

A. Case for Conservation

Nature speaks: Anne Lindbergh translates

By ALENE N. CASE

A few years ago as I began writing regular entries in a journal, my husband returned from a trip with a small treasure. It was a little volume of essays entitled *Gift from the Sea*. And what a "gift" it has been! Anne Morrow Lindbergh deftly turns shells she has found on the beach into vignettes about her struggles to fulfill her various roles. I identified with her immediately - in the very first paragraph of her introduction she echoed my oft-spoken statement that "I think best with a pencil in my hand."

But, as I read further, it became obvious that this lady was much more than a woman trying to find herself among her many responsibilities as wife, mother of five, writer, aviator, and world traveler. She was not trained as a biologist; yet she seemed to understand nature's interactions more deeply than many scientists. She also recognized that humans cannot be whole unless we accept our relationship with the world around us.

In preparation for this article, I began looking up biographical information and discovered that Mrs. Lindbergh is still alive. I shall, therefore, refer to her work in the present tense. It is possible more

relevant today than when she was writing. She has not published anything since her husband, Charles, died in 1974.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh returns to two themes often in her writings. (I say *writings* because she has published several volumes of diaries and letters, poetry, essays and at least one novel.) These themes are important to both the inner and outer world and are ignored by many modern people. FORM and SPACE are her special contributions to our understanding of the natural world and of ourselves.

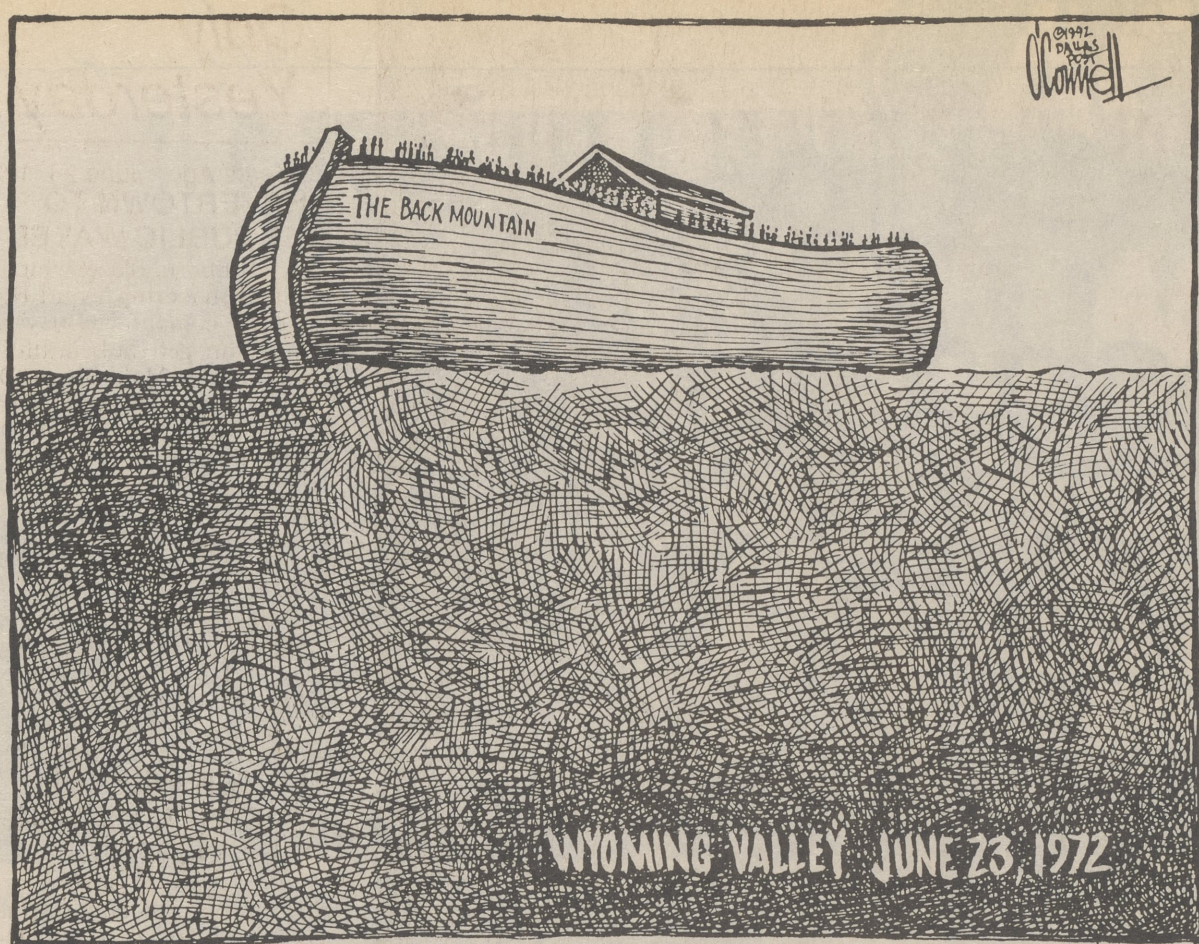
"Rollers on the beach, wind in the pines, the slow flapping of herons across sand dunes, drown out the hectic rhythms of city and suburb, time tables and schedules. One falls under their spell, on which one lies, flattened by the sea, bare, open, empty as the beach, erased by today's tides of all yesterday's scribbles." (*Gift from the Sea*)

Earth Shine is an unlikely combination of essays. Half of the book deals with space flight - particularly her visit to Cape Kennedy for the launch of Apollo 8: "Here is the seed split from its pod, the gleaming chrysalis cracked from its protective cocoon. Here is the new moon in the old moon's arms."

The other half of the book relates her experiences on a safari in Africa: "Perhaps some of the tremendous renewal of energy one experiences in East Africa comes from being put back in one's place in the universe, as an animal alongside other animals - one of the many miracles of life on earth, not the only miracle."

Only she could watch a passing herd of elephants and write "They have come from ages before us and are going somewhere we will never reach." Or, on sleeping outside in the desert, "The mass of stars overhead beat down like rain." As I leave you with one more quoted paragraph from *Gift from the Sea*, I hope that you will rush off to the nearest library to discover this lady for yourself.

For it is only framed in space that beauty blooms. Only in space are events and objects and people unique and significant and therefore beautiful. A tree has significance if one sees it against the empty face of sky. A note in music gains significance from the silences on either side. A candle flowers in the space of night. Even small and casual things take on significance if they are washed in space, like a few autumn grasses in one corner of an Oriental painting, the rest of the page bare."



Letters

State's illiteracy exaggerated in statistics

Editor:

In an attempt to detract from the quality of education in the valley's public schools, many taxpayer forums have circulated misinformation which they have obtained from less than reputable organizations which have repeatedly and consistently made correlations which are simply not valid or correct.

One such organization which is notorious for providing this misinformation is the Pennsylvania Leadership Council (PLC). The PLC reports that Pennsylvania is third in the nation in illiteracy. This is simply not the case. The best data available places Pennsylvania's literacy rate as slightly better than the nation as a whole.

The PLC is relying on the fact that Pennsylvania receives the fourth highest amount of money for literacy from the federal government through the Adult Education Act. This is not surprising for a state, that in 1980, had the fourth highest number of people. The only relevant way to compare states is to use percentages, and doing so represents that Pennsylvania is a literate state.

The Adult Education Act distributes money to states based on the number of individuals without a high school diploma. Few people would argue that this is an adequate definition of literacy. Many

people without high school diplomas are literate and some people with high school diplomas are illiterate. In 1980, close to 30 percent of Pennsylvania's adult population were without high school diplomas. The 1990 U.S. census will reveal that the percentage of Pennsylvanians without a diploma has dropped to around 15 percent.

Currently there is only one study which reports differences in literacy among states. It is the OPBE Adult Illiteracy Study and is based on data collected in 1982. For this study 3400 adults responded to 26 written questions related to English comprehension (a score of 20 or higher indicated literacy). The OPBE study found a national illiteracy rate of 13 percent. Pennsylvania had an illiteracy rate lower than the national average (it was 12 percent).

The U.S. Department of Education estimates that one-third of illiterate adults identified by the OPBE study were born outside of the United States and that virtually all spoke a non-English language at home, one third were over age 60, and of those who spoke English as their native tongue, 70 percent had dropped out of high school.

Two problems exist in measuring literacy. According to the U.S. Department of Education, no single definition of literacy exists. One researcher at the Pennsylvania

Department of Education has found 23 different definitions! Furthermore, the standard that defines literacy is constantly evolving to higher levels as our world becomes more technological.

We will be learning more about Pennsylvanians and literacy in the future. The U.S. Department has contracted Educational Testing Service (ETS) and the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) to conduct a study of document literacy, prose literacy and math word problems. Pennsylvania is participating in the study which is scheduled to begin in 1992.

This information was collected by the Pennsylvania State Education Association which employs a full-time research staff whose reputation for collecting reliable data is well known.

The public should be wary of much of the sensationalized misinformation which has been distributed by taxpayers groups and should further question and investigate their sources. It is truly unfortunate that many people have embraced this and other seriously flawed information, whether knowingly or unknowingly, from the PLC for the purpose of detracting from the value of education in our communities.

William R. Wagner, President
Dallas Education Association

J.W.J.

Organ donors give the gift of life

By J.W. JOHNSON

Your point of view will determine whether or not you want to continue reading.

This column is about death. And life.

More to the point, life after death. No, not the Christian offering of eternal life through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rather, the continued living of one human being subsequent to the death of another human being, because the first human being had the foresight to provide for his or her organs to be surgically removed for implantation into the second human being, should the first human being meet an untimely demise.

And the preceding sounds rather clinical, well, actually, it is. A surgeon is a human parts mechanic who, in this case, and rather than repair the existing part, installs a used one from another body.

But the key word in the 6th paragraph above is the word human. Organ donation is perhaps the most human thing a person can do, short of consciously giving your life for another person.

In fact, more than 35,000 people in the United States benefit each

year from organ transplants. How did organ and tissue donations benefit those recipients? Well, it translates into:

—burn victims heal faster and without as much suffering because skin was donated.

—persons who were confined to a wheelchair can now walk because bone was donated.

—children and adults who have never seen a sandbox or their grandchildren can see now because corneas were donated.

—and persons who would have otherwise died are now living normal lives because hearts, lungs and kidneys were donated.

Still, there are more than 10,000 persons who remain without sight, who can't walk, or who are near death because they are waiting for organs or tissue.

There have been several cases in the past decade where area residents have decided to give this precious gift by becoming organ donors. In one case, three different persons benefitted from the donation of a heart, lungs and corneas.

The decision to become an organ donor is obviously a very personal one, and one which should not be taken lightly. And should you wish to become an organ donor,

here are some steps that should be taken:

—Sign some sort of donor card. Many organizations, including both service and health organizations can provide these cards.

—You should also inform your immediate family of your desires. This is an extremely important thing to do, because for organs to be removed, the next of kin must give written permission.

—Medical personnel must also remember to ask the question. Some persons believe that many times organs are not donated simply because medical personnel forget to ask.

—Should you have further question about organ donation, please call your local hospital, or write to the American Council on Transplantation, P.O. Box 9999, Washington, D.C. 20016.

In the meantime:

- does your house have smoke alarms?
- fire extinguishers?
- an evacuation plan?
- have your children received a bicycle safety training?
- do they wear helmets when they ride?
- do you wear seat belts when you drive?

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