



Each year about this time, we're reminded there are still issues in this world which are, if not actually worth dying for, certainly worth bothering others about. Times when to remain silent would be to violate some fundamental law of justice and moral order.

Yes, Albert Einstein's birthday. It's March 14th, as if anyone cared.

Would someone explain to me, very slowly, why banks and schools are open? Why there's mail delivery? Where the commemorative celebrations are? The speeches, the eulogies, the thought piece on 60 Minutes?

Political correctness aside, what culture in its right mind lionizes George Washington (the one standing up in the rowboat) and ignores one of the deepest thinkers humanity has produced, a man who redefined our notions of reality?

Do we sound miffed? We are. And the list just goes on.

Columbus was the first European to winter in the Caribbean. Einstein was the first human to recognize that gravity is the curvature of space/time.

Jefferson wrote great prose. Einstein wrote field equations describing black holes half a century before their effects were observed.

Lincoln freed the labor force and saved the country from a bad business decision. Einstein united mass and energy and saved us from imagining we're separate from what we observe.

Martin Luther King went to the mountain top. Einstein showed that its mass curves light.

Is it just me, or should this count for something?

We love that there's a Labor Day. It's important to remember that, given a chance, the greed mongers in the corner office will feed us and the kids into the machine without overtime benefits.

We love that there's a Veterans Day to honor those men and women who risked their lives to enforce decisions made by power-mad hacks who regard them as statistics.

We love that there's a Memorial Day to honor the dead and encourage us to question authority. And a Fourth of July to celebrate, in advance, our independence and right to life and liberty.

We love holidays and all they stand for, and, were we king, there would be many more of them. One of them Albert Einstein's birthday. If nothing else, we do it for the children.

When Albert was a lad, he wondered what he'd see if he rode on a beam of light.

More than one person told Albert he was an airhead, but he kept on wondering. The mass/energy equation and general relativity were the answers he came up with.

What harm would it do to let school-children know this? Or that, before he described what he saw, humanity honestly believed it knew all there was to know; or, for that matter, that he stopped wearing socks when he realized they weren't necessary?

Where are the lesson plans for wondering? For not giving up when people think you're a little dotty? For imagining that the real issues aren't on Oprah?

And, most importantly, where are all

the masqued balls where we all come dressed as our favorite relativistic wave form?

Halloween, eat your heart out.



Sign held by a thoroughly disgusted looking person on a Newport street corner: "WILL WORK FOR A BUS TICKET."

Bumper sticker on an elderly 4-wheel drive pickup: "CLEARCUTS PREVENT FOREST FIRES."

Note for the euphemistically challenged: It is not a jig saw. It is an acute angle cutting device.

Rumor: Bob Packwood is thinking of running for governor. He heard Barbara Roberts' seat is up for grabs.

Comment from a lady who read the manuscript of a (sob) still unpublished novel I wrote a while back: "I read the whole thing, Alex, but I don't want to talk about it. You're really weird. In fact I don't think I want to talk to you."

Speaking of weird, my friend Brad has filed the papers and is running for governor of Oregon. In living memory he has run for Newport Mayor, City Councilman, County Commissioner, and several federal offices. He always gets my vote. The above mentioned lady may not agree but I firmly believe there isn't enough high weirdness in the world and especially not in state office.

The community of Netarts, though, is doing just fine in the weirdness department. A postcard, printed in Morocco but bearing that community's postmark, arrived at the ULE offices addressed to Yr. Obt. Clnmst., informing that Lorena Bobbit's sister is looking for me. It is signed by one Al Haj, Abdul Aziz.

The author H.P. Lovecraft once wrote of someone of that name as "The mad Arab Abdul Aziz, author of the blasphemous book The Necronomicron."

If Al Haj is the same person he's about 600 years old and should be easily identified. When netted, I suggest immediate shipment to a government shelter for the reality challenged. Meanwhile, personally, being somewhat challenged in the Bobbit area of expertise already, I'm being cautious. Very, very cautious.

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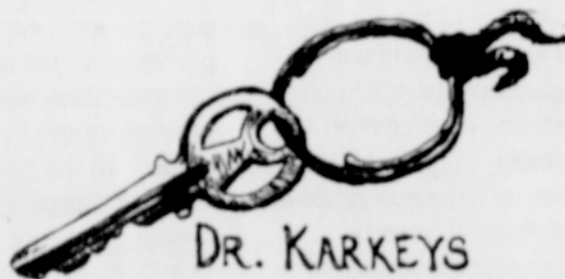
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DR. KARKEYS

The greatest reward of travel may be a renewed appreciation of home. Once upon a time, when outhouses outnumbered MacDonalds, when more reading was done in the former than ever will be in the latter, the elegant advertisements in magazines often were footnoted: "Slightly higher West of the Rockies"

Prey even in my youth to metaphysical dyslexia. I may have confused higher freight costs with heightened consciousness, yet I still feel that Westerners are privileged to live in such dramatic geography that human conceit occasionally withers where it is born.

Young, deep rivers, mountains so new their harsh upthrust edges seem unworn, deserts so vast and fragile that footprints last for decades... this is the world outside our tiny doors. Outflows of the oldest basalt on the earth cross a line of living volcanoes, and winter storms as frightening as the continuous earthquakes are delivered directly from the vast, adjoining ocean.

I am grateful for the immediacy of a place that wears human presence like rain on the back of a bear. It's good to be home.

Jay Raskin
Architect

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