



The Bunkhouse Chronicle

Craig Rullman
Columnist

Under the Volcano

Yesterday, encouraged by the bluest skies, I bravely opened the door to our shop. Our shop, where I like to futz and putter and try to make things, or fix things, or think about things, had become a desultory crypt of neglect.

That's my fault. It's been something of a challenging winter thus far, as you may have noticed, and I've tried to conserve and focus my energies on more pressing concerns, which means that sometimes, more often than I would like to admit, I've tromped through the snow, opened the shop door, tossed something in, and then closed the door.

But there it was: a big, dark, yawning disaster of disorganization. Fuel cans,

battery chargers, scraps of lumber, piles of hunting gear, tools in all the wrong places, a landfill of my own making. And now it was staring back at me, punctuated by the grating irritation of the talk radio I leave on inside because I believe — with zero scientific evidence — that mice are united in their hatred of The Lars Larson Show, and will seek other accommodations.

So I went to work. And for some reason — probably because our own volcanic peaks were standing up so perfectly in the rarified sunlight — I started thinking about Malcolm Lowry's excellent novel, "Under the Volcano."

If you've not read it, the book follows the last day on earth of a British diplomat in the town of Quauhnahuac, Mexico. It is a difficult, sometimes sordid drama, and plays out to its tragic end under the quiet eyes of two ancient and enormous volcanoes.

The volcanoes are important to the story because they lend the perspective of time. They suggest durability, and wisdom — there is nothing happening below that they haven't seen before — and they are a reminder that the hard hunt for the longer truths often evades us down here, in our little shops and villages, as we scheme and muscle

through the daily *sturm und drang* of an increasingly synthetic 21st century.

It was fitting enough, then, to think of that book while deciding why I actually need an entire drawer full of rusty pipe reamers, or how a box full of .280 Ackley handloads — missing for several months — ended up with a jar of wrecked paintbrushes, all buried under a pair of old hip-waders.

It was fitting, I think, because we live in the shadow of our own geologic sentinels. Mountains that, when the sun is out and shining on all of that snowy transcendence, we can meditate on just long enough to experience the sublime frisson of our own impermanence.

That should — but mostly doesn't — spur us into a different way of thinking about things. It might even, in a best-case scenario, cause us to think differently about how we intend to manage ourselves during the Cold Civil War we are apparently descending into.

We can learn a lot from just looking up. There is an old story of a Japanese water colorist who sat outside each morning, staring through the mists at a mountain across the valley. He did this every morning for decades before he ever tried to paint it. And

when he finally did paint the mountain, it was a masterpiece finished in minutes. Or so the story goes, and the larger part of me wants very much to believe it is true.

True or not, it was not the story in our shop. Some part of me toyed with the idea of just staring through the mist of the mess a little longer, on the outside chance it would organize itself, and that the great invisible Lord of the Volcanic Cascades would somehow find pleasure with my conviction. But I don't have those kinds of powers, or whatever that magic is called, and so it was back to unraveling the mystery of how, over the years, I have managed to collect so many combination locks, without recording — anywhere — the combinations, and why they were all in an old ammo can marked: Tape and Glue.

The volcanoes in Lowry's book are monoliths. They are the Romantics' notion of negative capability. They say everything by saying nothing. As do our own. They aren't even noticeably bemused by the strange and grinding duplicities we put on display each day, and that we seem to be insisting on. They just watch. And listen.

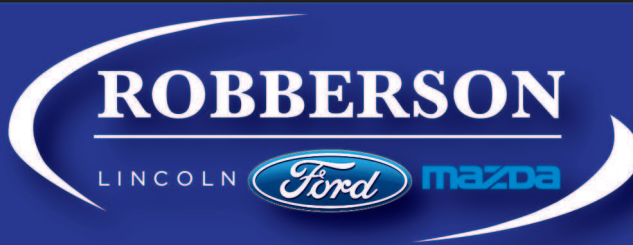
It occurred to me, as I performed a kind of kabuki dance with the ponderously

heavy and awkward bag containing our wall tent, grotesquely dragging it from one corner of the shop to another, that the vows of silence adopted by various religious orders are increasingly understandable.

What, really, is there to say?

Walt Whitman, who was ahead of most curves in life, wrote about an alternative, and offered a kind of salve for the sharpened dilemmas of modern duplicity that keep stabbing me in the side. He wrote: "Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself. I am large, I contain multitudes." So that's another way to go, if we can keep our multitudes honest. I don't know if we can. For certain, the mountains won't care one way or the other.

In the meantime, down here under the mountains, I was able to get the shop arranged in some kind of working order. It took some effort, and discipline, but I persevered to inject some logic back into the equation. And that kind of work is always its own reward. But this morning, naturally, in a rush to be somewhere else, and forgetting everything I had so laboriously learned, I opened the door, tossed in a bag of ice melt, and abruptly closed the door again.



robberson.com

**NEW SALES 382.4521
PRE-OWNED: 312.3986**

NEW 2016 Ford F-150 XLT SuperCrew 2.7L V6 EcoBoost



**\$5,550
Trade Assistance
Bonus**

NEW 2017 Ford Escape SE 4WD



\$219 /mo. for 36 mos.

**Ford Credit Red Carpet Lease
\$3019 Cash or Trade Due at Signing**

**Security deposit waived
Taxes, title and license fees extra**

NEW 2017 Ford Explorer



0% APR for 60 mos.
Ford Credit Financing

OR \$2,000 Cash Back

*\$5,550 Special Ford Credit Trade-In Assistance (PGM #30216) requires Ford Credit financing; not all customers will qualify. Available to customers who own or lease any aged vehicle who trade in or have an expiring lease up to 30 days prior to 90 days after the sale date of the new vehicle. Customer must have owned or leased the vehicle for a minimum of 30 days prior to the sale date. Take new retail delivery from dealer stock by 4/3/17. See dealer for qualifications and complete details.
- With Equipment Group 200A. Not all buyers will qualify for Ford Credit Red Carpet Lease. Payments may vary; dealer determines price. Residency restrictions apply. Cash or trade due at signing is after \$2,250 Customer Cash (PGM #50386). Lessee responsible for excess wear and mileage over 31,500 miles at \$0.15 per mile. Lessee has option to purchase vehicle at lease end at price negotiated with dealer at signing. Take new retail delivery from dealer stock by 4/3/17. See dealer for qualifications and complete details. Vehicle shown may have optional equipment not included in payment.
- \$2,000 Customer Cash (PGM #12996). Not all buyers will qualify for Ford Credit financing. 0% APR financing for 60 months at \$16.67 per month per \$1,000 financed regardless of down payment (PGM #20782). For all offers, take new retail delivery from dealer stock by 4/3/17. See dealer for qualifications and complete details. Images may vary from actual vehicle.



**COME SEE THE ALL NEW 2017 SUPERDUTY.
NOW IN STOCK AT ROBBERSON FORD**

robberson.com



**2100 NE 3rd. St. Bend Oregon
541.382.4521**