



# myron helfgott

Lester Van Winkle

It was the early evening of “day one” inaugurating our summer in Paris. In a sidewalk café on the left bank, a lovely meal, good wine, and small talk were suddenly interrupted by some JERK taking flash photos. I looked up to protest, and to my astonishment the photo flasher was none other than Myron Helfgott. (Hell, I thought I had left him in Richmond!)

Actually, it was Myron’s support and encouragement that got us to Paris, and an incredible generosity of spirit that got him there to surprise us. The next two weeks were a marathon of dining, drinking, picnics, conversations, museums, art, and cathedrals. Myron gave us the gift of “his Paris,” plus his restaurant list and greater insight into his passion for life, art, and good wine.

Back in Richmond, Myron’s commitment to his work is absolute. His work ethic (and play ethic) has long been exemplary and comforting to his peers. I recall being terribly upset with Myron for describing himself to a West Coast painter as a “home hobbyist.” And then again, he once delivered a lecture on his work, apologizing for each piece as a miserable failure. The sheer volume of his work and its immutable quality stand in stark contrast to his claims of hobbyism and monumental failure.

As a presence in this art community, Myron swings a big bat; his investment has been constant, selfless, and profound. He has been counselor, cheerleader, and jump starter for a number of his peers and ex-students. And he is definitely my go-to guy when studio problems seem insurmountable. His social circle resembles a spiral galaxy. His shadow is long. I think once you’ve seen the breadth and depth of his exhibition, you will agree that he has managed to become a prophet in his hometown.

But Myron, like the JERK taking flash photos, can be a JERK at times. Ask the freshman class he lined up in the hall for a trip to the infirmary to get their art inoculations. Yet, Myron is the kind of JERK who never forgets your anniversary or your birthday, or your wife’s birthday or you on *his* birthday. He’s an AMATEUR JERK.