

My father was a canny Scots gentleman given to prudence and value. He counselled us to purchase or acquire the best we could possibly afford, with an eye to durability and longevity. He repaired and restored our household possessions and took pains to avoid shoddiness or disposability. When I left the fine old Plumb shingling hatchet that passed from my grandfather through my father to me, I sense its appropriateness of purpose, its worth to me as a tool and means of livelihood these past 20 years. He revered a fine straight-grained timber and his vintage Record and Stanley planes for working wood. The home he built on Laurel Street in his 72nd year, testified to the value of his skill and the merits of his trusted tools sharp and oiled. The Lindseys repaired things, fixed screen doors, darned socks, patched tires, honed knives, glazed windows. We winced when consigning some failed item to the trash heap.

I remember my mother carting home a loaf of "balloon bread" from the store as a concession to modernity. My father squeeze the entire loaf into a golf-ball sized lump and launched into a tirade. I wonder how he would respond to the latest Stanley tools, cheap, stamped-out items fabricated of plastic and reclaimed steel.

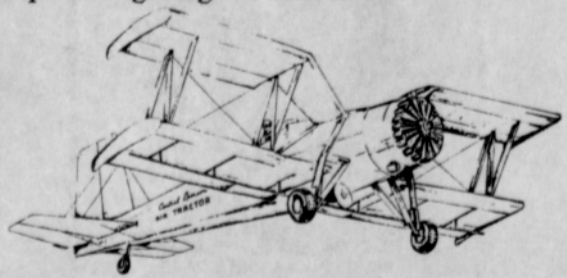
I guess this piece is a short grumble, a mild peeve about modern things, the "stuffness" of our time. So much of what comprises our current world is short-lived and cannot be repaired, re-used or salvaged. Attribute my irked condition to a Saturday spent at garage sales, if you will. For two hours this weekend I wandered through four homes staging estate sales and watched buyers picking over the bones. Relatives manned the cash box hoping to scratch a few dollars from sales of grandpa's effects, the money helping in some way to finance the cost of a nest home. The four homes were like cultural core samples. An astute archeologist could assess the contents and see what makes us tick. The picture is not pretty. Boxes of Tupperware containers, rusty T.V. dinner stands, water-bed heaters, eight-track stereo cassettes, unspeakable racks of viper green and tangerine-orange rayon and "virgin acrylic" clothing--unfit as even dustrags--souvenir trivets, haggard electrical appliances of every race and ethnic background, "air-pop" popcorn poppers. Do we have no shame? Even Sanford and Son would shake their heads in dismay. Most of this junk is unfixable and unclaimable. How many holes in the landscape can we fill with this unspeakable mass?

In a time gone by, things could be repaired and re-used. Even automobiles. Two decades ago Phillipine merchant vessels would dock in Astoria. Empty vessels periodically tied up at the Port of Astoria from that nation. Foraging parties of merchant seaman from those vessels would scour Clatsop County, searching for used automobiles that could be purchased for a song. Once acquired, those autos rode home to the Phillipines where inventive mechanics tinkered and patched and fiddled until they had useful transportation. A cunning person could fix those cars with a modicum of imagination and tools at hand. In the fine drama *Teahouse of the August Moon*, the playwright describes the delightful skills employed by Okinawans in modifying the humble Jeep for a wide range of practical purposes. I suspect the current crop of Lexus sedans and Mercury town cars, with their computerized circuitry and throw-away componentry, would not even rust away in a seemly fashion to add iron to the landfill.

I spend my life in the building trades. All the decent timber is gone. Two by four dimensional lumber from "super trees" shows up with bark on both sides of a board, three or four growth rings to a stick. Composite materials, "faux wood," and Wolmanized wood products with a lifetime guarantee are the order of the day. When buildings using these products are dismantled, the refuse cannot even be safely incinerated, and the arsenic salts in Wolmanized wood shouldn't be introduced into the soil when decomposed. Vinyl windows, carpeting, laminates, composition roofing...Christ, it gives you the creeps. Old boards from wood buildings, stone, cedar shingles--these materials could be resurrected, reclaimed, refashioned.

The things we consume now are touted as "no maintenance" and guaranteed for life, a short life in most cases. Just try to repair a ten-year old micro-wave oven!

I thought I'd close with a design for an early-forties aircraft that my friend Vi Thompson and her friend Bob Lamson, a test pilot for Boeing's B-29, conceived and drew in that era. Geared to the needs of agriculturists in lonely places, the wings featured modules that could literally be hay-wired back onto the fuselage of the aircraft. Pretty keen, huh? Your Professor isn't anti-technology, he just likes to see things created with an eye to prolonged usefulness. Let's stop building things we can't fix!



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Walking, recently, through pulsing downtown Boston streets, I attempt to describe Cannon Beach to a colleague from the Midwest. We have words in common, but we know well that we do not share much common, environmental ground: I speak of our big trees, beaches, waves, cliffs, elk, whales, tourists, but I can't shake the feeling that his Midwestern imagination paints a picture very different from the realities of our native terra firma. We duck into the crowd entering the city aquarium, built amidst skyscrapers, subway stations, and highway bypasses, on old, industrial piers. Winding through blue aquarium luminescence, the crowds, surge pulls us outside, to face a tank of harbor seals. Here, in the narrow, recessed space between our viewing platform and a schmaltzy seascape mural, seals swim, chase, perch on artificial concrete rocks, snort, and blink their huge, watery eyes. (Here they live, every hour of every day, half of these hours with an audience.) Tourist swarms jostle and crowd, seek the best view, light up the blue tank waters with cameras, flash. A neon-clad woman fights her way to the front, and holds a boy aloft with pale, fleshy arms, so that he may press his face and fingers against the protective glass, shrieking at the spectacle, leaving mucous streaks in opaque zigs and zags -- like the signature mark of an perverse anti-hero, I think: Zorro's evil and expectorating twin. My eyes rise, scanning the painted, mural seascape. Here, through the confusion and snot, I am confronted with the outline of familiar shapes: Haystack Rock, Chapman Point, Silver Point, the Needles. It is the view from Ecola. I point and grin: "Get in there. With the seals. Up close to the mural," I say to my friend, "And you will know exactly what it feels like to live in Cannon Beach."

Certainly, wherever you go, there is a chance of seeing images of Cannon Beach: in East Coast "Free Willy" promotional flotsam, in European pharmaceutical ads, in Deep South books of inspirational sayings, in car advertisements on television flickering in the chilly light of Los Angeles malls. And always, these images reinforce my sense that we are doomed. For millions of people, our home fits some preconceived, idyllic and scenic coastal ideal. Many want to see this place. And they want to move here. Wherever I travel in this country, people, good people, most, tell me: "You are from the Pacific Northwest? I plan to move there!" And often, their decision is based on little more than a smattering of media images and a desire to escape the place in which they now live. I never know how to respond. Certainly, our retail outlets will thrive, our real estate developers will climb into yet higher tax brackets, and our realtors will earn their commissions, ceremonial titles, and colored jackets. And most of us are immigrants, or their progeny. But what will happen to the land, the creatures, and the people who live here already?

Already, the population density in the Willamette Valley and the Puget Sound are approaching that of the United States' hyper-developed east coast. A hundred years ago, or so, when the first hotels were being built on the north coast, cities the size of the modern Seattle or Portland metropolitan areas would have been among the largest cities on Earth. Today we complain bitterly about population pressures, but demographers estimate that the population of western Oregon and Washington may double in the next two to three decades. And growth will not simply stop at this point: it will probably bound upward in the decades that follow. What will that look like? How will that feel? How many of us who live here now will pack up and move elsewhere?

Of course, this isn't new news. Long ago, some native peoples of the Oregon coast prophesized: they would be annihilated, wiped away from the face of the earth, and would be replaced by the "Moving People," freakish, antsy beings who would arrive, develop no meaningful attachments with the land and its creatures, take from the land, destroy the land, and move on, to be replaced by successive waves of Moving People from elsewhere. Surely, gathered around longhouse fires, native peoples hoped that these incomprehensible beings were mythical inventions, tales told to frighten children into compliance with some moral tenet or another.

But here we are. We Moving People retain an optimistic belief in the potential for self-

improvement over the next hill. And more and more, our freedom to move and live where we choose collides with our freedom to live in healthy, sustainable communities. By the millions, Americans have hopped, locust-like, from farm to city to suburb, from east coast to west coast, from rust belt to sun belt, from old community to new community. Populations surge, problems emerge, and the people with the means to do depart once again for greener pastures, leaving much blight in their wake. And I fear that, at this particularly mobile and media-rich point in Western history, our pastures look very green indeed.

For the entire history of the Northwest, humans have lived in islands of population amidst a sea of forests and mountains; increasingly we will live in a sea of developed areas, encircling shrinking islands of managed wildness. (This, despite Oregon's urban growth boundaries, which, by law, must expand to accommodate population growth.) Despite protected areas, some native plants and animals will become extinct, as they are mowed down, pushed back, and restricted to genetically impoverished pockets. (In the last hundred years, for a number of reasons, we have lost a host of creatures from the Northwest, wolves and grizzlies among them, and other creatures may soon follow.) A stunning percentage of our waterways will become "urban waterways," clad in concrete and blacktop: the landscape will be "hardened," causing downstream floods in winter and summertime aridity. Small amounts of pollution will emit from a million new households, and fish will not fare well. Left to the unregulated supply-and-demand logic of the real estate market, farmland will not persist, and we will need more fuel, more money, more machines to obtain our food. Every summer on the coast brings us a bigger burst of human activity as the exploding urban population attempts to fit into the finite scenic spaces in which we live, but you ain't seen nothing yet. We will see unprecedented pollution and congestion. We will see severely trampled trails, beaches and intertidal rocks. We will wake every morning to the deafening din of power equipment.

But not all of these symptoms are inevitable. Blight, at its root, is ideological. It can be ameliorated, directly and indirectly, through education and legislation. As Moving People, we seldom have learned to live for the long-term on the land: to set down roots, to learn the names of the trees, the calls of the birds, the smells of spring, the way the wind blows before a storm, the curves and feel of the land. To go native. Too often, places are reduced to abstractions, parcels and experiences to be bought or sold, boomtowns to be mined for quick bucks, fitting our aloof, a priori expectations like the anonymous seashore scenes in an aquarium mural. Despoilation has deep, cultural roots. But, it is important to consider, as we prepare to be besieged, that we live in places in which humans, plants, animals have co-existed for thousands of years, and in which they must co-exist for thousands more. It is a pivotal moment, but in historical terms it is a flash in the proverbial pan. And those of us who know this place, who know it intimately, carry a special responsibility in all this. While we still have the chance, there is a strong incentive to set the stage for the boom ahead -- to find alternatives for lower-impact living, and to identify and designate places which we feel should survive into the coming decades. And we might try to help the people who move here learn to cherish this place in a way they may not have back home: to see the coastline as something more than a generic and disposable source of scenery, to recognize their intimate relationship to the places they occupy -- to love, honor, and protect the landscape, in good times and in bad.

We probably cannot keep more Moving People from moving here; we have little choice but to search, quickly and intently, for ways to live with them.

People interested in learning more about Oregon's growth management strategy might want to check out H.J. Leonard's *Managing Oregon's Growth: The Politics of Development and Planning*. (Washington D.C.: Conservation Foundation, 1983) or look up the subject "Land Use Oregon Planning" at your local library. Certain organizations work to limit urban sprawl and protect sensitive scenic and environmental areas in the Northwest, including 1000 Friends of Oregon ((503)497-1000 or 534 SW 3rd Ave. Suite 300, Portland OR 97204) and 1000 Friends of Washington (206)343-0681 or 1305 4th Avenue #303, Seattle, WA 98101). The Nature Conservancy works to preserve habitats, plants, and animals endangered by growth and poor land management -- the Oregon chapter can be contacted at (503)230-1221 or 821 S.E. 14th Ave. Portland OR 97214.

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