sense during this time, it might be Johnny Cash — hard luck, but everyone gets it, just carry on. Cash, especially in his later recordings with Rick Rubin, was capable of retaining his stoic grace while embellishing all venues of tonal movement: whether country, folk, blues and even rock 'n roll. *One hundred million angels singing.*

Late at night, Susan asleep, I can now visibly see changes in her appearance while she sleeps. Gone are the weeks in a row of fever and sweats and a poor thing laying there somehow at rest, but looking tortured. At that point a loved one is just content that she is sleeping. Before the Lyme, Susan rarely had nightmares; ever since being inflicted, nightmares now dominate her nocturnal hours, and maybe moreso during the last two weeks of the antibiotic cleansing. The treatment is finally doable, but it seems like a step up from applying leeches...tacked to an I.V. tower from 3-6 every afternoon waiting for the new serum to kill off the toxins. If anything, we as a planet are completely unprepared for the ecological disaster ahead, which is just what it is meant to be: one subject will overcome another. We may be heading straight down the throat of a Philip K. Dick scenario; he's the prophet. There is speculation that experiments in biological warfare testing on Plum Island after WW II could be yet another contribution of Lyme disease. Susan is a walking talking bacterial bad environment trying to clean up, and it's not heroin or some synthetic. It's from the Mother.

Day 14 before visiting Camp I.V., I notice Susan stronger on the morning river bicycle ride and that's a sure indication of something. She points out how the poplar trees in our roadside woodlot are starting to mysteriously die. Sure enough, the crowns of some of the trees are leaf bare. We notice then two large cherry trees much the same way, though these two were smacked around situated beside an old logging trail. One of the causalities. Over the next two years the poplar and cherry will be dropped for stove wood. Later, on a Sunday in the hospital, the third floor is almost tip-toe quiet and our nurse from Saturday is waiting for us. It's a 'plug & play' day as Susan likes to call it, wearing the catheter the last two days — all that needs doing is fit on the tubing for antibiotics and rest calmly.

We had a corker of a thunderstorm last night. Lightning flashing bright throughout the heavy wash that we could watch water falling off the metal roofs. We went to the back door which I built long ago with a small alcove for one to stand within, while finding the key to

the door, three large stone steps up, and anyone can sit in there and pretty safely watch any thunderstorm crash on through. That's what we did. It knocked out reception for Buster Keaton's *Sherlock Jr* which I was sort of enjoying, again. The rain buckets (sheetrock 5 gal. pails) were filling in about ten seconds off the slick roofs. We line up eight and use them for the garden when we don't have this rain. One year, a storm much like this one, got all tangled up in the narrow valley and actually did serious damage. The wind first touched down as a small tornado a mile up river and easily lifted off with one paw a friend's makeshift but serious greenhouse roof, and I'm still not sure if it ever was found as roof or forgettable debris. It doesn't matter, she sold the place some years later and moved to the west coast. But the wind wasn't done — it tumbled across the field I used to hay with Clayton and ran full bore into his son's junkyard and really made more of a mess to things. Most everyone didn't think the junkyard could get worse; having red pine and fully mature rock maple trees cracked in half and on the junk vehicles didn't look right. There were two interpretations: the place deserved it; and, 'why me?' That was just the start of the problems — junkyard dog then 'hired' a local logger to come in to winch the trees around for possible saw logs that the logger could have for the taking, but then that eventually got complicated as everything usually did once entering the junkyard. This same logger we met in a haphazard way when he arrived one evening at suppertime and we were just sitting down and outside the glass kitchen door was camouflage pants and smudge top shyly tapping on the glass. It turns out Carson, then about age twelve, had been across the river that day with an impish friend and together they master minded to stuff bunches of matches down this logger's skidder gas tank. Had Carson read my copy of *The Monkey Wrench Gang* at such an early age? The logger and I took care of business quickly with Carson squeezed in the vise between us and to Carson's credit he hand wrote an apology to the logger later that week. Fences were mended. Not so readily back at the junkyard where the logs were cut and yarded and then stalled for months and finally years due to some fuss up between parties. When the junkyard went under — and it's still under, looks war-torn and abandoned, and we have been enjoying watching the speedy legs of brush return — the well- seasoned hardwood logs were bucked up, I imagine, for firewood, and then they had a big Texas A&M style fire for the pine logs and other junk. The other junk stalled the fire once, and it must have been quite a retardant with all that pine ready to rip, so they had to start it again on another lousy day.

A full two weeks of Susan in consistent antibiotic syrup transfusions. Today with a jungle style rain off and on through the day. It brings out fireflies in the woods and over the tall ferns in the evening. Some will come to my lit window as the night grows.

With Susan struggling all I want to do is work, work hard. Cutting trees, splitting wood, so what the high heat, mow the grass, scythe in the early morning, build with my stone, catalog books in the bookshop, organize and print new booklets, write all the letters. This afternoon we were on the third-floor again of the hospital because they are short on staff. We were given a private room that was soon accompanied by another fellow with lung disease. He doesn't announce this, it comes through from the nurses activity and conversation. The man needs to call his wife and pulls out a cellphone and tells her the latest. She will visit soon. He hangs up with three words said rapidly and smudged together as one, *luvubye*, and it sounds more like a cough than a word or anything with meaning, but he must mean it. In a half hour his wife arrives, very overweight and with small hard eyes. She leans against the empty bed. He arrived in a wheelchair and rose out of it and moved into a chair. A bag of blood empties into his arm while they visit. Each time the nurse asks if he needs anything, anything at all,

he replies cordially, *I'm fine*. Susan is cold. I strip the one thin blanket off the bed and fold it over her. The times she looks most unwell are in the hospital. The same joints remain sore, and everywhere she once had those twenty rashes or bulleyes there is a sparkling, peppery sensation. It reminds her, eerily, that she is possessed by something. After two weeks of treatment one begins to wonder, *will I ever get well?* So little is known or understood or conveyed by the medical staff — one must just believe.

Day 16 at Camp I.V. I don't make a note of every day, some mix with storytelling and other tales, and let it all ride together as one up & down life. Yesterday in the town PO, which we are seeing far too much (on the way to Camp I.V.) an elderly woman was amazed when I said we hadn't lost our power on Sunday night during the corker of a thunderstorm. We didn't know one another, but she hadn't that day met anyone who hadn't lost power in the metropolis. If she knew our region, then she would have known we lose power on a regular basis. Just because. Lots more trees, older equipment (when I moved down here the telephone line, such as it was, was stapled to trees...and we had no phone for the first five years), and the snow load is heavier than town and a bunch of other because. Then all day yesterday the rain came in those cloud bursts that still makes me happy about how things can be unpredictable. It's damaging some flowers and garden spots, but you live with the weather. The weather is our own bodies. Which takes me to Susan and the Lyme and the causes — there is a return to exhaustion now, and if I had to wager, I'd say she seems halfway cured. Our doctor is in the middle of a long vacation. The nurses are shy to make any opinion when we touch down each afternoon in Camp I.V. And if our doctor wasn't on vacation he'd be answering half of our questions with at least an honest, 'I don't know'. Because no one does.

At least the river is up, at least for today. We just took a bicycle ride along it, and Susan went at her own pace and speed and often I would circle back and circle around her to be back with her and she would smile and on we'd go a little further.

You're probably picking up I'm a pretty chipper guy and slinging the stories, but Susan is with acute Lyme disease. If you looked at her you might think she's pretty chipper and slinging quietly, but she's hurting, and is trying her best to live with it and above it. But we're worried. And I write you letters that try not to show it.

A new nurse today, pleasant, elder fifties, she used to be a chef and catered popular desserts at a local restaurant. Then her husband fell sick with cancer and her whole world changed. It was ten years ago he passed away, and she entered nursing school and supports herself now. Henna her thinning hair. She uses Biotin to thicken the hair but it doesn't work, instead her fingernails grow and grow. The little she knew about Lyme disease, and she wanted to learn more by listening to patients, somehow calmed Susan with her candid ease. This was on the 3rd floor again, and today all the rooms are occupied by patients in various stages from bad to cheerful. There's a chart on the wall showing eight smiley faces from very happy to a downright frown and tears. You select one to best describe your situation. Not being quite a patient I can't imagine which one to pick, or for Susan. All I want to see is her smiley face.

Poetry for me is 99% common sense: it must *relate*. The best of the mysterious poets came when life was still on the ground and quite mysterious, many from your homeland (Italy). Now we are going in the other direction: it's bogus mysterious because we are losing the life

on the land and the people and cultures that made sense of a world, tribe, this planet. Now we need the poems that relate, before we really lose how to relate. If 'as', as a word choice, will help from time to time, I'd use it. It can be a bridge. But poetry is all about the flow of message. Your message to Susan about healing, as you will too (your busted ankle), is perfect.

Susan and I were never 'back to the land'. As far as I was concerned, I was already here. I was far too ancient in my ways for that — no car, all walk. Never drugs. Constant hard at work, no parties. A real bundle of joy. I liked the ethics of Thoreau, Muir, some of Snyder and some of the Nearings, some of longshoreman Eric Hoffer, a lot of Thomas Merton and a bunch of others, and a great deal of poetry. We had a garden. I cut my first two winters of firewood all with two 3-foot bowsaws. Six cord each time. Rebuilt an old fire chief's hunting cabin into our abode. Fell in love with one woman. One love. And since then haven't changed a thing, except we eventually sold the cabin after lending it out to a friend for twenty years. We had long ago moved into a dilapidated colonial next door and rebuilt that sills-to-ridge and made it shine a little; then built three cabin, or hut, or cottage structures on the land because we must have a hut to walk to. Some of it makes sense only to us, some makes sense to many others. Dogs don't jump out of the truck or car and bark when visiting us.

I cheered the very day Sam Lovejoy loosened the nuts and spilled the Northeast utilities tower. Supposedly the tower ended up at a local sawmill I know of and one day the owner took me into the high brush to show me where he keeps it. Possible. The guy also seems a possible tall-taler.

I stuck my head up when a local lumberman wanted to sell his land to a co-generated power plant. That's when our friendship ended. He knew my father as a lumberman, me as a builder, and it was only his police chief ways that finally got in the way. I personally organized a grassroots collective between Guilford, Leyden and Colrain to fight off the encroaching Michigan company wanting this plant. It took some years and some of our health. Grassroots folks saved the valley, then some bigwigs from the towns stepped in and took the credit. Reminding me how I watched fire fighters do the same on a large grassfire one early spring after a farmlot of us put the thing out with snowshovels and rakes. As in poetry, look under the lines.

This same lumberman looked the most comical in his police chief uniform. He visited me twice, no three times, in the uniform: once when scouring the valley for a lost hunter, but really I know he was huffing & puffing into my cabin in the woods to search for pot. He certainly smoked more pot than I ever did. I could have helped him because there was a stash behind the very large door he swept open when I called, 'Come in.' A friend the day before had come down from the old place we had lived in up in West Halifax, a big cold vacant farmhouse. One more commune that didn't work: the girls and city kids all ran away on first snow. My pot growing buddy and I were left. He sat in his room all night drinking Old Duke and vomiting into a metal wastebasket while reading Bukowski; I was across the upstairs in a room filled with books, also reading Bukowski (or Rimbaud). For sex, he walked the long strip of back road from the farmhouse going pretty much to nowhere in the night. I went through the woods. Sometimes he'd drive to a nearby ski town to one of the bars and try to find someone to love him. He was handsome enough, but still had so-so luck.

I stayed home tending the potbelly stove in the hallway, chucking in butt ends from a local toy factory that put out daily scrap wood for any to take. Few traveled that road then, so we had all the quick firewood we wanted. Since we moved into the farmhouse in November there was never time to cut wood. Buying it was out of the question: we were living on pot pies at five for a \$1 and stealing everything else to eat. Lousy hustling but awful kind 19 year olds.

By that next Spring I was in my cabin in the woods fixing it all up and cutting that bowsaw stove wood (thank god for dying elm) and sometime in the early fall, I believe, the lumberman visited and asked about the lost hunter. I didn't dare look at the pot stash three feet from his head. Cops first watch the eyes. Another cop, posing as a rabbit hunter, came a year later looking for a 'lost hunter,' but by then Susan was with me blonde and thrilling and the cop just wanted a look at her. The lumberman came a second time looking for who was stealing his lumber off the drying stacks north of his sawmill. David, my new friend a mile down river in a crummy old camp was. You-know-who had already missed me pilfering his lumber stacks a few years earlier, in a black VW bug, Susan driving, and me hanging onto 1 x 10 pine boards six feet out the side window. Quite a sight. Don't smack a tree along the way! No one lived here then so fun was easy.

The third time for the lumberman's visit was when he came up wondering what gave me the nerve to steal his Willys 4WD jeep. He stored it purposely with a forklift up onto a stiked lumber pile so his son and dumb friends wouldn't joyride with it and strip more of the gears. I said well I knew he wanted to sell it so I asked (maybe it was Chucky, then a new worker and fresh out of high school) to lift it off the pile so I could give it a spin. I spun it three miles north, up river, to my house, where the lumberman was standing one evening, taking \$400 in cash from me now happily. I built the stone hut with that Willys. Pulled lots of wood out. It's rotting in one corner of the yard as a monument now. So who will rot first — Willys, or me?



Susan's arms at seventeen days straight I.V. are starting to look a little beat up. Today two nurses couldn't pin a vein, so it was another call down to the ER to ask for a nurse to come up and show them how it is done. 'Didn't feel a thing' is how Susan summed up the ER touch. Again, Susan was clocked in the smaller of the two waiting rooms where I was with her the day before. She started in the larger waiting room, but a family arrived with an elderly gentleman and they all had the job of telling him how he had to start in at assisted living. Most of his old routine would be gone. Susan related this by phone as I started on making our dinner. By the time she was back home and we were enjoying that dinner, conversation

juggled between whether three weeks of I.V. is quite enough; has the Lyme already done its damage and the antibiotics have stopped, at least, a continuation of something even worse; the joint pain remains, periods of exhaustion, episodic sweats, but she is much better than when she started.

Ah yes, the Reagan years. The time our son was born. The time I watched young women students start to bring in Valley Girl lingo and 'shit on their faces' (Travolta *Pulp Fiction*). It created a definite change, country and worldwide, and we're still paying for it. Watching the funeral for this war criminal became a devastating perusal. And yes, count on it, somewhere, even if only in their wallets, the new land developers have Ronny up in a glossy photograph. You must muster your way through recent and future experiences with such, but I'm afraid I'm all tapped out dealing with the likes of. I've become gladly ignorant to what is up. To this day, because I was raised in the lumberyard business from age ten, when I started working in my father's business in Adams, and then worked at all five of his yards around Berkshire country, including working on the building crews erecting the yards in Pittsfield, Shelburne, Great Barrington, and Pownal (when an x-rated bookstore could still be found before you reached the newly built race track) I have to almost grit my teeth to walk into these hopped up new lumber emporiums. I use every conceivable used piece of wood, plank, board I can find before buying anything new. Never mind the price for such. Carson was going to buy and I would build for him all these large wall cabinets for all his LPs and some books and it was only then I checked in with the local emporium and got the current price for plugged & touched 3/4 plywood, or AC. Of course one being pine and the other fir. Since an early age I have the aroma still in my nostrils of fir, cedar, redwood stocked up in the old Adams yard. Next to the coalyard. By the RR tracks. And the lace of the Hoosic River straight through the center of town. By the time I was in my late 20s, and crossing one of the longest foot bridges in the world, north of Vancouver, did I finally experience the grandeur of a real Douglas Fir. They were on the other side waiting to greet me.

I shot at that doe last night that has been grazing down our flowers and plants this summer. Right on the edge of twilight and dark I thought I noticed what wasn't there before, when I peered out the back kitchen windows. I went for the pellet rifle, cocked it, and wanted to make sure her lit two eyes were looking back at me so I sure enough had her full behind to sting. Pulled the trigger. Next thing I know, a few seconds, she was 100 feet further away from the yard and up near the woods edge where the stone hut hunkers, looking back at what had just happened. Those two lit eyes. I had the back light on which was just catching those eyes. In the gentle rain. I mainly and more shot her for Susan's deer tick, which makes no sense, but Susan cheered.

Terrible to hear what you have to pay on gas for trucking around to forestry jobs. I'm riled just paying the \$100 that it's taking me to get Susan to the hospital every day for three weeks, and maybe another week is about to happen. Go nowhere else. If Susan drives in alone, like she did yesterday, and I work in the woodlot hand moving by shoulder ash logs back up a hill where they fell from the tree that I toppled over and that's just where it had to land, so be it. We were both getting *something* done. And then someone had a baby in the nursery one floor below where Susan was in the hospital. And do you know what they do? — they play a lullaby throughout all the PA system in the hospital — and everybody, everywhere in the hospital, hears it. I write about this now while watching a film called *The Bridge*, documenting suicides off the Golden Gate Bridge in the year 2004. A camera crew just stayed focused and

waited...and they came. One very sincere fellow spoke of his jumping and surviving. Parents wept, young friends looked side-swiped, elder friends of jumpers gone tried to answer the unanswerable. I remember hiking over the whole length of the bridge one sunny day with Susan and Carson. It's a magnificent spot to live by, or, I guess, to die by. My point being: we all get to *somewhere*. Your finding abandoned buildings out in the field is one of the last delicacies.

Yesterday, leaving the hospital, Susan said every person walking toward her in the parking lot was on a cellphone. She remarked how it felt like she was *caught in some musical*.

Peggy tells me, by phone, about a 'picc-line' which could have been used for Susan's I.V. treatment instead of the daily pricks and left bruises. No one in our hospital ever mentioned this. More lessons learned.

Not a good day for Susan at Camp I.V. The nursing staff are now having a hard time locating a vein to use. The catheter put in yesterday was showing irritation when the antibiotics were applied today, and what's worse the young and inexperienced nurse didn't even see the trouble until Susan pointed it out. They stopped the transfusion and then Susan waited and waited until a nurse from the ER came up to try a new catheter. On top of that, a nurse supervisor, now after the fact, told Susan our doctor should have ordered a surgeon to put in a permanent pic-line for the extensive I.V. use when she was ordered up for twelve more days of antibiotic. Now all in the past. Again, short sightedness at work, and a patient now suffering with a trial that could have been clearly avoided. Susan a little weepy relating this by phone to me late in the day, stuck in a chair waiting for someone to come take care of things. The weeping is fatigue. Another nurse saying the antibiotics are now acting as a corrosive. 'An acid'. Terrific! And Susan has four more days of I.V. scheduled. A doctor out of town on vacation. Her both arms maligned. The only thought is that it could always be worse.

Much research on Lyme continues to be speculative. Unfortunately everyone is still learning, and learning off the guinea pigs like Susan. Our doctor admits this, openly, and when he isn't, I can see it at work. Same with the nurses. Most of the time they are guessing, using what instincts. Susan has experienced a rash of differences, and this has added to the frustration and exhaustion, and some fear. I can tell you how Susan is doing and this can change in 12 hours, so it's no use to run up a banner only to pull it down. One must stay optimistic to even begin to function, believe, and work things through...and likewise remain realistic and honest to see what-is-what and make action. Curiously, this is my answer to the more prevalent response to Obama in Europe, where, over & over again his popularity and optimism is met by hard-bitten realists, who can be valuable, but in this case are jaded souls who won't allow a man, with leadership, *to dream*. Mostso when one can see the focus and determined concentration and grand results from his US campaign. He is a winner if given half the chance. We may be one of the last places on earth that has a populace that will be the last to learn just how to live on the earth. How to save, how to work, how to be diligent, conservative with resources and plans, and still dream. We have a literature and many figures in history that showed this double-edged sword of an optimism to dream with hardcore principles and ethics. Emerson drowns in it. Proves forth. This morning in America we get whiners and narrow-minded mean spirited callous agents from John McCain, to the far left, who just want their doctrine, nothing else. It's pathetic and leads to an extreme measure of

impossible conquest, where the broader man is forgotten and is even used as waste, to achieve some lofty and selfish station. McCain is no cartoon. His threat is real, and he'll ruin the country for sure, the coda to the Neocons. He has absolutely no endurance at completing leadership. And he'll inherit a ruined Empirical mistake. The rest of the world has just about endorsed Obama, while shallow Americans worry about their stability, which went out the window with Reagan and both Bush families for the last thirty years. How to teach a dumb giant *how*. Gotta dream hard/gotta work hard and mountains then can be moved. Maybe the same spirit works in parts of medicine and health. We've seen the possibilities of even reasoning with cancer. Lyme disease is infectious, an intruder, with the capability of ruining parts of the body and soul if not dealt with swiftly and actively with the correct medicines. And we still all rise in the morning — whether to open or keep closed the blinds — is really all the message there is.

Too bad — I just cancelled an invite from a Buddhist event of poets & publishers for next March in Montreal. I can't even think straight right now into August. And with our simple ways of hunkered into home life straight through winters, it's impossible for us to leave home, wood fires, water pipes — not even Carson quite understands how this pinball house works for house-sitting when winter sets in. So one more irony: our simple life keeps me away from participating at a conference on the simple life. I wouldn't think of leaving home without Susan, anyway.

Day 20 at Camp I.V. and sorry to say Susan now believes her joint pain really isn't getting much better from three weeks ago. She buoys between blind exhaustion and tackling the next adventure, like climbing the stairs. She will get on a bicycle and go with me only because she is devoted, youthful at age fifty-seven, and in love. What can be said after three weeks of solid I.V. treatment is: the fevers are gone, the constant headaches, she is more clear-headed, and some concentrated energy has returned. All of that we title as *very fortunate*. What's next?

On the way home today on the back road from somewhere else, and never really leaving the side of the river we've lived beside for thirty-five years, we stopped in on the Marlboro Music Festival, just like last year on the same day, and just in time for its free rehearsal for this evening's program. The quartet on the stage in jeans, shorts, sandals, viola, cello, two violins and as Susan leans against me softly listening to Mansurian (who is there listening in the sparse audience), by large windows lighting, I read Camus. Like many of the ill and sickly and hurting, the music magnificently and surely begins to slowly fill Susan with hope.

This afternoon at the hospital Susan and I were served a meal from this very thoughtful nurse. Salad, chicken noodle soup, hot turkey sandwich, ginger-ale. Too bad no chocolate cake like Susan brought me home yesterday (me sneaking what Susan eagerly wants to give me: the food is *only* for the patient so I have to act like I often have to, a begging dog). Since Susan doesn't eat meat, I get the meat, even though I don't eat meat much anymore but it gets hungry away from home and the food is free. The nurse also sat with us and went over her background knowledge on Lyme disease, and then went and photocopied a sound article for our benefit on the disease. She spent more time with us than all the nurses put together over the full three weeks Susan has had appointments. This nurse actually sat down on the hassock in the large waiting room we have to ourselves on the weekend for Susan's I.V.,

where she is nearly princess-on-the-pea...and the nurse talking a bit of her fool head off about medicine and her knowledge of just learning more about Lyme disease. Was it the Indian beads wrapped around with her stethoscope that got Susan and I feeling a kinship? I think so. And then she forgets to wrap Susan's arm when it was time to leave. A funny and curious mistake in the nurse tableau of ethics. I wrapped it. We felt a well rounded meeting and assurance with this nurse. I bet Susan sleeps a little better tonight.

Ice-cream, ice-cream, the patient needs ice-cream! Suddenly Susan has a ferocious sweet tooth, or the tick does. We stopped at the country store on the way home and the young cashier was outdoors cleaning out the trash cans and took a break and came in and took our money for two more ice cream sandwiches. The little charms.

I'm already re-designing in my head the hospital during our visits *a la* Bucky Fuller. I easily envision a central courtyard garden, where patients and staff look down into any second of their days, and of course visit and pass through for solace, the public library, deep gardens, and small art museum. Everything is free. It would enable and rid the health industry of being a crass slob and become the care-giver it is meant to be. That we never thought of this, and instead made a war profiteering oil guzzling behemoth nation, sets our course for a demise. \$10 *billion* spent *per month* in a hopeless war in Iraq is just one sickening footnote. I've been out west in plush hotels designed with an atrium just this way for the incredibly wealthy, and many are still fools that have zeroed this country right into the mud. Give the same plush setting for the everyday everyman and watch some things improve. Or at least I would hope for improvement — decades now of Wal Mart shopping and quick fix mentality has allowed most Americans to run, whether wounded or medicated — slap-happy with a dogmatic routine. The wandering soul in hospital gown going nowhere on the hospital aisles for 'exercise' we must see in these gardens.

It's this quote by Samuel Beckett I really like: *Against the charitable gesture there is no defense.*



Day 21

Camus, whom I am reading again, in his *Notebooks* writes about a young woman (30 or so) who finally jumps for her life from the apartment above his. When they get down to her broken and dying body she opens her eyes and shares her last words, 'At last.'

Susan's full three weeks are up for the I.V., but she still has about the same pain in her joints. A clear sign, at least to me, she may be in for another three weeks! It will begin to be hell soon. We have to steer into almost a state of disbelief to get through day after day. Imagine a life of hardly ever going to town and now going every day, seven days a week, and to a hospital. Nowhere else. The young nurse who started us off today said maybe Susan would now go onto oral antibiotics for some weeks. The older nurse, who cleared up things at the end of the visit, when she heard Susan was still having joint pain, just went quiet. Wisdom hides in silence. She knows what is ahead. I'll be pushing for a picc-line if Susan goes any further: applied to her upper arm by a surgeon and so no more daily, or every other day vein stabbing by jittery nurses who mean well, but have lousy aims. It often takes the ER pros to do it right. Enough of Susan getting any more bruises.

Your mom sounds good. Sabine, too. And Susan. Moms are good. I see lots of them and I don't even know them, as nurses, in the hospital. They're picking up vomit and blood and tissue and fetching you a ginger-ale; almost everything that would tire any man plumb out week after week after week after week. I know some men are nurses, good ones. I once worked with a carpenter who was studying to be a nurse on the side. We used to joke all the time how we were 'a nurse and a poet' building houses. But where we go, it's mainly all women as nurses, and it's a honey bee palace.

One more small town early morning community tag sale did us well yesterday. Though exhausting for Susan, dragging with me six boxes of books full to the brim around in this madhouse backcountry village jamboree sale. Books dirt cheap, so we scuffed up about 150 of them, counting CDs. We wield the cargo out to some guy with two kids next to him as sidekicks and this guy is a cheery elder cashier, good sport, and he looks at me, then Susan, and then lifts up off his stool and looks at all the books in boxes on the grass and then looks at us both again and sets a quick and miraculously cheap price. I say, 'Sure'. Deal done. He and I could, maybe, save the world.

It's been rain and thunderstorms like we've been under siege all summer. Crackerjack storms, all night, fussing the trees and the windows with dangerous lightning. Surprisingly none of us have yet been killed. Or any big trees down. Undertows taking children away forever on Coney Island, scooping up four at a time. The Earth is changing, people. Yosemite is now burning.

To the doctor tomorrow. His first day back from a two week vacation. He has no idea how loaded for bear we are waiting for him.

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We're just in from a long drag at the hospital, doctor etc. Five hours. We received the bad news that Susan isn't improving at all like they had hoped: yesterday she completed twenty-one straight days, and me with her, of antibiotic I.V. Didn't miss a day, nor weekend. Right on the spot. Still, this morning Susan woke up with a fever and this headache...which we thought had all but disappeared over at least the last two weeks of treatment. Her doctor is disappointed she is still little improved. He started her immediately on another seven straight day regime of I.V. and is about to talk to an infectious disease specialist on what other treatments to try. I don't complain well at all, but the time is killing us for wages lost, never

mind wear & tear to Susan and the long back road drives in and out to town, then there is the gas. Whining makes some sentences here, but I'm more after *substance*.

'They said you didn't 'stick' easily' — that's how she came through the door this afternoon into the waiting room where we waited for something, oh yes, Susan to get her new regime started of I.V. and here is a nurse we've never seen before. She carries the standard tray for all the tie-up and needlework. Soothes Susan pretty well, talks about recently seeing a bear, scared her. Out in a blueberry patch we all know. The needle goes in fine, catheter set for the next seventy-two hours. 'It isn't that you have difficult veins, you have *tough* skin! What do you do for a living?'. I piped in, 'cooking with wood for over thirty-five years' — those arms going in and out of the firebox and the iron dark oven. It made the nurse think of how the staff were having a hell of a time getting into the vein of an older tannery worker down the hall. 'It's taken us two hours and still nothing.' I feel for the guy.

The next nurse in is happy to "finagle" two dinners since she is including me, the non-patient. I kept her paper notes for it: *Waiting Room 3rd / Reg diet / Tuna on ww / Turkey on ww / Tom soup / Milk, g'ale / salad Italian*. It did hit the spot. She forgot to mention the vanilla ice cream.

We're starting to get a little depressed now, a little worried. Susan now sick three months. August may be lost, too.

Not a good sleep for either of us. Susan needs some precision now. If it's many more weeks of I.V., but one will improve and this will be overcome, so be it. But that is precise.

Susan can take, as I can, all the rigmarole and the changes, but it's the little things: like shoddy service with some and the absolute exhaustion that comes from running around doctor-to-nurse-station-to-the-infernal-waiting, all jiggly parts of the patients day, but it is truly the killer when added to the *unknown*. And right now we're in the unknown. When the receptionist, the nurse, and our doctor in his office all look at a loss for words as what to do, you know they'll be next sending you into a routine while they scramble. Scrambling is going on now and I've already faked and feigned our doctor from rushing head long into having to send Susan to high-end specialists far from home (the catch-all when doctors here give-up, or convincingly are at the end of their abilities and their hospital's abilities) and putting us into the heebie jebbies of medicine. Yes, for cancer, but not for a possible bug in a rug. We just need an axe man right now, as I have sometimes done, who says: yes, the tree is leaning more that way...let's drop it *that way* and save the chicken coop, the electric lines and the hanging laundry. In the voice, shoulders, and eyes, one recognizes a confidence. Even the tree *knows*. We need a little of that right about now.

It rained this morning — the gentlest of rain — right off of the trees only and from a rain two days ago, still hanging around. And it all fell on me, under the trees, where I scythe the morning grasses.

An image of last evening returning from the hospital with Susan — passing our closest neighbor a quarter mile up river, all her kids and their friends on top of the front porch roof just hanging out, and one monkey thinking to scramble higher up the roof to the stovepipe. It sure looked like fun.

Considering...I didn't do too badly today for Susan's b'day. I started last night, late, after getting home and resettled from the hospital and found a large carton to pack all her gifts. All the recently found clothes from the weekend big tagsale, where I made some magic within five minutes of searching & finding. Women all around me doing the same. So I emptied out the carton of padded mailers I use in the bookshop and folded in the light colored jean bib-overalls, the warm blue sweater, the white blouse, the embroidered skirt, the pacific color long dress, the warm and good bulky Eddie Bauer red winter jacket. Susan happy.

Then Carson sprung a surprise visit while we were bicycling and met us coming back north along the river, and we sat awhile and filled him in about his mom. Youngsters understand nary little about hospitals and illness, as I didn't at his age. But where we are often stationed in the afternoon is right next to the nursery where Carson was born. I looked in on it again today as I was passing through.

We picked seven pounds of blueberries on the way to the hospital this afternoon, then I bought Susan tiny cupcakes for us to share while she lay in bed at the I.V. unit, where I sang to her 'Happy Birthday' in a very low whisper, and then I saved one cupcake to give away to someone on the hospital floor. Our young nurse didn't like chocolate, so she didn't take it. The young black kid heading to the bathroom and back with his mother just had his tonsils out so he wasn't a candidate; finally, I found the guy who runs as a gopher for all the nurses and I could see he has even gained weight eating all the snacks out of the kitchenette since we started coming at the start of the month. He was about to decline, and then I said he needed to take it so Susan and I could say we had a 'party' (*three* ate cupcakes). He gladly dove in.

Susan is still unwell and has just been posted with ten more days of I.V. visits, plus oral tablets of antibiotics on top of that. Doctors are stumped she hasn't cleared the bug, and then again no doctor has ever seen someone walk into the ER with so many Lyme disease bullseyes and rashes. *Gonzolo*. So we're giving it one more real cleanser week with double duty antibiotics and may just call it quits after that.

There are three 'solids' working all of July: the Lyme tick is relentless and wants Susan, blood and all. That's a fact. Last day of the month and sure enough there is our Blue Cross bill right in the mail. Nothing else but the tick is as sure and relentless, except the third solid is our determination at getting Susan better. It's starting to work on me with adrenal fatigue: thirty days, at least, spot-on the point, every second, charged to get Susan healed and this thing licked, now has my legs sagging like sacks of wet sand. The lower back (the stonemason's achilles) is throbbing, stiffening, very moody. I go to scythe for a half hour early this morning to unwind blood and mind and muscle and nightmares. In the meantime, Susan is moving into our old route of alternative medicine: there are all sorts of messiahs and healers and actual hard-working souls at work in this trade. Chinese medicine practitioners who have experienced Lyme disease and now swizzle out herb concoctions and needle points advocating some 'cure'. But for the moment, we will stick like soldiers to the diligent western medicine course, and follow medical reports from Chicago and Johns Hopkins that preach a sturdy month of antibiotic I.V. treatments against the Lyme

spirochetes. By next Wednesday, Susan will be well through a solid month of treatment and then plans to stop, expecting little improvement, but if she has it, she'll embrace it. Embrace it? she'll close her eyes and let it soak her through and through. The next move may be Chinese herbs to repair the body of the Lyme holocaust and to rid it of any bacterial crumbs left in hiding. This could be hilarious optimism to any trained medical mind listening, but I'm sorry — that, and a nose to the grindstone, is all we got.

I woke up this morning with my legs feeling pummeled. Shoulders stiff and brittle. Not all that strange given the years on end I felt that way from undisclosed something or other — probably the deer tick I picked up in Yosemite fifteen years ago which was operated on with deep removal in Bodega Bay (by the time we slowed down), and back then no real antibiotic was given, only Flagyl, which I don't believe did much. So I had all the muscular and joint trouble for some years. Well, this afternoon we discovered a bullseye on *my* back. Of course our doctor (who also sees Susan) is off for the day, so I go to a stranger who at least takes me in and gets me on the same oral prescription Susan is on, plus into a blood test. I'll know officially in a week's time, but all the signs point to Lyme. How? is what confuses us both, because Susan has been checking me daily and this was fully exposed on my back today. It showed up yesterday as a pimple-size shape — no cause for alarm — and since has spread to a bullseye today. No sign of it on Monday or Tuesday. At 6 o'clock tonight we were both eating tuna fish sandwiches in the I.V. room of the hospital, where Susan is hooked up, and I'm shivering with a fever. We look at one another and laugh and say, 'What the fuck is wrong with this picture?'

One interesting idea, which we will ask tomorrow — since Lyme works like syphilis, with a similar spirochete — is Lyme disease sexually transferred? Western doctors have shook their heads no; tonight we are reading other studies which aren't canceling the theory out.

And, Susan just found out her only sibling, a sister, had open heart surgery last week, 68 years old. She recuperated a few days in Albuquerque with Susan's folks who are 91 and 93 years of age. Military stock and quite admirable.

Sweaty pig up and at'em. I maybe got seven hours sleep, at best, but rolled in Lyme fever most of the time. Susan has been waking every morning and having to take a bath. Luckily we put in a gas water heater five years ago or else it would have been truly hard knocks: for 30 years we had no hot water. Start a wood fire, July so what, and you had a little hot water off the tall copper tank we installed behind the wood kitchen cookstove.

Now I'm dripping in sweat, temp 101.5. Susan has just moved back into town for her I.V. appointment and my body and legs are brittle glass, can't join her this time. You want 'empathetic' — I have a wise old mystical poet friend who lingers in the shadows of Amsterdam. Some consider her a shaman, some a traveler, some an angel, and she said right off with our bad news: you two love birds are together/ thick or thin. Sick or thin.

True true

My plight should be brief, let's hope so.

Susan has already been through the ringer and I have to get back on the pegs to help her through the last six days of I.V.

Yesterday I saw a stranger, doctor, filling in for our doctor on his day off. He was eerily distant, whereas my doctor is usually grounded. This doctor, though, did find something on my right knee when I pointed it out. He trained a magnifying light to its red spot and plucked out what we all thought might be the tick. 'I'm not sure,' he said, 'but it looks like a wood splinter. How'd you get a wood splinter on your knee?' The story of my life.

This morning, with fever, typically self-employed and as I have always had to play it...I was in town at 7 o'clock for a good place in line for an annual book sale. Always a favorite one. No choice. It wasn't great but we landed a selective clutch of books after two hours of hunting, and my shirts soaked through, now with a chill, we beat it back home, and I've been under a blanket with a water bottle recovering from that stint. Drinking plenty of liquids. On oral antibiotics.

It's Susan who must be well. Her and our gorgeous days because of her.

So, we're in a dumpy hole for sure. As the very long month of July closes up. And still, 'all's well'.

* _____ *

{a little into August}

Don't you know *not* to listen to *anyone* who is having a fever? Yesterday I was 101.5 and at the book sale. A little more delirious when back home, but at least under a blanket, door open to the woods & river, pouring rain. Shivering. A tall water bottle I told myself to drink, drink, drink from. So I did. I suggested Susan take in the pickup truck for the second drive to town in a day (almost never do such), like allowing one horse to rest (Ford Taurus), plus I feel better when she is driving alone, and not well herself, if she is in the truck...which at least has directional signals that work.

But what I did share with you about the fever has some truth to it: the Lyme spirochete don't like heat, and neither does the Lyme tick itself. Or dry conditions. One reason the tick is often found in the groin, at the belt line, armpit, behind the knee, on a foot. The spirochete also work in monthly cycles when they reproduce if not caught, which is why many folks have repercussions months and years afterwards by not killing the disease thoroughly at the offset. Hopefully, I'm in the offset period and am nailing it. I have a steel rod feeling in my inner right thigh this morning, mild headache, a little fatigue. I just ate a piece of toast to take with the antibiotic tablet. Last night during a very sound sleep, but with fever, I remember at one point hand rubbing down both arms while I slept and feeling splashes of sweat coming off. That seemed real. Then I went into a fever dream hunting down a bunch of pest intruders in our house, which was actually my folks old house where I was raised in the Berkshires. It seemed to be two adult men with a bunch of runts wanting to

take over the place. I cornered one of the adults with my rifle pointed to his head and said, rather convincingly, 'Any more shit from you, or your pal, and I pull the trigger.' Single shot .22 so I had to be close. He shivered down the wall into a seated position. I ordered, 'Stay there.' And since it was a dream, he did. I then launched into the big house looking for the other wily adult who was daring me. The accomplice runts seemed like mere decoration. I found both Susan and Carson in one bedroom in two separate beds hiding out and I may have given Carson some weapon to hang onto, and I know I handed Susan one of the two handles we recently cut from a pair of woods lopers. It was a great club in her hand. I told her to swing with that with all her might if an intruder got close. I then reloaded with rat-shot, instead of the .22 cartridge, to go look for the asshole. Unfortunately I woke up — but I still want to know who wins this war — the invading Lyme ticks, or us?

We're now going around calling ourselves 'ticklish'. Silly is often what gets you through. The other day in town we saw an acquaintance who wanted to know, 'How are the Tick Twins doing?' Laughing with her, I said, "You mean the Tick *Triplets*, don't you?" knowing she had just recovered from a twenty-one day salute with antibiotics for her own deer tick infection. Haplessly she nodded. We poor suckers.

As you know, most of the old stalwarts in the woods, or on the farm, may go to the truck driving stint, but it's a terrible job when the back is already bad. All that rumbling and pounding and sitting on bad roads. It's also a demeaning job for an age already diminishing: usually guys my age. They no longer are haying a mowing, rigging logs, walking under the leaves, fighting off Lyme disease; they're just truck driving. Bozo work. Though I have never demeaned a very good truck driver. The last I met was when Greg got me a job two years ago right next door to his spot up in Jamaica, Vermont. A hermit's cabin caving in. Greg had me up to look it over, and down the wood ladder rickety-rick I went and the dungeon of sopped dirt floor, old fiberglass insulation come apart with animal habitats, most of the floor joists a joke at this stage, and the main carrying beam sagging with an elephant weight bearing down from above. Not good. Greg said a local contractor had priced it at \$10,000 or more and I said I could do better if he would work with me. Carson had already run off. And I could see in Greg's eyes and words he wasn't much interested in getting entangled with old Bob, but that's only because he didn't quite know me. So I said, I'd need this amount for my labor and I could pay him such an amount and we'd need such&such for materials and I'd start immediately (April. One of those rare Aprils with grass). You'd be surprised how different the weather is from your spot in the Pioneer River Valley, to up here, in April. Many years Susan and I would drive down to Amherst just to soak in the springtime sun having left our land locked ice tundra an hour north. A miraculous difference. So Greg was on and my *Hermit's Hut* book pretty much says the rest. It was a great job. I love to jack buildings back into place and reset stonework anyway, but at my age now it has to be pretty free to get to and something like an old hermit's hut. I hired a kid who worked with Carson in the music store and he came with me one Sunday to spread crushed stone. Susan also pitched in. Normally I would have done it and kept the money, but my back was lousy that Spring, so for \$100 cash the guy did it and ate lunch with us at 1 or two in the afternoon. He was planning to give all his day's earnings to his girlfriend for a tattoo. Greg could never understand that I always eat lunch when the job hits an impasse (joists all in, don't start on the main beam: time for lunch?), not by any time clock. That's about the only thing he had to get used to. Plus listening to all the ethnic, blues, folk, old rock and roll music I brought in for such a dank job. I caught him one day playing air-guitar

to Van Halen's *Fair Warning*. He was outside with his truck radio on, happy as a clam, spreading some of the last of the crushed stone, while I was downstairs buttoning down a new wooden stairway. By the way, that crushed stone was delivered by just the truck driver I think of as excellent: no bravado (heaven), listens, conscientious, about my age, been somewhere, raised kids, lost work, not mean, and Greg closed his eyes as I hand directed the guy back, right up to a whisper away from the side walls of the old hut, and about perfect to splash eight yard of stone and save on mucho shovel work because it isn't getting dragged twenty feet away from the job by some buckaroo lame brain. *Placement* is the key.

My version of the Lyme disease is probably early stages and will be calmed by the oral tablets twice a day. I had two days of high fever and that has almost subsided. Some fever, light, in night sleep now. Susan is still struggling, and after a solid month of I.V. antibiotics. Mornings is when she has her best energy 5am-12... so everything gets done by her then. Exhaustion sets in, hopefully a nap is possible. I make suppers at night; sometimes when I join Susan we get a real good nurse and that real good nurse gets us both hospital trays with supper. Our doctor already mentioned a mosquito transferal was possible. We both are increasing our belief (seeing is believing) in the sexual transferal, and some Canadian medical studies are investigating that theory. The Lyme spirochete resembles syphilis in appearance and movement, maybe more. US studies on Lyme remains sketchy. There is biological warfare documentation as well.

This morning we were at a village wide tag sale for the books and you'd never know looking at Susan she was sick. That's her strong constitution, thankfully. She will go until this Wed with the I.V. duty and then we are both advocating a break for a week to give her at least a rest (continue on oral antibiotic tablets) and see how she responds. Maybe pick-up again on the I.V. within the month. Many stop long before she plans to and get whacked weeks, months, years later by the Lyme hiding in the tissue and bones. Experts now insist on a month long I.V. treatment with cases like Susan's. Going longer or not just doesn't have the research as to the harm the antibiotic begins to wreck on the body (some professionals say no more than thirty-nine straight days) or are the doctors just putting their patients into the I.V. wards at a loss as to what to do? Letting weeks and months go by. It seems excessive to us after a solid month. The disease seems to have done its damage during the first two months of high fever when no one was landing on Lyme and instead playing with every other diagnosis (mono etc). So some change in remedy is about to come. I don't want to see us, again, wandering the streets of our town or down in the Pioneer Valley seeking an alternative specialist because the body is broken and western medicine has done all it can. We're close enough with our doctor and will work a guideline with him and our own instincts. I just can't imagine Susan's arms sucking in antibiotics from a bag through all of August as well. When my common sense register starts to show alarm, and likewise her's (our backgrounds are lumber & military: basics) we begin to make a move into sensible terrain.

Muggy morning, turning to afternoon rain now. At the village fair this morning, in one crate, I found twelve used carving kitchen knives I picked out carefully from about fifty. 25-cents each. Susan got both folding wooden clothes racks. She was the envy — every women wanted them. She hasn't lost her eye, or step. Greg happened to see us and joined us stooping over the knife crate. I said to him, 'Whatever knife isn't good, stick it into the

ground.' He did. It ended up five in the ground, twelve in my hand, about thirty or so left in the crate. One big butcher knife scared Susan.

The Monteverdi Arts Collective are music and at one time drama and probably many other things. They did a version of *Alice in Wonderland* on the farm where I was caretaker for twenty years. One day the tribe arrived and headed up into the steep pasture where they built the natural set for the production. When they left I went up on my daily hike anyway, often I would keep going and hike home all the way by hiking over the ridge, that is if Susan dropped me off in the morning. In my 20s-30s it was nothing to work eight hours, hike home six miles, work until dark at home. Why didn't someone tell me it sort of ended after awhile? On my hike up through the pasture I found a mortar built tall mushroom, very elegant, *very Alice*, meticulous crafting by one of the commune guys. When I saw the tribe again I correctly picked out who did that work — in my eyes, the best of the lot: he walked a little stronger, straighter, had the eyes of concentration. Remember, the majority of these folks were ex-city born & raised, as were many who followed the Nearings to Vermont. It's always been a different cut from the native born and already *here*. But not always. The Nearings could be just as work-durable as any of the local farmers.

Our home is filled, room to room, with books. Carson had no choice. Children when very young adore their parents and adore mimicking in the most special ways. I now have sixteen children's books written, all for ages 4-8 at most, and of course all got devised after Carson left home. Many from poems. The child never leaves home, and the child doesn't quite get that until they have their own children. Those that don't have children have a lost perspective on that course...and then again, those who have tried to have children and won't, have an entirely different soul that has *lost* and this can bring an outstanding grace. Or sadness. Susan and I built mountain ranges after Carson came to us. A very good thing.

Have you tried Karen Hesse's books on your daughters? She is in this region.

When Gary Snyder gave a small talk at Smith College one afternoon, he went out of his way to introduce me, and then Susan & me via *Longhouse*, when he saw us in the audience. Maybe twenty-five in the room. He then went on to talk all sorts of good talk about poetry and answer questions. When he said he had never really written a poem against any war, I later reminded him, privately, that he had written a wonderful poem against the Pentagon that Unicorn Press published as a broadside. For a man who likes to correct a wrong, and will do so willfully in public, I liked seeing how animated and intrigued he took my correction. 'Thatz *right!*' as if, 'presto' went off in his faraway old 60s memory noggin'.

We're both exhausted from the Lyme, and we have a big lawn to mow today and it will be mown. I want to, at least, be able to get back to woodcutting in September. I'll chalk August up to caring more for Susan, mowing, scything, painting, light carpentry. Seeing Greg yesterday at a village fair, he handed me a small detail on some single level studio someone in Gill, MA., wants built. I asked him to keep his ear to the ground if any jobs come up I can take on and would hire him as co-worker...but bad timing for me right now on this one, plus Gill is a maniac's throw from our region. Another country as far as I'm concerned (*he who thinks on-foot*). An inch closer on the map and I would seriously consider doing it with Greg and get it buttoned up by winter (then move inside). But right now, my building, my temple, is getting Susan better.

You bet, count on it, we will improve. Things are already developing. We both mowed the lawn this morning, all of it, and I said to Susan to stay close to me so it didn't look like she had a lot to mow — she'd look, or I'd look, and where the other had passed was already *done*. Progress was always in view. There are a million ways to recover and to make the long path shorter. My coming down with the Lyme, and no visible tick or tick bite anywhere, call it empathetic or not, is yet one more way of sticking together...it makes it not so lonely that I have it for awhile while Susan builds up her stamina.

Camu is the only herb or medicine in your letter we don't know or haven't used, the others are familiar. I took vitamin E when younger, and maybe the lion was already with too much fire, it heated me no good. I may be ready for it now. Susan maybe even more. I have been asking around to a few doctors what I could get into Susan after all this shotgun method of antibiotics to rebuild her immune system, and they look at me blank. Strange. We can't afford the often luxury alternative medicine specialists, but it may take one to finally bed down for us where to go for healing methods post-Lyme. This will be important. I'd very much like to get Susan onto something immediately as she suffers with the exhaustion and the depression that comes with the disease and treatment. She has never been one to awake with depression, and now every day it is there. This after, granted, four solid months of fever, sweats, exhaustion, and battling a rampant disease. It takes its toll.

August is sensual, so your Florida field report of the calm is up here as well. The river is sound and motion every second, not unlike waves of the beach, actual discernible sound, and constant. Its fluid is ours. It passes through the trees before it reaches us. The other day poking our way down the hill driveway on the way to the hospital, we met halfway down our pond turtle coming back home. What a sight for sore eyes! To see it climbing our way. We knew it had probably gone to the river once it felt the pond draining away in July (the usual practice), but with all the rains in July, the pond returned full and blowzy...and the turtle just knew to return. I loved it that Susan saw the turtle while on the way to the hospital. The turtle added its two-cents of care to her. The cattails blow lovely with the pond right now.

In the hospital today a lost soul, guy my age, came wandering in at the 'short-stay' facility. He had just been bitten on the foot by a bat. Luckily he didn't see, like we did, how the nurse on duty had to study all the literature first before administrating his shot. A young nurse, very girlish, 'Hey (whisper to another nurse), have you ever done one of *these* before?' They put their heads together. The dope waiting down the hall had no idea.

I'm pretty free of fevers now. The Lyme bullseye is fading fast. It makes me sick at heart that this could have been the course for Susan. No such luck. Damn well terrible luck. She hops coming down the stairs, one knee that bad.

But, but, there's poison ivy suddenly on my left forearm. I'm not winning this summer.

Today, while I read on a park bench and dried my feet out in the sun (work boots off & socks) waiting for Susan to come out of a store, a wasted panhandler came up to me and asked for spare change. He didn't ask at all nicely, and in fact, he was mean. I shook my head and said, 'Nah.' He looked down at me. I looked up at him. He thought he'd look longer than he should, so I zeroed in. He looked a moment up at the sky and then back at me

shaking his head and then mumbled something about how, 'We fought for people like you.' He could have been a bum all his life, but I'm giving him the credit line that he may have been a war vet. I then reminded him, 'No, you didn't do any fighting for *me*, but I did fight to get you home.' I may as well been talking to a hay bale. He shuffled off and went to hit-on the next bench of innocents (no-go) and then continued down along the park benches preaching his meal ticket. If only he learned to ask nicely. Did I have to tell him I was also drafted into the Army in 1971, refused, and served two long years as a C.O. in Vermont? The very reason I'm in the state. No. I have always played it I don't have to explain anything to anyone or anything with native intelligence.

Tonight, on the way to the studio with a big armload of books bought over the last three days and now hooked into our system, a barred owl, close, let off one. It owned me.

You got it — Camp I.V. is a prison camp. Hurdle it, hurdle it, with true humor, affection and romance. New England, the way we live it, keeps one with the basics. There's no romance without the grit.

Susan this morning with a fever. Part of playing hard the day before on my b'day. She said she'd do it again. Day 31 begins at Camp I.V. today. Tomorrow we go in to see her doctor after a week or more. This is where we have to introduce to him some responsibility beyond basic medicine: antibiotic drip becomes just drilling for more oil, after awhile. A huge cancer ward is being built in the dead center of our town hospital. It's the lord and awakening for the hospital staff and hierarchy. Except what is missing from the hospital is a sense of the *living* — there are no gardens, the rooms are often way too cold, the halls and carpet and woodwork is all stiff and mechanical. You get to the lab for a blood test by passing the morgue. The medicine law has little idea what to do with Lyme disease in Susan's vintage: so they pump her silly with fluids. It is slowly helping at a creep. This is not a complaint. But first she will wear down, become depressed, her arms are hurting with so many needle prods. When you talk to doctors you are aware you are talking to doctors who have seen cancer fatalities up the ying yang...and just like the rest of the world they are over worked, burdened with depression, losses, poor judgment. They live and work in silos. The environment is now out of control: both fossil fuel damage, insects (ticks, brown recluse spiders etc), weather. It's coming in for a huge crash at a very slow landing. Susan is already part of this sci-fi nightmare. Those like her, highly sensitive and intelligent, are falling victim. It's her belief in us, this life, everything that we have made work from nada or scratch, that is keeping her constant.

Dinner at 8, for certain, was made by the pros between two world wars, the Depression, a farm stock background and when cinema was developing. No art is as good as when it is developing. Some art can show incredible vitality near the end if the artist continues to show this sage wisdom for development. Henry Miller kept to it, many of the Asian poets one way or another, Niedecker never gave up. It's almost impossible to make a true comedy any longer...unless one falls back and into the comedic form of irony and humility. Otherwise all we get now is raunchy and incessant sexist piggery. Disgust never fit into Chaplin or Keaton for good reason. Like the poets, who are running out of poetry in their living, the comic film has run out of joy.

Yesterday, in Camp I.V., I was with Susan on my b'day and brought along Philip Whalen's big collected poems as companion. Couldn't be finer. I've now read it in many settings: bed, car, chair, outdoors grass, bench, picnic table, truck, laundromat, finally hospital second floor I.V. unit — I'd say there is no chance for time to bury Philip Whalen. He made an immense offering and by golly it jelled. Like the best of poetry — it and he will survive because of itself. His subject was always the crystallizing of the day, the hour, the very second. Quite different from almost all his contemporaries, except Cid. But Whalen had the humor. It should have been with the Jewish kid Cid — the same era as Lenny Bruce, Sid Caesar, Mort Sahl — but he was just too damn serious. Humor *with* the Japanese and ancients would have really rolled some boulders.

Susan drives alone to the hospital today in her light tan bib overalls, stripe shawl, thunderstorm rolling all over and around the mountain woods tree line. I stay home and cook supper. Always her elegance, she asks me if it is okay to wear the overalls? If she should have the I.V. catheter, only set into her arm yesterday, taken out? She has such hope she will be better for the doctor appointment tomorrow. Even with a low fever today. It's nearly embarrassing admitting how little we know, or have been professionally told, and the dynamics of opposite opinions about remedies and recovery is staggering. There is deep research at Columbia University and all over Long Island (medical reports & books). Susan has now entered the notorious fourth dreaded week of I.V. treatment, when the critter (Lyme) tends to make a resurgence. So while the b'day brats had a wheel! time of it the day before yesterday, she has been going through a little hell since then. Fever back, joint pain (which we believe won't be cured by anything, but hopefully time), sweats, and rocky thought patterns. When we visit our doctor, he'll see I also have it, but not at all critical. He was on vacation when I came down with my own measly tick. The whole medical staff at the hospital has been on again and off again vacation since Susan entered this summer. Bad timing.

I have to insist on our doctor visit today that Susan needs time off now every week as much as the I.V. antibiotics. She is getting sick with all the *wellness*, which isn't showing much improvement today. On Tuesday, in the spirit of my b'day, you would have looked at her all revved and raring to go and said, "What's he been makin' all the fuss about her for?" That's what you get with two iron-men. Behind the curtain, Oz is oz, we all curl up and cry. My sense, and Susan agrees, if we go on and ruin all of our summer with I.V. it might work best M-T for I.V. F-S off. This is Mr & Ms Yankee Ingenuity going to see the doctor. We'll see what he says.

Crackling thunderstorms with close lightning was all over us when we drove back home from town and the hospital. We got those three days off for Susan. Today she had an IV in her right arm, while a nurse came up from the lab to draw three vials of blood from her left arm for yet more tests. As we were leaving the IV unit Susan caught a glimpse out of a far away window (the unit is smack dab in the center of things, no windows, bunkered) and said, 'It's pouring!' Luckily I had the library book of Tintin I was reading and the life of Herge (who was friends with Warhol) and could put that over our heads as an improper umbrella as we ran for the car in the emptying parking lot. Always packed full when we arrive. Always diminished when we leave.

Many electrical storms this year. Deep buckets of rain. Nothing is drying out. Grass is Amazonian. Not quite Vermont in August. Corn is growing great guns.

The furthest thing from my mind right now is the Rolling Stones. In better times and many years tipped end on end, they were right there with us and music flowed the house. It hasn't been a regular house since April. Not any bit of it. The best we are getting is keeping the bookshop thriving. Publishing has all gone woozy: we did six booklets in a row, probably all in the same day (it's a blur), including straight through into October plans. It's all done and we mailed all authors their copies today. We are on almost high alert. Other than the bookstore, we pick lettuce, tomatoes, mow the grass. I can't quite concentrate too long with a tool, a few hours. I'm watching films with one eye, because I can't stop my flow from Netflix and am able to receive eight films from them each week, because I down them in a gulp at late breakfast and mail it back the same day. Since I'm dealing with a computer, it just keeps hiccupping films to this address. Pitch them in/bat them back. Many decades the Stones' first six, and best albums, would be playing through our summers. We pile the best stove wood listening to their renditions of all the Black blues numbers they stole from and consistently drove back into the earth better than any white group ever. They paid homage to Muddy, Sonny Boy, Bo, Elmore, Wolf. They had to, or die. They are the ultimate snakes in the grass of rock 'n roll. You love them, and we love them, because they can, and we can (still).

Carson stepped on a rusted barbed wire last night and got himself a puncture wound. He called the next day in the afternoon as we were setting off to the hospital. I asked him, 'Did it bleed?' 'No.' I said, 'Get to a doctor and get a tetanus shot.' He had one or two when living with us, but has let all that go since leaving home. He's way overdue. I didn't want to tell him the quick, sad story about John Thoreau. He got uppity with me when he said he was too busy and had to go to work. I said, 'Fuck work and get the shot.' Every day there are a million medical questions in the land of the unfortunate. If you're living okay, you're not dying, but so many are dying right around the bushes, in the next house, right behind that curtain.

I ate tuna fish sandwiches with a pickle and apple juice brought up by a high school hospital kitchen worker with just enough aplomb to smile for a split second, while inches away behind a curtain a fellow name 'John' sounded in death's throes. He hated everything and told each and every nurse who took turns daring to enter his lair. I saw him just before we left when they were wheeling him out in the bed for another location: a dry husk of a man. A circled mouth sucking for air. Cid's *living/dying*.

Tonight Carson called to say he went to the ER in New Hampshire after work to get his tetanus shot. That meant, at the same hour, our whole family was in some hospital. We joked around and had a good ol' time on the phone. His drive every day to work between Vermont & New Hampshire rides partially along a lake everyone takes for granted, until I told Carson the ashes of George Carlin were now spread in that lake. *What!?! Are you kidding?* his voice jumped. A new drive.

So Susan's doctor is stumped. She should be 'well after 30 days of antibiotics.' She isn't. He now plans to call the infectious disease people up in Hanover. All through our lives as kids we fit into all clothes, found sneakers and they fit! made great friends, earned money and had

paying jobs since age ten, sailed with delight through school, played sports and read great books, jumped into the water and swam. It was easy, it flowed. Of course one is going to then run into a few road blocks. Suddenly two friends are going to die as teenagers, then two more; great earth plate shifting will happen from parents and society as we alter away from both (new societies to meet); a son will be born with all machines going on the blink at once and in the wrong way, and still the life comes forth. A disease will get in, a simple one, easy enough to detect and treat, but your appearance and attitude and signs fool the specialists. The disease now becomes complicated, elemental as it digs deeper, liking your splendid home.

Just as you start to feel sorry for yourself after almost four months of this, you find out the nurse not yet 30, and who greeted you at the start of the antibiotic treatment, just happens to be the same nurse on duty when you are at the end of the month-long treatment. She is in a smart flowered blouse and navy blue slacks and her legs are tall and I bet strong. There's Spanish to her name and eyes. She isn't married, but she has a boyfriend, and last November when she was just receiving certification for her nursing license her boyfriend came down with a thunderstruck brain tumor. He was twenty-nine, athletic, prime. The same thing killed his grandfather in his thirties. The night before the tumor was to be operated on, he went into a grand mal seizure. The surgeons did their best, but he ended up with partial facial paralysis, a strange smile, and he went blind. This young nurse balanced her new job from two mountain ranges away, and a highway leaping back and forth over a wide river, and after many sucky winter months of this in a row, and a devoted employer and staff, she's been here helping us. That's one young nurse on the second floor short-stay unit. The even younger receptionist on the ground floor with doe-eyes, and we missed seeing the last few days, has been out with a migraine and a rush to the ER yesterday. She welcomed Susan back today with a 'Come in, Susan', like a school girl running to catch up and wanting to walk with you home. She told Susan that while in the ER getting hooked up to an I.V. for the very first time in her life, all she could think about was Susan doing this every day for days on end. The quiet and famous love of my life.

This is Susan's self-prognosis after thirty-two straight days in a row of antibiotic Lyme disease treatment: 'In early July I was diagnosed with 'acute Lyme Disease' by my family doctor. By July 4th I was in the ER, with the same doctor, and twenty satellites and bullseyes spread all over my body which is quite uncommon for Lyme disease. Three days later in the doctor's office I was diagnosed with 'middle stage Lyme Disease'. I was then given 32 daily infusions of antibiotics at the hospital and after that (present time) was diagnosed with 'persistent Lyme Disease'. Is this called *treatment failure?*' — asked & analyzed today with a headache and fever. For those in the same pickle, or just starting out, please take cautious note. It may be a longer road than any expected.

...and during this time if anyone had asked me about anything, my answer, with face free of all pride, could only have been 'Love'
— Dante

{following August out}

I've been living and working and writing the last four decades in a house that probably took twelve or so oak trees to frame up, done in 1790 by a Revolutionary War soldier and his son. These were farmers, with a sawmill along the river, just like my forefathers in the Berkshires. In medieval England it took the same twelve oak tree amount to raise the average house. When Windsor Castle, a major operation of the 14th century, was built, an entire forest was purchased and every oak was dropped —over 3000 oaks. Still not enough to build the house for lords. Another 1000 oak trees were leveled between Combe Park and Pamber Forest to erect this castle. I run my hand along the rough-hewn sides of the oak and chestnut timbers today in our house and can be flashed back well over 200 years to the day the trees were cut, drawn out, sawn into log beams and hoisted into place. There's medicine and healing to this.

Monday we set forth to another book sale and filled a carefully chosen box, then a few more town errands, and then we timed the doctor visit (not an appointment, a checking-in) for his lunch hour and caught him just about right. He invited us in. We had walked to the doctor's office with Susan thinking she was sure to head deeper yet into more Camp I.V. She's still with all the symptoms, and being Susan, making the best of her day. Always the smile. I was with my much diminished Lyme, poison ivy on my left forearm, and now a big welt behind the right knee, where we thought a tick had lodged two weeks ago. Was it a Lyme bullseye? It was big enough, mean enough, but it seemed a big bad woods spider bite...and of course I had worked that sopping afternoon on Saturday up in the woods drawing stove wood with the truck. It turned out to be a spider bite the size of a softball and it took a week to heal. The skin had to go from rosy to jaundice yellow before it said *I'm gone*. Maybe it's fortunate I've been on antibiotics for the Lyme the last two weeks?

The doc said Susan was free and clear to stop the antibiotics: both I.V. and oral tablets. Just stop. A complete reversal from last Thursday, when I was trying to softly peddle him on the merits of some days off etc. He had since consulted with an infectious disease specialist up in the Hanover region..and comparing Susan's notes they think the disease has died off in her body successfully with thirty-three days of the duo antibiotics. Now they just want to wait & watch and see how or if she will recover. It's about all that is left. I already knew this from my Lyme experience fifteen years ago, and the hell I had to pay for years afterwards. I got through because I was young, lion feisty and I had a son to raise, plus I had Susan's love. No way was I going to cripple up and die at age 40. But I could have. Now it's our turn to get Susan up and back around. Our doc has known us for 35 years and believes Susan has a good chance to recover fully, but the disease has its bugger way of returning or causing so much initial havoc that one never repairs the body and so the immune system staggers and crumbles. This is the big job ahead now, and any help we can gather with advice etc. on rebuilding the body will be taken in as key pointers. Susan started last month with vitamins and now is moving into a close friend's gift of Spirulina, and perhaps some homeopathic medicines. She has always responded well homeopathically. Not catching it in time is the killer. Some, like Susan, show no visible signs (bullseye, rash) until it's too late. We're also in

a medical community that is just starting to admit Lyme disease exists. So it's sick dopes coming to get help from, well, sick dopes.

As for this new change in the treatment: Susan is relieved, and actually this plan follows the one we both thought best for her, and the doctors now agree. It is a double-edge sword — on the one hand they want to try Susan on this new course, thinking the disease has been wiped out. But for some unexplained reason, Lyme disease has the power to return in some cases/some not. Right now, with plenty of rest, they plan to watch & wait on Susan. Her constitution and attitude is strong...though she daily suffers from fatigue, sweats, low fever, joint pain flaring up unannounced for sure. The two doctors still believe it will take weeks, maybe months, for this to all vanish. Or come back for a second slaughter. It isn't solid on the prognosis, but they do feel Susan is halfway home. Since we have jumped deep into our insurance, and are now over our heads with paying into it with the high deductible, we think it best we now make some plans to go to Hanover for at least one face to face consultation with infectious disease folks. I'm also making sure we have a week's worth of antibiotics for the very next time either of us shows a hint of this bugger.

Supposedly there is a Lyme vaccination in the works from Czech to be ready in three years. If the wealthy continue to come down with Lyme in Conn., Cape Cod & the Vineyard, it will be rushed in faster. Just watch.

One thing we are studying — both of us received tetanus renewal shots (good for ten years) in April. Three weeks afterwards, Susan came down with the Lyme. I followed much later, but in the same stream. We took our shots from the same nurse within five minutes of one another. There are all sorts of speculation, from crazed to reasonable, about the strain in tetanus...and Lyme is a terrifying infection when you consider how it was, and why, concocted.

Ah, we savor the days returned now after a hospital month with dinners up on the bedroom porch. I missed having this with Susan so much. I drag out the futon and together that's where we dine. This evening: toasted hotdog rolls of homemade dishes: tuna and egg salad, our own French fries, corn on the cob sweet as ever, pineapple and melon, and one more slice of peach pie. This peach pie we found yesterday at the start of the morning an hour north of home. A little town fair just setting up out in a mowing which looked like a portrait right out of the midwest: cornfields either side of us and a thunderhead forming straight down the middle which wouldn't let go for hours longer. We heard later it had some hail in it. Elders everywhere, no one under fifty, long tables slid together of one-hundred homemade pies, most of them apple. A crate of apples at the end of the table for 25-cents each. The pies are \$8. A bargain. There is a heavy paper plate serving of peach, and I buy it for \$1.50 for Susan...we have to get to a book sale wanting to start in a nearby building and share the slice of pie as we walk. It is so good as we eat, we can't remember walking. Susan is immediately taken by the after taste of *something*, and the pie is gone by the time we reach the car and decide we need another piece, or a whole pie. Susan goes back to investigate the pies, and maybe she'll find the pie maker. While I get our gear together for the book sale, an old couple spends forever backing up their new silver Toyota pickup with a cap. By the looks on their faces they've been married about as long as I am old. We smile and I mention how delicious the pies are in the direction they are headed. The woman smiles like a bird might,

and tells me she is one of the pie makers, that they made one-hundred and they hope to sell every one. I said if the pies are as good as the peach, they will.

When Susan returned, she had one word for me, 'almond'.

Into another start of the week book sale with two others who are always there. Like I said to Carson yesterday: been all around this country, by train, car, bus, foot (once hiked lots of the Big Sur ridge line with Carson...Susan went ahead of us, or alongside us, or was behind us in the rental car: this was a very steep old road that prison gangs kept open and the brush cut. We'd see their prison bus and then up popped some guys, orange-suited, then more thicket, more orange guys. It was out above Tassajara, the heat was pure California. The blue distant pacific color and breezes was of another world. One I would adore dropping Susan into (right about now with me) and to all the book sales and tag sales and clothes sales and neighborhood garage sales, and Carson always with us — we've never met anyone quite like these two at any of these events. They rush to the books, and either side of Susan and me they're gobbling up every book in sight like locust, and then they check their Blackberries or computers which they carry with them for the current market value of each title. What doesn't pass muster gets tossed back like fishing. I find some of the best books in their toss-backs.

Susan with a bad day: fever, fatigue, sweats, sleep not good. I suggested she go to the studio and just lay down for as long as it takes. The thing with Lyme — it's of the blood and tissue, so getting in a good nap doesn't relieve much of anything — however, it does add a small inch into the long term subsoil. Rest is the key.

Insurance companies don't want to be pay into the many million\$ for health care on Lyme disease. It is an epidemic and it will be the big scare up-coming. The disease made by biologist working for the war dept. Hush hush stuff. People tend to go to sleep when explaining this to them...one reason we are all in the pickle we're in. We've made a diseased society and we will fall victims to it. Some have serious studies going back to HIV being also part of the biological warfare prepared in the scientist lair, along with Lyme. Since there are no hardcore facts as to treatment or recovery, the imagination goes into fits & starts. Some ideas, theories, sputterings will be dead-on, others will be left dangling.

I once met William Everson in a South Hadley, Mass., chapel where he arrived one Sunday evening to do a reading in full tan buckskin jacket with fringes. His beard was as white and long and pointed as Rip Van Winkle's; it's as if he had tramped over from the Sleepy Hollow region of the Hudson River, and he gave a reading with a film camera crew shooting it and the place was packed. Many pretty women in the audience from the all-women college which most obviously raised the affection in the old guy's body, every ounce of attention was on him. This spectacle. Gone from Brother Antonious to looking more like a washed and worn Jedediah Smith. When I walked up to meet him and to thank him for, well, *everything* (*The Residual Years* was another bible for me at age eighteen working in the lumberyards) he took my hand with both his hands and thanked me back. I'll never forget the look in his eyes. This was part of a many days Beat Conference in the five-college region, and Susan and I attended as much of it as we could from our woodland post and those deep winter freezing nights. Luckily we had no plumbing, so we froze with everything else every night when we got home to a cabin, temperature inside at a flat zero. After meeting Everson on Sunday, we

were down there again on Monday morning to hear one wholesome dandy and affected charlatan preside. I wished I had spent more time with bluesman and archivist Sam Charters, but I was still too young to know quite all what and who he was, and of course he was the quiet one, even though a bear shaped guy. Humble. Later in the day I finally got to meet my friend John Clellon Holmes, the closest I would get to Kerouac, one of his boyhood Massachusetts buddies, and of course the one that egged him *on, on, on!* after he wrote and published *Go*. John was very good to us. We had a correspondence. He'd often tuck in a few bucks for us to continue publishing and sometimes he'd include one of his curious little poems...which I always published. Every time. It still hurts that John died of cancer of the mouth. One guy I really miss.

By that evening we got to meet Robert Creeley, not famous yet, in Army jacket, no eye patch, level with the ground and completely approachable. I brought a copy of an early, big, loose paged *Longhouse* issue for Creeley to have and it was heart warming to watch him read the whole issue while taking part in a panel discussion on Kerouac that didn't interest Bob all that much. He was the only one up there who'd have anything to really say and everyone else dominated the table. Charles Jarvis led the harangue. Creeley patiently paged through *Longhouse*. Later we went up to him and he really put his eye onto us and wanted to talk about *Longhouse*, but you know the scene, impossible. I remember he looked us over and nodded his head and smiled and said something like, 'you'll both do well.' I never got to see him again, but over all the decades since, we kept in touch, by correspondence and finally e-mails near the end of his life. Through Cid's prompting, and a nice reunion of two bitter foes and actual friends, Bob got me \$ from the Academy of Poets when I was really down and dirty injured and out of work from Lyme disease and terrible groin and back pain from having to work at stone, treework etc. I never used the money, stubborn and honored, because I knew an older and crueller time was sure to come. It has now come. Thank you Cid & Bob.

Susan has been on a gift of Spirulina from friends every day without fail. She has now entered the domain of homeopathy and alternative medicines learning more and more in her research with me just what damage antibiotics can do. And *did* do to her. Though I do believe they cut off most of the heads of the Lyme (one can't help but think of ticks coursing through the body as bugs), like most things that work in America, it also spoils the rivers. Susan is all river. We must rebuild. This will take action with herbs and homeopathic medicines and charming a balance. 200,000 new people come down with Lyme Disease in this country every year. It's leaning into an epidemic. There is one small town in Pennsylvania where it seems everyone has Lyme disease. Rather crazy. Our doctor has pretty much asked Susan to sail away and take care, meaning the insurance companies, which under-write and fill doctors coffers, have forced these somewhat deceitful ones, and others who are very decent, to cut their patients loose with Lyme. The insurance companies just won't pay for the renewal; and these are the same insurance companies who have been built like the government that made the poison disease in their war labs. It's the opposite side of the coin in big country America. Some live high on the hog, others are slaughtered like hogs, many are crippled and half gone. It's up to all of us to take care of all of us.

Today I mowed. Rode the bicycles with Susan, along the river. Worked on making all these new booklets (we're doing six at once, krimmers!) Just sat in the breezes and the sun, the very last of summer days. True ones. Already too cold for any swimming in the icy river, but

if it shot up to near 90 degrees, I'd jump in one last time. Once we went in, had to, in late October when we were crossing a large footbridge where I was working on a carpentry job. I'd eventually replace this locust logpole bridge with a new swinging bridge with a small work crew. We parked the bikes on the bridge, halfway over the river. It's eight feet deep under the wide bridge planks. I was showing Susan the work done the day before, and it probably was a Sunday. A wind came down the river and saw our bikes up there and took'em easily over and down into the river. They sank to the bottom. What a sight. I went in, clothes and all, and Susan followed crazy as we are together and the very fiber she always is. Never a coward. Freezing, thrilling, Green River. I got the bikes up and Susan floated them back to shore. We shivered home, laughing some of the way. A little under a mile.

Late this afternoon we ate a delicious meal we both prepared up on the porch. Corn on the cob again & again (it seems the Lyme tick loves corn, we're both ravenous for it), blueberries, peach pie being cut down to the smallest slivers to last the longest. Already cooling out. After we ate, we huddled together on the futon bundled up in two Mexican stripe blankets, and fell asleep in each others arms all of a sudden. Didn't expect that. So many small seconds of the day.

Ah, in the morning another poet friend sends forth more kindness, and that's what it *is*, there is no other special word or naming. It's kindness: sending a check for booklets he wants and adding a little 'extra' to help us through this medical nightmare. Poets have been doing this for us for almost forty years of publishing and surviving. It's an ensemble piece. Nothing gets done without an extra hand, even carrying in the stovewood or covering the plants for frost: have a working buddy who is thinking for and with you. If I named each poet who has helped along this Lyme slog disastrous path I'd be sure to leave some name out. Let it be said, the poets are there — sending gifts of books, some limited and signed they advocate we sell in the bookshop, or new CDs of their reading/song, or just ordering from our feathered nest of Longhouse booklet publications. It has nothing to do with them, and everything to do with us. With healing. Not always the poet maxim as many are virtuous at strutting just their wily stuff. Ideal in today's market America. I'm happy to report where the late August cooling sunshine of early morning strikes my legs where I sit, companionship thrives.

Since Susan loves the ancient mariner: whether scientist, explorer, poets, thinkers — before the 19th c. the better — I thought in her healing process it'd be a good time to share with her a book or two by George Oppen. She loves Niedecker, so GO seems quite in the same tree of accuracy and devotion. Since her Milton, Dante and Newton were deep field explorers — they moved whole fields of galaxies and earth, much like the latter day Whitman would continue, and Thoreau in his journals. Thinkers that lifted a field in their mind's arms and put it elsewhere. Here came the twentieth century thinkers, and unlike Pound who remained more a field-lifter with the ancients, Williams and even part-field/part-modern Zukofsky and certainly Oppen and Niedecker showed the world of poetry how to think like a compass. No need for that heavy lifting, sweat of brow Whitman that even continued up to Duncan. Instead, turn the compass and watch the needle's eye direct the poem. Pure Oppen. I think Susan will much like his one line, or even one word, exploration. The Lyme is a deforested wreckage to replant and make green.

These August cooling days and harrowing beautiful nights are keeping me far away from the keyboard. We're also making many booklets (have you noticed!) and that's where I am into the night later than I should be. I could have on the Olympics from China but the moonlight is my TV these days as August begins to move its way into an even lovelier September. Though — I don't know: I'm an August birthday kid and Susan and I are both Leos — so August has often taken the cake. We were married in August. It can be a flipside, as you well know, and be the blistering hot and humid time of the year. The river stays full. We just returned from a bicycle ride.

I'm continuing *Camp I.V.* but it won't be as daily since we are now, officially, out of the 'Camp'. A good week ago our doctor finally came to his senses and agreed with me that getting Susan off the I.V. was the soundest track. But where does that leave Susan? In the wild. Right back where she started. They believe now with the antibiotic treatment so extensive the Lyme is dead. Now comes the recovery stage: which is a mystery to this very day with most everyone. A million experts out there, a new book on Lyme every month, frightened articles off the Cape and Vineyard newspapers revealing yet another attack and potion and "cure". Not yet. So Susan suddenly has no headaches, even though every nurse and our doctor said the antibiotic barge wouldn't be causing the headaches...well, they were. The sweats continue, low fever, and the old hemp rope of fatigue. Think of the rope wrapped around the legs and saying 'walk'. We're letting August relax our days best we can, and moreso Susan, and by September, when most have to at least appear they are back at work, we will begin investigating some local stories from Lyme patients, plus visit the specialists up in Hanover, as Susan continues her heavy research into her knowledge of herbs and homeopathy to rebuild her ravaged system. It's slow. There is never any concrete news except it isn't gone by a long mark, and the fatigue is the new energy for her.

As for me, I'm ending my 3-week antibiotic pill duty today. So now watch me head back up into the woodlot, which I'm about to do, and pull in another August tick just for kicks. I have a cord of elm and beech and soft maple and cherry and other assorted woods to bring in as one big cord pile. I've saved just a spot for it in the last seconds of the big woodshed before it is completely filled. To the rafters.

And then again, with illness, as Kierkegaard correctly stated somewhere, it's all about *comparison*. We have these smaller troubles compared to a 70 year old woman this morning in the former Soviet bloc of Georgia who only remembers last week the Soviet troops, or were they Georgian sympathizers in one more day in the world gone mad with ethnic cleansing? It's no longer nationalistic wars, it's all about grudges. And in this quick war of thousands killed or maimed and removed from their domain, it's really thuggery and murder at its best, very personal. All the woman remembers is that soldiers pushed into her house, and while she tried to accommodate beasts with small talk and perhaps some ration of understanding, they moved into the other room and shot her husband in the head dead, and then his brother for good measure, and left. Mere seconds. But not before taking "a tractor, a Soviet-era car, shoes and glass jars", explained the shocked widow. Call that equal trade for a few human lives. Lives that were a moment ago so damn rich from birth, boyhood, daring youth, young adult and loves and marriage and fatherhood and neighborly union and jobs and hand touched work and every breathing beautiful second of breathing. Gone in a pop. And the beasts take away some stuff, which doesn't even belong to them at all, just because.

Chart your own course, always, with writing. A dedication to us sounds quite lovely. I am really looking forward to reading all you got up your sleeve. Likewise, your wife is absolutely correct: vacation time, real time away from the regular junk of job and writing and proving the male self: but instead be a husband, a daddy, a lover, a boy...that's the magic. I'm glad you have each other. Susan has kept me a happy man for decades and decades. She still says a great deal of the credit also goes to me. She's so fair, it's tantalizing.

I've been softly after Greg to really look into you as his next book to letterpress print and publish (after mine). He's such a dedicated printer and publisher, and it would be jolly good to see him hooked up with someone to match his dedication. You two are made for one another and a book to fall between you. If Greg can't, he has connections with someone else, and I have a few of my own. I hope things gel with you guys on this. I'm also glad to hear Greg sent my *Happy As You Are* to you. That cover is a tapestry Susan and I have up in the kitchen that we really love so much I never notice it anymore. Like the nose on your face sort of thing...but it was perfect for Greg to make a cover wrap on those poems. I believe he told me he had been collecting my poems over some years and one day came to visit and said he wanted to do a book. Of what? I wondered. These poems, and he held them up. My kinda guy. Some of those poems would swim into an expanded book *Once In Vermont*.

I'm making more of your books for good measure in case you want any. I've filled out our standing orders for libraries that receive everything: Brown, New York Public, Buffalo, Iowa, Wisconsin — so you'll be in the best of the systems for small press forget-me-nots.

Take to the day

Yeah, weather too perfect to work in, but since work is our pleasure, work we are. And hard. Yesterday we pulled out a many thousand little pieces of a full cord of stovewood. Stacked close enough on the edge of the woodlot, but still asking for the truck, instead of multiple wheelbarrow loads. Susan, ever the trouper, right there with smiles and hard task arms, in blouse, throwing the wood in. The smallest of the small we never let rot —ironwood, hornbeam, young beech, some elm even, and then by the bottom of the stack the larger splits of ash, cherry and red maple I remember splitting almost a year ago when we began clearing this glade and making some cord wood up. It's dry, and it'll begin to decay, being this small, if left out another winter. I made sure Susan stopped halfway, despite her enthusiasm — the Lyme patient, dogging constant fatigue, likes to push at it when feeling so good, and she was feeling good because the day was refreshing, the sunlight spilt from a bucket, and we were together like always. Imagine asking a bird not to sing? Though I was able to get her to break and go take a nap halfway done with the woods work by my taking a break, and she did nap for a full hour. And I went and got busy elsewhere (the plastic wheel well protective sleeve finally came off its rusted pins on the Toyota up in the woods, mudflap and all...so I was deep into crawling under the truck to see how I will reinstall one more *impossible*). Long before supper we had the wood in, all piled up off a ladder since this wood was going to fit into the big woodshed by going to the rafters. 'Have we ever piled it this high?' is what Susan asked, peering up.

The birds are quieter and moving away, as the crickets come in. Exactly this time of year. For the last thirty-five years we have pretty much slept outdoors throughout the summer. Both in our old cabin (long ago sold) and moreso in this red farmhouse, I installed a

doorway at the foot of the bed that opens right out onto a small balcony and the full outdoors. It's open through the summer and all the nights. Moonlight, river wash, dew, rain, those crickets and all the spring birds come into where we sleep. These nights under three blankets. The past two nights it was 42-degrees, middle of August, the Curse of the Cat People full moonlight swarming indoors from that wilder and shimmering one past midnight and coating the solitary grasses and woods. If I wasn't past tired, I'd be tempted to go sit out in it for the longest time.

I say don't ever be self-conscious about your writing or poetry or activity with it — like in the woods where you work, act on where it's taking you. The past three years I have read publicly only on the street. I can't fathom the formal poetry reading any longer, and I guess I just want to read to whomever is there. Who shows up. Who suddenly *is*. I seem to recall writing the very poems from that same place. One time Greg and I were reading on the street, often right next to this pharmacy, and one day two women showed up. One was pushing the other in a wheelchair. The pusher went into the pharmacy and left the wheelchair woman outdoors for a moment while she did her errands, no doubt for the woman in the chair. Something seemed right, and the woman looked hunched over and lonely, so I went over and read this little poem about Susan planting daylilies and I could only sense if it was right or might be wrong between looking at the woman and walking toward her. By the time I got to her (5 seconds) it all seemed right and I read (10 seconds) and the woman handed me back a smile and thanked me...and in my own way I was thanking her. Drawing attention to it all almost destroys the concept, except it wasn't even a concept and should never be. It just *was*. I guess I believe the world needs more of this sort of thing right now in its terrible self-conscious and marketing steerage.

Out here from 1971-1974 I worked out of a backpack. No car. Two jobs in town. I had to get there. Two feet, sometimes a thumb, sometimes a farm neighbor (long gone) and his three feisty full-of-it boys he's driving to school, and all four are in the two wheel Chevy pickup (no 4WD vehicles yet in abundance, not even close) loaded in the back bed with dirt snow, two big tires, chains, a few cinder blocks, side board manure smear, and me. I'm adding 175 pounds extra back weight to get us up through either the deep mud or road ice on this long back road draw. In five miles, two kids will jump out for the country school, and I get to hop inside and melt next to the high-schooler going further on into town. He smells like a bed-wetter, but has a husky friendly smile. We're all now listening to Charley Pride off the 8-track. The grimmest looking 8-track ever to sound so sweetly in this world.



PARTNER LOVE —

Susan. Thirty-five years married, Susan is the one I have been in love with since I was 21 years old when we first met. We haven't been apart one day or night in all those years. This even spooks our son a little. One has to be careful not to reveal too much, simply out of privacy, and after awhile people just don't want to hear or believe so much lovey-dovey. It has been that. It's also been a lot of hard work and devotion, respect and care. One can't even begin to believe how deep love can go. I'd like young people to know it's possible. Marriage is possible. A long marriage. Co-dependency is simply heaven & earth / sunshine & plants / left & right / show & tell. Don't try to figure it out, try to practice it.

Susan and I are really nothing alike in some respects since she was raised into a military family, with some relatives buried at West Point. She also has other relatives who wrote the NFL rule book and blazed routes of the Pacific Crest Trail. She was born in Arlington, Virginia when her father worked at the Pentagon after a tour in the Pacific Theater of WW2. An older sister, likewise an Army brat, was raised awhile in Ketchikan, Alaska. Both daughters, with their parents, would sail for Italy to a new military job for their father in Germany that lasted some years, providing side trips to Italy, Amsterdam, Spain, France, and German cities. This early European stay made a long lasting influence on Susan with her style of dress, culture and cuisine, coming down into an all-American crash when the family next moved to Chicago for a short stint at the start of the sixties. From the 7th grade and straight through college, spanning all of the sixties, Susan's family settled in California where her parents were native, L.A. to be exact. Susan went on to earn a degree from the university in Santa Barbara, majoring in political science and studying literature with Hugh Kenner and Kenneth Rexroth. Girls wore surfer charms when Susan arrived in California; Charles Manson was on the loose by the time she left, and her military family lost hold of her to John Muir's Sierra and Hendrix, barely known, playing the dinky UCLA student union in the afternoon, the same year he would flourish at Monterey Pop.

In the early 1970s Susan made a visit to her sister in Vermont, in the same area where I was and still am. I was driving with a friend in his car one afternoon and spied this blonde feather walking up the sidewalk in a short white summer dress stopping to reach for lilacs. Spring was in the air! I told my friend I would meet this girl — me, without a car and two menial jobs, living seventeen miles from town and getting around on-foot. And I did.

I wrote my first love poem to Susan and those lilacs, and I've been writing them ever since. No matter the subject, she is my muse and we don't mind being unfashionable in the least with our monogamous love life, or whatever it is they are calling it now. Falling in love head-over-heels is enough for me. Love *is* the art, and centuries of it have proven this true. We are quite alike in our family Republican backgrounds — and while her family has military history, and mine is in lumber — it has taught us a certain work ethic and conservative social side, aligned with a radical consciousness we picked up far from these families, or because of them. Susan's parents dropped her like a hot coal when they got a look at my long hair and beard back then and cabin life in the trees; never sticking around long enough to get to know us through the marriage, birth of a son and making a living out in this patch of wilderness. A pity. Looking at Susan you might not know all the hard physical labor she has carried through right alongside with me and others, and that's part of that classical European side minced with those southern California years of staying cheerful, modest and with a military

might. She always sticks to her guns, her loyalties, and definitely gives more than she removes. Her grandfather Earl Grady Paules blazed the Alaskan Highway for the Army Corps of Engineers from the Whitehorse/Yukon side between April to November 1942. During that same time the Japanese had bombed the Aleutian Islands at Dutch Harbor and occupied the islands.

So, there are trailblazers in our family genes. My forefather loggers cut the summit road to Mount Greylock for timber while Melville was penning *Pierre* on the other side of the mountain in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. In 1965 in the mountain's foothills that I was climbing regularly, from a movie theater in the town of Adams, I watched James Brown do the splits in the film *The T.A.M.I. Show*, not realizing Susan was in the concert audience, front row, with her screaming teeny-bopper friends. Less than ten years later she told me this while showing me the only book of a contemporary poet we had double copies of, Janine Pommy Vega's *Poems to Fernando*. And to this day we dance to our favorite song, sung by Terry Stafford (or Elvis) and written by Doc Pomus, "Suspicion". Hardly a love song.

ONE'S COMMUNITY —

I grew up as a small town boy in the Berkshire hills of Massachusetts in a lumber family that taught me immediate allegiances amongst an Irish working-class family on the one hand, as opposed to the lumber magnet and those influences. I early on sided with the working-class, the Irish, the carpenters I saw come and go in our house, as a toddler, the same ones I would work with as a boy. They had last names like Lazarzek, Duffy, Liebeck, Zarek and they each had memorable faces and hands, jaunty hitches to their step and stories, and none owned a truck back in those days. Farmers owned trucks. The milkman had a truck with a heavy quilt spread over the glass bottles, thick cream on the top. The carpenters pulled their tool boxes out of the trunks of their cars or a station wagon. They could build a house from the ground up, master all the framing, electric and plumbing, they dug ditches, too. They could work on their cars, help raise their kids, and wear a tie to church on Sunday. They were tough to beat when it came to later meeting poets.

I moved from the Berkshires to southern Vermont and set up a cabin in the woods and met my next community of happy souls in the tattered network of backwoods mechanics, loggers, carpenters, jack of all traders, barely built farmers. All way older than me. All dug in with their lives because there was nowhere else to go, or happy as they are, or that's all they knew generation after generation. I began to make many poems surrounded and working from this livelihood, lasting for years.

Community for poetry began with my starting up *Longhouse* and seeking like-minded ones ready to send their writing at my request. I started out at 19 years of age doing this, just one earnest kid, voraciously reading. The majority of poets have always been forthcoming and generous, and the older generation were wise in the ways of sharing the names of others, even sharing others poems as a way of fellowship and the way it was once done. To this day, when I meet someone younger, like a Kent Johnson or Dale Smith, I'm reminded of how many others worked the channels the same way I was — that beloved share and share alike of names, poetry and resources. It's a waterwheel and illustrious when put into practice.

The poetry community has stayed constant (where else do they have to go?) as I have, wanting to work and massage it with an extensive correspondence and belief. There are always poets and there are always poets who have very fine work to share and stoke into one more ark floating the high seas, as witnessed by the recent collection I put together — the last *Origin*, sixth series.

My travel with poets actually began with Japan since I had studied judo as a youngster in a boy's club, long before I ever read a poem. By the time I came to poetry, the Asian influence from a body sport and philosophy was well in me and the poetry fell into place with it. Dovetailed. Swept the tatami mat.

The physical back country community I once knew has moved on. Ghosts now. Many dead and gone, their sometime slow hysterical ways barely manageable to pass on, almost impossible to mimic. Their children may as well live in skyscrapers. The carpenters are all about vanished, too — those with the cloth nail aprons and fearless at any job at any price, buffeted with stories and easy humor and even polite manners. I know a plumber who still works those charms, and I'm certain there is a carpenter in every other town who works quietly out of a small toolbox making wood grain sweetened magic. If they're still there, there will be poetry.

SOME INFLUENCES —

For a small fry, I think I've been pretty inclusive, so far, in this little life of mine. It ain't over yet. I've written over forty books of all sizes with subjects ranging from train and travel books of poetry and prose, two books on the building arts (stonework & carpentry), a few books of stories and yarns, and all the books of poetry planted in mostly Vermont, concerned with farmers, woods life, hard work and love. A French poet once wrote me a letter and said, 'well Bob, you have written a book of poems, have the love of your life and you both have had a child and you've built a home with your own hands to house it all. A complete life.' I had to smile at that lovely voice of wisdom knowing more than I knew then. To some the world is vast, to others it's all in the neighborhood, and then there are those specialists that see it all on the head of a pin. Come to think of it — I probably flicker between all three.

So I am inclusive *only so far* — for everything else I gather poetries from around the world and make anthologies and little booklets I like to share with friends and strangers of all that diversity I may not have, but I can locate it and bring it forth. I like nothing better than to read a collection of poets that isn't all that predictable, and even better if it swoons. By the end of this decade I'll probably finish up the 400th title published from Longhouse, hopefully spanning many regions of poetry, as well as continuing to mine the underdog, or what I consider the natural-act.

As an editor, I'm after what Charlie Parker was after in himself, 'Music is your own experience, your thought, your wisdom. If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn.' The same with poetry. A good editor/poet can hear the horseshoe of the poem ring as it strikes the stake.

My literary influences range between personal friendships with those I've been drawn to through first their writings, and then the person themselves, the whole portrait. To know the writer faraway from the literary and into their family life, professions, travels, that wholeness is the ultimate book. So I have a crew of friends that are poets who have been extremely influential: Cid Corman, Janine Pommy Vega, James Koller, Gerald Hausman, Theodore Enslin to name only a handful. As for hardcore influences, and the list would change day after day, but when I was a youngster I could never deny John Muir, Robinson Jeffers, Kenneth Rexroth, Philip Whalen, Gary Snyder and Joanne Kyger — my west coast love affair, those who practiced as they wrote/does — and throw in Emily Carr for good measure. And a cherry on top with Lew Welch. On the other hand I already feel empty without Thoreau, Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day, Woody Guthrie and one of his sons Bob Dylan. Did I say Joseph Cornell yet? As a reader it would be the ton of mountain hermit poets from Asia to the USA spanning centuries, too numerous to single out or actually expose...translated by Sandy Seaton, Red Pine, David Hinton, Corman. Plus the poetry of Issa. Blake. Patchen! A million others. Kerouac. Tranströmer...it's endless, really. Celan. Ristovic. Rukeyser. Zukofsky. Kenji. One should swim in books and so swim everywhere.

POUND & OTHERS —

Yes, Ezra Pound was essential and he first came to me through music — from Bob Dylan particularly, since Dylan had him fighting in the captain's tower with T.S. Eliot in his song *Desolation Row*. When I heard that as a teenager, it flew open all windows for a combined music and literary association. Who would have thought, when I was discovering Pound in the 60s, there were also poets out in the world like the daring Palestinian poet Samih Al-Qasim, spending a great deal of his youth in prisons for the fighter in him.

So who was this likewise fighter Ezra Pound? I asked myself. And when finally catching a glimpse of the sharp goatee prominent head of Pound's with hair as wild as Dylan's years later, I only questioned his worth more. Which took me to his books, every one I could locate in print, and I devoured everything straight up to his death in the early 70s. By then he was a silent man, by all appearances a troubled man, fingered by his struggles and wisdom, maybe a bit too cornered within himself. Not exactly my kind of guy. I would later see the same critter made into many poets who followed Pound's example, or at least fell into the spell of poetry and tackling the muse, and almost all of them were furrowed cynics, self-involved and somehow tortured. I loved the Pound of the magnificent *Cantos*, straight through to the Pisan era, and moreso the younger adventurer into the literary architecture of fellowship, publishing and courageously messing up the status quo for a greater good. Often at his own peril. His correspondence is fascinating, inventive, colloquial, flinty and genius. His was a given nature simply by his invented living, and his poetry was all together earthy, shrewd and imaginative. Charles Bukowski, of all people said, 'Pound strengthened my arms and my brains'.

But I don't think Pound had the touch for the natural in a poem as wisely and sure as his close friend William Carlos Williams, who swept me up into his dustpan as quick and neat as a diligent housekeeper. It was certainly Pound who took me outdoors and showed me the

stars: there was Robert Frost he discovered in England, and Doc Williams, and over there Zukofsky & Bunting majestic languagers, and Irish Joyce pointing to my own family roots, then so much of Europe into the Far East went the Marco Polo needle & thread of the Pound influence, translating and discovering as he cut through the brush of finding new poets, like finding new lands. Inventing his world, which I always consider the benchmark/the core of an artist's worth. From his poetry came friendships, countries and diverse cultures, an ABC of Reading principle, and a daring to dog despots and intellectuals for years to come. That's a human nature, a human force and one to reckon with. Absolutely essential and unavoidable when it comes with so much terrestrial goodness, that can be made into language and so furthered.

When Pound took me to Williams, Williams took me out into his New Jersey neighborhood of broken glass and a housewife wrapped in her morning robe who reminded Williams of a falling leaf. I used to bring that leaf into classes I visited as roving poet, picking one or two up in the pathway as I approached the school, and in the class of only young women I'd ask one to stand up on a chair, and as the Williams poem was read aloud, she let that leaf drop out of her hand. And all of us would follow the words of the poem and the shape of the dropping leaf...and I'm still following that leaf....that's greater than any poet.

NON~ASIA & STILL NATURE —

I can only imagine what hasn't been influenced by Asia, which is sort of like speaking about Vermont's weather without bringing up what has first passed through the upper Plains, our general weather maker. Crosswinds are impossible to dictate.

Like Gary Snyder, I first went as a reader to Asia through Thoreau, but then Snyder took me deeper in, while Thoreau kept me back in my native New England woodlands with a much more local boy inquiry to the lay of the land and a language and wording built from studying and hiking, working with one's own hands and making something of it other than a job, perhaps an independence, a philosophy, a telling. Thoreau was key for me in the spirit of that pursuit, but his poetry was mainly lousy with the language. One went to his journals which made the heart of all his books. That is his poetry.

Whitman, Dickinson and Stein were also essential for me — each with their own inventions, style, map of the natural way, which for a writer must come in one hand as language/imagination and in the other hand as a real life. Your own life. Gazing as the animal, all barriers and prejudices fallen away. I believe nature poetry only comes about when the poet or artist passes into and through the subject, so becoming one. Or what Whitman termed 'we are nature'. Jeffers had it on his stone shore Pacific, so did William Everson and Robert Sund for awhile in the fields they worked as young men, certainly Woody Guthrie in his tramp of songs, Lorine Niedecker's hollowed out whistle of poems from a Wisconsin wood, Drummond Hadley high on the horse saddle southwest outback, and similarly James Schuyler in flower arrangement and deckled-days, Frank O'Hara on his NYC beat street rounds, ditto Amiri Baraka in dark continent NJ, Whalen & Welch & now Schelling in many parts of the west, the American snow & earth poems of John Haines, Wendell Berry, Robert Francis, Jonathan Greene and Michael Mauri; and finally over to Lyle

Glazier, Hayden Carruth, David Budbill, Barbara Moraff and Greg Joly in my native Vermont. Most of us go to Asia for its resources, its vanishing depth; it's inevitable. Although one can remain quite-so with Robert Frost bed rocked to New England; or Ted Enslin's driftings between sea & wood & mind, quite palpable; Ian Hamilton Finlay's Stonypath landscape poem – Thomas A Clark just around the corner, as John Martone gardening America's midwest, or Cralan Kelder riding his poetry bicycle in Amsterdam — Native American chants and storytelling, Appalachian hollers and sayings, the full force of Blues music. A poetry nature need be only as wild and present at once, which is actually an informed and likewise unbalanced teetering of position — whether staying or fleeing — that flash point is where those fine poems are often hatched.

A WORLD OF POETRY —

I believe in a 'form' for poetry, many forms — whether Zukofsky's musical word/depth "A" in his precision of perceptions, mind/sound/body making that poet's language; Richard Wilbur's continued grace with rhyme; or the great burn-to-the-fingertips quixotic short poem; Neruda and Vallejo's odes and manifestos; Frank Samperi's book length sojourns toward angels and sometimes emptiness; bp Nichol's manifestations. It begins with content. De Kooning said 'content is a glimpse'. Whereas, a model I don't agree to, no matter where it comes from. It's already fixed, this 'n that go here and there, too many expectations. Good when building a dog house — you don't want the roof to collapse with snow or the dog on it, but bad for poetry. Poetry must have few expectations, that's its draw and its survival, its eternal mystery, its ability to spin out of thin air something whole from the human dimension. With no guarantees and every element of surprise, otherwise we're cooked. So every influence is important, circular, fluctuating, no matter from where. As Barbara Guest worded it, 'form occurs in conditions of freedom'. How else will one form a judgment unless carried first through trial and error, opposites to one's own pole, looking down from space at Bucky Fuller's Spaceship Earth and knowing while the continents are fixed, the people are not, and their original habits were tribal and nomadic and meant to wander and mix where possible.

Poetry and song remain the passenger pigeons of cultures, people and lands, whole histories, very easy and conversational to transport. Of course one should try to know more languages than one's own, more songs, more crafts, but not at the loss of one's definition and soul. It's an individual calling. Read everything / discard with care. Travel *into* / not just with. I find very little in any school, anywhere, for poetry. The best teacher for the poem is any book of poems from anywhere in any language and at any period of time and waiting as patiently for the reader to make-do with it. If anything, we may come to realize the best poetry has always been worldly, and simply waiting for us. Zukofsky practiced 'to think with things as they exist'. No better rule of thumb.

The appreciation for poetry should begin at the youngest ages and carry straight up through graduate school and specialized degrees. I want my doctor and dentist to know poetry and have it in the balance of their hands. Bamboozle cultures at your own loss, whether in translation or revisionist histories — we find the aura of a poetry faraway from the printed

page and more in the walk of life, and we find we can begin to formulate our living and being within the care of libraries and research — so develop the body with the mind. Poetry can be written anywhere. The question is: away from the poet, will the poem endure? The poet must learn to endure with everything *but* poetry.

TEACHING AS HOME —

I've always liked Ezra Pound's thought that 'technique is the test of a man's sincerity'. A poet is but technique, so when teaching in any school where I have visited, the essence for me is meeting everyone one-on-one and from a ground level of conversation. The poetry is in the room with us, but we have to welcome it in.

Susan and I were eleven years together as a couple before our only child Carson was born, and hopefully what we taught him was what Susan and I taught one another in the belief of mutual respect and love for one another, through the daily activity of physical work and then family as both a harmony and respect for the individual. Through sharing tools at work with Carson, plus the immensity and mystery to a youngster of building large frame structures, with materials fluctuating between wood and stone, both realized and often found, he had to find his ground within that vortex and with my help, as much as I had to find my own way with and for him and within the physical framework to succeed. Both with the human side *and* the materials. A technique will evolve, but it may take some years of struggle to realize exactly what it is. Readers should build / builders should read, as musicians should know silence since they plan to add or take from it. I spell much of this out in my book *Sunswumthru A Building*. Stravinsky liked to advise, 'Love the art in yourselves, not yourselves in the art.' In my book on tools and learning I was never out to exploit anything more than the love of relationship — tools, relationships, father, son and family.

I think it best the student seek out the teacher as far as home schooling is concerned. It's not cut out for everyone, and often a teacher believes he or she has something to 'teach'. Whereas, I believe the student will find a teacher. Carson came and asked us if we would teach him. Not the other way around.

If I had an agenda for a poet I was to teach, it would be as far away from what we know as poetry, so we could sneak up on it and surprise all sides. Most so our own. Again, remembering Pound: *that poetry causes one's life to become vividly present in one's consciousness*. It's our calling to be open to learning, mistakes and all. Some of my best classes in poetry have been on the basketball court between regular classes with a pickup game of students, or doing the simple but important math roughing out rafters with a youngster wild eye blue in the sky. After work, hand the youngster an enriched book of poems to spend the night with. Maybe something from Indonesia.

CINEMA —

Auden thought poetry was the clear expression of mixed feelings. I want every poem, every kiss, every hug goodbye to travel from my head down to my toes — is that too much to ask? A barred owl call in this river valley night does this for me. When alone it does one thing,

and when out of the greater nowhere it receives another owl call back, it does another thing to me. Alone I am with the one owl and our lonesome poem together. With a calling back, and now two owls, I am excited, extended, joyous at the continuity, and even the possible love I have with my own mate. I could listen all night to these two. I admire the love of others.

This is much of what all life is for me — one owl, and then two owls. The loner we begin as, the coupling and possible continuation until another passage of steering alone, maybe forever, maybe drifting awhile, though forever a *calling*. Sometimes inward / sometimes outward...and films and music are fully for me — as with literature — ingredients, testimonies, proof and a blessing to our existence. Some folks care nothing about films, others rarely listen to music (though all of life is a music), even more never pick up a book ever in their lives. I know family members who live quite happily this way. Call it curiosity, wonder, the builder in me with stone and carpentry, but I live to *make*, and all of something makes something more. Within reason. Knowing silence and emptiness, stillness and the *approach*, rather than the mile, is I believe crucial. So the high lonesome sound of Roscoe Holcomb playing his music is as poetry to me as Shakespeare or Basho. While sitting down awhile with films over the years and years like *Broken Blossoms*, *Shane*, *Alphaville*, *The Mirror* of Tarkovsky's, *Vengeance Is Mine*, all Buster Keaton, Geraldine Page stepping back deeper into Texas in *A Trip to Bountiful*, *Dersu Uzala* and so many more is simply an extension for what literature still does for me, and the cinema just as handily. I came to serious film watching after the age of 35 and after decades of intensive reading. Films now open many book pages at once, fanning before the eyes. It allows immediate strange lands, languages, customs and people, or what Gilberto Perez terms 'the spellbinding elsewhere of the screen.' Music, like Roscoe, John Coltrane, Kayhan Kalhor, The Carter Family, Harry Partch, Franco, Radiohead put me into their hands. It's downright important to sometimes be taken out of your own hands, as a poet, and into some other hands, other lands, those loving arms. Two owls.

{ After }

After burning up with a fever for some of May, then a month of remission, and a repeat of more fevers in June, followed by a full month of antibiotic I.V. from the hospital staff in July, Susan was thrown to the wolves in August by the medical staff and became one of the many thousands who walk, stalk and roam the earth looking for a remedy, while trying to heal. Some go outright nuts; we have spoken with those *some* by phone and uncomfortably in person. Others have the money to seek out \$700 an hour specialists and get tanked up with the best of current healing potions. The majority dwell into more antibiotics, homeopathy, herbal powders and smooth grounded leaves, and almost all collect newspaper clippings about Lyme disease, buy the books, begin a file. Friends begin to send or gift the same. Susan is one more of the candidates who truly suffers and waits for a possible vaccine, but then — money always drives the grants that steer the pharmaceutical companies that then motivate their scientists — it's all a racket. The big bad obvious is human lives come second. *Where is the profit* is where the action is. Whereas, the human touch and heart and devotions are the way to the other side.

A very good idea to work over a burned region, as you well know as a forester, so the house visit and the people forming is regrowth. Whether it *takes* is up to the little gods. The same region where Susan is now at with the Lyme disease — she's had a burn-out with a solid month of antibiotics. It has probably killed off most of the disease, but it's nature's way, and Lyme is a nature prone habitat, and the body itself is walking nature, some of the disease (bacteria) remains and forces itself into crevices of tissues (collagen). It may not have the power and thus ability to multiply, but it does have the power left to cause Lyme disease symptoms...which is often the occurrence for those in Susan's condition. It's up to the immune system to renew and rebuild and regrow the burned region. Back to those little gods. Some have it in them, some regions have it in them, some don't. Attitude means a great deal. Support is added attitude. You're giving to the ghosts with this reading and you're also giving to the very *now*. You're believing.

The elite in the literary world is just the same as the elite anywhere else, they form. But literature is part language and part invention and until I'm shown differently it is all meant to gather and inform, relate, inspire. So one writes to do these things. It is meant to be understood. The greatest books have always been the simplest formed: duty to fraternity, making good human sense (*Huckleberry Finn*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Leaves of Grass*, Black spirituals and blues, Jamaican folk songs, the myriad of true storytellers: all people relishing a certain communion) and I believe it should likewise build a humanity of *all*, and never an elite. Elites are structures that have overtaken another and actually work off the overtaken, supporting a cause they would never believe in: their nonidentity, except as servitude. The elite is maintained by a power base not reasoned with by either humility or grace. It is one more man made phenomenon of power. 'We have, I fear, confused power with greatness.' Stewart Udall once said. As far as I can see in your own life and writing, you have nothing to fear about elite and the literary — you're monkeying with the good stuff: Hesoid's *work & days*. Love and laughter, family and work skills. Making do. You're a minority courting with the majority. An extreme natural act.

We have many pounds of blueberries to pick today if we can get at'em. All day yesterday I worked on building body work that now looks terrible on a twenty year old pickup truck. Just the way it goes. Metal and structure now fatigues. It's a woods wagon. Done with the job I tore most of it out near day's end and managed to get it near satisfied by dark...when I discovered the twenty year old rot rimmed spare tire always under the truck and both fixed into place and dangerously wanting to fall off anytime it wants to. Like on the interstate. Impossible to get after, since I tried for an hour, with oils, hammer, crowbar, you name it. My friend Will and his woods mechanic garage will have us together at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning on his lift with bars, or maybe the torch. Tire off.

I'm Lyme free. I celebrated by watching until near midnight four guys from US and Brazil play beach volleyball like it was a pickup game in Santa Barbara, except we are in China and an Olympian number are watching. I then went to bed, but not before reading ancient Japanese verse to reverse and balance the brain pan.

This morning I'm happy to see Joe Biden on the Obama ticket, however, I'm leery of how the Republicans will respond to balance and activate their own ticket. Biden provides a strong and developed mind on foreign affairs, aligning beautifully with Obama's humanist side. Still, I'm regretting there is no woman on the ticket after a full year of Hillary Clinton

raising the stakes for women. It may be a mistake not having her more involved, though I well understand the poisonous atmosphere Bill Clinton has thus far brought around the Obama campaign. The Obamas are the visual testament of a grandiose difference next to all this fuss. Obama at Mile-High stadium and all the music is fine, but how I miss the chance of their overflowing the stadium of 80,000 people with Ben E. King's mesmerizing *Supernatural part 1*. The one-word message that rivets midway through Obama's speech — he looks into the camera, and with, I swear, a haunting resonance gathering Frederick Douglass to Katrina house top survivors waiting to be saved, he soft growl burns an unmistakable — 'Enough!' It gave us goose bumps.

We picked fifteen more pounds of blueberries yesterday north of Putney. As we left at noon I waved to a small male and probably my age Tibetan worker hunched down in the shade of a blueberry bush eating from his lunch bowl. He looked, but didn't wave back. No aggression, completely benign. I liked that. For all I know, he was eating with his eyes closed. Back down in town at a used clothing boutique I found for Susan a bright yellow dress and a leather snazzy woman's jacket with a bit of stitching unraveling, and intricate stitching it was, at half price. I bought them both for our anniversary. She isn't well and puts up a very durable face and goodwill, sticks to the day and work at hand. Little gifts are essential in such conditions.

I'm back, it looks like, to sheet metal work on the old pickup truck. Still unsatisfied with how it looks. When I went to see Will the mechanic on Friday to torch the spare tire off, he pointed to his chain saw on a bench and wondered: if he torched off the tire, and then the two mud flaps that had finally rusted loose and would begin to pull down the water shield inside the wheel-wells on the truck, would I sharpen his chain saw for him? 'I don't know how.' This is a country boy speaking. I remember his father very well, a hardhead. He delivered a load of lumber to me in my first Vermont cabin in 1972 hating everything about my long hair and beard. Then he saw me building stone walls and we became friends. Obviously he drove his only son away from the rough woods life and traits, so the kid became a pretty good mechanic and dad was often in the garage with him at his retirement age. The only time I didn't catch him in the garage was when he was in front of Saturday TV wrestling, same wrestling I watched in the early 60s as a boy. Killer Kowalski etc. So here's Will handing me his file and gauge with no handle, and the file is worn to nubs, and my god the chain is dark dulled and looks like its worked through a roll of barbed wire. I have to keep things happy with a lousy file that won't put more than half a smile on the chain teeth. Will said he'd be happy just to do a few more cuts on a maple branch he left half done back home because the saw just couldn't cut through milk at that point. I filed a little shine onto each tooth and Will popped on the torch and cut the big tire off from under the truck chassis. Barter be well.

Yesterday in a hardware store picking up undercoating spray, more paint for body work, a roll of sheet metal and a box of pop-rivets, we ran upon old friends from out of town. He has had dreadful Lyme disease, it turns out, and high success from one region of Bay State hospital. We were given a doctor's name. Our friends also declare the doctor has a magic antibiotic that 'cures Lyme disease'. Well, bring the Messiah forward! We must meet this man, somehow in the impossible tangle of medical maze, or at least find out the exact antibiotic and channel this back to our doctor. Little steps. Or as Bill Murray once said in a movie, 'Baby steps'.

Susan and I marched in a few of those anti-nuclear protests. The thing about anything not regular (basics): whether communes or rightwing Idaho Nazi camps — it won't work until one learns the athletics of the mainstream. To turn over the empire one has to know how to build it bottom to top and so to dismantle it top-down. Almost all the New England communes, except the earlier Shakers and such, were doomed as failures by a lack of understanding hard work and the methods of conservative social practices: hygiene, strong marriages, viable neighborhoods etc. Farm stock trade once known throughout the Midwest, and to this day these principles can be detected in almost anyone raised in them. Even a city kid has the story about a visit to the family farm. The trouble with this country is it has been kidnapped and destroyed right before our eyes...and by the very ones who believe they even come close to representing the people, or a millimeter of the guiding light of the original forefathers. The larger society (the one most work and earn in) is channeled through fear and prejudice. Celebrating the communes is a momentary exhilaration in the same exhilaration they lived by, and fell apart with. There has to be a way to sail a small boat on the big seas. Some have been successful.

This next week we have to work on three fronts: moving on the Bay State possible connection of someone in the infectious disease dept. We need a liaison into it, otherwise they'll never answer our calls. That will be either our hardware store friend who was treated by a specialist, or our own doctor who seems more reserved every time we see him now...he's done what he can. The other front is dealing with the infectious disease dept. up near Hanover. There is a possible contact. Our friend also proclaims he was given a special antibiotic just for Lyme. We're waiting for his return call on what the specific antibiotic was. Loose ends. A few days later it turns out to be the same antibiotic Susan and everyone in the world with Lyme has been on. It worked for him, for me, not for Susan. A dead end.

Susan's very fatigued. She's not sure she will ever recover. That isn't easy to see in someone's teary eyes. Someone you love.

We have a close friend, now an elder, who long ago when he was in his fifties and would visit us would suddenly succumb to weeping right in front of us over something we were all talking about — maybe the good old days, or a loving memory, or whatever image was floating before his eyes — outright crying. I had never experienced this before, mostly amongst the most rugged of men, of which he was certainly one. I was in my thirties, strapping, a tool belt always on me by day at building jobs and the night only became a whole other day of vitality and sweeping raw nerves. Who was crying?! Then my little son got older and moved away, and my father died and a very close friend two days later, and illness struck this strapping gladiator, and the world shifted and the woodlands were stormed and myna-birded into pockets of suburbs, and jobs vanished into new sectors of technology, and every obituary all of a sudden was one more stepping stone of where one had been, and the winters got longer. And one became a crybaby, too.

There is a woman we consistently run into at book sales and garage sales and tag sales and junk sales and she never paid us much mind and we didn't much either. And then one day she saw Susan with the I.V. bandaged up on her arm in-between hospital sessions all through the month of July, and she just sort of asked what had happened. Susan told her. And then this woman told Susan how she had just recovered from the usual three week

antibiotic session of ridding her own Lyme disease, and it scared her to death. But she recovered okay, just like I did in August. And now every time she sees Susan she asks how she is doing. From a distance I can even hear her greeting and its warm tone and concern. She's terrified the disease will return to her. She claims the bullseye on her body has yet to completely disappear even after her full scale treatment and I know she is right because my bullseye hasn't entirely vanished either. I can't see it, but Susan can when I pull my shirt off. There are raised pockets of Lyme disease sufferers all around the world. They read all the books on the subject. Experts abound. Some folks have whole houses devoted to paperwork piled on every table and ledge concerning Lyme disease, and they are often the ones who got it bad and can't leave the house too much. Soon Lyme becomes cancer research and spills into A.I.D.S which spills into government and labyrinth paranoia, and before your eyes a perfectly sound individual is now a walking time bomb of one-knowledge. I once watched a popular actor with a too early heart attack in his active life try to explain on the brouhaha of a talk show venue how his doctor told him after the heart attack to just take it easy and lay off the stress. The actor painfully smiled recollecting this tale. He then went home from the hospital and soon after his favorite dog up and died, followed a few weeks later with his mother dying, and all the actor wanted to get across, under the punishment of spotlights on the show, was how clearly impossible it was to find solace and healing in this day and age.

And then came a Monday morning, the closest person to us, appeared in a parking lot of all places, told us through head bent restrained tears, of an infidelity. And it was somehow not news to me, but Susan at least had the good sense to embrace this crushed soul and return a love. And every hour since, it's been with her Lyme disease, and bowls of picked blueberries, and the hummingbird that came *this close*. Add up the day.

Looking through the thickest morning glare of sun bright this morning from the little kitchen bathroom (our only bathroom: once a privy); I thought I could see movement from out near the two stovewood cairns right beside the studio where I stacked them up. An apple fell from the tree right near the head of what was moving. I thought, at first, it was a bird, then maybe it was Sophie the dog we board, but no, she wasn't visiting today. So it was a deer. The big doe. So I went to get the pellet rifle as my contribution to Susan and her deer tick odyssey. Still in slippers — where in the world were my low rubber work boots usually left at the back door? — hell with it, go with rifle bearing slippers quiet stalker...yes, the deer was head upright and waiting for me when I came around the corner of the woodshed. One look at my purple t-shirt and chinos and what the fuck are these slippers (that was the look the deer gave me) it was gone with a laugh. I persisted in the hike through dew drench, but *gone gone gone*. The tale of the foolish stalker. I came in and woke up with a tall cold glass of spring water.

{ As you read this text from late August - but shooting ahead to late September as I revise the book - Susan will be going to Dartmouth-Hitchcock (Hanover) with me for tests by the hospital's infectious disease department. Two doctors will join us for well over an hour, and with them both together, Susan will essentially be treated with a first and second opinion all in the same visit. The doctors are energetic, bright, under 40 years of age and their note-taking and recall is meticulous. Six vials of blood will be drawn. The test results will return after a good week, and any co-infections of the Lyme disease will all be negative. However, Susan has post-Lyme syndrome which means a continuation of the malaise, low fevers, sweats, nominal swelling of the joints. A general inflammatory feeling possesses her. Much is

normal: liver, kidney, etc., but her white blood cell count has been creeping downward since July. This has us concerned. The blood test did show that at one time, Susan had Epstein-Barr, as we suspected about ten years ago. In the Lyme world of patients and doctors, some would believe Susan is recovered; other wily patients would say she is just like they are and still suffering with the Lyme disease burrowed away in her skin or tissue, or it's anyone's guess. This is the maddening guessing game. Friends write back, kindly, after seeing a photograph of Susan with me working in the woods, saying she looked better than they thought she would. If your constitution and attitude is strong, you may not look the part.

By midOctober and a hike up river for the morning mail, Susan will run into one woman friend jittery about possible Lyme infection and a recent deer tick on her leg. She has no idea about Susan's condition. Not taking chances her doctor immediately has her on Doxycycline tablets which are making her sick since the pharmacist instructed her the same way they instructed Susan way back in July — swallow on an empty stomach, which is wrong. This friend feels much better the next day and thanks Susan when she is again coming for mail. While visiting, another woman neighbor passes by and claims her own Lyme tick problems, and then another woman on the road is mentioned also down with Lyme sickness. And then word of another. That's five women within a half-mile of hilly woodland, river, horses, dogs, children and families. }

You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you odd
~ Flannery O'Connor

A bat flew into the house the other night exactly, *exactly* after John McCain ended his stumble bumble speech at the Republican National Convention. This was an unusual flyer, too, very low to the ground. Like a drifting rat. It was going crazy so I had to open up the living room door and all lights and leave the room. There hasn't been a bat loose in our old farmhouse for years and years; not until tonight. Apropos all the way from this speech, which, miraculously, was worse than Sarah Palin's, only because she could at least deliver and perform her sarcasm, whereas McCain is so psychotic with his inner beliefs and power structure of might-over-right, he's inaudible and even autistic having to present something formally. Even to a crowd of jack boots just waiting for him to say, "Lynch the colored fella and let's move on!" The heavy boots stomping the floor which then shakes free the 100,000 red, white and blue balloons from the rafters. You wonder if you are the only one dumb struck watching this.

Palin has been brilliantly and cruelly placed into position by Karl Rove and colleagues. We all know middle America (remember the 'silent majority?') are the biggest voters - there is a potential at least - and Rove & Co. knew to bring in a symbolic poster and fantasy to answer their very fears & prejudice. At least credit them with a brilliant, yet insane move. While the liberals wind surf, groove, and still get high; the rightwing glorifies in defending its god and maintaining the Empire. The liberals just can't get it straight that the right wing knows how to get down and dirty and make a living with their hands. They build things, like houses, and they rack a rifle. They learned how to work young, and fewer still went to college to read the good books; they built highways and the cars we drove on them instead. After their last giant fell (Reagan), they became dupes for the preppy rightwing led by the wimpy Bushes, lumpy

Rove, and a crocodile named Cheney. Somehow the working-class tough guys couldn't see the silver spoon dangling out of these fools mouths.

Now we have to see just how much spine is left in the regular press to tolerate what McCain's bunch is about to do: ignore the press, TV media (except Fox News), the independent voice that barely hangs there by a thread as the voice of the open mind, and just sell the Presidency and Moose hunting Palin with their own brand of justice. Cut out the press, cut out the educated, cut out the conversation, fascism supreme. No real farmer or builder or mechanic in his right mind would plant or feed or milk or slaughter or mow or construct or tune-up an engine with so narrow of a hand or mind. Sorry to say, it's been happening for years, and more years may be coming. Imagine you are invited to a farmstead cookout, and it's potluck, and you bring to the event, with a big demented smile on your face, a Mock Apple Pie made all from a box of Ritz crackers. You think you're pretty smart. Everyone else has prepared wholesome warm pies and breads and stews. That's what John McCain has given to us - Mock Apple Pie. It's impossible to work with and he knows it, as does Rove, and the media and Obama will burn rubber for the next 58 days trying to measure and figure and plan something out. In the meantime, well intentioned America in droves may fall, again, for this gimmick. The Republicans have figured out how to have cheap thought, cheap politics, cheap books, cheap conversation, cheap schools, cheap medicine, cheap 'looking' clothes and haircuts, and all in all: cheap tricks. It's killing us wholesale to know this, to watch this, to live with this.

We have two experienced minds on the Democratic side ready to show leadership's built-in qualities and experience of both life and politics, up against shrill psychosis. If poor Barack Obama even attempted to pull off a speech like either McCain or Palin accomplished - high in chamber rhetoric, with no fraternity or ideas for all the country - he'd be dead in the water this morning. If there is anytime since McGovern/Nixon when the country will show what it is, and where it plans to go, it will be shown the next 58 days spilling into November. With Obama and the soul of civil rights history in his every presence and move, this will be an election for this country like no other. You'd be a fool this time not to vote. You'd be a fool this time not to vote for the better good of country, earth, waters, and the air we breathe. This is far from politics, this is stout common sense. It'll be the meat & potatoes of where this country plans to go next. If it doesn't go for Change, it's doomed for more of the same (business controls government), and we already know business is all about 'nothing personal', as they lean you back and slit your throat.

We went to a yard sale recently to benefit our local hospital with everything for sale, including books. This is where you catch the pulse of America. Not down in the summertime Berkshires or in Taos or Bolinas or Putney book sales. A hospital book sale out on a lawn and boxes and boxes, and did I say boxes? filled with vacuous crap. You may find six books if you are as desperate and a bounty hunter as I am, but really you could leave four of those and just take two, and a loving friend will talk you out of two and advise paying 50 cents for just that one lucky find. That's the pickings from middle America. Once they feel threatened by a Black man (who god forbid may be smarter than them), never mind being mesmerized by a hockey mom who could be a heartbeat away from the Presidency, they may turn out and take this election mighty personal. The workingmen and women may wish to wake up and realize, at long last, nothing for years has been done for them. They're protecting a macho reflex that is laughing at them from the country club. Too bad the same

have hired assassins to kill humanists, freedom activists and heroes since the 1960s. This is a very shitty clump of people.

Believe me, personally, I could sit back in little wood-leaf club paradise here by a fairly isolated river and continue to play at my back to the land trip of the last 40 years. Fine and dandy. The problem is the river comes from somewhere and it could easily be spoiled at anytime, and it has been threatened in the past, and it takes tough hard work to save what is natural and what blesses us. We can listen all day to real and devoted and highly dedicated believers of their faith that life begins at conception and they must be against abortion and behold a right to live. True enough, one should be respected with those beliefs. Just as long as those believers also understand that a right to life should be protected for those children not to be forced to also fight and die miserably young for businessmen's wars. It's the same child, and the same life. You fought to have them live, so let them live. Also know to support any troops or soldier that fights in these wars is a sham. Loving them as individual children as we do, they are still mercenaries when they choose to fight for despots and aggressors, no matter from what country. We desperately need, again, soldiers to fight for their country and their people: from Katrina havoc, and young children everywhere needing their love and attention, to the elderly often lost in a maze of derision. What is a country, or world, that forgets its truest teachers?

Good Americans can often be quiet at their work and even recognize quality. So prove it.

Now where was I?

Much enjoyed the new poem. I take the advantage of knowing a little of South Deerfield, maybe even my imagination to your garden. The exact time of a honeybee in the fold of a flower, very nice. You have ease and comfort and generosity in everything you write. A sensible tinge of humor. It's a human story and not just good writing. This is essential.

It's not vhs or dvd or anything, I'm just a film fanatic. I wasn't as a child, but I did enjoy films. I watched nothing my pioneer days of building a cabin and spot in the woodlands for a long ten years, great years. Apprenticeship years. No TV, no nothing, but Susan arrived. A cherished girl with a *car*! On her first visit to me she came by bicycle, 1974, all the way from town, many hills and dales, twelve miles. She immediately gave up all the comforts of home, but we had the greatest comfort: one another.

Of other backcountry writers, including Thoreau, I believe our man Henry lived the most healthiest and with the greater sense of humor. Of course he went home nearly every day to visit his Ma, and had a warm meal and a slice of pie, smart hermits all do! But they leave that part out of their books since books are all about creating a myth, but the greatest books just gush wholesome existence. Like Kerouac, Thoreau lost his brother and devoted his writing and life forever after in his memory. He gave a sort of haunting and glowing insight to almost everything. *Walden* (I read every year) is just one large Dutch oven of simmering mindfulness.

Your line in the new poem of the big houses with long driveways has the picture in my head I watched change and unfold from the summit of Sugarloaf, where we climbed year after year and looked just a bit north coming around the bend of the summit road heading down

the mountain and the old cornfield given to realtors and the one and then two and, I believe, now a dozen trophy houses put up in that district. I used to watch a farmer till the field just on the edge of that cul-de-sac; maybe he's gone, too? When driving back up into town from the Sugarloaf parking lot, on the right hand side of the street and almost into town near Cumberland Farms, there is this old dim white house I would have considered spooky as a child and out on the sidewalk a little table and on that little table we left a few dollars for a box of raspberries someone picked and put out for sale. The ghost house. Raspberries picked by a ghost.

What is it about a Cumberland Farms that sells junk food and gasoline in an old farm town? The best towns have a railroad track churning through it. I believe your town has two, maybe? Up in (Scott & Helen) Nearing country where Greg lives they have a large development and all the street names represent either Nearing or wildness themes. It's nightmarish given its sacred ground since gone to seed. The houses are owned all by millionaires and skiers and now and then there is even a murder in the district.

We did make it to the live music and the theater play and we did hug Carson after the show who was half covered in sweat. He's been waiting for us to come to one of his concerts. All have been very late at night — in bars, on Mount Snow, way down in low-end Connecticut. These are three very ambitious and close friend-guys at work here. Even the girlfriends and one wife are close, and then one wife suddenly became a cheat, and now all have combed to Carson. He is honey. So it's the first time we've ever seen the band play. Drums, bass, lead guitar. Susan always retired early, and now the Lyme has her exhausted every day by 7 o'clock in the evening, much curtailing us going anywhere at night. So when we showed up for the concert/play, and I went down to the bass player Josh and his girlfriend sitting in a little love huddle because he just got out of the hospital with appendicitis that day and was there to play! I wanted to squeeze his shoulder for that bravery. They were down in front and the whole play crew and musicians were off to another side after the show fielding Q&A (no Carson in sight, 'I hate that Q&A stuff'), and no one knows we were there...Josh looked behind him to me kneeling and smiling and saying 'Great show' (it was for what it was: the end of the world) and Josh tiny bowled over in his tiny space with girlfriend blurts up, 'Holy Crap, you *made it!*' I'd give anything again to see the smiles on their faces this morning and for the rest of their lives. Carson, too, when Josh leapt up and went back stage to retrieve the groundhog...Carson came surfing out, (the way he walks) so pleased there was someone in his life, right now at the concert, that he knows. It sounds very lonely, and actually can crush me down when I think about it, like when driving home through the steady rain last night on pocked marked back road (one car passed us during the half hour drive under canopy jungle wetness). When I'd express this crushing while driving, Susan, quiet right next to me (folk music playing from Africa) said she was in that crushing moment, too. It's an every day event around the world — a marriage busting up — barely news any longer. However, to those involved, it can feel life threatening.

Carson has been reduced to a third floor apartment overlooking main street in town with the trains snorting through from 5AM onward. The only reason why it isn't yet hateful is because he has always been one to give peace a chance. A doer. A maker. Many drummers are the low man on the totem-pole back beat providers. As I listened to the theater play kick in last night with Carson's drumming, I remember the boy I first taught how to play, and we dueted for years on two different drum sets, and by twelve years old he was better than me.

Keep flying little bird...and he did. We bought his first set at age four. I built him a stage up in his bedroom in one corner and for years he played up on it. The reason for the stage wasn't prominence (but I'm sure it was for a child). It was because the room had only so much space for toys, drums, music, and all the books. Underneath the stage allowed a grand hiding place to read and nap and camp out. Sometimes life is perfect.

The play consisted of a half dozen hard working young actors playing-out something that stretched from Greek drama to the present day Charlie Kaufman walking and talking through his film scripts and then the actual film. This especially works for young players today riled in a box of little expression left, and self-expression bursting forth anyway. One can see how it allows the stage craft lots of leeway to move through mistakes and let things hangout. It was little thrills to watch the actors go in and out of character as they played both their parts and worked as stage crew moving props and turning on switches. The music keeps lifting us up out of the waves, and it's live. Death and doom is pronounced, but at least by the end of the play our Charlie Kaufman-like narrator has found a crippled crow which he somehow gets into a box and takes to the vet and he isn't sure it will still be alive by the time he arrives. What was once a demolition of the mind and body in a apocalyptic two-character play, is now just a crippled crow and a troubled guy at the end. He does get to the vet. He does open the box. And the crow does happen to be alive. We can at least leave on that note, even though we are seemingly walking away on a carpet of ashes out of the auditorium. All through the play, squirreled into a big room in the woods of Vermont, far from any town and not much of a college campus (what I always like about the location), edges of tropical storm Hanna thundered down on the roof. An added actor. An appropriate presence.

Not to sound impossibly hopeless, but everything we do is a labor of love. So *Florida Turnips* hasn't sold at all and very few booklets have and that's just part of the work day. I started out at nineteen making booklets and for thirty-six years I gave the majority away, often high quality work. We sell some through the bookshop but don't rely on that at all. It's a bonus day when it happens. I make my living with my back and hands and for the last dozen years out of a bookshop too, and sometimes Longhouse publishing. Or garden bed. It takes lots and lots and lots of 'canning jars'. We're always canning.

It was an ideal night to stay home and be cozy. Very happy you did. Last night we had to be where we were. Drove with that dogs and cats rain and felt amongst companions of that rain. It was like thirty visits for Carson to have us there. It was like thirty years off my life to see his smile. It's amazing to see how things add up, or don't.

Susan and I remember many times being at that bookstore/cafe in its early days of popularity, all by day, no evening concerts. Though we were there on the day Tiny Tim was supposed to show up for an event, and some ukulele convention of a sort was also starting up, and me being a Mr. Tim fan, we considered staying. The vibe felt right. But I believe Tiny never showed up, and, in fact, died enroute. Another of the truest unrecognized 'Beats'. He does a rendition of "Stairway to Heaven" I live by.

I believe the only way to think of Thoreau today is to imagine what he would have gone through, as a modern man, to upset and compromise his principles. It would be impossible to survive and not have to, and he was stonily practical, so he would have. One can't imagine

1850 and now. It's nonsense. I imagine he might have solar panels, his bountiful garden, and he would still upset some town officials because he would still shoot a woodchuck. And maybe eat it. He may have also started Earth First! He may have been the Unabomber. He would understand Greenpeace. He'd say, if a tobacco barn can survive in this climate of development and crass housing, so can I. He would have lived in the town of Hatfield because he liked that name. *A-hat in-a-field*. There's a bicycle pathway and walk along the river down there, big bad tobacco fields march right to the shore. Henry country.

Oh yes, my literary archive (which includes *Longhouse* publishing and correspondence) is a work-in-progress, here in the land of the free and home of making ends meet. It's what keeps a frugal poet and publisher stoked just when the chips are down. It's one hope, and of course to see all this paperwork and decades of work and gathering and salvaging and believing put into perspective by perhaps a lone scholar one day in what future is left. It's a hope it will all happen. It has my manuscripts, and moreso all the correspondence since 1971 I've kept with poets worldwide, and their own manuscripts considered and often published from Longhouse. If you look over our bibliography (online) since 1971, you can see the names involved. It's been like a farm-stand business — one of the nice ones — with hanging plants and bright bins of washed produce. The water tastes real good out of the hose. They sell small, crisp coconut cookies. The workers all wear high rubber boots. There's a cornfield out back that looks like it goes forever. The workers are all lyrical women and they're okay with men.



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