

AWARE ONES OF THE TREASURE COAST

BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER

"We are Progressive Humanists
We are the Soul of the Coffee House
We are Love and Laughter"

Vol.2, No.6
November/December 2017

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-- Produced by the TC Secular Writers --

(Note: this issue was graciously assembled by Dan Vignau while I recovered from surgeries and other life-changing events. Thanks Dan! -- Ed Z)

INTRODUCTION

J Dan Vignau

Welcome to the last newsletter of the year 2017. Let's hope all of us can join together for some holiday cheer. We are simply a few like-minded, in many ways people, who enjoy each other's company and I hope we can continue to should work together to remain a cohesive group, despite our differences. We also need to join together to complete some projects that we have either begun or at least discussed, e.g., Joan's hard work on the business cards.

AOTC MEMBERS & FRIENDS

Members

Joan Auerbach
Marsha Banks
Rick Burkhart
Sandra Burkhart
Paul Carlos
Gloria Cosgrove
Barbara Lange
Jim Longo
Bert Mautz
Charlie Thompson
Marilynn Thompson
Dan Vignau
Ed Zillioux

Friends

Amar Almasude
Joanna Almasude
Marilyn Graton
Stretch Graton
Bob Haskins
Roberta Synal
Virgil Thorp

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Meetings

Sunday Coffee – Every Sunday, Importico's Bakery, across from Kiwanis Park, Stuart, 10:00 AM, USUALLY ON THE PATIO

TC Secular Writers – Every other Thursday, Jensen's House of Brews, 6:30 pm; December 14, 28, then January 4,18.

Events

Monthly Potlucks

December 21 from 4- 6:30 We'll celebrate the Winter Solstice, again at the Gratoms. Dan is organizing. Please Phone him at 772-285-9860 or email at vignaujdan@aol.com With RSVP and what you plan to bring for the potluck.

Dan's notes:

I bought 15 pounds of chicken breast for my subsequently deceased little collie friend, as well as 10 pounds of potatoes, so don't bring those.

Bert and Joan: NO PUBLIX CHICKEN! I have enough for several potlucks.

A dessert would be great!

I will bring the group's wine glasses, which Gloria and Paul returned to me.

MEMBER NEWS

Our movie road trips have been good, with nearly a dozen people at the last event, "Three Billboards In Billings, Missouri," another excellent movie chosen by our resident Movie critics... mostly Bert. We have also seen the 2016 Best Picture Oscar winner, "Moonlight", the modern Western, "Hell or High Water," and "Baby Driver," the thematic remake of 1978's "The Driver" which starred Ryan O'Neal and Bruce Dern... not to mention the latest "Alien"

movie. Oh I forgot, Ed, I was not going to mention this. (Yeah, but you forgot "Wind River.")

A new year is upon us! Let's keep up the Movie Trips, get the cards made, and continue the potlucks, the last of which was a pleasant repeat of our last year's Thanksgiving the very generous hosts, the Burkhardt's. We had a bit of a starting time snag, but Sandra and Rick graciously put up with us, as we arrived at various times due to our senior moments, I suppose. As usual, they provided the turkey and setting, while the rest of us provided a few items and gaping mouths.

Barb and Jim had another great Halloween party, from what I heard. (I was walking my dog every 20 minutes.). Was this number 29?

Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

Our Snowbirds have returned and we are all glad to have them back, Sandra and Rick, Marilyn and Stretch, Paul and Gloria, and Richard and Roberta.

COMMENTARY

Roberta Synal <rsynal@hotmail.com> Delivered this piece in the Thanksgiving program:

"We give thanks to Nature for all it has provided us. For Family and Friends who walk with us throughout the years. We give thanks forthose who have touched our hearts and made us smile. We give thanks to those who have alleviated suffering, Who have championed a cause, For those who have resisted unjust laws, Who have fought against oppression and injustice, and have fought for the freedoms we enjoy. We give thanks for those who have sacrificed their lives to make our world a better place to be. We give thanks for those who have advanced our understanding of medicine and science. Who have helped explain the workings of the Universe. We give thanks to those who have applied paint to canvas in a way that stirs lings deep within

us, Who have composed songs which make our spirits soar, To all the people – past, present and future – who strive to better our world and make life worth living, to these people, we give our highest praise and our endless thanks.” (Jennifer Beahan)

DOG PEE CALCULUS 09.24.15
by Bert Mautz

This rant was prompted by two large women trying to walk a tiny dog thru
down town Stuart,
Sunday from their car to the farmers' market. The two women cooed and
pleaded while watching
the pooch sniff and pee on everything vertical.

As city blocks go, this one up north is huge. The storm water drainage canal, a virtual river, down the middle interrupts two cross streets, otherwise this neighborhood feature would be three blocks. Paralleling the canal are four holes of a municipal golf course. The brick paved alleyway behind our garage dead ends at the golf course where my neighbors have created a soft ball diamond, taking advantage of a high screen erected to protect the widow's south facing windows from slicing drives, for a home plate back stop.

Other features of the "hood," include the Bahai Temple, towering above Lake Shore Drive at Linden, coincidentally the end-of-the-line stop of the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) most northern line.

An approximate census, too approximate for calculus, thirty dogs live on my huge block, thirty dogs that enjoy daily walks.

Completing the computation of walk-bys yields this: Most of these dogs are walked morning and evening, for sixty daily pass/walks-by. The property under discussion here, was my home from '84 thru '02: The southeast corner lot of Linden and Second. This is a mature neighborhood, with majestic Dutch Elms, lush evergreens, fully developed hedges and shrubs giving the traditional, mainly brick homes a settled and timeless quality - standing stoically, like this, forever.

This corner property has high and low perimeter hedges, a six-foot chain link fence with a hedge enclosing the back yard, though actually exposed along the Second Street side walk, steps leading to front door, and a substantial

(three hundred pound at least) granite stone at the very corner beneath the cherry tree. Judging by the weekly clean-up of cigarette butts around this "mile-stone," many a walker and his/hers canine companion paused beneath my Cherry tree before heading east up Linden to Lake Shore.

After years of casual watching, then noticing to see if the walkers are at all conscientious about their dog poop retrieval, I amassed a statistically significant appraisal to make the unequivocal statement that each of those precious/g.....n dogs paused to lift a leg while their adoring/stupid owner stood admiringly at the other end of the leash, only to be led on to the next target of which my hedges and fence posts constitute eight or nine such opportunities for relief, FIVE TIMES minimum. The nearly black granite stone/rock has a 99% likelihood of being peed upon whether walkers are circumnavigating the block, clockwise or counter clock-wise.

Gentle reader, you are probably ahead of me here. The resulting sum of this field-tested calculus, daily pass-bys times targets, my corner lot afforded, TOTALS = Three Hundred dog urine shots a day, a day people. That is two Thousand per week, and nearly a Hundred Thousand annually allowing for extra walks on weekends and possible missed opportunities due to inclement weather. Calculations did not include a cubic centimeter volume estimate. The Chihuahuas always wore their too cute/ridiculous winter sweaters, with nearly bursting bladders bulging from their winter coats. BuT! Who knows how many other territorial markings nearly are happening, because this is a really big block.

Eighteen good years at this address, nearly Two Million hits. It can get in a guy's head. The entire family shared feelings of abuse and disrespect so of course when the opportunity presented itself, like when the boys mowed, we kicked dog doggie deposits off the lawn back onto the sidewalk for the enjoyment of our neighbors walking dogs.

THE WAY WE WERE

BALD RIVER FALLS

By Dan Vignau

My Grandmother, Maggie Nelson was born way up in the mountains in Stratton Meadows, which is the upper part of the Cherokee National Forest. I believe they might have worked some for the Strattons, or were possibly just the poor(er) neighbors, but she acted as if the Strattons were really something special. After all, the place is named after them!

To get there, we went up the main road from Tellico Plains, past the big and beautiful Bald River Falls on the right.

(Flash Back)

When I was in Grad school, I told Everette, my best friend who married our Professor Sam, that we were going to go over a waterfall. I showed them the photo of me, as I went head first and on my back over Baby Falls. Of course I would never have done this without first having witnessed a twelve year old local girl who seemed quite brave to me. My friends were excited to see this and to actually be able to do something so novel and exciting; besides, they will try to find any excuse to go to the mountains.

The parking for Baby Falls is at Bald River Falls, which sends a wide stream of chilly mountain water into to a rocky pool carved by millions of years of river erosion. This is the left side of the upper half of the waterfall. From there, along with the other half flowing from the top, it cascades to the jagged rocks below, where it races under a bridge, then joins the Tellico River a hundred yards downstream.

We stopped on the bridge to gaze at this nature-given spectacle. I never cease to be thrilled by this beautiful sight, accompanied by the roar of the water and the smells of the forest.

By the side of the road, I yelled, "Here we are!" They acted quite confused.

Of course, for extra dramatic effect, I did not let them see the paved pathway going around the hill to the top of the falls, and guided them on a fifteen-minute climb up a steep trail about a yard from the thundering falls. It was too noisy to talk, and it is a difficult climb. We had to push and pull each other up, and actually had to always hold onto branches to avoid being swept into the waterfall right next to us. One slip, and Kaboom; fish food.

At the top is a beautiful pool of perfectly still water. In fact, there are only the sounds of the forest animals and the breeze through the trees.

As we entered the picnic area, they looked around at the children swimming and playing as close as 10 yards before the big drop off. This pool is about 150 by 80 yards, in size, and truly idyllic.

Everette spoke first, "How in God's name did these people get the babies, tents, and chairs up here?"

I replied, "These are rugged mountain folk, adding, "Are you ready?"

"Ready for what?" she yelled. "Ready to lie on our backs and go over the top," I beamed.

Sam added, "Come on Dan, I saw the photo, but... but that must have been when the water was low and slower, much slower, I should hope."

I looked puzzled and asked, "Did we just climb all the way up here to chicken out?" Next, with a pouty face, I said, "You saw that I did it, didn't you? Both of my Steve's have gone over with me. I just thought we could have some really intense fun."

"We don't require that much intensity," they seemed to say together. Finally, I led them down the paved path, above the car so they did not see it, and said, "Let me show you a cool campground, where the Bears and Boar play at night."

They followed me up the paved road to Baby Falls. When they saw the sixteen foot drop into a much smaller pool of relatively rockless water, they were noticeably relieved and began to laugh and joke around. Sam said, "Thanks for the scare, Dan, I should have known you might do something like that."

He fired up a joint from his homegrown kind bud, and sat on a rock. I asked them to follow me down the embankment to the pool below so that passersby could not see us. Besides, I said, check out the wooden sign, "Warning, seven people have drowned or disappeared here." The "Disappeared" had been added above the new carat mark, apparently with a Magic Marker.

As we climbed down the ledge, Sam said, "It doesn't seem that dangerous. I asked, "Do you see that pool of water under the rock ledge across the stream of water?" When they looked, I added, That is where the missing people are. You have to be very careful, because the water goes

underground there, and it is like a riptide. You have to swim straight down stream or you will be gone."

"Whee," I thought! More danger and excitement for all!

Besides, it is supposed to be true. Continuing, I added, "If you try to swim to the little piece of land by the ledge, the water grabs you. If you try to swim in the opposite direction to the closest shore, the water grabs you. You must swim downstream in order to avoid the undertow. Just go straight for the second shore, that little island where it juts into the stream just before the next drop. It is really rocky further down, so you want to hit the shore and not pass it.

After we smoked the joint, I said, "Watch and I will demonstrate."

After removing all, but my shorts, I climbed back up to the top of the waterfall. There is a little pool where you put your feet, and then you can sit on the boulder and turn around. For my first descent, I always go feet first, just in case conditions have changed, or big, new rock or tree or possibly a dead bear has found its way to the bottom.

After a little hesitation, I let go of the rock and let the water take control of me. Putting my feet together and holding my arms up for better aqua-dynamics, I washed into the pool, descended about twenty feet to where my feet just touched bottom, then surfaced with a big smile.

Looking up at my friends, I yelled over the sound of the rushing water, "Now watch! This is very important!"

I swam as hard as I could toward them, but the water dragged me toward the opposite shore ledge, where presumably an underground river flowed.

Actually, there is no other explanation. Locals had told me that the first two known deaths were a little girl who swam into the abyss and did not return. Her father tried to save her and was gone, too. In fact, the first sign I saw said that three had died. Over the years this number has grown.

They were never brave enough to go off head first, but we had a truly beautiful time. They had been my best friends for years, and had more than hinted that the three of us could hook up.

I got as close as their hot tub once, but took my son for protection.

I also got a new photo of me, headfirst and face up, of course.

To be continued.

ARTICLES

By Sandra and Rick Burkhardt

The grizzled old man with three days of white stubble pulled his battered pick-up truck beside us and said "I'm Jim, the Patriarch."

And so he is: He bought this thousand acres of Eagle Cliff Ranch, and more, fifty years ago, quit his job at the bank, and raised heifers, then horses, and three daughters. The middle daughter is the one who is now running a cottage rental here, using the cabin they built for Granny, our Barn Loft, as one. It's lovely but it's got a flight of stairs at each end, one rickety and the other worse. I asked how Granny got down and he grinned and said "She didn't. Made her mad as hell."

He showed us the Bunk House, his private retreat and where he lets friends stay. It has a huge collection of arrow and spear heads, along with other Indian artifacts. There are also photos of him in the 1989 Last Montana Round-Up, when he and others herded several thousand cattle from a town several miles away into Billings. His photo is on the poster they used to advertise, and he sure looks authentic!

He drove us around to check on The Sanctuary, 250 acres he donated to a foundation which he set up and runs, which lets church-related groups spend time there free, or for whatever they care to donate.

He reports that the local Baptist minister spends every Wednesday there, unless other people book. He also says that in his history

there have been only 3 forest fires here -- each of the last three years. And the one 2 years ago burned down The Sanctuary, and he rode in there through the fire desperate to save the people there on retreat, only to find they'd gone on a Day Trip and were fine, albeit they lost all their clothes. Then he let drop that the helicopter dumping water on the fire splashed him slightly, but it scared his horse so badly he was dumped, three ribs broken, and he was kept alive only by his companion doing mouth-to-mouth and cell-phoning for an ambulance. He's 82 and doesn't ride as much now, he says.

Our view, probably over 20 miles across the bowl of Billings, makes for splendid sunsets. The horses find Hagar and Jack fascinating, but when they muzzle and sniff Hagar, he's indignant while Capt Jack is only Interested. He says these are the biggest rabbits he ever saw. The dogs love the twice-a-day mile we walk down the gravel road to the ranch gate and back. Today we went to Pompey's Pillar, a 200-foot high rock about 400 yards around, on the south bank of the Yellowstone River. Remember Sacagawea, famous in Night at the Museum as the translator and guide for the Lewis and Clark expedition?

Well, she was a Shawnee who was kidnapped at age 12 by a rival tribe, then sold as a slave to a French-Canadian trapper. He bought two Indian women at the time but eventually married Sacagawea, and we never hear of the other one. When Sacagawea was age 16 and 6 months pregnant, she met Lewis and Clark, who had been authorized by President Thomas Jefferson to go explore the new Louisiana Treaty territory (the central half of the country today) and befriend the Indians. She agreed to be their scout and translator, and did a good job. Also, Indians never take women or children on war parties, so her presence and her son's let L&C's meeting with other Indians more peaceful.

L&C made it all the way to the West Coast, then on their return journey, they split up west of here, and Clark took the southern route following the Yellowstone River. By the time they got to the Pillar, Sacagawea's son was 18 months old and apparently had

charmed all the men in the group with his dancing and antics. Clark called him "Pomp," which was Indian for "Little Chief." He liked the kid so much that when he saw this huge rock, he named it Pompey's Tower. Later, cartologists changed it to Pompey's Pillar. Clark later talked the kid's parents into letting him raise Pomp as his own.

Clark's party split up at about Billings after 24 of their 50 horses, their trading wealth, were stolen by Indians. Clarks sent a sargent with the remaining horses to the Mandans, a friendly tribe east of here (where Bismarck now stands). Well, the rest of the horses were stolen too, so those soldiers killed a couple of buffalo and covered a basket with the skins to make a sort of furry bowl which floated them down the river to meet Clark.

Meanwhile, Clark needed a way to get down river, so he felled two cottonwood trees and dug them out to make two 28-foot long canoes. It was in these canoes that they arrived at Pompey's rock. The Indians had long held the rock sacred and also used it as a meeting and trading place, because it is visible from miles away. Fasting there was supposed to let you commune with the spirits, and one Indian fasting there was met on top by a mountain lion who chose NOT to eat him, so the rock was called "Rock where the Mountain Lion Comes."

In Billings Rick has delightedly found the home his parents built "way outside town" 45 years ago, now tucked into a crowded suburb in town. The Sears Store his father built and opened back then is still there, but smaller. Tomorrow we re-live Rick's memories of riding his little red sports car up the winding mountain road to Red Lodge, the eastern entry to Yellowstone Park. He remembers the cars ahead of his on this narrow road stopping to feed the bears, then getting back into their sealed cars and leaving him, in his sports car with no top, as lunch on a red plate for the bears. He cut abruptly past the other cars and sped on his way.

We'll let you know if tomorrow is as exciting!

LETTERS

If Christianity is about love, prove it; respect others' beliefs

By Dan Vignau; previously published in Stuart News

Here we go again. Jeff Gregory (Jan. 2. 2016 letter) calls it an absurdity for the paper to quote a Unitarian minister on the meaning of Christmas. Why is that Jeff? Are other people not able to share this holiday with you?

Gregory also states that Unitarianism disguises itself as a Christian church. Since I was raised as a Unitarian, I can state with certainty that is false. Unitarians welcome all faiths into their church, Christian or not. They do not want to exclude other people whose beliefs are somewhat different. In fact, they pray (not literally), "To whom it may concern," so they do not exclude any ghostly beliefs.

Gregory argues with Rev. Alexander's quote, "The true work of Christmas remains unfulfilled." Even Gregory must recognize the folly of this statement. If what he says is true, then absolutely nothing else can be accomplished by Christians. Is this what he meant?

Unfortunately, the extreme, right wing Christians have always espoused hate. They hated the Jews, then the blacks; they killed the American Indians, enslaved the Africans, and then hated them, too. They hate Communists, witches, homosexuals... the list goes on. Now they hate science.

Where will all of this hate stop? I think it is with humanism, with is a close ally of Unitarianism.

We should use science to discover how to make human existence more enlightening. We humanists do not want to preach our scientific knowledge to the religious choirs. We just get tired of continually hearing which groups the fanatics tell us to hate now.

Real Christians, keep your faith and religion of love. Do not join the haters. Try to offer love and peace, instead of isolating yourselves in self-pity and

hatred for people who are not your mirror image. Then, all people can change the world into a better place. Hateful rantings accomplish nothing.

I'm truly sorry that you super right-wing, hateful Christians need to rant every time someone offends your religious obsessions with a few scientific facts. Just remember, Science flies you to the moon. Religion flies you into buildings. Love makes the world a better place for everyone.

POETRY

A horse is a horse, of course, of course,
And no one can talk to a horse of course
That is, of course, unless the horse is the famous Mr. Ed.

Go right to the source and ask the horse
He'll give you the answer that you'll endorse.
He's always on a steady course.
Talk to Mr. Ed.

Come on people. Send me something or it will be worse next month.

COMEDIC CORNER

Not Funny Ha Ha

