

# Aluminum Currents

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# EXCERPTS

Feel free to share this collection of low-res excerpted pages from the book, ***Aluminum Currents***, written and published by Rodney Schroeter. The book is a celebration of my first 10 years of editing The Plymouth Review Current. It can be ordered from Barnes & Noble and other online bookstores. If you have questions or comments, please contact Rodney Schroeter (email on next page).

Page numbers in this excerpt are not the same as in the actual book. The actual book has 390 pages. Many pages have been omitted here, but pagination for this sample was automatic.

My thanks to Barry, Christie, and Ian Johanson  
for launching my Current career.



My First Ten Years of Editing  
**The Plymouth Review Current**

Edited by  
**Rodney Schroeter**

**EXCERPTS**

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# Up

This book is about *My* First Ten Years of editing *The Current*; not *The* First Ten Years.

I did not originate *The Current*.

By the spring of 2014, my IT (Information Technology) career of over two decades had been over for about a year. I was looking for a different direction, some means of utilizing my long-time writing abilities and my newly-developing book design skills.

I'd applied to The Plymouth Review for (if memory serves me right) a graphic design position, where I could use Adobe InDesign and Photoshop. I didn't get that position, but the people at The Review kept my application and resume, and contacted

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me several months later for something else.

The position I was offered included:

- Attending and reporting on four meetings

each month (school board, village board, town board).

- Composing newspaper pages (at first, the obituaries; then the sports pages; then news pages).

- (Later on) Assisting with the design of advertisements.

- (Mainly, and the focus of this book) Editing and composing *The Current*.

Abbey Harvey had been working at The Review, where she had originated *The Current* a little over three years previously.

Because Ms. Harvey intended to pursue new opportunities, I was called in for an interview. Apparently, I showed some promise, as I started in April, 2014.

*The Current* is a free monthly paper, financed by the ads. It is inserted in The Plymouth Review, usually the first week of the month; additional copies are distributed in the Plymouth (Wisconsin) and thereabouts region; the current month's issue is also posted online.

– Most (but unfortunately not all) uncredited photos herein are by Rodney Schroeter.

– Internet links given in articles may or may not still work. In assembling this book, when a non-functioning link was found, it was removed.

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used up all my gathered content, and found this big, white gap covering several pages. I finally filled it with a public-domain story by Thomas Thursday, an author I considered witty and hilarious.

I finished composing my first issue (the May 2014 edi-

– Award-winning science teacher Larry Scheckel has been answering high schooler's questions for over 40 years. He has collected some of these questions into several books. His "Ask A Science Teacher" excerpts from these books are reprinted here with the author's permission. His email is Lscheckel@charter.net; his website is larryscheckel.com

tion), handed it over for Barry to look over, and headed south to the Windy City Pulp and Paper Convention. While at that show, I received a phone message from Barry, telling me how pleased he was with what I'd done.

But stepping into Ms. Harvey's shoes was a challenge. A somewhat painful challenge.

It taught me that, in a situation like that, sometimes it's best not to try getting into those shoes, but to get (or completely fabricate from scratch) an entirely different pair of shoes. Not that one should go too radically afar, and try wearing something like gloves on one's feet; best to stay with shoes. But shoes that fit. Shoes that one can actually walk and eventu-

ally run in.

In other words: Instead of trying to simply continue what *The Current* had been, I gradually made it my own.

– The book reviews by Beth Dippel are reprinted here with permission from Beth Dippel. At the time those reviews were published, Beth was Executive Director at the Sheboygan County Historical Research Center.

There were several ways I did that:

– I leveraged my knowledge of movies. Highlights of movies scheduled on Turner Classic Movies for the coming month soon became a regular, prominent feature in each issue. (For obvious reasons, no examples of that column appear in this book.)

Surprisingly and encouragingly, people giving me in-person feedback on *The Current* name that column, and my additional comments on other movies, as their favorites.

– I feature a lot of art. But instead of modernistic piles of garbage, or trendy blank canvases, I include what I term in my mind "art for farmers."

I certainly do not mean that in the sense of a contemptibly-titled series of books, "Art for Dummies." I grew up on a farm, and realize that farmers are no dummies (or they are not farming for long). Farmers need to be

*reality-oriented*, something modern anti-art most definitely *is not*.

I have been to auctions and estate sales of many local farmers. I have noticed one thing: There are always framed pieces of art—reality-oriented art—that had been hanging for years on farmhouse walls.

I more often need look to the past, if I want to find art that speaks to reality-oriented minds (whether on isolated farms or in the hearts of vast megalopolises). But not exclusively. You'll discover in this book, two contemporary artists whose work deals with real-life values.

– Unless otherwise noted, images accompanying PulpArtists biographies are from the PulpArtists.com website, where you can find hundreds of entries written by David Saunders. The PulpArtists biographies in this book are reprinted with David Saunders' permission.

– I feature pro-freedom articles. This, too, brings me favorable comments from readers. *Most* readers. But it has enraged a small minority who passionately hate freedom; hate the unique form of human consciousness that gives rise to freedom and rights; and ultimately hate human life itself. I encourage those people to indulge their rage by repeatedly head-butting the brick wall of reality as they clamor for my cancellation.

But until I am canceled, I intend to keep constructing issues of *The Plymouth Review Current*.

For another ten years, and beyond?

We'll see.

Rodney Schroeter  
Spring, 2024

# Stuff

# Divisiveness

We hear it from many sources. People say it as if it's self-evidently true. No controversy. No doubt.

"This country is divided."

And who's causing this divisiveness?

You'll get a thousand answers. The President. The former President. This side. That side. This group. That group.

OK, that's not very helpful, but we should also ask: What are we divided *about*?

Here again, a thousand answers. Racism. Income inequity. Immigration. Policies of this party. That party. This group. That group.

In past articles, I've written about finding basic principles in the midst of specific, complicated situations. I'm going to try applying that approach to this question.

You see, I think I have a good, useful answer as to *what* we're divided *about*.

Sure, I could blurt it out right here. But I'm not going to.

What if I took you on a little journey of discovery? What if I spent this article, and the next two, leading you through certain pathways, so that you could very possibly reach some of the same conclusions I have reached? What if you could *discover* them—on your own?

This and the next two articles are for those who have felt satisfaction and pride in creating something. For those who open a newspaper and say, "I designed that ad." For those who look at a house and think, "I helped build that." Or a model battleship, thinking, "I put that together."

If all goes well with these articles, you just might end up thinking, "I had a little help, but *I discovered that principle*."

You will know the pride that comes, not only having *created* something, but *discovering* something.

## To understand the Present, look to the Past

We're in the midst of the present. We could simply study everything we can about present times. And sure, we'd learn something useful about our present divisiveness.

But that might not be enough. What if we look to the past? Ah! We might be able to put the present into better perspective. Compare today's divisiveness with that of other times.

There is another possible benefit. A big one. We could find situations in history where there was great divisiveness, and... we can see how things turned out.

If we can learn something helpful, we should look at history. Even if it makes us uncomfortable, and more than a little apprehensive about our own future.

## For example...

Let's look to this country's early history. It was the first country to base its existence on individual rights, the idea that each individual existed for his own sake, and not out of duty to any monarch, or to "society."

(This is an oversimplification. Ancient Greece had high regard for the individual, and the United States owes much to that culture.)

But individual rights were not implemented consistently. There were contradictions.

One of the worst, most divisive contradictions in this country's existence (as I've written in past columns) was slavery. I believe understanding each side—those who supported slavery, and those who fought it—will help us better understand today's divisiveness.

## Arguments against slavery

I'm reading and taking notes on a book edited by C. Bradley Thompson: *Anti-Slavery Political Writings, 1833-1860*. The book contains essays by Frederick Douglass (one of my personal heroes), Harriet Beecher Stowe, Abraham Lincoln, and others whose names might be less familiar to non-historians.

Complementing this book, I listened to a series of three lectures by Thompson: *American Slavery, American Freedom*, which can be downloaded at [estore.aynrand.org](http://estore.aynrand.org).

In the preface, the editor writes that the book has three purposes: "first, to present the best writings and speeches of the most influential antislavery thinkers, activists, and statesmen in the years between 1830 and 1860; second, to demonstrate the range of theoretical and political choices open to antislavery advocates during the antebellum period; and finally, to introduce students to the general problem associated with reconciling theory and practice."

As the United States grew in size and maturity, it became more obvious that slavery was incompatible with the nature of this country. It was a basic, or *fundamental* contradiction.

Take the various articles in the book, *Anti-Slavery Political Writings, 1833-1860*, and boil them down. Get to the essential, the fundamental point. What is it?

It's one answer to the question: "Who owns a person?"

The abolitionists all agreed on one basic moral principle: It is wrong for one person to own another.

You own your life. I own mine.

That's it.

Of course, there is a long history, interesting and important, of the development of the concept of rights; of how individuals should treat each other; what any one person is "owed." The concept didn't just appear. It developed. Grew. Is still growing.

There are other questions, such how rights are violated. How to untangle the issue of individual rights in complex situations.

All details we can't touch on here. So let's stick to the basic principles, and look at the opposite answer to "Who owns a person?"

## Who could possibly defend slavery?

This is the kind of question I'd expect from the typical, honest person in the street. Most people, hearing evil spouted, will turn away in disgust, and not want to think too much about it.

But just as doctors have to study smallpox in order to rid the world of it, I think those same honest people have to turn back and



face that evil to understand it. Introducing a weaker version of smallpox into the body helps that person resist the actual disease. Understanding evil will help one stand up to it. Understanding the evil *in principle* will help a person recognize it when it comes along in a new and different form.

One way advocates of slavery got around the “Who owns a person?” question was to claim, “Slaves aren’t persons.”

OK, how would you answer that? Just think about it a bit. Look at the world around you. If you’re educated enough to read and pick up this newspaper, you’ll soon enough understand that it’s easy to prove that’s wrong. If someone claims it’s a matter of one race being human, and one race being less than human, your own observations will show you that belief to be ridiculously false.

As I’ve written before, this kind of thinking doesn’t take any PhD-level education. All that’s required is good, honest common sense. Your observations will show that all races have both geniuses and fools; productive people and parasites. You’ll see, if you’re honest, that achievement is an individual matter. That you can’t just lump individuals of one race together and say, “Human,” and call individuals of another race “Non-human.”

(To me, it’s just common sense. But I also realize people believe all kinds of things for which there is no basis—psychic powers, astrology, haunted houses, etc.)

Yes, you and I have the advantage (if we take it) of historical perspective. But what about someone living during slavery? Can they be excused for greater ignorance?

Not in the final analysis. For at least one big reason: It was illegal in slave states to teach slaves to read.

If slaves were less than human, would they even have the *ability* to learn how to read? Have you heard of any conspiracies, lately, of subversive farmers trying to teach the cows or chickens they have penned up, to read?

Being able to read—having a conceptual consciousness—is one basis for being a person. A person with rights. A person whose life belongs to that person, and to no one else.

A principled approach would be: “If a person, by his nature, owns his own life, then that applies to every person.” An unprincipled approach would be: “Some do, and some don’t.”

### Descending deeper

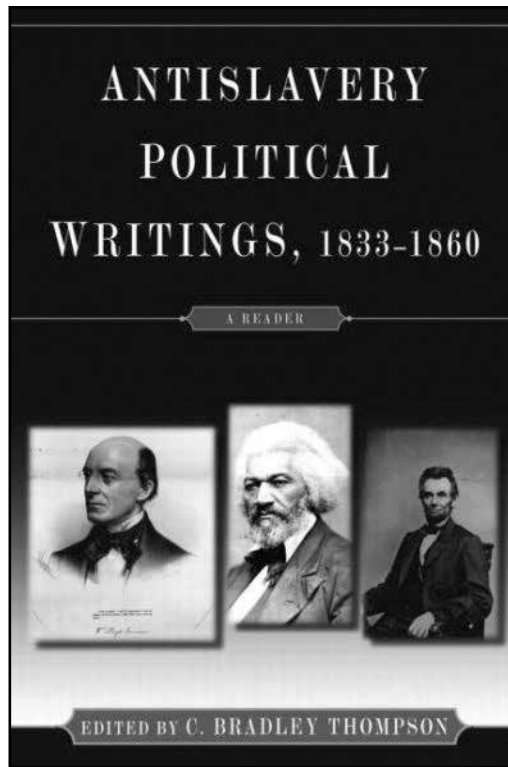
Now we’re going to look into the face of even greater evil.

One advocate of slavery was George Fitzhugh. The title of one of his books is very revealing: *Sociology for the South; or the Failure of Free Society* (1854).

Some people in the 1800s likely thought, “Look, I’m not a slave. So it’s not my problem.”

That’s not a practical view. If you’re not willing to fight injustice when it affects others, you allow that injustice to spread until it does affect you.

(And by “fighting,” I don’t mean with physical weapons, and I don’t mean you should fight the whole war. “Fighting” in this sense means standing up for what you believe is right, in what-



An anthology of abolitionist writings. — From Barnes & Noble, bn.com



Harriet Beecher Stowe, one of the writers appearing in the above book. What book is she most famous for? — Public domain photo from Wikipedia

ever way is appropriate and possible for you. It could mean discussing the subject; writing letters to newspapers; writing articles; etc.)

George Fitzhugh made slavery *everyone's* problem. He advocated that slavery be applied to *all* races. So you see, if you ignore justice and say, “Not my problem, man,” the evils you pretend don’t exist have a way of knocking on your door, saying with an wicked grin, “Got a problem for you, man.”

“Nineteen out of twenty individuals have a natural and inalienable right to be slaves,” Fitzhugh wrote.

Get that? *A right* to be a slave? A perfect example of a contradiction!

Said Fitzhugh: “If Yankees were caught young they could be trained, domesticated & civilized to make ‘faithful and valuable servants.’”

Since this is an attack on the very founding principles of America, it’s no surprise that Fitzhugh said, “The Declaration of Independence is exuberantly false, and aborescently fallacious.” (I couldn’t find a definition for “aborescently,” but I think we get his drift.)

“Liberty is an evil which government is intended to correct. This is the sole object of government.” Know of any modern-day politicians who’d agree with Fitzhugh on that?

And: “Slavery is a form, and the very best form, of socialism.” Yes, Fitzhugh was very consistent. Much of his thought anticipated Karl Marx by several decades.

### Can’t we compromise?

Every time you hear how divided our country is (which is often), you usually hear pleas for compromise.

But when it comes to basic, very fundamental principles, compromise is the last thing you want to do.

When you ask, “Is it right for one person to own another?”, what kind of compromise between Yes and No is conceivable?

Would it be a “compromise” to have allowed the southern states to retain slavery, while the north outlawed it? Not at all. That would be a concession that slavery is OK, sometime. It would be a total moral surrender to the principle of slavery.

I return to C. Bradley Thompson’s book, *Anti-Slavery Political Writings, 1833-1860*. In it are found passionate, uncompromising, principled arguments against this abomination. There was divisiveness between those

who supported slavery and those who opposed it; that divisiveness was over opposite sides of a fundamental principle.

But within the abolitionist movement, there was also divisiveness, of another sort: How to eradicate slavery. Immediately? Gradually? How?

There was disagreement about the *how* of ending slavery. There was no compromise, however, on the view that it *should* be ended. I believe without that uncompromising fidelity to moral principle, slavery could have lasted longer, or still exist today.

Slavery was ended, but not before a terrible Civil War. Which leads one to ask, with some trepidation: Is the divisiveness we now face serious enough that another civil war is possible? Or can we learn enough from the past to avoid that tragedy?

What kind of divisiveness *do* we face today?

Tune in next issue. I’ll have some thoughts.

### Opening comments

Attempting to summarize vast historical, global events in a short article like this (well, some would consider it short) can be perilous.

How do you do justice to so many events, relationships, causes and effects? It's like fitting a car into your back pocket.

Readers who are well-versed in the historical details of the subject that follows: Please read this charitably and try to overlook the oversimplifications. In contrast, if I have any actual facts incorrect (through error or omission), please drop us a note or e-mail. We do value factual accuracy.

### Germany divided

When Germany was defeated in World War II, part of it was occupied by the Soviet Union (this eventually became East Germany), and part was occupied by Britain, the US, and France (West Germany).

The Soviet Union had fought with the Allies to defeat the National Socialists (Nazis). But as we soon found out, contrary to the ancient proverb, the "enemy of our enemy" is not necessarily our friend. As freedom in West Germany allowed human activity and life to flourish, the Soviet Union imposed its totalitarian philosophy on East Germany: "Property and industry was nationalized in the East German zone. If statements or decisions deviated from the described line, reprimands and (for persons outside public attention) punishment would ensue, such as imprisonment, torture and even death." (Wikipedia)

For awhile, it was possible to travel somewhat freely between East and West Germany. In a period of about a decade, over 3



The Reichstag Parliament building in West Berlin on Sept. 5, 1961. The building gutted by fire in 1933 is being rebuilt. Barbed wire in front belongs to fence around Soviet War Memorial which was surrounded with the wire by British troops after the closing of the sector border to prevent possible demonstrations by West Berliners. — AP photo

million people left East Germany and never came back.

If the "means of production" had already been seized, you'd think East Germany would have everything it needed to create the worker's paradise it was supposed to be, and nobody would miss those 3 million people. But even communists had to face the fact that human minds have something to do with that "means of production." And people fleeing en masse from a communist country makes communism look bad. Solution: Stop people from leaving by brute force.

So the Soviet-controlled East German government erected, piecemeal, an "inner German border" between the two countries, trying to stop citizens from fleeing. But the "brain drain" continued as East German citizens could still move from East to West to a limited extent. Oppression of these people increased.

By the early 1960s, the inner German border was fortified with wide ditches, barbed wire, lookout towers, booby traps, and minefields.

As this wide border was built, if your home was in its path, or too close, it would be torn down (something advocates of eminent domain would be perfectly comfortable with). An East German farmer's field was cut in half? Too bad. He could now work only the part within East Germany, and then, only during the daytime, as armed guards watched and made sure he didn't do anything subversive out in what was left of "his" field.

Thousands of East Germans living too close to the border were forcibly cleared out and settled elsewhere, in a program charmingly named "Operation Vermin." A few lucky ones escaped to

the West.

### Berlin divided

Berlin, capital of Germany, was in the middle of the Soviet-occupied East Germany. The city, as the country, was cut into East and West sections.

By the early 1950s, the inner German Border pretty effectively stopped East Germans from escaping to the West. But within Berlin, movement between East and West was still relatively free. And West German citizens could travel between Berlin and West Germany, even though they had to pass through East Germany (with many restrictions and much checking of credentials—"Your papers, please!").

This comparative freedom within Berlin rankled the totalitarians. When you advocate complete subservience to the state, you can't allow all these individuals, each with his own thoughts, each with her own goals, to brazenly decide where to go and what to do.

These totalitarians clamped down on all that chaotic freedom by building another barrier, separating East Berlin from West Berlin. This destructive construction started in August, 1961, and extended into 1962. The wall was constantly "improved" over the years to become two barriers, with a "death strip" between the two.

(Neither national nor city borders were uniform. There were concrete or brick walls in some places; barbed wire or fences in others; anti-tank devices; or combinations thereof.)

"In an October 1973 order later discovered by researchers, guards were instructed that people attempting to cross the Wall were criminals and needed to be shot: 'Do not hesitate to use your firearm, not even when the border is breached in the company of women and children, which is a tactic the traitors have often used.'" (Wikipedia)

"If an escapee was wounded in a crossing attempt and lay on the death strip, no matter how close they were to the Western wall, Westerners could not intervene for fear of triggering engaging fire from the 'Grepes,' the East Berlin border guards. The guards often let fugitives bleed to death in the middle of this ground, as in the most notorious failed attempt, that of Peter Fechter (aged 18). He was shot and bled to death, in full view of the Western media, on 17 August 1962." (Wikipedia)

Yep. Real nice guys. Not!

### One country again

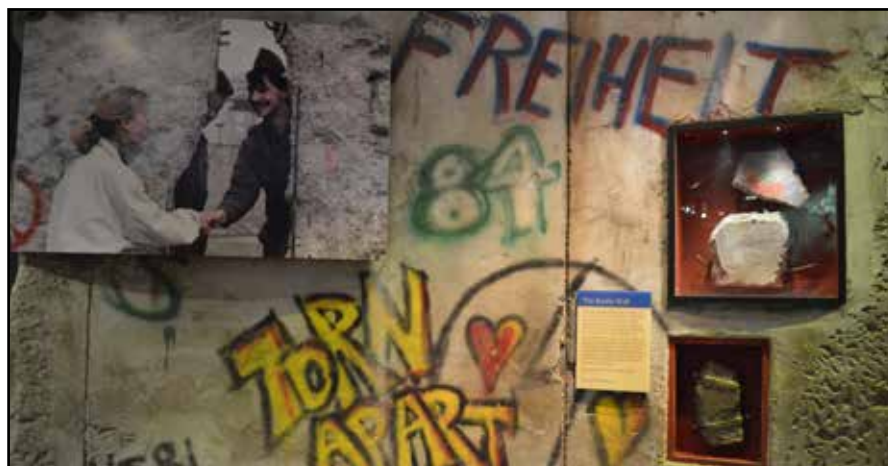
Last issue, I wrote how slavery divided America. Abolitionists agreed that slavery should be abolished, but did not agree on *how*—whether it should be



A resident of a building in East Berlin looks longingly across the Wall into West Berlin. — AP photo



East Berlin laborers work on the "Death Strip" which communist authorities created on their side of the border in the divided city on Oct. 1, 1961. A double barbed wire fence marks the border, with West Berlin at right. In this view of the area on September 23 laborers level rubble of houses which, just days before, stood on the site close to the border. Buildings along the 25-mile dividing line were evacuated and razed by Berlin reds to eliminate one means of escape used by East Berliners to jump to the west. — AP photo



A section of what's left of the Berlin Wall, on display at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History in Washington, DC. "Freiheit" is German for "Freedom."

done immediately, or in phases, and what to do with the former slaves.

Before the demolition of the Berlin Wall, some worried about how an East and West Germany, disunited for so many years, could come together. I was shocked to learn that British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (about whom I'd heard so many positive things) said to Soviet President Gorbachev, "We do not want a united Germany. This would lead to a change to postwar borders and we cannot allow that because such a development would undermine the stability of the whole international situation and could endanger our security."

But reunification (or "die Wende" as some prefer, which approximately translates to "the turning point" or "turnaround"—that has a nicer ring to it, don't you think?), while presenting challenges, has produced no disaster. Free people, to the extent they value and understand freedom, can deal with such complexities.

### The nature of this split

In last issue's article on Divisiveness, I wrote about a split in America, coming about because two sides could not compromise on a moral principle: whether every individual human being has the right to life and liberty. There was no "coming together" of those who said Yes to that principle, and those saying No.

That split—the divisiveness, taking sides, and resulting ugly war—came from within.

Germany's split is quite a different story. In the early part of the 20th Century, the country's culture started going mad, leading to World War I (the war that was so horrible, it would convince people to never fight wars again), and then World War II (see why history is important?). After the second war, those who conquered Germany split it up. So this country's split was imposed by outside forces.

And there was no war between the two sides.

A different kind of split, yes. But still one that can teach us something about divisiveness.

East and West. What was the difference?

### East vs. West

Professor Hope Harrison, of George Washington University, wrote, "The [Berlin] wall symbolized the lack of freedom under communism. It symbolized the Cold War and divide between the communist Soviet bloc and the western democratic, capitalist bloc."

Now would be an excellent time to define communism and capitalism. But I'll wait. See next issue's article.

Welsh historian Jan Morris wrote: “Traveling from west to east through [the inner German border] was like entering a drab and disturbing dream, peopled by all the ogres of totalitarianism, a half-lit world of shabby resentments, where anything could be done to you, I used to feel, without anybody ever hearing of it, and your every step was dogged by watchful eyes and mechanisms.”

Kate Connolly, writing for The Guardian, in a piece looking back 25 years after Germany’s “turnaround,” says, “...life expectancy has risen considerably in the east since reunification...” That’s interesting. It’s significant (and positive) from a certain moral/political perspective. (A rise in human life expectancy is not held as a positive value by everyone.)

An essay written in 1960 by Indian economist Bellikoth Rangunath Shenoy, Ph.D (1905–1978), entitled “East and West Berlin: A Study in Free vs. Controlled Economy,” is prefaced with the statement, “Shenoy contrasts the results produced in the two halves of Berlin, one under communism and the other capitalism, to show planning is not required for growth.”

There’s that communism/capitalism comparison again.

“The contrast between the two Berlins cannot miss the attention of a school child,” Shenoy writes. Some of the contrasts he makes (remember, this is 1960, prior to the Wall):

East: Much rubble and damage from WWII is still in evidence. “[B]uildings here are generally grey from neglect, the furnishings lack in brightness and quality, and the roads and pavements are shabby.”

West: “Rebuilding is virtually complete in West Berlin.” “[T]he shopping centers radiate boom conditions.”

East: Mass transit predominates. “The new phenomenon of

workers owning cars, which West Berlin shares with U.S.A and many parts of Europe, is unknown in East Berlin.”

West: Highways are “jammed with prosperous looking automobile traffic.”

East: “The food shops in East Berlin exhibit cheap articles in indifferent wrappers or containers and the prices for comparable items, despite the poor quality, are noticeably higher than in West Berlin. Walking into a restaurant in East Berlin, one finds the same contrast.”

West: “The departmental stores in West Berlin are cramming with wearing apparel, other personal effects and a multiplicity of household equipment, temptingly displayed. Nothing at all comparable is visible in East Berlin.”

East: “Visiting East Berlin gives the impression of visiting a prison camp.” People there “show an unwillingness to talk to strangers, generally taking shelter behind the plea that they do not understand English.”

West: People are cordial, willing to talk when approached.

East: “The flow of traffic, human and financial, is pre-dominantly one way, from East to West Berlin.”

West: No such movement, the opposite way.

Are you seeing a trend here? I suspect you do, as you are a sharp, intelligent, perceptive reader.

***Tune in next issue!***

**Note:** The movie Bridge of Spies, starring Tom Hanks, depicts the beginnings of the Berlin Wall.

In our March issue, we took a brief look at how slavery divided this country. With no compromise possible between the views that a) it is acceptable for some people to enslave other people; and b) that each person has rights which forbid slavery, the country split up and erupted in war.

In our April issue, we looked at a country and city forcefully split in two. Germany and Berlin were split between East and West, the first under control of the communist Soviets, the second under other countries. Some historians characterize this split as communism vs. capitalism.

In our country today, there is much divisiveness. That is—many cultural commentators and politicians say there is. And they keep accusing each other of creating more divisiveness.

Which makes me wonder how much divisiveness there actually is. Hearing over and over, “There’s so much divisiveness!” and then thinking, “Yeah, I guess there is”—you’re really cheating yourself out of actual knowledge, with that “thinking” pattern.

How would you measure divisiveness? Is it even possible? Elsewhere in this issue, we feature articles describing an attempt at measuring freedom within a given country. So maybe divisiveness can be measured. But who’s doing that?

Can we look at present times and compare them with other events in history? Oh... yeah... I *did* that, with the article on slavery. (Sneaky, ain’t I?)

We’re not fighting a civil war. Yet. Let’s hope never.

No one’s seceded from the Union. Yet. Though some Californians have proposed it.

All right, so we have a vague, general idea (if even that) of the *degree* of divisiveness we’re seeing. So just *what* is it that we’re divided *about*?

Immigration? Racism? I’d like to write about both of those important topics in a future issue. I do believe they *contribute* to the level of divisiveness. But they don’t get to the root, or fundamental cause of things. I’m looking for the one point of divisiveness that explains the many points of divisiveness, if there is such a thing in this case.

I’m going to call it the Master Divisiveness Issue. MDI.

I have an idea of what that MDI is. It’s difficult to find, because very few people talk about it. Amazing! People talk about almost anything. All body functions. Every physical cruelty, real or imagined. But this issue is not named often enough. If it were named, I think things would make a whole lot more sense.

Last issue, I quoted an article by Indian economist Bellikoth Raganath

Shenoy, Ph.D (1905–1978). Here’s another paragraph from his 1960 work, “East and West Berlin: A Study in Free vs. Controlled Economy”:

“For an explanation of the contrast of the two Berlins, we must look deeper: the main explanation lies in the divergent political systems. The people being the same, there is no difference in talent, technological skill and aspirations of the residents of the two parts of the city. In West Berlin efforts are spontaneous and self-directed by free men, under the urge to go ahead. In East Berlin effort is centrally directed by Communist planners, who do not lack in determination for speedy progress; the urge to progress is particularly strong, if only to demonstrate the potentialities of communism to foreign visitors to the two Berlins. The contrast in prosperity is convincing proof of the superiority of the forces of freedom over centralized planning. It is difficult to resist the inference that workers in East Berlin, deprived of the incentives of full property rights over the fruits of one’s effort, are loath to put in their best.”

Good observations. I’m not disparaging what Shenoy writes. But what word is present, above? And what word is missing?

Even in the Human Freedom Index—certainly, a valuable and important work—there is one important word used only once, and then, only in a contradictory way.

I’m convinced too many people are afraid of this word. Even many who support it don’t dare say it.

I dare.  
It’s *capitalism*.

All right. So does the MDI boil down to communism vs. capitalism, as some quotes from last month’s article suggest? I don’t think so. Now, I was recently astounded to read a thread at the bottom of a news show suggesting that the main issue in the coming presidential election was going to be “socialism vs. capitalism.” I think a thorough dialogue on that topic is needed.

But—hey, wait. Just a minute. If we’re going to use these terms, we should know precisely what they are. (Have you seen those videos where university students say, “I’m for socialism,” and when asked what socialism is, don’t have an answer?)

The following are distilled from several sources each. Don’t agree with these definitions? You know how to contact us.

**Slavery.** A system where one individual legally owns and coerces another individual. The owner may or may not have the legal authority to physically abuse the slave, even to the point of death.

**Communism.** A system where individual interests are surrendered to the

# DIVISIVENESS

## What Divides Us?

“commune” or “community” (however that is defined).

**Egalitarianism.** A result of communism. The theory that all individuals should have, or be rewarded, equally, even when some individuals create or produce more than others.

**Socialism.** A social system based on public ownership of the means of production.

**Capitalism.** A system based on private ownership of the means of production.

**Fascism.** A system based on private ownership of the means of production, with a centralized government controlling every aspect of that means of production.

**Statism.** A system based on state/government control of social and economic activity. This higher-level concept includes communism, socialism, and fascism.

Careful! The phrase “means of production” is used several times. If you’re on one side of this Master Divisive Issue, you might not want “means of production” clearly understood; if you’re on the other side of the MDI, you *must* clearly understand it.

To understand principles like this, it helps to get very basic. Therefore:

You decide one morning, “I’m going to collect sticks,” and act accordingly. What is the “means of production”? Your choice and your freedom to act on it.

Under communism and egalitarianism, you’d divide the gathered sticks equally (by force or voluntarily), with every member of the community (however you define that: a local hippie commune; the village; the nation-state; the world).

Under slavery, socialism, or fascism, personal choice is abolished, and isn’t a factor. You’re directed to gather sticks (or not) by the authorities. You’re told when, where, and for how long to gather them. Their distribution would be determined by the rulers. The authorities’ orders and your actions in following orders are the “means of production.”

In all examples, you are part of the “means of production.” So the most important, basic, fundamental question, on which there is no compromise, is:

Who owns your mind and your body?

**Slavery.** The slave-owner owns you.

**Communism.** The commune owns you.

**Socialism.** Here’s where understanding “means of production” is important. Some socialism advocates say, “We’re only talking about public ownership of factories, machines, and land. You own yourself.” As written last month, East Germany and East Berlin had a problem. Once they nationalized the factories, machines, and land, the *people*, while they were still free, fled from East to West, leaving no human *minds* to operate the factories, etc. The East German authorities then turned their country

and city into prison camps. If that is the nature of socialism, it is a system where society in general owns you.

**Capitalism.** You own your life, mind, and body.

I believe the Master Divisive Issue is: you own your life vs. someone else owns your life.

Or: individual rights, with the individual’s life and happiness its own justification vs. the individual is a means and justification to some other ends.

Or: capitalism vs. statism.

If you’ve read any of my past articles, you might know what’s coming next.

You should *not* believe what I’ve said here, simply because I’ve said it. If you have a good background in history, politics, and economics, you might have a good basis for evaluating what’s in this article. But if you’re just starting out, here’s my advice:

Don’t accept any of it. But *understand* it. In the years ahead, observing developments in this country and around the globe will give you a better basis to say whether I’ve identified the MDI or not. (You might discover some other divisive point I’m not aware of. I’d love to hear about it.)

I’ve been especially skimpy on my description of capitalism. If what I have said intrigues you or outrages you...

If you believe there is such a thing as “crony capitalism”...

If you believe “wage slavery” exists under capitalism...

If you believe lobbyists, or special-interest groups, or political favors for one sector of the economy, are part of capitalism...

If you believe that pure capitalism leads to depressions or inflation or widows and orphans starving in the street...

If you look at the definition of capitalism, and only part for fascism, and see “private ownership,” and think, “Hey, capitalism and fascism are the same!” (I’ve actually seen it claimed that Nazi Germany was “capitalist,” which is one of the most offensive falsehoods I can imagine)...

...then I challenge your misunderstandings, and urge you to discover what capitalism truly is.

Suppose you conclude my MDI identification is correct. You must still choose which side of the issue you’re on. There’s no compromise here. Either you as an individual own your life, mind, and body—or you don’t. Whichever side you’re on, you need to be able to defend it. That will require self-education on your part.

There are those who believe that the individual’s right to life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness is a part of the individual’s nature.

There are those who believe the individual should give up liberty and the pursuit of individual happiness; that property should be communally owned.

Which side are you on?

## An introduction to

# The Human Freedom Index

The 2018 edition of The Human Freedom Index (HFI) is a 400-page analysis and rating of freedom for most countries of the globe.

It was published by the Cato Institute (Washington, DC, USA), the Fraser Institute (Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada), and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (Berlin, Germany).

The Index is available free, for browsing online or downloading to your own computer. To find it, go to [cato.org](http://cato.org) and search on “freedom index.”

How does one measure something like freedom? To get an idea, please see “Defining and Measuring Freedom.” This is one of several excerpts which the Cato Institute kindly granted The PRC permission to run.

Of 162 countries for which a Human Freedom Index was calculated, these are the top (most free) 20:

- 1 New Zealand
- 2 Switzerland
- 3 Hong Kong
- 4 Australia

- 5 Canada
  - 6 Netherlands
  - 6 Denmark
  - 8 Ireland
  - 8 United Kingdom
  - 10 Finland
  - 10 Norway
  - 10 Taiwan
  - 13 Germany
  - 14 Estonia
  - 15 Luxembourg
  - 16 Austria
  - 17 United States
  - 17 Sweden
  - 19 Malta
  - 20 Lithuania
- And these are the lowest (least free) 20:
- 143 Zimbabwe

- 144 Gabon
- 144 Cameroon
- 146 Saudi Arabia
- 147 Chad
- 147 Mauritania
- 149 Myanmar
- 150 Ethiopia
- 151 Congo, Dem. Rep. of
- 152 Central African Republic
- 153 Iran
- 154 Burundi
- 155 Algeria
- 156 Egypt
- 157 Sudan
- 158 Libya
- 159 Iraq
- 160 Yemen, Republic of
- 161 Venezuela
- 162 Syria

# Human Trafficking

## Part I It's Happening. Here.

"I am forever grateful to the kids at South High who opened my eyes."

When Detective Tamara Remington came to Sheboygan 13 years ago and became school liaison officer at Sheboygan South High, she heard an outrageous story from some students.

They told her of a house in the heart of Sheboygan: "You can go inside and pick from pictures of young girls, runaways from Appleton, Sheboygan, Milwaukee — you can pick which one you want, and if you want her drugged or not."

It was hard to believe. But investigation showed it was all too true.

(The house in question has since been torn down.)

This is an example of sex trafficking. This crime, this modern-day slavery, is happening here, in Wisconsin, in Sheboygan county.

It's hard for some people to believe. Or — worse — some *refuse* to believe it. "Oh, that's a big-city problem. A Milwaukee problem. Maybe even Green Bay. Not in *our* town. Not *here*."

But sex trafficking has officially been documented in all 72 Wisconsin counties.

"Sex trafficking" involves a trafficker (or pimp) forcing, defrauding, or coercing a person into a sex act with a customer.

(There is also "labor trafficking," which is using force, fraud, or coercion to make a person work. Labor trafficking accounts for 20 per cent of all trafficking, and deserves its own, separate discussion and articles.)

To better understand *trafficking*, it must be sharply distinguished from two other concepts people might confuse it with: prostitution and human smuggling.

Prostitution involves consenting adults, but it is illegal in many states.

Human smuggling is a chosen, non-coercive arrangement to pay a smuggler to transport one or more persons across a border. The crime is that of entering a country illegally.

Human trafficking can involve crossing national or state borders, but it often does not.

One additional distinction is needed. If a minor is involved in a commercial sex act, it is considered trafficking, even if force, fraud, or coercion are not present.

Remington is part of the Federal Task Force for the Eastern District of Wisconsin (which includes Fond du Lac and Sheboygan counties, extending southward to Kenosha county). The task force meets regularly at the Milwaukee court house. They have identified over 30 violent pimps (or traffickers) in the Eastern District, with "two-thirds of the traffickers having their hooks into kids and community in Sheboygan."

While Milwaukee county has the most documented cases of trafficking, Sheboygan is tied with Racine county as having the second-most cases in Wisconsin.

That single statistic, however, is misleading.

"I don't think it's happening more in Sheboygan than elsewhere," Remington says. "I think Sheboygan is ranked so high because of all the good things happening here. All of our deputies, our city police, our dispatchers, they're all trained to be aware. Having the support of Sheriff Cory Roeseler, and Chief of Police Christopher Domagalski. And District Attorney Joel Urmanski

takes every single human trafficking case that we present. He's not afraid. These are difficult, challenging, very time-consuming cases. He's just fearless. So while Sheboygan county's number of reported cases are up there, that doesn't mean it's happening more than elsewhere."

Several programs in the county have aided in discovering trafficking cases. (See Part IV.)

Remington finds the public's willingness to gain awareness on the topic encouraging. But there is still much information that needs to get out there. There are still myths needing to be replaced with facts.

For example, sex trafficking is not confined to back alleyways, or to the seedier parts of towns. Nor do those involved slink about only under cover of night.

Trafficking can be happening in any type of neighborhood, and the majority of cases Remington has dealt with happened in broad daylight.

Some will say, "I don't believe we have modern-day slavery. I don't see people in chains and shackles and cages in Sheboygan."

But traffickers gain the trust of their victims over periods of weeks, months, even years, in a process called "grooming." The chains and shackles then applied are unseen, in the form of manipulative drug addiction, and sometimes brutal beatings and gang rapes. (See Part III.)

The Midwest is a hub for trafficking. But why?

The basic, paradoxical answer: Those perpetrating this evil rely on a virtue.

"Midwesterners are trusting, you're nice, you're people-pleasers, you have a great work ethic," Remington says. "Now, I'm not telling you to go out and be mean jerks, or to raise your kids to be jerks. But we could all benefit by being less trusting. You can start with your social media. Do you really need 857 friends? We need to consider that, and be careful on social media. Everybody. That's where most traffickers look for recruits."

"This topic is one that's very important, very close to my heart," Remington says. "I want people to know this. Not to scare them, but to give simple tips that we can use to stay safe, and to raise the awareness that this problem is everywhere."

Remington admits this is not the prettiest topic to hear about or think about. Yet, her talks draw large audiences. People come to hear about human trafficking, to become the alert eyes and ears ready to detect its presence, which is the key to its prevention.

"There are so many positives about Sheboygan county," she says. "I'm so proud of Sheboygan county."

Information for this series of articles was taken from a presentation by Detective Tamara Remington of the Sheboygan Police Department; and from several websites, including the Wisconsin Department of Justice's website on human trafficking, which is <https://www.doj.state.wi.us/ocvs/human-trafficking>

The Human Trafficking Hotline is  
**1-888-373-7888**

## Part II Who's at Risk? Rethinking Your Preconceptions

Before she became a member of the Sheboygan Police Department 13 years ago, Detective Tamara Remington had her own preconceptions about sex trafficking.

"When I worked in the San Francisco Bay area, I had cases involving Asian gangs," she says. "There were some human trafficking cases. But even as a police officer, I thought that human trafficking is an international problem. I started to better understand trafficking, its magnitude, and that it's going on domestically, because of the types of cases I worked on when I came to Sheboy-

gan.”

So Remington understands if people have misconceptions about this subject—a subject she admits is not pleasant. But she is continually encouraged by the large number of people attending her public talks, which indicates people want to understand the problem and do something about it.

One of several actual cases Remington uses to inform and raise awareness took place in Sheboygan: the Jason Guidry case.

“This case challenges us to re-think who the traffickers are, who the victims are, who you think their families are,” Remington says.

## The traffickers

The terms “pimp” and “trafficker” mean essentially the same thing: people who sell humans for sex or labor purposes.

What do pimps look like? Movies sometimes portray them dressed like royalty gone mad, with outlandish fur and leather clothing, elaborate hats, glittering gold and diamond jewelry. This version likely drives (or is chauffeured in) a large, luxury car whose interior is decorated with the same exotic flair as the pimp’s attire.

One place they will dress this way is at a pimp convention. The Players Ball is an annual convergence of pimps, held in Chicago and other cities.

“It’s like the Emmys or the Grammys gone wrong,” Remington says. “They give awards to the biggest, baddest pimp.”

But in the real world, away from the fantasy land of pimp conventions, traffickers look like anyone else. They can be men or women (despite the generic use of “he” that follows), and of any ethnic background.

Pimps are very good at communicating with each other, Remington says, and gives another discouraging fact: Milwaukee is known as the “Harvard of pimping,” where pimps come from all over to learn the trade.

Remington identified three types of pimp: the Romeo (or *finesse*), the bone-breaker, and (a relatively recent development) the CEO

A “Romeo” pimp is so named by being a master of psychological manipulation through sweet-talking cajolery. Jason Guidry was one. He was a good-looking slick talker. Remington says, when he was arrested, “An officer warned me, ‘Hey, Remington, be careful. After spending a few minutes with him, I want to take him to lunch or dinner.’ He was that slick.”

The “bone-breaker” (or “gorilla”) pimp exerts power through brutal physical abuse and terrorizes with the threat of more of the same.

The “CEO” pimp defrauds the victim into believing he is arranging a legitimate business relationship, often posing as a modeling photographer or a music producer.

“There are more Romeo pimps in our area than bone-breakers,” Remington says. “Though Romeo pimps are bad enough.”

## The victims

Remington says people might think victims of sex trafficking are trouble-makers. Misfits. Kids living in poverty. Kids from a big city.

The reality? “Jason Guidry had a ‘stable’ of six beautiful young ladies,” she says, including “a straight-A student, a cheerleader, a softball star. Some of the best and brightest.”

In her experiences in Sheboygan county, she’s seen victims ranging in age from two to 72, and everything between. “Men, women. Boys, girls. All ages, all races, all sizes, all shapes. Males and females.”

Victims come from a range of income levels; from rural or urban areas.

Out of this diversity of backgrounds, they had one thing in common. Vulnerability.

“All of us as human beings are vulnerable at some point in life, right?” Remington asks her audiences. “That’s one thing I hope will challenge you to re-think who the victims are.”

Sometimes Remington is asked, “What’s wrong with the victims? Are they dumb? Do they want to be in this situation? They must, because there’s the door, they can leave, or they can scream for help.”

The trafficker uses certain methods to gain control of a victim; other methods to retain that control.

## The parents

Some people ask, “Who are their parents? They must be terrible people.”

“Again, I challenge you to re-think your preconceptions,” Remington says. “Some of these parents are terrible; they’re selling their kids off for their own next fix of dope. However, some of the parents are wonderful. Having worked many of these cases, I’ve met many survivors of human trafficking, and they are some of the best and brightest. And their families, some of them are wonderful people. I hope the community, hearing these cases, will think twice about judging the families.”

When one 14-year-old girl went missing, “her mom was out there on the streets, looking for her daughter, and was on the verge of getting fired because she’d missed so much work. We eventually recovered the girl in Milwaukee.”

In another case, the father saw a sex ad for his missing daughter and pretended to be a customer. “I would not recommend that,” Remington warns. “That was very daring, very dangerous. She was being held by a gorilla pimp. A bone-breaker. We have the escape on video, and it is chilling. Terrifying.”

## Part III How Does it Happen?

**Riddle:** What’s easy to get into, but hard to get out of?

**Answer:** A habit.

On a darker note, that is also true of “The Life,” or “The Game”—two euphemistic terms for sex trafficking.

How do traffickers (or pimps) recruit their victims? How do they keep the victims enslaved? It turns out this waking nightmare can be very easy to walk into; and heart-breakingly, sometimes mind-breakingly difficult to walk away from.

Awareness of these techniques will hopefully prevent more victims from entering this lifestyle.

## Easy to get into

It can begin with one simple action. Getting into a car. Going to a party. Sipping a drink containing “something extra.”

**Real-life scenario:** Three girls are walking. A nice car pulls up. The driver is unknown to the girls. He gives the girls some cash, smiles, says “Get yourself some burgers,” and drives off. The girls get their burgers. An hour later, the car comes back. “Hey, girls, get in the car,” the driver says. None of the girls thinks that’s a good idea. “Hey, come on,” the driver says, “I’m the cool guy that got you those burgers. Get in.” Not one girl wants to. They each know they shouldn’t. But because they “owe” him for the burgers, they get into the car.

**Real-life scenario:** Two girls are walking. A nice car pulls up, driven by a young, beautiful, bi-racial woman. The driver makes friendly conversation and suggests the girls get in the car. Neither of the walking girls thinks that’s a good idea. “Oh, I see,” the driver says scornfully, “you’re racist.” Well, those two girls will show her they’re not racist! They get into the car.

**Real-life scenario:** A lone girl is walking. A nice car pulls up. A man is driving. A pretty, teen-age girl leans out the passenger window and says, “Hey, you’re too beautiful to look sad and lonely. Come on in for a ride. We’ll go get something to eat and cheer you up.” Astonished that the girl in the car knew she was feeling sad and lonely, the walking girl gets into the car.

What could happen, once someone steps into that car?

In the last scenario, the driver ordered the food, handed it to the teenager in the passenger seat, who in turn passed a burger and soda to their new friend in the back seat.

The food had been drugged.

When the girl in the back seat regains consciousness, she finds she’s lost several days; she’s been pumped full of drugs; she’s addicted and will do anything for her next fix.

Anything.

Three tactics are used in the above scenarios to convince the victim to take that first unknowing step into sex trafficking.

Debt bondage, paradoxically, relies on the victim’s sense of fair

play. “He did something for me; now I have to do something for him.”

An accusation of unearned guilt can catch a person off-guard, overriding one’s better judgment.

A vulnerable person can be especially receptive to, and cooperate with, anyone extending an act of kindness. How did the teenager know the walking girl was sad and lonely? She and her pimp (the driver) had likely tried the same line with several other girls, who’d told them to buzz off (but who, unfortunately, failed to note the license plate and call the police). After several tries, they’d likely find someone who’s sad and lonely.

Pimps driving a slick car often have an attractive, teen-age girl or boy in the passenger seat, offering anything to get someone into the car. Variations on this theme include, “Hey, you’re beautiful! I love your hair. You want to go to the beach? Want a ride? Breakfast? Some weed? Booze? Whatever you want, we’ll get it for you.”

“Promise her Heaven, you can take her to Hell,” is how Detective Remington puts it. Remington has worked on sex trafficking cases in Sheboygan county for over a decade.

## Grooming

In Remington’s talks to communities about sex trafficking, she tells how traffickers patiently comb social media for kids and adults who are vulnerable, or who tell the world they want something they can’t have. In a process called “grooming,” the trafficker builds online relationships built on deception, wearing a false face of trust and support.

“I want to go on a shopping trip to Mall of America, but my parents won’t take me,” one girl complained on social media. A trafficker and his “stable” of girls took her on a shopping trip of a lifetime, but then made it known that she owed them. (Debt bondage.)

“I want a tattoo so bad, but mom won’t let me have one,” a 13-year-old girl lamented online. “Hey, baby, we’ll get you a tattoo,” a Sheboygan pimp promised her. But it wasn’t a colorful rose, or an elegant Asian character. It branded the 13-year-old as the pimp’s property.

Traffickers spend months, even years, building online relationships of trust with people all too willing to share personal information about themselves, their families, and where they live. That time is well spent for the pimp, because success results in control over a human being, which the trafficker can sell for sex over and over again.

Jason Guidry, a Sheboygan trafficker behind bars for the next two decades, found six young ladies through social media who were down on their luck. One had lost her job; one, her apartment; one was fighting for custody of her child. Guidry swooped down and became a knight in shining armor to the six women. “Hey, I’ll help you find a job. I’ll give you shelter. I’ll help with your child.” He helped them when no one else would.

A master manipulator, he promised each of the six he would marry her.

Pimps also search for victims of past abuse. “I do appreciate the Me Too movement,” Remington says. “But at the same time, we have to be careful about what we post online. If we post publicly that we’ve been previously sexually molested, that’s going to attract the attention of pimps.”

## Hard to get out of: invisible chains

The slick, sweet-talking “Romeo” or “finesse” pimp can brainwash a victim into complete submission, convincing the victim that having sex with strangers ten to thirty times a day or night is something the victim owes the pimp. It can take months to undo such brainwashing, for victims fortunate enough to be rescued.

For victims not so willingly cooperative, other methods keep them enslaved.

If a person has no previous drug habit, that person will almost surely have one on falling prey to a trafficker. Threatening to withhold the drug to an addict is a powerful form of bondage.

The “CEO” type of pimp, promising a career in modeling or in music, has applicants fill out detailed applications, then tells the applicant, “Now you’re going to have sex with these men.” When

the applicant refuses, the CEO pimp replies, “Yes you are. You filled out this form. If you don’t do what we say, we’ll hurt (or kill) your family, brother, sister, your pet.”

The “bone-breaker” or “gorilla” pimp uses sheer brute force and gang rapes, and the threat of more of the same, to keep his or her stable of victims subdued.

Detective Remington offers this sobering fact: “Once you enter The Life, your life expectancy is seven years. So prevention is the key.”

## Part IV What can one do?

“How can I help?”

The answer is sometimes quite simple. To illustrate, what would you do in this—

**Real-life scenario:** You’re a motel manager. A very good-looking man pays for room 15. His one request that the room never be entered by motel staff makes you suspicious at first, but his gentlemanly manner reassures you. As weeks go by, you notice a lot of visitors enter room 15. You never enter the room, as requested, but while cleaning rooms on either side, you occasionally hear a woman screaming for help. You feel you should do something, and knock on room 15. The well-educated man answers, suavely stepping into the hall to offer a calm explanation which, the more he talks, the more plausible it sounds. You decide there’s no cause for concern and take no action.

Or do you?

The key word here is “decide.” The slick-talking man above was a trafficker of the “Romeo” or “finesse” variety, an expert at using manipulation to recruit his victims, keep them enslaved, and placate suspicious people who notice too much and get too curious.

After this trafficker’s arrest, Remington learned the pimp had forcibly taken the young woman from Sheboygan to a Milwaukee motel room. During the seven months she was kept there, the trafficker brainwashed her, promising to marry her and warning, “You’re going to jail if we’re caught, because you’re the one having sex with customers.” The situation began under violent duress. It mutated into willing cooperation by the victim.

“It took seven or eight months to undo the brainwashing she was subjected to, while imprisoned in that motel room,” Remington tells audiences at her talks on trafficking.

The motel manager’s lack of action, however one chooses to judge it, gives one answer to the question, “What can one do?”

That answer: Choose to be aware, and don’t allow anyone to override your judgment.

## Recognizing the signs

What do you watch for? Remington draws attention to the Wisconsin Child Sex Trafficking and Exploitation Indicator and Response Guide, which she tells audiences has an 80 per cent accuracy rate. The Indicator is reproduced on pages 12-13, and can be found online at [dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/aht/pdf/indicatorguide.pdf](http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/aht/pdf/indicatorguide.pdf).

“This flowchart has really prevented a lot of kids from falling through the cracks,” Remington says. Effective state-wide as of May, 2017, Sheboygan county led the way by adopting it four years earlier.

The chart has three risk levels: At Risk, High Risk, and Confirmed. It is recommended that local law enforcement, or Child Protective Services, be contacted if three or more items are present from the At Risk category; or if one or more items from the High Risk or Confirmed category are present.

One At Risk item is, “Child has possession of money, electronics, or other material items that are unexplained, unusual, or out of the ordinary for that child (e.g., nails, hair, clothing, shoes).” Remington says pimps often groom their victims by giving them something exciting, like a new cell phone, and then use the phone’s GPS to monitor the child’s location.

An Internet search on the phrase “evidence of sex trafficking” will bring lists of warning signs from many organizations throughout the world.

## Programs that help

Remington tells her audiences of several programs that fight trafficking, or help its victims.

**Sheboygan Safe Stay** is a partnership program between city of Sheboygan places of lodging and Sheboygan county law enforcement. All city hotels and motels participate and cooperate, learning to be on the alert for suspicious, possibly criminal activity. Owners and employees are educated as to what to watch for. (Had events in the “real-life scenario” opening this section happened at a Sheboygan lodging, they would have surely been reported to law enforcement, because of this training.)

**Ending the Game** ([endingthegame.com](http://endingthegame.com)) is a nation-wide educational organization that holds classes locally (with Wisconsin contacts in Appleton, Brookfield, Green Bay, Milwaukee, Neilsville, and Sheboygan) and publishes research articles. Its website says it is a “coercion resiliency” curriculum that reduces feelings of attachment to traffickers and/or a lifestyle characterized by commercial sexual exploitation, thereby reducing the rate of recidivism among sex trafficking survivors. Ending The Game is designed to educate and empower survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking by providing a structure and framework to uncover harmful psychological coercion (a.k.a. ‘The Game’) that victims may have been subjected to during or before their exploitation experience.”

**The Rose Home** established in Green Bay by Eye Heart World is a rehab home for young women who have been rescued from trafficking.

**Convergence Resource Center** ([convergenceresource.org](http://convergenceresource.org)), per its website, is a Milwaukee “faith-based, community service, non-profit organization that provides ancillary support for men and women rebuilding their lives after trauma with an emphasis on justice involv[ing] women and female survivors of human trafficking.” Co-founder and co-CEO Dr. Debbie Lassiter comes to Sheboygan regularly to provide services for trafficking survivors and high-risk girls. Dr. Lassiter is one of Wisconsin’s few trainers for Ending the Game facilitators, one of several programs CRC offers.

**SOLACE Support Line** is one CRC-offered service: (414) 797-3047.

**Restoration Bags** are backpacks for trafficking survivors, prepared by various organizations nation-wide. Local organizations active in this project include Love INC of Sheboygan county ([loveincsheboygancounty.org](http://loveincsheboygancounty.org)) and Freedom Cry ([freedomcryinc.org](http://freedomcryinc.org)). Bags include new clothing, hygiene and comfort items. Remington says some bags include a teddy bear or other stuffed animal. At first, she wondered why, but she has sometimes seen these prized stuffed animals in the protective possession of recovering victims she follows up with.

## Prevention

“The majority of recruiting happens via social media,” Remington says, and urges people to be cautious when online.

While online, she says, we have to be careful about what we post. Pimps are looking for people who are victims of past abuse. If we are posting that we’ve been previously sexually molested, that’s the number one thing they’re looking for—prior trauma or abuse.”

When in groups, have a plan that avoids leaving someone behind, alone or with strangers. If the group is confronted with a suspicious situation, such as getting into a stranger’s car, or going to a hotel room for a party, or answering questions with personal information, be assertive and (again) don’t surrender your own judgment—show that you value your own life and safety, and that of your friends, by saying, “This is not a good idea.” *And say it with conviction.*

Above all, if you are an adult with a child in your life, do what you can to ensure that child is comfortable talking to you about his or her concerns.

**Big Brothers Big Sisters of Sheboygan County** ([bbbssc.org](http://bbbssc.org)) is currently working with Remington to develop methods to mentor children and provide much-needed positive role models.

“I want to make sure that every kid in Sheboygan county has a trusted adult,” Remington says, because without that, traffickers are all too willing to fill that void.

## TEST YOUR SKILLS AT ALLEGORY

This pulp cover is part of a presentation I give on pulps. Most recently, I gave this talk in Plymouth (thanks, ladies, you were a great audience). This cover generated a lot of interest when I asked, “What do you think this represents?”

The cover date is January, 1919. What historical event happened shortly before that?

A few thoughts below.



The woman is Columbia. She and Uncle Sam were symbols of America. Interestingly, Wikipedia says, “While the figure of Uncle Sam represents specifically the government, Columbia represents the United States as a nation.” An Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, in Europe. That would be about the time this pulp was being produced. Characters in stories of the 1920s or 30s sometimes mention fighting in the Great War, meaning the 1914-18 war. Few people would have thought of adding a “(one)” at the end of “World War,” because it was also referred to as “The War to End All Wars.” Optimists thought this particular war was so horrifying, so devastating, that civilization had learned its lesson, and would never fight another. Well, by the late 1930s, the unsettling truth became more and more evident. The cover shows Columbia glad to see her boys coming home from across the ocean (or “Over There,” as George M. Cohan put it). Showing biplanes flying in from the ocean was definitely more symbolic than realistic. While they are not visible on this cover (an artist doesn’t always have room for everything), many American women served in Europe, providing medical aid or assisting the war effort in other capacities.

# From Fan to Publisher

## First Spider-Man Comic Leads to Book Projects

I've enjoyed reading comic books most of my life. I still do.

And it all started in Random Lake, the area where I grew up and went to grade school and high school.

The first comic book I remembers having was purchased by my mom at the Burmesch-Leider Variety Store (referred to simply, as I grew up, as "The Drug Store"). It was The Amazing Spider-Man #4. The year was 1963. I was 8 years old.

In that comic, Spider-Man fought The Sandman, a villain who could turn into sand. (He could, because he'd been on a sandy beach when a nuclear blast went off nearby. As long-time Marvel readers know, radiation and atomic bombs are like magic: Spider-Man gained his powers when bitten by a radioactive spider; Bruce Banner became The Hulk when bombarded by gamma rays; The Cobra took on characteristics of the radioactive snake that bit him; etc., and more.)

Like most kids, I suppose, I read a comic book the same way I watched a TV show or movie—with no awareness of the people who put the story together. No thought of writers for comics or dramas; no concern for artists who drew comics; no interest in the names of actors bringing dramatic scripts to life.

Eventually, one realizes the work that one responds positively resulted from someone's efforts.

Some comics companies would not give their artists and writers credit. Carl Barks wrote and drew the Disney duck stories, including that of Donald, his three nephews, and his Uncle Scrooge McDuck, for well over twenty years, never once having his name attached to his published work. (But one fan did the research; discovered the writer/artist's identity; and a new career was launched for Barks, who went on to create oil paintings of the duck characters he drew for decades.)

Marvel, on the other hand, listed the creative team that produced each of their comics. Those early Spider-Man comics, for instance, were written by Stan Lee and drawn by Steve Ditko.

But it wasn't quite that simple. Over the years, the "Marvel method" of creating a comic story was revealed: The writer (usually Stan Lee) and artist would confer, coming up with a basic storyline for an issue. The artist would then break down the story into the allotted number of pages; and

further break down each page into several panels. The artist would draw the story in pencil, and make notes as to what was going on. Those penciled pages would be given to the writer, who would write the dialogue. The dialogue was given to a letterer, who hand-lettered the dialogue on the page. (That method became obsolete when it became possible to combine computerized lettering with the image.)

The penciled and lettered pages would then be given to an inker, who would go over the penciled lines with pen and/or brush and ink. This step was needed because a solidly black line was needed for clear, sharp reproduction.

(Marvel once skipped the inking step in an early 1970s issue of Conan the Barbarian, because of time constraints. It wasn't a pretty sight.)

Sometimes, an inker could be the same person who drew the original pencils. Sometimes, it was another artist. This would make for some interesting artistic combinations and variations.

In later years, Ditko wrote about this "Marvel method" and made the point that listing Lee as writer and Ditko as artist was not accurate, especially when Ditko started creating new characters and deciding on his own what direction story events would take. Instead of merely "Drawn by," the credits soon read "Plotted and drawn by Steve Ditko."

But all of this was beyond my awareness in the 1960s. In fact, astounding as it seems to me now, I didn't even notice (at first) when Ditko stopped (plotting and) drawing Spider-Man. It took a few months before I got a sense of, "Hey, this just doesn't look the same."

What happened to Steve Ditko? There was no Internet to answer that. I wasn't connected to any fan news sources. An announcement in Marvel comics at the time simply said he'd decided "for personal reasons" to leave Marvel.

I soon discovered his work in comics of other publishers. In a 1967 issue of T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents, I discovered a story that seemed... the artwork looked like...

At this point, at age 12, I learned enough to distinguish between artistic styles, enough to identify the artist on this T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents story as Ditko.

I also discovered Ditko's work in several ghost-story comic titles.

Two years after I first read Atlas Shrugged, I learned that Ditko, like me, was interested in the philosophy of Ayn Rand. Some of his work, which he did on his own terms and copyrighted, dealt with sophisticated philosophical themes.

I continued to follow Ditko's career. One editor and writer Ditko worked with was Robin Snyder, who worked for several publishers. I started corresponding with Snyder over 30 years ago. In one of his letter columns, he mentioned a "fanzine" (fan magazine), Ditkomania. I



And here's the cover of the comic that started it all. The Amazing Spider-Man #4, from the summer of 1963. (It says "Sept." on the cover, but comics were post-dated by several months.) Cover art by Steve Ditko. Picturing the main character in the cover's upper left corner was Ditko's idea, and implemented on all Marvel comics. — Copyright © Marvel Entertainment

subscribed, and contributed a few articles.

In the late 1980s, I wrote a longer article on why I considered Ditko's work so interesting. I sent a copy to Robin Snyder. The article was published in *Amazing Heroes* #111 (easily available on eBay for well under \$10).

Robin had sent the manuscript to Ditko. I found this out when Ditko sent me a 13-page letter, commenting on the article.

It's gratifying to write to a person you respect, and then get a response.

It's on quite a higher level when that same person initiates contact with you.

I exchanged letters with Ditko from then on.

In 1991, I had an opportunity to travel with my wife to New York City. I asked Ditko if we could visit him in his Manhattan studio, and he agreed. I've heard that many fans had asked this, over the years, but few had been invited. Some had even appeared unannounced at his studio (his phone number and studio address were in the Manhattan phone directory); Ditko would talk to these people through a partly-opened door, but that's as far as they were allowed.

When my wife and I visited, there were not enough chairs to seat three people in his studio, so we all stood for about three hours. Steve Ditko smiled continuously as we talked about one thing after another.

My correspondence lasted nearly up to Ditko's death in 2018. The last letters I received from him were favorable comments on many features in *The Plymouth Review Current*.

Ditko remained a dynamic idea generator all during his career. In the last decade of his life, he and Robin Snyder published a series of 27 comics, where he introduced a multi-

tude of creative characters, showing he'd not lost his creative vision and imagination.

Some stories in this series evoke the eeriness of the old *Twilight Zone* TV show. For example, there is a series called "Personality Masks," where people visit a mysterious shop, find a mask giving them some character strength they need. The recipient of the mask then proves worthy—or not—of the characteristic they desired.

Ditko passed the copyrights to his independent work to Snyder. In late 2018, I contacted Snyder and proposed reprinting these 27 comics, some of which are now out of print, in book form. Snyder agreed, and the result is a 5-volume set, "The 32 Series by Ditko," which assembles over 800 pages of art Ditko created for this final major project of his life.

I used Ingram-Spark to make the "32 Series by Ditko" books available online from Barnes and Noble, Amazon, and other online booksellers. This "print on demand" method of publishing avoids the need to pay a printer for hundreds or thousands of copies, and then seeing them stockpiled in a garage or basement (something I *have* done at points in my life).

I've donated a set of the five books to the Lakeview Community Library in Random Lake. If you have access to the Monarch Library System, check them out.

I went from a kid reading *Spider-Man* (a character co-created by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko) in 1963, to co-publishing books by Steve Ditko in 2019. Designing those five books and working with Robin to refine them, was a milestone for me.

Robin and I are happy with those five books, and we're planning more projects that will make Steve Ditko's work more accessible.

Over **800 pages**  
of stories,  
art and essays by **Ditko** were published in  
**these 27 32-page comics**  
in the last major project of the last decade of Ditko's life

Some of the above are out of print  
Some are still available from Robin Snyder

**All 27 comics have been collected in these 5 books**

**All five volumes are available online from Barnes & Noble and other booksellers**

Images Copyright © SD Publishing Co.

Promotional leaflet for the five books in *The 32 Series by Ditko*.

The Plymouth Review  
**Current**

TAKING YOU PLACES WORTH SEEING

Volume 9 • Issue 5 • April 2020

**FREE!**



The publication respects your intelligence

See page 2 for more details

*Bond... James Bond*

Bad news, collectors! This issue is *scarce!* We haven't seen a *single one* on eBay! With the "pandemic," it was decided not to distribute copies to gas stations, restaurants, etc. Only Review subscribers received this, and a few subsequent, issues.

**April**  
 2020

Books by the  
**Silver Creek Press**

Specializing in making available  
 previously-uncollected works  
 by Albert Payson Terhune

Albert Payson Terhune  
 Forty All Babes and a Thief  
 A Silver Creek Press Tete-Beche Book  
 Volume I

Albert Payson Terhune  
 Reader  
 Volume II

Albert Payson Terhune  
 Reader  
 Volume III

The Flood Fighters  
 by Albert Payson Terhune

Two boys on a runaway tangle, assisted by a canine saint. From 1920

Albert Payson Terhune  
 Their Last Hope  
 A Silver Creek Press Tete-Beche Book  
 Volume I

Treason's Track  
 by Albert Payson Terhune

General Washington perseveres, despite his greatest betrayal. From 1911

**The Albert Payson Terhune Reader Series**  
 Dozens of stories, from 1900 to the 1920s, anthologized for the first time

**The Tete-Beche Series**  
 Read one novel, turn the book upside-down, and you have another novel!

These and other titles are available online  
 from Barnes & Noble and other booksellers

Previous page: When I learned that no advertisers wanted the front-page space, I stepped up and placed an ad for some of the books I published. These books *and more* are still available!

*The* Plymouth Review  
**Current**  
 TAKING YOU PLACES WORTH SEEING (AT HOME)  
 Volume 9 • Issue 5 • April 2020

**REJECTED**

In this issue:

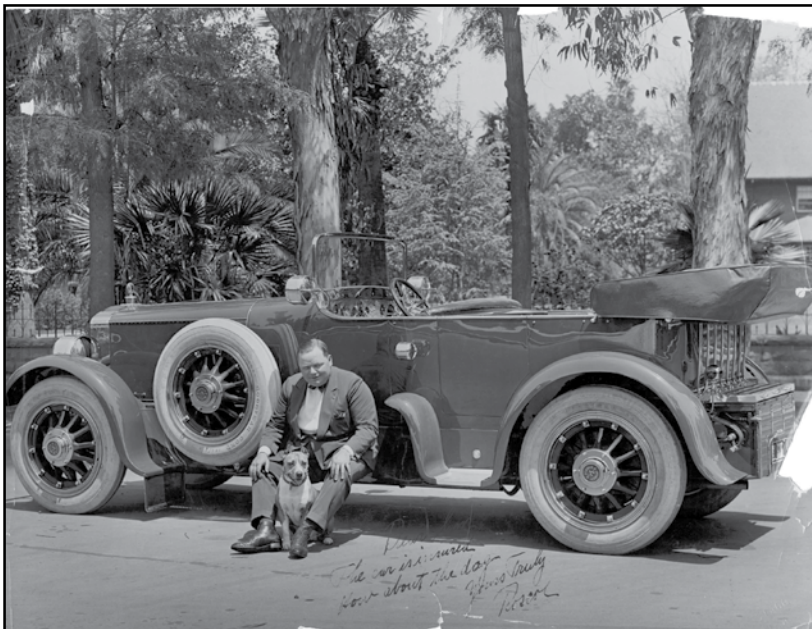
- ◆ Coronavirus ◆
- ◆ Coronavirus ◆
- ◆ Coronavirus ◆
- ◆ Coronavirus ◆
- ◆ Coronavirus ◆
- ◆ Coronavirus ◆

Plus: ◆ More on the Coronavirus ◆

Another view of the Aston Martin DB5. We were *thinking* about using this approach for our cover... but we didn't have to think very long.

This car is on display at the International Spy Museum in Washington, DC. According to the museum's website ([www.spymuseum.org](http://www.spymuseum.org)): "The Aston Martin DB5 first appeared in the 1964 James Bond thriller Goldfinger. The ultimate spy car came fully loaded with machine guns, tire slashers,

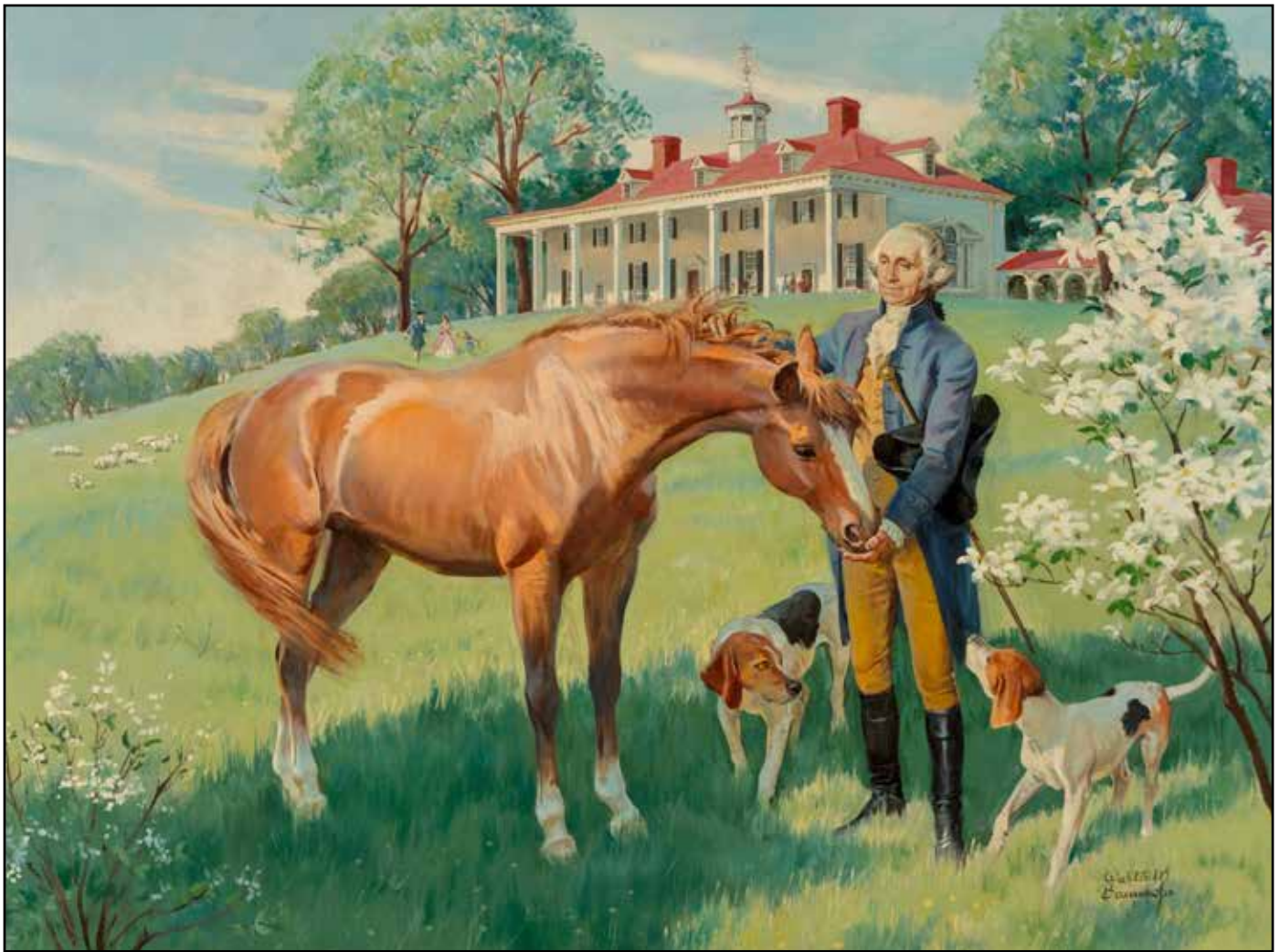
bulletproof shield, oil jets, dashboard radar screen, rotating license plate, and ejector seat. The Bond car not only captured the public's imagination, but inspired intelligence agencies to incorporate similar features into high security vehicles used in dangerous areas." **YEAH?** Ejector seats and everything?? **Cool!**



This autographed photo of Roscoe Arbuckle, sold by Heritage Auctions, is signed, "Dear Sam/The car is insured/how about the dog?/ Yours truly/Roscoe." That's some big car! – HA.com

• **The coronavirus!** Yes, even in the peerless pages of The PRC, you cannot escape mention of this onerous organism. We've found several articles that, in true PRC style, might challenge "conventional wisdom."

• **...which leads us** to an important announcement about this issue, and hopefully, *only* this issue. Copies are being inserted with the month's first Friday edition of The Review (in this case, April 3), as usual. **But none will be distributed** to the usual gas stations, restaurants, and other high-end businesses classy enough to regularly carry The PRC. We've told our readers in the past that The PRC is a publication worth keeping, because of its timeless articles on arts, entertainment, dining, sciences, practical philosophy, and other topics relevant to a happy, successful life. Now, I'm not **saying** this issue will become a sought-after collector's issue. But I might—just **might**, that is—be *thinking* it!



Walter Baumhofer, artist, was the subject of a past PulpArtists column. Your Editor likes his artwork, and likes George Washington; so here this 1967 image is. — HA.com

This painting was up for auction on Heritage, and I bid on it, but it went a little higher than I wanted to go.

POV-Ray • Just BASIC • **POV-Ray • Just BASIC** • POV-Ray • Just BASIC

Long, long ago, when I started editing The PRC (2014), I wrote several columns in a series, The Science in Science Fiction.

I created a heading I thought was as eye-catching as its subject matter was mind-catching. I used two computer programs to do this (and to generate the image on this issue's cover).

In the six years I've edited The PRC, I thought about writing an article like this. I asked myself if this would be of general interest. I thought, maybe not. But sometimes, you have to do something that will appeal to that small portion of readers—in this case, those who like to experiment with programming languages.

The first program was POV-Ray, which I started putting with twenty years before, when I bought the book, *Ray Tracing Creations*, Second Edition, by Chris Young and Drew Wells.

POV stands for Persistence of Vision; the "Ray" part means it's a ray-tracing program, which calculates light rays...

Rather than try explaining that, I refer you to POV-Ray's website, where you'll find complete background on POV-Ray; images formed by incredibly advanced users; and a free download of the program.

POV-Ray is a programming language where you define objects, light, and how they interact.

One nice thing about a programming language: Many reserved words will do a lot for you. For example, there are many pre-de-

fined "textures" you can apply to objects. Apply stone textures to make it look like different types of stone. The plane is formed of Pink Alabaster and Jade (not very visible in the example). The sphere has a texture of Blood Marble (well visible on the top of the sphere).

The sphere is highly reflective, so the tiles of the plane beneath it are mirrored in the bottom.

Why is the sky so dark? Because we didn't define any.

Suppose I'm not satisfied with one sphere. I want a ring of spheres. I want a sphere every 5 degrees, which means I'd have to calculate the locations of 72 spheres.

But I'm not going to do that.

Remember, I said I used *two* programs to generate these images, once they became complex. The second program is Just BASIC, another program that can be downloaded for free.

I used Just BASIC to write the file that would run in POV-Ray. Why? Because once I had the formula to calculate the location of a sphere, I just had to write a repetitive loop, running the formula 72 times, placing a sphere every 5 degrees. The results: **A.**

You'd think a ring of 72 spheres would satisfy me. I mean, what an accomplishment! But nooooo—

I created three rings, at different heights. Using Just BASIC, it was a snap! I did exactly what I'd done for the single ring, but

three times, with different heights. The result is shown in **B**. (Notice I have a sky. I used my own photo of some clouds.)

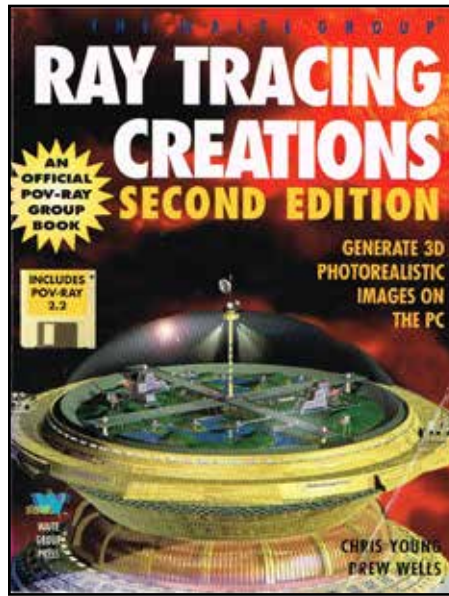
As I became more comfortable with POV-Ray, I experimented with textures and colors. For example, many stone textures are pre-defined; I used a different stone texture for each sphere in the image below.

Colors are light (not pigment) and thus defined by combinations of red, green, and blue. I changed the amount of red incrementally; then of green; then blue — to get the gradient effect you see in the pillars below.

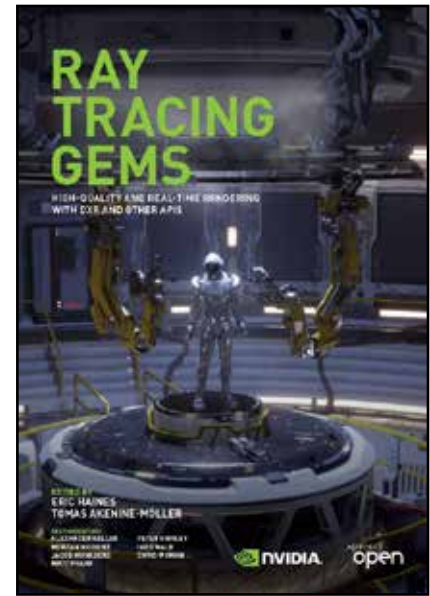
Three rings of spheres is fine; what about a spiral, where each sphere is on a longer radius than the previous one; and each sphere is a little higher than the one before? (That's part of what's going on in **C**.)

And when I grew weary of spheres, I played around with tubes (or toruses). I combined that with patterns of spheres. That led to the image on this issue's cover.

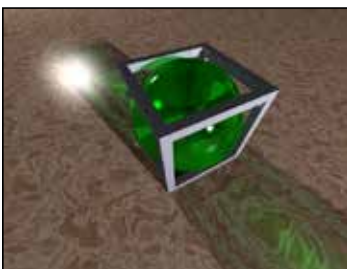
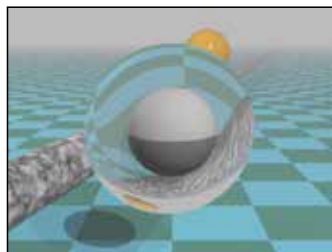
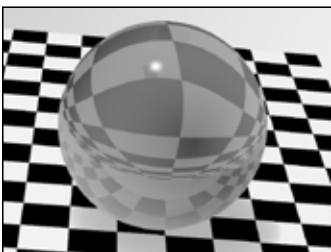
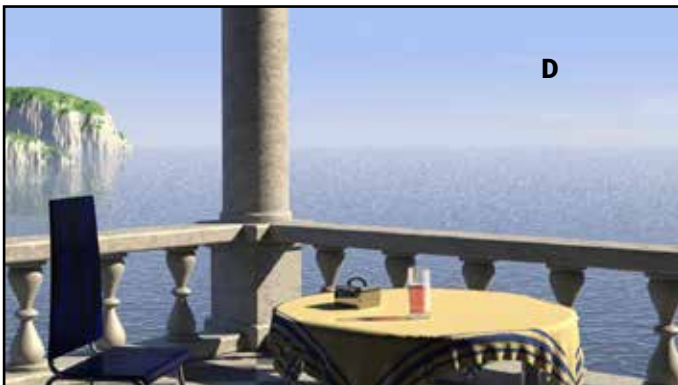
Some POV-Ray programmers develop a more focused, disciplined approach. They replicate actual things in the real world: animals, furniture, water, robots (well, robots are real, aren't they?), and scenery. **D** is one example, called Balcony, generated by Christoph Hormann. The POV-Ray code is one of many examples that are included when you download the program. For this and others, you simply open the code in POV-Ray; run it; and an image is generated. It only took a few seconds to create this image.



This 1994 book got Your Editor started in the wacky world of POV-Ray programming. Do you really need a book like this? Perhaps not. Just about everything within can be found online.

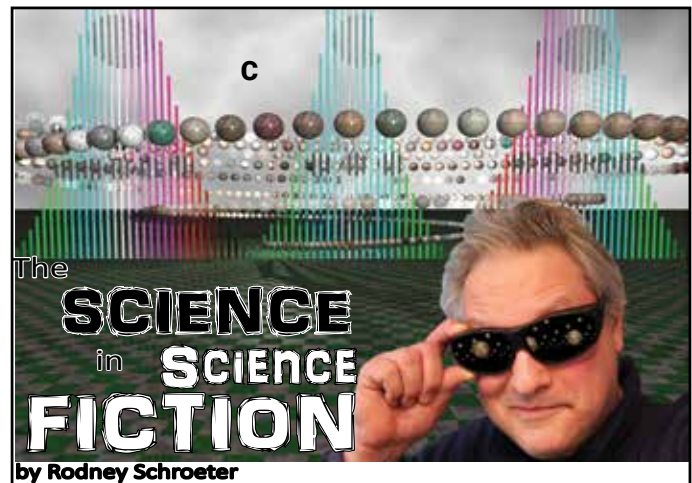
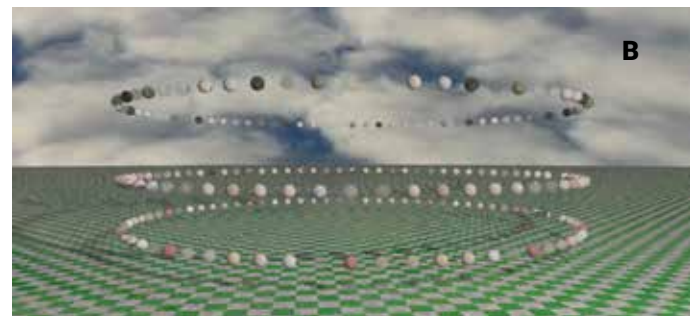
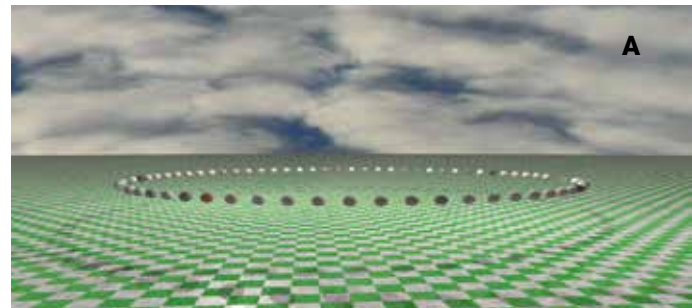


This 2019 book goes above and beyond POV-Ray, using the same technique (ray tracing) to generate images. This, too, is available free online (search on the title). Search also on Real-Time Rendering.



These three images were generated with sample programs that come with the POV-Ray program. For each file, you open the POV-Ray code; run POV-Ray; and the image is created. Each one takes seconds to create (more, if you want higher resolution). You can compare what's in the image to

the POV-Ray code, and discover, "Ah! So THAT's how it was done!" You can then use isolated parts of the code (for example, the checkered or textured plane) in your own POV-Ray programs.



Your Editor, off in a little world of his own making, created with POV-Ray. From an earlier issue of The PRC.

# Using Just-BASIC and POV-Ray Together

The tutorial on these two pages is new to this book, and might appear in a future issue of The PRC.

## Step 1

With Notepad (or any other plain text editor), create the file **01\_one\_ball.bas**

## Step 2

Use Just-BASIC to run **01\_one\_ball.bas**  
This will create file **01\_one\_ball.pov**

## Step 3

Use POV-Ray to run **01\_one\_ball.pov**  
This will create file **01\_one\_ball.jpg**, with one sphere in the middle of a vast checkered plane.

## Step 4

Hey, hold on a minute! Why would you go through all the rig-a-ma-role of writing **01\_one\_ball.bas**, when you could simply write **01\_one\_ball.pov** in the first place?!?

You wouldn't.

*If* this is the most complicated image you intend to make.  
It's *not*.

## Step 5

Make a copy (or "save as") of **01\_one\_ball.bas**; call it **02\_many\_balls.bas**

Here's what you're going to do differently:

- Change the file names in the first few lines.
- Use variables for the x and z coordinates (see POV-Ray documentation; that indicates the position of the sphere).

Set x and z to zero to start.

- Create a loop. The start of the loop is:

**For i = 1 To 20** (The part after the apostrophe is a comment)  
The end of the loop is:

**next i**

The code lines between the start of the loop, and the end, will be repeated 20 times.

- Use the variables instead of hard-coded values for each sphere's position.

Hard-coded in **01\_one\_ball.bas**:

**print #myfile, "sphere { <0, 7, 0>, 3"**

With the variables in **02\_many\_balls.bas**:

**print #myfile, "sphere { <; x; ", 7, "; z; ", 3"**

Yes, the syntax takes some understanding and getting used to.

## Step 6

Use Just-BASIC to run **02\_many\_balls.bas**  
This will create file **02\_many\_balls.pov**

## Step 7

*Oh, ho!!* Do you see how much time you saved by using Just-BASIC? Suppose you wanted to create 100 spheres, instead of 20? Suppose...

## Step 8

### Suppose...

If you are the typical reader of The PRC, your mind has already jumped ahead to several higher layers of speculation as to what can now be done. As stated elsewhere, what you've read

## 01\_one\_ball.bas

open "I:\Archives\Current\Content\_2020\2020\_05\POV\b\_sky\_plane\_OneRing\01\_one\_ball.pov" for output as #myfile

```
' This is JustBasic program          01_one_ball.bas"
print #myfile, "// This is POV-Ray file 01_one_ball.pov"
```

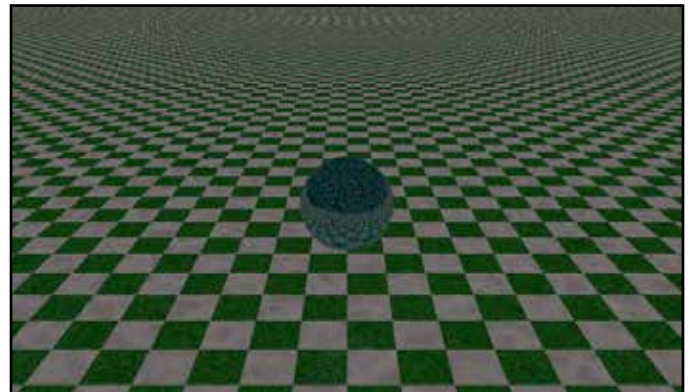
```
print #myfile, "#include " ; Chr$(34) ; "colors.inc" ; Chr$(34)
print #myfile, "#include " ; Chr$(34) ; "textures.inc" ; Chr$(34)
print #myfile, "#include " ; Chr$(34) ; "shapes.inc" ; Chr$(34)
print #myfile, "#include " ; Chr$(34) ; "stones.inc" ; Chr$(34)
```

```
print #myfile, "camera {location <0, 20, -30> look_at <0,3,0>}"
print #myfile, "light_source { <10, 30, 0> }"
print #myfile, "plane { <0, 1, 0>, 0 texture"
print #myfile, "  { tiles { texture {PinkAlabaster}"
print #myfile, "    tile2 texture { pigment {Jade scale .4}"
print #myfile, "    finish { reflection .1 } } } scale 3 } }"
print #myfile, "sphere { <0, 7, 0>, 3"
print #myfile, "  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }"
```

```
close #myfile
end
```

## 01\_one\_ball.pov

```
// This is POV-Ray file 01_one_ball.pov
#include "colors.inc"
#include "textures.inc"
#include "shapes.inc"
#include "stones.inc"
camera {location <0, 20, -30> look_at <0,3,0>}
light_source { <10, 30, 0> }
plane { <0, 1, 0>, 0 texture
  { tiles { texture {PinkAlabaster}
    tile2 texture { pigment {Jade scale .4}
    finish { reflection .1 } } } scale 3 } }
sphere { <0, 7, 0>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
```



01\_one\_ball.jpg

## 02\_many\_balls.bas

open "I:\Archives\Current\Content\_2020\2020\_05\POV\b\_sky\_plane\_OneRing\02\_many\_balls.pov" for output as #myfile

```
' This is JustBasic program      02_many_balls.bas"
print #myfile, "'// This is POV-Ray file 02_many_balls.pov"

'#version 3.7;
print #myfile, "'#include " ; Chr$(34) ; "colors.inc" ; Chr$(34)
print #myfile, "'#include " ; Chr$(34) ; "textures.inc" ; Chr$(34)
print #myfile, "'#include " ; Chr$(34) ; "shapes.inc" ; Chr$(34)
print #myfile, "'#include " ; Chr$(34) ; "stones.inc" ; Chr$(34)

x = 0
z = 0

print #myfile, "camera {location <0, 20, -30> look_at <0,3,0>}"
print #myfile, "light_source { <10, 30, 0>}"
print #myfile, "plane { <0, 1, 0>, 0 texture"
print #myfile, "  { tiles { texture {PinkAlabaster}"
print #myfile, "    tile2 texture { pigment {Jade scale .4}"
print #myfile, "    finish { reflection .1 } } } scale 3 } }"

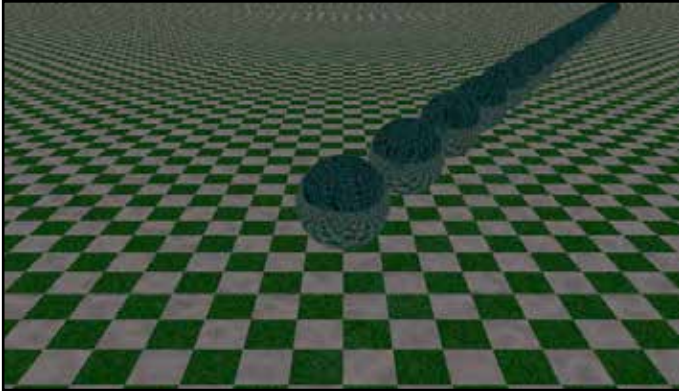
For i = 1 To 20 '-- Create 20 spheres --

print #myfile, "sphere { <; x, 7, ; z, >, 3}"
print #myfile, "  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }"

x = x + 5
z = z + 9

next i

close #myfile
end
```



02\_many\_balls.jpg

in these pages is the briefest introduction to this fun programming language.

For this issue's cover, I used Just-BASIC to generate a series of loops (or toruses), each at a different angle; different size; different color. The differences were all calculated again and again, within a programming loop.

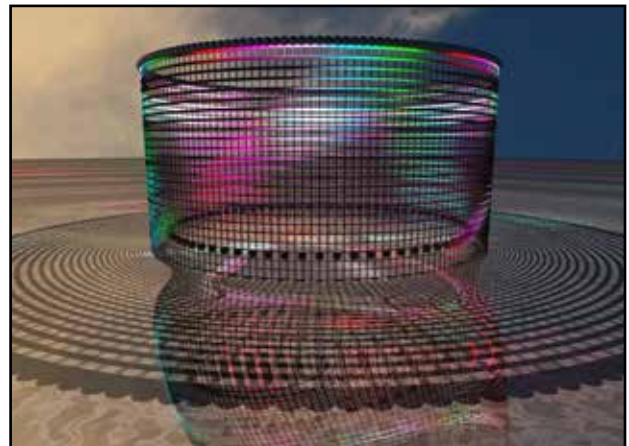
I also generated several circles composed of spheres. Few of us remember from our school days how to calculate points on a circle (and as I understand, few are now *ever* taught it), but how to do that kind of calculation is easy to find online, so I was able to place a sphere every so-many degrees on a circle. And I wasn't content to generate the same color/texture sphere; I varied that with each sphere. (Notice that the spheres on this page have the same texture: Blood\_Marble.)

While I have spent many hours working with POV-Ray, and saving many more hours using Just-BASIC to generate POV-Ray files, I myself have only scratched the surface of this rich programming language.

Working with POV-Ray helps to exercise the mind's spatial imagination, and to apply mathematics. *It's fun!*

## 02\_many\_balls.pov

```
// This is POV-Ray file 02_many_balls.pov
#include "colors.inc"
#include "textures.inc"
#include "shapes.inc"
#include "stones.inc"
camera {location <0, 20, -30> look_at <0,3,0>}
light_source { <10, 30, 0> }
plane { <0, 1, 0>, 0 texture
  { tiles { texture {PinkAlabaster}
    tile2 texture { pigment {Jade scale .4}
    finish { reflection .1 } } } scale 3 } }
sphere { <0, 7, 0>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
sphere { <5, 7, 9>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
sphere { <10, 7, 18>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
sphere { <15, 7, 27>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
sphere { <20, 7, 36>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
sphere { <25, 7, 45>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
sphere { <30, 7, 54>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
sphere { <35, 7, 63>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
sphere { <40, 7, 72>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
sphere { <45, 7, 81>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
sphere { <50, 7, 90>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
sphere { <55, 7, 99>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
sphere { <60, 7, 108>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
sphere { <65, 7, 117>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
sphere { <70, 7, 126>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
sphere { <75, 7, 135>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
sphere { <80, 7, 144>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
sphere { <85, 7, 153>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
sphere { <90, 7, 162>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
sphere { <95, 7, 171>, 3
  texture {Blood_Marble} finish { reflection .3 } }
```



Have you ever heard this expression?

**“From each according to his ability,  
To each according to his needs.”**

This was made popular in the 1800s by Karl Marx. It is one of the principles of communism. (I’ll refer to it hence as the “From/To.”)

In this article, I will totally discredit that phrase. Prove it to be wrong; a contradiction; impossible. I’m going to demolish this phrase so thoroughly that, by article’s end, you’ll be able to hear the ghost of Karl Marx squealing like a whipped hyena.

It’s like an unbalanced equation, as false as saying:  $2 + 2 = 100$ .

I hasten to say: It is not enough to prove something “unworkable.” Some light-weight, so-called defenders of freedom will prove (very convincingly, with every fact supporting them) that, for example, socialism is “unworkable” and “impractical,” but then say nothing about the immorality of socialism, or the morality of a free society (capitalism).

I will not address at length the moral issues. Author/philosopher Ayn Rand spends a good portion of her novel, *Atlas Shrugged*, telling of an auto manufacturer (by coincidence, located in Wisconsin) that operated by the “From/To” code of morality, and effectively refutes it.

Consider this example. Suppose one man’s ability allows him to gather 50 sticks; the Master Planners conclude that he doesn’t *need* any sticks (he has too many at his home, already); the Master Planners confiscate the 50 sticks and give them to another man, whom they decide *really needs* them. If that example leaves you asking, “Well, what’s wrong with that?”, please go read something else.

### Three examples

Thanks for continuing to read. Here are three more examples I’ll use throughout this article. Please keep them in mind.

**Mr. Homebody** and his family have a nice home, which he designed and built. He is continually improving the appearance of his property. He would like to buy more land, and is seriously thinking about building an addition onto his house.

**Ms. Jazz** has a fine collection of 78 rpm records, and takes great pleasure in listening to them. She’s very knowledgeable about the musicians represented by her collection. She is constantly going to record shows, and browsing eBay, and continues to acquire more records for her collection.

**Mr. Cash** has a lot of money saved up. He is always looking for ways to make more money.

### Where’s the “from” from?

To prove the “From/To” false, we need to fill in some missing elements.

“From each according to his ability.”

How does something come *from* somebody?

The 50 sticks “came from” the man because he went out, searched for them, and picked them up. The man had to choose to go out, take some action, and gather them.

To state the first line of the “From/To” more completely: “A Master Planner can take whatever a person produces.

Ah ha! The “From/To!” didn’t say anything about producing or creating anything. (That’s likely deliberate.)

Ah ha!—again! The “From/To” didn’t say anything about a Master Planner! Again, that’s probably deliberate. But it’s implied. There has to be *someone* to “take *from*” the person who has produced the item or service, to “give *to*” the person in needs.

Mr. Homebody, Ms. Jazz, and Mr. Cash have something now. Each already has a good life, and has a plentiful supply of what

# What do you *need*?

(And who should decide?)



they value.

But each *wants more*.

### Is it good to want more?

Most rational (reality-oriented) people have no problem with wanting to achieve a certain level of comfort and security (home, reliable income), and then, wanting more. Sustaining and furthering one’s life is inherent in life itself. I won’t address this further—other than to suggest you look up the symptoms of “flat affect.”

### How does one get more?

How did our example people acquire what they have? How does each intend to *get more*? These are very important questions.

Mr. Homebody has worked in landscaping and home construction and repair for years. He used income and knowledge from his work to build his fine home and environs.

Ms. Jazz has worked for years in a manufacturing firm, working her way up to planner and supervisor. She uses her income to provide a comfortable life, and to support her interest in 78 rpm records.

Mr. Cash makes his money from investments. He works with markets not as a gambler, but as an informed risk-taker.

Each person has used skills, knowledge, physical work or some combination thereof to produce a value. The production of that value is a creation of wealth; the amount of wealth in the area increases. The creator of that value/wealth can then offer it for sale (if a free market exists).

In contrast, each person could have decided to get what he/she wants through theft. By stealing goods and money, a home can be improved; more records can be purchased; one’s cash is increased—as long as one can get away with it.

With theft, no wealth is created. In fact, if theft is widespread, the people creating it will shrug and say, “If it’s going to be stolen, why create it in the first place?” The wealth in the area actually decreases.

Why should a person choose to produce, create wealth, and trade on a free market (that is, why should a person choose to be a *capitalist*?), instead of stealing and looting? For a detailed answer, I again refer you to *Atlas Shrugged*.

### Creating wealth—stunning implications

There are people who consider all of life a zero-sum game. Obviously, this is not true.

By applying skills, knowledge, physical work or some combination thereof, something new is created that had not before existed. If what is produced it of value, to the producer or to others, then wealth has been created.

See the Foundation for Economic Education’s graph, on page 7.

Read a brief history of India, whose massive population suffered terribly for most of the 20th Century under socialism and communism, but then started experiencing greater prosperity when it took some tentative, imperfect steps toward freedom (capitalism).

Contrary to the zero-sum advocates, more people, producing (in a free market) more, creates more wealth.

In fact, with the Earth’s continued population growth, it is conceivable that extreme poverty can be ended (if mankind does not turn its back on capitalism, which is a pretty big “if” in view of current self-destructive trends).

There’s another *very* important implication. Allowing more immigrants into this country will increase the wealth of the country—for every immigrant willing to be a producer.

The typical immigrant wants a better life. Maybe he/she was doing all right back home; but he/she *wants more*. Each wants a nice place to live. Nice things for the family. A comfortable home. Good



furniture. Recreation. Entertainment and art. Good food.

OK, as any xenophobe will point out, the immigrant might take someone's specific job away, because he is willing to work for less. But by *wanting more* and operating through free-market principles, working hard and smart enough to be able to buy what he wants, the immigrant's *wanting more* has created a *greater demand* for goods and services, which means *more opportunities* for that guy who lost his job. (If that guy thinks the job he lost is his only opportunity in life, that's his mistake.)

So if you ask yourself, "Am I in favor of allowing more immigrants into the country?" you should also ask: "Do I want to live in a wealthier country, with more opportunities, with more people trying to think of innovative ways to improve my life?"

Well, *do* you?

(Of course, immigration should not be a free-for-all. For example, there is no reason to allow entry to known terrorists.)

### The "From" is limited

It's good to know one's limitations.

And good to push them, sometimes.

There are a limited number of days in the week, and years in one's lifetime.

By building upon past knowledge, people can become more productive, allowing more values to be created. A person with a bulldozer can move more earth in an hour, than a person with a shovel.

But the amount of goods and services that any one person can produce, at any level, the "from" in the "From/To" equation, will be finite. That's important to understand, before moving on to...

### The "Need" is limitless

What a person *needs* or *wants* is potentially limitless.

What, after all, does a person truly need?

Bare sustenance? Enough rice and water to keep a person alive?

A few blankets to keep warm on cold days?

A small apartment, or a section of a communal shelter?

A car to get to work?

Internet? Broadband?

What a person needs or wants in life has the potential to grow, expand—limitlessly. It is limited only to one's imagination.

This is why the "From/To" equation is unbalanced. One side is finite; the other infinite. An impossible contradiction.

No, wait, we have to ask something else here...

### Who decides?

Suppose Mr. Smith looks at Ms. Jazz's record collection and says, "What foolishness! She doesn't *need* that junk."

The proper response to Mr. Smith is: "Butt out, buddy!"

The same applies to the *degree* of how much more a person wants. Some people achieve a certain level, and are happy with what they have. If someone with bigger dreams comes along and sneers, "You ain't ambitious enough, you bum!", the same "Butt out, buddy!" response is appropriate.

Likewise, when satisfied people look at an ambitious go-getter and say, "Why does she have to chase after more?", the same response applies: "Butt out, buddies!"

If you support individual rights (that is, a free society (that is, capitalism)), you are comfortable with each person setting his/her own life goals, and expect your own life goals to be your exclusive domain (adjusting them to be compatible with significant others in your life).

In a free society, there's no need for contempt for someone less ambitious than you, and you're not envious of someone with greater ambition—just as there's no reason to hold in contempt someone motivated by a different *kind* of ambition.

(You might privately wonder if someone with *no* ambition can be happy. You can also realize the tragedy of someone wanting *more* of something objectively harmful—like drugs or alcohol.)

But in a non-free society, one or more Master Planners decide what each person needs. Non-free societies come in a disgustingly plentiful variety: socialism, semi-socialism, democratic socialism, communism, fascism... and more.

In a society with Master Planners in charge, need must become finite.

"You *want* or *need* an addition to your home, comrade Home-

body? How dare you ask such a selfish thing! Be happy with what you have, and be grateful if we Master Planners don't take your home and give it to someone with greater need!"

"You *want more* records, comrade Jazz? Are you kidding? We're glad you brought this to our attention. You don't *need* those records, comrade. We have just sent a squad to confiscate them. They will be converted to cash, and the money given to those *truly* in *need*."

"You want *more* cash, comrade Money-Grubber? GUARDS!"

### We're better off

...when wants or needs are left to each individual, and when they are potentially infinite.

Because that means there is potentially an infinite amount of work that can be done.

After making all the plans, Mr. Homebody could provide income to an army of carpenters and landscapers by hiring them to enlarge his home and improve his grounds.

Ms. Jazz could hire dozens of search services to scour rummage sales and roam antique malls for the records she wants.

Mr. Cash could create a chain of financial offices that make more money for him, by making more money for his clients.

But let's face it. "Infinity" is only a *potential*, beyond any person's or society's *actual* reach.

There are limited numbers of landscapers and carpenters. Mr. Homebody's funds, however rich he is, are limited. And Mr. Homebody couldn't (and wouldn't) live in a house that is infinitely large.

The number of 78 rpm records that Ms. Jazz actually wants are limited. Even if she were able to magically snap her fingers and have every such record ever created, she might spend the rest of her life listening to each one, but the thrill of finding a rare label would be denied her.

And Mr. Cash? Like any of our examples, so long as he respects the individual rights of every other individual (that is, so long as he is a capitalist), the only way he can make more money is to create more values, wealth, innovations, and improvements for everyone else. Let no limit be placed upon him! (Or the others.)

With all the people who want more, and act to produce more to get what they want, overall wealth is increased; innovations improve our lives; and more opportunities are created.

With Master Planners in charge, society not only screeches to a halt, but starts sliding backwards. History shows this.

### Restating the formula

"From each according to his ability,

To each according to his needs."

I think we can now clarify this vile equation.

"Master Planners will confiscate finite wealth from those who create it, and give it away to fill an infinite need."

This is, obviously, incompatible with individual rights.

What kind of sentiment would be compatible with individual rights? This is definitely not the only way this could be stated, but it might be something like:

"Each person owns his/her own life, and has a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Each person retains those rights unless he/she violates those rights in another. Each person owns whatever he creates with his own mind and body, and is free to trade those goods or services, or give them away, at the producer's sole discretion."

**As this book is being assembled, members of the World Economic Forum are calling for increased totalitarianism (to allegedly ward off mythical climate scares), the end of agriculture, and human death on a massive scale (from depopulationism, which disvalues human life as detrimental to the Earth). The immigrant situation? The worst of them take advantage of not being prosecuted for crimes, while the best of them struggle to make an honest living and thereby improve all our lives.**



## Expertise in action

A few years ago, I purchased the illustration at left. The only clue to the artist's identity is the initials "ABS" in the corner.

Two years ago, at a collector's convention, I asked illustration historian and dealer Fred Taraba if he could identify the artist. He examined it and said, "This might be the work of Alice Barber Stephens."

Taraba looked at the back of the artwork, where the artist's name and address are sometimes printed. No such luck here. But there was a strip of paper adhered to the top, which Taraba said

was the practice of a certain book publisher he knew used Stephens' work.

Taraba told me his guess that it was Alice Barber Stephens was only that—a guess—but as he shared his thought processes out loud, I knew that it was a very, very *educated* guess.

I was wide-eyed and thrilled to hear such expertise in action.

At right is a color piece, with Alice Barber Stephens' full name at the bottom.

Both are from HA.com.

# 'Mr. Jones' – the horrors of evading the truth

When the New York Times covered up one of communism's worst atrocities.

by Jen Maffessanti

One of the great, universal truths is that everybody lies. From tiny white lies to great big whoppers, everyone does it, even babies. Don't believe me?

"Sorry I'm late, traffic was terrible."

"It's so great to see you!"

"Doing well, thanks for asking!"

"I have read and agree to the above terms and conditions."

These are just a handful of the easy, casual lies that we all offer up on an everyday basis. And much of the time, these kinds of lies are fairly harmless. These tiny deceptions are baked into most of our social interactions and, in many ways, grease the wheels of polite society. After all, how awkward and uncomfortable would our conversations be if we actually told the truth every time someone asked how we're doing?

These are the lies we expect to be told and are expected to tell. And while I would personally like to see more honesty in everyone's day-to-day interactions, I understand the purpose of these kinds of deceptions.

That said, the truth always matters. We may expect some level of insincerity in certain situations, but in others, honesty is more than simply suggested—it's required.

When it comes to reporting news, telling the truth is vitally important.

The term "fake news" has been abused to the point of uselessness, but false reporting does exist and has for a long time. The information we receive through various media outlets and platforms is frequently critical for how we plan our days and how we plan our lives. When that information is false, intentionally or not, it can cause us very real problems.

Sometimes, the consequences are as simple and relatively



**This movie, based on actual events, dramatizes an honest journalist's dedication to the truth.** — From Barnes & Noble, BN.com

benign as getting caught in the rain without an umbrella. Sometimes, though—and especially with intentionally misleading or false information—the results can be devastating to livelihoods and lives.

One of the most egregious examples of this was the coordinated cover-up of the Holodomor—a famine in the Ukraine deliberately created by the Soviet Union in 1932 and '33.

In the span of a year, decreased output due to the forced collectivization of farms and the confiscation of foodstuffs by the Soviet army led to the deaths of between seven and ten million people, mostly ethnic Ukrainians. It was, in short, a genocide by means of starvation.

Freelance reporter Gareth Jones broke the story. He did what he was supposed to do as a journalist. He told the truth.

Unfortunately, Jones's reporting shined an incredibly unflattering light on the fact that the news reports coming out of Moscow regarding the impressive successes of Soviet agriculture were false. Walter Duranty, the Moscow Bureau Chief for the New York Times, and the rest of the foreign press corps in Moscow promptly launched a coordinated

campaign to discredit Jones's reporting, despite the fact they all knew Jones was telling the truth.

Eugene Lyons, who was the Moscow correspondent for United Press at the time, even wrote in his 1937 book *Assignment in Utopia*:

Throwing down Jones was as unpleasant a chore as fell to any of us in years of juggling facts to please dictatorial regimes—but throw him down we did, unanimously and in almost identical formulations of equivocation. Poor Gareth Jones must have been the most surprised human being alive when

the facts he so painstakingly garnered from our mouths were snowed under by our denials. ... There was much bargaining in a spirit of gentlemanly give-and-take, under the effulgence of [Foreign Press Corps Soviet Official Konstantin] Umansky's gilded smile, before a formal denial was worked out. We admitted enough to soothe our consciences, but in roundabout phrases that damned Jones as a liar. The filthy business having been disposed of, someone ordered vodka and zakuski.

It should be noted that both Duranty and Lyons were true believers in the communist cause and didn't hesitate to use their positions as arbiters of truth to deceive the western world regarding the actual situation in the Soviet Union. As a result, around ten million people were starved to death during the Holodomor, and yet the Soviet Union continued to be propped up by Western governments and their investments. Furthermore, in total, approximately 100 million people have been killed by communist states since the Bolshevik Revolution which was allowed, in part, by the deceptions of professional "truth-tellers."

This is not to say that bias, in and of itself, is to blame. Another great, universal truth is that everyone has some kind of bias. No matter how hard we try to be objective and relate only the facts, at least a little bit of that bias is going to show through. But there isn't anything inherently wrong with having a bias, especially when it's acknowledged.

The problems come when the bias in people we rely on to report the actual facts internally absolves them of telling outright lies to further their ideological goals.

This is not a problem of the past, either. Whether it's an incident of claiming to have COVID-19 when they don't or building an entire career out of fabricated "news" articles, the long and sordid story of falsified reports continues to this day.

This kind of "reporting" isn't limited to simply lying, either. Blithely passing along uninvestigated press releases or unconfirmed allegations as fact also damages our trust in news media. Given how common such reporting is, it's no wonder trust in news media in the US is only about 29 percent.

And then we wonder why so few people comply with suggestions and warnings given by the news media.

A commonly-offered solution to this problem with news media trust is fact-checking by a small handful of officially approved arbiters. However, the reason that Duranty and the New York Times, Lyons and the United Press, and the other members of the foreign press corps in Moscow were able to cover up the horrors of the Holodomor is precisely because only a handful of media outlets were considered legitimate.

Policies, regardless of who institute them, that centralize the distribution and judgment of truth would end up doing the opposite of what they intend. We would be right back to the bad old days of journalism where media monopolies could spread misinformation largely unchallenged.

It's not hard to find some pretty spectacular fact-checking failures, and this is beside the fact that people tend to reject fact-checks that contradict their core beliefs regardless.

We in the US enjoy fairly robust legal protections for free speech and a free press, which, to be clear, is a good thing. But what can we do when reporters don't do their jobs correctly?

The solution is not to curb or restrict speech that doesn't meet certain criteria. And it's certainly not to limit the sources of various kinds of information. The only way to improve speech is to encourage more speech. We need an actual marketplace of ideas where consumers of information are able to judge for themselves what sources of that informa-

tion meet their quality requirements and which do not.

The solution isn't a single, official voice of truth. It's billions of voices. It's the competition of different ideas and their purveyors. It's individuals thinking for themselves and accepting the responsibility that comes with that.

The reason the true believers of the Moscow foreign press corps faked their stories was that they feared the truth would hinder the cause they'd placed their faith in. But if a cause can be crushed by the simple telling of truth, it's not much of a cause at all.

The truth matters and the truth will out, even in our world of "fake news" and clickbait.

But only if we let it and only if we demand it.

*Jen Maffessanti was a Senior Writer at FEE and mother of two. She is now Director of Communications of the Libertas Institute. When she's not advocating for liberty or chasing kids, she can usually be found cooking or maybe racing cars. Check out her website: [jenmaffessanti.com](http://jenmaffessanti.com)*

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(The online article contains links that serve as footnotes and sources for further information.)

"FEE" stands for Foundation for Economic Education.

### Editor's comments on the movie:

Any time you see a movie that says "Based on true events," you should relax, watch the movie, and enjoy it (or not, as the case might be).

Only later should you ask, if it inspired you to wonder, "How accurately did that film portray actual events?"

Even a filmmaker with the highest, most passionate devotion to the truth can find it impossible to fit that truth into the limitations of a movie.

So it is fortunate when we have "fact checkers" for films like Mr. Jones.

The website [garethjones.org](http://garethjones.org) is devoted to the real-life Gareth Jones. There is a tremendous amount of interesting material here.

On the main website at the upper left is a link, **Stop Press**. Click this and find the February 5th 2020 entry. Follow that, and you'll find a long article thoroughly comparing and contrasting events portrayed in the film, with the actual events the film is based on. It's written by Philip Colley, Gareth Jones' great nephew.

The movie itself is not rated, but if it were, it would likely be rated R. There is some nudity at a party thrown by one of the villains in this story, and there is some drug use at the same party. (In my opinion, the film does not glamorize drug use.)

The production values on this film are superb. Watching this, you can tell that a lot of time, work, and craftsmanship went into it. (I don't think you need to be a professional filmmaker to tell when a film is made cheaply, or sloppily.)

Great acting, fantastic photography and lighting that make you feel you're really there. You might have to put on a sweater after some of the winter scenes.

This is an important movie that helps uncover a shockingly outrageous cover-up.

Go to [FEE.org](http://FEE.org). Search on "mr. jones". You'll find this article. At the bottom of the article is a link to a video which contains a trailer for the movie, and much more info. After watching this, you'll know for sure if you want to see the film.

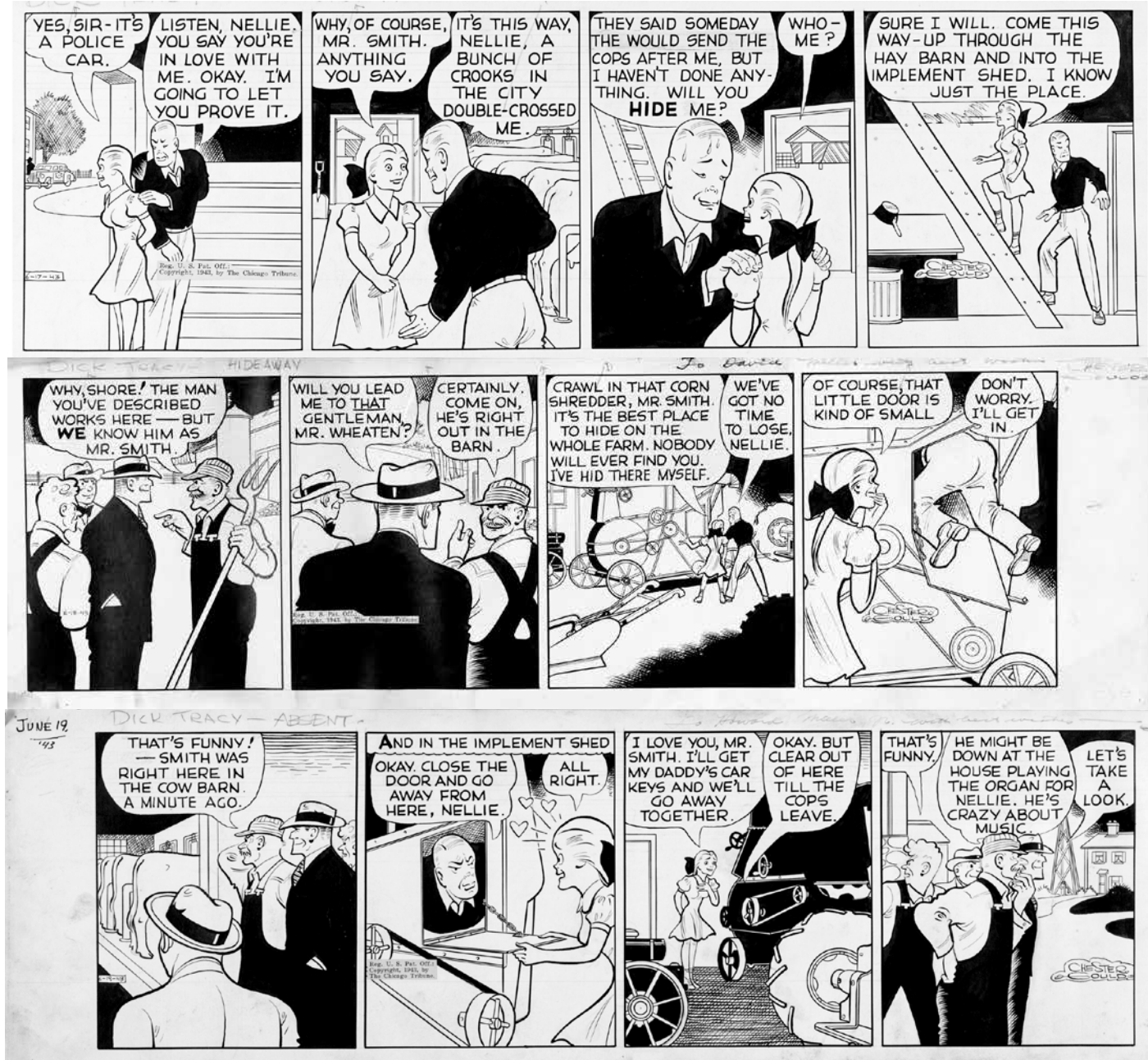


**Journalist Gareth Jones (played by James Norton) is horrified by what he photographs... but the horrors will only be added to, when other "journalists" with an agenda seek to discredit him. – From FEE.org**

# The Crook in the Corn Shredder

Or... What goes around comes around

Or... Connections bring coincidences



Three consecutive original daily Dick Tracy strips: June 17, 18, and 19, 1943. Villain 88 Keys is hiding on a dairy farm to escape the law. Nellie is infatuated with him, unaware he's a murderer.

Look closely at 6-17, panel 3: A correction had been made and rubber-cemented over the 2nd line. It fell off over the years, leaving a discolored area. — All three strips, HA.com

I bought my first Dick Tracy original at the 1978 Chicago Comicon. Since then, I've purchased a few others. But recently, I purchased the oldest, and what I consider the nicest, of all my Tracy originals.

The strip I recently bought is a daily, dated June 19, 1943.

(A little background, if needed: Dick Tracy was a "continuity" strip, continued from day to day in the newspapers that carried it. From Monday through Saturday, readers saw one of these "daily" strips; on Sunday, the strip was in color and had more panels. Sadly, the continuity strip is now nearly extinct. Newspaper comics fans have various theories on why that is so. When I say "original," I'm talking

The Rosenthal steel 40 corn husker/shredder. Could it be similar to the machine 88 Keys, above, crawled into to hide? — Courtesy of Farm Collector magazine, www.farmcollector.com



about the actual drawing the artist created; you can often see pencil lines, corrective white-out, and—as on two strips here—an inscription to someone Gould gave the drawing to, likely a gift.)

What makes the 6-19 original attractive for the collector?

- It features Tracy in two panels (1 and 4). Tracy appears nowhere in the 6-17 strip.

- Many collectors consider the 1940s to be artist/writer Chester Gould's best years on Tracy.

- It features a villain in one panel. This is 88 Keys, so named because he's a pianist. The law is after him because he's a murderer. He's hiding out on a farm, pretending to be an experienced farm hand (but the farm owner is highly suspicious of his soft hands, and ignorance about dairy cattle). 88 Keys was not an *iconic* Tracy villain, like Flattop or Pruneface. Originals with such iconic villains bring much higher prices.

What makes it attractive for *me, personally*?

- As established in an earlier strip, the dairy cows shown are Brown Swiss, which my dad milked on the farm I grew up on.

- This is one of my favorite Tracy continuities. I used it as an example when writing an article, *Dick Tracy: Morality in Black and White*. I described Nellie as an example of a good person who gets mixed up with evil (because of her youthful naivete). In the history of the Tracy strip, such characters were sometimes harmed or killed. Nellie realizes her error in time to extricate herself.

- It features interesting farm machinery.

Looking at the 6-19 strip, I thought maybe the machine was a

threshing machine. My dad once had one of those, and I'd seen it in operation several times.

But in the 6-18 strip, Nellie identifies it as a "corn shredder." That wasn't something I was familiar with.

I had to know more. Searching the 'net, I found photos of a corn husker/shredder on *Farm Collector* magazine's site. Could this be similar to the machine 88 Keys crawls into in the 6-18 strip?

My thirst for knowledge not quite sated, I continued searching, and found another photo, this one also from *Farm Collector*. I contacted the editor, who graciously granted The PRC permission to run the photos.

On finding the second corn husker/shredder photo, I knew I wanted to run it. By coincidence, I'd stumbled onto a photo by Larry Scheckel, whose name will be familiar to long-time PRC readers.

Less than two months after drawing the 88 Keys strip I purchased, Chester Gould was in the midst of one of his most famous and creepiest story lines: Mrs. Pruneface. Of course, there was a *Mr.* Pruneface; he was a Nazi spy (remember, this was 1943). *Mrs.* Pruneface captured Tracy and was going to get revenge...

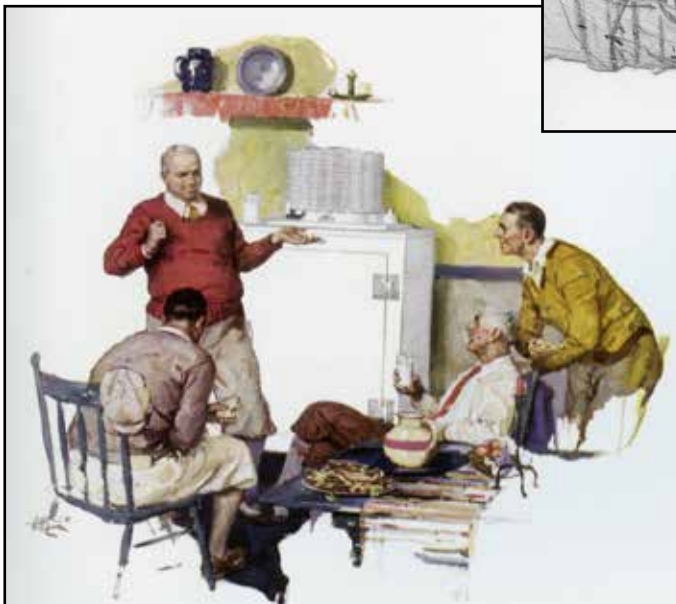
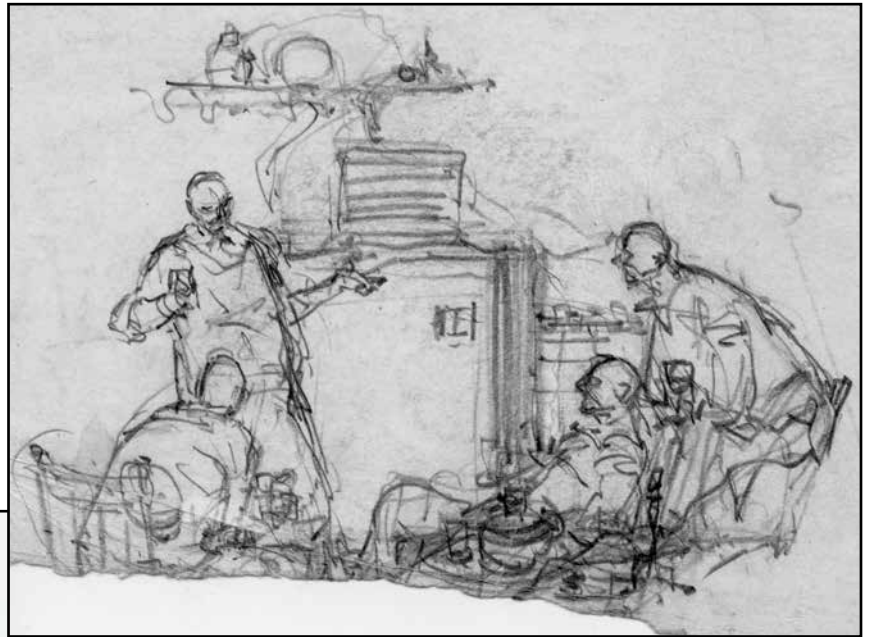
Here, I'd normally tell you: Pick up a copy of *The Complete Dick Tracy, Volume 8*, for *all* of these stories...

Alas, this book seems to be out of print. One book service has copies starting at \$140. An eBay search comes up with a couple of copies, both at that price or higher.

What a shame!

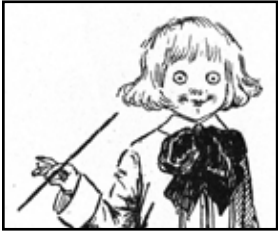
## The sketches and art of **Saul Tepper**

At a Windy City Pulp and Paper Show a few years ago, illustration art dealer and expert Fred Taraba had at his table many sketches by Saul Tepper for sale. I bought a few dozen—many selling for \$2 or \$5. — Sketches from Your Editor's collection; finished paintings from the Illustrated Press book, *Saul Tepper* (now out of print)



Tepper was probably given the main idea for what the advertising client wanted. He then worked up these three variations (maybe even more). The "best" one was selected by Tepper's art director (or maybe Tepper himself), and the artist created a full-size, finished painting. The preliminary sketches are reproduced here full size; the finished paintings would be much larger.

# Buster Brown Abroad



I recently acquired *Buster Brown Abroad*, a 1904 book written and illustrated by R. F. Outcault, creator of

Buster Brown.

I thought I'd share a couple of passages from the book, written in the voice of Buster Brown, describing his trip to Europe with his dog Tige (that's short for "Tiger"). Now remember, in the following—Tige *is* a dog.

From Chapter VIII—Basle—A Predicament

TIGE stayed in all next day, writing in his diary and reading about William Tell and the Alps. We were going to see the Alps in a few days, and he wanted to know all about them. He said he wan't afraid to go up on an Alp because he was still on the ground, but he was afraid to look out of our window in the "Three Kings" hotel because it went down for several stories straight into that rushing, roaring river Rhine.

THE funniest thing that happened to us during all our trip was when we left Basle. Pa and Uncle Jack decided on Monday night to leave for Lucerne the next morning, so, after they were all ready for bed, they set about packing the trunks.

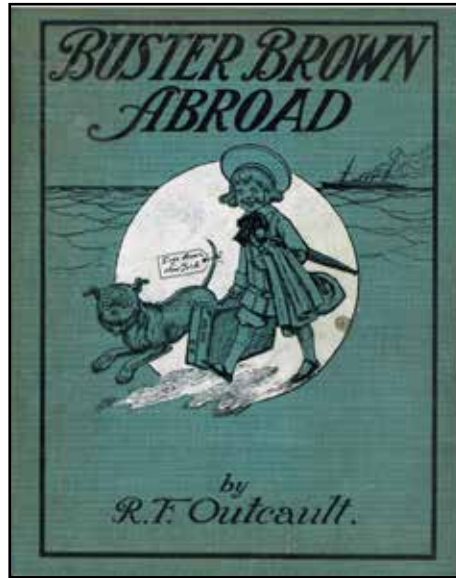
MA had told Pa, before he left, that he must be very careful, in packing, to see that he didn't forget anything. She had told him to look in closets, under beds, in all the drawers, and all around the floor, to see that he hadn't overlooked anything.

SO Pa and Uncle Jack crept all around on the floor, on their hands and knees, looking under beds and chairs. They got up on tables and looked on top of the wardrobe, and at last, when they were convinced that everything was packed, they locked their trunks and big bags, and called the porter.

"PORTER," said Uncle Jack, "take these trunks to the station and ship them to Lucerne."

SO the porter did as he was told. After the baggage had gone I was put to bed, and Pa and Uncle Jack sat down to smoke and congratulate themselves on their good packing. They were still sitting there, looking out at the river and laughing, when I went to sleep; but next morning, when I awoke, there was an awful row going on. They had just discovered that in their effort to pack everything they had packed all their own clothes except the pajamas they had on, and that all the baggage was now in Lucerne.

THINK of two men doing such a thing and then screaming with laughter over it. It was a mighty lucky thing for them that Pa



had his money and watch under his pillow. Well, we had our breakfast in our rooms, and while we were eating they were talking over the best thing to do. Tige offered to lend Pa his pants, but Pa spurned his offer.

AT last they decided to send me out for some clothes. It was my first experience at buying anything. I strolled up the street until I came to a store. I got Pa a suit which was not a very stylish fit, and a hat and a pair of shoes. They were still laughing at each other when I got back. Their idea was that when Pa had got these clothes he could go out and buy clothes for Uncle Jack; but when I got back to the hotel, Uncle Jack had bought a suit from the head porter. It had gold braid and a velvet collar and cuffs, the "sassiest" suit you ever saw. When Pa got his clothes

on we were exactly like a traveling minstrel company.

WELL, we got on the train and went to Lucerne, which is only about two hours away. As we went along we saw, in several different places, men digging square lumps of earth. It was very black earth.

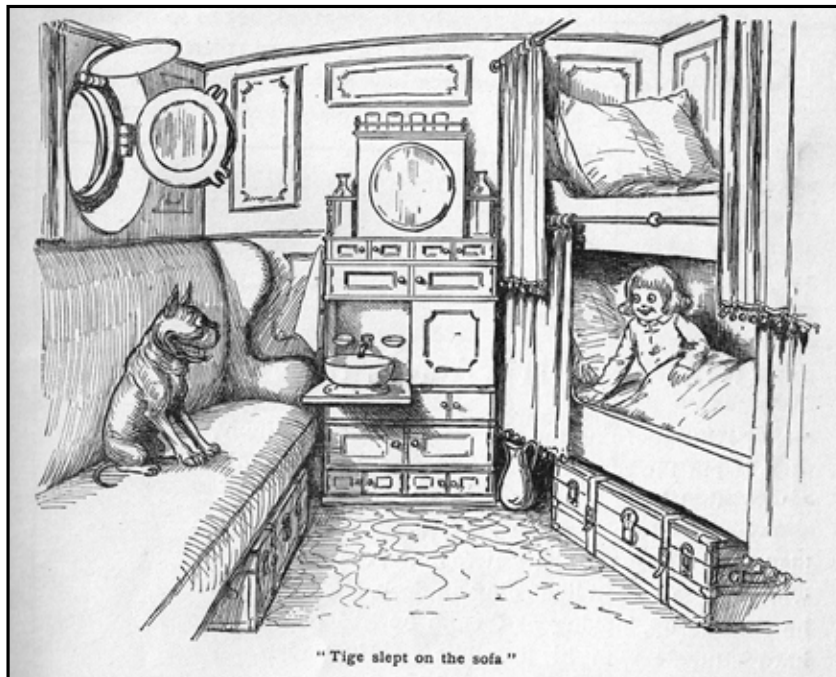
They were piling it up like bricks,—big black bricks. When we asked the conductor he told us it was for fuel. He said that when it was dry it burned just like coal.

PA said that he hoped he wouldn't meet any one he knew until he got those dreadful looking clothes off or he would be disgraced for ever. But his hope that he hoped didn't come out; for as we got off the train we bumped right into a General Somebody with his wife and three daughters. That old General nearly laughed himself to death. But he and his family decided not to go away that day, but to return to the hotel with us and stop a day or two longer. So they went with us to the Hotel National,

and all stood in front of Pa and Uncle Jack until they got to their rooms, to keep any one from seeing them. Every time Tige looked at Pa he would burst into another fit of laughter, and I thought he would surely have hysterics.

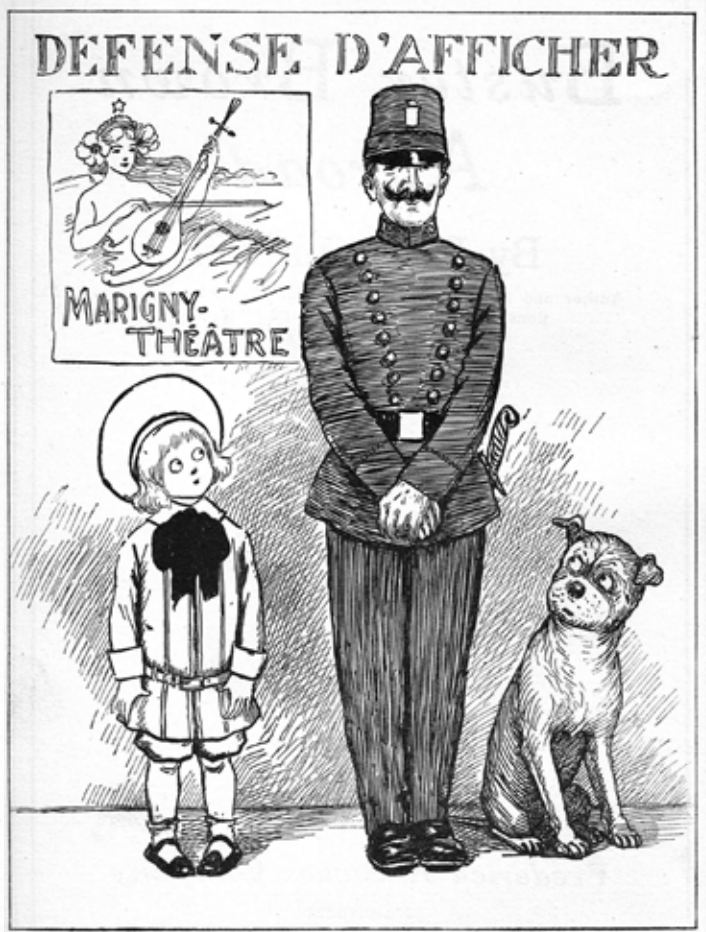
From Chapter XIV—London—The King and Queen—Seeing the City—A Trick

WHEN Pa and Uncle Jack arrived in London the fun commenced. They had been to Ostend, and had been bathing until they were all sunburned and tanned, but they were still laughing. I never saw any two people who could find so much to laugh at. They never complain about anything, or kick, because it is too much trouble, and they say that it never makes any difference except to make folks dislike you.





"We rode on top of penny 'busses'"



A "John Darms"

# E. Paul Wilson

## An Encounter With

Those cosmic, common coincidences. They're all over the place! Opportunities waiting to be plucked, if you're alert and willing to take advantage of them.

Take, for example, my recent attendance at the Windy City Pulp and Paper Convention (WCPPC). At the show three years ago, author F. Paul Wilson was the convention's guest of honor. After meeting him, I decided to try some of his books. I liked what I read, and I read more.

(You might have seen a 1983 movie, *The Keep*, which is based on one of Wilson's books.)

When we checked in to our hotel for WCPPC, I was part-way through an F. Paul Wilson novel, *Deep as the Marrow*.

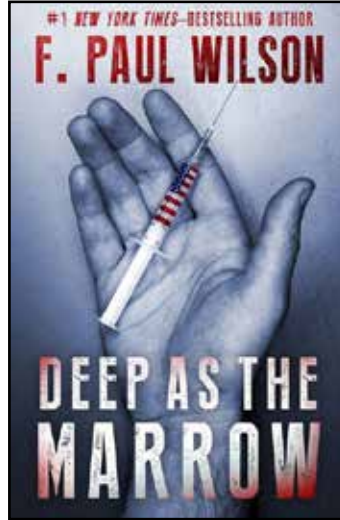
That book's premise: The President of the United States announces a personal crusade: He will do whatever it takes to legalize drugs for adults.

Cocaine. Heroin. Everything.

I won't tell you any more about this thrilling suspense story. But I will ask you to consider this:

What type of person, or group, or organization, *would be most opposed to this kind of change?*

If you think that over, you might be able to guess one small as-



The President wants to do **WHAT?!!!** – From Barnes & Noble, BN.com

pect of the book's plot. But even if you are that insightful, it will spoil nothing for you, as surprise after surprise motivates you to turn page after page.

So I sit in my hotel room, read a few pages of this novel, and then it's time to visit the dealer's room at WCPPC. I walk around, and see—

F. Paul Wilson.

The author of the book I'm reading.

He tells me he's just attending the show because he enjoys it. I tell him I'm reading—and I misremember the title. "Deep to the Marrow," I tell him. He corrects me. (You know how *embarrassing* that is?)

All right. Day one of WCPPC. Coincidence one.

Day two. I'm thinking, "I should ask Wilson a few questions for *The PRC*." I look for him all day and don't see him.

Day three. I still didn't find him. I sit in the front row for the show's auction. And F. Paul Wilson comes walking in and sits two chairs from me. Coincidence number two.

Sometimes, I think quickly enough to take advantage of such opportunities. In this case, Wilson kindly agreed to a brief (the five minutes the auctioneer took for a break) interview.

# E. Paul Wilson

## An Exclusive Interview With

**The PRC:** Dr. Wilson, you told me you're here at this show as a visitor. What attracts you to this show?

**F. Paul Wilson:** Well I just love the people that are here. We all have something in common. We all have a common frame of reference that seems to be dying out. I like the camaraderie and love the ambiance of all the books, because a lot of science fiction conventions now, their book room has no books. So this place is unique, for me.

**PRC:** I hope Tom Roberts will forgive me for asking a question he asked when interviewing you at this show three years ago. Are you still a practicing physician? If so, are your patients aware of your books?

**FPW:** No, I retired in January of 2019, just before the pandemic. But, yeah, a lot of my patients were my readers. But others, I'm sure, certain ones read my stuff and decided not to come to me anymore. So it goes both ways.

**PRC:** Your book, *Deep as the Marrow*, started with a premise of legalizing all drugs for adults. Does that reflect your own view?

**FPW:** I believe that, if you don't own anything else in this world, you own your body. And you have a right to pollute it any way you please. So I just don't think there should be any restrictions on what you can put in your bloodstream. I think that's one of the foundations of freedom—owning yourself, and being responsible for yourself.

That [book] was dear to my heart. There was a Hollywood production company that wanted to make a movie out of it. But they wanted to change the *McGuffin*, and they wanted to change it to something other than legalizing drugs, because that was too controversial. And I said, No. No, you can't do

it. Either you do it like it was in the book, or we don't do it. And so we didn't do it.

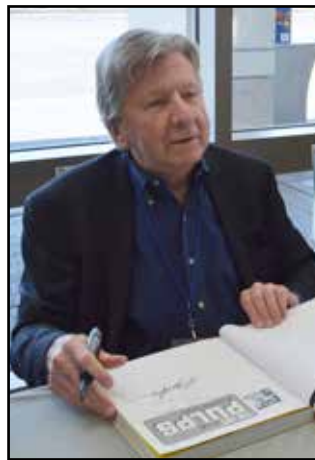
**PRC:** What can you tell us about your recent book, *Double Threat*, without any spoilers?

**FPW:** It's actually a rewrite of my first novel, *Healer*. I contemporized it, because of a movie version. Chris Morgan said he loved the book, he'd love to make a movie of it someday. And I said, Well everything takes place in Duad's head. And he said, No, I would make *Pard* visible, to Duad only, and then he would have someone he could interact with. And I said, Well, that's brilliant. And so I said, I have to rewrite it. And so I dedicated the [new] book to him, and I totally re-imagined it, and then I changed Duad to a female, and the dynamics between the two changed so dramatically, it was like a new book.

**PRC:** The springboard for your novel, *Healer*, and now the rewrite, *Double Threat*, was the short story, *Pard*, correct?

**FPW:** Yes, that was the [December 1972] *Analog* story.

**PRC:** Thank you.



F. Paul Wilson signs a book at the 2018 WCPPC.

**Editor's Note:** Information on F. Paul Wilson and his books can be found at [repairmanjack.com](http://repairmanjack.com) (a reference to one of Wilson's popular series characters, Repair-

man Jack, who... *fixes* things... when you can't get them... *fixed*... through conventional means.

Oh... you're wondering what a "*McGuffin*" is? It's a term used by Alfred Hitchcock to describe a catalyst that sets off events in his movies. In one film, it was a roll of microfilm.

# Windy City: Expertise in Action

Some months ago, I wrote about an experience I had at a past Windy City Pulp and Paper Convention (WCPPC).

I had an old black and white painting of William Penn negotiating with some Native Americans. The only indication of the artist's identity were the initials "A. B. S."

I showed the painting to Fred Taraba, who owns Taraba Illustration Art LLC. (Check out his website at [tarabailustrationart.com](http://tarabailustrationart.com).) My jaw dropped as he started thinking out loud, putting the evidence together to give me an educated guess as to who "A. B. S." likely was.

That situation took a complete reversal at the recent WCPPC. I wasn't even in the dealer's room when I ran into Fred. He told me someone in the dealer's room wanted *my* expertise.

That stunned me. An expert like Fred had been consulted by a dealer, and now the two wanted *my* expert opinion? *Beyond belief!*

But the question concerned James Bama.

Ah! You see, I call myself (only half-jokingly) a "world authority on the art of James Bama." (Er... maybe only 25% jokingly.) I don't claim to be the *most* knowledgeable person about Bama's career in the world, but... I know enough to be helpful. A few years ago, when Fred was working for an auction house, I was able to identify for him which paperback a piece of art had appeared on. I was able to identify another piece used in Argosy magazine as a preliminary; the auction house selling it thought it was the finished, published version. (It wasn't.)

So I trekked to the far back of the dealer's room, and the man behind the table knew I was coming and was ready for me. (It was kind of eerie.) He showed me the painting



Is this painting by James Bama? I say YES.

in the accompanying photo and wanted to know, Is this a work by James Bama?

It is. (In my opinion.)

I recognized the image as being from one of the 300-some paperbacks I've scanned for my "Bama project" I've worked for years on. Yes, this was painted by Bama.

I couldn't recall the paperback's title, but I knew it was published by Dell.

I also told its owner something that might be completely useless: The male model looked like the model Bama used on another paperback cover: The Detective. The painting's owner looked up that cover on his phone. He agreed.

(Looking closely at The Detective, I now think... Uh, maybe—and then again, maybe not. Take a look for yourself, below.)

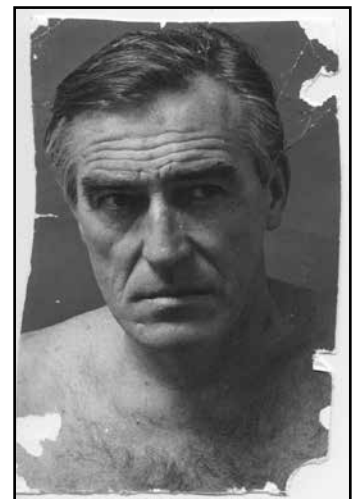
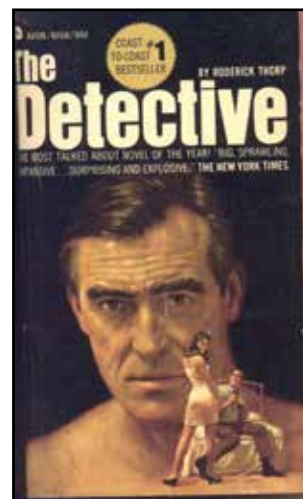
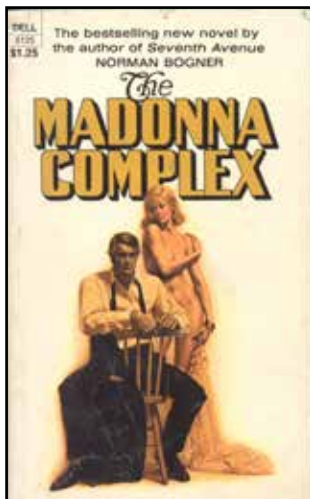
I also thought (but did not verbalize): The woman looked like Bama's wife. (Why did I not say this out loud? Maybe there was too much other verbiage flying around.)

I checked out this art several times that day. My wife looked at it. "Oh! That woman is Bama's wife!" she said. I nodded in agreement. Bama often used his wife as

a model. I have two original paperback paintings by Bama; his wife's features appear in both.

Bama usually signed his paintings. Why no signature on this piece? A possible answer came when we finally found the book it was used on. The art director reversed the image for publication. Why? Your guess is as good as mine. This set us to looking on the art for signs of a signature that was painted out (they don't usually print signatures backwards). We found no such thing.

This is just a small part of the enjoyment of WCPPC.

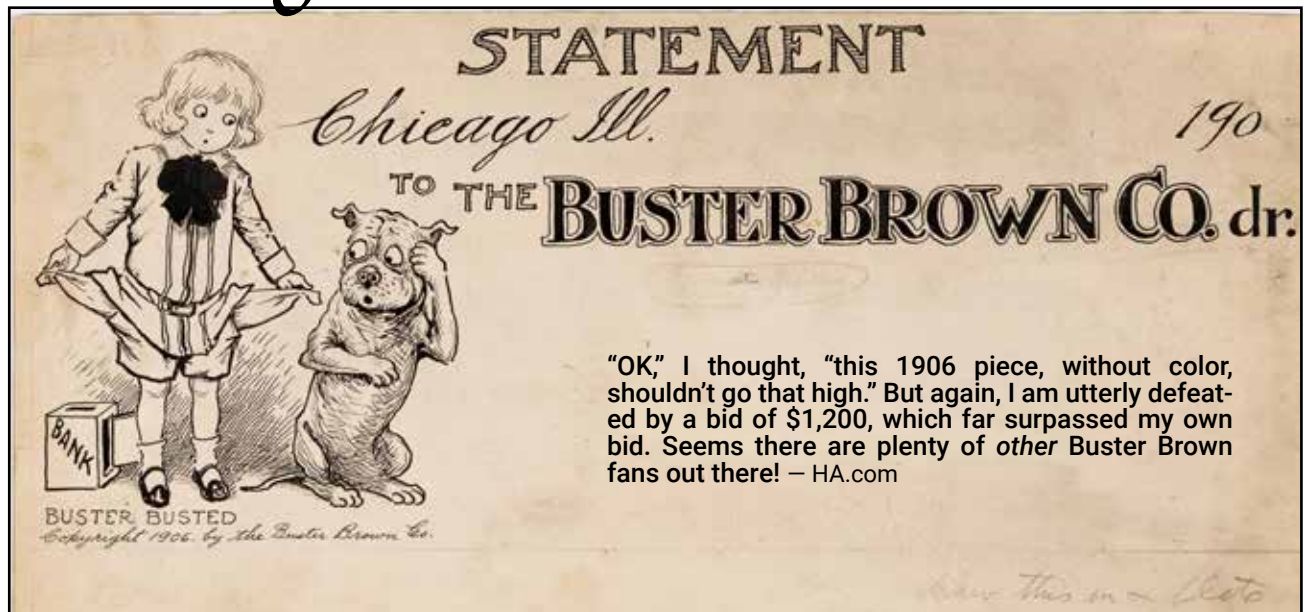


Left to right: 1) The paperback on which the mystery painting was used. A closeup of the man in the above painting. 2) Enlargement of the man's face in the mystery painting. 3) Another paperback which Bama painted. Is this the same man as in #2? 4) You won't see this anywhere else! A scan of the reference photo James Bama used to paint the cover for The Detective. And maybe for The Madonna Complex? Borrowed during one of my visits, scanned, and returned to Bama's files. Definitely a PRC exclusive!



Some day, I hope to acquire an original piece of art by Richard F. Outcault, featuring two of his creations—Buster Brown and Tige. This 1906 ink and watercolor piece, intended for a calendar, would go nicely on my wall. Alas, final bidding went well over \$5,000, leaving Your Editor tumbling and coughing in the dust. — HA.com

## Outbid Again!



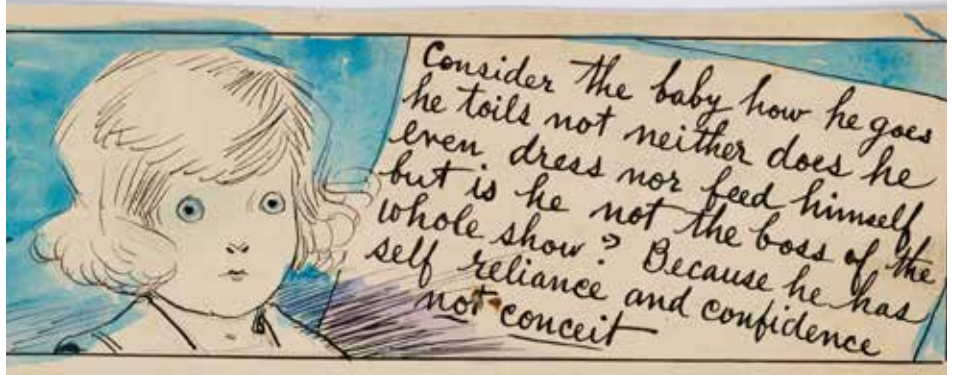
"OK," I thought, "this 1906 piece, without color, shouldn't go that high." But again, I am utterly defeated by a bid of \$1,200, which far surpassed my own bid. Seems there are plenty of other Buster Brown fans out there! — HA.com



## Outbid Again!

So. Again I adjust my goal in acquiring a Buster Brown original, to a more modest level (compared to the masterpiece at top of this page). The lot shown here consisted of three

pieces, each cut and incomplete. Attractively colored, but—(gasp)—no Tige! That might be too much of a compromise. Should I bid? Yeah, sure. The price on these shouldn't soar so insanely high, right? **Wrong.** Ownership of these three pieces slipped like quicksilver through my fingers. When the dust had settled and bidding for this lot was closed, it had brought over \$800. And I wonder—yes, I wonder—will I ever own an Outcault Buster Brown original drawing (with Tige)? — HA.com



## Outbid Again!



All right, now my expectations are *really* getting modest. But at least Tige is in here. This piece, obviously incomplete, measures 9.25 x 2.5 inches. From the way the lettering is crossed out, I suspect it was never used for publication. Bidding shouldn't go high on this one.

Wouldn't you think? Hm. Yeah, right. It went for over \$700. No Buster Brown original for me, for now, I guess. — HA.com

## ~~Outbid Again!~~ No! No! I got it!

I was top bidder on the painting at right, with a bid of—ah... *that's* confidential. No, it's *not* Buster Brown and Tige. But it features one of my favorite fictional characters: **The Shadow**. This is not the actual painting used for the August 1934 Shadow pulp magazine cover (if that painting still exists, it would be worth a small fortune). It's a re-creation. (Not *rec-reation.*) The original was done by George Rozen (see PulpArtists, July 2018), and is shown below left. George's twin brother, Jerome Rozen (PulpArtists, Sept. 2018), did the re-creation (right) in the 1980s (pretty close, aren't they?). The signature at bottom left reads, "Jerome Rozen after George Rozen." By an interesting coincidence (the kind of cosmic coincidence that happens all over the place), Gypsy Vengeance is the next Shadow novel I'll be reading (I'm reading all 325 Shadow novels in order of publication). So I'll probably be reading it when the painting arrives! That's a little weird, *but it's also pretty darn cool!!* — HA.com



# Saddle-Riding a Pig

## A Cautionary Tale from Buster Brown (and Tige)

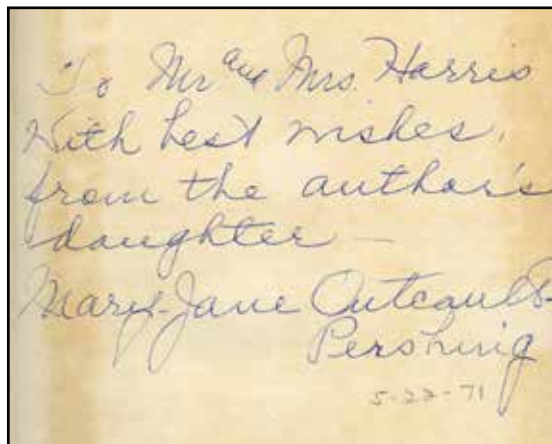
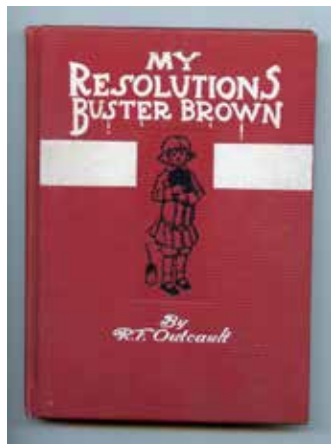
Last issue, Your Editor regaled the Dear Readers of The PRC with his unsuccessful attempts in bidding on several original Buster Brown and Tige drawings.

Unsuccessful with my bids for original art, I settled for some books by Outcault. These were nowhere near as expensive as going prices for original art; on the other hand, you won't find them at the dollar stores.

• *"Tige," His Story*, 1905 by R. F. Outcault (but allegedly written by Tige himself); and

• *My Resolutions*, 1906 (by Outcault / Buster Brown).

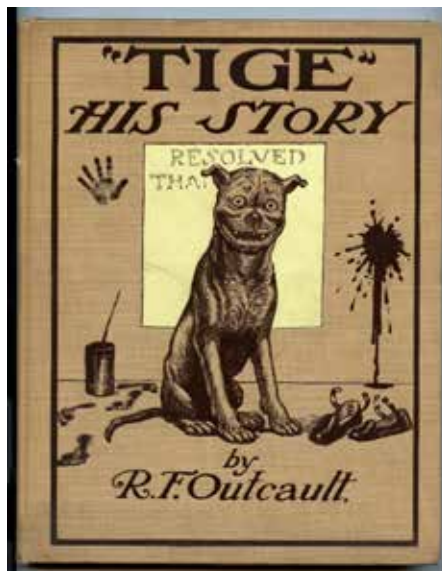
Resolutions? Yes, at the end of each Buster Brown Sunday comic disaster, Buster would make a resolution, wherein he swore he'd learned a lesson, and pledged to aspire to higher moral standards and better behavior.



On opening *My Resolutions*, by Buster Brown—surprise! An inscription from Outcault's daughter, who gave the book as a gift! That reminds me: A photo of Mary Jane Outcault, with a loving father's drawings of Buster and Tige in the margins, was auctioned off about a year ago. And (sigh), yes, I bid on it... but... *Outbid Again!* Its \$1,560 final price left Your Editor feeling he was running after a jet plane, trying catch it. — Photo of Mary Jane Outcault, HA.com



Buster resolves, "I'll never try to ride a pig again." For details, let's see what Tige himself wrote. Yes, he wrote the following. See—there he is, at his writing desk.



## From "Tige," His Story

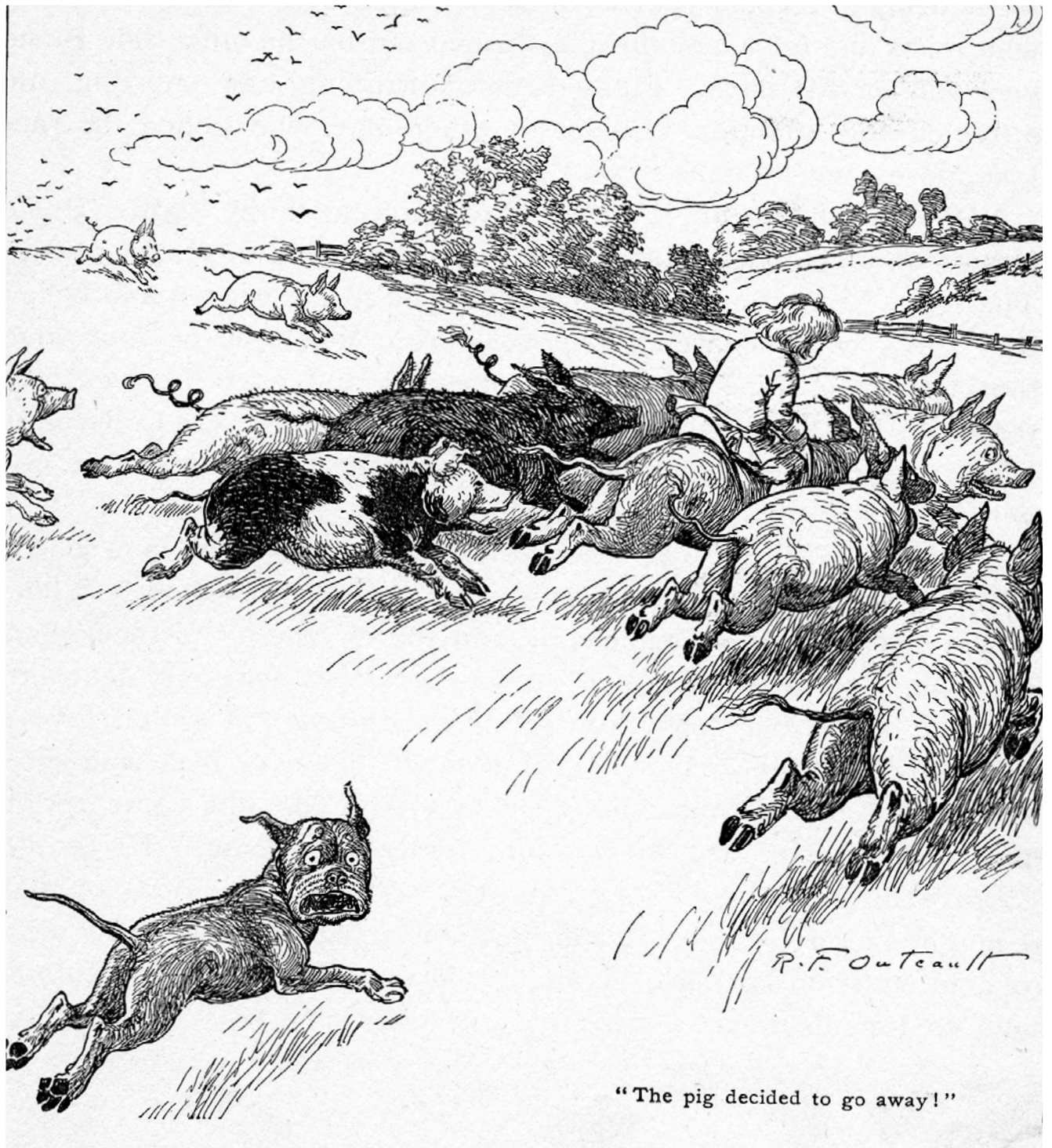
THE next day [Buster] came out of the stable with a saddle. He did n't see me, so I just followed him. At last he came to an old sedate-looking hog that was blinking in the sun. Yes! that's what he did, put the saddle on the pig and got aboard!

THE pig decided to go away, and when he did, he went away fast, *awfully fast!* Down the hill he went, and headed directly for a hedge. I could see the finish of that ride, I thought. But I was mistaken, for when the pig dashed out on the other side Buster was still on his back. Piggy kept on running and snorting, and attracted the attention of a lot of other pigs, who joined the race. I suppose they thought it was a race.

NOW in all my life I never saw such a funny sight. Buster Brown on piggy-back at the head of a whole herd of snorting swine. The more I ran, the more excuse they had to get excited and believe they were being chased. The bees from the three or four hives that

they had tipped over now joined in, and gave the pigs more reason to increase their speed. It was a race fit for the Coliseum at Rome. Buster hung on; he could n't well do anything else now with all those pigs at his heels.

DOWN in the barnyard, where the pigs live, there is a puddle of the dirtiest water I ever saw, where the pigs wallow. That's where that herd was headed for, and that's where the race wound up. Oh, *dear me*, what a sight for sore eyes was my dear little comrade when he crawled out of that hog-hole! I would love to have an instantaneous photograph of what Uncle Jack said when he saw his nice new saddle. Buster's aunt thought some serious things when she had to put him under the pump. He wanted to save his money and buy that pig! What do you think of that? I laughed until I got hysterical and Uncle Jack had to throw a pail of cold water in my face. I was afraid there was more coming, and so I made tracks!



“The pig decided to go away!”

**FALL IS COMING.**  
KEEP THE FIRE WARM

GO TO THE BEST PLACE

Besides Buster Brown and Tige, R. F. Outcault (1863-1928) created the Yellow Kid, who first appeared in newspapers in 1884. (Buster and Tige first appeared in 1902.) This original sold at auction in 2021 for \$10,0800. — HA.com

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IN THE LEVEL

And this one sold in 2017 for \$16,730.00.

# The two artists...

...who had the greatest impact on Your Editor's life are represented here: Steve Ditko (left) and James Bama (right). I was introduced to the work of each artist at age

eight, in 1963.

These two pieces of original art went up for auction at Heritage Auctions. — HA.com



My first Amazing Spider-Man comic, #4 (which introduced The Sandman), was drawn by Ditko.

Ditko created Spider-Man with Stan Lee in 1962, and eventually plotted the stories. (Note the credit—"Plotted and drawn by:")

In this opening page from Amazing Spider-Man #37, 1966, Ditko did something interesting. He emphasized Peter Parker; the Spider-Man mask hangs in the background—limp, less important. Showing Parker, contemplating the events and characters of the story (as if in retrospect), Ditko emphasized the importance of the characters. When Ditko plotted the stories he drew (in contrast to working with a full script from a writer), his stories were driven by the characters: their differences in viewpoint, misunderstandings, and conflicting values.

Ditko conveyed expressions not only through his faces, but through his hands. Note the tapping finger. It adds thoughtfulness to the contemplative expression, with Parker's raised eyebrow and wry smile.

In 1966, even as the popularity of Spider-Man and Dr. Strange (another character Ditko helped to develop) grew, Ditko left Marvel to work for other companies. From that time until his death in 2018, he worked for a variety of comics companies, applying his imagination by creating many, many characters and stories.

Ditko returned to work at Marvel in 1979, but refused to again draw Spider-Man or Dr. Strange.

Your Editor has had the pleasure of working with Robin Snyder to design and co-publish several books collecting Ditko's work, including *Avenging World*, *A Touch of Genius*, *The Complete Four-Page Series*, *Overture*, *Opening Acts*, *Character Twists*, *Postshadowing*, and *Curtain*.

(This original sold for \$336,000.) (Yes. It did.)

I was introduced to the art of James Bama (though I would not know his name until a few years later) through my first Aurora Universal Monster model kit, Dracula. (Bama did about 20 box-cover paintings for this series, including Frankenstein, the Wolf Man, the Mummy, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, King Kong, Godzilla, and The Munsters).

Bama painted several hundred paperback covers, including over 50 for the Doc Savage series. The Doc Savage cover shown here, for Merchants of Disaster, symbolizes the story's menace: an invention that destroys oxygen. The electrical chiaroscuro glare and the bolt of lightning makes me want to squint, as from a welder's torch, I can almost smell the ozone and feel the suffocation as Doc clutches his throat.

Bama grew up in New York City but made a radical change to his life when he and his wife moved to Wyoming in the late 1960s. He started painting interesting people he met in his new home; found he could sell those paintings at ten times what he was making on paperbacks; and began a career as a fine artist, earning him recognition as the Greatest Painter of the 20th Century. (Recognized as such, that is, by Your Editor, and perhaps a few others.)

Will I bid on either of these originals? Just thinking about it raises my body temperature a couple of degrees (Celsius), but only until I consider realistically what I think they will bring... at which point I answer: **Nah, I don't think so!** (Talk about a dash of cold water (the kind Tige was doused with (see two pages ago)).)

This original painting sold for \$50,400.

This 2006 German-language film immediately sets its story's historical context:

"1984, East Berlin. Glasnost is nowhere in sight. The population of the GDR [East Germany, or the German Democratic Republic] is kept under strict control by the Stasi, the East German Secret Police.

"Its force of 100,000 employees and 200,000 informers safeguards the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Its declared goal: 'To know everything.'"

The film first intercuts between two scenes: A prisoner being relentlessly interrogated, finally breaking down; and a classroom where Stasi students learn the techniques of effective interrogation from Wiesler (played by Ulrich Mühe). This establishes the total control over human life wielded by the "Shield and Sword" of the omnipotent State.

Wiesler and his superior attend a play written by Dreyman (played by Sebastian Koch). There is no reason to believe that Dreyman is other than a good, loyal, obedient socialist. But the order comes down the chain of command, for Wiesler to put Dreyman under surveillance. This means Wiesler and another agent must listen round-the-clock to what happens in Dreyman's apartment, and make complete notes. Reporting to his superior, Wiesler describes Dreyman as "an arrogant type, the kind I warn my students about."

Suspecting he's being bugged, Dreyman and some friends discuss some false information that the Stasi would act on. No action is taken (the Stasi suspect it's only bait and don't act on it), and Dreyman and his friends falsely assume that he is not under surveillance.

Wiesler betrays no emotion as he monitors every aspect of Dreyman's life. You know, in a strongly authoritarian situation like this, there are obvious oppressors (the government), and the victims (those being oppressed). Remember, socialism is public ownership of the means of production, and that "means of production" is human lives and minds. You can't get any more "totalitarian" than ownership of a person's life and mind. (It is, essentially, a form of slavery.)

So the life-damaging effects of a dictatorship on someone like Dreyman are easy to see, and a decent person would have sympathy for this victim.

But here's something interesting to think about. In his book, *The Ominous Parallels*, Leonard Peikoff describes not only the mind- and life-deadening effects of totalitarianism on the oppressed; he claims the same effects rebound onto the oppressors.

That's a complicated idea that can't be explored here; but I couldn't help thinking about it as I watched Wiesler during this movie. In a free society, a person finds a productive purpose and feels pride over

# Totalitarian Surveillance



## The Lives of Others: A movie written and directed by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck

his achievement. But can a Stasi agent feel a sense of achievement, or pride, on discovering little details about another person's life, which can be used to destroy that person? Or would the agent repress any such thoughts, thinking, "I'm only doing my duty?"

Something really interesting starts happening behind Wiesler's stone face. This is a key part of the story.

At one point, Dreyman's apartment is searched by a squad of Stasi goons. They throw books and other items on the floor as they search. They slash the sofa's cushions. They find nothing. The head goon, handing Dreyman a form, says, "In the unlikely event that damage has occurred, you may claim compensation." (You can probably

guess what would happen if he *did* claim compensation!)

You know how I review movies. I give very little away. I'm skipping over dozens of plot details, including Dreyman's actress lady-friend. But here are a few items:

It's four years later. The Berlin Wall has fallen.

Two more years pass. Dreyman discovers for the first time that he had been under full surveillance. He requests the records the Stasi made on him. He makes a startling discovery.

Two more years pass.

This film has one of the most satisfying endings I've ever seen in a movie. No, there is no bloodbath where the ex-Stasi agents are reduced to the garbage they already were.

I'll tell you exactly how it ends! (And this will spoil *nothing!*)

Wiesler enters a bookstore and buys a book.

All right, all right... I'm not telling the *whole* story here.

Now, if you watch this movie, consider the following odious fact: There are people today who openly, unashamedly, unapologetically advocate the kind of society depicted under the Stasi.

Of course, few such people are honest enough to admit there would be a need for a Stasi-like government entity to ensure that each person is a "good citizen" in any society where human life needs to be "regulated."

But poison sprinkled with a little sugar is still poison.

I first watched *The Lives of Others* (*Das Leben der Anderen*)

some months ago. I watched all the extras, including a short but interesting interview with the film's writer/director. I watched it again, to prepare for this article. Next? I'm doing what I seldom do with my home videos: I'll be watching it again, with the writer/director's commentary.

The movie makes an interesting side point. Alcoholism and suicide are rampant in dictatorships, resulting from the physical helplessness of being unfree, and the need to hide what one is thinking, both



from the ever-vigilant authorities, and from oneself. The character Jerska is a director (Volkmar Kleinert) who has displeased the Stasi (somehow), and is now blacklisted and unable to work. It's not that he can't *find* work; people would appreciate his talents in a free society. He is *forbidden* by the State to work. Several characters in the film are like this: Not prisoners in a jail, but wearing invisible chains and straight-jackets; walking, not-quite-alive because they've been deprived of their life's goals. What can one do? Drink and not think too much.

This movie is rated R, for "some sexuality/nudity."

It was issued on DVD and Blu-Ray.

Barnes and Noble does not seem to carry it.

New and used copies are available on Amazon.

## More about The Lives of Others

I wrote that I planned to watch *The Lives of Others* for a third time, with the commentary by screenwriter / director Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck. Well, since I set those words down, I *did* watch the commentary. (Yes! Developments are developing, even as this issue of *The PRC* is in development!)

You can view a movie on many levels. Take it for what it is; what you see is what you get; that's it. A totally legitimate approach to a movie.

In this case, however, the historical and political background got me thinking, and wanting to learn more. It led me to do some online research, some of which led to two other articles in this issue.

Directing my research in another direction led to viewing the writer / director commentary. I wanted to know his thoughts on his own film. Here are a few points I gained from that commentary:

- This was a difficult, long-range project. Research and writing took a long time. (Hey, that should come as no surprise to me, or certain others reading this.)

- von Donnersmarck selected the actors carefully, even if they had very small roles. He remarked on the importance of one actor with a very short role and said nothing, who had just the right expression of evil menace as he stood in the background. He commented that several actors had prominent careers on the East German stage (something few of us watching this in the States would be expected to know). Several actors (in real life)

Many, many copies are listed on eBay.

"Those who declare, today, that force is the only way to deal with men (with the unstated footnote that they, the speakers, would be safe in the position of rulers), ought to take a careful look at the history of absolute monarchies—and of modern dictatorships as well. Under the rule of force, it is the rulers who are in greatest danger, who live—and die—in permanent terror. The court intrigues, the plots and counterplots, the coups d'état, the known executions and secret assassinations are a matter of record. So are the purges of Party leaders and their cliques, in Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia." — Ayn Rand, "A Nation's Unity." You'll see this point in the film, as each Stasi bureaucrat is terrified by what the whims of the next-level bureaucrat will bring.

were persecuted by, even imprisoned by, the Stasi. von Donnersmarck many times expresses his high regard for the quality of acting, commenting on an especially well-done expression or gesture. He brought my attention to several subtleties I had not picked up on, watching the film twice previously.

- The film was made 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and German re-unification began. von Donnersmarck remarks on the difficulty of finding suitable locations. Something else interesting: A person making a phone booth call from the West German side is shown for a few seconds. The writer / director points out several visual background cues that indicate it was on the Western side, which are possibly lost on non-German audiences.

- There are several comments on the detrimental effects a dictatorship has on human life. Some very perceptive thoughts. It reminded me that I'd like to do an article, someday, on "Why Do Some People Hate Freedom So Much?"

- I've elsewhere remarked on how much I liked the film's ending. von Donnersmarck's comments enhanced my enjoyment even further.

I re-watched other special features on the DVD: deleted scenes; the half-hour interview with Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck; the "making of" documentary.

I certainly got more than my money's worth when I purchased this DVD. I hope you get much of value from it, if you decide to seek out *The Lives of Others*.

## 10 "Subversive" Jokes That Could've Landed You in an East German Prison

Here are 10 more jokes that were popular in East Germany, but were almost certainly too hot (or just too honest) for the Stasi.

Making fun of politicians is an American tradition. Some jokes cross lines of good taste; some are unfair or unfunny. Good taste and humor aside, Americans take it for granted that we can poke fun at politicians and our leaders.

What's the difference between Obama and God? God doesn't think he is Obama.

What does the Trump administration use instead of emails? Alternative fax.

Mocking political leaders seems to be a bipartisan pastime, accepted by the right and the left. And for good reason. A good joke has psychological, social, and spiritual benefits, research shows. Humans use jokes to lift the spirits of others, reduce stress, and to mock absurdity and dogmas.

Because of their potency, historically many have seen such jokes as less than funny. As we near the 30-year anniversary of the

by Jon Miltimore  
FEE.org

fall of the Berlin Wall, it's worth noting that East Germans faced the threat of prison for mocking the state.

Bodo Müller, an author of East German jokes, says the Stasi (official name *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*, or Ministry for State Security) viewed jokes as subversive propaganda. *The Lives of Others*, perhaps the best film of the 21st century (one guy's opinion), revealed the terror an ill-timed joke could trigger.

Telling these jokes invited investigation by the Stasi, Müller says. They'd show up at a joker's home and interrogate friends and neighbors. Of the 100 people identified in Müller's research, 64 were convicted. Convicted joke-tellers served between one and three years. At least one man served four (he must have told a real knee-slapper, like the one about \*General Secretary Honecker kissing Brezhnev). The accused were of course never convicted of telling jokes. Rather, they were found guilty of "state-endan-

gering propaganda and hate speech”; the jokes themselves were never read publicly.

This joke about two East German communist leaders, Wilhelm Reinhold Pieck and Otto Grotewohl, for example, landed a man before a judge in 1956.

Pieck and Grotewohl are visiting Stalin in Moscow.

Stalin gives them a car. But when they want to leave, they realize the car doesn't have a motor.

Stalin says: “You don't need a motor if you're already going downhill.”



Image Credit: Wiedemann & Berg Filmproduktion

Here are 10 more jokes that were popular in East Germany, but were almost certainly too hot (or just too honest) for the Stasi, including several about the Trabant, the worst car in history.

1. Why do Stasi officers make such good taxi drivers? — You get in the car and they already know your name and where you live.

2. What's the best feature of a Trabant? — There's a heater at the back to keep your hands warm when you're pushing it.

3. Capitalism is the exploitation of man by man. Under socialism, it is exactly the other way around.

4. What would happen if the desert became a socialist country? — Nothing for a while... then the sand becomes scarce.

5. Why do the Stasi work together in groups of three? — You need one who can read, one who can write, and a third to keep an eye on the two intellectuals.

6. The Stasi held a competition for the best political joke. First prize? Fifteen to twenty years.

7. How can you use a banana as a compass? — Place a banana on the Berlin Wall. The bitten end would point east. (Bananas were scarce and deeply desired in East Germany, in contrast to West Germany, where they were ubiquitous.)

8. A man-on-the-street poll was taken in three countries: “What is your opinion of the recently announced shortage of meat?” In the US, they asked, “What shortage?” In Poland, they asked, “What is meat?” And in East Germany, they asked, “What is an opinion?”

9. How do you catch a Trabi? — Just stick chewing gum on the highway. (An allusion to the Trabant's weak motor.)

10. Why did Erich Honecker get a divorce? — Because Brezhnev kisses better than his wife. (This joke is

a reference to the socialist fraternal kiss, also known as the Triple Brezhnev.)

*Jonathan Miltimore is the Managing Editor of FEE.org. His writing/reporting has been the subject of articles in TIME magazine, The Wall Street Journal, CNN, Forbes, Fox News, and the Star Tribune. Bylines: Newsweek, The Washington Times, MSN.com, The Washington Examiner, The Daily Caller, The Federalist, the Epoch Times.*

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The photo heading this article is from *The Lives of Others*. How the photo relates to the article would require elaborate explanation (see the movie, and you'll know). Apparently, Your Editor is not the only one who holds this film in high regard.

The “10 more” in the subtitle implies there was a previous article on this topic. Your Editor failed to find it.

Ladies and gentlemen:  
I believe our culture is in a state of decline. That it has been for decades.

I won't try to justify that statement, or give details of how, or why I believe it's happening. I will only say that I don't consider that decline to be inevitable or irreversible. And I will identify the culture I have in mind. It is often called Western Civilization, but I prefer the term Enlightenment Culture.

What has all that to do with James Bama? Well, you see, I believe the work of James Bama

## What can I say about **James Bama** that I haven't said 100 times already?

Images on this page are Copyright © the James Bama estate  
Some were imaged by HA.com

has slowed that decline.

I have no idea how I could prove that, or even what I could use as evidence. I wouldn't even dignify the statement as an opinion; let's call it an impression, even a suspicion.

I'll tell you what values I have found in James Bama's work for nearly sixty years of my life. That might help you see why I harbor that suspicion.

I am speaking of Bama's *fine art*—that is, work he did for himself, which he

started creating after he moved to Wyoming.

I certainly don't denigrate his commercial art. It has the same





technical mastery of painting as his fine art. That's why it's worth collecting. I own two of his paperback cover paintings. They are gems, proudly displayed in our home.

But whereas his commercial work was done to illustrate another person's vision, his fine art was done strictly for his own satisfaction; to his own artistic standards; embodying purely his own vision and view of life.

And what is that view of life? What values can we find in the work of James Bama?

One of the first things I hear people say when introduced to his work is, "Why, it looks just like a photograph!"

That's not technically true. If you are intimately familiar with the esthetics of both photography and painting, you'd realize it. If you had the opportunity to compare a reference photo Bama used, and the resultant painting he did from it, you'd realize it.

But the essence behind the initial, "It's just like a photo!" remark is valid. Bama's paintings *are* realistic (he called himself an "American realist").

The *style* of a painting relates to *epistemology*—that branch of philosophy dealing with the functioning of the mind, a proper methodology of thinking, and the validation of knowledge.

What epistemological principles can we glean from the style of a James Bama painting? One obvious thing is a sense of clarity. Just as a sharp, clear photo is in focus, so, too, are Bama's paintings in focus. Bama chose to paint with clarity. His style tells a viewer, "Choose clarity of thought. Observe and think with precision. Keep your mind focused."

What, then, can we learn from the subject matter of Bama's work? A painting's *content* relates to *metaphysics*—that branch of philosophy concerned with what exists, and the nature of what exists.

Bama's chosen content, like his style, is oriented to reality.

Many of Bama's paintings are of one person. Sometimes there is a background; often, there is not. (Bama once told me, or I saw it quoted somewhere, that adding a back-



ground never improved a single one of his paintings.)

What does an artist say about reality, by creating painting after painting of individuals (background or not)? He is saying, "The individual exists."

If that seems ridiculously obvious, I congratulate you for holding that element of Enlightenment Culture. In contrast, there are entire schools of philosophy that denigrate or even deny the existence of individuals—something those who have inherited Enlightenment Culture by default just can't fathom. However, have you ever seen paintings with numerous people in them, each person anonymous and indistinguishable from all the others? An artist who depicts people that way, in work after work, is denying the importance—or perhaps even the existence—of the individual.

Building on the epistemology of clarity, and the metaphysics of reality, we now touch on the evaluative branch of philosophy, *ethics*, which is concerned with the *choices* an individual makes.

How has James Bama *chosen* to portray individuals in his paintings? Several terms come to my mind. Proud. Dignified. Seriously reflective and contemplative. Self-respecting. Joyous (despite Bama telling me once he preferred not to paint a person smiling; there are exceptions). Most importantly: efficacious.

All of these qualities of personality are acquired through choice. In other words, the individual has free will.

These are the epistemological, metaphysical, and ethical principles, and the view of the individual person, that I believe are present in James Bama's work. These are the principles valued by people who respond strongly and fall in love with





Bama's work—even if they are unable to articulate those principles. Many people (including the artists themselves) hold values (Enlightenment or otherwise) implicitly, and are unable to explicitly identify them. Some people claim to have no philosophy; yet lacking philosophy would leave a person helpless, unable to act for one's short-range survival or long-range flourishing and happiness. Some say they know nothing about art; yet they respond positively to the work of James Bama (clearly showing they know *something* about art).

Choose reality.

Choose to be in focus and keep a clear mind.

Choose to recognize the existence and importance of each individual.

Choose to understand and accept that each individual is capable of achieving (by a series of choices) pride and dignity in his/her own life.

You're only able to choose these things because you have free will. That's your nature. That's the kind of consciousness you have.

These values are inherent in the work of James Bama.

They are also the foundation of Enlightenment Culture.

As I said, I believe Enlightenment Culture is in decline. If that subject interests you, I refer you to work by Ayn Rand (the most effective defender of Enlightenment Culture in my lifetime) and Leonard Peikoff (who wrote three important books on how philosophy shapes history). These two people will help you to reverse that decline (if it is indeed happening). Artists like James Bama can slow the process, but will not stop it. While art has all the elements

of philosophy, art is not a substitute for philosophy.

The work of James Bama is more than just pretty pictures that “look just like photographs.” Each one shows a viewer what kind of thinking and living is possible. Every person who responds positively to a Bama painting, stops to admire it, identifies with it, buys a print of it, introduces other people to it, has helped slow the decline of Enlightenment Culture.

If you find Bama's work speaking to you; if you find yourself passionately responding to it—you can make your own personal contribution to Enlightenment Culture. First, monitor and understand your own thought processes as you evaluate his paintings. Define your own reasons for those evaluations. Then, learn a little about philosophy and history. No PhD degrees necessary; just enough to understand how we have inherited Enlightenment Culture, whether it's truly in a state of decline, and what *you* can do about it.

James Bama died on April 24, 2022, four days short of his 96th birthday.

For reasons I have given here, I consider James Bama the greatest painter of the 20th Century.

Of course, he was not the only painter to express Enlightenment values. There were many before him; many contemporaries; and those who came after.

And now? The 21st Century eagerly awaits his equal.

## Clint Eastwood Calls James Bama

This is the story, as I remember Jim telling it to me.

Jim was working away at home (as he did so many hours each day) when he received a call. The woman identified herself as Clint Eastwood's secretary.

She told Jim that Clint Eastwood really wanted Bama to paint him for a movie poster (supposedly Pale Rider, which was released in 1985).

Jim did not want to do it, but he told the secretary, if Eastwood really was interested, Jim wanted Eastwood to call and talk to him.

Some amount of time goes by.

Jim gets another call, and it is indeed Clint Eastwood. After some discussion, Bama set the terms under which he would paint Eastwood:

- Eastwood would have to come to Wyoming and pose for Jim.
- This would not be commercial work (for a movie poster).

Bama said he would paint Eastwood as a fine art piece, like other work he was doing at this time.

Eastwood seemed to find those conditions acceptable.

Did it ever happen? Sadly, no.

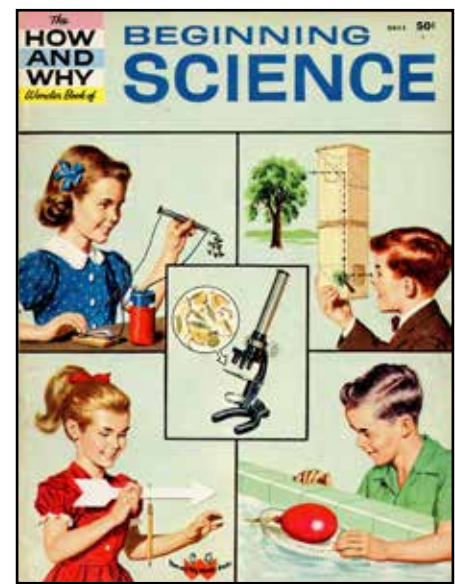
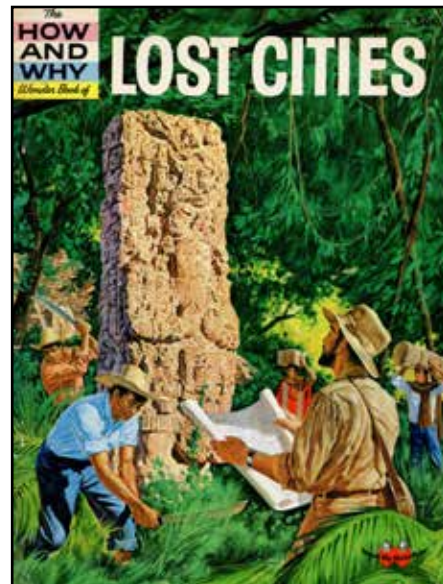
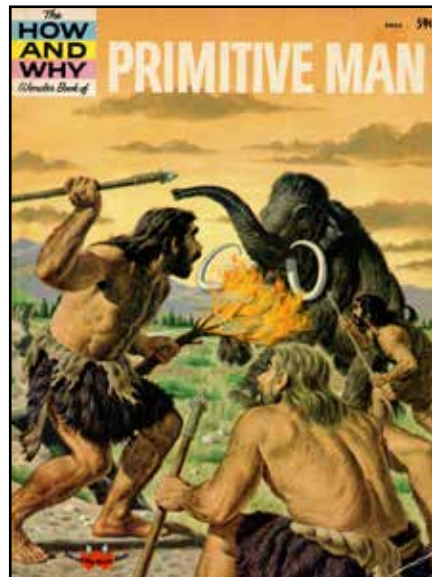
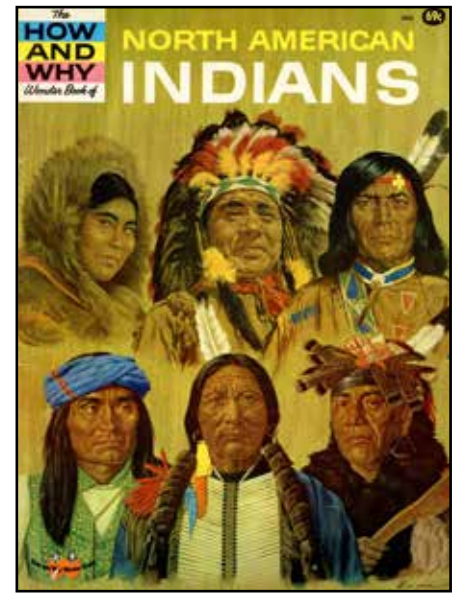
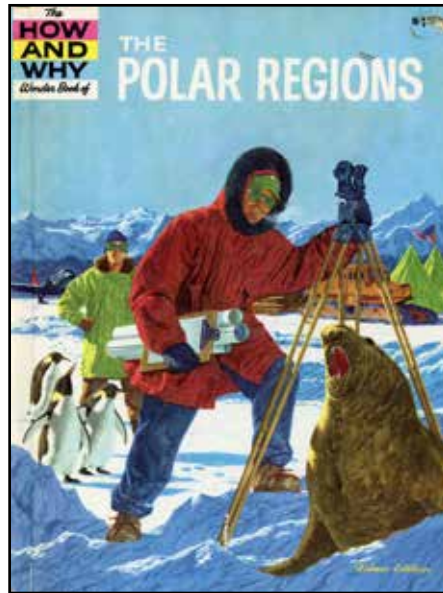
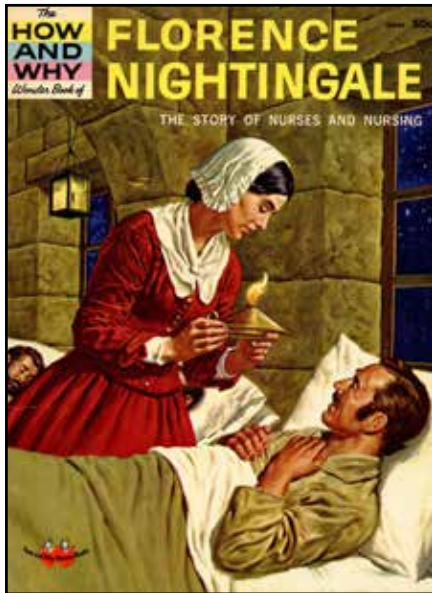
Two similar incidents took place. The Greenwich Workshop, which published Jim's limited-edition prints, convinced him to paint Paul Newman As Butch Cassidy. He did, in 1990 (see the bottom of pages 16-17).

Bama was also asked to paint Wes Studi as Magua, from Last of the Mohicans. He did.

Both works were released as prints by the Greenwich Workshop.

## The How and Why

## of James Bama



Who out there remembers these educational booklets, published from about 1960 to 1965?

Fun, weren't they?

There were dozens of titles, but the few you see here had cover art by James Bama.

You'd think the publisher would state on the title page, "Cover art by James Bama." But no. That would make the job of an obsessive Bama collector like Your Editor too easy. (Only one of these has his signature on the cover art, at the bottom

right corner; can you spot it?)

I first learned Bama had done some of these in 1987 or 1988, when I stayed with him and his family, going through his files and making lots of notes. I discovered a few he did not have copies of, recognizing his style and verifying them with him.

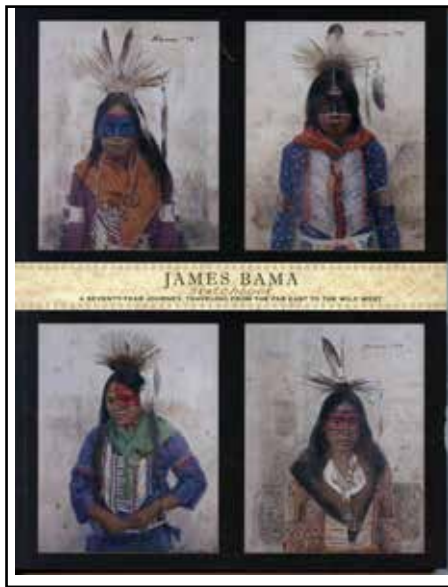
The inside pages were not illustrated by Bama. Of course, *those artists* were identified.

One more achievement of Bama's career as an illustrator.

# Preliminaries

Generally, this was James Bama's working procedure:

- He would take many photos. This could be arranged with the subject, at a specific time and place; wearing certain clothing; including a certain item (wagon, saddle, rifle, etc.). Or it could be what Jim called "grab shots," taken where and when it happened—at a pow wow, rodeo, or other special event.



- Jim would develop the photos. Most would be black and white, because he preferred to compose a painting with his own color scheme. The exception would be clothing where the colors had historical or cultural significance.

- Selecting the photo with the best composition, Jim would make a preliminary pencil sketch on tissue paper.

- Jim would then create a very small, preliminary color painting, establishing the color scheme for the final work.

- With the photo and the two preliminaries at the upper corner of his painting board for reference, Bama would create the finished painting.

Preliminaries can be interesting, because they often give insight into the artist's creative process.

Bama's prelims are as good as (or better than) the finished work of many artists. In fact, some auction houses have listed prelims by Bama, not even knowing they were not the finished work.

So the availability of a book devoted to preliminary pencil and paint pieces by Bama offers an excellent opportunity to enjoy these pieces.

James Bama Sketchbook is one of three excellent books published by Flesk Publications featuring Bama's work. Sadly, none are currently available from the publisher. But they can be found on the secondary market (eBay, for example).



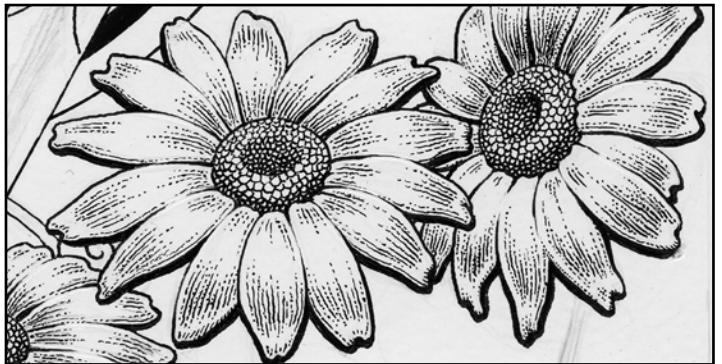
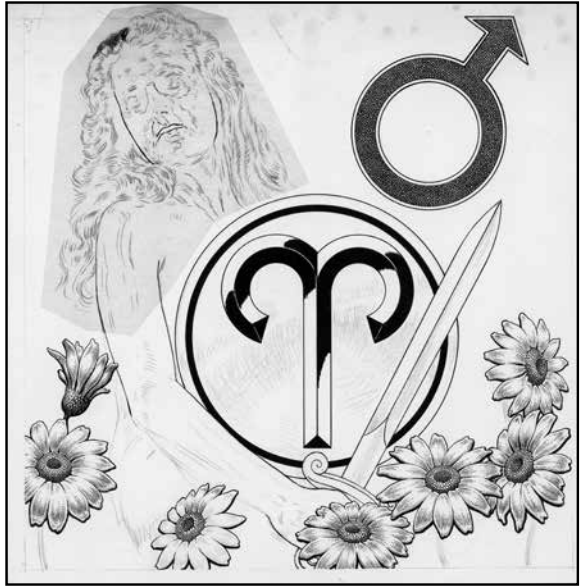
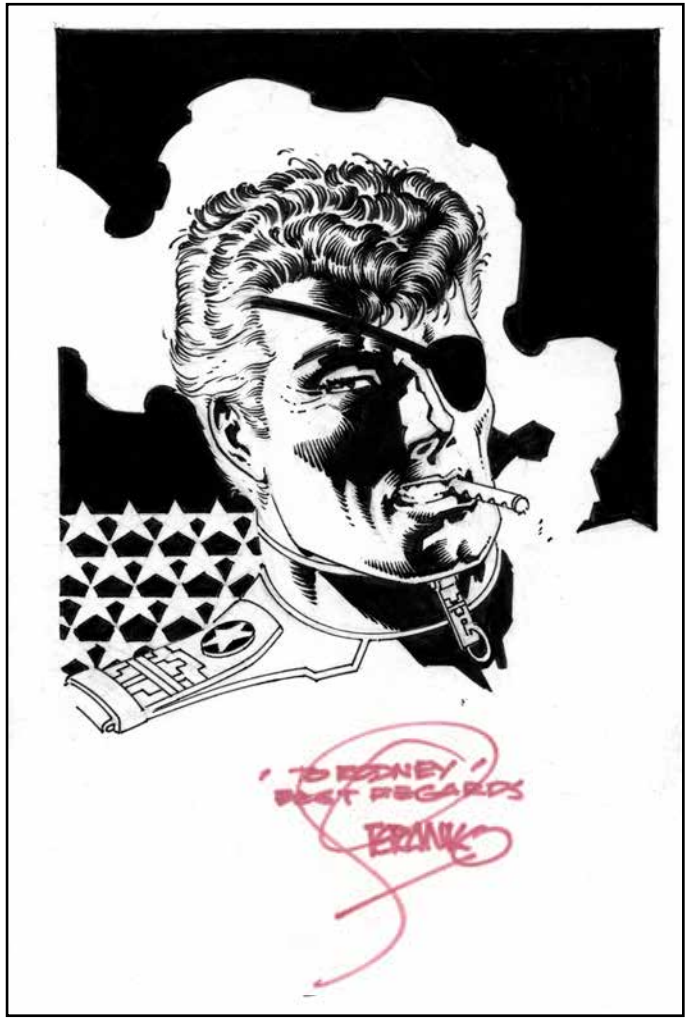
In 1986, I went to Cody, Wyoming, where the Big Horn Gallery had an exhibition of Jim Bama's work. I also had (at Bama's invitation) a very agreeable visit of several hours at his home (which was about 18 miles from Cody). The finished paintings at the Gallery were priced at \$10,000, \$20,000, \$30,000... *and up*, which was out of my reach. I settled, instead, for the purchase of this color preliminary, which is reproduced here full size.



**Bama's neighbor, Dee Smith.** — From the Flesk Publications book, James Bama Sketchbook



**Wes Studi, a Native American actor who appeared in Dances With Wolves, posed several times for Bama. Bama completed several paintings of Studi, including one in Studi's role as Magua, from Last of the Mohicans.** — From the Flesk Publications book, James Bama Sketchbook



A few art pieces Your Editor purchased at the Windy City pulp show. Top: Captain America and Nick Fury (Copyright © Marvel Characters, Inc.), drawn by Jim Steranko. Above: Preliminary and unfinished piece by Virgil Finlay. To the right: Detail of flowers, showing fine pen and ink work.

# Is this cause for concern?

I have started using Twitter only recently.

I'd never seen much value to it. But with all the news of Elon Musk purchasing Twitter, and subsequent discoveries that government agencies have brought pressure on Twitter (and other social media platforms) to suppress and silence certain viewpoints, I was curious. I downloaded the app on my phone a few weeks ago.

(Everything I say about Twitter—and it won't be much—is from the perspective of the most basic beginner. If you're curious, I don't believe you have to create any kind of account; just go to **twitter.com** on your computer or phone, and you'll see an endless stream of comments, of varying levels of relevance and intelligence. You can search, as I did, for a subject—for example, "Roald Dahl.")

Here is one great benefit I see in Twitter (and, to a degree, in Facebook). If something important is going on in the world, you'll hear of it, if you're tapped into (following; liking) sources you trust.

I was once told that Facebook (and, presumably, Twitter) are the worst possible places to get news stories from.

I disagree.

First, when there are dozens of tweets on Twitter, posts on Facebook, reports on TV, articles in newspapers, referring to an event, you're fully justified to *tentatively* conclude, "This really happened."

But the next step is up to you.

Are you reading or listening (1) uncritically, accepting every claim (because it's from a certain source, or a certain writer)? Or do you think with (2) an active and *critical* mind, pausing now and then to ask questions?

(Brief note: "critical" in this context is not the same as "skeptical.")

If (1), you'll be easily swayed by the slickest-talking writer or speaker who comes along, and you'll quite possibly end up following some *movement*-of-the-moment. You'll be trained that the worst crime is to question the *movement*. You'll be absorbed as a selfless unit into that *movement*. (Or "assimilated," as into the Borg, in the Star Trek stories.)

If (2), you're making it possible to live and operate as an independent thinker. An individual. And you'll be able to accept or reject ideas, trends, or movements on the basis of their validity or unsoundness, not on blind faith as in (1).

So here's what set this thing off for me.

I browsed Twitter on my phone the morning of Feb. 19 and discovered claims that works by the late Welsh-born author Roald

## ...or... How to think critically while reading

Dahl's were being edited by the author's publisher.

Dahl was the author of *James and the Giant Peach*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Matilda*, *The Witches*, *Fantastic Mr Fox*, *The BFG*, *The Twits*, *George's Marvellous Medicine* and *Danny, the Champion of the World*.

Allegations of fact (that the changes were being made; examples of the changes) were mixed with evaluations (some disapproving, some approving).

Here's what *links* are for on the Internet: You don't have to be satisfied with "Someone said something happened." Many tweets telling of the edits to Dahl's work linked directly to news sources where this information originated. I found enough references to safely assume it was actually happening.

Read the following. I'll then break it down. It was written by Tom Slater on 2-19-2023 at [spiked-online.com](https://spiked-online.com):

"When the *Telegraph* revealed yesterday that Puffin, Dahl's publisher, has made 'hundreds of changes' to his beloved children's books, in line with suggestions from so-called sensitivity readers, the response was one of horror and disbelief. An author beloved by generations of children for his magical, spiky and sometimes sinister

work has had his literary edges sanded off. All new copies will feature the newly cleansed text. Dahl's words and stories will be changed forever, no longer truly his own, all because some weirdo with a red pen thinks they know better. The philistinism, the cultural vandalism, is stunning."

Let's take that a piece at a time.

### When the *Telegraph* revealed yesterday that Puffin, Dahl's publisher, has made 'hundreds of changes' to his beloved children's books,

A pretty-much straightforward statement, asserting something to be fact. One can accept this claim as factual with

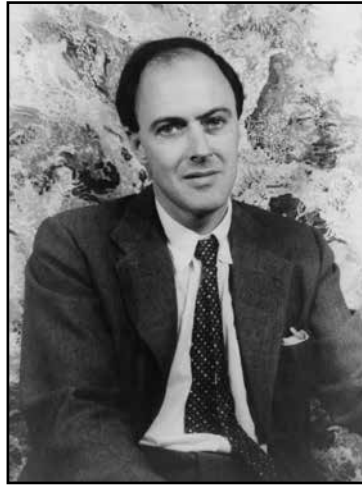
some degree of confidence, since the same thing has been stated by numerous sources—but be careful; a hoax can spread a plausible-sounding falsehood far and wide, before being uncovered as a hoax.

### in line with suggestions from so-called sensitivity readers,

Note the "so-called." Realize the author is saying, "I don't really consider them 'sensitivity readers,'" or else he considers the term itself questionable.

### the response was one of horror and disbelief.

The author is summarizing. It's his impression. It's not accurate to say "*the* response," as there were many; and he's likely not



Roald Dahl. — Public domain photo from Wikipedia

Changes to <i>James and the Giant Peach</i>	
2001 edition	2022 edition
queer ramshackle house	strange ramshackle house
Aunt Sponge was enormously fat and very short	Aunt Sponge was quite large and very short
One of those white flabby faces that looked exactly as though it had been boiled	A face that looked like a great soggy overboiled cabbage
She had a screeching voice	She had an annoying voice
those two ghastly hags	those two ghastly aunts
Aunt Sponge, fat and pulpy as a jellyfish	Aunt Sponge, pulpy as a jellyfish
Waving her fat arms and starting to dance around in circles	Waving her arms and starting to dance around in circles
In another minute, this mammoth fruit was as round and large and fat as Ant Sponge herself, and probably just as heavy	[removed]
They were like a couple of hunters who had just shot an elephant	They were like a couple of hunters who had just shot their prey

seen *every* response. I myself saw some responses that were lukewarm; others were approving. It's a judgment call to have said "*many* responses were"; it would not be accurate to say "*most* responses were" unless there were a reliable tally of "responses," and there was a reliable breakdown of how many expressed "horror and disbelief." It's perfectly legit to say, "Most of the responses I've seen were negative, some of them expressing horror and disbelief."

**An author beloved by generations of children for his magical, spiky and sometimes sinister work**

Another generalization, but if the author is knowledgeable about Dahl's work and its popularity, he can make that generalization, and should be ready to defend it if he believes a specific challenge warrants that defense.

**has had his literary edges sanded off.**

Again, evaluation.

**All new copies will feature the newly cleansed text. Dahl's words and stories will be changed forever, no longer truly his own,**

Straight-forward statement.

**all because some weirdo with a red pen thinks they know better. The philistinism, the cultural vandalism, is stunning.**

Full-blown, unrestrained evaluation, to which the author is completely entitled.

Now, mind you, I'm not saying Tom Slater's paragraph was wrong, evil, an abomination, slipshod, or any of that. He's free to express his personal views, just as I am (I do it all the time; have you ever noticed?). It's just that you, as a reader, need to understand what is going on, for reasons explained above.

Once you get a smattering of *facts* and *opinions* when reading something like this (and in the process, distinguishing between the two), it's time to come up with your own questions. Here are a few of my own:

- Some people defended the publisher's changes by comparing it to editing, which most authors experience. But when an author is alive, he/she can respond to such edits, and agree to accept them or not.

Changes to <i>Charlie and the Chocolate Factory</i>	
2001 edition	2022 edition
Like all extremely old people, he was delicate and weak.	Like most extremely old people, he was delicate and weak.
"Tell Charlie about that crazy Indian Prince," said Grandma Josephine.	"Tell Charlie about that ridiculously rich Indian Prince," said Grandma Josephine.
"You mean Prince Pondicherry?" said Grandpa Joe, and he began chuckling with laughter. Completely dotty," said Grandpa George. "But very rich," said Grandma Georgina.	"You mean Prince Pudcherry?" said Grandpa Joe, and he began chuckling with laughter.
"Prince Pondicherry wrote a letter to Mr Willy Wonka."	"Prince Pudcherry wrote a letter to Mr Willy Wonka."
"The crazy prince"	"The prince"
A nine-year-old boy who was so enormously fat he looked as though he had been blown up with a powerful pump	A nine-year-old boy who was so enormous he looked as though he had been blown up with a powerful pump
Great flabby folds of fat bulged out from every part of his body, and his face was like a monstrous ball of dough.	Great folds bulged out from every part of his body, and his face was like a ball of dough.

Changes to <i>Esio Trot</i>	
2001 edition	2022 edition
Tortoises used to be brought into England by the thousand, packed in crates, and they came mostly from North Africa.	Tortoises used to be brought into England by the thousand. They came from lots of different countries, packed in crates.
But not many years ago a law was passed that made it illegal to bring any tortoises into the country.	But not many years ago a law was passed that made it illegal to bring any tortoises into the UK.
This balcony belonged to an attractive middle-aged lady called Mrs Silver.	This balcony belonged to a kind middle-aged lady called Mrs Silver.
...like saving her life or rescuing her from a gang of armed thugs...	...like saving her life or rescuing her from a gang of armed robbers...
Try to think how miserable it must make him feel to be so titchy! Everyone wants to grow up.	Try to think how miserable it must make him feel! Everyone wants to grow up.
"That's where all these tortoises in England come from, and a bedouin tribesman told me the secret."	"That's where some of these tortoises in England come from, and a local person told me the secret."

If an author does not like the editing standards of a publisher, the author can take his work elsewhere, or self-publish. In this case, the deceased author cannot defend his work. More questions arise from this.

- Some people call this "censorship." My own understanding of the term is that only a government entity can perform censorship. What this publisher is doing might not be properly called censorship. (In contrast, when a government agency "suggests" or "requests" a privately-owned platform like Twitter or Facebook suppress certain viewpoints, which documentation has shown has happened, that is a fascist-style form of censorship; "fascist" in the sense of government dictating what a privately-owned company must do. —The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 5th Edition.)

ary of the English Language, 5th Edition.)

- Just what changes have been made? Examples accompany this article. I found these on many, many Internet sites. I believe they originated from *The Telegraph*, a daily United Kingdom newspaper. Some of these changes seem "innocent" enough, but... *is that really the point?* Or is the main point that they *are being made at all?*

- These changes were discovered for one deceased author. *Can we safely assume this is happening to other authors who are no longer able to defend their work?*

- (As the title asks) Is this cause for concern? (I do hope that question, by this point, is rhetorical.)

Several Twitter users, commenting on this topic, have quoted George Orwell's novel, *1984*:

"Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book rewritten, every picture has been repainted, every statue and street building has been renamed, every date has been altered. And the process is continuing day by day and minute by minute. History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right."

(I've seen t-shirts saying "Make 1984 fiction again." Maybe it's time to actually buy one, and wear it proudly.)

I've handled hundreds of Bantam paperbacks published from the 1950s through the 70s (many of them with James Bama cover artwork), and was always impressed by a statement proudly made on their Copyright page. When indicating the paperback was a reprint of an earlier hardcover, a separate line in italics read: "*Not one word has been omitted.*"

Perhaps publish-

ers of integrity could express this sentiment (one by which I guide my own publishing efforts, when collecting public-domain fiction): “*This is the text as originally published.*”

As far as offending delicate sensibilities, that can easily be taken care of. On the Copyright page of a book that I published is the following subtitle note:

“These stories were published at a time when political correctness had not yet caused serious cultural and moral decay. Certain ideas, terms and social conventions found herein are no longer considered acceptable (some for rational reasons, others not). A mentally healthy reader (the kind for whom this book was lovingly compiled) will understand that, and not give the matter further thought.”

A few other comments I found on Twitter and elsewhere:

Salman Rushdie: “Roald Dahl was no angel but this is absurd censorship. Puffin Books and the Dahl estate should be ashamed.”

The Washington Post, in a 2-19-2023 online article:

“The changes in Dahl’s children’s books were done in partnership with Inclusive Minds, a collective for people who are passionate about inclusion, diversity and accessibility in children’s literature, the Roald Dahl Story Company said.”

From Inclusive Minds’ website:

“Founded in January 2013, Inclusive Minds is a collective for people who are passionate about inclusion, diversity, equality and accessibility in children’s literature, and are committed to changing the face of children’s books.”

Suzanne Nossel, chief executive of Pen America, tweeted: “At Pen America, we are alarmed at news of ‘hundreds of changes’ to venerated works by Roald Dahl in a purported effort to scrub the books of that which might offend someone.

“Those who might cheer specific edits to Dahl’s work should consider how the power to rewrite books might be used in the hands of those who do not share their values and sensibilities.”

mir and a on Twitter:

“I just bought 16 used Roald Dahl books so my future kids can read them as they were written without the input of an ‘inclusivity’ team. @penguinrandom Rewriting classics is an erasure of literary history, and morally reprehensible.”

@RogerHelmer-MEP on Twitter:

“Thomas Bowdler, who expurgated Shakespeare in the days when Victorians covered table legs for modesty reasons, is now rightly an object of ridicule. It can only be a matter of time before today’s woke war-

Changes to George’s Marvellous Medicine	
2001 edition	2022 edition
	[Dedication added] This book is for doctors everywhere
He didn’t have a brother or a sister.	He didn’t have any siblings.
His father was a farmer	His parents were farmers
She had pale brown teeth and a small puckered-up mouth like a dog’s bottom.	She had rotting teeth and a small puckered-up mouth like a dog’s bottom, from years of frowning.
She certainly was a very tiny person.	She certainly was very small.
Her legs were so short she had to have a footstool.	It was as if she was shrinking, as she had to have a footstool.
Daddy says it’s fine for a man to be tall.	Daddy says it’s fine for people to be tall.
Owch	Ugh
Mummy washes them down the sink.	Mummy and Daddy wash them down the sink.
Mummy’s as stupid as you are.	Mummy and Daddy are as stupid as you are.

riors, who have sanitised Roald Dahl, suffer the same fate.”

[Editor’s note: “bowdlerize” — “To remove material that is considered offensive or objectionable from (a book, for example); expurgate; To expurgate, as a book, by omitting or modifying the parts considered offensive; to remove morally objectionable parts; — said of literary texts.” — The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 5th Edition.]

Brendan O’Neill, The Spectator (“Britain’s best weekly”), 2-19 at [www.spectator.co.uk](http://www.spectator.co.uk):

“What right do blue-pencil-wielding sensitivity readers have to drive the juggernaut of

correct thought through Dahl’s imaginary landscape?

“Every fashionable political belief of the 2020s is being crowbarred into Dahl’s fictional universe. So Matilda no longer reads Rudyard Kipling – that imperial old brute! – but Jane Austen. One of Dahl’s witches who posed as ‘a cashier in a supermarket’ is now a ‘top scientist’. We wouldn’t want any young witch to feel that the STEM subjects aren’t for her. Words like ‘crazy’ and ‘mad’ have been excised, lest they appear to make light of mental-health problems. Even such everyday words as black and white are out. Characters no longer turn ‘white with fear’ and the Big Friendly Giant no longer wears a ‘black cloak’. Why? In case a black kid feels offended when he reads that fantastic tale? The patrician urge of the sensitivity police to protect ethnic-minority children from certain words is infinitely more insulting to them than Dahl’s tales could ever be.

“Let us be frank about what is going on here. This is a cultural purging. These arrogant alterations represent a profoundly censorious attack on one of Britain’s best-loved writers. They can doll it up in the language of ‘sensitivity’ and ‘inclusion’ as much as they like, but to the rest of us it still smacks of a Stalinist correction of wrongspeak.

“Puffin’s vandalising of Dahl’s work was carried out in conjunction with an organisation called Inclusive Minds, a collective of sensitivity readers who are ‘passionate about inclusion and accessibility in children’s literature’. I find the modern use of that word ‘inclusion’ grimly fascinating. It so often means its opposite. When people say they are devoted to ‘inclusion’ it usually means they’re devoted to excluding problematic people and difficult ideas. And so it is with the haughty overhaul of Dahl’s world of make-believe: under the banner of ‘inclusion’ all sorts of words and characters

and jokes are being excluded, bowdlerised [Editor’s Note: There’s that word again, with British spelling], blacked-out. (Sorry, I know you shouldn’t say ‘black’ anymore.)”

Timothy Sandefur on Twitter:

BUY HARDCOPY BOOKS. OLD EDITIONS.

## Flash!

As this issue is literally being put together, we hear from our “London contact” (thanks, Matthew) that, according to The Evening Standard:

“Publishers Puffin UK has announced the release of the Roald Dahl classic collection ‘to keep the author’s classic texts in print’, following criticism of recent editing of his work to remove potentially offensive language.

“The 17 titles will be available later this year and will include archive material relevant to each of the stories by the much-loved but controversial children’s author.

“The classic collection will sit alongside the newly-released Roald Dahl books for young readers, which have been rewritten to cater for the sensitivities of modern audiences.”

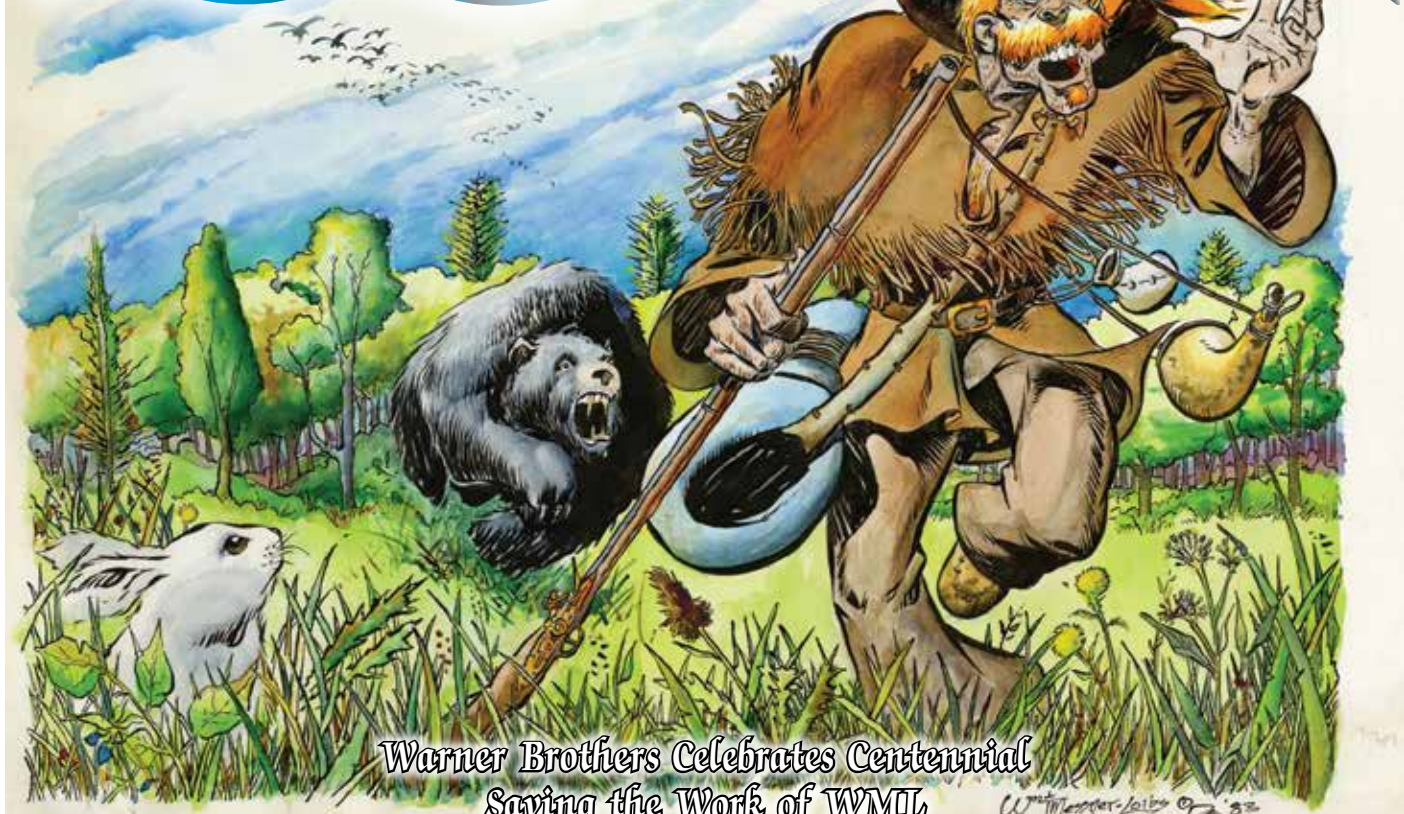
Reassuring, but... is this *still* cause for concern?

The Plymouth Review  
**Current**

TAKING YOU PLACES WORTH SEEING

Volume 12 • Issue 5 • April 2023

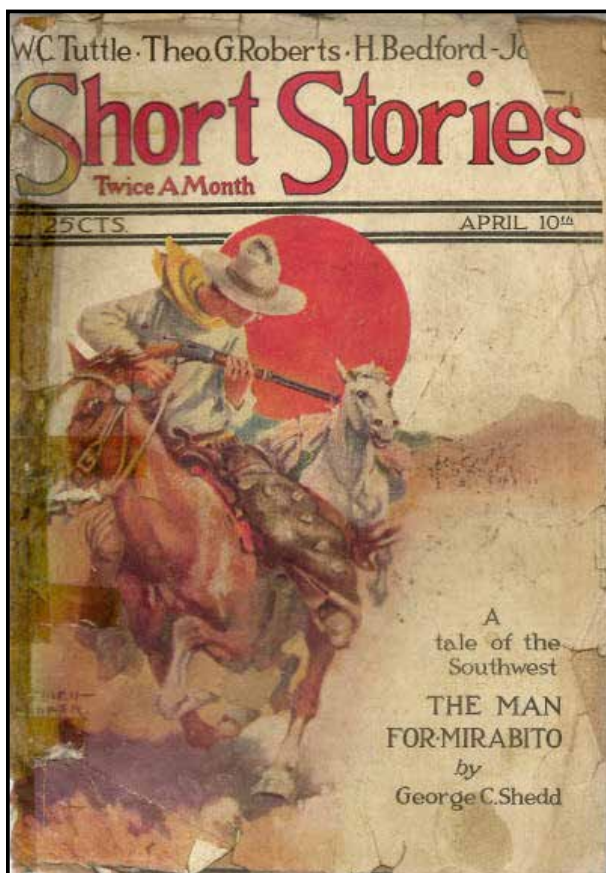
**FREE!**



Warner Brothers Celebrates Centennial  
Saving the Work of WML

**April**

**2023**



Nick Eggenhofer cover from 1922. – From philsp.com

**Cover image:** Life on the Frontier, by William Messner-Loebs

Great Movies This Month

Mission of Benevolent Greed

**PulpArtists** by David Saunders: Nick Eggenhofer

**Ask a Science Teacher**, by Larry Scheckel: When I Buy a Candy Bar, How Does a Vending Machine Know that a Dollar Bill Is Real Instead of a Same-Size Sheet of Paper?

49 and a Half Shades of Collaboration, by William Messner-Loebs (excerpt)

IJ Helps WI, by Suranjan Sen, IJ.org

Get \$2.35 Billion Worth of Books for Free, by Gale Pooley, FEE.org

Plymouth Arts Center Plans Two Events

Two Books Celebrate Farmall Tractor Centennial

# Mission of Benevolent Greed

I am not usually aware of my skeletal system. And I don't consider the stretch of Hwy. 144 from my home to Random Lake to be especially bumpy. But just a few miles into my trip of March 1, 2013, the truck hit a section of road that sent corrugated waves through my bones. The resulting clacking of upper and lower teeth made me glad I wasn't in the habit of sticking my tongue out often.

This was only the first few miles of the trip! And how far did I have before me?

Six hundred miles? One way?? Twelve hundred miles of having my skeleton rattled around in that truck?

I looked in the rear-view mirror. Oh, right. There wasn't one. Two side mirrors. It was dark. The only thing I could see in those mirrors were headlights behind me. And you know how well you can estimate the location and distance of a car, relative to you, based only on headlights in the dark?

You can't.

And it started to rain.

Why was I making this trip?

Roberto Benigni's film, *The Tiger and the Snow*, was released in 2005. Amazingly, I first saw it when my wife gave me a copy for Christmas in 2012. Had I known of it earlier, I would have purchased and watched it immediately.

I commented thus on the the film at Barnes & Noble's site:

**How did I miss this one??? After *Life is Beautiful*, I became a complete Roberto Benigni fan. This movie came out a few years ago, and I just saw it tonight. HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. Without giving a thing away, this is about a virtuously, nobly selfish man who WILL NOT GIVE UP. Not your typical Hollywood anti-hero. The greatest of civilizations, my friends, are made up of people like the main character in this movie.**

It has to be a coincidence, right, that if you drop the last letter of Benigni's name, it spells...

Or maybe it's not.

The title, *The Tiger and the Snow*, describes a sign, an omen in the movie's story. "You will know [something], when you see a tiger in the snow." Esthetic crafting in books and movies sometimes requires that kind of coincidental sign. But real life doesn't offer up such tidy symbolism, does it?

Or maybe it does.

Why was I making this trip?

My ultimate destination was Brighton, Michigan, home of Bill Messner-Loebs.

Bill and I first got to know each other in early 2006. From then until 2012, we slowly worked on a comic book which I wrote and he drew: *Human Interest Stuff*, adapted from a story by Albert Payson Terhune.

Bill and his wife had suffered financial hardships for over a decade. They'd lost their home. All they owned was in storage lockers. They were living in a motel when I first contacted Bill in 2006.

To help them out, I sold original comic art pages from his series, *Journey*, on

as I dealt more and more with them. After that initial frenzy, pages would go for \$100 to \$200 each.

This helped, but it wasn't enough. In early 2013, amidst continued financial difficulties, a new development rose to sink their spirits: They'd missed too many payments on their storage lockers. The contents were to be auctioned off on Feb. 19, Bill's 64th birthday.

Bill had posted this dismal fact on Facebook on Feb. 12. I did not see it until a few days later.

What could I do? Why hadn't he told me about this? I emailed him, expressing concern.

Bill replied: "What a pal you are! I'm sorry you had to find out

about all this through Facebook, but I'm trying not to talk about it in front of Nadine, who was hit really hard by all this. We've had all this stuff in storage since the foreclosure and it was 6 massive one-car garages full of stuff. I tried various schemes to get them emptied, but trying to get folks organized and able to sort through things, especially when it wasn't killing heat, or killing cold or pouring rain—on a weekend when most people could do things was very

hard. As you know, dreams die hard. I spoke to the storage people and it turns out they have to return everything obviously personal or legal. I mentioned the missing *Journey* artwork—looks like 1-12—and explained that it would have no real value to anyone but me. They promised to keep an eye out [for personal photos and papers]. I have not even the slightest clue where in all the bins [the art] might be. So, who knows what may happen? I'm depressed a bit, but not as depressed as I could be."

The original art for *Journey* 1 through 12? Wow!

What else would there be in lockers owned by a comic artist and writer? Correspondence with other creators? Drawings? Sketches? Scripts?

I didn't have the money to help out. No way. Very little savings. Part of my problem was the credit card debt I already had, the monthly fees of which ate into my finances viciously enough. I was happy with recent progress I'd made on one card, not charging anything on it and steadily lowering the balance farther from the card's limit.

How much (just for the sake of curiosity (I mean, nothing I could do about it, mind you)) did the storage company need, I asked Bill.

I was at work when he replied by email on Feb. 18: "So the actual deadline is tomorrow at 11 am. And they need [\$x], which is half of what I owe, to stop the auction. This is the reason I never mentioned it to you. It just seemed impossible." He gave me the storage company's contact info, as I'd requested.

Oh. [\$x]? A considerable sum. And that, only half.

What could be done? Have someone attend the auction in Michigan, and buy the good stuff? Who? Me? Then what?

**Editor's / Author's Note:**  
This article is an abridged version of the title essay from the book, *Mission of Benevolent Greed*.  
Artwork accompanying this piece are from the book, and are Copyright © William Messner-Loebs



Empty the bins? Then what? Take it where?

Now what?

I did have enough available on that one credit card.

Wow. Now, wait just one moment. I'd better think about that. Cautiously.

I started walking. Walking, to be alone. To think with a clear mind. Contemplate this situation real well. Look at every angle. I walked until there were no people. No buildings. Just a flat, glaring-white, featureless plane on which the clicks of my footsteps faded off into the infinite. I stared ahead, but heard ominous, obscenely garbled laughter behind me. I pivoted on my heel and looked up. Three credit cards towered over me. I recoiled, but they leaned closer, over me, laughing. Things darkened.

I heard a soft noise from behind. Spinning back 180 degrees, I stared over the totally calm, blue surface of Lake Michigan. Through the mist drifting over the water, on the other side of the lake, I could see something glowing. Something shiny, and very inviting.

The three gigantic credit cards loomed behind me, whispering their odious discouragement. But I heard another voice.

My own.

I blinked and stared at my computer screen. I willfully made myself aware of the florescent lights above, the conversations and other sounds in the large open office area. Down the aisle, a young man held a heavy coat tightly wrapped around himself. A woman walking to her desk wore a sweater that seemed to be about the fifth layer of clothing on her.

I wiped the sweat from my forehead.

I reviewed the numbers again. Wrote them down. Stared at them. [Sx].

I called the storage place. Answering machine. I left a message.

Was it too late in the day? About 4:30 in Michigan. Closed?

I called. Answering machine. Message.

I called several more times.

I powered down my computer, left work (it wasn't really quitting time, but I was an independent contractor at that point, and came and went as I pleased), and started driving home.

I'd just have to call the storage place in the morning, though that was cutting it pretty close.

My phone rang.

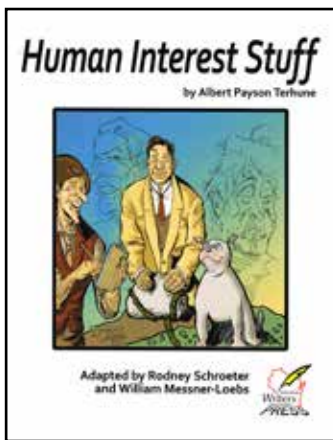
It was the storage company. I verified the amount, and said I was prepared to pay the amount to stop the auction. But I could not dig out my credit card and read the number to her while driving. Heck, it's hard enough for me to even conduct a coherent conversation while concentrating on dodging the psychotics of the highway. I needed to find a place to park. Verifying that she would be in the office for awhile, I thumbed off.

I exited, drove around for several maddening minutes, and parked.

My phone rang.

My wife. I told her I was very glad she called, whatever the reason. This matter would have been better discussed with her face-to-face, but I had to act. Now.

What I told her was likely pretty non-linear, so I had to back up a bit



before she understood what in the world I was talking about. I said I could make several times the [Sx] I'd have to pay, by selling art (if I found it) and splitting the income with Bill.

She was supportive.

Go for it.

I called the storage company. She was as nice as Bill had said she was. She took my credit card number, and the auction was halted.

How many lockers were there?

Five.

Of varying sizes.

I thanked her, adding, "I hope I haven't ruined any plans for you to have a TV crew there, like on *Storage Wars*." She laughed and said they'd planned no such thing.

But someone else had had plans. This manager later told me she'd received a call *that night*, asking, "So! Those lockers owned by William Messner-Loebs. Those are going on auction tomorrow morning, right?" When she'd informed the caller the auction had been halted, he'd responded, "Dang! \*click\*"

I made one more call. I told Bill what I'd done. He was quite happy, even going so far as saying this was the best birthday he'd ever had. When I asked if that weren't a bit hyperbolic, he said that sometimes, just the absence of pain was the greatest of rewards (or some such). I told him I hoped he wouldn't feel too much like Dr. Faustus in the weeks ahead.

All right. Now what?

The gears in my brain spun faster than usual, the next couple of days. Plans and alternatives zipped through my mind like a greyhound chasing a mechanical rabbit round and round and round the track.

Well, what *would* I do?

I'd store it all in the upstairs of my dad's barn. Yeah. That's the ticket.

I did some research on the 'net, trying to find what that would cost. Impossible. You couldn't estimate anything without talking to someone, and I didn't have enough specifics, anyway. Were we talking a semi-truck full? More?



At that point on my lifeline, my main "job" was part-time, hourly. My typical lackadaisical schedule consisted of a stop at the Random Lake Post Office at 8:30 or after, driving out to Hwy. 57, and heading south from there to Milwaukee. On such mornings, I passed Mueller's Sales and Service.

Driving past Mueller's south driveway the morning of Wednesday, Feb. 20, I saw a bright yellow truck parked with the rest of their used vehicles. In the truck's window was a big sign:

RENT ME

"When you see a tiger in the snow..."

No, no, no, it wasn't the same thing. Totally different. Apples and oranges.

Let's get one thing straight. My view of metaphysics doesn't entertain the idea of signs or omens. All right, I'll admit to liking M. Night Shyamalan's *Signs*, as a movie. But as I understand the relationship between reality and the human mind, there is an abundance of opportunities. I consider reality as tightly packed with opportunities, just as

the physical world is tightly packed with resources. There are so many opportunities waiting for a receptive mind to recognize them that some of them seem too fortuitous, too providential, to be a coincidence.

It was a yellow, former Penske rental truck with the lettering painted over. It had an automatic shift. That was important.

The mental clockwork smoked furiously, the rest of that day. I stopped at Mueller's that night. "Oh, we'll give you a good deal on that truck, Rodney," I was told. "When do you need it?"

Friday, March 1, 2013. I'd wanted to start out with the truck that day, but we had an appointment that lasted and lasted. I would not get to Mueller's before they closed. I called them. They said I could just get in the truck and drive off with it.

Darn. I'd have liked some expert orientation on truck operation. I finally figured out how to open the latch at the back and gazed into its cavernous maw. My wife suggested I'd need a lock if I put anything valuable inside.

I dropped her off at home and got on my way.

I stayed that night in Green Bay, wasting many miles trying to find a hotel at an exit sign. The next morning, after scraping ice off the windshield with a credit card, I wasted many miles asking my phone's GPS to take me back to Hwy. 41, and twice being sent south instead of north.

Now, why would I drive over the top of Lake Michigan? Through the U.P.? Wasn't that a lot farther than driving through Chicago?

Well, yes, but not that much farther.

According to Mapquest, from Random Lake WI to Brighton MI via the U.P. was 597 miles, a trip of 10.5 hrs.

The route via Chicago would be 389 miles, and 6.5 hours.

I mean, look, an additional 200 miles, that's not so much farther. Not much... really. And an additional... well, four hours more of driving. That's not so much longer, considering the whole trip. It... it really wasn't that much of a difference in the grand scheme of things, was it?

All right, I'll admit it. I just didn't want to drive through Chicago. Sheer terror. Avoid that heckhole at any cost.

So I progressed up Hwy. 41, then 35, along the Lake Michigan coast. Very scenic.

I called my brother and asked if he would arrange to have the driveway leading to the barn plowed out. With the snow drifts as high as they were, I wouldn't have even been able to get the truck off the road before getting stuck.

At Escanaba, I drove onto



Hwy. 2. I connected with I-75 at St. Ignace, heading south down to Flint, then onto 23.

My GPS's ETA for Brighton continually said I'd arrive a little after the 5:00 closing time for the storage office. I called the manager. She'd be there later than 5:00. Great.

It started to snow.

The Brighton exit at last. I found the place, parked, and staggered into the office.

"Guess who I am," I said.

She guessed. She gave me a map of the lockers and marked Bill's. I spied a vast selection of locks on the wall, and purchased a stout one. She gave me the keys and the secret code that would raise the gate.

Bill and Nadine had other plans they couldn't back out of that evening, so I was on my own. I maneuvered the truck in front of one locker and opened it.

A gigantic refrigerator, an old chair, bags and bags and bags. And a great deal of unidentified miscellanea.

I started to dig. I found several long boxes of comic books. More long boxes. Some of them falling apart, the comics spilling out. Those blasted long boxes, designed for comics collectors and dealers who were younger. I put these in the truck.

Some of these comics were copies Bill had picked up over the years; others were complimentary copies he received while working for certain companies; some (in multiple copies) contained his art or writing.

I put several mystery bags and boxes on the truck, just to get them out of the way. Things were piled nearly to the top of the bin, and my vision couldn't penetrate the Stygian blackness toward the back.

A long, cardboard portfolio. My pulse quickened. I brought it into the truck, switched on the electric lantern. Inside were about 100 signed and numbered prints by Bill, from 1982, of a mutated role-playing gamer. Heart-breakingly, every one was water-stained.

Two more portfolios. These were even better. They included *Journey* pages!

Sketchbooks of various sizes, some of them full of drawings. Excellent. A beautiful watercolor drawing of kids at play.

Smaller boxes from a publisher. I opened a few. Hundreds of copies of *Journey* comics. On the truck these all went.

I reached a point where I had to contort my body, twisting a leg this way, an arm another, to get into the bin, past the giant chair, behind the refrigerator, to get what I wanted. I was very much aware of things leaning toward me, wary of a deadly junkalanche.

Finally having had enough of this fun, I closed and locked the bin and snapped my new lock on the back of the truck. Finding a



wonderful hotel, I carried several sketchbooks and portfolios to my room for further examination. I called my wife and assured her that, already, the trip had proven worthwhile.

Sunday, March 3, 2013. I entered the compound and went to work on the same locker. After awhile, I went to each of the other lockers, just to peek within. Mostly furniture in one. Unidentified boxes in another. I was doing well with the first locker, so I didn't move the truck.

As expected, Bill came along about noon. He got out of his car and studied me. I had no illusions about him remembering me from when I last saw him in-person—at the 1990 Chicago Comicon. At that time, I was just one of the hundreds of thousands, perhaps even millions of fans clamoring for his attention. At that convention, I'd arranged for him to draw his character Wolverine in a peaceful situation with an Indian. He said he'd do the drawing during the convention. So I looked for him, for two days, not finding him at his table. His presence must have been in great demand elsewhere. I told my wife I felt like Richard Kimball in *The Fugitive*. But I finally found him; he had my drawing; it was worth the pittance he charged for it.

We visited the other lockers together. In one, we found his early 1980s portfolio. He'd carried this to conventions, trying to convince comics publishers that he had talent. We are all fortunate that he succeeded in that quest. We couldn't open it; the zipper was green and rusted shut.

With the truck loaded to maybe 15% of capacity, I decided I'd reached my own physical capacity. Bill and Nadine treated me to dinner at a great Asian buffet.

I decided to drive back home via Chicago. With four hours less driving, I could possibly arrive back home at a reasonable time, instead of the middle of the night.

That trip through Chicago wasn't so bad, overall. I was in the express lanes a couple of times, zipping through Chicago, only then noticing the signs, "No trucks in Express Lanes." Every lane change was a risk with those side mirrors. And I dropped a few quarters on the pavement at the automatized toll stops, as I tried pushing them into slots with icy hands.

I got home around 9:30 p.m. and pulled up to the barn. There was no danger of getting stuck in the snow; my brother had seen that the driveway was plowed perfectly.

Monday, March 4, 2013. I took off from work and spent the day unloading the truck. I lugged everything into the bottom area of



the barn, stacking long boxes of comics where once stood cows. I stacked the smaller boxes of *Journey* comics in another section, and built other miscellaneous stacks.

Within a few days, I had *Journey* pages and other items from the trip on eBay. I made arrangements with Bill to split the income, in a way that made us both happy.

Now, why would I do all this? Many hearing this tale would assume I'd done it altruistically and say, "Gee, you're a great guy for helping Bill out like that."

I wrote this account partly to dispel any false belief that I'd acted "unselfishly." I consider altruism, properly defined, to be a destroyer of values, happiness, and even life. If this trip, and my other efforts to help Bill, were altruistic, it would mean I didn't value him any more than I would a stranger. It would mean I'd be giving up values for lesser values, or non-values; that I'd have taken a loss.

Previously, when I sold *Journey* pages for Bill and absorbed the eBay / PayPal costs, yes, I was helping Bill out, but it was help I could easily afford. While I lost small amounts of money with each sale, it still wasn't altruism.

The [\$x] I paid to stop the locker auction was large enough that, had there been no chance of financial gain for me, I would not have considered it. The money I hoped to make selling things from Bill's lockers was an important factor in putting up the [\$x], but only one factor.

I value Bill because he helped me create *Human Interest Stuff*, a milestone in my life. For that alone, he'll have my support above and beyond what any stranger could ever expect from me.

Further, I consider his work, which I myself have enjoyed for many years, to be worth preserving and promoting. I can stand behind what Bill has achieved in his career. It would be very different if I'd purchased an abandoned locker and found it full of Jackson Pollack paintings. I'd violate my integrity and honesty by trying to convince people they were worth paying anything for.

It's in my self-interest to remember that Bill created (or otherwise legitimately acquired) the work (or goods) that I later sold for our mutual benefit. That's the virtue of justice. Does a rational person want to neglect or harm the source (whether some thing, or some one) of that which benefits him? Certainly not. A rational person would want to nurture and promote that beneficial source.

For these reasons, I am unpromising when it comes to my ethical treatment of Bill. ("Ethical" in the context of Objectivism, the philosophy I've studied and lived

by since 1971. Search the 'net for "Objectivist virtues" for more details; see Ayn Rand's work for even more details.)

The situation with me and Bill is an example of greed that promotes human life.

In our corrupt culture, it is necessary to distinguish between greed for the unearned, and greed for the earned. The first is destructive to human life, while the second advances human life and flourishing. But many do not make that distinction, and carelessly, or through innocent ignorance, or through dishonesty, simply say, "Greed is evil and destructive."

"Greed" is simply *wanting more*.

I wanted more money. But I was willing to work for it. I was willing to offer value for value, dealing with people honestly and fairly.

I also wanted more of Bill's work. I wanted to preserve his artwork, hold it in my hands, and enjoy it, even if I knew I would not keep most of it.

This *wanting more* led to my own benefit. But by acquiring the *more* through ethical means, all those I dealt with gained *more*, as well. Bill gained personal items he thought would be lost to him; he also gained money from my sales. Those who purchased from me gained art they valued. I heard from some of my customers how much they valued having original art from *Journey* comics they read and loved in the early 1980s. Among the intangibles Bill gained was my telling him there are still many people, world-wide, who highly value him and his work.

Now, OK, *wanting more* can become a destructive mania. Things have to be put into perspective in one's life—like washing one's hands, or spending money on hobbies, or exercising, or collecting something. Isolated, fixated upon, and divorced from reality, any one of those things can turn against one, or feed a neurosis, or be used as an excuse to avoid important aspects of one's life.

As an Objectivist, I consider it in my long-range, selfish interest to earn what I want, ethically. In the context of interacting with people who are free to deal with me or not, the only way I can acquire more money (or substantial non-monetary values) is to offer value for value. I could not (and would not want to) advance otherwise. Each sale of Bill's work was a win-win-win situation. I benefitted financially; Bill benefitted financially; the buyer received a piece he valued.

A movie character famously said, "Greed is good." This quote has been repeatedly held as morally contemptible. As I understand the quote (I've never seen the movie), I'd agree with that assessment, though perhaps not for the same reasons. It implies it's OK to want and get more through any means, a view expressed in the phrase, "It's just business." But business requires the same virtues that are required by a commitment to one's own life, friendship, romantic relationships, or any rational endeavor—virtues including honesty, justice, and integrity. Only when those virtues are applied to one's business relationships can one deservedly, proudly call oneself a businessperson, or a capitalist.

Rational self-interest and ra-



tional greed are creators of values and wealth. *Wanting* more in a free society leads to *creating* more, offering more values available for trade or sale. A society becomes wealthier, in proportion to the freedom and ambition of its individuals.

In the months following this and other trips, I would sell *Journey* pages, sketchbook drawings, graphic novels, and comics from Bill's long boxes. Among the items I would find:

- Various comics signed by their creators to Bill. This included four early issues of the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*.
- A comic with four covers. I've seen double covers several times in my collecting career. I've even seen a triple cover (maybe twice). But never before this, a quadruple cover.
- Early drawings by Bill.
- Bill's birth certificate.
- Three spiral sketchbooks almost filled with finished drawings, doodlings,

and studies for faces.

- A Mattel Junior Detective ID, with a small photo of an 11-year-old Bill. I told Bill about this before I sent it to him. He recalled that it also came with a pair of handcuffs, a gun, and a shoulder holster for the gun. "I never was much good with shoulder holsters," he told me wryly, "so I'd stick the gun in my belt."

- The original art from several issues of *Journey*. Some of this I sold through Heritage Auctions instead of on eBay.

- Hundreds if not thousands of clipped articles, recipes, and store coupons. Most of these last were expired by years, of course, but I did find one that made me shout with glee: a 15-cent coupon for a package of wieners, with No Expiration. When I put that one to the test, the grocery store clerk passed it under the scanner several times before looking at it perplexedly. But it was good!

- A money order made out to Bill for \$14.00. Though nearly 20 years old, he was able to cash it.

- Tons of fan mail (some from other comics pros).

There was a big value at risk here. Bill's storage lockers. But there was also Bill and Nadine. When you've lived at the edge for so long, it sometimes happens that you get too close to that edge. You start teetering, but all it takes is for someone to recognize the situation, to reach out, grab an arm (or even an empty sleeve), stop you from falling into the abyss, pull you back from that precipice, and stabilize you once again.

\* \* \*

As the years went by, I continued selling Bill's work on eBay. But with me in Sheboygan County, and he being in central Michigan, working together was difficult.

Fortunately, Bill found a new Patron of the Arts in Mike Jones, who lived near Bill. Jones asked to purchase what I still had in my possession from Bill's lockers. So I loaded up the car (and it was a *full* load!), took the ferry across Lake Michigan, and handed everything off to Jones. Bill joined us. Once



Jones paid me in cash, I counted out half of that cash and handed it to Bill. It was our last financial transaction.

But not our last personal transaction.

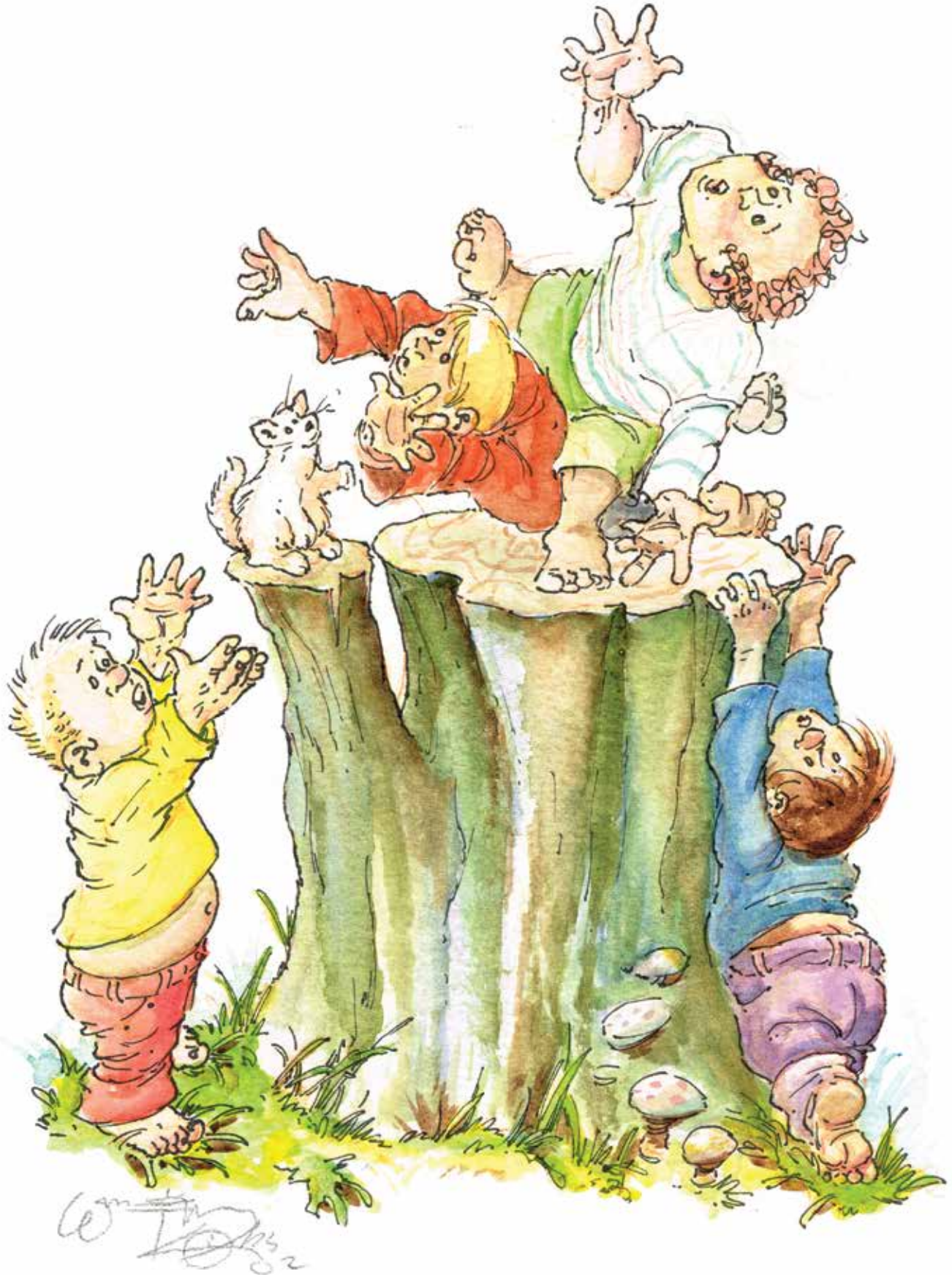
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To learn more about Bill Messner-Loebs:

- Join the Facebook group, Fans of William Messner-Loebs. Mike Jones is the admin.

- Go to YouTube.com and search on "Messner-Loebs." You'll find many interviews.

- Buy a copy of *Mission of Benevolent Greed* from Barnes & Noble or another bookstore. The publisher's share of the book price will go to Bill Messner-Loebs.



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*Jon Wos: Realizing Romanticism*

# May

## 2023

**Cover image:** Jon Wos, Assembling a Raven

Great Movies This Month

Realizing Romanticism, by Jon Wos

**Ask a Science Teacher**, by Larry Scheckel: Can Lead Be Turned Into Gold?

'Alive in the Arts' Entries Now On Exhibit

**PulpArtists** by David Saunders: R. Farrington Elwell

A Celebration of Story-Telling

Popular Arts Tour Returns



All four panels, installed in a northern Wisconsin home.



One of the four stained glass panels, ready for transport.

# Realizing Romanticism

by Jon Wos

In May 1981, my parents were looking forward to their first child. My arrival, however, was *not* what they anticipated.

It was immediately evident that something was wrong. My body appeared to be broken. And X-rays showed that I had thirteen broken bones. Most of these were from the process of being born, but I also had fractures sustained in the womb, plus evidence of others that had healed before birth. Twenty-four hours after I was born, I was diagnosed with osteogenesis imperfecta—OI for short.

OI is a group of genetic disorders that prevent the proper formation of the connective tissue collagen. The primary manifestations of the disorder are fragile bones and short stature, but it can also include weak joints, fragile teeth, hearing loss, and even lung, heart, and neurological problems. Here (fig. 1) you can see my baby teeth capped in silver to prevent them from chipping or breaking off.

My parents had to deal with the risk of breaking my legs when they changed my diaper or breaking my ribs and arms when they picked me up. My early childhood was rife with fractures, casts, hospitals, and surgeries. By the time I was ten, I'd fractured my right forearm *alone* about ten times, and the forearm bones had fused together. The first time I remember breaking my right arm was when I fell out of my wheelchair in the parking lot before going to see Santa with my grandmother. It wasn't all bad, though. I insisted on seeing Santa before we went to the hospital, broken arm or not.

But broken femurs were the worst. They were the most painful and took the longest to heal. I had several surgeries in an attempt to straighten my femurs and thereby reduce fractures. But they continued. Most of these fractures required a spica cast, which went from chest to toes and was kept on for an average of three months. They kept me immobile and were uncomfortable, hot, and itchy.

My fractures were unpredictable. One day I could fall off a chair and not break anything, but the next I could break my arm while drying my hair with a towel. My life could be stopped and my physical freedom taken from me at any random time. This looming uncertainty caused a lot of anxiety at an early age.

But this is not to suggest that it was always fractures and casts. Although I was born with unfortunate genetics, I was also born with an amazing family, who brought immense joy to my life. Living on a dairy farm until I was about ten made finding things for me to do challenging, as most of the activities of farm life are pretty physical. But I insisted on keeping up with my peers,

fractures or not. I did everything from making straw bale tunnels to racing my brother on the four-wheeler with my wheelchair. Unavoidably, though, there were times when my condition kept me from physical activity, and I often turned to art.

I loved to create and considered myself an artist before I could even say the word, proudly telling everyone I was an "arsonist" as I peddled my drawings to family at holidays. This (fig. 3) is one of my grandmother's favorites, being the comedian she was, for if you can read my writing, you will see I could draw a horse before I could spell it. The form of creation didn't matter: drawing, blocks, Legos, painting. I could always undertake *something* creative, even when I had a fracture. It gave me both physical and mental stimulation when I needed it most. I started out aiming very high with my creative endeavors. I wanted to build Lego cathedrals and mansions out of Lincoln Logs. My dad likes to talk about how I would get so frustrated with him because he couldn't help me build a three-story, five-bedroom man-

## Editor's Notes:

In 2021, Jon Wos invited several people (Your Editor among them) to his Oshkosh home, where he gave a practice run of a talk and slide show he prepared.

Jon then gave this talk to a small group at TOS-Con in Boston, 2021. It was so successful and popular that TOS-Con organizers asked Jon to give the same talk to all attendees at the following year's conference, in Denver. (Your Editor was present at both conferences.)

The Objective Standard then published Jon's talk in its Fall 2022 issue, accompanied by 46 photos and artworks. That issue can be purchased at [theobjectivestandard.com/issues/](http://theobjectivestandard.com/issues/)

With Jon Wos' permission The PRC here reprints the talk he delivered at TOS-Con.

For reasons of space, we could not reproduce all images used by The Objective Standard. Original numbers of the images have been retained. That is why, as you read the article, there are gaps.

A few images are not in numerical order.



(1) Me as a child, showing my capped teeth



(3) Hores and Buggy, 1991



(7) Imperfect Bone Origin, 2005, glass and ceramic

sion out of Lincoln Logs.

In middle school, I began experimenting with oil paint, inspired by my virtually religious commitment to watching Bob Ross on TV. By the time I started high school, I was well versed in the Rossian technique. I focused on drawing and painting, but I actively sought to try as many different media as I could. My middle- and high-school teachers, Mrs. Voight and Mr. Dickson, were excellent. They let me spread my creative wings in all media and helped me develop some of my artistic foundations. I tried everything, from metalwork, to ceramics, to stained glass. I was particularly drawn to glasswork. I began creating stained glass at home on my own and, by the end of high school, I was doing commissions for teachers and family friends.

Amid all the experimenting with different media, I continued to draw and paint. I often didn't have much concern for or even understanding of the subjects I chose. That was partly because I focused simply on learning how to master the techniques in the different media—but also because I didn't understand myself psychologically, or what drew me to certain subjects.

By this point, my fracture rate was declining due to increased bone and muscle mass, as well as a better understanding of how to mitigate the risks. However, even with the lower frequency of fractures, I was still dealing with the psychological consequences of my condition: anxiety and depression (fig. 4). Art was one of the few things that melted these away—except when I was assigned self-portraits. I hated doing them because they brought

my anxiety and depression to the fore, effectively advertising things I tried to hide as best I could (fig. 5).

I made it through high school and started college at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, in 1999, pursuing a bachelor's in fine art. Early on, I focused on study-

ing drawing, but I couldn't give up my love of glass. I sought to expand what I had learned creating stained glass. At the end of high school, I had taken a workshop on glass bead making, in which I learned to use a small table torch to melt glass rods into beads. This form of glass sculpting is called lampworking. I was in love with it and wanted to delve deeper, but there were no glass programs or classes available at my university. So, my amazing sculpture professor, T. C. Farley, set me up with a small glass station in the sculpture studio so I could study lampworking independently. The new space he supplied enabled me to create new things, including marbles and large pendants.

Soon, I became interested in using glass to make more complex things. I started a series of glass sculptures drawing on the analogy between the material and my own body. I focused, though, not on my fragility, but on *overcoming* it. The theme was: Even with bones of glass, I can still accomplish what I want in life.

This (fig. 7) became my final project for sculpture class—a skeleton about half my size, sitting on a ceramic rock. Essentially, it is a self-portrait symbolizing my precarious life and my perseverance.

Then I met Li Hu, a drawing and painting professor at the university (fig. 8). I was blown away by his skill and passion. I was also enthralled by his life story. He was an adolescent during the so-called Cultural Revolution, launched by Mao Tse-tung in China. His father was sent to a labor camp, and Li was sent to work in the rice fields, not even allowed to attend high school. However, he overcame these barriers. He got into Shanghai University Fine Arts College in 1984 and learned the ways of traditional masters. Four years later, he was teaching there, and he came to America a few years after that.

Li's work is monumental in scale—his largest painting, *Birds of Nu Woh*, is sixteen feet by forty-two feet—and he was prolific. I took every class I could from him, studying portraiture and the human figure, primarily by drawing live models. He taught me the foundational skills to re-create any subject I chose, whether in charcoal, pastel, watercolor, or oil paint. Much to my dismay, one of his favorite assignments to improve our drawing skills was self-portraiture. Some semesters, Li assigned one or two dozen self-portraits. Self-portraits are one of the most convenient ways to learn portraiture. After all, you always have a model right there in front of you. But there was more to Li's preference than mere convenience.

This (fig. 10) was one of the first assignments where he asked us to do more than just a straight-up portrait from a mirror; he asked for a self-portrait that showed something beyond our physical likeness. I reflected on what I had dealt with and how far I had come—from fractures, to surgeries, to psychological struggles. This piece ended up being a major professional boost for me—in part because it won the top award of \$10,000 in a national show for artists with disabilities. But more important, this painting started me on a path of introspection. I reluctantly began working with more self-portraiture, driven by a higher confidence from winning the award, Li's direction, and the goal of understanding my own



(10) *Self-Introspection*, 2003



(12) *Gemini*, 2004

control how I deal with it. Being honest and vulnerable through my work was a challenge, but Li's assignments helped push me forward.

One of these was to paint a double self-portrait (fig. 12). One version had to show how I saw myself, and the other had to show how I thought others saw me. Li got us to ask an important question of ourselves and, in answering this question, I was more honest with myself about my own psychology than I had been before. Others would often tell me how brave and strong I was and how happy I seemed, but this was not how I saw myself. I saw myself as weak and fearful, and I would often hide behind the persona others created for me.

I had a major surgery coming up the following semester, to remove the plate from one of my femurs and replace it with a rod down the center. I was dreading it. I was also overwhelmed by my new freedom and the responsibility of living on my own, overwhelmed with college, overwhelmed with loneliness. I was overwhelmed by life and didn't have the self-esteem to combat my sense of futility.

I had struggled with depression and suicidal thoughts throughout high school. In college, on snowy days, I had an unusually hard time getting to class and back in my wheelchair. On one occasion, I reached a tipping point, my mind broke, and I tried to take my own life. Afterward, this was something I had to come to terms with and find a way to heal. Creating self-portraits, it turns out, was one such method. This painting (fig. 13) is painful, but it is something I should never forget. It is important to me in that it represents my rebirth—in the sense that my suicide attempt showed me that there is something hard I must face.

I have always felt a dualism within myself. I could swing dramatically from being very optimistic to being deeply cynical, even nihilistic. Creating art was one area of my life where I could escape this feeling. Being an artist was more than just a professional aspiration for me, but I couldn't really explain why.

So, it was serendipitous that, around this period, I read *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand, at the suggestion of a good friend. *The Fountainhead* sparked something in me like nothing before had. It moved me intellectually, aesthetically, and spiritually. I wanted to create art that motivated me like *The Fountainhead* did. There were so many important things in it that made me think deeply, so many things I got from it. Primarily, though, was that Rand showed me, through her character Howard Roark, what I needed to gain: a *self*. Roark asks the question; "And isn't that the root of every despicable action? Not selfishness, but precisely the absence of a self?" This question started me down a whole new road.

I graduated from UWO in 2005 with a bachelor of fine art, with an emphasis in drawing, painting, and sculpture. While my senior show was still hanging, the gallery curator of a local college, Ripon College, saw it and asked if I would create a larger collection of self-portraits for a solo show there.

This pushed me to introspect even deeper. It would be my first

Jon Wos is represented by Quent Cordair Fine Art. To view many of his works, and for information on purchasing art prints and original works, please visit [Cordair.com](http://Cordair.com)

solo show, and I had a year to create enough work to fill the gallery. Delving further into self-portraiture while devouring everything I could by Rand, my perspective began to change. This new self-portrait series would again start with my past. I realized that I could not ignore my past struggle or its importance to understanding myself. But, more than ever, I would stress the value in overcoming adversity.

I started with a series of twelve small paintings that hang like a filmstrip, each symbolizing a week in a spica cast, twelve weeks being the average to heal a femur. The series included the roller coaster of emotion that accompanies a major fracture: from the pain and fogginess (fig. 14) to the unavoidable boredom (fig. 15), even the small joys and pleasures that helped me forget about the state I was in (fig. 16), ending in the longing to be free (fig. 17) and the inevitable, indescribable, feeling of being free from the cast (fig. 18). These experiences are important to me as a simple reminder of how much I love my freedom and of the fact that I can overcome fractures—a reminder to take full advantage of every moment of freedom that I can.

This is *Pity Party* (fig. 19), which expresses the view that life is only struggle, only about escaping pain, that it is futile to try for anything beyond that. It is about hopelessness, apathy, and nihilism—about playing the victim. *And* it's about the fact that this leads to more depression and anxiety, a self-fulfilling cycle—the most futile of all. This is the view that I needed to purge. Rand's work caused me to question the value of pity. I could now admit how much I disliked being pitied, but also that I sat in self-pity far too often, wasting the time during which I was free of the cast. Having been completely helpless at many times in my life, and having little to no self-esteem, I implicitly held that pity was the only currency I could rely on. Self-pity gave me excuses to give up and not even try. Dwelling on the negative earned me pity from others and fooled me into feeling justified for giving in to resignation.



(8) *Li Hu*, 2017

This painting (fig. 20) is about my shift away from *Pity Party*, to looking ahead rather than only backward. Through art and Rand's philosophy, called Objectivism, I was beginning to understand myself, which resulted in a shift of perspective. I started to heal my soul, to get out of my head and enjoy life, to focus on and act on positive thoughts. I realized that I have free will and am not doomed to dwell on the negative. Life is not about avoiding death but about achieving happiness.

These elements—free will and a focus on achieving values or overcoming obstacles—

is the province of Romantic art. Such art, as Ayn Rand put it, is about what might and ought to be. It is a source of optimism because it is about choices and values and what can be changed for the better. And it stands in contrast to Naturalism, the school of art that denies free will and focuses on life allegedly as it is and can only be.

A quote from Rand's *The Romantic Manifesto* really struck me in this regard. She wrote:

Consider the significance of the fact that the Naturalists call Romantic art an "escape." Ask yourself what sort of metaphysics—what view of life—that designation confesses. An escape—from what? If the projection of value goals—the projection of an improvement on the given, the known, the immediately available—is an "escape," then medicine is an "escape" from disease, agriculture is an "escape" from hunger, knowledge is an "escape" from ignorance, ambition is an "escape" from sloth, and life is an "escape" from death. If so, then a hard-core realist is a vermin-eaten brute who sits motionless in a mud puddle, contemplates a pigsty and whines that "such is life." If that is realism, then I am an escapist. So was Aristotle. So was Christopher Columbus.<sup>1</sup>

I was fine being labeled an "escapist" as well, because I was escaping that which *should* be escaped: pain, depression, and anxiety. My life would never be what I wanted it to be if I just settled



(13) *Bittersweet Surrender*, 2005



(14) *Rectifying 1*, 2006



(15) *Rectifying 4*, 2006

for the given.

I was re-creating my relationship with myself, eliminating my self-pity so I could push myself to greater heights. My self-confidence was growing. After I graduated college, I took a trip to the Grand Canyon with some friends, which was the first time I had traveled that far without family or my usual safety net (fig. 21). This was something I had to do in spite of my anxiety about it. The dreaded surgery to rod my other femur was successful, and I was now able to walk short distances without aid for the first time in my life. I was even able to climb around on the edge of the Grand Canyon.

I could now see the view I wanted to have of myself and of existence. By coming to terms with my past, accepting my identity, and clarifying my values, I could finally look to the horizon and set realistically challenging goals.

This painting (fig. 22) symbolizes the opposite of *Pity Party*. My life should be celebrated, not pitied. It is a reminder to always work to improve my self-image, that it is a never-ending process, that giving life meaning and setting goals and standards isn't really possible without self-esteem.

Valuing one's self is the first and primary value. Anything I gained from self-reliance was tenfold more fulfilling than all I could gain from the pity of others. It is impossible to accept the love of others when you don't love yourself. I had been habitually skeptical of others' sincerity, feeling that the praise and friendship ultimately were out of pity. Not



(19) Pity Party, 2006

(20) Leaving the Pity Party, 2009



(21) Gemini United, 2006

until I could objectively agree with them, by my own standards and judgment, did I even begin to accept some truth in what others say.

I wanted to see myself more clearly and objectively (fig. 23). Only then could I see the world more clearly and work better within it. I realized that an inaccurate view of myself inevitably leads me to set unrealistic standards. Just as we need standards for measuring the world, we also need standards for measuring our values. This need became all the more real to me after grasping Rand's point in *The Romantic Manifesto* that art is fundamentally a concretization of one's values, an essential psychological need.

Romantic art is particularly important because it highlights the fact that we have free will and focuses on how things ought to be. As such, it can sharpen how we evaluate our choices and values. This focus on values can prompt deep introspection, which is vital for a healthy, growth-oriented mind-set.

My feelings began to catch up with my new perspective. I was the most confident I had ever been (fig. 24). I started doing talks like this, which would have been unthinkable just a few years before. I also started driving my artwork all over the country. Both of these gave me anxiety, but I pushed myself to do them anyway.

Comparing these self-portraits with those



(16) Rectifying 8, 2006



(17) Rectifying 11, 2006



(18) Rectifying 12, 2006

# Before...

# ...and After—



(25) *Leaving a Bad Philosophy*, 2009



(26) *Building a New Philosophy*, 2009



(4) *Self portrait*, 1997



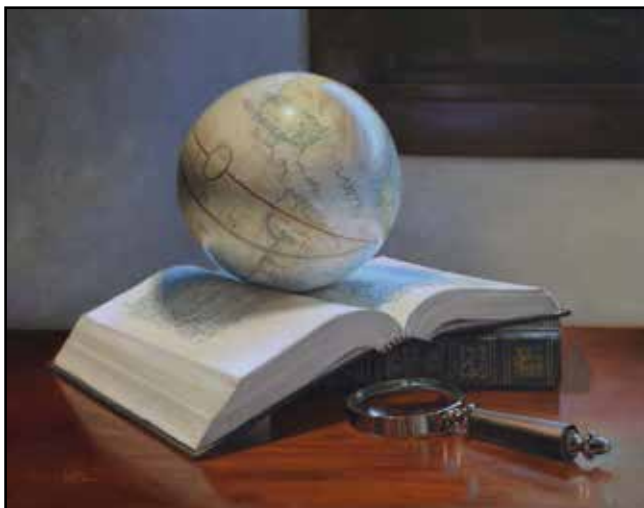
(5) *Self portrait*, 1996

Early in life, the philosophy Jon held was a non-systematic, piecemeal collection of ideas that were ready to collapse at any moment (image at top). The result: The self-images above.



(24) *Self Made*, 2008

Jon discovered the plans for a better philosophy. But those plans needed to be made real, in a form he chose for his own life. He built on a solid foundation, constructing each level on what he'd carefully built before. The result is stable, sturdy, and elegant (image at top). The practical result of that philosophy: The satisfaction of his self-recreation, above.



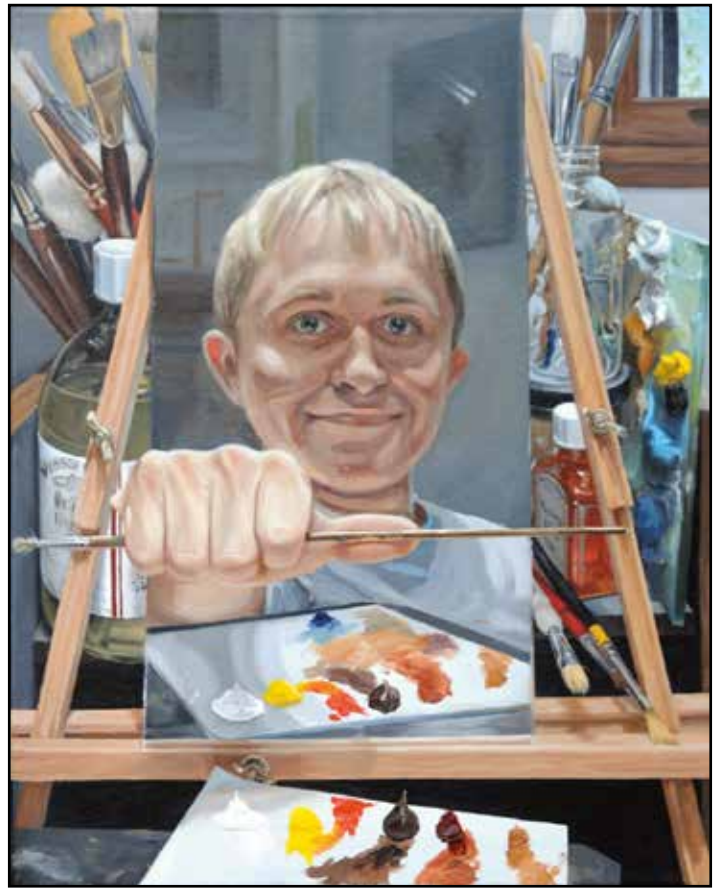
(32) *Atlas Rests on Reason*, 2014

**Jon's talk is on YouTube!**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0x9AuX7xSgo>



(22) *Commemoration*, 2006



(23) *Clarifying Self*, 2010

I did in high school (fig. 5), it is obvious how my perspective of myself has changed. I'm now able to grasp the significance of details I included in my early self-portraits even more clearly than when I created them: the cracked mirror, looking away from myself, the colorless reflection. I now felt a sense of harmony as I continued to introspect and see that I was ultimately responsible for my *self*. I realized that much of my anxiety came from my reliance on others, and it was dissipating as I learned to rely on myself.

This is not to suggest that I do not get help from my awesome family and friends sometimes, but I am speaking about self-reliance in a psychological, even spiritual, sense. Rand said we are beings of "self-made soul," and I now understood what this means. You are the only one with direct access to your soul. You are the only one who can truly feel it. You can show aspects of your soul to others, but they can never perceive it directly the way you can. It is a universe within a universe that only you can sense directly—and *shape*. The choices you make and the development of your character can only be done by you. Others can certainly help through guidance and example, but ultimately the work is yours. In that sense, psychologically speaking, we are all islands and, therefore, are self-made.

I could now clearly see the power of philosophy. This is how other philosophies made me feel (fig. 25). Each brick is an idea piled on the others, trying to reach for something. But it is a disintegrated mess doomed to topple, stifling your potential rather than improving your life. I needed to see, concretized, the attitude I should have about life. This is how life should feel (fig. 26); a proper philosophy gives you a deliberately integrated foundation of wisdom,

enabling you to achieve soaring heights. These two paintings are meant to hang together, in contrast, as a reminder that philosophy should not be confusing and disconnected from reality but should instead be a tool for furthering one's own life and purpose. I now fully accept that life is knowable, happiness is possible, and that it is mine to achieve.

Each painting led to the next, all pointing to the conclusion that I was becoming a Romantic artist.

My love of stained glass never diminished, and I continued to create it between paintings. This is my dining room window, my most extensive glass project, which I created completely for myself (fig. 27). It contains 2,293 pieces of glass and is a little less than three feet by four feet. It is the tree of knowledge, specifically the knowledge that life is all about continual growth, progressing in small steps, piece by piece. It reminds me that I am better than I was yesterday and that tomorrow can be even better than today. This knowledge helps me enjoy the now.

While I created this piece for myself, I was simultaneously building a small art business, doing commission work, and selling pieces in galleries, some of which were glass. I also did a few residencies in schools, where I taught and painted murals with the students.

But commissions filled most of my professional time. I did everything from mosaics to pets (fig. 29), but portraits became my biggest request. I did dozens and dozens of them.

A few years ago, having done so many of them, I needed a break. For a period, I turned my attention to still life. I was curious about how to make the simplest things more interesting (fig. 32). I have come to deeply enjoy creating still lifes. They are like little meditative moments. I can spend days



(27) *The Tree of Knowledge*, 2008

or weeks selecting the objects, the arrangements, and the lighting. From the start, my goal hasn't changed: Make everyday life more dramatic, even exciting. In essence, we all design our lives with the objects we surround ourselves with, and we need to be reminded of our values as often as possible, to stay focused on them, because it is easy to get overwhelmed. We need the important things to be pointed out, emphasized, and integrated with day-to-day life.

As an analogy, I often think back on how, most fundamentally, my mentor Li Hu helped me become a better artist. Ultimately, he taught me to pay closer attention to what I perceive. He helped reveal things that were right in front of me but that I could not fully see, in part because I was overwhelmed by the magnitude of perceptual data coming in. He would walk around the class as we were drawing a model, coming up to each of us and pointing out what we were not seeing.

He would say simple things, such as, "pay more attention to this area," or "there is a reflection on that object that is missing." From then on, I would see instances of such reflections everywhere, even on relatively nonreflective surfaces. They were now glaringly evident, like when you learn a new word and it seems to pop up everywhere all of a sudden.

Still life works this way, too. It shows us what to look for to make every moment special, so that, like hearing a newly learned word everywhere, we can spot these special moments in our day-to-day lives and make life that much more interesting.

But little makes life more interesting and worthwhile than the people we surround ourselves with (fig. 34). Unlike a still life, or even a landscape, the subjects are always one of a kind. The objects in a still life can be replaced, a beautiful scene can be revisited, but the people in your life and the moments you share with them are irreplaceable (fig. 35). Other people can be the source of our greatest joys, and given that we are all inherently finite and irreplaceable, portraits can move us the most. Portrait painting is about more than just capturing a likeness. It is also about capturing emotion, or a shared moment, or the love between two people, or the reverence one feels for someone.

Li had become more than just my professor. He became my mentor and my friend. And shortly before he passed away, I was able to do this portrait of him (fig. 38). Li's love of creation and passion for his work were profound. He told us: "When I am working here, when I am staying in my house, every day I want to go down, even if I don't paint. I just look at my paintings, just like the way you look at your baby, you know you enjoy it, that's your kids!"

Li would often tell us that passion is more important than talent (fig. 39). What I think he meant was not that passion is a better guide than reason but, rather, that in a certain context, passion has primacy over skill. Your passion for something must be more powerful than disappointment. In other words, my desire to create art was always stronger than the desire to avoid the inevitable stumbling and disappointments involved in learning how to create it. My passion or love of creation is the source of my skill,



(29) Tilly, 2009

as it is what drove me to develop and improve my skill. My passion came first, and the skill followed. When my passion fades, my skills go unused.

And I realize now that this is applicable to my whole life, beyond just the creation of my work. Passion for my whole life should be stronger than the impulse to avoid the pain it involves. Li Hu and Ayn Rand showed me their passion for life through their work, and they fueled my fire within like no one ever had before. That I was so fueled simply by seeing their example was proof to me of the power of a vision, a vision of the ideal, the essence of Romanticism.

This is best summed up by a quote from *The Fountainhead*: "Don't work for my happiness, my brothers—show me yours—show me that it is possible—show me your achievement—and the knowledge will give me courage for mine."<sup>2</sup>

I want, and implicitly always have wanted, to show a reverent view of reality. But I have learned that holding a reverent view of life is not automatic. Our minds can focus on only so many things at a time. And what you focus on, you will see everywhere. If you are always focused on the negative, then that is what you will look for and find as a matter of habit. If you can make it a habit to direct your focus to the good, the positive, then there will be less room in your lens for the negative (fig. 40). Whatever you set your gaze upon gets magnified; what you shine your light onto becomes clearer. So it is vital to set your gaze on a vision that helps you flourish. This vision can help you cultivate a sense of serenity that washes away your anxiety and fuels your passion.

Rand's unique conception of Romanticism, "Romantic Realism," hit home with me, and I now identify as a Romantic Realist myself. Romanticism holds that art should be focused on showing life as it could and ought to be. Realism signifies that this ideal can be portrayed realistically, that artists need not rely on unrealistic or supernatural standards to convey the ideal. This is perfectly concretized in a quote from Rand's play *Ideal*, which touched me on a profoundly personal and artistic level. She wrote:

**I want to see real, living, and in the hours of my own days, that glory I create as an illusion! I want it real! I want to know that there is someone, somewhere, who wants it, too! Or else what is the use of seeing it, and working, and burning oneself for an impossible vision? A spirit, too, needs fuel. It can run dry.<sup>3</sup>**

I am a Romantic because I seek a better version of life, an improvement on the given. I am a realist because I want this better version to be real and achievable.

Romantic Realism is inherently optimistic. But it is wider than just optimism. It shows that values are possible within this life but also that they must be freely chosen and then earned (fig. 42). Even psychological values must be earned by developing the right attitude. Romantic Realism helps me do that work, cultivating an attitude captured by the first part of the serenity prayer, which reads, "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know



(34) *Enlightenment Women*, 2019  
This was used as the cover art for the Winter 2019 issue of *The Objective Standard*.

learned that holding a reverent view of life is not automatic. Our minds can focus on only so many things at a time. And what you focus on, you will see everywhere. If you are always focused on the negative, then that is what you will look for and find as a matter of habit. If you can make it a habit to direct your focus to the good, the positive, then there will be less room in your lens for the negative (fig. 40). Whatever you set your gaze upon gets magnified; what you shine your light onto becomes clearer. So it is vital to set your gaze on a vision that helps you flourish. This vision can help you cultivate a sense of serenity that washes away your anxiety and fuels your passion.



(40) *Life in Focus*, 2022, oil on linen panel

the difference.” Realism represents the things I cannot change, and Romanticism represents those I can.

I need the realism with the romantic. It was more than mere positive thinking that got me through my struggles and helped me become who I am today. I needed to understand and accept those facts that were outside my control. And I needed the romantic with the realism. Beyond recognizing the immutable facts of my situation, I needed a vision of what could be and the courage to pursue it. Both are necessary elements of objectivity. The dualism I once felt was caused by swinging wildly between them. Now I could understand how each improved my life; I could integrate them and thereby achieve the serenity, courage, and wisdom necessary to fully and deeply love my life.

This ignited my passion, a fire that needs to be fed and protected (fig. 43). One of my favorite quotes is from Rand’s Atlas Shrugged:

**Do not let your fire go out, spark by irreplaceable spark, in the hopeless swamps of the**

**approximate, the not-quite, the not-yet, the not-at-all. Do not let the hero in your soul perish, in lonely frustration for the life you deserved, but have never been able to reach. Check your road and the nature of your battle. The world you desired can be won, it exists, it is real, it is possible, it’s yours.<sup>4</sup>**



(38) *Who Is Li Hu*, 2016

Everyone has a tipping point; it is only a matter of degree within the context of each individual’s life. The struggles of hard times, of loss and disappointment, can swamp one’s passion for living, and the darkness of nihilism can begin to encroach. To combat this darkness, we need Romantic art to keep us looking ahead at what is possible, to show the joy life has to offer, and to remind us that overcoming the struggle is worth it. These moments of joy, of experiencing one’s values here and now, protect your inner fire from being blown out by the winds of struggle. I created this stained-glass lantern to represent that needed protection (fig. 44). Each piece of glass is like an experience of joy—joy now in the moment, joy remembered from the past, and joy that is possible in the future.



(39) *Symphonies of Li Hu*, 2017

**Cover image:** A Load of Crocks at the Red Wing Pottery Museum  
Great Movies This Month  
The Red Wing Pottery Museum  
One Author's Search for the Authentic West, by Frank Gruber  
**PulpArtists** by David Saunders: Remington Schuyler (oops, again)

# Farming in Kenya

by Juser Machogu

## Editor's Note

This is printed, with permission, from Juser Machogu's Substack blog. It has been lightly edited. The still photos here are from videos that accompany Juser's article. To see the full videos, visit [jusermachogu.substack.com](https://jusermachogu.substack.com)

2 Apr 2023

Good morning from Kisii Kenya.

What is it like to live here without fossil fuels?

Some refer to it as 'Sustainable', I agree, only if its definition changes to 'break your back if you want to eat even though you'll be poor forever'

I am weeding our maize.



We had a drought this January, as usual. This one went for a bit longer—over 1½ months, it is the longest we go without rain.

Our beans died. Most farmers didn't get what they planted as seeds back—zero harvest. Maize died and we had to do gapping when it started raining.

But most farmers did replant afresh. That is costly and most skipped buying fertilizer (DAP) for the second time and planted maize without. We don't top dress our maize over here. No wonder you see 20-30 Kgs of fertilizer per ha [hectare; 10,000 square meters, about 2.47 acres] compared to 360 China, 250 India, 120 US, 150 EU

We don't plough our lands, we dig using hoes (jembes). This is my bestie digging. The owner planted 1/8 ha of sugarcane but he couldn't sell. 5 years later, realized losses and decided to uproot it.



My bestie is earning \$1.50 working from 8 - 1 p.m.

Labor costs

5 men dug for 5 days

My village gets water from a spring 1 km away and when that dries up, we do another one about 2 km away. In various regions in Kenya, people walk for half a day for water.

This is my small bro @GetangeIan fetching water.



Nowadays we have motorbikes, a few people can afford them for fetching water. Five 20-litre cans (100 litres of water) for \$1. A cow drinks 20 litres per day during the drought seasons on average. A family of 6 uses about 100 litres per day during the drought seasons.

Our village spring



Women carry water by placing a 20-litre plastic can on their heads. Men usually use their fingers to hold the handles on the cans.

Fetching water for our cattle using a wheelbarrow from a water pan gathering runoff water from our road about a km away. It dried before week 2 ended!



We prefer to walk our cattle to the river because it doesn't cost us money. Plus they will drink to their satisfaction. We can also have a bath and wash our clothes before going home.



We have kids fetching water in the morning before or in the evening after school. Depending on water discharge, they can wait for 3 hours before they can fetch water which means they go back home at 9 p.m.!

Oh, walking in the dark!  
Our cattle drinking water.



Sustainable living/farming/development as used today is a scam. It is tied to climate change which means:

- Living in grass thatched roofs is sustainable but living in a mansion is.
- Eating vegetables is sustainable but eating meat or drinking milk are not.
- Farming in a tiny garden is sustainable but farming 100 hectares is not.

It is all tied down to climate change. The UN promotes its SDGs [Sustainable Development Goals] in our countries without acknowledging the fact that they literally don't want us to develop. If everyone lived as Americans, the world wouldn't be as is. That's their biggest fear.

Fossil Fuels have really transformed civilization. In the US a ha

was producing 2T of maize in early 1800s. Today, farmers in the US produce 11T per ha. And I learnt the other day there is a farmer who has managed 33T per ha! In Kenya we produce 2T per ha. Some farmers do 4T per ha but we have the potential to produce 10-12T per ha. Too bad Americans produce all of that grain and use about 40% for biofuels! A waste of energy in most cases but the term 'Green'—which loosely translates to 'It doesn't matter as long as we are doing it for the environment'—sells it.

Fossil Fuels for Africa.

## Harvesting Tea

July 14, 2023

Tea is Kenya's main cash crop. And in Kisii we grow tea. We usually sell it to nearby factories.

As a farmer, I just pluck tea, carry it on my head or shoulders to the buying centre a few metres away, sometimes up to a kilometer or two depending with how far the farm is from the buying centre. Then at a given time usually afternoon, unless it is on Friday, the tea factory sends its staff to pick the tea up.



This is what the tea buying centre looks like. We have the beds and partitions. Farmers place their tea up or on the verandah as they wait for the factory buyers to come. It comes anytime after 12 in the afternoon other than on Friday. They honk once they arrive.

They pick up the tea from tea buying centres by vehicles. But first, they measure the tea to determine how many kilos you sold them. Then wait for your payment at the end of the month. And a bonus at the end of the year.

We usually pluck two leaves and the bud. And we produce CTC black tea. CTC is crush, tear and cut—I will spoon-feed you, don't worry [wink].



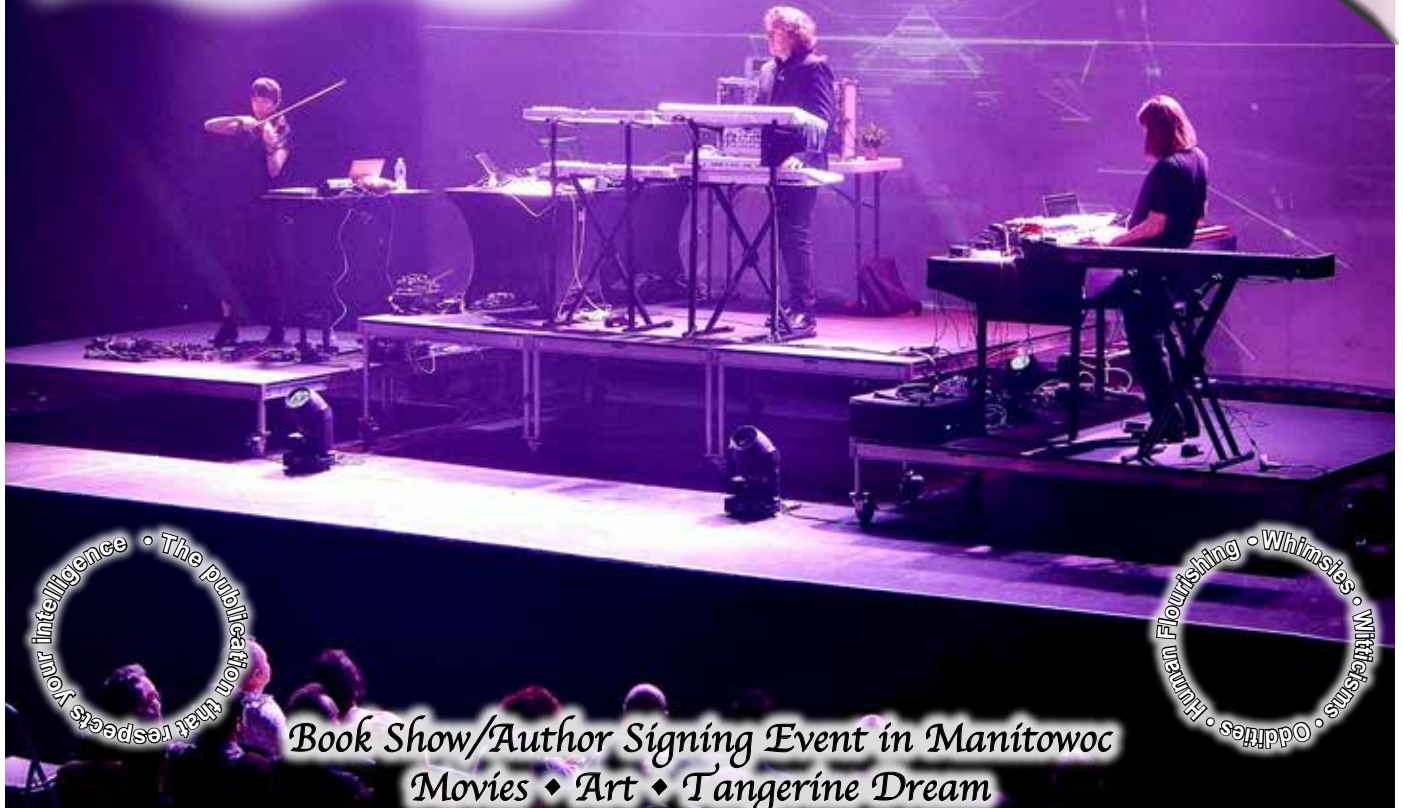
We only use fertilizers on our tea—no pesticides, no insecticides, no fungicides. Remember, no fertilizer application, no tea! Urea works very well with tea because urea is all about healthy lively leaves and that is what your kitchen garden with vegetables requires. P and K, phosphorus and Potassium—still spoon-feeding you [smile], are for flowering and fruiting or rooting for tubers.

The Plymouth Review  
**Current**

TAKING YOU PLACES WORTH SEEING

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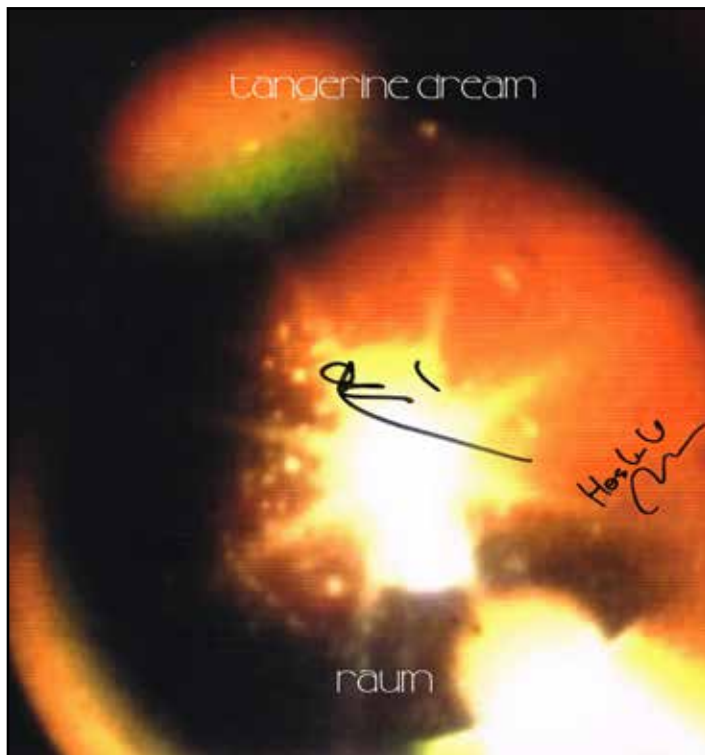
**FREE!**



• Your intelligence • The publication that respects

• Whimsies • Mitzisms • Oddities • Human Flourishing

**Book Show/Author Signing Event in Manitowoc**  
Movies ♦ Art ♦ Tangerine Dream



Two members of Tangerine Dream signed this vinyl album, Raum, for Your Editor. Thorsten Quaeschning signed it at center (quite—how shall I put it?—stylized), and Hoshiko Yamane signed at right. This album includes the song, You're Always On Time, which can be heard on YouTube (our Facebook page has a link thereto).

# October

2023

**Cover image:** Tangerine Dream, Atlanta, September 12, 2023, Photo by David McDaniel

Great Movies This Month  
Tangerine Dream

**Ask a Science Teacher,** by Larry Scheckel:  
What Does “Survival Of The Fittest” Really Mean?

A Class Act(or)

Good News for Laurel & Hardy Fans

Lakeshore Book Show and Author Signing

**PulpArtists** by David Saunders: Mat Kauten

Artists Reception for Paint the Towns in Fall Color

Outbid Again!

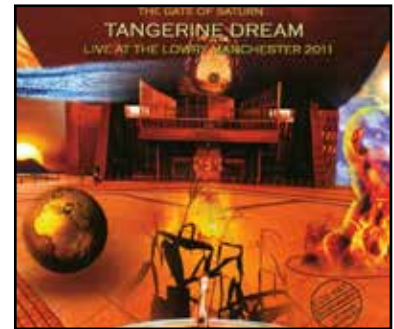
Musical Memories Concert

# TANGERINE DREAM

I first became aware of Tangerine Dream's music with the 1977 film, *Sorcerer*. *Sorcerer* was directed by William Friedkin, who just a few years before had directed *The Exorcist*. With a title like *Sorcerer*, it's understandable that some would ask, "Sorcerer? Is that 'Exorcist II'?"



(I don't care for *The Exorcist*. University classmates at the time of its release told me how much I'd like it; how scary it was. I attended it with a friend. We both reacted with contemptuous laughter. I only mention it here because I've read that, had William Friedkin heard Tangerine Dream music a few years earlier, he would have asked TD to do the soundtrack for *The Exorcist*. Instead, *Tubular Bells* by Mike Oldfield became the *Exorcist* "theme." Anyone alive at that time heard it constantly on the radio.) (I do like *Tubular Bells*.)



*Sorcerer* was a *great* movie. (If you don't believe *me*, ask Quentin Tarantino, the next time you see him.) Nothing supernatural about it; four desperate men drive two truckloads of highly unstable nitroglycerine through 200 miles of jungle "roads."



Tangerine Dream was based in Germany. Edgar Froese founded the band in 1967. He was the core of the group as members came and left over the years, until his death in 2015.

Early on, TD used electronic synthesizers to create their mostly wordless music. Their earlier albums were ethereal and sometimes non-melodic. Later, more substantial melodies emerged.

I had heard several TD albums by 1981, when I settled into a theater seat for *Thief*, a film starring James Caan, Tuesday Weld, James Belushi, and Willie Nelson. As the movie began, with the opening strains of music, I thought, "This sounds like—"  
—when the credits



## Music Composed and Performed by Tangerine Dream

—faded onto the screen.

You can bet I purchased that soundtrack.

I missed the next major film released in the US featuring TD music. In 1983, while living in North Dakota (teaching Middle School Science), I called a theater that was only 50 miles away and asked what was playing. I thought the guy said "The Cape," but he'd actually said "The Keep." Perplexed, I asked what it was about. "I think it's some kind of evil movie," the theater owner explained.

I didn't go.

(*The Keep* has a *great* soundtrack.)

By 1986, I'd left behind the wonderful world of teaching, returned to my native land, and saw that Tangerine Dream would perform in Milwaukee at the Oriental Theater. I saw them then, and again in 1988, at the Riverside in Milwaukee.

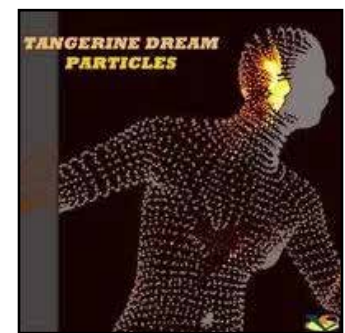
I liked TD's music more and more. In 2015, when Edgar Froese passed away, the decision was made to continue the group. Two of the musicians in the current lineup had worked with Froese for several years: Thorsten Quaeschning and Hoshiko Yamane. The band's third member now is Paul Frick.

TD recently toured North America. This past September 12, we attended their concert in Atlanta, Georgia. After two hours of music, band members greeted fans at the merchandise station.

As much as I enjoy music (and not exclusively TD), I rarely write about it. I mean, really, how does one *describe* music? I've picked up magazines about music, read all kinds of descriptions, articles, and reviews; but never have found a satisfying answer to that question.

So while I have given you two objective facts about TD (they use electronics; their music is mostly wordless), I find it impossible to describe their music in any way that would help you answer the basic question: "Would I enjoy Tangerine Dream's music?"

You could just get one or more CDs and try them out. But that's such a random, hit-or-miss process (it's not even a "process"), that



TD albums from Barnes & Noble, BN.com



only someone with money to throw away would likely try it.

Fortunately, two methods allow you to easily and cheaply investigate their music: movies; and the Internet.

### I. Film music

Since TD did many film soundtracks in the past 40+ years (in addition to their many studio albums), chances are good you've already heard their music.

Most of the following have a trailer on [imdb.com](http://imdb.com). Most feature snippets of music. (Incredibly, the trailer for Firestarter features music from Sorcerer!!)

Here is a partial list of movies scored by TD:

**Sorcerer** (1977). One of the best. It made me a life-long fan of actor Roy Scheider. Certain music from this film is often played at TD concerts. (Other such music is indicated below by "Concert favorite.")

**Thief** (1981). Concert favorite.

**The Keep** (1983). Based on a novel by F. Paul Wilson, and part of a double series that included his character, Repairman Jack. Wilson was Guest of Honor at the 2018 Windy City Pulp & Paper Convention, where he commented on the movie as it was screened. Featuring Scott Glenn, Ian McKellen, and Jürgen Prochnow. TD scored at least three films with Prochnow, a German actor who played the captain of a Nazi submarine in *Das Boot* (The Boat). This film, and *Thief*, were co-written and directed by Michael Mann. Concert favorite; in fact, there was some trouble in releasing an official soundtrack album, so at one of TD's concerts, they played just about all the music from this film, and released it as the album Logos.

**Risky Business** (1983). Tom Cruise dances in his shorts! Concert favorite.

**Wavelength** (1983). With Keenan Wynn and Robert Carradine. A good one for UFO/captured alien theorists. Superb soundtrack.

**Firestarter** (1984). With a young Drew Barrymore. One of the best soundtracks.

**Flashpoint** (1984). With Kris Kristofferson and Treat Williams. Concert favorite.

**Heartbreakers** (1984). My personal favorite soundtrack.

**Legend** (1985). Tom Cruise once more! Concert favorite.

**Red Heat** (1985). Speaking of (ugh) *The Exorcist*... this is a women's prison film starring Linda Blair.

**Vision Quest** (1985). High school wrestling film with Mat-

thew Modine ("Joker" in Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*). The official soundtrack contains several pop tunes, but *no music* that TD composed for the film.

**Near Dark** (1987). Directed by Kathryn Bigelow, this film occasionally shows up on TCM. Cowboys and vampires!

**Shy People** (1987). With Jill Clayburgh and Barbara Hershey. One of the best soundtracks, but scarce.

**Dead Solid Perfect** (1988). Golfing movie with Randy Quaid.

**Miracle Mile** (1988). With Anthony Edwards, who played a doctor on the ER TV series.

**The Man Inside** (1990). As I prepared this article, I was top bidder on a copy of this rare soundtrack. I bought it through eBay from someone in Ireland! Jürgen Prochnow plays Günter Wallraf, a journalist who went undercover to expose conditions of immigrants working in Germany. Sadly, the movie seems to be as scarce as the soundtrack.

### II. The Internet

A great deal of work by TD can be heard on YouTube and other Internet sites. I have to question the legality of much of it, and rationalizing it by saying, "Yeah, but it leads to legitimate sales of the band's music" is the kind of unprincipled pragmatism that my philosophy rejects. So it is with mixed thoughts that I inform you that you will find:

- Concerts, in part or in whole, of wildly varying video and sound quality.
- Individual songs.
- Interviews with band members.

### Former TD members

A YouTube or other 'net search will bring info on former members of TD who subsequently produced music on their own or with others. Each undoubtedly learned a great deal from TD founder Edgar Froese, and built upon that gained knowledge. None were content to continue as mere clones of their respected mentor, however; they incorporated their own musical visions and personalities. (That also very much applies to TD's three current members. Some long-time fans are disappointed that they are *not* exact clones of Froese.)

- (This list is *not* exhaustive.)
- Jerome Froese (son of Edgar)
  - Johannes Schmoelling
  - Paul Haslinger
  - Chris Franke

Enjoy the process of discovery!

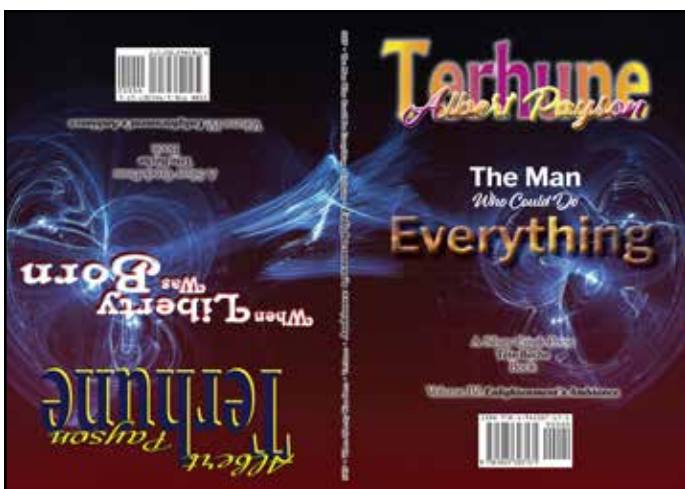
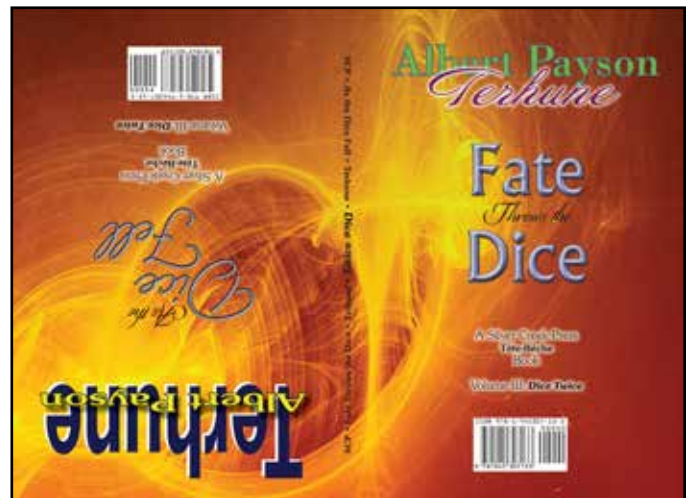
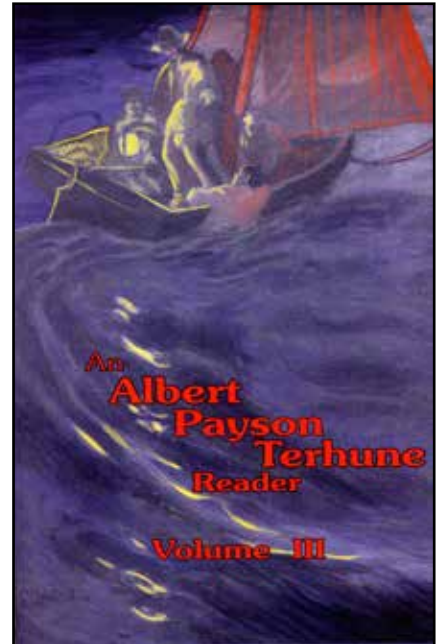
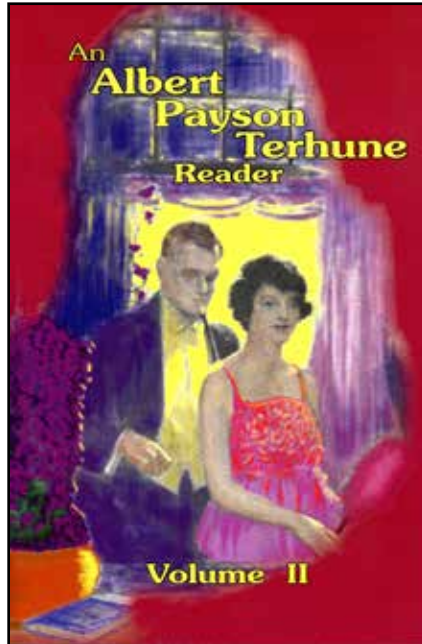


Hoshiko and Thorsten greet fans and sign items. — Photo by Rodney Schroeter

Photos of the September 12, 2023 concert by Rodney Schroeter



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