As a public service,

THE LAUCKS FOUNDATION

from time to time calls attention to published material that might contribute toward clarification or understanding of issues affecting world peace. The accompanying reprints constitute Reprint Mailing No. 92.

(Mrs.) Eulah C. Laucks, President
Post Office Box 5012
Santa Barbara, CA. 93150-5012

December 10, 1987

The following are quoted from Citizen Summitry, ed. by Don Carlson and Craig Comstock. (Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1986. L.A.):

"Peace is not an absence of war, it is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice."

—Spinoza

"A childlike mind, in its simplicity, practices that science of good to which the wise may be blind."

—Schiller

"Every heart that has beat strong and cheerfully has left a hopeful impulse behind it in the world, and bettered the tradition of mankind."

—Robert Louis Stevenson

The following is from Nuclear Ethics, by Joseph S. Nye, Jr. (The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc., N.Y., 1986) p.7:

"The total skeptic who argues that there is no role for ethics in international politics tends to smuggle his preferred values into foreign policy, often in the form of narrow nationalism. When faced with moral choices, to pretend not to choose is merely a disguised form of choice."

(Reprinted from Fellowship July/August 1987, by permission of The Fellowship of Reconciliation International, Spoorstraat 38, 1815 BK Alkmaar, Holland)

Seeing Through Peaceful Eyes

by Mary Evelyn Jegen, SND

Dan Ebener

A small news item about Pope John Paul's visit to Southeast Asia a few years ago turned out to be a powerful impulse in my faith journey, and more specifically, in my ongoing desire and effort to integrate prayer and other ways of working for peace. The news item told about the Pope's visit to the Supreme Patriarch of the Buddhists of Thailand. Protocol for that visit required that the two men sit together for a half hour in absolute silence, while they "exchanged benevolent glances." The story intrigued me. I wonder what it felt like to exchange benevolent glances with a stranger for a half hour. Did Pope John Paul have to practice in advance? What was the difference between just plain looking or observing, and benevolent glancing?

Since I do not drive, I spend a fair amount of my life on public transportation. Not long after I read the story about benevolent glancing I decided to give it a try myself. At first I felt a bit awkward. However, I was protected by my anonymity, since I was making this first experiment on a Chicago bus. I did not try to engage anyone's eyes, so in effect the benevolent glancing was strictly a unilateral initiative. A strange thing happened. I found I was praying, not saying prayers, but being attentive, alert and aware in a way impossible to describe. I was very much "with" a mysterious depth of reality. Perhaps I had been thinking in advance about the juxtaposition of the notions of benevolence and looking but, for whatever reason, I wanted to look with love. Love is what benevolence is all about, since the word "benevolence" means "to wish another well."

I have never minded riding the bus; but since that first experience of benevolent glancing a few years ago, I look forward to bus riding as a great adventure, a genuine romance in the best sense of the word. Here I might add that while I have done a good bit of international travel since I first took up benevolent glancing, many of my best experiences have been on city buses. As a matter of fact, if the day comes when I have no need to ride the bus to go anywhere, I firmly believe that I will ride anyway, simply for the joy of benevolent glancing.

After about a year of practice, based solely on the authority of a one and a half inch newspaper story, I had the opportunity to check out my understanding with a Japanese man steeped in the Buddhist tradition. He was a Buddhist priest, of the fortieth consecutive generation of Buddhist priests in his family. He assured me that my interpretation of the newspaper story was basically correct. He went on to explain that the Buddhist way of seeing is very different from our western approach. Westerners, he thought, seek to extract data, to "take" what they can from what they are looking at. A Buddhist is more apt simply to be present, to allow reality to present itself, to wait for it to come forward to meet the eye.

What has all this to do with peace? Very much, I think. Benevolent glancing is an art of attentiveness. Paying attention to what is before us is a way of prayer. It is almost a definition of prayer. We know by faith and even by philosophy, if we have speculative inclinations, that God is everywhere. Benevolent glancing is relishing God by directly attending to what is immediately before us.

My experience has been that persons who would feel very uncomfortable in considering contemplative prayer as something for themselves (a pity to be so misinformed) can nevertheless become enthusiastic at the prospect of benevolent glancing. The two words themselves seem to correspond to an unexpressed desire. Once the desire is legitimated,

---

Mary Evelyn Jegen, SND is a teacher and author. Her most recent book is How You Can Be a Peacemaker, *(available from FOR, Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960 at $3.70, including postage).*
This article is excerpted from April 1987 Sisters Today.

many a person who would shy away from contemplative prayer will in fact be practicing contemplation with no inhibitions.

Peacemaking and contemplation are so intimately related that one can hardly exist without the other. This truth can be appreciated by recognizing that violence depends on distorting the object or the victim of violence, turning the victim into an impersonal object which can then be injured or even killed. An army officer told me that killing in war is easier today because soldiers do not have to look enemies in the eye as they are coming over the hill. Psychologically, it would be impossible to kill anyone on whom one had just been casting a loving glance. Modern technology enables the killer to maintain a distance from the victim. In war simulation exercises, when a target is bombed, the people in the vicinity are considered collateral damage — that is, burned, bleeding, and dead children, women and men. It is impossible to cast a benevolent glance on "collateral damage." The day we teach people to look at the persons behind the abstraction, to glance benevolently at them, the military-industrial complex will have a very serious problem.

To try benevolent glancing is to experience deeply stirred emotions, ranging from embarrassment to fear, to compassion, and almost inevitably to love. Fear of invading a person's privacy causes the embarrassment, but this initial feeling can be shaped into what we traditionally call modesty, a way of respect, reverence, even awe in the presence of the splendor of the human person who is "little less than the angels...crowned with glory and honor." Benevolent glancers can know immediately by a trustworthy intuition whether they are staring or glancing benevolently.

To practice benevolent glancing is to expose oneself in a healthy way to pain and suffering. To take a bus ride on any street that runs east and west in Chicago is to come into direct contact with an embodiment of suffering. It is in the deep lines of people's faces, in the sag of their shoulders. I like to look carefully at one person at a time, simply to allow that person's truth to come home to me. It is not always an older person whose body bears the marks of a life of endurance. Sometimes I choose a high school student, and in those cases I often have to deal with my own irritation and impatience at the obstreperous behavior of the urban teenager. In any case, before long I find myself seeing someone truly beautiful.

Feelings towards an old person or a teenager have at least two discernible movements — appreciation and admiration. People who ride the bus are often poor, traveling to or from work, or perhaps to the welfare or unemployment office, or who knows where. Unlike the person behind the wheel, we bus riders are not in charge; we are dependent on others and know our dependence. This group dependence tends to make the atmosphere less assertive than the atmosphere in many other places. I have discovered that benevolent glancing on a bus has a kind of ripple effect. I frequently have the impression that I am not alone in my exercise. I can testify to the fact that if one seeks it, gently and attentively, there is often a profound sense of God's presence on a vehicle of public transportation.

Appreciation and admiration for other persons evokes in turn a more active benevolence, a desire for the true good of the other persons. This only rarely translates into a particular act at the time, but it does affect the deep structure of the personality of the one who is practicing benevolent glancing. When an occasion arises for a response to a problematic situation, a benevolent glancer is more apt to act constructively than a person who has not carefully cultivated the habit of lovingly paying attention.

Benevolence towards suffering is a different experience from benevolence towards a merry child. A benevolent glance at a suffering person is an act of compassion. It is compassion that acts as a bridge from attentiveness to action, an action that can be healing and liberating. Compassion is closely akin to care, a dynamism that integrates mind and emotion, thought and feeling so well that it is almost impossible to distinguish between them.

Caring is a constitutive dimension of peacemaking. Peace is the goal of the universal longing for order in relationships, with the earth itself, with others, and with God. To care is to be in peace while one is peacemaking. The famous cellist, Pablo Casals, once wrote, "I feel the capacity to care is the thing which gives life its deepest significance and meaning."

Those who would take the time to look with appreciation at another person, or at a rose, a stick, a soup plate, would soon discover that *what* they see is not completely up to them. What is really there does not reveal itself on demand. Only slowly, gradually, does the truth of the person, the rose, or any other object make itself present. It is only with detachment and time that people can receive the truth of what they are looking at. What prevents us from seeing better is the delusion that with a normal pair of eyes and adequate light we can see whatever we choose to look at.

Reflection on the Christian mystery corroborates all the claims I have made for benevolent glancing. The gospel accounts show us Jesus looking with keen attention. This appears to have been his habitual way of seeing. How else can we account for his easy and spontaneous use of imagery to carry home a point he wanted to make in his teaching? Jesus does not come down to us as someone who went through life with his eyes closed, uninterested in the immediate data and homely events of his daily experience. A person who had no inkling of the religious significance of Jesus could still be intrigued by his exquisite capacity for creative observation.

It is in his benevolent glancing at particular persons that Jesus clearly reveals his heart, and engages ours. Think of the encounter with the rich young man. Mark says, "Jesus looked steadily at him and loved him."

In prayer we can find ourselves drawn simply to look benevolently at Jesus in any of the events of his life recorded in the gospel. We learn that there is no need to do a lot of thinking, analyzing, reflecting, comparing. Just as the worn face of a person on the bus, or a cloud, or a piece of bread will slowly reveal itself to us if we will simply be there attentively, patiently, without demanding, without trying to take anything from it, so will benevolent glancing at a mystery of the life of Jesus prepare us for surprising gifts of light and love.

Here I would like to share a few simple experiences of my adventuring into the science and art of benevolent glancing. The first is something I do with students. In a course on Christian Spirituality and Social Concerns I have recommended, but without insisting on it, that students take the option of substituting a sunrise or sunset for one of the recommended readings assigned. They are simply to be attentive to it for forty-five minutes. Almost without fail, students who have taken this option have found it a genuine learning experience of a high order. Some

have been candid enough to say that at first they felt awkward, or even slightly silly; others wondered if they were taking the easy way out, and a few admitted that they had never invested generous time in looking at anything other than words or figures that could yield what they considered hard facts, real knowledge or insight.

I myself find more and more satisfaction both of mind and heart in a disciplined looking at a beautiful photograph or a painting, or at any object that has some artistic merit. The art of benevolent glancing benefits from a certain sparseness, a sense of space and time, a rejection of clutter and fussiness. It is not surprising to me that benevolent glancing comes to us from the same culture that excels in flower arranging and the tea ceremony.

Shortly before I read about benevolent glancing in the newspaper I had taken up watercoloring. In my experience these two activities support each other. The common denominator is attentiveness; the difference is in the activity which flows from the act of attention. There may be others like me who for years had known that the sky was only blue when, in fact, it was otherwise. It was only when I began watercoloring that I really saw cerulean, cobalt, ultramarine, and a myriad of hues, tones and values in the sky. It is not that I did not know what to name them; I did not see them. I would not be seeing all these blues yet, had I not first seen them carefully in tubes and on paper. Four years later I am still marveling at seeing for the first time, or at least in much greater depth, things I had only *looked at* but had not really seen well at all.

I have also learned that benevolent glancing helps one repair the damage done to the imagination by some of the biases of our culture. Many of us learned to despise or at least to undervalue our imagination as unreliable, deluding, sometimes dangerous, or at best something to be left behind as quickly as possible in the pursuit of truth. We were wrong, of course. Joan of Arc, at least as George Bernard Shaw portrays her, was closer to the truth in her response to the inquisitors who told her that the voices she heard were all in her imagination. Of course, Joan responded, where else did they think God spoke to her?

The point I want to make here about the imagination is that benevolent glancing at what is "out there" sensitizes us to greater awareness of what is going on inside what we have traditionally called the mind. It is in the imagination that the future of the world will be born or not born. The frontier of the peace and justice movement is in the human imagination. Today, it is the imagination that is crying for the grace of redemption.

A practice of benevolent glancing that depends upon an imagination at least partially redeemed is the practice of praying for our enemies. How many of us have been taught how to do it? In benevolent glancing I have found one way. I do not meet Mr. Reagan, Mr. Gorbachev, the Contras, the person who mugged a friend of mine, on the bus. I do find them in my imagination, along with others with whom I have troubled relationships—some at very close range. I do not try to get away from them; rather, I now try to stay with them very deliberately, bringing them with me to the benevolent glancing of God.

Our world is mortally ill and for the most part does not even know it. Those of us who do know can bring the illness of our time very consciously into the realm of grace. One of the effects will be on our own imaginations, on our energy, and our hope. Invariably, to bring an enemy, personal or public, into one's prayer, in more than a token way, is to experience a call to shift one's attitude in a constructive direction. Could this be one of the ways God chooses to redeem us?

Finally, I can imagine a practice of benevolent glancing which I have not been able to make my own, for want of skill and opportunity. Let us suppose that all over our land, all over the world, children of primary school age were taught benevolent glancing, just as they are taught to brush their teeth, write their names, say please and thank you and, now, how to use computers. They might then be motivated to want to learn how to understand to talk to the people they learned to see with benevolence and appreciation—people of other colors, other ideologies. Could we then really maintain those myths which are driving us to mutual destruction if we were to teach children the art of benevolent glancing—after learning it ourselves? Would Isaiah's vision of the peaceable kingdom look less like an impossible dream?

Benevolent glancing does indeed have social implications. It is certainly not a single solution to the complex issues that torment our world today. On the other hand, the lack of hope, the quiet desperation of good people is one of our most serious problems, whether or not it is recognized. We cannot reanimate hope through instructions or arguments. Rather, hope is stirred by glimpses of the kingdom, by experiences of being saved, healed, rescued. Benevolent glancing can be an exercise of faith practiced in the face of the mystery of suffering, of evil, of seemingly intractable problems. It brings all under the saving glance of love. Faith, hope, and love flourish or languish together.

Two areas that have important implications for benevolent glancing are ecology and work. I can only touch briefly on each, in the hope that others will pursue these connections further. It is widely recognized that the technological mindset has done irreparable damage to our ecosystem. If we do not find a way to stop our course and change it, we may end up with a planet that can no longer sustain human life. The way to redemption will be through contemplation before we can find solutions through social analysis and political will. Until we are captivated by the beauty of the earth that we hold in trust, until we allow it to reveal itself in its fragile glory, we will, as a race, go on raping it and dooming ourselves to destruction along with it.

Equally important is our need to regain a sense of the marvel and the dignity of human work. Among the many ways to approach this central issue is to contemplate the fruit of the earth as it is transformed by the work of human hands. Could those who make nuclear weapons, or components for them, go on doing it if they were in touch with what they are making, and with their own dignity as makers, as workers? Could those of us who are not faced with this agonizing dilemma in our own work go on, year after year, failing to invent a tangible, well-funded support system to our brothers and sisters who have found themselves caught in a system they did not choose, and from which they long to be delivered if only they could see an alternative?

We live in the between-time. It is our task to be attentive to all that is good, all that is wounded, all that is beautiful, all that is marred—learning to see with eyes of love. □

SHARED FATE IN THE NUCLEAR AGE

by Robert Jay Lifton

Robert Jay Lifton, psychiatrist and noted author, was one of several speakers at SANE's forum on the ABC miniseries "Amerika," held on February 18 at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. He is the author of the National Book Award winner "Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima" and, most recently, "Nazi Doctors." A selection from his remarks that evening follows.

Whenever arms control is seriously discussed in this country, you always hear someone say that we shouldn't appease the Soviet Union now, as we appeased Nazi Germany at Munich. But I've just finished a study on Nazi doctors and published a book by that name, and I take a different lesson from Munich and World War II and the Nazis. The appeasement at Munich consisted of lacking both the courage and the imagination to confront evil and danger. Evil and danger now reside in nuclear weaponry and the entire wiring of the doomsday system of nuclear weapons throughout the world. The direct equivalent of appeasement today would be the failure to take bold and imaginative action against that danger.

Nuclear weapons stockpiles are dangerous, obviously, because of their explosive power. They are also dangerous because they are invariably accompanied by scenarios of winning. No matter how much we take in about the truth of nuclear winter and the destructive power of nuclear weapons—that, in fact, there can be no winning—we always have a scenario of winning. The scenario proceeds on three different levels.

One level is winning the arms race by bankrupting your adversary. The trouble with this scenario is that their budget seems to be in no worse shape than ours.

The second level is winning the actual nuclear war. That means fighting a limited nuclear war and prevailing. What a wonderful word—"prevailing." People in power still haven't realized that the only way to prevail in a nuclear war is not to fight in a nuclear war.

The third level is winning the battle for survival. You've seen those survivalist groups out in northern Idaho and in nearby places. They are not just survivalists. They are also neo-Nazis, Nazis with a difference. Their plan is that, following a nuclear holocaust, which they welcome, they will impose a Nazi system on the United States. Then there are these fundamentalists who literally see the nuclear holocaust as biblical realization and, more than that, as specifically equated with the Second Coming. What a tragic and convoluted image—taking a great spiritual vision and equating it with the most corrupt and evil sort of action that could destroy all of humankind and its works.

We have to reject all three scenarios. I want to say just a word about consciousness and imagination, what we are expected to believe and what we have to reject. For a long time, Herman Kahn and the scenario writers and strategists had the nation convinced that normal, reasonable behavior consisted of planning and anticipating limited (or not-so-limited) nuclear wars—and to protest that idea was unreasonable, abnormal, and in some way aberrant.

Now there is a new image of normality, one presented in a book edited by some of the leading figures of Harvard University, called *Living with Nuclear Weapons*. That outrageous book, outrageous intellectually and morally, ends with the statement that we have to learn to live with nuclear weapons and we have to learn to risk nuclear war if that becomes necessary. Let's be moderate, they say, don't build too many weapons and make it dangerous; but also, don't get rid of too many weapons, let's be cautious.

Then along comes Star Wars with the great promise of a shield in the heavens. Isn't it abnormal and unreasonable to refuse the protection of a shield? Well, I'll say very little about Star Wars except that we have had this illusion, but in piecemeal, before: the illusion of protection, the illusion of preparation for nuclear war with evacuation plans or protection with fallout shelters, the illusion of stoic behavior under attack and, above all, the illusion of recovery. Now they have rolled all these into one great grand illusion: Star Wars, the grand illusion of our time. It is a crusade, a Sisyphian crusade, because its central element is a falsehood, denial of the truth of the nuclear age, which is absolute, total vulnerability.

The next time somebody says to you, "What about the Russians?" I suggest you answer something like this—the answer is not ideological, it is really pragmatic—the answer is, "If they die, we die. If they survive, we survive." Shared fate. Shared fate is the beginning of something else more profound, what I call the species self—a sense of self in the true psychological sense of being bound up with every other single self, individually and collectively, on the globe. The beginnings of that growing awareness have been forced upon us by our technology of destruction. It doesn't mean I stop being an American or, in my case, a psychiatrist, a Jew, a fanatical tennis player, a sometime bird cartoonist, a father, a husband, and a few of the other things my enemies have called me. But it does mean that each of these becomes combined with a sense of species self that is bound up with all other selves in the universe. I think that is an important psychological process to cultivate. A sense of shared fate and of the species self, psychologically and politically, is an idea whose time has come.

(Reprinted from Sane World, Summer 1987, a quarterly of the Committee for a SANE Nuclear Policy, 711 G St. SE, Washington, DC 20003)

(Reprinted from Reconciliation International, June 1987
published by IFOR, Spoorstraat 38, 1815 BK Alkmaar, Holland)

Bertha von Suttner: The Woman Behind the Nobel Peace Prize

a 1987 Swedish postage stamp honors Bertha von Suttner

by Annemargret L. Osterkamp

Few people know that the Nobel Peace Prize would not exist if it had not been for an almost forgotten Austrian woman named Bertha von Suttner.

Who was Baroness Bertha von Suttner? Her picture appears on the Austrian 50,000 shilling note, some streets are named after her, and Austria issued a stamp in her honor as part of a series on benefactors of humankind.

Bertha von Suttner was born into a poor family of somewhat faded nobility on June 9, 1843. Her father, Count Kinsky, died shortly after her birth, and her widowed mother, Wilhelmine von Koerner, had difficulty living within her income. Nevertheless, Bertha was given a very sheltered education, learning the social graces and becoming, thanks to private tutors, an accomplished linguist and musician.

Bertha found herself penniless at the age of 30, with few prospects for the future. She had been engaged to three men but in the end chose not to marry any of them. She could not resign herself to the life of a poor aristocratic spinster and decided to seek employment. The only position open to a woman of her background was that of governess, so she became governess to the four daughters of Freiherr von Suttner and his wife. During the three years she stayed with the von Suttner family, she fell in love with their son Arthur and he with her. She was seven years his senior and neither of them had money. Yielding to his parents' disapproval, they decided to separate.

In 1873, as Bertha was trying to decide what to do next, she saw a notice in the local paper that "a very wealthy, cultured, elderly gentleman living in Paris" was looking for a "mature, educated lady" who knew languages and could serve as secretary and manager of his household. She responded and received a letter signed Alfred Nobel, a name completely unknown to her. Soon she discovered that the writer (in the words of her autobiography) "was the well-known, famous, and respected discoverer of dynamite." Bertha answered immediately and thus started a friendship which lasted until Nobel's death on December 10, 1896.

Bertha was Nobel's secretary only for a short time. Arthur von Suttner wrote that he could not live without her, and they decided to marry, still against his family's wishes. They moved to the town of Kutaisi in the Caucasus, where they had friends. They supported themselves by writing and teaching, and were there when the Russian-Turkish war broke out in April 1877.

Firsthand exposure to the brutality and suffering of war strengthened their pacifist views. They began writing anti-war articles. During this period von Suttner and Nobel carried on a regular correspondence.

After producing six books and many articles, and becoming recognized authors, the von Suttners returned to Vienna, where they were now warmly welcomed. They also went to Paris to see Nobel. It was there that they first heard of the London-based International Peace and Arbitration Association. Bertha was immdiately attracted to it and in time became its leading spokesperson. Nobel praised her work and sent her a substantial donation. Bertha urged him to prove his support of her goals by establishing a prize for peace.

In 1889 Bertha von Suttner published her most widely read book, *Lay Down Your Arms.* Its graphic descriptions of war shocked her contemporaries but brought her worldwide fame. Among the thousands of letters of approval was one from Leo Tolstoi, who wrote, "The abolition of slavery was preceded by the famous book of a woman, Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe. May the good Lord help your book to accomplish the abolition of war."

Bertha von Suttner also received a moving letter from Nobel, who sent his greetings to "the Amazon who made war on war." Other peace leaders called her "our commander in chief."

It was not until after Nobel's death that Bertha von Suttner and the world learned about the creation of the annual Nobel Peace Prize for "the person who shall have done the most or the best work for the fraternization of peoples and the abolition or reduction of standing armies, as well as the establishment and promotion of peace congresses."

Bertha von Suttner took part in the First International Peace Congress held in Boston, in the United States, in 1904. She was a delegate from Austria, and founder and head of the Austrian Peace Movement. She was received in a private meeting by Theodore Roosevelt, along with George Arnhold, delegate from Germany. They discussed the World Court of Arbitration, later established in The Hague in the Netherlands.

Bertha von Suttner rose from the minor status of governess to become an internationally recognized author, political journalist, and crusader for peace. She had the courage to marry the man she loved in spite of poverty and parental opposition. In 1905, Bertha von Suttner became the first woman to receive a Nobel Prize. She died in June 1914, just a few months before the outbreak of World War I, which she had worked so hard to prevent. ●

The author, a Quaker, is a retired psychiatric social worker and counselor. She became interested in Bertha von Suttner when she found some pictures of her and letters she had written to George Arnhold, her grandfather. This profile is a shortened version of the article published in the Friends Journal, *December 1986.*

(Reprinted by permission, from The Land Report, Spring 1986, pp.22-23, 2440 E. Water Well Road, Salina, KS. 67401)

On Herons, Human Senses and Healing: The Wild Thread

Gary Nabhan

At age nineteen, while gandydancing on an industrial railroad line edging Lake Michigan, I watched a half dozen migrating great blue herons looking for a place to land.

To this day, they loom as large in my mind's eye as Mesozoic pterodactyls. I can still see them flying low in the heavy air over the steel mills of Gary, Indiana: the slow wing beats; their hoarse squawks as they called to one another over the mill roar. At one level, the herons seemed oblivious to the mills, which were built over the sand swales and interdunal lagoons so well described in the writings of Edwin Way Teale and Donald Culross Peattie. The herons loped along as if searching for some feature beneath the blast furnaces, refuse heaps and train tracks. I sensed that they had been pulled to that place by a memory of marshes which had served their ancestors for the last nine thousand years.

The herons circled the slag pile nearest me, where a shallow pond had once lain in an interdunal depression. They slowly flew onto the next debris-filled depression...the next...then the next...until they passed from my sight and the mills' property to the tenuous refuge of Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. I stood still on the tracks, watching them pay respect to the ancient pit-stops strung along some primordial migration route. I stood still, yet my heart flew with them.

Do such incidental observations of natural phenomena qualify any teenager as an incipient naturalist? At the time, I certainly did not work or look like our stereotype of one: a spike maul in my hands instead of binoculars; a pin-striped railroad cap and tar-stained coveralls as costume in lieu of khakis, camouflaging, or other apparel from the L. L. Beanery. I suspect, as Ann Zwinger once cautioned me, that we can't rightfully claim to be fully-functioning naturalists until we are well into our fifties in age. For the flavor of our own distinctive observations to distill, we need time to ripen, to cure, to be exposed to the proper conditions, or rid of extraneous influences.

Our evolutionary history has suited us to a peculiar kind of nature-sensing, relative to that of other species. We came to some of our senses as forest-dwelling primates, others as savanna and shoreline hominids, and still others as wide-ranging hunters, fishers and gatherers. Our increasingly upright posturing and frontal vision allow us to see into the distance more than they absorb what is directly around us. Combine these tendencies with our opposable thumbs, and we become capable of holding onto binoculars to see even further into space. Yet we miss much of the world that other creatures perceive.

Thanks to our mid-range color vision, flowers stand out from their background, but not as vividly as they do for bees which see into the ultraviolet range. Our noses can lead us to a fragrant night-blooming cereus hidden in the evening shadows of the desert scrub, but we're hardly fazed by the many animal pheremones spewed out all around us. Our hearing is sharp enough to warn of the sidewinder's rattle, but we lack the sense to pick up the sonar signals of pallid bats.

If we had the sensory organs of a gopher or a Colorado River razorback sucker instead of our own hominid holdings, would we still say "I see" to mean "I understand?"

The world gets thoroughly filtered through the warp and weft of our network of perceptual faculties. Regardless of all the messages that never reach us, we are still left with more than just food for thought. For millions of years, we have sifted through the wild growth, finding enough to eat, to drink, to shelter us. As a species, our physical and mental agility has been honed by the richness and harshness of wilderness.

Farming people have gone on to simplify the natural communities in which they live, but some of them have not forgotten the connection between wildness and wellness. Piman-speaking native farmers use the terms doajig for health, and doajk for wildness. These words are derived from doa, "to be alive," or "to be cured," as are doakam for "living creatures" and doajkam for "wild or untamed beings." Taken back to their roots, Piman terms for healing and recovery convey a sense of becoming wild and whole again.

The wilderness has historically served as a sanctuary for sad, disturbed or dis-eased people troubled by their society and their personal discrepanies with it. Medicine men and hermits, homesteads and monks, biologists, herbalists and artists have sought cures to their sicknesses and sorrows in the deserts, jungles and boreal forests. By letting other elements and organisms into our lives, perhaps we dilute the

poisonous human preoccupations with status, security and societal acceptance.

If wild habitats challenge us to be alert and agile, then it is easy to despair over the conditions in which we find the planet and its peoples today. In worked-over, manicured environments, we are simply not in touch as much with the wild stimuli that set us on our path. We must find our way along an obscure trail, hoping that someone has not already kicked down all the cairns.

Not too long ago, I found myself working on the floodplain of the lower Rio Colorado, where the one-time wild river had crazily meandered over centuries and centuries. Several dams upstream now tame its flow. Where farmlands have replaced its grand riparian forests, and levees sharply separate water from land, the floodplain has a petrified, frozen feel to it.

One hot August, however, I watched this landscape thaw with my own eyes. And as the land grew fluid again, a heron arose out of it.

It was after a week of work in the fields and remnant mesquite forests that I found myself in a small plane over this river valley. In the dawn light, I saw that its earthen history was buried alive, but still breathing, underneath the fields of monocultural crops. As we passed across miles of cotton, I could see beneath them the patterns of the ancient meanders: oxbows and backwater sloughs. Each old land feature was marked by a soil of another hue. The cotton plants had started as evenly-spaced seedlings, but could not maintain any uniformity on such heterogeneous substrates. Each piece of earth was still charged by how the river had run through it, and even the narrowly-bred, tightly-tended stands of domestic plants could not hide this fact.

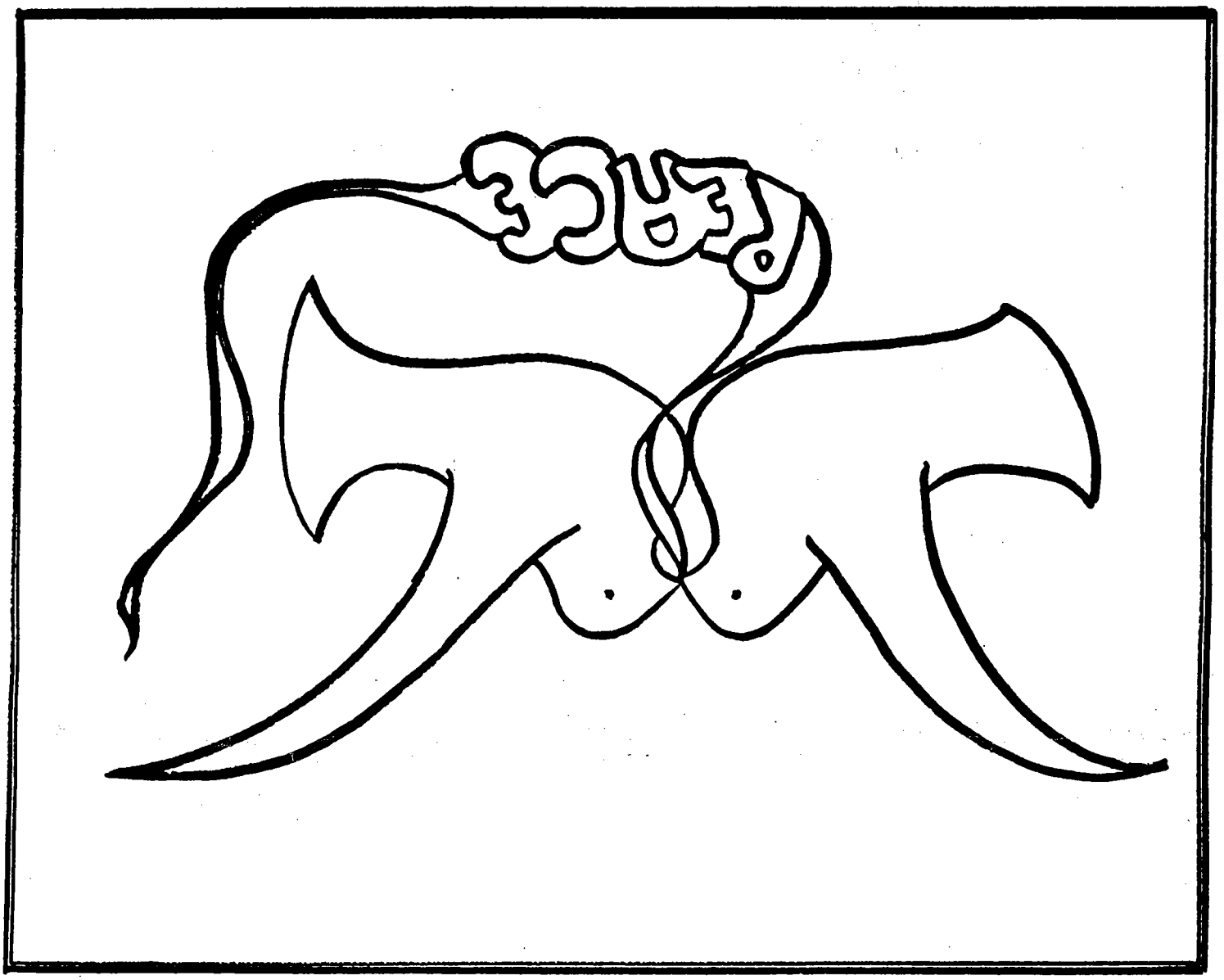
Edging one of the fields laid out over a dark-soiled slough, a concrete irrigation canal ran in a straight line clear to the horizon. From the shallow standing water of that newly-irrigated field, I watched a great blue heron take flight. Would the heron rise to follow the straight-running concrete canal? Or would his flight again find the underlying curvilinear meander?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Gary Paul Nabhan is the 1986 John Burroughs Medal recipient for the natural history/ethnobotany book with artist Paul Mirocha, Gathering the Desert (University of Arizona Press). He is also author of The Desert Smells Like Rain (North Point Press) and the forthcoming Saguaro: A Naturalist Looks at Saguaro National Monument and the Tucson Basin (Southwest Parks and Monuments Association). Dr. Nabhan is Assistant Director of the Desert Botanical Garden, Phoenix, Arizona, and a cofounder of Native Seeds/SEARCH with his botanist wife, Karen Reichhardt. Gary and Karen will be speakers at The Land's 1986 Prairie Festival May 31, and June 1.

"The realization that
our small planet is only
one of many worlds
gives mankind the
perspective it needs
to realize ... that
our own world belongs
to all of its creatures ..."

—Arthur C. Clarke

(From: *Citizen Summitry*. ed. Don Carlson and Craig Comstock. Pub: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., L.A.)



LAUCKS FOUNDATION, INC.
POST OFFICE BOX 5012
SANTA BARBARA, CA., 93150-5012

FIRST CLASS MAIL

MARY LAUCKS
8708 N.E. 20th
BELLEVUE, WA. 98004