

XVIII***TIME BELONGS TO THE GODS***

In the olden days, before Captain Vancouver plied these Coasts, before the compilations, computations and calculations that resulted in the daily tide and current predictions, one was obliged to be ever watchful of the respirations of this watery element. In those days, one would be advised to observe caution in his anchorings in a strange place, sounding the datum all around, allowing enough depth beneath his craft to account for unknown tidal excursions. He would also be advised to study the flux of currents, that he might not labor in vain against their issue.

Ordinarily one could care less what day it was and hardly care much more the exact time; lost in the wildernesses. We of the modern era are only casually aware of those preeminent concerns of Captain Vancouver.

We carried aboard Atavist detailed charts of every anchorage; we also carried detailed calculations and predictions, computed to the minute, of tidal excursions and the extremes of flux of the currents, as well as their direction in degrees. All we need do is keep abreast of the day and the time of day. Equipped with a calendar, the much handled and manipulated record of the solar year, juggled by the Caesars and sundry Roman politicians until Gregory the Thirteenth put matters aright, amongst other things, we merely needed be aware of what man has never lost track of. In addition, embanded to my wrist, was a Japanese Quartz chronometer that gained only a few seconds per month. If I doubted the accuracy and veracity of this marvelous contraption so-called 'watch' (watch what? Why, WATCH over time, of course), others, by the billions, were ticking and pulsing away; but even more, we carried aboard a radio that would receive the International Time Signal every minute, with precision. Ah yes!, such faith have we. Amen.

Although we gave some attention to the calendar, the chronometer, the tide and current tables and the charts, we did lose contact with another time; the steady knock and knell of the Media, those heralds of the dire travail of MAN.

Steeped in this other environment, this other time, this lack of concern; His (Man's) pervasiveness and preeminence had diminished to the sight of the occasional mariner, the floating offal, the rusting indecipherable thing along the shore; His voice reduced to a sullen whisper. We had broken off our contact with Him. We looked at each other in awe at our new-found species.

Surely while we carried His good works aboard, we denied His preeminence NOW. We had grown weary of kneeling before His arrogance and presumption.

Even at best, "All Things Considered", that 'enlightened' source of NEWS, that attempt at studied objectivity, rarely found time to rant in any but the mundane Altercations, beaming and radiating its oblations, all the while hoping, through some persuasion to a sincere rationality, to be able to provide solutions to our myriad common dilemmas. They projected the seemingly discerning and moderated sapience, that the moderate, rational person would accept as palatable truth; those passive frightened creatures, the moderately rational people.

How not to sensationalize the NEWS; how restrain the compulsion to dramatize? - all out of proportion? How pass over the fact the NEWS is a rather tiresome repetition of past events, a grim reminder of our failures? Mark Twain, perhaps sarcastically and bitterly, observed one need only peruse the Headlines but once a year, to become reassured we were still on the same old course. Truly we are unerringly remanded to our real-life soap operas. We perceive the world in Turmoil, often Ruin, and that, my fellow man, is the objective fact. I can only guess at the Intent of the Media to Foment, knowing it to be a cruel wrong.

Cry WOLF!, for evermore; we, deadened by this overdose of enlightenment, are no longer willing or able to respond, or abide its message.

And so it was, that cataclysmic events unfolded in our absence; unconcerned, not waiting for us, hardly wishful of our participation.

And so it was we survived in ignorance; and in PEACE. And so it was this mutuality of the Event, the sound of the tree crashing to her enforested breast, and the unevented ear in the remoteness deaf to the occasion; neither this Fall mourned in witness to an arrogant exit, or in witness to humble expiration, nor ear assaulted or engaged in pained commiseration. Surely this sound occurred, and surely, being responsive souls, lives, we would have mourned.

And, indeed, it was after some five days, it had happened, and it had been broadcast far and wide, round and round; the air was rife with the truth of the Event; the big tree had crashed to the forest floor; our ears wide to the songs of birds, the gurglings of the freshets, the invisible motion of the air as it plied our sails and rigging, and the trees near abouts; our Black Box silenced to OFF.

It has been estimated that if each person was to relay a tidbit to two others every twenty minutes, and each subsequent person were to relay to yet two others in the next twenty minutes, and so on, it would take less than half a day for the entire world's population to be informed of the tidbit by word of mouth, such is the nature of exponentiality.

Still it was five days after the spectacular occurrence that we learned Mt. St. Helens had become a ghost of her former self. And indeed it was by word of mouth, as we touched upon some tiny outpost to procure fuel, that we gained knowledge of this earthshaking Event. "Oh

my, you don't say". Nevertheless the Black Box remained confined and disciplined to Silence.

But you see we might have been punished, if one is inclined to believe in chastening forces, and had perished of an agonizing malady had we not listened, in another context, to the Voice from out the world of Man. Fate, however, played into our hands, not wholly by accident. We had procured a Marine Radio especially for our sojourn, that would allow us to receive information regarding nature's disposition in terms of weather systems and ought else she might provide to hazard our passage. In addition Environment Canada sought to broadcast repeated and adamant warnings concerning the incidence of Red Tide (that insidious minute and poisonous marine organism *Gonyaulax*, that becomes concentrated in filter feeding Bivalves; Hah!, being immune to the poison themselves). Precisely the very day and no less coincidentally, near the very place we had decided to gather clams from the seabed at low tide, we received the Fated message.

While it may appear that one is damned if he does and equally damned if he doesn't, it is to say, upon further examination, that one occasionally acts from out his wisdom and not always in a hypocritical way. We benefited from our training, such as we were willing to submit ourselves, and our otherwise cautious natures.

Indeed it would have been a pleasure to have had a ringside seat, despite the loss of Mr. Truman and all those who tempted fate by venturing too closely, to have witnessed this wonder and power of Nature, this testament to the palpitations of our dearest Mother whom we take for granted; to some, a violent display of her 'Wrath'; and to others, a clear demonstration of Universal elemental forces, and yet others, as merely a touch of gastritis in the Great Mother.

"Oh, you're from Oregon; quite a show down there!".

"How so?", we queried.

"Mt. St. Helens; have you heard?"

"No".

"She blew her top".

It had not been unexpected; we had been apprised before we departed 'pon our journey; there had been rumblings; predictions. It had already been planted in our minds, like Nuclear War; it was a matter of time. The Media had plagued us; it was a Hot item serve at breakfast, lunch and dinner, and even during our repose, any time we cared for a little update in panic. The world thereabouts rattled incessantly of the approaching eruption. For a time at least, something



had displaced WAR, MURDER, and VIOLENT DEATH in the Headlines; surely for some it must have come as a Welcome relief; something to humble Man in his feeble Wars, Murders, Rapings and Dopings; surely Man was being scooped by the forthcoming BIG BANG!

Other momentous News items found their way into the endless chatter of the chroniclers. Aye!, the Rise of the One man, a future President, upon the Failings and Entrapments of the Other, the to-be-deposed President. And another worthy of mention in he that had borne the brunt and fault, and was a fugitive from the curse of IMAM, having perished of Dread Cancer, a week-long buried Shah before we had learned. Hah!, and still more to gab; those two Persian Gladiators had bloodied each other for some five days, and were in their second throes, catching their breaths, finding little, as it were, before we became privy to that exhibition and recurrent desultory theme. HMMN, Yes!, again and again, these preening banties come by some of the Super Power's odd toys, emboldening their spurious brains; Aye! - to provide entertainment for the masses, cock-fighting being a peculiar pastime encouraged by the MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL ESTABLISHED ORTHODOXIES. Place your bets!!!

Is it any wonder we would not allow our Peace to be disturbed?

Should I convey to you this UnNewsWorthy, this unmomentous event of PEACE? Of quiet; of life begging a Unity with one's surroundings; a life begging for its validity amongst things not broadcast, not notorious, but plain, mysterious; insinuating themselves through an osmosis of spirit?

To partake of adventure, one must participate in its very own happening, leaving ought else to fend for itself. It would seem from this I advocate some irresponsible acts or some calloused indifference. Ah! No; you must do, yourself, then you may speak, and I would venture to guess, quite differently afterwards.

Thus it was we were so privileged. It would have been a glorious treat to have returned to a transformed world. We had learned, however, we were not responsible for its failures. While some might have blamed us for having shirked our share of the load, allowing it to fall to someone else, each along an endless chain burdened the more.

But Hail!, we have returned; and how do you greet us, but with more of the same. Ye have not perfected your own world; if we had died it would still be your prospect.

Aye, ye Utopian, take heed; 'twill require infinitely longer than God hast to recreate this one small sphere of activity. Perhaps it is He that is derelict.

An endless journey then; is that your advice? The question arises whether to further the journey or end the participation, and whether there is any happier circumstance.