

Extremist Times



"It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society." - Krishnamurti

WHEELCHAIR HUNTER A LESSON IN HUBRIS



The ancient Greek myth of Icarus is a cautionary tale about the dangers of hubris, the expression of arrogant pride, and the tragedy that results from ignoring natural limits. To facilitate a prison escape, master craftsman Daedalus constructed a set of wings, made from feather & wax, for himself and his son. Before their escape Daedalus instructs Icarus, 'fly too close to the sun and the wax will melt, too close to the water below and the moisture will render your wings heavy and cumbersome'. However, post-escape, Icarus haughtily ignored his father's warning. He could not resist temptation, and rather than find solid ground for landing, beat his wings faster and flew higher and higher, until predictably, the hot sun melted the wax and Icarus plunged to his death into the sea below.

While going through a 1996 issue of Safari International, a big-game hunting magazine, I came across an article that perfectly encapsulates our culture's devotion to hubris and its disregard for limitations.

From the original article; "Forty-one-year-old Tom Balis of Coville, WA, became totally paraplegic and wheelchair-confined at the age of 12, secondary to a spinal cord tumor." In this introduction the limits are apparent - Tom's body, badly damaged by a tumor, has severely limited his physical capabilities, from adolescence onward his movements must be aided by society and technology, without them he would be unable to survive. Despite these obvious setbacks Tom and his enablers are unhindered.

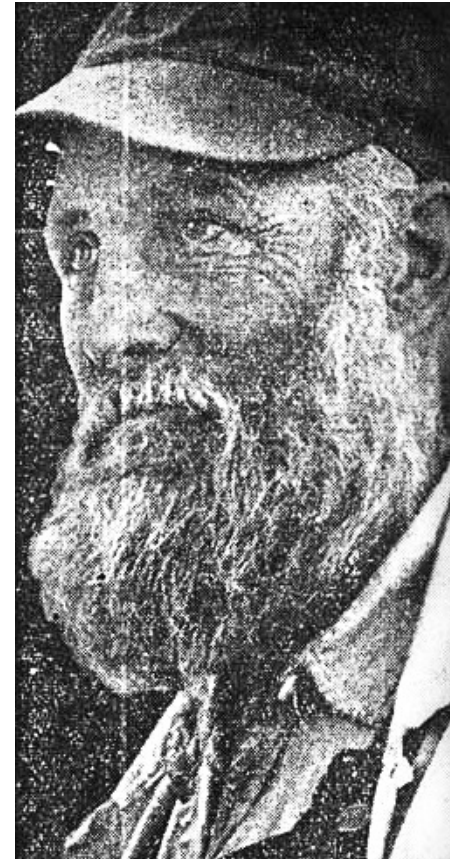
"They had driven to Calgary, and on the following morning took a flight to Yellowknife, Northwest Territories; at Yellowknife, they boarded a charter plane for the final leg of their journey. Transfer in a wheelchair from the dock into the float plane was chancy, due to high winds and rough water. Tom in his wheel-

THE ROAD TO HELL PAVED WITH BLIND ASSUMPTIONS

For the past 50 years, the story of Romaine Tenney, a Vermont farmer who refused to accept modernization, has been told enough to be integrated into local mythology. Described as both a martyr and victim, public perception of his fate has remained a blurry line between guilt and horror, along with a changing perception of what we call "greater good". While his personal judgments and behavior are questioned, his conviction is generally honored, although in a way that completely ignores the moral crux of his defiance. The concept of "progress" is occasionally questioned, although never in an absolute or committed way. Now, as the age of cheap oil concludes in earnest, it becomes harder to maintain that highway 91, or any highway for that matter, ever really served anything outside of the techno-industrial system itself.

In 1961 ex-governor and longtime Republican senator George Aiken stood on the blasted remnants of his childhood home and declared "We're on the verge of the greatest development Vermont has ever seen". His shameless dedication was for Interstate highway I-91, a federal project that began in 1958, and upon completion, served as the primary gateway to the state, functionally connecting Vermont to the rest of the world. The Federal-Aid Highway Act, signed by president Dwight Eisenhower in 1956, precipitated a fundamental change to the American landscape. Cities, towns and countryside alike rapidly mutated from pedestrian to automobile-centric, and when the project was declared complete 36 years later, the whole country had become almost unrecognizable.

See *Road To Hell* page 2



Romaine Tenney: Vermont farmer

WHEELCHAIR HUNTER

chair was placed on a pallet and with a forklift was delivered to the plane's cargo door, pulled through and securely tied down for the 75 minute flight to Little Martin Lake." From there the story continues, in agonizing detail, to describe the great lengths a group of men went to enable a scenario that could never occur without the decadence and excesses of a society out of balance.

"Tom has taken seven bears, one cougar, 25 or more deer - both mule and white-tail - numerous coyotes, badgers, ducks, geese grouse and pheasant. Most of the time without assistance, requiring help only with the retrieval of game". It continues; (Tom) "held on to a horse following the hounds to a treed

bear... Hospitalization and surgery to treat the resulting skin breakdown became necessary."

Close to 50 wild animals shot, their lives, abilities and beauty squandered to uphold an illusion - equality, that anyone can do anything - be anything, and that each and every attempt is equal to the one before, a parity without end or beginning. Truth blatantly opposes this fallacy; there is no equality in nature. Tom was unequal in every way to the animals he killed. In attempting to show the boundless possibilities of modern society the article embarrassingly exposes the ugly truth of hubris. Tom's personal tragedy was exploited, fantasy was prioritized, and we now live in a world with less. Was it worth it?

-NED LUDD

ROAD TO HELL

Continued from page 1

The years after world war 2 were a period of rapid technological change, both locally and nationally. Many of the young men who had left for the war resettled elsewhere, and the state's population stagnated. In 1946 the magazine "Vermont Life" got it's start as a marketing tool, the image of an idyllic, pastoral landscape was pitched to the wealthy residents of New York City and Boston. Stately colonial homes, maple-lined dirt roads, and a backdrop of dairy barns, livestock, and rolling hills depicted Vermont to outsiders as a bucolic paradise. Thus began the transformation of the state, from a remote rural community of small independent farmers, to an open-air simulacrum of "how things were".

Romaine Tenney, born in 1900, grew up on his family's 75 acre farm in the small town of Ascutney. His father had died when he was 14, and after returning home from foreign duty, was the only one of his 9 siblings to stay and helped his widowed mother continue to farm. After her death in the late 50's, he retreated into the ell in the back of the home, a large 1843 gothic-style farmhouse. There he had access to its necessities, a single bed and a large kitchen with a wood-powered cook stove. While his personal quarters were stacked waist-high with newspapers and junk mail, the rest of the house became a dust covered tribute to his family's past. No one ventured into the majority of the house, where it remained frozen in time. His mother's dresses hung untouched in the closet, while family photos, kerosene lamps, and the old organ sat alone and in perpetual darkness. The house had no electricity, no phone, and no running water. Romaine didn't have a car or tractor, and instead used a team of two work horses and a scythe for his haying. By stubbornly clinging to his own past, he had unintentionally become a perfect representative of the "Vermont Life" brand, an obstinate Yankee who did things the old way. Tourists traveling on Rt. 131 loved to stop and take pictures of the old farmer and his house, stuck in a traditional past.

Changing technology had a new agenda for farmers like Romaine. Beginning in 1952, creameries started to encourage the use of bulk tanks, an expensive piece of modernizing equipment that made the small dairy farm (an average of 17 cows in the early 50s) obsolete. By the end of the decade, the tank had become a requirement. It was a cataclysmic development that devastated the family industry. There was no opting out, either you sacrificed a years worth of earnings for

the upgrade, or you abandoned your way of life. Vermont in 1945 had over 26,000 family farms, but by 1964 there were about 9,000. Romaine made a half-hearted attempt, installing electricity in the barn and buying the newfangled milking-machines, but he soon reverted to the old ways and continued to milk the cows by hand. Still, by the early 60s, the property and way of life were noticeably crumbling

In the spring of 1964, 3 years into its construction, the interstate project had reached

machinery turned the land he loved into dust. On September 11, 1964, a sheriff and team of deputies arrived at Tenney's farm with a court order, justified by eminent domain, to seize his property. They emptied his barn and home of all belongings and stacked them in a pile on a hill above the house. That night, in deep grief and despair, Romaine set free his livestock, set fire to the barn and outbuildings, locked himself in his bedroom, torched the house, and blew his brains out.

Romaine's suicide made national news at the time, and letters from all over the country poured into Ascutney for the Tenney family. The tragedy and horror of the story continues to attract attention, summarized most definitively in a 2013 Yankee Magazine article titled "I Will Not Leave". More recently, local news has given the tale a flurry of attention; the sole surviving piece of his homestead, a large maple tree that had once framed the front of the house, had to be cut down. Now a highway park and ride, the hot asphalt surrounding the tree had been slowly killing it for years, and the idea that a dead branch might damage a parked car convinced the state to bring the whole thing down. After several sessions for public comment the department of transportation devoted \$30,000 to remove the old tree, encase its stump in shellac, and build a gazebo for picnicking (as of publication, bureaucrats continue to deliberate on what the commemorative plaque will say).

Today, driving on Rt. 131 toward the highway onramp, passing through what was once Romaine's beloved farm, you will now pass a towing business housed in a former industrial building, Green Mountain Power's gas terminal and electrical substation (framed by high voltage power lines), the transportation department's sand shed and utility truck garage, a large 3 bay garage for the fire department, and finally, on the ashes of Romaine himself, a large parking lot for local commuters.

The brutality of this story highlights two obvious, but unquestioned myths; that technology is inherently neutral and that progress is

(regrettably) inevitable. Technology, as Romaine's story illustrates, leaves no room for those who opt out. The idea that it is "neutral" is absurd, a brainless mantra repeated whenever anyone gets too close to questioning the real driver of our current (now global) system. Think for yourself what your life might look like; without a car, a phone, a computer, etc. and consider again the axiom "technology is neutral". It is not shaped by "how people use it" but rather people are shaped by how it uses us. We mine for rare minerals, pump oil, burn coal, build roads, blast mountains, and clear-cut forests, all to

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BEFORE PROGRESS



Romaine Tenney cutting hay with a team of horses.

AFTER PROGRESS



The same view in 2023 shows GMPs gas terminal & electric substation.

Ascutney. Preceding the construction by several months, engineers and surveyors had placed their lines of sight directly through the Tenney barn. Although repeatedly given notice, Romaine continued to farm past his eviction date in April, despite the growing noise and clamor. The state had offered him a compensation of \$10,600 for his land and buildings, which he refused. Later, they upped the offer to \$13,600 (a sum he would've had to split 10 ways with siblings), but again he refused. Meanwhile, the destruction had moved to practically his doorstep, and yet stubbornly continued his daily chores, even as dynamite and heavy

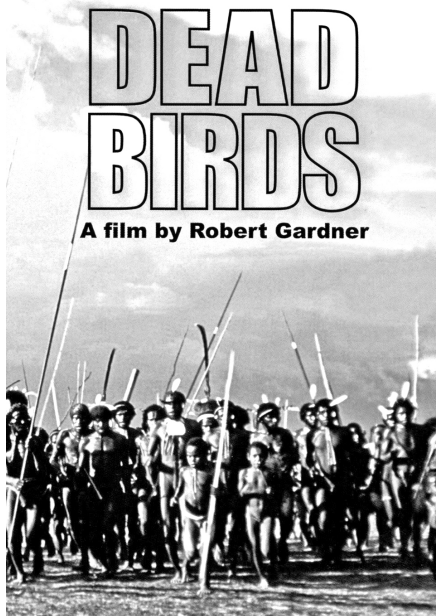
ROAD TO HELL

Continued from page 2

feed the system's needs as it races toward oblivion. Progress has been made inevitable by a flow of cheap energy that furthers the needs and evolution of technology itself. There is nothing random about the direction the machine is taking us. We race to absorb a system that competes to grind up the most raw material in the shortest amount of time. Its values are universal in any form; efficiency, utility, productivity & predictability. There is no way for the machine to quantify beauty, harmony, tranquility or the sacred. The dehumanization and destruction of the living develops in tandem with the advancement of mechanization, all to make us slaves of technology, not the leaders of its direction. What person today actually believes that they have any input whatsoever in the way our society is going? Young and old, trapped and alienated in confusion and isolation, we all struggle to understand the forces at work that brought us to our present condition. Think of Romaine. What cost him his life has now come for all of us.

-NED LUDD

Critic's Corner

Tim Osman Reviews

DEAD BIRDS

A film by Robert Gardner

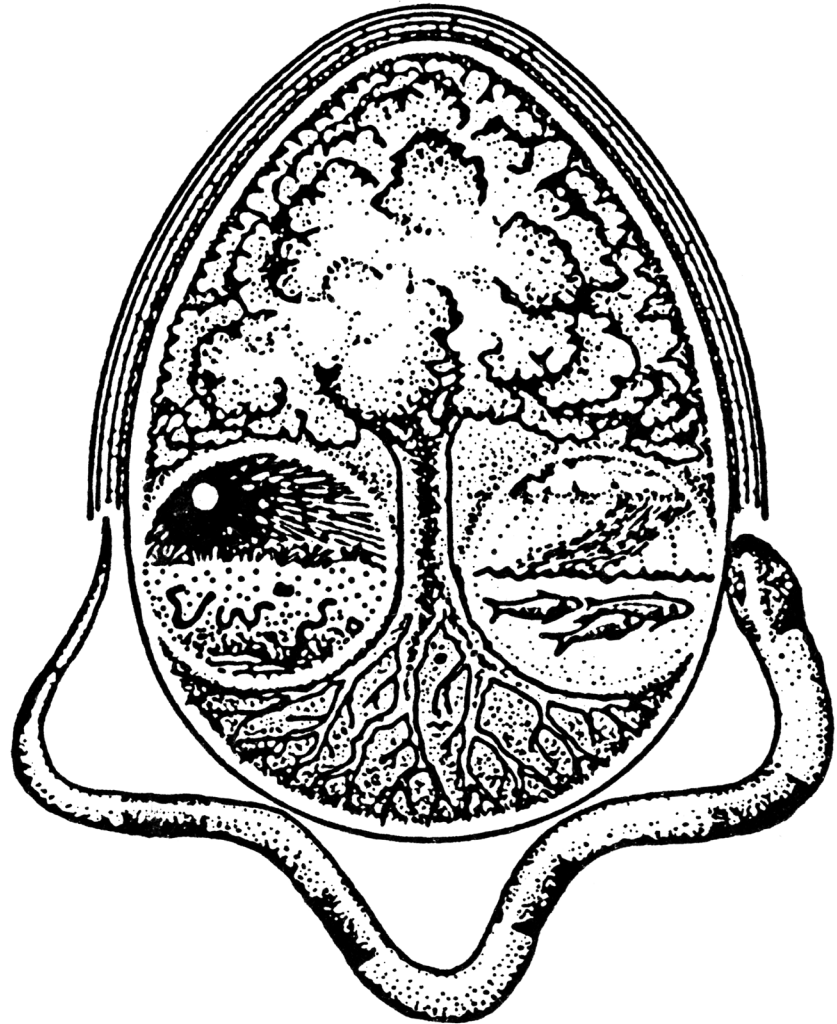


DEAD BIRDS (1963)

Dead Birds is a 1963 Documentary about the Dani people of western New Papua island, in what is a part of present day Indonesia. Like other Ethnographical documentaries from the time, it captures on film a people still mostly undisturbed by western civilization. What sets it apart is the departure from common "noble savage" tropes,

See *Dead Birds* page 4

WHAT IS PERMACULTURE?



The word itself is a contraction of not only permanent agriculture, but also of permanent culture, as cultures cannot survive for long without a sustainably-sound and economically viable, which provide for their own needs, do not exploit or pollute, and are therefore sustainable in the long term.

Fukuoka, in this book *The One Straw Revolution*, has perhaps best stated the basic philosophy of permaculture. In brief, it is a philosophy of working with, rather than against nature; of protracted and thoughtful observation rather than protracted and thoughtless labour; and of looking at plants and animals in all their functions, rather than treating elements as a single-product system. I have spoken, on a more mundane level, of using aikido on the landscape, of rolling with the blows, turning adversity into strength, and using everything positively. The other approach is to karate the landscape, to try to make it yield by using our strength, and striking many hard blows. But if we attack nature we attack (and ultimately destroy) ourselves. I think harmony with nature is possible only if we abandon the idea of superiority over the natural world. Levi Strauss said that our profound error is that we have always looked upon ourselves as "masters of creation", in the sense of being above it.

See *What is Permaculture* page 5

WHAT IS PERMACULTURE

Continued from page 3

We are not superior to other life-forms; all living things are an expression of life. If we could see that truth, we would see that everything we do to other life-forms we also do to ourselves. A culture which understands this does not, without absolute necessity, destroy any living thing.

In all permanent agricultures, or in sustainable human culture generally, the energy needs of the system are provided by that system. Modern crop agriculture is totally dependent on external energies. The shift from productive, permanent systems to annual, commercial agricultures where land is regarded as a commodity involves a shift from a low to high-energy society, the use of land in an exploitative and destructive way, and a demand for external energy sources, mainly provided by the third world as fuels, fertilizers, protein, labour and skills. Conventional farming does not recognize and pay it's true costs; the land is mined of it's fertility to produce annual grain and vegetable crops; non-renewable resources are used to support yields; the land is eroded through over-stocking of animals and extensive ploughing; land and water are polluted with chemicals. When the needs of a system are not met from within the system, we pay the price in energy consumption and pollution. We can no longer afford the true cost of our agriculture. It is killing our world, and it will kill us.

Ethics are moral beliefs and actions in relation to survival on our planet. In permaculture, we embrace a threefold ethic: care of the earth, care of people, and dispersal of surplus time, money and materials towards these ends.

Care of the earth means care of all living and nonliving things: soils, species and their varieties, atmosphere, forests, micro-habitats, animals and waters. It implies harmless and rehabilitative activities, active conservation, ethical and frugal use of resources, and "right livelihood" (working for useful and beneficial systems).

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DEAD BIRDS

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mainly that for the Dani people, their way of life revolves around a never-ending war. Two neighboring clans, separated by a large valley, stage frequent battles in the open and unclaimed median, a mostly treeless landscape of rock and grass.

The story centers around two characters, Pua, an adolescent characterized as a runt, and Weyak, a young warrior somewhere in the middle of his social hierarchy. Pua, confined by stature and social expectation, herds pigs and tends to village sweet potato horticulture, a task generally reserved for Dani women. Weyak has a more respectful role as a border guard, which in Dani society involves manning a watchtower at the edge of tribal territory. There he passes time scanning the horizon for an enemy ambush, an inevitability that - in respect for natural rhythms and time constraint - only occurs in the morning time. The characters were likely chosen to summarize the structure of their culture; a patriarchal and agrarian society of small villages united by racial tribalism.

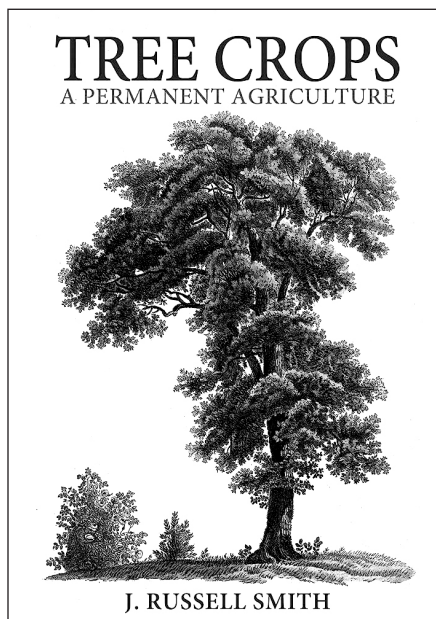
When war does break out, it does as a cinematic (albeit un-objective), narrative arc. The fighting is shown honestly as both glorious and tragic, but conspicuously devoid of any of the hopeless, soul crushing machinery of "modern warfare". The war of the Dani has more in common with the ongoing street beef of American neighborhood gangs than the pitiful moral posturing of "democracy building" espoused in modern geo-conflict.

The movie title, *Dead Birds*, summariz-

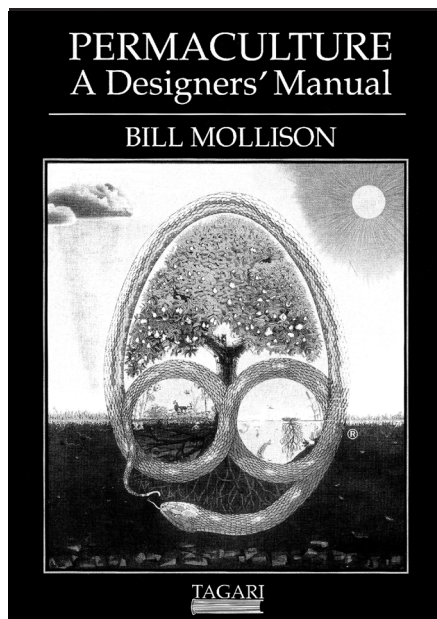
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PERMACULTURE CLASSICS

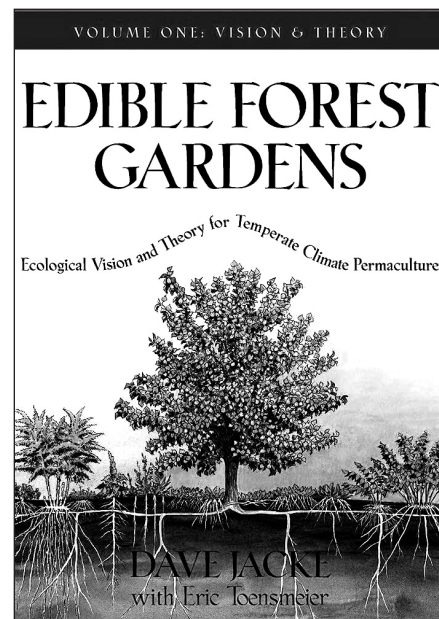
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DEAD BIRDS

Continued from page 4

es a tribal ethos, long forgotten by modern culture: man must die. In Dani mythology, there was once a great race between bird and snake, a contest which would determine the fate of humanity. Would men become like snakes, immortal as their skin-shedding rebirth, or like birds - chained to warm-blooded cycles of mortality? In the end the bird won the race, and since then it has been the fate of the Dani, like birds, to die. War in this context is an interactive ritual - as their basic agricultural society has removed much of the instinctual hunting reflex and necessity, the Dani enact the timeless cycle of death/life in a conceptual battle with their neighbors. The war scenes, beautifully captured, put any Mel Gibson epic to shame. Although you can imagine the Dani warriors self-consciously playing it up for the foreign camera men, it is hard to counterfeit the real thrill of taunting death, bravado and brutality shown on the battlefield.

Dead Birds is a very good film, both visually and as a document of real human culture. If you are interested and having a hard time finding a place to watch, get in touch - I can make you a video copy.

-TIM OSMAN

JANITOR HEARD

'ANNOYING ALARMS' SHUT OFF FREEZER, RUINED 20 YEARS RESEARCH, \$1 MILLION

A university janitor who turned off a freezer after hearing multiple "annoying alarms," ruined more than 20 years of research, according to a lawsuit filed against his employer by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in upstate New York.

The janitor, who is not being sued in the lawsuit, was a contractor with Daigle Cleaning Systems Inc., who worked for several months in 2020 at the private research university in Troy.

The school is seeking more than \$1 million in damages and legal fees from Daigle Cleaning Systems as a result of the incident. The lab's freezer contained over 20 years of research, including cell cultures and samples, to which a "small temperature fluctuation of three degrees would cause catastrophic damage," according to the lawsuit filed with the Rensselaer County Supreme Court. The lawsuit states that cell cultures and specimens in the freezer needed to be maintained at -80 degrees Celsius and a small fluctuation of 3 degrees would cause damage, so alarms would sound if the temperature increased to -78 degrees or decreased to -82 degrees.

K.V. Lakshmi, a professor and director of the school's Baruch '60 Center for Biochemical Solar Energy Research who oversaw the research, noticed the freezer alert went off on or around September 14, 2020, because its temperature had risen to -78 degrees, according to the suit.

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WHAT IS PERMACULTURE

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Care of the earth also implies care of people so that our basic needs for food, shelter, education, satisfying employment, and convivial human contact are taken care of. Care of people is important, for even though people make up a small part of the total living systems of the world, we make decisive impact on it. If we can provide for our basic needs, we need not indulge in broad-scale destructive practices against the earth.

The third component of the basic "care of the earth" ethic is the contribution of surplus time, money and energy to achieve the aims of earth and people care. This means that after we have taken care of our basic needs and designed our systems to the best of our ability, we can extend our influence and energies to helping others achieve that aim.

The permaculture system also has a basic life ethic, which recognizes the intrinsic worth of every living thing. A tree is something of value in itself, even if it has no commercial value for us. It is doing its part in nature: recycling biomass, providing oxygen and carbon dioxide for the region, sheltering small animals, building soils and so on.

- BILL MOLLISON

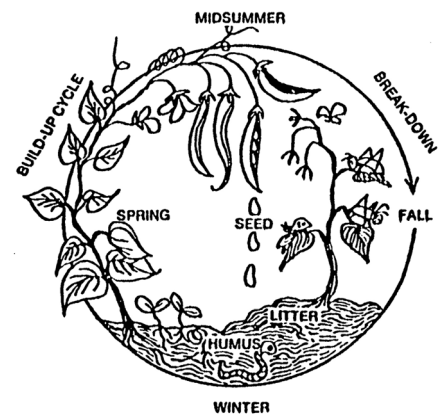
Originally published 1991, Introduction to Permaculture, Tagari Publications

TIME AND PERMACULTURE

One of the more revolutionary effects of permaculture is how it can change our conventional concept of time. When you begin to view a plant over its whole life cycle - its place in ecological succession, years until maturity, or periodic booms and busts - it leads you to consider all of life over a wider scope. Thoughts, plans and projections begin to expand, away from the instant gratification and sensory overload of modern culture, and into a deeper consideration for the enduring web of organic life. Viewing your own life in this regard can lead to a better understanding of your ancestors before and children ahead, context that hopefully motivates a more intentional, conscious existence.

The historical emergence of time directly lead to our cultural desacralizing of nature. Before the universal regimentation of quantifiers like time, we lived in accord with the rhythm and fluxes of the planet's natural cycles; chaotic and unpredictable but also familiar and stabilizing. Contemporary technological society has now redefined and warped time to a never-ending present. Trapped in artifice, stimulated by machines, 'progress' has become a totalitarian force pushing humanity 'forward'. John Zerzan (Feral House, 2015) notes; "modern technology is precisely what alters our experience of time. The always-faster colonization of life by technology commands an ever-fluctuating environment in which the self is destabilized and such dichotomies as online-offline, public-private, and work-leisure are made largely irrelevant. The properties of the physical self are reduced, as galloping technology claims to complete and enhance them. Speed is of the essence; computing power means one thing—how fast it is."

He continues, "staring at screens we become "digital interfaces", approaching a commu-



nitive elsewhere that is nowhere. Through the always-developing devices a great indifference to the world is apparent. And why this should this be surprising; given how indifferent the world now is to us. A world subdued and rendered uniform, ugly and lifeless by onrushing technology. Enlightenment modernity, its promises unrealized, is now unrecognizable in key ways. Spengler said that modern times have been 'stretched and stretched to the elastic limit at which [they] will bear no more.'

We can no longer afford to 'watch the clock', 'beat the clock' or 'race against time' - the machine will always win. Our dire need is for a 'time out', not 'vacation time', but a full-scale abandonment of the mechanical, mathematic concepts that further our alienation and self destruction. A beautiful living world, pulsing in annual cycles, still exists beyond and beneath the crushing hyperreality of modernity.

-NED LUDD

Letters to the editor

'We must sit here and take it'

The worst aspects of such evils as air pollution, DDT and the garbage put on TV is not the actual harm that these things do us; the really galling thing about them is that we just have to take what society dishes out, be it good or bad. Individually, there's nothing we can do about it.

-THEODORE J. KACZYNSKI

Originally published 1969, Chicago Daily News

Classifieds

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READING MATERIALS WANTED

I am looking for the following titles;
GREEN ANARCHIST (UK) - any issues
VANGUARD (hardline zine) - any issues
HOLOCENE GAZETTE (1970's Vermont)
BLACK CLAD MESSENGER - early issues also - any book/article dealing specifically with the **AMISH** and their relationship with technology.

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ANNOYING ALARMS

Continued from page 5

But, on September 17, the janitor heard what he later called "annoying alarms," according to the suit. In apparent attempt to be helpful, he flipped the circuit breakers, which provided electricity to the freezer, mistakenly turning them from "on" to "off," according to the lawsuit. It said the freezer's temperature rose to -32 degrees Celsius. The next day, research students found the freezer switched off and despite attempts to preserve the research, a majority of the cultures were "compromised, destroyed, and rendered unsalvageable demolishing more than twenty years of research," the lawsuit states.

-JESSICA XING

Originally published on CNN.com June 28, 2023

This article highlights the precarious fallibility of what we consider 'cutting-edge' and 'high-tech', along with the subjective value of "\$1 million dollars". Curious to note that institute's study is not described beyond; "cell structures and samples" for "Biochemical Solar Energy Research". A bit of digging reveals that since 2008 they've "work(ed) to develop bio-inspired artificial photosynthetic devices for solar fuel production... (for) understanding the chemistry behind the biological solar energy conversion of plants". Thankfully this Frankenstein was aborted after only 20 years in the womb. No amount of alchemy will suspend the inevitable crash - it doesn't matter how many "scientific breakthroughs" are reported - nothing will match the energy density of fossil fuel. The janitor did us all a favor by pulling back the curtain and revealing how pointless and fragile the religion of science has become.

-NED LUDD

SMASH YOUR CLOCKS!



THE CONCEPT OF TIME

I would like to share with you an Indian fellow who sings a song, and in his song he says that; "I would venture to say that on any given day that if the sun were to rise in the west and sink in the east, the white man would never know because he runs by the clock. It's time for this and time for that all day long that's all he talks about - what time it is to do something. He is run by the clock and if he took the clock out of America, the whole world would stop. There would be nothing because man doesn't run any more by the daylight and dark. He runs by the clock.

-TIMM WILLIAMS

Originally published in *Protectors of the Land*, 1994

VERMONT SCIENCE GROUP MOLEST SALAMANDERS

Recent technology has allowed biologists to easily spy a Spotted Salamander whenever they want. Miniature tags encased in inert epoxy that emit a radio signal are surgically placed into the body cavity of a Spotted Salamander. After a few days of recovery, the salamander is released where it was captured. All of its movements and locations can then be monitored with a radio receiver and small antenna.

Steve Faccio, a fellow biologist at the Vermont Center for Ecostudies, captured 8 Spotted Salamanders and 8 Jefferson's Salamanders (*A. jeffersonianum*) for a study at the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historic Park in Vermont. He first bathed them in a solution of tricaine methanesulfonate to put them into a deep sleep for the quick operation. Just 24 hours later, they were released near their capture site. A few days later, we were on the hunt.

I have tracked many animals with radio telemetry and they have led me on wild chases that can last for miles. The nice thing about tracking salamanders is that they don't really go that far and they don't move that fast, but they can be difficult to pinpoint. They like to go underground where radio signals don't travel well... The salamanders can't dig. They use shrew, mice and chipmunk tunnels for refuge.

After tracking them to these surface tunnels all summer long, suddenly, as the chill of winter was slowly engulfing New England, the salamanders changed behavior. They entered more vertical tunnels that led deeper into the ground. By the end of November nearly all of them were deep under the earth. The radio signal only travels about 2-3 feet. Most signals were lost.

-KENT MCFARLAND

Originally published *Audubon Guides*, 2010

Reading this article one can imagine Steve and his fellow biologists feeling good about their 'cool jobs', studying nature, 'educating' the public, etc. A closer look reveals a sick impulse to probe, expose, inspect and harass everything not controlled by the predictable algorithms of the machine. How much time, money and effort was wasted on this pointless exercise? To discover that salamanders go underground in the winter? I see a group of men, their expertise a decadent product of our wasteful age, desperate for new discoveries and mysteries to 'solve'. Their child-like behavior (turning over logs in the woods) is transformed into 'research' on behalf of a 'science' that is both obvious and conceited. Possibly one of the saddest articles I've ever read and a clear look at how scientists squanders resources and assume pretension.

-NED LUDD

NEXT ISSUE:

FALL 2023 issue will focus on the farce that is "GREEN ENERGY" both locally and nationally. If you have any comments/questions or are interested in submitting an article please get in touch.

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