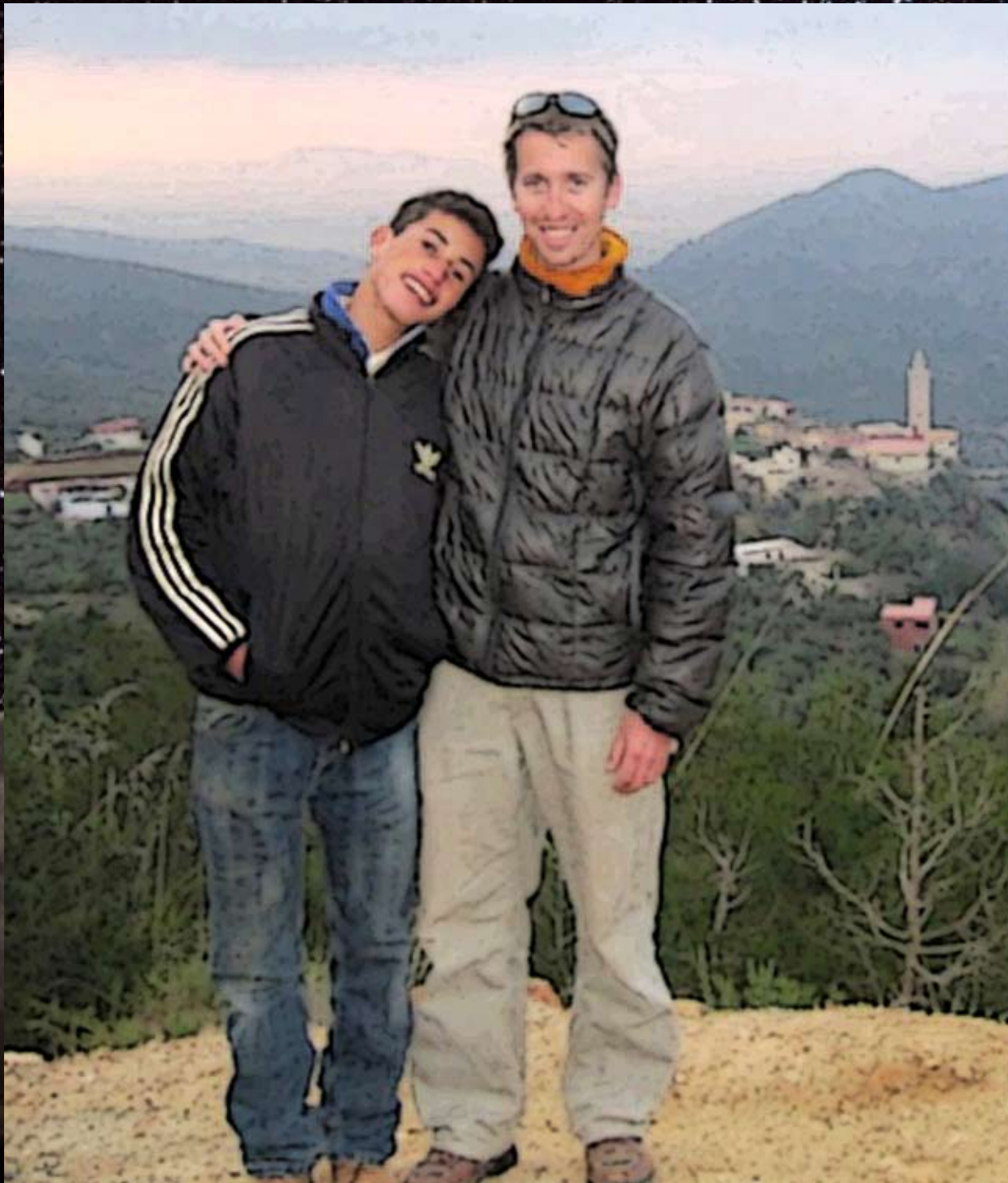


THE CANYON COUNTRY ZEPHYR

PLANET EARTH EDITION

ALL THE NEWS THAT CAUSES FITS... SINCE 1989



GIVING AZIZ a HAND

*A remarkable story from Peace Corps volunteer and Zephyr correspondent
Charlie Kolb*

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OVERPOPULATION & THE WINDEX/EASY-OFF SOLUTION

The world's human population passed seven billion souls last October with little fanfare. There were a few ripples of concern but, incredibly, others thought it was a moment for celebration. You'd think we'd won a prize for procreation or something. While progressives worry about the long-term effects of overpopulation, they offer few if any solutions. Conservative thought suggests there is nothing to worry about—that technology and the free market of ideas will solve any and all problems caused by an expanding global population. That 'growth' in all its incarnations is a good thing.

Demographers predict that around mid-century, the global population will stabilize somewhere between nine and eleven billion, as if that's a manageable number. Why they think population growth will finally grind to a halt is bewildering to me.



Demographers predict that around mid-century, the global population will stabilize somewhere between nine and eleven billion, as if that's a manageable number.

I suppose there is an assumption that, as the world becomes more educated, affluence will follow and populations will decline. What it really means is that, as families become more connected to the developed world, they will prefer to spend their available incomes on stuff instead of kids. That alone is a mixed bag and a troubling possibility: the very future of the planet depends upon a less consumptive, more sustainable population and it cannot survive if all seven, or nine, or eleven billions choose to live like Americans. The American Dream is not sustainable.

We've heard the numbers again and again. The United States represents about 4% of the world's human popula-

tion but consumes almost 30% of its resources. If even half of the world's 2050 population consumes at the same rate as us, they'd be gobbling up seven and a half times MORE resources than exist! The math just doesn't work.

But what can we do? Even the most cheerfully optimistic (delusional) mainstream environmentalists agree there's no easy way to accomplish negative population growth. It's an absurdity to think voluntary population reduction is a viable notion. Governments are not, in the main, going to take draconian measures (The China Solution for example) to reduce population. Any government in this country that tried to take even the mildest of steps, like eliminating tax exemptions for families that bore more than two children, would be driven from office and out of the country. On a rail.

Pundits and social scientists may promote their Nine Point Plans for Population Reduction and talk about an ideal world where the human race takes a hard magnanimous look at itself and says meekly, 'Damn, there are WAY too many of us...we better stop having kids for a century or two.'

But it's not going to happen.

What other options do we have? Ed Abbey used to insist, "Our only hope is Catastrophe!" In 1986, Abbey scribbled in his journal, "...oh God when will your vengeance descend upon these mean ugly people? I long for the day of the coming collapse." He died three years later, his prayer unanswered.

And certainly many others, struggling with a solution to overpopulation and carefully avoiding the personal image of the human suffering such an apocalypse would cause, share his view.

And maybe it's the way it will happen, but I doubt it. So far, science seems to keep outwitting the germs, and, no matter how insane and murderous we may act as a species, no matter how frequently or intensely we make war on each other, we eventually emerge more fertile and productive than ever. World War II cost 50 million lives and the destruction of trillions of dollars in destruction. Yet, the war eventually generated the greatest population



and building boom in the history of the world.

Those who prefer the Apocalypse Solution may pray for earthquakes and famines and asteroids all they want. But it doesn't seem like a viable option to me.

There is another possibility. The Hope of Severe Infertility. It's hardly a new idea and it gets talked about more frequently these days. Scientists have already noted a decline in male fertility world-wide. Studies show that about 1.5% of all men were functionally sterile in 1938. Now it's up to 8-12%.

Still, the threat, or the hope (choose one.) remains.

Here, the 'solution' comes in conflict with both mainstream progressive and conservative thinking. The contradictions could easily cause them to develop a terrific headache and split in two. Bear with me a moment.

If the world's population should experience a precipitous decline due to wide-spread infertility, it has to be caused by something. It won't 'just happen.' For those who hope God might point a wrathful finger at the earth and render us all barren, keep praying. It might work. But there are other human-made processes that may have the same effect.

Years ago, I stumbled upon a fascinating fact—one of those stories that makes for great party conversation (if I

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ever went to a party). An article in Newsweek magazine featured the findings of Dr. Irwin Goldstein, an impotency expert from Boston University. Goldstein issued a grave warning to men who regularly ride bicycles. His studies showed that when a man rides a bike with a standard seat, the kind that looks like a mutated black banana, his body weight flattens his main penile artery. This artery is essential for an erection and, from a man's perspective, what could be more essential than that?

Goldstein believed that, over time, riding a bike and putting that kind of long-term pressure on the penile artery can irreversibly damage the vessel ("All hands abandon ship!"). The worried doctor was seeing several new patients a week. Among them was Ed Pavelka of "Bicycling Magazine." Pavelka complained that his years of intense marathon bike riding had left him "as soft as an over-cooked rigatoni." Not exactly a macho biker pick-up line.

But what are the odds that enough of us will take to the bicycle to cause this kind of impotency on a grand scale? Not likely.

Recently a story published in "Fertility & Sterility" magazine suggested that "wi-fi radiation may also be giving us more infertility by decreasing sperm motility and damaging DNA in sperm." A story at NaturalNews.com said, "Researchers in Argentina took semen samples from 29 healthy men, and they measured sperm motility after four hours of exposure to wi-fi radiation from a laptop wirelessly connected to the internet. Sperm in the control group was kept at the same temperature for the same amount of time, but was not exposed to wi-fi radiation.... Of the sperm exposed to the wi-fi radiation, 25 percent stopped swimming. Only 14 percent of unexposed sperm ceased to swim after four hours. Wi-fi sperm also showed 9 percent DNA fragmentation, or irreversible damage in the genetic code, while sperm in the control group only showed 3 percent."

But the study pointed out that the infertility effect is only noticeable when the laptop user sets it directly on his lap, for hours at a time. The odds of drastic population declines based on excessive laptop use are remote.

So what is the answer? How can infertility save the world? It's the solution that will confound and dismay everyone, from the most ardent 'progressive' to the most strident 'conservative,' for precisely the opposite reason.

What are the most potent causes of infertility? They're all around us—men who smoke have sperm counts that are 13 to 17% lower than non-smokers. Men exposed to agricultural pesticides were 10 times more likely to experience infertility problems. A chemical called chlordane has been found in 75% of all homes and is believed to contribute to infertility. Then there's the car exhaust, specifically

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All the News that Causes Fits
since 1989

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benzopyrene, which has a profound negative effect on women's ovaries. Chemical solvents like xylene, acetone, trichlorethylene, and other petroleum distillates have caused spontaneous abortions in women. Monosodium Glutamate (MSG) has been shown to reduce the success of pregnancies. Chemicals used to make silicon chips have caused a dramatically increased miscarriage rates in women who worked with these solvents.

And then there are the products that are around us every day--laundry detergents, air-freshening products, fabric softeners, glass cleaners, carpet cleaners, hard-surface cleaners, and oven cleaners,

Are we risking infertility each time we reach for the Windex Aerosol, Formula 409, Lemon Fresh Pine-Sol or



Are we risking infertility each time we reach for the Windex Aerosol, Formula 409, Lemon Fresh Pine-Sol or Simple Green All Purpose Cleaner? The answer may be a resounding YES.

Simple Green All Purpose Cleaner?

The answer may be a resounding YES.

And there's the irony...Progressives worry about overpopulation and seek ways to bring it under control and even reduce it. But they have also historically believed in the strict regulation and often the total elimination of chemicals that might cause harm to the general public. Consequently they have a real dilemma. They can oppose the massive use of toxins and fight for their removal, but by so doing, they may also eliminate the one option that might slowly bring our global population down to a reasonable level.

Conservatives support and encourage an ever-expanding population and an economy that grows with it, based on the idea that all growth is good. They believe that a declining population would be a disaster. But they also oppose the regulation of toxic chemicals. They believe agencies like the FDA and the EP are harassing business and stalling growth. But by encouraging their continued wide-spread use, they may eventually contribute to a dramatic population collapse.

In the end, obviously, neither of these options is very appealing. The idea of choosing between slowly killing our species by destroying our ability to reproduce versus waiting for a comet to hit the planet is not something to cheer about. But it does say something about the way we've allowed our future and our destiny to get away from us. We no longer have any real control over our fate. Or maybe that's the point...

We never did.

**THE 99%:
(We really don't like each other very much...but we'd better TRY)**

Since the Occupy Movement began last September, I've watched with bated breath. I love a good revolution and have spent most of my adult life hoping to see one, but in this day and age, especially here in the United States, I view these kinds of uprisings with a wary eye. I'd love to see this movement grow (if only we were in Egypt, it would be a sure thing) and become powerful and change forever the way Washington and Wall Street do business. But we've all been down these roads before. Where was the Great American Protest Movement during the Iraq War?

As I've said before, it takes more than signs and extended camp-outs to change the world. It might be a good start but it has to appeal to a much broader base. It's supposed to be about US--the 99%. But so far, I see very little to suggest the Masses are bonding.

It's been interesting to follow the Occupy Movement on facebook. I've saved many of these "un-groups" to my page favorites so I can monitor their progress. I love rhetoric as much as the next guy and can get pretty rhetorical

myself under the right climatic conditions, but some of it has been incomprehensible. For example, in January, in anticipation of the planned Occupy Congress march, the occupycongress.info group declared:

"Tens of thousands of people chanting outside the Capitol would be hard to ignore, and it doesn't matter what we chant, because WE are our demands! If Congress started working for the 99%, reckless corporations would be restrained, not bailed out. Come to Washington on January 17th, 2012."

I could not understand what that meant--"it doesn't matter what we chant, because WE are our demands?" It's not exactly a focused message. Or, I believe, the right one.

On the anadora.org/freepress page, they announced that, "Protesters say they hope to set up 1 million tents in front of the Capitol." Sad to say, less than a thousand turned out.

The protesters claimed they were being ignored by the mainstream media and they were probably right. But there really wasn't all that much there to ignore. I followed the LiveStream on several channels on the web and there was nothing there to rally around. I watched protesters taunt and yell obscenities at the cops and most of the comments flowing in from citizens who watched the live show complained that they couldn't let their kids watch because the language was too raunchy.

In Moab, Utah, the Occupy Moab group took a resolution condemning the Supreme Court's decision that gave "personhood" to corporations to the City Council. The Council agreed to create a draft of its own but wouldn't allow the petition gatherers the chance to speak. Apparently only a relative handful of citizens showed up for the meeting and one of the Occupy Moab facebook administrators expressed bitter disappointment at the small turnout, only to have the post removed a short while later. He/she could not understand WHY there wasn't stronger support for the Movement.



It's actually very easy to understand why the Occupy Movement stays so fragmented--

WITHIN THE 99%, NOBODY LIKES EACH OTHER VERY MUCH.

We keep claiming unity within this new all-encompassing brand, but there's no unity at all. Within the 99% we despise each other to a great degree, or at least much of what many of the 99% stand for. Let me offer some exhibits:

I went back to the social media, to see what Republicans and Democrats were saying about each other on facebook this afternoon. In the 15 minutes I devoted to this task, these are some of the epithets and insults that were being hurled back and forth, via the comments, through the fiery rhetorical ethereal glow of cyberspace. They called each other...

"...thugs, trolls, outlaws, liars, criminals, shills, thieves, sheeple, mindless, pukers, crazy, RePUKelicans, decayed, DEMONcrats, racists, dumbasses, dicks, Socialists, Fascists, Commies, brain-dead, stupid, Obamatons, spoon-fed morons, haters, ignorant, ignoramuses, un-American, SOBs, a joke, loon, delusional, deceitful, BS, mean-spirited, forked-tongue, Obumma, jack ass, asshole, lazy pieces of crap, and big fat turds."

After a while I gave up. Clearly, there's not much love being lost within this portion of the 99%. Republicans hate Democrats. Democrats hate Republicans. Conservatives hate Liberals and Liberals hate Conservatives. There are the Obama Haters. The Gingrich Haters. The Romney Haters.

And we can get more specific, out in the Rural West... Americans who:

--are Christians hate non-Christians. And vice versa.

---are Pro-Life hate the Pro-Choice people. And vice versa.

---are for closing the borders to immigrants and deporting the illegals despise the Americans who want a more liberal immigration policy. And vice versa.

---support gun control hate those who oppose gun control. And vice versa.

--support the military hate those that do not. And vice versa.

---want a national health care policy despise those that do not want one. And vice versa.

---support the oil and gas industry don't like Americans who oppose it. And vice versa

---support coal hate Americans who oppose it. And vice versa.

---oppose ATVs on public lands hate people who DO drive their ATVs on public lands. And vice versa.

--support Wilderness hate people who don't...and vice versa.

And so on. And so on. Ad nauseum.

In short, it's a war out there in America and the idea that 99% of our citizens are somehow mystically bound in a righteous war for Truth and Justice and Equality against the Forces of Evil strikes me as a bit absurd. You may think I'm just being cynical or counter-productive, that's fine.

In these insanely, embarrassingly politically correct times, if the point is to make the Occupy Movement successful, then its strongest adherents should want to hear all viewpoints from all directions, no matter how uncomfortable it might make us feel. After all, no matter how contradictory the criticisms, they're still coming from our fellow 99%ers. The secret to success here is not avoiding scrutiny but standing up to it. And maybe, by some miracle, learning from it.

If the '99%/Occupy Movement' wants to succeed, it has to find a way to reach out to the vast majority of that 99% who they are otherwise, and in so many ways, at odds with, or this nationwide protest will sputter and fail.

For starters, the movement might think about the notion that while it's easy to lump all of us into one basket and declare OUR 'demands,' it might be far more effective to stand on behalf of the millions of Americans who are really suffering.

I have never made more than \$25,000 in a year, I drive a 13 year old car, and my wife and I get most of our clothes at thrift shops, but we own our home and have very few debts. We are comfortable. Part of it has been luck and part of it has been timing and another part has been avoiding dangerous financial traps that have befallen so many Americans.

Before I start worrying about others like myself within the 99%, instead of offering lists of "demands" for US, I'd rather devote my energies and righteous indignation for THEM--the Americans that are homeless, hungry, and without any visible means of support...the citizens who worked hard and, through no fault of their own, lost their jobs because their companies found it more profitable to take their operations to China. I want to find ways for US to help the abused and forgotten children in this country, the ones who don't even get a decent breakfast in the morning. I want US to reach out to the veterans who can't find jobs and are still paying a price for their service, years and decades after they came 'home.' I want to help young people find a way to get a decent education without burdening themselves and their families with a lifetime of debt.

In short, I want to help the people who long to have SOMETHING good in their lives before I start worrying about so many of us who just want MORE. This movement should be, first and foremost, about helping those Americans who have so very little.

As for all the hot rhetoric and denigrating language that flies non-stop, day after day, across the multi-media fruited plain, the divisiveness that keeps the 99% divided and fractionalized, I don't know how you stop it. Clearly, I appreciate a good argument, based upon the facts and an earnest desire to express oneself. But sooner later, somebody has to make the first move and lay down the stones. Who's it going to be?

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GAY MARRIAGE TODAY... POLYGAMY TOMORROW?

If you're like me, you know the whole "gay rights" question isn't really a question: it's an eventuality. According to an ABC poll from 2011, 68% of Americans under the age of 30 support gay marriage rights. More strikingly, 65% of those under the age of 40 do as well. Even a slight majority of the population between the ages of 40 and 50 support full marriage rights. The numbers for every age group have risen significantly from only five years ago. And so it's sort of funny, really, watching evangelical Christians and Republican politicians rail against gay marriage, knowing that, given a few years' time and the passing of another generation, the argument has already been won.

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The only interesting question to ponder, as we sit back and wait for time to solve this particular inequality, is what comes next.

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Of course, the staunchest of gay marriage opponents think they know. Rick Santorum seized on his argument a couple months ago at a New Hampshire college. Responding to a question about gay marriage, he asked:

If it makes three people happy to get married, based on what you just said, what makes that wrong?"

It's the same argument we've heard since the advent of the gay-rights movement: if you legalize gay marriage, what's to stop the legalization of polygamy, incest, pedophilia, bestiality, etc.? And the answer, for all but one, at least, is "quite a bit." Pedophilia and bestiality are of course prohibited by the whole notion of "consent." A dog cannot express consent in a way that a judge would understand; and a seven year-old is understood to be unable by virtue of a lack of brain development. Incest

is a whole other can of worms, dealing with possible damage to the gene pool. It will probably come up someday, but it effects such a miniscule population, I doubt we'll see a movement to legalize brother-sister relations anytime soon.

On the matter of polygamy, however, Santorum has a point—though I doubt it's the point he wanted to make. The student to which he posed his question knew the game. She didn't react with the level of disgust he might have expected. "That's irrelevant," the student answered. And, before moving on, stated, "In my opinion, yeah, go for it." Polygamy is almost certainly the next marriage-rights debate. And, unless the Santorums of the world are willing to push America back to 1868, and repeal the fourteenth amendment, they will all have to acknowledge that the



polygamists' victory is inevitable.

The mistake Santorum keeps making, and he made it again at that New Hampshire college, is his claim that "marriage is not a right." Unfortunately for him, the Supreme Court settled that matter in 1967 and they concurred, unanimously, the opposite. The basis for their decision? The Fourteenth Amendment—specifically the "equal protection clause," which states, in part, that "No State shall make or enforce

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any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." Now, interpretation of those words has varied widely since their inception. Clearly, at the time when the Amendment was drafted, the writers did not intend to legalize polygamy or gay marriage. They also didn't intend to legalize interracial marriage—but, according to the Supreme Court, their words made it legal anyway.

In 1967, the Supreme Court struck down Virginia's law banning interracial marriage. In *Loving v. Virginia* the state argued precisely what Santorum argued to that New Hampshire college student—that marriage was a privilege and not a right. But, as Justice Earl Warren wrote, in the unanimous opinion of the Court:

"The freedom to marry has long been recognized as one of the vital personal rights essential to the orderly pursuit of happiness by free men." He continued, "Marriage is one of the "basic civil rights of man," fundamental to our very existence and survival. To deny this fundamental freedom on so unsupportable a basis as the racial classifications embodied in these statutes, classifications so directly subversive of the principle of equality at the heart of the Fourteenth Amendment, is surely to deprive all the State's citizens of liberty without due process of law."

Although he was writing in that case about a white man's ability to marry a black woman, Justice Warren must have known the importance of his words—the first clear definition by the Court of Marriage as a civil right.

It was inevitable, then, that once Justice Warren wrote his majority opinion enshrining the "right to marriage," that such a right would extend beyond his original intent, to homosexual unions. And now it is inevitable that other marginalized groups—like the polygamists—will test the legal waters to determine whether that right extends to them as well. I don't think it will happen as quickly as Rick Santorum might predict, but the beauty of the constitution is that it always seems to be expanding rights, adding to the rolls of the enfranchised, as awareness expands.

Though the story hasn't garnered much attention yet—as anything

other than an entertainment tidbit—one polygamous family has recognized the direction of the changing winds. Stars of the TV reality show *Sister Wives* are currently suing the state of Utah in Federal Court over its anti-bigamy law. Though they aren't suing for equal marriage rights, they want the legal ability to live together in "spiritual" marriages. The current state law forbids a married person from professing to be married to multiple people or from cohabiting with those people. And so, given the precedence of *Lawrence v. Texas*, and its landmark decision on the right to privacy in sexual matters, the family sees an opportunity to move the law in their favor.



It's hard to imagine the gay community and the Fundamentalist Mormon community agreeing on anything, but the Sister Wives are smart to look to gay rights achievements for their inspiration.

It's hard to imagine the gay community and the fundamentalist Mormon community agreeing on anything, but the Sister Wives are smart to look to gay rights achievements for their inspiration. I can't imagine how any judge would rule against them—a group of consenting adults who have lived responsibly with each other for years—but it's possible that they will have a long fight ahead of them. It's possible that it will be a still longer fight until they receive the right to legally marry. And then who knows what battle will come next—which other groups will follow, rising up to claim the same rights as their neighbors. All I know is that more are coming. And I wish all the best to them.

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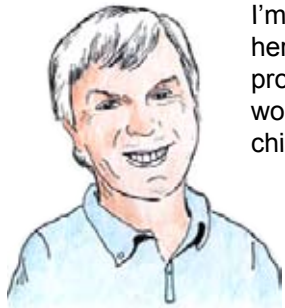
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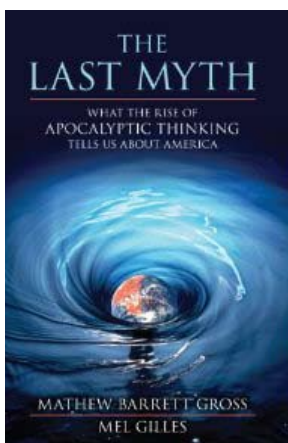
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Giving Aziz a Hand...

Rain falls softly from a slate grey sky, and drips slowly from the drooping tips of the palm leaves that dominate the view from my hotel window here in Rabat. Birds sing unseen, sheltering from the rain, and people rush across the courtyard beneath my window. The rain today is a slow, gentle fall, almost a mist, and smells of the nearby sea. It's quiet, for the city, though the call to prayer drifts in on the breeze every few hours. It's a good day to just sit and write; a good day to read and think. This I do, for a time, but my thoughts seem to turn where they have tended to over the past few months; they turn to a 17 year old boy in my village named Aziz Atmani.

~

I met Aziz in the early spring of last year while I was on a walk from the nearby lake, accompanying Molly's dad and stepmom back to the village. I remember the day very well, it was clear and cool, and from the top of the volcanic sill above Lake Tis-lit, we watched as a pale gold of the spring sunlight painted a startling array of swirling colors across the flatlands between the two lakes. Mark and Molly had gone back another way and I agreed to take the parents back; following the road below a neighboring village, and crossing the fields back to my house.

It was late in the day by then, and the slanting light cast long shadows on *Tissekt Tamda*, the mountain that looms over my village. The children were walking home from school in clusters of three or four and greeted me loudly and raucously, laughing at my accent when I replied. All save one.

I didn't see the boy until he was at my side, he said nothing and looked at the ground. He was small and thin, dwarfed by a massive wool coat that was several sizes too big for him; still looking at the ground, he greeted me in a whisper. When I replied, he finally looked up at me. He had the look of the *Amazigh* that live in the deep mountains; slanting almond eyes, high cheekbones, and brown hair. He said his name was Aziz. I was at a loss as to why he had approached me, most kids just greet me and run off howling with laughter; and yet he lingered. I asked what he wanted, and the resulting string of Tam was even more confusing. One word kept popping up, however; *afous*, or hand. I looked over at him, belatedly noticing that one sleeve of his overcoat hung dark and empty. He had no left hand, and he was asking me what I could do about it.

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I flushed and said I didn't know anything about prosthetics, that I was an environment volunteer and that wasn't my area of expertise. He looked unsurprised, and slowly walked away. By this time, Molly's family had walked off ahead and I was left alone in the fading light, watching Aziz' back retreat down

the road, every movement giving off an air of defeat. "*Blati!*" (wait), I said as I trotted to catch him. I put a hand on his shoulder and looked at him again before saying "I don't know anything about what you're asking, but I will research it; that's all I can promise." For the first time, he smiled.

A few weeks later, I had him into my house to take a couple pictures of him and what was left of his hand; as well as getting a clear view of what had happened that had caused him to lose it. He told me slowly and haltingly, and I had to ask him to repeat much of it before I got an idea of the story:

There had been an accident, two years before, when Aziz was just fifteen. Like any fifteen year old boy, he loved playing with fire, regardless of the consequences. I flushed, recalling several close calls I had had with bottle rockets around the same time in my life. Aziz, it transpired, was an avid watcher of NBC action, a channel where they play old, American action movies over and over, without ever once saying that they are *fictional* (this is important). One

day, after watching a movie, Aziz decided to make a pipe-bomb. He took a length of metal tubing and stuffed it with industrial-grade *fertilizer* (widely available and loosely regulated in a country whose primary natural resource is phosphates). The only problem now, was a fuse... for which he used a *match*.

You can all guess, as I did, what happened next. The makeshift explosive detonated before he could throw it, leaving his hand a charred ruin. What little remained was amputated at the hospital in Er-Rachidia. I could only imagine the pain and horror of that four hour ambulance ride; the smell of burned flesh, the screaming. Yet he told it to me so matter-of-factly, he had had two years to come to terms with what had happened; what had shattered his life forever. He had gone from whole and normal, to broken and outcast in a matter of seconds. A few snapshots and he stood up, we had gone quiet after his story, but he broke the silence and said "*shukran*" (thank you). Then he took my hand, kissed it once, and ran out the door into the darkness of the street.

~

Four months later, after several meetings and innumerable emails and phone calls, Aziz and I waited side by side for a midday transit. It was mid-July by then, and the leaves of the poplars shivered in the warm breeze. The mountains were lit up by the flat, hot light of the summer afternoon,

and people hid from the sun in cafés; beneath awnings or sometimes even an umbrella. A month or so before, Hakim, my contact in Rabat, had put me in touch with a prosthetics specialist who lived and practiced in the Spanish enclave-city of Melilla, on the northern coast. He had taken an interest in Aziz'

case, and was on vacation in our area. Our destination was Merzouga, where we would meet the doctor on the fringe of the Saharan Erg, a dune sea. But first we would spend the night in Er-Rachidia, which Aziz had not returned to since the accident.

The transit arrived in short order and we watched as the miles of silent mountainsides and deep canyons slid by our window. A taxi from Er-Rich completed this leg of the journey, and soon we were sitting together at my favorite café, drinking sweet coffee and enjoying the shade provided by the towering eucalyptus trees in the back garden. My friends, Driss and Said, both joined us and Aziz looked back and forth between us as we spoke in English. I explained to him that one of them would be our translator tomorrow, to enable me to speak with the Doctor, who spoke Spanish, French, and Moroccan Arabic—no Tamazight. The entire process hung on what he would tell us the next day, and it would be then when he would tell us whether or not Aziz was even eligible for a new hand.

Said agreed to join us the next day and the rest of the evening was spent introducing Aziz to other volunteers who were in the area. He also had the opportunity to try his first pizza, which he thoroughly enjoyed. We went to bed exhausted, and met Said the next morning at the taxi stand. The morning sunlight was already hot on my back as we crammed into the taxi bound for the city of Erfoud, considered by some to be the gateway to the northern Sahara. I ended up buying out the additional seats in another taxi who said he knew where the *Auberge* was that the doctor had referred us to. Before long we were powering across the Saharan *Hamada*, rock-plain, and watching as the heat roiled off the scorched landscape of blackened rock in shimmering, viscous waves. Soon, the sparkling sea of dunes rose from the rippling horizon, their gigantic reality seeming a fevered mirage in the midday heat.



Our destination was Merzouga, where we would meet the doctor on the fringe of the Saharan Erg, a dune sea. But first we would spend the night in Er-Rachidia, which Aziz had not returned to since the accident.

Merzouga itself was not much of a town, the center being a cluster of one-room shops and small hotels, half-swallowed by the eternally encroaching sands. Sun-darkened men in indigo *jelaba* robes and a few tired looking camels watched as we drove around trying to find our destination. The *auberges* were scattered along the edge of the erg itself, and the shining red-gold dunes loomed over everything as we searched. After a time, we pulled up to a low, earthen building half-buried by the shifting sands. My throat was dry, and sweat rolled down my back as I stepped out into the sunlight and knocked on the front door.

I was greeted by a rather suspicious Moroccan man, who turned out to be the owner, demanding what my business was asking after one of his guests. I looked sideways at Said and asked him to translate for me. "Tell the Spanish doctor that the American is here to see him, and be fast about it." Shooting me a glare, the proprietor vanished into the dark interior leaving us to stand in the heat, which had climbed to nearly 115°F. After a while, a tall gray-haired man came striding up the hall toward us, with the proprietor trailing behind him sullenly. I had never been more relieved to see anybody in my life.

Aziz was measured and evaluated in the doctor's sweltering hotel room, and a cast was made of his damaged wrist and forearm. Speaking with the doctor

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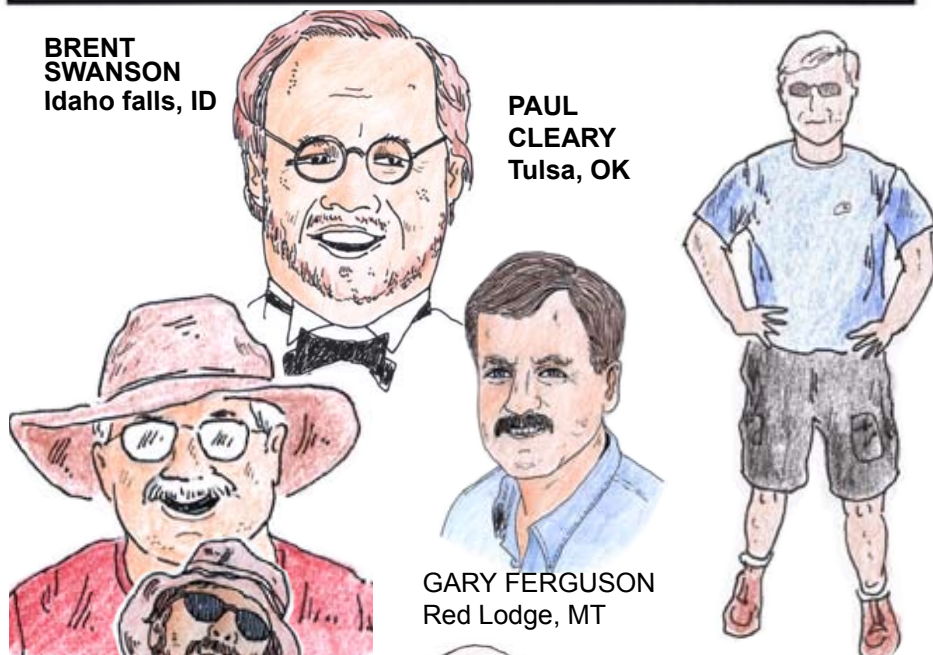


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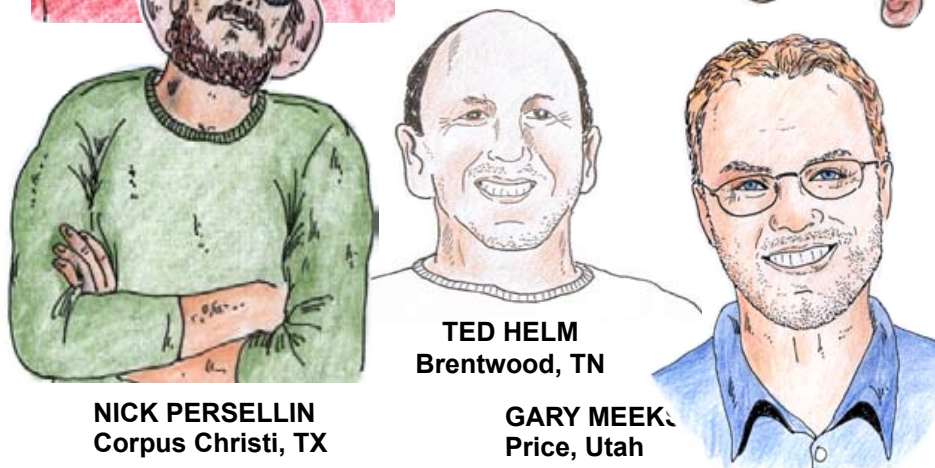
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Price, Utah

‘AZIZ’ by Charlie Kolb

(continued)

through Said, I was told that Aziz was the ideal candidate for a prosthetic hand. There were a variety of options, but all were expensive; even with the doctor being willing to work for free, this would require a grant of some kind. Though the doctor said he was willing to start work right away, I asked him to hold off while I researched the funding possibilities.

Aziz was ecstatic on the ride back to Er-Rachidia, but I was more subdued; I knew how much work I had ahead of me, and I knew how easily everything could come crashing down around my ears, sliding away like sand through my fingers. That night, I sat on the front steps of the apartment building where we were staying with my friends Marcus and Dipesh, looking up at the stars. I thought of the impossible responsibility and fragility of the task ahead, and how much was riding on it. I remembered what Aziz’ father had said to me a few weeks before as we sat at a café table back in the village “I know that this may not happen. But if you do this for my son, the whole valley will be happy.” The door opened behind me and Aziz sat down on the steps as well. “Hassan, I know this may not work out, but I want you to know that either way, we’ll still have a party in my village to celebrate.” I sat there in silence, not knowing what to say.



Aziz, me, and Said in the Auberge in Merzouga

Finally, we found what we were looking for, a much needed loophole; one that could make many small scale projects that don’t fit Peace Corps guidelines a reality.

Peace Corps grants are tricky. They come in a variety of forms, but all are clear that they should be used only for a “sustainable” project, that benefits the community rather than the individual. What I was trying to do for Aziz, was not a Peace Corps project by the standard definition. It would change only one life, rather than many. In my estimation, this was still entirely worthwhile; I came here with the hope that if I could change one life, help even just one person, my time here in North Africa would have been worth it. But how was I going to do it?

I researched on my own for awhile, making phone calls to various Peace Corps staff members trying to work things out. Finally, we found what we were looking for, a much needed loophole; one that could make many small scale projects that don’t fit Peace Corps guidelines a reality. It was so simple, I was at first wary of its legality. Although I wasn’t allowed to raise the money on my own, privately or through grants, there was no reason that an association could not do it on Aziz’ behalf. In essence: If I never touched the money, I wasn’t raising it. I racked my brain, trying to think of a Moroccan association willing to accept donations for a project like this. When I put the question to the Peace Corps staff on the other end of the phone, they replied slowly:

“You misunderstood; when I said ‘any association’ I meant any association.”

“So, means any non-profit back in the states?”

“Yes!”

“How about a church?”

“Sounds fine to me.”

I immediately sent an email to Christ the King Lutheran Church, back home in Durango, Colorado. I told Aziz’ story, and what I had been able to do so far. Their reply was brief, and very positive. The tagline of the email? “Let’s give the boy a hand”

~

Summer crept by, and I watched as my friends back home, faculty from my college (Fort Lewis), and colleagues from my work with the parks donated to Aziz’ cause. Ramadan came and went in a blaze of dehydration and delirium and I soon found my hands full with the Wedding Festival in Imilchil in mid-September. The nights lengthened and grew colder; the days began to be filled with the crisp, golden light of another Atlas Autumn. Finally, I got an email. We had reached, and overshot, our original goal on 9/11, the 10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks in New York which planted the bitter seed of distrust and hatred of Muslims in many Americans. Aziz is muslim, and this fact had been emphasized passionately by my old friend, Kip Stransky, during that service. He explained that on that day, of all days, we should remember to love those who are different from us and to extend our love and goodwill even to those that society tells us we should despise. After all, isn’t that what Jesus would do?

~

The leaves had been swept from the poplars by the river by the bitter winter wind, by the time the doctor informed me he had finished. We set a date for mid-December, and again I found myself sitting with Aziz as we waited for the transit. The morning was pale with frost and the people followed the weak sunlight from café to café as it slowly moved from one side of the street to the other. The first snow of the year glistened on the mountains high above and I was just beginning to warm up when the transit arrived.

In the days that followed, Aziz and I made our way to the Northeast corner of Morocco. We stayed with friends of mine the whole way; they were very generous to take us in, and I thank them for it. Errachidia was the first stop, then ten hours by bus across the Saharan plain to Oujda, a rest in the beautifully forested village of Tafelghalt, and finally to Nador, a city perched on the shores of the Mediterranean. It was a journey of firsts for Aziz, and he marveled at things that I too often take for granted. Here are a few highlights: Stoplights exist to regulate traffic, ice can be used to cool drinks, occasionally the water that comes out of the tap is hot, just because the nice man tried to sell you something doesn’t make it legal, and so on and so forth. It was quite an experience for him, and for me as well, as I got a fresh look at my own life (which



I long considered to be mundane and rather normal) through the Aziz’ eyes. We stayed in a hotel, for which the doctor had kindly paid the bill, and walked along the seashore for awhile which was another first for Aziz.

My friend Socorra, who had been in Morocco as long as I, joined us in Tafelghalt and accompanied us to Nador to help out with translation. She was proving an invaluable source of support to both Aziz and me, as Aziz was not always on his best behavior, so two pairs of eyes were better than one. He started calling us ‘Mom and Dad’ which I found rather appropriate as we always seemed to be hollering at him about various things. In the space of two minutes I had informed him, much to his chagrin, that, no, he couldn’t ride the pony that we passed and Socorra then had to pull him out of traffic. So yes, ‘Mom and Dad’.

After our walk, we took him to McDonalds, (yes, there’s one here too) a

place I avoided like the plague in the states but rather enjoyed in the Moroccan setting. To Aziz it was a veritable 'cave of wonders', with well dressed people forming orderly lines to place their orders, music playing quietly from invisible speakers, and a non-fluctuating room temperature. I can empathize with him of course, as central heating now makes me patently uncomfortable (do people *really* need their houses so warm!?). Socorra and I chatted in English, blessed English, as Aziz tried to figure out what to do with his cheeseburger and McFlurry. He enjoyed it of course, but not nearly as much as the two rounds of bumper cars I paid for at a traveling carnival on the way back to the hotel.

By the time the doctor arrived the next morning, I had few remaining fingernails after biting most of them to the quick. We exchanged our greetings in the hotel lobby and proceeded up to the room. The new hand was a wonder, a delicate sheath of life-like plastic skin fitting over a carbon-fiber frame. Aziz was dumbstruck by how real it looked. He told me he had never seen anything like this; to be honest, neither had I and I told him so. The hand was adjusted to fit right there in the room and, after an hour or so, it was on Aziz wrist and he was running around giving everyone high fives. The doctor was grinning ear to ear, as was Socorra who had been an amazing translator. I smiled cautiously, not believing it was done. But as I looked at Aziz' face, I saw ecstasy; so different was he from the tired and downcast boy I had met on the road nearly a year before, that I could scarcely believe them the same person. We had done it, he and I, a little project that could have died at anytime was kept alive by a veritable chain of friends and advisors. This wasn't my doing, as the doctor insisted to Aziz, I just had the pleasure of being the facilitator—a catalyst for change. But after all, isn't that what Peace Corps is all about?

~

As the rain slowly dies down and daylight begins to fade from the hotel courtyard, I shut off my computer and sit in the dark quiet, listening to the drops of water falling from the drooping leaves of the palms. I think of all that I have seen in the past 22 months here. I think of the four months I have remaining in Morocco, and wonder what challenges and opportunities they hold for me. But most of all, I think of Aziz and smile.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not reflect the views or opinions of the U.S. Government"

CHARLIE KOLB is almost a native Coloradan, and has worked as a seasonal ranger for the National Park Service, but will be working with the Peace Corps until 2012.

The Zephyr looks forward to sharing-regular reports from Charlie. You can also follow him via his blogs:

<http://charlieofmorocco.blogspot.com>
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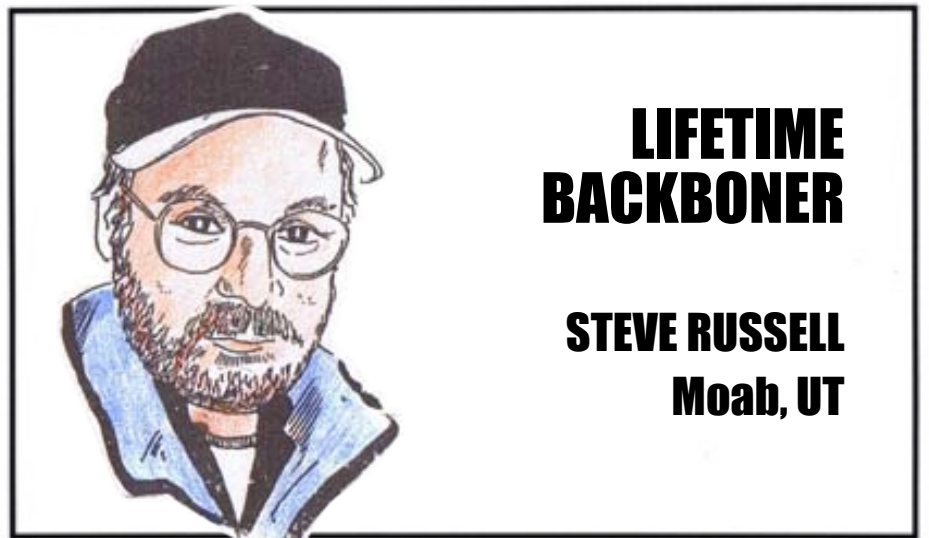
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'Water' We Gonna Do?

Political Deadlock & the West's Coming Mega-drought

Kathleene Parker

I was going to write about population, water and the Southwest, largely where I'm still headed. But then came headlines about the Occupy Movement; an essay on the Cassandra dilemma, and my ongoing frustration that a nation founded on the core concept of majority rule today has none, why—although the fact is little recognized—we are paralyzed on critical issues.

The founders fought the Revolutionary War to end “the tyranny of the few over the many,” sadly, pretty much the system we have devolved into. We no longer have the “few” of English royalty, but we have the few of powerful lobbyists and campaign contributors.

Elected officials were, once upon a time, obligated to vote in a way that represented the wishes of the majority of those they, well, represented—that in a time when an angry constituency might happily resort to tarring and feathering.

Our minority-rule system today is predicated on:

electd officials' seemingly unbreakable ties to campaign-finance sources (the few)

their exclusive focus on critical voting blocs (the few), rather than the majority

a preoccupation with the next “election cycle,” rather than the long-term good of the nation catering to the overly powerful “elites” (the few)

that the Occupy Movement rightly condemn as CBS News revealed on “60 Minutes,” outright Congressional corruption.

The news program showed how the only people who can do insider trading legally are members of Congress. Curiously, after “60 Minutes” broke the story, a bill to correct the problem, which had languished for lack of sponsors, was suddenly awash in them, as an outraged Nancy Pelosi and John Boehner could do little more than bluster during “60 Minutes” interviews about their possible enrichment as a result of insider trading.

I recently read “The Quiet Coup,” (The Atlantic, May 2009) by a former chief economist at the International Monetary Fund stating that if the United States needed a loan from that organization—often a last resort for developing nations—it would be denied for the same reason that many developing nations are: corruption! The problem, from author Simon Johnson's view, is that the finance industry has “effectively captured our government,” with him defining how recovery will fail unless we break the financial oligarchy that blocks reform.

Congress focuses solely on economic issues even as it ignores environmental, education, health-care, infrastructure, and other critical crises—without realizing that those are all the very foundations of long-term economic well-being and, certainly, the ability of all systems to evolve and adapt to a changing world.

Now, to the Cassandra dilemma. I receive daily—and, to me, critical—emails from Population Media. Much of their work targets women in developing nations. These include family-planning messages and progressive role models featured in radio and television soap operas. Their emails, available upon request at www.populationmedia.org/who/subscribe-to-pmc/, are gathered from news sources and professionals around the world and are about population, global warming, species extinctions, agriculture, biodiversity, water and women's issues, such as the recent, “The men behind the war on women,” about the influ-

ence of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (the few) on Congress.

The nation's nearly 70 million Catholics—nearly one-in-four Americans—deserve representation, but the essay indicates that even Catholics go unrepresented. One 2008 poll showed that 98 percent of sexually active Catholic women use birth control, 83 percent of those who attend mass weekly. A Pew poll showed that only 21 percent believe abortion should be illegal, while 59,000 nuns sent a letter to Congress in 2010 urging the passage of healthcare reform, despite the bishops' opposition because the bill would allow federal subsidy of abortions. We got another example of this recently when a right-to-life effort in Mississippi was turned down resoundingly by voters, illustrating, if nothing else, that far-right religious voters might not be as many or as extreme as depicted in the media. Yet, this is an example of how the few hold sway over the many.

Another recent Population Media transmission was an essay by Kurt Dahl about the Cassandra dilemma. Cassandra was the beautiful daughter of royalty from ancient Troy. The god, Apollo, fell in love with her and bestowed upon her the ability to know the future. But when she refused him, he cursed her by making it so that no one would believe her predictions, as Dahl wrote, “a frustrating curse in the extreme,” as she tried, in vain, to warn of the danger of the Trojan horse.

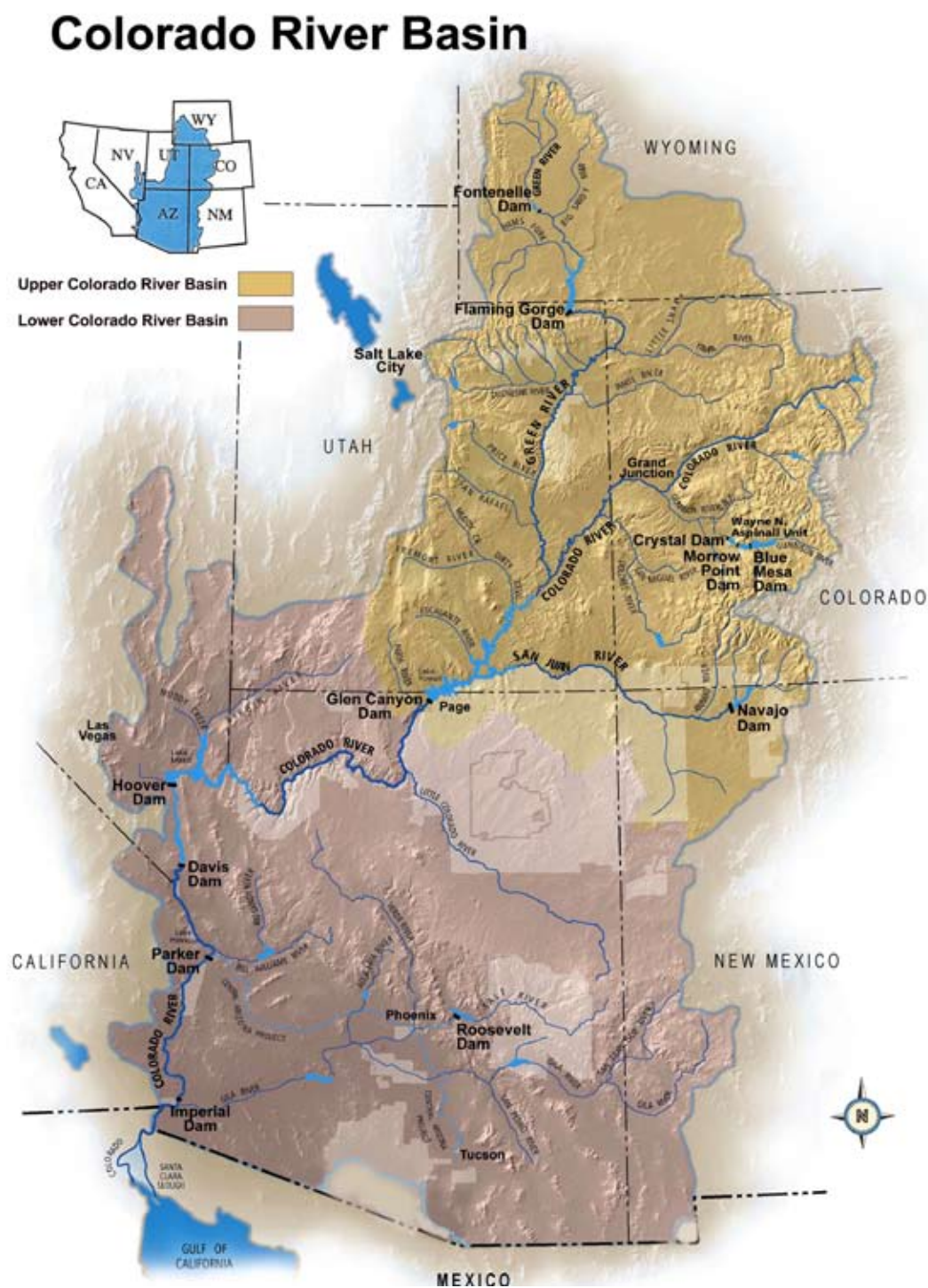
Dahl then says this is where we are today. Many see the looming dangers of climate disruption, peak oil, water depletion, soil degradation, species extinction, and human population growth and fear a disaster, as Dahl writes, “of unimaginable proportions.” Yet, we get no action to address those problems even though there could be only a small window of opportunity.

Dahl attributes this to apathy, denial and false hope, certainly true. But I think it also harkens back to “the tyranny of the few over the many.” Even if most Americans are concerned about climate disruption, (I believe most are), we have nowhere to go for representation—certainly not elected officials whose purse strings are held by powerful energy lobbies, who see not an opportunity in fighting climate disruption but an obstacle. That is tragic, since China sees that opportunity and has captured the market in solar technologies, with fog-bound Germany close behind. As clearly defined in Tom Friedman's *Hot, Flat and Crowded*, a nation

that grew based on innovation is no longer innovative nor willing to change outdated utility regulations—the few again.

Now to water and the American Southwest. It is telling that the first online comment about a January 2012 *Scientific American* article about an impending water crisis in the Southwest—of perhaps catastrophic proportions—read, “...those who follow U.S. politics will immediately recognize that nothing will happen until a crisis is undeniable, and probably not even then.” That's cynical, but accurate because water is another issue where we have no representation, although another hurdle is that 99 percent of the people have no clue where their water comes from or how vulnerable the supply.

Scientists have long cautioned that the Southwest would be hit first, worst and hardest by climate disruption, but more troubling is what could happen if the Southwest simply returns to the usual far drier norms.



Key is that our “leaders” (a term I always use now with quotes) are moving forward on growth on the assumption that precipitation levels from 1960 to 1995 were the norm, but tree-ring and other research refute that.

Stark reality lost on just about everyone in the Southwest is that the region has been drier—often much, much, much drier—with a number of catastrophic, sometimes civilization-breaking droughts dotting its history, such as one that turned the prehistoric Hohokum’s amazing irrigation system at today’s Phoenix into dust, triggering famine.

Recent years, 2000, 2002 and 2011 brought droughts to the Southwest, each triggering massive tree die offs and wildfires of biblical proportions, such as this year’s Wallow Fire in Arizona and the Las Conchas Fire—visible at night as an eerie ghost fire smoldering across miles of mountain side after its first catastrophic blowup. The Wallow burned over 800 square miles (half-a-million acres) and the Las Conchas burned over 150,000 acres. For perspective, the 1996 Dome Fire, at the time the largest wildfire in state history, burned a mere 16,600 acres!

Yet, these “droughts,” including the infamous 1930s drought or the “Fifties drought,” when placed in the context of Southwestern history, barely show as droughts!

Key is that the 20th century was the wettest century in nearly 2,000 years.

A 40-year drought in the mid-1500s hit much of the continent, but most especially the Southwest. As one climatologist commented, “There’s no way that large human populations would be able to live (in the Southwest) in that. It was not a good time.”

And, severe droughts occurred in the late 1300s, contributing to the abandonment of cities in the Four Corners area. Drought dominated much of the 1400s and the mid-1700s. A 1680s drought was worse than the 1950s drought and helped trigger the successful uprising against Spaniards by the Pueblos in New Mexico who had been forced to turn over most of their harvests to their captors.

Such mega-droughts were likely triggered by routine temperature changes in the Atlantic and Pacific, part of normal Southwest weather trends—trends likely to grow more extreme with global warming.

On other side of the coin—the one we humans have control over—is that the region is the fastest growing region of this the world’s third most populated nation, behind only China and India.

Such growth, common in the West, reflects rates, matched only by population-explosion nations in Africa of 2 and 3 percent per-annum, or doubling times of 35 to a mere 23 years, a stark reality absolutely lost (or dodged) on “leaders” and the media.

As I argued in a recent paper for the Center for Immigration Studies (<http://www.cis.org/southwest-water-population-growth>), there is insufficient water for the current population, as “leaders” operate on the assumption that the astronomically high growth of the past century must (apparently, solely for economic reasons) continue, even as Phoenix is larger in physical size than Paris, San Francisco, Chicago and Washington, D.C., combined with the greater Salt River Valley at over 4 million people, up from a paltry 5,554 citizens in 1900. Las Vegas is over 2 million, up from 2,000 in 1920, a thousand-fold increase in less than 100 years, a story common or exceeded in every major Southwestern city. Denver, at over 2.5 million, up from 130,000 in 1900, is on the Atlantic watershed—where the Colorado’s waters were never meant to flow—but dependent upon Colorado River water diverted under or over the Rocky Mountains, an illustration of the adage that in the West, “Water flows uphill towards money.”

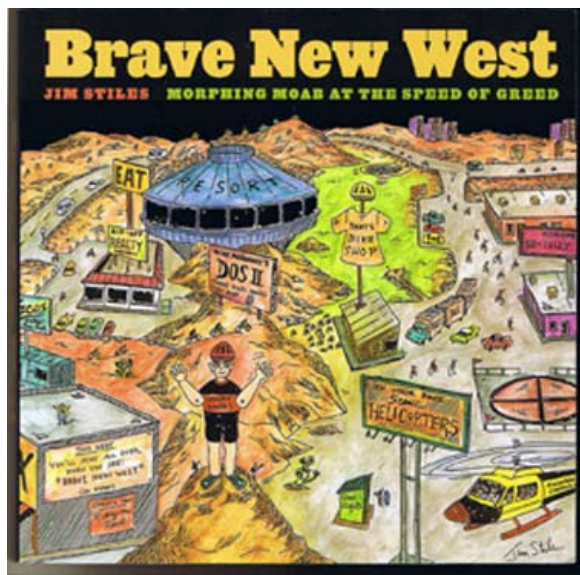
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The Colorado is the only major river in the region, since, as 20th Century humorist Will Rogers summed up, the only other “big” river, the Rio Grande, is the only river he had seen that “looked like it needed to be irrigated,” plus it too is over-allocated, improperly used and increasingly challenged by drought.

In the 1920s, the Colorado was legally apportioned, or divided, to the upper-basin states (Colorado, Utah, Wyoming and New Mexico) and the lower-basin states (Arizona, Nevada, California) on the assumption the river carried 16.4 million acre-feet a year, with 7.5 million acre feet allocated to each basin and the “excess” promised to Mexico.

But then, grim reality dawned as it was discovered the allocation was based on measurements on the river during the wettest period in 400 years. It was clear that 1.3 million acre feet more water was apportioned than would exist most years.

After tree-ring studies in the late 20th century, an even grimmer reality dawned: the flow will likely be 3 million acre feet less than allocated, something of not-



“Jim Stiles holds up a mirror to those of us living in the American West, exposing issues we may not want to face. We are all complicit in the shadow side of growth. His words are born not so much out of anger but a broken heart. He says he writes elegies for the landscape he loves, that he is “hopelessly clinging to the past.” I would call Stiles a writer from the future. Brave New West is a book of import because of what it chooses to expose.”

-- Terry Tempest Williams

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Corvallis,
Oregon



Kathleene Parker (continued)

great concern in 1950 when fewer than 15 million people lived in the Southwest, but a serious problem today as the population stands at 60 million on its way to a projected—land-development interests would argue a “hoped-for”—doubling late century. Stream-gage readings have averaged only 14.2 million acre feet per year since 1950, despite it being the dampest period in discernible history.

The Colorado could well average only about 13.5 million acre-feet a year, a stark reality become clearer in the mid-1990s as drier norms returned and reservoir levels plummeted—even as the region’s already booming population really began to explode, part of national demographics linked to births (40 percent of growth) and immigration (60 percent), with the high birth-rate among first-generation immigrants also part of the “birth” number. Key is that, while few things influence outcomes more than our sheer numbers, “leaders” are continuing policies influencing demographics—such as the highest immigration in our nation’s history by a factor of five, higher even than during the Frontier Era “Great Wave”—with no acknowledgement or discussion of the implications to problems like the water shortfalls in the now highly populated Southwest.

Scientific and other voices warn that that shortfall is dangerous, even if global warming is not taken into account, since population increases make the entire water system more “brittle” and likely to respond more quickly and more negatively to drought. At the least, water shortfalls will increase political instability. Nevada recently threatened, for example, to break the very core of all water management in the Southwest, the Colorado River Compact, based on shortfalls linked to its mushrooming population and drought and what it saw as an unwill-

But then, grim reality dawned as it was discovered the allocation was based on measurements on the river during the wettest period in 400 years. It was clear that 1.3 million acre feet more water was apportioned than would exist most years.

ingness of other interests to hear its concerns.

The Scripps Institute of Oceanography has warned—based on a study that bent over backwards to err on the side of caution—that Lake Mead, the largest reservoir in the nation, by the 2020s could run dry. Others have raised concerns about the second largest reservoir, Lake Powell, with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation conceding, partly due to water-management changes implemented to try to ameliorate the crisis on the Colorado, that Lake Powell will likely never reach the full-line again.

Critical is that these massive reservoirs are the water core upon which the economy and civilization of the Southwest is built.

Other agencies—the National Academy of Sciences, the Pacific Institute, the University of Colorado’s Western Water Assessment—have similarly raised concerns. A National Academy’s statement, after a 2007 study, said, “It became clear that a broad understanding of the Colorado River management issues is not possible unless both water supply and water demand issues are adequately studied. Our report presents population growth data for much of the western

United States that is served by Colorado River water. The cities in the region are collectively the fastest growing in the nation. Of further concern is that growth seems to be occurring with little regard to long-term availability of future water supplies. (Emphasis added.)

Yet, virtually every approach by “leaders” to the crisis—those who even acknowledge it—is only on the “supply side,” or how to find more water, stretch available supplies, or to turn to “techno fixes,” like de-salting, that will only marginally increase supplies or are energy intensive at a time when energy is also an increasing problem, as defined in a recent Sandia National Laboratory study.

Meanwhile, they focus exclusively, to total preoccupation, on attracting more growth to our already fast-growing region—this as they serve “the few,” powerful



economic forces dependent upon continued high population growth, especially developers.

That type of “tyranny of the few over the many” is particularly dangerous if it means a potentially dangerous water crisis is not addressed in a common-sense, all-inclusive—demand side and supply side—way, or if national policies affecting growth are never discussed or their demographic implications considered.

(Parker, who lives near Albuquerque, is a fifth-generation native of the American Southwest, and has worked as a journalist covering Los Alamos National Laboratory and the Jemez Mountain region for the Santa Fe New Mexican. She has also worked and written about water issues, forestry issues and population, regionally and nationally.)

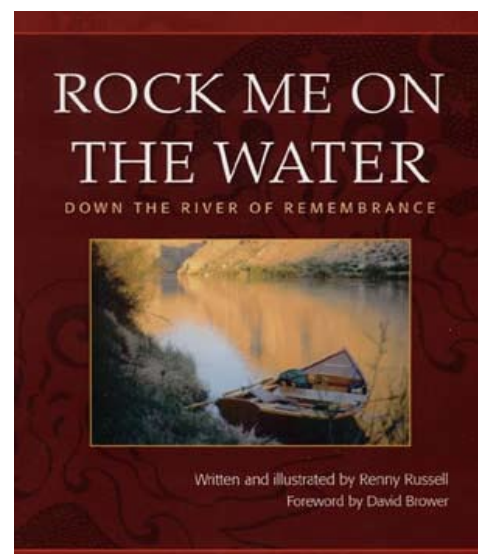
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Robert Redford

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From Renny Russell,
 the author of...





THE D&RGW: COLORADO 1954



HERB RINGER came West from his home in New Jersey in 1939. Camera in hand, Herb captured the American West, from the Canadian Border to the Rio Grande and from the Big Sur coast to the High Plains.

We believe Herb's collection of *Life in the West* is one of the finest. His work has been published in *The Zephyr* for 20 years. I am pleased finally, to offer Herb's photographs in color. We are also building a new 'album' of his work, elsewhere on this site.

My dear friend died on December 11, 1998...JS

THE CRUSH OF STUDENT DEBT

IS IT WORTH IT?

Tonya Stiles

Desi and I tried to picture the country in 50 years, as a kind of parlor game. "Oh! Mushroom cloud! It's going to be a disaster!" he said. "It's so overwhelming there's nothing in particular to be worried about." We both laughed, because it's true.

– Noreen Malone, "The Kids Are Actually Sort of Alright: My screwed, coddled, self-absorbed, mocked, surprisingly resilient generation." *New York Magazine*.

I think it was the 8th grade when I first became conscious of the Grand Plan. Throughout elementary school and middle school, I had ignored the whisperings and vague illusions from teachers who warned us that, one day, we would reach a year when our grades would begin to "count."

In the 8th grade, my Algebra teacher flat-out said it. "Next year, you'll be in high school. From the moment you step into the 9th grade, all of your test scores and homework assignments will be for real. Get bad grades, you won't be going to college. You think you don't want to go to college? Try getting a job in 10 years without a college degree." Kids around me murmured and laughed. A few, who clearly had already developed high hopes for their futures, went pale and quiet at the thought.

At the age of 13, I was only a few years beyond wanting to be a ballerina when I grew up, but suddenly the outline of my future appeared before me. High School, College, a job, a marriage, a house. All of these were in a state of constant jeopardy, depending on my performance. Never before had the future seemed like a tangible object. It had never seemed like something I could shape and alter with my own hands. It had never seemed like something I could break.

A couple months ago, I emailed an article to my friend Clint. From *New York Magazine*, it was the latest in a string of pieces I'd read intended to explain the angst of my generation. Noreen Malone described what she called "two long-term social experiments conducted by our parents," the over-attentive, minivan-driving baby boomers:

The first sought to create little hyperachievers encouraged to explore our interests and talents, so long as that could be spun for maximum effect on a college application. (I would like to take this forum to at last admit that my co-secretaryship of the math club had nothing to do with any passion for numbers and much to do with the extra-credit points.) In the second experiment, which was a reaction to their own distant moms and dads, our parents tried to see how much self-confidence they could pack into us, like so many overstuffed microfibre love seats, and accordingly we were awarded clip-art Certificates of Participation just for showing up.

And then she interviewed her friends and acquaintances to describe the ill effects of those experiments, all grown up and exposed to a world in which praise is no longer forthcoming and even the highest-achieving students are unemployed. Clint replied to me a couple hours later, "My first impression after reading this is 'Holy crud, the examples are me!' (And probably half the people I know, come to think of it...)" Four minutes passed and he added an addendum to his comments, "This is quite possibly an ironic statement, considering the article's stance on our generation's self-centeredness."

As I read the article, I considered whether Clint, half the people he knows, and I had all been done a great disservice by those who told us that a college degree was the ultimate goal, the achievement to which all our adolescent endeavors should be directed.



If we had been told, instead, that college was one option among many—an option which may or may not lead to a job and a better salary once completed—maybe fewer would have taken out tens of thousands of dollars in loans in order to attend the "best" school. Maybe we wouldn't have been surprised when the "best" school didn't bring us any closer to success or happiness than any other option would have.

Christopher, from Colorado, has \$100,000 in debt. He got his Bachelor's in philosophy in-state at the University of Colorado-Boulder. He went to graduate school for Public Administration at the University of Colorado-Denver. He had a lot of options—even a full-ride scholarship to a Law School in New York City—but, given the cost of living expenses, staying in Colorado was actually

the least expensive route. I asked him how long he thinks it will take to pay off his loans. "I have no idea," he replied. "Which is perhaps why it is so scary. In theory, my repayment period is 25 years or so." Assuming that's correct, he'll be paying off his loans well into his mid 50's. So far, he says it hasn't affected him much. "But that is also because I have been in the grace period," he said. "I have to start paying my loans this month and I am already thinking about putting off a move. So I foresee it being a problem."

When I asked him whether college had been worth it, he replied, "It is hard to say. I am grateful to have received it. I think in an intrinsic sense, then yes. But I am not sure if it will necessarily be a good return on investment from a purely financial perspective." I could tell from his answers that this was a conflict for him, as it was for most people I talked to. He liked college, but what he liked wasn't necessary what the college-pushers have made it about. "I definitely think more critically about the world and world issues," he said. "I don't think I got many hard skills that would be useful for employment," he admitted, "though I don't think that should be the point of college anyway."

My buddy Clint, a tall Nordic-looking park ranger with a degree in Speech Communication and English,

said pretty much the same thing. "I can say that, regardless of the career I end up with in the long run (or lack thereof,) my education has most certainly been worth the cost... I went into college with the vague assumption it was where you were supposed to go to start up a career. I picked out fields that interested me, barely stopping to consider if it would net me a high wage or a cushy retirement package in the future." He agreed that college had become too focused on job-attainment. "A quality education is not about building good employees or good consumers or even good citizens," he said, clearly getting a little fired up. "It is about building good humans."

Clint and I went to the same college, up in South Dakota. The school wasn't very

In the 8th grade, my Algebra teacher flat-out said it. "Next year, you'll be in high school. From the moment you step into the 9th grade, all of your test scores and homework assignments will be for real. Get bad grades, you won't be going to college. You think you don't want to go to college? Try getting a job in 10 years without a college degree."



expensive and both of us managed to get by on part-time salaries and a little help from our parents. So Clint doesn't have a monthly student loan payment like most of our friends do. Instead, thanks to his lifelong diabetes, he has a health insurance payment. "I realize now that most of my unhappiness can probably be traced to the \$600 a month I need to pay for health care costs," he wrote to me. "One thing that makes me feel enormously bitter towards pharmaceuticals and health insurance companies is the realization, were it not for that \$600 a month, I could genuinely live the life I want to live. I really could work as a park ranger half of the year and spend the other half traveling. I mean, blimey, that \$600 may not sound like much, but it means the world to someone who lives like me."

Everyone I talked to said something to that effect. No one is expecting to join the upper classes. My friends like Clint don't even care to join the middle class. He just wants enough money to live the simple, meaningful life he imagines for himself. And an extra \$600 a month is all it would take. "Anyone who has such high costs," Clint wrote, "is forced to sell out their desires for freedom, for self-improvement and exploration, for the sake of paying the bills and clinging on to a job that, while not what was desired, is the best they were capable of finding immediately after school." Despite what you've

heard, the piece of societal pie to which my generation feels “entitled,” (a word bandied about quite a bit when talking about the Occupy Wall Streeters and anyone else complaining about their student loan debt,) is nowhere near as large as our parents might imagine.

From that same article by Noreen Malone:

...there's evidence to suggest other members of our cohort believe they'll live a more fulfilled life, have better relationships, even if they don't live in larger houses or drive fancier cars than their parents. Jean Twenge, author of Generation Me, says the most prominent shift she has seen so far among young people in this economy is an apparent decrease in materialism.

Without debt, a college graduate has a million options from which to choose the life he finds most dignifying. With very little money, he can find places to sleep and the occasional meal while exploring the world. Growing up, I heard all the time from my parents and their friends about the joys of being young and free—hitchhiking in Europe, setting out cross-country with only a few dollars in their pocket. This was supposed to be the promise of young adulthood—a time of liberation before the onset of marriages, kids, and responsibilities. But add a few thousand dollars in student loan debt to that equation and a college graduate has one option: find a well-paying job and quick.

I asked him how long he thinks it will take to pay off his loans. “I have no idea,” he replied.

“Which is perhaps why it is so scary.

In theory, my repayment period is 25 years or so.”

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Sarah, from California, is a senior at the University of Colorado-Boulder. She has \$80,000 in student loan debt. When I asked her how long she expects to be paying it off, all she said was, “I anticipate [I'll be] paying off debt until I'm very old.” Soon she'll have a degree in International Affairs and Peace and Conflict Studies, and she told me, “I have always imagined traveling for a few years after graduation or working abroad.” She also mentioned wanting to make documentaries or start a non-profit, but as graduation approaches, she realized all these goals “will most likely have to be put on hold...depending on how I can make enough money to pay off my debt post college.”

She described herself as “a very optimistic person,” but it was clear the stress of money worries was already taking a toll. “I am still excited about graduating and what I'll be doing,” she said, “but my main worry is that I'll get stuck in a job that I hate because I have to pay bills.” Like Clint, she said, “Having a lot of money (and maybe it's just because I am a broke college student and don't have any) isn't a huge priority for me.” But, she acknowledged, “it will have to be once I am paying back my loans.” And there, with a sigh, goes the promise of freedom.

An admission: I don't know what the purpose of college is supposed to be. Whether higher education is a noble calling—a way of turning slaves into free-thinking men—or merely a path to a career becomes more confusing to me as I see more of my friends, armed with their degree and bright ideas about the future, stunned and shell-shocked to come up against a world with no job to offer them. I used to think I knew. When I was in college, like my friend Clint, I was very much caught up in the mind-expanding promise of a liberal education. I grew resentful of anyone who asked me what I was going to “do” with my English degree. “Waitressing,” was my standard smartass reply.

Everyone I asked pretty much agreed with that mentality. All humanities or social science majors, we believed in the ability of education to create powerful thinkers and voices of opposition. As Christopher said, “I only went back [to college] when I decided I wanted to grow more intellectually. So I don't think college ought to be a prerequisite for life (or a good job), but a chance to pursue intellectual topics if one should desire it.” But, the fact remains, when I was a naïve 18 year-old filling out applications, everyone was saying, “This is how you get your career.” Billboards for colleges around town promised “93% career-placement after graduation.” Six months after my college graduation, when I was balancing four plates of pumpkin risotto in two hands and winding my way to another table, I reflected that I hadn't really meant that I wanted to use my English degree for a life of waitressing.

And so, the question to which I come back again and again, is college worth it?

Brent, a young comedian living in Brooklyn, left college after one semester. He said



to me, “I regularly use the Mark Twain quote that's along the lines of, “Never let school get in the way of a good education.” I think dropping out after one semester may have been the best thing I have ever done. I would have graduated last spring, been in

(left) AP photo

debt, and still have no chance at getting a job.”

Brent has been spending a lot of his time lately in Zuccotti Park with the Occupy Wall Street protests. He has heard the stories of too many people with college degrees and nothing to show for it. As for the “worth” of college, he said, “I think it is a bullshit concept that perpetuates itself to keep the business that is college going. I know a lot of brilliant people that can't get a job because they don't have a piece of paper that a less apt/intelligent person does.” And, when he considered whether he had hurt his chances of making money, he said, “Regardless of school, most jobs you still have to learn from doing.” He summed up his argument with a flourish: “I say fuck college. It's not original. Make your own trail through the jungle of life. Walking on the well worn path is boring.” And I had to wonder if he wasn't right.

At least one person in Noreen Malone's article had found his way to the same conclusion:

I have a lot of regret about going to college,” Sam, the person in my high-school class who'd been most obsessed with getting into a good college, now says. “If I could go back again, I think I'd try ... not going to college”—our generation's ultimate blasphemy.

And it raises an interesting question: could we ever sever that tie between college and career? In previous generations, a kid went to work at his Dad's business after school. At 18, he took a low-ranking position schlepping coffee or making copies. Over the years, he worked his way up. The experience of working formed the basis of his credentials for each advancement. To become an electrician, he worked underneath an electrician for years. To become a secretary, he took a typing class. College was for teachers, lawyers, doctors and ministers—and, for many of those people, it was free.

It's a strange sort of revolutionary idea—to step back 50 years in the “progress” of our country. And not an idea without drawbacks. One of the biggest problems now is the ratio of graduates to jobs. Too many people fighting for too few positions. And how we solve that, I have no idea. Not to mention, without the pressure for everyone to attend college, fewer young people will encounter Hemingway and Aristotle—and that prospect, I must admit, breaks my English-major's heart. But if we can hinder the “business” that is higher education in America, then any change is worth it. If the millions of blinkered young people ready to sign away their future incomes for the chance at a college degree were to suddenly disappear, the companies that prey on them would as well. And maybe then colleges could shrink down to a reasonable size, relinquishing their role as the key-holders to every child's future.

I have to admit, I was one of the lucky ones. With no debt to my name, I could move across the country after graduation, and a few more times after that—to Connecticut, to California, to Utah. I could leave my waitressing job to attend a literature conference halfway across the country, where I met my future husband and found my future career at his online newspaper. But, for everyone I know, the problems are only growing worse. College tuitions rose again this year, and outstanding student loan debt is predicted to top \$1 Trillion this year. More of my former classmates are moving back in with their parents. Depression rates rise by the year. Without a massive program of debt forgiveness, my generation will likely be weighed down for the rest of our lives.

**...what will we tell our children?
Will we make the same mistakes
as the generation that raised us—
feeding their self-esteem and ambition,
pushing them up the staircase to success
even as the boards beneath
their feet disintegrate?**

Time passes and, despite our problems, most of us are getting married, having children. Every time I check Facebook someone else is engaged. Some are finding jobs. Some are testing the patience of their unemployment benefits. And life is moving on.

What, I can't help but wonder, will the future bring for us? A part of me imagines an entire generation of depressed, disillusioned adults, retreating further into virtual entertainments and pharmaceuticals. But, to be honest, I think most of us are more resilient than that. We will likely still make some happiness for ourselves. We will find meaning the same way our ancestors have—in the people around us.

The next question that arises, then, is, what will we tell our children? Will we make the same mistakes as the generation that raised us—feeding their self-esteem and ambition, pushing them up the staircase to success even as the boards beneath their feet disintegrate? When it is time for the ballerinas, and firefighters, and future presidents to start considering their “grand plan” for the future, where will we point them? The future remains so overwhelmingly vague. We don't know yet—maybe we will never know—how to keep them from sinking beneath the cost of their dreams.

TONYA STILES is co-publisher of *The Zephyr*.



Approaching my old home grounds, Jackson's Hole, I start gearing down. Deep breathing, concentrating on traffic, letting all else blur by. But a parking place has to be found and by then I've remembered the sagebrush flats where Albertson's grocery monopoly now squats, and the springtime shows of Johny Jump-ups and wild onion and windflower, and the paved-over willow patches along Cache Creek. I begin to lose it. I start making judgments.

Yes, nostalgia is a dangerous ailment, but it has a saving side, the use of remembrance to make sense of shreds of history, and the places where history has landed us. Where would we be without those selected memories colored by emotion? True, they're often, maybe usually, overly simple, sentimental in a bad way, misanthropic and racist, et cetera. Old timers in Jackson's Hole complained that the valley wasn't like it used to be, too damn many people; they swore they'd light out for the territory: Alaska. Some did go north; most stayed; some made good money catering to the summertime hordes.

Without nostalgia, how would we know that it's things like zillionaire trophy homes and Cloudrocks and maquiladoras on the border that disgrace the American landscape? Our touchstones for comparing good, bad and indifferent don't spring up from zero, they are ragged survivors from the past, once part of a living present, one of the few things we own, and they offer a stance, a pause, before we follow blindly into the future without a clue.

Hemingway, in "The Sun Also Rises," wrote, "And then came the Rich." Who are these Rich, who take over and build over and fence in paradises where ordinary folks have been enjoying nature's glory and each other's company, maybe feeling a little smug and a lot lucky? Hemingway didn't say, probably reluctant to bog down the flow of the prose.

We could be generous: The rich are ordinary folks doing what they more or less have to do, given their situation, just like the rest

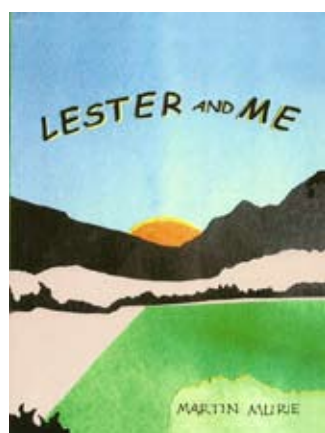
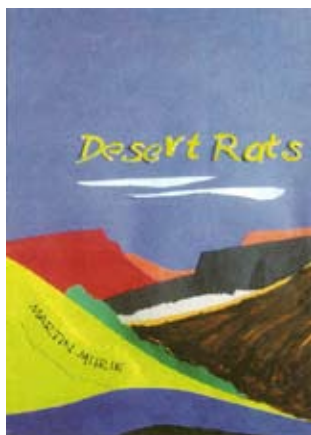
of us here in the belly of the Beast. They're human, after all. Sure, their accommodations are much, much better than ours, but it's the same belly. And they do sometimes put on a good show of standing at the wheels of decision, or at least somewhere in the pilothouse. Periodically one of them gets to live in the Big House. We go along with the pretense, the show. Some laughs along the way, there's that. Don't fret, get on with your life.



Yes, but I'm not that generous. What about that zillionaire crook who hid out in Switzerland and then bought a pardon from the outgoing president? And not one word about Leonard Peltier who deserves a pardon, who deserves at the very, very least, a parole hearing. Outrages like that, the list is long. We can make jokes about these things, we ought to make the jokes, but it's black humor, and we all know it and it has a certain flavor that hangs on.

Accountability, part of our history, demanded of each of us, rich or poor, no exceptions. That's an idea that's become fact. We've hammered it into shape for a long time now. "We hold these truths to be ... and pledge our lives, our fortunes, our sacred honor." Do you know a

single mega corporation head who talks like that? I can't take the High Road of forgetting what's past and "getting on with it." Why do the power people go on and on about "getting on"? Because they want us to forget, that's why. I think the High Road is a sort of fraud, anyway: serenity that graces us when we put ourselves above it all. I'm hoping we varmentalists can find another kind of serenity. It could come from a lot of listening before we jump, listening before spouting off insulting inanities like "Cow Free by 93." Or from looking backward into where we've been. Or a sudden light in the sky. I don't know. Something's got to give.



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MY PERSONAL HISTORY

Life & Times in Southeast Utah Verona Stocks

The twins were born March 7, 1916. That was a night. Mary had to run up the hill a little way to get Mrs. Wheeler to come stay with Mother while Dad went after Mrs. Carrol, the Midwife. I had to get Annie, Neva and Margaret dressed and up the hill to Mrs. Wheeler's place where we would spend the rest of the night. Margaret would not walk anywhere, Mary and I always had to carry her, so I carried her up the hill that night.

We were supposed to sleep but Mary was so keyed up she would not let us sleep. I finally got mad and contested her, as long as she picked on me and let the babies alone I did not care. Some of those little kids was two, three, and four years old. All of the Wheeler children were younger than we were, Minnie Wheeler was nine years old, our sister Annie was nine, I was 10 but would be eleven April 1st. I was pinched, my hair pulled, was shoved around, morning came and Mary took off down the hill to see that baby boy we felt so sure of.

The Blanding people were so wonderful, they brought Mother so many beautiful clothes for those babies, they brought Mother some gowns and bed jackets too. They prepared food for Mother too for the first few days. Dad had so much to do Mary had to stay home from school to tend Neva and Margaret and take care of Mother and the twins.

The little boy was named after Dad's father, Felix Grundy Murphy; his twin sister got a pretty name, Felicia Violet. It was a long time before Mary got to do much for Felix because Mother kept him close to her. She had lost two baby boys which made her so afraid for this one. The little girl was quiet and seldom fussed; when she did either Mary or I took care of her.

Dad needed something from over town, it was a dark night, I was not afraid of the dark so I got on Bird, I was no longer afraid of her either. Coming down the road through the trees to our place I could not see a thing but I figured the horse could. All at once she stopped, I kicked her but she would not move then hands took hold of my legs just below the knees, I knew then there were two people that had stopped my horse. I said "I don't know who you are but I am in a hurry." One of them said, "You are not afraid?" I said, "Sure, wouldn't you be if someone you could not see stopped your horse?" They all laughed, one of them said something to the others and I knew him then even though he spoke Indian. He patted my leg and they went on toward the store. I went home, Dad was outside waiting for me, he asked if I had met them. I told him what happened, He said, "Yes, I knew they were up to something, that is why I waited for you out here."

That Indian was a friend, he had not come to ask for food as so many of them did. He came because he probably had something important to tell Dad. He liked to play tricks on Mary and me as he did his own kids. He was the one that sang with us in the tent in Recapture. I do not remember his name and I don't remember seeing him again.

We moved down to the farm before school was out, Dad needed help, he had two big fields he had cleared and needed our help to plant and harrow. There was twenty acres in each field on farms adjoining ours. Mary usually did the harrowing but now she had to stay with Mother. She did it when she was eleven so why shouldn't I.

Dad favored me, Mother favored Mary, they each made it very plain to us. Mary could and did work with Dad, I could do dishes, make beds and sweep

floors as long as I stayed away from the cooking. Mary and I got along with each other, accepted things as they were and did our work, never discussing our parents way of treating us, it was their problem not ours.

Dad put me to harrowing the field close to our place so he could keep an eye on me. It was a big harrow and it took three horses to pull it. He had to use Bird for that third horse, he put her in the middle, Baldy on one side, Nickle on the other side. There was a board on the harrow to ride on but Dad told me not to get on it because if Bird got to acting up it might flip over. I walked just behind in the dust. Bird did act up but the other two horses held steady. Dad sure knew about horses.

There were big grassy flats south and east of our place, that is where our cows and horses liked to graze. We had to watch out for mean cows and rattlesnakes, there was always plenty of both around. Sometimes Mary and I could

not find the cows and if they did not come home in the night then Mother would saddle a horse and go after them. She usually took Mary with her and left me to tend the kids. Those were long scary days for me, and one time they did not get back until far into the night. She took me with her one time, we went north-west and away up toward Blanding. We saw the cows in a field, there as a gate close by and those cows took off on a run toward the south when they saw us come in. They reached the hole in the fence they had come in. When we caught up to them they were on the other side of the fence. Mother could make a horse do things a horse could not do. She made Nickle jump that fence, and he could not jump anything with anyone else on him. She told me to go back to the gate, I asked her to make Bird jump the fence, she told me Bird was not smart enough, so Mother left with the cows. I got a tree limb and pried some staples out of the fence, pressed the wire down and Bird crawled through the hole. Mother said, "that was fast." I said, "Yes, she couldn't jump over but she could crawl through."

Mother did not need to hunt the cows after the twins were born; Mary and I knew all their hide-aways and little tricks by then. We went after them one afternoon, it looked like a bad storm was coming. It hit us before we got back with the cows. Thunder and lightning and sheets of water, like a cloud burst.

When we got home Mother opened the cellar door and told us to get in fast. We corralled the cows and took care of our horses first. Mother had all five of her younger kids, some bedding and dry clothes for us. She was so afraid for lightning. When the storm was over there were little toads everywhere you looked.

There is an old saying, "It's raining toads and frogs." I sure believed it then. Mother was happy there on the farm. No one was living with us that summer, she had her young ones to look after and Mary and I could manage what farm work that had to be done, keep the water supply for the house, take the cows and horses to water, Mary milked the cows and fed the chickens, I got in the wood.

When Dad came home from his job he would hitch up the horses to the wagon and they would take their baby boy and go to the spring and fill up all the barrels with fresh water. They never took the little twin girl Felicia with them, it was all right because Mary and I always kept her well fed, she was a good baby. After caring for Margaret so much, Felicia was just a doll.

When the planting was finished and the roads were dry enough to get



to the mountain, Dad got a job once again working on ditches and reservoirs to bring the water to Blanding and surrounding ranches.

Then all that changed for us. Dad received word that his Father, Felix Murphy, was dying. He was on the mountain working so he loaded his camp and tools in the wagon and came home fast. We had just brought the cows in, Nickle was right there so Dad put his saddle on that little knock kneed pacer, and took off for Moab, 85 miles away. He left the farm six o'clock in the evening and arrived in Moab six o'clock the following morning.

We looked at the white dove, it flew over and settled on Mother's shoulder, it stayed there for a few minutes then flow away. Mother said she had never seen a white dove before and none of us ever did again.

Felix G. Murphy died July 11, 1916. The day Grandpa was buried Mother, Mary and I were looking at the clouds and watching for the sunset, the clouds were fluffy and beautiful, the kind that makes pictures in the sky. Mother said "Oh no." I looked up at the clouds they had changed while I was watching a white dove that lit on a bush close by. The picture in the clouds looked like a funeral procession, the sun was getting low and started tinting the clouds. They gathered together all in one place as we watched then they broke up and went away. We looked at the white dove, it flew over and settled on Mother's shoulder, it stayed there for a few minutes then flow away. Mother said she had never seen a white dove before and none of us ever did again.

July passed and Dad did not return and he did not write, food was getting scarce the flour had to be rationed, we had milk and she made cottage cheese; there were vegetables from the garden and a few eggs. Then Dad and Grandma came in a wagon.



Dad was cranky with us kids and seldom spoke to Mother, Grandma never let Mother forget that she was in Blanding to make Dad come for his family. I think Grandma was unhappy too and she adopted a cute little boy. Guess she really missed us kids even if she did not think Mother was good enough for her son.

Dad sold Grandma's place and our farm too. Before we left the farm he killed a big roan cow, she was five years old and had never had a calf and she liked to jump fences, we had better cows for us kids to drive without her. But how to keep the meat? It was August. Mother fried some and put it in crock jars, the rest she put in bottles. Pressure cookers were unknown then so Mother put the jars of meat in a boiler and cooked it for several hours. As it turned out we were very lucky she did that.

Now we were ready to leave for Moab, Dad finished loading the wagons. He drove the wagon with the heavy load, the buggy as a trailer. Mother drove the covered wagon with a lighter load and all the little kids with her. Grandma rode with Dad. Mary rode Bird and I rode that little bronc, Nibs to drive the cows.

Mary was worried for some reason, she kept checking on Mother. Grandma was unhappy and she kept Dad stirred up, him and Mother had some trouble and Mother just left. She was troubled and did not know what to do. Mary grabbed Felix and followed her. Mother tried to send her back but she would not go. Dad finally tracked them down and they came back to the wagons.

As soon as I ate my breakfast I started out with the cattle, Nibs kept

trying to go back to his mother, the grazing was good for the cows and I kept expecting the wagons to catch up with me. I did not hurry, but I did fight with the colt all day. When I saw the wagons I just stopped. They made camp, as soon as I reached camp I knew there was some kind of trouble. Mother never came out of the wagon. Dad and Mary each told me a little but I was so tired and I knew Mother and Dad would have to settle the troubles between them, I just went to bed and to sleep.

That was a long unhappy trip back to Moab. For me it was a fight all the way with that Bronc, my arms were sore so was my hands but his nose was sore too and when he tried to turn back I hit him with a quirt. He never did try to buck. Mary helped sometimes but most of the time she stayed with Mother. I was 11 years old and Mary was 13 so at times she drove the wagon team.

We did not know what to expect when we reached Moab, it sure was not what we did get. We came onto the Murphy ranch through the gate on the west side, crossed the creek southwest of the orchard, passed by the logical place to stop, drove on south to a sand dune and there Dad stopped. The sand dune was west of the ditch which had nice cool water in it and tall green popular trees bordering the ditch. There was a grassy spot on the other side too. Dad just drove up, unhitched the horses from the wagons, hitched one team to the buggy so Grandma could drive down to her house. Dad took the other teams to the pasture and that is the last we saw of him for several weeks.

Mary and I got the tent set up for Mother and the little kids, rustled up wood to cook with. Mary cooked on a camp fire, I carried drinking water from a spring. It was a long dry August very hot, except the little kids could play in the ditch, when a little breeze came up there was sand all over everything. Mother was so depressed for several days finally she would help Mary with the cooking.

Uncle Felix came up two or three times and looked around. I heard chopping and pounding in a grove of young cottonwood trees then one day on my way to the spring I stopped to see what was going on. There was a cabin about 12 by 14 feet nearly finished. Those cottonwood trees were tall, straight and about as thick as lodgepole pine. I suspected Uncle Felix was building that cabin, because he was the builder, but I did not know why.

Mary and I refused to go around any of Dad's people. Uncle Heber came up and talked to Mother but I was not there. Just before school started Uncle Felix told Mary to get our team so we did, he hitched them up to the wagon and moved us to where we should have been all the time and into the cabin he had built for Mother. We went back for the other wagon while he was unloading the first one, we had to help him with the cook stove. He set up the big tent and made it secure by putting poles, like a fence all around. The cabin had a floor, the cook stove, cupboards, table and in the back Mother's bed were in the cabin. In the tent there was a bed for Annie, Neva, and Margaret, another for Mary and me. We fixed orange crates with curtains in front for dressers and a place to hang our clothes, we did have dirt floors in the tent but we knew how to cope with that.

Now the thing we did not have was money or where to get any. Dad sold the farm in Blanding and the lot in town but he did not give Mother any, he gave it all to Heber and Tom plus he gave Heber 75 head of cows and 50 more for himself to form the Murphy Brothers Land and Cattle Company. They made Grandma sign over her ranch and cattle to Tom and she gave them the money she received from the place she sold in Blanding. Jack and Tom had about 60 head of cows between them so they put those in. Jack soon withdrew, he did not like his bosses, Heber and Tom, but that was later. The point is Grandma and Dad were the big losers. Uncle Felix, Otho and Victor had nothing to put into the company.

We did not know what to expect when we reached Moab, it sure was not what we did get. We came onto the Murphy ranch through the gate on the west side, crossed the creek southwest of the orchard, passed by the logical place to stop, drove on south to a sand dune and there Dad stopped. The sand dune was west of the ditch which had nice cool water in it and tall green popular trees bordering the ditch.

Mary, Annie and I started school in hand-me-down clothes someone gave to Grandma, we did not like them but we had to go to school, Mother would not have it otherwise. Then one day we came home and Dad was there, him and Mother acted very happy. Mary and I said nothing, if Mother was happy then we could accept it that way.

We lived there until Uncle Heber and Aunt Nellie moved into their new house before Christmas then we moved into the old rock house.

I liked school in Moab even though I had to walk 2 1/2 miles from the Murphy ranch. At eight the school bell rang and sometimes Mary and I were

continues on next page...

VERONA STOCKS (CONT)

slow with our chores, we were seldom late. We were active kids. Annie had to start earlier because she could not run like we could.

I went into a class with the kids I had started school with, Mary went into a class with kids my age. I had not started to go to school when I was 6, I had rhumatic fever. We had no idea if we had been promoted in Blanding or not. We quit school there about a month early to help Dad on the farm. School work was easy for me. We did not have report cards and the teacher did not ask for them.

I started planting a garden early in March after I came home from school and Mary had to hunt for hen's nests and fix up coops for hens that had hatched baby chickens, that besides our regular chores. Mary had to milk the cows and feed them also, feed the pigs and chickens. I had to carry water from the spring and get in the wood. If the cows did not come in then I had to catch a horse and go find them. Yes! we were busy kids. Saturday we washed the clothes, did some ironing and mopped the floors.

When school was out there was plenty of work for Mary and me. I had my garden to take care of and I hated weeds and especially sand-burrs. I hoed weeds when I was not riding a pull up horse at haying time. Mary and I took turns at that because there was haying all summer. The first cutting on the Murphy ranch was soon after school let out, then up to Uncle Jack's place. He owned what is now the 4M

ranch and he had big hayfields. When we finished there we went up to the South Mesa ranch which Uncle Heber had. They paid us a dollar a day to ride the pull up horse and help their wives, Rosie and Nellie in the kitchen. They always hired several men at haying time. We were up at five in the morning and got to bed about nine at night after helping with the dishes, etc.

Mary and I took turns on these summer jobs. We could not both be away from home at the same time. Dad was working away from home and the garden and chores were too much for Mother. We saved our money to buy school clothes. When school started I had no more paying jobs but I did miss some school when the cows were brought off the mountain. The calves had to be weaned and the steers drove to Thompson for shipment. That year they were sold at Chicago. I remember that because Victor went with them and he bought me a wrist watch. He never let me keep it however.

I missed school until all the cows were brought in and those they were going to keep close to the ranch were separated from the ones to be driven to the winter range down below Island in the Sky on the White Rim between the Colorado and Green Rivers. I had to herd those cattle for about two weeks before they were put on the winter range.

Mary had other jobs, she could babysit for three different women that I remember. Anyway she got paid for her work and she needed it more than I did because she could wear out a pair of shoes in a month. I could wear a pair all winter.

When it rained on the cliffs across the valley pot holes in sand rocks filled up; then I helped Dad put some of the cows over there. There are little valleys with good grass and other vegetation good for cattle but no living water so we had to check the water holes often.

That winter Uncle Felix started teaching me how to play the guitar so I could cord for him when he played his violin. He knew the old tunes and he had a phonograph, and he bought the new dance tunes, he only had to hear them a few times so he could play them. Dancing and music was the best entertainment at that time.

That winter Dad was gone a lot, he worked on the Shafer Trail with John (Sog) Shafer and then him and his brothers built up the Murphy Trail. Even that was a rough trail to drive cows over.

I was 13 years old April 1, 1918 and a few days later Dad was ready to go after the cattle that had wintered on the White Rim between the Colorado and Green Rivers. We got as far as Seven Mile that first day just before noon and Dad said he wanted to see a man who was helping guard the convicts who were working on the Seven Mile bridge. He left Otho and me back about a mile away to keep the extra horses we had to have on that cattle drive and we had two pack horses. Dad and Otho each had three saddle horses, I had two. Dad did not hurry back so Otho soon followed him and I started driving the horses toward some trees I could see up the canyon.



When Dad got back he was real happy with himself, he had bought me a bridle with long braided leather reins and a martingale to put on little Buck to keep him from tossing his head and rearing up. It was late and we went up a side canyon toward the knoll. It was dark when we got there, a cowboy was there and he told Dad the coffee was good and hot so Dad cooked a good supper and drank coffee and talked to the cowboy.

We went a round about way down the Shafer Trail which was so narrow in spots the sturp would rub against the cliff on one side and you could look about two to three hundred feet straight down on the other side. I had to ride Flax down that trail, she was short, fat, lazy, and very spoiled but safe on a bad trail. All day I rode her which was very tiring. The next day I rode Little Buck. We saw some Big Horn Sheep, they are beautiful animals and I chased them right by Otho so he took some pictures.

Dad was checking out some cows to see if we had any cows in that bunch, we didn't, when he saw me chasing those sheep he hurried back and he was mad, he really told me off for running a horse in that kind of place. Well, Buck jumped a big wash, and over rocks and brush. He was fast and wasn't long from the wild bunch and he liked to run.

When we came to the brush fence between Shafer's range and Murphy's range it had been knocked down and Dad figured by the tracks that about 50 head had gone through. He would have to go back next day to round them up.

He had time before dark to check out the water. There were three springs, one was arsenic, no tracks there. In the second draw was a soda spring, grass and brush grew around it

but it was not fit to drink. The third spring had some alkali in it, not enough to hurt animals, it was running quite a lot of water and there were about a hundred cattle along the stream bed. We came to a little water fall and I wanted to get a drink, the water looked so clear and cold, Dad said no. We rode up the wash and turned a corner and there in the middle of the stream was a dead cow. Dad put a rope around her legs and pulled her out of the stream. On up the wash we came to the spring it came out of a rock ledge and Dad had built a rock wall in front to keep the cows away.

At the campsite nearby Dad unpacked the horses and started cooking supper, he told me to take some of the horses to a cove north of camp and hobble them. Otho hobbled the rest.

Before daylight Dad went after the cows that had broken through the fence into Shafer's range. Otho went looking for the horses he had hobbled. They were gone up the Murphy Trail. I caught my horse and started rounding up cows, and starting them toward the water.

Dad came back with about 50 head of cows. Otho told him the horses were gone. Otho was twenty but being the youngest in a big family he had never had to anything he did not want to do and this was his first time to rough it. He did not know how to hobble a horse with ropes. He had left them too long between the front feet and had tied the ropes too loose. Dad did not even scold Otho he just went after the horses, he found some of them that still had hobbles on. I was thirteen and was glad none of the horses I had hobbled had got away or Dad would have been pretty cross with me.

It took a few days to round up the cattle and cut out those too weak or ready to have calves. Dad would make another trip for them. We had about seven hundred head ready for the drive and started pushing them up the narrow trail about daylight.

When the lead cows were out of sight Dad started working his way up, making lazy cows move faster. As soon as Dad was out of sight Otho took off after him as he had done each day, always keeping Dad in sight. All afternoon I was up and down that trail, to get where the cows had stopped, and start them moving again. Otho was supposed to be along that trail. I never saw either Dad or Otho until after sundown. Dad asked, what took us so long? I just said "Us? It was just me." He said, "I was afraid of that."

We camped there that night at the head of the Murphy trail and Dad rode herd most all night to keep the herd from scattering all over Island in the Sky. We had the herd on the move at daylight. When we reached the Neck the stock had been two days without water and there was barely enough to fill our waterbags and water the horses. The fourth day the cattle had no water there was a low moan coming from the whole herd, it was the most pitiful sound I ever heard. Late afternoon of that day we reached the Knoll and the cows smelled water and started moving faster. Dad went with the leaders to stop them at the water in Seven Mile Wash. Otho was leading the pack horse and he followed Dad

as fast as he could. I stayed with the drags as I had done all along.

We camped at Seven Mile that night. The next day we drove almost to the head of Moab Canyon and put the cattle on the bench in a natural corral. The next morning Dad and Otho went after the cattle, leaving me to keep them bunched close by. About half the cows were off the bench when a cow fell down in the narrow trail blocking it. Dad and Otho worked to get her up and tried to get her to a place so the rest of the herd could get by but she got on the fight and they could only get a few cows by before she would fall down again.

Every time they turned a few cows loose they headed for the Arches and I had to run my horse to head them off and bring them to the herd, as the herd grew it was harder to keep them bunched. I had only one horse to ride since part of the horses got away and I had been riding him every day on the roundup and then on the drive. I rode drag. It was hot and dusty and that horse had to trot back and forth behind those cows to keep them moving and now this, it was too much, even for a horse like Little Buck. Dad finally noticed. He shot that cow, and sent Otho to help me.

When the cows were all together again we drove them down Moab Canyon toward the river bridge. The first mile we picked up what was left of our camp outfit. That pack horse just rubbed against a tree until the pack was loose enough to turn underneath him then he kicked it to pieces. The bridge was narrow but traffic was slow, when we got the herd across the river we drove them through the town and up to the Murphy ranch. The valley was fenced off and that was the only way we could go.

**There is nothing better than two,
a man and a woman who walk together.
When they walk right together there is
no way too long, no night too dark.**

I missed about ten days of school and had to work hard to catch up so I could take my tests, school would be out the first week of May. I also had to finish planting the garden. Mary and Annie missed the last week of school because Dad needed Mary's help to get the remainder of those cows we could not bring on that first drive. It did not take them as long as it did us because they went straight to the Murphy trail and the cows were feeding closer to the water. There was about 200 head and many of the cows had calves but Mary and Annie working together kept them on the move up the Murphy Trail. Even with the small calves they made it to the Neck on the first day. The excitement of the trip was when a herd of deer almost ran over the girls who were stationed at the mouth of a big canyon.

Mary and I helped round up the cows, herding them while the calves were branded then helping to get them on the mountain to the summer range. After that it was back to the hayfields, taking turns being away from home as we had the summer before. We saved the money we earned to buy school clothes.

Annie, Neva and I started to school the first day of school but Mary was still working for Aunt Pearl who was cooking for a road crew. Nick was born Oct. 4, 1918 and I had to stay home, Mother was very sick. Dad stayed with her all day and worked with that baby to get him to come right but Nicklos was cautious about coming into a world he knew nothing about. It was like testing bath water with your toes, that is what Nick did only when Dad saw those toes he grabbed them and Nick had no chance to change his mind he came into this world screaming mad, feet first. There was a Doctor up at Grandmother's drinking coffee, he was there to help Mother, he never did but he came when he heard the baby and he cut the cord.

Dad hired a woman to do the washing, she just brought it all to me, I did it and she got paid. I was a little peeved when I heard Dad had paid her. I

did not mind taking care of Mother and the kids but I sure wished Mary would come home and do the cooking. She did come before Mother was up and able to do anything but tend her baby. She was so proud now she had two little boys. I went back to school.

Mary started school as soon as Mother was on her feet enough to look after her other little ones. Then they brought the cows off the mountain and I had to ride herd on them until the steers were cut out and taken to Thompson and the others moved from the ranch to the winter range. Well I liked school and it did not take me long to catch up on lessons missed.

We were not the only kids that missed school at planting time or harvest and when help was needed with the stock.

When the first snow came I helped Dad put about a hundred cows into the hidden valleys on the cliffs across Spanish Valley from the Murphy ranch. There is no living water over there but pot holes in the slickrock that fill up when it rains or snows. Most weekends I checked on the cattle to make sure they had water. Dad showed me some hidden trails over the rock fins and in one little valley was a beautiful Arch with a pond under it and lovely flowers all around. I explored in some rather scary places just to look for a flower or rock formation. I finally went too far and scared myself. I decided not to tie my horse and go on foot if it was some place he could not go then I wouldn't go.

When I return home in the evening and the sun is setting, lighting up the Majestic LaSal Mountains sitting on their purple pedestal with the red sandstone cliffs of many shapes reaching out toward them. Well! I wish I was an artist or had a good camera.

As I ride closer to my home I begin thinking of the fireplace hoping Mother has enough wood to build a good fire. I still must carry in the wood, and I hoped Mother had something special cooked, she usually does. After I helped Mary with the chores we go into the house and get warm by the fireplace. The younger children fall asleep and all is quiet.

When Dad is home it is a pleasure to watch him and Mother begin their day. He would build the fires then milk the cows and care for the horses and pigs. By the time he came back in, Mother was up, her hair combed and she was making biscuits, she loved biscuits. Dad washed his hands and face and combed his hair. It was important for both of them to look nice for breakfast. He sliced and fried the bacon, Mother fixed the cereal and together they set the table.

Usually the kids were all asleep and I pretended to be until it was time for all school kids to be up. The evenings were wonderful too, when Dad was home. He would read to Mother and I always listened. The other kids soon went to sleep.

There is nothing better than two, a man and a woman who walk together. When they walk right together there is no way too long, no night too dark.

NEXT TIME: 'My Life as a Shepherd..part 1'



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Cowboys and Rednecks

I was at a roadside café the other day, listening to this fella' go on about cowboys and rednecks. To his way of thinking, it seems, there was no difference at all between the two and he used the terms interchangeably to disparage anyone who made their living in the rural west. Now, I've known some cowboys who were rednecks, and some rednecks who were cowboys, but, generally speaking, there are some important differences between these rustic types. I've been thinking on it since that day, and though it may be too late to educate that fella' at the café, I'd like to pass along some observations if the readership will indulge me.

First of all, rednecks are usually fat. Cowboys are skinny, wiry fellows.

Rednecks wear camouflage britches even when they aren't hunting. Cowboys can find deer without a special outfit.

Rednecks eat Big Macs. Cowboys herd cattle.

Rednecks listen to Rush Limbaugh. Cowboys listen to Chris Ledoux.

Rednecks wear their hats at the dinner table. Cowboys were raised better by their mammas.

Rednecks live in trailers. Cowboys live in the saddle.

Rednecks dislike Mexicans and Indians. Cowboys actually know some Mexicans and Indians.

Rednecks watch Fox News. Cowboys don't own a TV.

Rednecks talk a lot about Jesus. Cowboys get to know God on a first hand basis.

Rednecks demand their right to bear arms. Cowboys can actually shoot.

Rednecks think the liberal media elite is ruining this country. Cowboys think that anybody should be able to know a fool when they hear one and judge for themselves.

Rednecks tend to vote Republican. Cowboys are usually too far from town on election day to cast a vote.

And last of all, rednecks will probably be offended by this list. Cowboys couldn't give a good damn what I have to say.

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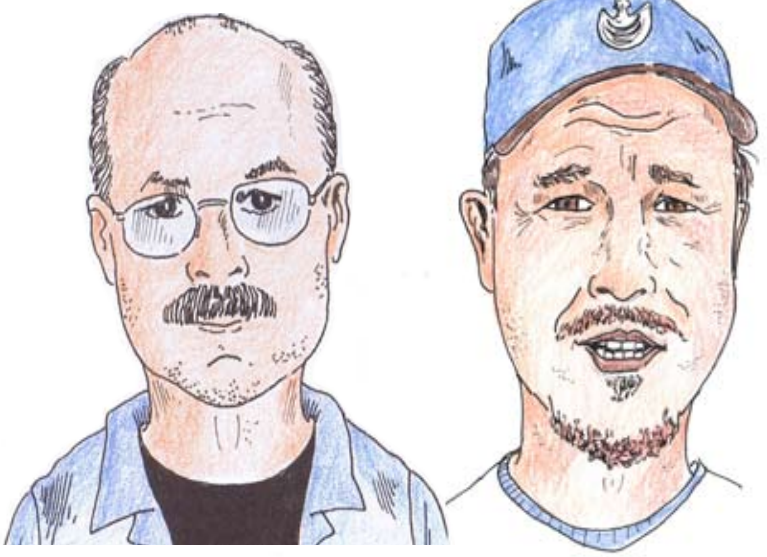
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Overall, America's insatiable desire to chomp on overseas food has been growing. About 16.8 percent of the food that we eat is imported from other countries, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, up from 11.3 percent two decades ago. Here are some other facts:

— Not all juices are treated the same. About 99 percent of the grapefruit juice we drink is produced on American soil, while about a quarter of the orange

juice is imported; more than 40 percent of that is from Brazil.

— About half of the fresh fruit we eat comes from elsewhere. That's more than double the amount in 1975.

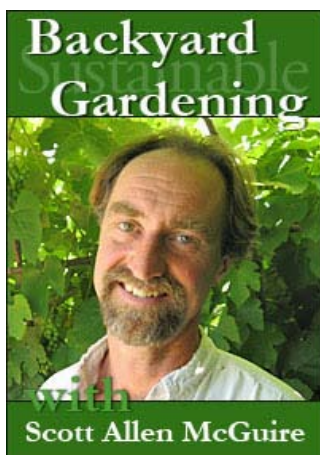
— Some 86 percent of the shrimp, salmon, tilapia and other fish and shellfish we eat comes from other countries. That's up from about 56 percent in 1990.

<http://news.yahoo.com/apple-juice-made-america-think-again-165940000.html>



“The federal government is proposing to grant a first-of-its-kind permit that would allow the developer of a central Oregon wind-power project to legally kill golden eagles, a regulatory move being closely watched by conservationists.” MSNBC

http://usnews.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2012/01/04/9952873-feds-propose-allowing-wind-farm-developer-to-kill-golden-eagles



Free energy is precisely a Ghost Dance in our times, promising the continuation of a way of life that is simply dying out. The prospect of an unlimited energy supply appeals to Petroleum Man precisely because He uses more energy to live His life than any human ever has. Ever.

<http://www.scottallenmcguire.com/eyeonthehorizon/uncategorized/free-energy-is-our-ghost-dance/comment-page-1/#comment-659>



“Telling the story of Obama’s first term without including any of it is a shocking failure of liberalism. It’s akin to conservatism’s unforgivable myopia and apologia during the Bush Administration. Are liberals really more discontented with Obama’s failure to reverse the

Bush tax cuts than the citizen death warrants he is signing? Is his ham-handed handling of the debt-ceiling really more worthy of mention than the illegal war he waged? Is his willingness to sign deficit reduction that cuts entitlement spending more objectionable than the fact that he outsourced drone strikes to a CIA that often didn’t even know the names of the people it was killing? These are the priorities of a perverted liberalism.”

<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2011/11/why-do-liberals-keep-sanitizing-the-obama-story/248890/>



As tensions rise between Japanese whalers and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society in the recent lawsuit brought by the Japanese, Sea Shepherd has a new ally on their hands: drone aircrafts.

The whale activists have been locked in a heated and exponentially worsening battle with the Japanese whalers, and in light of the situation, Bayshore Recycling Corp. of New Jersey has donated two long-range drones equipped with detection capabilities and cameras which help to scan hundreds more miles of ocean for whaling ships. The drones have been outfitted on two Sea Shepherd vessels, the Steve Irwin and Bob Barker, and it has already yielded success.

<http://www.maritime-executive.com/article/sea-shepherd-activists-using-drones-to-track-japanese-whalers>



Tom Brady’s 22,000-square foot palace near Los Angeles is nearing completion, and it will make almost any environmentalist smile.

Oh sure, the Patriots star will be living life like a coal baron. His new home includes eight bedrooms, six-car garage, a lagoon-shaped swimming pool with spa, a weight room and a wine cellar, reports the Boston Herald. The house that Brady built also comes loaded with -- get this -- a covered bridge connecting two wings of the home, an elevator, a nursery for his son Benjamin, and a gallery.

The price? More than \$20 million. That’s in addition to the \$11 million that was spent to buy the 3.75 acres of land in Brentwood, Calif.

Now for the green part:

<http://www.thepostgame.com/blog/dish/201112/nfl-stars-environmentally-friendly-palace>

CARBON EMISSIONS UP!

Total carbon emissions for the first time hit 10 billion tonnes (36.7 billion tonnes of CO2) in 2010, according to new analysis published by the Global Carbon Project (GCP) in Nature Climate Change. In the past two decades (since the reference year for the Kyoto Protocol: 1990), emissions have risen an astounding 49 percent.

http://news.mongabay.com/2011/1204-hance_emissions_record.html



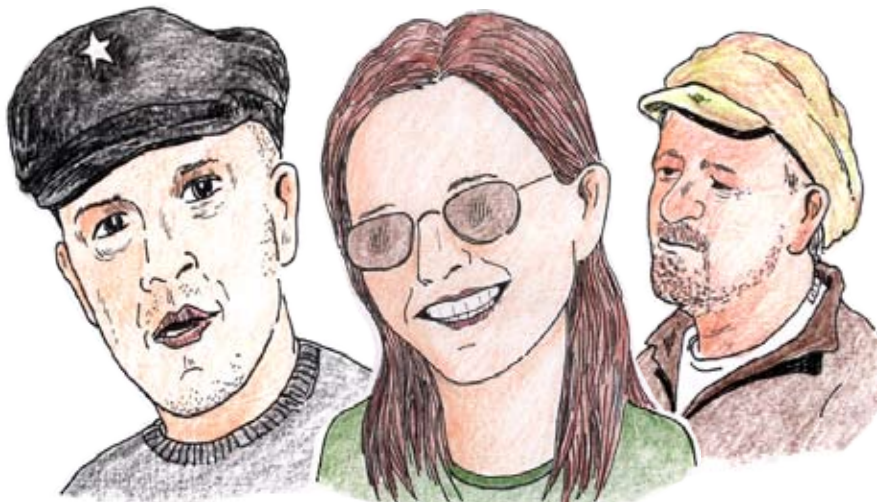
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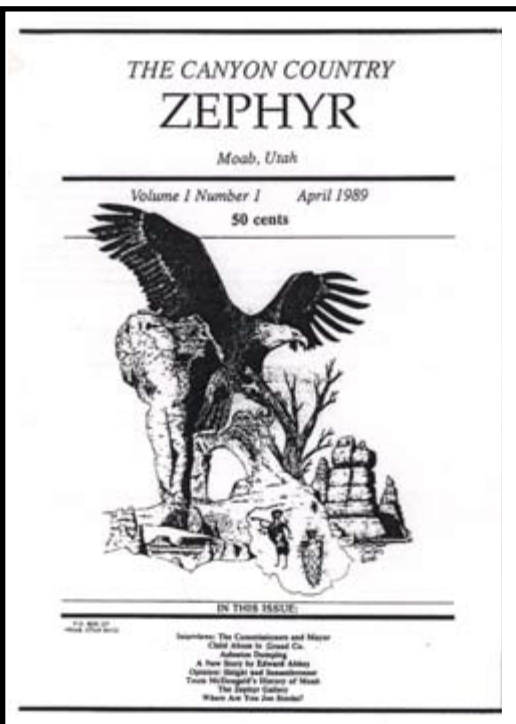
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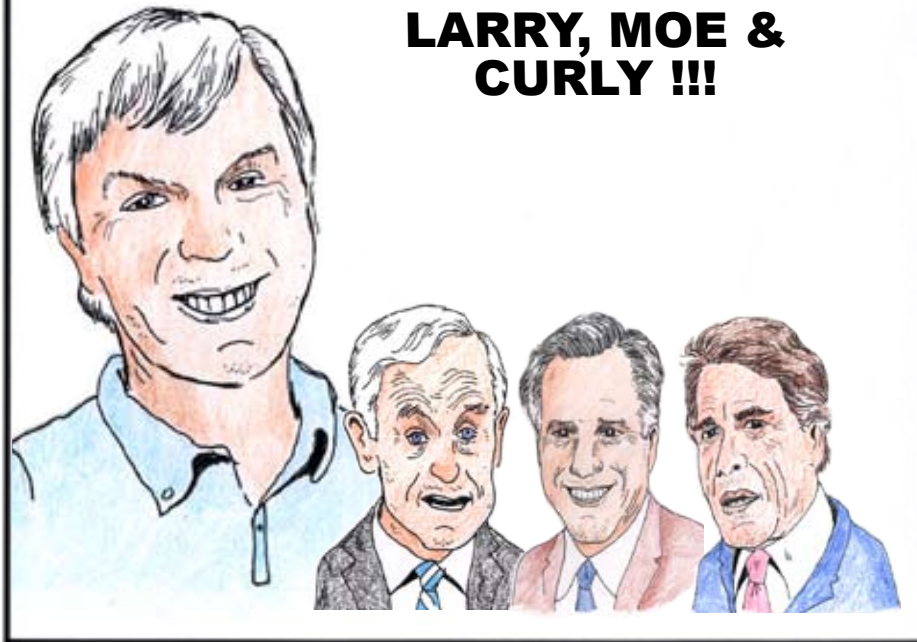
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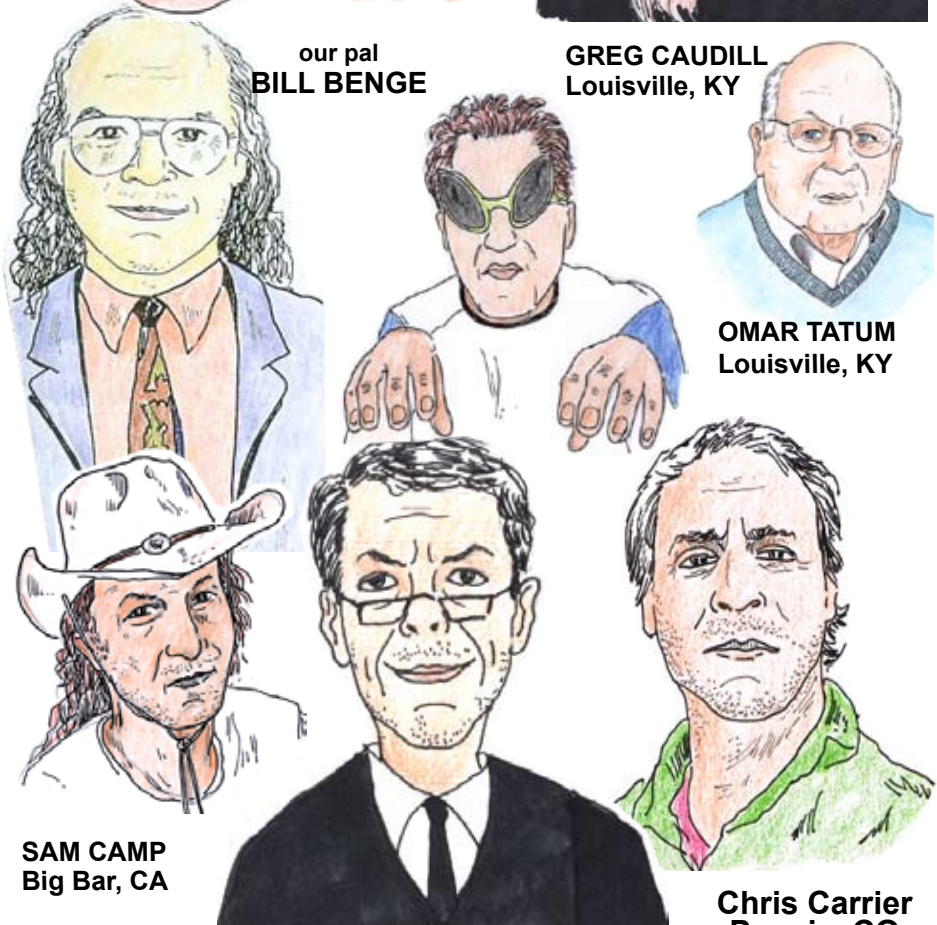
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THE CALM BEFORE the SWARM #2

The 'Joy of Being Poor' gets run over by a Bicycle

Jim Stiles

*EDITOR'S NOTE: For Part One of: "The Calm before the Swarm," go to:
<http://www.canyoncountryzephyr.com/2011/12/01/the-calm-before-the-swarm-by-jim-stiles/>*

After decades in operation, the Atlas Uranium Mill, once the lifeblood of the community, ground to a halt, closed in 1984 and never re-opened. The domestic uranium industry had collapsed in the wake of the Three Mile Island accident; then the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl, in 1986, drove nuclear power even deeper into the ground. Hundreds of Grand County citizens were suddenly jobless and the ripple effect was felt across all strata of the Moab economy. Almost overnight, the "Uranium Capital of the World" became a ghost town with as many as a quarter of its homes for sale and many Main Street businesses boarded up. Prices plummeted.

For the marginal Moabites who had come here solely to live near the canyon country and who had survived by cobbling together a strange and varied assortment of jobs, we became the new prospective home buyers. Even I, a lowly seasonal ranger at Arches National Park, could afford to buy a small cottage on Locust Lane. Suddenly and unexpectedly, we became the new stalwart citizens.



For a short while---and maybe this is just me being more delusional than usual---it looked as if Moab might become something very different. There was the germ of an idea that perhaps we had something special here, and that it had very little to do with money or the quest for material wealth.

But how would we survive? The toxic waster incinerator proposed by the Grand County commissioners went down in flames after its citizens overwhelmingly voted 'NO' in a county referendum. Tourism was always there and had been for decades, but few of us thought it could be THE solution to our economic woes. But then again, we thought, maybe all we needed was a part-time economy.

For a short while---and maybe this is just me being more delusional than usual---it looked as if Moab might become something very different. There was the germ of an idea that perhaps we had something special here, and that it had very little to do with money or the quest for material wealth.

We lived in Moab, Utah. We were already rich. Who needed more than the real wealth that this amazing red rock country had already bestowed upon us? We just wanted to make enough money to live happily and humbly ever after.

Many of us created our own businesses in those days. Most of them had a tourist-related connection. Some new locally owned restaurants and cafes opened—places like 'Honest Ozzie's and 'Back to the Soda Fountain' and the 'Center Café.'

Kathy Cooney and Chuck Schildt opened the Moab mercantile art gallery and Vern Erb started the Hogan Trading Company. Both businesses were in the Grand Emporium building on Main St. (Now the Slickrock Café. New businesses opened on Main. Rent was still cheap and Moab's last standing citizens were feeling creative.

Kyle and Carrie Bailey opened a video rental shop on Center Street. Tim and Terry and Becky Knouff—The Flying Knouff Family!— started 'K Group.' They advertised themselves as "house painters/illusionists....seldom seen but rarely forgotten."

Zeke and Maralee Francis owned Four Corners design across from the post office and specialized in custom T-shirts. Ken and Alice Drogin opened a nursery in Castle Valley. Rob Soldat created "Superior Energy Systems" that offered solar solutions for electrical needs. Tom Rees was offering his services as a master cabinet maker. And Dave Wagstaff hung out his shingle as a construction contractor.

I was looking for a way to stay in Moab too. I'd quit the Park Service in 1986 and needed to find a way to make a living. I came up with The Zephyr in late 1988. I strong-armed about fifty friends and relatives to buy \$10 subscriptions and I strung together about 25 advertisers who were willing to pay in advance, sight unseen, for their first ad so I could pay the printer.

Much of my 'income' came from trade-outs. In the late 1980s, Moab was the Barter Capital of SE Utah. There just wasn't that much cash flowing and so I took my ad payments from the Main Street Broiler in the form of cheeseburgers and buttermilk pancakes. I traded with Petra Computers for a desktop and a laser printer and free advice. The Cowboy Trading Company kept me well-attired and Dave's Corner Market kept a cup in the backroom for my endless coffee fix.

Life was good.

And yet, even from the beginning, we should have seen what was coming. It's almost impossible to hide from the Great American Entrepreneurial Spirit. Moab was no different. Something had happened here a few years earlier that sealed our fate and we were foolish to think we could escape its greedy clutches. This is how it all went down...

One day in 1984, Kris Allen and Bill Davis stopped by Arches to say hello. Both had lived in Moab for years but had recently moved to California. Now they were back here as tourists; strapped to the back of Bill's truck were two bicycles, unremarkable in most respects except they sported knobby tires and thicker frames. Kris explained that they were "mountain bikes" and both believed that these bikes would revolutionize recreation in the canyon country.

"What do you mean, 'revolutionize,'" I asked.

"Mountain bikes can go anywhere," Bill said. "Anyplace a jeep can go, a mountain bike can go. And they're cheaper to run, I might add."

"Yeah," I said uncertainly. "Maybe they can go anywhere, but jeepers aren't going to give up their 4WDs for a bike."

"Maybe not the jeepers, but there's a market for this, believe me."

I thought they were both mad. I remembered what a local rancher, Don Holyoak, had once said about the sport of bicycling: "Oh yeah, that's where you pedal your legs off to give your ass a ride...I'll keep my horse." The thought of mountain bikes swarming over my beloved slickrock like frenzied ants on a hot day disturbed me in a deep and profound way. But the idea seemed fantastic and I dismissed their prophecies with an uneasy smile. Bill and Kris climbed back in their Four-Runner and drove up the old highway for a premier ride on their mountain bikes.

Kris and Bill were early bike aficionados in Moab but they weren't the first—not quite. The idea that Moab could become the "Mountain Bike Capital of the World" first occurred to a most unlikely pair of brothers from Moab. They had both been laid off recently from the uranium industry and their names were Bill and Robin Groff.

Big Bill and Little Robin don't look like bikers. If they were riding Harleys, perched atop a Chopper and decked out in black leathers, that might suit a newcomer's first vision of the Groffs on a two-wheeled conveyance. They're big fellows with heads like hairy cinder blocks. Their wrists are as big as my thighs. A couple of Blutos might best describe them...Blutos who eat spinach. They take shit from no one.

And maybe that's why nobody had the nerve to advise them not to open a bike and outdoor gear shop in the fall of 1983. Which is what they did. At first they only sold road bikes; in fact, not many biking options existed, but they'd heard of the newly arrived sport of "mountain biking," and one day, a mystery biker known only as "Scott" appeared at their shop door. He had pedaled all the way from Santa Barbara, California on what the Rim boys called "a precursor to the modern-day mountain bike." It was a modified 5-speed Ross, one of the early popular bike brand names and soon the Groffs were Ross dealers. By the fall of 1983 they were also selling a bike called the "Stumpjumper" from a company called Specialized.

Robin put the new bikes through their paces, learning just what their capabilities were and even helped herd cattle on them with his rancher buddy Deuce. It occurred to them that mountain biking could draw thousands of enthusiasts to the canyon country if they could just show them the many venues that were available. Robin scouted the backcountry for suitable trails and routes and there were plenty of them. The remnants of old jeep trails from the Uranium Days were about to be revived. Old two-tracks would allow bicyclists to ride side-by-side through some of the most remarkable scenery on earth.

The Slickrock Bike Trail was actually created by dirt bikers, the motorized predecessors to the pedal-powered Stumpjumper. Though the trail had received some early notoriety when it was first built on BLM lands above Moab along the Sand Flats, it had recently fallen into disuse.

But more than anything else there was the slickrock, the local name given to the vast expanses of raw hard sandstone that sometimes stretch for miles without interruption. The domes and channels and turrets and arches and canyons provided every kind of recreational challenge imaginable for a hard core mountain biker. And the most extraordinary slickrock challenge already carried the name....

The Slickrock Bike Trail was actually created by dirt bikers, the motorized predecessors to the pedal-powered Stumpjumper. Though the trail had received some early notoriety when it was first built on BLM lands above Moab along the Sand Flats, it had recently fallen into disuse. Robin and a friend named Dan Hosco decided to test their bikes on the Slickrock Trail...lights came on inside their heads. This was it.

By the following spring Rim began renting bikes and had teamed up with a new arrival, a tall lanky man named John Groo. The Groffs and Groo created Rim Tours and led small excursions into the backcountry around Moab. Bike touring started slowly and early on; even one paying customer was enough to load up the bikes into an old pickup truck called "Old Green" and head for the trail.

Then, as it almost always happens, Forces in the Universe that are far beyond our power to comprehend came together to create a recreational revolution. National Geographic was in Moab and its photographer, Ken Redd, was shooting images of the spectacular red rocks when he began to notice the bicyclists. When the story appeared with a comment and several photos of the newly arrived sport of mountain biking, an avid biker from Crested Butte, Colorado named Hank Barlow took note. In fact he did more than that.



House painter Tim Knouff came to Moab in 1987.

Barlow had come to Colorado from Marin County, California, the place many call the Birthplace of Mountain Biking. Barlow and a group of fellow bikers had played with the idea of a magazine devoted entirely to the sport of mountain biking and they wanted something extraordinary for its first issue. One glance at the pages of National Geographic convinced Barlow that Moab was the place.

"Mountain Bike" appeared on newsstands a few months later but in it, the bicycles played second fiddle to the incredible scenic backdrop--Moab dominated the first edition. Soon all roads led to Moab. The town and the surrounding countryside exploded. According to the Rim Guys: "It is said that in the realm of mountain biking, Crested

Butte provided the 'spirit', Marin County provided the 'tools', and Moab provided the 'place.' The triad was complete, mountain biking had arrived and Rim Cyclery was in the thick of it."

A year later, in the autumn of 1986, Rim Cyclery sponsored the first "Canyonlands Fat Tire Festival." Thousands of bikers arrived to experience the Slick Rock Bike Trail for the first time...it was already "world famous" by the time their knobbies touched the rock. People began to refer to the mountain bike influx as a phenomenon.

For a town that, just a few years earlier, had proclaimed itself "The Uranium Capital of the World," Moabites were utterly bewildered. This was the community that had been settled by ranchers a century earlier, and that had been one of the most remote, backwater towns in America until Charlie Steen put Moab on the map in the 50s. For the last 40 years it had flourished or failed on the whims of the mining industry and no one imagined straying from that course, for better or worse. The men and women who lived here were predominantly conservative, hard-working, and not prone to "non-motorized recreation" (an expression not quite in the lexicon in the late 80s) for its own sake. Recreation meant a day of four-wheeling while checking claims or fence lines. And other than Jeep Safari and maybe hunting season, Moabites rarely saw a gathering of anyone for a single event.

The 1986 Fat Tire Festival in late October changed that.

Winter settled over Moab just a few days after the Festival, the Big Tree on First South shed its leaves again, as it had each winter for over a century, the skies turned grey, we retrieved our regular seats at the local diners and for all appearances, our little town had returned to "normal." But there was an anticipation throughout those cold months... changes were coming that would affect our lives and our community forever. There was almost an inevitability about it. A nebulous sense of Doom. We fired up our wood stoves and sipped our coffee and waited for Spring.

I have always associated the coming of Spring with color--those brilliant bursts of pigment that celebrate the departure of grim, dull days and the silhouettes of skeletal trees and matted dead leaves and breath we can see. In Moab, winter can be especially cruel. Mild autumn weather often lingers into November and we become seduced by the notion that maybe Winter will simply pass us by this year. When it brutally and suddenly appears, we are that much more unprepared to accept the bitter months ahead.

Moab's winters were exacerbated by its location and its bad habits. There is no more spectacular setting for a town than Moab--it lies between towering red sandstone cliffs. The West Wall rises more than 2000 feet above the Colorado River and to the east, broken ledges and cliffs lead to the Sand Flats and into the high country of the La Sal Mountains. But winter inversions love deep canyon towns like Moab. Under normal conditions, the temperature drops as you travel to higher elevations. Inversions, as the name suggests, turn logic on its head. Then factor in the smoke from the wood fires that most Moabites used then to heat their homes and the acrid smoke that used to pour from the Atlas Mill, north of town, and the air was as foul as anything found in Akron or Pittsburgh. Driving into town from Arches, our nostrils could detect the shift from Atlas smoke to wood smoke, just as we passed the Grand Old Ranch House. Wood smoke, by comparison, smelled healthier.

And so, enduring all that, we'd wait for Spring with unbridled anticipation. Looking for color.

The Colors of Spring. Like the iridescent glow of a mountain blue bird, skimming across the sagebrush meadow near Sand Dune Arch. Or perhaps the first gaudy splash of Indian paintbrush, poking through the rocks in Hidden Valley. And around town, the careful study of Golden Willows for a hint of green--- always a good harbinger of Spring.

But this year, the Color of Spring assumed an entirely new meaning.

I can still remember where I was--eating breakfast at the Main Street Broiler, homemade sourdough biscuits and fresh creamery butter if I recall, when Carl Rappe, the Broiler's soul proprietor, leaped from his seat and dashed out the door. He pointed toward Kane Creek Blvd with a trembling finger and shouted, "They're here! They're here!"

It was the color I saw first. A hue so vivid and alive, it almost hurt to look at it. But it wasn't the lupines that we'd longed to see, or a hint of violets, or even the locoweed that grew so prolifically along the roadsides. This was something else...

It was a herd, a flock...a rash perhaps, of mountain bikers, dressed in matching royal-blue, skin-tight Lycra riding outfits. From my vantage point, they looked to me like a cluster of naked blue people.

Aliens, I thought...we've been invaded. Which in a sense was true. With hordes of naked blue aliens pedaling the streets and alleys of our quaint little backwater town, could Judgement Day be far behind?

It turns out, Judgement Day wasn't far behind at all. In a sense, it had already arrived. What happened here in the next five years was unprecedented and would forever change the community, in ways many of us could not imagine. Old Moab gave way to a very different New Moab. Was it a change for the better? It depends on who you ask.

NEXT TIME: The last installment of this three part series: "What can we steal today?" NEW MOAB ARRIVES

NOTE: Part of this story is an excerpt from "BRAVE NEW WEST. To order a signed copy, go to our home page.

PORTRAITS OF MOAB...1988-1993 #2

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM STILES

In the late 80s and early 90s, I was taking a lot of pictures of Moab's 'survivors.' the ones who decided to tough out the hard times and make a new life. Here is Part 2 of my collection of Great Moab Faces...JS



JANET LOWE came to Moab in the late 1980s. She now lives in Alaska with her husband Bob Buckingham.

KELLY STELTER...one of the kindest and most good-hearted men I've ever had the pleasure of knowing. 'Cheerful in all weathers...never shirked a task.'

CHIP BROX...Longtime Moabite and the owner of Grand Tire. He is the guy who can put a square deal in a round hole!!!



DENNIS KILKER was a familiar face in Moab for decades and a mechanic at Rim Cyclery. He left us more than a decade ago. I miss getting flipped off by Kilker.



JOSE KNIGHTON...for many years the manager of Back of Beyond Book store in Moab. He lives in Oregon these days.



JULIE FOX moved to Moab in the mid-1980s. She had worked for AMTRAK for years but later started the Eklekticafe' which still thrives, despite the onslaught of national chain restaurants. She is married to the infamous KEN DAVEY

DEVIN VAUGHAN came to Moab with his brothers Dirk and Darren in the early 90s when they bought Tex McClatchey's business. Always the heartthrob, even when he started wearing skirts in public, he's still in Moab.

DON SWASEY was the owner of High Desert Gift shop on Main Street for more than two decades. He was also a brilliant artist and silversmith. Don passed away in 2003.



BLACK BEAN or (to me) BEANIE BOY, was my next door neighbor in Moab for many years (along with Ken Davey & Julie Fox) and always greeted me, each and every time, as he appears in this photo. He was loved by all who knew him. I miss Beanie Boy...



TERI ANN TIBBETTS..
Always outrageous and never forgotten, TeriAnn has been a part of the Moab landscape for decades. She brings a lot of smiles to many faces

NIK HOUGAN...cowboy, artist, resident hermit, NIK is one of the most interesting people I've ever met. I hear he's still living up on the Flats on his patented mining claim. One of a kind...



KARLA VANDERZANDEN...the creator, along with the late Robin Wilson, of the Canyonlands Field Institute in Moab. She's still there, at the helm of CFI.



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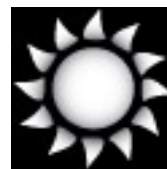


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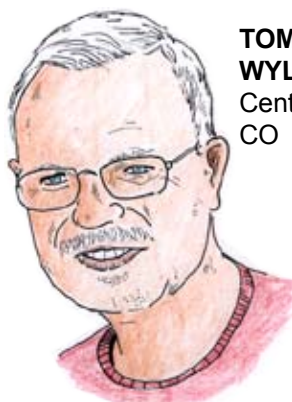
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SLC, UT



DAVE WILDER
Camp Verde, AZ



JUDY MULLER
Pacific Palisades, CA

TOM PATTON
Lawnchair Point, UT



THE HOME OF TRUTH

For the followers of Marie Ogden in the 1930s, the vortex of the universe was at Photograph Gap

Lloyd Pierson

Visitors to the Needles District of Canyonlands National Park may wonder what the three groups of rag-tag buildings are along the entrance road shortly after leaving the Moab to Monticello Highway. The rapidly deteriorating buildings give little indication of the dreams and high holy aspirations of their former inhabitants. It was on this desolate sagebrush plain that a religious colony (some called it a cult) was founded. Its not so modest name? "The Home of Truth."

Well, Truth theoretically has to exist somewhere and this forlorn spot in the great Colorado Plateau is probably as good a place as any for the elusive deity to reside.

The colony was founded by Mrs. Marie Ogden in 1933, a well educated widow from New Jersey, after she received a spiritual revelation. Mrs. Ogden's husband, an insurance executive, had died in 1929 at an early age, back in New Jersey. In her grief she turned to serious religious study and, guided by an inner light, began to seek "the truth" and an understanding of life and death.



The colony was organized in three groups entitled, as one proceeds west from the state highway, the Outer Portal, Middle Portal and Inner Portal. ..The Inner Portal was also the real Home of Truth and on the very axis of the earth according to members of the sect.

As she delved further into religion she began to preach and to convince others of the correctness of her beliefs. Her religious activities took her over most of the east preaching and lecturing and at least as far west as Boise, Idaho, where she reportedly had the revelation to establish a religious colony devoted to "the truth".

She apparently convinced a number of Boise citizens to accompany her but exactly how, when, and why she settled on this remote corner of Utah is not known. She tried first to make a land deal with Al Scorup who then owned Dugout Ranch on Indian Creek. He offered to sell her the ranch for half a million dollars but the group couldn't ante up that much. Scorup said the deal she counter offered included his joining her group and a guarantee of eternal life. He declined. The Indian Creek area would have provided irrigated land for farming which was one of the original foundations of the colony. However when Scorup turned her offer down she settled on the land occupied by the three groups of now dilapidated buildings. The land here was much less suited for growing things but they tried anyway for a while without much success.

At best the group probably never consisted of more than 100 people. The group was a communal one: all members gave up their worldly goods, abstaining from liquor and tobacco, eating a semi-vegetarian diet with only fish for meat. The sect believed in revelations and prophecies by Mrs. Ogden, who received The Word via her typewriter and from trips to the top of a nearby hill. Among the revelations were those of reincarnation, resurrection, a spartan life and a form of spiritualism involving vibrations, spiritual planes, soul language, conversations with the dead and other astro-esoteric ideas. As director Mrs. Ogden made the decisions and controlled the financial and spiritual matters of the colony.

Descriptions of some of the members indicate they were ill suited for life in a high desert country. They seem to have put more faith in God supplying their needs than in themselves. They did have water from a windmill-driven pump and a couple of concrete tanks that still remain on the property. But today there is no sign of their ultimately futile attempts at self-sufficient farming.

The colony was organized in three groups entitled, as one proceeds west from the state highway, the Outer Portal, Middle Portal and Inner Portal. It is the Inner Portal where Marie Ogden lived in what has been called Photograph Gap with a fantastic view of the canyons and mountains. The Inner Portal was also the real Home of Truth and on the very axis of the earth according to members of the sect.

The various buildings were all built by the members. Most of them are rough cut lumber, uninsulated, with no plastered walls and usually cardboard or newspaper to keep out the winter cold. Wood burning stoves provided warmth and the means to cook. Outdoor plumbing was the rule and no water seems to have been available in most of the houses--a pretty rugged existence even for the 1930s.

Some of the buildings were built as dormitories and meeting places. One large unfinished foundation must have been meant to be a temple of sorts. Marie Ogden's home in the gap, though unpainted clapboard, had a porch, a fairly decent interior with several bedrooms and a two car garage underneath the structure. Here and there are homes made of adobe brick or covered with shingles instead of the usual clapboard. In the 1970s transients used the buildings and, in one case, burned the house to the ground.

Mrs. Ogden and her group got along fairly well with their Monticello neighbors. She even bought and edited the San Juan Record, the only newspaper



in the county. Wallace Stegner, in his book "Mormon Country," says they got along because many of Mrs. Ogden's beliefs were similar to those of the dominant religious group in the area, the Mormons. As a result, they were more understanding than would normally be expected.

What finally got the Home of Truth into trouble was an attempt in 1935 to bring one of the recently deceased members of the colony back to life. Mrs. Ogden believed that if she could keep the corpse from deteriorating that sooner or later she could get the soul back into the body and restore life. The sheriff of San Juan County got into the act several months later and checked on the now naturally mummified body declaring that it was no health menace and since many people in San Juan County had old Indian mummies from the dry caves of the county he guessed Mrs. Ogden could have one too.

So Mrs. Ogden kept her mummy for at least another two years. It was an-

What finally got the Home of Truth into trouble was an attempt in 1935 to bring one of the recently deceased members of the colony back to life.

nounced that the dead woman was about to return to life. This stirred the authorities to further action. As the furor got hot she gained nation-wide attention and the powers-that-be began to lean harder and harder on Mrs. Ogden. She solved her problem by getting rid of the body. Some say it was cremated shortly after the first contact with the law. At any rate the colony began to go down hill after this fiasco and most of the faithful drifted away.

A few members continued to live at the Home of Truth even after Mrs. Ogden's death. The final chapter was written in September 1977, when her possessions were auctioned off at Photograph Gap. The land and buildings are now in private hands. Passersby should mind their manners if only out of respect for Mrs. Ogden and her sect and their attempts to solve the mysteries of life and the hereafter. And who knows the mummy may still be about the place somewhere.

LLOYD PIERSON is retired from the National Park Service. he was Ed Abbey's boss in 1957. He still lives in Moab.



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- Edward Abbey

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PAID FOR BY THE DESERT RAT COMMANDO

A Further Country: Entering the Sacred Land

By Scott Thompson

"I'd hoped that my intuitions were wrong, but they weren't."

– Jim Stiles, 2007

It's late Monday morning at Starbucks, on the day after New Year's. The snow outside is beginning to whip up; several inches are forecast for later in the day. As I write President Obama has less than sixty days, thanks to a deadline imposed by Congress, to decide whether to approve the proposed Keystone XL pipeline. It would transport crude petroleum from massively destructive tar sand excavations in the boreal forests of Alberta, Canada, to refineries along the Gulf coast of Texas, that heartland of the American oil business.

According to a news story I found on "The Hill," dated early this morning, President Obama is likely to reject the pipeline on technical grounds, claiming that the Congressional deadline has in effect barred needed federal environmental review of proposed alternative routes around the ecologically sensitive Sand Hills region of Nebraska. But what is notable about this news story, as is so often the case in the mainstream virtual reality, is what it does not say: that Keystone XL is a fiendishly dangerous project that cogent humans should be terrified of.

Here's why. Early in his career the eminent climate scientist James Hansen studied the greenhouse effect on the planet Venus. Due to amplifying feedbacks that occurred there, the plentiful water vapor was entirely lost to space. The atmosphere is now 97% CO₂ and the surface of the planet has a temperature of 850 degrees Fahrenheit. Hansen calls such a planetary runaway the Venus syndrome, and believes a similar calamitous process is now possible on Earth, thanks to our human-created Frankenstein, global warming.

Here are several factors among others which he feels could make Earth vulnerable to a such a runaway: (1) levels of atmospheric CO₂ here may have been lower in the distant past than we once thought, making our relatively high level at present even more of a concern; (2) climate "sensitivity" is apparently greater the warmer Earth gets, meaning that warming tends to beget quicker warming; and (3) greenhouse gases are increasing in the atmosphere so fast that the climate system may not have time to use its natural processes to cool it down. More specifically, Hansen said: "If we burn all reserves of oil, gas, and coal, there is a substantial chance we will initiate the runaway greenhouse. If we also burn the tar sand and tar shale, I believe the Venus syndrome is a dead certainty." (See Hansen's 2009 book, *Storms of my Grandchildren*, pp. 224-226, 236, and chapter 10 generally.)

Hansen is arguably our greatest climate scientist. He may be wrong about the risk that we humans could destroy all life on Earth, but: what if he isn't? Try to imagine the suffering of our descendants, knowing that their own ancestors, namely us, have willfully brought about the ultimate catastrophe.

That's what the news story from "The Hill" didn't happen to mention. It did, however, include the following comments from Matt Letourneau, spokesperson for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce: "Right now, the issue in front of the President is whether the pipeline is in the national interest or not, and that's where we think the discussion should be. Using some other issue as a reason to avoid making that decision, to us, is not sound policy."

I read Letourneau's last sentence three times, wondering if he thinks that preserving life on our planet is "some other issue."

My hope, probably forlorn, is that President Obama will rise up and smite that pipeline with his holy tongue.

I got that much written before the first snow squall, which swept in at half past noon, blanketing the roads and parking lots, fast. I fled to a nearby Chinese restaurant, ordering Moo Goo Gai Pan for Gail and me before nimbly threading my way home along white tire tracks in the snow. I focus pretty well driving in the snow.

Nearly fell on my ass outside the Chinese restaurant.

Tuesday morning, Gail and I awoke to six inches of snow outside; now it's coming down in pouring flakes. All the area schools are closed; since I'm a counselor in a school wellness center on Tuesdays, I have the day off too. Slipping out of bed, I put on a partial pot of decaffeinated coffee and sit in the big chair to write.

Back to Keystone XL. It's stunning. Our political leaders, along with the lobbyists who push their buttons, are flirting with a pathway toward annihilating life on Earth. In spite of the apocalyptic stakes, they've refused even to foster a public debate about Hansen's warning. What is leading them to such a bizarre perspective?

Maybe there is something about the structure of large, hierarchical societies that makes them weirdly obtuse to emerging environmental catastrophes. Here are the poet Gary Snyder's observations, vintage 1977: "For a long time I thought it was only capitalism that went wrong. Then I got into American Indian studies and at school majored predominantly in anthropology and got close to some American Indian elders. I began to perceive that maybe it was all of Western culture that was off the track and not just capitalism – that there were certain self-destructive tendencies in our cultural tradition." (*The Real Work*, 1980, p.94.) And maybe that self-destructiveness is a tendency that lies not



just within Western cultures, but is endemic to the structure of hierarchical societies as a whole. Maybe that tendency goes all the way back to the first cities to arise out of the agricultural plain.

This suggests a comparison with hunter-gatherer cultures, the original environment of our evolutionary adaptation, which were more geographically fluid, egalitarian, sparsely populated, and better adapted to and more knowledgeable about the landscape and wild creatures surrounding them. In this vein let me share the following from the psychiatrist Carl Jung, which he recounted to his English speaking students in 1928: "[Knud] Rasmussen obtained from an Eskimo (the son of an Eskimo woman and a Dane, who had lived with him in Greenland) a marvelous story about an old medicine man who, guided by a dream, led his tribe from Greenland across Baffin's Bay to North America. The tribe was increasing rapidly and there was a great scarcity of food, and he dreamt about a further country with an abundance of seals, whales, walrus, etc., a land of plenty. The whole tribe believed him and they started out over the ice. Halfway over, certain old men began to doubt, as is always the case: is the vision right or wrong? So half the tribe turned back, only to perish, while he went on with the other half and reached the North American shore." (C. G. Jung, *Dream Analysis: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1928-30*, pp. 5-6.)

The story rings true, doesn't it? It's probably one of the ways conflicts sorted themselves out in the world of hunter-gatherers: the visionary versus "the old men." I expect that they were evenly matched.

Now let's imagine another story, this one taking place just as small settlements began to have some hierarchical features. We could call this story "At the Dawn of Hierarchy." Our tribe is larger than in the previous story, almost a village, dating back 8,000 years ago in the Middle East. They grew wheat and barley in fields near their homes, hunting small animals within range of their settlement, and gathering wild foods such as nuts, berries, medicinal plants, and so on. When the crops wilted they relied on hunting and gathering; when the game animals fled they depended on gathering and their crops; and so on. It was a cycle they had learned to trust.

The medicine man – it was too early at this stage for priests – had a dream that the rain spirits had led him to a new land of plenty far to the northwest and told him that everyone in the settlement must migrate there with him or starve. Unlike the last story, however, when the medicine man reported his dream the "old men" angrily refused to leave the settlement, publicly upbraiding the medicine man as a fraud and a troublemaker. That same evening the old men solemnly gathered everyone together and with great earnestness assured them that they had lived in this good place since they were infants and knew that the rain spirits would never leave.

What the old men didn't tell the others is that their detailed knowledge of growing crops was restricted to a hundred mile radius and that they had no idea what would

grow somewhere entirely different. They also didn't explain that moving away would have felt like the end of the world to them. What they didn't need to explain was that because of their primary rights to the fields around the settlement they were both wealthy and influential in conferring status on younger people.

After the gathering a bitter conflict ensued between a ragtag group that still believed in the chastened medicine man and the rest of the people, who felt dependent on the "old men" and were fearful of life without their approval, guidance, and lifelong knowledge of growing food. Finally the medicine man slipped away with his tiny band of believers, eventually reaching the further country of his dream, where they flourished. The next growing season an unrelenting series of mega-droughts lasting fourteen years struck the old settlement, bringing starvation.

Pause. It's mid-afternoon now. The snow has tapered off into tiny bits, blowing at sharp angles in the gusts of wind; sometimes softly fluttering; no longer hiding the torn gray clouds.

Hansen calls such a planetary runaway the Venus syndrome, and believes a similar calamitous process is now possible on Earth, thanks to our human-created Frankenstein, global warming.

(Image at left, artist's conception of the surface of Venus..and perhaps the Earth's of the Future...)

Thursday afternoon. I'm at Starbucks again. All day long the sky has been a clear blue dome with wisps of Cirrus up high. After dawn the sunlight shone gold on the tree limbs and threw pole-like shadows across the U.S. highway as I drove to my morning job as a drug and alcohol counselor at an outpatient correctional facility.

Here is an educated guess about the kind of people the "old men" are, at least a significant percentage of them, then and now: (1) outwardly directed, perceiving primarily through the five senses, keenly aware of how the rules of society work;(2) who relish the enjoyments of the material world and are usually competent and successful; tending in our time toward orthodox careers in business; (3) who are out of touch with the unconscious mind, distrusting intuitively derived insights;(4) who as a result have great difficulty imagining a future that is not a continuation of the way of life they know and enjoy.

As a group they excel at preserving a society's traditions and keeping its institutions humming efficiently, therefore putting them in a position to acquire positions of influence. But when in a stratified society they're exerting a critical mass of influence at a time when drastic change - a paradigm shift - is essential, tragedy will be the likely outcome. This is because a necessary but different vision of the future will seem alien and dangerous to them, and they will fight it with all their resources, steering their society straight into the rocks.

The "medicine men," or inner-directed intuitives, could hardly be more different. While they eagerly draw insights and inspiration from the unconscious, they find conventional thinking and routines tedious and confining. They do not fit in, nor do they

want to. And there aren't very many of them. The "old men" outnumber them at least 9:1.

Gary Snyder once gave a brief but useful description of their orientation: "Some people's sensibilities, as well as maybe their lifestyles, are out at the very edge of the unraveling cause-and-effect network of a society in time...they are like an early warning system that hears the trees and the air and the clouds and the watersheds beginning to groan and complain a little bit. And so they try to send a little bit of a warning back, although they themselves may not know what it is they're hearing. They can also hear the stresses and the fault block slippage creaking in the social batholith and also begin to give out warnings." (The Real Work, p.71.)

The inner-directed intuitives have a remarkable gift for spotting problem patterns just as they begin to emerge from the mist of the future. They also have the gift of envisioning far-reaching geographic, spiritual, or social changes in order to help their cultures cope. This made them invaluable within the relatively fluid hunter-gatherer cultures and they had significant roles within them. But within stratified societies they tend to scrape by as outsiders. Even where they gain prominence within the professional fields they favor, such as art and science, and are read, heard, and praised for their work, their warnings are ignored by people at the core of the political and economic system. Or suppressed, if those warnings hit a nerve. (On the foregoing paragraphs see Isabel Briggs Meyers, Gifts Differing, 1980, chapters 4 & 5.)

Saturday morning. It's much warmer and the snow cover is almost gone. Scudding gray clouds; a predicted high in the fifties. Record high temperatures are proliferating all across the country. Must be the jet stream, a guy on the news said.

So: where is the further country? I've never read a better description than in Jim Stiles' lovely book Brave New West, published in 2007. A key reason he wrote it is this. Although environmental groups have targeted huge areas in Utah for federal wilderness designation, which sounds good, he realized that these same groups were increasingly unwilling to treat the land itself as sacred. Specifically, they were silent in the face of alarming impacts from the mushrooming amenities industry near and upon "protected lands." And guess what? He also noted a growing pattern of donations to these environmental groups from people and organizations with little interest in the spirit of wilderness.

Jim Stiles was watching professional environmentalists become "old men."

He said, "Wilderness is anywhere we find things wild and free and solitude that is long and unbroken. All these places deserve our respect, our reverence, and our concern, or they will not survive...All land is sacred." (p. 154.) I think that's exactly where the further country is and how a person will know she or he has found it.

When and if a culture can find it is more difficult, but if ours does, if all the land within it becomes sacred, it will finally be safe from destruction, along with the creatures then surviving on it, as well as those of our own species who remain.

Assuming we're thoughtful enough not to wipe out all life forms on the planet.

Note - the term "old men" denotes persons of recognized status with a certain outlook. They are often but not necessarily male or ripe in years.

SCOTT THOMPSON is regular contributor to The Zephyr.

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THE VIEW FROM ABOVE...



In the early 1980s, soil scientist Lynn Fenstermaker conducted soil tests near the Sand Flats above Moab. At the time, there was scarcely any human presence and her soil transects were established to determine the impact of cattle grazing on the local vegetation and soil. The aerial photo dated 5-1-81 shows the status of the land as it appeared then.

Less than 10 years later, the empty Sand Flats had been transformed into one of the most popular mountain bike trail in the United States. Human impacts were so striking, they all but obliterated Fenstermaker's study area.

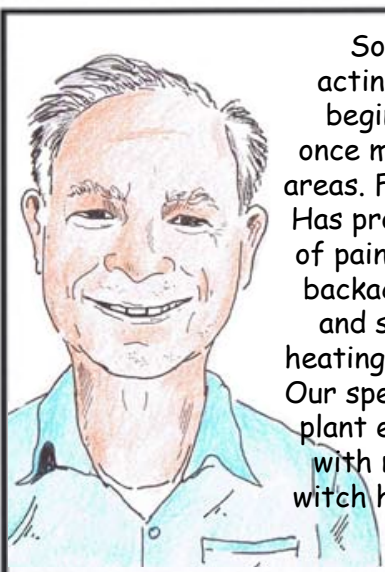
The second photo as shot in 1995.

JS



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WELCOME TO THE DIMFORMATION AGE!

notes from the desk of Ned Mudd
reporting from the crawspace of history

"All I know is that I know nothing; and I'm not sure about that."

----Michel Eyguem de Montaigne



In the spirit of Seigneur Montaigne, perhaps Europe's most alluring philosopher, this essay (essai - to be precise) aims at nothing in particular, and everything in general. After all, where is there to go that hasn't already been reached a thousand times before? So let me state at the outset - "I am here going to whip up a hodgepodge of various items." So be it, Monsieur Montaigne.

And, if I'm already beginning to sound (can fonts sound?) a tad insubstantial, née esoteric, don't stress about it. Language is inherently abstract, and I plan to make sure it remains that way as long as possible. The human experience may be devolving into a

foamy sea of data-bits, but that's no excuse for what is currently passing itself off as pop culture. Buttermilk is cultured; it's hard to say the same thing about The Billboard Top 40.

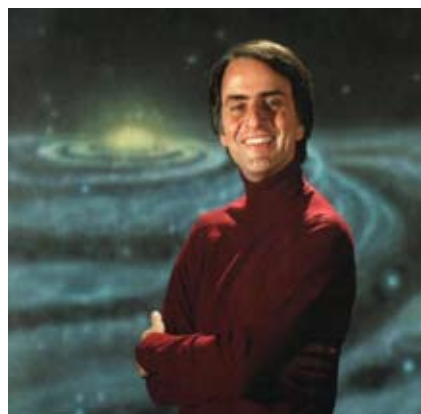
Does anybody remember Scampy the Clown? A seemingly innocuous question, but of great interest to a smattering of TV cognoscenti. Seeing as it's my essay, let me be bold enough to say this: If you can see into the true nature of Scampy and his merry band of syndicated co-stars, your deep-grok of the American super circus will be more or less complete. It all begins (and ends) with a word from our sponsors.

Which is not to say that enlightenment is pleasant. Although it's always nice to get a laugh along the Way. Clowns may seem silly to our cyber-sophisticated sensibilities today, but at one point during our long slog down the bunny trail they served a vital socio-spiritual function. Somebody has to be the keeper of the keys to our cavernous subconscious minds, especially during the dark night of the soul. Why not the village clown?

If at this point you're starting to harbor vague feelings of linear distortion, not to worry. The idea that words on a page (even a digital page) must make sense is simply an example of consensual fraud. By that I mean we've collectively been duped by our own neurons into believing in the sanctity of certain socially acceptable algorithms involving the written word. Where these algorithms came from is anybody's guess. Perhaps glossolalia only goes so far in the lofty pursuit of civilization. On the other hand, civilization only goes so far itself. And then what?

But why digress? Like any other intrepid cyber-surfer, you, too, can find Scampy and company on lovely YouTube at a moment's notice. If talking birds and high-flying Hungarian acrobats don't jiggle your synapses, perhaps your therapist needs replacing. Of course, as with any other endeavor in today's hyper-banal flotsam culture, whether you comprehend the experience depends on your proclivity regarding the penultimate question: the red pill or the blue pill? As always, the decision is yours.

Or is it? According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, free will "is a philosophical term of art for a particular sort of capacity of rational agents to choose a course of action from among various alternatives." So far, so good. The tunnel of conundrums appears when we begin a query as to what, exactly, a rational agent might be. Aren't we all rational agents simply by virtue of belonging to the species *Homo erectus asphaltus*? A cursory review of today's headlines belies the sanity of such nonsense.



Of course, the quandary over free will is one of those sticky wickets best left in the hands of corduroy philosophers and other assorted Ivy League wiz-

A better question might be this: Who cares if free will is a part of the Universe's infinite fabric (assuming the word infinite has any meaning outside of old Carl Sagan reruns)? If everything that happens is merely a dazzlingly convoluted chain of dependent causation (karma soufflé), do we get a free pass on this year's taxes? If you answered something along the lines of "no," you're batting 1099. Even David Bois, Esq., would have a hard time keeping a straight face arguing that case.



ards. To be, or not to be, remains the big question, despite the blunt end of the Cold War and its dark cloud of Apocalyptic Doom. If a global nuclear winter is preordained, what use is a bomb shelter? Or a fat 401(k), for that matter? The answer is obvious, isn't it?

Whether to order thick crust or whole wheat pizza simply doesn't seem that interesting twelve hours later, when most of last night's meal is on its way towards being compost. Or, in the words of my favorite poetic cosmonaut, Tao Jones: "In the final analysis, there is no final analysis." Let's continue.....

According to my editor's stern marching orders, I am now halfway through this drivel of an essay. Montaigne I am not. But then, neither was he on more than one occasion. For to truly be one's self is often simply a matter of timing and circumstance. For instance: are you yourself in the depths of a deep sleep? When you wake from said sleep, are you the same self as you were while dreaming of winning the Powerball lottery? Is there anything reliable that we can call a self without falling into a rhetorical pit of nauseous quicksand?

Of course, those trick questions deserve trick answers. And to find those answers, let's turn to one of my favorite Zen masters, Thich Nhat Hanh (the man who once said, "To return to a speck of dust will be quite an exciting adventure!")

Where was I? In Zen parlance, I am here; where else is there to be? Of course, as with enlightenment, being here isn't necessarily a pleasant experience. Meanwhile, there's that pesky self to deal with. Master Hanh has this to say about that - "Our mind is like a television set with thousands of channels, and the channel we switch on is the channel we are at the moment." If that doesn't make sense, keep reading. It'll probably get worse.

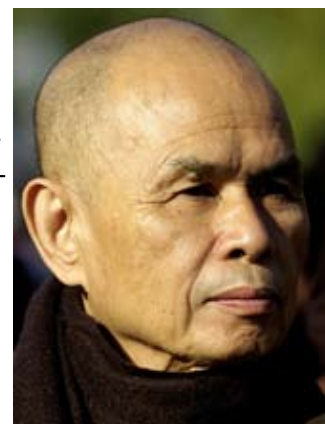
How about this for a taste of quantum fun: the mind is not local. As Schrödinger's cat made clear (relatively speaking), scientific experiments are influenced by being observed. Or - an observer is, in some inexplicable manner, part of the observed. Which calls into question the concept of a unique and permanent self, existing like a vaporous cloud of consciousness floating inside one's bulbous skull.

Let's jump back to Thich Nhat Hanh, who says, "Not only is the mind not localized, but everything is like this..... The notion of outside and inside cannot be applied to reality." Turn the channel and you are a new you. Which leads us right back to where we started, metaphorically speaking: free will or deterministic universe?

I'd like to leave it right there, dangling in the limbo we all inhabit as our birthright. But why not thicken the quantum soup a tad, at least until the rat is in the proverbial trap and we can get back to the fantasy we call our daily lives. Which leads us into a wonderful morass of philosophical mumbo jumbo from ground zero: ancient Greece.

From what I've managed to gather in my pursuit of all things relevant and pithy, the atavistic Greek philosophers were, in today's goofy parlance, mash-up artists. Not that the Greeks invented such erudite pastiche. On the contrary, folks have always had a habit of copying and pasting fragments of gnostic "wisdom" into the worldview de jour. For example, the World Tree, our lovely little planet's axis mundi, has been cloned by transient ideologues so many times that smart folks have simply quit fretting about its proverbial roots. And how many of Edith Hamilton's colorful tales can seriously claim their origins as Mycenaean? Even Genesis begins looking a bit second hand if one has the time to peek under the lingua franca.

From Heraclitus to Epicurus to Democritus to Pyrrho, even the old heart-



throb Sappho, the best of the classical Greek philosophers had a penchant for pragmatism coupled with an earthy gusto. While their philosophical cousins to the east (Persia, Bactria, India) were reveling under the influence of turbulent sky gods, the Greek pragmatists found a way to keep the dirt in their sandals, so to speak. And let's face it: dirt is fun.

How's this for pragmatic: "Raising children is an uncertain thing; success is reached only after a life of battle and worry." For that, you can thank Democritus, the man who introduced us to particle physics back in the 4th Century B.C. (before cheeseburgers). He also told us this: "Nothing exists except atoms and empty space; everything else is opinion." I don't know about you, but that sort of brings the 2012 presidential election into better focus.

Let's not forget the sagely wisdom gushing from Heraclitus: "Couples are wholes and not wholes, what agrees disagrees, the concordant is discordant. From all things one and from one all things." Remind you of the Three Musketeers? If you said "yes," consider a tall glass of Jack Daniels.

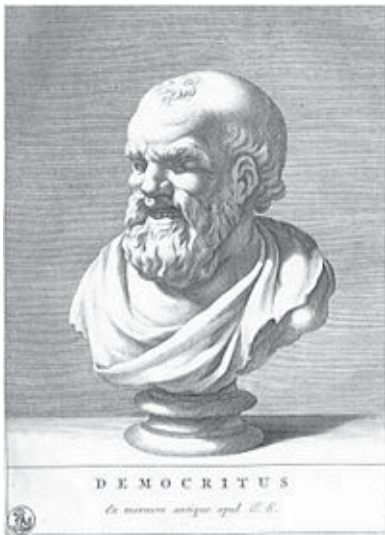
I could go on. But why? Life is plenty crazy enough without me having to spoon feed a load of baloney into the black hole that is the center of our galaxy. And if the Universe is constantly expanding, what, exactly, do we think is going to happen to that swirling gravitational vacuum cleaner when things get stretched past the loving hug of gravity? Only Facebook knows.....

salut!

Mudd

p.s. For additional reading, see Sarah Bakewell dazzling tome, "How to Live: Or a Life of Montaigne." While you're at it, digest Stephen Greenblatt's: "The Swerve: How the World Became Modern." And don't forget Heraclitus' "Fragments".

<http://www.sarahbakewell.com/Montaigne.html>



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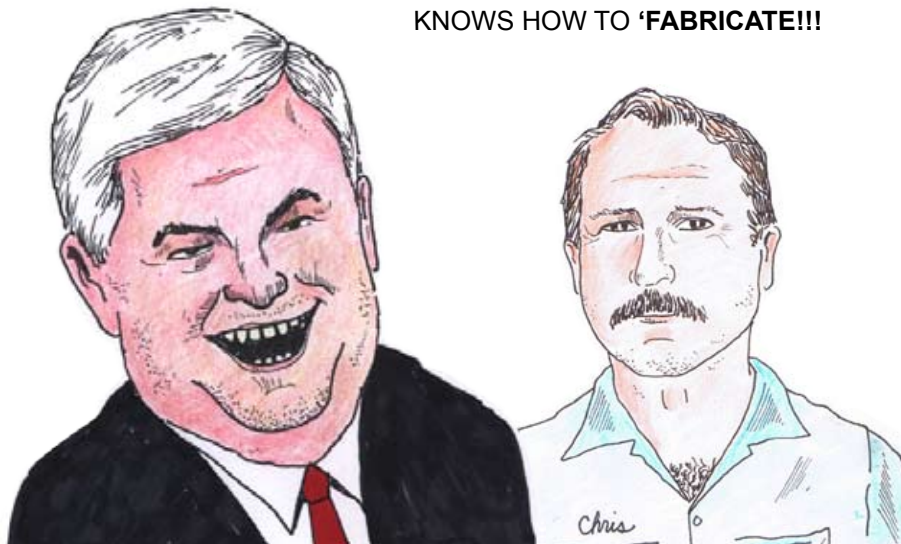
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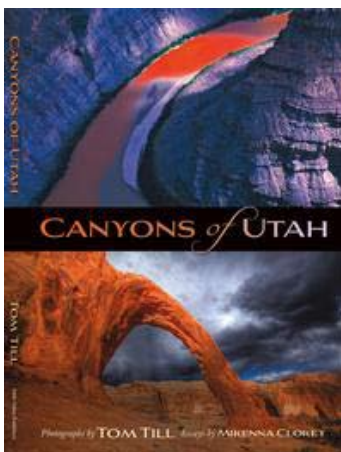
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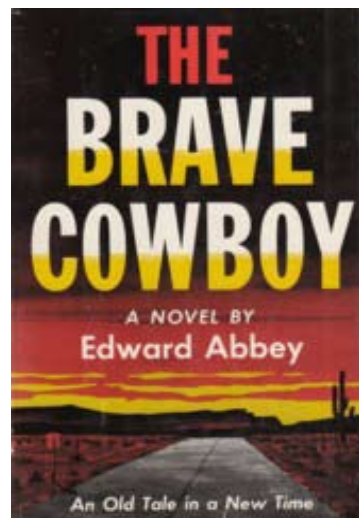
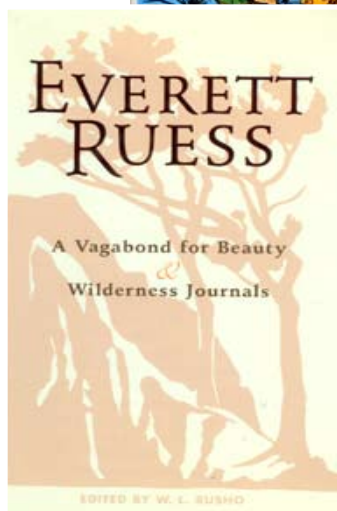
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POINT BLANK
RETURN TO PERFECTO

EVAN CANTOR

Everyone has a favorite campsite. Whether it dates from a happy childhood, undergraduate hi-jinks or racial memory from pre-historic humanity makes no difference. If you're lucky, you have a favorite secret campsite, one that will hopefully remain unknown forever.

In a strangely Native American sense, we sign no deeds of mortgage to possess such secret places, yet we call them our own. And we are outraged when they are discovered. I am no exception. Mine once belonged to Perfecto Martinez.

Once upon a time, near the tiny Mormon hamlet of Moab, there were no National Parks, no river-runners, no hordes of RVs, no masses of hikers, bikers, jeepers, and tourists. The vast canyonlands were inhabited by a few Mormon settlers, a handful of outlaws, Native Americans, and the occasional hardy soul providing a basis for modern cowboy mythology. Perfecto was one of those hardy souls.

In 1921, he staked his claim to my favorite secret campsite by carving name-and-date on a huge boulder. The valley, bounded by soaring red cliffs, was probably overgrazed then as now. Perfecto ran sheep or cattle out of a settlement called "Valley View," now an empty sagebrush flat, working for some honcho who sent him out to do the round-up. In those days, there was a reservoir at the mouth of the valley. I can barely imagine where the water originated because this place is dry as a bone and the nearby La Sal mountains contribute nothing more than a nice view.

But those were rainy years on the Plateau. By the time Perfecto signed his name on the rock, the wettest twenty had just ended and the Colorado River would soon be apportioned accordingly. Although the valley floor is bare from overgrazing, there are no cowpies up in the rocks. A huge white slickrock mass rises just south of camp, the view from which is, as you might imagine, expansive. Around a corner, tucked in a bend of the ridge, is a series of slots and cracks, generally untouched by people and livestock. An old jeep track fades into the area, but it doesn't go far enough for bikers or jeepers. It's simply not on the map.

Perfecto may have spent quiet evenings here watching golden sunsets over distant plateaus, marveling at the beauty of the land, but still, he had a job to do. He wasn't here to renew his spirit, to revitalize a world-weary soul or simply escape the rat-race for a day.

Cowboying was, and remains, hard, dusty, ass-crunching, back-breaking work.

Curious about Perfecto's pedigree, I did some poking around. I found eleven persons named Perfecto Martinez, most of them in Texas. One, Perfecto Martinez III, teaches at the University of Texas. He did not respond to my polite inquiries. Over the years, others, like Tom Baldwin, laid claim to Perfecto's campsite by carving their name on the rock. There are a few Baldwins living in Moab to this day, but none remember Tom. In 1956, Dave Oliver left what must have been the crowning glory of his life, name-and-date in huge block-letters accompanied by a naked woman glyph. In the larger scheme of things, it is a tasteful graffito.

But to me, it will always be Perfecto's campsite. I'm afraid it won't be long until the hordes catch up. Last Spring, I encountered a lone woman in a VW micro-bus camped conspicuously on a small hilltop not far from Perfecto's camp. She had colorful banners waving

in the breeze. She asked if we were going into Moab, and, if so, would we mind picking up some water for her? "Sorry," I said, "we're not going into town." It was 105 degrees Fahrenheit. She was gone the next day. Lack of services had presumably driven her off. I can only pray that it will stay that way. As Utah's canyonlands become increasingly discovered country, places like this grow ever more precious.

I cannot, will not, tell you where it is. I can only

vouchsafe that it is still there. If a secret spot is something you need, you'll have to go out and find one yourself. It wouldn't be the same if a guidebook or chatty column writer showed you the way. To possess a secret spot, you must earn it the hard way. In so doing, you will find something no guidebook can ever give you: the true experience and satisfaction of solitude. Don't even tell your friends...

The drawing is by Mr. Cantor and has nothing to do with the place he just spoke of. If you find perfecto, say nothing. Tell no one, or face the wrath of the author.

He can be reached, when he feels like it, at:

www.evancantor.com

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