



On Tuesday November 16th, your Professor is scheduled to read from his grant project, a glimpse at Cannon Beach's past based on anecdote and reminiscence. The free reading commences at 7 p.m. in the Cannon Beach City Hall Council Chambers. The curious have inquired about "my book" for some months now. What I have, in fact, is a manuscript, a loose higgledy-piggledy tacked together with my own glue. What might become of the manuscript is anyone's guess. Given another year of editing and sprucing up, who knows? After sitting for 12 months in front of my computer, I begin to detect a sourish smell rising from the text, a fragrance not unlike spoiled meat. I do have a pretty full basket of verbiage now: a few plums, some green apples.

I shuffle out of my burrow each morning like an old badger snuffling over familiar ground, the same lanes, neighborhoods and woodlands I've occupied almost continuously for 4 decades. Like Wendell Berry and Gary Snyder, I've always had a strong sense of place, this place. If you stay put long enough, the stories swirl around you like smoke. They permeate the very air you breathe and get into your skin. Nothing much endures over time. Ideas do. Stories certainly do. I guess this project allows me to serve as a conduit linking "now" with an earlier time, a medium introducing readers to people I was privileged to know.

The Cannon Beach Arts Association asked me for a photograph appropriate for an announcement of the reading. I selected a photo of my long-time friend, Gerald Sroufe, and me, preparing for a bike trip to Arch Cape Creek in the early Fifties. I find the snapshot particularly pleasing and apt. Sroufie has always relished a good story. He's a journeyman story smith, keen and witty, jocular, a compendium of local tales and lore. When Gerald starts a story, no matter what the circumstance or setting, people pause, stop whatever they're doing, and listen. Gerald remembers minutiae as well as grand events. His wry humor, slyly satirical, has perennially charmed listeners.

When I began my project, I realized that a paucity of oral histories and recollections characterized our community's reflection on its past. A few strong voices remain: Leonard Gerritse, Jr., Bridget Snow, Mary Gerritse, Dora Hall Hardie, George Shields, Lester Ordway, and others. A vast number have been stilled by death and the passage of time. Someone should be listening and recording those stories before they're irretrievably lost.

I hope my project suggests the nature of life in this small north coast village in a time rapidly slipping away from us. Gerald Sroufe will help me tell the story. He always has.



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And Commerce settles on every tree.  
William Blake

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The First Crusade... set off on its two-thousand mile jaunt by massacring Jews, plundering and slaughtering all the way from the Rhine to the Jordan. "In the temple of Solomon," wrote the ecstatic cleric, Raimundus de Agiles, "one rode in blood up to the knees and even to the horses' bridles, by the just and marvelous Judgement of God!" Herbert J. Muller

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The memory of my own suffering has prevented me from ever shadowing one young soul with the superstitions of the Christian religion.  
Elizabeth Cady Stanton

FROM THE LOWER LEFT CORNER  
Victoria Stoppiello

Denial is not a river in Egypt

JOHN DAY, OREGON—At the SolWest Renewable Energy Fair welcoming dinner, 150 solar and other renewable energy technicians, inventors, consultants and advocates were welcomed by the chair of the Grant County Commission. He spoke easily, yet seemed a man who had been thrust into a role he wouldn't have chosen. Spanking new jeans and a shirt with blue pinstripes and pearl buttons, his burly frame, his selection of words, all said "rancher."

Then a woman covered two topics: Grant County, Oregon, has only eight fewer days of sunshine than Phoenix, Arizona, and the whole county had just been declared an economic enterprise zone, triggering financial inducements for businesses to locate there. Later we were told Grant County has the highest unemployment in Oregon, over two million acres and only about 8,000 people. Mining, timber and agriculture have been the mainstays. Mining stopped long ago and now the only viable timber is on federal land. Many citizens are angry about logging restrictions.

When I talked with the Chamber of Commerce representative and told her that John Day looks prosperous compared with Ilwaco, she looked at me blankly. She asked why Ilwaco was having trouble, and I responded that the fish are gone. Again she asked why, and I answered, dams, timber and agricultural practices, urban and industrial water pollution, and (the one I am most reluctant to admit) over-fishing. She didn't want to hear it. She was polite, but she didn't want to hear that government regulation might save our bacon, while limiting theirs.

Another person commented that the local people just can't let go of the idea that if the government would get out of the way, they'd still have sawmills and jobs. My view, of course, is, which death do you want? A rapid death from logging all remaining timber right away, or a slow dwindling, with restricted logging while you try to figure out something else. Sooner or later you'll be out of timber jobs either way.

It's notable that we were at a renewable energy fair because the question is the same for all three resources—fish, timber and petroleum: Shall we just use up what we have or use it conservatively while we strategically prepare for a different future? That is one of the hopes of the renewables industry, whether solar, wind, or biomass: Use petroleum carefully while developing technologies to replace it.

There's good reason to do so: First is that all the petroleum prognosticators estimate world oil production will peak in about 15 years; after that there will be oil, but the supply will be waning, and prices will become "volatile," a euphemism for expensive. The other reason is climate change. The scientist who gave the global warming/climate talk, OSU professor Jack Dymond, showed us convincing evidence of the precipitous climb in average earth temperatures, glacier retreats, bird migrations further north, death of coral due to higher ocean temperatures, etc. It was a frightening scenario of exponential change in a geologic eyeblink.

Dymond said there is no debate among scientists about the climate change that is under way, and the only "evidence" to the contrary is propaganda manufactured to protect the fossil fuel industries' interests. The more CO2 we produce, which is the main component of greenhouse gases, the warmer the earth.

Denial. That's the word Dymond used to describe the oil and gas industries' response. We could say the same about ourselves in our two impoverished counties. Big timber in Grant County and big fish here are gone for now and won't be back for a long time. Wishing for what has been isn't going to do us any good. One of the ironies is that John Day people don't want to hear about the salmon issue. For them, it's just one more instance of government meddling. Being in favor of salmon run restoration just puts me in the company of those no-good do-gooders, environmentalists.

The John Day itself starts as a small river near the town that bears the same name. It flows through dry hills, creates its own colorful gorge and eventually dipsy doodles down to the Columbia. The waters of the John Day come directly past the Port of Ilwaco with its empty boat slips, and on out to sea. We are connected—connected by the river, by big issues like climate change, and of course we are connected inadvertently and subtly by our reluctance to face our problems head on and change our ways.

Victoria Stoppiello is a writer living in Ilwaco, at the lower left corner of Washington state.