

UPPER LEFT EDGE

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Treason doth never prosper. What's the reason? Why, when it prospers none dare call it treason.

Behind the Times

By Michael Burgess

Each year on the fourth of July, America celebrates Independence Day. Before the fireworks start, let's all go to our quiet place, sit down and think things through.

When it comes to fuzzy thinking, few notions are more absurd or dangerous than independence. Worse than meaningless, it's a mental construct born of misunderstanding and insufficient data, a myth that was long of tooth when, a century ago, Albert Einstein and Max Planck discovered the world we knew didn't exist.

Relativity showed us that, no matter how things seem to the self important, there are no privileged perspectives in the universe. Surrounding any point in the continuum, there exists an infinite array of perspectives, all of them unique: none of them is the real one, none of them is absolute, none of them is holy. All of us just points of view in the curved geometry of space/time. Quantum theory unveiled the world as an infinite array of probabilities. Observed reality, the one with the greatest probability, turns out to be a collaborative magic between the observer and the observed: what we see depends largely on who we are and what we're looking for. This is not, for the thoughtful, a universe in which the term independent makes much sense. In simplest terms, it lacks any meaningful referent.

Consider the situation. For an object or an event to be independent, it must be unaffected by the reality that surrounds it. The outside world (another meaningless term) cannot influence either its internal state or its external momentum: which is to say, who or what it is and whatever it is that it's doing. To be independent, an object or an event, be it a human, an art form or a civilization, must act always and only on its own volition, pursuing its bliss unswayed by the perspectives and realities arising and unfolding around it. Even less likely, it must somehow manage to do this while seamlessly imbedded in a space/time geometry that disallows separation of one thing from another.

As nearly as we can tell, and we can tell now pretty nearly, objects and events are waves of actualized potential. Like ripples in a pond, they're not just interdependent, they're interpenetrating. Like the notes in a jazz riff, there is no place where one wave ends and another begins. There is no this and that, no us and them, no thee and me. Given what we know, merely to speak of independence implies, if not an irrational state, a boneheaded unwillingness to accept matters as they are. To know the truth and live a lie frustrates the spirit and disfigures the soul. We would be less foolish to behave as if the world were flat.

The faithful will, of course, remind us that Independence Day commemorates our liberation from tyranny and our birth as a sovereign state, a nation among nations, a lamp post of liberty and freedom. We should beat the drum slowly when we speak of these things. With the exception of Plymouth, the colonies weren't havens for the persecuted and downtrodden: they were business ventures chartered for the purpose of turning a profit. The notions of liberty and freedom that life in the wilderness naturally fosters were the effect of colonization, not the cause. In both theory and practice, mercantilism (an activity involving stealing raw materials and selling the shiny junk you make out of it back to the same rubes) was, as business plans go, every bit as pitiless and reptilian as the corporate capitalism it spawned. The colonies were a business deal and the American Revolution was a political event mostly commemorating a falling out between trading partners. Our country was born, not because our founding father figures (all of them prominent businessmen) were losing sleep worrying about peasants struggling under the brutal yoke of foreign domination, but because our businessmen wanted a better deal and their businessmen told us to, in so many words, go suck a prune. A good

case can be made that the Revolution was corporate America's first hostile takeover. Our fight for independence, by the way, bankrupted France and cost Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette their relatively innocent heads. Bummer.

But hey, at least we were independent. Independent from what? The interlocking dynasties of bankers and merchant princes who invented the check and had been signing them since the Middle Ages? Please. The smarmy alliances between power hungry divine right maniacs and the organized slaughter their appetites inevitably lead to? Hardly. The same people still have all the marbles and this country has been at war nearly every year of its existence. Ah but, surely now, squatting like a self righteous sumo wrestler at the top of the food chain of goods and services, we're independent. Of what? Oil? Huddled masses yearning to be farm workers and domestics? If we're so independent, why is there a trade deficit? Why, for that matter, is there a World Bank? Or a Federal Reserve System that, rather than being a branch of the government, is a slaving cabal of global bankers who print the money, rent it to us and tell us when we have enough? If we stand tallest because we stand proud and alone, why can't we make our own overpriced sneakers? Why are our Christmas lights made by political prisoners in China? Why are we choosing sides in South American drug wars? Why, if we're so damned independent, do global corporations run our government, and the world, like a fast food franchise?

As much as we're able to know anything, here's what we now know is true: we are, all of us, not merely connected intimately to each other and to all of life but are, on the most fundamental level of reality, indistinguishable from any of it. Our planet is one world, its people are one people and its life forms are one life form because the universe is one thing. One sea, many waves, no islands.

But we were talking about the Fourth of July. If the word independence was only meaningless, we wouldn't be having this discussion. The meaning assigned to it implies freedom, a notion often mistaken for license. Being able to do something is not a mandate for doing it. The definition of power is force unexercised, potential held in reserve. Just as democracy depends upon an informed electorate, freedom depends upon enlightened self interest which, in turn, depends upon recognizing the difference between what feels good and what's right. Like every other bit of life in the universe, we are free of everything but the consequences of our actions. The birth of our nation was the beginning of a process of directed change: a unique experiment in molding reality according to our collective will. For a revolution to be a revolution, it can never stop. As Patrick Henry put it so nicely: "Give me liberty or give me death."

Today, he'd be in the streets in front of the World Trade Organization.
Happy Revolution Day.

Sir John Harrin



MOONS & TIDES

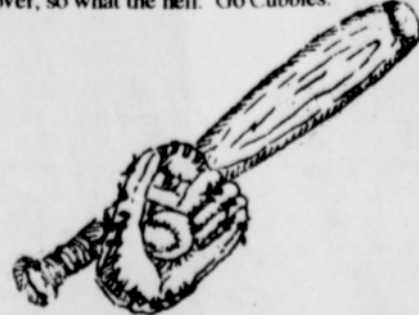
WASHINGTON AND OREGON COASTS
2001 Corrected for PACIFIC BEACHES

DAY	MOON	HIGH JULY		LOW JULY	
		TIME	FT.	TIME	FT.
1 SUN	•	10:31	6.4	10:13	8.9
2 Mon	•	11:30	6.6	10:57	8.9
3 Tues	•	12:23	6.8	11:38	8.8
4 Wed	•			1:11	6.9
5 Thur	•	0:18	8.7	1:56	7.0
6 Fri	•	0:56	8.5	2:37	7.0
7 Sat	•	1:24	8.3	3:16	7.0
8 SUN	•	2:12	8.1	3:52	7.0
9 Mon	•	2:50	7.8	4:27	7.0
10 Tues	•	3:37	7.5	5:02	7.1
11 Wed	•	4:19	7.0	5:37	7.1
12 Thur	•	5:08	6.5	6:15	7.3
13 Fri	•	6:13	6.0	6:57	7.4
14 Sat	•	7:29	5.6	7:42	7.7
15 SUN	•	8:48	5.6	8:30	8.0
16 Mon	•	10:00	5.8	9:20	8.3
17 Tues	•	11:03	6.1	10:11	8.7
18 Wed	•	NOON	6.5	11:02	9.0
19 Thur	•	12:52	6.8	11:54	9.2
20 Fri	•			1:40	7.1
21 Sat	•	0:46	6.3	2:27	7.4
22 SUN	•	1:39	6.3	3:12	7.7
23 Mon	•	2:32	6.1	3:56	7.9
24 Tues	•	3:27	6.1	4:40	8.1
25 Wed	•	4:25	5.9	5:26	8.2
26 Thur	•	5:28	5.7	6:13	8.2
27 Fri	•	6:39	5.4	7:04	8.2
28 Sat	•	7:55	5.0	7:57	8.2
29 SUN	•	9:10	4.9	8:51	8.2
30 Mon	•	10:18	5.0	9:43	8.2
31 Tues	•	11:17	5.3	10:33	8.2

AM TIDES *BIGGER THE DOT, BETTER THE FISHING* PM TIDES
LITE TYPE DAYLIGHT TIME BOLD TYPE

BASEBALL

Can you feel it? It is like a million people holding their breath. Crossing their fingers. Pretending not to notice that the Cubs are still in first place in their division. With every win we wonder, will this be the last one? With every loss we wonder if this will be the first one that will send us tumbling into our usual home at the bottom of the division. Friends laugh and talk about a Mariner vs. Cubs World Series and you curse them under your breath for putting a hex on. You notice that the Cubs are being mentioned in the Sports Pages more, but mostly as an oddity. And you curse them. You realize the Cubs haven't been in the Series since Strom Thurmon was born and you curse him. You try to be cynical and to not give in to hope. But in the back of your mind you wonder, is this the 'next year' we've awaited for so long? What if they really do stay in first and make the play-offs and win the pennant and face the Mariners in the Series? What if by some miracle they win? Will the world come to an end? Will it cause Armageddon? Should you really wish for such a thing? Well, it is a long season and it is less than half over, so what the hell. Go Cubbies.



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