Peter Simon began examining his father's work after receiving his first toy camera. "I inherited his passion for music, photography, and documenting people and times," he states.

On Sunday, August 17th, Peter Simon will show a retrospective of his work in his Vineyard Haven Gallery, which he opened last month with his wife, Ronni Simon. Mr. Simon will present a lecture to accompany his photographs as part of a series of Sunday Specials — appearances that began last week at the gallery. The lecture, "The Footprint of My Generation," follows the story line of Mr. Simon's life as it has applied to counter-cultures, drugs, and rock and roll in the 60s. Generations of anti-war protestors and communal living are just a few of the historical events of the era. His work also depicts icons like Grateful Dead, James Taylor, and Bob Marley.

"I see my life as full of experiences shaped by a baby boomer generation," Mr. Simon observes, "I just happen to document it.

The artist, who is also a commercial photographer, shooting family portraits, events and weddings, focuses on local landscapes, trying to capture what he describes as "the difference" of the Vineyard. His images are traditional representations of beaches, sunsets, farmland and panoramic views of the island in all its seasons.

Over the years, the direction of Mr. Simon's photography has shifted along with his personal life. "When I got married and had a kid, I realized I had to be a part of the material world," he says. "Yet, I refused to do advertising. The artist moved to the Vineyard, where he had been spending summers since childhood. "I'm not on the cutting edge anymore," he notes about the direction his work has taken, adding, "It's much different here. There aren't catastrophic horrible things, there are no people dying on the streets. With the move, I retreated into a comfort zone of family photography and sunsets. But I am lucky to have found a place to live that is so picturesque and where art is so supported and appreciated."

Mr. Simon has faced his share of challenges, but feels his constructive outlook has given him a more complete understanding of life's trials. Mr. Simon went through years of personal turmoil and struggling with the disease of alcoholism. "I didn't see the consequences of my actions. I was completely wrapped and depressed. I gave up on life," he admits.

After a year of enforced rehabilitation for repeatedly driving under the influence, Mr. Simon began his recovery. "I believe that his trials have helped his photography become more multifaceted. "I've come away with a much deeper understanding of the human dilemma," he says. "I used to be rather superficial in my outlook, it was very don't worry be happy. Now I understand that life isn't all about that. I have a fuller and deeper understanding of the complexities of life."

Through his ups and downs, Mr. Simon is optimistic for what is to come. "My life is an open book," he declares.

Simon Gallery, 54 Main Street, Vineyard Haven. For more information, call 508-693-0242.
Peter Simon is the on-the-line, singing sister Carly Simon's hit song, "Never Been Gone," to this writer: "Snuggling and the hills are green/And my friends are waiting for me/ Great ambition is all a dream/ Let me down my pride in the sea."

And then he recalls, "The line aptly describes what was going on in my head before I arrived last year. We all made so much sense, but it didn't feel like it was true to my soul — coming to the Vineyard was.

After 20 years, Mr. Simon has become an integral member of the Island community. He is omnipresent, smiling, barefoot, with a slightly nervous flutter, a wide and friendly smile, often appearing at art shows and events. In addition to his prints, stationery, and magazine work, his yearly calendars featuring his photographs have become anticipated offerings. His coffee-table retrospective, "I and Eye: Pictures of My Generation" (Lettle, Brown and Company) generated national attention, and his series of three "On the Vineyard" books have become collectibles.

Mr. Simon grew up in the arts. His three sisters were all professional singers, his mother was community activist Andrea Homan Simon, and his father, Richard L. Simon, co-founder of the publishing company Simon and Schuster Inc.

"My father always had a camera with him," Mr. Simon remembers, "and in my childhood I noticed how he would shoot everything."

Peter Simon began emulating his father soon after receiving his first toy camera. "I inherited his passion for music, photography and documenting people and times," he states.

On Sunday, August 17th, Mr. Simon will show a retrospective of his work in his Vineyard Haven Gallery, which he opened last month with his wife, Rhoda Simson. Mr. Simon will present a lecture to accompany his photographs as part of a series of Sunday Specials appearances that began last week at the gallery. The lecture, "Through the Lens: Pictures of My Generation," follows the story line of Mr. Simon's life as he has applied to counter-culture: drugs and rock and roll in the 60s, generation of anti-war protests and communal living are just a few historical events of the era. His work also depicts icons like Grateful Dead, James Taylor and Bob Marley.

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Over the years, the direction of Mr. Simon's photography has shifted along with his personal life. "When I got married and had a kid," he notes, "I found myself spending more time as a father and less as a professional."

But Simon has faced his share of challenges, but feels his constructive outlook has given him a more complete understanding of life's trials. Mr. Simon went through a period of personal turmoil and struggling with the disease of alcoholism.

"I didn't see the consequences of my actions. I was completely wrung out and depressed. I gave up on life," he admits.

After a year of enforced rehabilitation for repeatedly driving under the influence, Mr. Simon began his recovery. He believes that his trials have helped him's path become more multi-dimensional. "I've come away with a deeper understanding of human dilemma," he said. "I used to believe that life was perfect, but now I don't worry because I understand that life is perfect."

Through the ups and downs, Mr. Simon's philosophy is: "My life is an open book."

Peter and Ronni Simon are in their new gallery on Main Street in Vineyard Haven.