

TAKE IT or LEAVE IT...

By Jim Stiles

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CAN THE ZEPHYR SURVIVE in a 'FACEBOOK/TWITTER WORLD?'

I was worrying out loud to a friend of mine recently about the future of long-winded publications like my own, and when I say "long-winded" I speak only relatively. I received a complaint not long ago from a former reader who said the Zephyr's stories lacked depth and suggested the 2000 to 3000 word essays represented the "juvenilization of complex realities." But while he insisted a good story, well-told requires 10,000 to 20,000 words, I doubt most readers possess the will to get past the title.



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Welcome to the Age of Twitter. My friend Lily Hodge recently noted, "The only thing that stands between us and the 'lower creatures' is 160 characters." It turns out Lily was being too generous. The Tweet character limit is 140.

That's barely enough letters to say: "We are rapidly approaching the end of civilization as we know it...may the Great Hairy Thunderer have mercy on our moronic souls."

My greatest fears were confirmed yesterday when I read that former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin "plans to continue speaking her mind on the social networking site Twitter."

Her latest Tweet quotes the song "Rollin'," by the country duo "Big & Rich:"

"Ain't gonna shut my mouth / I know there's got to be a few hundred million more like me / just trying to keep it free,"

I may not detect Presidential timber here but I certainly know a twig when I see one.

Sarah's numbers, however, are probably, like her, too conservative-- "a few hundred million out there?" Soon there will be billions of Twitterers. Or Twesters. Or may I just call them 'twits?'

My feelings for Facebook are a bit more conflicted. After all, we have a "Friends of the Canyon Country Zephyr" group page on FB and I had to, albeit reluctantly, sign up, just to access the FOZ. We now boast 235 'fans.'

I can see some advantages to Facebook; recently the granddaughter of dear friends of mine who passed away many years ago contacted me. She plans to bring Murray and Dot's ashes out west to the place they loved and asked if I would like to be a part of it. She only "discovered" me via Facebook and I know that others have found long lost friends via FB---who can object to something like that?

And at times someone will send me some excellent links to interesting stories that I may not have discovered on my own...I'm grateful.

But more often, it appears to me that Facebook has become a way of life--no, even that doesn't go far enough. It IS Life for many people. They log on and stay there. The most trivial occurrence somehow ranks enough significance to appear on their FB "Wall," for everyone to read:

- * "how are you? i'm feeling like a cornish game hen today."
- * "---- is grateful for her vegan brunch cookbook...enjoyed some polenta rancheras with avocado/cilantro topping:) YUMMM! -Thanks"
- * "I just took the 'Who is your celebrity twin?' quiz and the answer is Miley Cyrus!"
- * "FINALLY the tomatoes are ripening!!!!"
- * "I watched Soylent Green yesterday, and I had terrible dreams last night, of a shirtless Charlton Heston"

I could have lived without this information. I don't care if someone I barely know had nightmares about Charlton Heston. We all do.

Even emails seem to have become antiquated now. Rather than send an email to a friend, you can just "wall" it to everybody. Or they message via FB. I'm constantly getting FB message alerts via my email, but in order to reply, I need to log on to FB, send my reply, log off, and three minutes later another FB message alert arrives. So I log back on again...but I don't want to be logged on. Emailing is high tech enough for this little buckaroo.

But my growing disdain for all this abbreviated "communication" made me wonder if my "Friends of The Zephyr" was worth the effort. I put out the question via a mass message--are you actually going to The Zephyr web site and would you mind if I sent more messages? I got some positive feedback from some of the FOZ. Bt others thought one message per issue was enough. But my favorite reply was probably the most candid when she wrote:

*I'm lazy.
I don't like to have to GO to a website.*

But she didn't want me sending Zephyr links to her Wall either:

...No one really wants you to post stuff to THEIR wall. It's like cyber graffiti

Banished for messaging..Banished for 'walling.' Damned either way

Someday I may succumb to the realities of the 21st Century; you'll open the Zephyr thumbnail pages to find a vast empty white space, save the 140 characters lurking in the corner. I will have finally given up "clinging hopelessly to the past" and embraced contemporary society. And I'll hire Sarah Palin to be my copy editor--she'll be able to whittle this tomb down to a length that's manageable!

THE BLANDING RAIDS... Shame and Hypocrisy All Around

It's an early morning in June 2009...Blanding, Utah.

Suddenly, more than a hundred federal agents, carrying search warrants and dressed for combat, enter dozens of homes, in some cases with weapons drawn, in search of illegally obtained Native American artifacts. Almost two dozen Blandingites are arrested. One is the town's most prominent doctor, James Redd and his wife Jeanne. Another is Harold Lyman, 78, recently inducted into the Utah Tourist "Hall of Fame." He runs the local tourist visitor center.

Antiquities on federal lands are protected by law; since 1979, collecting them has been a felony. But old habits are

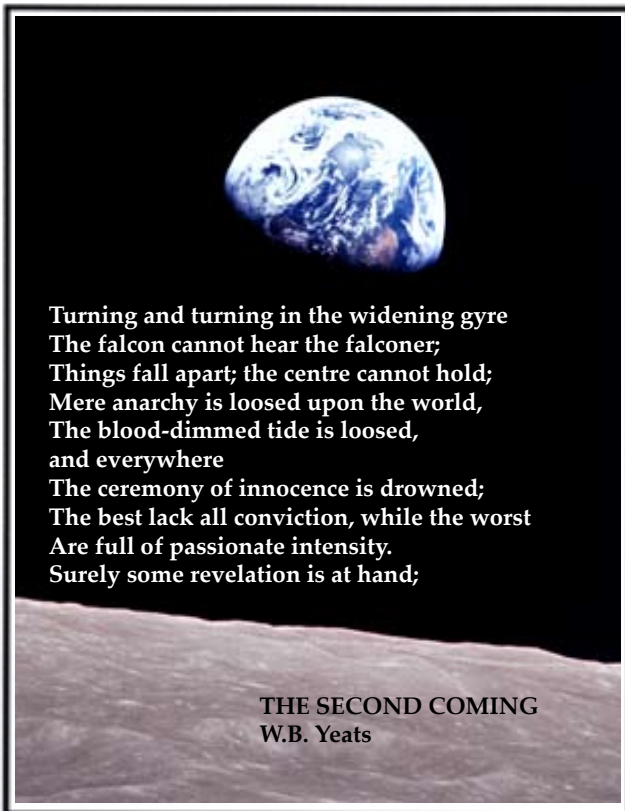
Some of the rhetoric, from both sides of the antiquities debate was unspeakable in its cruelty. Blog comments were especially vicious.

hard to break--for many residents of San Juan County, it's an illegal hobby that's been passed along for generations and for a handful of "Moki Poachers," it's a business. Either way, it's wrong, but motives do count for something and that has been a problem, not just for the media covering the story, but for all of us who have an opinion.

For some of the arrested, digging artifacts is nothing more than a money-maker, whether to supplement a regular job or as a primary way of generating income. For a few it's quick cash to support a drug business. For others, however, it is almost an act of defiance--an expression of disdain for the federal government. If you live in metropolitan America, and most of you do, it is almost impossible to convey the cultural chasm that exists between some rural westerners and the federal government. One would have to go back in time half a century, to the Deep South in the 1950s and the civil rights movement, to find a hatred as intense.

This conflict turned to tragedy a day after the arrests when Dr. Redd committed suicide (later a second man, arrested in Santa fe on similar charges, took his own life).

The residents of Blanding were stunned and grief-stricken and furious and placed Redd's death squarely on the shoulders of those responsible for his arrest. Even Native Americans came to Dr. Redd's defense. In a Salt Lake Tribune story by Chris Smart, former San Juan County com-



Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed,
and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.
Surely some revelation is at hand;

THE SECOND COMING
W.B. Yeats

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missioner and member of the Navajo Tribal Council, Mark Maryboy, expressed regret and anger.

"I'm very sad. Dr. Redd was a good friend of mine," Maryboy said. "Dr. Redd was one of a kind; he was good to everyone." According to Smart, the Navajo leader called the federal authorities "heavy handed."

"The federal government has a responsibility to protect antiquities," Maryboy said. "But they have a responsibility to protect people, too. Anytime somebody loses his or her life, like Dr. Redd, it's gone too far."

The fury that followed Dr. Redd's death was so intense that, for a while, federal agencies in San Juan County banned their employees from driving government vehicles alone through Blanding and forbade them from stopping and getting out of their vehicles altogether.

Some of the rhetoric, from both sides of the antiquities debate was unspeakable in its cruelty. Blog comments were especially vicious; one friend dismissed them because they were offered anonymously, and that's true—people will say anything if they're not held accountable for their words. But the words were spoken, just the same. It simply reveals the ugliness that hovers beneath the surface in so many of us.

There were threats of retaliation against the federal government for their heavy-handed tactics and cold-blooded observations from others who felt the arrested, even Dr. Redd, got what they deserved. The ugliness everywhere was overwhelming.

If I can just make some personal observations, not as a journalist/small-time pundit, but as a human being...

First, taking artifacts is wrong and it cannot be condoned. For those arrested who were trying to make a career out of pot hunting, or to support a drug business or habit, they now suffer the consequences. For those who kept up the "hobby" out of sheer defiance, though they clearly did NOT need the money from their sale, I can only ask, "Why? What was the point?"

For those who hold the federal government accountable for Dr. Redd's death, I can speak from personal experience, I regret to say. I have lost many friends to suicide and I have stared down the barrel myself. The early morning arrests may have been the proverbial straw that brought him down, but there had to be much more on the doctor's plate than most of us know. Nor do we have the right to know. It is a personal matter that should not be idly speculated upon or marginalized by gossipmongers. His family and friends deserve compassion and understanding even from those who felt the arrests were justified. To do anything less reflects a lack of humanity in all of us.

Among those cheering the enforcement of the antiquities laws are thousands of one-time pot hunters, tourists mostly, but also the "progressive/enviro" locals who, over the last few decades, have picked up just one or two artifacts and put them on their bed room dresser. Just as a memento...hardly like the Moki Poachers of Blanding, they convince themselves. But take one shard, multiply that innocent gesture a million times, and it's why canyons once covered with pot shards and points are now bare. The San Juan County people aren't responsible—the rest of us, hypocrites all—are.

Finally, my dear friend Ken Sleight may have identified the ultimate hypocrisy. He notes:

"Here's the federal government arresting all these people, for their collections of arrowheads and pots, but do you

know who is the biggest vandal and destroyer of Anasazi artifacts that ever lived? It's the U.S. government who approved the construction of Glen Canyon Dam. Lake Powell destroyed more precious artifacts and rock art than all the people in Blanding could ruin in a thousand lifetimes. How come nobody's arrested the Bureau of Reclamation for high crimes?" I'm still waiting."

HANSJORG WYSS, RATTLERS & 'GREENS'

Hansjorg Wyss is one of America's most celebrated benefactors. He made billions via his company Synthes, which "develops, produces and markets instruments, implants and biomaterials for the surgical fixation, correction and regeneration of the skeleton and its soft tissues." Though his personal fortune declined in 2008 to less than \$6 billion, he donated \$125 million to Harvard University to create the "Hansjorg Wyss Institute for Biologically Inspired Engineering."



Yes, those damn rattlesnakes kept slithering onto the fairways, even the greens, causing a mighty distraction to duffers on the course.

He is also a financial supporter to many environmental groups, including The Wilderness Society (TWS), The Grand Canyon Trust (GCT), The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA), Moab's Red Rock Forests, even Great Old Broads for Wilderness. He sits on the board of directors of SUWA, GCT and TWS.

But I found this story about Mr. Wyss by Charles Durrenberger in the *Arizona Daily Star* that actually made me laugh out loud. Although Mr. Durrenberger may not have seen the irony in it, the irony is there. The story is about a Tucson golf course. He writes,

"Despite its new name, Crooked Tree Golf Course at Arthur Pack Regional Park feels like an old friend in spiffy, new duds.... The 18-month face-lift — with a few more nips and tucks in store — is more than skin deep for the tract that hits the big 3-Oh next year. Beyond the sparkling clubhouse, past the flagstone patio behind the repositioned No. 1 tee and on the other side of the championship-caliber practice area is a rejuvenated tract that looks, feels, smells and plays as a golf course should."

But the golf course had some problems. So the new developer made some changes...

"Brush has been cleared, opening up views of the nearby mountain ranges. Even the high-handicap golfer is not in serious danger of losing a ball due to a stray tee shot."

'There were no vistas.' complained one golfer. Rattlesnakes were plentiful, however. Leveling unruly desert broom and creosote eliminated much of the reptilian habitat."

Yes, those damn rattlesnakes kept slithering onto the fairways, even the greens, causing a mighty distraction to duffers on the course. But of course, if you can obliterate the habitat, you can get rid of the problem. And who holds the lease on this newly revamped, rattler-free golf course? According to the *Daily Star*, "Tucson-based Wildcat Golf Partners, headed by medical-equipment mogul Hansjorg Wyss, holds the lease through 2019."

Hansjorg Wyss...another one of America's great conservationists who loves Nature, as long as it doesn't interfere with his putting.

"Damn those diamondbacks, hand me my seven-iron!"

EDITOR'S NOTE: Another story about Mr. Wyss can be found in this issue's Canyon Country Watchdog, page 9

THE AESTHETICS OF 'ALTERNATIVE' v TRADITIONAL' ENERGY

I used to loathe the sight of a seismic line or an oil well. Decades ago, well beyond the statute of limitations, I once crawled on my belly, across an open valley, pulling seismic survey stakes. I still cringe at the sight of them, but I've come to realize my abhorrence has more to do with my sense of aesthetics than any well-founded fear that a ten foot swath of thumper truck damage is going to permanently disrupt the bigger picture of habitat displacement and disruption.

True, many of the plants and some of the critters are at risk when the big rigs rumble through. But eventually the seismic crews leave and Life returns to normal. It's a fact that permanent human habitation is what wildlife fears and suffers from most. If we just have the decency to LEAVE these wild lands, the wild things will be okay.

But it doesn't matter. I am still offended by the ugly scars, whether the whiptail lizards and the antelope ground squirrels even notice.



To me, it's all about aesthetics again. They're ugly and offensive. They are no more a part of the "natural" scene than an oil rig...



Recently another lawyer for another environmental group objected to plans by the State Trust Lands people to issue permits for oil and gas exploration. The state lands are adjacent to proposed wilderness and the lawyer said such development was unacceptable.

But what if the state land trust decided, instead, to issue permits for a massive wind turbine farm? Imagine hundreds or even thousands of these wind monsters, scattered along the skyline, with the additional required infrastructure of interconnecting roads and transmission lines. Is that a view from adjacent wilderness that is any more palatable?

To me, it's all about aesthetics again. They're ugly and offensive. They are no more a part of the "natural" scene than an oil rig. Some even believe wind turbines can disrupt wildlife (see Gormless Gits page in this issue re: goats).

Is "alternative energy" on a massive scale our future? If it is, the landscape of this country will be transformed—degraded—on a scale I cannot even imagine. I hope I don't live that long.

Aesthetically, it's unthinkable.

WE'RE STILL ALIVE... BUT WE NEED YOUR HELP...

As you open the next 40 pages of the August/September issue of the online Zephyr Planet Earth Edition, you'll see many new 'faces.' And some old ones.

The new Backbone members have made an enormous contribution. Many of the original Backboners have stayed with us. AND a core of longtime advertisers will stay with the Z until Hell freezes over. They are the ONLY reason we're here. Keeping The Zephyr going will take even more participation from many of you. Please go to our home page and consider ways to support this publication. If we can build The Z back up, to a real "peoples' paper," we will continue to be heard... Thanks in advance for your support...Jim



Lawrence King had it right almost 100 years ago...on June 6, 1919... "IT'S ALL BULLSHIT"