They say if you remember the ‘60s you weren’t really there. But Martha’s Vineyard photographer Peter Simon not only remembers the ‘60s, he has the photographs to prove it.

Simon and his trusty camera documented the counterculture – the protests, the hippies, the drugs, the communes, the gurus – and the icons of that era including the Grateful Dead, Bob Marley, Bobby Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr. and many more. He is like the baby boomer version of Woody Allen’s Zelig.

“I really believe that a lot of issues that came up in the ‘60s are just starting to take effect: gay rights, civil rights, environmental issues, the legalization of marijuana. They all started in the ‘60s,” Simon said. “I knew something special was happening then, and I was glad to be there to photograph it.”

Continued on page 16

James Taylor posing for the cover of his 1972 album One Man Dog.

Simon’s story is a familiar one to those of his generation. He grew up in a successful, affluent and talented family. His father Richard co-founded the giant publishing house Simon & Schuster. Sister Carly became a huge pop star, sister Joanna is a retired opera singer and sister Lucy – who performed with Carly as the Simon Sisters at the beginning of their careers – wrote the music for the Broadway musical *The Secret Garden* and the upcoming *Dr. Zhivago* musical.

“Growing up in that kind of family raised the bar for me,” he said. “There was a certain amount of pressure to be a success. But my ambition was tempered by my use of psychedelic drugs and my being a hippie.”

An average student at his private school, Simon was accepted into Boston University where he became the photo editor for the avant-garde *BU News*, and began to document the beginnings of the campus anti-war movement. After graduation, like many of his generation, Simon moved to a hippie commune in Vermont and went on a spiritual quest to find a guru, capturing unforgettable images of

*Continued on page 18*
And the living is easy...

Carol McManus  Broker/Owner
508.221.1139
www.cmcmanusrealtygroup.com
Timothy Leary, Ram Dass, the Hare Krishnas and Guru Maharaji along the way.

“This was all really appealing as opposed to following a normal path, a normal career,” he said.

But Simon always carried his camera and, although he may not have known it at the time, he was building a career. Besides photography, Simon’s other passion was music “The common language of the Simon family,” and he traveled the country photographing icons like Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and, of course, his sister Carly and her then-husband James Taylor. He toured with the Grateful Dead and their loyal band of Deadheads and journeyed to Jamaica with writer and frequent collaborator Stephen Davis to explore the “cultish, rather poverty-driven” reggae music movement.

His photos were published in Rolling Stone, the Village Voice, the Cambridge Phoenix and even The New York Times, but Simon found it difficult in the competitive New York media market. After marrying his wife Ronni and becoming a dad, the couple made the decision to move permanently to Martha’s Vineyard, where his family had summered since Simon was a boy.

“I always felt more at home on the Vineyard,” he said. “The scale of the island is more my scale. Big tall office buildings and trying to peddle my wares along with hundreds of other photographers was not for me. I decided to become a big fish in a small pond.”

Simon started out on the island photographing weddings, family portraits and other small jobs. But in the intervening years he published 10 books, produced a DVD retrospective of his work called Through The Lens, captured the beauty of Martha’s Vineyard for an annual calendar and opened a gallery with wife Ronni – a jewelry designer – in Vineyard Haven where his photographs are on display.

“I’m 90 percent happy with my decision,” he said. “Part of me would have liked to conquer more photographically. But this is the perfect place to live.”

Simon’s next project is a coffee table book of Vineyard photography – paying homage to his adopted home.

“The Vineyard is a beautiful, majestic, enthralling place full of life enforcement. I’m not saying it’s perfect. No place is perfect. But it’s pretty darn close.”

The Simon Gallery at 54 Main Street, Vineyard Haven is open now through December.

petersimon.com

The Simon Family, Stamford, CT 1955

PHOTO BY RICHARD SIMON