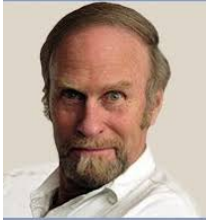


Irony, Pain, and Hope of Earth Day 2024



By Frosty Wooldridge

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Fifty-four years ago, we college kids stood on campuses across America to celebrate U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson's initiation of "Earth Day 1970."

"Millions of people around the world will pause on Monday, at least for a moment to mark Earth Day. It's an annual event founded by people who hoped to stir activism to clean up and preserve this planet that houses 8 billion humans and trillions of other organisms."

Senator Nelson said, "Our goal is not just an environment of clean air and water, and scenic beauty. The objective is an environment of decency, quality and mutual respect for all other human beings and all other living creatures. We must recognize that we're all part of a web of life around the world."

Since that year, this journalist traveled across six continents in the past 54 years to see if humanity noticed and acted on Nelson's creating of "Earth Day."

At the time, humans numbered 3.5 billion of themselves across seven continents. In 1970, plastics were virtually non-existent. Species extinction rates weren't even counted. Humans burned 50 million barrels of oil 24/7, which was not noticed at the time. Air pollution had not reached the enormous toxicity it would become. Whoever heard of

“gridlocked” traffic other than New York City and Los Angeles? What was “acid rain?” Roadkill--what’s that? China approached 1.0 billion people, but so what?

Fifty-four years later, we humans added 4.6 billion more of our selves to reach 8.0 billion. We add 1.0 million of ourselves every four days, which exceeds 83 million annually, net gain. Projections show us adding 2 or 3 billion more of ourselves in this century.

We’ve tossed 170 trillion pieces of plastic into our oceans according to National Public Radio’s Scott Simon. You can see it EVERYWHERE in rivers, lakes, alongside roadways, in the woods and anywhere humans tramp across the land. Even in our National Parks, hundreds of young people must pick tons of litter from visitors. Which shows, countless Americans don’t care about our environment.

We burned 50 million barrels of oil 24/7 in 1970. Today, we burn 100 million barrels of oil 24/7. Predictions by James Howard Kunstler in *The Long Emergency*, state that humans will burn 200 million barrels of oil by 2040-50, daily! Air pollution over our large cities rains down with acid rain that kills our soils and toxifies our water.

Americans in the lower 48 states, run over, propeller chop-up and kill 11.4 vertebrate animals every second to add up to 1.0 million roadkill’s every day of the year. (Source: High Country News study on “American Roadkill’s.”) The wind turbines chop of 500,000 birds a year.

In our oceans since Life Magazine reported in 1991, “Predator Becomes Prey”, humans have been killing 100 million sharks annually for the past 33 years. Such a killing spree destroys the ecology of our oceans along with the plastics onslaught. Additionally, because of all that carbon particulate and acidity being dumped into our oceans from fossil fuel burning, reefs worldwide are being destroyed. And, the fish cannot

adapt fast enough to survive.

That leads into the extinction rates of Earth's creatures--now estimated at 80 to 100 species 24/7 going extinct. Never to be seen on Earth again! The great Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson said, "We expect 1/3 of all creatures to become extinct by 2050 and up to $\frac{1}{2}$ before the end of this century."

We've created 84,000 chemicals that Nature cannot neutralize. Thus, they all flush into the final toilet: our oceans.

While I have only covered the tip of the iceberg, "catastrophic climate destabilization" will most likely be our ultimate downfall as a species on this planet. We humans are running out of balanced weather, water and soil to grow our crops.

As it is in 2024, 4 million children starve to death annually and 8 million adults. (Source: United Nations reports on childhood and adult early deaths.)

So, what do you do as an American, Canadian, European, Australian, and/or third world person? Is it hopeless? Are we headed for the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse?

This past Sunday, my preacher at my church in Denver, Dr. Barry Ebert gave a deeply touching sermon on Earth Day.

"We must have a worldwide consciousness of change," Ebert said. "We need commitment, clarity, and interest. We must return to balance. We need to collaborate with ourselves and Nature. We must bring 'focus' to our mission for our planet. We have only one home and it's this planet."

He added his thoughts on climate change. "It's real, it's bad. It's us. It's changeable. It's hope. It's about heart and love of Earth."

Ebert cast a deeply serious tone over the 1,500 people in the audience. They felt his words. They knew that every one of

them would be affected in the years to come. They knew their children would be living through Nature's response to our current abuse of the planet.

Ebert said, "Crisis brings clarity, hope, possibility and energy to restore the planet to balance."

In the end, it's up to each one of us, individually to act. Ebert has taught at our church for 30 years, Love and Logic, how to bring up kids to be productive and contributing members of our society, as well as confident human beings. He taught the entire audience that morning to become involved with the solutions for our planet. He beseeched us to stop using plastics along with many other solutions.

Today, only seven states carry a 10-cent bottle, can and plastic deposit/return law? Hey, why don't Americans engage a 50-cent deposit/return law on all plastic, metal and glass containers? What are we waiting for? When you put financial incentives in place, every kid would sweep the landscape clean of plastic, glass and metals of all kinds. So simple, but why haven't we made it a national/federal law?

Why aren't we recycling EVERYTHING we manufacture? Why haven't we charged full speed toward clean energy? When are we going to address the fact that every added human being as to "exponential growth" to the planet beyond the planet's carrying capacity is a "resource competitor" that cannot be watered, fed or sustained? When are the 8.2 billion humans on this planet going to engage serious and gracious birth control to bring our numbers into line with the planet's ability to sustain us? We've already accomplished it in the United States with 2.1 children per woman since 1970. Same with all first world countries!

Why not STOP spraying Roundup and Weed B Gone on our crops with the poisonous glyphosates that cause cancer to us and all other creatures? Why not stop the GMO's that are killing our

bees, and other pollinators? Why not total organic food production?

Dr. Ebert implored the congregation to get involved, to produce ideas and solutions, to act. For certain, the U.S. government won't produce solutions because they owe their souls to Big Pharma, Big Food Industry, and Big Business. When it comes to industry, money always wins over ethics, morality and common sense. Dr. Ebert mentioned the book, Draw Down by Paul Hawkins. It might be a roadmap for you to start your own journey to balance ourselves with this planet.

In the final equation, what does Earth Day mean? It means YOU must be the "change agent" in your community, your state and your country. You must elect those who will act. If they won't act, you may run for office. When it comes to a free society, it's up to "we the people" to make change toward a viable future.

"And into the forest I go, to lose my mind and refresh my soul." –John Muir

"What's the use of a fine house if you don't have a planet to put it on?" –Henry David Thoreau

"But man is a part of Nature, and his war against Nature is inevitably a war against himself." Rachel Carson, Silent Spring

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