

LOW LEVEL
BUREAUCRATIC
STRUCTURES:
A NOVEL
&
PRINCIPLES OF THE
EMERYVILLE
SHELLMOUND

LYTLE SHAW

Low Level Bureaucratic Structures
Principles of the Emeryville Shellmound
Lytle Shaw

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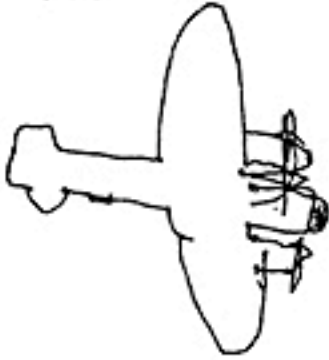
PRINCIPLES OF THE
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2004

LOW LEVEL BUREAUCRATIC STRUCTURES:
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for reasons that have to do with narrative.



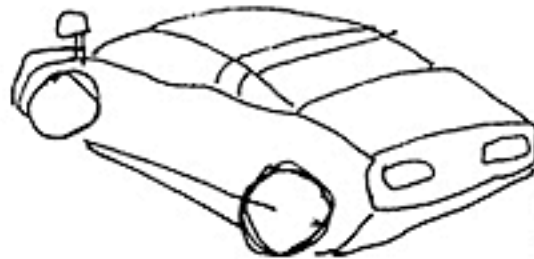
Fashion of course comes in.



And research.



A new apprenticeship.





Some children find variety
a threat.



Trot out into the backyard
behind a tree



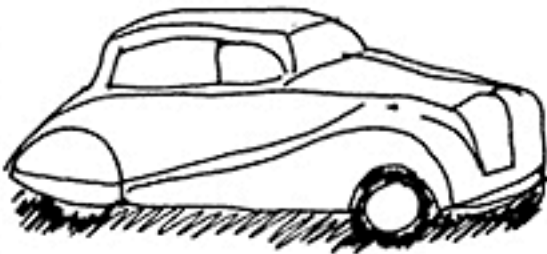
Maybe learn some details



Or a new language



You've been practicing



Yes, that kind of proliferation

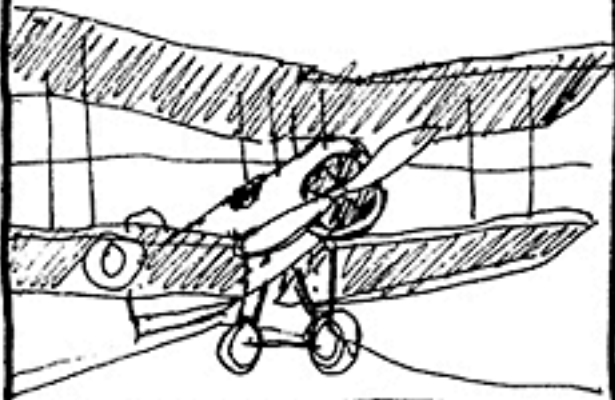


Everyone will expect this of you in time



Able to take some air

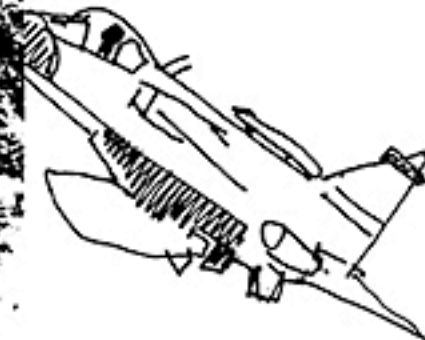
Upright, Stern and with a perspective



Sweep off the eraser shavings



And take stock of the canned goods



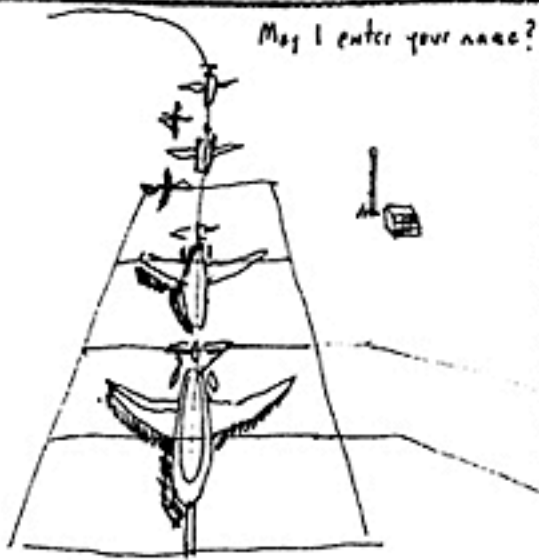
Study life in pools
Or Streams
nearby



We all like structures of contrast



May I enter your name?



Perhaps a wicker basket of cheeses
and apples

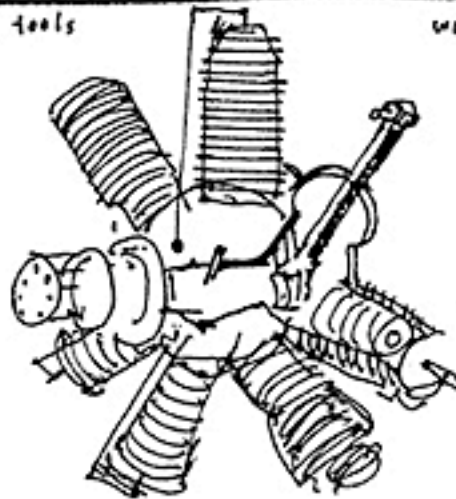


A general return to lead



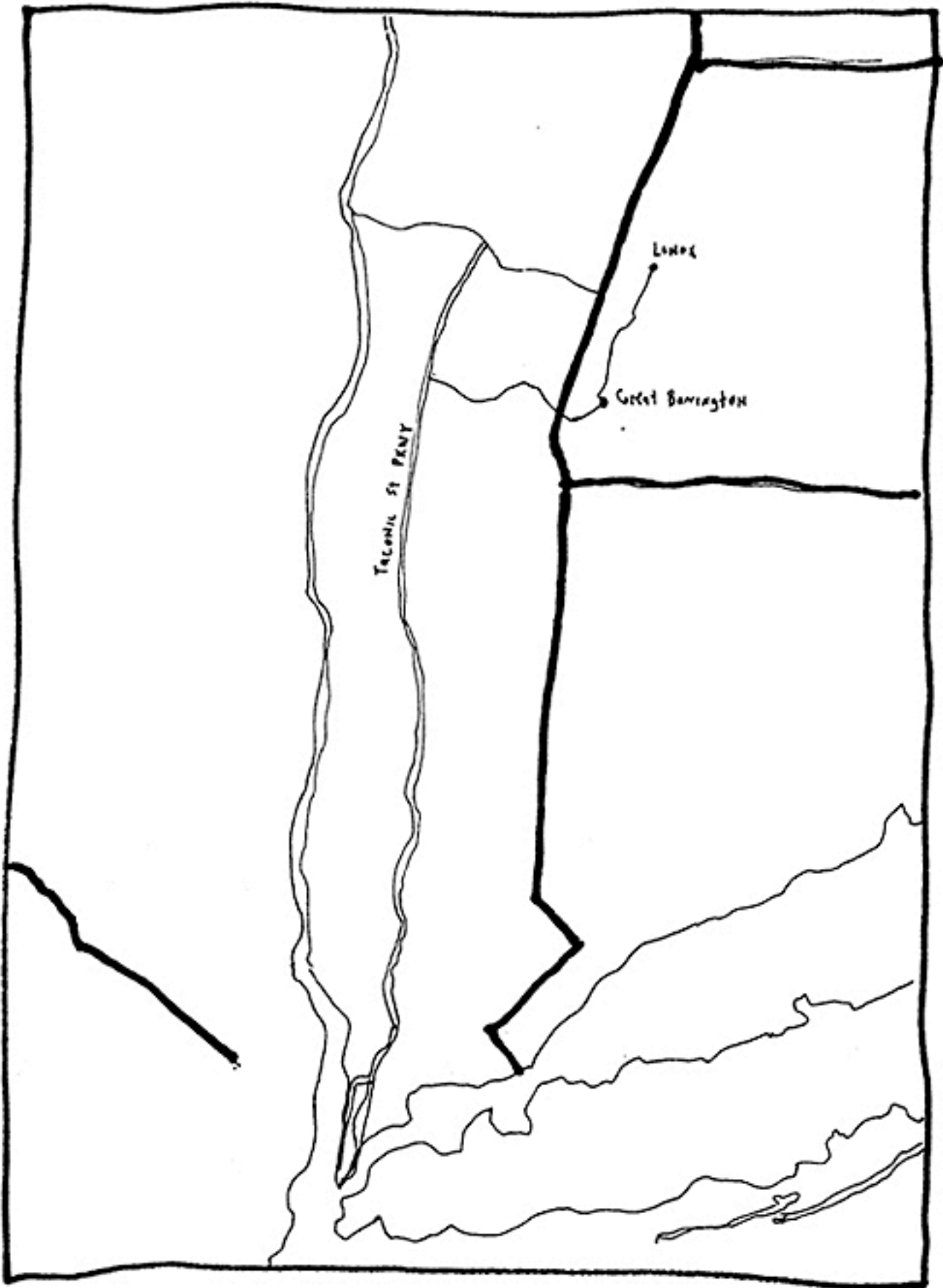
and tools

with

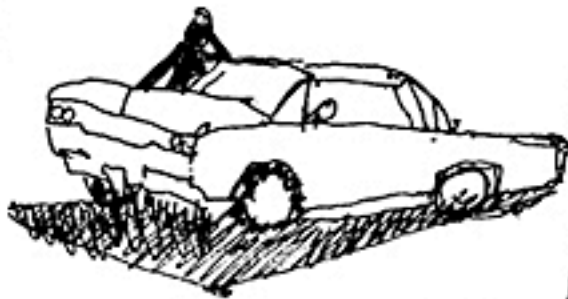


high

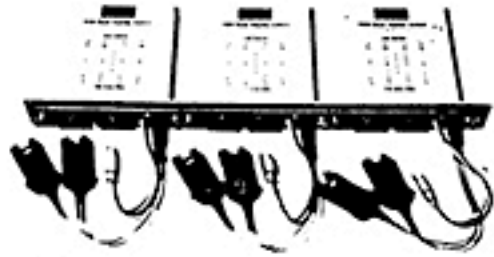
numbers



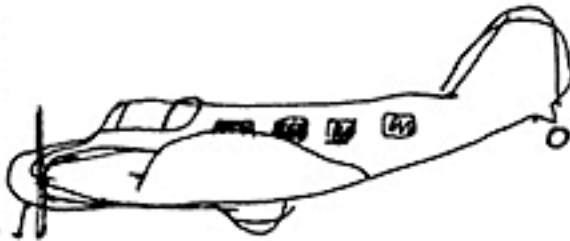
Bye to the old stuff



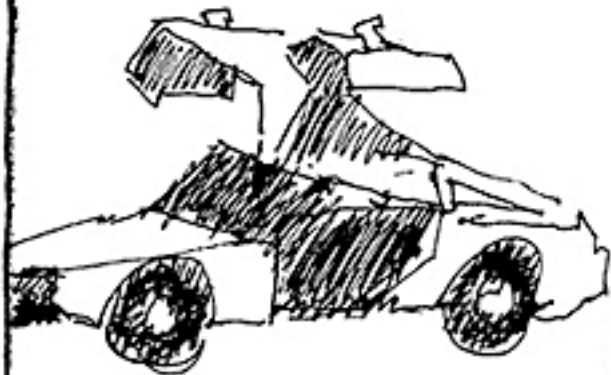
Model glue capless
on the basement work table



My legs are light and the design
looks fine



look up, I'm behind the mirror



Cards and cigars



If the
tracking
holds,



We'll be there soon

Often we choose surroundings that bear no resemblance to our aspirations



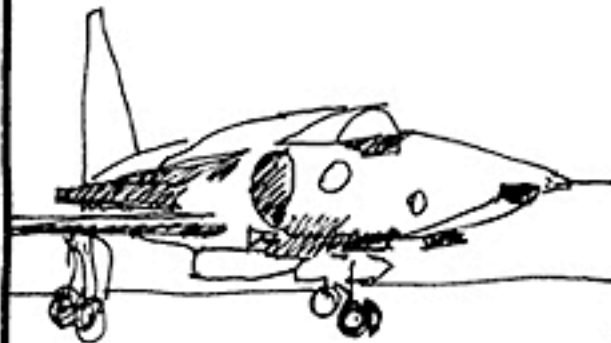
Thickly clogged with cheap looking oil



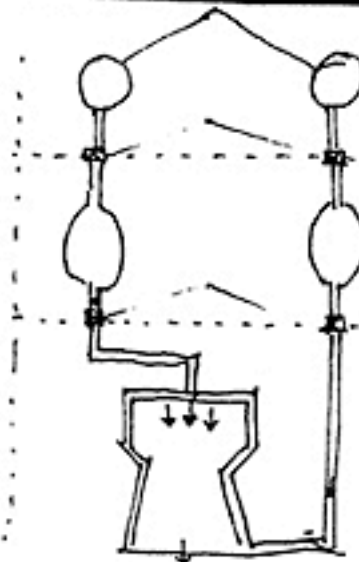
A landscape must respire in audible whiffs



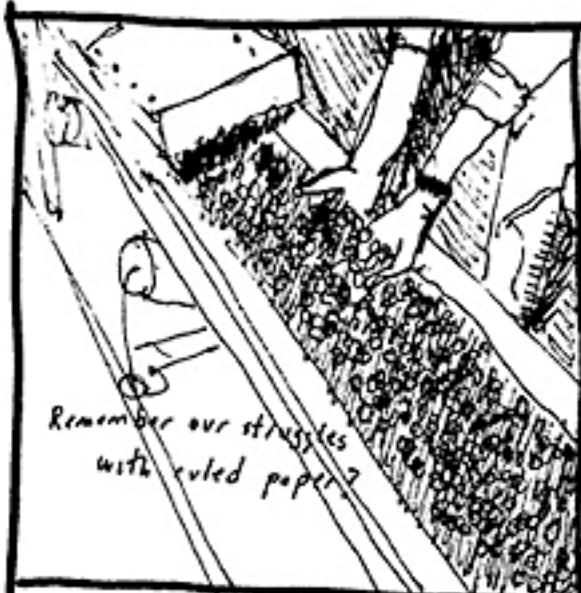
Or a genie emerge from a thicket of tea trees



hand frozen on combination slip-joint pliers



I suspect this chalkboard will arrange our memories



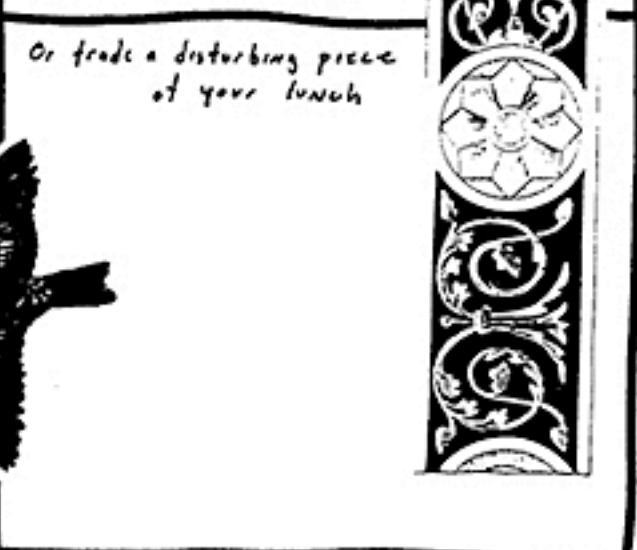
Remember our struggles with ruled paper?



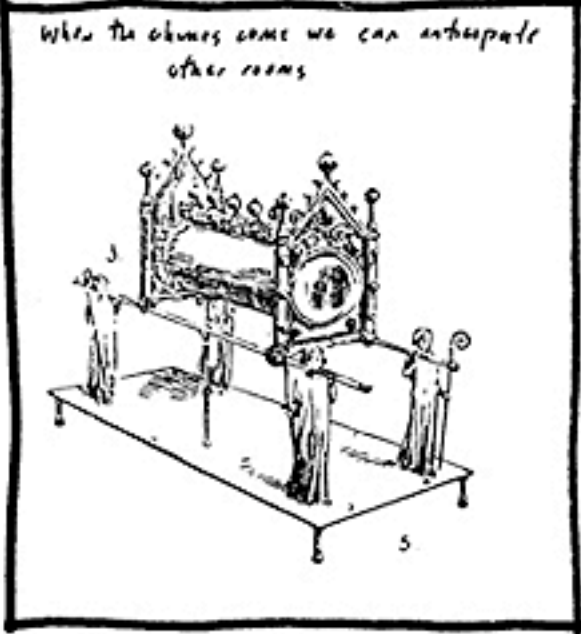
I'll zoom in for a second and you can pass your finger around



Small soil clods on agrarian boots



Or trade a disturbing piece of your lunch



When the changes come we can anticipate other rooms

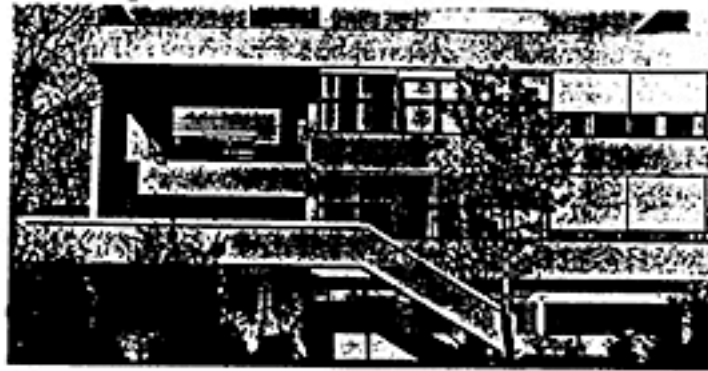


And who will be there to arrange the girders

For young baseball players, modernism is only a dim possibility



Comb crease worn into jeans



like analytic philosophers who invent "other worlds"



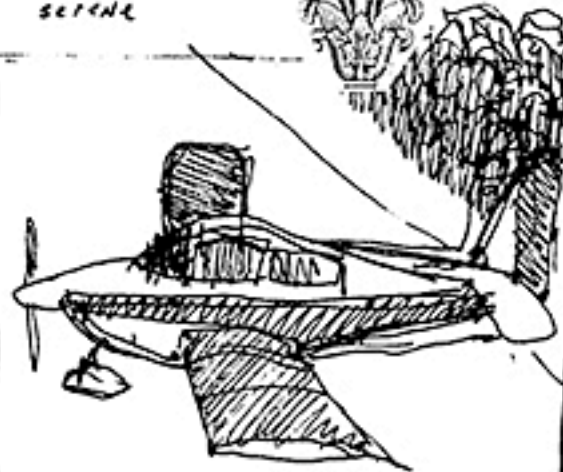
Or he-men designers through history



This one can be sudden and fierce



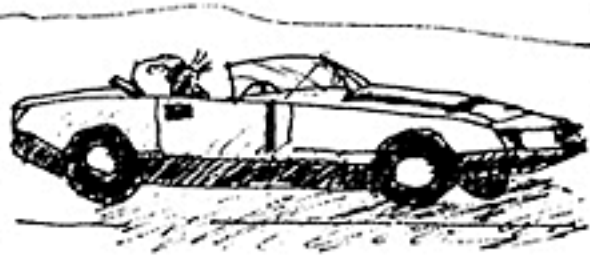
And by turns serene



Let me explain something
right from the start



This predatory action will take us far
into the country



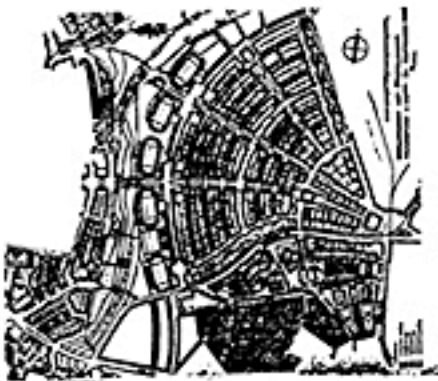
We are not a charity organization



bound to weather systems and the sheep
of small vegetables



but sought by technicians



With any bond between us temporary



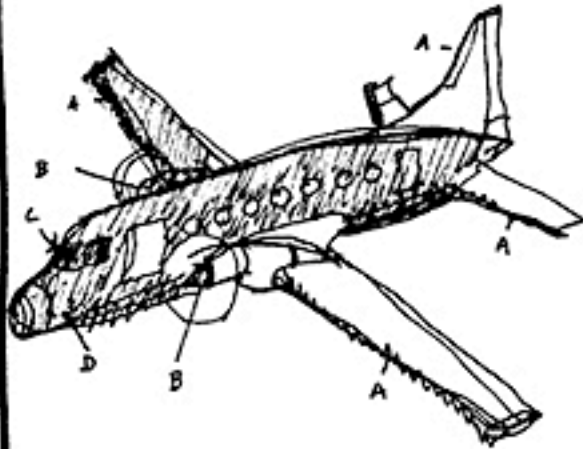
Our best hours are after those
at home



The garage is a place to start



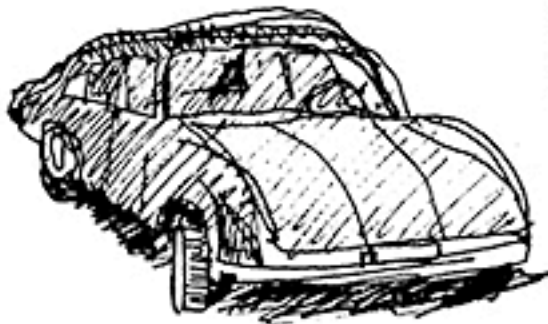
Decals and wood glue speak
my language



like an alpine hike with
a real swiss guide



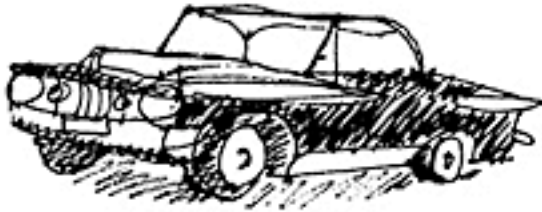
You haven't taken him down
when you capture his leg



But sometimes the real heroes
have to wait outside



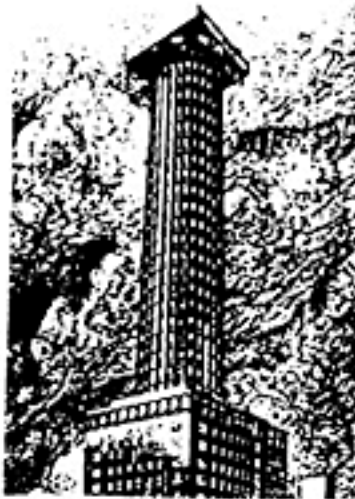
As you sit by the trail and observe chipmunks at work and play, you may wish to capture their characteristic appearance with a pencil.



At home, the drawers welcome our participation



head looming above the terrarium



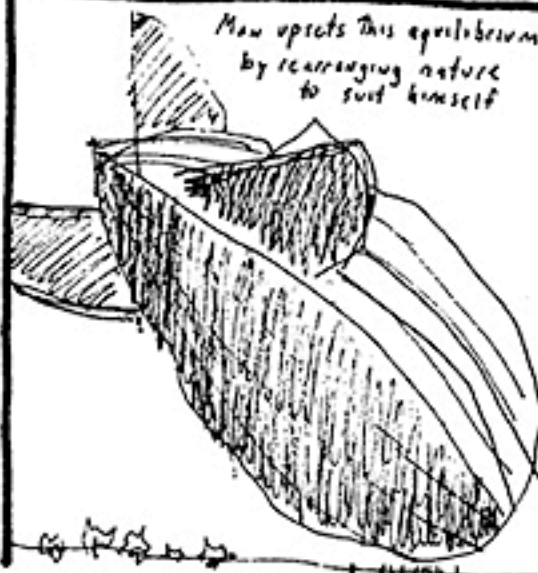
Civic structures for the temporary cities



Revelatory inside even a tuna casserole



Man upsets this equilibrium by rearranging nature to suit himself



From inside the ashram, the ego-based struggles of the material world recede into the unimportant background



A medieval atmosphere obliterates the surrounding bicentennial

Slacks or a frontal attack



Violence creeps into the laundry room through a dog-door



Watering continues in the aftermath



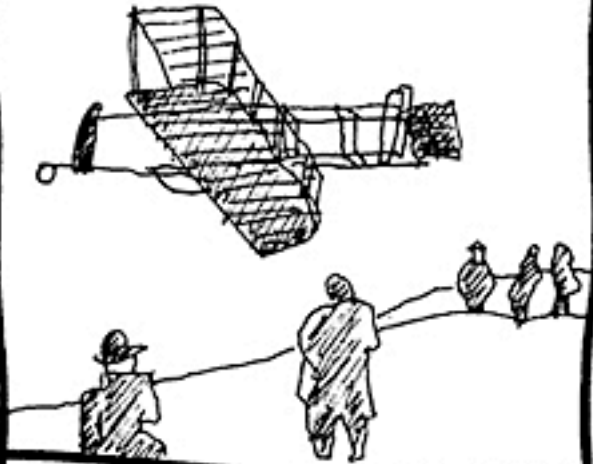
And the summons names several new members



On the back porch, the engineers
glumped silently around the Keg



Products of everyone's labor
took on flashy attitudes



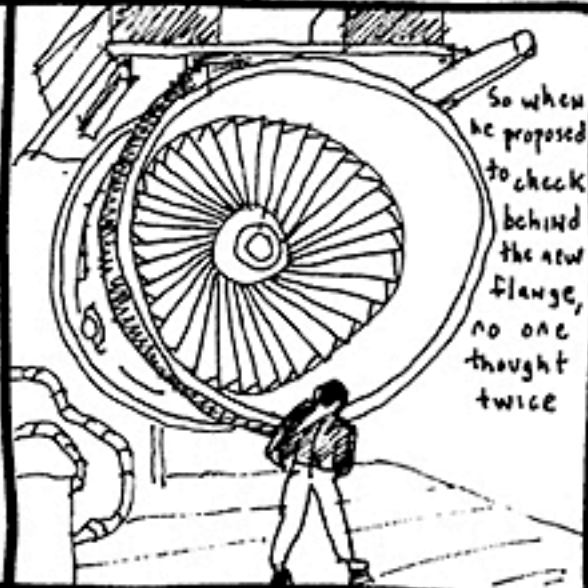
To chart this pull was young Eric's
secret longing



Several candidates had systems

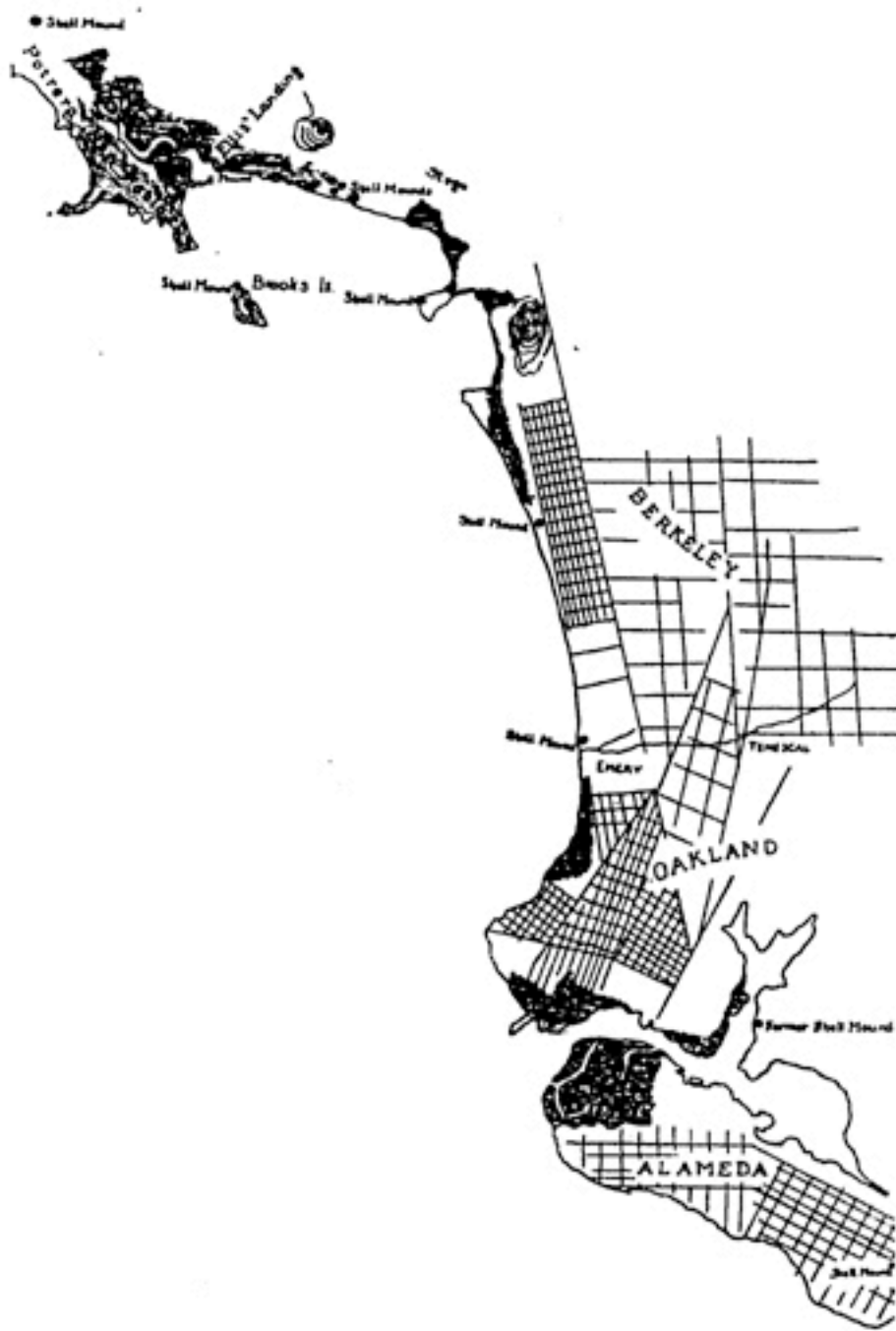


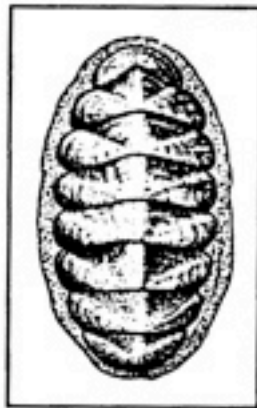
And the warm weather awaited for trips
through the surrounding parkways

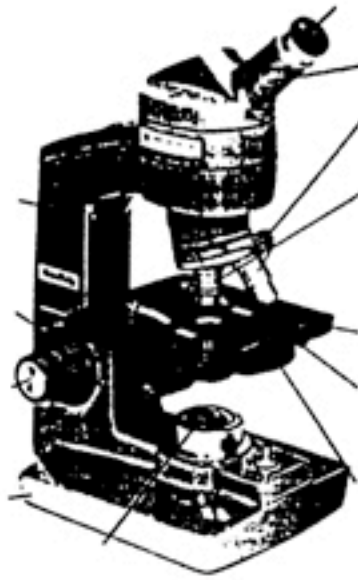


So when
he proposed
to check
behind
the new
flange,
no one
thought
twice

PRINCIPLES OF THE
EMERYVILLE SHELLMOUND

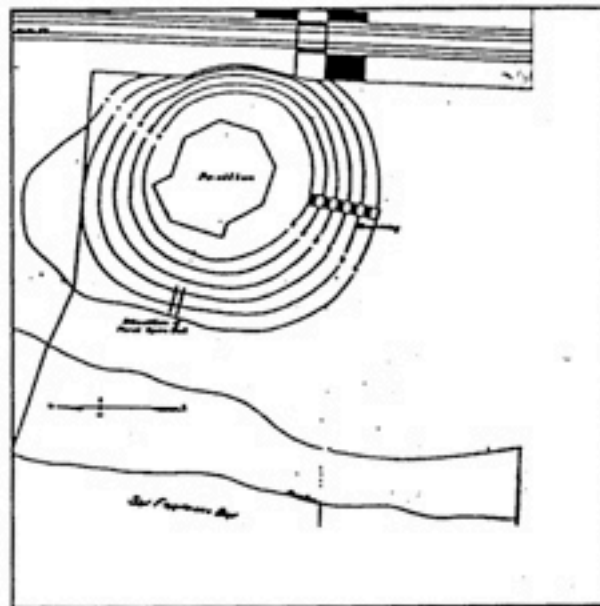






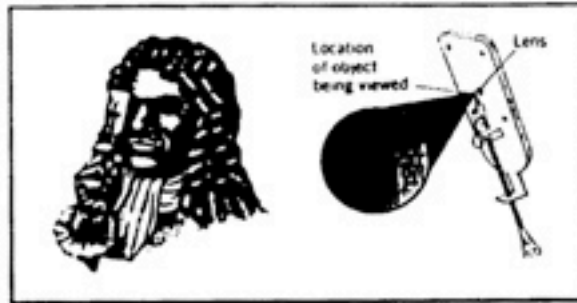


The ancient shellmound in Emeryville, California was probably produced over hundreds or even thousands of years. The Native Americans who lived in the marshy wetlands north of what is now the Bay Bridge were prodigious fishermen. Some anthropologists believe that shellmound size was taken as a relative measure of a tribe's fishing skill. Though we have little evidence to confirm such ideas, we do know, however, that the Emeryville mound grew to almost 80 yards in diameter (Rockman and Foster, 1977), making it the West Coast's largest shellmound south of Koyuk, Alaska.

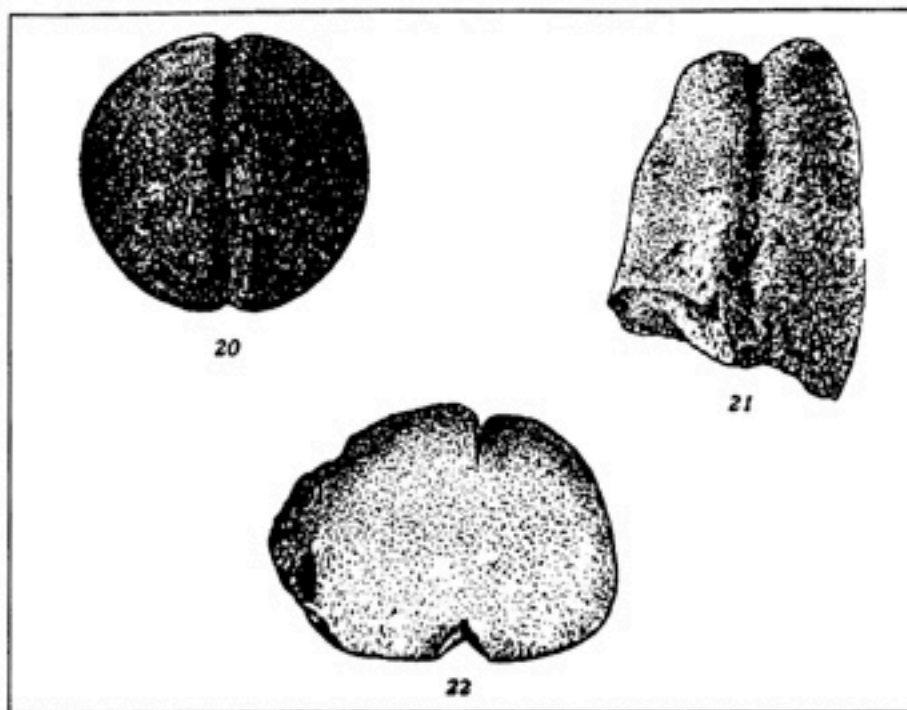


Most of us are interested in the world around us. Sometimes this world expands suddenly. In California, coastal sea-life must be managed with special care. Houses are placed firmly on bedrock. As a writer and an amateur scientist, I was especially concerned with these issues. When I discovered that the industrial building in which I have a studio rests on the northeastern edge of the mound, I spent several weeks reconsidering my writing's relation to the sedimented structures in my neighborhood. This led to a great deal of research and, eventually, the discoveries I published some years ago--whose origins I describe more fully in what follows.



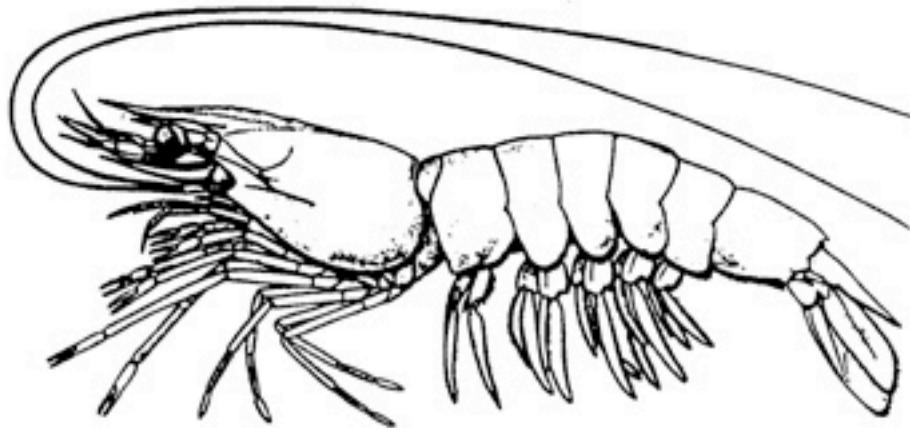


If you make keen observations and keep accurate notes, you may produce worthwhile contributions to science. In my own case, I began to suspect that the shellmound could incorporate almost any fact, suspending it among mollusks within layers of dirt. How, I wondered, could the nearby reef sustain the high levels and variety of mollusk production indicated by the mound's astonishing variety. But even stranger was the organization of samples within the mound, which had baffled even Ernest Uhle, the mound's most distinguished interpreter (Uhle, 1908).



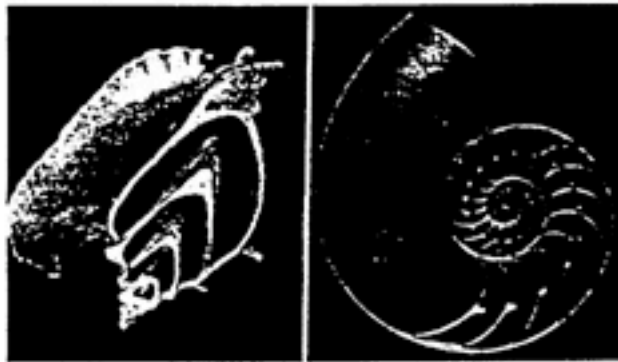
The Western Maritime Library houses its East Bay archive in the small pontoon bungalow next to the famous Polynesian restaurant, Trader Vic's. The archive floats in the harbor a few hundred feet from the site of the mound, and the mysterious reef just beyond it. Doctor Gamward, the regional curator, provided me with excellent documentation of Emeryville's nautical heroes: I began transcribing audio interviews with sea captains.

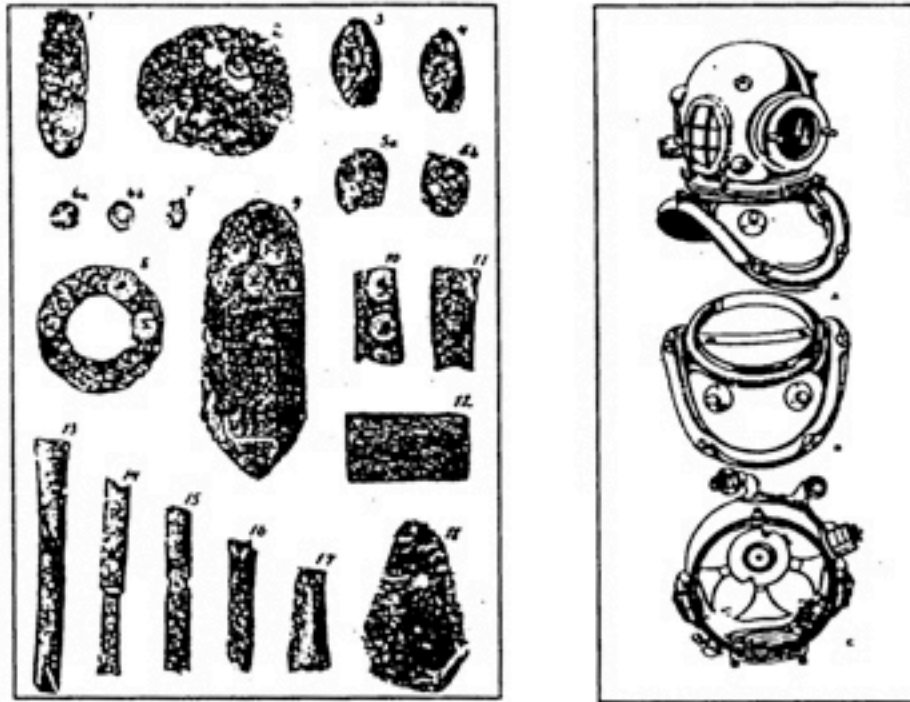
As I left, Gamward reminded me that massive withdrawals of living substances of the sea by man, without any thought of replacement, may not be feasible. In Hank Schramm's Sportfishing Center I spoke to Cutter Stevens, who runs the bait and tackle section. Though never on a commercial vessel, Cutter had been a recreational fisherman on the Bay since the mid 1960s. Cutter was eager for me to see his collection of marine exotica. With the first limpet, however, I detected crudely enlarged mantle cavities and cut our visit short.



From my apartment I could look across Interstate 80 toward the land features of the cove and marina. In the foreground crews were retrofitting the overpass and reconstructing the on-ramps in both directions. Helicopters ferried metallic debris between sites. Coastal sea and plant life took on luminous import in the technical language of the reference books I had stolen from the research bungalow. Cuvier had seen animality burdened with disturbing and nocturnal powers. When I visited the site again, several joggers, noticing me taking measurements and loading samples into my van, stopped to speculate about winter tidal patterns.

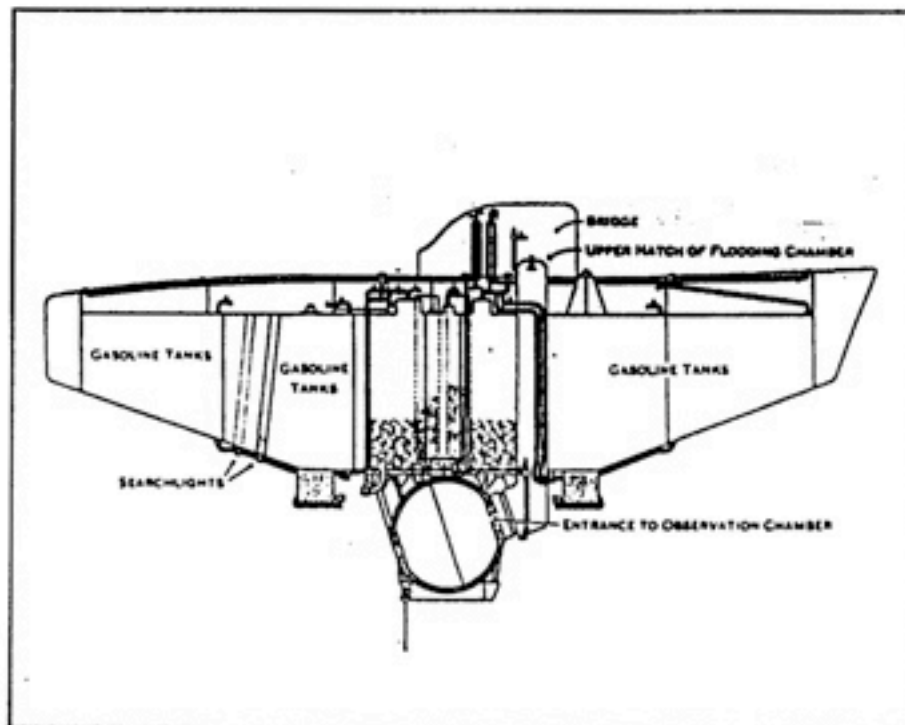
I changed the subject, locked my van and hurried into the bungalow. Inside, I was again disturbed by glances from an older bearded man who, not a student or professor, I had nonetheless seen at East Bay Libraries nearly every day for the past 7 years. After matching shellmound tissue with reef samples, I consulted Hickman and Roberts' most recent *Integrated Principles of Zoology*, where I climbed their illustrated cladograms, separating, once again, bass, lizard, then mammary glanded horse and monkey. Hickman had been known as a renegade phylogenist, discovering anagrams within the patterns of animal names of his deeply eccentric phylogenetic tree.



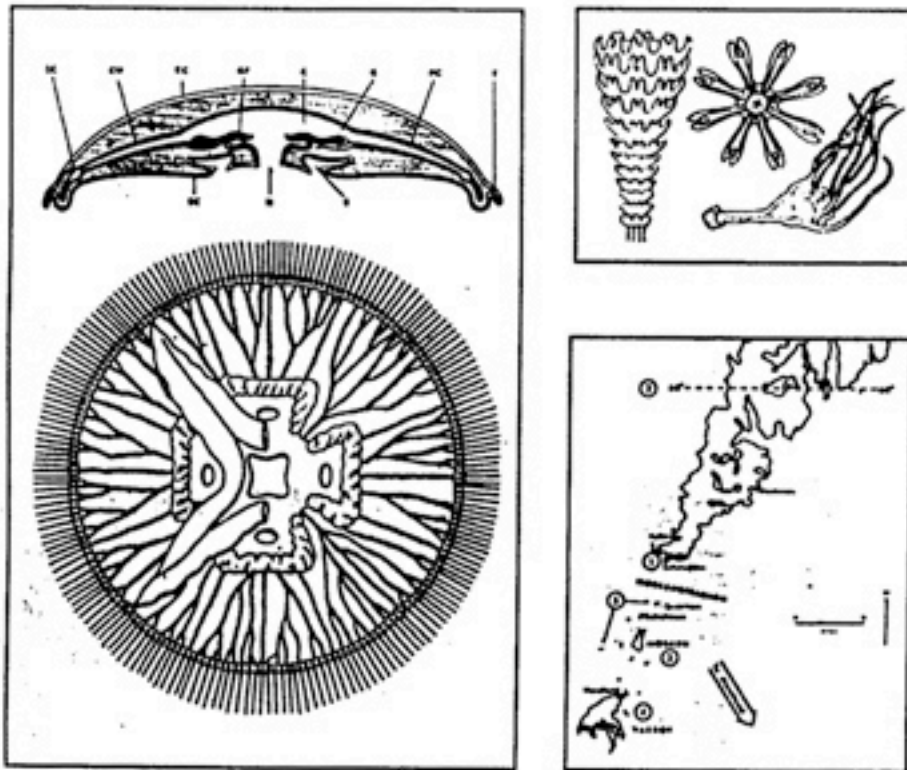


Unfortunately, the origin of most animal phyla is shrouded in the obscurity of Precambrian times. It is often said that the nominal structures of phylogeny are inefficient and arbitrary (Hickman, 1980). I am not so sure. Many of the artists in my building had recently produced patternistic drawings that seemed to mine Native American animal catalogues. In Uhle's documentation of the mound, I found drawings that indicated oddly sorted 'name layers' with arrows. These field marks suggested an unpredictably regular proportion between excavation depths and the size of individual mollusks. The reefs would have to be examined first hand. We left by boat the very next morning.

Below me in the chartroom my wife, Simone, manned the echo sounder, interpreting its pings through a headset and calling off soundings. I inflated my lungs in eager anticipation of the big day. We were going to investigate the coastal reefs to a depth of two hundred feet, take specimens of fixed animal life in various environmental layers, and document the reef with artificial-light color photography.

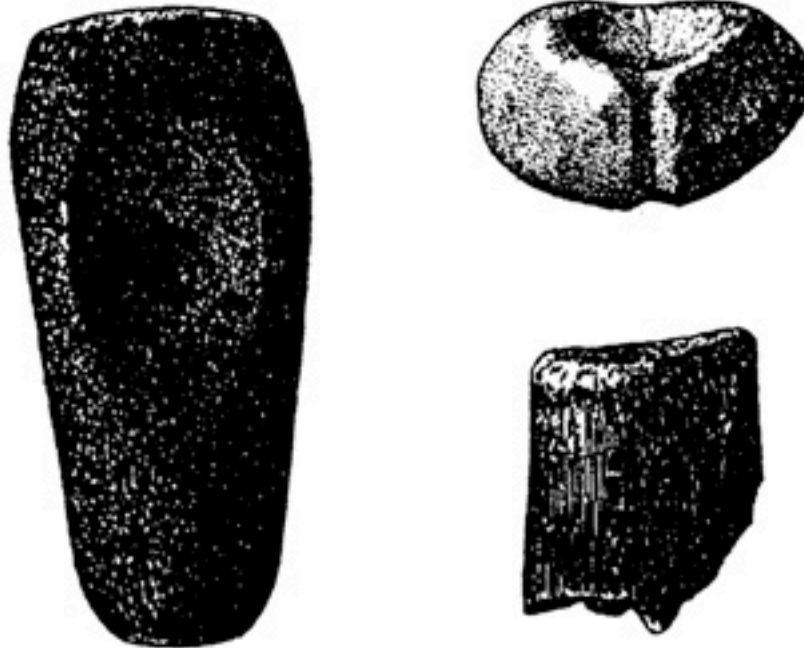


Sixty feet down, I entered a vertical field of pliant growths shaped like celery plants, each stalk a different hue. Here were the implausible illustrations of Lister's treatise on gastropoda. Surfaces pulsated in mineral folds. Above me I could see only the rhythmic movements of polyps, hovering at an indeterminate depth.

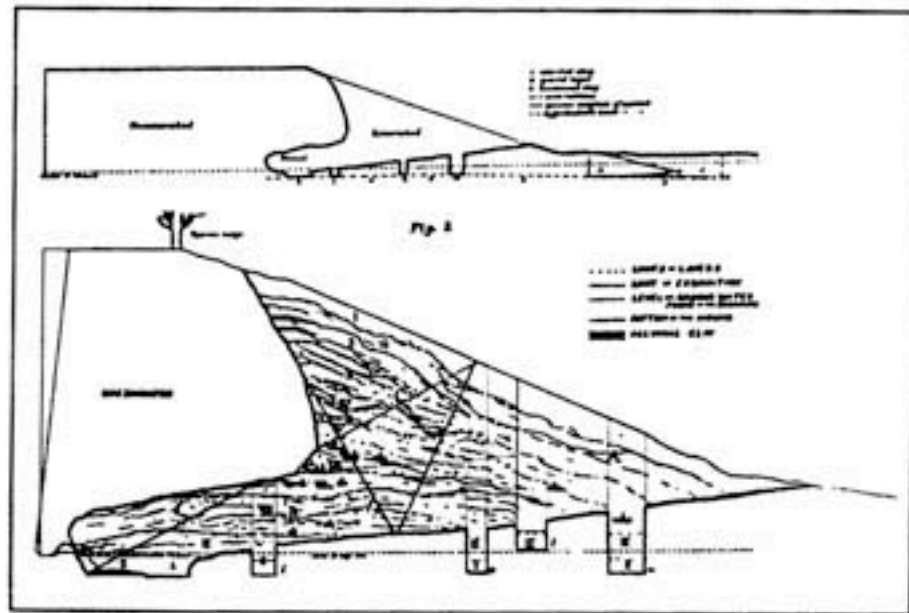




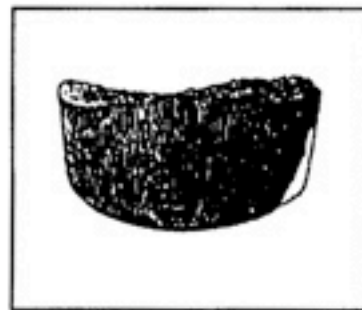
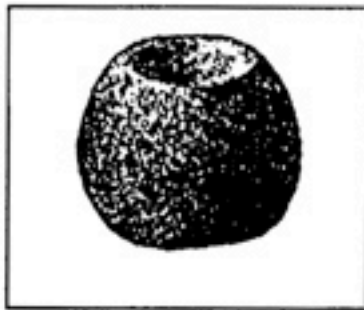
At the edge of my authorized pressure, 200 feet, I flirted with letting go. The reef stretched on in gaudy blues and oranges far beyond my sight. Clearly its mammoth production could sustain the most ambitious program of shell organization.



As I floated in this space the horizon flipped ninety degrees and light seemed to vanish accordingly. Sheets of mollusk names spun before my eyes. Small land animals--perhaps raccoons--broke shells and extracted food; a worn club functioned as a line break between conch phrases. The mound's depth was an archive of expanding species knowledge, a generation's record of the name embalmed, and its height grew proportionally from there. It was in this angled position, then, that I discovered the now well known principles of mound construction that I reproduce below.



Layer	Relative Contents	Rubbed* stone implements	Obolians	Fished stone implements excepting obolians	Kaile-like implements	Rough saw-like implements
I	5.5	2[5]	2[2]	—	[6]	—[8]
II	10.6	24[10]	11[5]	6[10]	[13]	—[16]
III	7.3	3[7]	4[4]	4[7]	[9]	—[11]
IV	4.2	4	2	4	[5]	—[6]
V	3.4	4[4]	1[1]	5(2)	[4]	—[5]
VI	1.5	—[1]	—[1]	3	[1]	—[2]
VII	1	—[1]	2[1]	6	[1]	—[1]
VII*	2.2	—[2]	—[-]	9	1[2]	[11]
VIII	7.4	1[7]	1[4]	24	1[9]	—[3]
IX	3.3	—[3]	1[2]	62	4[4]	5[6]
X	1.8	—[2]	—[1]	17	—[2]	4[3]



- Deer, *Cervus* sp.
- Elk, *Cervus canadensis*.
- Sea-otter, *Enhydrus lutris*.
- Beaver, *Castor canadensis*."
- Squirrel, *Spermophilus* sp.
- Rabbit, *Lepus* sp.
- Gopher, *Thomomys talpoides*.
- Raccoon, *Procyon lotor*.
- Wild cat, *Lynx* sp.
- Wolf, *Canis* sp.
- Bear, *Ursus* sp.
- Dog, *Canis familiaris*." (f)
- Seal, *Phoca* sp.
- Sea-lion.
- Whale.
- Porpoise?
- Canvasback Duck, *Aythya vallisneria*
- Goose?
- Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax* sp.
- Turtle.
- Skates, Thornbacks, and other fish.

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