

Why We Explore

Ry Southard
2024

A Cord

A phone cord
Like readiness
Coils that mesmerize
Flexible malleable surrender and connectedness
The power of cylindrical circles
Go Slinky

I had a rhyme
But by the time I wrote this
It evaporated into time, the rhyme that is
Swirling into an abyss and never landing

I continue my search for lands of meaning
Where the cruel truths of life are false
Even though we haven't a choice either way

Forgive my ignorance, I don't know much
about anything except words and love
And even there, I am imperfect, unsynced
as a knowing lover connected
by an analog cord
to an evaporated rhyme

A future

What happens when life ends
Is there a new synapse that
pulses through deadness or a
promissory note to float in the clouds
relieved of past burdens

somnambulant bongo drum beat abraxas
drifting through marsh and reeds
across wetlands of memory
oboes and flutes whisper to vapor
winnowing through star dust

searching for an elusive sanctuary
beyond purgatory
where we will build our cabin
in our next life

a wonderful thing to have choices after death

A Long Cloud

A long cloud settled upon a place that
Was yet to be

Its white vapors spread peace and greenery
Where nothing was before

Ferns and flax and vines and
 birds that sing lively
waves roar counsel upon the shore

a dream became a wish became today
a cloud became me
a cloud became we

—

What to do now with knowing and wisdom
How to sing and chant the rhythm of clouds

That you that we
that they become family
With honor and clarity
Weaving long cloud dreams

Truth when true is always like before and after
Measured in waves that counsel the shores
It is the way of this long white cloud

1/27/24

Cattle in the Washes

Cattle in the washes
Hidden in the pinions
30 miles on a dirt road
An hour on the horses
Seesawing up and down the gullies

I watch Karen as she herds
She shouts calls that only Wyoming knows
I reckon to follow
Gallop and trot wombly in the saddle
Only ridden western once before
Not a gimme but it sure was fun

In the moment
I random a poem
To shout love to the high plains
to the washes, lost memories and dreams
and their gods that will remember this

It was a perfect day and remains so
40 years later

credo

file me a new credo
toss in a fab font
frothy with trendy words that
throw back to better times

when the river was slow enough
to tube and go no where
aloft in the shade of cottonwoods
trusting when
we would know more than now

how have you experienced your life
is fulfillment a bureau
or maybe a universe un-named
or a good or bad beau
or an unrememberable number

yes

throw it as far as you can
imagination carries further
than any horizon
embrace the newest moon
i'm there

Driftwood, S. Island, New Zealand

A driftwood log called
walking Bruce's Bay
There was only that rocky beach, this log and me
Everything else was the always sea

What did I hear over waves drumming and foaming
Sounds of earth's presence, rivulets of prescience
Deltas to sea
Seducing now into always
It's been that way since prescience began
and seduction and foaming became always

The log lured me closer, weary and sodden
Yet delighted to be alighted
on such a fine always

Peering into the cavity I saw the Soul
The universe of always

I took this photo to share with you
Hope
A single moment never to be repeated
Yet it always can

Farewell Circe

Temptation so abundant
Loins crying to land and succumb
Songs that lullaby and flame
 weary souls from years of voyage
and my blind surrender

Awaking from a year of confusion
Severed lures, my men are not swine
and I am no longer weak for your luxury

Now sailing past Aeaea
 beeswax in our ears
Silencing the Sirens
Farewell Circe

The journey is not an island in the distance
 or just an adventure for a poem
Set the true navigation for home and my wife

Where we can unravel years of turmoil and separation
 Entwining now as only we know
No mystery of why we are we
 lyrics of love and devotion
An arrow through every ring

follow the Star

follow the Star
I can't see my feet
oh follow the Star

banjos echo the willowy path
whippoorwills in lonely chorus
the dream is yours and mine and us
follow the Star

lost on the skyline
struggling in the muck
wondering about reason
and what to believe in
trust that Star

more poems are held in the heavens
than I could ever know
visions are created
down on earth below
footsteps going forward
into a distant universe
following a Star

when dark days appear on our horizon
when the paychecks disappear
the dreams we nurture
love and cherish
follow our Star

Garden

What is the memory of mountains
 cradled in crevasses and rushing rivulets
Does snow get lonely when its edges melt
 or a glacier when it caves
We cherish the quilt of wildflowers
cascading to our garden
as the sun sets looking up
from the terrace of our floral peace place

Plastering petals to our imagination
Shucking anomalies carving our paths
Splashed with smiles of I love you
We plan our life around gardens

Here is contentment
A future of fulfillment fashioned by
the memory of mountains
a wandering dune festooned with Hatteras sea foam
wondering love

A rock garden like Panayoti and Nicola know
Unassuming beauty, texture and simplicity
with endurance
Knowing ten years is only a garden tomorrow

Imagine running your fingers over the contours
caressing soil and leaves and blossoms
The certainty of now
Listen to lichen with stones so old
Forgiving the clouds whooshing across your dreams

Grandpa's formula

$G=V/GF (GC*A nap)+14\sum time$

I inherited my Grandfather's ethic and occasional golf car
He laughed so hard when we went to the driving range
Watching me flail in Findlay's scathing summer sun

1970 Pontiac Tempest, 2 door, low miles
His four brothers and Dad gathered around as I drove away
Back to school in San Francisco as the journey continued
to create art and begin a 7k mile sojourn
and find out what I did not know

It was a mountain, higher than Annapurna
with more injurious faults
Gods were with me through volcano, drought and tempest
1980 was that way
It made the local paper
A paragraph barely

With absolution and foresight, a vision
I really know
An oval around America
Rough as pastel then gradient clear
It was a perfect journey
To prove the theorem
We are community when we connect
A great caring network when kindness rules

This revelation was, as an older gent once said
Enough for a nap

Hatteras Moments

9:52am

The only thing that matters
Five pelicans flying in symphony

2:49pm

Guessing the high tide
Roaring swish slide up the sand

5:57pm

Watching the pelicans
fly back east up the coast
From the high deck the sea's melody
is subdued yet still frothy

7:07pm

The pink is mesmerizing
Wafting feathers above the waves

11:43am

Osprey hovers partner to the wind
Adding velocity to gravity
Dives into the sea

12:19pm

Wind blowing spray when waves curl
Waves crash thunder on the sandbar
Then a lull but not dull
The ocean resets in five moments

12:31pm

Two-year old boy chases gulls
from his beach camp
Joy of running in circles with purpose

2:01pm

The horizon rises polytonal gray
Burnished and matte
without form or depth
Only perspective over
the now olive sea

10:12am
From the lookout
A pod of dolphins
 hypnotizes our focus
Fulfilling me

Jerry Jeepers

Jerry is my jeepin' jerry friend
Traversing Colorado's mountains
Sucking dust and postcard vistas and
 washboard fumes, whiplash, and endless 3.2 beer
 PBR and Triscuits and yak about women
and scars and bars
 and the lives we've lived and loved
Friendship bouncing beyond camaraderie

Trusting Jerry on the Alpine Tunnel rail bed
It's only a thousand feet down below the palisades
Yikes! The man behind the wheel is acrophobic
His mirror pulled in and scraping the inside cliff
Incessant historian and cigarillo smoker

I look over the abyss just a foot away
left hand ready to grab the wheel to jerk left
praying no jeep comes the other way

Mark Twain's scariest moment
the short line car hanging over the edge
10,000 men built that tunnel at 11,500 feet
 year-round for two years
400 men at a time and no one died

We celebrate Mike's life everyday
Vibrant and so lucky to have jeeped with him
Standing, we backseat surfed up the impossible Taylor Pass
exhilarated until Mike's grip broke
"Drive Asshole" he bellowed as Arnie
Full steam ahead unstoppable
Like Molly Brown

Tendered by the lore and lure of Colorado's
highest country is Jerry's monologue
Who can't love such a devotee
So happy to hear every story again (and again) and
the kicker is that he knows how to drive a '75 CJ5
like Noooo body's business

Breakneck and Brown's Pass

Mosquito too, make sure to sound the horn upon descent

Tincup or Hancock Pass as Williams is closed

Past the chalk cliffs drifting deeper into history

Taylor Pass with Mike and Jerry is my best memory

Of mining and railroads with short lives

Mining stories that live beyond us

Jeeping into the past and celebrating now

Jerry

It just shakes you all up to have somebody die
Light flickers, sudden dark skies
Tears sparkle light within

There is a reason for Jerry
He built a circle of friends with loyalty and trust
50 or 60 years of odds and ends
I was an odd in his crossword puzzle

Cherishing the earth
and jeeping to see it
It wasn't environmentally correct
Breathing fumes especially with the doors on
But the mountain goats didn't care

He didn't recycle, another odd
Idiosyncrasies who cares
Acceptance of life and death
And memories of both

When we were jeeping it was only that moment
Rocky Mountain vistas, herds of elk scattering
Keeping the damn jeep from jumping off the trail
Steering linkage way too loose
An upper body workout that remembers

Laughter and joy of moments when only
The mountains and trail and rocks and 3.2 beer
And same old stories and dusty Triscuits
and wildflowers stretching beyond imagination and ghost towns
and mines with memories of miners and the Alpine Tunnel
just over Hancock pass as Williams Pass is closed

Jerry's Pass is now closed but not his purpose
to bring odds and ends together to watch
the sky change over South Park
from the top of Brown's Pass

July 16, 2013

Some say I'm eccentric
with a lust for all
a passion for nothing
sitting in Hyde Park waiting for your memories

what do you presume about a tunic
or head piece or an obviously London suit

I remember the gales of laughter from the pub
rising to my flat
fueled by the barkeep
that wore the same ugly red cardigan every day

do you know Bach's toccata in D for cello?
It is better than Bill Evan's 'Peace Piece'
but not by much

assembling ways to go forward
connecting universes
we are ready

I arose from the pew
facing the alter that I never really understood

stepping into the aisle
I turn away
straight to those famous Ghiberti doors
open only on Easter
I guess paradise is open only once a year

i shared big laughter with a friend today
it was so good

message

a word at a time
does not make a phrase

a sentence or two
does it describe me or you?

desire for contact by
word, thought, or touch

it is by utterance
that we remember

that's the script
spoken every day
so indelible

I eyeball the bottle
it would be nice if it had history
but it's just a brown bottle
to set a message inside
and hope for response
cork it, throw it

is that any different
than us
drifting in a cross current
not being seamen
a semaphore or telegraph
would be helpful for details

but we do need guidance
the touch that we had last month
has diminished
our souls haven't sync'd for weeks
a sandbar has shifted

I am just a wishful man
struggling with knowing
your heart that heals mine

hoist the banners
we shan't hide our joy
it is a gush not a trickle after all
endurance is the peace to practice

Old Bigelow

As Icarus
falls to sea,
As the battle
has shown
to be,
In the lost
and lonely
moments of
anytime,
Ascend old Bigelow
and watch the ice
rime upon
whipped, unbeaten
pines and
spruce –
listen to
the limbs
bear the weight.
It is there and here.
They know all
storms
to pass –
and thaws
bring fresh mint tassels
to bounce
on the twig
tips.

Oracle

I doubt your vision
Despite your credence
I slip back to doubting
in a cadence of uncertainty

Lilting over indecision
Dreams of doubting
Any reason to do so
It's not really me

Me wishing, believing, knowing
that love matters
essential as water
utmost

Sitting on a barrel
The past swirling within
The reason we are human
Wondering why

Tell me seer
Please tell all
Why hope and love's path
remain bumpy and long
Why should we not hope?

I left my home and family
To seek your wisdom
only to find you didn't care
My wife may forgive you
But I don't

Another day
Another journey
That proves hope and love's path
Will get us there

Reinvention

I seem to reinvent myself more often
than my normal 3 or 5 years
or maybe it's now 2 or 4
or yesterday, I can't keep track

Life's triptych of clouds, forests and
mesmerizingly green moss
a breathing canvas
Vast lakes quenching every last
Drench
to grow a new canopy

Magnificent earth and peoples
each care as we dream
Hope for a new solution
praying for survival
Inventing sustainable compassion
Calling for more love

A Viseu love note
A Ventimiglia poem
Photos from Dolceacqua
 You and the vintner smiling with fresh jug wine
 New squash blossoms float through the market
 gone before landing, we are so lucky
Paris is wonderfully only perfect with you

Nothing matters more than our love
It is good that the rain is soaking tonight
Let's get the fireplace ready

You know
Love flows endlessly at Moinhos do Dao
Creating always

seven seques

turned 30 relationships into 51 to the nth
it wasn't real, but i touched it
now i am naught

caverns of nothing deep into the moon
echoing daydreams of hopscotch
bouncing off marbles inside circles
and rooms of daffodils
that laugh at everything

crocs smiling and waiting for any
turn of events
great works of fiction are written in the meantime

ahoy time
have you lept and not told me
that pinnacles and barnacles
are kin

Sextant

Immersed in conflagration
Swimming backward in the tide
The dawn I once trusted retreats to another nation

Where drifting is celebrated in sideways song
Stanza remnants stored in the billabong
We canoe to the north or is it south
Every shoreline looks the same

We frame our vision on four horizons
Each with different spectrums
No compass needed to relive the past
A sextant for the future sure would come in handy

The Bald

We're safe now
Not knowing where we are
Some bald mountain in North Carolina

So we know the mountain is safe but
Not where it is
Importantly we don't know who we is

Should I alert the authorities and raise roadblocks?
We'll let you know next week
Working to cast off dysfunction

The sun rose again
It made most of us happy
The morning news was obtuse
Coffee percolated smartly
There was reason to wonder

No accolades to question
I will make some up so we can
Have meaning to wander
Hopscotching on cypress elbows
Across slow mesmerizing swamps

A hammock on our deck
I will go there and lull

Colors cast pastels across the bald
We're safe now

Winding

I wind through freedom without a guide
Amazed every day I am not a prisoner
Peering into peace as if it were a separate land

We share now the honor of freedom
Lucky oh so lucky

The burden of watching those that deny freedom
and there are so many
Tragedy upon devastation and sorrow

How can I reconcile
that horror and joy
Knowing each day with you is joy

Epiphanies are for another day
Will you lie with me now in peace
I am naked before you, ready
for a new psalm

Yahuch

Wash the blackness from my dreams
cluttered in sovereigns
never to be redeemed

paste Siletz icons to my forehead
over my doorway
upon my pile of shelves
my cobwebs
slowly wafting in translucent afternoon shadows
woven messages waiting

I want to know your history
I'll settle for tomorrow
for now

and a plate full of eggs and fresh scallions
and a side of sea air
I'll ride the green stems
around Cape Perpetua
to our ancestors up the hill
dead from starvation
and await

anchored
we are

winds covering
each wave's backside

way beyond my grandparents
my tribe
the totem angular
colors of history
before the bible
ochre on the cave wall

the spruce of 400 years
the burnt out broken cedar of 1,000
backstop of our love

fresh hemlock needles
in your backyard

fragrance of perspective

tides of waves imitate whales
until the blow spouts tell true

meaning is a bucket of water
thrown across the deck
reason is forgotten
tomorrow is forgiven
ahead of the super moon

translucent agates
dripping from the stream
children of the earth