

What's happening? What happened?

So I look around at these sixteen female pot plants and wonder how life would have been different the last two months if I hadn't spent time growing them.

What is it about marijuana that we like so much? It's instant, like snorting coke but without the nasty hundred-dollar bills and *need to have more right away*. It's also an aphrodisiac, creatively inspiring, and makes me dance.

Around here marijuana was the surprising ingredient which made a lot of dirty hippies and university grad slackers rich. It also allowed artists and musicians to grow a little weed and end up owning some land in the country, if they were even a little motivated. No, I take that back, the artists and musicians often ended up with nothing, just wasn't in their DNA to chase the *yanqui* dollar.

Southern Humboldt USA. If they saw how we lived back in the day they would have thrown away the key: eight-year-old kids smokin' weed, yeah there were some casualties, a whole generation of kids growing up with no rules, or few, while out in the real world the appetite for good weed kept the pot patches humming.

Hopefully those kids settled down in their forties. One thing I noticed as these hippie kids grew up was their tightness as a community, the bond each age group had and maybe still has: they were mostly all friendly to each other, everyone got invited to the parties and got their boyfriends and girlfriends through their groups. (I was jealous of their closeness—it wasn't like that back in Indiana.) There were no bullies that I knew of, although when they started to come in to school some townie kids were probably mean to them, hence they stuck together?

There were few if any overweight kids—why was that? Why no fat kids? Living in the woods you just tended to run around more, walk a mile to your best friend's house, then in their teens seriously hiking around to distant pot patches. In such a tight-knit community you couldn't get fat without someone noticing. And what happened with the next generation, the founding hippies grandkids—were they equally fit?

Mothers and sometimes fathers cooked mostly healthy meals; being twenty miles from the nearest junk food outlet probably helped. (I remember the times when I ran out of town food and had to resort to the glass jars of rice and beans was when I ate the healthiest.)

It was the land of **BP** and **AP**, before pot and after pot. The pursuit of growing weed for money was **absolutely shameless**. No one I knew ever said, "*Gee, do you think we shouldn't be trying to grow so much?*" By the early 90's the price was up to four thousand a pound and even ten modest plants could net the laidback backyard farmer fifty grand.

Eventually as the boom roared on, there were isolated voices saying, "*When is it enough?*" And I believe Tommy Lasbury coined the term "*Senseless-meeing.*"

For someone like me, the quintessential "*get a life*" kid, the solution to boredom, loneliness, depression, and pot addiction was to just put in more plants. It was a fun project when the hills were wide open: find the water, explore until you found a sunny site below it, set up the water system, and figure out how to get the supplies, fertilizer and plants, to the patch.

Looking back on **BP** time I remember I had no garbage. We made bread, we didn't buy it. With no refrigerator I couldn't store fattening dairy items. I still know a couple of holdouts with no refrigerators and there are probably more. It must be a lifestyle choice for those in their fifties to seventies, something they certainly should be able to afford.

I got fat after the pot boom hit. Not right away but when it got into the second decade, the eighties, the heyday, I was pretty much deeply involved with the "*marijuana munchies.*" I had to eat after smoking, well an hour or two after, and if there wasn't some quick munchies around then three or four bowls of sugary cereal with milk (remember "Honey Bunches of Oats" with Almonds?) made me "Exhibit A" in Pavlovian theory.

If there wasn't any cereal I sometimes made pancakes at midnight with banana and walnut pieces embedded in the whole grain (Multigrain from Arrowhead Mills) mix. I heated up large amounts of organic maple syrup and melted chunks of butter into it. On the side were a couple of over-easy eggs, yogurt, sausages or Fakin' Bacon, and a big glass of cold milk to wash it down. Mmm...

Later I ate that combo un-stoned for breakfast a few times a month just for fun until dietary awareness the last few years has sadly taken that wonderful treat away. (That'll happen when you start getting regular sugar and fat tests, find you're pre-diabetic and too-high cholesterol, and get scared straight for awhile.)

In the last ten years or so I don't get the munchies anymore. Maybe that's because I floss and brush before smoking, knowing that when drooling on the couch later the chances of accomplishing those nightly ablutions are slim.

I started getting into beer at the Sunday softball games in Whitethorn. (A little known fact: I was the only one who never missed a Sunday in twelve years.) Later I'd walk a mile barefoot to my pot patches back in Thompson Creek where I kept a few bottles in shallow shaded pools to drink after watering, sad to confess it was Miller High Life (thanks Yerba) and Budweiser.

**-Pablo Zucchini
Gulch Mulch**

Rest in the Grace of the World

One of my close acquaintances said I could sum up "*my dilemma*" in a word. "**Advertising**", he said. I resisted taking him to task for what seemed a frivolous, and far too simplistic answer to what I've been stewing in for nearly two weeks.

This stew isn't the delectable, herbed beef one, delicious in cold weather. The cost being whatever was paid for the meat and the time preparing it. Unspoken is the life of the steer- To feed my appetite? a life. Herein lies my stew, the crux of my dilemma. How did we come to this?

How has the deep suffering of others not shaken us to the core of our consciences?

No one likes a preacher (hopefully, his wife does, and the congregation). It's that no one likes being preached at. We don't want to admit to our own piece of the big, big bag of gnarly troubles sitting on our collective doorstep. How did this happen? It wasn't me. It must be Them.

You know about the troubles in Pandora's Box: global warming, air quality, immigration, a country seriously divided politically, and going deeper than political party, a virus gone wild, making yet another split — the masked versus the unmasked, the unemployed, the few very rich, the many very poor; because of drought, the real threat of failed crops, of famine. What have I left out? Surely something, for this is Biblical in magnitude and scope.

What started me off on this tangent was **Wendell Berry's poem** shared by a friend:

"The Peace of Wild Things

*When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down
where the wood drake rests in his beauty on the water,
and the great heron feeds.*

*I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief.
I come into the presence of still water.*

*And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light.*

*For a time I rest in the grace of the world,
and am free."*

Juxtaposed next to Berry's poem was her own. In hers, she writes about her mother, being six years old and wondering: "**How can the sun be shining when my mother just died?**" I responded to her that one would think beauty and grief might work to heal us, why does it not seem too? And she responded that we are "*an entitled people, an adolescent people not having learned the profound lessons of true humility and gratitude...*"



I've asked a few friends what their greatest concern is right now. One has lost her job. Another said she's still worried about Covid and the new variants. Two teachers are concerned about how it will be once they get back to their classrooms. I don't know what's at the top of the ladder of concerns for me. What is yours? Along with you, I keep getting more of the stuff George Carlin made us howl with laughter and recognition about.

Inequity has always existed. Every day we read about it. This late in the game, **and it is**, is there **anything** we are willing to give up? To do? The Earth, Our home, is being cooked.

And we started the fire. - ShirleyAnn Gaines

...Always Laughing

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In 2020, when the pandemic hit and economies around the world went into lockdown, policymakers short-circuited the economy with a windfall of public spending, pulling it out of the deepest slump on record, faster than almost anyone expected. Pandemic logic made sense: Americans thrown out of work by the pandemic, lost their jobs through no fault of their own. This was an emergency response and politicians were comfortable supporting the cost. Unlike the Fed actions that dominated crisis funding in the past, government spending went directly to people. A lot of that went to pay bills, and rent and mortgages, so that money, like most money, ended up where it always does: trickling up to the banks, enabling more leveraged lending to further empower the deception of our debt-driven economy.

Despite the inertia of economic theory, policy, and dogma, economists are beginning to be affected by reality are changing their opinions. In March, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development listed some of the ideas that dominated global economic policymaking before the pandemic — "*austerity, inflation targeting, trade and investment liberalization, innovative finance, and labor market flexibility*" — and described some of their negative effects: "*This path led to a world of growing economic inequalities, arrested development, financial fragility, and unsustainable use of natural resources before the pandemic hit.*"

According to the traditional laws of the economic cycle, it should have taken years for households to bounce back from 2020's sudden collapse in economic activity. Governments stepped in to help Average Americans from the worst effects in a way that hadn't been tried before, because they could see the calamity that would result if they didn't. The novel policies were also based on regrets, built over a decade, over the lopsided and inadequate response to the crisis in 2008, when bank bailouts fixed the financial system, but little was done to help debt-burdened homeowners, as household incomes were allowed to fall.

Even before Covid-19, the plight of low-paid workers was becoming a focus of economic policy. The slow recovery from the last great recession took more than a decade to restore to pre-2008 levels of employment helped push issues of economic inequality and racial justice forward. Wealth and income gaps, in the U.S., and other developed countries, have been widening since the 80's as government intervention in the economy was replaced by reliance on the free market.

Indications are that there now may be a tectonic change in the way people work as well. America's working age population is about 245 million people. As of May just 125 million were employed. The employment-population ratio is about 50%.

Just half of America is employed.

During Quarantine, office-bound workers discovered they could work more comfortably and cheaply from home, with no onerous commute. Essential workers, those who must be present to perform their various skill-sets, are just now finding it more feasible to demand higher pay and benefits as a "worker shortages" emerge. Throughout the workforce people are questioning their priorities and rethinking their opportunities.

Will the "Free Market" be modified by the "Free Agency" of those referred to by both business and government as "workers?" Perhaps debt-ridden Average American workers will recognize their right to choose how they work and live.

Unfortunately, the numbers of those without options are on the rise: eviction moratoriums expiring soon will add to the desperate un-housed population, and despite shortages in supply lines, small business failures and the uncertainty of surging Covid-19 infection rates — "**Business as usual**" continues as the mantra of both business and government, but, if you can't afford to pay people a decent wage, you can't afford to be in business!

- Joshua Golden

An Anarchist from outside Havana says:

**"We Cubans are like the dolphin -
Up to the neck in water and always laughing."**

