

From "Grandma Books Blind Faith Journal" - October 27, 2013

A Kick in the Head

...is worth ten thousand words. I got up today raring to go walking. It was cold, so I put on a coat, a scarf, gloves and two hats. It's not two-hat weather until it's close to freezing, and it qualified today at 7:30 am. The first hat is a felt beret, the second is my purple double-knit hat with a brim that I wear all winter.

Walking along my usual route, lost in thought, I hit my head on a billboard by the Hillside Mall. The blow rocked me off-balance, so I staggered and would have fallen on my butt if a cement wall had not been there for me to grab and sit down on. I took stock of my head, and there was no damage to my scalp because of the two hats. So I quickly recovered and continued my walk around Brookings. After my hit on the head, I'm mulling over events from my childhood.

As a small child, my first real pet was an aquarium. I was always begging my parents for a pet, and bringing things into the house to show them I could take care of a pet. I fed earth worms, caterpillars, toads, turtles, and salamanders. The last three eat live insects, so I had a net my father made so I could catch food for my pets. I always released my pets after observing them for a while. The caterpillars became butterflies, and the box turtle released himself from his backyard corral. It had not occurred to me that turtles can dig.

For my 8th birthday, my parents surprised me with an aquarium, and left me to figure it out on my own. I assembled the bubbler-filtration system, which had many parts, washed the gravel, de-chlorinated the water, checked the ph, and read everything I could find about the tropical fish that I loved, Zebras and Angels.

With an aquarium for a pet, you don't cry over one fish who dies. Well, maybe the first one, but after that, you learn that the aquarium is the important thing. All your fish will be as healthy as the water, the system. The eco-system!

I loved my aquarium for years, and then I had other pets who took my interest away from the aquarium. As soon as I had children who could learn from it, I had more aquariums, and I copied my parents way by giving the care over to the boys. Well, I helped them sometimes. One of my sons still keeps fish, and he knows the most about eco-systems of any of us. He is the one who is a Master gardener, and a garden is an eco-system, too.

On Facebook this week, I got a bigger kick in the head than I got on my walk today. I follow a whole lot of ecology stuff, and I try to spread the most encouraging news, things that we can fix, that we have a chance of making better. I try to be sparing with the bad news. But this news rocked me back on my butt. It was from a sea-going sailor who said "the ocean is broken", and then he sketched a picture of the broken ocean he saw this summer.

I have a plan to save the Ocean. If there is a better plan, I will support it. My plan involves an “Ocean Cleanup Tax” that could easily be implemented on American ships first, and spread to all ports and all ships. It is a tax on the fuel put into ships of a certain tonnage—trawlers, container ships, tankers, and luxury liners. The tax goes into a fund for Ocean clean-up to target the garbage in the Pacific gyre and the Tsunami debris. Dozens of large ships are needed for the clean-up jobs. Two deserted islands are needed for the landfill space. Old ships could be used to “trawl” up the debris, but eventually the fund could confiscate ships that fail to pay the port fuel tax. If they buy fuel in a port without the tax, they would owe tax when they enter another port.

I will be looking for ways to publicize my plan and to gain illustrious environmentalists’ support. There are many ways to contribute to the environment voluntarily, but it seems to me it is time to hold polluters of the Ocean accountable, and not leave the fox in charge of the hen-house anymore. Or the cat in charge of the aquarium!

Please come to the 1st Friday Salon, Nov. 1st, 6 pm, at the Chetco Library Meeting Room, to view the movie “Ocean Frontiers II” and to discuss the “Save the Ocean” proposal.