

A Case for Conservation



Alene N. Case

This week has been an unusually emotional time for me. There was Easter with its music and flowers, Oklahoma City with its bloodiness and tragedy, a walk in the woods with new friends, major car repairs, deadlines to meet, and more time alone than normal. And, through it all, there has been Ishmael.

Daniel Quinn had never written a novel before. He began *Ishmael* in 1977 and wrote and rewrote it so many times that he was about to give up. Then he learned of the Turner Tomorrow Award and decided to try once more. Out of 2,500 submissions, Quinn's *Ishmael* won the prestigious fellowship created "to encourage authors to write fiction that produces creative and positive solutions to global problems."

Ishmael tells the story of humans through the eyes of a gorilla. The gorilla, *Ishmael*, is literally the teacher of the man who narrates this book. In fact, if

Like animals, homo sapiens is still subject to natural law

someone had told me that a conversation between a man and a primate could be so fascinating, I probably would have laughed. Fascinating is hardly the right word—compelling would be better. As one reader from Arizona put it: "I will remember *Ishmael*. I wish I'd known him firsthand."

But, the point of the book is that we can know *Ishmael*. If we as humans begin to live again as one species in the wider community of this earth, we can avoid the senseless crimes—like the bombing in Oklahoma City—that we have brought upon ourselves by trying to live outside the natural rules. *Ishmael* emphasizes that our culture has declared itself immune to the law of species competition, and that, in doing so, we are free-falling as certainly as if we had jumped off a cliff declaring our independence from the law of gravity. We have two choices—either to continue toward a disastrous end or to learn to live within the natural law.

The natural law that we are trying to defy is really quite simple. No other animal hoards excess food. No other animal refuses to limit the growth of its population to comply with the available food sources. Over the past 10,000 years, our culture has tried to live outside the bounds of the community surrounding us. In other

words, we have tried to become god. We have decided who can live and who should die. And, the whole world is now suffering the consequences of our egomania.

As the givers of the Turner Fellowship recognized, this is no "gloom and doom" treatise. It offers a chance for redemption—a way to look at the world through different lenses. I think Quinn intentionally made the narrator a bit "slow." *Ishmael* had to spell out almost everything for him. He did so fairly patiently because he understood that the survival of the whole world was at stake. If humans could once again function as participants in the global system instead of trying to destroy all life that was not similar to theirs, then global disaster could be avoided and other species would have a chance for life as well.

This is a book to read and re-read. It is a book to discuss with others who have read it. It is definitely a book that will change the way we see the world and our place in it. I will end as the book ends—with the image of a two-sided poster. On one side it reads: "With man gone, will there be hope for gorilla?" The other side reverses the question: "With gorilla gone, will there be hope for man?" Ask *Ishmael*.

Guest column

Sexual harrasment has many ugly faces

By Lynda Goldstein, Ph.D

Sexual harassment in the workplace is a form of discrimination. It clearly violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which protects employees from discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin and sex. All organizations, including educational institutions, are covered by this law.

Although any person can be a victim of sexual harassment, the vast majority of instances involve women as victims and men as perpetrators of the harassment. Statistics from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) indicate that 90% of cases are men harassing women; 9% of cases are same sex harassment; 1% of cases are women harassing men. That's because sexual harassment is about power—the sheer power of being able to control, intimidate, embarrass, or demean another human being, and get away with it. And in most organizations, men hold positions of power, and women are subordinates. Harassment, and all of its ugliness, flows down the organizational hierarchy. Bosses are harassers, subordinates are victims.

Sexual harassment is found in two forms. Quid pro quo (this for that) harassment places the victim in the position of going along

with the offender's behavior because of fear of reprisal. The reprisals can be blatant, "Either you sleep with me or you're fired," or obscure, "things might be easier for you here if we became better friends."

The second, and more common form of sexual harassment, is the creation of a "hostile work environment." In a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor stated, "When the workplace is permeated with 'discriminatory intimidation, ridicule and insult' that is 'sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the victim's employment and create an abusive environment,' Title VII is violated." Not only is a hostile environment abusive of the victim, it also stifles morale and interferes with job performance and productivity of co-workers.

But the human and organizational costs are not the only ones. Employers are paying dearly, as well as they should, for allowing this behavior to exist. Organizations that fail to take seriously the issue of sexual harassment will continue to dig deeply in their pockets. The same fate befalls schools and colleges, for the law clearly holds the institution responsible for failing to provide a safe and harassment free environment for employees and students.

Over the past few months, our community has watched the sexual harassment case unfold at the Luzerne County Community College. To our great sadness, the details, as reported in the press, provide a textbook case of sexual harassment. We urge all decision makers involved in this situation—trustees, college officials, and county commissioners—to commit to transforming an apparently oppressive environment to one of fairness and civility.

We specifically urge that you work toward the gender equity by appointing qualified and progressive women to the board of trustees and to other leadership positions within the college. In addition, you must conduct a national search for the next president, and include as a selection criterion, a demonstrated commitment to fair treatment.

As a public institution, your actions both reflect and shape the community. You have the moral imperative to set appropriate examples of gender equity in a non-discriminatory work environment. As women in the academy, and as citizens of this community, we demand that you do so.

Lynda Goldstein is Acting Treasurer of Women in Higher Education (NEPAWHE). She teaches at the Penn State Wilkes-Barre campus in Lehman.

As I was saying



Jack Hilsher

Here's a name that belongs to a man who really exists: Azeezaly Jaffer! How's that for a handle? Jaffer is the U.S. Postal Service "stamp czar," manager of our "stamp service."

This title means he is responsible for marketing of all U.S. stamps, not just for postage sake, dear friends, but to help overflow the coffers of our postal service. Oy, does he ever succeed!

Last year the top ten 29¢ commemoratives which were issued under Jaffer's direction featured such diverse subjects as the moon landing, winter olympics, dinosaurs, WWII, blues and jazz stars, country music stars, pop singers, flowers and Norman Rockwell himself. The millions upon millions of dollars made by stamps never, ever, to be used as postage but stashed away by collectors would truly boggle the mind.

An example is the '93 stamp honoring (and I use the word advisedly) an over-weight, drug-crazed hillbilly singer, now departed which sold 124,000,000 copies and pulled in 35 million

One who really deserves to be on a postage stamp

bucks, less of course the normal production and distribution costs which couldn't be all that much. (Yes, Virginia, I meant Elvis.)

With all the music makers mentioned above, one wonders how Jaffer and his selection committee, whoever they may be, managed to miss honoring one of the music world's most respected and revered members...Glenn Miller, the vastly popular band leader of the 40s who was lost over the English channel in World War II.

The one who wonders about this the most is probably Joe Cooper of Forty Fort. Joe is a former columnist for the venerable *Sunday Independent*. His "Waxing Nostalgic" column appeared each Sunday for well over a decade.

Coop worked for the SI in their heyday, when editors were editors and not just figureheads. He rubbed elbows with men who are legend in Valley newspaper lore, like Sheldon Wintermute and Lou Rauscher. These names will bring back memories to many readers today.

Last year when I wrote a few columns on early swing bands I was asked "What are you trying to do, Jack? Take Joe Cooper's place?" No, I couldn't. And no one else could either. He was unique, the master of nostalgia. Now retired and a young 73, Coop is still active, knee deep in grandkinder

but still writing regularly for several regional weekly papers. They are lucky.

His connection with the Glenn Miller Society is interesting. He started it, long before the Miller estate went to court and had their name changed to "Big Band Society." Coop was their first president. He conceived the idea, took out an ad and was surprised when two dozen interested people showed up to become members. Marion Sterling of Forty Fort was their second president...the group met at the gracious King's Inn, a landmark bar/restaurant on Wyoming Avenue, long ago torn down.

Over the years their society tried every which way they knew to get a Glenn Miller stamp issued. Once they had ex-Hollywood song and dance man George Murphy try when he became a California senator. No stamp. Next they tried Dan Flood. Coop says, "In Washington when Dan said 'Jump!' the answer was always 'How high?' and we felt sure he could pull it off if anyone could." No stamp. And that's where it stands today. Still no stamp.

It's hard for society members to understand. It's hard for anyone to understand, especially when they see the lineup of stars from the same music world appearing on stamps today.

Azeezaly, are you listening?

DAMA offers recycling tips for spring

The Dallas Area Municipal Authority reminds area residents that spring cleaning is also an opportunity to help the environment through recycling.

The first few weeks of spring are often a time when people pay more attention to automotive maintenance as well as the maintenance of powered household machines such as a lawnmower. In both cases, a battery replacement and oil change are standard procedures. Both items can be recycled.

"In the past two years we've recycled 797 batteries," said DAMA recycling program coordinator Larry Spaciano. "This is a

tremendous number and is due to the public's concern over the environment as well as the help of the program's sponsor, Interstate Batteries."

Spaciano reminds customers that batteries can be delivered to DAMA offices. He also recommends that the battery be placed in an old container. Customers should be careful of battery acid, which can cause damage to clothes and other surfaces as well as injury if the acid comes in direct contact with skin. Most modern automotive batteries, however, are completely sealed and safe.

Oil can be recycled at any of four convenient locations: L.L.

Richardson; Finish Line Quick Lube; Schmid's Amoco or Back Mountain Transmission. Oil must be in a plastic see-through container (a standard water jug) and cannot contain any contamination by water or other liquids. Contaminated oil cannot be recycled. Deposits are limited to 5 gallons per visit and acceptable containers are available from DAMA.

There is no charge or cost to residents for either of these programs.

For more information on recycling programs, contact DAMA at 696-1134.



POST PHOTO/GRACE R. DOVE

Satisfied customers

Dennis, Brandon and Susan Shovlin of Harveys Lake relax after a good meal at the Back Mountain Police Association's annual all-you-can-eat breakfast to benefit the Association for Retarded Citizens April 23.

Assigned to USS Shenandoah

Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Wallace C. Gauthier, son of Wallace J. and Florence M. Gauthier of Dallas recently reported for duty aboard the destroyer tender *USS Shenandoah*, homeported in Norfolk, VA.

The 1986 graduate of Dallas High School joined the Navy in January, 1989.

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Meetings

- May 1, 1995 10:00 a.m.
Dallas Township
Municipal Building, Dallas
- May 2, 1995 10:00 a.m.
Wyoming Borough Bldg.,
Wyoming
- May 3, 1995 2:00 p.m.
Geisinger Wyoming Valley
Medical Center,
Wilkes-Barre
- May 4, 1995 2:00 p.m.
St. Jude's Church,
Blessed Pauline Center,
Rt. 309, Mountaintop