

NormalcyMag

Exploring American Culture



The Lives That Fall Upon Us

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NormalcyMag

Cover Art

Photo by Krsytal Urman

"Chasing space through time"

Digital editing by Cree Larson

Editor's Standard

Welcome back to NormalcyMag! For this issue, we chose the theme “the lives that fall upon us.” By this theme, we mean the inevitable question everyone confronts more than once in their lifetime, the great question of “how the hell did this happen to me?” Every person does, or should, evaluate things at certain times. We all need to compare the dreams we had with the realities that emerge. We should also always have ambitious dreams, especially when young. Yet, at the end of inquiry, we find our own normalcy.

Why have youth or feel youthful later in age unless we harbor aspirations? If we do not dream high and beyond the limits, we can only fault a lack of imagination or even a condemning complacency. But, yes, life's realities and immediate priorities meet those stubborn obstacles of fate. Still, evaluating things can work to keep us grateful and humble for what we do have at the time. While some of those lucky few end up doing exactly what they set out to accomplish, most humans have to remain practical and usually NEED to volunteer to lead their lives under the very strict rule for achievement: “Does it make me happy?”

There, in that normalcy of the world's great average, we exceed our own expectations. Indeed, readers may agree, that like me, luck, grace, hard work, and help when we could least expect it, save all of us for the surprisingly relevant useful lives. Today!

That identity of “human,” concerned and helpful, if done right, demands we hold the common denominator of empathy for others. To cope, to contribute, to lead, or to receive the benefits or blessings and love—all those things that make us human—require us to understand, tolerate, accept, and help others in making this a better world. There, on that journey to discover our true natures and our relevance to better things, we remove the obstacles we allowed to hold us back, and the path reopens. How did we reach the life we did not expect? How can we make the world better with what we have learned? How can we live happy within the fortune of a heartbeat that can separate from us at any moment? How did this life happen to me? How did it happen to you, the reader? The stories of life come as diverse as the individuals who tell them. We tell you ours here. Tell yours to someone, soon.

In this issue, Volume 3, Number 4 (our eighth total), we offer the usual fare for the eclectic and interesting. I contributed my two memoirs, “Sub Terra Vita” and “Low Adventures.” In addition, both Cory Ruona reappears in “Versing,” and our old and good friend Leroy comes up in a story by an anonymous contributor, himself. Davey Shoves gives us a another check list, deeply philosophical and entertaining. Finally, Pi Kietly reappears from the netherworld, where Persephone unleashed Pi's restraints to reach beyond the grave with these previously unpublished works. Our cover photo, taken by Krystal Urman, with digital work from Cree Larson, makes a perfect fit with the image's title “Chasing space through time.” With my sincere gratitude for everyone's collaboration to make this issue, we hope you enjoy this issue! And, as always: Please read with open mind!

Sincerely,
Tim Krenz
Editor & Publisher



Sub Terra Vita Chronicles

#53: Confessions of An Underground Writer

By Tim Krenz

This Autumn, as I approach the age of 48, I need to reflect on how on the god's good earth I got to this point, to my role as a writer, let alone an editor and publisher of cultural magazine?!! I graduated from the university in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, twenty-five years ago this past summer. Much transpired in my professional journey and personal adventure since those post-school pretensions to pursue scholarship in the academic field of history. All that has happened took place within the personal dialectic of successes and failures, leading to more successes and failures, and so on.

Some of the journey should not surprise me, even if the entire adventure looks incredible in retrospect. Yet, the career in writing all began even long before my high school graduation in the spring of 1989. I know, in fact, that the story begins before starting kindergarten, with the day I first spelled my own name.

Having my sisters teach me the "ABCs" caused me no end of struggle, particularly as I thought "and" in the "-n-Z" made up its own two letters, repeating a second "n." Somehow I managed to eliminate the second "n" as most people should do. Then, I do not remember the exact date, or the year it happened. One day at home, with sunshine coming through the roll-out living room windows, my siblings off at school, I remember I had an oversized pencil in my hand. On a piece of paper, on top of my toy yellow semi-truck car carrier as a desk, I wrote (rather imperfectly in penmanship), the proper noun, "tim." I took the paper and ran into the kitchen, where my mom did the dishes. "Is that my name?" I asked her. "Yes," she said. I proceeded to jump around in joyful blast of energy. Strangely, both at that time and still now, I knew that I would grow up and become a writer. A stranger journey began in earnest. I have followed it, willingly and even with resistant, ever since.

In grade school I wrote stories in and out of class. I wrote letters, even "strategic" memorandums to the president of the United States. On one warm summer's night, in my bedroom at a fold out desk in the corner, I copied out on the backside of three small sheets of my father's scrap paper from work a "gazette" of sorts:

My first newspaper publishing venture. The next day I sold all three copies to my sisters and brother for a dime each. I made the equivalent of 15 cents an hour for the effort. Even then, like all struggling writers, I could never manage to put a proper profit margin on my efforts. I found out since that all writers struggle with that throughout their lives.

I remember Mrs. Hartman's fifth grade homeroom at Osceola Elementary School. Our home room class put together a school newspaper issue as our spring project. As an avid reader of newspapers, news magazines, and history books from the assorted school, public and private libraries, I used my interest in that area for my contribution to the "Hartman Times." I still have the extant copy in my archives. The article from the spring of 1982 examined the Falklands War and the sinking of the Royal Navy ship, H.M.S. Sheffield. Also, in Mrs. Hartman's class, we had to keep a journal on various assigned topics or for general writing. I do consider that my first journal, and, yes, I still have that theme book edition in my archives, too.

Writing always came easier than reading, but I had to work hard at both of them growing up. I still do. I could never spell well, and I fought a discouraging dyslexia all through high school. Sometimes, it still crops up. Yet, as a result of writing and reading, two major themes in high school became apparent concerning my future. I would do something that involved writing. Second, I really, really did well at history, current events, and philosophy.

Two bad things about middle and high school surfaced, too, and would cause me some degree of trouble. First, I hated manipulative controls on my own inquiry into the world. And worse, I hated bad people who either failed, tormented, or humiliated kids—or all of the above combined. I did, though, learn a critical insight. The lesson: All private and public institutions, indeed ALL things involve the interplay of politics, personalities, positions, and power. The good people in institutions remained humble and kept their humanity and empathy intact. Funny, I learned this vital curriculum before age

nineteen. The lesson rarely fails me when I put it in the perspective of whatever I do. These matters all pertained to the “what” and the “why” I write.

On the positive side, more than a few teachers and administrators and support staff really delivered HUGE gains to students, and to me in particular. For the students who could perceive it, these wise and honored ones earned more than their weight in pure salt in how they carried their lives, their personalities, and their empathy into us and for what they taught. They treated us as fairly as possible. These good ones let us inquire and develop. These teachers and the other people just had the knack, to teach us to live and think, and to express ourselves and explore ideas and the world without fear. They held us accountable, yes. And, yes, sometimes we deserved a little punishment. The big difference? They never acted unjustly or in retribution. I have too many to mention in such a short article, but those teachers know already and some have passed. Thank you, for helping make me a person who writes!

Not a very good grade-oriented student, for obvious reasons, I somehow made it into university. I started as a journalism major for one semester. That first year, though, I had a two-part history

survey course of western civilization. In those classes, I had a professor who subsequently remained a life-long mentor, friend, and motivator in all that I would do professionally. Because of Dr. Walter J. Wussow, Ph.D., I changed to a history major and declared a political science minor right before registering for second semester classes.

I found my three and a half years of history course work intellectually challenging, and the writing very intensive. I started keeping a regularly written journal my sophomore year, a series of notebooks which continues to the present. Including two English professors who taught history degree required writing courses, August Rubrecht and Gloria Hochstein, my biggest challenges came from the writing for each history class. My senior year, I took my two-semester capstone methods and writing series from my adviser, Dr. Maxwell P. Schoenfeld. I earned that paper to graduate with every tear, nightmare, blood-and ink-stained finger I devoted to it.

For health reasons four weeks before graduation, I had to take a leave of absence. Demoralized, depressed, sick and unsightly and defeated, I remember seeing my mentor on the elevator. We had not yet become such friends that we made after he retired the following year, but Walt Wussow knew my struggle, understood the circumstances, and he saw me, and he spoke to me amid the crowd riding the car down to the ground floors. “IF you need ANY help at all through this with the administration, you come and SEE ME, or Warlowski,” the latter name referring to the department chair. As physical skeleton, pale as a zombie, and without a soul in my eyes, that ONE vote of confidence in me, that one act of kindness by Walt saved my future. Somehow, that summer I returned to school, earned my degree, and ran like hell with no destination in mind.


What next? I had no fucking plan. I had no money. I had little hope. I really had no future. I knew little. I started a career in the political adviser field. Within two years of graduation I had started The Cepia Club as a little project. I could write non-fiction under my own real name. I had already adopted a pen name my junior year in university as a lark, as a way to keep the creative writing separate if I chose to do that. I had never before thought of anything else but writing in high school. Now, I needed a purpose. How to bring it all together?

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I understood two things. I could really, really learn to write so others could read it. Therefore, I kept up my journals, and I sharpened my skills everyday for years to develop a written style of clarity, simplicity, precision, and brevity in the American language. As I healed that summer of 1995, I still had not found my calling, but I knew I needed to write to help me with self-understanding. Could I use writing to help others understand the world and their lives just a little better? I meant not just in the political field, but in the inner ways that can make light bulbs glow off?

At the end of that summer 1995, I sat watching the Packers opening game at my sisters with my brother-in-law and nephew.

Then, in a way that President Carter had once discussed world policy with his teenage daughter (without such fraught fears from the national press), I consulted with my eight-year old nephew, Andy. Rather, he consulted me and asked me questions about my future. Huh? I had no idea. "Why don't you really just become an real author or something?" Well, I never wanted to disappoint anyone, but I had done enough of that. I resolved not to disappoint my nephew. Nor could I refute his logic. In the mind of the children things look so very clear. May we all achieve that clarity we had when youthful. To my nephew's question, I answered, "Yeah, why don't I." That sealed the fate and I have not stopped my quest for writing better, and writing with more empathy and honesty, ever since. 

Story

On the Street with Leroy By "Contributor"

We were listening to the radio DJs discussing FOMO, fear of missing out. One piped in and said he thinks he has FOBI, fear of being included. I laughed knowing that second one was me. Some people don't realize, it can take a lot to get me out of my own sphere. As strange as it feels for me to greet strangers, I always felt good playing guitar anywhere and singing my songs. Well not at first, but Leroy could always coax me out of my shell. I met Leroy when a young boy when we were both 13. He was playing his bongos on 7th Ave near Washington and I gave him a buck. Every now and then I'd see him at the spot. I walked by every day, quickly finding a way to scrounge up a dollar if I didn't have one. I started to make sure to carry a dollar on me at all times. After a few years got my nerve up to bring my guitar out there and jam with Leroy. We grabbed our instruments out of the van and walked a ways to a good bench in the small town. We were just going to rest for a few hours, as we had been traveling for over half the day. This type of rest involved our guitars and hand drums. Busking is an art in itself so one has to be thoughtful. One has to pick the right bench or uncomfortable edge of the sidewalk to guarantee some attention. There had to be walk-by, although there were those few from afar who seek out the music and make their way to listen and dreamily drop a buck in Leroy's hat or my open guitar case. Your set-up and sound were better off not coming across as too desperate, yet perhaps a little. We weren't just holding signs begging, we were doing something for smiles even if they were just going to be our own. Art for the ears. Smiles for spreading happiness. Although Leroy grew up poor and actually was out there busking for food all them years. I grew up a bit fancier and ended up very well off in my later years through inheritance. I took Leroy on 2-3 road trips every year and we went around playing cities and small towns along the way. It had been Leroy's dream to travel the country but felt he was in the same recycled rut for the first 40 years of his life. I started to get him some actual paying gigs later, these trips, which I fronted, and all the busking cash kept us at least fed.

The day I really got hooked was when I was waiting for my wife to get a tattoo at Shane's Sugar Shack. I brought my guitar, sat on a bench outside and was playing along. These two young girls slowly went by on their bicycles. They stopped down the sidewalk a ways and listened awhile. I just had my empty guitar case open and one of the young girls, probably 10-12 years, put a dollar in. I said "oh wow, thanks, but you should keep your dollar." She replied, "No, you deserve it." She walked back to her friend. They were out of

earshot but chatting, then came back and put another dollar in. “Oh wow” I was saying. She said “You are good you do deserve this,” in a clearly-not-taking-her-greenies-back mannerisms.


I learned long ago, the hard way, how to take compliments and to accept well-intentioned money and gifts. If I had insisted to deny the two bucks it would have negated the meaningful exchange and diminished the impact of the experience on both sides. They could have felt like I was saying ‘your opinion doesn’t matter young girls take it back’ or who knows... This simple exchange profoundly affected my soul and I think I even shed some happy tears it felt so good.

Some interactions weren’t as fun. Drunks seemed to be the number one fun-bashers asking me to play my guitar and almost breaking it. Maybe he was going to acting school because he was fake smashing it but ended up dropping it. It slammed pretty good on the sidewalk culminating in a dent I had to look at and remember every time playing that guitar.

Once in a while there are very strange characters, people that want to interrupt or talk about their opinions in a way that doesn’t really allow for any exchange to take place. Folks selling their gospel as the only way. Folks who talk about them for way too long and keep you silent. Some people can just be very rude or have ideas of buskers as homeless beggars on the verge of a terroristic crime spree. There are rituals when it comes to busking. Those two bucks the young girls gave me would be always kept in my opened guitar case for ‘starter cash’ to utilize the law of attraction, money attracting more money. Leroy always put in an old cig butt he’d find on the ground nearby and a small sparkly quartz rock he carried with him. There were lots of ‘hem’s and clearing of the throat, positioning of posture and instruments if there were a number of them. In tuning the song, Leroy’s hand stretched, and he gave a few vocal warm-up ‘tra la la’s’ and rhythmic ‘boom bup bedop’s. It all fit in a bit of silence for some mindful meditation, before even getting to ring out the first chord.

Usually by break time and if we made a few bucks we might one at time take a walk somewhere to get something to drink, maybe bringing back some sugary snacks to leave nearby us. We live for the conversations between songs and if people stuck around we’d let them know to feel free to have some candy. A couple passer-by dudes took a seat by us on the next bench and we ended up talking about their band for a half hour. At first glance I felt concerned, but after chatting with these roughnecks they were just metal-loving peace mongers. They ended up dropping a five-er in with that same 2-dollar starter money, the cig butt and Leroy’s disco rock. We played on, made a couple more bucks and Leroy went and got us some snacks. I sat there remembering how not long ago I was back in my shell, life had gotten way too monotonous. I had everything I’d ever want, need, desire, or could fill my ego with. But I was so bored and lost. I picked up the guitar which I had been doing, concentrating on all these songs we were learning for playing paid gigs. I was still working my day job, had gotten my inheritance, but was sitting on it and then playing one to two shows every weekend plus some practices in-between so life was busy. Yet all that busy-ness led to dissatisfaction and after thinking of how Leroy wanted to travel more, this idea popped into my head and I knew he would want to. After his resounding yes, I gave notice for my retirement.

First things first, I had to get out of my shell once again. I’d been slamming myself shut from any world that wasn’t within my immediate realm. Perhaps because I was so creative, it was somewhat easy creeping into miserable me over time without realizing it. Mr. never-goes-outside, he’s a shut-in, What’s he doing holed up in there? I heard one guy respond ‘maybe he’s scrapbooking’ which earned him some chuckles even from me who overheard it.

That's why I need Leroy, he gets me out of my shell. He's never afraid to sit there out in the open with a big smile and bang away the right moments. And so the busking continues. The trip stumbles along. We're singing songs. It's never a dull moment on the street trying to spread a little happiness and gettin' some in return. 

Story

The Light Above By Pi Kielty (p.h.)

“Good night, son.”

“Good night, Dad”

“Can I turn off the light tonight?”

“Ahh, let's leave it on one more night. Please,” Danny replied.

“Okay, one more night,” Danny's dad said. “Sleep well.”

“Dad?”

“Yeah,” his dad responded, stopped halfway in the hall, having already almost closed Danny's bedroom door behind him.

“Did Lacy really go to heaven?” Danny asked, again.

“Sure did,” his dad started to close the door again. Then, he paused, opened it wider to step partly back into the brightly lit, blue room with sports posters and team pennants on the wall. “Everything's going to be okay, Danny. It's only been a couple of days. She's with God, now. We'll get another one soon.”

“Can dogs really go to heaven, like people?”

“Of course,” Danny's dad said. “Now, get a good night's sleep, Danny. Pray to God and tell him to say hi and to take care of Lacy.”

“What's heaven like, Dad?”

“I don't really know, Danny. No one does, until they get there. But like I said, it's not a lonely or a dark place. It's a happy place.”

“Okay. Thanks.”

“Can I turn off the light?”

“Just one more night, . . . please,” Danny requested.

“Okay. Have a good day at school tomorrow. Good night.”

As Danny's dad left the room and closed the door behind him, he saw Danny looking straight up from his pillow toward the ceiling light and its glass shade hanging below it. Danny had folded his hands, and muttered silently so his dad could not hear his words.

Downstairs in the family room, Danny's mom sat on the sofa eating a bowl of ice cream. She asked Danny's dad, “Well, how did it go?”

“I think he'll be alright. We'll have to get him another dog, but he'll get over it.”

“How are you doing with it?” she asked.

“I'm better. You?”

“I'm okay. I miss her already. But poor Danny. . . . Poor old Lacey,” Danny's mom said, watching the television as she ate. “Too bad we had to lie to him that she died of old age.”

“Yeah,” Danny's dad said, with a gulp. “I don't think he needs to know the truth.”



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Versing

Everyone Always ***By Cory Ruona***

I want to offend you
Point out all of our flaws
I'd like to be authentic
To shine a light on our possibility

We all have our doubts
We all have our potential
We know it. I know it. You know it.

I want to wake you up (I can't offend you)
I'd like to be an example (I don't know how to be authentic)
Our possibilities are flawed
Our potential is in doubt

Check Your Leeway List ***by Davey Shoves***

Tape Measure.
Carpenter's square.
Angle finder.
Convince yourself there are 13 inches in a foot.
Speed square.
Level.
Decide not all angles are the same.
Carpenter's pencil.
Sunshine.
Sunglasses.
Try it again.

Breath ***By Pi Kielty (p.h.)***

Breathless best when fresh, we view, clean mountain streams; clasp airy dew. A morning's moonrays, the morrow's wave, coming sunlit glean, can thank the god—we forgave—for the way we trod; fair winds he saved. The beaming stars, their smiling ways, gave lights we roam'd our youthful days. They guide us well to near our homes, once done wand'ring far harder loam. Time so spent, late dearly best, with friends for merry evening rest. Take our gift, our ageless breath; share our hope so winds stay blessed. Live our times, hear our best, the sublimned breeze our lives do share, with hearts a'thriving. We live. We dared.

Heavy storm some moment comes. We despair waits of many ones. Our breathing fails our weary lungs, with weighty fears that crush insides, time-shorn gasps do frail all rhymes.

Could we, though, see our mountain streams, grasp breathful winds in moon day dreams, let all we here, tell heartfelt core, pray godful times, let us breathe you—More.

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Low Adventures: Trekking the Superior Hiking Trail Part 7: Oh, Christmas Tree! Oh, Christmas Tree! How that Ridge Belies Me. . .

By Tim Krenz

After our winter sled and snow shoeing adventure in February, our most recent trip to the Superior Hiking Trail, Craig and I went on a side adventure to the backwaters of the St. Croix River. Camping on the “secret” un-designated site between Osceola and St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin, we spent two nights, Friday and Saturday, over the daylight savings weekend.

The site on the little spit of land above the backwater of Rice Lake, which we reached by canoeing from Franconia Landing in Minnesota and then by a short walk, often served as a useful escape since before Craig went to do Peace Corps service in 1998. The trip that April went rather well and fun. That first Saturday morning, I woke Craig up at the equivalent of 5:45 AM, on his day off, when I already had coffee made and breakfast cooked. As the saying goes, “Never wake a sleeping Craig when you come across him in the woods.” Craig stayed a little grumpy the rest of the day and on into the evening. Ah, yes, never wake a sleeping Craig in the woods.

The rest of strip on the St. Croix River held little excitement, even if fun. Then, the long summer passed, and we finally came up with a plan in the fall for a one-day hike of the imposing section of the Superior Hiking Trail named Christmas Tree Ridge.

The process of planning trips always takes its round the circle course, all to get to the objective in the best way possible. And planning also always becomes a trade off between schedules, physical and material requirements, logistics of travel and lodging (if any while not camping along the trail), and, of course, time factors. Wrapped around all these variables, the most inflexible usually becomes time, hence why we had not trekked the trail since February. For the first Saturday of October, 2004, our trip to the trail started as an overnight backpacking trip from Beaver Bay to Split Rock River. Then, the plan changed several times, from staying at a camper only about 40 miles from my house, to camping overnight at a municipal campground in Two Harbors, MN, and then several iterations of all these options.

Craig, the main planner and recognized “Quartermaster” for all the low adventures to the Superior Hiking Trail, always did a great job with the details. I usually just needed to show up, ready, with my gear and with anything he told me to bring. As an aside, I almost always, though, brought one thing he told me to leave behind on every trip: My trusty camp hatchet. He hated me wasting the weight in my bag carrying such a tool. He thought it a dangerous tool, too. (I had to agree, after all the narrowly saved accidents I had with it). But Craig usually did a great job with the planning and I followed the plan. And for this one-day hike of 11.1 miles of trail, doing it on a Sunday afternoon with light day packs, he made some pretty good choices. As a reward for his good planning, I gave Craig one of the best laughs he ever had at my expense on any of the treks to the Superior Hiking Trail.



On that Saturday, at 5 PM, I picked up Craig at his parents house and we drove a good deal farther north than Duluth or Two Harbors, MN, on Lake Superior. Craig's dad, Don, had an old college friend, Wade, who would let us stay with him. We pulled into the drive way in the dark, to a beautiful log home, high above the rocky shore of Lake Superior. In the night as we unloaded gear from the car, with stormy, rainy, and windy air blowing fiercely, we could hear the swells of the big lake crash water on the shoreline behind the house. The sound of it felt like danger to the unwary of the fortunes of that large, freshwater body of inland sea. I realized at that moment that I should always respect the lake for its power, neither good nor bad, just power.

We visited with Wade for an hour, who Craig last met when age 13. After that, Craig and I settled into a room in the basement. Wrapped in my sleeping bag, I read about half of Aldo Leopold's "A Sand County Almanac," and then fell asleep, with the fierce churning of an overworked sump pump waking me occasionally.

The next morning we took Wade to breakfast, as a very inexpensive expression of gratitude for letting us stay the night. I say inexpensive because Wade only had a bowl of oatmeal, toast, and an orange juice that morning. Following breakfast, Craig and I dropped off my car at Split Rock and Wade shuttled us back north to Beaver Bay, to a parking lot on County Road 4. We said farewell to our last-minute host. Then at exactly 8:30 AM, Craig and I crossed the road and entered the trail.

As I had started to read Leopold's book for a newspaper review column, almost immediately as I climbed through a muddy path or over corduroy logs set over the trail, I began to reflect on the book by one of the original naturalist authors of the 20th Century. In the midst of ferns and walking under trees dripping after-rain down on top of us, I never had conceived of myself as much naturalist or a conservationist, nor could I identify any of the plants, trees, animal signs by proper names or even many by common names. I noticed these objects of sight and sound on all the trips, but I always used some adjectives to give those nouns some meaning. I could describe these things, hopefully, well enough for listeners and readers. This trip, with "A Sand County Almanac" in my head, I looked around more, instead of only at the ground immediately in front of my feet. I had the cool revelation about the things I would normally fail to appreciate. Of course, I always saw them or just awed at the big vistas of valleys full of trees or meadows with grass, or whenever Lake Superior

came into view. But, did I really understand the things, like the REALLY big picture or the small details?

After having read a chunk of Leopold's book before bed, I asked Craig the difference between the aspen and the birch, the pines, and more annoying questions. I may not have understood his answers as he walked in front of me. Yet, now I wanted to know more than I cared to know at other times. Like a woman at the coffee shop said to me on my way to pick up Craig, "we need to recognize that things have intrinsic value beyond what they may provide for human necessity and comfort." Sometimes, as I think Leopold intended in his writing, we can act as stewards of nature to enjoy it for what it does to our souls. We can have a desire to help sustain itself, which in the modern world nature most likely cannot do without some assistance. In doing so, we directly—even inadvertently—sustain ourselves.

The walk the first four miles traveled some distance along the western ridge of a big hill, a course with some open views of spectacular valleys at this time of autumn. Through these valleys, we got views of the Beaver River as it thundered its sound after the storms. The guidebook described trees and plants "precipitously dangling" from a ledge. We found that ledge. We sat there on a rock cliff, some hundreds or so feet high, looking and resting. At least the storms of the previous days had passed. The sky, though overcast, gave off its bright yellow sheen, one that matched the brown, leaf covered floor of the land we could see through the bare tree tops. Yes, I guess, even without specific knowledge of the name, class, genus, or common nouns to things, I could see the big, the bigger, and also the smaller pictures. Inside of me, I began feeling intrinsic worth for what I could outwardly see, hear, and feel.

Coming down the hill and walking around Fault Line Ridge (which has an ominous name), we reached a multi-group campsite and we bypassed a group of campers we could hear and smell cooking breakfast on a gas pressurized stove. That memory of fresh cooked bacon in the woods stays and the thought always entices me to go back camping at odd times.

Ahead and onward, we stopped at a knoll with a clear lake view at 11:30 for a twenty-five minute lunch and rest. Craig ate a ham and cheese sandwich he brought with him. True to my form, I ate a boring crunchy peanut butter sandwich. Adding some chocolate snacks, fruit, and Craig's homemade venison jerky, we drank

water because we brought no stove with which to perk coffee. Along the trail again we went, two miles to another campsite, to the half-way mark of the section for our one-day saunter. I looked at a deer in the valley below and once Craig used the latrine, we started the climb up to Christmas Tree Ridge.

For this trip I had somehow gotten out of shape over the summer. I had some weird breathing problems a few weeks previously and I knew that the distance of such a long power hike would tax me. I feared it would break my will. And we did not know what to expect in terms of the ruggedness or lack of it on the ridge in the months of planning. Without a stop, I plowed ahead for the second five or six mile push on this trip to the car. Ready, we got after it.

As Craig and I say, we always felt that on some of the harder, longer walks that we always “chased Gunther,” the German guy who lapped us, twice, doing the Split Rock River loop on a previous trek. Chasing Gunther. That guy, who we just arbitrarily named Gunther, looked so fit and walked so fast with those ski poles, that he reminded me of a philosophical “Superman of the North Shore.” That spring day on the Loop, he plowed ahead, passing us on our side of the river, and then passed us coming down the other leg on the opposite side of Split Rock River. He made time on the trail. We could never emulate Gunther in his drive, or his speed, or the smallness of his backpack.

Now after the day I had so far walking and thinking of Aldo Leopold and his book, could I, or did I want to, match Gunther's incredible speed in walking? Would I even want to do it so quick? Did Gunther even see anything, see the intrinsic value of the things he passed at “weight-light-speed?” Perhaps he did, and I should not judge him. Besides my out of shape ungainliness and heavy packs on the overnight trips, I would look ridiculous trying to walk so determined. Now, I could see these traces and reflections of the trail both ahead and around me walking Christmas Tree Ridge. Because Craig asked me to go along, and yes, because Craig asked me to go along, what could I hope to learn about this whole trekking experience walking the Superior Hiking Trail? I decided at some point that I no longer needed to go on this adventure chasing Gunther.

Going up to the ridge itself took a small, steep climb and it burned my legs. Then on top of it, the ridge to our intense relief became a flat walk over a large, beautiful meadow of tall yellow

grass, outcroppings of rock, and (what else?) Christmas trees! Some trees, full evergreens hanging with healthy needles, stood tall between sawed off or burned stumps, and that all seemed natural in the order of things. Those stumps did not scar my experience and we had a wonderful walk.

We had seen several grouse or some sort of birds throughout the day, fluttering feather wings up from the grass along the ridge. Coming down the ridge miles later, we heard a wolf wailing, not far from us, toward the big lake to our left and east. What a cry of the solitude, he or she moaned. The cry sounded a call to which no friends of the wolf responded. A sad thing, always: Alone in the forest by circumstance, not choice.

Three times on this trip, we came upon beaver dams. One of them actually formed the bridge over a swollen stream at the last campsite before we ascended the ridge. It had held water at a table five feet above the lower level, in a U-shaped masterpiece of natural engineering. After the third dam, we climbed downhill from the ridge and sat for a break at a campsite. We nestled on crooked ground beneath a dark canopy of tall evergreens to relax, drink water, and where I smoked a few cigarettes.

The rest of the walk went through a darker section of thick trees, one that let in little sunlight, stunting any underground and leaving an otherwise dirt bare forest floor. The temperature differences between open spots and shaded woods, even on an overcast day, make a noticeable change in early October along the north shore of Lake Superior. I noticed it by its extremes. Then, after our rest, we came to the last hill climb. We climbed it. Craig outpaced me by far as I struggled up the steep incline on the dark brown dirt trail. We followed the eastern ledge of the hill until the Superior Hiking Trail connected with more trails, one on the north side of Split Rock River that formed one leg of the loop, and the other trails leading down to the road and parking lots near the light house.

On the way to the spur trail to the east, toward my car, we decided to skip checking out on the ski shelter lean-to structure but we stumbled across something rather odd. On a piece of ground on top of dirt and a gray rock face, someone or some people had made a medicine wheel, or a witches wheel (I could not tell which). They had structured it using small, brown rock chips (abundant objects on that part of the trail), setting them in a pattern of symbols, etc. inside a circle made of larger pieces of

stone chips. Someone, or an animal, had kicked one quadrant pie around, messing up and disordering the wheel and whatever powers (good or bad) the wheel represented. Craig and I looked at it for a minute. When we continued walking downhill toward the lake and the car, Craig told me to step around it. Around I went, staring at the strange encounter with a language and experience I did not comprehend, something good or bad, but also symbolic to others.

At the parking lot, we reached the car I borrowed from my parents, the “Little Casino” green Dodge Shadow, at exactly 3:30 PM. In seven hours, we walked a total of thirteen miles, which included the side walking and spur trails. We had done a good, long hike and added a chunk of mileage to our Trail total over the past two and a half years of part low adventures. Skipping to different sections as we spent only weekends and day trips hiking or backpacking, we both felt better about our ambition after the ridge. We still had a lot of trail to go to finish, though.

On the drive home, I felt the burn in my body. Thank goodness we had only carried light day packs with food, water, rain gear, medical kit, flashlight, and a few other items. As I drove, I could barely move my legs. At the Moose Lake gas station stop for coffee, it hurt getting out of the car.

Craig had already made his purchase and sat in the car when I exited the store. I once again vowed to never get so out of shape again before our next trek. And I gave Craig the best laugh he had on the whole experience of walking the trail as I approached “Little Casino.” For when I walked across the parking lot, I had my left hand lifting my leg to walk. I literally carried my own ass to the car!



Story

The Cannon's Express

By Pi Kielty (p.h.)

Donny had taken the Twin Cities Line street car from his home neighborhood directly after cleaning up from his very last shift on the grain barge. He had only a short wait in the concourse of St. Paul Union Depot before boarding the Soo Line “Laker” which went all the way to Duluth. At Withrow Junction, he fell into a nap and now he woke as the train rumbled over the heavy beams of the Osceola swing bridge. The train entered a familiar Wisconsin. He noticed the water of the St. Croix River lower than normal, but smoothly reflective still, in the unusually dry early May.

He fell back into a sleep, tired from his 9 months working all he could. He had to leave school after his father's injury at the tin can factory. Now, Donny could see few prospects. In the Railway Post Office car ahead of his coach, workers sorted the mail for drop off. In the coach behind his car, the travelers and revelers enjoyed themselves. With only five other passengers on his own car, he could enjoy their quiet to rest for his big day tomorrow.

He did not check in his soft leather bag at the depot, and when a red hat offered to help him, Donny had only replied, “No thank you, sir. I've got my luck and my future in this bag.” Donny's royal blue and flat-topped cap dangled on top of the bag which sat on the seat facing him. The cap had a giant red “C.” Donny hoped he would make it there someday. With all his needs, and all his savings left over from helping his family, he embarked on the biggest gamble an 18-year old could ever take. If drafted to go fight in Korea, he would go. If not drafted, and his gamble went bust, he would volunteer for the the army anyway, and figure out life afterward.

As the train passed an embankment, it came abreast of the Bethania Spring and the stone building near the railway. Donny opened his eyes and he lifted his bare head from its rest on the window, the blonde hair just recently cut short had matted and dented a smoothness in the thin strands. He looked out the glass window. He saw the pop factory near the tracks. Beyond that, above the fish ponds that ran downward left to right, Donny saw the big manor house at the top of the hill. The Osceola depot came shortly next. Then, at his destination not far away, he could rest his sore but strong arms and back at the cabin on the spare cot.

Once at the depot, the man carrying the large canvas mail bag from the RPO car stepped off onto the platform. Two of the passengers on his coach also exited, which Donny could hear while he had his eyes closed again. He did not open them, however, to see the five passengers who boarded on their way north. The diesel locomotive's horn startled Donny a little, as it still did not sound as familiar as the old steam locomotive whistles he heard his whole life traveling this line.

The conductor had called all aboard, and after the train moved forward, Donny sneezed. He pulled his white hankey from his clothe jacket pocket, blew his nose free of the pollen that irritated it and out it came with the dark, almost black chunks of grain grit from inside his deep sinuses. He worked hard, and worked hard all his young life at what he did. He hoped the gamble for which he worked would pay off. Tomorrow he would find out.

The train neared Dresser Junction. Donny finally stirred from his napping. Once the diesel train passed the coaling tower, not needing any coal or water like a steam locomotive, it crept the paces to the long-shaped depot, with its wooden sides and its overhanging roof, where the train stopped.

Donny stood, and grabbed his ball cap that had fallen on the floor. He took the leather bag by the two handles, and followed one other person who traveled also all the way from St. Paul. Descending by the metal steps at the end of the coach and off the step stool and onto the platform, he saw the man waiting for him.

“Hi, Grandpa,” Donny said.

His Grandpa looked stern in his gaze, always, but with a welcoming grin, he said. “Hi, Donny. Let's get you to the cabin and settled in. Grandma's making you something to eat.”

As Donny and his grandfather drove away from the depot neither spoke for a long moment. Down the road, as their red Buick Roadmaster sedan passed the super-towering oblong wood and metal castle of the Trap Rock quarry, his Grandpa finally spoke.

“They'll be ready for you tomorrow in Osceola,” crossing the railroad tracks far enough ahead of the northbound train, blowing its horn. “Did you bring much with you, in case you have to ship out from here at some point?”

Donny unzipped the leather bag which sat on his lap. He pulled out the baseball glove, dark brown, finely shaped into a half-bell, oiled, soft, worn-well, and smooth. “All that I need,” he told his grandfather.

“You have a cannon for a right arm, Donny. If it works, it works. If not, life goes on. But you're smart and good enough to know that, already,” his Grandpa advised, and then they both fell silent again.

Donny closed his eyes, to rest a little more, before tomorrow's big day, to rest all he could, on the drive from Dresser Junction to his grandparent's cabin on Poplar Lake.



The Cepia Club LLC
connecting people...with community media

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. This includes not only sales and purchases but also any other financial activities that may occur. It is essential to ensure that all entries are properly documented and supported by appropriate evidence.

In addition, the document emphasizes the need for regular reconciliation of accounts. This process involves comparing the company's internal records with external statements, such as bank statements or supplier invoices, to identify any discrepancies. Regular reconciliation helps to prevent errors and ensures that the financial data is up-to-date and accurate.

Another key aspect of financial management is the timely payment of bills and invoices. Failure to pay on time can lead to strained relationships with suppliers and potential penalties. Therefore, it is crucial to establish a clear payment schedule and to monitor the status of all outstanding payments.

Finally, the document highlights the importance of maintaining a clear and organized system for managing financial information. This includes using appropriate accounting software, maintaining separate bank accounts for business operations, and ensuring that all financial records are securely stored and backed up.