

The Week of the Wind has blessedly passed. Whew! A Zephyrus sigh escapes my lips that is not unlike the soft sigh I breathe following Thanksgiving dinner or the end of the Christmas holidays. The winds still blow, rest assured of that fact, but the bluster and hype has abated. Sometimes the storm created in newsrooms and public agencies across our nation exceeds that in the earth's atmosphere itself. As Genesis tells us: "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." On our chunk of the Upper Left Edge the Breath of Heaven cannot be dispensed with lightly. The wind has its tricks and magic. Swirls at the center of supertornadoes have been estimated to approach speeds of up to 1220 kilometers an hour. Wheat straws are routinely embedded in the bark of trees in St. Louis, wind shot a pine plank right through a solid iron girder supporting the Eads Bridge. In the Midwest, a whole herd of cattle were lifted aloft and were seen drifting along together like gigantic birds in the sky. Nasty winds grind the earth. In Japan the Arashi "stormwind" blows. The Kamakaza, or sickle wind, cuts like a knife into one's body. The Daibafu or Giba, the "hang-horsewind" is strong enough to smash down horse and rider. Roksblow in Iceland. The Ty Fung of China, the Willy-Willy of Timor and the Baguio of the Philippines scourge and tear at sea, earth, and sky.

Last Monday word went out. A bruising, mauling wind had started north to beat up the Northwest. Recommendations for emergency precautions and school closures held the day. The television news teams began salivating, hungry for a feast of storm carnage and destruction right here on their own turf. On Tuesday, the barometer slid down badly. The first gusts Tuesday drove my pals and I indoors for the duration of the day. At noon a hastily organized CBS Evening News Team was dispatched and arrived in Cannon Beach to send a report back to the East describing the situation here. They interviewed several local residents, hoping to transmit fear and cataclysmic foreboding across the country via television. One Cannon Beach resident interviewed said his chief concern was that Bill's Tavern would be closed during the storm. Several others shrugged off the wind's threat. Locals tend to become wind and storm jaded. They've seen it howl in over The Rock many times before. I spent Tuesday afternoon lolling in an armchair in my friend's home watching television coverage of the storm. I considered their treatment of the storm and its effects on the state to be appalling and disturbing. The broadcasters were not content with simply reporting weather data and storm activity. Television news seeks to entertain, and if the actual events occurring don't fit the script, then the news commentators editorialize and infuse on-screen images with the heightened emotional atmosphere they seek. We spun the TV channels all afternoon. On every channel over-zealous on-the-scene reporters, the "talking heads" of television news, whipped themselves into berserkerfrenzies over fallen trees and power outages. I suspect that every downed tree in the city of Portland was televised and scrutinized by two or three newscasters. Singularly embarrassing performances by "the Boz" and some hypertensive nit-wit in a snowsuit covering the Jantzen Beach boat moorage for Channel 6 set the tone for Storm Tuesday '95. I am deeply concerned at what appears to be a trend in contemporary newscasting. Exaggerating the severity of storms, earthquakes, floods, and other disasters in order to sell broadcasting is irresponsible, unethical, and dangerous. Goading the general population into an emotional froth, playing on their fears and uneasiness, is reprehensible and inexcusable. It was a restless wind, a wayward wind. It blew through the willows, cried Mary to some, Louise to others. It may have been an ill wind, with dreadful rain, but it wasn't the wind I saw on TV last Tuesday.

MARY WHITEFISH, CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

pause, she continued: "Sun has many children, but fog is the most mischievous. Fog is always running away from sun's house. Every night fog escapes and sun spends the mornings trying to bring fog home, inside. Some days, it can't be done. Some days, sun locks fog in all day, all night, all night, all day. But fog is clever and always finds a way out."

In the silence, broken only by the slow slush of the waves breaking on the beach and the gurgle of the stream just beyond the fireplace, fog swirled and played. Gloom of dusk was setting in, and it was time for Steve and me to head for home. We washed up our cups; Mary remained seated and quiet. Steve stoked the fire and we started up the trail: no good-byes, no come agains. Yet I knew we would.

Steve and I had about three miles to go before we reached our houses and we needed to do it before it got too dark. We walked rapidly and for the most part silently. I broke the silence to ask, "Where did Mary get the story about the fog, do you suppose? Did she make it up?"

"She may have; she's good at doing that, and she likes to talk in tales. Or she may have learned it from her people. When I asked her about that anemone story which I told you on the beach, she said it was an Umquit tale."

"Is she the only Umquit around, do you know? That was one of the things I wanted to ask her. But somehow I found it impossible to ask her anything. It didn't seem right. I felt like I had to wait and let her tell me things."

MONEY

By John Buckley

The thing that differentiates man from the animals is money. Gertrude Stein

George Washington had to borrow money to pay for his trip to his first inauguration. Abraham Lincoln's regard for money extended no further than keeping his family in modestly decent circumstances. Thomas Jefferson died broke. Andrew Carnegie, of all people, said the mere "amassing of wealth is one of the worst species of idolatry."

Most of us have heard the old saw, "What comes around goes around." In the US, in 1900, 1% of the population is reported to have controlled 90% of the wealth. In 1990, 7% to 8% was the figure. For the world at large in the same year 2% to 3% controlled 90% of the world's wealth. So much for old saws as far as money is concerned.

Money. Mazuma. The long green. Jack. "The love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). It is "the most important thing in the world" (George Bernard Shaw). It is "the alienated essence of man's work and existence" (Karl Marx). "There is nothing so habit forming as money" (Don Marquis). "Money is a kind of poetry" (Wallace Stevens).

Money. It is a medium of exchange, a measure of some values. It is an index of power and influence, a social marker like your address or the number of feathers in your war bonnet. Iago counseled, "Put money in thy purse," and we heed his advice, keeping the figure to ourselves. It comes in handy when you want to take a vacation or get the car fixed. Get pinched, bail is a matter of money. It is "the final enemy that will never be subdued" (Samuel Butler). It is "better than poverty, if only for financial reasons" (Woody Allen).

Not all that many things occupy as central a place in our lives as money. The usual reply to that is, "you've got to live." Note: in that formulation money equals life.

Try numbering the days lately when no thought one way or another was given to money. Few subjects provoke such intense and varied responses. When it comes to dough-re-me, detachment is for the other guy. You can learn a lot about someone if you have a feeling for their attitudes about money. You can learn a lot about yourself.

Money is like sex and the weather. Who is without opinions about it? Listening to tirades against money is like listening to angry soon-to-be-ex-spouses on the eve of their divorce settlement. About which are they more angry? Marriage or the party they'd stopped having it with? Francis Bacon in his essay, "Of Riches" (1597), cautioned we should not believe people who claimed to despise money, despise wealth. He called them pretenders, hypocrites.

Sour grapes is one thing. An informed understanding of the injustices that can stem from fortress concentration of wealth is another.

When it comes to money we all put our own spin on the matter, but consider these three familiar ways of looking at it:

First, money as something in itself. This is the point of view that creates, among other things, misers. Words like greed, avarice and covetousness come to mind. Words one doesn't hear all that often given the prestige that attaches to wealth. The infrequency of their use in polite conversation suggests denial of the downside in human and moral

terms of this domineering value.

Greed is numbered among the Seven Deadly Sins, a form of idolization and false worship. Such reverence is commonly known to deepen one's talents for suspicion and dismissive opinions of one's neighbors. After all, when it comes to important things like money and your good opinion of yourself, whom can you trust?

Next. Undoubtedly the most common attitude, succinctly put, is "no money, no live." Salt isn't the salt of life, money is. Food, the rent, gas, the kid's diapers, all cost money. So we find work, i.e., exchange our labor for the money to pay for those things. The class of people we are born into and our personal and family choices and ambitions have a lot to do with the kind of work we seek and how much we think we are worth. What is achieved is called one's standard of living. It is not for nothing that when that standard is graphically portrayed it looks like a thermometer.

With some seasoning many come to realize that not having a lot of wants, especially of the vain and impulsive sort, is a kind of wealth. Meanwhile, there is the constantly rising cost of living, work insecurity, health matters and having enough for your spouse's and your old age.

Many of us are doing just fine, but increasingly for many the exchange rate isn't keeping up. Enter, "to economize." A lonely fearful business when what you have to sell, your labor, no one wants to buy or if they do, then at a price telling you you're not worth much.

A third way of looking at money is as a commodity. Just as oil and Coca Cola are treated as commodities by individuals and corporations having a proprietary interest in them, so can money be regarded. The commodity point of view is one reason to have retirement accounts, to have savings plans — if, that is, we can afford them. The notion is a simple one. Farmers plant wheat to make money. Money regarded as a commodity is "planted" to grow more money. Just as wheat seeds beget wheat, so money can beget money. Unlike wheat, however, money is almost always in season.

Big money. Surplus money. Extra money. In an uncertain world informed treatment of it as a commodity is the most productive and safest way. Of course, there are risks. There are always risks. Death and taxes are about as close as we get to sure bets. Stuff the money in the mattress, hide it underneath the floorboards, one thing you can be fairly certain of is that it will be worth less in purchasing power when you resurrect it.

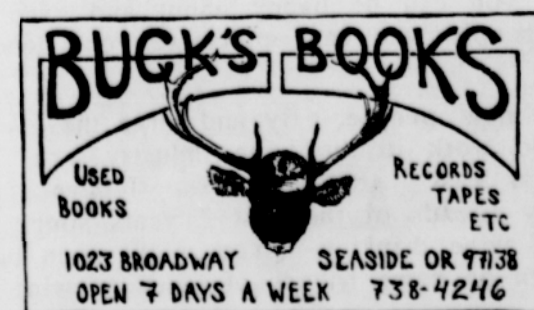
A good cigar may still be a smoke, but a dollar hasn't been worth a dollar since who knows when. Maybe never. In November I paid \$1.09 for a dozen eggs. In December, \$1.29. Soon enough, if not already, the \$50 bill will play the role in the walking-around-money department that the \$10 bill played.

Many who have amassed great fortunes claim not to have been interested in money as such. Which is not to say they pooh-poohed the status and life-style it provided. Look into their lives and you will discover that neither Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller or Henry Ford were spellbound by money. Many top-notch professional athletes have expressed surprise at getting rich playing a game. So has Bill Gates, at forty years of age reputed to be the richest man in the country. Rather, these people tend to talk about putting their talents or better ideas to the test. They talk not only about their fortune, they also talk about making their luck. In this country, as elsewhere, that mostly means in the marketplace. Common consent has it you've passed with flying marks when the money comes cascading in.

The meaning of money? Consider these sentences by Lewis H. Lapham from his book, *Money and Class in America* (1988):

"Money is like fire, an element as little troubled by moralizing as earth, air and water. Men can employ it as a tool or they can dance around it as if it were the incarnation of a god. Money votes socialist or monarchist, finds a profit in pornography or translations from the Bible, commissions Rembrandt and underwrites the technology of Auschwitz. It acquires its meaning from the uses to which it is put."

We've all got our own take on money as a fact of life, a symbol and a necessity. One thought I expect most of us would agree upon, though, is that it takes more money than ever before to go broke.



UPPER LEFT EDGE JANUARY 1996 3