

AQUAPEACE

PLASTIC

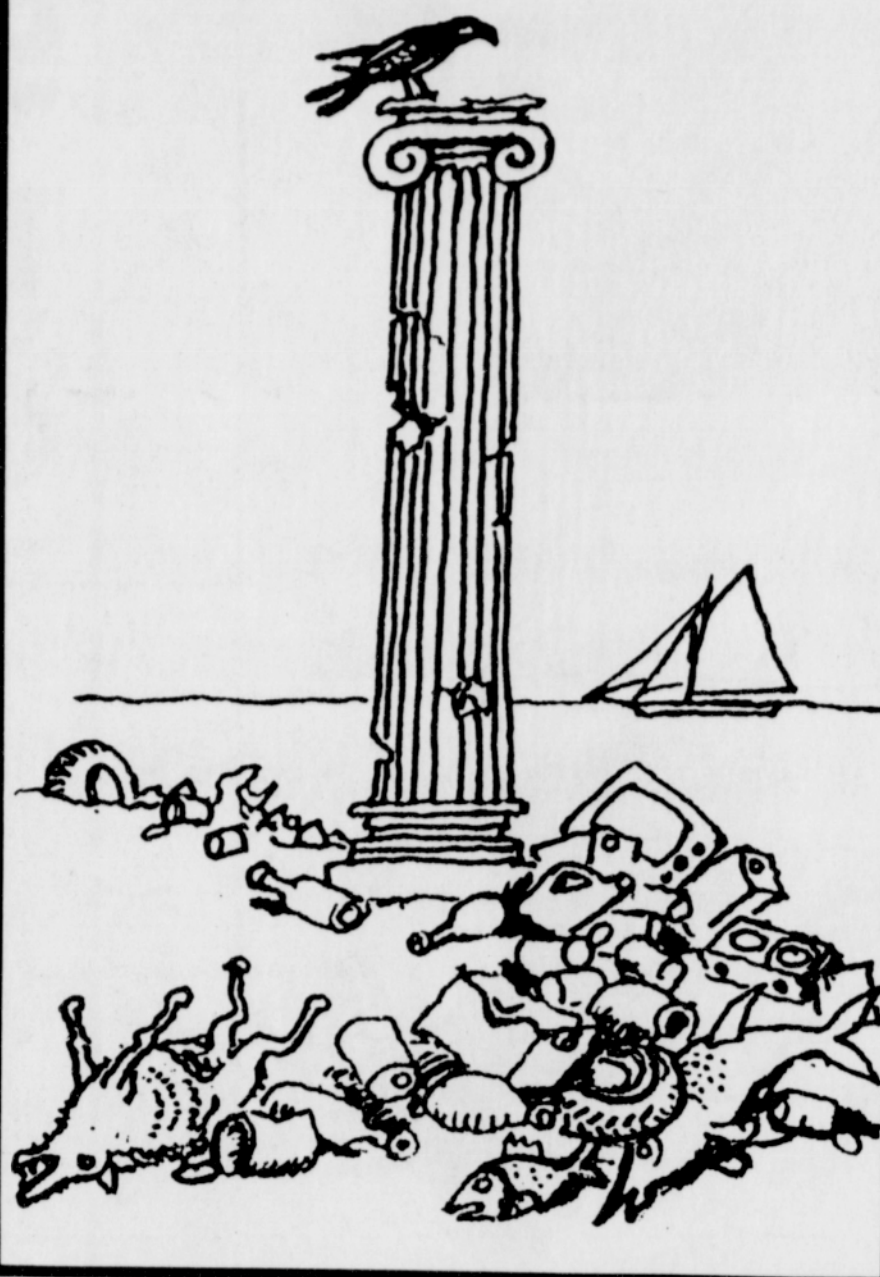
Greece has been recovering from a military dictatorship that lasted seven years, from 1967 to 1974, but the country seems to be losing ground to another agony: the pollution of land and sea by tourists and villagers, by industry and passing supertankers. I have lived in Greece, in a valley near a small fishing village on the east coast, for nineteen years. I have been organizing a grassroots plastic boycott for the past year.

It is difficult to separate the political from the environmental. I have seen this in my work with ghetto kids during the McCarthy presidential campaign of 1968, and I see this in my recent work with setting up the plastic boycott in small villages in Greece. The Alpha and Omega is quality of life in a rich environment.

In pleading the case against plastics I try to emphasize the need to minimize the use of a product that is endangering the livelihoods of local people. They do respond more quickly to abandoned perlong nets wound around their boat propellers that they do to pelicans constricted by those same nets in shallow water. I see that it takes considerable dead sea creatures, both birds and fish, to impress the villagers. By the time death comes daily, the severity of the problem can hardly be remedied. This is precisely the issue I try to address every day. I print flyers proclaiming the dangers that unchecked use of plastic invites.

There were fourteen major forest fires in Greece the summer of '88. They blazed out of control for as long as eighteen days. Experts believe that some of these fires were caused by combustion of dry grass under plastic sacks that flutter about by the hundreds of thousands in the most peaceful landscapes of Europe. Almost all of the fires devastated huge tracts of olive groves, some of them planted by the Venetians 1200 years ago. Most Greek newspapers will cite careless use of cigarettes or developers who set fires to clear land, making it available for building vacation dwellings, but often they are willing to concede that plastics play a new role in causing fires.

Fifteen years ago, before plastics were available in Greece, people stored burnable garbage behind their houses and waited for October 1 to burn. There is a ban on burning anything outdoors from May 1 to October 1.



AQUAPEACE LOGO

by Gail Jacobson

CELEBRATE THE 4TH SLOWLY

An unofficial government inquiry finally concluded the Valdez oil spill was avoidable. The vessel should have been steered away from those nasty rocks. But at least it was learned from this terrible accident how many men it takes to pilot an oil tanker: one and a fifth.

Seriously, though, each of us needs to consider how we contribute to environmental destruction. Exxon, et al, supply us with the petroleum products we demand. It may not be possible or desirable to eliminate all uses of petroleum from our lives, but there is certainly room for conservation, recycling, and more careful use.

A slogan making the rounds these days claims that when the people lead the leaders will follow. On the Fourth of July holiday there will be a massive protest against mindless petroleum use. At least 500 people are expected to die in their cars, trucks and vans. Another 2000 will be injured sufficiently to require medical care. Many will never drive again. If this action is not enough to steer society from its rock-bound course, there will be a repeat protest Labor Day weekend.

Fortunately there are alternatives to suicidal escape from our self-destructive habits. Human powered travel promotes wellbeing while withdrawing support from harmful cultural practices. Liberate your legs and help keep the tankers off the ocean. We will all breathe easier. Let this Fourth of July be a celebration of independence from polluting destructive vehicles.

— LARRY AND MARGE WARNBERG-WELLING

Larry and Marge Warnberg-Welling live in Nahcotta, Washington. They raise oysters.

BOYCOTT

In dry years the ban is extended. To most villagers along the Mediterranean from Turkey to Greece the dangers of burning are unclear. In most of the southern countries of Europe it is common to see women starting their cook fires with plastic sacks they get free at the market with their purchases. Whenever I explain that burning plastic is dangerous they resent this defamation of a freebie in their otherwise spare lives.

Although I believe Americans are generally better educated to the dangers of creating garbage, America remains a throwaway paradise. Americans tend to discuss what to do with the mountains of garbage rather than how to create less of it. My advice to sophisticated city dwellers is the same as my advice to villagers who lead a simpler life:

Boycott products packaged in plastic and complain to the producer about his use of plastic. If he does not send you an answer, send him the packaging telling him you do not believe in what he is doing. If you think the weight of your plastic parcel is heavy and expensive to send, then it is high time you cut back on your plastic consumption.

Find a store that is willing to sell you goods wrapped in paper, cartons or containers that you bring yourself. When you find such a store, spread the word and reward its proprietors for improving quality of life for everyone.

Wear clothes and shoes of natural fibers, and wear them until they have fulfilled their life of wear for you or friends or people in shelters.

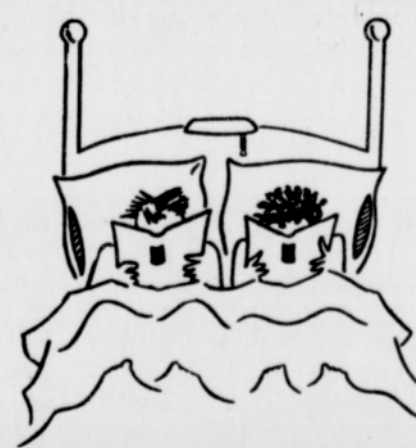
The very best way to create a better life is directed at people who own cars. Ask yourself every single time you get into your car if this is something you could do on foot or by bicycle or by public transport? When you have asked this often enough to leave your car behind, think of selling the beast.

Gail Jacobson has lived in Greece since retiring from teaching in 1968. She owns a rowboat and two bicycles and has never owned a car. She spent last summer living in a house on Neah Kah Nie Mountain. She is presently recovering from pesticide poisoning.



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