

PART III

A JOURNEY OF ECONOMIC DISCOVERY

DEEPLY EMBEDDED IDEOLOGIES of our times initially led me to reject the centrality of land policy and the inequitable treatment of land wealth elucidated by Henry George and others. This power of accepted standards and customs to sustain themselves with little questioning lets us understand how our predecessors could mentally block out past injustices like slavery or denial of women's rights. It explains how socially aware and intelligent people have difficulty in recognizing ethical fault lines in our current economic landscape. The following chapters describe the constellation of people and events that shaped my economic perspectives and gave me a sense of urgency about getting America back on track.

5

The Earth, Our Home

WHAT NATURE PROVIDES – this bountiful earth – is the ticket to survival and well-being for every person and creature in the world. How much longer we can abuse and poison the air, water and soil of our earthly home and workplace is no idle academic question. More and more people have come to agree with the noted ecologist and ethicist Aldo Leopold (1886-1948), who wrote: “When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect. There is no other way for land to survive the impact of mechanized man.” Or for mankind itself to survive, it may be added.

Starting in the early 1930s, A.B. Brooks, a charismatic naturalist-philosopher and pioneer conservationist, led bird walks every Sunday morning in my home town, Wheeling, West Virginia. My parents, Ry and Buddy, were faithful A.B. followers – literally, along the beautiful trails of Oglebay Park.

A.B. organized nature leadership camps every summer, two weeks at Oglebay and two more in wilder parts of West Virginia. From the ages of 11 and 12, my older brother Art and I were allowed to participate in these adult programs. The faculties included the renowned bird artist George M. Sutton; herpetologist Graham Netting, the future head of Pittsburgh’s Carnegie Museum of Natural History; Maurice Brooks, chair of West Virginia University’s Forestry Department, a botanist and specialist on Appalachian culture; plus geologists, astronomers, and entomologists.

In a mountain camp alongside Lake Terra Alta, the evening vesper songs of the Veery resounded in the woods like a symphony of flutes and left a permanent imprint. Identifying ferns, trees, wildflowers, birds, reptiles and so forth was not the point. The naturalists' quest was how plants, animals, soils, insects and rock strata related to each other and to humans. Ecology was their "in" word, unfamiliar to few outside their circle at that time. Not content to dwell on what was known, these nature leaders seemed always in hot pursuit of unraveling nature's mysteries – how migratory birds navigated, or how leaves converted sunlight into energy, for instance.

Gentle, dignified A.B. and his circle were radicals. They were rebelling against scientists who had "gone indoors", so to speak, confined to their labs and losing touch with the natural world. While winning public acclaim for their marvelous new inventions and products, at times they were unintentionally putting at risk the intricate and fragile support systems developed over eons to sustain life, including human life.

As to America's "march of progress", A.B. recalled seeing huge flocks of Passenger Pigeons darkening the sky during his boyhood. Beech tree branches on which they roosted broke from the load. Hunters killed them by the thousands, yes, thousands, to put on dinner plates and to feed their hogs. By 1914 the Passenger Pigeon was extinct, ahead of other species being wiped off the face of the earth.

Older campers told how lumber companies felled every accessible tree in the Allegheny Mountains, clear-cutting almost all of West Virginia's magnificent old-life forest. Without trees and undergrowth to hold back the water, floods became more prevalent, rich fertile soils eroded away, and rural people living off foods grown on nutrient-deprived soils suffered poorer health.

During his Sunday bird walks, A.B. helped hikers single out the "instruments" in nature's symphony – Indigo Bunting, Wood Thrush, Tufted Titmouse, Kentucky Warbler, Carolina Wren, and other songsters. He had an actor's knack of making his favorite poems come alive. It became evident from the philosophers he quoted that our forebears' intimate association with the beauty and wonder of nature etched important elements into the American character.

One Sunday A.B. discussed nature's restorative powers, noting how the scouring of streams rushing over gravel and sand, along

with the life forms within them, formed a water purification system. But he said this remarkable cleansing capacity was being defeated by mines and industries that overloaded rivers and tributaries with more impurities than they could tolerate.

"I have a confession," spoke up a local steel executive. "The State Legislature passed a law against acid pollution, so we stopped draining acid directly into the Ohio River. We dug large pits to collect the poisonous liquids. When these pits fill up, we call state inspectors to watch us dump the acid all at once, and pay our fine. We just considered the fine a cost of doing business." He shook his head saying, "There must be a better way"

Association with A.B. enabled me to become curator of Oglebay's nature museum and a nature guide for day campers during my teenage summers, and embarked me on a lifetime of awe and delight.

Perhaps A.B.'s most enduring gift to those touched by him was an understanding that we humans are land creatures, part of an interdependent web of living things. Respect for this web, difficult as it may be for a society that no longer has its feet on the soil, is essential for the health and sanity of the human race. As Chief Seattle said about this web, "What we do to the web, we do to ourselves."

For those who bemoan the prospects for major social reform, A.B.'s pioneering work offers an optimistic lesson. From small beginnings, the Oglebay nature camps and the Brooks Bird Club became prototypes for the Audubon Society, the Sierra Club, and others. Gradually environmental awareness spread nationwide, blossoming into a political movement with considerable clout.



Land of Opportunity

FOR A NATION overwhelmingly populated by immigrants and their descendants, we pay precious little attention to what made America a land of opportunity, not just for the few but for almost everyone. My grandparents' story is not unique. In the telling of stories like theirs, the emphasis understandably is on how hard the immigrants worked and sacrificed to enable their families to prosper. Rarely mentioned, however, is the role that real estate or land played in their struggles to get ahead.

My grandfather Heyman Rybeck left the pogrom-ridden Polish-Russian border region in his late teens, crossed the Atlantic, arrived alone and penniless at Ellis Island a decade after our Civil War, joined a synagogue, picked up an approximation of English while working in leather shops, saved enough to buy a candy store in Manhattan, and married Hungarian immigrant Fanny Greenwald. They raised three daughters and two sons and lived above the shop, sharing a bathroom with other families on their floor. When the children were old enough to see over the counter, they pitched in to help their parents serve customers long hours every day.

Heyman contracted tuberculosis, recuperated on a New Jersey farm, and later retired to suburban Mount Vernon in Westchester County. The family grandly referred to that house on Homestead Avenue as "the homestead". Heyman got disability payments from a Jewish burial society, a kind of insurance in that era, but he and Fanny survived mainly from the large portions of their

paychecks that four of his working offspring regularly sent home.

The eldest, Nancy, became a fashion writer on the *New York Daily Mirror*. I was about to say, “with only a high school education”. Would that only a high school education prepared children so well today. Nancy spoke with a lovely theatrical style, not a trace of her parents’ heavy accents. She was well read, loved the arts, and had a keen interest in public affairs.

Samuel, my father, was next in line. Known as Ry, he graduated from the free City College of New York and served in World War I. An apprenticeship in Gimbels led to his becoming advertising manager for a small store in New Jersey. He and Nancy helped their younger brother enter the advertising world and Maury soon became a rising star at big name stores. Flo was a dress shop saleswoman. Ruth, the youngest, was still at home.

Tedious work and cramped living conditions were the lot of many immigrants, but they recalled that their families had endured similar hardships or worse in the Old World. There they felt doomed to remain in poverty. Here their poverty was merely a first stop, a springboard. Examples of friends and neighbors working their way up the economic ladder showed that keeping one’s nose to the grindstone, so to speak, really paid off. People who only partially realized the promise of upward mobility put their hopes in their children’s prospects.

The idea that everyone had a chance to earn the good life so permeated the atmosphere they could almost taste it.

How did real estate figure in this story? Land was cheap enough – even in America’s largest city! – for folks like Heyman to gain a foothold in business. Acquiring space for a song, he became his own boss. As he and Fanny proudly watched their family flourish, no payments to landlords and no income taxes whittled away their earnings. The harder they worked, the more they could earn and save. Their one tax on real estate – the property tax that current political demagogues love to impugn – funded the superior school system and other municipal services that contributed to New York City’s attraction.

Granddad rhapsodized about how American freedom blessed his family. His patriotism overflowed when he and Grandma joined us on a trip to Washington. I saw tears streaming down Granddad’s face as we climbed the Lincoln Memorial steps and he confronted that pensive face on the statue of the Great Emancipator.

Years later, during visits to my grandparents, when my father's old friends gathered, they would frequently voice a lament. If only their parents had held on to the Manhattan lots they once owned, they sighed, their families would now be rolling in wealth. Why, they asked, had they not been like the Astors, never selling land and growing "filthy rich" from the gigantic rise in New York real estate prices? It never occurred to me in my childhood days to question why these folks felt they should have become millionaires simply by holding on to a piece of land. Nor did I wonder whether the people who had become extraordinarily rich due to no productive effort on their part did so at the expense of others who actually created that wealth. At any rate, my parents' friends, by laboring in their various professions, had carved out reasonably comfortable lives. Was that not a good thing and sufficient?

It should be underscored that America was a land of opportunity, not merely because people worked hard. People work hard, often extremely hard, in almost every country in the world. What made our nation so special was that it provided easy access to affordable places to work and because it did not erode away the rewards of that work via high rents to landlords or a multitude of injurious taxes.

7

The Call To Make a Better World

DO RELIGIOUS LEADERS have a role to play in ending joblessness, poverty and recessions? American clergy and lay leaders were slow to take a stand against civil rights abuses. Many even defended and promoted such abuses. Yet, once the churches and synagogues belatedly got on board the cause of the blacks, there was no stopping or turning back the movement for their equal treatment. When religious leaders and organizations take strong stands against injustice and make them a moral issue, they prove to be a powerful force for good. Where do they stand on today's social disorders and abuse of land rights?

Unlike Granddad, who wore his talis or prayer shawl every morning, swaying as he chanted Hebrew portions of the Scriptures or Talmud, my parents were Reform Jews. Dad at times served as president of our congregation. Mother, Rosalind Greenbaum Rybeck, known as Buddy, headed our religious school. We attended Friday evening services and celebrated Jewish festivals. We also enjoyed the festive spirit and non-religious aspects of Christmas. Brother Art believed in Santa Claus longer than many of our little Christian friends because he had "seen him" – a Santa impersonator who caught him sneaking a look for presents one Christmas Eve. On occasion, Dad led the lighting of Wheeling's community Christmas tree.

Our rabbi in the 1930s, George Lieberman, taught that the vital core of our religious heritage was ethical monotheism. One God,

therefore one humanity. Typical of teenagers, we questioned the miracle stories. The rabbi said we could choose to take them literally or poetically. But he was not permissive about the Bible's moral lessons. Society's problems were caused by people, not God, and therefore it was up to humans to resolve them. Our ethics, he taught, should imbue us with a determination to correct injurious behavior and to be peacemakers in our families and the larger community.

The rabbi's teachings, fortifying the similar views of my parents, made me feel a common bond with people of other religions, and with those who claimed to be agnostics or atheists, for that matter, as they tried to find their paths in the world and reached out to make a better world.

Our social climate reflects an undercurrent of unfairness that leads to excesses of belligerence and unsustainable disparities between the very wealthy and the very poor. People who find inspiration from religion should feel challenged to correct public policies that are out of kilter – including the inequitable sharing of nature's gifts – and champion more ethical approaches. Don Marquis (1894-1937), journalist, poet and social satirist, wrote shortly before the Great Depression: "The gods do not make men better. And when men have made themselves better, the Almost Perfect State will be here – just like that."

8

That's Business

WE ROMANTICIZE SMALL BUSINESSES although, to a greater degree than we like to admit, we have become a land dominated by megafirms. The official federal definition of “small” is a stretch. Companies with up to 499 employees or that gross up to \$6,999,999 a year are classed as small businesses. Yet a number of genuine mom and pop businesses do still exist. The rules by which small businesses operate – not the legal framework but the ethical codes determining how they treat employees and customers – set the tone for relationships among families, communities and society. The microcosm of my parents’ small business illustrates the point and underscores why land policies that could give small enterprises greater leverage would be so desirable.

Dad was an instant success when, at age 50, he opened an interior design business. A couple would come to Rybeck Studios to buy a Venetian blind and end up redecorating their whole house. Dad and Mother enjoyed serving affluent clients, but their biggest joy was working with young lower-income couples and helping them, often over the course of years, to have homes that fit their incomes and surpassed their dreams.

This “instant success” was based on years of solid experience. After apprenticeship in New York and New Jersey, Dad became advertising-sales manager and vice president of Stifel’s, Wheeling’s second largest department store. Adept at human relations, community relations, and customer service, he made Stifel’s profitable, even during the Depression. To enable store clerks to be home with

their families on Christmas Eve, he led a successful campaign to close all Wheeling stores early on that day.

When Stifel's president, pretty much a figurehead, died, the chain that owned the store overlooked Dad, despite his excellent work, and brought in an outsider to fill the position. That was business, said the managers in the New York headquarters.

Dad then turned a friend's faltering dress shop into a flourishing venture. Seeing this success, the local newspaper, which held the bankrupt Palace Furniture Store in a receivership, hired Dad to revive it. Short-handed, Dad asked Mother to join in his rescue efforts. As quietly sedate as Dad was exuberant, she protested that she had never sold anything, but Dad persuaded her to act as hostess. Soon her good taste plus a knack of judging what styles suited different customers made her the star salesperson. Mother also wrote a weekly newspaper column, "Inside the Palace". In lieu of conventional ads, she wrote about decorating trends, interesting customers, or goings-on in the store, like a "Palace romance" between two employees.

The Palace gave other local furniture stores a run for their money. The largest competitor conspired to have out-of-town financiers buy out and close down the Palace. Mother discovered that a man they had known for years had engineered this. She asked him how he could do such an underhanded thing. "That's business," he replied casually. Mother detested that excuse and often recalled it as the type of ethical lapse that gives business a bad name.

Dad, used to landing on his feet after setbacks, typified American optimism. At this point he risked opening Rybeck Studios, his own business. He and Mother were as good to their staff as to their customers. They trained them so well that Gene and Irene, the couple that had fallen in love at the Palace, were able to take over and run the store after Dad died.

Many 8-to-5 workers do not realize how their work lives differ from that of their small business bosses. Mother and Dad worked late evenings and weekends to keep their enterprise viable. They befriended manufacturers at furniture markets. They negotiated long and hard with sales representatives so they could compete price-wise and not lose customers to big-city stores in Pittsburgh, sixty miles away.

My parents' mix of civic involvement and business brought them economic security, a wide circle of friends, and a rich life. They

boosted Oglebay Park and its nature program. Mother started the park's day camp. They actively supported the symphony, international folk festivals, hospital committees, and family service programs. Dad loved acting. Once, when the amateur theatrical group's usual theater underwent repair, the play in which Dad starred was moved to a school auditorium. The sign on the highway in front of St. Michael's Catholic school announced the performance in large bold letters: "THE BISHOP MISBEHAVES - 7 PM ALL NEXT WEEK."

Words cannot convey the depth of my parents' fondness for Wheeling, for West Virginia's beautiful hills, and for their country and the opportunities it provided.

Wheeling, however, was undergoing a transformation, and not for the better. Through World War II, the city was the bustling tri-state hub for rural and industrial towns up and down the Ohio valley, east into Pennsylvania and west into Ohio. Then factories shut down one after the other. Leading stores left the city, fading away or popping up in outlying malls. Population dwindled. Fine buildings were torn down for parking lots. The formerly active B&O and Pennsylvania Railroad lines closed down and their rails rusted. Crime, poverty, and unemployment grew.

Given these trends, Dad located Rybeck Studios not downtown but "out the Pike", on the other side of a hill from the business district. My brother Arthur moved his dental practice to a residential neighborhood when patients no longer felt safe in his previously fashionable downtown site.

It was no consolation that similar problems were afflicting cities throughout the Rust Belt and beyond. Officials in Washington, state legislatures, and city councils seemingly had no clue about the causes of this downward spiral or what to do about it. Many West Virginians, after years of being exploited by resource monopolists, became resigned to being in an economic backwater.

Working hard and smart, my parents managed to keep their business viable, but it greatly pained them to watch as friends and associates fell victim to the worsening local economy. Art, imbued with his parents' sensitivity and community spirit, responded to bad times by devoting his weekends to offering free dentistry to poverty-stricken folks in the area.

"Doing well is the result of doing good," wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson. "That's what capitalism is all about." Monopolists who

restrict competition are not “doing good”. Shops are boarded up, cities decline and unemployment increases. Meanwhile, people who do well financially tend to hunger for more and more income, perhaps because they are unconsciously fearful of joining the underclass. If prosperous people were not islands in a sea of poverty, is it not conceivable that they would be satisfied with less copious incomes and inclined to pursue non-monetary enrichment for themselves, their fellow workers and their communities?



War or Peace?

IF, AS MANY BELIEVE, war is inevitable because of an inherent fault of human nature, the potential for mutual nuclear destruction hangs over us. My strong feeling, however, is that survival of the species is a more primal drive and that this drive can prevail when our collective intelligence is enlisted in the pursuit of a peaceful world. No small part of this challenge is correcting arrangements that deny decent living conditions for so many of the world's people.

Days before I became a soldier in 1942, Sara, a Quaker friend, asked how I would feel if I had to kill someone. It struck me as an odd question. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor had filled us with pro-war frenzy (the word is not too strong). Belligerent dictators in Germany, Italy and Japan and a demonic Nazi plan to obliterate the Jewish people fed our conviction that we had to fight to save our country, our European and Asian allies, and civilization itself.

No war hero, luck was on my side. I moved from an anti-aircraft outfit at Fort Bliss, Texas, to engineering training at Oklahoma A&M, to the infantry in mid-Texas, to the combat engineers in a Mississippi swamp, to Morse code training at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Our battalion went overseas late in the war. Crossing the English Channel at night, a depth charge alarm sent all hands on deck – except for me, sound asleep on the top of a stack of six bunks. I awoke as the all-clear signal brought troops back to quarters.

We were stationed behind the lines at Epernay, France, instructing other troops in our specialty, assembling pontoon bridges. After Germany's defeat, we were set to sail from Marseilles to the Pacific

when atomic bombs led to Japan's surrender. We veterans, saved from further combat by those bombs, have a more benign view of the bombs than do later critics. Our ship made a U-turn back to the U.S.A.

Interestingly, I had chosen *War and Peace* from the ship's mini-library on the way to France. Tolstoy did not soft-pedal war's brutality and carnage, and he portrayed the bewilderment and lack of control by generals in both Napoleon's and Russia's armies. I must have persuaded myself that his account applied to *that* old war, not ours. It was frightening to learn later how close Britain came to being overrun, how totalitarianism nearly triumphed. We were spared by German mistakes, by Britain's staying power, by the spunk of ordinary GIs, by America's industrial might, by the Russian front, and by superior Allied strategies.

In Epernay a Jewish couple, Gaby and Gaston Hannaux, befriended me during the last months of the war. Gaby had come out of hiding. Gaston had escaped from a labor camp, where his translating abilities had made him useful to the Germans. They lived above their fur shop, from which their equipment and furs had been stolen. Gaby's cousin Odette told how Nazis, angered by local resistance, randomly picked a dozen men, lined them against a wall and shot them. They were bullet-ridden beyond recognition, but Odette found her husband's wedding band on one of the bodies.

Such heartbreaking stories, plus tales of German atrocities in World War I, plus more horrors recalled from wars in the 1800s, made me pessimistic that French-German enmity could ever be healed. How could the old men, women, and children I watched scavenging our garbage dump recover from the ravages of war? Greater cause for dismay about man's inhumanity to man struck me when I visited a buddy in a hospital in Rheims and caught a glimpse of concentration camp survivors – emaciated living skeletons. Their memory still haunts me.

Nothing I saw, heard about, or experienced prepared me for the surprising aftermath. Europe's foes united. The Marshall Plan, a mix of American idealism and practicality, had a healing effect, uplifting Western Europe's economies and deflecting ancient animosities. Within a generation France and West Germany cooperated in coal and iron production, helped form a common tariff union, eased border restrictions, joined a European parliament, and adopted a common currency.

The atom bomb's immense power had stunned mankind. Some thought it would change everything, signaling the end of war forever. Wrong. The bomb reinforced whatever people believed before the ominous mushroom clouds arose. Nationalists became more so. Internationalists and pacifists became more so. Militarists became more so. In the guise of defense, the United States and the Soviet Union vied to acquire the best and largest arsenal of nuclear weapons, converting the post-war years into the Cold War. Nuclear proliferation remains a most troubling issue of our times, notwithstanding the heroically patient efforts of scientists and statesmen to edge world leaders and our own hawkish militarists toward a sane disarmament posture.

My three years in the army fortunately were on the outskirts of the war. That was close enough to see the horror and mayhem it wrought and the obliteration of centuries of cultural treasures. That was personal enough to have lost friends killed at Pearl Harbor and in the European and Pacific theaters, and to see a brilliant classmate become psychologically damaged from hardships he endured in the Battle of the Bulge.

War also has its tragicomic aspects. My father and my wife's father fought on opposite sides in World War I. The war medals Erika's father won in the Austrian army did not keep him and his wife from being persecuted by his own countrymen and murdered by Hitler's henchmen. My Dad's only apparent residue from that war was to occasionally put my brother and me to sleep by singing taps, "Day is done, gone the sun, from the lakes, from the hills, from the sky, all is well, safely rest, God is nigh."

On a recent anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bombs, Erika and I dined with a native of Nagasaki who was miraculously unharmed while her family members died of radiation burns. After a career in treating bomb victims, she married an American and came to the States. We smiled – to keep from weeping – at the oddity of how a shattering event affected us so differently but did not stop us, decades later, from rejoicing in our common humanity.

Could the massive killings, destruction of cities, lost treasures, and other tragedies of the worldwide conflagration have been avoided if, instead of waiting until after the war, we had committed before the war a genuine concentration of good will, energetic diplomatic efforts, and capital investments? Obviously, that was no

longer an option once Germany, Italy, and Japan were intent on aggression. Long before, however – in the immediate aftermath of World War I – could not something akin to the Marshall Plan have been initiated? Can civilization move to a stage in which nations learn to wage peace with the same fervor that they wage war?

Gandhi's passive resistance campaign to free India from British rule intrigued me as a step in that direction. Should not America take the lead in mounting strategies of diplomacy and economic cooperation to defuse international friction? Martin Luther King, Jr, a student of Gandhi and Thoreau, wrote: "To meet hate with retaliatory hate would do nothing but intensify the existence of evil in the universe. Hate begets hate; violence begets violence, toughness begets a greater toughness."

The need to reverse civilization's race toward mutual destruction was uppermost in my mind as I returned to my studies. Forging America as a pro-peace anti-war force struck me as a challenge of monumental importance. It was some years before I became aware of the extent to which struggles for control of land and resources pitted nation against nation. Achieving an equitable distribution of land rights to ease poverty, unemployment and homelessness – and to erase the bitterness and enmity these induce – will help foster the peaceful world that now seems almost beyond our reach.

10

A Glimpse of Utopia

CERTAIN TIMES AND PLACES open up vistas where life is liberating, happier and more stimulating. They give us a forecast of what society might be. Such a time and place for me was Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, after World War II.

Antioch was a blissful antidote to army life. The honor system was refreshingly civilized. Student community managers ran campus government so democracy was no mere ivory tower theory. Faculty-student work parties fostered community spirit. Without inter-collegiate competition or a star system, all students enjoyed sports. The mix of backgrounds – whites, blacks, Europeans, Africans, Asians, radicals and conservatives – helped us respect and celebrate our differences. The students, mostly war veterans, were eager to make up for lost time and their hunger for learning led them to discuss the day's lectures long into the night.

Antioch's unique features reflected the philosophy of engineer-educator Arthur E. Morgan, president emeritus during my years on campus. After a 1913 flood took hundreds of lives and caused massive damage along the Great Miami, Little Miami, and Mad Rivers of Ohio, Dayton leaders called on Morgan to prevent future disasters. His five dams were first called "Morgan's follies" because they formed no lakes. Apertures at the bottom of the dams were large enough for normal river flow. Only when the rivers were swollen with heavy rains or snow melt were excess flows forced to back up. Strange as "dry lakes" looked, downstream cities and industries

have been flood-free ever since. Morgan designed an equally unique financing plan, using a species of local land value tax with no federal funding. (This plan is described in "Paying for Infrastructure – Miami Conservancy of Ohio" in Chapter 28.)

Morgan's reputation as the country's preeminent river valley engineer led Roosevelt to name him as the first head of the Tennessee Valley Authority. TVA was multi-purpose, designed for power generation, navigation, and recreation as well as flood control. Morgan integrated all these features to regenerate a poverty-stricken sector of Appalachia. TVA became the New Deal's stellar success.

Morgan shifted his focus to education after one of his dam sites near Dayton required relocating and combining two towns, Fairfield and Osborn, into a new city called Fairborn. During this socially disrupting task, he found his staff well-trained technically but poorly equipped to deal with human relations. To cultivate political and social skills, Morgan conceived a novel educational approach and searched for a college to try it out. Antioch, founded in 1853 by Horace Mann, was on the market. Morgan's innovation was the co-op or work-study program. Vocational training was a secondary goal, the primary goal being to help students understand and get involved in community life while on their jobs.

If students were to be trusted to act responsibly on jobs around the country, they needed to be able to supervise themselves off campus and on campus as well. Unlike most colleges in that era, Antioch did not act as a nanny. Hence the honor system on campus. Students bought supplies in the untended bookstore, leaving what they owed in a kitty. They set their own hours. They took open exams back in their dormitories.

Founder Horace Mann had challenged Antioch students: "Be ashamed to die until you have won a victory for mankind." Arthur Morgan challenged students to fashion society in accord with their highest goals, inspiring them to replicate the school's mores and values. In my mind, Morgan's eminence as social reformer and ethicist equaled his genius as an engineer.

I conspired with Kenneth Hunt, biology professor and director of Glen Helen, Antioch's thousand-acre nature preserve. We organized Sunday morning bird walks, opened the Glen to school camping, and held nature leadership weekends for townspeople, students, and faculty.

Eating in the Kitchen

Coretta Scott was one of my closest college friends. She was an aspiring singer before she married Martin Luther King, Jr. Hearing her tell about the indignities her family suffered while she was growing up in Alabama was heartbreaking. Black churches around Ohio invited her to sing and I went along as accompanist. Mixed-race couples were seldom seen in those times. We were never physically harmed as we traveled by bus – but if looks could kill! We were relieved to reach the churches, where the audiences invariably received me with the same warmth as Coretta.

Lest people forget the racial climate in America in the 1940s, an incident is worth recalling. I invited Coretta and two other students to an Oglebay folk dance festival in my home town, led by folk leader Jane Farwell (herself an Antioch grad and another of my role models). We arrived in Wheeling in time for dinner with my parents at the 12th Street Grill. The manager nodded toward Coretta.

“She’ll have to eat in the kitchen.”

“That’s completely unacceptable,” Dad protested.

“If it were up to me, she could join you,” he replied, seeming to forget that he was the manager as he shifted the blame. “It would upset the customers.”

Years later Coretta cited this incident in a book, saying she ate in the kitchen while the rest of us ate in the dining room. I can only guess that an editor persuaded her that this misstatement would better dramatize the evils of segregation. The truth strikes me as a better story. We phoned the festival and asked if any dinner was left. Plenty, they said, but they had just cleared the tables from the dance hall. So we drove to Oglebay Park where *all of us ate in the kitchen!* The folk dancers reached out to Coretta and fell in love with her, not erasing but taking the edge off the demeaning treatment she had suffered downtown.

Coincidence

One of Antioch’s all-time favorite professors, philosopher George R. Geiger, had a sparkling humor – the honey that made his medicine go down. The “medicines” were his probing questions

about the meaning of life and taking responsibility. Later, when I was a reporter in Columbus and took that Henry George class, I learned to my surprise that Geiger's father, Oscar H. Geiger, had founded the Henry George School and that Prof. Geiger himself had written *The Philosophy of Henry George*, a gem of a book highly praised by John Dewey and written fifteen years before I was in Geiger's class.

I went back to campus to ask Geiger why he never mentioned this in his courses. Henry George, he told me, was so derided in the 1930s that philosophy societies blackballed Geiger for promoting George's ideas. He said he did not abandon his views of social justice, but he very consciously took care *not* to cite Henry George.

I also learned that his interest in philosophy, as well as in Shakespeare and the theater (he was an accomplished amateur actor), was spurred by his father. During his high school years, Oscar Geiger organized a literary club for his son and some of his bright buddies. Several in this circle achieved fame, including Harry Golden, editor of the *Carolina Israelite*, a quirky but widely read small newspaper, and author of *Only in America*. I was able to locate eight members of that group and help set up a reunion. After that, Geiger lost his reticence about Henry George. When our paths crossed, he would press me, "Are we making progress with the land tax?"

Transradio Press

I got fired from my first co-op job, at Transradio Press in New York. TP had grown rapidly during the war years with its one brilliant idea. Other press services were adhering to an old journalism formula, telling the whole story in the first paragraph. Radio announcers turned purple trying to read who, what, where, when, why, and how in one breath. TP came to their rescue, writing the news in short punchy sentences.

That smart idea was too easily copied. When I arrived as a TP copy boy, I was unaware that the United Press and Associated Press had installed their own broadcast divisions, adopting TP's style to win back radio clients. I thought it was my brilliant writing that led the editor, after my very first week, to invite me to become night editor. That meant rewriting each day's late news to make it sound

fresh for morning broadcasts. I asked if I could start a week later while I crammed on the national and international news that I had lost touch with during my war years and while on campus. He agreed. Yet two days later, perhaps frustrated by his rapidly sinking ship, he fired me. That did not hurt as much as his parting shot: "You're not cut out for journalism." TP went out of business a few months later.

I quickly found an office typing job until it was time to return to campus. Getting fired early in my career turned out to be liberating. My world, I soon realized, had not collapsed. Thus, in later jobs, I never worried that I had to shave my convictions for the sake of my livelihood.

A Very Different New York City

It now seems like a fantasy. I often went to an eatery near TP called the Exchange Club. On the way out, a cashier by the door asked us what we had eaten and rang up the charges on his cash register. In midtown Manhattan this busy restaurant operated on the honor system. Ah, 1947!

Antioch demonstrated the potency of vision. The college I knew was very much the reflection of the vision of Arthur Morgan. Without vision, civilizations decline; with it, they can progress.



Dreams of a Castle

TO KNOW WHERE we're going, especially if we're trying to improve social conditions, it's essential to know where we're coming from. So I am indebted to a small-town editor who shared his passion for American history. Other interesting developments, there in the heart of West Virginia coal country, arose from unexpectedly spotting a castle.

My first real newspaper job in Fairmont could not have been better. Some evenings *Fairmont Times* Editor E.C. "Ned" Smith, in a melancholy mood after a Scotch or two and missing the son he had lost in the war, would invite me into his office for a chat.

He reminisced with pride about his maneuvers at the 1932 Democratic convention to help nominate Franklin D. Roosevelt. Then he would ask, "Are you paying attention to America's First Team?" He was not talking sports. He was referring to the genius of Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Madison, Franklin, and other Founding Fathers. A serious history buff, Smith observed that revolutionaries who rise up against tyranny are a dime a dozen. After toppling old regimes, most become tyrants themselves. The remarkable thing about our First Team, he said, was that they gave power to the people, not to themselves, and that they devised a way to guarantee both minority rights and majority rule.

My work in Fairmont as an Antioch co-op began during the 1948 presidential campaign. I often heard Smith order banner headlines featuring Dewey's attacks on Truman's handling of the presidency.

As it was widely predicted that Dewey, the Republican candidate, would win, I had the temerity to ask why he gave these orders. "Boy," he said, "we want Democrats to get mad enough to come out and vote." They did, to many people's surprise, but not to Smith's.

Routine

Journalism is often painted as exciting and glamorous. My tasks included writing obits, getting weather forecasts, calling the hospital for new births, listing club speakers, carrying typed articles to Linotype operators, and helping proof the galleys. One day, to counteract boredom, I combined weather data and newborns in a jingle. After that, my silly rhymes appeared daily in a corner of page one.

A short-handed news staff was my good fortune. City Editor Sutton Sharp asked me to cover a tax evasion case in federal court against "Big Bill" Lias, the gambling king of Wheeling, my home town. The first day's legal wrangling between the prosecutor and defense lawyer utterly confused me. I threw myself on the mercy of the court, confessing my puzzlement to Judge Harry Evans Watkins. He clarified significant points and invited me to come to his chambers whenever I had questions. I had stumbled onto a valuable technique that I gladly share with beginning journalists: when writing about unfamiliar topics, seek out experts who can help you give readers a fair interpretation of issues and events.

The Greatest Newspaper

"You're with the *Fairmont Times*, Walter? You work for the greatest paper in the country." Was Van Bittner, whose speech I was covering, pulling my leg? Detecting my disbelief, he asked me to join him for a beer so he could explain.

Bittner was a mineworker organizer back when unions were forbidden. To get around that prohibition, Bittner became a minister. He preached to get workers' ears about unsafe mines, cheating by company stores, and scales that undercounted the coal that determined each miner's wages. A real war erupted with armed camps firing at each other. In a front page column, Editor Smith proposed a temporary government takeover to get mines back into

operation. Bittner penned his opposing view and got a courier to cross hostile line to deliver his letter.

“The next day I couldn’t believe it when I saw my rebuttal on the front page,” Bittner said. To his astonishment, Smith’s columns and Bittner’s answers alternated every day for several weeks. “No other newspaper was this fair to labor,” he said, supporting his “greatest paper” comment to me.

Failure’s Surprising Fruit

One day I crossed the bridge from downtown Fairmont to a residential area across the Monongahela River and was stunned to see a romantic reddish castle. At close range it seemed less romantic, with its broken windows and tangled shrubbery. I learned that a man named Hutchinson, who made a coal fortune during World War I, took his wife to Scotland where she fell in love with Inverness Castle. What does a coal baron do? He builds her a replica, moat and all. Oldsters recalled how the castle lights were all ablaze when West Virginia and Washington bigwigs, brought to Fairmont in chartered trains, were lavishly entertained there.

After Hutchinson died, his attorney, Judge Shaw, bought the castle from his widow. Shaw made no secret to me that he disapproved of the Hutchinsons, contrasting their sumptuous lifestyle with his own frugality. I asked a relative of Shaw’s if he might let the castle become a community center. She thought the retired judge was purposely “letting the castle rot to show people the wages of sin”. Yet Shaw let me inspect it with a contractor, and his cost estimate for restoration was not excessive – it was an amount local groups might feel justified in raising in exchange for making the castle their home.

We failed to save the castle. Many clubs and organizations were enthusiastic about the project, but Judge Shaw would not cooperate. A decade or so later, when I took my wife to Fairmont, all we could see of that fine replica of Inverness Castle was a pile of rubble.

Out of this failure, however, came an unexpected result, the founding of a symphony. While pondering how to stir interest in the castle, I ran into a close family friend, Dave Daniels, in front of a jewelry store. He was an accomplished Polish violinist who had been the Wheeling Symphony’s concertmaster. Under a New Deal

program, Daniels was chosen to form and conduct an orchestra in Parkersburg. Federal funds stopped abruptly after Pearl Harbor and his orchestra folded. A relative in Fairmont offered Daniels a job as salesman in his jewelry store.

When I asked Davey if he still played violin, he shook his head. "They just like hillbilly music here," he said. Not true. I had already met others who enjoyed classical music. One was Thelma Loudin, a school music supervisor, who told me that, as a little girl, she had played violin in the castle's great hall. She remembered being awed by displays of medieval armor there.

At any rate, I wrote a short news item inviting anyone eager to play chamber music to meet at the YWCA. Instead of the half dozen we anticipated, thirty showed up. We realized we had the makings of a symphony. Davey said he had loads of symphony scores. So we launched a search for missing instrumentalists.

Because Fairmont's Dunbar High had an excellent music program, I called on the principal to see if he could help us locate the musicians we needed. The response of that well-educated black man may sound incomprehensible to people born after the 1940s. "A symphony would do wonders to elevate the civic climate here," he told me. "Don't jeopardize getting it started by involving Negroes," he advised.

Seeing my disappointment, he explained: "Fairmont is funny. When I'm walking along the sidewalk, one white person will smile at me but the next one moves so menacingly toward me that I have to jump out of the way. We're always off balance."

The principal was trying to spare Fairmont's blacks from the rejections and hurts that tended to be their lot. However, our need for musicians took precedence over racial considerations. Several black musicians were willing to show up for the first rehearsal. Everyone was so delighted to be making music that no sign of prejudice broke the harmony.

As the group tuned up, a trumpet player who also headed the local musicians union warned that he and others were really rusty. "Not to worry," Davey said. "I'm not Stokowski, and we'll start with easy Strauss waltzes to break the ice." The musicians, plus the wives and husbands who had come with them, were almost in tears as the music swelled. Soon they gave their first concert and Davey became Fairmont's beloved conductor till the end of his long life.

The symphony was a splendid dividend from my failed efforts to save a castle. It inspired others who were interested in acting to ask me to help them start a little theater, which also took root. Such stories need to be repeated and remembered to counter the defeatist attitudes of would-be reformers who, though seeing the need for change, too often belittle their power to make a difference.

12

A Far Cry from Home

A YEAR IN LATIN AMERICA became a kind of college course in land policies. There one sees land problems in exaggerated form, clarifying how land tenure and taxation policies sharply divide society into the wealthy few and the impoverished multitude.

While many college friends went on to grad school, I was eager to get on with a writing career. That, plus the willingness of my former *Fairmont Times* editor and three Ohio Valley newspapers to take weekly columns about South America, let me enjoy a year as a foreign correspondent.

A tramp steamer took me from Brooklyn to Barranquilla, Colombia, where it unloaded a cargo of dynamite. We went through the Panama Canal to the Pacific Coast port of Buenaventura, Colombia. The small fees from my newspapers, thanks to the dollar's amazingly favorable exchange rate in that era, financed my adventures in Colombia, Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands.

The title of my columns, "A Far Cry from Home", reflected the cultural distances as well as the distance in miles from Appalachia to Latin America. Yet my experiences in those places illuminated for me much about my homeland.

The Price of Order in Colombia

In Medellin, I asked a local editor why his country seemed to be witnessing an authoritarian takeover. He arranged a session with

executives of two textile factories and managing engineers from a hydroelectric project to respond to my query. They had all studied at U.S. universities. They exemplified the energetic enterprise that made Medellin people known as the *Yanquis* of Colombia. They took pride in Colombia's long period without revolutions and in their peaceful freeing of slaves. I wondered why they supported their new leader, who had a dictatorial bent.

"Laureano Gomez will make workers disciplined, as in your United States," a factory executive said. The others nodded in agreement. Worried by the awakening of a long subjugated lower class, these men defended use of police powers to duplicate what they had perceived as the "order" in my country. It saddened me that they admired an outward aspect of U.S. industrial relations. They seemed to have little inkling of the long struggle by tradesmen, and by mine and factory workers, to overcome the overwhelming power of owners and management, and to gain government protection of their basic rights – rights that Gomez was starting to repress.

This session often came to mind as Colombia spiraled downward, as rebels and militia locked in battles that killed many of their country's finest jurists, journalists and statesmen, and as Medellin became known, not for its industrial prowess, but for its vicious drug cartel.

Ecuador's Half Truth

"We're a rich land and a poor people." Ecuadorians from all walks of life could have been describing my West Virginia as they voiced what I came to think of as their national mantra. This mantra however was a half truth.

Rich land, true. Ecuador's treasures included fertile valleys, vast tropical forests, and an ideal climate for bananas, coffee, cocoa and the *jipijapa* palms from which Ecuadorians laboriously made the straw hats known incorrectly as Panama hats.

Poor people, both true and false. Grinding poverty was the norm amidst Ecuador's rich resources, but the mantra omitted the controlling fact that the few who controlled the land – and thus the economy and the political machinery – were incredibly wealthy.

In my interview with Galo Plaza Lasso, Ecuador's handsome president, he said modernization was his recipe for easing poverty. Galo Plaza's family owned thousands of hectares of his country's

best farmland. This was no surprise. Most accounts of Latin America refer to vast rural haciendas. What I was not prepared for was the extent of *urban* land monopoly. I was told, for example, that most of central Quito belonged to the Jijon family, whose lavish mansion I visited adjacent to the cathedral.

Most of my young Ecuadorian friends, in their twenties and thirties, called themselves communists. Why? A typical reply: "Ecuador has tried capitalism and it doesn't work." It did not look like capitalism, certainly not the U.S. version. The parents of these young radicals were eking out a living in downtown shops and paying over half of their earnings in rents to the Jijons. Like the peons getting meager wages on Galo Plaza's estates, the shopkeepers were operating under an almost feudal system. It seemed fairly obvious that rampant landlordism was making Ecuadorians susceptible to communist demagoguery. A thin veneer of capitalism was struggling to exist in the face of an oppressive system of land monopoly. My friends there seemed unable to see it that way.

Utterly Foreign

A few things completely unknown to me back in the States were commonplace in Barranquilla, Buenaventura, Cali, Medellin, Bogotá, Quito, Cuenca, Ambato, Guayaquil, and other cities I got to know in Colombia and Ecuador.

Omnipresent heavy iron grates. Merchants pulled them down over their store fronts at night.

Snarling watchdogs behind walls topped with jagged shards of glass. These protected homes in the "nice" neighborhoods. The grates and fierce dogs both bespoke a degree of fear and lawlessness I could not have imagined back home. Nor could I have imagined that the iron grates would become familiar equipment in our own cities all too soon.

Lottery sellers on the streets. All day long they cried out. The buyers, often shoeless, spent pesos needed to feed their kids. Poor laborers, apparently giving up on the world of work, put their faith in luck as a way to escape their miserable existence.

How could people condone raising public revenue by preying on such desperately poor citizens?

With no glimmer of shame, the officials I interviewed justified the practice by recounting worthy purposes such as welfare

programs, hospitals, and schools that were funded by the lotteries. I would have objected strenuously if anyone had told me then that our own states would, within a generation, use this same logic to justify lotteries and other forms of publicly sponsored gambling. Or that our media and state governments would hype playing the odds to such an extent that it would whittle away at the work ethic in Americans' thinking and behavior.

My dismay was not a moral judgment against betting or disapproval of people who chose to amuse themselves with games of chance. Rather, I was struck that a nation was on mighty shaky ground if it had to finance its public goods and services by inducing those who were most in need of these goods and services to gamble away their pitiful earnings.

Many problems in Latin American societies that stem from land privileges are gradually taking hold in the United States. The growing gap between the haves and have-nots is one example. Rampant crime and insecurity in our cities is another. An increasing reliance on lotteries instead of equitable taxes to fund public services is yet another. It would not be prudent to think these trends can be reversed without addressing the underlying land issues.

13

Eden, Darwin and Free Land

THE "REGULAR MONTHLY NAVY BOAT" I took to the Galapagos Islands did not return for three months. Its delay gave me an unexpectedly long and glorious stay on these islands a thousand miles west of South America. They belong to Ecuador and lie on the Equator. The cold Humboldt Current swirls up from Antarctica, bathing the islands and modifying their temperature.

Ground doves were so tame they let me pick them up. To walk in an extinct volcano crater amidst hundreds of Blue-Footed Boobies was dreamy. Herds of sea iguanas came fearlessly within inches. People shouting "thar' she blows" when whales surfaced and exhaled a geyser came right out of Moby Dick. Imagine frolicking in the breakers with sea lions and wandering among them on shore. This peaceable kingdom inspires one to wonder if or when humans would evolve to live as harmoniously with each other as do the Galapagos creatures.

Understanding how living things evolve was the monumental contribution of Charles Darwin. He was only 26 when his ship, the *Beagle*, arrived at the Galapagos in 1835. Amazingly, he was not overawed by the wonders there, as were other naturalists before and after him, and as I certainly was (at the same age as Darwin when he was there). Instead, he noticed and documented seemingly picayune differences in the beaks and tails of a nondescript finch and other minutiae as he moved from one island to another on this archipelago.

Far from rushing into print with his suppositions about the cause

of these differences, he spent the next twenty-four years gathering further evidence for what he had observed before publishing *The Origin of Species*. Incontrovertible evidence has piled up to confirm Darwin's core conclusions. Those who feel his scientific findings undermine religious beliefs one day may come to see that the way creatures and plants change is no less miraculous than the Bible's allegory of creation.

In my view, however, public debates over creation arguments divert attention from a more serious distortion of evolution theory, a theory posited by proponents of Social Darwinism. They twist one of evolution's mechanisms, survival of the fittest, to applaud the "fit" ruling class and people of great wealth, and to look without compassion on the supposedly "unfit" underclass. Justifying and comforting the exploiters of the world in this way does a terrible disservice to the evolution concept. Darwin's theories emphasized long-term adaptability and sustainability.

On the Galapagos, Blue-Footed Boobies dive for fish and hawks eat lizards, just as we too eat other creatures, although supermarket packaging disguises this pretty well. The natural world is not all roses and honey, but neither is it all tooth and claw. Darwin recognized that the fittest species do not destroy their environment or food supplies but create conditions in which their young can survive.

A marvel of nature is that, although all plants and animals are part of a food chain (we are lunch for mosquitoes), the survival of each species also depends on symbiotic and cooperative relationships within their biological setting. By disregarding the role of mutual support systems as tests of fitness, Social Darwinians abuse Darwin's name and philosophy.

Galapagos human history is no less remarkable than its natural history. Getting to know some settlers and hearing the tales of how they came to live on the islands was fascinating. At Academy Bay on Indefatigable Island, I pitched my tent in the ruins of a cannery built by Scandinavians who turned to farming up the mountainside when their fishery venture failed. One of them, a Norwegian named Horneman, explained that the five populated islands in 1950 were each governed, like ships, by an Ecuadorian navy captain. The captains allotted land – free land – to residents for their homes, gardens, and animals. Mr Horneman admired this system that gave families as much land as they needed and could use, but no more.

Around the bay from where I camped, Carl Angermeyer and his brothers Gus and Fritz lived with their wives, all in little homes they themselves had built. Carl said they left Germany after Hitler came to power "because everyone was acting like sheep, and we wanted to be men". With movie-star looks, they *were* men – admirable, kind, strong, and friendly.

Carl and his wife Marga took me on their boat to see many of the islands' natural wonders. They winked when I told them of my conversation with Horneman about land allotments. Old Horneman, they confided, had a reputation for "all talk and no work". I laughed, recalling that, while Horneman was leisurely taking the afternoon to share his philosophy, his industrious wife was pouring a cement floor in their home. The world needs thinkers as well as laborers, Carl conceded.

At any rate, the land policy Horneman described worked well enough when only dozens of families lived in rather primitive circumstances on the inhabited islands I visited. There were no paved roads, motorized vehicles, hotels, restaurants, or stores that exist there now. Barter was more common than monetary transactions. (In Quito I had met Margaret Wittmer, who had lived on the Galapagos since the early 1930s and who persuaded me to visit her family on Floreana Island. She gave me the good advice to take sacks of flour, sugar, and other staples to help pay my way with the islanders.)

The only motorized vehicle I saw there in 1950 was one truck used by the small contingent of Ecuadorian naval officers who guarded the abandoned airfield on Seymour Island. That facility was built by the United States during World War II, not to protect the Galapagos turtles or iguanas, but to exercise control over air space leading to the Panama Canal – our strategic lifeline to the Pacific.

Did the Galapagos system of free land hold up during the decades after my stay when new residents and merchants came to urbanize the settlements and cater to the thousands of international tourists streaming there? Economics students looking for a thesis topic ought to check it out.

Over eons, the Galapagos evolved, thanks to natural laws, to become a veritable wonder, an Eden. Can Americans discover the essential land-to-people relationships that can let us evolve into the just and equitable society of which our Founders dreamed?

ENSLAVED IN PARADISE

A captain unloads a shipload of people on an island with fresh water, abundant fish in the waters, decent soils and materials for building shelters. Did they land in paradise? After the ship leaves, they learn that a man in the big house up from the port claims ownership of the entire island. He says he will allow these people to use his wells, his home sites, his garden spots and so forth – with a little proviso. In exchange they will owe him whatever labor he prescribes. Dependent as they are on the use of his land, they have little choice but to accept the terms of their “host”.

Theoretical? No, it is precisely what happened on the Galapagos island of Chatham in the late 1800s. Manuel Cobos won from Ecuador the right to collect an unusual lichen growing there, known as dyer’s moss, which was much in demand for producing a reddish dye. To provide a workforce for him, Ecuador unloaded political prisoners at a nearby beach. In exchange for his water and primitive shelters, these unpaid workers gathered the lichen, tons of which were sent back to the mainland. They also cultivated sugar cane and food crops. Cobos treated his workers cruelly. I ate watermelon grown by descendants of those prisoners. They pointed out the Cobos plantation house and its balcony from which they said two slaves threw Señor Cobos to his death in 1904. An account of the trial of the murderers, in *El Telegrafo* in Guayaquil, told of a more brutal ending, claiming Cobos was hacked to pieces by razor sharp machetes in revenge for his having shot several workers dead.

Land injustice has a way of begetting more injustice.