

Rev.
Hults

Editorial Now & Then



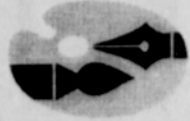
If I were to tell an astrologer that I was born June 2nd, 1944 she could work up a chart that might tell me what the future holds. If, on the other hand I give the same information to the scientists who are studying the health effects of radioactive releases from the Hanford Nuclear Reservation from 1944 through 1957, well, I might learn even more about my hopes for any future at all.

My son James and I were walking home on the beach when I spotted a flight of Brown Pelicans skimming the wave tops, heading south. The pelicans are wonderful to watch, they fly single file and the leader will pump his wings rhythmically, then set them and glide, each bird in turn will do the same until they are all on glide for a moment, then the leader will start pumping, then the next, and the next will break their glide, over and over as they fly south. They are like flying music. I mentioned to James that he almost didn't get to see the beauty before us, because the Brown Pelican was on its way to extinction until we finally banned DDT. "What's DDT?", he asked. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. It was as if he had asked "What's racism?" Well, I told him about DDT and how we used to think it was a miracle chemical that had helped us wipe out diseases and various pests. I told him how I had been sprayed with it in the Navy after we found some unwelcome critters on the ship. How it was used to wipe out mosquitos that carried Malaria and other diseases. And then how we had discovered the Pelicans and Eagle who were exposed to it began to lay eggs with shells so thin that they wouldn't survive long enough to hatch. He agreed that it was a good thing that we banned it. But I told him DDT is still used in other countries and can still be detected in breast milk of pregnant women, to such a degree that if it were in any other container it could not be shipped anywhere in the United States. He wondered why we had used such a dangerous chemical in the first place. I was reminded of the story Dennis Hayes, the founder of Earth Day, told us on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of what started the modern environmental movement. He said that if on the very first Earth Day he had been asked to name one chemical that was absolutely harmless, non-toxic, non-corrosive, could be swallowed with no ill effects, he would have named Chlorofluorocarbons. You see, he said, it wasn't until ten years later when a scientist in California noticed what happened when this harmless chemical reached the Ozone layer: it began destroying it. Our children ask how we could have acted so recklessly. Well, the truth is we just didn't know any better. Last month Doug Deur's article on forest practices in the past, and the clear cuts of today, is an example. As we try to find ways to stop the dangerous behavior of corporations and individuals that we all pay for, we must remember how far we have come and how much we have learned. In some cases, like tobacco abuse, it is obvious that the industry knew the dangers it was exposing its customer to as early as the fifties. In other cases like the chemical industries and nuclear industries it is not so clear. Yes, in some cases it was reckless greed that motivated companies to put products that were not safe on the market. In the case of Hanford, though, the scientists had a pretty good idea that what they were doing was dangerous to a large part of the population, but they were prevented from going public with their information due to the Cold War's need for National Security. I didn't learn until the Sixties that because I was under eleven when Stronium 90 was released from Hanford, I probably had accumulated it in my young bones. When my sister got Lukemia no one knew what had caused it, and there was no cure. Well, I'm delighted to say as I write this she is celebrating her Sixtieth Birthday in Hawaii. She underwent an experimental operation that obviously worked for her in, Chicago in the late Sixties. Now folks are doing a study on people exposed to Iodine 131 also released from Hanford in the forties and fifties. Iodine 131 is thought to cause Thyroid problems, like Thyroid Cancer. As a 'downwinder', which is what they call folks exposed to radioactive material in the atmosphere, I have decided to participate in this study, and urge other to join. It occured to me that the study was being done not to find out what killed or crippled so many, they already know that, but why some of us are still alive.

The information they sent me included an anonymous story of one young couple who moved to Richland so the husband could make good money working at Hanford. The wife got sick, the two boys they had were born with weak immune systems, but they couldn't move away even if they thought they were in danger because the husband needed his job. When he died of cancer, the wife and children moved away. The project is called the Hanford Individual Dose Assessment Project and the number is 1-800-432-6242, and if you were there, then, I ask you to give them a call, now that we can, we should find out.

Recently reading a collection of Calvin & Hobbes cartoons by Bill Watterson, a wonderful strip that used to run in the Big O, there was one strip that seemed relevant, it shows Calvin reading his Science Fiction story to Hobbes, the story is in the form of a poem that we would like to share with our readers.

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I like Republicans, and I would trust them with anything in the world except public office. Adlai Stevenson

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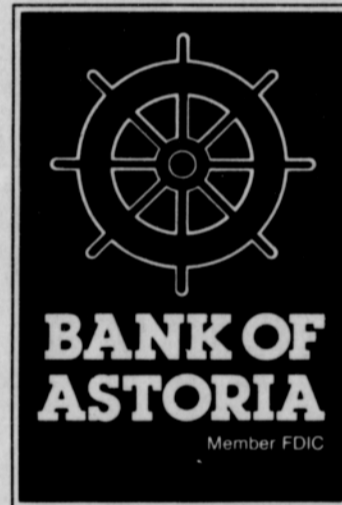
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"The aliens came from a far distant world on a large yellow ship that blinked as it twirled. It rounded the moon and entered our sky. We knew they had come but we didn't know why. Bright the next morning with noisy commotion the ship slowly moved over the ocean. It lowered a tube and drained the whole sea for transport back to their galaxy. The tube then sucked up the clouds and the air, causing no small amount of earthling despair. With nothing to breathe we started to die. "Help us! Please stop!" was the public outcry. A hatch opened up and the aliens said, "We're sorry to learn that you soon will be dead, but though you may find this slightly macabre, we prefer your extinction to the loss of our job."

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In the last frame Calvin says, "That's my science fiction story. Think it's too far-fetched?" "Not enough, really," replies Hobbes.

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Eugene: Book Mark, Café Navarra, Eugene Public Library, Friendly St. Market, Happy Trails, Keystone Café, Kiva Foods, Lane C.C., Light For Music, New Frontier Market, Nineteenth Street Brew Pub, Oasis Market, Perry's, Red Barn Grocery, Sundance Natural Foods, U of O, & WOW Hall
Corvallis: The Environmental Center, OSU
Salem: Heliotrope, Salem Library, & The Peace Store
Astoria: KMUN, Columbian Café, The Community Store, The Wet Dog Café, Astoria Coffee Company, Café Uniontown, & The River
Seaside: Buck's Book Barn, Universal Video, & Café Espresso
Portland: Artichoke Music, Laughing Horse Bookstore, Act III, Barnes & Noble, Belmonts Inn, Bibelot Art Gallery, Bijou Café, Borders, Bridgeport Brew Pub, Capt'n Beans (two locations), Center for the Healing Light, Coffee People (three locations), Common Grounds Coffee, East Avenue Tavern, Food Front, Goose Hollow Inn, Hot Lips Pizza, Java Bay Café, Key Largo, La Patisserie, Lewis & Clark College, Locals Only, Marco's Pizza, Marylhurst College, Mt. Hood CC, Music Millennium, Nature's (two locations), NW Natural Gas, OHSU Medical School, Old Wives Tales, Ozone Records, Papa Haydn, PCC (four locations), PSU (two locations), Reed College, Third Eye, TransCentral Library, & YWCA
The Dalles: Klindts Bookseller
Ashland: Garo's Java House, The Black Sheep, Blue Mt. Café, & Rogue River Brewery
Cave Junction: Coffee Heaven & Kerby Community Market
Grants Pass: The Book Shop
(Out of Oregon)
Vancouver, WA: The Den
Longview, WA: The Broadway Gallery, & Carat Patch
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Naselle, WA: Rainy Day Artistry
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