Have you ever had a dream like this? You’re cruising on the freeway, and you hit the brakes to slow down—a and nothing happens. Then you go to turn the steering wheel, and once again you have no control. You try the gas. Same thing. None of the control mechanisms are working, and you are helplessly careening down the freeway in an out-of-control vehicle. At that point, you usually wake up.

Well it’s time to wake up, America. Welcome to the new American “dream.” Over the past five years, the steering and driving mechanisms our country’s founders designed for our ship of state have been progressively (or rather, regressively) taken out of our hands. Our elected representatives ... our courts ... the “loyal opposition” ... the press ... the electoral process itself, have all come under the influence of some dark force. We find ourselves in an intractable, costly, perpetual war. Civil liberties are being taken away, and those who have taken an oath to protect us are inexplicably going along with the program. Gold-collar criminals and high-ranking officials are looting the commonwealth, as the middle class in our country disappears. Scientists who point out global warming or environmental distress are being silenced. The media keep us numbed up and dumbed down by distracting us with the most divisive or trivial issues.

Aside from the real massive problems we face if we would only face them – peak oil and global warming, and a house-of-cards economy where the Chinese hold the strongest hand – we face the gravest political and moral crisis in our history. Yes, there was the bombardment of the Capitol during the War of 1812, the Civil War, the Great Depression, the war against fascism 65 years ago, and the ongoing cold war, ostensibly against totalitarian communism. But never, never in our history has the “enemy” been so starkly and obviously our own rulers.

This realization is a hard gulp to swallow. None of us have wanted to go there. But now, we must courageously wake up to the realization that “there” is already “here.” The body politic is gravely ill, and unless we open our eyes and face this condition squarely, government of the people, by the people, and for the people will indeed perish from this earth, only to be replaced by neo-feudalism disguised as Big Brother totalitarianism.

This is not a time to push the panic button, but a time to push the “calm button” that activates our highest values of love, courage, imagination, and curiosity. Einstein has told us that a problem can never be solved at the level of the problem. So as the “political” solutions seem to dissolve one by one, we must find the solution at the next level up.

**The Truth Shall Upset You Free**

The first step in facing any grave illness—particularly when the disease is addiction-based—is telling the truth. This may not be pleasant or easy, but as the Swami says, “The truth shall upset you free.” The condition we face is life-threatening, not just to liberty and justice, not just to our democratic republic, but to human life on the planet itself. (We can assume that whatever happens to us, the cockroaches will very likely survive.)

In addition to the truths the framers of the Declaration of Independence held self-evident 230 years ago, we must now take the first step of facing some darker self-evident truths:

The results of the presidential elections in 2000 and 2004 were very likely the result of fraud, and thanks to very hackable voting machines, future elections are in jeopardy.

The official 9/11 story has more holes in it than Dick Cheney’s hunting buddy, and could very well have been self-evident!
It has been said that God (good old divinity) is always whispering in our ears. If we do not hear the voice, it becomes a shout. And if we ignore the shout, we get hit over the head. There is so much din in our ever-accelerating culture that the quiet voice has been all but drowned out. For Job, it required the “voice of the whirlwind” (actual translation) to wake him. For many of us, it has required the thundering collapse of the World Trade towers, the angry shout of Katrina or the jack-boot stomp of the World Trade towers, the angry shout of Katrina or the jack-boot stomp of the World Trade towers, the angry shout of Katrina or the jack-boot stomp of the World Trade towers, the angry shout of Katrina or the jack-boot stomp of the World Trade towers, the angry shout of Katrina or the jack-boot stomp of the World Trade towers, the angry shout of Katrina or the jack-boot stomp of the World Trade towers, the angry shout of Katrina or the jack-boot stomp of the World Trade towers, the angry shout of Katrina or the jack-boot stomp of the World Trade towers.

But what we seem to agree upon, those of us seeking a way out of the madness, is that the “old story” no longer supports our deepest needs nor any hope for a sustainable world – that we are in a state of Koyaanisquatsi, the Hopi word for “life out of balance.” “Yes, we did produce a near perfect Republic,” said Thomas Jefferson. “But will they keep it, or will they, in the enjoyment of plenty, lose the memory of freedom? Material abundance without character is the surest way to destruction.”

Gandhi went further in spelling out the “deadly sins” of what we call modern civilization: Politics without Principle, Wealth without Work, Commerce without Morality, Pleasure without Conscience, Education without Character, Science without Humanity, Worship without Sacrifice. When asked by a reporter what he thought of western civilization, Gandhi replied, “I think it would be a good idea.”

Yet we don’t need to reject, in toto, the long-standing and powerful myths which brought us to this juncture, as many tried to do in the 1960s. As Rod McKuen so poignantly put it: “There is no single day or time within the life I’ve so far lived that I’d have changed or altered. Possibly there are some days I could have missed and never missed. But I suspect that I could not have come down to this place a different way, as I suspect that being here I don’t as yet know where I am.”

We don’t know where we are, perhaps, because we’ve built for ourselves a house of mirrors, crafted over centuries from the self-justifying “truths” that we’ve come to believe. Those “truths” may have sustained us for a time, but – as the indigenous people say – if they “no longer grow corn” for us it is time to let them go. It is time to walk through the looking glass.

In his Nobel Prize for Literature acceptance speech last year, Harold Pinter intoned, “As a citizen I must ask: What is true? What is false? … But sometimes a writer has to smash the mirror – for it is on the other side of that mirror that the truth stares at us.” And this is what we invited writers to do for this issue of Vermont Commons, devoted to Values and Vision: Telling and Living a New Story.

We, as the purveyors of the dominant culture – the old story – both individually and collectively, are in the midst of a great Passage, a transformative moment. The therapeutic professions have recognized the psychological state of “spiritual emergency” as a unique and valuable transitional process that mimics schizophrenia, but which – if recognized and respected – can become an integrative rather than disintegrative process.

Yet integration, the restructuring of self or society, requires a period of disintegration. But if we recognize and honor this moment of “emergency” – which Swami Beyondananda, Steven Bhaeram’s alter ego, would call “emerge-n-see” (see Steven Bhaeram’s article on page 1) – then we can understand it as a Rite of Passage, a necessary and healing ritual of metamorphosis. There is a new creature struggling to be born. But the caterpillar must undergo a partial dissolution before it can emerge as a butterfly.

There is no more profound political document than our Declaration of Independence. But dependence on cultural myths is far more difficult to either perceive or relieve than political or economic dependence. Joseph Campbell, the renowned professor of world mythology, said that myths are shared “public dreams” that shape and guide our lives by giving us meaning and purpose.

“The world is as you dream it,” says the Shuars of the Ecuadorian jungle. “In the North, you had dreamed of huge industries, lots of cars, and gigantic skyscrapers. Then you discovered that your vision had in fact been a nightmare that would ultimately destroy you. Change that dream.” Ben Okri, Nigerian novelist, tells us that “Stories are the reservoirs of our values. Change the stories and you ultimately change the people and the nation.”

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the mythological roadmaps that guided them to the present moment, they must co-create a new moral compass to guide them onward, derived from a healthy respect for the Laws of Nature and Life. Such healthy respect for our proper place in the community of life requires that when we take up that moral compass we set the declination so that we can know true North. We must set ourselves to decline excess, to decline manufactured wants in place of authentic needs, to decline to lay waste to the Earth, to decline the “myths” of division, dissention, and dis-ease.

Our unique opportunity

Vermont is in a unique place to take the lead in redefining our story, for we are not far removed from the culture, the values, the qualities that once sustained us in better balance with the community of life. The old Yankee adage, “use it up, wear it out, make do, or do without,” can once again become a guidepost along our journey.

“The greatest country, the richest country, is not that which has the most capitalists, monopolists, continued on page 5
Letter to the Editor

Know Your Weeds
On the Value of “Valueless” Plants

Last October Vermont Commons asked: “Can Vermont Feed Itself?” I took the question quite personally, asking: “If the shit really hits the fan around here, if Mother Earth decides to knock us Northeasterners down a notch – or 10 – as well, can I feed myself?”

Come to find out, there’s food and medicine growing wild all around us. Unbelievable stuff, in terms of nutrition and health maintenance. Truly spirited and magical creations, which most of us who have ever lived in a place with a yard have been taught to search and destroy. May God help us all if the folks at Monsanto figure out how to completely eradicate that which the folks at Random House define as “a valueless plant” – the lowly weed.

I intend to cultivate a host of valueless plants this spring. A yard and gardens full of potential lifesavers.

I became interested in weeds as a result of a dream I had last summer. I was shown a very distinctive wavy-edged leaf and told that if I chopped it up and threw it into my swimming pool, I could keep the water pristine without any chemicals. Wish me luck with my upcoming curly dock experiments!

Crafty devils, weeds are. That swimming pool dream was all I needed to get sucked into their world. For quite a while now, I’ve had plants of one sort or another coming to me every night in my dreams. Sometimes I wake up with a name, like Myrtle or Thuja (cedar), clearly in my head. Other times I have to work a little harder. But if I don’t figure out who’s knocking on my door at night, similar symbolism shapes my dreams until I finally recognize the visitor. I even think a couple of extraordinarily feisty plant-spirits have engineered at least two eye-popping waking dreams.

Crazy, you’re probably thinking. But one morning I turned my attention suddenly from my plant study to another big project slated for this summer, an image of someone ripping out plants and hurling them at the ground flashed before my mind’s eye! Possessive, they are.

A friend gave me two great books for Christmas: Juliette Levy’s Common Herbs for Natural Health and Susun Weed’s Wise Woman Herbal. This same friend told me that some weed totally took over her gardens last summer. After ripping out piles, she thought: “Maybe I should figure out what this is...” I interrupted the story, saying that it probably showed up because she needed it. She continued, saying that it was lemon balm – which her naturopath prescribed for her shortly thereafter!

Goldthread (or canker root) got my attention two nights in a row, by clearly showing me its leaf. (Goldthread leaves rain down over me in the first dream.) It’s growing quite abundantly in the woods behind my house, wherever the ground is wet. It’s got four berberine compounds in it. Berberine is also in the much more famous and expensive goldenseal. Goldthread was one of the last plants I identified last fall before it started snowing. I remembered where I’d seen it and actually dug some up out of the snow on December 31st. It’s thriving in a window box. The rhizome – luminously orange and threadlike – is the medicinal part. I’m taking a small box of it (dried) with me on an upcoming trip. The berberine within is good for traveler’s diarrhea and intestinal parasites and a host of other things.

Google Dr. Duke’s database (without quotation marks) and the first internet entry that pops up is a fabulous phytochemistry database. If the plant is in there, it’ll give you all of the plant’s chemical constituents, plus each chemical’s known activities. You can search several different ways, too. Enter a chemical, for instance, and get a list of plants that contain it. As my housemate (a former chemist) informs me, a plant is a complete little chemistry set. Substances are often contained in the plant which may eliminate or buffer the potential side effects of a single component, isolated for drug use.

However, herbs can also be powerful drugs and should be respected as such. Herbalist Matthew Wood says one can often experience results after the taking of only a drop or two of an herbal tincture.

Dandelion is a wonder food. So is stinging nettle. Violet leaves and blossoms are edible; both contain vitamin C and the leaves are full of vitamin A (according to Euell Gibbons, whose books are also information-packed). Ever try to get rid of daylilies? The rhizomes, buds, and petals are all edible. Coltsfoot, from roots dug up last fall, thrived in one of my window boxes all winter. The dried leaves, used as a tea, make a great cough remedy. Galinsoga generated galinsoga babies all winter long! From two small plants, I’ve got a box full of sprouts. The curly dock seeds germinated; I’ve got another box full of sprouts. (Rub the dried, brown, winged seed carriers between your fingers until a tiny, glossy, three-sided seed separates out.)

I filled my window boxes with dirt dug up in the woods – dirt covered with leaves and pine needles, in which I thought nothing was growing. Mulllein showed up in all of my boxes. A poke plant, too. Gibbons claims that poke sprouts, when they’re only six to eight inches tall, make an excellent cooked vegetable. (Look to Gibbons for a lesson in how to grow a wild winter garden in a warm, dark basement.) Matthew Wood values mulllein in the same way that comfrey is often valued – for setting bones. Herb Robert, a “true” and medicinal geranium, transplants easily. I also got a couple of seeds to germinate. Another wild geranium (Bicknell’s) showed up, as well.

I ordered some “weed” and herb seeds over the winter. And now that spring has arrived, I’m going out foraging now that everything is blossoming, and learning how to identify more of the local produce – and transplant some of it to my own backyard for easy picking.

Jacqueline Brook
Putney
How to Survive the Crash and Save the Earth

By Ran Prieur

1. Abandon the world mentally. The world is the enemy of the Earth: The "world as we know it" is a short-lived culture that survives by taking from the biosphere without giving back, and it’s just about finished. We’re not just running out of cheap oil. We’re also running out of topsoil, without which we need oil-derived fertilizers to grow food, and forests which stabilize climate and create rain by transpiring water to refill the clouds. We’re running out of room to dump stuff in the oceans without killing them, and to dump stuff in the atmosphere without wrecking the climate, and to manufacture carcinogens without giving ourselves cancer. We’re coming to the end of global food stockpiles, and antibiotics that still work, and our own physical health, and our own mental health, and our will to keep the whole game going.

In the next five or 10 years, the American economy will collapse, food, fuel, and manufactured items will get much more expensive, and most of us will begin withdrawal from the industrial lifestyle. SUVs will change their function from transportation to shelter. We will not be able to imagine how we ever thought calories were bad. This isn’t the doom scenario – it’s the mildest realistic scenario: the slow crash. Resources will become scarce; in some places, people will starve, conflict will increase, and climate disasters will get worse. Smart people will stop poisoning dandelions and start eating them. My young anarchist friends are already packing themselves into unheated houses and getting around by bicycle, and they’re noticeably happier than my friends with full-time jobs. We just have to make the mental adjustment.

2. Abandon the world physically. Getting out of the system is not about avoiding guilt, or even reducing your ecological footprint. It’s not a contest to see who’s doing more to save the Earth. It’s about reducing your dependence, getting free, being yourself, slipping out of a wrestling hold so you can throw an elbow at the Beast. This world is full of people with the intelligence, knowledge, skills, and energy to make heaven on Earth, but they can’t even begin because they would lose their jobs. We’re always arguing to change each other’s minds, but nobody will change if their survival depends on not changing. We need to decouple our survival from the system that commands us, so we can say no to it.

Dropping out has both a mental and an economic component that go together like your two legs walking. It’s a lot of steps! Maybe you notice that you hate your job, and that you have to do it because you need money. So you reduce expenses, reduce your hours, and get more free time, in which you learn more techniques of self-sufficiency and establish a sense of identity not dependent on where you get your money. Then you switch to a low-status low-stress job that gives you even more room to get outside the system mentally. And so on, until you’ve changed your friends, your values, your whole life.

3. You are here to help. In the culture of Empire, we are trained to think of ourselves as here to "succeed," to build wealth and status and walls around ourselves, to win in games where winning is given meaning by others losing. This value system only makes sense in a world rigged so you can win all the time. Thousands of years ago only kings were in that position, and they reacted by massacring all enemies and bathing in blood. Now, through a perfect conjunction of Empire and oil energy, we have just put the entire American middle class in that position for 50 years. No one should be surprised that we’re so ignorant, selfish, inflexible, and short-sighted.

It’s a simple but profound shift to think of ourselves instead as here to help, to serve the greatest good that we can perceive in whatever way is right in front of us. Being here to help is more suited to difficult times, because you will frequently be in a situation where you can’t win, but you will almost never be in a situation where there’s nothing you can do to help. It even has survival value: as the system breaks down, people here to win will waste their energy fighting each other for scraps, while people here to help will build self-sufficient communities capable of generating what they need to survive.

4. Learn skills. Skills are more valuable than stores of canned food and gold. You know the saying: get a fish, eat for a day; learn to fish, eat for a lifetime. (Just don’t take it too literally; there might not be any fish left!)

The most obvious useful skills would include improving shelter from materials at hand, identifying and preparing wild edibles, finding water, making fire, trapping animals, and so on. But I don’t think we’re going all the way to the stone age. There will also be a need for electrical work, medical diagnostic, surgery, optics, celestial navigation, composting, gardening, tree propagation, food preservation, diplomacy, practical chemistry, metalworking, all kinds of mechanical repair, and all kinds of teaching. As the 15th century had the Renaissance Man, we’re going to have the Postapocalypse Man or Woman, someone who can fix a bicycle, tan a hide, set a broken bone, mediate an argument, and teach history.

Then there are meta-skills that make skill-learning and everything else easier: luck, intuition, adaptability, attention, curiosity, physical health, mental health, the ability to surf the flow. The best bumper sticker I ever saw was a “think globally, act locally” sticker altered to say just “think, act.” Most human behavior is based neither on logic nor intuition nor emotion, but habit and conformity. This barely works in a confined environment, and in a chaotic environment it doesn’t work at all.

5. Find your tribe. You may feel like you want to do it alone, but you have never done it alone. You’ve lived your whole life as a member of a giant mad tribe, where the relationships are exploitative, abusive, and invisible. Now this tribe is dying, and others will grow to take its place. You’ll depend more on relationships and less on numbers, trading your sterile, insulated links of money and law for raw, messy links of friendship and conflict. The big lie of postapocalyptic movies is that the survivors will be loners. In the real apocalypse, the survivors will be members of multi-skilled well-balanced cooperative groups.

6. Get on some land. Not everyone is going to buy land. You need money, and if you don’t have money, you need the mental discipline to save it up; buying questionable land in cash is still safer than going into debt to buy good land. Then you have to spend a lot of time looking. Some people join land-buying groups to share the cost, the work, and the benefits.

If you don’t buy land, other options are to find someone who already has land and will take you in for your skills, or to find a place you can occupy without owning, or just to stay in the city and do your best to make it survivable. There were cities before the industrial age and there will be cities after it.

If you do get land, the most valuable thing it can have is clean surface water, a spring or stream you can drink from. I agree with William Kotke that the ideal situation is “at the top of a watershed in low hills.” If you don’t have good surface water, you can still filter bad water through sand and reed beds, or set up a system to catch and store rainwater. Then you’ll need a few years to learn and adjust and get everything in order so that your tribe can live there year-round, even with no materials from outside. With luck, it won’t come to that.

7. Save part of the Earth. I think it’s self-evident that the biosphere is valuable on its own terms, and more valuable than anything else we can perceive. The popular focus is on saving trophy ani-
Prieur, continued from page 4

mals – whales, condors, salmon, spotted owls – but we could save a lot more species if we put that attention into habitats and whole systems. And the easiest way to save habitats is by just doing it: adopting some land, whether by owning or squatting or stealing, and building it into a strong habitat: slowing down the rainwater, composting, mulching, building the topsoil, no-till gardening, scattering seed balls, planting trees, making wetlands – a little oasis where the tree frogs can hide and migrating birds can rest, where you and a few species can wait out the crash.

This requires a new set of skills. A good place to start is the permaculture movement. What it comes down to is seeing whole systems and working with the flow of nature. Some rain forest environments, once thought to be random wilderness, have turned out to be more like the wild gardens of human tribes, orders of magnitude more complex than the monoculture fields of our own primitive culture.

Sustainability is only the middle of the road, and there’s no limit to how far we can go beyond it. We can live in ways that increase the richness of life on Earth, and help Gaia in ways she cannot help herself. This and only this justifies human survival.

8. Save human knowledge. When people of this age think about knowledge worth saving, they usually think about techniques for rebuilding and using machines that enable concentrations of power, economic “growth,” alienation from other life, and a doomed cycle of increasing complexity. But I’m talking about the knowledge to avoid that. In 200 years, when our descendants are brushing seeds into baskets with their fingers, and a stranger appears with a new threshing machine that will do the same thing with less time and effort, they will need to say something smarter than “the Gods forbid it,” or “that is not our Way.” They will need the knowledge to say something like:

"Your machine requires the seed to be planted alone and not interspersed with perennials that maintain nitrogen and mineral balance in the soil. And from where will the metal come, and how many trees must be cut down and burned to melt and shape it? And since we cannot build the machine, shall we be dependent on the machine-builders, and give them a portion of our food, which we now keep all for ourselves? Do you not know, clever stranger, that when biomass is removed from the land, and not cycled back into it, the soil is weakened?

"And what could we do with our “saved” time, that would be more valuable than gathering the seed by hand, touching and knowing every stalk and every inch of the land that feeds us? Shall we become allies of cold metal that cuts without feeling, turning our hands and eyes to the study of machines and numbers until, severed from the Earth, we nearly destroy it as our ancestors did, making depleted uranium and polychlorinated biphenyls that even now make the old cities unfit for living?

"Go back to your people, and tell them, do not come to teach us, because we understand your world better than you do yourself. Tell your people to come to learn." •

Editorial, continued from page 2

immense grabblings, vast fortunes, with its sad, sad soil of extreme, degrading, damning poverty,” quoth Walt Whitman, “but the land in which there are the most homesteads, freeholds – where wealth does not show such contrasts high and low, where all men have enough – a modest living – and no man is made possessor beyond the sane and beautiful necessities.”

Richard Czapinski’s example in this issue (page 7) of a modest and simple life which reclaims the agrarian community values of our recent past, might also serve as a guide and inspiration for what we can again become.

Martin Luther King’s words are as relevant today: “This hour in history needs a dedicated circle of transformed non-conformists. The saving of our world from pending doom will come not from the actions of the conforming majority, but through the creative maladjustment of a dedicated minority.” Vermonters have long been known as a “dedicated minority,” creatively maladjusted to the dominant paradigm, and we can once again lead the nation toward a more true-to-life deep pragmatism, as Amy Seidl’s article suggests (page 6).

In his perceptive analysis of the American personality, Alexis de Tocqueville (Democracy in America, 1831) wrote: “Choose any American at random, and he should be a man of burning desires, enterprising, adventurous, and above all an innovator.” No one better embodies that character today than Barry Simpson of the Warren Bobbin Mill, who has crafted a locally rooted entrepreneurial incubator of ideas and products which have become “feedback” for a self-reliant economy (page 8).

Jeffrey Triplat, trained by Chi Gong masters and Peruvian Shamans, helps us re-member our dismembered spiritual consciousness so that we may alchemically transmute the dross of our dysfunction into a new spiritual ecology (page 10). Gen Xer Ran Prieur (page 4) offers a how-to manual for departing the failed paradigms, disentangling ourselves from the addictions which are destroying us, and entering a new/old story based upon Earth-skills and tribal connectedness.

And Charles Sullivan offers a stern warning and calls us to non-violent political action to instigate a velvet revolution which reasserts our sovereignty and natural rights (page 12).

We are in the midst of an epochal Rite of Passage from a failed paradigm – the old story – to a true-to-life paradigm, woven from many strands into a new tapestry. Vermonters and other co-creators are in the process of writing a new story which will inspire and guide the transition from the Age of Fear to the Age of Hope. We are called now to build bridges between that past and that future – for that is the purpose of the present moment.

The contributors to this issue of Vermont Commons offer their values, visions and living examples to you, our readers. Take a deep breath, relax, release and join us on this journey. We need you on board.

ROBERT RIVERSONG
Guest Editor

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“Aside from some particularly thoughtful frogs and phragmites, no one on earth knows more about ponds than Tim Matson.” —Michael Pollan, author of The Botany of Desire
We are in a period of transition, beckoning in a transformative age; morally, ecologically, and socially. We sit at the edge of the Cenozoic era, looking out upon a new era and the opportunity to radically reinvent ourselves, how we live, and our relationship to life on Earth.

The transition that we are about to undertake is as historic as any in Earth’s history. The Cenozoic, the previous 65 million years that supported the evolution of mammals, the proliferation of birds, and the origination of humans, our agriculture and civilization, is coming to a close. And like the end of other geologic eras, the end of the Cenozoic has an ecological basis: the planet is experiencing mass extinction brought on by the human species. Extinction, now approximately a thousand times the natural background rate of one species per million per year, is forcing us to recognize that we must fundamentally change the way we live or become extinct ourselves. As the French paleontologist Tielhard de Chardin wrote, “We need a new form of human being.”

Some have called the era to be ushered in the Ecozoic, a time in which human action naturally results in mutual benefit among all life forms, their evolutionary capacity and natural hierarchy. Clearly, entrance into the Ecozoic means a wholesale redesign of how we live. This transformation, and the transition that precedes it, will be no small undertaking. Redesigning how we live so that our actions naturally result in deep equity and ecosystem health is an enormous task, one greater than any previous construct of human civilization. The fact that we exist now and are part of this transition culture, preparing the way for the future of the human race to flourish while simultaneously enhancing life, is both terrifying and captivating.

And yet it is hard to imagine the end of something that has so entirely framed our existence. Not only the Cenozoic era, in which humans evolved into being, but the extractive industrial age that marks its end. It may be impossible to truly appreciate all that this signifies; ecologically, evolutionarily, and culturally. What we are each able to do is appreciate the turning point and embrace our individual obligation to assure life’s full persistence in a new era of Earth’s history.

To enact this full transformation we need to align ourselves with a new ethic, a moral imperative that encourages us to live our lives and structure our economies in ways that promote life rather than deplete it. I call this moral imperative a true-to-life ethic, one that guides our actions to be deeply pragmatic, meeting our inherent desire, and our desperate need, to be the generation that cultivates rather than extinguishes life.

The idealism of this proposed moral imperative is in sharp contrast to how our society functions today. It is meant to be, for its idealism and its inherent rightness is justified as the means to bring humans back into an equitable relationship with the dynamics of the planet. This equity has ecological consequences but it simultaneously feeds the human person, releasing creative capacity and expanding our ability to become more fully who we are. This ethical framework also addresses the tension that as we strive for local independence in our actions, we also realize that we are ecologically and culturally interdependent. Our right life actions in a mountainous state have consequences far beyond our granite boundaries. Living with a true-to-life ethic forces us to conceive of what we do at the level of planetary health, and when we conceive of our actions this way we end up acting locally and globally.

We have reason to be hopeful; the transition into an Ecozoic-like era is occurring around the globe. More than 100,000 nongovernmental organizations are already committed to bringing it about, and more companies are adopting green practices than in any other decade. Vermont is far along in its transition and in many ways leads the nation with this work. We are underway because of the legacy of environmentalism from George Perkins Marsh’s conservation ethos to Bill McKibben’s enviro barnstorming. We have entered the transition with a working sense of civic life, maintained by geographic scale, low population size, and the rich community-based traditions of town meeting, hunter’s breakfast, and church suppers. These foundations coupled with our 21st century understanding of the drivers of ecosystem and planetary health, have advanced a values system that promotes lessening our impact, quantifying and diminishing our harmful ecological footprint.

So if the good news is that we are underway, the bad news is that it isn’t enough. It isn’t enough to work within the regulatory framework and the environmental politics of the past. There we end up working against the tide, struggling to right wrongs and settle for less-bad choices. What we want to do is strive to make our actions “100-percent good” as architect William McDonough puts it, working to design our economies around cradle-to-cradle thinking. McDonough encourages us to use organic and technical resources in closed-loop cycles, infinitely upcycling products and their byproducts so that they become “nutrients” for new production and the concept of waste is eliminated.

How best, then, to cast off the regulatory approach and the destined ruin of our planet, and re-conceive our actions around a true-to-life ethic in the Green Mountain State? To begin, we must consciously reframe the endeavors we have begun. For instance, we can re-frame the state’s support for renewable energy, we can move its goal from lessening the electric draw on utility companies to the goal that the state should help make perpetual (unfathomably ancient) and non-polluting energy available to everyone. Similarly, we can reframe our support for sustainably harvested biomass used to heat and electrify Vermont schools, pointing to the fact that good stewardship of forest ecosystems assures that they thrive and that we benefit from their viability in the form of ecosystem services.

Next, we can frame our future endeavors, calling upon our collective creative genius to redesign how we and the next generations live. For example, we can frame the relationship between rural and urban/suburban areas in Vermont, redesigning the import and export of resources to be analogous to resource flows in natural systems. Perhaps rural communities become those that exploit and cycle organic resources while urban areas focus on technical nutrients. Our framing of future endeavors should push an edge, inspiring us to build buildings that house us while also creating habitat for other life, re-planting carbon, sidings that is photosynthetic. To my mind, recasting and then executing these endeavors are our very passage into a new eco-centric era.

We are fortunate to be entering this critical time in Vermont, where many people already practice the truth of living well, where individuals are acutely aware of how their actions can be catalysts of goodness beyond what they gain from them in the short term. In Vermont, people lead lives that are informed by the practical consequences of their actions. We tend to think about the subsequent effects of what we do, encouraging actions that result in good things. This is the essence of deep pragmatism and a true-to-life ethic – sensing the truth of our actions through their potential to support life.

What are some of these true-to-life actions, actions so good they carry the weight of truth? They are eating Intervale beets, turnips and carrots, stored in a root cellar and shared all winter with 100 families, speaking the wisdom of community-supported agriculture. They are buildings such as the ones being constructed at ‘Teal Farm in Huntington, barns powered by renewable energy, constructed from locally harvested or reclaimed wood, where wastewater flows through a constructed wetland and the buildings are designed to function as a living system, powered by the sun and cycling all wastes.

What we need to do is to lead Vermont into and through a transition culture, recognizing that it will happen by degrees, in steps and bits, and in time by leaps. We need to establish a transition culture determined to wean itself from our devastat ing ways and to nurture an age of ecological health for our planet. This transition may take decades or centuries. But it must be begun. And it must be grounded in practical approaches and with full divestment from what we know is counter to our own survival. Without a transition culture like the one we are working to create, we will find ourselves afloat, directionless and likely in chaos.

And all along, our transition and eventual transformation needs to be guided by a commitment that we will arrive at a place where life, in all its complexity and interdependence, in all its evolutionary capacity, will be fully realized. Let us take advantage of our fortune to be citizens of a state that has established a firm foundation, ecologically, morally, and socially, from which to make the transition. Let us take advantage of our fertile soils, our windy ridges, our independent nature, and our populace that is progressive, ingenious, and deeply pragmatic. “The dream drives the action,” wrote Thomas Berry. Let us dream and then become true-to-life. •

**True-to-Life**

*By Amy L. Seidl*
Living Simply and Strengthening Community

By Richard Czapinski

The shrieking of the horn of the old McCormick Deering tractor was so loud that I covered my ears. It could be heard at least a mile away. It signaled that the threshing of oats on our farm was done and it alerted the neighboring farm that the threshing machine was coming soon. But not until all who helped us out had a bountiful meal prepared by my mother and two sisters.

As the baked chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, fresh baked bread were passed around the table to famished farmers, the buzz of conversation was loud and filled with laughter. Stories of critters seen in the field and how full the straw barn and granary were went back and forth across the long table.

So it was back in the 1940s and early 1950s when, out of necessity, neighbor helped neighbor to get the threshing done as well as filling the silo, husking corn, or sawing up and splitting the firewood for the winter. It was a basic, simple, hard-working life, and even as children we felt a vital part of the daily rural life. The one-room school working life, and even as children we felt a vital part of the rural life.

The post-War Two economy was in full swing, having converted from making war materiel to domestic products. Shortly after the war, I remember my dad coming down the hill to the farm driving the new John Deere tractor from town. Some years later we had two tractors. My dad was working part-time in town as my brother and I did the farm chores after school. The extra money he made allowed us to get a furnace for the house, to put in a bathroom with a flush toilet, to buy a TV, and to get a brand new 1953 Ford car.

Then came the corn chopper, the corn husker, and the combine. No longer was it necessary for neighbor to help neighbor. These machines made it possible for the farmer to do it alone. Our Sunday afternoon visits faltered as we watched the TV instead. In this way the strength and fabric of the community was sapped by “progress.”

From here you can pick up the rest of the story.

The trend has continued and accelerated to the present day. On a massive scale, technology, aided by slick advertising and plastic credit cards, has made it possible for almost everyone to heartily join the consumption spree, but at a dear price. The price is an increasing pace of life, an indebtedness that controls our lives and which builds a worrisome wall of isolation between us and our neighbors.

Little did I know how large an impact being born and growing up on a small dairy farm would have on my life. Nor could I imagine how it would and still does affect my life and view of the world.

It was in college in the early 1960s, studying engineering under an NROTC scholarship, that I realized that I was on my way to potentially making a lot of money. But this thought bothered me. Somehow, from my religious upbringing I got the idea that it was a sin to make too much money. If I had lots of money then someone else wouldn’t have it.

In today’s terms, it’s like Bill Gates having billions and my thinking, “How much money does he need to live a decent life? Who sacrifices, or maybe got short-shifited to make his fortune possible? Oh, yes he’s giving a lot away, but who is he to decide who needs it and what’s best for the world?”

My decision in college was to continue and get my engineering degree. At that time I felt, maybe as Bill Gates does today, that I could give money away if I made too much. And after an interlude of getting married, almost six years in the service, and having a family, circumstances and necessity pointed me back in the direction of my roots and living simply.

In 1978, with the help of a good friend giving me a land contract on a piece of land he was willing to sell, I began my 25 years of living as simply and inexpensively as possible. With the help of another good friend and that of colleagues from work and friends, I built a small (about 600 square feet) house. The cost to build the house when I moved in that Thanksgiving was $5,500. I avoided a mortgage and all that it entails. Of course, the house was largely unfinished and incomplete. Over the years, I added a lean-to woodshed, back and front porches, and an attached, unheated greenhouse.

With a large garden, an up-and-coming fruit orchard, berry bushes, and firewood from the back woods, I could and still can live comfortably on $5,000 to $6,000 per year. Expenses were minimal except to keep my Toyota pickup going (one third or more of the total), then federal, state and local taxes, and food I couldn’t grow myself (about $600). With electricity from a very small photovoltaic system (which powers a computer and radio), a gravity-fed water supply, and hot water from a natural circulation system on the wood cook stove, I live in wonderful comfort. And there never is a blackout when the power grid goes down.

The human condition

After all this rambling through my personal life, here’s what I really want to say. Two things: First, the choice I made was voluntary. Very soon the choice of lifestyle, how we conduct our lives will no longer be voluntary. Why? Because we are running out of fossil fuel and cheap energy. Notice the gas prices. They will only go higher, quickly. We are at peak oil — no further increase in output, or if we do attempt to increase production we will break the bank (i.e., it will cost more in energy to extract the energy from nature than we get in return).

Second, as we face this transition to a lower-energy economy, I hope my story is a reminder to all that there is enormous room to conserve energy and yet live in great comfort and lead a satisfying — maybe a more satisfying — life.

For most of my life I have been intrigued by the human condition and how our minds work, in particular my own mind. I’ve come to a couple of conclusions. One is that old habits die very hard. The other is that we, as human beings, will continue to do the same things and more of the same, until drastic force is applied from the outside unless we can somehow change our minds and view of life.

There are two very awesome outside forces now looming: Global warming, and the end of cheap energy. These will have a dramatic affect on our lives. And combined with old habits dying hard, we will have a hard time of it, unless we begin doing now what we will have to be doing in a big way very soon. That is, to begin practicing energy conservation now in all kinds of small and big ways.

Ultimately, to make it through the transition, we have to begin to cooperate instead of compete in all aspects: from the local, by strengthening our communities, to the global, where we see ourselves as a global village instead of competing nations.

Are we up to the challenge? Can we show a continued on page 11
‘Relocalization’ In The Post-Carbon Era

By Barry Simpson

Theoretical

The sunset of the era of inexpensive, readily available liquid fuels will portend a night of economic, social, and political turmoil that will be unlike any that Vermont, or the world for that matter, has experienced before. The central task of Vermonters during this period will be to readjust our economic models in a manner that will hasten the dawn of the post oil-depletion era. The way we adjust will be essential to our survival as a social and political entity.

Adjusting commerce to a world in which oil among other fossil fuels has passed its peak of availability will necessitate a reassessment of the processes involved in mining, growing and harvesting, manufacturing and shipping necessary and saleable products. Several strategies, beyond the obvious emphasis on energy conservation and conversion of renewable energy on a decentralized basis, might be employed.

One strategy is the relocalization of the area actually served, and another might be the use of local experience to produce innovative methods or ideas that cost little or nothing to export but, if carefully managed, can produce significant dividends.

Among the dilemmas of decentralization or relocalization of economies is how a particular locality can support viable, durable enterprises without enabling them to become commodities themselves, to be bought and sold and moved around at the whim of distant directorates. Several strategies, beginning with the trade name itself, can be encouraged to promote a permanence or allegiance to a place that will countervail the tendency for viable businesses to be gobbled up or shuffled around.

Another strategy would be broad-based, or total, employee ownership from inception. If all owner-employees individually have their roots firmly planted in a particular community, the chances of outright sale or agglomeration of a business are substantially diminished.

Of course, the prospect of any enterprise is greatly enhanced by its ability to address a pressing or emerging need with its product or service mixture. Many new or previously unmet needs will arise as a result of the imminence of oil depletions, global warming and other forms of environmental degradation, and food-supply interruption and deterioration. Providing solutions to emerging needs on a local basis will give rise to innovations or inventions that have universal application, and can be made available to a much more widespread market if an organization chooses to develop and meet the demand.

Developing a few key product or service offerings, combined with a multifaceted or flexible approach should improve the chances of success. And if success is measured substantially in terms of growth of human capital, the positive influence on the local community will be even more durable and profound. One of the primary objectives of relocalization is to build a cultural continuum that is permanently resourceful and regenerative. And the key to regeneration is to ensure that the contribution of the community’s young people is always respected.

The apparent collapse of globalization due in part to the ever-increasing cost, complexity and hazards of transshipment and travel will support the emergence of electronic means of connectivity between regions, inauguration of a brand-like identity among communities, continuation of widespread technical capability in the transmission of ideas and trends, and diversification of the concepts and information thus transferred.

One of the positive benefits of the post-carbon era may well be the ascension of a new type of locational allegiance that once was our mainstay but has gradually eroded in Vermont. This would certainly be a welcome antidote to the merge-and-move mentality that has prevailed in recent years, resulting in the loss or displacement of numerous highly contributive enterprises.

The decline of globalization has caused a retreat into nationalism wherever corporate interests control central governments, and into transnational tribalism based on religious or ethnic allegiance where corporate

Achievable

The Bobbin Mill site in Warren, just south of the village off Route 100, has been occupied for a century and a half by a succession of natural resource-based manufacturing businesses. Initially occupied by a water-powered wood-turning mill, an ownership change in 1970 allowed it to become an incubator for a succession of firms with an energy-conservation or -conversion and wood-products focus that individually achieved considerable prominence.

Among the product introductions with their inception at the Bobbin Mill were airtight wood-burning stoves (Vermont Castings and Vermont Iron Stove), wind and remote backup power systems (Northern Energy), movable window insulation devices and super-insulated homes (Dirt Road), onsite foam insulation and instantaneous hot water heaters (Controlled Energy), composting toilets (Lincoln Plastics), and large commercial furnishings (Wall-Goldfinger).

The Bobbin Mill site can now enable a successor to this lineage, called Forevermont™, to locate there and identify the highly innovative Waterbury-to-Rochester corridor as its primary service area. An abundance of experience and talent in the fields of energy conservation and conversion, especially in renewables, resides in the region as a result of three decades of activity. Several of the businesses or their successors that began operations at the Bobbin Mill remain active in the region, while others have merged or moved on, leaving a partial vacuum that can be filled by a firm utilizing this wellspring of locally developed talent. This resource, augmented by those who would migrate to the area to take advantage of the opportunity, would serve as Forevermont’s owner-employee base.

The mill site itself, with its generally southeastern exposure beside the plunging cataract of the Lincoln Brook, offers some potential for solar- or water-assisted power generation, as well as three-phase power and a convenient access to Route 100. But more remarkable than the physical attributes of the mill site is its history, since the 1970s, as a place where ideas were generated and needs were served in the realm of natural energy conservation and conversion. The source of the ideation was the first set of oil crises, which were a result of the transfer of power to control the extraction and distribution of oil from the United States to the OPEC countries. Idea generation will be spurred once again by the worldwide realization that oil, in its readily extractable forms, is a finite resource while the world’s thirst for it is infinite.

Forevermont® could be a company that recognizes the urgency of the need to create anew or redevelop existing product entries, and to implement them vigorously in the nearby service area, thereby achieving immediate and tangible results.

The concept of a company that combines broad employee ownership and management, technical expertise in the realm of energy resource optimization, and design and implementation of individual and community self-sufficiency plans could have an immediate local applicability.

One of the strategies for providing an immediate revenue stream would be to reintroduce a useful product such as Dirt Road’s Comfort Shade window insulation system. Contacts could then be made with the hundreds of installations in the region with the offer of a tune-up or replacement package. Then, while the repairs are proceeding, the experience gained in restoring or replacing systems that have 20 years or more of active use would be employed to develop the next generation of movable window insulation directed toward current needs.

Developing a loyal local customer base by making available for specific applications the broad range of energy, food, and water security options would be the primary initial objective. Having acquired this base, the ability for a firm to design, implement, and maintain certain aspects of a solution to individual needs and to bring in other local experts where needed should assure a locational permanence.

continued on page 9
interests do not predominate. The dilemma for Vermont in the midst of this turmoil is how to maintain our viability as a social and economic entity with a “Freedom and Unity” motto immersed in a relentless assault on personal freedoms and a corporate-orchestrated right-left polarity that eliminates the possibility of national unity. Certainly relocalization, with many small and overlapping geopolitical units, each with its own identity and objectives, will play a big role in a successful transition.

Other aspects that a business, like Forevermont®, might incorporate would be to instill a permanent commitment to innovation and product development, and to dedicate the business location itself to this type of activity. The real estate could be placed in a trust, similar to those that apply to agricultural lands, that would perpetuate its use for industrial or directly related commercial or residential applications. The Bobbin Mill site currently has a zoning designation that would support this legal distinction.

Forevermont® lies at the confluence of the Mad River and the Lincoln Brook, where the Mad River Valley begins in earnest. Composed of the fiercely independent yet intensively collaborative towns of Warren, Waitsfield, and Fayston, “The Valley” will be a model for an internally cooperative geopolitical unit that others will follow through the turmoil to come.

We are at a critical juncture. There are wonderful things happening and we’re ready to take our message to Vermonters all over the state. But we need your help.

We would like to have a presence at as many county and regional fairs as possible this summer. We need folks who are willing to staff an SVR booth. We’ll provide all the materials for the booth, get it set up, and take it down. We need you to staff it. And we need your donations to pay for it as well. Each fair booth costs $100 and $200 to secure the booth space, and there are 18 fairs this year. Our goal is to raise $1000 for the Fair Project.

We would also like to have a presence in as many parades as possible this summer. Is there a parade in your town? Would you like to carry the SVR banner with your family and friends? Let us know, and we’ll get you the banner.

Our wonderful, revamped Website is almost done—it should be online by June. We have received $5200 in donations to cover the cost of this work, and we need another $1800 to finish. We hope you can help.

And don’t forget the Vermont Sovereignty Declaration! We have received $400 in donations to start getting the ad out there (see this page of Vermont Commons). We need your name, and your small donation, to be able to start publishing it in as many Vermont papers as possible.

Please help spread the word. The time is now. Second Vermont Republic needs you!

I want to help make VT succession a reality!

We support the Sovereignty Declaration!

I support the Vermont Sovereignty Declaration too!

Name(s)________________________

Address________________________

City_________State____Zip________

Donation amount: $10 $25 $50 $ Other $________ 

I want my name to appear in the ad: Yes No

Yes, in Anonymous Yes, no

Please make check payable to Second Vermont Republic, with "Ad Campaign" in the memo line. Mail to address at left. Thanks for your support!

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Second Vermont Republic Needs You!

We support the Sovereignty Declaration!

I support the Vermont Sovereignty Declaration too!

Name(s)________________________

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PHOTO: ROBERT RIVERSONG

Vermont...going its own way.

PHOTO: ROBERT RIVERSONG

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The Vermont Sovereignty Declaration

Recent actions by the United States government, including the prosecution of illegal wars, the USA PATRIOT Act, the illegal rendition of “terrorist suspects,” prisoner abuse and torture, citizen surveillance, violations of our constitutional rights, the suspension of habeas corpus, a foreign policy based on full spectrum dominance and imperial overstretch, and a culture of deceit have all given rise to legitimate concern that under circumstances of its own choosing, the federal government might not rule out:

- the suspension of the U.S. Constitution or Bill of Rights,
- the declaration of martial law,
- the militarization of civilian police functions,
- the suspension of free elections,
- the usurpation of individual property rights, or
- the negation of the Second Amendment right to bear arms.

In light of these troubling developments, the People of Vermont hereby reaffirm:

- OUR right of sovereignty,
- OUR right to nullify acts of the central government deemed to be unconstitutional,
- OUR right to secede from the Union, and
- OUR right to call a statewide Convention to decide whether or not Vermont remains in the Union.

To get involved in the Sovereignty Ad Campaign, contact:

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Spiritual Sustainability

By Jeffrey Triplat

When one comes to ponder the definitions for sustainability, many established practices come to mind. We cherish local food production, renewable power, green building, social equity, leave no trace policy and numerous conscientious ways to conduct daily affairs with the smallest possible footprint upon our dear Mother Earth. We inhabit the Gaia principle, and revere the elder wisdom of living one’s life mindful of our impact upon the next seven generations.

When thinking about the predominant lifestyle in America, Europe, and the Northern Hemisphere with its principle cosmology defined by exclusivity, entitlement, and external regulation, I come to realize we have forgotten a critical component and moral compass for overall sustainability — spiritual embodiment of our true Selves and our integral place within the larger Whole.

To the Native peoples, our species is uniquely recognized as determiners of energy — in other words, possessing the ability to benefit the Land by stewarding change based on consciousness. In order to fully embody this Way of living, we must be willing to address our own inner landscapes, step outside of resource dominance and examine the motivations driving our free will. If we are to truly achieve sustainability and transmute current paradigms, it is absolutely necessary to live in “ayni,” the Inkan word for balanced relationship, while embracing our own deep, spiritual ecology.

For millennia we have divided and disconnected ourselves from Nature, our very essence. We have lived preoccupied by external constructs and, for the most part, perceived problems instead of orchestrated opportunities. We have lost our way not for lack of ability, but rather for lack of spiritual comprehension. We no longer recognize nor honor personal breakdowns as pathways to health, no longer embracing the Hero’s journey nor empowering ourselves from within. We have forgotten how to dance with our shadow, the disowned and discredited aspects of one’s psyche. We tend to change jobs, addresses, names, and relationships in our quest to find true happiness — ironic when the word happy is a derivative of the root to happen. We have evolved into a society on the verge of spiritual bankruptcy. Some say beyond the verge. What a blessing.

Indeed, a Blessing. With a majority of our ideas and systems no longer serving, we find ourselves at the end of our individual and societal ropes, yet now ready to fly. We are shedding our cocoon. In recent decades there has been tremendous movement toward more harmonious lifestyle. We have moved to the land, planted gardens, and addressed consumption issues. We develop ourselves with how-to workshops and personal-growth seminars, dedicating ourselves to helping others and working through relationship issues. Yet at the end of the day, we lie in bed feeling something amiss, in some deep way troubled, somewhat overwhelmed by scale, and somehow out of control. We drift to sleep with the promise of tomorrow’s sunrise birthing another opportunity to get involved, to do something about all of the “wrongs” out there.

But where is out there? I believe it is right here, within.

We live in an era of profound transformation wherein quantum physics is delivering us full-circle, re-establishing our natural awareness of the unified field, the concept of energetic Oneness. It is not possible to live an isolated life without affecting everything, everywhere. The molecules one breathes today are the same another will metabolize tomorrow. We cannot escape the fact that we all dance in reflection to one another, affecting change by determining our reality. Like begets like. Our perceptions are rooted in the viewpoint of experience and belief, projecting only that which we accept as true. What one observes in another is quite literally a mirroring of what is held within. Our external focus must return home.

To heal anything we have to first heal our Selves. As Gandhi professed, be the example you wish to see in the world. To live fully sustainable lives, we must learn to be Self-full by integrating our own personal discord so as not to sow seeds of discontent for future harvest. In the past centuries, cultural momentum has predominantly swung outward, concentrating on external conflicts and creating entrenched resolutions. Today’s greatest teachers are in many ways those in power who hold fast to the course, polarizing events and manipulating information to achieve desired outcomes. Today’s greatest change agents are in many ways those in power who hold fast to the course, polarizing events and manipulating information to achieve desired outcomes.

Spiritual responsibility, and thus sustainability, can be a bumpy road to navigate at first. However, it is one with divine purpose. It is a proactive way of being in the world, but not encumbered by it. It is learning to look within, to glean the wisdom contained within conflict and seemingly negative events without identifying them as part of our personal story. It is not dropping out nor feeding the beast in the basement with spiritual materialism. It is a grounded, self-accountable approach to inter- and intra-personal relationship. We can benefit immensely from shifting our affinity for life’s drama, learning to focus on the integrity of our inner process instead of the goal — for the goal is the natural outcome of an integral process. It is important to set objectives, but more important to allow their evolution as the energetically integrative process reveals itself. This is an aspect of what the medicine people call “dancing with life’s momentum,” and such Self-awareness is a required component of embodying our roles as co-creators.

At the energetic level, we are all individualized cells comprising a larger organism: us. So why do we resist? We are the Resource in this re-emerging cosmology, our beliefs driving consensual reality and our experiential wisdom the supportive vehicle. We know that energy does not die, atoms simply rearrange at the vibrational level for new forms to emerge. A fruit does not mourn its blossom lost, if one seeks consciousness and incentive for change, what better impetus than recomposing energetic form manifested from previous belief? Part of the paradigm that hinders our culture is the duality of good and bad. This concept is based on validating belief and interpretive experience. It does not hold water. An underlying principle of Nature provides that all things move toward fulfillment. We are the only species who create disharmony out of negative perception and retaliatory action, the only ones who have forgotten how to embody our exquisite Nature. When we act out of scarcity and state of homeostasis from the Garden, we are sourcing from our fear. When we are holding abundance and compassion, stewarding the Garden, we are emanating Love.

Deep in the mountains, deserts, and rainforests reside people still embodying spiritual sustainability. In their prophetic stories they have been waiting for us, their younger siblings, to approach critical mass. In the past decades their teachings have been revealed, released to find their own in our society. These wisdom-keepers know that a person cannot possibly sustain a balanced lifestyle without incorporating his or her own disruptive experiences and the emotional memories held in association. These unresolved emotions, traumatic events, and subsequent beliefs are the energetic core of imbalance and dis-ease. They need to be harmonized and integrated.

An individual’s electromagnetic field, like that of the Earth, is an energetic symphony composed of experiential frequencies, ever-compensating to achieve a state of homeostasis. This universal equilibrium is the definition for general health and well-being. As we interact with the world, our interpretive experience shapes our approach and personal story. Disparities stress the central nervous system, suppressing immune response, fostering chronic tension and influencing fatigue. Left unattended, these disharmonious chords embed in soft-tissue, trigger compensatory behavior and facilitate health crises while informing an electromagnetic template of overall health. As our body regenerates, this template encodes and orchestrates predispositions to illness and repetitive life patterning.

In our western mindset, we have pursued symptomatic suppression and amputation as a means to a cure. While allopathic medicine is outstanding in crisis situations, it is not causal-level healing, based on preventative principles, nor sustainability. A Self-empowered, holistic resolution resides within each of us. By consciously shifting our perspective to embrace imbalance as latent healing potential, dis-ease provides uniquely personal opportunities to revisit and resolve our original traumas and blockages. Healing on the energetic level affects change on all levels, addressing core issues, developing personal awareness, stimulating chronic stagnancy, reducing systemic stress, decoupling defining stories, and freeing our immune system to accelerate toward optimal health.

Spiritual sustainability begins as a journey into one’s own darkness to embody its Light, to open the door to our personal basement and learn to dance with our dormant potential. It requires a willingness to amend perception, that which separates good...
Triplat, continued from page 10 from bad, us from them, right from wrong. It asks us to not bypass a healing opportunity for fear of pain or setback. For what is more painful than a long, slow death? Pain and illness are allies of consciousness.

We do not have to tear down our structures, just remodel their components. We must develop ways to be safely held in society, honored for our emotional experience, and nourished so that we may develop wisdom and learn to spiritually fish for ourselves. It is our birthright to embody joy and the spontaneous, organic wellspring of Consciousness that emanates from within. We will no longer become encumbered by conflict and tension when the human organism embraces its spiritual, inter-connective, sustainable Nature. It is a process, one layer at a time mixed with quantum leaps – all experiential by Design. We are remaking our way home. Tomorrow’s sunrise will bring another opportunity to get involved.

Bhaerman, continued from page 1 to be the most devastating and cynical scam ever imposed on the American people.

The media: the fabled “fifth estate” has become the “fifth column,” betraying the truth left and right, mostly right. The one major difference between our “liberal” media and Pravda of 30 years ago is that the Russian people knew they were being lied to.

The Democratic Party leadership (an oxymoron very high in irony content) lacks vision, courage, and integrity. You can count on them to once again trot out the slogan that has kept them safely out of power for years now: “We’re not as bad as the Republicans.” Not even this is true. In my book, the enabler bears as much responsibility as the abuser. Until they prove otherwise, the only things the Democrats are good for are taking our money and wasting our votes.

Now I hope all of that didn’t sound too cynical, because cynical is the last thing I want to be. The upside of “disillusionment” is that it disabuses us of the “illusionment” that keeps us knocking on doors that will never open, and marching down pathways that lead to a dead end. The release of false hope is the gateway that can lead to real hope. Hopefully, that is where this is all leading.

Time To Face The Music and Dance

So how do we face these issues on a higher level, and translate all of this happy-sounding philosophizing into effective action? How do we make the shift from politics as usual to politics as unusual? What does the American Evolution look like in practice? Here are some ideas which will, hopefully, lead to better questions and clearer answers:

Cultivate the Field. Right now, the most effective thing we can do on a daily basis is speak the truth with “calm passion.” In their heart of hearts, a majority of Americans know there is something terribly wrong. We’re not in Kansas anymore, and we may not even be in America, at least not the America we love. The media refuse to go any deeper than positional squabbling. So we must do it. The biggest obstacle we face right now is our collective unwillingness to see our own shadow. However, once a critical mass of us face this fear directly – and act anyway – it only becomes easier. Remember, the wall of lies is “hanging by a thread.” When we the people no longer feel threatened by that threat, the wall of lies will crumble into dust. The stronger the “field” of courage and truth we create at the grassroots, the more inevitable the breakthrough.

Stop Marching, and “Stand” Instead. No more yelling, no more shouting, no more spouting anger that squanders energy better spent. Marching indicates there is someplace to get to. Standing demonstrates that we are already “here” and are quietly steadfast as a “stand” for the world we know is possible – and necessary. “Standing” is an acknowledgment that we are not fearful or intimidated. It is an invitation to courage, and an inspiration to those who are ready to evolve beyond dueling dualities. Standing also acknowledges that darkness isn’t the “opposite” of light, it is the absence of light. So there is no need to “fight” darkness, as long as we shine the light.

Pray For The Soul of America, and Invite the People of the World to Do the Same. I’m sorry if this sounds unctuous, and before you secular humanists reading this run for the hills please take a minute to sit with this idea. There are many definitions of prayer, but if we go with the most generic, it boils down to “shared intention for the good.” In his book on the subject, Dr. Larry Dossey cites studies that show people who are “prayed for” actually recover more quickly from surgery and have fewer complications. Interestingly, it doesn’t seem to matter what tradition the prayer is in. As long as there’s healing intention, it works. In this sense, even a self-identified atheist could participate in this field, simply by wishing an individual, a group, or a situation well. In a similar way, practitioners of Transcendental Meditation have correlated an influx of meditators to a region with a reduction of the crime rate.

If all this sounds “idealistic,” remember that we are rapidly approaching the point where the ideal must become the real deal – otherwise, when it comes to human life on the planet, it’s no deal. For a long time now, we’ve been hearing that every generation must step up to defend freedom. Now it’s our turn. In the past, we’ve been called upon to march to some foreign land, armed with a gun. In these times, being a stand for freedom looks like standing up where we are, armed only with the Declaration of Independence, our Constitution, and the knowledge that every religion or spiritual path boils down to some variation on the Golden Rule. A critical mass of citizens standing on the brink of evolution, firmly and fearlessly, stripped of illusion. Now that is the real “naked power” that will change the world as we know it.
There are events in human history that galvanize a people into action. Such events are so profoundly wrong and troubling that they can no longer be ignored by the great majority of the citizenry. Instinct tells us that we are nearing a crossroads in the history of our nation, when we must decide upon a course of action. In this momentous decision there can be no neutrality. It is understood that there can be no reconciliation with corrupt power and authority. Either we stay the course and witness the systematic destruction of not only our own nation, but perhaps the entire world; or we refuse our allegiance to this system of inequity called capitalism and operate upon a new premise, or paradigm.

Let us proceed upon the assumption that all persons are created equal. Therefore, all people should be treated accordingly, regardless of their income, property holdings, race, sex or creed. Assuming that a great majority accept this credo, we must then recognize that the current system does not operate upon this principle. It favors those with wealth over people without wealth. It offers privileges and advantages to a small percentage of the citizenry that it does not accord to the great majority. Thus it is a paradigm that is inherently unjust and unequal. At this point we must ask ourselves: Do we believe in such a system? If we do not, then we must ask: Does an unjust system deserve and warrant our support?

Let it be understood that any system based upon a paradigm of inequity, and therefore injustice, cannot be reformed. Capitalism is an economic and social system based upon private wealth, not the commonwealth. It is inherently unstable and unsustainable because it is based upon the idea of private greed and waste. The result is that power and wealth are concentrated into the hands of the few by exploiting the many, and by destroying the earth. It is the philosophical basis for trickledown economics that gives plenty to those at the top, much less to those immediately below the top, and virtually nothing to those at the bottom. Those at the top stand upon the shoulders of everyone below the top, which is an enormous burden for them to bear. No matter how good the intentions of the thousands or millions of first-rate people operating in good faith within that system, it is inherently unfair and unjust. It cannot produce equity or justice because it was not designed to operate in this way. Expecting a result different from the kind we always get is like asking an oak tree to produce oranges. However we might wish it possible, it is not going to happen. Oaks can produce only acorns—the seeds of their own kind. Tremendous amounts of energy and capital are spent waiting for our oaks to produce oranges, as the inequity gap continues to widen and the system spins wildly out of control. Meanwhile, the infection deepens and spreads violence and imperialism throughout the world, setting a chain of events in motion that has the potential to destroy us all. Under capitalism the rich are parasites that prey upon the labor of the poor; they continually bleed them dry and treat them as mere servants. War wages wherever there is social and economic injustice with its staggering cost in capital, misery, environmental degradation and appalling loss of life.

In very simplistic terms, this is nothing more than the output of the input. Injustice can never create justice; inequity will never produce equity. If we believe in getting a better result, we must find a better paradigm, such as Democratic Socialism.

**A brief opening**

So we come to the realization that the political process does not, and cannot work for us, the great majority of the citizens. It plays us against one another and distracts us from recognizing the root causes of injustice that is the source of our misery. Thus we come to realize that we do not live in a democracy, as we are so recklessly told; we live in a plutocracy—a system in which those with wealth rule those without wealth. That is the kind of government we have.

Let us have it no more. If the form of government we have offers little benefit to us, or does us great and irreparable harm, why should we support it? Plutocratic government does not and cannot liberate us—it enslaves us.

Let us take that which is rightfully ours and use it for the public good.

Nearly 90 percent of us have no more freedom from endless toll and sacrifice than the slave on the plantation. Under the enormous and oppressive weight of capitalism, we are nothing more than the property of our employers, who can and do terminate us at will without just cause or provocation. The system that created slavery is incapable of emancipating its slaves. The genius of the wage-slave system is that the great majority of its subjects do not realize that they are in fact slaves to fraudulent corporate and plutocratic power.

We must also recognize that no political party, regardless how well-intentioned it is, represents us by operating within the existing framework of capitalism, or wage slavery. The only representation we have is ourselves. Our power cannot come from the system that produces our misery and suffering; it can come only from without. We the people are our own power; but only if we act. It was this realization that gave organized labor and the civil rights movements their impetus for social justice. True grassroots movements understand that their power lies in direct action, not in waiting for corrupt leaders to give us what is already ours under the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. We must assert our rights, here and now, and without compromise. Nothing is given without a demand. We cannot cure one part of a diseased body; we must cure the whole organism in order to give it health.

The neocon cabal that is in power will not voluntarily step down. They must be forcefully removed from power by demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience on a massive scale. Let me stress that these demonstrations and marches are to be nonviolent. Violence begets violence. These must not be sporadic events; they must be frequent, widespread, and economically disruptive. As workers, our greatest weapon has always been to withhold our labor through the general strike, as well as our refusal to consume beyond the most basic necessities.

We have but a brief window of opportunity to organize and to mobilize against our oppressors, before dissent is criminalized. Beyond the Rubicon, dissenters will be imprisoned and every channel of free and open communication will be commandeered and subverted to the service of empire. This is already happening on a large scale. Unless we appreciate the approaching danger and act to defend our human rights and our dignity, we will quickly reach the point of no return. We stand now at the brink of the Rubicon wondering how to proceed.

As we put our bodies on the line we will suffer many defeats and indignities. These events must be so widespread that even the commercial media cannot afford to ignore them. There will be beatings and attacks upon us. Our oppressors must be exposed and revealed for who and what they are. The world will be our witness. So great will be the force of worldwide opposition to this brutal conduct, that its perpetrators will be forced to relinquish their hold on power. This is the only way to bring the system down and give power to the people.

At this point a brief clarification is in order: Giving power is a misnomer. Power is never given; it is taken, or asserted. Let us take that which is rightfully ours and use it for the public good. We cannot afford to wait for our acorns to evolve into oranges. The window of opportunity is rapidly closing. It may not be available to us tomorrow.

Regimes such as the Bush cabal have always plagued America. They are a recurring cancer that pervades every cell of society. They recur because we are treating symptoms, not underlying causes. A few decades ago it was Nixon and his henchmen. The cancer replicates itself through the capitalistic system of inherent inequity. The time has come to treat the disease, to rid ourselves of its scourge for all eternity, rather than treating the symptoms manifested in the present moment of crises. Otherwise, history is doomed to repeat itself in endless cycles of want and waste and human misery. A long road to industrial and personal emancipation awaits our eager footsteps. Let the journey begin. •