

*This book contains 29 essays and one poem inspired by the author's life of skiing, climbing and wandering in the mountains of the world. He is very grateful for the beauty and lessons of that path, and very disturbed by the changes he sees.*

**LESSONS FROM THE CAVE  
and others after leaving the cave**

By Dick Dorworth

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# LESSONS FROM THE CAVE

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Dick Dorworth

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Print ISBN: 978-1-958877-10-4

Ebook ISBN: 979-8-88531-293-6

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Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Trenton, Georgia.

Printed on acid-free paper.

BookLocker.com, Inc.

2022

First Edition

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

Dorworth, Dick

LESSONS FROM THE CAVE and others after leaving the cave by

Dick Dorworth

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022912438

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## LESSONS FROM THE CAVE

In 1968 I was one of a group of climber friends who drove a 1965 Ford Econoline van from California to Patagonia where we made the 3<sup>rd</sup> ascent of Fitz Roy, an 11,171 foot high granite, snow-blasted peak. The trip and the route are relatively well known in the climbing world because of the films “Fitz Roy” and “Mountain of Storms” and the book “Climbing Fitz Roy 1968” and, of course, the subsequent resumes of my mates on the journey, Yvon Chouinard, Doug Tompkins, Lito Tejada-Flores and Chris Jones.

The entire trip took nearly six months, two of them on Fitz Roy. Thirty of those days the five of us lived in two different ice caves on the mountain, each approximately 10’ by 10’ in size. At one point we spent 15 consecutive days living in the highest one. The weather, particularly the infamous Patagonian winds, made movement impossible. Most days we were unable to even leave the cave. It was a life changing trip and significant climb filled with memories and lessons for each of us, many of them from the cave. Unlike Plato’s well known cave there were no moving shadows to observe within, and on those occasions when we exited the reality of Patagonia’s harsh weather was terrifying and there were no other humans within many miles. We scurried back inside with gratitude for the comforts of the cave where we engaged in philosophical discussions that would make Plato proud.

For several years after the trip I periodically gave slide show/talks about it and, of course, mentioned without excessively dwelling on the 15 consecutive days we spent confined to the second cave. After one talk, sometime in the mid-70s, a woman from the audience came up to me and introduced herself as a leader/facilitator of encounter group therapy sessions. She asked if I knew about them. I told her I had heard of but

didn't know much about it. My impression was that people in the group let out their repressed hostilities and aggressions and overcame social politeness and correctness to express their truest feelings and thoughts, uninhibited by how those might be taken by others. It was said to be a therapeutic technique of letting it all hang out on whoever was there as well as being on the receiving end of whatever came out of the others. The theory was that such discourteous venting produced a healthier psychology than did respectful etiquette.

She replied that my impression was more or less right. She then said something to the effect that our 15 days in the cave had to have been "the all time encounter group therapy session." I thought about it a moment and told her, truthfully, that unless my impressions of encounter groups were wrong that wasn't true. So far as I could remember, there was never an intentionally unkind, hostile, aggressive, demeaning word or encounter between any of us during those 15 days, though there was abundant good-natured, uninhibited ribbing of the smelly fart and body odor variety, especially during the close-quarters, visually/audibly/olfactory disagreeable if personally comforting once a day 'shit call' when a hole was dug in the floor of the cave and we took turns relieving ourselves into it. She replied, not unkindly, that she didn't believe me and that I was either repressing or not remembering the way it was. She seemed sincere, friendly and not engaging in an argumentative encounter and we talked about it for a few minutes before she left. This woman's genuine if erroneous belief that the five of us could not have spent that much time in such conditions without conflict *because that is what humans do and that is how humans are* has intrigued me and influenced my subsequent standards of observing my own and others' interactions. It is one factor that leads me to periodically ruminate on that time in the cave. Encounter group therapy turns out to have been more an exploratory branch of the human

potential movement than a root of the tree of human psychological healing. I am reminded of the prescient words the late, great editor and writer and founder of Mountain Gazette in his “Breaking Free From the Human Potential Movement”: *“I’m not equating ‘est’ and a lobotomy, understand. But on a scale between a chocolate sundae and a lobotomy, ‘est’ is closer to the latter than the former.”* Still, more than 40 years later that woman’s erroneous certainty about our personal dynamics in the cave has stayed with me.

That humanity’s past, present and, if those are any indication, future are and will be filled with conflict, brutality, and letting incomprehensible hatreds and hostilities hang out on the encountered group of the day—the religious, political, sexual, racial, ideological, economic, geographical OTHER—is not in question. The news of any day is filled with innumerable examples. (These words were written during Donald Trump’s reign as President of the United States.) Though I am not a psychiatrist, psychologist, therapist, counselor or even advisor, it seems to me that the same individual dynamics intended to be addressed by encounter group therapy are in play in the larger conflicts between nation states, tribes, ideologies and business interests (drug wars and those over who controls oil in the ground are business interests). Conflict and cooperation begin with the individual (though they do not end there), and, as every climber knows, climbing is a great metaphor and schooling for larger arenas of living. The encounter group therapy leader’s contention that five men could not exist together in a small cave for two weeks without conflict is not to be lightly dismissed, and I did and do not.

Still, five of us—each in our own way opinionated, strong minded, not reluctant to speak up, sometimes abrasive and always right—existed for two weeks in a cramped, damp, cold snow cave not only without conflict but with a great deal of



camaraderie, good cheer, cooperation, consideration, re-told stories, bad odors and worse jokes. We survived, successfully completed the climb, went on with our individual lives and have remained good friends for nearly 50 years (Doug died in December 2015). I have been involved in and know of many, many other climbing expeditions in which the personal dynamics of its members, both during and after the expedition, were, to put it mildly, filled with conflict, hostility and demeaning behavior. Some climbers learn and move on from their personal contribution to those dynamics, and some do not, and, as George Santayana said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Having written about some of my own expeditions I am often reminded that the written word keeps alive the dynamics of the past, as they are intended to do, though not everyone enjoys or is capable of remembering the past. That is, climbers are human and climbing expeditions are microcosms of the human condition.

And there are lessons to be learned from them.

In my view, some of those lessons from the cave on Fitz Roy are worth repeating, writing down and contemplating. None of these ruminations would have occurred if that woman had not appeared after a slide show to offer her assurance that conflict is the natural way of humanity and that encountering it is the path to psychological healing and good health.

*Au contraire.* I think conflict and good health--psychological and physical--are antithetical. By the time our little group arrived at the 2<sup>nd</sup> cave we had spent a few months together in a small van driving the length of South America—sleeping on the ground and in the van, surfing, skiing, cooking and eating and cleaning up, learning the strengths and weakness, follies and genius, social and other skills and their absence, philosophies and prejudices, histories and dreams of ourselves and each other. And, yes, there were a few conflicts which we worked through and, thereby,

learned and kept moving on from. The more we learned the better we worked together as a team, a unit, an expedition, an interdependent band of humans on the same path up a mountain. That path included time in the cave which I've come to think of as a microcosm of human life on Earth, past, present and, one hopes, future. Despite the opinion of the well-intentioned encounter group therapy leader, our cave time was marked by cooperation, encouragement and interdependent care, a good model, it seems to me.

I don't pretend to speak for my cave mates, but the cave lessons speak for both the time in the cave and for the previously mentioned microcosm. We were in the cave together and there was nowhere else to go. The cave was our world and there was no communication to anywhere outside it. We did not have such modern amenities as smart (or dumb) phones, satellite phones, the internet or even GPS. A few people knew we were on Fitz Roy but if the cave had collapsed into the crevasse beneath its floor (always a possibility in the backs of our minds) or if we had been asphyxiated (also always a possibility) those few would have had no idea of how to even search for us. We were acutely aware that we were completely on our own and that our mutual dependency was a great gift paid for with gratitude. The challenges and discomforts of the cave were shared equally. When food supplies ran low rations were distributed equally. Cooperation, companionship and compassion were not so much conscious choices as necessities guided by instinctive intelligence and gratitude for the present moment. Think of that: with nowhere else to go, survival is dependent on equal sharing of rather than competing for available resources and rewards in a spirit of cooperation, companionship and compassion. Just like all of life on planet Earth today

## DO YOU CARE IF OUR GRANDCHILDREN SKI?

*“Perhaps you notice how the denial is so often the preface to the justification.”*

Christopher Hitchens, author

*“The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive.”*

Donald Trump, President of the United States

*“I have been described as the grandfather of climate change. In fact, I am just a grandfather and I do not want my grandchildren to say that grandpa understood what was happening but didn't make it clear.”*

James Hansen, leading climate scientist and author of “Storms of My Grandchildren: The Truth About the Coming Climate Catastrophe and Our Last chance to Save Humanity

*“Skiers did not create climate change, but we are among a few populations who will be hit by it hardest. It's time to stand up and save our snow. Forget about fear. Get serious about advocacy and put candidates into office who will do the right thing and lead us into a cold, snowy future.”*

Porter Fox, author

If you, esteemed reader, are among those who share Donald Trump's values and purposeful (and, perhaps, real) ignorance in denying human caused global climate change, please read no further. Turn on your TV to Fox news or your radio to Rush Limbaugh, relax and enjoy the show. My intention here is not to insult or offend those who have been politely and clearly alerted

to read no further, but, rather, to encourage everyone (including skiers) to, among other things personal, civic and environmental, get **serious** about advocacy. There is no time for relaxation in the face of our last chance. The show is getting less and less enjoyable and by the time our grandchildren reach our ages it will be a shit show for skiers/mountaineers and a worse one for those less privileged.

In the spirit of James Hansen, to be clear, the current and coming climate catastrophe is caused entirely by humans and can only be averted or even softened by them; but while Porter Fox is mostly correct skiers did and do contribute to climate change. We, fellow skiers, are complicit and the **only** way to start saving humanity (as well as the rest of Earth's biota) is by getting serious about advocacy and putting candidates into office who will do the right thing and lead us into a cold, snowy future. Don't let your grandkids have to say that grandpa and grandma understood what was happening but didn't care enough to make it clear and did nothing about it. Lao Tzu said it best: "From caring comes courage," and many years later Mahatma Gandhi said, "A coward is incapable of exhibiting love; it is the prerogative of the brave."

Skiing has always seemed to me a metaphor for larger aspects of life, including cowardice and bravery, courage and love, care and greed; and the industry of skiing, as well as many of its citizen practitioners, have been reluctant advocates of seriously and effectively addressing climate change. Every life-long skier old enough to be a parent has noted decreased snowfall and shorter winters since their own childhood. Everywhere in American ski country winters are shorter and warmer than they were 50 years ago, and every skier old enough to be a grandparent has changed skiing habits and patterns because of it. Every skier my age (83) or more (and several years less) realizes that skiing isn't quite the disaster it is going to become without action, but it is certainly more and more an artificial snow show. When I was

a boy I had the good fortune to live at Lake Tahoe, including the winter of 1951-52, (which recorded the second highest Sierra snowfall since records have been kept) when more than 65 feet of snow fell on nearby Donner Summit. Since then the amount of precipitation falling on the Sierra and elsewhere has dropped about 1.2% a year and more and more of that precipitation is falling as rain rather than snow. Porter Fox points out that “By 2050, snowpack in the Sierra Nevada is projected to decrease 40 to 70 percent. If we do not slow or stop burning fossil fuels, we will be looking at brown mountain ranges all winter long as soon as 80 years from now.” The artificiality of man-made snow is in some ways in the short view good for the business and practice of lift-serviced skiing: among other things, so long as it continues to be cold enough it is controlled by man without relying on nature, is more manageable and can be groomed into surfaces smooth enough that an 80 year old experienced skier as well as first year skiers can more easily be enticed to buy a lift ticket and slide upon it. But artificial snow is part of the problem of global warming, sort of like putting an infected band aid on a self-inflicted open wound and then again stabbing the wound through the infected band aid with a dirty knife. Over the last 200 years mankind has slowly crippled nature’s natural processes by releasing CO<sub>2</sub> and other air pollutants and greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and creating the Greenhouse Effect. The process of making artificial snow contributes to the Greenhouse Effect and adds to global warming, as, of course, does all the automobile and airplane miles each of us travels to our favorite mountain and its retreating snowpack. In many places, before too long it will not be cold enough to consistently rely on even artificial snow.

Every skier is part of the problem and, if there proves to be one, part of the solution. Since the United States has only 4.6% of the world population and is 2<sup>nd</sup> highest (next to China with a population 4 times that of America’s 3.11 million citizens)

contributor of greenhouse gases which cause global warming, each individual American has a larger responsibility (and burden) than citizens of other countries to be an advocate for a cold, snowy future for all the Earth's inhabitants including our skiing (or not skiing) grandchildren. Any solution starts with the individual but it does not end there. Each of us can alleviate the ongoing destruction of Earth's atmosphere and environment in many ways, starting with becoming educated. If one is uneducated or confused about the matter, a good place to start is Union of Concerned Scientists at <https://www.ucsusa.org/global-warming#.W6PW-vZMFPY> where it is made clear (by the finest scientific minds) that global warming is real, that it is entirely caused by mankind and was not created by or for China, though that country is the leading contributor to greenhouse gases. The individual effort matters, but as skier citizens of America—the only nation on earth to reject the Paris Agreement on climate change, which Trump falsely and treacherously described as “...an agreement that disadvantages the United States to the exclusive benefit of other countries.”—we need to become advocates for making America a good citizen of the nations of the world instead of the moronic, soulless, ethically challenged MAGA pro-fossil leadership/oil/gas/coal corporate directed imperialist mercenary the U.S. government has officially declared itself to be and which the rest of the world has duly noted. The individual matters, but unless the ideology, policies and practices of the U.S. government changes drastically the individual will not matter enough. As individual skiers we can begin with the world of skiing and we need to vote, march, protect, protest, read science and push on corporate leadership to ensure THOSE entities are pushing on government. Porter Fox published an article in Powder 2 years ago about the many ski industry leaders who give money to climate change deniers in the U.S. government. They include Vail Resorts, Deer Valley Resort

Company, Solitude Mountain Resort, Alta Ski Area, Snowbird, Brighton Ski Resort, Jackson Hole Mountain Resort, Mammoth Mountain, KSL Capital Partners (which owns Squaw Valley, Loon Mountain, Sunday River and Sugarloaf) as well as the National Ski Areas Association (NSAA). NSAA issues an annual report on ‘Sustainable Slopes’ subtitled “Keep Winter Cool” and its charter states, “In order to continue to offer quality recreational experiences that complement the natural and aesthetic qualities that draw these visitors to the mountains, the National Ski Area Association (NSAA) and its member resorts have committed to improving environmental performance in ski area operations and management.” A worthy commitment but, since several of the member resorts are those donating money to climate change deniers in the U.S. government it calls into question their definition of the word ‘commitment’ among other obvious questions. A few years ago KSL teamed up with Henry Crown and Company (HCC), which owns Aspen Skiing Company, to acquire Intrawest Resorts Holdings and Mammoth Resorts. This company is called Squaw Valley Ski Holdings (SVSH) which consists of 12 ski resorts with, according to KSL’s website, “... approximately six million skier visits, 20,000 skiable acres and significant land available for real estate development, as well as Canadian Mountain Holidays, the world’s leading heli-ski operator, plus comprehensive aviation and real estate businesses.” The Aspen Skiing Company, still owned by HCC but not part of SVSH, is a minority bright light in the U.S. ski industry by intentionally and effectively being serious about doing the right thing and leading us into a cold, snowy future. Check here:

<https://www.aspensnowmass.com/we-are-different/take-action>

Some backcountry skiers and riders do not use ski resort facilities and perhaps do not think of the ski industry as representing them or their values and interests. Whatever the

merits of this mindset, in reality **the ski industry is the public face of skiing in the halls and offices and bars and restaurants and, most important, lobbying donations given to members of Congress who are deniers of human caused global warming.** James Inhofe, Oklahoma Senator and Chair of the Senate Committee on environment and Public Works, has a slightly different perspective than Donald Trump on the ‘hoax’ of a global warming conspiracy theory, saying, “Because ‘God’s still up there’, the ‘arrogance of people to think that we, human beings, would be able to change what He is doing in the climate is to me outrageous.” Giving money to climate change deniers in the U.S. government who share Trump and Inhofe’s denials of reality (for whatever stated reasons—God ‘up there’ or China ‘over there’ or head up ‘somewhere’) is supporting killing the very snow that we, fellow skiers, depend on as our foundation, revere and make the tracks of life upon.

Bob Dylan, as he so often has, said it best:

“While money doesn’t talk, it swears

“Obscenity, who really cares

“Propaganda, all is phony”

To state the obvious, no obscenity adequately describes giving the money that skiers pay in order to ski to people who call any reality that interferes with the short-term bottom line a hoax, people whose actions indicate they do not care a snowflake in hell whether our grandchildren ski or, even, survive.

Personally, I care.

Do you?



## VOICES RISING INTO THE MYTH

*“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.”*

Winston Churchill

*“The ‘white race’ thus becomes the chief victim of its own myth.”*

Harry Edwards

1968 was a pivotal year in American history. It was also the year I received a powerful, disturbing and disheartening lesson about American journalism and the effect it has on the society it serves. I know, I know, many reading this are tired of and impatient with cultural relativism rants from old farts that came of age in the ‘60s, but—sit down and listen. 2016 was also a pivotal year in American history, and that same disturbing lesson of mine from 50 years earlier is still in the forefront of the news every day ever since the unexpected, unbelievable, powerful and disturbing campaign and election of Donald Trump as President of the United States. So far, the words, actions, personnel and stated intentions of the Trump and his MAGA lickens are terrifying for those who care about the whole of humanity, the environment of Earth, social justice, compassion, common decency and freedom. The affects Trump and cadre will ultimately have on the world are, at this writing, undetermined. It can be safely assumed they will make the influence of Agent Orange on the flora and fauna (including those humans who happened to be present) in Viet Nam in the ‘60s seem like benign organic fertilizers used in the backyard home gardens of today.

I was 29 years old in the spring of 1968, a recent graduate school dropout, who, like others of my social/political/psychedelic persuasions, was adrift and searching to find a

suitable place even on the fringe of the mainstream. One of my varied sources of income was writing a column for the major newspaper of a western city of some 70,000 souls. The column was well received and I enjoyed free rein to write about whatever I thought appropriate--until I wrote a column that I thought pertinent, timely and socially relevant to every American. That column changed my perception of America and my life, though it was never published.

The column was about Harry Edwards, a sociology professor at San Jose State University, and the movement he was leading called the Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR). The intention of Edwards and OPHR was to organize an African American boycott of the upcoming 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City to expose the racist policies and practices of America and the hypocrisy of the white washed image of itself America presented to the world, in opposition to its reality perhaps best explicated by the great American writer James Baldwin: "The American Negro has the great advantage of having never believed the collection of myths to which white Americans cling: that their ancestors were all freedom-loving heroes, that they were born in the greatest country the world has ever seen, or that Americans are invincible in battle and wise in peace, that Americans have always dealt honorably with Mexicans and Indians and all other neighbors or inferiors, that American men are the world's most direct and virile, that American women are pure. Negroes know far more about white Americans than that; it can almost be said, in fact, that they know about white Americans what parents—or, anyway, mothers—know about their children, and that they very often regard white Americans that way. And perhaps this attitude, held in spite of what they know and have endured, helps to explain why Negroes, on the whole, and until lately, have allowed themselves to feel so little hatred. The tendency has really been, insofar as this was

possible, to dismiss white people as the slightly mad victims of their own brainwashing.” In addition, OPHR had four demands: Restore Muhammad Ali’s heavyweight boxing title; remove Avery Brundage from his long time position as head of the International Olympic Committee (IOC); hire more African American coaches for the nation’s athletic teams; and bar South Africa and Rhodesia from the Olympics because of their racist policies.

OPHR and Edwards seemed to me timely topics just months before the Olympic Games in Mexico City and their message to American society significant. I put my best efforts into writing a good column and turned it in. The editor refused to publish it, though he conceded it was well written and its message relevant. His reason for not publishing it was simple and direct and I’ve never forgotten it: “This community is not ready to hear this message,” he said. I disagreed and said so and it ended my relationship with the newspaper and altered my relationship with the editor, an old friend. Less than six months later Edwards and OPHR had not accomplished all their goals, but they did raise their voices into the collection of myths to which white America clings. OPHR and Edwards were responsible for the most significant and published athletic photo of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which stripped those myths to naked, porous, racist bone: Tommie Smith and John Carlos, black American runners who finished 1<sup>st</sup> (in world record time) and 3<sup>rd</sup> respectively in the 1968 Olympic 200 meter race on the podium after receiving their medals raising their black-gloved fists in the air, their heads bowed, their feet bare. Their friend and silver medalist, Australian Peter Norman, wore an OPHR badge on his chest in support and solidarity. Smith and Carlos were shoeless to protest black poverty as well as beads and scarves to protest lynching. Their gesture was reported all over the world as a “Black Power Salute” though

Smith, Carlos and Edwards referred to it as a “Human Rights Salute.”

At the time my editor told me the reason my column wouldn't be used I attributed my disappointment to his personal flaws, a journalist's moral/professional failure of public trust and public service. But after the photo was published all over the world it became evident that both failure and flaw were much larger than one editor. It was a failure of the (almost) entire profession and industry of American journalism, not just one editor. The Los Angeles Times described Smith and Carlos' gesture as a “Nazi-like salute,” apparently unaware of the irony that IOC head Brundage had, in 1936, defended and approved of German athletes raising their arms on the podium in the real Nazi salute to the real Fuhrer in the real capital of Nazism, Berlin. Time magazine put the Olympic logo on its cover, replacing the motto “Faster, Higher, Stronger” with “Angrier, Nastier, Uglier.” The Chicago Tribune termed Smith and Carlos “renegades,” and called their gesture “contemptuous of the United States” and “an insult to their countrymen.” And a young reporter for the Chicago American who later became an iconic sportscaster, Brent Musburger, described the two Olympic medal winners as “...a pair of black-skinned storm troopers.”

It would seem that most of mainstream American journalism agreed with my editor and for several years after 1968 I believed that American journalism as a whole was failing the community. That was and is true, but gradually--so gradually--it became clear that the “collection of myths to which white Americans cling” clouded the perception of American journalism itself for the simple reason that it clung to and was part of those myths. As a white American male, my upbringing was within those myths and clouded my own perceptions, though even as a boy and young man it was clear that many of the myths were simply not true. Some of the voices of the 1960s and 70s rising into the

myths—Dalton Trumbo, Martin Luther King, The March on Selma, Rosa Parks, Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, Jane Fonda, Dennis Banks, Russell Means, Leonard Peltier, Ken Kesey, Dick Gregory, Gloria Steinem, Tom Hayden, Stephen Gaskin and many others—created enough heat and energy to help dissipate more of them. Like every sincere critical thinker who knows that all things are connected and that changing the world starts with each person (you and me), I'm still working on separating the collection of myths and alternative facts from the organic reality that America is and always has been a racist, sexist, misogynist, imperialist nation built on the genocide of its indigenous peoples, the backs of slaves and the institution of slavery, all justified by the religious delusion that white males are God's chosen people and superior to all other races as well as the females of their own race.

Harsh words, yes, but they are rooted in a long and venerable tradition of voices both harsh and maternally kind rising into the myth. One of the first was from abolitionist Thomas Day in 1776 commenting on the Declaration of Independence, just written by Thomas Jefferson. The second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence reads, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." (The first draft of the Declaration was worded "...all free men are created equal..." and the removal of the word 'free,' a message the fathers of the constitution apparently were not ready to hear, or, at least, did not think the community was ready to hear, was the beginning of the myths.) Jefferson and George Washington were among slave owner fathers of the constitution (Jefferson also fathered children with his slaves) and Day responded to their hypocrisy: "If there be an object truly ridiculous in nature, it is an American patriot,

signing resolutions of independency with the one hand, and with the other brandishing a whip over his affrighted slaves.”

The myths were built into the Constitution from the beginning. The voices rising into the myths were present at the beginning as well, and they have been and continue to be the home of hope for America and the only reason the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence creeps ever so slowly out of myth towards reality. It took nearly a hundred years before the Civil War ended slavery and in theory gave slaves freedom and the right to vote, but in reality it was not until the 1964 Civil Rights Act made it possible for the descendants of slaves to vote in America. Native Americans were not granted citizenship by Congress until 1924 but in many states could not vote until 1957. Even white women could not vote until 1920 when the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution was passed after 70 years of the voices of organized women’s groups led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony and others (and, it seems likely, individual pillow talk voices) created enough heat and energy to dissipate the fog of myths enough so that even the morally challenged couldn’t hide within them. As everyone reading this knows, the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in America are not the same for white males, black people, native Americans, people of any shade of color, females, those who believe in the wrong religion or private sexual preferences that tweak the image of the world’s most direct and virile men and pure women. Still, over the past 50 years the volume of rising voices and the pace, slow as it is, to bring these inalienable rights to all the equal people of America have raised dramatically compared to the previous 200 years. That is, there is hope and there has been progress and human rights are better in America than they were 100 years ago. That snail pace came to a screeching (literally) stop with the election of Donald Trump, but the voices rising into the myths have never been louder,

higher or hotter. Nor have they ever been more necessary or grateful for each new voice.

Which leads to an issue that many Americans, starting with Donald Trump, believe the community is not ready to hear: Since two of the last three Presidents of the United States lost the popular vote and still became President, democracy itself is another in the collection of myths America tells itself and anyone else who will listen. The Electoral College circumvents the democratic process of voting rights and, like slavery, racism, sexism, bigotry, misogyny and religious intolerance, destroys equality in the name of the nation it mocks which needs voices rising into the myths of its usefulness as a tool of democracy.

As self-encouragement to raise your own voice, take some time to contemplate how different our country and the world would be if Al Gore instead of George W. Bush and Hillary Clinton instead of Donald Trump had become President as the population had voted them to be, if democracy of the people, for the people and by the people had prevailed instead of the myths of the slightly mad victims of our own brainwashing.

Raise your voice, friends and fellow citizens. Raise your voice. Loudly. Clearly. Respectfully. Truthfully. In the venerable tradition of Thomas Day and those who came before and the many who followed. Raise your voice. Dissipate the myths. Make your Mother proud.

## REMINDERS FROM YOKO

During the winter of 1963-64 I worked as a bartender/pizza cook at the Sun Valley's employees bar in the Quonset hut behind the Challenger Inn that later became the laundry. Called the Holiday Hut, it had a full service bar, pizza, ping pong tables, sofas and a television and was in business to discourage off duty Sun Valley employees from hanging around the guest bars in the lodge and inn. My old friend and boss, the wonderful Ned Bell, had set me up with this job that included room and board, a lift pass, some spending money and enough time to ski and train at the gentle levels required to recover from recent surgery and sickness.

Thanks in part to Ned it was an enjoyable, unusually relaxed winter and period in my personal life, a vacation from the concentration of competitive skiing, allowing room and energy for the contemplation of larger issues. And it was a strange and unsettling time in American culture when such issues encouraged contemplation, reassessment and personal connection to and responsibility for them. Just a few months before, President John Kennedy had been assassinated. A year earlier, George Wallace's inaugural address as Governor of Alabama included, "...segregation now; segregation tomorrow; segregation forever!" Six months after Wallace's shameful (and shameless) racist polemic, Martin Luther King Jr. gave his "I Have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial. And the obscene disaster that a few months later would become known as the Viet Nam War was already underway under the radar but being felt and heard like the distant thunder of an imminent shift in and expansion of the consciousness of the unsettled American culture.

A milestone in my own awareness of and participation in that shift and expansion happened in the Holiday Hut one February 1964 night, the 9<sup>th</sup> to be precise.



Usually the Holiday Hut had about 10—15 customers doing the things young people do in such places after work, but early that evening the place unexpectedly filled up. I had never been so busy making pizzas, serving drinks and trying to keep customers happy. I asked someone what was going on and was properly chastised for being clueless. The Beatles were appearing on the Ed Sullivan show that night and the Holiday Hut had the available TV. Since I had been out of the country for most of the previous year I didn't even know who the Beatles were.

I, along with 73 million other people who watched Ed's show that night, soon found out.

And the Beatles were more than fine musicians and pop stars. They embodied, inspired and gave literal voice to both shift and expansion in the culture's consciousness, at least for those not too mired in mud to shift or/and too tight to expand. The Beatles were the right people in the right place in the right time to be the literal and musical voice of an era. It was an era of change for many, but even many of those who couldn't embrace, for instance, peace and love as a mantra for social organization or getting America out of Viet Nam as a political goal, incorporated the Beatles music into their lives. The Beatles' personal and professional lives were part of the cultural fabric, not because they were celebrities but because they were the public face of shifts in perspective and thinking of a significant part of the culture. The lyrics of their songs were studied and oft repeated. "All You Need is Love," "Good Day, Sunshine," "Let It Be" and, later, "Imagine" made far more sense for all people than, say the systems analysis thinking of people like Robert McNamara who orchestrated the Viet Nam War and for whom some people were more disposable than others. I mean, anyone with half or less a brain knows that Gandhi is a better role model than Attila.

So, even though life moved on and the Beatles broke up and went separate ways the music and the message lived on. Even

when John Lennon joined Martin Luther King, Bobby Kennedy and thousands of lesser known oblations to the gods of America's gun culture the music of the Beatles endures with lyrics like:

*"But if you want money for people with minds that hate  
All I can tell you is brother you have to wait"*

And then decades later a book called "Acorn" by Yoko Ono, Lennon's widow, showed up. She calls it a book of 'conceptual instructions' and notes, "I'm riding a time machine that's going back to the good old ways. Great!"

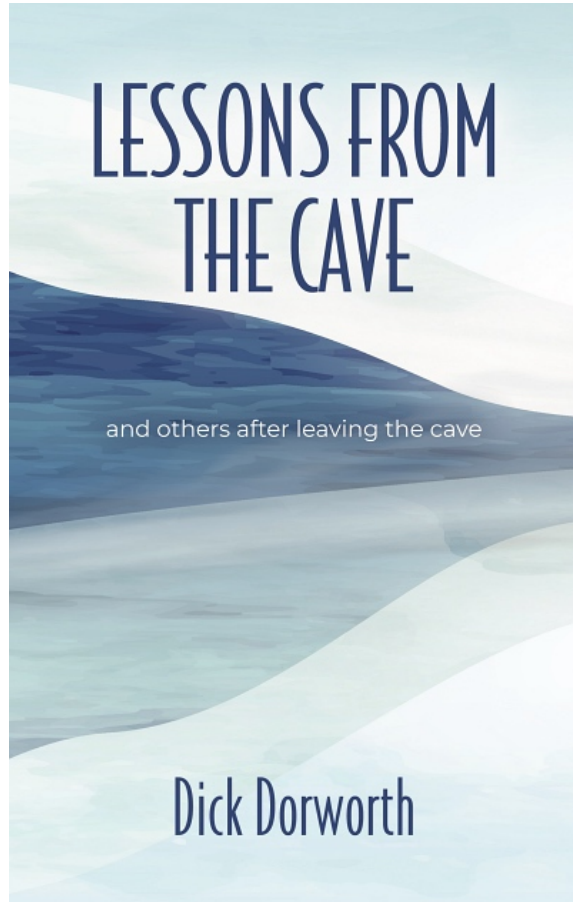
Among Yoko's instructions:

*"Mend an object  
When you go through the process of mending  
You mend something inside your soul as well."*

And

*"Take your pants off before you fight."*

The beat goes on.



*This book contains 29 essays and one poem inspired by the author's life of skiing, climbing and wandering in the mountains of the world. He is very grateful for the beauty and lessons of that path, and very disturbed by the changes he sees.*

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