

Adventures In The High Wind

Poetic Observations and Other Lore

Robert Nichols

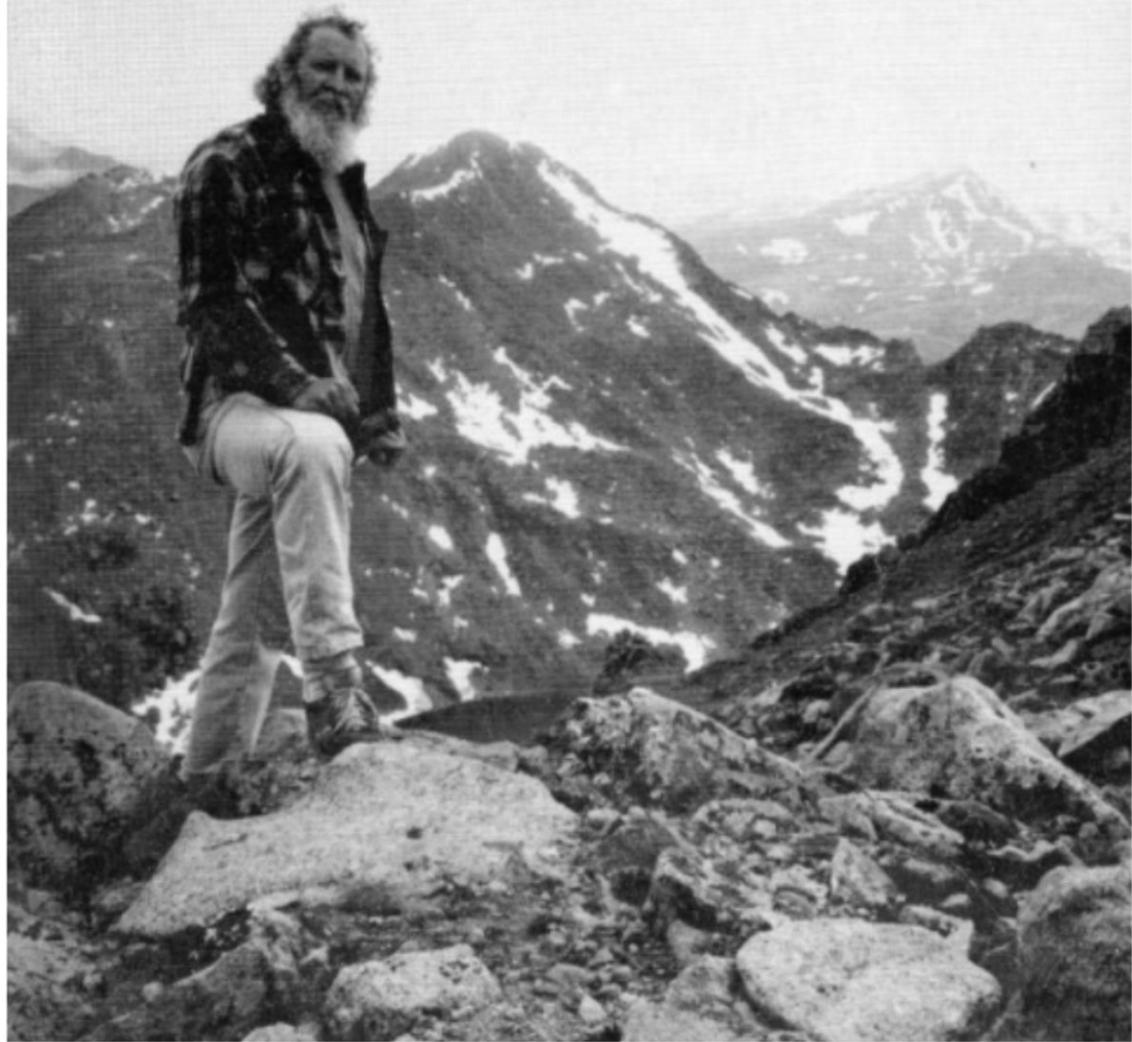


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Winter c.1990
Park County, Colorado

Words, the Wind... the Adventure Continues

May 31, 2013

I worked on this book most of the summer of 1990. It was up in Park County, Colorado, during a five year period when I had my tipi camp on the edge an aspen grove overlooking Cowboy Flats. Actually, I started gathering my poems and 'lore' (from new and old notebooks and footlockers and coat pockets) throughout the good long winter before.

At a Rocky Mountain elevation of nearly ten thousand feet, powerful storms would settle in on me for raging days and blizzard-shrouded nights. And, when it would clear off to sub-zero clarity, myriad stars would spin the night in galactic wonder all about me. I loved those seasons, those years in mountain's embrace. I wrote a poem about it.

Tipi Night: Winter

Deep winter night.
An enticing shimmer of fear and cold
enveloped me as,
crouching through the low doorway,
I departed the warm-lit wrap of the tipi.

Hermit times they were,
dwelling far up the side
of a distant mountain,
alone
but for the invisible warriors who,
with courage and taunt,
urged me to action:
venturing out to check the night
before sleep.

With these ghosts of the wilds
as my spirit companions,
in a ritual that spun centuries
down to the essence
of a single night,
and spun a single night
back out
to all the scatter of centuries,
I circled my camp
in final communion
with moon
and stars
and clouds of coming weather.

We paused in the snowfield
spill of the moon—
my spirit friends, myself,
and all the motions of time and
distance—
thrilling to the chill

of pure winter night,
(how the fabric glowed white
against the lightless curtain of the forest—
this cone of pole and canvas
I called my home)
and in stillness we listened for danger.

The flap secured,
the fire set back to a good long glow,
the hissing lantern silenced—
in darkness, beneath wool blankets,
as the cold worked
against the dampened woodstove,
I touched the stock of my shotgun,
pulled my knit cap tightly upon my head,
settled in,
and, suspended there,
raptly absorbed by the absolute stillness,
glad in the closeness of mortal truth,
I deeply breathed a fresh good
breath of God's Universe
and shattered the immense quiet
with a roar of laughter!

Yes, I relished the grit and challenge, the ridiculous liberation of those reckless times in the realm of raw blessing and mortal risk. There are Gods who live where only holy hermits and madmen would dare to dwell. You know, damn-fool poets and the like. And don't ever confuse the Gods of the natural world with your Fairy Godmother. The undiluted spiritual essence of a winter's night miles from the nearest human is a wonder to know but never to trifle with. God's love is an opportunity, not a promise. Sometimes it would get so dark up there—and I'm not talking about long nights of the cold solstice, or unrelenting cloaks of cloud and swirling snow—sometimes just being a poet dwelling in the unguarded recesses of his own mind was so bereft of glimmers of safety that I would just give it up and make the sixty-mile run down the switchbacks and stream-course highways into town and camp out on the living room couch of my best friend and often wife Carol.

You see, this matter of living a life of art is dangerous.

Those times up on the mountain with my solar-panel electric system, my little Toshiba laptop computer, a single 12V light bulb and all the expanse and explosion of Cosmic reality a-swirl about me, I was living the metaphor that is the title of this work. I was having an adventure in an actual high wind—that's for sure. But a poem's power is not in the accuracy of its depiction of reality. Power comes with leaps of poetic language arcing words into magical never-realms of mutual experience. I lived the metaphor of wind and danger, but my poetry is of an open encounter with the creative might of God-sized Art. It was physically harrowing to

confront gale-rushing tempests and extremes of cold and isolation in the wilds, but these poems do not tell of wind and threat, they tell of the sense of peril that is universal to all who open minds and hearts to the fullness of life.

Which brings us up to this spring day in 2013. I live in a real house, have rejoined my wife Carol in our lifelong journey together, have the love and belief of our daughter Kristin to lift and encourage my days and, yet, knowing what I do of the nature of Art, I am as awash in the deadly splendor of this singing Universe as ever I was in the rage and wonder of the high mountains.



Robert,
Hey, if
(with the
then aren't

playing the fool out on the edge of Ever.
we're not laughing
Gods, or at ourselves)
we just wasting our time here?

A New Poem for an Old Book

I should begin this new edition of my book of "Poetic Observations and Other Lore" with a new poem, don't you think?

NOTE: You can view me reading this poem and others on Youtube.com. In the search box at the top of the screen, type *R444ism*. Click on *Robert Nichols*, find the poem from the list of my works, hit the button, sit back and enjoy.

Poetry and a Good Song Sung

Song and metaphor drive this good day.
Nothing so real that can't be
better known, better expressed—
in-your-gut,
soul-spun
deeply, sweetly
heart-told—
by words poetic:
shouted,
sung,
laughed like an ocean,
wept like autumn drizzle,
whispered like promised love,
read like lines of a face (raging or about to smile),
like lips wanting kiss,
spleen vying revenge,
child giggles teasing tickle—
 lines of a soul-spoken moment,
 eternal and ever fleeting.

Leaps of imagination
and startling quirks of irony. Yes!
Cleanly choreographed
rhymes and meters. Yes!
Artful streams of consciousness—
like spilling rivers,
coursing mind journeys
to exotically mundane
ports of
home sweet love,
frightful honesty,
desperate joy.

Ever been there?

No place for the weak of heart, you know.
Flowers do not decorate,
they explode holy beauty.
And songs do not sedate,
they lightning-bolt, jig-dance
the wonder-stunned mind;
they sorrow-course the blood

with merciless swells of emotion.
And the heart is not flesh.
 The heart is the poetic core
 of human essence.

It is such a story,
this poem of life.
Recited in roared and whispered rush
of truth
known only by honest passion,
rapt attention,
and
(care-be-damned),
a risk-frenzied willingness
to feel full force
the hilarity, the curse of its blessings,
real and magical,
to the very bone of being.

It is a poem,
purely, simply
a poem we live, we sing,
we marvel to know.

Like “Little Bo Peep who lost her sheep,”
and love like “a summer’s day”
and raging the “rage against the dying of the light”
and a Raven speaking doom.

And a grocery list where “deli meats”
rhymes with “sweet candy treats.”
And when the meter of raindrops
on roof tops
says it all,
every never word of it.

And the song:
just take the beat of your heart
and, for melody,
the secrets of a woodland path,
and all the metaphoric mystery
of the stretching Universe drawing
upon the notice of your
simple mortal wonder,

and sing this poem of life with me.
Oh, dear friend,
let us sing it together.

(Spring, 2013)



Albert Dreher, 1990

Introduction

Think of it as a High Wind.

A Force that blows across the Universe scattering the night-burning stars.

A Force of such beauty and power that no mortal being can possibly bear to stand fully before it without being torn forever from this Earth.

Think of this High Wind as being the creative energy of the Cosmos.

It is the omnipotent Source of all the enlightenment of the human spirit and, just as it has scattered the stars, it, too, has scattered the souls of a million poets into the infinite chill of the Void—a million poets and artists and musicians and all manner of others who have attempted to know its Power, its Beauty, and have recklessly dared to brave too much of its might.

(And you thought Dylan Thomas drank himself to death.)

The High Wind is the raw energy of a reality far more vast than our frail flesh can fully experience.

It is the breath of a Truth that dwarfs the petty, man-gods to whom we cast our crude and desperate prayers.

It is the deadly allure of Art.

Hunker down in the leeward calm of comfort's shelter and you will only faintly hear its howling call.

Stand slightly aloft of such complacent safety and, for a while, know with me the precarious world of the poet's earthly grasp and celestial dare.

Join me in these Adventures in the High Wind.

Here's to You

I am a poet—an honest speaker of a human vision.

I am not a romance-book man. I have lived the trash and turmoil of soap operas—we all have. I will not be a teller of such shallow-hearted foolishness and superficial eroticism.

I am not a humor-book man. In New York, where accountants and lawyers and other merchants determine what is the literary culture of an entire nation of readers, there are only inside jokes, and I shall always be an outside person.

I am not a holy-book man. My God is the wonder-vicious Creative Wind that would blow me from the face of existence were it not for careful anchoring upon the earth by the desperate embrace of love. My God is hardly the stuff of moral dilemma and personal damnation.

I am not a pornographer-man for I have loved women, and I yet love a woman.

I am no fact-man. For me there is little fascination to the grounding distraction of certainty.

By the commercial and material measure of the practical world in which I live, I am not a successful writer.

Rather, I am a poet who will tell his stories and times to any who will listen.

Through these poems, written sketches, and stories—real and imagined, I have written of places I have traveled, people I have encountered, and energies I have sensed emanating from the spirit of existence. They are not ramblings of fondled fantasies selfishly reconstructed from the complexity and ruin of my days, nor are they furtive expressions of my singular gleaning of bitterness. These words were not written for myself.

I once wrote: Artists do not keep secrets; artist tell them.

Poets do not create poetry when they write only for themselves.

I have written these words for you, World.

You, people,

You, Person.

And for \$3.99 and whatever time you can spare them, they are yours.

Patience

He waits with his senses wide open—
soul spread to the fickle, chilled day.
(Snow flurries pass the window
drifting down from the sky, white-gray.)

And he knows no certain coming
of the warmth and life it should bring,
yet he waits with his fortieth March
for the birth of his fortieth spring.

Words from the Last Condominium

I had such a beautiful poem to write—
one full of rich vibration and flowing truth,
a touch of dread,
a subtle lift of hope.
But I made the mistake of opening
the drapes and looking out beyond
the railing of my third-story balcony
at the ruined world spread before me—
a smoldering, tangled horror
engulfed by a pall of black smoke,
and the poem,
in embarrassment,
slipped away to silence.

Writing poems was like waiting
for the phone to ring,
so, I closed the drapes
and, curling up beneath a tattered quilt
upon the last couch,
I shut my burning eyes
and laughed the muttered laugh of a madman
until I slept;

And then the phone rang.

I answered it.
“I thought everyone was dead,” I said.
“Not quite,” came the answer.
“Would you like to hear a poem?” I asked.

The Gathering

I have known a flat and empty time
when seldom were there windsongs or rain rhythms,
a time of chill without the lucid touch of winter's cold,
a time of sex without the giddy shiver of love,
a place of shelter without the ember-glowing heat
of my own soul:

A cold time
in which the passing of days
was only the passing of moments,
only the passing of life.

But, also,

I have known the memory-touched voice
of tree-gusted autumn,
the wet-tapped telling of spring storms
playing musically upon the pale green
infancy of April leaves.

I have known the sounds and sensations
of laughing mornings with sunrise-glow
upon sweat-creased sheets
singing naked secrets blessed by the caress
of love's hazy dawning eyes.

I have known the sanctuary of belief
against the inquisition of self-doubt.

I have known the beating of a heart
filled with the joyous, soul-deep breath
of my own life.

So now,

as the dance and doldrums of my times
envelop successive days with their separate
and sometime gentle, stifling, scintillating array
(knowing only what the raging storms know
of the winds that glide them wildly across
the reach of the sky),

I live the cycles of my times
with patience born of perception
of the spring-breath warmth

of mountain-drafted winter winds melting
the stolid face of January
with hints of May;
born of recollection of nights of slashing,
fervent-oathed fury
relenting to the tear-cleared eyes
of a new day's forgiveness;
born with the truth of the ever-mysterious wonder
of each fulfillment of today
despoiling the doom of yesterday's prophets.
A patience
heeding the respiratory pace
of seasons breathing upon sacred seasons,
paced by the drum of the human heart predominant
in the symphony of existence,
of patience measuring the steady might
of the rhythms of years
over the frenzied arrhythmia
of the gifts and the terrors of moments.

And the empty time,
flat and chilled,
will haunt again, in seeping persistence,
the soul-scattered, desperate abandonment
of bleak and artless days;
but, also again—
with song of cloud-drawn season sung resonantly
through the once muted fibers of my being—
will the full-felt times of
variegated fascination make rich
the epoch of my passage.

Each life in spiraling cycles
collects
all the moods and passions,
all the beauty and boredom,
love and vacancy;
all matters caressed and brutally collided—
all the dust-settled, dreary days,
all the wild and child-free flying days,
all the subtle, silent days.
And each life, a mosaic of all moments,
each life is a gathering.

When Van Gogh Has Taught Me How to See

When Van Gogh has taught me how to see,
to speak the shades, shadows, textures,
and tints of flesh and far flung stars;
when Beethoven has taught me how to hear,
to chorus the vibrant airs of the human spirit,
the bombastic heights of human triumph and fragile rage,
the melodious themes of the singing soul;
when life's pulsing blood-truth has taught me
its touching energies, its love-secret caresses,
its bludgeon-scarred survival,
its death and its birth;
then, perhaps, I will begin to know words
for the wonders of my times
and will write the colors of this autumn—
haunting with deepening memory
the aura of these chilling days:
these desperate, holy moments of my own heart.