

# JOURNEY NOTES

## POEMS

by **Joe Pounder**

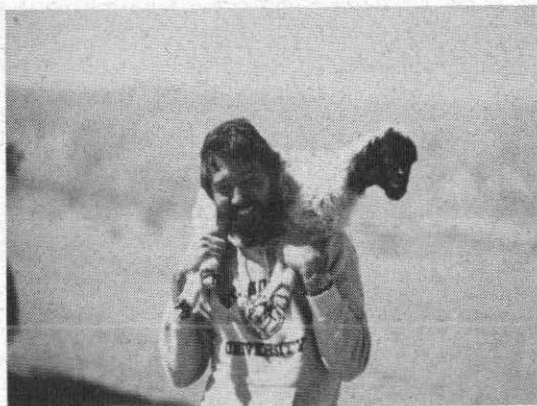
"they took a clean-cut kid and made a killer out of him is what they did."  
Bob Dylan (from the *Burlesque* Album)

### RETURN TO THE HERMITAGE

Reflections of a Return Visit to Thomas Merton's Hermitage  
Abbey of Gethsemani, Trappist, Kentucky

Older, wind-burned, long of beard --  
a wadi-wanderer,  
in bare-foot-loose-sandals of the desert type --  
I return to a silent beginning  
to pay you a visit; knowing  
you didn't get to Nitria or Scete, where  
I was so close it seemed irrelevant --  
the desert is the desert is the desert, and  
who knows it by any better name?  
"Take nothing for your journey"  
-- as the wind through the trees.

Fires still burn in dens and caves  
and other strange places --  
for those who follow the Way of the Name  
drink lonely dark-sensed "nights" of  
new pomegranate wine; gatherings  
amid Sinai sunrises and sunsets that  
celebrate cloistered gardens tilled by  
ageless voices of plainsong -- there  
offering sweet oblations to the Mysteries  
"I met a traveller from the holy desert"  
Ordo Vagorum Gyrovagus --  
Vitae Patrum of mirrored questions, as  
great were my need -- and  
I prayed for you.

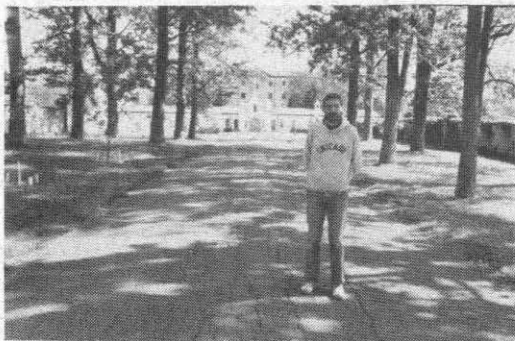


SINAI 1984

In deafening mistral silence  
and hollowed-rock security,  
sweet caressed reflections of  
former years lightning-cross the quadrants of time  
You in Kentucky with papers flying  
while I was lost  
seeking cool-earth refuge in some far pagoda  
bare-foot and happy in my abnormal sanity  
planning my escape from  
sweet-stink napalm rituals -- and  
suffering my ignorance  
You prayed for me.

## II

Then you with silver winged mantras,  
 incense and saffron tossed  
 became the moment of Being --  
 touched Truth in Reality, bare-foot  
 you were set free at last, and  
 in a far distance  
 at a fragrant Lavra near the Sea  
 where Jesus walked --  
 I prayed for you  
 -- as the wind through the trees.



GETHSEMANI 1985

Today, among these blue-misted "knobs"  
 my return is your walks remembered  
 "through the valley of the mastic trees"  
 sifting quiet encounters of memorable clues --  
 pass the cement cross  
 to stand silently at the edge of  
 your hidden martyrdom --  
 no need to come any closer, now  
 late sun waxing warmth on  
 the threshold of the house, Shalom --  
 softly echoing happy koans of  
 contemplation -- meditation,  
 a cold beer for variation -- Salut!

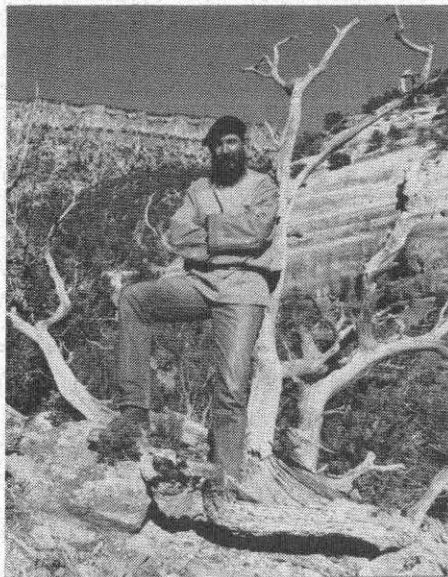
It was a good trip this journey --  
 a pilgrimage of the heart  
 for God-mad nomads; all  
 the things you would have done, maybe,  
 except Nitria and Scete?  
 Just the same --  
 greetings from the valley of the "waterbearer"  
 and other strange haunts, where  
 your prayer flags catch spiritual breezes and  
 become paraclete for  
 countless souls you never knew --  
 Deus Caritas est  
 the wind through the trees.

## MERTON IN ASIA

No-death  
 gift of zero  
 gift of self  
 Eucharist!

## A MONK'S HAIKU

My life  
 Now  
 Like the rice bowl  
 Empty  
 To receive his silence



CHRIST IN THE DESERT 1986