

Setting Out

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life. - **Henry David Thoreau**

Go confidently in the direction of your dreams! Live the life you've imagined. As you simplify your life, the laws of the universe will be simpler. - **Henry David Thoreau**

Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves. - **John Muir**

I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in. - **John Muir**

Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons, It is to grow in the open air, and to eat and sleep with the earth. - **Walt Whitman, *Song of the Open Road***

Adventure is not in the guidebook and Beauty is not on the map. Seek and ye shall find. - **Terry & Renny Russell**

Men wanted for hazardous journey, small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful, honour and recognition in case of success. - **Ernest Shackleton**

Then something Tookish woke up inside him, and he wished to go and see the great mountains, and hear the pine-trees and the waterfalls, and explore the caves, and wear a sword instead of a walking-stick. - **J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit***

Always in the big woods when you leave familiar ground and step off alone into a new place there will be, along with feelings of curiosity and excitement, a little nagging of dread. It is fear of the Unknown, and it is your first bond with the wilderness you are going into. What you are doing is exploring. You are undertaking the first experience, not of the place, but of yourself in that place. It is an experience of our essential loneliness; for nobody can discover the world for anybody else. It is only after we have discovered it for ourselves that it becomes a common ground and a common bond, and we cease to be alone. - **Wendell Berry**

They were now committed together, all of them were encompassed by the same risks, the same hardships and the same hope. Any weakness in one man weakened them all, and each little triumph was a shared accomplishment. One man was best with the rifle, another at cooking, a third with his physical strength, and all these matters were established without pride or jealousy and were fitted into a pattern. Everything depended, of course, upon their liking and respecting one another, and this they evidently did. - **Alan Moorehead (describing Burke-Wills Expedition across S. America)**

The Journey

I speak of journeys because of course we are all of us on a journey ourselves. The comparison of life to a road is a very ancient one, and you and I are travelers along that road whether we think of it that way or not, traveling from the unknown into the unknown... When we are on a journey, what is real is not so much to role we play, the mask we wear in the place that we are leaving, and not even the role we will soon be called to play when we get to the place where we are going. Instead, what comes increasingly real as we travel along is something much closer to the actual face that lies behind all the masks and that gives a kind of relative unity to all the different parts that our life demands that we play. In other words, travel can be a very unmasking experience, bringing us suddenly face to face with ourselves – as when we are gazing out of a train window at the endless line of telegraph poles whipping by, and we find that part of what we are looking at is our own reflection. - **Unknown author**

Were it possible for us to see further than our knowledge reaches, and yet a little way beyond the outworks of our divining, perhaps we would endure our sadnesses with greater confidence than our joys. For they are the moments when something new has entered into us, something unknown; our feelings grow mute in shy perplexity, everything in us withdraws, a stillness comes, and the new, which no one knows, stands in the midst of it and is silent. - **Rainer Maria Rilke**

Leaders are best when people barely know they exist; not so good when people obey and acclaim them; worse when they despise them. Of a good leader who talks little, when their work is done, their aim fulfilled, the people will all say, "We did this ourselves." - **Lao Tzu**

To laugh often and much, to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children, to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends, to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others, to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded! - **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

I believe that no man can be completely able to summon all his strength, all his will, all his energy, for the last desperate move, till he is convinced the last bridge is down behind him and there is nowhere to go but on. - **Heinrich Harrer**

Boys and girls in America have such a sad time together; sophistication demands that they submit to sex immediately without proper preliminary talk. Not courting talk — real straight talk about souls, for life is holy and every moment is precious. - **Jack Kerouac**

The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars. - **Jack Kerouac, *On the Road***

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; because there is not effort without error and shortcomings; but who does actually strive to do the deed; who knows the great enthusiasm, the great devotion, who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement and who at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly. So that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat. - **Theodore Roosevelt**

That's how I started. It's not a story to be proud of, you might say. And I'm not. But I'm sure that even this foolish adventure was useful to me later. These are things that make your back broad, which isn't something Nature gives everyone. I read somewhere—and the person who wrote this was not a mountaineer but a sailor—that the sea's only gifts are harsh blows and, occasionally, the chance to feel strong. Now, I don't know much about the sea, but I do know that that's the way it is here. And I also know how important it is in life not necessarily to be strong but to feel strong, to measure yourself at least once, to find yourself at least once in the most ancient of human conditions, facing blind, deaf stone alone, with nothing to help you but your own hands and your own head. - **Primo Levi**

The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, gifted ability, or skill. It will make or break a company, a church, a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice everyday regarding the attitude we will embrace from that day. We cannot change our past, we cannot change the fact that people will act in certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing that we can do is play on the one string that we have and this string is our Attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you....We are in charge of our Attitudes. - **Charles Swindoll**

After walking for days, coming home bug-bitten, shins bruised, nose peeling, feet and hands swollen, I feel ablaze with life. I suspect that the canyons give me an intensified sense of living partly because I not only face the basics of living and survival, but carry them on my back. And in my head. And this intense personal responsibility gives me an overwhelming sense of freedom I know nowhere else. - **Ann Zwinger, *Wind in the Rock***

If I had my life to live over I'd like to make more mistakes next time. I'd relax. I would limber up. I would be sillier than I have been this trip. I would take fewer things seriously. I would take more chances. I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers. I would eat more ice cream and less beans. I would perhaps have more actual trouble, but I'd have fewer imaginary ones. You see, I'm one of those people who lives sensibly and sanely hour after hour, day after day. Oh, I've had my moments, and if I had to do it over again, I'd have more of them. In fact, I'd try to have nothing else. Just moments, one after another, instead of living so many years ahead of each day. I've been one of those persons who never goes anywhere without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a raincoat, and a parachute. If I had to do it again, I would travel lighter than I have. If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more dances. I would ride more merry-go-rounds, I would pick more daisies. - **Nadine Satir (85 years old)**

Press on. Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing in the world is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. - **Calvin Coolidge**

Too much caution is bad for you. By avoiding things you fear, you may let yourself in for unhappy consequences. It is usually wiser to stand up to a scary-seeming experience and walk right into it, risking the bruises and hard knocks. You are likely to find it is not as tough as you had thought. Or you may find it plenty tough, but also discover you have what it takes to handle it. - **Norman Vincent Peale**

The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen. - **Elisabeth Kübler-Ross**

First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win. - **Mahatma Gandhi**

I arise in the morning torn between a desire to save the world and a desire to enjoy the world. This makes it hard to plan the day. - **E.B. White**

I would feel more optimistic about a bright future for man if he spent less time proving that he can outwit Nature and more time tasting her sweetness and respecting her seniority. - **E.B. White**

Life's a pretty precious and wonderful thing. You can't sit down and let it lap around you... you have to plunge into it; you have to dive through it! And you can't save it, you can't store it up, you can't horde it in a vault. You've got to taste it; you've got to use it. The more you use the more you have... and that's the miracle of it! - **Lyle Samuel Crichton**

In the current regulatory environment, the rules make small-scale traditional food production and distribution almost impossible. Selling home-baked bread, or any food prepared in a home kitchen, is prohibited by most, if not all, health codes in the United States. Livestock for sale (with the exception of poultry, in most places) may not be slaughtered by the farmers who raise them; instead they must be trucked to anonymous factory-like commercial slaughterhouses. Milk and other dairy products may not be sold without pasteurization, which diminishes nutritional quality, digestibility, and flavor. Cider, too, is nearly always required to be pasteurized or irradiated. In other words, real food, increasingly illegal, is being replaced by processed food products. Laws dictating food standards are driven by the model of mass production, where sterility and uniformity are everything, rendering much of the trade in local food technically illegal. Eating well has become an act of civil disobedience. - **Sandor Elix Katz, *The Revolution Will Not Be Microwaved***

Wilderness

A wilderness in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. - **The Wilderness Act, 1964**

I believe we need wilderness in order to be more complete human beings, to not be fearful of the animals that we are, an animal who bows to the incomparable power of natural forces when standing on the north rim of the Grand Canyon, an animal who understands a sense of humility when watching a grizzly overturn a stump with its front paw to forage for grubs in the lodgepole pines of the northern Rockies, an animal who weeps over the sheer beauty of migrating cranes above the Bosque del Apache in November, an animal who is not afraid to cry with delight in the middle of a midnight swim in a phosphorescent tide, an animal who has not forgotten what it means to pray before the unfurled blossom of the sacred datura, remembering the source of all true visions.

As we step over the threshold of the twenty-first century, let us acknowledge that the preservation of wilderness is not so much a political process as a spiritual one, that the language of law and science used so successfully to define and defend what wilderness has been in the past century must now be fully joined with the language of the heart to illuminate what these lands mean to the future. - **Terry Tempest Williams**

Nothing is more vulnerable than the beautiful. - **Edward Abbey**

We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect. - **Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac***

Until man duplicates a blade of grass, nature can laugh at his so-called scientific knowledge. - **Thomas Edison**

Yes, falling in love with the earth is one of life's great adventures. It is an affair of the heart like no other; a rapturous experience that remains endlessly repeatable throughout life. This is no fleeting romance, it's an uncommon affair, one that is unconstrained by age or custom, and strengthened rather than diminished through sharing. In fact, the more one gives away, the stronger it grows. - **Steve Van Matre**

There I lay staring upward, while the stars wheeled over... Faint to my ears came the gathered rumor of all lands: the springing and the dying, the song and the weeping, and the slow everlasting groan of overburdened stone. - **J.R.R. Tolkien**

This is one of the reasons I like to hear the rain come down on my tent. I am close to it then, as close as one can be without actually being in it. I have slept in many primitive shelters, under overhanging cliffs, in lean-tos made of spruce boughs and birchbark, in little cabins roofed with poles and sod. I have slept under canoes and boats and under the spreading branches of pines and balsams, but none of these places gives me quite the feeling I get when sleeping in a tent. - **Sigurd Olson**

Sooner or later in every talk, Brower describes the creation of the world. He invites his listeners to consider the six days of Genesis as a figure of speech for what has in fact been four billion years. On this scale, a day equals something like six hundred and sixty-six million years, and thus 'all day Monday and until Tuesday noon, creation was busy getting the earth going.' Life began Tuesday noon, and 'the beautiful, organic wholeness of it' developed over the next four days. 'At 4 P.M. Saturday, the big reptiles came on. Five hours later, when the redwoods appeared, there were no more big reptiles. At three minutes before midnight, man appeared. At one-fourth of a second before midnight, Christ arrived. At one-fortieth of a second before midnight, the Industrial Revolution began. We are surrounded with people who think that what we have been doing for the last one-fortieth of a second can go on indefinitely. They are considered normal, but they are stark, raving mad. - **John McPhee, *Encounters with the Archdruid***

Sometimes my doubt completely filled me up, but amidst these feeling emerged a more powerful surge of hope, flowing out through my fingertips, joining me to this place, to the jagged fields of talus and the sunbaked granite. In this place I knew that my hope would smack up against the cold bluntness of reality. I knew I had a long way to go, but if a way existed, I would find it. - **Eric Weihenmayer (the first blind man to climb The Nose of El Cap and Everest)**

This is not wilderness for designation or for a park. Not a scenic wilderness and not one good for fishing or the viewing of wildlife. It is wilderness that gets into your nostrils, that runs with your sweat. It is the core of everything living, wilderness like molten iron. - **Craig Childs, *The Animal Dialogues***

When one of us says, "Look, there's nothing out there," what we are really saying is, "I cannot see." - **Terry Tempest Williams**

When you try to climb a mountain to prove how big you are you almost never make it. And even if you do it's a hollow victory... Mountains should be climbed with as little effort as possible and without desire. The reality of your own nature should determine the speed. If you become restless, speed up. If you become winded, slow down. You climb the mountain in an equilibrium between restlessness and exhaustion. Then, when you're no longer thinking ahead, each footstep isn't just a means to an end but a unique event in itself. *This* leaf has jagged edges. *This* rock looks loose. From *this* place the snow is less visible, even though closer. These are the things you should notice anyway. To live only for some future goal is shallow. It's the sides of the mountains which sustain life, not the top. - **Robert Pirsig, Zen & the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance**

Spirituality

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, "Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?" Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us, it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we're liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others. - **Ann Williamson**

What I'm feeling, I think, is joy. And it's been some time since I've felt that blinkered rush of happiness. This might be one of those rare events that lasts, one that'll be remembered and recalled as months and years wind and ravel. One of those sweet, significant moments that leaves a footprint in your mind. A photograph couldn't ever tell its story. It's like something you have to live to understand. One of those freak collisions of fizzing meteors and looming celestial bodies and floating debris and one single beautiful red ball that bursts into your life and through your body like an enormous firework. Where things shift into focus for a moment, and everything makes sense. And it becomes one of those things inside you, a pearl among sludge, one of those big exaggerated memories you can invoke at any moment to peel away a little layer of how you felt, like a lick of ice cream. The flavour of grace. - **Craig Silvey**

Caterpillar: "And who are you?" *Alice*: I...I hardly know, sir, just at present – at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have changed several times since then." - **Lewis Carroll, from Alice in Wonderland**

Before Siddhartha could discover that he needed no teacher, he first had to exhaust his longing for other to guide him, to take charge of his life. So too with every one of us. Unwilling to tolerate life's ambiguity, its unresolvability, its inevitability, we search for certainty, demanding that someone else must provide it. Stubbornly, relentlessly, we seek the wise one, the wizard, the good parent, someone else who will show us the way. Surely someone must know. It simply cannot be that life is just what it appears to be, that there are no hidden meanings, that this is it, just this and nothing more. We cannot possibly bear having to live life as it is, without reassurance, without being special, without even being offered some comforting explanations. - **Hermann Hesse**

We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms -- to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way. - **Victor E. Frankl, Man's Search For Meaning**

On our knees drinking with cupped hands from our creek is a kind of praying for my daughters and me. In times of drought there is nothing holier than the water in the bowls of our hands poured over our upraised faces or sipped on bent knee giving thanks. Religion is such a simple thing, either it is cupping hands in deep gratitude and filling them with creek water swallowing God whole, or it is nothing at all. - **from Journey of the Medicine Man**

If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion. - **The Dalai Lama**

World peace must develop from inner peace. Peace is not just mere absence of violence. Peace is, I think, the manifestation of human compassion. - **The Dalai Lama**

When you plant lettuce, if it does not grow well, you don't blame the lettuce. You look for reasons it is not doing well. It may need fertilizer, or more water, or less sun. You never blame the lettuce. Yet if we have problems with our friends or family, we blame the other person. But if we know how to take care of them, they will grow well, like the lettuce. Blaming has no positive effect at all, nor does trying to persuade using reason and argument. That is my experience. No blame, no reasoning, no argument, just understanding. If you understand, and you show that you understand, you can love, and the situation will change. - **Thích Nhất Hạnh**

The miracle is not to walk on water. The miracle is to walk on the green earth, dwelling deeply in the present moment and feeling truly alive. - **Thích Nhất Hạnh**

I feel that the essence of spiritual practice is your attitude towards others. When you have a pure, sincere motivation, then you have right attitude towards others based on kindness, compassion, love, and respect. - **The Dalai Lama**

Remember that the best relationship is one in which your love for each other exceeds your need for each other. - **The Dalai Lama**

This is my simple religion. No need for temples. No need for complicated philosophy. Your own mind, your own heart is the temple. Your philosophy is simple kindness. - **The Dalai Lama**

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality. - **Desmond Tutu**

I don't preach a social gospel; I preach the Gospel, period. The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is concerned for the whole person. When people were hungry, Jesus didn't say, "Now is that political or social?" He said, "I feed you." Because the good news to a hungry person is bread. - **Desmond Tutu**

We must not allow ourselves to become like the system we oppose. We cannot afford to use methods of which we will be ashamed when we look back, when we say, '...we shouldn't have done that.' We must remember, my friends, that we have been given a wonderful cause. The cause of freedom! And you and I must be those who will walk with heads held high. We will say, 'We used methods that can stand the harsh scrutiny of history. - **Desmond Tutu**

Do not ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive. - **Howard Thurman**

There are two questions that we have to ask ourselves. The first is "where am I going?" And the second is "who will go with me?" If you ever get these questions in the wrong order, you are in trouble. - **Howard Thurman**

In many shamanic societies, if you came to a medicine person complaining of being disheartened, dispirited, or depressed, they would ask one of four questions: When did you stop dancing? When did you stop singing? When did you stop being enchanted by stories? When did you stop being comforted by the sweet territory of silence? - **Gabrielle Roth**

And above all, watch with glittering eyes the whole world around you because the greatest secrets are always hidden in the most unlikely places. Those who don't believe in magic will never find it. - **Roald Dahl**

Gratitude & Transference

The world is round and the place which may seem like the end may also be the beginning. - **Ivy Baker Priest**

"What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day ... "Does it happen all at once, or bit by bit?" "It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand. - **Margery Williams, *The Velveteen Rabbit***

One final paragraph of advice: do not burn yourselves out. Be as I am - a reluctant enthusiast....a part-time crusader, a half-hearted fanatic. Save the other half of yourselves and your lives for pleasure and adventure. It is not enough to fight for the land; it is even more important to enjoy it. While you can. While it's still here. So get out there and hunt and fish and mess around with your friends, ramble out yonder and explore the forests, climb the mountains, bag the peaks, run the rivers, breathe deep of that yet sweet and lucid air, sit quietly for a while and contemplate the precious stillness, the lovely, mysterious, and awesome space. Enjoy yourselves, keep your brain in your head and your head firmly attached to the body, the body active and alive, and I promise you this much; I promise you this one sweet victory over our enemies, over those desk-bound men and women with their hearts in a safe deposit box, and their eyes hypnotized by desk calculators. I promise you this; You will outlive the bastards. -**Edward Abbey**

One of the best-paying professions is getting a hold of pieces of country in your mind, learning their smell and their moods, sorting out the pieces of a view, deciding what grows there and there and why, how many steps that hill will take, where the creek winds, and where it meets the other one below... which contour lines on a map mean better cliffs or mountains. This is the best kind of ownership, and the most permanent.

It feels good to say, "I know the Sierra" or "I know Point Reyes." But you don't. What you know better is yourself, and the Sierra and Point Reyes have helped. - **Terry and Renny Russell, *On The Loose***

Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of the rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs. I am haunted by waters. - **Norman Maclean, *A River Runs Through It***

I felt like lying down by the side of the trail and remembering it all. The woods do that to you, they always look familiar, long lost, like the face of a long-dead relative, like an old dream, like a piece of forgotten song drifting across the water, most of all like golden eternities of past childhood or past manhood and all the living and the dying and the heartbreak that went on a million years ago and the clouds as they pass overhead seem to testify (by their own lonesome familiarity) to this feeling. - **Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums***

I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought, and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder. - **G. K. Chesterton**

Piglet noticed that even though he had a Very Small Heart, it could hold a rather large amount of Gratitude. - **A.A. Milne**

Let's rise and be thankful, for if we didn't learn a lot today, at least we may have learned a little. And if we didn't learn even a little, at least we didn't get sick. And if we did get sick, at least we didn't die. So let us all be thankful. - **A Thai monk**

If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough. - **Meister Eckhart**

The future is not some place we are going, but one we are creating. The paths to it are not found but made, and the activity of making them changes both the maker and the destination. - **Johh Schaar**

In the end, though, maybe we must all give up trying to pay back the people in this world who sustain our lives. In the end, maybe it's wiser to surrender before the miraculous scope of human generosity and to just keep saying thank you, forever and sincerely, for as long as we have voices. - **Elizabeth Gilbert**

I think that real friendship always makes us feel such sweet gratitude, because the world almost always seems like a very hard desert, and the flowers that grow there seem to grow against such high odds. - **Stephen King**

To be grateful is to recognize the Love of God in everything He has given us - and He has given us everything. Every breath we draw is a gift of His love, every moment of existence is a grace, for it brings with it immense graces from Him. Gratitude therefore takes nothing for granted, is never unresponsive, is constantly awakening to new wonder and to praise of the goodness of God. For the grateful person knows that God is good, not by hearsay but by experience. And that is what makes all the difference. - **Thomas Merton**

The only real voyage of discovery consists not in seeing new landscapes, but in having new eyes, in seeing the universe with the eyes of another, of hundreds of others, in seeing the hundred of universes that each of them sees. - **Marcel Proust**

You get a strange feeling when you leave a place, I told him, like you'll not only miss the people but you'll miss the person you are now at this time and place, because you'll never be this way ever again. - **Azar Nafisi**

I shall pass this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer to neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again. - **Mahatma Ghandi**

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. - **Maya Angelou**

May your trails be crooked, winding, lonesome, dangerous, leading to the most amazing view. May your mountains rise into and above the clouds. May your rivers flow without end, meandering through pastoral valleys tinkling with bells, past temples and castles and poets' towers into a dark primeval forest where tigers belch and monkeys howl, through miasmal and mysterious swamps and down into a desert of red rock, blue mesas, domes and pinnacles and grottos of endless stone, and down again into a deep vast ancient unknown chasm where bars of sunlight blaze on profiled cliffs, where deer walk across the white sand beaches, where storms come and go as lightning clangs upon the high crags, where something strange and more beautiful and more full of wonder than your deepest dreams waits for you ... beyond that next turning of the canyon walls. - **Edward Abbey**

Quotes from *The Tao of Pooh* by Benjamin Hoff

If people were Superior to Animals, they'd take better care of the world.

Lots of people talk to animals...Not very many listen though...that's the problem.

In the story of Ugly Duckling, when did the Ugly Duckling stop feeling Ugly? When he realized that he was a Swan. Each of us has something Special, a swan of some sort, hidden inside somewhere. But until we recognize that it's there, what can we do but splash around, treading water? The Wise are Who They Are. They work with what they've got and do what they can do.

But isn't the knowledge that comes from experience more valuable than the knowledge that doesn't? It seems fairly obvious to some of us that a lot of scholars need to go outside and sniff around - walk through the grass, talk to the animals. That sort of thing."

The Christmas presents once opened are Not So Much Fun as they were while we were in the process of examining, lifting, shaking, thinking about, and opening them. Three hundred sixty-five days later, we try again and find that the same thing has happened. Each time the goal is reached, it becomes Not So Much Fun, and we're off to reach the next one, then the next one, then the next.

That doesn't mean that the goals we have don't count. They do, mostly because they cause us to go through the process and it's the process that makes us wise, happy, or whatever. If we do things in the wrong sort of way, it makes us miserable, angry, confused, and things like that. The goal has to be right for us, and it has to be beneficial, in order to ensure a beneficial process. But aside from that, it's really the process that's important.

Now, scholars can be very useful and necessary, in their own dull and unamusing way. They provide a lot of information. It's just that there is Something More, and that Something More is what life is really all about.

"It is very hard to be brave," said Piglet, sniffing slightly, "when you're only a Very Small Animal." Rabbit, who had begun to write very busily, looked up and said: "It is because you are a very small animal that you will be Useful in the adventure before us."

"The main problem with this great obsession for saving time is very simple: you can't save time. You can only spend it wisely or foolishly. The Busy Backson has practically no time at all, because he's too busy wasting it by trying to save it. And by trying to save it, he ends up wasting the whole thing."

"When you wake up in the morning, Pooh," said Piglet at last, "what's the first thing you say to yourself?"

"What's for breakfast?" said Pooh. "What do you say, Piglet?"

"I say, I wonder what's going to happen exciting today?" said Piglet.

Pooh nodded thoughtfully.

"It's the same thing," he said.

The major lesson Tiggers need to learn is that if they don't control their impulses, their impulses will control them. No matter how much they do, Tiggers are never satisfied because they don't know the feeling of accomplishment that eventually comes when one persistently applies one's will to the attaining of non-immediately-reachable goals.

Wisdom, Happiness, and Courage are not waiting somewhere out beyond sight at the end of a straight line; they're part of a continuous cycle that begins right here. They're not only the ending, but the beginning as well.

Do you really want to be happy? You can begin by being appreciative of who you are and what you've got.

"Rabbit's clever," said Pooh thoughtfully.

"Yes," said Piglet, "Rabbit's clever."

"And he has Brain."

"Yes," said Piglet, "Rabbit has Brain."

There was a long silence.

"I suppose," said Pooh, "that that's why he never understands anything."

The Invitation by Oriah Mountain Dreamer

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living.

I want to know what you ache for, and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are.

I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love, for your dreams, for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon.

I want to know if you have touched the center of your own sorrow, if you have been opened by life's betrayals or have become shriveled and closed from fear of further pain.

I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own, without moving to hide it or fade it or fix it.

I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your own; if you can dance with wildness and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful, be realistic, or to remember the limitations of being human.

It doesn't interest me if the story you're telling me is true.

I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself; if you can bear the accusation of betrayal and not betray your own soul.

I want to know if you can be faithful and therefore be trustworthy.

I want to know if you can see the beauty even when it's not pretty every day, and if you source your life from its presence.

I want to know if you can live with failure, yours or mine, and still stand on the edge of a lake and shout to the silver of a full moon, "Yes!"

It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have.

I want to know if you can get up after the night of grief and despair, weary and bruised to the bone, and do what needs to be done for the children.

It doesn't interest me who you are, or how you came to be here.

I want to know if you will stand in the center of the fire with me and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom you have studied.

I want to know what sustains you from the inside when all else falls away.

I want to know if you can be alone with yourself, and if you truly like the company you keep in the empty moments.

The Definition of Privilege by Adam Falkner

Nathan and Davis had the wad of bills we stole from Davis's father's work coat

So when they led us down the block to hop in, we followed, because we were thirsty, and had no idea the darker skinned of us would only minutes later end up with their chests on the pavement, a stranger's hands scaling their waistlines and thighs while the lighter skinned of us would watch from the sidewalk, with our tongues pretzeled into knots like the barrels of cartoon rifles, and I was 9 years old.

On the verge of beginning a 15-year obsession to prove I was not whatever it was that kept me off the pavement alongside Nathan and Davis.

First, by quitting classical piano lessons and growing my hair out.

And studying the blues. Then traveling across continents with groups of quasi-guilty Christians to build schools in Peru, or community centers in Israel, or soccer fields in

Mexico or wherever to the hell, and then working up the nerve to rock matching track suits every day in the upper lot at Pine Ear high school.

And basketball jerseys two sizes too big. And drinking 40s of Olde English malt liquor like Ice Cube, with kids who lived at Eagle Pt. and North Maple, and reciting Too Short verses to my crush at the bus stop.

Where I eventually started smoking so much before school that I got suspended for vomiting in the trashcan during my 3rd period English class and had to go to summer school.

Which I really used as an opportunity to distribute the first of many mixtapes in my very serious rap career, that I swore would be my ticket outta here, on which I used spoonfuls of words my mother did not understand until I finally, not somehow, landed back in school.

My teacher asked me to share the earliest memory I had of race and so I told her the story of Nathan and Davis and the stranger's hands and she asked me why whiteness made me so uncomfortable and I said,

It doesn't. But then I said,

Because I don't ever think about it. And she replied,

Not having to think about something sounds like an amazing privilege.

And then I started seeing kids who looked just like me everywhere, whose whole lives were bending into knots like the barrels of cartoon rifles just to prove they weren't

whatever it was that kept me off the pavement when I was 9 years old. Which is to say, guilty for something they didn't do, which is to say,

I never owned slaves. I'd never say the n-word, ever,

Which is to say, invisible, I don't really have a race, which is to say, the option of silence.

from Song of the Open Road by Walt Whitman

1

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.

Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself am good-fortune,
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need nothing,
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticisms,
Strong and content I travel the open road.

The earth, that is sufficient,
I do not want the constellations any nearer,
I know they are very well where they are,
I know they suffice for those who belong to them.

5

From this hour, freedom!
From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits and imaginary lines,
Going where I list, my own master, total and absolute,
Listening to others, and considering well what they say,
Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,
Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of the holds that would hold me.

I inhale great draughts of space;
The east and the west are mine, and the north and the south are mine.

I am larger, better than I thought;
I did not know I held so much goodness.

All seems beautiful to me;
I can repeat over to men and women, You have done such good to me, I would do the same to you.

I will recruit for myself and you as I go;
I will scatter myself among men and women as I go;
I will toss the new gladness and roughness among them;
Whoever denies me, it shall not trouble me;
Whoever accepts me, he or she shall be blessed, and shall bless me.

The Perfect High by Shel Silverstein

There once was a boy named Gimmesome Roy. He was nothing like me or you.
'Cause laying back and getting high was all he cared to do.
As a kid, he sat in the cellar, sniffing airplane glue.
And then he smoked bananas -- 'cause that was the thing to do.
He tried aspirin in Coca-Cola, breathed helium on the sly,
And his life was just one endless search to find that perfect high.

But grass just made him want to lay back and eat chocolate-chip pizza all night,
And the great things he wrote while he was stoned looked like shit in the morning light.
And speed just made him rap all day, reds just laid him back,
And Cocaine Rose was sweet to his nose, but the price nearly broke his back.
He tried PCP and THC, but they didn't quite do the trick,
And poppers nearly blew his heart and mushrooms made him sick.
Acid made him see the light, but he couldn't remember it long.
And hashish was just a little too weak, and smack was a lot too strong,
And Quaaludes made him stumble, and booze just made him cry,
Till he heard of a cat named Baba Fats who knew of the perfect high.

Now, Baba Fats was a hermit cat who lived up in Nepal,
High on a craggy mountaintop, up a sheer and icy wall.
"But hell," says Roy, "I'm a healthy boy, and I'll crawl or climb or fly,
I'll find that guru who'll give me the clue as to what's the perfect high."
So out and off goes Gimmesome Roy to the land that knows no time,
Up a trail no man could conquer, to a cliff no man could climb.
For fourteen years he tries that cliff, then back down again he slides
Then sits -- and cries -- and climbs again, pursuing the perfect high.

He's grinding his teeth, he's coughing up blood, he's aching and shaking and weak,
As starving and sore and bleeding and tore, he reaches the mountain peak.
And his eyes blink red like a snow-blind wolf, and he snarls the snarl of a rat,
As there in perfect repose and wearing no clothes -- sits the godlike Baba Fats.

"What's happening, Fats?" says Roy with joy, "I've come to state my biz.
I hear you're hip to the perfect trip. Please tell me what it is.
For you can see," says Roy to he, "that I'm about to die,
So for my last ride, Fats, how can I achieve the perfect high?"

"Well, dog my cats!" says Baba Fats. "here's one more burnt-out soul,
Who's looking for some alchemist to turn his trip to gold.
But you won't find it in no dealer's stash, or on no druggist's shelf.
Son, if you would seek the perfect high -- find it in yourself."

"Why, you jive motherfucker!" screamed Gimmesome Roy, "I've climbed through rain and sleet,
I've lost three fingers off my hands and four toes off my feet!
I've braved the lair of the polar bear and tasted the maggot's kiss.
Now, you tell me the high is in *myself*. What kind of shit is this?
My ears 'fore they froze off," says Roy, "had heard all kind of crap,
But I didn't climb for fourteen years to hear this sophomore rap.
And I didn't crawl up here to hear that the high is on the natch,
So you tell me where the *real* stuff is or I'll kill your guru ass!"

"Ok, Ok," says Baba Fats, "you're forcing it out of me.
There is a land beyond the sun that's known as Zaboli.
A wretched land of stone and sand where snakes and buzzards scream,
And in this devil's garden blooms the mystic Tzu-Tzu tree.
And every ten years it blooms one flower as white as the Key West sky,
And he who eats of the Tzu-Tzu flower will know the perfect high.
For the rush comes on like a tidal wave and it hits like the blazing sun.
And the high, it lasts a lifetime and the down don't ever come.

But the Zaboli land is ruled by a giant who stands twelve cubits high.
With eyes of red in his hundred heads, he waits for the passers-by.
And you must slay the red-eyed giant, and swim the River of Slime,
Where the mucous beasts, they wait to feast on those who journey by.
And if you survive the giant and the beasts and swim that slimy sea,
There's a blood-drinking witch who sharpens her teeth as she guards that Tzu-Tzu tree."

"To hell with your witches and giants," laughs Roy. "To hell with the beasts of the sea.
As long as the Tzu-Tzu flower blooms, some hope still blooms for me."
And with tears of joy in his snow-blind eye, Roy hands the guru a five,
Then back down the icy mountain he crawls, pursuing that perfect high.

"Well, that is that," says Baba Fats, sitting back down on his stone,
Facing another thousand years of talking to God alone.
"It seems, Lord", says Fats, "it's always the same, old men or bright-eyed youth,
It's always easier to sell them some shit than it is to give them the truth."

For Lew Welch by Gary Snyder

Snowfall in March:
I sit in the white glow reading a thesis
About you. Your poems, your life.

The author's my student,
He even quotes me.

Forty years since we joked in a kitchen in Portland
Twenty since you disappeared.

All those years and their moments—
Crackling bacon, slamming car doors,
Poems tried out on friends,
Will be one more archive,
One more shaky text.

But life continues in the kitchen
Where we still laugh and cook,
Watching snow.

Wild Geese by Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening by Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village, though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.
My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.
The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

The Happy Virus by Hafiz

I caught the happy virus last night
When I was out singing beneath the stars.
It is remarkably contagious -
So kiss me.

Phenomenal Woman by Maya Angelou

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.
I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size
But when I start to tell them,
They think I'm telling lies.
I say,
It's in the reach of my arms
The span of my hips,
The stride of my step,
The curl of my lips.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

I walk into a room
Just as cool as you please,
And to a man,
The fellows stand or
Fall down on their knees.
Then they swarm around me,
A hive of honey bees.
I say,
It's the fire in my eyes,
And the flash of my teeth,
The swing in my waist,
And the joy in my feet.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Men themselves have wondered
What they see in me.
They try so much
But they can't touch
My inner mystery.
When I try to show them
They say they still can't see.
I say,
It's in the arch of my back,
The sun of my smile,
The ride of my breasts,
The grace of my style.
I'm a woman

Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Now you understand
Just why my head's not bowed.
I don't shout or jump about
Or have to talk real loud.
When you see me passing
It ought to make you proud.
I say,
It's in the click of my heels,
The bend of my hair,
the palm of my hand,
The need of my care,
'Cause I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Still I Rise by Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may tread me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

For Whom the Bell Tolls by John Donne

No man is an island,
Entire of itself.
Each is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less.
As well as if a promontory were.
As well as if a manner of thine own
Or of thine friend's were.
Each man's death diminishes me,
For I am involved in mankind.
Therefore, send not to know
For whom the bell tolls,
It tolls for thee.

from Chicago Poem by Lew Welch

Standing in the boat one night I watched the lake go
absolutely
flat. Smaller than raindrops, and only
Here and there, the feeding rings of fish were visible a
hundred yards
away – and the Blue Gill caught that afternoon
Lifted from its northern lake like a tropical! Jewel at its ear
Belly gold so bright you'd swear he had a
Light in there. His color faded with his life. A small
green fish . . .

All things considered, it's a gentle and undemanding
planet, even here. Far gentler
Here than any of a dozen other places. The trouble is
always and only with what we build on top of it.

There's nobody else to blame. You can't fix it and you
can't make it go away. It does no good appealing
To some ill-invented Thunderer
Brooding above some unimaginable crag . . .

It's ours. Right down to the last small hinge it
all depends for its existence
Only and utterly upon our sufferance.

Driving back I saw Chicago rising in its gases and I
knew again that never will the
Man be made to stand against this pitiless, unparalleled
monstrosity. It
Snuffles on the beach of its Great Lake like a
blind, red, rhinoceros.
It's already running us down.

You can't fix it. You can't make it go away.
I don't know what you're going to do about it,
But I know what I'm going to do about it. I'm just
going to walk away from it. Maybe
A small part of it will die if I'm not around

feeding it anymore.

Water by Wendell Berry

I was born in a drouth year. That summer
my mother waited in the house, enclosed
in the sun and the dry ceaseless wind,
for the men to come back in the evenings,
bringing water from a distant spring.
veins of leaves ran dry, roots shrank.
And all my life I have dreaded the return
of that year, sure that it still is
somewhere, like a dead enemy's soul.
Fear of dust in my mouth is always with me,
and I am the faithful husband of the rain,
I love the water of wells and springs
and the taste of roofs in the water of cisterns.
I am a dry man whose thirst is praise
of clouds, and whose mind is something of a cup.
My sweetness is to wake in the night
after days of dry heat, hearing the rain.

The Old Poets of China by Mary Oliver

Wherever I am, the world comes after me.
It offers me its busyness. It does not believe
that I do not want it. Now I understand
why the old poets of China went so far and high
into the mountains, then crept into the pale mist.

The Quitter by Robert Service

When you're lost in the Wild, and you're scared as a child,
And Death looks you bang in the eye,
And you're sore as a boil, it's according to Hoyle
To cock your revolver and . . . die.
But the Code of a Man says: "Fight all you can,"
And self-dissolution is barred.
In hunger and woe, oh, it's easy to blow . . .
It's the hell-served-for-breakfast that's hard.

"You're sick of the game!" Well, now that's a shame.
You're young and you're brave and you're bright.
"You've had a raw deal!" I know — but don't squeal,
Buck up, do your damndest, and fight.
It's the plugging away that will win you the day,
So don't be a piker, old pard!
Just draw on your grit, it's so easy to quit.
It's the keeping-your chin-up that's hard.

It's easy to cry that you're beaten — and die;
It's easy to crawfish and crawl;
But to fight and to fight when hope's out of sight —
Why that's the best game of them all!
And though you come out of each gruelling bout,
All broken and battered and scarred,
Just have one more try — it's dead easy to die,
It's the keeping-on-living that's hard.

This World by Mary Oliver

I would like to write a poem about the world that has in it
nothing fancy.
But it seems impossible.
Whatever the subject, the morning sun
glimmers it.
The tulip feels the heat and flaps its petals open and becomes a star.
The ants bore into the peony bud and there is a dark
pinprick well of sweetness.
As for the stones on the beach, forget it.
Each one could be set in gold.
So I tried with my eyes shut, but of course the birds
were singing.
And the aspen trees were shaking the sweetest music
out of their leaves.
And that was followed by, guess what, a momentous and
beautiful silence
as comes to all of us, in little earfuls, if we're not too
hurried to hear it.
As for spiders, how the dew hangs in their webs
even if they say nothing, or seem to say nothing.
So fancy is the world, who knows, maybe they sing.
So fancy is the world, who knows, maybe the stars sing too,
and the ants, and the peonies, and the warm stones,
so happy to be where they are, on the beach, instead of being
locked up in gold.

You cannot stay on the summit forever,
You have to come down again ...
So why bother in the first place?
Just this: what is above knows what is below
But what is below does not know what is above.
One climbs, one sees. One descends, one sees no longer.
But one has seen.
There is an art of conducting oneself in the lower
regions by the memory of what one saw higher up.

-Rene Daumal

The Road Less Traveled by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth

Then took the other, just as fair
And having perhaps the better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear
Though as for that, the passing there
Had worn them really about the same

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet, knowing how way leads onto way
I doubted if I should ever come back

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence
Two roads diverged in a wood
And I took the one less traveled by
And that has made all the difference.

Snow Geese by Mary Oliver

Oh, to love what is lovely, and will not last!
What a task
to ask
of anything, or anyone,
yet it is ours,
and not by the century or the year, but by the
hours.
One fall day I heard
above me, and above the sting of the wind, a
sound
I did not know, and my look shot upward; it was
a flock of snow geese, winging it
faster than the ones we usually see,
and, being the color of snow, catching the sun
so they were, in part at least, golden. I
held my breath
as we do
sometimes
to stop time
when something wonderful
has touched us
as with a match,
which is lit, and bright,
but does not hurt
in the common way,
but delightfully,
as if delight
were the most serious thing
you ever felt.
The geese
flew on,
I have never seen them again.
Maybe I will, someday, somewhere.
Maybe I won't.
It doesn't matter.
What matters
is that, when I saw them,
I saw them
as through the veil, secretly, joyfully, clearly.

Morning Poem by Mary Oliver

Every morning
the world
is created.
Under the orange
sticks of the sun
the heaped
ashes of the night
turn into leaves again
and fasten themselves to the high
branches ---
and the ponds appear
like black cloth
on which are painted islands
of summer lilies.
If it is your nature
to be happy
you will swim away along the soft trails
for hours, your imagination
alighting everywhere.
And if your spirit
carries within it
the thorn
that is heavier than lead ---
if it's all you can do
to keep on trudging ---
there is still
somewhere deep within you
a beast shouting that the earth
is exactly what it wanted ---
each pond with its blazing lilies
is a prayer heard and answered
lavishly,
every morning,
whether or not
you have ever dared to be happy,
whether or not
you have ever dared to pray.

What We Need Is Here by Wendell Berry

Geese appear high over us,
pass, and the sky closes. Abandon,
as in love or sleep, holds
them to their way, clear
in the ancient faith: what we need
is here. And we pray, not
for new earth or heaven, but to be
quiet in heart, and in eye,
clear. What we need is here.

A Buddhist Prayer

With a wish to free all beings
I shall always go for refuge
to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha
until I reach full enlightenment.

Enthused by wisdom and compassion,
today in the Buddha's presence
I generate the Mind for Full Awakening
for the benefit of all sentient beings.

As long as space endures,
as long as sentient being remain,
until then, may I too remain
and dispel the miseries of the world

Little Summer Poem Touching The Subject Of Faith by Mary Oliver

Every summer
I listen and look
under the sun's brass and even
into the moonlight, but I can't hear

anything, I can't see anything --
not the pale roots digging down, nor the
green
stalks muscling up,
nor the leaves
deepening their damp pleats,

nor the tassels making,
nor the shucks, nor the cobs.
And still,
every day,

the leafy fields
grow taller and thicker --
green gowns lofting up in the night,
showered with silk.

And so, every summer,
I fail as a witness, seeing nothing --
I am deaf too
to the tick of the leaves,

the tapping of downwardness from the
banyan feet --
all of it
happening
beyond any seeable proof, or hearable hum.

And, therefore, let the immeasurable come.
Let the unknowable touch the buckle of my
spine.
Let the wind turn in the trees,
and the mystery hidden in the dirt

swing through the air.
How could I look at anything in this world
and tremble, and grip my hands over my
heart?

What should I fear?
One morning
in the leafy green ocean
the honeycomb of the corn's beautiful body
is sure to be there.

This is just to say by William Carlos Williams

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold

Last Night the Rain Spoke to Me by Mary Oliver

Last night
the rain
spoke to me
slowly, saying,
what joy
to come falling
out of the brisk cloud,
to be happy again
in a new way
on the earth!
That's what it said
as it dropped,
smelling of iron,
and vanished
like a dream of the ocean
into the branches
and the grass below.
Then it was over.
The sky cleared.
I was standing
under a tree.
The tree was a tree
with happy leaves,
and I was myself,
and there were stars in the
sky
that were also themselves
at the moment
at which moment
my right hand
was holding my left hand
which was holding the tree
which was filled with stars
and the soft rain --
imagine! imagine!
the long and wondrous
journeys
still to be ours.

by Wendell Berry

In the dark of the moon
In the dead of night
In the dead of winter
In flying snow,
The world in danger
Families dying
War spreading
I walk the rocky hillside
Sowing clover.

Pine tree tops by Gary Snyder

In the blue night
frost haze, the sky glows
with the moon
pine tree tops
bend snow-blue, fade
into sky, frost, starlight.
The creak of boots.
Rabbit tracks, deer tracks,
what do we know.

The Buddha's Last Instruction by Mary Oliver

"Make of yourself a light,"
said the Buddha,
before he died.
I think of this every morning
as the east begins
to tear off its many clouds
of darkness, to send up the first
signal — a white fan
streaked with pink and violet,
even green.
An old man, he lay down
between two sala trees,
and he might have said anything,
knowing it was his final hour.
The light burns upward,
it thickens and settles over the fields.
Around him, the villagers gathered
and stretched forward to listen.
Even before the sun itself
hangs, disattached, in the blue air,
I am touched everywhere
by its ocean of yellow waves.
No doubt he thought of everything
that had happened in his difficult life.
And then I feel the sun itself
as it blazes over the hills,
like a million flowers on fire --
clearly I'm not needed,
yet I feel myself turning
into something of inexplicable value.
Slowly, beneath the branches,
he raised his head.
He looked into the faces of that frightened crowd.

The Guest House by Rumi

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.
Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.
The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.
Be grateful for whatever comes.
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

I Wish I Could Speak Like Music by Hafiz

I wish I could speak like music. I wish I could put
the swaying splendor of fields into words so that
you could hold Truth against your body and dance.
I am trying the best I can with this crude brush,
the tongue, to cover you with light. I wish I could
speak like divine music. I want to give you the
sublime rhythms of this earth and the sky's limbs
as they joyously spin and surrender, surrender

against God's luminous breath. Hafiz wants you
to hold me against your precious body and dance,
dance.

The Peace of Wild Things by Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
Rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.

I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

The Summer Day by Mary Oliver

Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean-
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down-
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?

I know why the caged bird sings by Maya Angelou

A free bird leaps on the back
Of the wind and floats downstream
Till the current ends and dips his wing
In the orange suns rays
And dares to claim the sky.

But a BIRD that stalks down his narrow cage
Can seldom see through his bars of rage
His wings are clipped and his feet are tied
So he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings with a fearful trill
Of things unknown but longed for still
And his tune is heard on the distant hill for
The caged bird sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze
And the trade winds soft through
The sighing trees
And the fat worms waiting on a dawn-bright
Lawn and he names the sky his own.

But a caged BIRD stands on the grave of dreams
His shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
His wings are clipped and his feet are tied
So he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings with
A fearful trill of things unknown
But longed for still and his
Tune is heard on the distant hill
For the caged bird sings of freedom.

Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front by Wendell Berry

Love the quick profit, the annual raise, vacation with pay.
Want more of everything made.
Be afraid to know your neighbors and to die.
And you will have a window in your head.
Not even your future will be a mystery any more.
Your mind will be punched in a card and shut away in a little drawer.
When they want you to buy something they will call you.
When they want you to die for profit they will let you know.
So, friends, every day do something that won't compute.
Love the Lord. Love the world. Work for nothing.
Take all that you have and be poor.
Love someone who does not deserve it.
Denounce the government and embrace the flag.
Hope to live in that free republic for which it stands.
Give your approval to all you cannot understand.
Praise ignorance,
for what man has not encountered he has not destroyed.
Ask the questions that have no answers.
Invest in the millennium.
Plant sequoias.
Say that your main crop is the forest that you did not plant,
that you will not live to harvest.

Say that the leaves are harvested when they have rotted into the mold.
Call that profit. Prophesy such returns.
Put your faith in the two inches of humus that will build under the trees
every thousand years.
Listen to carrion--put your ear close,
and hear the faint chattering of the songs that are to come.
Expect the end of the world.
Laugh. Laughter is immeasurable.
Be joyful though you have considered all the facts.
So long as women do not go cheap for power,
please women more than men.
Ask yourself: Will this satisfy a woman satisfied to bear a child?
Will this disturb the sleep of a woman near to giving birth?
Go with your love to the fields.
Lie easy in the shade. Rest your head in her lap.
Swear allegiance to what is nighest your thoughts.
As soon as the generals and politicians can predict the motions
of your mind, lose it.
Leave it as a sign to mark the false trail, the way you didn't go.
Be like the fox who makes more tracks than necessary,
some in the wrong direction.
Practice resurrection.

When I heard the Learn'd Astronomer by Walt Whitman

When I heard the learn'd astronomer;
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me;
When I was shown the charts and the diagrams, to add, divide, and measure
them;
When I, sitting, heard the astronomer, where he lectured with much applause
in the lecture-room,
How soon, unaccountable, I became tired and sick;
Till rising and gliding out, I wander'd off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

Untitled by T.S. Eliot

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

The Journey by Mary Oliver

One day you finally knew
what you had to do, and began,
though the voices around you
kept shouting
their bad advice --
though the whole house
began to tremble
and you felt the old tug
at your ankles.
"Mend my life!"
each voice cried.
But you didn't stop.
You knew what you had to do,
though the wind pried
with its stiff fingers
at the very foundations,
though their melancholy
was terrible.
It was already late
enough, and a wild night,
and the road full of fallen
branches and stones.
But little by little,
as you left their voices behind,
the stars began to burn
through the sheets of clouds,
and there was a new voice
which you slowly
recognized as your own,
that kept you company
as you strode deeper and deeper
into the world,
determined to do
the only thing you could do --
determined to save
the only life you could save.

At This Party by Hafiz

I don't want to be the only one here
Telling all the secrets -
Filling up all the bowls at this party,
Taking all the laughs.
I would like you
To start putting things on the table
That can also feed the soul
The way I do.
That way
We can invite
A hell of a lot more
Friends.

Tadpoles by Andrea Gibson

A tadpole doesn't know
It's gonna grow bigger.
It just swims,
and figures limbs
are for frogs.

People don't know
the power they hold.
They just sing hymns,
and figure saving
is for god.

Be Melting Snow by Rumi

Totally conscious, and apropos of nothing, you come to see me. Is someone here? I ask.
The moon. The full moon is inside your house.

My friends and I go running out into the street.
I'm in here, comes a voice from the house, but we aren't listening. We're looking up at the sky.
My pet nightingale sobs like a drunk in the garden.
Ringdoves scatter with small cries, *Where, Where*.
It's midnight. The whole neighborhood is up and out in the street thinking, The cat burglar has come back.
The actual thief is there too, saying out loud,
Yes, the cat burglar is somewhere in this crowd.
No one pays attention.

Lo, I am with you always means when you look for God, God is in the look of your eyes,
in the thought of looking, nearer to you than your self,
or things that have happened to you
There's no need to go outside.

Be melting snow.
Wash yourself of yourself.

A white flower grows in quietness.
Let your tongue become that flower.

Bewilderment by Rumi

There are many guises for intelligence.
One part of you is gliding in a high windstream,
while your ore ordinary notions
take little steps and peck at the ground.

Conventional knowledge is death to our souls,
and it is not really ours. It is laid on.
Yet we keep saying we find 'rest' in these 'beliefs'.

We must become ignorant of what we have been taught
and be instead bewildered.

Run from what is profitable and comfortable.
Distrust anyone who praises you.
Give your investment money, and the interest
on the capital, to those who are actually destitute.

Forget safety. Live where you fear to live.
Destroy your reputation. Be notorious.
I have tried prudent planning long enough.
From now on, I'll be mad.

This We Have Now by Rumi

This we have now
is not imagination.

This is not
grief or joy.

Not a judging state,
or an elation,
or sadness.

Those come and go.
This is the presence that doesn't.

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,
there is a field. I'll meet you there.

When the soul lies down in that grass,
the world is too full to talk about.
Ideas, language, even the phrase *each other*
doesn't make any sense.

Gamble everything for love, if you're a true human being.
If not, leave this gathering.
Half-heartedness doesn't reach into majesty. You set
out to find God,
but then you keep stopping for long periods at mean-
spirited roadhouses.

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.
Don't go back to sleep.

You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep.

People are going back and forth across the doorsill
where the two worlds touch.

The door is round and open.
Don't go back to sleep.

Today, like every other day, we wake up empty
and frightened. Don't open the door to the study
and begin reading. Take down a musical instrument.
Let the beauty we love be what we do.
There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground.

Some nights stay up till dawn,
as the moon sometimes does for the sun.
Be a full bucket pulled up the dark way
of a well, then lifted out into the light.

The minute I heard my first love story,
I started looking for you, not knowing
how blind that was.
Lovers don't finally meet somewhere.
They're in each other all along.

Sit, be still, and listen,
because you're drunk
and we're at
the edge of the roof.

Don't be satisfied with stories,
how things have gone with others.
Unfold your own myth.

I am so small I can barely be seen.
How can this great love be inside me?

*Look at your eyes. They are small
but they see enormous things.*

Dance, when you're broken open.
Dance, if you've torn the bandage off.
Dance in the middle of the fighting.
Dance in your blood.
Dance when you're perfectly free.

Who could be so lucky?
Who comes to a lake
for Water and sees
the reflection of Moon.

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock By T. S. Eliot

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question ...
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"

Let us go and make our visit.
In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"
Time to turn back and descend the stair,
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair
(They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!")
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin
(They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!")
Do I dare
Disturb the universe?
In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all:
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
I know the voices dying with a dying fall
Beneath the music from a farther room.
So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?
And how should I presume? **continued>>>**

And I have known the arms already, known them all
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare
(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)
Is it perfume from a dress
That makes me so digress?
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.
And should I then presume?
And how should I begin?

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? ...

I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!
Smoothed by long fingers,
Asleep ... tired ... or it malingers,
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought
in upon a platter,
I am no prophet and here's no great matter;
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and
snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,
Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the universe into a ball
To roll it towards some overwhelming question,
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"
If one, settling a pillow by her head
Should say: "That is not what I meant at all;
That is not it, at all."

And would it have been worth it, after all,
Would it have been worth while,
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled
streets,
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail
along the floor
And this, and so much more?
It is impossible to say just what I mean!
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a
screen:
Would it have been worth while
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
And turning toward the window, should say:
"That is not it at all,
That is not what I meant, at all."

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use,
Politically cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous
Almost, at times, the Fool.

continued on next page>>>

Prufrock continued from previous page

I grow old ... I grow old ...
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.
We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

A Great Injustice by Hafiz

It is a great injustice and a monumental act
of cruelty for any religion to make someone
fear god.

What Was Said To the Rose by Rumi

What was said to the rose that made it open
was said to me here in my chest.

What was told the Cypress that made it strong
and straight, what was

whispered the jasmine so it is what it is, whatever made
sugarcane sweet, whatever

was said to the inhabitants of the town of Chigil in
Turkestan that makes them

so handsome, whatever lets the pomegranate flower blush
like a human face, that is

being said to me now. I blush. Whatever put eloquence in
language, that's happening here.

The great warehouse doors open; I fill with gratitude,
chewing a piece of sugarcane,

in love with the one to whom every that belongs!

Expedition Behavior... The Finer Points by Howard Tomb

A good expedition team is like a powerful, well-oiled, finely-tuned marriage. Members cook meals together, carry burdens together, face challenges together, and finally go to bed together. A bad expedition, on the other hand, is an awkward, ugly, embarrassing thing characterized by bickering, filth, frustration, and crispy macaroni.

Nearly all bad expeditions have one thing in common: poor expedition behavior (EB). This is true even if team members follow the stated rules, such as Don't Step on the Rope, Separate Kerosene and Food, No Soap in the River, No Raccoons in the Tent, Keep your Ice Axe Out of My Eye, etc.

Unfortunately, too many rules of expedition behavior remain unspoken. Some leaders seem to assume that their team members already have strong and generous characters like their own. But judging from a few of the campers we've encountered, more rules ought to be spelled out. Here are ten of them.

RULE #1 Get the hell out of bed. Suppose your tentmates get up early to fetch water and fire up the stove while you lie comatose in your sleeping bag. As they run an extensive equipment check, coil ropes and fix your breakfast, they hear you start to snore.

Last night you were their buddy; now they're drawing up lists of things about you that make them want to spit. They will devise cruel punishments for you. You have earned them.

The team concept is now defunct. Had you gotten out of bed, nobody would have had to suffer.

RULE #2 Do not be cheerful before breakfast. Some people wake up perky and happy as fluffy bunny rabbits. They put stress on those who wake up mean as rabid wolverines. Exhortations such as "Rise and shine, sugar!" and "Greet the dawn, pumpkin!" have been known to provoke pungent expletives from wolverine types. These curses, in turn, may offend fluffy bunny types. Indeed, they are issued with the sincere intent to offend. Thus, the day begins with flying fur and hurt feelings.

The best early-morning EB is simple: Be quiet.

RULE #3 Do not complain. About anything. Ever. It's ten below zero, visibility is four inches and wind-driven hailstones are embedding themselves in your face like shotgun pellets. Must you mention it? Do you think your friends haven't noticed the weather? Make a suggestion. Tell a joke. Lead a prayer. Do not lodge a complaint. Your pack weighs 87 pounds and your cheap backpack straps are actually cutting into your flesh. Were you promised a personal sherpa? Did somebody cheat you out of a mule team? If you can't carry your weight, get a motorhome.

RULE #4 Learn to cook at least one thing right. One expedition trick is so old that it is no longer amusing: on the first cooking assignment, the clever cook prepares a meal that resembles, say, Burnt Sock In Toxic Waste Sauce. The cook hopes to be relieved permanently from cooking duties.

This is a childish approach to a problem that has been with us since people first started throwing lizards on the fire. Tricks are not a part of a team spirit. If you don't like to cook, say so. Offer to wash dishes and to prepare the one thing you do know how to cook. Even if it is only tea. Remember that talented camp cooks sometimes get invited to join major expeditions in Nepal, all expenses paid.

RULE #5 Either a) Shampoo, or b) Do not remove your hat for any reason. After a week or so on the trail, without shampooing, hair forms angry little clumps and wads. These leave the person beneath looking like an escapee from a mental ward. Such an appearance could shake a team's confidence in your judgment. If you can't shampoo, pull a wool hat down over your ears and leave it there, night and day, for the entire expedition.

RULE #6 Do not ask if anybody's seen your stuff. Experienced adventurers have systems for organizing their gear. They very rarely leave it strewn around camp or lying back on the trail. One of the most damning things you can do is ask your teammates if they've seen the tent poles you thought you packed 20 miles ago. Even in the unlikely event you get home alive, you will not be invited on the next trip. Should you ever leave the tent poles 20 miles away, do not ask if anyone's seen them. Simply announce—with a good natured chuckle—that you are about to set off in the dark on a 40-mile hike to retrieve them, and that you are sorry. It's unprofessional to lose your spoon or your toothbrush. If something like this happens, don't mention it to anyone.

RULE #7 Never ask where you are. If you want to know where you are, look at the map. Try to figure it out yourself. If you're still confused, feel free to discuss the identities of landmarks around you and how they correspond to the cartography. If you a) suspect that a mistake has been made; and b) have experience in interpreting topographical maps; and c) are certain that your group leader is a novice or on drugs, speak up. Otherwise, follow the group like sheep.

RULE #8 Always carry more than your fair share. When the trip is over, would you rather be remembered as a rock or a sissy? Keep in mind that a pound or two of extra weight in your pack won't make your back hurt any more than it already does. In any given group of flatlanders, somebody is bound to bicker about weight. When an argument begins, take the extra weight yourself. Then shake your head and gaze with pity at the slothful one. This is the mature response to childish behavior. On the trail that day, during a break, load the tenderfoot's pack with 20 pounds of gravel.

RULE #9 Do not get sunburned. Sunburn is not only painful and unattractive—it's also an obvious sign of inexperience. Most greenhorns wait too long before applying sunscreen. Once you're burned on an expedition, you may not have a chance to get out of the sun. Then the burn gets burned, skin peels away, blisters sprout on the already swollen lips...Anyway, you get the idea. Wear zinc oxide. You can see exactly where and how thickly it's applied and it gives you just about 100% protection. It does get on your sunglasses, all over your clothes, and in your mouth. But that's OK. Unlike sunshine, zinc oxide is non-toxic.

RULE #10 Do not get killed. Suppose you make the summit of K2 solo, chain-smoking Gitanes and carrying the complete works of Hemmingway in hardcover. Pretty macho, huh? Suppose now that you take a vertical detour down a crevasse and never make it back to camp. Would you still qualify as a hero? And would it matter? Nobody's going to run any fingers through your new chest hair. The worst thing to have on your outdoor resume is a list of the possible locations of your body. Besides, your demise might distract your team members from enjoying what's left of their vacation.

All expedition behavior really flows from this one principle: Think of your team—the beautiful machine—first. You are merely a cog in that machine. If you have something to prove, forget about joining an expedition. Your team will never have more than one member.

I Can Sleep Through A Storm by Mitch Albom

Sam Cooke looked up from under the tractor he was fixing to see a middle-aged, well-build man standing there quietly waiting for him. To Sam's inquiry the man gave his name as Bill Jeffers – his business, handyman. He was inquiring about the "Handy Man Wanted" sign on Sam's gate.

Sam needed a helper, but he wanted to be sure he got a good one, so he asked the stranger, "What can you do?" The reply, "I can sleep through a storm," didn't make sense and sounded as though the man might be a little on the "cracked" side. Repeated questions brought on the same answer, calm and direct, "I can sleep through a storm." Impatiently Sam Cooke expressed his misgivings about hiring Jeffers by telling him that there was another man applying for the job, and to come back next Saturday to see if it was still open.

Saturday morning Jeffers was on hand early, inquiring about the job which he knew wasn't filled because the sign was still up on the gate. The interview was the same as before; with "I can sleep through a storm" Jeffers' only answer. By this time, Sam was desperate for a helper, so he hired the man on a trial basis. In the weeks that followed, Sam was to find that Bill Jeffers was the best worker he had ever seen. Whatever needed doing got done, and well, and both men were pleased with the arrangement. The farmer was willing to forget that his hired man talked a little "peculiar" when asked what he could do.

Then one night came the storm. Lightning had been flickering on the horizon when they went to bed, but when Sam awoke about midnight; the storm was almost on them. He quickly pulled on his clothes and went to the hired mans room to wake him up so that together they could put the farm in shape for the storm, see that the doors were closed, the tractor covered, the livestock inside, and a number of other things.

Pound as he might on Bill's door, there was no response, and Sam angrily went rushing out to put the place in shape, muttering about his stupidity in hiring a man you couldn't waken when you needed him most, resolving to fire him in the morning.

When Sam got to the barn, all the doors were already closed, the tractor was indoors, the livestock was all bedded down; everything was all set. As he slowly undressed after his unnecessary trip around the farm in the rain, Sam Cooke at last knew what his hired man had meant by "I can sleep through a storm." Jeffers did his works so well, so thoroughly that he did not need to worry in the time of storm. He knew that everything was right.

If we live our lives the same way, the storm times will never bother us, because we will be ready for them.

Tips For A Successful Marriage by Leroy A. Morgan

When I came out of the army, they had job openings for the post office, but you had to take an entry exam. They had about five hundred guys taking this test, and I finished number eleven. Vivian was also at the post office, and I used to kid her about it. And she'd say, "Leroy, you were number eleven, but I was number two!" She never did let me forget that.

She had a beautiful smile. We used to go out for coffee breaks, and then later on we started going out to shows. About six months later I asked her, Would she marry me?

My wife and I were in Philadelphia, and we saw a sign that said 'SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE.' I will never forget it: It had six points to always say to your wife or husband. The first one was: YOU LOOK GREAT. The second one was: CAN I HELP? The third one was: LET'S EAT OUT. The fourth one was: I WAS WRONG. The fifth one was: I AM SORRY. But the last and most important one was: I LOVE YOU. That was it. There were six statements, and it said if you follow that, you'll have a successful marriage. So we followed it, and we did have a successful marriage.

If she was working out in the yard, I'd come out: "Can I help you?" And when we'd come home from work, and I knew she was tired, I'd ask her, "You want to go out to eat?"

It lasted fifty three years, two months, and five days. It's been rough, but every morning when I wake up she's included in my prayers and I talk to her every night when I go to bed. She was something. One thing: If they ever let me in those pearly gates, I'm going to walk all over God's heaven until I find that girl. And the first thing I'm going to do is ask her if she would marry me, and do it all over again.

In order for the admissions staff of our college to get to know you, the applicant, better, we ask that you answer the following question: Are there any significant experiences you have had, or accomplishments you have realized, that have helped to define you as a person?

I am a dynamic figure, often seen scaling walls and crushing ice. I have been known to remodel train stations on my lunch breaks, making them more efficient in the area of heat retention. I translate ethnic slurs for Cuban refugees, I write award-winning operas, I manage time efficiently. Occasionally, I tread water for three days in a row. I woo women with my sensuous and godlike trombone playing, I can pilot bicycles up severe inclines with unflagging speed, and I cook thirty-minute brownies in twenty minutes. I am an expert in stucco, a veteran in love, and an outlaw in Peru.

Using only a hoe and a large glass of water, I once single-handedly defended a small village in the Amazon Basin from a horde of ferocious army ants. I play bluegrass cello, I was scouted by the Mets, I am the subject of numerous documentaries. When I'm bored, I build large suspension bridges in my yard. I enjoy urban hang gliding. On Wednesdays, after school, I repair electrical appliances free of charge.

I am an abstract artist, a concrete analyst, and a ruthless bookie. Critics worldwide swoon over my original line of corduroy evening wear. I don't perspire. I am a private citizen, yet I receive fan mail. I have been "Caller Number Nine" and have won the weekend passes. Last summer, I toured New Jersey with a traveling centrifugal force demonstration. I bat .400. My deft floral arrangements have earned me fame in international botany circles. Children trust me.

I can hurl tennis rackets at small moving objects with deadly accuracy. I once read Paradise Lost, Moby Dick, and David Copperfield in one day and still had time to refurbish an entire dining room that evening. I know the exact location of every food item in the supermarket. I have performed several covert operations for the CIA. I sleep once a week; when I do sleep, I sleep in a chair. While on vacation in Canada, I successfully negotiated with a group of terrorists who had seized a small bakery. The laws of physics do not apply to me.

I balance, I weave, I dodge, I frolic, and my bills are all paid. On weekends, to let off steam, I participate in full-contact origami. Years ago, I discovered the meaning of life but forgot to write it down. I have made extraordinary four-course meals using only a mouli and a toaster oven. I breed prize-winning clams. I have won bullfights in San Juan, cliff diving competitions in Sri Lanka, and spelling bees at the Kremlin. I have played Hamlet, I have performed open-heart surgery, and I have spoken with Elvis.

But I have not yet gone to college.

Most Of What I Need To Know I Learned In Kindergarten by Robert Fulghum

Most of what I really need to know about how to live and what to do, and how to be, I learned in kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate school mountain, but there in the sandbox at nursery school.

These are the things I learned: Share everything. Play fair. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don't take things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat. Flush. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you. Live a balanced life. Learn some and think some and paint and sing and dance and work some every day. Take a nap every afternoon. When you go out into the world, watch for traffic, hold hands, and stick together. Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the plastic cup. The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all alike like that. Gold fish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the plastic cup—they all die. So do we.

And then remember the book about Dick and Jane and the first word you learned, the biggest word of all: LOOK! Everything you need to know is in there somewhere. The Golden Rule and love and basic sanitation. Ecology and politics and sane living.

Think of what a better world it would be if we all—the whole world—had cookies and milk about 3 o'clock every afternoon and then lay down with our blankets for a nap. Or if we had a basic policy in our nation and other nations to always put things back where we found them and cleaned up our own messes. And it is still true, no matter how old you are, when you go out in the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together.

New Heroism by China Galland, from *Women in the Wildernes*

We have so often linked heroism with warfare, battling, conquest, and victory that a different notion of heroism, one that allows us to see nurturing and sustaining as heroic activities, is difficult to develop. Yet this is what must be done. We need to value actions in which one identifies with rather than opposes another being or way of being. The idea of battling and fighting is only one of the ways of dealing with fear, conflict, and difference. Often that which we reject and oppose is the very person or position that we need to include within our embrace.

Acceptance is the art of making the obstacle the path. Therefore, embrace the enemy. This is the lesson of the river: face the danger, move toward it, that's where the current is the strongest, and it will carry you around the obstacle. Use it. In aikido, a Japanese martial art, our teacher would say "blend," never turn from your attackers, move right in next to them, see the world from their point of view. Identify with the enemy and they are transformed. Opponents are lively, giving you energy: accept the gift. These ideas are not passive: taken from Aikido, from Zen, from the river, they demand an alertness and ability to respond that are complete. Our first task is to become the leaders of our own lives, heroes of our own stories. In fact, we already are; we have only to discover what that means.

Naming The Environment by Wendell Berry

No settled family or community has ever called its home place an "environment." None has ever called its feeling for its home place "biocentric" or "anthropocentric." None has ever thought of its connection to its home place as "ecological," deep or shallow. The concepts and insights of the ecologists are of great usefulness in our predicament, and we can hardly escape the need to speak of "ecology" and "ecosystems." But the terms themselves are culturally sterile. They come from the juiceless, abstract intellectuality of the universities which was invented to disconnect, displace, and

disembody the mind. The real names of the environment are names of rivers and river valleys; creeks, ridges, and mountains; towns and cities; lakes, woodlands, lanes roads, creatures, and people.

And the real name of our connection to this everywhere different and differently named earth is “work.” We are connected by work even to the places where we don’t work, for all places are connected; it is clear by now that we cannot exempt one place from our ruin of another. The name of our proper connection to the earth is “good work,” for good work involves much giving of honor. It honors the source of its materials; it honors the place where it is done; it honors the art by which it is done; it honors the thing that it makes and the user of the made thing. Good work is always modestly scaled, for it cannot ignore either the nature of individual places or the differences between places, and it always involves a sort of religious humility, for not everything is known. Good work can be defined only in particularity, for it must be defined a little differently for every one of the places and every one of the workers on the earth.

The name of our present society’s connection to the earth is “bad work” – work that is only generally and crudely defined, that enacts a dependence that is ill understood, that enacts no affection and gives no honor. Every one of us is to some extent guilty of this bad work. This guilt does not mean that we must indulge in a lot of breast-beating and confession; it means only that there is much good work to be done by every one of us and that we must begin to do it.

On Climbing by Walter Bonatti

Climbing is not a battle with the elements, not against the law of gravity; it is a battle against oneself. I love the mountains passionately. I have signed a sort of contract with them. And in them I will live out my life. I love other things too, but mountains are where nature offers her most beautiful contrasts. Nature offers the mountains to me, and I have consecrated my life to them. Without them, I would feel condemned to death. Strong emotion is what a climber lives for. Fear and joy are the strongest of them all. The climber who feels no fear is very unlucky, for this means that he is simply unfeeling altogether. If he can’t feel fear then he can’t feel the sublime joy of victory.

It is to conquer fear that one becomes a climber. The climber experiences life to its extreme limits. A climber is not a crazy man. He is not trying to get killed. He knows what life is worth, he is in love with living. The mountains have rules. They are harsh rules but they are there, and if you keep them, you are safe. A mountain is not like men. A mountain is sincere. The weapons to conquer it exist inside you, inside your soul.

Slowness by Terry Tempest Williams

I want my life to be a celebration of slowness.

Walking through the sage from our front door, I am gradually drawn into the well-worn paths of deer. They lead me to Round Mountain and the bloodred side canyons below Castle Rock. Sometimes I see them, but often I don’t. Deer are quiet creatures, who, when left to their own nature, move slowly. Their large black eyes absorb all shadows, especially the flash of predators. And their ears catch each word spoken. But today they walk ahead with their halting prance, one leg raised, then another, and allow me to follow them. I am learning how to not provoke fear and flight among deer. We move into a pink, sandy wash, their black-tipped tails like eagle feathers. I lose sight of them as they disappear around the bend.

On the top of the ridge I can see for miles.... Inside this erosional landscape where all colors eventually bleed into the river, it is hard to desire anything but time and space.

Time and space. In the desert there is space. Space is the twin sister of time. If we have open space then we have open time to breathe, to dream, to dare, to play, to pray to move freely, so freely, in a world our minds have forgotten but our bodies remember. Time and space. This partnership is holy. In these redrock canyons, time creates space--an arch, an eye, this blue eye of sky. We remember why we love the desert; it is our tactile response to light, to silence, and to stillness.

Hand on stone -- patience.

Hand on water -- music.

Why Go Into The Wilderness? by Mike Clelland

Why go into the wilderness? Natural world can be hard work, frustrating and uncomfortable, but we go nonetheless. What pulls us there, to a place that we may perceive as unwelcoming? For me, and maybe you too, there is a very real tugging at the soul, a deep-rooted desire to find something, to achieve something, a metaphysical fix of some sort.

The oppressive influences of our modern society keep many of us from being our real selves. We continually react not to Mother Nature, but to Mother Culture, and we take on identities and personalities not our own. But when we step into the wilderness, we temporarily liberate ourselves from those influences. Perhaps we begin to discover a little more about our real selves. Maybe we’ll get some reassurance there is something behind it all, and that it’s good.

I spend up to 30 days at a time in the wilderness, instructing for an outdoor school, and many of my fellow travelers are new to the Grand Experience of wilderness travel. They’ll often excitedly vocalize their observation: “We are in the middle of *nowhere!*”; “There is *nothing* out here!”; “Y’know, back in the *real* world ...”

I have learned that it’s impossible to be nowhere, much less in the middle of it. Wherever you are, and most especially the wilderness, you are—quite definitely—*somewhere*.

In the backcountry, you are surrounded, not by nothing, but by lots and lots of something, an amazing variety of the interlocking *everything!*

Don’t look away over the distant horizon for some place called the real world. This is the illusion. Wherever you are, any place your feet are planted on this fabulously complex and beautiful Earth, you are most assuredly in the real world.

On Walking by Edward Abbey

Whenever possible I avoid the practice myself. If God had meant us to walk, he would have kept us down on all fours, with well-padded paws. He would have constructed our planet on the model of the simple cube, so that notion of circularity and consequently the wheel might never have arisen. He surely would not have made mountains.

There are some things unnatural about walking. Especially walking uphill, which always seems to me not only unnatural but unnecessary. That iron tug of gravitation should be all the reminder we need that in walking uphill we are violating a basic law of nature. Yet we persist in doing it. No one can explain why George H. Mallory's asinine rationale for climbing a mountain—"because it's there"—could easily be refuted with a few well-placed hydrogen bombs. But our common sense continues to lag far behind the available technology.

There are some good things to say about walking. Not many, but some. Walking takes longer, for example, than any other known form of locomotion except crawling. Thus, it stretches time and prolongs life. Life is already too short to waste on speed. I have a friend who's always in a hurry; he never gets anywhere. Walking makes the world much bigger and therefore more interesting. You have time to observe the details. The utopian technologists foresee a future for us in which distance is annihilated and anyone can transport himself anywhere, instantly. Big deal, Buckminster. To be everywhere at once is to be nowhere forever, if you ask me. That's God's job, not ours.

The longest journey begins with a single step, not with a turn of the ignition key. That's the best thing about walking, the journey itself. It doesn't matter whether you get where you're going or not. You get there anyway. Every good hike brings you eventually back home. Right where you started.

From the tomb of an Anglican Bishop in Westminster Abbey, 1100 AD

When I was young and free and my imagination had no limits, I dreamed of changing the world. As I grew older and wiser, I discovered the world would not change, so I shortened my sights somewhat and decided to change only my country. But, it too, seemed immovable. As I grew into my twilight years, in one last desperate attempt, I settled for changing only my family, those closest to me, but alas, they would have none of it. And now as I lie on my deathbed, I suddenly realize: *If I had only changed my self first*, then by example I would have changed my family. From their inspiration and encouragement, I would then have been able to better my country and, who knows, I may have even changed the world.

A Single, Lucid Moment by Robert Soderstrom

As the plane buzzed back over the mountains, it was now just us and the villagers of Maimafu. My wife, Kerry, and I were assigned to this village of 800 people in the Eastern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea. It looked as if we were in for a true Indiana Jones adventure!

The mountains were dramatic and thick with rain forest. No roads had ever scarred them. We had loaded a four-seater plane with cargo (we would fly out every three months to resupply) and flew for thirty bumpy minutes southwest to the mountain ridges. From the plane, the village looked very much like a shoebox panorama from a grade school science project.

My wife and I were the first Peace Corps Volunteers ever in Maimafu. We had been greeted by a large group of beautiful people, all wearing gorgeous, curious smiles. Giggling, naked children hid behind trees during the trek down the mountain to our new home, and a lively entourage followed using their heads to carry our boxed supplies through the muddy trails. It was quickly becoming clear that we had just been adopted by a very large and unique family.

The basic culture of subsistence living had not been replaced; there were no cars, electricity, or telephones—just grass huts, large gardens, and a whole lot of rain forest. The women spent the day in the gardens planting, weeding, and harvesting. The men grew coffee, from which they generated their sole income of about \$200 a year. The village had lived in harmony with its natural surroundings for millennia.

The villagers had built us a beautiful, bamboo-thatched hut on short stilts. Planted behind the house was a three-acre garden, carefully tended and ready to harvest. Its bounty included corn, greens, tomatoes, beans, peanuts, onions, potatoes, and pineapples. To top it all off, the path to our new home was sprinkled with flower petals the day we arrived. It quickly became clear that Maimafu was a preserved example of communal living. Men rallied to the building of a new home, the elderly worked and lived with their families, and mothers breast-fed their neighbors' children. In fact, the one parentless, Down's syndrome man in our village was fed, housed, and clothed by everyone; he would spend a few days with one family before happily wandering into work or play with the next.

It was when we had settled in that it happened. We were sitting in a circle on the ground with a large group of villagers to "tok stori," Papua New Guinea's favorite pastime of "telling stories." I had passed around photos I had snapped back home in Chicago. A villager was staring intently at one of the photos. He had spotted two homeless men on a Michigan Avenue sidewalk with crude signs propped between their legs.

"Tupela man wokem wanem?" he asked. "What are these two men doing?"

I attempted to explain the concept of homelessness to the group, and the desire of these two men to get some food. Crowding around the photograph for a good stare, the villagers could not comprehend how the men became homeless, or why the passersby in the photo were so indifferent. They bombarded me with questions and I did my best to make sense of the two, ragged beggars in the midst of such glittering skyscrapers. I read from their questions and solemn mood that they had made an important observation—these two men must lack not only food and shelter but also a general sense of affection and purpose in their community.

Early the next morning, we were startled to hear a sharp rap at the door. Opening it, I was greeted by Moia, Kabarae, Kavalo, and Lemek. Kerry and I went out into the bright beautiful day. Each man gave us a pineapple. Moia spoke: "After you left last night, all of us men on the village council had a very big meeting. For a long, long time we discussed the two men in your picture. We have reached a conclusion and have a proposal for you."

"What could this possibly be?" we wondered.

"Please contact those two men as well as your government. Ask the government if they will fly those two men to Maimafu, just like they did for you. We have marked two spots of land where we will build houses for those two men, just like we built for you. Our men will build the houses and the women will plant the gardens to feed them." They were offering to do what? I was stunned and overwhelmed. Their offer was bold and genuine. It was innocent and naïve. It was beautiful. And, like the twist of a kaleidoscope, my worldview had completely changed.

What does one say to such an offer? We stammered for a response and stumbled over explanations of difficult logistics, scarce money, and government bureaucracies. But the councilmen would not accept no for an answer. In their simple lives, it was impossible to comprehend that humanity was host to such an injustice. They wanted action.

The villagers were serious. They were offering everything they had. We reluctantly matched their enthusiasm with a few letters to America and long conversations with the village council. We toured the sites where the homes were to be built. We listened to the women discuss the type of gardens they would plant, which would even include coffee trees to generate a small income. And we answered numerous questions over time from villagers amazed with this foreign thing called “homelessness.” The plan could not work, we told them. Their hearts sank, and I could see in their eyes that this dream would not die easily.

“Sori tru, sori tru we no inap wokem dospela samting,” they told us. “We are sorry this can’t happen.” They clicked their tongues and shook their heads in disappointment.

Initially inspired by the episode, I began mulling questions over and over in my mind. Fetching water in the ink-black night and looking up the hill at our small hut, light from the lantern inside splitting the bamboo-thatched walls, I would think of the spiritual wealth of Maimafu and the material wealth of America: Can a community reach a balance of material wealth and spiritual wealth? Why do these two societies exhibit so much of one and not much of the other? Do those two ends interfere with each other? How much spiritual wealth can we have? How much material wealth do we need? How has the world evolved so that some people own mansions and others lack shoes? How many people have love in their souls but diseased water in their drinking cups?

The villagers worked with us on newer projects. And I discovered, like many Peace Corps Volunteers, that the world’s purest form of brotherhood can often be found in the smallest of villages.

The Structure of Gratitude by David Brooks

I’m sometimes grumpier when I stay at a nice hotel. I have certain expectations about the service that’s going to be provided. I get impatient if I have to crawl around looking for a power outlet, if the shower controls are unfathomable, if the place considers itself too fancy to put a coffee machine in each room. I’m sometimes happier at a budget motel, where my expectations are lower, and where a functioning iron is a bonus and the waffle maker in the breakfast area is a treat. This little phenomenon shows how powerfully expectations structure our moods and emotions, none more so than the beautiful emotion of gratitude.

Gratitude happens when some kindness exceeds expectations, when it is undeserved. Gratitude is a sort of laughter of the heart that comes about after some surprising kindness.

Most people feel grateful some of the time — after someone saves you from a mistake or brings you food during an illness. But some people seem grateful dispositionally. They seem thankful practically all of the time.

These people may have big ambitions, but they have preserved small anticipations. As most people get on in life and earn more status, they often get used to more respect and nicer treatment. But people with dispositional gratitude take nothing for granted. They take a beginner’s thrill at a word of praise, at another’s good performance or at each sunny day. These people are present-minded and hyperresponsive.

This kind of dispositional gratitude is worth dissecting because it induces a mentality that stands in counterbalance to the mainstream threads of our culture.

We live in a capitalist meritocracy. This meritocracy encourages people to be self-sufficient — masters of their own fate. But people with dispositional gratitude are hyperaware of their continual dependence on others. They treasure the way they have been fashioned by parents, friends and ancestors who were in some ways their superiors. They’re glad the ideal of individual autonomy is an illusion because if they were relying on themselves they’d be much worse off.

The basic logic of the capitalist meritocracy is that you get what you pay for, that you earn what you deserve. But people with dispositional gratitude are continually struck by the fact that they are given far more than they pay for — and are much richer than they deserve. Their families, schools and summer camps put far more into them than they give back.

There’s a lot of surplus goodness in daily life that can’t be explained by the logic of equal exchange.

Capitalism encourages us to see human beings as self-interested, utility-maximizing creatures. But people with grateful dispositions are attuned to the gift economy where people are motivated by sympathy as well as self-interest. In the gift economy intention matters. We’re grateful to people who tried to do us favors even when those favors didn’t work out. In the gift economy imaginative empathy matters. We’re grateful because some people showed they care about us more than we thought they did. We’re grateful when others took an imaginative leap and put themselves in our mind, even with no benefit to themselves.

Gratitude is also a form of social glue. In the capitalist economy, debt is to be repaid to the lender. But a debt of gratitude is repaid forward, to another person who also doesn’t deserve it. In this way each gift ripples outward and yokes circles of people in bonds of affection. It reminds us that a society isn’t just a contract based on mutual benefit, but an organic connection based on natural sympathy — connections that are nurtured not by self-interest but by loyalty and service.

If you think that human nature is good and powerful, then you go around frustrated because the perfect society has not yet been achieved. But if you go through life believing that our reason is not that great, our individual skills are not that impressive, and our goodness is severely mottled, then you’re sort of amazed life has managed to be as sweet as it is.

You’re grateful for all the institutions our ancestors gave us, like the Constitution and our customs, which shape us to be better than we’d otherwise be. Appreciation becomes the first political virtue and the need to perfect the gifts of others is the first political task.

We live in a capitalist meritocracy that encourages individualism and utilitarianism, ambition and pride. But this society would fall apart if not for another economy, one in which gifts surpass expectations, in which insufficiency is acknowledged and dependence celebrated.

Gratitude is the ability to see and appreciate this other almost magical economy. G. K. Chesterton wrote that “thanks are the highest form of thought, and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder.”

People with grateful dispositions see their efforts grandly but not themselves. Life doesn’t surpass their dreams but it nicely surpasses their expectations.

The How of Pooh? a.k.a. The Vinegar Tasters by Benjamin Hoff, from *The Tao of Pooh*

"You see, Pooh," I said, "a lot of people don't seem to know what Taoism is ..."

"Yes?" said Pooh, blinking his eyes.

"So that's what this chapter is for—to explain things a bit."

"Oh, I see," said Pooh.

"And the easiest way to do that would be for us to go to China for a moment."

"What?" said Pooh, his eyes wide open in amazement. "Right now?"

"Of course. All we need to do is lean back, relax, and there we are."

"Oh, I see," said Pooh.

Let's imagine that we have walked down a narrow street in a large Chinese city and have found a small shop that sells scrolls painted in the classic manner. We go inside and ask to be shown something allegorical—something humorous, perhaps, but with some sort of Timeless Meaning. The shopkeeper smiles. "I have just the thing," he tells us. "A copy of *The Vinegar Tasters!*" He leads us to a large table and unrolls the scroll, placing it down for us to examine. "Excuse me—I must attend to something for a moment," he says, and goes into the back of the shop, leaving us alone with the painting. Although we can see that this is a fairly recent version, we know that the original was painted long ago; just when is uncertain. But by now, the theme of the painting is well known.

We see three men standing around a vat of vinegar. Each has dipped his finger into the vinegar and has tasted it. The expression on each man's face shows his individual reaction. Since the painting is allegorical, we are to understand that these are no ordinary vinegar tasters, but are instead representatives of the "Three Teachings" of China, and that the vinegar they are sampling represents the Essence of Life. The three masters are K'ung Fu-tse (Confucius), Buddha, and Lao-tse, author of the oldest existing book of Taoism. The first has a sour look on his face, the second wears a bitter expression, but the third man is smiling.

To K'ung Fu-tse (kung FOODsuh), life seemed rather sour. He believed that the present was out of step with the past, and that the government of man on earth was out of harmony with the Way of Heaven, the government of the universe. Therefore, he emphasized reverence for the Ancestors, as well as for the ancient rituals and ceremonies in which the emperor, as the Son of Heaven, acted as intermediary between limitless heaven and limited earth. Under Confucianism, the use of precisely measured court music, prescribed steps, actions, and phrases all added up to an extremely complex system of rituals, each used for a particular purpose at a particular time. A saying was recorded about K'ung Fu-tse: "If the mat was not straight, the Master would not sit." This ought to give an indication of the extent to which things were carried out under Confucianism.

To Buddha, the second figure in the painting, life on earth was bitter, filled with attachments and desires that led to suffering. The world was seen as a setter of traps, a generator of illusions, a revolving wheel of pain for all creatures. In order to find peace, the Buddhist considered it necessary to transcend "the world of dust" and reach Nirvana, literally a state of "no wind." Although the essentially optimistic attitude of the Chinese altered Buddhism considerably after it was brought in from its native India, the devout Buddhist often saw the way to Nirvana interrupted all the same by the bitter wind of everyday existence.

To Lao-tse (LAODsuh), the harmony that naturally existed between heaven and earth from the very beginning could be found by anyone at any time, but not by following the rules of the Confucianists. As he stated in his *Tao Te Ching* (DAO DEH JEENG), the "Tao Virtue Book," earth was in essence a reflection of heaven, run by the same laws—not by the laws of men. These laws affected not only the spinning of distant planets, but the activities of the birds in the forest and the fish in the sea. According to Lao-tse, the more man interfered with the natural balance produced and governed by the universal laws, the further away the harmony retreated into the distance. The more forcing, the more trouble. Whether heavy or light, wet or dry, fast or slow, everything had its own nature already within it, which could not be violated without causing difficulties. When abstract and arbitrary rules were imposed from the outside, struggle was inevitable. Only then did life become sour.

To Lao-tse, the world was not a setter of traps but a teacher of valuable lessons. Its lessons needed to be learned, just as its laws needed to be followed; then all would go well. Rather than turn away from "the world of dust," Lao-tse advised others to "join the dust of the world." What he saw operating behind everything in heaven and earth he called Tao (DAO), "the Way." A basic principle of Lao-tse's teaching was that this Way of the Universe could not be adequately described in words, and that it would be insulting both to its unlimited power and to the intelligent human mind to attempt to do so. Still, its nature could be understood, and those who cared the most about it, and the life from which it was inseparable, understood it best.

Over the centuries Lao-tse's classic teachings were developed and divided into philosophical, monastic, and folk religious forms. All of these could be included under the general heading of Taoism. But the basic Taoism that we are concerned with here is simply a particular way of appreciating, learning from, and working with whatever happens in everyday life. From the Taoist point of view, the natural result of this harmonious way of living is happiness. You might say that happy serenity is the most noticeable characteristic of the Taoist personality, and a subtle sense of humor is apparent even in the most profound

Taoist writings, such as the twenty-five-hundred-year-old *Tao Te Ching*. In the writings of Taoism's second major writer, Chuang-tse (JUANGdsuh), quiet laughter seems to bubble up like water from a fountain.

"But what does that have to do with vinegar?" asked Pooh.

"I thought I had explained that," I said. "I don't think so," said Pooh.

"Well, then, I'll explain it now." "That's good," said Pooh.

In the painting, why is Lao-tse smiling? After all, that vinegar that represents life must certainly have an unpleasant taste, as the expressions on the faces of the other two men indicate. But, through working in harmony with life's circumstances, Taoist understanding changes what others may perceive as negative into something positive. From the Taoist point of view, sourness and bitterness come from the interfering and unappreciative mind. Life itself, when understood and utilized for what it is, is sweet. That is the message of *The Vinegar Tasters*.

"Sweet? You mean like honey?" asked Pooh.

"Well, maybe not that sweet," I said. "That would be overdoing it a bit."

"Are we still supposed to be in China?" Pooh asked cautiously.

"No, we're through explaining and now we're back at the writing table."

"Oh."

"Well, we're just in time for something to eat," he added, wandering over to the kitchen cup-board.

The Pooh Way by Benjamin Hoff, from *The Tao of Pooh*

By the time it came to the edge of the Forest the stream had grown up, so that it was almost a river, and, being grown-up, it did not run and jump and sparkle along as it used to do when it was younger, but moved more slowly. For it knew now where it was going, and it said to itself, "There is no hurry. We shall get there some day."

Now we come to what could be called the most characteristic element of Taoism-in-action. In Chinese, it is known as Wu Wei. It is also the most characteristic element of Pooh-in-action. In English, it is not known as much of anything in particular. We believe that it's time that someone noticed it and called it something, so we will call it the Pooh Way.

Literally, Wu Wei means "without doing, causing, or making." But practically speaking, it means without meddlesome, combative, or egotistical effort. It seems rather significant that the character Wei developed from the symbols for a clawing hand and a monkey, since the term Wu Wei means no going against the nature of things; no clever tampering; no Monkeying Around.

The efficiency of Wu Wei is like that of water flowing over and around the rocks in its path—not the mechanical, straight-line approach that usually ends up short-circuiting natural laws, but one that evolves from an inner sensitivity to the natural rhythm of things.

Let's take an example from the writings of Chuang-tse:

At the Gorge of Lu, the great waterfall plunges for thousands of feet, its spray visible for miles. In the churning waters below, no living creature can be seen.

One day, K'ung Fu-tse was standing at a distance from the pool's edge, when he saw an old man being tossed about in the turbulent water. He called to his disciples, and together they ran to rescue the victim. But by the time they reached the water, the old man had climbed out onto the bank and was walking along, singing to himself.

K'ung Fu-tse hurried up to him. "You would have to be a ghost to survive that," he said, "but you seem to be a man, instead. What secret power do you have?"

"Nothing special," the old man replied. "I began to learn while very young, and grew up practicing it. Now I am certain of success. I go down with the water and come up with the water. I follow it and forget myself. I survive because I don't struggle against the water's superior power. That's all."

When we learn to work with our own Inner Nature, and with the natural laws operating around us, we reach the level of Wu Wei. Then we work with the natural order of things and operate on the principle of minimal effort. Since the natural world follows that principle, it does not make mistakes. Mistakes are made—or imagined—by man, the creature with the overloaded Brain who separates himself from the supporting network of natural laws by interfering and trying too hard.

Not like Pooh, the most effortless Bear we've ever seen.

"Just how do you do it, Pooh?" "Do what?" asked Pooh. "Become so Effortless."

"I don't do much of anything," he said.

"But all those things of yours get done." "They just sort of happen," he said.

"Wait a minute. That reminds me of something from the Tao Te Ching," I said, reaching for a book. "Here it is—chapter thirty-seven. Translated, it reads something like, 'Tao does not do, but nothing is not done' "

"That sounds like a Riddle," said Pooh.

"It means that Tao doesn't force or interfere with things, but lets them work in their own way, to produce results naturally. Then whatever needs to be done is done."

"I see," said Pooh.

"In Chinese, the principle would be Wei Wu Wei—"Do Without Doing." From Wei Wu Wei comes Tzu Jan, 'Self So.' That means that things happen by themselves, spontaneously."

"Oh, I see," said Pooh.

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When we learn to work with our own Inner Nature, and with the natural laws operating around us, we reach the level of Wu Wei. Then we work with the natural order of things and operate on the principle of minimal effort. Since the natural world follows that principle, it does not make mistakes. Mistakes are made—or imagined—by man, the creature with the overloaded Brain who separates himself from the supporting network of natural laws by interfering and trying too hard.

When you work with Wu Wei, you put the round peg in the round hole and the square peg in the square hole. No stress, no struggle. Egotistical Desire tries to force the round peg into the square hole and the square peg into the round hole. Cleverness tries to devise craftier ways of making pegs fit where they don't belong. Knowledge tries to figure out why round pegs fit into round holes, but not square holes. Wu Wei doesn't try. It doesn't think about it. It just does it. And when it does, it doesn't appear to do much of anything. But Things Get Done.

When you work with Wu Wei, you have no real accidents. Things may get a little Odd at times, but they work out. You don't have to try very hard to make them work out; you just let them. [...] If you're in tune with The Way Things Work, then they work the way they need to, no matter what you may think about it at the time. Later on you can look back and say, "Oh, now I understand. That had to happen so that those could happen, and those had to happen in order for this to happen..." Then you realize that even if you'd tried to make it all turn out perfectly, you couldn't have done better, and if you'd really tried, you would have made a mess of the whole thing.

Using Wu Wei, you go by circumstances and listen to your own intuition. "This isn't the best time to do this. I'd better go that way." Like that. When you do that sort of thing, people may say you have a Sixth Sense or something. All it really is, though, is being Sensitive to Circumstances. That's just natural. It's only strange when you don't listen.

Break Out Of The Box! by Elizabeth Gilbert, from *The Last American Man*

Eustace, thin and serious, stood at the microphone with his hands in his pockets. After a long moment, he said, "I am a quiet-spoken man, so I am going to have to speak quietly tonight."

The showing and stripping and laughing stopped. The jerky teenagers stared at Eustace Conway, riveted. Just like that—dead silence. I swear it. It was like goddamn To Sir with Love.

"I moved into the woods when I was seventeen years old," Eustace began. "Not much older than you are today . . ." And he talked about his life. Those kids were so transfixed, you could have operated on them and they wouldn't have noticed. Eustace told them about wilderness survival and his adventures, but he also gave his speech about the difference between the world of boxes and the world of circles.

"I live," Eustace said, "in nature, where everything is connected, circular. The seasons are circular. The planet is circular, and so is its passage around the sun. The course of water over the earth is circular, coming down from the sky and circulating through the world to spread life and then evaporating up again. I live in a circular teepee and I build my fire in a circle, and when my loved ones visit me, we sit in a circle and talk. The life cycles of plants and animals are circular. I live outside where I can see this. The ancient people understood that our world is a circle, but we modern people have lost sight of that. I don't live inside buildings, because buildings are dead places where nothing grows, where water doesn't flow, and where life stops. I don't want to live in a dead place. People say that I don't live in the real world, but it's modern Americans who live in a fake world, because they've stepped outside the natural circle of life.

"I saw the circle of life most clearly when I was riding my horse across America and I came across the body of a coyote that had recently died. The animal was mummified from the desert heat, but all around it, in a lush circle, was a small band of fresh green grass. The earth was borrowing the nutrients from the animal and regenerating itself. This wasn't about death, I realized; this was about eternal life. I took the teeth from that coyote and made myself this necklace right here, which always circles my neck, so I'd never forget that lesson.

"Do people live in circles today? No. They live in boxes. They wake up every morning in the box of their bedroom because a box next to them started making beeping noises to tell them it was time to get up. They eat their breakfast out of a box and then they throw that box away into another box. Then they leave the box where they live and get into a box with wheels and drive to work, which is just another big box broken up into lots of little cubicle boxes where a bunch of people spend their days sitting and staring at the computer boxes in front of them. When the day is over, everyone gets into the box with wheels again and goes home to their house boxes and spends the evening staring at the television boxes for entertainment. They get their music from a box, they get their food from a box, they keep their clothing in a box, they live their lives in a box! Does that sound like anybody you know?"

By now the kids were laughing and applauding.

"Break out of the box!" Eustace said. "You don't have to live like this because people tell you it's the only way. You're not handcuffed to your culture! This is not the way humanity lived for thousands and thousands of years, and it is not the only way you can live today!"

Why I Do What I Do by Morgan Hite

I always try to remember not to ask my students where they go to school.

Most of them are in college, and right after they tell me *their* college they want to know where *I* went to school. I have to reveal then that my alma mater was one of those ivy-covered, East Coast institutions of venerable tradition. They inevitably ask the same, incredulous question: "If you don't mind my asking, what are you doing *here*?" It's stated almost as an act of self-protection, a litany against evil. Because, of course, they're thinking, "Why should *I* bust my ass for four years to get through college when this guy went to Harvard and now he just bums around the woods with a bunch of deadbeat kids like me?"

I usually give them some glib answer, like, "This is where those of us who can't handle it wind up." But if they press me further I give them more. They deserve to know. When they go back they will be on the front lines, doing daily combat with the traffic, the crowding, the over stimulation. It is they, not I, who have to face the expectations of parents, the labyrinth of society and business, and the confusion of their brethren. It is a grim place. I would not trade shoes with them.

I have a lot of ideas about why I do what I do, and why this job is great. I'll bet anybody could write down why he or she thinks what they do is a really good thing. I wish they would. We all could only benefit from sharing a little about why we think we do what we do.

I'll give you my view, here from a canyon in Southern Utah, from a rocky alpine cirque in Wyoming, from the inside of a snow cave miles and miles from the nearest plowed road. These are my five favorite ways to think of what I do.

1. I teach people to escape. JRR Tolkien was told once that his books were "escapist," but he insightfully replied that the only people concerned about escape were jailers. I like to think I help people acquire the skills and confidence to get away from it all, from what subtle jailers there may be in our lives, any time they like, and take friends with them.
2. It is good to be out here. It is healthy and virile and all of those good things. I can commune with the mountain gods. I get away from it all and talk with the real powers that be and help others do the same. We look back on civilization from a high mountain and see it for what it is. Clean air and hard work make healthy, free people. This is Real, dealing with weather and terrain and survival. This is what Man lived in for thousands of years. To meet Earth on her own terms is to respect her and we do a lot of meeting out here.
3. I meet impressive people in this world, bold and daring. *Handsomest men and beautifullest women* as William Golding might say, with great senses of humor and incredible storehouses of knowledge – they must be this way, to be ready to deal with anything. We are real souls out here; there are too few of us to get lost in the sauce. Hard work and clean air make honest, generous folk with integrity, and I have a feeling the world was supposed to be this way.
4. I come out here for the castles: the awesome buttes, mountains, mesas, canyons, and valleys that stir the imagination. I commune with all the lost centuries, and stories that never were, at home in rugged places. What better job could one ask for than to live in rugged, beautiful places, be inspired by them and help others do the same?
5. Here I find Peace, a time to reflect and replan my life, and to feel surplus goodness in myself that I want to share with the world.

I do it because there are thousands of people out there itching to be free, to journey to that photograph on their Sierra Club calendar and all that is standing between them and their goal is someone to show them how and reaffirm that they can do it. Someone to say, “Take that risk, live that dream! Life is too short, you may die soon – live now!” I am Coyote out here, summoning the students and the businesspersons who hardly know why or what the call is, and dangerously destabilizing their lives by showing them freedom. I am serving a high cause of democracy.

I do it because it’s good for me, it’s good for you, and it’s good for the greater whole. I do it because pretty few of us grow up in anything akin to hardship anymore and we need hardship to appreciate the basic things in life, like love and beauty and water and warmth. Life can be simple and this is a good place to experience that. We need to be tired and cold and hungry, and then make ourselves a hot meal and go to our bags to realize that life is complete, and how rarely we experience that.

I do it because sometimes things get pretty Real out here and we start making basic honest communications with each other: “I’m alright. How are you?” And it feels good, and we wonder what we’ve been doing in our lives. Because here, we can be the captains of our own ships and chart our own destiny.

The backpacking vacation is always unlike other vacations. When we return, there is at least a little sigh of relief – *we made it*. There is definite risk going out there: we have to find our way; we have to deal with our own injuries. There won’t be anywhere to stop in to ask for help. It’s a risky business. As vacations go, it is more than just a vacation. So it stands to reason that as jobs go, it is more than just a job.

Not On Any Map by Jack Turner, from an interview in *The Sun*

In the mid-1970s I was an assistant philosophy professor at the University of Illinois. I was about thirty years old. I was very unhappy. One day I went to the Lincoln Park Zoo to sneak some meat to the snow leopards, as I did on occasion. It was a crappy day, cloudy and dim and snowing, and I thought to myself: I’m as trapped as these wild cats. I decided that I didn’t want to live my life working indoors. Since then, I’ve worked inside — a forty-hour-a-week, punch-the-time-clock type of job — for only two and a half years total. The rest of the time I’ve been working outside or writing in my cabin.

There was a massive shift in the 1950s and 1960s, a fierce reaction to modern American life that had begun much earlier with Thoreau. Many people of that time — Lew Welch, Edward Abbey, Doug Peacock, Gary Snyder, the translator Red Pine, and others — bailed, as I did, from programs in good schools or from distinguished careers. A lot of these people, including me, found their way to Asia and got involved in Eastern religion and literature. I traveled there in 1974, and by then the hippie trail from Istanbul across the continent had been humming for ten years. People with nothing more than a day pack would head off for three, four, five years to wander the world. All of this had a profound influence on American culture in ways we don’t even understand yet.

My friend Allen Steck, an American climber, was one of the founders and owners of Mountain Travel, now Mountain Travel Sobeck. I wrote to him saying I wanted to go to the Karakoram mountain range [along the borders of China, India, and Pakistan] and visit k2, the world’s second-highest mountain, to take photographs. He wrote back saying he couldn’t pay me anything, but he was leading a trip there in the summer, and I could go as his assistant if I wanted to. I accepted.

It was to be a five-week trek to k2 with 125 porters and 18 clients. We flew in on a military-transport aircraft; there were no roads. Then Allen became ill and had to leave, which meant I was now leading the trek. It was a crash course in Himalayan expeditions.

When I got out a month later, a letter from Allen and a pile of blank traveler’s checks were waiting for me. The letter said I could use the money to scout northern Pakistan and the Hindu Kush mountain range and try to put together a few more treks. I went back north with my liaison officer and another friend to explore the Hindu Kush. There were no banks, no telephones, no telegraphs, no doctors, no roads. I didn’t get out until mid-September. It was one of the most wonderful periods of my life. After that, I told the philosophy department at the University of Illinois to take me off the tenure track.

We believe we make contact with the wild, but this is an illusion. In both the national parks and wilderness areas, we accept a reduced category of experience, a semblance of wild nature, a fake, and no one complains.

Three years ago I gave a talk in Yosemite, and the area around the visitor center was as crowded as anywhere I’ve ever been other than Calcutta. It was literally shoulder to shoulder. People arrive at the park in cars, they wander around in the areas they’ve been funneled to, they look at something without knowing what they’re seeing — maybe a ranger tries to explain it, maybe they read a description — and then they get back in their cars and drive away. Most visitors to Grand Teton National Park never leave their vehicles. Nature is a movie that goes by outside the car window. There’s absolutely no intimacy with it. Intimacy always has to do with the body. It has to do with what you see, what you hear, what you smell, what you touch, what you taste. It’s like sex: you can’t have it abstractly. And you certainly can’t have intimacy with what’s going by the window of a moving car. At best what you’ve experienced is scenery through a window, which is really not much different from looking at a screen. You can’t smell a bear through a television. You can’t look a moose in the eye and know it’s looking right back at you. You certainly don’t have to worry about a moose hurting you.

In my youth I did a lot of skin diving. One time I was ten feet underwater by some undulating eelgrass, and suddenly it opened to reveal a five-foot shark against the sand. That does something to your nervous system. It’s the same when you come across a bear in the wild. And you can have these experiences with people, too. I once ran into a sadhu [a Hindu holy man] way up in the Himalayas. It was sleeting and snowing heavily. He had a long beard and wore nothing but a loincloth. His eyes were huge! I said hello. He nodded. I pointed to the camera on my chest, indicating that I’d like to take a photo of him. He politely asked me not to in perfect English. I replied by saying something incredibly stupid: I asked him where he’d learned English. He said, “From my parents; where’d you learn English?” Wham! That guy was something else. Whether it’s with sharks or bears or sadhus, that type of wham experience shakes your foundations in a way an iPad never will. It has to do with contact. As Thoreau wrote in *The Maine Woods*: “Contact! Contact!” You can’t get contact from a screen.

Wildness is a quality; wilderness is a place. I have never been much interested in the “great wilderness debate,” about what wilderness is and whether we have preserved it. It is now divided into “real” wilderness and legislated wilderness areas. As for the latter, I’m for anything that preserves what remains of the natural world, and if the only way

we can do that is by formally declaring these areas wilderness, then fine. Do it — even if they are tiny, littered with old roads and trails, lacking dominant predators, subject to fire control and constant surveillance, and filled with people carrying iPhones, iPads, and gps's. What I am personally interested in are places that are remote, quiet except for natural sounds, and that have natural wildlife populations and few people. I think it will eventually come down to this: wilderness is a place you can go where there are no other people.

I think employee timecards and everything that follows from them are among the most pernicious things that have ever happened to the modern world. The techniques developed by Frederick Winslow Taylor, the father of scientific management, infected the very beginnings of wildlife biology by stressing the importance of efficiency and the collection of data. An emphasis on these to the exclusion of everything else always leads downhill.

The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and The Washington Post have reported that Google has found its employees are more productive if they actually stop and meditate once in a while. It's also been reported that productivity goes down with open offices. People need some solitude, some privacy, some time to slow down. In our culture that's anathema. We're unnerved by the idleness of Thoreau and Muir, both of whom were censured for not working all the time. Thoreau's critique of American life went much deeper than our mumblings about late capitalism and consumer culture. He would have felt much more at home with those Taoist hermits.

When I taught some courses for the University of Utah, I would take my class out in the national park for eight hours at a stretch. For those eight hours I asked the students to be totally silent. It wasn't formal meditation; we just walked for twenty-five minutes — slowly inching along, doing what Zen Buddhists call walking meditation — and then we sat for twenty-five minutes. Then we walked again. Then we sat again. Finally, at the end, we wrote. Some students said it was like an explosion on the page. About a third of them liked it, a third thought it mildly interesting, and a third hated it. Some of the latter said it was as if ants were crawling all over them.

Getting people to slow down — young people, in particular — is important to me. I'm not saying that anybody needs to formally meditate. A far less loaded word is contemplate. What's going on in your life and your relationships? Think about it. Reflect. Most people don't contemplate anymore. They just go, go, go. Every one of the luminaries from the American conservation movement — Thoreau, Muir, Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, Margaret and Olaus Murie, E.O. Wilson, and many others — spent a lot of time alone on the seashore, or in a canoe on a lake, or in the forest, or in the mountains, or digging in the soil, and always in silence. I don't think the conservation movement is going to get anywhere if we have a citizenry that no longer wants to be alone and experience silence.

There is no need now to encourage most people. There was when Muir started leading large groups of the public into the Sierra Nevada to acquaint them with the values of wilderness. Now the values claimed for such areas are well-known. The problem is that the people who go there don't care about the wildness; they care about the other human values of our culture: money, gear, family, friends, having fun. Most people who do go into the natural world are going for recreation, not contemplation. They use their beloved stuff — skis, fishing rods, backpacks, rafts — in the playground of their choice. Many are in the wilderness business, servicing clients, often hordes of them, at thousands of dollars a whack. These visitors do not have to confront the loneliness, existential fear, silence, and indifference of the wild, nor do they contemplate what these things mean for a human life.

If you have no passion or desire for exploration, then you probably won't take an unknown path. If you do, your path will be treacherous, if only because it is unknown. Thoreau was opposed to the State, but his ultimate enemy was conformity to the known. The less conformity you have in your life, the greater the likelihood that your path will be dangerous. And I say: The more digital your life is, the more you have conformed. It's safe to stay home and watch reruns of Star Trek and fiddle with Facebook and track digital gossip, but it's also shallow and lifeless.

There's no obstacle blocking us from real contact with nature. Students will sometimes say to me, "I want to have a wilderness experience, but I don't have the money to go to Tibet. What should I do?" I tell them to get a pair of cheap snowshoes and a plastic sled and then drive up to the Tetons in the middle of winter and head north for eighty miles into Yellowstone, alone. You'll have a wilderness experience real fast that way. Sometimes people will ask me how to become a hermit. Look, the Escalante in Utah and many other places in the desert have huge alcoves. Find a side canyon that branches into more side canyons. In many of them there's water trickling along the bottom. Live in the alcove. Drink the water. You don't need a tent. Spend a week there. Nobody's going to bother you. Nobody's even going to know you're there.

It's important to note that there are many levels of solitude. Thoreau was often not completely alone at Walden Pond. His cabin is little more than an hour's walk from Concord. He wrote about the Irish workers living in shacks nearby. He went home in the afternoon to have tea with his sisters and to visit his mother. He walked the beaches of Cape Cod with a friend and went to the Maine woods with Native American guides. The amount of time that he spent in complete solitude was minuscule compared to the isolation of the Taoist and Chan and Tibetan hermits, and yet you can see how vital it was to the development of his thinking.

When the British first visited the Rongbuk Monastery on the north side of Everest in 1924, they found 450 monks living there, plus hundreds of meditation caves, all of this at over sixteen thousand feet in one of the most hostile environments in the world. We don't have a hermetic tradition like that in America. It's contrary to the Puritan spirit of work, work, work! You're supposed to spend your life working, not sitting in a cave. My conservationist and environmentalist friends often take me to task for advocating wilderness and hermetic experiences. "But what about saving the world, Jack?" they say. "You should spend your time fighting climate change, saving the wolves and the redwoods, tweeting, blogging, and doing all that you can." I reply with a very simple statement: I think a hermit can live a perfectly good and full human life. People recoil at that response. The Puritan ethic and Taylor's ideals of management and efficiency are eating away at us. Solitude is seen as something to be feared, something that's not "productive."

In the first chapter of Walden Thoreau says, more or less: Don't be too good. "If I repent of anything it is very likely to be my good behavior." And Abbey says that the problem with his environmentalist friends is that they're all obsessed with doing more in the fight for conservation. Too often this comes at the loss of a week spent alone in the desert or a week "gone fishing." The root experience is lost for the sake of the branches, which will eventually die.

By and large I think that environmental nonprofits are not very productive or successful. They take people's money, fill out forms, go to meetings, write letters, and talk a lot. There are a lot of problems with putting faith in them, as well as orienting environmental and conservation education toward them. At the University of Utah there was a student

who wanted to spend her life defending wolves. I asked her how much time she'd spent with wolves. She told me she'd never seen a wolf. That's a problem.

I do support environmental nonprofits that are doing something concrete. I love Earthjustice because they sue environmental offenders. I support Greenpeace. But I also hope that the people working for those organizations don't lose perspective. I hope that they spend some time in the water with the whales and dolphins, that they get out in the Yellowstone backcountry and backpack for a week now and then, preferably in a horrible storm.

Children in the Woods by Barry Lopez

When I was a child growing up in the San Fernando Valley in California, a trip into Los Angeles was special. The sensation of movement from a rural area into an urban one was sharp. On one of these charged occasions, walking down a sidewalk with my mother, I stopped suddenly, caught by a pattern of sunlight trapped in a spiraling imperfection in a windowpane. A stranger, an elderly woman in a cloth coat and a dark hat, spoke out spontaneously, saying how remarkable it is that children notice these things.

I have never forgotten the texture of this incident. Whenever I recall it I am moved not so much by any sense of my young self but by a sense of responsibility toward children, knowing how acutely I was affected in that moment by that woman's words. The effect, for all I know, has lasted a lifetime.

Now, years later, I live in a rain forest in western Oregon, on the banks of a mountain river in relatively undisturbed country, surrounded by 150-foot-tall Douglas firs, delicate deerhead orchids, and clearings where wild berries grow. White-footed mice and mule deer, mink and coyote move through here. My wife and I do not have children, but children we know, or children whose parents we are close to, are often here. They always want to go into the woods. And I wonder what to tell them.

In the beginning, years ago, I think I said too much. I spoke with an encyclopedic knowledge of the names of plants or the names of birds passing through in season. Gradually I came to say less. After a while the only words I spoke, beyond answering a question or calling attention quickly to the slight difference between a sprig of red cedar and a sprig of incense cedar, were to elucidate single objects.

I remember once finding a fragment of a raccoon's jaw in an alder thicket. I sat down alongside the two children with me and encouraged them to find out who this was—with only the three teeth still intact in a piece of the animal's maxilla to guide them. The teeth told by their shape and placement what this animal ate. By a kind of visual extrapolation its size became clear. There were other clues, immediately present, which told, with what I could add of climate and terrain, how this animal lived, how its broken jaw came to be lying here. Raccoon, they surmised. And tiny tooth marks along the bone's broken edge told of a mouse's hunger for calcium.

We set the jaw back and went on.

If I had known more about raccoons, finer points of osteology, we might have guessed more: say, whether it was male or female. But what we deduced was all we needed. Hours later, the maxilla, lost behind us in the detritus of the forest floor, continued to effervesce. It was tied faintly to all else we spoke of that afternoon.

In speaking with children who might one day take a permanent interest in natural history—as writers, as scientists, as filmmakers, as anthropologists—I have sensed that an extrapolation from a single fragment of the whole is the most invigorating experience I can share with them. I think children know that nearly anyone can learn the names of things; the impression made on them at this level is fleet ing. What takes a lifetime to learn, they comprehend, is the existence and substance of myriad relationships: it is these relationships, not the things I themselves, that ultimately hold the human imagination.

The brightest children, it has often struck me, are fascinated by metaphor with what is shown in the set of relationships bearing on the raccoon, for example, to be quite beyond the raccoon. In the end, you are trying to make clear to them that everything found at the edge of one's senses—the high note of the winter wren, the thick perfume of propolis that drifts downwind from spring willows, the brightness of wood chips scattered by beaver—that all this fits together. The indestructibility of these associations conveys a sense of permanence that nurtures the heart, that cripples one of the most insidious of human anxieties, the one that says, you do not belong here, you are unnecessary.

Whenever I walk with a child, I think how much I have seen disappear in my own life. What will there be for this person when he is my age? If he senses something ineffable in the landscape, will I know enough to encourage it?—to somehow show him that, yes, when people talk about violent death, spiritual exhilaration, compassion, futility, final causes, they are drawing on forty thousand years of human meditation on this—as we embrace Douglas firs, or stand by a river across whose undulating back we skip stones, or dig out a camas bulb, biting down into a taste so much wilder than last night's potatoes.

The most moving look I ever saw from a child in the woods was on a mud bar by the footprints of a heron. We were on our knees, making handprints beside the footprints. You could feel the creek vibrating in the silt and sand. The sun beat down heavily on our hair. Our shoes were soaking wet. The look said: I did not know until now that I needed someone much older to confirm this, the feeling I have of life here. I can now grow older, knowing it need never be lost. The quickest door to open in the woods for a child is the one that leads to the smallest room, by knowing the name each thing is called. The door that leads to the cathedral is marked by a hesitancy to speak at all, rather to encourage by example a sharpness of the senses. If one speaks it should only be to say, as well as one can, how wonderfully all this fits together, to indicate what a long, fierce peace can derive from this knowledge.

The Man Who Planted Trees by Jean Giono

Many years ago, I set out on a walking tour high in the Alps, a region quite unknown to travelers where ancient mountains thrust down into Provence. The trek began on barren moors twelve or thirteen hundred meters above sea level through land that was bleak and monotonous. Nothing grew there but wild lavender. My route led across the region at its widest point, and after hiking for three days, I found myself in a wasteland desolate beyond description. I made camp near the remains of an abandoned village. The day before, my water supply had run out and I had to find some. The cluster of houses, although they were in ruins reminding me of an old wasps nest, made me think that once there must have been a fountain, perhaps a well.

There was indeed a fountain, but it was dry.

The roofless houses, eaten away by wind and rain and the chapel with its crumbling belfry stood arranged like houses and churches in a living village, but here, life had vanished. It was a sunny, cloudless June day, but over these highlands blew a fierce, insufferable wind. Growling through the skeletons of the houses, it sounded like a wild beast disturbed while feeding on its prey. I had to move camp.

After five hours of walking, I still had found no water, and I could see nothing that gave me hope of finding any. Everywhere, I came upon the same drought, the same course weeds.

In the distance, something caught my eye: a thin, dark shape that I took for a tree stump. But just in case, I walked towards it. It was a shepherd. And beside him, resting on the barren ground, lay about thirty sheep. He let me drink from his gourd, and presently, he led me to his sheep fold in a hollow in the plain. He drew water – and very excellent water it was too – from a very deep natural well over which he had rigged a simple windlass.

The man spoke very little, often the way with people who live alone, but he appeared sure of himself, and confident in his assurance. It all seemed somehow strange in this barren land. He lived not in a hut, but in a real house: a stone house whose walls clearly showed how his own labor had repaired the ruin it had once been. Its roof was solid and strong, and the wind on its tiles sounded like the sea upon the seashore. Inside, it was neat and tidy: dishes washed, floor swept, shotgun oiled, his soup simmered over the fire. And I noticed that he was freshly shaved, that all his buttons were firmly sewed on, and that all his clothes were darned with that meticulous care that makes the mend invisible.

He shared his soup with me. When I offered him my tobacco pipe, he told me that he did not smoke. The dog, silent like his master, was friendly without fawning. It had been agreed that I would spend the night. The nearest village was still almost two day's walk away.

Villages in this region were few and far between, and I knew well what they were like. Four or five of them were scattered over the slopes of these highlands, each one at the very end of a car track among copses of white oaks. They were inhabited by charcoal burners. The living was poor, and families huddled together in a climate very harsh both in summer and winter found their struggle for survival made more bitter by their isolation. There was no relief.

Their constant longing to escape became a crazy ambition. Endlessly, the men carted their charcoal to town then returned home. Even the most stable characters crack under the constant grind. The woman seethed with resentment and there was rivalry in everything: the sale of charcoal and the church pew. There were rivals in virtue and rivals in vice and the battle royal between virtue and vice raged incessantly. And always, there was the wind, the ever-present wind constantly grating on the nerves. There were epidemics of suicide and many cases of madness, nearly always ending in murder.

The shepherd who did not smoke went to fetch a little sack and onto the table he emptied a pile of acorns. He began to examine them very carefully, one by one, separating the good from the bad. I sat, smoking my pipe. I offered to help, but he told me it was his work. And indeed, seeing how very carefully he carried out his task, I did not insist. That was the only time we spoke.

When he had set aside enough acorns, he divided them into piles of ten. As he did this, he discard the smaller ones or those that were cracked, for now, he was examining them very very closely. When finally there lay before him a hundred perfect acorns, he stopped and we went to our beds.

Being with this man brought a great sense of peace.

The following morning, I asked him if I might stay on and rest for the day. He found that quite natural, or to be more precise, he gave me the impression that nothing could upset him. The day of rest was not absolutely necessary, but I was intrigued, and I wanted to learn more about him.

He let the sheep out of the pen and led them to their grazing. Before he went, he took the little bag of carefully chosen acorns and put them into a pail of water to soak. I noticed that for a walking staff, he carried an iron rod about as thick as my thumb and as high as my shoulder.

Pretending to take a leisurely stroll, I followed him at a distance, but keeping on a parallel path with him. The pasture for his sheep was down in a dell. Leaving his dog in charge of the little flock, he began to climb towards me where I was standing. I feared he was coming to reproach me. Not at all. It happened to be on his way, and he invited me to go with him if I had nothing better to do. He was going a little farther on to the top of the hill.

When we reached his destination, he began to drive his iron staff into the ground. He made a hole, dropped in an acorn, and filled in the hole. He was planting oak trees. I asked him if he owned the land. He said no. Did he know who owned it? He did not. He thought it was common land, parish property, or perhaps it belonged to people who did not care about it. That did not concern him. And so with infinite care, he planted his hundred acorns. After the midday meal, he began to sort out more of his acorns. I suppose I must have been quite insistent with my questions, because he answered me.

For three years, he had been planting trees in that desolate country. He had planted one hundred thousand. Of the hundred thousand, twenty thousand had come up. Of these, he still expected to lose half, either to rodents or to any of the unpredictable things which only providence can account for. That left ten thousand oaks to grow on this tract of land where before, there was nothing.

It was then that I wondered about the man's age. He was clearly more than fifty. Fifty-five, he told me. His name was Elzéard Bouffier. He had owned a farm down in the lowlands. It had been his life. He had lost his only son, and then his wife, and had withdrawn into his solitude where he was content to live quietly with his lambs and his dog. It was his opinion that the land was dying for lack of trees. He added that having nothing very important to do himself, he had resolved to remedy the state of affairs.

I was young and only thought of the future as it affected me and my happiness. So I told him that in thirty years, those ten thousand oaks would be magnificent. He answered quite simply that if god granted him life, in thirty years, he would have planted so many more that these ten thousand would be like a drop of water in the sea.

Already, he was studying the growth of beech trees and had a nursery of seedlings grown from beech nuts. They were quite beautiful. He was also thinking of birches for the dales where, he told me, there was moisture just below the surface of the soil.

The next day, we parted.

The following year came the first world war, in which I was engaged for five years. An infantryman was hardly likely to have trees on his mind.

After demobilization, I found myself the possessor of a small gratuity and a great desire to breathe pure air. This was my only thought when I set off once more on the road to the barren land. The country had not changed, however, in the distance, beyond the deserted village, I noticed a sort of grayish mist that lay on the hilltops like a carpet. The shepherd who planted trees had been in my mind since the day before. "Ten thousand oak trees," I thought to myself, "really need a lot of space." I had seen so many people die in those five years, it was easy to imagine that Elzéard Bouffier, too, was dead. Especially since at twenty, we think of men of fifty as ancient with nothing left to do but die.

He was not dead. He had changed his occupation. He had only four sheep left, but now, he had over a hundred hives of bees. He had given up sheep because they threatened his young trees. The war had not disturbed him, and he had calmly continued his planting.

The oaks of 1910 were now ten years old and taller than either of us. It was such an impressive sight, I was struck down. And as he never said a word, we spent the whole day in silence walking through his forest. It was in three sections and measured eleven kilometers long and three kilometers at its widest. When I reminded myself that all this was the work of the hand and soul of one man with no mechanical help, it seemed to me that men could be as effective as god in tasks other than destruction.

He had followed his dream, and beech trees as high as my shoulder and stretching as far as the eye could see were witness to it. The oaks were strong and past being at the mercy of rodents. As for providence, she would have needed a cyclone to destroy this creation of man.

He showed me handsome groves of five-year-old birches, planted in 1915, the year I was fighting at the Battle of Verdun. He had set them out in all the hollows where he guessed, and rightly, there was moisture near the surface. They were like young children, tender, yet firm and confident.

And creation, it seemed, had just followed in a natural sequence. He hadn't worried about it. Resolutely, he had gone about his simple task. On the way down through the village, I saw streams flowing with water which in living memory had always been dry. This was truly the most impressive effect of creation's natural cycle that I had ever seen. Long ago, these brooks had been full of water. Among the miserable villages I mentioned before, some were built on sites of ancient Roman villages, and archeologists, digging in the ruins, had found fishhooks, whereas in the 20th century, cisterns were needed to ensure even a modest supply of water.

The wind had scattered seeds too, and as the water reappeared, so did willow trees, reeds, meadows, gardens, flowers, and a reason for living. But the change had come about so gradually that it was simply taken for granted. Of course, hunters who climbed these heights in search of hares and wild boar had noticed the sudden appearance of little trees, but had put it down to some caprice of nature. That is why no one had meddled with the work of the shepherd; if they had suspected it was man's work, they would have interfered. But who would even think of him? Who in the villages or among the authorities could ever have imagined such constant, magnificent generosity?

Each year from 1920 on, I paid a visit to Elzéard Bouffier. I never saw him lose heart, nor was he ever deterred. And often, god knows, it must have seemed that heaven itself was against him. I never tried to imagine his frustrations, but to achieve such an end, he must have had to overcome many obstacles. For such passion to succeed, he must surely have fought and conquered despair. We must remember that this exceptional man had worked in utter solitude, solitude to complete that towards the end of his life, he lost the habit of speech. Or, perhaps, he saw no need for it.

In 1933, he was visited by an astonished forester who notified him of an order that lighting fires outdoors was forbidden for fear of endangering this natural forest. It was the first time, the forester told him naively, that he had ever seen a forest grow of its own accord. In 1935, a whole delegation from the authorities arrived to look at the natural forest. There was a high-ranking official from the forestry department, an elected member of parliament, technical experts. And there was a great deal of talk. It was decided something must be done. Fortunately, nobody did anything except for the one good thing: the forest was placed under government protection and charcoal burning was prohibited. For it was really quite impossible not to be enchanted by the beauty of these young healthy trees, and they had even managed to cast their spell over the member of parliament.

One of the senior foresters in the delegation was a friend of mine, and I explained the mystery to him. The following week, we both set out to find Elzéard Bouffier. He was hard at work about twenty kilometers from where the official inspection had taken place. I was right about my friend the forester; he was able to appreciate all he saw. I offered the eggs I had brought as a present. We all shared our lunch and spent several hours in silent contemplation of the landscape.

The slopes we had climbed on our way up were covered with tall trees four times our own height. I remembered how it had looked in 1913: desolate. But quiet, regular work, brisk mountain air, the simple life, and above all, peace of mind, had endowed this old man with almost awe-inspiring health. He was one of god's athletes. I wondered how many more hectare he would cover with trees. Before we took our leave, my friend made one small suggestion about the kinds of tree which seemed to suit the soil here. He did not press the point, "for the simple reason," he told me afterwards, "that this man knows more about it than I do." The idea must have been turning over in his mind, for after we had walked for an hour he added, "he knows more about it than anyone else in the world. He's found a perfect way to be happy." Thanks to this forester, not only the forest, but the happiness of Elzéard Bouffier were protected.

The only serious danger to his work occurred during the second world war: cars being powered by wood-burning generators. There was never enough wood. So, cutting was begun among the oaks of 1910, but they were so far from transportation routes that the whole enterprise proved financially unsound. It was abandoned.

The shepherd knew nothing of all this. He was thirty kilometers away, quietly going about his business, ignoring the war of '39 just as he had ignored it in 1914. I saw Elzéard Bouffier for the last time in June 1945. He was then eighty-seven. Again I had set out on the road to those barren moors, but now, in spite of the dislocation left behind by the war, there was a bus that ran from the Durance valley up into the mountains. I decided it must be because of this relatively speedy means of transport that I could not recognize the places where my walks used to lead me. It took the name of a village to reassure me that I really was in that region that had once been desolate and abandoned.

The bus dropped me at Vergon. In 1913, this hamlet of no more than a dozen houses had three inhabitants: wild creatures who hated each other who set snares to make a living. They were people without hope. Now everything was different, even the air itself. Instead of the harsh, dry winds of the past, there was a gentle breeze full of fragrance. From the mountaintops came a sound like rushing water. It was the wind rustling through the forest. And then, even more astonishing, I heard another sound of water. I saw that they had built a fountain that was splashing merrily. And beside it,

what I found most touching, and someone had planted a linden tree: the perfect symbol of rebirth. Moreover, Vergon showed signs of the kind of labor that only hope can inspire. So hope had been restored.

Ruins had been cleared, and crumbling walls torn down. The new houses, freshly rough-cast, stood in kitchen gardens where flowers and vegetables grew in orderly confusion. Roses and cabbages, snapdragons and leeks, celery and anemones. It had become a place where one would want to live.

From this point, I continued on foot. The war had not been over long enough for life to reach full bloom, but Lazarus had emerged from the tomb. On the lower slopes of the mountain, I could see small fields of young barley and rye, and down in the narrow valleys, the meadows were green.

It has taken only eight years since then for the whole countryside to glow with health and prosperity. Where I had seen ruins in 1913, there now stand clean, freshly plastered farmhouses: evidence of happy, comfortable lives. Dry springs fed by snows and rains now conserved by the forest have begun to flow again. In the maple groves, each farm has its fountain, brimming over onto carpets of fresh mint.

Bit by bit, the villages have been rebuilt. People have come to settle from down in the plains where land is expensive. They have brought youth, life, and the spirit of adventure. On the roads, one meets people glowing with health, and boys and girls laughing as they enjoy their rustic pleasures.

Counting those who lived here before, quite changed by their light and gentle surroundings, and including the newcomers, more than ten thousand people owe their happiness to Elzéard Bouffier.

When I think that one man, one body, and one spirit was enough to turn a desert into the land of Canaan, I find after all that a man's destiny can be truly wonderful. But when I consider the passionate determination, the unfailing generosity of spirit it took to achieve this end, I am filled with admiration for this old, unlearned peasant who was able to complete a task worthy of god.

Elzéard Bouffier died peacefully in Banon in 1947.

Good, Wild, Sacred by Gary Snyder, from *The Practice of the Wild*

Weeding Out the Wild

My family and I have been living for twenty years now on land in the Sierra Nevada range of northern California. These ridges and slopes are somewhat "wild" and not particularly "good." The original people here, the Nisenan (or Southern Maidu) were almost entirely displaced or destroyed during the first few decades of the gold rush. It seems there is no one left to teach us which places in this landscape were once felt to be "sacred"—though with time and attention, I think we will be able to feel and find them again.

Wild land, good land, sacred land. At home working on our mountain farmstead, in town at political meetings, and farther afield studying the problems of indigenous peoples, I hear such terms emerging. By examining these three categories perhaps we can get some insights into the problems of rural habitation, subsistence living, wilderness preservation, and Third and Fourth World resistance to the appetites of industrial civilization.

Our idea of Good Land comes from agriculture. Here "good" (as in good soil) is narrowed to mean land productive of a small range of favored cultivars, and thus it favors the opposite of "wild": the cultivated. To raise a crop you fight the bugs, shoo the birds, and pull the weeds. The wild that keeps flying, creeping, burrowing in—is sheer frustration. Yet wild nature cannot be called unproductive, and no plant in the almost endless mosaics of micro and macro communities is ever out of place. For hunting and gathering peoples for whom that whole spread of richness, the wild natural system, is also their economy, a cultivated patch of land might seem bizarre and definitely not good, at least at first. Gathering people draw on the whole field, ranging widely daily. Agricultural people live by a map constructed of highly productive nodes (cleared fields) connected by lines (trails through the scary forest)—a beginning of "linear."

For preagricultural people the sites considered sacred and given special care were of course wild. In early agrarian civilizations, ritually cultivated land or special temple fields were sometimes considered sacred. The fertility religions of those times were not necessarily rejoicing in the fertility of all nature, but were focusing on their own harvest. The idea of cultivation was conceptually extended to describe a kind of training in social forms that guarantees membership in an elite class. By the metaphor of "spiritual cultivation" a holy man has weeded out the wild from his nature. This is agrarian theology. But weeding out the wild from the natures of members of the Bos and Sus clans—cattle and pigs—gradually changed animals which are intelligent and alert in the wild into sluggish meat-making machines.

Certain groves from the original forest lingered on into classical times as "shrines." They were viewed with much ambivalence by the rulers from the metropole. They survived because the people who worked the land still half-heard the call of the old ways, and lore that predated agriculture was still whispered around. The kings of Israel began to cut down the sacred groves, and the Christians finished the job. The idea that "wild" might also be "sacred" returned to the Occident only with the Romantic movement. This nineteenth-century rediscovery of wild nature is a complex European phenomenon—a reaction against formalistic rationalism and enlightened despotism that invoked feeling, instinct, new nationalisms, and a sentimentalized folk culture. It is only from very old place-centered cultures that we hear of sacred groves, sacred land, in a context of genuine belief and practice. Part of that context is the tradition of the commons: "good" land becomes private property; the wild and the sacred are shared.

Throughout the world the original inhabitants of desert, jungle, and forest are facing relentless waves of incursions into their remotest territories. These lands, whether by treaty or by default, were left in their use because the dominant society thought the arctic tundra or arid desert or jungle forest "no good." Native people everywhere are now conducting an underprivileged and underfunded fight against unimaginably wealthy corporations to resist logging or oil exploration or uranium mining on their own land. They persist in these struggles not just because it has always been their home, but also because some places in it are sacred to them. This last aspect makes them struggle desperately to resist the powerful temptation to sell out—to take the cash and accept relocation. And sometimes the temptations and confusion are too great, and they do surrender and leave.

Thus some very cogent and current political questions surround the traditional religious use of certain spots. I was at the University of Montana in the spring of 1982 on a program with Russell Means, the American Indian Movement founder and activist, who was trying to get support for the Yellow Thunder Camp of Lakota and other Indian people of the Black Hills. Thunder Camp was on traditional tribal land that was under Forest Service jurisdiction at the time. These

people wanted to block further expansion of mining into the Black Hills. Their argument was that the particular place they were reoccupying is not only ancestral but sacred.

During his term in office California Governor Jerry Brown created the Native American Heritage Commission specifically for California Indians, and a number of elders were charged with the task of locating and protecting sacred sites and native graves in California. This was done partly to head off confrontations between native people versus landowners or public land managers who start developments on what is now considered their property. The trouble often involves traditional grave sites. It was a sensitive move, and though barely comprehensible to the white voters, it sent a ripple of appreciation through all the native communities. Although the white Christian founders of the United States were probably not considering American Indian beliefs when they guaranteed freedom of religion, some court decisions over the years have given support to certain Native American churches. The connection of religion to land, however, has been resisted by the dominant culture and the courts. This ancient aspect of religious worship remains virtually incomprehensible to Euro-Americans. Indeed it might: if even some small bits of land are considered sacred, then they are forever not for sale and not for taxing. This is a deep threat to the assumptions of an endlessly expansive materialist economy.

Waterholes

In the hunting and gathering way of life, the whole territory of a given group is fairly equally experienced by everyone. Those wild and sacred spots have many uses. There are places where women go for seclusion, places where the bodies of the dead are taken, and spots where young men and women are called for special instruction. Such places are numinous, loaded with meaning and power. The memories of such spots are very long. Nanao Sakaki, John Stokes, and I were in Australia in the fall of 1981 at the invitation of the Aboriginal Arts Board doing some teaching, poetry readings, and workshops with both aboriginal leaders and children. Much of the time we were in the central Australian desert south and west of Alice Springs, first into Pitjantjara tribal territory and then three hundred miles northwest into Pintubi lands. The aboriginal people in the central desert all still speak their languages. Their religion is fairly intact, and most young men are still initiated at fourteen, even the ones who go to high school at Alice Springs. They leave the high school for a year and are taken into the bush to learn bush ways on foot, to master the lore of landscapes and plants and animals, and finally to undergo initiation.

We were traveling by truck over dirt track west from Alice Springs in the company of a Pintubi elder named Jimmy Tjungurrayi. As we rolled along the dusty road, sitting back in the bed of a pickup, he began to speak very rapidly to me. He was talking about a mountain over there, telling me a story about some wallabies that came to that mountain in the dreamtime and got into some kind of mischief with some lizard girls. He had hardly finished that and he started in on another story about another hill over here and another story over there. I couldn't keep up. I realized after about half an hour of this that these were tales to be told while walking, and that I was experiencing a speeded-up version of what might be leisurely told over several days of foot travel. Mr. Tjungurrayi felt graciously compelled to share a body of lore with me by virtue of the simple fact that I was there.

So remember a time when you journeyed on foot over hundreds or miles, walking fast and often traveling at night, traveling night-long and napping in the acacia shade during the day, and these stories were told to you as you went. In your travels with an older person you were given a map you could memorize, full of lore and song, and also practical information. Off by yourself you could sing those songs to bring yourself back. And you could maybe travel to a place that you'd never been, steering only by songs you had learned.

We made camp at a waterhole called Ipili and rendezvoused with a number of Pintubi people from the surrounding desert country. The Ipili waterhole is about a yard across, six inches deep, in a little swale of bush full of finch. People camp a quarter mile away. It's the only waterhole that stays full through drought years in tens of thousands of square miles. A place kept by custom open to all. Until late at night Jimmy and the other old men sat around a small thornbrush fire and sang a cycle of journey songs, walking through a space of desert in imagination and music. They kept a steady rhythmic beat to the song by clapping two boomerangs together. They stopped between songs and would hum a phrase or two and then argue a bit about the words and then start again. One would defer to another and let him start. Jimmy explained to me that they have so many cycles of journey songs they can't quite remember them all, and they have to be constantly rehearsing.

Each night they'd start the evening saying, "What will we sing?" and get a reply like "Let's sing the walk up to Darwin." They'd start out and argue and sing and clap their way along through it. It was during the full moon period: a few clouds would sail and trail in the cool light and mild desert wind. I had learned that the elders liked black tea, and several times a night I'd make a pot right at the fire, with lots of white sugar, the way they wanted it. The singers would stop when they felt like it. I'd ask Jimmy, "How far did you get tonight?" He'd say, "Well, we got two-thirds of the way to Darwin." This can be seen as one example of the many ways landscape, myth, and information were braided together in preliterate societies.

One day driving near Ipili we stopped the truck and Jimmy and the three other elderly gentlemen got out and he said, "We'll take you to see a sacred place here. I guess you're old enough." They turned to the boys and told them to stay behind. As we climbed the bedrock hill these ordinarily cheery and loud-talking aboriginal men began to drop their voices. As we got higher up they were speaking whispers and their whole manner changed. One said almost inaudibly, "Now we are coming close/" Then they got on their hands and knees and crawled. We crawled up the last two hundred feet then over a little rise into a small basin of broken and oddly shaped rocks. They whispered to us with respect and awe of what was there. Then we all backed away. We got back down the hill and at a certain point stood and walked. At another point voices rose. Back at the truck, everybody was talking loud again and no more mention was made of the sacred place.

Very powerful. Very much in mind. We learned later that it was indeed a place where young men were taken for ceremony.

I traveled by pickup truck along hundreds of miles of rough dirt tracks and hiked into the mountainous and rocky country where the roads stopped. I was being led to special places. There were large unique boulders, each face and facet a surprise. There was the sudden opening out of a hidden steep defile where two cliffs meet with just a little sandbed between, and some green bushes, some parrots calling. We dropped down cliffs off a mesa into a waterhole you wouldn't guess was there, where a thirty-foot blade of rock stands on end, balancing. Each of these spots was out of the ordinary, fantastic even, and sometimes rich with life. Often there were pictographs in the vicinity. They were described as teaching

spots and some were "dreaming spots" for certain totem ancestors, well established in song and story over tens of thousands of square miles.

"Dreaming" or "dreamtime" refers to a time of fluidity, shapeshifting, interspecies conversation and intersexuality, radically creative moves, whole landscapes being altered. It is often taken to be a "mythical past," but it is not really in any time. We might as well say it is right now. It is the mode of the eternal moment of creating, of being, as contrasted with the mode of cause and effect in time. Time is the realm where people mainly live and within which history, evolution, and progress are imagined to take place. Dogen gave a difficult and playful talk on the resolution of these two modes early in the winter of 1240. It is called "Time/Being."

In Australian lore the totem dreaming place is first of all special to the people of that totem, who sometimes make pilgrimages there. Second, it is sacred (say) to the honey-ants which actually live there—there are hundreds of thousands of them. Third, it's like a little Platonic cave of ideal honey-antness, maybe the creation spot for all honey-ants. It mysteriously connects the essence of honey-antness with the archetypes of the human psyche and makes bridges between humanity, the ants, and the desert. The honey-ant place is in stories, dances, songs, and it is a real place which also happens to be optimum habitat for a world of ants. Or take a green parrot dreaming place: the stories will tell of the tracks of the ancestors going across the landscape and stopping at that dreaming place, and it is truly a perfect place for parrots. All this is a radically different way of expressing what science says, as well as another set of metaphors for the teachings of the Hua-yen or the Avatamsaka Sutra.

This sacredness implies a sense of optimal habitat for certain kin-folk that we have out there—the wallabies, red kangaroo, bush turkeys, lizards. Geoffrey Blainey (1976, 202) says, "The land itself was their chapel and their shrines were hills and creeks and their religious relics were animals, plants, and birds. Thus the migrations of aboriginals, though spurred by economic need, were also always pilgrimages." Good (productive of much life), wild (naturally), and sacred were one.

This way of life, frail and battered as it is, still exists. Now it is threatened by Japanese and other uranium mining projects, large-scale copper mining, and petroleum exploration. The issue of sacredness has become very political—so much so that the Australian Bureau of Aboriginal Affairs has hired some bilingual anthropologists and bush people to work with elders of the different tribes to try and identify sacred sites and map them. There has been much hope that the Australian government would act in good faith and declare certain areas off-limits before any exploratory team even gets near them. This effort is spurred by the fact that there have already been some confrontations in the Kimberly region over oil exploration, as at Nincoomba. The local native people stood their ground, making human lines in front of bulldozers and drilling rigs, and the media coverage of this resistance won over some of the Australian public. Since in Australia a landowner's mineral rights are always reserved to "The Crown," even somebody's ranch might be subject to mining. So to consider sacred land a special category, even in theory, is an advanced move. But it's shaky. A "registered site" near Alice Springs was bulldozed supposedly on the instructions of a government land minister, and this was in the relatively benign federal jurisdiction!

Shrines

The original inhabitants of Japan, the Ainu, had a way of speaking of the sacredness and specialness of a whole ecosystem. Their term *iworu* means "field" with implications of watershed region, plant and animal communities, and spirit force—the powers behind the masks or armor, *hayakpe*, of the various beings. The *iworu* of the Great Brown Bear would be the mountain habitat—and connected lowland valley system—in which the bear is dominant, and it would mean the myth and spirit world of the bear as well. The *iworu* of salmon would be the lower watersheds with all their tributaries (and the associated plant communities), and on out to sea, extending into oceanic realms only guessed at, where the salmon do their weaving. The bear field, the deer field, the salmon field, the Orca field.

In the Ainu world a few human houses are in a valley by a little river. The doorways all face east. In the center of each house is the firepit. The sunshine streams through the eastern door each morning to touch the fire, and they say the sun goddess is visiting her sister the fire goddess in the firepit. One should not walk through sun-beams that shine on the fire—that would be breaking their contact. Food is often foraged in the local area, but some of the creatures come down from the inner mountains and up from the deeps of the sea. The animal or fish (or plant) that allows itself to be killed or gathered, and then enters the house to be consumed, is called a "visitor," *marapto*.

The master of the sea is Orca, the Killer Whale; the master of the inner mountains is Bear. Bear sends his friends the deer down to visit humans. Orca sends his friends the salmon up the streams. When they arrive their "armor is broken"—they are killed—enabling them to shake off their fur or scale coats and step out as invisible spirit beings. They are then delighted by witnessing the human entertainments—sake and music. (They love music.) The people sing songs to them and eat their flesh. Having enjoyed their visit they return to the deep sea or to the inner mountains and report: "We had a wonderful time with the human beings." The others are then prompted themselves to go on visits. Thus if the humans do not neglect proper hospitality—music and manners—when entertaining their deer or salmon or wild plant *marapto*, the beings will be reborn and return over and over. This is a sort of spiritual game management.

Modern Japan is another sort of example: a successful industrialized country with remnants of sacred landscape consciousness still in-tact. There are Shinto shrines throughout the Japanese islands. Shinto is "the way of the spirits." *Kami* are a formless "power" present in everything to some degree but intensified in strength and presence in certain outstanding objects such as large curiously twisted boulders, very old trees, or thundering misty waterfalls. Anomalies and curiosities of the landscape are all signs of *kami*—spirit-power, presence, shape of mind, energy. The greatest of *kami* centers is Mt. Fuji. The name Fuji is now thought to derive from that of the Ainu Fire Goddess, the only one who stands above and can scold and correct the *kimun kamui*, mountain deity, Bear. All of Mt. Fuji is a Shinto shrine, the largest in the nation, from well below timberline all the way to the summit. (Many place names left behind by the displaced Ainu are still current in Japan.)

Shinto got a bad name during the 1930s and World War II because the Japanese had created an artificial "State Shinto" in the service of militarism and nationalism. It and folk Shinto became confused in the minds of many Euro-Americans. Long before the rise of any state, the islands of Japan were studded with little shrines—*jinja* and *omiya*—that were part of neolithic village culture. Even in the midst of the onrushing industrial energy of the current system, shrine lands still remain untouchable. It would make your hair stand up to see how a Japanese developer will take bulldozers to a nice slope of old pines and level it for a new town. When the New Island was created in Kobe harbor to make Kobe the second busiest port in the world (after Rotterdam), it was raised from the bay bottom with dirt obtained by shaving down

a whole range of hills ten miles south of the city. This was barged to the site for twelve years—a steady stream of barges carrying dirt off giant conveyor belts that totally removed soil two rows of hills back from the coast. The newly leveled area became a housing development. In industrial Japan it's not that "nothing is sacred," it's that the sacred is sacred and that's all that's sacred.

We are grateful for these microscopic traces of salvaged land in Japan because the rule in shrines is that (away from the buildings and paths) you never cut anything, never maintain anything, never clear or thin anything. No hunting, no fishing, no thinning, no burning, no stopping of burning: leaving us a very few stands of ancient forests right inside the cities. One can walk into a little jinja and be in the presence of an 800-year-old Cryptomeria (Sugi) tree. Without the shrines we wouldn't know so well what the original Japanese forest might have been. But such compartmentalization is not healthy: in this patriarchal model some land is saved, like a virgin priestess, some is overworked endlessly, like a wife, and some is brutally publicly reshaped, like an exuberant girl declared promiscuous and punished. Good, wild, and sacred couldn't be farther apart.

Europe and the Middle East were once studded with similar shrines. They were even spoken of as "sacred groves." It may be that in the remote past the most sacred spot in all of Europe was under the Pyrenees, where the great cave paintings are. I suspect they were part of a religious center thirty thousand years ago, where animals were "conceived" underground. Perhaps a dreaming place. Maybe a thought that the animals' secret hearts were thereby hidden under the earth, a way of keeping them from becoming extinct. But many species did become extinct, some even before the era of cave paintings was over. Many more have become so during the last two thousand years, victims of civilization. Occidental expansion brought an acceleration of habitat degradation to the whole globe, but it is interesting to note that even before that expansion such political and economic processes were already well under way. The destruction of species, the impoverishment and enslavement of rural people, and the persecution of nature-worship traditions has long been part of Europe.

So the French and English explorers of North America, the early fur traders, had no teachings from the societies they left behind that would urge them to look on wild nature with reverence. They did find much that was awe-inspiring, and some expressed it well. Some even joined the Indians and became people of the New World. These few almost forgotten exceptions were overwhelmed by trading entrepreneurs and, later, settlers. Yet all through American history there were some who kept joining the Indians in fact or in style—and some, even in the eighteenth century, who realized that the world they saw would shrink away. In the Far East, or Europe, the notion of an ancient forest or original prairie and all the splendid creatures that might live there is now a tale told from the neolithic.

In the western United States it was the world of our grandmothers. For many of us today this loss is a source of grief. For Native Americans this was a loss of land, traditional life, and the sources of their culture.

True Nature

Thoreau set out to "make the soil say beans" while living by his pond. To cause land to be productive according to our own notion is not evil. But we must also ask: what does mother nature do best when left to her own long strategies? This comes to asking what the full potential vegetation of a spot would be. For all land, however wasted and exploited, if left to nature (zi-ran, the self-so), will arrive at a point of balance between biological productivity and stability. A sophisticated post industrial "future primitive" agriculture will be asking: is there any way we can go with rather than against nature's tendency? Go toward, say, in New England, deciduous hardwoods—or, as where I live, a mix of pine and oak with kitkitdizze ground cover? Doing horticulture, agriculture, or forestry with the grain rather than against it would be in the human interest and not just for the long run.

Wes Jackson's research suggests that a diverse and perennial-plant-based agriculture holds real promise for sustaining the locally appropriate communities of the future. This is acknowledging that the source of fertility ultimately is the "wild." It has been said that "good soil is good because of the wildness in it." How could this be granted by a victorious king dividing up his spoils? The fatuity of "Spanish land grants" and "Real Estate." The power that gives us good land is none other than Gaia herself, the whole network. It might be that almost all civilized agriculture has been on the wrong path from the beginning, relying as it does on the monoculture of annuals. In *New Roots for Agriculture* Wes Jackson develops this argument. I concur with his view, knowing that it raises even larger questions about civilization itself, a critique I have worked at elsewhere. Suffice it to say that the sorts of economic and social organization we invoke when we say "civilization" can no longer be automatically accepted as useful models. To scrutinize civilization is not, however, to negate all the meanings of cultivation.

The word cultivation, harking to etymologies of till and wheel about, generally implies a movement away from natural process. In agriculture it is a matter of "arresting succession, establishing monoculture." Applied on the spiritual plane this has meant austerities, obedience to religious authority, long bookish scholarship, or in some traditions a dualistic devotionism (sharply distinguishing "creature" and "creator") and an overriding image of divinity being "centralized," a distant and singular point of perfection to aim at. The efforts entailed in such a spiritual practice are sometimes a sort of war against nature—placing the human over the animal and the spiritual over the human. The most sophisticated modern variety of hierarchical spirituality is the work of Father Teilhard de Chardin, who claims a special evolutionary spiritual destiny for humanity under the name of higher consciousness. Some of the most extreme of these Spiritual Darwinists would willingly leave the rest of earth-bound animal and plant life behind to enter an off-the-planet realm transcending biology. The anthropocentrism of some new age thinkers is countered by the radical critique of the Deep Ecology movement.

On the social level cultivation has meant the absorption of language, lore, and manners that guarantee membership in the elite class and is to be contrasted with "vernacular manners." The truth is, of course, that the etiquette of villagers or nomads (Charles Doughty having black coffee with his Bedouin hosts in Arabia Deserta) can be as elaborate, complex, and arbitrary as that of any city-dweller.

Yet there is such a thing as training. The world moves by complementaries of young and old, foolish and wise, ripe or green, raw or cooked. Animals too learn self-discipline and caution in the face of desire and availability. There is learning and training that goes with the grain of things as well as against it. In early Chinese Daoism "training" did not mean to cultivate the wildness out of oneself, but to do away with arbitrary and delusive conditioning. Zhuang-zi seems to be saying that all social values are false and generate self-serving ego. Buddhism takes a middle path—allowing that greed, hatred, and ignorance are intrinsic to ego, but that ego itself is a reflex of ignorance and delusion that comes from not seeing who we "truly" are. Organized society can inflame, pander to, or exploit these weaknesses, or it can encourage

generosity, kindness, trust. There is a reason, therefore, to be engaged in a politics of virtue. Still it is a matter of individual character as to whether or not one makes a little private vow to work for compassion and insight or overlooks this possibility. The day-to-day actualization of the vow calls for practice: for a training that helps us realize our own true nature, and nature.

Greed exposes the foolish person or the foolish chicken alike to the ever-watchful hawk of the food-web and to early impermanence. Preliterate hunting and gathering cultures were highly trained and lived well by virtue of keen observation and good manners; as noted earlier, stinginess was the worst of vices. We also know that early economies often were more manipulative of the environment than is commonly realized. The people of mesolithic Britain selectively cleared or burned in the valley of the Thames as a way to encourage the growth of hazel. An almost invisible system of nut and fruit tree growing was once practiced in the jungles of Guatemala. A certain kind of training and culture can be grounded in the wild.

We can all agree: there is a problem with the self-seeking human ego. Is it a mirror of the wild and of nature? I think not: for civilization itself is ego gone to seed and institutionalized in the form of the State, both Eastern and Western. It is not nature-as-chaos which threatens us, but the State's presumption that it has created order. Also there is an almost self-congratulatory ignorance of the natural world that is pervasive in Euro-American business, political, and religious circles. Nature is orderly. That which appears to be chaotic in nature is only a more complex kind of order.

Now we can rethink what sacred land might be. For a people of an old culture, all their mutually owned territory holds numinous life and spirit. Certain places are perceived to be of high spiritual density because of plant or animal habitat intensities, or associations with legend, or connections with human totemic ancestry, or because of geomorphological anomaly, or some combination of qualities. These places are gates through which one can—it would be said—more easily be touched by a larger-than-human, larger-than-personal, view.

Concern for the environment and the fate of the earth is spreading over the world. In Asia environmentalism is perceived foremost as a movement concerned with health—and seeing the condition of their air and water, this is to be expected. In the Western Hemisphere we have similar problems. But here we are blessed with a bit of remaining wilderness, a heritage to be preserved for all the people of the world. In the Western Hemisphere we have only the tiniest number of buildings that can be called temples or shrines. The temples of our hemisphere will be some of the planet's remaining wilderness areas. When we enter them on foot we can sense that the kami or (Maidu) kukini are still in force here. They have become the refuge of the Mountain Lions, Mountain Sheep, and Grizzlies—three North American animals which were found throughout the lower hills and plains in prewhite times. The rocky icy grandeur of the high country—and the rich shadowy bird and fish-streaked southern swamps—remind us of the overarching wild systems that nourish us all and underwrite the industrial economy. In the sterile beauty of mountain snowfields and glaciers begin the little streams that water the agribusiness fields of the great Central Valley of California. The wilderness pilgrim's step-by-step breath-by-breath walk up a trail, into those snowfields, carrying all on the back, is so ancient a set of gestures as to bring a profound sense of body-mind joy.

Not just backpackers, of course. The same happens to those who sail in the ocean, kayak fjords or rivers, tend a garden, peel garlic, even sit on a meditation cushion. The point is to make intimate contact with the real world, real self. Sacred refers to that which helps take us (not only human beings) out of our little selves into the whole mountains-and-rivers mandala universe. Inspiration, exaltation, and insight do not end when one steps outside the doors of the church. The wilderness as a temple is only a beginning. One should not dwell in the specialness of the extraordinary experience nor hope to leave the political quagmire behind to enter a perpetual state of heightened insight. The best purpose of such studies and hikes is to be able to come back to the lowlands and see all the land about us, agricultural, suburban, urban, as part of the same territory—never totally ruined, never completely unnatural. It can be restored, and humans could live in considerable numbers on much of it. Great Brown Bear is walking with us, Salmon swimming upstream with us, as we stroll a city street.

To return to my own situation: the land my family and I live on in the Sierra Nevada of California is "barely good" from an economic standpoint. With soil amendments, much labor, and the development of ponds for holding water through the dry season, it is producing a few vegetables and some good apples. It is better as forest: through the millennia it has excelled at growing oak and pine. I guess I should admit that it's better left wild. Most of it is being "managed for wild" right now—the pines are getting large and some of the oaks were growing here before a Euro-American set foot anywhere in California. The deer and all the other animals move through with the exception of Grizzly Bear and wolf; they are temporarily not in residence in California. We will someday bring them back.

These foothill ridges are not striking in any special way, no postcard scenery, but the deer are so at home here I think it might be a "deer field." And the fact that my neighbors and I and all of our children have learned so much by taking our place in these Sierra foothills—logged-over land now come back, burned-over land recovering, considered worthless for decades—begins to make this land a teacher to us. It is the place on earth we work with, struggle with, and where we stick out the summers and winters. It has shown us a little of its beauty.

And sacred? One could indulge in a bit of woo-woo and say, yes, there are newly discovered sacred places in our reinhabited landscape. I know my children (like kids everywhere) have some secret spots in the woods. There is a local hill where many people walk for the view, the broad night sky, moon-viewing, and to blow a conch at dawn on Bodhi Day. There are miles of mined-over gravels where we have held ceremonies to apologize for the stripping of trees and soil and to help speed the plant-succession recovery. There are some deep groves where people got married.

Even this much connection with the place is enough to inspire the local community to hold on: renewed gold mining and stepped-up logging press in on us. People volunteer to be on committees to study the mining proposals, critique the environmental impact reports, challenge the sloppy assumptions of the corporations, and stand up to certain county officials who would sell out the inhabitants and hand over the whole area to any glamorous project. It is hard, unpaid, frustrating work for people who already have to work full time to support their families. The same work goes on with forestry issues—exposing the scandalous favoritism shown the timber industry by our nearby national forest, as its managers try to pacify the public with sweet words and frivolous statistics. Any lightly populated area with "resources" is exploited like a Third World country, even within the United States. We are defending our own space, and we are trying to

protect the commons. More than the logic of self-interest inspires this: a true and selfless love of the land is the source of the undaunted spirit of my neighbors.

There's no rush about calling things sacred. I think we should be patient, and give the land a lot of time to tell us or the people of the future. The cry of a Flicker, the funny urgent chatter of a Gray Squirrel, the acorn whack on a barn roof—are signs enough.

Mosquito by Craig Childs

He stumbled as if he'd been shot. His plate and food spilled on the ground. I ran to him and grabbed his shoulders. He was in pain. His face was obscured by mosquitoes. They were all somehow inside of his heat net.

"Oh my God," I whispered.

He sputtered, his eyes wet from frustration. "I can't do this anymore," he said, then madly pawed at his face, crushing the insects against his skin.

We had pushed our canoe on to the Yukon River not long after the ice breakup several weeks ago. That was at the town of Whitehorse, in the Yukon Territory of Canada, where we had great aspirations for this expedition. Todd Robertson and I were now traveling north to the Arctic Circle, planning to cover a thousand miles in forty-six days. We had just got the bad news yesterday at the town of Carmacks where we stopped after two hundred miles to restock a few things. People there said the mosquitoes never had been worse. It's the flood, they said. And the early warmth this year and then no cold snap in May to kill the first wave of the creatures. Couldn't be a worse year to be out in the wilderness.

Well, they added, there was that one time, back in the fifties. Then nobody said anything because they were either too young to remember, or they remembered the mosquitoes back in the fifties and didn't want to talk about it.

Ignorance had been bliss until Carmacks. We knew that there were those before us who had floated the river and the knowledge gave us comfort. People had been coming down the Yukon for thousands of years and somehow they had dealt with the mosquitoes. We were good, strong people then. Certainly we could endure as well as anyone. We pulled head nets tight, wore gloves, kidded each other, and tried to live as best we could.

It was all over now. We knew the truth, the truth that we had every reason in the world to lose our minds. A record flood swallowed the forest, and great mats of trees surged down the river. Long spruce poles javelined into the river bottom and breached the surface, vaulting against the sky. There were times that the flood stole all of the shoreline. We paddled into the dark timber looking for land, for camp. Weaving between drowned trees, we found our camp as far back as we could get. Unfortunately it was in the musty thickness where mosquitoes thrive like backstreet thugs. Tie the canoe to a tree and deal with it. Todd was teetering on the brink of insanity, just about to go. I let loose of his shoulders and stepped back as he wrestled with his head. Eight hundred miles remained.

What we were dealing with was a genius of sensory organs, a nightmare insect the will find you anywhere you hide. Of any creature this size, the mosquito has the most complex mechanical wiring known. Fifteen thousand neurons reside in the antennae region alone. The sensory organs of the head are arranged like clockwork. Electron-microscope examination reveals interconnected rods and chambers, pleated dishes and prongs and plates. It looks like a science fiction world of satellite dishes and receiver towers. These take the mechanical and chemical environment and translate it into a tactical array of electrical impulses to the mosquito's brain, a brain the size of a pinprick in a piece of paper.

If a mosquito is released in still air it will come directly to you even if you are standing on hundred feet away. Through the air, the mosquito senses the carbon dioxide of your breath, lactic acid from your skin, traces of acids emitted by skin bacteria, and the humidity and heat of your body. If there is a slight breeze, a mosquito may be able to locate you from across the length of a football field. If there is a strong wind, your signals are broken and scattered and the mosquito can rarely find the source from a distance.

It was windy on a shoreline evening. A strong wind, twenty miles per hour, came down the Yukon and pounded our camp. We were both working on dinner in the midnight sun, coaxing the stove to light. The mosquitoes were excited by the weather, coming in fast, piercing skin, and becoming gravid with our blood in a matter of seconds. They were able to fight the wind by clustering in the leeward side of our bodies. There, they rode the turbulence, hundreds of them massed just within reach. I flailed and dropped the stove. It was an outrage that they were using me as a windbreak. The mosquitoes flocked back into position before I could gather pieces of the stove again. I screamed at them, muscles tightening at my neck.

Margaret Murie, who came down this river into the Yukon Flats in 1927, wrote in her book *Two in the Far North*, "And there is no escaping the mosquitoes." We are about to enter the flats. There, the Yukon sweeps over the Arctic Circle and expands to a width of about twenty miles, riddled with tens of thousands of islands, lakes, and sloughs. This is the center of the world for mosquitoes.

A fisherman came to our island on a motorized skiff. He unloaded a pile of gear and introduced himself. He lived down-river, but he had to come up here to build an elaborate salmon net. The mosquitoes were making it impossible at home; he needed a bare island with a decent breeze so that he could at least concentrate. I've been living here since 1976," he said, "and haven't had to use bug dope until now." A few hundred miles ago I talked to a Dawson historian named Dick North who told me that it was definitely the worst since 1965 or 1966, but he put the real date back to some horrible, indefinable year in the fifties. I told him that I'd heard of that year.

In the name of science, two Canadian researchers once walked into this arctic frenzy wearing only shorts. They stumbled back to shelter and counted swollen welts on each other's body. Nine thousand bites per minute, they figured. With each bite taking five microliters of blood, half of a human's blood supply would be lost within two hours. You were dead long before then. If not from volume-loss shock, then from insanity.

Human blood is not high quality. Isoleucine, an amino acid required for egg production, is deficient in humans, so for maximum egg-making a mosquito is far better off seeking a moose. But with the numbers of mosquitoes versus the numbers of animals in the Arctic, it has become a feeding frenzy and whatever blood one can get will have to do. And the Arctic has the greatest concentration of mosquitoes in the world.

Blood is strictly for eggs, so the blood-sucking habit belongs to females alone. It is the males who avoid death-by-slapping and all associated risks of attacking a host. It is the males who must merely join in a buzzing column and wait for a female gravid with stolen blood to pass.

A tuning fork vibrating at about four hundred to six hundred cycles per second will instantly send male mosquitoes into a mating posture. This is the pitch of a female's flight noise, the pitch that will echo in the bowl of your ear when one slips in while you are trying to sleep. It is about eighty-five decibels from a couple centimeters away, nearly equivalent to the backup warning signal on an industrial bulldozer. The frequency of this buzz mounts as a female becomes engorged with blood, trying to hover with the increased weight. Higher frequencies propel males into delirium, so they flock to a blood-filled female with enthusiasm. The sound is not as meaty as the drone of a bee or a fly, but far more sinister.

We did have our own last-ditch defense on this river. It was in the dry-box, down in the corner, triple-wrapped in plastic. If we ever needed it, we knew where it was. It was 100 percent N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide, a toxic chemical concocted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in the forties. Commonly, it is called deet. It keeps mosquitoes away when slathered on skin. The bottle tipped over during a run down a rapid several weeks ago and deet oozed from under the lid. It melted through all layers of plastic and began to corrode a hole into the industrial strength, hard plastic dry-box. Since then, we hesitated to use it.

Deet works. It turns skin so toxic that mosquitoes have no wish to poison themselves on it. They hover in maddened droves but fail to land. The problem is that this stuff that melted our dry-box quickly enters the bloodstream from the skin. The first published report of brain damage from deet came in 1961. Following several weeks of deet use, six young girls developed toxic encephalopathy and suffered convulsions. One girl died. Mostly, the effects were neurological: headaches, dizziness, slurred speech, and confusion. You could also get a good dose of nausea and abdominal pains. In the arctic on a year like this, the trade-offs between deet and mosquitoes were nearly equal. Agony versus agony.

Otherwise, it was head nets and gloves. At the town of Eagle, Alaska, I met a biological technician for Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve. His name was Ira Saiger, from Maryland. He had stopped smashing hundreds of mosquitoes with single slaps and instead took a more ethical approach. He killed them one at a time by crushing them in his hand as they flew by. His record was then 151 in a row without a single miss. He complained that in the field mosquitoes were violating the space between his gloves and sleeves, leaving a swollen wristband of bites. He wrapped duct tape around his forearm and found that although mosquitoes could pierce canvas and neoprene, they could not pierce tape. After weeks of this, his skin reacted allergically to the tape and broke out in boils. It was a difficult decision, he told me, but he finally opted to halt the use of duct tape, and the mosquitoes feasted on his wounds.

They excel at finding tight places in clothing. Knees and shoulders pushed against clothes as I moved and that was where they congregated. Usually, they all broke through at the same time and the stabbing heat more than once caused me to flail and scream like a madman.

Blood, for a mosquito, is a delicacy. They otherwise feed on the nectar of flowers. Lewis Nielsen, a scientist who has worked extensively with mosquitoes, found pollen grains of over thirty flowering plant species clinging to a mosquito. Flowers such as the bog orchid that grow in the tundra are dependent on mosquitoes for pollination. Nielsen has suggested that these bloodsucking vermin are much more necessary for the prosperity of wildflowers than we would like to admit.

Flowers aside, I have little love for mosquitoes. Blood was streaked along the inner wall of my tent. To get to bed I had to take a running start. A hundred yards would do and in that final crash, flinging the zipper, then slamming it closed, about thirty mosquitoes adhered to my body and entered with me. I spent the next hour killing them, smashing their bodies against the nylon wall.

I took pleasure in loitering at the mosquito screen on the front of my tent. I rubbed a place with my finger and instantly a mound of mosquitoes accumulated on the spot. They jabbed their tiny proboscis mouths through the mesh and I grabbed them. With a silent pluck, I removed the organs and grinned. They died, of course, losing the working ends of their heads. They clung to the mesh for a moment and fell. Never had I felt such brutal joy. Never had I wished such an end to any creature. But I did it, over and over, gathering a handful of proboscis threads, mumbling to myself with satisfaction. Todd shouted at me from his tent and I stifled my laughter.

If you have ever noticed that you are being eaten alive by mosquitoes while the person next to you is unaffected, there is a reason. In an experiment in Tanzania, three volunteers slept in open tents with mosquito traps. It quickly became apparent that one of the people did not attract nearly the number of mosquitoes that the others had. The researchers concluded that it was a difference in odors causing the imbalance. Sweat, especially from below the waist, mainly from the groin area, attracts mosquitoes, as do volatile substances produced by skin bacteria. Some people stink more than others. The degree of the stink, subtleties we may never comprehend with our noses, is like a field of wildflowers to a mosquito. Different types of smells, or at least stimulants, emitted from a body either tell the mosquito what type of blood you have or enhance the mosquito's ability to track you down.

Host selection also comes down to size, coloration, age, and sex. Mosquitoes are more likely to go for a man than a woman, an adult than a child, a person wearing black than white, and someone who is physically large. Jay Keystone, writing for the Tropical Disease Unit at the University of Toronto, concluded that "a large person with an irresistible odour, especially a man huffing and puffing while jogging in dark-coloured shorts through a mosquito-infested area, is likely to be invited for dinner—unfortunately, to be the main course."

On a warm day, when my body does not stand out so sharply against the background temperature, if I keep my breathing slow and keep movements to a minimum, I have my best luck with mosquitoes. When they come in numbers, though, it takes Herculean will, which I do not have, in order to breathe slowly and keep movements to a minimum. The more mosquitoes come, the faster I move and the harder I breathe. This attracts even more mosquitoes, which makes me slap and jump and breathe rapidly. More mosquitoes come. The circle grows ever tighter.

When a mosquito's array of sensors has found you, there are only two things that will stop it: death or satiation. Stretch muscles encircle its gut and until they are pushed to the limit by blood, the host-seeking receptors will not be disabled. Meaning, until it has your blood, a mosquito is unable to stay away from you, even if it wants to. The insect is compulsive in the worst of ways. In cases where stretch muscles have been surgically severed, mosquitoes have inhaled blood until their bodies popped open. Flicking a half-filled mosquito off your arm will not rid you of her. Nor will it work to brush her away from your ear. Nor will it help to kill her companions in hopes that she will fear you. Once she has you imprinted into her brain, she will not stop until those muscles are tightened like a belt around the waist of a sumo wrestler.

When she has your blood and is clear of your swatting hand, she will lumber with her load to a landing space and process the goods. Eggs are bathed in the pilfered blood for several days. Water, nitrogen, and hemoglobin are separated and eliminated. The remaining pulp of proteins is broken into amino acids by digestive enzymes and what remains is pure energy for the growth of eggs. Up to one hundred thirty eggs in one mosquito. Without blood, on nectar alone, a mosquito may be able to produce a mere two or three eggs.

I have a theory. If you kill more than one hundred thirty or so mosquitoes for every one that makes off with your blood, it is no longer feasible for the species to seek you as a host. Swatting only ten or fifteen will not be enough. You must kill them all. Do this for the rest of your life, never let down your guard. Teach your children, friends, and neighbors to do it. Pass the word on, and after one hundred thousand years, about thirty thousand human generations, evolutionary adaptation should kick in and mosquitoes will stop biting humans. The numbers are tough, you will have to be vigilant.

It was late at night when we arrived at the village of Beaver. Perhaps it was one or two in the morning and we dragged our canoe up the dirt ramp. Red strips of salmon hung from wooden drying racks. Chained sled dogs barked and licked as we came by and ran our fingers through their coarse hair. Beaver was a metropolis of mosquitoes. All twelve arctic species were here at once.

There was an old man at the ramp. His eyes were moist and sunken. He was an Athabaskan Indian and although I once believed the natives had found a way to deal with mosquitoes, I since found that we are no different. Under his arm he carried a spray can of Raid. Raid is not a repellent, but a full-blown insecticide. Cockroach and ant killer. He shook it and sprayed his face. Then noting that I was being tormented by mosquitoes, offered it to me. I politely turned him down with a shake of my tired.

He showed Todd and me through the village, around the poles upon which great moose antlers were mounted. We laughed with him and talked about life in the north as the three of us swiped and swung at the air. He pointed to a building a wooden shack.

"You want to stay here tonight?" he asked. "Feel at home, please."

We all looked at the cabin from there. A darkness of mosquitoes hung over it. They swarmed out of holes in the walls. I could hear them. Todd and I glanced at each other.

"We should be heading downriver," Todd said to him. "But thank you, it's a kind offer."

"Where downriver?" the man asked as he shook the can again and sprayed the back of his neck.

"I don't know," I shrugged. "Just somewhere away from these damned mosquitoes."

The old man chuckled at my delusion and walked away.

Do we really love our land? by David James Duncan

What do people mean when they speak of "love of the land?" Most Americans claim to feel such a love.

Most Americans also move, on average, every four years. Is this the behavior of true land lovers?

In James Galvin's "The Meadow," a man named Lyle falls in love with a single high-mountain meadow in Colorado, moves into a cabin at meadow's edge, and stays there for 50 years.

Near the end of this half-century meadow-man relationship, we see what true love of land does to human behavior: "The way people watch television while they eat - looking up to the TV and down to take a bite and back up - that's how Lyle watches the meadow out the south window while he eats his breakfast.

"He's hooked on the plot and doesn't want to miss anything. He looks out over the rim of his cup as he sips."

To pawn off a true love for new love every four years is not love at all. True land love is a romance.

In the company of the ground we cherish, we can't tear our eyes away, don't want to be anywhere else, don't need anyone else. We want to know our loved land in nuance and depth, want to serve and preserve and give to and receive from it.

We watch it over the rim of our cup as we sip.

Sometimes love of land is palpable, as with Lyle and his meadow, John Muir and his Sierras, Wendell Berry and his Kentucky soil. But when we seek to hone in on our own land and love, the loves of Galvin, Muir and Berry can't help us. What helps is finding for ourselves what Lyle found for Lyle: the place we can't tear our eyes from, the plot that won't let us go.

For me these past 40 years, that place and plot has been rivers. And it was obvious from the start.

When I was a toddler living in a dehydrated Portland suburb, I took a garden hose to a sloping flower bed every summer morn and built my own little rivers. When I grew old enough to bicycle, I rode to real ones.

When I grew old enough to move to one, I did. I'm living by one now. Why? The farmer Paul Gruchow writes:

"To inhabit a place means literally to have made it a habit, to have learned how to wear a place like a familiar garment, like the garments of sanctity that nuns once wore. The word habit, in its now-dim original form, means to own. We own places not because we possess the deeds to them but because they have entered the continuum of our lives."

I consciously chose a life of rivers, words and contemplation over, among other things, any real possibility of a large income, because rivers, words and contemplation are the nouns that have most vividly invaded my life. I've made it my habit, my wearable habit, to walk aimlessly along in water as often as I can.

I used to call these walks "fishing trips." For diplomatic purposes among those scared of pagans - or worse, mystics - I still do.

But I long ago realized that these aimless waterwalks show me, more than anything else I do, how to inhabit and wear my chosen home.

I've spent thousands of days now, in the waders I call my "portable sweat lodge" simply walking in water. I possess no deed to any river I've strolled. Yet I possess no friend or family member with whom I've spent more time than I've spent in rivers.

And I dare say that, in their hard-to-describe wild way, rivers have befriended me in return. They're very cool in their friendships, incapable of sentimentality or preferential treatment, and would always as soon drown as coddle you.

Yet if you touch a river's skin with the least tip of your finger, it reconfigures everything it was doing in instantaneous response. Is there a better name than friend for something this ready to answer your touch?

On a recent waterwalk near my Western Montana home, I stumbled upon two Americans engaged in a "love of the land" so passionate that I instantly felt like a voyeur. Like Lyle, though, I couldn't stop watching.

I'd been fishing for cutthroat, the fishing was good, and I was in Idaho mountains 700 river miles from the Pacific. As I strolled through a glide as clear as air, though, my heart and brain did simultaneous somersaults at the sight of two fish easily 15 times the size of the trout I'd been happily catching.

They were hard to accept as real.

One moment this water held no life forms larger than trout, sculpins, clusters of caddis flies. The next it housed two beings the size of my kids.

Where had they come from? The answer sounds like a fairy tale: the far reaches of the sea. How had they arrived? Another fairy tale: by swimming against one of the most powerful rivers on Earth and past eight deadly dams, all the way up from the Pacific.

Why had they done this? Another wonder: These colored stones and clear currents, so high and far from the sea, once gave them life. So now they'd become mountain climbers, returning home at the certain cost of their lives, to create tiny silver offspring.

What does it mean to truly love one's land? Is it still possible in the age of you name it - the Happy Meal, the Viagra shill, the Jerry Manson, Marilyn Stern, Howard Falwell Show - to form a hallowed bond to a small piece of Earth, leave that bond behind in your outward-bound youth, but later decide to fight, with all your adult might, to reclaim it?

I slipped to my knees in the water behind two spawning chinook salmon to try to find out.

The current swirled round half of me and all of the chinook, coming in small uneven surges that rocked my body. It felt like riding a quiet horse. The salmon moved in rhythm with the same horse.

Since they faced upstream, I turned that way, too. Mountains veered down toward the river, their timbered ridges freshly dusted with snow. A dipping sun glowed like a salmon egg in the canyon haze before us.

I noticed scars on the female's tail, saw the fresh-dug excavation beneath her belly: the redd. Seven hundred miles from the ocean that fed and protected her, she'd turned her body into a shovel and dug, in the very bone of this planet, a home for offspring she could only feel inside her - offspring she would not live long enough to see.

What does it mean to love one's land or one's children?

Suddenly the male eased in front, turned on his side, and milt melted down into the nest of stones. Feeling the horselike rhythm of the river now, I blushed.

This was definitely the rhythm of a lovemaking. But watching the two huge fish circle the redd, tending and touching their stone nest but only incidentally touching one another, I was struck by the truth: These salmon were not making love to each other. They were making love to the land and water itself.

I looked upstream, saw the mountains veering down toward the water. The current flowing past us was the melting snow, the gravel beneath the broken body, of those same mountains. The salmon were making love to the mountains and the snow.

I couldn't stop watching, couldn't get unhooked from the plot. Till darkness fell, I watched. To 700 miles of river, to the mountains on both sides, the salmon just kept making love.

There is a fire in water. There's an invisible flame, hidden in water, that creates not heat but life.

I felt the flame run through and past us. And I was fed, I was sated, I'd had all the fire and fish I needed when at last I rose from the river, thanked salmon, sea and mountains, and set out for home.

Thinking Like a Mountain by Aldo Leopold

A deep chesty bawl echoes from rimrock to rimrock, rolls down the mountain, and fades into the far blackness of the night. It is an outburst of wild defiant sorrow, and of contempt for all the adversities of the world. Every living thing (and perhaps many a dead one as well) pays heed to that call. To the deer it is a reminder of the way of all flesh, to the pine a forecast of midnight scuffles and of blood upon the snow, to the coyote a promise of gleanings to come, to the cowman a threat of red ink at the bank, to the hunter a challenge of fang against bullet. Yet behind these obvious and immediate hopes and fears there lies a deeper meaning, known only to the mountain itself. Only the mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of a wolf.

Those unable to decipher the hidden meaning know nevertheless that it is there, for it is felt in all wolf country, and distinguishes that country from all other land. It tingles in the spine of all who hear wolves by night, or who scan their tracks by day. Even without sight or sound of wolf, it is implicit in a hundred small events: the midnight whinny of a pack horse, the rattle of rolling rocks, the bound of a fleeing deer, the way shadows lie under the spruces. Only the ineducable tyro can fail to sense the presence or absence of wolves, or the fact that mountains have a secret opinion about them.

My own conviction on this score dates from the day I saw a wolf die. We were eating lunch on a high rimrock, at the foot of which a turbulent river elbowed its way. We saw what we thought was a doe fording the torrent, her breast awash in white water. When she climbed the bank toward us and shook out her tail, we realized our error: it was a wolf. A half-dozen others, evidently grown pups, sprang from the willows and all joined in a welcoming melee of wagging tails and playful maulings. What was literally a pile of wolves writhed and tumbled in the center of an open flat at the foot of our rimrock.

In those days we had never heard of passing up a chance to kill a wolf. In a second we were pumping lead into the pack, but with more excitement than accuracy: how to aim a steep downhill shot is always confusing. When our rifles were empty, the old wolf was down, and a pup was dragging a leg into impassable slide-rocks.

We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes - something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then, and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters' paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view.

Since then I have lived to see state after state extirpate its wolves. I have watched the face of many a newly wolfless mountain, and seen the south-facing slopes wrinkle with a maze of new deer trails. I have seen every edible bush and seedling browsed, first to anaemic desuetude, and then to death. I have seen every edible tree defoliated to the height of a saddlehorn. Such a mountain looks as if someone had given God a new pruning shears, and forbidden Him all other exercise. In the end the starved bones of the hoped-for deer herd, dead of its own too-much, bleach with the bones of the dead sage, or molder under the high-lined junipers.

I now suspect that just as a deer herd lives in mortal fear of its wolves, so does a mountain live in mortal fear of its deer. And perhaps with better cause, for while a buck pulled down by wolves can be replaced in two or three years, a range pulled down by too many deer may fail of replacement in as many decades. So also with cows. The cowman who cleans his range of wolves does not realize that he is taking over the wolf's job of trimming the herd to fit the range. He has not learned to think like a mountain. Hence we have dustbowls, and rivers washing the future into the sea.

We all strive for safety, prosperity, comfort, long life, and dullness. The deer strives with his supple legs, the cowman with trap and poison, the statesman with pen, the most of us with machines, votes, and dollars, but it all comes to the same thing: peace in our time. A measure of success in this is all well enough, and perhaps is a requisite to objective thinking, but too much safety seems to yield only danger in the long run. Perhaps this is behind Thoreau's dictum: In wildness is the salvation of the world. Perhaps this is the hidden meaning in the howl of the wolf, long known among mountains, but seldom perceived among men.

The Station by Robert Hastings

Tucked away in our subconscious minds is an idyllic vision. We see ourselves on a long, long trip that almost spans the continent. We're traveling by passenger train, and out the windows we drink in the passing scene of cars on nearby highways, of children waving at a crossing, of cattle grazing on a distant hillside, of smoke pouring from a power plant, of row upon row of corn and wheat, of flatlands and valleys, of mountains and rolling hills, of biting winter and blazing summer and cavorting spring and docile fall.

But uppermost in our minds is the final destination. On a certain day at a certain hour we will pull into the station. There still be bands playing, and flags waving. And once we get there so many wonderful dreams will come true. So many wishes will be fulfilled and so many pieces of our lives finally will be neatly fitted together like a completed jigsaw puzzle. How restlessly we pace the aisles, damning the minutes for loitering ... waiting, waiting, waiting, for the station. However, sooner or later we must realize there is no one station, no one place to arrive at once and for all. The true joy of life is the trip. The station is only a dream. It constantly outdistances us.

"When we reach the station that will be it!" we cry. Translated it means, "When I'm 18, that will be it! When I buy a new 450 SL Mercedes Benz, that will be it! When I put the last kid through college, that will be it! When I have paid off the mortgage, that will be it! When I win a promotion, that will be it! When I reach the age of retirement, that will be it! I shall live happily ever after!"

Unfortunately, once we get it, then it disappears. The station somehow hides itself at the end of an endless track.

"Relish the moment" is a good motto, especially when coupled with Psalm 118:24: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." It isn't the burdens of today that drive men mad. Rather, it is regret over yesterday or fear of tomorrow. Regret and fear are twin thieves who would rob us of today.

So, stop pacing the aisles and counting the miles. Instead, climb more mountains, eat more ice cream, go barefoot oftener, swim more rivers, watch more sunsets, laugh more and cry less. Life must be lived as we go along. The station will come soon enough.

By The River, from *Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse

When the sun was beginning to set, they sat on a tree trunk by the river and Siddhartha told him about his origin and his life and how he had seen him today after that hour of despair. The story lasted late into the night.

Vasudeva listened with great attention; he heard all about his origin and childhood, about his studies, his seekings, his pleasures and needs. It was one of the ferryman's greatest virtues that, like few people, he knew how to listen. Without his saying a word, the speaker felt that Vasudeva took in every word, quietly, expectantly, that he missed nothing. He did not await anything with impatience and gave neither praise nor blame—he only listened. Siddhartha felt how wonderful it was to have such a listener who could be absorbed in another person's life, his strivings, his sorrows.

However, towards the end of Siddhartha's story, when he told him about the tree by the river and his deep despair, about the holy Om, and how after his sleep he felt such a love for the river, the ferryman listened with doubled attention, completely absorbed, his eyes closed.

When Siddhartha had finished and there was a long pause, Vasudeva said: "It is as I thought; the river has spoken to you. It is friendly towards you, too; it speaks to you. That is good, very good. Stay with me. I once had a wife, her bed was at the side of mine, but she died long ago. I have lived alone for a long time. Come and live with me; there is room and food for both of us."

"I thank you," said Siddhartha, "I thank you and accept. I also thank you, Vasudeva, for listening so well. There are few people who know how to listen and I have not met anybody who can do so like you. I will also learn from you in this respect."

"You will learn it," said Vasudeva, "but not from me. The river has taught me to listen; you will learn from it, too. The river knows everything; one can learn everything from it. You have already learned from the river that it is good to strive downwards, to sink, to seek the depths. The rich and distinguished Siddhartha will become a rower; Siddhartha the learned Brahmin will become a ferryman. You have also learned this from the river. You will learn the other thing, too."

After a long pause, Siddhartha said: "What other thing, Vasudeva?"

Vasudeva rose. "It has grown late," he said, "let us go to bed. I cannot tell you what the other thing is, my friend. You will find out, perhaps you already know. I am not a learned man; I do not know how to talk or think. I only know how to listen and be devout; otherwise I have learned nothing. If I could talk and teach, I would perhaps be a teacher, but as it is I am only a ferryman and it is my task to take people across this river. I have taken thousand of people across and to all of them my river has been nothing but a hindrance on their journey. They have travelled for money and business, to weddings and on pilgrimages; the river has been in their way and the ferryman was there to take them quickly across the obstacle. However, amongst the thousands there have been a few, four or five, to whom the river was not an obstacle. They have heard its voice and listened to it, and the river has become holy to them, as it has to me. Let us now go to bed, Siddhartha."

Siddhartha stayed with the ferryman and learned how to look after the boat, and when there was nothing to do at the ferry, he worked in the rice field with Vasudeva, gathered wood, and picked fruit from the banana trees. He learned

how to make oars, how to improve the boat and to make baskets. He was pleased with everything that he did and learned and the days and months passed quickly. But he learned more from the river than Vasudeva could teach him. He learned from it continually. Above all, he learned from it how to listen, to listen with a still heart, with a waiting, open soul, without passion, without desire, without judgment, without opinions.

He lived happily with Vasudeva and occasionally they exchanged words, few and long-considered words. Vasudeva was no friend of words. Siddhartha was rarely successful in moving him to speak.

He once asked him, "Have you also learned that secret from the river; that there is no such thing as time?" A bright smile spread over Vasudeva's face.

"Yes, Siddhartha," he said. "Is this what you mean? That the river is everywhere at the same time, at the source and at the mouth, at the waterfall, at the ferry, at the current, in the ocean and in the mountains, everywhere, and that the present only exists for it, not the shadow of the past, nor the shadow of the future?"

"That is it," said Siddhartha, "and when I learned that, I reviewed my life and it was also a river, and Siddhartha the boy, Siddhartha the mature man and Siddhartha the old man, were only separated by shadows, not through reality. Siddhartha's previous lives were also not in the past, and his death and his return to Brahma are not in the future. Nothing was, nothing will be, everything has reality and presence."

Siddhartha spoke with delight. This discovery had made him very happy. Was then not all sorrow in time, all self-torment and fear in time? Were not all difficulties and evil in the world conquered as soon as one conquered time, as soon as one dispelled time? He had spoken with delight, but Vasudeva just smiled radiantly at him and nodded his agreement. He stroked Siddhartha's shoulder and returned to his work.

And once again when the river swelled during the rainy season and roared loudly, Siddhartha said: Is it not true, my friend, that the river has very many voices? Has it not the voice of a king, or a warrior, of a bull, of a night bird, of a pregnant woman and a sighing man, and a thousand other voices?"

"It is so," nodded Vasudeva, "the voices of all living creatures are in its voice."

"And do you know," continued Siddhartha, "what word it pronounces when one is successful in hearing all its ten thousand voices at the same time?"

Vasudeva laughed joyously; he bent towards Siddhartha and whispered the holy Om in his ear. And this was just what Siddhartha had heard.

As time went on his smile began to resemble the ferryman's, was almost equally radiant, almost equally full of happiness, equally lighting up through a thousand little wrinkles, equally childish, equally senile. Many travelers, when seeing both ferrymen together, took them for brothers. Often they sat together in the evening on the tree trunk by the river. They both listened silently to the water, which to them was not just water, but the voice of life, the voice of Being, of perpetual Becoming. And it sometimes happened that while listening to the river, they both thought the same thoughts, perhaps of a conversation of the previous day, or about one of the travelers whose fate and circumstances occupied their minds, or death, or their childhood; and when the river told them something good at the same moment, they looked at each other, both thinking the same thought, both happy at the same answer to the same question.

Something emanated from the ferry and from both ferrymen that many of the travelers felt. It sometimes happened that a traveller, after looking at the face of one of the ferrymen, began to talk about his life and troubles, confessed sins, asked for comfort and advice. It sometimes happened that someone would ask permission to spend an evening with them in order to listen to the river. It also happened that curious people came along, who had been told that two wise men, magicians or holy men lived at the ferry. The curious ones asked many questions but they received no replies, and they found neither magicians nor wise men. They only found two friendly old men, who appeared to be mute, rather odd and stupid. And the curious ones laughed and said how foolish people were to spread such wild rumors.

from *The Place No One Knew*, by David Brower

Glen Canyon Died in 1963 and I was partly responsible for its needless death. So were you. Neither you nor I, nor anyone else, knew it well enough to insist that at all costs it should endure. When we began to find out it was too late. On January 21, 1963, the last day on which the execution of one of the planet's greatest scenic antiquities could have yet been stayed, the man who theoretically had the power to save this place did not find a way to pick up a telephone and give the necessary order. I was within a few feet of his desk in Washington that day and witnessed how the forces long at work finally had their way. So a steel gate dropped, choking off the flow in the canyon's carotid artery, and from that moment the canyon's life force ebbed quickly. A huge reservoir, absolutely not needed in this century, almost certainly not needed in the next, and conceivably never to be needed at all, began to fill. At this writing the rising waters are destined to blot out everything of beauty which this book records.

There could be long and acrimonious debate over the accusation of mistake. Good men, who have plans for the Colorado River whereby "a natural menace becomes a natural resource," would argue tirelessly that the Colorado must be controlled, that its energy should be tapped and sold to finance agricultural development in the arid west. But our point here is that for all their good intentions these men had too insular a notion of what man's relation to his environment should be, and it is tragic that their insularity was heeded.

The Place No One Knew has a moral and the moral is simple: Progress need not deny to the people their inalienable right to be informed and to choose. In Glen Canyon, the people never knew what their choices were. Next time, on other rivers that are still free, and wherever there is wildness that can be part of our civilization instead of victim to it, the people need to know before a bureau's elite decide to wipe out what no men can replace.

Chubasco by Craig Childs

This year I had so many dreams about floods. In one I took a nap on a sandstone ledge and woke with my body covered in frothy, rust-colored foam, the kind that floods leave on the backs of boulders and up against cottonwood trunks. In the dream I jumped off the ledge and chased the flood. But I could not catch it. It glimmered as it entered numerous arroyos and spread beyond my reach.

There was a dream of a storm that ripped canyon walls apart, prying the cliffs until they crumbled like statues during siege. The leathery storm unraveled to the ground, and I watched it take one canyon, then the next. I was hoping

not to fall under the gaze of this huge, roving creature, hoping it would not find me. But it did and it lumbered at me. I hid behind a boulder as the water surged down and exploded above my head. A protective envelope of air formed between the boulder and the fan of a waterfall, where I crouched and shivered as the flood thundered around me. A couple of years ago I sat in a window seat of a passenger airliner. We were attempting to land among summer thunderstorms in Phoenix, banking around the city eight times as I looked down on arteries of lightning. Each time we passed the edge of a storm, the rattling of the fuselage made a sound like a box of pencils being violently shaken. Running low on fuel, we turned south for Tucson and within ten minutes of landing, a thunderstorm hit the Tucson airport, pinning us there for an hour, still in the airplane. During bursts of wind-driven rain, all conversations halted as people looked around, expecting the fuselage to buckle. After we finally took off, halfway to Phoenix I looked out the oval window from ten thousand feet and scanned the sunset earth below. Then my hands went flat against the window as I lifted from my seat, my forehead pasted against the plastic. It looked like molten gold had been loosed across the desert. Arroyos were flooding, catching sunset light, their brilliant threads working the desert, each of them advancing at the same pace, which seemed incrementally slow from up here. Tom Mix Wash, Bogard Wash, Coronado Wash, Big Wash, Rainbows End Wash, Suffering Wash, Cadillac Wash. Everything was running down there.

I turned quickly from the window. I must have looked raving because the man one seat over, a businessman from El Paso, was already tilted away from me. I blurted, Flooding down there. He regarded me with a kind, protective smile. Really? I stared at him for another three seconds. I wanted off the plane.

It was pilots coming back from Southeast Asia in the '50s and '60s who added the term monsoon to the Arizona lexicon. They were stationed near Tucson, and commonly referred to these summer storms as monsoons because they came on schedule each year like those of Vietnam and Korea. Monsoons are broad and slow rainstorms, liquefying the ground into mud, sweeping over entire continents like an arm brushing crumbs from a table. Arizona's "monsoons" come immediately after the harshest droughts of the year, which run right up to July. Almost half of the desert's yearly precipitation then arrives in August as if a door is flung open. Water stands against drought like light and dark.

What we have in the Southwest is more a season of *chubascos* than monsoons. If a monsoon is a big front of weather, then *chubascos* are needles poking through the weather map. A *chubasco* is a kind of storm that eats holes into the sky and the earth. It is a convective thunderstorm, the one item of weather that brings the quickest rainfall, the heaviest winds, and erodes the most land. Corrugated aluminum roofs are ripped off with horrible screeches, then sail like cotton sheets into the atmosphere. People die in *chubascos* when twenty minutes earlier they didn't even think there would be weather. Most of a year's precipitation can easily be unloaded in six minutes, while one mile away the ground might not even be dampened. This kind of storm is not slow, not broad, not long-lived. Often they come in groups, like packs of feral dogs bickering the winds apart in their teeth. They appear from nowhere and hurl at the ground, ten evaporate as if they didn't mean anything by it.

A *chubasco* is an alchemy of conflict. It is superheated air forced through cold, wet air, heralding the desert's rainy season at the hottest time of the year. A low-pressure system, ripe with moisture, pushes from the Sea of Cortés and the Gulf of Mexico, colliding with the heat of an Arizona summer. Hot air rises off the sunbaked ground, shooting upward at about fifty feet a second, with low pressure leaving the sky open for heat to continue upward as long as it can. The heat pierces higher, colder layers so that rivers of air scroll backward, toward the ground. The sky becomes a sea of writhing puncture wounds. As cumulus clouds move upward, becoming cumulonimbus clouds along these rising domes of heat, enough turbulence builds to rip the wings and rudders from airplanes. Moisture caves in, driven at the earth by frantic winds. Ice churns from the sky, landing on ground that may be 150 degrees.

For over a century scientists have been trying to isolate variables out of these *chubascos*, tying them down to numbers for prediction. Because they bring the greatest annual rainfall to the desert, offering both water needed for crops and drinking, and disastrous floods, they have been studied down to their individual shapes, trajectories, electrical fields, and the theoretical mathematics of their frequencies. A seventeen-line equation was once composed to anticipate summer thunderstorms from a single gulch in southern Arizona. It was based on eleven years of data from forty-seven rain gauges, leading to a prediction of where and when rain is most likely to fall. After all of that, the prediction was that the rain could fall just about anywhere, and would probably do it during the summer. After seventeen lines of calculations, the mathematicians could conclude nothing more.

Fear of Transformation by Danaan Parry

Sometimes I feel that my life is a series of trapeze swings. I'm either hanging on to a trapeze bar swinging along or, for a few moments in my life, I'm hurtling across space in between trapeze bars.

Most of the time, I spend my life hanging on for dear life to my trapeze-bar-of-the-moment. It carries me along at a certain steady rate of swing and I have the feeling that I'm in control of my life.

I know most of the right questions and even some of the answers. But every once in a while as I'm merrily (or even not-so-merrily) swinging along, I look out ahead of me into the distance and what do I see? I see another trapeze bar swinging toward me. It's empty and I know, in that place in me that knows, that this new trapeze bar has my name on it. It is my next step, my growth, my aliveness coming to get me. In my heart of hearts I know that, for me to grow, I must release my grip on this present, well-known bar and move to the new one.

Each time it happens to me I hope (no, I pray) that I won't have to let go of my old bar completely before I grab the new one. But in my knowing place, I know that I must totally release my grasp on my old bar and, for some moment in time, I must hurtle across space before I can grab onto the new bar.

Each time, I am filled with terror. It doesn't matter that in all my previous hurtles across the void of unknowing I have always made it. I am each time afraid that I will miss, that I will be crushed on unseen rocks in the bottomless chasm between bars. I do it anyway. Perhaps this is the essence of what the mystics call the faith experience. No guarantees, no net, no insurance policy, but you do it anyway because somehow to keep hanging on to that old bar is no longer on the list of alternatives. So, for an eternity that can last a microsecond or a thousand lifetimes, I soar across the dark void of "the past is gone, the future is not yet here."

It's called "transition." I have come to believe that this transition is the only place that real change occurs. I mean real change, not the pseudo-change that only lasts until the next time my old buttons get punched.

I have noticed that in our culture, this transition zone is looked upon as a "no-thing," a no-place between places. Sure, the old trapeze bar was real, and that new one coming towards me, I hope that's real, too. But the void in between? Is that just a scary, confusing, disorienting nowhere that must be gotten through as fast and as unconsciously as possible?

NO! What a wasted opportunity that would be. I have a sneaking suspicion that the transition zone is the only real thing and the bars are illusions we dream up to avoid the void where the real change, the real growth, occurs for us. Whether or not my hunch is true, it remains that the transition zones in our lives are incredibly rich places. They should be honored, even savored. Yes, with all the pain and fear and feelings of being out of control that can (but not necessarily) accompany transitions, they are still the most alive, most growth-filled, passionate, expansive moments in our lives.

So, transformation of fear may have nothing to do with making fear go away, but rather with giving ourselves permission to "hang out" in the transition between trapezes. Transforming our need to grab that new bar, any bar, is allowing ourselves to dwell in the only place where change really happens. It can be terrifying. It can also be enlightening in the true sense of the word. Hurling through the void, we just may learn how to fly.

Paths Are Made By Walking by Nipun Mehta

Right now each one of you is sitting on the runway of life primed for takeoff. You are some of the world's most gifted, elite, and driven college graduates – and you are undeniably ready to fly. So what I'm about to say next may sound a bit crazy. I want to urge you, not to fly, but to – walk. Four years ago, you walked into this marvelous laboratory of higher learning. Today, heads held high, you walk to receive your diplomas. Tomorrow, you will walk into a world of infinite possibilities.

But walking, in our high-speed world, has unfortunately fallen out of favor. The word "pedestrian" itself is used to describe something ordinary and commonplace. Yet, walking with intention has deep roots. Australia's aboriginal youth go on walkabouts as a rite of passage; Native American tribes conduct vision quests in the wilderness; in Europe, for centuries, people have walked the Camino de Santiago, which spans the breadth of Spain. Such pilgrims place one foot firmly in front of the other, to fall in step with the rhythms of the universe and the cadence of their own hearts.

Back in 2005, six months into our marriage, my wife and I decided to "step it up" ourselves and go on a walking pilgrimage. At the peak of our efforts with ServiceSpace, we wondered if we had the capacity to put aside our worldly success and seek higher truths. Have you ever thought of something and then just known that it had to happen? It was one of those things. So we sold all our major belongings, and bought a one-way ticket to India. Our plan was to head to Mahatma Gandhi's ashram, since he had always been an inspiration to us, and then walk South. Between the two of us, we budgeted a dollar a day, mostly for incidentals -- which meant that for our survival we had to depend utterly on the kindness of strangers. We ate whatever food was offered and slept wherever place was offered.

Now, I do have to say, such ideas come with a warning: do not try this at home, because your partner might not exactly welcome this kind of honeymoon. :-)

For us, this walk was a pilgrimage -- and our goal was simply to be in a space larger than our egos, and to allow that compassion to guide us in unscripted acts of service along the way. Stripped entirely of our comfort zone and accustomed identities, could we still "keep it real"? That was our challenge.

We ended up walking 1000 kilometers over three months. In that period, we encountered the very best and the very worst of human nature -- not just in others, but also within ourselves.

Soon after we ended the pilgrimage, my uncle casually popped the million dollar question at the dinner table: "So, Nipun, what did you learn from this walk?" I didn't know where to begin. But quite spontaneously, an acronym -- W-A-L-K -- came to mind, which encompassed the key lessons we had learned, and continue to relearn, even to this day. As you start the next phase of your journey, I want to share those nuggets with the hope that it might illuminate your path in some small way too.

The W in WALK stands for Witness. When you walk, you quite literally see more. Your field of vision is nearly 180 degrees, compared to 40 degrees when you're traveling at 62 mph. Higher speeds smudge our peripheral vision, whereas walking actually broadens your canvas and dramatically shifts the objects of your attention. For instance, on our pilgrimage, we would notice the sunrise everyday, and how, at sunset, the birds would congregate for a little party of their own. Instead of adding Facebook friends online, we were actually making friends in person, often over a cup of hot "chai". Life around us came alive in a new way.

A walking pace is the speed of community. Where high speeds facilitate separation, a slower pace gifts us an opportunity to commune.

As we traversed rural India at the speed of a couple of miles per hour, it became clear how much we could learn simply by bearing witness to the villagers' way of life. Their entire mental model is different -- the multiplication of wants is replaced by the basic fulfillment of human needs. When you are no longer preoccupied with asking for more and more stuff; then you just take what is given and give what is taken. Life is simple again. A farmer explained it to us this way: "You cannot make the clouds rain more, you cannot make the sun shine less. They are just nature's gifts -- take it or leave it."

When the things around you are seen as gifts, they are no longer a means to an end; they are the means and the end. And thus, a cow-herder will tend to his animals with the compassion of a father, a village woman will wait 3 hours for a delayed bus without a trace of anger, a child will spend countless hours fascinated by stars in the galaxy, and finding his place in the vast cosmos.

So with today's modernized tools at your ready disposal, don't let yourself zoom obliviously from point A to point B on the highways of life; try walking the backroads of the world, where you will witness a profoundly inextricable connection with all living things.

The A in WALK stands for Accept. When walking in this way, you place yourself in the palm of the universe, and face its realities head on. We walked at the peak of summer, in merciless temperatures hovering above 120 degrees. Sometimes we were hungry, exhausted and even frustrated. Our bodies ached for just that extra drink of water, a few more moments in the shade, or just that little spark of human kindness. Many times we received that extra bit, and our hearts would overflow with gratitude. But sometimes we were abruptly refused, and we had to cultivate the capacity to accept the gifts hidden in even the most challenging of moments.

I remember one such day, when we approached a barren highway. As heavy trucks whizzed past, we saw a sign, announcing that guests were hosted at no charge. "Ah, our lucky day," we thought in delight. I stepped inside eagerly. The man behind the desk looked up and asked sharply, "Are you here to see the temple?" A simple yes from my lips would have instantly granted us a full meal and a room for the night. But it wouldn't have been the truth. So instead, I said, "Well, technically, no sir. We're on a walking pilgrimage to become better people. But we would be glad to visit the temple." Rather abruptly, he retorted: "Um, sorry, we can't host you." Something about his curt arrogance triggered a slew of negative emotions. I wanted to make a snide remark in return and slam the door on my way out. Instead, I held my raging ego in check. In that state of physical and mental exhaustion, it felt like a Herculean task-- but through the inner turmoil a voice surfaced within, telling me to accept the reality of this moment.

There was a quiet metamorphosis in me. I humbly let go of my defenses, accepted my fate that day, and turned to leave without a murmur. Perhaps the man behind the counter sensed this shift in me, because he yelled out just then, "So what exactly are you doing again?" After my brief explanation he said, "Look, I can't feed you or host you, because rules are rules. But there are restrooms out in the back. You could sleep outside the male restroom and your wife can sleep outside the female restroom." Though he was being kind, his offer felt like salt in my wounds. We had no choice but to accept.

That day we fasted and that night, we slept by the bathrooms. A small lie could've bought us an upgrade, but that would've been no pilgrimage. As I went to sleep with a wall separating me from my wife, I had this beautiful, unbidden vision of a couple climbing to the top of a mountain from two different sides. Midway through this difficult ascent, as the man contemplated giving up, a small sparrow flew by with this counsel, "Don't quit now, friend. Your wife is eager to see you at the top." He kept climbing. A few days later, when the wife found herself on the brink of quitting, the little sparrow showed up with the same message. Step by step, their love sustained their journey all the way to the mountaintop. Visited by the timely grace of this vision, I shed a few grateful tears -- and this story became a touchstone not only in our relationship, but many other noble friendships as well.

So I encourage you to cultivate equanimity and accept whatever life tosses into your laps -- when you do that, you will be blessed with the insight of an inner transformation that is yours to keep for all of time.

The L in WALK stands for Love. The more we learned from nature, and built a kind of inner resilience to external circumstances, the more we fell into our natural state -- which was to be loving. In our dominant paradigm, Hollywood has insidiously co-opted the word, but the love I'm talking about here is the kind of love that only knows one thing -- to give with no strings attached. Purely. Selflessly.

Most of us believe that to give, we first need to have something to give. The trouble with that is, that when we are taking stock of what we have, we almost always make accounting errors. Oscar Wilde once quipped, "Now-a-days, people know the price of everything, but the value of nothing." We have forgotten how to value things without a price tag. Hence, when we get to our most abundant gifts -- like attention, insight, compassion -- we confuse their worth because they're, well, priceless.

On our walking pilgrimage, we noticed that those who had the least were most readily equipped to honor the priceless. In urban cities, the people we encountered began with an unspoken wariness: "Why are you doing this? What do you want from me?" In the countryside, on the other hand, villagers almost always met us with an open-hearted curiosity launching straight in with: "Hey buddy, you don't look local. What's your story?"

In the villages, your worth wasn't assessed by your business card, professional network or your salary. That innate simplicity allowed them to love life and cherish all its connections.

Extremely poor villagers, who couldn't even afford their own meals, would often borrow food from their neighbors to feed us. When we tried to refuse, they would simply explain: "To us, the guest is God. This is our offering to the divine in you that connects us to each other." Now, how could one refuse that? Street vendors often gifted us vegetables; in a very touching moment, an armless fruit-seller once insisted on giving us a slice of watermelon. Everyone, no matter how old, would be overjoyed to give us directions, even when they weren't fully sure of them. :) And I still remember the woman who generously gave us water when we were extremely thirsty -- only to later discover that she had to walk 10 kilometers at 4AM to get that one bucket of water. These people knew how to give, not because they had a lot, but because they knew how to love life. They didn't need any credit or assurance that you would ever return to pay them back. Rather, they just trusted in the pay-it-forward circle of giving.

When you come alive in this way, you'll realize that true generosity doesn't start when you have something to give, but rather when there's nothing in you that's trying to take. So I hope that you will make all your precious moments an expression of loving life.

And lastly, the K in WALK stands for Know Thyself.

Sages have long informed us that when we serve others unconditionally, we shift from the me-to-the-we and connect more deeply with the other. That matrix of inter-connections allows for a profound quality of mental quietude. Like a still lake undisturbed by waves or ripples, we are then able to see clearly into who we are and how we can live in deep harmony with the environment around us.

When one foot walks, the other rests. Doing and being have to be in balance.

Our rational mind wants to rightfully ensure progress, but our intuitive mind also needs space for the emergent, unknown and unplanned to arise. Doing is certainly important, but when we aren't aware of our internal ecosystem, we get so vested in our plans and actions, that we don't notice the buildup of mental residue. Over time, that unconscious internal noise starts polluting our motivations, our ethics and our spirit. And so, it is critical to still the mind. A melody, after all, can only be created with the silence in between the notes.

As we walked -- witnessed, accepted, loved -- our vision of the world indeed grew clearer. That clarity, paradoxically enough, blurred our previous distinctions between me versus we, inner transformation versus external impact, and selfishness versus selflessness. They were inextricably connected. When a poor farmer gave me a tomato as a parting gift, with tears rolling down his eyes, was I receiving or giving? When sat for hours in silent meditation, was the benefit solely mine or would it ripple out into the world? When I lifted the haystack off an old man's head and carried it for a kilometer, was I serving him or serving myself?

Which is to say, don't just go through life -- grow through life. It will be easy and tempting for you to arrive at reflexive answers -- but make it a point, instead, to acknowledge mystery and welcome rich questions ... questions that nudge you towards a greater understanding of this world and your place in it.

That's W-A-L-K. And today, at this momentous milestone of your life, you came in walking and you will go out walking. As you walk on into a world that is increasingly aiming to move beyond the speed of thought, I hope you will each remember the importance of traveling at the speed of thoughtfulness. I hope that you will take time to witness our magnificent interconnections. That you will accept the beautiful gifts of life even when they aren't pretty, that you will practice loving selflessly and strive to know your deepest nature.

I want to close with a story about my great grandfather. He was a man of little wealth who still managed to give every single day of his life. Each morning, he had a ritual of going on a walk -- and as he walked, he diligently fed the ant hills along his path with small pinches of wheat flour. Now that is an act of micro generosity so small that it might seem utterly negligible, in the grand scheme of the universe. How does it matter? It matters in that it changed him inside. And my great grandfather's goodness shaped the worldview of my grandparents who in turn influenced that of their children -- my parents. Today those ants and the ant hills are gone, but my great grandpa's spirit is very much embedded in all my actions and their future ripples. It is precisely these small, often invisible, acts of inner transformation that mold the stuff of our being, and bend the arc of our shared destiny.

On your walk, today and always, I wish you the eyes to see the anthills and the heart to feed them with joy. May you be blessed. Change yourself -- change the world.

A Call to Action by Paul Hawken, a commencement address at University of Portland, 2009

When I was invited to give this speech, I was asked if I could give a simple short talk that was "direct, naked, taut, honest, passionate, lean, shivering, startling, and graceful." Boy, no pressure there.

But let's begin with the startling part. Hey, Class of 2009: you are going to have to figure out what it means to be a human being on earth at a time when every living system is declining, and the rate of decline is accelerating. Kind of a mind-boggling situation... but not one peer-reviewed paper published in the last thirty years can refute that statement. Basically, the earth needs a new operating system, you are the programmers, and we need it within a few decades.

This planet came with a set of operating instructions, but we seem to have misplaced them. Important rules like don't poison the water, soil, or air, and don't let the earth get overcrowded, and don't touch the thermostat have been broken. Buckminster Fuller said that spaceship earth was so ingeniously designed that no one has a clue that we are on one, flying through the universe at a million miles per hour, with no need for seatbelts, lots of room in coach, and really good food, but all that is changing.

There is invisible writing on the back of the diploma you will receive, and in case you didn't bring lemon juice to decode it, I can tell you what it says: YOU ARE BRILLIANT, AND THE EARTH IS HIRING. The earth couldn't afford to send any recruiters or limos to your school. It sent you rain, sunsets, ripe cherries, night blooming jasmine, and that unbelievably cute person you are dating. Take the hint. And here's the deal: Forget that this task of planet-saving is not possible in the time required. Don't be put off by people who know what is not possible. Do what needs to be done, and check to see if it was impossible only after you are done.

When asked if I am pessimistic or optimistic about the future, my answer is always the same: If you look at the science about what is happening on earth and aren't pessimistic, you don't understand data. But if you meet the people who are working to restore this earth and the lives of the poor, and you aren't optimistic, you haven't got a pulse. What I see everywhere in the world are ordinary people willing to confront despair, power, and incalculable odds in order to restore some semblance of grace, justice, and beauty to this world. The poet Adrienne Rich wrote, "So much has been destroyed I have cast my lot with those who, age after age, perversely, with no extraordinary power, reconstitute the world." There could be no better description. Humanity is coalescing. It is reconstituting the world, and the action is taking place in schoolrooms, farms, jungles, villages, campuses, companies, refuge camps, deserts, fisheries, and slums.

You join a multitude of caring people. No one knows how many groups and organizations are working on the most salient issues of our day: climate change, poverty, deforestation, peace, water, hunger, conservation, human rights, and more. This is the largest movement the world has ever seen. Rather than control, it seeks connection. Rather than dominance, it strives to disperse concentrations of power. Like Mercy Corps, it works behind the scenes and gets the job done. Large as it is, no one knows the true size of this movement. It provides hope, support, and meaning to billions of people in the world. Its clout resides in idea, not in force. It is made up of teachers, children, peasants, businesspeople, rappers, organic farmers, nuns, artists, government workers, fisherfolk, engineers, students, incorrigible writers, weeping Muslims, concerned mothers, poets, doctors without borders, grieving Christians, street musicians, the President of the United States of America, and as the writer David James Duncan would say, the Creator, the One who loves us all in such a huge way.

There is a rabbinical teaching that says if the world is ending and the Messiah arrives, first plant a tree, and then see if the story is true. Inspiration is not garnered from the litanies of what may befall us; it resides in humanity's willingness to restore, redress, reform, rebuild, recover, reimagine, and reconsider. "One day you finally knew what you had to do, and began, though the voices around you kept shouting their bad advice," is Mary Oliver's description of moving away from the profane toward a deep sense of connectedness to the living world.

Millions of people are working on behalf of strangers, even if the evening news is usually about the death of strangers. This kindness of strangers has religious, even mythic origins, and very specific eighteenth-century roots. Abolitionists were the first people to create a national and global movement to defend the rights of those they did not know. Until that time, no group had filed a grievance except on behalf of itself. The founders of this movement were largely unknown Granville Clark, Thomas Clarkson, Josiah Wedgwood and their goal was ridiculous on the face of it: at that time three out of four people in the world were enslaved. Enslaving each other was what human beings had done for ages. And the abolitionist movement was greeted with incredulity. Conservative spokesmen ridiculed the abolitionists as liberals, progressives, do-gooders, meddlers, and activists. They were told they would ruin the economy and drive England into poverty. But for the first time in history a group of people organized themselves to help people they would never know, from whom they would never receive direct or indirect benefit. And today tens of millions of people do this every day. It is called the world of non-profits, civil society, schools, social entrepreneurship, and non-governmental organizations, of companies who place social and environmental justice at the top of their strategic goals. The scope and scale of this effort is unparalleled in history.

The living world is not “out there” somewhere, but in your heart. What do we know about life? In the words of biologist Janine Benyus, life creates the conditions that are conducive to life. I can think of no better motto for a future economy. We have tens of thousands of abandoned homes without people and tens of thousands of abandoned people without homes. We have failed bankers advising failed regulators on how to save failed assets. Think about this: we are the only species on this planet without full employment. Brilliant. We have an economy that tells us that it is cheaper to destroy earth in real time than to renew, restore, and sustain it. You can print money to bail out a bank but you can't print life to bail out a planet. At present we are stealing the future, selling it in the present, and calling it gross domestic product. We can just as easily have an economy that is based on healing the future instead of stealing it. We can either create assets for the future or take the assets of the future. One is called restoration and the other exploitation. And whenever we exploit the earth we exploit people and cause untold suffering. Working for the earth is not a way to get rich, it is a way to be rich.

The first living cell came into being nearly 40 million centuries ago, and its direct descendants are in all of our bloodstreams. Literally you are breathing molecules this very second that were inhaled by Moses, Mother Teresa, and Bono. We are vastly interconnected. Our fates are inseparable. We are here because the dream of every cell is to become two cells. In each of you are one quadrillion cells, 90 percent of which are not human cells. Your body is a community, and without those other microorganisms you would perish in hours. Each human cell has 400 billion molecules conducting millions of processes between trillions of atoms. The total cellular activity in one human body is staggering: one septillion actions at any one moment, a one with twenty-four zeros after it. In a millisecond, our body has undergone ten times more processes than there are stars in the universe, exactly what Charles Darwin foretold when he said science would discover that each living creature was a “little universe, formed of a host of self-propagating organisms, inconceivably minute and as numerous as the stars of heaven.”

So I have two questions for you all: First, can you feel your body? Stop for a moment. Feel your body. One septillion activities going on simultaneously, and your body does this so well you are free to ignore it, and wonder instead when this speech will end. Second question: who is in charge of your body? Who is managing those molecules? Hopefully not a political party. Life is creating the conditions that are conducive to life inside you, just as in all of nature. What I want you to imagine is that collectively humanity is evincing a deep innate wisdom in coming together to heal the wounds and insults of the past. Ralph Waldo Emerson once asked what we would do if the stars only came out once every thousand years. No one would sleep that night, of course. The world would become religious overnight. We would be ecstatic, delirious, made rapturous by the glory of God. Instead the stars come out every night, and we watch television.

This extraordinary time when we are globally aware of each other and the multiple dangers that threaten civilization has never happened, not in a thousand years, not in ten thousand years. Each of us is as complex and beautiful as all the stars in the universe. We have done great things and we have gone way off course in terms of honoring creation. You are graduating to the most amazing, challenging, stupefying challenge ever bequeathed to any generation. The generations before you failed. They didn't stay up all night. They got distracted and lost sight of the fact that life is a miracle every moment of your existence. Nature beckons you to be on her side. You couldn't ask for a better boss. The most unrealistic person in the world is the cynic, not the dreamer. Hopefulness only makes sense when it doesn't make sense to be hopeful. This is your century. Take it and run as if your life depends on it.

Wild Connections by Jeff Wagner

I spend my life taking people into wilderness. I am a 23-year-old outdoor educator, and my students are people not much younger than myself: teenagers and twenty-somethings. Every time, whether we're out there for a week or a month, there's always a night when we lie on our backs and stare up at the night sky. The stars out there are like powdered sugar. The silence consumes us until somebody says, “I don't want to go back.” Nobody responds, but we all agree. I ask my students what they will miss about the wilderness. The peace. The quiet voices of the wind and the water. And the feeling of reality, they always say, because wilderness teaches us what really matters.

As American lifestyles speed up, the lessons we learn from wild places are more relevant than ever. Our culture is emphasizing instant gratification, instant communication, and global visibility. Everything is getting faster: food, communication, work, even vacations. The gulf between wilderness experiences and mainstream life is growing, and we have never been more disconnected from our environment. I've worked with young students who have asked me whether the cows we drove past were alive and I've worked with people my age who had never seen the stars.

The most important things we deal with on a daily basis in the wilderness are the safety and happiness of our companions. The simplicity of spending time in wild places is rooted in the connections we develop with our environment and the people we bring with us. We settle into a effortless rhythm as the days flow past. Spring sprouts into summer. The moon waxes towards full. You can begin to sense where the water hides in a dry desert wash.

Then, all at once, we come crashing back into the computer age. My friends and family ask me, what do you do out there? How can you handle being disconnected from the world for weeks on end? Unlike much of our technology, wilderness builds strong connections. Like a best friend, you can't distill your experiences together into a two-sentence online post. The trails and the peaks, the rivers flowing through the desert. The ponderosa, cottonwood, and ocotillo.

Last fall, I slept on a mountaintop deep in the New Mexico desert. It rained hard that night and heat lightning lit up the horizon until dawn. At sunrise, a 24-year-old man arrived on the summit, tiptoeing around pools of water that had collected in the rock. He quit a job with Google a few weeks earlier to come wander the desert. In the office, he had a growing feeling that there was something to learn in these mountains, and he decided to find it. I asked if he had found what he was looking for. He laughed at that, knelt down beside the rainwater, put his face in and drank deeply.

I hear his story again and again from young people I meet in far-flung canyons, rugged mountains, and dark forests. They left their successful life because it didn't feel successful anymore. They came to the wilderness because they wanted to be in a place more powerful than themselves. As my students would say, there's something about wilderness that gets into your soul.

There's a growing hunger in my generation for something raw and true. To be on the loose, free from traffic jams, professional references, and masses of people lost in the pale glow of their electronics. Young people tell me they want a different lifestyle, one where simple things like peace and health are more important than a quick profit or instant visibility on the internet. They want to live in a society that values the things that pay off in the long run like clean air,

clean water, and a starry night sky. They want things that pay off in human terms. Lots of things come in instant form, but not happiness, kindness, peace, empathy, genuine connections, and certainly not patience.

So what's the role of wilderness for my generation? All those twenty-somethings trying to make their way in this world? Environmentalists have no greater ally and teacher than wilderness. I see it in each person I spend time with in wild places and how it changes their perspectives on the world. Wilderness lets us experience an alternative to what humans have created, and it demands that we ask ourselves where our world is going.

Briefing for Entry Into A More Harsh Environment by Morgan Hite

People always talk about what you can't take home with you after a NOLS course. You can't take home the backpack, or at least it has no place in your daily life. You can't take home the rations, and if you did, your friends wouldn't eat them. You can't take home the mountains. We seem to have to get rid of all of our connections to this place and our experiences here. It's frustrating and can be depressing.

This essay is about what you can take home. What you can take home, and what, if you work at it, can be more important than any of those things you have to leave behind.

Let's look at what we've really been doing out here. We've been organized. We lived out of backpacks the whole time, and mostly we knew where everything was. We've been thorough: we counted every contour line on the map and put every little bit of trash in a bag. We've been prepared: at this moment, every one of us knows where his or her raingear is. We've taken care of ourselves. We've been in touch with basic survival tasks. We've taken chances with other people, entrusted them with our lives and seen no reason not to grow close to them. We've persevered and put our minds to things that never seemed to end. We've learned to use new tools and new techniques. We've taken care of the things we have with us. We've lived simply.

These are the things you can really take home. Together they comprise the set I call "mental hygiene," as if we needed to take care of our minds the way we take care of our bodies. Here they are again, one by one.

1. Organization. The mountains are harsh, so you need to be organized. But that other world is much more complex, and even harsher in ways that aren't always as tangible as cold, wind and rain. Being organized can help you weather its storms.

2. Thoroughness. Here it is easy to see the consequences of leaving things only half done. That other world has so many interruptions, distractions and stimuli that it is easy to leave things half done, until you find yourself buried under a pile of on-going projects with no direction.

3. Preparedness. Out here you've only had to be prepared for every eventuality of weather; but in that other world you have to be prepared for every eventuality - period. There are no rules, shit happens, and only the prepared are not caught off balance.

4. Take care of yourself, and do it even more aggressively than you do it out here. The environmental hazards are even greater: crowding, noise, schedules. Take time to be alone and think. Never underestimate the healing power of being near beauty, be it a flower, music, a person, or just dinner well-prepared.

5. Stay in touch with basics. Continue to cook your own food and consciously select the place where you sleep at night. Take care of your own minor injuries and those of your friends. Learn about how the complex vehicles and tools you use work. The other world is far more distracting and seeks to draw you away from the basics.

6. Keep taking risks with people. Your own aliveness is measured by the aliveness of your relationships with others. There are so many more people to choose from in that other world, and yet somehow we get less close. Remember that the dangers are still present; any time that you get in a car with someone you are entrusting that person with your life. Any reasons that seem to crop up not to get close examine very carefully.

7. Remember you can let go and do without seemingly critical things. Here it has only been hot showers, forks and a roof overhead. But anything can be done without; eventually for us all it is a person that we have to do without, and then especially it is important to remember that having to do without does not rule out joy.

8. Persevere at difficult things. It may not be as concrete as a mountain or as immediately rewarding as cinnamon rolls, but the world is given to those who persevere. Often you will receive no support for your perseverance because everyone else is too busy being confused.

9. Continue to learn to use new tools and techniques. Whether it is a computer or an ice cream maker, you know now that simply because you haven't seen it before doesn't mean you can't soon be a pro. Remember that the only truly old people are the ones who've stopped learning.

10. Take care of things. In that other world it's easy to replace anything that wears out or breaks, and the seemingly endless supply suggests that individual objects have little value. Be what the philosopher Wendell Berry calls "a true materialist." Build things of quality, mend what you have and throw away as little as possible.

11. Live simply. There is no substitute for sanity.

These eleven things are the skills you've really learned out here, and they will serve you in good stead in any environment in the world. They are habits to live by. If anyone asks what your course was like, you can tell them. "We were organized, thorough and prepared. We took care of ourselves in basic ways. We entrusted people with our lives, learned to do without and persevered at difficult things. We learned to use new tools and we took care of what we had with us. We lived simply." And if they are perceptive, they will say, "You don't need the mountains to do that."

Europa Canyon, Bridger Wilderness, Wyoming, August 1989