



TAKE IT or LEAVE IT...

By Jim Stiles

cczephyr@gmail.com

MARK TWAIN...A CENTURY AFTER HE HITCHED A RIDE ON HALLEY'S COMET

Mark Twain once said, "I am not the editor of a newspaper and shall always try to do right and be good so that God will not make me one" Since he only briefly succumbed to that unspeakable profession, I can assume that his relationship with God was considerably more successful than mine has been. Starting the 22nd year of this "thing that will not leave," and The Zephyr's second as an internet incarnation, I have more than once remembered Sam Clemens' words.

Still it isn't as though Twain himself felt any close proximity to the Deity. In his later years, Mark Twain rarely had a kind word to say about the Almighty. He particularly reviled the hypocrisy of God's followers and loathed Christians' talent for twisting New Testament scripture to suit their needs.

"If Christ were here," he noted, "there is one thing he would not be--a Christian." He opposed war and nationalism and attacked Theodore Roosevelt's incursions into the affairs of foreign countries. He tinkered with pacifism. In "A Salutation from the 19th to the 20th Century," December 31, 1900 he wrote:

"I bring you the stately matron named Christendom, returning bedraggled, besmirched, and dishonored, from pirate raids in Kiaochoo, Manchuria, South Africa, and the Philippines, with her soul full of meanness, her pocket full of boodle, and her mouth full of pious hypocrisies. Give her soap and towel, but hide the looking glass."

Twain infuriated Roosevelt and when they were once scheduled to appear on the same stage at the same time, TR took great pains to avoid his nemesis and heckler. Twain seldom passed an opportunity to heckle and, as always, he knew where to look for the best targets. Though he once said, "The lack of money is the root of all evil," a reference to worldwide crushing poverty, he knew that too much of a good thing could ruin any man:

"Some men worship rank, some worship heroes, some worship power, some worship God, & over these ideals they dispute & cannot unite--but they all worship money."and "This nation is like all the others that have been spewed upon the earth--ready to shout for any cause that will tickle its vanity or fill its pocket. What a hell of a heaven it will be

when they get all these hypocrites assembled there!" 1901

Twain included himself among the sinners and his own greed and consumptive life cost him dearly. To his last breath, he never forgave himself.

The success of his early novels brought Twain worldwide fame and wealth of a scale he could never have imagined as a boy in Hannibal. But the gifted writer had no financial sense at all. He lived extravagantly, built a magnificent home for his family in New Haven, Connecticut, and invested wildly in dubious schemes and machines. Twain fancied himself an inventor of sorts and was fascinated by technology. He once patented a device called an "Improvement in Adjustable and Detachable Straps for Garments"



"If Christ were here," he noted, "there is one thing he would not be --a Christian."

to replace suspenders.

It was, however, his pet project, the Paige typesetting machine that destroyed his world. The machine was an intricate and complicated wonder to behold when it worked, and Twain was convinced it would revolutionize the print industry. He gambled his personal fortune on the Paige and his wife's inheritance as well.

But the Paige was unreliable, its myriad of parts broke down frequently and eventually, the Twains lost everything.

Humiliated to the point of despair by his foolishness, he was forced to file for bankruptcy. Twain nonetheless took to the lecture circuit to pay down his debts.

During his world tour in 1896, the Clemens learned that their daughter Susy, and Sam's favorite, had died of meningitis. The family was devastated. Clemens believed his decision to leave Susy in the States had contributed to her death, and had he not recklessly indebted his family, the

tour would have never occurred.

Yet, it was that same global journey that made Mark Twain a household name, from Sydney to Liverpool. Twain always noted the ironies.

But tragedy relentlessly pursued him. Eight years later, his beloved wife of 34 years, Olivia, died and, in 1908, his daughter Jean died at the family home. She had long suffered from seizures and she drowned in her own bath,

Twain included himself among the sinners and his own greed and consumptive life cost him dearly. To his last breath, he never forgave himself.

while having one.

In his final years, those who knew him best thought Sam Clemens had already died; that it was only Mark Twain who continued to walk the New York streets and attend countless affairs and banquets to honor him. Little of Sam was left.

In 1909, Twain noted, "I came in with Halley's Comet in 1835. It is coming again next year, and I expect to go out with it. It will be the greatest disappointment of my life if I don't go out with Halley's Comet. The Almighty has said, no doubt: 'Now here are these two unaccountable freaks; they came in together, they must go out together.'"

On April 21, 1910, Sam Clemens...Mark Twain died quietly at his home. On the southern horizon, Halley's Comet glowed in the fading sunset sky. A century later, his wry and candid observations of a world he both loved and loathed still make us laugh with joy, and squirm with discomfort. That was Twain.

THE BIG HEAT vs THE BIG COLD... and the relative nature of misery.

I left the United States again for Australia in November and about two weeks after my departure, Monticello was hit by a series of storms that kept everyone miserable for most of the winter. Each time the sun appeared and the temperature rose, and as hopes climbed that winter might finally be over, another blizzard would dash them. The last white-out dumped 41 inches in a day. The cumulative total by mid-March exceeded 120 inches and this morning, with Spring just hours away, more than three feet of snow still blanket my yard. When (or if) it finally melts, we can expect one of the biggest mud holes in recent history to replace the white stuff. Right now, brown ooze sounds like a pleasant change.

But I missed most of this. While my friends were enduring a winter without end, I faced the opposite in weather extremes. Across Australia, temperatures reached and remained at record highs. In Western Australia, the rain stopped falling in early November and it never so much as spit again, at least while I was there.

Because I was camping much of the time, I could not es-



Facts are stubborn things, but statistics are more pliable.

Mark Twain

THE CANYON COUNTRY
ZEPHYR
 Planet Earth Edition
JIM STILES, publisher
 PO Box 271
 Monticello, UT 84535
www.canyoncountryzephyr.com
cczephyr@gmail.com
moabzephyr@yahoo.com
All the News that Causes Fits since 1989

THE ZEPHYR, copyright 2010
 The Zephyr is produced six times a year at various global locations and made available free to almost 7 billion people via the world wide web
 The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of its advertisers, its Backbone members, or even at times, of its publisher.
 All Cartoons are by the publisher

Colorado Plateau Bureau Chief
DOUG MEYER

Contributing Writers
Martin Murie Ned Mudd
Michael Brohm Scott Thompson
Ken Sleight
Kevin Emmerich
Laura Cunningham
Willie Flocko
& The Heath Monitor Files

The Artist
John Depuy

Historic Photographs
Herb Ringer

Zephyr Pilot/Aerial Reconnaissance
Paul Swanstrom

Webmaster
Rick Richardson

cape the heat, so I lay there in my tent for days at a time, suffering from the scorching sun and, when I could find internet access, I complained to my pals in the Northern hemisphere.

They were not especially sympathetic.

I believe one of them even called me an idiot. "You're sweating and you're unhappy?" wrote one. "I have been shoveling snow all day, I can't feel my toes and I should worry about your suffering?"

I felt ashamed.

Then one afternoon, as the temperature hovered around 105 F, I was sitting in my old Datsun pickup, futilely trying to catch a breeze off the Bunbury Estuary. I noticed a tiny black speck on my bare sun-baked leg. It was moving.

Concerned but not alarmed, I pinched the little creepy critter between my fingers and flicked it out the window. But a few moments later, I eyed another one. And another. Then they began creeping up both legs. Soon I was doing nothing but studying my legs, waiting for the next intruder.



MONTICELLO,
UTAH...
SUMMER...
90 days.
WINTER...
275 days

They kept coming.

Wondering what these mini-invaders looked like, I retrieved a magnifying glass, put one of the little bastards in the palm of my hand and had a gaze. It looked hideous, like a miniature tick and still alive and I could see his legs trying to gain traction on my skin. I thought that I had most likely walked through a swarm of sand fleas, but then I began to wonder if Australia had chiggers, as they do in Kentucky. The Fear swept through me--- I had been down that road once before and I knew I needed to get these creatures off my body as quickly as possible.

But I was camped out, in the middle of nowhere, with no running water, so I did the best I could with my solar shower. After I dried, I located my can of insect repellent and sprayed my legs with enough poison to make the skin turn color. I didn't care anymore. Even after the soap and water, they kept coming, from where I couldn't say. And despite my best efforts, I spotted more of them advancing farther up my leg.

Suddenly I was gripped by flashbacks. The thought sent shivers down my recently and increasingly violated body.

CHIGGERS.

I remembered the summer of my eleventh year. My first year at Boy Scout summer camp. We had camped in an open field the night before and planned a 15 mile canoe paddle for the following day. But shortly after breakfast, I felt an uncomfortable itch emanating from the most sensitive part of the male anatomy. I sneaked a peak at the Little Fireman and it looked uncharacteristically red. It looked, in fact, to be on fire. But I said nothing, chose not to peek again and boarded my canoe for the five hour trip. By the time we reached our next stop, I was in agony.

I wandered away from my fellow Scouts and had a look.

It was horrible. It was grotesque. I was terrified.

There had been significant swelling. It looked like a fire-apple-red baseball, perched atop half a roll of pennies. If it is really true that "size matters," then it is also true that I peaked when I was 11 years old.

Mortified, but needing to share my predicament with someone, I sought out my friend Rusty and when nobody else was looking our way, I showed him my injured part.

"OH MY GOD!" he exclaimed. "That's horrible! Mr. Morey has to see this." He dragged me to my scoutmaster, a wonderfully calm and reasonable man who could always soothe us when the fear of camping and being away from our mothers became too much. Mr. Morey would know what to do.

"OH MY GOD!" he cried. "Jack! Jack!" Mr. Morey called to Mr. Steiner, the assistant scoutmaster. "You've got to see this!"

It was decided I needed medical treatment and so Mr. Steiner loaded me into his station wagon and we made a mad dash for the Leitchfield, Kentucky community hospital. We were met at the ER entrance by a stern looking nurse who wanted to know the precise nature of my ailment. I showed her.

"OH MY GOD!!!!" She summoned the doctors.

"OH MY GOD!!!!"

By now it had become something of a theme.

Once the commotion died down, the issue of treatment was finally raised. No one knew what to do because none of them had ever seen anything quite like the spectacle I presented. Now, years later, I wish to hell I'd had a camera.

Finally one of the doctors suggested an anti-itch spray called Multi-derm. It was supposed to be effective but had never been applied to this part of the body. What were the side effects? Could it make matters worse? I didn't see how that was possible and pleaded with them to spray me. The doctors agreed. (Here, as before, a crowd had gathered. Nurses, doctors, technicians, other ER patients.)

But the plastic spray nozzle jammed. Nothing would come out of the can. Finally one of the doctors pulled the nozzle from the can, jammed a screwdriver into the tube and leveraged it back like one might raise a carjack.

An explosion of Multi-derm spewed from the can onto my affected area and knocked me against the wall. I remember it was also very cold and for the first time in 16 hours, it didn't itch.

"Do it again!" I pleaded and they did.

"Again!" I cried. Now the doctors thought I was beginning to enjoy the Multi-derm more than was deemed appropriate and advised me I could only be sprayed every eight hours.

Finally, Mr. Steiner drove me back to our main camp, which was chigger-free. "I don't think you need to camp in any more fields for a while," he assured me. I spent the next two days alone, except for Mr. Steiner and my can of Multi-derm. By the end of the week I was healed.

Now in February 2010, the fears of such a reoccurrence gripped me with dread. I finally drove to Bunbury and found my friends Steve and Gaynor who saw the Fear in me and offered the use of their wonderful shower.



THE ESTUARY...so green, so lush, so...
...mite infested

But it was too late. In fact, it was only after my hot shower and a hard scrubbing that the welts first appeared. From my knees to my waist, I was suddenly covered by more than one hundred ugly red pimples. And they itched with a familiarity that carried me back decades. None of them had made their way to the scene of the original crime, but they were close enough. A month later and only now are the bites starting to fade. Later I learned that I had been consumed by an evil little beast called Trombicula (eutrombicula) hirsti Commonly called "the scrub-itch mite."

MITES? Indeed. It turns out they're the Aussie version of a Kentucky chigger.

So...I ask you, the North American reader who has endured the bitter cold winter and dreamed of nothing else but warm summer nights and a roll in the grass...would you trade your frostbite for my bites? Would you pass on the snow for "OH MY GOD!?"

Mighty COLD vs MITEY hot. The choice is yours.

FINALLY...THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA CASTS A CRITICAL EYE AT THE MAINSTREAM GREEN\$...

At long last, almost a decade after the dollar signs became apparent, the mainstream media has begun to pull its head out of the sand. Is it possible that the mainstream environmental community isn't as conscience-driven and idealistic as so many of us wanted to believe? Is it possible that the mainstream press is finally willing to report it?

There is a crack in the facade. And it's about bloody

time.

The story that has attracted so much attention, "The Wrong Kind of Green," by Johann Hari, appeared recently in The Nation. Amy Goodman followed up on "Democracy Now" in an interview with Hari (links to both stories appear at the end of this one). I know the story is being read because Zephyr readers across the country keep sending me the link.

Hari writes:

"At first glance, these questions will seem bizarre. Groups like Conservation International are among the most trusted "brands" in America, pledged to protect and defend nature. Yet as we confront the biggest ecological crisis in human history, many of the green organizations meant to be leading the fight are busy shoveling up hard cash from the world's worst polluters--and burying science-based-environmentalism in return. Sometimes the corruption is subtle; sometimes it is blatant. In the middle of a swirl of bogus climate scandals trumped up by deniers, here is the real Climategate, waiting to be exposed."

Is it possible that the mainstream environmental community isn't as conscience-driven and idealistic as so many of us wanted to believe? Is it possible that the mainstream press is finally willing to report it? There is a crack in the facade. And it's about bloody time

Stories of corporate compromise, subsequent policy reversals, and blatant hypocrisy and greed by the Green\$ should sound familiar to longtime Zephyr readers. I won't try to recount the content of these stories and interviews. They are available to everyone online. But please use the links to read them. You will find them enlightening.

Hari also tells the story of Christine MacDonald.. MacDonald, "an idealistic young environmentalist, discovered how deeply this cash had transformed these institutions when she started to work for Conservation International in 2006. She told me, 'About a week or two after I started, I went to the big planning meeting of all the organization's media teams, and they started talking about this supposedly great new project they were running with BP. But I had read in the newspaper the day before that the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] had condemned BP for running the most polluting plant in the whole country... But nobody in that meeting, or anywhere else in the organization, wanted to talk about it. It was a taboo. You weren't supposed to ask if BP was really green. They were 'helping' us, and that was it.'"

MacDonald's subsequent book, "Green, Inc." claims that this kind of attitude has infected almost all of the mainstream greens.

If there is one flaw in Hari's account, it is his suggestion that "wealthy individuals" who contribute to environmental groups are without blame. The evidence, even at the grassroots, suggests otherwise. (NOTE: My eternal 'exception to the rule' is always Grand County's Jennifer Speers, who continues to use her wealth for the common good, and in the interests of full disclosure, one of four lifetime Zephyr Backbone members).

But individual billionaires like David Bonderman contribute vast sums to organizations like the Grand Canyon Trust and the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, groups allegedly dedicated to reducing greenhouse gases and coal-fired power plants. Meanwhile Mr. Bonderman BUILDS coal plants two states over in Texas and gets a pass from the local greens. How I long for consistency. (See Bonderman's latest shenanigans on our Planetary Observations page)

In any case, it is gratifying to finally see the national media wake up to the growing hypocrisy of environmentalism in America. I hope they stay awake because there is still so much more to be told.

Here are the links:

www.thenation.com/doc/20100322/hari

www.democracynow.org/2010/3/9/the_real_climategate_conservation_groups_align