

## **A Clarion Call for Action**

Tim Toben

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I have known Thomas through my mother Carolyn for the past 25 years. Six years ago, I met with Thomas at his simple cabin in Greensboro. Characteristically, Thomas welcomed me warmly into his home and for two hours walked me through the history of Western civilization and brought me up to the present time, which calls for rapid and fundamental shifts in our great institutions—the church, government, the academy, corporations. His message was about the “fierce urgency of now,” which Dr. King and Senator Obama have so eloquently reminded us of. Thomas sent me away with books to read, not about theology, but about his beloved state of North Carolina: books about our state history, our bioregion and geography, our rivers and forests. He told me to keep them and read them, which I did. This two-hour lesson, complete with homework assignments, changed my life and professional direction. I had listened to Thomas and read his books many years, but that day, his piercing eyes and heartfelt plea were a clarion call for action—not action for Thomas, but for the planet that he so dearly loves.

My mother has two simple sayings that I’m sure were inspired by Thomas: “Do the best you can with the awareness you have,” and “What you feed, grows.” Thomas has given my family an awareness of place and time that compels us to act in new ways and do what we can to create models for the future. My wife Megan and I have begun to feed projects in organic farming, biofuel production, and green—and they are growing. Our journey is not easy. No one said that it would be. We all face financial challenges and institutional barriers to change that are large and sometimes overwhelming. When things seem especially tough in these times of upheaval, I think of those sparkling 90-year-old eyes on that fall morning. I think of the turbulence that Thomas described in the industrial, extractive economy of the 19th and 20th centuries. I think of his description of those times as the struggles of an adolescent nation. And I hear the words of a wise old owl who saw better days ahead. We are graced with his teachings and his hope for the future. The time to act individually and to elect leaders who inspire change is now. I am grateful to Thomas for showing me a way to participate in the transition to the Ecozoic Era.