

A BONFIRE OF GRIEVANCES... DON RICARDO'S REPORT FROM THE HIGH RHINE, DEC. 2015

Just when you begin to set your little house in order, and you're trying to strengthen and protect it, the world knocks it down. Ever-worsening storms threaten your hard-fought gains. You wake up every morning, clear your head, and start over. There's always a little you can do to make things better. As for the rest, forget it: rant if you will, but you may as well scream at the wind. A walk, or a morning bicycle ride will restore peace of mind, though. Or a semblance thereof, enough to carry on. But, hey, Christmas is here!

The big news stories this month have shifted from the refugee crisis to the ISIS Paris attack, and then to the Paris climate talks. This world was never a paradise, but it looks like we've really blown it now. Future generations as far as we can see or imagine, will live in horrific climatic circumstances we're just beginning to experience. We can thank the Industrial Revolution for this, and it goes back five-hundred years. No one saw this coming? More than fifty years have passed since the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962. Met with fierce opposition from the chemical industry, this was the book that first alerted the public to the dangers of synthetic pesticides. Industrialists not only ignored and failed to act on the evidence; they sponsored publication of phony studies to counter it. The tobacco industry did the same when evidence began to pile up linking smoking to cancer.

How can Americans respect a Supreme Court that makes the absurd decision that a corporation is an individual, with the same rights as a citizen? Corporations do not breathe, dream, make love, or write poetry. They don't even have to die. The court majority decided this to enable corporations to make unlimited political campaign contributions; to buy elections. To my mind this shameful decision is matched only by the Separate but Equal Court ruling in 1896 justifying Jim Crow segregation laws. Times change but people don't.

"Mankind," the title song of a CD that never really came out in 1990, was just released to the world on Bear Family Records this year. I meant the title to be ironic: the inner contradiction, the oxymoron. The truth is we humans have been anything but kind; not to each other, or the planet and the creatures we share it with.

To the industrialists truth about environmental destruction is inconvenient fact that can be denied. But they can't do that anymore: Truth is the power of water rising. Truth is spreading deserts, and storms that grow worse every year. Consumerism powers the machine that gobbles up the earth and men's souls. Industrialists and a few hundred billionaires owe their privilege to this destruction. These are not stupid people; even in their gated communities and buffered by their fabulous wealth, they must realize their grandchildren will be obliged to breathe the common air. But, hey, it's Christmas!

I suppose I'm trying to gather all my grievances in one place. I ought to just wrap them up and put them in a bonfire. That sounds like a plan. The world may be going to hell. People were saying that around here a thousand years ago, a time of famine, violence, and general misery. Still, the human spirit managed to rally. From the ashes of the Dark Ages arose the great cathedrals of Europe. It's all in the wink of an eye, and now the very planet is threatened. The truth is Mother Earth can live without us, and doubtless she will. That doesn't mean we can't enjoy ourselves this Christmas season, as the world turns to the light. Raise a glass and kiss your baby on New Year's Eve. And be kind to one another; that much we can do.

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The artwork for *Plenty Good People*, the duo recording with W.C. Jameson, has been forwarded to the designer. A print by Julie Sola who did our *Gulf Coast Tales* CD. Check out her work at: www.fatcrowpress.com I've about finished with another edit on the novel. There will be more to come. I'm okay with that; I think my characters want me to get it down right. I'd like to wish everyone Merry Christmas from me and Edith, and "*Guete Rutsch*," as they say here—Have a Good Slide into the New Year.

Richard J. Dobson, Diessenhofen am Rhein

23 December 2015

www.richard-j-dobson.ch

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