



Joel Parrill

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For fifty-six years I have been looking at these old hands. I think of all that they have done. The bones are prominent, covered by a reptilian hide scarred by countless wounds. They have made thousands of things, both my own and those of others. They have played music and manipulated dangerous tools. They have guided brushes and pencils, strung beads and tied fishing lines, held beautiful rocks and babies.

In August of fifty one, my hands were soft and pink and tiny. They were cold in the late summer of Cripple Creek, Colorado. They were not the hands of a girl, for which my mother had hoped, but another set of boy hands. Because the birth was difficult, I was the last child of the family. I was the little brother, or, as my father called me, the little man.

Not only was I not a daughter and a difficult birth, but I was sickly and frail. The family was forced to relocate to a lower altitude where more oxygen was available. For several years, my hands learned the basics of shoe laces and buttons and zippers, formed snowballs, and explored all the dirty sticky states of childhood.

I took my hands to school and began their education. At first, my parents and teachers paid no attention to my hands, allowing me to use them as I wished. When I was in the second grade, the family moved to sunny Arizona and my hands became the focus of attention. While the school in Colorado Springs was sluggish and cold, the new school in Phoenix was progressive and warm. It was soon noticed that I favored my left hand. Although I didn't know it at the time, left hands were not popular.

In an effort to save me from a life of inconvenience, my parents and teachers began a campaign of punishing my left hand and rewarding my right hand. This process resulted in a deep confusion, manifesting itself in upside down and backward letters, and the stigma of the sinister hand.

As I was to learn later in Latin class, the left is the sinister hand while the right is the dexterous hand. The right is, obviously, the right hand to use. The left hand is what's left if something happens to the right hand. Eventually, my hands made peace and each held skill and dexterity, waiting to be useful.

My hands enjoyed a typical childhood and grew, managing to avoid any serious injury for many years. Then, on the brink of adolescence, I was a passenger in a car which was wrecked. I was not seriously hurt, but sustained many cuts and lacerations, a broken tooth, and the realization that I was mortal. While my hands healed and my dental work progressed, I decided to get to work becoming whatever I was going to become.

I grew up, making the usual cub scout projects, science fair projects, the usual wood shop projects, just like all the other kids. After nine years of school, I was average in all categories. I was happy to be average. I wasn't a great athlete, but was ok. I wasn't a great student, but wasn't stupid. I wasn't able to draw nice horses or dogs, but I did draw weird monsters. It was, after all, the days of monster movies and monster dragsters, and it was normal to like monsters.

Initially, I supposed I should like to become a mad scientist. I thought it would suit me to create monsters, or find some role in the monster industry. Then, there was space, space monsters, and all the possibilities of other worlds. My comic texts and paperback novels filled my imagination with all sorts of wonderful possibilities.

While I was average, my mother always insisted I was above average. The average of my grades was average. I did better in some things than others, like all kids, and so was average. However, most average kids get average grades in all subjects and achieve an average average. I, on the other hand, did very well, well, average, and below average, but never failed outright. From this data, my mother insisted I was above average but lazy.

Scottsdale public schools tested their students. They wanted to know how intelligent students were. They wanted to know which students were gifted, average, or dangerous. They gave tests every year, testing student's ability to read, comprehend, write, compute, and their psychology. The results of these tests were never revealed to me, but I always assumed I passed them.

The average phase of my life ended when my mother took me to school one day to consult with a test person. I was informed about my latest test results. I was smart. I was the smartest guy in my school. I couldn't believe it. I said there has to be some mistake. He said there was no mistake and that I had always scored very high on my tests. He said I was a high potential-low achiever. My mother said I was so smart, I could be anything I wanted to be. Wow! I didn't know it then, but in that moment, I became an artist.

I continued on through high school, gradually taking a greater interest in art. I discovered the Surrealists and the possibility of making pictures of monsters for a living. I knew my mother had in mind that I should become a scientist or a doctor or something successful, but I was more interested in an exciting life of creativity than an endless education of boring subjects.

Decades passed during which I paid no attention to rocks. No rocks cluttered my tables and shelves. But then, a surprise birthday trip to California's motherlode country resulted in the rekindling of my rock love. As if to make up for lost time the rocks lured me on, enticing me to collect them. They accumulated and spread over my life, filling every vacancy until there was no room for anything else.

The boxes and cartons each represent a place, a search, a quest for more and finer examples of minerals. These rocks exhibit the ultimate structure of matter, locked in the alchemical geometry which their atoms demand. The structure defines the substance just as the substance defines the structure. The crystallography controls the lattice and some atoms wander in and out while others remain captive.

Each place has its unique composition which identifies the rocks by their local elements. Many resemble other rocks from distant locations, but each has its own odd varieties. Some are rare chemistries, existing in only a few deposits. Some are unique creations which occur in one location where elements mixed and fused and crystallized like nowhere else.

Each place was a stop on a trip, a day searching while crossing the vast nowhere on the way somewhere. And so, the rocks define my life. The rocks passed down from the grandfather miner share space with those collected on family trips long ago. To these are added the recently collected. Their dust and glitter and ancient mineral smell permeates the air and reminds me of my past.

Once, I had a brief past, receding back into the foggy blur of memory. I was just becoming aware of a self and this self was focused on the future stretching out before me. As the years roll by at ever increasing velocity, my past has accumulated and my future has dwindled. Now, the majority of my life has passed and I have collections of memory laced artifacts to record my existence.

The as yet unmade and uncollected artifacts of the future are few and futile in their relative stature. They shall linger only briefly in the collection before they are recollected or uncollected by others. These collected artifacts are only the memories of the collector and must stay or go, stripped of sentimentality. Rocks of no value are uncollected. Despite their tiny secret crystals and exotic alloys, the boxes of silicates and oxides and sulfides, the periodic table of rock, all are so much debris to be dumped.

However, among the ores and alloys are the pigments which color the skies and rivers of my landscapes. They also contain the metals which have become my life, cast and ground to dust, welded and soldered, polished and burnished. I have poured a river of bronze, glowing golden and hot. Silver and gold, aluminum and lead, the metal dust is a fine glittering layer in the strata of my life. How many mountains have been crushed and leached of their metal to make my dust is beyond calculation.

How many meltings and formings have these metals known? From rocks to metal to scrap to dust to rocks, the cycle is eternal. And among the incarnations of these rocks, some chanced to be pigments. The purified, crystallized, pulverized rocks become a curious composition of colored dust. Mixed with various secret ingredients, these colored dusts serve to depict. Titanium and cobalt and manganese create an illusion of a place or a thing or a person. Cadmium and copper and iron blend in thin deposits to suggest a setting sun or fire. The arrangement is quite unlike the normal associations of such elements, indifferent to the periodic order of things. The magic dust of rocks is used to depict the image of rocks in the paintings created from the imagination. This alchemy may not transform lead into gold, but it does transform canvas and pigment into precious art which occasionally exceeds the value of gold.

And then, there are the many other uses for rocks. There are optical rocks and electrical rocks and rocks which have come to life. The new silicon based life is not biological but technological. Rocks are learning how to think, how to reproduce, how to surpass the carbon based life form that created them. The rocks are alive.

Carbon was my first pigment. Of course, graphite was the gateway pigment leading to a toxic rainbow of compounds. However, carbon is a natural beginning for a carbon based life form. With carbon, one can write or draw. If one writes, one tells stories and communicates. If one draws, one depicts ideas and emotions in a somewhat mystical way. I have used carbon to write and draw, infusing blank paper with meaning. The same gambler's spirit that drives gamblers to gamble and miners to mine drives the writer and the artist to seek the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

If art has merit, the pigment acquires value. Skillful manipulation of pigment can have a power which is beyond value. A poem or a song, a drawing or an idea expressed in written language may move emotions and change the course of history. Indeed, the power of military weapons is limited, but the power of art is limited only by the skills and mind of the artist.

Ivory black was my first oil paint. The carbon of burnt ivory was arranged upon a ground of titanium and lead and zinc oxides. These formed the bright white void where other pigments could glaze the stark emptiness with color. Under the oxides of metal were fibers of flax, fixed with the glue of rabbit skins, stretched over the wood of pine whose gum is distilled into a liquor of dreamy vapors and, together with the oil pressed from flax seed, binds the colored dusts together. The thin film of pigment suspended in oil and gum forms an ambiguous cloud, evoking all the phantoms of the human psyche.

My explorations of the mirror of paint have continued throughout all my years, paint after paint, canvas after canvas, searching for that secret center of the rock, the image. The manipulation of the paint is a mirror of images, reflecting my own spirit, my own peculiar vision. Some paint is ordered and premeditated. Some paint takes on a life of its own and I am its servant. The struggle to depict, to create an illusion is balanced by the unbidden phantoms which emerge from the liquid paint. The imagination populates the paint with every form, pattern, and texture. As the vapors of the distilled spirits evaporate from the pigment cloud, a skilled hand may further arrange, add, subtract, tint, or wipe away and start again. There is only one limitation. All things are possible in the paint. Anything conceivable can be depicted, limited only by the skill of the hand. This is the incomparable power of pigment. It may portray that which does not exist, that which is not possible, that which is magic.

If, then, one may portray the impossible, so too can one portray the ideal. The perfected reality which will never exist. Or, one may portray the ominous foreboding future that might be. The desires and fears swirling in the paint are the universe of possibility, waiting for the skilled hand to decide what will become and what will not. Each painting begins, becomes, and concludes, aspiring to communicate, to move, to effect its power.

Some years passed while the pigment, bound in oil and resin, arranged deposits on my canvas, patterns suggesting many impossible and nonexistent regions of reality. The imagination, stimulated by science fiction stories, imagined planets far away, strange and alien. These planetscapes obey a different geology, a physics and chemistry beyond the comfortable concepts of earth science. The pigment composed plastic rocks, flowing sand, elastic skies, and hostile life forms.

In 1976 I began experimenting with egg tempera. The conflict between oil and water introduced new nebulosities to my paint. The varnish layers captured pigment and locked it into a foggy mist which resembled airbrush effects. Eventually, I eliminated the egg emulsion, using only dry pigment dusted onto tacky glazes.

The pigment is swept by tiny brooms, methodically and precisely into neat piles, lines, defining space and form. There are also mops, blotters, squeegies, and cardboard combs to pattern the pigment. There are fingers, the ultimate tool for drawing. Fingers of ambidextrous hands trace wild winding curves in wet paint, amidst clouds of fumes and spatters and dribbles. Finally, there is a clever device consisting of a pair of small tubes hinged together which may be used to blow liquid paint in a misty spray over the canvas. This allows a glaze to be applied without brush strokes and has many unpredictable effects. The pigment has infinite potential and the means of manipulating it are open to invention and experimentation, like a vein of ore always leading deeper into the mountain.

Metal is in my blood. There is a progression of metal in my family. My grandfather was a prospector, searching for the ore. He was a miner, working to extract the ore. He was a night watchman at the mill where the ore was concentrated and refined into pure metal. My father was a machinist, cutting metal spun in a lathe to precise tolerances for rocket engines. And I have been a foundryman, casting metal into forms of my choosing.

My metal work began in my youth when my father decided I needed a summer job to keep me out of trouble. He took me to the machine shop where he worked to be a “flunky” fit only for those jobs which require no skill or knowledge. The shop was a cacophony of screeching metals being tortured by machines, lathes, mills, drills, punch presses, and nameless grease caked iron monsters. The metal had music. This musical property of metal was to also become an important part of my life.

Among the talents which lie dormant in me was a constant song, an imaginary music flowing through my thoughts. Like most of my generation, I aspired to play in a band. I acquired an electric guitar and amplifier and discovered the music of steel strings. I found in the vibrations of those strings a means of directly expressing my moods and emotions in endless improvisations. I never learned songs or played with others or cared to join a band. I was not a musician, but happy to play my own music for myself.

The electric cables and jacks of my guitar led to microphones and tape recorders, and the exploration of the audio universe. There was a creative potential in audio waves that was just as rewarding and powerful as painting. The music in metal strings and the electrical circuits of wires were fixed in the oxide layers of magnetic tape and preserved. It was the beginning of the accumulation of tapes, documenting music which only I, being the creator, would enjoy.

The guitar has been with me ever since, but the flunky job and metal work ended with the summer. The seeds were planted, however, and would, one day, germinate and grow into a whole new series of possibilities. I would, by slow degrees, understand that the threads of life often weave in and out, seemingly without purpose, until time brings the pattern into focus. So it has been in my life. Again and again, some threads are lost only to reappear, renew inspiration, and complete the cycle.



I was not popular. The music I liked, the films I liked, and the art I liked was not popular. It was the sixties, the era of pop art and op art, but I was reliving the past. Or, perhaps, I was preliving the future, but I was certainly not of my time. I could only accept my place and resigned myself to be neither popular nor popular.

I was not talented. I was creative. I was ambitious. I was motivated. I did not have the raw natural talent for drawing or painting to be an artist. On the other hand neither did the majority of modern artists have any great talent for drawing, being more concerned with new ways of making art, or redefining what is art.

It seemed that the essential ingredient to be a modern artist was a strong self, a unique vision, and the faith to defend that self from the relentless pressure to conform. For success is a matter of conforming to popular taste and exploiting the demand by fulfilling it. In order to remain unpopular, I rejected advice and constructive criticism. I adopted a negative attitude toward popular culture.

I did not watch television. I did not buy records. I did not go to see movies. I did not go shopping, looking for things to buy. I wasn't interested in how I looked, what I owned, or what others thought of me.

I resolved to ignore popular culture where the majority congregated and approved. The majority was where the lowest common denominator was the standard, the mediocre middle. Here is where success is found. To sell work requires an appeal to the tastes of buyers. The more popular one is, the more one sells, the more one conforms to demand, and the less one risks unpopularity. Indeed, the greater the demand, the more it is necessary to delegate the work to assistants so that the demand can be met. So it goes that the old masters were quite popular and had to employ many assistants to produce their product. As it happened, I became one of those assistants, making the art of others to earn my living.

I made my compromise early on. I would work at a job and keep my art for myself. I did struggle to find fame and fortune by entering shows, visiting galleries, and looking for that big break which would mean I could make art for a living. Always it was the same, "I can't sell that." Always it was the same, "If you could do this or that or something else, I might be able to sell it." Never could what I had done be sold, but I was told what I should do if I wanted to be sold. Despite my romantic idea of the artist's life, I came to recognize the similarity between the artist and the prostitute. I chose to not sell.

After a typical childhood, I had a typical adolescence. I was a typical young man. Typically, I got married and became a father. Consequently, I got a job. Fortunately, my experience at the machine shop taught me how to get up and go to work as well as getting experience using various tools to shape metal.

I applied to join the Prescott Fire Department and did well on the written test, but fell just a little short on the physical test. After the test I was walking home when I chanced to look up and saw a sign over a dirty old building which read, "Noggle Bronze Works." My brother, who was taking a class from a sculptor name John Wadell, had mentioned that Wadell was having a group of dancing figures cast at a foundry in Prescott. I went up to the door and opened it.

Inside was a larger than life female figure in a dance pose made of golden bronze. She was beautiful. I was hooked. I looked around and saw a strange world of tools and machines and there, amidst it all, was an old man who looked a lot like Santa. He was portly, with a white beard and hair, and he seemed like a right jolly old elf. He asked what I wanted and I said I was looking for a job.

Joe Noggle was not hiring. In fact, he said most of his crew had just quit because he couldn't pay them, so he certainly couldn't pay me. I was so captivated by the shop and bronze dancer that I wouldn't take no for an answer. I asked Joe Noggle if I could work for nothing. This was so odd that Noggle didn't know how to respond, so he said I was welcomed to work for nothing and to be there the next morning at eight.

The following day I began my apprenticeship as a bronze foundryman. I was introduced to mold making by making a mold under the guidance of old Noggle. Then, when the mold was finished, I was introduced to wax casting by casting a wax. All along the lengthy process which translates an original into a bronze, I was guided and taught by Noggle. I learned the entire process and the relationship between each step and the final result.

After a few weeks, I was paid a small wage and my future was set. For more than a year, I learned how to melt and pour bronze, how to weld and chase and patina bronze. I was however, finding it difficult to get paid the small wage I earned. As a new father, I could not accept such a situation and resolved to move to New Mexico where there were a couple of small foundries where I might get a job.

My second foundry was Nambe Mills north of Santa Fe. It was a different kind of foundry. Nambe cast an aluminum alloy into petrol bonded sand molds. I packed sand molds all day with oily black sand and, after they were poured, pulled the castings from the smoking piles of hot sand. It was a scene out of Bosch, with the ear splitting roar of the furnace, fumes and dust, and the glow of fire and brimstone. Each day I returned home covered with the black grit, sweat, and exhausted.

Nambe Mills was a good education on sand casting and aluminum, but I had no intention of working in hell. I began searching for another foundry which was in the area. I found Shidoni Foundry, and, after a few weeks, persuaded them to hire me. Shidoni was a new foundry started by Tommy Hicks and it was small and new and I felt right at home, for the next few years.

During these years I became an excellent chaser and, eventually, head of the metal shop. My daughter was born and my paintings were getting a little attention. Santa Fe was a nice place to be young family man with artistic inclinations. The foundry grew and prospered and I ought to have been set for life, but I lost my temper one day and quit.

The happy life I had came apart, my marriage ended, and I was floundering. I felt a need for a new beginning and decided to investigate a print studio where an acquaintance was doing a lithograph. The first visit to Hand Graphics was similar to Noggle Bronze years before. I volunteered to work for free and got a job as an apprentice. For the next couple of years I worked at Hand Graphics. I learned about lithography and fine art printing from Ron Adams. Nothing could be further from the noise and dirt of foundry work. This was a clean shop where classical music played while the printing and proofing proceeded. It was hard work, to be sure, but it was a welcome change.

An economic down turn and a fire in the building led to a layoff which led back to bronze. I was offered a job by a cowboy artist who had built his own foundry near Ruidoso, New Mexico. I only worked for Dave McGary for a few months before I got a call from Dwight Hackett offering me a job.

Another new foundry had opened in Santa Fe called The Art Foundry. I was starting over with a new boss and a clean slate. I began making my own bronzes at this time and learning how to expand the limitations of the process.

I had certainly made bronze castings before this, but they were just casual efforts. I had seen many ways to make castings from all manner of organic and plastic materials. These were direct burnout castings without the intermediate mold and wax part of the process. I had used plastic toys to make pieces before. I called them lost toy castings, made from the remnants of my children's toys. Now, however, I began buying my own toys and experimenting with the limits of what can be done.

I was relatively happy working for Dwight Hackett, but I was seduced by a woman into setting up a shop for her where I could do independent chasing. I thought all of those artists who had praised and preferred my work for years would be willing to use my finishing services and save money as well. I was wrong. Those artists were loyal to me only as long as I was working for the foundry. I failed.

After the failure of my freelance business, I went to live in Vicki's house in Villa Nueva, a village on the Pecos river. For the next year I lived in this old house without electricity or plumbing, and painted. I also fished in the river, built a greenhouse, and listened to the wind blow. I had nothing except time and days of sunrises and sunsets. I chopped wood and bathed in a pan with water heated on the woodstove. I ate beans and cornbread, smoked cheap rolling tobacco, and tuned in baseball games at night on my grandfather's transistor radio.

Finally, I got an offer to come back to the Art Foundry in Santa Fe. As much as I wanted to be a painter, I also wanted to take hot showers and stay up past sunset, to be warm in winter, to shit in a toilet indoors. I also wanted to be independent. If I had learned anything from these years of dependence, it was the folly of surrendering control of my life to a woman.

I spent another year and a half at the Art Foundry when Vicki told me she was going to take the children and move to Austin, Texas. I was not pleased to hear that my children would be out of my life. Although I had wreaked their lives already I was as good a father as an absent father can be. I decided I would simply have to move to Austin as well.

In Austin I found another small foundry, Kasson's Castings, where I was able to work. This was a difficult time, working harder for less than I had in a long time. I began to regret my decision and started planning a return to Shidoni and New Mexico. I was soon able to negotiate a deal to go back to work for Tommy Hicks and left Vicki and the children behind.

My second stint at Shidoni lasted three and half years, during which time Vicki and the children also returned to Santa Fe. These were stable years where I rose in the hierarchy to become production manager. I made a great small many pieces in bronze and some larger wall pieces. Once again, I ought to have been satisfied with my place and relaxed into a comfortable life. But, once again I threw a temper tantrum and quit.

I had visited the San Francisco Bay area several times and toured a foundry in Berkeley, Artworks Foundry. I was able to arrange a job there and, therefore, moved to California. At Artworks, the work was far more sophisticated than any I had done before. The artists were more creative than the cowboys and indians whose work I had always done in the past. Some were famous, some would become famous, and it was a step up in the foundry world.

For nine years I worked for Piero Mussi and Artworks, learning a great deal more about the process and many other things. I even learned to keep my temper under control and to keep my mouth shut. Unfortunately, even with my mouth shut, I could be arrogant and annoying.

After I was laid off from Artworks, I had a few part time and temporary jobs, but enjoyed another interlude when I could make art. The period came to an end when I was hired by Archie Held to work on his work. This shop was staffed my ex-Artworks employees who were all highly skilled. Once again, I learned a great deal at this new shop where fabrication was the predominant process.

Most of the pieces created were fountains or “wet pieces”. This required all manner of pipes, pumps, valves, and the mysterious ways of water. Wet work was very successful and the shop was an easy place to work. The difficulty came when pieces already installed in luxurious homes and gardens all over the bay area inevitably malfunctioned. It was necessary to revisit every site and refurbish, repair, or reconfigure the growing population of units.

I saw first hand the reality of success. Archie was able only to perform the social duties of the artist, make a few basic plans with his computer drafting program, and assigned all the actual making to his employees. His hands were clean and he was always smiling. We who worked, however, had dirty wounded hands and our faces bore the green patina of filth associated with years of welding and sanding bronze. My declining ability to do the work led me to leave this job and move back to New Mexico.

Back in the land of enchantment, I rented a small converted garage in Albuquerque and started searching for a job. I worked one day for a crazy belt buckle casting operation, setting a new personal record for shortest length of employment. Eventually I got hired by Jim Crane of Adobe Forge and Foundry. This was another small bronze caster who did a bit of wrought iron as well. Here, I was one of three employees and was certainly the most skilled and experienced. Consequently, I did most all the work that got done and for only ten dollars an hour. I worked about a year at Adobe and spent a lot of time with my son, Max, and his wife. I had kept in touch with Archie Held during this time and he made it clear that I could always have a job with him if I wanted it. So, I returned to the bay area and the fountain factory.

Four more years went by grinding out product for what was now called Center Star Studio. I set up a foundry and cast some bronze, melting the scrap left from bronze sheets used to fabricate the wet boxes and walls which Archie designed. I made cardboard models, door handles, and bronze bamboo towel racks. During this time, the owner of Artworks foundry, Piero Mussi, sold the business to Dale Smith. This provided a new opportunity to shift jobs and I did.

The new Artworks was run differently than the old Artworks. To save money, the new owner tried the outsourcing model of industry, by doing all casting and metal working in Mexico. I was among the members of the metal shop that got laid off. The following months were time for me and my art. I also began the writing of this history of my life. My interlude ended when I was called back to work. The business continued to have problems making a profit and a couple of years later, I was laid off again.

This is the broad overview of my life as an employee. Of the days of my life thus far, most of my time has gone to the making of the art of other artists. Each week, one hundred sixty-eight hours are available. Forty hours were lost to a job. Fifty-six were lost to sleep. The remaining seventy-eight hours have been available for my work. Naturally, I have also washed my clothes, cooked my food, cleaned my bathroom, and all the other business of life in the time left for me.

I bought these hours of performing the thankless task of an artisan. I have never earned any significant wage, nor had more than the essentials of life. It is a choice I made when I rejected the role of artist prostitute. Since then, the world has evolved, becoming more and more confused and corrupt. It is ironic that I have refused to prostitute my own art only to find that, after these years have become an artisan prostitute. Now, the “artist” is one who pays those with artistic skills to make the product. The “artist” is the brand name, and I am only a tool. I am an old worn out tool, blunted by more than thirty years of ill use. However, I have made my art. Never caring what was popular, what would sell, nor what anyone thinks about it. I’m proud of it, and that’s all that matters to me.

The history of my employment demonstrates several things about my nature. I am never satisfied. I am temperamental, conceited, and aggressive. As a result, I eventually find myself out of favor with my employer. This has been both an asset and a liability, as I have started over many times. Each new beginning has brought new skills and new challenges, new people and new ideas.

Ideas are the river that flows through my mind. I have no control over this river. It waxes and wanes, floods occasionally, but has never gone dry. From the river, I dip a few ideas to develop. Each one has potential. Each one could be a success, if hands and mind make it real. Ideas are mere flashes of potential, appearing and disappearing in my mind, leaving no trace. Ideas lead me ever onward, one suggesting another which suggests still more. In the process of making an idea, new unforeseen ideas occur. It is, therefore, the making that is the purpose of my life. The purpose is the process. It is neither credit nor profit that I seek, but the unimpeded flow of ideas and the making of things. Some of my ideas have resulted in inventions and innovations, but most have resulted in things. Most of these things are in the realm of art.

One of the strange things about ideas is their interrelationship, the weaving in and out of various ideas from one realm to another. Even those which seemed isolated dead ends, often return and resume when new ideas incorporate the old. Year by year, the realized ideas accumulate as things I have made.

I began making things as a kid. I liked glue and tape better than hammers and nails or nuts and bolts. Consequently, I didn't build much, or fix much, but liked to collect and assemble odds and ends. I liked blank paper and pencils. I was awed by the possibility that something could be written or drawn on blank paper to make it valuable. I liked materials, waiting to be transformed into some worthy thing.

Like all kids, I was expected to occupy myself by using up paper and crayons, paste and glitter and glue, and keep quiet for an hour or so. While most kids drop these occupations, however, I continued to occupy myself, even expanding the range of materials and techniques.

Art was a subject at school. When it was time for art, the materials were brought forth and the kids were encouraged to create. Most kids are a bit intimidated by such a command, but not I. I wasn't too smart and I wasn't too strong or fast. What I did have was a vivid imagination and a streak of silliness. These strengths were just the combination needed to confidently consume whatever art supplies were provided.

The scattered rocks about are my biography. I began my life in the former boom town of Cripple Creek, then a bust town on the way down. This mountain valley was riddled with tunnels and piles, oxidized wood structures, and rusty fossils of former wealth. There was a forlorn quality to everything, including the people. They were rock people and so was I.

At 9000 feet, Cripple Creek was a harsh place where only hard people could survive. The gold rush brought fortune seekers, gamblers, and prostitutes, looking to strike it rich. In the rocks of these rocky mountains were hidden precious metals and gems, valuable ore waiting to be discovered. Once discovered, however, it was then a matter of blasting and shoveling and hauling rock. This was the job of mining, digging down, following the vein ever deeper into the mountain. It was deadly work, in the dark hot tunnels where gas and cave in threatened sudden death at any time.

My father decided not to spend his life in the mines and it was fortunate because the mines were doomed. The price of gold was insufficient to cover the cost of mining it and, eventually, all the mines closed. Our family moved to sunny Arizona where I grew up.

As a boy, I loved rocks. My miner blood was hot to find the magic metals or crystals hiding inside rocks. My rocks had specks and sparkles and I couldn't resist smashing them to bits, curious to know if there was a secret center.

Our family went on long boring drives all over Arizona, seeking various rocks. The result was a collection of rocks and associated artifacts, pot shards or arrowheads left by long gone peoples. Collecting the past was always part of the purpose, the dusty smell of the frontier days when the west was still wild.

I collected and collected, until I had enough rocks, Then I turned my attention to science and the understanding of rocks. For many years, I thought science would be my life. Science unlocked the secrets of rocks, the true nature of matter and the ever smaller secrets locked inside. The secrets became so small and incomprehensible that they could not be unlocked. At this point, I discovered art.

Art took over where rocks left off. In fact, the same alchemical mysteries which transmute metals also distil colored crystals which color canvas. My love of rocks became a love of colors and the magic of creating a view into my imagination with paint.

I could be an artistic scientist or a scientific artist, but I was a seeker, scanning and collecting, and smashing to bits in search of the secret inside.



