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LUG and Wind

The Leica User Group

by George Lottermoser

Some years ago I ran across the Leica User Group (LUG). A collection of people who suffer from addiction to photographic images, the venerable Leica camera systems, single malt scotch, fine fountain pens and other esoterica.

About a year ago an off-shoot of the LUG became the LUG-prints group. Anywhere from twelve to twenty of us exchange prints every few months. For the third “round” the group chose the theme of “wind.”

A number of ideas came to mind. The photograph at left represents the final print I chose to speak on that theme.

My friend, Doug Irwin, crews on *Odyssey*, a Tartan 34, owned by David Bohl.

A big thanks to David and Doug for allowing me to accompany them on a Wednesday evening race on our beloved Lake Michigan. That evening they placed third in their class.

Other images from this sail, which I considered for the “wind”

theme, can be viewed at: www.imagist.com/wind_prints. The complete shoot can be viewed at www.imagist.com/wind.

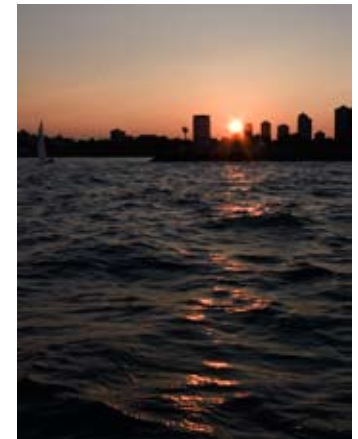
Each time I've gone out on this great lake, under sail, I can't help thinking about wind power, and its ability to move these vessels. The Tartan 34 has a displacement of 11,200 lbs with a lead ballast of 5,000 lbs. When and where did the first human put a sheet up and feel the power?

When an adjustment in course or sail is required the crew, lines and sheets move at lightning speed. Then the quiet, slow pace returns and seems to make so much more sense than the speed and noise of powerboats.

Sailing feels magical, historical and elegant in both form and function. Using nature in this manner also affirms the notion of sustainability.

When sailing, canoeing, kayaking, biking or walking I feel in harmony with the world around me. All my senses tune into their surroundings.

Standing on the gunnel, with the boat at a 30 or 40 degree angle, shoes inches from the lake itself—soaked—I can smell and almost taste the lake; hair in my face, “one hand for the boat,” hearing only water on the hull; the sun setting over the city.



BEING *there*

This periodical publication intends to present views from writers, poets and artists for the purpose of shifting consciousness toward peace, clarity, affirmation of life, generosity, stewardship, wisdom, creativity and beauty; and away from fear, hate, greed, war, destruction, lies, pretense, ignorance and confusion.

We must administer cultural medications of real awareness, acceptance, positive confrontation and optimism; while reducing the cultural poisons of denial, avoidance, cynicism and hypocrisy now running rampant around the globe.

We invite your comments, contributions, and critiques of this publication and the larger cultures of our planet (yes, it belongs to all of us—we best take care of it—heh?).

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This issue's theme: Stewardship and this is what stewardship looks like



photography by George Lottermoser

The dictionary defines stewardship as the actions of a person who looks after; a person responsible for; a person appointed to supervise arrangements or keep order; employed to manage another's property; a person whose responsibility it is to take care of something.

When we vote we become stewards of our social systems. And we expect those we vote for, then pay, to steward our communities, states, and federal institutions.

Thoreau said, "If I devote myself to other pursuits and contemplations, I must see, at least,

that I do not pursue them sitting on another man's shoulders. I must get off him first, that he may pursue his contemplations too."

When the average salary of a leading CEO exceeds that of the average American worker by a factor of 431 times—that CEO sits obscenely on the shoulders of those workers who do not have time for other pursuits and contemplations; as they exhaust themselves to pay for rising health-care costs, fuel prices, educational expenses, debt service. In these times as we watch pension funds fail, tax cuts for the wealthiest, funding cuts of social programs for the poorest, windfall profits being taken by oil companies, expanding national and personal debt, and unbridled spending on an a war in the middle east; it's difficult if not impossible to see the majority of our elected officials as the stewards that we hired them to be. They seem more like carpetbaggers, which the dictionary defines as an unscrupulous opportunist. When 40% of our country's wealth is controlled by 1% of our country's population it's hard to imagine that the wealthy steward anything beyond their own wealth.

As pesticides and other chemicals poison our top soil, water and air - where do we find hope, aspiration, optimism, and opportunity. Where do we find stewards we can trust to take care of our planet and the resources of its countries, states, communities, and our families?



Stewardship

by Bert Stitt
photo by George Lottermoser

Bert Stitt has lived in Madison, Wisconsin for twenty-five years and has traveled out from there for business and pleasure to many points in the hemisphere with great concentration in the Midwest. He gardens, bikes,

reads and enjoys an occasional late-evening pub crawl in his neighborhood. He writes occasionally.

In my work as a community visioning facilitator I have adopted the slogan, "Shifting community culture via intentional stewardship."

Now, the idea of shifting community culture carries with it a fair amount of presumption that it can get done at all, that people there can find definition as community, that their community definition includes any desire whatever to shift culture in any way, and finally that the community shares a definition of stewardship or cares a smidgeon about it!

This hair ball of impervious consternation sticks solidly in the throat of many community members and keeps them from moving off the dime on anything. I start unraveling it by offering a definition of stewardship that I have found acceptable to most people. Stewardship of the community, at any rate, boils down to this: "In what condition will we leave this place for people not yet born?"

People often come to visioning processes because they have passion about economic development, housing, downtown revitalization, education, or any number of other 'things.' I like to point out that these 'things' are secondary. We do not have an economic issue here. We do not

have a housing issue here. We do not have an education issue here. We have a spiritual issue: "In what condition will we leave this place for people not yet born?"

Many questions follow to be sure. Will we have taken our gift from former generations and added to its value for these future residents? Will that added value consist of an economic trust that generates the financial resources sufficient to carry each generation through and provide a nest egg for the next? Will that added value consist of a community culture based on a spirit of generosity sufficient to keep meanness at bay? Will that added value include a husbandry of land sources such that future generations will not get caught short in their investment in their own stewardship endeavors?

That discussion, that challenge, that (dare I say it) TRUTH begins to claw away the matted thinking that so often keeps communities locked in old ways and stops any progress toward the creation of legacy for future generations. People present in such a discussion do begin to care about this even though they would not for the most part have described their motivation for attending a visioning session as having anything to do with the spiritual matter of leaving a healthy legacy.

The presumption that a cultural shift can happen becomes a moot issue when framed as a spiritual matter. Of course a cultural shift can happen, especially in our

own world today where religion, a second cousin, to spirituality has so significantly shifted our culture in the United States.

The presumption that the community wants this to happen becomes a moot issue in the reality of those present proceeding to do it.

Finally and in reverse order as I laid out the presumptions in paragraph two above the presumption that people can find definition as community also becomes moot. It becomes moot because 'community' has roots in the idea that 'where two or three people are gathered...'

As the product of a Christian fundamentalist upbringing I make no apology for richly lacing my thinking and commentary as a community visioning practitioner with biblical references and the truths we find there; including this favorite: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these other things will be added unto you."

Stewardship happens when we understand personal accountability and personal accountability starts with simply showing up, be(ing) present in the moment sufficient to not pass on messes to others and most importantly to assume responsibility for creating the strategies that will inculcate this sense of accountability to our community, present and future.

A conversation with Suzanne Rosenblatt

George Lottermoser: Well Suzanne, I don't really know you at all. But for quite some time I've found myself enjoying your images and poetry from a distance. Some years ago I sat down at a restaurant and found myself admiring your drawing/poems on the wall. I've heard and watched your animated readings/performances at the Coffee House. I've walked into a oriental art gallery, on Broadway, and found a limited edition book of your work. I spoke to you only once, briefly, at one of the festivals at Milwaukee's Summerfest grounds. And for some reason, when *Be(ing) here Vol 1:2* began to develop around the theme of 'Stewardship' I thought, "Interview Suzanne Rosenblatt for this issue."

Suzanne Rosenblatt: Thank you!!!

GL: I really have no idea why this thought came to me. But I'm trusting the process. Perhaps you can enlighten me as to the 'why' of my thought by sharing with us your thoughts about the word/theme/concept of 'stewardship.'

SR: There was something in one of my poems about that. Perhaps you heard me do it a few years ago.

Stewardship implies we're somehow superior to other animals. Yet our uniqueness may



WE HAD THE EARTH TO CARE FOR, AND WE DIDN'T CARE
FORGOT THE WATER, BIOTA, AIR
WE CHOP, WE MOW, WE BURN, WE SPRAY
AND SPE.W OUR STEWARDSHIP AWAY
ARE THE MEEKEST THE WEAKEST?
ARE THE WEAKEST THE MEEKEST?
WILL SENSITIVE SPECIES CONTINUE DOWNHILL?
IF THE MEEK ARE TO INHERIT, THEY'LL NEED A NEW WILL.
SURVIVORS, SURVIVORS, CAWCAWCAW.

not be our intelligence but our prehensile thumb, which gives us the ability to destroy the earth.

It's our selves we have to watch out for, our tendency to grab more than we need or could possibly use. So we begin as stewards of ourselves. I think we have the responsibility to take care of and make use of whatever advantages we're born with. That responsibility expands outward to everyone whom we care about and further outward to the earth in general and people in general. The key word is

responsibility.

GL: Responsible stewardship. Could there be any other kind?

SR: Yes. Well, but it starts with your self. You have stewardship for the body you're born with and the talents you're born with.

So you start with taking care of that and taking advantage of it. . . ok, I write poems and I love writing poems and performing. I feel as if part of my responsibility in life is to do that if I can get my message across that way.

I'm born with a basically healthy mind and body. My responsibility is also to take care of them not only so I can enjoy life, but also so I can help other people enjoy their lives. I have kids and grandkids and my responsibility is to try and make the world a better place for them to grow up in.

GL: It seems so difficult to steward for the coming generations when it seems like those who really have the power over the planet do not seem concerned with stewardship of the earth for future generations. I'm totally in agreement with you about beginning with self. I've drawn diagrams with the little circle that is me, and then my family, home, yard, street, community, city, county, state, etc.. And yet I find it extremely difficult to take care of myself. Once I'm done brushing my teeth and taking a shower. . .

SR: (with a laugh) Half the day is gone.

GL: Not quite, but as soon as

I get to the office and begin to deal with the economics, which seem always to be falling apart, and the maintenance of the house, which needs a roof, among other things. I can hardly steward my own little piece of it. When I begin to worry and wish to steward the larger the community, “No not war. We have to stop this.” Then I leave my own little roof leaks and photograph a demonstration, or write my congressmen and find myself out doing this other kind of stewardship and my little house is literally falling apart.

SR: Yes. We’re in a time now when there’s so much to do. But we all know that if you can’t take care of yourself you can’t take care of anyone else. That’s what they tell care givers. But you do have to keep informed. So many people just can’t stand to look at the news anymore and neither can I. But I still do. And you have to find your own ways to fight. Sign every petition. E-mail your congressman. Write poems!

GL: You have a very specific focus with your “Grass roots communications.”

SR: Yeh, (laughing) the bane of my life.

GL: Why do you describe it in those words?

SR: Because it takes up so much of my time now; between my grandchildren and all of those emails coming in. I don’t want to overwhelm people with emails, so I try to just winnow things out and

I don’t like to do that; there’s so many interesting things.

GL: You picked an issue to put this time into which is very much about . . .

SR: Stewardship-really. Very local.

GL: And very earth centered. Very much about food and healthy ground. . . with everything that is in the ground, healthy water, etc. Obviously you have a broad appreciation for everything that’s going on and staying informed. Do you find your mind spontaneously focused on this one issue and how other things relate to that?

SR: The Grass Roots list is a very specific list for toxins in the environment, basically, and most important — pesticides in the environment. And I try to keep that separate from my personal email list.

During the election I was sending out a barrage of emails to my person list about voter intimidation and everything related to Kerry .

I started Grass Roots very specifically to educate people about lawn pesticide risks, with a friend whom I thought would help me, and she isn’t around. So it ended up an extra grandchild and I already have seven—(again that wonderful laugh).

GL: I see them. I see their spirits floating about. (We’re sitting outside Suzanne’s home, where children’s toys abound in the welcoming way that playgrounds

beckon.)

SR: I refuse to clean up after everybody.

GL: It looks very playful. You’d have to pull it all out again any way.

SR: Right. That’s what happens.

The reason that I chose pesticides. Well really it chose me. If you look at the Grassroots web site, you’ll find that Lilac (Suzanne’s dog) died. And I saw that this stuff is really dangerous and people don’t realize it. And then when I broke my foot on a pesticide sign, people started telling me about breast cancer and pets dying—I just felt that this was something in my everyday life—that maybe—in some way, I could affect if I make people aware of it. There are people all over Wisconsin addressing this issue. In Madison, last I heard, there were eighteen groups that have an umbrella organization, Madison Healthy Yards. My friend Robin is hypersensitive to these chemicals; and I met one woman who gets pneumonia from them. One of my friends said that her mother went temporarily blind when her neighbor treated the lawn. I mean I get so much anecdotal evidence and then of course there are studies too. But you know, unless it happens to you directly and your dog dies young, you figure, “oh people are just saying these things.”

GL: In this working hypothesis of going out from self to ever larger circles of community - do you see a change on your block?

SR: Well, the people right next door used pesticides once and I said something to them and I sent an email to their daughter, who is a doctor, and she said something to them. But then of course the lawn company continued to treat, because they signed a contract.

GL: There’s something about writing our congressmen, and sending out email, while unable to connect with my neighbors that leaves me feeling helpless. Rather than walking door to door and making eye contact, we toss these fine ideas into the wind, hoping they might land and grow into something.

SR: Well, it is all those good ideas that eventually coagulate. We all feel hopeless.

GL: But that sounded hopeful.

SR: Look what’s happening now. I don’t know if there is a chance to change Congress. There are several organizations which have been working on changing the voting machines. A lot of the states now require a paper trail. Congress hasn’t passed the HOLT amendment, which I thought was a very important amendment because if you don’t have legitimate voting machines you don’t have a democracy. Of course that doesn’t do anything about voter intimidation. There’s a movement in Ohio to change the election board because there was such a conflict of interest that they managed to steal Ohio basically and blatantly by having no machines in the

black neighborhoods; and seven machines in every precinct in the white neighborhoods.

GL: Who’s in charge? We pay folks huge amounts of money to “take care of things” for us, so that we can take care of our little pieces. And it seems a real dilemma when we find our “representatives” are not doing their job - which means we have to—which means we can’t do our job.

SR: It is. We’re all caught in it. It was kind of nice to wait for you today, nice that we miscommunicated about where to meet so I had time to write a poem, because my days get taken up by all these other things.

Whether it’s looking at my mail from TruthOut to see what the news media all over the world are saying about what’s happening. Certainly our media isn’t covering a lot of the most important issues. Sending emails to Congress, whatever—it’s just endless. But talking about change, all these people, I guess it’s through organizations like MoveOn, People for the American Way and Common Cause are making a difference in the voting machines. So it feels hopeless, but something is getting done. Whether it will be enough when the most powerful people in the world are just plain greedy and, um—evil. The axis of evil is right here.

GL: So it seems. You sent me a poem with the word stewardship in it. Do you have any particular artwork which may accompany this



Suzanne performed her poem "Water" Wednesday, November 30, 2005, at the Shorewood Senior Resource Center, 3920 N Murray during their LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH POETRY program.

Suzanne Rosenblatt uses irony, humor, melody, rhythm, dance, word-play and other devices to make us think about the impact of our actions on the world and the impact of the world on each of us.

During the same program Tom Pexton shared his interest in the writings of Poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar, who was the son of slaves and a friend and neighbor of the Wright Brothers.

Photography by George Lottermoser



interview and that poem and kind of weave in your visual side with your poetic side and your political side.

SR: A lot of the environmental poems start out as drawings. The Inuit poem came from one of the drawings from the Shorelines book. If you look at that, and I have all of the drawings on-line, there's one that's "We're studying studying studying dying"—that's the Inuit poem. Then I read about Inuit [breast] milk being undrinkable and went from there. Like you, I'm overburdened. Everyone I know is. My kids are. No one has time for everything. Well my kids are bringing up kids, working full time, and trying to do their art—in this age of information over-load.

It is hard to be optimistic. But I feel if you just let things slide without doing anything about it you get what you deserve no matter what. You have to know what's going on and try to do something. And if everyone had that attitude—but how could the people of New Orleans have had that attitude when it's a complete struggle for survival?

I like email because it saves time in telephone conversations; I can have all these simultaneous email conversations with people all over the world—but then it's destroying my life. (followed by insight laughs on both our parts) It takes so damn long.

I actually wanted to write something [on this word stewardship] for the NPR "This I

believe" series. It would be nice to write something just to have that down, but I haven't had time.

At least with the Earth Poets I have to write a poem a year. In 1988 Jeff Poniewaz invited local poets who were environmentally minded to read at the Coffee House, and he formed the Earth Poets. I'd written only one poem, "Yoruba Pygmies," and Jeff and Antler just loved it. We read at least once every year, usually we have two readings. That's a motivator to have an environmental poem that's really a performance piece.

I don't try to get them published because a lot of them need to be heard. I don't like poetry unless I'm really drawn to the way the person expresses himself. I'm not a big poetry reader, if you want the truth. I never had any intention of writing poetry. It just happened. I started suddenly writing fiction. I'd invited Clyde Morgan, who was dancer in residence at UWM, to dance at the Jewish Community Center, and he said he'd only dance if I wrote a poem for him to dance to. So I went over to his office every Wednesday and interviewed him and wrote my first poem - the Yoruba Pygmy poem.

I was always an artist. I didn't start writing until I was almost 40. Now it's 28 years later, I'm still writing and still painting and it's too much to do. I heard someone being interviewed yesterday saying something about people wishing for different lives. It's something that I wouldn't have wished for. I've



Words by George Lottermoser

05727:08:00

First thing in the morning
the atlas lay
on the kitchen table

How odd?

A late-night geography lesson?
Who, in this home,
needed to know
what, the night before, when
the bound maps were not
here?
Not when I went to sleep.

12 hours later

the question found
the answer choking
through tears.

On 050726:23:30

the BBC's Hillary Anderson
and Ted Koppel
exposed
the Niger famine
in graphic detail
with moving pictures
of millions of human
skeletons drawing
their pain filled,
final breaths.

Ann needed to know
where Niger—no!
where fellow beings
died. Weeping words,
“why can’t they drop food
instead of bombs? It was
the most horrible thing
I’ve ever seen.”

Babies’ bones erupting
through their skin.

The reporter’s film made
Ann a witness.
Despair and guilt.
The atlas here,
now
on the kitchen table.

Where we eat.

