

## Days and Vision: an appreciation of George Wallace, his art and his life

# George Wallace

by Robert Clark Yates

**Canadian artist George Burton Wallace is known primarily for his splendid sculptures and graphics. He was born in Ireland in 1920, came to Canada in 1957 and taught art at McMaster University in Hamilton from 1960 until 1985. He retired to Victoria, B.C. where he died in 2009.**



Robert Clark Yates & George Burton Wallace

I HAVE HAD CONSIDERABLE DIFFICULTY finding a way to begin what you are now reading. I could talk about George Wallace in impersonal and truthful terms as a significant Canadian artist whose sculptures should be recognized as work of national importance, even though they seem to have escaped notice of those who determine who should be mentioned in the official art story of Canada. Or I could simply talk of Professor Wallace as an outstanding teacher and public speaker who for 25 years worked in the Department of Fine Arts at McMaster University. Almost everyone who is currently involved in the production of visual arts in the Hamilton region is aware of his influence on several generations of up-and-coming artists during his time at McMaster. Directly or indirectly his presence can still be felt in the local art scene 25 years after he retired and moved from Hamilton to Victoria. Finally, and most personally satisfying, I can tell you some of my memories of Geo Wallace as a friend.

As you can see, this essay has begun so I guess you could say my problems with how to begin have been overcome. I hope what follows will be an appropriate appreciation of George Wallace, his art and his life. If you are interested in Canadian art, it sure wouldn't hurt for you to know something about him and you really should become familiar with his work. I know his sculptures and prints deserve a more scholarly presentation and discussion, but that will have to be at another time elsewhere. I'm going to ramble on here in an informal manner and interweave facts, memories, speculations and daydreams as they occur to me.

YOU HAVE JUST HEARD ME MAKE THE CLAIM that George Wallace is an important Canadian artist. Certainly his work is far more deserving of a place in our National Gallery than, say, the Brillo soap boxes of Andy Warhol. I know there are those who would reject any recognition of excellence that has not been accepted by the establishment mainstream as being merely a Philistine's reactionary matter of opinion. This cannot be helped. My only qualification in this matter is that I am approaching the age where I can pretty accurately be referred to as "an old fart" (a happy and irreverent phrase used by Wallace to mock himself in one of the later exhibitions of his work). I have spent most of my life looking at art, making art and thinking about art. This considerable accomplishment has unsurprisingly led to neither fame nor fortune nor a position of recognized wisdom and authority. Be that as it may, I have acquired a deep sense of how extremely important an activity art is. It is profoundly important for all of us — especially in these dark days when there seems to be no need for it. We as a society and civilisation will be remembered by the artistic production of our time. It reflects our activities, what we think is important and the environment we have chosen to make for ourselves. But I am telling you nothing new in saying that art is no longer a priority. Surely we can all sense our collective goals and social purpose have been monopolized by business interests, money, automobiles and uncontrollable free-fall advances in technology. Instead of providing the essential framework for our lives together, the humanities have been relegated to being merely a personal hobby of little consequence. And almost in spite of itself, a Brillo soapbox in our national collection of art may provide the valuable service of allowing us to see how trivial our collective concerns can be. Here is art presented to us by experts marching obediently to the incessant drum-roll of celebrity and wads of money. Most people are simply not interested. And who can blame them?

Although George Wallace may not have come to the attention of the most influential gate-keepers of the Canadian art establishment, his work is "established" because each of his sculptures radiates an independence that says it really belongs here, no strings attached. It is of a genre of human creation that is permanent because it is so strongly in sync with the human condition. It addresses the heart and soul of what concerns us individually when we face the Great Mystery that is being alive, our lone nakedness in the face of the universe and our having come to be. Not just those schooled in fine arts but Everyman can see it. It is not superficial. It is charged with a mood and feeling that make it part of something that has always been. With Wallace's work you cannot be forced into the way of looking at art that longs for the "always new" or "the latest fad" or the voice of the future that is divorced from our heritage. His use of Biblical and classical mythologies and stories make his work untouchable by capitalistic notions of commodities and advertisements. He has placed his work on a sure footing but it is on a path that is walked increasingly less often these days. He is, let us say, off the beaten track, which is, let us also say, the only sane position to be in when the beaten path is one of exploitation, pollution, inhumanity, greed and excess.

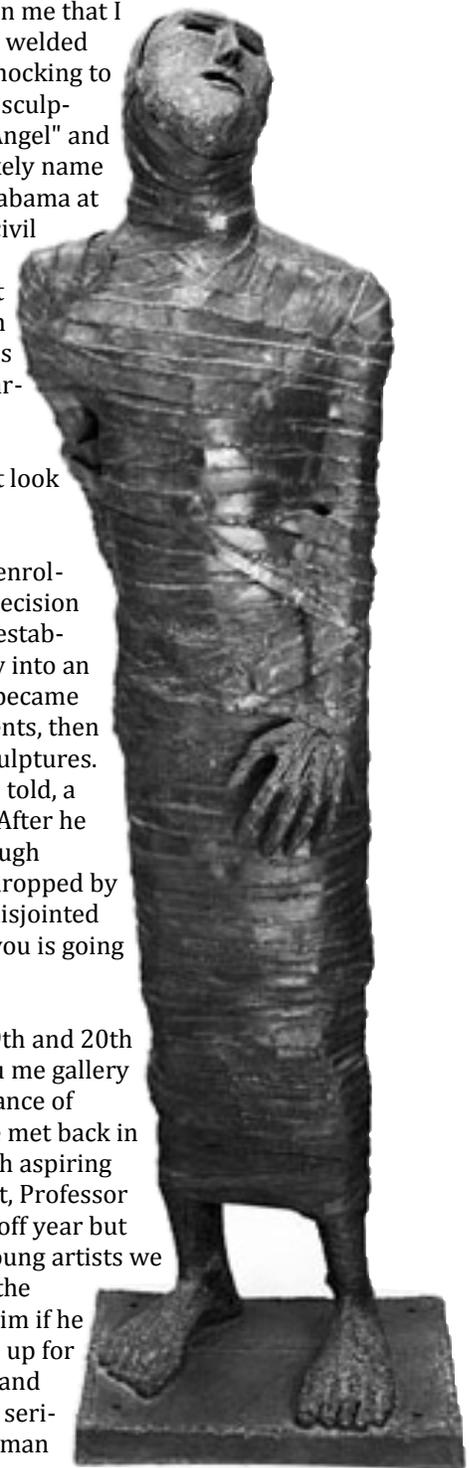
ART DEALS ULTIMATELY WITH CORE ISSUES OF LIFE and the mystery of being here. Ironically that means that the lives of most artists seem to be on the periphery of our society's concerns because our collective life is almost totally determined by financial concerns and the market. Even our much touted "democracy" can be all too easily understood in terms of "one dollar, one vote" instead of "one citizen, one vote". There is no doubt that the role of painting and sculpture have diminished in importance in our culture. It may be the job of those of us who find profound meaning in visual art to recognize and reject whatever advances its trivialization and to recognize and embrace anything that advances its enhancement in our lives. I hope I can come up with a satisfactory way of talking about these things. I certainly have found worthy support material in the art of George Wallace.

THE MEMORIES I AM ABOUT TO RECALL go back over 40 years. In the mysterious world of memory, past experiences do not rise to the surface in chronological order and sometimes they do not rise to the surface at all. As you likely know from your own experience, a memory may provoke an earlier memory or a more recent one. It may suggest a relationship or something entirely unrelated. When you are asked to recall the life of someone you know, you necessarily recall that life as it related to you personally, even when you know that life relates in a larger public way to many others when it contributes to the culture of us all. Nonetheless, you wind up thinking about your own life. We cannot help ourselves. We are signs and witnesses to each other. Geo Wallace died last year and I feel his absence because he was one of my life's "trail signs"; that is, he was a witness to at least one aspect of my life. So with his death my life is somewhat diminished because there is one less person who seems to know what I am all about. Those of us who knew him will miss him but whether or not you knew him, he has left us a fine body of work in his prints and sculptures.

ONE OF THE DEFINITIVE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCES of my life took place in the mid-sixties during my early days as a student at McMaster University. This was at a time when it was dawning on me that I was becoming an artist. In the stairwell of Mills Memorial Library were four welded steel sculptures. They were life-sized human figures and it was pleasantly shocking to me to stumble upon things of such haunting strength and bleak beauty. The sculptures were called "The Hanging Thief", "The Dead Christ", "The Benevolent Angel" and "Lazarus". Only later did I discover the sculptor was someone with the unlikely name of "George Wallace", which was also the name of the redneck Governor of Alabama at the time. This was during those years dominated by American racial strife, civil rights and the Viet Nam war. The name of the sculptor really meant nothing to me but I was pleased to discover that things of such centred and confident accomplishment were imagined and realised by a person who lived locally in my home town of Dundas and in fact was an instructor at the university I was attending. I was immediately attracted to this Wallace character's very apparent clarity of purpose. It resulted in a strongly focused, central image which was something to which I aspired in my own work. In my spare moments I would gravitate to that stairwell and sit alone in their powerful aura and just look at and be with those magnificent creations.

For my next year of schooling I expanded my English studies to a combined enrolment in the Fine Arts program with Wallace as one of my instructors. This decision proved to be decisive for the way my life has come to be. My already firmly established practices of drawing, painting and sculpting became focused and grew into an obsession and a way of life. Luckily I met others with similar interests who became life-long friends, and luckily I got to know Wallace — first as one of his students, then as a hired hand who helped him install a few of his commissioned welded sculptures. While working side-by-side with him, conversations were built, stories were told, a rapport was achieved and I am happy and proud to say we became friends. After he retired from McMaster and moved to Victoria we casually kept in touch through Canada Post and when he came back to visit this area of the world he often dropped by my place for a visit. Our conversations were as wide-ranging, unifying and disjointed as I'm sure this account of the facts and memories I am about to share with you is going to be.

AT McMASTER A FELLOW FINE ARTS STUDENT in Dr. Walton's engaging 19th and 20th century art classes was Bryce Kanbara. He now is an artist who runs the you me gallery on James Street in Hamilton and is one of the pivotal reasons for the renaissance of James Street North as a growing cultural contribution to Hamilton. When we met back in the mid-60's Bryce and I had an instantaneous rapport because we were both aspiring artists and each could see in the other that he was not alone. As it turned out, Professor Wallace's print-making course offered etching every second year. It was an off year but Bryce and I decided we needed to learn to etch immediately. As impatient young artists we had our own unarticulated agenda, and we were full of beans, so we cut out the middle-men and went straight to Wallace's residence in Dundas and asked him if he would teach us etching. As a professional professor he could have said, "Sign up for my next course", but he didn't. He seemed pleased with our outrageousness and consented to our request. I think he could sense Bryce and I were unusually serious about art and he wanted to encourage that characteristic. This beautiful man on his own time met with us once a week for several weeks and voluntarily gave us a free, off-the-record, non-credit course in etching. Armed with this knowledge, Bryce and I bought our own paper, ink and zinc plates then, without permission, we moved into the McMaster print room, secretly claiming the unused room for our personal studio. At that time Fine Arts students could make use of the studios by signing out a key from the offices then returning it when finished. One of the times we signed out the key we went and had a personal key made for ourselves so we could get in and use the print room any time we wanted during off hours. And this we did, staying after hours, and when the school term ended, all summer, many times etching and drawing till the morning sun was pouring in the windows. Often we put in twelve or fourteen hour work days. Eventually we were caught, chastised and kicked out by the authorities, but it was a great learning experience. I'm sure we appeared to be a couple of sloppy undisciplined and irreverent hippies, but we were learning to be working artists. For those of you



who don't know, becoming an artist is a transformation you feel possessing you like falling in love. In some way it is beyond your control and you do not need official recognition or diplomas for things like that.

There was no discernible art scene in Hamilton at that time and even though there were just two of us, Bryce and I were making an artistic community, as many artists have done and as artists will always do. For what it's worth, I tend to think of this as the first step in the Hamilton Artists Inc's coming to be. Not long after this we rounded up a group of fellow artists to exhibit our work together. This led to the opening of the Hamilton Artists Co-op Gallery, much to the delight of George Wallace who thoroughly approved of this action. The Co-op grew into the Hamilton Artists Inc and when Sam Robinson was its administrator (an era I think of as The Golden Age of Hamilton Artists Inc.), an ambitious exhibition of George Wallace's work was organized as a tribute to our mentor. To accompany this show a catalogue of his work was pulled together by Bryce Kanbara with layout by Brian Kelly, photographs of the work by Jim Chambers and an introductory essay by me. Wallace was flattered he had been asked to exhibit and that we were taking the trouble to document his major works in a catalogue, so he made a splendid woodcut poster to announce this show. A copy of that print that he gave me has hung in my front hall as an integral part of my home for over a quarter of a century. For this 1983 exhibition Wallace surprised everyone by painting a couple of his sculptures which we had just seen a few days before in their raw, welded steel form. He coloured the robes of one a bright red and the robes of the other a bright yellow ("Lazarus Risen From The Dead" and "Benevolent Angel"). The "George Wallace" catalogue we had produced was printed in black and white and contained images for all his major sculptures to date, unpainted. On the night of the opening I jokingly presented Wallace with one of the catalogues. Instead of reading just "George Wallace" on the cover, I altered it to read "The George Wallace Colouring Book". I'm glad to say this delighted him and he was to make ironic reference to it numerous times over the years.

WHEN I FIRST HAD WALLACE AS AN INSTRUCTOR in a studio class at McMaster, all I knew about him (other than the fact he was the creator of some magnificent sculptures) was his ominous reputation of being an intimidating, perceptive and unapologetically harsh critic of student work. He was unfamiliar with me at the time. On one of our first encounters he looked at something I was working on and informed me (with a delivery that made me think he was impersonating the haughty dismissiveness of the British actor, Sir John Gielgud), "You can't draw, Mr Yates." He was living up to his reputation. If he was hoping to provoke a reply from me, he didn't get one because in my shy youthful arrogance I didn't believe his comment then, and in my elderly dottiness I don't believe it now. I'm not sure what he saw — maybe he thought I was drawing too big. Wallace thought that to be able to draw with

discipline and accuracy you should draw "size as"; that is, the drawing appearing under the point of your pencil should appear to the eye to be the same size as the thing being drawn. There was a simple way to test this. On your paper draw, say, an oval to represent the head of a person who will act as your model. Now take a piece of glass the same size as your paper, hold it up the same distance from your eyes that your paper was when you drew the oval. Trace an oval around the head of your model on your glass and place this oval over the oval you have drawn on the paper. They should be exactly the same size if you are drawing "size as". Most people draw bigger than they see. I once talked to Wallace at an opening that included some drawings at the Art Gallery of Hamilton and he was quite amused at the Mount Rushmore proportions of the figures portrayed. They were considerably larger than life size and this humoured him in a quiet way. He smirked at these drawings as though the person who drew them had told an off-colour joke not quite appropriate for the situation, to be tolerated maybe but certainly not to be encouraged.

Another time in class, a figure in one of my drawings was of a naked starving African child copied from a Time magazine news story. He did not see the photograph I used as a model but just looked at my work and asked, "Why don't you draw in his genitals?" I replied, "They are as visible as possible: she's a girl." He smiled wryly as if to say, "Yeah, sure thing, Yates," and turned away to give his attention to the next student. I guess he did not want his students to be squeamish about portraying male genitals. He certainly wasn't himself. The nakedness or non-descript clothing in his work cannot be identified with an era and therefore is not restricted to one moment in the past but to the here and now which incessantly move with us into the future. In a late self-portrait he is naked with an amulet around his waist and is holding up a social insurance card. This is pretty funny stuff. His social concerns satirically have something to do with his artistic concerns which in turn have something to do with his social concerns. There is no separation between art and life.

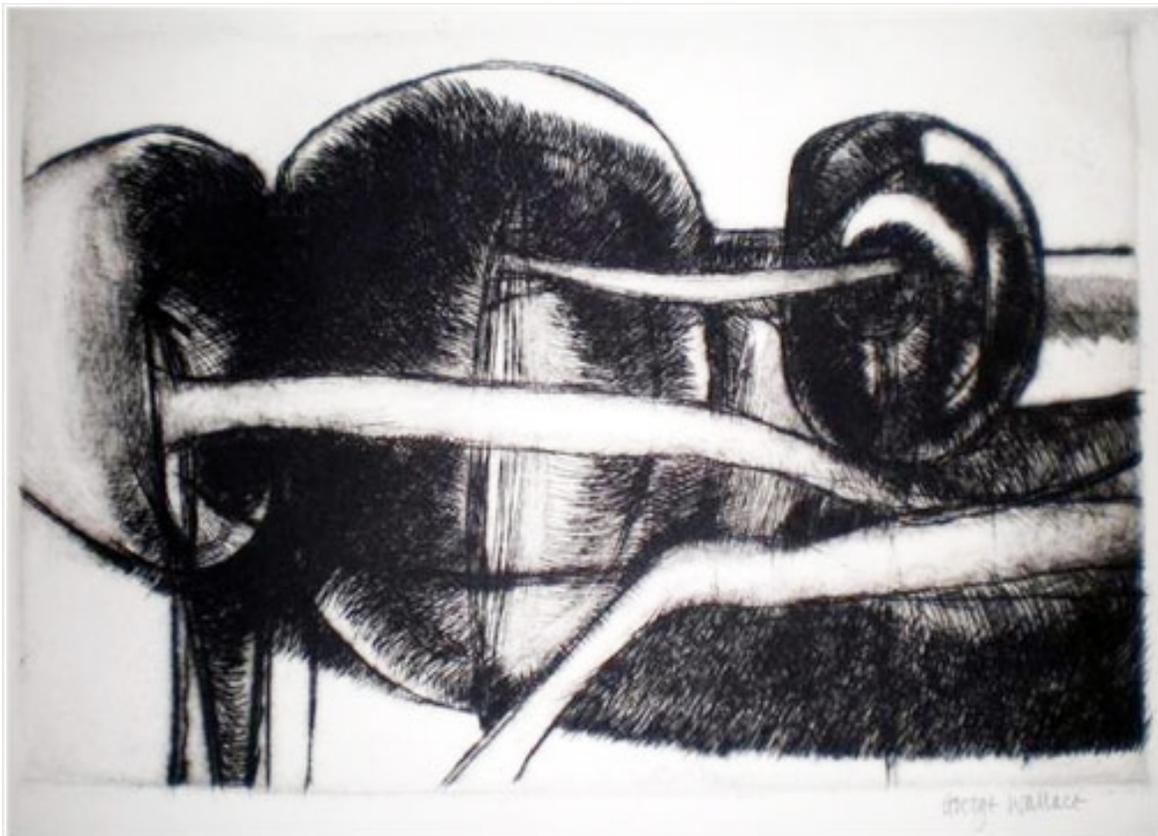
WALLACE'S WORK MAKES ME ACUTELY AWARE of the difference between what is implied by the words "naked" and "nude". "Naked" is a condition of facing the eternal, infinite universe unarmed and alone. "Nude" is more like a costume, a part of a wardrobe; it is "social" and deliberately for the approving eyes of others. Wallace's sculptures are naked. Shortly after he had his show of sculpture and graphics at Hamilton Artists Inc in 1983, I wrote an essay for the Inc newsletter called "Our Sex and Art" in which I made reference to Wallace's work: "Just imagine all the sculptures in George Wallace's recent exhibition as female instead of male. Offended men and women would be picketing the place. The brutalization of women! A legless lady, naked and screaming. A naked woman hung. Numerous women in bondage. As women Wallace's sculptures would be different. The show would range from slightly to grossly obscene. Yet as men they are powerful images, saying something to both men and women about the human condition. Why is this? Why should this be so?"

AS A STUDENT I DID EDITORIAL CARTOONS for the student newspaper. On several occasions Wallace would comment on them to me. He seemed to appreciate my sense of satire. A sense of satire was certainly something he himself had in abundance. Around that time I also did posters for on-campus events. One of my posters was a warning against venereal disease for the Students Health Services. It portrayed a baby cupid shooting a heart-pointed arrow, but behind him was a crouching monster pulling the little cupid's bow back with deadly force. Wallace commented on it in a way that told me he thought it was pretty good. To have the approval of someone whose work I admired made me feel pretty good. I remember he seemed to look more favourably on my extracurricular activities than on my class projects and I took this as encouragement to participate in the real world. When regional government was being forced on the smaller municipalities in this region I printed a few "old" posters on the English Department's Washington press that advocated "Home Rule" for Dundas and the separation of Dundas from Wentworth. One poster was a reproduction of a protest against Dundas joining Wentworth from a 19th century newspaper that I researched in the library. These projects met with Wallace's witty and smiling approval. I also wrote a satirical "Modest Proposal" inspired by the work of Jonathan Swift in which I solved all the problems for all the people of Canada. I published it as a pamphlet and his lofty and generous appreciation is a cherished memory to me.

George Wallace had a keen interest in the goings-on in Dundas while it was his hometown. He knew I grew up there, loved the place and had a certain radical understanding of what it was all about. In the early 70s I designed a poster that was pinned up all over town announcing the annual Dundas Ravine Bash, a recurring illegal and slovenly drinking festival which I tried to elevate into an event sympathetic to saving the things worth saving about Dundas that were quickly disappearing. Wallace occasionally would want to hear stories out of Dundas's history. I told him about the profound differences between Dundas and Hamilton, that the two communities should never be confused or come under one local government because they had different takes on what it means to live together in a community. Hamilton was under the influence of powerful establishment-oriented upper class exploiters like Sir Alan MacNab and his obscenely famous Dundurn Castle. These snobs hoped to establish a Canadian aristocracy complete with a large riff-raff lower class to serve them. The story of Dundas was the friendly neighbourhood down-home opposite. One night George Rolph of Dundas was tarred and feathered by MacNab's henchmen for opposing his ideolo-

gical and political stands. Rolph and all those who wanted radical reform hoped his brother (John Rolph) would be the new President of Canada after the 1837 Upper Canada Revolution. William Lyon MacKenzie, who led the revolt to overthrow the privileged and make a true commonwealth, had once lived on Baldwin Street in Dundas. And part of the glorious mythology of Dundas that every school child knew, was that MacKenzie's Cave on the escarpment above town is where the legendary MacKenzie hid from the Empire's forces after the failed revolution. When Dundas became an official town in 1847 it took the laid back residents a few years to get around to electing a mayor and governing body because they functioned just fine without them. But the impatient authorities of the Crown in Toronto insisted on having someone in Dundas responsible for collecting taxes for them. A significant fact in understanding Dundas is that the first man in that town to be thrown in jail was trying to prevent a tree from being chopped down. As sure as Dundas lost its Home Rule to Hamilton in recent years, alas, the tree in question was indeed chopped down. Wallace enjoyed these stories. When he moved to Dundas it was still a beautiful place, the town of my boyhood. The town stopped abruptly where country farmland began, at Creighton Road which was the first street you would come to beyond his house out the Governor's Road. Steam engines came into town right up Hatt Street. Milk was delivered to homes by horse-drawn carriages well into the '60s from one of two dairies to service the town. But things began changing due to outside forces, and not for the better. Dundas now has no dairies and neither does Hamilton. As we move further and further away from what really sustains us, God knows where our milk comes from. Certainly not from the dairy farms out the Governor's Road which have all been converted to subdivisions.

Wallace's curiosity about the town once prompted him to phone me to see if I knew who kept the wonderful huge vegetable garden on Dundas Street. It was like a little market garden farm smack in the middle of town just a block from Town Hall. It belonged to the grandparents of an old acquaintance of mine. Wallace's love of gardening had a lovely by-product of tales of fighting groundhogs. His best one was of Helen Brink, a splendid potter (who made my favourite personal mug and bowls). With admiration tinged with awe, Wallace told me that this gentle and peaceful woman accidentally killed a groundhog trying to scare it out of her garden. To justify the killing she came to the conclusion that she had to eat it, so the groundhog was cooked. Wallace had the highest praise and respect for Helen and the course of action she chose, "but to have to share that meal... poor Andrew," he said (Andrew being Helen's husband).



Large Excavations, St. Austell, George Wallace

THE MANUAL LABOURERS WALLACE WOULD CALL ON to assist him erect some of his welded sculptures included Romano Dreossi and myself. We helped install "Jacob Wrestling the Angel" in a private backyard above Dundas and "Noah Releasing A Raven" on a private deck below the escarpment in south central Hamilton. I remember Geo had a ball-peen hammer he was very fond of that had a special sculptural handle made by his son Mark that he lovingly used to persuade his creations to co-operate. I also remember he would not hesitate to ask us, his assistants, for our opinions about the sculpture's orientation and the direction it should be placed, almost as though he was not sure of what was best to do. Romano's enormous confidence and his larger-than-life joie de vivre pleased Wallace. He would politely listen to our suggestions but the final solution was always what he had initially imagined, and we all agreed it was always right. His wife Margaret's opinion of what he was doing was often just below the surface of anything he had to say about it. He would use her comments to lure a comment from others. At a Carnegie Gallery exhibition of his graphic work he said, "Margaret says this work is not authentic because I have no business portraying Arab subjects. Do you agree?" Or when he was working on "Jacob Wrestling the Angel", the sculpture was partially completed and lying down, not yet vertical the way the finished sculpture was to be installed. He told me that when Margaret came into his workspace and saw what appeared to be a naked man mounting another man, one lying on top of the other in a passionate embrace, she was quite shocked. "She thought it was homo-erotic," he said, then asked, "What do you think?" But he had a very good eye, especially for his own work. His later works are whimsical and humorous in the same way Jonathan Swift or Honore Daumier are humorous. It is serious humour. There is an implied recognition and understanding that human foibles prevent mankind from achieving social justice and other desirable things for our life together. In preparation for his last sculptural project, the bronze heads of "Ten Characters from a Spanish Comedy", he made the waxes of the heads in Victoria then shipped them all the way across the country to his friend John Miecznikowski in Ontario to have them cast in bronze. John told me that one of the lips on one of the figures had minor damage and he repaired it. When Wallace saw the completed bronzes he immediately noticed the lip of the figure in question and said, "That's not right," and proceeded to correct it.

WHEN HE RETIRED FROM TEACHING Wallace moved to Victoria, British Columbia. In getting rid of excess baggage he had accumulated in Dundas, he gave me a small real bronze cannon to give to my son, Gregory. I always associate this cannon with his interest in sailing ships. While at McMaster Wallace wrote at least three books as aids to teaching art. One was on sailing ships, another on the artist's workshop and I think a third was on wild animals, all illustrated by paintings out of art history. When he came back to Hamilton for business or pleasure, Geo would sometimes drop by my place for a visit. One time, when my daughter Stephanie was about 4 or 5, we joined her at the dining room table where she was totally absorbed in colouring with crayons. We adults began to talk and catch up with what had gone on in our lives since we had last seen each other. It wasn't too long before a focused silence came over us as a piece of Stephanie's paper began making the rounds. From Stephanie it went to Geo, and then to me, then back to Stephanie, each of us responding to what the person before us had done, making a few marks with a crayon before passing it on. It went around and around until we all smiled approvingly and mutually agreed our masterpiece was complete. In this way the three of us made a communal drawing which Steph and Geo reminisced about a decade or so later when they chatted at the opening of the Wallace exhibition at the Art Gallery of Hamilton in 2001. Geo also told Steph he remembered the robins nesting above our side door which she as a child had insisted that he come with her to see. And she could not have shown a more interested observer of nature.

In one of his letters from B.C. Wallace wrote, "A note on the weather: We have had a night and a day of rain and this evening the clouds are like a low grey ceiling which obscures the Sooke hills to the west and filters the light so that the gardens are a brilliant green like that in some Pre-Raphaelite paintings — like that strange and startling green that you find in the fields of County Clare as your plane comes in to land at Shannon on a spring morning, & which we get here because a similar rain-laden wind so often sweeps in on this coast from the ocean stretching immense to the west."

And I recall many of his poetic observations — like relating the flight of grackles from the trees in his backyard in Dundas to his mood and the events of the day. When I worked at the equipment room in the athletic complex at McMaster, Wallace would come in for a swim a few times a week. For a period of time I remember him giving me updates on a pair of Canada geese which he saw in passing every day on his way to work. They were nesting in a very awkward place near the 102 Highway and his reports continued right up to the unpromising but successful birth of their goslings.

ONCE WE WERE RETURNING IN HIS CAR from John Miecznikowski's foundry in Troy when a huge bird of prey flew across the road right in front of us. Geo who was driving the car said, "What was that?!" I, who could turn my head and follow the creature's flight said, "I think it was an owl." With his eyes fixed on the road ahead he said, "Yes, yes, it was an owl." We then recalled that his friend and university colleague, the philosopher George Grant, had a favourite saying from Hegel, and it went something like, "The owl of Minerva only takes flight after darkness descends upon us." We took this to mean that wisdom becomes active only after the light of one way of doing things has run its course and we are ready for a new one. This, of course, is to be understood in political terms, and in terms of time, as something needed now. Wallace was fond of Grant who was a fellow professor at McMaster at the time. He admired Grant's insights and the clarity and depth of his thought and once in a while would quote him. The two men were friends but outwardly they were quite different. George Wallace was a very neat and tidy man. He was always well groomed in a relaxed and comfortably tweedy way. His bald head assured that his hair was never messy. He was very polite and always had good manners. George Grant was also polite with extremely good manners, but was dishevelled, with unruly hair and holes in the front of an old worn sweater, and a wild toothless smile when he forgot to wear his dentures. He smoked and was overweight and did not seem remotely physically fit. Where Wallace would smile sardonically, Grant would laugh out loud. And these two men were the best. They both had a grasp of The Good and goodness, and it manifested itself as excellence in their work. Grant may have looked unruly and sloppy but his thoughts and his writing were clear, tidy, robust, fit and poetic. He was considered by many to be Canada's foremost political philosopher and I was attracted to his public stands on various issues. He spoke out against dangerous policies of the government that threatened justice. He wanted us to think more deeply about what we are doing. He thought it was crucial for us to notice that the sickness affecting the modern world was also infecting almost all aspects of human endeavour. He wondered if art was becoming merely subjective entertainment. He noted that "Art is used to enfold us in the acceptance of what we are, not as an instrument of a truth beyond us." I felt this was the type of thing I needed to hear, so although I was no longer an official student, I approached Dr. Grant and asked if I could sit in on his classes. He welcomed me with open arms but made it clear I would get no official credit for it if I didn't enrol. That was okay by me. I sat in on his course "Technology and the Good" and his graduate class on Plato. Wallace was pleased I had discovered his friend, George Grant.

Among my valued possessions is an etching Wallace sent me along with an amulet he made to ward off evil spirits. He wrote: "As you see I am sending you two historical relics. The etched self-portrait of me trying to look like George Grant will be appreciated by you as it can be by no one else but yourself. The other object — the Amulet — will be treated with the respect it undoubtedly deserves. It is of course usually worn beneath the undershirt hanging on a piece of sweat-soaked string around the neck. Some years ago I made a similar amulet for Romano Dreossi and even that hardened Italian cynic has been forced to admit the good it has done him. Even if the sad darkness of your mind prevents your recognizing its remarkable powers, you will surely be pleased with the rugged charm of its handicraft! Cheers! Geo."

If I remember correctly, Wallace told me that Margaret had some beautiful antique teacups which had been passed down in her family that were so precious to her they never used them. When Grant visited Wallace he liked Margaret's prized teacups so much he insisted on their taking tea from them. Grant's attitude was probably that these vessels are useful objects of excellence and we must use them so they can be what they are fit for, and maybe some of their essence will rub off on us. No cup was ever broken but Wallace took delight in describing Margaret's horror



as Grant laughed and talked with a cigarette hanging out of his mouth with the legendary two inches of ash waiting to drop down his shirt front and treating the irreplaceable teacup in his hand as casually as if it was a paper cup. I never saw these two very special men, relaxed and chatting together as friends over tea, a beer or gin and tonic, but it really would have been something to see and hear. Another thing they had in common was that in public they both usually wore a shirt and tie and jacket. They came from a more genteel time when a university degree was rare and meant something different than it does today. When they were young men, wearing a tie and jacket was a sign of respectability. During my youth, the time of hippies, this mode of expression became far less fashionable, to the extent that to me a young man in public wearing a suit and tie now has come to mean "an impersonation of respectability". He is either going to try to sell you something or he is a con man. And we all know the con man is the nicest guy in the world, especially if he's wearing the same uniform as a politician, a lawyer or a used car salesman. In many ways the same things that can be said of a suit and tie can now be said of a university education. And the same can be said of people who claim to be "experts". They are a dime a dozen. I don't want to get into a digression about the experts who decide what our public collections of art are going to be, though I feel myself leaning in that direction. I'll leave it to you to guess anything more I might have to say about that.

WHEN I WAS IN MY LAST YEAR AT McMASTER, approaching the final exams, I guess you could say I had a crisis of belief in the system that many people of my era had. The wiser ones of my contemporaries successfully obtained their diploma then burned it publicly on stage to show they thought it was worthless. They received instant notoriety but they still had their degree and I'm sure it has served them well over the years. I probably believed the same things they did at that time, but the pointlessness of it kicked in a few months earlier for me. I didn't write the final exams and became a drop-out. I received no degree. I didn't feel my calling was to teach or work for the art establishment — I wanted to make art. For that I felt I didn't need a diploma or the recognition of authority that it represents. So, I had no degree either to burn or to fall back on later. I seem to have always been more interested in learning than in having learned, if you know what I mean. That is still the case. As far as my education is concerned I lucked out in studying under the best. I had both George Wallace and George Grant as teachers. Years after I had left McMaster, Wallace invited me to participate in an Alumni Exhibition at the Mac Art Gallery. He was either supervisor or curator of the show. I reminded him that I was not an alumnus, that I never did graduate, and he said it didn't matter, I had studied at Mac and he wanted me in the show. He came to my house and picked a painting from my Canadiana Suite called "The Last Spike" to be part of that exhibition. I got lots of positive feed-back so I'm glad I took part. Years later on one of his trips back to Ontario after his retirement to B.C., he came to visit me. He asked what I was working on now and I showed him a couple of my recent paintings which were shaped and sculpturally stretched canvases. These were works I really liked and enjoyed doing so I was happy to show them to him. He expressed an appreciation of all the work and skill that went into stretching and shaping the canvas, but he did not commit himself or volunteer an expression of what he thought of the art object itself. For a few moments I almost felt like a student again. After all these years he was still "the Master" and whether or not I needed his approval, I still wanted it. I did not press him for a more complete critique or appreciation, and he did not give it.

I SHOULD SAY A FEW WORDS ABOUT McMASTER University where George Grant and George Wallace both taught. As I am writing this, McMaster is threatening once again to severely curtail the Art History program. This is an on-going theme at Mac as they grow more and more supplementary to big business and corporate interests. The humanities seem to be nothing more than an irrelevant inconvenience to the misguided people in control because they concern themselves with few things other than how comfortable they can be in the monolithic embrace of capitalism and technological happenings. About 30 years ago George Grant uncomfortably left McMaster to take a less prominent job at Dalhousie University in Halifax. He was Canada's best known philosopher. He quit McMaster in a principled stand of protest against the direction the university was taking. I cannot remember the details, but I do know that in the intervening years either the standards prerequisite for a principled stand have dropped considerably or things are an awful lot worse in the United States of America than in Canada. A few years ago there were news stories of a prominent professor leaving his university in the States for what seemed much the same reasons Grant had left McMaster decades ago. This American professor, who was considered a coup acquisition for McMaster, came to find fulfillment up here where things were so much better. They are certainly much worse now than in Grant's time. Wallace would be saddened by what is happening in his old department at McMaster but I do not think he would be surprised. A new darkness is settling in. Let's hope that somewhere the owl of Minerva is taking flight.

ONE DAY I GOT A PHONE CALL from a gallery in Victoria that carried Wallace's work. The caller wanted to inform me of an art review that had appeared in a national newspaper a few days before. They thought I would be interested because they knew I knew Wallace and had written the catalogue introduction to his work when he had the show at Hamilton Artists Inc. The review was of the work of John Hartman who (like me) had studied under Wallace years before at McMaster. In the article I believe it was mentioned that Hartman had named Wallace as an inspira-

tion and influence in his development as an artist. It also mentioned that Gary Michael Dault, the art critic, had called George Wallace "the worst artist in the world" — not, mind you, "one of the worst artists in the world" but "the worst artist in the world". It was an absurd comment, the type that carelessly flamboyant people in the arts are liable to deliver from time to time. Let's just say it was as absurd as Wallace telling me 30 years before that I couldn't draw. Since the comment about Wallace was broadcast in a national public forum, I figured it needed a public reply. I wrote a letter to the editor which was printed handsomely, accompanied by a Jim Chamber photograph of Wallace's splendid sculpture, "Lazarus Risen From The Dead". My letter listed places where the public could see Wallace's work first-hand. I then invited readers to decide for themselves whether or not Gary Michael Dault simply had problems with his vision or perhaps he was "the worst art critic in the world". Wallace himself said not one word about the above incident to me. The Victoria gallery owner called back to thank me after seeing my letter. About life in general Wallace had no bitterness about him whatsoever. He was actually very humble about his considerable achievements. And thankfully we have no reason whatsoever to believe that the art critics today and our contemporary experts who decide what should go into public collections have any more a clue of what is truly significant than their counterparts of a hundred years ago. You will remember Cezanne and Van Gogh were dismissed by the art experts of their day, as were the Group of Seven in Canada.

Many people consider the height of Canadian sculpture to be the memorial at Vimy Ridge in France. It is a great achievement by a sculptor named Allward. He also did the sculptures of Justice and Truth that stand outside the Supreme Court of Canada in Ottawa. These latter works were intended for another project that was not realised. They sat in storage in a garage out of the public's eye for 50 years before being "discovered". Let's hope that some of Wallace's sculptures that are stored in a basement somewhere await a similar fate. It just may be the Canadian way to be slow to thrust accomplishments from one of its own into the limelight, and even then it is more Canadian and thought to be for the best if they remain somewhat anonymous. I am pretty confident, not being an "official" expert myself, that the images George Wallace has created for us are in it for the long haul.

IT CAN BE ENTERTAINING TO FIND HELD UP in front of us those celebrities who, in the opinion of the experts, are worthy of notice. But we mustn't allow them to completely block our vision and ability to see for ourselves what is in front of us. Rolof Beny was a Canadian photographer who received a considerable amount of fame in the 1960s. He was very well known with a high profile back then though I haven't heard mention of him for decades. At that time he came out with a big coffee table art book. One of the images included in it was an atmospheric photograph of Wallace's haunting sculpture, "Lazarus". I mentioned to Wallace that I had seen his sculpture reproduced in this "famous" book and he told me Beny had admired that sculpture and had even toyed with the idea of buying it. Because Rolof Beny had achieved national fame and Wallace was relatively unknown, I remember suggesting that I was surprised that Beny didn't generously offer him a signed photographic print of the sculpture in exchange for the sculpture itself. If that had ever happened, of course, according to the experts we would be expected to feel that Wallace was really getting the best of the deal. He replied to that with a wry smile and an ironic, "Indeed." His sense of humour was always close to the surface. When he was commissioned to do the sculpture for the McMaster Arts Quadrangle it was to be a memorial in honour of Carey Fox, a benefactor of McMaster University. He was asked why he did a "Man Releasing Eagles". He replied, "Well, I couldn't very well do a sculpture of a man standing there holding a big bag of money."

GEORGE WALLACE ENJOYED GOSSIP but there was nothing malicious about it. He found sympathetic and empathetic humour in the foibles of humankind of which he was a full-fledged member. The Ship of Fools as it applied to himself was the subject of one of the prints he did for his annual hand-made Christmas cards where he portrayed what appears to be himself and Margaret plying the waters in their boat waving "Greetings" to all of us out there in a similar situation. About his colleagues at Mac (who will remain nameless) he might say, "She's a queer bird, isn't she?" or "I think he's a bit dotty, don't you?" There was a sense of irony in his recognition of mankind's predicament and he saw there was a certain amount of foolishness in even our recognition of our foolishness. Quite often when he stated an opinion he would end it with a question almost if he was hoping you would back him up and become complicit in whatever it was he was thinking. Or if not, at least the question would provide an opening for an exchange of ideas. He would say of Mulroney's government, "These men don't seem intelligent — they're not too bright, are they?" And he would say something like, "Italian opera is somewhat absurd, don't you think?" He loved Bach and Baroque music.

While in his company I heard praise for Margarite Larmand's teaching, Doug Moore's artistic ability, the prints and booklets of Margaret Capper. He had a deep admiration for the sensitivity of John Mieczkowski's drawing. He expressed a fondness for T.R. MacDonald's painting of a nude before a mirror and he believed the model was Rae Hendershot, MacDonald's wife. Once when he saw a Hugh Galloway painting that was populated with numerous fig-

ures I heard him muse aloud to himself, "I wonder where Hugh meets such strange exotic women?" At a book launch Geo said to me, "Look over there: Paul Fournier... Doesn't he look like Christ?" That image pleased him but he didn't particularly like the way the photographs of his work were cut from their backgrounds in Greg Peters' book called Images of Vulnerability. He thought that the classical Harold Town drawings with their broken lines were weak imitations of the far more fluent and unbroken line drawings of Picasso. When Toronto was getting the Henry Moore collection for the AGO, Moore was being praised by the press as the greatest sculptor of the 20th century but Wallace did not seem to think too highly of him. He did say that Moore had done some not bad things in carved wood. At an exhibition of Inuit art, while everyone else raved about the soapstone carving, he stated his preference and admiration for the carvings in whale bone. He also thought that those in the know believed that the Mona Lisa was an invaluable object for the Louvre because it attracted the crowds like a magnet so the really interesting art could be seen with fewer visitors to impede you. On more than one occasion I heard him praise the paintings of Bonnard, the drawings of Degas, the sculptures of Reg Butler, the prints of Rouault. He loved the work of Goya and sent students down to Julius Lebow's Westdale Gallery where they could see Goya etchings in real life up close. He once snidely suggested that Andy Warhol's Tomato Soup Can would be in the ideal place if it was hung in the soup aisle of a supermarket. His deep appreciation of German Expressionist prints found a generous expression in his influence on McMaster's art acquisitions. With his advice they assembled one of the best collections of Expressionist prints in the world.

Quite often when he saw me, first he wanted to know how Donna, my wife, was doing, then he would want to know what I was reading at the time. He loved to read and would recommend what he was reading — John Le Carre spy stories, Seamus Heaney poetry, Flann O'Brien novels, Susan Sontag essays. He recommended Celine's wartime trilogy to George Grant which set Grant off on a new way of thinking what art was about. One day he came across me examining reproductions of the paintings of Andrea del Sarto in a book in Mills Library. I was attracted to certain Del Sarto paintings in which he drew with the paint in a manner that reminded me of some of the looser things of Degas. I can't remember or reconstruct the stream of consciousness that guided our thoughts that day, but somehow that particular conversation ended with his recommendation that I look at the watercolours of Turner.



UNFORTUNATELY WALLACE USED CORTEN STEEL for his out-of-doors welded sculptures. It was a new product at the time, claimed by the manufacturers to form a protective patina as it aged to become corrosion resistant. When Stelco Towers and Jackson Square were built, Corten steel was used to showcase Stelco's promising new product. We were told it was going to oxidize to a blue colour, stabilize and stop rusting. I do not know the details of this material, but didn't turn out that way. Jackson Square just rusted and the bottom floor has now been painted over to cover up a nasty corroded surface. The Omni Coliseum in Atlanta, Georgia was made from Corten steel and had to be demolished a mere 25 years after construction due to excessive rusting. Like Wallace's sculptures, these buildings were supposedly built to last. Ironically for the people of Hamilton, Corten steel was developed by U.S. Steel who eventually took over Stelco causing many problems for the City of Hamilton and threatening the livelihood of our steel workers. It seems it indirectly also made problems for Wallace's Mohawk College sculpture. In 1969 I was one of a small crew of hired hands to assist Wallace in erecting his multi-figured 24 foot high sculpture ("Educational Experiment") at Mohawk.



A few years ago (in 2000), for safety reasons, this rusting sculpture was taken down and put into storage. There it remains. Let us hope Mohawk College will find the resources to breathe a Lazarus-like life back into it. It would be good to see it resurrected again, preferably out of the weather in an indoor location. I sometimes wonder if a coat of rust-proof paint would weather-proof it. And I almost think that if it was painted in primary colours (following the examples of "Lazarus Risen From The Dead" and "Benevolent Angel") it might be something Wallace would approve of. At any rate, all of Wallace's outdoor sculptures made of Corten steel should be found suitable display spaces indoors, or they should be treated with something to inhibit corrosion. Future generations deserve to be able to see these works of art and we should ensure they get that opportunity.

BRONZE IS A FAR BETTER MATERIAL FOR SCULPTURES to face the weather than Corten steel and that is what Wallace's "Balancing Act" at the Milton Court House is made of. He cast this monument at John Miecznikowski's foundry in Troy. The method for casting is called "the lost wax process". Usually a sculptor works in clay, a mould is made of his clay sculpture, a wax duplicate is made from the mould, and then another mould is made by covering the wax in a material that will harden like ceramic when it is baked in a kiln. The heat of the kiln melts the wax and it is "lost", leaving a cavity in the mould to be filled with molten bronze. Then the mould is broken away and the bronze sculpture remains. Now Wallace's method of working cut out the early steps. To make his original sculpture he preferred to work directly in wax not clay. Wax has three states that are all good for sculpting. It can be melted and poured as a liquid into shapes to harden. Or when it is partially congealed it is soft and can be worked and modelled like clay. Or when it is hard it can be sculpted like soapstone in the traditional sense of cutting and carving away what you don't want. Wallace's wax sculptures were coated then fired in the kiln. The wax was lost, which means the original was lost. There was no room for error. He could not go back to the original clay if something went wrong simply because it didn't exist.

I babysat the kiln all night on a few occasions and helped with a couple of the many pours of molten bronze. I also hammered and hack-sawed some of the various cast pieces so they would fit together. One night I was watching the kiln and the temperature was such that the wax melted and began running out. This was good. I idly poked at the molten wax with the handle of a broom and in a few moments I had a big glob of soft wax on the end of the broom handle. I pushed and pulled at it with my fingers, gave it my improvisational attention and, probably because I was inspired by the broom itself, I soon shaped the screaming head of a witch. I was pleased with the way it looked because it seemed like the sculpted figure-head on the hood of an old car or the bow-piece of an old ship. I found this very appropriate because a broom was the mythological vehicle of witches. I hung it by wires approximately parallel to the floor as if in flight and left it there thinking it would be appreciated by Geo, John and the others who worked in that shop. John Miecznikowski laughingly described to me Wallace coming in and seeing it, taking it down and muttering an iconoclast's disapproval while brutally hacking my masterpiece off the broom handle with a knife.



ANOTHER TIME, I WAS ASSISTING WALLACE coat his wax sculpture in the plaster-like gook that was to be later baked to form a mould for the bronze. We applied this gook by getting a handful of the stuff and flicking it with our hands and fingers at the wax sculpture to get it into all the cavities and contours. We tended to be working on opposite sides of the sculpture and each of us managed to be hit by quite a bit of the overspray of the other's flicking. We became quite messy. When it was time for lunch we went out, a man saw us and said he could see we were plasterers and wanted to know if we were interested in doing a job for him. Wallace smiled good-humouredly and answered him, "Look at us! We're covered from head to foot in plaster! Surely you wouldn't hire such sloppy workmen to do work for you!" At a nearby roadside restaurant we sat down for lunch and our order was taken by a very pleasant waitress who delighted Wallace. "Just look at her!" he said. "Renoir! The ripe plumpness, the smile, the demeanour! It is astounding! She is a perfect Renoir." And she was. For the next half hour that young woman moved around the room interacting with the people she served. Seeing her as if through Wallace's eyes was like having a page from an

art history text book come to life. She was quite remarkable and a visual feast. A perfect Renoir. There is however an unfortunate denouement to this story: A few years later I was in the vicinity of Troy working as a stage-hand for members of the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra who were taking classical music to rural public schools. It was lunch time and I dropped in the same restaurant in the hopes of seeing the Renoir again. Sure enough, the young woman was still working there but she had lost weight and looked slim and healthy, closer to being a subject for Playboy magazine than a Renoir painting. I told Wallace what had come to pass. He remembered the waitress, smiled and said, "It's a shame."

WORKING WITH GEO I HEARD MANY FASCINATING STORIES. One that sticks in my mind was of a time in his life shortly after he and Margaret were married. I have always imagined this took place in the vicinity of St. Austell, the site of his splendid mine-working prints, and that the worker of the story was one of the miners, but this may just be my own projection. It seems the newly weds rented a cheap flat with extremely thin walls. On the other side of the wall from their bed was a toilet. Their working man neighbour stayed at the pub every night till closing time. By then Geo and Margaret had already gone to bed. They heard the man come home and enter the toilet. Then a foot or two from where they had laid down their weary heads, the sudden sound of piss hitting the water in the toilet bowl commenced and continued and continued, and continued relentlessly without letting up for a miraculously unbelievable length of time. This was a memory of his younger days that brought that special twinkle to Geo's eye, it so pleased him in the telling of it. And it pleases me to remember his telling of it. For the last phase of his life, apparently Wallace had Alzheimer's disease and became largely disconnected from the memory of his life. A few years before he died I heard of his condition which explained why my last letter to him was never answered. But when I was working with him many years earlier, he delighted in recalling events of his younger life. I could say that I am left wondering why would the memory of the sound of a man pissing stick in his mind for so many years? Similarly (and maybe as an answer to that question) I could also ask why would his telling me of this recollection stick in my mind after more than 25 years? We are all in this together, and as the hippies used to say, no one gets out of here alive.

WALLACE HAD AN ADMIRATION FOR "the common working man". He told the story about when he was a youngster he often would go with an elderly groundskeeper to watch him train branches of the bushes in hedgerows to grow in a certain way. They would then come back later and harvest them when they were the right size and shape to be carved into walking sticks. This skilful working-class man with a desire to make beautiful objects left a big impression on Wallace as a boy. As a sculptor, often he seemed almost proud that with his welding torch, overalls and goggles he was doing the physical job of a common worker, even though what he was constructing was far from common. And the fact that he was working in steel in the region defined by "The Steel City" of Hamilton made him feel he was not only true to his materials but also to the people and culture of the environment he lived in.

I occasionally wrote Wallace to update him on Hamilton occurrences after he had retired to Victoria. I had mentioned the death of one George Wilkinson who worked as a maintenance person at McMaster. He was a wonderful guy who did heavy repair work around Mac and Geo knew and liked him. He wrote back saying, "About the death of George Wilkinson I had heard in a round-about way. The Engineers, eager to prove yet again the size of their balls, last year vandalized the "Death With Flowers" in the psychology building and I had suggested to Kim Ness that George would be the man to ask to weld a piece of metal they had torn off back on again. She asked for him and was told he was dead. From this distance it is interesting to note that most of those that one remembers from Mac are not the teachers but people doing maintenance work."

While I was helping him as a common hired hand in his garage studio in Dundas, we took a lunch break and went into the house for cheese and toast. I was surprised and deeply flattered to find my Dundas Ravine Bash poster, a poster with political protest overtones from years before, framed and hanging in his residence. After his death, when his wife Margaret, son Kit and daughter Julia came to an event honouring him at the Carnegie Gallery in Dundas, Julia told me her father also had my poster hanging in his home in Victoria. I am honoured.



SHORTLY BEFORE WALLACE LEFT DUNDAS to move to Victoria, he told me he thought his next welded sculpture was to be of a large fat man. If whatever idea he was having then was ever realised it must have been in another medium because I don't think he ever welded again once he got to British Columbia. I know that for a while he must have done some thinking in terms of a very small format because he mentioned on a couple of occasions that he would like to design a postage stamp for Canada Post.

Geo Wallace was a great person. I'm blessed and thankful I knew him. And you, my attentive and patient reader, should know that his art is relevant and meaningful and good to look at. Try to see some. I'll end this writing by sharing with you some of Geo Wallace's own words quoted from the letters and notes he sent me:

"This is a wonderful part of the world for gardening where you can plant your peas before St. Patrick's Day and have things growing through the winter. For some strange reason there are no Dundas groundhogs to chomp up everything that puts its head through the ground. So we have spent much of our time reorganizing and reworking the garden. House moving proves to be an extraordinarily time-consuming activity and retirement resembles nothing so much as a summer holiday by the sea. As you begin to suspect, these are the preliminary excuses before answering your questions about whether I am making prints or sculptures..."

"Since early March I have been reading Pepys' Diary, which becomes very much a whole time occupation... Margaret complains that instead of digging in the garden, I tend to go to bed with Pepys. (You will remember the Anglican Bishop who when asked what he did with Sunday afternoons replied, Oh I usually try to curl up on the sofa with my favourite Trollop.) Wonderful stuff... as a result I don't know when I shall escape from the English 17th century again, for when Pepys is done... there is Evelyn beckoning and then Clarendon's History of the Great Rebellion and so forth! In Ireland the 17th century was the dreadful century... but in England it sees the beginning of prosperity and was a time seething with all sorts of ideas. A seedbed of all that George Grant hates — the expansion of merchantile commerce and Newtonian empiricism! Pepys seems the very essence of the practical, well organized, more or less

honest cover-your-arse bureaucrat — a man of affairs in both senses of the word, hardworking, curious, mad about going to plays, greedy, lecherous and surprisingly honest about himself..."

"For the last few weeks I have been thinking about a character out of 7th century Ireland, Sweeney, a kingling who was a little rough and impolite to a local clergyman and was punished by being driven mad and transformed into a bird. You may have met this Sweeney in the 1939 novel by Flann O'Brien called "At Swim-Two-Birds", which if you haven't read it might amuse you and appeal to your sometimes whimsical tastes. Seamus Heaney has translated the Gaelic original of the Sweeney story in a book called "Sweeney Astray"... The story of this mad king being chased from bush to bush back and forth across Ireland by evil intentioned characters with pockets full of large stones is a wonderful image and some of Heaney's poems of commentary on these goings-on are comic, satirical and pathetic for he obviously thinks of Sweeney's fate as the prototype of the poetic life. I have been trying to find some monotype images amongst these ideas but nothing seems to have come as yet. Which is pretty well what has gone on with attempts at art over the past couple of years where production has been a few drawings, eight or nine waxes of life sized heads, characters from a supposed Comedia dell Arte, none of these heads being quite finished. In general very little has happened. I wait patiently on the Lord!"

"Dear Bob & Donna: I hope that things go well for all of you. I do from time to time get hints of Bob's doings. Bryce, from seeing you passing, reports your being alive. That same man is in process of organizing an exhibition of sculptures and prints in the Hamilton Art Gallery to take place in December of 2000. I find it hard to believe that such a mythical date exists. It is a little like wishing to take a holiday in Atlantis..."

"It was very nice to see you all in June. The time seems to have drifted away with extraordinary speed and to little effect..."

"This is a very dreary note which I began yesterday when I seemed unusually low and spastic-minded — maybe it is time that you wrote me a long entertaining Bob-Yates-like letter to cheer me up for though I am less topsy-turvy than yesterday I am quite unequal to dancing, with those other six beings, on the head of a pin. With such unsatisfactory inconclusiveness let me hope that the New Year will bring a long letter of gossip, malicious and otherwise, about all those I know of who dwell beyond the rising sun."

"Remember me to Donna and to any others for whom such a salutation might have meaning. Very best wishes, Geo."



There will be an exhibition featuring the work of George Wallace at the McMaster Museum of Art in June 2010.

A movement is afoot to resurrect Wallace's Mohawk College sculpture, "Educational Experiment" which has been in storage for the last decade. This work will be on display at you me gallery on James Street North, Hamilton this year. Contact the gallery.

"An Introduction to the Sculpture of George Wallace" by Robert Clark Yates can be read in the first issue of Hamilton Arts and Letters

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