

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**

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. -**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 the Burke-Wills Expedition across South America)

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**

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 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**

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**

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**

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**

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 on the 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**

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. **Robert Fulghum**

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 (c. 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**

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 is something 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.

- **Edward Abbey**

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

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**

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**

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, paraphrasing David Brower in Encounters with the Archdruid**

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.

If by Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream - and not make dreams your master;

If you can think - and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
' Or walk with Kings - nor lose the common touch,
if neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And - which is more - you'll be a Man, my son!

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 (misquoted as Nelson Mandela)**

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.

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 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.

All that is gold does not glitter
by J.R.R. Tolkien

All that is gold does not glitter,
Not all those who wander are lost;
The old that is strong does not wither,
Deep roots are not reached by the frost.
From the ashes a fire shall be woken,
A light from the shadows shall spring;
Renewed shall be blade that was broken,
The crownless again shall be king.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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. -Rumi

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.

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.

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?

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

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 Man From Snowy River by A.B. "Banjo" Paterson

There was movement at the station, for the word had passed around
That the colt from old Regret had got away,
And had joined the wild bush horses - he was worth a thousand pound,
So all the cracks had gathered to the fray.
All the tried and noted riders from the stations near and far
Had mustered at the homestead overnight,
For the bushmen love hard riding where the wild bush horses are,
And the stockhorse snuffs the battle with delight.

There was Harrison, who made his pile when Pardon won the cup,
The old man with his hair as white as snow;
But few could ride beside him when his blood was fairly up -
He would go wherever horse and man could go.
And Clancy of the Overflow came down to lend a hand,
No better horseman ever held the reins;
For never horse could throw him while the saddle girths would stand,
He learnt to ride while droving on the plains.

And one was there, a stripling on a small and weedy beast,
He was something like a racehorse undersized,
With a touch of Timor pony - three parts thoroughbred at least -
And such as are by mountain horsemen prized.
He was hard and tough and wiry - just the sort that won't say die -
There was courage in his quick impatient tread;
And he bore the badge of gameness in his bright and fiery eye,
And the proud and lofty carriage of his head.

But still so slight and weedy, one would doubt his power to stay,
And the old man said, "That horse will never do
For a long a tiring gallop - lad, you'd better stop away,
Those hills are far too rough for such as you."
So he waited sad and wistful - only Clancy stood his friend -
"I think we ought to let him come," he said;
"I warrant he'll be with us when he's wanted at the end,
For both his horse and he are mountain bred.

"He hails from Snowy River, up by Kosciusko's side,
Where the hills are twice as steep and twice as rough,
Where a horse's hoofs strike firelight from the flint stones every stride,
The man that holds his own is good enough.
And the Snowy River riders on the mountains make their home,
Where the river runs those giant hills between;
I have seen full many horsemen since I first commenced to roam,
But nowhere yet such horsemen have I seen."

So he went - they found the horses by the big mimosa clump -
They raced away towards the mountain's brow,
And the old man gave his orders, "Boys, go at them from the jump,

No use to try for fancy riding now.
And, Clancy, you must wheel them, try and wheel them to the right.
Ride boldly, lad, and never fear the spills,
For never yet was rider that could keep the mob in sight,
If once they gain the shelter of those hills."

So Clancy rode to wheel them - he was racing on the wing
Where the best and boldest riders take their place,
And he raced his stockhorse past them, and he made the ranges ring
With the stockwhip, as he met them face to face.
Then they halted for a moment, while he swung the dreaded lash,
But they saw their well-loved mountain full in view,
And they charged beneath the stockwhip with a sharp and sudden dash,
And off into the mountain scrub they flew.

Then fast the horsemen followed, where the gorges deep and black
Resounded to the thunder of their tread,
And the stockwhips woke the echoes, and they fiercely answered back
From cliffs and crags that beetled overhead.
And upward, ever upward, the wild horses held their way,
Where mountain ash and kurrajong grew wide;
And the old man muttered fiercely, "We may bid the mob good day,
No man can hold them down the other side."

When they reached the mountain's summit, even Clancy took a pull,
It well might make the boldest hold their breath,
The wild hop scrub grew thickly, and the hidden ground was full
Of wombat holes, and any slip was death.
But the man from Snowy River let the pony have his head,
And he swung his stockwhip round and gave a cheer,
And he raced him down the mountain like a torrent down its bed,
While the others stood and watched in very fear.

He sent the flint stones flying, but the pony kept his feet,
He cleared the fallen timber in his stride,
And the man from Snowy River never shifted in his seat -
It was grand to see that mountain horseman ride.
Through the stringybarks and saplings, on the rough and broken ground,
Down the hillside at a racing pace he went;
And he never drew the bridle till he landed safe and sound,
At the bottom of that terrible descent.

He was right among the horses as they climbed the further hill,
And the watchers on the mountain standing mute,
Saw him ply the stockwhip fiercely, he was right among them still,
As he raced across the clearing in pursuit.
Then they lost him for a moment, where two mountain gullies met
In the ranges, but a final glimpse reveals
On a dim and distant hillside the wild horses racing yet,
With the man from Snowy River at their heels.

And he ran them single-handed till their sides were white with foam.
He followed like a bloodhound on their track,
Till they halted cowed and beaten, then he turned their heads for home,
And alone and unassisted brought them back.
But his hardy mountain pony he could scarcely raise a trot,
He was blood from hip to shoulder from the spur;
But his pluck was still undaunted, and his courage fiery hot,
For never yet was mountain horse a cur.

And down by Kosciusko, where the pine-clad ridges raise
Their torn and rugged battlements on high,
Where the air is clear as crystal, and the white stars fairly blaze
At midnight in the cold and frosty sky,
And where around The Overflow the reed beds sweep and sway
To the breezes, and the rolling plains are wide,
The man from Snowy River is a household word today,
And the stockmen tell the story of his ride.

"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*)

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.

- **Mike Clelland**

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***

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**

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**

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 and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*)**

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**

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***

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 Bisy 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.”

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 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.

-Benjamin Hoff, *The Tao of Pooh (all quotes)*

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.

COLLEGE APPLICATION ESSAY by Hugh Gallagher (now attending NYU)

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.

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. Prophecy 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 highest 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.

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

S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo
Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.

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 "â€"
(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 "â€"
(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"â€"
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?

And I have known the arms already, known them all"â€"
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 "â€" 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,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous
Almost, at times, the Fool.

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.

The Last American Man by Elizabeth Gilbert

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 shoving and shrieking 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!"

A Call to Action by Paul Hawken

from 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, it's 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.

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."

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 Tolkein 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. *Handsome men and beautiful 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.

The Man Who Planted Trees by Jean Giono

For a human character to reveal truly exceptional qualities, one must have the good fortune to be able to observe its performance over many years. If this performance is devoid of all egoism, if its guiding motive is unparalleled generosity, if it is absolutely certain that there is no thought of recompense and that, in addition, it has left its visible mark upon the earth, then there can be no mistake.

About forty years ago I was taking a long trip on foot over mountain heights quite unknown to tourists, in that ancient region where the Alps thrust down into Provence. All this, at the time I embarked upon my long walk through these deserted regions, was barren and colorless land. Nothing grew there but wild lavender.

I was crossing the area at its widest point, and after three days’ walking, found myself in the midst of unparalleled desolation. I camped near the vestiges of an abandoned village. I had run out of water the day before, and had to find some. These clustered houses, although in ruins, like an old wasps’ nest, suggested that there must once have been a spring or well here. There was indeed a spring, but it was dry. The five or six houses, roofless, gnawed by wind and rain, the tiny chapel with its crumbling steeple, stood about like the houses and chapels in living villages, but all life had vanished.

It was a fine June day, brilliant with sunlight, but over this unsheltered land, high in the sky, the wind blew with unendurable ferocity. It growled over carcasses of the houses like a lion disturbed at its meal. I had to move my camp.

After five hours’ walking I had still not found water and there was nothing to give me any hope of finding any. All about me was the same dryness, the same coarse grasses. I thought I glimpsed in the distance a small black silhouette, upright, and took it for the trunk of a solitary tree. In any case I started toward it. It was a shepherd. Thirty sheep were lying about him on the baking earth. He gave me a drink from his water-gourd and, a little later, took me to his cottage in a fold of the plain. He drew his water - excellent water - from a very deep natural well above which he had constructed a primitive winch.

The man spoke little. This is the way of those who live alone, but one felt that he has sure of himself, and confident in his assurance. That was unexpected in this barren country. He lived, not in a cabin, but in a real house built of stone that bore plain evidence of how his own efforts had reclaimed the ruin he had found there on his arrival. His roof was strong and sound. The wind on its tiles made the sound of the sea upon its shore.

The place was in order, the dishes washed, the floor swept, his rifle oiled; his soup was boiling over the fire. I noticed then that he was cleanly shaved, that all his buttons were firmly sewed on, that his clothing had been mended with the meticulous care that makes the mending invisible. He shared his soup with me and afterwards, when I offered my tobacco pouch, he told me that he did not smoke. His dog, as silent as himself, was friendly without being servile.

It was understood from the first that I should spend the night there; the nearest village was still more than a day and a half away. And besides I was perfectly familiar with the nature of the rare villages in that region. There were four or

five of them scattered well apart from each other on these mountain slopes, among white oak thickets, at the extreme end of the wagon roads. They were inhabited by charcoal burners, and the living was bad. Families, crowded together in a climate that is excessively harsh both in winter and in summer, found no escape from the unceasing conflict of personalities.

Irrational ambition reached inordinate proportions in the continual desire for escape. The men took their wagonloads of charcoal to the town, then returned. The soundest characters broke under the perpetual grind. The women nursed their grievances. There was rivalry in everything, over the price of charcoal as over a pew in the church, over warring virtues as over warring vices as well as over the ceaseless combat between virtue and vice. And over all there was the wind, also ceaseless, to rasp upon the nerves. There were epidemics of suicide and frequent cases of insanity, usually homicidal.

The shepherd went to fetch a small sack and poured out a heap of acorns on the table. He began to inspect them, one by one, with great concentration, separating the good from the bad. I smoked my pipe. I did offer to help him. He told me that it was his job. And in fact, seeing the care he devoted to the task, I did not insist. That was the whole of our conversation. When he had set aside a large enough pile of good acorns he counted them out by tens, meanwhile eliminating the small ones or those which were slightly cracked, for now he examined them more closely. When he had thus selected one hundred perfect acorns he stopped and we went to bed.

There was peace in being with this man. The next day I asked if I might rest here for a day. He found it quite natural - or, to be more exact, he gave me the impression that nothing could startle him. The rest was not absolutely necessary, but I was interested and wished to know more about him. He opened the pen and led his flock to pasture. Before leaving, he plunged his sack of carefully selected and counted acorns into a pail of water.

I noticed that he carried for a stick an iron rod as thick as my thumb and about a yard and a half long. Resting myself by walking, I followed a path parallel to his. His pasture was in a valley. He left the dog in charge of the little flock and climbed toward where I stood. I was afraid that he was about to rebuke me for my indiscretion, but it was not that at all: this was the way he was going, and he invited me to go along if I had nothing better to do. He climbed to the top of the ridge, about a hundred yards away.

There he began thrusting his iron rod into the earth, making a hole in which he planted an acorn; then he refilled the hole. He was planting oak trees. I asked him if the land belonged to him. He answered no. Did he know whose it was? He did not. He supposed it was community property, or perhaps belonged to people who cared nothing about it. He was not interested in finding out whose it was. He planted his hundred acorns with the greatest care. After the midday meal he resumed his planting. I suppose I must have been fairly insistent in my questioning, for he answered me. For three years he had been planting trees in this wilderness. He had planted one hundred thousand. Of the hundred thousand, twenty thousand had expected to lose half, to rodents or to the unpredictable designs of Providence. There remained ten thousand oak trees to grow where nothing had grown before.

That was when I began to wonder about the age of this man. He was obviously over fifty. Fifty-five, he told me. His name was Elzeard Bouffier. He had once had a farm in the lowlands. There he had his life. He had lost his only son, then his wife. He had withdrawn into this solitude where his pleasure was to live leisurely with his lambs and his dog. It was his opinion that this land was dying for want of trees. He added that, having no very pressing business of his own, he had resolved to remedy this state of affairs.

Since I was at that time, in spite of my youth, leading a solitary life, I understood how to deal gently with solitary spirits. But my very youth forced me to consider the future in relation to myself and to a certain quest for happiness. I told him that in thirty years his 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 ocean.

Besides, he was now studying the reproduction of beech trees and had a nursery of seedlings grown from beechnuts near his cottage. The seedlings, which he had protected from his sheep with a wire fence, were very beautiful. He was also considering birches for the valleys where, he told me, there was a certain amount of moisture a few yards below the surface of the soil.

The next day, we parted.

The following year came the War of 1914, in which I was involved for the next five years. An infantry man hardly had time for reflecting upon trees. To tell the truth, the thing itself had made no impression upon me; I had considered as a hobby, a stamp collection, and forgotten it.

The war was over, I found myself possessed of a tiny demobilization bonus and a huge desire to breathe fresh air for a while. It was with no other objective that I again took the road to the barren lands.

The countryside had not changed. However, beyond the deserted village I glimpsed in the distance a sort of grayish mist that covered the mountaintops like a carpet. Since the day before, I had begun to think again of the shepherd tree-planter. "Ten thousand oaks," I reflected, "really take up quite a bit of space."

I had seen too many men die during those five years not to imagine easily that Elzeard Bouffier was dead, especially since, at twenty, one regards men of fifty as old men with nothing left to do but die.

He was not dead. As a matter of fact, he was extremely spry. He had changed jobs. Now he had only four sheep but, instead, a hundred beehives. He had got rid of the sheep because they threatened his young trees. For, he told me (and I saw for myself), the war had disturbed him not at all. He had imperturbably continued to plant.

The oaks of 1910 were then ten years old and taller than either of us. It was an impressive spectacle. I was literally speechless and, as he did not talk, we spent, the whole day walking in silence through his forest. In three sections, it measured eleven kilometers in length and three kilometers at its greatest width. When you remembered that all this had sprung from the hands and the soul of this one man, without technical resources, you understand that men could be as effectual as God in other realms than that of destruction.

He had pursued his plan, and beech trees as high as my shoulder, spreading out as far as the eye could reach, confirmed it. He showed me handsome clumps of birch planted five years before - that is, in 1915, when I had been fighting at Verdun. He had set them out in all the valleys where he had guessed - and rightly - that there was moisture almost at the surface of the ground. They were as delicate as young girls, and very well established.

Creation seemed to come about in a sort of chain reaction. He did not worry about it; he was determinedly pursuing his task in all its simplicity; but as we went back toward the village I saw water flowing in brooks that had been dry since the memory of man.

This was the most impressive result of chain reaction that I had seen. These dry streams had once, long ago, run with water. Some of the dreary villages I mentioned before had been built on the sites of ancient Roman settlements, traces of which still remained; and archaeologists, exploring there, had found fishhooks where, in the twentieth century, cisterns were needed to assure a small supply of water.

The wind, too, scattered seeds. As the water reappeared, so there reappeared willows, rushes meadows, gardens, flowers, and a certain purpose in being alive. But the transformation took place so gradually that it became part of the pattern without causing any astonishment. Hunters, climbing into the wilderness in pursuit of hares or wild boar, had of course noticed the sudden growth of little trees, but had attributed it to some natural caprice of the earth. That is why no one meddled with Elzeard Bouffier's work. If he had been detected he would have had opposition. He was undetectable. Who in the villages or in the administration could have dreamed of such perseverance in a magnificent generosity?

To have anything like a precise idea of this exceptional character one must not forget that he worked in total solitude: so total that, toward the end of his life, he lost the habit of speech. Or perhaps it was that he saw no need for it.

In 1933 he received a visit from a forest ranger who notified him of an order against lighting fires out of doors for fear of endangering the growth of this natural forest. It was the first time, that man told him naively, that he had ever heard of a forest growing out of its own accord. At that time Bouffier was about to plant beeches at a spot some twelve kilometers from his cottage. In order to avoid travelling back and forth - for he was then seventy-five - he planned to build a stone cabin right at the plantation. The next year he did so.

In 1935 a whole delegation came from the Government to examine the "natural forest". There was a high official from the Forest Service, a deputy, technicians. There was a great deal of ineffectual talk. It was decided that something must be done and, fortunately, nothing was done except the only helpful thing: the whole forest was placed under the protection of the State, and charcoal burning prohibited. For it was impossible not to be captivated by the beauty of those young trees in full-ness of health, and they cast their spell over the deputy himself.

A friend of mine was among the forestry officers of the delegation. To him I explained the mystery. One day the following week we went together to see Elzeard Bouffier. We found him hard at work, some ten kilometers from the spot where the inspection had taken place.

This forester was not my friend for nothing. He was aware of values. He knew how to keep silent. I delivered the eggs I had brought as a present. We shared our lunch among the three of us and spent several hours in wordless contemplation of the countryside.

In the direction from which we had come the slopes were covered with trees twenty to twenty-five feet tall. I remembered how the land had looked in 1913: a desert ... Peaceful, regular toil, the vigorous mountain air, frugality and, above all, serenity of spirit had endowed this old man with awe-inspiring health. He was one of God's athletes. I wondered how many more acres he was going to cover with trees.

Before leaving, my friend simply made a brief suggestion about certain species of trees that the soil here seemed particularly suited for. He did not force the point. "For the very good reason," he told me later, "that Bouffier knows more about it than I do." At the end of an hour's walking - having turned it over his mind - he added, "He knows a lot more about it than anybody. He's discovered a wonderful way to be happy!"

It was thanks to this officer that not only the forest but also the happiness of the man was protected. He delegated three rangers to the task, and so terrorized them that they remained proof against all the bottles of wine the charcoal burners could offer.

The only serious danger to the work occurred during the war of 1939. As cars were being run on gazogenes (wood-burning generators), there was never enough wood. Cutting was started among the oaks of 1910, but the area was so far from any railroads that the enterprise turned out to be financially unsound. It was abandoned. The shepherd had seen nothing of it. He was thirty kilometers away, peacefully continuing his work, ignoring the war of '39 as he had ignored that of '14.

I saw Elzeard Bouffier for the last time in June of 1945. He was then eighty-seven. I had started back along the route through the wastelands; by now, in spite of the disorder in which the war had left the country, there was a bus running between the Durance Valley and the mountain. I attributed the fact that I no longer recognized the scenes of my earlier journeys to this relatively speedy transportation. It seemed to me, too, that the route took me through new territory. It took the name of a village to convince me that I was actually in that region that had been all ruins and desolation.

The bus put me down at Vergons. In 1913 this hamlet of ten or twelve houses had three inhabitants. They had been savage creatures, hating one another, living by trapping game, little removed, both physically and morally, from the conditions of prehistoric man. All about them nettles were feeding upon the remains of abandoned houses. Their condition had been beyond hope. For them, nothing but to await death - a situation which rarely predisposes to virtue.

Everything was changed. Even the air. Instead of the harsh dry winds that used to attack me, a gentle breeze was blowing, laden with scents. A sound like water came from the mountains: it was the wind in the forest. Most amazing of all, I heard the actual sound of water falling into a pool. I saw that a fountain had been built, that it flowed freely and - what touched me most - that someone had planted a linden beside it, a linden that must have been four years old, already in full leaf, the incontestable symbol of resurrection.

Besides, Vergons bore evidence of labor at the sort of undertaking for which hope is required. Hope, then, had returned. Ruins had been cleared away, dilapidated walls torn down and five houses restored. Now there were twenty-eight inhabitants, four of them young married couples. The new houses, freshly plastered, were surrounded by gardens where vegetables and flowers grew in orderly confusion, cabbages and roses, leeks and snapdragons, celery and anemones. It was now a village where one would like to live.

From that point on I went on foot. The war just finished had not yet allowed the full blooming of life, but Lazarus was out of the tomb. On the lower slopes of the mountain I saw little fields of barley and of rye; deep in the narrow valleys the meadows were turning green.

It has taken only the eight years since then for the whole countryside to glow with health and prosperity. On the site of ruins I had seen in 1913 now stand neat farms, cleanly plastered, testifying to a happy and comfortable life. The old streams, fed by the rains and snows that the forest conserves, are flowing again. Their waters have been channeled. On each farm, in groves of maples, fountain, pools overflow onto carpets of fresh mint. Little by little the villages have been rebuilt. People from the plains, where land is costly, have settled here, bringing youth, motion, the spirit of adventure. Along the roads you meet hearty men and women, boys and girls who understand laughter and have recovered a taste for picnics. Counting the former population, unrecognizable now that they live in comfort, more than ten thousand people owe their happiness to Elzeard Bouffier.

When I reflect that one man, armed only with his own physical and moral resources, was able to cause this land of Canaan to spring from the wasteland, I am convinced that in spite of everything, humanity is admirable. But when I compute the unflinching greatness of spirit and the tenacity of benevolence that it must have taken to achieve this result, I am taken with an immense respect for that old and unlearned peasant who was able to complete a work worthy of God.

Elzeard Bouffier died peacefully in 1947 at the hospice in Banon.

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.

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.

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

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, then 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.

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