



"There was a time...."
"Once upon a time...."

The Professor likes the ring of those beginnings. He is, after all, a groveller at the trough of recollection and sentiment, a trencherman feasting on what has passed. Experience, like a wild duck hung up to cure, becomes more tender and savory with the passage of time.

There was a time when combing our coast's beaches occupied countless hours of local residents' lives. Storms and currents carried the bounty, often from other shores far-flung and exotic. A traveller passing through a coastal village could easily locate the shacks and sheds of ardent beachcombers. Crusted with the spoils of constant beach gleanings, they stood like cluttered ginger cookie houses -- colorful, varied, and slightly disturbing. Driftwood, crab pots, Japanese wood crates, hemp rope, fish net floats, life rings, sea shells and bottles hung from weathered walls, spilled from shanties, and lined walkways. Turbulent seas and westerly onshore winds sent grizzled coasties in search of sou' wester and oilskins for a walk through the drift lines at high tide.

The earliest combers in our area, the indigenous Clatsop Chinooks and Killamooks, located bee's wax from the Spanish galleon the St. Francis Xavier on local beaches and iron scraps from ship-wrecked vessels. The City of Cannon Beach derives its name from a small cannon (a carronade) retrieved by an early beachcomber, Mr. John Gerritse, from the beach at Arch Cape. Wreckage from the U.S.S. Shark (1846) washed ashore south of the current township of Cannon Beach and was dragged home by Gerritse's horse team.

An honor roll of noted local combers would include the likes of Leon Settem, Silver Point homesteader, who filled a small streambed with prized green glass balls, fishing floats brought on currents from Japan. Harley Sroufe harvested Japanese glass fish floats and drift debris regularly during the 50's and 60's aboard cranky vans and pick-ups, acquiring one of his favorite vehicles in trade for a bottle of whiskey. Those characters and times are gone now.

For many decades following the century's turn, local houses and cabins built from beach timbers and driftwood logs were commonplace. Rare Port Orford incense cedar, tight-grained old-growth Douglas Fir and Asian hardwoods floated ashore in vast quantity. That has ended too. Gentrified coastal communities no longer tolerate messiness. A beachcomber's yard filled with "treasures" would incur the wrath of trendy condominium and second-home owners.

Cannon Beach can still claim one beachcomber, though, impassioned and relentless: Steve McLeod.

Steve and his long-time companion, George the dog, know when the hunt is on. Spring's sustained west winds, all squall and bluster, drive floating objects ashore. The wind during "float season" has a smell, a taste to it, like a whiff of the sea's bowels. Flotsam drifts offshore for years eddying, flowing and ebbing, under the influences of the Japanese (Kuroshio) Current and the Davison and California Currents. Strong westerlies push debris to land.

Steve and George haunt the beaches during spring season and salvage virtually everything they find. Kelp sculptures, walking sticks ornamented with found objects, shell collages, beach assemblages, crab rings, fishing floats of every shape and nation of origin (glass, plastic, iron, cork, and wood), swim fins, driftwood, bird bones, salmon plugs, shells, bottles and light bulbs shrink the walls of his small apartment.

"I've seen veleva on the beach," Steve will tell me. "Could be something coming in." Veleva veleva are a good sign. Small blue jellyfish (relatives of the Portuguese Man O' War) these hydrozoans boast small sails that blow them across the ocean's surface. When they appear, drift treasures appear.

Steve gained national and international attention during the winter and spring of 1991. On May 27, 1990, the container ship Hansa Carrier lost 5 containers overboard containing 80,000 Nike shoes, 500 miles off the Aleutians. Steve began finding scores of these shoes on local beaches. Devoting the next three years to puzzling out their drift patterns, Steve travelled south to the California border, and north to Vancouver Island and the Queen Charlottes, contacting other beachcombers who located Nike shoes and shared data. CNN interviewed Steve. Articles appeared in the Wall Street Journal and syndicated publications. The scientific community (including the National Marine Fisheries Service and N.O.O.A.) solicited Steve's aid in plotting shoe density and site locations. Computer plotting of shoe drift will serve as a tool for future oceanographic research. This month Steve McLeod's beachcombed Nikes appear in a Smithsonian exhibit entitled "Ocean Planet." The show opens April 20th in Washington D.C. Steve still wears his salt-cured Nikes and confesses to dreams of beaches strewn with green glass fish floats.

What follows are some responses to the Professor's raccoon/garbage can problem discussed last month.

Dear Professor,

Your problem is entertaining, but surprisingly enough is not of garbage cans and raccoons! The enterprising critters need to eat, and food is in the can.

So... why not a 4-pallet compost bin, wired together at the top, for vegetable, fruit and plant leavings? Then, inside the house, a 5-gallon plastic tub for meat and fish scraps? These can be put in a plastic sack just before garbage pickup day and put in the can in the morning before pickup. ¡Voila!

But wait... Who will you invite over to eat 5 gallons of ice cream to celebrate your success?

-- An Amused Reader

Personal Environmentalism

By Kim Bossé

Conversations regarding conservation generally seem to be centered on a political apex, environmental issues or financial concerns. By being so involved in issues it is easy to become removed from our personal commitments. Isn't it sad that we do not often take the time or the risk to ponder our intrinsic needs for fresh air, clean water and sustainable natural surroundings. What better way to evaluate our concerns towards the preservation of the environment than to look inward at that which grounds each of us to the earth.

A few years ago a friend challenged me to co-write a mission statement describing our personal attitude rather than a professional one that would outline our own philosophy and lifestyle toward the environment. Because we both made our living writing philosophical statements, goals and objectives for corporations and non-profits, he felt this would be an easy task. Over a bottle of wine and an animated discussion we discovered that identifying our own purpose in life was much more difficult than devising ones for corporations. The following was the best compromise we could agree upon: To live a life that is respectful, mindful and thankful of the place we live in, therefore enabling each of us the capability of giving back more than we take from the environment and the people we interact with.

Once stated the actual act of living up to this self imposed credo has not been easy. Many times I have felt hypocritical in the choices I have made. Last month was one of those periods in which I did not feel I made decisions that allowed me to live up to my expectations. Due to many overwhelming and uncontrollable factors, I had been feeling off center with the world. The balance between what I believed in and what I was doing had been skewed. I felt invaded by too much noise, violence and fear, too much talk without fruition, too many compromises, too little respect, and not enough laughter, smiles or hugs. This resulting in feeling alone and unattached. In order to turn around these frustrations, I decided

to take some time to step aside and re-evaluate what was important and figure out how to interweave that back into the fabric of everyday life. Essentially to revisit my purpose and to remember the differences between wisdom and knowledge, integrity and control. Basically your lapsed-Catholics herbal granola version of an Act of Contrition.

Usually when I feel this way I try to spend some time in or around water. During my life I have always gravitated toward water. Whether it be a place for joyous play, a healing balm, a source of inspiration, or a quiet respite; water has been an instinctive home to me. I remember as a child going down the banks of the Mississippi in the dead of winter, walking out onto the ice, peering down into the holes and just watching the water, looking for fish and having a sense of belonging. Of course I was never allowed to play down by the river when it was frozen, let alone walk out on it and looking back it's amazing that I never got hurt. I didn't go down out of defiance or youthful adventure but rather was simply drawn there. (Hopefully my mother will not read this because I'm sure that even though I'm in my 30's I'll still get grounded or worse yet have my bicycle privileges taken away). Water has always held that magnetic appeal for me. I have always felt an instinctive trust, that it would protect and harbor me. Even when I haven't had the courage to seek out help from friends, I knew that I could find solace in the power and tranquility of water. I can not imagine living in a landlocked area.

So in my little self-imposed funk, I wandered toward the water and did something I rarely do. NOTHING!! Spending time observing and listening to my surroundings and my bodies reaction to them is generally something I do when I am engaged in a physical activity like hiking or playing in the water. But to just sit and allow my mind to wander in no direction for a long period of time... well, it is not a luxury I often take. My eye was caught by fragile prisms in a damp tree, the smell of the wet soil as the sunlight hit it and the reflection of the clouds flying through the water. Sometimes you need to listen to the trees, feel the harshness of the wind, and hear the song of the waves to rekindle your soul. So on that sunny afternoon being beside the water reminded me that we need to spend less time trying to control things and more time allowing what's meant to happen, to happen. For me the bottom line is that having an intimacy with nature helps me to retain a balance and simplicity that can be lost in our everyday hectic schedules. It illuminates the souls quest for belonging within the natural and manmade environment and brings me back full circle to my own purpose in life.

This is why I feel it is important to think about our innate relationships within the natural world and equate them to our conservation projects and lifestyles. While the biological and social issues are important, these personal inter-relationships are also essential to the political and financial decisions we make regarding the environment. So find your hole in the surf or crack in the sky and enjoy.

P.S. HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION

Mark Saturday June 17th on your calendars. The City of Cannon Beach in conjunction with the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and Clatsop County will be hosting another Hazardous Waste Pickup between 10 AM & 4 PM in the city hall parking lot between Hemlock and Glower Streets. For detailed information on what will be accepted call City Hall at 436-1581.



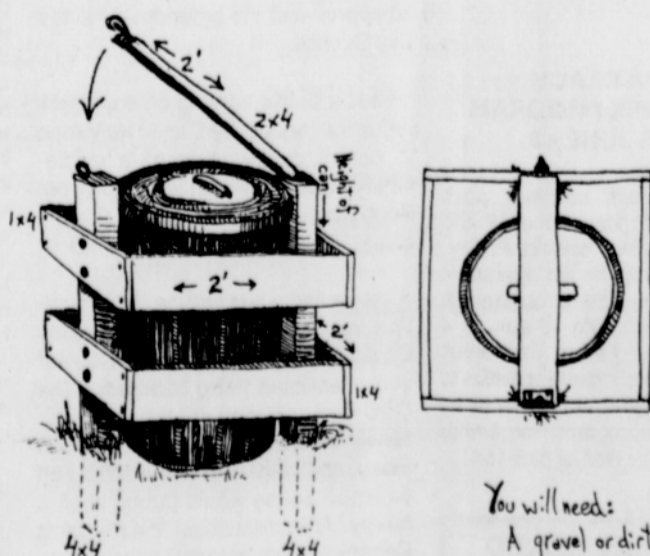
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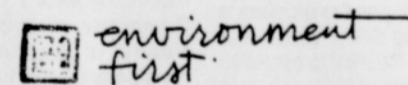
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... And This idea was submitted by Mr. Bob Cerelli.

You will need:
A gravel or dirt surface
10' 4x4
16' 1x4
2' 2x4
1 Hinge
1 Hook



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