

Initially, I intended to present my own "modest proposal", that the State of Oregon simply clearcut the scant remaining older growth timber in Ecola Park. Shoot, they'd already scrounged up a good passel of the best old growth spruce and hemlock in our area at Oswald West State Park some years ago under the guise of "wind Salvage". The Oregon Department of Transportation engineers, armed with some spurious data they scrambled up in their Salem computers, sliced down all the trees adjacent to the highway crossing Neahkahie Mountain two years ago, ostensibly to eliminate soil slippage. When Ecola Park closed as a consequence of storm-triggered erosion, the brain boys sitting in the parks department think tank in Salem consulted their computers, checked the price of pulp, and gave the chain-saw guys the go ahead. Hell, nobody would even realize any trees had been cut; with the gates to the park locked. Might as well make a clean sweep of things. Take the revenue from the trees and put in some more RV sites at Fort Stevens. Besides, with all the clear cutting going on all around the park by Cavenham Corporation, no one would be able to tell the difference.

My friend Vi Thompson asked me one evening at dinner, "Peter, why do you think people want to hurt trees? Don't they like trees?" At first, I thought she was simply being facetious. Violet loves joshing me just to test the waters, but she was serious. I confessed then not to have an answer, but I've thought of her comment often. Violet, like some others who pay attention, likes trees. She buys sitka spruce seedlings with an eye toward replanting the ravaged stands of our native conifers, sitka spruce, red cedar, and Western hemlock.

"What do you do if it's your last day on earth?", she often asks me. "Why, plant a tree, of course."

Martin Luther once said much the same thing: "And even if the world should end tomorrow, I still would plant my little apple tree."

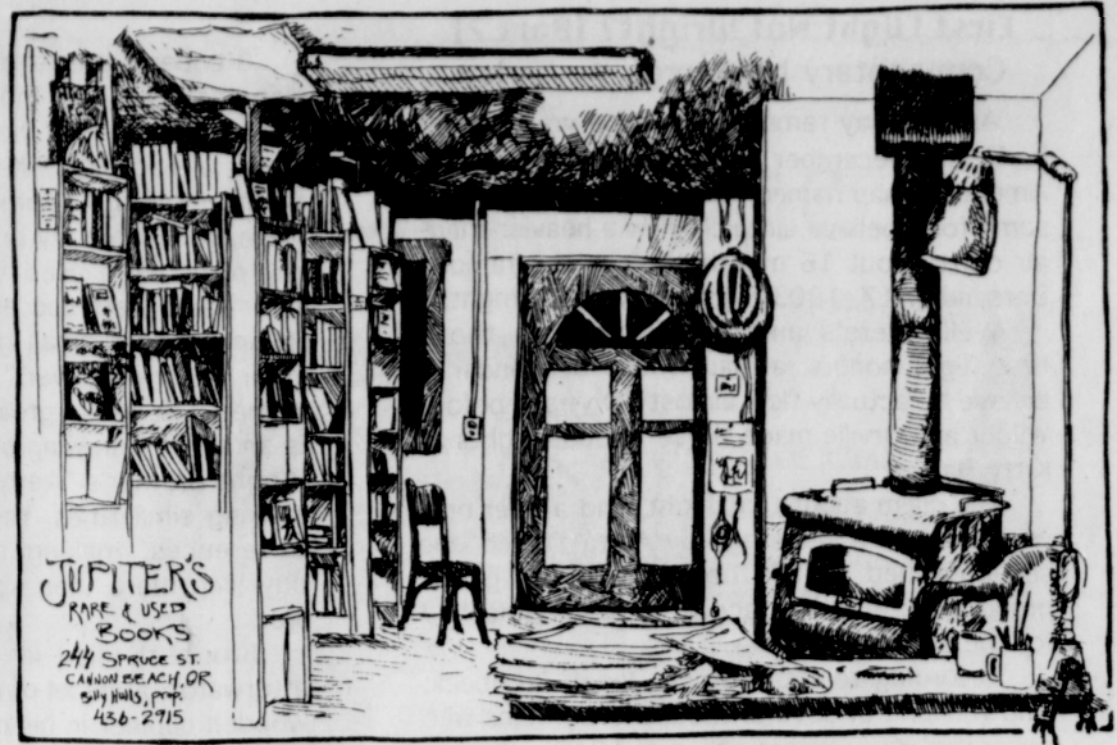
I've decided to take Violet's position, and accept that many people in our culture look on trees with disdain. But why? To console myself, I've sought out some motive behind the elimination of all aged, mature, and stately trees, besides those old favorites, greed and ignorance. I've seen very young children step out of automobiles in campgrounds, pick up an axe, and begin hacking away at the nearest tree. The Father of Our Country, George Washington himself, got in Dutch for whacking at that famous cherry tree. Abe Lincoln thought nothing of felling a few trees in his day. Something deeply imbedded in our cultural psyche shivers at the prospect of dark forests, the wilderness, brooding stands of deep timber. I've begun to think perhaps some subtle mythic fear is operating here. Remember the movie *The Wizard of Oz*? When Dorothy approached the forest, the stylized stage set portrayed a place dark and fearful, threatening. In Disney movies, the most terrifying things occur in scary forests. Kurtz in *The Heart of Darkness*, Daniel Boone, J.R.R. Tolkien's Hobbits, and scads of Grimm and other folk characters run amok in the woods. Consider Goldilocks or Winnie-the-Pooh stuck up that honey tree. Our forefathers in Salem, Massachusetts thought Devil worshippers danced in dark forest clearings on moonlit nights. Indians, red devils incarnate, lived in those trees and attacked settlements on cleared land.

If that weren't bad enough, the cross Christ was crucified on was referred to, in other times, as "the tree". In hangin' times, the gallows was also referred to as "the tree".

So you see, now when I walk through the trails and roadways of my beloved Ecola Park and see the stumps and creeks eroded by adjacent logging, I tell myself that those who carved up the last handfuls of old spruce and hemlock can't help themselves. They're not greedy or short sighted, only products of their own myths and culture.

Soon the only place we will see old growth trees will be golf courses and cemeteries. Hmmm.

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I fear explanations explanatory of things explained.  
Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1865

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Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend,  
inside of a dog it's too dark to read.  
Groucho Marx  
All those in favor of free speech  
raise your hand.

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- TOP TEN REASONS WE SHOULD EVACUATE FOR SONIC TSUNAMIS:
- 1) It amuses Alfred and Gary.
  - 2) It clears the beach for the real surfers.
  - 3) Everyone should see you without makeup at least once.
  - 4) It makes time for visiting neighbors who'd otherwise be at work.
  - 5) It is fun to drive fast.
  - 6) You are reminded to repair your garage door remote, car door lock, out-of-balance washing machine, and safety rail on your platform bed.
  - 7) You learn your material priorities: cigarettes, beer, parrots, earrings, coffee, cell phone, papers.
  - 8) It is good exercise catching your cats, dog, and pet iguana.
  - 9) Keiko doesn't live here, so there isn't much to do.
  - 10) Most motel rooms don't have alarm clocks.

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