

Paul Shepard: *Thinking Animal & Tender Omnivore*

On a dry autumn evening on the forty-ninth day after Paul died, I walked out of our cabin into a sea of smoke settling into the Bondurant Basin from a fire on Grey's River. I plucked dried sprigs of sage as I made my way to the top of Clark Butte where, on a sandstone outcrop in the lee of a pine, defying the mandate of the forest service, I built a tiny fire that I fed twig by twig until the sun had set and the stars began to show. As the smoke spiraled into the haze, I thought of Paul rising with it freeing himself from earthly constraints, dispersing into and joining the forces of the Earth. I felt lighter as I descended Clark Butte that evening.

The simple ceremony, providing me a passage into a more accepting and harmonious place, was suggested by Paul's good friend, Carl Hertel, a colleague with whom he had taught in the Environmental Studies Program at Pitzer College. Carl, now living in New Mexico, had stayed in touch with me during the days after Paul died, a time that was for me very grey, bordering on black. Alone in our cabin in Wyoming, I revolted against the idea that Paul was gone. How could anyone so filled with life vanish into thin air? And, if he persisted, what was that form and what was he doing? Where in this world, or for that matter any other, was he? And what would I do without him? The smokey ritual moved me from my literal insistence for some sort of explanation of death to more acceptance of its uncompromising ambiguity. It is propitious that at this point in my grieving, when I find memories of our life together consoling, that Casey Walker has generously asked me to write a little about Paul and our life together. I am pleased to do so and am also extremely grateful to Casey for this issue of *Wild Duck Review* which pays homage to Paul and his work.

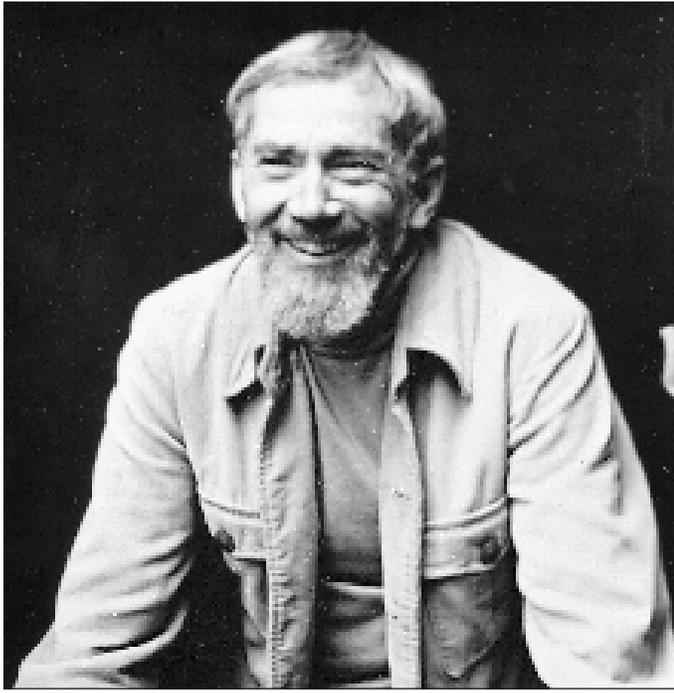
I first began reading Paul Shepard's books and using them in my environmental studies courses at the University of Utah in 1978 when I ordered from him a copy of *The Tender Carnivore and The Sacred Game* that was then out of print. He mailed me the book and included a copy of *Thinking Animals* that had just been published. I sent him a thank you and a check for the books and that was the extent of our communication until 1985 when I received a note from him saying that he would be flying through Salt Lake City on his way to teach a seminar at the Teton Science School near Jackson, Wyoming and wondered if I could meet him for lunch during his lay-over. At that time *Nature and Madness* was required reading in my graduate class where I emphasized the importance of nature in the early years of child development. I had my secretary call him and ask if he could arrange to fly in a day



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early and meet with my graduate students. He agreed to do so, and on February 13, 1985, I found myself standing at the arrival gate watching people stream out of a plane just in from California. Assured that I would recognize him from a composite version I had framed in my mind from dust jacket pictures, I was unprepared when a tall, slender man with graying beard and hair, wearing a weathered leather jacket and clutching a brief case and small brown suitcase, went striding past me at break-neck speed. I hurried to catch up and asked tentatively, "Paul???" He turned, looked at me (I might add "with eyes bluer than robins' eggs"), and answered, "Flo, there you are!"





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I rushed him off to the university where students were waiting and where for three hours he held us in awe. He began his lecture straightaway, without wasting time on disclaimers or niceties. Expecting that we had come to hear what he had to say, he delivered a lecture that was brilliantly crafted and executed referring only occasionally to a short list of topics he had written on a small yellow pad. His delivery was eloquent and his voice appealing. At the end of the lecture, he received each question with complete attention, extending and bringing added depth to the topic. A good listener with an uncanny memory, he followed complicated questions with astounding skill and insight. With a firm idea of who he was and what he believed, he met criticism with humility, without defense, but with firm commitment to his ideas. I listened transfixed as I would many times in the next years during one of his lectures. And, as in the years to follow, my attention wandered from time to time from his words to his physical being, the beard line, his lean, firm chest revealed by a tight turtle neck, the way he threaded his long slender fingers through his hair as he struggled for exactly the right phrase.

My first portrayal is of Paul as a teacher for that is how he saw himself and is, I believe, how he would want to be remembered. It took me sometime to understand his deep commitment to pedagogy. Whether before an audience or class or with friends and family, he relished challenging questions. I was constantly astounded at the depth of his knowledge, which he always seemed pleased to share. I was also amazed, as well as dismayed, by his generosity of spirit to respond as he did to queries which came in a steady stream of letters as well as in lengthy telephone conversations with complete strangers who were working on some project and wanted to 'pick his brain.' And much less

tolerant than he, I was put off when visitors to our home brought their notebooks and pens to the dinner table. None of this disturbed him; in fact, it was an accepted mode of interaction. He valued good questions and interest in his work. Visits became seminars and he gave each his complete devotion and concentration. After company left, however, Paul, completely spent, would often collapse for a day or two of recuperation before he could get back to his own work. It was obvious that he had given his all.

After his death many of his friends paid tribute to the profound way, as mentor and teacher, he had influenced their lives. Calvin Martin, a professor at Rutgers and author of *Keepers of the Game* wrote: "Paul deeply influenced me. . .the most important thing I can say is that [his books] gave the rest of us courage—courage to say what we are saying in our own books, our lectures, our conversations. Our thoughts. Paul was a leader for many people, I think. A pioneer in the best, healing sense of the word. I consider him one of the leading nature philosophers of all time, along with Thoreau, Muir, Leopold, and Eisley."

On visits, his children always came with natural history questions, mostly to do with the identification or behavior of animals that they had observed. These queries were an opening to conversations with their father and reminiscences that followed about a past intertwined with kept animals, travels, and misadventures that had been a part of their childhood. And from there the conversations would ultimately come around to genealogy, one of Paul's particular interests; he had traced his ancestors back to the Eleventh Century. As his daughter Margaret wrote in a tribute to him: "Dad was the ultimate teacher. He treated us not like children, but like students. We could ask him anything. And he would explain things, and we would listen to. . .and appreciate him, because in his explaining the world he was sharing himself and touching our hearts and opening our eyes."

During his last months I watched and listened as he, still much in a teaching mode, interacted with his family. He spent as much time as his strength would permit in our study going over his collected family photos and explaining genealogical materials to his children, Kent Shepard, Margaret Winn, and Jane Shepard, and to his nephew Gray Shepard, a shared activity that opened the way for periods of closeness between them. My professor daughter, Lisi Krall, helped him organize his archives as he explained to her the convoluted history of his life as teacher and author. And, with my doctor daughter, Kathryn Morton, who carefully monitored his condition from diagnosis to death, he discussed the implications of each development and possible treatment in order to make informed decisions at each step. These times with the dying patriarch, passing his knowledge and wisdom and example on to his children, are a lasting testament to them of his will to live and to teach.

A poignant portrayal of Paul came to me by way of Carl in New Mexico at about the time I was conducting my smokey ritual on Clark Butte. In medi-



tation, he visualized Paul—luminous, dressed in radiant, colorful robes—at the center of some primordial sea that swirled around him teeming with creatures of all sorts, real and fantastic. Dragons. Paul was fishing serenely, casting out a line and reeling it in and casting it out again.

This image seemed to me a perfect metaphor for Paul's approach to the world, for he was a fisher. He spent his life fishing for ideas, but, more so for the right questions. He was not a dedicated catch-and-release type. Some were not 'keepers' and he soon cast them back. But others, the big ones, he kept and pondered carefully and repeatedly throughout his lifetime: We evolved in synchrony with other life forms and locked in our genes in our inherited wildness is all that is needed to make us at home on this Earth. We should be dedicated to the rearing of children in ecological harmony with nature. Animals are the primary "Others," key players in our ontogeny, triggering our cognitive development and identity.

The image of Paul fishing is not merely a metaphor for his world view. In the real world he loved to fish. I often wondered if he hadn't taken up with me as much for the possibility of fishing in my territory as being with me. By way of explanation, I return briefly to our first meeting. The morning after his lecture in Salt Lake City, I went to the bed and breakfast where he stayed the night to pick up another guest lecturer who was scheduled that day. I knocked at Paul's door and found him meticulously sorting and rearranging the contents of that little brown suitcase in preparation for his next journey. I delivered his honorarium, thanked him for the visit, explained that a graduate student would take him to meet his plane, and said good-by, never expecting to see him again. But much to my surprise and pleasure, we did meet again in early June in Bondurant, Wyoming. Accompanied by my teenage grandson, Jason, who also loved to fish, I had gone to my sister's cabin to recover from a hectic quarter as department chair. I was sunning on the deck one morning when Paul drove up in a battered blue Honda and a cloud of dust.

Following his lecture at the Teton Science School he had left for three months of lectures in India and Australia and, upon returning, had tracked me down by calling my home and talking to my granddaughter, Meredith. I sent Jason fishing with John, my nephew, who was also staying at the

cabin, and spent the day hiking and talking to Paul. When we returned in the evening, John had left some cooked trout for us. Not wanting to impress Paul with my cooking, I suggested we eat the leftover cut-throats for supper. Afterward, since he didn't seem to be leaving, I invited him to sleep in the loft with Jason.

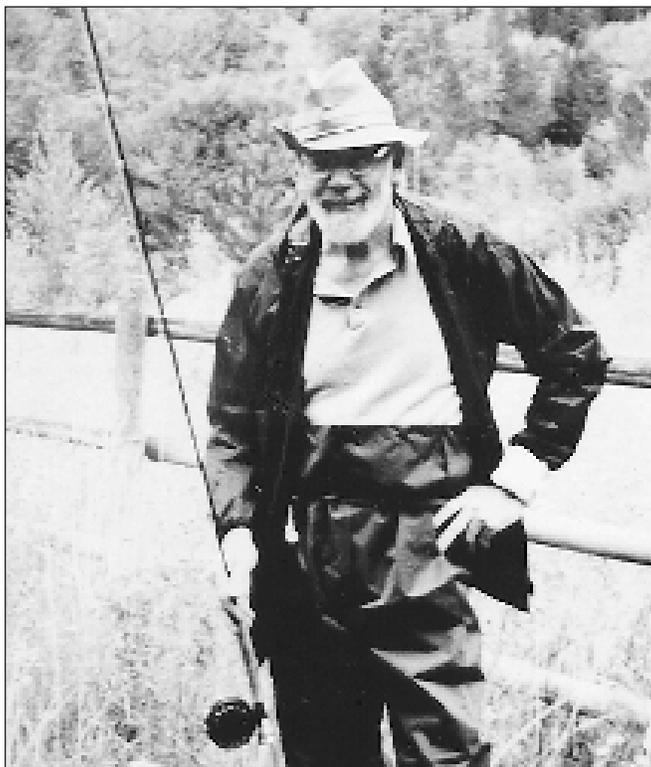
We spent the next day hiking and talking, at home with each other and intrigued with the details of our lives. On the way back to the cabin he stopped by a gas station to call Mardy Murie, arranged to have dinner with her that evening, and invited me along, but I declined in order to spend the evening with Jason. (I later learned that, when passing through the home range of persons who expressed interested in his work or whose work he admired, Paul made a special effort to drop by to see them; in fact, that

was why he had first contacted me.) I went to bed early that night, but heard him come in and climb the stairs quietly to the loft. The next morning after breakfast, he was on his way to his place in Montana where his daughter and family were living. On leaving he held me by the shoulders, kissed me firmly, and said, "I'll be in touch."

That first Bondurant fish and the prospects it brought for enjoyable hours on the streams undoubtedly influenced his decision to return to Bondurant. Bondurant was home territory for me since I had ranched not far from there in the past. Together we bought land and built a cabin. Although he had miles of unposted streams at his disposal, he resented "no trespassing" signs. Lisi recalls how she

encountered him one day at the cabin dressed in paramilitary camouflage clothes preparing to sneak onto the neighbor's posted land to fish for the big ones lurking in the deep holes.

His son, Kent, built a small 'John boat' to Paul's precise specifications and together they fished the Green and New Fork Rivers each year. I was doubtful that I could navigate the river as Kent did, but Paul insisted there was nothing to it. There was a great deal to it, especially on fast curves overhung with willows, and I fell short of giving him the time to fish the good holes. But he made do with his inept boatperson and concentrated with all his power when an opportunity was at hand. We spent some golden autumn days floating the rivers with geese and sandhill cranes sounding overhead and huge moose staring at us from shore.



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Paul was also a hunter, in the metaphorical sense, as well as in the real world. Although he admitted to the wide misuse of hunting, he saw the complex hunting game as a natural extension of human curiosity, self-reliance, and survival, a perspective of the world we acquired on the savannahs in our pre-history. Hunting, in his view, was an important ritual that initiated youth into adulthood and clarified the meaning of death, the "sacred game" of eating and being eaten.

Paul hunted throughout his life, later more with binoculars than with guns. He grew up on the Missouri State Experimental Fruit Farm, referred to as the Fruit Station, that his father directed. It was beautifully situated on a high rise that overlooked the Missouri landscape near the small town of Mountain Grove. As a youth he hunted and fished with his father and followed Ben, the son of an employee at the farm, slightly older than himself and a skilled hunter and trapper. Ben played a very influential role in Paul's development as they ran trap lines and hunted small game through the oak-hickory woods.

In his research, Paul had identified important "design features" of hunting, the skills and strategies that hunters use. Reading them recently, I was struck by how well they described the method he used in becoming aware of and approaching his research and writing projects as well as life's problems. To his "progressive strategies" I have added in parenthesis the elements I observed him following in his research: selecting locality and time (setting limits); scanning, random search (letting intuition lead); distance sensing (seeing implications); temporal sensing in the sign world of tracks, scent, etc. (following leads, sources); selecting prey (identifying topics); using terrain for stalking, ambushing, intercepting (using various fields, interdisciplinary research); cooperative pursuit (collaboration with others, use of resources); forethought, planning strategies (goal-linked plan); observational learning (travel, museums, galleries); the kill (a book as closure); autopsy (lectures, opening up the subject to others).

Paul was a voracious and selective reader, hunting down references and following the meandering trails of research. He regularly reviewed current literature, xeroxed all pertinent articles, and checked out armfuls of books. Most books he went through in a few hours, scanning and reading only the parts that were relevant. I had the impression that there was little he hadn't seen in print before. But when he did encounter a book that contained new and pertinent material, he spent days taking meticulous notes which he then condensed into "notes on notes." When he began a new project, he would spend time reviewing previous research that pertained to his ongoing project. Sorting and resorting what he knew was a means of framing his new direction for research. Next he made a list of the topics he intended covering in the new book or essay. When he began *The Others* he taped to the study door a list of over 100 topics he intended exploring in the book.

He wasn't satisfied with library research alone. His venatic tendencies carried him to many parts of the world. Most of his travel, which was extensive, was planned

around geographical or archaeological sites that might contain information to illuminate his topic of concern. He visited the caves in France when he was writing *The Tender Carnivore and The Sacred Game*. Together we searched Hindu Temples and ritual sites in India for animal images in preparation for *The Others* and original sites of Artemis temples in Greece as he extended his research on the mythology of bears. His method of "tracking" in museums was similar to his library research. He selected exhibits carefully and then walked through each scanning objects and studying their iconography. He would stand in absolute concentration before an object of interest, plumbing its meaning, and, where permitted, taking a picture. This was the hunter's sign world that inspired his imagination and opened possibilities. During these travels he wrote regularly in a small notebook, not journal notes of his journey, but thoughts associated with his current writing projects that were stimulated by sites or iconography.

Hunting and the attention to detail it requires, led Paul to a deep love of all nature, but his greatest passion was for animals. His fascination with animals in childhood guided him through a series of passages. At seven or eight he was collecting butterflies and birds' eggs whose sensual pleasures of color and texture followed him for his lifetime. At one point, Rudolph Bennitt, a zoologist from the University of Missouri, visiting the Fruit Station, looked at Paul's collection and showed him how he had misclassified some of the eggs, a display of knowledge that Paul never forgot.

At the age of sixteen, he was inspired by a bird of prey exhibit conducted by Bob Hecht at the Missouri State Fair. He immediately immersed himself in falconry becoming proficient with Cooper's hawks and a red-tailed hawk named Napoleon. After his service in the army during World War II, he enrolled at the University of Missouri and attended Cornell University summer courses in ornithology to improve his proficiency in bird identification. He undertook three years of independent study under Professor

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Bennitt, who became one of Paul's primary mentors. In the process of this extended study, Paul wrote a book-length manuscript on the eyes of animals. His life-long friendship with Daniel McKinley, with whom he wrote *The Subversive Science*, grew from birding forays when they were students of Bennitt.

Partly due to this good grounding, Paul was an excellent naturalist and impressive 'birder.' Although he had poor eyesight, he had an uncanny ability to spot birds, mostly by sound but also by behavior and habitat. When we drove through the countryside, he would roll down the car window a crack so that he could hear the birdsong, and he would intersperse our conversation with the names of the birds whose calls filtered through the window. In our years in Wyoming, we would often walk through the sagebrush on the forest land adjoining our property, identifying nesting birds. Some were new to him. He'd return to the cabin, play his tapes of western bird calls, and verify the identification. Thanks to his tutoring, I am now much more aware of animal sounds as well as the entire visual field.

As a young professor at Knox College, he kept and studied a colony of crows. His essay, "A Letter From an Old Crow," a delightful piece republished recently in *Traces of an Omnivore*, a collection of essays, shows the extent to which he respected and understood the behavior of these creatures. In his archives I found a letter from the chair of his department at Smith College, setting out precise rules needed to be followed by a professor who insisted on keeping crows in his office.

But of all animals, the bear held the most fascination and meaning for him. In the *Sacred Paw* he had written, "From time older than memory, the bear has been a special being." Close to the "source of life" it represents "the blackness and darkness of *prima materia* that must be transmuted on the path to enlightenment." The summer of our first year, much to his chagrin, I carried through with my plans to visit the Alaskan Arctic on a trip I had planned with a professional hunter and friend, Walt Prothero. *The Sacred Paw* was about to be published and he gave me a copy to take with me. It was my companion on the long twilight evenings as I dealt with my fear of bears and my new-found love. At dinner after his lecture that first day of our meeting, I told him about a dream I had a year or two before, a dream of walking on the tundra with a man who turned into a bear. Later he confessed that he knew at the time that he was the bear in my dreams. And on that first Arctic trip the bear in my dream became very closely associated with Paul.

A few years later, I convinced Paul to join Walt, his partner Cheri Flori, and me on a trip to the Alaska Arctic. I wanted him to experience the expansive wildness of the region and the proximity of bears. One snowy morning on the Sheenjek River just before dawn, I heard the ptarmigans calling near our cozy tent. I woke Paul gently with



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the good news that food was near at hand. Not taken to profanity (I did the cussing in the family), his only answer was "sh--!!" He dressed quickly, grabbed his gun, stumbled out of the tent—and missed every shot. Later he redeemed himself by bagging a couple of ducks which he retrieved by wading bare-bottomed into an icy pond, a very noble deed that didn't go unrewarded. That evening we enjoyed a delicious meal of wild rice and duck served with a glaze made from tang and cranberries we had gathered.

Paul was delighted when anyone invited him along on back-pack or hunting trips and found great pleasure in planning for such ventures. Gary Lease, a professor in the History of Consciousness Program at Santa Cruz and co-editor of *Reinventing Nature*, visited us one fall in Wyoming. Of his time with Paul, Gary wrote: "Though I knew him personally only briefly, I count that time as a shining moment of humanity's best: he was, to borrow the lingo of my long-ago existentialist youth, genuine to a fault: what you saw is what you got. His constant flow of insightful, and inciteful!, perceptions about who we are and where we are remains beyond his death an inspiration to others. For me, though, it was his pure lust for living that I found so uplifting, and the fact that he shared with me an afternoon hunting the slopes of his beloved Wyoming hills is a memory I treasure dearly."

Paul's "lust for living" coupled with a wry sense of humor were endearing traits that brought joy to my heart and laughter into our days as he wove a rich tapestry of work and play. Life was a game and he played it well. As his friend, the poet Peter Dufault said in a letter to me after Paul's death, "You must feel as if a door had shut in your face. The same door swings too on me, only it can't quite shut when one's foot is in it. So I think, rather, of all the fun in Paul, the daring, the endless projects, and how he managed to die young—one of 'those whom the gods love.'"

Paul's plans for the future, a complicated maze of activities, satisfied his urge to explore new territory, reunite with



family and acquaintances, and keep moving. Often, around the dinner table with his children or friends, I listened to stories told of adventures and misadventures on backpacks, journeys, or yachting trips. Referring to the marvelous vacations he planned with his children each summer, his daughter, Jane, wrote in a fathers' day letter, "We had adventures together. And that's not something typical fathers and daughters often say. You showed me the world, and took me to places all through my childhood, into adulthood, that gave me scope and a realization of the earth and different cultures that nothing but adventure can bring."

Having lived primarily within my bioregion, I at first found this constant activity disorienting, as if I had been dropped into a Breughel painting and was asked to make sense of it all. Paul was not the kind, at least in my experience of him, to bask long on a veranda sipping cool drinks. In London in the summer and fall of 1986, a kind of relational shake-down cruise for us, I was first introduced to this sense of adventure. Most week-days we spent in the British Museum Reading Room or examining exquisite illuminated manuscripts for images that depicted humans in conjunction with animals or landscapes. But we also took weekend trips into the countryside or weeklong sojourns to Europe on various research forays. I learned to keep that weathered leather jacket and small brown suitcase in sight, as well as to pack lightly, as I scurried with him from place to place.

On our return to the United States at Christmas, he suggested a sidetrip to Kenya. Having spent little time abroad and away from my family, I was more anxious to get home than to go to Africa, and, being a frugal sort, was also concerned with how much it would cost. He found a very economical tour: we were transported in an old dump truck equipped with a tattered canvas canopy for shade and old airplane seats. We slept out in tents and were served our meals from huge black kettles cooked over an open fire by three native Kenyans. Each night, in a tent reeking with the citronella coil he burned to deter mosquitoes, we slept lightly to the calls of lions and elephants, and, along the headwaters of the Nile, to hippos heaving great sighs. From the advantage of the open-air vehicle, often through clouds of dust, we positively identified well over a hundred birds. Back in Nairobi, Paul treated me to several days at the idyllic Norfolk Hotel and then took me by car to one of those mountain lodges where animals are baited and viewed in the middle of the night, proving to me that he was not adverse to a little luxurious living—for a day or two. It was a beautiful and memorable side trip and convinced me to follow him willingly on his dance-like jour-

neys, partly choreographed and partly improvised—not, however, without the option of reviewing and revising travel plans and adding my pragmatic touch to avoid possible catastrophes.

At home, when we alternated teaching quarters in Claremont or Salt Lake City, or in Wyoming for the summers, Paul was a hard worker. On non-teaching quarters or summers, he was at his desk early each morning with a cup of coffee, writing or reading and taking notes.

After a short break for breakfast he returned to his current work until mid-afternoon when he ate lunch and then rested with a brief nap or light reading: Marquez, Eco, Borges, Paz, books sent to him and written by friends, *The New York Times*, the *New Yorker*. He glanced hastily through journals devoted to environmental issues, but read carefully the issues of *Science* or *Nature* given to him by Kathryn. In late afternoon he would answer correspondence that continually collected in one grand stack or work in his shop on small projects, such as sanding and painting his boat or building and installing bird houses. In the summers when conditions were favorable, he abandoned his work for a day or afternoon of fishing. And during winter evenings in the city,



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he watched television, old movies, mysteries, or professional ball games. His energy had decreased, he said, from younger days, when he could work into the night and when he ran, not walked, everywhere.

Research for a new book was like an archaeological dig, a grand excavation, that uncovered components bit by bit, as we did while in London and Europe. At home he began writing surrounded by stacks of organized notes, a precis of the book, and a list of topics he had developed and refined to chapters and sub-sections. This beginning seemed very rational and cerebral to me, the book having undergone a long evolution in his mind before he sat down at the desk. The creative process emerged as he began writing. Each sentence was carefully crafted. Before his computer, completely absorbed, he whispered sentences or phrases to himself, listening to the sound of his words, tasting them on his tongue, and then, when they sounded just right to him, typing at break-neck speed.

His writing was a complex matrix of interrelated concepts. Because of the necessity of limiting the length of manuscripts, he sometimes only mentioned a topic in passing, leaving the interpretation to the reader. But my impression was that nothing he came up with in his writing was "inadvertent." Everything he put on paper had been thought through and placed there for a purpose, even if it wasn't elaborated in detail.

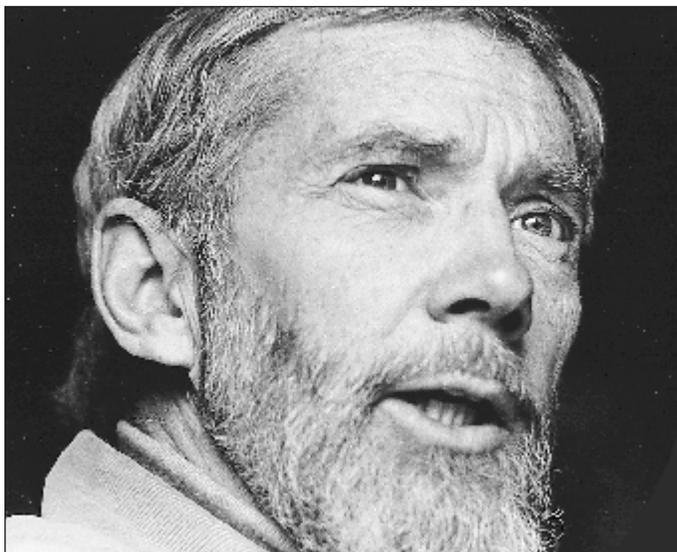


Although, as Peter Dufault had observed, he may have been one “loved by the gods,” Paul, like all of us, had his failing. Raised by a mother and father who recognized his talents and intellect, he was encouraged and supported unconditionally to follow his passions. As a result he grew up self-assured and with a spirit of adventure and creative energy, although somewhat lacking in the ability to take the perspective of others or to cope with interpersonal strife –not so unlike other artists and authors I have met. For the most part he was able to leave mistakes behind and forge ahead with new projects although he did carry the guilt of his two previous failed marriages and the wound of a betrayed friendship with him to the end.

We met when we were older and knew a good thing when we saw it. It was fortuitous that we had come together when and how we had and had bonded so completely from the start. Winning or losing were not as important to us as just being together. But in the beginning we did have a bit of adjusting to do. He said that I reminded him of Miss Marple, the sleuth in the Agatha Christie murder mystery series; he couldn’t get by with a thing. Although a bit self-possessed, Paul was a wonderful companion, a “good man,” as Mardy Murie once described him to me—kind, gentle, gracious, generous, honest, and always appreciative and thankful for kindnesses bestowed upon him. His wit, often slightly off center, apprised me of his differing interpretations of our reality and, fortunately, often set me to laughing, or at least smiling, at the back-handed way they brought me the clear view of his complex being.

As an example of this, when he was approaching his end, I also was approaching the end of my care-giving capacity. The stress of maintaining his medical regimen, the constant press of correspondence, the support of his writing, and the cooking needed to keep him well nourished and to accommodate the constant influx of family and friends who came to visit him in his last days weighed heavily on me. I should not have complained, but I did (to others), and

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sometimes I felt resentful—and worried that I wouldn’t survive his illness. One day as I sat with him in our bedroom upstairs, resting briefly before I ran downstairs on yet another errand, all these emotions must have registered on my face. I could feel him staring at me and when I looked up he caught my gaze with his clear blue eyes and said, “Flossy, this is no time to get hard-nosed about all of this.” I knew exactly what he meant: He had a short time to live and depended on me for what life he had left. Unless exhaustion killed, I had some of my life before me. I thought carefully about what he said, walked over to him, gave him a kiss, and said, “You’re right, Buddy.” That prod was enough to get me through the final weeks of his life in the proper spirit of giving. (It wasn’t until after we had each attended our class reunions that we realized that our endearing terms for each other, Buddy and Flossy, were nick-names our elementary classmates had chosen for us long before.)

One day as he was approaching the end, he said, “Do you know what I dislike most about dying?”

“No, what is it, Buddy?”

“The thought that you will be here having fun and I won’t be able to enjoy the good times with you.”

With or without him he expected that I would have fun. Life was a gift to be enjoyed to the fullest. And even after his diagnosis, he seemed to do so up to the very end when “Mother Death” stepped forward and he finally submitted to her. He felt no fear of death, only disappointment that he had to leave the Earth he so loved. Often in long periods of quiet meditation, he seemed to be observing with interest his own process of dying. Whenever I tiptoed into the room to check on him, he opened his eyes and smiled at me, giving me updates now and then on his changing perspective: “The skyline [seen from his window] is becoming more abstract.” “I was dreaming of my mother and father in Mountain Grove.” “I’m in a shadow world, Flossy.” I wanted very much to ask him what it was like, what he was seeing, how he felt, but knew that death was a private world reserved for those dying. In the end I only asked if there was something he needed or anything I could do. He always replied that there was nothing in the world he needed or wanted and that he felt completely at peace. An then he would close his eyes and return to that welcoming place.

During our times together Paul rarely spoke of death; he preferred to concentrate on living. In his books he wrote of the importance of death as a necessary part of life and was especially taken with animals, such as the bear, as spiritual messengers. He approached all natural phenomena with a deeply pantheistic reverence. His acceptance of death left us with a sense of his profound spirituality.

As I have idealized and idolized Paul Shepard, so have others. His prose—dark, deep, and spiritual—pierced our unconscious, released the best in us, and made us think in ways we didn’t know possible. Having coined the phrase, “You don’t know who you are until you know where you are,” Paul gave us the impression he was



very well acquainted with his being as well as his place. Although, as Gary Lease said, "What you saw is what you got." What you got may not have always been what Paul was, but what others saw in him or wanted him to be, projections of their own failures or desires.

Expecting too much from him, his readers were often disappointed and ended criticizing him for being insufficiently literary, philosophically original, socially aware, or politically correct. He did not fit the mold of others' expectations and was impossible to categorize except, perhaps, as the human ecologist he considered himself to be.

An environmental "whistle blower" as a young adult, he refused as he matured to become embroiled in ideological or activist battles. When he was told by Arne Naess on our visit to Norway that he was disappointed that Paul had abandoned the Deep Ecology Movement, Paul said nothing, but later confided in me that he was confused by the statement. He was sympathetic to the tenants of its followers but avoided getting embroiled in the "deep and shallow" debate. He didn't consider this abandonment.

More recently, seen as an ecopsychologist by some, he explained in a letter, "I have never been comfortable with what is said and done under the rubric of 'ecopsychology,' mostly because it seems to me to be insufficiently evolutionary. It has seriously neglected both the limits and the opportunities built into our extended human immaturity and its link to the wild landscape." Likewise he did not consider himself a nature writer and felt that nature writing, like landscape painting, both of which he had studied, worked to distance us rather than bring us closer to nature. And more recently, he was somewhat shocked when a writer defended him against allegations of being a misanthrope. He never considered himself a human hater; to the contrary, in the words of Morel, the hero of Romain Gary's *The Roots of Heaven* who became the protector of elephants, he felt that "It wasn't worth while to stand up for this or that separately, men or dogs—it was essential to attack the root of the problem, the protection of nature."

Paul refused to be placed in zoology or biology cubbyholes and disliked teaching traditional science courses. Fortunately his position at Pitzer College in environmental studies as an endowed chair of Natural Philosophy and Human Ecology allowed him to teach interdisciplinary courses, such as his "Confrontations with Nature" and "Animals and the Imagination," as well as seminars with theologian, John Cobb, Jr. First drawn to Paul's work by the ecological movement and its criticism of present society, John astutely typified Paul's contribution. He unequivocally identified Paul as "one of the truly great prophets of our time." In *The Company of Others*, John said, "Authentic prophesy ... critiques existing norms and brings new ideals into play ... In prophetic fashion, Shepard brings to bear on our society a perspective that challenges all its taken for granted values. He does so by recalling a past in which the evils of our society were absent or much less present. He knows we cannot return to that past; so he points us toward a future which recovers some aspects of that past, but in a radically new form. This new future would bring an end to

all that we have known as history." He had chosen to critique history, the course of the past that had bound us to ecological missteps and possible catastrophe. He pursued this confrontation throughout his lifetime with abiding commitment through his books and his teaching.

I have taken a somewhat circuitous course to explain what could have been said briefly in one simple statement: It was a great pleasure and privilege to share Paul's life for a decade and I hope to enrich what remains of my life and work with the wisdom of his words. He set a splendid model for hard, continuous dedication to his many projects sprinkled each day with a good mix of love and play—and fishing, when possible. When he left us with that long, final sigh, it was as if he had turned the concluding page of his last book and said, "Well, that's all there is this time around."

*Florence R. B. Shepard
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