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Cliffdwellers fueling station near Vermillion Cliffs and Marble Canyon, Arizona
Photograph by Jason Houge; 2024

CRISIS ON THE COLORADO

THE LIFEBLOOD OF THE SOUTHWEST IS CHANGING. ARE WE READY?

Journals from The Westlands

Story by: Jason Houge

In spring of 2018, a very good friend, Jacqulyn Jahnke, invited me to accompany her to a strange place in the desert. Jacqulyn is a photographer and former lecturer of photography from my undergrad alma mater. Over the years we have frequently traveled together, often I as the driver, to be a part of and to photograph situations like the Wisconsin Worker's Rights protests (2011), Occupy movement in Chicago (2011,2012) and Standing Rock (2016). Years earlier she made a book about discovering Quartzite, Arizona. Through the connections she made, she learned of a unique place in the Southwest called Slab City. And in August 2018, she and I stepped off a plane at the airport in Palm Springs, California with the intent to discover and learn about Slab City for ourselves. It was the first time I had ever been in the southwest, the first time feeling the desert heat, the first time I found a community of people I felt somewhat akin to. Stepping off the plane, I was greeted by an unrelenting hot, dry wind that felt like a blow drier on high pointed directly at my face. Slab City is not an official recognized city. If I had to give it a label, I'd call it an honest Burning Man. It's located south of the Salton Sea, a saltwater lake 230 ft below sea level, in the desert of Southern California. Although we spent a week fully embedded and documented the life there, I have never felt like the work I made during this visit was thorough enough. Unfortunately, the pandemic put a stop to any further plans to return for a deeper dig. As I began grad school at the UW, I also began to think about this project once again. It would seem I had the opportunity to finally return and to make something more profound of the work so I invited Jacqulyn to join me once again. Over the fall of 2022, we discussed various current events and their potential value. We discussed how we would travel and where. Unfortunately, things changed rapidly in our absence and the people we knew were no longer there.

From here on, I will share with you entries from my journals that help to build a picture about the genesis of the Westlands Project. These entries not only provide some context for the work, but also give insight into my observations, feelings, thoughts and process that help guide nearly every project I work on.

23/01/12
11:45
Know thy self.

In the darkest of places, look for the light, even a glimmer + let that lead you.

Your enemy can be your greatest teacher.

23/01/13
17:00
Woo! Yeah! Finally a light. A fire burning has me going in a direction.
A major success….

Jacqulyn, my old travel buddy who has been my path, guide, patron to many of my past works wants to do another trip back west. Today we worked out a rough plan while I moved her domain names away from GoDaddy to Namecheap.
(Coupon code: byebyegd)

Our plan: Fly out to Palm

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SPECIAL FEATURE: PAGE 3

The Disappearance of Reo Lutz

Story by: Barbara Justice

June 1978. Reo didn't show up to work at his usual time 6:45am Tuesday morning. The heat of the southern New Mexico desert was climbing. It would reach around 102 degrees, the usual for a summer day.

Reo was a tall and slender 28 year old. His broad-shouldered frame matched his fathers, he had his mother's wary blue eyes. His face and neck were tan from working outside. He was the foreman of the Cornudas Mountain Ranch, a sprawling 280,000 acres located on the New Mexico / Texas state line. Reo's duty was to supervise ranch hands and manage daily operations which meant tending to a few thousand head of cattle, flocks of sheep and goat herds. The ranch sat in the low desert of the Otero Mesa in the southern portion of New Mexico. In high summer the scent of creosote wafted in the dry air. Cacti, such as Ocotillo, Prickly Pear, and Cane Cholla, put on a magnificent show of red, orange, violet and yellow. Their flowers painted the landscape.

Yearly monsoons brought much needed water to the dry desert in summer months. Torrential rains would happen quickly and unexpectedly causing flash floods due to the hard clay soil not absorbing water fast enough. The day before Reo went missing was Monday the 19th. The wind was more gusty than usual. Reo was out early that day checking the stock tanks and dropping bales of hay for the sheep. Alone, he had all he needed for a workday packed in his red Ford F-150 4x4 truck. His lunch was two ham and cheese sandwiches, peanut butter cookies, a bag of chips, and two Dr. Peppers. He also had work tools, a CB radio, and a gun. Reo knew the terrain, as he had been working there for over 10 years. He was familiar with the cow trails and natural landmarks such as Wind Mountain and Flat Top Mountain. The largest mountain on the ranch, Cornudas Mountain, could be seen from a hundred miles away in any direction. He was there that day, as he planned on putting new barbed wire on a long stretch of fencing which would take the entire week to do. He didn't usually work alone. That day, though, several ranch hands had to wrangle 30 to 40 steers that wandered onto the Jones Ranch. It gave him time to concentrate so he could get back

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Journals from The Westlands

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Springs, CA + tour around the Salton Sea. Revisit these areas paying special attention to how the loss of the Colorado River is affecting the people, land, etc.

Then we'll drive south to Mexico, follow highway 2 across to Nogolas. Along the way maintain observations regarding the environment + people. Then in Nogalas, well cross back into the U.S., visit my aunt,

Places			
Colorado	Grand Canyon? Durango Glen Canyon?	New Mexico	
Nevada	Lake Meade	Arizona	Town outside Scottsdale
Mexico	Border Baja Colorado River Delta Hwy 2	California Niland Bombay Beach Salton City Country Side Central Valley Death Valley Sequoia Forests – Look for fires * Look for landslides	

see what we can on the north side of the border + continue on to Tucson.

** Colorado River delta is in the Baja.
Needs:
PASSPORT, VISA?
Cash
15-20 gal water reservoir
Britta Filter?
Liquid IV
Food?
Cup, Instant Coffee
Clothes / Good Shoes
Hat
Sunglasses

Concerns: Jaguars & Leopards, Gila Monster. Snakes, no H20

23/02/18
14:21
Framing, Displaying, Publishing acts in a few ways:
- It memorializes the work
- It creates a concrete conversation
- It shares the progress

But any step too soon, it can hurt the work + its creator. Be sure to know what you're saying. No good song is underdeveloped. No one wants an unbaked cake.

ARTIST SATEMENT

Photography is but a single facet of my work. I'm a visual storyteller working with photography in a social documentary practice I call Compassionate Photography. This is a deviation from "Concerned Photography," a form of social documentary practiced in the 1960's + 70's by legendary photographer, Cornell Capa. Whereas Concerned Photographers placed emphasis on sympathy for subjects, concern for the loss of trust in the honesty of a photograph + concern for the political shifts occurring at the time, Compassionate Photography is founded on empathy, emotional awareness, acceptance + change.

Through my work I aim to preserve a sense of a life lived today. I am photographing for posterity, to make a historical record that converses with an uncertain future, from the perspective of my own experiences + interactions with people during my life. Perhaps the most vital facet of this work, for me, is how images work in chorus with one another to build a sum greater than the parts. Today, I am less interested in chasing singular stand-out images. Instead, I see my art as exploring how images work together to communicate meaningful + intersectional stories. Music plays a significant role in how I understand + observe the world + it also informs much of my photo making process. In the narrative ideation phase, I approach the work with the vision of a motion picture director + the metaphoric observation skills of a singer songwriter. Arrangements evolve by connecting the principles of songwriting + musical structure with visual + emotional elements found within the photographs themselves. This results in a flow of characters, themes, forms + motifs that interact with the emotions, movements + instincts suggested by both the imagery + storyline.

"People don't remember things the way it happened. They remember the most intense moment + the way it ended. The last impression is the lasting impression" - Chris Voss, the Black Swan Group

"I always say that emotion is one of the greatest communicators of message through music. + in my experience, connecting with an audience's heartstrings is the best way to leave a lasting impression." Elizabeth Zharoff, Charismatic Voice, YouTube – Hi Ren

23/03/21
22:11
Riddle me this Batman
Scientists are always looking for the building blocks of life beyond Earth in hopes the mix is just right for life to exist.

But what do we know? Life does exist here + we know the life producing soup is perfect on this planet, so… Why aren't new life forms just popping into existence? Why must all life here evolve from one thing to another? This seems to be a double standard.



Ted Block, at 101 year old, this WWII Vet is living in Slab City because he could no longer afford to keep his apartment in Bombay Beach, CA. Photo by Jason Houge; 2018

I've been dreaming a ton. It's exhausting! Each night is a lot. I toss + turn. I don't remember much.

Daydream I had: If I was the last human alive, how long might it take me to circumnavigate the planet to leave a stone memorializing each fallen society?

Kayla says my asthma would keep me from doing it.

This morning I sat on a wall in Stoughton, WI watching traffic on Main Street roll by. I wondered how often… I'll bet… Squirrels + birds come out + do exactly that. Sit + watch humans + marvel at the strange sights we humans provide. In some simple way, we amuse animals w/ our noise + movement. But we also steal from them their peace, their quiet, their lives. We even do that to ourselves.

23/04/03
11:10
Pauli recommends:
Hi-Camp
Like air-BnB for camping.
Backcountry Permit needed: 6 month wait

NEEDS
- AAA Maps
- iPhone Charger
- Hitch + Trailer?
- NP wilderness / backcountry pass?
- 2tb hard drive

23/05/27
20:07
In less than a month I will be embarking on to my first major expedition. From June 21-Aug 5, I will be travelling the Southwest to photograph the importance of the Colorado River.

I had anxieties…. When don't I these days?
I over spent + knew it. I ended up feeling like an ass + returned 1/3 or more of the things + supplies I bought. But good friends I have.

Mike is allowing me the use of his Ford Escape Hybrid. It gets better mileage than my car saving me nearly $500 in costs. Plus splitting it w/ Jacqulyn means even better!

I have an electric cooler w/ ice maker, solar panel + power supply, hammock stand - I intend to sleep in a hammock much of the trip, 30 frames of 4x5 color film, a water tank, a water filter, stove, propane, + myself.
I returned a toilet, 2 water tanks, parts to fix my car + some other stuff.

Yesterday I processed almost all of my film from this spring. There was a roll from last year in my Nikon… Pictures of Ansel. ☺☹ Happy + sad.
I miss that boy.
Years ago I kept a nature journal… It's time to revive that idea during this trip.

23/06/20
11:20
It's my last full day in Madison. By early morning tomorrow, Jacqulyn Jahnke + I will be departing Madison. Hopefully by 6 pm we'll arrive in Sidney, Nebraska – Just 4 hours drive from the Colorado head waters.

I'm sitting outside on a large rock in our front yard. A man earlier exclaimed "It looks like a good thinking rock!" I suppose I look like "the thinker" sculpture. Nearby, in a patch of sun, is Lumpy. Laying on her side soaking in the warmth + feeling the breeze. The sky is a hazy blue-grey laced with smoke from the Canadian forest fires way to the north. Where I sit the light filters through a tree above. Shadows of the leaves + branches dance across my page. Around us birds chirp + squawk. Its nesting season. Lumpy, the rotisserie cat, just rolled to her other side. I shaved her the other day so she'd stay cool while I'm away. She looks like a Majestic miniature lion. The light has moved + she's asleep on the grass + dry dirt. It's been very dry this summer. El Niño, I suppose. Like an old dog, Lump raised her head to see a noisy car pass + plopped back down to continue her nap.

If I sit here long enough, I occasionally see a solitary bumble bee humming around the base of the spruce tree Lumpy is laying near. The bee seems to visit this spot daily once or twice, before humming over to another spot on the other side of my "thinking rock." From there she lifts off, crosses the street + passes over a house. [I think] this is the same bee I discovered crawling cold + hungry in our basement a few weeks ago. She crawled onto a bit of cardboard I found + I took her upstairs to the kitchen where I made a tiny spoon of sugar water for her. She happily drank some + then I set her atop one of Kayla's flowers. Lumpy + I sat outside while the bee recovered. Before I realized it, the bee was hovering before me, looking at me as if to say "thank you," then hummed to the spot by the tree + off over the house across the street… It's fair today, not quite 80°f.

23/06/23
11:55
Yesterday was long – We drove from Sidney, Nebraska to Granby, Colorado. That is to say we also drove from Madison, Wisconsin to Sidney the day before. That's about 1,100 miles in two days – navigating tight switchback gravel roads, big cities +construction with very little sleep… [Which was] had in a car.



We drove to Granby because the Headwaters was inaccessible. Soon we'll go to Moab, Utah + I hope we can camp on some BLM sites.

But what I really want to do is write about my observations.

In Colorado the air is thinner + drier. The sun feels more sharp? The edges of shadows seem more defined. The contrasts are more pronounced. It's windy + cool today. When the wind blows through pine trees it makes a woosh… But here there are a lot of burn scars + those trees howl in unison to make a moaning roar – low + distant. It seems the trees burnt were all within 20 years of age so they must have been from fires past. The air is light + smells something + fleeting. Few animals – mostly these cute ground squirrels. A lovely black bird w/ white wings, gazelle + apparently bear, moose, + sneks, but I haven't seen any yet. Faint sounds from insect + birds unseen + a wide variety of grasses, cactus, lichen, trees + bushy plants. Tonight we hope to camp + I can really see some of what I'm here for.

23/06/28
10:00
Last night we drove to a home NW of Chinle, Arizona, closer to Many Farms, AZ. Jacqulyn found this place on AirBnB. We slept in a Diné Hogan, a ceremonial home in the Navajo nation. The night before, our last in Moab, Utah, was a windy one. Along the river bank, where our camp (Camp Tumbleweed) was, we had gusts up to 50 mph. I was up late, almost to 3 AM because I was concerned her tent would collapse + because the roof of my covered hammock was flapping + slapping me. I realized if I grabbed ahold + tucked the top between my knees it wouldn't be as bad. I finally fell asleep. BUT! I nearly forgot! As I was getting into my hammock I noticed my inflatable pillow was gone – taken by the wind presumable somewhere in the river + long gone. When I woke the thought occurred we were surrounded by lots of small trees + maybe my pillow wasn't gone after all. + indeed, I put on my shoes + glasses + there it was, the little pillow, caught within the brush at the base of a bunch of small trees by the river. Here at this Hogan, we've been kindly guarded by 5 sweet dogs. 3 belong to the host + 2 by his uncle. The two belonging to his uncle are chained outside with little to no food. One is a female, she's had many puppies + she's extremely passive. Her collar is on far too tight + she appears unloved. I want to rescue her, but I cannot.

During our short stay, we've been visited by feral cows, goats + horses. In the outhouse, under the seat, lives a black widow spider. I won't tell Jacqulyn. During the night, both here + at our previous stay, she got up to use the bathroom 2 – 3x. Each time she shuffles out holding the brightest LED photography lamp she owns. She shuffles a short way + begins to look bewildered + lost. She cannot find her way. She seems to be losing her eyesight, but equally seems to refuse to accept it. I must go now to pay a visit to that black widow. I must pay my respects before leaving.

23/06/28
13:12
We're in Chinle, Arizona now, using the Silver Coin laundromat. In a while we'll go to the Chinle chapter house for showers. Then we'll go eat + drive to Holbrook, Arizona. The laundromat reminds me of the one on University Ave (in Green Bay, WI) that Kayla + I often used. The machines are the same but here you can tell they're well used. Doors are broken, belts squeal + whine, motors whir. This could very well be the only laundromat anyone has. People here are friendly, more or less. Arlondo's uncle seems inhumane. His dogs had zero water, chained one to a stake. The other to an old rim. I gave both water before leaving forever. That must be so traumatic for them… no one stays. No one rescues them.

Chinle, as a town, is small, dusty + dry. The riverbed is dry, not a shade tree or anything. Nothing could grow here anyway. It seems well water is often the go-to, some get a haul from the chapter house. So much DUST! + the dirt highways are deadly bumpy. Cows, goats, horses + dogs all seem to roam free. The windmill wells may only be for the animals. A lot of good that does them if they're chained up…

I'm hungry. I haven't eaten since yesterday. I was going to say it was early, but I finished that meal last night. We're going through about a gallon of water per day. I will need to refill – or our extended stays w/ family + friends will negate our need to use it, extending our range. We reach Nogolas, AZ in about 2 days on July 1.

I'm at a place called Telephone Lake. It seems to be situated at an ancient lava plane. The smell immediately reminded my of the cottage (I went to as a kid.) There's a warm, humid, swampiness. I can hear + see birds of all kinds all around me. It's a beautiful place. There are shotgun casings everywhere. I think 2 birds + frogs are duking it out just beyond the reeds. For the first time in ages, I feel like I'm home.

23/07/04
Happy Anniversary….. 25 years… WOW! WOW!!!!
(I moved from my parent's house to St. Louis, MO on July 4, 1998.)

I brought Jacqulyn to the urgent care this morning. Muscle strain. She'll continue w/ me, which is good. She's not ill, it's treatable. Aunt Maggie is a wonderful caretaker.

23/07/05
6:33
Yesterday was rather ok. Aunt Maggie has a white male cat named Snowflake that lives outside. To protect his ears + cool him, she put him in her casita beside her carport. After the fireworks we went to get him back out + it was terribly hot inside. The window AC making tons of noise…. He ate dinner + left shortly after. Every morning since I've been here, he's been sleeping in his bed atop his nice house. (But,) that room may have frightened him + he's not come back.

Well, anyway, today we leave Nogales + go to Chandler, AZ.

7:10
I stand corrected about Snowflake. He was waiting for Matthew at Maggie's door. Matthew is a blind Dandie Dinmont. Matthew + Snowy seem to be very good friends. Matthew survived distemper when he was a puppy + being bitten by a rattlesnake. He's quite old now. Snowflake seems to have been bitten by something much bigger. He's all scarred + scabby from recent interactions. He has FIV, otherwise he'd be inside w/ Willow + Kittycat, (and Matthew).

In regards to the Colorado River water story, it's been a bust here. Not so much to say from here. Christopher Anderson left Magnum. Good for him.

23/07/15
8:07
Good morning from Lake Havasu, Arizona!

We went from Aunt Maggie's to Chandler to Quartzite to Yuma, to Slab City (California)

The Slabs, if you can believe it, have gotten worse. Dog shit everywhere, drug use, slow moving people. There seems to only be a few ways to escape that place. It's a well of despair.

1 arrested for a crime committed, or not.
2 Just leave while you still can
3 die.

If we experienced the first time what we saw this time, we would have never returned.

So with two nights paid + only one spent, we left at sun up + never went back.

The work has been going great despite constant shifts + setbacks. Like a river flowing over a landscape for the first time, it'll get there.

Speaking of, in Yuma, a border patrol officer stopped us when their cameras picked us up photographing through the fence. He told me once he was out at his post + the wildest thing happened: "It looked like something big, it looked like a dinosaur was coming through the trees + brush. Everything moved, trees went down + brush, rocks, everything was being pushed out of the way. It was the river! They opened the dam for the first time in the 19 years I've been out here + it was a wall of water pushing across the land. It was incredible!"

Here in Havasu Lake City, they have the old London Bridge. Can you imagine? When Robert McCullach had moved this bridge here, what if nothing happened? No one came? There would just be this iconic relic, greatly displaced, a roadside anomaly.

23/08/03
Day 0
When I returned home from my trip, I cut all of my hair off. Then today while trying to clean up a few longer tufts, a lot more came off than expected. I am nearly, well I am, bald. (I plan to grow it back out)

23/08/17
My face hair is longer
Lumpy wanted me to take her outside. We're sitting on the porch, her on my lap + my book on a leg + her back.

There seem to be fewer, if any, new ideas in art. The only new idea seems to be to take something previous considered unacceptable, reassess it + accept it as Ok, + to make a go of it. To say "this is good" is a form of rebellion. It also says "you are wrong" to anyone who previously said the idea was not good.

23/09/09
Old guy on a mobility scooter just rolled up the driveway – he crossed the street just to say hi. He was a bad ass old timer with tatoos, a skull ring + other rings. He noticed I was standing with Lumpy. "You got a dog there?" he asked. "A cat." I replied. "Can I

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SPECIAL FEATURE

Story and Photographs by Jacqulyn Seibert Jahnke

The journey to follow the Colorado River and explore the impact of its receding waterline not only exposes me to human dependency on water and the resulting desire to reroute and exploit this precious resource, but also reveals the limitless variety of ecological environments the river supports. It challenges my understanding of the world's immensity, with open empty spaces, and of the way darkness, when the borderless sky loses its light at night, can envelop the world, removing any sense of place and safety in a way I have never before experienced. I am grateful to my colleague and friend Jason for inviting me to share in this journey.

The initial goal is to start at the headwaters, but the Long Draw Road to our destination is closed by flooding caused by melting snow. The southern leg is marked by desert and the absence of this essential source of life. We encounter water stations where residents buy their water, vegetable gardens are watered from underground, and trucks with loads of 100's of gallons in containers, at the Navajo reservation's accessible community water sites.

The lack of running water for anything—even basic needs—is shocking. Though I've been to areas without indoor plumbing, water is always within walking distance from people's daily lives. What strikes me most is the significant distances residents must travel to access this most basic necessity.

In contrast, off the reservation land, there are intricate webs of piping and pumps on corporate acres of pecans, dates etc.

How can the path of a single river cover such diverse ecology and natural environments? The mountain regions are dense with thick, green forests and roads appear to drop off cliffs. As I stare out my passenger side window, I feel so close to the sky that I can almost reach out and touch the clouds.



Water filling station at the Chile Chapter House in Chinle, AZ Photo by Jacqulyn Seibert Jahnke; 2023

The dark granite stones are cloaked in tree after tree, and even in areas scarred by forest fires, growth is persisting. This is starkly contrasted by the clay-colored terrain further south, where trees grow more sparsely - not dense like in the higher Colorado Rockies. We experience yet another type of forest: the remnants of prehistoric, semi-tropical forests buried under layers of sand for millions of years. The petrified forest, with horizontal pieces of ancient wood preserved by the water, now survives in an environment where, although I am in a "forest," the absence of water feels pervasive.



Dry and dead forests on the slopes of the Colorado Rocky Mountains. Photo by Jacqulyn Seibert Jahnke; 2023

In contrast to the majestic granite-peak forests of Colorado, the Joshua tree forests are not traditionally beautiful. These trees embody the pain that water scarcity can bring. I am unsure how this can be called a forest; instead, it is filled with twisted, bristling trees adapted to store water in their trunks and protect it from evaporation with thick, waxy coatings on their leaves. Their shallow, wide root systems allow them to drink quickly when blessed with sparse desert rainfall. This resilience, though impressive, imprints an impression of struggle, with shrubs rather than trees battling to stay alive. Then there is the Saguaro Cactus Forest of cacti standing erect similar to evergreens but so radically different. The saguaros, like Joshua trees, have waxy coatings to reduce water loss. But unlike trees, the cacti have ribs that expand to store scarce rainwater, and their roots, shallow yet with a single deep taproot, help them stay balanced. As the trees differ, so do the rock formations.

Though I don't admire the desert trees' beauty, I am captivated by the rock formations, which are more visible in the sparse landscape. One of the most profound experiences is understanding how I always wondered about ancient artists' depictions of their gods—their faces often so unlike human features. Here, with fewer trees and light reflecting off the rocks, I see the faces of the gods, and feel as though the rocks themselves form a canvas for these ancient images. In this open, arid environment, where the absence of water and sparse vegetation leave the rocks exposed, the light dances in a way I never see in lusher landscapes. At home, I wake early to watch the sunlight sparkle across the bay like diamonds, moving in a path across the water's surface like a clock across my canvas. But here, without water to reflect it, the light instead moves across the colorful clay rocks, illuminating god-like shapes and faces—a stark, mesmerizing dance only possible in this desert landscape.



Landscape of god-like forms in the rocks of southern Utah. Photo by Jacqulyn Seibert Jahnke; 2023

Near the end of the trip, we reach the Salton Sea. Although now known for the resilient artists who come to express themselves, this place is profoundly shaped by water. A river diversion gone wrong caused the Colorado River to breach an irrigation canal, creating the Salton Sea. It first flourished as a tourist destination, but as the water began evaporating, so did the tourism, leaving behind a ghost town. The remaining water is now highly saline and heavily impacted by human pollution, including residues of lead, chromium, DDT, and other chemicals. These pollutants, the result of fertilizers and pesticides meant to enrich and transform the dry land into something lush and green, have ultimately contaminated the environment. Toxic to humans, this place now feels like a physical embodiment of karmic consequence, a reminder of nature's response to human interference.



An arrow drawn into the dusty ground intended to act as a guide for finding the outhouse. Photo by Jacqulyn Seibert Jahnke; 2023

The wide-open spaces of the West, both naturally rugged and often deserted due to a lack of accessible water, affect me most profoundly. Sometimes overwhelmingly during the day, the vastness creates an environmental effect unlike anything I've ever experienced in all my travels. A darkness so deep it leaves me disoriented and requires me to carefully stage light for night time navigation and even draw arrows in the sand to avoid wandering off into the desert's great unknown when my only light is swallowed by the landscape.

At night, navigating to the outhouse, I imagine the darkness as similar to the bay at the cottage: a large expanse of unbroken space, no human artifacts in sight, no trees to obstruct the line of sight. But here, it feels different. Unlike the bay, where the moonlight sparkles on the water like diamonds dancing with joy, the desert night is harsh, with a hard, unforgiving terrain. The bay always evokes two emotions in me: though it's visually pleasing and peaceful, my inability to swim turns it into a place of deep anxiety, as I know that if my feet were to leave the safety of the land, I will drown in the very space that brings my mind tranquility. In the desert, my feet never leave the land, but I fear that if I venture past my predefined perimeter, I will get lost, drown in the emptiness, and never return, as the vast space and darkness will envelop me like water, extinguishing my ability to breathe.

Disappearance of Reo Lutz
Continued from: page 1

to Dell City. He was going to his niece's softball game that night. She was the pitcher for the Cougars and hoped to be picked up by the Albuquerque Lobos her senior year. He had to be back at a decent hour. Dell City was the closest town to the ranch. He had family there. Visitors driving into Dell City were greeted by a large sign that read "Land of Hidden Waters". It was a small town, population 449 and 80 miles east of El Paso.

The afternoon air was heavy with humidity. Reo's jeans and long-sleeved pearl snap shirt were stained from sweat and dirt. Though his hands were calloused from fencing, he had gotten a lot done. He looked to the north and noticed several large thunderclouds building up and swiftly moving closer. It was monsoon season, and he knew that if there was rain, it would pass quick, and he could get back to work.

Renee wondered where Reo was. It was 7:30pm, and usually he was on time for the games. It wasn't like her brother to miss the first pitch, especially since the game had been delayed an hour due to the heavy downpour. Reo and Renee were twins, born in Valentine, Texas. She taught high school math at the same school her daughter played softball for. She sat on the metal bleachers eating a large bucket of popcorn from the concession stand; the game was underway. The field was still damp from the storm, but it was a perfect evening for ball. The clouds with their pinkish and purple hues drifted along gently. The bright field lights shined down on the players. Renee started to get concerned. She went to the car, grabbed the CB radio and messaged her brother. "Reo, you out there?" click. "Reo I'm waiting for you" click." Let me know where you're at!" click. "Patty really wanted you to be here to see her play, where are you? Over and out" click. The Valley of Hidden Waters was named so for a reason. Beneath that land was one of the most cavernous aquifers in the southwest. Runoff water from the Sacramento Mountains of Alamogordo and Guadalupe Mountains of far west Texas filled underground caves. Ranchers started drilling water wells all over the region after an oil prospector tapped the abundant watershed source in the 1940's. The locals knew there was water underneath them, they just didn't know how extensive the geological formation was. There were stories amongst the townspeople and ranchers to be cautious of sinkholes and quicksand, though some were skeptical and it was not often discussed. When it was, the topic was quickly brushed off or dismissed.



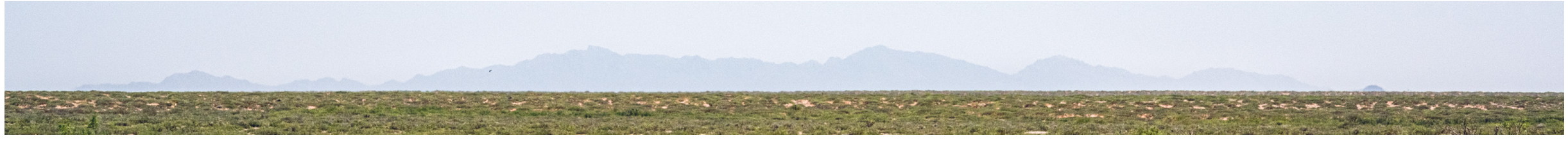
North of the Cornudas Mountain, a western bound train passes though a New Mexico cattle ranch. Photo by Jason Houge; 2024

Around 4pm, Reo heard the crack of lighting behind him as he stood up and turned from wiring one of his last fence posts of the day. His body vibrated with the heavy rumble of thunder. The light turned quickly to a dark grey. The wind kicked up and blew his straw hat off, it rolled on its brim until Reo couldn't see it anymore. The rain was coming fast. It started as soft sprinkles, but within a minute the drops felt like hard pellets! The wind turned from a gust to almost a wave of cool and hot air. It pushed and pulled Reo, he could hardly see it was so windy! The rain was now pouring. His truck must have only been 30 feet away, but it seemed like miles. He couldn't get to it, he stuck his arm out as if to try and reach it. He lost his sense of direction, the rain below his feet turned into a rapid stream that quickly wrapped around his boots and up his jeans. "Help! Help! Anyone!" Reo yelled. It was no use, his cries were silenced by the lighting, cracking thunder, downpour of rain, the wind and the rushing water. The sound was like standing next to a speeding freight train. It was too much, Reo couldn't see! His hair whipped around his cheeks, and the water violently reached up, grabbed him by the hands and pulled him down.

Ranch hands Norma and Cody pulled up next to Reo's Ford the next morning, it was parked out in the brush. They were looking for him. They remembered him saying he would be out at Cornudas Mountain while they were herding cows. Normally, Reo checks in with everyone and tells them what the jobs are for the day, but he didn't on this day. They both walked around slowly and looked around, inspecting the ground. Norma found his hat, but that was the only sign of Reo. "Reo! Reo! Reo where are you??" they yelled, but the quiet desert offered no clue to where he was. The only sound was a slow spinning windmill in the distance. The ground was wet from yesterday's storm, but it would soon dry. The temperature would reach 105° by 3pm.

Reo's disappearance was on people's mind's for a long time. His sister moved to Albuquerque to be close to her daughter who was soon graduating from the University of New Mexico. His absence broke her heart; she thought about him every day. People had all kinds of theories and speculations. Maybe he got sucked into the earth by one of the cavernous sinkholes. Maybe he was swallowed by quicksand. Maybe the water washed him down into one of the old wells. No one knew.

Cacti put on another spectacular display of colors when their flowers bloomed. Rattlesnakes slithered the desert floor to find a cool rock in the shade. Herds of antelope blended in with the terrain and could be so still they looked like statues. Whiptail lizards stopped for a break on top of wooden fenceposts to quickly look from side to side. The Cornudas Mountain could still be seen a hundred miles in any direction.



Reflections on AGU 2024

Story by: Casey Fletcher

On Sunday, December 8th, 2024, thousands of researchers and I made the trip to Washington D.C. to attend the annual conference of the American Geophysical Union. Held at the cavernous Walter E. Washington Convention Center just to the northeast of the Whitehouse on the edge of Chinatown. The conference hosted a range of professionals, graduate students, applied scientists, journalists and activists. Each attendee had a vested interest in the disciplines associated with the geosciences, some for the love of the game, others seeking professional development, and as I was able to confirm with some of my peers over lunch, opportunities for romance. This was my first time to attend a conference of any kind, and as an artist, I hope not the last related to the physical sciences. My collaborator, a geography graduate student, Marco Vallejos and I were there to present our budding research on the controversy surrounding Chamberlin Rock in the poster hall. Over the course of our presentation slot we spoke to interested and confused geoscientists about how a 42-ton glacial erratic moved first 100,000 years ago from the Lake Superior region on the Laurentide ice sheet, and then again when exhumed by T.C. Chamberlin in 1925, and once again, off campus by the University due to the rock's perceived racist legacy. In addition to being a story of reconciliation, shared governance, and the fight over just-representation, it is also a story of placelessness and how empirical thought can come in conflict with human interest. It would seem that the message from a critical mass of human beings and indeed the physical forces of the Earth itself were clear: please, anywhere but here.

From the beginning of this process there has been that same placelessness in the air. The pitch to present a poster at AGU came from Marco, while we were both at City Bar in Madison, Wisconsin, just down the street from our respective offices at the University of Wisconsin - Madison. It, like the five acre poster hall at AGU, and like Marco's feelings of dispossession within his discipline of human geography, summoned purgatorial feelings. There should be more here, more intentionality, more people, more noise. This distinct absence signals some kind of danger is nearby. An inexplicable absence leaves one feeling as though the situation has gone from the realm of the familiar to the uncanny, the unintelligible. The certainties one has towards their spouse are suspended when they come home from work later than normal, and, as will become increasingly relevant in this article, insane thoughts are only kept at bay through a reliance on trust.

Marco is a relatively new person in my life, even by the standards of the transient higher-education ecosystem. Our shared trust was clear when he expressed interest in collaboration and I decided to make the trip to D.C., and then murky during the months of radio silence while we pursued our litany of university responsibilities and attended to our personal lives. Even during the poster presentation our trust-balance went through rhythmic oscillations, but the two of us fielded questions and comments from more than a dozen poster visitors from 8:30 in the morning to lunchtime. Despite having traveled far and having limited time to corroborate our notes – at least in person – Marco and I worked quickly and collaboratively. It was a series of fun and challenging conversations that fortified our sense of direction with the research. Both of us left that day with a laundry list of blindspots, new leads and interested researchers in our contacts. I look forward to what comes from it.

On the way back from the conference center, I had not a near-death experience. It could have been decidedly a death-experience with the nudge of a few minor variables. In order to stretch my generous travel funding from the UW EdGRS fellowship, I only purchased a day pass for the week-long conference and rented an AirBNB in a neighborhood further away from the conference center, Anacostia. Those reading this familiar with the D.C. area may know where I may be going with this; I did not as I drove up to the home in my rented Nissan. Anacostia is separated from capitol's regal neighborhoods by a river sharing the same name. To cross the bridge that spans it is to see the manicured buildings of glass, marble, and anodized aluminum be replaced by row homes and businesses of flaky painted wood and brick. The closest analogue I've experienced is Philadelphia's Kensington neighborhood and much of Detroit. Shortly after exiting the Anacostia metro stop a few things happened in short sequence. First, I passed a group of around twelve, Black men in their 50's hanging out on the street laughing and shuffling, maybe drunk, maybe high, maybe just tired. Then I passed a vacant lot surrounded by a chain-link fence with faded signs that read "absolutely no trespassing" and what looked like electric utility equipment; lots of pebbles and islands of tall bristling grass. Next, tires screech ahead of me and a burst of shouts erupt at the same time. Two or three car lengths away a black sedan has come to a halt, it feels like it's on the sidewalk but it's not. Two young and excited men, are in the front seats. The passenger fires what I remember as five shots where two people are standing, but seemingly between them and into a doorway since neither of them fall. Everyone else falls to the ground reflexively, myself included until the car peeled off. Most of the people ahead and behind me were older and by the time I hald already stood up they were still making their way back to their feet. I walked back towards the group of older men in part to check on them and I suppose to check with myself. To ask if everyone was good and if I'd just seen what I thought I'd seen. They seem fine, familiar to this. I do not talk to them and continue towards my vacation rental.

I then recalled that I felt something hot hit my ankle and piece together that a spent shell casing had almost certainly bounced off the sidewalk and hit me while prone. I scan the ground while walking to see if I can find it and then I thought better of lingering. As I walk, I see no evidence of it happening aside from people exiting their homes and places of business to see for themselves; everyone seems fine, nonplussed. A group of young men exit what I assume was a residence closest to what I also assume was the "target" in a determined and unified fashion. I kept walking and as quickly as it began, it was over. By the time I crossed the street a father in his late 20's or early 30's was walking hand in hand with his early elementary aged daughter. She was singing to herself, neither of them aware of or appeared concerned about what had just happened 45 seconds before. It all kept on and the day stayed beautiful.

I go over the moment in my head again and again, but the part that sticks out to me is my reaction to it. I didn't then, and don't now, feel especially disrupted. I have a handful of theories as to why:

The reactions of others kept me on Earth, both their synchronous drop to the ground and their brisk recovery.

The uncanny nature of the day in question; sunny, pleasant temperature, bustling streets amidst the ambient struggle and unseen violence.

Maybe it was the fatigue from presentations, networking, travel, etc. and a dump of adrenaline, achieving, somehow, a near perfect balance.

Or it could have been gratitude for surviving; for myself and the others.

Perhaps it is a generalized low self-preservation instinct, resignation, but also an unwillingness to die.

Maybe it's an ancestrally ingrained familiarity with this kind of violence.

Or it could even be denial of the danger, wanting the situation to be better than the evidence would suggest.

When I think of families I have known and their relative unity through the slog of addiction, extramarital affairs, abuse, or abandonment, each of these little strategies appear somewhere along the line. When working with inner city children at Salvation Army summer camps, siblings often looked to each other as ballast points when their parents couldn't fill the role. As I write this, I live in the Midwest, a region characterized by its trademarked conflict avoidance. After witnessing enough outrageous behavior only to be met with a "keep 'er movin'" response, it's easy to imagine that some genetic predisposition towards resignation has been passed down through the generations. In my own relationships, I have seen the silencing power of denial rooted in desire for things to be better than they are. Nothing is preserved without something else being lost, and it's hard to know if one freedom traded for safety is for better or for worse.

So, I don't get too far from geophysical thought: the apparent calm amidst a climate apocalypse rhymes, (history, preservation, and



Chamberlin Rock, as it once stood with its plaque installed, near Observatory Drive at the University of Wisconsin Campus in Madison, Wisconsin. Photo by: Daniel Einstein; 2020

to me, with the same calm during a marriage apocalypse, or what could have been a case of broad daylight, right-place, wrong-time personal apocalypse. It shouldn't be. Like Cormac McCarthy (whose legacy is going through an apocalypse of its own)



Chamberlin Rock, as it now sits, near Lake Kageonsa, southeast of its previous home in Madison, Wisconsin. Photo by: Casey Fletcher; 2024

penned in the Road: "the right dreams for a man in peril were dreams of peril and all else was the call of languor and death."

There are of course a few obvious mechanisms through which we, at least in the global north under capitalism, have made docile in the face of the scientific promise of climate catastrophe. The 24-hour news cycle arranges the prescient and devastating reports from climate scientists into an unintelligible drone of other bad news and advertisements. Or, in the case of conservative media outlets, translate the so-called "narcissist's prayer" into a manifesto for climate change denialism: 'This isn't happening. And if it is, it isn't that bad. And if it is, that's not a big deal. And if it is, that's not our fault. And if it is, we didn't mean it. And if we did, you deserve it.'

I wonder if this is the trap of a less-than-mindful deployment of grace, when it's used to placate oneself under the guise of helping others. But in these instances, for that grace (or maybe peace) to be maintained it requires a denial of the realities of others. If true, it is one of the sneakiest manifestations of narcissism, this mode of making peace with oneself rather than with the world. Brass mistaken for gold. The "brass" in scientific circles could be understood as broad-stroke terms such as "innovation," "development," or "growth." The things that, when used as an appeal to nature, are made to resonate as a universal good but the means of actualizing these can be devastating. Their inverses degrowth) may be gold, but can, in the case of eco-fascist thought, be turned to clay. By definition this narcissistic bend is one within a closed loop, characterized by its exclusion and indifference toward external realities' influence on its fabricated narrative. It looks only to itself and outwardly into an imagined other to maintain an isolationist, disciplined, ontology.

I talked with Marco and Mauricio De La Perra Gurr while waiting for the NASA booth to open and we compared the arts and sciences, specifically their respective practitioners who we felt were excelling or had lost the plot. A common thread was that of self-awareness in one's practice through a practice of concern for the broader context in which one practices. So much of what we here might call "pornographic" art or science comes to viewers in elegant packaging characterized by its singularity, purity, and ease. An agreeable mural or an impressive satellite can instill wonder and be interpreted, when in a vacuum, as almost magical. But left to their own trajectory within structures of capital and power, they can be deployed to nefarious ends. The fact that ocean floor cartography can be quickly snatched up by petroleum and military interests, or the mural reading "this must be the place" can make invisible the lost labor and purpose formerly contained within the factory-come-luxury housing on which it is painted.

All of a sudden something technically impressive becomes an accessory to despair. The mindful scientist (particularly needed, I think, in the applied sciences) might choose to design a submersible drone with an awareness of both those in need of protection and those seeking to do harm. The similarly mindful artist may likewise analyze the milieu in which they practice and choose a message that draws attention to the legacy of globalization, or perhaps reject a commission from a faceless luxury housing developer entirely.

For the three of us, the emphasis on the milieu supports a move towards interdisciplinarity practice instead of rigid specialization, and perhaps is how one might negotiate between anxiety and peace in the face of the climate apocalypse. So why don't we do it more often? I can say for myself there is a modernist hangover in art that says with each headache throb: Universality… Freedom… Purity… Reason… Efficiency… Excellence, over everything. At the end of the day, a lot of us don't want our specific practices to be disrupted by what someone else has decided is inconveniently "outside" of our discipline, be that other exclusionary disciplines or ethical concerns. Even the banalities of grocery shopping, earning money for rent, or the company of dissimilar coworkers are frequently processed as threats to our work as solitary geniuses, the masters of our own fate, we think. We do, largely, just want to be left the hell alone. We do not want the magic of our moments to be broken by that which lies around it. But the more we think about epistemologies of discipline, or gain a deeper understanding of the gut biome, or power structures hinged on interconnected parts, the harder it becomes to maintain the illusion of the possibility of being left alone. Back to Anacostia: a clip loading, pistol discharging, suddenly in irregular succession likewise closes the gaps we have imagined between us and the not-us.

Ultimately, it feels to me that our resistance to interdisciplinarity and our related resistance to reckon with inconvenient realities, is a trust issue and a two fold one at that. On the one hand there is an anxiety that our trust will be betrayed and, as such, we are inclined towards cynicism. On the other hand, and I would argue more threatening, we might trust but in a way that indicates a misunderstanding of the term's constituent parts. The flourishing of trust, like I argue good science, good art, and a good life lived, is entirely contingent on a good faith practice of acknowledging that which existentially threatens the thing exercising trust. This doesn't mean that everything ought to be thought of as trustworthy, that rhymes more with a toxic optimism and denialism, but rather that you can be trusted with yourself in all things so long as you have a practice of committed, interdisciplinary, milieu oriented thought. Since I'm not secretive about my practice being Love or God-forward in my life and studio practice, it's worth saying that I think trust is a valuable concept because it is a precondition and symptom of love's flourishing.

Under this line of reasoning that a good way of doing, being, and becoming is hinged on good-faith inquiries into authentic difference (i.e. relying on a complex network and resisting impulses to isolate myself) I'm naturally concerned about how social media and screen-oriented living may create an inescapable cycle of narcissism. This anxiety is, so far, assuaged when I employ the strategy I just described: being among the living. As I write this, I'm now on an airplane over Ohio or Indiana, and have been so encouraged by the warmth (sometimes carried through commiseration) strangers with disparate optics and class, faith structures, and orientations extend to one another. This warmth emanates despite what they might do in the frictionless corners of the internet or at the ballot box. As I said earlier, during the shooting there was a unified series of reactions from those of us subjected to it: a drop to the ground, a staccato chorus of "oh shit" or "the fuck?!" scanning the threat, scanning ourselves, scanning each other, in that order, in unison as if choreographed. I wonder now how we would have behaved differently had one of us been hurt or killed in that moment. I wouldn't have said this a week ago with much confidence, but after having such a reflexive response in hitting the dirt, I can extend myself a little credit and say I would have tried to help. Based on the rest of our responses I think others would have too. But in both cases, you can't know until you know. And even then, the relevance of that knowing is held to task by the constancy of change.

THE JOY OF
PUBLIC SPEAKING

Does speaking to the public give you anxiety and stress? Do your talks sound something like this?

"Right, Yeah! So, it's like, uh, I just, sort of, uhm," well, I mean, like, kind of, you know, ah, I guess, I don't know, so...

Well that's a real bummer, but you're not alone. For just $65* we can help. Don't Wait, Call Now!

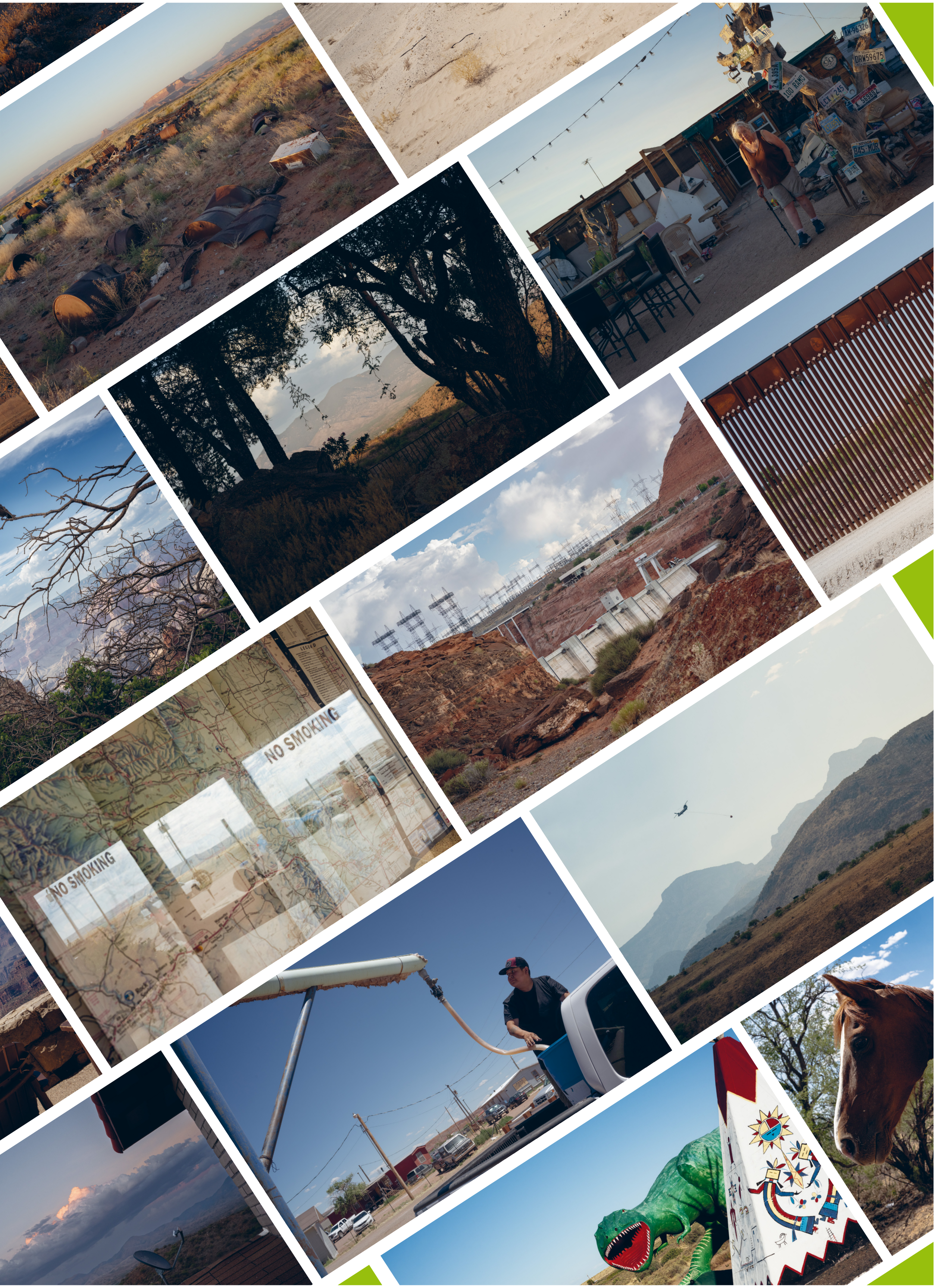
*Results may vary. Rates begin at $65 for the first hour and are $65 for each hour thereafter. This isn't a real service, but if you are truly considering seeking help, send us an email and lets chat! We may be able to help!" info@jasonhouge.com

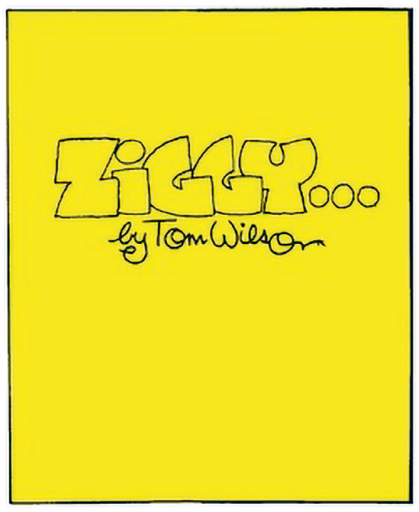
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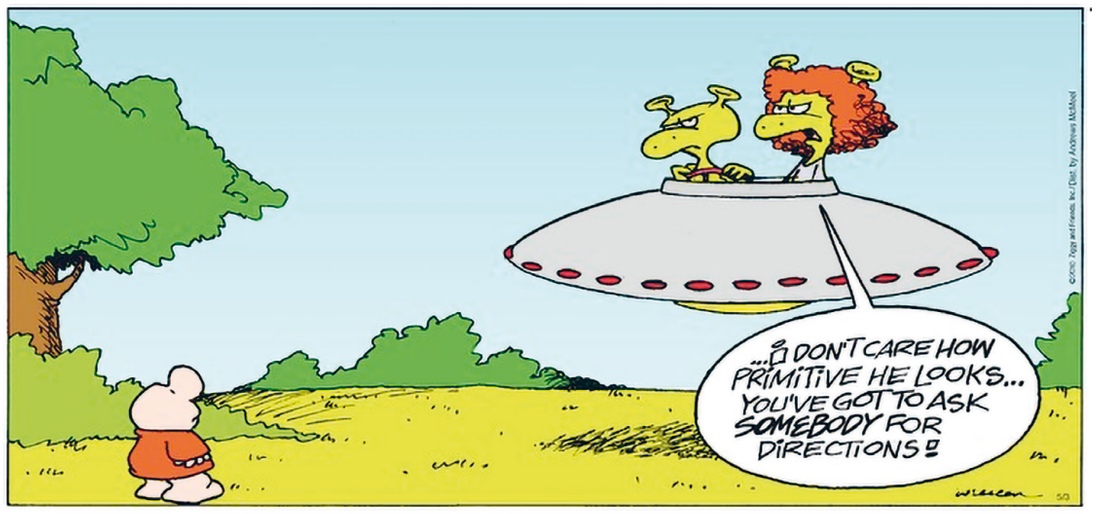
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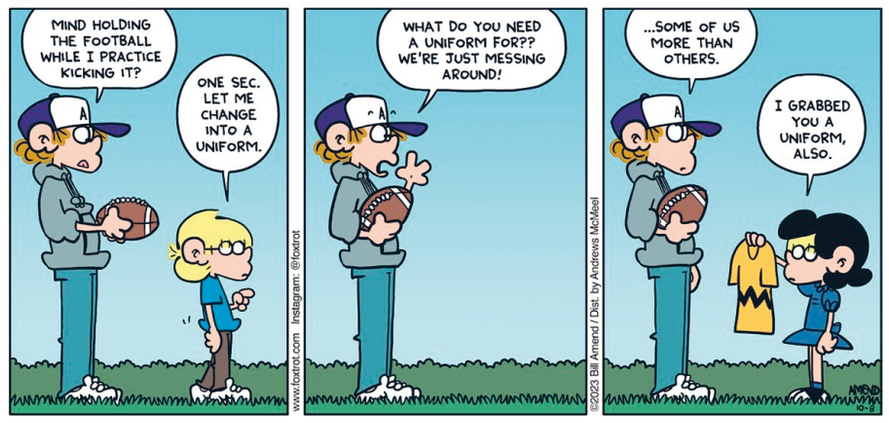
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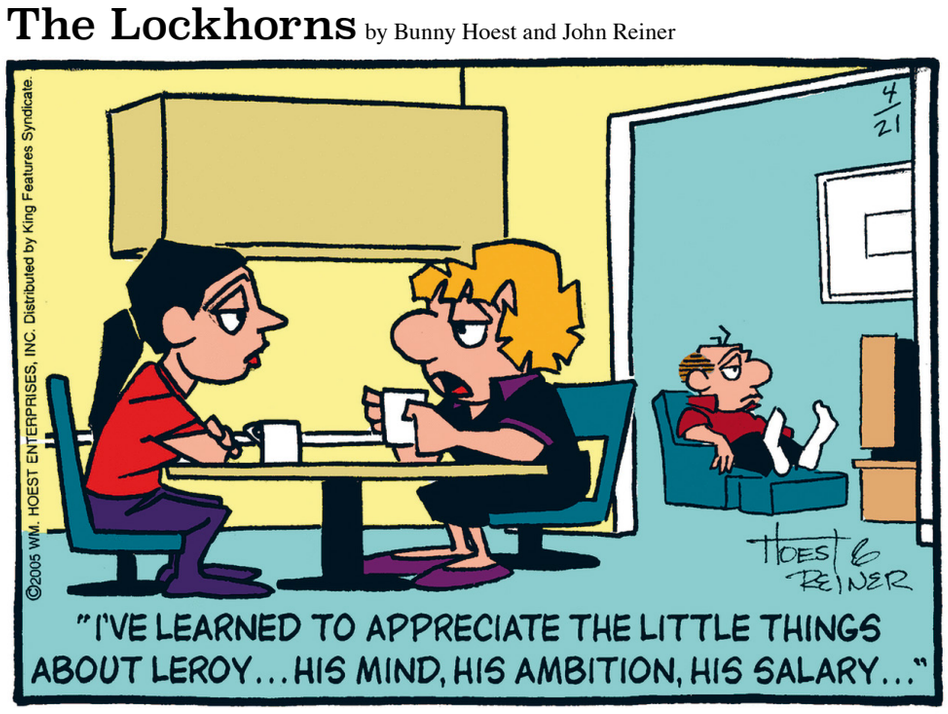


"Sssssteve?"
Blinded by the brilliance of his discovery, Steve handn't noticed his cantankerous neighbor had dropped in to discuss his late hour noises.

HALF FULL by Maria Scrivan



The Lockhorns by Bunny Hoest and John Reiner



Postcards by Kayla Bauer



SOUTHWEST STYLE

Across

1 State where Doc Holliday died.

7 The most famous gunfight in the American West happened here.

8 Favored by gunslingers and lawmen alike, the .45 caliber round was invented for the iconic gun, also known as this.

9 The former mining town where a famous U.S. marshal met his wife.

11 Named after an American yucca, this album put U2 on the map.

14 Originating in the 1960's, a subgenre of the American Western produced by European film makers.

16 A Gadget built and tested in secret was discovered by this New York company.

19 Armed prickly giants are called this.

20 After his failed attempt to fly a giant balloon to spread the word of God, outsider artist Leonard Knight built this masterpiece in Southern California.

21 The phenomenon responsible for 10% to 90% of the snow loss in the Colorado Rockies.

24 Known as a monadnock, this New Mexico rock stands out from the rest.

25 Incredible builders of the southwest, these peoples are the original inhabitants of the region.

28 Loopholes in water regulation has enabled these subdivisions to compound the water crisis in Arizona.

29 Genus of an invasive plant species that found its way to North America through Russian flaxseed import.

30 New Mexico is known for this delectable herbaceous delight.

31 The superfund uranium cleanup site on the banks of the Colorado River.

32 Popularized by Nirvana, discovery of this metal has started a white gold rush in Southern California.

33 The world's largest pistachio can be found here.

34 A dry landscaping process that reduces, or eliminates, the need for irrigation.

Down

1 Can't tell a cow: hikers beware of this delicate biological soil that covers much of the Southwestern landscape.

2 The thing that may be wrecking you on this crossword that the Southwest has plenty of.

3 The most prominent feature in this national park are its hoodoos.

4 These indigenous people are the oldest residents of Colorado and Utah.

5 Proper name for a seasonal waterway commonly called a "wash."

6 These twists of wind and dirt are the smaller cousins of tornadoes.

10 At 230 feet below sea level, sitting upon the San Andreas fault, this saltwater lake is often ignored as the current point of termination for the Colorado River.

12 Traditional ceremonial home of the Diné people.

13 Originally inhabiting arctic regions, these Athabaskan people moved into the Southwest around the same time Europeans "discovered" the Americas.

15 Alaskan photographer, Bill Hess, rescued his cat from a killer dog in this Arizona village.

17 At nearly 18 miles wide, over a mile deep and 277 miles long this is one of the seven wonders of the natural world.

18 Located in the Never Summer Mountains, this engineered waterway diverts significant source water away from the Colorado River.

22 Cause for great concern: More than five hundred of these are abandoned on or near the Navajo Nation.

23 Final resting place for the wandering outlaw in the Southwestern U.S.

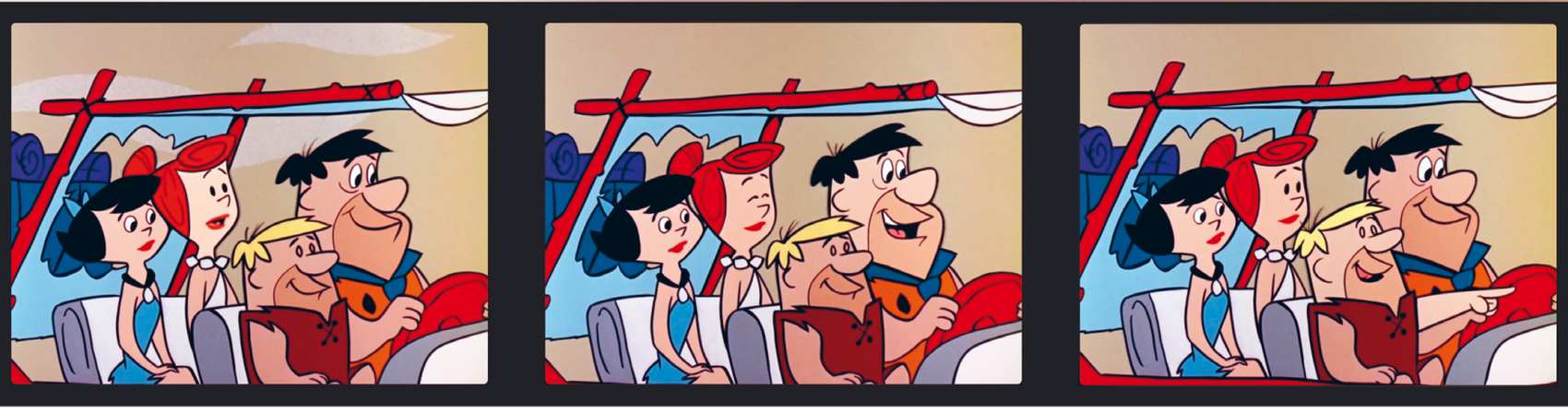
26 Originally from El Centro, California this Goddess of Pop would turn back time, if she could.

27 This tiny marine cetacean once relied on the lush Colorado River delta.

Answers can be found on page 10

THE FLINTSTONES

Hanna-Barbera, 1961



Wilma: "We've been traveling for four days now. We should be getting close to the ranch."

Fred: "Yeah, we'll be there in a few hours."

Barney: "Hey, Fred! Fred! Uh, look at the sign up ahead."

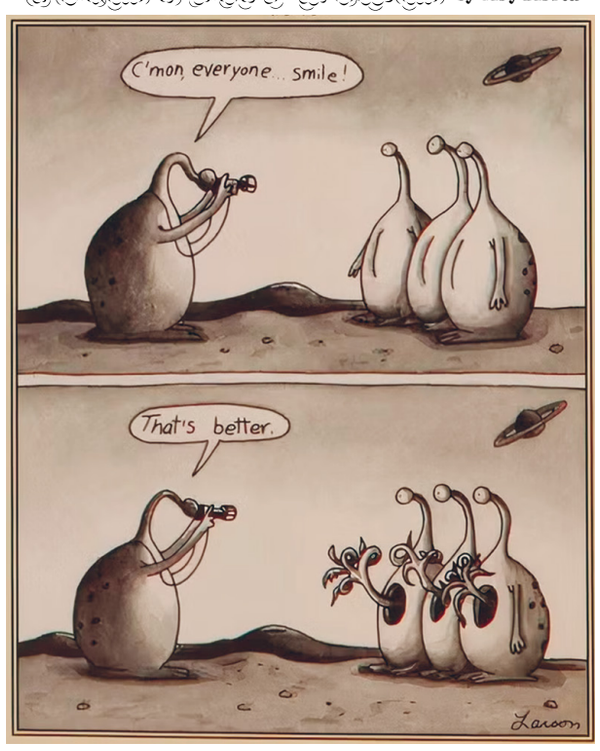


Fred: "Boy! The Grand Canyon. That's one of Nature's Wonders. Lets take a look..."

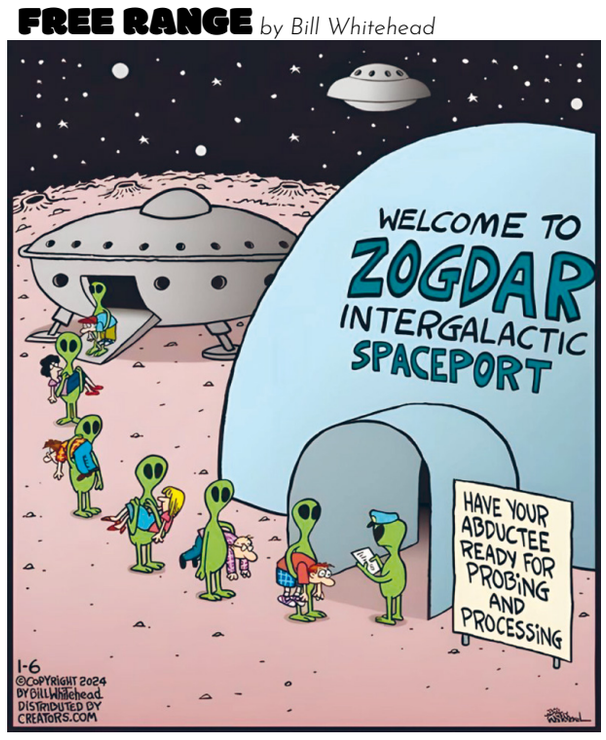
Wilma: "So that's the Grand Canyon, huh?" Fred: "That's it!" Wilma: "Well, it doesn't look like much to me..."

Fred: "Not now, but they expect it to be a big thing someday."

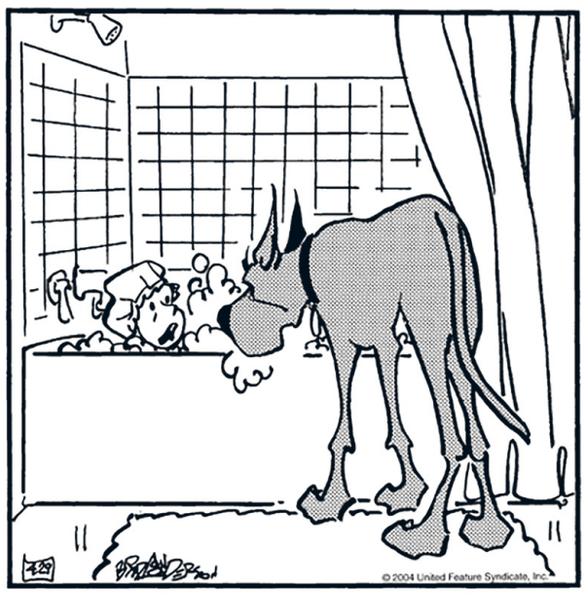
THE FAR SIDE by Gary Larson



FREE RANGE by Bill Whitehead



Marmaduke by Brad Anderson

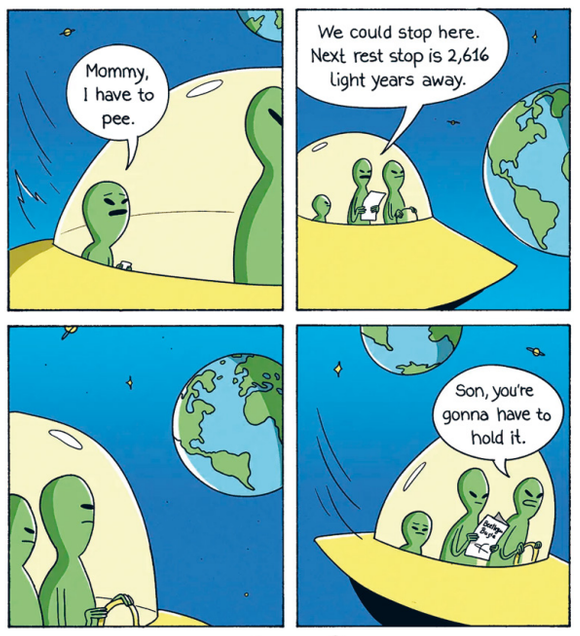


"Marmaduke, go find yourself some other spectator sport."

Sarah's Scribbles by Sarah Anderson



WAR and PEAS by Elizabeth Pich & Jonathan Kunz



False Knees by Joshua Barkman

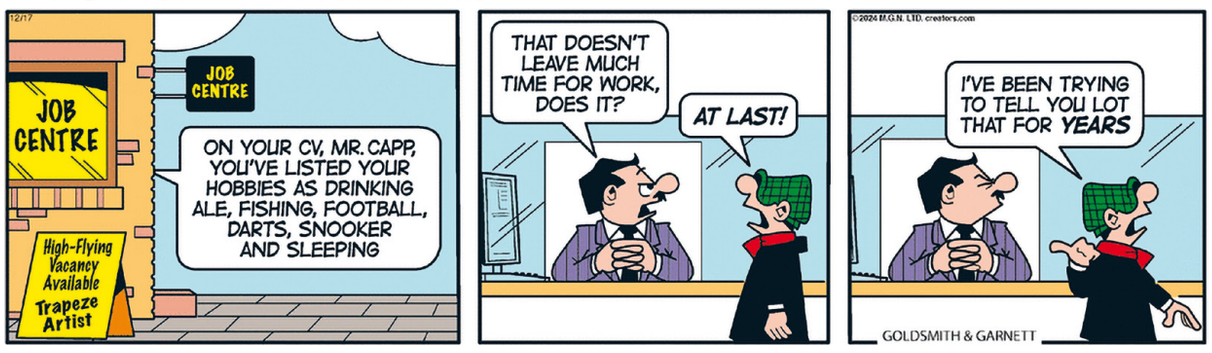


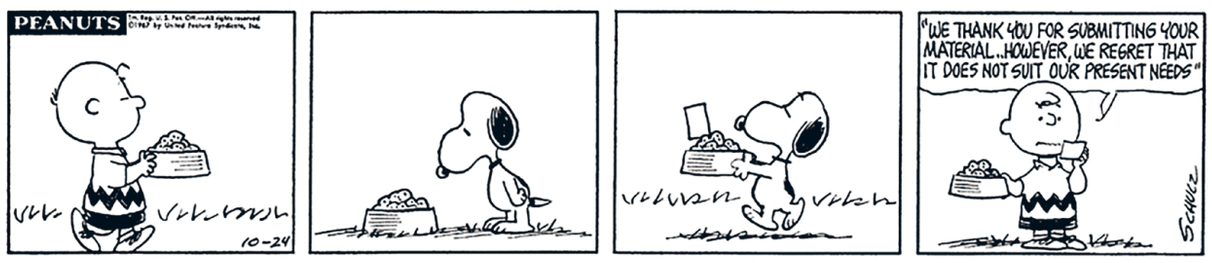


Jeremyville



ANDY CAPP BY REG SMYTHE





snake by Ethan























CLASSIFIEDS

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OBITUARY

In loving memory of our baby, Ansel. On Halloween Night; 31, October 2022, he lost his 2-year battle against lymphoma. He was 13 years old, soft, grey and he loved his nipple. He frequently flew to the Moon in a spaceship made of cardboard and when he wasn't watched: chewed on plastic and tape. Rest in Peace sweet Baby Grey.



Brian Andrew Stehsel, 44, of Seymour, WI was at home, in the company of his wife of 20 years, Aimee (Janssen), and his closest friends and family when he went sailing away for the rest of eternity.

After graduating from Green Bay West in 1998, he enjoyed racing his truck, Brute Force, fishing, and working with his friends and clients at Van's Honda.

In his later years, he was a beloved uncle, husband and friend. He enjoyed watching pelicans fly over the Fox River with Aimee.

He was a huge fan of the World of Warcraft series, Def Leppard, Styx, South Park, Bob's Burgers, fine bourbon, fine scotch and craft beer.

He was preceeded in death by his old man, Arlen, and cousin Paul.

He is survived by his wife: Aimee; mother: Mary; brother: Joe (Erica); his chosen brothers: Nick (April) Verstoppen and Jason Houge (Kayla Bauer); his in-laws: Jan and Linda Janssen, a sister-in-law: Sarah (Miguel) Medina, nieces: Juniper and Sophia, a nephew: Wyatt and his furbabies: Zoey and Sherman.



Patricia "Pat" Neerdaels, 90, peacefully passed away April 4, 2023 in her hometown of Green Bay, Wisconsin. She was born on May 18, 1932 to Sylvester "Bud" and Freda (DePeaux) Gallagher. At the age of 17, she married Peter J. Neerdaels on July 4, 1949. Together, they shared 60 wonderful years. They had 3 children, Christine, Peter and Ellie.

She loved spending summers at the cottage and winters in Hawaii with her family and friends. Together with Peter, they loved to travel across the world to destinations such as: China, India, Belgium. Africa and Alaska.

She is survived by her three children and many grand children and great grandchildren.

LONELY HEARTS

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Journals from The Westlands

Continued from: page 2

pet your cat?" he asked. I picker her up to bring her over as he tried to get up. One leg was prosthetic. He said: I had a cat once. His name was Skeeter. I was 8 years old. We went up to my grandmother's house. He was in the back of the truck. We opened the back of the truck + he took off scared. Never saw him again." As he pet Lumpy, he said "Long hair. What's his name?" "Lumpy", I tell him. He laughed + said "Well, have a nice day," as he sat back down. As he rolls away, he says one more thing: "I like your tie!" It's Adam's second wedding in a few hours. I'm late.

23/09/28
14:30
Time travel would need to account for motion in space, not just time. The planet, solar system, galaxy all move.
{see below 23/10/30}

I had a panic snap over the weekend – school is such a trigger. It's like being at a buffet, but instead of 'all you can eat,' it's: 'eat it all.' + do it in 3 years.

I must sit + write about my summer work.

23/10/08
Not so many years ago, when we moved from Green Bay to Madison, I only had a hint of grey in my beard. Earlier this year, perhaps before my trip this summer, my chin had the only solid patches anywhere in my beard. My sideburns are a solid white mixing into a salted pepper surrounding my dark chin. Today my chin is a salted pepper surrounded by salted sides + full white cheeks. My face will probably be a full white by my next birthday.

My back + shoulders are very tight + sore, causing stiff + erratic movement in my writing. A tight neck plus my "table" is the soft armrest of the love seat – so yes, I'm also contorted while trying to write.
Experience of the wall – photos as portals.

23/10/30
21:28
What if… The asteroid that struck the Earth + wiped out the dinosaurs was really a massive spaceship used for mankind's only time travel experiment attempts ever. (It may not even need to be massive, only moving relative to Earth at an extreme speed, due to adjustments to needed in relation to Earth's position over temporal changes.) The result being the great extinction event + time travel being concluded a folly, thus why Stephen Hawking never had any visitors during his Time Traveler Party.

23/12/10
18:08
Times + Things are looking up.
I am thankful for what I have today + what I am able to do + where I am headed. I feel very grateful. I am at school in my studio, printing some demos of my work at scale to see what looks best in print.

23/12/19
When we are young + we discover out fragility, are we discovering this? Are experts correct in saying kids "think they're invincible?" – OR – were we invincible once? Before this Earth?
I remember thoughts from my youth, I dared not say certain words, + unable to express others because my mouth was like a drunk's: confused + unable to move as I wished. Is birth the "humbling" of a spirit as it takes to this Earth, to live here?

And do we gradually forget this before? Through successions of humblings? Is this how so many feel a loyalty to this earthly realm? They've come to believe, through a complete forgetting of the before, therefore they've become human? What if you were born a goat? Or a lizard? What of a sparrow or algae? Is all of this a form of entertainment for the soul?

If energy cannot be created not destroyed, then upon death consciousness, the spirit of a life, must go someplace! To become a part of another field of energy – to climb into another kind of existence.

"You see
It's neither pride, nor
gravity but love
That pulls us back down
to this world.
…
The soul makes a
thousand crossings,
the heart, just one."

Quoted from John Glendy, 2009; Poem Landscape with flying man.

The Landscape:
Man's transport through space + time across the universe. We inhabit + exist upon the nurturing surface of this space craft we know as Earth.

Virgo; moon in Leo
Yin Earth Goat Jǐ wèi
Authority is contextual + constructed

John Berger

- Learnt assumptions
- What does my audience think
- What are my assumptions about them

24/04/05
8:54
Going to the Grand Canyon this summer with Peter + Ash.
This weekend: visit REI, plan out itinerary, determine camps + food needs.

24/05/24
23:30
It's hard to think about bigger goals or dreams when those around you have no ambition, or don't align with you.

24/06/03
11:13
Captains Log…
I am sitting on a picnic table at the Green Bay Wildlife Sanctuary. The geese are all around basking. Baby butt biters squeaking not far away. There is a breeze + cottonwood floating in the air. Earlier I saw someone mowing + it stirred up like a snow globe.

This summer, in just a few weeks, My brother + I will be going to Arizona + camping in the Grand Canyon. I can't wait.



Peter photographing the Moon though Ken Kochberg's telescope. Ken is an artist living in Tucson, Arizona area. He is close friend of Devon Stackonis and her family. Ken enjoys stargazing and brought one of his telescopes over to Devon's family's X9 Ranch home to share look at planets and the Moon with us. The X9 community is a dark sky community and an excellent place for star gazing. Photo by Jason Houge; 2024

I have spiders + bugs crawling on me! They tickle…
Not more than 10 minutes ago I was sitting in my car with the AC blowing + gurgling water to stop a sneeze fit.

Anyway, it's … HA! A little spider crawled up my arm, climbed me to the top. I felt it tickle past my ear then a moment later, it stretched down on a thread of silk right in front of me as if to say "Hi"

On 5/21 @ 21:21 Brian passed. I'm not sure if I've written about it.

Many years ago I used to keep a nature log to write about the discoveries I found on a nature trail I made behind my parent's cottage. I feel I need to revitalize some of this practice. To sit, to observe, to just be.

24/06/12
12:00
This week my brother, Peter, + I will be going to Arizona to explore + visit the bottom of the Grand Canyon. However, his flight has been cancelled due to a huge, unusual weather pattern over Florida. It may become the first named storm of 2024. Stay tuned – or just look it up…

He's rebooked for later.
Things I still need:
- Bring Voigt
- Roll 20 rolls of film
- Get cooler plugged in

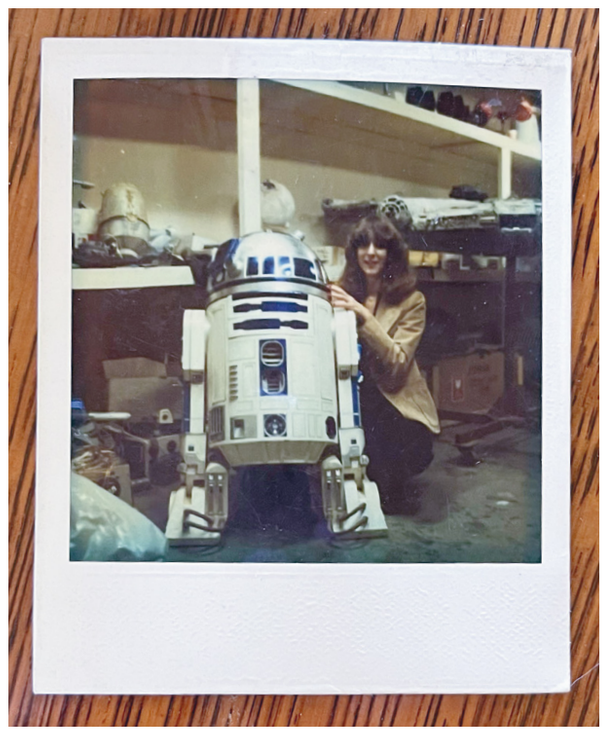
Things in the news: Russia has a small armed fleet of ships visiting Cuba. There is an on-going war w/ Ukraine + Ukraine is using U.S.-made weaponry to defend + attack inside Russian territories.



The Moon as photographed by Peter though Ken Kochberg's telescope. His technique of placing his phone's camera up to the eyepiece worked quite effectively. Photo by Peter Alan Neerdaels; 2024

Russia + Belarus have begun nuclear drills saying they don't plan to use nukes. Remember they also said they didn't plan to invade Ukraine, either, as they built up troops along the border.
Elephants call each other by name. This is in the news today. What scientist are overlooking is that cats, dogs, horses, cows, + many other animals (including Ed, the squirrel) all recognize names, what they are + what they mean which indicates they understand language + name usage. They too may use names for themselves. But humans are too stupid to acknowledge this yet. Stay tooned! (What will happen when humans realize animals are multilingual beings capable of understanding multiple human languages as well as their own?
What will humans think of themselves when they finally make this great discovery + simultaneously realize, they've made no effort to, or have very limited means in which to, understand the languages of other life forms?)

24/06/16
9:00
Hello from New Mexico! Cloudcroft, NM. I'm just up. I'm on top of a mountain just up from Alamogordo, in the silver camp.



A Polaroid of Aunt Maggie with an original R2D2 at Skywalker Ranch in the 1970's or early 1980's. Photo by somebody she used to know.

Peter is with me + we've just camped our first night. So far, really damn good… honestly think we'll be fine. Neither of us are competitive, stupid or very foolish. We'll take our time, stay cool, hydrate + rest.

We'll be at the canyon later this week. It's also the summer solstice + a full moon.
I'm staying with my Aunt Maggie again. She loves to cook + I'm so full.

I've not written as often as I need during this trip, so some catch up is due.

We stayed with my friend Devon Stackonis + her family in Vail, AZ @ their X9 Ranch home. The X9 Ranch protects a back entrance to Saguaro National Park (east). + from their home you get a great view of the mountains in the park.

Devon + her family introduced us to Kenny, an artist friend of theirs. Devon, her mom + step dad are all artists as well. It was a wonderful time, we all hiked + swam in their pool + looked at Saturn + the Moon with Kenny's telescope.
…
In Nogales: the Moon, nearly full, just rose above the mountains to the East. The sun is getting lower + its light appearing warm across the landscape. A fair breeze blows + I am sitting at a table outside in the shade. My aunt lives in a nice home atop a ridge in the Northern part of town. From here I am overlooking the airport + a small prop plane just took off. A pair of ravens r nested in a tree by her patio. They don't seem to notice me now, but they were unhappy I walked out here. They circled the house, sat in the tree beside me, crowed in 3 parts each time. Then they gurgled + chattered to each other. I stood up to see if they were eating some unfortunate animal… they flew off + circled some more.

Yesterday, on our way to Nogales from Vail, we took a mini detour to see Tombstone, AZ. Curious town of theatrics, old ways + new. A lizard is watching me from a nearby tree.

It's warm, but not hot. I am tired, from eating, but not sleepy. I feel… greasy. The tortillas, I discovered, are made with lard. I've been a vegetarian now for over 10 years.

In a year, I hope to return here. My aunt has slides she needs digitized + I can do that.

24/06/26
9:30
"***Well, That was Tedious.***"
- Sherlock (Benedict Cumberbatch)

On Sunday, 24/06/23 around 5:00, Peter + I began our decent to the bottom of the Grand Canyon. The information we read regarding time down + back up was deeply flawed. They claim 4-6 hours down, we took 12 down + almost 20 back up.

I suppose if I had lived there, it would get EASIER in time. At the bottom it was humid + 100°f for most of the day. The Bright Angel Creek offered significant comfort. I'll need to do some research to learn about its source.

The way down was the worst. As we walked, we entered the danger time of 10am-5pm + reached camp around 5:30. The body stress was intense. I had several blackouts, from what I assume was low blood pressure. I sought out the ranger, Tim Hobbs, the next day. He + an intern med student / assistant ranger, Thea, gave me an EKG, took my vitals +gave consultation. Thea + Tim were great + so impressive. They do such a variety of tasks. Tim is a linguist, medic, armed officer, + obviously knowledgeable in hiking + survival. A real impressive man who seemed kind, caring, patient + ready for anything. Thea seemed caring, brilliant, + excited for life. I was happy to have met them.

Along the way I helped several people. Peter + I spotted 3 Germans filling water bottles from a stream. When I asked them what it was for, they said "emergency use." I had been carrying a portable filter, so I cleaned the water for them. But unfortunately they had already contaminated their bottles, so I worried for them. I heard about an Indian woman + her daughter who hiked down with little for supplies. I saw them

Continued on: page 10

Journals from The Westlands

Continued from: page 9

a while later, they made it to the bottom but seemed very lost + confused. When I saw them, they were by the ranger station but I knew the ranger was in the camp checking the sites. After I mailed some post cards, I walked back + told Thea about them. She ran back to see how she could help…. They had been asking for a phone.

I also met a couple in the camp within the first hour of being there. Bill + Tracy. Tracy is Chinese + Bill is from Southern California. Bill is a teacher + Tracy with circuit board manufacturing. Bill had moved to China around 2010 + met Tracy a year later. In 2020 they came to the U.S. for a 10 day visit, then the pandemic changed everything for them. The were stuck + had to stay in the states.

Peter + I ended up leaving a day early + it was good we did. We walked with Bill + Tracy, we were all grateful for the company.

…Many hours later…

22:22

We left the Bright Angel Camp around 5:30pm after spending most of the day laying in the creek and writing post cards. It was really too hot to get comfortable rest at night and virtually impossible to nap during the day. So, after a quick dinner + talking about our plans, Peter + I decided to skip the second night of our reservation + joined Bill + Tracy to hike out together.
If you've never hiked to the bottom of the Grand Canyon, you should know we took the Bright Angel trail both down and up from the South Rim. There is another trail, the Kaibab. It's shorter, but more treacherous, has no cover and no amenities. We opted to take the Bright Angel despite being several miles longer because it does offer cover from the sun + weather + has running water. The Bright Angel, from the South Rim is just shy of 10 miles. The Kaibab is around 7. The North Rim is several miles further away and has greater altitude change as well. We hiked through the night until we reached the 3-mile rest house, I think it was around 1 or 2 am. If you're counting, that's 3 miles from the rim. We hiked about 6 ½ miles in about 8 hours. Bill was having heart trouble on the way up.
We took our packs off, sat in the rest house + took turns using the bathroom. It rained momentarily + by this point we had regained some phone service + were able to check the weather. But we sat for too long + each of use spontaneously fell asleep. Peter on the ledge of the window, Bill on the floor, + Tracy on one end of the bench, I on the other. We woke around 4am. Soon were joined by many others who were making the journey down and some were coming up. For the longest time we were fairly alone on the trail with a small group of young men from India ahead of us. Every so often we would catch up with them and they'd move on. At one point, as we were pausing for a rest along the side of the trail, we saw a light in the darkness higher up the canyon moving towards us at a high speed. Could it be someone on a bike? That couldn't be… Bikes aren't permitted + it's too dangerous. Then suddenly a man comes sprinting by us. He pauses for only a moment when he sees us.

"Headed up or down?"

"up" we say feebly

"I'll feel your pain in a few hours, I'm headed to the north rim" he said as he ran by.

I watched his light as he descended deeper into the canyon. He passed points in the trail that took us hours to reach within minutes of each other. 'Damn, he's fast' I thought. In the distance we could see the



Bill, Tracy and Peter resting on the Bright Angel Trail as we hike back up to the Grand Canyon's South Rim. Photo by Jason Houge; 2024

lights of others rushing to the bottom nearly 20 miles across the canyon.

"Who are these people?!" Bill asked.

As the group was gathering their things + getting ready to move further up, I continued to watch the light of our visitor as he zigzagged through switchbacks we encountered much earlier in the night when suddenly his light stopped moving. His light lingered in the darkness, not moving. Questions began running through my mind: What happened? Is he ok?
Too far away to know. Time seemed to crawl + his light didn't move. Then suddenly, the little light seemed to fall straight down into the darkness of the canyon. My heart jumped! As I was thinking the worst, his little light proceeded to continue through the night on down what I could only presume to be the path.

Within the hour, others jog by and a few more walk by.

We trudged on into the sunrise and through the morning. The final 1.5 mile stretch took 2.5 hours as we shuffled from shady spot to shady spot. As the morning dragged on we reached the danger hours again, where the sun is directly overhead + temps climb fast. The trail was now pretty full of people, because most visitors never go beyond the 3 mile point. Bill was monitoring his heart rate closely and took more frequent rests to bring it down again. Peter, being the youngest and most athletic, jogged the rest of the way to the top so he could use the restroom. To my surprise, he came back down, pack + all, despite having been to the top. He could have left his pack in the car. But he wanted to make sure we all made it out together. He even offered to help Bill carry his pack. Peter again ran off to the top, this time to leave his pack in the car so he could carry Bill's to the top. Between the tunnels near the top just through the lower one, Bill, Tracy + I paused again to rest along a cliff face. Bill seemed to grow tired of being tired + decided to move a bit sooner than the rest of us. As he disappeared around the corner, Tracy was shouldering her pack when Bill reappeared. "Change your mind?" I asked. "Trail's closed" he replied. Closed??
Turns out workers just ahead were moving huge stones to build a better trail. We were soon allowed to pass, which we took advantage of with all the speed we could muster. After what seemed like an eternity, Peter reappeared on the trail ahead. Bill wasn't ready to give up his pack now that we were within sight of the rim. By 1pm we all emerged and went to the bathroom to clean up and refill our bottles.

Bill offered to meet us at McDonalds to feed us and thank us for sticking it out with them. McD's is about 8 miles out of the park in a nearby town. I nearly ran off the road twice on the way due to being so exhausted. All I could eat were some fries and a small vanilla shake. In part because I am vegetarian, but more so because of an intense heart burn I was feeling from the hike. The only other time I felt heart burn this bad was while I was at the Workshop I took in NYC with David Alan Harvey. Peter + I departed Micky D's with hugs and handshakes. We drove back to the park + upon entry the attendant asked if we needed a map. I mentioned we had just crawled out today and had gone to eat. She looked at us closely and realized how tired we were and wished us well. We had a camp site reserved for the night and still had to check in. I stopped the car near the registration building and both of us passed right out. I have no idea how long we sat like that, but when I woke up I had absolutely no idea where I was, how I had gotten there or what I had been doing before.

Slowly, as I was looking around, it started to piece together + I remembered what I was supposed to do next. We registered, set up camp + drove back to the general store where we showered. That was when I started to shiver uncontrollably so I put on the jacket I had brought along.

That night, we slept really well and woke up early. I made us some soup then we packed up our camp. I started writing this earlier, during breakfast, now we're at the North Rim where I am sitting in the dark at a picnic table with my red headlamp on. This lamp worked all night last night as we hiked and the past few hours again tonight, all on a single charge! Tough light.

I must sleep now.

24/06/27
6:12

Good morning from the North rim! It's cool here, if I had to guess, I would say low 60's ºf.

I was having an interesting dream, bus I've since forgotten it.

Peter has wandered off to see the sunrise from someplace.

In fact, he just strolled by on an adjacent road. I think he may be lost.

I have our camp kitchen set up and I'm currently heating the water for coffee + hopefully some soup.

The North rim lacks the crowds. In fact, if you didn't know better, you'd think this was just an ordinary camp in the woods with some extraordinary rock formations a short walk away. Unlike the South Rim, the view of the canyon is hidden + the trail is much longer going in.

Travelling between Rims

Coming from the South Rim, the road passes through the short scrubby trees of the Kaibab forest. Then large conical hills begin to dot the terrain, old cinder cones from a more volcanic time. The trees eventually vanish and just as quickly are replaced by dried grass. The landscape becomes one of grass covered hills and water cut canyons – small canyons, dry at the bottoms. The grass soon gives way to stoney lands. One of these old cinder cone hills was active in a more recent time period. It's called S.P. Crater + may have been active when early humans lived in the region. S.P. Crater was used for lunar lander tests during the 60's. S.P. is short for a more interesting name. Look it up!
From the road, you can see the Colorado River has cut a deep gorge across the land. It appears as a stark crack across the baren stoney landscape. One place of importance along the river is called Lee's Ferry. To get to it, one has to navigate down a canyon edge to the river below where it would have been possible to ford the river during drier times. This was a vital crossing for early travelers. Today, there is a bridge that crosses nearby. There are two bridges, actually. A contemporary one, used for traffic, + one built in the 1920's, called Navajo Bridge. These bridges are at level with the landscape but soar high above the river below.

Across the bridge, the rocky lands once again fill with grasses and then trees. The Kaibab forest again, but one this side, it is distinctly different. Unlike the southern trees, this side is composed of much taller pines and quaking aspens. Open meadows appear with small, lovely ponds. This area feels more like Northeastern Colorado than Arizona. Supposedly, there is a large buffalo herd that lives in this region, although I never saw any. On the south Rim, there exists a herd of Elk which are a pretty common site any time of year. But these herds have never met because of the vast canyon between them.

The Canyon

The bottom of the canyon is an astonishing place of great geological mystery. Somehow, the layers of stone at the bottom formed vertically. Sediment formed in flatter layers above it. All of this was heaved up over millennia + became the Colorado Plateau. Was there a great Earthquake that left a crack for the water to flow through? So much of the stone appears sharp and jagged. Some has certainly broken away, but was it really weathered by water alone? Only near the bottom is there visible evidence of the smooth surfaces water leaves behind.

Down below it's hot with limited airflow. Mule Deer, squirrels + lizards seem to dominate the limited lands. We also saw cicadas, scorpions + tadpoles. Once, while we sat in the Bright Angel Creek, tiny sucker like fish began nibbling my feet, ankles + hands. The were roughly silver w/ a black line along their sides.

The altitude on the North Rim is significantly higher than the South rim. Almost 8,000 at the edge, we passed 8,100 ft on the way in. The air was less abundant + I could feel that in my lungs. A mottled sunlight reaches through the trees. On the forest floor, beneath a break in the canopy, small purple lupine flowers were in bloom.

There is a scent of pine in the air and the occasional call of a raven can be heard. The ravens have a unique sound. One on the South Rim had a low authoritative voice. On the occasion you are near to a group of them, they grumble + clatter, talking amongst themselves. They are mystifying, intelligent + beautiful creatures.

At night, the winds above make a low hushed sounding whisper in the pines. By day, the activity of humans fills the air with vocal noises, the rustles of tarps and tents + the mechanical drone of a generator + passing cars. Car doors slam, horns honk, plates clang together in distant camps. We've finished our breakfast + will soon take down our tent + plan our next move.

24/06/27
22:42

Lake Powell at night is curious. It gets quiet + very dark. Overhead the stars twinkle brightly + the Milky Way blends with clouds. In the distance, lightning strobes on the horizon. Trucks come and go near the camp. The drivers seem to be trying to quiet their intentionally loud diesel engines, as though they might be embarrassed. Above, something chirps in the night. A night hawk? In Vail, Lesser Night Hawks would skim across Devon's pool at night taking little sips of water. In Hopper's painting, people are taking little sips as well. I kept a feather dropped by a night hawk that visited Devon's pool.
Crickets and other creaky insects also fill the background with their songs.



Peter preparing breakfast at our camp, Camp Tumbleweed, at the Flaming Gorge in southern Wyoming. Photo by Jason Houge; 2024

24/06/30
7:53

We left the Lake Powell / Glen Canyon area fairly early and drove to the Bears Ears / Canyonlands national parks. We had been planning to visit + perhaps stay at the hamburger rock camp site. When we arrived, it was evident no one had been there in quite a while + the sand had been made pristine again by recent rains. Of course, we messed that up… not intentionally. Due to the recurring storms, we decided to pass on the stay, + headed northward to Moab, Utah. When we pulled into town it was evident they had recently encountered a flood! The red mud was everywhere. Because more storms were in the forecast, camping at the BLM sites along the river didn't seem to be the safest option. We drove into the Arches national park and hung around there all night. We cleaned ourselves up and shaved at the visitor center and slept in the car in a place called the Garden of Eden overlook. When we woke up there were cars and people everywhere with cameras ready to photograph the sunrise.

On Sunrises

I rarely see them, but on trip like this I often wake with the day. The time is a busy time of getting ready + warming up. No time to take photos. Or put more simply. The sunrise is sacred + is not photographed (by me).

The Crystal Geyser

We headed toward the Green River, a tributary I've never paid much attention to before. Our first stop along the way was the Crystal Geyser. It was orange.

A long mysterious pipe was laid out across the desert. There were no signs or markings of significance. We jokingly assumed it must be the pipe that powered the "geyser" + someone had to go pump a handle to make it work.

As we left, an elderly couple had also made the journey and were beginning to walk around the site as well.

As we traveled northward, we hit some weather. It looked spectacular, so we jumped out to take some photos.

This morning we are waking from our camp on the Wyoming state line. The Flaming Gorge lake laps at the nearby beach. Overhead, gulls squawk. We just had our breakfast + I nearly boiled all of my water away writing this.

I had hoped Peter would alert me when the water was boiling, but he did not. Now we're off to a Great start! Peter is annoyed + I am tired of his company.

24/06/30
21:18

We've made it to Colorado! We'll meet up with Maeve + Jamie in Denver tomorrow.

We're up here at 10,100ft N40º29'32" W105º48'19"
We're camping in our tent. It's chilly + I suspect over night it will get into the low 40's. We chose site 1 on the Long Draw. It gives us an amazing view of Specimen Mountain, + I think the Craigs, which all seemed to have a lot more snow on them this time last summer.

Tonight, heavy clouds are moved swiftly overhead, but as the sun set they parted. The sky lit up in purple, yellow, orange + blue. Tomorrow I'll show Peter the headwaters, then I don't know!

24/07/01
16:52

Well…. We did a thing.
Our site was a pay by night site and we couldn't seem to find any deposit envelopes. We sought out the camp host and finally found her. Her camper was painted to look like the Scooby Doo mystery machine and her hair was dyed a red orange and she looked a bit like Velma. She told us the U.S. Forestry service opened the gate on the road a day early. The camps were not supposed to be opened until July 1. By my dumb luck, we happened to slip in early and set up camp before the season began. She let us go without paying. We got to camp in this gorgeous place with no one else around - for free. Wow. Just. Wow…

24/07/02
11:16

Yesterday as we drove to Denver, we left the Rockies. And unlike coming to them from the west where the terrain gradually builds and becomes mountains, driving out to the east the mountains simply end and you pop out into the great planes. It's a strange sensation.

24/07/10
17:00

We arrived home, in Madison on July 4.
Kayla is now in San Francisco, Peter is back home in Florida + Lumpy + I are sitting on the porch, enjoying the outside together. I've been getting some good work coming my way since my return + it feels great! I do need to follow up on some leads that came my way while I was gone.

I want to work more on my descriptive writing.
In my next life I want to travel with the person I love. I want to visit Paris, take the train south to Italy. I want to see the Mediterranean. I want to experience the art + feel the culture.
I'd like to learn about book printing + publishing, visit print studios + explore. I don't want to stay in one place too long. But I do want a place to call home.
I want to expand my business to become a prominent fine art print studio – both digital and traditional. I want to collaborate with other artists. I want to be sought out. I want to open a residency + workshop school. I want representation + global recognition for my art.

I want to call someplace warm home. I am tired of the Wisconsin isolation + winters. I want my relationships to be built on trust, communication + the understanding we may have different goals + we respect one another's ambitions. I want to be with someone who has ambitions + goals + will work to reach them. I want to cheer them on + be of help along the way + I want the same from them in return.

24/07/16
8:44

Sometimes, you've got to do a little stunt just so people will say: "Hey! That guy…. That's the guy."

Crossword Answers: (words only):
ALAMOGORDO APACHE ARROYO BOOTHILL BRYCECANYON CARRIZO CHER CHILE COLORADO CRYPTOBIOTICSOIL DUSTDEVIL GRANDCANYON GRANDDITCH HOGAN KODAK LITHIUM OKCORRAL PEACEMAKER PUEBLOANS SAGUARO SALSOLA SALTONSEA SALVATIONMOUNTAIN SHIPROCK SPACES SPAGHETTI SUBLIMATION THEJOSHUATREE TOMBSTONE UMTRA URANIUMMINE UTE VAQUITA WILDCAT XERISCAPING

FIRST PIX: a Travel Log of the Southwest by Peter A. Neerdaels

Editors note: This was Peter's first road trip and his first time in the American Southwest. He and his brother, Jason Houge, spent just over 3 weeks together driving out from Madison, Wisconsin toward the Southwest through Iowa, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska and finally Iowa again. Due to Peter's heavy work schedule, we were only able to obtain these photos. We've done our best to supply captions.



A "Nodding Donkey" oil well near the Oklahoma and Texas Border. Photo by Peter Alan Neerdaels; 2024



The Carrizozo volacinic field of New Mexico. Photo by Peter Alan Neerdaels; 2024



At the White Sands National Park in New Mexico, the sand is made of gypsum and is relatively cool to the touch, despite ambient air tempurtures being over 100°f. They also rent out sleds to ride down the dunes with. Photo by Peter Alan Neerdaels; 2024



Jason in the vastness of the dunes. To the north is the White Sands Missile Range. The Trinity atomic bomb test site is located on its northern edge. Photo by Peter Alan Neerdaels; 2024



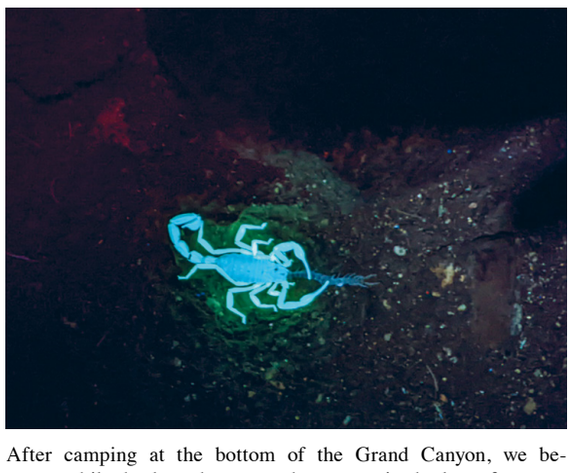
Devon Stackonis and Jason hiking on the trail leading from the Saguaro National Park back to Devon's parents' X-9 Ranch home. Photo by Peter Alan Neerdaels; 2024



In the desert south of Chandler, Arizona we found this random chair with a pair of pants and a Bible sitting upon it. Strange. Photo by Peter Alan Neerdaels; 2024



Over a mile down, and over 10 miles away from this vantage point, the Colorado River appears to flow slow and peacefully through the Grand Canyon. In the morning we'll hike down to see for ourselves. Photo by Peter Alan Neerdaels; 2024



After camping at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, we began our hike back to the top as the sun set in the late afternoon. After nightfall, we came across this scorpion eating a centipede. Photo by Peter Alan Neerdaels; 2024



Maggie's Kitchen

Arizona Classic Cheese Crisp

This simple, open-faced quesadilla originated at El Charro Restaurant in Tucson, Arizona generations ago and is a staple of the Sonoran-style cuisine in Southern Arizona. A large, thin, buttered flour tortilla is lightly toasted in the oven, then topped with melty cheese and baked until it becomes a crispy, buttery, ooey gooey cheesy delight. Although toppings can be added, the cheese crisp is perfect all by itself.

Ingredients

- One especially large, authentic thin tortilla (13-inch diameter or larger); hopefully, thin enough to almost see through it. Authentic tortillas are thinner than burrito tortillas and toast quicker.
- 1 tablespoon soft, unsalted butter
- 1 cup freshly grated melting cheese, such as a mixture of Oaxaca and Cheddar or Monterey Jack and Cheddar. Freshly grated cheese melts better than pre-packaged shredded cheese.

Optional Topping Suggestions

Roasted green chiles, chopped
Green onions, chopped
Cilantro
Black olives

Method

1 Preheat the oven to 350°F. Place a rack in the middle of the oven.

2 Place the tortilla on a large baking sheet or pizza pan.

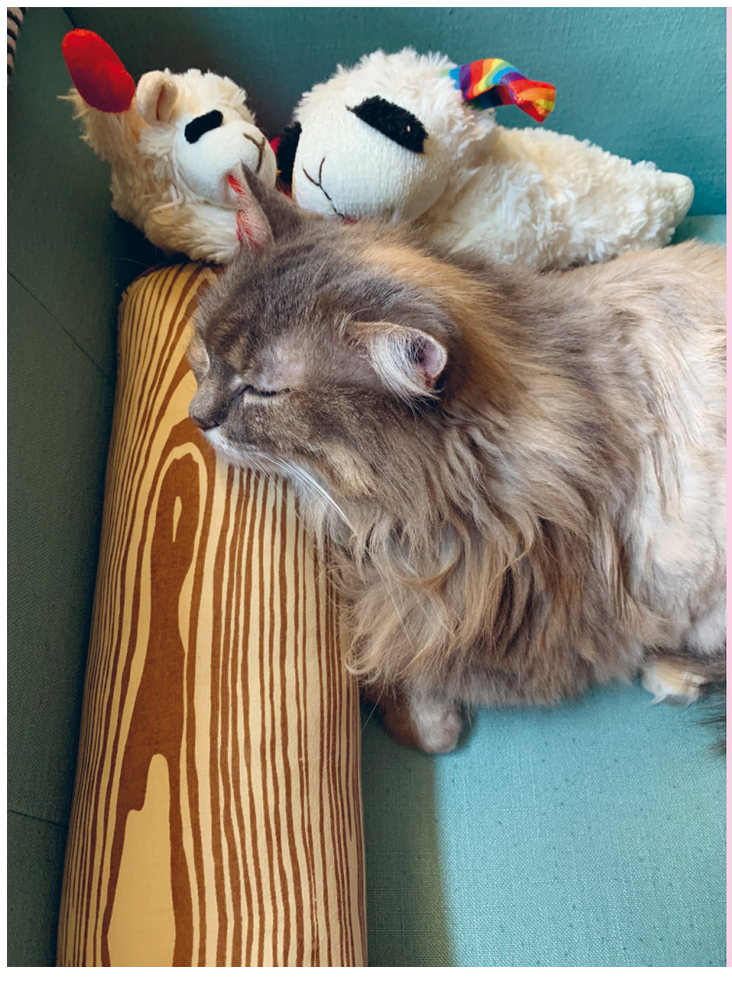
3 Spread the butter all over the top and out to the edges of the tortilla. This step is essential for the buttery taste and crispy texture.

4 Bake the plain buttered tortilla until slightly toasted; about 6 minutes.

5 Remove the tortilla from the oven and sprinkle evenly with the cheeses. If you desire toppings, add them to the cheese.

6 Return the tortilla to the oven and bake another 2-4 minutes, until the cheese is melted and bubbly.

7 Remove from the oven, cut the tortilla like a pie, share, and enjoy.



Lumpy's Log

My name is Lumpy. I once lived in the wild. The human I adopted has left me. My spare human says he left to venture far away.

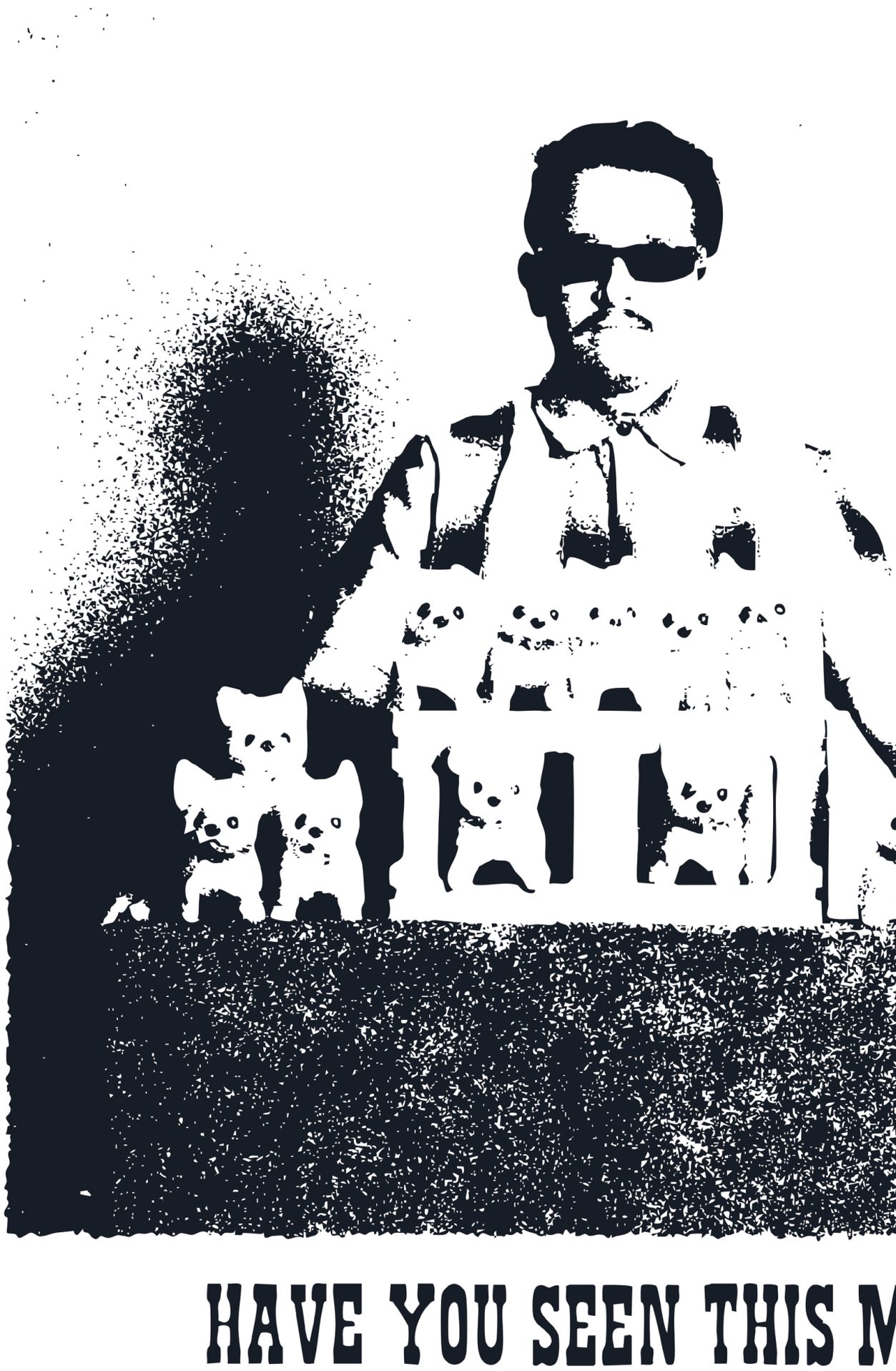
He went to see some big rocks-not sure why, we have one here.

Alas, he was gone for many months-all to experience a feral life. But he returned happily and has realized his home is wherever his Lumpy is. Now only if he'd stop looking at his pictures on the glow screen to feed me. Transcribed by Kayla Bauer.



REWARD!

$5000



HAVE YOU SEEN THIS MAN?

A reward of $5000 is hereby offered by the U.S. Government for the arrest and delivery of this man. He is 25 years old, 5 foot 6 inches, brown eyes, and dark brown hair. This man undoubtedly brings problems and crime, he was last seen on the run with his 13 vicious dogs.

His name is Mark Almanza! You'll find him at one of his hideouts: https://markalmanza.photo or https://www.instagram.com/bigairbonus